



Promises to Keep: French Canadians as Revolutionaries and Refugees, 1775–1800

Patrick Lacroix
Phillips Exeter Academy
pke26@wildcats.unh.edu

Abstract

The Treaty of Paris of 1783 brought the American War of Independence to a formal end. But all was not resolved with the return of peace to North America. Loyalists had to build new lives in Canada and elsewhere across the British empire. Similarly, Canadians who had supported and fought for the revolutionary cause were no longer welcome in their ancestral homeland. After years of hardship in the ranks of the Continental Army, they remained south of the border. Both in and out of military service, Canadian soldiers and their families held the political and the military authorities of the United States to the lofty pledges they had made in 1775–1776. In response, despite acute financial constraints, American leaders sought to honor their word. Through varied forms of compensation, policymakers aimed to uphold the moral character of the young nation and to ensure that all those who sacrificed for liberty might reap the blessings of independence.

Keywords

American Revolutionary War (1775–1783) – American Invasion of Quebec – French Canadians – Revolutionary War Veterans – Refugees – Early American Republic

In 1775, the political and military leaders of the American revolutionary movement endeavored to wrest the Province of Quebec from British forces. The capitulation of Montreal in November of that year raised great hopes among “Patriots” in the Thirteen Colonies but, guarded by British soldiers and colonists (both French and British), Quebec City held firm. A failed assault on the city on 31 December heralded the gradual deterioration of the Continental

Army in the St. Lawrence River valley. In the spring of 1776, its situation became critical. Disease, the *Canadiens'* declining support for the invaders, and the arrival of British reinforcements sealed the Continental Army's fate. When Congress adopted its Resolution of Independence on 2 July, the northern colony was again securely held by British military forces.¹

The *Canadiens'* involvement with the American Revolution did not end there, however. Those who had supported the Continental Army as soldiers, suppliers, and sympathizers and who stayed in the St. Lawrence Valley faced British retaliation. Meanwhile, approximately two hundred men who had enlisted retreated with the invasion force as it left the province. These Canadian officers and soldiers served through the War of Independence. They saw action at the battles of Brandywine and Germantown, suffered a dark and difficult winter in Wilmington, near Valley Forge, and participated in the triumph of Yorktown. In the aftermath of the war, they reaffirmed their sacrifices for the cause of independence. Congress's responses to the *Canadiens'* plight as refugees in a foreign land exposed the cause of independence as a pluralistic enterprise bound by moral and financial commitments. Far from abandoning the exiles, policymakers honored their pledges and provided materially for those who had lost their all in the retreat of 1776.²

The *Canadiens'* circumstances and prospects might, at first glance, confirm recent scholarship on the darker side of the fight for independence. According to the historian Serena Zabin, such research has undermined "comforting narrative[s]" about the Revolution. "[I]n every direction," she writes, "the view is bleak." She agrees with Alan Taylor in concluding that "the American Revolution, if it made any difference at all, intensified and accelerated trends toward racial chattel slavery, westward expansion, and state power, all in order to solidify elite control over land and enslaved people."³ However, this dark

1 On the course of military events in Canada, Gustave Lanctôt, *Canada and the American Revolution, 1774–1783* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), George F. G. Stanley, *Canada Invaded 1775–1776* (Toronto: A. M. Hakkert, 1973); Mark R. Anderson, *The Battle for the Fourteenth Colony: America's War of Liberation in Canada, 1774–1776* (Lebanon: University Press of New England, 2013), and Gavin K. Watt, *Poisoned by Lies and Hypocrisy: America's First Attempt to Bring Liberty to Canada, 1775–1776* (Toronto: Dundurn, 2014); on the invasion's reverberations in the Thirteen Colonies, Amy Noel Ellison, "Montgomery's Misfortune: The American Defeat at Quebec and the March toward Independence, 1775–1776," *Early American Studies* 15, no. 3 (2017): 591–616.

2 This article refers to the revolutionaries as Patriots (rather than Americans) to acknowledge the "Americanness" of loyalists born in the colonies.

3 Serena R. Zabin, "Conclusion: Writing To and From the Revolution," *William and Mary Quarterly* 74, no. 4 (2017): 754–755. See also Alan Taylor, "Introduction: Expand or Die: The Revolution's New Empire," *William and Mary Quarterly* 74, no. 4 (2017): 619–632.

view fails to recognize the limits of political action with which the Continental Congress, state legislatures, and military authorities contended during the Revolutionary War: they lacked both a strong, central fiscal system and the means of the modern bureaucratic state. The discrepancy between means and commitments was significant, but the commitment remained. The leaders of the young nation sought to provide compensation to those who sacrificed for the cause of independence—even to a people foreign in language, religion, and customs. The view was no doubt bleak for the exiled *Canadiens* who, for two decades, faced trying circumstances, yet this reflects the relative powerlessness of elected leaders rather than an unwillingness to share the material benefit of independence, if and when possible.⁴

Despite what they tell us about both the struggles of Revolutionary War veterans and early national commitments, the *Canadiens* have been somewhat neglected in the historiography, as indeed they occupied geographical and cultural margins. The nineteenth-century residents of Clinton County, New York, along Lake Champlain, however, knew well the part that Canadians had played in securing independence from Britain,⁵ while the descendants of later immigration from Quebec also understood their countrymen's revolutionary service.⁶ Scholarly recognition moved more slowly with the prevalence

4 Such work on newcomers in the Thirteen Colonies adds to recent research on the social, ethnic, and geographical margins of the Revolution, which has recovered the agency of men and women who helped to cement or disrupt the ideals expressed by revolutionary leaders along the Atlantic seaboard, e.g., Patrick Griffin, *American Leviathan: Empire, Nation, and Revolutionary Frontier* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007); Kathleen DuVal, *Independence Lost: Lives on the Edge of the American Revolution* (New York City: Random House, 2015); Janet L. Polasky, *Revolutions Without Borders: The Call to Liberty in the Atlantic World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015). The Canadians' experience mirrors in some respects that of the French on the western frontier, Jay Gitlin, *The Bourgeois Frontier: French Towns, French Traders, and American Expansion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); Robert Englebort and Guillaume Teasdale, ed., *French and Indians in the Heart of America, 1630–1815* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2013); Teasdale and Tangi Villerbu, ed., *Une Amérique française, 1760–1860: Dynamiques du corridor créole* (Paris: Les Indes savantes, 2015).

5 J. H. French, *Historical and Statistical Gazetteer of New York* (Syracuse: R. Pearsall Smith, 1860); Duane Hamilton Hurd, *History of Clinton and Franklin Counties, New York* (Philadelphia: J. W. Lewis and Co., 1880); Peter S. Palmer, *History of Lake Champlain from Its First Exploration by the French in 1609 to the Close of the Year 1814*, 3rd ed. (New York: Frank F. Lovell and Co., ca. 1885); Daniel T. Taylor, *The Shores of Champlain* ([1892]; Champlain: Moorsfield Press, 1979); *Reminiscences of Old Chazy* ([1898]; Elizabethtown: Crown Point Press, 1968).

