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The Growth of a Craft Labour Force: Montreal Leather Artisans, 1815-1831

JOANNE BURGESS

Résumé

This study calls into question the view that immigration from the British Isles in the first half of the nineteenth century dramatically altered the ethnic composition of the urban crafts of Lower Canada and resulted in the marginalisation of French-Canadian artisans.

Unlike earlier studies, which relied essentially on the snapshots provided by the manuscript censuses of 1831 and 1842, this case study combines a variety of sources in order to reconstitute the entire population of Montréal's leather trades between 1815 and 1831. The evidence provided by this important group of crafts shows that, while the British presence increased, it was primarily confined to the most transient elements of the artisan population. Among craftsmen who settled in Montréal for extended periods of time, French Canadians remained dominant. Although their relative importance declined, their absolute numbers grew. Vital craft traditions ensured that skills were transmitted from father to son and that apprenticeship thrived. While the local economy was the major source of new manpower throughout this period, there was a steady increase in the flow of young men into Montréal from the surrounding countryside.

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Cet article remet en question une interprétation historique concernant l'immigration britannique au Bas-Canada dans la première moitié du XIXe siècle. On a prétendu que l'arrivée massive des Britanniques avait profondément altéré la composition ethnique de l'artisanat urbain et qu'elle avait eu pour conséquence la marginalisation des artisans canadiens-français.

Contrairement aux études qui l'ont précédée et qui reposaient essentiellement sur les données partielles des recensements manuscrits de 1831 et 1842, cette étude de cas fait appel à une variété de sources afin de reconstituer l'ensemble des travailleurs du cuivre à Montréal, entre 1815 et 1831. On constate que les Britanniques augmentent en nombre dans ce groupe important d'artisans, mais qu'ils y sont l'élément le moins stable. Ce sont les Canadiens français qui dominent le groupe des artisans qui demeurent à Montréal pendant une période assez longue pour être significative. Leur importance relative diminue, mais leur nombre en chiffre absolu s'accroît sans cesse. Une tradition artisanale importante s'établit donc chez les Canadiens français, leur habilité technique se transmet

de père en fils et leur apprentissage s'enrichit. Parce que c'est l'économie qui appelle la main d'oeuvre, à l'époque il y a augmentation constante du nombre des jeunes hommes qui affluent des campagnes environnantes vers Montréal.

In most preindustrial societies, shoemakers and other leather craftsmen were an important segment of the artisan population.[1] Montréal was no exception to this rule. Available records show that early in the nineteenth century, the leather crafts provided employment for 5 per cent of the city's labour force[2] and, despite the tremendous technological change which took place after midcentury, the manufacture of leather and leather goods remained prominent in the local economy.[3]

Shoemakers and saddlers were to be found within the walls of the old city and in the suburbs which spread out along the main arteries leading from the gates of Montréal into the surrounding countryside. In Saint-Laurent suburb to the north, in Sainte-Marie or the Quebec suburb to the east, in Saint-Joseph suburb to the west, and in Saint-Antoine suburb to the northwest, numerous small workshops were to be found. The meandering streams of those small suburbs provided ideal locations for the establishment of small tanneries.

In the countryside surrounding the Montréal suburbs farmland predominated, but occasionally the fields gave way to clusters of dwellings and embryonic villages could be discerned. In the early nineteenth century the three small villages of Saint-Henri-des-Tanneries, Tanneries-des-Bélairs, and Côte-des-Neiges all contained leather craftsmen.

City and country artisans alike produced leather, shoes, harnesses, and saddles in small workshops where they were assisted by family members and young assistants. Their goods were sold on the local market, peddled in neighbouring rural parishes, and sometimes offered for sale as far away as Québec City.

Between 1790 and 1831, Montréal's leather trades remained largely untouched by the forces which were already beginning to disrupt many of the consumer-finishing trades of eastern American cities.[4] However, this persistence of traditional craft practices

1. E.J. Hobsbawm and Joan W. Scott, "Political Shoemakers," *Past and Present* 89 (1980): 100.
2. Jean-Paul Bernard, Paul-André Linteau, and Jean-Claude Robert, "La structure professionnelle de Montréal en 1825," *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française* 30:3 (décembre 1976): 383-415.
3. Joanne Burgess, "L'industrie de la chaussure à Montréal: 1840-1870 — le passage de l'artisanat à la fabrique," *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française* 31:2 (septembre 1977): 189-90.
4. The situation prevailing in Lower Canada in the early nineteenth century has been the subject of some controversy. See the discussion in Joanne Burgess, "Work, Family and Community: Montréal Leather Craftsmen 1790-1831," PhD diss., Université du Québec à Montréal, 1987, ch. 1-3. The changes occurring in the United States at the same time are described in Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic. New York City & the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788-1850* (New York, 1984), ch. 1.

