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## Vermonters and the Lower Canadian Rebellions of 1837-1838\*

*Sympathy for the rebels was strong in Vermont and not restricted to the northern region of the state.*

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**I**n the fall of 1837, a radical movement in the British colony of Lower Canada took up arms in an effort to end the appointed minority's domination of the colony's governing institutions. The government of the United States declared neutrality toward the events, but Americans nevertheless delivered support to the rebels. After the mid-1830s, during the period when the Lower Canadians' struggle against the colonial government was undergoing radicalization, the United States provided a compelling model for the insurgents through its own experience in political independence and democratic institutions. After December 1837, when the insurrection had been virtually crushed and many of the insurgents had fled to the United States in hope of regrouping and beginning the campaign anew, a large number of citizens in Vermont demonstrated solidarity with the rebels and their cause. Their activity contributed to the British government's eventual decision to provide more democratic institutions in the Canadian colonies.

The origins of Lower Canadian discontent may be traced to 1763 when the British claimed Canada from the French after defeating them in the

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Seven Years War. A forum for the discontent was provided in the Constitutional Act of 1791 which, while maintaining unchanged the authority of the British governor and creating a legislative council to counterbalance the popular demands, granted to the colonial population the right to elect representatives in an Assembly.

During the early 1830s, the colony's dissatisfaction intensified with the onset of serious economic difficulties. The region experienced a high level of immigration (although land was scarce in the seigniories) and the townships underwent a wave of land speculation. Bad harvests earlier in the decade and the banking crisis of 1837 in Great Britain and the United States added to the area's economic difficulties. The economic disarray, in turn, fueled Lower Canadian protests against the concentration of the colony's wealth in the hands of merchants linked with imperial commerce, and it increased tensions between the French Canadian and British populations.

Beginning around 1820, the majority who controlled Lower Canada's popularly elected assembly sought the right to decide all public expenditures in a shift of control from the British-dominated legislative and executive offices, including the governorship. By the early 1830s it had also begun seeking changes in the eligibility to the legislative council to make it more responsive to the majority opinion of the "country," and it denounced the exclusive manner in which the governor made nominations to the council. The assembly's proposals entailed fundamental changes in the British parliamentary system as it applied to its colonies.<sup>1</sup>

In the 1830s Lower Canada possessed many links with its American neighbor to the south and to Vermont in particular. The Richelieu River, which flows north from Lake Champlain into the St. Lawrence River, was more than just a place where British forts stood guard against American incursions; it was also a trade route to the United States. As such it was a symbol of the possible diversification of trade relations for Lower Canada and as an alternative to its exclusive economic relationship with Great Britain. For example, the 1835 customs records from the port of St. John on the Richelieu River indicate the existence of a noteworthy trade with the United States during that year, involving such imports as cattle and manufactured tobacco, and exports of pine plank and flour.<sup>2</sup>

The Richelieu River/Lake Champlain corridor also provided a transportation and communications link as an alternative to the Quebec/Great Britain one, especially in winter.<sup>3</sup> Further east, especially in the border townships, a significant number of colonists possessed American roots. Two distinct and competing areas of economic interest developed there. The first, a British one, comprised a network based in



Montreal and later in Sherbrooke; the other, an American one, was based in Boston and later in the eastern town of Stanstead. These communications links would shape the Vermont-Lower Canadian relationship during the rebellions.

The reform or patriot movement was mainly but not exclusively French Canadian, and many of its leaders were English-speaking reformers. The movement sprang initially from the areas of earliest seigniorial and *canadienne* colonization in Lower Canada but also gained support in parts of the Eastern Townships. The recently settled, primarily American yeomen in this area gave their support in opposition to the monopoly of the London-based British American Land Company, because of the strong link many of these people had with American democratic and representative traditions. Stanbridge East in Missiskoui County had a reformist newspaper called the *Missiskoui Post and Canada Record*, later replaced by the *Township Reformer*, while Stanstead County from 1834 to 1837 was the location of many patriot events, including public meetings, petition drives, and committee gatherings. Moreover, the county elected two reformist candidates to the assembly in the last general elections before the uprising.<sup>4</sup> These events, which reflected a discontent as deeply felt as that in the counties of Richelieu and Two Mountains, counties known for having been the most committed to the movement, were freely cited by the patriots. These actions in the Eastern Townships also illustrate that the struggle by the majority in the Assembly was not just a struggle of the *canadienne* majority.