6 Edouard Hamon, *Les Canadiens-français de la Nouvelle-Angleterre* (Quebec City: N. S. Hardy, 1891), 164; Edmond Mallet, "Les Canadiens-Français et la guerre de l'Indépendance américaine," *Bulletin des Recherches historiques* 3, no. 10 (1897): 156–157; Téléphore Saint-Pierre, "Les Canadiens et la guerre de l'Indépendance," *Bulletin des Recherches historiques* 6,

of national historical comprehensions hampering the study of these French-speaking revolutionaries through much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The rise of a continental historiography in the 1920s and 1930s did spark interest in a shared Canada-U.S. history, but assessments of the Revolution still followed modern boundaries.⁷ Important works on the invasion of Quebec by historians Gustave Lanctôt and George Stanley, for example, showed little concern for Canadian Patriot soldiers exiled in the Thirteen Colonies, let alone Congress's financial commitments to these expatriates.⁸

Allan Everest began addressing this oversight in 1976 in a monograph that followed Canadian Patriot soldiers from the invasion of 1775 to their eventual settlement in New York. However, Everest's study was primarily a biography of Colonel Moses Hazen, who led a regiment of Canadians. The author paid less attention to the experiences of the other officers and soldiers, many of whom were not even named, and who were moved by better-placed historical actors.⁹ But claims for compensation submitted by these veterans and their families reveal that they were active in shaping their circumstances both during the war and after it when, as exiles, they forced the U.S. Congress to live up to its pledges. In the 1970s, local historians began to resurrect the memory of these Canadians, highlighting the survival strategies they and their families deployed in northern New York.¹⁰

no. 7 (1900): 209–213. Exceptional histories of Catholic participation in the Revolution have recognized Canadians, Martin I. J. Griffin, *Catholics and the American Revolution*, 3 vols. (Philadelphia: s.p., 1907–1911).

7 Carl Wittke, "Canadian Refugees in the American Revolution," *Canadian Historical Review* 3, no. 4 (1922): 320–333; Gustave Lanctôt, ed., *Les Canadiens français et leurs voisins du Sud* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1941), 91–141; C. M. Layton, "Canadian Refugee Lands in Ohio," *Canadian Historical Review* 24, no. 4 (1943): 377–380; Mason Wade, "Some Aspects of the Relations of French Canada with the United States," *Report of the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Historical Association* 23 (1944): 22–23. See, on the era's continentalist approach, John Bartlet Brebner, "Canadian and North American History," *Report of the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Historical Association* 10 (1931): 37–48.

8 Lanctôt, *Canada and the American Revolution*; Stanley, *Canada Invaded*. Similarly, Anderson's more recent *Battle for the Fourteenth Colony* devotes only several paragraphs to the Canadian refugees, at 338–339.

9 Allan S. Everest, *Moses Hazen and the Canadian Refugees in the American Revolution* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1976). These Canadians are, moreover, invisible in the leading study of the Continental Army, Charles Royster, *A Revolutionary People at War: The Continental Army and American Character, 1775–1783* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979).

10 Nell Jane Barnett Sullivan and David Kendall Martin, *A History of the Town of Chazy, Clinton County, New York* (Burlington: George Little Press, 1970); Martin, *Chazy and the*

Yet, U.S. military and political histories still regularly neglect French-Canadian participation in the Revolution beyond passive resistance to British rule. Canadian scholars, on the other hand, have been more attentive to different levels of support for the Revolution in the districts of Montreal and Quebec City, and have also identified shifts in Canadian public opinion that followed the course of military events.¹¹ For its part, research on the transnational history of *canadien* revolutionaries is constrained by methodological challenges. Nineteenth-century antiquarians sometimes destroyed or edited the written records in their possession, while others relied on unsourced oral traditions. Further, many soldiers were illiterate and did not leave to posterity first-hand accounts of their experiences and motivations. Fortunately, traces of their activities survive in muster rolls, the Journals of Congress, the papers of George Washington and Robert Morris, War Department records, census returns, and various legal documents.¹²

Revolution (West Chazy: Town of Chazy Bicentennial Committee, 1976); Philip L. White, *Beekmantown, New York: Forest Frontier to Farm Community* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979). This resurgence was significantly aided by the historical work of Hugh McLellan and his Moorsfield Press beginning in 1920.

- 11 E.g., George C. Daughan, *Revolution on the Hudson: New York City and the Hudson River Valley in the American War of Independence* (New York City: W. W. Norton and Co., 2016); Taylor, *American Revolutions: A Continental History, 1750–1804* (New York City: W. W. Norton and Co., 2016). The leading Canadian studies of French-Canadian revolutionary activity are Lanctôt's and Stanley's. An older work by A. L. Burt detailed the occupation of Quebec with little concern for the experience of the *habitants*. Scholars have since exposed the dialectic between military successes and Canadians' willingness to support the insurgents, Burt, *The Old Province of Quebec, Vol. I (1760–1778)* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1968), 182–224, and *The Old Province of Quebec, Vol. II (1778–1791)* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1968), 1–22; Robert Chodos and Eric Hamovitch, *Quebec and the American Dream* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1991), 35–40, 231–32; Desmond Morton, *A Military History of Canada: From Champlain to Kosovo*, 4th ed. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1999), 41–47; Michel Ducharme, *The Idea of Liberty in Canada During the Age of Atlantic Revolutions, 1776–1838* (Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014), 38.
- 12 George S. Bixby, *Peter Saily (1754–1826): A Pioneer of the Champlain Valley*, New York State Library History Bulletin no. 12 (Albany: University of the State of New York, 1919), 11–12, 30. The Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media has led the effort to reconstitute the records of the War Department as they were prior to the fire that destroyed them in 1800. See *Papers of the War Department, 1784–1800* [<http://wardepartmentpapers.org/>] (2017-02-20). One especially valuable transnational work is Barry Rodrigue's "An Album in the Attic: The Forgotten Frontier of the Quebec–Maine Borderlands During the Revolutionary War," *Journal of The Historical Society* 3, no. 1 (2003): 45–73.

The experiences of Canadian troops during and after the revolutionary conflict reveal that Loyalists were not alone in suffering harassment, having their property seized, and starting anew in a foreign land. Patriots too were dispossessed and their fates fluctuated with those of their adoptive nation. The circumstances faced by these revolutionaries and refugees provide valuable insights concerning the substantial challenges that faced the young United States, while shedding light on those who sacrificed in the name of liberty and revealing the willingness of political and military authorities to reward those who fought for independence.

The Other Sons of Liberty

In Québec, political repression followed the revolutionary forces' retreat in the spring of 1776. Governor Guy Carleton ordered commissioners to travel throughout the colony identifying those who had been disloyal. Aided by certain Catholic priests who were willing to cooperate (others had tacitly or even vocally supported the insurgents), these government agents revoked militia appointments, restored judicial authority, and reported widespread dissent. In most parishes, men and women had expressed revolutionary ideas and rendered valuable services to the Continental Army, for which some men had even signed up to fight. According to Virginia DeMarce, "from 10% to 15% of the adult male population of Quebec was sufficiently active in support of the American Revolution to warrant their names being so recorded in government records."¹³ Though DeMarce's figure is speculative, it remains that support for the Patriots ("active" or not) was in fact widespread in the early months of the invasion.

