Temperance campaigning and alcohol consumption: a case study from pre-confederation Canada

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Today's large and powerful antismoking lobby has perhaps unconsciously absorbed a lesson from an earlier generation of prohibitionists. It seems advisable to curb the "vice" through education, taxation, and various restrictions that fall short of absolute prohibition. This forestalls the corruption and crime that attend banishment of a highly desired, widely used substance. Despite the health hazards and medical expense of nicotine, criminalization has been resisted. The milder approach might be said to be effective, having caused as much as a 20% decline in smoking in Canada during a recent five-year period without resort to prohibition.

For the anti-alcohol campaigners of an earlier generation, the stakes were higher than mere physical health. They saw temperance as a means not only to personal health but also to domestic peace, social harmony and prosperity, progress, and eternal salvation. Some even claimed sobriety would usher in the millennium. It is hardly surprising that they made absolute demands on the state to legislate this paradise. However, it will be contended here that their earlier and milder nonprohibitory assault deserved more credit than they gave it and, like present-day antismoking campaigns, was at times quite effective.

Inspired by the American movement, temperance spread rapidly after 1827 on a wave of religious revivalism through Britain's colonies that lay between the Atlantic seaboard and Lake Superior. Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian and Congregational evangelists, later joined by Catholic priests, used persuasion to win voluntary pledges of temperance or total abstinence. Starting somewhat later than in the United States, temperance in Britain's provinces was only two decades old when adjacent American states began agitating for prohibition in the 1840s. The leadership had decided that voluntary campaigns were a failure. Northern neighbors followed their lead: the Province of Canada (which included Upper and Lower Canada) very nearly passed a prohibition bill in the 1850s, and New Brunswick experienced a brief, tumultuous enactment. Movement dogma quickly hardened around the position that nothing short of a complete ban on the importation, manufacture and sale of beverage alcohol could rout so insidious an enemy.

Historians, schooled in the perils of prohibition, do not generally admire the measure. There are few who echo the interesting claim of Prairie historian James Gray that prohibition brought in an unprecedented era of social tranquility and a substantial decline in criminal behavior.[1] Nonetheless *something* needed to be done. Historians generally accept the weight of evidence that 19th-century North American drink-

ing habits were excessive and baneful, and needed reform. While eschewing the prohibition solution, scholars have remained uncertain about the efficacy of the softer approach, the "moral suasion" of the movement's initial decades. Given the sketchiness of the early-19th-century data, historians have been wary of claiming any real victory for the suasionists.

There have been some inconclusive attempts to chart 19th-century consumption. W. J. Rorabaugh has produced a bold chart of early U.S. consumption that shows a sharp and permanent drop, at least partly in response to temperance agitation, after 1830. Although Ian Tyrrell's influential 1979 book *Sobering Up* subsequently argued that declining U.S. drinking in the first half of the 19th century was offset by post-1850 increases, Jack Blocker's recent survey of the American temperance movement tends to support the Rorabaugh thesis of a real and lasting decline. It is hoped that a large project recently undertaken to chart historical alcohol consumption in the United States will eventually settle the question.[2] Any similar attempt to measure alcohol consumption in pre-Confederation Canada may founder because of the large unpatrolled border in the fur trade West, across which vast but unmeasurable quantities of whiskey were transported after the Hudson's Bay Company monopoly broke down in the 1840s. In the east, Upper Canada, with a population that more than quadrupled between 1831 and 1851, also presents serious problems of measurement. Heavy immigration brought continual waves of the unconverted, exhausting temperance workers at the time as well as denying present-day researchers a stable base for study. The two most detailed assessments of consumption in Upper Canada conclude that drinking did decline over time; however, they do not make any careful attempt to match declines with specific temperance campaigns, and their figures are discrepant, necessarily relying on guesswork about such issues as the proportion of non-drinkers in the very young population of 1850 and the strength of early homemade whiskey versus later factory products.[3] As for the Maritime provinces, historians who have

examined the statistics in any depth have been very cautious, speculating that economic downturn may have accounted for declining use, or that a turn to domestic spirits or beer may have offset the sharp drop in imported rum after 1830.[4] The question needs to be explored in local or regional studies that allow careful scrutiny of the variables.

