When the decennial U.S. census figures from 1900 were made public, they showed the number of Canadian-born living in the United States as 1,179,922, or 22 percent of Canada’s entire population. Adding their U.S.-born children, the number more than doubled, equalling 54.8 percent. At roughly the same time the Canadian census of 1901 was showing that 13 percent of the Dominion’s population that year consisted of foreign-born people, some from the United States, the majority from Europe. These rather simple figures are very suggestive of what Marcus Hansen and John Brebner called “the mingling of the Canadian and American peoples,” while simultaneously capturing a striking aspect of the history of North Atlantic and intracontinental migration and in particular the role that Canada played in the international circuits of labor and migration.

Migration from British North America (which later became the Canadian Dominion) into the American republic has marked continental history throughout much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As early as the 1830s British colonial authorities expressed deep concern for “the exodus of young people from Lower Canada,” and soon French Canadian elites employed the expression “exode” to denounce the conditions that pushed many thousands of their young people to work in the United States. The same expression would later resound in many districts of Atlantic Canada, as county after county was depopulated. In many ways this continental southward flow of population and labor can be best understood by adopting a regional scale of observation.
Migration from French Canada

Throughout much of the nineteenth century French Canada remained an agrarian society, despite the growing importance of proto-industrial activities and a few commercial centers such as Quebec City, Three-Rivers, and Montreal. The coexistence of commercial and subsistence agriculture proved insufficient to sustain the natural growth of this rural population, whose birthrate was one of the highest in the western world. Moreover, in the absence of adequate public policies to encourage the settlement of largely forested hinterland regions, rural French Canadians began to overflow from the old parishes toward commercial centers and increasingly across the border into the United States. By mid-century the southward population movement seemed irreversible, as ascertained by a public inquiry in Quebec in 1857. While the majority crossed into rural districts of neighboring states, and a few joined the expanding agricultural frontier in the American Midwest, a growing number migrated seasonally to work in canal and railroad construction and logging, thus providing a significant labor input to the initial phase of industrialization associated with antebellum America.

Despite the multidirectional nature of these cross-border flows, two sections in the United States acted as major magnets: the Great Lakes region, owing—at least initially—to the previous existence of French Canadian enclaves that had survived the decline of the fur trade; and New England, on account of the geographical proximity of its expanding labor markets. On the eve of the Civil War Michigan, Illinois, and Wisconsin had become the destination for nearly half of all French Canadians residing in the United States. Of these, Michigan soon rose as the leading pole of French-Canadian settlement. One key factor was the pull exerted by the forestry industry, whose rapid development by the 1860s had made Michigan the major producer state in the union. Many French-Canadian lumberjacks had followed the industry in its continental move from east to west; others, encouraged by improvements in fluvial and rail transportation, joined in Michigan as enclaves and communities started to multiply. By 1885 French Canadians made up 13 percent of the valley’s population, with more than half of their labor force employed in logging operations and sawmills, thus making them the largest immigrant group within the valley’s forestry industry.

In the northern section of Michigan, known as the Keweenaw Peninsula, French Canadians began to arrive in the 1850s. To a large extent their early arrival and subsequent influx were related to the rapid growth of copper mining and its centrality in the region’s economy. So acute was the labor shortage in this sector that on many occasions employers sent recruiting agents across the
border to entice Canadians with the promise of higher wages. By the end of the century French Canadians made up 12 percent of the peninsula’s population and had created a stable institutional network. Not surprisingly, mining-related work became the leading single sector of occupation among French Canadians, followed by logging and a variety of service-related occupations. Among the manufacturing centers of the Midwest, Detroit exerted the most important pull for French Canadians. By 1900 they had become the leading immigrant group after the British, the Anglo-Canadians, and the Polish and were engaged primarily in unskilled and semiskilled occupations.

Despite the importance of this westward movement, by the end of the century, for every French Canadian migrating to Great Lakes states four more were choosing New England as their destination. It was mostly after the Civil War that hard-pressed rural French Canadians began to discover the opportunities of the New England textile mills. Geographical proximity and the integration of Quebec into the region’s railway network were key contributing factors. Although this integration had begun in the 1850s, it was primarily after the postwar railroad boom that it reached the major centers of the province. Now French Canadians only had to travel to the closest rail junction to reach any major urban center in New England in less than a day. These factors help explain the rapid redirection of the migration flows that had linked Quebec to New England. In fact, while during the antebellum era the main destinations were the rural districts of neighboring states (in 1850 65 percent of all French Canadians in New England resided in Vermont), during the last third of the century the majority migrated farther south, to Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and New Hampshire, to the textile industry’s heartland.

Textile manufacturing was the first industrial sector to experience mechanization on a large scale, and the first that from the very beginning relied on cheaper wages paid to women and children. It was the ideal context for various family members to access waged work. Arriving in Fall River in 1899 with her parents and siblings, Elmire Boucher recounted how often French Canadians lied about their children’s ages so that they could work: “Arriving families would bring their children to the mills and just say they were fourteen years old. I know some who have gone to work at the mills at the age of ten, my own husband among them. They did not ask you for any certificate.” Such practices were quite frequent and suggest the extent to which textile manufacturing enabled these migrants to rely on the earnings of various family members.

