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Grass Roots Connections: The Northern Plains Borderlands during the Great Depression

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Grass Roots Connections: The Northern Plains Borderlands
during the Great Depression

by

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A THESIS

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Abstract

Writers and scholars who have studied the northern Great Plains borderlands argue that the region possessed a unique, cross-border community in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. This dissertation argues that this community persisted beyond the settlement era, well into the 1930s. This is significant because powerful forces threatened to divide Canadian and American borderlanders during this period. National authorities effectively closed the border in late 1929 in response to the economic disaster that afflicted both countries. Steep tariffs limited cross-border trade, and strict immigration rules restricted migration from one country to the other. Border crossers were under increased scrutiny from border officials and lawmakers. But none of this stopped Americans and Canadians who lived near the forty-ninth parallel from intermingling on the northern Plains. Indeed, the sense that they belonged to a special community only intensified.

This dissertation is a grass roots social history of the northern Great Plains borderlands. It makes a contribution by exploring the significance of the border in ordinary borderlanders' lives. It shows that borderlanders' relationship with the border came to shape their identity. People who lived near the forty-ninth parallel had more in common with each other than with their fellow countrymen and women. They asserted their borderlands identity alongside or over and above their respective national identities.

Newspapers, memoirs, letters, government records, local histories, and interviews with people who lived in the Plains borderlands in the 1930s show that borderlanders' many transborder interactions helped them juggle multiple identities

and transcend national, ethnic, and cultural differences. Canadian and American borderlanders of different backgrounds regularly crossed the border and participated with each other in national, social, business, and other events. They took a keen interest in each other's lives. They saw each other as people experiencing similar hardships and they looked to each other for ideas, resources, companionship, and inspiration. Borderlanders felt their cross-border ties set them apart from non-borderlanders. Maintaining their community was very important to them. Long after the border was established and settlers filled the borderlands, grass roots connections continued to unite people on both sides of the line.

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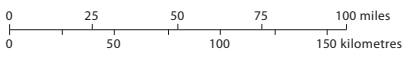
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NORTHERN GREAT PLAINS BORDERLANDS - 1930s

- Community
- Road
- - - - Provincial/State Boundary
- - - - International Boundary



INTRODUCTION

An Intermingled Community

Members of the International Lions Club of Cou tts, Alberta, and Sweet Grass, Montana, were upset. On December 7, 1935, they wrote Montana Senator James E. Murray to complain that American immigration officials were not providing around-the-clock service at the local port of entry. The club explained that oil refinery workers, highway travellers, and local residents who regularly crossed the international boundary urgently needed extended service: “The entire community on both sides of the border affiliate and intermingle in their social and business relations and the lack of twenty-four hour immigration service is a glaring inconvenience and nuisance.” The senator immediately took up the matter with the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization in Washington, assuring the Lions Club that “I sincerely hope that they will find it possible to make the necessary change.” Letters flew between Murray, senior customs and immigration administrators, the Cou tts-Sweet Grass Lions Club, and other organizations in northern Montana who shared the club’s concerns. I. F. Wixon, the deputy commissioner of Immigration and Naturalization, warned Murray that the bureau was severely stretched. “We do not have sufficient officers to cover the various ports on our respective boundaries, even though some of them are now open for only a limited number of hours daily.” Still, on January 23, 1936, Murray was able to inform Lions Club Secretary Douglas Parker that twenty-four hour service would be maintained at the port. “If, however, you learn that steps are being taken to limit the Service in Sweet Grass,” he wrote, “please advise me and I will be happy to again contact the officials of the Customs Service and have the present service continued.”ⁱ

From correspondence between Murray and northern Great Plains borderlanders in the 1930s, it is clear that the American senator was very sensitive to border residents' concerns. He came from a family of border crossers and had criss-crossed the Canadian-American border himself many times. Murray's parents were Irish immigrants who moved from New York to Ontario in the mid-nineteenth century. Murray was born on a farm near St. Thomas in 1876. When he was a young man he, his widowed mother, and a sister moved to Butte, Montana, to join a wealthy uncle who had migrated there from Ontario years earlier. Murray became an American citizen in 1900, established a thriving law practice, and was elected as a Democrat to the Senate in 1934. Speaking to the Kiwanis Club of Montreal several years later, Murray fondly described his "boyhood days on this side of the border" and his "sentimental" attachment to Canadians. "It was as a mere lad in the late nineties that I set out hopefully from Canada to seek my fortune in far away Montana," he recalled. "Much to my surprise, when I arrived I found a host of Canadians...from nearly every part of the Dominion." Murray noted that wherever Canadians had settled in the United States they had enriched the country with "their enterprising spirit and devotion to democratic principles and human progress." The same could be said of Americans who moved to Canada. "This exchange of citizenship has wrought much good. On both sides of the border there has grown up through the years a genuine spirit of goodwill and mutual respect which must never be destroyed." Murray emphasized the similarities between his birth country and his adopted country, saying they were largely comprised of the same immigrant "stocks" and that no other part of the world could boast "citizens of two separate nations so nearly alike as those of Canada and the United States. That is why on a stretch of over 3,000 miles of boundary between the

two countries, we see no fortifications or military establishments with soldiers perpetually mounting guard. Our boundary line has become a threshold, a welcome mat across which our two peoples freely enjoy the advantage of friendly intercourse between neighbors.”ⁱⁱ

Murray’s familiarity with the “intermingled” community of Coutts and Sweet Grass and his early experiences as a Canadian in Montana shaped his understanding of the Canadian-American border. He saw it not as a barrier but as a doorway offering Canadians and Americans easy access to cross-border social and economic opportunities. Murray recognized that residents of the northern Great Plains borderlands belonged to a unique community that transcended national lines, and he saw the importance of preserving their cross-border ties. In addition he believed that the easy flow of people, goods, and ideas across the forty-ninth parallel was vital to national prosperity. The memory of “trade warfare” between Canada and the United States during the Great Depression filled him with distaste. A fervent supporter of the Roosevelt administration’s free trade policies, he happily informed his Montreal audience that “relations between our two countries have reached a high state of perfection.” Murray seemed to see interactions between Canadians and Americans in the borderlands as a model for healthy “intercourse” between the two nations.ⁱⁱⁱ

Many residents of the northern Great Plains borderlands shared Murray’s sense of the Canadian-American border in the 1930s and early 1940s. Borderlanders believed they were special because they lived near the border and mingled with people from across the line. They valued their cross-border connections and, whatever happened to be going on in the world or in the minds of border officials, they fought to preserve those ties. Many

borderlanders saw the international boundary as a line of opportunity. They crossed and recrossed it in search of work, fellowship, love, and adventure. Some, like Senator Murray, saw the borderlands as a shining example of peaceful interaction between nations. They thought of borderlanders as different from their non-borderlands countrymen and women -- as more friendly, cooperative, and open to new experiences, ideas, and people -- because they were comfortable operating in two countries. Still others viewed the border as something to be ignored, circumvented, or manipulated to their own ends. Their many transborder activities -- legal and illegal -- allowed them to assert their borderlands identity alongside, or over and above, their national identity. In some ways the Plains borderlands constituted a complex zone of resistance. Borderlanders often thwarted attempts to categorize them as Americans or Canadians. Thus, their borderlands identity trumped their national identity. Like the forty-ninth parallel itself, they ran “against the grain.”

Scholars have generally associated the term “borderlands” with the southwestern United States and the Mexican-American border. American historian Herbert Eugene Bolton used the term in his path-breaking 1921 study, *The Spanish Borderlands: A Chronicle of Old Florida and the Southwest*. By the early 1930s the southern-oriented borderlands school of history was in full flower.^{iv} The Canadian-American borderlands, in contrast, were attracting little notice from historians. However, research shows that people living along the western stretch of the boundary were already referring to their region as a “borderland,” and a handful of observers were feeling the pull of the forty-ninth parallel.^v Significantly, these border commentators tended to be border-crossers who wrote from personal experience with the northern Great Plains borderlands.

Between 1929 and 1931, Seattle-born Stephen B. Jones worked as a petroleum geologist in Alberta and spent his free time hiking in the Canadian Rockies. There he met his future wife and decided to write his PhD dissertation on the “Bow-Kicking Horse Region” straddling the border between Alberta and British Columbia.^{vi} In 1932, while studying at Harvard, Jones published an article on the geography and history of the region stretching from southern Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba to the tip of Wyoming and South Dakota. Long before other writers adopted the term, he referred to this segment of the Canadian-American border as “the medicine line” because “a fugitive from justice crossed the line and magically became a free man.” Jones argued that the region had a rocky history marked by obstreperous whisky traders, harassed buffalo and natives, loose cattle, horse rustling, and general lawlessness. Both sides of the border were “really wild.” But by the early 1930s the forty-ninth parallel had become “a tamely satisfactory boundary.” East-west railway lines had replaced north-south trade routes, farmers had broken much of the land, a fence along the border was restraining wandering cattle, and low livestock prices and effective police patrols were discouraging smuggling and other cross-border crime. “All’s quiet along the Forty-ninth Parallel in the Great Plains,” Jones wrote. “Similarity of occupance, similarity of race and language, and general similarity of laws on the two sides of the boundary will probably keep it so.” The upbeat academic was so focused on the region’s new peacefulness that he failed to mention the economic depression and dust storms scouring the Plains. Jones saw the western borderlands as a single environmental and cultural region and the international boundary as an “artificial” intrusion. The forty-ninth parallel had evolved into a “good”

boundary -- “except for the fundamental disadvantage of having any political division at all in the Great Plains.”^{vii}

In 1937 Jones, by then a geography professor at the University of Hawaii, became the first scholar to apply the term “borderland” to the Canadian-American border.^{viii} In “The Cordilleran Section of the Canada-United States Borderland” he expanded his study of the forty-ninth parallel to “the Oregon country” to the west of the Plains borderlands. Again, he was among the first to ask how the forty-ninth parallel affected “the ordinary person,” discussing the cross-border movement of tourists, investment capital, clothing styles, sports, and newspaper and radio news. Jones concluded that there were some slight differences between Canadians and Americans in the area, but only because the international boundary was in place before non-native settlers arrived. “Had no boundary been drawn, neither the people nor the cultural landscape of the Oregon country would show any significant change near the forty-ninth parallel.... The immigrants, whatever their origin, would have mingled to form a single culture.”^{ix}

Meanwhile an American journalist and popular historian was working on a history of Montana that crossed into southern Saskatchewan and Alberta and recognized “the centuries-old [cultural] identity of the Canadian and American prairies.”^x Joseph Kinsey Howard was born in Oskaloosa, Iowa, in 1906 and spent his early childhood in Lethbridge, Alberta. As a “foreigner” in Canada his loyalties were mixed; when he and his friends played Mounties and Indians, he sided with the “enemy” warriors.^{xi} In 1918 Howard’s miner father left the family and, a year later, Howard and his mother moved to Great Falls, Montana. Again Howard was at odds with his peers. His American schoolmates reportedly tossed him out a window for defending the British position in the

War of 1812. Howard was news editor of the *Great Falls Leader* from 1926 to 1944.^{xii}

In *Montana: High, Wide, and Handsome*, which appeared in 1943, he described the forty-ninth parallel as “a political and not a cultural boundary.” He argued that “Southern Saskatchewan and Alberta have always been an economic unit with the northern states,” and added that historically the weather, the buffalo, and the people of the northern Plains paid “no attention to the boundary line.” Howard discussed cross-border buffalo hunts, cattle operations, and the spread of soil conservation practices from Alberta and Saskatchewan to Montana and beyond. “Canada is the land of agricultural miracles,” he declared. “In recent years the farm scientists have recognized the identity of interest, for planning purposes, of Assiniboia’s prairie and the plains of Montana, the Dakotas, Wyoming, and Nebraska.”^{xiii}

As a child of the borderlands and a veteran newspaperman, Howard knew a compelling cross-border story when he saw one. In 1938 he began writing a book about Louis Riel, the Metis, and the North-west Rebellion of 1885. Howard, who lived near Choteau, Montana, in a cabin built by Metis refugees from Canada, had been itching to tell this story ever since he heard it growing up in Lethbridge. *Strange Empire* was unusual for the time because it was written largely from the perspective of aboriginal people and because it treated the Canadian and American Wests as a single “social and economic entity.” Howard recognized that Riel, the “footloose” Metis leader, and the “new, aggressive” white traders, smugglers, and rustlers were border people who had a fluid sense of citizenship or no sense of national allegiance whatsoever. He noted that Riel, who was born in the Metis settlement of St. Boniface and had crossed and re-crossed the Canadian-American border many times, already had a sense of “dual

citizenship” before he became an American citizen in Montana in 1883.^{xiv} Howard also noted the disdain with which early fur traders viewed the “invisible” international boundary line and the American government’s insistence that only its citizens could trade with natives south of the border. To officials’ disgust these “Mississippi demi-civilized Canadian mongrel English-American citizens” often didn’t bother to obtain American citizenship papers.^{xv} Howard wrote that most nineteenth-century borderlanders found the border “absurd.” “The border just did not make sense.... It sought to separate the sparse populations of a hazardous frontier, to stave the essential interchange among people whose needs were similar and who were socially compatible. Therefore the people ignored the line, flouted the law, and dodged the enforcement agents.” Indeed, skipping forward in time, Howard argued that the notion of “interchangeable citizenship or no citizenship at all” persisted well into the twentieth century. In the 1940s, even “with customs and immigration patrols grimly awaiting a misstep,” borderlanders crossed the line to attend Saturday night dances and “American housewives” crossed daily to buy cheaper meat for supper.^{xvi}

Also during this period a third “border man” was trying to understand the border’s effect on him and other people of the Great Plains borderlands. Wallace Stegner wrote several autobiographical short stories and novels in the 1930s and early 1940s that were “charged with the presence of the international boundary and the implications of Stegner’s own crossing of it.”^{xvii} These works culminated several years later in *Wolf Willow*, a powerful mix of memoir, history, and fiction that spoke to many Canadians and Americans about what it meant to be a westerner and a borderlander.^{xviii} “The 49th parallel ran directly through my childhood,” wrote Stegner, “dividing me in two.”^{xix}

Stegner was born in 1909 near Lake Mills, Iowa, to Scandinavian immigrant parents. His father, George, was a “notably irresponsible” dreamer who dragged his young family all over the American West.^{xx} Eventually he abandoned them in Seattle and obtained a homestead in southwestern Saskatchewan abutting the international border. In 1914 Stegner, his older brother, and their mother joined George in Saskatchewan. The family spent winters in Eastend, Saskatchewan, where “we were almost totally Canadian.” Stegner studied the history and geography of the British Empire and the Dominion of Canada, sang “The Maple Leaf Forever” and “God Save the King,” celebrated Dominion Day, Victoria Day, and the King’s birthday, wore clothes ordered from the T. Eaton catalogue, and saluted the Union Jack. Summers were spent on the homestead, where they became “not quite American” and their lives “slopped over the international boundary every summer day.” They gathered stones from their fields and dumped them in Montana, shopped and collected their mail in Montana border towns, read American magazines and newspapers, ordered items from Sears Roebuck and Montgomery Ward, and celebrated the Fourth of July. In the fall they crossed – “I suppose illegally” – to sell their wheat in the handiest Montana town.^{xxi}

Stegner recognized that the Saskatchewan-Montana border was not a natural boundary and that there were many environmental and cultural similarities on both sides. It was a “very open fence” across a semi-arid Plain marked by burnouts, gopher holes, cacti, stinkweed, shallow coulees, circling hawks, and few settlements. Unlike Joseph Kinsey Howard, however, Stegner did not think the boundary was “ridiculous.” “The 49th parallel was an agreement, a rule, a limitation, a fiction perhaps but a legal one, acknowledged by both sides.” Many borderlanders ignored it, but “it exerted

uncomprehended pressures upon affiliation and belief, custom and costume.” As with Howard, the border seemed to confuse Stegner’s national and ethnic loyalties. At one point he wrote that “we never thought of ourselves as anything but American.” But elsewhere in *Wolf Willow* he remarked that he was “half-way” Canadian, and in yet another spot he wrote that as a child he didn’t know whether he was Canadian or American, and harking back to his mother’s ancestors, he decided he was actually Norwegian.^{xxii}

Stegner wrote evocatively about the imprint the Plains border, people, and landscape left on him. He carried the images and smells of the borderlands into adulthood, feeling privileged to have grown up in such a “special culture.”^{xxiii} He also carried physical and emotional scars. Memories of wolf willow and blooming flax were interlaced with memories of racial intolerance, a harsh “frontier” code, and an abusive father. When drought ruined his homesteading fantasy, George Stegner grew “furious.”^{xxiv} He beat and denigrated his small, sensitive son, giving him a permanent sense of inadequacy. George turned from farming to gambling and rum-running, using his knowledge of cross-border trails and the border patrol’s movements to full advantage.^{xxv} Finally, in 1920, George decided to move his bootlegging business and his family to Great Falls, Montana. Eleven-year-old Stegner hated to leave his friends, his community, and his prairie haunts. In the back seat of the family car as it headed for the border, he pulled a blanket over his head and cried.^{xxvi}

To Wallace Stegner the border was personal. It shaped his family life, his work, his personality, and his sense of national and regional identity. It gave him a lifelong affinity for both the Canadian West and the American West.^{xxvii} Like the cactus spine that

lodged in his middle finger when he was a boy and calcified over time, the Plains border was “in his bones.” With his many scars, Wallace embodied the Great Plains borderlands much like Chicana poet and “border woman” Gloria Anzaldúa embodied the southern borderlands. In *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Anzaldúa famously described the Mexican-American border as an “open wound” that ran down the length of her body, “staking fence rods in my flesh” and splitting her in two.^{xxviii}

Stephen B. Jones, Joseph Kinsey Howard, and Wallace Stegner all knew the forty-ninth parallel intimately. They explored it literally and figuratively, shining a sympathetic light on the border landscape, its inhabitants, and its history. All considered the role the border played in borderlanders’ lives. Interestingly, all were Americans whose perceptions of the border were colored by early experiences on the other side. To these three the border was not a national dividing line, but the heart of a north-south region criss-crossed with human trails. These early borderlands writers experienced the western stretch of the Canadian-American border as a place that gave rise to a distinctive culture. Their “insider” status probably explains why they wrote about the Plains borderlands the way they did.

Multi-talented Canadian academic and social commentator Stephen Leacock, on the other hand, was a Plains border outsider. Leacock was born in England in 1869, migrated to Ontario as a young boy, and remained a staunch imperialist throughout his life. He eventually became chair of the department of economics and political science at McGill University and, by the 1920s and 1930s, was Canada’s most popular humorist and – some said – “the best known Canadian in the English speaking world.”^{xxix} In late 1936 and early 1937 Leacock toured western Canada to give speeches and to gather

impressions for a series of Montreal and Toronto newspaper articles called “My Discovery of the West.”^{xxx} The series became a book which won the 1937 Governor General’s Literary Award for non-fiction. In it, Leacock denied the existence of a Plains cross-border community. “The idea of people at a distance that the Canadian Northwest and the American Northwest are all intertwined has no foundation in fact.”^{xxxi} He admitted there was some mixing of Americans and Canadians in Manitoba’s Red River Valley and near Lethbridge, Alberta, but the geopolitical border was generally doing a good job of separating the two nationalities. “The West is more physically and socially separated from the United States than Eastern Canada. By an odd chance the forty-ninth parallel, an astronomical line, turned out to *mean* something.” Leacock implied that the Plains borderlands were insignificant because they were “arid and waterless,” not heavily populated, and not in the “east.” “There is little back and forth intercourse or give and take and the border is thinly settled,” he wrote. “If you want to see the real Canadian-American frontier you must go, not to the forty-ninth parallel, but to the Niagara-Buffalo boundary. Go in summertime, round the first of July or the fourth -- they hardly know which is which. Go on a holiday and see the Stars and Stripes and the Union Jack all mixed up together and the tourists pouring back and forward over the International Bridge.”^{xxxii} Of course Leacock, who lived in Quebec and Ontario, was biased because he was much more familiar with cross-border interactions in central Canada than in western Canada. He had never experienced Dominion Day and the Fourth of July in the western borderlands, and he knew little about the Canadian and American families, business enterprises, and social organizations that mingled there. He did not actually visit the forty-ninth parallel on his six-week winter tour of the West.

Leacock was neither a Plains borderlander nor a borderlands historian.

Although he often wrote about Canadian-American relations in the 1930s, he was not particularly interested in the relationship between the international boundary and the people who lined it. To Leacock, who was worried about impending war, the border was a symbol of Canadian-American friendship and an example to the world. Some Canadians feared their country was being “Americanized” by an influx of American newspapers, radio broadcasts, tourists, and ideas, but Leacock thought such fears were groundless. Yes, Canadians and Americans sometimes sampled each other’s culture, but both nations were content to honor the political dividing line.^{xxxiii} While some Canadians were beginning to speak of Canada as “an American nation,” Leacock continued to see the country as a British monarchy, albeit one that knew Americans well.^{xxxiv} In 1937 he suggested that Canada was “a sort of half-way element” – a borderland if you will – uniting Britain and the United States. Two years later, as the Second World War overtook Britain, he begged isolationist North Americans to maintain the flow of people, goodwill, and investment money across the forty-ninth parallel. They owed it to the British people to preserve the undefended border.^{xxxv}

The notion that Canadians and Americans were similar peoples who peacefully shared the North American continent appealed to many social commentators in the 1930s. A growing number of historians focused on Canadian-American relations, stressing the geographical, political, and economic links between the two countries. The chief vehicle for this continental approach was a series of twenty-five volumes sponsored by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace between 1936 and 1945. Many contributors were Canadians with graduate degrees from American universities and

some, like John Bartlet Brebner and A. L. Burt, were expatriates who were pursuing careers in the United States.^{xxxvi} The series included several volumes on population exchanges between the two countries. *The Mingling of the Canadian and American Peoples*, a major study of cross-border migration that included a section on American farmers who rushed to the Canadian prairies in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and a section on the Great Depression's effect on population movement in the West, was published in 1940.^{xxxvii} The study's main author, American immigration historian Marcus Lee Hansen, argued that migrants saw the continent as a whole. "It was not the United States and Canada. It was all America to them."^{xxxviii} Fellow author John Bartlet Brebner, who was born in Toronto, spent most of his career at Columbia University, and became an American citizen in 1942, suggested that migrants' loyalties transcended the national border. North Americans were "eminently capable of allegiance to one country one day and to another the next."^{xxxix} By the 1930s Canadians and Americans were so intermingled that roughly one-third of "Canadian stock" lived in the United States, and every tenth person the "ordinary active Canadian" met in Canada was, or had been, American. Canadians and Americans were making more than thirty million border crossings every year -- that officials knew of.^{xl} "North Americans, particularly Canadians, have always refused to be tied down, and they have never really policed their common boundary," Hansen remarked. "Even granting the extraordinary unpredictability of international affairs today," the Canadian and American governments probably would not crack down on "their restless peoples," many of whom were still "openly or surreptitiously" changing countries. This determined cross-border traffic did not faze

Hansen because he did not think it would lead to political union. History showed that Canada and the United States did not need “good fences” to make “good neighbors.”^{xli}

Meanwhile, a group of western Canadian and American intellectuals was trying – without much success – to articulate a continental vision for the northern Great Plains. In 1942, at three conferences sponsored by the Rockefeller Foundation, historians ranging from Texas native Walter Prescott Webb (author of the 1931 regional classic *The Great Plains*) to Ontario-born A. L. Burt (who migrated from the University of Alberta to the University of Minnesota in 1930) expressed the vague sense that a distinct environment and culture unified the northern Plains. Awareness that environmental, economic, and social devastation had blasted the entire transnational region in the 1930s helped to fuel this sense of unity.^{xlii} “Drought holds the same terror in Canada that it does in Texas,” Webb reminded the group. “And there isn’t anything about a state line that it respects.”^{xliii} But the conference attendees found it hard to put their feelings into words. Indeed, it appears that none of them went on to publish anything on the transborder region. They would have done better to consult ordinary Plains residents. Years later historian Molly Rozum found diaries, memoirs, and other manuscripts proving that grasslanders in Canada and the United States had little difficulty expressing their emotional ties to their vast, shared landscape in the first half of the twentieth century.^{xliv}

The Rockefeller conferences may have indirectly inspired at least one budding American historian to explore connections between the Canadian prairies and the American Plains, however. In the 1940s one of Burt’s University of Minnesota doctoral students, Paul F. Sharp, visited western Canada to research early farm movements. Sharp’s dissertation, published in 1948 as *The Agrarian Revolt in Western Canada*,

fleshed out Hansen and Brebner's work on cross-border migration in the West and explored the influence of American agrarian movements in the prairie provinces.^{xlv} Two years later, calling for a "truly regional" approach to western history, Sharp suggested that the forty-ninth parallel was "a far more formidable barrier to historians than to the men and movements they sought to describe. The ranchers on the northern plains, for instance, often ignored this boundary in their search for adequate pasturage, and cowboys sought employment with outfits in Alberta as freely as with those in Wyoming and Montana."^{xlvi} In 1955 Sharp produced *Whoop-Up Country*, a study of the region between Fort Benton in Montana and Fort Macleod in the Canadian Northwest during the whiskey and fur trade era. Sharp covered, in much greater depth, some of the topics that geographer Stephen T. Jones had raised two decades earlier. Mainly Sharp argued that north-south economic forces united the "northern grassland empire" – overriding the international boundary – until east-west railroads and distinct national loyalties finally made the political line meaningful.^{xlvii}

Around the same time Canadian historian C. P. Stacey produced *The Undefended Border*, in which he noted that Canadian-American relations had not always been as amicable as orators and editorial writers claimed. Wars and the threat of war made the notion of the undefended border before 1871 "pure myth."^{xlviii} Only over time – chiefly during the Second World War -- did the border evolve into a true symbol of friendship between two nations. Stacey's focus was on Canadian-American military relations rather than the similarities that united Canada and the United States.

Aside from Sharp and a few other scholars, interest in continental themes and transborder regions languished after the Carnegie series and the Second World War

ended in 1945.^{xlix} Then, in the late 1980s, two social scientists rediscovered the forty-ninth parallel. Lauren McKinsey, a Montana political scientist who wrote about relations between the American West and the Canadian West, and Victor Konrad, an Ontario-educated anthropologist at the University of Maine's Canadian-American Center, noted that over the past century "the 5,526-mile undefended border" had become "virtually a sieve to the flow of people, ideas and commodities." The open border had created "a vast zone of interaction" that warranted further study.¹ Inspired by the innovative work of southern borderlands historians like Oscar J. Martinez, McKinsey and Konrad urged historians, geographers, and other scholars to explore the notion that "North America runs more naturally north and south than east and west as specified by national boundaries.... While people living near the border pay allegiance to their respective sovereign authorities in Washington, D.C. and Ottawa, they sometimes have more in common with neighbors across the border than with their fellow citizens."^{li}

McKinsey and Konrad defined borderlands as "a region jointly shared by two nations that houses people with common social characteristics in spite of the political boundary between them. In a more narrow sense, borderlands can be said to exist when shared characteristics within the region set it apart from the country that contains it."^{lii} Some scholars refused to believe Canada and the United States possessed such a region. They argued that, compared to the Mexican-American border, the forty-ninth parallel was too long, too sparsely populated, too ethnically and culturally homogenous, and featured too few urban "mixing zones" to possess a continuous border zone with its own "special flavor" or "*ambiente*."^{liii} It lacked the "special border political culture and feeling of transborder affinity or loyalty" that came from daily interactions in the Mexican-

American border zone.^{liv} But McKinsey and Konrad strongly disagreed, arguing that the Canadian-American borderlands were simply more complex, diverse, and subtle than the southern borderlands. The northern border zone was not one long, uninterrupted region, but a series of smaller regions exhibiting varying degrees and types of cross-border interaction.^{lv} The Plains section of the border, for example, was “most open” and “most artificial.” “Modern sod busters and stock ranchers, if left to their own devices, would pay it as little heed as their Indian predecessors who followed the buffalo north and south of the line.”^{lvi}

To foster research on the Canadian-American borderlands McKinsey, Konrad, and several colleagues launched the Borderlands Project, which released several monographs and essay collections in the late 1980s and early 1990s.^{lvii} Although the project’s team said they had no ideological agenda, the project sounded much like Carnegie continentalism of the 1930s: “The Borderlands Project is meant to promote greater recognition and understanding of the status of the United States and Canada as border neighbors.”^{lviii} McKinsey and Konrad argued that the Canadian-American border failed to attract much scholarship because it seemed so peaceful and accommodating. But these were the very qualities that made it worth studying. “The West Bank is more volatile, the Rio Grande may be more seductive, but no borderland is more important than this one, not for the headlines that it fails to inspire, but for its comity, which is taken for granted.”^{lix} How could other nations be expected to happily “coexist in the global community” if Canadians and Americans could not explain the secret of their long-time friendship?^{lx} Like the Carnegie series, the Borderlands Project was born at a time when relations between Canada and the United States were in flux (the two nations

were negotiating the controversial 1987 Free Trade Agreement and the 1993 North American Free Trade Agreement) and the nature of national borders everywhere seemed to be changing.^{lxi}

Also during this period several historians of the American West began to comment on the scant attention scholars had historically paid the western stretch of the Canadian-American border. In an essay on Montana, North Dakota, and other northern tier states, John Worster noted that the forty-ninth parallel barely separated “two friendly neighbors, really kinfolk.” Even though the history of this northern borderland and the history of the southern borderland were very similar (with their struggles over sovereignty and their cross-border migrations), “we have no real school of northern borderlands history,” Worster wrote. “No Herbert Bolton or John Francis Bannon for these parts.”^{lxii} A growing number of articles comparing the Canadian West and the American West and calling for studies on the significance of the Canadian-American border began to appear.^{lxiii}

The literature on the Canadian-American borderlands grew steadily over the next two decades, with historians producing articles, monographs, and dissertations on everything from religion to hockey.^{lxiv} In the West they looked at cross-border salmon fishing, gold mining, prostitution, migrant labor, bootlegging, ranching, female settlers, regional identity, and a host of other topics.^{lxv} Several scholars discussed migration between the United States and Canada, including the movement of American people, agricultural methods, and political ideas into the prairie provinces.^{lxvi} The scholarship on aboriginal people in the western borderlands also surged.^{lxvii} Between 2002 and 2008, three essay collections comparing the Canadian and American Wests appeared, Canadian

historian Sterling Evans compiled a number of previously published articles on the western borderlands, and the first collection of essays on the historical role the forty-ninth parallel played in western women's lives was published.^{lxviii} Much of this literature is still exploratory in nature. Usually the studies take a continental approach (treating the region as a whole and ignoring the border), a comparative approach (emphasizing differences between Canadians and Americans), a borderlands approach (focusing on people and communities near the border and emphasizing cross-border connections), or a combination of these approaches.^{lxix} The September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States and heightened concerns about continental security may explain some of the recent interest in the Canadian-American border. However, many of these studies originated before 9/11, when the forty-ninth parallel and other national borders were so permeable that scholars often spoke of the "borderless world."^{lxx} For whatever reason, work on the Canadian-American boundary has expanded to the point where some scholars are beginning to wonder if a school of northern borderlands history has finally materialized.^{lxxi} Others imagine a day when northern and southern borderlands historians will work toward "an integrated and comparative history of North American border-making."^{lxxii}

In recent years three books have shed light on the social history of the Plains borderlands, examining the lives and perceptions of border residents in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The books' authors deal with the same general cross-border region that earlier borderlands writers like Jones, Howard, Stegner, and Sharp covered. Each book approaches the borderlands from a different angle. Together they provide a comprehensive picture of the borderlands during the settlement period; however, some

authors downplay the presence of the border and some express superficial or stereotypical notions about differences between Canadians and Americans.

American anthropologists John W. Bennett and Seena B. Kohl, who published *Settling the Canadian-American West* in 1995, contribute to western borderlands historiography in several ways.^{lxxiii} First, they deal with ethnicity and gender issues and are careful to include women, families, and children. They show that the Great Plains were not, as Walter Prescott Webb said, strictly “a man’s country.”^{lxxiv} Nor were the borderlands settled solely by Anglo-Americans; Bennett and Kohl note the presence of eastern European and Scandinavian immigrants (but not Asians, Blacks, or Jews). Second, Bennett and Kohl make an effort to write history from the inside out, asking how settlers perceived their experiences, what values best served them, and how they came to think of themselves as “Westerners.” Third, they ask about the difference the political border made in borderlands residents’ lives, arguing that it was significant in some ways but not in others. Here they assume that Montana communities were more “rough-edged and individualistic” than Canadian communities, and that the Canadian side of the border was milder than the American side – “more disciplined and influenced by eastern British-style order and elitism.” But the boundary made little difference to borderlanders’ sense of community and national identity, at least initially. Rural communities often extended across the forty-ninth parallel and residents did not think of themselves as either Canadians or Americans. They were more interested in surviving and in building communities than in questions of nationality. “National identification with either country came slowly to the Canadian-American West,” write Bennett and Kohl, “not as a single

act of Congress or Parliament but as a slow accumulation of responsibilities and benefits, of political customs, and above all from long-term residence on one side or the other.”^{lxxv}

Although they sometimes compare Canadians and Americans, Bennett and Kohl generally behave as though the international boundary is not there. Like the settler who said his “neighborhood” ran from Maple Creek, Saskatchewan, to Chinook, Montana, they treat the northern Great Plains borderlands as a continuous region. They lump American and Canadian settlers’ experiences together under the heading “Canadian-American West.” They do not think of the borderlands as a place where different cultures and nationalities mixed; there is very little sense of how Canadians, Americans, and people of various ethnic backgrounds saw and interacted with each other. To Bennett and Kohl, the political and cultural lines that ran through the settlers’ midst are not as important as the boundary between the undeveloped and the developed frontier. They impose a progressive, continentalist, American framework on the Plains borderlands, assuming that the region as a whole moved through the evolutionary stages of development famously articulated by American historian Frederick Jackson Turner in 1893. They assume that the entire region was one big melting pot, and that the settlement process in the borderlands produced “a remarkable type of human being” whose individualistic, egalitarian, pragmatic qualities found their way into the North American mainstream.^{lxxvi}

Bennett and Kohl’s view of the northern borderlands is relentlessly sunny. They ignore or gloss over ethnic discrimination, gender inequities, and environmental and economic hardships. Even the eventual depopulation of the borderlands is seen as a good

thing because it allowed remaining farmers to enlarge their holdings. Nothing that happened in the borderlands during the settlement period and the years that followed was enough to destroy the settlers' spirit. Indeed, at the end of the book, Bennett and Kohl predict (somewhat accurately it turns out) that the values of self-help and cooperative action would endure and the region's "populist impulse" would rise again.^{lxxvii}

In her 2001 book *The Medicine Line*, American narrative historian Beth LaDow describes events along a one hundred-mile stretch of the Saskatchewan-Montana border between the early 1870s and the 1920s, between the time the international boundary was surveyed and the period when many settlers left the area.^{lxxviii} Mainly through stories about Sitting Bull, Northwest Mounted Police Inspector James Walsh, American Army Colonel Nelson Appleton Miles, Louis Riel, railway entrepreneur Jim Hill, Wallace Stegner, and others, LaDow pursues themes that have to do with the environment, culture, race, ethnicity, and local and national identity. Her borderlands are what Stegner called a "wild mix of cultures and people" who fight amongst themselves, attend the same picnics and baseball games, celebrate both Canadian and American national holidays, and scuffle to survive a harsh, arid environment.^{lxxix} She finds that borderlanders' common landscape defines them more than their multicultural background or nationality. They are bound together by a love-hate relationship with the land and an urge to survive.

Threaded throughout the book are questions about borderlanders' national identity and how their experiences fit national narratives. Did the region's residents think of themselves as either Canadians or Americans? Were the two sides of the border marked by fundamental differences? Were Americans and Canadians driven by similar national

myths? LaDow suggests that settlement in both the Canadian West and the American West was inspired by Jefferson's agrarian myth and the narrative of progress. People on both sides of the border had much in common. They had a similar propensity to organize social institutions and to engage in violence and ethnic and racial conflict. Relationships between Americans and Canadians were generally friendly, and borderlanders saw national distinctions as irrelevant; many immigrants strove to be "Canadians *and* Americans." The border itself served as a potent political dividing line only in its infancy. It quelled Canadians' fears of annexation, offered natives hope of political sanctuary, and inspired "rival governments and visionary capitalists to establish parallel worlds of settlement along it." Thereafter, the medicine line faded in significance. "It faded into something to overcome or ignore," writes LaDow. "Despite the political and cultural divisions the border signified, and in contrast to the twentieth-century Mexican border, it made its mark as something astoundingly weak, weaker than the local forces of nature and culture and the larger forces of capitalism and British-based nations. It was, perhaps more than any other, the place where exclusively national stories become an intertwined story of the North American West."^{lxxx}

Like Bennett and Kohl, LaDow approaches the forty-ninth parallel from the American side. She remembers reading Stegner's *Wolf Willow* as a child, crossing the border every summer when her family ventured north from Montana, and wondering "what it means to be an American."^{lxxxi} Early in the book she describes a scene in which she and two octogenarians from northern Montana drive up to a remote part of the border and survey the seamless landscape of prairie grass, prickly pears, and sage that Stegner knew so well. Perhaps her nationality explains why LaDow, like Bennett and Kohl,

ultimately cannot get past stereotypes about Canadians and Americans. Although she finds some Canadians to be independent-minded and some Americans to be collective-minded, she often assumes that Canadians were more “moderate,” pro-government, and British (she almost always refers to British immigrants as “pretentious”), and less adventurous, individualistic, and rough and ready than Americans.^{lxxxii}

Overall LaDow tells a grim tale, arguing that the northern borderlands were “primed for fatality.” Natives and settlers alike invested their hopes in the region, only to have those hopes dashed. Sitting Bull, who used the medicine line to escape capture by American soldiers, was eventually compelled to return to the United States and to give up his freedom. Waves of ranchers and farmers, lusting after open spaces and bursting with optimism, flooded the northern plains. But nature conspired against them. Drought, blizzards, and the Spanish influenza epidemic of 1918 drove many of them away. Wallace Stegner and his family were just a few of the borderlands’ casualties. In the end, LaDow says Great Plains borderlanders were united by a kind of spiritual hunger, a (doomed) quest for freedom and a better life. “In the lives on the borderland, the real divide was not the border. It was the line that divided past from future – the line of hope.”^{lxxxiii}

Canadian historian Sheila McManus complicates the story of the border still further by exploring the borderlands between national and social history in *The Line Which Separates*, published in 2005. McManus argues that the line government surveyors drew along the forty-ninth parallel in the early 1870s only partially succeeded in separating the “Canadian West” from the “American West.” The markers the surveyors left behind – large mounds of rocks or earth spaced three miles apart – highlighted the

porous nature of the new international boundary. They left plenty of room for cross-border connections that defied Ottawa's and Washington's vision for the region. "The land that would become the Alberta-Montana borderlands was home to interconnected communities, economies, and ecologies that could not be divided simply by proclaiming that a linear boundary ran through them," writes McManus.^{lxxxiv}

McManus, who grew up in Calgary, Alberta, argues that the political border was just one of many lines Canada and the United States tried to impose on the northern Plains borderlands during the critical period in the late nineteenth century when both countries were trying to establish control over their respective Wests. "Both governments wanted the border to be a clear and unequivocal dividing line between the two nations that were being constructed, and they wanted that line to reinforce and be reinforced by spacial, racial, and gender categories that were also supposed to be clear and unequivocal." McManus finds that the two governments employed similar strategies in their attempts to create a linear boundary. First they tried to control the land. Then they tried to control its native inhabitants. Finally they encouraged an influx of white settlers who would supposedly identify with one nation or the other. "White women were the unacknowledged key to this final step. Their presence was the ultimate symbol of successful colonization and the future of each nation."^{lxxxv}

However, the borderlands and their inhabitants often frustrated federal authorities' efforts. Prairie fires, cattle, and native people destroyed or carried away the survey stakes that represented official, national possession of the land; maps continued to reveal "a coherent region with more similarities than differences"; the Blackfoot refused to be easily contained within national and local boundaries; the region was more racially and

ethnically diverse than officials would have liked; and white women, while gradually firming up particular racial and gender norms, created communities that closely resembled those across the line and showed little interest in the border or in national identity.^{lxxxvi} The lines Ottawa and Washington hoped would separate Americans from Canadians, whites from natives, different immigrant groups from each other, and women's roles from men's roles were not enough to turn Montana and Alberta into what historians Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron would call "bordered lands."^{lxxxvii} The process of dividing and nationalizing the northern Plains was difficult, uneven, and in some ways remained incomplete.

McManus contributes to the literature on the Canadian-American borderlands by emphasizing the important role the Great Plains borderlands played in the construction of the two nations, by showing how the countries' similar colonial agendas played out in the region, and by examining the complicated notions about space, race, gender, and nation that supported and undermined those agendas. McManus is one of the first scholars to carefully explore the social borders that criss-crossed the Plains borderlands, and she is the first to give women and their notions about the region's various boundaries a central role. Ultimately McManus depicts the western borderlands as the site of a prolonged battle between national and local forces. As the twentieth century progressed the forty-ninth parallel became a "powerful symbolic divide between Canada and the United States," but as a physical barrier "the border remained on shaky ground." Borderlanders continued to make and remake cross-border connections, weakening the border's ability to separate the two Wests, even to the present day. "The weight of the border's history is on continuity, not change," insists McManus.^{lxxxviii}

In 2004 Alberta rancher and history professor Warren Elofson produced the first cross-border study of cattle ranching on the northern Great Plains, arguing that “the political boundary known as the forty-ninth parallel was far more a psychological demarcation than a border that substantively distinguished between disparate people.”^{lxxxix} Earlier scholars, such as David Breen, have contended that the Canadian ranch community of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was made up of elites from eastern Canada and Britain and was considerably more refined and law-abiding than the American ranch community.^{xc} However, Elofson found that ranches on both sides of the border were influenced by both the Old and New Worlds, society on the Canadian side was almost as violent and debauched as society on the American side, and the cattle industry on both sides of the border responded to northwestern frontier conditions by evolving from enormous, open range ranches to smaller, mixed farms or “ranch farms.”^{xc} While Breen focused on the Canadian prairie West and took a “top down” approach, focusing on federal government policies and the lives of ranch owners and managers, Elofson took a comparative approach to the borderlands as a whole and did an excellent job of depicting the lives of the cowboys who worked the ranches and wrestled with the frontier environment.^{xcii}

Recently English professor Frances Kaye, who has homes in Calgary and outside Lincoln, Nebraska, has produced a transnational historical survey, or “meditation,” on the Great Plains as a whole. She argues that the semi-arid region that runs from central Alberta to Texas shares a history based on the early, misguided notion that the land was deficient. Similar people, ideas, and events – including dust bowls and economic

depressions -- characterized the Canadian and American sections of the Plains. Kaye's continentalist approach erases the international boundary, and so cannot be thought of as a borderlands study. Nor does she focus on individual residents' experiences in the border region.^{xciii}

In 2012 Kornel Chang published *Pacific Connections: The Making of the U.S.-Canadian Borderlands*, which focuses on the Pacific Northwest and its historical relationship with China, Japan, and South Asia. Chang's borderlands, which run from Seattle, Washington, to Vancouver, British Columbia, are inhabited by a network of laborers, merchants, smugglers, and activists who resisted the efforts of American and British empire-builders to harden racial and national lines in the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century. The once-porous boundary became increasingly impermeable to Asian migrants and radicals. As the United States and Canada stepped up border surveillance and anti-Asian immigration policies, the Canadian-American border was transformed "from an imaginary line on maps and atlases to a lived reality in the Pacific Northwest."^{xciv} Chang's work reminds us that a series of different borderlands ran along the international divide. Unique geographical characteristics and historical currents shaped the Pacific Northwest borderlands just as surely as they shaped the northern Great Plains borderlands to the east. *Pacific Connections* also reminds us that there are different ways to view borderlands. Chang views most of his subjects from the vantage point of community and business leaders and national authorities. This is not grass roots history.

The Plains section of the Canadian-American border has inspired a respectable -- even surprising -- number of borderlands studies over the past three-quarters of a century. From Stephen B. Jones to Sheila McManus, scholars have asked if and how the political

boundary shaped the border zone. The fact that the Plains borderlands were less populous and less racially and culturally split than some border zones failed to discourage these scholars. From their work we know that the history of the forty-ninth parallel has been rougher and more interesting than many North Americans assume. For much of its history the border has been the site of tension between east-west national forces and north-south regional forces. It has proven very porous to people, goods, and ideas. Many people crossed and recrossed the border, often mingling near the international line. Especially at first, borderlanders saw little point in the border and if they expressed any national allegiance at all, it was very fluid; they saw little difference between Americans and Canadians. The Plains border was different things to different people. It was a medicine line, an invisible line, an open fence, a line of hope. Some treated the border as an opportunity, while others used it to resist authorities at various levels. The borderlands were a zone of tension in more ways than one. The border's ability to separate Canadians and Americans also changed over time. Some historians say the border grew stronger, while others say it weakened. Several scholars argue that studying the borderlands can enrich our understanding of broader relations between Canada and the United States, not to mention relations among other nations.

Historical interest in the borderlands has waxed and waned over time, depending on what was happening in the world and in scholars' personal lives. Many of the scholars who wrote about the border were border crossers and borderlanders. As Canadians or Americans who grew up, found spouses, and built families and careers on the other side of the line, they understood the powerful effect the border could have on people's lives and they knew about the many social, economic, and other connections that spanned the

border. To these scholars and to many borderlanders the border was more than a metaphor; it was a lived experience.

In 2006 American historian Elizabeth Jameson and Canadian historian Jeremy Mouat published an article comparing Canadian and American historiographies of the forty-ninth parallel and the West. They note that borderlands history as a category is still “mired in nationalist assumptions.” However, a growing number of studies are focusing on frontiers and borderlands as cultural (rather than national) meeting grounds and the importance of identifying relationships that crossed national boundaries long after the creation of nation states.^{xv}

This dissertation builds on earlier borderlands studies by discussing the role the Canadian-American border played in the lives of northern Great Plains residents in the 1930s and early 1940s. Few scholars have examined the history of the forty-ninth parallel past the close of the settlement period. Historians tend to lose interest at the moment when the United States and Canada began to restrict cross-border migration and agricultural trade – effectively closing the border -- in an effort to cope with the Great Depression. Aside from McManus, even scholars who emphasize the social history of the Plains borderlands seem to think that Washington and Ottawa succeeded in splitting the borderlands into two national camps by 1930. This study challenges this assumption. It shows that the community that grew up along the Plains border in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century survived into the 1930s. Tighter border rules and profound economic, social, and environmental changes failed to sever the countless cross-border connections that defined this borderlands community. Official migration between Canada and the United States dropped off, but many Great Plains residents continued to cross the

international line to socialize, shop, worship, play, attend school, conduct business, find marriage partners, and break the law. Did their many transborder interactions help them juggle multiple identities and transcend national, ethnic, and cultural differences? Did they feel different from non-borderlanders? Did they pressure national authorities to recognize their special needs?

The study also tests the theory, borrowed from southern borderlands historian Oscar J. Martinez, that a distinctive “border culture” or “border milieu” characterized the Canadian-American borderlands -- that “unique forces, processes, and characteristics” set Plains borderlanders apart from non-borderlanders.^{xcvi} Few historians have applied Martinez’s theories to the Canadian-American borderlands. Claire Puccia Parham, author of *From Great Wilderness to Seaway Towns: A Comparative History of Cornwall, Ontario, and Massena, New York, 1784-2001*, suggests that Cornwall and Massena possessed a border culture, but undermines her argument by using a comparative rather than a borderlands approach; she focuses not on interactions and similarities between the two communities, but on testing sociologist Seymour Lipset’s assumptions about differences between Canadians and Americans.^{xcvii}

Newspapers, memoirs, letters, government records, local histories, and interviews with people who lived in the Plains borderlands during the Great Depression show that Plains borderlanders did, indeed, possess a special border culture – and they knew it. Individual borderlanders’ participation in the border milieu was mediated by factors such as their race, ethnicity, gender, proximity to the border, length of residency in the borderlands, and level of cross-border interaction. “In any borderland, the human spectrum ranges from the quintessential border people (individuals highly immersed in

transnational and transcultural interaction) to people who for one reason or another are influenced very little by the presence of the boundary and are therefore not much different from people living in interior areas,” writes Martinez.^{xcviii} The subjects of this study shared a particular identity based on their experiences as border crossers and border residents. They thought of the borderlands as a community of people who good-naturedly accommodated various nationalities (especially people of Anglo “stock”), fraternized and cooperated with people across the line, and valued rural, western qualities like friendliness, honesty, independence, and resourcefulness.^{xcix} Borderlanders rarely distinguished between Canadians and Americans, and anti-American or anti-Canadian sentiment was almost unheard of. Borderlanders were proud of their proximity to the international boundary and the way they used it to benefit themselves. They were especially proud of their cross-border relationships. They had a tremendous desire to foster and maintain these ties, and they resented anyone or anything, including border officials and political processes, that stood in their way.

Research shows that Plains borderlanders’ strong sense of community extended into the Second World War. Between the time Canada entered the war in 1939 and the United States joined in 1941, community leaders in northern Montana and southern Alberta worked in concert to strengthen continental ties and to undermine American isolationism. Montana’s beleaguered Senator Murray received a barrage of letters from business people in Great Falls and Lethbridge asking him to expedite approval of a cross-border “air link” between the two small cities. The Lethbridge Board of Trade and the Great Falls Chamber of Commerce argued that the new air route would not only facilitate business, personal, and tourist connections between Montana and Alberta, but it would

also enhance North American security. “Under present world conditions we feel that such a link may, in the not too distant future, prove a very valuable asset to both countries concerned,” wrote Lethbridge Board of Trade Airways Committee Chairman George B. Davies.^c His counterpart with the Great Falls Chamber of Commerce, James J. Flaherty, used his knowledge of Great Plains history and Canadian-American relations to push the plan. He urged Murray to phone the chairman of the American Civil Aeronautics Administration because the chairman was “a man of vision” like James Hill, the former Canadian who extended the Great Northern Railway across northern Montana and “built an empire.”^{ci} Flaherty also reminded Murray of the August 1940 “meeting of Prime Minister MacKenzie [sic] King and President Roosevelt on the banks of the St. Lawrence in which this nation [offered] its strength and resources to the protection of Canada.” In return, Flaherty said, Canada owed Montana “a safe all year round protected” air route from Great Falls to Lethbridge and on to Alaska.^{cii} By October 1940 Flaherty was writing Murray every day to argue that “the natural route” from Great Falls to Lethbridge “should be put in *now*.” On October 8 he sent Murray a *Great Falls Tribune* clipping supporting the plan and a map that showed the offending 170-mile gap in an air corridor stretching from Panama to Nome, Alaska. “The citizens of Montana are very angry over this delay,” Flaherty wrote Murray in Washington. “Everything has been said than can be said on the subject. Then why don’t you, Senator, insist that the line with two round trips daily be established immediately.”^{ciii}

On October 14 Murray wrote the chairman of the Civil Aeronautics Administration to say he found Flaherty’s arguments “very reasonable” and to beg the chairman to move quickly on the “Lethbridge extension.” “I am under constant pressure

from Montana,” Murray said.^{civ} Meanwhile, back in the Montana-Alberta borderlands, Great Falls and Lethbridge business leaders were exchanging visits and letters and whipping up public sympathy for Murray and his belief that America should help the war effort. When Flaherty sent Lethbridge Board of Trade President Charles MacMillan a Montana newspaper editorial praising Murray, MacMillan happily forwarded the item to the *Lethbridge Herald* for publication. MacMillan said it gave the board “a great deal of satisfaction” to publicize Murray’s views because many people in the area were anti-isolationists. “Should action of similar nature on our part assist the complete change of isolationist opinion please do not hesitate to command us accordingly,” MacMillan urged.^{cv}

Murray and his supporters must have been relieved when the Civil Aeronautics Board finally gave the Great Falls-Lethbridge air route the go-ahead on December 5, 1940. In its report the board noted that air traffic between the two borderland cities “would ordinarily seem insufficient to justify a new route, but the circumstances here are peculiar.” The board was swayed by testimony that the air route was vital to national defence, would improve “commercial intercourse between the US and Canada,” and would serve a cross-border, Montana-Alberta community “of the same stock.” The approved airline, Western Air Express, could expect to ferry thousands of Americans living in Alberta, and Canadians living in the United States, back and forth across the border. “There is a definite community of interest between the population of Western Canada and the territories served by the applicants due to their common economic activities, including agriculture and ranching, mining, and oil developments,” wrote the board.^{cvi}

Murray, the champion of the Plains borderlands, duly issued press releases and telegrams to radio stations and leaders in Lethbridge, Great Falls, and other northern Montana communities congratulating the region on establishing this “highly important crossing of the Canadian border, affording quick transportation between these two friendly countries.”^{cvi} Exciting as this development was for Murray and his borderlands compatriots, it was simply the latest incarnation of the Whoop-Up Trail and the other “natural” north-south links that had helped to unify the borderlands community for the previous seventy-five years.

To sum up, this dissertation argues that Great Plains borderlanders belonged to a “peculiar” community that gave them a special sense of identity and pride. In some ways their borderlands identity overrode their national identity. Borderlanders monitored the porousness of the border that ran through their midst, and when outside forces threatened to break down their community in the 1930s and 1940s, they fought back. Exquisitely aware of the border’s impact on their daily lives, they used a range of strategies to maintain and promote the cross-border connections they held dear. Often this meant pressuring, evading, or simply ignoring the authorities. Plains borderlanders and their culture proved very resilient in troubled times.

Most border studies tend to discuss Canadians, Americans, and border residents in general. They tell us that people migrated across the border, but not how they lived their lives in the border zone. This grassroots social history of the Plains borderlands asks how individual men, women, and children experienced the border on a daily basis. It uses the stories of particular people to explore the borderlands community. What did the border

mean to borderlanders? How did it look and feel? How did it affect their identity? How did it shape their social and economic lives?

Having suggested that many borderlands writers have been influenced by world events or personal experiences as border residents and border crossers, perhaps I should explain my own interest in the northern Plains borderlands. Although I grew up on the Alberta prairies and many of my ancestors were Canadian-American borderlanders (in both the East and the West), I was initially drawn to this subject because my maternal great-grandparents spent the Great Depression on a drought-stricken farm forty kilometres north of the Saskatchewan-Montana border. My great-grandmother's letters from this period sometimes mention American relatives, acquaintances, radio programs, and New Deal social welfare programs.^{cviii} Reading her letters, I wondered how people across the line experienced the Depression and how Canadians and Americans on the Great Plains saw each other. Although I hatched the idea for this study before September 11, 2001, the intense scrutiny the Canadian-American border has received since then has encouraged me to think about the border's meaning in times of national crisis, the resiliency of borderlands communities over time, and the question of national versus borderlands identity.

My study focuses mainly on northern Montana, southern Alberta, and southern Saskatchewan; it covers the rectangular region that runs from the present-day Coutts-Sweet Grass border crossing in the west to the North Portal-Portal crossing in the east, and from Lethbridge and Regina in the north to Great Falls and Glasgow in the south. The dissertation explores the various cross-border connections and tensions that characterized the borderlands, moving chronologically from borderlanders' response to

the closing of the border to rum-running and other smuggling activities to general crossborder interactions to the border's effect on intimate family experiences to the onset of the Second World War.

Chapter one describes the nature of the Great Plains border and borderlands during the settlement period. It discusses the ease with which borderlanders crossed "that invisible line" and the transborder migration, transportation, communication, and trade patterns that were in place by the 1930s.

Chapter two focuses on the tightening of the border in response to the Great Depression. The Canadian and American governments introduced strict tariff and immigration rules that profoundly limited the number of goods and people allowed to cross the border.

In chapter three we see the ways in which Canadian and American borderlanders resisted national attempts to segregate them. The border wasn't nearly as impermeable as authorities would have liked. Borderlanders frequently ignored or found ways around border rules.

Perhaps borderlanders' most obvious form of resistance was cross-border smuggling. Chapter four looks at how they used smuggling, rum-running, and rustling to resist national authority and to improve their economic circumstances. Smuggling helped to define their community. The chapter also asks how borderlanders reconciled their criminal behavior with their sense of themselves as honest, upright citizens.

Chapter five focuses on the region's many cross-border social and economic activities in the 1930s – ranging from border picnics, rabbit hunts, and women's club meetings to shopping contests, road-building projects, and soil conservation programs.

How did Canadians and Americans see these connections? How did they use their cross-border interactions to address the Great Depression? How did their experiences shape their identity? Essentially, borderlanders believed their cross-border relationships knit them together in ways that all nations should admire.

Chapter six asks what the border meant to youths, courting couples, and families. Many young people used the border to resist parental authority and social norms, taking advantage of more liberal drinking laws and marriage laws on the other side.

Borderlanders often sought intimacy across the line, going out of their way to establish and maintain cross-border family relationships. And yet, some borderlanders used the border to escape their family responsibilities. While some borderlanders associated the border with excitement and romance, others associated it with abandonment and pain.

Finally, in chapter seven, World War II comes to the borderlands, bringing tighter border restrictions and further disrupting borderlanders' lives. Did the war change relationships between Americans and Canadians in the region and did it affect their understanding of the border? Did the war permanently shatter Great Plains borderlanders' sense of unity -- or would their special community rise again?

Notes

ⁱ Douglas Parker to James E. Murray, 7 December 1935; James E. Murray to Douglas Parker, 23 December 1935; I. F. Wixon to James E. Murray, 19 December 1935; James E. Murray to Douglas Parker, 23 January 1936. James E. Murray Papers, K. Ross Toole Archives, Maureen and Mike Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula, Collection 91, Series I, Box 215, Folder 7.

