

JOURNAL OF EASTERN TOWNSHIPS STUDIES

REVUE D'ÉTUDES DES CANTONS DE L'EST



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TABLE OF CONTENTS TABLE DES MATIÈRES

JOURNAL OF EASTERN TOWNSHIPS STUDIES
REVUE D'ÉTUDES DES CANTONS DE L'EST

ARTICLES

- Alfred DesRochers, animateur littéraire
et culturel des années trente et quarante / *Richard Giguère* 3
- British Toryism amidst 'a horde of
disaffected and disloyal squatters':
The Rise and Fall of William Bowman
Felton and Family in the Eastern Townships / *J.I. Little* 13
- L'essor de l'enseignement des
arts visuels dans la région Sherbrooke / *Antoine Sirois* 43
- Humorous Aspersions:
The Verbal Traditions of
Difference in the Eastern Townships / *Michael Taft* 55
- Claiming the Landscape:
John Glassco and his Poetry
of the Eastern Townships / *Patricia Whitney* 67

CONFÉRENCE

- Les noms de lieux des Cantons de l'Est :
une toponymie responsable / *Henri Dorion* 77

ARCHIVES

- The Hyatt Papers: An Interpretation / *Stephen Moore* 89

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ALFRED DESROCHERS, ANIMATEUR LITTÉRAIRE ET CULTUREL DES ANNÉES TRENTE ET QUARANTE

Richard Giguère
Université de Sherbrooke

Alfred DesRochers est né à Saint-Élie-d'Orford, à une dizaine de kilomètres à l'ouest de Sherbrooke. Son père et sa mère, Joseph-Honoré Desrochers et Zéphirine Marcotte, ainsi que ses grands-parents paternels sont tous originaires du comté de Lotbinière (Deschaillons, Sainte-Emmélie-de-Lotbinière, Fortierville). C'est le métier de Joseph-Honoré Desrochers, bûcheron, puis contremaître de chantiers pour la compagnie Savoie, qui l'amène à travailler à Bromptonville et à Saint-Élie d'Orford. La famille Desrochers s'installe donc dans les Cantons de l'Est à la fin du siècle dernier et, sauf pour un séjour de quatre ans, de 1904 à 1908, à Manseau (comté de Nicolet), quelques mois à Manchester, au New Hampshire, en 1914, et trois années d'études à Trois-Rivières (1918-1921), Alfred DesRochers demeurera près de cinquante ans dans les Cantons de l'Est. C'est-à-dire de sa naissance en octobre 1901 jusqu'à son départ avec son épouse, Rose-Alma Brault, pour le Centre social de Françoise Gaudet-Smet, à Claire-Vallée (près de Saint-Sylvère de Nicolet), en juin 1951.

C'est à Sherbrooke qu'Alfred DesRochers commence à travailler, en 1915, un peu plus d'un an après la mort prématurée de son père, pour contribuer au gagne-pain familial. Il sera tour à tour apprenti mouleur de fonte, ouvrier aux usines de munition de guerre Rand et Mackennon, puis bobineur à la Dominion Textile, commis quincaillier et plus tard «scieur de long» pour une compagnie de bois de Rock Forest. C'est à Sherbrooke, après trois années de cours classique terminées au Collège séraphique des franciscains de Trois-Rivières, qu'Alfred décide de s'établir en 1921 et qu'il commence à signer des chroniques littéraires et musicales pour le quotidien *la Tribune*. C'est à Sherbrooke également que le jeune Alfred, qui écrit des poèmes depuis ses années de collège, entreprend de publier ses premiers textes, dans la revue *la Bonne*

Lecture d'Hermas Bastien. C'est à Sherbrooke enfin qu'il s'installe après son voyage de noces, en juin-juillet 1925, et qu'il obtient un poste régulier à *la Tribune*. D'abord correcteur d'épreuves, chroniqueur et traducteur, puis rédacteur sportif et directeur des correspondants, il sera par la suite agent, puis directeur du service de la publicité dans les années trente et quarante, jusqu'à son congédiement en juillet 1950.

DesRochers et *la Tribune*

C'est en bonne partie grâce à son travail au quotidien de Sherbrooke que DesRochers publie ses premiers recueils de poèmes, s'engage de plus en plus dans les activités littéraires et culturelles de sa région et même rayonne à l'extérieur de sa ville et des Cantons de l'Est au cours des années trente et quarante. Il commence à faire paraître des poèmes dans *la Tribune* en 1923, signant d'abord Des Rochers en deux mots, puis en un seul mot (mais en conservant la majuscule R au milieu de son nom). Les premières versions de plusieurs poèmes de *l'Offrande aux vierges folles*, son recueil publié en 1928, se retrouvent dans le journal de Sherbrooke. En octobre 1929, *À l'ombre de l'Orford* (dans un premier tirage de 78 exemplaires) est imprimé à compte d'auteur sur les presses de *la Tribune*. C'est en fait la seule façon pour un poète de Sherbrooke, un jeune auteur qui n'est pas connu et vivant dans une ville qui ne compte pas de maison d'édition littéraire, de publier un livre sans avoir à le soumettre à un éditeur de Montréal ou de Québec. DesRochers se servira aussi de l'atelier d'imprimerie de son journal pour éditer le recueil *la Course dans l'aurore* de la poète Éva Senécal (une résidente de La Patrie) et deux recueils de Louis Dantin.

C'est grâce aussi à son travail à *la Tribune* que DesRochers entreprend des correspondances littéraires importantes avec des journalistes de Montréal (Albert Pelletier, du journal *Le Canada*, par exemple), de Québec (Jean-Charles Harvey, du *Soleil*), et même d'autres régions du Québec (Harry Bernard, du *Courrier de Saint-Hyacinthe*, Clément Marchand, de l'hebdomadaire *le Bien public*, de Trois-Rivières), ou avec des journalistes travaillant à l'extérieur du Québec (c'est le cas de sa correspondance avec Rosaire Dion, de Nashua, au New Hampshire). On le voit, le rayonnement du poète dépasse de loin la région des Cantons de l'Est, mais DesRochers n'a pas voulu que ce rayonnement soit limité à sa seule personne ou à son oeuvre. C'est sans doute pourquoi il a mis sur pied une association littéraire, pour donner une voix collective aux écrivains de sa région.

«Les Écrivains de l'Est»

DesRochers n'est pas sans se rendre compte que c'est le nombre qui fait la force. Il s'aperçoit très vite que, dans le domaine de la littérature, ce sont les villes les plus peuplées de la province, Montréal et Québec — «les métropoles culturelles», comme il l'écrit lui-même — qui prennent toute la place. C'est à Montréal que se trouvent les journaux et les revues qui ont la plus grande audience, les éditeurs de prestige, alors que la Vieille Capitale est le siège du gouvernement et de l'association littéraire qui sert de point de référence à tous les poètes, la Société des poètes canadiens-français, présidée par Alphonse Désilets. Dans les années vingt et trente, c'est à Montréal que sont concentrés les lieux de l'avant-garde en littérature, les jeunes poètes prometteurs comme Robert Choquette ou Saint-Denys Garneau et les premiers éditeurs modernes, c'est-à-dire indépendants des partis politiques, des communautés religieuses et du marché scolaire : Édouard Garand, Louis Carrier, Albert Pelletier et Albert Lévesque. À la même époque, Québec compte plutôt des revues de poésie traditionnelle, comme *le Terroir*, et des critiques et historiens de la littérature comme Camille Roy, de l'Université Laval, qui tente d'apporter une reconnaissance académique à la littérature qu'on disait alors «canadienne». DesRochers ne veut pas s'opposer aux représentants de l'institution littéraire — critiques, journalistes, professeurs de littérature, membres des jurys des prix littéraires — qui «garnissent» (l'expression est de lui) dans ces deux villes. Mais il juge vital de créer à Sherbrooke une association d'écrivains qui donnera une cohésion culturelle et une voix littéraire à la région.

Qui fait partie de l'association «les Écrivains de l'Est» et quand DesRochers l'a-t-il fondée? D'après les renseignements retrouvés dans ses archives personnelles — déposées aux Archives nationales du Québec à Sherbrooke —, il en aurait eu sans doute l'idée l'année où il publia le premier supplément littéraire de *la Tribune*, en 1930. Je dis bien «sans doute», parce que, après avoir lu une bonne partie de sa correspondance de plus de 2 000 lettres, je n'ai trouvé aucune source manuscrite dans laquelle DesRochers s'expliquerait clairement sur ses raisons et ses intentions lorsqu'il fonde les Écrivains de l'Est. D'ailleurs qu'est-ce qui vint en premier : l'idée du supplément *l'Almanach littéraire de l'Est* ou l'idée de créer une association? J'émetts l'hypothèse que la fondation des Écrivains de l'Est précéda la publication du premier supplément, mais je ne possède aucun document pour confirmer cette hypothèse.

Chose certaine, les Écrivains de l'Est se sont engagés dans deux sortes d'activités : la tenue de réunions annuelles d'écrivains à Sherbrooke et la publication de suppléments littéraires annuels dans *la Tribune*. Il y eut en effet une rencontre d'écrivains en 1930, 1931 et 1932, et le journal de Sherbrooke fit paraître un supplément intitulé *l'Almanach littéraire de l'Est* chacune de ces trois années. La première réunion eut lieu le samedi 30 août 1930, «en la demeure du mécène des Écrivains de l'Est», M. Florian Fortin, gérant de *la Tribune* et ami personnel de DesRochers. Selon le carton d'invitation retrouvé dans les archives du poète, douze écrivains de l'extérieur des Cantons de l'Est y étaient invités : six venaient de Montréal (Gaétane Beaulieu, les poètes Robert Choquette et Émile Coderre (Jean Narrache), Pierre Dansereau, l'éditeur Albert Lévesque et le critique Albert Pelletier), trois de Québec (Germain Beaulieu, Alphonse Désilets et Aimé Plamondon), plus Alice Lemieux, de Saint-Michel de Bellechasse, Rosaire Dion, de Nashua, et Claude-Henri Grignon, de Sainte-Adèle. On le voit, il s'agit surtout, mais non pas exclusivement, de poètes, et ce sont en majorité des hommes (dix écrivains sur douze). L'invité d'honneur de la réunion était Louis Dantin, le célèbre critique littéraire, premier éditeur des poèmes d'Émile Nelligan en 1903, que le poète convainquit d'accepter l'invitation de venir rencontrer des écrivains à Sherbrooke. (Louis Dantin vivait exilé en Nouvelle-Angleterre depuis plus de vingt-cinq ans). DesRochers eut la bonne idée d'inscrire sur le carton d'invitation les noms des «Écrivains de l'Est» en 1930. Il s'agit de quatre femmes, presque toutes des poètes (Jovette Bernier, Françoise Gaudet, Jeanne Gris  ,   va Sen  cal), et de six hommes, presque tous des journalistes (DesRochers, Henri-Myriel Gendreau, Aur  le Goyer,   douard Hains, Louis-Philippe Robidoux et Denis Tremblay).

D'apr  s la correspondance de DesRochers, cette premi  re r  union connut un franc succ  s et encouragea DesRochers    tenir une deuxi  me rencontre, le 18 juillet 1931, qui prit la forme d'un «D  ner des   crivains de l'Est», plac   sous la pr  sidence d'Alphonse D  silets et offert dans le but d'honorer les laur  ats du concours de la Soci  t   des po  tes canadiens-fran  ais (DesRochers et Alice Taschereau, de Sherbrooke, et Ulric Gingras, de Trois-Rivi  res) ainsi que les gagnants du concours annuel des   ditions Albert L  vesque (  va Sen  cal, de Sherbrooke, et Claude Robillard, de Montr  al). Le carton d'invitation reproduit le menu du d  ner, suivi de «R  flexions» de Louis-Philippe Robidoux (r  dacteur en chef de

la Tribune), mais il ne dresse pas la liste des invités, comme le faisait le carton de 1930. Enfin le 29 octobre 1932, les Écrivains de l'Est se réunissent une nouvelle fois à Sherbrooke, sous les auspices de *la Tribune* (lire : Florian Fortin), «pour fêter les gagnants des prix David de littérature en 1932» : Harry Bernard, grand prix du roman canadien; Robert Choquette et Alfred DesRochers, qui se partagent le grand prix de poésie (et la somme de 1 700\$).

Quant aux suppléments littéraires des Écrivains de l'Est publiés annuellement dans *la Tribune*, il ne fait aucun doute qu'ils sont une initiative de DesRochers. On sait aussi, grâce à la correspondance du poète, qu'ils étaient «tolérés» par le propriétaire du quotidien, Jacob Nicol, à condition que les coûts de production des suppléments soient entièrement couverts par les encarts publicitaires vendus par DesRochers lui-même (c'est Florian Fortin qui agissait comme négociateur entre le poète et Jacob Nicol). DesRochers a conservé dans ses archives les questionnaires qu'il a fait parvenir à vingt Écrivains de l'Est en 1932 pour obtenir de chacun d'eux des renseignements bio-bibliographiques à jour. Ces vingt questionnaires retournés à DesRochers contiennent les noms et les coordonnées d'à peu près tous les auteurs qui ont publié des textes dans *l'Almanach littéraire de l'Est* du 29 novembre 1930, du 17 décembre 1931 et du 27 août 1932 : Jovette Bernier (poète, romancière, journaliste et animatrice à la radio), Harry Bernard (romancier, rédacteur en chef du *Courrier de Saint-Hyacinthe*), Arthur Bouchard (romancier, éditeur de deux hebdomadaires de Coaticook), Cécile Chabot (poète de Saint-Césaire), Alphonse Désilets (agronome, directeur de la revue *le Terroir*, fondateur des Cercles des fermières, président de la Société des poètes canadiens-français, de Québec, mais né à Victoriaville), Joseph Doucet (notaire de Victoriaville, auteur de pièces de théâtre), Alfred DesRochers (poète et critique littéraire, qui avait déjà trois livres publiés en 1932), Joseph Donat Dufour (professeur à l'École normale de Sherbrooke), Camille Duguay (fondateur de deux hebdomadaires à Drummondville et à Victoriaville), Mme Camille Lemaire-Duguay (chroniqueuse littéraire), Léon Gérin-Lajoie (sociologue, ancien fonctionnaire à Ottawa, demeurant à Coaticook), Arsène Goyette (curé de Rock Forest, ancien professeur au Séminaire Saint-Charles de Sherbrooke), Jeanne Grisé (poète de Saint-Césaire), Berthe Guertin (née à Abercorn), le docteur John Hayes (maire de Richmond), Paul Rainville (de Québec, mais né à Arthabaska, auteur d'un recueil de nouvelles), Éva Senécal (poète née à La Patrie, correspondante de *la Tribune* pour son village), l'abbé

Arthur Sideleau (né à Waterloo, professeur au Séminaire Saint-Charles), Marie-Alice Taschereau (poète de Sherbrooke), et Denis Tremblay (professeur de cours de dessin au Séminaire Saint-Charles, plus tard architecte à Sherbrooke).

Ces vingt auteurs (sept femmes et treize hommes) sont soit de la même génération que DesRochers, soit plus vieux que lui; la moitié d'entre eux sont nés à Sherbrooke ou dans les environs, l'autre moitié viennent des Bois-Francs ou sont nés dans la région des Bois-Francs. De ces vingt Écrivains de l'Est, sept sont encore cités aujourd'hui dans les anthologies de littérature québécoise, surtout les poètes (J. Bernier, C. Chabot, A. Désilets, DesRochers, J. Grisé, Éva Senécal) et un romancier (H. Bernard). Seul DesRochers, l'auteur d'*À l'ombre de l'Orford*, est considéré comme un classique de la littérature québécoise.

D'autres réunions littéraires se sont tenues à Sherbrooke au cours des années trente. Mais il s'agit de rencontres plus intimes qui ne sont pas sous l'égide des Écrivains de l'Est. Le samedi soir, DesRochers invite régulièrement des auteurs de Montréal (Robert Choquette, Émile Coderre), de Trois-Rivières (Clément Marchand, Alphonse Piché), de Saint-Hyacinthe (Harry Bernard), de Joliette (Gustave Lamarche, Rina Lasnier), etc. Dans la petite maison de DesRochers, située sur la rue Georges (près du boulevard Queen, dans le nord de Sherbrooke), la fête se poursuit souvent toute la nuit. À son tour DesRochers, souvent accompagné de son épouse, est l'invité d'Albert Pelletier, à Montréal, ou d'Émile Coderre, ou encore d'Albert Lévesque, l'éditeur qui a publié à peu près tous les écrivains québécois des années vingt et trente. De temps à autre, DesRochers se rend aussi à Trois-Rivières, à l'invitation de Clément Marchand, à Québec et à l'Ile d'Orléans, à l'invitation d'Alphonse Désilets, et même en Nouvelle-Angleterre, à l'invitation de Louis Dantin et de Rosaire Dion.

«Les mardis du Soupirail» ¹

DesRochers cesse la publication de *l'Almanach littéraire de l'Est* avec le supplément du 27 août 1932. Après cette date, on ne retrouve plus trace de l'association «Les Écrivains de l'Est» dans *la Tribune* ou dans ses archives. L'autre groupe auquel DesRochers est associé — mais cette fois il ne s'agit pas d'écrivains et c'est dix ans plus tard, au début des années quarante —, c'est le Soupirail. Il s'agit d'un groupe d'études et de conférences qui a été actif pendant au moins cinq ans, à Sherbrooke. La meilleure définition des activités du groupe — il s'agit d'une série de dîners suivis de deux

conférences qui ont lieu toutes les deux semaines, le mardi soir, de novembre à mai — est donnée dans le bulletin *Soupirail* du 2 juin 1942.

Ce repas intime, sur lequel déborde la même belle humeur dont se sont animées nos séances, nous soustrait aux tracas de nos vies routinières, nous repose de nos besogneuses journées et nous retrempe dans une amitié dont nous avons besoin. Ce sont vraiment des agapes fraternelles, car elles nous fournissent l'occasion de cultiver la camaraderie, de mieux nous comprendre et de nous entre-édifier. («Présentation», anonyme).

DesRochers, un des membres fondateurs du groupe, a conservé dans ses archives la liste des vingt-six conférences de l'année 1941-1942 (elles s'échelonnent du 11 novembre 1941 au 12 mai 1942). Les conférenciers, la plupart du temps des professionnels et des membres du clergé de Sherbrooke, étaient tous des spécialistes d'une discipline précise, par exemple Maurice Delorme (le droit), Sylvio Lacharité (la musique), Alphonse Labrecque (la philosophie), Louis-C. O'Neil (le journalisme), Maurice O'Bready (l'éducation), Louis-Philippe Robidoux (la bibliophilie), Denis Tremblay (l'architecture), l'abbé Arthur Sideleau (la langue et la littérature françaises), etc. DesRochers s'intéresse, quant à lui, à la poésie et au journalisme. Voici quelques-unes des conférences qu'il a données de 1941 à 1945 : «La poétique d'Aristote» (11 novembre 1941), «La versification française» (14 janvier 1941), «Le français dans l'armée» (13 novembre 1945). Ses archives contiennent des copies de plusieurs conférences données aux mardis du Soupirail, en 1941 et 1942, et des copies d'une demi-douzaine d'autres conférences prononcées par lui, au Soupirail ou ailleurs, dans les années quarante : «Poésie catholique et française», «L'humanisme», «La première poétesse canadienne-française, Anna-Marie Duval-Thibault», «Le fonctionnement d'un journal», «Le rôle de *la Tribune* dans les Cantons de l'Est», «Ma vie à l'armée». Enfin je m'en voudrais de ne pas souligner la présence dans ses archives d'un manuscrit consacré à l'histoire des Cantons de l'Est et qui date des années 1945-1950. Le manuscrit s'intitule «Les Cantons de l'Est dans la Grande Histoire» et DesRochers, qui y a beaucoup travaillé, avait l'intention de le publier en fascicules dans le quotidien *la Tribune*. Son objectif était de faire connaître aux lecteurs l'histoire de leur région, de l'époque de la Nouvelle-France à 1950. Malheureusement les négociations avec Jacob Nicol n'ont pas

abouti et le manuscrit n'a pas été terminé; il n'a jamais connu la publication, ni en fascicules ni sous forme de livre.

* * *

Ce rapide parcours de l'oeuvre de DesRochers comme animateur littéraire et culturel de Sherbrooke et des Cantons de l'Est dans les années trente et quarante m'a amené à me poser la question suivante : comment se fait-il qu'après le départ de DesRochers, en 1951, il n'y a pas de continuité ni de leadership dans l'animation de la vie littéraire à Sherbrooke? Les années cinquante et soixante sont particulièrement désolantes de ce point de vue. Comment s'expliquer ce vide culturel d'une vingtaine d'années, du moins en ce qui a trait à la littérature? Je ne ferai qu'esquisser trois hypothèses de réponse à cette question pour conclure ma communication.

D'abord DesRochers et sa génération n'ont pas formé de relève en littérature. En quittant la région, DesRochers, Jovette Bernier, Éva Senécal n'avaient personne à qui passer le flambeau. Il n'y avait pas de jeunes écrivains à Sherbrooke pour prendre la relève, ou du moins il n'y en avait pas dans le milieu où évoluaient DesRochers, Jovette Bernier, Louis-Philippe Robidoux, Édouard Hains, c'est-à-dire dans le journalisme. Mon hypothèse est que le journalisme s'est professionnalisé dans les années cinquante et soixante, il est devenu de plus en plus spécialisé dans sa pratique comme dans ses critères d'embauche. Il n'est plus à partir de la Révolution tranquille la pépinière d'écrivains qu'il a été de la fin du 19^e siècle jusqu'à la Deuxième Guerre mondiale en littérature québécoise. Maurice Lemire et son équipe du *Dictionnaire des oeuvres littéraires du Québec* de l'Université Laval l'ont bien démontré pour l'ensemble du territoire québécois. Sherbrooke et les Cantons de l'Est n'ont pas échappé à ce phénomène.

Ma deuxième hypothèse est la suivante. À Sherbrooke, comme dans bien d'autres villes à l'exception de Montréal et de Québec, les institutions littéraires et culturelles bien établies, bien structurées, sont peu nombreuses avant l'arrivée du Conseil des arts et du ministère des Affaires culturelles. Depuis les années vingt au Québec, les villes sont de plus en plus importantes pour le développement de la culture et de la littérature, encore plus les villes des régions éloignées de Montréal et de Québec. Mais le soutien financier et les infrastructures de base tardent à venir. Sherbrooke, Trois-Rivières, Hull, Chicoutimi, Rimouski souffriront de cette pénurie. En fait c'est non seulement avec le

développement des bureaux régionaux du ministère des Affaires culturelles, mais plus encore avec le développement du réseau de l'éducation — en particulier avec la création des cégeps et des universités en région — que ces villes connaîtront une renaissance culturelle dans les années soixante-dix et quatre-vingt.

C'est là ma troisième hypothèse et je ne prendrai que les cas de Sherbrooke et de Trois-Rivières pour illustrer mon propos. Les départements d'études littéraires de l'Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières et de l'Université de Sherbrooke ont été la bougie d'allumage qui a relancé l'activité littéraire et suscité le goût d'écrire chez un grand nombre de jeunes étudiants à la fin des années soixante et dans les années soixante-dix². À l'Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières, c'est le poète Gatien Lapointe qui a entrepris de donner des ateliers de création littéraire à la fin des années soixante. Il a recruté des jeunes, fervents de littérature et d'écriture (de poésie en particulier), et, de fil en aiguille, stimulé par ces jeunes, il a fondé une maison d'édition, les Écrits des Forges, en 1971, pour publier leurs premiers textes. Plus tard viendront une revue, *les Ateliers de production littéraire de la Mauricie*, puis un successeur de Gatien Lapointe, Gaston Bellemare, qui prend la relève et crée un Festival international de poésie qui a lieu chaque automne à Trois-Rivières. À la même époque que Gatien Lapointe, à la fin des années soixante, Antoine Naaman, professeur au Département d'études françaises de l'Université de Sherbrooke, fonde avec d'autres professeurs une maison d'édition, Cosmos, et une collection, «Amorces», pour publier les textes de ses étudiants en quête d'un éditeur. La suite est connue : les Éditions Cosmos, puis les Éditions Naaman publieront de nombreux jeunes auteurs de Sherbrooke et de la région dans les années soixante-dix et quatre-vingt; l'Association des auteurs des Cantons de l'Est est fondée en 1977, ses animateurs relancent le Salon du livre annuel de Sherbrooke, ils créent une revue et des prix littéraires; le Département d'études françaises de l'Université attire plusieurs écrivains de Montréal qui font des mémoires de maîtrise et des thèses de doctorat en création littéraire avec des professeurs de Sherbrooke, des échanges s'intensifient avec le cégep de Sherbrooke, des rencontres d'écrivains s'organisent, etc.

La distance peut sembler grande entre le DesRochers animateur des années trente et quarante et les animateurs des années soixante-dix et quatre-vingt. Pourtant, en y regardant de plus près, cette distance n'est pas si grande qu'elle en a l'air à première vue. Les traits communs de ces leaders et animateurs sont les mêmes :

la volonté d'encourager, de stimuler les écrivains en herbe, de les réunir pour discuter littérature, d'échanger, de publier et de diffuser des romans, des recueils de poèmes, de contes et de nouvelles, des essais et des pièces de théâtre en région et au-delà, dans tout le Québec. Ce sont les traits communs de deux ou trois personnes par génération, et bien souvent d'un seul animateur, passionné de littérature, désintéressé et prêt à s'engager à fond pour faire bouger les choses. C'est le portrait bien caractéristique d'Alfred DesRochers.

