From Borderland to Bordered Land:
Reaction in the Eastern Townships Press
to the American Civil War and the Threat
of Fenian Invasion

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The accepted wisdom, based on the classic study by Robin Winks of relations between Canada and the United States during the Civil War, is that nearly all British North American newspapers were hostile to the Northern cause, even while being strongly opposed to slavery. But Winks ignored the Eastern Townships press, which was unequivocally pro-Northern in sympathy. The Stanstead Journal took a particularly hard line against the South, with the result that its Vermont-born owner and editor, L. R. Robinson, felt betrayed when neighbouring New England newspapers opposed renewal of the reciprocity treaty and supported the Fenian invaders. Robinson’s response suggests that the forces unleashed by the Civil War were making the “imaginary line” between New England and the Eastern Townships more tangible, even before Confederation fostered a new sense of nationalism north of the 45th parallel.

La croyance populaire, ancrée dans l’étude classique par Robin Winks des relations entre le Canada et les États-Unis durant la guerre de Sécession, veut que tous les journaux ou presque de l’Amérique du Nord britannique aient été hostiles à la cause nordiste tout en dénonçant vivement l’esclavage. Mais Winks a fait abstraction de la presse des Cantons de l’Est, qui prenait fait et cause pour les nordistes. Le Stanstead Journal avait adopté une ligne particulièrement dure envers le Sud, tant et si bien que son propriétaire et rédacteur en chef, L. R. Robinson, né au Vermont, se sentit trahi lorsque les journaux de la Nouvelle-Angleterre voisine s’opposèrent à la reconduction du Traité de réciprocité et appuyèrent les envahisseurs féniens. On devine à la réponse de Robinson que les forces déclenchées par la guerre de Sécession rendirent plus tangible la “ligne imaginaire” entre la Nouvelle-Angleterre et les Cantons de l’Est avant même que la Confédération n’insuffle un nouveau sentiment de nationalisme au nord du 45e parallèle.

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Robin Winks stresses the hostility that Canadians felt towards the North despite their abolitionist sympathies. Based on his extensive newspaper research, Winks argues that many Canadians saw the war as the logical consequence of unbridled egalitarianism and democracy, and others resented the North’s belligerent stance towards Britain and repeated threats to annex Canada. Winks also points to the more effective Southern propaganda campaign in Canada and suggests that “an inchoate sense of geopolitics made it evident that a Southern victory might re-establish the North American balance of power that had been eroded away during the previous decades.”

Winks would have discovered quite a different story, however, had he added the press of the Eastern Townships to the 84 Canadian newspapers he claims to have examined.

The region known as the Eastern Townships was not formally opened to settlement until 1792, with the result that the townships bordering Vermont and New Hampshire were mostly settled by post-Loyalists in search of cheap land and relief from taxation. The international border therefore divided a culturally homogeneous population and did little to prevent the movement of people and goods in either direction. In discussing how North American borderlands became bordered lands, the seminal article by Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron focuses largely on the power exercised by the state, with its imposition of “fences, gates, and other signs and systems of control,” but British missionaries began to instil a more conservative religious and political identity north of the 45th parallel long before the boundary line impeded regular communication or contact.

The border also tended to thicken metaphorically during periods of armed conflict such as the War of 1812 and the Rebellions of 1837-1838, with their attendant raids and threats of military invasion.

Finally, the Eastern Townships fell increasingly within the economic orbit of Montreal after the arrival of the railway in the late 1840s, a time when French-Canadian newcomers began to change the region’s cultural and religious composition. The response of the Stanstead Journal as well as other local newspapers to the American Civil War, however, suggests that this was still very much a borderland in the early 1860s, though the boundary line would once again thicken as a result of forces unleashed by that conflict.


2 Winks, *Canada and the United States*, pp. 220-221. Winks did include one footnote to the Sherbrooke Freeman (p. 198 n. 40), but it did not commence publication until 1864, and the issue to which he refers is not among those that have been microfilmed.


Each issue of every Eastern Townships newspaper carried American news columns on the progression of the Civil War, as one might expect, but the issue that preoccupied most of the editors was slavery. Reporting at the outbreak of hostilities that the vice-president of the southern Confederacy had proclaimed its very cornerstone to be the inequality of the races, Joseph S. Walton’s Sherbrooke Gazette commented, “At present it is only the Negro who is assumed to be inferior to the white man, and therefore fitted for slavery; very soon we may be told that the Chinese, the Indians, and perhaps we Canadians, are an inferior race, and must submit to the great ‘physical, philosophical and moral truth,’ that slavery is our ‘natural and moral condition’.”5 A month later, the conservative Vermont-born editor claimed that a Northern victory was inevitable: “The South have, perhaps, better trained and equally brave officers, as military life is more congenial to Southern feelings than manual labour; but in endurance of fatigue, in skill and tact for all the diversified occupations of war, Northern soldiers as much surpass the Southerners, as Northern merchants and mechanics excel in mercantile and manufacturing pursuits.”6 Slavery was viewed as evil, less out of sympathy for the African-Americans than because the practice was believed to undermine the initiative and independence of the slaveholding population. Walton claimed that the Northern army would consist of “intelligent, well educated men from all classes of society, who volunteer from a sense of duty to save their country from national death, and who will be fighting in defence of freedom, while the Southern army will be composed of men taught to look upon hard work as only fit for negroes, and of ‘poor white men,’ who are looked down upon even by the negroes, as incapable of taking care of themselves.” Finally, the Gazette declared that “it would be a terrible waste of blood and treasure, and a mere mockery of patriotism, if this contest is to end without the people of the free States completely and forever wash [sic] their hands of human slavery.”7

A week later the Gazette went as far as to suggest that Britain should not adopt a position of neutrality: “We are quite prepared to admit that neither the Mother country nor her Colonies, would be justified in taking an active part against the slave States; but we cannot understand how England can be justified in affording moral aid to the cause of freedom in Italy and in Syria, and condemned for extending the same aid to the cause of freedom in the United States!” Not only were Americans “her own kith and kin,” but England was responsible for introducing slavery to America in the first place; her “faithful subjects” in Canada had a direct interest in emancipation because between 20 and 30 thousand “colored persons” had escaped to Canada West, and, stated the Gazette, “There is no disguising the fact that they are not a desirable population.” Should the South

5 Sherbrooke Gazette, April 6, 1861.
7 Sherbrooke Gazette, May 4, 1861.
win its independence, the North would be obliged to return runaway slaves, who would therefore “continue to pour into the Province in increasing numbers, until their presence will be felt to be almost, if not quite intolerable.”8 Not surprisingly, then, the Gazette did not welcome the British troops sent to strengthen the Canadian garrison in July 1861. It dismissed the threat of American invasion out of hand, as it did Secretary of State William Seward’s talk of “manifest destiny,” arguing that the phrase was used in a “prophetic sense, just as similar language has been repeatedly used by statesmen of undoubted loyalty both in Canada and England, giving utterance to the probable future union of the U.S. and the B.N. American colonies.”9

The Sherbrooke Gazette took a more critical stance towards Washington the following November, when two Confederate agents were seized from a British ship, the Trent, and London threatened war if they were not released. Editor Walton pointed out that one of the main causes of the War of 1812 had been American objection to the Royal Navy’s interception and searching of United States merchant ships for deserters. The United States had continued ever since to deny this right: “But now the American ox has gored the English bull, their tone is changed, and they are ready to quote English writers on the law of nations as good authority for doing what they were ready to take up arms to resent when done by English ships.” To be fair, the Gazette also pointed out that the British had seized the American steamer Caroline in an American harbour because it was carrying rebels and their munitions to the shores of Upper Canada in 1838, adding that the Queen’s proclamation at the outset of the Civil War had enjoined her subjects not to carry troops, ammunition, or dispatches for either side: “If the rebel Commissioners had dispatches, as it is alleged they had, the commander of the Trent violated the proclamation, and can have no claim to protection under it.”10