ⁱⁱ James E. Murray, "Address by Honorable James Murray, United States Senator from Montana, before the Kiwanis Club of Montreal, at Montreal, Canada, July 8, 1943," Murray Papers, Series III, Box 947, Folder 17.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid. For details on Murray's life and political views, see Donald E. Spritzer, "New Dealer from Montana: The Senate Career of James E. Murray" (PhD diss., University of Montana, 1980).

^{iv} Herbert Eugene Bolton, *The Spanish Borderlands: A Chronicle of Old Florida and the Southwest* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1921). On the historiography of the southern borderlands, see Samuel Truett and Elliott Young, "Making Transnational History: Nations, Regions, and Borderlands," in *Continental Crossroads: Remapping U.S.-Mexico Borderlands History*, ed. Samuel Truett and Elliott Young (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004), 1-32.

^v "Man and Woman Murdered in Cold Blood, Blaine Co.," *Daniels County Leader*, 7 July 1932. Recent historiographical essays on the Canadian-American border and the North American borderlands include Pekka Hamalainen and Samuel Truett, "On Borderlands," *Journal of American History* 98, no. 2 (2011): 338-61; Benjamin H. Johnson and Andrew R. Graybill, "Borders and Their Historians in North America," in *Bridging National Borders in North America*, ed. Benjamin H. Johnson and Andrew R. Graybill (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010), 1-29; Benjamin Johnson, "Problems and Prospects in North American Borderlands History," *History Compass* 4, no. 1 (2006): 186-92; Elizabeth Jameson and Jeremy Mouat, "Telling Differences: The Forty-Ninth Parallel and Historiographies of the West and Nation," *Pacific Historical Review* 75, no. 2 (2006): 183-230; Elizabeth Jameson, "Dancing on the Rim, Tiptoeing through Minefields: Challenges and Promises of Borderlands," *Pacific Historical Review* 75, no. 1 (2006): 1-24; Randy William Widdis, "Migration, Borderlands, and National Identity: Directions for Research," in *Permeable Border: The Great Lakes Basin as Transnational Region, 1650-1990*, ed. John J. Bukowczyk and others (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005), 152-74. On the historiography of the western stretch of the Canadian-American border, see Thomas D. Isern and R. Bruce Shepard, "Duty-Free: An Introduction to the Practice of Regional History along the Forty-ninth Parallel," in *The Borderlands of the American and Canadian Wests: Essays on Regional History of the Forty-ninth Parallel*, ed. Sterling Evans (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), xxvi-xxxv; Ken S. Coates and John M. Findlay, "Scholars and the Forty-

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^{vi} Chauncy D. Harris, “In Memoriam: Stephen Barr Jones, 1903-1984,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 75, no. 2 (1985): 271-76; Stephen B. Jones, “Human Occupance of the Bow-Kicking Horse Region, Canadian Rocky Mountains” (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1933).

^{vii} Stephen B. Jones, “The Forty-ninth Parallel in the Great Plains: The Historical Geography of a Boundary,” *Journal of Geography* 31, no. 9 (1932): 365, 362, 366, 367, 357, 368.

^{viii} Dennis Rumley and Julian V. Minghi, “The Border Landscape Concept,” in *The Geography of Border Landscapes*, ed. Dennis Rumley and Julian V. Minghi (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), 3.

^{ix} Stephen B. Jones, “The Cordilleran Section of the Canada-United States Borderland,” *Geographical Journal* 89, no. 5 (1937): 445, 441, 443.

^x Joseph Kinsey Howard, *Montana: High, Wide, and Handsome* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1943), 319.

^{xi} Joseph Kinsey Howard, *Strange Empire* (1952; repr., St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1994), 13.

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^{xiii} Howard, *Montana*, 326-27, 275.

^{xiv} Howard, *Strange Empire*, 14, 49, 348.

^{xv} Lawrence Taliaffero, quoted in Howard, *Strange Empire*, 49.

^{xvi} Howard, *Strange Empire*, 49.

^{xvii} Dick Harrison, “Frontiers and Borders: Wallace Stegner in Canada,” in *Wallace Stegner: Man and Writer*, ed. Charles E. Rankin (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996), 198, 191.

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- ^{xxiii} Stegner and Etulain, *Stegner*, 1.
- ^{xxiv} Stegner, *Wolf Willow*, 127-38, 277.
- ^{xxv} Fradkin, "Wallace Stegner's Formative Years," 13.
- ^{xxvi} Benson, *Wallace Stegner*, 31.
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^{xxxvii} Marcus Lee Hansen and John Bartlet Brebner, *The Mingling of the Canadian and American Peoples* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1940).

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^{xxxix} Hansen and Brebner, *Mingling*, x. Elizabeth B. Elliot-Meisel, "John Bartlet Brebner: The Private Man Behind the Professional Historian," *American Review of Canadian Studies* 32, no. 4 (Winter 2002): 629, aptly describes Brebner as a historian with one foot in Canada and the other in the United States.

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^{xliii} Walter Prescott Webb, quoted in Rozum, "Spark," 135.

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^{li} Lauren McKinsey and Victor Konrad, *Borderlands Reflections: The United States and Canada* (Orono: Borderlands Project, 1989), 6.

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^{xcvii} Claire Puccia Parham, *From Great Wilderness to Seaway Towns: A Comparative History of Cornwall, Ontario, and Massena, New York, 1784-2001* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004).

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^{xcix} On rural community and culture, see Orville Vernon Burton, "Reaping What We Sow: Community and Rural History," *Agricultural History*, 76, no. 4 (2002): 631-58.

^c George B. Davies to James E. Murray, 28 October 1940, Murray Papers, Series I, Box 544, Folder 13.

^{ci} James J. Flaherty to James E. Murray, 9 October 1940, Murray Papers, Series I, Box 544, Folder 13.

^{cii} Norman N. Thisted, James J. Flaherty, and A. J. Breitenstein to James E. Murray, 20 August 1940, Murray Papers, Series I, Box 544, Folder 13. Flaherty and his fellow Great Falls Chamber of Commerce senior officers were referring to the August 18, 1940, Ogdensburg Agreement to create the Canada-United States Permanent Joint Board on Defence.

^{ciii} James J. Flaherty to James E. Murray, 8 October 1940, Murray Papers, Series I, Box 544, Folder 13.

^{civ} James E. Murray to Harllee Branch, 14 October 1940, Murray Papers, Series I, Box 544, Folder 13.

^{cv} Charles MacMillan to James J. Flaherty, 31 March 1941; "Senator Murray Clears the Air," *Bozeman Daily Chronicle*, 28 February 1941, repr. *Lethbridge Herald*, 21 March 1941. Murray Papers, Series I, Box 544, Folder 3.

^{cvi} "Western Air Express Corporation Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity, Great Falls – Lethbridge Operation," 5 December 1940, Civil Aeronautics Board, Washington, D. C., Docket No. 31-401-B-1, Serial Number 796, Murray Papers, Series I, Box 544, Folder 3.

^{cvii} James E. Murray memo to Charles Murray, no date, Murray Papers, Series I, Box 544, Folder 3.

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CHAPTER ONE

That Invisible Line

On a sultry evening in August 1929, a small airplane climbed into the sky above Scobey, Montana. Peering down at a familiar yet “greatly diminished landscape,” the pilot and his passenger noted that “the villages of Coronach, East Poplar, Madoc, Flaxville, Whitetail and other towns for a radius of more than 25 miles were plainly visible. Fife Lake seemed close enough to dive into from the plane.” The interesting thing about Henry Kleinman’s and Lloyd Schaeffer’s “joy ride” over northeastern Montana was that their aerial view included communities in southern Saskatchewan. Coronach, East Poplar, and Fife Lake were all on the Canadian side of the border. But Kleinman and Schaeffer failed to mention the international boundary. They *knew* the border was down there; they just did not *see* it. To Kleinman, Schaeffer, and many other borderlanders in the early twentieth century, the forty-ninth parallel was simply “that invisible line that most of us blithely ignored.”ⁱ

The Canadian-American border had been a fixture in northern Plains residents’ lives for as long as they could remember. It was as if it had always been there, separating them from their own history. Like young Wallace Stegner, who accepted the international boundary as unthinkingly “as I accepted Orion in the winter sky,” few of the region’s white settlers and their offspring knew the tangled story of the border and the border zone: that after much wrangling Britain and the United States agreed to split the West along the forty-ninth parallel in 1818;ⁱⁱ that surveyors strung stone cairns, earth mounds, and iron stakes along the 853-mile line from the Lake of the Woods to the Rockies in the early 1870s; that the region’s first borderlanders, the Metis, Cree, Sioux, and other

aboriginal people, fought to preserve their transborder communities until the end of the nineteenth century; that north-south ties continued to unify Whoop-Up Country long after the North West Mounted Police and the Canadian Pacific Railway supposedly sparked a “regional divorce”;ⁱⁱⁱ that an “intermixture” of Canadian and American cattle herds, cowboys, and outlaws dominated the borderlands in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century;^{iv} that widely-spaced, black iron obelisks replaced the original border markers between 1909 and 1913, right around the time the Stegners and thousands of other homesteaders invaded the northern Plains. By the time “land-hungry” Canadians, Americans, and Europeans began chewing up the sod in southeastern Alberta, southern Saskatchewan, and northeastern Montana, few signs of the borderlands’ previous inhabitants remained.^v The newcomers lay claim to the entire region, “discovering” natural landmarks and referring to “our North West.”^{vi} The international boundary was almost as irrelevant to these people as it was to their predecessors. Although they knew it existed, they did not always know – or care – precisely where it lay. The line of pillars that ran east and west through badlands, flats, and gently rolling hills was barely visible and easily crossed. It was the open fence of Stegner’s childhood, dwarfed by the enormity of the landscape and the imperative of human need.

Most of the North American West had been settled by the time Washington and Ottawa decided to throw open the driest section of the northern Plains, which happened to embrace the Canadian-American border. In 1908-9, settlers began pouring into the corridor between the South Saskatchewan and the Missouri, spawning border communities like Plentywood, Scobey, Opheim, Glentana, and Turner in Montana, and Milk River, Shaunavon, Assiniboia, and Bengough in Alberta and Saskatchewan.^{vii}

Several settlers in both countries emphasized their proximity to the forty-ninth parallel by giving schools and rural districts names like Border, Boundary, Borderland, and Bordervale.^{viii} Initially, at least, more American settlements than Canadian settlements hugged the border, perhaps because Great Northern Railway lines ran closer to the boundary than Canadian Pacific Railway lines. Residents of southern Alberta and southern Saskatchewan often “freighted” their wheat to northern Montana railroad towns and collected mail and supplies from clusters of businesses just across the border. Many Canadian homestead shacks were built with lumber from south of the line. “There were no Ports of Entry or border restrictions, and one just followed the nearest trail to where they wished to go,” recalls one southwestern Saskatchewan family. “Caldwell’s store in Montana seven miles away seemed a short drive by team and democrat. Until Shaunavon was built, we hauled our wheat to Malta, and brought lumber, coal, and other provisions on the return trip.”^{ix} Many parts of southern Saskatchewan did not get rail lines and towns until the late 1920s and early 1930s.^x Although Canadian and American government and railroad promoters competed to see who could fill their section of the “Last Best West” the fastest, incoming farmers did not seem to distinguish between the two countries.^{xi} “The border was disregarded by eager land seekers who thought much of fertility and markets and little of political jurisdiction,” write Hansen and Brebner.^{xii} Most of the newcomers came from Europe and previously settled parts of Canada and the United States. Memoirs and community history books are full of stories about individuals and families who crossed and re-crossed the Plains border, homesteading first on one side and then the other. Many were “border people” who stayed close to the line and switched national allegiance several times.^{xiii} Bill Helgesen, for instance, migrated from Norway to

North Dakota as a young man in April 1905, filed on a homestead near Weyburn, Saskatchewan, a few months later, became a Canadian citizen in 1910, traded the homestead to a farmer in Portal, North Dakota, soon after, and moved to a homestead on the “Big Flat” near Turner, just south of the Saskatchewan-Montana border, in 1912. To comply with American homesteading regulations Helgesen presumably applied for American citizenship. This did not prevent him from regularly crossing the border in the 1920s and 1930s to work, socialize, and lobby Saskatchewan and Montana politicians to improve roads leading to the local port of entry. In his memoir Helgesen reveals that he developed a mixed sense of North American citizenship that overrode his national origins. While working for an English-speaking farm couple near Weyburn, he learned “American ways and customs,” taught himself English by reading “horses for sale” advertisements in the *Minneapolis Tribune*, began writing letters in English to friends back in North Dakota, and dropped his Norwegian accent. By following these strategies he became “more sure of myself and felt better, more like a Canadian or American.”^{xiv} Homestead entry records show that “a great many” settlers moving from the United States to the Canadian Plains “considered themselves to be Americans, regardless of where they had been born.”^{xv}

The population of the northern Great Plains exploded in the first few decades of the twentieth century. One historian estimates that between 1900 and 1920 the rural population of the eastern two-thirds of Montana and the western half of the Dakotas jumped by more than three hundred per cent, from 194,000 to 620,000.^{xvi} One thousand to fifteen hundred people a month applied for homesteads in north-central Montana in 1910.^{xvii} Joseph Kinsey Howard, no fan of “honyockers,” grouched that between 1910 and

1922 “the homesteaders took up 42 per cent of the entire area of the state – 93,000,000 acres – although more than 80 per cent of that area was unfit for crop agriculture.”^{xxviii}

The number of farms in Montana grew from 13,370 in 1900 to 57,677 in 1920, while the total population leapt from 243,329 to 548,889.^{xix} The picture for the Canadian portion of the northern Plains was equally startling. The population of the North-West Territories (later Alberta, Saskatchewan, and part of Manitoba) went from 159,000 in 1901 to more than 1.3 million in 1921.^{xx} Saskatchewan, which soon became the most populous prairie province, saw farm numbers multiply almost nine times, from 13,445 in 1901 to 119,451 in 1921.^{xxi} Homesteaders saved their biggest “stampede” for the semi-arid rangelands between Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, and Calgary, Alberta, establishing an average of more than 40,000 homesteads a year between 1909 and 1912.^{xxii} Ranchers near the international boundary in southwestern Saskatchewan watched in horror as more than 4.5 million acres of fescue succumbed to the plough.^{xxiii} Agriculture quickly became the region’s chief industry. Although mixed farmers, sheep ranchers, and small-scale ranchers or stockgrowers all lived along the border, most borderlanders focused on wheat. By the early 1920s Saskatchewan had more than thirteen million acres and Montana had more than three million acres in Marquis and other varieties. Scobey, which was on a branch line of the Great Northern Railway in Daniels county, became a bustling trade centre for producers in northeastern Montana and south-central Saskatchewan. The fact that Scobey shipped more than one million bushels of wheat every fall – much of it hauled across the border by Saskatchewan farmers – allowed the town to brag that it was “the largest primary market in the United States, and probably the world.”^{xxiv}

Northern Plains people were a diverse, trans migratory lot. For many homesteaders the region was the latest stop in a series of cross-Atlantic, cross-continent moves. Many were second or third-generation Americans or Canadians hopscotching further and further west in search of cheap land. Often they migrated within the same continental zone, moving directly across the forty-ninth parallel to neighbouring provinces or states and back again in response to shifting homesteading opportunities, economic conditions, weather patterns, and family circumstances.^{xxv} Between 1908 and 1931, more than 620,000 immigrants from the United States told Canadian authorities they were heading for the prairie provinces.^{xxvi} Thousands loaded their farm equipment and livestock into railway cars and took the popular Soo Line to North Portal, Saskatchewan, stopping to answer border officials' questions about their intended destination, their health, their animals' health, the value of their goods, and the amount of cash they carried, before continuing north to their new homes. Meanwhile, countless farmers left western Canada for newly opened areas in Minnesota, Montana, the Dakotas, and other western states.^{xxvii} The migrants chose the easiest, most affordable means of travel available; often that meant trundling across the border in prairie schooners, following the Whoop-Up Trail and other old trade routes between Montana and the prairie provinces.^{xxviii} There were so many road crossings and so few control stations along the line that entire wagon trains crossed undetected. Canadian and American authorities trying "to curb the free interchange of their peoples" admitted that thousands of migrants were slipping through their fingers.^{xxix} "It would be such a hardship and inconvenience for them to enter by rail through one of our established ports of entry that they can hardly be blamed for entering as they do, by driving across the boundary with all

their equipment and effects along the overland trails,” wrote one sympathetic official.^{xxx} In addition to the farm families who criss-crossed the international line, a large number of agricultural, mining, and other workers roamed unimpeded throughout the West.^{xxx} Thanks to the rogue behaviour of these border-crossers and the porous nature of the Plains border we will never know exactly how many people journeyed north or south during this period.^{xxxii}

Between 1906 and 1930 thousands of people in prairie Canada migrated to western and midwestern border states, generally settling in rural counties and cities near the boundary or clustering in urban centres on the Pacific coast.^{xxxiii} Most Anglo-Canadians in the movement headed for Minnesota or California, but 7.3 per cent picked Montana and 5.8 per cent chose North Dakota. In other words, 13.1 per cent of the prairie out-migrants favoured the Plains territory to the south; no single destination state achieved this level of popularity. Not surprisingly, most of the Anglo-Canadian immigrants Montana and North Dakota received during this period came from the prairie provinces.^{xxxiv} Many French-Canadians also found their way from the Canadian West to the American West. California was their favorite destination, but Montana was a close second; 12.3 per cent chose the northern Plains state.^{xxxv} “There has unquestionably been a large number of people gone back to the United States who were formerly settled in Western Canada,” J. H. Haslam told readers of the Winnipeg-based *Grain Growers’ Guide* in 1916. “There are settlements in Montana which practically consist of people who formerly lived in Canada.”^{xxxvi} In 1920 American officials counted approximately 115,000 Canadians in the country’s West North Central and Mountain states, which included Montana and the Dakotas.^{xxxvii}

The United States census for 1920 shows that 83 per cent of Montanans were American born. Most hailed from the upper American Midwest, which was settled in the second half of the nineteenth century.^{xxxviii} Canadians dominated the other 17 per cent of the population, outstripping competition from Norway, England, Germany, and other countries. Native-born Canadians accounted for more than 15.3 per cent of the state's foreign-born residents, compared to 8.1 per cent of the foreign-born in the entire United States. In 1920 Montana was home to 14,700 Canadian-born people, or 37,828 people of "Canadian stock." The number of Canadian born in Montana dropped to 11,193 in 1930, but Canadians still made up 2.08 per cent of the state's 537,606 residents, compared to 1.05 per cent of the total population of the United States. Only two states outside New England (Michigan and Washington) topped this figure.^{xxxix} Native-born Canadians formed a significant percentage of the population in many Montana counties, especially along the Canadian-American border. For example, the 276 Canadian-born people in Daniels County formed almost five per cent of the county's total population in 1930.^{xl} The Canadian born in Cascade County (home of the region's largest city, Great Falls) numbered 1,183 and accounted for almost 3 per cent of the total population. Altogether 4,212 of the 145,286 people sandwiched between the international boundary and the Missouri river were native to Canada. The percentage of Canadian born in most of the Plains border counties ranged between 2 and 4 per cent. Below the Missouri, it dwindled to less than 1 or 2 per cent.^{xli}

Meanwhile, American immigrants blanketed the Canadian Plains. Most gravitated from North Dakota, Minnesota, Montana, and other contiguous western and midwestern states to southern Alberta and southern Saskatchewan.^{xlii} They saw the region as an

extension of the American Plains and they planned to apply the farming techniques they knew from south of the border to the short-grass Canadian prairie.^{xliii} Between 1900 and 1920, upwards of 143,000 Americans filed on homesteads and thousands more purchased land from the Canadian Pacific Railway; by comparison, approximately 131,000 Canadian, 91,000 British, and 101,000 people of other nationalities applied for homesteads.^{xliv} American homesteaders, land buyers, and their families “constituted the largest foreign nationality to farm the Canadian Plains,” notes historian R. Bruce Shepard. “Together with Canadians from other provinces, and the various British peoples, they dominated the population of the region.”^{xlv} In 1921 approximately 54 per cent of Albertans were Canadian born, 17 per cent were American born, 17 per cent were British born, and 13 percent were natives of Europe and other countries. Alberta boasted the highest percentage of American-born residents in the country. Saskatchewan followed close behind, with native-born Canadians forming about 60 per cent, American and British-born residents each forming 13 per cent, and Europeans and others forming 15 per cent of the total population. Interestingly, the percentage of American born equalled the percentage of British born in each province and was three to four times higher than the 4.26 per cent figure for Canada as a whole.^{xlvi}

Although migration from the United States to the prairie provinces slowed in the 1920s, thousands of Americans continued to make their way north.^{xlvii} As late as 1928 western Canadian border officials admitted more than 8,400 American settlers and 12,800 “returning Canadians” – one-time Canadians who had settled in the United States and were migrating back to Canada.^{xlviii} The Canadian Department of Immigration and Colonization, then operating seventeen offices in the United States, processed 2,785

settlers in Fargo, North Dakota, and 1,141 in Great Falls, Montana -- in addition to the more than three thousand settlers from those areas who showed up unannounced at the border. By this time officials noticed that “a considerable number” of settlers were crossing the boundary in automobiles.^{xlix} Despite the fact that Alberta and Saskatchewan lost approximately 35,500 American-born residents (to death and out-migration) between 1921 and 1931, Americans maintained a strong presence on the Canadian Plains. There were still 78,959 native-born Americans in Alberta and 73,008 in Saskatchewan in 1931. They accounted for almost 11 per cent of Alberta’s 731,605 residents and 8 per cent of Saskatchewan’s 921,785 residents, compared to 3.3 per cent of the total population of Canada. Native-born Americans ranged throughout the southern half of Saskatchewan and the southern two-thirds of Alberta, but many preferred the border area. In southeastern Alberta 4,607, or 16 per cent, of residents in census division 1 and 2,823, or 19 per cent, of residents in census division 3 were American born. In division 4 in southwestern Saskatchewan, with 4,638 native-born Americans, the percentage was 16.5; no other division in the province came close. The concentration of American-born immigrants was even higher in certain spots near the border. They operated 30 to 50 per cent of southern Alberta farms in the mid-1920s and accounted for 35 per cent of farm operators in the Maple Creek district of southwestern Saskatchewan in 1931. All told, roughly 44,000 of the 480,000 people in the census divisions between the South Saskatchewan River and the international boundary were born in the United States.¹

By 1930-1931, then, approximately 625,000 people occupied the northern Great Plains borderlands. The Canadian and American-born dominated the population. Most borderlanders lived on farms or ranches far from their neighbours and far from major

urban centres. The population was sparse due to the area's vast size, marginal land, and difficult climate. Scholars have long recognized that parts of the northern Plains were subject to drought and dust storms. Sociologist Jean Burnet was the first to document the difficult lives of farmers in Alberta's "dry-belt economy" in *Next-year Country*.^{li} Historian David C. Jones then painted a poignant picture of the challenges residents of southeastern Alberta and southwestern Saskatchewan experienced between 1917 and 1926. Filled with stories of human aspiration and tragedy, *Empire of Dust* gives a clear sense of what it was like to live in the dust bowl of the northern Plains.^{lii} Recently, historian Curtis R. McManus argued that the "Dirty Thirties" actually struck the region years earlier. Residents of southeastern Alberta and southwestern Saskatchewan suffered total or near-total crop failure for most of the twenty-three years between 1914 and 1937, and this pattern of intermittent drought stretched across the international border as far south as the Texas Panhandle.^{liii} Donald Worster discussed the human and environmental effect of drought in *Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s*, and Catherine McNicol Stock was the first to examine North and South Dakota's dust bowl from a social and cultural perspective.^{liv} This dissertation builds on these scholars' work by focusing on the lives of people in the northern Great Plains region that straddled the Canadian-American border.

Thousands left the Alberta and Saskatchewan drylands by the early 1920s.^{lv} "In the end there was a tendency for penniless families, often from the United States, to sell whatever crop they had and to 'abscond' across the border with funds owing through liens and other encumbrances," writes Jones.^{lvi} The Montana side of the border was similarly primed for disaster. Drought struck the High Line -- counties between the

Canadian-American border and the Missouri River -- in 1917 and continued into the mid-1920s. “High winds set in during 1920, whipping away great clouds of pulverized topsoil into the hideous dust storms that would become so familiar a decade later,” note the authors of a history of Montana. An estimated sixty thousand settlers fled Montana for states like California, Washington, and Oregon in the 1920s.^{lvii} Still, a “surprising” number of Americans and Canadians persisted in the prairie provinces and the Plains states, respectively, into the 1930s.^{lviii}

Noting that most borderlanders were born in North America masks the overall diversity of the population. In 1918 Georgina Graves, a young Anglo-Canadian teacher at the Herba school in southwestern Saskatchewan, about twenty miles north of the border, wrote out a list of her forty-one pupils’ ethnic backgrounds. She counted “4 Swedes, 17 French, 6 Norwegians, 3 Syrians, 2 Austrians, 8 English, 1 German.”^{lix} The list suggests that the region was a smorgasbord of people of various ethnicities, cultures, and religions. The vast majority of borderlanders were of Anglo or European origin. People of British ancestry could be found throughout the area, especially in southeastern Saskatchewan. As late as 1930 the Canadian Pacific Railroad created a colony of British immigrants on the border southwest of Rockglen, Saskatchewan. A large swatch of Norwegians and other Scandinavians extended along the border from northwestern North Dakota into northeastern Montana, southern Saskatchewan, and southeastern Alberta. There was a bloc of Danish settlers in southeastern Saskatchewan and another bloc at Dagmar in northeastern Montana. Many groups of Russians, Germans, and other central and eastern Europeans were scattered throughout the borderlands, including a Romanian community north of Wood Mountain and a group of Ukrainians who spent time in Canada before

settling the area between Scobey and the border. There were Mennonite settlements in southeastern Saskatchewan and northeastern Montana, Mormon communities in southwestern Alberta, and French-speaking Catholics near Willow Bunch, Ferland, Gravelbourg, and Val Marie, Saskatchewan.^{lx} Parts of northern Montana, too, were settled by French Canadians and Metis; for instance, the French-Canadian Gauthier family, from Ponteix, Saskatchewan, established a community south of Malta named after the Saskatchewan city of Regina, and a group of French Canadians and Metis from Minnesota settled north of the community of Wagner.^{lxi} While few non-Anglo-Europeans lived in the borderlands, there was a smattering of Syrians in Swift Current and other parts of southern Saskatchewan.^{lxii} In addition, aboriginal people occupied federally-designated areas such as the Wood Mountain Reserve near the border in south-central Saskatchewan and the Ft. Peck Indian Reservation in northeastern Montana, which was partially opened to white homesteaders in 1913.^{lxiii}

Although many non-Anglo immigrants retained their ancestral language and customs into second, third, and subsequent generations, by the 1930s most had learned English (from teachers like Graves) and were well on their way to adopting the region's predominantly Anglo culture.^{lxiv} This meant that American and Canadian borderlanders seemed much alike. Most were white, spoke English, and possessed similar social skills and values. Indeed, Canadians and Americans blended into each other's populations so well that it was difficult to tell them apart.^{lxv} Some frequent border crossers used this fact in the 1930s to impersonate residents of the country in which they happened to find themselves. For instance, a transient who was arrested at Antelope, in northeastern Montana, in 1938, "freely confessed that he had been wandering back and forth across

[the] United States and Canada for about eight years.”^{lxvi} Even officials charged with apprehending illegal immigrants were forced to rely on subtle clues like clothing brands and word choices to distinguish Americans from Canadians. In July 1937 the *Daniels County Leader* reported that an American immigration patrol officer had plucked 30-year-old transient Jim Nelson off the train at Scobey, Montana. Nelson swore he was from Milwaukee and had never set foot in Canada. However, immigration officials noticed that he “wore Canadian clothes, carried a Canadian Gillette razor, and used Eddy’s matches.” They also noticed that, when questioned about his work as a harvest hand, Nelson referred to “stooking” sheaves of grain in the field. The newspaper pointed out that this was a Canadian term; Americans used the word “shocking.” These revelations convinced the *Daniels County Leader* and the officials that Nelson was a “Canuck.” The officials suspected he had walked across the border from Fife Lake, Saskatchewan, to Peerless, Montana, where he boarded the eastbound train. They escorted Nelson to Whitetail, Montana, for further questioning, and that is the last local newspaper readers heard of him.^{lxvii}

Mary Aquina (Breuiette Price) Anderson and her kin were typical early twentieth-century Plains borderlanders: restless, resourceful people with a multinational background and a casual attitude toward the Canadian-American border. Aquina was born in 1896 into a family of “adventurers” and “rolling stones” who had temporarily put down roots in central South Dakota. Her mother, Lula Arnold, was the daughter of a “well-known frontiersman” from West Virginia and had lived all over Nebraska, Wyoming, and South Dakota before she wed French-Canadian ranch hand Joe Breuiette.^{lxviii} Lula soon divorced Joe (who was a gifted fiddler but a neglectful husband)

and married Abe Price, a middle-class British-American school teacher from New York who ventured west to help build the Great Northern railroad and become a ranch foreman. In 1911, when South Dakota was in the grip of economic depression and drought, Aquina, Lula, and Abe travelled by train and wagon to a homestead in south-central Saskatchewan, about fifteen miles north of the international boundary. The family soon became part of an intricately connected, cross-border community. They hauled their grain to Hinsdale, Montana, celebrated July Fourth at Theony, which was just across the border, and exchanged visits with Metis, Anglo, and European-American families in northeastern Montana. Many of the family's American and Canadian acquaintances knew them from previous "frontiers." In 1914 Aquina married Leonard Anderson, who also came from South Dakota. Leonard's mother was a Norwegian immigrant and his father was a second-generation Norwegian-American farmer, business man, and state politician. Over the next fifteen years Aquina and Leonard continued to nurture their cross-border connections. Leonard and other ranchers from both sides of the border trailed their cattle in one big herd to the nearest railway station, at Whitetail, Montana, and accompanied them east to Chicago to be sold. The family mingled with Americans at dances and rodeos along the border. They acquired a car and travelled to South Dakota every few years; Aquina even reconnected with her biological father in the mid-1920s. "We all felt at home on sports days, rodeos, family gatherings, wedding dances, and social events on either side of the border," recalls Aquina's fourth eldest son, Boyd, who was born in 1920. "Neighbours went back and forth freely exchanging work and machinery."^{lxix} Throughout this period many members of Aquina's and Leonard's families migrated between Saskatchewan and the Dakotas. At one time or another Aquina's parents and

grandparents, Leonard's parents, two of Leonard's brothers, a sister, and a nephew all lived near Leonard, Aquina, and their growing family on Rock Creek. It seems as though, whenever hard times, personal tragedy, or wanderlust struck members of this clan, they loaded up a hayrack and lit out for the border. The forty-ninth parallel was an escape valve offering them economic relief, emotional solace, and excitement. Not that the family gave the boundary itself much thought. They took the northern Plains border -- and their freedom to cross it wherever and whenever they pleased -- for granted. "It was as if there was no border at all," says Boyd.^{lxx}

Many Plains borderlanders ignored the border during this period because it was lightly enforced. Fred and Rosina (Melle) Hoffart were Romanian immigrants who moved from southeastern Saskatchewan to northeastern Montana and back again between 1913 and the late 1920s or early 1930s. They often rode from their homestead north of Big Muddy Lake, Saskatchewan, to Outlook, Montana, to buy groceries. "At that time there was no customs house or customs men at the border," Rosina recalls. "Everything was wide open, like one big country."^{lxxi} Wallace Stegner also remembers the absence of officials along his family's stretch of the Saskatchewan-Montana border between 1914 and 1920: "The nearest custom house was clear over in Alberta, and all the summers we spent on the farm we never saw an officer, Canadian or American."^{lxxii}

The border was so open that many borderlanders failed to see it as a national dividing line. "Canada" and the "United States" were rather distant entities that started somewhere north and south of them. Andrea (Eckel) Steger, who grew up in southeastern Saskatchewan, writes that "even ten miles inside the southern Canadian border, at Estevan, wasn't and isn't the real Canada to me."^{lxxiii} In Steger's mind the Canadian

border actually lay hundreds of miles north of the forty-ninth parallel. Borderlanders tended to think their territory extended to the nearest significant trade centre or natural boundary across the line. Local newspapers suggest that the farthest north most Montana borderlanders travelled was to Regina or the Qu' Appelle River north-east of the provincial capital, and the farthest south most Saskatchewan borderlanders went was to Glasgow, the Valley County seat, on the Milk River near the spot where it empties into the Missouri. Borderlanders seemed to think the region beyond these metropolises was too different and too inaccessible to be part of their community (especially since roads and bridges were rudimentary at best). Boyd Anderson remembers northern Montana farmers speaking of Regina "as some place far away, almost like we would now talk about New York or London." For members of Boyd's family a trip "outside of our local area" to Regina or Glasgow was a major event. Whenever they travelled a few miles into Montana they saw "just country people like ourselves." But when they reached Glasgow, seventy miles to the south, they sensed they were on foreign ground. The saloons, stores, baseball games, and crowds thirteen-year-old Boyd and his older brother, Cliff, saw in Glasgow on July 4, 1933, made a huge impression on them. "At that time Glasgow had a population of three or four thousand people and it seemed like a big place to us," Boyd recalls.^{lxxiv} The line between country and city life seemed more significant to these borderlanders than the boundary between Canada and the United States.

The fact that residents of southernmost Saskatchewan (the "south country") and northernmost Montana (the "north country") often interacted also gave them the sense that they belonged to one big community. Newspapers, memoirs, and oral histories reveal that borderlanders worked, socialized, and conducted business with people across the

boundary well into the 1930s. They shopped in the same stores, visited the same doctors, belonged to the same fraternal organizations, attended the same celebrations, and worked for the same bosses as ranch hands, coal miners, teachers, domestics, and clerks. Boyd's brother Cliff worked for ranchers and attended high school in Opheim, Montana, in his teens, and later he and another brother competed in rodeos throughout the north country. Other young men played for ball teams on the north side one year and the south side another. Large parties of north and south country farmers and agricultural experts toured each others' farms and experimental stations. Some borderlanders congregated in Catholic, Lutheran, and other churches, while others mingled illegally in bars and brothels, or "chicken ranches," on or near the border.

Many borderlanders pursued cross-border business opportunities during this period. Ontario-born Burley Bowler moved from southern Saskatchewan to northeastern Montana in 1913 to work as a jeweler, printer, and editor in several communities near the border; by 1924 he was the voluble owner of Scobey's *Daniels County Leader*.^{lxxv} Around the same time the fledgling Saskatchewan Wheat Pool hired German-Canadian immigrant Anton H. Knops of the Borderland, Saskatchewan, district to handle much of the grain Canadians hauled to Scobey. "This was the first grain handling facility owned by the Pool, and my dad was the first operator of this 'Scobey dump,' " recalls Francis "Dutch" Knops.^{lxxvi} Canadian borderlanders continued to operate businesses in the American borderlands into the late 1920s and early 1930s. For example, Melvin Sigglekow of Fife Lake built a pool hall in Richland, Montana, and John Dippong went from the Westland Oil station in Rockglen, Saskatchewan, to stations in Scobey, Montana, and Minot, North Dakota.^{lxxvii}

At the same time Montana business men and women streamed into the Saskatchewan borderlands. Many Scobeyites were attracted to the “booming little hamlets” that formed along new Canadian Pacific Railway lines in the 1920s.^{lxxviii} Knut Knutson of the Citizens State Bank of Scobey opened a bank in Fife Lake, Frank Hively opened a pool hall and his wife opened a café in Joeville, and Vic Hillstrom “made a trip to Borderland...where he sold several new Nash cars.”^{lxxix} By 1926 Melfred Eide was running a barber shop, former grain handler Knops was running a farm machinery, plumbing, and heating business, and northeastern Montana lumber magnate O. B. Egland owned a lumber yard in the new community of Rockglen. So, while Canadian entrepreneurs helped build communities south of the border, Americans helped build communities north of the border. Borderlanders thought this was perfectly normal. In May 1928 the *Opheim Observer* reported that the Canadian Pacific had contracted a Montana company to lay thirty-seven miles of new track near Wood Mountain, Saskatchewan. The paper said the company, which had been working on a Northern Pacific branch line in east-central Montana, shipped its equipment to Opheim and hauled it north in eleven trucks. “A large 75 horsepower steam shovel was also unloaded and proceeded slowly overland towards its Canadian destination.”^{lxxx} Whoever wrote the article was so impressed with the number of men and machines handling the job, and so accustomed to thinking like a borderlander, that he or she found nothing ironic about the fact that an American company was building part of a Canadian railroad.

Advances in transportation and communication, especially in the 1920s, helped knit western borderlanders together.^{lxxxi} Touring southern Alberta with Norwegian and American newspaper editors in 1928, Minnesota Governor Theodore Christianson

observed that “distances were being obliterated by better highways, the automobile, the radio and the airplane, so that boundary lines constantly mean less and less.”^{lxxxii} Plains borderlanders had always been willing to travel long distances on foot, horseback, and by wagon, sleigh, and train, but the advent of the car made it even easier to visit back and forth.^{lxxxiii} Cross-border automobile trips multiplied throughout the period, with borderlanders constantly demanding more and better cross-border roads.^{lxxxiv} According to Canadian Department of Immigration and Colonization reports, the total number of American tourists and other visitors who crossed at official ports of entry in the department’s western division rose from 512,090 in 1923 to 1,048,395 in 1930. Crossings at many prairie ports more than doubled between 1923 and 1928. Entries at Coutts, Alberta, jumped from 17,192 to 38,274; those at West Poplar, Saskatchewan, climbed from 1,269 to 3,043; and those at Willow Creek, in the remote southwest corner of Saskatchewan, rose from 659 to 1,740.^{lxxxv} “There has been a noticeable increase in the number of non-immigrants who were inspected at the ports in this division during the year,” Western Division Commissioner of Immigration Thomas Gelley reported in 1924. “This is mainly on account of the ever increasing automobile traffic.”^{lxxxvi} Increases in cross-border roads and traffic forced Canadian officials to open new ports of entry at several western locations in the mid-1920s and again in the mid-1930s.^{lxxxvii}

American immigration officials also noticed that cross-border automobile traffic was growing “by leaps and bounds.” The Bureau of Immigration said in 1928 that the number of Canadians visiting the United States and Americans returning from Canada was “assuming tremendous proportions. New highways are being continually built, or old ones improved, and nearly every community along the Canadian border is interested in

the opening of such arteries of travel....The traffic is not confined to daylight hours, but continues on almost uninterruptedly through the night.^{lxxxviii} The bureau estimated that American ports of entry handled almost twenty-nine million crossings from Canada in 1931, compared to twenty-four million crossings from Mexico. Almost 150,000 travellers crossed at Sweet Grass, Montana, including 80,287 American citizens and 68,988 Canadians and other non-Americans. More than ten thousand people crossed at Scobey; 6,990 of them appear to have been Canadian visitors and 3,627 were returning Americans. The bureau added three new ports to the western border in 1931 to cope with increased traffic on newly-opened and existing roads.^{lxxxix}

Border ports in northeastern Montana and southern Saskatchewan saw significant increases in tourist traffic in the late 1920s. “Hundreds of motorists have passed through the Scobey and Whitetail customs on their way to take in the Provincial Exhibition at Regina,” the *Daniels County Leader* reported in August 1927.^{xc} In the first week of June 1927, alone, one hundred Canadian drivers and passengers registered with the customs office at Opheim, Montana, on their way into the United States. The vast majority, who came from Wood Mountain, Rockglen, Lonesome Butte, and other communities just across the border, were travelling to points in northeastern Montana or North Dakota. Only seven were bound for other states. Half of the twenty-two vehicles carried five to seven people; one was carrying thirteen.^{xc1} Borderlanders tended to cram their cars and trucks with friends, family members, and neighbours for trips across the line; children and youths often piled into open truck boxes.

Driving in the borderlands could be stressful, as motorists often had to contend with snow, mud, dust, and poor roads. Highways in northern Montana, southern Alberta,

and southern Saskatchewan consisted mainly of prairie trails and graded, dirt roads. Few were gravelled, and even fewer were paved. “The roads are little better than theoretical reservations with the earth scraped up from the edge to the centre to allow rain to run off,” wrote a prominent British social activist visiting Shaunavon, in southwestern Saskatchewan, in the fall of 1933.^{xcii} In 1932 Montana had only forty-seven miles of hardtop. As late as 1939 many Saskatchewan roads had yet to be gravelled. “Only one highway in Saskatchewan, No. 39, connects with the U.S. as a gravelled highway,” lamented the province’s highways minister.^{xciii} Still, roads gradually improved during this period. And borderlanders loved the freedom cars gave them to travel long distances. “The joy of our life was a new 1919 Model T Ford car which certainly shortened the distance for shopping and travel,” recalls Wood Mountain, Saskatchewan, farm woman Madge Stewart, whose family visited doctors and attended Catholic services across the border in Opheim and Glentana.^{xciv} On the vast northern Plains, where cross-border train connections were few and far between and horse travel was slow and arduous, many found that crossing in packed vehicles was relatively cheap, fast, and convenient.

Automobiles allowed borderlanders to take quick trips across the line to investigate unusual sights, such as the dinosaur skull and other fossils Canadian paleontologist C. M. Sternberg found one mile north of the Montana-Saskatchewan border in 1929. “Several families from Richland drove out to the bad lands northwest of Opheim on Sunday to see the remains of prehistoric animals which have recently been discovered in that locality,” said the *Daniels County Leader*. “They took their picnic dinners and report having had a very enjoyable trip. Mr. Sternberg ... very kindly took the visitors around.”^{xcv} Two years later, north country denizens flocked to Coronach and

Fife Lake to investigate rumours of a major gold find. “Oscar Fogelquist, Bill Meredith and Gus Kelmer were among the Opheim gold hunters visiting the Canadian yellow metal field Friday,” the *Opheim Observer* said. “They were not very greatly impressed with the field. In fact they were of the opinion that somebody was putting out a fish story and getting a lot of bites.”^{xcvi} Montana borderlanders also monitored the progress of Saskatchewan rail lines and communities. “Dr. W. B. Stunkard and family autoed to Killdeer Sunday to see the new town since the railroad arrived,” the *Observer* reported in May 1931. “Mr. Stunkard said that the new townsite was still empty awaiting the sale of lots.”^{xcvii} A big draw for Saskatchewan borderlanders later in the decade was the massive Fort Peck Dam being constructed on the upper Missouri River near Glasgow. In July 1937 a large truck took “forty young people, mostly Roumanians” from a school district west of Assiniboia, Saskatchewan, on a camping trip to Fort Peck and Glasgow for “the time of their lives.”^{xcviii}

To some extent the growing popularity of air travel also erased the Plains border in the late 1920s, as airfields sprang up in Great Falls, Sweet Grass, Opheim, Scobey, Moose Jaw, Regina, and other northern Plains communities. The Lethbridge “air harbour” became an official customs port of entry in 1927. Customs officers at the Winnipeg airport went from processing twenty-one planes between August 1, 1928, and March 31, 1929, to 183 planes between April 1 and October 1, 1929. The Grand Forks, North Dakota, airport handled 151 border crossers in 1931. In 1930 Washington designated airfields at Scobey, Havre, and Great Falls as customs ports of entry. Politicians, business people, professionals, and ranchers with means often chartered flights or piloted their own small planes between the prairie provinces and the western

states. At various times passenger service was also available between Lethbridge and Great Falls, and between Winnipeg and Minneapolis, Minnesota.^{xcix} Sometimes airborne borderlanders found it hard to tell whether they were flying over Canada or the United States. For instance, a plane carrying four dignitaries on a good-will trip from Minot, North Dakota, to Scobey in August 1928 accidentally landed near Estevan, Saskatchewan. From the air the pilot, like the two joy-riders over Scobey, failed to recognize the international boundary.^c

Many Plains residents were keen on air travel, if only as a spectator sport. Awestruck borderlanders swarmed pilots who touched down or held air shows in their vicinity. Twenty thousand came to see “about forty ships,” including American military planes on a cross-country tour and private planes from Regina, Plentywood, and other border communities, arrive at the tiny town of Froid, in northeastern Montana, for a day-long “great air spectacle” in July 1928.^{ci} More than five thousand people from southern Saskatchewan and northeastern Montana descended on Flaxville, another tiny community fifteen miles south of the border, in October 1929 to take a spin in an eight-passenger Wasp Stinson Detroitter piloted by Flaxville native George D. Lowers.^{cii}

Local newspapers kept readers abreast of borderlanders’ air travels. On December 20, 1929, the *Opheim Observer* teased Saskatchewan Minister of Highways A. C. Stewart for flying instead of driving to a meeting of the Northwest International Highway Association in Helena, Montana. Stewart, who left Regina at 10 a.m., stopped briefly at Great Falls, and arrived in Helena before 4 p.m., said he flew because “he was pressed for time and the rail journey would have required four days.”^{ciii} On November 5, 1931, the *Daniels County Leader* reported that “Mr. and Mrs. Skinner and little daughter of Willow

Bunch, Sask., came over by airplane Wednesday afternoon for a few hours' visit with friends."^{civ} Pilot Charles Skinner, whose inlaws ran a ranch just north of the border from their home in Scobey, often ferried family members, business people, and dignitaries between Saskatchewan and Montana. In March 1938 Skinner flew Bowler's wife, Maud, from the customs office north of Scobey to her elderly father's bedside in Radville, Saskatchewan. The *Leader* marvelled that Skinner made the one-hundred-mile trip in only thirty-three minutes; the same journey would have taken three days by train.^{cv}

The fact that Canadian and American borderlanders got much of their news and entertainment from the same radio stations and newspapers unified them even further. The local media both reflected and nurtured Plains residents' interest in happenings across the line. Canadian scholar Sarah Common noticed this north-south communication pattern back in 1931. "In the West information concerning the neighboring republic is more easily available than that concerning the East," she wrote. "The development of radio broadcasting has accentuated this tendency."^{cvi} The number of radio stations and radio listeners in the border region blossomed in the 1920s. On July 27, 1923, the *Ophelim Observer* reported that the Buttrey Radio Broadcasting station in Havre, Montana, planned to broadcast weather forecasts, general news, agricultural market quotations, road conditions, "late phonographic selections," and dance music to the cross-border community. "It is expected that farmers throughout Northern Montana and Southern Alberta and Saskatchewan will be able to keep in close touch with the markets and the daily news...as well as have available through their own receiving sets daily entertainments."^{cvi} Seven years later Regina radio celebrity Bert Hooper chartered a Tiger Moth airplane to fly to Wolf Point, seventy miles south of the Saskatchewan-

Montana border, to run the new KGCX station there.^{cviii} Many Montana borderlanders had trouble picking up signals from American stations, however, so they turned their dials to stations in western Canada. There were five radio stations in Calgary, one in Lethbridge, four in Regina, two in Moose Jaw, and three in Winnipeg by 1929.^{cix} “I’m listening to an old time fiddlers annual contest from Regina,” Scobey farmer Frank Hughes wrote late one night to his parents back in Indiana.^{cx} Scobey residents got much of their news and entertainment from CJRM Moose Jaw and the Regina *Leader’s* CKCK, which both began airing Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission programs in 1933. Later in the decade the commission’s successor, the publicly-owned Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), began sharing its programs with KGCX in Wolf Point. Thus, throughout much of this period, radio listeners in northeastern Montana got their local, national, and international news from Canada.

Daniels County Leader editor Burley Bowler was a devoted CKCK and CJRM listener who often plucked information off the air for the benefit of his readers. The paper’s front page on June 6, 1929, featured a story about the provincial election in Saskatchewan. “As this is being written the *Leader* broadcasting station at Regina, CKCK, is putting the results on the air. While incomplete, conservatives seem to be leading.”^{cxii} That spring, thanks to CJRM and Bowler, Scobey residents also learned that fifty planes participating in a race from Tulsa, Oklahoma, to Calgary might fly over their town later in the summer. The Moose Jaw station informed listeners that a lone pilot from Tulsa had recently “swooped down from the clouds for a few moments” to check out Scobey’s airfield. Almost as thrilling was the fact that CJRM aired performances by six Scobey piano students, including Bowler’s daughter Gwendolyn, on June 26, 1929.

Bowler's paper gushed that "every radio in the city was tuned in promptly on time," announcer Billy Ward "proved himself a real fellow with all Scobeyites, and Station CJRM becomes a greater favorite than ever as a result of the courtesy extended to our young musicians." Telegraph wires between Scobey and Moose Jaw were "hot with congratulations from friends here."^{cxii} To these Americans, having their town's name and talent broadcast over the Canadian air waves was the ultimate measure of success.

Meanwhile, on the Canadian side of the Plains border, radio listeners were steeped in signals from Detroit, Chicago, Minneapolis, and Los Angeles. In fact, they picked up American stations much more clearly than stations in other parts of Canada. "Except in a coast-to-coast link-up it is easier, in the West, to pick up a station in Denver, Colorado, or even in Mexico City than one in Toronto," wrote Common.^{cxiii} Until the CBC built a high-power transmitter northwest of Regina in the late 1930s, rural listeners in the prairie provinces were exposed to far more American than Canadian politics, news, and popular culture.^{cxiv} Although local stations offered them weather, agricultural, educational, sports, religious, and musical broadcasts, many Canadian borderlanders preferred American programs. More than 45 per cent of listeners surveyed in southern Saskatchewan in 1930 said KOA Denver was their favourite station and 11 per cent said they preferred KSL Salt Lake City; only 26 per cent preferred CKCK Regina.^{cxv} Residents of southern Alberta were thrilled that a "Magrath boy" was chief operator of the powerful KSL station to which many of them were glued.^{cxvi} Even Canadians who favoured local stations heard hours of imported American comedies, dramas, advertising, and music. Besides listening to "Amos 'n' Andy," "Little Orphan Annie," and "Hit Parade," many used their radios to keep abreast of American politics.^{cxvii} Ruth Lentz

recalls that her frugal American father, who was a minister in southern Saskatchewan during the Depression, bought a Philco radio in 1936 so that he could follow the presidential election.^{cxviii}

Local newspapers offered Canadian and American border people a less novel but equally informative glimpse of life on the other side. Many served readers in both countries. In the late 1920s the *Climax*, which was published in a small, southwestern Saskatchewan community of the same name, reached twenty-six American households, and in 1933 the *Daniels County Leader* reached more than one thousand county homes and hundreds of other homes “adjacent to its borders.”^{cxix} Border newspapers reflected their readers’ interest in both Canadians and Americans, mixing stories about the two together on the same page and including cross-border residents in their “Local News” columns.^{cxx} These columns were a rich source of information about locals’ border crossing activities. Readers learned who was working, vacationing, receiving medical care, getting married, or visiting friends and family next door. In the late 1920s the *Opheim Observer* reported that “Mr. and Mrs. A. P. Miller spent Thursday and Friday with friends over across the border near Rockglen”; Frank Beachler and Art Hansen snowmobiled to Saskatchewan; Julius Johannsen and “other Canucks” hauled wheat to Opheim; Mrs. Kemper Hughes of Wood Mountain gave birth at the Opheim hospital; and visitors from Killdeer, Saskatchewan, “had Barney tune up their Chevy as it wasn’t chevying good enough.”^{cxxi} The *Daniels County Leader* said Mrs. Becklund entertained the Priscilla Sewing Club of Scobey at her home in East Poplar, Saskatchewan; Mrs. Johnson of Coronach consulted doctors at the Scobey Clinic; and (in true borderland fashion) a Fife Lake woman married a man from Poplar Valley, Saskatchewan, and her

sister married a man from Peerless, Montana, in a double ceremony at the Catholic parsonage in Scobey.^{cxxii} The *Leader* also carried notices by local farmers eager to return stray horses to their Canadian owners, and stories about a big barbeque the Havre, Montana, American Legion was organizing “across the Canadian line.”^{cxxiii} On the Canadian side, the *Climax* said Mr. and Mrs. Wiggins visited friends in South Dakota, and Masons from Climax and Shaunavon visited their counterparts in Havre.^{cxxiv} The *Lethbridge Herald* reported that Miss Birdie Chinworth, who taught at Wild Horse Lake school in southeastern Alberta, planned to attend July 4th celebrations in Havre; Wheatland, Montana, farmer George Storbu was scouting for land in southern Alberta; and Miss Eudora Fawns carried the Stirling, Alberta, banner in a big Mormon parade in Salt Lake City.^{cxxv}

Border newspapers did not always find it necessary to indicate which nation borderlanders happened to be travelling to or from; after all, they were writing for people who knew the region well. The *Daniels County Leader* assumed readers knew that people visiting Scobey from Buffalo Gap, Bengough, and Fort Qu’ Appelle came from Canada, and that Richland residents attending “the celebration at Woody Mountain” were at the Wood Mountain Stampede in southern Saskatchewan.^{cxxvi} Likewise, the *Climax* thought it unnecessary to mention that, when editor A. H. Stevens and twelve other locals went golfing in Malta in March 1931, their destination lay in the United States.^{cxxvii}

Some papers devoted space to districts across the line without indicating that they were technically in another country. A column in Montana’s *Opheim Observer* followed the comings and goings of people who lived in Frontier, Saskatchewan, without ever mentioning the word “Saskatchewan” or “Canada.” Thus, in 1928-29 readers learned that

“Noah McGowan, a cousin, and two chums returned home from Colorado, where they have been mining coal and shoveling beets,” Bill Mosenko was jailed for trapping badgers on his neighbour’s land along the border, and Jack Kizema was “planning on coming down this summer to Opheim with his band for serenading.”^{cxxviii} The *Lethbridge Herald* ran columns on Coutts, Alberta, and Sweet Grass, Montana -- which locals called the “Twin Cities” – without saying whether the columns’ subjects lived in Canada or the United States.^{cxxix} To Plains borderlanders the people of Rockglen, Scobey, Frontier, Opheim, Climax, Havre, Coutts, and Sweet Grass were simply neighbours; the fact that they lived in different countries was irrelevant.

Needless-to-say, north and south country residents were very interested in each other’s affairs. As western Canadian historian Paul Voisey suggests, personal news stories in small-town weeklies confirmed locals’ identity as members of “an intimate society in a real community.”^{cxxx} Reading about familiar people and locations on both sides of the forty-ninth parallel helped Plains borderlanders solidify the line, not between Canadians and Americans, but between borderlanders and non-borderlanders.

Border newspapers satisfied readers’ interest in cross-border environmental, political, social, and economic news with material from local correspondents, wire services, and publications across the line. For instance, the *Lethbridge Herald* lifted stories about border oil strikes from the *Great Falls Tribune* and the *Montana Oil Journal*, the *Opheim Observer* got news about proposed Saskatchewan rail lines from the *Assiniboia Times*, and the *Shaunavon Standard* ran a *Chinook Opinion* article about a Montana farmer who preached soil conservation in Saskatchewan.^{cxxxi} The papers also offered cross-border stories on everything from storms and fires to accidents and crimes.

Readers knew all too well that tragedy did not respect the international boundary. Tales of people who were hurt or killed were legion: A Saskatchewan girl who was “playing Indian” near the North Dakota border was attacked by a wild cat; an Outlook, Montana, farmer ran over his Saskatchewan neighbour’s son; a family returning from Regina was badly burned when their car overturned and caught fire north of Plentywood, Montana.^{cxxxii} The *Opheim Observer* even recorded the head-on collision Saskatchewan borderlander Leonard Anderson survived in Opheim in December 1925.^{cxxxiii} Other stories described violent crimes: A Sweet Grass roadhouse keeper “inflamed the border country” when he gunned down a popular oil worker on a road two miles south of the border; a Montana couple was mysteriously murdered on a “barren borderland farm” north of Chinook; one southern Manitoba farmer shot another so close to the forty-ninth parallel that authorities struggled to determine whether the killing took place in Canada or the United States, finally deciding that it happened thirty-five feet south of the line and that the accused should stand trial in Minnesota.^{cxxxiv}

When they thought about the border, borderlanders seemed to regard it as a district rather than an international dividing line. If they had to they could find the exact spot where one country left off and the other began, but usually they could not be bothered. Newspapers used the word “border” to help readers mentally place someone or something, as in “border oil driller,” “border visitor,” “border farmers,” “border herds,” “border towns,” and “border [oil] fields.”^{cxxxv} Unless readers were familiar with the district, however, they would have a hard time determining which side of the boundary these drillers, farmers, and fields occupied.

Cross-border weather stories said a great deal about how Plains borderlanders defined the entire region. On July 15, 1927, the *Opheim Observer* reported that “a bountiful rain hit this section of the north country and certainly was welcome from every point of view except to the celebrators at Wood Mountain and Wolf Point.”^{cxxxvi} The “north country” apparently included southern Saskatchewan, stretching at least one hundred miles from the Wood Mountain Stampede to a similar event on the Missouri River east of Glasgow. Some stories suggested that southern Alberta, southern Saskatchewan, and northeastern Montana all belonged to one region. “Northeastern Montana, in fact the whole of the northwest, experienced a new feature in its varied brand of weather last week when a genuine blizzard swept over the country,” the *Daniels County Leader* reported on October 16, 1930. The paper went on to say that the storm killed five motorists travelling from Lake Qu’Appelle to Regina, the ground between Regina and Calgary was covered in deep snow, and the thermometer in Montana “ranges down too close to the zero mark for comfort.”^{cxxxvii} Sometimes newspapers lumped the border region into even larger categories. Cross-border blizzards deposited “Heavy Snow in West,” and a hailstorm that struck southern Saskatchewan in 1928 wiped out “as fine wheat crops as have been grown in America in many years.”^{cxxxviii}

The fact that Plains borderlanders tended to include people and events across the line in their mental maps of the “north country,” the “border country,” and the “northwest” shows that many of them saw the region as a whole.^{cxxxix} They scarcely noticed the international boundary. In a way, then, the borderlands really did form their own country.

