

## CROSS-BORDER SCHOOLING AND THE COMPLEXITY OF LOCAL IDENTITIES IN THE QUEBEC-VERMONT BORDERLAND REGION: A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

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### **Abstract**

This paper examines the history of cross-border education in the Eastern Townships of Quebec and Northern Vermont borderland region. Considering that the legal and administrative jurisdiction over schooling rests at the provincial and state levels, the sharing of schools along an international borderline raises challenging questions about the administrative and cultural history of education. This paper argues that by crossing educational boundaries, the people of the borderland region challenge us to rethink three strongly held assumptions in public schooling's history: first, that school advocates in Canada were motivated to establish public schools in order to counter the threat of American republicanism; second, that Quebec education has been rigidly divided between French and English systems; and third, that the Canada-U.S. borderline represents a clear demarcation between social and political views and values.

### **Résumé**

*L'article examine l'histoire de l'éducation transfrontalière dans les Cantons-de-l'Est et la région frontalière du nord du Vermont. Considérant que la juridiction légale et administrative sur les établissements d'enseignement était déjà établie à l'échelle de la province et de l'État, la présence d'un enseignement international transfrontalier est une caractéristique étonnante de l'histoire administrative et culturelle de cette région. L'article soutient que les gens de la région frontalière qui fréquentaient l'école de l'autre côté de la frontière nous défient de reconsidérer trois hypothèses fermement soutenues en histoire de l'éducation : en premier lieu, que la motivation des défenseurs de l'enseignement au Canada était animée par le besoin d'établir des écoles publiques afin de bloquer la menace du républicanisme américain; en deuxième lieu, que l'éducation au Québec a été rigoureusement divisée entre les systèmes français et anglais; et en troisième lieu, que la frontière entre le Canada et*

*les États-Unis établit une démarcation nette entre les opinions et les valeurs sociales et politiques.*

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In 1931, Charles Benjamin Howard, the Liberal Member of Parliament for Sherbrooke, Quebec, raised questions in the House of Commons about census taking in Rock Island, Quebec. The Three Villages, including Rock Island and Stanstead in Quebec, and Derby Line in Vermont, he pointed out, shared churches, theaters, libraries, ice skating rinks, schools, and other social and cultural institutions. His concern was whether Mr. Downing, the census officer in charge of the area, lived in Canada or the United States. In response to Howard's concern, Henry Herbert Stevens, the Minister of Trade and Commerce, could not verify Mr. Downing's address, which may well have been across the line in the United States, but noted that his place of business and post office address were in the province of Quebec. The answer seems to have satisfied Howard, and the issue was dropped.<sup>2</sup> By 1931 standards, this was a rather mundane question that went unnoticed by the press and public. In fact, Stevens' response indicates that the possibility of a census official living across the border was of little concern. In our own post-9/11 world, however, it is hard to imagine such a concern not receiving public attention. Indeed, the idea of Canadians and Americans sharing churches, theaters, libraries, ice skating rinks, and schools along an unchecked and permeable border has become virtually unfathomable. Yet, for well over a century such institutions were indeed shared.

This paper examines cross-border schooling in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Quebec and Vermont. The particular concern is that inhabitants living in two nations were able to traverse the border as part of their everyday lives, and share publicly-funded schools. Considering that the legal and administrative jurisdiction over schooling evolved firmly at the provincial and state levels in the two countries, the presence of international cross-border schooling raises challenging questions about the administrative and cultural history of education in this region and in both countries at large. This paper explores the complexity of inhabitants in two countries educating their children together, and asks what that can tell us about community, culture, and identity among people with a shared local history but separate national histories. The paper concludes by suggesting that by crossing educational boundaries, the people of the borderland region challenge us to rethink three strongly held assumptions in public schooling's history: first, that school advocates

in Canada were motivated to establish public schools in order to transmit culture in ways that would serve as a form of security against the threat of American republicanism; second, that Quebec education has been rigidly divided between French and English systems; and third, that the Canada-US borderline represents a clear demarcation between social and political views and values.

### **The Historiography of Borderlands and Education**

Identity along borders and boundaries has attracted a world of scholarly attention in recent years. Since at least the 1980s, scholars, and most notably anthropologists, have emphasized the divergence and intersections of communities typically examined in isolation due to their geo-political borders.<sup>3</sup> Victoria M. Phaneuf points out that the result has been a focus on borders, with the terms “border” and “boundary” being used interchangeably.<sup>4</sup> The literature on borders and boundaries, she furthermore points out, characteristically emphasizes their role in the maintenance of difference within or between nation states.