NOTES

1. Le soupirail est une «ouverture pratiquée dans le sous-bassement d'un rez-de-chaussée pour donner de l'air, du jour aux caves et aux pièces en sous-sol» (*le Petit Robert*).
2. Voir les collectifs publiés sous la direction d'Antoine Sirois, *L'Essor culturel de Sherbrooke et de la région* (Département d'études littéraires, Cahiers d'études littéraires et culturelles, no 10, 1985, 292 p.; avec la collaboration d'Agnès Bastin) et *L'Université de Sherbrooke, son rayonnement littéraire et artistique* (Cahiers d'études littéraires et culturelles, no 12, 1990, 160 p.; avec la collaboration de Louise Simard).

BRITISH TORYISM AMIDST 'A HORDE OF DISAFFECTED AND DISLOYAL SQUATTERS': THE RISE AND FALL OF WILLIAM BOWMAN FELTON AND FAMILY IN THE EASTERN TOWNSHIPS*

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One of the twin pillars supporting Family Compact domination in Upper Canada was an imperialist tradition forged by Loyalist settlement and American military invasion. The other was the selective distribution of patronage by governor and council. Gordon Stewart argues that the executive was free to distribute offices so as to create an anglicized ruling class, while other historians have shown how local elites emerged with tight links to the Family Compact in York.¹ Historians of Lower Canada have, on the other hand, paid little attention to the so-called "Chateau Clique", or to the ties its members forged with the local *élites* at the district and parish levels. Furthermore, while much has been written about the inexorable march toward constitutional deadlock and armed conflict caused by the clash between French-Canadian nationalism and British imperialism, the concurrent struggle which took place in the English-speaking Eastern Townships has been largely ignored.² Here, where much of the settlement was basically a northern extension from the neighbouring states of New Hampshire and Vermont, the rift between the governing and the governed was deeper even than that in Upper Canada where the same basic issues were at stake. A political accommodation was finally worked out in this border region only when the outbreak of French-Canadian rebellion threatened to overwhelm the English-speaking inhabitants of Lower Canada as a whole.

From the time when the Eastern Townships was first opened to settlement in the 1790s, British authorities considered this region to be a potentially greater threat to the imperial connection than

the French-speaking parishes themselves.³ Furthermore, while Upper Canada's Family Compact members tended to have Loyalist roots and to have established their prominence during the War of 1812, the Eastern Townships had neither been settled by a large number of Loyalists nor tested by American invasion. The government therefore felt compelled to turn to outsiders and recently-arrived English half-pay officers when it began to establish an institutional framework of government and justice within the region during the early 1820s.

British-born officials also dominated certain local districts in Upper Canada,⁴ but there they were part of a major trans-Atlantic wave of immigration. Thirty-three percent of Upper Canada's population had been born in Britain as of 1842, while the British natives of the Eastern Townships were only half that ratio two years later.⁵ Consequently, the Sherbrooke-based elite failed to establish the degree of popular legitimacy enjoyed by its counterparts in much of Upper Canada. Rather than forging stronger imperial links during the pre-rebellion era, the distribution of patronage in the Eastern Townships became the focal point of protest within the economically stagnating and politically disaffected region. So much hostility was directed toward one man, William Bowman Felton, and his office-holding relatives that the Colonial Office felt compelled to sacrifice this former favorite prior to the outbreak of the Rebellion in 1837. In doing so, it helped to ensure that hostilities did not spread beyond a few skirmishes within a couple of restive border townships.

As the "agent victualler" of the British fleet at Gibraltar, Felton had held a very important patronage-distributing position during the Napoleonic Wars, but he faced limited prospects when his promised consulship failed to materialize in 1814. He and several members of his family (including a younger brother who had been a naval lieutenant, and a brother-in-law who had been a purser)⁶ therefore joined the parade of half-pay officers emigrating to the American colonies. Their proposal to the Colonial Office was to invest the impressive sum of £20,000 in the wilderness of Lower Canada in return for a 5000-acre free grant. When they arrived in the colony in 1816, Colonel George Frederick Heriot encouraged them to move to strategically-located Ascot Township, about sixty-five miles up the St Francis River from his new-born military settlement of Drummondville.

Ascot still lay on the frontier of settlement even though the Loyalist Gilbert Hyatt and his associates had moved to the town-

ship twenty-three years earlier in 1793.⁷ Four parcels of 1200 acres each were granted to W.B. Felton's two brothers, John and Charles, as well as to his brothers-in-law, William and Charles Whitcher. By 1826 Felton himself had received three grants in the same township totalling 15,000 acres — all this at a time when official regulations stipulated a strict 1200-acre limit on individual family grants, with settlement conditions on each lot to be enforced through the location ticket system instituted in 1818.⁸ Felton obviously had a powerful patron in London, but who that individual was remains a mystery.

There appears to have been no non-political justification for Felton's later grants totalling 10,000 acres, even if his labourers did clear 1000 acres, as he claimed. Over £5000 of his investment capital simply went to the acquisition of all the mills and mill sites at the confluence of the St Francis and Magog Rivers, properties which he did little to develop. A few miles from this site, which was named after Governor Sherbrooke in 1818, an additional substantial sum was spent on the construction of an impressive manor house. This house soon had to be reconstructed after it was destroyed by fire. Despite his failure to stimulate significant development of the area, Felton went so far as to attach a supplementary request to his last 5000-acre grant — 1200 acres for each of his nine children (with three more yet to be born). This request was too much even for the Colonial Office, which reduced the claim to 200 acres per child in 1828. The following year, however, the draft of patents from the Attorney General's office mysteriously specified a total of 10,861 acres in Orford, the mountainous township adjacent to Ascot. Felton and his immediate family now held full title to over forty square miles of land in the very heart of the Eastern Townships. The "oversight" with the children's patents would, however, eventually contribute to their father's downfall.⁹

Felton's position at the head of a regional oligarchy was ensured by his appointment to the Legislative Council in 1822, in full keeping with the design of the 1791 constitution to stimulate the development of a landed aristocracy.¹⁰ Felton identified himself at once as an opponent of the French-Canadian nationalists by voting for union with Upper Canada.¹¹ An indignant Denis-Benjamin Viger reported to his cousin, *parti Canadien* leader Louis-Joseph Papineau: "*M. Felton arrivé depuis peu d'années dans cette province entre d'hier [?] dans le Conseil, a montré de l'amertume et des préjugés qu'on n'aurait pas dû attendre d'un homme aussi nouveau.*"¹² Felton,

nevertheless, did adopt a conciliatory position towards the Legislative Assembly while advancing his own interests in London in 1826-7. He advised the Colonial Office that much of the Assembly's hostility could be attributed to the Executive's insistence on controlling payments to all public servants. Such a policy, Felton claimed, was bound to irritate "any body pretending to exercise functions at all analogous to those attributed to the popular branch of the Legislature in England." He therefore advised that all Crown revenues be conceded to the Assembly in return for fixed quarterly payments to the executive branch of government.¹³ This proposal would have undermined the position of the landed and commercial elite given its lack of influence over the popularly-elected body. In May, 1827 Chief Justice Jonathan Sewell wrote to Governor Dalhousie: "Horton seems eager to effect a compromise of disputed issues with the Assembly, which I suspect is Felton's influence working on him."¹⁴ After this initiative failed, however, Felton himself began to take a hard line on the civil list question.¹⁵

Philip Goldring has pointed out that such an uncompromising position was less characteristic of the paid officials in the Council than of those who were tied directly to the merchant interest. As Commissioner of Crown Lands since 1827, Felton might have been expected to share his fellow bureaucrats' desire to achieve the constitutional harmony that would ensure their salaries. Perhaps his independent wealth and extensive landholdings simply made him less dependent than they in this respect, as well as more concerned with the economic future of the colony.¹⁶ In 1830 Papineau even expressed concern, without cause as it turned out, that Felton would win over the newly-elected American-born MLAs of the Eastern Townships. He reported to his wife that "ils sont mal logés à l'Hotel de l'Albion [...] où Felton les choye comme le prunelle de ses yeux, où Richardson & Ogden viendront essayer à les endoctriner."¹⁷

As a firm believer that the Legislative Council would have to remain an appointed body in order to represent the interests of the Church of England, English-speaking merchants, and British immigrants, Felton drafted a resolution condemning the Assembly's republican-oriented Ninety-two Resolutions in 1834.¹⁸ The following year he bitterly attacked Lord Gosford's conciliatory speech from the throne,¹⁹ prompting Papineau to write: "*L'on est surpris de voir Felton faire une opposition si violente. Il est le seul des employés qui se la permette, et t'on [sic] en conclut que la Commission*

le dénonce et le menace. Il l'appelle la commission du crucifiement pour les employés."²⁰ On both occasions the Montreal merchant leader, George Moffatt, went still further, but the pro-Patriote *Vindicator* nevertheless included Felton with the "Moffatt faction." It claimed that he was taking a prominent position in the opposition to His Majesty's Government because he feared losing his salaried position should the crown lands and clergy reserves be placed at the Assembly's disposal.²¹

Felton's stand on the basic constitutional issues of the day therefore came to identify him closely with the Montreal merchants. He was, however, less concerned than they with French-Canadian cultural assimilation, perhaps because of his conservative agrarian ideology and his marriage to a practicing Roman Catholic of Spanish origin.²² He took an independent stand, for example, when he defended the Members' Pay Bill drafted by the Assembly in 1831. To his colleagues' claim that it would encourage paupers to run for election, Felton replied that absentee lawyers, notaries, and "petty" merchants would be replaced by legitimate representatives of agricultural and landed interests. Consequently, not only would more attention be paid to local improvements, but "the steady correct habits of the agriculturist would be very useful to the country."²³

Felton also took a rather progressive stand in his support for bank loans on the security of land,²⁴ but his social conservatism came to the fore with his spirited attack on the Assembly's Fabrique Bill. Influenced, no doubt, by the priests he knew through his wife, Felton argued that permitting parishioners to vote at vestry meetings would introduce "a tumultuous and unruly element into the daily administration of the temporal affairs of the Church."²⁵ In apocalyptic terms, the Sherbooke councillor equated the bill with a spark projected onto a magazine or arsenal; the result would be that "the whole fabric is shaken to its foundation and crumbles into atoms, scatters desolation all around, and destroys every individual in its ruins." As long as the French-Canadian masses remained basically unlettered, it was best to preserve the influence of the Catholic Church over them:

What stronger proof of the efficacy of that system could they have, than in the acknowledged and undisputed moral and religious character of the Canadian people — a people, illiterate, it is true, but well educated in the proper sense of the term, if the strict performance of civil obligations be amongst the best fruits of education.²⁶

During the 1835-6 session Felton painted a somewhat less patronizing image of the rural masses, defending them against what he considered to be an attack by their self-styled spokesmen, the petit bourgeois members of the Assembly. Even though his own estate clearly depended upon hired labour, Felton proclaimed that the Assembly's bill empowering magistrates to imprison agricultural workers for breach of engagement was "drawn from the barbarous Legislation of past ages." Such sanctions might have to be tolerated in the cities because of their mixed and foreign population, but it would only degenerate the youth of the rural districts where

the existence of a servile class, deriving their support solely from the wages of labour, and distinct from the proprietors of the soil, is wholly unknown; where the labourers employed in husbandry are usually the sons of the poorer landed proprietors, of equal station and respectability with their employers, and destined in their turn to become like them, the honest and independent yeomanry of a free country.²⁷

Felton never expressed such kind words for the American farmers of the Townships whom he once referred to as "a horde of disaffected and disloyal squatters."²⁸ While such a prejudice came naturally to an individual of Felton's origin, it also served to justify the office-holding monopoly enjoyed by him and his family as well as other British-born residents of Sherbrooke. As a regional investor and resident, Felton nevertheless did share with the American-descended majority an interest in removing the formidable barriers to local economic development. Thus, he sponsored bills to build or repair leading road arteries into the region, establish a limited system of municipal government, create land registry offices, extend the jurisdiction of the district courts, and even increase representation in the Assembly.²⁹ Though he frequently spoke out in favour of official support for the established Churches of England, Scotland, and Rome, through tithes if necessary, Felton was a vocal opponent of clergy reserves on the grounds that they retarded the development of the country.³⁰ He also demonstrated a surprisingly liberal streak by acting as chief spokesman in the Legislative Council for the right of Protestant sects to keep their own birth, death, and marriage registers.³¹

Despite such efforts, however, Felton was never accepted as their spokesman by the majority of the people in his region. Caught between two sides in the constitutional struggle, residents

of the Townships felt that their needs would be ignored as long as no electoral constituencies lay exclusively within the boundaries of their own region.³² Thus, in 1826, a Stanstead meeting appointed an agent to present local grievances to the Quebec Legislature. It was even proposed to make the arrangement permanent by raising a local subscription of £150 to £200 a year, for "there is no doubt that this District is misrepresented by designing men, who wish to give the Government an unfavourable opinion of the inhabitants, that they themselves might exclusively share the loaves and fishes."³³

The following year, the Assembly did draft legislation which would have provided representation for the Townships. When the anglo-dominated Legislative Council rejected the bill on the grounds that it created a still larger number of new French-Canadian constituencies, Stanstead's *British Colonist* commented that "even if we allow all the objections to be true, we could not be worse off than we are." Referring to Felton without naming him, the *Colonist* added that the Council had not "at all times manifested the same degree of anxiety for us, that the Assembly has, and that too, at a time when we supposed we had a member there who would have spoken for us."³⁴ When the region finally did gain eight representatives in 1829,³⁵ it proceeded to return reform-minded candidates.

The result was that the Assembly, for a time, became more generous with road subsidies for the Eastern Townships. Thus, between 1829 and 1831 it provided grants for the St Francis River route which totalled £3000.³⁶ Felton was resented by the local population not only for having failed to gain such subsidies in earlier years, but also for the role he had played in administering the one large grant the Townships had received prior to 1829.

Responding to a flood of petitions from settlers in the region, the Assembly had voted £8500 for Eastern Townships roads in 1817, when Felton and two other individuals were appointed commissioners of roads and bridges for the county which then incorporated much of the region.³⁷ They signed an agreement with two French-Canadian contractors to complete a sixty-four mile route from the St Lawrence seigneurial zone alongside the St Francis River to Hatley Township, near the American border. In addition, they were to repair twenty miles of the Craig Road to Quebec starting at its terminus in Shipton Township on the St Francis.³⁸ Popular opinion favoured the completion of a more direct route between Sherbrooke and Quebec via the upper St

Francis (the future Gosford Road) rather than devoting most of the grant to what the locally-formed committee on Eastern Townships grievances called "speculative and useless roads through the wilderness — through deep morasses, and over almost inaccessible mountains, which will neither be travelled or settled in many years to come."³⁹ The committee was right about the impracticality of the lower St Francis route, but final proof would have to await the costly investment of the British American Land Company during the later 1830s.⁴⁰

According to Felton and his fellow road commissioners themselves, the £6400 contract which expired in late 1818 was never fulfilled. Criticizing the French-Canadian road builders, whose funds were subsequently cut off, the commissioners claimed that parts of the road remained in trees. Elsewhere "the roots and stumps yet remained; no bridges erected, the hills not taken down, nor ditches, nor causeways made thro' the Swamps."⁴¹ The contractors proceeded to win a judicial appeal for all but £300 of their claim,⁴² but the condition of the road clearly left much to be desired. As early as 1821 the inhabitants of Shipton Township were complaining that local roads were "impassable for carriages of any description except in the very drought of summer and not even then, but with the utmost difficulty, expence [sic], and risk. In the wet sections it is frequently unsafe to travel on Horseback."⁴³

A few years later the bankrupt and embittered township leader of Shipton,⁴⁴ Elmer Cushing, published a pamphlet echoing the same charges. He wrote that even though the region's settlers had remained loyal during the 1812 War, their petitions went unheeded until "an *Englishman*, of considerable property, sat down in our country, whose interest was unavoidably blended with our public concerns. *His* voice was heard; and the Legislature entered with spirit into our embarrassments." When the road grant of 1817 was made, "we hailed the day as the date of our deliverance from bondage." But the local people, being Americans, were overlooked for three outsiders when it came to the appointment of overseers. One of these was the "Englishman," whose wealth proved that he was "a man of sound calculation, and shrewd discernment on subjects with which he was *acquainted*. Yet the analogy between nautical and mercantile concerns, and those of a new country, was not very striking." Cushing added that the other two men were equally incompetent, and that all three were careful to construct roads through their own land, with the result that two routes were

located "where no travelling will take place perhaps for a century to come." As a result, the princely grant was all but wasted.⁴⁵ Felton and his co-commissioners appear to have been more guilty of negligence than cupidity, but the residents of the Townships had just cause to be bitter, for public funds were particularly hard to come by in this region. In 1818 the nationalist spokesman, Pierre Bédard, asked rhetorically: "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?"⁴⁶

In 1821 Felton ironically resorted to the same anti-American theme when he complained to Governor Dalhousie about the new road alongside the Chaudière River: "while every facility is afforded to the subjects of a foreign Power by opening a road at the public expense to the American Settlements on the Kennebec, a large and fertile portion of this province is destitute of the means of transporting its commodities to their Market." He offered to take charge of repairing twenty-five impassable miles of the Craig Road to Quebec in return for 10,000 acres of "waste land."⁴⁷ Nothing more was heard of the proposal, but Felton was nevertheless appointed as one of the commissioners for the Craig Road when the Assembly voted £400 for its repair in 1824.⁴⁸ Piecemeal repairs could not solve the basic problem, however, and during the winter of 1826-7 protests about road conditions reached an unprecedented level in Stanstead's *British Colonist*. Several correspondents wrote long series of letters lamenting the depressed economic situation of the Townships, which they attributed primarily to the nature of the transportation system. Some tended to lay the blame at the door of the Assembly, but the councillors were more frequently seen as the villains. One correspondent even suggested that economic stagnation was "leading towards that which I have long considered as a darling object, with some of our leading characters, that is to reduce the Townships, from that equilibrium, which is so desirable, in a farming country, to what they may call a more popular system of lordships and tenantry."⁴⁹

Felton might have approved of such a society, but he certainly did not consider a stagnant economy to be to his benefit. In 1829 he protested to the Governor that the "enormous travelling charges exacted from the Inhabitants" by the grand voyer of Trois-Rivières, who was in charge of the region's public roads, "effectually prohibit the people from obtaining the sanction of the Law to opening new roads."⁵⁰ The result was that the government

appointed a deputy grand voyer for the St Francis District — none other than Felton's brother-in-law, Charles Whitcher. Such nepotism would do little to stimulate public gratitude in favour of Felton for the creation of the new office.

In addition to resenting his family's monopolization of major public offices, as we shall see, residents of the Eastern Townships felt threatened by Felton's strategy for developing the remaining crown lands in the region. Felton was a strong proponent of government-assisted pauper emigration from Britain, which in itself would have had some attraction to the residents of the severely underpopulated region. However, he argued that the best and least expensive means of encouraging British settlement would be to grant "extensive tracts to individuals possessing capital on condition of Residence and the bona fide amelioration of a specified quantity of land by a determinate number of families thereon located."⁵¹ In other words, Felton was proposing the re-creation of Britain's socially-stratified rural society, with its landed gentry supported by a labouring peasant class.

Felton had lived in the colony long enough to be aware that families moved to the frontier in order to acquire their own land, rather than leasing it or working permanently as agricultural labourers, but he envisioned colonization as a two-step process which would allow large landholders to maintain sizeable estates for themselves. His own initial agreement with the Colonial Office had provided for one hundred acres for each of the British labourers who wished to establish a farm once his contract with Felton had expired. Felton informed the Land Committee of the Legislative Assembly in 1823 that Europeans who hired themselves out for a full year would earn seven to ten dollars a month, including lodging, and that a man, woman, and child would need eighty-five dollars to support themselves for six months.⁵² The obvious conclusion was that each head of a pauper immigrant family would have to work for at least a year before accumulating the bare necessities for independence. Thus, a steady stream of British pauper immigrants would help to ensure the establishment of a local landed gentry. Even if the privileged grantees were to follow Felton's example, rather than adding to the long list of absentee speculators, there was clearly little place in this strategy for the sons and daughters of settlers who already inhabited the region.

In 1825 Felton came close to implementing a more practical plan by launching a monopolistic enterprise on the model of the

sister colony's Canada Company. Despite the support of Montreal and London entrepreneurs, as well as the Colonial Office, the project foundered in the wake of a financial panic and opposition by Governor Dalhousie.⁵³ The British American Land Company arose in its place in 1832, but Felton meanwhile had gained direct control over the land-granting process with his appointment in 1827 as Lower Canada's first Commissioner of Crown Lands. He attempted to encourage settlement by families with limited means by ignoring instructions from London in 1831 to abolish quit rents, make payments semi-annual, and charge interest. Felton was competing for the British immigrants who disembarked at Quebec rather than rejecting Edward Gibbon Wakefield's theory that the colonies needed a larger labouring class. Thus, he sold large blocks of public land in the Eastern Townships to speculators. His accounts reveal that the 14,386 acres auctioned in 1828, for example, were purchased by only nineteen individuals, for an average of 757 acres each. Petitioners from Brome County later protested that the local crown lands agent, Felton's brother John, had offered land that year in blocks of 1200 acres and upwards. Residents (presumably squatters as well as lessees of reserves) had consequently been forced either to leave their homes or purchase from the final bidder at an increase of 200 to 300 percent.⁵⁴

Local settlers, as well as the Church of England, made much the same complaints concerning Felton's alienation of clergy reserves. The Colonial Secretary instructed him in 1828 to select and sell 100,000 acres a year until one quarter were thereby disposed of. Because settler demand could not absorb such a large-scale marketing of land, Felton's sales policy was quite restrained at first. After the British American Land Company acquired all the crown land in the counties of Sherbrooke, Shefford and Missisquoi, however, he began to auction large blocks at low prices to anyone with sufficient capital. By 1836 ten individuals had purchased over 58,000 acres in blocks of 5000 acres and up, and the land company had itself acquired 118,215 acres at an average of only 4 1/2 shillings (\$0.90) per acre. Felton may well have been motivated largely by his sales commission, as Lord Durham later charged, but colleague John Davidson felt that he genuinely believed that reserve land would be developed more rapidly in the hands of capitalists.⁵⁵

If Felton's efforts to attract large numbers of British settlers to the Eastern Townships met with relatively little success, he did play an instrumental role in strengthening the hand of British authority in the region. He had barely set foot in his new home

when he informed Sheriff Coffin of Trois-Rivières that delegates from Hatley and Compton Townships were planning to hold a meeting in order to draw up a petition concerning roads. Town meetings were clearly too closely associated with New England democracy to be tolerated by colonial authorities.⁵⁶ Consequently, Coffin in turn wrote to the Civil Secretary:

From my knowledge of the dispositions of many of the Inhabitants of the Townships mentioned in Mr. Felton's letter, I fear that the Republican mode of proceeding alluded to (if not arrested) may create impressions highly dangerous to the future Peace of the Country. It might be advisable that some Public Officer be sent to prevent the proposed meeting of Delegates.⁵⁷

The Executive Council concluded, however, that because the meeting was convened by magistrates, it could not be considered unlawful.⁵⁸

At least as serious as the threat of civil insubordination, even in Felton's opinion, were the inter-related crimes of smuggling, counterfeiting, and livestock rustling. A significant source of income in some of the more remote border communities was the printing of bogus American bank notes, which were exchanged for cattle and horses stolen in the neighbouring states and driven North to the Townships.⁵⁹ In 1816 Felton asked to be appointed justice of the peace, along with a brother and brother-in-law, adding that "I have experienced during the last three months the necessity of the measure."⁶⁰ No official response was forthcoming, but three years later the government appointed Felton's brother-in-law, Charles Whitcher, to the position of "peace commissioner."⁶¹ Felton received the same appointment in 1821, the year that he became Lieutenant Colonel of the Fifth Battalion of the Eastern Townships, but he complained that "the want of power in the commissioners — who are not vested with the authority of magistrates — to commit for any crime whatever, is seriously felt."⁶² After entering the Legislative Council in 1822, Felton spoke out forcefully in favour of a judicial district for the Eastern Townships. His bill to establish the Inferior District of St Francis was ratified only a year later.⁶³ The choice of Sherbrooke as the site of the courthouse and jail was a boon not only for the struggling village, but for Felton's family as well. Brother Charles became the prothonotary, and Charles Whitcher the district sheriff.