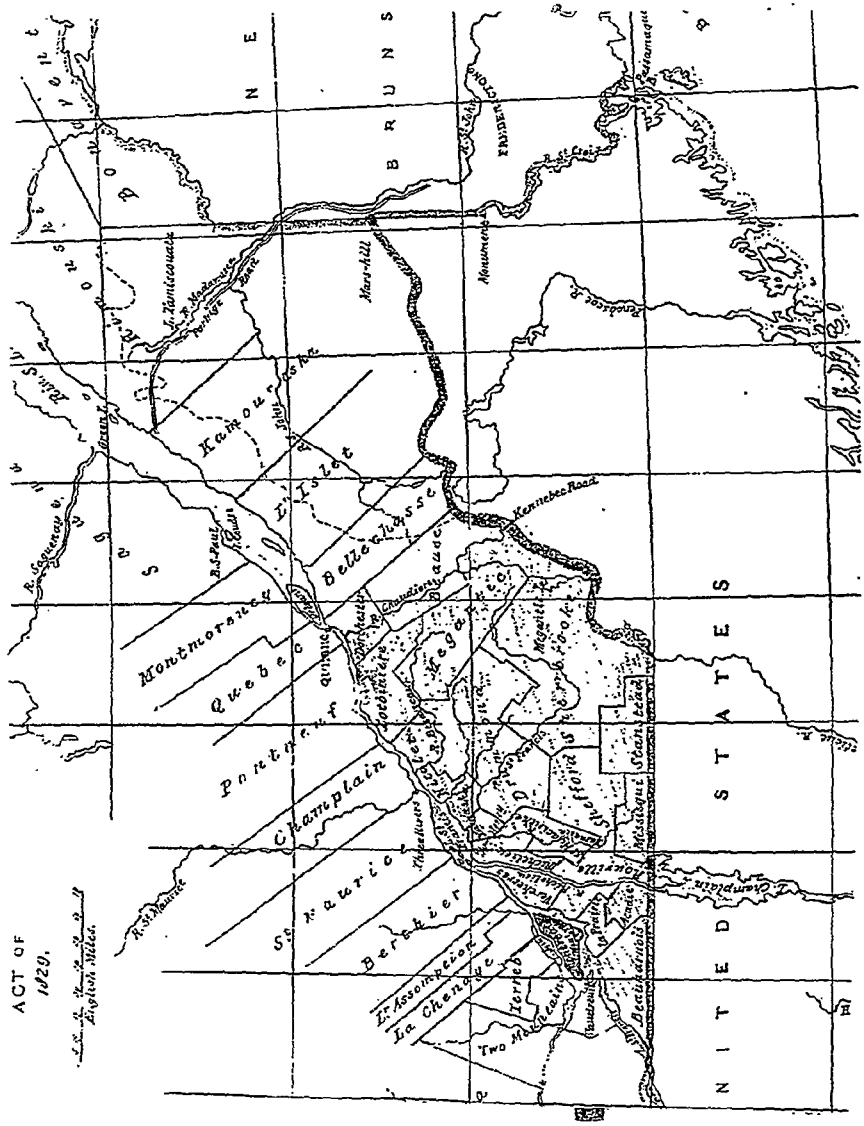
Researching various regions of British North America for my new book, *Canada Dry: Temperance Crusades Before Confederation*,[5] uncovered a region that provides strong evidence that voluntary temperance crusades could be quite effective. It should be noted that this population that decisively changed its habits was a rural one. By the middle of the 19th century a clear and not unfamiliar pattern had begun to emerge in British North America: although temperance campaigns often began in cities, urban reforms were shortlived. This had many economic causes, which include concentration of liquor production and merchandising in the cities, and social factors such as transience and anonymity, greater class and religious diversity, and the continual influx of British immigrants with their "fondness for the old country usages." Noted by Parliamentary committees at midcentury, this phenomenon remained in evidence in the early 20th century, when, for example, a study of Quebec drinking patterns concluded that while "rural Quebec was and is, aridly dry, the City of Montreal was, and is . . . sopping wet."[6] Widespread rural reform in the populous regions of British North America in the mid-19th century, when some 80% of the population lived in the country, does, however, represent a very significant change of heart.

Temperance crusades did not occur in a vacuum, and economic factors were also, of course, at work. Better facilities for transport, the growth of grain markets, and the perceived need for a sober workforce clearly contributed to the movement's popularity. Certainly rural temperance was all part of a larger trend toward more specialized agriculture, more efficient work practices, and larger, urban distilleries. While

broader changes worked in tandem with temperance campaigns to promote sobriety, contemporary accounts suggest that crusading was sometimes the horse that pulled the cart. It provided, at the least, the immediate occasion for eliminating local distilleries and changing personal habits. The fierce resistance reported by the first generation of temperance advocates—ridicule, rocks thrown at meetings, charges of sedition, as well as dismissal from regiments, jobs, and church congregations—also suggests that these crusaders were catalysts of change rather than passive beneficiaries of it. The complex amalgam of economics and evangelism that prepared the ground for the strong temperance movement of pre-Confederation times has been discussed elsewhere[7] and is not our subject here. It can be said, though, that temperance tended to flourish where there was some conjunction of religious revival and economic opportunity—most typically a certain level of commercial development (urban or rural) and a prevalence of small propertyholders rather than a landless proletariat. Here we address a somewhat narrower question, but one that is vital to any assessment of the temperance movement: Could exposure to temperance ideology influence hearts and minds to the extent of causing real change in drinking customs?

The case study here relates to the hinterland lying on the south shore of the St. Lawrence, across the river from Montreal. This region, which we shall call Southwestern Lower Canada, is bounded by the Chaudière River on the east and Lake St. Francis on the west. This ethnically diverse area included the French parishes of the south shore as well as the eastern townships, which in the first half of the 19th century were populated by longtime settlers of American stock and a trickle of more recent British immigrants. It possessed neither major ports nor sufficiently fertile land to attract heavy overseas immigration, and it did not become a major destination for land-poor French Canadian migrants until after midcentury. It was part of a province whose population (despite French Canada's proverbially large families) grew sluggishly

Southwestern Lower Canada, Act of 1829



in comparison with Upper Canada's, expanding between 1831 and 1851 by a mere 70% in comparison with the 415% rate of the Upper province.

Apart from its stability, the area's suitability derives from its temperance fervor, which equaled or surpassed that of Upper Canada and the Atlantic region. Indeed this was a "burnt-over district" for temperance revivals, well traveled by both Protestant and Catholic evangelists from Montreal as well as a number of indigenous enthusiasts. Southwestern Lower Canada produced the first known British North American temperance society, founded at Russelltown in the Beauharnois region in 1822. This county also supplied one of Canada's first teetotalers and its first teetotal member of Parliament, a friendly Presbyterian entrepreneur named Jacob DeWitt. The earliest temperance societies in the area were founded in the 1830s by ministers or devout laypeople on the basis of abstention from spirits or very moderate use of them, while wine, ale and cider were initially permitted.