The more liberal Waterloo Advertiser criticized the anti-Northern position taken by newspapers such as the Montreal Gazette, not because it might precipitate war, but on the grounds that “the exhibition of bitterly hostile sentiments to the North in this day of her calamity may ‘leave a sting behind,’ the result of which a quarter of a century may be too short to obliterate.” The Advertiser excused what it referred to as the American “Spread-Eagleism” issuing from sources such as the New York Herald by suggesting that “men exasperated in the terrible conflict” could not be expected to observe “all the formalities and courtesies to which in times of peace a polished etiquette would entitle us.” Indeed, it was hardly conceivable that Canadian public opinion, which had been so “so thoroughly roused against the unmitigated horrors of Slavery […] should so suddenly veer into open sympathy against the free States, and look forward complacently to the establishment of an uncompromising Slaveocracy at the South.”11

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8 Sherbrooke Gazette, May 11, 1861.
9 Sherbrooke Gazette, July 27, 1861.
10 Sherbrooke Gazette, November 23, 1861.
11 Waterloo Advertiser, November 14, 1861.
Two weeks later, the Advertiser challenged at length the Montreal Gazette’s claim that the South had the right to secede, arguing that “the Federalists do but resist a principle which if established might destroy their ‘national existence.’” Furthermore, the “battle between Slavery and Freedom would have to be fought a little later, perhaps – but just as surely – were the Southern Confederacy recognised by the Federalists tomorrow.” The Advertiser did, however, criticize the “money-grubbing journalists” of the “mammoth sheets” in the northern cities, claiming that the purpose of their “silly gasconade against Britain” as well as “the threats of absorption or conquest of her Colonies” was simply “to sell newspapers to the rabble.” The Americans therefore had “no right to complain if the bluster and bullying and lying of those journals – which grow rich from their support – have alienated sympathy and engendered disgust among their neighbors.”

H. Rose, publisher of Granby’s Eastern Townships Gazette and Shefford County Advertiser, was less rhetorical in his prose as well as less opinionated in his editorials, but, like the other Eastern Townships newspaper publishers, he did not share the cynicism that Winks claims was expressed by most of his Canadian counterparts when President Abraham Lincoln issued the Proclamation of Emancipation on New Year’s Day, 1863. It might be a war measure, Rose admitted, but that was the only ground upon which Lincoln could constitutionally issue such a decree, and “we do not see how that fact can in any way militate against the proclamation itself, nor yet that it can affect the result aimed at.” In July 1864, when Lincoln made peace overtures to the Confederacy, the Eastern Townships Gazette proclaimed, “Those who have looked upon the dreadful civil war now raging in the seceded States as a means of removing the curse of slavery from this continent, will rejoice to find Mr. Lincoln making ‘the abandonment of slavery’ equally with the restoration of the whole Union an indispensable part of ‘any proposition’ for the termination of the war.” Lincoln’s electoral victory in November was greeted with the enthusiastic statement, “Although the dark clouds of war may hang over the nation for some time, we feel confident that there is in store for them in the future a glorious triumph – that freedom shall reign triumphant and the last vestige of slavery be blotted out forever.” When Lee surrendered in April 1865, the Gazette declared, “It is well that the war was fought out to the bitter end; for had it ended sooner some miserable compromise might have been come to, and some remnant of Slavery left to breed future strife.”

While these three Eastern Townships newspapers adopted a distinctly Canadian perspective on the Civil War and focused on the abolition of slavery as the main reason for supporting the North, the Stanstead Journal was more deeply immersed in American politics and was passionately committed to the Northern

12 Waterloo Advertiser, November 28, 1861.
13 Winks, Canada and the United States, p. 129.
14 Eastern Townships Gazette and Shefford County Advertiser, January 9, 1863.
15 Eastern Townships Gazette and Shefford County Advertiser, July 29, 1864.
16 Eastern Townships Gazette and Shefford County Advertiser, November 18, 1864.
17 Eastern Townships Gazette and District of Bedford Advertiser, April 14, 1865.
cause for reasons that went beyond emancipation. This stance is hardly surprising because not only was its publisher and editor Lee Roy Robinson from Vermont but the newspaper carried many advertisements from Derby Line, directly across the border. More so than for the other newspapers in the region, then, the loyalties of the *Stanstead Journal* were torn when friction erupted between Britain and the United States and when Canada was threatened with retaliatory invasion by the Northern army.

Robinson was not uncritical of the American government, but only because he felt it should adopt a stronger response to Southern provocation in the months leading up to the war. Thus, in early January 1861, the *Stanstead Journal* criticized President James Buchanan for not taking a harder line against the “rebellious ‘Kingdom of South Carolina’,” claiming that “it is evident that the poor old man is no Andrew Jackson.” Two weeks later Robinson praised the rally in Philadelphia to support Major Robert Anderson at Fort Sumter as “one of the most significant rebukes of the secessionists that has yet been given,” adding that the people of the Keystone State were committed to the Union cause, regardless of “imbecility and treason in the government at Washington.” In Robinson’s opinion, the real cause of the movement to secede was the slave states’ realization that the free states were “outstripping them in terms of manpower and influence.”

In reference to Canadian newspapers sympathetic to the Confederacy, Robinson wrote, “Shame on them. Is spinning cotton the sole aim of human existence?”

Robinson blamed the United States government for alienating public opinion in Great Britain and Canada by failing to issue a direct statement on emancipation as a war aim. He was not a fervent abolitionist, however, and he also criticized the Toronto *Globe*, which Winks claims was one of only two major pro-Union newspapers in the Province of Canada, for suggesting the merits of a slave uprising “with its attendant horrors, in the South.” Robinson may have shared the Canadian consensus that economic differences rather than humanitarian concerns about slavery were the main cause of the war, but he did not think that made the Northern cause any less noble.

While the *Stanstead Journal* reasoned that the British deployment of more troops to Canada in the fall of 1861 was merely a prudent measure rather than an


19 *Stanstead Journal*, January 3, 1861.

20 *Stanstead Journal*, January 17, 1861.

21 *Stanstead Journal*, October 10, 1861.

22 *Stanstead Journal*, May 9 and August 15, 1861; Winks, *Canada and the United States*, pp. 14, 222. Firm abolitionist though he was, J. S. Walton of the *Sherbrooke Gazette* also opposed encouraging the slaves to revolt, claiming that it would lead to the “wholesale slaughter of women and children” (*Sherbrooke Gazette*, June 7, 1862).

augur of war between Great Britain and the United States,\textsuperscript{24} three months later it accused Britain of adopting a belligerent tone in the handling of the Trent Affair by insisting on the release of the two Confederate envoys seized from the British vessel. Robinson also criticized publications in England and Canada for seemingly advocating war with the United States, stating that such a war would be a "crime against civilization."\textsuperscript{25} Unlike in New Brunswick, where the editor of the \textit{St. Croix Herald} was attacked at this time as a Yankee sympathizer and forced to move across the river to Calais, Maine, the Eastern Townships press expressed general agreement on this point.\textsuperscript{26}

Although Robinson was in favour of Canadian neutrality in the Civil War, it would have been difficult for Washington’s war office to find a more effective propagandist, for he repeatedly claimed that the Confederate states were governed by a ruthless military oligarchy.\textsuperscript{27} Countering what he claimed was the illusion of southern chivalry propped up by the London \textit{Times} and other pro-Confederate newspapers, Robinson condemned the South for committing numerous atrocities against Union forces.\textsuperscript{28} He also printed one-sided accounts of the military engagements, claiming that in the disastrous Battle of Bull Run, for example, "[t]he volunteer troops acted nobly, and only reluctantly withdrew after the ammunition for the artillery was expended." The following week he added that the retreat of Union forces may not have constituted the disastrous rout initially claimed by the press.\textsuperscript{29}

The \textit{Stanstead Journal} was somewhat unique in its generally independent stance on Canadian politics, yet Robinson wrote in 1862 that Conservatives in Canada and England who sympathized with the Confederacy were "like old and ferocious dogs, their fangs are gone, and their bark is about all there is left to them."\textsuperscript{30} He also warned that forcing Canadians to pay for their own defence would cause them to question the merits of ongoing ties to Britain, especially given the critical importance of trade connections with the United States.\textsuperscript{31} The \textit{Journal} maintained its hard-line position on the war throughout 1862, suggesting in November that the war had thus far been almost a complete failure and urging Washington to launch a swift advance into the South to sustain the Union cause.\textsuperscript{32}