Studies that consider the intersections of communities along borderlands in North America tend to concentrate on migration and trade patterns, with the result being a historiographical body of work that is concentrated heavily on political and economic history.<sup>5</sup> As geographic delineators of boundaries, borders are typically presented as the lines that separate communities, regions, and nations. In the case of North America, however, the Canada-US border has also come to represent a geo-political line that is continually negotiated in relation to cultural identity, social values, and political and economic cooperation. Canada-US borderland themes tend to emphasize similarities, as seen through common languages, values, and histories.<sup>6</sup> Some significant studies, however, have also considered the symbolic role of the Canada-US border as representative of the line demarcating differences in values, culture, and identity.<sup>7</sup>

In studies of the Canada-US border, Quebec has received far less attention than other parts of Canada. Those studies that do consider the history between Quebec and the United States tend to focus on migration to New England in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>8</sup> When Quebec-US relations are considered in these cases, scholars have tended to focus on the importance of language identity among French Canadians, and thus emphasize the differences that the border symbolizes.

In recent years, scholars have begun to rethink the Quebec-US border in ways that consider patterns of cultural similarities and the intersections of communities. The aforementioned work by Phaneuf

has examined the Quebec-Vermont border region in order to answer questions about the identity of the Americans living there. She finds that being what she calls a “borderlander” forms a central identity for these Americans, shaping their culture, values, historical narratives, and behaviour. Their relationship with the border sets them apart from those unconnected to the region who create and enforce the laws regulating the border.<sup>9</sup> Other borderland scholars, such as Matthew Farfan, have highlighted the extent to which communities on both sides of the border have been connected historically, and how that connection continues to be a defining feature of life along the borderland.<sup>10</sup>

Still others have also begun to examine more closely the complexity of Quebec’s and Vermont’s cultural dynamics, and the impact of that complexity on the shaping of social and cultural institutions. In a study on borderland identity in the early nineteenth century, Canadian historian J.I. Little demonstrates that religion helped forge a distinctive national identity for English Canadians in the Eastern Townships of Quebec, and that the making of that identity was shaped through links of kith and kin across the border. In a study on Vermont identity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, American historian Paul M. Searls points out the significance of Vermont’s relationship with Quebec in defining the boundaries of Vermont’s imagined community.<sup>11</sup> In all of these studies, the borderland has added a layer of complexity to the historical narratives of Quebec and Vermont.

In the writing of the history of education in Quebec, the US-Canada border has virtually been ignored. Educational scholars in Quebec have characteristically concentrated on the historical internal forces pushing for educational development in the province. The central theme in schooling’s history in Quebec is that of cultural dualism, marked by divided French and English systems of education.<sup>12</sup> Scholars of education have done little to consider borders, and the extent to which school development in borderland regions can be woven into their historical narratives.

In a similar vein, educational historians of Vermont have done little to consider borders and borderlands. The writing of educational history in Vermont itself is scarce, and studies that do exist tend to focus on the political and legal development of the system.<sup>13</sup> Emphasis is almost always placed on the local nature of schooling and school decision-making, and the state’s own internal forces of division, conceptually highlighted in the divide between rural and urban elements, which have resulted in two different experiences of schooling in Vermont. Those studies that do weave Vermont educational history into an even broader narrative tend to situate it within patterns of educational

development in New England. Like historians of education in Quebec, historians of education in Vermont have failed to consider the educational relationship of certain localities which form community relationships with neighbours across the Canada-US border.

A study of cross-border education offers to advance our understanding of schooling, culture, and borderland identity in Quebec and Vermont. Canadian scholars have written extensively about the questions that major school promoters of the nineteenth century had about itinerant American teachers, the influx of American textbooks, and the dangers of inculcating Quebec and Canadian children with republican, American values.<sup>14</sup> What we know less about, however, are those parents, community leaders, and students who established shared educational institutions in both nations. Thus, while the importance of local agency in the shaping of the school system has received growing attention in recent years, notably absent from the existing literature is an analysis of those Quebec residents who chose an education outside of the province while still living within the province, as well as those Vermonters who chose to attend schools in Quebec while living in the United States. Historical studies of Quebec and Vermont identity overwhelmingly concentrate on internal forces of difference and disintegration. This paper, however, suggests that identity and culture in Quebec and Vermont was also shaped by equal forces of integration with community along the borderland.