In 1834, with the colony's general elections possible for the fall, the Lower Canadian Assembly adopted the so-called 92 Resolutions,<sup>5</sup> a series of democratic demands, and the patriot party escalated its own demands. In response, during the winter of 1834 and through 1835 and 1836, a so-called constitutionalist movement was formed to counter the patriots. The movement sought to maintain the political status quo and to emphasize the benefits of belonging to the Empire. It gathered under two main associations or political groups, the Quebec Constitutional Association and the Montreal Constitutional Association, with many branches in the rural counties. Consequently, the time leading up to the Rebellions was a period of intense activity for both the patriot and constitutionalist parties—a time of large public assemblies, resolutions, and heated debates. From April to November 1837 the two parties' exertions also included legal action, physical harassment, and paramilitary organization.

The patriot party won a clear victory in the 1834 general elections, after which the British government demanded that the new governor, Archibald Gosford, initiate an inquiry into the situation in the colony and recommended that his policies be conciliatory. The Assembly exerted pressure

on the administration by refusing to vote on the colony's annual budgets; in particular, it sought to paralyze the administration by refusing to vote on the list of annual bureaucratic expenses and salaries.

The Russell Resolutions appeared in March 1837, a few days after the Gosford Commission completed its report stating that an elective legislative council was inopportune and that a responsible executive council was not acceptable for a colony.<sup>6</sup> These resolutions, named for British Minister Lord John Russell who was responsible for colonial matters, not only unequivocally refused to recognize the claims of the majority of the Lower Canadian Assembly, but they also deprived the Assembly of its main means of action against the Colonial Executive, by authorizing the governor to ignore, when necessary, the assembly's refusal to approve the monies required to cover current expenses and the administrative cost of running the courts and the civil government.

In responding to the resolutions, the patriot party did not want to capitulate, but hesitated to take up arms. To demonstrate that the party had a large base of popular support its leaders organized a series of huge protests. Between spring and fall of 1837, from the time they learned of the Russell Resolutions to the decision to take up arms, there were more than thirty major county meetings to make "the voice of the people" heard. Strikingly, in a colony with fewer than 100,000 families, over forty thousand people took part.

The first of these grand assemblies, held on May 7 in St. Ours for Richelieu County, made clear the patriots' relationship to the United States. The fifth resolution adopted at the St. Ours meeting stated:

That the people of this country have long been expecting justice, first from the Colonial Administration, next from the Metropolitan Government, but always in vain; that this last hope having been disappointed, obliges us to renounce for ever the idea of seeking for the justice from the other side of the Atlantic; and finally, to acknowledge how grossly the country has been deceived with false promises, which led us to fight against a people that offered us Liberty & Equal Rights, in favor of a people preparing for us Slavery and sad experience obliges us now to acknowledge, that our friends and natural allies were on the other side of line 45°.

The United States was also the subject of two more resolutions, one asserting that if the use of force in the colony became inevitable, patriot sympathies would lie "elsewhere," the other proposing a way to deprive the colony's treasury of the bulk of its revenues while at the same time developing local industry and redirecting trade towards the United States.<sup>7</sup> The patriots' meeting held in St. Hyacinthe County on June 1 went further with a resolution favoring an appeal to the Congress of the United States to promote free trade.<sup>8</sup>



On June 15 Governor Gosford issued a proclamation forbidding large gatherings that incited defiance of the law and encouraged illegal trade. The meetings, however, did not cease but spread beyond the Montreal district and the city of Quebec. On July 4 patriots staged a rally in Stanbridge East in Missiskoui County. Speakers stressed their ties to the United States, their view that the people of Lower Canada were united and free from the prejudice that some Europeans tended to foster, and their commitment to equal rights.<sup>9</sup> As the insurgency spread, the movement's opponents also began to stage large meetings to express loyalty to the government.

Although the governor's proclamation ordered the magistrates and militia officers to pursue the insurgency's organizers, it was difficult to punish them because opinion in the cities and several of the villages was sharply divided. Several magistrates and militia officers resigned rather than enforce the governor's orders. Still others were relieved of their posts for lack of enthusiasm, allowing the government to make new appointments. The magistrates, more than other people, were mocked and taunted by patriots seeking to intimidate them. These circumstances thrust the local elite, to whom the state had principally entrusted administration of law enforcement, in the middle of the political conflict.<sup>10</sup>

At the end of the summer, when all hope of compromise seemed impossible, an organization called the Fils de la Liberté was formed in Montreal. Although its stated aim was political education, especially for young people, it was also engaged in paramilitary activities. Thomas Storrow Brown headed the military arm of the organization. Brown had lived in Montreal since 1818 but had grown up in Woodstock, Vermont, where his family continued to live. He was the author of a series of twelve letters about the patriot movement in Lower Canada, which were sent to the *New York Express* and reprinted in the Montreal *Vindicator* between October 7, 1836, and October 31, 1837. Brown also drafted the manifesto from the Montreal Fils de la Liberté to the youth of North America, which asserted that "The authority of a parent state over a colony can exist only during the pleasure of the colonists; for the country being established and settled by them, belongs to them by right for the pursuit of happiness." The manifesto referred to past "struggles against every degree of despotism" and proclaimed the necessity to "emancipate our beloved country from all human authority except that of bold democracy residing within its bosom."<sup>11</sup>

