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Article abstract

This paper examines the annexationist movement on the border region of the Eastern Townships, where the American-descended majority felt that union with the United States would end their economic isolation and stagnation as well as remove them from the growing threat of French-Canadian political domination. Leading proponents of this genuinely bi-partisan movement were careful not to appear disloyal to Britain, however, and they actively discouraged popular protest at the local level. Fearful of American-style democracy, the local élite also expressed revulsion towards American slavery and militaristic expansionism. Consequently, the movement died as quickly in the Eastern Townships as it did in Montreal after Britain expressed its official disapproval and trade with the United States began to increase.

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J. I. LITTLE

Résumé

This paper examines the annexationist movement on the border region of the Eastern Townships, where the American-descended majority felt that union with the United States would end their economic isolation and stagnation as well as remove them from the growing threat of French-Canadian political domination. Leading proponents of this genuinely bi-partisan movement were careful not to appear disloyal to Britain, however, and they actively discouraged popular protest at the local level. Fearful of American-style democracy, the local élite also expressed revulsion towards American slavery and militaristic expansionism. Consequently, the movement died as quickly in the Eastern Townships as it did in Montreal after Britain expressed its official disapproval and trade with the United States began to increase.

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Au cours des années 1849-1850, un mouvement d'annexion aux États-Unis enflamma la majorité de la population de la partie frontalière des Cantons de l'Est. De provenance américaine, les annexionnistes croyaient avoir trouvé à la fois la solution à leur double problème économique d'isolement et de stagnation et une façon de se protéger de la menace grandissante de la domination politique des Canadiens français. Cependant, les dirigeants de ce mouvement authentiquement bi-partisan prirent plusieurs précautions: celle de ne pas apparaître déloyaux à la couronne britannique de même que celle de décourager activement toute manifestation à l'échelle locale. En outre, ces élites locales condamnaient l'institution américaine de l'esclavage, l'expansionisme militaire du pays de même que la nature de sa démocracie. Ainsi, lorsque la Grande-Bretagne réprouva officiellement le mouvement, il expira aussi rapidement dans les Cantons de l'Est qu'à Montréal. Par la suite, le commerce avec les États-Unis commença à augmenter.

Even though annexationist sentiment was stronger in the largely American-settled border townships of Canada East than anywhere else in British North America, no publication on the crisis has paid significant attention to this region since the detailled volume by

I wish to thank Jan Noel for her comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

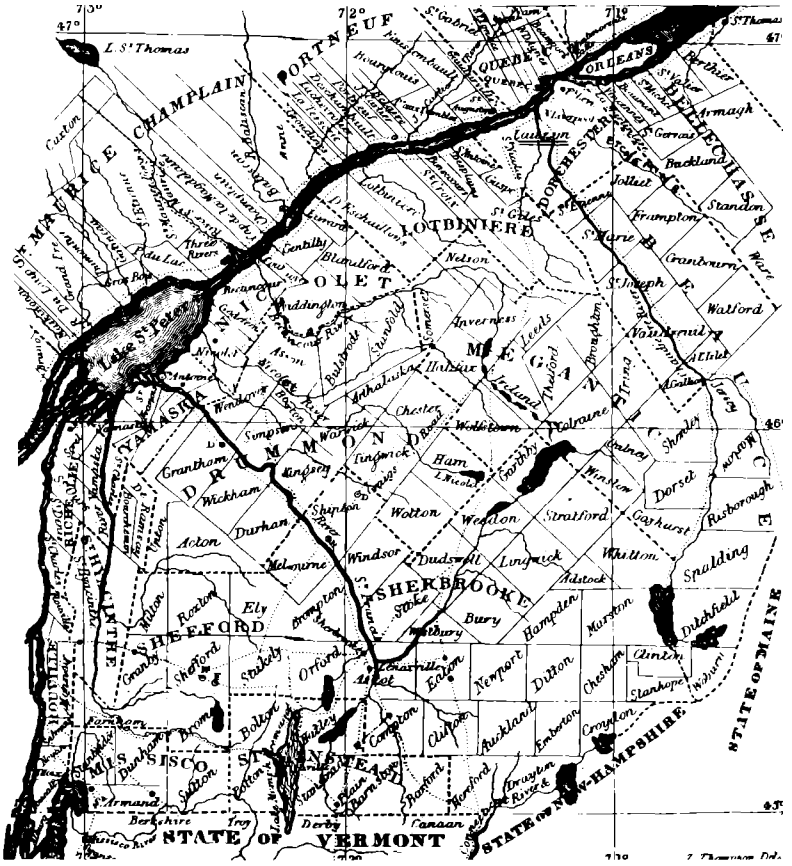
Cephas Allin and George Jones made its appearance eighty years ago.[1] To find much additional mention of the prominent pro-annexation politicians of the Eastern Townships one must turn to O. D. Skelton's biography of Alexander T. Galt published in 1920, Michael McCulloch's unpublished doctoral thesis on the English-speaking Liberals of Canada East, and the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*.[2] Useful as these studies are, they do not present a comprehensive picture of developments in the region as a whole. Perhaps now that the current economic and cultural crisis has brought Canada full circle in many respects, it is time to insert this missing chapter into the annexationist story.

During the early nineteenth century the inhabitants of the geographically isolated Eastern Townships were deeply concerned with how to overcome their region's economic stagnation through the development of a viable transportation network to the St Lawrence River, and with acquiring the political clout that would make such a development possible. Unfortunately for these largely American and British-origin settlers, the French-speaking nationalists who dominated the Legislative Assembly saw little point in subsidizing roads which would only encourage the expansion of the English-speaking population within the province. As for the Montreal merchants who enjoyed the confidence of the colonial authorities, their priority was to improve the St Lawrence shipping artery through the construction of upriver canals. Finally, the British officials in the town of Quebec harboured a deep mistrust and antipathy towards the American majority in the oldest and most productive townships, leaving the region with almost no one to represent its political interests until it was granted representation in the Assembly in 1826. The result was a quick burst of government road-building activity and a sharp increase in population growth from 28,500 in 1827 to 37,000 in 1831, but the constitutional impasse and the armed rebellion of the 1830s slowed the rate of progress to a crawl once again.[3]

The early 1840s brought renewed investment in the St Lawrence canals, but for the Eastern Townships this remained a period of fruitless searching for a solution to the ongoing economic stagnation.[4] That solution finally became tangible in the late forties

1. Cephas D. Allin and George Jones, *Annexation, Preferential Trade, and Reciprocity* (Toronto and London, [1912]). The more recent publications include S. F. Wise, "The Annexation Movement and its Effect on Canadian Opinion, 1837-67," in S. F. Wise and Robert Craig Brown, eds., *Canada Views the United States* (Toronto, 1967); Jacques Monet, *The Last Cannon Shot: A Study of French-Canadian Nationalism, 1837-1850* (Toronto, 1969), chapters 19-21; and Michael S. Cross, *Free Trade, Annexation, and Reciprocity, 1846-50* (Toronto and Montreal, 1971).
2. See Oscar Douglas Skelton, *Life and Times of Sir Alexander Tilloch Galt* (Toronto, 1966; abridged reprint, 1920); Michael E. McCulloch, "English-Speaking Liberals in Canada East, 1840-1854" (PhD thesis, University of Ottawa, 1986); and the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* articles on Galt, John S. Sanborn, John McConnell, and Moses F. Colby.
3. For a brief survey of this period, see J. I. Little, *Ethno-Cultural Transition and Regional Identity in the Eastern Townships of Quebec* (Canadian Historical Association, Canada's Ethnic Groups, Booklet no. 13, 1989), 1-15.
4. For details, see the introduction to J. I. Little, *Politics, Business, and Family Life in an Eastern Townships Community: The Child Letters, 1841-45* (forthcoming).