The creation of the new judicial district was doubtless hastened

by the climate of unrest which had followed the appointment of a customs official the previous year. The Sherbrooke dwelling of the English-born William Hamilton had been razed, presumably by local residents, soon after his arrival. Rather than risk similar incidents with a second station on the border, the government had taken Felton's advice by assigning preventative officers to the main crossings at Hereford and Stanstead, and a detachment of troops to Sherbrooke.⁶⁴ To show their gratitude for the soldiers and the establishment of a circuit court, Felton and seven others formally reported to the Governor that "many idle and abandoned characters, formidable in numbers and atrocities" had fled back to the United States. They added that "the more remote but not less important effects of this measure will be the improved tone of public opinion, political and moral, by which the almost exclusively American population, feeling the immediate presence of Government, will become familiarized to the respectful observances of British Laws and manners." It was important, therefore, not to withdraw the troops too hastily in order to prevent people from concluding that they had been sent to protect the judges on circuit.⁶⁵

Despite the impression created by Felton's despatches, most of the criminal cases that appeared before the General Sessions of the Peace were for violent assaults, which the grand jury of 1826 attributed to "the facility with which ardent spirits were to be procured at several unlicensed Stores and Taverns in each of the Townships."⁶⁶ That the use of firearms was rare is suggested by the local reaction in 1824 when a bigamist from New Hampshire wounded three men who were attempting to return him to the wrath of his in-laws. Stanstead's *British Colonist* exclaimed that this was

the most melancholy occurrence that has ever taken place within our remembrance in this village or in its vicinity. [...] This horrid and sanguinary occurrence, so repugnant to the feelings of human nature, and so derogatory to the Laws of our Country, has so paralyzed the sober and peaceful Inhabitants of this Village, that they have scarcely been able to attend to their regular avocations for some days past.⁶⁷

The presence of the customs officer nevertheless continued to be widely resented, for he interfered with the merchants' trade while doing little to protect local agricultural producers. In 1826 seventy-three inhabitants of Stanstead Township — including

magistrates and militia officers — strongly condemned Hamilton's decision to charge a fee to all persons crossing the border on horseback or in carriages, even if they had no articles to market. American drovers, at the same time, were allowed to bring their cattle into Lower Canada at a much lower duty than required by law. Finally, the meeting took pains to deny that the recent break-in to the local customs agent's room could have been the work of a local resident.⁶⁸ Of course the very mention of this apparently trivial incident may have been a veiled threat.

In order to impress its authority upon the local population, the new judicial machinery required a substantial jail. The Assembly failed to return Felton's bill to erect a temporary facility in 1823,⁶⁹ but, a year later, it did agree to the appointment of Felton, Whitcher, and a third party to take responsibility for erecting the building. They were to negotiate a loan to be paid off by a tax on district law processes. Louis-Joseph Papineau's rather curious rationale for not supporting a government grant for the building was that the region consumed few of the dutiable goods imported via the St Lawrence.⁷⁰ Backed by the Legislature's permission to borrow £2800 from the Bank of Montreal, the commissioners advertised for a contractor to complete the prison by 1 August 1825.⁷¹ New accommodations were urgently required, for the grand jury reported in February 1825 that "the state of the unfortunate persons now confined, is such, that some regulation is necessary to render their state even supportable."⁷² Work was delayed, however, when the Executive Council reduced the loan limit to £1200 as punishment for not being consulted on the original proposal.⁷³ Felton et al. consequently had to mortgage their properties in order to borrow the additional £1200 needed to complete construction.⁷⁴

In 1828 they reported that the brick building had walls three feet thick, with door and window sills of hewn granite, and each of the two storeys containing eight well-ventilated cells.⁷⁵ This was an impressive structure for an era in which district jails served essentially to hold prisoners who were awaiting detention or execution of sentence.⁷⁶ Lord Gosford reported in 1836 that it could hold 96 prisoners (which would be six to a cell), in comparison with only 140 for the city of Montreal.⁷⁷ Governor Kempt recommended a favourable response to the commissioners' request for relief from their personal liability, and his recommendation was repeated in 1830 and 1831, when the private loans with interest totalled £1580.⁷⁸ The three men would have had to wait a long

time for the court tax to relieve them, for it had raised only £210 by 1832, when the local MLA took up their cause. B.C.A. Gagy pointed out to the Assembly that jails had been erected at government expense in other districts, including Montreal where £20,000 had been voted for a new structure, and that disorders in the St Francis District affected the whole province. Papineau nevertheless remained adamant, stating that the accounts were incomplete, and that he would not allow even the court tax to continue beyond half the cost of the building.⁷⁹

How the matter was finally settled is not known,⁸⁰ but Felton could at least console himself with evidence that the new legal institutions appeared to be making some impact. By 1830 the press was reporting that the counterfeiting centre had shifted westward from Stanstead to the Dunham and St Armand area, outside the St Francis District. Once again, however, Felton received little credit locally, for the correspondent to the *Montreal Gazette* attributed this development chiefly to those innkeepers and merchants who had resolved not to have any intercourse with suspicious characters.⁸¹

Any gratitude the local petite bourgeoisie might have felt towards the Felton clan was undermined by the fact that Sheriff Whitcher and Prothonotary Felton constantly had to be sued for payment of goods received.⁸² The merchants particularly resented the high expenses required to recover small debts. Though the region had a largely cashless economy in which long-term advances in credit were unavoidable, the township courts of commission had no authority for debts over £4.13.4. Local grievance meetings during the winter of 1824-5 demanded county courts with jurisdiction to £10 sterling, and the extension of the provincial court's ceiling to £100.⁸³ The village elites were clearly not overly concerned about the replacement of "their particular judicial traditions in favour of a centralized and uniform system of Quebec law," as suggested by Brian Young for the neighbouring Bedford Judicial District.⁸⁴ They simply desired a system that would operate effectively and efficiently in their interests. The situation was exacerbated by the St Francis District's Judge John Fletcher, another English-born appointee. In the spring of 1825 Fletcher declared that to eliminate the "unnecessary" bringing of actions for small and trivial causes, a plaintiff would have to prove that three days notice had been given to the defendant in any case involving debts. Furthermore, the cost of the suit was not to be larger than the debt and damages owed. The result, according to the *Colonist*, was that recovery of sums under five or six dollars

would become unenforceable.⁸⁵ In March, 1826, "Philo Junius" wrote to the newspaper that Fletcher's regulation had practically eliminated suits in the provincial court, and that property values were declining.⁸⁶ These criticisms ultimately led to contempt charges by Fletcher against editor Silas Dickerson and his correspondents. Just as the tendency for Upper Canada's Family Compact to flout the "rule of law" by abusing their privileged status is said to have been a major factor in the outbreak of the rebellion there, so did Fletcher's imposition of repeated fines and jail sentences against Dickerson lead to the intensification of anti-government feeling throughout the Eastern Townships.⁸⁷

Even when creditors were able to launch and win cases against one of the Felton clique, there remained the problem of seizing his goods.⁸⁸ In 1836 a petition of one hundred signatures charged Sheriff Whitcher with incompetence and corruption, thereby providing the Assembly with an opportunity to investigate him through a committee on grievances chaired by Marcus Child, the pro-Patriote MLA for Stanstead. Among the charges, one witness claimed that Whitcher had failed to execute a judgement on his behalf against a shipment of provisions received by his brother-in-law, Charles Felton. The delay in assigning a bailiff to the task had given Felton plenty of opportunity to hide his goods.

The grievance committee recommended that Whitcher be removed from his position largely on the basis that he had withheld for himself one third of his bailiffs' fees for summoning jurors. A majority vote in the Assembly supported the declaration that Whitcher was "unfit to hold for the future any office of honour and profit in this province."⁸⁹ This position was reversed by the Colonial Office, however, after Whitcher submitted a number of affidavits from local law agents, as well as a petition of 211 signatures claiming to be "perfectly satisfied with the sheriff of the district, and with the manner in which the duties of his office are discharged." Whitcher was careful to point out that many of these individuals were large proprietors, magistrates and "persons whose pursuits and wealth" brought them into frequent contact with him.⁹⁰ The sheriff not only held onto his office, with the outbreak of rebellion he filled his brother-in-law's place as commanding officer of the local militia battalion. Before the onset of the second wave of hostilities in 1838, however, a public meeting in Sherbrooke passed a resolution complaining of

the present disorganized state of the Militia of the District, and the inefficient execution of the Road Laws, both of which may be justly attributed to the negligence of Charles Whitcher Esquire, the Deputy Grand Voyer of the District and the Lieutenant Colonel of the Fifth Battalion of the Townships Militia (in addition to other offices incompatible and inconsistent)⁹¹

Incompetent as he may have been, Whitcher managed to hold onto his various charges until he died in 1846.⁹² However, the government paid little attention to the patronage claims of his son who had been effectively fulfilling Whitcher's duties as sheriff in later years.⁹³

As chief court clerk, Charles Felton aroused no less controversy than his brother-in-law, for he ran afoul of the Court of Quarter Sessions in 1834, when he was found guilty of extortion for collecting a fine from someone who had been absent from his case. The court claimed that the fine had been a conditional one, meant to encourage the individual to apologize at the next session. Felton apparently compounded his sins by falsifying the records to make it appear that he had been given instructions to collect the money.⁹⁴ In a rather faint-hearted fashion, Felton resigned his offices of prothonotary and clerk of the peace in March, 1835, after learning that the Assembly had appointed a committee to inquire into his character and conduct as a public officer.⁹⁵ His official reason was failing health, but he later admitted that "knowing as I do the severity of that Body with regard to Public Functionaries in this Province I will confess that I could not avoid being thrown into a state of great trepidation by such a piece of intelligence."⁹⁶ With this statement Felton was actually explaining why he was now withdrawing his resignation only four days after the Assembly had formally taken note of it and dropped the inquiry!⁹⁷ He pleaded that the large size of his family (nine children under the age of fourteen), and the general default in payment of even his official fees, had placed his pecuniary circumstances "in a very deplorable state." After insisting that nothing could be alleged against him that would warrant his dismissal, Felton suggested that a lawyer friend share his duties, thereby providing double security for those who believed that he was mishandling public funds. Whether or not this appeal was in vain, the government appointed a different individual to the position of district clerk when the courts were reorganized in 1841.⁹⁸ As for Charles Felton, he finally moved to New York City in 1850.⁹⁹

Brother John, the local crown lands agent, failed to attract the direct attention of the Legislative Assembly, perhaps because it was more concerned with attacking William as his superior in the crown lands office. John managed to hold onto his position until 1865,¹⁰⁰ but William was not so fortunate. A grievance committee chaired by the local "Constitutionalist" MLA, B.C.A. Guky, was established to investigate him in 1835. The inquiry was based largely on documents provided by Surveyor General Joseph Bouchette, whom Felton had been criticizing for incompetence. Guky may have become engaged in his vendetta against Felton simply because the latter had rejected his claim to a £150 land grant as a retired military officer.¹⁰¹ Probably more significant, however, was the desire on the part of Guky and the administration to solidify ties with American-born merchants such as Samuel Brooks who were tempering their liberalism in order not to jeopardize local investment by the British American Land Company.¹⁰² As a means of maintaining this broader political base in the region, the governing authorities presumably deemed it necessary to jettison the unpopular Felton clique even if they had to use the tools of the radicals to do it.

Details of the Guky inquiry have been provided in an earlier study,¹⁰³ but, briefly, the committee demanded Felton's dismissal on the grounds that during the early 1820s he had sold crown lots in Ascot as his own property. Lord Gosford went so far as to launch a legal suit on behalf of the government, but Felton's defence was that the lots in question were part of his 5 percent commission as local crown lands agent. Because no claims had been submitted specifying the lots Felton wished to have set aside for himself, the law officers of the crown eventually dropped the legal proceedings against him. In August, 1836, however, Gosford did suspend his vocal critic as Commissioner of Crown Lands.

Any sympathy Felton might have gained in London had evaporated two years earlier when the Colonial Secretary noticed the unauthorized increase in the size of the grants which had been made to his children in 1828, as mentioned above. Felton had narrowly escaped dismissal then only because there was no proof that he himself had altered the documents, and only on condition that the extra acreage be returned immediately. Legal complications had ensued, however, because most of the offspring were still minors. Before the matter could be settled, Felton's suspension had become a dismissal. He died only a few months later, in the spring of 1837.

Felton's widow soon sold the valuable Sherbrooke industrial sites and other Orford lots (about 800 acres) to the British American Land Company for £5300, yet by 1841 she was forced to rent out the family manor of Belvedere for what one son-in-law called a trifling sum.¹⁰⁴ In 1845 Maria Felton moved to Quebec, and the following year she divided the remaining 12,900 acres and £2426 in credits among her offspring in return for an annual life pension of £220.¹⁰⁵ One son remained in the region as a lawyer and marginally successful politician, and another as a notary and militia officer, but Felton's dream of establishing his own aristocratic line had died with him.

In contrast to the half-pay officers who became the gentry of Carleton County in the Ottawa Valley, the Felton clan never managed to acquire recognition and respect as leaders in the Eastern Townships.¹⁰⁶ After the principal citizens of Sherbrooke launched a fund-raising campaign for the victims of the disastrous Miramichi fire in 1827, for example, a letter in the *Colonist* criticized Charles Whitcher as treasurer for failing to publish a list of receipts and disbursements. The correspondent conceded that the money had probably reached its destination, but a public accounting would "remove suspicion from these gentlemen, who appear by their office and character to be above suspicion."¹⁰⁷

The common sentiment concerning the British officials was expressed succinctly by a correspondent calling himself "The American." He complained that the government, after having invited Americans to settle in the Eastern Townships, had treated them "with distrust; with a cold reserve, and a freezing indifference bordering on contempt." Once they had cleared the forests and surmounted "all embarrassments, both natural and artificial, so as to compose a population of forty thousand souls," the settlers needed "internal regulations by which to conduct and manage our little concerns. — To carry such a purpose into effect, there have uniformly been sent among us foreigners, unacquainted with our habits, manners and customs, to fill and execute every official function, thereby declaring, in language too unequivocal to be misunderstood, that no confidence was to be placed in a native born American."¹⁰⁸ The "American" was not speaking as an isolated radical, for in succeeding articles he cautioned local residents from taking matters into their own hands, and chided them for not celebrating the King's birthday, as well as for resisting the advances of the established church.¹⁰⁹ As with the mainstream reformers elsewhere in British North America, his aim was not to

reduce executive power, but to ensure that it was exercised by more than a narrowly-circumscribed elite.¹¹⁰

By the time the Rebellion had ended, a new leader of the local elite had emerged in the person of Edward Hale, who became a member of Sydenham's Special Council in 1838, the Warden of the newly-created municipal district in 1841, and Sherbrooke's first MPP in the Province of Canada. Hale was the grandson of both General John Hale — who had been with Wolfe at Louisbourg and Quebec — and General Jeffrey Amherst — Commander in Chief of the British forces in America during the Revolution. His father, John, who was one of the largest landholders in the colony, became the Receiver-General for Lower Canada in 1824.¹¹¹ Hale's military aristocratic background was therefore still more impressive than that of Felton, but he was well aware that the population of American origin would have to be included in the distribution of patronage. During the Rebellion in 1838, for example, he asked that three American-born officers be officially commissioned to a volunteer unit to be known as the Royal American Rifle Company. Hale did not "look upon this affair as important in a military view, but as likely to secure the Tory feelings of the Individuals in civil matters, and future Elections."¹¹² In 1840, citing the loyalty of the region during the Rebellion, he recommended to the Governor that one or more "gentlemen of American origin" be added to the Special Council.¹¹³ It was in large part due to this more tolerant approach, and to his active involvement in local industrial development, that Hale was able to solidify a political alliance with influential local American merchants. Consequently, he established the kind of political power base which had completely eluded Felton.¹¹⁴

S.F. Wise claims that the local oligarchies of Upper Canada nominated justices of the peace, local court officials, and militia officers, as well as submitting names for the issuance of licences and the allocation of government contracts. The resulting "maze of inter-relationships" strengthened "the social, economic, religious and ideological bases of the conservative alliance in the most tangible way."¹¹⁵ J.K. Johnson has demonstrated more recently, however, that American settlers and their Canadian-born descendants increasingly received short shrift as far as patronage appointments were concerned.¹¹⁶ The "conservative alliance" referred to by Wise would therefore appear to have depended heavily upon the growing political weight of the British immigrants.¹¹⁷ The operation of the patronage system at the local level

in the Eastern Townships remains to be studied, but it is clear from the remarks by "American," noted above, that the Sherbrooke gentry was itself heavily biased toward the British-born in the outlying communities. In 1842 the former registrar of Sherbrooke County claimed that he was the only American-born resident in the Eastern Townships who in 1837 had "held office with emolument from the Crown."¹¹⁸ The problem for the local Tories was not only that the region lacked the "loyalist" tradition so emphasized by Upper Canada's historians, but that demographically the British would remain a rather weak and marginalized force.¹¹⁹ The result was that Felton, for all his power over patronage distribution and land grants, failed to establish the personal ties essential to the role of a grand patron, a role played with great effect in Upper Canada by men such as Thomas Talbot and William "Tiger" Dunlop.¹²⁰

Felton might nevertheless have been less resented had he managed to attract and implement the public works projects needed to help break down the economic isolation of the Eastern Townships. Historians of Upper Canada have stressed how members of the Family Compact viewed their public role as promoters of economic development, implementing policies which helped to sow the seeds of nationalism in the colony.¹²¹ But Felton's roads projects were far from successful, and his obsession with the need for law and order did little to endear him with a population all too aware that members of his own circle were blatantly abusing their official positions.

Furthermore, while Felton may have taken a genuine interest in local development, he remained a staunch supporter of Lower Canada's political and economic subordination to Britain.¹²² His own position, and that of his extended family, depended upon that subordination, and his downfall quickly came about when London began to realize that political legitimacy in the North American colonies depended upon a greater degree of self-rule.¹²³ By 1836, with rebellion becoming a palpable threat, Felton's dismissal was deemed even by the local constitutionalists to be essential for the sake of peace in the Eastern Townships. Thus, the conservative *Farmer's Advocate* of Sherbrooke identified Felton as the chief cause of radicalism in the region, and the ultra-Tory *Missiskoui Standard* congratulated local inhabitants "upon the prospects of their being relieved from his arbitrary and iniquitous proceedings."¹²⁴ Felton's brothers and brother-in-law may have managed to hang onto some of their salaried offices for a time, but

the political influence of this particular "family compact" had died with its leader in 1837.¹²⁵

NOTES

- * I wish to thank Allan Greer, Jan Noel, Brian Young, and David Milobar for their helpful comments on earlier drafts of this essay.
- 1. Gordon T. Stewart, *The Origins of Canadian Politics: A Comparative Approach* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1986), 29-31; S.F. Wise, "Tory Factionalism: Kingston Elections and Upper Canadian Politics, 1820-1836," *Ontario History*, LVII (1965): 205-25; H.V. Nelles, "Loyalism and Local Power. The District of Niagara, 1792-1837," *Ontario History*, LVIII (1966): 99-116; F.H. Armstrong, "The Oligarchy of the Western District of Upper Canada 1788-1841," *Canadian Historical Association, Historical Papers*, 1977, pp. 87-102; and Colin Read, "The London District Oligarchy in Rebellion Era," *Ontario History*, LXXII (1980): 195-209. For a detailed examination of the distribution of patronage positions among the members of the Legislative Assembly, see J.K. Johnson, *Becoming Prominent: Regional Leadership in Upper Canada, 1791-1841* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989).
- 2. The best source remains Fernand Ouellet, *Lower Canada 1791-1840: Social Change and Nationalism* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1980).
- 3. James Sturgis, nevertheless, examines only the French-Canadian question in his "Anglicisation as a Theory in Lower Canadian History, 1807-1843," *Bulletin of Canadian Studies*, III, 2 (1979): 29-54. For a brief overview of the early years of British-American conflict in the region, see J.I. Little, *Ethno-Cultural Transition and Regional Identity in the Eastern Townships of Quebec* (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 1989), 5-12.
- 4. For example, see Read, "The London District Oligarchy," 205.
- 5. The Eastern Townships ratio is based on the population of the six counties which comprised the bulk of the region. On Upper Canada, see Johnson, *Becoming Prominent*, 136.
- 6. McCord Museum, Morris Family Papers, Genealogical Notes; NA, RG1 L3L, Lower Canada Land Petitions, pp. 41322-3, 95517; MG11, CO Papers, 1836, vol. 228, pt. 1, p. 26.
- 7. Jean-Pierre Kesteman, "Les débuts du Canton d'Ascot et de la Ville de Sherbrooke (1792-1818). Étude critique" (Université de Sherbrooke, Département d'Histoire, Bulletin de Recherche, 1984).

8. Ivanhoë Caron, *La colonisation de la Province de Québec, III, Les Cantons de l'Est, 1791-1815* (Québec, 1927), 30; J.C. Langelier, *Liste des terrains concédés par la couronne dans la Province de Québec de 1763 au 31 décembre 1890* (Québec: Charles-François Langlois, 1891), 6, 17.
9. The foregoing is summarized from J.I. Little, "Imperialism and Colonization in Lower Canada: the Role of William Bowman Felton," *CHR*, LXVI (1985): 511-15; and Bernard Epps, *More Tales of the Townships* (Lennoxville: Sun Books, 1985), 9-14.
10. Stewart, *The Origins of Canadian Politics*, 23.
11. *Journals of the Legislative Council of Lower Canada* (hereafter *JLCLC*), 1823, 24-8.
12. NA, MG24 B2, Papiers Papineau, 373-8, D.B.V. to L.J. Papineau, 25 Jan. [1823].
13. NA, CO42/211, folios 185-7, W.B. Felton, "Memoir on the Financial Difficulties of the Government of Lower Canada" [1826].
14. Scottish Record Office, GD/45/3/44, Sewell to Dalhousie, 9 May 1827. I am indebted to Philip Goldring for this reference.
15. See *JLCLC*, 1828-9, pp. 301, 304-5; 1830, pp. 197-8; *Montreal Gazette*, 29 Nov. 1832.
16. Philip Goldring, "British Colonists and Imperial Interests in Lower Canada. 1820 to 1841" (PhD thesis, University of London, 1978), 83-5.
17. NA, MG24 B2, L.J. P. to his wife, 21 Jan. 1830.
18. *Montreal Gazette*, 31 March 1831, 9 Feb. 1833, 8 March 1834, 13 March 1834, 18 March 1834.
19. *Ibid.*, 14 Nov. 1835, 17 Nov. 1835.
20. NA, MG24 B2, 2013-16, Papineau to his wife, 9 Sept. 1835.
21. *Irish Vindicator*, 16 Nov. 1835, 4 March 1836.
22. Sturgis ("Anglicisation," 35) claims that "almost every scheme of anglicisation, direct or indirect, had connected with it the promptings of the English community in Quebec or its close allies." On the agrarianism of the leading Family Compact members, see Robert Fraser, "Like Eden in her Summer Dress: Gentry, Economy and Society, Upper Canada, 1812-1840" (PhD thesis, University of Toronto, 1979).
23. *Montreal Gazette*, 15 March 1831, 20 Dec. 1831.
24. *Ibid.*, 21 Jan. 1832.
25. Felton's role in encouraging the Catholic Church to establish itself in Sherbrooke is outlined in Maurice O'Bready, *De Ktiné à*

- Sherbrooke. Esquisse historique de Sherbrooke: des origines à 1954* (Sherbrooke: Université de Sherbrooke, 1973), 62.
26. *Montreal Gazette*, 7 Jan. 1832. On the important political implications of the Fabrique Bill, see G. Bernier and D. Salée, "Social Relations and Exercise of State Power in Lower Canada (1791-1840): Elements for an Analysis," *Studies in Political Economy*, XXII (1987): 118-20. For a different perspective, see Lucien Lemieux, *Histoire du catholicisme québécois. Les XVIIIe et XIXe siècles: Tome 1, Les années difficiles (1760-1839)* (Montréal: Les Éditions du Boréal, 1989), 155-60.
 27. *JLCLC*, 1835-6, 174-5. Robert Tremblay attributes this bill to the proliferation of forest-based industries throughout the countryside. R. Tremblay, "Un Aspect de la consolidation du pouvoir d'État de la bourgeoisie coloniale: la législation anti-ouvrière dans le Bas-Canada, 1800-50," *Labour / Le Travailleur*, VIII & IX (1981/82): 246-7.
 28. *Journals of the Legislative Assembly of Lower Canada* (hereafter *JLALC*), XV (1835-6), Appendix QQ, W.B. Felton to Civil Secretary, 1 July 1834.
 29. See the index to the *JLCLC*, as well as Stanstead's *British Colonist* for 15 Jan. 1829.
 30. See, for example, his testimony in British Sessional Papers, House of Commons, 1824 (404), iv, Select Committee on Emigration, 181-2.
 31. See, for example, *JLCLC*, 1825, 54, 56, 78; *Montreal Gazette*, 15 March 1831, 6 Dec. 1832, 11 Feb. 1834.
 32. The elected members for the immense County of Buckinghamshire, which ran from the South-shore seigneuries to American border, invariably came from outside the Eastern Townships. Maurice O'Bready, *De Ktiné à Sherbrooke. Esquisse historique de Sherbooke: des origines à 1954* (Université de Sherbrooke, 1954), 24-25.
 33. *British Colonist*, 24 Aug. 1826. See also 23 Nov. 1826.
 34. *Ibid.*, 15 March 1827.
 35. Thomas Chapais, *Cours d'histoire du Canada*, III (Québec: Librairie Garneau Limitée, 1921), 225-6.
 36. *Montreal Gazette*, 26 Nov. 1831; Jules Martel, "Histoire du système routier des Cantons de l'Est avant 1855" (MA thesis, University of Ottawa, 1960), 84, 87, 90.
 37. NA, RG68, Registrar General, Lib. 5, Fol. 50, 14 May 1817.
 38. NA, RG1 E17, Quebec and Lower Canada: Committees of the Executive Council on Highways, Roads, and Bridges, 1765-1838,