The last of the patriots' meetings, held in St. Charles on October 23, 1837, was a first step toward a projected convention for the framing of a new political order. It also presaged the rebellion. Among the participants were representatives of the six counties in the region of the Richelieu

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River: Richelieu, Verchères, Rouville, Chambly, St. Hyacinthe, and L'Acadie.<sup>12</sup> At the convention they created a wooden pole symbolizing liberty in honor of Louis-Joseph Papineau, a fiery leader of the Lower Canada rebellion. More important, they adopted a series of resolutions written by an ad hoc committee, reflecting the influence of the French Declaration of Human Rights but mainly patterned after the American Declaration of Independence.<sup>13</sup> The first resolution, moved by Dr. Wolfred Nelson of St. Denis and seconded by Dr. Joseph-François Davignon of Ste. Marie, stated "That in accordance with the example of the Wise men and Heroes of 1776, we hold as self-evident, and repeat the following truths: That all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among the number of these Rights are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."<sup>14</sup> The next day, the same principles were advanced in a manifesto to the people of Lower Canada drawn up by Papineau and Dr. Edmund Bailey O'Callaghan in behalf of the six-county confederation.

Early in November a violent clash in the streets of Montreal between the *Fils de la Liberté* and the Doric Club, a pro-constitutionalist and paramilitary organization, illustrated the explosiveness of the situation. By November 13 the colonial government had published a new list of magistrates' appointments for the district of Montreal, and it was clear that orders for the arrest of the leaders of the patriots would soon follow. The patriots organized a resistance by setting up armed camps in the counties of Richelieu and Two Mountains. The British garrison quartered in Montreal first attacked the Richelieu region. Three weeks later the commander-in-chief of the British forces in the Canadas, John Colborne, led a force of considerable size along with loyal volunteers against the armed camps in Two Mountains. The patriots were no match for the British garrison and those loyal volunteers. According to a government list, 521 patriots were imprisoned in Lower Canada during the period following the 1837 uprising.<sup>15</sup>

The patriots' defeat caused the movement's leaders and many of their followers to flee to the United States where they attempted to regroup and then to reenter Lower Canada. The proximity of the Lake Champlain area attracted many of them to the New York towns of Rouses Point, Champlain, Chazy, and Plattsburg, and to the Vermont towns of Alburg, Highgate, Swanton, St. Albans, and Burlington.

By June 1, 1838, about four hundred to five hundred refugees from the Lower Canadian rebellion were living in the United States. This estimate is taken from a highly detailed document prepared by the notary J. J. Girouard, a patriot leader from St. Benoit, while he was imprisoned in Montreal.<sup>16</sup> Analysis of the information cited in Girouard's document,



including the name, age, occupation, and parish of birth of 135 individuals, provides a rough profile of the refugees. More than half of the 135 were from Montreal (26), L'Acadie Parish (23), St. Valentin (18), and St. John (16). Nine were members of the Assembly. Twenty-three were professionals, including six lawyers, ten doctors, six notaries, and one surveyor; nineteen were merchants. There were also eighteen craftsmen and fifty farmers, representing approximately fifty percent of the names known to Girouard.

In the first week of December 1837, with Papineau's consent, if not at his instigation, refugees at Swanton tried to bring arms and ammunition to a camp they believed was forming in St. Cesaire, Lower Canada, on the Yamaska River. The loyal volunteers from the Missiskoui region, however, expected and defeated the refugees at Moore's Corner, the intersection of the main United States-to-Montreal route and the east-west route to Frelighsburgh. These volunteers used arms shipped from Montreal towards Brome on the east-west route. This failure taught the refugees that successful return to Lower Canada would not be easy.<sup>17</sup>

The refugees, however, captured the attention of many Americans who saw them as defenders of the same course as the Americans in 1776. Coming to their aid would be a means of spreading American democracy. Although official American power brokers were constrained to practice the politics of neutrality, it did not diminish the worry felt by both the government of Lower Canada and British diplomats over the activities of the exiles who were on American soil. Nor did it diminish the prospect of aid that the American population might afford the exiles.<sup>18</sup>