did not signify stagnation or decay.[5] Rather the city's leather crafts experienced tremendous growth and development during the early nineteenth century. The range of goods offered for sale expanded continously as did the number of artisans engaged in their manufacture. The number of both masters and apprentices grew, and journeymen emerged as a distinct group within the craft population.[6]

This paper will focus on a brief period of major growth — 1815 to 1831. It will examine the process by which the labour force employed in Montréal's leather crafts expanded in these years and explore the effects which this growth had on the established craft community. This is not entirely uncharted territory. Other historians, most notably Fernand Ouellet, have examined aspects of the early nineteenth-century craft labour force. In a number of studies, Ouellet has measured the impact of British immigration upon the ethnic make-up of various urban occupations. He has shown that the massive influx of British immigrants to Lower Canada seriously undermined the position of French Canadians; for example by 1831 the *Canadiens* were outnumbered in many Montréal trades, including shoemaking. Ouellet argues that, faced with stiff British competition, French Canadians were unable fully to exploit the opportunities provided by the expansion of craft production. Many found themselves unable to gain access to traditional fields of employment and, as job possibilities in urban centres dried up, migration from the countryside to the towns was cut off.[7]

Ouellet's portrayal of the marginalisation of French-Canadian craftsmen may not, however, be entirely accurate. To make his case, he relies primarily upon the manuscript censuses of 1831 and 1842 and this is a severe handicap. While the manuscript census is the traditional source for the study of nineteenth-century populations, for the pre-Confederation period it has severe limitations. In the Montréal region, no census was taken between 1780 and 1825, and not all parts of the censuses of 1825 through 1861 have survived. A further difficulty arises from the different kinds of information collected by these many censuses. Whereas all of the post-Confederation population surveys attempted to identify all individuals regardless of their age or status within the household, this was not the case prior to 1851. In the earlier period the census is in effect only a listing of heads of household, supplying family names, given names, and occupations. Artisans who resided with the householder, whether children, relatives, journeymen, apprentices, or boarders, do not appear on these nominal lists. The craft population is thus underenumerated, though how seriously we cannot say. Only the Viger census of 1825 provides a bright spot in this somewhat dismal landscape, for his

5. Montréal's leather crafts do not conform to the pattern described by David T. Ruddel in *Québec City, 1765-1832. The evolution of a colonial town* (Ottawa, 1987), 99-102, 152-59.
6. The growth occurring in Montréal's leather trades is documented in "Work, Family and Community. . . ," ch. 3, pt. 4.
7. Fernand Ouellet, "Structure des occupations et ethnicité dans les villes de Québec et de Montréal (1819-1844)," *Eléments d'histoire sociale du Bas Canada* (Montréal, 1972), 177-202; *Le Bas Canada 1791-1840. Changements structuraux et crise* (Ottawa, 1976), 277-81.

surviving notebooks contain extremely detailed information about the members of each of the households which he enumerated.[8]

The present study of the Montréal leather trades takes a very different approach. It attempts to identify the entire population of the relevant trades — in other words all shoemakers, tanners, and saddlers active in Montréal at any time between 1815 and 1831 — and follow each individual artisan from his first appearance on the local scene through to his death or departure from the city. This reconstruction[9] is based primarily upon the analysis of the records of births, deaths, and marriages kept by the various religious congregations of the city of Montréal. All of the available parish registers covering the years between 1815 and 1861[10] have been examined and every entry pertaining to a leather craftsman transcribed. Using these thousands of pieces of information, complementary geneological data,[11] and the methodology developed by E.A. Wrigley,[12] the family histories of these artisans have been reconstituted.

Other population listings were also examined to complete this inventory of Montreal's shoemakers, tanners, and saddlers. These included the manuscript censuses of 1825, 1831, 1842, 1851, and 1861; the many notebooks used by Jacques Viger for the census of 1825; a survey of the population of Saint-Laurent suburb in the first decade of the nineteenth century;[13] lists of persons eligible for jury duty in Montréal in the years 1811, 1813, and 1815;[14] and city directories, especially those compiled by Thomas Doige and Thomas MacKay.[15] Finally, material which provides greater detail about the

8. See Paul-André Linteau and Jean-Claude Robert, "Un recensement et son recenseur: le cas de Montréal en 1825," *Archives* 8:2 (September 1976): 29-36 for a full description of Viger's compilations for the 1825 census.

9. For a complete discussion of the sources and methodology used, see Burgess, "Work, Family and Community. . . ," ch. 1, pt. 2 and appendix A.

10. It was decided to end the survey of the parish registers in January 1861 in order to link up with the census taken in that month.

11. These were the indexes to Catholic and Protestant marriages performed in the Montréal judicial district prior to 1875 and the *Fichier Loiselle*, an extensive alphabetical index to Catholic marriages performed in the province of Quebec and in parts of Ontario and New England. The former are located in the Archives nationales du Québec à Montréal (ANQ-M); a microfilm copy of the *Fichier Loiselle* is also to be found there.

