

The Patriot Press and their Paper Tiger

Community Formation and Allusions to the Patriot Hunters, 1836-1842

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Volume 115, numéro 2, fall 2023

The 1838 Upper Canadian Rebellion/Patriot War and its Aftermath

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1106168ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1106168ar>

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Éditeur(s)

The Ontario Historical Society

ISSN

0030-2953 (imprimé)

2371-4654 (numérique)

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Citer cet article

Smith, S. R. I. (2023). The Patriot Press and their Paper Tiger: Community Formation and Allusions to the Patriot Hunters, 1836-1842. *Ontario History*, 115(2), 249-274. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1106168ar>

Résumé de l'article

Alors que les études sur la rébellion se sont principalement concentrées sur la société secrète des Frères Chasseurs, un aspect peu étudié de la rébellion est le rôle persistant des journaux alliés dans la structuration de la rébellion au Canada, puis dans son maintien en exil. L'article donne un aperçu de la "presse patriote" et de la façon dont elle a contribué à délimiter le mouvement patriote en exil. Dans la presse, les termes et le langage associés aux Frères Chasseurs ont permis d'unir les patriotes. Alors que certains rédacteurs patriotes ont exprimé leur dégoût pour le secret, certains de ces mêmes rédacteurs se servent maintenant de références à l'organisation secrète pour rassurer les lecteurs qu'ils font partie d'une organisation plus vaste, très active et très efficace, engagée dans l'indépendance du Canada - même si ce n'est pas vrai.

The Patriot Press and their Paper Tiger

Community Formation and Allusions to the Patriot Hunters, 1836-1842

by Stephen R.I. Smith

One of the most interesting aspects of the 1837-38 Rebellion is the creation and ongoing role of the secret society known (in English) as the Patriot Hunters after the initial defeat and flight of rebels and *patriotes* to the United States in the last months of 1837. However, the major problem with any study of the Patriot Hunters is the lack of a primary, reliable, comprehensive study of the movement other than Oscar A. Kinchen's slim 1956 volume. What has been missed in focus on the secret society—and can help fill this lacuna—is a collection of allied newspapers: the patriot press. Starting in the Canadas, this press survived the outbreak of the Rebellion in November 1837 to re-emerge later in the United States. This article describes the formation of the press in the Canadas, its characteristics, and its migration to and evolu-

Abstract

While a major focus in studies of the Rebellion has been the secret society the Patriot Hunters, one understudied aspect to the Rebellion is the continued role of allied newspapers in organizing rebellion in the Canadas and subsequently sustaining it in exile. The article provides an overview of the "patriot press" and how it helped delineate the patriot movement in exile. In the press, terms and language associated with the Patriot Hunters provided a tool to unite patriots. While some patriot editors expressed aversion to secrecy, some of those same editors now used references to secret organizing as ploys to reassure readers that they were part of a larger, highly active, and highly successful organization committed to Canadian independence—even if that was not true.

Résumé: *Alors que les études sur la rébellion se sont principalement concentrées sur la société secrète des Frères Chasseurs, un aspect peu étudié de la rébellion est le rôle persistant des journaux alliés dans la structuration de la rébellion au Canada, puis dans son maintien en exil. L'article donne un aperçu de la "presse patriote" et de la façon dont elle a contribué à délimiter le mouvement patriote en exil. Dans la presse, les termes et le langage associés aux Frères Chasseurs ont permis d'unir les patriotes. Alors que certains rédacteurs patriotes ont exprimé leur dégoût pour le secret, certains de ces mêmes rédacteurs se servent maintenant de références à l'organisation secrète pour rassurer les lecteurs qu'ils font partie d'une organisation plus vaste, très active et très efficace, engagée dans l'indépendance du Canada - même si ce n'est pas vrai.*

tion in the United States. How did the press interact with the patriot movement in the United States and its new interest in secret organizing? In the press, terms and language associated with the Patriot Hunters provided a tool to unite patriots. However, the propriety of secret organizing was a force for division amongst the press. By centering on this press, a number of obscured elements can come into focus. First, rather than a rupture with exile, the press demonstrates continuity in the Rebellion between its initial stages in November and December 1837 and its later expressions in the United States.¹ Second, rather than trying to amalgamate all patriot activity as falling under a supposedly regimented and homogenous voluntary association—the Patriot Hunters, this paper casts the Hunters as a component of an amorphous and expansive movement united by common media.

The Patriot Press

The importance of patriot newspapers is evident from their number,

continuity, and their expansion in exile as illustrated in the following table. The table excludes papers for which no issues are extant. To be “patriot,” the papers listed must meet two main criteria. First, the papers embraced immediate independence for the Canadas from British control. Second, the papers also had a strong dedication to republicanism. Thus, even when initially printed in the Canadas, patriot papers contained a common borderland element, namely they wished to erase the existing boundary between republic and monarchy in North America.

The development of the patriot press began in the Canadas and continued in the United States. In the Canadas, it was a response to actions by British and colonial administrators that radicalized a segment of the reform and *patriote* movements. July 4th 1836 saw the publication of a new paper edited by William Lyon Mackenzie: the *Constitution*. It was by no means the first paper advocating for reform in the Canadas. However, it is best viewed as the vanguard of a new set

Table 1: Patriot newspapers (organized by date of founding; * indicates that the date of first issue has been derived from later issues.)²

Newspaper	Location	Associated Individuals	First Issue	Frequency of Editions	Last Issue
Patriot Newspapers in the Canadas					
<i>Minerve</i>	Montreal, LC	Ludger Duvernay	9 Nov. 1826	Semi-weekly	20 Nov. 1837
<i>Vindicator</i>	Montreal, LC	Edmund Bailey O'Callaghan, Louis Perrault, Thomas Storrow Brown	12 Dec. 1828	Semi-weekly	7 Nov. 1837

¹ Not to ignore the continued agitation in the district of Montreal in November 1838.

² The *Vindicator*, *Minerve*, and *Libéral/Libral* are available through the digital portal of the Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec <<https://www.banq.qc.ca/revues-et-journaux/>>. The *North*

