

## A MORAL ENGINE OF SUCH INCALCULABLE POWER: THE TEMPERANCE MOVEMENT IN THE EASTERN TOWNSHIPS, 1830–52

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Alcohol studies are beginning to experience a renaissance in Canada, and Jan Noel's *Canada Dry* has recently provided a much-needed overview of the temperance movement in the pre-Confederation era.<sup>1</sup> But even while this study reveals that the movement followed quite a different dynamic from one region to another, it pays only passing attention to Lower Canada's distinctive Eastern Townships. As in Upper Canada, the American temperance movement exerted a dominant influence in this border region; however, its prolonged history of economic and social isolation fostered a strong sense of particularism within the scattered settlements. As a result, the Eastern Townships temperance crusade developed its own dynamic as it progressed through several stages during the 1830s and 1840s. When an externally based organization did come to dominate the region in the later 1840s, it was not the Sons of Temperance, as elsewhere in English-speaking Canada, but the Independent Order of Rechabites. Because they continued to promote moral suasion over prohibition in this era of rising support for state control, the Rechabites were particularly well suited to the independent-minded people of the Eastern Townships. Nor was the region's anti-drink movement any less effective for its relatively moderate stance, for local historians of the region writing in the nineteenth century are unanimous in pointing to the revolution experienced in alcohol consumption habits by mid-century.

Referring to pioneer rural economies in the United States, W.J. Rorabaugh claims that their poor transportation links and small local markets made the distillation of surplus cereal crops an efficient and profitable choice.<sup>2</sup> The Eastern Townships conformed to this situation during the early nineteenth century, except in one particular. The liquor was not produced from corn, as in the trans-Appalachian West, but from the much more productive potato. Not-

ing that potato whiskey had been one of the few locally produced commodities that could be transported profitably to outside markets, Reverend Edward Cleveland's local history of 1858 names eight men who had operated distilleries in his home township of Shipton. Cleveland claimed that one of them had retailed 3000 gallons in a year:

Those who have witnessed the evening scenes in these distilleries, the gatherings of men and boys from the neighborhood, the songs, jests, and revelry that filled up the time, would not wonder at the worst effects that followed. And when we consider how the same liquid fire was carried into the bar-room, the store, and private dwellings, and was then so common in all departments of society, we shall at once see a prominent cause of all the evils that prevailed.

Cleveland credited the temperance movement with the fact that there were no longer any stills in the township; also, few of the stores retailed "the poison," and "our private dwellings are generally free from it."<sup>3</sup>

A similar picture is painted by another local historian, B.F. Hubbard, who wrote in 1874 that the township of Stanstead had once boasted twenty-six distilleries:

A considerable part ... was disposed at Montreal and other markets, but the amount consumed at home told fearfully upon the prosperity of the settlement. The Temperance Reformation of subsequent years changed the aspect of this traffic, but not before many of the early settlers had become habitually intemperate, some of whom found the drunkard's grave, and others were stripped of their property and compelled to leave the country.<sup>4</sup>

Even if, as Ghislaine Hildebrand claims, much more liquor was sold in the towns than in the countryside prior to the temperance movement,<sup>5</sup> the images painted by Cleveland and Hubbard suggest that consumption was another matter. Rural alcoholism remained the theme of numerous locally written poems, including the sad tale recounted in "The Drunkard's Wife," published in 1855 by young Helen Marr Johnson of Magog:

She remembered well when in early youth  
 She stood by the loved one's side,  
 With a beaming eye and heart of youth,  
 A fair and a happy bride.

...

She remembered well the home of yore,  
Where peace and where plenty dwelt,  
Ere the tempter foul had crossed the door,  
And woe and destruction dealt.

...

She thought of those who had downward led  
One dearer than light or life;  
And a curse fell on the rumseller's head —  
The curse of the drunkard's wife!<sup>6</sup>

The melodramatic language employed by such temperance supporters has made it easy to dismiss their claims about the damaging social impact of alcohol, and the anti-drink movement has been largely attributed by one school of historians to the needs of industrialists for a sober and dependable work force.<sup>7</sup> Certainly, as we shall see, the Sherbrooke Temperance Society on the Total Abstinence Principle was fostered by that town's entrepreneurial elite during the early 1840s. Its chair in 1842 was the former tavern keeper, Samuel Brooks, leading entrepreneur and member of the Legislative Assembly, and its secretary was the conservative newspaper publisher, Joseph S. Walton.<sup>8</sup> It should not be forgotten, however, that the merchants had profited greatly from what Hubbard called "the long columns of charges of rum, brandy, gin, whiskey, and ditto" which appeared in their account books.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, we shall see that women, who were more likely than their husbands to be active church members, played an important role in Sherbrooke's temperance society, as well as in all the others established in the region.

Finally, it has been suggested that even in the rural areas the temperance movement embodied the middle-class values which emerged with the expansion of transportation facilities and growth of the market-based economy.<sup>10</sup> This hypothesis is doubtless true, and of course the new economy would offer profitable alternatives to the sale of potato whiskey, but it should be noted that the temperance movement struck a popular chord in the Eastern Townships long before the arrival of the railway at mid-century. It is also difficult to apply to this slow-growth region Rorabaugh's argument that the increased consumption of alcohol in early nineteenth century America, particularly the new pattern of solo binge drinking, reflected a collective anxiety caused by the rapid economic and social change of that era. Even though it is now clear that alcohol abuse is as much a symptom as a cause of social problems, Rorabaugh's findings do lead to the obvious but neglected conclusion that the temperance movement was a logical response to the conditions of the time.<sup>11</sup>

Whatever the prime motivation, it was not in the industrial centres of North America — where the social control argument would best apply — that the nineteenth century temperance organizations were strongest, but in the long-settled towns and villages where evangelical religion flourished. Here, according to Joel Bernard's argument, the traditional religious practice of fasting evolved into temperance just as the mentality that took divine intervention for granted was evolving into one that sought naturalistic causes for the same events. Poverty, crime, and disease were no longer "contingent facts of the divine order," but social ills that could be eradicated by eliminating the consumption of alcohol.<sup>12</sup> Laura Schmidt presents a different but compatible analysis by suggesting that the American churches were seeking to preserve their authority and the authority of their beliefs by bringing traditional Puritan ideas more into line with the changing social order. In her view, the temperance movement offered "a new kind of religious ideology and strategy for winning converts *en masse*."<sup>13</sup> In short, a synthesis of the arguments made by Bernard, Schmidt, and Rorabaugh would suggest that the American temperance movement originated as the church's defensive response to a growing social problem during an era of increasingly secular values.

Reflecting their rejection of Calvinistic predestination, evangelical ministers began to establish temperance societies in various Eastern Townships communities during the early 1830s. The first one whose records have survived was the Stanbridge Temperance Society, founded in January 1831. A week after a public meeting had "listened to a Spirited address on the Subject of Intemperance by the Rev. Wm Arthur," 221 individuals — of whom approximately one-third were women — promised to "entirely abstain" from the use of distilled spirits "except as a medicine," to "banish them from our families," to "not give them to persons employed by us," and to "use our influence in discouraging their use amongst our friends."<sup>14</sup>

The Stanbridge society was clearly church-inspired, for its committee of directors was presided over by Reverend John Baker. Which denomination he was affiliated with is not clear, but the main force behind the pioneer temperance movement was the Congregational Church.<sup>15</sup> In Shipton Township's village of Danville, for example, a committee of the Congregational church reported in 1834 that 150 people had joined the local temperance society.<sup>16</sup> Reverend Ammi Parker added: "Intemperance appears to have received a stamp of reprobation in our community. Buildings are raised and farm work

prosecuted, without the monster's aid, except as a few of the more worthless perpetuate the curse upon themselves." He estimated that the amount of spirits consumed in the parish had declined by four-fifths during the previous year.<sup>17</sup> There were also Congregationalist-led temperance societies in Granby and Shefford as early as 1833, while elsewhere in the region Congregationalist missionaries reported the number of pledge-takers as follows: 100 in Stanstead in 1835, increasing to 950 the following year; 80 in Melbourne in 1836; and, in 1837, 80 in Philipsburg, 200 in Potton, 280 in Eaton, plus more than 400 in Compton.<sup>18</sup>

The Baptists of the Eastern Townships were also involved in the anti-alcohol movement at an early date, for the pastor of East Farnham's Free Will Baptist Church introduced the temperance pledge in 1830 and established an organization with a constitution in 1835. The original pledge, which did not proscribe beer or ale, was replaced with a more restrictive one in 1842, and the following year a committee of three was appointed to visit all persons engaged in the liquor traffic. The society's historian claims that bi-weekly meetings were held for many years thereafter, with women and children eligible to join.<sup>19</sup>

What appears to have been a second Baptist-organized society was not so long-lived. The records of the South West Stanstead Temperance Society for 1834–37 are included with that township's Baptist minute book for 1840–52.<sup>20</sup> This society operated on the total abstinence principle, "excepting as a medicine or for Scientific or Culinary purposes," and the membership list reveals that approximately half its 153 members were women. The medical exemption was clearly a tempting loophole, for at the quarterly meeting of 22 April 1836 some members protested having to reapply to a physician for spirits when they suffered subsequent attacks of the same illness. A month later, one of the founding committee members was reprovved for violating a pledge, with the result that he and two others immediately resigned. Matters deteriorated from there, for the July minutes record that the meeting was very poorly attended. The document ends with the minutes of the annual meeting in October 1837 suggesting that a special committee of three visit public houses and stores "to endeavour to persuade them to discontinue their traffick in Ardent Spirits."