The campaign escalated in the 1840s. Discouraged by backsliding and following a North American trend, the men and women of the dynamic Montreal Temperance Society began in 1841 to send out agents on horseback across the Province of Canada to preach total abstinence from all that could intoxicate. Winning several thousand converts in their first circuits of southwestern Lower Canada in 1841–42, they established a network of nondenominational societies.[8] To reinforce the message and coordinate efforts, the Montreal society's eloquent *Canada Temperance Advocate* was widely sold and was distributed free to all teachers, preachers and Members of Parliament. Some local societies caught fire and sent agents to convert neighboring communities. By the summer of 1842, a Montreal agent reported from Stanstead that two large societies in the township had enrolled nearly all potential supporters in the villages and that "the *highways and hedges* were all that were left for me to visit, and in some places, many of the names were already enroled [sic] in some

society, leaving little for me but the mere gleanings."[9] A Catholic religious revival in those same years led to the formation of societies in the region's French parishes, culminating in the 1848–50 temperance crusade of Father Charles Chiniquy in which whole parishes, on a wave of Catholic nationalism, took the abstinence pledge. In those same years the Rechabite and Sons of Temperance brotherhoods increased the numbers and "respectability" of supporters in the anglophone communities, forming jolly men's clubs with secret passwords, parades, and witty speeches, as well as insurance that was to be forfeited by the member if he fell off the wagon. Apparently all this activity had an effect on attitudes; by 1849 a number of parishes and municipal councils in the region were refusing to grant any tavern licenses whatsoever within their boundaries.

The movement was timely, for drinking was a serious problem in Lower Canada. In 1762, two years after France had surrendered the colony to Britain, British Governor James Murray reported the newly conquered population to be a sober one; but things had begun to change with the influx of very cheap rum directly from the British West Indies and also via New England. By 1772 an official reported that many of the French Canadians "begin to be dram Drinkers since the great inundations of a poisonous firey stuff from New England, called rum, which sells cheap because it pays no duties."[10, 11] In the early 19th century, increased local production and a new steam process caused prices to drop even lower.[12] Production of local whiskey increased rapidly in the 1820s. In the Montreal district alone, the number of distilleries climbed from 26 to 56 in the space of four years,[13] concentrated particularly in the south shore region under consideration here.

Growing supply met growing demand. British traders discovered spirits to be one of the few trade items whose consumption the relatively self-sufficient habitants were willing to

increase. By the 1790s travelers were reporting that the people had become heavy drinkers, and Loyalist settlers at Sorel on the south shore reported that a glass of rum and a crust of bread was the usual French Canadian breakfast. The bitter climate encouraged increasing use of these cheap spirits; outdoor laborers, carters and farmers were reported to consider liquor a necessary on-the-job warmer and stimulant.[14] Reveling became the recreation of choice among not only common folk but seigneurial families too.[15] Liquor came to be considered necessary even to a nursing mother's flow of milk, a vital tonic and cure-all for the whole family. In 1807 *Le Canadien* confirmed that the taste for spirits "est fortement repandue en ce pays";[16] ten years later it was reported that in the countryside unlicensed vendors had recently become so bold as to sell outside the church doors on Sundays. According to both clerical and lay observers, excess reached its height in many parishes in the 1830s, just as the temperance movement was beginning to spread.[17]

Reliance on alcohol was also strong in the more isolated settlements in the townships and border seigneuries that had attracted American settlers from the late 18th century. In a pattern not infrequently seen in "frontier" communities,[18] expensive transport militated against shipping produce or grain. If crops were distilled, however, shipping the more valuable manufactured product repaid carrying costs. B. F. Hubbard's 1874 *Forests and Clearings: The History of Stanstead County* recounts that for many years potatoes were the principal crop, yielding some 175 bushels per acre. Manufactured into whiskey, each bushel yielded about a gallon, worth nearly half a dollar.[19] At the height of production Stanstead Plain alone had 26 distilleries producing some 3,000 gallons annually:

> A considerable part . . . was disposed of at Montreal and other markets, but the amount consumed at home told fearfully upon the prosperity of the settlement. The Temperance Reformation of subsequent years changed the aspect of this traffic, but not before

many of the early settlers had become habitually intemperate, some of whom found the drunkard's grave, and others were stripped of their property and compelled to leave the country.[20]

A Compton County historian recalled that "a very popular drink in those days was potato whiskey, which was nearly as free as water and looked upon as a nourishing drink."[21] An account of early English-speaking settlers in the Huntingdon, Chateauguay and Beauharnois region speaks of hard drinking as universal.[22] Like the French Canadians in the neighboring counties, the Anglo-American settlers found rum and potato whiskey all too accessible:

The cheapness of whisky removed the chief check on its use, and for what a bottle cost in Scotland or Ireland, the settler could buy a couple of gallons. It was used habitually. . . . Were it not that it would give pain to their descendants, a harrowing catalogue could be given of those who met their death in accidents while drunk. . . .[23]

A settler at Shipton recalled early-19th-century days when the men and boys of the neighborhood gathered in the evenings at the distilleries for "songs, jests and revelry . . . the worst effects . . . [flowed from ever present whisky at] the bar, the store and private dwellings. How many expended the value of a good farm in this way in a few years!"[24]

Another damaging custom was the use of liquor on worksites. Liquid "payment" of workers at the frequent pioneer "bees" was customary in the first decades of the century and often led to brawling and accidents. Pioneer accounts from south-western Lower Canada record unsober preachers and teachers as well. Indeed, the unsteady professionals reeling through the border village of Russelltown motivated Mrs. John Forbes to persist, despite local derision, in founding in 1822 the first known British North American temperance society.[25] The message took longer to reach the St. Lawrence, where several steamboat accidents in the 1840s were attributed to intoxicated crews. Drunken riots accompanied construction of the

St. Lawrence and Atlantic Railroad near Sherbrooke as late as 1851, when temporary illegal taverns sprang up along the line.[26]

The pioneer accounts make it clear that by the 1870s, south shore inhabitants were looking back upon the century's opening decades as an antediluvian age. Hubbard's 1874 book credits the "Temperance Reformation" (a term commonly used in the 1840s) with changing the alcoholic blight on Stanstead's prosperity and seems to find it peculiar that respectable people once drank:

> In those days of "temperate drinking" [before total abstinence became movement dogma in the 1840s] almost everyone, high or low, rich or poor, indulged in those beverages; and the account books of the merchants shewed frequent instances of long columns of charges of rum, brandy, gin, whiskey . . . against individuals in good standing and of high respectability.[27]

Robert Sellar's 1888 account of Chateauguay and Beauharnois is more explicit about the change:

> Considering the universality of the drinking-custom among the early settlers, it is most remarkable that its hold should be so slight among their descendants. Then not a house was to be found without its jar; now it is the exception to find a house with one. Then no bee or social gathering could take place without the circling jug; now, it would be an insult to offer it.[28]

In a similar vein, 1896 Compton County historian L. S. Channell noted that Bishop Charles Stewart had visited the region around 1815 and expressed hope that the alcoholic cider produced there would replace the ubiquitous potato whiskey. Channell commented, "If Bishop Stewart could have lived to the present day, when cider is tabooed far more than potato whiskey was in those days, while the latter is not known of, he would be hardly able to realize the change that has taken place."[29]

When did this dramatic change take place? Accounts of the temperance movement suggest it had a major impact. A number of local and denominational societies sprang up in the 1830s. They proliferated, appearing in virtually every township and village, during the major upsurge of organized campaigning emanating from Montreal in the 1840s. A number of the new societies reported that they were having a substantial effect on local drinking practices.[30] Father Chiniquy overshadowed earlier efforts when he administered the pledge to over 12,000 people in the south shore parishes of Longueuil, Varennes, Boucherville, and Chambly in the spring of 1848.[31] Drawn by his promise that sobriety would ensure French Canadian survival on a more progressive anglophone continent, converts emptied their liquor jugs onto woodpiles and lit huge bonfires to celebrate their deliverance. Tavernkeepers shipped unwanted puncheons back to Montreal.[32]

Just after this wave of campaigning in the 1840s, a temperance supporter in Compton summarized in 1851 the changes he had witnessed in his lifetime. He reported much liquor still being sold in his village, but added:

> In our rememberance, alcohol made far more devastation, both with respect to the number and respectability of its victims; for both Captains and Esquires in days of yore, so indulged in this vice, that they not only squandered their properties, but became public nuisances . . . . Their distracted wives, and half-naked and starved children . . . would shun his [sic] presence, and the very dog seek a safe retreat from the rude usuage [sic] of their beastly master. There may be instances still of the kind . . . but . . . they are comparatively rare; and the distilleries that used to be so thickly scattered over the country, are now few and far between.[33]

Later in the same decade, Edward Cleveland's history of Shipton contrasted the first settlers' heavy use of alcohol and ensuing "loss of time, bad bargains, carelessness in business, and losses thus occasioned" with "the light shed . . . now by the temperance reformation . . . it is a matter of congratulation that not a distillery is in operation in the township, and

that so few of our stores retail the poison, and that our private dwellings are generally free of it."[34]

Taken together, various statistical measurements provide confirmation of the settlers' perceptions that distilleries closed and drinking declined during those first decades of widespread temperance fervor between 1830 and 1850. Although in 1832 British Army surveyor Joseph Bouchette recorded that Lower Canadian distilleries were concentrated in the townships, census figures indicate that 20 years later almost all of these were closed.[35] The decline of these distilleries does, of course, owe something to the general pattern of centralization in large towns as roads improved and it became feasible to ship potatoes and grain rather than distilling them locally, but it is doubtful it would have happened so rapidly without the temperance movement. The census indicates that this centralizing tendency was particularly pronounced in Lower Canada in the first two decades of temperance fervor:

TABLE 1 **Number of distilleries**[36]

Lower Canada		Upper Canada	
1831	70	1842	147
1844	36	1851	102
1851	7	1861	53
1861	5		

Another set of statistics suggests that Father Chiniquy's oratory was as persuasive as contemporaries said it was. Although the output of distilleries was not precisely measured until 1847 (earlier stills had been taxed on their size rather than their output), production records began just in time to document his triumph. Domestic production hit bottom when the Chiniquy campaign crested in 1849–50, dropping from over 645,000 gallons in 1847 to under 80,000 in 1850.[37] By July of 1849, a year after Chiniquy began his crusading, nearly all the distilleries of Canada East had suspended oper-

ations, and scores of puncheons had been returned by country merchants who had no buyers. Molson's, the largest distillery in the province, which had weathered earlier temperance campaigns without any serious loss, reported a loss of 15,000 pounds that year.

Like the Irish crusader Father Theobald Mathew, Chiniquy was bedeviled by lack of organization and other problems. It was generally agreed that there was widespread backsliding after his campaign ended abruptly in 1851, when his ecclesiastical superiors discovered his attempt to seduce a parishioner. But the Catholic Church, then very much on the ascendant, stepped in to stop the slippage with an austere organization called La Société de la Croix, closely supervised by the curé, in which temperate families hung a three-foot black cross on their wall to signify their temperance commitment. By June of 1855 this society had penetrated every parish of Canada East, and the bishops declared that in many parts of the province drunkenness had disappeared. Visiting Rome in 1855, Montreal Bishop Ignace Bourget proudly announced that the French Canadians had become a non-drinking people.[38] The towns, however, could not stay dry, and even in the country determined drinkers could find sources of supply. There were country parishes, though, in which taverns remained closed at the time of confederation and even into the 20th century.[39]

Apart from the data on distilleries, another statistical indicator of change is the decreased importation of liquor in the 1840s, which occurred despite a Lower Canada population increase of some 200,000. The amount of liquor entering the province at the two major ports of Montreal and Quebec dropped sharply at the beginning of the decade, as temperance revivals swept the province. Merchant records, such as those of the Jersey Island-based Robin Company, which controlled Gaspé fishing, reported a drop in demand as a direct result of temperance society enrollment; a company clerk wrote from Caraquet to his suppliers in 1841 that "a number

of the folks here have joined the Temperance Society and the remainder will do so very shortly, so that we will not require Rum next season."[40] Thereafter, although there were some fluctuations, the trends for both wine and spirits were definitely downward:

TABLE 2 **Importations, ports of Montreal and Quebec[41]**

	Wine (gallons)	Spirits (gallons)
1838–42	335,465	678,113
1843–47	280,634	371,365
1848–52	157,539	242,180