The Eastern Townships



Source: Louis -Philippe Demers, Sherbrooke
(Sherbrooke: Gauvin, [1963])

with the proposed railway link from Montreal southeastward through the border region to Portland, Maine. The picture painted by the *Stanstead Journal* on 20 September 1849 was a tantalizing one:

> We fancy we can see the hitherto long and sober faces of the honest yeomanry relaxing into a cheerful smile in anticipation of the 'good time coming,' when the products of

> the farmer will bear a cash value; when freight, commission and per cent. will not absorb all the profits of labor beyond a bare subsistence; when our forests and waste lands, shall be changed into fruitful fields; our vast water power employed in driving machinery; and our Townships filled with an industrious, thriving and happy people, who shall have no occasion to look Southward with an envious or longing eye.

The newspaper was referring to the promise of the American market, since the Eastern Townships did not have the capacity to grow much wheat for the British staples trade, even if the Corn Laws had not been abolished in 1846. The problem remained the protectionist policies of the American government. The *Journal* concluded that either "reciprocity of trade . . . or if that cannot be had, an obliteration of the boundary line" would be necessary in order to "soon realize the picture we have drawn." Reciprocity might be preferable from a political point of view, but annexation would bring the added economic benefit of protection against British imports for the region's burgeoning manufacturing industries.[5]

If annexation could be contemplated by prominent residents of the Townships, it was not simply for economic reasons. The American-descended majority of the region had long resented the fact that all positions of local authority were monopolized by a British office-holding clique,[6] with the result that they had initially elected pro-Papineau candidates to the Assembly. Because the prospect of a French-Canadian dominated republic held few attractions, however, the region's politics became increasingly conservative during the 1830s. The Act of Union may have eased cultural anxieties for a time, but, with the inexorable progress towards a quasi-federal administrative system and full cabinet responsibility, for all practical purposes the English-speaking population of Canada East remained a political minority.

The ramifications of Responsible Government for the ethno-cultural identity of the Eastern Townships manifested themselves as early as 1848 when the government threw its support behind the nationalist and Church-inspired "Association pour l'établissement des Canadiens-Français dans les Townships du Bas-Canada." While work on the economically crucial Main Eastern Townships Road linking Sherbrooke to Montreal was suspended due to the "present depressed state of financial affairs," £20,000 were earmarked for the construction of colonization roads into the mountainous and remote upper St Francis district.[7] The *Sherbooke Gazette* could only protest the fact that "while Ministers are daily reiterating their inability to complete the roads through the settled part of the Townships, for which appropriations have long since been made . . . money, it appears can be found to build roads in the wilderness for the Canadian *Colonists*."[8]

5. McCulloch, "English-Speaking Liberals," 425-6.
6. See J. I. Little, "British Toryism amidst 'a horde of disaffected and disloyal squatters': The Rise and Fall of William Bowman Felton and Family in the Eastern Townships," *Journal of Eastern Townships Studies*, I (1992): 13-42.
7. *Stanstead Journal*, 8 March 1849. For details on the colonization proje, see J. I. Little, *Nationalism, Capitalism, and Colonization in Nineteenth-Century Quebec: The Upper St Francis District* (Kingston and Montreal, 1989), ch. 4.
8. Cited in *Stanstead Journal*, 22 March 1849. Unfortunately, there are no surviving issues of the *Sherbrooke Gazette* for this period, but the *Stanstead Journal* was popular enough to have twenty-four agents scattered widely throughout the region.

The English-speaking inhabitants of the Eastern Townships also felt threatened by a bill introduced by the government in 1849 to increase the number of members in the Assembly because it would reduce their ratio. To John McConnell, the locally-born MPP for Stanstead, the representation bill was "part of the Grand Scheme proposed by the French Canadians to control the destiny of the anglo Saxon Race in Canada. The Colonization of the Townships I think is another portion of the same."[9] The third measure objected to by McConnell on similar grounds was the proposal to introduce certain aspects of French law to lands held in free and common soccage. Particularly resented was the clause to grant the right to vote to those tenants whose leases included a contract for future purchase, termed a *promesse de vente*. In Montreal as well as in the Townships, Solicitor-General Lewis T. Drummond was accused of attempting to ensure his election in the tightly-contested constituency of Shefford by enfranchising the impoverished French Canadians who were migrating there in large numbers.[10] Not only would the bill "swamp Shefford," in McConnell's opinion, "if the Colonization continues on three years more I think it will do the same for Sherbrooke."[11]

The sense of malaise caused by the prolonged economic recession and the uncertain political climate manifested itself most dramatically in the rise of the temperance movement and the rapid expansion of the millenarian Millerite sect from neighbouring New England.[12] Many of the faithful had relinquished all their property or failed to harvest their crops in anticipation of Christ's second coming in 1843 and again in 1844, but the ensuing disappointment did not eliminate all the prophets of doom. In July, 1849 the press reported that "A crazy woman with a long wand in her hand is at present wandering through the counties of Sherbrooke and Drummond proclaiming that a dearth may be expected this year and every year that Lord Elgin remains in the land."[13]

Given the climate of cultural anxiety and political resentment that already existed, then, the fact that the Rebellion Losses Bill would fail to distinguish the claims of rebel sympathizers from those of loyalists was simply the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back. The immediate response to the bill from the Eastern Townships was that it was an insult to the many who had, with little compensation, spent considerable time guarding the border as members of the local militia units in 1837-38. As with the col-

9. Stanstead Historical Society [hereafter SHS], Colby Papers, J. McConnell to M. F. Colby, Montreal, 22 March 1849.
10. McCulloch, "English-Speaking Liberals," 422-4; *Stanstead Journal*, 23 August 1849.
11. SHS, Colby Papers, J. McConnell to M. F. Colby, Montreal, 22 March 1849. Additional grievances included the centralizing tendency of the school reform legislation, and — in the counties of Shefford, Missisquoi and the western part of Stanstead — the fact that many people had to travel over one hundred miles to have access to a law court. *Stanstead Journal*, 18 January 1849, 15 February 1849; Alonzo Wood to Edward Goff Penny, Shefford, 21 December 1849, in Arthur G. Penny, "The Annexation Movement, 1849-50," *Canadian Historical Review*, V (1924): 248-9.
12. See David M. Ludlum, *Social Ferment in Vermont, 1791-1850* (New York, 1966), 78-85, 250-9; and Françoise Noël, *Competing For Souls: Missionary Activity and Settlement in the Eastern Townships, 1784-1851* (Sherbrooke, 1988), 156-61.
13. *Montreal Gazette*, 3 July 1849, cited in McCulloch, "English-Speaking Liberals," 411.

onization roads project, the English-speaking people of the region would "have to assist in paying the expenses incurred for their destruction."[14]

American annexation was, in many respects, an obvious alternative for a region where the oldest and most developed settlements were geographic and cultural extensions of the northern New England frontier. But the local reformers, who had been on the defensive ever since the Rebellion, were not inclined to speak out against an administration constituted by their own party, and the conservative loyalists were not the most likely group to feel an affinity with the American republic. Only when members of Montreal's merchant élite turned to annexation in protest against English free trade and the ramifications of Responsible Government as manifested by the Rebellion Losses Bill did this radical option begin to be discussed openly in the Eastern Townships.