Finally, in March 1863, Robinson expressed confidence that the danger of "Northern treason" had passed and that a vigorous war policy would now be pursued. The Democratic party in the North, he felt, had sabotaged its electoral

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\item \textsuperscript{24} \textit{Stanstead Journal}, September 26, 1861.
\item \textsuperscript{25} \textit{Stanstead Journal}, December 26, 1861.
\item \textsuperscript{26} Winks, \textit{Canada and the United States}, p. 94. See, for example, \textit{Waterloo Advertiser}, December 31, 1861.
\item \textsuperscript{27} See, for example, \textit{Stanstead Journal}, October 10, 1861.
\item \textsuperscript{28} \textit{Stanstead Journal}, May 22, 1862.
\item \textsuperscript{29} \textit{Stanstead Journal}, July 25 and August 1, 1861.
\item \textsuperscript{30} \textit{Stanstead Journal}, July 3, 1862.
\item \textsuperscript{31} \textit{Stanstead Journal}, July 17, 1862. The Canadian Parliament had rejected the militia bill and defeated the government in May. See Desmond Morton, \textit{A Military History of Canada} (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1985), pp. 82, 87-88.
\item \textsuperscript{32} \textit{Stanstead Journal}, November 6, 1862. The \textit{Journal} made the same point on February 5, 1863.
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chances because certain of its leaders were advocating peace with the South.\textsuperscript{33} In response to widespread criticism of General Benjamin Franklin Butler’s actions in Northern-occupied New Orleans, the \emph{Stanstead Journal} argued that he had alleviated unemployment and hunger throughout the city and that many credited him with “restoring order and security to life and property in a city where both were proverbially unsafe.” Confederates, on the other hand, mercilessly killed any Union supporters found in the South.\textsuperscript{34} In April, Robinson claimed that the Confederate government was suppressing news of the bread riots in Richmond, Virginia, adding that “Supplies of all kinds are seized for the soldiery and the poor are left to starve.”\textsuperscript{35} The following month, his newspaper expressed sympathy for the heavy losses suffered by the First Vermont brigade in the battle at Fredericksburg, and in July it praised the good behaviour of the three Vermont regiments at Gettysburg.\textsuperscript{36}

By way of contrast, but not inconsistently, the \emph{Journal} also began to carry reports of local disturbances and crimes committed by American draft dodgers and deserters. The influx was caused by military conscription in the Vermont border communities. In July 1863, a letter to the editor complained about draft evaders singing at night in front of houses where young ladies lived, accusing them of “trying to charm the British Lion with their nasal discords, after deserting their bleeding country in her bitter hour of need.”\textsuperscript{37} A poem titled “Lines,” which was said to be inspired by “the skedaddlers’ serenading concert on Stanstead Plain,” charged that “your country’s claims you’re spurning, and singing in your flight.”\textsuperscript{38} The situation was still taken rather lightly in October when the author of a satirical piece suggested setting “all skedaddlers and deserters at work building fortifications to prevent the Yankees from carrying off Owl’s Head,” a mountain on the Canadian side of Lake Memphremagog.\textsuperscript{39} The following month, however, the \emph{Journal} reported that two recent robberies were evidence that “a more desperate class” of thieves was now at work, adding, “There is no disguising the fact that the exigencies of war in the United States have sent in upon us a flood of persons many of whom are ‘loose fellows of the baser sort,’ and our authorities must be on the alert or there will be no safety for movable property.” While not all draft dodgers were causing trouble, the \emph{Journal} admitted, “it is equally true that it

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\item[33] \emph{Stanstead Journal}, March 5, 1863.
\item[34] \emph{Stanstead Journal}, January 1, 1863.
\item[35] \emph{Stanstead Journal}, April 16, 1863.
\item[36] \emph{Stanstead Journal}, May 21, June 4, July 9 and 16, 1863. For details of the Vermont regiments’ role at Gettysburg, see William L. McKone, \emph{Vermont’s Irish Rebel: Capt. John Lonergan} (Jeffersonville, VT: Brewster River Press, 2009), ch. 14-16.
\item[37] \emph{Stanstead Journal}, July 9 and 16, 1863. Conscription began in the summer of 1862 when Vermont was assigned a quota of nearly 10,000 (McKone, \emph{Vermont’s Irish Rebel}, pp. 199-200, 203-208). Approximately 15,000 deserters and draft dodgers fled to Canada. See Marcus Lee Hansen and John Bartlett Brebner, \emph{The Mingling of the Canadian and American Peoples}, vol. 1 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1940), pp. 148-149.
\item[38] \emph{Stanstead Journal}, July 16, 1863.
\item[39] \emph{Stanstead Journal}, October 22, 1863.
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is not usually the case that men of reputable character desert their colors or flee from their country in its hour of peril.  

Despite the influx of draft evaders, editor Robinson insisted that support for the war remained strong in northern Vermont, reporting that on the day of National Thanksgiving decreed by President Lincoln the church in Derby Line was “crowded to utmost capacity.” The Journal commented that the patriotic speeches made outside that village’s hotel “showed that the ‘peace at any price’ party are an absurdly small minority in Derby and vicinity.” Two months later, Robinson argued that the “Union triumphs” in the Ohio and Pennsylvania elections “have put a veto upon any plan of compromise or settlement with the rebellious States while they are in arms against the duly constituted authorities.”

Not surprisingly, Robinson was far from enthusiastic about the call issued by Irish-Canadian politician D’Arcy McGee in August 1863 for “an immediate arming of the province.” The Journal contended that Canadians were willing to be taxed for the purpose of maintaining a militia, “but they are not disposed to run wild on the subject and prepare ostentatiously for a war over the declaration of which they can have no control, and in the event of which they would be heavy sufferers.” Robinson insisted that peace along the border was essential: “The true position […] for Canada, is that of peace and friendly relations with the United States, and any Canadian who tries to destroy such relations now existing, is an enemy to his country.”

Without stating so openly, Robinson clearly condoned the recruitment of Canadians into the Union army. He reported in October 1863 that a captain formerly of the Fifteenth Vermont Volunteers had opened an office in Derby Line and that “[t]he pay and bounties for men are very high.” He was referring to the legally sanctioned purchase of substitutes for military service with the payment of a $300 commutation fee, an amount that increased as states and counties sought to fill their enlistment and draft quotas. In December 1863 a letter from “A Northern Sympathizer and Abolitionist” warned Canadians that enlisting in the Union army was a felony under British law, but a column written by Robinson stated, “British subjects who voluntarily enter the service of a foreign nation, do so at their own risk, but have an undoubted right to do so if they wish.”

41 Stanstead Journal, August 13, 1863.
42 Stanstead Journal, October 29, 1863.
43 Stanstead Journal, August 20, 1863.
44 Stanstead Journal, October 29, 1863.
weeks later the Journal reported without comment the arrest of several men in nearby Coaticook for attempting to enlist Canadians in the Union army.47

Robinson finally began to express concern about such activities in January 1864, writing that “the people of Canada, especially those on the borders, have very justly felt annoyed and outraged by the efforts of unprincipled substitute brokers.”48 The following August, the Journal reported that they had “run out several men from this county within a short time, and sold them for high prices to parties in the States.”49 This was clearly not an exaggeration, for the Coaticook customs collector complained that crimps were making it unsafe for townsmen to be out at night and that their sleep was being disturbed by the cries for help of those being abducted.50 But Robinson was more concerned about the fact that some of those who signed up were abusing the system by becoming bounty jumpers. He reported in September 1864, for example, that “three persons, all formerly soldiers in the Federal army, left Stanstead last week, went to Concord, N.H., enlisted and received $750 each, and were back in Canada on Saturday night. Comment is unnecessary.”51