The reasons for such support varied. Some Canadians sincerely embraced revolutionary ideals, perhaps inspired by the widely disseminated appeals of the Continental Congress, but less altruistic factors also motivated many to join the ranks. In the Quebec City region, some Canadians remembered the devastation wrought by the British in certain areas in the summer of 1759. For

13 Michael P. Gabriel, ed., *Quebec During the American Invasion, 1775–1776: The Journal of François Baby, Gabriel Taschereau, and Jenkin Williams* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2005); Virginia E. DeMarce, *Canadian Participants in the American Revolution: An Index* (Arlington: s.p., 1980), 14–15; Stanley, *Canada Invaded 1775–1776*, 124; Lanctôt, *Canada and the American Revolution*, 70, 116–118. On Catholicism and religious encounters, Patrick Lacroix, "Popery and Tyranny': King George III as a Late Stuart," *Historical Papers: Proceedings of the Canadian Society of Church History* (2015): 27–45.

others, financial interest played a part—the opportunity to profit from supplying the occupiers, but also the lure of military pay and pensions. At last, coercion, the opportunity to settle local scores, and a desire to side with the winners shaped colonists' actions. These factors, however, were not pervasive enough to cause a large-scale revolt among the *Canadiens*, most of whom maintained a “deliberately neutral” stance that enabled British reinforcements to oust the revolutionaries.¹⁴ Thereafter, the colonial government managed to imprison agitators, disarm subjects, and monitor public speech with relative ease.¹⁵

The men and women who supported the revolutionary cause were of varied backgrounds. Some soldiers fit the image of the *habitant*, the *canadien* peasant, but a disproportionate number did not. There were Acadians such as Basile Mignault and fur traders. Alexandre Ferriol, Antoine Paulint, and others who had come from France during the French and Indian War married in the colony and opted to remain there under British rule. But the revolutionaries of the Province of Quebec were not exclusively French. Among the Patriots of British descent in the colony were those who ultimately led the two Canadian regiments of the Continental Army. Massachusetts-born Moses Hazen had served with the British as an officer during the previous war and then purchased a *seigneurie* abutting the Richelieu River. After some hesitation, he accepted a colonel's commission from Congress in 1776 and raised a regiment. The other regimental commander was also a transplanted “old subject,” James Livingston, a scion of the prominent New York family, who had likewise conducted business on the Richelieu prior to the war.¹⁶

14 In his study of Patriot addresses to Quebec colonists, Pierre Monette argues that culture had little part in the *Canadiens'* response to the invasion. Ultimately, in his view, reactions followed a clear class division between the *habitants* on one hand and the Catholic Church and *seigneurs* on the other. Holly Mayer has also studied the motivations of *Canadiens*, whose decision to join the conflict meant either “expanding or containing the rebellion.” In their mixed response to the pleas of Congress, “they complicated [the rebels'] enterprise militarily and ideologically.” Evidently, they posed a challenge to Continental policymakers as early as 1775; Monette, *Rendez-vous manqué avec la Révolution américaine: Les adresses aux habitants de la province de Québec diffusées à l'occasion de l'invasion américaine de 1775–1776* (Montreal: Québec/Amérique, 2007); Mayer, “Canada, Congress, and the Continental Army: Strategic Accommodations, 1774–1776,” *Journal of Military History*, vol. 78, no. 2 (April 2014): 503–535.

15 Burt emphasizes the relative leniency of Governor Carleton's regime; Carleton's successor, Haldimand wielded a heavier hand beginning in 1778. See Burt, *The Old Province of Quebec*, 1: 186–187, 2: 15–22.

16 DeMarce, *Canadian Participants in the American Revolution*, 7–9; Lacroix, “Le cas particulier de la famille Mignault: Prospection d'une histoire transnationale,” *Quebec Studies* 65 (2018): 37–55; on Hazen and Livingston, Everest, *Moses Hazen and the Canadian Refugees*,

Some historians estimate that as many as 750 Canadians were mustered by Hazen and Livingston during the occupation. Stanley and Lanctôt offer instead a figure of five hundred men, evenly split between the two regiments; of Hazen's regiment, according to Lanctôt, only 124 stayed in the ranks during the retreat. Livingston's regiment likely suffered the same attrition. At the end of the war, 227 refugee officers and soldiers were listed as eligible for land grants in New York. As will be seen, this relatively low figure nevertheless posed significant budgetary and policymaking challenges to U.S. authorities, not least because the retreat from Quebec swept up Canadian families whose only means of survival now were a father's army pay and the promise of a pension.¹⁷

Outside of Quebec, the two Canadian regiments rendered valuable services. In the summer and fall of 1776, they helped to strengthen Fort Ticonderoga, fortify the American position across the narrows at Mount Independence, and put a flotilla on Lake Champlain. Their exertions succeeded in deterring a full-scale attack from Governor Carleton before winter. But in the flurry of activity, in the wilderness of northern New York, no doubt the Canadians—daily expecting to see British ships on the northern horizon—were haunted by uncertainty and by concern for those left behind.¹⁸

As the British threat receded, the Canadian regiments decamped. By November, Hazen's regiment was in Fishkill, ten miles north of West Point on the

2–17, 29–36; Anderson, *Battle for the Fourteenth Colony*, 95–96. The leading sources of information on individual officers and soldiers are DeMarce, *Canadian Participants*; Francis J. Sypher, Jr., *Biographies of Original Members and Other Continental Officers* (Fishkill: New York State Society of the Cincinnati, 2004); and the few portraits in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*. A more comprehensive listing is available online: Debbie Duay, "Index to French Canadian Revolutionary War Patriots"

[<http://www.learnwebskills.com/patriot/frenchcanadianpatriots.htm>] (2017-02-20). Adela Peltier Reed's biography of her Canadian ancestor exposes the limited availability of primary sources and the importance of oral traditions, *Memoirs of Antoine Paulint* (Los Angeles: D. M. Peltier–San Encino Press, 1940).

17 The numbers put forth by Everest, Lanctôt, and Stanley do not include the small contingent of Nova Scotians who fled to the Thirteen Colonies at a later date and in much smaller numbers; DeMarce, *Canadian Participants in the American Revolution*, 14; Everest, *Moses Hazen and the Canadian Refugees*, 42–43; Lanctôt, *Canada and the American Revolution*, 116, 148; also Stanley, *Canada Invaded*, 107; on Nova Scotia, which experienced a small native uprising but no invasion from the south, George A. Rawlyk, *Nova Scotia's Massachusetts: A Study of Massachusetts–Nova Scotia Relations, 1630 to 1784* (Montreal/Kingston: McGill–Queen's University Press, 1973), 226–240, 241–246.

18 "Extract of a letter from Ticonderoga, dated July 29, 1776," and "Extract of a letter from Independent Point, dated July 30, 1776," *Pennsylvania Evening Post*, 17 August 1776, 410. See also Everest, *Moses Hazen and the Canadian Refugees*, 43–47.