Canadians and Americans were accustomed to interacting on the northern Plains in the early decades of the twentieth century. North-south immigration, business, social, travel, and communication patterns encouraged them to see each other as friends, neighbours, relatives, workers, customers, rural folk, and westerners. Many believed their similarities overrode their differences. Whatever their nationality, they were residents of one big country -- the border country -- united by the sense that the border didn't matter.

Major regional and national changes in the late 1920s and early 1930s forced Plains borderlanders to take the Canadian-American border more seriously, however. Aquina and Leonard Anderson's children developed a more complex relationship with the border and border officials than the previous generation had known. Family members still crossed often, but their cross-border activities were subject to more scrutiny and they could no longer set up residence, obtain work, or market their agricultural products as readily on the other side. Their son Boyd developed a very keen awareness of the border, honed over years of herding his father's sheep along the line and slipping across to visit American neighbors, date American girls, and order cowboy clothes from American catalogues. "In the 1930s, from the time I was about twelve years of age, through the summer months there wouldn't be a week that I wasn't down on the Montana side doing something or other," he recalls. Dodging border officials became routine. "I didn't go near any customs. I just rode." Returning from Montana with some stray horses in 1933, Boyd met a Canadian customs officer in a car. "You guys are crossin' this border quite freely, you know," the man said drily, before waving Boyd on.^{cx1} It was as if the officer was putting Boyd on notice. Officials knew what borderlanders were up to and they could

clamp down if they chose. The days when Canadians and Americans could criss-cross the northern Plains, blithely ignoring the border, were coming to an end.

Notes

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- ⁱ “Rather Cold 7,500 Feet Above Scobey Says Local Airman,” *Daniels County Leader*, 15 August 1929; Connie Mitchell, *Softly the Winds are Whispering* (Altona: Friesen Printers, 1978), 17.
- ⁱⁱ Stegner, *Wolf Willow*, 85. On the Canadian, American, and British surveyors who marked the Plains section of the forty-ninth parallel between 1872 and 1874, see Tony Rees, *Arc of the Medicine Line: Mapping the World’s Longest Undefended Border Across the Western Plains* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007).
- ⁱⁱⁱ Sharp, *Whoop-Up Trail*, 313. On north-south links that survived the Whoop-Up Trail era, see James M. Francis, “Montana Business and Canadian Regionalism in the 1870s and 1880s,” *Western Historical Quarterly* 12, no. 3 (July 1981): 291-304; Peter S. Morris, “A Special Kind of Comparative History: Envisioning the Borderlands of the Northwestern Canadian-American Grasslands,” paper presented at Association of Canadian Studies in the United States conference, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 23 November 1997, 4-5.
- ^{iv} Superintendent A. Bowen Perry to the Commissioner of the North-West Mounted Police, 4 June 1894, quoted in Marjorie Mason and Thelma Poirier, “Ranching,” in *Wood Mountain Uplands: From the Big Muddy to the Frenchman River*, ed. Thelma Poirier (Wood Mountain: Wood Mountain Historical Society, 2000), 91. On early ranching society in the northern Plains, see Elofson, *Frontier Cattle Ranching, and Cowboys, Gentlemen, and Cattle Thieves*. Barry Potyondi, *In Palliser’s Triangle: Living in the Grasslands, 1850-1930* (Saskatoon: Purich Publishing, 1995), focuses on ranching and homesteading in southwestern Saskatchewan.
- ^v Daniel N. Vichorek, *Montana’s Homestead Era* (Helena: American Geographic Publishing, 1987), 9.
- ^{vi} S. McManus, *Line Which Separates*, 147; Kate Graves to Georgina Edith (Graves) Griffiths, 6 August 1925, Kate Graves Family Papers, author’s possession. Graves was my maternal great-grandmother and Griffiths was my maternal grandmother.
- ^{vii} Michael P. Malone and others, *Montana: A History of Two Centuries*, rev. ed. (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1991), 241; D. M. Loveridge and Barry Potyondi, *From Wood Mountain to the Whitemud: A Historical Survey of the Grasslands National Park Area* (Ottawa: Parks Canada, 1983), 166-95.
- ^{viii} Rockglen 50th Anniversary Committee, ed., *The Rolling Hills of Home: Gleanings from Rockglen and Area*, Vol. 1 (Altona: Friesen Printers, 1978), 50-53, 273; Roberta Carkeek Cheney, *Names on the Face of Montana: The Story of Montana’s Place Names*, rev. ed. (Missoula: Mountain Press Publishing, 1984), 29; Warren Brower, ed., *The Hills*

of Home, 2nd ed. (Aden: Hills of Home History Committee, 2003), 107-108; Cottonwood Extension Homemakers Club, ed., *In the Years Gone By: Simpson, Cottonwood* (1964; repr. Susie's Copy Shop, 1989), 64, 71.

^{ix} Patterson family, quoted in *Homesteaders South of the Whitemud*, ed. Harrisland Sewing Club History Committee (Altona: D. W. Friesen and Sons), 32.

^x C. A. Dawson and Eva R. Younge, *Pioneering in the Prairie Provinces: The Social Side of the Settlement Process*, Canadian Frontiers of Settlement, Vol. 8 (Toronto: Macmillan Company, 1940), 50-51; Potyondi, *In Palliser's Triangle*, 87-88; Charles W. Bohi and Leslie S. Kozma, "The End of An Era: The Prairie Province Branch Line Boom: 1919-1935," *Trains* 51, no. 13 (November 1991): 48-52. My thanks to Dale Martin for directing me to the latter source.

^{xi} Canadian government promoters came up with the phrase, but homestead boosters and settlers in both the prairie provinces and Montana thought of the northern Plains as "the last best West." See Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook, *Canada 1896-1921: A Nation Transformed* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), 60; Malone and others, *Montana*, 248; Harold Martin Troper, *Only Farmers Need Apply: Official Canadian Government Encouragement of Immigration from the United States, 1896-1911* (Toronto: Griffin House, 1972).

^{xii} Hansen and Brebner, *Mingling*, 2.

^{xiii} *Ibid.*, 227.

^{xiv} Bill Helgesen, *Homesteading in Canada and the Big Flat Country* (Bear Paw Printers, ca. 1970), 2.

^{xv} Shepard, "American Influence," 119-20 fn 40.

^{xvi} Mary W. M. Hargreaves, *Dry Farming in the Northern Great Plains: Years of Readjustment, 1920-1990* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1993), 2.

^{xvii} Malone and others, *Montana*, 241-42. Clark C. Spence, *Montana: A Bicentennial History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1978), 132.

^{xviii} Howard, *Montana: High, Wide, and Handsome*, 169.

^{xix} Malone and others, *Montana*, 242; Montana Department of Agriculture, Labor, and Industry, *Montana: Resources and Opportunities Edition 1*, no. 1 (June 1926): 52.

^{xx} Calculated from Gerald Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies: A History*, rev. ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 511.

^{xxi} Calculated from G. E. Britnell, *Wheat Economy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1939), 36.

^{xxii} Vernon C. Fowke, *The National Policy and the Wheat Economy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1957), 73.

^{xxiii} Barry Potyondi, "Losing Ground: Farm Settlers on the Periphery," in *Wood Mountain Uplands*, 139.

^{xxiv} Malone and others, *Montana*, 242; Britnell, *Wheat Economy*, 48-51; Federal Writers' Project, *Montana: A State Guide Book* (New York: Viking Press, 1939), 60-67; Montana Department of Agriculture, Labor, and Industry, *Montana*: 58-59, 261-73. Wheat accounted for 90 per cent of crop acreage in the driest sections of Saskatchewan, which included the territory along the Saskatchewan-Montana border. Wheat was the main crop, or one of the top few crops, in most of the Montana counties that ran along the boundary.

^{xxv} John W. Bennett and Dan S. Sherburne, "Ethnicity, Settlement and Adaptation in the Peopling of the Canadian-American West," in *Migration and the Transformation of Cultures*, ed. Jean R. Burnet and others (Toronto: Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1992), 203; LaDow, *Medicine Line*, 149-72; Ramirez, *Crossing the 49th Parallel*, 67-188; Sarah Common, "The Flow of Population Across the Canadian-United States Border, 1900-1930," PhD diss. (Queen's University, 1931).

^{xxvi} Calculated from R. H. Coats and M. C. Maclean, *The American-Born in Canada* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1943), 50-51.

^{xxvii} Common, "Flow of Population," 92, 100, 190-91; Ramirez, *Crossing the 49th Parallel*, 68-69, 108-109.

^{xxviii} Sharp, "American Farmer," 67; Common, "Flow of Population," 74-75, 77, 81, 85.

^{xxix} Hansen and Brebner, *Mingling*, 244.

^{xxx} United States, *Annual Report of the U.S. Commissioner General of Immigration*, for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1914 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1915), quoted in Hansen and Brebner, *Mingling*, 247.

^{xxxi} Stitt Pickett, "Hoboes," 203-21.

^{xxxii} Troper, *Only Farmers Need Apply*, 147-49.

^{xxxiii} Ramirez, *Crossing the 49th Parallel*, 106, 109, 120; Leon E. Truesdell, *The Canadian Born in the United States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1943), 30-34. Common,

“Flow of Population,” 148, notes that Canadians dominated the foreign-born population in Montana, Washington, and Oregon in 1920.

^{xxxiv} Calculated from Ramirez, *Crossing the 49th Parallel*, 108-109. “A majority (53 per cent to 80 per cent) of the Anglo-Canadian immigrants received by the four states of Minnesota, North Dakota, Montana, and Idaho came from the Prairies,” writes Ramirez.

^{xxxv} *Ibid.*, 67-95.

^{xxxvi} J. H. Haslam, *Grain Growers’ Guide*, 30 August 1916.

^{xxxvii} Calculated from Common, “Flow of Population,” 192.

^{xxxviii} Malone and others, *Montana*, 243.

^{xxxix} Common, “Flow of Population,” 148, 195; *Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920*, Vol. 3, Population: Composition and Characteristics of the Population by States (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1922), 577, Table 6; Truesdell, *Canadian Born in the United States*, 10, 19, 26-27, 32-33, 38, 56, 72, 80. By “Canadian stock” Truesdell means “the Canadian-born (white) and those natives of the United States who are of Canadian parentage.” He omits non-whites of Canadian birth because “practically all of the Canadian born in the United States are of the white race.” The above sources suggest that there were 384 non-white Canadian-born people in Montana in 1920, and 440 in 1930.

^{xl} Truesdell, *Canadian Born*, 30, 32-33. Truesdell points out that the absolute number of native-born Canadians in Montana in 1930 appears small because of the state’s vast size and low population per square mile (3.7). However, the Canadian born formed a considerable percentage of the total population in many counties and in the state as a whole. Also, Maurice R. Davie, *World Immigration: With Special Reference to the United States* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1936), 211, notes that considering Canada’s small population, the country sent a large number of native Canadians to the United States; the total number of Canadian-born residents in the United States in 1930 was 1,286,389, while the total population of Canada in 1931 was 10,376,786.

^{xli} Calculated from Truesdell, *Canadian Born*, 33; United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930*, Population, Vol. 3, Part 2: Reports by States, Showing the Composition and Characteristics of the Population for Counties, Cities, and Townships or other Minor Civil Divisions, Montana-Wyoming (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1932), 22-25.

^{xlii} Bicha, *American Farmer* 85-88; Paul F. Sharp, "The American Farmer and the 'Last Best West,'" *Agricultural History* 21, no. 2 (April 1947): 65; Shepard, "American Influence," 110-15, 356.

^{xliii} Shepard, "American Influence," 128, 132-33.

^{xliv} Calculated from Shepard, "American Influence," 355. Also see 91-99, 103-10, 119-20 fn 40. The estimate of American homesteaders is based on Shepard's definition of an American as "a person from the United States; whether native born, naturalized, or who had indicated by declaration or length of residence a desire to become an American citizen." The estimate includes more than 7,100 "returning Canadians." Shepard argues that these immigrants should be classified as American because many were naturalized American citizens or had resided in the United States long enough to qualify for citizenship. He also argues that historians should respect the wishes of the many arrivals from the United States who indicated on homestead entry forms that they were American, "regardless of where they had been born." Scholars disagree on the significance of this contingent of immigrants. See Widdis, *With Scarcely a Ripple*, 290-336; Isern and Shepard, "Duty-Free," xxxiii.

^{xlv} Shepard, "American Influence," 83.

^{xlvi} Calculated from Canada, Dominion Bureau of Statistics, *Seventh Census of Canada, 1931*, Vol. 1, Summary (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1936), 526, 531.

^{xlvii} Coats and Maclean, *American-Born in Canada*, 50-51; Harvey, *Americans in Canada*, 43.

^{xlviii} Canada, *Report of the Department of Immigration and Colonization*, for the fiscal year ended March 31, 1928 (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1929), 93.

^{xlix} *Ibid.*, 57. Officials at Fargo processed the largest number of settlers, followed by Detroit, St. Paul, and Great Falls.

^l Calculated from *Seventh Census of Canada, 1931*, Vol. 1, Summary, 351, 526, 531; Coats and Maclean, *American-Born in Canada*, frontispiece, "Index Map of Counties and Census Divisions in Canada Showing Percentages of American-Born." Also see Howard Palmer, "Patterns of Immigration and Ethnic Settlement in Alberta: 1880-1920," in *Peoples of Alberta: Portraits of Cultural Diversity*, ed. Howard Palmer and Tamara Palmer (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1985), 11-12; Britnell, *Wheat Economy*, 154, 161.

^{li} Jean R. Burnet, *Next-year Country: A Study of Rural Social Organization in Alberta, 1951* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, repr. 1978).

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- ^{lii} David C. Jones, *Empire of Dust: Settling and Abandoning the Prairie Dry Belt*, 2nd ed. (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2002).
- ^{liii} Curtis R. McManus, *Happyland: A History of the "Dirty Thirties" in Saskatchewan, 1914-1937* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press), 10, 224.
- ^{liv} Donald Worster, *Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s* (1979; repr., Oxford University Press, 2004); Catherine McNicol Stock, *Main Street in Crisis: The Great Depression and the Old Middle Class on the Northern Plains* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1992). Also see Paula M. Nelson, *The Prairie Winnows Out Its Own: The West River Country of South Dakota in the Years of Depression and Dust* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1996).
- ^{lv} David C. Jones, ed. "We'll All Be Buried Down Here": *The Prairie Dryland Disaster 1917-1926* (Calgary: Historical Society of Alberta, 1986), xli-lll; Jones, *Empire of Dust*, 117, 211-13, 220-21; C. McManus, *Happyland*, 70.
- ^{lvi} David C. Jones, "We'll All Be Buried Down Here in This Dry Belt," *Saskatchewan History*, 35, no. 2 (Spring 1982), 49.
- ^{lvii} Michael P. Malone and others, *Montana*, 281, 283.
- ^{lviii} Harvey, *Americans in Canada*, 48; Stanley Lieberson and Mary C. Waters, "The Location of Ethnic and Racial Groups in the United States," *Sociological Forum* 2, no. 4 (Autumn 1987): 793-94.
- ^{lix} Georgina Edith (Graves) Griffiths Scrapbook, ca 1910-1973, Kate Graves Family Papers.
- ^{lx} Britnell, *Wheat Economy*, 16; Dawson and Younge, *Pioneering in the Prairie Provinces*, 31-38; John Murray Gibbon, *Canadian Mosaic: The Making of a Northern Nation* (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1938), 17-18, 218-21; Carlton C. Qualey, *Norwegian Settlement in the United States* (Northfield: Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1938; repr. New York: Arno Press, 1970), 170-71, 202-203; Federal Writers' Project, *Montana: A State Guide Book*, 57-58; Potyondi, "Losing Ground," 139-40; Dorothy Rustebakke, ed., *A Brief Historical Review of Life and Times on the Northeastern Montana Prairies* (Scobey: Homesteaders Golden Jubilee Association, 1963), 68-71; LaDow, *Medicine Line*, 149-72; Loveridge and Potyondi, *From Wood Mountain to the Whitemud*, 166-67; Peter S. Morris, "Charles Ora Card and Mormon Settlement on the Northwestern Plains Borderlands," in *Borderlands of the American and Canadian West*, ed. Sterling Evans (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2006): 172-82.

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- ^{lxi} Martha Harroun Foster, *We Know Who We Are: Metis Identity in a Montana Community* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006); Noel Emond and Sharon (LaFond) Emond interview with author, 7 October 2005.
- ^{lxii} Hugh Henry emails to author, Swift Current, Saskatchewan, 16-17 November, 2007, printed copies, author's possession.
- ^{lxiii} Elizabeth Thomson and Rory Thomson, "The Lakota," in *Wood Mountain Uplands*, 66-84; David R. Miller, "The First Allotments, Changes in Land Tenure, and the Lohmiller Administration, 1905-1917," in David R. Miller and others, eds. *The History of the Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Indian Reservation, Montana, 1800-2000* (Poplar: Fort Peck Community College, 2008), 205-206.
- ^{lxiv} Bennett and Sherburne, "Ethnicity, Settlement, and Adaptation," 191-219; Jean R. Burnet with Howard Palmer, *Coming Canadians": An Introduction to a History of Canada's Peoples* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1988): 88-89. On the complex subject of assimilation and immigrants' multiple national and ethnic loyalties, see Royden Loewen, *Ethnic Farm Culture in Western Canada* (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 2002); Jon Gjerde, *The Minds of the West: Ethnocultural Evolution in the Rural Middle West, 1830-1917* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Elliott R. Barkan, "America in the Hand, Homeland in the Heart: Transnational and Translocal Immigrant Experiences in the American West," *Western Historical Quarterly* 35, no. 3 (Autumn 2004): 332-54.
- ^{lxv} LaDow, *Medicine Line*, 162; Widdis, *With Scarcely a Ripple*, 307, 349-50; Palmer, "Patterns of Immigration," 13.
- ^{lxvi} "Alien Taken Monday for Deportation," *Daniels County Leader*, 21 July 1938.
- ^{lxvii} "Canuck Denies Alien Charges," *Daniels County Leader*, 15 July 1937.
- ^{lxviii} Boyd M. Anderson, *Grass Roots* (Wood Mountain, SK: Windspeak Press, 1996), 5-6.
- ^{lxix} *Ibid.*, 136.
- ^{lxx} Boyd M. Anderson oral history interview with author, 26-27 July 2005.
- ^{lxxi} Alice Henderson and Mrs. Nick Stefan, eds., *Homesteading in Surprise Valley* (Gladmar: Gladmar Community Club, 1970), 81.
- ^{lxxii} Stegner, *Wolf Willow*, 83.

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- ^{lxxiii} Estevan History Book Committee, ed., *A Tale That is Told: Estevan 1890-1980*, Vol. 2 (Altona: Friesen Printers, 1981), 743-4.
- ^{lxxiv} Boyd Anderson interview with author; Anderson, *Grass Roots*, 179-80.
- ^{lxxv} Daniels County Bicentennial Committee, ed. *Daniels County History* (Great Falls: Blue Print and Letter Company, 1977), 166-69.
- ^{lxxvi} Rockglen 50th Anniversary Committee, *Rolling Hills of Home*, 181. Also see Coronach Historical Committee, ed., *From the Turning of the Sod: The Story of the Early Settlers in the R. M. of Hart Butte No. 11* (Winnipeg: Inter-Collegiate Press, 1980), 8, 41, 155, 370; Daniels County Bicentennial Committee, *Daniels County History*, 14.
- ^{lxxvii} "Richland," *Daniels County Leader*, 30 August 1928.
- ^{lxxviii} "Work on Sask. Railroad is Pushed Ahead," *Daniels County Leader*, 16 September 1926.
- ^{lxxix} "The Local News," *Daniels County Leader*, 7 October 1926.
- ^{lxxx} "Railroad Construction Unloads Outfit Here," *Opheim Observer*, 11 May 1928.
- ^{lxxxi} On the dramatic increase in the number of motor vehicles in Saskatchewan between 1910 and 1929, see G. T. Bloomfield, " 'I Can See a Car in That Crop': Motorization in Saskatchewan, 1906-1934," *Saskatchewan History* 37, no. 1 (Winter 1984): 4-5. On the social impact of the automobile, the radio, and other technology on northern Plains families, see Angela E. Davis, " 'Valiant Servants': Women and Technology on the Canadian Prairies 1910-1940," *Manitoba History*, no. 25 (Spring 1993): 33-42; Katherine Jellison, "Women and Technology on the Great Plains, 1910-40," *Great Plains Quarterly* 8, no. 3 (Summer 1988): 145-57.
- ^{lxxxii} "Coal and Irrigation Impress Norwegian Editors on Tour Here," *Lethbridge Herald*, 23 July 1928.
- ^{lxxxiii} Wallace Stegner discusses northern Plains borderlanders' habit of travelling long distances to tend to farms, obtain supplies, seek entertainment, and generally avoid isolation, in *Where the Bluebird Sings to the Lemonade Springs: Living and Writing in the West*, repr. (New York: Penguin Books, 1993), 51-52.
- ^{lxxxiv} On the rise of automobile traffic and tourism in Montana and other parts of western North America, see Robert G. Athearn, "The Tin Can Tourist's West," in *Montana and the West: Essays in Honor of K. Ross Toole*, ed. Rex C. Myers and Harry W. Fritz (Boulder: Pruett Publishing Company, 1984), 105-21; *Seeing and Being Seen: Tourism in the American West*, ed. David M. Wrobel and Patrick T. Long (Lawrence: University

Press of Kansas, 2001); Michael Dawson, *Selling British Columbia: Tourism and Consumer Culture, 1890-1970* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004), 4.

^{lxxxv} Canada, *Report of the Department of Immigration and Colonization for the Fiscal Year Ended March 31, 1923* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1923), 40-1; Canada, *Report of the Department of Immigration and Colonization for the Fiscal Year Ended March 31, 1928* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1929), 94; Canada, *Report of the Department of Immigration and Colonization for the Fiscal Year Ended March 31, 1930* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1931), 72.

^{lxxxvi} Canada, *Report of the Department of Immigration and Colonization for the Fiscal Year Ended March 31, 1924* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1925), 35.

^{lxxxvii} Canada, *Report of the Department of Immigration and Colonization for the Fiscal Year Ended March 31, 1926* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1927), 56; Canada, *Report of the Department of Immigration and Colonization, Including Report of Soldier Settlement of Canada, for the Fiscal Year Ended March 31, 1935* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1936), 80-81; Canada, *Report of the Department of Immigration and Colonization, Including Report of Soldier Settlement of Canada, for the Fiscal Year Ended March 31, 1936* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1937), 86; Canada, *Report of Immigration Branch, Including Report of Soldier Settlement of Canada, for the Fiscal Year Ended March 31, 1937* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1938), 303, 305.

^{lxxxviii} United States, *Annual Report of the Commissioner General of Immigration to the Secretary of Labor, Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1931* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1931); United States, *Department of Labor Annual Report for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1928* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1928), 2.

^{lxxxix} United States, *Annual Report of the Commissioner General of Immigration to the Secretary of Labor, Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1931*, 26, 285.

^{xc} "Crowds Journey to Regina Fair," *Daniels County Leader*, 11 August 1927.

^{xc}i "Many Canadians Drive Through Opheim Customs," *Opheim Observer*, 8 July 1927. Vehicles in drought-stricken southern Saskatchewan in the 1930s commonly carried nine to thirteen people, according to the *Regina Leader Post*. See "Saturday Night in Assiniboia," 5 July 1937, and "13 Children in Saltcoats Car Accident," 20 July 1937.

^{xcii} Sir Raymond Unwin, "Problems of a Canadian Prairie Farmer," *Shaunavon Standard*, 17 May 1934.

^{xciii} "Gravelled Roads Come First," *Assiniboia Times*, 24 May 1939.

^{xciv} Wood Mountain Historical Society, ed., *They Came to Wood Mountain*, 4th ed. (Wood Mountain: Wood Mountain Historical Society, 1995), 132.

^{xcv} “Richland,” *Daniels County Leader*, 22 August 1929.

^{xcvi} “Additional Locals,” *Opheim Observer*, 29 May 1931.

^{xcvii} “Local News Items,” *Opheim Observer*, 29 May 1931.

^{xcviii} “Local News,” *Daniels County Leader*, 4 July 1935; “Return from Trip,” *Regina Leader Post*, 15 July 1937.

^{xcix} “Scobey Airport is Recognized by U.S. as Port of Entry,” *Daniels County Leader*, 29 May 1930; Bruce W. Gowans, *Wings Over Lethbridge, 1911-1940*, Occasional Paper No. 13 (Lethbridge: Whoop-Up Country Chapter, Historical Society of Alberta, 1986), I-9, I-19-20, III-48, III-58, III-62, III-70, III-84; Daniels County Bicentennial Committee, *Daniels County History*, 241-42; Dave McIntosh, *The Collectors: A History of Canadian Customs and Excise* (Toronto: NC Press, 1984), 144; United States, *Annual Report of the Commissioner General of Immigration to the Secretary of Labor, Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1931*, 284.

^c “Plane Brings Part of Good Will Tour to Scobey Tuesday,” *Daniels County Leader*, 16 August 1928.

^{ci} “Great Air Spectacle Greeted by 20,000 Visitors,” *Froid Tribune*, 27 July 1928.

^{cii} “Huge Crowd at Flaxville Sunday,” *Daniels County Leader*, 17 October 1929.

^{ciii} “Canadian Makes Trip in Plane to Road Conference,” *Opheim Observer*, 20 December 1929.

^{civ} “Local News,” *Daniels County Leader*, 5 November 1931.

^{cv} “Three Days by Train; 33 Minutes by Air,” *Daniels County Leader*, 3 March 1938. Also see Daniels County Bicentennial Committee, *Daniels County History*, 178-79.

^{cvi} Common, “Flow of Population,” 60-61.

^{cvii} “Havre Radio Sends Weather and Markets,” *Opheim Observer*, 27 July 1923.

^{cviii} Bill Knowles, “KGCX: ‘The Voice of Cow Creek,’ ” *Montana: The Magazine of Western History*, 47, no. 1 (Spring 1997): 56; Wayne Schmalz, *On Air: Radio in Saskatchewan* (Regina: Coteau Books, 1990), 26-29.

^{cix} Nadine Irène Kozak, “ ‘Among the Necessities’: A Social History of Communication Technology on the Canadian Prairies, 1900 to 1950” (master’s thesis, Carleton University, 2000), 101-103.

^{cx} Frank D. Hughes to Frank and Mellie Timmons Hughes, Scobey, 5 April 1937, Doris (Fee) Hughes Letters and Diaries, Daniels County Museum, Scobey, Montana.

^{cx}ⁱ “Saskatchewan Election Today,” *Daniels County Leader*, 6 June 1929.

^{cx}ⁱⁱ “CJRM, Moose Jaw, Welcomes Scobey Talent Wednesday,” *Daniels County Leader*, 27 June 1929.

^{cx}ⁱⁱⁱ Common, “Flow of Population,” 61. Even in the cash-strapped 1930s a growing number of borderlanders managed to purchase or rig up radios. Kozak, “Among the Necessities,” 111, notes that the percentage of rural prairie Canadian homes with radios rose from 18 per cent in 1931 to 70 per cent in 1941.

^{cx}^{iv} Schmalz, *On Air*, 43, 66-69; Unwin, “Problems of a Canadian Prairie Farmer.”

^{cx}^v Mary Vipond, *Listening In: The First Decade of Canadian Broadcasting, 1922-1932* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1992), 79-103.

^{cx}^{vi} “Magrath Boy Wins Success in Radio; Operator for K.S.L.” *Lethbridge Herald*, 21 July 1928.

^{cx}^{vii} “Radio Programs,” *Regina Leader-Post*, 20 July 1937.

^{cx}^{viii} Ruth Arlene Nora Lentz Oral History Interview, OH 1218, Montana Historical Society.

^{cx}^{ix} Rate Card, *The Weekly Climax* (Climax, SK: Climax Publishing Company, ca 1920s), 4; “The Greatest Service,” advertisement, *Daniels County Leader*, 23 November 1933.

^{cx}^x For insight into small-town western weeklies and the significance of personal news items, see Paul Voisey, *High River and the Times: An Alberta Community and Its Weekly Newspaper, 1905-1966* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2004).

^{cx}^{xi} *Opheim Observer*, “Richland Town,” 20 September 1929, 24 February 1928; “Local News Items,” 9 November 1928, 12 July 1929; “Local News,” 19 December 1930.

^{cx}^{xii} *Daniels County Leader*, “Local News,” 25 July 1929, 20 June, 1929; “Double Wedding,” 25 November 1926.

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- ^{cxxiii} *Daniels County Leader*, "Want Ads," 19 April, 1928; "Havre Expects Big Attendance at Legion Meet," 16 May 1929.
- ^{cxxiv} "Local Items," *Climax*, 18 July 1929.
- ^{cxxv} *Lethbridge Herald*, "Onefour," 3 July 1928; "Onefour News Notes," 6 July 1928; "Stirling," 4 July 1928.
- ^{cxxvi} *Daniels County Leader*, "Local News," 24 July 1930; "Richland," 31 July 1930.
- ^{cxxvii} "Climax Golfers Visit Malta," *Climax*, 26 March 1931.
- ^{cxxviii} *Opheim Observer*, "Frontier," 2 March 1928; "Frontier News," 15 March 1929.
- ^{cxxix} "Frank Gunn Being Held for Murder," *Lethbridge Herald*, 23 July 1928.
- ^{cxxx} Voisey, *High River*, 206.
- ^{cxxxii} *Lethbridge Herald*, "10,000 Barrel Gusher Struck in Kevin-Sunburst Oil Field," 17 July 1924; "Michener Well Holds Spotlight in North Montana Oil Fields," 3 July 1928. "Canadian Railroad Will Extend West of Rockglen," *Opheim Observer*, 1 February 1929. "Bill Reed, Turner, Will Speak on Merits of Strip Farming," *Shaunavon Standard*, 17 May 1934.
- ^{cxxxiii} *Daniels County Leader*, "Wildcat Injures Small Girl Living in Saskatchewan," 27 March 1930; "Outlook Boy Run Over by Truck, Dies," 28 May 1931; "Plentywood Pair Saved From Death in Burning Auto," 9 July 1931.
- ^{cxxxiiii} "Cars Collide in Fog on Slippery Street," *Opheim Observer*, 18 December 1925.
- ^{cxxxv} "Frank Gunn Being Held for Murder," *Lethbridge Herald*, 23 July 1928. "Man and Woman Murdered in Cold Blood, Blaine Co.," *Daniels County Leader*, 7 July 1932. "Think Murder Occurred in Minnesota," *Regina Leader Post*, 10 July 1937. Also see Canada, *Report of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police for the year ended March 31, 1938* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1938), 75-76.
- ^{cxxxvi} *Lethbridge Herald*, "Body of Border Oil Driller Goes South for Burial," 28 July 1928; "Coutts," 3 July 1928; "Border Farmers Do Lot of Breaking," 26 July 1928; "Plague of Mosquitoes Harass Border Herds," 13 July 1928; "Electric Service for Border Towns," 16 July 1928; "Alberta and Coast Men Secure Valuable Oil Acreage on Border," 6 July 1928.
- ^{cxxxvii} "Bountiful Rain Hits North Valley County," *Opheim Observer*, 15 July 1927.

^{cxxxvii} “Weather Caught Cold Suddenly; Several Perish,” *Daniels County Leader*, 16 October 1930.

^{cxxxviii} “Hail Ruins 20,000 Acres Wheat in County,” *Daniels County Leader*, 19 July 1928.

^{cxxxix} On western regions as mental constructs, see Morrissey, *Mental Territories*.

^{cxl} Boyd Anderson interview with author.

CHAPTER TWO

The Border Tightens

In late September 1931 two American immigration officers patrolling south of the forty-ninth parallel came across a horseback rider wearing part of a police uniform. The officers arrested the man, who turned out to be an ex-RCMP member from Gravelbourg, Saskatchewan, for sneaking into the United States through the badlands west of Opheim, Montana. A. L. Doust told the officers he was going to Glasgow, about sixty miles inland, for a short visit, but papers in his possession indicated he was heading for Mexico. According to the *Opheim Observer*, Doust ended up in jail in nearby Scobey awaiting deportation and his horse and saddle ended up in the deputy customs collector's hands.ⁱ About one month later, the same officers arrested another man for attempting to "crash the gates." Wilhelm Otto Schmidt was a twenty-two-year-old German immigrant who had been living in Canada for several months when he decided to move to the United States. "However," said the *Observer*, "being minus a passport, he was afraid to report to the Immigration and Customs offices and succeeded in making his way as far as Glasgow before he was apprehended." Officials seized Schmidt's horse and saddle and arranged to deport him to Germany. "The boundary line in the Opheim territory is getting to be a rather hard line to cross by aliens seeking entry into this country without necessary papers, due to the vigilance of the immigration patrolmen," the newspaper commented.ⁱⁱ

A growing number of articles about "line runners" like Doust and Schmidt appeared in northern Plains newspapers in the late 1920s and early 1930s. External forces were squeezing the border, making life more difficult for individuals and families who once moved freely between the United States and Canada. On orders from Washington

and Ottawa border authorities excluded, pursued, fined, jailed, and deported Canadian, American, and European-born border-crossers on an unprecedented scale. Immigration officials who once encouraged farmers and workers to migrate back and forth suddenly decided most of them were “undesirable” and should be confined to their country of birth. Customs officials also cracked down on borderlanders who were accustomed to buying and selling items across the line. These were tense times in the borderlands. Plains residents who saw the boundary as an open frontier were pitted against national authorities who saw it as a bulwark against unwanted immigrants and trade. The authorities ushered in an era of tough regulations, heightened surveillance, and strict enforcement that had serious implications for Plains borderlanders. Many were forced to experience the border in harsh, new ways. By the early 1930s the once-invisible line was, indeed, a rather difficult line to cross.

Before the turn of the century national authorities were not overly concerned about Canadians’ and Americans’ border-crossing habits. Canadians and Americans circulated freely about the continent. Customs officers inspected travellers’ baggage and collected duty on imported items, but no one closely questioned or kept accurate count of the people who crossed the land border in either direction. As time went on, however, the United States and Canada introduced more and more measures to control the cross-border movement of people and goods. By 1908 each country had a string of official entry posts from east to west and a bureaucratic system to monitor cross-border migration.ⁱⁱⁱ Plains border crossers were expected to report to customs and immigration officials on both sides of the line when coming and going. Americans taking livestock across the border were required to go through official ports where the animals were subject to duties and

veterinary inspections. The Big Muddy customs office, which operated southeast of Bengough, Saskatchewan, from 1908 to 1936, was actually manned by veterinarians. Fenced strips of land on the Canadian side were used to quarantine stock. Farmers and ranchers who raised horses, cattle, or sheep near the border were supposed to keep their animals on their side of the line.^{iv}

Both the United States and Canada enacted immigration laws in the early part of the century that allowed officials to reject border crossers deemed to be mentally, physically, financially, or morally unfit. Officials could also deport immigrants who became public charges, convicted criminals, prostitutes, pimps, or inmates of jails, hospitals, or insane asylums. During and soon after the First World War, both countries expanded these laws to target vagrants, illiterates, alcoholics, anarchists, and people suffering from “constitutional psychopathic inferiority.”^v Potential immigrants were subjected to rigorous medical examinations at designated stations along the border. For instance, in 1921 American officials at the Sweet Grass, Montana, port of entry rejected 168 of 1,287 applicants from Canada because of “physical or mental defects.”^{vi} The American Immigration Law of 1917 also stated that any non-American citizen, or “alien,” who crossed into the United States at an unauthorized location or evaded inspection by immigration officials could be deported within five years.^{vii}

Canadian and American immigration laws generally grew more restrictive in the wake of the First World War, as anti-immigrant sentiment escalated in both countries.^{viii} The two neighbours granted each other several concessions, however. They were relatively lenient with people who “habitually cross and recross the boundary on legitimate pursuits,” allowing borderlanders to reside in one country and work in the

other. Canadians and Americans who lived ten miles on either side of the line could obtain border crossing cards to expedite their trips through ports of entry. Almost 51,000 such cards were in use along the Canadian-American border by 1929-30.^{ix} Canada welcomed white American citizens who had work or could support themselves, and did not require them to produce passports or visas upon entry.^x The United States exempted Canada from immigration quotas imposed on most countries in 1921 and 1924, and did not expect Canadians who sojourned briefly in the United States to present a passport or to pay the head tax demanded of visitors from other countries.^{xi} Still, the quotas profoundly affected cross-border movement. They encouraged large numbers of Canadian-born agricultural and other workers to migrate south to take advantage of the booming American economy, while limiting foreign-born Canadians to the quota of their country of birth. They also prompted thousands of people from Europe and other restricted areas to surreptitiously enter the United States by way of Canada.^{xii} Furthermore, with the American Immigration Act of 1924, Canadians planning to live and work in the United States had to decide beforehand how long they wished to stay. Temporary movers could seek a permit for up to six months. Permanent movers needed a visa from an American consulate in Canada. For people in southern Saskatchewan this meant a trip to Regina and, if approved, further examination by immigration officials at a designated American port of entry. They also had to promise to become Americans. Canadians began to realize that crossing the border was serious business. Gone was their freedom “to choose if and when they would return to Canada, if and when they would settle in the United States, if and when they would take up American citizenship,” writes Canadian historian Bruno Ramirez.^{xiii} Canadians and other aliens who entered the United

States after July 1, 1924, without proper documentation or inspection, or who stayed longer than permitted, could be deported at any time.^{xiv}

By this time American law makers were concerned, not only about illegal immigrants, but also about rum-runners and bootleggers who were defying national prohibition laws by smuggling liquor from Canada and Mexico into the United States. National prohibition was in effect in the United States from 1920 to 1933. Most parts of Canada also experimented with prohibition, but by 1924 the three prairie provinces were “wet,” and enterprising distillers, moonshiners, and smugglers were providing liquor to thirsty residents south of the line. That year Congress approved funding for a special force to police both borders. Soon the Border Patrol, which was partly modelled after the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), began deploying men to the Plains border.^{xv} In April 1926 the director of the Immigration Department’s Spokane division, which included Montana, told the *Daniels County Leader* the department planned to put one hundred officers on the boundary between Canada and Montana “to effectively close the border against illegal entry of aliens, smuggling, transporting of liquor and other infractions of federal statutes.”^{xvi} Borderlanders noticed officials’ heightened vigilance. “In 1928 the border became harder to cross as U. S. Patrols were out to stop all traffic and smuggling,” says Robert Leininger, who grew up in a cross-border community encompassing the northeast corner of Montana, the northwest corner of North Dakota, and part of southeastern Saskatchewan. Leininger recalls that American officers patrolled on horseback.^{xvii} In addition to the Border Patrol, federal prohibition agents, local sheriffs, customs officials, and immigration inspectors all watched the American side of the border. The Opheim newspaper noted that officers stationed at the local port of entry,

which was about ten miles south of the Saskatchewan-Montana line, included a deputy collector of customs (who inspected vehicles upon entry and levied duty on imported items), two customs patrolmen (who combed a sixty-mile stretch of the border for contraband), an immigration inspector (who granted Canadians and other aliens permission to enter and questioned Americans returning from Canada), and three Border Patrol immigration officers (mainly responsible for apprehending illegal entrants).^{xviii}

Monitoring the Canadian side of the Plains border were customs, immigration, and RCMP officers. The federal police force, which absorbed the provincial forces in Saskatchewan in 1928 and Alberta and Manitoba in 1932, operated several detachments at ports of entry along the Plains border.^{xix} Officers at these detachments were chiefly responsible for enforcing Canadian immigration laws and preventing people from entering “by stealth”; some doubled as customs and immigration inspectors. RCMP officers also patrolled sections of the forty-ninth parallel in an effort to stem cross-border smuggling and other crimes.^{xx} “A close watch was kept on all main trails leading into Canada from the United States, especially at night,” the superintendent for southern Saskatchewan reported in 1930. “Suspicious characters who could not give a proper account of themselves were dealt with in the usual manner,” which presumably meant they were turned over to the nearest immigration officer. Senior officers praised the patrols for discouraging “evil-doers in the neighbouring States” from crossing the line to rob banks, businesses, and highway travellers.^{xxi}

Canadian and American officials often cooperated on cases involving crimes committed on or near the border. For instance, in 1929 a detective sergeant and six constables from the Arcola, Bengough, and Weyburn detachments in southeastern

Saskatchewan went undercover to help the sheriff, the state's attorney, and customs and border patrol officers in Divide County, North Dakota, shut down several "line houses" -- shacks on the Canadian side of the boundary that were illegally keeping and selling liquor to border crossers from various parts of North Dakota. The Canadian officers posed as American customers, approaching the houses from the south, to crack the case. "Three men were convicted and fined \$200 each, a quantity of liquor was seized, and the traffic was stopped for the time being," reported RCMP Commissioner Cortlandt Starnes. "The Sheriff and the State's Attorney have written warm letters of thanks."^{xxii}

On another occasion authorities busted a ring of bank robbers who operated on both sides of the boundary. In addition to robbing banks in northern Montana, the thieves, who hailed from Opheim, Glasgow, and Jordan, Montana, crossed into Saskatchewan to rob a bank at McCord. RCMP detective J. G. Metcalf made a special trip south to collect one of the culprits.^{xxiii}

In the late 1920s the American government pulled the drawstring on the forty-ninth parallel even tighter. On April 1, 1927, it began controlling the cross-border movement of Canadian workers. Those who entered the United States to work at existing jobs or to seek employment were now classified as immigrants, rather than non-immigrants, and must obtain a visa and pay a head tax. European-born Canadians were forced to join long lists of immigrants vying for a small number of quota visas. American immigration officials also began inspecting local crossers to ensure they had valid border cards. Border crossers who failed to meet officials' increasingly stringent requirements were refused entry.^{xxiv} These measures hit border cities in central Canada and the

American Midwest especially hard; thousands of people who lived in Canada and commuted daily to work in the United States lost their jobs. The number of regular border-crossers in the Windsor-Detroit area fell from about 15,600 to 10,000. Vincent Massey, Canada's minister to the United States, wrote Secretary of State Frank B. Kellogg to protest the sudden termination of "a long-standing and reciprocal arrangement" that allowed Canadians and Americans – especially those in "intimate" border communities – to move freely back and forth.^{xxv} His pleas appeared to fall on deaf ears. However, in 1928 Kellogg told the United States Senate Committee on Immigration that he opposed plans to impose a quota on native-born Canadian immigrants. He said people who lived near the border were "in the habit of coming and going with great freedom and they would resent any interference with that freedom." He was also loath to estrange "a country made up of people so closely allied to the people of the United States by blood, by speech, by habits of thought, and industrial interest."^{xxvi} Kellogg, border states sympathetic to Canada, and anti-restrictionists who shared their views helped kill efforts to extend the quota system to Canada and the rest of the Western Hemisphere, but restrictionists managed to introduce several laws and policies in the next few years that negatively affected Canadians.^{xxvii} For instance, the Act of March 4, 1929, made unauthorized entry a criminal offense. Border crossers who entered at undesignated places or times, eluded inspection, or deliberately gave immigration officials false or misleading information were subject not only to deportation, but also to substantial fines and/or prison terms. Immigrants who were arrested and deported could never legally return to the United States; they were permanently banished. The law was "in some respects the most drastic immigration law ever enacted."^{xxviii}

To make matters worse, on November 7, 1928, Americans elected a president who promised to boost already high tariffs on agricultural imports. Canadian Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King told his diary he feared Herbert Hoover's win would spark "border warfare which will be most injurious all round." If Hoover failed to offer Canada -- his nation's largest trading partner -- special treatment King confided that the dominion "could and probably would retaliate" by restricting imports from across the line.^{xxix} Many Canadians and Americans feared the proposed new tariff bill, which Congress debated between April 1929 and June 1930, would seriously hurt economic and political relations between the two countries.^{xxx} Plains borderlanders took considerable interest in these developments. In August 1929 Montana Senator Thomas J. Walsh told the *Havre Daily News* the "proposed tariff wall is making the Canadians sullen. In my opinion a great mistake has been made in trying to put a duty on products coming in from Canada."^{xxxi}

Any hope of softening the Canadian-American border vanished with the onset of the Great Depression. The door between the two countries was already closing in the late 1920s; the Depression virtually sealed it. For the northern Great Plains the crisis began with scorching heat and poor crops in the summer of 1929. The *Daniels County Leader* noted that the temperature in Scobey reached a record 105 degrees Fahrenheit in the shade on July 24, 1929, and that Regina was experiencing the worst heat wave in twenty-five years. "The Canadian west, suffering from the same drought as we are experiencing in northeastern Montana, will raise hardly enough for home consumption," the paper said.^{xxxii} Cross-border opportunities for farmers and labourers shrivelled along with the crops. When an impoverished North Dakota tailor and his family arrived at the Canadian

Department of Immigration and Colonization's Lethbridge office in late July seeking farm work, the department realized it had better warn its agents in the United States to dissuade all but the most financially secure settlers from moving north. "Crop conditions are so poor that there is very little likelihood of employment being obtained," wrote the official responsible for southern Alberta.^{xxxiii} Nationally, the closely-linked American and Canadian economies were also showing signs of strain.^{xxxiv} Growing unemployment prompted Canada to issue an order-in-council on August 7 barring most contract workers.^{xxxv} Six weeks later a correspondent for the *Daniels County Leader* noted that "Tom Smith who lives near the Canadian border" had just returned from a two-month stay in Detroit. "He reports that times are hard and work scarce in the east."^{xxxvi} The crash that rocked stock exchanges in New York, Toronto, Winnipeg, and other financial centres in late October 1929 signaled the beginning of a slump that would continue, with ups and downs, for more than a decade.^{xxxvii} The world price of wheat and other farm products plummeted, which was terrible news for the Plains borderlands because the area was so dependent on agriculture.

Soon poverty, dust storms, and grasshoppers turned southeastern Alberta, southern Saskatchewan, eastern Montana, and the Dakotas into a dust bowl more hellish than the dust bowl of the southern Plains.^{xxxviii} Environmental destruction and economic depression combined to produce a decade of unprecedented suffering on the northern Plains. Areas near the border were particularly hard hit; lifeless land, starving livestock, drafty shacks, and ragged children greeted observers on both sides.^{xxxix} "There was no rain," recalls northeastern Montana borderlander Curtis A. Stadstad, "and the top soil blew away. It drifted along fences until the wires and posts were covered. The sky

became black. One day as we walked home from school, visibility was about fifty feet. It was as thick as a snow blizzard.”^{xl} So-called “black blizzards” filled homes and lungs with dust and turned farms into “sand piles.”^{xli} Hordes of grasshoppers, cutworms, and other insects destroyed the few crops and gardens that grew.

Eye-witness reports like Stadstad’s best depict the environmental, economic, and social devastation the region experienced. Small-town newspapers along the border – on which this dissertation extensively relies – did not describe the full effect of the Depression. Rather, they expressed a spirit of boosterism left over from the settlement period, focusing on positive, genteel aspects of life in their communities. For instance, they reported that farewell parties were held for individual families, but failed to note that the region was actually experiencing an exodus.^{xlii}

“One could never believe the desolation existing in southern Saskatchewan did he not see it himself,” a shaken Minister of Labour, Gideon Robertson, wrote Prime Minister R. B. Bennett in 1931. “The whole country for more than one hundred miles in extent...is a barren drifting desert.”^{xliii} “Terrible wind and the whole country blowing,” McCord-area farmer George Hamilton wrote in his diary in the spring of 1930. Some days the air inside Hamilton’s house was so thick the family had to light a lamp to see.^{xliv} At her farm down the road, Kate Graves could hear the wind howling “very, very high” and see “the big weeds go rolling past.”^{xlv} Newspaper reporters (with a major western Canadian daily) travelling near the Saskatchewan-Montana border in 1934 reported seeing land that was “lifeless as ashes,” “gaunt cattle and horses, with little save their skins to cover their bones,” and people who appeared “haggard and hopeless.” “This is the real drouth country,” they wrote.^{xlvi}

No part of Canada or the world suffered more during the Great Depression than the province of Saskatchewan. Between 1928-29 and 1933, the province's per-capita income fell by 72 per cent, compared with 42 per cent for Canada as a whole.^{xlvi} Farmers' total net income dropped from \$185 million in 1928 to minus \$34 million in 1931 – “an achievement unmatched in any civilized country.”^{xlviii} The average farm operator's net income fell to minus \$255.^{xliv} Many Saskatchewan borderlanders were hungry, poorly clothed, ill-housed, and in poor health. Some women sewed clothing from flour sacks and layered quilts with old newspapers to warm their families. People patched broken windows with cardboard and replaced worn out teakettles with lard pails. In one family, two girls took turns wearing “the” dress to school.¹ Farm woman Alice Butala wrote that “almost every farm woman” near the border in far southwestern Saskatchewan gathered cow chips for fuel.^{li} Some people were reduced to eating Russian thistles and gophers.^{lii} Dozens died from nutritive diseases such as rickets, scurvy and beriberi; fourteen died from starvation.^{liii} By 1937 – the worst year of the drought -- two-thirds of rural Saskatchewan was on government relief.^{liv} Over the course of the decade approximately forty thousand people fled southern and western Saskatchewan.^{lv}

The situation was also grim on the American side of the border, even after Franklin D. Roosevelt brought in the New Deal in 1933. Montana and North Dakota -- the states that border Saskatchewan -- were among the hardest hit in the country. On July 6, 1931, University of Montana professor M.L. Wilson wrote Saskatchewan Deputy Agriculture Minister F. H. Auld to say his state was “in the throes of the worst drought Montana has ever witnessed.” Wheat was “a failure.”^{lvi} That summer half the counties in the state applied to the Red Cross for relief. “Most of those counties lay in the arc of dry-

farming and stockgrowing lands that reached from the High Line north of the Missouri river to the southeast along the Dakota state line,” write the authors of *Montana: A History of Two Centuries*.^{lvii} Almost 990 of the 1,402 farmers in Sheridan County, which touched Saskatchewan in the far northeastern corner of Montana, applied for feed loans in 1931 – “the largest percentage in any county in the state.”^{lviii} Many families along the border in northeastern Montana ate Russian thistle and pigweed as greens, and some children went without shoes in summer and winter.^{lix} After witnessing the “desperate condition” of the people in the drought-stricken area, Montana Governor John Erickson could only bury his head in his hands.^{lx} Between 1930 and 1932 the annual income of Montana farmers fell by 53 per cent; the average cash income per farm went from \$2,018 to \$961.^{lxi}

Drought continued to pound the Montana borderlands later in the decade. “We are definitely in the dust bowl,” an irrigation lobby group from Saco telegrammed Senator James Murray in May 1937. “No rain for eleven months. Day after day of dust storms. Grasshoppers hatching by the millions. Crops all gone and no feed for livestock.”^{lxii} William Bartley, Great Falls customs collector, wrote Murray and other Montana politicians to say that in twenty-six years of travelling in Montana he had never seen conditions as bad as they were in northern and eastern Montana. He said the community of Scobey in Daniels County in the northeast had not seen rain for a full year and “cattle and horses are chasing themselves to death looking for a little grass.” Farmers were killing lambs at birth because there was no feed or market for them.^{lxiii} Later that summer a Scobey man complained that northeastern Montana was not getting a fair share of Works Progress Administration funds: “Certainly there is no other place in the state

where the conditions are as tragic as right here in Daniels county, and no other place in the United States for that matter.”^{lxiv} Between 31 and 40 per cent of the population of Daniels County was on relief in 1935.^{lxv} In June 1937 a group from Daniels, Sheridan, and three other counties in northeastern Montana asked for increased Works Progress Administration funding because “80 per cent to 90 per cent of the farm population is faced with starvation or evacuation” and “they have exhausted all their resources.”^{lxvi} Montana ultimately received more per capita Works Progress Administration and Public Works Administration funding than any other state.^{lxvii}

Counties in northwestern North Dakota that touched the Canadian-American border suffered too. American journalist Lorena Hickok, reporting to senior officials in Washington on conditions throughout the country, called the Dakotas “the ‘Siberia’ of the United States.” Touring North Dakota in October 1933, she met once-prosperous farmers who could no longer feed and clothe their families. Conditions in Bottineau County on the border were among the worst in the state. There, “houses had gone to ruins. No repairs for years. Their furniture, dishes, cooking utensils – no replacements in years. No bed linen, and quilts and blankets all gone. A year ago their clothing was in rags. This year they hardly have rags.”^{lxviii} Hickok said women were worse off than men and children because families made it a priority to provide men with work clothes and children with shoes so they could attend school; women were often confined to their homes because they lacked enough clothing to go out.^{lxix} Average farm income in North Dakota dropped 64 per cent between 1929 and 1933. Only the state of South Dakota, with 68 per cent, lost more.^{lxx}

Initially, at least, national leaders and the general public were too preoccupied with other matters to address the disaster unfolding on the northern Plains.^{lxxi} The United States focused on erecting tough new immigration and trade barriers to protect American jobs and industries. Canada, which exported more people and products to the United States than to any other country, watched these developments with dread.