### **Sources and Methodology**

The main sources for this study are school registers and other enrolment and attendance records in Vermont and Quebec. In Vermont, school registers are kept in the various local town clerk offices for an indefinite period. The surviving registers date back to the late nineteenth century. This paper focuses on the borderland region of Essex County, and in particular the town clerk records of Norton and Canaan Vermont. For much of the nineteenth century, school registers as we know them were not kept. A record of enrolment and attendance was, for the most part, the responsibility of individual teachers in the various schools. A complete repository of enrolment for the period to the 1890s is absent, and so for this study a consolidated list from a scattering of records kept in local archives, museums, and town clerk offices was compiled. In this respect, the archival work of the Vermont Northeast Kingdom Genealogy Association was indispensable; they have amassed the most complete listing of school enrolment records for the schools of Northern Vermont and have made them accessible to the public via their website.<sup>15</sup> In many cases, student addresses are listed, and so Lower Canada (the province's name to 1841), Canada East (its name

from 1841 to 1867), and Quebec (the province's name since 1867) residences were flagged and entered into a database containing the names of Quebec children attending Vermont schools.

From the 1890s to 1923, the names of students listed in the surviving school registers were cross-checked with Canadian censuses from 1891, 1901, and 1911 to determine which students were residing in Quebec.<sup>16</sup> Beginning in 1923, the Vermont Department of Education made the historian's task much easier by adding a section to the register in which teachers were to record "Non-Resident Pupils" as well as their town of residence. The Quebec students were easily flagged and entered into the database.

The enrolment records and school registers of the Quebec schools are housed for the most part by local school boards. The most pertinent to this study are the records kept by what is now called the Eastern Townships School Board.<sup>17</sup> Other enrolment and attendance records are housed in the province's central archive, the Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec. Unfortunately, most Quebec school registers for schools along the borderland region for the period to 1950 have been lost or destroyed. From the records that do exist, however, we are offered additional insight into the world of cross-border education in the Eastern Townships and Northern Vermont. As will be discussed later in the paper, however, surviving data on the Canadian side of the border is much more scarce than that on the American side.

A variety of other sources were used to contextualize these records, including superintendent reports, local newspapers, personal writings from local inhabitants, and other relevant archival material related to the schools. Because of how limited such records are, however, what is desperately needed is an oral history of former teachers and students who attended these schools. With the existing records indicating that Quebec children attended Vermont public schools as late as 1972, we can be sure that much of that population is not only still alive, but also still quite young, and so there is an opportunity to gain a world of insight into experiences they had as children attending school across the border. We may also gain an understanding of the reasons and motivations parents had for sending their children to school across the border.

## **Findings**

From the period covering 1800 to 1899, the surviving records indicate a total of 588 residents of Quebec enrolled in 28 Vermont schools along the entire Eastern Townships-Northern Vermont borderland region.<sup>18</sup> Most of these schools, however, were not what we can call

“public schools” in the contemporary definition of the term. While many were aided in part or in full by the state, schooling at this time was completely voluntary in Quebec, and parents were left on their own to decide whether or not their children should attend school. Nevertheless, we should note that the machinery of public schooling had already been set in motion, and parents did not have a lack of options when it came to schools for their children. The Common School Act of 1841 allowed for the publicly-aided schooling of the entire population of Canada East (present-day Quebec).<sup>19</sup> Its subsequent revisions in the 1840s and 1850s saw government funding to schools increase considerably. By the time of Confederation in 1867, publicly-funded schooling was a central component of Quebec social policy, and the British North America Act entrenched the right to education in the new constitution, leaving its operation and control in the hands of the provinces. While schooling was not made compulsory in Quebec until well into the twentieth century, it would be incorrect to suggest that the people of Quebec did not have options or public support when it came to the questions and decisions about sending their children to school, because they did.

While it is also true that the Eastern Townships of Quebec itself is a more remote region, between 1875 and 1900 we find, on average, 21 publicly-supported schools operating on the Quebec side of this small borderland strip.<sup>20</sup> In many ways, the province of Quebec was leading the development of public schooling in Canada. Its success at the World Fair of Chicago in 1893 highlights this point. Of the ninety-two prizes awarded to Canadian exhibits about education that year, the province of Quebec took forty-five.<sup>21</sup> This is an astonishingly high number, especially in light of the fact that schooling in Quebec was still not compulsory. Considering that neighbouring Ontario, with a longer history of publicly-aided schooling and with compulsory schooling itself introduced in 1871, took home only twenty-four awards, Quebec’s success is made even more astonishing. Indeed, Quebec was no educational backwater, and the people of Quebec did not need to cross educational jurisdictions in order to school their children.