The impression given by the Stanstead Journal was that most of the men who were carried across the border against their own will were army deserters,52 and it always cast local Canadians who enlisted in a favourable light. For example, Robinson published two lengthy letters from a Canadian named A. G. Call describing his exploits fighting in the South with the First Vermont Cavalry. In Call’s words, “Although my native and ever loved Canada is not an active participant in this ruthless war, it is a fact well known to all who know anything of her people, the general interest felt in transpiring military events by the inhabitants of the townships, is scarcely less than that felt by our cousins ‘over the line’.”53 In July the Stanstead Journal reported that “by a return of losses in the Vt. Cavalry from June 14 to June 30, we perceive that our correspondent, A.G. Call, is wounded and missing, probably a prisoner.”54 How many local Canadians fought in the war is impossible to say, but an unpublished letter by Lieutenant F. A. Trull of the Second Massachusetts Regiment, Heavy Artillery, mentioned several from Stanstead.55 Another Stanstead native, Hiram R. Steele, joined the

47 Stanstead Journal, December 24, 1863.
48 Stanstead Journal, January 14, 1864.
49 Stanstead Journal, August 11, 1864.
50 Winks, Canada and the United States, p. 197.
52 The Journal reported on December 10, 1863, that there were arrests in Coaticook and Sherbrooke of “persons accused of running out deserters from the Federal army.” It noted, without comment, that two more substitute runners were arrested in Stanstead and Derby in September 1864 and another two in Barnston in November (Stanstead Journal, September 22 and November 24, 1864).
53 Stanstead Journal, March 31 and April 28, 1864.
54 Stanstead Journal, July 28, 1864.
55 Stanstead Journal, July 21, 1864. Trull himself was from Compton. The owner of the Sherbrooke Woolen Factory had offered in 1861 to supply clothing to local men planning to join the British Regiment in New York (Sherbrooke Gazette, May 18, 1861).
Tenth Vermont Regiment as a captain, and the adventurous Buckskin Joe Hoyt, son of the mayor of Magog, enlisted in a Pennsylvania regiment, deserted, and joined again for a bounty of $900. The existence of the Ladies’ Soldiers’ Aid Society of Derby Line and Stanstead may also be an indication of significant local Canadian enlistment. The society’s activities were regularly advertised in the Journal, which reported that at charitable events in May and August it raised $121 to purchase hospital supplies for the Sanitary Commission. That some of the local Canadian recruits did not survive is illustrated by the notice that same month of the funeral in Griffin’s Corner of Willard Bodwell, “a soldier of the Potomac Army.”

At the same time, Americans who were dodging the draft continued to be blamed for causing local disturbances. Commenting on a stabbing during a drunken row in Stanstead Plain in May 1864, the Journal declared: “the necessity of a local police force here is quite apparent. What with ‘unlimited whiskey’ and a large influx of strangers from the neighboring States, who find Canadian air necessary for their health – morals are going to the bad very fast. ‘Rum holes’ and gambling houses are numerous, and shameless and degraded women openly haunt the streets day and night. It is a matter that deserves the attention of the law-abiding and property-owning classes of these villages.” Some readers clearly took the advice to heart, for several weeks later the Stanstead Journal reported that a “house of ill-fame” had been “cleared of its inmates in the easterly part of the town on Saturday night, by some of the neighboring inhabitants.” On a less serious note, Robinson advised his readers that, in dealing with clothes-line thieves, “a charge of small shot from a fowling piece is a sovereign remedy, and should be applied without hesitation where an opportunity occurs.” Clothes lines, gardens, and hen roosts continued, nevertheless, to be targeted by sneak thieves.

By early 1864 Robinson was also becoming concerned about reports that the United States might terminate the reciprocity agreement because of perceived Canadian hostility to the Union cause. He argued that the “secession refugees in Canada and their sympathizers make a good deal of noise, but their influence is not wide,” and that the “mass of the people are either sympathizers with the

56 Steele had become a major by 1868 when he was appointed judge of a parish court in Louisiana and US Commissioner at St. Joseph, Tensas County (Stanstead Journal, May 21, 1868). Hoyt spent much of his life as a travelling musician and circus performer in the United States. See Glenn Shirley, ed., Buckskin Joe Hoyt, Being the Unique and Vivid Memoirs of Edward Jonathan Hoyt (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1966).
57 Stanstead Journal, March 10, 1864.
58 Stanstead Journal, May 19 and 26, 1864; August 25, 1864.
59 Stanstead Journal, May 19, 1864. Winks exploded the myth that as many as 53,000 Canadians served in the Northern forces (Canada and the United States, pp. 179-185). Many of those who did serve were French Canadians. See Bélanger, Canada, French Canadians and Franco-Americans, ch. 1.
60 Stanstead Journal, May 19, 1864.
61 Stanstead Journal, June 16, 1864.
62 Stanstead Journal, August 18, 1864. Such thefts were also reported on June 30, 1864.
63 Stanstead Journal, September 22 and November 24, 1864. It is impossible to know how many deserters and draft dodgers had moved to the Eastern Townships during the war, but the Journal reported on May 11, 1865, that the President’s amnesty had prompted 20 to 30 to leave the village of Stanstead.
North or indifferent to the affairs of their neighbors.” Arguments such as this one did not prevent Portus Baxter, a newly elected Vermont Congressmen, from speaking out against the reciprocity treaty. Presumably not coincidently, it was reported in August that measures would be taken by Washington to end “the very lax manner” in which certain customs officers had been enforcing the revenue laws.

Matters took a decided turn for the worse with the October raid on the savings banks of St. Albans, Vermont, by some 20 Confederate agents who fled back across the border to Canada. Although 14 were arrested, Canadian and British authorities rejected Seward’s demand that they be extradited, leading the Burlington Free Press to declare that if Canada were to be an asylum for the perpetrators of such warlike activities then “the sooner open war is declared with our Northern neighbors, the better.” A clearly concerned Robinson noted that “all along the borders the people are arming and organizing as home guards” and that troops had been dispatched to Derby Line to guard the border. He argued somewhat optimistically, however, that “If our government act with vigour and impartiality, […] and take care that there be no repetition of the offence, they will not only allay the state of embittered feeling arising, but add to the good feeling and cordiality which has so long prevailed between Canada and the United States.” One positive result, the Journal reported, was that local authorities were not only guarding the border against “forays” but taking steps to stop kidnapping and “substitute running.”

But Washington went further after it passed a militia law in late November organizing Vermont into 12 districts, each of which was required to raise a regiment of 10 companies, for one full regiment of cavalry was assigned to guarding the northern border. And the crisis was further exacerbated when the St. Albans raiders were released by a Montreal magistrate the following month. In Robinson’s view, “whatever may have been the rights of these men under international law, it is very unfortunate for Canada that this humiliating affair should have taken place.” As for General John Adams Dix’s order authorizing his subordinates to follow raiders on United States territory into Canada in order to arrest them, Robinson could only assure his American readers that “the Governor General and his advisors are sincerely desirous of doing justice to our neighbors, and

64 Stanstead Journal, January 7, 1864. See also February 11, 1864.
65 Stanstead Journal, June 23, 1864.
66 Stanstead Journal, August 18, 1864.
69 Stanstead Journal, November 3, 1864.
70 Stanstead Journal, November 17, 1864.
71 McKone, Vermont’s Irish Rebel, pp. 374, 376.
maintaining friendly and mutually advantageous commercial relations.”  

Not surprisingly, the *Stanstead Journal* was highly disapproving when the American passport system was made much more restrictive in December 1864. Claiming that “[h]undreds of passengers on the railways have been turned back because they had not the necessary documents,” editor Robinson argued that “the whole system is an unmitigated nuisance, which has been found entirely inoperative in Europe of preventing the transit of refugees and suspects, the very object it is instituted for by Mr. Seward. It will fleece a few dollars from persons who travel, and create a vast amount of vexation and annoyance to people who are obliged to do business between the two countries.”