<i>Constitution</i>	Toronto, UC	William Lyon Mackenzie, James Mackenzie	4 July 1836	Weekly	6 Dec. 1837
<i>Libéral/ Liberal</i>	Québec, LC	Robert-Shore-Milnes Bouchette, Charles Hunter, François Lemaître	17 June 1837	Semi-weekly	20 Nov. 1837
Patriot Newspapers in the United States					
<i>Lewiston Telegraph</i> ³	Lewiston, NY	John A. Harrison, Samuel Peters Hart, Edward Allen Talbot	Mid-late 1836 ^a	Weekly	1839
<i>Detroit Morning Post</i> ⁵	Detroit, MI	Benjamin Kingsbury Jr., George Burnham	3 July 1837 1838	Daily Weekly	1838 early 1840
<i>Canadian Patriot</i> ⁶	Derby Line, VT	Hiram Blanchard	22 Dec. 1837 ^a	Weekly	1838
<i>Buffalonian</i>	Buffalo, NY	Thomas Low Nichols, J. Whipple Dwinell	25 Dec. 1837 5 March 1838 2 June 1838	Daily Triweekly Weekly	5 March 1838 1839-1840? 1839-1840?
<i>Estafette</i> ⁷	New York, NY	Henry D. Robinson	2 Jan. 1838	Semi-weekly	1839
<i>Budget</i>	Conneaut, OH	Daniel C. Allen _____? Finch	21 Jan. 1838 ^a	Daily	3 Feb. 1838
<i>Mackenzie's Gazette</i>	New York, NY later Rochester, NY	William Lyon Mackenzie, Edmund Bailey O'Callaghan, Henry O'Reilly	12 May 1838	Weekly	23 Dec. 1840
<i>Freeman's Advocate</i>	Lockport, NY	James Mackenzie, John A. Harrison	28 Sept. 1838 ^a	Weekly	29 March 1839
<i>Mercury</i>	Buffalo, NY	Thomas Low Nichols	16 Nov. 1838 ^a 21 Nov. 1838 1 Dec. 1838	Semi-weekly Daily Weekly	? 19 Jan. 1839 19 Jan. 1839
<i>Oswego Bulletin</i>	Oswego, NY	John Carpenter	Fall 1838	As needed ⁸	
<i>Patriot Express</i>	Syracuse, NY	Unknown	Fall 1838	?	?
<i>Bald Eagle</i>	Cleveland, OH	Samuel Underhill, W. M. Thompson	23 Nov. 1838 ^a	Semi-weekly	"early in 1839" ⁹
<i>Mercury and Buffalonian</i>	Buffalo, NY	Thomas Low Nichols	? Nov. 1838 ^a 5 Jan. 1839 ^a ?	Daily Weekly Semi-Weekly	22 Mar, 1839 "spring" 1840 ¹⁰
<i>Patriot's Friend</i>	Painesville, OH	Horace Steele Sr.	8 Dec. 1838 ^a	Weekly	1839
<i>Canadian</i>	Jackson, MI	Rufus Budd Bement	1 Jan. 1839 ¹¹	?	?
<i>North American</i>	Swanton, VT	Hiram Thomas, Jackson Abraham Vail, Cyrille-Hector-Octave Côté	10 April 1839	Weekly	12 August 1841
<i>Patriote Canadien</i>	Burlington, VT	Ludger Duverny	7 Aug. 1839	Weekly	5 Feb. 1840
<i>Spirit of '76</i>	Detroit, MI	Edward Alexander Theller	17 Aug. 1839 19 Aug. 1839	Weekly Daily	Only issue 17 Oct. 1840
<i>Volunteer</i>	Rochester, NY	William Lyon Mackenzie	17 April 1841	Weekly	Late Jan. 1842 ¹²
<i>Truth</i>	New York, NY	Edward Alexander Theller Benjamin Kingsbury Jr.	3 May 1841	Daily	?
<i>Sublime Patriot</i>	Buffalo, NY	Thomas Jefferson Sutherland	15 Nov. 1841 ^a	Weekly	Early 1842

of newspapers, which I term the patriot press. Beginning with the *Constitution*, this particular press community grew to include two established Lower Canadian newspapers: the *Vindicator* and *Minerve*. These Montreal-based papers, as will be elaborated below, became part of the pa-

triot press at the latest from April 1837 in response to Lord John Russell's ten resolutions. The June 1837 founding of a new paper for the *patriotes* of Quebec City, the *Libéral/Liberal*, completed the patriot press in the Canadas.¹³ of newspapers, of newspapers which I term the patriot

American and *Patriote Canadien* are available online through *Chronicling America* from the U.S. Library of Congress <<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>>. Some papers are available in hard copy only.

³ Lewiston also had the *Frontier Sentinel* published in 1837 by Thomas P. Scovill. This was possibly another patriot paper but one that has left no known issues. Early newspaper chroniclers noted that Thomas P. Scovill established the *Frontier Sentinel* in connection with the "Patriot War." See Frederick Follett, *History of the Press of Western New York* (Rochester: Jerome & Brother, 1847), 65; John Homer French, *Historical and Statistical Gazetteer of New York State* (Syracuse: R. P. Smith, 1860), 452. (Both of these works have a different spelling of Scovill. However, there is a high probability that it is the same individual.) In addition to the above-noted connection with the patriot war, Scovill served as an agent for *Mackenzie's Gazette* in Lewiston, New York. See Thomas Scovill to Mackenzie, Lewiston, 19 March 1839, Mackenzie-Lindsey Papers, quoted in Edwin C. Guillet, "The Cobourg Conspiracy," *Canadian Historical Review* 18:1 (1937), 35n36. See also *Mackenzie's Gazette*, 2 March 1839, p292 c4, 9 March 1839, p299 c4, 23 March 1839, p315 c4, and 27 July 1839, p398 c2.

⁴ The *Telegraph* was founded in 1836 and described as lasting for three years. For it to be still extant in May 1839 would mean that it commenced publication no later than May 1836. S.N.D. North, *The Newspaper and Periodical Press* (Washington: U.S. Census office, 1884), 398.

⁵ The *Detroit Morning Post* merged with the *Craftsman* in January 1839. Silas Farmer notes that the paper "would be appropriately described as a daily issued at irregular intervals." Silas Farmer, *History of Detroit and Wayne County and Early Michigan: A Chronological Cyclopaedia of Past and Present* (Detroit: Silas Farmer and Company, 1890), 673.

⁶ Hiram Blanchard also published the *Democrat* in Derby Line, Vermont by July 1838, and the *Montreal Express* in Montreal by that fall. The *Express* was quickly shut down by authorities. J.I. Little, *Loyalties in Conflict: A Canadian Borderland in War and Rebellion, 1812-1840* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 66.

⁷ Henry D. Robinson announced the prospectus for his New York *Estafette* in December 1837.

⁸ *Oswego Bulletin*, 20 November 1838, p1 c4.

⁹ David Dirck Van Tassel and John J. Grabowski, eds. *Encyclopedia of Cleveland History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 247.

¹⁰ Guy H. Salisbury, "Early History of the Press of Erie County" in *Publications of the Buffalo Historical Society*, vol. 2 (Buffalo: Bigelow Brothers, 1879), 208.

¹¹ The date on the masthead of the first issue of the *Canadian* is "January, 1 1838." However, the documents and articles in that issue refer to later events such as the Battle of Windsor and include the dates "December 1838" and "June 12 1838." Other patriot papers noted the start of the *Canadian* as being in December 1838. Thus, the newspaper probably began on 1 January 1839 and the date was a major typographical error.

¹² Facing financial difficulties, William Lyon Mackenzie last published the *Volunteer* on a regular basis on 17 November 1841. In late January 1842, Mackenzie issued a small extra of the *Volunteer*, disclaiming any further interest in the patriot movement. In a unique move amongst patriot editors, Mackenzie then restarted the *Volunteer* but as a "liberal political journal" rather than a patriot paper. However, Mackenzie only published two issues of this paper: 25 April and 10 May 1843. Lillian F. Gates, *After the Rebellion: The Later Years of William Lyon Mackenzie* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1996), 97-99.

¹³ There were other newspapers, beyond these four, who were sympathetic to political reform but not

press. Beginning with the *Constitution*, this particular press community grew to include two established Lower Canadian newspapers: the *Vindicator* and *Minerve*. These Montreal-based papers, as will be elaborated below, became part of the patriot press at the latest from April 1837 in response to Lord John Russell's ten resolutions. The June 1837 founding of a new paper for the *patriotes* of Quebec City, the *Libéral/Liberal*, completed the patriot press in the Canadas.¹³ After abandoning the publishing business in 1834, Mackenzie re-entered the profession with the *Constitution* only weeks after his loss in the highly controversial June 1836 election for the Upper Canadian House of Assembly; however, the paper had

been contemplated since April.¹⁴ Several historians have noted the historical significance of the election. More specifically, historians Carol Wilton, Colin Read, Ronald Stagg, and Allan Greer have all explained how the election played a major role in radicalizing part of the reform movement and especially Mackenzie.¹⁵ However, it appears that the "final straw" for more advanced reformers in Upper Canada, as for Lower Canada, was the Russell resolutions.¹⁶ Stagg notes an increasingly radical tone in the *Constitution* beginning in April 1837, soon after news of the Russell resolutions reached Toronto.¹⁷ While William LeSueur notes the *Constitution's* growing stance in favour of separation from Great Britain,

fully committed to revolutionary change. As well, there were papers started after the outbreak of violence in November 1837 which, while equally radical, were quickly shut down. For a discussion and distinction see Stephen R.I. Smith, "Within Arm's Reach: Political Violence, Voluntary Organizing, and the Borderland Press during the Canadian Rebellion, 1834-1842" (PhD Dissertation, Queen's University, 2017), 98-104.

¹⁴ William Kilbourn, *The Firebrand: William Lyon Mackenzie and the Rebellion in Upper Canada* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Company, [1956] 1977), 143-44. Archives of Ontario, Mackenzie-Lindsey Papers, Clipping #3645 "Prospectus – The Constitution."