Findings drawn from the state of Rhode Island illustrate how the migration of families and entire kinship networks became the predominant pattern. In 1880 80.4 percent of French-Canadian children aged eleven to fifteen were employed, while 8.5 percent attended school. The manuscript census
schedules do not specify the sectors of employment, but they clearly indicate that the majority of French Canadians who went to Rhode Island chose cities such as Woonsocket and Pawtucket, the state’s main textile centers. A similar scenario emerges from studies of the other New England textile-production states. Not surprisingly, children were a major component of this population flow, with the family acting as a key vehicle of spatial mobility. In Rhode Island in 1880 about 30 percent of French-Canadian immigrants were children aged fourteen and younger, with 81 percent of this population composed of nuclear families. But while textile manufacturing was the main factor setting off and sustaining this regional cross-border migration flow, French Canadian immigrants, especially adult males, accessed a variety of other employment sectors, as the more accurate twentieth-century data indicate.

Migration from the Maritimes

For much of the nineteenth century the timber trade and shipbuilding were the two sectors responsible for inserting the Maritimes’ economy into some of the major routes of international trade. These sectors created a sort of symbiotic relationship with a mostly rural population practicing subsistence farming. A similar relationship existed with the third-most important sector of activity: fishing. Though never a major industry, fishing was the main activity in most coastal villages and was practiced in combination with subsistence farming. In many ways farmer-fishermen were perpetuating a way of life that had become a century-old tradition.

Much of the early migration from this region grew out of the mobility patterns engendered by these three main sectors of the local economy. As the perimeter of that mobility enlarged, it became increasingly frequent for Nova Scotians to take up work on U.S. fishing vessels, for naval craftsmen to join building crews in the yards of Rhode Island, or for New Brunswick farmers to seek better wages in lumber camps in Maine. Soon, however, the region would enter a period of important economic change that disrupted long-established ways of life and work. The 1860s to the 1890s could be characterized as a period of economic reconversion that entailed the restructuring of some sectors, the creation of new ones, and the elimination or disappearance of others. Its overall effect was continued growth, which also engendered considerable dislocations, namely by changes in the utilization and processing of natural resources, the introduction of new technologies, the penetration of factory-produced consumer goods into the countryside, and most importantly the localization of new productive activities. Many local labor markets were disrupted and long-established occupational patterns undermined.
Despite new opportunities and development, the economy proved unable to absorb the vast population on the move. For many Maritimers this was a step in an ongoing migration that ultimately took them outside their region; for the majority this meant the United States. While the available sources do not distinguish migrations that ended (if temporarily) in a nearby district or province from those that ended in the United States, it is very likely that step-migration characterized these mobility patterns: first toward commercial and industrial districts, then farther away, beyond the region’s border to Ontario, the Canadian West, and most importantly the United States. From 1871 to 1901 the Maritimes would lose approximately a quarter of a million people to the United States, much of it during the 1880s and 1890s. During each one of these two decades the losses corresponded to 10.5 percent of the region’s total population, the highest in those years in Canada.

The trend toward cross-border migration had already become visible in the early stages of the exodus when in 1880–81 three out of four Maritimers residing outside their region were in the United States. By then the largest proportion of Maritimers had chosen industrial New England. Much as for Quebecers, the rapid growth of the textile and leather industries after the Civil War provided ample job opportunities for young Maritime women, whose role in the household economy was increasingly undermined by cheaply produced consumer goods. But it was the greater Boston district that became by far the leading destination. The New England metropolis had long been a crucial reference point both for its economic opportunities and cultural attraction. As the exodus intensified, craftsmen and tradesmen put their skills to profit in Boston. Soon they became the dominant force in the local building industry, in the shipyards as carpenters, making inroads in commercial activities, and in a variety of white-collar sectors. Equally important, Boston afforded ample opportunities to Maritime women, who generally migrated in larger numbers than men. The majority found employment as domestics, but for many others the New England metropolis offered opportunities in nursing, sales, and office work.

Migration from Ontario

Ontario too lost a significant portion of its population to the migration movement toward the United States, especially during the last third of the century. Much as in the other two regions, outmigration was part of wider, complex population movements sparked by rapid and profound changes encompassing much of Ontario’s economic base and society. During the last third of the century the region that in earlier decades had been “the granary of two continents”
had to face new challenges from developments in international trade and, increasingly, the domestic market. The most momentous development was the abrogation in 1866 of the Reciprocity Treaty with the United States, resulting in the loss of what for over a decade had been the major market for Ontario’s agricultural products. This, coupled with a period of severe instability in the international price of wheat, spelled the end of the “wheat boom era.”