Up to this point, the *Stanstead Journal* might have been mistaken for a patriotic Vermont newspaper as far as its position on the Civil War was concerned. With the reciprocity treaty about to be abrogated and the bellicose posturing on the other side of the border, however, Robinson finally felt compelled to give a history lesson to his American readers. He reminded them that there had been a number of raids into Canada during the Rebellions of 1837-1838 by men who had not been recognized as belligerents, as the St. Albans raiders claimed to be, and that “American officials and people openly abetted these movements, furnished arms, supplies, and men.” To avoid war with Great Britain, President Martin Van Buren had finally intervened, “and yet it is a patent fact that several expeditions left large towns like Detroit and Chicago after they were garrisoned by troops.” Van Buren’s attempt to maintain neutrality had made his administration very unpopular, and “such a thing as the extradition of the offenders was never even thought of.” Moving forward to the current situation, Robinson claimed that there was abundant evidence to show that the majority of Canadians sympathized with the North. The conduct of the Canadian judge in releasing the St. Albans raiders “has been more severely denounced in Canada than it has in the United States,” yet the incident “has been the occasion for a deal of violent talk in the States.” This was regrettable, Robinson wrote, for “The people and the government of Canada were in no sense responsible. The courts are absolutely independent of both.” The Canadian government had, nevertheless, attempted to recapture the released parties and had sent a strong military and constabulary force to the border to prevent further raids. The Governor General had also asked for summary powers “to deal with such cases in the future. No more could be reasonably asked by any intelligent Northern man.”

The *Journal* did suggest later, however, that the Canadian government should restore the bank losses without a request from the United States government in

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73 Passports had been introduced for the first time in the summer of 1861, but only for individuals en route to Europe via Portland or New York, and only to prevent Southerners from using these ports during the winter when the St. Lawrence River was closed (Winks, *Canada and the United States*, pp. 135-136, 326-328).

74 *Stanstead Journal*, January 12, 1865. The passport requirement for Canadians was withdrawn on March 8, after the Province of Canada passed a strict neutrality act (Winks, *Canada and the United States*, pp. 329-330).

75 *Stanstead Journal*, January 26, 1865.
order to show Americans “that Canada, at least, acts up to the requirements of international law.”

Despite its American sympathies and cross-border readership, the *Stanstead Journal* was a Canadian newspaper and spoke approvingly, initially at least, of steps taken towards Confederation. It was somewhat critical, however, of the militia draft imposed by the Canadian government in January 1865, observing that it “was quietly enforced throughout the Eastern Townships where the people are a law-abiding population as a general rule, but we have reason to believe that the Militia law, in some of its features, is highly unsatisfactory to the people here, as well as in the French district.” Under the mistaken impression that they were being called up for active service, many draftees had been frightened into “skedaddling.” This, the *Journal* declared, was “a very foolish thing to do even if the draft had been for actual service.” Mild criticism of the military activities turned to sarcasm the following week when the *Journal* commented that “a company of volunteers has been stationed at Sherbrooke, for what purpose is not apparent, as the expense of crossing the boundary system of Mr. Seward will effectually cut off the profits of raiding.”

Robinson nevertheless supported the Canadian legislature’s move to control traffic across the border and to prevent another raid by passing the *Alien Act* in February. This draconian bill, which passed in the Legislative Assembly by a nearly unanimous vote of 107 to 7 and received the Queen’s assent only three days later, empowered the Governor General to arrest or deport any alien at his discretion. Apparently not concerned about the threat to civil liberties, Robinson declared that the parties “who most strenuously opposed the measure in the House and through the press, are those whose sympathies are unmistakably with the South.” He also suggested that provision “of a sum to defray the expense of calling out the volunteers, will also give our neighbors to understand that we are in earnest in putting down the attempt of the South to make Canada a base for operations against the Federal government.”

Whether the Canadian government’s efforts to curb the inflow of deserters and draft dodgers had any success is not clear, but one wag submitted an ad for the sale of his farm in Barnston township, adjacent to Stanstead, that was headed in block

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76 *Stanstead Journal*, February 23, 1865.
77 See, for example, *Stanstead Journal*, January 5, March 16, and July 29, 1865.
78 *Stanstead Journal*, January 12, 1865. Because of the failure in Canada East to reach the enrolment target set by the government in the spring of 1864, a ballot system had been introduced at the end of the year. Each regimental division was to enlist 795 men, with Stanstead Township (161 men) and the village of Stanstead Plain (17 men) being included in that of Stanstead and Brome (see *Sherbrooke Freeman*, December 29, 1864). According to Stacey, the result in at least one parish was “disturbances necessitating the employment of volunteer units to assist the civil power” (*Canada and the British Army*, pp. 150-151).
79 *Stanstead Journal*, January 19, 1865.
81 *Stanstead Journal*, February 2, 1865.
82 *Stanstead Journal*, February 23, 1865. Because the government felt it could not trust the Lower Canadian militia at the time of the Rebellion, it sanctioned the organization of volunteer companies, formally recognizing this principle in 1846. See Morton, *A Military History*, p. 86; Little, *Loyalties in Conflict*, pp. 79-82.
letters, “To Skedaddlers and Others.” As for traffic in the opposite direction, substitute runners and kidnappers or crimps appear to have been more active than ever. In March 1865 the Journal reprinted a story from a Vermont newspaper that described how substitute brokers had been running men out of Canada by having them stowed in freight cars on the Grand Trunk Railway, then telegraphing their agent in a code that identified the train and car that would be unlocked after it reached a siding on the American side of the border. A customs inspector had somewhat accidentally happened upon such a car with six English deserters from the Victoria Rifles who were being taken to a substitute broker in Gorham, New Hampshire. The men were simply released, then shanghaied by two other brokers who reportedly made $3,000 in the transaction. Canadian authorities do appear to have become more active, however, for the same issue of the Journal reported four separate cases of substitute brokers being arrested in Stanstead and Coaticook.

When the war ended a few weeks later, the Journal sounded a triumphant note, declaring, “The revolution, inaugurated to found an empire on the cornerstone of human slavery, has ignominiously failed.” It asserted, as well, that “this war has also settled the point of the position of the United States as a power. A nation that can raise, arm and equip a million of men in a few months, and raise the largest fleet in the world in nearly as short a period, will not hereafter be classed as second to any power in the world.” Editor Robinson was also convinced that the rebel leaders had been complicit in the assassination of Lincoln, and he declared that “if the fact is made out, [Jefferson] Davis will become infamous everywhere. There will be no place of refuge for him among civilized men.” Rather ironically, Davis would be cheered by a large crowd at the Sherbrooke railway station two years later when he arrived to visit his son at Bishop’s College School, and he would be welcomed to Stanstead by Timothy Lee Terrill, the county’s former MLA. However, the people of Sherbrooke had also greeted General Ulysses S. Grant with enthusiasm, and there had been an outpouring of grief in the Eastern Townships when President Lincoln was assassinated. Businesses in Rock Island closed their doors during the memorial service in neighbouring Derby Line, and a well-attended public meeting was organized in Massawippi village “for the purpose of giving public expression to feelings of sympathy with the people of the United States in their recent loss by violence of their chief Magistrate,

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83 Stanstead Journal, March 16, 1865.
84 Stanstead Journal, March 16, 1865. Even after the war had ended, “a somewhat notorious substitute broker” named George Fletcher was arrested at Derby Line (Stanstead Journal, August 3, 1865).
85 Stanstead Journal, May 4, 1865.
86 Stanstead Journal, May 11, 1865. See also June 15 and July 13, 1865.
Abraham Lincoln.89 On July 4, people of the Stanstead area travelled to Derby Line where festivities commenced with the “firing of a national salute” by a gun that had been captured from a southern blockade runner and was now owned by Carlos Pierce of Stanstead. Pierce, who had made his fortune in Boston, had presented a famous 4,000-pound ox named General Grant to President Lincoln the previous November.90

The Honourable John S. Sanborn, Member of the Legislative Council and former annexationist, delivered a speech at the Derby event in which he stressed the sympathy that people of the Eastern Townships had felt for the North during the war. He trusted, therefore, “that the good feeling which had so long prevailed between the people of the United States and the Provinces would always continue.”91 To help ensure that good feeling did prevail, the Reverend J. Rogers of Stanstead delivered a lecture on Lincoln’s assassination at Derby Line in February 1866. According to the Journal, “it was an eloquent and learned vindication of the North in crushing a rebellion caused mainly by the system of Southern chattel slavery, and an appreciative tribute to the character and course of Mr. Lincoln in his difficult position, as a statesman, philanthropist, and above all, an honest man.”92