The irony of the tory merchants flirting with sedition was not lost on the *Stanstead Journal*, a newspaper as surprisingly "free from political and sectarian bias" as it claimed to be. Editor L. R. Robinson, who had slowly come to advocate annexation, could not resist a barb at both sides in his "New Year's Address" of 1850:

> True *patriots* all, the Outs and Ins, —
> They take care of their own skins!
> (And tween ourselves be't understood)
> They serve their land for their own good.
> As Outs, they go for Annexation,
> And cut without a hesitation,
> The tie that binds them to our Queen —
> Although most loyal they have been.
> As Ins they stick to Queen and Laws —
> Though rebels once against the cause![15]

Robinson's reaction to the initial proposal for an indemnity bill had been relatively positive, his chief objection being that a future generation would be saddled with part of the debt.[16] A public meeting chaired in March 1849 by Sherbrooke's former Tory MPP, the aristocratic Edward Hale, went so far as to support the principle of indemnity. One resolution warned, however, that "any attempt to include under the head of just Losses, the losses of the misguided individuals who took up arms against their Lawful Sovereign, and the Constitution of the Land in 1837 and 1838, and whose losses can in no wise be deemed just, would be a gross outrage upon the people of this province." Should the bill pass as it was then constituted, a committee comprised of thirteen of the most prominent local citizens would prepare and circulate petitions praying for the dissolution of "the present Parliament."[17]

Similar meetings were held in the counties of Shefford and Missisquoi, but only several weeks later in Stanstead where armed skirmishes and arrests of local residents

14. *Sherbrooke Gazette* cited in *Stanstead Journal*, 22 March 1849.
15. *Stanstead Journal*, 3 January 1850.
16. *Stanstead Journal*, 29 February 1849.
17. *Stanstead Journal*, 8 March 1849.

had actually taken place during the Rebellion.[18] The Stanstead meeting was enlivened by the fiery rhetoric of chairman Moses French Colby, the Harvard-educated physician who had sat briefly in the Assembly after defeating his pro-*Patriote* opponent in Stanstead's 1837 by-election.[19] Dr Colby had arrived from Vermont to set up practice in the village of Stanstead as recently as 1832, but he emphasized the Townships' record of loyalty beginning with the War of 1812. The population of American origin had responded to the call of the government in 1837-38:

> because we saw no reason for revolt, and having been born freemen, we saw no freedom in the liberty offered us — the liberty of the serf; we saw in the continuance of the Seignorial system and the French law, an obstacle more damning to the future prosperity of Lower Canada, than the everlasting snows of the almost perpetual icy bridge of the St Lawrence.

The Act of Union, while imposing Upper Canada's debt on Lower Canadian taxpayers, had promised the benefit of enlightened and liberal legislation, but:

> Vain have been our hopes. It is not in the power of language to express our feelings at the change which has come over us. They are not feelings of anger and of hostility to the race of French Canadians. . . . We would accord to them equality in freedom, and liberty of conscience. But it is against their *peculiar institutions*, and their extension and perpetuation in Lower Canada, and particularly over these Townships, with which we wage war; and it is war to the knife. Aided by an ungrateful government, they may enslave our bodies, they may chain us to the Feudal Car, but they can never stifle our love of liberty.

The people of the Eastern Townships could even endure the Rebellion Losses Bill as an "act of an ungrateful government."

> But when we contemplate the Ministerial measure for an increase of representation, their division of counties, their organised plan of colonizing these Townships with inhabitants of French origin, and this for the avowed purpose of transferring all legislation in Lower Canada to the French Canadians, to a race of people behind *all* others in enterprize, in agriculture, commerce and the arts, as well as in education, we feel an oppression almost beyond endurance. We see in these acts the expiring blaze of hope in all that concerns the Anglo-Saxon race in *this* section of the Province.

Colby concluded his inflammatory speech with the suggestion that "amid this dark gloom of coming events, we have yet a gleam of hope," that "by prayer of petition we may receive emancipation by annexation, and share in the prosperity which that Government has shed upon Louisiana."[20]

At this stage, annexation remained a threat which was not referred to in the formal resolutions of the public meetings. Colby was, in fact, privately convinced that the time to launch an annexation movement had not yet arrived for two main reasons. First,

18. *Stanstead Journal*, 22 March 1849.
19. See Marion L. Phelps, "Moses French Colby," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, IX.
20. *Stanstead Journal*, 29 March 1849.

British self-interest, at a time when the China trade was opening up, dictated an ongoing foothold in North America.[21] London would therefore simply persist in accepting the expression of the Reform-dominated legislature "as the expression of the people." Second, the Baldwin-La Fontaine administration would not have to face the electorate for another two years. "You are aware that I am a Yankee and that the policy of all true Yankees is secrecy on all great subjects till on the eve of a general election. Any other course gives their enemies time to defeat them." Nor was Colby optimistic about the chances of an electoral victory in the short run, given LaFontaine's influence over the Catholic clergy and the strength of Baldwin and Hincks in Canada West.[22] His shrewd assessment of the situation nevertheless did not prevent Colby from continuing to give vent to his sense of moral outrage, as we shall see.

On a more dispassionate level, the Rebellion Losses Bill also spurred editor Robinson of the *Stanstead Journal* to begin a discussion of the pros and cons of joining the United States, while claiming not to have reached a decision himself. His editorials emphasized the economic benefits of annexation, including an influx of American capital, higher property values, increased trade, and less expensive government. The "moral considerations" were more troubling, for Robinson was repelled by American slavery and militaristic expansionism. Union with the United States would "involve us in the guilt and odium of having slavery and the slave trade sanctioned by our national legislature, as well as in such disreputable diplomacy as that carried on respecting Oregon, Texas, and Mexico."[23]

Like Colby, Robinson was obviously also concerned about the cultural status of the English-speaking population of the Eastern Townships, for a month later he wrote that the region would prefer to join Vermont rather than enter the American union as a new state with the rest of Canada East. "Vermont has a well-established code of State Laws, is free from debt, has an excellent system of Common Schools, and an intelligent and 'go-ahead' population unsurpassed for enterprize by any portion of the 'universal Yankee Nation.'"[24] Robinson was also prepared to consider the dissolution of the Union, provided the Eastern Townships remained connected to Upper Canada:

> It has been said, that as this is an English colony, conquered from France, the English must rule, and the French must succumb to the conquerors, whatever, may be their numerical power, or rights guaranteed by the Constitution. Such arguments can be only used by those whose 'wits are wool gathering,' or scattered by their own intemperate zeal. If, then, the two races cannot 'pull together', in heaven's name let something be done to bring about a different state of affairs — peacefully and satisfactorily to all

21. Phillip Buckner has recently stressed that Britain remained reluctant to loosen the colonial link to North America despite its movement to free trade during the 1840s. P. A. Buckner, "The Transition to Responsible Government: Some Revisions in Need of Revising," in C. C. Eldridge, ed., *From Rebellion to Patriation: Canada and Britain in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Canadian Studies in Wales Group, n.d.), 1-25.
22. SHS, Colby Papers, M. F. Colby to A. T. Galt, 25th [sic].
23. *Stanstead Journal*, 15 March 1849.
24. *Stanstead Journal*, 12 April 1849.