During the months of December 1837 and January 1838, a large number of communities in northern and central Vermont held meetings in support of the refugees' cause. Burlington, Westford, St. Albans, Middlebury, Swanton, Royalton, Ludlow, Danville, Barre, and Northfield numbered among them. On December 13, 1837, Vermont governor Silas H. Jenison issued a proclamation demanding that Vermonters adhere to a strict neutrality toward the Canadian events, but it did not put an end to open support for the movement. The locations of the Vermont meetings indicate that sympathy for the patriots was widespread during this time and not restricted to the northern region of the state. A few meetings, however, were held in support of a more cautious approach. For example, a gathering in East Berkshire, Vermont, on December 20, 1837, voted the following:

[We] pledge ourselves that as those adjacent to the province line are of the same national origin, our friends, and our relatives, we will maintain . . . the same friendly intercourse and correspondence that have subsisted for as long a series of years; and that, whether the Tory or Radical shall come, of choice or be driven amongst us, each



shall receive at our hands the same hospitality and friendship as the other.<sup>19</sup>

The Van Buren administration, as had the governor of Vermont, reminded the public that the American policy of neutrality concerning the internal affairs of another country forbade American citizens to sell arms and munitions to the refugees or to take part in their military preparations and exercises. Despite this, in late December the refugees could feel confident of powerful friends within or close to the executive branches of the Vermont and New York state governments and could speak of the great progress their cause had made in New York and Boston.<sup>20</sup>

Letters<sup>21</sup> sent to the exiled Ludger Duvernay, who was known as "the father of the refugees," provide a sense of the refugees' morale, lifestyle in the United States, their views of the possible role of the Americans, their interest in news from Lower Canada and the fate of the prisoners, and the planning of their military forays. Ludger Duvernay was a figure central to communication among the exiles. He had been printer and publisher of *La Minerve*,<sup>22</sup> the French-language newspaper supporting the patriot views and interests in Montreal. In 1834 he conceived of a banquet to celebrate the twenty-fourth of June, the national holiday of French Canada. Moreover, in May 1837 he had been elected to the Legislative Assembly of Lower Canada. In November of that year, the Lower Canadian government posted an order for his arrest, and he fled to the United States, living in Swanton, St. Albans, Rouses Point, and Plattsburgh before finally settling in Burlington in 1839. Other refugees wrote him from locations throughout the United States and in Lower Canada, including Ogdensburg, Champlain, and Keeseville in New York State; Middlebury, Chelsea, and St. Albans in Vermont; Bangor, Maine; St. Louis, Missouri; and Verchères, Lower Canada. His correspondents asked for news, told him their financial woes, and sought advice on how to conduct themselves. These letters depict a high degree of instability among the refugees, their difficulty communicating among themselves, their dependence on the goodwill of the inhabitants in their localities, and their lack of financial resources. The letters reveal that the patriot refugees were divided not only by the distances that separated them but by their ideological orientations and by disagreements over strategies.

On January 12, 1838, two weeks after the defeat at Moore's Corner, J. B. Ryan wrote to Duvernay from Chelsea, Vermont:

We had a very large assembly at this place last night — when the sympathy expressed by the people in our behalf, did not end in mere words, they have come out in bright colors, declaring that they have a right to give, lend or sell to our people, whether here or at home, their muskets, lead, balls, etc., and will do it — consequently we have good reason to suppose that the seed sown here, will bring forth fruit

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to some good purpose, we have the promise of their 6 lb. cannon, if we can make out to steal it and I think there will be no difficulty in that, seeing the guard upon the same, is in no way large, nor very vigilant— Believe me, I have good reason for entertaining great expectations from the meeting held in this place.<sup>23</sup>

Ryan remarked that he knew a man who was selling gunpowder. This acquaintance could prove useful "to both parties and that being one of the most necessary implements in the present contemplated *Wolf Hunt*." He wrote of an anticipated return to Montpelier after which he would visit Hardwick, Barton, and Derby Line, Vermont. Another example of letters Duvernay received at Swanton was from Edouard-Etienne Rodier of Burlington, a lawyer and former deputy from the county of L'Assomption. Writing on December 20, 1837, Rodier complained of the lack of news from Duvernay. He sought new information of the loss in Two Mountains County, told Duvernay of his need for clothing and money, and worried about his son's education. He stated that he had received some news of Lower Canada from Guy Catlin. Concerning support for the exiles' movement in Burlington, Rodier felt that it was purely symbolic: "The resolutions passed here are insignificant, and they do not mention giving us arms: many words, much sympathy, but no arms. I have received the letter from Beaudry in Montpelier, where they already have five cannons (6 pounders in good working order) 1,200 guns, etc. etc., and where volunteers are being recruited."<sup>24</sup>