Hudson River. In fact, Canadian women and children spent the duration of the Revolutionary War in Fishkill and Albany on rations authorized by the Continental Congress. These families were, as Everest puts it, "more or less wards of the government, for ten years ... Babies were born in camp, children died also and were buried there. Captain Paulint and his wife, for example, lost twins and other children during the war, of whom there is no official record." Fishkill also served as an important army depot and a camp for invalids. The Marquis de Chastellux remarked on the state of these invalids in 1780, stating that "[t]hese honest fellows were not covered even with rags; but their steady countenances and their arms in good order seemed to supply the defects of clothes and to display nothing but their courage and their patience."¹⁹

While Canadian families waited in refugee camps in New York, husbands and fathers served with distinction far from their homeland. Hazen's regiment served in nearly all theaters of the war, including the siege of Yorktown. It began building a road from the Connecticut River towards the Richelieu as a potential overland invasion route. There were also numerous cases of individual commendation. Major François Chandonnet rose in the quartermaster department and rendered valuable services at Fort Arnold, present-day West Point. For a time, his superior was Udney Hay, who had sacrificed his lumber business in Quebec during the American invasion. Sergeant Basile Nadeau served as a French officer's interpreter. Joseph Christophe Delezenne of Trois-Rivières became a captain in Kosciusko's Corps of Engineers, and Pierre Régnier de Roussi, a lieutenant-colonel of New York troops. At last, Amable Boileau, Pierre Cadieux, brothers Clément and Louis Gosselin, Jean Goulet, and Francis Monty fulfilled one of the most valuable and difficult assignments. At great personal risk and expense, they all traveled north to gather intelligence along the St. Lawrence and encouraged the Patriot cause in Quebec.²⁰

Such intelligence might lay the groundwork for a new invasion; Quebec would be rid of the British and the expatriated soldiers would return to their

19 Everest, *Moses Hazen and the Canadian Refugees*, 115; Frank Hasbrouck, ed., *The History of Dutchess County, New York* (Poughkeepsie: S. A. Matthieu, 1909), 172–173, 611–612.

20 Everest, *Moses Hazen and the Canadian Refugees*, 175–176; George Washington to Charles Pettit, 7 September 1778, and Washington to Col. William Malcom, 11 September 1778, both in *George Washington Papers*, Revolutionary War Series [hereafter RWS], vol. 16, accessed on *Founders Online*, administered by the National Archives and Records Administration [hereafter NARA] [<https://founders.archives.gov/>] (2017-02-20); Sypher, "Francis Chandonnet," "Joseph Christopher Delezenne," "Udney Hay," and "Pierre Regnier de Roussi," *Biographies of Original Members*, 75–76, 119–120, 214–216, 400–402; Berthold Fernow, *Documents Relating to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, vol. 15 (Albany: Weed, Parsons and Co., 1887), 239.

properties. But the Gosselin brothers' report to George Washington in 1778 showed how disheartening those missions could be. Their countrymen were initially unwilling to speak to the brothers "for fear of the Tories."²¹ The mood changed somewhat when the Canadians learned of the alliance with France. The emissaries were thus able to secure provisions after three days without food. They related to the commander-in-chief that the colony's priests stood with the government. The *habitants*, now disarmed, had despaired of liberation, thinking rumors of an attack to be a joke. The brothers' letter hinted at an opportunity for an invasion of Quebec during the coming winter, but their own hopes may have blinded them to the military situation. Having found all of their goods seized and their family destitute, Clément and Louis Gosselin asked for Washington's protection.²²

Lieutenant Jean Goulet's mission was equally sobering. "May it please your Excellency to listen the crys [sic] of a poor Canadian refugee," he wrote to Washington, whom he deemed "the Father of Strangers." Goulet had stayed in Canada some time to settle his affairs after the Patriot retreat. He was then taken prisoner by the Tories, who burnt his commission, "insulting and abusing" him. Freeing himself, Goulet "determined to spend the remainder of [his] days in the service of the United States." But his trials had only begun. British troops plundered his house and harassed his family. He then made a number of trips to Canada with Clément Gosselin and Lieutenant Boileau "without having received for this [sic] two years and a half past a copper of pay." Goulet asked for protection and compensation.²³

21 In the original the brothers write of the *"crainte des torés"*; Clément and Louis Gosselin to Washington (*"A son Excellence"*), 23 November 1778, *Washington Papers*, RWS, vol. 18, *Founders Online*. The translation is the present author's.

22 Clément and Louis Gosselin, forwarded by Jacob Bayley, to Washington, 23 November 1778, with reports, *"Réponse des observations que nous devons faire [sic] en Canada"* and *"Nouvelles du Capt. Traversi,"* *Washington Papers*, RWS, vol. 18, *Founders Online*.

23 The letter is in English; a fellow soldier may have penned it on Goulet's behalf while they were stationed in Fishkill. See Jean Goulet to Washington, January 1781; on other missions to Canada and similarly claims for compensation, Jacob Bayley to Goulet, 19 October 1779; Antoine Lavalley [Lavallée], 28 April 1780; Bayley to Goulet, September 1780; Amable Boileau, signed 5 August 1780, indexed October 1780; A. Ferriol, October 1780; Clément Gosselin to Washington, January 1781, with report, *"Réponse des observation [sic] que jai [sic] fait en Canada par ordre de son Exelence [sic]"*; Pierre Cadieux to Marquis de LaFayette, 17 January 1781; Gosselin, 18 January 1781; Gosselin to Washington, 2 May 1781, with attachment, *"Etat des dépenses,"* all in *Washington Papers*, Series 4, General Correspondence, 1697–1799, Library of Congress [<https://www.loc.gov/collections/george-washington-papers/about-this-collection/>] (2017-02-20).

As these cases reveal, the Canadians sometimes sacrificed more than they wanted. The terrible winter of 1776–1777 along the Delaware River is an iconic case. But seldom during the war were the troops all at once properly clothed, shod, and fed. Such was the plight of the Continental Army.

In fact, a group of Maryland officers attached to Hazen's regiment requested leave to secure clothing from their state's governor. Washington assented, as "[u]nfortunately there [was] no money in the military chest" of the Continental Army. Because state-supported units were in better material straits, the Canadians of "Congress's Own" regiment were often the least provided for. Perhaps sensing an unfair situation, Hazen resisted the Marylanders' request. He advocated strongly on the Canadians' behalf. Though set apart by his rank, his cultural heritage, and the property he held in the nascent United States, he earned the confidence of his Canadian subordinates. He lobbied for their promotions and demanded proper and timely compensation for their services. Conversely, the expatriates defended Hazen against one Major Reid's unspecified allegations; they refused to serve with Reid until he publicly supported his claims. The matter still caused division in the ranks during the siege of Yorktown.²⁴

The "cause of liberty" did not erase or even conceal frustrations. In fact, Canadians' grievances show that they were not docile servants of the Revolution. When Jacques La Framboise deserted and went to Canada in 1777, he complained that the Patriots had imprisoned his family the prior year. Francis Monty's case shows that impressment remained a problem throughout the war. Upon returning from a mission in Canada in 1780, he found that two of his younger sons had been mustered in his absence. He prayed that "my children, may have it in their power to be free, and enjoy that liberty they have so gloriously contended for." Conflict could also be more overt: at the siege of Yorktown, John Dubee [Dubé] was sentenced to death for striking a lieutenant. Shortages and material desperation meanwhile led to theft. In 1782, two Canadian "spies" were arrested and executed in Albany. They were apparently part of the same band that had stolen from General Philip Schuyler's stores the previous year.²⁵

24 Canadian Second Regiment Officers [John Carlile *et al.*] to Washington, 16 September 1780; Washington, reply, 16 September 1780; Second Regiment Officers [James Reid *et al.*] to Washington, 20 September 1780; Second Regiment Officers [Clément Gosselin *et al.*] to William Heath, 3 March 1781; Second Regiment Officers [William Latterlee *et al.*] to James R. Reid, 6 October 1781; Second Regiment Officers [Moses Hazen *et al.*] to Washington, 29 May 1783, all in *Washington Papers*, General Correspondence, Library of Congress.