The relatively tolerant position towards spirits still taken by the South West Stanstead Temperance Society was reflected in the Free Will Baptists' quarterly regional conference in 1836. Rather than proscribing consumption completely, the conference declared that

church members could not be “in constant use of ardent spirits so as to be frequently disguised by it,” or manufacture or sell the product. The Baptist stance became more hard-line in 1842 when the quarterly meeting agreed to amend the constitution “so that the church may be built on temperance principles.”<sup>21</sup>

As in Upper Canada, the Methodists were the largest evangelical church in the Eastern Townships, but it was the more conservative British Wesleyans rather than the American-based Episcopal Methodists who supplied missionaries to the East of the Ottawa River. This presumably explains why the early Methodist enthusiasm for temperance societies in Upper Canada was not echoed in the Eastern Townships.<sup>22</sup> In 1840 the *Canada Temperance Advocate* published a letter from the Methodist leadership stating that “no member of this meeting shall be allowed to agitate the question of temperance, especially in the extreme view of it called teetotalism or total abstinence, with the view of making it a church question or a condition of membership in our Society.”<sup>23</sup> However, local reports in the same journal also reveal that Methodist ministers were among the temperance society leaders of the Townships during the 1840s.

Somewhat surprisingly, greater enthusiasm for the temperance movement was expressed from within the more conservative Church of England. The papers of the English-born Reverend Richard Whitwell of Philipsburg in Missisquoi County include his draft of the local temperance society’s report for 1831–32. While admitting that such organizations in themselves did not have the power to transform men into “practical christians,” Whitwell wrote that “under the superintendence of Divine Providence” they could “prepare the way for the entrance of Christianity into the heart, which must be rid of the love & practice not only of ebriety, but of every other vice, before the seed of the Kingdom — the word of God — can take root there.” He also expressed astonishment “that so many generations should have gone into eternity without a thought of setting in motion a moral Engine of such incalculable power — such universal applicability — & promising so much individual & national benefit.”<sup>24</sup>

Whitwell illustrated this argument by noting that the Eastern Townships region had been largely spared by the “desolating pestilence” then raging elsewhere in the province. He also cited statistics from the Albany Board of Health to show that only the intemperate had become victims of cholera. Such reasoning would appear to conform to Joel Bernard’s observation, noted above, that temperance became the perceived solution to poverty, crime, and disease.

However, the Philipsburg cleric did not have a medical-scientific interpretation in mind. Rather, he proclaimed that the cholera epidemic was an act of "Divine judgement, sent to awaken a guilty lethargic world to a sense of their sins." Whitwell's reasoning must have been persuasive, for 116 people in the Philipsburg area pledged to abstain not only from "ardent spirits" but also from wine, "except on sacramental occasions & when medicinally necessary." Two branch societies, totaling 124 male and female members, were also established on the total abstinence principle.<sup>25</sup>

Four years later, in 1836, Whitwell's neighbouring Anglican colleague, Reverend James Reid of Frelighsburg, also made a public plea in favour of temperance. In a lengthy pamphlet responding to a lecture published by the Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Vermont, Reid stated that "of all the objections [to the temperance movement] that I have yet seen, the most surprising, at least to me, is that which is brought on behalf of religion."<sup>26</sup> Bishop Hopkins had complained that laymen were interfering with the moral prerogative of the church through the American Temperance Society, which lay open to any non-Christian who pledged to abstain from alcohol. In response, Reid pointed out that there was no conflict between the society's aims and those of the church. He also denied Hopkins' charge that the society pretended to redeem the world simply by means of the temperance pledge. However, he could not resist adding that "the advantages resulting from a discontinuance of the use of ardent spirits have, nevertheless, been found so great and so obvious, as to have suggested the propriety of not refusing it the honour of being dignified with the name of reformation though in the strictest application of the term, it has no claim to the appellation." As to the charge that the temperance society was making "the sin of drunkenness the *master sin* — *the parent of all sins*, — *the worst of all sins*," thereby implying that abstainers were innocent of sin, Reid responded, "This part of the Lecture would require stronger proofs to make it pass for any thing more than a caricature." He did insist, nevertheless, that drink was "the parent' of a vast many overwhelming miseries, and sorrows, and crimes, which could not exist if mankind were strangers to intemperance."<sup>27</sup>

Extreme as the Vermont bishop's critique may have been, it did reflect an awareness of the temperance movement's secularizing implications. Reid himself could not have been blind to those tendencies, but he argued that if the clergy did not become involved in the movement, "but throw cold water on efforts to that effect, a change may take place which may be apt to consider them as

unfriendly to the best interests of man."<sup>28</sup> He was presumably concerned that his own church, in particular, was being left behind by the reforming age, and he took pains to point out that the bishop and the archdeacon of his diocese also supported the temperance movement.<sup>29</sup> Reid and Whitwell (who wrote an appendix to the tract) may also have been motivated by the fact that few of the original settlers had belonged to their church on arrival from the United States. Due to the efforts of the Anglican missionaries, assisted by the state, the Church of England had, nevertheless, become the largest denomination in the Eastern Townships. The stance it took on the temperance issue was therefore of considerable importance. Whether or not most of the other Anglican clergy in the region actively favoured the temperance movement is not clear.<sup>30</sup> However, Reverend Lucius Doolittle was Vice-President of the Sherbrooke County Temperance Society in 1836,<sup>31</sup> and Dunkerly of Durham, Balfour of Waterloo, and Anderson of Inverness appear as local supporters in the pages of the *Canada Temperance Advocate* during the 1840s.

While there was undoubtedly rivalry in some communities for domination of the local temperance societies, the sense of moral urgency coupled with the role played by the Montreal Temperance Society ensured that the movement would be remarkably interdenominational. The report published by the 1836 convention of the Montreal society, which had two Townships clergymen in attendance, provides the first good overview of the local societies in the region (see *Table 1*). While not all the societies submitted reports, the thirteen that did so — with their 2871 adherents — represented the majority of the convention's membership. Only those in Frelighsburg had taken the more restrictive pledge, and, not surprisingly, Frelighsburg also reported the highest number of expulsions — twenty. The voluntary departure of eighty individuals from the Georgeville society suggests that there were serious internal divisions there, but elsewhere the movement appears to have been quite stable. Within the bounds of these thirteen Townships societies there were reportedly only nineteen taverns and eight stores selling liquor, as compared to fourteen temperance stores and inns. Montreal — with only 440 members — had 228 taverns, 147 stores selling liquor, and only one temperance store or inn. Finally, the twenty-six distilleries and breweries reported to have been operating at the time the Townships temperance societies were established had been reduced to five, whereas Montreal's number remained constant at ten.<sup>32</sup>

Despite this optimistic picture, it appears that enthusiasm for tem-

*Table 1*  
**Returns Made to the Montreal Temperance Convention, Feb. 1836**

<b>Society</b>	<b>Date formed</b>	<b>Members</b>	<b>Expelled</b>	<b>Withdrawn</b>
Frelighsburg	1830	156 <sup>a</sup>	20	6
Dunham	1830	459 <sup>b</sup>	8	12
Georgeville	1830	245 <sup>b</sup>	11	80
Philipsburg	1831	181 <sup>b</sup>	8	5
Lennoxville	1832	139	1	14
Eaton	1832	318	4	2
Compton	1832	436 <sup>b</sup>	9	7
Bolton	1832	91	7	5
Shipton	1833	153 <sup>b</sup>	6	8
Stanstead Plain, S.E.	1833	200	0	15
Stanstead Plain, N.E.	1833	389	3	1
Granby	1835	73	0	0
Westbury	1833	31	1	8
		<b>2871</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>163</b>
<b>Convention totals</b>		<b>4249</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>217</b>

a – all total abstainers    b – wine excluded from oath

perance had begun to decline by 1836. In February, the *Canada Temperance Advocate* correspondent for Granby reported that matters were not progressing well there, and the secretary of the Sherbrooke County society wrote that the local branches were so poorly represented at the last meeting that it was “impossible to prepare a sufficiently accurate report to deserve publishing.”<sup>33</sup> The following January, the *Advocate* published the report of a correspondent who had travelled through the Townships where he had found a “very great need of the the influence of Temperance Societies” in the Stanbridge area, and few in attendance at the Stanstead meeting. While the cause appeared “more alive” at Eaton, the speakers at the meeting he attended “lamented the extent of intemperance, and the increased use of intoxicating liquors.” Finally, the people of Sherbrooke appeared to be too obsessed with commerce to be interested in the temperance movement.<sup>34</sup>