12. E.A. Wrigley, "Family Reconstitution," in *An Introduction to English Historical Demography* (London, 1966), 103-53.

13. Archives du Séminaire Saint-Sulpice de Montréal, tiroir 19, "Liste alphabétique des familles du faubourg Saint-Laurent, et de quelques autres familles qui y ont rapport. Commencée en 1806"; tiroir 19. "Familles du faubourg Saint-Laurent, en 1808, par ordre alphabétique. Extrait en 1810 d'un registre en folio." My thanks to Allan Stewart who first told me of this source and later made his research material available to me.

14. Canada. National Archives (NA), RG4 B19, vols. 1-6. Once again my thanks to Allan Stewart who first informed me of this source.

15. Thomas Doige, *An Alphabetical List of Merchants, Traders and Housekeepers residing in Montreal to which is Prefixed a descriptive sketch of the town* (Montreal, 1819), as well as his *An Alphabetical List of the Merchants, Traders and Housekeepers residing in Montreal* (Montreal, 1820); R.W.S. MacKay, *The Montreal Directory for 1842-43 Containing an Alphabetical Directory of the Citizens Generally, A Classified Business Directory and A Supplementary Directory of Professional and Business Men in Chambly, Laprairie and St. Johns* (Montreal, 1842).

business, neighbourhood, and family life of these working people was examined. While newspapers, maps, and property records all proved valuable, notarial archives were undoubtedly the richest source. All deeds kept by notaries who practised in Montréal between 1780 and 1829 were examined on a systematic basis.[16]

This attempt to reconstruct the entire population of the Montréal leather crafts between 1815 and 1831 produced a wealth of information on more than a thousand individuals. In most cases it was possible to identify an artisan's specific trade, his career span, the names of his parents, wife, and children, the date and site of his marriage, his place of origin,[17] and the specific neighbourhoods in Montréal where he lived and worked. This rich database contrasts with the relatively meagre evidential foundation supporting other studies of the Lower Canadian craft world. Such an approach yields a very different perspective on the relationship between British immigration and the French-Canadian artisan population.

At least 1155 leather craftsmen spent some time in Montréal between 1815 and 1831. Some remained active throughout the period, some left after a brief sojourn, and others seemed merely to pause in Montréal en route to another destination. Even those who made the city their home for a long period did not necessarily remain in one place. The records abound in examples of individual craftsmen who moved frequently, whether along the same street, from one neighbourhood to another, or from the city's rural fringe to one of its suburbs. Furthermore, some persons simply seem to have vanished for a few years before reappearing as an entry in the city directory or in the manuscript census.

Despite all this movement, there was a definite structure to the Montréal community of leather craftsmen and the evolution of the craft community during the first decades of the nineteenth century followed a specific pattern.[18] A comparison of the situation prevailing in 1815, 1825, and 1831 reveals the extent of the growth in the craft labour force which occurred over the period and shows that, in all three crafts, this expansion brought with it a larger non-French-Canadian presence. The relative decline of French-Canadian artisans was greatest in shoemaking, where they dropped from 74 per cent of the total population in 1815 to 46 per cent in 1831. A decline also occurred in tanning, although French Canadians remained the largest group, accounting for 95 per

16. For more information on the methodology used, see Burgess, "Work, Family and Community. . . ," 54-56 and appendix A.

17. The exact birthplace of most artisans has not been determined. For natives of Lower Canada, however, an approximation has been attempted which may be termed the *place of origin*. It corresponds to the artisan's actual place of birth according to baptismal or census records, or his parents' place of residence at the time of his wedding, or the location of his wedding.

18. This pattern is best understood if we distinguish between leather craftsmen both on the basis of the length of their stay in Montréal and on the basis of their ethnicity. Members of each craft have been classified according to the date they first appeared in Montréal as adult craftsmen and according to whether their stay lasted less than one year, one to five years, or more than five years. The members of the last group are described as persistent artisans. Finally, on the basis of the craftsman's name and of other information when available, French Canadians were separated from those of other ethnic origins.

Table I
Ethnicity and Persistence in the Montreal Leather Crafts. 1815, 1825, and 1831.

PERSISTENCE	1815 N.	1815 F.-C. %	1815 B. %	1825 N.	1825 F.-C. %	1825 B. %	1831 N.	1831 F.-C. %	1831 B. %
TANNERS									
more than 5 years	73	95	5	114	94	6	112	90	10
1 to 5 years	0	—	—	6	50	50	20	55	45
less than 1 year	2	100	0	3	33	67	23	52	48
Total	75	95	5	123	90	10	155	80	20
Number		(71)	(4)		(111)	(12)		(124)	(31)
SHOEMAKERS									
more than 5 years	96	70	30	191	57	43	240	64	36
1 to 5 years	6	33	67	23	9	91	63	25	75
less than 1 year	12	42	58	26	15	85	85	11	89
Total	114	65	35	240	48	52	388	46	54
Number		(74)	(40)		(115)	(125)		(179)	(209)
SADDLERS									
more than 5 years	13	62	38	30	63	37	41	68	32
1 to 5 years	2	0	100	1	0	100	8	38	62
less than 1 year	0	—	—	1	0	100	12	33	67
Total	15	53	47	32	59	41	61	57	43
Number		(8)	(7)		(19)	(13)		(35)	(26)
MANY CRAFTS									
more than 5 years	21	95	5	21	95	5	22	91	9
1 to 5 years	0	—	—	0	—	—	0	—	—
less than 1 year	0	—	—	0	—	—	0	—	—
Total	21	95	5	21	95	5	22	91	9
Number		(20)	(1)		(20)	(1)		(20)	(2)
ALL CRAFTS									
Total	225	77	23	416	64	36	626	57	43
		(173)	(52)		(265)	(151)		(358)	(268)