25 Martin, *Chazy and the Revolution*, 16; Francis Monty to Washington, 29 April 1780, *Washington Papers*, General Correspondence, Library of Congress; Washington, General

These officers and soldiers nevertheless understood that their fate was now profoundly connected to the success of the war. The most extreme example is undoubtedly Pierre Charlant who joined Ethan Allen's impetuous assault on Montreal in September 1775 and was captured. He spent much of the next year as a prisoner on British ships. He was taken to Plymouth, Cork, Madeira, Lisbon, and Charleston. At last, in Halifax, he broke free with other Canadians. When he reached his home in the fall of 1776, he "found all his goods plundered, his wife dead, and his children reduced to the mercy of charitable people." There Charlant stayed until 1780. The British then tricked him with fictitious letters and took him into custody. He was shot in the hand and abdomen in an attempt to flee. In May 1781, he escaped. Only three months before Yorktown, Charlant safely reached Albany. Evidently, these *Canadiens* gave as much to the revolutionary cause as Patriots in the Thirteen Colonies.²⁶

From Revolution to Redress

As major operations ended after Yorktown, Canadian Patriot soldiers pressed their claims for compensation with increasing insistence. Their case illustrates the "multiple and clashing visions pursued by the diverse American peoples of the continent," as Alan Taylor puts it. "[T]he revolutionary upheavals spawned new tensions and contradictions rather than neat resolutions."²⁷ Through pleas and petitions, Congress and Washington became acutely aware of Canadians' plight as refugees, but dire economic straits and the limits of congressional power prevented immediate resolution. On 14 July 1783, while awaiting news of the expected peace treaty, some officers and soldiers communicated with Washington directly. They felt

abandoned in general by those who have conducted them in the just cause they have been engaged in since 1775 ... in consequence of orders and promises as well from your Excellency as from the honorable Congress, that all the citizens of Canada who would join them should be protected and receive satisfaction for their trouble. In consequence of

Orders, 13 October 1781, early access document, *Founders Online*; "Worcester, May 30," *The Massachusetts Spy Or, American Oracle of Liberty*, 29 May 1782, 3.

26 "Recis [sic] abrégé des démarches et services rendu [sic], aux Etats de l'Amerique par Pierre Charlant," 9 July 1781, *Washington Papers*, General Correspondence, Library of Congress.

27 Taylor, *American Revolutions*, 8.

these promises the Canadian Refugees did not hesitate to do all in their power to gain the object it has pleased God to grant us.

Now, with victory at hand, they declared, “[w]e have only the glory of having assisted you.” There was no compensation, no assistance. They and their families lived like “beggars.” “Regarding you as our Father,” they declared, “we beg you to hearken to the plaintive voice of us poor strangers.”²⁸

Like Hazen, General Washington supported the refugees’ claims. But he could do little without Congress’s support. To state delegates assembled in New Jersey, he explained that he was

anxious for [the Canadians’] relief from the most distressing situation and finding myself without the means or the power of doing it ... These, with many others, are the Men, who as they will say, have left their Country, their friends, their substance, their all, in support of the Liberties of America; and have followed our Fortunes through the various scenes of a distressing contest, until they find it to have terminated in the happiest manner for all but themselves.

Washington added that the proposed treaty did not provide for these expatriates. He ventured possible means of compensation—Congress might support them through confiscated loyalist property or provide grants “from the [unallocated] lands in the interior parts of our territory.” Drawing attention to his “awkward situation,” the commander-in-chief’s frustration was palpable. “[W]ith little less else to do than to be teased [sic] with troublesome applications and fruitless demands which I have neither the means [n]or the power of satisfying,” he wrote, he would soon embark on northern tour that would take him to Ticonderoga and Crown Point. He would not be alone in travelling to the northern reaches of New York, in July 1783.²⁹

Washington’s pleas reveal that Congress had promises to keep but no means to fulfill them. As the superintendent of finance, Robert Morris, would soon declare to petitioning Canadian officers, “You *demand instant payment*. I have *no money to pay you with*.” But there was land. In the spring of 1784, New York

28 There was also a hint of cultural anxiety about their fate in the newly independent states; the petitioners noted that in New York they were “strangers unacquainted with the language.” See Continental Army Canadians to Washington, 14 July 1783, *Washington Papers*, General Correspondence, Library of Congress.

29 Washington to Congress, 16 July 1783, *Washington Papers*, General Correspondence, Library of Congress.

State acted on the refugees' claims and provided them a large tract in the northeastern part of the state. The settlement process along Lake Champlain had actually begun in that last summer before treaty ratification. On 26 July 1783, Lieutenant Benjamin Mooers, his cousin, and nine Canadian soldiers stocked a bateau in Poughkeepsie and sailed up the Hudson. Jean La Framboise, a relative of Jacques, joined them in Albany. The men braved the rapids near Saratoga and portaged to reach Lake George and Lake Champlain. The sight of Ticonderoga, seven years after the retreat from Canada, was surely a reminder of how little they had secured in that time. At last, on 11 August 1783, "the whole party, except La Frambois[e], who had gone on to visit his old place a few miles below, commenced work, and in ten days completed a log house and cleared a small patch of land for turnips." So began the permanent settlement of French-speaking Canadians south of the new international boundary, but the work of many summers would be needed to make the land ready to support families year round.³⁰

It is possible to overstate the generosity of governments even as the state made life on the frontier possible. Colonel Hazen had planned the excursions of 1783 and subsequent years as a quasi-colonial project. Having profited from the Champlain–Richelieu corridor as a landowner in the early 1770s, Hazen surely expected to reap similar benefits further south in the postwar years. But this private venture quickly became, as Congress and New York State responded to refugee claims, government-supported colonization. Apparent generosity was, after all, deeply entwined with the assertion of national interest. The affirmation of national sovereignty in areas dubiously claimed by Britain depended on the occupation of northern New York's wilderness. Refugee resettlement resolved a budgetary issue but also brought dedicated revolutionaries with military experience to a potentially explosive frontier.

³⁰ Mooers was Hazen's nephew. In the 1780s and 1790s he gained power of attorney from dozens of Canadians to represent them in claims for compensation; Robert Morris to Liebert, Selin, Gosselin, and Dionne, 23 January 1784, forwarded to Charles Thomson on 27 January *The Papers of Robert Morris 1781–1784, Vol. 9: January 1–October 30, 1784* (Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press, 1999), 59–63, 169–170; "An Act for granting certain lands promised to be given as bounty lands ... Passed the 11th of May, 1784," *Laws of the State of New York Passed at the Sessions of the Legislature ... Being the First Seven Sessions* (Albany: Weed, Parsons and Co., 1886), 731–36; Palmer, *History of Lake Champlain*, 141–42; Hurd, *History of Clinton and Franklin Counties*, 117; on Mooers' relationship to his uncle, Everest, *Moses Hazen and the Canadian Refugees*, 69, 70, 127, 134, 143; on the Canadians he represented, Kent-Delord Collection, 66.7e Box 6, Feinberg Library Special Collections, SUNY–Plattsburgh.