If one accepts the claim by historians of the movement in Upper Canada, there was one crucial ingredient missing for its success in the Eastern Townships: the fear and resentment caused by a large wave of Irish immigration. While James Clemens emphasizes middle-class anxiety arising from the influx of Catholics fleeing the famine, Glenn Lockwood argues that the Upper Canadian temperance lodges were essentially disguised reform societies established

in response to the spread of Irish Protestant Toryism.<sup>35</sup> The popularity of the movement in the Eastern Townships, where there were relatively few Irish immigrants of either religion, raises some doubt about the negative interpretations of these historians. Indeed, Irish settlers themselves were undoubtedly involved in most, if not all, the four temperance societies organized during the later 1830s in Megantic, the one heavily Irish-settled county in the region.<sup>36</sup>

Meanwhile, the general decline that observers elsewhere in the Townships were noting by this time presumably reflected the inevitable expenditure of several years of emotional energy in a movement characterized by its revivalistic fervour. Furthermore, there were more pressing issues to distract people's attention as political tensions increased in the later 1830s. When it finally broke out, the Rebellion had a devastating impact on the temperance movement of the Townships even though there was very little armed conflict in the region. In Stanstead, the number of temperance adherents declined from a peak of nearly one thousand to only sixty in 1838, and zero the following year.<sup>37</sup> The local Congregationalist minister complained that his meeting house had been taken for a barracks for five weeks, during which time the pulpit had been used for storing whiskey bottles, and the sacred desk for a card table.<sup>38</sup> Further west, in South Potton, the pastor reported in March 1838 that the local radicals had ceased attending his church regularly, and his efforts to hold a temperance meeting had been in vain: "the minds of the people were so agitated that I could not get enough together to produce any good effect. The Tavern keeper still sells his poison."<sup>39</sup> Even in areas removed from the border skirmishing, temperance was in decline. A correspondent from Danville wrote in April 1838, "The temperance cause is almost dead here. The Society is a mere name."<sup>40</sup> The following year the Congregationalist minister for Sherbrooke noted that the movement had suffered considerably, and his counterpart in Waterloo complained that liquor selling was killing the enterprise of his community, particularly among the English and Scots settlers.<sup>41</sup>

But the political turmoil had merely interrupted what would become a more widespread and hard-line movement during the provincial union era. The Congregationalists played a leading role once again in the early 1840s, but this time the original initiative came from within the region. In January 1841, the St Francis Association of Presbyterian and Congregational Ministers established a district society based on the total abstinence principle,<sup>42</sup> and reports to the *Canada Temperance Advocate* revealed that virtually all the

local societies were abandoning the moderate pledge. The Montreal Temperance Society, nevertheless, continued to exercise considerable influence by sending travelling agents to the outlying communities. In November 1841, Secretary R.D. Wadsworth made an extensive tour of the Townships, gathering pledges, distributing hundreds of tracts, and selling subscriptions to the *Advocate* to pay his expenses. He held meetings in four Congregational churches, two Wesleyan chapels, two union chapels, one Anglican church, one Baptist chapel, seven schools, and the registry office in Drummondville. From this last town he reported in the agrarian language that temperance promoters frequently resorted to in the Townships: "The soil here requires to be stumped, and twice ploughed, before temperance seed will yield a harvest." There were also few in Wadsworth's audience in the town of Sherbrooke, but everywhere else he reported success, recruiting a total of 374 new members.<sup>43</sup>

The following month, Wadsworth headed to Quebec on another tour, passing through the British settlements of Megantic County *en route*. Here he held successful meetings in the Leeds Presbyterian church, the three Wesleyan chapels in Inverness and Ireland, several schools, and the home of a former tavern keeper.<sup>44</sup> At the same time, the Montreal secretary's efforts in the more southern townships were being reinforced by a four-month tour on the part of William Black. In addition to attending a large number of temperance meetings, Black reported visiting 824 families and gathering 773 signatures to the temperance pledge.<sup>45</sup> But this Montreal agent did not meet with success everywhere. He reported that there was still little interest in Sherbrooke, no society in Brompton and Windsor because of tensions within the community, and opposition in Shipton due to "old country" prejudices.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, the feeling in Eaton was that the adoption of the new total abstinence pledge had been premature, though Black disagreed: "the recent establishment of a brewery at Lennoxville, and the strong predilection of many of the people at Eaton and Newport for *cider*, are reasons sufficient for maintaining the present pledge inviolate."<sup>47</sup>

February 1842 found Wadsworth yet again in the Townships, travelling 280 miles and delivering twenty-three lectures in as many places within seventeen days, despite the obstacle presented by a heavy snow storm. Given the much shorter period he spent in the region, the Montreal secretary had considerably more success than Black, no doubt because the latter felt incapable of public speaking. Wadsworth organized four new societies, gathered 569 signatures to total abstinence pledges, and distributed approximately two thou-

sand temperance tracts.<sup>48</sup> In what appears to be an extension of the same report, later printed in his *History of the Temperance Cause in Canada*, Wadsworth added that the twenty-seven distilleries and breweries in Stanstead County had been reduced to one. Still he was not satisfied, complaining that it was "extremely hard to induce moderationists to give up their *brandied* wines, home-brewed beer and cider."<sup>49</sup>

Despite his relatively poor performance, Black returned to the Townships as well in 1842. This time he was able to report that the village of Stanstead "had taken up the subject of temperance in good earnest ... the *high-ways and hedges* were all that were left for me to visit: and in some places, many of the names were already enroled in some society, leaving little for me but the mere gleanings." But the story was different in another part of the township, where the Montreal agent wrote: "Field barren and uninviting. I felt like a traveller suddenly transported from the genial warmth and opening bloom of spring, to the withering blast and naked sterility of winter." Black also noted little progress among the recent Scots immigrants of Beebe Plain and a general falling away in the village of Charleston, but he did add 258 members to the county's local temperance societies.<sup>50</sup>

Sales of the *Temperance Advocate* were too few in this border region, flooded by American periodicals, to finance further initiatives by the Montreal Temperance Society,<sup>51</sup> but the local societies continued to report steady growth. One of the most active communities was Granby, where there was a Juvenile Temperance Society of sixty-four members by 1841, and where a Catholic society of approximately six hundred was reported the following year.<sup>52</sup> A "temperance revival" was also reported by the Congregational minister in 1842, resulting in five hundred pledges.<sup>53</sup> In Stanbridge East the secretary of the 320-member temperance society claimed in 1842, as well, that there had been a rapid decline in liquor consumption: "I do not think that one-fourth of the liquor is drunk now in this part of the township that there was four months ago, before the Society was formed. We now have raisings, logging bees, etc. etc. without a drop of intoxicating liquors being used."<sup>54</sup> Finally, Reverend Parker of Shipton reported the same year that "a fresh impulse was given to the cause of Temperance which brought a large addition to our Soc.'y."<sup>55</sup>

But this promising renewal threatened to be short-lived because the grounding of the Montreal Temperance Society's travelling agents in 1843 was followed by the withdrawal of the American

Home Missionary Society from Canada the same year, and its British Congregational counterpart failed to fill the breach. After a hiatus of a couple of years, the next phase of the temperance movement was dominated by the emerging industrial center of Sherbrooke. As we have seen, Sherbrooke had been the center of a rather weak county association in the mid-thirties, but the Montreal agents had met with little encouragement there during the early 1840s. In 1845 the secretary of the local association reported that support had been flagging because of the forced closure of several taverns, but enthusiasm was rekindled by a charismatic crusader from Boston named Cole.

In addition to proclaiming a desire "to keep pace with the great moral improvement of the age," the preamble to the reactivated society's charter mentioned "the poverty, disease and crime" which intemperance had introduced "into our otherwise peaceful town ... thereby not only hindering the growth and improvement of this town, but also counteracting the protecting influences of virtue, morality, and religion."<sup>56</sup> Despite the evident concern about social disintegration, however, the promoters were clearly more interested in hastening the process of social and economic change than in reasserting traditional values and protecting their status in a changing society, as one theory would suggest.<sup>57</sup> Cole had attracted "those holding position and rank in Sherbrooke society,"<sup>58</sup> and the first elected president of the Sherbrooke Total Abstinence Society was George Frederick Bowen, district sheriff and son of Chief Justice Edward Bowen of Quebec. But this was evidently a largely honorary position, for Bowen does not appear to have played an active role in the society. And noticeably absent from the list of officers was Bowen's brother-in-law, Edward Hale, another scion of the Quebec office-and-landholding elite, and the leading Tory in the region. Most of the temperance officers were instead self-made American-born entrepreneurs or liberal professionals with strong attachments to the community. Treasurer of the society was the merchant-politician, Samuel Brooks (who had served as president of the earlier incarnations in 1836 and 1842); secretary was his merchant son, William; and among the vice-presidents and committee were such rising notables as Adam Lomas, J.G. Robertson, William Ritchie, William Arms, J.S. Sanborn, and J.S. Walton.<sup>59</sup>