Another factor, both a cause and an effect of temperance, was a price increase. At a time when improved transport was reducing the cost of many consumer goods, the government was only too happy to cater to temperance agitation by raising taxes. The systematic taxation and regulation of distilleries that began after 1846 caused prices to rise further. A gallon of whiskey costing 2s7d (52 cents) in 1840 cost 3s9d (75 cents) in 1851; this was the first step in escalation that was to carry heavy daily drinking out of popular reach, with taxes spiraling toward 60 cents a gallon by the time of confederation.[42] Although central Canadian staples such as tea, flour, pork, potatoes and apples either decreased in price or stayed constant, rum, whiskey and wine tripled in price between 1830 and 1880.[43] Expensive and controversial, alcohol lost its former role as a dietary staple, and many grocery and dry goods firms ceased to stock it.[44]

At the same time, alternatives became available. Nonlicensed restaurants and inns made their first widespread appearance. Coffee, tea, fruit juices and carbonated beverages became more common at dining tables, picnics and banquets, aboard steamships and in military canteens. Towns responded to temperance agitation by taking steps to provide safe drinking water.

Tavernkeeping also became a less attractive occupation. License fees more than doubled, and the enactment of a strict licensing law in 1849 held tavernkeepers liable for injury or loss resulting from the actions of those who became drunk on their premises. The 1850 session of the Assembly saw the introduction of a bill to remove the tavernkeeper's claim on a creditor's wages and property, a longstanding source of the "blight" and "ruin" mentioned in settlers' reminiscences.

A comparison of the number of taverns recorded in the census of 1827 with those in 1851, after the major French and English campaigns had swept through, also suggests that taverns were becoming a less pervasive feature of the Lower Canada landscape. Decline in taverns is not a certain indicator, since one large tavern can dispense as much liquor as many small ones. However, it is suggestive of reduced consumption; certainly it made drinking less convenient. Beauharnois County had approximately the same number of taverns per capita in 1827 and in 1851. This is probably explained by its remoteness from Montreal's campaign circuit and its border location, an oasis when its neighboring American states went dry in the 1840s and 1850s. All other southwestern counties for which data could be found[45] showed a considerable per capita drop in the number of taverns as well as a reduction of distilleries and breweries after the temperance movement penetrated the region (see Table 3).

Another effect of temperance campaigning was to discredit on-the-job drinking. Taking stock of the movement in 1845, the Montreal Temperance Society weighed the failures and accomplishments of the previous few years:

> Amongst the agricultural population at bees, raisings, haytime, harvest . . . whiskey used to flow like water, and by lumbermen, boatmen and sailors it was considered as necessary as flour or pork: nay, in almost every mechanic's shop and on every public work, a system of continued drinking was kept up, by treating on the part of the masters, and fines, footings and subscriptions, on the part of the

men. Now all these absurd customs have either passed, or are fast passing away.[46]

TABLE 3 **Liquor production and distribution facilities in Southwestern Lower Canada before and after the temperance movement**

	PERSONS PER TAVERN		NO. OF DISTILLERIES		BREWERIES	
	1827	1851	1827	1851	1827	1851
Beauharnois	1426	1436	4	0	0	0
Chambly	519	823	1	-	2	-
Drummond	310	1505	0	0	0	0
Megantic	626	6417	0	0	0	0
Missisquoi	516	749	3	1	3	0
Nicolet	2116	*	0	0	0	0
Richelieu	991	2569	0	0	0	0
Rouville	808	2252	0	0	0	0
St. Hyacinthe	856	2356	0	0	0	0
Shefford	745	1177	3	0	0	0
Sherbrooke	623	1334	2	0	0	0
Stanstead	636	926	4	2	1	0
Verchères	1154	3596	0	0	0	0
Yamaska	1759	*	0	0	0	0
			17	3	6	0

* According to the official returns there were no taverns in these counties.

The elimination of drinking at work bees was widely reported from the 1830s onward. At Huntingdon the Presbyterian minister in 1832 "set his face against the drinking customs that prevailed, and organized a temperance society":

The time was favorable, for many farmers had become uneasy in conscience regarding the supplying of drink at their bees, yet none had the courage to set the example of banishing the keg. The temperance society supplied the required countenance for their new departure, and thereafter many farmers had no drink at their bees.[47]

A similar change was noted by the 300-strong Stanbridge East Society in 1842:

I do not think that one-fourth of the liquor is drunk now in this part of the township that there was four months ago, before the Society was formed. We now have raisings, logging bees etc. etc. without one drop of intoxicating liquors being used.[48]

Temperance leader and Beauharnois steamship operator Jacob DeWitt flew in the face of public opinion and stopped dispensing liquor to both crew and passengers in the 1830s, and during the 1840s larger St. Lawrence lines followed his lead. Workplace sobriety received the official stamp when the government banned the sale of liquor on public works sites in 1853.[49]

Also of great significance in Lower Canada, where logging rivaled agriculture in economic importance, was the suppression of drinking on logging jobs. Inaugurated by several operators with temperance convictions in the early 1840s, this was seen to increase efficiency and became widespread in the 1850s. Although drunkenness caused absenteeism and there were still sprees at season's end, a number of accounts suggest that lumberjacks were moving toward the modern practice of sobriety during working hours.[50]

Clearly the concept of celebratory drinking lingered—indeed, this has come down to modern times. In its progress report of 1845, the Montreal Temperance Society lamented that the attempt to eliminate social drinking had failed, that at "weddings, funerals, markets, public festivities and other social occasions . . . [liquor] maintains its ground very firmly." Even in the dramatically successful French Canadian campaign, Montreal Bishop Ignace Bourget singled out Sundays and holidays as the occasions on which teetotallers tended to abandon their resolves.[51] Concerning a livestock show in 1851, the *Stanstead Journal* reported beautiful cows, much-improved sheep, and swine "that behaved better than some of their two-legged prototypes—none of them debasing themselves by getting 'tight.' "[52] At a ribbon-cutting celebration to open the new railway in 1852, gentlemen drank so much champagne that some "disgorged the contents of their stomachs before they left Sherbrooke" and an evening gala had to be canceled because its organizers were too drunk to prepare the ballroom.[53]