¹⁵ Sean T. Cadigan sees this election as important for changes to campaigning and paternalism. David Mills sees it as the start of moderate Tory and reform forces coming together. Sean T. Cadigan, "Paternalism and Politics: Sir Francis Bond Head, the Orange Order, and the Election of 1836" *Canadian Historical Review* 72:3 (1991), 319-47 and David Mills, *The Idea of Loyalty in Upper Canada, 1784-1850* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988), 3-8, 44-90, 106. See also Carol Wilton, *Popular Politics and Political Culture* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000) 179-83; Colin Read and Ronald Stagg, *The Rebellion of 1837 in Upper Canada: A Collection of Documents* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1988), xxx; and Allan Greer, "1837-38: Rebellion Reconsidered" *Canadian Historical Review* 76:1 (1995), 12.

¹⁶ Read and Stagg, *The Rebellion of 1837*, xxx. See also Greer, "Rebellion Reconsidered," 13, and Jarett Henderson, "Banishment to Bermuda: Gender, Race, Empire, Independence and the Struggle to Abolish Irresponsible Government in Lower Canada," *Histoire Sociale/Social History* 46:92 (2013), 339.

¹⁷ Ronald Stagg, "The Yonge Street Rebellion: An Examination of the Social Background and a Re-Assessment of the Events" (PhD Dissertation, University of Toronto, 1976), 30-31. Kilbourn, *Firebrand*, 150. William Dawson LeSueur, *William Lyon Mackenzie: A Reinterpretation*, ed. A.B. McKillop (Toronto: MacMillan, 1979), 270. Although written in 1908, the work was not published, due to a 1913 court injunction, until 1979. See Clifford G. Holland, "William Dawson LeSueur," *DCB*.

¹⁸ Stagg, "Yonge Street Rebellion," 4; LeSueur, *Mackenzie*, 279; see also Kilbourn, *Firebrand*.

¹⁹ Stagg, "Yonge Street," 32.

²⁰ *Constitution*, 19 October 1836, p3 c2. The issue included an article entitled "REBELLION!" The

Stagg cautions against viewing the newspaper as too radical too soon, concluding that Mackenzie was not an advocate of armed separation from Britain until late September or early October 1837.¹⁸ In his view, the evidence “is contradictory” as to what Mackenzie meant by “resistance” in the *Constitution* before that time.¹⁹ Nevertheless, Mackenzie included such language as early as mid-October 1836. He used blatant American republican symbols as emblems of the paper from its start.²⁰ Therefore, the founding of the *Constitution* should be viewed as the beginning of a process of radicalization for Mackenzie and consequently the beginning of the patriot press in Upper Canada.

Lower Canada had a long-established campaign for redress of colonial grievances supported by allied newspapers. The *Patriote* party had roots that extended back to 1805 and both the *Vindicator* and the *Minerve* had an extensive tradition of demanding redress and run-

ning afoul of the colonial administration. Publishers Ludger Duvernay of the *Minerve* and Daniel Tracey of the *Vindicator* had spent time in prison in 1832 for articles criticizing the Legislative Council.²¹ What transformed these two papers into patriot papers was the arrival of the British response to the Ninety-Two Resolutions.²² *Habitant patriotes* lauded these papers at a large meeting on 1 June 1837 in Sainte-Scholastique with the banner “À la *Minerve*, au *Vindicator*, à la presse libéral.”²³ Also in June 1837, a new patriot paper began in Québec: Robert-Shore-Milnes Bouchette and Charles Hunter founded the *Libéral/Liberal* to replace Étienne Parent’s *Canadien* and John Neilson’s *Quebec Gazette* after both abandoned the *patriote* movement due to its increasing radicalization.²⁴ Proudly standing for the patriot cause, these four papers displayed their belief in independence for the Canadas and republicanism, in both text and visuals. Patriot newspapers included republican argu-

piece discussed rebels from British history (William Wallace, Robert Emmet, etc.) and how the “youth of America” were being taught Emmet’s words. See also 21 July 1836, p2 c2.

²¹ Jean-Marie Lebel, “Ludger Duvernay,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography (DCB)*. Louis-Georges Harvey, *Le Printemps de L’Amérique française: Américanité, anticolonialisme et républicanisme dans le discours politique québécois, 1805-1837* (Montreal: Les Éditions du Boréal, 2005); J.M. Bumsted provides a good overview of libel and sedition trials of British North American papers. See J.M. Bumsted “Liberty of the Press in Early Prince Edward Island, 1823–9” in *Canadian State Trials: Law, Politics, and Security Measures, 1608-1837* Volume 1, F. Murray Greenwood and Barry Wright eds. (Toronto: Osgoode Society for Canadian Legal History, 1996), 522-25.

²² Henderson, “Banishment,” 339.

²³ Gilles Boileau comp. *1837 et les patriotes de Deux-Montagnes: Les voix de la mémoire* (Montreal: Méridien, 1998), 154.

²⁴ Elinor Kyte Senior, *Redcoats and Patriotes: The Rebellions in Lower Canada 1837-38* (Stittsville, ON: Canada’s Wings, 1985), 15. Sonia Chassé, Rita Girard-Wallot, and Jean-Pierre Wallot, “John Neilson,” *DCB*.

²⁵ Jane Errington, *The Lion, the Eagle, and Upper Canada: A Developing Colonial Ideology* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, [1987] 2012), 38. Jarett Henderson and Dan Horner “Introduction: British North America’s Global Age,” *Histoire Sociale/Social History* 46:92 (2013), 267.

ments, vocabulary, and imagery from the United States. Use of these symbols would continue in exile. The focus on the borderland nature of the patriot press is not to deny the long history of cross-border copying of news and commentary or of republican rhetoric in the Canadas. Newspapers from all over, copied news and information from each other. Many historians have pointed to the long tradition of American news and information being copied by papers in the Canadas.²⁵ However, what was new was both the extensive use by patriot papers of U.S. news and symbols and their deployment as a near-open challenge to British administration.

The republicanism of the patriot press community had deep roots and early manifestations. In Upper Canada, reformers in St. Thomas held a celebration for the fourth of July in 1832 that

was threatening enough to be attacked by constitutionalists.²⁶ As its most distinguishing feature, the later patriot press in the Canadas consistently deployed strident republican texts to bolster support for independence and thus to erase the monarchical-republican boundary in North America. Patriot papers chose to repeat news from the United States to attack Britain and bolster the patriot cause. For example, Mackenzie noted that U.S. President Martin Van Buren would soon deliver his Message to Congress, which would reveal the position of the U.S. in relation to agitation in the Canadas. Mackenzie then copied a report of a meeting in Philadelphia against British interests and influence in the United States, especially by British banks.²⁷ Patriot papers not only celebrated the fourth of July, but also made frequent, if veiled, calls for republican liberty, often by alluding to

²⁶ G.H. Patterson, "Asahel Bradley Lewis," *DCB*. In Upper Canada, even "supporters of the government" recognized this imbalance and encouraged economic development in order to rival U.S. growth and the adoption of U.S. techniques. See Errington, *The Lion, the Eagle*, 121-24. For an extensive discussion of republicanism in Lower Canadian political discourse see Harvey, *Printemps*.

²⁷ See *Constitution*, 31 May 1837, p2 c7, 14 June 1837, p1 c7, 30 August 1837, p1 c2; Harvey, *Printemps*, 46 and 214-15; *Vindicator*, 27 October 1837, p1 c4.