Further study on religion in the Sherbrooke area will be needed to determine the degree to which these men were fired by the millennial fervour that marked some of their bourgeois counterparts in Montreal.<sup>60</sup> It should be noted, however, that most of them were

active members of the Congregational Church, and that Walton, Sanborn, and Robertson apparently shared a mutual understanding that they could call on each other to relieve the poor "if the assistance granted was considered too much for one to give."<sup>61</sup> Commenting on the impact that the temperance evangelist Cole had made upon him, the registrar William Ritchie declared in 1845 that "no more grog, wine or beer goes down my gullet." Writing as land agent to a Quebec client, Ritchie's rationale for taking the pledge combined pragmatism with altruism: "You will save money by it if no higher motive besides incalculable amount of good that will arise from it, depend upon it I am sincere.... I wonder at it how much misery would be done away in the world if intoxicating drink were banished from the land."<sup>62</sup>

The temperance revival was reportedly followed by "a revived state of religion,"<sup>63</sup> for the Sherbrooke Total Abstinence Society adopted many of the characteristics of nineteenth-century evangelical religion. In doing so, it was clearly influenced not only by its Congregational predecessors, but by the largely artisan-dominated Washingtonian Society which became the most popular temperance organization in the United States during the early 1840s.<sup>64</sup> Like the Washingtonians, the Sherbrooke temperance leaders were anxious to provide social alternatives to the taverns, and in late May they organized a "Temperance Jubilee" in the town's cotton factory. The day's activities began with "a large procession of members" marching in order from the Court House where "a cold water army of children" had assembled. The Sherbrooke society also extended its activities to charity, for a few days later a committee of prominent men was formed to collect and distribute old clothes to the needy.<sup>65</sup> It is quite likely that women did the work this activity involved, just as they helped to circulate the pledge drafted by the society, but their support remained behind the scenes. Even though they were nearly half the 1211 members in 1845, they were not among the society's officers.<sup>66</sup> It is also doubtful that women attended the meetings, since the discussion of drink and drunkenness was still thought to be unladylike at this time.<sup>67</sup>

The Sherbrooke Total Abstinence Society's weekly assemblies nevertheless took on the tone of revival meetings, with the singing of temperance songs, readings from tracts, and members testifying to their formerly dissolute ways. One Barnston man was said to have consumed 639 gallons in seven years, an incredible average of a quart a day.<sup>68</sup> With such church-inspired strategies, the Sherbrooke temperance leaders may simply have been adopting the most effec-

tive techniques available, but their interest was not confined to reforming the local wage labourers. By mid-July six merchants were reported to have given up the liquor trade,<sup>69</sup> and the general falling off in enthusiasm for the temperance movement in the outlying areas provided an opportunity for the Sherbrooke society to reach out to the rural population. In January 1846 delegates from nine townships met in Sherbrooke in order to establish a federation of local societies.<sup>70</sup> During the following weeks, delegates from Sherbrooke attended temperance meetings in a number of scattered locations. They reported that they were well received everywhere, with as many as three hundred in attendance at both the Melbourne and Danville meetings.<sup>71</sup>

Temperance fervour reached a peak in Sherbrooke in February 1846 when three men purchased and destroyed an innkeeper's supply of liquor. While declaring that it had not played a role in this action, the Total Abstinence Society officially approved of it, adding that "we are satisfied they intended no offense to any individuals; and had it not been for the unwarranted interference, we believe no disturbance would have taken place." This resolution suggests that the more conservative elite organizers had lost control of the movement, at least for the moment,<sup>72</sup> but popular enthusiasm inevitably waned soon afterward. The first sign of a decline in resolve came early in March when two members acknowledged breaking the pledge, though they offered to sign it again. Meetings continued on a weekly basis throughout the next ten months, but Walton complained of a lack of moral fervour.<sup>73</sup> The minutes became increasingly perfunctory until none at all were recorded for a meeting in late January 1847. The next meeting was not held until a month later, when a brass band performed in an attempt to attract an audience.

Another survival strategy was to broaden the appeal of the society to the French Canadians who constituted most of the town's industrial workforce.<sup>74</sup> In May the Catholic curé, Bernard O'Reilly, was invited to deliver an address, but the initiative did not bear fruit.<sup>75</sup> By the end of the summer, meetings had once again become infrequent. The following March, spokesmen such as Arms and Sanborn were recorded as making "interesting and spirited remarks" about "the amount of good" the society had accomplished "while in a vigorous and healthy state." However, they deplored "the injurious influence exerted by it over Branch Societies by its feeble and sickly existence during the last six months." Inspired by the large number of people in attendance, the officers optimistically made

plans to repair the Temperance Hall, but this was to be the last recorded meeting of the Sherbrooke Total Abstinence Society.

Meanwhile, enthusiasm in the outlying areas continued to wax and wane, with the major new initiative being led in the south-western part of the region by Captain J.D. Crippin (also spelled Crispin and Cripin) of New York State. In December 1847 the secretary of the Brome Total Abstinence Society reported that Crippin had not only revived this moribund society, he had fostered the establishment of three others in the same township. Crippin was also instrumental in founding a society at Sutton Flat, "a place heretofore considered almost impregnable."<sup>76</sup> The following spring he was credited with increasing the number of societies in Missisquoi County from two to fourteen.<sup>77</sup> In August a correspondent from Dunham reported that Crippin's work had been instrumental in leading nearly 1600 people to sign the pledge, "besides working wonders in Stanstead, Sherbrooke and Shefford."<sup>78</sup>

But the American crusader's impact on the more easterly townships appears to have been quite limited. Two months before Crippin's death in November 1848, the *Stanstead Journal* was reduced to hoping that the Chiniquy crusade in the French-Canadian parishes would bring some influence "to bear upon the distilling business in the Eastern Townships, at least to a sufficient extent to obviate the necessity of importing breadstuffs."<sup>79</sup> The desired influence on the Townships actually came from an entirely different direction, for, before he died, Captain Crippin had established six "tents" of the international temperance brotherhood and benefit group known as the Independent Order of the Rechabites (named after a biblical sect which abstained from alcohol).<sup>80</sup> Little appears to have been written about this British-born society in North America, where it first appeared in 1842,<sup>81</sup> but Tyrell claims that it perpetuated the disintegrating Washingtonian Society's principles by adhering to moral reform and revivalism at a time when support for state prohibition was on the rise.<sup>82</sup> He argues that the Rechabites were essentially a plebeian organization, even though it was effectively open only to those who could afford to pay dues and support a mutual insurance programme. Furthermore, in contrast to the more populist and more popular Sons of Temperance, which emerged around the same time, the Rechabites enforced a strict moral code with backsliders subject to expulsion.<sup>83</sup> Given the rapid proliferation of Rechabite "tents" throughout the older communities in the Eastern Townships, the society clearly appealed to a well-established rural and small-town population in this region.

The Rechabite order, which had been introduced to the United

States in 1842 and spread to Canada four years later,<sup>84</sup> held a jubilee or Grand Tent meeting in Stanstead in September 1848, and another in Sutton the following month. Branches had been incorporated in Missisquoi, Shefford, and Stanstead Counties.<sup>85</sup> Secret though the society may have formally been, the minutes of the Grand Tent meeting held at Dunham Flat, Missisquoi County, in December 1848 provide some sense of the Rechabites' well-orchestrated appeal. Twenty-nine delegates were present from ten tents, and the proceedings were opened with a short address by Brother G.J. Emery: "with vivid language," Emery depicted "the vile effects of ardent spirits upon the human systems and the efficacy of Rechabism to dethrone King Alcohol and, finally, the glorious reward of all who labour in its righteous cause."

A negative note was briefly sounded when one of the Stanstead delegates was asked to explain why he had established tents in his county without orders from his superior to do so, but the meeting then voted to recognize these tents "as having been duly organized." After hearing "the most cheering accounts" from the various tents represented, the meeting discussed a proposal to have degrees associated with the order, and appointed a committee of eleven to choose "*Signs and Pass-Words*" for the ensuing quarter. To add to the pomp and ceremony, the officers of each tent were to wear sashes "made of purple cot. velvet, trimmed with gold leaf, with the no. of their Tent thereon, to distinguish them from private members on public occasions."<sup>86</sup> As T.W. Acheson has pointed out, the fraternal temperance orders, with their sacred oaths and secret symbols, were "at once profoundly religious and profoundly secular."<sup>87</sup> This was particularly true of the Rechabites, who sponsored family picnics but not the more morally "suspect" teetotal balls or dances organized by the Sons of Temperance in Canada West.<sup>88</sup>

Playing prominent roles in the society were such old political rivals as Sherbrooke's Tory editor, J.S. Walton, and Stanstead's former radical editor and political exile, Silas Dickerson.<sup>89</sup> There was some dissension in the Stanstead branch in August 1849 when a local man objected to being expelled for breaking the pledge, but he attracted more ridicule than sympathy in the local newspaper, and the following year found meetings still being held every Thursday.<sup>90</sup> One local merchant had begun advertising his business as a "Temperance Store," and local enthusiasm was stronger than ever when the quarterly session of the region's Grand Tent was held in Stanstead in June 1850.