The Stanstead Journal did express some concern that war might break out between Britain and the United States, but concluded with the hope that “we may depend still more upon the good sense and fairness of the leading statesmen of two countries so closely connected by ties of blood and language, religion and interest.”93 Editor Robinson also reported regularly on the reciprocity negotiations, but without much hope that the treaty would be renewed. Although he appeared not to be worried about the potential impact on the export of raw materials, he did declare that, if reciprocity were not renewed, “[t]here will be only one course for the British and Provincial authorities to pursue, and that will be to prevent American fishermen from fishing beyond their limits, let the consequences be what they may.”94

Of more immediate concern was the fact that the celebratory mood brought by the end of the war was resulting in increased rowdiness, especially when the circus came to town. In early September, the Stanstead Journal reported a “disgraceful

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89 Stanstead Journal, April 20 and June 8, 1865.
90 According to a note in the Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1953), vol. 8, p. 97 (http://name.umdl.umich.edu/lincoln8, accessed March 2, 2012), Lincoln had, in turn, presented the ox to the National Sailors’ Fair, which gained $3,200 from it. A carte de visite from 1869 states, however, that the ox was exhibited during the war for the benefit of the Sanitary Commission at their fairs in New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and Chicago. It was retired to Grant’s farm in Missouri with arrangements made to have its skin stuffed for the Central Park Museum in New York. The skeleton was deposited at the Museum of Comparative Zoology in Cambridge, Massachusetts (Pamplin Historical Park and the National Museum of the Civil War Soldier, 2004.001.0017, http://www.americanheritage.com/category/collection-keywords/u-s-general-grant-ox (accessed March 1, 2012); Stanstead Journal, September 21, 1865, and February 18, 1869). On Pierce, see B. F. Hubbard, Forests and Clearings: The History of Stanstead County (Montreal: Lovell, 1874), pp. 129-130.
91 Stanstead Journal, July 6, 1865.
92 Stanstead Journal, February 22, 1866.
93 Stanstead Journal, November 2, 1865.
94 Stanstead Journal, October 26, 1865; February 15, 1866.
affair” in which “whiskey was, as usual in such cases, a prime ingredient in bringing on the row.” Indeed, it was said there were no fewer than 40 establishments dispensing liquor within a five-mile radius of Stanstead Plain. One man died as a result of the altercation, but Robinson’s pride was wounded when the Newport (Vermont) Express compared it to the actions of roughs from New York City and the Baltimore Dead Rabbits. The Journal pointed out that the “Stanstead ‘roughs’ have not yet introduced the practice of biting off noses, ala Newport.”

Matters in Stanstead Plain got further out of hand a week later, however, when a resident’s house and barn were burned to the ground, with suspicion falling on “some of the loose and depraved characters who were brought out by the performance of Whitmore & Thompson’s ‘nigger’ show the previous day; and who made ‘night hideous’ by their orgies.” Robinson complained further that “the late war in the United States has sent in upon us a floating population, of a portion of whom it is no slander to say that they are not patterns of good behavior.” Robberies continued to take place in the local area, and the Journal’s last issue of 1865 declared that “there seems to be a perfect ‘Carnival of Crime,’ of the larceny order along the border on both sides.” A week later it reported another suspicious fire in which a Barnston resident lost three barns and three sheds.

Meanwhile, Vermont’s Rutland Weekly Herald had foreshadowed a more serious threat to the Canadian border communities after the St. Albans raiders were released a second time in March 1865. In the opinion of its editor, the United States would get no justice “until we can invite some enemies of John Bull to organize northern raids from our soil.” Seven months later, in October, the first meeting of the newly formed Vermont Reunion Society of Civil War officers toasted “The Western Continent – One Constitution – one People – one Flag – the opinion of a world in arms to the contrary notwithstanding.” Such sentiments were fuelled by Irish-born exiles who considered the Civil War to be a training ground for the war that would liberate their homeland, but the Stanstead Journal was still rather nonchalant about the Fenian Brotherhood, one faction of which was planning to launch attacks against the British North American colonies as a strategy to win independence for Ireland. In fact, according to the original Fenian plan, the raids on Canada West would be feints aimed at drawing British forces away from Montreal so that Sherbrooke could be made the seat of the Irish government in exile. The strategy was to move Fenian forces by train to St. Albans (Vermont) and Malone (New York) where camps had been prepared by

95 Stanstead Journal, September 7 and October 25, 1865.
96 Stanstead Journal, September 14, 1865. Robinson made similarly racist comments on other occasions, and on December 14, 1865, he wrote of President Johnson’s message to Congress, “[Johnson] advocates ably his policy of reconstruction, and deals with the condition of the freed negroes in a spirit which will meet the approval of all except those ultra impracticable who would at once elevate the negroes en masse to all the rights of citizenship.”
97 Stanstead Journal, October 19 and 26, 1865; December 28, 1865.
98 Stanstead Journal, January 4, 1866.
100 Quoted in McKone, Vermont’s Irish Rebel, p. 392.
local agents, and where arms and ammunition could be supplied from scattered storage sites near the border.\textsuperscript{101} Local rumours associated two Catholic priests in the Granby area with the Fenian plot, but the \textit{Stanstead Journal} rather cavalierly dismissed Fenianism as “an attempt on the part of certain broken down Irish politicians and soldiers to raise money out of the more honest but easily deluded portion of their countrymen.”\textsuperscript{102} Robinson paid little attention to rumours that the organization was planning to invade Canada until late November 1865, when he reported the government’s decision to place a volunteer force on active service to check anticipated Fenian raids.\textsuperscript{103}

From that point on, the \textit{Journal} followed the political manoeuvres of the Fenians closely, but, even when the Canadian government called out 10,000 volunteers to protect the border in March 1866, editor Robinson assured readers that “the Fenians can hardly expect to organize and equip a formidable force on American soil without being interfered with, and hence, we apprehend, the greatest danger to be feared is the coming in of small parties and individuals to organize raids in Canada.” But he also added, somewhat bitterly, that “some of the Vermont papers are very jocose about the Canadians taking necessary precautions in view of the threatenings of a considerable portion of the citizens of the United States. Well, it is’nt [sic] so very long ago that the great Green Mountain State was thrown into convulsions and a general arming of the inhabitants by a raid of twenty of Morgan’s rough riders.” Robinson reminded his Vermont readers, “Many similar attempts at raids on a larger scale were prevented by the prompt action of the Canadian government in giving information to Mr. Seward, by placing our volunteers on the frontier, and by the passage of a stringent alien law. All we ask of our sneering friends over the border is to act in good faith in executing their own neutrality laws.”\textsuperscript{104}

Robinson was correct in assuming that the United States military would prevent the Fenians from mustering a large enough force to establish a base in Canada, but the fact remained that a successful raid would be a face-saving gesture that would help justify the money collected and the efforts to gather forces on the border.\textsuperscript{105} The \textit{Journal} was beginning to express more concern as St. Patrick’s Day approached in 1866. It advocated that the British provinces arm and prepare themselves for the prospect of conflict, and it supported the effort to raise a company of volunteers in Stanstead Plain, adding that “it is really a shame that Stanstead has not at least one efficient company of riflemen.” Robinson also observed that “there has been a considerable influx of strangers within a few weeks, and our authorities cannot be too cautious. We have an alien act which would bring all strangers to an explanation of their business about


\textsuperscript{102} Eastern Townships Gazette and District of Bedford Advertiser, January 20 and February 3, 1865; Stanstead Journal, October 26 and November 9, 1865.

\textsuperscript{103} Stanstead Journal, November 2 and 16, 1865.

\textsuperscript{104} Stanstead Journal, March 15, 1866.