- vol. 4, Contracts between the commissioners of Buckingham County and Pierre Bureau and Louis Picotte, 3 Sept. 1817, 6 Oct. 1817.
39. *Quebec Gazette*, 22 Nov. 1818. Cited in Abbé Ivanhoë Caron, "Colonization of Canada under the British Domination (From 1815 to 1822)," in Province of Quebec, *Statistical Year-Book* (Quebec: King's Printer, 1921), 536.
 40. See J.I. Little, *Nationalism, Capitalism, and Colonization in Nineteenth-Century Quebec: the Upper St Francis District* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989), 39-42.
 41. NA, RG1 E17, J. Badeaux and W.B. Felton to Lt Col. Ready, Three Rivers, 17 Jan. 1819; 29 Dec. 1818; Petition of Pierre Bureau and Louis Picotte of Three Rivers, Que., 8 Jan. 1819; J. Badeaux and W.B. Felton to Col. Ready, Three Rivers, 17 Jan. 1819.
 42. NA, RG1 E15A, Quebec and Lower Canada: Executive Council, Committee to Audit Public Accounts, vol. 45, Commissions for Internal Communication, 1823, W.B. Felton and J. Badeaux to A.W. Cochran, Que., 16 Feb. 1823.
 43. NA, RG1 E17, vol. 4, Petition of inhabitants of Shipton Township, 17 Sept. 1821.
 44. On the "leader and associates" system of land grants, see G.F. McGuigan, "La Concession des terres dans les cantons de l'est du Bas-Canada (1763-1809)," *Recherches Sociographiques*, IV, 1 (1963): 71-89.
 45. Elmer Cushing, *An Appeal, Addressed to a Candid Public; ...* (Stanstead: S.H. Dickerson, 1826), 75-8. Correspondents to the *British Colonist* reiterated the same theme. See the issues for 21 Dec. 1826 and 4 Jan. 1827.
 46. Quoted in Helen Taft Manning, *The Revolt of French Canada 1800-1835. A Chapter in the History of the British Commonwealth* (Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada Limited, 1962), 192-3.
 47. NA, RG1 L3L, Lower Canada Land Petitions, 41254-5, Memorial of W.B. Felton to Earl of Dalhousie, 20 Oct. 1821.
 48. NA, RG68, Lib. 10, Fol. 25, 17 March 1824.
 49. *British Colonist*, 18 Jan. 1827.
 50. NA, RG4 A1, S Series, Civil Secretary's Correspondence, W.B. Felton to Col. Yorke, 5 June 1829.
 51. *JLALC*, XXXII (1823), Appendix T, sub-appendix D.
 52. Felton's estimate was based on \$15 for a cow, \$27 for 270 pounds of pork, \$18 for eighteen bushels of wheat, and \$25 for 100 bushels of potatoes. *Ibid.*

53. For details, see Little, "Imperialism and Colonization," 517-18.
54. *Ibid.*, 520, 526-7, 531-3.
55. *Ibid.*, 530-2.
56. Newport Township nevertheless kept minutes of local public meetings from 1799 to 1814. L.S. Channell, *History of Compton County* (Cookshire, Que.: L.S. Channell, 1896; reprinted Belleville, Ont.: Mica Publishing Company, 1975), 214-15.
57. NA, RG4 A1, V. Coffin to A.W. Cochran, pvte, 14 Aug. 1816.
58. NA, RG1 E1, State Book I, p. 28, 22 Aug. 1816.
59. See, for example, NA, RG4 A1, W.B. Felton to A.N. Cochrane [sic], 19 March 1818; to Col. Ready, 28 May 1822; to S., 5 July 1822; *British Colonist*, 11 Sept. 1823, 18 Sept. 1823, 9 Oct. 1823, 7 July 1825.
60. NA, RG4 A1, W.B. Felton to Col. Ready, 15 July 1816.
61. NA, RG68, Lib. 5, Fol. 329, 30 April 1819.
62. *Ibid.*, Lib. 6, Fol. 32, 28 June 1821; *Quebec Gazette*, 5 April 1821. Felton's jurisdiction was gradually extended to the districts of Trois-Rivières, Gaspé, Montreal and Quebec. On the primitive nature of the police system in the Lower Canada of this era, see Jean-Marie Fecteau, *Un nouvel ordre des choses: la pauvreté, le crime, l'État au Québec, de la fin du XVIIIe siècle à 1840* (Outremont: VLB Éditeur, 1989), 230-2.
63. *JLCLC*, 1823, 49, 71, 74, 112, 132, 148; 1824, 125, 133.
64. NA, RG1 E1, State Book J, p. 182, 19 May 1821; p. 185, 28 May 1821; p. 206, 6 Sept. 1821; p. 326, 28 April 1822; p. 371, 4 Aug. 1822.
65. NA, RG4 A1, Petition of W.B. Felton et al. to Andrew Cochrane, 18 Sept. 1822.
66. *British Colonist*, 16 March 1826. See also *ibid.*, 28 Oct. 1824, 25 Feb. 1825, 20 Oct. 1825. The newspaper accounts are clearly incomplete, for only four cases were reported by the *Colonist* for 1826, while the prothonotary's report for that year lists eighteen. NA, RG1 E15A, Quebec and Lower Canada: Executive Council, Committee to audit public accounts, vol. 56, Clerk of the Peace: St Francis, 1826.
67. *Ibid.*, 29 Jan. 1824.
68. *Ibid.*, 18 May 1826.
69. *JLCLC*, 1823, pp. 112-13, 121.
70. *British Colonist*, 5 Feb. 1824.
71. *Ibid.*, 27 May 1824; Archives Nationale du Québec à Sherbrooke, William Ritchie, n.p., Répertoire A, 28 June 1824.

72. *British Colonist*, 25 Feb. 1825.
73. NA, RG1 E1, State Book J, 2 Sept. 1828, p. 317.
74. Sherbrooke Registry Office, Register III, no. 892, 28 June 1825. Three of the relevant documents are summarized in Louis-Philippe Demers, *Sherbrooke* (Sherbrooke: Gauvin et Frère Ltée, 1969), 127-9.
75. NA, RG1 E15A, W.B. Felton, Chas. Whitcher, and M. Nichols to Gov. Kempt, Sherbrooke, 1 Nov. 1828.
76. J.M. Beattie, *Attitudes Towards Crime and Punishment in Upper Canada, 1830-1850: A Documentary Study* (Toronto: Centre of Criminology, University of Toronto, 1977), 13-14. Quebec's prison did not begin to take on the role of a penal institution until the early 1830s (Fecteau, *Un nouvel ordre*, 251-2), the same era when, in Upper Canada, "pain and humiliation were replaced with fines and incarceration." John Weaver, "Crime, Public Order, and Repression: The Gore District in Upheaval, 1832-1851," *Ontario History*, LXXVII, 3 (1986): 199.
77. Fecteau, *Un nouvel ordre*, 243, n. 209. For a description of conditions in the Gore Jail prior to 1850, see Weaver, "Crime," 201.
78. *JLCLC*, 1829, 171; 1830, p. 58; 1831, 85.
79. *Montreal Gazette*, 27 Feb. 1832.
80. Fecteau (*Un nouvel ordre*, 240-1) states that the prison was still not complete in 1835. Given the debate which took place in February, 1832, he must be mistaken in his assertion that the government became responsible for the entire prison debt in 1831.
81. *Montreal Gazette*, 22 Feb. 1830, 4 March 1830. See also Felton's statement in *JLCLC*, 1830, 81. The same argument that local inhabitants were quite willing and able to expel criminals from their midst was made by the *British Colonist* three years earlier (31 May 1827).
82. Whitcher's salary was £50 per year, and the net profits of his office for issuing titles and writs were approximately as follows; 1831 - £26.14; 1832 - £58.14; 1833 - £41.18; 1834 - £100.15; 1835 - £83.9 Whitcher also charged the following contingent expenses: 1831 - £64.2; 1832 - £139.19.6 1/2; 1833 - £205.5.8; 1834 - £195.6.8; 1835 - £178.7.6. NA, MG11, "Q Series," vol. 228, pt. 3, 684-5.
83. *British Colonist*, 25 Nov. 1824, 16 Dec. 1824, 30 Dec. 1824, 27 Jan. 1825.
84. Brian Young, "The 'Business of Law' in Missisquoi and the District of Bedford before 1861," in *Business in Missisquoi*:

- Proceedings of the Missisquoi Historical Society*, vol. 20, 1990 10-24.
85. *British Colonist.*, 28 April 1825, 26 May 1825.
 86. *Ibid.*, 2 March 1826.
 87. See *ibid.*, 9 Nov. 1826 ff; Jean-Pierre Kesteman, "Silas Dickerson," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, VIII; and Paul Romney, "From the Types Riot to the Rebellion: Elite Ideology, Anti-Legal Sentiment, Political Violence, and the Rule of Law in Upper Canada," *Ontario History*, LXXIX, 2 (1987): 113-44.
 88. NA, RG1 E1, State Book L, Fol. 51, 27 May 1830.
 89. NA, MG11, "Q Series," vol. 228, pt. 3, 679.
 90. *Ibid.*, 689-96.
 91. NA RG4 A1, vol. 549, 53, Petition of inhabitants of District of St Francis, Sherbrooke, 21 Aug. 1838.
 92. *Ibid.*, Chas. Whitcher to Adjut. Gen. of Militia, Sherbrooke, 9 Jan. 1839; NA, RG4 C1, Provincial Secretary's Correspondence, no. 961, Wm. Fred. Parker to Governor General, Lennoxville, 24 March 1846; I. Caron, "Historique de la voirie dans la province de Québec," *Bulletin des Recherches Historiques*, XXXIX (1933): 447.
 93. McCord Museum, Hale Papers, E. Hale to Eliza, Montreal, 5 April 1846; W. Whitcher to E. Hale, Sherbrooke, 13 April 1846.
 94. NA, RG4 A1, Guy C. Colclough to Col. Craig, 13 Nov. 1834.
 95. *Ibid.*, C.B. Felton to Lt. Col. Craig, 2 March 1835; *JLALC*, XLIV (1833), 25.
 96. NA, RG4 A1, C.B. Felton to Lt. Col. Craig, 9 March 1835.
 97. *JLALC*, XLIV (1833), 84.
 98. McCord Museum, Hale Papers, draft letter by Edward Hale, Sherbrooke, 21 Dec. 1841; E. Hale to J.B. Forsyth (copy), Sherbrooke, 4 Jan. 1842.
 99. NA, RG4 A1, C.B. Felton to Lt. Col. Craig, 9 March 1835; Epps, *More Tales*, 14.
 100. McCord Museum, M21585, Morris Papers, Capt. John Felton to Hon. A. Campbell, 1 March 1865; Testimonial from the Citizens of Sherbrooke to Capt. Felton [1865].
 101. NA, RG1 L3L, Lower Canada Land Petitions, 11357, 18 April 1834; 11374, 26 May 1834.
 102. On Brooks, see Charlotte Thibault, *Samuel Brooks, entrepreneur et homme politique de Sherbrooke, 1793-1849* (Sherbrooke: Département d'Histoire, Université de Sherbrooke, 1985), 61-5.
 103. See Little, "Imperialism and Colonization," 536-7.

104. McCord Museum, M21585, Sgt. Richard Burnaby to Father, 24 Nov. 1845; Demers, *Sherbrooke*, 188-9.
105. Sherbrooke Historical Society, Felton Papers, Assignment and Partage between Mrs. Anna Maria Felton and William L. Felton & others Heirs..., 13 Oct. 1846, office of C.A. Richardson, n.p., Sherbrooke.
106. M.S. Cross, "The Age of Gentility: The Formation of an Aristocracy in the Ottawa Valley," Canadian Historical Association, *Report*, 1967, 105-17.
107. *British Colonist*, 26 April 1827. See also the issues of 10 Nov. 1825, 5 Jan. 1826, 6 April 1826, 17 May 1827.
108. *Ibid.*, 26 Jan. 1826.
109. *Ibid.*, 2 Feb. 1826, 9 Feb. 1826, 16 Feb. 1826. Upper Canada's alien question caused some concern, but on the whole it received surprisingly little attention in the columns of the *Colonist*. See the issues for 3 Aug. 1826, 10 Aug. 1826, 28 Sept. 1826, and 12 Oct. 1826.
110. See Stewart, *The Origins of Canadian Politics*, 29-31.
111. Monique Choquette-Habel, "Edward Hale, un des fondateurs de la première société organisé de Sherbrooke, 1801-1875" (MA thesis, Université de Sherbrooke, 1985), 10-16.
112. McCord Museum, Hale Papers, Edward Hale to F.H. Heriot (copy), January 1838; Edward Hale to Col. Eden (copy), n.d.
113. *Ibid.*, Edward Hale to T.C. Murdoch (copy), Sherbrooke, 20 May 1840.
114. See Choquette-Habel, "Edward Hale," chapters 2-4.
115. S.F. Wise, "Upper Canada and the Conservative Tradition," in *Profiles of a Province*, edited by E.G. Firth (Toronto: Ontario Historical Society, 1967), 27.
116. Johnson, *Becoming Prominent*, 106-9.
117. See, for example, Donald Harman Akenson, *The Irish in Ontario: A Study in Rural History* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1984), 169-96.
118. NA, RG4 C1, 1842, no. 183, 10103, Petition of Robert Vincent to Governor-General Bagot, Sherbrooke, 10 January 1842.
119. See Little, *Ethno-Cultural Transition*, 8-15. Romney argues that the post-Loyalist Americans made a much more profound impact on Ontario's political culture than her historians realize. See, for example, his "Re-Inventing Upper Canada: American Immigrants, Upper Canadian History, English Law, and the Alien Question," in *Patterns of the Past: Interpreting Ontario's History*, edited by Roger Hall, William Westfall, and Laurel Sefton

- MacDowell (Toronto and Oxford: Dundurn Press, 1988).
120. See S.J.R. Noel, *Patrons, Clients, Brokers: Ontario Society and Politics, 1791-1896* (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 1990), chapter 3.
 121. See Fraser, "Like Eden in Her Summer Dress;" and Wise, "Upper Canada," 30-2.
 122. See, for example, *JLCLC*, 1823, 116-25; and British Sessional Papers, House of Commons, 1826 (404), iv, Report from the Select Committee on Emigration from the United Kingdom, 229-31.
 123. See Phillip A. Buckner, *The Transition to Responsible Government: British Policy in British North America, 1815-1850* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1985).
 124. *Missiskoui Standard*, 9 Feb. 1836. *The Farmer's Advocate* is quoted in the same issue.
 125. On the transition of political power from large-scale landowners to the bourgeoisie in Lower Canada, see G. Bernier, "Landownership and Access to Political Power in Lower Canada, 1791-1838," *Quebec Studies*, no. 7 (1988): 87-97; and A. Garon, "La Fonction politique et sociale des chambres hautes canadiennes, 1791-1841," *Histoire sociale - Social History*, 5 (1970): 66-87.

L'ESSOR DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT DES ARTS VISUELS DANS LA RÉGION SHERBROOKE

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Les métropoles monopolisent habituellement le gros de l'activité artistique et sont parmi les premiers, historiquement, à instaurer les lieux de formation et d'animation. Mais certaines régions semblent devoir relever le défi avec succès, se prendre en main avec les ressources du milieu, gagner une relative autonomie face à la métropole, même si le rythme du développement est plus lent et repose souvent, chez lui aussi, sur quelques individus et organismes dynamiques. Ce me semble être le cas des Cantons de l'Est, de Sherbrooke et de sa région en particulier.

Je ne m'attarderai, dans ce bref exposé, qu'à l'enseignement, pris dans un sens large, aussi bien *l'animation* pour développer le goût et la connaissance des arts visuels que *l'enseignement* plus formel.

Rappelons-nous qu'au 19^e siècle les futurs artistes, faute de lieux d'enseignement appropriés au Canada, ont d'abord dû apprendre par apprentissage chez un maître, comme Philippe Hébert de Sainte-Sophie d'Halifax au studio de Napoléon Bourassa, ou par la copie d'oeuvres d'artistes, comme Allen Edson, de Stanbridge, chez un collectionneur de son patelin, John Carpenter Baker, ou encore ont dû recevoir, comme nous le verrons ci-après, des rudiments de dessin dans des organismes orientés vers une formation pratique, appliquée d'abord à l'industrie ou aux métiers.

Effectivement, depuis la Confédération où le Canada prenait son envol, depuis 1875 surtout, les étudiants en arts, canadiens-français et anglais, devaient s'exiler outre-mer, vers Paris surtout, à l'École des Beaux-Arts ou dans des académies privées. L'historien Laurier Lacroix en a dénombré 75 ayant séjourné à Paris entre 1875 et 1905. Presque tous les grands noms figurent dans la liste, que ce soit Brymner, Coburn, Laliberté, Hébert, pour ne nommer que quelques artistes en provenance des Cantons de l'Est.

Ce ne sera qu'en 1921 que sera fondée l'École des Beaux-Arts de Québec, et en 1922, l'École des Beaux-Arts de Montréal. Même si

plusieurs se dirigent encore vers l'Europe, il sera au moins possible d'obtenir au pays une véritable formation professionnelle. Mais, avant ces fondations, qui dispensait les premiers rudiments?

À Montréal, deux organismes privés et une institution publique ont largement contribué à la formation première des futurs artistes.

Le Art Association of Montreal, fondé en 1860 et regroupant les artistes, s'est préoccupé, dans ses activités, de donner des cours, surtout à partir de 1879, alors qu'il a acquis des locaux permanents. William Brymner¹, qui a reçu sa première éducation à Richmond, près de Sherbrooke, a pris la direction des cours en 1886 et a enseigné durant 35 ans.

L'Institut national des Beaux-Arts, de 1870 à 1887, sous la direction de l'abbé Joseph Chabert, initie au dessin et à la peinture de nombreux élèves dont quelques-uns sont devenus célèbres comme Suzor-Côté, Charles Gill. Dans l'esprit de l'époque qui est à l'industrialisation, le fondateur vise au perfectionnement de la classe ouvrière et au succès de l'industrie.

C'est cette orientation qui marquera le Conseil des arts et manufactures mis effectivement sur pied par l'État en 1872. À l'encontre de l'Art Association, dont l'enseignement se voulait moins technique, avec un dessin plus orienté vers l'expression picturale, le Conseil vise à instruire de façon pratique les jeunes de quinze ans et plus, par des cours du soir, dans les arts et métiers. Il s'agit de les préparer à produire des objets mieux finis, plus compétitifs sur le marché, et d'améliorer leur situation. À Montréal, plusieurs artistes tels Alfred Laliberté, Edmond Dyonnet y dispensent des cours, comme plusieurs y ont reçu leur initiation.

Mais ce Conseil des arts et manufactures s'installe également dans plusieurs municipalités dont Sherbrooke, dès 1874. Un rapport, paru dans le *Journal de l'Instruction publique* en 1876, fait état de l'enseignement à l'École de Sherbrooke où les cours suivants sont dispensés : dessin à main levée et dessin mécanique². Aux cours précédemment énumérés s'ajouteront, par exemple, des cours de géométrie, de dessin mécanique, de dessin architectural et d'art féminin (décoration). De nombreux architectes locaux y apporteront leur contribution³.

Cependant, comme à Montréal, les cours de dessin à main levée, faits à partir de modèles anatomiques ou de bustes en plâtre, comme ce fut la mode à l'époque, ont constitué une sorte d'initiation pour ceux qui désiraient se cultiver⁴ et pour ceux qui se sentaient appelés à une vocation artistique⁵, et ont offert un

débouché d'enseignement pour des artistes formés professionnellement. Tel fut le cas des premiers Sherbrookoïses issus d'une école régulière de Beaux-Arts au Québec, qui revinrent enseigner au Conseil, où ils avaient eux-mêmes reçu leurs premiers cours de dessin : Paul Gagné, de 1912 à 1916, en dessin architectural; Thérèse Lecomte, en 1928 et en 1929, et Marcel Gingras, en 1935, en dessin à main levée.

Il s'est effectivement glissé un changement important dans la direction provinciale du Conseil des arts et manufactures, à un moment qu'il m'a été impossible encore de préciser. Depuis 1941, à tout le moins, les professeurs de la section des arts graphiques et décoratifs de l'école de Sherbrooke étaient sous la juridiction du directeur de l'École des Beaux-Arts de Montréal⁶. Quand Mlle Lecomte prit l'enseignement en 1941 à l'école de Sherbrooke et sa direction en 1944, ce fut à la demande du directeur de l'École des Beaux-Arts de Montréal. Peut-être qu'on se rapportait à cette école depuis sa fondation en 1922⁷, à un moment où le souci était encore important de donner un enseignement "pratique et appliqué". Selon son prospectus de 1923, son programme d'art décoratif devait permettre à l'artisan et au dessinateur de s'intégrer aux industries locales⁸. Mais, comme l'on sait, le projet artistique y prendra avec le temps beaucoup plus de poids. Le départ, suite à une contestation, en 1945, du directeur, Charles Maillard, identifié à l'académisme, témoignera encore d'une transformation dans la conception de l'art.

Cette évolution semble s'être reflétée aussi à Sherbrooke. La section des métiers débouche en 1938 sur l'École des arts et métiers, dans un enseignement plein temps. La section des arts graphiques et décoratifs, qui reposait surtout sur le dessin, continue à se développer grâce au retour des premiers étudiants de la municipalité émanant des Beaux-Arts, soit Paul Gagné en 1930, qui enseignera de 1932 à 1944 le dessin à main levée, et Thérèse Lecomte, en 1940, qui donnera l'organisation picturale, de 1941 à 1967. Cette diplômée sera appuyée d'un autre Sherbrookoïse formé aux Beaux-Arts, Marcel Gingras⁹, de 1944 à 1946.

L'enseignement des arts visuels avait donc pris sa modeste autonomie dans les cours du soir, de par sa séparation avec les cours de métier (ou vice versa) et grâce aussi au retour de maîtres professionnellement formés. En 1946, les temps étaient murs pour des cours de jour, qui s'ajouteraient à ceux du soir. Le nouveau directeur de l'École des Beaux-Arts de Montréal demanda à Thérèse Lecomte, de les dispenser. Dix à quinze adultes s'inscriront

annuellement à ce programme jusqu'en 1967. La directrice inaugure en même temps les cours du samedi matin pour les enfants, avec une cinquantaine d'inscriptions, cours qui perdureront aussi jusqu'en 1967. Elle adoptera avec ceux-ci, comme avec les adultes, une attitude ouverte, leur permettant de cultiver leur propre imagination, soit en dessin, soit en peinture. Ceci constitue une transformation totale de méthode d'enseignement par rapport à celle utilisée au Conseil des arts et manufactures, lorsque, en 1928 et 1929, Thérèse Lecomte y était inscrite. Mme Marie Sagala¹⁰ faisait copier des bustes en plâtre et des modèles anatomiques. La nouvelle école, considérée comme l'École régionale de Sherbrooke, préparant à l'École des Beaux-Arts, demeure sous la même direction jusqu'en 1967. Claude Lafleur¹¹, diplômé des Beaux-Arts, apporte aussi son concours de 1961 à 1964.

Parallèlement à l'École du Conseil des arts et manufactures et à l'École régionale qui lui succéda, des studios privés contribuèrent à entretenir le feu de l'art jusque dans les années soixante. Le premier à signaler est celui du couvent des Dames de la Congrégation, le Mont-Notre-Dame, mis sur pied en 1911 et qui, jusque dans les années cinquante, dispense aux étudiantes du couvent et à ses anciennes des cours de peinture, de dessin et de différents métiers d'art, dont celui de la porcelaine peinte. On relève encore d'autres studios particuliers, celui de Mlle S. C. Draper de 1892 à 1906, de Mme Marie Sagala, qui, en marge de son enseignement au Conseil, de 1908 jusque dans les années trente, initie à l'art plusieurs Sherbrookoises. Ajoutons le studio de F. X. Constantineau dans les années cinquante.

Le réveil de l'intérêt pour l'artisanat au Québec, vers 1950 et 1960, a suscité la création d'ateliers de métiers d'art dans la région, surtout en céramique, à Sherbrooke, North-Hatley et Way's Mills¹².

Le domaine scolaire avait été aussi "infiltré" grâce à Thérèse Lecomte, toujours, qui devient, en 1956, le premier professeur d'arts plastiques embauché par la Commission scolaire de Sherbrooke, pour des cours d'initiation générale, de travail avec la couleur, au secondaire. De 1958 à 1968, elle enseignera dans sept écoles et donnera des cours de perfectionnement au personnel enseignant dans diverses localités, à l'École normale et à l'Université¹³.

Sherbrooke et la région étaient alors prêts pour une troisième étape, celle de l'institutionnalisation de l'enseignement des arts visuels, avec des études conduisant à un diplôme, étape qui

s'intègre bien à l'effervescence de la Révolution tranquille.