While Jan Noel claims that temperance leadership had shifted

**FRIEND!**  
**That Lot of New Goods**  
*Has come to Town, and is now being opened at*  
**FOSTER & CO'S.**  
**TEMPERANCE STORE!**

**D**IRECT from Boston, a large assortment of "NEW SPRING GOODS," consisting of Fancy Dress Goods, Cloths, Bonnets, Artificial Flowers, &c. &c., which are ready for public inspection. Please drop in and see what they have on hand now, and they will inform you that they have more coming, so that your wants they can surely supply. Ladies, just call in at the "Temperance Store," they are prepared to please you. Further particulars on next arrival.  
 Rock Island, May 7th, 1850.

Stanstead Journal, May 9, 1850.

(Source: Stanstead Historical Society Archives.)

1850 meeting reported that 1273 individuals had joined the society, with the village of Stanstead and Sherbrooke registering the highest numbers at 181 and 112, respectively. However, sixty-six individuals had been honourably discharged, seventy-four suspended, and twenty-five expelled, leaving a total of only 1126 members in good standing.<sup>91</sup> Without other detailed reports, it is impossible to say whether or not the Rechabites had already peaked in the region, but there were a few signs of internal dissent. While Stanstead's village society was clearly very active, its township branch reported seven honorary discharges, ten suspensions, and three expulsions, leaving a total of only fourteen members. In addition, several members from Brome registered a formal complaint against their tent, which had only fifteen members, for refusing to grant them an honourable discharge.<sup>92</sup>

Elsewhere in British North America, women had apparently begun to take their place on temperance platforms by 1850, and female societies and branches were also being established.<sup>93</sup> The women of the Eastern Townships were, however, more formally marginalized initially in the new international fraternal movement, with its military symbolism, than they had been in the older one fostered by church and local community. Finally, in January 1852 the Canada East Grand Tent meeting held at Frost Village in Shefford Township voted unanimously to allow women to join on the same conditions as men.<sup>94</sup> In the meantime, the Rechabite membership numbers of over 1100 men at mid-century must have represented only a fraction of temperance supporters in the region.

There were no Rechabite branches reported for the British-settled periphery of the region, but this does not mean that the temperance

from Montreal to Upper Canada due to the rise of the Sons of Temperance, it would be more accurate to state that the Canadian movement had become regionalized. On a per capita basis, it was probably stronger at mid-century in the Eastern Townships, where there were twenty-eight Rechabite "tents" (the "encampment" included an additional five Vermont "tents"), than in Upper Canada with its fifty-two Sons of Temperance "divisions." Aside from the Americans, the June

movement had died there. John R. Lambly, a leading Methodist layman from Leeds Township, became deputy grand worthy patriarch of the Society of Temperance in 1855.<sup>95</sup> Furthermore, reports to the *Canada Temperance Advocate* reveal that, even in the older townships to the south, the Rechabites had not entirely replaced the church-sponsored temperance societies. The journal's vivid description of the Missisquoi County Total Abstinence Society's annual meeting held in Stanbridge in 1849 reveals how important religion and the American connection remained to the movement:

Early in the morning, vehicles of all kinds began to arrive. Four horse teams, with the wagons so arranged as to hold 20 persons each, came up from distant places by ten o'clock, accompanied by other conveyances in great number from different localities. The day was fine — all was bright and beautiful. The sun shone — the ladies smiled — the men looked happy, and the boys and girls laughed in innocent gaiety. All centred toward the place of meeting — the brick church. The whole inside — pulpit, aisles, communion place, and galleries, were literally packed with ladies alone. A large platform was erected the whole length of the south side of the building, for speakers, delegates, bands, and choir of singers; stretched from thence southerly were long rows of seats for the gentlemen. The place was full inside and out, and a small platform fixed for the Speaker, President, and Secretary.

The meeting began with singing and prayer by a minister from Franklin, Vermont, followed by the annual address delivered by the presiding elder of the St Albans District Methodist Church, Vermont. The reporter describes “the vast multitude” as being “enchained with interested delight for an hour and ten minutes, when all rent the air with loud and prolonged exclamations of applause.” The crowd of three thousand was then fed at tables totalling five hundred feet in length, followed by the business meeting in which three motions were presented and seconded by local clergymen. The officers finally elected, however, were all laymen, making the society secular in name if not in spirit.<sup>96</sup>

The temperance movement was given another fresh impulse by the marked increase in the illicit sale of liquor after the arrival of the St Lawrence and Atlantic construction crews at mid-century.<sup>97</sup> Furthermore, the rise in violence and paranoia that accompanied the Irish navvies also resulted in increased pressure on the government to control the sale of liquor despite the Rechabites' formal opposition to prohibition.<sup>98</sup> While prohibition is generally associated with

the post-1850 era, Tyrell points out that the evangelical American anti-drink societies had already opted for it in 1840, and that it had become the dominant theme by the later 1840s.<sup>99</sup> As early as 1842 the Sherbrooke Temperance Society had argued in a petition to Governor-General Bagot that, were the government to suppress the sale of liquor, it would regain its money "from the increased demand by a better conditioned population for other duty paying articles." The society's members realized that the governor would have to wait "till the advancing light" had further "dissipated the prejudices of custom," but they asked that steps at least be taken against the unlicensed dealers. Of more than twelve outlets "for the wholesale and retail of intoxicating liquors" in Sherbrooke, only two were licensed. The petition added that licenses were generally granted to applicants with "comparatively respectable" houses and, being under the surveillance of the law, they were "generally less ensnaring and injurious to the poor labouring people than the reckless illegal receptacles that now waylay them at every turn." Finally, the Sherbrooke society claimed that it was difficult to close these establishments because the people refused to inform against them even for a reward. The best solution to the problem would therefore be to appoint an officer "to migrate through the entire united province to detect lodges and prosecute informations every where," or to impose this duty on the sheriffs, coroners, or some other county officer.<sup>100</sup>

While the grand jury repeatedly attributed the lack of serious crime in the St Francis District to the work of the temperance societies,<sup>101</sup> in 1842 it too began to deplore the existence of so many places "for the sale of ardent spirits, without license or the authority of the Law."<sup>102</sup> But even after the government followed the grand jury's advice by appointing a district inspector of licenses in 1845,<sup>103</sup> most liquor establishments remained without a permit. The government issued only twenty tavern licenses for the entire St Francis Judicial District between April 1845 and April 1846, though the number did increase to twenty-nine during the following eight months.<sup>104</sup> The inspector, Chauncey Bullock, also admitted that few of the distilleries in the district were licensed. He reported that most of them were owned by poor men "merely for working Potatoes a few months in the winter season." As a result, the law passed in 1842 imposing a tax on stills "has been supposed, by the People Generally in the Townships, to bear heavily on these small concerns." Bullock concluded that if he had taken action against them, "I should have been frowned down by the People and should not have been sustained by the magistrates."<sup>105</sup>

In 1847 the grand jury claimed that "the laws regarding the sale

of spirituous liquors" had begun to be strictly enforced,<sup>106</sup> but such enforcement continued to be hampered by the shortage of Justices of the Peace (JPs) even in the town of Sherbrooke itself. When Inspector Bullock reported to High Constable Clark in 1848 that two Sherbrooke establishments were retailing "spirituous liquors" without permits, Clark's hands were tied by the fact that the two magistrates legally required to hear the case were not available.<sup>107</sup> Even where there were sufficient JPs, unlicensed liquor dealers could be adept at exploiting legal technicalities. One of the more imaginative, no doubt, was Stanstead's Timothy Taylor. The magistrates had twice dismissed charges against him by 1851, when he appeared before them once again accused of dispensing alcohol without a license. His argument was that he collected money only for a "show," not for drinks. According to a witness, customers went into a back room where there was a decanter of spirits on a table, and the show consisted of "an image of a negro, etc."<sup>108</sup>

When the government did introduce legislation to restrict the sale of alcohol in 1850, there was far from unanimous approval in the Eastern Townships. The *Stanstead Journal* complained that the "injudicious and severe restrictions" of the bill for the More Effectual Suppression of Intemperance would do more harm than good.<sup>109</sup> The bill's provisions were indeed strict, since they would make innkeepers liable for injury or loss resulting from the actions of those who became drunk on their premises.<sup>110</sup> Claiming that he would be forced to close his Stanstead hotel when these provisions came into force, the outspoken Dr M.F. Colby attacked "the advocates for promulgating the principles of moral reform by legislative proscriptive enactments."<sup>111</sup>

Colby referred in particular to Stanstead's aggressively evangelical Methodist minister when he charged that "those who would spread and enforce moral and religious tenets by fire and sword" were not "the followers of the great and all-important doctrines which inculcate peace on earth — but the followers of the doctrines of men — those who enforce purification of the heart by outward washings — the Pharisees of modern times — the followers of Mahomet and those whose kingdom is on this earth." A laissez-faire liberal, despite his conservative political affiliation, Colby argued that every attempt to enforce moral precepts, rather than reforming the heart, would inevitably "carry the people to opposite extremes, and encourage infractions of law and morals, the more dangerous for being the more secret." Moving from the moral high ground, Colby complained that "the penal enactments are thrown

on that class of vendors where the high charges for spirit, by the glass, would render its sale the least dangerous, while the government itself, by allowing the importation at a reduced duty, and the merchant and distiller who sell cheap and in any quantity from one gallon upward, are exempted from its penalties."<sup>112</sup>