Yet, as the numbers indicate, they did; and the trend continued into the twentieth century. From 1900 to 1923, the surviving school records indicate that 25 children living in present-day Stanhope, Quebec attended the publicly funded and administered Norton Village School on the US side of the border.<sup>22</sup> The US school was only minutes away by foot, and so it made sense to do so since the Quebec alternative would have been a school in Dixville, more than 6 kilometres away. Along the Hereford, Quebec and Canaan, Vermont border, 49 children

crossed the line to attend school in Vermont.<sup>23</sup> Writing on the history of the Stanhope-Norton region, former Norton Village School teacher Lydia C. Andrews notes that at the turn of the twentieth century Sainte-Suzanne de Boundary Line (Stanhope, Quebec) and Norton Mills (Norton, Vermont) “constituted the same academic municipalities.”<sup>24</sup> In 1903, in fact, the Reverend M. Leblanc of Norton and Father Amédée Goyette of Stanhope worked together to acquire a house for the purpose of offering an education for the children who lived in the border towns. The building that was secured was the Damon and Baker Drug Store, which was built deliberately astride the border.<sup>25</sup> The educational agreement that was reached by the two religious leaders, according to Andrews, specified the following:

1. A school was to be established for the same advantages to children of both localities: Stanhope and Norton.
2. That the priest from Stanhope would render himself personally responsible for the necessary and important purchases such as the building and furniture.
3. The school would be regulated by the academic laws of the Province of Quebec.
4. The Boundary Line School: Stanhope-Norton Mills should remain as ONE and not be divided as if in fact establishing a school for Stanhope and a school for Norton Mills.<sup>26</sup>

The school was a unique bilingual institution offering courses in both French and English, in keeping with its mandate to serve both the French-speaking and English-speaking communities on both sides of the border.<sup>27</sup> Archival records for this school are scarce, and so we are left only with the statistics that Andrews herself was able to provide. By these records, we know that at its opening in 1903, St. Paul School, as it was named, saw an enrolment of 120 students from both the Canadian and American sides. Its numbers increased in the 1920s, and in 1923 the building even saw a new 3600 square-foot section constructed.<sup>28</sup> Records at the Coaticook Historical Society, however, indicate that by 1948 interest in the school had waned. The building itself was deemed unsuitable by the Board of Education and had to be shut down. The Sisters of the Presentation-de-Marie, who had been put in charge of the school, continued their work in a new structure in neighbouring Compton, Quebec.<sup>29</sup> While the school continued to welcome boarders from both Canada and the US, it was no longer a borderland school adhering to the fourth principal of the school’s founding.

Most school registers for Norton Village School for the 1920s were lost, but they re-appear beginning in 1928. From the period 1928 to



1965, the records indicate a total of 43 Quebec children attending the Vermont public school.<sup>30</sup> Similar numbers appear in the school registers of Canaan Vermont, where 30 Quebec children received their education in Canaan, Vermont during the same period.<sup>31</sup> By the late 1950s, Quebec children along the Stanhope, Quebec-Norton, Vermont border either stopped attending Norton Village School, or the teachers simply stopped recording them. The latter is probably not the case, as we see the number of children in Hereford, Quebec attending Canaan, Vermont schools declining as well. While the numbers dwindled, however, it is interesting to note that at least one family in Hereford, Quebec continued to send their children to school in Vermont as late as 1972.<sup>32</sup>

Schooling in Quebec was made compulsory in 1943, and so one might have expected the decline in cross-border schooling to have happened earlier. With residents paying compulsory school taxes in Quebec, and with a system of provincial regulations and standards set in place, parents were now obligated to support and use the system. A significant number of Quebec parents living along the borderland, however, continued to choose to send their children to school in Vermont. Despite the new era of compulsory schooling in Quebec, this act by borderland parents did not seem to raise any official concern. In fact, in the Norton Village School register of 1947–48, “Commissioners of Education, Province of Quebec” are listed as visitors on September 22, 1947. These commissioners were charged with visiting schools in Quebec to both ensure that children were attending school, and also to report on the condition of instruction at the school. It seems to have mattered not to these commissioners that the children of Stanhope, Quebec and its neighbouring towns were attending school in Vermont. They inspected it as they would any other, ensuring that the children were indeed attending school and receiving proper instruction. Their report was presumably sent to the Inspector of Schools for the region. There are no existing records that can be found from commissioner or inspector reports indicating objection or apprehension about Quebec children attending school in Vermont. In fact, from the reports that do exist there is no mention about cross-border schooling. The silence of commissioners and inspectors, in this regard, might be quite telling. The fact that Quebec children were attending school in the United States was, perhaps, nothing to be concerned about.

Certain Vermont parents, like their Quebec counterparts, also chose to send their children to schools across the border. The historical record, however, is extremely limited with the evidence of cross-border schooling in this regard. As noted earlier, a number of

Americans chose the St. Paul borderland school serving the Stanhope, Quebec and Norton, Vermont communities. The home residences of its students are impossible to arrive at with the available evidence, but we can safely assume that roughly half of the students would have come from the United States.