F.-C. = French-Canadian
B. = British or other ethnic group

Source: "Work, Family and Community...," appendix C.

cent of the membership in 1815 and 80 per cent in 1831. In saddlery the situation was different as French-Canadian saddlers increased their share slightly from 53 per cent to 57 per cent.

The data presented in Table I thus appear to support the thesis that British immigration led to declining opportunities for French-Canadian craftsmen. However, this impression is misleading, for the table also shows that British craftsmen and others of non-French-Canadian origin were most important among transient craftsmen. For

example, in 1831 non-French Canadians constituted 20 per cent of all tanners, but 48 per cent of those who remained in Montréal for only one year. A similar situation prevailed in shoemaking, where they accounted for 54 per cent overall, but 89 per cent of those who remained in Montréal less than one year. In saddlery non-French Canadians were 43 per cent of the total craft, but 67 per cent of those who stayed less than a year. On the other hand, when we consider persistent artisans (those who stayed more than five years), we find that French Canadians formed a clear majority in all three crafts.

Any examination of the ethnic structure of the craft population which fails to distinguish between persistent and transient craftsmen produces major distortions. British artisans in the Montréal leather trades must be seen primarily as transients, of whom only a minority put down roots in the city. This view is supported by the data presented in Table II which provides a closer look at the ethnicity of both transient and persistent craftsmen and their respective evolution during the period from 1815 to 1831.

Table II
Craftsmen Entering the Leather Trades Between 1815 and 1831, According to the Length of Their Stay and Their Ethnicity.

Type and Date of Entry of Artisan	Length of Stay (years) French-Canadian N.	- 1 %	1-5 %	5 + %	British or other ethnic group N.	- 1 %	1-5 %	5 + %
TANNERS								
Pre-1815	66	—	—	100	3	—	—	100
1815-1819	37	30	16	54	1	—	—	100
1820-1824	32	16	9	75	9	33	22	44
1825-1829	40	33	10	58	17	47	18	35
1830-1831	33	42	27	30	21	57	33	10
Total	208	21	11	69	51	45	24	31
SHOEMAKERS								
Pre-1815	55	0	2	98	27	0	11	89
1815-1819	60	28	20	52	78	44	26	31
1820-1824	41	20	7	73	125	50	17	34
1825-1829	86	20	22	58	128	50	23	27
1830-1831	39	28	15	56	129	67	25	8
Total	281	19	15	67	487	51	22	28
SADDLERS								
Pre-1815	9	0	0	100	5	0	0	100
1815-1819	5	0	0	100	6	50	33	17
1820-1824	11	36	0	64	15	60	0	40
1825-1829	12	25	25	50	9	44	22	33
1830-1831	13	31	15	54	16	63	25	13
Total	50	22	10	68	51	51	16	33

Guide to Symbols: F.-C.: French-Canadian
B.: British or other ethnic group

Source: "Work, Family and Community...," analysis of files of artisans listed in appendix C.

It shows that only a minority of British and other foreign craftsmen settled in Montréal for prolonged periods of time. In the years 1830 and 1831, for example, 129 shoemakers who were not French Canadians entered the trade; of these, only ten were still active in the city six years later. A similar trend may be observed in all crafts throughout most of the period. This table also shows that the movement of transient artisans into the Montréal leather crafts was tied to the ebb and flow of immigration from the British Isles to British North America. The average number of transient tanners arriving in Montréal each year rose from one in the interval 1820-24 to ten in 1830-31, while in shoemaking the corresponding increase was from seventeen to sixty. Clearly the bulk of these individuals were simply passing through Lower Canada on their way to other places and it is doubtful that many of them stayed in the city long enough to actually work at their trade.

Nevertheless, many immigrants to Lower Canada did settle permanently and the expansion of the labour force in all three Montréal leather crafts was dependent to some extent upon this source of manpower. As shown in Table I, in tanning, shoemaking, and saddlery the numbers of persistent non-French-Canadian artisans grew substantially between 1815 and 1831. Yet, while British artisans almost tripled in number in each trade, in absolute terms the French-Canadian presence increased even more significantly. The core craft population comprised seventy-three more British artisans in 1831 than it had sixteen years earlier, but there were then 139 more French Canadians than there had been in 1815. An increased British involvement in the crafts thus did not result in reduced French-Canadian participation.