En 1971, le Collège de Sherbrooke lance son département d'arts plastiques et graphisme conduisant à un D.E.C.; en 1973, le Collège Champlain ouvre son département de beaux-arts, menant à un D.E.C. en arts visuels et en métiers d'art; la même année, l'Université de Sherbrooke crée son Certificat d'expression artistique, maintenant Certificat d'arts visuels. En 1977, l'Université Bishop's instaure son département de beaux-arts et offre, à partir de 1990, un programme enrichi (honours) en histoire de l'art et en cours d'ateliers.

Après avoir brossé un tableau de l'évolution de l'enseignement plus formel et structuré dans les arts visuels, je voudrais ébaucher un portrait des activités d'animation entreprises dans notre milieu, afin d'éveiller chez un public plus large la connaissance et le goût des arts.

Si nous avons pu remonter à 1874 pour l'enseignement, nous pouvons retourner à 1880 pour l'animation, avec Samuel F. Morey, inspecteur en chef du Eastern Townships Bank de Sherbrooke et important collectionneur de l'époque¹⁴. Quelques citoyens de la ville, sous sa direction, instaurent une salle de lecture ouverte au public dans le même bâtiment qui abrite le Conseil des arts et manufactures, le Griffith Building sur la rue Dufferin (autrefois Commercial). À cette salle, on décide d'adjoindre une bibliothèque en 1881 et un musée comportant divers spécimens naturels et aussi des reproductions de bas-reliefs célèbres et une peinture, à l'origine d'une collection à monter. Les responsables forment alors la "Library, Art and Natural History Association", à l'intérieur de laquelle association, un "Art Comittee" qui verrait à la croissance de la collection. Devant le besoin d'espaces nouveaux, on érige en 1886 un bâtiment de l'autre côté du pont Dufferin, le "Library and Art Building". La galerie d'art et la salle de spectacles et de conférences de 300 places sont combinées. Y sont exposées la collection permanente, des oeuvres prêtées ou provenant d'expositions itinérantes. Le rapport annuel de 1889 établit bien la volonté d'éducation populaire des responsables : "Les différents spectacles et conférences [...] rassemblent dans cette salle des auditoires représentatifs de notre cité et, par ce moyen, la collection d'art est utilisée comme elle ne pourrait l'être autrement". Nos deux universités n'ont-elles pas aussi créé des lieux d'exposition attenants à leur salle de spectacle? La collection sera dispersée en 1923, suite à la détérioration du bâtiment et à un déménagement¹⁵.

Il faudra attendre en 1950 pour une nouvelle impulsion à l'éducation populaire dans les arts visuels¹⁶. Le Centre musical d'Orford, alors sous la direction de Gilles Lefebvre, organise des expositions d'art moderne accessibles aux mélomanes qui fréquentent le Centre et des sessions de cours consacrées aux arts visuels, activités qui se poursuivront intensivement jusqu'en 1972, année de départ du directeur-fondateur.

Mais la vie artistique reprend à Sherbrooke même dans cette période d'effervescence culturelle que constituent les années 60 et 70 au Québec. Sherbrooke-Art, sous la présidence de Mme Solange Fortin, organise de 1963 à 1973 des expositions à Howardene. 1964 voit aussi l'apparition de l'Association pour l'avancement des arts, à l'initiative de deux professeurs-animateurs que nous connaissons déjà, Thérèse Lecomte et Claude Lafleur, que viendra épauler Jeannine Lafrenière. Ce dernier organisme poursuit ses activités à l'Université de Sherbrooke : expositions, conférences, projections, et se trouve à l'origine de la Galerie d'Art de l'Université, mise sur pied en 1964. Celle-ci poursuit toujours ses activités éducatives, en présentant une production d'avant-garde dans une vingtaine d'expositions annuelles et en déployant des activités variées, conférences, visites et autres¹⁷. Si Orford, dans les années cinquante, Sherbrooke-Art et les Trois A, dans les années soixante, suscitent une accessibilité plus grande aux arts visuels, pour le public, les Ateliers d'animation culturelle, dans les années soixante-dix, grâce à la collaboration de l'Université et de la Ville de Sherbrooke, encouragent un apprentissage plus généralisé des arts visuels et des métiers d'art. Comme le signale Danielle Potvin, "la communauté artistique sherbrookeoise, par son implication et sa présence stimulante, participe à ce nouvel élan culturel généralisé"¹⁸. Ce mouvement a contribué à la naissance du Certificat d'expression artistique, aujourd'hui Certificat d'arts visuels.

À la même époque, les artistes plus nombreux à Sherbrooke et dans la région, en partie à cause des nouvelles institutions d'enseignement, fondent en 1973 le Rassemblement des artistes des Cantons de l'Est (RACE) qui entreprend diverses activités, dont la fondation de la Galerie Horace en 1983. C'est un centre d'art expérimental, qui propose une vingtaine d'expositions annuellement et développe maintes activités d'animation. En 1982, plusieurs citoyens se sont réunis pour instituer un musée des beaux-arts dont le but principal est de récupérer, conserver, exposer les artistes de la région des 19^e et 20^e siècles.

Les jeunes deviennent une cible privilégiée, prometteuse

d'avenir, pour les diffuseurs d'art. Plusieurs expériences s'élaborent tant du côté de la Commission scolaire que de celui du Musée de Sherbrooke, pour ne citer que deux exemples. La Commission scolaire, sous l'impulsion d'une conseillère pédagogique en art, Michelle Quintin, assure depuis 1980 l'implantation du programme d'art du ministère de l'Éducation et cherche à provoquer, chez les élèves de l'élémentaire et du secondaire, le goût de l'art. Par divers projets et au moyen d'une pédagogie fondée sur l'apprenant, on tente de soulever sa curiosité, de l'intéresser au processus créateur avant même de lui proposer l'apprentissage des techniques ou l'étude du produit. Il s'agit de former des "goûteurs" avant des producteurs et des consommateurs. Deux écoles, en plus, offrent une concentration dans les arts visuels. Le Musée des beaux-arts, de son côté, sous la direction de Michel Forest, essaie de développer chez les jeunes un talent de visiteur, de leur apprendre à explorer, au moyen de jeux, les formes, les textures, les couleurs, les ombres et lumières. 2500 d'entre eux profitent annuellement de cette animation originale.

Tous les lieux de diffusion affichent actuellement un dynamisme remarquable pour rejoindre un vaste public : la Galerie du Centre culturel accueille 20,000 visiteurs annuellement; la Galerie du Centre d'artistes de Bishop's, par son réaménagement en 1991 et son repositionnement près de la salle de spectacle Centennial, va chercher une abondante clientèle; la Galerie Horace, agrandie et relocalisée au Centre-Ville, attire de nouveaux adeptes; le Centre d'art d'Orford intensifie son intérêt pour les arts visuels et offrira cette année, à ses nombreux mélomanes, de multiples expositions. D'autres galeries publiques et privées présentent aux amateurs d'art une production variée pour répondre à la diversité des goûts.

L'évolution que nous avons pu noter au niveau régional en éducation artistique, soit pour fins de culture personnelle ou de formation professionnelle, reflète l'évolution du statut de l'art au plan national et international.

L'enseignement des arts visuels au 19^e siècle et dans la première partie du 20^e était axé sur la connaissance et la pratique des genres et médias traditionnels, avec accent sur le dessin et la copie des oeuvres célèbres. L'industrialisation encourage cette technique pour des objectifs artisanaux et utilitaires. Les liens étaient étroits entre beaux-arts et arts appliqués. Vers 1940¹⁹, on assiste à des changements majeurs. L'art et l'industrie se dissocient, les artistes se tournent plus vers l'avenir. L'expression individuelle de l'artiste

s'impose. Au même moment, à Sherbrooke, les objectifs utilitaires du Conseil des arts et manufactures débouchent nettement sur une école de métiers, tandis que sa section de dessin à main levée, soumise, jusque là, à la copie de modèles, s'ouvre à la libre expression et prend son autonomie.

Une attention plus grande est aussi apportée désormais au développement psychologique de l'enfant, à sa créativité naturelle. Cette tendance s'affine, s'adresse maintenant au processus créateur de l'enfant et à sa capacité d'appréciation des oeuvres, comme nous venons de le constater dans deux exemples récents.

Nous pouvons relever, dans les productions artistiques contemporaines, la naissance d'une nouvelle étape dans le statut de l'art, étape qui se répercute jusque dans notre région et se manifeste de diverses façons, soit dans la conception des oeuvres : délaissement des dimensions purement esthétiques, expression d'une nouvelle vision du monde, écologique et autres; soit dans l'emploi des multi-médias, des installations, dans l'usage de l'informatique. Plusieurs de nos lieux d'enseignement et d'animation se montrent sensibles à cette transformation.

Peut-être même que si un projet de baccalauréat spécialisé en arts visuels, axé sur la nouvelle conception de l'art et sur les nouvelles technologies à l'étude à l'Université de Sherbrooke, se réalisait, notre région pourrait se projeter à l'avant-garde de l'enseignement dans ce domaine.

Si la métropole dispose de ressources plus importantes et abondantes, la région, par la panoplie, la qualité et le dynamisme de ses institutions d'enseignement et d'animation, peut apporter une riche contribution culturelle à sa communauté.

NOTES

1. Après des études en architecture à Ottawa, il va, en 1878, étudier à Paris, à l'Académie Julian et dans des ateliers, comme celui de Bouguereau, et revient au Canada en 1885. Joseph Chabert est, pour sa part, un ancien élève de l'École impériale des Beaux-Arts de Paris.
2. L'École, qui ouvre le 5 janvier 1874, logera d'abord dans une salle de la bâtisse Tuck & McNical (sic); ensuite on la retrouve en 1877 à la maison Beckett et plus tard (au moins depuis 1894) dans le Old Griffith Block, rue Dufferin.
3. L'architecte J. W. Grégoire a longtemps dirigé l'école. Selon le registre des présences du Conseil des arts et manufactures en

dessin architectural de 1903 à 1954 (déposé au Service d'archives du C.R.C.E. de l'Université Bishop's avec celui du dessin à main levée), les personnes suivantes ont donné des cours : Louis N. Audet (1903-1913), J. Aimé Poulin (1918-1925), Denis Tremblay (1925-1944), tous architectes; J. Roméo Audet (1945-1954), dessinateur industriel; C.A. de Valter (1914-1918), professeur au Séminaire.

4. Ces cours ont attiré une clientèle, variée quant à l'âge et l'emploi, de plus de 30 et 40 personnes par année et jusqu'à 72 en 1932-33.
5. Paul-Émile Borduas, qui, à 16 ans, assistait Ozias Leduc dans sa décoration de la chapelle de l'Évêchée de Sherbrooke, a lui-même fait son apprentissage en dessin à Sherbrooke en 1922-23, selon le registre des présences au cours de dessin à main levée de Mme Marie Sagala. Voir aussi François-Marc Gagnon, *Borduas*, Montréal, Fides, 1978.
6. La section des métiers était sous la juridiction du directeur général de l'Enseignement technique dans la province. Voir *La Tribune* du 13 octobre 1944, p. 3,8. Plusieurs dates sont avancées pour signaler l'abolition du Conseil des arts et manufactures. Bernard Mulaire, dans *Olindo Gratton, 1855-1941* (Montréal, Fides, 1989) retient la date de 1928. Voir p. 97, et 106, note 59.
7. L'architecte Denis Tremblay affirme dans une interview que tout le temps de son enseignement de dessin architectural, soit de 1925 à 1944, il a fait son rapport comme professeur au directeur de l'École des Beaux-Arts de Montréal.
8. Voir Marcel Fournier, *Les Générations d'artistes*, Québec, IQRC, 1986, p. 35.
9. Marcel Gingras (1921-), toujours actif comme peintre, a tenu plusieurs expositions dans la région de Sherbrooke en particulier. Ses oeuvres figurent dans la collection du Musée des beaux-arts et de la Ville de Sherbrooke.
10. Mme Marie Sagala dispense des cours de 1919 à 1936, sa fille Alice, de 1936 à 1943, toutes deux ayant été formées au Conseil.
11. Claude Lafleur (1932-), établi à Sherbrooke depuis 1960, a joué un rôle important comme animateur culturel, enseigne au Collège de Sherbrooke depuis 1974, tout en poursuivant sa création. Il a tenu plusieurs expositions et ses oeuvres figurent dans maintes collections publiques.
12. Retenons, par exemple, les noms de Savoie, Bedin, Denis, Doucet, Rodzynska, Mullavey, Gerrish.

13. Thérèse Lecomte terminera sa carrière à la Commission scolaire Jacques-Cartier, comme enseignante spécialisée en arts plastiques à l'élémentaire. Elle revient s'établir à Sherbrooke en 1981.
14. Monique Nadeau-Saumier a conduit une précieuse recherche sur ce personnage et son activité qui sera publiée prochainement.
15. Le journal *La Tribune* occupera ces locaux près de la rivière Magog en 1928.
16. Voir Richard Milot, "Propos sur les arts visuels contemporains et modernes" in *L'essor culturel de Sherbrooke et de la région*.
17. Voir Aline Poulin, "La Galerie d'art", in *L'Université de Sherbrooke, son rayonnement littéraire et artistique*. Voir aussi la recherche (inédictée) de Johanne Brouillet sur l'histoire de la Galerie d'art.
18. Danielle Potvin, "L'enseignement des arts visuels", in *L'Université de Sherbrooke, son rayonnement littéraire et artistique*, p. 133.
19. Le diplôme de couronnement d'étude décerné aux Beaux-Arts de Montréal en 1940 s'intitulait Diplôme de professeur de dessin.

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HUMOROUS ASPERSIONS: THE VERBAL TRADITIONS OF DIFFERENCE IN THE EASTERN TOWNSHIPS*

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While there are probably more professional folklorists in Quebec than in any other province, and while the folklore institute (CELAT) at Université Laval is the one of the oldest in North America, there has been very little folkloristic research among the anglophone populations of the Eastern Townships. Aside from one book-length study of the Hebridean Scottish enclave in this part of the province (Doucette 1980), there has been no extensive treatment of the folklore of any of the English-speaking groups which settled in the Eastern Townships.

When I came to Quebec in late 1977, Jean-Claude Dupont, then Director of CELAT at Université Laval, suggested that I work among these anglophones, and thus it was that in the winter of 1978, I attempted a folkloristic survey of the anglophones of Brome and Missisquoi Counties (see Taft 1978b). The enormity of this task, considering that no other such work had been done previously, did not faze me then — I was full of youthful enthusiasm; today, I doubt that I would attempt anything so broad and unmanageable as the survey of all the folklore of a region. Still, in “tacking...between the small imaginings of local knowledge and the large ones of cosmopolitan intent” (to quote Geertz 1983: 15-16), I learned much from my foray into the Eastern Townships, and I think that I gained some insight into the nature of the folklore of this part of Quebec.

While all cultures and groups display a wide spectrum of traditional expressiveness — ranging from verbal forms to rituals and beliefs to material culture — different regions seem to gravitate more strongly towards one kind of expression than another. For example, Newfoundlanders are especially adept at expressing themselves in music and song; the people of Saskatchewan are particularly fond of masquing and drama.¹ In the Eastern Townships, however, I found that the liveliest tradition seemed to

be narrative in form — more specifically, people were particularly comfortable and skilled in the performance of humorous or descriptive anecdotes, usually told within the context of casual conversation.

My observations in this matter, however, are based on a rather small sample, and as well, on a rather specific group of anglophones: most of those I interviewed were descendants of English-American and Dutch-American settlers who came to the Eastern Townships more than two hundred years ago. In addition, these people were mostly of the older generation, their birth years ranging from 1884 to 1931, with most born before 1910.² Their skill at storytelling, therefore, might be more a function of their anecdotality, than their ethnic or regional affiliation, and many did indeed engage in dramatics, dancing, singing and traditional occupations when they were younger. Yet whatever the reasons, their narrative abilities were considerable and noteworthy.

Their anecdotal repertoire was extensive, and taken as a whole, revealed much about their perceptions of their own history, their values, their sense of place, and their perceived relationships to other groups in the Eastern Townships. It is this last dimension upon which I will concentrate, for through their storytelling, they expressed much about the ethnic, social and geographical divisions in their community. Their sense of difference from one another created groups within groups — not only the “two solitudes” of francophone and anglophone — but also layers of social strata, based largely on attachments to the community, as well as on economic differences. Furthermore, their sense of locality and occupation created divisions based on relatively small geographical differences. Thus, while an outsider, such as myself, might see these anglophones as a rather homogeneous group, their own self-image was considerably complex, involving layers of identity which both separated and united individual anglophones in Brome and Missisquoi.

Indicative of the complexity of these conceptions of social difference is the following story: one woman explained to me that there were four kinds of people in Knowlton: the very rich summer people from Montreal, the not-so-rich summer people from Montreal, the middle-class residents (among which she placed herself), and the lower or working-class residents. As an afterthought, she added, “And then, of course, there are the French.”³

The social division most obvious to both them and me, of course, was their distinctiveness from francophones. This distinction, though primarily based on ethnic background and language, was augmented or exacerbated by the fact that most anglophones

were Protestant, while the francophones were Catholic. More than once, I was told that religion — and from their perspective, the Catholic Church — was the main factor in separating these two communities; although on further probing, most of those I interviewed regretfully admitted that their own failure to learn and speak French widened the chasm. Their considerably ambivalent attitudes towards francophones — especially only one year after the Parti Québécois victory — is an entire study in itself, and I will not pursue it at length here.⁴

Yet the French-English division has revealed itself in the verbal traditions of these people for a very long time. The conflict of languages is at the heart of these traditions. As early as 1874, local performers put on *"Ici On Parle Français": A Farce in One Act* (Williams n.d.) at the Cowansville town hall,⁵ and almost everyone recalled that, well into the present century, recitations of fractured Habitant English — especially the poetry of William Henry Drummond — were standard fare in schools, at concerts and at get-togethers.

Anecdotes about the French language or the francophone use of English show the people's concern over the "two solitudes" of the Eastern Townships. One of the younger women I interviewed told the following story, which is indicative:

No, because my grandmother — it's really amusing — she always — when I talk to her on the phone — of course she's in a convalescent hospital. And quite a few of the nurses are French where they are. And she talks to me and she'll say — she always sort of whispers into the phone — and she said, "You know, they're mostly French here." Or when I'm there, she always goes like this [making a secretive posture] and tells me, "They don't talk English."

Stories of the francophone's English mistakes are common and hearken back to earlier dramatic traditions. One man told me of a local francophone:

And he always told about — they weren't expecting this baby and they didn't have any clothes for it. So he told Mrs. Keeping they had to "dress it up naked." [laughter] That's the way he expressed it...He said he had "three children at once, and two twice" — two children twice — "and one many times." [laughter]

The humour here, of course, is not only at the expense of the man's use of English, but also of the large and poor families, which were a part of the common stereotype of the French

Catholic household.

From the anglophone perspective, the French were outsiders, even though they lived together in the same communities and conducted business with each other. But the French were not the only outsiders, as the anecdotal record shows. The people I interviewed often made the distinction between themselves and those who were not permanent residents in the community. Transients and peddlers were especially singled out for mention. For example, I was surprised to hear stories about gypsies, who used to travel through the countryside. These tales were of an international character, concentrating on the clever and not-so-clever thieving of the gypsies.⁶ Like the gypsies, itinerant peddlers and other travelers were also marginal to the community, and thus subject, not only to stories, but also to pranks and other forms of anti-social behaviour. Note the following Hallowe'en prank story concerning a local peddler who was a well-known transient in Brome County many years ago:

A: What about old Pat Squibb's horse there?

B: He had a white horse and he used to have a wagon that he peddled different stuff around to the farmers, you know. Dry goods and cooking utensils and everything like this. And he kept the horse in a barn over there by the Methodist Church. So the boys — he was all white, the horse was — the boys figured they were going to fix Pat's horse up. So they striped him with tar. And they took the hair pretty well all off the horse. Yeah, and there was pretty well some trouble over that.

The major group of outsiders, however, were the people who came to the community in the summertime. As the woman from Knowlton pointed out, these Montrealers represented another social class, or at least distinction, which made them as alien to the local anglophones, as were the French population. Those I interviewed almost unanimously stated that they had little to do with the summer people, other than through business transactions — similar in many ways to their relationships with local franco-phones. I collected several anecdotes in which these outsiders — these urban rich — were brought down a peg or two, made to look foolish or put into some kind of embarrassing situation.

The following story concerns a local garage mechanic who was known for being covered in grease when on the job. When lying on a roller-board underneath a car, he would usually grab a centre-pole in the garage to haul himself out when he had finished his work.

Well this one day he was working on Mrs. Babstock's car. And they were quite monied people. They were the Babstock's Bakery in Montreal and it was a big outfit. Anyway, the old lady was waiting for to get the oil changed and Pritch changed it. And he reached out around like that [mimics action] to pull himself out, and he put his hand right around Mrs. Babstock's leg like that, and he pulled himself right out. You can imagine what his hands were like. [laughter]

These stories of francophones, itinerants and summer people have a common function for those who tell them: in a humorous way, outsiders are described according to those characteristics which define them as outsiders. Through these anecdotes, people are able to name and comment upon the social divisions in their region. One might go so far as to say that these anecdotes help to empower the tellers against those who in one way or another are threatening to them: mysterious strangers, rich urban people, and certainly the dominant Quebec culture represented by the local francophone population. As Diane Tye has expressed it, the local character anecdote "aid[s] in the construction and negotiation of personal and social identity." (Tye 1989: 196)

But anecdotes which name and comment upon those who are in one way or another different from the norm are not restricted in topic to those outside the local anglophone community. The larger function of such narratives is to examine all forms of abnormality or deviance in the community. Thus, I heard many stories which cast humorous aspersions on community insiders. Some of these insiders were certainly "local characters" in one way or another, but in a sense, through the telling of such stories, almost anyone in the community could become a local character. Such anecdotes are a kind of gossip — a kind of social commentary on the way everyone in the community — at one time or another — deviates from what is expected.⁷

While these stories deal with social deviance, they are certainly not intended to be taken as serious commentaries or as preludes to some form of ostracism. They are humorous tales, after all, and the butts of the humour remain a part of the community, despite their deviations from expected behaviour. There are those, for example, who suffer from some disability or some affliction, and thus are the natural victims of storytellers.

And at that time we had Barney Porter here for thirteen years. A great little worker. And he was mentally retarded. So anyway, we went out together one morning, and I said I wanted him to help, and I said, "All right, you can start digging a

new well." Well he worked like a little cuss. He came down at noon and his face was longer than any horse you ever seen. I said, "How'd you get along?" Said, "The water's running in faster than I can dig it out." [laughter] I said, "That's what we want." He was discouraged as the devil.

Just as francophones were the victims of humour because of their English, anyone who had a speech problem or who used the language in a strange way became celebrated in anecdotes.

We had this one fellow in town here, and he's telling the difference about the modern doctors and the old-time doctors back at that time, you see. He says, "Well you know in the old days, you go into the doctor there, and he'd look you over and examine you and all, and he'd go out in the back and he'd come back in with a hand full of pills. And it would be a dollar, you see. Office-call and pills and all, you see. Now perhaps those pills, they were nothing but a little bi-carburetor of soda, you see. Now you go to the doctor, and he look you over and he'll sit down there and he'll write you out a subscription. You'll have to take that subscription down to the druggist down there and have it repaired." [laughter]

Drunks, of course, were regular victims of the anecdote — especially stories of how their horses knew the route from the tavern to the drunk's home by heart and would drive their sleeping masters home after a night on the town. Laziness was also worth commenting upon, as in this anecdote:

My grandfather had a great many apples, and there was a man in the neighbourhood who was noted for not being too ambitious. My grandfather thought that perhaps that his wife would be pleased to have some apples. So he said to him, "There are a great many apples there. You can have all the apples you like." And the lazy man said, "Are they bagged up?"

While the disabled, the confused, the drunk and the lazy were natural targets for the storyteller, so too were the worthies of the community — those who in one way or another had risen above the average through education, wealth or politics. Anecdotes about these people demonstrate the common social phenomenon, sometimes metaphorically referred to as "crab antics" — where, in a bucket full of crabs, the ones which manage to reach the top are pulled down again by those below (See Wilson 1973).⁸ For example, a particular town councillor was known for being ostentatious and self-important. In a local minstrel show production, he

became the butt of the humour:

They mentioned about him going up through the Pass there one day. He was going up through there and they said now here was a bull on one side of him and on the other side of him was a bear. So the interlocutor said, "Well now what do you suppose that Mr. Willicott did?" Well he said, "Naturally he shot the bear, because he could shoot the bull any time."

The authority of ministers, teachers and doctors was also tempered by humorous anecdotes, as in the following example:

When I was born, the doctor named me after himself — Schuyler. And I had quite a joke on him one time, and I was in Cownasville getting my licence from Mrs. Houle. And she couldn't speak hardly any English and I couldn't speak no French. I was having a time to get that name so she'd spell it right on my licence. Doc came in. And I said, "Doc, you're just in time." He said, "Schuyler, what's wrong?" I said, "I'm trying to get this French woman to spell that name right." He said, "You know, you should feel yourself lucky. I named five boys after myself and you're the only one that lived." I said, "I don't blame the rest of them. They couldn't stand it."