Along with the decline of wheat trade, crop failures, soil exhaustion, and the scarcity of new land also brought chaos and insecurity to many rural counties and districts. However, this did not prevent farmers with sufficient capital and other means from turning to mechanization, which significantly reduced the need for farm labor and became one of the main factors contributing to rural depopulation. The growing scarcity of arable land also caused population pressures. By the 1850s the Ontario farming frontier had been pushed to its physical limits, with only a few tracts of marginal Crown land left for settlement. Rural Ontario’s relatively high fertility rate, coupled with the constant arrival of land-seeking immigrants, made land availability a major problem. It touched both long-established farming districts and areas of new settlement, making it difficult for farmers to establish their sons on the land. These economic transformations also affected the largest stratum of the province’s agrarian population, the smallholders. In the absence of an easily marketable cash crop, and faced with the unequal competition from commercial farmers, most smallholders’ only alternative was wage labor; increasingly, that meant moving to where jobs could be found.

The extent of rural depopulation at the province-wide level emerges eloquently from census statistics. During the last three decades of the century, despite a population increase from 1.6 million to 2.5 million, the total number of rural Ontarians remained constant from one decade to the other, yet its proportion declined to 57.1 percent in 1901 from 78 percent in 1871. When proper weight is given to the rates of natural growth and rural immigration, it is clear that the increase the rural population would have normally experienced from 1871 onward was taken away by outmigration.

Equally important in this evolving scenario are the transformations taking place in the manufacturing sector. As agriculture entered its new age of commercialization and diversification, the myriad of villages and small commercial towns throughout the province’s countryside incorporated more specialized and technically advanced forms of industrial production. This, and the particular spatial configuration of industrialization in Ontario, not only contributed to the making of an industrial working class but also shaped patterns of mobility and the range of opportunities available to outmigrants in their own region. In Ontario more than in the Maritimes, and much more
than in Quebec, farmers’ children, clerical workers, and experienced craftsmen and industrial workers did not have to travel very far to find the wages and career opportunities they sought. For many of them their search could go on in nearby districts or take them beyond their province—to a town or an industrial center south of the border.

Not surprisingly, a fast-growing industrial district such as Detroit, just across the Detroit River, would become the most important destination for Ontarians and Anglo-Canadians from other provinces. In 1860 they made up 14.5 percent of the city’s foreign born; twenty years later that figure rose to 23.6 percent, making them the third-largest foreign-born group, after the Germans and the British. By 1880 Ontarians’ presence was firmly established in the urban universe of the city. By the end of the century Ontarians were present in virtually all the major industrial centers of the Midwest, particularly in neighboring states like New York, Ohio, and Michigan. In several of those regional labor markets Ontarians would rub shoulders with other, mostly European immigrants, but soon also with the first contingents of Mexicans whose migration project had pushed them further north to industrial centers like Detroit, Chicago, and the mines of the Mesabi Range.

The Twentieth Century and Border-Crossing Data

As the twentieth century began, and both Canada and the United States entered into an unprecedented era of economic growth and industrial expansion, immigration and cross-border outmigration kept feeding regional labor markets, transforming the landscape of many cities and industrial districts from coast to coast. Although migration from Canada to the United States declined somewhat compared to the years 1860–1900, it remained a persistent feature of continental life. In fact, until the Great Depression drastically interrupted the movement, Canada’s net population contribution to its southern neighbor surpassed the one-million mark. During years of labor shortage, such as that caused by the Great War, Canada was the leading labor donor to the U.S. economy. Thanks to a new system of border control and inspection instituted by U.S. immigration authorities in the early 1900s, the social, demographic, geographic, and occupational data from that century are much more precise. Consequently, one can now reconstitute as accurately as possible the various profiles of Canadian outmigrants, the variety of migration patterns involved, and the local and regional dimensions of this continental migration movement.

From a spatial perspective the twentieth-century migration movement was continental in scope, involving virtually all Canadian provinces and U.S. states
along the northern belt. As with the cross-border flow of previous decades, the twentieth century can best be understood in a regional context. Thus Maritimers kept migrating predominantly to the New England states, Ontarians to the Great Lakes region and northwestern New York districts, and Canadians from the prairies and British Columbia largely to U.S. western and Pacific states. As for Quebec outmigrants, though an important proportion kept heading to Michigan, the predominant destinations were now along the southern corridor, from New York State and Maine, through the various northern New England States, down to Connecticut and Rhode Island. Much as in the late nineteenth century, the textile labor markets of southern New England continued to exert a major pull for French Canadians despite child labor reforms and the gradual move of textile manufacturing toward southern states.

Two striking features of Canadian migration at this time were the fairly equal participation of males and females and the presence of virtually all age groups. The proportion of children and young adults combined represented well over half the migrating population. This demographic feature helps to explain, at least in part, some of the movement’s prevailing patterns. Some Canadians, in fact, left while young and unmarried, while others left in family units. Still others practiced repeat migration—a pattern that was partially prompted by the proximity of the two countries and by the extensive social networks within which most of these migrants moved. One of these repeat migrants was David Watkins, a fifty-three-year-old fisherman from Nova Scotia. He had worked and lived in Massachusetts from 1914 to 1915, and two years later he headed there again. Similarly, when William Baily—a young unmarried machinist from Kingston, Ontario—migrated to Detroit in 1911, this was his second migration experience, as he had previously worked and lived in Massachusetts. These are not isolated cases. In fact, if we exclude children aged fourteen and under, well over one-third of the Canadian population migrating during the years 1906 to 1930 had already migrated to the United States at least once.