In the publicly-funded and administered schools of the Eastern Townships, the historical record is also limited. School registers have virtually all been lost or destroyed, and those that have survived date only from the 1940s onward.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, the quality and quantity of information provided in the Quebec school registers are, compared to those found in Vermont, extremely limited. Unlike their Vermont counterparts, teachers in Quebec were not required to list the place of residence of their students, let alone whether they came from out of town or out of country. What we are left with, then, is a list of student names. In order to determine which students were from Vermont, these names can be cross-checked with census enumerations in the United States. The United States' census sunset law of 72 years, however, has only made the 1940 national census recently available; and so even if we can determine that some of the children listed in the Quebec school registers resided in the United States, the volume of evidence itself would remain inconclusive at best. We can reasonably conclude, however, that few if any Vermont children were sent to Quebec schools in the elementary years. With elementary schools on the Quebec side being geographically farther from the border than the Vermont schools, only a small number of parents would likely have chosen the Canadian schools.

At the high school level, however, we have stronger evidence to support the notion of a cross-border culture of schooling that Vermonters themselves actively participated in. The borderland historian is once again indebted to Norton Village School teacher Lydia Andrews, who followed her students' progress even after they left her classroom in grade 8. Andrews kept meticulous records about where her elementary students would later attend high school and college, and what occupation they eventually found themselves in. While we only have records for seventy-eight of her students, we can note that of the twenty-two that can be confirmed to have attended high school, fifteen attended high school at Canaan High School in Canaan, Vermont, two at St. Johnsbury Academy in St. Johnsbury, Vermont, and five chose Coaticook Academy in Coaticook, Quebec. Of those five, three were Americans. We also have records of one Vermont student who left Norton Village School early to attend a Catholic school in Sherbrooke, Quebec, and then returned to school in Vermont at Canaan High School.<sup>34</sup> Interestingly, in the surviving school registers

of Coaticook Academy housed at the Eastern Townships School Board Archives, there is evidence of at least two students who left the high school during the Second World War to join the US Army.<sup>35</sup> While the registers do not list their residence, it is safe to assume that they were indeed Americans who enlisted in their own country for military service.

Based on the available record, it is impossible to draw any broad conclusions about why certain Vermonters would have chosen to go to school in Quebec. Their choice may have been based on religion, on a real or imagined belief in higher academic standards, or on the fact that their parents had themselves attended school across the border. The more likely explanation, however, is that, like their Canadian counterparts who chose the Norton Village School for the elementary years, the Canadian school simply represented the closest geographic option for their wants and needs. In the case of high school choices, Coaticook Academy was located 18 kilometres away, Canaan High School was 24 kilometres away, and St. Johnsbury Academy was a distant 85 kilometres away. We can speculate that those who chose Coaticook Academy were probably those who lived closest to the Canadian border in Norton, Vermont. To them, Coaticook was no more foreign a town than Canaan or St. Johnsbury. They were part of a borderland world in which the international border could be ignored for matters of local expediency.

### **Analysis and Conclusions**

What do we make of cross-border schooling in the Eastern Townships and Northern Vermont? Was this simply an educational anomaly that should perhaps interest the historian but really not offer much in terms of forcing us to rethink the history of schooling in this region? I believe that it is not, and that cross-border schooling can tell us much about not only the history of schooling, but also about identity, community, and culture among the people of Canada and the United States. At the very least it is a reminder about just how permeable our border has been. In this regard, the border was much more permeable for Canadians, and with good reason. With well-funded, publicly administered, and well-regulated American schools within walking distance, there was little need for Canadians to either build their own schools or send their children miles away for an education. Cross-border schooling, in a historical context, thus forces us to rethink three myths in the history of Quebec education.

The first myth is that of a fear of American education and the danger it posed to a British colony and, later, an autonomous Dominion. Historians have noted at length the extent to which early

school advocates in Canada based their arguments for a homegrown common school system in large part upon the premise that without a closely controlled Canadian system, the threat of American teachers, textbooks, and republican ideas would infiltrate the mind of the young. But what was happening on the Canadian side? Along the border of Quebec and Vermont, we see not fear of American education but rather a cultural synthesis of the two countries. If the textbooks used in the schools of the Eastern Townships borderland region are any indication, then Canadians did not fear American education but rather embraced it. Of the sixty surviving textbooks from 1800 to 1870 housed at the Colby Curtis Museum in Stanstead, Quebec, all but four are American textbooks.<sup>36</sup> Of the four textbooks that were printed in Canada, two are reprints of American books. So, only two of the surviving sample of textbooks were written and published on the Canadian side. This is hardly an indication of a fear of the United States and American ideas.