On June 17, 1930, Hoover ignored the pleas of diplomats and economists and signed the controversial Smoot-Hawley tariff bill into law, raising import duties to the highest level in American history and effectively shutting out Canadian field crops, livestock, dairy products, poultry, wool, hides, and a range of other commodities. Two years later the United States added restrictions on Canadian oil, coal, lumber, and copper. As King predicted, Canada retaliated with prohibitive increases of her own. First, the Liberal government introduced countervailing tariff increases and additional duties on fruits, vegetables, and steel. Then, the newly elected Conservative government passed the Emergency Tariff in September 1930 and still more tariffs and restrictive measures in June 1931. The total value of Canadian-American trade shrank from approximately \$1.5 billion in 1929 to \$400 million in 1933.^{lxxii}

For Plains borderlanders the days of openly freighting grain or trailing livestock across the border to the handiest market were over; exorbitant duties and zealous border authorities made such trips unfeasible. The changes came as a shock to some. “The first years we didn’t know much about the border between Canada and the United States,” recalls American-born Hilda (Sorum) Bendickson, who farmed with her husband in southeastern Saskatchewan from the mid-1920s on. The Bendicksons regularly crossed into Montana to buy groceries, sell eggs, and ship cream, and Americans crossed into

Saskatchewan to buy the Bendicksons' grain. It did not occur to any of them to pay duty on items they sold or purchased across the line. Then border authorities got "more strict," forcing the Bendicksons to haul their grain forty miles to Radville, Saskatchewan, rather than sell it to their American neighbors, and sending Canadian customs officers around to collect duty on "a lot of our stuff."^{lxxiii}

The border was becoming an inconvenient, expensive barrier that interfered with borderlanders' free trading ways. Those who failed to report to customs when bringing items over the line risked imprisonment, fines, the loss of the items, and the seizure of horses or vehicles used to transport them. "To bring any article in without reporting is smuggling and punishable as such, even if the articles are duty free when reported," said Scobey's *Daniels County Leader*.^{lxxiv} Customs officers in Montana and Idaho confiscated more than \$112,000 worth of whiskey, beer, wine, livestock, and other items in 1928-29, including seventy-three automobiles worth an estimated \$24,179. Montana officials watched for borderlanders who snuck grain and livestock across the border to take advantage of higher agricultural prices in the United States. "Alfred Anderson and Jack Bostrom, farmers living near the Canadian line, lost their trucks loaded with grain when Special Agent Henry A. Roberts and Immigration Officer C. L. George confiscated two loads of Canadian wheat in Saco the other day," the *Daniels County Leader* revealed in January 1926.^{lxxv} Several years later customs patrol officers charged two men from the Whitetail, Montana, area with shipping sixty-two smuggled "Canuck cattle" to eastern American markets.^{lxxvi} Canadian officials expected American motorists entering the country to report to customs and to obtain permits admitting their vehicles. "Failure to report may result in seizure of the car," warned a government brochure. "*Do not fail to*

declare any articles or goods that may be subject to duty.”^{lxxvii} On one border patrol in 1929 Manitoba District RCMP and customs officers collected \$426.50 in duty from American tourists who must not have read the brochure. In 1932 Manitoba border detachments boasted forty-eight smuggling convictions, “a large percentage of these cases arising from intercepted American cars which were seized and released on payment of a penalty for failing to report. Smuggled horses and goods were also seized and released on payment of the duty paid value.”^{lxxviii} Four years later the border detachments garnered almost twice as many convictions for such offenses.^{lxxix}

Even more disruptive than the tariff wall between the United States and Canada were harsh new measures to reduce cross-border migration. As we know Canadians and Americans had a history of switching countries in large numbers. In the decade before the crash, about 262,000 immigrants from the United States entered Canada. By 1931 Canada’s 10.4 million-strong population included 344,574 native-born Americans and 474,200 people of American parentage. The American born made up 3.3 per cent of Canada’s total population. They were the second largest foreign-born group after the English, who formed 7 per cent of the population. Native-born Americans made up almost 31 per cent of Canadian residents born outside the British Commonwealth.^{lxxx} Canada sent proportionally more people to the United States than vice versa. In fact, almost everyone who emigrated from Canada headed south. About 925,000 people from Canada and Newfoundland immigrated to the United States between 1921 and 1930, far more than in any previous decade. They accounted for 22.5 per cent of all immigrants and 61 per cent of immigrants from the Western Hemisphere during this period. Canada supplied the vast majority of the republic’s non-quota immigrants – 70 per cent – in the

fiscal year ending June 30, 1930.^{lxxxii} By that time there were about 1.3 million Canadian-born residents and 2.1 million people of Canadian parentage in the United States. There were more native-born Canadians in the country than on any previous census date. Canadians formed 1.05 per cent of the total population of roughly 123 million and 9.1 per cent of the foreign-born population, which made them the third largest foreign-born group after Italians and Germans. (Polish, English, and Mexican-born immigrants came fourth, fifth, and sixth.) In 1930-31 almost 14 per cent of all native-born Canadians actually lived below the forty-ninth parallel. One-quarter of North Americans of Canadian stock (Canadian birth or parentage) called the United States home in 1930.^{lxxxiii} When the Depression hit, the flow of immigrants between Canada and the United States slowed to a trickle as authorities rigidly enforced existing legislation and introduced new rules to keep out – and to kick out -- as many immigrants as possible. “The economic depression completely destroyed any vestiges of the old traditional freedom of immigration,” notes a student of the period. “Both Canada and the United States closed their doors to each other’s peoples.”^{lxxxiii}

Soon after protectionist Prime Minister R. B. Bennett was elected on July 28, 1930, the Canadian immigration department sent inspectors posted along the border a circular ordering them to strictly enforce new regulations limiting immigration from the United States. Only American citizens and British subjects who could support themselves until they found work and “bona fide agriculturalists” who had enough capital to immediately establish farms should be admitted.^{lxxxiv} The department sent similar instructions to its agents in Great Falls, Fargo, Spokane, and other American cities,

adding that “there is to be no harvester movement this year from the United States to Western Canada and there is no demand at the present time for general farm labour.”^{lxxxv} Three and a half months later, the chief commissioner of colonization sent agents a five-page letter informing them of Canada’s dire unemployment situation and the need to focus only on tourists, business investors, and settlers who could “cover the cost of *establishment and maintenance* of a farm.”^{lxxxvi} By March 1931 the immigration department no longer had the budget or heart to promote prairie Canada’s faded charms. The department began shuttering its American agencies, and the era of mass migration from the United States to western Canada officially ended.^{lxxxvii} Immigration from the United States to Canada went from 30,727 in 1929-30 to 5,113 in 1936-37. Admissions at border ports in the Western Division, which included the prairie provinces, fell from 8,052 to 677. Officials in this division rejected almost 45 per cent of immigration applicants in 1936-37, compared to 8 per cent in 1929-30.^{lxxxviii} Many unemployed Americans were rejected at the border because they supposedly had work waiting for them in Canada. Immigration inspectors used the contract labour regulation of 1929 to bar 953 people of this “class” in 1931-32.^{lxxxix} RCMP detachments near the border also “kept a sharp lookout for unemployed persons seeking to enter Canada.”^{xc} Between 1931 and 1940 Canada admitted a total of 92,761 immigrants from the United States, only 35 per cent of the figure admitted the previous decade.^{xc}

American isolationism profoundly affected Canadians who lived in or hoped to move to the United States in the early 1930s. In an effort to slash immigration from all countries, American immigration authorities targetted Canadians as never before. Canada lost its favoured status as part of the Americas. Suddenly, it was much harder for

Canadians to obtain immigrant visas and much easier for Canadians already in the United States to run afoul of the rules and to face deportation. Soon after the crash Hoover asked the Department of State to scour existing immigration laws for ways to reduce immigration. The department suggested stringently enforcing a provision allowing officials to reject applicants likely to become public charges. At a September 9, 1930, press conference Hoover revealed that American consuls had been barring immigrants from Canada on these grounds “for some time.”^{xcii} Applicants who could not prove that they had the means to maintain themselves indefinitely or that they had relatives in the United States who could support them were turned away. This strategy was so effective that the number of non-quota visas issued to Canadians went from 6,127 in October 1929 to 1,622 in October 1930 – a 74 per cent drop. Only 374 native-born Canadians received visas in February 1931, compared to 1,886 in February 1930.^{xciii} Authorities also reduced migration from Canada by strictly enforcing American contract labor regulations. Unemployed Canadians who applied for entry were hooped: If they had work lined up they were barred as contract workers, but if not they were rejected as future public charges. Officials were supposed to make exceptions for professionals, nurses, artists, domestics, and skilled workers whose positions could not be filled in the United States, but often they ignored or limited the number of people who qualified for these exemptions. Official immigration inspectors at American ports of entry made Canadian migrants’ lives even more difficult by arbitrarily rejecting visas and reducing the length of time temporary visitors could stay in the country. They rigorously examined “all persons entering daily from Canada,” cancelling border crossing cards on technicalities and cutting the number of commuters in the Windsor-Detroit area to 3,600 by December

1930. Plains borderlanders got a taste of these tactics in October 1929 when the immigration inspector at Scobey refused to permit a Crane Valley, Saskatchewan, woman to visit her husband in California, but allowed five members of the woman's family to make the trip. The *Daniels County Leader* noted that Mrs. E. B. Long and her husband, who were born in the United States, were naturalized Canadians. The woman's son-in-law apparently said she was detained because of "a technicality arising out of the residence of Mr. Long, an aged and dependent man, who is now in California with his sister and who did not have the regular entrance certificates." Inspectors who lacked a valid reason to exclude border crossers, or who found them disrespectful or uncooperative, tended to invoke the trusty public charge provision.^{xciv} In 1930-31 officials along the Canadian-American border debarred 5,454 Canadian residents who applied for "temporary sojourn" in the United States; 2,961 were rejected because they might become public charges, 1,602 because they lacked proper visas, and the rest were dismissed as contract laborers, prostitutes, illiterates, vagrants, "idiots," and the like. The number of immigrants ushered through ports on the Canadian border fell by more than 65 per cent -- from 61,531 to 21,251 -- between 1929-30 and 1930-31. Officials at border points in the Spokane and Grand Forks districts, which included Montana and North Dakota, saw admissions fall from 9,135 in 1928-29 to 4,692 in 1930-31.^{xcv} The *Opeheim Observer* reported that eight people were rejected and only one immigrant was admitted at the local port of entry in August 1931.^{xcvi} Two years later, only 6,074 immigrants were admitted over the border's entire length. Bureau of Immigration Commissioner General Daniel W. MacCormack marvelled that immigration from Canada, which "for years furnished more immigrants to the United States than any single country" fell more than

3,300 per cent between 1924 and 1933.^{xcvii} Although American officials began to admit more immigrants from Canada halfway through the decade, they continued to disappoint thousands of applicants. In 1937 officials debarred 6,671 immigrants at the border, including 3,910 who lacked valid consular visas and a significant number deemed likely to become public charges.^{xcviii} A mere 108,527 immigrants from Canada and Newfoundland were admitted between 1931 and 1940 -- about 12 per cent of the number accepted between 1921 and 1930. The United States admitted only 15,766 more immigrants from Canada and Newfoundland than vice versa during this period.^{xcix}

American authorities also made a concerted effort to track down and remove unwanted Canadian immigrants in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Hoover's Secretary of Labor -- "Doak the Deportation Chief" -- encouraged his officers to collect illegal immigrants of all nationalities from bread lines, hospitals, church missions, dances, and other venues throughout the country. Officials were especially active along the land borders, where "bootlegging of aliens often mingled with the bootlegging of liquor or other contraband." The Border Patrol apprehended 3,750 people near the Canadian-American line in 1932-33.^c Recent border crossers and long-time residents who had not attained American citizenship could be arrested and deported for becoming mentally or physically ill, committing certain crimes, or joining the "immoral classes." (Officials tended to view immigrants who committed adultery, cohabitated, or bore illegitimate children as immoral.) Immigrants who snuck across the border risked imprisonment, fines, and permanent banishment. Immigrants who required public aid could be deported or repatriated. The "liable to become a public charge" provision was "shaken on deportation cases as though with a large pepper shaker."^{ci} Often, officials retroactively

claimed that immigrants broke the public charge law at the time of entry. Many men and women who committed minor crimes or sexual transgressions before or after entering the United States were expelled under this catch-all provision.^{cii}

Initially officials deported most native-born Canadians to Canada and naturalized Canadians and other immigrants to their country of birth, even if they had no connections there and had been away for years. In many cases immigrants were torn from jobs, families, and property they had acquired in the United States.^{ciii} In 1931, officials deported 5,016 people of various nationalities who had entered at stations along the Canadian-American border, including 1,176 who entered at western ports; 2,276 deportees were sent to Canada and the balance to other countries. Many were deported because they lacked proper immigration visas, which usually meant they had crossed the border surreptitiously.^{civ} Some deportation laws and practices changed later in the 1930s. For instance, the Act of May 25, 1932, allowed deportees wishing to avoid permanent banishment to apply to the Secretary of Labor for readmission. And, after May 14, 1937, deportation was no longer limited to an immigrant's native country; deportees could also be returned to countries from which they came, or of which they were citizens.^{cv} Northern border states supplied the vast majority of Canadian deportees – almost 80 per cent in 1937. Of the 2,216 immigrants deported to Canada in 1933, 509 came from Montana, North Dakota, and other western border states. An additional 155 came from California and Oregon.^{cvi}

Scores of Canadians “whose only offense may consist in attempting to ‘find a job’ across the border, or in illegally entering to see relatives” were consigned to overcrowded, poorly equipped jails along the boundary. Barnard College political scientist

Jane Perry Clark, who investigated many cases involving Canadian and European deportees, found that conditions in border jails, where most “illegal entries” were detained, were much worse than conditions in inland jails. “The situation of inadequate detention facilities and overcrowding repeats itself constantly on both the northern and southern borders,” she wrote in 1931. Clark noted that the Bureau of Immigration had no idea how many deportees were being held in the country’s more than 1,100 county jails. She deplored the fact that cramped county jails in “far-off border towns” with no other detention facilities allowed deportees, including young children, to mingle with prostitutes, “narcotic addicts,” and people who were “insane and ill.”^{cvi} Many immigrants spent a year or more awaiting prosecution and serving sentences in such settings before finally being deported.^{cvi} Even Secretary of Labor William N. Doak admitted that the country’s harsh deportation laws made “an already deplorable situation...immeasurably worse.”^{cix}

Many illegal immigrants ended up in county jails in northern Montana. Between 1929 and 1932 the Cascade County jail in Great Falls lodged a total of more than 240 Canadian-born immigration violators, as well as a considerable number of European-born immigrants who crossed illegally from Alberta and Saskatchewan.^{cx} The Valley County jail in Glasgow, the Daniels County jail in Scobey, the Hill County jail in Havre, the Liberty County jail in Shelby, and other jails near the forty-ninth parallel also saw their fair share of illegal border-crossers. The *Opheim Observer* described case after case in its vicinity alone. For instance, a man wanted for stealing fifteen cases of beer in Rockglen, Saskatchewan, was apprehended “in the early morning hours” near the border north of Richland, Montana, incarcerated in the county jail at Glasgow, rejected “as an

undesirable character,” and deported from Opheim in July 1930.^{cxii} In January 1931 the customs collector at Opheim “detained” Peter Yorga of Flintoft, Saskatchewan, and confiscated the Buick sedan he was using to drive two other immigrants to Glasgow, where they were promised work. The three men, who were “of Rumanian descent,” were all deported to Canada.^{cxiii} That fall the newspaper noted that Philemon E. Renno, a French-Canadian from Reward, Saskatchewan, who was arrested at Hinsdale, Montana, for not reporting to customs and immigration officers, was being held in the county jail at Scobey pending completion of deportation proceedings. “Mr. Renno was on his way to North Dakota to spend the winter. His car and some of his personal effects were seized by the Deputy Collector of Customs.”^{cxiiii}

The number of illegal border crossers in the county jail in Great Falls fell in 1932 as officials began concentrating offenders in other jails near the boundary. On January 28 the *Daniels County Leader* reported that the county jail in Shelby was slated to become a station point for aliens being deported to Canada; officials were getting ready to take fifteen people, sentenced in the previous month, from Great Falls to Shelby to serve their time. Deportees born in Europe would be jailed at Havre, before joining a “deportation party” bound for New York.^{cxiv} In the late 1920s and early 1930s American immigration officials shuttled thousands of deportees around the country by train, picking up and dropping off people to be sent across the land border or shipped en masse from coastal ports. In February 1929, for example, “a barred deportation train containing a large number of aliens who are being taken from Seattle to New York” was expected to collect eight deportees from the “Hill County bastille” in Havre.^{cxv} Commissioner General of

Immigration Harry E. Hull noted somewhat callously that the bureau moved 181 groups of deportees in 1930, “at a great saving of funds and personnel.”^{cxvi}

Throughout the Depression American officials also warned thousands of Canadian immigrants that they faced deportation unless they left “voluntarily” at their own expense. Immigrants who left before deportation warrants were issued could choose their destination and apply for re-entry, although many who tried were rejected for previously receiving public aid or committing deportable offenses.^{cxvii} In August 1931 Opheim immigration officials deported British-born J. L. Marshall and his Canadian-born wife and two daughters for entering without reporting several years earlier. The family had been living at Faranuf, a small community southwest of Glasgow, since October 1928. “These people returned voluntarily to Canada at their own expense but under regular deportation proceedings,” noted the *Opheim Observer*, “and under such proceedings they can never return to the United States.” The newspaper added that a “family of Polacks” apprehended about 50 miles west of Opheim had recently been “allowed to return to Canada, from which country they came, without regular deportation proceedings being instituted.”^{cxviii}

Northern Montana newspapers seemed to sympathize more with Anglo deportees than those born in central or eastern Europe. An August 1929 article in the Scobey-based *Daniels County Leader* described a “tired, hungry, discouraged, and very, very homesick” Irish immigrant who walked from Ceylon, Saskatchewan, to Plentywood, Montana, and turned himself in to the police chief in hopes of being returned to the “Old Sod.” Immigration officials took Dennis Patrick O’Keefe to Great Falls to be deported to Canada. “Later, it is more than probable, he will be sent back to Ireland,” the paper said

sadly. “He was a bright, fine appearing young man, of a type this country could very well afford to welcome.”^{cxix} Articles about illegal “Polacks” and other “smuggled aliens” were less complimentary. Unlike O’Keefe, the group of “Hungarian Magyars” arrested near Medicine Lake, Montana, in October 1929 for illegally crossing to work on a railroad construction gang were clearly undesirable types who “spoke no English” and had foreign-sounding names like Lazro Demes, Steve Stupock, and Basil Kurylac.^{cxx}

Formally and informally, the United States deported more people to Canada than to any country except Mexico in the 1930s. Between 1932-33 and 1939-40, 14,323 immigrants were formally deported and 24,072 left voluntarily for Canada. Although formal deportations to Canada fluctuated between 1,503 and 2,216, voluntary departures rose steadily from 1,750 in 1932-33 to 3,981 in 1939-40. The gap between Canadian and Mexican voluntary departures narrowed significantly in the second half of the decade. By 1939-40 only 168 more immigrants were informally deported over the southern border than the northern border.^{cxxi}

Canada and the United States used similar laws and tactics to boost deportation figures in the early 1930s. Canadian officials could be as harsh and arbitrary as their American counterparts. They were especially fond of deporting immigrants who were unemployed or receiving relief, on the grounds that they were public charges.^{cxxii} However, Canada seemed less eager than the United States to “dispose of” immigrants from next door. Canadian authorities returned far more people to Britain and other parts of Europe than to the United States, perhaps because Europeans formed the bulk of the dominion’s immigrant population. The number of people deported to the United States remained fairly steady in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Between 1929-30 and 1933-34

Canada expelled an average of 283 Americans – compared to 5,110 people from Britain and other countries -- each year. Deportations to the United States peaked between 1932 and 1934. In 1933-34 Canada deported 301 American citizens across the international boundary. Ninety-three were deported for being convicted of criminal offenses, 78 for being public charges, 56 for entering by “misrepresentation and stealth,” 39 for previously being deported, 22 for suffering from insanity, and 13 for other reasons. Eighty of the 301 deportees were ejected from the prairie provinces.^{cxxiii} Saskatchewan hospitals sent dozens of patients with schizophrenia and other mental illnesses across the border. In 1932-33 alone, five of the Battleford Mental Hospital’s twenty-two deportees went south; the five American deportees included one twenty-five-year-old woman and four men between the ages of thirty-three and fifty-five.^{cxxiv} As late as 1939-40 the Saskatchewan Mental Hospital at Weyburn deported one twenty-eight-year-old and one forty-six-year-old male schizophrenic to the United States. Some patients ended up in northern Montana jails. “Sheriff Madsen Comes for Man Believed Insane,” said a *Daniels County Leader* headline in February 1931.^{cxxv} The *Regina Leader Post* carried several stories about vagrants who were deported to the United States, including a “colored youth” who arrived with Regina Exhibition midway workers in July 1937. The paper also mentioned Americans like twenty-four-year-old Harold Ryan, who was arrested for writing bad cheques in Shaunavon in 1933, jailed in Regina, deported to the United States in June 1934, immediately walked back across the border, wrote more bad cheques in Swift Current, and was promptly sentenced to two and one-half years in the Prince Albert penitentiary -- from which he would likely be deported.^{cxxvi} Canada deported a total of 2,223 Americans between 1928-29 and 1936-37.^{cxxvii}

From a distance the Canadian-American border looked very solid in the late 1920s and early 1930s. It was heavily regulated and seemed to be doing a good job of restricting the cross-border flow of people and goods. To people on the ground, however, the border remained remarkably flimsy. Even as the rules tightened Plains borderlanders continued to see ports of entry along the forty-ninth parallel as “a series of locked doors with no connecting walls between them.”^{cxxviii} It was easy enough to slip through. Border officials were too weak, border residents too determined, and cross-border connections too powerful to keep Canadians and Americans from mingling on the northern Plains.

Notes

ⁱ “Patrolmen Shipley and Jensen Arrest Ex-Member of RCMP,” *Opheim Observer*, 2 October 1931.

ⁱⁱ “Young German Tries to Visit United States; Nabbed by Officials,” *Opheim Observer*, 30 October 1931.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ramirez, *Crossing the 49th Parallel*, 39-44; Common, “Flow of Population,” 172; Valerie Knowles, *Strangers at Our Gates: Canadian Immigration and Immigration Policy, 1540-2006*, rev. ed. (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2007), 121-22. The Canadian and American governments were much more determined to restrict the cross-border movement of Asian immigrants than Anglo and European immigrants in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The Canadian government also discouraged the migration of African-American settlers to western Canada. See Erika Lee, *At America’s Gates: Chinese Immigration During the Exclusion Era, 1882-1943* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); R. Bruce Shepard, *Deemed Unsuited: Blacks from Oklahoma Move to the Canadian Prairies in Search of Equality in the Early 20th Century, Only to Find Racism in Their New Home* (Toronto: Umbrella Press, 1997).

^{iv} Herbert Legg, *Customs Services in Canada, 1867-1925* (Creston: Creston Review, 1962), 25, 27, 196, 206, 209, 286, 321; William Beahen and Stan Horrall, *Red Coats on the Prairies: The North-West Mounted Police, 1886-1900* (Regina: Centax Books, 1998), 45-49; Milk River Historical Society, ed., *Under Eight Flags: Milk River and District* (Lethbridge: Graphcom Printers, 1989), 22.

^v United States Senate, Committee on the Judiciary, “History of the Immigration and Naturalization Service,” 96th Congress, 2nd Session (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1980), 23; Darrell Hevenor Smith and H. Guy Herring, *The Bureau of Immigration: Its History, Activities, and Organization* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1924), 54; Angus McLaren, “Stemming the Flood of Defective Aliens,” in *The History of Immigration and Racism in Canada*, ed. Barrington Walker (Toronto: Canadian Scholars’ Press, 2008), 189-204.

^{vi} Smith and Herring, *Bureau of Immigration*, 47-57.

^{vii} United States, National Commission on Law Observance and Enforcement, *Report on the Enforcement of the Deportation Laws of the United States* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1931), 34-35.

^{viii} Roger Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door: American Immigration Policy and Immigrants Since 1882* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2004), 46-56; Ninette Kelley and

Michael Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic: A History of Canadian Immigration Policy*, Repr. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 183-215; Donald Avery, “*Dangerous Foreigners*”: *European Immigrant Workers and Labour Radicalism in Canada 1896-1932* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1979), 76-115. Both countries experienced post-war economic depressions that helped to shape their restrictionist agendas. The depression was more short-lived in the United States than in Canada, but it continued to influence American’s views on immigration throughout the 1920s. Many restrictionists were motivated by nativism and the desire to protect native-born citizens’ jobs.

^{ix} Smith and Herring, *Bureau of Immigration*, 44; Marian L. Smith, “The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) at the U.S.-Canadian Border, 1893-1993,” *Michigan Historical Review* 26, no. 2 (Fall 2000): 127-147; Evelyn L. K. Harris, “The Restriction of Immigration Between the United States and Canada, 1927-1945,” (master’s thesis, Columbia University, 1946), 43-56; United States, *Annual Report of the Commissioner General of Immigration to the Secretary of Labor for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1930* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1930), 8. The border crossing passes were issued by the United States Bureau of Immigration (later the Immigration and Naturalization Service). Sources that mention these passes refer mainly to commuters in the heavily populated, industrial Ontario-Michigan border region. It is not clear whether people who lived in the Plains borderlands and other rural areas along the border also received these passes.

^x Kelley and Trebilcock, *Making of the Mosaic*, 183-89.

^{xi} Smith and Herring, *Bureau of Immigration*, 46.

^{xii} John Bartlet Brebner, *North Atlantic Triangle: The Interplay of Canada, the United States and Great Britain* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1966), 295-96, 298; Avery, *Dangerous Foreigners*, 97-98; Smith, “Immigration and Naturalization,” 127-47.

^{xiii} Ramirez, *Crossing the 49th Parallel*, 49. Also see Sidney Kansas, *U. S. Immigration: Exclusion and Deportation, and Citizenship of the United States of America*, 2nd ed. (Albany: Matthew Bender Company, 1941), 16-68.

^{xiv} Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 60; Smith and Herring, *Bureau of Immigration*, 35; Kansas, *U. S. Immigration*, 113-14.

^{xv} United States Senate, Committee on the Judiciary, “History of the Immigration and Naturalization Service,” 35-36; Clifford Alan Perkins, *Border Patrol: With the U.S. Immigration Service on the Mexican Boundary, 1910-54* (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1978), 89-91; Smith, “Immigration and Naturalization,” 127-47.

^{xvi} “Border Patrol Increased on Mont.-Can. Line,” *Daniels County Leader*, 22 April 1926.

^{xvii} Lake Alma History Book Committee, ed., *Settlers of the Hills and Beyond* (Altona: Friesens Corporation, 2000), 169-70.

^{xviii} “Seven U. S. Officers Make Homes Here,” *Opheim Observer*, 27 June 1930.

^{xix} The Alberta Provincial Police served Alberta from 1917 to 1932, the Saskatchewan Provincial Police served that province from 1917 to 1928, and the Manitoba Provincial Police operated in Manitoba from 1870 to 1932. The RCMP continued to patrol the international boundary during these periods. See Zhiqiu Lin, *Policing the Wild North-West: A Sociological Study of the Provincial Police in Alberta and Saskatchewan, 1905-32* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2007), 56, 164; Duncan Francis Robertson, “The Saskatchewan Provincial Police, 1917-1928” (master’s thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 1976), 17, 21; Steve Hewitt, *Riding to the Rescue: The Transformation of the RCMP in Alberta and Saskatchewan, 1914-1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006) 17, 23.

^{xx} *Report of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police for the Year Ended September 30, 1928* (Ottawa: King’s Printer, 1929), 36.

^{xxi} *Report of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police for the Year Ended September 30, 1930* (Ottawa: King’s Printer, 1931), 10, 33, 37.

^{xxii} *Report of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police for the Year Ended September 30, 1929* (Ottawa: King’s Printer, 1930), 22.

^{xxiii} “Jordan Rancher Confesses to Bank Robbery,” *Glasgow Times*, reprinted in *Opheim Observer*, 8 May 1931.

^{xxiv} United States Department of Labor, General Order No. 86, 1 April 1927; Harris, “Restriction of Immigration,” 43-57. Harris says potential immigrants were charged ten dollars for a visa and eight dollars for the head tax. Applying for a border crossing card entailed filling out separate forms and paying an additional fee.

^{xxv} Vincent Massey to Frank B. Kellogg, Washington, 8 June 1927, “The Canadian Minister (Massey) to the Secretary of State,” *Foreign Relations*, no. 1 (1927): 503. Also see H. Wrong to H. L. Stimson, Washington, 26 December 1930, “The Canadian Charge (Wrong) to the Secretary of State,” *Foreign Relations*, no. 1 (1931): 894-96. Little is known about the effect the new restrictions had on residents of Canadian-American border regions outside the Windsor-Detroit region.

^{xxvi} United States Senate, *Restriction of Western Hemisphere Immigration: Hearings Before the Committee on Immigration, 70th Congress, 1st Session* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1928), 158, 167. Also see “Must Apply Quota to Some

Canadians: Kellogg Points Out to Massey Immigration Law Makes Exclusion Mandatory,” *New York Times*, 30 May 1927; “Kellogg Opposes Davis Quota Plan: Objects to Any Restriction on Immigration From Countries in This Hemisphere,” *New York Times*, 6 March 1928.

^{xxvii} Robert A Divine, *American Immigration Policy, 1924-1952* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), 52-68; United States, Act of March 4, 1929, Public. No. 1018, 70th Congress, 2nd Session. Restrictionists were generally more concerned with limiting immigration from Mexico than from Canada. On racist aspects of American immigration policies during this period, see Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*; Lee, *At America's Gates*.

^{xxviii} United States, National Commission on Law Observance and Enforcement, *Report on the Enforcement of the Deportation Laws of the United States*, 38-39; United States, *Annual Report of the Secretary of Labor for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1930*, 62, quoted in Jane Perry Clark, *Deportation of Aliens from the United States to Europe* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931), 465.

^{xxix} William Lyon Mackenzie King Diary, 7 November 1928 (p. G5256) and 26 February 1929 (p. G5352), quoted in Judith A. McDonald and others, “Trade Wars: Canada’s Reaction to the Smoot-Hawley Tariff,” *Journal of Economic History* 57, no. 4 (December 1997): 807.

^{xxx} Richard N. Kottman, “Herbert Hoover and the Smoot-Hawley Tariff: Canada, A Case Study,” *Journal of American History* 62, no. 3 (December 1975): 609-35.

^{xxxi} “Walsh Approves Hoover Program During Interview,” *Havre Daily News* article, reprinted in *Daniels County Leader*, 15 August 1929.

^{xxxii} *Daniels County Leader*, 25 July 1929, “Heat Wednesday Sets New Record for This Locality;” “Canadian Wheat Crop Very Small.”

^{xxxiii} W. S. Woods, Calgary District Superintendent, to Superintendent, Land Settlement Branch, Department of Immigration and Colonization, 29 July 1929; W. R. Little, Commissioner of Colonization, Department of Immigration and Colonization, to W. E. Black, Canadian Government Agent, Fargo, North Dakota, 19 August 1929; W. E. Black to W. R. Little, 26 August 1929. Canada, Immigration Branch Records, RG 76, Vol. 76, File 5146, Part 8, Saskatchewan Archives Board, Regina (microfilm copy of Immigration Branch Records, National Archives of Canada, Ottawa).

^{xxxiv} David M. Kennedy, *Freedom From Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 39; John Herd Thompson with Allen Seager, *Canada 1922-1939: Decades of Discord* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1985), 193-97; A. E. Safarian, *The Canadian Economy in the Great Depression* (1959; repr. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1970, 32-108.

^{xxxv} Canada, Order-in-Council, P.C. 1413, 7 August 1929; untitled press release, 21 August 1929, Immigration Branch Records.

^{xxxvi} “Richland,” *Daniels County Leader*, 19 September 1929.

^{xxxvii} It is difficult to say exactly when the Great Depression began -- the stock market crash being a symptom rather than the cause of the economic crisis. According to Robert S. McElvaine, *The Great Depression: America, 1929-1941*, 2nd ed. (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1993), 48, sharp declines in American industrial production and imports in the last three to four months of the year suggest that the Depression was underway by December 1929. Safarian, *Canadian Economy*, 73, says, “The stock market crash in the United States speeded up the decline in that country in the fourth quarter of 1929.”

^{xxxviii} Britnell, *Wheat Economy*, 69-74; Montana Crop and Livestock Reporting Service, *Montana Agricultural Statistics, 1867-1976* (Bozeman: Montana Department of Agriculture, 1978); Richard Lowitt, *The New Deal and the West* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 35; Worster, *Dust Bowl*, 11, 35; Stock, *Main Street in Crisis*, 17-30; Lamar, “Comparing Depressions,” 188; “Dust Bowls of the Empire,” *The Round Table* 29, no. 114 (March 1939): 338, 343-44; James H. Gray, *The Winter Years: The Depression on the Prairies* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1966), 104-16, and *Men Against the Desert* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1978).

^{xxxix} Lowitt, *New Deal*, 9-13; Mary Murphy, *Hope in Hard Times: New Deal Photographs of Montana, 1936-1942* (Helena: Montana Historical Society Press, 2003), 3, 38, 46-47, 78-80; D. B. MacRae and R. M. Scott, *In the South Country* (Saskatoon: Saskatoon Star-Phoenix, 1934), 12-37.

^{xl} Curtis A. Stadstad, *Growing Up in the Great Depression: The Tragedy of the Great Drouth* (Curtis A. Stadstad, ca 1988), 26.

^{xli} C. McManus, *Happyland*, 178.

^{xlii} On boosterism see Jones, *Empire of Dust*, 27-29, 58-69, and Voisey, *High River and the Times*, 43, 70, 72-73, 81, 102-103, 217.

^{xliii} Quoted in James Struthers, *No Fault of Their Own: Unemployment and the Canadian Welfare State 1914-1941* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), 53.

^{xliv} George E. Hamilton diary, 1921-1932, McCord Museum, McCord, Saskatchewan.

^{xlv} Kate Graves to Georgina Edith Graves Griffiths, 17 April 1937, Kate Graves Family Papers, author’s possession.

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- ^{xlvi} MacRae and Scott, *In the South Country*, 18.
- ^{xlvii} Thompson and Seager, *Canada 1922-1939*, 351.
- ^{xlviii} John Archer, quoted in C. McManus, *Happyland*, 118.
- ^{xlix} Province of Saskatchewan Royal Commission on Agriculture and Rural Life, *Rural Roads and Local Government: A Summary* (Regina: Queen's Printer, 1956), 6.
- ¹ C. McManus, *Happyland*, 129; "A General View of the Drought Area," Saskatchewan Archives Board, Regina, Drought File, Red Cross Society Reports, 1936, SHS101; MacRae and Scott, *In the South Country*, 18.
- ^{li} Alice Butala to Violet McNaughton, Divide, Saskatchewan, 25 January 1938, Saskatchewan Archives Board, Saskatoon, Mrs. George Butala letters (Mrs. Alice Butala), McNaughton Papers, Collection A1 D, File 16.
- ^{lii} W. Assaf, *And the Winds Blew*, 29; C. McManus, *Happyland*, 137.
- ^{liii} C. McManus, *Happyland*, 197.
- ^{liv} Britnell, *Wheat Economy*, 97.
- ^{lv} C. McManus, *Happyland*, 167.
- ^{lvi} Quoted in C. McManus, *Happyland*, 178.
- ^{lvii} Michael P. Malone and others, *Montana*, 292.
- ^{lviii} Murphy, *Hope in Hard Times*, 38.
- ^{lix} Stadstad, *Growing Up in the Great Depression*, 13-16.
- ^{lx} Malone and others, *Montana*, 293.
- ^{lxi} Scott C. Loken, "Montana During World War Two," (master's thesis, University of Montana, 1993), 9, 70.
- ^{lxii} Saco Divide Irrigation Committee telegram to James E. Murray, Saco, 27 May 1937, Murray Papers, Series I, Box 194, Folder 7.
- ^{lxiii} William H. Bartley to B. K. Wheeler, James E. Murray, James O'Connor, and Jerry O'Connell, Great Falls, Montana, 17 May 1937, Murray Papers, Series I, Box 194, Folder 7.

lxiv Albert W. Schammel to James E. Murray, Scobey, 25 August 1937, Murray Papers, Series I, Box 805, Folder 12.

lxv Murphy, *Hope in Hard Times*, 45.

lxvi "Resolution," Resolution Committee, Roosevelt, Daniels, Sheridan, McCone and Richland Counties, 5 June 1937, Murray Papers, Series I, Box 194, Folder 7.

lxvii Leonard J. Arrington and Don C. Reading, "New Deal Economic Programs in the Northern Tier States, 1933-1939," in *Centennial West: Essays on the Northern Tier States*, ed. William L. Lang (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1991), 236.

lxviii Lowitt, *New Deal and the West*, 10-11, 13.

lxix *Ibid.*, 9.

lxx Arrington and Reading, "New Deal Economic Programs," 228-29.

lxxi Worster, *Dust Bowl*, 38; Gray, *Men Against the Desert*, 1-6, 19-34.

lxxii Kottman, "Herbert Hoover," 632, and *Reciprocity and the North Atlantic Triangle, 1932-1938* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1968), 82; Brebner, *North Atlantic Triangle*, 241-42, 289, 292; Judith A. McDonald and others, "Trade Wars: Canada's Reaction to the Smoot-Hawley Tariff," *Journal of Economic History* 57, no. 4 (1997): 808, 814-15; John Herd Thompson and Stephen J. Randall, *The United States and Canada: Ambivalent Allies*, 3rd ed. (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), 129-31.

lxxiii Lake Alma Over 50 Club, *Settlers of the Hills*, 73.

lxxiv "Don't Forget to Report at Customs," *Daniels County Leader*, 4 August 1927. Also see "Laws Relating Border Patrol are Set Forth," *Opheim Observer*, 19 July 1929.

lxxv "State Briefs," *Daniels County Leader*, 28 January 1926.

lxxvi "Customs Department Makes Valuable Seizures Past Year," *Opheim Observer*, 28 June 1929; "Two Charged With Shipping Canuck Cattle," *Daniels County Leader*, 5 September 1935.

lxxvii Canada, Natural Resources Intelligence Service, *How to Enter Canada* (Ottawa: Department of the Interior, 1928), 1; Canadian Travel Bureau, *How to Enter Canada*:

Information for Tourists Crossing the Border (Ottawa: Department of Railways and Canals, 1936), 8.

^{lxxviii} *Report of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police for the Year Ended September 30, 1932* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1933), 65.

^{lxxix} *Report of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police for the Year Ended March 31, 1937* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1937), 63.

^{lxxx} Davie, *World Immigration*, 417; Coats and Maclean, *American-Born in Canada*, 2-3, 8, 61.

^{lxxxi} Davie, *World Immigration*, 53, 208-209; United States, White House Statement on Government Policies to Reduce Immigration, 26 March 1931. By comparison, about 459,000 people, or 11.2 per cent of all immigrants, came from Mexico between 1921 and 1930. In the fiscal year ending June 30, 1930, 19 per cent of non-quota visas were issued to native-born Mexicans.

^{lxxxii} Truesdell, *Canadian Born in the United States*, 10, 16, 19-20, 57. Brebner, *North Atlantic Triangle*, 300-302.

^{lxxxiii} Evelyn L. K. Harris, "The Restriction of Immigration Between the United States and Canada: 1927-1946," (master's thesis, Columbia University, 1946), 1, 12.

^{lxxxiv} Commissioner of Immigration to Canadian Immigration Inspectors at International Boundary Ports, 14 August 1930, Department of Immigration and Colonization Official Circular No. 33, Immigration Branch Records.

^{lxxxv} Commissioner of Colonization to Canadian Government Agents in the United States, 18 August 1930, Department of Immigration and Colonization Circular No. 1-30, Immigration Branch Records.

^{lxxxvi} Chief Commissioner of Colonization to Agents at Boston, Mass., Buffalo, N. Y., Chicago, Ill., Columbus, Ohio, Detroit, Mich., Fargo, N. D., Great Falls, Mont., Kansas City, Mo., Omaha, Neb., Minneapolis, Minn., San Francisco, Cal., Spokane, Wash., 5 December 1930, Immigration Branch Records.

^{lxxxvii} Chief Commissioner of Colonization Memorandum to Mr. Egan, 6 February 1931, and D. M. to J. M. Davidson, Managing Secretary, Industrial Development Board of Manitoba, 4 August 1931, Immigration Branch Records; "To Close Offices of Immigration," *Ottawa Journal*, 10 February 1931.

^{lxxxviii} Canada, Department of Immigration and Colonization, *Annual Report for the Fiscal Year Ended March 31, 1930* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1931), 8, 54; Canada, Department

of Mines and Resources, *Report of Immigration Branch for the Fiscal Year Ended March 31, 1937* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1938), 296, 305.

^{lxxxix} Canada, *Report of the Department of Immigration and Colonization for the Fiscal Year Ended March 31, 1932*, 71.

^{xc} *Report of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police for the Year Ended September 30, 1931* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1932), 49.

^{xcⁱ} United States, *The Immigration and Naturalization Systems of the United States*, Senate Report No. 1515, 81st Congress, 2nd Session (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1950), 812, Table 6.

^{xcⁱⁱ} Harris, "Restriction of Immigration," 16-20; United States, President's News Conference, 9 September 1930.

^{xcⁱⁱⁱ} Harris, "Restriction of Immigration," 17-25; United States, "White House Statement on Government Policies to Reduce Immigration," 26 March 1931. By comparison, the number of non-quota visas issued to Mexicans fell by 94 per cent, from 4,030 in October 1930 to 236 in October 1931.

^{xc^{iv}} Harris, "Restriction of Immigration," 11-25; William C. Van Vleck, *The Administrative Control of Aliens* (New York: Commonwealth Fund, 1932), 54; H. Wrong to H. L. Stimson, 26 December 1930, "The Canadian Charge," 895; "Permission to Visit Husband in Cal. Denied," *Daniels County Leader*, 17 October 1929.

^{xc^v} United States, *Annual Report of the Commissioner General of Immigration to the Secretary of Labor, Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1929* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1929), 7; United States, *Annual Report of the Commissioner General of Immigration to the Secretary of Labor, Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1930* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1930), 13; United States, *Annual Report of the Commissioner General of Immigration to the Secretary of Labor, Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1931* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1931), 21-24, 26-27, 181.

^{xc^{vi}} "Aliens Deported to Canadian Home," *Opheim Observer*, 28 August 1931.

^{xc^{vii}} United States, *Annual Report of the Secretary of Labor, Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1933* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1934), 48. Immigration from Canada peaked at 200,834 in 1924. It apparently hit bottom in 1933-34, when American authorities categorized immigrants by race rather than nationality. According to the *Annual Report of the Secretary of Labor, Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1934* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1935), 59, "Canada contributed 2,327 English, 1,360 French, 1,077 Scotch, and 987 Irish," for a total of 5,751 immigrants.

^{xcviii} United States, *Annual Report of the Secretary of Labor, Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1937* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1937), 86. By comparison, only 756 applicants were debarred at the Mexican-American border, including 558 who lacked valid visas.

^{xcix} United States, *Immigration and Naturalization Systems of the United States*, 816.

^c Gardner Jackson, "Doak the Deportation Chief," *The Nation* 132, no. 3428 (March 18, 1931): 295-96; United States, *Annual Report of the Commissioner General of Immigration, 1931*, 2; United States, *Annual Report of the Secretary of Labor, 1933*, 60. By comparison, officials apprehended 16,950 people on the Mexican border and 1,109 elsewhere in 1932-33.

^{ci} Clark, *Deportation of Aliens*, 71, 79-82; United States, *Immigration and Naturalization Service Annual Report, 1941-42*, 19; *History of the Immigration and Naturalization Service*, 42; Harris, "Restriction of Immigration," 66-68.

^{cii} Van Vleck, *Administrative Control of Aliens*, 118-27; Ngai, "Strange Career," 89-97.

^{ciii} Van Vleck, *Administrative Control*, 29; Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 75.

^{civ} United States, *Annual Report of the Commissioner General of Immigration to the Secretary of Labor, Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1931*, 36, 38, 72, 188; United States, National Commission on Law Observance, *Report on the Enforcement of the Deportation Laws of the United States*, 124.

^{cv} E. P. Hutchinson, *Legislative History of American Immigration Policy 1798-1965* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), 224-46.

^{cvi} United States, *Annual Report of the Secretary of Labor, Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1937* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1937), 90; United States, *Annual Report of the Secretary of Labor, Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1933*, 56.

^{cvii} Clark, *Deportation of Aliens*, 394, 398.

^{cviii} United States, *Annual Report of the Secretary of Labor, Fiscal Year Ended June 1934* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1935), 51.

^{cix} *Annual Report of the Secretary of Labor, 1929*, quoted in Clark, *Deportation of Aliens*, 394.

^{cx} Calculated from Register of Prisoners Confined in the County Jail of Cascade County, Montana, Vol. 5- 6, March 1928-March 1934, Cascade County Historical Society, Great Falls, Montana; "Line Runners to Great Falls," *Daniels County Leader*, 8 May 1930.

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- cxix "Canadian Gets Into Difficulty With Officers," *Opheim Observer*, 11 July 1930.
- cxii "Customs Official Deports Three," *Opheim Observer*, 16 January 1931.
- cxiii "Federal Officers Nab Alien; Brought to Opheim," *Opheim Observer*, 13 November 1931.
- cxiv "Shelby Named as Alien Deportee Station Point," *Daniels County Leader*, 28 January 1932.
- cxv Clark, *Deportation of Aliens*, 454-58; "Trainload of Aliens to Pass Through Havre," *Daniels County Leader*, 31 January 1929.
- cxvi United States, *Annual Report of the Commissioner General of Immigration, Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1931*, 37; Clark, *Deportation of Aliens*, 454-58.
- cxvii National Commission on Law Observance and Enforcement, *Report on the Enforcement of the Deportation Laws of the United States*, 37-38, 102; Martha Gardner, *The Qualities of a Citizen: Women, Immigration, and Citizenship, 1870-1965* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 181-94.
- cxviii "Aliens Deported to Canadian Home," *Opheim Observer*, 28 August 1931.
- cxix "Dennis Patrick Was Homesick for the Old Sod," *Daniels County Leader*, 22 August 1929.
- cxx "Four Smuggled Aliens Nabbed at Med. Lake," *Daniels County Leader*, 10 October 1929.
- cxxi Calculated from United States, *Annual Reports of the Secretary of Labor*, 1933-1940.
- cxixii Barbara Roberts, *Whence They Came: Deportation from Canada, 1900-1935* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1988), 159-201; Kelley and Trebilcock, *Making of the Mosaic*, 227-49; Harris, "Restriction of Immigration," 76-79.
- cxixiii Canada, *Report of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration for the Fiscal Year Ended March 31, 1950* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1951), 54; Canada, *Report of the Department of Immigration and Colonization for the Fiscal Year Ended March 31, 1934*, 74-77; Canada, *Report of the Immigration Branch for the Fiscal Year Ended March 31, 1937*, 297, table 49. Canadian statistics do not always jibe with American statistics. For instance, the *Report of the Department of Immigration and Colonization for the Fiscal Year Ended March 32, 1933* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1934), 65, indicates that Canada deported 331 Americans in 1932-33, but the *Annual Report of the Secretary of Labor for*

the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1933 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1934), 55, says the United States received 462 deportees, presumed to be “mostly American citizens,” from Canada that year.

^{cxxiv} Saskatchewan, *Annual Report of the Department of Public Health and the Vital Statistics Report of the Province of Saskatchewan for the Calendar Year 1932* (Regina: King’s Printer, 1933), 62-66.

^{cxxv} Saskatchewan, *Annual Reports of the Department of Public Health and the Registrar General, as Required by the Vital Statistics Act, for the Calendar Year 1939* (Regina: King’s Printer, 1940), 110; “Sheriff Madsen Comes for Man Believed Insane,” *Daniels County Leader*, 5 February 1931.

^{cxxvi} “Deportation of Colored Youth Sought,” *Regina Leader-Post*, 28 July 1937; “Ryan Sent to Penitentiary,” *Regina Leader-Post*, 26 July 1934.

^{cxxvii} Canada, *Report of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration for the Fiscal Year Ended March 31, 1950* (Ottawa: King’s Printer, 1951), 54.

^{cxxviii} United States, *Annual Report of the Secretary of Labor, Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1938* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1938), 104.

CHAPTER THREE

Borderlanders Fight Back

The trouble started with a picnic. In July 1929 more than seven hundred Americans and Canadians gathered at a spot near the Wild Horse port of entry on the Alberta-Montana border. "A number of the American Legion...concluded that there was more freedom outside of the Land of the Free and staged their picnic about one hundred yards on the Canadian side of the line," joked a local journalist. American federal officers arrived, camped on the border, and proceeded to conduct exhaustive searches of all vehicles entering or leaving the campsite, which "somewhat annoyed the picnickers." Two Canadian officers materialized and began processing border crossers. They had admitted about 170 cars and "outside of some badinage" everything was going smoothly, when a drunk American picnicker sped across the border and smashed into a vacant car. "The result was that the U.S. officers came over the line, much to the annoyance of one of the party, who ordered them back. The U.S. officer resented this, which resulted in an argument and a scuffle ensued in which the shirt of a Canadian picnicker was torn." At this point the Canadian customs officer noticed that American officers were inspecting cars on Canadian territory and ordered the officers to return to their own side. The offenders complied and the tension finally subsided. The unnamed journalist, who wrote for southwestern Saskatchewan's *Climax*, found the whole incident regrettable. Relations between western American and Canadian border officials had been amicable until now, but officers on the American side were being rotated so frequently that they were failing to form bonds with their Canadian counterparts and the people who lived along the Canadian-American border. The writer suggested that the overzealous American officers

provoked the “tangle” because they did not understand borderlanders’ ways:

“Apparently they are not accustomed to the western friendly spirit existing amongst the residents tributary to the border.”ⁱ

This “rather nasty incident” reflected a major shift in Plains borderlanders’ relationship with the border and border officials in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Historically most borderlanders had given this relationship little thought. They tended to ignore the boundary and its enforcers – if there were any – when planning cross-border forays. Events like border picnics were opportunities to mingle with family members and friends from both sides of the line; the international boundary was a convenient spot to celebrate the strength of the borderlands community. Increasingly, however, borderlanders grappled with federal authorities intent on controlling their cross-border movements. Borderlanders viewed the border with a strong sense of ownership, and they resented officious outsiders who tried to push them around on their own turf. They responded by challenging the authorities in various ways -- including monitoring their activities, attacking them verbally and physically, breaking customs and immigration rules, and literally crashing the border – all in an effort to assert their ownership of the forty-ninth parallel and their freedom to operate in a cross-border community. Although they generally depicted themselves as honest, law-abiding citizens who tried to cooperate with border officials, borderlanders sometimes behaved as though the rules did not apply to them. They were quick to criticize officials who struck them as overly strict or unfair. To win borderlanders’ respect, authorities must fit in to the border community, use discretion when enforcing the law, and treat locals with a degree of leniency and good humour. They must recognize that in some respects the border region was a country unto

itself, that “the residents tributary to the border” had their own rules and expectations. Ultimately, borderlanders’ efforts to preserve the open border enhanced their sense of identity and helped to ensure the border community’s long-term survival.

Plains borderlanders kept a sharp eye on the Canadian-American boundary during this period. They acquainted themselves with border regulations, personnel, and issues, and used this knowledge to bend the border to their liking. Often, they complained to newspaper editors, politicians, and bureaucrats about problems they encountered, went to bat for those who ran afoul of border rules, and pressed for changes that would make border crossing more safe, convenient, and profitable. Many took matters into their own hands, using their knowledge of the system to skirt the authorities and to infiltrate, move, and even expropriate sections of the border.

As early as 1922 some borderlanders questioned national authorities’ presence along the forty-ninth parallel. In a Lethbridge hall festooned with British and American flags, *Great Falls Tribune* manager O. S. Warden told more than one hundred community leaders from northern Montana and southern Alberta that “he saw no reason why either Canada or the United States should have customs officers at the line.” Warden, vice-president of a new organization promoting a gravelled highway between Lethbridge and Butte, Montana, was a League of Nations fan who believed that unimpeded travel was the key to harmonious relations between cities and countries. “He favored getting closer together socially, commercially and fraternally,” noted the *Opheim Observer*.ⁱⁱ To this borderlander and many of his listeners the only thing better than a highway over the border would be no border at all.

Northern Plains newspapers and their readers watched closely as Washington began beefing up the boundary later in the decade. In April 1926 the *Daniels County Leader* reported that the national head of the Border Patrol and senior western immigration officers were visiting district inspector Sidney A. Sherman in Scobey to discuss tightening the Montana-Saskatchewan border. The officers promised that plans to add one hundred immigration officers to the boundary would not interfere with “legitimate business intercourse by either Canadians or Americans.” Locals going to Saskatchewan would receive “every courtesy” if they reported to customs and immigration offices on their way out and their way in, and they could assure “friends across the line” that they would receive the same treatment when visiting Montana.ⁱⁱⁱ By September Great Falls customs collector Col. Charles L. Sheridan was recruiting men with experience in police forces such as the Texas Rangers and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to patrol the Plains border, stopping smugglers and performing other duties “comparable in nature to those of a soldier under actual field conditions.”^{iv}

Daniels County Leader editor Burley Bowler was impressed when the new border regime began cracking down on “booze runners,” moonshiners, bootleggers, and illegal drinking establishments, or “blind pigs,” serving smuggled Canadian liquor. On April 22, 1926, Bowler noted that customs and immigration officers determined to stop liquor from “rolling down across the border on rubber tires” had confiscated two cars belonging to northeastern Montana residents. “Laws are very strict regarding carrying of liquor or smuggling across the line,” he warned readers. “Officers have no alternative, even though only a pint of beer constitutes the offense.”^v In January 1929 Bowler reported that federal officers had raided the Dirty Shame and three other “grog shops” in Scobey, confiscated

a still on a farm near Whitetail, and visited several “Plentywood piggers.” “Customs and prohibition officials have proven a boon to Northeastern Montana,” he wrote. The *Leader* enjoyed making fun of authorities’ victims when they happened to be well-known “dive keepers and gang leaders.”^{vi} In August 1928 a correspondent reported that “the law abiding citizens of Richland were afforded considerable amusement” when a carload of officials arrived in town and sent bootleggers scurrying. “At-a-boy officers,” the writer chortled. “Go to it.”^{vii}

Bowler and other borderlanders were not amused, however, when the enforcers turned their attention to ordinary citizens. Like the *Climax* journalist who covered the dust-up near the Wild Horse port of entry, they noticed a growing number of incidents involving “over-zealous” American officials. In May 1927 Bowler published a scathing editorial about two Scobey officers who were proving particularly difficult. One, Deputy Collector of Customs J. R. Seger, had fined “a couple of our good citizens...for crossing a few rods into Saskatchewan with their auto and returning without reporting to the U. S. Customs.” Although the men, who were on a fishing trip, apparently reported to Canadian customs, left a record of their return at the American customs office, and had the entire community’s sympathy, Seger was unmoved. “Everyone in Scobey is familiar with the occurrence by this time and the majority feel that the official hand was used too freely and rigidly,” Bowler wrote. Then, to Bowler’s outrage, a second “over-officious gentleman who is apparently trying to lift himself into a better paying job by his bootstraps began to show his authority. We refer to Deputy Game Warden Krost.” Krost threatened to fine the two men for fishing without a licence. “They informed him that they had caught the fish in Canada and thought they had paid enough already. ‘Get a

license or pay a fine; it's all the same whether you were fishing in Canada or the United States' was the ultimatum." So the men paid a second fine. "Now, we would like to know just when our Deputy State Game Warden was endowed with authority by the Dominion of Canada," huffed Bowler. "Official sandbagging doesn't set well with the people of any free country. And we can't find any other name in our vocabulary for such official actions." Clearly, Bowler thought Seger and Kost – not the fishermen -- were the ones who had "crossed the line." The editor said "common people" like himself wanted to see the law "enforced justly and we also want to see some plain common sense and common justice injected into some officials who look for trivial and technical violations with a microscope and couldn't see a mountain if they stubbed their toe on it." The officers in question, who were fairly new to the community, would only "breed disrespect" if they continued to target honest citizens instead of genuine criminals. "We trust common sense and not nonsense will be the guide of our officers, present and future," Bowler concluded.^{viii}

But conflict between borderlanders and border officials continued to mount. In January 1929 the *Leader* reported that "a popular young farmer of the Raymond territory has run afoul of the immigration laws in a rather unpleasant manner." Kenneth Collins and fiancée Gabrielle Goessart, whose parents lived a few miles north of the border, had recently visited the American consul in Regina to seek advice on their plans to marry and live on the groom's Montana farm. Told to go ahead, the couple married in Scobey on December 5, 1928, and set up housekeeping north of Raymond. "They had scarcely got settled when Mrs. Collins was informed by immigration officials that she must return to Canada immediately as she was not permitted to stay here." Recalling that

they had crossed from Saskatchewan to Montana at an unofficial location, the couple hurried to the nearest border station to report, “but this doesn’t seem to satisfy immigration officials.” The officials insisted that Goessart, who was born in Belgium but thought she became a Canadian when her father was naturalized in 1917, was still a Belgian “and she has been ordered to return to Canada until the tangle can be straightened out.” Collins was forced to remain behind to care for their farm.^{ix} In early February the newspaper reported that officials were fining Collins one hundred dollars for bringing Goessart to the United States without providing the passport and head tax required of European immigrants. Locals, who could not understand why the immigration bureau was separating the newlyweds, leapt to their defence. The fact that Collins and Goessart were local favourites made their case all the more appealing. “Miss Goessart, previous to her marriage, worked in the Markuson store at Raymond for two years, and her right to remain here was never questioned until after her marriage to Mr. Collins,” said the *Leader*. “Friends as well as strangers have interested themselves in this immigration mixup and are appealing to Senators Wheeler and Walsh and Congressman Scott Leavitt to help Mr. Collins to get his bride entered here. They are also demanding a thorough investigation of what they term ‘persecution’ on the part of immigration officials.” Perhaps the couple had fellow borderlanders to thank for the fact that they were reunited several months later.^x

Borderlanders on the Canadian side of the line also rallied behind respected locals who crossed border authorities. When a RCMP-customs officer accused Willow Bunch, Saskatchewan, farmer Damas Laporte of smuggling thirteen horses from the United States into Canada over a three-year period, more than sixty people from Saskatchewan

border communities petitioned the Canadian customs minister and the courts to treat him as leniently as possible. The petitioners included numerous farmers and merchants, two medical doctors, a bank manager, an accountant, a notary public, and the Willow Bunch post master. “We have known the said Damas Laporte for a number of years and have always found him to be a good and law-abiding citizen and have never known of him being implicated in any proceedings of civil or criminal nature,” the petitioners said. They believed Laporte brought the animals into Canada “under the impression that he was legally entitled to do so and without any intention of depriving the Government of Canada of any moneys that may have been due.”^{xi} It seems Laporte was caught unawares by the tightening of the border. Accustomed to crossing wherever he pleased without encountering customs officials, he did not even realize he should have paid duty on the horses. He seemed genuinely surprised when the RCMP seized the animals, and could not understand why they refused to return them. Laporte’s supporters argued that his good reputation and good intentions should count for something. Also, the courts should consider locals’ wishes. Treating Laporte leniently would satisfy both the “ends of justice” and the “desires of the people of this community.”^{xii} Again, the borderlands community may have protected one of its own from the full weight of the law. Judicial District of Assiniboia court clerk documents indicate that Laporte was ultimately required to pay only one hundred dollars -- in ten-dollar installments -- of the five hundred dollars he owed in customs duties.^{xiii}

As if dealing with rule-bound authorities wasn’t scary enough in the late 1920s, Plains borderlanders learned that American officers were shooting at citizens who ventured near the line. On several occasions federal officials in unmarked cars shot at

travellers in northern Montana who supposedly hesitated to stop and submit to searches. The *Lethbridge Herald* reported that prohibition officers had “an exciting weekend” firing on three cars in the oil fields south of Sweet Grass in July 1928, and Bowler said a “local party motoring...with a couple of girl friends was shot at by an officer whom the motorist could not distinguish from a common highwayman” in June 1929.^{xiv} That September a customs officer fired a bullet through the radiator of a Chevrolet Six carrying two men and two women northwest of Opheim. The officer, known as a “severe” individual who enjoyed chasing down border runners and displaying their bullet-riddled vehicles to the local citizenry, accused the men of smuggling Canadian beer.^{xv} Plains borderlanders were shocked to learn that patrolmen had actually killed residents in other communities along the border. “Citizens of Daniels County, and especially those who have occasion to cross the international border frequently, are thankful that we have been fortunate in having sane and sensible customs and immigration patrolmen appointed along this section of the boundary,” Bowler wrote on June 27, 1929. “However, other communities bordering the boundary have not been so fortunate.”^{xvi} Earlier that month a customs officer shot and killed a man driving near International Falls, Minnesota, and federal officers opened fire on a youth who was fishing on the Detroit River.^{xvii} A *Calgary Herald* correspondent scouring government records in Washington found 263 deaths linked to prohibition enforcement in the first ten months of 1929 alone. An “amazing” number of drivers were killed when officers attempted to shoot out their tires or stumbled and accidentally discharged their weapons.^{xviii}

While praising local officials who clearly identified themselves when flagging down motorists and treated them with common sense and courtesy, Bowler condemned “aggravating and egotistical” officers who ignored his earlier advice. “We have a deputy collector of customs about whom we have not yet heard favorable comment,” he sniped. “His principal occupation seems to be trying to get innocent residents fined for some slight infraction of the letter of the law.... We refer to the very officious Mr. Seger.” Bowler also complained about an immigration officer “who caused a fifteen or sixteen year old boy to be incarcerated in the local jail for several days for committing no offense whatever.” The editor could see no reason for punishing people who meant no offense “and whose acts did not in any manner harm or defraud the United States government or any of its citizens.” He was so incensed that he discussed the matter with Department of Labor Secretary James J. Davis and his assistants in Washington, and was happy to learn that “they want innocent citizens protected – not murdered, fined, or pestered by officious hirelings armed with authority and deadly weapons.” Bowler, a staunch Republican, urged the Hoover administration to “start a weeding out process which will remove from its service the silly, dangerous, and over-officious misfits which are far too numerous today.”^{xix}

Plains borderlanders were understandably alarmed when rumours circulated in early January 1930 that Washington planned to add up to ten thousand armed agents to the Canadian-American border to prevent liquor smuggling. Several western newspapers and politicians vigorously protested the move, fearing it would hamper cross-border trade and endanger the lives of innocent travellers from both countries. The *Calgary Herald* said Canadians could be forgiven “a feeling of serious uneasiness,” given American

officers' "unenviable record in the promiscuous use of high powered weapons."^{xx}

"The obvious fear is of the probable results when 10,000 more border guards become too quick on the trigger in their hasty blundering," said a *Great Falls Tribune* editorial reprinted in the *Opheim Observer*. Citing Royal Bank of Canada statistics on the growing number of American tourists visiting the dominion, the editorial predicted that "a determined effort to prevent small smugglings cannot fail to result in fatalities that will shock the country and add to the growing insistence of the question as to whether the game is really worth the candle."^{xxi} Congressmen from border states also protested legislation that would permit travellers to cross only at designated ports of entry, rather than allowing them to cross at any point as long as they reported to the nearest customs and immigration office. Minnesota Representative William A. Pittenger told the Congressional Committee on Inter-state and Foreign Commerce that he opposed any measures that would make crossing the border between his state and Canada more difficult. "My goodness, gentlemen," he exclaimed, "if this country is not travelling in the direction of more rules and regulations and more bureaus and red tape, where is it going?"^{xxii} Fortunately for borderlanders, the prospect of running a gauntlet of machine gun-toting officers every time they crossed the border faded in May 1930 when Canada agreed to support Washington's war on smuggling by banning liquor shipments to the United States. The fact that voters were losing interest in enforcing prohibition also convinced American politicians that heavily arming the border was not a good idea.^{xxiii}

Clearly, borderlanders were not afraid to speak up about troublesome border rules and authorities. Writers with at least two Saskatchewan borderland newspapers let it be known that they resented federal government policies that hurt border residents

economically. In June 1931 the *Climax* lambasted Prime Minister R. B. Bennett for bringing in a budget that prevented borderlanders from going across the border to purchase cheap, secondhand cars. “We read that Canadian motor manufacturers are pleased that this traffic is to be stopped, and feel that the measure will greatly assist in the employment of more Canadians. We don’t think so.” In the past borderlanders who couldn’t afford new cars found “real snaps” across the line. “We used to pay the modest duty and from that time forth paid maintenance on that car, bought repairs, accessories, gas and oil, and in fact our car provided employment for several hundred persons, indirectly. But ‘them days are gone forever.’”^{xxiv} A few years later the *Yellow Grass Herald* fumed that Canadians earned less and paid more than their American neighbours for many items. Canadians who sold scrap iron received \$2.50 per ton, while people to the south received \$15 per ton. “On the other hand, radios and almost every other line of manufactured articles can be bought in the States for little more than half what we have to pay for them. Are we simply being skinned alive because we persist in remaining ‘loyal Canadians?’”^{xxv} Both writers clearly felt more attached to their borderlands identity than their national identity. They knew where their loyalties lay.