Furthermore, as British artisans put down roots, many of them became integrated into the local French-Canadian community. This is very noticeable in shoemaking where fully 17 per cent of persistent British shoemakers active in Montréal between 1815 and 1831 had close ties with French Canadians. Many shoemakers found French-Canadian brides. American Samuel Walker wed Marie Provendier in 1804; their two children later married French Canadians.[20] The three Hinton brothers — Isaac, Joseph, and William — all settled in east-end Montréal, married local women and had children who appear to have been French-speaking.[21] Other Montréal cobblers with English names were in fact the children of French-Canadian mothers and had grown up in Lower Canada: this was true of Charles Smallwood Junior, Louis Antoine Cook, George Robley, and of the brothers Edward and Frederick Mitchell dit Frédérick.

There is no denying that immigration to Lower Canada from the British Isles had a significant impact upon the city of Montréal and its craft economy. However, the extent

20. ANQ-M, Registers of Notre-Dame Parish of Montréal, 26 November 1804, 25 October 1830, and 4 September 1832; Archives du Groupe de recherche sur la société montréalaise du XIXe siècle, Viger Census: Faubourg Sainte-Marie, maison 286.

21. ANQ-M, Registers of Saint Gabriel Presbyterian Church, 5 June 1817 and 3 March 1823; Registers of Christ Church (Anglican), 18 March 1827; Registers of Notre-Dame Parish of Montréal, 31 July 1848, 18 October 1854, 23 June 1856, 18 October 1859, and 29 May and 12 November 1860. Archives du Groupe de recherche sur la société montréalaise au XIXe siècle, Viger Census: Faubourg Sainte-Marie, maisons 142 and 368. NA, Microfilm C-5941, Census of the City of Montréal, 1831, Faubourg Québec, rue Panet.

of British dominance in the leather crafts, and perhaps in many other sectors as well, appears to have been exaggerated. The available evidence does not substantiate the view that immigration brought a rapid reduction in economic opportunity for French-Canadian artisans or any lessening of access to the crafts for French Canadians generally. In these years of growing immigration to British North America, French Canadians continued to make up the bulk of the persistent craft population in the leather trades and their numbers grew even as British artisans poured into Montréal. The ability of the francophone leatherworking population to more than hold its own suggests that its members belonged to a vital and dynamic community with longstanding craft traditions, able to reproduce itself and to attract large numbers of new recruits.

Whether they entered the crafts as apprentices or as journeymen, new leather artisans were drawn primarily from the population of the city and parish of Montréal. The analysis of the origins[22] of persistent French-Canadian craftsmen reveals that the majority were local men. Table III shows that this was the case in both of the largest trades, tanning and shoemaking, as well as among artisans who practised more than one craft; it held true both for those present at the outset of our period and for the newcomers who entered after 1815. The percentage of native Montrealers in these two trades ranged from 54 to 64 per cent of the French-speaking labour force. Many countryfolk and inhabitants of Lower Canadian towns and villages were also drawn to Montréal and they, too, contributed to the expanding craft labour force. In both tanning and shoemaking the relative importance of this source of craftsmen increased during our period. By 1831, a greater proportion of artisans than theretofore were internal migrants and these tended to be drawn from more distant portions of the city's hinterland.

It is generally recognized that internal migration played an important role in the growth of Montréal's population after 1850, whereas in the earlier period immigration from Great Britian and Ireland is seen as the major contributor to demographic expansion.[23] However, as few monographs detail the nature of internal migration or the characteristics of migrants either before or after midcentury,[24] it is difficult to assess the significance of the relative distribution of natives and migrants found in the leather crafts between 1815 and 1831.

There was also short-distance migration to Montréal. The parish of Montréal was very large and within its boundaries were farmland and villages as well as the city itself. Many artisans who spent their entire lives in Notre-Dame parish nevertheless migrated

22. As stated in note 18, "place of origin" represents the best approximation of the birthplace. Because of the sources available, it has not been possible to identify artisans who moved to Montréal with their parents in childhood or in adolescence Thus, in all likelihood, the figures presented here underestimate the number of migrants in the craft labour force.

23. Jean-Claude Robert, "Montréal 1821-1871. Aspects de l'urbanisation," thèse de doctorat de 3e cycle, École des hautes études en sciences sociales, 1977, ch. V.

24. Two studies which shed some light on the latter period are Jean-Claude Robert, "Urbanisation et population: le cas de Montréal en 1861," *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française* 35:4 (mars 1982): 523-35, and France Gagnon, "Le rôle de la famille dans l'adaptation des migrants de la plaine de Montréal au milieu montréalais: 1845-1875," MA diss., Université du Québec à Montréal, 1986.