Among those I talked with, geography and history were also topics of anecdotal commentary, as well as general discussion. Some discussed the events of the Fenian raids as though they had happened only a few years ago. One old man proudly told of his ancestor who, with only a cane as a weapon, captured three Hessian soldiers during the American Revolutionary War. The vibrancy of local history societies, and local history writing in the Eastern Townships speaks to the people's interest in their region. For example, I saw locally-made landscape paintings hanging in many homes, and such pictures often evoked discussion and anecdotes (see Taft 1978a).

While these shared interests have kept the region rather cohesive, they have also led to certain perceived divisions among the people. I was often told that those who lived just down the road were "different" in some way; usually this difference remained unspecified, although it was often implied that those "down the road" were less sophisticated, perhaps more folksy, perhaps more peculiar in their dialect, than whomever I was talking with at the moment. The heart of these geographical distinctions was the natural division between townspeople and farmers — and I collected many stories which described this division — but rivalries between one town and another were also a part of this perception of

geographical difference.

As a final example, let me quote from a man, who if living today, would be 107 years old. He had spent his entire life in Mystic — a village only a few kilometres from the town of Bedford in Missisquoi County.

Mystic had a wonderful ball team. They could beat anything. But Bedford just wasn't in it. I can remember the last game that I knew of that we played was up in the Fuller pasture. And Bedford said that they were going to beat Mystic. So they sent over to St. Alban's [Vermont] and hired a Negro who was supposed to be a very good pitcher. Well it went all right until he hit the ball, went sliding into the base and broke his leg. Well anyway, Mystic beat Bedford. I can remember Pete Wagner, who was considerable of a character here in Mystic at that time. He was walking along and the Bedford people came along and they called out to him in what they thought was an insulting way, "Go on home and milk your cow!" "By God," Pete said, "I can do that too!" [laughs]

The implication here is that Pete, the farmer from Mystic, could beat Bedford at baseball as easily as he could milk his cow, but the local distinction between town and farm, urban and rural, is also a part of this anecdotal commentary.

I do not want to leave the impression that life in the Eastern Townships was particularly fractious. All communities and regions contain humorous aspersions among their repertoire of anecdotes; all peoples construct layers of difference in their view of society. My point, however, is that the kinds of narratives told in the Eastern Townships give us an insight into how this process works in the area under study — how the people of this region see themselves and how they discuss what they see.

NOTES

- * I should like to thank the Ministère des Affaires culturelles du Québec for financing my research, as well as the Brome County Historical Society and the Missisquoi County Historical Society for their help, and Jean-Claude Dupont for his encouragement.
- 1. Understanding how specific geographical regions define themselves through their distinctive use of creative traditions has been central to folkloristic analysis since the earliest years of the discipline. Benjamin Botkin was one of the first North American folklorists to apply regionalism in a conscious way to folklore (see Hirsch 1987); for an overview of folklore and regionalism, see

Lightfoot 1983. The vitality of folksong performance in Newfoundland is evident from the work of Mercer 1979; while Saskatchewan's masking traditions have been investigated by Hunter 1983 and Taft 1989.

2. I interviewed a total of twenty-four people (seventeen in Brome County and seven in Missisquoi County) between 2 February and 10 April 1978. Of these, sixteen were men born in the following years: 1884, 1890, 1893, 1898, 1900, 1901, 1902, 1904 (two men), 1907, 1909 (two men), 1910, 1914, 1915 and 1929; eight were women born in the following years: 1901, 1908 (two women), 1909, c. 1910 (two women), 1915 and 1931.
3. All quotes are from Taft 1978b; all names have been changed, according to the general wishes of those I interviewed. I have somewhat altered these quotations for the sake of readability, removing false starts and other "accidents" of conversational speech, and supplying the noun for some pronouns for the sake of clarity.
4. As I discuss in my report (Taft 1978b: 10-24), attitudes towards francophones which I uncovered were not uniform, and many individuals exhibited ambivalent feelings towards francophones. While some maintained good social relations with francophones, others kept apart; some were accomodating towards the asperations of the francophone population, while others resented any change in the social dominance of anglophones in the Eastern Townships. Many blamed "outside forces" for the changing social structure in their region. Some considered that relations between the two language groups were closer in the past; for example, many noted that, when young, they often played with francophone children. The overall impression which I received was that business relations (and children's socializing) were the major points of contact between those I interviewed and their francophone neighbours, while other forms of contact were minimal.
5. In the copy of this book in the Brome County Historical Society collection, the Cowansville performances are noted in pencil on the title page.
6. In the two stories which I collected, the gypsies steal turnips and chickens. The ethnic stereotype of gypsies as thieves is ancient (see Roback 1944: 271) and has long been the subject of tales and ballads (see Sinclair 1906).
7. In a previous study (Taft 1979), I delved further into the local character anecdote in the Eastern Townships as a commentary on

everyday social deviations from normal behaviour. While most research on the local character anecdote examines its relationship to the extremes of social deviance (see Tye 1989 for a recent study), I prefer to place these stories within the wider context of general social legislation.

8. While Wilson applies this term to a study of a specific African-Caribbean culture, wherein he investigates "the dialectal relation between the two principles, respectability and reputation" (p. 9), he makes clear in his introduction that his crab antics metaphor might be applied to any culture.

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CLAIMING THE LANDSCAPE: JOHN GLASSCO AND HIS POETRY OF THE EASTERN TOWNSHIPS

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John Glassco first experienced the Eastern Townships of Quebec as a boarding student at Bishop's College School in Lennoxville in 1923-1924. Although he was a miserably unhappy child required to "fag" for the older boys at the school, something of the landscape surrounding Bishop's appears to have lodged in his imagination, because after the Paris years (1928-32), and the trials of tuberculosis and quarrelling with his parents, it was to the Townships he went to settle when he came into an inheritance from his Grandfather Rawlings in 1936. He decided on the Dawes house, the White Mansion of his poetry, which still stands among mature trees just outside the village of Knowlton. In January 1937, Glassco moved to the property with his life companion, Graeme Taylor. They called the farm "Windermere" to honour Wordsworth.¹

The two men soon established themselves as notorious members of the community, seen about in flashy fur coats, chain-smoking and on the look-out for the housekeeper of their dreams. They found her eventually in Mary Elizabeth Wilson, "beauty queen," ardent horsewoman and all-round sexual good sport. "Sappho" as the men called her, was willing to milk the cows, bake the pies, accompany her employers to the pub in Knowlton for drinking bouts (in winter they travelled by cutter, drawn by their ox "Rocket") and mediate the male couple's ever-complex sexuality.

Glassco's other preoccupations were the pursuit of mannishly-beautiful women who would indulge his craving for masochistic punishment, the raising of hackney ponies (he would eventually found the Foster Horse Show), the writing of endless drafts of pornographic prose, and the composing of the poetry that would become, in 1958, *The Deficit Made Flesh*.

During the twenty years between his taking up residence in the Townships and the publication of his first book, Glassco came to know the landscape intimately. Not only did he live there year round — he rarely went to Montreal and never further afield — he spent much of his time driving the roads in all seasons. This activity was regularized during the war years. Unable to serve in the armed forces (he had only one lung, a result of the tuberculosis he contracted in Paris, and was refused when he tried to enlist in the RCAF), he took over Rural Route Number One for the post office in Knowlton. Poems such as “The Brill Road” and “Needham Cemetery” are markers of those days of driving his route. He travelled by cutter in winter, very smart in a fur coat and hat, his beloved Dalmatian dog “Lucy” on the seat beside him. He would sell milk from the Windermere cows to his customers and oblige housewives by secreting, in road-side hedges, their personal mail-orders purchases, bought with egg money hidden from tyrannical husbands.

Other than his war-service job as a rural postman, Glassco had no profession other than that of writer. He was a slow one at that, very self-critical and loathe to publish even as he longed for recognition of his talent. He suffered intensely from incapacitating depression, writing in his *Journal* in April 1946 that he was “fearful of stirring up old ghosts”.² His father, at whose hands he had suffered both physical and sexual abuse, had died in 1945. It would be several years before the aftermath of his father’s death, accompanied by the frightful reminders of his own childhood suffering, would release Glassco. Paradoxically, the memories of his adult experiences were tinged with nostalgia about “the past of Windermere with all its atmosphere of ecstasy, happiness, heart-break, misery — disgust” (fol. 119). In his dark frame of mind he saw a world of decay around him. He fancied that new buildings were prefiguring their own decay, that “all endeavour [was] doomed.” Even the simplest acts seemed to carry within them gloom and sadness: “The sight of a farmer spreading manure the other day...felt like weeping for him.” He felt he could never again breed a mare, much less beget a child, turning over in his mind Schopenhauer’s words: “The soul is grieved by everything it looks on.”

At his worse, even the landscape of the Townships failed to cheer him, becoming “this Canadian landscape...the most unreal collection of places, angles and colours that ever was seen.” He was himself a “deadman” alive only “from force of habit.” But by

late March of 1947, Glassco had managed to exhibit some self-discipline. He was writing two or three hours each evening after dinner and drinking less. This period of reform produced "The Entailed Farm," which was published in *The Canadian Forum* in May 1947. He had written "Stud Groom" and "Soldier's Settlement" and began to see a small body of poetry emerge. He wrote with pleasure in his Journal that "At least I have done something! And the plan of keeping on writing verses such as these is almost the only thing that gives meaning or direction to my life these days, — the plan of keeping on until I have about 1000 lines, enough for a volume, — 'The Rural Mail'" (fol.122).

With Glassco, such bursts of happiness and self-confidence were followed by periods of low self-esteem and cruel self-criticism when he would dwell in his Journal on the "intensity of sadness...the underlying melancholy of human life" (fol.23). Nevertheless, he was able to write "Gentleman's Farm" even while in this despondent mood. He was pleased to find in it "a further good slice of documentation of the rural landscape."

The aftermath of his father's death, and all the burdens of unresolved wounds and angers that accompanied the event, had not yet exhausted itself. In June of 1947 Glassco began to undergo incapacitating panic attacks that sapped his strength and left him terrified; he wrote in his Journal of "hiding my face in my hands and sobbing." Like most victims of incest, he suffered seemingly endless torments of grief, guilt and horror. Throughout 1948 he lived a mole-like existence, sleeping ten or twelve hours a night, rising at two in the afternoon to paw anxiously over his pornography manuscripts. Only his poetry remained uplifting; he retained the "still shining goal of my Rural Mail book of poems: about 350 lines done out of a necessary 1000" (fol. 135).

By this time Sappho was long gone and so was the grand house in Knowlton. Glassco and Taylor were living in Foster, still affecting riding clothes and top boots around the house. Glassco was elected town councillor by acclamation and was beginning to write about the town, as "Blighty" illustrates. Still, his emotional health remained fragile and he wrote sorrowfully in his Journal: "My poetry is steadily going downhill, my ideas becoming more inchoate & emotionally intense & less & less articulate. Wordsworth has said everything I wish to say, already, & a hundred times better than I could hope to" (fol.139). Much of the 1950s were a decline. The terrifying homicidal fantasies directed towards his father grew more intense; a dancer he had met in



Photo: P. Whitney

Glassco's farmhouse in Foster where he lived with G. Taylor in 1946

Montreal was imprisoned on drug charges; he was drinking heavily and watching Graeme die a long, painful death. Yet still the poems of the Township landscape came to him.

The turning point came in November 1956 when A.J.M. Smith wrote to Glassco to ask permission to include "Deserted Buildings Under Shefford Mountain" in his *Oxford Book of Canadian Verse*. The significance of this contact was that Glassco and Smith rekindled the acquaintanceship of their McGill University years when both men had been on campus; their friendship grew and Smith would edit Glassco's poems and ensure the publication of *Deficit* with McClelland and Stewart in 1958. Also in 1956, Elma Koolmar (later to style herself von Colmar) moved into the Foster house with Glassco and Taylor as housekeeper. Taylor was jealous of this arrangement; he died miserably in February 1957. Nevertheless, Glassco's love affair with, and eventual marriage to, Elma was to usher in the most creative period of his life, when under her "inspiration" he would publish two volumes of poetry, his translations of de St-Denys Garneau, *The English Governess*, and the *Memoirs of Montparnasse*.

II

In the second part of this paper I would like to turn to the poems themselves. It is not likely that a poet as well-read as

Glassco could have been free of the prevailing artistic climate of his period: Modernism. Against this influence stand his admiration for the brilliant originality of Gerard Manley Hopkins, his fondness for and knowledge of the Georgians, and his reverence — not too strong a word — for Wordsworth. Nevertheless, he was profoundly moved by Eliot (as is demonstrated by the debt to Eliot's *Four Quartets* in the elegiac tone, the chaste diction and the evocation of places of great meaning in Glassco's "A Point of Sky"). Still, the poetry of *Deficit* points more to the continuity of Romanticism in Modernism than it does to Eliot's "impersonal theory of poetry" that spoke for Modernism as "cultivating impersonality, objectivity, and detachment" (Schwartz 71). Revisionists have, however, argued that Modernists like Pound and Eliot have "exaggerated their break with the nineteenth century" (Schwartz 72). Eliot and Pound were in reaction to nineteenth-century excesses of subjectivity, an accepted view that Schwartz also holds. In fact, Eliot's poetic theory, more than his poetry itself, may be thought to stress the impersonal.

A.J.M. Smith, writing the jacket blurb for *Deficit*, finds Glassco's poetry "classical". I can agree that Glassco's verse is "classical" in its adherence to established forms such as the ode, but would argue that it is Romantic-Modernist in sensibility. His impulse is to explore and exploit form rather than to question or challenge it, certainly, and he held to his unrealized wish, stated in his *Intimate Journal* on 2 June 1965, "to found...a 'Romantic Revival'".³ In fact, Glassco was a poet deeply influenced in youth by the Romantics, nursed to early maturity in the very bosom of Modernism — Paris in the twenties — and holding fast to the forms if not the sentiments of the Neo-Classical period.

Northrop Frye calls the rural poems the "core" of *Deficit*, and perceives in them "how a feverish vision of a paradise of conquered nature forces generations to wear themselves out to construct and maintain a 'Gentleman's Farm' or a 'White Mansion'" (*The Bush Garden* 91). The Gentleman's Farm is a monument to foolish pride. Man never learns. The Philistine comes to a "valley of slash and beaver-meadow" (man has already despoiled the landscape), and now "things are humming" as the "silos rise" and "the milkwhite temple" fulfils the passion of the "absentee whose will has broken/ Between these barren hills." This is a temple of greed, the "working out of a man's reverie." The whole of man's efforts to harness the earth are foolish. The speaker calls on the reader to see "that the wreck of all things made with hands...Must marry

the ragged matter." All man's temples are hollow; so says the narrator in "Deserted Buildings Under Shefford Mountain":

Here where I grasp the certain fate
Of all man's work in wood and stone,
And con the lesson of the straight
That shall be crooked soon or late
And crumble into forms alone

There is no trust in man — man is "The Whole Hog" — the destroying father whose "demons spoke of his hold forever / On my heart, and mine of the fragile tenure of all things". The purest loathing is husbanded for release not on figures of myth or painterly images but for the Nobodaddy of "The Whole Hog". The narrator is led to the father by the betraying woman: "When I was very young my mother told me / That my father was the strongest of men". The child finds in his father a corrupted power. He would "set himself to become / Great God to a little child," "To be the Absolute to someone else". The father builds in the child's heart "an altar" on which the boy is to be sacrificed: "the altar stands, eternal absolute". This perversity is the unholy church built "in living rock" on "infallible authority," which has reduced the boy to a dog "whistled by my master," "alone and nosing about the world for love and tid-bits". Like the hungry stray he is, the boy lurks outside the lighted windows of his father's house where there are "no dissensions" and where stands "the Portland vase before the Venetian mirror." This temple of domesticity is the abode of evil: "my father's demons spoke of his hold forever / On my heart, and mine of the fragile tenure of all things".

It is perhaps too facile to equate Glassco's terror of his abusive father with his certainty of man's corruption of innocence (whether that innocence be the trust and unawakened sexuality of the child, or the earth itself); there is nevertheless a reverberation of this association in the collection as a whole. Whereas in *Deficit* there is occasional beauty in moments of serenity in nature and receptivity in man, there is never a dualistic sense of an ontological struggle between man and nature, matter and spirit. One cannot struggle against a preordained fate. The child may battle against an abusive father, but the child will always lose. His fate is sealed in the perversity of the strong man's desires. So too man may attempt to subjugate nature, but such struggle is an illusion. The world of nature is "untouched/ By hope or hunger"; the man must let things be as he resigns "The flowers to yellow and the

lake to blue" ("Hail and Farewell"). Moreover, man is himself nature, although he may be displaced from knowing her face by his own folly. As the child is of his father's flesh, so man is of the matter of his mother, nature. Both the child and the man, in the cosmology of these poems, dwell among the damned.

Glassco explores this idea in the religious context of "Thomas A Kempis," where the mystic is a prisoner in his monk's cell: "not that he's brave / But that, on earth, there is nothing left to fear." For the saint, fate is sealed as surely as for the sinner because "Nobodaddy held him in his hand / A fireless particle." This is an essentially Calvinistic view of predestination. Struggle is irrelevant; one can only endure and await God's predetermined decision about one's fate. Man, his fate, and his destiny are one with nature. To struggle is futile. This grim view does not preclude pleasure, happiness or the love of beauty, as in the lines "But oh, green leaves and singing birds that see / The flaming sun" show. Nevertheless the Calvinistic view is the baseline that supports the poems of *Deficit*.

Munro Beattie called the poems in this collection "splinters from a damaged sensibility". He discerned here "an attitude to life that is both compelling and repulsive" (310). While Beattie perceives a struggle between man and nature that is much less fated than I would support — I see rather a rage followed by unwilling acquiescence — he does recognize the essential pessimism of the poems, where the speaker has "put his money on nature" to



Photo: P. Whitney

On the road to St-Étienne (Bolton Glen)

prevail now and forever. These are moral poems: not moralistic or didactic, but rather a statement of a baleful knowledge that the road leads upward to “impossible heights” where it finds no Olympus or Parnassus, but is enveloped in “boiling snow”: “There is no turning back; but the road is a trap. / This is the involvement that we never sought” (“The Brill Road”).

In the landscape poems of this collection, the speaker often stands at the top of a hill, but he is no god surveying a paradise. He is doomed to the rise and fall of the path he must follow. Like the hackney pony on his jogging track going round and round, the man must follow the road that leads nowhere but to where: “The hills darken, and this heaven-riving road thrown / Like a noosed lifeline to five worthless farms / Peters out under the snow” (“The Brill Road”). This first book of Glassco’s poems surely expresses the fragmented sensibility that could write in “The Entailed Farm”:

From us, with our hearts but lightly tinged with poison,
Who composed our quarrel early and in good season
Buried the hatchet in our father’s brain.

III

In *The Deficit Made Flesh* the poems are strong and concrete, close to the “green valleys where accidents may happen” and the “stony pastures” in a world where, at its best, “all is gold and azure” and where “The Brill Road” can end on a plaintive note that longs for a northern paradise:

Does it even exist, that quiet road
Snow-pleached between the laden, bending trees
Where the small, fat birds will be flitting and feeding,
Where the mind is muffled and we move at peace?

John Glassco was aware of the immediacy of the Eastern Townships in his poetry. On 4 August 1956 he wrote to Elma, sending her holograph copies of “my five best poems all now finished”:

“Deserted Buildings Under Shefford Mountain” (“Clark Baird’s old place in Iron Hill”); “A Devotion” [a celebration for Elma]; “The Entailed Farm” (“This is Julia Wheeler’s place — you know, just past the cemetery”); “Blighty” (“This is Bill Arnold’s place — with the sign!” [a green house named “Blighty” still stands on the

principal road through the village of Foster]); and "The Burden of Junk" ("This is me and Arthur Charles who lives (still) beside the farm in Knowlton [Windermere]. The harmonium I saw with my own eyes!") (McGill Collection).

He wrote himself into the Townships, making the landscape, at times, a sign for his own despair. Yet this landscape sustained him. He died in Montreal it is true, but he never gave up his house in Foster — a larger stone home he had built for Elma after their marriage. For one moment in the "warm wind" of "Soldier's Settlement" there is a dream of imagined serenity and eternity in this landscape:

But stand for an instant and fix forever
The battered mail-box, the shallow stream,
In a frame where all is gold and azure
And the stony pasture, plinth of a dream.

After his death, his ashes were scattered in the Yamaska River of the Eastern Townships and John Glassco went back to the landscape he celebrated in *The Deficit Made Flesh*.

NOTES

1. The biographical details in this paper are distilled from my doctoral dissertation "Darkness and Delight: A Portrait of the Life and Work of John Glassco" (1988).
2. I have named John Glassco's unpublished diary, which is held at McGill University, the McGill Journal. It is a holograph document of 128 leaves dating from 28 February 1934 to 15 December 1957. The Journal is part of what I refer to elsewhere in this paper as "The McGill Collection." The collection is held in the Dept. of Rare books and Special Collections, McLennan Library, McGill University. The John Glassco Collection. # 74-731/1917-65.
3. The "Intimate Journal" is part of the John Glassco Papers at the National Archives of Canada. MG 30/D163.

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LES NOMS DE LIEUX DES CANTONS DE L'EST : UNE TOPONYMIE RESPONSABLE

(Conférence prononcée à l'Université Bishop's de Lennoxville, au Colloque du Bicentenaire des Cantons de l'Est organisé par le Centre de recherche des Cantons de l'Est, le 23 mai 1992)

Henri Dorion

Musée de la civilisation

Québec

Introduction

Après avoir imprudemment accepté l'aimable invitation que m'a transmise madame Nadeau-Saumier d'adresser la parole à ce Bicentenaire des Cantons de l'Est, j'ai vite réalisé qu'il serait présomptueux de venir chanter les charmes et les mérites de la toponymie d'une région que plusieurs d'entre vous connaissez beaucoup mieux que moi, pour l'avoir fréquentée et analysée avec ferveur et méthode.

A tous les détours de l'histoire, dans tous les replis d'une géographie émaillée de couleurs et de formes diverses, des noms de personnes et de lieux surgissent, porteurs de souvenirs dont certains se lovent dans des niches si intimes de la mémoire collective que c'est par de patientes recherches comme celles qui ont alimenté vos débats et échanges qu'il est possible d'en découvrir, d'en décoder le message. L'interrogation attentive des événements passés par le décryptage des documents anciens et des noms qu'ils recèlent, vous a, j'en suis persuadé, livré des clés pour lire à travers les noms de lieux les mille éléments qui composent l'histoire et la géographie de cette région.

Ayant conscience d'avoir bien peu à vous apprendre à cet égard, l'objectif de mes propos sera plus modeste et je ne ferai que prendre à témoin quelques éléments du trésor toponymique des Cantons de l'Est pour appuyer ou illustrer certaines réflexions que 25 ans de recherches et de gestion toponymiques m'ont inspirées.

Avant de vous livrer ces quelques pensées, permettez-moi, pour respecter le caractère en un sens sacré qui est celui d'un

bicentenaire, de rendre hommage, d'une manière presque rituelle, à un nom de lieu bien particulier, singulier, sous la protection duquel, si je puis dire, je logerai mes propos. Ce nom est *Mena'Sen*. Évoquer ce nom de lieu, en effet, c'est aussi l'invoquer, un peu comme les indiens qui en faisaient une divinité sortie des eaux pour barrer la route à ceux qui y passaient et qui devaient lui rendre hommage. C'est faire appel aux nombreux souvenirs qui se sont réfugiés au-dessus et autour de ce *Rocher du pin solitaire* (traduction de *Mena'Sen*), c'est aussi rappeler les symboles dont est dépositaire ce lieu de mémoire, situé dans la rivière Saint-François, près de la confluence avec la rivière Magog.

Bien sûr, le nom de *Mena'Sen* rappelle d'abord la présence abénaquise dans la région. Mais au-delà ou à partir des preuves historiques, fleurissent aussi des légendes qui, pour contradictoires qu'elles soient, méritent de continuer à hanter la mémoire des lieux. L'une d'elle entrelace cruauté et sagesse en racontant que tribus abénaquises et iroquoises, en ennemies qu'elles étaient, décidèrent un jour de ramener leur inévitable affrontement aux dimensions d'une compétition entre deux guerriers qui eurent le pénible privilège de défendre les couleurs de leurs nations respectives en courant autour du Pin solitaire jusqu'à épuisement. Le vainqueur, qui en l'occurrence fut l'Abénaquis, eût ainsi le droit d'occire le vaincu dont le sacrifice sauva bien des vies parmi les armées qui s'opposèrent ainsi par procuration.

L'autre légende, plus douce, raconte que deux amants, venant de leur pays abénaquis plus au sud, arrivèrent épuisés près d'un rocher où la belle mourut. L'amant ensevelit son corps sur l'île nue et y planta un pin dont les racines s'alimentèrent au coeur de la belle abénaquise.

On rapporte aussi que ce lieu, ou tout près, s'appelait aussi Shacewantegou "lieu où l'on fume". Était-ce la pipe du repos ou le calumet de paix?