²⁸ For the anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, see for example the "fourth of July ode" published by Mackenzie, *Constitution*, 2 August 1837, p1 c3. (Also see, later in that issue, comments on how "America complained that it was taxed, and oppressively taxed" 2 August 1837, p3 c3.) and 23 August 1837, p1 c2. See also the Declaration of the Six Counties published in the *Minerve*, 30 October and 2 November 1837 as well as the *Vindicator*, 27 October 1837, p2-3 and 31 October p2; Jean-Paul Bernard, *Assemblées publiques, résolutions et déclarations de 1837-1838 / textes recueillis et présentés* (Montréal: VLB éditeur et l'union des écrivains québécois, 1988), 259-85. This coverage in the *Vindicator*, still took place even though O'Callaghan was in disfavour with some in the *patriote* party. See Jack Verney, *O'Callaghan: The Making and Unmaking of a Rebel* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), 127-28 and Michel Ducharme, *Le concept de liberté au Canada à l'époque des révolutions atlantiques (1776-1838)* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010), 129-35.

²⁹ For example, the first resolution of the Young Men's Political Association of Vankleek Hill was the preamble of the Declaration of Independence. See *Vindicator*, 11 August 1837, p3 c1 as well as *Constitution*, 23 August 1837, p2 and 4 October 1837, p2.

³⁰ *Constitution*, 26 July 1837, 2 August 1837, p1 c7 and p3 c1-2, 9 August 1837, p1; *Vindicator*, 27 October 1837, p1 c1-4.

events surrounding the American Revolution.²⁸ The patriot press often tied these references to past revolutionary events to current political developments in the Canadas.²⁹ In addition, the patriot press copied U.S. republican documents. Mackenzie serialized Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* and the *Vindicator* published "Extracts from the History of the American Revolution."³⁰

Republican symbols and mottos also figured prominently in the patriot press and emphasized Canadian independence, U.S. republicanism, democracy, and a belief in associationalism. The *Minerve's* masthead consisted of the goddess Minerva with her owl, surrounded by rays of light pushing out toward clouds to signify knowledge dispelling ignorance. Louis-Georges Harvey has noted that the *Minerve's* Minerva constituted a symbol of republicanism that was as much part of a U.S. tradition as a French one.³¹ The *Vindicator* included the motto "United We Stand – Divided We Fall."³² *Le Libéral/The Liberal* used the Latin motto "*Salus Populi, Suprema Lex Esto*," which is generally translated as "let the welfare of the people be the supreme law."³³ Mackenzie did not have

a set motto for the *Constitution*. Rather, he included several long quotations that he would change after a number of issues.³⁴ On one run of issues, Mackenzie included a motto, printed in bold letters, "A Long Pull—a Strong Pull—and a Pull Altogether" showing a continued commitment to collective organizing and common purpose.³⁵

Mackenzie's most striking symbol, however, appears to be a modification of the State Seal of Missouri as the page two masthead for the *Constitution* as well as on the top of his notice for the August 1837 reform meetings in the northern parts of York and Simcoe counties.³⁶ Containing both the mottos "United We Stand Divided We Fall" and "*Salus Populi, Suprema Lex Esto*," the arms of Missouri combined two mottos adopted by the patriot press. Mackenzie appears to have used a version of the state seal denuded of the twenty-four stars (signifying Missouri as the twenty-fourth state) and the United States federal coat of arms from the right quadrant.³⁷ Such repurposing of American symbols also demonstrates the extent to which these patriot papers were part of a republican borderland, hovering on the edge of

³¹ Louis-Georges Harvey, "Rome et la république dans la culture politique des Patriotes" *La Culture des Patriotes*, Charles-Philippe Courtois et Julie Guyot, eds. (Québec: Septentrion, 2012), 150-55.

³² See for example *Vindicator*, 3 January 1834, p2 c4 and 2 January 1835, p2 c3.

³³ This is the official translation by the U.S. State of Missouri <<http://www.sos.mo.gov/symbol/seal>>.

³⁴ Mackenzie placed these quotations above the paper's masthead.

³⁵ *Constitution*, 2 August 1837, p3 c3.

³⁶ For an example of Mackenzie's early use of this symbol in his newspaper, see *Constitution*, 21 July 1836, p2 c2. For Mackenzie's later use of the symbol in relation to calls for public meetings, see *Constitution*, 26 July 1837, p3 c7. I have not found a contemporary paper's comment on the symbol or his use of it.

³⁷ Unmodified Seal from D. L. Webster, *Webster's Encyclopedia of Useful Information and World's Atlas* (Chicago: Ogilvie and Gillett, 1889), 277.

Mr. Mackenzie presents his compliments to his brother Reformers in the several places for which Meetings of the people have been advertised in the *Correspondent & Advocate*, and *Constitution*, of last Wednesday, and expects to have the pleasure of being present at these meetings.

The following copy of the notices to which he refers, ought to be widely circulated.



[From the *Correspondent & Advocate*.]



William Lyon Mackenzie's modified Missouri seal (left) and the Missouri State seal (above).

what could have been seen as sedition in the Canadas. While constitutionalists also used a similar language of combination (such as “when bad men conspire, good men must unite”), the use of such language by the patriot press reveals a republican connotation, fundamentally at odds with monarchy. It also pointed to the continued belief by the patriots in the positive benefits of voluntary organizing.

In the United States, patriot papers continued to make heavy use of U.S. re-

publican texts, content, symbols, and mottos that promoted collective organizing and unity. Such visuals represented one of the strongest means by which to convey republican beliefs, given that not all who accessed newspapers may have been literate.³⁸ Multiple patriot papers had variations of “American Eagle” imagery. The *Freeman's Advocate* simply used a more lifelike rendering of the Great Seal of the United States: an eagle with a shield clutching olive branches and arrows.³⁹ Others added their own modifications. The *Bald Eagle's* masthead consisted of an eagle holding a ribbon emblazoned with “E Pluribus Unum” and

³⁸ Jeffrey L. McNairn, *The Capacity to Judge: Public Opinion and Deliberative Democracy in Upper Canada, 1791–1854* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 133–34.

³⁹ *Freeman's Advocate*, 11 January 1839, p4 c3.

⁴⁰ See *Bald Eagle*, 28 December 1838, p1 issue for this addition.

⁴¹ See for example *Le Patriote Canadien*, 7 August 1839.

⁴² *Lewiston Telegraph*, 26 April 1839, p2 c3.

⁴³ *Semi-Weekly Mercury and Buffalonian*, 5 March 1839, p3 c3.



Masthead from the first issue of Edward Alexander Theller's *Spirit of '76*

above, on later issues, the motto “Liberty and Equality.”⁴⁰ Duvernay’s *Patriote Canadien* also featured an eagle, this time clutching a ribbon with the words “L’Union fait la Force.”⁴¹ The *Lewiston Telegraph* printed an eagle, wings spread, above the motto “FREEDOM TO THE OPPRESSED.”⁴² The *Mercury and Buf-falonian*, edited by Thomas Low Nichols, included the slogan “a long pull, a strong pull, and a pull all together” in an issue, the same slogan Mackenzie had used in his *Toronto Constitution*.⁴³

Two of the most elaborate uses of patriot images were found in the *Spirit of '76* and the *Volunteer*. Patriot editor Edward Alexander Theller emblazoned his *Spirit of '76* with a large masthead con-

taining multiple American flags, an eagle, and two allegorical supporters around a portrait of George Washington. One of the allegorical supporters drapes an unidentified flag—possibly patriot—over drums.⁴⁴

William Lyon Mackenzie’s *Volunteer* included an elaborate masthead with a scene of Navy Island in the Niagara River with the *Caroline* burning. After his flight to the United States, Mackenzie and other patriots had occupied this island—in Upper Canada—as a republican foothold in the Canadas. Eventually the British burned the American ship, the *Caroline*, which had been supplying them from New York. Prominently included in Mackenzie’s masthead was

⁴⁴ A flag draped over drums could be a sign of mourning associated with a military drumhead service in the field.

⁴⁵ See the *Volunteer* 22 May 1841 and 10 July 1841 for its frontispiece of the burning *Caroline*. Mackenzie had two engravings in his 24 July 1841 issue: In the first, a dead man lies on a wharf with the *Caroline* burning in the background. In the second, “THE CA” and “ROLINE” flank in huge letters on each side of a depiction of the hanging of Upper Canadian rebels Samuel Lount and Peter Matthews.