Equally significant was the occupational composition of the migrating Canadian labor force. The social profile of Canadian immigrants that emerged from the massive Dillingham inquiry (1909–12) placed them at the top of the overall immigrant population in terms of schooling, proficiency in English, skill composition, and premigration work experience, especially in the manufacturing sectors. The border data enrich that profile, showing the wide occupational spectrum to which Canadian migrants belonged. While the majority had been associated with agricultural and manufacturing activities at the time of their migration, nearly 20 percent of the male adults outmigrating were businessmen, professionals, supervisors, and miscellaneous white col-
lars as well as students. An even larger proportion included skilled production workers and independent craftsmen. Even more significant was the occupational composition among women, with as many as 48 percent belonging to occupational groups such as professionals and supervisors, nurses, miscellaneous white collars, and students. One can thus safely say that Canada was contributing to the U.S. economy the most varied workforce of any migrant-sending country. Moreover, a significant component of this workforce was equipped to adjust quickly to the growing technological and administrative transformations that the U.S. economy was undergoing during the first third of the twentieth century.

Whether migrating for the first or the second time, whether doing so as single men or women or as members of a family group, and regardless of their occupational skills, the majority of both Anglo-Canadians and French-Canadians moved within networks that had grown from long-established migration traditions. As table 2.1 shows, a majority of Canadians did the move under the auspices of family members and various types of kin. For another small but significant minority, the destination contact was a friend. Even when well-delineated migration fields had not emerged, or are not always visible through the available data, for nearly four out of five Canadians their migration project rested on the important role played by close social relations. These data invite us to look beyond the mere economic dynamics of migration and appreciate its character of social process based on personal loyalty, solidarity, and willingness to share a positive experience with less fortunate townspeople—be they siblings, relatives, or friends.

The representative experience of George Marion reveals the extent to which the migration project rested on enduring social webs that extended across the border. When in 1921 he left his Quebec parish for Fall River, Massachusetts, he moved with his two parents, who had previously lived there and were now

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Anglo-Canadian</th>
<th>French-Canadian</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spouse, son, daughter</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents, brother, sister</td>
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<td>29.7</td>
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<td>Other kin (uncle, aunt, cousin, in-laws)</td>
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<td>27.4</td>
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<td>Friend</td>
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<td>8.5</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Institutions (including companies)</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<tr>
<td>Undetermined</td>
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<td>18.5</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>N</strong></td>
<td>1,449</td>
<td>4,224</td>
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remigrating. Moreover, both his mother and his father had parents living in that same city. For three generations Fall River had thus been a crucial part of the Marion family’s life. When a few years later both his parents returned to Quebec, George was hardly left alone. He went to live with his paternal grandparents, though he could have chosen one of several uncles living in the city.30 By then Fall River had a French-Canadian population of about 28,000, representing a quarter of the entire city’s population. Besides the mere size of the French-Canadian group, the chain migration of the past forty years had produced a very elaborate institutional network similar to those found in most large New England textile centers. As of 1909 Fall River’s French-Canadian immigrants and their children were served by six parishes, eleven parish schools, a college, and more than 150 societies and associations ranging from mutual-benefit societies to religious congregations to cultural and leisure organizations.31

The need to preserve their language and religion—the two foundations of French-Canadian culture—was the pivotal factor that fueled the rich associational life characterizing most petits Canadas, whether in New England or in Midwestern districts. This explains why hardly any equivalent of this urban phenomenon could be found among Anglo-Canadian immigrants in the United States. In his historical study of Detroit’s evolving social and ethnic structure during a period of massive Canadian immigration there, Oliver Zunz found no major residential clusters among the many Anglo-Canadians working and living there. The few small clusters he did find were in areas largely populated by native white Americans and, to a lesser extent, by British immigrants. Nor were Anglo-Canadians that visible as a group in the city’s public and social spheres. The intermarriage patterns he observed provide evidence of the tendency among Anglo-Canadians to associate with mainstream American life. In fact, only one of five Anglo-Canadian males chose a spouse within the same group. A larger proportion chose native white Americans as spouses, and the remaining proportion married women belonging to British and other ethnic groups. Zunz’s book is one of the rare existing historical inquiries on the presence of Anglo-Canadians in urban America.32 Yet it is very likely that the residential choices as well as the patterns of incorporation that he described for Detroit are similar for most areas of Anglo-Canadian settlement in the United States.