Borderlanders often took their grievances to the top, complaining to politicians about everything from unfair customs duties to boorish border agents. In July 1934 farmers near the drought-stricken border community of Westhope, North Dakota, begged Senator Gerald P. Nye to convince Washington officials to lift the duty on hay from Canada. “W. A. Meddaugh telegraphed the senator [that] good Manitoba hay could be delivered for \$14 a ton if the duty were eliminated. He said farmers near Westhope were ‘absolutely without feed’ for their stock.”^{xxvi} Montana’s Senator Murray received a

steady stream of telegrams and letters from business men, community leaders, ranchers, and farm men and women asking him to intervene on their behalf. For instance, a Browning, Montana, rancher urgently requested permission to move his cattle from Alberta to Montana before they starved or froze in an approaching blizzard.^{xxvii} A Jordan, Montana, hotel keeper sought help recovering two Hudson's Bay rugs seized at the border.^{xxviii} And a Great Falls businessman defended a Calgary friend and his pilot for failing to give local customs officers advance warning before flying in from Lethbridge. "These gentlemen had no intention of violating the laws or regulations either of Customs or Immigration but supposed that they were complying with them by notifying customs officials immediately upon their arrival in Great Falls," H. R. Eickemeyer telegraphed Murray on May 20, 1937. "The violations were purely technical ... and [I] wish you would use your good offices with the commissioner to see that no heavy penalty is asked and that [the] plane is released." Murray telegraphed Eickenmeyer the next day to say Commissioner of Customs James Henry Moyle had agreed to release the plane and to waive a \$1,100 penalty.^{xxix}

Some Montana borderlanders asked Murray to challenge local officials who affected their ability to do business with people across the border. On August 22, 1935, B. V. Hole, Jr. wrote Murray to say that Canadian farmers were eager to buy gasoline from his Montana company, Hole Bros. Refinery, "as we save them a few cents on each gallon after they have paid all the duties and taxes." The company got Canadian and American customs officers' approval to build a bulk station on the border twelve miles north of Turner to serve customers in southern Saskatchewan. The company trucked thousands of gallons of products from its refinery at Cut Bank, Montana, hired local

workers, and advertised in Canadian papers. Canadian customs officials welcomed the company's efforts and even moved the Climax port of entry to a new office on the international boundary, a few feet from the Hole Bros. bulk plant, to make it easy for local farmers to comply with Canadian customs regulations when nipping across for American oil and gas. "However," Hole complained, "the U. S. local Custom officer now wants the Canadian farmer to drive, a 24-mile round trip and over very bad roads, into Turner, just to report to him and let him see the Canadian truck, car or team and wagon. If we are forced to comply with this, it will ruin our business." Hole thought the Turner customs officer should be stationed at the border during business hours. Or, if the American government agreed, he would "extend a hose or pipe over the line into Canada, and load the farmers on Canadian soil, keeping a complete record of every transaction myself. The Canadian Customs has suggested such a plan might be satisfactory to you." Hole obviously thought he got more support from Canadian officials, who "seem pleased with our seeking the Canadian business," than from officials in his own state.^{xxx}

Murray responded swiftly. "There is no doubt that your organization has gone to a great deal of trouble and expense to build up trade with Canadian people, which is now jeopardized by the action of the Customs Officials," he wrote Hole on August 27. "I am today presenting the matter to the head of the Customs Service in Washington requesting that an investigation be made of the situation with a view of correcting the ruling so that your customers will not be inconvenienced." The senator was determined to ensure that Hole and Canadians got the service they wanted. "I sincerely hope that in the near future the matter will be straightened out to your complete satisfaction," he wrote.^{xxxi} Less than one month later, Commissioner of Customs Moyle instructed the Great Falls customs

collector to allow Hole to extend a hose or pipeline over the border to export his products. Murray sent Hole a copy of the letter with a note saying he was pleased to see the Montana officials who caused Hole so much grief “making arrangements to deal with the situation according to your suggestions.”^{xxxii}

Murray also went to bat for Montana farmers who complained that customs officials charged excessive duty on agricultural items imported from Canada. Charles J. Davis of Shelby said officials led him to believe that he would pay eight cents per bushel on a load of feed oats. “Now they come back and want to collect another 8 cts per bu.,” he wrote. “I understood this was for the purpose of letting feed into Montana at a cheaper rate or I could of never shipped them in.”^{xxxiii} Unfortunately, when Murray asked Commissioner of Customs Moyle to investigate the matter, Moyle said the grade of oats Davis imported was “dutiable at the rate of 16¢ per bushel under paragraph 726, Tariff Act of 1930.”^{xxxiv} Davis accepted Moyle’s decision and agreed to pay the higher duty in instalments.

Bella Drengson of Hogeland, Montana, was more persistent. On July 11, 1936, she began corresponding with Murray about thirty-six “very thin” cattle she imported from Saskatchewan. She said she and her male companion planned to fatten the cattle for market. However the Turner customs officer (the same individual Hole encountered) estimated that the cattle weighed more than Drengson thought and charged her so much duty that she would never be able to recoup her expenses. The duty actually exceeded the cost of the cattle. This struck Drengson as “very unfair” and left her and her partner “very hard up.” “We do hope you can do something for us as we are trying to make money so we don’t have to go on relief,” she told Murray.^{xxxv} The senator repeatedly urged

Secretary of Agriculture Henry A. Wallace to address Drengson's concerns. "I am today taking the subject up again with the Secretary of Agriculture, asking him to give the matter further and special consideration," Murray wrote Drengson on August 27, 1936.^{xxxvi} However, Wallace passed the matter off to Assistant Secretary of the Treasury Stephen B. Gibbons, who sided with the customs officer. On November 3, 1936, Gibbons wrote that the duty assessed was correct and Drengson should have weighed the cattle "at her expense" if she disagreed with the officer's estimates. He argued that Drengson paid \$885 for the cattle and \$498.25 in duty, so the duty collected did *not* exceed the cost of the cattle.^{xxxvii} Undaunted, Murray asked Drengson if she could refute the assistant secretary's statements. If Gibbons had some of his facts wrong "it might be possible to have the case reconsidered with the view of remitting to you some of the money paid thereon."^{xxxviii} Drengson responded that she could prove she paid only \$367 for the cattle. "I certainly did not pay \$885." She recalled that she was not satisfied with the weight the officer assigned the cattle upon entry, but felt pressured to proceed because "it was after we had papers made out and everything. I told him I would write to Senator Murray and see what I could do about it." By the time Drengson penned this letter, on November 28, 1936, economic conditions and feed shortages had forced her to sell many of her cattle at a significant loss. "I guess all I can do is go on relief if I'm going to be robbed like that."^{xxxix} Murray forwarded Drengson's letter to Gibbons, but it had no effect. On December 31, 1936, the senator reluctantly informed Drengson that "there is absolutely nothing further that can be done to reimburse you for the payments made by you on the cattle."^{xl}

Then there were correspondents like Helena, Montana, bank vice-president T. O. Hammond, who demanded that officials show border-crossers more respect. On March 26, 1936, Hammond sat down to write Murray about an American immigration inspector he encountered at the Mexican-American border. The man treated Hammond so rudely that the banker could only think of him as a boorish, insolent “brute.” Hammond went on to say that discourteous American government officials were not confined to the Mexican border. “This general attitude is also prevalent in our own State on the Canadian border, and almost without exception traveling friends have told me how arrogant and disagreeable some of these men are.” An American official detained a group of Hammond’s friends at the Canadian-American border for more than an hour because a servant accompanying them was Irish-born. “Because she did not have her naturalization papers this official was so discourteous that he had most all the women in the party in tears,” Hammond wrote. “Finally the men told him that if he intended to hold the girl he should so decide but they intended to go on. He eventually gruffly told them to go ahead.” Hammond thought innocent American citizens deserved better. “Why do we have to stand for officials that treat all as though we were smuggling dope or had a hidden Chinaman in our car?”^{xli}

Hammond peppered Murray and senior bureaucrats with letters about the matter for more than a year. He wanted the customs service to inform border officials that “discourtesy and boorishness would not be tolerated.”^{xlii} He even sent along a *Reader’s Digest* article suggesting that the problem was widespread; he wanted the article distributed to every customs official in the country “with an admonition that it was time for employees to realize that United States citizens are beginning to make themselves

heard in this matter.”^{xliii} Murray took the case to senior customs officials who expressed “concern” but ultimately refused to take responsibility for what one official called the “unpleasantness” Hammond and his friends experienced at the Canadian border.^{xliv}

Hammond thought Canadian officials treated American border crossers much better. “They tell you you are guests of the Canadian government, and that they hope you will have an enjoyable visit.”^{xlv} It’s true that bureaucrats in Ottawa told customs officers to handle travellers, especially American tourists, with utmost courtesy. But the public still complained of officers who lost their tempers, made rude comments while examining parcels, or sat at their desks and expected travellers to come to them, rather than going outside to greet them. “It need hardly be stated that this treatment savors of discourtesy and must be abandoned forthwith,” the customs department chided.^{xlvi} Plains borderlanders griped to western Canadian district inspector Herbert Legg about customs officers who neglected their posts, engaged in shady or “irregular” practices, or were negligent and irresponsible. A Montana woman who stopped at a border post en route to a ranch in southern Alberta reported that the customs officer rammed her team with his car. A horse broke a leg and had to be shot, but the officer refused to compensate the woman for her loss. Legg arranged for the officer, who had long been a problem, to pay the woman in instalments. Soon she wrote to say that she hadn’t been paid. A frustrated Legg finally deducted money from the officer’s salary to cover the debt.^{xlvii}

Borderlanders who wrote politicians and bureaucrats about problems at the border didn’t always get what they wanted. Some, like Hammond, grew so weary of the struggle that they begged authorities to drop their cases. But complainants displayed a strong

sense of agency. If nothing else, their anger and persistence told authorities that they believed their concerns were important and deserved redress.

While many borderlanders lashed border officials verbally, others resorted to physical violence. Borderland newspapers described several occasions when desperate bordercrossers threatened, attacked, or attempted to outrun pursuing officers. The *Daniels County Leader* reported that someone shot a bullet through the hat of a customs patrol officer who was watching for smuggled liquor at Scobey.^{xlviii} The *Climax* told of a notorious Great Falls rum runner who was returning from Saskatchewan with a carload of beer and whiskey, refused to stop for an American patrol officer, fled back across the border, got lost, and came to a screeching halt when American and Canadian officers blocked the road and demanded his surrender.^{xlix} According to other press reports, four or five men who stole \$25,000 from Winnipeg bank messengers led Manitoba police and American immigration officials on an all-night hunt from southern Manitoba into northeastern North Dakota, where they shot out the pursuing officers' windshield, disarmed them, and drained their gas tank before making their escape.¹ And, in June 1937, a "tough Canuck" named Cyril Francis Arner was arrested for biting and shooting at the immigration patrol inspector who was driving him to Scobey on charges of illegally entering the United States.^{li}

Not surprisingly, officials who crossed borderlanders feared for their safety. A north-central Montana family tells of a woman who was outraged when a border patrol officer discovered that the local store was selling dressed turkeys her husband had smuggled from Saskatchewan. "When the border patrolman showed up at the ranch, he said he would have to confiscate the brand new 1936 Ford pickup, because it had been

used to transport illegal turkeys. Mom hit the ceiling. She went out and got in the pickup and said, ‘Nobody is taking my pickup anywhere. I paid 700 dollars for it.’” The officer got the truck, but was obviously shaken by the experience. “After that, when the border patrolman came by and spent the night he no longer hung his gun on the porch, he kept it on.”^{lii}

Some borderlanders went to extreme lengths to protect their section of the border. In December 1938 a Montana man threatened to sic the law on a U.S. Treasury Department official who attempted to survey three acres along the south side of the line. The official hustled into Scobey to report the matter. “The owner of the land has told me to keep off or I will be arrested for trespassing,” he told the sheriff, who seemed amused by the incident and said that, much as he would like to jail the official, he would need a warrant to do so. The official decided to withdraw to await further orders from Washington – orders the feisty borderlander no doubt ignored.^{liii}

Many borderlanders expressed their resistance passively, by simply doing as they pleased with the border: crossing it illegally, squatting on it, or literally moving it. Families who lived near the border regularly visited, picnicked, shopped, worshipped, grazed livestock, and attended celebrations on the other side – all without border officials’ permission. “We all felt at home on sports days, rodeos, family gatherings, wedding dances, and social events on either side of the border,” recalls Saskatchewan borderlander Boyd Anderson. “Neighbours went back and forth freely exchanging work and machinery. Border people were and still are free traders.”^{liv} Astrid Bergen and her family, who lived in southeast Saskatchewan, simply walked across the border to see relatives in North Dakota.^{lv}

Curtis A. Stadstad, who grew up just south of the border, between Raymond, Montana, and Minton, Saskatchewan, remembers herding cattle unimpeded on the Canadian side of the line. He regularly crossed the border without reporting to the Canadian customs house at Regway, a mere half mile away. As far as he was concerned his community extended into Saskatchewan and included several Canadian friends. One Saturday his family watched borderland cowboys from both countries perform at a rodeo on the Big Muddy in Saskatchewan. “It was a celebration that diverted our attention from the emotional drain of the depression. We probably had not licensed the car, but there was not much check on crossing the border at this time.”^{lvi}

Stadstad writes that as the Depression worsened, “the border crossing became a crossroads for poor and near starving people.”^{lvii} Unemployed drifters snuck across the border in both directions, often under cover of darkness. Once, Stadstad found a young Canadian man hiding in some bushes. “His name was Orval. He was going to look for work in Montana.” That night, after sharing a meal with Stadstad’s family, the young man headed south “where he eventually found work.”^{lviii} Many young Saskatchewan men crossed to find jobs on farms, in coal mines, and on construction sites in Montana and other northern states. Some even wound up on massive American work relief projects like the Fort Peck Dam in northeastern Montana. “Some of the men working there were Canadian boys who had slipped across the border and were employed at fifty cents per hour,” writes Saskatchewan borderlander Konrad Istrati. “I actually knew some of these boys.”^{lix} The fact that such jobs were officially reserved for Americans failed to deter the illegal border-crossers, who simply provided false names and addresses.^{lx}

Borderland newspapers also refer to transients who travelled back and forth, undetected, for much of the decade. A 38-year-old man who was arrested in Antelope, Montana, in July 1938, “freely confessed that he had been wandering back and forth across the United States and Canada for about eight years.”^{lxi} Scholars Marcus Lee Hansen and John Bartlet Brebner argue that countless people surreptitiously switched countries during this period. “No border posts or patrols could pretend to keep track of the populations set adrift.”^{lxii}

Some borderlanders passively resisted border authorities by literally camping on the border. They occupied everything from houses to churches on, or very near, the international boundary. Stadstad remembers a Saskatchewan borderlander who moved a house trailer back and forth across the line. Suspected of smuggling cream and eggs into Montana, he refused to allow the customs inspector to enter the trailer. “This is my home,” he said. “You cannot search it without a warrant.”^{lxiii}

For many years John Moore, nicknamed Rawhide Jack because he tanned leather and bought and sold hides, occupied a two-room house on the border east of Sweet Grass, Montana, and Coutts, Alberta. The front room was in the United States and the kitchen was in Canada. From his base in the “international house” Moore was able to work in both countries without reporting to customs officials. Apparently Moore was a kind-hearted individual who often took in destitute travellers from both sides of the line.^{lxiv}

Also on the border at Coutts and Sweet Grass was a Catholic church attended by parishioners from Alberta and Montana. “The Canadians parked on their side of the church and the Americans on their side,” says a local history book. “It wasn’t necessary for either side to report at the border to go to church.”^{lxv} Farther east, near the

border in North Dakota, lay a Lutheran church built and attended by people from both sides of the border. When Astrid Bergen's grandfather died in 1937, his family transported his coffin across the line for burial in the church yard.^{lxvi}

A couple of enterprising borderlanders – one American and one Canadian -- operated a coal mine on the border between Opheim, Montana, and West Poplar, Saskatchewan, in the 1930s. "We called it the Border Mine," writes Montanan Burt Waltermeyer Schneider. "It had an opening on the United States side and one on the Canadian side." Their cross-border customers were so poor that Schneider and his partner often accepted items in trade. "Nobody went home without coal."^{lxvii}

Boyd Anderson's father, Leonard, had a particularly cavalier attitude toward the border. In the 1930s he allowed drought-stricken Montana rancher John Stelflug to water his three thousand sheep at a creek in Leonard's pasture near the border in south-central Saskatchewan. The fact that such unreported crossings were illegal did not concern Leonard. He was more interested in helping a neighbour and friend than with reinforcing the international boundary. Border authorities apparently knew what was going on, but "it was a neighborly turn, so everyone closed their eyes."^{lxviii}

Boyd tells a story that clearly demonstrates the sense of ownership his father felt toward the border. During this period, Americans erected a fence along the Montana side of the line as part of a work relief program. The sturdy barbed wire structure, which was designed to keep Canadian and American livestock from straying back and forth, was set back several yards from the actual boundary. Leonard, who had already built a fence on his side of the border, promptly tore it down and extended his holdings as far as the Montana fence. "My dad gained probably four or five acres [of grassland] on every half

mile,” says Boyd. No one challenged Leonard’s decision to move the border. Nor did the fence stop Saskatchewan and Montana borderlanders from fraternizing. They simply crossed through gates in the fence. Ranchers on both sides even developed a sense of communal responsibility for the fence, diligently repairing it whenever necessary.^{lxix}

Leonard Anderson wasn’t the only borderlander to lay claim to the border. Not far away, on the Montana side, C.W.G. Bowery dammed the waters of Rock Creek as they crossed the boundary and set up a system to irrigate his garden and alfalfa crops. “Canadian authorities have established a water gauge at the Bowery place, keeping close check of the water coming over the border,” said a July 1930 article in the *Opeheim Observer*.^{lxx} Mrs. Bowery monitored the gauge for the authorities, who didn’t seem to mind her husband’s activities.

Saskatchewan borderlander Hartley Urquhart remembers a pair of hard-up borderlanders who literally stole the border. “There was two old fellas – I won’t mention any names – they went down to the border and stole the wire off the fence.” The men, who planned to sell the wire, rolled it up and cached it in case the border patrol came along. The joke was that “during the night, this one guy, he thought, well I’ll just go down and I’ll steal that wire. And the other guy had the same idea, and they both met there at the same time!”^{lxxi}

Many – perhaps most – borderlanders responded to tighter border rules by trying to work with the system. They learned who regulated the border, how it worked, and how to soften its effect. To begin with, everybody knew the names of local border officials and how strict or lenient they were. They essentially co-opted them by welcoming them into the border community, befriending them, and encouraging them to join local

organizations. Newspapers followed their comings and goings and reported on the degree to which each official fit into the community and understood borderlanders. The papers published a steady stream of editorials, news articles, wire stories, and government press releases about border-related events, people, policies, statistics, and controversies. They also followed developments in local border officials' personal and professional lives, noting who was being transferred in or out, who was away on business or vacation, who was newly married, whose wife had a baby, who belonged to which community organizations, and who was tracking criminals or visiting friends across the border. For instance, the *Opheim Observer* noted in June 1929 that Scobey customs patrol officer J. H. Melvin had been moved to Opheim and his wife and three children were expected to follow.^{lxxii} A year later, the paper said: "Moses J. Dunn of the Northwest Royal Mounted Police of Canada was a visitor here on official business from Wood Mountain. "This member of Canada's colorful police force wore blue trousers with a yellow stripe instead of red trousers as was formerly the case, and the spurs which were once used to tickle the hide of a prancing mount now serve as foot rests and give leverage on the accelerator of a popular make of six-cylinder car."^{lxxiii}

Some newspapers reported on both Canadian and American border authorities' activities, praising those who were "popular" with residents on both sides of the line. Borderlanders possibly assumed that friendly border officials were likely to treat border crossers more civilly and infractions (intentional or unintentional) more leniently than unfriendly officials.

The *Daniels County Leader* often mentioned Montana border officials who were "quite well known and liked along the border."^{lxxiv} In May 1935 the paper reported that

immigration inspector L.A. Gunerud was being transferred to Sweet Grass. “Mr. Gunerud has given splendid service at Scobey and has made a host of friends as a citizen and as a federal official. He has conducted the duties of his office both courteously and efficiently and the people here regret his leaving”^{lxxv} Three and a half years later, the *Leader* noted that “Collector of Customs Bartley and Gerald Fallon, his assistant, were here from Great Falls Tuesday of this week on business of the department. Mr. Fallon was formerly located at Whitetail and has many friends there. Mr. Bartley has completely familiarized himself with road conditions and business related to his department in this area and is one official with whom local citizens have had very cordial relations.”^{lxxvi}

The paper also commented on popular Canadian authorities like “Customs Officer Dand, who has so ably filled his post at the East Poplar customs port at the line north of Scobey.” The border community would miss Dand, who was being transferred to Weyburn, Saskatchewan. “Scobeyites, and all who have had occasion to make Mr. Dand’s acquaintance, while rejoicing in his promotion, regret his leaving this locality.”^{lxxvii}

The cross-border community thought less highly of the Canadian customs officer at the Regway port of entry. “Inspector Harry took his duties seriously as though the honor of the whole empire depended on him,” writes Stadstad. “He searched cars, found items not declared, broke liquor bottles, and had his wife search the women [for smuggled dresses].” The man’s stern manner and zealous pursuit of scofflaws won him few friends. “Many people feared him on both sides of the border. He went above and beyond the call of duty – sometimes racing after those who did not stop to report in his 1923 Willys-Knight touring car with side curtains.”^{lxxviii}

Borderlanders liked officials who played an active role in their communities.

In July 1931 the *Opheim Observer* praised “genial immigration patrolman” Elmer Shipley for doing his part to ease the economic depression by hiring unemployed locals to help renovate his home.^{lxxxix} And RCMP officer Doug Minor, who patrolled the border from Beaubier to Outram in southeastern Saskatchewan, joined local baseball and hockey teams and made lasting friends among Canadian and American customs officials and local residents. “Our stay in the area was extremely happy and very rewarding,” Minor recalled years later. “So many were so very kind.”^{lxxx}

Border officials often belonged to local organizations. Dan Bailey, the deputy collector of customs at Scobey, and his successor, A.W. Boetcher, both belonged to the Masons. American immigration officer C. H. Olson became a member of the Coutts-Sweet Grass International Lions Club – the same club that fought so fiercely for 24-hour service at the port of entry – when it formed in 1934.^{lxxxix} As members of such organizations, officials often participated in cross-border goodwill expeditions and supported campaigns to build cross-border roads, extend port of entry hours, and create new ports. For instance, American Legion commander and chief customs collector Charles L. Sheridan joined other prominent northern Montanans on tours of farms and visits with dignitaries in southern Saskatchewan in the late 1920s.^{lxxxii} And in 1934 Climax, Saskatchewan, customs officer Duncan McIntosh and members of the Turner, Montana, Lion’s Club travelled to Havre, Montana, to urge the Rotary Club there to support plans to improve the road linking the three border communities.^{lxxxiii}

Borderlanders often used their knowledge of the system to get around strict border rules. When they learned that officials would confiscate their vehicles if they drove

across the border without reporting, they took to leaving their cars at the boundary and walking across. Fred Andrews, who grew up in the border community of Caldwell, Montana, attended dances and basket socials at the Patriot school in southwestern Saskatchewan in the 1930s. “There were about seventeen of us that would ride in my brother’s pickup as far as the line and then walk the rest of the way.”^{lxxxiv} Borderlanders regularly bent the rules with officials’ tacit consent. For instance, when returning from cross-border activities after the border post had closed for the night, they left passes under rocks for the official to find the next morning. “After a dance or similar event, the rocks with passes under them were quite numerous,” notes a history of the Surprise Valley, Saskatchewan, border district.^{lxxxv} Thus, borderlanders loosely followed the spirit, if not the letter, of the law.

Canadian borderlanders were especially inventive when it came to avoiding duties on items from the United States. Stadstad writes that when the rules were changed to allow Canadians to bring back one hundred dollars worth of goods after spending forty-eight hours in the United States, a resourceful Saskatchewan woman came to his parents with a proposition. She had saved up enough money to buy a radio in northern Montana, and if they let her stay with them for the required forty-eight hours, she could take the radio home duty-free. The plan worked beautifully, and the Stadstads made a new friend into the bargain. Canadian borderlanders also got out of paying duty by ordering catalogue items through post offices in the United States. An annual RCMP report describes a “curious state of affairs” along the boundary between British Columbia and the state of Washington, where some residents on the Canadian side rented mailboxes in an American post office just across the border, had items mailed to their American

addresses, and spirited the items into Canada without reporting them. “Several cases were made against these ingenious people,” says the report.^{lxxxvi} Similar situations existed all along the Plains section of the border.

Borderlanders believed their knowledge of the system gave them an advantage over non-borderlanders. On October 6, 1936, Scobey bank cashier P. B. Murphy wrote Senator Murray to say that the infamous J. R. Seger had fined two customers one hundred dollars apiece for briefly crossing into Canada and returning to Scobey without reporting to the American customs office. “I assure you that these are both good boys and they had no intention of doing anything wrong in not reporting,” Murphy wrote. “Their homes are in central Montana and this was their first experience in crossing the Canadian line.” Not being from the borderlands, the young men could not be expected to know the border laws and should therefore be treated leniently. Senator Murray appealed to Bureau of Customs Commissioner James H. Moyle in Washington, who reduced the fines to ten dollars each.^{lxxxvii}

When the Canadian-American border hardened in the late 1920s and early 1930s, Plains borderlanders fought back. They resisted national authorities in many direct and indirect ways. They complained about rigid officials, unsafe practices, and punitive regulations; they befriended and kept tabs on border enforcers; they ignored, tampered with, and claimed sections of the boundary; and they stretched the rules to their liking. These activities helped give borderlanders the sense that they were different than non-borderlanders. They had a special relationship with the border, a better understanding of its workings and a stronger sense of entitlement than those who were unfamiliar with the borderland community. As the decade progressed borderlanders would maintain a whole

range of crossborder connections that defied national authorities' efforts to thicken the boundary. The forty-ninth parallel and its enforcers could not contain "these ingenious people."

Notes

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- ⁱ “Revenue Officers Tangle,” *Climax*, 18 July 1929. This newspaper, edited by H. A. Stevens, served the southwestern Saskatchewan border community of Climax and area. Canadian officials operated the Wild Horse Port of Entry, located on the international boundary just west of the Alberta-Saskatchewan border.
- ⁱⁱ “State-Province for Good Roads: Alberta-Montana Highway Association Formed at Lethbridge,” *Opheim Observer*, 14 July 1922.
- ⁱⁱⁱ “Border Patrol Increased on Mont.-Can. Line,” *Daniels County Leader*, 22 April 1926.
- ^{iv} “Sheridan Seeks Border Patrol,” *Daniels County Leader*, 16 September 1926.
- ^v “Officers Grab Two Cars with Illegal Cargoes,” *Daniels County Leader*, 22 April 1926.
- ^{vi} *Daniels County Leader*, “Officers Swoop Down on Local Grog Shops,” 10 January 1929; “Federalers Grab Big Moon Still at Whitetail,” 17 January 1929.
- ^{vii} “Federalers Raid at Richland,” *Daniels County Leader*, 23 August 1928.
- ^{viii} “Government – For the People?” *Daniels County Leader*, 12 May 1927.
- ^{ix} “Immigration Laws Separate Raymond Husband and Wife,” *Daniels County Leader*, 31 January 1929.
- ^x “Farmer of Raymond Fined for Bringing Bride Over Border,” *Daniels County Leader*, 7 February 1929; “P. J. Collins,” in *Sheridan’s Daybreak*, Vol. 1, 719.
- ^{xi} Petition, “The Minister of Customs for Canada, the Judges of the Courts and Justice of the Peace in the Province of Saskatchewan,” Case No. 33, Damas Laporte, District Court Criminal Cases, Assiniboia, 1922-1989, Saskatchewan Archives Board, Regina.
- ^{xii} Statement, RCMP Corp. M. E. E. Anthony, 5 November 1927; Statement, Damas Laporte, 4 August 1927; Petition, “The Minister of Customs for Canada,” Case No. 33, Damas Laporte.
- ^{xiii} Recognizance: Rex vs. Damas Laporte, 22 November 1927, Case No. 33, Damas Laporte.
- ^{xiv} “Cars Riddled by Patrol Men,” *Lethbridge Herald*, 1 August 1928; “Enforcement and Its Victims,” *Daniels County Leader*, 27 June 1929.

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- ^{xv} “Federal Officers Seize Chevrolet Car near Border,” *Opheim Observer*, 13 September 1929; North Valley County Bicentennial Committee, ed., *Homesteading Our Heritage: North Valley County*, (Glasgow: *Glasgow Courier*), 342.
- ^{xvi} “Enforcement and Its Victims,” *Daniels County Leader*, 27 June 1929.
- ^{xvii} “Hoover Deplores Killings, But Asks Border Citizens to Help Enforce Dry Law,” *New York Times*, 19 June, 1929.
- ^{xviii} “An Armed Patrol Along the Border,” *Calgary Herald*, 7 January 1930.
- ^{xix} “Enforcement and Its Victims,” *Daniels County Leader*, 27 June 1929.
- ^{xx} “An Armed Patrol Along the Border,” *Calgary Herald*, 7 January 1930.
- ^{xxi} “Increased Border Patrol,” *Opheim Observer*, 7 February 1930.
- ^{xxii} “U. S. Hears Protests on Patrol Reform,” *Globe*, 15 May 1930. Also see “Plan to Unify Border Patrol Given Approval,” *Daniels County Leader*, 1 May 1930; “U. S. to Tighten Law Enforcement,” *Lethbridge Herald*, 7 January 1930.
- ^{xxiii} Kottman, “Volstead Violated,” 106-26; Moore, “Bootlegging and the Borderlands,” 194-200.
- ^{xxiv} “Second Hand Cars,” *Climax*, 11 June 1931.
- ^{xxv} “Skinned Alive?” *Yellow Grass Herald*, reprinted in *Regina Leader Post*, 14 July 1937.
- ^{xxvi} “Removal of Tariff on Hay Asked,” *Regina Leader Post*, 24 July 1934.
- ^{xxvii} J. L. Sherburne telegram to James E. Murray, 18 February 1936; Levi J. Burd telegram to James E. Murray, 21 February 1936. Murray Papers, Series I, Box 215, Folder 7.
- ^{xxviii} W. A. Connacher to James E. Murray, 14 January 1937, Murray Papers, Series I, Box 215, Folder 7.
- ^{xxix} H. R. Eickemeyer telegram to James E. Murray, 20 May 1937; James E. Murray telegram to H. R. Eickemeyer, 21 May 1937. Murray Papers, Series I, Box 215, Folder 7.
- ^{xxx} B. V. Hole, Jr. to James E. Murray, 22 August 1935, Murray Papers, Series I, Box 215, Folder 6.

^{xxx}i James E. Murray to B. V. Hole, Jr., 27 August 1935, Murray Papers, Series I, Box 215, Folder 6.

^{xxx}ii *Ibid.*, 23 September 1935.

^{xxx}iii Charles J. Davis to James E. Murray, 30 September 1936, Murray Papers, Series I, Box 215, Folder 7.

^{xxx}iv James H. Moyle to James E. Murray, 2 December 1936, Murray Papers, Series I, Box 215, Folder 7.

^{xxx}v Bella Drengson to James E. Murray, 11 July 1936, Murray Papers, Series I, Box 215, Folder 7.

^{xxx}vi James E. Murray to Bella Drengson, 27 August 1936, Murray Papers, Series I, Box 215, Folder 7.

^{xxx}vii Stephen B. Gibbons to James E. Murray, 3 November 1936, Murray Papers, Series I, Box 215, Folder 7.

^{xxx}viii James E. Murray to Bella Drengson, 5 November 1936, Murray Papers, Series I, Box 215, Folder 7.

^{xxx}ix Bella Drengson to James E. Murray, 28 November 1936, Murray Papers, Series I, Box 215, Folder 7.

^{xl} James E. Murray to Bella Drengson, 31 December 1936, Murray Papers, Series I, Box 215, Folder 7.

^{xli} T. O. Hammond to James E. Murray, 22 March 1936, Murray Papers, Series I, Box 215, Folder 8.

^{xlii} *Ibid.*, 2 October 1936.

^{xliii} *Ibid.*, 12 November 1936.

^{xliv} James E. Murray to T. O. Hammond, 20 August 1936; Josephine Roche to James E. Murray, 3 September 1936. Murray Papers, Series I, Box 215, Folder 8.

^{xlv} T. O. Hammond to James E. Murray, 26 March 1936, Murray Papers, Series I, Box 215, Folder 8.

^{xlvi} Dave McIntosh, *Collectors*, 336-37.

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- xlvi Legg, *Customs Services*, 309, 315-16.
- lviii “Customs Patrol Officer Receives Bullet Thru Hat,” *Daniels County Leader*, 28 July 1927.
- lix “Notorious Rum Runner Captured on Highway 37,” *Climax*, 19 March 1931.
- ¹ “Winnipeg Bandits Disarm Pursuing Police Near Border,” *Lethbridge Herald*, 31 July 1928.
- li *Daniels County Leader*, “Patrolman Injured in Battle with Prisoner,” 10 June 1937; “Tough Canuck Gets Free Ride to Havre Jail,” 17 June 1937.
- lii Edith Ergenbright Svenson, *Friendship Quilt* (2004), 25.
- liii “With People Making News,” *Daniels County Leader*, 8 December 1938.
- liv Boyd Anderson, *Grass Roots*, 136.
- lv Astrid Bergen oral history interview with author, 1-2 August 2005. A pseudonym has been used, at the subject’s request, to protect her identity.
- lvi Curtis A. Stadstad, *They Called Her Nighthawk*, 1988, 51.
- lvii *Ibid.*, 50.
- lviii *Ibid.*, 60.
- lix Konrad C. Istrati, *Virgin Sod* (Altona: Friesen Printers, 1985), 635-36.
- lx *Ibid.*, 636.
- lxi “Alien Taken Monday for Deportation,” *Daniels County Leader*, 21 July 1938.
- lxii Hansen and Brebner, *Mingling of the Canadian and American Peoples*, 259.
- lxiii Stadstad, *They Called Her Nighthawk*, 61.
- lxiv Sunshine Women’s Institute History Committee, ed., *The History of the Border Country of Coutts: 1890-1965*, Section 1 (Lethbridge: Southern Printing Company, 1965), 273-77.

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- lxv Prairie Homemakers Home Extension Club and Jayhawker Ridge Home Extension Club, ed., *Echoes from the Prairies: History on North Toole County* (Shelby, MT: Shelby Promoter, 1976), 104.
- lxvi Astrid Bergen oral history interview.
- lxvii North Valley County Bicentennial Committee, *Homesteading our Heritage*, 65.
- lxviii Anderson, *Grass Roots*, 126.
- lxix Boyd Anderson oral history interview.
- lxx “Bowery’s Alfalfa Gets Irrigation,” *Opheim Observer*, 11 July 1930.
- lxxi Hartley Urquhart oral history interview with author, 6 August 2006.
- lxxii “Local News Items,” *Opheim Observer*, 7 June 1929.
- lxxiii “Canadian MOUNTY [sic] Visits,” *Opheim Observer*, 13 June 1930.
- lxxiv “Duckworth Appointed,” *Daniels County Leader*, 7 July 1938.
- lxxv “Promotion for L.A. Gunerud to Sweetgrass,” *Daniels County Leader*, 30 May 1935.
- lxxvi “Collector Bartley Here Tuesday,” *Daniels County Leader*, 1 December 1938.
- lxxvii “Dand Transferred to Weyburn Office,” *Daniels County Leader*, 16 April 1936.
- lxxviii Stadstad, *They Called Her Nighthawk*, 62.
- lxxix “Local News Items,” *Opheim Observer*, 3 July 1931.
- lxxx Souris Valley No. 7 History Club, ed., *The Saga of Souris Valley R.M. No. 7* (Altona, MB: Friesen Printers, 1978), 73.
- lxxxi “Dan Bailey, Former Scobey Customs Collector Dies,” *Daniels County Leader*, 19 January 1938; “Local News Items,” *Opheim Observer*, 15 August 1930; Sunshine Women’s Institute, *History of the Border Country of Coumts*, 224.
- lxxxii “New Customs Office in Daniels,” *Daniels County Free Press*, 10 March 1938; “C.H. Willson Submits Canadian Tour Plans,” *Opheim Observer*, 25 June 1926.
- lxxxiii “Local and District,” *Climax*, 26 July 1934.

^{lxxxiv} Mitchell, *Softly the Winds*, 5.

^{lxxxv} Alice Henderson and Mrs. Nick Stefan, comps. *Homesteading in Surprise Valley* (Gladmar Community Club, 1970), 8.

^{lxxxvi} Canada, *Report of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police for the Year Ended September 30, 1927* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1928), 13.

^{lxxxvii} P. B. Murphy to James E. Murray, 6 October 1936, Scobey, Montana; James E. Murray to P. B. Murphy, 19 October 1936, Washington DC. Murray Papers, Box 215, Folder 7.

CHAPTER FOUR

A Smuggling Culture

Late at night Edgar Richardson lay in bed and listened to the sound of trucks coming over the border with smuggled Canadian wheat. His family's northeastern Montana farmhouse was a mile south of the line and the trucks—there were three or four of them -- belonged to the neighbours. “The traffic was mostly at night, and you could hear ‘em,” recalls Richardson in a 2005 oral history interview. “I got so I could tell whose truck it was by the sound of it. One guy would have a truck that would make a different sound, and other makes of truck had different sounds. So I could tell.” Young Richardson and his parents saw nothing wrong with these activities. They were just part of life in the borderlands. But the family was careful never to mention the smugglers to border authorities or other outsiders. The borderland community lived by a code of silence that Richardson obeys to this day. “I don't want to mention their names,” he says carefully.ⁱ

Ask anyone who lived in the northern Plains borderlands in the 1930s if the community had its own distinctive character or culture and they will say, “Yes, it was a smuggling culture!”ⁱⁱ Nothing defined borderlanders so much as their penchant for illegally transporting grain, cattle, horses, liquor, clothing, food, and other items across the border. Borderland newspapers, community histories, and oral history interviews reveal just how prevalent the practice was. “Who living along the border had not smuggled at some time?” asks William Durick in a local history about Estevan, Saskatchewan.ⁱⁱⁱ The direction of the illegal traffic depended on the availability and price of products in both countries. Liquor smuggling, or rum-running, from the prairie

provinces into the northern states was common until Americans repealed Prohibition in 1933. Then borderlanders began smuggling American whiskey north because it was cheaper – and handier -- than the Canadian equivalent. Farm products tended to flow south, where they fetched higher prices than they did in Canada. Canadian borderlanders were fond of smuggling tobacco, cotton clothing, and manufactured goods from the United States, while American borderlanders coveted Canadian woollens and a particular brand of strawberry jam. As one northeastern Montana borderlander says, the border was “marked by an imaginary line – oftentimes too imaginary to be noticed if bargains were better on the north side of it!”^{iv} Despite increased border patrols “this business continued along the border from the Cypress Hills on the east to the Manitoba border,” writes Saskatchewan borderlander Konrad Istrati. “They smuggled everything possible: machinery, repairs, livestock and especially liquor, cigarettes and clothes, which had quick sale.”^v Liquor, grain, and livestock smuggling tended to take place under cover of darkness, but other items crossed the border in broad daylight. “As people on both sides were neighbors and attended one another’s dances and parties, the exchange of foreign goods was common,” recalls Durick.^{vi}

Although rum-running from western Canada into northern Montana peaked in the 1920s, border folklore reveals that large and small-scale liquor smuggling continued into the early 1930s. “Many were the stories told of the rum-running days,” recalls RCMP officer Doug Minor. “Not one town was exempted.”^{vii} Communities like Havre, Montana, were bases for serious rum-running operations. “The town of Havre is a major smuggling headquarters,” said an American federal officer. “Everybody profits by it. Nobody wants it stopped and booze sleuths have no friends in Havre once they are

known.”^{viii} During the Depression a Medicine Hat, Alberta, rancher reportedly paid hoboes to purchase beer from provincial liquor stores (which only allowed a small amount per patron) and stockpiled it in a barn near the border to await convoys of smugglers from Havre.”^{ix} Scobey’s *Daniels County Leader* ran many stories about bootleggers based in Scobey, Plentywood, and other borderland communities. “It has been known for a long time that the booze runners from Sheridan County supplied all northeastern Montana and if they got by the border patrol they were safe,” the paper said.^x

Big operators transported large quantities of beer and whiskey over little-known trails from the Canadian to the American side of the border. Their hirelings drove expensive cars equipped with armoured gas tanks and automatic weapons to fend off pursuers. A Scobey citizen who watched curiously as two heavily loaded cars pulled into a gas station in Minot, North Dakota, was startled to come face to face with two machine gun barrels. “Both cars were loaded down with Canadian booze,” said the *Daniels County Leader*.^{xi} Farmers on both sides of the border were used to the sight of rum-runners speeding over their fields. “There was many a carload of bootlegged whiskey went right through our yard on its way from Canada,” recalls north-central Montana borderlander Fred Andrews. “The reason they used our road was because we always milked cows and when we chased them out it always covered their tracks.”^{xii} Often the smugglers enlisted borderlanders’ help, hiding caches of liquor in barns, basements, and haystacks and relying on borderlanders to warn them of the border patrol’s approach.^{xiii} In September 1929 customs inspectors visiting a shack northwest of Scobey found a cave filled with “40 cases of beer, 25 jugs of wine, 24 quarts of whiskey, some brandy, crème

de menthe, etc., all of it apparently of Canadian manufacture.”^{xiv} Most smuggled liquor ended up in secret drinking establishments or “blind pigs” near the border, was sold at dances, ball games, and rodeos, or was funneled into bigger centres farther inland. Scobey, Plentywood, Richland, Opheim, Flaxville, and a string of smaller communities immediately south of the border dispensed illegal booze from pool halls, garages, restaurants, and shacks with colourful names like the Dirty Shame, the Little Shame, the Beer Garden, and the Dove Cot.^{xv} *Leader* editor Burley Bowler counted ten “piggers” in Plentywood alone, run by “gangsters” associated with robberies, prostitution, “and other depredations.”^{xvi}

Bowler distinguished between big-time bootleggers and ordinary citizens who smuggled small amounts of liquor for their own use or foolishly lent their vehicles to friends who used them to smuggle. “Many good citizens who merely wanted a few pints of beer for themselves have found it very costly,” he wrote.^{xvii} The paper greeted news that one community member had been caught smuggling “giggle soup” with a mixture of pity and amusement. “No Joy in This Case of Suds,” read the February 5, 1931, headline. “A case of beer which one local citizen had in his car returning from a visit to our northern neighbors has caused him no little embarrassment and might prove an expensive luxury.”^{xviii} The story was probably referring to popular Scobey hotel owner Pat Gorham, who was indicted on a smuggling charge in Great Falls federal court two months later.^{xix} Bowler warned readers that they were risking fines and the confiscation of their vehicles if they smuggled any amount of alcohol. His paper carried many stories of individual men, and the occasional woman, who were caught red-handed by border patrol officers. “Charged with smuggling, Harry MacDonald testified that in company with Mrs. E. R.

Burton and son, they were returning from the Regina Fair with a few bottles of liquor ... got lost and did not know they were in [the] United States until arrested by the border patrol.”^{xx}

For every liquor smuggler who was arrested, however, countless others crossed the border undetected. Borderlanders generally agree that the authorities were no match for lawbreakers. According to an East Blaine County community history book, “Many of the ... roads in this area were whiskey-running trails and many a runner was caught. However, many more escaped the patrol. [The authorities] were very short-handed and had a large territory of new and unfamiliar land to travel.”^{xxi} A history of Sweet Grass notes that American officers were unable to shut down speak-easies in that community and Canadian police who patrolled the border “were unable to stamp out the lucrative traffic until it was brought to a close by the repeal of prohibition in the United States.”^{xxii}

Later in the 1930s, after Prohibition ended, many Saskatchewan borderlanders bought bottles of whiskey cheaply in northern Montana and smuggled them across the border. Saskatchewan borderlander Boyd Anderson recalls that Opheim’s three saloons were only thirty miles away, while liquor stores in Assiniboia and Gravelbourg were more than fifty miles away. “It was a common practice for some enterprising young men to buy these mickeys of whiskey in Opheim, smuggle them over the back trails and then sell them at the school house dances, picnics, and rodeos. Sometimes they rode thirty miles through the snow in winter to sell whiskey at the school house dances.”^{xxiii} The RCMP sometimes netted a few smugglers at these dances, but most of them got away. Fellow Saskatchewan borderlander Hartley Urquhart says many people in his area east of Kildeer rode to Martin Grove’s store on the border to buy whiskey, putting their horses in

stalls on the Canadian side so they wouldn't lose them if the border patrol came along. "There was no custom house then," he laughs. "We used antelope paths." Like antelope, everybody "just crossed the border any time they wanted to." Carloads of men also drove down to buy booze to bootleg or for their own enjoyment. When they left Grove's store they would begin drinking and flinging mickeys out the car windows, leaving such an obvious trail of empty flasks that police were forced to start monitoring that section of the border line.^{xxiv}

Many borderlanders also smuggled livestock during this period. "Because livestock prices were usually higher in Montana, rustlers from both sides of the border were involved with stealing cattle and horses and smuggling them," writes Boyd Anderson. "If the cattle were not branded it was easy to move them over at night and by morning the cattle belonged to someone on the American side."^{xxv} On summer evenings well-organized American thieves on horseback would appear on the hills along the border, waiting for an opportunity to swoop down and drive off herds of the Anderson family's cattle. Once rustlers stole fifty head of their cattle, and another time Boyd's father tracked a stolen herd to the Montana badlands southwest of their ranch.^{xxvi} Often smugglers hid cattle in the same Big Muddy caves that cross-border outlaws used in an earlier era. On one occasion the sheriff of Sheridan County and his deputies traced a stolen herd of cattle to Horsethief Coulee, which lay on the border.^{xxvii} In 1935 a man from the border community of Thoeny, Montana, was sentenced to fifteen months in jail for smuggling fifteen head of cattle from a ranch near Summercove, Saskatchewan.^{xxviii} And in Opheim in November 1937 American customs officers rounded up three men from Opheim, one from Glasgow, and one from Conopus, Saskatchewan, for allegedly

smuggling thirty-nine head of cattle.^{xxxix} Canadian and American borderlanders often worked together, smuggling livestock and other agricultural products south and selling or trading them to Americans. Many Canadian cattle met their fate near the border. “A Canadian neighbour looking for a bull on both sides of the line found it in a chokecherry thicket about to be butchered,” writes Montana borderlander Carl Stadstad.^{xxx}

On another occasion an RCMP officer, an American customs officer, and the Daniels County Sheriff investigated and charged a Fife Lake, Saskatchewan, man for illegally slaughtering a Montana rancher’s steer just north of the boundary. “The brand on the hide revealed that the animal had belonged to Claude Tande of Scobey, whose stock pastures near the border,” said the *Daniels County Leader*.^{xxxi} Cattle thieves usually left the animals’ hides, with their telltale brands, in the pasture and transported the meat to buyers farther south. Often these buyers ran bars or restaurants and were “in cahoots” with the rustlers. A considerable amount of fresh Canadian beef made its way down to the Missouri river near Glasgow in the mid-1930s, where it fed hundreds of Americans working on the federal government’s Fort Peck Dam project.^{xxxii}

Thieves smuggled horses from Montana into Saskatchewan and vice versa, depending on the markets. One group of rustlers gathered herds of sixty or more horses from the Wolf Point, Montana, area, pastured them overnight at the border, then drove them into Canada.^{xxxiii} In the mid-1930s Climax and Shaunavon RCMP extradited two Americans for stealing horses from the Belnap Indian Reserve near Harlem, Montana.^{xxxiv} And American authorities charged five young men from the Scobey area with failing to pay duty on horses stolen from two ranches on the Canadian side. The horses were involved in some interesting trades. “Six horses were traded to Mr. Hanrahn

of the Madoc vicinity for a roan horse, a bay saddle horse, a radio, a yearly bull and two pigs,” said the *Daniels County Leader*. “Another black saddle horse was traded to Mr. Templeman of Richland for a bay saddle horse, 4 turkeys and 4 ducks.” With the arrest of “the boys” – with whom the *Leader* seemed to sympathize – the paper noted that “Canadian horses immediately north of Scobey will be free to roam the range and will not be humiliated by being traded off for ducks, radios and calves.”^{xxxv}

Horses and cattle weren't the only farm animals illegally transported over the border. Every year around Christmas southeastern Saskatchewan borderlander Delores Larsen's father smuggled plucked and cleaned turkeys across the border to a waiting farmer. Usually he took them in his Bennett buggy (a horse-drawn car with the engine removed), but when there was snow on the ground, he used a homemade bobsled. “Everybody raised turkeys,” says Delores's husband Duane, a fellow borderlander, “and they pretty near *all* went across the line.”^{xxxvi} On one occasion Saskatchewan borderlander Boyd Anderson sold four of his father's purebred Rambouillet sheep to an American rancher who crammed them into the back of his touring car. “Carl Nelson was his name. He never went near the Customs, never went near nothin'. There were no papers. He had the registered rams and I had his money.” Boyd says Nelson probably paid half price for the animals. “He wasn't coming up here and taking a chance on losing his car at the Customs and everything else unless there was a buck or two in it for him.”^{xxxvii}

Grain smuggling was another popular pastime in the borderlands. Canadian farmers often arranged to have American farmers truck their smuggled products to market in the United States – for a share of the proceeds.^{xxxviii} Such arrangements were

risky. In November 1934, the border patrol accused a grain elevator operator and fourteen farmers and labourers of smuggling 160,000 bushels of wheat from Canada into North Dakota and selling it in small towns near the border. The men faced up to two years in prison and up to \$5,000 in fines.^{xxxix} Whether they were handling large or small quantities of grain, smugglers had to be cagey to avoid the law. Boyd Anderson tells of an American farmer who had just smuggled a wagonload of oats from Saskatchewan into Montana when he saw the border patrol coming down the road. He quickly drove the team into a field and began picking up stones and tossing them into the wagon, as if he was clearing rocks from his pasture. The ruse worked: the officers stopped for a brief visit and continued on their way.^{xl}

While many borderlanders – especially men -- smuggled liquor, grain, cattle, horses, and other animals, by far the most ubiquitous form of smuggling involved everyday items. Canadians liked smuggling Bull Durham tobacco, Red Rooster coffee, cigarettes, and the latest clothing styles from the United States, while Americans liked getting Empress strawberry jam, Roger's Golden Syrup, and woollen clothing from Canada.^{xli} Most smuggled items flowed from south to north, as American goods were cheaper than Canadian goods. Canadian borderlanders went across the border to place catalogue orders, to collect items their American friends purchased on their behalf, and to shop at small stores.