⁴⁶ *Sublime Patriot*, 14 February 1842, p2 c2. In Sutherland’s coat of arms, the “supporters” flanking

the Navy Island flag of twin stars for Upper and Lower Canada and below that the word “Liberty.”⁴⁵ One of the last patriot newspapers to emerge, Thomas Jefferson Sutherland’s *Sublime Patriot*, strongly mirrored the republican visuals of the first, Mackenzie’s *Constitution*. Sutherland’s paper contained a modified version of the coat of arms of New York state above the motto “Light, Liberty and Truth,” harkening back to the modified state seal of Missouri deployed by Mackenzie six years before.⁴⁶

The advocacy of republicanism for the Canadas was also evident in the very titles of newspapers, especially those published in the United States. While Minerva could be a republican symbol and naming a paper the *Constitution* could be a subtle call for a written one, patriot papers in the United States were replete with the words “Canadian,” “Pa-

triot,” and other titles suggesting a more direct association with the American Revolution, the *Bald Eagle* and *Spirit of ’76* being the most obvious.

Beyond visual support for U.S. republicanism, patriot papers attacked monarchy more generally. Demonstrating a continued commitment to the public sphere, Mackenzie printed in the *Constitution* the prospectus of a new constitutionalist paper in Toronto, the *Royal Standard*. However, when Mackenzie printed the royal coat of arms that accompanied the prospectus, he did so with the coat of arms turned on its side. This was a major sign of disrespect to monarchical authority.⁴⁷ In a similar vein, the *Minerve* attacked the monarchy in France, notably Charles X and his successor, Louis Philippe, arguing that the French Revolution of 1830 had only increased tyranny and suffering.⁴⁸ Monar-

the shield are switched from how they are traditionally depicted: the woman with the Phrygian liberty cap appears on the right rather than on the left. Newspaper publishing was one of many of ventures by Sutherland. See Lillian F. Gates, “Thomas Jefferson Sutherland,” *DCB*. For the official description of the New York State coat of arms, see <<http://www.dos.ny.gov/info/pdfs/CoatofArmsDescriptionSheet.pdf>>.

⁴⁷ *Constitution*, 26 October 1836, p3 c6. After the outbreak of insurrection, the representation of the Royal coat of arms on its side resulted in Samuel Hart having his *Plain Speaker* office trashed. H. Belden, *Illustrated historical atlas of the counties of Hastings and Prince Edward, Ont.* (Toronto: H. Belden and Co, 1878), iii. William Renwick Riddell, “An Old Provincial Newspaper” *The Ontario Historical Society Papers and Records* 19 (1922), 139. H.F. Gardiner, “When the ‘Plain Speaker’s’ Type was Pied, *The Ontario Historical Society Papers and Records* 20 (1923), 87.

⁴⁸ Harvey *Printemps*, 140. See also Yvan Lamonde. *Histoire sociale des idées au Québec, Volume 1 1760-1896* (Montréal: Fides, 2000), 211. Charles X was also fodder for the press after 1837 see *Volunteer*, 8 May 1841, p60-62.

⁴⁹ Wilton, *Popular Politics and Political Culture*, 193; Lamonde. *Histoire Sociale*, 247; Little, *Loyalties*, passim.

⁵⁰ I chose the term ‘refugee’ as it was the contemporary terminology political exiles from British North America gave themselves. I will use it to refer to those who considered themselves part of the patriot exile community as opposed to the broader community of exiles from the Canadas. This broader group included both those involved in radical political agitation in the Canadas as well as those not involved with the Rebellion but who left out of fear of wider political retribution. There were others who had been personally involved with the Rebellion or the reform or *patriote* movement, who had fled to the U.S., but, once there, were

chy, even a supposedly popular one, was no acceptable to the patriot press.

Some scholars have viewed the 1837-38 Rebellion as silencing radical reform voices in the developing British North American public sphere.⁴⁹ However, such a national emphasis misses how patriot newspapers and public meetings continued in the U.S. beyond November 1837. Newly published newspapers, edited by Canadian refugees or U.S. residents, formed all along the border from Michigan to Vermont.⁵⁰ While many newspapers in the United States editorially supported the Canadian patriot cause, the papers noted in Table 1 were uniquely devoted to the patriot cause or actively working to transform Canada (or each of the Canadas) into an independent republic.⁵¹ These papers remained accessible to those in the Canadas. A fuller picture of the breadth and continuity of the Rebellion thus emerges if one looks

at the patriots through their press.

Who comprised the patriot press now that it was in the United States? Patriot newspapers in the U.S., like their Canadian predecessors, shared the characteristics of dedication to republicanism, anti-monarchism, and immediate freedom of the Canadas from British control. As Table 1 reveals, there were twenty-one patriot newspapers in the United States. Most of the papers existed in the U.S.-Canada borderland and corresponded to areas of patriot agitation and raids.⁵²

The patriot press in the United States was both vibrant and ephemeral. Individual papers survived for limited runs. As seen in Table 1, the longest papers survived for about three years and the shortest possibly lasting just one issue.⁵³ The fragility of individual patriot papers, however, was offset by the constant arrival of new papers into the developing com-

also determined not to be part of the patriot exile community. For a fuller discussion see Smith, "Within Arm's Reach," 124-25, 194-95.

⁵¹ For the response of United States papers to the Rebellion see Arthur Johnson, "The New York State Press and the Canadian Rebellions, 1837-1838," *American Review of Canadian Studies* 14:3 (1984). For a fuller discussion distinguishing the boundaries of the patriot press in the United States see Stephen R.I. Smith, "Making a Patriot Order: Violence, Respectability, and the Patriot Press in Exile, 1838-1847," in Elizabeth Mancke, Jerry Bannister, Denis McKim & Scott W. See, eds. *Violence, Order, and Unrest: A History of British North America 1749-1876* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019).

⁵² Julien Mauduit's map of the location of agents for three patriot newspapers shows that agents filled a void along the St. Lawrence (i.e., an area where there were no patriot papers). See Donald E. Graves, *Guns Across the River: The Battle of the Windmill, 1838* (Toronto: Robin Brass Studio, 2001), 228; Colin Read, "Unrest in the Canadas," in R. Louis Gentilcore, *Historical Atlas of Canada Vol. 2: The Land Transformed, 1800-1891* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), Plate 23; and Julien Mauduit, "*Vrais républicains* d'Amérique : les patriotes canadiens en exil aux États-Unis (1837-1842)" (PhD Dissertation, Université du Québec à Montréal, 2016), 252.

⁵³ The three longest-surviving patriot papers were the *Buffalonian* and its successors, *Mackenzie's Gazette*, and the *Lewiston Telegraph*. It is possible that the *Canadian* and the *Truth* each only lasted one issue. Because of the limited number of surviving issues, determining an average lifespan of these newspapers is difficult and any calculation may be somewhat artificial.

munity. Only by the last months of 1840 did the number of patriot papers begin to wane: in the period from Mackenzie closing his *Gazette* on 23 December 1840 until launching his *Volunteer* on 17 April 1841, only one patriot newspaper, the *North American* of Swanton, continued to publish. While some only lasted for a short time—likely a single issue in some cases—the patriot press continued to be made up of papers that were truly newspapers: serving their communities with other news, notices of events, and advertising local enterprises—including patriot ones.⁵⁴ A number of patriot editors operated printing business along with their newspapers.⁵⁵

As with editors more generally, many editors of patriot papers were often associated with several papers across their lifetime. These individuals were serial editors—moving and creating one newspaper after another. Refugee editors such

as Duvernay, Thomas, Hart, and William Lyon Mackenzie continued their work from the United States. The same was true for American editors who were not refugees. It appears that the first issue of the *Bald Eagle* was published on 23 November 1838, just one month after the suspension of Underhill's first paper, the *Liberalist*. Henry D. Robinson began the *Estafette* after working with other New York City papers.⁵⁶ In 1836, Benjamin Kingsbury Jr. was working for the Methodist *Zion's Herald* before moving to Detroit.⁵⁷ Kingsbury founded the *Detroit Evening Spectator and Literary Gazette* with his brother-in-law George Burnham in October 1836 before turning to the *Morning Post*.⁵⁸ After the *Morning Post*, Kingsbury edited the *American* of Portland, Maine.⁵⁹ James Mackenzie had worked with his father, William Lyon Mackenzie, before beginning the *Freeman's Advocate* and the patriot papers of

⁵⁴ Jackson Abraham Vail, before he would become involved with the patriot *North American*, interacted with the patriot press community, having placed an advertisement for services as a lawyer in the *Canadian Patriot*. *Canadian Patriot*, 2 February 1838, p3 c5. Vail also placed an advertisement in the *Patriote Canadien*. See *Patriote Canadien* 23 October 1839, p3 c4. Thomas Jefferson Sutherland included English, French, and German advertisements for his services as a lawyer in the *Sublime Patriot*. *Sublime Patriot* 14 February 1842, p4 c2.