Even through the settlement process, Canadians in Albany, Fishkill, and New York City continued to appeal for financial compensation for expenses they personally defrayed in the course of service and for the depreciation of Continental paper money. They also awaited their pensions. Only days before the 1783 expedition to Lake Champlain, Colonel Hazen conducted an informal poll of his noncommissioned officers and privates. Over three hundred hoped to be furloughed as soon as they were "paid up as far as the other parts of the Army." A substantial minority, numbering over 160, continued to rely on military remuneration; they wished to remain in the ranks "until some further provisions may be made for them, not having friends or connections in these United States of America." Here were the Canadians.³¹

With Congress struggling to fulfill monetary pledges, government-issued rations sustained the Canadian veterans and their families through the difficult postwar years, while the able-bodied men prepared the shores of Champlain. Washington had been an advocate for them and justified the rations during the war. "The case of those Canadians who have attached themselves to our fortune is in general deplorable," he stated,

and both justice and humanity make it infinitely to be desired, it were in our power to make some better provision for persons, who have left their own country and involved themselves in every kind of distress in compliance with our invitations. There have been of late frequent representations to me of their sufferings; I am persuaded Congress will do every thing their means will permit for the relief of these unhappy people.

But civil authorities worried about the cost of rations. One member of Washington's staff complained of impropriety in food distribution: some Canadians apparently drew two or three rations excluding those allowed to their families. Still, public relief for the refugees continued, leading Henry Knox to comment in 1788 on this "great expence" imposed on the government.³²

The state of public finances may explain Congress's willingness to support the formal resettlement of refugees that began in July 1786—once in upstate New York, the families would be able to support themselves. In New York City,

31 Hazen to Washington, 11 June 1783, *Washington Papers*, General Correspondence, Library of Congress.

32 Washington to Congress, 1 November 1780; Charles Thompson, secretary, Extract from the minutes, 10 November 1780; and Benjamin Walker to Benjamin Lincoln, 10 March 1783, all in *Washington Papers*, General Correspondence, Library of Congress; "Extract from the Journals of Congress," *The Independent Gazetteer*, 28 October 1788, 3.

Udny Hay gave notice to his fellow exiles that “through the bounty of Congress, a vessel will be provided and ready to receive on board such of you as may be at this city on the 22d. of this month.” It would halt at West Point and Fishkill, and in Albany “proper carriages will be ready for the purpose of transporting yourselves and families, &c. to Lake-George, and from thence to the lands on Lake-Champlain, which this State has very generously been pleased to set apart for you.” The effort was premature. Captain Antoine Paulint explained in a letter to Congress that he wished to accept New York’s offer of land, but did not have the means to buy and transport implements and livestock, especially to support a large family like his. He asked for further relief.³³

In reality, many refused to venture to the New York frontier or, once there, soon left. A 1793 report noted that “two hundred and ninety-two men, women, and children, were victualled at Albany and Fishkill, from the public stores, in 1784.” Many more men were eligible for refugee lands. But a year after the relocation effort led by Hay, an enumerator found only 169 Canadian refugees, including women and children, on Lake Champlain. A great many soldiers chose to sell the claim to their plot and to settle in New York City or remain in Albany. Some, desperate for specie, sold their land certificates at a loss. There was no optimal survival strategy, but there were options.³⁴

Settling and Securing the Northern Frontier

Additional challenges awaited those who braved frontier life. The Refugee Tract had yet to be fully surveyed and apportioned. Some families had to mortgage half of their lands to pay for the survey of the other half. Even as squatters, the refugees were forced to cultivate “truly deplorable” land. In the spring of 1787, having “no where else to go (under God) but to the honorable Congress,” all settlers who had removed to northern Lake Champlain signed a petition drafted by Major Laurent Olivier and Major Clément Gosselin

33 Benjamin Mooers managed Hazen’s affairs when a stroke prevented the latter from providing active leadership in the resettlement. See Hay, “To the Canadian Refugees,” *Loudon’s New-York Packet*, 10 July 1786, 3, and *The Pennsylvania Packet, and Daily Advertiser*, 14 July 1786, 3; Report on Paulint, 13 April 1786, *Journals of the Continental Congress*.

34 “Refugees from Canada and Nova Scotia,” 19 February 1793, 2nd Congress, 2nd session, no. 13, 28, from *American State Papers* 28, Public Lands Vol. 1 (1793); “To the honorable Congress [...]” with attachment, *Papers of the Continental Congress*, Petitions Addressed to Congress, 1775–89, C to E (vol. 2), 226 [<https://www.fold3.com/image/436173>] (2017-02-23); Everest, *Moses Hazen and the Canadian Refugees*, 113, 122, 144–47; Saint-Pierre, “Les Canadiens et la guerre de l’Indépendance,” 211.

indicating that they were determined to stay, but needed further provisions. Still struggling financially, Congress reauthorized rations, which now had to be transported much farther. In the fall of 1787, these were extended for another year but limited to the aged and infirm. Thus, the young country's authorities again recognized and sought to honor their debt to those who had fought in its independence.³⁵

The refugee experience did not suddenly end with relocation. The refugees still felt the weight of past sacrifices; there was no romance in these "pioneer days." The work of many summers was necessary to prepare the land for hungry families. Two full years passed before the settlers had horses and livestock. Thereafter, they continued to fish and hunt. The bateau served as the only means of breaking the region's isolation, for road construction required manpower and money that did not exist. The settlers sat on a great hydrographic artery linking Montreal and New York City, but a decade elapsed before it yielded any benefit. Until then, the refugees' existence was one of log cabins, subsistence farming, and meager living.³⁶

On the basis of past commitments, pressures on authorities continued. Men like Pierre (now Peter) Charlant, Clément Gosselin, and Francis Monty had suffered injuries in war and relied on the help of family and friends. In September 1789, Gosselin went further. He wrote to President Washington to convey his "poor and sad situation." Every year he was sick, he explained. Now, unable to pay for his patent, he pleaded for help from his former commander. His wish was only "that I may be left to end my days in peace, what remains of a miserable life, that I have dragged since I was wounded at Yorktown." He also complained of the outpost at Point au Fer, near present-day Coopersville, which remained in British hands although it was south of the forty-fifth parallel.³⁷

35 Congress may have felt honor-bound not only by virtue of Canadians' service; on the other side of the line, the British were similarly supporting exiled Loyalists; "To the honorable Congress [...]," with attachment, *Papers of the Continental Congress*; "Extracts from the Journals of Congress," *The Massachusetts Gazette*, 22 August 1786, 4; "Extract from the Journals of Congress," *The Independent Gazetteer*, 28 October 1788, 3; and Henry Knox, letter, 22 September 1787; Report of Board of Treasury on Canadian Refugees, 2 October 1787; Resolution, 12 October 1787, all in *Journals of the Continental Congress*.