The Postwar Era

As peace returned and Canadian authorities lifted wartime regulations discouraging workers to leave the country, thousands of Canadians rushed to U.S.
consulates to seek visas. In the last six months of 1945 as many as 8,767 visas had been approved, and many more were pending. In the following months and years, as the new Republican-dominated Congress debated restrictions on a wide range of European nations and retooled the country’s racial and ideological fences, Canadians continued to head south in ever-increasing numbers, soon making Canada the leading donor country along with Germany—a role maintained until the revocation of the quota laws in the mid- to late 1960s.

Once again, what is striking about this cross-border migration movement—beyond its mere magnitude—is its occupational composition, making it one of the most qualified workforces to flow into the U.S. economy. During the previous industrialization era Canadian immigrants had contributed to the growth of virtually all U.S. manufacturing sectors. Now, in the postwar era, marked by ongoing mechanization, rapid technological transformations, and the growing role of the service sector, Canadians made up some of the most skilled and educated sectors of the population, including an important cross-section of technicians, engineers, and intellectual workers. As in past years, health-care professionals (nurses in particular) were among the most important professional groups. A survey done in the 1950s concluded that “Canada was . . . the number-one provider of immigrant scientific and engineering talent for the United States, followed by the United Kingdom and Germany.” A Canadian government statistical study was more precise; it found that during the same decade Canada had contributed 27 percent of all professional immigrants to the United States. The expression “brain drain” had barely entered the public jargon, but it is likely that Canada was among the advanced industrial societies to experience that phenomenon most acutely.

The long-established tradition of transborder migrations, the contiguity of labor markets between the two economies, the ongoing communication occurring in trade and professional channels across the border, and Canadians’ affinity with American society and its institutions are among the major factors that facilitated the migration project for hundreds of thousands of Canadians, turning those newcomers “from the North” into a major economic and social asset and into highly valued candidates for civic and cultural incorporation.

The Re-emigration Movement

Any discussion of Canada’s role in intracontinental flows of population and labor would be limited if one left out those hundreds of thousands of border-crossers who were not Canadians, but rather Europeans who had first migrated to Canada and subsequently remigrated to the United States. Saverio Varteo was one of this large cohort of border-crossers. A thirty-four-year-old Italian-
born laborer, he had first migrated to Canada in 1906. Three years later he was in Edmonton, Alberta, from where he remigrated to Boston. Similarly, Beatrice Pritchard, a native of Wellington, England, had migrated to Canada in 1912 and two years later she left the city where she lived—Winnipeg—and remigrated to Lancaster, Minnesota.36

Although during the twentieth century Britons such as Beatrice continued to remigrate across the border, by that time remigration from Canada to the United States had become a practice for a variety of European immigrants who had been part of the unprecedented surge in immigration to the Dominion. The vigorous expansion that the Canadian economy experienced at the end of the century and through the Laurier era—centered mostly on natural resources, railroad construction, and manufacturing—forced Canadian authorities to turn to non-British sources of European immigration. By 1901, in fact, the latter component accounted for 18 percent of the entire immigrant population, and it continued to grow.

The rich variety of information contained in the cross-border manifestos (Soundex Index) allows us to draw a very accurate profile of the remigrant population for the years 1906 to 1930.37

Much like the migration of Canadians, remigration was a continent-wide phenomenon. If less frequent in the Maritimes, it is because their share of immigration was proportionately much lower than that of the other Canadian regions. Spatially, it articulated itself within regional contexts, with nearly two-thirds of remigrants moving to a U.S. border state. Much like their Canadian counterparts, they departed from various socioeconomic settings: metropolitan areas, middle-sized cities, small frontier towns, and agrarian districts.

Remigrants belonged to all age groups. However, when compared to Canadian migrants, they included a much higher proportion of fifteen- to twenty-nine-year-olds. If men and women aged thirty to thirty-four are added, these two age groups (prime working age) represented nearly 90 percent of the entire remigration movement. But perhaps a more striking feature was the overwhelming presence of men (four out of five), and most of them unmarried. These are typical attributes that suggest a highly mobile population that could adjust its migration according to perceived opportunities. This hypothesis is reinforced somewhat by the occupational structure that characterized this population.

An analysis of the occupation declared at border crossing reveals that virtually all categories of labor, including white-collar and professional employment, were represented and that consequently the remigration movement fed virtually all sectors of the U.S. economy. Yet within this wide spectrum, the most important occupation was “laborers” (nearly one out of two male
remigrants), and the largest proportion was found among remigrants from central-eastern and southern Europe, where they made up two-thirds of all occupations.

Next to laborers and agriculturalists, the other most frequent occupations can be grouped into three categories: white-collar workers, small independent producers, and factory-related workers. Whereas the latter two categories were found in varying degrees in all four European groups, white-collar remigrants were most frequently Britons and to a lesser extent western Europeans. No doubt language proficiency and forms of training comparable to those practiced in North America are the key factors explaining the stronger white-collar presence among these two groups of European remigrants.