One would think, and historians have certainly argued, that once the machinery of mass schooling took form, the use of American textbooks diminished. Standardization, regulation, and state control would ensure that Canadian children were reading from Canadian books and learning Canadian values. But again, the borderland region of Quebec and Vermont seems to have been an exception, and, moreover, the exception was understandable and acceptable to state officials themselves. Superintendents were required to monitor the textbooks used in schools, and as W.M. Thompson, the school inspector of the Compton-Stanstead Protestant district, noted in 1892, "Uniformity exists in nearly all the municipalities, and with the exception of a few American books in schools near the United States boundary, only those authorized by the Protestant Committee of the Council of Public Instruction are used."<sup>37</sup> This was acceptable, as far as the superintendent was concerned, and we can conclude that the central government office in Quebec, by virtue of its silence on the matter, agreed. At the very least we can argue that the issue raised no official concern.

We might also think that once schooling became compulsory in 1943, enrolment in American schools would drop. But they did not. In fact, along the Stanhope, Quebec-Norton, Vermont border, enrolments saw a sharp spike in the late 1940s and early 1950s. In September 1947, as noted above, Quebec commissioners can even be found on the visitors list of Norton Village School. What do we make of Quebec officials inspecting a school in Vermont? How did they monitor the teaching? How did they evaluate the quality of the curriculum? Was it enough that the students were simply in school?

Did it matter not that the school was American? Did it matter not that students were pledging allegiance to the American flag and republic every morning? In this case, the answer seems to be that an American education was not objectionable. It was perfectly acceptable for Quebec children along the US border to be attending schools on the American side, as it had been for the previous 100 years. The fear of foreign, republican values has been written about extensively. Indeed, "anti-Americanism" itself has often been considered by scholars to be a central defining feature of being Canadian.<sup>38</sup> The borderland region of the Eastern Townships and Northern Vermont, however, suggests that that scholarship represents more a myth than it does a reality.

The second myth that cross-border schooling calls into question is that of the French/English divide in relation to Quebec education. The historiography typically presents the history as the "two worlds" of Quebec education.<sup>39</sup> Yet, the evidence along the border indicates that both English and French speaking families were sending their children to school in the United States. In some cases, it mattered not that the children themselves could not speak English. Records kept by Norton Village School teacher Lydia Andrews, for example, demonstrates that at least five of her students in the late 1940s and early 1950s began school with the ability to speak French only.<sup>40</sup> What do we make of this? Why did French-speaking parents living in Quebec choose to send their children to a school in the United States where instruction was only available in English? Did they hope to secure some sort of educational advantage for their children? Or, were they simply following compulsory school laws and social conventions which dictated that parents should send their children to school? And since it was easiest, by virtue of geography, to send those children down the road for such schooling, the reason for choosing the American one may have simply been a matter of convenience. Ultimately, the answer cannot be drawn from the school records alone, but it is indeed clear that language was not a factor when choosing a school, and educating children alongside both their Canadian and American English-speaking peers was normal enough.

This idea also forces us to challenge a third myth that is called into question by the history of cross-border schooling in the Eastern Townships and Northern Vermont: that the Canada-US borderline represents a clear demarcation between social and political views and values. That is, cross-border schooling demonstrates that the debate about identity in Quebec and Vermont is even more complex than we have previously assumed. While the "two solitudes" in Quebec may have been a real, and even defining, feature of Quebec society throughout the twentieth century, along the borderland of Quebec

and Vermont we can find yet another solitude. This borderland identity is one that defies definition. It is one that saw a minister in Vermont team with a priest in Quebec to offer a religious education to the children of what they considered to be a single community. It is also one that saw Vermont school administrators welcome Canadian children into their schools. In the case of Canaan, Vermont, it also saw them send school buses into Canada in order to make sure that the “non-resident” children were able to get to school. Catholic or Protestant, Canadian or American, Francophone or Anglophone: the divides did not matter much. The borderland region was in many ways a world of its own, and perhaps any attempt to define it would be futile. Residents were connected in ways that, as Phaneuf has pointed out, outsiders are unlikely to understand. When asked about living “on the edge of a foreign country,” June Elliott, a woman from Derby Line, responded vehemently: “Foreign country – that’s no foreign country!” Travelling into Quebec, she insisted “didn’t seem as though it were any more significant than going into New Hampshire.... It was one community, essentially.”<sup>41</sup>

In the end, the importance of the history of cross-border education is not so much in that it offers us a different history of Quebec, but rather that it offers us a history of a different Quebec. And, on the American side, it offers us a history of a different Vermont. Values, culture, and identity meant something different to the people of the borderland region. Their identity was part and parcel of the borderland community in which they lived. That identity was shaped by the boundaries those borders represented, and, in the case of schooling, by the boundaries that the people of the borderland region chose to ignore.