Table III
Persistent French-Canadian Artisans by Place of Origin, 1815-1831

Date of Entry of Artisan	Total	Place of Origin of Artisan					
		Montreal Region					
		Parish	Island	Jesus Island	North Shore	South Shore	Other
	N.	%	%	%	%	%	%
TANNERS							
Pre-1815	66	64	15	15	5	0	1
1815-24	44	55	18	9	14	0	4
1825-31	45	58	18	0	15	0	9
SHOEMAKERS							
Pre-1815	52	62	6	2	10	8	12
1815-24	60	57	8	2	12	7	15
1825-31	72	54	3	1	15	17	10
SADDLERS							
Pre-1815	9	67	0	0	11	0	22
1815-24	12	33	0	8	25	8	25
1825-31	13	69	0	0	8	15	8
MANY CRAFTS							
Pre-1815	20	90	0	0	5	0	5
1815-31	6	100	0	0	0	0	0

Source: "Work, Family and Community...," analysis of files of artisans listed in appendix C.

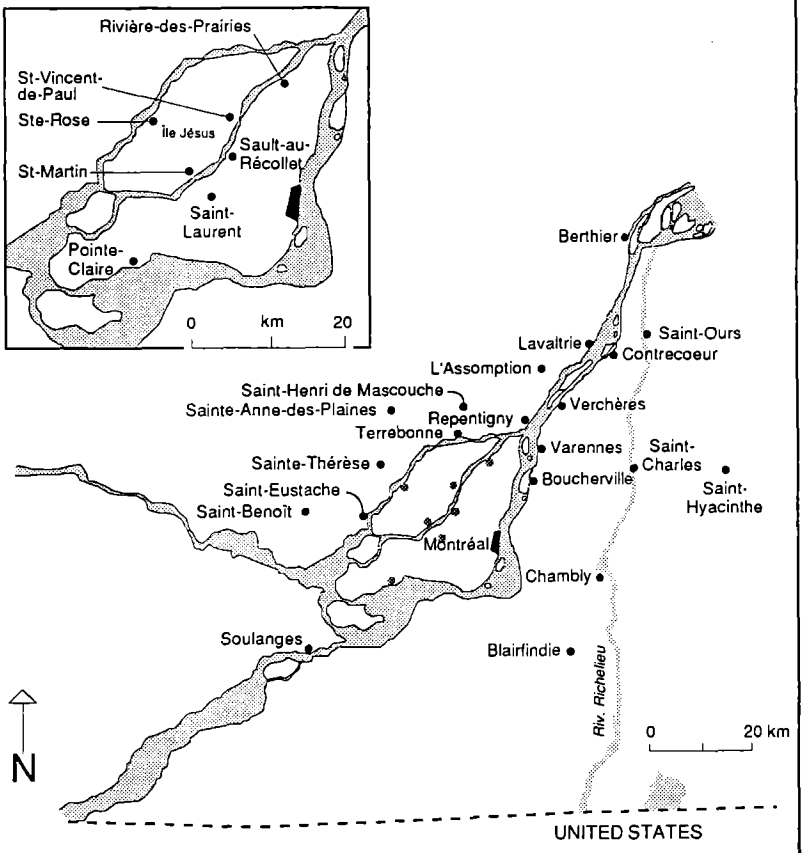
from rural to more urban settings. Jean-Baptiste Picard grew up in a Côte-des-Neiges family which combined farming and tanning; he subsequently lived and worked as a tanner in Saint-Antoine suburb.[25] Alternatively, a number of artisans left the city for the villages of Saint-Henri-des-Tanneries or Côte-des-Neiges in order to apprentice or to set up shop. One of these was shoemaker François Deguère dit Maréchal. The son of a blacksmith living in Saint-Joseph suburb, he apprenticed locally then, in 1781, he married the daughter of a prominent Saint-Henri shoemaking family and settled there until his death in 1827.[26]

While all leather crafts shared a basic reliance on local manpower, they differed in their recruitment patterns once they looked beyond the boundaries of Notre-Dame parish. Tanning drew primarily on the nearby rural parishes of the Island of Montréal (Saint-Laurent, Pointe-Claire, Rivière des Prairies, and Sault-au-Récollet) and on neighbouring Jésus Island (Saint-Martin, Saint-Vincent-de-Paul, and Sainte-Rose). Then, as the years passed, it turned increasingly to the seigneuries to the north, in the area extending from the parish of Saint-Benoit through Saint-Eustache and east to Sainte-Thérèse and Mascouche.

25. ANQ-M, greffe of L. Chaboillez, 28 June and 7 September 1796; greffe of J. Desautels, 15 December 1815; Registers of Saint-Laurent Parish, 26 September 1796.
26. ANQ-M, greffe of F. Simmonet, 13 October 1775; Registers of Notre-Dame of Montréal Parish, 26 February 1781 and 22 May 1827.