A small but significant minority of women were part of the remigration movement. Even if the majority of them (53 percent) declared no occupation or simply that of “housewife,” several others were considered wage earners. Thus a discussion of the occupational configuration of this movement would

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<th>Table 2.2 European-born Remigrants, by Major Group and Country of Origin, 1906–1930 (in Percent; N = 4,632)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>British Isles</td>
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<td>England</td>
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<td>Scotland</td>
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<td>Western Europe</td>
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<td>Central-eastern and southern Europe</td>
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not be complete without taking into account the role of working women. Given the relatively small number of wage-earning women, their occupational range was considerably narrower than that of men. Still, some clear tendencies emerge from the data. The most conspicuous one was the significant presence of domestics—nearly one out of two. By far the largest concentration was to be found within the British and the Scandinavian and Finnish groups. Also significant was the minority (17 percent) of remigrant women involved in white-collar occupations, particularly within the British and western European groups, with nursing the most frequent occupation. Equally significant were occupations associated with the clothing and dressmaking sectors, though it is difficult to assess the extent to which these occupations were practiced in a factory or as independent trades. Occupations such as “garment worker” or “mill-hand,” for instance, clearly denoted a factory setting, whereas other occupations such as “embroiderer” or “seamstress” were most likely self-employment.

The Reverse Flow: Migrating from the U.S. to Canada

Apart from the American Loyalists who moved and settled in British North America during the revolutionary era, the nineteenth and twentieth centuries witnessed a constant and sometimes dramatic movement of Americans into Canada. Yet since Hansen’s and Brebner’s seminal work, which locally and regionally situated a variety of movements of Americans into Canada, very little systematic attempt has been made to study this important development in continental history, and this movement has not found its way into the migration literature.\(^{38}\) Much like the Anglo-Canadians in the United States, Americans in Canada did not behave as ethnic minorities, and hence they exhibited little cultural and institutional visibility within Canadian civil society. This may have been compounded by the composition of the American immigrant group, the largest component of which was made up of “returnees” (former Canadian immigrants in the United States, along with their U.S.-born children). In most cases they returned to their provinces where they resumed their life and work, most likely in their original communities. One must also note the limitations of the data: because for much of the historical period in question no official records of this cross-border movement were made, and the estimates offered occasionally are fragmentary and not always reliable.

Starting with the first confederate decennial census (1871), the mention of the place of birth of the enumerated Canadian population allows researchers to identify the number of U.S.-born residing in Canada. Limited as this information is to grasp the dynamics of the movement during the intercensus
years, it is the only reliable information that can provide an initial sense of the magnitude of the American presence within the Canadian population. Note the progressive growth of the American presence through the last three decades of the nineteenth century, followed by a dramatic rise during the first decade of the twentieth. This surge was largely the result of the massive migration of Americans who took up farmlands in the Canadian Prairies—a regional movement that will be discussed later. As shown in table 2.3, the peak census year was 1921, when the U.S.-born made up 4.3 percent of Canada’s total population—a presence that remained above the 300,000 level until 1941. (A U.S.-born person enumerated, for example, in the Canadian census in 1921 will reappear again in the ensuing censuses as long as the person is alive.)

The following series of analytical observations offer a global view of the historical significance of this reverse movement within the continental migration equation. Four major historical contexts seem to have produced the conditions leading Americans to move across the northern border.

**Agrarian Migrations**

The profile of the agrarian American cross-border migrant diverges from that of a typical migrant seeking higher wages in the receiving country; it suggests an agriculturalist intent on exploiting the availability of land and the farming conditions in Canada at specific conjunctures. In the nineteenth century the most significant migration of American agriculturalists occurred in Quebec’s Eastern Townships (south of the St. Lawrence River) and involved New Englanders who sought a solution to demographic pressures and the hardening of agrarian life. Though most of these agriculturalists sought new opportunities in the Ohio Valley, a minority headed northward, as the Eastern Township region became open to colonization. Adopting a land-grant system similar to that in use in New England (“leader and associates”), between 1792 and 1809 about fifty groups of American settlers obtained land grants and began populating the region. This process was slowed by the war of 1812–14, and in subsequent years Britons and Canadians joined in the settlement of the region.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>U.S.-Born Individuals Residing in Canada</th>
<th>Percentage of Total Canadian Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>64,613</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>77,753</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>80,915</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>127,899</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>303,680</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>374,024</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>344,574</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>312,473</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>282,010</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>283,908</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Still, over the years the presence of the original American settlers attracted a stream of New England agriculturalists, and by 1840 Americans made up nearly two-thirds of the entire population of the region, particularly in townships contiguous to Vermont.39

Much more dramatic and historically significant was the massive migration of American agriculturalists to the Canadian prairie region during the Laurier era—more than half a million from 1897 to 1912. The social and political impact on the region during the ensuing years and decades was also significant. As Harold Troper shows, this massive migration grew out of an exceptional economic and continental conjuncture: the official closing of the American farming frontier and nearly a decade of economic hardship and political defeat among American farmers coincided with the massive efforts made by Canadian authorities to develop the resource-rich western provinces. One corollary was the extensive network of recruitment—involving hundreds of agents—set up by the Canadian Immigration Branch to attract American farmers.40

Whether looking at the latter western case, or the earlier one of New England and Quebec, Canada’s natural resources and socioeconomy were a safety valve for American populations and regions caught in the grips of an agrarian crisis of historic proportions.