⁵⁵ For example, editor Samuel Underhill advertised the printing of election tickets. *Bald Eagle*, 11 January 1839, p4 c3, 15 January 1839, p4 c3.

⁵⁶ Albert Post, *Popular Freethought in America, 1825-1850* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943), 42. Robinson began the *Comet* in 1832 and then was responsible for the *Free Enquirer* until 1835. He issued his prospectus for the *Estafette* in 1837.

⁵⁷ William Lloyd Garrison, *The Letters of William Lloyd Garrison, Vol. II, A House Dividing Against Itself: 1836-1840*. Louis Ruchames, ed. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1971), 43.

⁵⁸ Detroit Institute of Arts, *American Paintings in the Detroit Institute of Arts, Volume 2*, (New York: Hudson Hills, 1997), 34.

⁵⁹ Edward E. Elwell, *Portland and Vicinity*, revised ed. (Portland: Loring, Short and Harmon, 1881), 33.

⁶⁰ *Truth* 3 May 1841.

⁶¹ When discussing Nichol's move from the *Buffalonian* to the *Mercury*, Guy H. Salisbury notes that in the fall "Nichols left the concern [the *Buffalonian*] and started an opposition print of the like species." By opposition it is not clear whether Salisbury is referring to the party affiliation of Nichols (i.e., opposed

Painesville, Conneaut, and Oswego were begun in tandem by editors of existing papers there.

Others moved between patriot papers in the United States. With declining finances in Detroit, Theller closed his *Spirit of '76*. He migrated with his family to New York City where he began another patriot paper, the *Truth*.⁶⁰ Thomas Low Nichols moved from the *Buffalonian* to begin the *Mercury* and then purchased the *Buffalonian* and merged it with the *Mercury*.⁶¹ William Lyon Mackenzie was notable for establishing multiple patriot papers. Editors in the U.S. joined the patriot press as part of the common practice of editors moving from paper to paper. Rather than abandon the cause, some editors would try to continue within the patriot movement after the failure of one paper by founding another.

The founding of patriot newspapers in the United States roughly coincided with major developments in the continuing Canadian Rebellion. The first wave of papers developed between late December 1837 and late January 1838, coinciding with the initial rebellion, the occupation of Navy Island, and the *Caroline* affair. Next, as a solitary addition, was *Mackenzie's Gazette*, which began

in May 1838 and whose start may have been delayed due to his imprisonment for debt.⁶² The second wave of newspapers began from the fall of 1838 and lasted until 1 January 1839, coinciding with the next round of major raids as well as renewed insurrectionary violence in Lower Canada.

The correlation between newspapers and events became more tenuous after this second wave. Three more papers appeared in 1839: one in April and two in August. After another hiatus, a last cluster of newly published patriot papers appeared, consisting of two begun in the spring 1841 and a final patriot paper that was established that winter. There had been a rise in border incidents between March and May 1839. Most notably, beginning in March constitutionalists began crossing the border to burn the barns of Americans in Vermont. While not mentioning these burnings as a cause, the *North American* began in April and carried news of the continued arson attacks in its first issue.⁶³ March through May 1841 saw a rise in the diplomatic controversy surrounding the arrest of Alexander McLeod, an Upper Canadian, in November 1840 while in the United States, for alleged involvement in the burning of the *Caroline*.⁶⁴

to Hiram Pratt and the Whigs). Salisbury, "Early History of the Press," 208.

⁶² Gates, *After the Rebellion*, 35-36.

⁶³ Kenneth R. Stevens, *Border Diplomacy: The Caroline and McLeod Affairs in Anglo-American-Canadian Relations, 1837-1842* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1989), 58-59. *North American*, 10 April 1839, p2 c4-5.

⁶⁴ Stevens, *Border Diplomacy*, 90.

⁶⁵ Lebel, "Duvernay," *DCB*; Colin Frederick Read, "Edward Alexander Theller," *DCB*, Lillian F. Gates, "Thomas Jefferson Sutherland," *DCB*.

The correlation to events was weakened because three of the individuals involved had been delayed in establishing papers. Both Theller and Sutherland had been captured in 1838 and imprisoned by British authorities while active along the border, and Duvernay had had difficulty obtaining printing equipment.⁶⁵ Second, two of the papers in 1841, the *Volunteer* and the *Truth*, were second attempts by patriots, Mackenzie and Theller respectively, to keep a patriot newspaper afloat. The patriot press thus was an integral aspect of the patriot movement. Its success correlated with the peaks and valleys of the movement more generally.

United States editors of the period tended to communicate with each other through their papers rather than with letters, due to the more favourable postal rates accorded to newspaper.⁶⁶ Moreover, the patriot press in the U.S. was a definable community of likeminded

editors continually corresponding with one another, forwarding newspapers, and republishing one another's articles. Patriot papers welcomed new additions and mourned when fellow papers ceased publication. Besides giving each other quills and exchanging newspaper copies, Dr. Samuel Underhill of the *Bald Eagle* and J. Whipple Dwinell, then editor of the *Buffalonian*, corresponded, occasionally publishing some of this correspondence in the pages of their newspapers, including a self-deprecating commentary by Dwinell about writing patriot editorials with his new gift.⁶⁷ As evidence of how replete the patriot press was of these updates on fellow papers, James Mackenzie of the Lockport *Freeman's Advocate* noted the beginning of the *Canadian* and the *Patriote Canadien* as well as Mackenzie's move to Rochester in a single issue.⁶⁸ In mourning a paper, the *Telegraph* cast the demise of the *Buffalonian* as "like the noble Lion it

⁶⁶ Laura J. Murray, "Exchange Practices Among Nineteenth-Century U.S. Newspaper Editors: Cooperation in Competition," in *Putting Intellectual Property in its Place: Rights Discourse, Creative Labor, and the Everyday* ed. Laura J. Murray, S. Tina Piper, and Kirsty Robertson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 91.

⁶⁷ *Buffalonian* copied in *Bald Eagle*, 8 January 1839, p4 c1-2.

⁶⁸ *Freeman's Advocate*, 11 January 1839, p6 c2 and p7 c2-3. Thomas Low Nichols also advised readers of his *Weekly Mercury and Buffalonian* that Mackenzie's *Gazette* had moved to Rochester. *Weekly Mercury and Buffalonian*, 2 February 1839, p4 c4. Mackenzie boasted of the newly published *Freeman's Advocate* "ably edited and entirely devoted to the Canadian Cause." However, Mackenzie did not mention that the 'able editor' was his son. *Mackenzie's Gazette*, 29 December 1838, p260 c2. The *Bald Eagle* contained a notice, copied from the *Burlington Sentinel*, about the prospectus by Jackson Abraham Vail for the *North American*. *Bald Eagle*, 15 January 1839, p3 c1.

⁶⁹ *Lewiston Telegraph*, 26 April 1839, p3 c1. In an April 1839 issue of his *Gazette*, Mackenzie copied a report of the public dinner given in honour of Benjamin Kingsbury Jr.'s retirement from the *Morning Post* and mourned that the *Buffalonian* had ceased operation. *Mackenzie's Gazette*, 27 April 1839, p344 c1 and c2. Later Mackenzie provided readers of his *Volunteer* with a description of Theller's new paper, the *Truth*. Mackenzie spoke of it in positive terms and noted that Kingsbury, since he was now in New York City, would be assisting the *Truth*. *Volunteer*, 15 May 1841.