The exiles held a "crucial conference" at Middlebury on January 2, 1838, to debate policy. Most of the patriot leaders were in attendance. Louis-Joseph Papineau came from Saratoga Springs where he had been residing since the defeat at Moore's Corner. Participants journeyed from other New York points and from Vermont. At the meeting, differences of opinions on strategy as well as the social changes proposed for Lower Canada emerged. Papineau believed that the border incursions contemplated by some refugees and a handful of sympathetic Americans were poorly timed and doomed to failure. He argued that it was paramount to gain highly placed political support and, of course, funds. Papineau attempted to seek assurances from his contacts in Albany, New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and Washington that the American government and certain financial circles would support the patriots' cause. His position was not shared by others like Cyrille-Hector-Octave Côté, a doctor and deputy from the county of L'Acadie; Julien Gagnon, a farmer from St. Valentin; and Edouard-Elisée Malhiot, a law student from Montreal, who believed that the border activities should be intensified. A second rift occurred over a proposal to abolish the seignorial system: those who were in favor of border raids and immediate action were also in favor of the seignorial proposal; Papineau and his supporters were not.<sup>25</sup>



The Middlebury meeting ended in discord. As a result, several exiles lost their confidence and for all intents and purposes quit the movement. The patriot cause persisted, however, kept alive by the radicals for the remaining months of 1838 with Robert Nelson, a Montreal doctor, as their leader. Near the border, at Champlain, Swanton, and Plattsburgh, they planned a second armed thrust onto Canadian soil. Thomas Storrow Brown wrote to P. P. Demaray on January 21, 1838, from St. Albans, stating his confidence in the planned raid and remarking on the impact it would have on the British rulers.

Were I at liberty to make an entry into Lower Canada with 300 men it would cost England 3 millions to drive me out. In playing such a game we must gain in the end. We exiled from Lower Canada now in the States are sufficient to secure the independence of Lower Canada if we only maintain courage and determination. Queen Victoria will have more trouble in keeping herself upon the throne of England than we shall have in driving her from Canada.<sup>26</sup>

At the end of February 1838, an expedition led by Robert Nelson passed through Alburg, Vermont, to proclaim on Canadian soil the independence of Lower Canada. The insurgents crossed the border with arms that had been plundered for the most part from the militia arsenal in Elizabethtown, New York, and with the cartridges that had largely been handmade in Plattsburgh. They had to retreat when they learned that their arrival had been expected and that local volunteers together with soldiers from St. John were prepared to advance on them. Before retreating, however, the expedition proclaimed the independence of Lower Canada at Caldwell Manor, south of Rouville County near the Richelieu River. Their proclamation asserted "that from this day forward, the PEOPLE OF LOWER CANADA are absolved from all allegiance to Great Britain, and that the political connexion between that Power and Lower Canada is now dissolved." The proclamation also embraced principles of republicanism, bilingualism (French and English) in all public affairs, equality of rights for the native Canadian Indians, and liberty of conscience for every person. About land ownership, it declared "that the Feudal or Seigniorial Tenure of land is hereby abolished, as completely as if such Tenure had never existed in Canada."<sup>27</sup>

Further to the east, at about the same time, a minor border raid on Potton occurred. It had been organized in Troy. There were rumors of similar preparations for an attack on Stanstead, with the activity centered in Derby, where the *Canadian Patriot* had been published for some time.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, patriot leaders realized that their strategy required changes. From Swanton on April 6, Edouard-Elisée Malhiot wrote unenthusiastically to Duvernay about an expedition planned for that very day, about fifteen successive schemes that were not carried out and about his

reticence and perplexity in the face of these events: "If to refuse means meeting with contempt in the States, and to accept and fail means to be ridiculed in Canada, what a position!"<sup>29</sup> The next day Duvernay spoke to Jos. Robitaille of St. Roch about scuffles that had broken out and that he felt put everything at risk. He needed "10 to 12,000 guns, ammunition to match, and 3 to 4,000 men if we are to begin now."<sup>30</sup> Men such as Edouard-Etienne Rodier and Joshua Bell thought about abandoning the movement during this period. Survival was fraught with difficulties; they had perhaps become skeptical; and they were not able to return to Lower Canada. Rodier, who had made his living in St. Albans as a barkeeper, even considered leaving for Wisconsin. In the end he did not leave, although he spoke also of settling in New York or perhaps even in France. Joshua Bell, who had been a shoemaker and trader in Montreal, seems to have disappeared without a trace. On May 19, 1838, Bell wrote from Plattsburgh to Duvernay in Rouses Point, stating his intention to move west, perhaps never to return. He added, however:

But if anything occurs that would make it appear, to the *Chief* or others that I could likely render any Service towards the redemption of *your* Country, I believe I could submit to leave my family (when they are settled, in a Strange land,) and return to the work of Philanthropy. Go where I may, I shall have a friendly disposition towards your countrymen, and an interest in their Liberty.<sup>31</sup>

The patriot leaders continued to organize throughout the summer and rumors about imminent expeditions circulated, but few details are known. Louis Perrault, who had been the editor and printer of *The Vindicator*, received a sober letter from Montreal stating that "now sympathies and agitation are dreams that no longer lull anyone here."<sup>32</sup> The letter came from lawyer and deputy Augustin-Norbert Morin, who is believed to have drafted the 92 Resolutions of 1834 with Papineau.