Entrepreneurs, Managers, Technicians

Though difficult to quantify, a variety of historical sources in business and entrepreneurial history, as well as in biography and local history, shed light on the presence of this group within American migration. This presence extends from the early stages of industrialization to the more mature economy of the twentieth century, when American direct investments—along with their subsidiaries and branch plants—increasingly marked the Canadian economic landscape.

As Paul-André Linteau’s recent systematic historical exploration regarding the Province of Quebec shows, a significant number of American artisans and entrepreneurs contributed to the early industrial development of the province when they brought capital and new technologies in a variety of key sectors: foundry and hardware, marine engines, mills, refining, shoes and leather, and logging.41 With the industrial expansion that marked the American economy during the last third of the nineteenth century, Canada became the leading target for U.S. direct investments by many large manufacturing corporations. By 1936 these American establishments were concentrated in Ontario (66 percent of the total), followed by Quebec (16 percent). Equally important was the
presence of these enterprises in the natural resource sectors, such as mining and forestry.42

Linteau shows that the predominant tendency was the migration of executive and managerial cadres who often brought engineering and technical personnel from the United States. The several examples cited are all from Quebec, but one may assume the other provinces had the same tendency. This will remain a constant feature of American emigration well into the postwar era and beyond.

**Canadian Returnees and Their U.S.-Born Children**

Very likely the largest component of the reverse cross-border flow to Canada—certainly during the first half of the twentieth century—was Canadian immigrants who moved back to Canada with their U.S.-born children. The Bourdinal family is representative of this widespread pattern. After migrating twice to New England they decided to return permanently to Quebec in 1930. The family now included three children who were born in the United States and who were formally considered by the Canadian census authorities as U.S. immigrants.43 As we shall see, the classification assigned to parents varied according to changing census criteria.

Historians and demographers have pointed to the difficulties of quantifying this movement, owing largely to the limitations of the official statistics and to the divergent ways—on the part of Canadian government agencies—to classify Canadian returnees and “American immigrants.” As we have seen, Canadian migration to the United States was marked by temporary sojourning that led to return migration and repeat migration. Geographical proximity undoubtedly enhanced this cross-border mobility, but in addition, return to the homeland led Canadian authorities and private organizations to implement specific initiatives and programs.

As far as the late nineteenth century is concerned, a partial measure of the repatriation movement can be obtained from the official figures reported by Canadian authorities, ranging from 8,971 in 1873 to 26,152 between 1880 and 1890.44 From 1925 on the Canadian Department of Immigration published yearly data on Canadian repatriation. In addition, the federal censuses of 1931 and 1941 included within the immigrant population “Canada-born individuals who had resided abroad”; the latter census also specified the country of last residence. Using these three sources, the historical demographer Yolande Lavoie estimates the total number of Canadian returnees from the United States at nearly half a million during the years 1901 to 1941—the decades when this movement was most intense. This reverse population flow
was augmented by the U.S.-born children of Canadian migrants; as of 1931 they amounted to over 150,000.45

The census of 1941 provides additional statistical information on Canadian returnees from the United States. This latter group was somewhat arbitrarily subdivided into those who had resided in the United States for one year and over (“immigrants”) and for less than a year (“repatriated”). Following this classification, the number of “repatriated” as of 1941 amounted to 140,044.46 The 1941 census also breaks down this population movement at the provincial level, indicating the province of birth before migration to the United States and that of residence after return to Canada. Thus, as to the repatriated group, 68 percent had originated in Ontario and Quebec, and 24 percent in the Maritime Provinces. Moreover, the majority of the repatriated went on to reside in their province of birth. Quebec showed the highest rate, with 92 percent of Quebec-born repatriated returning to Quebec, while Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Ontario, and British Columbia registered rates ranging from 83 to 88 percent.47 As to the “immigrant” category, table 2.4 shows their provincial distribution in 1941.

Table 2.4 Provincial Distribution (in Percent) of Immigrant Population Originating from the United States, 1941

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prince Edward Island</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nova Scotia</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Brunswick</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quebec</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manitoba</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saskatchewan</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alberta</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Columbia</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Professional and Intellectual Workers, Managers, and Political Resisters

The period between the end of the Second World War and the late 1960s witnessed a particularly intense migration between the two northern neighboring countries. Not only did Canada become the leading donor country to the United States, but by 1971 the United States was the leading source of immigrants to Canada, moving up from second place in 1968.48

During the postwar period up to 1963, at a time when Canada experienced a major economic expansion and technological change, two-thirds of all the professional workers migrating into Canada came from Britain and the United States—eloquently suggesting both the place that Canada still held within the British Commonwealth and its place within the North American socio-economic system. In the ensuing years professional workers continued to be
a major component of U.S. immigration, mostly attracted by opportunities in the expanding tertiary sector of the Canadian economy. Their weight within the northbound migration must be assessed along with another key component: managerial personnel. As the trend toward direct investments intensified and the two economies became more integrated, managerial personnel, especially in manufacturing, finance, and insurance, increasingly became part of cross-border migration.