⁷⁰ See for example *Le Patriote Canadien*, 4 September 1839, p1 and 14 August 1839, p1 c1-4 for his

kicked at his opponent when struggling for *his last breath*.⁶⁹ While predominantly English, the patriot press community in the United States continued to span the language barrier. Two papers, the *Estafette* and the *Patriote Canadien*, were francophone. Published by Ludger Duvernay—now based in Burlington, Vermont—the *Patriote Canadien* contained both French translations of salient articles as well as original articles from Anglophone newspapers.⁷⁰

Edward Alexander Theller, publisher of the *Spirit of '76* in Detroit, regularly received copies of the *Patriote Canadien*.⁷¹ He informed his readers of Duvernay's patriot credentials and encouraged "old Michigan" inhabitants who still knew French (a reference to the francophone community in the region from the time of New France) and young ones, who wished to learn French, to subscribe to the *Patriote Canadien*.⁷² Mackenzie also covered the start of the *Patriote Canadien* and spoke of the "utility" of the paper

for Lower Canada, as well as American francophones and those "desirous of cultivating their familiarity" with French.⁷³ Thomas Jefferson Sutherland included English, French, and German advertisements for his services as a lawyer in the *Sublime Patriot*, pointing to an understanding of French.⁷⁴ In these ways, the patriot papers helped bridge the linguistic divide in the patriot movement. Nonetheless, the patriot press in the United States was predominantly an English-language one.

Conversely, editors of patriot papers shunned others lacking patriot credentials as part of an effort to define the membership of their group.⁷⁵ In exile, it was important to define explicitly what was and was not a patriot paper to foster a sense of community in exile. In sum, the patriot press created a community of editors and worked to form a broader patriot community by giving cohesiveness to the movement in exile that it was otherwise lacking.

translation of "The Polish Wife." The *North American* copied from the *Estafette*, suggesting that translation could go the other way as well. *North American*, 10 April 1839, p2 c3-4.

⁷¹ Theller had been a significant player early in the Rebellion, rousing American support for it in the Detroit area in January 1838. His arrest, treatment, and ultimate escape became notorious. See Colin Read, "Edward Alexander Theller the 'Supreme Vagabond': 'Honest, Courageous, and True?'" *Ontario History*, 84:1 (1992) as well as his autobiography E.A. Theller, *Canada in 1837-38, showing by historical facts the causes of the late attempted revolution and of its failure; the present condition of its people and their future prospects, together with the personal adventures of the author and others who were connected with the revolution*. Two Volumes. (Philadelphia and New York: Henry F. Anners and H.G. Langley, 1841).

⁷² *Spirit of '76*, 5 September 1839. Marcel Bénétteau, ed., *Le Passage du Détroit. 300 ans de présence francophone/Passages: Three Centuries of Francophone Presence at Le Détroit*, Humanities Research Group, Working Papers in the Humanities 11 (Windsor: University of Windsor, 2003). Theller seems to have had some comprehension as he was able to converse in French. This was possibly due to his having spent time in Lower Canada. See E.A. Theller, *Canada in 1837-38*, Vol. 2, (Philadelphia and New York: Henry F. Anners and H.G. Langley, 1841), 114-17.

⁷³ *Mackenzie's Gazette*, 29 December 1838, p260 c2.

⁷⁴ *Sublime Patriot*, 14 February 1842, p4 c2.

⁷⁵ *Lewiston Telegraph*, 26 April 1839, p3 c1. *Spirit of '76*, 26 March 1840. See also *Weekly Mercury*

The Patriot Press, Hunter Allusions, and Community Formation in Exile

Now that we have explored the concept of the Patriot press, how does this collection of allied papers fit into what has been traditionally emphasized about the patriot movement in the United States? In the past, historians tended to limit their considerations of the patriot movement in the U.S. to secret paramilitary organizing such as within the Hunters' Lodges. This narrow focus has not fully explored the central role of the press in the movement: it was through the press that patriots learned about meetings and filibustering expeditions, read pro-patriot literature, and exchanged news on favourable developments from their perspective in British North America. From the perspective of the patriot press, while the Hunters' fraternalism and rituals constituted an important element, the Hunters could not stand in for the wider patriot movement. The importance of the Hunters for the press was as both a uniting and dividing force within

the community. The Hunters served as a rhetorical tool used by the press to foster a sense of community. However, debates over the appropriateness of secrecy were a source of division.

A very brief overview of the Patriot Hunters is in order. Patriot organizing, post-1837, had many centres, leaders, and iterations. One initiative that would grow in importance was in relation to a secret society, the Frère Chasseurs (in English known as the "Hunters' Lodges" or "Patriot Hunters") first organized by Robert Nelson, Cyrille-Hector-Octave Côté, and others. As other historians have shown, the Hunters' Lodges had elaborate initiation rituals and degrees of membership loosely based on freemasonry. The latter were akin to military ranks, but as historian Allan Greer notes, with a distinct *canadien* cultural influence.⁷⁶ The Hunters were successful in establishing a secret headquarters in Montreal and initiating many adherents into their network, especially in the Beauharnois and Châteauguay regions.⁷⁷

Concentrated south of Montreal and in that city, variations of the Hunters' fra-

and Buffalonian, 2 February 1839, p4 c2. Nichols informed readers that a paper "about our bigness" had been started in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

⁷⁶ A number of historians have discussed this phenomenon such as: Albert B. Corey, *The 1830-1842 Crisis in Canadian-American Relations* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1941), Oscar A. Kinchen, *The Rise and Fall of the Patriot Hunters: Liberation of Canadian Provinces from British Thralldom* (New York: Bookman Associates, 1956), and Donald E. Graves, *Guns Across the River*. For Lower Canada see for example Beverley Boissery, *A Deep Sense of Wrong: The Treasons, Trials and Transportation to New South Wales of Lower Canadian Rebels After the 1838 Rebellion* (Toronto: The Osgoode Society and Dundurn Press, 1995), 32. Allan Greer, *The Patriots and the People: The Rebellion of 1837 in Rural Lower Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 341.

⁷⁷ Elinor Kyte Senior, *Redcoats and Patriotes: The Rebellions in Lower Canada, 1837-38* (Stittsville, Ontario: Canada's Wings, 1985), 154-56. Greer, *Patriots and the People*, 341-44. Boissery, *Deep Sense of Wrong*, 32-34.

ternal ritual spread to cover areas of patriot activity throughout the United States. Hunter ritual spread through itinerant individuals working within patriot networks. For example, according to a published confession of captured *patriote* Dr. Jean-Baptiste-Henri Brien to Lower Canadian authorities, Donald M'Leod was inducted into the Hunters' Lodges when he visited Nelson in the early summer of 1838.⁷⁸ According to Brien, M'Leod made a pledge to Nelson and his compatriots "that on his return among his brethren, he would cause this [secret or-

ganization] to be adopted in preference to all others."⁷⁹ Although not mentioned in his memoirs, M'Leod then established himself in Cleveland and, beginning in May or June 1838, Hunter ritual spread from Lower Canada rapidly throughout the borderland and possibly into Upper Canada.⁸⁰ The Lodges that developed in the United States adopted degrees, oaths, and rituals similar to their *canadien* antecedents, but varying in different ways from the original ones of Lower Canada.⁸¹ This would all suggest modification at the local level rather than centralized

⁷⁸ *Report of the State Trials, Volume 2* (Montreal: Amour and Ramsay, 1839), 550. The confession was also in the *North American*. The *North American* refuted part of Brien's confession, but did not refute the role of M'Leod in spreading Hunter rituals. See *North American*, 4 December 1839, p1 c5. Donald M'Leod, who had been the editor of the *Grenville Gazette* in Prescott, Upper Canada, became a leading figure in the patriot movement in the United States. Although M'Leod never founded a patriot paper, he did publish a history of the Rebellion and his involvement. Lillian Francis Gates, "Donald M'Leod," *DCB*. Donald M'Leod, *A Brief Review of the Settlement of Upper Canada by the U. E. Loyalists and Scotch Highlanders in 1783; and of the grievances which Compelled the Canadas to have Recourse to Arms in Defence of their Rights and Liberties in the Years 1837 and 1838: Together with a Brief Sketch of the Campaigns of 1812, '13, '14: With an Account of the Military Executions, Burnings, and Sacking of Towns and Villages by the British, in the Upper and Lower Provinces, during the Commotion of 1837 and '38* (Cleveland: F. B. Peniman, 1841).