> parties, so that we can, at least in the far distant future, see a faint ray of hope that Canada will be a country as good to live in, as it is now to emigrate from![25]

The Stanstead editor's columns remained free from the vitriol and outrage expressed by Dr Colby, and he was deeply shocked by the burning of the Montreal parliament buildings in late April: "And what renders it still more humiliating, is the fact, that this mob — guilty of deeds equalled only in modern times by the revolutionary populace of Paris — was led on and incited to action by what the reporter of the *Gazette* calls 'respectable gentlemen!'"[26] In his next edition, Robinson condemned the seditious language uttered by the *Montreal Gazette* on the first day of the riot: "mob law is a game at which all parties can play."[27]

The only public manifestations reported as taking place in the Eastern Townships occurred in Sherbrooke, the site of a comic opera version of the Montreal riots. The affair was apparently led by William Walker, a local merchant, militia captain and justice of the peace who had served in the Napoleonic Wars. Walker later faced the charge that on May 14 he had headed a mob of sixty which took an effigy with a rope around its neck to the Magog bridge, "greatly to the terror of her Majesty's loyal subjects, and threw said effigy into the River with shouts of 'Here goes the Governor General!'" Subsequent correspondence published in the *Journal* revealed that, as with the much more serious Rebellion Losses riots in Bytown, local divisions between Irish Catholics and Irish Protestants were at the root of the affair.[28]

For the most part, protests in the Eastern Townships against Lord Elgin's signing of the Rebellion Losses Bill took a more orderly form. In a second Stanstead meeting the indefatigable Dr Colby, once again the chairman, compared the burning of the Parliament buildings to the Boston tea party: "Both were the result of advice given by an unwise and tyrannical Ministry. Both acts aroused the Anglo-Saxon spirit — not of rebels but of loyalists." Echoing Lord Durham's assessment of the Rebellion, the Stanstead physician declared: "It must be evident to all present, that the great contest now agitating the people of Canada is a contest of races — a contest which has been unhappily revived by men now in power." Political principles were not the main issue because the governing party was not a liberal one despite its claims, witness its support for "the ancient despotic laws and land tenure." The object of the meeting was therefore "to unite all, without reference to former political parties and without reference to religious creeds, on principles in which we can all agree."[29]

Colby counselled that no concrete steps be taken until London had had a chance to repeal the bill, but that "in the mean time it is incumbent on us to organize, to

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25. *Stanstead Journal*, 17 May 1849.
26. *Stanstead Journal*, 3 May 1849.
27. *Stanstead Journal*, 10 May 1849.
28. For details see *Stanstead Journal*, 19 July 1849, 16 August 1849, 23 August 1849. On the Bytown riot, see Michael S. Cross, "Stony Monday, 1849: The Rebellion Losses Riot in Bytown," *Ontario History*, LXIII (1971): 177-90.
29. *Stanstead Journal*, 17 May 1850.

associate, in order to be prepared to act and vindicate the interests of these townships, whenever the proper time arrives for us to do so." Three possible alternatives should be discussed: first, the removal of all distinctions between Canada East and West, so that Upper Canadians "would be obliged to submit to the same laws which they impose upon us"; second, the union of the Eastern Townships, the District of Montreal, and the Ottawa Valley with Upper Canada; and third, annexation to the United States, "but this is a subject which it would be premature to discuss, for it would require the consent of the Imperial Government, as well as that of the United States." The American expatriate also expressed concern about the high taxes in Vermont and the fact that fugitive southern slaves would lose their place of refuge.[30]

Once again, none of the seventeen resolutions passed at the Stanstead meeting mentioned annexation. After the first four had emphasized the Townships' history of loyalty and sacrifice, the fifth stated that "while we are not asking for payment of losses sustained in supporting the Government, we cannot be constitutionally nor morally compelled to pay the losses of the promoters of rebellion for its overthrow." Other resolutions renounced "for the present all measures of retaliation" against Lord Elgin, but requested his recall and the repeal of the Rebellion Losses Bill by the Queen.[31]

Colby was clearly a persuasive orator, but his influence was weakened by a strong association with Stanstead village's conservative petty bourgeoisie in a county where the reform tradition persisted to a considerable degree among the farm population. Indeed, the correspondence in the *Stanstead Journal* during the next several weeks was overwhelmingly critical of Colby and the public meeting. "C.B.F.", for example, wrote that only thirty to fifty people had attended the so-called mass gathering, and he questioned Colby's statement that great sacrifices had been made by the people of the Townships in 1837-38. The loyalists had hesitated to come forward until the battle of St Charles was over "and all probable danger passed," and they had been "amply paid for all real sacrifices rendered government." Some had actually "made themselves independent" by virtue of the tens of thousands of pounds spent by the government in the region: "Is this *sacrifice*? Is this loss?"[32]

In the next issue of the newspaper, "Querist" charged that the meeting had been held on short notice in a remote area so that it could be packed by a pre-selected group. On the question of past sacrifices, this letter pointed a finger directly at Colby: "Will the worthy Chairman of the *last* County meeting tell us about a certain Surgeon of Her Majesty's Volunteer forces in the Eastern Townships in '37 '38 and '39. It is well known that he had but trifling duties to perform, but is whispered that he had a good fat salary for his services." As for the meeting's professions of loyalty, "Querist" concluded: "You may . . . cheer the Queen while you attempt to overthrow the Government, but mind you, you only deceive yourselves."[33]

30. *Stanstead Journal*, 31 May 1849.
31. *Stanstead Journal*, 24 May 1849.
32. *Stanstead Journal*, 31 May 1849.
33. *Stanstead Journal*, 7 June 1849. See also the letters of "A British Subject" and "C.B.F." in the 14 June 1849 issue, and that of "A Loyalist" in 5 July 1849.

In order to dampen the ardour of his correspondents, the ever-moderate editor Robinson admonished them to the effect that "personalities and slang are not argument, and show a want of self-respect, as well as good breeding, in the writer."[34] In late June, when it became clear that London would support Lord Elgin's decision, Robinson advised his readers "to keep as *cool* as the state of the weather." He noted that there was still no locally organized plan to promote annexation,[35] but within the coming days and weeks branches of the recently-founded British American League were established at Sherbrooke and other towns in the area. The League's proclaimed objective was "to consult upon the action necessary to be taken in the present important crisis in our political affairs," and to explore issues such as protection for home industry, British North American Union, an elected Legislative Council, the reduction of official salaries, and, presumably as a last resort, annexation to the United States.[36] The third and fourth issues were clearly meant to reassure the skeptical that this was not a partisan anti-government movement. Nevertheless, the prime figure in Montreal, George Moffat, did envision the League as the successor to the moribund Tory party.[37]

This internal inconsistency would eventually hasten the League's demise; but in the meantime, an association which publicly defended the British connection did not hesitate to recruit annexationists. Thus, in the Eastern Townships, the Sherbrooke and Melbourne branches soon became openly annexationist.[38] A third branch was formed in Stanstead County's Barnston Township,[39] which had been a centre of pro-rebellion sentiment in 1837-38, but whose grievances were now articulated by the conservative local Baptist minister, James Green. The Reverend Green complained privately about "state juggling and trickery upon the subject of Religion and Education in connection therewith," and, as delegate to the League's first general meeting at Kingston, he focussed on the government's colonization project.[40] Stanstead's MPP, John McConnell, expressed a similar view when he wrote to Colby that if the object of the League was "to make the Frenchmen know their place," he was with it "heart and hand."[41]

At Kingston, Green and the Sherbrooke delegates, who included editor J. S. Walton of the *Sherbrooke Gazette*, failed to carry the question of an elected Legislative Council or to prompt an open discussion of annexation. They quickly concluded that the central body of the League was simply a thinly-veiled organization to elect the opposition Tory party.[42] A period of disillusion followed in the Eastern Townships, and

34. *Stanstead Journal*, 7 June 1849.
35. *Stanstead Journal*, 21 June 1849.
36. *Stanstead Journal*, 5 July 1849.
37. Allin and Jones, *Annexation*, 54.
38. *Stanstead Journal*, 19 July 1849. Allin and Jones (*Annexation*, 58) mistakenly state that only Melbourne came out distinctly for annexation.
39. *Stanstead Journal*, 19 July 1849.
40. SHS, Colby Papers, James Green to M. F. Colby, Barnston, 2 April 1849; J. I. Little, "Watching the Frontier Disappear: English-Speaking Reaction to French-Canadian Colonization in the Eastern Townships, 1844-90," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, XV (1980-1): 95.
41. SHS, Colby Papers, J. McConnell to M. F. Colby, Montreal, 6 May 1849.
42. Allin and Jones, *Annexation*, 60-6; *Stanstead Journal*, 9 August, 16 August, 30 August 1849.