The planned forceful inroads into Lower Canada were gravely handicapped because the "other side" knew what the refugees and American sympathizers were planning. The Lower Canada government had spies in the United States, and the American government provided information about the exiles to the administration of Lower Canada as well. On December 23, 1837, Perrault advised Duvernay to keep "*le secret*."<sup>33</sup> In January 1838 there was talk of a "wolf hunt," and of the formation of a secret association. E. N. Duchesnois informed Duvernay from Boston on May 7, 1838, that "A secret association would be the best, the only way I believe, of producing positive results."<sup>34</sup> Apparently the secret group formed during the summer. No more precise references to it exist, but Côté wrote to Duvernay from St. Albans on September 2, 1838, encouraging him to find recruits for the group. Accompanying the letter was a list entitled "*loges*" that detailed the locations in Lower Canada in which



they had succeeded in setting up lodges, including communities ranging from the border with Vermont and New York state to Quebec City.<sup>35</sup> This Frères Chasseurs ("hunter brothers") movement in Lower Canada was comparable to that of the so-called Hunters' Lodges in the United States, American associations in support of the Canadian rebels, both groups having been inspired by the Masonic lodges. From New Hampshire to Michigan the American lodges were particularly active in the areas bordering on Upper and Lower Canada. According to Albert B. Corey 107 of them existed in Vermont.<sup>36</sup>

Through the lodges the patriot leaders were laying plans for a major coup involving an invasion into both Lower and Upper Canada from the United States and a general popular uprising in Lower Canada. The event that proved to be the last military action of the exile forces occurred early in November 1838 when a patriot group led by Robert Nelson crossed the border from Rouses Point, west of Lake Champlain, and headed to the "Grand Camp," a large rebel rallying point in Napierville. Although there were no Americans among his troops, Nelson counted on the use of American arms. When the rebel forces tried to pick up those weapons on November 7 and 9 to move them to Napierville, the final disastrous battles of the 1838 uprising occurred. They were attacked by local volunteers and defeated at Lacolle and then in a battle at Odelltown. When the regulars, marching from Montreal and commanded by John Colborne, reached Napierville, the rebel camp had already scattered. Other camps formed in several places on the south shore of the St. Lawrence but the insurgents were unable to coordinate their action against volunteers and British troops. The rebels' failure this time resulted not only in imprisonments but also executions and, for some, exile to Australia.

Agitation continued along the Canadian border until 1842. During this period exiles across the American border were able to maintain contact with their colleagues by reading the *North American*, published in Swanton by Hiram J. Thomas of Stanbridge East,<sup>37</sup> and Ludger Duvernay's *Patriote Canadien*, published in Burlington.<sup>38</sup> As an active movement, however, the rebel cause had reached its end.

The uprisings in Lower Canada failed in their immediate goals. They dramatized the need for reform of Canada's political institutions, however, and forced a decision by the British government to initiate a study, directed by Lord Durham, reassessing its Canadian relationship and colonial governance. Responses in Vermont and elsewhere in the United States to the Lower Canadian uprisings influenced Lord Durham's recommendations. When his Commission of Inquiry ultimately advised in favor of responsible government for the Canadian colonies, it indicated that American public opinion had affected the shaping of its proposal: "The

maintenance of an absolute form of government on any part of the North American continent can never continue for a long time without exciting a general feeling in the United States against a power of which the existence is secured by means so odious to the people."<sup>39</sup> Lower Canada's proximity to the United States and American support for the cause of the 1837 and 1838 refugees contributed to the establishment of more democratic colonial institutions in the decade that followed.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> See Fernand Ouellet, *Lower Canada, 1791-1841: Social Change and Nationalism* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1980), chapter 9; Gérald Bernier, "Le Parti patriote (1827-1838)," in Vincent Lemieux, éd., *Personnel et partis politiques au Québec* (Montréal: Boréal Express, 1982), 207-228; Jean-Paul Bernard, *Les Rébellions de 1837-1838. Les patriotes du Bas-Canada dans la mémoire collective et chez les historiens* (Montréal: Boréal Express, 1983); Jacques Monet, "Political Unrest in the Canadas in the 1830s; What Lay at the Root of the Struggle," in Paul W. Bennet and C. J. Jaenen, *Emerging Identities; Selected Problems in Canadian History* (Scarborough, Ontario: Prentice Hall, 1986), 156-184.