By 1850, though, non-drinkers had captured a hefty share of the public space. Temperance folk of the 1840s inaugurated family gatherings, picnics, soirées and parades. Beginning small, these reached enormous size as the movement grew, with as many as 3,000 people sitting down to temperance banquets in Stanstead in the late 1840's. Temperance Halls, such as that built in Durham in 1849 specifying rental "for Public, Private and Social Assemblies, Meetings and Entertainments . . . upon STRICTLY TEMPERANCE PRINCIPLES," provided a venue for sober entertainment away from the tavern.[54] There were a number of well-conducted temperance houses and inns across the province.[55] Protestant communities had societies, brotherhoods, and halls—not to mention growing numbers of schools and churches—to provide alternatives to taverns. Catholics could join growing numbers of parish-related societies, activities and processions that helped replace the taverns officially closed down in 75 parishes (including a number of southwestern ones) at the height of the Chiniquy campaign in 1849.[56] Temperance forces were, however, the first to admit that their victory was not complete. Drinking during holidays and celebrations remained common in both the French and the British culture of southwestern Lower Canada. Determined drinkers could still find their sources of supply, and a great many illegal taverns could be found in the countryside even at the height of the Chiniquy crusade.[57] But in contrast to ever-wet Montreal, as we have seen, largely dry communities in rural Quebec were reported just after midcentury and well into the 20th century.[58]

This study of southwestern Lower Canada suggests that voluntary temperance campaigns could, in the rural areas where most people lived, be very effective without resort to prohibition. Prohibition can be understood as an indicator of the dogmatism of temperance evangelists, for whom every drop was damnable. But it was also an understandable response to the difficulties of sustaining sobriety in urban areas, where economic centralization and social diversity favored distilling

and drinking. In the long run, various combinations of education, declining opportunity, workforce requirements, acculturation, regulation, and "sin taxes" greatly reduced the problem. But it is hardly surprising that the prophets of a dry millennium were not willing to await the slow, uncertain workings of such mechanisms. Backed by armies of rustic saints, they attempted to parch the unregenerate citadels with one sweeping decree.

Sober recruits for prohibition campaigns were plentiful out where the fields began. Although mid-19th-century rural voters in Atlantic and central Canada gave strong support to prohibition, our data suggest that their own communities stood least in need of it. Southwestern Lower Canada provides a clear case of what both Parliamentary inquiries and tavern closures suggest was a rural trend[59] to reduce drinking voluntarily after exposure to temperance campaigns. Certainly in southwestern Lower Canada the first wave of temperance between 1830 and 1850 created a new perception of alcohol. It was no longer universally seen as a necessary and healthful staple. Temperance activists persuaded people that the frequent and deep drinking of their day was not only expendable but downright dangerous. Members of the press, the bench, the bar, grand juries, the clergy, the press, civic politicians, merchants, youth and women's groups were publicly proclaiming this negative view in 1850 in a way that would have been unthinkable a quarter century earlier, when the first temperance advocates found themselves objects of ridicule. Now, supplies were no longer so cheap or so readily available. The statistics on price, numbers of taverns, importation and production together suggest a genuine change in attitudes that resulted in declining consumption. Although temperance crusaders on Lower Canada's south shore did not deliver the devoutly dry society they desired, they won many battles. One might conclude that they were winning the war.

Notes

1. J.H. Gray, *Bacchanalia Revisited* (Saskatoon, 1982), 14-15. For a positive assessment of American prohibition see N. Clark, *Deliver Us from Evil: An Interpretation of American Prohibition* (New York, 1976).

2. W.J. Rorabaugh, *The Alcoholic Republic* (New York, 1979), 77-88. See also his "Estimated U.S. Alcoholic Beverage Consumption 1790–1860," *Journal of Studies on Alcohol 37* (1976); Ian Tyrrell, *Sobering Up* (Westport, CT, 1979), 302. Jack S. Blocker Jr., *American Temperance Movements: Cycles of Reform* (Boston, 1989), 33-39, notes a lower per capita consumption by 1840 but feels further research is needed to fully understand the complex patterns, which include such elements as unwitting alcohol consumption through use of patent "medicines" and the gradual shift to beer. For a preliminary report on the major charting of American consumption now under way, see R. Roizen and G. Austin, "Estimating Alcohol Consumption in American History," unpublished paper presented at the International Conference on the Social History of Alcohol, Huron College, London, Ontario, May 1993.

3. F.L. Barron, "The Genesis of Temperance in Ontario, 1828–1850" (Guelph, Ph.D. thesis, 1976), and R. Smart and A. Ogborne, *Northern Spirits: Drinking in Canada Then and Now* (Toronto, 1986), 12-14.

4. J.K. Chapman, "Mid Nineteenth Century Temperance Movements in New Brunswick and Maine," in J. Bumstead, ed., *Canadian History Before Confederation* (Georgetown, Ont., 1972), 459-460. The argument would be more convincing with more evidence of expanding local distilleries. Or did New Brunswick re-export a large quantity of its molasses as Nova Scotia did? See also R. Gwyn, "Rum, Sugar and Molasses in the Economy of Nova Scotia, 1770–1854," in J. Morrison and J. Moreira, eds., *Tempered by Rum* (Porters Lake N. S., 1988); for an apparently successful Nova Scotia temperance campaign see G. Hartlen, p. 73 in the same volume. S. Barry believes the economy played a role in the sharply declining use of spirits in 1831 in Queen's County, Nova Scotia, shortly after the temperance society was founded. Her data would seem to indicate, though, that consumption remained low even after trade revived at mid-decade. S. Barry, " 'Shades of Vice and Moral Glory': The Temperance Movement in Nova Scotia 1828–48" (Acadia University, M.A. thesis, 1986), 74-75. E. Dick, "From Temperance to Prohibition in Nova Scotia," *Dalhousie Review* 61.3 (1981), 530-552, believes temperance campaigning probably did have some impact on drinking but notes the difficulty of securing statistical proof.