no further steps were taken until after the Montrealers took the initiative of circulating an annexation petition in October.[43] The *Stanstead Journal* expressed very cautious support, stating that:

> personally we have no objections,' when it can be done 'peaceably and with honor to all parties interested.' Some very sanguine individual [sic] see that period now; but there are certain preliminary questions to be settled before a course of agitation should be entered upon. Are the people of Canada 'ripe for the change?' Is it a well ascertained fact that Great Britain will give up her N. American possessions' peaceably?' Is it a settled point that United States, nearly divided equal in Congressional representation of free and slave territory, will consent to so large an annexation of free territory?[44]

Robinson's cool-headed approach contrasted sharply with that of three English-language Montreal newspapers, the *Herald*, the *Courier*, and the *Gazette*, as well as the *Sherbrooke Gazette*, all of which vented their anger against the mother country. Defending himself against charges of pusillanimity by the Sherbrooke editor, Robinson declared that he was "not prepared to go blindfold — 'slap-dash' —into a movement so hastily matured." Not only had Walton already demonstrated his lack of judgement by his involvement in the ill-fated British American League: "In years past, he has been a most rampant supporter of the British connexion, British intitutions and laws, in contra-distinction to everything Republican or American, although a Yankee by birth and education of the true 'nasal-twang' breed."[45]

Many residents of the Eastern Townships were nevertheless willing to commit themselves to the Montreal Annexation Association, which established a number of branches throughout the region.[46] In November, Sherbrooke's annexationists circulated a petition supporting the Montreal manifesto's statement "that a peaceable separation of the Province from Great Britain, and a union with the United States, would best promote the prosperity and develop the resources of Canada." The petition took the form of a requistion to the recently-elected independent MPP, Alexander T. Galt, calling upon him to express his opinion on the question.[47] The influential Galt was Commissioner of the British American Land Company, to which London had sold most of the crown land in the Eastern Townships during the mid-1830s in order to promote a British influx to the American-dominated region.[48] He did not hesitate, however, to endorse the petition which had been signed by 1,213 individuals (as compared with approxi-

43. *Stanstead Journal*, 18 October 1849.
44. *Stanstead Journal*, 18 October 1849.
45. *Stanstead Journal*, 25 October 1849.
46. Without citing a source, Warner states that there were five branches in Sherbrooke County alone. There are also scattered references to branches in Stanbridge, Durham, and St Armand. Donald F. Warner, *The Idea of Continental Union: Agitation for the Annexation of Canada to the United States, 1849-1893* (1960), 20; Penny, "The Annexation Movement," 255, 258; Allin and Jones, *Annexation*, 196, 202.
47. *Stanstead Journal*, 8 November 1849.
48. See Little, *Nationalism*, ch. 2.

mately 1,500 in Montreal), a high ratio of the adult males in a county whose total population was roughly 16,000.[49]

Having co-operated with the Montreal "Association des Townships" to establish French-Canadian settlements on British American Company Land in Shefford County,[50] Galt was in no position to echo the bitter protests of Dr Colby or Reverend Green. Rather, his chief objective as an eminently practical business man was to ensure that his company's major investments in Sherbooke's industries and in the St Lawrence and Atlantic Railway would bear fruit.[51] Gordon Rothney also suggests that Galt was playing the political game of pressuring the provincial government to grant a subsidy for the railway's completion.[52] Certainly, he had adopted a similar strategy prior to the 1844 election, when he exacted a promise from Sherbrooke's two Tory candidates not to support the Metcalfe administration if it did not loosen its purse strings for the Eastern Townships.[53] But the timing for Rothney's interpretation is off. The Hincks bill guaranteeing a subsidy for the construction of any railway over seventy-five miles long had passed in April 1849, eight months before Galt declared himself an annexationist.

In fact, the pragmatic young entrepreneur was not entirely lacking in the visionary ideals of his well-known father, the Scottish novelist and settlement promoter, John Galt. The younger Galt's lengthy reply to the annexation petition foreshadowed his later career as an advocate of Canadian independence by appealing, somewhat paradoxically, to a nascent sense of nationalism:

> To make Canada great, there must be opened to her inhabitants those elements of emulation and pride, which will call forth all their energies, the dissentions of her citizens must be terminated by abolishing distinctions of race, they must be made to feel that they form part of one great country, and that its destinies are entrusted to their guidance.

The choice was simply whether Canada should remain a dependency of the British Empire or become an integral part of the American Empire:

> A Union with the United States will give Canada a place among the nations; the accumulated wisdom of their legislators will become our own; we shall share in the triumph

49. Skelton, *Life and Times*, ch. 5; Monet, *The Last Cannon Shot*, 350. The population of far-flung Sherbrooke County was 13,391 in 1844 and 19,450 in 1852. *Journals of the Legislative Assembly of Canada*, V (1846), Appendix D; Canada, *Census Reports*, 1851-2. Constituency boundaries changed in 1853.
50. For details, see J. I. Little, "The Catholic Church and French-Canadian Colonization of the Eastern Townships, 1821-51," *University of Ottawa Quarterly*, LII (1982): 158-9.
51. The British American Land Company established a woolen mill, grist mill, and iron foundry in Sherbrooke prior to the Rebellion, and by 1853 Galt had added a tannery, a cotton factory, a paper mill, a pail factory, a joiner's shop, a machine shop, an iron foundry, and a saw mill. Ronald Rudin, "Land Ownership and Urban Growth: The Experience of Two Quebec Towns, 1840-1914," *Urban History Review*, VIII (1979): 27-9. For Galt's involvement with the St Lawrence and Atlantic Railway, see Skelton, *Life and Times*, ch. 2.
52. Gordon Rothney, "John Sewell Sanborn," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, X, 641-2.
53. Skelton, *Life and Times*, 60-1.

> of their unparalleled progress; we shall reap the fruits of the political skill which has thus far shielded their institutions from harm; our interests will be watched over, and our industry protected and encouraged by their wise commercial policy; and although no longer dependent upon Great Britain we shall feel that we have served her well in ensuring that harmony between the two Empires which is now constantly in peril from conflicting interests.[54]

In closing, Galt was careful to discourage "local agitation, or sectional demand," stating that "the Legislature is the place where the public sentiment must be pronounced." Popular support for annexation, then, should presumably be tested in an election. Galt was not looking for a personal platform, however, for he announced that his business obligations would prevent him from attending the next Legislature at its new seat in Toronto; and his superiors in London had meanwhile made it clear that his political adventurism had gone far enough.[55]

Commenting approvingly upon Galt's statement, Robinson of the *Journal* stressed "the right of the people to discuss and act upon this matter, in a peaceable and proper manner," and strongly denied that it was a partisan movement.[56] During the following weeks he methodically rebutted the various arguments of the anti-annexationists. Tackling the question of American lawlessness, for example, Robinson argued that the "criminal calendar of Canada 'presented' as great an array of crime, compared with population, as that of the United States." And even if the allegation were true, Canadians would be able to enforce their own code of criminal laws within the American union.[57]

To the claim by the London *Times* that the British population of Canada East had not suffered from the recent commercial policies of the mother country, Robinson responded:

> The farmers of the Eastern Townships would differ with the Times upon this point. — They would show him that they have 'reason to complain' that they, while placed in immediate contact with the people of the United States, cannot avoid making the contrast between their own impoverished condition and the prosperous state of the latter.

While Townships farmers were dependent upon the American market for disposal of their surplus products, their profits were minimized by a 20 per cent tariff "to help support the American Government." And while they were also able to purchase "necessary articles of comfort and luxury" more cheaply in the United States than in Canada, here again they had to pay a 12.5 per cent duty "to support their own government."