Women found creative ways to smuggle items between the two countries. A Saskatchewan aunt gave Clara Emond Veseth of Montana a canary for a wedding present. "When they came to visit us the summer after we were married, she crossed the border with the bird in a small box hidden in the leg of her bloomers," writes Veseth.^{xlii}

Young Saskatchewan borderlander Audrey McCutcheon loved shopping at Martin Grove's Emporium on the Montana side. "We would leave home as flat-chested girls and return as well-developed maidens with our purchases stuffed around our torsos, just in case an RCMP patrol stopped to ask questions."^{xliii} Women often smuggled clothing. Astrid Bergen's aunt on the Montana side made dresses to smuggle across to Bergen's family. And when Bergen's mother and a friend found a good deal on dresses in Montana, they each wore three home.^{xliv} On Sundays in the summer women engaged in "a kind of black market" on the border south of Coronach, Saskatchewan.^{xlv} Eunice Hayward recalls that Americans brought their Canadian relatives and friends cotton clothing and material and Canadians brought the Americans woollen clothing. "Many a parcel changed hands behind the scenes at Sunday picnics."^{xlvi} Women were also experts at smuggling food supplies. One Malta, Montana, woman sent a nephew home to Saskatchewan with his clothing stuffed full of cucumbers and squash from her garden.^{xlvii} Bergen's mother galloped home from trips across the border with a box of contraband peaches under each arm. And once, Bergen's grandmother almost got caught smuggling a bag of sugar from her relatives' place across the border. When she saw the customs officer coming, she ducked into the barn, hid the bag of sugar, emerged with a pail, and told the officer that's what she'd been carrying all along.^{xlviii}

Canadian borderlanders enjoyed the better selection and prices American catalogue companies like Sears Roebuck and Montgomery Ward offered than Canadian companies. They often placed orders with friends on the American side. Astrid Bergen recalls that a bachelor who lived just south of the line placed so many orders for Saskatchewan borderlanders that the catalogue company sent him three huge bags of

peanuts to reward him for his patronage. Boyd Anderson ordered all his hats, shirts, and jeans from American catalogues – “we wanted the American look” -- and smuggled them home from a post office across the line.^{xlix} One time his uncle, cousin, and he crossed the border in an old Chevrolet to pick up a parcel of clothing, only to have the border patrol catch sight of them and give chase. They fled across the prairie with their lights off, lost the patrol, and ended up landing on a big rock. “It seemed as if there was often a little game being played between the residents of the border and the authorities,” writes Boyd.¹

Smuggling was popular in the borderlands in the 1930s for four main reasons. The first was economic. At a time when people on both sides of the line were experiencing extreme hardship, many borderlanders stretched their meager resources by buying items more cheaply across the border or by working for someone else who was smuggling. It was a matter of survival. “If they had to go across the line to do something like that, then they would do it. To get something or to trade something,” says Saskatchewan borderlander Shirley (Graham) Magnuson. “I know there was smuggling,” adds her sister Luvine (Graham) Treharne. “but that was at a time that they had to make a living.”^{li}

To these people living near the border was an economic boon. “Even though patrolling was increased to twenty-four hours a day, over the years smuggling continually increased and got to be quite a profitable business, especially during the dirty thirties,” writes Saskatchewan borderlander Konrad Istrati.^{lii} During Prohibition, notes a north-central Montana community history book, the fact that Hill County touched the border “proved very profitable, as many runs were made into Canada to bring back the ‘spirits.’”^{liii} One man from the area smuggled Canadian beer to support his eleven

children. “The ranch was an ideal location for this as it was so isolated and bordered along the Milk River just this side of the US/Canadian line.”^{liv}

The second reason smuggling was so common was the thrill factor. Some borderlanders loved trying to outwit the authorities. “One of our American neighbours smuggled, I’m sure more for kicks than profit,” writes southeastern Saskatchewan borderlander Orvina (Mellom) Black. “After a successful escapade he would slap his knees with his hands and laugh heartily.” Once the man thought he could hide the identity of a smuggled Hereford cow by putting red paint on her white face, but he was foiled when the paint ran and the border patrol stopped to examine the cow with the “bloody” head.^{lv} Istrati describes a Canadian rancher who established exits and entries along the border for several miles to make it difficult for the authorities to pin him down. He smuggled liquor and other items, even though he knew he was under surveillance. “He liked smuggling and it appeared as he had made it a challenge as he never gave up,” writes Istrati. One of the rancher’s more ingenious schemes involved buying merchandise in Montana, leaving it with American friends, and returning empty-handed through the port of entry. Back home, at night or on a quiet day, he would load up a raft with Canadian items and send it sailing down a creek that flowed over the border. Downstream, his American friends would unload the smuggled Canadian booty, reload the raft with the items the rancher had purchased in the United States, hook it to a tow line, and the rancher would pull the raft back over the border.^{lvi} “These guys liked the risk involved,” says Boyd Anderson. “They *liked* the risk.”^{lvii}

The third reason for smuggling’s prevalence was the sense of entitlement borderlanders felt towards the border. Edgar Richardson says borderlanders resented

rules designed to force them to go through customs when crossing. “It was taking some of their freedom away.”^{lviii} Many thought the rules were stupid and didn’t apply to them. “[They] didn’t make sense,” says Boyd Anderson. “There’s something in border people that says ‘What the hell, I’m not hurting anything.’” For some, smuggling was a way of rebelling against national authority. “If you can get something over on the government, go to it. That’s good,” says Boyd.^{lix} Hartley Urquhart was always glad when he crossed the border from Montana with his smuggled items. “I felt *relieved*. That we’d beat the system. We’d beat the system again.”^{lx}

The final reason smuggling flourished along the border line in the 1930s was lack of enforcement. Officials lacked the resources required to completely seal the forty-ninth parallel. Customs and immigration sources indicate that the Canadian government operated thirty-three border ports in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba in 1928, and the American government operated twenty-six in Montana and North Dakota in 1930.^{lxi} These offices tended to be isolated, widely spaced, and inconveniently located. The Willow Creek station in southwestern Saskatchewan, for instance, was situated “in a creek bottom, out of sight to travellers on the road, and some distance north of the boundary.”^{lxii} Well into the 1930s many ports of entry were not actually located on the border. On the Canadian side, the Wild Horse, Aden, Climax, and Estevan entry ports did not appear on the border line until 1929, 1934, 1935, and 1937, respectively. Willow Creek did not get a border office until the early 1940s.^{lxiii} On the American side, customs and immigration authorities waited until 1937 to move the Scobey port of entry sixteen miles north to the boundary. As of 1939 the Whitlash, Turner, Opheim, Whitetail, and Westby, Montana, entry ports were still a fair distance inland. The Wild Horse port of

entry on the Alberta-Montana border and its counterpart at Havre, Montana, were more than forty miles apart.^{lxiv} Needless to say, law-abiding borderlanders often had to travel many miles out of their way to report to customs officials in both countries. There was no guarantee that they would find an officer on duty when they arrived, as several entry ports went unmanned for months or years at a time. Harsh winters, impassable roads, staff shortages, and tight budgets made it impractical to keep some offices open year-round. No wonder “no one paid much attention to the border in those days.”^{lxv}

Some authorities understood border crossers’ temptation to ignore entry ports. In the mid-1920s Royal Canadian Mounted Police Commissioner Cortlandt Starnes told a parliamentary inquiry that customs houses did a poor job of preventing cross-border smuggling because most of them were so easy to bypass. The offices were “reported to by the honest, [and] avoided by the dishonest at will.”^{lxvi} Around the same time a senior western Canadian customs inspector urged Ottawa to re-open the Wild Horse office, which had been closed for five years, because locals were engaging in a considerable amount of “petty smuggling” and “cattle thieving on both sides of the boundary.” “And who could blame settlers and ranchers for smuggling,” he asked rhetorically, “when no Customs facilities were available?”^{lxvii} In 1930 the same official got Ottawa to move the Boissevain, Manitoba, customs office twelve miles to the border. “As might be expected residents of the communities along the C. P. R. in southern Manitoba did a lot of visiting with friends and relatives in North Dakota, and Customs offices being situated so far inland, afforded great opportunities for petty smuggling.”^{lxviii} According to Commissioner General of Immigration Harry E. Hull, many small, isolated American entry ports were also ineffective during this period. “In many of the vicinities concerned,

the Immigration Service is now located in ramshackle and unsatisfactory rented quarters, a considerable distance from the border, with the consequent uncertainty that all entrants present themselves for the required inspection,” Hull wrote in 1931. Plans were underway to erect modest, combination customs and immigration buildings “at strategic points on the actual border” which “will put the service in an immensely improved position to control the vast number of entries over our international frontiers.”^{lxix} As we know, however, few such facilities appeared on the Plains border for many years.

The Great Depression significantly affected American and Canadian officials’ ability to enforce the Plains border. Financial constraints and staff problems dogged senior administrators. There simply weren’t enough people to adequately man the border stations and patrol the prairies, coulees, and badlands in between. Authorities in both countries often begged for more staff. As early as June 30, 1928, Hull wrote that demands on the American immigration service’s limited resources had increased so much that he was forced to “skeletonize” the organization. He was especially worried about the situation along the Canadian border. “No one could be more anxious than I am to have the personnel reinforced to a point that would insure the proper inspection of all arriving aliens in an orderly and expeditious manner.” Hull said the service was short-staffed at “numerous points along the entire Canadian border. Our officers in charge are almost driven desperate in their endeavors to stretch their personnel to provide some semblance, at least, of inspection at the various points.”^{lxx} Things were scarcely better one year later. “There exists a pressing need for a larger bureau and field force,” Hull wrote in his 1929 annual report. “This need is steadily growing and must be taken care of if efficient administration of the laws now on the statute books dealing with aliens is to be had. The

capacity of the field organization and bureau staff is taxed to the uttermost; vitally important work is neglected.” Hull added that enforcing the Act of March 4, 1929, which criminalized unauthorized entry, had placed a “heavy burden upon an already overtaxed field force.”^{lxxi}

There were only 735 officers in the Border Patrol on June 30, 1930. Equipped with 306 vehicles and 15 saddle horses, they were responsible for patrolling both land borders and parts of the coastline, preventing unauthorized immigrants from entering the United States, arresting those already in the country, apprehending other federal law violators, and seizing contraband such as smuggled aliens, liquor, and the vehicles used to transport them. The force was also expected to support customs, prohibition, narcotic, justice, and other federal and local officials -- sometimes to its own detriment.^{lxxii} For instance, Immigration and Naturalization Service Commissioner James L. Houghteling complained in the service’s 1938 and 1939 annual reports that patrol officers had to compensate for a shortage of regular immigrant inspectors on the Canadian border. “The Service has been seriously handicapped by the necessity of detailing officers from the already too small patrol force to act as immigrant inspectors at ports of entry.” The commissioner stressed that patrol officers tied to fixed border ports during the summer -- “when there is the greatest need of a strong and active Border Patrol” -- could not prevent people from illegally entering at other points. “Aliens who know or suspect that they will not be admitted at legal ports of entry evade inspection by crossing the border through the fields or woods. That is a problem for the Border Patrol, and, without the strong deterrent effect that it exercises on smugglers and illegal entrants, the efforts of the immigrant inspectors at ports of entry would be largely nullified.”^{lxxiii}

On top of everything the American immigration service had trouble attracting and keeping qualified patrol officers, especially in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Salaries were low, the work was demanding and dangerous, and staff turnover was high (28.7 per cent in 1929 and 20.5 in 1930); officers kept leaving for more remunerative government work. It seems the Border Patrol never did get the manpower it needed to properly fulfill its mandate during the Depression. The average number of patrol staffers spiked at 995 in 1932 and 965 in 1933, but in 1934 the Immigration and Naturalization Service was forced to slice \$1.5 million from its annual budget, and the Border Patrol's share of the pie fell to pre-Depression levels. Thus, the force began and ended the period with roughly the same average number of employees; including clerks, janitors, and mechanics, there were 828 on staff in 1930 and 831 in 1939.^{lxxiv}

Officials responsible for monitoring the Canadian side of the international boundary were also forced to make do with fewer resources than they would have liked. Customs, immigration, and police departments were seriously underfunded, understaffed, and overworked in the 1930s.^{lxxv} In 1934 the Commissioner of Immigration, A. L. Jolliffe, pointed out that reduced immigration did not translate into less work for his department, as the number of unemployed American residents applying for admission had swollen and the task of inspecting these and other potential border crossers continued apace. "The need of careful inspection was never greater than at present." The department tried to maintain staff levels along the Plains border in the midst of general cutbacks. "During the year there has been a reduction of eleven in the Winnipeg staff," reported the commissioner for the Western Division. "The necessity for a close check on all movements across the international boundary has not made possible any reduction of

boundary inspectional staff.” Still, the entire division, which stretched from Port Arthur, Ontario, to Kingsgate, British Columbia, had only 167 staff of any description at its disposal. In addition to their regular duties inspectors had to personally investigate the situations of prairie residents asking to admit wives and dependent children. The division received 926 such applications in 1934 alone. “In such a wide area where settlers are not always close to railways, the investigation of so many cases represents a very considerable amount of work,” wrote the division commissioner.^{lxxvi}

The RCMP were similarly stretched in western Canada. The federal police force, which absorbed the provincial forces in Saskatchewan in 1928 and Alberta and Manitoba in 1932, staffed several detachments at ports of entry along the Plains border. These detachments were chiefly responsible for enforcing immigration laws and preventing people from entering “by stealth.” Officers also patrolled sections of the forty-ninth parallel in an effort to stem cross-border smuggling and other crimes. The superintendent for southern Saskatchewan was “fully convinced” that the patrol he created in 1928 “has had a moral effect and has prevented the yeggs from across the line from coming over and blowing safes, etc.”^{lxxvii} RCMP annual reports generally emphasize the force’s effectiveness in the face of growing demands. They rhapsodize about stymied smugglers, thieves, and other “criminals from the south.”^{lxxviii} But the border was looser than the reports suggest. Patrols operated only when weather and rural road conditions permitted, which meant they were inactive much of the year. Detachments near the line were widely scattered and understaffed. Most consisted of one or two officers. The Depression forced RCMP headquarters to reduce the number of detachments in the region and to deny officers the number of vehicles they needed to cover their vast districts. And, finally, the

border was only one of the RCMP's many priorities during this period. In addition to performing regular police work the force was employed "as a species of handmaiden" to other federal, provincial, and municipal authorities.^{lxxix} Officers in the prairie provinces administered relief, removed transients from trains, destroyed illegal stills, policed strikes, escorted prisoners to jail, guarded government offices, conducted the census, issued radio licences, and even participated in wild bird counts on behalf of other agencies. The RCMP also engaged in surveillance and intelligence gathering, investigating deportees and spying on unemployed workers and their organizations. At several points along the boundary RCMP officers doubled as customs collectors and immigration inspectors. Western Canadian superintendents noted that these tasks often involved a considerable amount of work and took officers away from their detachments. They implied that such duties compromised the effectiveness of a force that was already "under strength."^{lxxx} The RCMP's ability to control the western border likely suffered along with its other police work in the 1930s.

All this undermined American and Canadian efforts to enforce the border. Borderlanders knew the border's weaknesses and they simply didn't take the rules and the authorities seriously. They knew that once in a while "the higher ups cracked the whip and border officials would make an example of somebody," but generally they could get away with small-scale smuggling.^{lxxxi} "Over the years a few smugglers were caught, with some going to jail, but most of them got away with their smuggling," writes Boyd Anderson. "The border in our area stretched far and wide and the patrol men were few in number. No one ever got rich from smuggling, but it was a challenge to put something over on the law."^{lxxxii}

The fact is, most borderlanders did not see smuggling as a crime.^{lxxxiii} RCMP officer Doug Minor recalls minor cases of smuggling along the section of the border that he patrolled, but “smuggling was never really considered an offence – merely a way of life.”^{lxxxiv} Saskatchewan borderlander Orland MacInnes admits that he picked up catalogue orders in Montana and smuggled them home, but “I never thought of it as breaking the law.”^{lxxxv}

Borderlanders tended to sympathize with smugglers, even if they didn't smuggle themselves. “Although very few of the local residents were active in transporting liquor,” writes southeastern Saskatchewan borderlander William Durick, “their sympathies were with the rum runners.”^{lxxxvi} When borderlanders looked at smugglers, they didn't see criminals; they saw the unlucky sons, husbands, and fathers of their friends and neighbours. For instance, when lawyer John Slattery defended Ernest Paradis of Scobey on a charge of smuggling thirty-one cases of Canadian beer, he told the federal court judge in Great Falls that he was appearing “as a friend of this boy.” He said he knew the young man's father when he lost his eastern Montana farm and had to become a labourer. “This lad is married and has a 10-month-old baby and his wife is expecting another child within three months. He has no money. He was out of work and it was in desperation he tried to make something in a way not sanctioned by the Prohibition law. He is not a criminal and this is his first offense.”^{lxxxvii} Similarly, N. H. Nordby sympathized with three or four rum-runners he passed one day while driving east of Opheim, Montana. Their Buick was in the ditch, bottles and glass everywhere, and federal officers were arresting them. “So the bootleggers' road is a hard one,” Nordby wrote in the local paper. “They stood and looked as though they had lost their last friend. I hope they get winter

jobs somewhere and are able to quit once and for all hauling Canadian liquor.”^{lxxxviii}

Slattery and Nordby clearly saw these smugglers as victims of circumstances who deserved understanding rather than condemnation. They knew there was more to the men’s stories than the fact that they had broken the law.

Historian Curtis R. McManus argues that the Depression corroded “the moral code of the day” and smuggling was evidence of this corrosion.^{lxxxix} However, borderlanders never really saw smuggling as wrong. This was not so much because unrelenting drought and poverty made differences between right and wrong seem irrelevant, but because borderlanders happened to live near the border. They smuggled because they could. And just because society in general deemed smuggling wrong didn’t mean that borderlanders lacked a set of well-understood personal codes.

Borderlanders protected the smugglers in their midst by adhering to a strict code of silence that prevented them from mentioning smuggling activities to the authorities or untrusted acquaintances. “The unwritten law of the border was: ‘Don’t talk,’ writes Minor, “and believe me they didn’t.”^{xc} Whenever border patrol officers dropped in to inquire about smugglers in the area, Edgar Richardson’s family pleaded ignorance. “You didn’t talk. You didn’t say anything. You just acted dumb.”^{xc}

Border children learned the code at a young age. When young Richardson noticed Canadians picking up catalogue items in Montana and smuggling them home, his mother warned him to “be quiet” about what he’d seen. Bergen learned to lie to her schoolmates about where she got her smuggled clothes; she said they came from Eaton’s catalogue. And one Christmas the Larsen sisters received a new toy wagon with the hubcaps bashed

in. They figured their parents had obscured the initials “MW” so people wouldn’t suspect that the wagon came from the Montgomery Ward catalogue in the United States.

As far as borderlanders were concerned, there were far worse offenses than smuggling. For instance, when a hired man from Montana insulted Boyd Anderson’s grandmother, his grandfather was so outraged that he beat the man and he and two friends drove the man to the international boundary and dropped him off in the middle of the night. To Anderson’s grandfather the border was a dumping ground for people who broke accepted codes of conduct.^{xcii}

Breaking the code of silence was considered particularly heinous. Minor found that normally friendly border people “might totally ignore me on the street or in a certain crowd. I thought nothing of it. I understood. They just did not want anyone to think they were a ‘squealer, stool pigeon, informer’ or whatever one might call it.” Minor seemed to approve of the fact that borderlanders had their own brand of justice for those suspected of reporting on smugglers. “More than one suspected “stoolie” got his just desserts at an auction sale, school dance or picnic after a few bottles of smuggled booze had been discreetly passed around. We as policemen did not respect the informers any more than the border people, but occasionally we knew they had beat up the wrong person.^{xciii}

Even borderlanders who thought of themselves as honest and who never smuggled themselves looked the other way when they encountered the practice. This was partly because, in addition to the code of silence, borderlanders were bound by a code of hospitality that required them to help out strangers and to not ask questions. Boyd Anderson’s father, who always went through customs and reported any purchases, was okay with the many rum-runners who stopped in his yard for water en route to the border

– and the bottles of whiskey they left behind as thank you gifts. “In those days most people believed in live and let live,” writes Boyd.^{xciv}

The code of hospitality sometimes put borderlanders in interesting situations. They might find themselves providing food, water and even shelter for people they knew to be smugglers. For instance, when three men rode up to young Boyd Anderson and his father’s campsite near the border one day, the father and son shared their lunch of beans and baking powder biscuits with them. “After they left I said something to Dad about what nice friends he had. Dad replied, ‘It is a good thing we were here or them dang buggers would have some of our cattle into Montana tonight.’”^{xcv}

Borderlanders applied the code of hospitality to smugglers and enforcers alike. Women on farms and ranches near the border often fed and housed Canadian and American patrolmen who came through. “Our home, being on the border, was kind of a stopping place,” recalls southwestern Saskatchewan borderlander Orland MacInnes. “They were always stopping for dinner.”^{xcvi} Nellie Brower, whose family ranched on the border in southeastern Alberta, kept a diary that shows that in May 1936 American Border Patrol officer Al Larsen visited five times; once he stayed for lunch and once he and another border patrol officer stayed overnight.^{xcvii} And there was the Montana woman who grudgingly provided meals and lodging for the patrol officer who had confiscated the family’s truck when he discovered it was used to smuggle turkeys.

Borderlanders walked a thin line between smugglers and the authorities by befriending and supporting both. Border officials knew this and were generally careful not to put borderlanders on the spot. Borderlanders tell stories of Mounties who stopped to visit Saskatchewan families and pretended not to notice the cars with Montana plates

parked in their yards. Or patrol men who never asked farm women the whereabouts of their husbands, who happened to be away on smuggling expeditions. Like Minor, most border authorities liked borderlanders and respected their values. They understood the culture they were dealing with. After all, the officials were borderlanders themselves. “Over the years we got along very well with the Canadian and American customs people, the Mounties and the patrol men,” says Boyd Anderson. “The authorities knew that small deals were taking place. As long as one was only dealing in small consumer goods, no one seemed to care.”^{xcviii}

A culture of smuggling thrived in the Plains borderlands in the 1930s because borderlanders sought ways to cope with dire economic conditions, enjoyed thwarting border officials, resented national authority, and took advantage of weaknesses in border enforcement. They obeyed a set of values that aided and abetted smuggling and earned them the respect of border enforcers and the border community. Ultimately they developed fluid notions about right and wrong that were unique to the borderlands.

Notes

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- ⁱ Edgar Richardson oral history interview with author, 10-13 October 2005.
- ⁱⁱ Astrid Bergen oral history interview with author.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Estevan History Book Committee, *A Tale That Is Told*, Vol. 2, 740.
- ^{iv} North Valley County Bicentennial Committee, *Homesteading Our Heritage*, 54.
- ^v Istrati, *Virgin Sod*, 588-89.
- ^{vi} Estevan History Book Committee, *A Tale That Is Told*, Vol. 2, 740.
- ^{vii} Souris Valley Historical Club, *Saga of Souris Valley*, 73.
- ^{viii} Quoted in Gary A. Wilson, *Honky-Tonk Town: Havre's Bootlegging Days* (Havre: High-Line Books, 1985), 3.
- ^{ix} *Ibid.*, 97.
- ^x "Officers Grab Two Cars with Illegal Cargoes," *Daniels County Leader*, 22 April 1926.
- ^{xi} "Didn't Look After Peering into Machine Gun Barrel in Auto," *Daniels County Leader*, 20 October 1927.
- ^{xii} Phillips County Historical Society, ed., *The Yesteryears*, Vol. 1 (Havre: Griggs Printing and Publishing), 256.
- ^{xiii} Wilson, *Honky-Tonk Town*, 74, 77-78.
- ^{xiv} "Officers Find Booze Cache in River Bank," *Daniels County Leader*, 19 September 1929.
- ^{xv} "Officers Swoop Down on Local Grog Shops," *Daniels County Leader*, 10 January 1929.
- ^{xvi} *Daniels County Leader*, "Turn About," 3 June 1926; "Federalers Grab Big Moon Still at Whitetail," 17 January 1929.

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- xvii “Officers Grab Two Cars with Illegal Cargoes,” *Daniels County Leader*, 22 April 1926.
- xviii “No Joy in This Case of Suds,” *Daniels County Leader*, 5 February 1931.
- xix “Daniels County Offenders Visit Federal Judge,” *Daniels County Leader*, 23 April 1931.
- xx “Justice Without Mercy for Poor, Abused Leggers,” *Daniels County Leader*, 6 October 1927.
- xxi Stella Breitmeier, ed., *Thunderstorms and Tumbleweeds: 1887-1987 East Blaine County* (Visalia: Jostens Publishing and Printing, 1989), 537.
- xxii Sunshine Women’s Institute History Committee, *History of the Border Country of Coutts*, 254.
- xxiii Anderson, *Grass Roots*, 135.
- xxiv Harley Urquhart oral history interview with author, 6 August 2005.
- xxv Anderson, *Grass Roots*, 127.
- xxvi *Ibid.*, 128, 132.
- xxvii Hartley Urquhart oral history interview with author; “Cattle Thieves Busy in Sheridan County,” *Daniels County Leader*, 24 January 1929.
- xxviii “Cattle Thief Caught after Chase Lasting Six Years,” *Meyronne Independent*, 22 August 1935.
- xxix “Feds Mop Up Alleged Cattle Smugglers Fri.” *Daniels County Leader*, 11 November 1937.
- xxx Curtis A. Stadstad, *They Called Her Nighthawk* (Curtis A. Stadstad, 1988), 64.
- xxxi “Draws Year for Killing Tande Beef,” *Daniels County Leader*, 21 December 1939.
- xxxii Anderson, *Grass Roots*, 128; Boyd Anderson oral history interview with author.
- xxxiii Curtis A. Stadstad, *Growing Up in the Great Depression: The Tragedy of the Great Drouth* (Curtis A. Stadstad, ca 1988), 15.
- xxxiv “RCMP Extradite Two Horse Thieves,” *Climax*, 23 August 1934.

xxxv “U.S. Officers Charge Five in Fed. Court,” *Daniels County Leader*, 23 February 1933.

xxxvi Duane and Delores Larsen oral history interview with author, 3 August 2005.

xxxvii Boyd Anderson oral interview with author.

xxxviii Henderson and Stefan, *Homesteading in Surprise Valley*, 6.

xxxix “Wheat Smuggling New Border Worry,” *Daniels County Leader*, 29 November 1934.

xl Anderson, *Grass Roots*, 133-34.

xli Coronach Historical Committee, *From the Turning of the Sod*, 243; Stadstad, *Growing up in the Great Depression*, 24; Hartley Urquhart oral history interview.

lii Phillips County Historical Society, ed., *The Yesteryears*, Vol. 1 (Havre: Griggs Printing and Publishing), 540.

liiii Rockglen 50th Anniversary Committee, *Rolling Hills of Home*, 197.

xliv Luvine (Graham) Treharne and Shirley (Graham) Magnuson oral history interview with author, 31 July, 1 August 2005.

xlv C. McManus, *Happyland*, 129.

xlvi Coronach Historical Committee, *From the Turning of the Sod*, 243.

xlvii Betty (Hardin) Ulrich oral history interview with author, 7 October 2005.

xlviii Astrid Bergen oral history interview with author.

xlix Anderson, *Grass Roots*, 126.

¹ *Ibid.*, 134.

li Treharne and Magnuson oral history interview.

lii Konrad C. Istrati, *Virgin Sod* (Assiniboia: Konrad C. Istrati, 1986), 589.

liii Edith Ergenbright Svenson, *Friendship Quilt* (Joplin: Edith Ergenbright Svenson, 2004), 15.

liv *Ibid.*, 24.

lv Oxbow-Glen Ewen History Book Committee, ed., *Furrow to the Future: Oxbow and Glen Ewen*, Vol. 1 (Oxbow: Oxbow-Glen Ewen History Book Committee, 1984), 237.

lvi Istrati, *Virgin Sod*, 589-91.

lvii Boyd Anderson oral history interview with author.

lviii Edgar Richardson oral history interview with author.

lix Boyd Anderson oral history interview with author.

lx Hartley Urquhart oral history interview with author.

lxi Calculated from Canada, *Report of the Department of Immigration and Colonization for the Fiscal Year Ended March 31, 1928*, 94; Kansas, *U. S. Immigration, Exclusion, and Deportation*, 196-97. The number, names, and locations of ports of entry often changed. In the prairie provinces in 1928, in addition to thirty-three stations along the border, the Canadian government operated four inland ports of entry, at Calgary, Edmonton, Saskatoon, and Winnipeg.

lxii Legg, *Customs Services*, 287.

lxiii *Ibid.*, 87, 121, 209, 286-87.

lxiv "U.S. Inspector for Customs Building Here," *Daniels County Leader*, 8 April 1937; Montana State Highway Commission, *Land of the Shining Mountains: Montana Highway Map* (Chicago: Rand McNally and Company, 1939).

lxv Lines, *British and Canadian Immigration*, 93.

lxvi Quoted in McIntosh, *Collectors*, 148.

lxvii Legg, *Customs Services*, 285.

lxviii *Ibid.*, 27.

lxix United States, *Annual Report of the Commissioner General of Immigration*, 1931, 7.

lxx United States, *Annual Report of the Commissioner General of Immigration to the Secretary of Labor, Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1928* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1928), 2. Hull quotes extensively from a letter "the department" –

possibly Hull – sent to an unnamed person who had asked for more staff at a small station on the Canadian-American border.

^{lxxi} United States, *Annual Report of the Commissioner General of Immigration, 1929*, 4.

^{lxxii} United States, *Annual Report of the Commissioner General of Immigration, 1930*, 29; United States, *Annual Report of the Commissioner General of Immigration, 1936*, 105.

^{lxxiii} United States, *Annual Report of the Secretary of Labor, 1938*, 103-104. Also see *Annual Report of the Secretary of Labor, 1939*, 99-100.

^{lxxiv} United States, *Annual Report of the Commissioner General of Immigration, 1930*, 37, 43; United States, *Annual Report of the Secretary of Labor, 1932*, 80; United States, *Annual Report of the Secretary of Labor, 1934*, 47, 74; United States, *Annual Report of the Secretary of Labor for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1935*, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1936), 97; United States, *Annual Report of the Secretary of Labor, 1939*, 99.

^{lxxv} Gordon Blake, *Customs Administration in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1957), 157.

^{lxxvi} Canada, *Report of the Department of Immigration and Colonization, 1934*, 83-85.

^{lxxvii} Canada, *Report of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police for the Fiscal Year Ended September 30, 1928* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1929), 36, 42.

^{lxxviii} Canada, *Report of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police for the Fiscal Year Ended September 30, 1930* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1931), 8.

^{lxxix} Canada, *Report of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police for the Fiscal Year Ended September 30, 1932* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1933), 19.

^{lxxx} *Ibid.*, 67; Canada, *Report of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 1928*, 42, 44; Canada, *Report of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police for the Fiscal Year Ended September 30, 1929* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1930), 33, 45; Canada, *Report of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police for the Fiscal Year Ended September 30, 1931* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1932), 46; Hewitt, *Riding to the Rescue*, 72-73, 104-31, 136-39.

^{lxxxi} Boyd Anderson oral history interview with author.

^{lxxxii} Anderson, *Grass Roots*, 135-36.

^{lxxxiii} *Ibid.*, 136.

^{lxxxiv} Souris Valley No. 7 History Club, *The Saga of Souris Valley* (Altona, MB: Friesen Printers, 1976), 71.

^{lxxxv} Orland MacInnes oral history interview with author.

^{lxxxvi} Estevan History Book Committee, *A Tale That is Told*, Vol. 2, 740.

^{lxxxvii} “Slattery Pleads Case of Scobey Lad Before Pray,” *Opheim Observer*, 9 March 1928.

^{lxxxviii} “Nordby Writes of His Impressions on Trip,” *Opheim Observer*, 18 January 1929.

^{lxxxix} C. McManus, *Happyland*, 129.

^{xc} Souris Valley No. 7 History Club, *Saga of Souris Valley*, 73.

^{xc}i Edgar Richardson oral history interview with author.

^{xc}ii Anderson, *Grass Roots*, 51.

^{xc}iii Souris Valley No. 7 History Club, *Saga of Souris Valley*, 73.

^{xc}iv Anderson, *Grass Roots*, 126.

^{xc}v *Ibid.*, 132-33.

^{xc}vi Orland MacInnis oral history interview with author.

^{xc}vii Hills of Home History Book Committee, ed., *The Hills of Home*, 2nd ed. (Altona: Friesens Corporation, 2003), 381.

^{xc}viii Anderson, *Grass Roots*, 136.

CHAPTER FIVE

A Shining Example

So many people from northeastern Montana and southern Saskatchewan attended Memorial Day celebrations in Scobey on May 31, 1937, that they spilled out of the Rex Theatre and lined both sides of main street, where organizers set up amplifiers to broadcast the day's patriotic speeches and music to the crowd. War veterans from Bengough, thirty-five miles north of the border, joined the festivities for the seventh year in a row. Everyone was in a congenial mood. "An oration by Miss Ainlee of Bengough, dealing with the friendly relationship between our two great nations helped to intensify the friendly attitude not only between the veterans of the two countries but the citizens as well," said a local newspaper.ⁱ Spectators also heard from a Canadian Legion representative from Regina who said peaceful relations between Canada and the United States were based on individual acts of neighbourliness by people on both sides of the line. The whole event was "a shining example of the goodwill between the Dominion of Canada and the United States," said the newspaper. Noting the praise the Canadian visitors heaped upon the United States, he gushed: "Our country as a whole feels deeply the same toward Canada."ⁱⁱ

Some historians dismiss such sentiments -- echoed by service organizations all along the Canadian-American boundary during the inter-war years -- as "boosterish cant" or "vapid Babbitry."ⁱⁱⁱ But Plains borderlanders enjoyed a bond that ran deeper than mere platitudes. They went to great lengths to maintain friendly cross-border ties in the 1930s. Lack of money and terrible environmental conditions, including bad roads and dust storms, did not prevent them from making long journeys across the border to celebrate

national holidays, promote cross-border causes, maintain long-time friendships, support each other's businesses, and exchange ideas. Canadian and American Plains borderlanders included each other in everything from picnics and contests to farm sales and rabbit drives. Many believed these "neighborly acts across the line" separated them from non-borderlanders. Living near the border increased their awareness of cross-border issues and made them more open-minded, cooperative, and friendly. It made them special.

Borderlanders say they felt lucky to grow up on the Plains border. "I think we're the most fortunate people in the world," says Boyd Anderson, "because we have more of an understanding of other people." Anderson thinks one of the main things that distinguished Canadian and American borderlanders from non-borderlanders in the 1930s is the fact that they genuinely liked each other. Plains borderlanders were "very, very friendly," he says. "Very friendly."^{iv} Fellow Saskatchewan borderlander Orland MacInnes says he was "plum happy" that he lived near the border. "I learned a lot. I learned what Americans are like. We're all the same. We're the same darn people."^v

Canadian and American borderlanders clearly identified with each other. At a time when anti-Americanism ran high in much of Canada, Canadian borderlanders embraced Americans and American culture.^{vi} And while most people in the United States were ignorant of Canada, American borderlanders took an active interest in events across the border.^{vii} Each group appreciated what the other had to offer, welcoming each other's help and companionship and eagerly sharing ideas on how to combat the environmental and economic disaster engulfing them both.

Canadian and American borderlanders interacted with each other in twelve main ways. First, friends and relatives regularly exchanged cross-border visits; they had ties going back many years and they were bent on sustaining those connections. Borderland newspapers recorded their comings and goings. Mrs. Norman Hunter and her children, of Meyronne, Saskatchewan, spent two weeks visiting relatives in the border community of Hannah, North Dakota.^{viii} Pilot Charles Skinner, his wife, and daughter, of Willow Bunch, Saskatchewan, flew to Scobey to spend a few hours with friends.^{ix} Scobey dentist W.P. McDaniel and his wife had the Canadian customs officer and his wife over for dinner.^x Mr. and Mrs. Harold Chaffey, who ran a hotel in Fort Qu'Appelle, Saskatchewan, visited back and forth with Scobey hotel owner P.R. Gorham.^{xi} Scobey's Dr. Morrow and his wife spent a week visiting friends and relatives in Regina and "other Canadian points."^{xii} The Dippong family of Minot, North Dakota, stopped in Scobey to visit the Paus and Bowler families en route to Rockglen, Saskatchewan; Peter Dippong, who was with Westland Oil, had once lived in Scobey and Rockglen.^{xiii} And George Curliss, a merchant-turned-silver fox farmer from Assiniboia, Saskatchewan, visited *Daniels County Leader* editor and "boyhood friend" Burley Bowler in Scobey.^{xiv} Many local news items referred to Bowler and his wife, whose father and siblings lived across the border; the Bowlers regularly visited these relatives in Radville, Saskatchewan, or entertained them in their Scobey home.

Men often drove wives and other female family members long distances across the border, presumably because the women couldn't drive themselves. For instance, in May 1931, Mr. M. Markuson drove to Assiniboia, Saskatchewan, to collect his sister. They returned to Opheim the next day and the entire family immediately left for Fertile,

Minnesota, where Markuson's sister, wife, and children planned to stay for a month while he returned to his Farmers Union Elevator job in Opheim.^{xv}

Several cross-border visits reflected the large Norwegian makeup of the northeastern Montana/southern Saskatchewan borderlands. In December 1937, "Dr. Wm. A. Olson and his sister Mrs. Johnson entertained a group of their friends at a lutefisk, turkey and lefsa dinner" in Scobey, said the *Daniels County Leader* (lutefisk and lefsa being special Norwegian dishes). Guests included Mr. and Mrs. William Norgren and family of East Poplar, Saskatchewan.^{xvi} And in May 1938 a group of Norwegian-Canadian and American friends went down to see a Norwegian-language comedy titled "You Have Promised Me a Wife" at the Rex theatre. "Mr. and Mrs. Ole Odegaard, Mr. and Mrs. Carl Odegaard of Whitetail and friends from Rock Glen, Saskatchewan, were Scobey visitors Tuesday," said the *Leader*. "They attended the Norwegian show while here."^{xvii}

Second, many borderlanders travelled back and forth for significant events in their personal lives, like weddings, anniversaries, family reunions, and funerals. Mr. and Mrs. John Frostad's relatives from North Dakota "motored" to Assiniboia, Saskatchewan, to help them celebrate their silver wedding anniversary.^{xviii} Garfield Wilson, Nellie Livingston, and Cliff Jones of Scobey visited Wilson's father on his deathbed in Carnduff, Saskatchewan.^{xix} And S. Michel and Walter Holle of Whitetail, Montana, attended a Canadian Legion comrade's funeral at Coronach, Saskatchewan.^{xx} Cross-border funerals were common, with mourners attending services in both countries and the deceased being interred across the line. For instance, when John Linthicum, who was born in Virginia and settled in the Borderland, Saskatchewan, district, died there was a

service for him at the Rockglen Catholic church. “The remains were taken to Scobey, Montana, for burial. A large number of his friends attended the funeral service to pay their last respects to him before leaving for Scobey where more friends waited at the graveside.”^{xxi} Linthicum was probably buried in Scobey because his wife’s grave was there, but some American-born borderlanders likely wanted to be buried in Montana for patriotic reasons.^{xxii}

Third, many borderlanders crossed the border to seek medical treatment. South-central Saskatchewan borderlanders made countless treks to dentists and doctors in Scobey and other northern Montana centres. In September 1929 nine-year-old Kenneth Jensen, who lived “just across the border in Canada,” was taken to the hospital in Glasgow after accidentally wounding himself with a 22 rifle.^{xxiii} In July 1932 “Mr. Libby of Buffalo Gap, Sask., came to the hospital in a serious condition with multiple abscesses of head and neck,” said the *Daniels County Leader*.^{xxiv} And in December 1934 an “interesting” woman and her daughter and granddaughter of Coronach, Saskatchewan, visited dentist W.P. McDaniel. The paper said Mrs. Fair was the second white child born in Saskatchewan and “a real Saskatchewan pioneer.”^{xxv} Many Alberta and Saskatchewan borderlanders travelled south to have their babies. For some, this was because the nearest doctor or hospital was in Montana. For others, it was because the parents admired the United States and thought their children would have more opportunities if they were born there.^{xxvi}

Fourth, many Canadian and American borderlanders were thrown together by circumstances. Families who lived near the boundary were called upon to demonstrate kindness and hospitality to border-crossers in trouble, pulling vehicles out of the mud,

feeding the hungry, providing shelter during storms, and more. “Our family was a liaison between our neighbors across the line and many of the services they needed,” recalls northeastern Montana borderlander Curtis Stadstad. His father often took border-crossers south to buy groceries or to visit the doctor. Once he took a young man who had lost a finger to have it trimmed. Another time a young family in a sleigh stopped at the Stadstads’ en route to their home in Saskatchewan. “We had dinner with them, as my mother always had a meal for those who were traveling,” writes Stadstad. His father lent the family a horse to help them get home. The isolation and harshness of the borderlands environment and the dire economic times forced people like the Stadstads to help neighbours in need, regardless of their nationality. “All neighbors on both sides of the line were hospitable,” says Stadstad. “All were deprived and poor. All had basic food. They were all willing to share.”^{xxvii}

The fifth thing that brought Canadian and American borderlanders together was the need to purchase items. The *Opheim Observer* was full of references to people from southern Saskatchewan who were in Opheim, “the metropolis of the north country,” to shop. On December 19, 1930, the *Observer* reported that “John Karpenko from north of the border was renewing acquaintances...and incidentally doing some Christmas shopping.”^{xxviii} In February 1931 “many of our Saskatchewan friends” were in Opheim on shopping expeditions. “They find that there are still many articles on which they can make savings by buying them in the United States.”^{xxix} Saskatchewan farmers along the border often went south to buy parts for farm equipment or to have machines repaired. Scobey farm implement dealer Chris Neilson was shocked in late 1938 when Dr. Penton of Hart, Saskatchewan, came in and said he wanted to buy a new tractor. “Local

Implement Dealer Almost Believes in Santa,” read the *Daniels County Free Press* headline. One wonders if the community saw the Canadian’s extravagant purchase as a harbinger of better times to come.^{xxx} They definitely knew the local economy was on the uptick when another Canadian, Rudolph Wolf of Constance, Saskatchewan, purchased a new, one-ton truck from Erickstein Motors in Scobey in August 1939. “He stated that he planned to put it to work immediately hauling his wheat crop.”^{xxxix}

Farm sales in the borderlands often drew cross-border shoppers as well.

The sale of R.B. Wigmore’s farm implements, household furniture, and stock in the Rockglen area in 1938 attracted buyers from Willowvale, Montana, and many other border communities.^{xxxii} When George Sorsdahl decided to auction off machinery and other goods at his farm northwest of Scobey in 1936, he expected Saskatchewan farmers to attend, so he advertised that customs and immigration officials would be on site, “saving Canadian farmers the time and trouble of coming to Scobey to report.”^{xxxiii}

Scobey businesses went out of their way to accommodate Canadian shoppers. Hotel owner P.R. Gorham offered them special weekend rates, and many businessmen involved Canadians in their sales promotions, naming them as contest judges and often awarding them prizes.^{xxxiv} Three “Canucks” in a row won \$50 prizes in 1935, and F. Poquette of Willow Creek, Saskatchewan, won a new car from Battleson and Company on Christmas Eve, 1938.^{xxxv} And, when American banks began discounting Canadian money ten per cent or more, the Rex Theatre, an oil company, and several stores and beer parlours continued to accept it at face value, believing “some concession should be made to encourage our Canadian neighbors to trade with us.”^{xxxvi}

Although they seldom went into detail, newspapers often mentioned a sixth type of cross-border interaction, to do with “business.” On March 6, 1931, the *Opheim Observer* noted that “George Wyman from the Missouri River passed through Opheim Sunday on his way to Moose Jaw, Regina and other Canadian points where he has many business interests needing his personal attention frequently.”^{xxxvii} Some border crossers were farmers or ranchers who had property in both countries. On September 5, 1930, the *Opheim Observer* reported that “Adolph Borgen of Great Falls stopped overnight at Walt Vick’s on his way home from Canada where he just finished threshing on his farm there.”^{xxxviii} Northern Montana business owners were frequent border crossers. On July 17, 1931, the paper noted that Elmer Johnson and Mr. Walker drove to Wood Mountain, Saskatchewan, where Johnson, who was evidently a baker, delivered one thousand five hundred buns to a customer. The customer may have been feeding participants in the town’s annual sports day celebration, which the two travellers attended while they were there.^{xxxix} In April 1936 the *Daniels County Free Press* reported that Scobey businessmen T.O. Erickstein, O.O. Erickstein, and H.O Brekke had bought the Chevrolet agency in Weyburn, Saskatchewan. The men already owned the Ford dealership, Erickstein Motors, in Scobey.^{xl} Even New Deal administrators travelled to Saskatchewan in an (unspecified) official capacity; on June 3, 1937, the *Daniels County Leader* said state National Youth Administration (NYA) director William McMurphy and local NYA supervisor Wayne Humbert “made a business trip to Regina, Sask., over the week-end.”^{xli}

Men weren’t the only ones who conducted business across the border. The *Opheim Observer* noted on May 29, 1931, that “Mrs. Abe Galloway, Mrs. Andy Johnson and mother motored over from Lonesome Butte, Sask., Tuesday to transact business and

visit friends.”^{xlii} On April 15, 1937, the *Daniels County Free Press* reported that Mrs. G. Hickson from Harptree, Saskatchewan, was a business visitor in Scobey.^{xliii} And Mrs. L. C. Shoebridge of North Portal, Saskatchewan, bought inexpensive garden seeds from American companies and distributed them to correspondents throughout Saskatchewan.^{xliv}

The seventh way Canadian and American borderlanders interacted was on the job. Whether such arrangements were legitimate or not, many Canadian borderlanders went to work for American borderlanders. Although they didn’t advertise the fact, many farmers in the Scobey area hired Canadian workers.^{xlv} Saskatchewan borderlander Cliff Anderson (Boyd Anderson’s brother) worked for an American rancher while attending high school in Opheim. Odin Asplund, whose parents also lived in Saskatchewan, worked for a large-scale farmer near Opheim. Phyllis Mollberg of Congress, Saskatchewan, worked at the Jack Schuster store in Glentana, Montana.^{xlvi} Some Canadian men worked for coal mines in northern Montana. Charles Carter, a twenty-eight-year-old from Radville, Saskatchewan, was killed in a blast at the Wiley mine near Whitetail in 1937. He and his family had been living near Whitetail for two years.^{xlvii}

American borderlanders also worked for Canadian borderlanders. Farm workers headed north whenever crop prospects looked brighter in Saskatchewan. In May 1937, a 104-year-old man stopped at a gas station in Scobey en route to Saskatchewan to help his grandchildren put in their crops. The man, along with his 78-year-old son and 49-year-old grandson, were on their way from North Dakota.^{xlviii} More than a year later, in August 1938, Dick McConnen and Emil Pomarleau of the Coal Creek, Montana, area, were “making hay in Canada.”^{xlix} Members of the Emond family and many of their neighbours

from the Malta area went north to help with the harvest. One fall, while her ill husband stayed with their other children, Eva Gauthier-Emond, her daughter Clara, and a male neighbour drove a “strange old car” to an area in southern Saskatchewan where the neighbour had relatives. For six weeks Eva and Clara cooked for threshing crews while the neighbour helped with the threshing and lined up jobs.¹ Later, Clara lived with her grandparents while working at a hospital in Gravelbourg, Saskatchewan.ⁱⁱ

Members of various Christian denominations did God’s work on both sides of the border. Southern Saskatchewan’s John Carlos Bailey, who had been a travelling evangelical preacher in Montana and North Dakota in the 1920s and whose wife was from Elmdale, Montana, held gospel meetings in various parts of northern Montana and Idaho in the 1930s. Scobey’s Rev. Fred Anderson, a Baptist, preached in southern Saskatchewan. Rev. Stewart B. East, with the United Church in Coronach, Saskatchewan, was a guest minister in Scobey. Montana students attended a summer Bible school in Radville, Saskatchewan, in 1932. And Canadian Jacob J. Toews taught at the Mennonite Bible school at Lustre, in northeastern Montana, in 1938 and 1939.ⁱⁱⁱ

The eighth form of grass-roots, cross-border interaction was tied to agriculture. M. L. Wilson, head of the Montana State College’s department of agricultural economics, announced that about twenty-five representatives of spring wheat regions in Montana, North Dakota, Minnesota, and the three prairie provinces held a regional conference, touring experimental farms in northeastern Montana and southern Saskatchewan, in September 1930.ⁱⁱⁱⁱ In 1934 Turner, Montana, farmer Bill Reed travelled to Shaunavon and Climax to talk about his soil conservation practices and to leave a copy of his farm layout with Board of Trade officials. Carloads of farmers from the area went down to

Turner to see Reed's operation for themselves.^{liv} In July 1939 county extension agents from northern Montana and specialists from the Montana State College visited experimental farms at Swift Current, Saskatchewan, and Manyberries, Alberta, to study western Canadian farming methods. "Canadian farmers, through government sponsorship and private initiative, are generally recognized as pioneers in soil conservation and advanced tillage methods compared to farmers of northern Montana," said the *Daniels County Leader*.^{lv} And in the same month A.C. Bole, a field expert for the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, visited friends and examined the crop situation in the Scobey area. He reported that south-eastern Saskatchewan was experiencing "total crop failure."^{lvi}

The ninth activity that brought Canadian and American borderlanders together was participation in a wide range of community events. Northeastern Montana residents like Edgar Richardson and his family joined south-central Saskatchewan residents in rabbit drives, which involved rounding up and killing large numbers of wild hares (considered pests because they ate feed, crops, and gardens).^{lvii} Scobey organizations invited southern Saskatchewan residents to participate in talent contests, soapbox derbies, and dog sled races.^{lviii} The Coutts-Sweet Grass Catholic ladies aid held cross-border bazaars, picnics, and teas to raise money for church upkeep and the church summer school that alternated between Sweet Grass and Coutts.^{lix} And borderlanders often travelled across the border to help each other mark milestones such as town anniversaries or the opening of new facilities. Many Americans were among the three thousand people who gathered for the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of Maple Creek, Saskatchewan.^{lx} Several Climax, Saskatchewan, residents drove to Harlem, Montana, to witness the opening of a new hospital – "a very fine building, fully equipped with the

most up-to-date devices.”^{lxix} And the Coronach, Saskatchewan, curling club invited Scobeyites to the grand opening of their curling rink: “Hoot Mon, It’s a Bonnie Game and You’re Invited,” read the *Daniels County Leader* headline.^{lxxii}

Canadian and American borderlanders were especially excited about the official opening of a steel and concrete bridge over the “treacherous old Missouri” at Wolf Point, Montana, in July 1930, because it promised to make north-south travel safer and more convenient; it was “a connecting link on the great international highway from Canadian cities, through Scobey to the Yellowstone Park and Denver-Mexico highway.”^{lxxiii} The event, which attracted ten thousand spectators, sparked an outpouring of goodwill on both sides of the border. The evening before, on their way to Wolf Point from Regina, a band of bagpipers got out of their cars on the outskirts of Scobey and marched through the town playing “Bonnie Dundee” and “Cock o’ the North.” With the band was a delegation of thirty notables, including Saskatchewan’s chief highway engineer (who later spoke at the bridge opening) and Regina Board of Trade secretary C.H. Puckering. Scobeyites were so delighted with the spectacle that community leaders treated the visitors to dinner at the Jones Coffee Shop. Two and a half weeks later a glowing letter landed on the desk of *Daniels County Leader* editor Burley Bowler. “If all the world could experience the pleasure and happiness that a certain delegation from Regina to Wolf Point experienced through the hospitality of the Scobey Commercial Club on July 8, international disputes and misunderstandings would never happen,” wrote Puckering. “We could not ask for finer neighbours ... and everyone is anxious to know these neighbours better and to meet with them to develop life a little more deeply and a little fuller.” Puckering sent Bowler, Scobeyites, and Wolf Point residents complimentary tickets to the Regina Fair. Those

who went said they enjoyed “a welcome which they will always remember as one of the most whole-hearted and friendly ever extended by the citizens of any city.”^{lxiv}

Saskatchewan and Montana borderlanders clearly went out of their way to meet and bond with each other.

The tenth form of interaction between Canadian and American borderlanders involved entertainment. Picnics, sports events, national holidays, and other events were all good reasons to mingle on the Plains.^{lxv} In July 1937 the *Daniels County Free Press* reported that cross-border traffic had tripled in the past two years, with many Canadians coming down to Scobey to take in the movies.^{lxvi} In the summer, Saskatchewan and Montana borderlanders flocked to a swimming hole on the border north of Scobey to swim, picnic, and play baseball.^{lxvii} Many Saskatchewan borderlanders went down to view the dam being constructed on the Missouri. “McCord folks who spent the weekend at the Fort Peck Dam were Mrs. Bromley and son, Arthur, J. Ruhl, Mr. and Mrs. H. F. Donaldson, Miss B. Houston and A. Dunbar,” wrote the *Meyronne Independent* in October 1936.^{lxviii} Others enjoyed the New Deal hot springs facilities at Saco, Montana.^{lxix} One September, Clinton Richardson of Scobey visited Miss Olga Fahlman and attended a picnic at Kildeer, Saskatchewan.^{lxx} Borderlanders also danced together in schoolhouses along the border. Mr. and Mrs. F.H. Smith, Mr. and Mrs. O.W. Paus, Mr. and Mrs. P.R. McLaughlin, and Mr. and Mrs. A.G. Strom of Scobey attended a dance in Willowbunch, Saskatchewan, in November 1932.^{lxxi} Many southeastern Saskatchewan borderlanders went dancing in northern Montana or North Dakota. Carl and Gladys Offet “would head for Westby, Montana, every Saturday night to listen to the live talent of ‘Little Oscar’ at the town hall.”^{lxxii} And Saskatchewan borderlander Orvina (Mellom)

Black writes that so many Canadians went dancing and drinking across the line in Northgate, North Dakota, that it was impossible to find a parking spot in front of “our” dance hall on Saturday nights.”^{lxxiii}

Attending or participating in sports events was another popular form of entertainment. Amateur baseball teams from many communities in southern Saskatchewan and northeastern Montana regularly played each other on both sides of the border. For instance, teams from Scobey and Bengough, Constance, and Willowbunch, Saskatchewan, promised to demonstrate “a good brand of Canadian and American baseball” at a tournament in Scobey in August 1932.^{lxxiv} A Scobey newspaper article announced in June 1938 that “gals from across the line will ‘strut’ their stuff on local diamond.” Two Canadian women’s softball teams were scheduled to play on the Fourth of July. “Red heads, brunets, platinum blondes and golden haired mamas will show local soft ball fans how the game is played in Canada – where they really are serious about ball games.”^{lxxv} Canadian and American borderlanders also mingled at hockey games. “Fulfilling a promise to themselves to see the speediest of all athletic games, Sheriff A.E. Nelson, Mel Eide, Howard Schaefer, “Skipper” Parks, and A.W. Schammel made a trip to Regina [to see] the Regina Aces and Regina Vics clash in a bang-up hockey game,” said the *Daniels County Leader* in December 1937.^{lxxvi} Many northern Montana borderlanders enjoyed going north to camp, hunt, or fish. Fife Lake and the Fishing Lakes near Fort Qu’Appelle were popular destinations. And golfing drew some Saskatchewan borderlanders to northern Montana; in March 1931 the *Climax* newspaper editor and ten other men went down to Malta to play eighteen holes.^{lxxvii}

Hundreds of borderlanders interacted at fairs, rodeos, and other celebrations in the 1930s. “Car after car has been going through Opheim this week bound for Canadian rodeos and exhibitions,” said the *Opheim Observer* in June 1930.^{lxxviii} Every summer local news columns were packed with the names of northeastern Montana residents who were attending the annual rodeo at Wood Mountain, Saskatchewan, or the exhibition in Regina. “Several local residents have visited the Regina fair and World’s grain show at Regina,” reported the *Daniels County Leader* in August 1933. “They report the largest crowds yet seen at Regina and have high praise for the great grain show.”^{lxxix}

For their part, many Canadian borderlanders headed to Minot, North Dakota, for their annual state fair and exhibition. In July 1937 the fair invited western Canadians to help Americans celebrate “more than 120 years of peace and goodwill between the two countries.” A historical pageant would extol the happy relationship between the two countries and would feature a re-enactment of the Coronation of King George VI. Premiers and mayors from the prairie provinces were slated to attend, and many cow hands and ranchers from both sides of the border would reconnect at the “old time western sports meet” run by Guy Weadick -- “who manages the Calgary Stampede and other rodeos in the northwest.”^{lxxx}

Borderlanders regularly celebrated national holidays together, with Montana borderlanders going north to Fife Lake -- “always a favorite with the locals” -- or other Saskatchewan communities for July 1 (Dominion Day) and Saskatchewan borderlanders going south for July Fourth.^{lxxxi} The “double holiday” celebrants enjoyed picnics, swimming, ball games, band competitions, and other entertainment on both sides of the line. “While no real old-time Fourth of July celebrations are scheduled in this vicinity this

year, people of this territory will not lack for entertainment on that glorious holiday,” the *Opheim Observer* wrote in 1930. Baseball teams from Wood Mountain and Macworth, Saskatchewan were playing Opheim teams in Opheim, and the Rockglen, Saskatchewan, team was playing in Glentana, Montana.^{lxxxii} In Scobey in July 1935 “a large crowd of merry-makers from north of the boundary joined with their friends...in swelling the crowd to a total estimated at more than 4,000.”^{lxxxiii} July Fourth festivities often included tug o’ wars between easterners and westerners or Canadians and Americans – good-natured events based on barely discernable differences between friends. In 1938 Scobeyites and a huge crowd from southern Saskatchewan witnessed a “Canada vs. U.S.” tug o’ war where the prize, fittingly enough, was a case of beer for each side.^{lxxxiv}

Canadian and American borderlanders made a special point of sharing extraordinary national occasions with each other. In the spring of 1933 Scobeyites were feeling hopeful because times seemed to be improving. Crop conditions looked favourable and President Franklin Delano Roosevelt was promising a “new deal” for Depression-hit Americans. The community decided to put on its first big July Fourth celebration in years – and it wanted Canadian borderlanders to be there. “Northeastern Montana and southern Saskatchewan are going to celebrate July 3rd and 4th at Scobey,” announced the *Daniels County Leader*. Musicians, ball players, golfers, trap shooters, and horse racers from Regina, Moose Jaw, Bengough, Ceylon and other Saskatchewan towns were all invited to join the fun.^{lxxxv} Thus, many Canadians helped celebrate a major event in American political history.

Canadian borderlanders, in turn, included Americans in significant events in their national lives, such as the coronation of King George VI in London in 1937 and King George and Queen Elizabeth's visit to Canada in 1939. In the spring of 1937, the *Regina Leader Post* noted that communities throughout western Canada were planning coronation activities and decking themselves out with flags and bunting, often with the help of American-born residents who "have the traditional American liking for a 'good show' and the capacity for arranging such."^{lxxxvi} Groups of British-born people from Montana announced plans to attend coronation celebrations in Regina and other prairie cities. The Wolf Point, Montana, boys' band and the mayor of Wolf Point visited Regina for the occasion; Regina Board of Trade representatives met them on the highway and escorted them into the city, where a special dinner was held in their honour.^{lxxxvii}

Two years later, thousands of Americans poured into southern Alberta and southern Saskatchewan for a glimpse of the king and queen, who were making train stops across the country. "From a thousand districts of the southern plains and from storied spots all across the northwestern states will come throngs, 100,000 people, to join Regina's excited 60,000," exclaimed the *Regina Leader Post* on May 24, 1939. "A vanguard of Americans has already reached the city."^{lxxxviii} More than one thousand visitors came to Regina from Montana and North Dakota, including a band from Plentywood, Montana, a band from Williston, North Dakota, and ten boxers and their coaches from Great Falls, Montana.^{lxxxix} The *Daniels Country Free Press* said Scobey, Wolf Point, Plentywood, "and in fact nearly every town in this section" sent large delegations to Regina on May 25. Two hundred people in sixty-five cars made the trip from Plentywood alone.^{xc} Many more American borderlanders, including specially

invited ex-service men and their families, took in street dances, ball tournaments, whippet races, band concerts, and other entertainment in Moose Jaw before the royal train arrived there that evening.^{xci} The next morning, the royal couple greeted twelve thousand cheering men, women, and children from the northern United States and the surrounding area at the train station at Medicine Hat, the queen thanking the school band from Big Sandy, Montana, and the other school children who came from across the border.^{xcii} Finally, a “really surprising” number of people from Montana were among the throngs along Eighth Avenue for the couple’s visit to Calgary. The mayor of Great Falls was in town, at the invitation of Calgary mayor Andy Davison. “We Montana folk are mighty glad to be here to greet King George and Queen Elizabeth,” a woman from Sunburst told a reporter. “We in the states figure they are just about ‘tops’ in a king and queen. They’re real folks.”^{xciii} No doubt many Americans took part in these events because they were born in England or raised in Canada and they were sentimental about their British heritage. Some, like the woman from Sunburst, simply enjoyed the novelty of seeing a real king and queen on their doorstep.