5. University of Toronto Press, 1995.

6. B. Spence, *Quebec and the Liquor Problem* (n.pl., c. 1917), 33.

7. See, for example, Barron, "Genesis"; J. Burnet, "The Urban Community and Changing Moral Standards," in M. Horn and R. Sabourin, eds., *Studies in Canadian Social History* (Toronto, 1974); Chapman, "Mid Nineteenth Century Movements"; Dick, "From Temperance to Prohibition"; S. Barry, " 'Shades of Vice and Moral Glory' "; T. Acheson, *Saint John: The Making of a Colonial Urban Community* (Toronto, 1985); G. Hildebrand, "Les Débuts du Mouvement de Tempérance dans le Bas-Canada, 1828–1840 (McGill, M.A. thesis, 1975); F. Rowe, J. Noel, *Canada Dry: Temperance Crusades Before Confederation* (University of Toronto Press, 1995), chs. 1-2.

8. *Canada Temperance Advocate* (hereafter *CTA*), May 1842.

9. *CTA*, 1 June 1842.

10. Cited in Allan Greer, *Peasant. Lord and Merchant* (Toronto, 1988), 158.

11. Cf. Greer, *Peasant, Lord and Merchant* (Toronto, 1985), 157-159, 284-285, note 47; G. Craig, ed., *Early Travellers in the Canadas* (Westport, CT, 1955), 8; G. Malchelosse, "Ah! mon grand-pèr' comme il buvait!" *Cahiers des dix* (no. 8, 1943), 142.

12. H. Innis and A.R.M. Lower, eds., *Select Documents in Canadian Economic History* (Toronto, 1933), 65; F. Ouellet, *Eléments d'Histoire Sociale du Bas-Canada* (Montreal, 1971), 85; Hildebrand, *Les Débuts du Mouvement de Tempérance dans le Bas-Canada* 1828–1840, 16.

13. Hildebrand, "Les Débuts," 16, referring to the period 1827–31. The *Montreal Gazette* in July 1834 noted a great increase in the Lower Canada production of oats and barley in the previous 10 or 12 years, and also a considerable increase in prices paid for them, due to "the greatly increased demand from the Distilleries," Innis and Lower, *Select Documents* II, 65.

14. Hildebrand, "Les Débuts," 20; *Les Mélanges Réligieux* (hereafter *MR*), 6 juillet 1849, 8 janvier 1850; *Journal of the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Canada* (hereafter *JLAC*) 1849, Appendix ZZZ.

15. *CTA*, September 1836; *MR*, 22 October 1847. See also J. Brierley, ed., *A Man of Sentiment: The Memoirs of Philippe-Joseph Aubert de Gaspé 1786–1871* (Montreal, 1988) for the carousing of aristocrats and army officers.

16. *Le Canadien*, 15 août 1807, 19 juillet 1817, 26 juillet 1817.

17. H. Lemay, *Bibliographie de la Tempérance* (Quebec, 1910), 25; *CTA*, December 1838; Innis and Lower, *Select Documents* II, 256; D. Levack, *Un pionier de l'abstinence totale: Mgr Ignace Bourget, 1799–1885* (Montreal, 1945), 10.

18. Rorabaugh, *Alcoholic Republic.* For a discussion of similar frontier drinking conditions in Upper Canada, see M. Garland and J. Talman, "Pioneer Drinking Habits and the Rise of Temperance Agitation in Upper Canada Prior to 1840," in F. Armstrong, ed., *Aspects of Nineteenth Century Ontario* (Toronto, 1974).

19. B.F. Hubbard, *Forests and Clearings: The History of Stanstead County* (Montreal, 1874), 25.

20. *Id.*, 30.

21. L.S. Channell, *History of Compton County* (Belleville, Ont., 1975, 1st ed. 1986), 67. There is one voice of dissent to this portrayal. Mrs. C.M. Day's pioneer account of the townships maintains that the presumably mixed gatherings she knew about always served liquor but not excessively; even this, though, was placed in the context of "however the practice of drinking might have been carried to excess at other times and places, such was seldom the case on these festive occasions." Mrs. C.M. Day, *Pioneers of the Eastern Townships* (Montreal, 1863), 120.

22. Robert Sellar, *History of the County of Huntingdon and of the Seigniories of Chateauguay and Beauharnois* (Huntingdon, 1888), 405-406, 435.

23. *Id.*, 459; Hubbard, *Forests and Clearings*, 29. J. Bouchette, *The British Dominions* (London, 1832), 177. The *Canada Temperance Advocate* broke the silence by supplying the names and particulars of such deaths in the early 1840s, and some of the secular press followed suit.

24. E. Cleveland, *A Sketch of the Early History of Shipton, Canada East* (Richmond, 1858), 35.

25. Bouchette, *The British Dominions* 177. Mrs. Forbes's society is discussed in Noel, *Canada Dry*, ch. 7.

26. J.-P. Kesteman, "Les travailleurs à la construction du chemin de fer dans la région de Sherbrooke (1851–53)," Revue d'histoire de l'Amerique française 31, 4 (mars 1978), 44; see also *CTA*, 15 March 1852; *MR*, 15 juin 1847.

27. Hubbard, *Forests and Clearings*, 29.

28. Sellar, *History of the County of Huntingdon*, 459.

29. L.S. Channell, *History of Compton County*, 8.

30. For example, the town of Durham in Drummond County was persuaded at the time of the Montreal Temperance Society's crusade to form a total abstinence society with 25 members in 1841, and it

reported two licensed establishments in the vicinity. The society claimed to have reclaimed 20 hard drinkers and also claimed that "not one tenth of the spirits is being consumed in this town this year, that has been consumed in former years." By 1844 it had 300 members, and the secretary reported that "few towns have been more afflicted by the evils of intemperance than Durham, but . . . few towns are now as greatly favoured as it is, by the blessings of temperance. Among a population of 2000 . . . there is no place where a drop of anything that intoxicates can be bought." *CTA*, 1 August 1842, 1 April 1844.