> Furthermore, being convinced that their difficulties are not merely temporary, easily remedied by local legislation, and despairing of assistance from the parent state, it is

54. *Stanstead Journal*, 15 November 1849. Galt's rhetorical flourishes were a sharp contrast to the pragmatic tone of the Montreal annexation manifesto, which, in the words of one historian, rang only "the cash register bell" not "the liberty bell." Warner, *The Idea of Continental Union*, 19.
55. Skelton, *Life and Times*, 70.
56. *Stanstead Journal*, 22 November 1849.
57. *Stanstead Journal*, 29 November 1849.

> not surprising that the popular current is fast setting in favor of a connexion with a government whose institutions are eminently successful in diffusing energy and enterprise amongst its people, and consequently promoting prosperity and contentment.[58]

Following his own temperate handling of the annexation question, Robinson could only express shock at the dismissal from local office of those who had signed the Montreal manifesto. He argued that, in declaring their opinions with regard to the state of the colony, the annexationists had "earnestly deprecated appeals to the passions of the people, or to the prejudice of party or sect. They have simply called upon the people of Canada to examine the matter carefully, and decide upon its merits candidly and quietly."[59] From the perspective of the horrors associated with war in revolutionary Europe, which Robinson's New Year's "Address" described in gruesome detail a week later, even the Montreal riot was a harmless frolic:

> The year that's past has been a year,
> That knaves and drones alone may fear.
> No war has raised its bloody crest —
> No earthquake rocked the sleeper's rest —
> No blood has tracked the conqu'rors path —
> No strife save politicians' wrath —
> And that, thank God, does never worse,
> Than bleed a nose, or bleed a purse.
> When patriots break but rotten eggs
> Tis better far than breaking legs!
> And happy when our ruler's cause,
> No sterner missile on him draws.[60]

The Montreal dismissals did nothing to slow down annexationism in the Eastern Townships, and, in early January, Robinson wrote to the Montreal association that nineteen-twentieths of the people in Stanstead County supported the movement. Some of the supporters of the ministry "will not act now," and a few Tories remained stubbornly loyal. "But the masses are with us." Robinson added somewhat enigmatically that they "will be willing to act upon their convictions when the proper time arrives. This I do not say to be blazoned forth, but confidentially."[61]

While the *Journal* claimed that Stanstead had been imperfectly canvassed due to the intemperate season and want of proper organization, the number of pro-annexation signatures that it published grew each week until it reached 1,413.[62] Robinson claimed that were divided roughly equally between "Tories and Radicals."[63] Certainly, in a

58. *Stanstead Journal*, 22 November 1849.
59. *Stanstead Journal*, 20 December 1849.
60. *Stanstead Journal*, 3 January 1850.
61. Archives Nationales du Québec à Québec [hereafter ANQQ], AP-G-203, Edward Goff Penny Papers, L. R. Robinson to Edward G. Penny, Stanstead, 8 January 1850.
62. See *Stanstead Journal*, 27 December 1849 to 24 January 1850.
63. ANQQ, P-G-203, Penny Papers, L. R. Robinson to E. G. Penny, Stanstead, 8 January 849.

county of approximately 12,000 people, the ratio of adult males who had signed was higher even than in Sherbrooke.[64]

Stanstead's MPP, John McConnell, finally followed Galt's example on New Year's day, 1850, by openly declaring his support for annexation. He gave as his reasons, first of all, the economic stagnation of the region: "Long have we waited and hoped that our resources, particularly those available for lumbering, agricultural and manufacturing purposes, would be so encouraged as to lead to their gradual, but healthy developement [sic], thus furnishing employment to our increasing population, and equitable remuneration for the investment of capital and labor." The problem was basically that the Americans would not grant "free and reciprocal intercourse" to Canada as long as it remained a colony of Britain. Canadians, therefore, had no choice but to dissolve their connection with the parent state and join the United States: "Let tyranny frown and cry treason! but free and enlightened governments cannot deny this inalienable right to the governed."[65]

This statement was as close as McConnell came to Galt's rhetoric, and he too cautioned against extra-parliamentary action: "the proper method for discussing this great subject will be through an enlightened, temperate, and judiciously conducted press, means which, I am happy to know, we abundantly possess, — and on the floor of the Assembly by the representatives of the people."[66] The Townships MPPs seemed unaware of the government's nervousness in the wake of the Rebellion Losses riots, the outbreak of cholera in Montreal, and the rumours that Irish Catholics south of the border were preparing to assist in an armed insurrection. Perhaps more significantly, the Reform administration felt concerned that its political future was challenged by a movement that was expanding well beyond the control of the ineffectual Tory party. McConnell himself was a one-time Reformer, who now also expressed disillusionment with the Tories whom he had been elected to support in 1844. In his view, both parties, once in power, were primarily concerned with "increasing the number of offices in the Government" and "dividing the public revenues as party spoils among their friends and supporters."[67]

To curtail a movement which crossed party lines and promised to become a popular new political force, solicitor-general Drummond stuck with his rather draconian policy of dismissing all the magistrates and militia officers who admitted to signing the annexation manifestos. The pro-annexationist justice of the peace, Alonzo Wood of Shefford, feared that "we shall have all of those that think it a great honor to hold a Magistrate's Commission or Captain of Militia to oppose us,"[68] but the majority of

64. The population of Stanstead County was 8,845 in 1844 and 13,898 in 1852.
65. *Stanstead Journal*, 10 January 1850.
66. *Stanstead Journal*, 10 January 1850.
67. *Stanstead Journal*, 10 January 1850. McCulloch ("English-Speaking Liberals," 407, 414) is the first historian since Allin and Jones to stress the non-partisan nature of the annexation movement.
68. Alonzo Wood to Edward Goff Penny, Shefford, 21 December 1849, cited in Penny, "The Annexation Movement," 249.

those contacted by the Provincial Secretary to verify their signatures remained defiant. The most impudent were the four magistrates from Compton Township. They replied that the inquiry was:

> so impertinent in its nature, so decidedly indicative of childish imbecility, and above all so utterly subversive of the Constitutional liberty of Her Majesty's subjects that it would seem impossible it could come as it appears to do from a member of the Provincial Government. We would therefore beg to be informed at your earliest convenience, whether your signature appended to it is real, or has been placed there with your consent, or whether, as we are in duty bound to believe to be the case, it has been forged by some evil disposed person who wishes to bring Her Most Generous Majesty's benign and Constitutional Government into contempt.[69]

One of the three annexationist justices of the peace in neighbouring Eaton Township replied in like manner: "while I deny the right of any man living to interrogate me as to the matters referred to in your Communication," he was still perfectly willing to admit that he had signed the document, and remained "perfectly indifferent as to what use His Excellency may make of such admission."[70]

Of the sixty-four magistrates appointed for the District of St Francis, the government struck the names of only fifteen (including John McConnell) living in nine townships.[71] In addition, however, the *Sherbrooke Gazette* warned that Drummond's actions would be tantamount "to disbanding the militia in the townships, as both officers and privates have generally signed."[72] Some of the highest-ranking militia officers were discharged, including McConnell as Lieutenant-Colonel of the Stanstead Regiment, Galt as Captain in the Sherbrooke Regiment, and P. H. Knowlton (a former member of Lower Canada's Special Council) as Lieutenant-Colonel of the Shefford Regiment.[73]

Drummond was clearly confident that these dismissals would not lead to the type of defiance which preceded the Rebellion of 1837-38, when residents of the Richelieu and Two Mountains areas elected their own officers and magistrates to replace those dismissed by the government. But the local élites in the Eastern Townships were apparently not as dependent on official appointments for their prestige and influence as studies of other regions would suggest, for the government did not find them easy to