After touring Canada the royal couple visited the United States. On June 22, 1939, a *Daniels County Leader* editorial gushed that the hearty welcome they received was “proof of the most friendly relations between the two great English speaking peoples.” The editorial added that the couple visited the United States as “Canada’s king and queen,” and “the bond which exists between Canada and the United States is, without doubt, the strongest which could unite two nations.”^{xciv}

Meetings between cross-border organizations was the penultimate form of interaction in the borderlands. Members of fraternal and other groups from both sides of

the line often met for the sheer pleasure of each other's company. The oft-stated belief that they were building international ties made their meetings all the more meaningful. Men, women, and children's groups took part in a range of get-togethers. For instance, in July 1929 the Priscilla Sewing Club of Scobey went to the border community of East Poplar, Saskatchewan, "where they were entertained at the home of Mrs. Becklund."^{xcv} The following summer Montana home demonstration clubs organized picnics for families and friends in the northeastern part of the state and south-central Saskatchewan.^{xcvi} And in April 1937 nineteen Boy Scouts from Shaunavon, Saskatchewan, rode six and a half hours in the back of a truck to attend a large "Scout Circus" in Havre, Montana. Scouts from Medicine Hat, Alberta, also made the trip. Upon their return the Shaunavon Scouts, who were billeted with Havre families and exchanged badges and souvenirs with American Scouts, lauded their hosts' hospitality and friendliness. "Lasting friendship has been cemented," scoutmaster H.B. George told the *Shaunavon Standard*.^{xcvii} The Shaunavon Scouts couldn't wait for an opportunity to return their new friends' kindness. Indeed, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts in the borderlands regularly crossed the border on camping trips and visits.

Boy Scouts weren't the only ones who took long, dusty cross-border rides in the name of international goodwill. Town bands were always crossing the border to take part in celebrations or band competitions. In May 1939 the citizens of Assiniboia donated nine cars to take the local boys' band to a festival in Scobey, where they performed with a band from Bengough, Saskatchewan, and four American bands. Afterward, everyone was invited to a free movie at the Rex Theatre. "The citizens of Scobey and district treated the Canadian bands...with respect and courtesy," reported the *Assiniboia Times*. "This good

will trip revealed the close relationship and friendship between Canada and U.S.A.”^{xcviii} Less than two months later American Legion members and the high school band from Scobey went to Bengough to “participate in Dominion Day activities in the Canadian city.”^{xcix}

Service organizations were proud of the number of members they regularly attracted from across the border. In July 1929 about forty Masons from Limerick, Bateman, and Woodrow, Saskatchewan, visited Masons in Opheim, and four months later, about fifty-five Masons from Opheim and Glasgow travelled to Limerick to meet with Canadian Masons. According to the *Opheim Observer*, it was “a wonderful display of the brotherly spirit which exists between the members of the Masonic lodges on both sides of the international boundary line, which was brought to a climax when the 250 Masons present stood at attention while the ‘Star Spangled Banner’ was played.”^c In August 1931 twelve members of the Turner and Harlem, Montana, Lions Clubs braved heavy rain and muddy roads to attend a meeting of the Climax Board of Trade; they concluded the meeting by singing “God Save the King” and “America.”^{ci} And in 1933 and 1934, Rotarians from Regina and Minot, North Dakota, exchanged visits. There were thirty-six delegates in the party from Minot in July 1934, including an ex-governor and a former Minot mayor, W. Smart. In a luncheon speech, Smart described the British Commonwealth as “a lighthouse in a stormy world” and said that he wanted, as an American, to be part of that Commonwealth. “Politically, we are not a part of your country, but in the great kingdom of spirit – and that is the only thing that matters – we are one with you.”^{cii} As American and Canadian citizens who shared the same language,

democratic ideals, and membership in the “Anglo Saxon race,” members of fraternal organizations on both sides of the border clearly identified with each other.^{ciii}

The last reason Canadian and American borderlanders crossed the border was to support each other’s causes. Politicians and community leaders on both sides of the line often joined forces to pressure state, provincial, and federal politicians to make changes that benefitted borderlanders. A favourite cause was cross-border roads. All along the Plains border, in all seasons, borderlanders travelled back and forth to promote the construction of roads stretching north and south of the line. “Commercial Club Men Take Hazardous Trip,” read a headline in the January 18, 1929, issue of the *Opheim Observer*. The paper reported that community members had faced snowy road conditions on a return trip from Regina, where they were “on a public spirited mission in the interests of a better hook-up of roads into Canada in connection with the proposed federal aid highway through Opheim.” The Saskatchewan highways minister promised to send a letter to the Montana highway commission “setting forth what would be done on the Canadian side.”^{civ} Farther west, in Climax, Saskatchewan on May 8, 1930, the minister conferred with more than one hundred cross-border road enthusiasts, including forty-seven from north-central Montana, about the prospect of linking Saskatchewan’s Highway 37 with a new highway from the border to Turner, Montana.^{cv}

The prospect of completing a highway from Canada to Mexico, starting in Regina and threading its way through northeastern Montana, appealed to many borderlanders. A delegation that included a Montana senator, two state representatives, and the president of the Plentywood Commercial Club broached the subject at a banquet for Saskatchewan highways minister C. A. Stewart in Ceylon, Saskatchewan, in December 1930.^{cvi} A year

later, the Opheim Commercial Club road committee and the editor of the *Opheim Observer* went to Kildeer, Saskatchewan, to support about thirty-six men and women in their bid for a highway from Rockglen to the West Poplar port of entry. “We feel assured that Canadian road officialdom will grant our neighbors’ request,” wrote the editor, “thereby giving us a connection with their federal highway No. 2 at Rockglen.”^{cvi} The Canadian road was finally approved, and in April 1931 a delegation including Senator J.W. Schnitzler of Froid, Montana, and community leaders from Plentywood and Culbertson, Montana, went to Regina to pave the way for more than one hundred carloads of grateful Montanans who planned “to thank the officials of that province for having built the highway to the boundary north of Raymond and which is the Canadian link of the Canadian-Mexican highway which will pass through Plentywood.”^{cviii}

Montanans continued to follow road developments on the Canadian side with interest. In August 1931 prominent Opheim citizen Dr. M.B. Sherrard, returning from a family holiday at Qu’ Appelle Lake, Saskatchewan, stopped in Regina to speak to government officials about the progress of the highway from Rockglen to the West Poplar border post. He discovered that tenders had been called and the work would be done that fall. Unemployed men on relief would complete much of the work.^{cix}

The push for better cross-border roads went on throughout the decade, as roads continually deteriorated and required upgrading. In July 1934 borderlanders were again keen on improving the road that crossed the border at Climax, Saskatchewan. Climax customs officer Duncan McIntosh, newspaper editor A.H. Stevens, and a delegation from the Turner Lions Club went down to Havre, Montana, to convince the Havre Rotary Club to support a bid to improve the road.^{cx} And in 1936 delegations from Whitetail, Flaxville,

Scobey, Plentywood, and Wolf Point, Montana, and Bengough, Ogema, and Ceylon, Saskatchewan, went to Regina to ask the premier and the highway commissioner to gravel roads leading to the border post north of Whitetail. Workers on the Montana side had already gravelled Highway 13, which “cares for more travel from central and southern Saskatchewan to Montana than any other road in the state.”^{cxix}

Another cause that attracted the attention of community leaders on both sides of the border was the desire for new, more convenient ports of entry. Thanks to lobbying from individual Canadian and American borderlanders, the Scobey Lions Club, Senator James E. Murray and other politicians, American borderlanders got a new, part-time customs post on the border at Carbert, Montana, and Canadian borderlanders got a similar post south of Rockglen, Saskatchewan, in 1938. “A good, graded road extends almost to the border and should bring many Canadians to Scobey to celebrate the Fourth,” said the *Daniels County Leader*. “The road also give tourists a shorter route to cities in western and southern Saskatchewan. With the new customs port established, an all-weather road is not impossible in the near future.”^{cxii}

Distance, difficult weather, and tough economic times didn’t stop borderlanders from crossing the border for whatever reason. Some travelled considerable distances. In July 1930 Mr. and Mrs. C.W. Anderson of Opheim visited Mr. Anderson’s brother in the east-central Alberta community of Empress and a niece in Saskatoon. “They also visited at Kelvington and Yorkton in Saskatchewan and took in the Regina Exposition, traveling about 2,000 miles on the trip.”^{cxiii} Border-crossers travelled in all seasons – by car or truck if roads were clear and by sleigh if they were snowed in. In December 1937, one of the worst years of the Depression in the borderlands, the *Daniels County Leader* reported

that “Tony Erickstein of Weyburn, Sask., with his brother T. E. of Scobey spent the Christmas holidays with their parents at Tagus, North Dakota.”^{cxiv} Business owners, community leaders, and professionals and their families seemed to cross the border more frequently than others. This, and the fact that travellers required reliable vehicles, suggests that many border crossers were people of relative status and means. Mind you, we are discussing people whose names appeared in the newspaper and who likely crossed the border legally. Countless others crossed surreptitiously on foot, on horseback, with wagons and teams, or in cars and other vehicles. Many saved money by travelling as passengers in cars or trucks.

Needless-to-say, borderlanders’ many cross-border interactions heightened their awareness of conditions on both sides of the line. Many Canadians and Americans may have thought the Dust Bowl centred on the southern Plains, that it stopped well short of the forty-ninth parallel, but borderlanders knew that economic depression and drought afflicted both the northern Plains states and the prairie provinces. Travellers crossing the border in both directions told tales of economic and environmental ruin.

Local newspapers suggest that Canadian borderlanders were well aware of conditions in northern Montana, North and South Dakota, and other parts of the northern United States. Returning from a trip through eastern Montana, the Dakotas, and Minnesota in July 1934, the secretary-manager of the Taber, Alberta, irrigation project told the *Lethbridge Herald* “the farm relief problem in the greater part of those states is taking on huge proportions. Crops are practically a failure throughout that whole area, and livestock is being bought up by the government as a relief measure.”^{cxv} A *Regina Leader Post* writer who returned from a similar trip the same month reported that “areas

in North Dakota have had virtually no rain all this season and have no crop at all,” and that virtually the whole northern hemisphere was experiencing drought.^{cxvi} Visiting the Regina Fair in July 1937, a couple from the northeastern Montana community of Redstone told the *Regina Leader Post* conditions in their state were much the same as in Saskatchewan and cattle and sheep were being shipped out because there was no feed for them.^{cxvii} A former Saskatchewan resident who was visiting from California told the paper southern Saskatchewan and the states immediately south of the border were “dry as a bone and there were little signs of vegetation.”^{cxviii} After visiting the Lions Club in Turner, Montana, in August 1938 the *Climax* newspaper editor told readers that wheat yields in the district were similar to those around Climax and the price was much lower.^{cxix}

American borderlanders were equally aware of conditions across the line. As early as July 1929 the *Daniels County Leader* noted that western Canada was “suffering from the same drought as we are experiencing in northeastern Montana.”^{cxx} On June 5, 1931, upon returning from a trip to Stockholm, Dubuc, and Waldron, Saskatchewan, Mrs. Elmer Johnson and her children reported that crops from Regina to the border were “practically a complete loss.”^{cxxi} Later that same month, Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts returning from holidays in Saskatchewan brought dismal reports of farming conditions in the Regina area. “That once great wheat country is this year a barren desert and farmers are in a severe predicament,” said the *Daniels County Leader*. “No water for stock and no crops is causing untold hardships.”^{cxxii} Cross-border travellers from Scobey noted that rural southern Saskatchewan residents were not the only ones who were hurting. After spending several days in Regina, Mr. and Mrs. E.T. Peterson and E.W. Battleson reported

in December 1935 that businesses there were suffering more than Scobey businesses and that twelve thousand Reginans were on relief.^{cxxiii}

Canadian and American borderlanders were keenly interested in political issues and personalities across the line. They heard about them over the radio, read about them in local newspapers, and discussed them in bars, meetings, and each other's homes. In his memoir Philip S. Long, who was born in Maple Creek, Saskatchewan, and spent the Depression in northeastern Montana, recalls that when he went to town the talk was of "depression, politics and faulty government. Many times I visited with farm and ranch friends from across the border. It would appear that the Canadians were even hit harder than we were. About all you could hear was news of a so-and-so named R.B. Bennett who was the Prime Minister of Canada at the time." Long's Saskatchewan friends told him about turning their cars, which they could no longer afford to drive, into horse-drawn vehicles and derisively calling them "Bennett Wagons."^{cxxiv}

American borderlanders also learned about "Bible Bill" Aberhart, the radio evangelist who led the unorthodox Social Credit Party to victory in Alberta in 1935. Northern Montana newspapers like the *Great Falls Tribune* and the *Daniels County Leader* carried editorials about Aberhart's government, noting that Albertans and "their neighbors to the south" faced similar economic challenges. On a visit to Scobey, a senior Lions official from Calgary raved about Aberhart's effectiveness as a leader. "Premier Aberhart of Alberta is giving the province an able, honest, and progressive administration," said Dr. Spankey. "He is one of the best premiers the province has had." The *Daniels County Leader* disagreed, calling the premier a "would-be dictator" for bringing in measures to limit freedom of the press.^{cxxv}

For their part, Canadian borderlanders were familiar with many of the political and economic issues that captured American borderlanders' attention. They knew about the Hill County, Montana, people who broadcast a speech over Calgary radio station CJCJ favouring referenda that would increase tax support for state institutions. "So far as is known this is the first time that a speaker has gone into a foreign country to reach his own people on an issue of this nature," said the *Opheim Observer*.^{cxxvi} Canadian borderlanders knew what Long and other American borderlanders thought about President Herbert Hoover and his successor. They knew about New Deal programs to help farmers and they knew about massive work projects like the Fort Peck dam. On at least one occasion Saskatchewan borderlanders attending a Lions meeting in Scobey heard a report on the dam.^{cxxvii} Scores of Saskatchewan borderlanders drove down to see the dam for themselves. Then there were the Regina business leaders who flew over the dam site at the invitation of the Glasgow Board of Trade.^{cxxviii} And the visits Canadian agriculture minister Jimmy Gardiner and other politicians paid the dam and a major irrigation project in Malta, Montana. *Lethbridge Herald* readers followed the careers of a number of Montana senators and other government luminaries in the 1930s, including M.L. Wilson, the Montana professor who was appointed assistant secretary of agriculture in Washington in 1934. "He has frequently been in Lethbridge and is looked upon here as a strong and competent authority on western problems," said the newspaper, strongly suggesting that Canadian borderlanders viewed Wilson as one of their own.^{cxxix}

Naturally, Plains borderlanders looked across the fence at the measures their neighbours were using to address the Depression. Canadians envied Americans their president and his New Deal policies. They noticed that their American neighbours

seemed to be better off than they were, that they had Works Progress Administration jobs, farmed with tractors when Saskatchewan farmers were still using horses, and seemed to have newer cars and more conveniences.^{cxxx} Visiting Scobey from Saskatchewan in November 1936, Jacob Tunjum told the *Daniels County Free Press* “times [are] much worse in Canada than they are here and [he] thinks we are fortunate in living under a government which is ready and able to take care of those in need during such emergencies as we are passing through.”^{cxxxii}

Although borderlanders on both sides obviously suffered, Tunjum appears to have been right about the relative lack of help Saskatchewan residents received. The province’s 1929 to 1938 relief expenditures (financed mainly by the federal government) exceeded \$153 million. This was three times the Canadian average, but much lower than the figures for neighbouring Montana and North Dakota. The state of Montana received more than \$530 million and North Dakota received more than \$482 million in grants and loans between 1933 and 1939. Montana received more federal money per capita than any state except Nevada. Much of the state’s Public Works Administration funding went to construction of the \$100-million Fort Peck Dam.^{cxxxii}

Many Saskatchewan borderlanders thought Canadians should emulate American efforts to combat the Depression. Alice Butala, a farm woman who lived near Divide in southwestern Saskatchewan, wrote the press to say she envied New Deal work relief programs that paid men ten dollars a day and agricultural policies that paid farmers not to plant crops.^{cxxxiii} Orland MacInnes, who lived on the border near Val Marie, Saskatchewan, says people in his area thought the Canadian government should introduce large work projects like the Fort Peck Dam. “Well, they thought it’d be

wonderful if we had something like that in Canada, ‘cause them guys were workin’ and had *money*. Things were kinda boomin’ there. We were just sittin’, doin’ nothing.”^{cxxxiv}

Canadian borderlanders in the Shaunavon area were so impressed with the success Montana farmer Bill Reed had with strip farming (alternating rows of crops and summerfallow to keep the soil from drifting) that many of them adopted the method. The Shaunavon Board of Trade started the process in the spring of 1934 by inviting Reed to speak on the topic. More than one hundred farmers from the Shaunavon area then travelled to Reed’s 2,200-acre farm southeast of Turner, Montana. “There they saw a sight that wrung frank admiration and enthusiasm from the most skeptical. There they saw with their own eyes land of an extremely light, sandy nature, which DOES NOT BLOW,” said the *Shanavon Standard*. The newspaper said strip farming “offers a solution to the farmers of southern Saskatchewan to eliminate absolutely the soil drift menace.”^{cxxxv} The trip sparked the formation of the Shaunavon Soil Drifting Association – the first organization of its kind in the world – and the interest of the Saskatchewan Department of Agriculture. By 1938 the association had 350 members and the strip farming method was in use in twenty-five townships in the area and in many other parts of western Canada.^{cxxxvi}

More surprising, perhaps, is the fact that many Montana borderlanders looked to Canada for solutions. Borderland newspaper editorials indicate that in some regards Americans envied Canadians – at least until the New Deal went into effect in 1933. In March 1931 the *Opheim Observer* complained that it was much easier to get relief in Saskatchewan than in Montana. “When one learns of the small amount of red tape

connected with applications for relief in Saskatchewan, he gets the impression that our system is the weeds to say the least.”^{cxxxvii} Five months later the newspaper reprinted an editorial from North Dakota’s *Williston Herald*: “Over across the line in Canada the government is paying farmers \$2 an acre for summer fallowing land. Canada has a drouth area as large as our own, a credit problem fully as pronounced, and is approaching its solution with a most admirable unanimity of all interests concerned.” The editorial praised the Canadian government for distracting farmers from their present situation by paying them to prepare the soil for better crops next year. It said Canada, which had “pretty well gone the limit” in supporting its farmers, had much to teach the United States. “Canada outdoes us in a great many things. Canada has both politics and statesmen. Here we have politics and what have you.” America’s neighbour was demonstrating sound leadership and a true desire to help the people. “The Canadian method will bear close observation on this side of the line.”^{cxxxviii} A few years later, the *Daniels County Leader* noted that the Saskatchewan government was cancelling all delinquent taxes prior to 1935. “The effect in Saskatchewan will be watched by the other provinces and by the various northwestern states with more than ordinary interest.”^{cxxxix}

In 1933 *Daniels County Leader* editor Burley Bowler printed an editorial that said, “There Is A Way Out.” He mentioned that school districts in southern Saskatchewan had asked him to print small cards to be issued to schoolteachers instead of money. “In Canada some school districts have no money so are using scrip. They cannot pay, but they are still functioning.”^{cxl} Bowler took his Saskatchewan customers’ idea and ran with it, printing several articles discussing the use of scrip in Alberta and other jurisdictions and advocating its use in Scobey. “It is well worth considering,” he wrote. “The *Leader*

suggests a joint meeting of the County Board, the City Council, the Commercial Club and farmers' organizations to consider it after investigating what other cities and communities are doing in this way."^{cxli}

The Canadian solution that most appealed to northeastern Montana borderlanders concerned road relief. Dr. M. B. Sherrard, H. O. Morgan, and at least twenty-five other Opheim Masons and their families who attended a large picnic in Wood Mountain, Saskatchewan, in early July 1931 took away more than free cigars, Cracker Jacks, and peanuts. Before a sudden dust storm "blew across the prairies in a veritable cloud," they heard Saskatchewan highways minister C. A. Stewart explain that the province was creating a huge work relief program that would put destitute farmers to work constructing roads with horses and fresnos (scrapers), rather than heavy road-building equipment.^{cxlii} As a borderlander, the editor of the *Opheim Observer* thought this was an excellent idea. "We who live near the Canadian boundary line perhaps are more prone to watch the actions of both the Canadian and U.S. governments in matter of policies which affect the people of both countries than do those living greater distances from the border," he wrote. "The Canadian idea is bound to meet with the hearty approval of those who know conditions in the drought stricken regions of the United States."^{cxliii}

The editor noted that there was no overall effort to build roads in these regions, and if any roads were constructed, the work was given to contractors who used their own workers. Farmers in northeastern Montana should be allowed to work on local roads. They could build the badly needed highway from Glasgow to the Canadian border and avoid the stigma of accepting "charity" from the only source of help then available, the Red Cross. "Uncle Sam could well emulate the example of the Canadians in their efforts

to rehabilitate the people in the stricken regions of that country by giving them an opportunity to build highways.”^{cxliv}

Over the next few months “the Canadian idea” took on a life of its own. The week after the Wood Mountain picnic, Great Northern railway president Ralph Budd learned about the idea on a tour of Valley County. He immediately wrote State Highway Commission chairman O. S. Warden to offer his support. Meanwhile, the Opheim Commercial Club decided to send Dr. Sherrard to Helena, the state capital, to meet with Governor Erickson and the State Highway Commission. There Sherrard was joined by the mayor of Glasgow and other representatives from northeastern Montana. The Highway Commission told the men it couldn’t do anything unless the federal government created a special emergency fund to cover the cost. So, the group decided to send a delegation composed of Budd, Warden, Senator T.J. Walsh, and Republican State Central Committee chairman Senator J.W. Schnitzler, to Washington to meet with President Hoover. Sherrard was optimistic that some form of relief would result.^{cxlv}

By August 14, however, hope of a road relief plan was fading. The *Opheim Observer* said the approach of winter made such a plan unfeasible. “It would seem that the government is bound that the people shall accept alms or starve. A popular request from the entire northwest that will need aid has been forwarded to the national capital, and many prominent people have interested themselves in the project of giving the penniless people a chance to earn their winter’s food and clothing. It has created a lot of talk, but nothing else.”^{cxlvi}

Still, on August 23 the *Observer* noted that Senator Schnitzler had been summoned to Washington to confer with Hoover, agriculture secretary Arthur Hyde, and

federal officials on more effective relief plans for the drought areas of Montana and North Dakota. In September, the paper said federal officials were aware of the road relief plan. On a visit to Glasgow, Hyde listened sympathetically to residents' suggestions and promised to support the Montana Highway Commission in the matter. Hyde wired the commission about the plan and directed someone with the San Francisco district of the federal Bureau of Public Roads to attend the commission's next meeting. Also that month, Hoover heard Montana's two democratic senators, Thomas J. Walsh and Burton K. Wheeler, ask for a government construction program in strategic regions that would employ local farmers rather than out-of-state labourers. The Bureau of Public Roads told the senators it would consider a program of highway construction. Walsh reported that the executive was sympathetic to their plea. "There isn't much the president can do, but anything that can be done now will be greatly welcomed and will afford work for some of the people."^{cxlvii}

In October, Congressman Scott Leavitt and Valley County road commissioners drove from Opheim into Saskatchewan "to see what the Canadians are doing on this project."^{cxlviii} He found that construction had begun on the road leading from the border and farmers living within ten miles of the road were doing eighty-five per cent of the work. Opheim residents remained optimistic. On visits to the Charles Wilson home in Limerick, Saskatchewan, road relief enthusiast H.O. Morgan "came back as usual with some new road ideas, which he has tucked away for future use."^{cxlix} But the *Opheim Observer* noted that, to approve such a plan in the United States, the president needed an amendment authorizing him to declare an emergency and to allocate federal funds. The editor was discouraged. "What a fine thing it would have been this fall if our government

could have been pliable enough to grasp the situation immediately and provided work for our people on a highway to Glasgow.” Bitterly he attacked “kind, benevolent Uncle Sam, with his riches unlimited, his millionaires and his billionaires,” for disregarding the people who made such wealth possible.^{cl}

It’s not clear whether farmers in the Opheim area ever received road relief under Hoover, but on November 6 the *Observer* reported that forty drought-stricken farmers would get work hauling gravel to surface seven miles of federal highway between the northeastern Montana communities of Froid and Culbertson.^{cli} At least someone had heard the pleas of Senator Schnitzler, who was from Froid. One wonders if “the Canadian idea” helped soften Hoover’s opposition to government relief. If nothing else, the Roosevelt administration incorporated the notion of government-supported work relief into its New Deal programs. Between 1933 and 1939 the Public Works Administration, a work relief agency, spent almost \$47 million on Montana projects such as public buildings, water mains, and highways.^{clii} The American government employed an average of 4,576 people per year and invested almost \$28 million in the state’s roads.^{cliii} Canadian borderlanders could feel proud.

Whatever the outcome, Plains borderlanders seriously considered ideas from across the line in the 1930s. Living near the border gave them a unique vantage point. They could see the similarities between people and conditions in their two countries and they could see solutions at work in their neighbours’ lives. They believed that living in the borderlands fostered a spirit of goodwill, cooperation, open mindedness, and appreciation. There was no anti-Americanism in the Plains borderlands, no hostility

toward Canadians. Quite the opposite. Borderlanders were proud of their cross-border friendships, of their ability to get along. They believed it set them apart.

Thus, on Coronation Day in May 1937, a school inspector told the children of Shaunavon, Saskatchewan, that living so close to the border gave them certain obligations. “Children growing up here had a greater responsibility than merely taking part in celebrations honoring the King – that of fostering a greater spirit of unity between the peoples of Canada and the United States.”^{cliv} To borderlanders, the friendly interactions that wove the borderland community together were an example to the world.

Notes

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- iv Boyd Anderson oral history interview with author.
- v Orland MacInnes oral history interview with author.
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- viii “Items of Local Interest,” *Meyronne Independent*, 11 August 1932.
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- xi “People Who Come and Go,” *Daniels County Free Press*, 11 May 1939.
- xii “Local News,” *Daniels County Leader*, 13 August 1931.
- xiii Ibid., 18 July 1935.
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- xv "Local News Items," *Opheim Observer*, 29 May 1931.
- xvi "Dr. Olson's Entertain," *Daniels County Leader*, 30 December 1937.
- xvii "Local Notes," *Daniels County Leader* 19 May 1938.
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- xix "Local and Personal," *Daniels County Free Press*, 17 December 1936.
- xx "Whitetail News," *Daniels County Leader*, 23 May 1940.
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- xxii Astrid Bergen oral history interview.
- xxiii "Shot in Accident," *Opheim Observer*, 13 September 1929.
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- xxxi "Purchases Truck," *Daniels County Free Press*, 31 August 1939.
- xxxii "Announcements," *Rock Glen Review*, 29 September 1938.
- xxxiii "Sorsdahl Sale: Wed., October 7," *Daniels County Leader*, 1 October 1936.

^{xxxiv} “Scobey Lions Hosts at Zone Meet Nov. 22,” *Daniels County Free Press*, 10 November 1938; “Ervin Hanson Wins the Cash,” *Daniels County Leader*, 28 November 1935.

^{xxxv} Two of the three Canadian prize winners were from Buffalo Gap, Saskatchewan, and one was from Regina. “Canucks Win Cash Prizes Three in Row,” *Daniels County Leader*, 7 November 1935; “Canadian Wins Car Here Dec. 24,” *Daniels County Free Press*, 29 December 1938.

^{xxxvi} “Canadian Exchange,” *Daniels County Leader*, 21 September 1939. Also see “Canadian Money Now Discounted,” 7 September 1939.

^{xxxvii} “Local News Items,” *Opheim Observer*, 6 March 1931.

^{xxxviii} “Black Eagle,” *Opheim Observer*, 5 September 1930.

^{xxxix} “Local News Items,” *Opheim Observer*, 17 July 1931.

^{xl} “Local and Personal,” *Daniels County Free Press*, 30 April 1936.

^{xli} “Local News,” *Daniels County Leader*, 3 June 1937.

^{xlii} “Additional Locals,” *Opheim Observer*, 29 May 1931.

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^{xlv} Edgar Richardson oral history interview with author.

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^{li} Phillips County Historical Society, *Yesteryears*, Vol. 1, 539.

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- lxxxviii “150,000 Will Greet King,” *Regina Leader Post*, 24 May 1939.
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- ^{cxxv} *Daniels County Leader*, “Alberta’s Troubles,” 13 August 1936; “In the Lions’ Den,” 11 November 1937; “One of the First Steps,” 7 October 1937.
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^{cxxxiv} Orland McInnis oral history interview with author.

^{cxxxv} “Strip Farming is the Solution to Our Soil Drifting Problem,” *Shaunavon Standard*, 21 June 1934. Reed actually borrowed the strip farming idea years earlier from farmers in southeastern Alberta.

^{cxxxvi} “Local Board of Trade has Notable Achievement Record,” *Shaunavon Standard*, 28 September 1938.

^{cxxxvii} “Let’s Talk It Over,” *Opheim Observer*, 27 March 1931.

^{cxxxviii} “A Practical Subsidy,” *Opheim Observer*, 28 August 1931.

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^{cxl} “There Is A Way Out,” *Daniels County Leader*, 2 February 1933.

^{cxli} “Scrip Money Has Several Advantages,” *Daniels County Leader*, 26 January, 1933.

^{cxlii} “500 Masons Attend International Picnic,” *Opheim Observer*, 17 July 1931.

^{cxliii} “A Good Idea,” *Opheim Observer*, 17 July 1931.

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^{cxlv} “Prominent Men Boost Relief Hi-Way Project,” and “Dr. Sherrard Meets with State Board,” *Opheim Observer*, 24 July 1931.

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^{cxlvii} “Hoover Hears Plea of Montana Senators,” *Opheim Observer*, 25 September 1931.

^{cxlviii} “Leavitt Gathering Pictures on Trips Throughout State,” *Opheim Observer*, 23 October 1931.

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CHAPTER SIX

Romancing the Border

Clarice Travland grew up on a farm near Coronach, six miles north of the Saskatchewan-Montana border. In the fall of 1936, when she was eighteen, she visited a cousin who was teaching school across the line. The two young women decided to attend a dance at the Silver Star community hall near Scobey. Clarice had a wonderful time – she loved to dance – and she didn’t lack for partners. One fellow danced with her a few times and asked her to have lunch with him later that evening. “I said ye-aah, I guess I will,” recalls Clarice. “They served the lunch right there at the hall, in the kitchen.” Then Clarice danced with a young man named Ralph Susag, “and *he* wanted me to go and have lunch with him.” Clarice went downstairs to the kitchen to help Ralph put out the sandwiches – he was on the lunch committee -- “and I turned the other guy down. I guess I should not have done it. He came down the steps to the kitchen and said, ‘Where’s that Canadian girl? She said she was gonna eat lunch with me!’” Clarice laughs. “I felt like hiding.” Ralph laughs, too. “I didn’t know her word wasn’t any good at that time.”ⁱ

Some time after that Ralph, who farmed with his parents south of Scobey, showed up at the little store in Coronach where Clarice worked. They began dating, and by October 1937 their relationship was serious enough that Clarice was invited to spend a weekend at Ralph and his parents’ home.ⁱⁱ The local newspaper reported that she visited again in January 1938.ⁱⁱⁱ When word came that Ralph’s grandfather, a minister, would be visiting from Minnesota in March 1938, Clarice and Ralph decided to get married. To surprise Clarice, Ralph ordered a wedding dress from the catalogue and, when it arrived, set out for Clarice’s home in Saskatchewan. Near the border, his car got stuck in snow

and he walked six miles across country to deliver the dress.^{iv} The *Daniels County Leader* reported that Clarice and Ralph were wed in a small ceremony at Ralph's parents' farm on Sunday, March 27. "The bride was prettily attired in aqua blue embroidered lace over satin with [an] orange blossom bandeau, and carried a lovely bouquet of lilies and carnations."^v Two weeks later, the bride and groom treated their "many friends" to a Saturday night wedding dance in the same hall where their romance began.^{vi}

Many Plains borderlanders associated the forty-ninth parallel with colourful stories in the 1930s. The border had a strong hold on their imaginations; it was synonymous with love, adventure, freedom, and humour. While many young people crossed the line to find mates, others crossed to find excitement and independence from parents and other authority figures. They used the border to test limits, to defy social expectations. Plains borderlanders occupied an "intimate borderlands" rich in personal drama.^{vii}

Even children knew the border was special. Sisters Luvine and Shirley Graham remember playing "Canadians and Americans" on the dirt road that ran along the international boundary south of Oungre, Saskatchewan. "Oh, we were definitely aware of the border," says Luvine, "because we thought it was kinda special to play on the border. One of us would be American, and one would be Canadian." With a single step across the line, the girls could magically change their identity. "That was the way kids think, I guess." Luvine finds the game funny because she actually believes there is no difference between Americans and Canadians. "We're all the same," she says.^{viii}

Two teenage boys from the Montana borderlands must have thought the border had special properties, too. In March 1929 Lloyd Whitish and Frank Barge, both

fourteen, ran away from their homes twenty miles south of Redstone “and headed for Canada.”^{ix} Border patrol officers caught up with them at Whitetail, just short of their goal, and held them until their parents came for them. Perhaps the boys equated the border with freedom from parental authority. Perhaps it promised exciting new careers as cowboys or outlaws. Or perhaps it signified their entrance into adulthood.

Saskatchewan borderlander Boyd Anderson associated the border with maturity, independence, and the mythic West. By the time he was eleven or twelve, he already thought of himself as a man. He moved out of the house and into the bunkhouse with the other men, began driving the family car, and herded his father’s cattle and sheep in the isolated pasture along the border for weeks at a time. His father, Leonard, expected Boyd and his two teenage brothers to work hard. “The three of us were men when it came to getting things done.” Boyd’s status gave him a lot of freedom. When he wasn’t working he roamed the borderlands, attending dances, playing baseball, competing in rodeos. Often he rode into Montana to visit friends or order western clothing from American catalogues. Boyd knew a lot of American cowboys and read a lot of stories by Zane Gray and other western writers, and he was enamoured with the fitted jeans, cowboy shirts, Stetsons, and colourful bandanas cowboys typically wore.^x Canadian catalogues and stores didn’t carry such clothing. In Boyd’s mind, the Canadian West was populated with staid farmers wearing bib overalls or square-cut pants, while the American West was populated with dashing ranchers, cowboys, and bandits in stylish cowboy attire. “The American West was romantic,” Boyd says. He wasn’t the only borderlander who thought so. “Canadians flocked down there to get the American stuff.”^{xi}

Boyd also associated the Plains border with adventure. Once, his brother Cliff was riding to an American neighbour's farm with a sack of muskrat hides he planned to sell, when he saw the border patrol. He quickly dropped the bag of muskrats into the brush. Unfortunately, when he went back to collect them, they were gone. Either the patrol or a lucky passerby had claimed them. Then there was the night Boyd's uncle and cousin were driving to Montana to pick up a catalogue purchase and Boyd decided to go along "for a little excitement." They were on their way back when, "all at once we saw a light coming, *just a thundering* up the road. My cousin Wayne, he turned that little car right around, we got over a hill, then he shut off the lights and took *right* off across the prairie!"^{xii}

Both Boyd and Cliff crossed the border to take advantage of opportunities they wouldn't have had if they lived farther away and didn't have connections in the United States. Boyd sold sheep hides to a dealer in Montana because there was no market for them in Canada. He and Cliff also made a few dollars killing coyote pups and smuggling the pelts to a Montana rancher who took them to Glasgow to collect a two-dollar bounty. "Another product that sold better on the American side was horse hair," writes Boyd.^{xiii} The brothers collected hair from the tails of their father's horses and any dead horses they found on the range in the spring. Cliff spent a lot of time in Montana because he worked and attended high school in Opheim and he participated in many rodeos in the United States. In 1934 when he was sixteen, he took the train from Glasgow to Chicago to compete in the rodeo there. Three years later Boyd and a neighbour drove to Iowa, where the neighbour looked for work and Boyd, who had broken his front teeth in a skiing accident, visited a dentist uncle who could fix them for free. While he was there, Boyd

borrowed three hundred dollars from his uncle to buy sixty head of sheep. The trip gave seventeen-year-old Boyd his start in ranching.^{xiv}

For some borderlanders the border was synonymous with rebellion. Montana borderlander Curtis Stadstad tells the story of a nineteen-year-old boy named Gene who was in trouble with his father for being reckless and was forbidden to drive the family's new car to a Saturday night dance in Raymond, Montana. When his father, Roy, went to bed, Gene snuck the car out of the garage. "He went to town and loaded up eight young girls and men and headed back up the road to Canada. The road was slightly graded with a little gravel. With the drouth there was a great deal of dust." Gene and his companions sped past the closed custom house at ninety miles an hour. He had only driven once before, but it didn't occur to him that what he was doing was dangerous. Meanwhile, back at the farm, Roy woke to find Gene and the car missing. He and his son Kenneth drove an old car into the dance and learned that Gene and his friends had mentioned going to Minton, Saskatchewan. Roy and Kenneth headed toward the border as fast as their old car would go – which wasn't very fast. "They had gone nine miles when they saw a big dust cloud coming down the hill three miles south of Minton.... The new car hit a hundred miles per hour. Roy and Kenneth got out of the way. They thought there might be a car in the cloud, but they did not recognize it." Roy and Kenneth went on to Minton but didn't find Gene. Stadstad says borderlanders found this tale hilarious. "We heard that when the searchers arrived home, the new car was in the garage with hastily wiped dust paths on it and the 'boy' was asleep in bed."^{xv} Gene had succeeded in thwarting both his father and the law.

Borderlanders also enjoyed the story of a Saskatchewan boy who went on a cross-border crime spree. “Cameron Mohn, 12-year-old epileptic son of a service station operator at Assiniboia, Sask., told his schoolmates that someday he was going to go on a trip,” the *Daniels County Leader* reported on September 22, 1938. “Thursday evening of last week he ‘borrowed’ a government agent’s car at Assiniboia and drove it to Peerless, Montana.” There, the boy abandoned the car and hitched a ride to Scobey. Friday afternoon, he drove away in county agent E.W. Bjork’s car “while four ladies directly across the street sat in the front porch and gossiped unnoticeably.” Mohn left the car outside Poplar, Montana, “stepped into Roosevelt County Commissioner Ben Zimmerman’s car and started back to Scobey.”^{xvi} Saturday evening he stole a fourth car, which was later found near the border two miles east of Carbert, Montana. The suspect was last seen in Montana on Sunday when he stopped at a border family’s home for food. On October 13, 1938, the *Leader* reported that Mohn went on to race a stolen car from Moose Jaw to Regina, with police in pursuit. His exploits earned him four years in a Saskatchewan reform school.^{xvii}

Borderlanders admired rebels of all kinds. Stories of buffalo that escaped from a private herd in northeastern Montana entertained newspaper readers on both sides of the line. “Ignoring immigration and custom laws,” the animals simply wandered across the international boundary. “The buffalo have little respect for fences,” observed the *Daniels County Leader*.^{xviii} The story of a border-crashing bull nicknamed Bad Dillinger had the Saskatchewan borderlands in a tizzy in the summer of 1935. “Stray Buffalo Gives South Country Farmers the Thrill of Olden Days,” read a *Meyronne Independent* headline. The newspaper said the sight of the buffalo “gave farmers near Rock Glen an idea of what this

part of the west used to be, as well as a real scare. Ordinary pasture fences are no obstacle for this powerful, fleet-footed beast.”^{xix} Someone decided to herd the buffalo to Wood Mountain for the annual stampede, where organizers would re-enact an old-time buffalo hunt. “Indians would shoot the buffalo with bows and arrows and butcher it right in the arena,” recalls Boyd Anderson. “There was much publicity about this event over the Moose Jaw and Regina radio stations and the movement of the buffalo became a daily news item.” However, an animal welfare organization protested the stampede’s plans, “so instead of killing the buffalo, a few Indians and cowboys chased the buffalo around the arena a little and then the buffalo was loaded up and returned to its American owner.”^{xx} The *Daniels County Leader* related a similar story, only the paper said the animal was trucked east for another public appearance. “Ornery Bison Wins Trip to Madison Square Garden,” said the *Leader*.^{xxi}

Borderlanders recall many humorous anecdotes about the border. In *Settlers of the Hills and Beyond*, a history of the cross-border region around Lake Alma, Saskatchewan, Bobby Leininger writes that although his parents lived in Canada, they ensured that he was born in Ambrose, North Dakota, because they wanted him to retain American citizenship. Bobby’s father, David, was going down to the hospital to visit his wife and newborn son in 1930 when the border patrol stopped him and dismantled his car. Finding nothing, the patrol said, “Okay, you can go now.” But David said, “I’ll leave after you put my car back together.” The patrol did as they were told. Bobby also recalls a drifter who worked for his father. His name was Fingerless, because he had no fingers on one hand. “One time the Mounties stopped Fingerless and were questioning him and asked

what his name might be. His reply was, 'I might be Jesus Christ, but ain't.' That's all they got out of him."^{xxii}

A favourite story among borderlanders from this region concerns pigs. In 1934 David Leininger and his family hired a man named Lars Petersen to work their farm in Canada and moved back to David's homestead in Fortuna, North Dakota. David made a living smuggling livestock into the United States, and Lars appears to have been an accomplice. One night Lars was chasing pigs across the border to Fortuna when the pigs got lost in an oat field. The next morning David and Bobby went out and rounded up most of the pigs. A few escaped, however. "For several days these pigs were going back to Canada, right by the Custom House," writes Bobby. "The Custom men were wondering whose they were, but no one dared to claim them."^{xxiii}

Stories of romantic love also abounded in the Plains borderlands. Cross-border dating was common. Canadian boys liked to take their dates to bars across the border because Montana and North Dakota drinking establishments accepted women, while Saskatchewan establishments did not. Boyd Anderson often took girls down to view the progress of the Fort Peck Dam. Such dates were affordable because a couple could drive down and back in one day and they could take a lunch with them.

Often men and women from both sides of the border met at dances or rodeos near the line. Boyd Anderson squired Muriel Theony, whose father ran a store in the border community of Theony, Montana, to several such events. They remained friends for several years, even after Boyd met his future Saskatchewan bride. Saskatchewan borderlander Orland MacInnes fell for a girl who worked for his American neighbours. He visited her every chance he got. Boyd says dating American girls was a novelty.

“Guys would date American girls because it was something different. You’re always looking for adventure. Quite a thrill.”^{xxiv} Then there were Canadian girls, like Clarice Travland, who dated American guys. Clarice doesn’t recall thinking that Ralph Susag’s nationality made him more attractive. She liked him because he had broad shoulders and he was a good dancer. And Ralph liked her because “she was pretty good-looking.”^{xxv}

Many of these Canadian-American courtships led to marriage. Boyd knows of more than four in his vicinity. The *Daniels County Leader* mentions at least eight cross-border unions between 1929 and 1937, and the *Daniels County Free Press* mentions an equal number between 1935 and 1940. This was in the Scobey area alone. “William Davies of Coronach, Sask., and Carol D. Spencer of Whitetail, Montana, were married at the ME [Methodist] parsonage on Saturday, Dec. 23, Rev. A.E. Plummer reading the ceremony,” wrote the *Leader* in 1933. “Mr. and Mrs. Geo. Cromwell were their witnesses.”^{xxvi} Two cross-border couples married on the same date in 1935. “George C. Hughes of Opheim and Jesse M. Riley of Killdeer, Canada, and Robert Felstead of Opheim and Helen Jackobs of Macworth, Canada, were married at a double wedding November 1st by Justice of the Peace Kloss,” said the *Free Press*. “Both couples remained in Scobey for a short visit with friends.”^{xxvii}

Plains borderlanders were very aware of another phenomenon: the large number of Canadian couples who went south to marry. Canadian family historian James Snell found that many couples crossed the Ontario-Michigan border to marry in the early twentieth century. American couples accounted for 50 to 83 per cent of all marriages in Canadian border towns, and Canadian couples were just as likely to head across the border to marry in American facilities.^{xxviii} Some thirty years later, the traffic in the Plains

borderlands was noticeably one-way. Southern Saskatchewan border community history books mention many couples who wed in northern Montana in the 1930s, and almost every issue of the *Daniels County Leader* and the *Daniels County Free Press* lists the names of Saskatchewan couples who crossed the border to obtain marriage licences and marry. Couples from as far away as Regina made the trek. “Cupid Must Use A Machine Gun,” quipped the *Daniels County Leader* in October 1933, noting that Clerk of Court George Jones issued five marriage licences in a four-day period. One of the unions involved a groom from Parity, Saskatchewan, and a bride from Whitetail, Montana; one involved a couple from Scobey; and three involved couples from Saskatchewan border communities.^{xxix} On one historic occasion in October 1938, the Lutheran minister in Scobey married three couples from Amulet, Saskatchewan. “It was the first time that the pastor had officiated at a triple wedding,” said the *Leader*.^{xxx} Forty of the ninety-five marriage licences Jones issued in 1938 went to Canadian couples; that’s 49 per cent.^{xxxi} In June 1939 Jones issued a near-record seventeen licences. “Nine of the 17 licenses were issued to Canadian couples who find Uncle Sam’s knot tiers just as efficient as the Canadian and they do it with considerably fewer preliminaries,” joked the *Leader*.^{xxxii}

Often these were truly cross-border celebrations. Couples would hold the wedding in Scobey and return home to Saskatchewan for further festivities. On December 1, 1933, Roy Clinton Thurlow and Marguerite Bassett of the Coronach area married in the Methodist church in Scobey. “After the wedding they had a wedding dance in the East Poplar hall with music provided by Art Olsen’s orchestra. People came to the dance in horse drawn sleighs and cutters.”^{xxxiii} In November 1936, two Saskatchewan couples married in a double ceremony in Scobey. “After the service the company

proceeded to the home of S. Kolibaba of Coronach, where a crowd of 180 people assembled to wish the newlyweds the best of luck, health and happiness,” wrote the *Daniels County Free Press*. Some of the couples’ Scobey friends journeyed to Saskatchewan to help them celebrate. “Mr. and Mrs. Greengard and Dr. McDaniels motored to the Kolibaba home in the evening to wish their friends good luck.”^{xxxiv}

Many couples appear to have had their parents’ blessing. “A very pretty wedding took place at the Methodist parsonage Friday, Nov. 17, when Donald Wm. Welch and Nylene Floy Day were married in the presence of about 15 immediate relatives and friends of Coronach,” the *Leader* wrote in 1939. The couple honeymooned at Fort Peck. When Donald McNair of Coronach and Alice Shelstad of East Poplar married at the Lutheran parsonage in Scobey in December 1935, their parents witnessed the ceremony.

However, numerous Saskatchewan couples defied their parents by eloping. English-born Norah Bullivant met Minnesota-born Vic Johnson in southeast Saskatchewan in 1931 when he was operating a road grader on a highway construction project. “I had taken feed for my brother’s horses and went to the cook car to visit with the girls cooking there and met Vic having coffee.” Vic, who wintered in Minnesota, worked on Norah’s brother’s farm at harvest time in 1932 and again in the summer of 1933. “Because my parents were not too sympathetic towards us marrying, it seemed simpler to go across the U.S. border to be wed,” writes Norah. Perhaps her parents disapproved of the match because Norah was nineteen and Vic was almost thirty-six. The couple first went to Crosby, North Dakota, but learned they would have to reside there ten days before they could get a marriage licence. “Then we went to Plentywood, Montana, and were married September 14, 1933.”^{xxxv}

Vera Wittman and Roy Vrooman, who grew up near Rockglen, Saskatchewan, met when Roy visited at the farm house where Vera was working as a hired girl. The couple began a courtship that lasted from 1931 to 1935. Their story demonstrates some of the challenges of courtship in the borderlands in the 1930s. “They both loved to dance, but dating wasn’t all that easy at the time. For one thing, there were no phones. To make a date, plans had to be made weeks in advance, usually one date being arranged at the end of another.” Another problem was lack of transportation. “Roy needed another horse on those nights that Vera came along. She would carry her dancing clothes in a small bag for the trip to the dance hall or to the home of a friend who lived closer to the dance location. She would then change into her dancing shoes.” But the biggest difficulty the couple faced was the difference in their two religions: Vera’s mother was a staunch Catholic and Roy was raised by a deeply religious Anglican grandmother. Vera and Roy had to meet late at night, in secret, and then put in a full day’s work the next day. “But love conquers all, and Roy and Vera were eventually married by a justice of the peace in Scobey, Montana, to avoid parental conflict. By that time Roy estimates he had put five thousand miles on his horse riding from place to place on their dates.”^{xxxvi}

One of the reasons marrying in Montana was so popular with Saskatchewan couples was because state law allowed for quick and easy matches. Couples could purchase a two-dollar licence and go straight to a minister or justice of the peace to tie the knot. The process was more involved in Saskatchewan. “A new law demanding five days notice of intention to wed and a physical examination in effect in Saskatchewan accounts for the numerous Canadians coming to Scobey to be married,” wrote the *Leader* on

October 19, 1933.^{xxxvii} An amendment to the Saskatchewan Marriage Act that year required a prospective groom to undergo a medical exam and produce a health certificate within ten days of the wedding.^{xxxviii}

Montana experimented with a “gin marriage law” in 1935 in an attempt to “discourage hasty marriages or those inspired ‘by the cup that flows well but not wisely.’ “Marriage on an hour’s notice will no longer be possible in Montana,” wrote the *Daniels County Leader*. A couple who wished to wed had to be free from “the influence of intoxicating liquor” and produce health certificates. They also had to wait three days to receive their marriage licence. Saskatchewan and Montana couples alike found these requirements too stringent. And expensive. The *Leader* estimated that health certificates, a marriage licence, and the minister’s fee would cost the average couple at least thirty dollars. For the two and a half months the law was in effect, there wasn’t a single marriage in Daniels County. The gin marriage law was a spectacular failure. After it was repealed, Saskatchewan couples began flowing south again.

After they married in March 1938, Clarice and Ralph Susag quickly settled into married life and Clarice integrated into the Silver Star community. Local newspapers charted their progress. In April the Farmers Union gave the couple a wedding shower, and a few weeks later “Mrs. R.W. Susag” joined the Silver Star Home Demonstration Club. In June Clarice and Ralph “motored to Regina on business,” no doubt to start the process of applying for American citizenship for Clarice. In November, the couple bought their own farm, and in early December they invited about fifty friends and neighbours to a housewarming party featuring games and food. On July 6, 1939, the *Daniels County Free Press* reported that the Silver Star Home Demonstration Club held a

baby shower for Clarice after their regular meeting. In mid-August Clarice came home from the hospital with their first child, Diane. More children followed. The couple left their older children with Clarice's parents in Coronach for about two weeks each time a new baby arrived.

Clarice received her American citizenship in 1942.^{xxxix} When she agreed to marry Ralph, she had assumed she would become an American. She didn't see much difference between Canadians and Americans anyway. She had been comfortable in Montana before she met Ralph, visiting relatives and attending weddings and other family occasions, and she continued to feel at home there after she married.^{xl}

Perhaps the most noticeable thing about local news items on the Susags is the number of times Clarice, Ralph, and their children visited back and forth with Clarice's relatives in Saskatchewan. Clarice's parents and siblings came down to visit her soon after her wedding, and continued to visit off and on. "Mr. and Mrs. A. M. Travland of Coronach, Sask., are visiting at the home of their daughter, Mrs. Ralph Susag, for a week," the *Daniels County Leader* reported in November 1939.^{xli} Ralph's parents and friends from the Silver Star area often joined Clarice and Ralph on trips to Coronach. "Mr. and Mrs. O.E. Susag, Mr. and Mrs. R.W. Susag, Mr. and Mrs. B.J. Lekvold and children and Richard Veis motored to Coronach, Canada, Sunday," said the *Daniels County Free Press* on October 20, 1938.^{xlii} Even Ralph's grandfather from Minnesota joined Clarice and Ralph on their cross-border jaunts whenever he visited.^{xliii}

Local newspapers were full of similar items about other family visits in the 1930s. "Mr. and Mrs. J.N. Tufte of Abbey, Sask., are visiting at the Al Bachlund place near Baylor," wrote the *Opheim Observer* in July 1929. "Mr. Tufte is a brother of Mrs.

Bachlund. They expect to remain about 10 days.”^{xliiv} Dr. and Mrs. W.P. McDaniel of Scobey went to Ceylon, Saskatchewan, to visit Mrs. McDaniel’s brother, said the *Daniels County Leader* in May 1930.^{xliv} LaVerne Cromwell and his family of Qu’Appelle, Saskatchewan, visited Mrs. Cromwell’s parents in Scobey and the George Cromwell family in Fort Peck in April 1935.^{xlvi} Mr. and Mrs. Paulson of Noonan, North Dakota, drove up to spend July Fourth with Mrs. Paulson’s brother, William Norgren, “across the border.”^{xlvii} Mr. and Mrs. Fred Preddy and family of Tribune, Sask., were guests of Mr. and Mrs. George Jones of Scobey, “Mr. Preddy being Mrs. Jones’ brother and his wife is a sister of Mr. Jones.”^{xlviii} Mrs. Burley Bowler enjoyed a visit from her sister, Mrs. H. Clark, and her father, G.M. Cryderman, of Radville, Saskatchewan, in September 1938.^{xlix} And Mr. and Mrs. George Sorsdahl of Silver Star entertained George’s Coronach-based parents in November 1939.¹ Cross-border family ties clearly knit the borderlands together.

Not all married couples in the borderlands associated the border with romance and happy domestic lives. For some men, especially, the border was an avenue of escape from family responsibilities. Western Canadian historian Sarah Carter mentions several men and one woman who crossed the Plains border in one direction or the other, abandoning their spouses and children, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.^{li} In the 1930s, it wasn’t so easy to assume entirely new lives across the line. But some husbands still managed to use the border to neglect wives and children.

When she was growing up in the southeastern Saskatchewan borderlands, Astrid Bergen certainly saw nothing romantic about her parents’ relationship. Her mother, Bertha, was originally from south-central Saskatchewan and her father, Tom, was born in

North Dakota and moved to southeastern Saskatchewan with his family in 1911. Tom belonged to a cross-border family; he, his parents and one sister lived near the border in southeastern Saskatchewan and two sisters lived near the border in northwestern North Dakota. Bertha and Tom married in 1929 and lived on a series of farms on the Canadian side in the 1930s. Astrid was born in 1933. She remembers that her father was a “fancy free” individual who was seldom home. He was off drinking in Saskatchewan and North Dakota bars, smuggling items across the border, and visiting friends and relatives in the United States. He thought of himself as American and praised the United States at every opportunity. “He was never home on July Fourth,” says Astrid. “He was down there. He was *always* down there.” Meanwhile, Bertha looked after the children and did the farm work that enabled the family to survive. She milked cows, raised chickens, maintained farm equipment, sowed crops, shovelled grain, and sold butter, milk, and eggs. Once, Tom was caught smuggling cattle across the border and spent a month in a Fargo, North Dakota, jail. “But he didn’t suffer. My mother suffered. She’s the one who had two little children and she’s out stooking and taking care of the cattle. Cattle at that time were on the loose looking for any blade or grass they could, so she would take one of us in the bib of my father’s overalls and one on her back and go and get them.”^{lii}

Tom resisted expectations that he be a good husband, father, and provider. He ignored his wife and children, expected them to handle the farm work, and treated his friends to steak dinners while his family went without flour and other necessities. He refused to share information with his family about his exploits across the border and he never invited them along on his excursions. Asked if he ever took them to July Fourth

celebrations in the United States, Astrid says: “Oh, no, no, no, no, no, no. He didn’t take the wife and kids out for fun of any sort. No.”^{liii}

Like Astrid, Edgar Richardson felt abandoned by his father in the 1930s. Canadian-born Cecilia Walter and American-born Charlie Richardson met at a dance near the border, married in 1927, and settled on the south side of the Montana-Saskatchewan line. Edgar was born later that year. Charlie was “a social guy” who enjoyed visiting and playing cards with neighbours across the border. Meanwhile, Cecilia cared for their two children, kept an immaculate home, and handled household repairs – painting walls and patching the roof when necessary. “It was kind of strange,” says Edgar, “but they never spent much time together, going out together. He would go his way and she’d just stay at home. I would say it came close to havin’ separate lives.” Charlie never took Edgar with him, a fact that left a lifelong scar. “It kind of bothered me, because some of the other kids, their dad would take ‘em some place or something. And I was never allowed to go. So, I was stayin’ at home most of the time.” Edgar developed “kind of an inferiority complex”; he became shy and reclusive and would hide from strangers when they visited. “It’s something that I’m still struggling with, too.”^{liv} Again, here was a husband and father who used the border in ways that hurt his family.