Dr Colby actually appears to have been a Rechabite, for in 1850 a letter from Boston addressing him as Brother Colby informed him, "In this part of the country, a man who keeps a *grog-shop* is rather a disreputable person. A licensed hotel keep or apothecary could not come under this head and if such persons as you mention — creditable and respected in the community where they live, wish to join & you wish to have them, I don't know who there is to object."<sup>113</sup> A committee of the local Rechabite tent nevertheless criticized Colby for attempting to associate its activities with the controversial Reverend Borland, and declared that it was "the people" who demanded proscriptive legislation, since "Parliament was flooded with petitions for a more stringent License Law." To Colby's complaint that wholesalers would escape unscathed, the committee conceded that "the axe should have been laid at the root of the tree — but there is a step in the right direction when they lop off the branches." The solution was not to repeal the law, but to remove the inequity Colby complained of: "It is a plain case. The public versus the grog seller. The interest of which party, should the Law be made to uphold?"<sup>114</sup>

This hard line was endorsed by the Canada East quarterly session of the Rechabites held in Compton several months later. One resolution declared that "all who are now engaged in the manufacture of, or the traffic in, intoxicating liquor, are *practically* the enemies of our race." However, the delegates remained true to their organization's anti-coercion principles by refusing to support J.S. Walton's motion to the effect that they would be satisfied with nothing short of the Maine prohibition law.<sup>115</sup> The Missisquoi County Total Abstinence Society, on the other hand, strongly supported prohibition.<sup>116</sup>

Meanwhile, in 1851, the hotel owners of Stanstead County took a more moderate collective stance than Colby had done when they asked that the offending bill be repealed simply on the grounds that merchants and distillers "are not under any restrictions whatsoever." Their petition was supported by Mayor Bigelow, who was a hotel owner himself, but seven councilors spoke forcefully against it at their June 1851 meeting. Consequently, rather than asking the Legislature to repeal the act, the Stanstead County Council moved unanimously that it should be "so amended as to apply equally to all per-

sons vending spirituous liquors, both as respects its penal provisions and the obtaining of Licenses."<sup>117</sup>

In Shefford the county council went further, objecting that the act was counterproductive because it would cause respectable houses of public entertainment to close, forcing travelers to resort to establishments "kept by reckless and disreputable characters in violation of the revenue law." The new legislation required the district inspectors to issue liquor licenses only to those applicants who presented a requisition signed by the majority of municipal electors, plus a certificate of support from the senior magistrate, senior militia officer, and — inappropriately for Protestant districts — the "marguiller en charge" (translated as the churchwarden in office).<sup>118</sup> The Shefford councilors argued, however, that they were the best judges of how to regulate houses of public entertainment, and that they should therefore be the body to make the relevant laws, control the issuing of licenses, and appropriate the fees.<sup>119</sup>

It is somewhat surprising that the demand for greater local control was not more widespread in the region, since this was a dominant theme in the United States, and it was granted to the municipalities of Canada West in 1848.<sup>120</sup> Furthermore, the Eastern Townships responded to the municipal and school reforms of the 1840s with strong demands for increased decentralization.<sup>121</sup> Perhaps the municipal councils were generally content with receiving the local license funds from the provincial government without having to enforce the more controversial aspects of the 1851 act. It also appears that a more sympathetic attitude towards state control began to develop after mid-century, for in 1854 the Farnham East Temperance Society sent out committees to surrounding neighbourhoods to promote prohibition and to persuade them to vote only for teetotal candidates.<sup>122</sup> By this time there also existed an Eastern Townships Prohibitory Liquor Law League whose president was Stanstead's former MLA, John McConnell.<sup>123</sup>

How popular this society was remains to be seen.<sup>124</sup> For more than two decades, though, the region's fluctuating temperance movement had remained largely a morally directed one, with an emphasis on individual conversion to abstinence. Though the Sherbrooke Total Abstinence Society and the Rechabites emerged in the 1840s as popular secular organizations, their meetings had strong religious overtones, and they shared a millenarian-inspired desire for a transformed world.<sup>125</sup> Their hopes may have been disappointed, but at least they could take comfort in the fact that the temperance movement and the restrictive licensing legislation had made a significant

impact on alcohol consumption in the region. According to the *Canada Census Reports*, the number of people per tavern in the six Eastern Townships counties had increased three and a half times, from 576 in 1827 to 2018 in 1852.<sup>126</sup> As for Dr Colby, his business appears to have survived the new licensing regulations, for even though his “tavern stand” was advertised for sale in January 1852, he renewed his liquor license two months later.<sup>127</sup>

## RESUME

Cet article se penche sur le mouvement antialcoolique qui se développe dans les Cantons de l’Est du dix-neuvième siècle. Cette manifestation traversa plusieurs phases distinctes avant le milieu du siècle, mais qu’elle ne représenta essentiellement, nous suggère l’auteur, qu’une tendance moraliste érigée sur les bases de fortes croyances religieuses

## NOTES

- 1 Jan Noel, *Canada Dry: Temperance Crusades before Confederation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995). I wish to thank Jan Noel for reading an earlier draft of this paper, Matthew Barlow for his research assistance, and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for its financial support.
- 2 W.J. Rorabaugh, *The Alcoholic Republic: An American Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 11, 61, 69, 74–84. Rorabaugh (pp. 8–10) claims that annual per capita consumption of distilled spirits in the United States declined from five gallons to less than two after 1830. For a useful overview of consumption in Canada, see Reginald G. Smart and Alan G. Ogburne, *Northern Spirits: Drinking in Canada Then and Now* (Toronto: Addiction Research Foundation, 1986), chapter 1.
- 3 Rev. Edward Cleveland, *A Sketch of the Early Settlement and History of Shipton, Canada East* ([Richmond]: S.C. Smith, 1858), 35–6.
- 4 B.F. Hubbard, *Forests and Clearings. The History of Stanstead County* (Montreal: Lovell, 1874), 30. Likewise, L.S. Channell of Compton states of the pioneer era: “A very popular drink in those days was potato whiskey, which was nearly as free as water and looked upon as a nourishing drink.” *History of Compton County* (Cookshire: L.S. Channell, 1896), 67.
- 5 Ghislaine Blais Hildebrand, “Les débuts du mouvement de tempérance dans le Bas-Canada, 1828–1840” (MA thesis, McGill University, 1975), 15–16.

- 6 Helen M. Johnson, *Poems* (Boston: J.V. Himes, 1855), 226–7.
- 7 See, for example, John J. Rumbarger, *Profits, Power and Prohibition: Alcohol Reform and the Industrialization of America, 1800–1930* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989); and F. Laurie Barron, “‘Damned Cold Water Drinking Societies’: Oligarchic Opposition to the Temperance Movement in Upper Canada, 1828–1848,” *Upper Midwest History*, 4 (1984): 11–28. For a contradictory interpretation, stressing the evangelical religious motivation, see T.W. Acheson, *Saint John: The Making of a Colonial Urban Community* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), chapter 7; and James K. Rohrer, “The Origins of the Temperance Movement: A Reinterpretation,” *Journal of American Studies*, 24, no. 2 (1990): 228–35. Jan Noel’s *Canada Dry* attempts to strike a balance.
- 8 Memorial of Sherbrooke Temperance Society, no. 1037, 1842, Civil Secretary’s Correspondence, Incoming, RG4 C1, National Archives of Canada [hereafter NA].
- 9 Hubbard, *Forests and Clearings*, 29. Referring to the seigneurial zone in the early nineteenth century, Allan Greer states that the traders used liquor “as a battering-ram into the habitant’s self-sufficient household economy.” *Peasant, Lord, and Merchant: Rural Society in Three Quebec Parishes, 1740–1840* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), 157.
- 10 Cheryl Krasnick Warsh, “‘John Barleycorn Must Die’: An Introduction to the Social History of Alcohol,” in *Drink in Canada: Historical Essays*, edited by Cheryl Krasnick Warsh (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1993), 17–18; Daniel Joseph Samson, “Industry and Improvement: State and Class Formations in Nova Scotia’s Coal-Mining Countryside, 1790–1864” (PhD thesis, Queen’s University, 1997), 585–94.
- 11 Rorabaugh, *Alcoholic Republic*, 123–47, 163–82, 189. One recently published diary from New Brunswick’s lower Saint John Valley during the 1840s suggests that the number of those who died by drowning, freezing, and fighting while inebriated gave reformers good cause to be concerned about the effects of alcohol abuse. J.I. Little, “Death in the Lower St John River Valley: The Diary of Alexander Machum, Jr, 1845–1849,” *Acadiensis*, 22, no. 1 (1992): 122–33.
- 12 Joel Bernard, “From Fasting to Abstinence: The Origins of the American Temperance Movement,” in *Drinking: Behavior and Belief in Modern History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 342, 344, 347.