36 Everest, *Moses Hazen and the Canadian Refugees*, 132, 144; Palmer, *History of Lake Champlain*, 151–152; Hurd, *History of Clinton and Franklin Counties*, 258, 260–261.

37 Tellingly, six years after the peace treaty, Clément Gosselin still referred to the British troops at Point au Fer as "the enemy." See "Recis [sic] abrégé des démarches et services rendu [sic]"; Sypher, "Francis Monty," *Biographies of Original Members*, 328–29; Gosselin to Washington, 18 September 1789, *Washington Papers*, Presidential Series, vol. 5, *Founders Online*.

State power was called upon in this regard, too. An international dispute concerning the location of the United States' northern border persisted after 1783. British forces retained forts south of the new border. Their garrisons at Point au Fer and on the island of North Hero harassed American settlers. In 1790, a British officer visited local farms and demanded that the settlers stop improving their land and prepare for departure. Judge Pliny Moore resented this assault on the United States' national honor. He asked New York Governor George Clinton, "[M]ay we not expect and depend on the protection in the enjoyment of our property from the Government [sic] to which we are subject, or are we to submit to the repeated incroachments of British Government [sic]?" He added that there were no overland roads and no available watercraft by which to evacuate, should the British press the threat further. The British remained on Lake Champlain until Jay's Treaty, ratified in 1795, called for *their* evacuation.³⁸

These forms of government intervention—the allowance of land and surveys organized by the New York legislature; rations and means of transportation provided by Congress; the establishment of a local militia and a customs office; and the signing of Jay's Treaty—lowered the considerable odds against the settlers. But these factors also concealed the trauma and mental scars inherited from the war, now exacerbated by lack of certainty and continuing poverty. Judith Pepin, the wife of an improvident veteran and mother of fourteen children, was the victim of spousal abuse and constantly feared that she would be left to her own devices. Eccentric innkeeper Francis Chandonnet "taught his children to swear like pirates till they were eight years old," one historian notes, "and then told them they had arrived to the years of understanding and must stop the use of profane language, or he would use the whip, which he did freely." For his part, in or about 1792, Jacques Rouse visited Peter Janqueray, sword in hand, and alleged that Janqueray had called him a coward. He prefaced his threats by asserting that he was "full of grief that, so few *Frenchmen* as we are here, we cannot live in concord together."³⁹

38 Loyalists had begun to settle just over the line on Missisquoi Bay. In fact, as early as 1783, Mooers witnessed Loyalists traveling on the lake to the safety of Canadian territory. See "The Western Army," *Political Gazette*, 2 February 1796, 163; George Clinton to Washington, 21 May 1790, *Washington Papers*, Presidential Series, vol. 5, *Founders Online*; Martin, *Chazy and the Revolution*, 18–19.

39 The conflict between Rouse and Janqueray seems to have continued at least to 1794. See Judhit [sic] Pepin to Pliny Moore, 13 April 1791, cited in *The Moorsfield Antiquarian* 1, no. 2 (1938): 254–255; Hurd, *History of Clinton and Franklin Counties*, 284; "Peter Dubree & Peter Janqueray *ads.* Jacques Rouse," *The Moorsfield Antiquarian* 1, no. 2 (1937): 129–134.

Insecurity, personal interest, and petty squabbles conspired to raise social tensions. In 1790, former army chaplain Pierre Huet de La Valinière, who had taken residence at Chazy, complained that he had helped to feed the La Framboise family for months the prior spring, when food had run out. The priest explained to Judge Moore that La Framboise refused to compensate him. By then La Valinière had built a chapel, but his presence was disagreeable. When Clément Gosselin married one of the Monty girls that very fall, justice of the peace Murdoch McPherson—not the prelate—formalized the union. La Valinière criticized McPherson as an associate of La Framboise and Gosselin, to which Judge Moore responded that McPherson was “far from being in any shape the fomentor of discord or a supporter of robbers.” Still, either personally or as a justice of the peace, McPherson could not restrain passions. A fire destroyed the chapel soon thereafter and suspicion fell on some of the refugees. That neither Congress nor the State of New York could do more to ensure the economic well-being, security, and order of the new settlements attests to the discrepancy between state power and the lofty pledges of the early Revolution.⁴⁰

As a result, settlers continued to leave. Gosselin returned to Canada around 1791. John B. Joyal and Udny Hay quickly moved to Vermont. When he petitioned for an invalid’s pension in Boston, in 1792, Peter Charlant was no long a resident of the United States. “[D]iscouraged at the delays and inattention of Congress to redress his claims, and unable to prosecute it further, and to subsist alone,” Charlant sought the support of his family in Canada, though he could not recover property lost as a result of the war. Pierre Ayotte, whom a British report had labeled “one of the most infamous rebels in this province,” found himself in similar circumstances. Ayotte appealed repeatedly to Congress for compensation in the 1780s. “[A]fter he ceased to draw rations for himself and his family,” it was later noted, he “was left in a destitute situation, and was obliged to return to the frontier of Canada, where he relocated and died in 1814.”⁴¹

40 Pierre Huet de La Valinière to Moore, 31 October 1790, Moore to La Valinière, 6 November 1790, La Valinière to Moore, 21 November 1790, all cited in *The Moorsfield Antiquarian* 1, no. 4 (1938): 242–251; John Talbot Smith, *A History of the Diocese of Ogdensburg* (New York City: John W. Lowell Co., 1885), 32–33; Sullivan and Martin, *History of the Town of Chazy*, 39–42.

41 A different claim to Congress states that Ayotte died in Champlain, New York, “poor and destitute.” Numerous claims submitted by Canadians appear in the *War Department Papers*; Committee on Revolutionary Claims, House Report no. 165, (34th Cong., 3rd session), 30 January 1857; *Orderly Book of the Northern Army, at Ticonderoga and Mt. Independence* [...] (Albany: J. Munsell, 1859), 205; Committee on Revolutionary Claims, House Report no. 330, (34th Cong., 1st session), 8 August 1856; Gabriel, *Quebec During the American Invasion*,

Remarkably, amid economic woes, departures, and British intimidation, the refugee settlement survived. The census returns of 1790 and 1800 and the occasional travel account attested to the distinctively French-Canadian character of the Chazy and Rouse's Point areas, though "Yankees" and "Yorkers" were quickly joining these revolutionaries. Canadians even held positions of public authority: Rouse was a militia captain, Clément Gosselin led the county's grand jury, and Lewis Lizotte served as a constable.⁴² Cultural survivals resulted from proximity to French Canadians and Catholic institutions just over the border. Material benefits appeared as well: as trade along the Champlain-Richelieu axis revived following Jay's Treaty, the potential that Hazen had gleaned was substantiated. Only then did the resettlement of the refugees appear as a beneficent and profitable venture.⁴³

113; Joseph Howell, Jr., to Richard H. Lee, with notes, 5 January 1785, *War Department Papers*; Knox, report on the "Memorial and Narration of Pierre Ayotte," 12 September 1785, *Journals of the Continental Congress*; Report of the Court of Claims, House of Representatives, C.C. Report no. 92, (35th Cong., 1st session), 15 December 1857; Committee on Revolutionary Claims, House Report no. 36, (36th Cong., 1st session), 2 March 1860.