31. *MR*, 25 avril 1848.

32. On the Chiniquy campaign, see M. Trudel, *Chiniquy* (Trois-Rivières, 1955) and J. Noel, "Dry Patriotism: The Chiniquy Crusade," *Canadian Historical Review*, June 1990, 189-207.

33. *CTA*, 15 March 1851.

34. Cleveland, *A Sketch of the Early History of Shipton, Canada East*, 36.

35. Bouchette, *British Dominions*, 352. He also noted a large brewery at La Prairie and pointed out that most of the townships' distilleries were small ones.

36. Hildebrand, "Les Débuts," 16; *Census of Canada*, 1870–71 (Ottawa, 1876) v. 4, 140, 158, 198, 218.

37. Ouellet, *Eléments d'Histoire* II, 492; M. Denison, *The Barley and the Stream*, 119, 195, 207; *CTA*, 1 January 1849, 15 February, 1849; *JLAC* 1849, Appendix ZZZ; Trudel, *Chiniquy*, 95.

38. Levack, *Un pionier de l'abstinence totale*, 34, 50.

39. A. Mailloux, *Essai sur le luxe et la vanité des parures* (Ste. Anne-de-la-Pocatière 1867), 129; S. Gagnon and R. Hardy, *L'Eglise et le Village au Quebec, 1850–1930* (Ottawa, 1979), 81, 93-97.

40. Robin, Jones, *Whitman Correspondence 1841–43*, Public Archives of Canada, MG 28, III, vol. 231, letter of Elias de la Parell 24 August 1841. Boswell's Brewery (later Dow) was established in Quebec City in 1844 and grew rapidly. N. Dorion, "L'industrie de la bière: Le cas de la Brasserie Boswell," *Material History Review*, 33, 1991, 1-9. This would have provided those who took the moderation pledge of the early 1840s with a substance milder than spirits.

41. F. Ouellet, *Histoire Economique et Sociale du Québec* (Montreal, 1971), II, 492, 617; *JLAC* 1846, Appendix GG, and 1849, Appendix XX.

42. Innis and Lower, *Select Documents*, 256, 287; Chiniquy, *Manuel des Sociétés de Temperance* (Montreal, 1849), 160; Craig, *Early Travellers, xxxi*; Denison, *The Barley and the Stream*, 229, 244.

43. C. Haight, *Country Life in Canada* (Belleville, Ont., 1971 reprint), 106-107.

44. *CTA* (Quebec City), June 1841 (Montreal) 15 December 1849; *MR*, 2 juillet 1844, 5 juillet 1844, 27 juin 1848; Chiniquy, *Manuel*. Stephen Foster, later mayor of Stanstead, operated a store in Rock Island from 1828 to 1844 reported to be the first in the eastern townships to abandon the sale of spirits.

45. The few counties that were subdivided or whose boundaries changed were not measured. Census figures rather than official tavern returns were used throughout the period because it was acknowledged that there were a number of illegal taverns in southwestern Lower Canada. While these are not measurable, the manuscript census taker walking along from building to building probably recorded at least the busier of these establishments, while the official tavern returns recorded none.

46. *CTA*, 1 January 1845.

47. Sellar, *History of the County of Huntingdon*, 400, 427-428.

48. *CTA*, 1 June 1842.

49. William Scott, *The Teetotaller's Handbook* (Toronto, n.d. [c. 1860]), 25.

50. T. Keefer, *The Ottawa* (Montreal, 1854), 62. Governor Elgin wrote in 1854 that "For some years past, intoxicating liquors have been vigorously excluded from almost all the chantiers [shanties] . . . and . . . the result of the experiment has been entirely satisfactory." Cited in M. Cross, "The Lumber Community in Upper Canada, 1815–1867," in J. Bumsted, *Canadian History Before Confederation* (Georgetown, Ont., 1979), 314. On drinking after the turn of the century as a form of rebellion/absenteeism, see C. Curtis, "Shanty Life in the Kawarthas," *Material History Bulletin* (Fall 1981).

51. Bourget, *Mandements* (Montreal, 1851), 191, 195.

52. *Stanstead Journal*, 31 October 1851.

53. *CTA*, 1 October 1852; J. Vansittart, *Lifelines: The Stacey Letters, 1833–1858* (London, 1976) 137-138.

54. *CTA*, 15 December 1849.

55. William Smith, *Canada Past, Present and Future* (1851), cited in E. Guillet, *Pioneer Inns and Taverns* (Toronto, 1954–8), I, 49.

56. *MR*, 1 juin 1849; *CTA*, 15 August 1849.

57. *CTA*, 15 January 1851.

58. A. Mailloux, *Essai sur le luxe*; Ben Spence, *Quebec and the Liquor Problem* (Toronto, c. 1917), 33.

59. See note 6 above; also *JLAC* 1856, vol. 14, no. 6, Appendix 62; *JLAC* 1859, vol. 17, no. 5, Appendix 43; also the *Globe* reprint in *Montreal Witness*, October 24, 1854. Forty years later, in Ontario, the provincial and dominion plebiscites of 1894 and 1898 indicated strong support in rural areas and opposition in cities. For the Atlantic region, see *Journal of the Legislative Assembly of Nova Scotia* 1851, Appendix 8; Barry, "Shades of Vice," 324-325; Spence, *Quebec and the Liquor Problem*, 497; Fingard, "A Great Big Rum Shop," in *Tempered by Rum*, 89; Gail Campbell, "Disenfranchised but Not Quiescent: Female Petitioners in New Brunswick in the Mid-19th Century," *Acadiensis* 18.2 (Spring 1989), 36-52. See also my *Canada Dry*, chs. 3, 8, 16.