- 13 Laura A. Schmidt, "'A Battle Not Man's But God's': Origins of the American Temperance Crusade in the Struggle for Religious Authority," *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, 56, no. 1 (1995): 111.
- 14 "Stanbridge Temperance Society," in *Water By the Mill*, Missisquoi County Historical Society, 13 (1974): 33–5. In this and the other membership lists considered below, there are a few names of ambiguous gender, and it is assumed that those with initials rather than first names were men.
- 15 Reverend Joseph Christmas, who founded Canada's first major temperance society in Montreal in 1828, served the local American Presbyterian Church, but his ties with the Congregationalists were close. He also founded the Canada Education and Home Missionary Society which helped to fund the Congregational missionary effort in the Eastern Townships. See Noel, *Canada Dry*, chapter 4; and J.I. Little, "Serving 'the North East Corner of Creation': The Community Role of a Rural Minister in the Eastern Townships of Quebec, 1829-70," *Histoire sociale — Social History*, forthcoming.
- 16 Wm. C. Lord et al. to Montreal Ladies' Sewing Society, Shipton, 18 Aug. 1834, Canada Education and Home Missionary Society Papers [hereafter CEHMS], United Church Archives, Montreal-Ottawa Conference [hereafter UCA], Archives nationales du Québec à Montréal [hereafter ANQM].
- 17 *Report of the Canada Education and Home Missionary Society*, 1834, 8–9.
- 18 *Reports of the American Home Missionary Society* (New York: 1835–37); Ora Pearson to W.F. Curry, Compton, 22 March 1837; A.O. Hubbard to W.F. Curry, Melbourne, 29 March 1837; Edwin J. Sherill to W.F. Curry, 18 Dec. 1837, CEHMS, UCA, ANQM.
- 19 East Farnham Temperance Society, Brome County Historical Society Papers, vol. 12, Towns and Villages, Farnham East, MG8 F13, NA; Moses B. Jewell, "Temperance and Total Abstinence: East Farnham Temperance Society," in Ernest M. Taylor, *History of Brome County, Quebec*, vol. 1 (Montreal: John Lovell and Son, 1908), 82–4.
- 20 Stanstead Church Minute Book, 1840–52, Canadian Baptist Church Archives, McMaster University.
- 21 Hatley meeting, 15 Jan. 1836; meeting of 17 June 1842, First Record Book, 1828–47, Stanstead Free Will Baptist Quarterly Meeting, Bailey-Howe Library, University of Vermont.
- 22 On Upper Canada, see Neil Semple, *The Lord's Dominion: The History of Canadian Methodism* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), 67–70, 78, 87. Some prominent

- American Methodists were initially themselves unenthusiastic about co-operating with temperance societies organized by rival denominations, arguing that their own church had always opposed the consumption of ardent spirits. Douglas J. Williamson, "The Rise of the New England Methodist Temperance Movement, 1823–1836," *Methodist History*, 21, no. 1 (1982): 3–28.
- 23 Quoted in Hildebrand, "Les débuts," 46.
- 24 Report of the Philipsburg Society for the Promotion of Temperance for 1831–32, Whitwell Papers, Montreal Anglican Diocesan Archives [hereafter MDA].
- 25 Report of the Philipsburg Society for the Promotion of Temperance for 1831–32, Whitwell Papers, MDA.
- 26 Rev. James Reid, *Remarks on the Lecture of the Rt. Rev. Bishop Hopkins Against the Temperance Society* (Frelighsburg: Standard Office, 1836), 3, file 9, Rev. James Reid Papers, MDA.
- 27 Reid, *Remarks*, 8, 13, 19.
- 28 Reid, *Remarks*, 4–5.
- 29 Reid, *Remarks*, 16. Bishop Stewart, who had been the first Anglican missionary in the area, did thank Reid for publishing his tract. C.J. Quebec to J. Reid, Que., 19 March 1836, Bishop Stewart Letters (Reid Collection), 1812–36, Quebec Diocesan Archives, Anglican Church, Bishop's University. According to Hildebrand ("Les débuts," 38), however, the Bishop of Quebec opposed total abstinence for the Quebec temperance society in 1834.
- 30 On the division within the church in Upper Canada, see Curtis Fahey, *In His Name: The Anglican Experience in Upper Canada, 1791–1854* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1991), 256, 297.
- 31 *Canada Temperance Advocate* [hereafter CTA], Feb. 1836.
- 32 Extra to the CTA, 1836.
- 33 The secretary did note, however, that the five societies which were represented had a total of 747 members. CTA, Feb. 1836.
- 34 CTA, Feb. 1837.
- 35 James M. Clemens, "Taste Not; Touch Not; Handle Not: A Study of the Social Assumptions of the Temperance Literature and Temperance Supporters in Canada West between 1839 and 1859," *Ontario History*, 64, no. 3 (1972): 142–60; Glenn Lockwood, "Temperance in Upper Canada as Ethnic Subterfuge," in *Drink in Canada: Historical Essays*, edited by Cheryl Krasnick Warsh (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993). A similar argument to Lockwood's is made in Sean T. Cadigan, "Paternalism and Politics: Sir Francis Bond Head, the Orange

- Order, and the Election of 1836," *Canadian Historical Review*, 72 (1991): 335–7. The Orange Lodge remained a marginal organization in the Eastern Townships. See Cecil J. Houston and William J. Smyth, *The Sash Canada Wore: A Historical Geography on the Orange Order of Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 49–56.
- 36 CTA, May 1836, Feb. 1837, May 1837, June 1838.
- 37 *Reports of the American Home Missionary Society*, 1838, 1839.
- 38 R.V. Hall to W.F. Curry, Stanstead, 17 Dec. 1838, CEHMS, UCA, ANQM.
- 39 M.P. Clark to W.F. Curry, S. Potton, 12 March 1838, CEHMS, UCA, ANQM.
- 40 CTA, June 1838.
- 41 James Robertson to W.F. Curry, Sherbrooke, 8 March 1839; H.B. Chapin to W.F. Curry, Waterloo, 3 May 1838, CEHMS, UCA, ANQM.
- 42 5 Jan. 1841, p. 75; 8 June 1841, p. 82; 27 Dec. 1841, p. 84, Minutes, St Francis Association of Congregational and Presbyterian Ministers, 1836–66, UCA, Quebec-Sherbrooke Presbytery, Eastern Townships Research Centre, Bishop's University [hereafter ETRC].
- 43 CTA, Nov. 1841.
- 44 CTA, Jan. 1842.
- 45 CTA, Dec. 1841, Jan. 1842, Feb. 1842.
- 46 CTA, Feb. 1842.
- 47 CTA, March 1842.
- 48 CTA, March 1842.
- 49 This excerpt also states that he returned to the Eastern Townships after an absence of twenty days, travelled 330 miles, visited twenty-three places, held twenty-one public meetings, delivered twenty-seven addresses and lectures, added 433 names to the teetotal pledge, and circulated large numbers of the *Temperance Advocate* and temperance tracts. *History of the Temperance Cause in Canada ... Being Part of Wadsworth's Temperance Manual* (Montreal: J.C. Becket, 1847), 30.
- 50 CTA, 1 June 1842.
- 51 CTA, 1 June 1842, 3 Jan. 1843
- 52 CTA, May 1841; 1 July 1842.
- 53 N.B. Fox to C. Strong, Granby, 5 April 1842, CEHMS, UCA, ANQM.

- 54 Quoted in Jan Noel, "Temperance Campaigning and Alcohol Consumption: A Case Study from Pre-Confederation Canada," *Contemporary Drug Problems* (Fall 1994): 417.
- 55 A.J. Parker to C. Strong, Danville, 21 Aug. 1842, CEHMS, UCA, ANQM.
- 56 10 May 1845, Minute Book, Sherbrooke Total Abstinence Society [hereafter STAS], Société d'histoire de Sherbrooke [hereafter SHS].
- 57 Noel attributes the "prestige legitimation" theory to Jean Burnet who was in turn inspired by Joseph Gusfield. Jan Noel, "Dry Millennium: Temperance and a New Social Order in Mid-Nineteenth Century Canada and Red River" (PhD thesis, University of Toronto, 1987), 33. See also Ian R. Tyrell, *Sobering Up: From Temperance to Prohibition in Antebellum America, 1800–1860* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979), 6.
- 58 CTA, 2 June 1845.
- 59 10 May 1845, Minute Book, STAS, SHS. Lomas and Arms were manufacturers, while Robertson was a lawyer, Ritchie a notary, Walton a newspaper editor, and Sanborn a Dartmouth-educated teacher, as well as being Brooks' son-in-law and a future MLA. For more information on Sherbrooke's entrepreneurial elite, see Jean-Pierre Kesteman, "Une bourgeoisie et son espace : industrialisation et développement du capitalisme dans le district de Saint-François (Québec), 1823–1879" (PhD thesis, Université du Québec à Montréal, 1985).
- 60 See Noel, *Canada Dry*, chapters 5 and 6.
- 61 Hon. J.G. Robertson, *Sketch of the Formation of the Congregational Church at Sherbrooke and Lennoxville* (Sherbrooke: W.A. Morehouse, 1890), 4–6, Plymouth United Church (Sherbrooke) fonds, UC001, Quebec-Sherbrooke Presbytery, UCA, ETRC.
- 62 W. Ritchie to W. Phillips, Sherbrooke, 14 May 1845, Phillips Papers, Brome County Historical Society [hereafter BCHS].
- 63 *History of the Temperance Cause*, 44.
- 64 Tyrell, *Sobering Up*, chapter 7.
- 65 20 May 1845, 24 May 1845, Minute Book, STAS, SHS.
- 66 This figure is based on my count of the membership roll. Maurice O'Bready claims that there were 1322 members. *De Ktiné à Sherbrooke. Esquisse historique de Sherbrooke : des origines à 1954* (Sherbrooke : Université de Sherbrooke, 1973), 111–12, 114.
- 67 Smart and Ogburne, *Northern Spirits*, 19–20.
- 68 24 May 1845, Minute Book, STAS, SHS.
- 69 CTA, 15 July 1845.