One Canadian institutional sector that experienced a major expansion and was responsible for attracting significant numbers of U.S. intellectual workers was the university system. Writing in the early 1970s, a leading student of immigration to Canada estimated that during the previous decade or so “the inflow of university teachers from the U.S. to Canada had been roughly three times as great as the outflow”—a development which at the time intensified the fears of U.S. cultural domination.49

This historical overview would not be complete without briefly mentioning the social movements of the 1960s and the Vietnam War. Most estimates have placed the total number of draft resisters who moved to Canada at about 100,000. Though this was largely a political migration that did not result in massive permanent residence, it stands to remind us of the historical role that Canada played as a safe haven for fugitive slaves and later for Afro-Americans who sought to free themselves from an oppressive racial system.

Conclusion

Seventy years have passed since the historians Marcus Hansen and John Brebner published what became the seminal work on the history of cross-border population movements between Canada and the United States from a continental perspective.50 Yet except for one short section set in the industrialization era, the migrants discussed in that text moved predominantly across a North American agrarian universe where farmlands constituted the main poles of attraction and settlement.

Since then the United States and Canada have undergone profound transformations typical of postindustrial societies, while also becoming major players in the new global economy. More importantly, through the enforcement of free trade agreements in 1988 and 1994 (which included Mexico), the two neighboring countries have strengthened their positions as each other’s most important trading partners. Direct investments, along with the constant flow of natural resources, goods, and services in both directions, could have hardly occurred without the transfer of technical and managerial personnel and their families, whether temporarily or permanently. This reconfigured
North American economic landscape has forced momentous changes in immigration policies and significantly shaped cross-border mobility trends and the spatial distribution of American and Canadian immigrants. For instance, the U.S. census in 2000 revealed the growing presence of Canadian immigrants in North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Tennessee—southern states that historically have been outside Canadians’ range of destinations.

At the same time, partly in response to the threat of international terrorism, the border separating and unifying the two countries has become more guarded than ever, bearing little resemblance to the one studied by Hansen and Brebner. Yet as in the previous century, tens of thousands of Americans and Canadians keep crossing it daily either to go to work or to visit family and friends. Economic necessity, emotional concerns, and the sharing of an interwoven mass culture continue to make the two countries overlap, certainly in those northern borderlands (see chapter 4).

Notes

6 Report of the Special Committee on Emigration, Journals of the Legislative Assembly (Toronto: Lovoll, 1857), appendix N, 47.
11 Thomas Dublin, Women at Work: The Transformation of Work and Community in


20 See Randy William Widdis, With Scarcely a Ripple: Anglo-Canadian Migration into the United States and Western Canada (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1998), esp. chapter 5, for a discussion of the impact of these developments on depopulation in southeastern Ontario.


23 Terry Crowley, “Rural Labour,” Labouring Lives: Work and Workers in Nineteenth-
See Century Ontario, ed. Paul Craven (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 57. See also Widdis, With Scarcely a Ripple, esp. 87–114.

Terry Crowley, “Rural Labour,” 57. See also Widdis, With Scarcely a Ripple, esp. 87–114.


Zunz, The Changing Face of Inequality, 106.


The archival source used, the Soundex Index to Canadian Border Entries, is part of the records of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Services, Record Group 85. For a detailed discussion of this source see the appendix in Bruno Ramirez (with Yves Otis), Crossing the 49th Parallel: Migration from Canada to the United States, 1900–1930 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001). Unless otherwise specified, all the quantitative data presented in this section are computations made by the author and based on a representative sample of border crossers derived from the Soundex Index and presented in greater detail in Crossing the 49th Parallel.

Ramirez, Crossing the 49th Parallel, 129.

Oral history interview, Projet d’Histoire Orale, Université de Montréal.


Zunz, The Changing Face of Inequality, 32.

Time, April 1, 1946.


In other contexts and circumstances—as in the case of Poles traveling through Germany and then to the United States or Canada—“transit migration” is more appropriate. The movement discussed here, however, entailed a “remigration” (to the United States) after a relatively lengthy stay in Canada.

Ramirez, Crossing the 49th Parallel, 148.

For a more extensive analysis see Ramirez, Crossing the 49th Parallel, chapter 5.

Hansen and Brebner, The Mingling of the Canadian and American Peoples.


For a more recent discussion see Randy W. Widdis, “American-Resident Migration to Western Canada at the Turn of the Twentieth Century,” *Prairie Forum* 22, no. 2 (1997), 237–62.


45 Lavoie, “Les mouvements migratoires,” 82, 85.


49 Freda Hawkins, *Canada and Immigration*, 40.

50 Hansen and Brebner, *Mingling of the Canadian and American Peoples*. 