42 Everest finds "126 men, women, and children of apparent French extraction" in Champlain in 1790. The census of 1800 has French names not found in the prior one; the population of Canadian extraction grew by drawing countrymen from other settlements, including some who had momentarily left the United States; First Census of the United States, 1790, microfilm publication M637, and Second Census of the United States, 1800, microfilm publication M32, both in Records of the Bureau of the Census, Record Group 29, NARA, accessed on Ancestry.com (2016-06-20); Taylor, *Shores of Champlain*, 13–17; Saint-Pierre, "Les Canadiens et la guerre de l'Indépendance," 212; Everest, *Moses Hazen and the Canadian Refugees*, 132–33. Clinton County and the Town of Champlain, which then included Chazy, were both organized in 1788. See Palmer, *History of Lake Champlain*, 140.

43 Smuggling under the embargos of 1807 and 1809 highlighted the benefits of trade with Canada, especially in lumber and potash. A contemporary found that people living near the border could not "be persuaded that Albany is a better market [than Canada]; – or that political restraints on a trade so clearly indicated by circumstances of a permanent nature, can make it treasonable, or in any way criminal, to continue it on the footing of a reciprocity of private interests." Rouse's tavern drew "adventurers in the unlawful trade, for whom it was a rendezvous"; DeMarce, *Notebook: French-Canadian Settlement in the Champlain Islands, Grande Isle County, Vermont Before the Year 1880* (Arlington: s.p., 1985); on the border's porousness, Everest, *War of 1812 in the Champlain Valley*, 10; H. Nicholas Muller III, "A 'Traitorous and Diabolical Traffic': The Commerce of the Champlain-Richelieu Corridor During the War of 1812," *Vermont History* 44, no. 2 (1976): 78–96, and "Jay's Treaty: The Transformation of Lake Champlain Commerce," *Vermont History* 80, no. 1 (2012): 33–56; Taylor, *Shores of Champlain*, 15–17; Horatio Gates Spafford, *A Gazetteer of the State of New-York* (Albany: H. C. Southwick, 1813), 157.

Conclusion

The financial expectations tied to revolutionary service were not laid to rest with the growing fortunes of the country in the first decades of independence. In 1852, the Senate Committee on Revolutionary Claims reported that “[t]he men who held the destiny of this nation in their hands have now nearly all passed away; yet there remains upon the journals of Congress an unredeemed pledge to them, of the national faith!” The committee was thus responding to a petition submitted by the heirs of Benjamin Mooers, an early leading figure of Clinton County. Though the specific pledge was a 1780 act that granted officers half-pay for life, the committee’s statement echoed a lingering sense of unfulfilled promises that haunted the veterans and their heirs. This was especially true among descendants of the refugees.⁴⁴

Canadiens on both sides of the border followed the Mooers family’s efforts to gain compensation for services rendered three generations earlier. The petitioners found a new ally in Calvin Averill, an attorney, postmaster, and businessman residing in Rouse’s Point. He came to know the old veterans and their children and, decades later, he made their cause his own.⁴⁵ In the 1850s, Averill navigated a complex record of enactments concerning veteran compensation, some expired or repeatedly amended, some targeting specific groups like officers, invalids, and widows. The claimants and their attorney were hindered by a sometimes-thin paper trail and the loss of records. Averill corresponded with various federal and state offices, sought the help of Canadian notaries, and personally represented his clients in Washington, D.C.⁴⁶ His work was aided by John Monty, who, as a child, had been a musician in a company that included

44 Committee on Revolutionary Claims, Senate Report no. 164, (32nd Cong., 1st session), 5 April 1852. For more on compensation bills, John P. Resch, “Politics and Public Culture: The Revolutionary War Pension Act of 1818,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 8, no. 2 (1988): 139–158, and Emily J. Teipe, *America’s First Veterans and the Revolutionary War Pensions* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2002).

45 Averill assailed Mooers, who had become a commissioner of the Treasury Department for pensions in 1828, for rejecting numerous claims. He complained to the Treasury that the old officer was defrauding Canadians. Mooers responded that Averill had “a pecuniary interest in processing as many claims as possible,” as Everest puts it; Taylor, *Shores of Champlain*, 20, 32, 37; Everest, *Moses Hazen and the Canadian Refugees*, 134–136, 140–141.

46 Averill’s presence in Washington is ascertained by the Committee on Revolutionary Claims, House Report no. 32 (36th Cong., 1st session), 1 March 1860. See also Passport Applications, 1795–1905, microfilm roll 62, 2 May 1857 to 28 May 1857, NARA, accessed on Ancestry.com (2016-06-28).

his father, Francis, and five brothers. Now, as a living link to the war, he testified in support of the heirs of numerous soldiers whom he had personally known.⁴⁷

The Civil War quickly overshadowed the trials of refugees in the War of Independence as well as the early financial trials of nationhood that followed the Republic for generations. In 1860, John Monty died and, with him, the direct connection to the refugee experience. While the U.S. Court of Claims reported on Jacques Charlant's petition, Congress debated the prospect of a broken Union. One last time, the refugees' heirs put their narrative on the public record. Their distinct historical experience and struggles in upstate New York faded from view, perhaps on account of later interethnic resentments or the refugees' uncomfortable place in national narratives. For more than a century, only a few old and unusual toponyms along the lake and certain families' oral traditions acknowledged them.

Yet there is ample reason to remember the struggles of the first Franco-Americans and Congress's management of this Early American refugee crisis. As Serena Zabin explains, "[a] dark history can become even more heartrending when told through the individual lives of those who experienced it. And sometimes we can also be reminded of the ripple effects that small personal choices have on future events."⁴⁸ Zabin's words are especially suited to the expatriated Canadians. Though the soldiers never numbered more than three hundred in assessments, they and their families illustrated what was *and was not* achievable for the white populations of the Revolutionary War's "winning coalition." They proved a substantial burden and challenge for the nascent United States' civil and military authorities. Congress's willingness to support the refugees was guided by national interest. The resettled population might secure the frontier at a time when the Confederation had no means to do so, for instance. But American leaders were also responding to the new national duties acquired through independence. While Britain lent its support to the Loyalists, Canadian Patriots offered U.S. leaders an opportunity to assert the

47 A Court of Claims report stated that Monty "is a general witness to prove the claims of some half a dozen officers. This witness is represented to be extremely old ... The only remark the deputy solicitor makes is as to the utter uncertainty of the memory of man as to services performed by another more than seventy years ago"; Committee on Revolutionary Claims, House Reports nos. 444 and 446, (35th Cong., 1st session), 29 May 1858, and House Reports nos. 34 and 38, (36th Cong., 1st session), 2 March 1860; Report of the Court of Claims, Senate, Misc. Doc. 119, (35th Cong., 1st session), received 10 December 1857. See, for Monty's claims, Committee on Revolutionary Claims, House Report no. 135, (34th Cong., 3rd session), 24 January 1857, and House Report no. 340, (36th Cong., 1st session), 6 April 1860.

48 Zabin, "Conclusion: Writing To and From the Revolution," 755.