<sup>2</sup> "An Account of Imports and Exports at the Port of St. John's, from January 1835 to 5th January 1836," *Journals of the Legislative Assembly of Lower Canada*, vol. 45 (1835-1836), app. G.G.G. Some products imported into Lower Canada in order of worth included cattle, rawhide, manufactured tobacco, juniper berries, and manufactured tallow. Lower Canada exported pine plank, flour, wheat, horses, and flax seed.

<sup>3</sup> Joseph Bouchette, *A Topographical Dictionary of the Province of Lower Canada* (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, Green and Longman, 1832). See St. Armand, Seigneurie, in the County of Mississkoui. Vermont's vital role is illustrated in this 1832 book belonging to general surveyor Joseph Bouchette, who states that the St. Armand Seigneurie north of Vermont was well located "with roads in every direction, besides the main road that runs through Philipsburg to Albany by Burlington and Vergennes, and which is the most direct line of communication with New York."

<sup>4</sup> Henry Samuel Chapman, *What is the Result of the Elections? Fully Answered From the Daily Advertiser* (Montreal, 1834); Helen Taft Manning, *The Revolt of French Canada, 1800-1835: A Chapter in the History of the British Commonwealth* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1962), 363-365.

<sup>5</sup> On February 21, 1834, the Lower Canadian Assembly adopted the famous 92 Resolutions, a long text entitled *Adresse au Roi et Pétition aux Lords et aux Communes sur l'état de la Province . . .*, and reproduced in T. P. Bédard, *Histoire de cinquante ans (1791-1841)* (Québec: Brousseau, 1869), 334-362.

<sup>6</sup> Mason Wade, *The French Canadians, 1760-1945* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1956), 157-158.

<sup>7</sup> The resolutions stated, in part: "That we will abstain, as much as in us lies, from consuming imported goods, particularly those which pay the highest rates of duties, such as Tea, Tobacco, Sugar, Rum &., -that we will consume, in preference, the manufactures of the country: -that we will regard as well deserving of the country, whoever shall establish manufactures, whether of Cloth, Linen, Sugar, Spirits &c.: -that considering the Trade Acts as null, we will regard as lawful, the traffic denominated *Contraband*, and will endeavour by all means to favor it, considering those as deserving well of the country who shall embark therein, and as infamous, whoever become *Informer* against them." *The Vindicator*, 12 May, 1837.

<sup>8</sup> *The Vindicator*, 9 June 1837. Free trade was proposed in Lower Canada by the *Comité Central et Permanent de Montréal*, which coordinated all patriotic activities in Montreal and the surrounding rural counties.

<sup>9</sup> *La Minerve*, 13 June 1837.

<sup>10</sup> Allan Greer, "From Folklore to Revolution: Charivaris and the Lower Canadian Rebellion of 1837," *Social History* 15 (January 1990): 25-43.

<sup>11</sup> Robert Christie, *A History of the Late Province of Lower Canada* (Quebec: John Lovell, 1848-1855), 4: 396-397.

<sup>12</sup> *La Minerve*, 30 October and 2 November 1837. While the meeting was in progress, Laprairie and Mississkoui counties were invited to join the confederation.

<sup>13</sup> Louis-Georges Harvey and Mark V. Olsen, "French Revolutionary Forms in French Canadian Political Language, 1805-1835," *Canadian Historical Review* 68 (September 1987): 374-392; L. G. Harvey, "L'image des États-Unis dans le discours politique des patriotes, 1827-1837," *Communication, Congrès de l'Institut d'histoire de l'Amérique française* (Fall 1987). These works indicate that the American Revolution had more impact than the French Revolution on the political language of the patriot movement.