Que ce soit pour y résoudre des disputes entre nations ou pour y ensevelir le souvenir d'un amour interrompu par la mort, ou pour d'autres raisons que la légende a imaginées, *Mena'Sen, le rocher du Pin solitaire*, fut donc un lieu de mémoire et d'imagination, un lieu de rencontre entre nations autochtones et aussi, plus tard, entre les nations exogènes que furent français et britanniques.

Mais la leçon de *Mena'Sen* fait aussi réfléchir à l'importance relative des choses et des êtres. Car le fait que ce nom immortalise un arbre, un arbre solitaire sur un rocher nu, fait mentir cette règle qui veut que dans les pays de forêts, on ne nomme pas les arbres.

Le *Pin solitaire*, par la mémoire qu'il entretient, par les légendes qu'il a engendrées, a acquis ses lettres de noblesse et, à titre de nom propre, la dignité de toponyme.

Ce faisant, ce nom a aussi acquis la force de la permanence. Car, si une triste journée de tempête eut raison du *Pin solitaire*, le 23 novembre 1913, elle n'eut pas raison de sa persistance dans la mémoire des hommes où elle demeurera longtemps. Le nom survit à la chose; là réside la force et la magie de la toponymie. Cela, un poète amérindien, de la nation kwakiutl, l'a exprimé en termes émouvants : "Nous n'avons aucun monument, aucune littérature. Ni rouleaux, ni peintures sur toile, nous racontent les merveilles de notre passé. Quelles frustrations attendent les recherches de ceux qui transmettent le savoir! Qu'ils trouvent les noms des terres, les noms des mers et des rivières. Que ces noms ne s'effacent pas de la mémoire. Ce sont nos monuments". Il y a, dans ces évocations autour de *Mena'Sen*, plusieurs leçons toponymiques, sur lesquelles je voudrais concentrer mon propos.

J'ai dit que je ne réciterais pas la magnifique litanie des noms de lieux évocateurs de cette région, mais je prendrai plutôt appui sur sa variété toponymique pour rappeler quelques enseignements de cette science historique et identitaire qu'est la toponymie. Je tenterai de le démontrer à partir de 5 thèmes :

- 1^{er} thème : La toponymie est le miroir de ce qu'elle nomme : comme la région elle-même, la toponymie des Cantons de l'Est est un espace de confluence.
- 2^e thème : La toponymie est une mémoire permanente : elle nous rattache à notre passé et elle garantit que notre futur sera relié à notre présent. Mais il faut y veiller.
- 3^e thème : La toponymie est vivante; elle est dynamique, elle évolue, elle s'adapte; en cela aussi, elle est témoin. Il faut respecter ses pulsions.
- 4^e thème : Comme la langue elle-même, la toponymie est sujette à normalisation, c'est là la rançon des nouvelles technologies et de l'internationalisme; mais jusqu'où et à quelles conditions?
- 5^e thème : Et enfin, pour nous réconcilier avec la fantaisie, l'imaginaire et parfois avec le rêve, je rappellerai que la toponymie a ses secrets; et, à cet égard, je plaiderai pour le droit à l'hypothèse et, pourquoi pas, à l'erreur.

1. La toponymie est un trésor

Ne parle-t-on pas, pour désigner l'ensemble des noms d'un pays ou d'une région, de "trésor toponymique". Chaque nom recèle une information plurielle, sur l'événement ou la personne qui a présidé à la désignation du lieu, sur les circonstances de sa découverte ou de sa promotion au rang de chose nommée, sur la manière dont les premiers habitants l'ont perçu, sur les espoirs ou les craintes qu'il inspirait. Des noms comme *Le Portage*, *Hyatt's Mill*, *La Grenouillère*, *Salmon Falls* ne font pas mystère, pas plus d'ailleurs que ne font mystère pour les quelques privilégiés qui connaissent les langues amérindiennes, des noms comme *Coaticook* et *Memphrémagog* qui signifient respectivement "le pin" et "grande étendue d'eau".

Ce que je voudrais souligner ici, c'est qu'au-delà de chaque nom de lieu, au-delà de l'information que, un à un, les toponymes livrent au chercheur, c'est l'ensemble des noms d'une région qui constitue une description, une caractérisation pour ainsi dire synoptique d'un "pays" au sens français du terme, c'est-à-dire d'une région. Y a-t-il, par exemple, témoignage plus éloquent de cette confluence ethnique et linguistique qui caractérise cette région, que la séquence — dans l'espace et dans le temps — de nombreux toponymes des Cantons de l'Est?

Prenons l'exemple de ce lieu que les Abénaquis nommaient *Ktineketolekwak*, c'est-à-dire "les grandes fourches", à la confluence des rivières *Alsigontekw* — "rivière aux coquillages" — et *Magog* (que les Abénaquis appelaient d'ailleurs aussi *Pskasewantek* — "rivière méandree"). La traduction de *Ktineketolekwak* s'est imposée dans l'usage qui consacra les formes *Les Grandes Fourches* puis *Great Forks*, après l'avoir désigné du nom de *Grand Portage*, *Le Portage* et *Le Sault*.

Par un phénomène de retour aux origines, fréquent en toponymie, le souvenir d'un village du Berkshire, célèbre pour ses courses de chevaux, prit le pas sur les trop évidentes descriptions des lieux que représentaient les noms antérieurs et lui substitua le nostalgique *Ascot*, vite remplacé par ce que l'on pourrait appeler un "rapatriement toponymique", en donnant à ce lieu le nom de celui qui en 1795 y construisit un moulin, qui enjambait la rivière Magog, moulin qui méritait bien de s'inscrire dans la toponymie vu le nombre important de citoyens qui y venaient faire scier leur bois ou moudre leur grain.

Hyatt's Mill était né du nom de Gilbert Hyatt, ce riche fermier-entrepreneur originaire de Schenectady, New York. Mais sa gloire

toponymique, du moins officiellement, dura moins d'un quart de siècle, puisqu'en 1818, le gouverneur John Sherbrooke "with great condescension has permitted the Settlers on the Forks of the River St. Francis, to designate the village at that place by the name of Sherbrooke". Et la *Quebec Gazette* de souligner la valeur symbolique de ce changement : c'était, y fut-il écrit, "l'influence britannique détrônant la colonisation loyaliste".

Toutes les villes n'ont pas ce bagage de synonymes qui sont autant de repères historiques. Mais si l'on jette un regard synoptique, un regard d'ensemble, sur la carte des Cantons de l'Est, cette confluence, à la fois juxtaposition et sédimentation d'origines, d'influences et, par conséquent, de natures et de caractères différents, apparaît tout de suite et clairement dans la toponymie. Les plages de noms amérindiens, anglais et français, avec leurs couleurs respectives, s'y entremêlent comme dans un paysage d'automne.

Les noms religieux des paroisses font bon ménage avec les noms civils des cantons; les béatifiés se retrouvent assis au même banc que les grands de ce monde dont les noms d'ailleurs étaient à l'origine pour la grande majorité inspirés de la nature : *Saint-Georges-de-Windsor*, *Saint-Ignace-de-Stanbridge*, *Saint-Grégoire-de-Greenlay*, *Saint-Paul d'Abbotsford*. Comme d'ailleurs se voisaient des transplantations pures et simples de France ou d'Angleterre; ou du moins les croit-on "pures et simples"; car, tout compte fait, *Waterloo* dont on devine la raison d'être dans cette région, est-il un immigrant belge ou britannique?

Notre *Windsor* est un toponyme, inspiré d'un anthroponyme collectif (la "maison de Windsor"), lui-même issu d'un nom de lieu topographique. Quelquefois, la séquence est plus longue comme dans ce nom — que vous me permettez d'emprunter d'une autre région du Québec — de *Roberval*, qui est un nom de lieu, emprunté d'un nom de personne, à son tour, emprunté d'un nom de lieu, lui-même d'origine anthroponymique. Mais, dans des séquences de ce genre, la toponymie sait choisir ses références, ses patrons et ses idoles.

Les Cantons de l'Est, terre de confluence, la toponymie est là pour le rappeler éloquentement.

2. La toponymie est une mémoire

La mémoire, dit-on, est une faculté qui oublie. La mémoire, en effet, ça s'entretient; ça se développe et ça invente; ça se refoule aussi. (Une exposition permanente du Musée de la civilisation de

Québec, justement intitulée “Mémoires”, illustre ces différentes facettes de la mémoire collective qui fonctionne à cet égard exactement comme la mémoire individuelle.) La mémoire toponymique est “gérée”; gérée collectivement par la sagesse populaire; gérée aussi par des “autorités toponymiques” que je me permettrai ici de qualifier, en dépit de mes fonctions antérieures, de “mal nécessaire”, en ce sens que la sagesse populaire en général bien inspirée se permet quelquefois des écarts de conduite ou des délits d’opinion qu’il est alors fort bien de corriger.

Ainsi, le respect de la toponymie autochtone, qui a constitué chez nous une préoccupation nouvelle dans les années 80 (et j’ose espérer qu’elle aura des suites), n’a pas toujours caractérisé les attitudes d’un Québec qui a connu ses périodes d’intolérance. Rappelons-nous qu’un haut fonctionnaire provincial, M. Eugène Rouillard, publiait en 1908, un réquisitoire intitulé “L’invasion des noms sauvages au Québec”. Autres temps, autres mœurs : en 1985, la Commission de toponymie du Québec entreprenait la publication d’une série de Répertoires présentant la toponymie de chacune des nations amérindiennes du Québec. Le premier recueil fut d’ailleurs celui de “La toponymie des Abénaquis”, qui inventoria plusieurs centaines de noms de lieux abénaquis encore connus, pour la grande majorité évidemment situés dans les Cantons de l’Est et les régions voisines. Bien sûr, il est difficile de redonner droit de cité, en les rendant “officiels”, aux innombrables noms de lieux dont les autochtones avaient baptisé nos régions et que des siècles d’indifférence, d’ignorance ou même d’intolérance avaient effacés. Mais au moins, que leur connaissance, leur consignation, leur analyse retiennent l’attention des chercheurs qui ont la responsabilité de contribuer au respect de l’Histoire.

Ce plaidoyer pour la consolidation sinon la réhabilitation d’une toponymie respectueuse, vaut pour toutes les couches de la sédimentation historique — et toponymique — qu’ont connues le Québec comme d’ailleurs tout particulièrement les Cantons de l’Est. Colonisée par des Loyalistes anglophones, développée par des chevaliers d’industrie d’abord britanniques, puis canadiens, anglophones puis francophones, cette région a retenu, dans ses noms géographiques, les étapes de son évolution. Cette séquence de noms, qui constitue en quelque sorte les éphémérides de sa trame historique, constitue un patrimoine qu’au nom d’aucun principe valable il n’est acceptable de détruire ou d’oblitérer.

Bien sûr, certains noms, trop liés à des options politiques qu’aujourd’hui d’aucuns renient, peuvent devenir gênants. Une

rue de Sherbrooke honora *Philippe Pétain*, le héros de Verdun, qui, aux yeux de plusieurs, était encore honorable en 1953, mais non plus en 1960, date où la rue en question changea de nom. *Sic transit gloria mundi*. Certaines administrations ont d'ailleurs l'habileté de maquiller leurs intentions : ainsi, la *rue de l'Isle-Dieu*, à Sainte-Foy rappelle, dit-on, la mémoire d'un modeste prêtre d'origine française; la vérité est que le maire de l'époque, qui avait Philippe Pétain en haute estime, a voulu, à travers une appellation homonyme, vénérer l'île où mourut le Maréchal en exil. La toponymie, avais-je dit, recèle des trésors d'information, des trésors quelquefois bien cachés.

Mais au-delà de certains rajustements compréhensibles des choix historiques, au-delà des divergences d'opinion, la permanence de la mémoire toponymique demeure un précepte à respecter. Et quoi qu'en pensent certains esprits simplificateurs qui voient dans le chanoine Groulx un penseur fascisant, qu'on n'oublie pas, avant de rayer son nom du répertoire odonymique des villes, qu'il fut témoin et miroir de son temps et que nos ancêtres en furent solidaires.

Bien sûr, quand on pense à la mémoire toponymique et aux rajustements qu'on lui fait subir, on ne peut pas ne pas évoquer la francisation, cette légitime préoccupation d'un peuple en processus de définition, processus qui a la singulière particularité d'être aussi interrogatif que constant. Je n'entrerai pas dans ce débat qui est délicat parce qu'identitaire et par conséquent subjectif. Ce qui importe c'est de répéter, de persister et de signer ce qui devrait aussi devenir un slogan : "Touche pas à ma toponymie". Mais, encore là, tout dogmatisme est dangereux. Remplacer le nom de *rivière Ascot* ou *Ascot River* par *rivière au Saumon* est-il opportun ou inapproprié? Le fait qu'il s'agit moins d'une innovation que d'un retour au nom original ne peut être une justification que dans la mesure où la population, et au premier chef les usagers locaux, le souhaitent.

Il est moins dérangeant d'entendre *Sherbrooke* prononcé à la française et *Trois-Rivières* prononcé à l'anglaise que de lire sur les cartes *Three Rivers* et d'entendre des plaidoyers pour changer *Sherbrooke* en *Cherbourg*! Respectons la toponymie écrite; l'oral suivra, s'il le peut.

3. La toponymie est dynamique, vivante

Car c'est ainsi qu'évolue la toponymie. Il est dans l'ordre des choses que la toponymie respire, s'adapte, par osmose, par lentes

transformations dues à toutes sortes de facteurs, y compris l'erreur. Que la *Market Street* de 1846 soit devenue la *rue Marquette* d'aujourd'hui peut bien relever d'un bilinguisme folklorique et constituer ce que les toponymistes dans leur jargon appellent le phénomène de l'"attraction paronymique"; mais cela n'est ni étonnant ni condamnable. La *rue de la Montagne*, à Montréal, a bien déjà été la *Bishop Mountain Street*, et les chercheurs ne s'entendent pas pour identifier laquelle des deux formes fut la première. Et il n'y a rien d'iconoclaste à ce que les anglophones du canton de Stanstead aient fait de *Chemin Vaillancourt* le *Vancourt Road*.

En fait, toute adaptation phonétique d'un langue à une autre, surtout entre langues qui ont des systèmes phonologiques différents, peut engendrer des glissements de sens ou carrément des pertes de sens. Il faut savoir que les sons "J" et "F" n'existent pas dans les langues amérindiennes du Québec pour comprendre que *Sansozepowdi* n'est que l'adaptation phonétique de *chemin Saint-Joseph*. On devine que les adaptations dans le sens inverse, c'est-à-dire en se référant à "notre" manière de prononcer les toponymes amérindiens, risquent fort de nous éloigner du sens originel des noms de lieux. Ce qui importe c'est de retrouver les origines et les consigner.

Il a fallu du flair — et de l'imagination peut-être — pour retrouver l'origine de la *Côte des Quatorze*, ce coin de l'Est de Sherbrooke où fonctionnait un abattoir au début du siècle. L'origine en serait l'adaptation phonétique — bien approximativement — de "Cattle and Horses". Folklorique? Oui, bien sûr. Autant et aussi délicieusement intéressant que le bien connu *Elephant and Castle*, de Londres et d'ailleurs, qui ne serait que l'adaptation phonétique et bien approximative aussi — de *El Infante de Castilla*.

La toponymie, comme la langue elle-même, est dynamique. Elle évolue; elle invente. L'usage est la règle d'or qu'il faut respecter. Au point même que le grand dialectologue suisse Schüle a dit un jour : "En toponymie, l'erreur n'existe pas!"

4. La normalisation, un mal nécessaire

Bien sûr, j'exagère en disant que la normalisation est un mal nécessaire. Je veux dire par là que la sagesse populaire, dans le meilleur des contextes, devrait être le juge suprême quant au choix et à l'usage des noms.

A vrai dire, la normalisation est nécessaire parce que, pour des raisons d'économie, de sécurité, de précision scientifique, pour des raisons d'ordre judiciaire même, il importe que le rapport entre un

nom et un lieu ne soit ni équivoque ni ambigu. Livrer le courrier à la mauvaise adresse coûte cher. Une ambulance qui se rend dans un chemin qui porte le même nom que celui d'où provient l'appel peut être cause de malheur. La délocalisation, par imprécision toponymique, d'un fait historique peut être à l'origine d'hypothèse fautives et de recherches inutiles. Et combien de procès coûteux ont eu à débattre la localisation d'un ruisseau limitrophe ou d'une borne définie par référence à des micro-toponymes! Les raisons sont multiples pour justifier que les noms de lacs, de rivières, de rangs, de rues soient normalisés, officialisés de façon univoque (un lieu = un nom) et que ce travail relève d'autorités responsables.

A vrai dire, la tâche de ces autorités n'est pas toujours facile puisqu'elles doivent établir un juste équilibre entre deux tentations également dangereuses: le laxisme et le purisme. Un minimum de respect pour la langue française — et la remarque vaut de la même manière pour les toponymes anglais par rapport à la langue de Shakespeare — exige que les manquements aux règles élémentaires de la grammaire ne soient pas plus tolérées dans la toponymie que dans la langue courante. N'accusons pas la langue anglaise d'imposer des calques grammaticaux à la toponymie française. Ici comme ailleurs, c'est l'emprunteur qui contracte une responsabilité; et ici comme ailleurs, la vigilance est de mise. Oublier, ou pire ignorer, qu'en français les prépositions ont une fonction dans le discours (et dire par exemple *Chemin Montréal* au lieu de *Chemin de Montréal*), c'est tronquer sa langue. Sans aller jusqu'à dire qu'il y a là un crime de lèse-Molière, convenons qu'un souci raisonnable du détail du bien-dire a sa place dans la toponymie. Car si, comme on l'a dit, celle-ci est un miroir, moins il y aura d'impuretés, plus nette sera l'image.

Mais à l'autre bout de l'échelle des attitudes, il y a le purisme au nom duquel certains veulent traduire des noms de lieux, revenir aux noms d'origine, en changer d'autres pour l'unique raison que les cadres de référence politiques ou administratifs ont changé. Ceux qui reprochent à cette région de se désigner les Cantons de l'Est alors qu'elle est située au Sud-Ouest du Québec feignent d'ignorer que ces Cantons furent établis immédiatement après ceux du Haut-Canada, ce qui est connu d'à peu près tout le monde. On appelle bien Transdanubie la région située de ce côté-ci (à l'ouest) du Danube, ce qui rappelle que les Hongrois qui habitent cette région sont venus d'Asie.

Il n'y a pas plus lieu de changer ces noms au nom de réalités

géographiques subjectives que d'invoquer la variation des proportions ethno-linguistiques d'une région pour justifier une révision systématique de sa toponymie. Il y aurait là un soi-disant purisme, dangereux, que la sagesse populaire est en mesure de contrôler, à condition qu'on soit à son écoute. On en revient toujours à la règle d'or de la toponymie : l'usage; l'usage objectif, concret, autant que la volonté des usagers.

Bien sûr cette volonté des usagers, leurs goûts, leurs caprices même ne sont pas toujours unanimes. La toponymie et sa gérance, comme en politique, c'est l'art du possible. Et les choix sont quelquefois multiples. Et j'aborde ici mon cinquième et dernier thème.

5. Le droit à l'hypothèse

En officialisant les noms de lieux, les autorités toponymiques doivent quelquefois effectuer des choix. Ceux-ci doivent d'abord respecter l'usage qui est la règle d'or. Mais des usages contradictoires cohabitent souvent. On a alors recours à des critères d'ordres différents : l'antécédance, la charge historique, l'exactitude sémantique. Mais là encore des difficultés se posent. D'abord, les critères n'ont pas de poids spécifique stable, c'est-à-dire que tel critère n'a pas dans tous les cas préséance sur tel autre. Aussi, et surtout, l'exactitude sémantique (telle signification ou telle origine plutôt que telle autre) et, par conséquent, la signification historique sont souvent, elles mêmes, sujettes à controverse ou, du moins, à divergence d'opinions.

A cet égard, il n'y a pas de tribunal toponymique — et c'est tant mieux. En appelant à la barre des témoins les faits connus de l'histoire, les documents, les connaissances linguistiques (maigres, souvent, pour ce qui touche la toponymie amérindienne), certaines explications pourraient apparaître plus vraisemblables que d'autres. Et alors? Si j'ose dire, l'hypothèse la plus plausible n'est pas toujours la plus intéressante. Car la richesse de la toponymie tient tout autant à cette "valeur ajoutée" que l'imagination et la fantaisie des usagers lui attachent.

Prenons l'exemple de la *rue King* à Sherbrooke. L'opinion populaire y voit un hommage au Roi d'Angleterre. Cette référence a été retenue par madame Andrée Désilets, dans son ouvrage sur "Les noms de rues de Sherbrooke" en précisant que le roi éponyme était Guillaume IV. Cela est tout à fait vraisemblable. Mais il est intéressant d'apprendre qu'en 1934 un nommé Otis King possédait une taverne sur la rue qui l'année suivante — par hasard sans doute —

reçut officiellement son nom. Un autre King fut tabaconiste dans la même rue et Ira King y installa une boutique, à vrai dire quelques années plus tard. Le nom du lieutenant colonel Charles King, notable de Sherbrooke, a aussi été invoqué. Que la *rue King* rappelle à certains le roi William the Fourth et à d'autres quelque boutiquier, il y a moins matière à authentifier une exclusive vérité qu'à se réjouir de cette heureuse cohabitation dans l'imagination populaire du souverain et de ses humbles sujets.

Que la *rue Vigneault* à Ascot-Nord (Fleurimont depuis 1971) tire son nom d'un ancien secrétaire-trésorier à la commission scolaire de la ville et que des visiteurs de passage peuvent plutôt être interpellés comme "gens de mon pays", cela n'a rien de déviant.

Et ceux qui croiseront à Fleurimont une série de rues portant des noms de fleurs, y verront peut être la justification du nouveau nom d'Ascot-Nord, alors qu'il rappelle en fait la mémoire du chevalier de Fleurimont, un officier de l'armée canadienne qui fut affecté à la défense du territoire menacé par les Américains. Ces deux relations ne sont pas contradictoires. Comme il n'est pas contradictoire que la *rivière Saint-François* est bien sûr dédicatoire à l'un des saints de ce nom, mais en même temps au fils aîné du 4^e gouverneur de la Nouvelle-France, François de Lauson, sieur de Lirec.

La *rue Fulton*, à Sherbrooke, honore-t-elle l'inventeur du bateau à vapeur ou un pionnier Sherbrookoïse? Ou les deux?

Et qui donc pourra dire avec certitude que sont contradictoires ou pas les diverses explications données quant à l'origine du nom *Mégantic* : gros bois, gros arbre, là où il y a des poissons, le loup-chevreuil, le nom d'un chef indien, ou encore l'endroit des truites saumonées? Qui dit vrai? Qui dit mieux?

L'opération qui consiste à officialiser un seul nom pour chaque lieu ne devrait jamais avoir pour effet de reléguer dans l'oubli les divers sens qu'on lui attribue, si surprenants peuvent-ils paraître. Il faut protéger le droit à l'hypothèse, même si de savants chercheurs en viennent à découvrir, preuves à l'appui, la face cachée de chaque nom de lieu.

Leurs trouvailles, autant que celles des étymologies populaires, auront confirmé que la toponymie est un miroir, une mémoire, permanente mais vivante et dynamique, qu'elle est forcément sujette à normalisation, mais qu'elle doit continuer de s'abreuver à l'imaginaire, qui réciproquement, la nourrit. Les noms de lieux sont objets d'appropriation culturelle : s'y greffent, en amont comme en aval de leur confluence avec l'usage, des souvenirs, des

valeurs, des croyances, des idéaux aussi.

N'est-il pas symbolique et stimulant de rencontrer le village de *L'Avenir* aux portes des Cantons de l'Est et aux portes de ce 3^e siècle qui commence et auquel nous a conviés ce Bicentenaire des Cantons de l'Est?

THE HYATT PAPERS: AN INTERPRETATION

Introduced and transcribed by

Stephen Moore

Sherbrooke

As with most military confrontations, the hostilities arising out of the American Revolution produced a significant number of political refugees. In making the decision to remain loyal to the British crown, many Americans found themselves displaced from their homes and businesses, ridiculed and persecuted by their fellow colonists. As a result, most fled to what remained of British North America: what was then Quebec and Nova Scotia. One of the principal points of entry for those travelling by land and inland waterways was the outlet of Lake Champlain where it empties into the Richelieu River in what is today the Province of Quebec. Along the banks of the river and in the area adjacent to Missisquoi Bay, hundreds of loyalists from the Hudson River Valley and northern colonies congregated in safety and in anticipation of government reconciliation.

In return for property confiscated and/or military service in support of the crown, the loyalists sought compensation from government representatives. In addition to short term needs such as food and related supplies, the loyalists also requested grants of land for the permanent resettlement of their families and the re-establishment of their livelihoods. Up to this point in time, settlement in the old colony of Quebec had been concentrated along the St. Lawrence River and its principal tributaries. The more outlying areas remained unsettled and were considered for the most part, wastelands. Included among these wastelands was the territory in the southeastern part of the colony, now known as the Eastern Townships. The mountainous foothills and uplands of the area were viewed by many loyalists as representative of the topography of New England and New York; a landscape that was familiar and appealing, their ancestors having farmed similar terrain for generations. The colonial government on the other hand, initially prohibited settlement in the area, wishing instead to retain the territory as a wilderness impediment to the northward spread of

republican ideologies emanating from the independent American colonies. As a consequence of this policy, loyalists were encouraged to relocate to other sections of the colony, notably, the upper reaches of the St. Lawrence River Valley and the Gaspé Peninsula. Grudgingly, most loyalists complied. A handful of loyalists, though, remained in the area and continued to lobby for lands in the eastern sections.