\textsuperscript{105} Senior, \textit{The Last Invasion}, pp. 110-111.
as speedily as a suspension of the *habeas corpus*, and there need not be a great deal of false delicacy felt about using it."\(^{106}\) Even though some of the soldiers stationed in Stanstead Plain reportedly engaged in "a very disgraceful demonstration" against a prominent local citizen several days later, the *Journal* argued that "it is quite evident that the course of the Government of Canada in preparing for any emergency, has had a fine effect, not only in uniting the people here as one man, but in morally raising our status in the United States and elsewhere."\(^{107}\)

Furthermore, the Prince of Wales Riflemen had redeemed themselves by staging a series of "Amateur Theatrical Performances" in a local hall, and the local populace enthusiastically collected goods to ensure their comfort.\(^{108}\)

By April the *Stanstead Journal* was expressing concern that, even though the United States government would attempt "to prevent the invasion of a country with which they are at peace," it might "hesitate to take decided steps soon enough, thus virtually aiding and abetting the mad scheme of the characterless adventurers who are luring the Irish both in Ireland and America to their ruin."\(^{109}\)

The first Fenian scare ended in May with the "fizzle" on the Maine-New Brunswick border, but the following month the Roberts-Sweeney faction launched a brief attack on Upper Canada that cost the Canadian forces 10 dead and 27 wounded.\(^{110}\) Robinson condemned, in no uncertain terms, "this most outrageous and unjustifiable invasion of a peaceful country by the people of a neighboring Republic with which we are at peace." He also complained that the American forces dispatched to the frontier were "ridiculously small" and worried that most of the arms and ammunition seized had reportedly found their way "back into the hands of the Fenians."\(^{111}\)

To American newspapers that compared the Fenians with the St. Albans raiders, Robinson replied that there was no parallel because the Fenians were travelling openly in the United States. He also argued that "the Canadas are as much self-governed as the United States, and the Irish of Canada are, as a body, as loyal as the English." Finally, he condemned the fact that "not a single homily is preached on the lawless and outrageous character of the attack! Oh, no! Pat’s vote will be wanted at the next election, and there are already indications that the opponents of President Johnson’s administration will make use of this wretched Fenian business to bolster up their cause."\(^{112}\)

Robinson had failed to give credit to the United States Army for its prevention of a large-scale attack on Canada East’s Huntingdon area by seizing the arms and supplies of the thousand or so Fenians who had gathered at Malone, New York,

\(^{106}\) *Stanstead Journal*, March 22, 1866.

\(^{107}\) *Stanstead Journal*, March 29, 1866.

\(^{108}\) *Stanstead Journal*, April 5, 12, and 19, 1866. In May, however, three members of the Prince of Wales Rifle Company broke down the door of the Stanstead Plain lock-up to free "a notorious female named Ellen Mosher, incarcerated there for the night for some street disturbance" (*Stanstead Journal*, May 17, 1866).

\(^{109}\) *Stanstead Journal*, April 19, 1866.

\(^{110}\) *Stanstead Journal*, May 10 and 17, 1866; McKone, *Vermont’s Irish Rebel*, pp. 410-416.

\(^{111}\) *Stanstead Journal*, June 7, 1866. In fact, only 225 soldiers were stationed in Franklin County (McKone, *Vermont’s Irish Rebel*, p. 422).

\(^{112}\) *Stanstead Journal*, June 14, 1866.
and arresting their leaders.\textsuperscript{113} The presidential proclamation of neutrality on June 6 had ordered the Fenians to abandon their expedition and return home, but this did not prevent a band from crossing the border near Frelighsburg in the Eastern Townships the following day. The defence of Missisquoi County had been left to only 200 poorly trained men in independent companies, and, when the local militia was ordered by the regular commanding officer to retreat from the border without offering resistance, the hungry Fenians began looting the area’s farms, stores, and hotels.\textsuperscript{114} Referring to the \textit{Newport Express}'s reports on the two-day raid, a correspondent to the \textit{Journal} declared that “the unfriendly tone toward Canada and the evident sympathy with the band of cutthroats and robbers who under the cover of striking a blow for Ireland, made this raid upon the defenseless people of the townships, […] should seriously lead Canadians to consider how far they shall extend their trade and patronage toward that community.”\textsuperscript{115} When the \textit{Express} attacked the \textit{Journal} in turn, Robinson reminded its editor that he had taken “so decided a stand for the Union during the war as to incur the dislike of all the ‘cop-perheads’ in the country.”\textsuperscript{116} Several months later he also criticized Secretary of State Seward for advocating clemency on the grounds that the Fenians on trial in Canada were political prisoners, adding that “the United States government and people have very lax notions of international obligations.”\textsuperscript{117}

Meanwhile, Fenians were reported to be still prowling about northern Vermont, “watching for an opportunity to plunder,” and on June 22 sentries stationed at Pigeon Hill in St. Armand were fired upon by five or six men who ran through a swamp to make good their escape across the line.\textsuperscript{118} The \textit{Journal} expressed confidence that the American government would “perform its duty” and that Canada was “now prepared for any event,” but it also urged the men of Barnston to join that township’s volunteer company: “If Volunteers are needed at all, it must be in the border towns, liable as they are to be invaded by the lawless hordes of Fenians.”\textsuperscript{119} The Stanstead volunteer company had by this time filled its ranks, and a cavalry company had been formed, but in September the volunteers, many of whom had either received no arms or not been paid, were reported to be “almost in a state of disaffection in consequence of the bungling and botching of the militia department.” The \textit{Journal} complained, “Instead of having a well drilled and equipped force, we stand precisely where we did last Spring when the mad attempt of Sweeney was made on the Eastern border.”\textsuperscript{120} The arms for the Stanstead Volunteer Company finally arrived the following month.\textsuperscript{121}

\textsuperscript{114} \textit{Stanstead Journal}, June 14, 1866; Senior, \textit{The Last Invasion}, pp. 116-126; \textit{The Fenian Raids, 1866-1870: Missisquoi County} (Missisquoi Historical Society, 1967), pp. 8-11, 35-37.
\textsuperscript{115} \textit{Stanstead Journal}, June 28, 1866.
\textsuperscript{116} \textit{Stanstead Journal}, July 12, 1866.
\textsuperscript{117} \textit{Stanstead Journal}, November 1 and 8, 1866.
\textsuperscript{118} \textit{Stanstead Journal}, June 28, 1866.
\textsuperscript{119} \textit{Stanstead Journal}, July 5, 1866.
\textsuperscript{120} \textit{Stanstead Journal}, June 21 and 28, 1866; September 6 and 13, 1866.
\textsuperscript{121} \textit{Stanstead Journal}, October 11, 1866.
Local volunteer companies continued to be inspected in 1867,\textsuperscript{122} and the Queen’s birthday was celebrated in Stanstead Plain for what appears to have been the first time, only to be outdone by Dominion Day festivities in which “The ringing of bells, the rattle of musketry and the booming of cannon was kept up all the afternoon.”\textsuperscript{123} July 4, which had played a prominent role in the Journal’s pages during the Civil War, was now ignored, but the newspaper did note on that day that “Mr. Seward still believes in the manifest destiny of his country and government.” The collection of customs duties in this post-reciprocity era was also a border irritant, and the Journal suggested that the American agents were motivated to be over-zealous because of the commission they received on seized property. The editor therefore advised, “If there are residents of that country who will buy our produce here, let them have it, but until there be some more reliable arrangements in regard to the collection of the Customs revenue, it will be better to sacrifice something in prices rather than run the gauntlet of Newport Custom House attacks.”\textsuperscript{124} Robinson also attributed American reluctance to renew the reciprocity treaty to a desire to annex Canada, stating that “the repeal of the treaty has injured the Commerce of the United States more than it has that of Canada.”\textsuperscript{125} While the Journal later admitted that annexation would have its advantages, it observed that many Canadian leaders opposed “the constant turmoil of politics in the United States – the constant change of public servants – the corruption bred of these changes – and the irresponsibility of official incumbents to the people.”\textsuperscript{126}