It seems that men and women experienced the border differently. The borderlands were what Boyd Anderson calls “a man’s world.”^{lv} Men travelled more widely because they had more access to vehicles and horses and more opportunities to cross the border than women. They traded equipment and farm animals across the border, herded each other’s stray horses and cattle back across the line, helped each other with branding and other activities, visited in homes and bars across the border, and organized cross-border

smuggling operations. Often they went across the line to get farm equipment fixed, to buy parts, or to purchase used furniture and machinery at farm sales. Many men went across the border to fetch coal. Men tended to be the ones who went to town for food supplies. They also took their families' catalogue orders across the border. Astrid Bergen says paying for catalogue orders in the company of other men stroked her father's ego. "Going across the border was man's work. He'd take catalogue orders to Eli in the U.S. He's paying."^{lvi}

Women got across the border far less often than men. "That was a man's thing," recalls Boyd's sister Dolly (Anderson) Mitchell. "That's what we were taught." Unlike Boyd, Dolly never got to go to Fourth of July celebrations in Montana. "The girls never got in on that. We probably didn't even know it was on."^{lvii} Women's border-related activities included making lunches for menfolk who were going across or baking cakes and bread for Canadian husbands to take to American neighbours who placed catalogue items for them.^{lviii} Women could go to dances, picnics, and sports days near the border, but only if they were accompanied by family members. Respectable girls didn't go by themselves. "Girls weren't supposed to be *out*," says Dolly. "A good girl would be with her parents. Boys didn't have to be anywhere near their parents. Girls were supervised; boys weren't."^{lix} Some Canadian women visited American bars with their husbands and boyfriends, but at least one borderlander thought such behaviour was unseemly. Mrs. Shoebridge of the border community of North Portal, Saskatchewan, wrote that such women were extravagant and selfish; they should be putting their partners' money to better use.^{lx}

Some borderlanders say men travelled more freely throughout the borderlands because they had more leisure time than women. The Depression robbed the men of many of their traditional activities; crops were scanty and jobs were few. Thus, many idle male borderlanders roamed in search of work and entertainment. Stadstad says many young male drifters rode around the countryside on borrowed horses.^{lxi} It was harder for wives, sisters, and mothers to get away because they were busy with domestic and farm work year-round.

Still, many women had cross-border connections with other women. One woman from the Rockglen area turned to an American friend when her infant son developed whooping cough in the early 1930s. “His terrible coughing and choking spells were a source of great worry to me,” recalls Stella Bakken. “I felt so helpless, with my first child, so far from medical aid. I followed the directions our States neighbour had been given by an Opheim doctor.”^{lxii}

The women in Astrid’s family also extended helping hands across the border. Astrid’s grandmother carried eggs in a little teakettle across the border to her American daughter’s family. Astrid’s mother went down to help an American sister-in-law when she gave birth in 1936 or 1937, cleaning the house, providing meals, and caring for the sister-in-law’s other children. This sister-in-law regularly sewed new clothes for Astrid and gave her used clothing.

All was not rosy among the women in Astrid’s family, however. Tom’s female relatives were sometimes cruel to Bertha. Once Tom, his mother, one of his American sisters, and her family went on a vacation in northern Saskatchewan and left Bertha at home with baby Astrid, her sister-in-law’s baby boy, and the work of the farm. The

sister-in-law wanted to stick Bertha with the unpleasant task of weaning her son.

“Mom thought, forget that,” says Astrid. Bertha was nursing Astrid and decided to attach the baby boy to her other breast. “We both enjoyed my mother’s breast at the same time,” laughs Astrid. “*That* was help across the border.”^{lxiii}

Some borderlanders think life was much more difficult for women than men in the borderlands, that it was defined by hard work, isolation, and loneliness. Her mother’s experiences certainly shaped Astrid’s views: “Women along the border had a bad time in the Thirties. It started from the day they were married. When I think of the discouragement my mother had, whoa, my goodness sake.” Astrid hastens to add that not all men were irresponsible, “but my father certainly was.” She thinks men like him used the border “to slip out from under their responsibilities.”^{lxiv}

Alvina Wright was a rare example of a woman who crossed the border to find work in the 1930s. Alvina, who grew up in southwestern Saskatchewan near Bracken, experienced extreme poverty and lost her father to suicide during the Depression. In November 1935, when she was twenty-five, she and her brother Art joined a truckload of nine borderlanders (four women and five men) who went to the United States. Alvina recalls that on the way down they stopped at the port of entry in Havre, Montana, and paid a head tax that allowed them to visit the United States for six months. Although they were not legally allowed to work, Alvina and Art knew they had to find jobs to survive. Art ended up in Indio, California, demolishing work camps used to build aqueducts to Los Angeles; he worked under the radar for a contractor who paid cash. Alvina ended up serving meals in a Los Angeles “dine and dance” and living in the truck, which was equipped with a camper. She felt “freer” in the United States because she had work and

the climate was pleasant. “I thought I was pretty darn lucky, you bet I did – making a few dollars. It was winter time then, and to think that I could walk to work, that was different than back home.” Alvina enjoyed dancing, gambling, going to movies, and spotting celebrities. Interestingly, she ran into several men and women she knew from Saskatchewan who were also working in Los Angeles. For six months the Depression seemed far away; then Alvina and the others went back to Bracken. Alvina wanted to return to California on her own, but her mother begged her to stay. “I sure liked that trip,” Alvina muses. To this day she thinks Canadians should be free to cross the international border whenever they please. “There shouldn’t be a line down there. I guess there’s a reason for it, but I don’t know what it is.”^{lxv}

The international boundary meant different things to different people in the 1930s. For many rural men it was a handy social outlet and an escape from family obligations. For their wives and children, it could be a symbol of abandonment. To most Plains borderlanders, however, the border was a source of colourful stories and characters. It was associated with romance in the broadest sense of the word -- a gateway to adventure, freedom, love, and marriage.

Notes

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- ⁱ Clarice and Ralph Susag oral history interview with author, 15 October 2005.
- ⁱⁱ “Silver Star,” *Daniels County Free Press*, 14 October 1937.
- ⁱⁱⁱ *Ibid.*, 3 January 1938.
- ^{iv} Clarice and Ralph Susag oral history interview with author.
- ^v “Ties Nuptial Knot for his Grandson,” *Daniels County Leader*, 31 March 1938.
- ^{vi} “Silver Star,” *Daniels County Free Press*, 14 April 1938.
- ^{vii} Jameson, “Dancing on the Rim,” 20.
- ^{viii} Luvine (Graham) Treharne and Shirley (Graham) Magnuson oral history interview with author.
- ^{ix} “Runaway Sheridan County Boys Taken by Patrol Officers,” *Daniels County Leader*, 21 March 1929.
- ^x On cowboy culture, including clothing styles, see Elofson, *Frontier Cattle Ranching*, 96-118.
- ^{xi} Boyd Anderson oral history interview with author.
- ^{xii} *Ibid.*
- ^{xiii} Anderson, *Grass Roots*, 127.
- ^{xiv} *Ibid.*, 170-71.
- ^{xv} Stadstad, *They Called Her Nighthawk*, 42-44.
- ^{xvi} “Car Theft Epidemic Charged to Youth,” *Daniels County Leader*, 22 September 1938.
- ^{xvii} “Canuck Boy Gets Jail Term at Regina,” *Daniels County Leader*, 13 October 1938.
- ^{xviii} “Buffalo Herd at Walt Truax Ranch Northwest of Scobey,” *Daniels County Leader*, 25 October 1934.
- ^{xix} “Stray Buffalo Gives South Country Farmers the Thrill of Olden Days,” *Meyronne Independent*, 4 July 1935.

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- ^{xx} Anderson, *Grass Roots*, 94-5.
- ^{xxi} “Ornery Bison Wins Trip to Madison Square Garden,” *Daniels County Leader*, 15 July 1935.
- ^{xxii} Lake Alma History Book Committee, *Settlers of the Hills*, 170.
- ^{xxiii} *Ibid.*
- ^{xxiv} Boyd Anderson oral history interview with author.
- ^{xxv} Clarice and Ralph Susag oral history interview with author.
- ^{xxvi} “Davis-Spencer,” *Daniels County Leader*, 28 December 1933.
- ^{xxvii} “Double Wedding,” *Daniels County Free Press*, 7 November 1935.
- ^{xxviii} James G. Snell, “The International Border as a Factor in Marital Behaviour: A Historical Case Study,” *Ontario History* 81, no. 4 (December 1989): 292, 297.
- ^{xxix} “Cupid Must Use A Machine Gun,” *Daniels County Leader*, 19 October 1933.
- ^{xxx} “Triple Wedding,” *Daniels County Leader*, 6 October 1938.
- ^{xxxi} “No Births or Marriages in New Year Here,” *Daniels County Leader*, 5 January 1939.
- ^{xxxii} “17 Licenses to Marry Issued Here in June,” *Daniels County Leader*, 29 June 1939.
- ^{xxxiii} Coronach Historical Committee, *From the Turning of the Sod*, 398.
- ^{xxxiv} “Neighbors Have a Double Wedding at Roy Humbert’s,” *Daniels County Free Press*, 19 November 1936.
- ^{xxxv} Souris Valley No. 7 History Club, *Saga of Souris Valley*, 494.
- ^{xxxvi} Rolling Hills History Book Committee, *Rolling Hills of Home*, Vol. 2 (Regina: PrintWest, 2000), 304-5.
- ^{xxxvii} “Cupid Must Use A Machine Gun,” *Daniels County Leader*, 19 October 1933.
- ^{xxxviii} Sarah Carter, *The Importance of Being Monogamous: Marriage and Nation Building in Western Canada to 1915* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2008), 287-8.

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- xxxix “Citizenship Granted to Five Thursday,” *Daniels County Leader*, 7 May 1942.
- xl Clarice and Ralph Susag oral history interview with author.
- xli “Silver Star Community,” *Daniels County Leader*, 16 November 1939.
- xlii “Silver Star News Items,” *Daniels County Free Press*, 20 October 1938.
- xliii “Silver Star,” *Daniels County Free Press*, 22 December 1938.
- xliv “Local News Items,” *Opheim Observer*, 5 July 1929.
- xlv “Local News,” *Daniels County Leader*, 8 May 1930.
- xlvi *Ibid.*, 25 April 1935.
- xlvii *Ibid.*, 9 July 1936.
- xlviii *Ibid.*, 30 July 1936.
- xlix *Ibid.*, 22 September 1938.
- ¹ “Silver Star,” *Daniels County Leader*, 23 November 1939.
- li Carter, *Importance of Being Monogamous*, 40-41.
- lii Astrid Bergen oral history interview with author. Names have been changed to protect identities.
- liii *Ibid.*
- liv Edgar Richardson oral history interview with author.
- lv Boyd Anderson oral history interview with author.
- lvi Astrid Bergen oral history interview with author.
- lvii Dolly (Anderson) Mitchell oral history interview with author, 9 August 2005.
- lviii Asrid Bergen oral history interview with author.
- lix *Ibid.*

^{lx} Mrs. L. C. Shoebridge to Violet McNaughton, North Portal, Saskatchewan, 8 October 1939, McNaughton Papers.

^{lxi} Stadstad, *They Called Her Nighthawk*, 35, 38.

^{lxii} Rockglen 50th Anniversary Committee, *Rolling Hills of Home*, 223.

^{lxiii} Astrid Bergen oral history interview with author.

^{lxiv} *Ibid.*

^{lxv} Alvina Wright oral history interview with author.

CHAPTER 7

Like Old Times

Ample rains returned to the northern Plains borderlands near the end of the decade. In June 1939 southern Saskatchewan's *Meyronne Independent* gleefully reported that unaccustomed rainfall had flooded out "three little pigs" and that wheat in low-lying areas was under water.ⁱ "Dust Bowl Now Resembles Mud Bowl," northeastern Montana's *Daniels County Leader* quipped the following spring.ⁱⁱ Crop yields improved but agricultural prices remained low. Many borderlanders continued to require government assistance into the 1940s. Only when Canada and the United States were well into the Second World War – when farmers enjoyed bumper crops and high wheat prices – could borderlanders genuinely say the Great Depression was over.ⁱⁱⁱ

Canada, of course, entered the war in September 1939 and the United States entered more than two years later, in December 1941. How did the fact that war came to the Canadian side of the border before the American side affect the cross-border community? What happened to borderlanders' bonds when world events set Canadians and Americans on different courses?

Border restrictions and other realities of war affected Canadian and American borderlanders' ability to mingle during this period. Border-crossers faced tighter border security and measures that limited cross-border travel and trade. Border authorities limited the amount of money Canadians could bring across the border and, on July 1, 1940, began requiring Canadian border-crossers to carry passports and visas. A "small army" of officials on both sides of the line enforced these regulations.^{iv} In addition, tire and fuel rationing kept many borderlanders at home. But Plains borderlanders' ties

proved to be extremely resilient. Borderlanders kept the border community alive by continuing to show a keen interest in developments on the other side and by working hard to maintain the connections they had nurtured over the years. They continued to associate the border with romance and adventure. They continued to interact with each other. They continued to think of people across the line as part of “our” community. And, as soon as conditions allowed they went back to their old, fraternizing ways.

Whether their country was “belligerent” or “neutral,” talk of war was on most borderlanders’ tongues. After Canada entered the war, Montana borderlanders eagerly tuned into wartime broadcasts and discussed the war with their friends. Much of their knowledge of the war came from direct contact with Canadians. One of the first times the *Daniels County Leader* mentioned Canada’s involvement was when five members of the Bengough, Saskatchewan, branch of the Canadian Legion joined a meeting of the American Legion in Whitetail, Montana. “Captain Dove of Bengough stated their entire membership has registered for service if needed for war. He stated that many veterans of the World War will be serving as home guards and replacements overseas when needed.” No doubt meeting-goers continued to discuss Canada’s situation when they adjourned to the Humbert Café for lunch.^v

Montana borderlanders lapped up information about Canadian borderlanders’ response to the war. In December 1939 the *Leader* described a mother and her two teenage sons from the East Poplar, Saskatchewan, area who were in Scobey on a Saturday night. “They were part of just an ordinary family such as we find among our neighbors just north of the border.” The woman’s husband, Fred Clark, was a First World War vet who had immediately volunteered to return to his post as a torpedo expert. “He is

now stationed at Victoria, B.C., but chafing to get back where action is thickest.” One son was waiting for his enlistment call and planned to fight in submarines or join the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF). The *Leader* reporter was impressed with the family’s attitude toward the war. “They expressed no hate for anyone; they talked with a smile, with optimism, modest loyalty and pride that the men of their family were eager to ‘do their bit’ for their country.”^{vi} The writer seemed to deliberately undermine the notion that Canadian borderlanders were aggressive and war-like because their nation was at war. Indeed, they seemed much like their neighbors to the south.

Almost two years later, in September 1941, Bowler interviewed Reginaans to get a sense of their thoughts on the war. “After talking to a few officials, army and airmen, privates in the ranks and civilians, one is impressed by the absolute confidence they have in victory before another year ends.” Bowler outlined the progress of the war to date, the help Americans were providing in the form of destroyers, munitions, and planes, and the sacrifices Canadians had made. “If the people of Regina are a fair sample of the people of Canada as a whole, Hitler should give up now.”^{vii}

Meanwhile, many Canadian borderlanders followed debates in the United States about that country’s possible entry into the war. The *Lethbridge Herald* spoke for many southern Albertans when it opposed isolationists like Montana senator Burton K. Wheeler. On October 6, 1941, a *Herald* editorial criticized Wheeler’s efforts to drum up anti-war sentiment throughout the northwestern states, quoting a Seattle letter-writer named J. F. Clarke who said allowing the “gangster nations of the day (Germany, Italy and Japan)” to “bump off” decent nations one by one was not the Montana way. “The decent and fairly decent citizens of Montana have always worked and fought side by side

to run down and rid themselves of thieves, murderers and maniacs.” The *Herald* avowed that Clarke “represents the mind of the rank and file of the American people.”^{viii}

From the time Canada entered the war, Montana borderlanders treated Canadians they knew who were in the forces as if they were their own. For instance, in October 1940 a *Leader* correspondent reported that the custom’s inspector, his wife, and fifteen other residents of Whitetail, Montana, attended a farewell party in Bengough, Saskatchewan, for Vic Wightman. Wightman was leaving for Regina to join the air service.^{ix} Later, Wightman’s friends in Scobey were elated when he visited them on leave. “Vic was a visitor here Thursday last with one of his Bengough friends, Joe Stewart, with whom he has attended several Legion events at Scobey where the boys are always more than pleased to welcome their Canadian friends and those fellows especially.” Wightman’s friends couldn’t say enough good things about him -- “He’s the best all-round fellow you ever saw and a real soldier” – and they looked forward to the day “when he will again be a comparatively close neighbor and gas and rubber rationing will be just history.” Wightman clearly felt as attached to his Scobey friends as they did to him. Before he left, he insisted on contributing to the town’s July Fourth festivities. “That’s just like him,” said the celebration’s organizer. “He’s a real guy.”^x

Wightman was just one of a number of Canadian First World War veterans who served in the Second World War and spent their leaves in Montana. “The bond of friendship between allied soldiers of the last war is very apparent in this community when Canadian veterans frequently come down to Scobey to visit with ex-servicemen from this community,” wrote the *Leader*. Private W. R. Jones of Bengough, for instance, visited friends in Scobey in August 1942. Jones guarded German prisoners at a camp in Alberta.

“Jones once lived for a while in the United States and likes to spend his leaves visiting friends and war buddies here,” said the *Leader*.^{xi}

In September 1942 a delegation of Scobeyites, including *Leader* editor Burley Bowler and hotel owner P. R. Gorham, travelled across the border to help the community of Assiniboia honour twenty-two-year-old pilot John Higham and his four crewmen, who were on leave from successful bombing raids over Germany. “Quiet, composed although all around them were excited and flustered, the boys looked as though they might have been just off the farm, out of stores, or young tradesmen such as any number of our boys now in uniform.” Bowler saw the young Saskatchewan men as part of “our” Plains borderland community; he was as proud of them as he was of every young American entering the war. “They are just ordinary boys from our northern plains and no better soldiers have ever been trained than these young fellows now being mustered into the army by the millions.”^{xii}

Later, Bowler praised seventeen Canadians who were back in Saskatchewan after taking part in the commando raid at Dieppe. “They pay glowing tribute to the South Saskatchewan boys who showed how westerners can really battle in that raid.”^{xiii} The Saskatchewan service men were not just part of Bowler’s borderlands; they were part of his West.

Another Montana borderlander identified with the South Saskatchewan Regiment so strongly that he was outraged when many of its members did not survive Dieppe. “I had great empathy for those fellows, because they fought a battle that was a loser,” says Peyton Bennett, whose family farmed near the border northwest of Scobey. Peyton still can’t forgive the British for “takin’ these young guys outta here and pushing them up

against the Germans in Dieppe, for the Queen. I didn't like that at all. That was a personal thing."^{xiv}

Bowler and other Montana borderlanders had a soft spot for pilots who were training at centres in southern Saskatchewan. Once, while returning from Regina, Bowler gave rides to two different groups of student fliers who were hitchhiking to Weyburn and Estevan. The fliers told Bowler they often flew over Scobey, Plentywood, and Wolf Point at night, and Bowler invited them to "give us an aerial salute next time they were over Scobey in the daytime." A few days later a Canadian plane swooped down over the *Leader* office and put on a show – performing barrel rolls and playing tag with the light poles -- for the townspeople.^{xv}

When mechanical problems forced two pilots from No. 2 Bombing and Gunnery School at Mossbank, Saskatchewan, to land their bomber near Peerless, Montana, immigration officer Al Bien and other federal officers took turns guarding the plane until mechanics arrived from Mossbank the next morning. Meanwhile, Scobeyites made the pilots feel at home. "The boys readily made friends at Scobey, where all Canadians or service men from there always find a hearty welcome."^{xvi}

Montana borderlanders were clearly interested in and supported Saskatchewan borderlanders' efforts in the war. Whitetail customs officer Stanley Preston and eleven others attended a victory loan program in Bengough, and Scobeyites with farmland in southern Saskatchewan contributed to that area's victory loan drive; an Assiniboia man made a special trip to Scobey to canvas them.^{xvii} The *Leader* printed excerpts of letters Coronach service men wrote their parents along with letters from Scobey service men. In one series of letters the Coronach postmaster's son, Cecil Keast, described being chained

in a German prison camp for more than nine months.^{xviii} Scobeyites also attended functions in Scobey honoring Canadian “doughboys.”^{xix}

In addition to maintaining an interest in events and people on the other side of the line in the early war years, Plains borderlanders continued to associate the border with adventure. On October 3, 1940, Bowler wrote about an American pilot named Wes Zinn who was no longer allowed to fly in the United States because he fought in the Sino-Japanese conflict in 1935 and 1936. “Wes came to Scobey from California just to get near the Canadian border and a chance to fly again.”^{xx} Zinn hoped to train pilots with the Royal Canadian Air Force in Regina.

Indeed, approximately thirty thousand Americans crossed the border to join the Canadian forces when Canada went to war. They volunteered for several reasons but many, like Zinn, were looking for excitement. Most came from border states. Many of the pilots who were training at centres in southern Saskatchewan were American. When events at Pearl Harbor catapulted the United States into the war, there were more than six thousand Americans in the RCAF and more than three thousand in training, or waiting to start training, in Canada. About one-third soon left to join their own air service.^{xxi} Velma (Anthony) McCrea, a Saskatchewan borderlander who moved to Regina when she was eighteen to work as a domestic for the editor of the *Regina Leader Post*, remembers the night in December 1941 when the editor invited three American airmen to dinner. Velma cooked an elaborate meal and her employers waited and waited, but the men never showed up. “We found out the next day that Pearl Harbor had been bombed and these fellas had snuck back across the border that night when they heard that. It was such a letdown.”^{xxii}

“A good number” of Canadian Plains borderlanders also served in the American forces.^{xxiii} Nick Zuk of Masefield, Saskatchewan, enlisted in the Montana National Guard, 163rd Infantry Regiment, in the fall of 1940.^{xxiv} William Franklin Hoffman of Big Beaver, Saskatchewan, registered for the draft in Daniels County around the same time.^{xxv} North Dakota-born Alfred Haugerud, who lived near Coronach, joined the American air force in 1940.^{xxvi} Julian Berhart Ness of Beaubier, Saskatchewan, was called up in Sheridan County, Montana, in October 1942.^{xxvii} Seven of the forty-eight Coutts, Alberta, men and women who served in the war belonged to the American forces.^{xxviii} Several Canadians in the American services had moved to Montana during the depression and still had strong connections on the Canadian side of the border. Orval Anderson, who was from East Poplar, Saskatchewan, attended high school in Scobey, married a Scobey girl, and trained with an amphibian truck division at Fort Ord, California, during the war. His parents still lived in East Poplar.^{xxix} A clipping in a Scobey woman’s scrapbook notes that when Private William A. Poil got leave from driving a prisoner wagon at Fort Douglas, Utah, “he went directly to Clarksburgh, Sask. to see his father.”^{xxx} Some women from the Canadian borderlands also supported the United States during the war. For instance, the *Daniels County Leader* reported that Miss Kearn of Coronach was employed in defence work in Seattle, and the *Lethbridge Herald* noted that Alice Darling of Coutts, Alberta, was with the U. S. Army Medical Corps in San Francisco.^{xxxi}

Curiosity and a quest for adventure often sent servicemen who were training in southern Saskatchewan across the border. In August 1941 two Canadian soldiers visited Flaxville, Montana. The pair spent a whole day desperately trying to catch a ride back to

Regina in time for the Duke of Kent's inspection of Canadian troops. "Though at a loss to explain how they got there" – no doubt because they'd crossed illegally – "the two lads were definitely aware of the necessity of their immediate return," said the *Leader*.^{xxxii} In June 1942 a twenty-year-old, newly minted British pilot from a Saskatchewan air training station, armed with a letter of introduction from a Regina lawyer, hitchhiked to Scobey and befriended the citizenry. "He is just a fine, clean-looking peaceful appearing boy," wrote Bowler. "He's cheerful, and he has no doubt about a United Nations victory. But he's far from boastful."^{xxxiii} Many thrill-seeking servicemen from the Assiniboia and Mossbank air bases went down to Martin Grove's store on the Montana side of the border and smuggled back carloads of cigarettes. Business, which usually took place at night, was so brisk that Grove could barely keep enough cigarettes and tobacco in stock.^{xxxiv}

Borderlanders also continued to associate the border with romantic love and close family ties during this period. Many Saskatchewan couples continued to marry in Scobey right up until the American government began requiring Canadian border-crossers to have passports on July 1, 1940. "Thirty-eight couples, a large number Canadians, have secured wedding permits since January first," the *Leader* reported on July 4 of that year. Five Canadian couples "slid under the passport wire" in the week before the deadline.^{xxxv}

All was not lost for Canadian couples who didn't know about the new border restrictions. When two couples showed up at the Raymond port of entry north of Plentywood without passports, an American immigration officer kindly fetched the Sheridan County clerk of court to issue them marriage licences and a minister to marry them. "And so both couples were married in an immigration station on the international

boundary, in the presence of United States officials and a Sheridan County minister,” wrote the *Daniels County Free Press*. “It was said to be the first double wedding under similar conditions.”^{xxxvi}

Montana borderlanders soon noticed that fewer Canadians were coming south to marry, however. “We are not having any Canadian marriages any more,” lamented Jones in September 1940. “Since July 1 there have been no licenses issued to Canadian persons, and we must remember there were often six to ten per month.”^{xxxvii} The number of Canadian marriages was still low almost a year later. “The romance business is the poorest it’s been in the history of the county,” said Jones. He said that in past years Canadians accounted for 40 per cent of marriages.^{xxxviii}

Still, some Canadian-American couples and Canadian couples continued to wed in Montana. Raymond Waller, who worked at the Silver Slipper in Scobey, and Evelyn Bellrose of Coronach were married by a justice of the peace in July 1940.^{xxxix} Kenneth King Basseth of East Poplar married Lavon Sorenson of Scobey in September 1941.^{xl} Irving Thornton and Della McIntosh of Bengough were married at the Methodist parsonage in Scobey the same month. After the ceremony the bridal couple were invited to join a supper at the parsonage honoring a visiting minister and his wife.^{xli} And a justice of the peace united Frank F. Eger and Florence Jean Thompson of Coronach in Scobey in September 1942. Raymond and Evelyn Waller, who were married by the same justice of the peace two years earlier, attended the couple.^{xlii}

The passport restrictions could have had a devastating effect on Canadian-American couples who lived near the border. But families in the Carbert-Coal Creek area found creative ways around them. “At first it appeared as if the bloomin’ things were

going to separate relatives, a number of Americans and Canadians being intermarried up thataway,” wrote Bowler. But Canadian families parked their cars on the north side of a swimming hole on the border and Americans parked on the south side and they swam out to the middle to visit. The families also played baseball in a nearby pasture. “The international boundary runs someplace through the field but nobody is quite sure where, the marker being over a hummock. Everybody is careful to be sure and not run too far past the base and be on foreign soil.” The authorities turned a blind eye to these goings on. Scobey immigration officer Al Bien joked that he should go up and ump the games, but he obviously thought the families should be left in peace.^{xliii}

Some Canadian-American families solved the passport problem by camping in “no man’s land” on the border line. One man, an American citizen from Washington, left his family at Scobey, went across the border to collect his Saskatchewan relatives, deposited them at the border, and returned to Scobey to collect his family and take them to the border to join their Canadian kin. Bowler’s source for this story did not disclose the parties’ names, probably to protect them from border authorities.^{xliiv} Other cross-border families picnicked on the line. Clarice and Ralph Susag and their friends and families from Saskatchewan and Montana held a picnic at the “Canadian line” soon after the passport rule went into effect, in August 1940.^{xliv}

The tightening of the border made Montana borderlanders more aware than ever of the importance of their relationship with Saskatchewan borderlanders. After Canada declared war, cross-border trade and other interactions continued apace. Despite unfavorable exchange rates and limits on the amount of money Canadians could bring into the United States, record numbers of Canadian borderlanders crossed the border to

shop. The immigration inspector stationed north of Scobey reported that in November 1939 “the volume of Canadian immigration into the U.S. to purchase American goods exceeded records of the past three years. The volume, charted through that port of entry, showed more than 1,400 entries for that month.”^{xlvi} The following April, visitors from East Poplar and Coronach cashed \$1,940.75 worth of dominion money orders at the Scobey post office. In addition, an “inestimable” amount of money went directly to Scobey businesses. “This influx of Canadian money is significant and a considerable boost for the local business community,” said the *Daniels County Free Press*. “Virtually every business house in this area receives considerable patronage from the other side of the international border.”^{xlvii} The influx of Canadian business continued as the spring progressed, with Fife Lake farmers coming to town for implement parts and one hundred and fifty Canadians reserving tickets to “Gone With the Wind” at the Rex Theatre.^{xlviii}

After the passport rule went into effect, Canadian trade fell dramatically. In December 1940 the manager of the Marquis flour mill in Scobey reported that he had lost more than two thousand dollars in business and other Scobey businesses were also hurting. The border change “has seriously hampered merchant, restaurant and entertainment business in all border towns in this area,” said the *Daniels County Free Press*.^{xlix} If they didn’t know it before, Montana borderlanders now realized how economically intertwined they were with Saskatchewan borderlanders. “In northeastern Montana we have looked upon Canada as a great source of friendship and business,” wrote the editor of the *Free Press*. “These days there is a common lament over the great loss resulting from the border being shut down. This rather obvious fact shows that as Americans we are far from independent. We do rely upon the trade and good will brought

to us from across the boundary and the severed relations re-awakens our sensibility on that score.”¹ Living near the border made Montana borderlanders more aware than most Americans that they were not exceptional. They needed other nations. They needed Canada. For Montana borderlanders, the tightening of the border helped drive home the significance of Canada’s entry into the war.

As usual, Plains borderlanders refused to go down without a fight. Scobey’s business leaders could not understand “why the American government moved to demand passports from Canadians coming here, while Americans travel at will across the line to Canada – and find a grand welcome awaiting them.” They thought it was unfair that Americans could not welcome Canadians as warmly as Canadians could greet Americans. Bowler said restrictions preventing Canadians from making their usual calls on the American side had cut business by ten to fifteen per cent.^{li} The Scobey Lions Club launched the Canadian Trade Project, firing off letters to Montana’s senators in Washington asking them to investigate the matter. A dozen senators from states along the border pressured Washington and Ottawa to make it easier for Canadians to spend money in the United States. “The situation is a real mess,” said one of the senators. “The Canadian restrictions have caused a devil of a lot of trouble. There are many towns which are dependent upon Canadian trade. Their entire economy has been built on that trade.”^{lii} Unfortunately, the Scobey Lions and the senators failed to convince the powers that be to soften the border. Secretary of State Cordell Hull wrote Senator Burton Wheeler to explain that the Canadian – not the American -- government imposed the regulations restricting importation of goods and restricting Canadian citizens’ travel in other countries “for the purpose of conserving Canadian foreign exchange resources.”^{liii}

Montana senators informed the Lions that their plan to revitalize trade with their Canadian neighbours was impossible “due to war conditions.”^{liv}

Canadian and American borderlanders both fought to have the Carbert port of entry reopened in 1940 and 1941 to make it easier for Canadians to get to Scobey. The Scobey Lions Club and individual businessmen wrote Senator James Murray, other politicians, and federal customs officials about the port on the Montana side, while Rockglen real estate and insurance man C. E. Sproule wrote officials in Ottawa about the matching port on the Canadian side. It seems Canadian authorities were willing to keep their port open but American officials were not. Canadians in the Rockglen area had to make the “Grand Detour,” driving miles out of their way to get to another customs post if they wanted to enter Montana legally.^{lv}

Border restrictions may have put a chill on Canadian and American borderlanders’ trade relations, but they failed to stop crossborder interactions altogether. In 1940 and 1941 Plains borderlanders held international picnics and baseball games on the border line north of Scobey, with the Canadian Red Cross operating a concession stand on the Canadian side.^{lvi} And regulars continued to travel back and forth. American borderlanders, who did not require passports, continued to go north to fish, hunt, visit friends and relatives, buy livestock, and attend sports events, fairs, and funerals. American Legion representatives from Scobey, Flaxville, Whitetail, Wolf Point, and Fort Peck, along with the Flaxville drum and bugle corps, the Scobey school band, and fifty majorettes, attended Dominion Day celebrations in Bengough. A. A. Hames and family of Porcupine Quills, Montana, drove to Oxbow, Saskatchewan to attend his sister’s

funeral. Flaxville café owner Mathilda Kramer went to a family reunion in Coutts, Alberta. Well-known Scobey hotel owner P. R. Gorham, farmer J. V. Bennett, and businessmen E. T. Peterson and E. W. Battleson went hunting in southern Saskatchewan. Adolph Hexom and three friends went to see the movie “Northwest Mounted Police” in Regina. Conrad Erickson and Charles Adams of Plentywood went on a fishing trip to Lake Qu’Appelle. Neil Taylor went to Lake Valley, Saskatchewan, to purchase fifty-seven Hereford calves from the T. A. Clarke ranch; it was the second year he had purchased the ranch’s entire calf crop. Whitetail customs officer Stanley Preston and his wife attended a banquet and dance in Bengough with six Whitetail friends and later spent Christmas Day with the Aust family of Bengough. Daniels County clerk of court George Jones and his wife vacationed in Regina and other Canadian towns. Scobey dentist W. P. McDaniel and his wife also travelled to Regina to visit friends and attend the western conference of the Canadian Dental Association. And the “usual” number of Scobeyites (the *Daniels County Leader* counted more than twelve in 1943) attended the Regina fair.^{lvii}

Fewer Canadians went south in the early 1940s than in the past, but many wasted little time in obtaining passports to enable them to cross. M. H. Cowan, his wife, and five sons from Constance, Saskatchewan, were the first to present their passports at the East Poplar port of entry, in early August 1940.^{lviii} Regular Scobey visitor Joe Stewart dropped by in early September. “He was the first person in Bengough to receive his passport,” said the *Daniels County Free Press*.^{lix} Moose Jaw school official James Frazier visited Scobey in November 1940. “Mr. Frazier, formerly a frequent visitor here, had come here

the first time since the border restrictions were established on July 1 requiring all Canadians to have a passport for admittance into the United States.”^{lx}

Canadian Legion members continued to travel to Memorial Day services in Scobey, members of fraternal organizations like the Masons continued to visit their peers across the line, and Canadian and American sports teams continued to exchange visits. The passport rule failed to stop Saskatchewan teams from competing in Montana. The first time the Regina All-Stars basketball team tried to travel south to play against the Peerless Pirates, they were stopped at the border because their passports were not in order. But the team “surmounted the red-tape difficulties” and eventually “invaded the Peerless stronghold.” The *Daniels County Leader*, which noted that the Regina team included two Royal Canadian Air Force members, was fond of using military terminology in its headlines after Canada went to war.^{lxi}

Canadians who visited friends in Scobey included Mossbank farmer Cal Sutor, Bengough residents Art Dove and Royal Canadian Mounted Police Sergeant Cheeter, and Al Chafee and his wife from Fort Qu’Appelle.^{lxii} The Sutors, the Chafees and a couple from Assiniboia went down to attend their friend P. R. Gorham’s wedding in 1943.^{lxiii} Once, Sutor and three Mossbank companions had a car accident because they were rushing back to the border before it closed at 6 p.m.^{lxiv}

Not all Montana borderlanders were keen to see Canadians during the war. Saskatchewan farmer Orland MacInnes obtained a passport so he could visit his girlfriend on the Montana side. But after the United States entered the war the young woman broke up with him. As a patriotic American she supported gasoline and tire rationing, and she

could not abide the thought of Orland using such resources to cross the border on her account.^{lxv}

Border regulations softened over time. Canadians with passports who crossed regularly could obtain identification cards to speed up the process – instead of having to make a special trip to Regina to obtain a visa. Canadian servicemen in uniform could enter the United States without passports. Custom combiners were allowed to cross the border in either direction to help with harvests. And two Assiniboia men who visited Scobey in August 1941 reported that Canadians were allowed to bring more expense money across the border. Formerly allowed only five dollars, they could now obtain permits for one hundred dollars. “Border towns in Montana appreciate the modified rules,” said the *Daniels County Leader*, “although customs and excise levies on goods purchased here and taken across have a very depleting effect.”^{lxvi}

At last, the border reopened. The *Daniels County Leader* noted in the summer of 1944 that Canadians could now visit for up to twenty-seven days without passports or border cards. They were also allowed to spend one hundred and fifty dollars per year in the United States. The number of Canadians crossing the border jumped. “Quite a few Canadians have been seen in Scobey since the restrictions were lifted,” said the *Leader*. On one day alone one Scobey office cashed thirty-one Canadian money orders, compared to eight American money orders. As one Scobey woman said, “It seems quite like old times again to see so many of our Canadian friends.”^{lxvii} Only when Canadians and Americans could freely mingle again did Plains borderlanders consider that life had returned to normal.

A year later, as the end of the Second World War approached, Bowler brought out the trope of the undefended border. “The pattern set by the United States and Canada, which have the longest international line in the world without a fortification, in settling international problems – despite the pettiness of minor officials – could be a pattern for peace and understanding between all nations.” As a borderlander with a long history of crossing and observing the border, Bowler was well-qualified to comment on the significance of the forty-ninth parallel. At the local level, officials and border restrictions could try borderlanders’ patience, but overall the border was a model of peaceful international relations.^{lxviii}

Meanwhile, across the border in Climax, Saskatchewan, a woman named Harriet Wiggins tucked a poem lauding the Canadian-American boundary into her scrapbook. The last stanza of the poem, entitled “A Century of Peace,” read: “Three thousand miles of border line,/ One hundred years of peace! / In all the page of history, what parallel to this? / God speed that surely dawning day – that coming hour divine -- / When all the nations of the earth shall boast such border line!”^{lxix} Both Bowler and Wiggins were proud of their connection with the Canadian-American border, proud of the message it sent to the world, especially in times of war. The border and its history of amicable cross-border relationships were very special to these borderlanders.

From the late nineteenth century through the 1930s and early ‘40s, northern Plains borderlanders maintained a unique, cross-border community characterized by resistance to border authorities, friendly social and economic interactions, and romantic notions of love, family, and adventure. When the forty-ninth parallel hardened in 1930 and again in 1940, Canadian and American borderlanders took note. They would not allow world

events to separate them. In fact, they sang the praises of their intermingled community and the border that ran through their midst.

Notes

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- ⁱ “Glentworth Splashes,” *Meyronne Independent*, 22 June 1939.
- ⁱⁱ “Dust Bowl Now Resembles Mud Bowl,” *Daniels County Leader*, 9 May 1940.
- ⁱⁱⁱ S. M. Lipset, *Agrarian Socialism: The Cooperative Commonwealth Federation in Saskatchewan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 131; D. M. Loveridge and Barry Potyondi, *From Wood Mountain to the Whitemud: A Historical Survey of the Grasslands National Park Area* (Ottawa: Parks Canada, 1983), 232-35; Malone and others, *Montana*, 308-309, 318; Montana Crop and Livestock Reporting Service, *Montana Agricultural Statistics*, 5, 37; Bill Waiser, *Saskatchewan: A New History* (Calgary: Fifth House, 2005), 337-38; Scott C. Loken, “Montana During World War Two,” (Master’s thesis, University of Montana, 1993).
- ^{iv} “U. S. Lifts Passport Rule: Admits Canadian Troops – Easing Other Bans Suggested,” *New York Times*, 31 December 1941, 18.
- ^v “Whitetail Community,” *Daniel’s County Leader*, 14 September 1939.
- ^{vi} “With People Making News,” *Daniel’s County Leader*, 21 December 1939.
- ^{vii} “Confidence,” *Daniels County Leader*, 4 September 1941.
- ^{viii} “Back at Wheeler,” *Lethbridge Herald*, 6 October 1941.
- ^{ix} “Whitetail News,” *Daniels County Leader*, 3 October 1940.
- ^x “A Champion is Visitor Here,” *Daniels County Leader*, 18 June 1942.
- ^{xi} “Guards German Prisoners,” *Daniels County Leader*, 6 August 1942.
- ^{xii} “They Earned a Vacation,” *Daniels County Leader*, 10 September 1942.
- ^{xiii} “With People Making News,” *Daniels County Leader*, 15 October 1942.
- ^{xiv} Peyton Bennett oral history interview with author, 10 October 2005.
- ^{xv} “They ‘Dood’ It,” *Daniels County Leader*, 8 October 1942.
- ^{xvi} “Canadian Flyers Have Mishap,” *Daniels County Leader*, 27 May 1943.

^{xvii} *Daniels County Leader*, “Whitetail,” 19 June 1941; “Over the Top,” 12 November 1942.

^{xviii} “Canadian Boy in Chains in German Prison Camp,” *Daniels County Leader*, 1 July 1943.

^{xix} “Canadian Doughboy Honored,” *Daniels County Leader*, 1 July 1943.

^{xx} “Flyer Wants Wings Back,” *Daniels County Leader*, 3 October 1940.

^{xxi} Fred Gaffen, *Cross-Border Warriors: Canadians in American Forces, Americans in Canadian Forces* (Toronto: Dunburn Press, 1995), ix, 44-46, 50-51. Many Americans in the Canadian army were of British stock “and thus were motivated by a sense of loyalty,” writes Gaffen. “Those who enlisted in the RCAF (Royal Canadian Air Force) were additionally motivated by a strong desire to fly.”

^{xxii} Velma (Anthony) McCrea oral history interview with author, 14 August 2005.

^{xxiii} Gaffen, *Cross-Border Warriors*, 51.

^{xxiv} Martin J. Kidston, *From Poplar to Papua: Montana’s 163rd Infantry Regiment in World War II* (Helena: Farcountry Press, 2004), 184.

^{xxv} “36 Names Added to Daniels County Registrants,” *Daniels County Leader*, 31 October 1940.

^{xxvi} “Coronach Man Dies at 57,” newspaper clipping, Delma Cabarett Scrapbook, ca. 1961-1974, Scobey Color Guard box, Daniels County Museum, Scobey, Montana.

^{xxvii} “Sheridan County Servicemen from World War II” Scrapbook, Sheridan County Museum, Plentywood, Montana.

^{xxviii} Sunshine Women’s Institute History Committee, *History of the Border Country of Coutts*, 294-96.

^{xxix} “Two Soldiers, Local Girls Wed This Week,” *Daniels County Leader*, May 18, 1944.

^{xxx} Antonina Veiss Scrapbook, 1940s, Daniels County Museum, Scobey, Montana.

^{xxxi} “From Coronach,” *Daniels County Leader*, 24 August 1944; “Sweet Grass Notes,” *Lethbridge Herald*, 9 July 1943.

^{xxxii} “Canadian Soldiers Visit,” *Daniels County Leader*, 7 August 1941.

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- xxxiii "He was at Dunkirk," *Daniels County Leader*, 18 June 1942.
- xxxiv "Remembrances of Mr. and Mrs. Niels Gording," Collection E3576, Saskatchewan Archives Board, Regina, Saskatchewan.
- xxxv "Canadian Couples Use Last Chance," *Daniels County Leader*, 4 July 1940.
- xxxvi "Double Wedding Held at U. S. Border Station," *Daniels County Free Press*, 25 July 1940.
- xxxvii "Records Tell Story of Relation of Conscription to Marriage," *Daniels County Free Press*, 19 September 1940.
- xxxviii "Whadaya Say, Joe?" *Daniels County Leader*, 4 July 1941.
- xxxix "Three Weddings During Weekend," *Daniels County Leader*, 11 July 1940.
- xl "Five Marriage Licenses Issued by Clerk of Court," *Daniels County Leader*, 25 September 1941.
- xli "Canadian Couple Married Thursday," *Daniels County Leader*, 4 September 1941.
- xlii "Canadian Couple Wed," *Daniels County Leader*, 3 September 1942.
- xliii "Makes No Difference to Carbert," *Daniels County Leader*, 18 July 1940.
- xliv "Families Solve Border Problem," *Daniels County Leader*, 25 July 1940.
- xlv "Silver Star," *Daniels County Leader*, 8 August 1940.
- xlvi "Traffic from Canada Greatest in November," *Daniels County Leader*, 8 February 1940.
- xlvii "Businessmen of Scobey Urged to Promote Opening of Carbert Customs to Invite Canada Trade," *Daniels County Free Press*, 2 May 1940.
- xlviii "Merchants State Trade Increases," *Daniels County Free Press*, 16 May 1940.
- xlix "Loss in Canadian Trade Totals \$2,000 Yearly, Says Mill Boss," *Daniels County Free Press*, 19 December 1940.
- ¹ "Nations Rely on One Another," *Daniels County Free Press*, 5 December 1940.

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- li “Border Restrictions Have Background in War Effort – Secretary Hull,” *Daniels County Leader*, 1 May 1941.
- lii “Canada Asked to Liberalize Border Trade,” *Daniels County Leader*, 7 August 1941.
- liii “Border Restrictions Have Background in War Effort – Secretary Hull,” *Daniels County Leader*, 1 May 1941.
- liv “No Change in Rules Regarding Border,” *Daniels County Free Press*, 1 May 1941.
- lv “Merchants State Trade Increases,” *Daniels County Free Press*, 16 May 1940; *Daniels County Leader*, “Lions Request Longer Hours at Line Office,” 30 May 1940; “Carbert Customs Favored on Canadian Side,” 18 April 1946.
- lvi “International Picnic to be Held August Third,” *Daniels County Free Press*, 31 July 1941.
- lvii *Daniels County Leader*, “Scobey, Flaxville Musicians Will be at Bengough,” 27 June 1940; “Porcupine Hills,” 26 September 1940; “Flaxville Community,” 3 October 1940; “Local Notes,” 24 October 1940; Altar Society Dinner Success, 3 October 1940; “Hunters Return from Trip,” 23 October 1941; “Neil Taylor Buys Crop of Registered Calves,” 27 November 1941; “Local Notes,” 25 June 1942; “Whitetail Community,” 18 November 1943; “Whitetail,” 30 December 1943; “Local Notes,” 24 June 1943; “Dr. McDaniel Visits Regina,” 1 July 1943; “Many Attending Provincial Fair,” 15 July 1943.
- lviii “East Poplar Port Receives First Canadian Passports,” *Daniels County Leader*, 15 August 1940.
- lix *Daniels County Free Press*, 5 September 1940.
- lx “People Who Come and Go,” *Daniels County Free Press*, 14 November 1940.
- lxi “Regina All-Stars to Invade Peerless Stronghold in Scobey,” *Daniels County Leader*, 6 February 1941.
- lxii *Daniels County Leader*, “Local Notes,” 24 April 1941; “Canadians Here,” 14 May 1942; “Mossbank Farmer Visits Here,” 17 September 1942.
- lxiii “Juliet Barringer and P. R. Gorham Married Saturday,” *Daniels County Leader*, 23 December 1943.
- lxiv “Canadian Car Upsets on Second Bridge,” *Daniels County Leader*, 11 December 1941.

^{lxv} Orland MacInnes oral history interview with author.

^{lxvi} *Daniels County Leader*, “Canucks May Get Identification Cards,” 5 September 1941; “Restrictions Easing,” 28 August 1941; “Trying to Save Sask. Crop,” 17 September 1942; “Border Formalities Will Suspend for Harvest Time,” 6 July 1944; Isern, *Custom Combining*, 185-99; “U. S. Lifts Passport Rule: Admits Canadian Troops – Easing Other Bans Suggested,” *New York Times*, 31 December 1941.

^{lxvii} “North Neighbors Good Customers,” *Daniels County Leader*, 10 August 1944.

^{lxviii} *Daniels County Leader*, 5 July 1945.

^{lxix} Harriet Wiggins Scrapbook, 1920s-1940s, Climax Museum, Climax, Saskatchewan. The same poem, entitled “Our Borderline,” was included in the American Woman’s Club of Calgary’s 1940-1941 bulletin; see Nora Faires, “ ‘Talented and Charming Strangers from Across the Line’: Gendered Nationalism, Class Privilege, and the American Woman’s Club of Calgary,” in Jameson and McManus, *One Step*, 277-92. The poem also appeared as “The Borderline of Brotherhood” in the *Rockglen Review*, 3 February 1945.

CONCLUSION

The Community Endures

Writers and scholars who have studied the northern Great Plains borderlands argue that the region possessed a unique, cross-border community in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The international boundary was loosely regulated and trade and people flowed north and south as easily as they flowed east and west. This dissertation argues that this community persisted beyond the settlement era, well into the 1930s. This is significant because powerful forces were at work that threatened to divide Canadian and American borderlanders during this period. National authorities effectively closed the border in late 1929 in response to the economic disaster that afflicted both countries. Steep tariffs limited cross-border trade, and strict immigration rules restricted migration from one country to the other. Border crossers were under increased scrutiny from border officials and lawmakers. But none of this stopped Americans and Canadians who lived near the forty-ninth parallel from intermingling on the northern Plains. Indeed, the sense that they belonged to a special community only intensified.

This dissertation is a grass roots social history of the northern Great Plains borderlands. It makes a contribution by exploring the significance of the border in ordinary borderlanders' lives. It shows that borderlanders' relationship with the border came to shape their identity. The dissertation uses Victor Konrad and Lauren McKinsey's definition of borderlands, as "a region jointly shared by two nations that houses people with common social characteristics in spite of the political boundary between them.... Shared characteristics within the region set it apart from the country that contains it."¹ People who lived near the forty-ninth parallel had more in common with each other than

with their fellow countrymen and women. They asserted their borderlands identity alongside or over and above their respective national identities.

Plains borderlanders' many transborder interactions helped them juggle multiple identities and transcend national, ethnic, and cultural differences. Canadian and American borderlanders of different backgrounds regularly crossed the border and participated with each other in national, social, business, agricultural, and other events. They took a keen interest in each other's lives. They saw each other as people experiencing similar hardships and they looked to each other for ideas, resources, companionship, and inspiration. Borderlanders felt their cross-border ties set them apart from non-borderlanders. Also, they felt different from non-borderlanders because they understood border rules and how to get around them. They had a sense of ownership about the boundary. Often they pressured national authorities to recognize their special needs. Maintaining their community was very important to them; they regularly looked to politicians to facilitate cross-border connections and to solve border-related problems.

Much of northern Great Plains borderlanders' identity revolved around resistance to national authority. When the border tightened borderlanders fought back in several ways. They kept tabs on border officials' activities, attacked them verbally and physically, broke customs and immigration rules, expropriated sections of the boundary, and protested regulations they regarded as unfair.

Perhaps borderlanders' most obvious form of resistance was smuggling. Nothing defined them so much as their penchant for illegally transporting grain, cattle, horses, liquor, clothing, food, and other items across the border. Smuggling was popular in the borderlands in the 1930s because people on both sides of the line were experiencing

extreme hardship; many borderlanders stretched their meager resources by buying items cheaply across the border and sneaking them home without paying duty on them or by working for someone else who was smuggling. It was a matter of survival. Smuggling was also popular because borderlanders thought outwitting border authorities was exciting, many borderlanders thought the rules were ridiculous, and borderlanders simply thought they were doing nothing wrong.

Canadian and American borderlanders also stymied national efforts to separate them by fostering numerous grass roots connections. Borderlanders frequently journeyed across the line to celebrate national holidays, promote cross-border causes, maintain long-time friendships, support each other's businesses, and exchange ideas. Many believed these "neighborly acts across the line" separated them from non-borderlanders. Living near the border increased their awareness of cross-border issues and made them more open-minded, cooperative, and friendly. It made them special.

Many borderlanders enjoyed a romantic connection with the border – associating it with courtship, marriage, and colourful tales of adventure, rebelliousness, and the mythic West. While many young people crossed the line to find mates, others crossed to find excitement and independence from parents and other authority figures. Some borderlanders saw themselves as renegades in search of freedom, like Bad Dillinger, the feisty Montana buffalo who crossed the border into Saskatchewan and eluded capture for weeks. For others, the borderlands were a region of the heart, knit together by stories of love and cross-border family ties.

When the Second World War came to the borderlands and the depression came to an end, national authorities tightened the border even further. This failed to sever cross-

border relationships. Borderlanders continued to cross legally and illegally, to show interest in events and people across the border, and to press for measures that would facilitate cross-border travel and trade. Still, the community didn't fully reassert itself until authorities reopened the border near the end of the war.

This dissertation supports historian Sheila McManus' contention that "the weight of the border's history is on continuity, not change."ⁱⁱ Long after the border was established and settlers filled the borderlands, grass roots connections continued to unite people on both sides of the line. Evidence of a cross-border community could still be found on the northern Plains in the decades after the Great Depression and the Second World War. Canadian and American borderlanders pressured American officials to reopen the border crossing at Carbert.ⁱⁱⁱ Scobeyites participated in Bengough sports days and southern Saskatchewan athletes participated in Scobey's July Fourth celebrations.^{iv} Canadian and Montana bands competed in Havre.^v Many Canadian couples continued to go south to marry.^{vi} Northern Montana merchants hosted "Canadian Days."^{vii} Women from across southern Saskatchewan attended international teas held by the Sheridan County Homemakers Club of northeastern Montana.^{viii} American and Canadian borderlanders who belonged to the International Square Dancing Association "developed many across-the-border friendships that we'll always cherish."^{ix} Borderlanders continued to hold border picnics and to play baseball across the line.^x Whenever the exchange rate was in their favour, Canadian borderlanders inundated American communities; Great Falls residents recall years when Canadian and American money commingled in their wallets.^{xi} Borderlanders in one northeastern Montana community were so close to Saskatchewan borderlanders in the 1980s that they referred to them as "our amorous

neighbours” in their local history book.^{xiii} And in the early 1990s a cross-border newspaper, the *Can-Am Telegram*, sprang up “to expand better personal relations and business climate between the southern Alberta and north-central Montana regions.”^{xiii}

World events have thickened the border yet again. The tightening of the forty-ninth parallel in response to the terrorist attacks of 9/11 raises questions about the future of the northern Great Plains borderlands community. Will the community survive in a world where border crossers require passports and the border is becoming a “virtual electronic wall” patrolled by ground officers, helicopters, planes, and unmanned aircraft?^{xiv} There’s no question these changes have disrupted the decades-old border community. It’s hard for borderlanders to treat the border lightly when guards grill them every time they cross and giant billboards at the Coutts-Sweet Grass crossing urge them to report suspicious activity to Homeland Security. Still, criminals continue to smuggle drugs, people, and weapons across isolated stretches of the border.^{xv} Ordinary Canadian borderlanders collect prescription drugs from American postal boxes and attempt to smuggle them into Canada.^{xvi} American mothers drive their children north to swim in Canadian swimming pools.^{xvii} Canadian borderlanders include their “neighbors to the south” in recently published local histories.^{xviii} Communities on both sides of the border continue to lobby their governments to increase port of entry hours to facilitate trade.^{xix}

The old pull between borderlanders’ interests and national interests continues. Plains borderlanders have a history of building and re-building cross-border relationships in response to world events. Given half a chance, they’ll do it again.

NOTES

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- ⁱ McKinsey and Konrad, *Borderlands Reflections*, 4.
- ⁱⁱ S. McManus, *Line Which Separates*, 183.
- ⁱⁱⁱ “Delegation from Canada Delays Scobey Trip,” *Daniels County Leader*, 23 May 1946.
- ^{iv} “Canucks May Participate in Scobey Sports,” *Daniels County Leader*, 6 June 1946.
- ^v Antoinette R. Hagener, “Havre,” typescript, ca. 1993, Havre-Hill County Library, Havre, Montana.
- ^{vi} “1945 Record of Births, Marriages, Divorces, Deaths,” *Daniels County Leader*, 3 January 1946.
- ^{vii} “Plentywood,” newspaper clipping, 1960, Antelope Homemakers Club Scrapbook, 1935-1992, Sheridan County Museum, Plentywood, Montana.
- ^{viii} Antelope Homemakers Club Scrapbook, “International Friendship Prevails at Home Club Tea,” newspaper clipping, July 1960; “International Tea Here Was Huge Success; Over 300 Here,” newspaper clipping, July 1962; International Tea program, May 18, 1985; Hands Across the Borders, International Tea program, 5 May 5 1990; International Tea program, 2 May 1992.
- ^{ix} George H. Johnson, *George H. Johnson Autobiography* (1993), 44.
- ^x Author’s personal knowledge, from visit to Climax, Saskatchewan.
- ^{xi} Author’s personal knowledge, from visits to Great Falls and Scobey, Montana.
- ^{xii} North Valley County Bicentennial Committee, *Homesteading Our Heritage*, 2.
- ^{xiii} *Can-Am Telegram*, Great Falls, December 1992, 1, no. 1.
- ^{xiv} Erin Madison, “‘Thick’ Border May Deteriorate U.S.-Canada Relations, Expert Says,” *Great Falls Tribune*, 14 May 2009.
- ^{xv} “Carnduff, Sask., Used for Smuggling People into U.S., Authorities Say,” Associated Press, 9 April 2013, cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/story; Bill Graveland, “International Weapons Smuggling Ring Was Based in Alberta: Police,” 1 April 2011, www.thestar.com.
- ^{xvi} Mike McIntyre, “Woman Spared Record for Smuggling Drugs Across Border for Husband,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, 28 February 2013.

^{xvii} Author's personal knowledge, from a visit to Oungre, Saskatchewan.

^{xviii} Hills of Home History Book Committee, *Hills of Home*, 783-837.

^{xix} Kim Skorngoski, "Pushing for 24-hour Ports," *Great Falls Tribune*, 21 September 2008; Kim Skorngoski, "Canada to Mirror Summer Hours at Port of Wild Horse," *Great Falls Tribune*, 18 November 2010; Paul Tuss, "Upgrade Our Gateway to Canada to Boost Trade," *Great Falls Tribune*, 16 June 2011.

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