In 1791, the government reversed its policies and with the introduction of the Constitutional Act, began the process of opening up the Eastern Townships for settlement. The territory was subdivided into approximately ninety townships, each measuring about 10 miles square. The individual townships were granted to groups of settlers, consisting of a leader and a minimum of fellow associates. Among the first to apply for lands in the region were the remaining loyalist holdouts still residing in the upper Richelieu Valley near Missisquoi. Included in this group was a loyalist by the name of Gilbert Hyatt.

Having served with the King's Loyal Americans under General Burgoyne, Hyatt submitted a petition for the Township of Ascot based upon his military record. After nearly a decade of delays caused by government changes in regulations and deliberate posturing in respect to the whole subject of land grants, Hyatt was eventually granted Letters Patent for Ascot in 1803. To his dismay, however, he received only a portion of the township. As well, some of his associates were disqualified outright and others received less than the normal anticipated 1200 acres. Hyatt was unable therefore to cover the costs he had incurred in settling the township. By his own account, he had spent a personal fortune on such endeavors as the construction of a road from Missisquoi, the establishment of a grist mill on the falls of the Magog River, the settlement of a number of families and the surveying of the township. Because these costs were never recovered, Hyatt was forced to sell off most of his grant and to exploit the commercial opportunities of his mill site in what is today the city of Sherbrooke. Deprived of the land to which he was entitled and thus the financial security that it represented, Hyatt travelled to Quebec City on numerous occasions to plead his case. While there, he submitted many memorials to the government, though all to no avail. His claims rejected, Hyatt was forced to live out his life in financial despair and relative obscurity.

In the fall of 1991, Glenn Taylor, a resident of Phoenix, Arizona and a direct descendant of Gilbert Hyatt, donated a collection of

private papers to Bishop's University. Handed down from generation to generation, the collection consists of various papers relating to the Hyatt family including petitions, deeds, military certificates and government documents. While the selection of papers contained in the collection are but a mere fraction of the total number of documents that can be attributed to Gilbert Hyatt, they nevertheless constitute a representative sample of the type and variety of legal documents that Gilbert and other family members were witness to in their daily lives during the early days of settlement in Ascot Township. The following examples that make up part of the collection, reflect some of the overall problems associated with the initial settlement of the region and more specifically, the inequities that often characterized the land grant system during the 1790s and 1800s.

* * *

Explanatory Notes on the Transcription of the Hyatt Papers

In transcribing the Hyatt Papers, the following procedures and practices were employed:

1. all original punctuation was retained
2. because of different handwriting styles, capitalization was not retained but altered to conform with today's standard
3. of those documents consisting of text that is both printed and handwritten, the non-printed text (ranging from individual letters to whole paragraphs) is enclosed in double quotation marks
4. text that is segregated in the original documents by brackets is identified in the transcripts by: []
5. the use of () in the transcripts implies inserted information as in the following examples:
 - (sic) spelling error
 - (_____) indiscernible word or words
 - (de)privation missing letters or syllables
 - (signed) signature
 - (double entry) words written twice

The first item consists of a list of applicants for land grants in the Township of Ascot, dated 1796. In effect, it is a list of 45 associates and their leader, Gilbert Hyatt, each of whom petitioned for specific lots within the township. Because of changing government regulations, varying aspirations of individual applicants and the inability of some to meet minimum conditions and requirements, the makeup of the list of associates often changed over time. Hyatt's original petition for example, contained over 200 associates while the final list of grantees recorded only 30 individuals in 1803.

The repetition of family names on the following list reflects the inter-relationships that often existed among associates of a given township; relationships that were based upon family ties, joint military service or common links to a former community. As the document suggests, the Hyatt family was well represented among the list of associates, with five brothers named in addition to Gilbert. As well, Gilbert's mother's maiden name was Canfield, thus establishing the identity of another family member on the list, Enos Canfield.



List of the Speculators of the Town of Acworth			
No. Lots	Cont. acres	Names	Remarks
3 9 12 19 2 1	8 6 7 16 8 8	Gilbert Hyatt	Leader
8	7	Abraham Hyatt	
5	1	Isaac Hyatt	
6	1	Isaac Hyatt	
7	7	Cornelius Hyatt	
9	4	Ebenezer Lobdell	
13	0	Thomas Lobdell	
15	6	James Lobdell	
10	6	Moses Knapp	
1	4	David McC	
2	4	Joseph Merihew	
14	6	John Merihew	
		The ² Merihew	
4	5	Clara A. McC	
		Abraham McC	
14	7	Joseph McC	
		Francis Wilson	
3	6	Clement Wilson	
4	6	Joseph Wilson	
3	5	John Wilson Sr ^g	
		John Wilson Jun ^r	
7	4	John Wilson	3

No Lots	Rank	Names	Remarks
11	6	Stephen Wilson	
3	2	Thos. Wilson	
1	3	Abiram Vantide	
22	7	Chas. Dorman	
26	7	Sam. Dorman	
13	6	James Dorman	
		Philip Cook	
		Sam. L. Bickham	
12	4	Joel Leonard	
12	5	John Ward	
		Uri Edgemo	
5	7	Enos Campfield	
16	4	John Newton	
15	4	Benj. Benoit	
		Samuel Hubart	
7	7	Willard Hubart	
		Levi Presbrey	
2	3	Jacob Mc	
18	4	Belus Ward	
1	1	Phillip Dillenback	
2	1	Henry Dillenback	
17	7	Jonathan Hall	
6	7	W. Kinder	

Hyatt Papers: file # 1, article # 24**format:** two remnants of one folio - handwritten**subject:** list of associates for Ascot Township, dated 1796**folio title:** List of Associates and their petitions (?) or Lot(s)
Ascott (sic) 29th Feb^{ry} 1796**folio text:**

A list of the Associates of the Town(ship) of Ascot

N. ^o Lots	Concession	Names	Remarks
3	8	Gilbert Hyatt	Leader
9	6	"	
18	7	"	
19	7	"	
7	6	"	
2	8	"	
1	5	Joseph Hyatt	
8	7	Abram Hyatt	
5	1	Isaac Hyatt	
6	1	Jacob Hyatt	
7	7	Cornelius Hyatt	
7	4	Ebnez. ⁿ Lobdell	
13	8	Thomas Lobdell	
15 (13?)	6	James Lobdell	
10	6	Moses Knapp	
1	4	David Moe	
2	4	Joseph Merihew	
14	6	John Merihew	
		Tho. ^s Merihew	
4	5	Elam A Moe	
		Abram Moe	
14	7	Joseph Moe	
		Francis Wilcox	
3	6	Clement Wilcox	
4	6	Joseph Wilcox	
3	5	John Wilcox Seig. ⁿ (sic)	
		John Wilcox Jun. ⁿ	
7	4	John Wilcox 3 (i.e. the 3rd)	
11	6	Stephen Wilcox	
3	2	Tho. ^s Wilcox	

1	3	Abram Vontine
20	7	Ebnez. ⁿ Dorman
26	7	Sam. ¹ Dorman
15	6	James Burns
		Philip Cook
		Sam. ¹ Peckam (sic ?) Jun. ⁿ
12	4	Joel Leonard
12	5	John Ward
		Uri Colgrave
5	7	Enos Canfield
16	4	John Newton
15	4	Benj. ⁿ Benidict (sic ?)
		Israel Hubart (sic ?)
7	7	Bildad Hubart (sic ?)
		Levi Presbrey
2	3	Jacob Moe
13	4	Beluv (?) Ward
1	1	Philip Dillenback
2	1	Henry Dillenback
17	7	Jonathan Ball
6	7	V (?) Kindell

In 1800, the colonial government decided to award the Township of Ascot to Gilbert Hyatt as the following document attests. Calling for a warrant of survey and subdivision of the township, the government officially issued Letters Patent two years later. According to the document, only 24 associates were under consideration at this point in time.

Hyatt Papers: file # 2, article # 01

format: one leaf - handwritten

subject: Order of Council regarding the surveying and subdivision of Ascot Township, dated 1800

leaf title: Ascott (sic)
Order of Council for a Warrant of Survey and Subdivision in favor of G. Hyatt & 24 Associates
3^d March 1800

leaf text:

Extract from the Minutes of Council
Council Chamber Castle of S.^t Lewis
Quebec 3rd March 1800

Present

His Excellency Rob.^t S. Milnes Esq.^r Lieut. Governor in Council

Ordered also that a Warrant of Survey and Subdivision of the Township of Ascott (sic) do issue in favor of Gilbert Hyatt and his 24 Associates returnable before His Excellency in Council subject to such further order as shall be deemed expedient.

A true Extract
(signed) H. Ryland

marginal note: Rec^d Monday 17th March 1800
and paid 2/6 fee thereon
(initialled) S.J.

The following document from the same year, reflects both the documentation and costs involved with the land granting system during this period. It consists of a statement of patent fees relating to the land granted to Hyatt and his associates, amounting to in excess of £72 on a total of 20,160 acres of land.

Hyatt Papers: file # 4, article # 21

format: one leaf - handwritten

subject: statement of fees regarding the issuing of patents for Ascot Township, dated 1802

leaf title:

Note

Fees due on the Township of Ascott (sic)

4.th Dec.^r 1800

For Mr. Hyatt

leaf text:

Note of Fees to be provided by Mr. Hyatt
for the Township of Ascot

Ex.^c Council office fees on

Dist.^r return 30 ass^o a(t) 2/6 ea(ch) 3 - 15 - 0

Patent fees on 19,200 acres

add 5 pct 960

20,160 at 3 - 6 - 8

(____) 67 - 4 - 0

Copy of patent etc

1 - 0 - 0

Enrollment

-10 - 0

72 - 9 - 0

With the issuing of Letters Patent in the spring of 1803, the government formalized its decision to grant Gilbert Hyatt only part of the Township of Ascot. Almost immediately, Hyatt was put in the position of having to exploit his mill site on the Magog River in an attempt to recapture some of the capital he had expended over the previous decade in establishing his claims to the township. The following deed demonstrates how Hyatt relinquished title to two riverside lots in order to secure the operation of a blacksmith shop in the vicinity of his grist mill. By attracting various artisans, Hyatt hoped to inflate the value of real estate in the burgeoning community of Hyatt's Mills and thus the value of his Ascot land grants.

Hyatt Papers: file # 1, article # 23

format: one folio - handwritten

subject: deed of obligation of Gilbert Hyatt to Felix Ward

folio title: Bond

Gilbert Hyatt to Felix Ward
for two pieces of land

folio text:

Know all men by these presents, that I Gilbert Hyatt of Ascott (sic), in the County of (blank) in the District of Three Rivers, and Province of Lower Canada am holden and firmly bound unto Felix Ward of the town, county, district and province aforesaid in the sum of one thousand Spanish dollars, to be paid to the said Felix Ward his certain attorney, his heirs, executors, and administrators, to the which payment well and truly to be made I bind myself my heirs, and assigns, jointly and severally firmly by these presents, sealed with my seal. Dated this nineteenth day of November in the forty third year of His Majesty's reign and in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and three.

The conditions of this obligation are such, that, whereas Felix Ward hath promised to build a shop and carry on the business of smithing. The above named Gilbert Hyatt hereby promises and agrees under the above penalty to give the said Felix Ward, his heirs, etc. a good executed deed of two certain pieces of land herein after described agreeably to the laws, of said province whenever the same shall be demanded and which the said Gilbert Hyatt voluntarily declares himself the lawful owner having never before bargained away the same, the said pieces, being a part of lot number nineteen in the seventh range of lots in the said Township of

Ascott (sic), described as follows, [viz] first piece beginning at a post standing on the southerly side of the outlet of Lake Memphremagog 174 feet south 69 degrees west of a large rock on the same side of the river and running thence south 85 degrees west 40 feet to a post, thence north 5 degrees west 30 feet to a post, near the water side, thence north 85 east along the shore 40 feet to a post, thence south 5 degrees, east 30 feet to the place of beginning be the same more or less.

Second piece,

Beginning at a post one chain seventy four links south 10 degrees west of the edge of a rock upon the south side of Memphremagog River a little below the falls, about midway of the floom (sic) that conducts the water to the grist mill, thence running south 10 degrees west three chains fifty links to a post, thence north 80 degrees west two chains fifty links to a post, thence north 10 degrees east three chains twenty five links to a post, thence south 85 degrees east two chains fifty links, to the place of beginning, containing about one hundred and thirty five square rods of ground be the same more or less. Surveyed by Joseph Kilborn on the delivery of the deeds of the above and within described, lands, this obligation null, and void otherwise in full force. Signed and delivered in presence of the witnesses whose names are hereunto annexed, agreeably with the within dates.

(signed)

Gilbert Hyatt

Ebenezer Dorman

Peter Stone

And whereas the principal motive and intent of this sale & conveyance is to enable the said Felix Ward to carry on his smith trade on this part of the said Township of Ascott (sic) and the piece of land herein first before described [an(d) which the s.^d Felix Ward hath already erected a shop] was & is by them the said Gilbert Hyatt & Felix Ward destined and appropriated for that purpose It is therefore covenanted & agreed by & between the said parties (____) and these presents are made (_____) that the said Felix Ward nor his h(eirs) or assigns shall not convert the said piece of land herein first described & the shop now erected thereon so any other use whatever than that for carrying on the said blacksmith trade on pain of the nullity of these presents and that in case his heirs or assigns should not carry on or cause to be carryed (sic) on the said trade on the said premisses (sic)

Because of constant delays brought about by government policy changes, bureaucratic indecision and ineptitude or deliberate stalling tactics, settlers often found themselves in legal limbo, unaware of their present or future status. When the government decided in 1803 to grant only part of the township of Ascot to Hyatt and his associates, Hyatt (and his associates) fully believed that after appropriate appeals, the remaining lots would be handed over as well. This belief is reflected in the following deed of obligation in which one of Hyatt's associates, having decided perhaps to seek his fortunes elsewhere, expressed the desire to satisfy his legal obligations to Hyatt through arbitration.

Hyatt Papers: file # 1, article # 13

format: one folio - handwritten

subject: deed of obligation from Nehemiah Hadley
to Gilbert Hyatt and arbitration

folio title: Bond
Hadley to Hyatt
In arbitration
1804

folio text:

Know all men that I Nehemiah Hadley of Ascott (sic) in the Province of Lower Canada, am held & stand firmly bound unto Gilbert Hyatt of the same Ascott (sic) in the full sum of one hundred pounds provincial currency, to the which payment well & truly to be made to the said Hyatt his heirs & assigns; I the said Hadley do hereby bind myself my heirs, executors & administrators forever by these presents. Witness my hand & seal this twenty eighth day of July AD 1804. Be it remembered that whereas the said Hadley is now situate upon the moiety half of the lot numbered fourteen in the fourth range, for a deed of which the said Hadley now hold(s) & a bond against Jon.^o Ball, & the said Ball holds a bond against the said Hyatt for the same & as said lot is not included in the charter of A.(scot) Town(ship) & as the said Hyatt has made application to the government of said province for a grant of the same half lot on account of, & in the name of the said Hadley for said westerly half, & a determination of government has not yet been made known & the before named parties, & the said Hadley being uneasy in his situation, has called for the penalty of his s.^d bond, & as the damages ultimately falls upon the said Hyatt, & as said Hyatt & Hadley does (sic) not agree upon

terms of settlement in the case, have agreed to refer the same to the judgement & decision of Lee Terrill, Ebenezer Dorman & Moses Nichols, who after hearing the parties upon the same, are to make up their judgment or award in the case, upon the following principals, [which award shall be final between the contending parties]. viz. To say how much damages, if any, shall be awarded to the said Hadley & how the same shall be paid, & when, & whether said Hadley shall even have any priviledge of any thing heretofore done or said, & shall hereafter be done or said in the name of the said Hadley, by the said Hyatt, in procuring said half lot, & also to say whether or not, said Hadley shall give said Hyatt a bond & deed to said Hyatt, said half lot, in case said half lot shall be granted to said Hadley by government, in consideration of duties etc being done by said Hadley upon the same.

Done in the presence of

(signed)	Lee Terrill	Nehemiah Hadley
	Ebenezer Dorman	
	Moses Nichols	

We the undersigned having taken the before named promises into consideration, do agree that M.^r Hyatt give M.^r Hadley two hundred dollars one half to be paid upon the first day of January next & the other half upon the first day of January next after, one half of each payment to be made in neat stock, & the other half in merchantable wheat, & that N.^a Hadley give said Hyatt a bond to deed first half lot to said Hyatt in case it is ever granted by government to N.^a Hadley

(signed) Lee Terrill
Ebenezer Dorman
Moses Nichols

Unfortunately for Hyatt and his family, the inequities of the 1803 decision were never emended. Despite endless appeals Hyatt never received title to the remaining lots. Even after Gilbert's death in 1823, the family continued to plead his case to the government as demonstrated by the following petition submitted by Gilbert's wife, Anna Canfield. By this point in time, however, the family was willing to accept any form of compensation.

Hyatt Papers: file # 3, article # 03

format: one leaf - handwritten

subject: petition from Anna Hyatt for compensation in respect to the expenses incurred by her late husband, Gilbert Hyatt, for surveying the Township of Ascot, dated 1824

leaf title: (none)

leaf text:

To His Excellency

The Honorable Sir Francis Nathaniel Barton, Knight Grand Cross of the Royal Hanoverian (____) Order, Lieutenant Governor in and over the Province of Lower Canada, etc. etc. etc.

May it please Your Excellency

The memorial and petition of Anna Hyatt, widow of the late Gilbert Hyatt Esq^r in his lifetime of the Township of Ascot and province aforesaid

most humbly sheweth

That during the late American Revolution the said Gilbert Hyatt, actuated by the most sincere sentiments of loyalty, left his native country, the then Colony of New York, and came into the Province of Quebec, and immediately entered into the service of His late Majesty in which he continued to serve faithfully until the peace of 1783. Shortly after which he together with many others of His Majesty's faithful old loyal subjects, being encouraged to expect portions of His Majesty's wastelands, settled themselves at Missiskoui (sic) Bay where after some length of time by persevering industry he procured a decent property

That in the year 1792 from the encouragement then held out by the Proclamation of the then Lietenant Gover.^r General Allured (sic) Clarke inviting such of His Majesty's loyal and faithful sub-

jects who were or might desirous of settling themselves on and obtaining portions of His Majesty's wastelands in the Province of Lower Canada to come forward and apply for the same. In consequence of which the said Gilbert Hyatt with (____) others his associates was induced to apply for a portion of His Majesty's wastelands and obtained a Warrant of Survey for the Township of Ascot and penetrated into a pathless wilderness the distance of eighty miles with his surveying party, where with incredible fatigue, hardship, (de)privation, and expense he completed the survey of the whole Township of Ascot, under the full assurance of obtaining a grant of all the lands comprised in his survey. Immediately after completing the survey, at great expense in assuring a passage into the wilderness for the purpose of making a permanent settlement in his township with his family, he effected this arduous undertaking, where he resided twenty seven years, constantly using all his exertions, and induring (sic) incredible hardships and inconveniences in order to promote the individual and general prosperity of the Townships, until his excessive fatigues brought him to a premature end, something more than a year since, leaving from all the land granted to him but two hundred acres, for the maintenance and support of Your Excellency's memorialist and petitioner and six children and considerable debts to be paid even out of this slender remnant of a more ample fortune. In point of fact Your Excellency's memorialist and petitioner's husband sunk the bulk of his fortune in this unhappy business - not thro' any want of due exertion or calculation on his part, but thro' a series of events which proved highly detrimental to the interest of the Townships and such events [regarding the applicants] as could not either before seen or guarded against by any human sagacity prudence or foresight on his part -

After paying the money for the survey of the whole of the Township of Ascot he received a grant for one moiety only, so that in reality the sum of one hundred and fifty pounds have been advanced to Government twenty seven years since for which he has not received even a normal compensation towards the survey of the ungranted lands -

Under consideration of the above described nature Your Excellency's memorialist & petitioner feels a confidence in applying to the justice of Your Excellency in her cause, and begs permission to solicit a return of the monies or a remuneration therefor, for the expense which her late husband paid out for the sole benefit of Government in surveying that part of the Township of Ascot

which still remained in the hands of the Crown meaning 75 (pounds) together with the lawful interest which may have accrued since; or any other provision which Your Excellency in great wisdom and justice may think her case may warrant such as an equivalent in a suitable portion of the yet ungranted lands in said Ascott (sic) - And your mem.st & pet.^r as in duty bound will ever pray

Ascot 22nd Dec^r 1824

widow of the late G. Hyatt Esq^r

The government's decision to grant only part of the Township of Ascot in 1803, left Hyatt financially destitute. Because he did not receive the amount of land anticipated, Hyatt was unable to cover the costs incurred in settling the township. Having expended his own personal fortune, Hyatt was forced to live out his remaining years in a lifestyle that was subordinate to what he had been accustomed to before the war. The following document records the share of Gilbert and Anna's estate apportioned to one of their sons. The list is meagre, suggesting that the Hyatt's enjoyed a relatively modest lifestyle at best.

Hyatt Papers: file # 1, article # 11

format: one leaf - handwritten

subject: inventory of Charles Hyatt's share of the estate of his parents, Gilbert and Anna Hyatt, date unknown

leaf title: Cha^s Hyatt
Inventory

leaf text:

Copy of Charles Hyatt's
Share of the Personal Estate of
Gilbert & Anna Hyatt

9 chairs	\$ 3.60
1 sleigh + harness	20.00
1 yoke irons + chains	7.25
1 account book	1.00
1 bed	10.00
	\$ 41.85

The last document which is presented originated from the government. It is a response to a petition submitted by one of Gilbert Hyatt's sons, Charles. The document demonstrates that even as late as the 1830s, the family had not abandoned its goal of emending the wrongs of 1803. But as the government official argued, too much time had elapsed in the interim to evaluate whether or not any injustice had indeed been perpetrated on the family.

Hyatt Papers: file # 1, article # 22

format: one folio - handwritten

subject: deed of obligation from Nehemiah Hadley
to Gilbert Hyatt and arbitration

folio title: (none)

folio text:

Know all men by these presents that I Nehemiah Hadley of the Township of Ascott (sic) County of Buckinghamshire District of Three Rivers in the Province of Lower Canada am held and stand firmly bound and obligated to Gilbert Hyatt of the township county district and province aforesaid in the penal sum of four hundred Spanish dollars the payment whereof well and truly to be paid to the said Gilbert Hyatt. I hereby bind myself my heirs and assigns. Signed with my hand and sealed with my seal this twenty fifth day of June in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred & five -

The conditions of this bond are stated in an award of arbitration given in writing by Lee Terrill Ebenezer Dorman & Moses Nichols arbitrators dated the twenty eighth day of July 1804 and signed by them the said arbitrators -

The condition of this obligation is such that whereas the said Hadley being now settled & resident on lot number fourteen in the fourth range of lots in the said Township of Ascott (sic) which said lot is not included & granted in and by the Letters Patent for the said Township of Ascott (sic) reference to which said lot is made in the aforesaid award of arbitration Know that I the said Nehemiah Hadley do hereby bind and oblige myself my heirs and assigns to give and execute to the said Gilbert Hyatt a good deed in due form according to law and usage in this said province whenever and if ever the said lot is shall or may be granted or assigned to me and furthermore promise by these presents to give all the assistance in my power [whether present of future] to

obtain a grant of said lot from the government of this province and to sign all and every request and petition for the obtaining the same whenever reasonably thereonto required by the said Gilbert (Hyatt). Two interlineations previous to signing are good, the said interlineations being as follows to wit, the word four between the seventh & eighth line from the top & the word or between the twenty first & second from top

Signed & delivered [signed) Nehemiah Hadley L.S.
in presence of Gilbert Hyatt L.S.

Signed Samuel Heard
 Elvin Andrews

On the twenty sixth day of June in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and five before the subscribing Notary Public residing at S^t Armand in the District of Montreal in the Province of Lower Canada, personally appeared the signers & sealers of the foregoing instrument and in the presence of the witnesses herein after named voluntary (sic) acknowledged that their respective names thereunder subscribed are of their own hand writing and that having satisfactorily perrused (sic) the said instrument they are contented therewith consent and agree that it be executed agreeable to its tenor and have deposited the same in the custody of the said notary to remain of record in his office that all persons whom it doth or may concern may, in case of need, have recourse thereto and obtain authentic copies or extracts thereof. In faith and testimony whereof the said parties have requested this act & thereunder set and subscribed their names the day and year above mentioned in the presence of mss^{rs} Bela Eldukin & Samuel Heard the said witnesses who also have set their names thereto & being first duly read according to law.

[signed]

Bela Eldukin Nehemiah Hadley
Samuel Heard Gilbert Hyatt

L.ⁿ Lalanne N.P.

A true copy of the original remaining of record in the office of the subscribibg notary.

L.ⁿ Lalanne N.P.