The border area was now relatively quiet, apart from the burglaries that continued to take place on barns, stores, and the like, but people remained on edge because of the ongoing Fenian threat. In June 1868, for example, rumours circulated that an attack on Canada was imminent, but the Journal reassured its Canadian readers that “should the Fenians have the fortune to elude their own government and effect a foothold on Canadian soil, they will meet with a better prepared opposition than they did in 1866.”\textsuperscript{127} Upon the mustering of some volunteer cavalry and infantry companies in response to Fenian movements near the border in April 1870, the Journal claimed, “The people on the Republican side of the border feel full as nervous in regard to such a movement as do the Canadians.”\textsuperscript{128} However, it also criticized the United States government for “allowing the farce of a Fenian Government, with a Senate, Executive and armed and drilled force to exist as a standing menace to a friendly power.”\textsuperscript{129}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{122} Stanstead Journal, June 13, 1867.
  \item \textsuperscript{123} Stanstead Journal, May 30 and July 4, 1867.
  \item \textsuperscript{124} Stanstead Journal, November 14, 1867. See also October 8 and 15, 1868; December 31, 1868.
  \item \textsuperscript{125} Stanstead Journal, November 21, 1867.
  \item \textsuperscript{126} Stanstead Journal, April 29, 1869.
  \item \textsuperscript{127} Stanstead Journal, June 11, 1868.
  \item \textsuperscript{128} Stanstead Journal; April 14, 1870; McGee, The Fenian Raids, pp. 23-27.
  \item \textsuperscript{129} Stanstead Journal, June 16, 1870; April 21, 1870.
\end{itemize}
In late May, when the Fenian attacks were quickly turned back by volunteers and home guards in engagements at Eccles Hill in St. Armand (see Figure 1) and at Trout River in Huntingdon, the Journal boasted, “The Fenians, in every instance have been repulsed by an inferior force in numbers, although the American press have been dinning into our ears for months that when Canada was next invaded it would be by a different force from that of 1866. That the disciplined veterans of the late war, led by experienced officers, would lead the van and make short work with the raw militia of the Provinces. The trial has been had and the raw militia have put the veterans to ignominious flight.” As a result, the Journal claimed, “the sympathizing citizens of Franklin County, Vermont, are getting the full benefit of extending their hospitality to their Irish friends. Disgusted beyond measure, they are imploring the State authorities, the railroads and everybody, to remove the ‘defenders of Ireland’ from their midst.”

There were reports, however, that a band of 60 men under Colonel Sinnott of Boston had arrived in nearby Island Pond with the aim of “menacing” the Grand Trunk Railway, Coaticook, and Stanstead. In response, a Coaticook correspondent

130 To ensure that they would have more control over the defence of their homes, local men had formed a home guard company of sharpshooters armed with breech-loading Ballard sporting rifles and known as the Red Sashes. See The Fenian Raids, 1866-1870, pp. 25-27, 38-41; Senior, The Last Invasion, pp. 139-142; McKone, Vermont’s Irish Rebel, pp. 490-507.

131 Stanstead Journal, June 2, 1870. On these skirmishes and their aftermath, see McGee, The Fenian Raids, pp. 28-56; The Fenian Raids, 1866-1870, pp. 41-81; Senior, The Last Invasion, pp. 147-172.
wrote, “a number of citizens enrolled themselves as a Home Guard, and were each furnished with a firearm.” When the small Fenian band marched to Derby, the *Journal* asserted, “They will receive a very warm and hospitable reception, in a certain sense, if they will turn their course this way. We trust that our Derby friends will cherish them cheerfully.” The raid did not materialize, and by June 9 the volunteers had returned home, leading the *Journal* to praise “our brave and patriotic citizen Soldiers” who had “moved with alacrity to the points which they were ordered” and “displayed the courage and steadiness of veterans.” Like other Canadian newspapers, the *Stanstead Journal* took exception to British press reports giving credit to the United States government for quelling the movement to invade Canada, declaring that no American troops had appeared “until the movement was virtually defeated” and that they had been dispatched “to protect their own citizens from being plundered by their disbanded ‘Irish fellow citizens,’ more than for any other purpose.” The Stanstead Volunteers may not have seen action, but the *Journal* claimed that they made “as good an appearance at drill as any of the companies which visited Stanstead in 1866 or since.” The point was driven home by a poem supposedly written by the self-styled General McNamara, who had been arrested in Rock Island: “No man can trifle, With a Snider rifle, In the hands of Stanstead volunteers.”

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One of the main advantages of the borderlands approach is that it shifts the historian’s focus from the central state to the local community as an active agent in history. Robin Winks gives much of the credit for maintaining peace between the United States and Great Britain during the Civil War to Secretary of State Seward and the British minister to Washington, Lord Lyons, but their task would have been considerably more difficult had relations between communities on either side of the border between Canada East and Vermont been less harmonious. Borderland historians are interested in the common features of contiguous societies and in how state-imposed boundaries have been defied or ignored by the people they divided. Lauren McKinsey and Victor Konrad of the University of Maine’s Northeastern Borderlands Project go so far as to state that borderlanders have “more in common with each other than with members of their respective dominant cultures.” The fact that the *Stanstead Journal* served both the Canadian and American communities tends to support that assumption, especially as editor L. R. Robinson’s position on the war differed from that expressed by most Canadian newspapers, though not others within the Eastern Townships. The pro-Union stance of the region’s press was uncompromising at

132 *Stanstead Journal*, June 2, 1870.
133 *Stanstead Journal*, June 9, 1870.
134 *Stanstead Journal*, June 16, 1870. It is clear, nevertheless, that the US military gave the Fenians little time to organize on the border (McKone, *Vermont’s Irish Rebel*, pp. 488–489).
135 *Stanstead Journal*, June 16 and 30, 1870.
a time when nearly all newspapers in the Province of Canada, French as well as English, were anti-Northern in outlook. A correspondent to the Waterloo Advertiser gave one reason why this might have been so when he wrote in 1861, “In a war between England and the United States we should necessarily act the part of a shell thrown into the hostile camp, that must burst itself to damage others.” It was clearly more a feeling of kinship than a sense of fear, however, that caused the Eastern Townships newspaper editors to support the Union cause, and it was a sense of betrayal of that kinship that led the belligerently pro-Northern Stanstead Journal to criticize the United States when the American threat intensified towards the end of the war.

The degree to which newspaper editors shaped and represented popular opinion may be debatable, but the longevity of Robinson’s Stanstead Journal suggests that he was generally in tune with his community. As well, the newspaper included more than one man’s opinion, reporting on cross-border events such as the very popular annual July 4 race held by the Stanstead and Orleans (Vermont) Trotting Club in the village of Stanstead. It is significant, therefore, that Independence Day celebrations were largely ignored by the Journal after 1866, suggesting that Canadians were less inclined to take part in them. There is no indication of Fenian membership in the northeast corner of Vermont near Stanstead, sympathetic as the Burlington press may have been, but New England’s hostility to reciprocity and the increased activity of American customs agents served as additional irritants. L. R. Robinson’s example suggests that John Potter, United States consul in Montreal, was badly misreading popular opinion in his host province when he boasted that “in two years from the abrogation […] the people of Canada themselves will apply for admission to the United States.” American in many respects though he may have been, the Stanstead Journal editor was Canadian enough to resent any attempt to promote “Manifest Destiny.” Cross-border ties would remain strong after these tensions eased, but conflicts such as the War of 1812, the Rebellions of 1837-1838, the Civil War, and the Fenian threat made the boundary line more tangible for the people living on either side of it. In short, even though there was little armed conflict along the 45th parallel during and after the Civil War, the position taken by the Stanstead Journal serves to remind borderlands historians that they need to look beyond state-imposed barriers to understand how international boundaries become more than imaginary lines.

137 Rather than pro-Northern or pro-Southern sympathies, Winks claims, it is more accurate to speak of anti-Northern or anti-Southern feelings (Canada and the United States, p. 210). Wise and Brown echo the same opinion (Canada Views, p. 83). On the French-language press, see Bélanger, Canada, French Canada and Franco-Americans, ch. 2.
138 Waterloo Advertiser, August 1, 1861.
139 The attendance at the race was reportedly 1,500 to 2,000 in 1864 (Stanstead Journal, July 7, 1864). An annual temperance picnic on the Canadian side of the border in late June received more attention than either Independence Day or Dominion Day during the late 1860s.
140 See McKone, Vermont’s Irish Rebel, pp. 152, 404; Stouffer, “Canadian-American Relations,” pp. 341-342.
141 Quoted in Thompson and Randall, Canada and the United States, p. 38.