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69. National Archives of Canada [hereafter NA], RG4 B37, Annexation Addresses, 1849-50, vol. 4, 1290-1, Bejamin Pomroy, J. Longee, A. Stimson, and J. Smith to Sir, Compton, 19 January 1850.
70. NA, RG4 B37, vol. 4, 1285, Benjamin Lebourveau to J. L., Eaton, 19 January 1850.
71. *Stanstead Journal*, 14 February, 28 February, 14 March 1850; NA, RG4 B37, vol. 4, 1276-7. Several others had their names restored when they pointed out that different individuals of the same or similar names were the signees. NA, RG4 B37, vol. 4, 1302-3, 1306-7.
72. Cited in *Stanstead Journal*, 24 January 1850.
73. Galt actually resigned before he could be dismissed. NA, RG4 B37, vol. 4, 1301, John McConnell to J. L., Hatley, 19 February 1850; 1309-10, A. T. Galt to James Leslie, Sherbroke, 14 February 1850; 1321, J. Leslie to Lt. Col. de Salaberry (draft), Toronto, 15 February 1850; 1349-51, J. Leslie to Hon. P. H. Knowlton, Toronto, 28 February 1850; *Stanstead Journal*, 28 February 1850, 14 March 1850.

replace with creditable alternatives.[74] In 1851 it finally took quiet steps to reinstate those magistrates willing to express a perfunctory repentance.[75] How many did so is not clear, but, three years later, eight of the seventeen militia officers approached (including Galt and J. S. Walton) refused to resume their commissions in return for repenting their actions of 1849-50.[76]

Whether the government was aware of it or not in late 1849, the timid approach of the local political leaders to stirring up the populace was already threatening to kill the annexation movement before the dismissals were announced. The issue was only kept alive by the widespread resentment these dismissals caused, and by the by-election which followed Galt's retirement as MPP for Sherbrooke County.[77] In late January an unusually democratic convention, with delegates chosen from each township, unanimously nominated a reform-minded pro-annexationist candidate. John S. Sanborn was a young teacher and lawyer who, despite being a relative newcomer to the region in 1850, had the advantages of being a graduate from the prestigious Dartmouth College, as well as son-in-law of the popular former MPP, Samuel Brooks. He was also a leading promoter of the temperance campaign, then at the peak of its influence.

Sanborn's election to the Assembly would not go unopposed, however, for Drummond informed Louis-Hyppolite La Fontaine that this by-election was of the highest importance, not only for the provincial ministry, but for the Imperial government itself.[78] Beneath the announcement of Sanborn's nomination, the *Journal* printed a portentous postscript: "As we are going to press we learn that the English mail has arrived, bringing the important intelligence that Earl Grey has sent a despatch to Lord Elgin, instructing him to put down the Annexation movement at all hazards."[79] Central to the annexationists' self-justification had always been the claim that Britain would willingly allow the colony to pursue its own course without outside interference.

The anglo-Montreal stereotype of Tory annexationists opposing a Reform administration breaks down completely in the case of Sherbrooke, where an annexationist member of the Congregational Church, holding advanced liberal views, was opposed by a prominent local Tory Episcopalian, Chester B. Cleveland. Cleveland was a long-established farmer from Shipton Township, which lies about twenty-five miles down

74. By May the government had appointed only four new comissioners, all for the immediate Sherbrooke area. *Stanstead Journal*, 2 May 1850. On the political importance of local patronage appointments, see J. K. Johnson, *Becoming Prominent: Regional Leadership in Upper Canada, 1791-1841* (Kingston and Montreal, 1989), especially ch. 3.
75. See the correspondence in NA, RG4 B37, vol. 4.
76. Two others pleaded ill health. NA, RG4 B29, Militia Records, 1855, vol. 5, "Letters from officers dismissed for favoring annexation with U.S.A., 1855," numbers 1-3, 36-38, 42, 43, 51, 55, 56, 58, 59, 66, 68, 74.
77. The Town of Sherbrooke was a separate constituency from the county. In June 1849 a local meeting had called for the town's anti-annexationist MPP, Col. B. C. A. Gugy, to resign. McCulloch, "English-Speaking Liberals," 458.
78. McCulloch, "English-Speaking Liberals," 449.
79. *Stanstead Journal*, 7 February 1850.

Table 1
Electoral Support for Sherbrooke's Anti-Annexationist Candidate in 1850 and Population of British Birth in 1852.[80]

Township	Votes for Cleveland (%)	British-Born Population (%)
Compton	5	8
Dudswell	28	13
Orford	31	24
Eaton	34	10
Ascot	43	17
Hereford	46	12
Brompton	55	57
Shipton	58	30
Melbourne	86	40
Bury	94	54

the St Francis River from the town of Sherbooke.[81] This area, readily accessible to British settlers ascending the St Francis River from the St Lawrence, was much less American in character than the border townships (see Table 1). The government supporters made a great deal of Sanborn's American background, and challenged his right to stand for election on the grounds that he was not a naturalized citizen,[82] but Cleveland was American-born as well, and the rather insulting language of the Montreal press could only backfire in the Eastern Townships, where it was reprinted in the local newspapers.

The pro-ministerial Montreal *Pilot*, for example, claimed that residents of the region had no reason to complain of customs duties since they simply smuggled goods across the border in any case.[83] To sneers against the "aliens" and "Yankees" of the Eastern Townships, the *Stanstead Journal* responded:

> Who have cleared up the forests, made the roads and bridges, built the mills, churches and school-houses, and in fact been foremost in every enterprise for the improvement of the country? . . . . We do not make these observations in a boasting spirit but simply to reprove the little, nasty spirit of malignity which animates a part of the *British* press of this Province.[84]

80. *Stanstead Journal*, 14 March 1850; Canada, *Census Reports*, 1851-2. Because it refers only to first-generation immigrants, country of birth is a less useful category than national origin, but the latter is not recorded in the 1851-2 Census Reports. It is also worth noting that several peripheral townships in Sherbrooke County are not included here, presumably because they had no polling stations.
81. Allin and Jones, *Annexation*, 291.
82. *Stanstead Journal*, 7 March 1850.
83. *Stanstead Journal*, 7 February 1850.
84. *Stanstead Journal*, 21 February 1850.

Local pride was also wounded when the government party sent two Montreal lawyers, W. G. Mack and G. R. Robertson, "to *direct* the stupid yeomanry how to vote," in the words of the *Journal*.[85] At the official nomination meeting in March, the crowd refused to hear the anti-annexationist editors of Montreal's Tory *Gazette* and Reform *Pilot*.[86] While the Montreal annexationists apparently paid Sanborn's expenses,[87] they were wise enough to stay away from the region during the campaign.

Cleveland was careful to distance himself from the unpopular ministry, declaring that "he was in favour of elective institutions, a reduction of salaries, and if elected, would act independently of parties as he thought for the best interests of his constituents." Sanborn, in turn, attempted to circumvent his chief political liability, the loyalty issue, by vowing that if Britain opposed Canadian-American union once the people of Canada had expressed their support for it, the annexationists would "remain perfectly satisfied with the British sway, and . . . in case of danger, there would not be among all the subjects of England, better defenders of the crown!"[88]

Although the ministerial candidate took an early lead in the polls, Sanborn narrowly won the election by 34 votes of 1,448 cast, thus becoming the only annexationist to win a seat in the legislature.[89] Given the strong sense of local grievance, and Sanborn's impressive connections, the annexationists had expected a much larger margin of victory.[90] The *Sherbrooke Gazette* complained of "the menacing and threatening attitude" assumed by the government and its press, but admitted that the contest was marked by a minimum of personal animosity and physical interference at the polls.[91] Perhaps the lack of violence was due in part to the fact that the issue divided long-standing allies and even families. Prominent examples included the outspoken "loyalist," Hazard B. Terrill, who would be elected Stanstead's MPP two years later, and his annexationist brother, Timothy, who would succeed him in the Legislature after he died of cholera in 1852.