In shoemaking the Island of Montréal was also an important recruitment zone but, from the early 1800s, this craft was able to attract artisans from much farther afield, including seigneuries on the south shore of the Saint Lawrence near Montréal and in the Richelieu valley. By 1815 the craft already was home to natives of Saint-Eustache, Terrebonne, Repentigny, and L'Assomption to the north and of Chambly, Boucherville, Varennes, and Verchères to the south. With the significant expansion of the boot and shoe trade after 1825, the relative importance of these more-distant regions also increased. Over 30 per cent of French Canadians who became shoemakers in Montréal between 1825 and 1831 came from places like Berthier, Chambly, and Contrecoeur.

Places of Origin
of Persistent French Canadian Leather Craftsmen, 1815-1831.



Source : "Work, Family and Community...", Appendix C.

Thus the Montréal leather crafts reached out to the surrounding rural districts to meet their expanding manpower needs. The numbers involved do not suggest a mass exodus from the countryside, nor did these internal migrants travel great distances. The odd individual might leave Kamouraska[27] for Montréal, but most came from within a fifty-kilometre radius of the city. Nevertheless, the trend towards increased numbers of migrants entering the leather crafts calls into question the view that French-Canadian workers were reluctant to leave the land and "remained at best a secondary or tertiary source of labour recruitment."[28]

Artisans varied not only according to the migration routes which brought them to Montréal, but also according to the career paths which they followed. More than one artisan in four had inherited his place in the craft world. As sons of artisans, they were involved in craft production from an early age and were expected to carry on the family tradition once they reached adulthood. The study of the families of 120 master craftsmen living in Montréal in 1815 shows just how prevalent craft dynasties were in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Not all master craftsmen were able to pass on their craft skills. Almost a quarter of the master artisans active in Montréal in 1815 either had no children at all or only daughters;[29] a further 11 per cent either left the city or died while all of their sons were very young. Of those masters able to teach their sons the secrets of the craft, however, fully 57 per cent did so.[30] Among a clear majority of tanning and shoemaking families where boys were present, the master craftsman chose to pass on his knowledge to at least one of his sons.

Members of well-established craft families and artisans who had entered the trade as apprentices both appear to have trained their sons to follow in their footsteps. Thus Louis Barré, himself the son and grandson of a tanner, passed on the family tradition to his eldest son Léon. A member of another illustrious tanning family, Pierre Plessis Bélair, handed down the secrets of the trade to his sons Amable and Jean-Baptiste. Shoemaker Louis Bardet dit Lapierre, an apprentice in the late eighteenth century, later taught his own first-born son, Louis Benjamin, the skills which enabled him to ply the craft until at least the 1860s.[31]

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27. Elie Chassé followed this migration route: ANQ-M, Registers of Notre-Dame Parish of Montréal, 24 March 1831; NA, Census of 1861, City of Montréal, Saint-Jacques, district 11, folio 7689.
28. Bryan D. Palmer, *Working-Class Experience. The Rise and Reconstitution of Canadian Labour, 1800-1980* (Toronto, 1983), 26.
29. Only one daughter of a craft family is known to have acquired those skills required of a master craftsman and her career appears to have ended prior to 1815. In most cases, the wives and daughters of artisans contributed in other ways to the craft family economy. Their contribution is examined in "Work, Family and Community...," ch. 6, pt. 3.
30. For a detailed presentation of the supporting data, see Burgess, "Work, Family and Community...," ch. 6, pt. 3.
31. Ibid., 599, 612, and 624; NA, Census of 1861, City of Montréal, Saint-Louis, district 21, folio 11341.

Moreover, there was a widespread tendency for master craftsmen to train more than one of their sons; this also meant that they were able to count upon the help of many assistants in the workshop. Families like those of Nicolas Cazelais, a master craftsman who was simultaneously tanner, shoemaker, and saddler, were not as exceptional as they seemed at first glance. Of the six Cazelais sons, three were tanners and three were shoemakers; in addition, two Cazelais daughters wed saddlers.[32]

Not every son of an artisan followed in his father's footsteps. Some were apprenticed to other tradesmen, while others were sent to school to further their education. Nevertheless, master leather workers who had sons, and who remained in Montréal until these sons reached adolescence, generally brought one or more of their children into their workshops to teach them craft skills and to take advantage of their labour power.

For another group of young men, apprenticeship, whether formal or informal, was the only way to acquire the "art," "mystery," and "science" of the craft.[33] Between 1790 and 1829, at least 446 apprentices[34] were formally hired by Montréal master leather craftsmen. The average apprentice was fifteen years old. His parents, relatives, or guardians entered into an agreement on his behalf whereby he was to serve and obey his new master and live in a strange household for a number of years, usually four or five.

Apprentices were generally the children of nonleather craftsmen, farmers, and small traders and, less frequently, of labourers. These men bound over their sons, as one father stated, "for his advantage in procuring him a trade."[35] Most of these adolescents lived in Montréal at the time they were apprenticed and a significant number already dwelt in the same neighbourhood as their master. They were thus able to maintain close ties with their families while they boarded out. Only ninety-nine apprentices, or 22 per cent of the total, moved far from their homes when they entered their master's household. With parents living in Saint-Eustache or Chateauguay, visiting privileges were more limited, although ties with kith and kin could often be sustained through other relatives living in Montréal.