- <sup>14</sup> Robert Christie, *A History*, 4: 402-412.
- <sup>15</sup> "A Return of the names of Persons imprisoned in Lower Canada . . .," *Irish University Press Series of British Parliamentary Papers, Colonies, Canada* (1968-1971), vol. 14 (1840), 405-425.
- <sup>16</sup> "Documents inédits. Les patriotes de 1837-1838 d'après les documents J. J. Girouard," *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française* 21 (September 1967): 302-305. Girouard wrote: "We assume that the number of patriots that political events have forced into hiding or caused to seek refuge in the United States is no less than four to five hundreds." Translated by the author.
- <sup>17</sup> Elinor Kyte Senior, *Redcoats and Patriots. The Rebellions in Lower Canada, 1837-1838* (Stittsville: Canada's Wing, 1985), 108-111, 151; Pierre B. Cadieux, "L'escarmouche de Moore's Corner le 6 décembre 1837," in Réal Fortin, *La guerre des patriotes le long du Richelieu* (Saint-Jean-sur-le-Richelieu: Éditions Mille Roches, 1988), 257-276.
- <sup>18</sup> John Duffy and H. Nicholas Muller III, *An Anxious Democracy: Aspects of the 1830s* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1982); Stephen Kenny, "Duvernay's Exile in 'Balenton' [Burlington]: The Vermont Interlude of a Canadian Patriot," *Vermont History* 52 (Spring 1984): 103-122.
- <sup>19</sup> *Missiskoui Standard*, 12 December 1837.
- <sup>20</sup> *Canadian Antiquarian and Numismatic Journal* 5 (1908): 196.
- <sup>21</sup> "Papiers Duvernay conservés aux Archives de la province de Québec," *Rapport de l'archiviste de la province de Québec pour 1926-1927*, 176-200; *Canadian Antiquarian* 5 (1908): 67-199; 6 (1909): 1-33 and 87-187; 6 (1910): 17-192; 7 (1911): 21-196.
- <sup>22</sup> *The Vindicator* supported the patriot views and interests in Montreal for English-speaking readers.
- <sup>23</sup> *Canadian Antiquarian* 6 (1909): 7-9.
- <sup>24</sup> *Canadian Antiquarian* 5 (1908): 192. "Les résolutions passées ici sont insignifiantes et ils ne parlent point de nous donner des armes: beaucoup de mots, de sympathie mais point d'armes: j'ai reçu une lettre de Beaudry de Montpellier ou l'on a déjà 5 canons (6 pounders en bon ordre,) 1,200 fusils, etc. etc., et ou l'on recrute des volontaires." Translated by the author.
- <sup>25</sup> L. J. Amédée Papineau, *Journal d'un Fils de la Liberté, réfugié aux États-Unis, par suite de l'Insurrection Canadienne, en 1837* (Montréal: édition L'Étincelle, 1978), 2: 66-68. Brien's deposition, in *Report of the State Trials before a general court martial held at Montreal in 1838-9* (Montreal: Armour and Ramsay, 1839), 2: 548-549.
- <sup>26</sup> *Canadian Antiquarian* 6 (1909): 185-186.
- <sup>27</sup> "Declaration," *Report of the State Trials*, 2: 562.
- <sup>28</sup> H. Nicholas Muller III, "Trouble on the Border, 1838: A Neglected Incident from Vermont's Neglected History," *Vermont History* 44 (Spring 1976): 97-102.
- <sup>29</sup> *Canadian Antiquarian* 6 (1909): 94. ". . . si refuser c'est ce faire mépriser au États en acceptant et n'ayant pas de succès c'est se faire babouer en Canada, quelle position." Translated by the author.
- <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 102. "10 à 12,000 fusils, des munitions à proportion, et 3 à 4,000 hommes pour commencer à présent." Translated by the author.
- <sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.
- <sup>32</sup> *Canadian Antiquarian* 7 (1910): 30. ". . . les sympathies, les agitations, sont maintenant des rêves qui ne bercent plus ici personne." Translated by the author.
- <sup>33</sup> *Canadian Antiquarian* 5 (1908): 198.
- <sup>34</sup> *Canadian Antiquarian* 6 (1909): 126. "Une association secrète serait le meilleur moyen et je crois le seul qui pourrait amener des résultats favorables." Translated by the author.
- <sup>35</sup> Côté speaks of "the order of the loges as far as I know them" and mentions Ste. Martine, Beauharnois, Chateauguay ("a strong one"), Longueuil, Boucherville, Varennes, Contrecoeur, St. Antoine, St. Marc, Chambly, St. Charles, St. Denis, St. Athanase, Ste. Marie, St. Césaire, Brome, Potton, Sutton, Stanstead, Milton, Barnston, Shipton, Nicolet, Grand Maska, Three Rivers, ("a very strong one"), Berthier ("a very strong one"), Montreal, Pointe aux Trembles, Ste. Scholastique, St. Benoit, Vaudreuil, St. Jacques le Mineur, Quebec ("a very strong one"), Hemmingford, and Sherrington. *Canadian Antiquarian* 7 (1910): 130. Translated by the author.
- <sup>36</sup> Albert B. Corey, *The Crisis of 1830 to 1842 in Canadian American Relations* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1941); Oscar A. Kinchen, *The Rise and Fall of Patriot Hunters* (New York: Bookman Associates, 1956).
- <sup>37</sup> *The North American* was published in Swanton from April 19, 1839, to August 12, 1841.
- <sup>38</sup> *The Patriote Canadien* was published in Burlington from August 7, 1839, to February 5, 1840.
- <sup>39</sup> C. P. Lucas, ed., *Lord Durham's Report on the Affairs of British North America* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1912), 2:297.