Another factor not mentioned by the press concerning Cleveland's unexpected strength was the relatively high ratio of British immigrants in certain townships in northern Sherbrooke County. The annexation issue was clearly the only one of major importance in the by-election, and Table 1 suggests that there was a significant dividing line along national origins, though weakened to some extent by local loyalties based on the residences of the two candidates. Thus, if Cleveland did not win as high a majority in Brompton as one might have expected from its high ratio of British-born settlers, it was probably because this township lay close to Sanborn's home town of Sherbrooke. On the other hand, the fact that he won a larger majority in Melbourne than in his own neighbouring township of Shipton was perhaps because Melbourne had a higher ratio

85. *Stanstead Journal*, 21 February 1850.
86. *Stanstead Journal*, 7 March 1850.
87. McCulloch, "English-Speaking Liberals," 449.
88. *Stanstead Journal*, 7 March 1850.
89. *Stanstead Journal*, 7 March, 14 March 1850.
90. Allin and Jones, *Annexation*, 299.
91. Cited in *Stanstead Journal*, 14 March 1850.

of the British-born. Local loyalty and national origin coincided nicely in Compton Township, as far as Sanborn was concerned, for he took 239 votes to Cleveland's fourteen in this centre of early American settlement. But further up the St Francis River, where Bury Township had been colonized by families from southern England in the 1830s, the results were only eight for Sanborn and 127 for Cleveland. The fact that Sanborn did so poorly in a township which lay within the British American Land Company's St Francis Tract undermines the charge made by the ministerial press and Lord Elgin that Galt was able to use the company's influence to coerce the electorate.[92]

The lack of enthusiasm for annexation among the non-American population had already been reflected in petitions from counties with substantial British and French-Canadian populations. After the Montreal riots, solicitor-general Drummond's constituency of Shefford, which would be 44 per cent French-speaking in 1852, submitted two pro-Elgin addresses, one with 206 names and one with 1,205. In December 1849, Alonzo Wood asked the Montreal Annexation Association to send a "French gentleman" to Shefford in order to "show why the french Priests are against annexation," but he admitted that "it will take some little time to stir up this County."[93] Missisquoi County, with 19 per cent of its population French-Canadian in 1852, also delivered an anti-annexationst address, this one signed by 702 individuals.[94] In the opposite corner of the region, in the northern county of Megantic, Halifax and Ireland Townships submitted a similar address signed by the local curé, his vicar, and sixty-one mostly French-speaking inhabitants.[95] Finally, within a month of the Sherbrooke by-election, another one held in Megantic, which was almost exclusively settled by British and French-Canadian colonists, found none of the four candidates supporting annexation.[96]

Indeed, the lack of commentary in the *Stanstead Journal* reveals that annexation was also moribund in the border townships by late spring.[97] Perhaps the promise of a growing export market, made more accessible by the northern advance of Vermont's Passumpsic Railway, was enough to reassure local producers. The following winter, the *Journal* would report that a local merchant was paying cash for oats to be sent to Boston via this rail line, despite the customs duty and the forty-seven mile haul by teams

92. Allin and Jones, *Annexation*, 297-8. McCulloch ("English-Speaking Liberals," 443-6) also overlooks the county's ethno-cultural settlement pattern when he claims that "local ties and local influence" were the sole determining factors in the Sherbrooke by-election. If this were the case, it is unlikely that Sanborn would have taken as much as 42 per cent of the vote in Cleveland's home township of Shipton.
93. Alonzo Wood to Edward Goff Penny, Shefford, 21 December 1849, cited in Penny, "The Annexation Movement," 249-50.
94. McCulloch, "English-Speaking Liberals," 424. The French-Canadian population was 7,290 in Shefford and 2,628 in Missisquoi. Shefford also had 1,772 British-born inhabitants in 1852, while Missisquoi had 1,124.
95. NA, RG4 B37, vol. 4, 1225-6, Memorial to Lord Elgin from inhabitants of Halifax and Ireland, 30 Nov. 1849.
96. McCulloch, "English-Speaking Liberals," 443-6.
97. In early May the *Montreal Gazette* and the *Pilot* could confidently declare that annexation was dead. *Stanstead Journal*, 16 May 1850.

to the northern terminus at St Johnsbury: "Bring about the connection of roads which we have been advocating, and every bushel of grain, every pound of beef, pork, butter, cheese, lard, etc., etc., which this country produces, could be sold for cash here."[98] In October 1850, the Cambridge market near Boston reported an annual sale of 1,326 Canadian cattle (2 per cent of the total) and 488 Canadian horses (39 per cent of the total). Likewise, the Stanstead customs agent recorded exports of 1,592 cattle and 398 horses for 1850.[99]

The English-speaking residents of the Eastern Townships certainly felt threatened by the upsurge in French-Canadian political power, but for pragmatic spokesmen such as Galt and Robinson the economic issue was paramount. This sentiment was nicely expressed in one segment of Robinson's lengthy New Year's address:

> And we (like every man of sense)
> Will make the question one of pence.
> If better off with Uncle Sam,
> No man of sense will care a d—
> For Lords or Common long I ween
> If worse, why then, 'God Save the Queen!'[100]

By the late spring of 1850 it was clear that further agitation in the face of ongoing indifference from the more northerly townships, the seigneuries and Upper Canada made neither economic nor political sense. In supporting annexation, residents of the Eastern Townships had courted the displeasure of a ministry which did not have to face an election for another couple of years. That displeasure had already manifested itself in the dismissal of local magistrates and militia officers who had signed the annexation manifestos. Upon the opening of the summer session in 1850 further retribution came with the bill to increase representation in the Assembly by forty seats — the extensive Eastern Townships region gained a total of one![101]

With the general election a year later, however, Sanborn was on the ministerial side, winning handsomely against the young conservative farmer, John Henry Pope. Indeed, the whole annexationist affair appears to have been soon forgotten as the region began to enjoy the economic fruits of the new rail links and reciprocity with the United States. To some extent the rise and fall of the annexationist movement in the Eastern Townships was tied to the influence of the Montreal merchants. Thus there were surprisingly few echoes in this region of the pro-republican radicalism espoused by the annexationist Clear Grits and *Rouges* in other parts of Canada.[102] But this case study is not a particularly good example of J. M. S. Careless's metropolitan thesis in action, not only because local conditions were ripe for such a movement, but because leading

98. *Stanstead Journal*, 30 January 1851.
99. *Stanstead Journal*, 31 October 1850, 24 July 1851. The *Journal* carried the weekly sales prices for the Cambridge livestock market.
100. *Stanstead Journal*, 3 January 1850.
101. *Stanstead Journal*, 27 June 1850; McCulloch, "English-Speaking Liberals," 468-9.
102. See Wise, "The Annexation Movement," 53-60.

proponents such as Galt, Sanborn and Colby were far from being puppets of the Montreal élite. Instead, the annexationist movement took on the characteristics of a genuine local protest movement as party affiliations broke down temporarily in response to a tradition of resentment against the government in all its guises. And, short-lived as the movement may have been, one historian has argued that it marked a major political and socio-economic shift within the region by dividing the local Tory bourgeoisie and destroying its dominant influence, as well as shifting the balance of outside influence from the metropolis of Montreal to Boston during the following decade and a half.[103]

103. Jean-Pierre Kesteman, "Une Bourgeoisie et son Espace: Industrialisation et Développement du Capitalisme dans le District de Saint-François (Québec), 1823-1879" (PhD thesis, Université du Québec, 1985), 704-11.