Not all apprentices remained in the city which had provided them with a training. Only 42 per cent of apprentices who successfully completed their years of service were later found working as leather artisans in Montréal.[36] We know little of what became of the remaining 58 per cent. Some worked as leather craftsmen elsewhere, returning to

32. Burgess, "Work, Family and Community...," 618.

33. The degree of accessibility to each of the three leather crafts by means of apprenticeship was not equal. Between 1790 and 1829, very few apprentices were hired by master tanners; these particular skills appear to have been primarily handed down within families and kin groups. However, masters who combined tanning with another leather trade did hire apprentices during these years.

34. This figure includes both French- and English-speaking apprentices. It is impossible to know how many other young men received training without signing a formal contract with their master.

35. ANQ-M, greffe of N.B. Doucet, 18 June 1819.

36. Burgess, "Work, Family and Community...," 84-88.

their home towns or moving to other settlements and villages in Lower Canada. Two examples of Montréal apprentices who brought their skills to other centres are François Clocher[37] and Léon Lehenp dit Latulippe.[38] It was also not uncommon, however, for former apprentices to earn their living in totally unrelated fields: Joseph Auger became a voyageur and Joseph Parenteau a labourer.[39] Much further research, however, would be needed to trace the careers of all former apprentices.

The fact that many apprentices did not subsequently work in the Montréal leather crafts does not diminish the significance of apprenticeship in replenishing the craft labour force and in forging strong links between artisans. Of the 218 artisans who made up the core group of French-Canadian shoemakers and saddlers (the only two crafts to make extensive use of apprenticeship), 65 or 30 per cent had served a formal apprenticeship in Montréal.

Just as many young men left Montréal at the end of their training to work as craftsmen elsewhere, many journeymen left their country homes for Montréal to find employment. We know little about the careers of these individuals. A handful entered into formal agreements with masters upon their arrival, but most were silently absorbed into the local labour scene. Most appear to have come to the city as single men and, if those who signed journeymen contracts are typical, appear to have found board and lodging in their masters' households. Artisans who came following marriage, with wife and dependents in tow, were extremely rare.

Generally speaking, it has not been possible to determine why numerous artisans came to Montréal or how they settled in. In instances where a number of leather craftsmen migrated from the same village, such as the tanners from a number of parishes who moved to the village of Côte-des-Neiges, one can examine chain migrations and gain some insight into how these migrants put down roots in the local community.[40] The study of both Côte-des-Neiges and Saint-Henri-des-Tanneries shows that family ties — those of birth and those of marriage — played a fundamental role in the integration of migrant artisans into their new community.

Montréal's leather crafts experienced considerable growth between 1815 and 1831, a period which coincided with large-scale immigration from the British Isles. As the labour force expanded, its internal composition was modified. The British presence grew, in shoemaking particularly, but also in tanning and saddlery. However the majority of British artisans formed an extremely transient element within the craft population and the threat which they posed to the French-Canadian craft community

37. Clocher was apprenticed in 1811 in his native village to Saint-Henri-des-Tanneries; later he settled and worked in the parish of Sainte-Geneviève on the Island of Montréal.

38. Lehenp was a member of a prominent shoemaking family of Saint-Laurent suburb. While his father was serving in the militia in the War of 1812, he was apprenticed to his aunt. He later produced boots and shoes in the parish of Saint-Michel-de Vaudreuil.

39. ANQ-M, greffe of J.G. Delisle, 13 October 1815; greffe of P. Ritchot,, 27 June 1823; Registers of Notre-Dame Parish of Montréal, 15 May 1823 and 6 October 1834.

40. Burgess, "Work, Family and Community...," ch. 9.

was more apparent than real. Among artisans who were long-term residents of Montréal, French Canadians continued to dominate. While their relative importance declined somewhat, the absolute size of the indigenous craft population continued to grow. This increase was made possible by the ability of local craft families to transmit skills to their children and to bring apprentices into their shops. In addition, Montréal's role as regional metropolis was instrumental in attracting new recruits to the leather trades from the surrounding parishes. While in this period the bulk of artisans were native Montréalers, a substantial and growing number were newcomers, whether brought in as young apprentices or as adults ready for journeywork.

These conclusions raise serious doubts about the supposed marginalisation of French-Canadian artisans in Montréal between 1815 and 1842. If these findings with respect to leather craftsmen apply to other groups of artisans as well, then the current view with respect to the ethnic structure of the urban crafts of Lower Canada in 1831 and 1842 is suspect. It may well be that the reliance on census data alone, in two years of particularly heavy immigration from the British Isles, leads to a distorted view of the situation prevailing generally in the craft world during these decades. Certainly, the experience of the leather crafts does not support the conclusion that British immigration had massive and catastrophic effects on Montréal's French-Canadian craft community.