## NOTES

- 1 The author would like to acknowledge the research assistance of Emilie Bowles, Eric Heyser, André Lachance, Ryan Millar, and Jessica Plouffe, as well as the financial support of the *Fonds de recherche du Québec – Société et culture*. He would also like to thank Cheryl Gosselin, Christopher Kirkey, and Sabrina Moisan for their valuable comments and feedback.
- 2 Canada. House of Commons. Debates (Hansard). 17<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 32<sup>nd</sup> session, (1 July 1931). p. 3237.
- 3 See Arjun Appadurai, "Theory in Anthropology: Center and Periphery," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 28, 1 (1986): 356–361 and "Putting Hierarchy in its Place," *Cultural Anthropology* 3, 1 (1988): 36–49; Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, "Beyond 'Culture:' Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference," *Cultural Anthropology* 7, 1 (1992): 6–23; Néstor Garcia Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995).
- 4 Victoria M. Phaneuf, "Towards a Vermont-Québec Border Study: Interviews from the Northeast Kingdom," MA, University of Arizona, 2006.
- 5 See Josiah Heyman, *Life and Labor on the Border: Working People of Northeastern Sonora* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1991); Pamela Maria Smorkaloff, "Shifting borders, free trade and frontier narratives: US, Canada and Mexico," *American Literary History* 16, 1 (1994): 88–102; John Herd Thompson and Morton Weinfeld, "Entry and Exit: Canadian Immigration Policy in Context," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 538 (1995): 185–198; Scott Wheeler, *Rumrunners and Revenuers: Prohibition in Vermont* (Shelburne, Vermont: The New England Press, 2002).
- 6 Victoria M. Phaneuf, "The Vermont Québec Border Region: Negotiations of Identity and Logic in the Northeast Kingdom," *Journal of Borderlands Studies* 28, 1: 112.
- 7 See W.H. New, *Borderlands: How We Talk about Canada* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1998); Clark Blaise, *The Border as Fiction* (Orono, Maine: University of Maine Borderlands Project, 1990).
- 8 See Robert Rumilly, *Histoire des Franco-Américains* (Montreal : USJBA, 1958); John Hudson, "Migration to an American Frontier," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* (1976) 66, 2: 242–265; Gerard J. Brault, *The French-Canadian Heritage in New England* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1986); François Weil, *Les Franco-Américains* (Paris: Belin, 1989); Armand B. Chartier, *Histoire des Franco-Américains de la Nouvelle-Angleterre, 1775–1990* (Montréal: Septentrion, 1991); Yves Roby, *Les Franco-américains de la Nouvelle-Angleterre : rêves et réalités* (Montréal: Septentrion, 2000); Jacques

- Ferland, "Canadiens, Acadiens, and Canada : Knowledge and Ethnicity in Labour History," *Labour / Le Travail* (2002) 50: 101–115.
- 9 Phaneuf, "The Vermont-Québec Border Region," 109.
- 10 Matthew Farfan, *The Vermont-Quebec Border: Life on the Line* (Charleston SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2009). Jean Manore also explores the ways in which communities astride the border have been connected historically, concentrating specifically on the Abenaki, and considers the ways in which they became separated by the Imperial forces that created the border. Jean L. Manore, "The Historical Erasure of an Indigenous Identity in Borderlands: The Western Abenaki of Vermont, New Hampshire, and Quebec," *Journal of Borderlands Studies* 26, 2 (2011): 179–196.
- 11 See J.I. Little, *Borderland Religion: The Emergence of an English-Canadian Identity, 1792–1852* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004); Paul M. Searls, *Two Vermonts: Geography and Identity, 1865–1910* (Hanover: University of New Hampshire Press, 2006). Of equal importance in the historiography is research by Quebec and American historians who have examined the impact of Franco-American migration to New England on the identity of New Englanders and Quebeckers alike. See, for example, Yves Roby, *Les Franco-américains de la Nouvelle-Angleterre : rêves et réalités* (Montréal: Septentrion, 2000); Armand B. Chartier, *Histoire des Franco-Américains de la Nouvelle-Angleterre, 1775–1990* (Montréal: Septentrion, 1991); Gerard J. Brault, *The French-Canadian Heritage in New England* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1986); Robert Rumilly, *Histoire des Franco-Américains* (Montreal : USJBA, 1958); François Weil, *Les Franco-Américains* (Paris: Belin, 1989).
- 12 See, for example, Louis-Philippe Audet, *Histoire de l'enseignement au Québec, 1608–1971*, 2 vols (Montreal: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1971); Andrée Dufour, *Histoire de l'éducation au Québec* (Montréal: Boréal, 1997); and Roger Magnuson, *The Two Worlds of Quebec Education during the Traditional Era, 1760–1940* ( London, ON: Althouse Press, 2005).
- 13 See Seth M. Zorack, "Vermont's Tradition of Education and the Vermont Constitution," *Albany Law Review* 69, 2 (2006): 581–590; John A. Sautter, "Equity and History: Vermont's Education Revolution of the Early 1890s," *Vermont History* 76, 1 (2008): 1–18; Clyde Greenleaf Fussell, "The Emergence of Public Education as a Function of the State of Vermont" (Ph.D., University of Connecticut, 1958); Mason Sereno Stone, *History of Education, State of Vermont* (Montpelier: Capital City Press, 1936); George Gary Bush, *History of Education in Vermont* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1900).