- 70 Noel, "Dry Millenium," 175; 8 Jan. 1846, Minute Book, STAS, SHS.
- 71 See the minutes from 19 Jan. 1846 to 2 March 1846, STAS, SHS.
- 72 The fact that this resolution is pasted into the minute book with no date (indeed out of place, after the March 16 entry), and that a sentence disapproving of the breach of peace is crossed out, suggests that the society was divided over what response to make. The context reveals that the event took place in February.
- 73 J.S. Walton to Edward Hale, Sherbrooke, 10 April 1846, Hale Papers, McGill University.
- 74 On the French-Canadian temperance movement, see Jan Noel, "Dry Patriotism: The Chiniquy Crusade," *Canadian Historical Review*, 71 (1990): 189–207; and Noel, *Canada Dry*, chapters 11 and 12.
- 75 The *Canada Temperance Advocate* (1 July 1845) reported that there was a separate Catholic temperance society of 150 teetotallers and as many more on the temperate pledge, but no other record of this society has been found.
- 76 CTA, 16 Dec. 1847.
- 77 CTA, 15 April 1848.
- 78 CTA, 1 Aug. 1848.
- 79 *Stanstead Journal*, 7 Sept. 1848. Chiniquy did speak in Granby in January 1849. CTA, 1 Jan. 1849.
- 80 CTA, 1 Aug. 1848.
- 81 Reverend William Scott, *The Teetotaller's Handbook* (Toronto: Alfred Dredge, c. 1860), 40.
- 82 Tyrell, *Sobering Up*, 209.
- 83 See Tyrell, *Sobering Up*, 211–13; Rumbarger, *Profits, Power and Prohibition*, 29.
- 84 Barron, "American Origins," 140–1. There were three "tents" in Montreal by the spring of 1846, when it became a separate district. *Crystal Fount and Rechabite Recorder* (New York), vol. 6, 14 March 1846, 4 April 1846, located at BCHS.
- 85 *Stanstead Journal*, 31 Aug. 1848, 7 Sept. 1848, 26 Oct. 1848, 23 Nov. 1848; Index, no. 929, 1849, RG4 C1, NA.
- 86 15 Dec. 1848, Temperance Society, V-200, Missisquoi County Historical Society. R.D. Wadsworth, who was himself a Rechabite, nevertheless stated that the order emphasized the equality of its members by not having any titles or degrees. See excerpt from his address in Scott, *Teetotaller's Hand-Book*, 40.
- 87 Acheson, *Saint John*, 149.

- 88 Noel, *Canada Dry*, 146.
- 89 *Stanstead Journal*, 18 Sept. 1851. On Dickerson, see Jean-Pierre Kesteman, "Silas Horton Dickerson," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 8, 221.
- 90 *Stanstead Journal*, 16 Aug. 1849, 23 Aug. 1849, 30 Aug. 1849, 11 April 1850.
- 91 *Stanstead Journal*, 4 July 1850.
- 92 *Stanstead Journal*, 11 July 1850. For a description of the quarterly meeting held at Charleston the previous November, see *CTA*, 15 Dec. 1849.
- 93 See Noel, "Dry Millenium," 141; Acheson, *Saint John*, 151; Tyrell, "Sobering Up," 179; Rumbarger, *Profits, Power, and Prohibition*, 39; Ruth M. Alexander, "'We Are Engaged as a Band of Sisters': Class and Domesticity in the Washingtonian Temperance Movement, 1840-1850," *Journal of American History*, 75, 3 (December 1988): 776-7.
- 93 *CTA*, 16 Feb. 1852.
- 94 Marion L. Phelps, "John Robert Lambly," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 9, 454.
- 95 *CTA*, 15 Oct. 1849. Attendance at the Missisquoi Temperance Association's annual festival in 1851 was equally large. *CTA*, 1 Nov. 1851.
- 96 The Rechabites were still publishing announcements of picnics and temperance celebrations in 1851. See, for example, *Stanstead Journal*, 19 June 1851.
- 97 For a description of the rise in crime at mid-century, see J.I. Little, *State and Society in Transition: The Politics of Institutional Reform in the Eastern Townships, 1838-1852* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), 67-77.
- 98 Tyrell, *Sobering Up*, 9-10, 225.
- 99 Memorial of Sherbrooke Temperance Society [n.d.], no. 1037, 1842, RG4 C1, NA.
- 100 On the perceived link between liquor consumption and crime, see Noel, "Dry Patriotism," 197-9.
- 101 Presentment of Grand Jury, St Francis District, 15 Feb. 1842, no. 455, 1842; 26 Sept. 1845, no. 2816, 1845, RG4 C1, NA.
- 102 Presentment of Grand Jury, District of St Francis, no. 563, 1845, RG4 C1, NA.
- 103 Tavern licenses issued, District of St Francis, 5 April 1845 - 5 April 1846, 5 April 1846 - 5 Jan. 1847, no. 117, 1847, RG4 C1, NA.
- 104 C. Bullock to D. Daly, Georgeville, 3 June 1845, Correspondence

- and Returns, National Revenue — Customs Excise, RG16 A1, NA; Ruth Elizabeth Spence, *Prohibition in Canada* (Toronto: The Ontario Branch of the Dominion Alliance [1919]), 31.
- 105 Presentment of Grand Jury, Sherbrooke, 20 Aug. 1847, no. 2956, 1847, RG4 C1, NA.
- 106 E. Clark to J. Leslie, Sherbrooke, 5 Oct. 1848, no. 2917, 1848, RG4 C1, NA.
- 107 *Stanstead Journal*, 31 July 1851. An earlier version of the same ruse was to charge for the viewing of a pig that had been painted with stripes. Rorabaugh, *Alcoholic Republic*, 217–18.
- 108 *Stanstead Journal*, 19 Sept. 1850.
- 109 Noel, “Temperance Campaigning,” 416.
- 110 Colby had purchased thirty-nine barrels of whiskey from J.W. Molson in November 1848. Family correspondence file, Colby Papers, Stanstead Historical Society.
- 111 *Stanstead Journal*, 10 April 1851.
- 112 A.J. Wright to Bro. Colby, Boston, 27 Nov. 1850, Miscellaneous letters file, Colby Papers, Stanstead Historical Society.
- 113 *Stanstead Journal*, 17 April 1851.
- 114 *Stanstead Journal*, 18 Sept. 1851. The *Stanstead Journal* declared itself in opposition to the Maine Law on 27 May 1852.
- 115 *CTA*, 15 March 1850, 1 April 1852.
- 116 *Stanstead Journal*, 20 March 1851; Petition of Stanstead Municipal Council, 1 June 1851, no. 1113, 1851, RG4 C1, NA.
- 117 The applicant would also have to prove that he held property valued at at least £100, and provide a security of £100 plus two sureties of £50 each for his good behaviour. *Stanstead Journal*, 3 April 1851; Spence, *Prohibition*, 32–3.
- 118 Petition of Municipality of County of Shefford, 9 June 1851, no. 1113, 1851, RG4 C1, NA.
- 119 Barron, “American Origins,” 143–5. See also Acheson, *Saint John*, 152. Under the township council system of 1845–47 only Shipton appears to have petitioned for the right to grant liquor licenses. Petition of municipal council of Shipton, 6 April 1846, 6670–3, no. 1233, 1846, RG4 C1, NA.
- 120 See Little, *State and Society*.
- 121 East Farnham Temperance Society, vol. 12, Towns and Villages, Farnham East, MG8 F13, NA.
- 122 Michael McCulloch, “English-Speaking Liberals in Canada East, 1840–1854” (PhD thesis, University of Ottawa, 1986), 613.
- 123 A legislative committee convened in 1856 reported that 88,945

people in Canada West had petitioned for prohibition, as compared with fewer than 14,000 in Canada East (Noel, *Canada Dry*, 150). Given the Catholic Church's opposition to prohibition, however, a high ratio of the latter were likely from the Eastern Townships.

- 124 Clemens ("Taste Not," 156-7) notes that the meetings of the Upper Canadian temperance societies often resembled church services.
- 125 Noel, "Temperance Campaigning," 417.
- 126 *Stanstead Journal*, 15 Jan. 1852, 18 March 1852.