- 14 See, for example, Louis-Philippe Audet, *Histoire de l'enseignement au Québec, 1608–1971*, 2 vols (Montreal: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1971); Andrée Dufour, *Histoire de l'éducation au Québec* (Montreal: Boréal, 1997); and Roger Magnuson, *The Two Worlds of Quebec Education during the Traditional Era, 1760–1940* (London, ON: Althouse Press, 2005).
- 15 Vermont Northeast Kingdom Genealogy, [Online] <http://www.nekg-vt.com/schools/>.
- 16 Library and Archives Canada (LAC). Census of Canada, 1891; Census of Canada, 1901, Census of Canada, 1911. [Online] <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/Pages/census.aspx>. Full manuscript copies of all three censuses can be found online. Census data for the period from 1921 onward is not yet available to the public.
- 17 The Eastern Townships School Board Archives (hereafter ETSBA) are located in the basement of Princess Elizabeth Elementary School in Magog, Quebec.
- 18 Tabulated from the data gathered on the Vermont Northeast Kingdom Genealogy website, [online] <http://www.nekg-vt.com/schools/>.
- 19 Canadian Institute for Historical Microreproductions (CIHM). Common School Act of 1841, *Journals of the Province of Canada*, 1841.
- 20 *Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the Province of Quebec*. Quebec: Department of Public Instruction, 1875–1900.
- 21 *Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the Province of Quebec*, 1894–95, p. 74.
- 22 Norton Town Clerk Office (NTCO), School Registers, Norton Village School, 1900–1923.
- 23 Canaan Town Clerk Office (CTCO), School Registers, all schools, 1900–1923.
- 24 Lydia C. Andrews, *Three Towns: Norton & Averill, Vermont, Stanhope, Quebec. A History of the Northeast Kingdom*. Norton, Vermont: The Three Towns Historical Society (1986, r. 2011), 139.
- 25 *Ibid.*, 139.
- 26 *Ibid.*, 139–140.
- 27 *Ibid.*, 140–141.
- 28 *Ibid.*, 140–141.
- 29 Société d'histoire de Coaticook (SHC), Report of the Sisters of the Presentation of Mary Convent.
- 30 NTCO, School Registers, Norton Village School, 1928–1955.
- 31 CTCO, School Registers, 1923–1955.
- 32 CTCO, Canaan High School School Register, 1971–72.

- 33 ETSBA, records relating to Hereford, Compton County, Coaticook, and Stanstead County. There are a scattering of pre-1940 registers and enrolment records, but still not enough to draw any substantive conclusions about cross-border schooling on the Quebec side.
- 34 NTCO, Norton Village School Records.
- 35 ETSBA, School Registers, Coaticook, Box 1933–1946.
- 36 Pierre Rastoul, “A Southern Wind: American Printers and the Emergence of the Press in the Eastern Townships,” paper presented at the 47<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the *Fédération des sociétés d’histoire du Québec*, 26 May 2012; Pierre Rastoul, “Libraries and their Influence in the Stanstead Area,” paper presented at the Annual General Meeting of the Stanstead Historical Society, 9 June 2012.
- 37 *Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the Province of Quebec*, 1892–93, 101.
- 38 For a discussion on counter-American sentiment in the historical context, see Adam J. Green, “Introduction” in *Images of Americans: The United States in Canadian Newspapers During the 1960s* (Ph.D., University of Ottawa, 2006).
- 39 Magnuson, *The Two Worlds of Quebec Education*, 2005.
- 40 NTCO, Norton Village School Records.
- 41 June Elliott, Personal Communication, 28 June 2006, quoted in Phaneuf, “The Vermont-Quebec Border Region,” 115.