⁷⁹ *North American*, 4 December 1839, p1 c5.

⁸⁰ On 25 June 1838, M'Leod stood trial in Detroit for violating the U.S. Neutrality Act. Gates, "M'Leod," *DCB*. Consequently, M'Leod must have facilitated the spread of Hunter rituals and structures before then. Corey points to May as a key month in this regard, Tiffany to June. From a contemporary perspective, patriot Daniel D. Heustis states that when it came to the arrival of the Hunter ritual in Wauertown New York, "sometime in the Month of May" a man from Cleveland arrived to establish a lodge "on the same plan as those previously established at Cleveland and other places." Albert B. Corey, *Crisis in Canadian-American Relations*, 75; Orrin E. Tiffany, "Relations of the United States to the Canadian Rebellion of 1837-38" *Publications of the Buffalo Historical Society* 8 (1905), 130; Oscar A. Kinchen, *Patriot Hunters*, 36; Daniel D. Heustis, *A narrative of the adventures and sufferings of Captain Daniel D. Heustis and his companions in Canada and Van Dieman's [sic] land...* (Boston: Silas W. Wilder, 1847), 41.

⁸¹ Unfortunately, the Hunters' Lodges have suffered from the historiographical divide between Upper and Lower Canada and the United States. Certain work on the "Chasseurs" or the "Hunters" does not mention the existence of the movement beyond the area of study. Senior, *Redcoats and Patriotes*, Chapters 13 and 14; Corey, *Crisis of 1830-1842*, 75-76. This has created an artificial barrier between what was one diverse movement and that divide has been formalized in the literature. See for example Gian Mario Cazzangia, *Frères chasseurs, Brother hunters: Une histoire méconnue de charbonnerie canadienne* (Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2009), 9-16; Ruth Dunley, "A. D. Smith: Knight-errant of Radical Democracy" (PhD Dissertation, University of Ottawa, 2008), 64.

control over ritual.⁸² Through this diffusion, different centres of Hunter organizing emerged, with different leaders, most notably in Cleveland.⁸³ Different regions and leaders planned or undertook disparate initiatives including organizing military expeditions in the winter of 1838.⁸⁴

For the study of the patriot press, it is important to emphasize that the Hunters'

Lodges movement in the U.S. very much involved the spread and modification of Hunter ritual from Lower Canada. While an attempt to definitively count "membership" in the Hunters misses their significance, it does demonstrate that the movement was very well known.⁸⁵ Hunter ritual spread expansively among patriots along the U.S. border and was

⁸² Kinchen discusses this regional variation. Kinchen, *Patriot Hunters*, 36, 57. There are also different versions of the Hunter oath which survive. Kinchen, *Patriot Hunters*, 55-56; "Hunters' Lodge: persons about to be initiated as members are introduced..." [1838?]. In printed ephemera of the Toronto Metropolitan Library, CIHM Microfiche Series, 2B3; Corey, *Crisis of 1830-1842*, 76; Charles Lindsey, *The Life and Times of William Lyon Mackenzie, Volume 2* (Toronto: P. R. Randall, 1862), 199; Cazzaniga, *Frères chasseurs*, 17-20.

⁸³ While Cleveland was certainly a major node of Patriot organizing, its role as formal headquarters for the entirety of the Patriots may have been limited. Both M'Leod and Mackenzie referred to the Hunters in Cleveland with a regional designation, "Cleveland committee" or "Cleveland association." Gates, "M'Leod," *DCB*; Mackenzie's *Gazette*, 4 May 1839, p1 c1. Lindsey, *Life and Times*, Vol. 2, 199 describes it as a regional convention of the Hunters' Lodges of Ohio and Michigan. The regional nature has been lost in subsequent works, witness the evolution in coverage from Kinchen, *Patriot Hunters*, 38 to Graves, *Guns Across the River*, 58 and Dunley, "A.D. Smith," 69 to Shaun McLaughlin, *The Patriot War Along the Michigan-Canada Border: Raiders and Rebels* (Mount Pleasant, South Carolina: Arcadia, 2013), 85.

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⁸⁴ For example, the November 1838 attack near Prescott in Upper Canada was conducted by lodges in a localized part of New York state and suggests an independence from Cleveland or elsewhere. According to Heustis, in late August 1838, "leaders or officers" meeting in Watertown formulated a plan to invade Upper Canada in November via Cleveland. They instead decided to attack Prescott. For his part, M'Leod in his brief review noted that a "group in Salina" (near Syracuse in Onondaga County) initiated the plan to attack Prescott. On 12 November, a force of men recruited almost exclusively from Jefferson and Onondaga Counties (specifically the town of Salina) has seized a windmill downstream from Prescott. Importantly, the force unfurled a flag emblazoned "Liberated by the Onondaga Hunters" and not a banner for "the Hunters." Heustis, *Narrative*, 42; M'Leod, *A Brief Review*, 244.

⁸⁵ On membership, Albert Corey provides an estimate of 40,000 to 50,000 but also possibly up to 200,000, based on a narrative from a British officer. Kinchen provides an estimate of 40,000 based on a report from the customs collector at Oswego. All subsequent work on the Hunters uses elements of these estimates. The issue for understanding the patriot movement is that these broad contemporary guesses are rationalized to fit the concept of one centralized fraternal order. As a case in point, Donald Graves singles out a lower estimate as more plausible due to initiates attending only one meeting. Rather, these estimates should stand as a clear indicator of the expansiveness of the patriot movement and the rapid spread and popularity of hunter ritual. T.R. Preston, *Three Years' Residence in Canada, from 1837 to 1839, with Notes*

consequently picked up as a marker of community by the patriot press. As an example, in a deposition to Upper Canadian authorities, George U. Tihe revealed how knowledge of secret Hunter ritual travelled across the community of readers of the patriot press. In Lockport, New York, Tihe had been reading the *Freeman's Advocate*, which led him to be solicited if he was "willing to see the light?" When he replied in the affirmative, he was brought to a house and initiated into the first degree.⁸⁶ While only one example, this reference speaks to the potential importance of press to the spread of Hunter ritual and ideas.

Regardless of the actual form and reach of the organization, the notion of the Hunters and their cultural trappings provided a useful way for the patriot press to help form a community in exile in the United States. Some members of the patriot press expressed a dislike of oath-bound associations such as the Hunters' Lodges.⁸⁷ However, this dislike did not stop them from using the ritual and popular understandings of secret patriot societies for their own ends. Secrecy was frequently harnessed as a tool. This included taunting enemies and communicating misleading information about

military organizing to them, outing supposed spies or conspirators, and printing selected songs and words with hidden meanings and significance for supporters.

Debate about the role of secrecy in the patriot community started neither in May 1838 with the establishment of the Hunters, nor after the failure of initial patriot raids: secret organizing was a patriot tactic from the start of exile.⁸⁸ In fact, historian Julien Mauduit has noted the early origins—the end of December 1837—of the secret organizing that became the Chasseurs.⁸⁹ Given the need to organize clandestinely to avoid exposure to British and American authorities, the use of secrecy is not surprising. Nonetheless, secrecy proved troubling for various members of the patriot press as it was at odds with their understandings of liberal voluntary associations. As a case in point, Edmund Bailey O'Callaghan, in exile in Vermont and who worked with Mackenzie on his *Gazette*, grappled with the moral and strategic implications of a secret organization. The former editor of the *Vindicator* wrote to his former printer—and fellow Lower Canadian exile—Louis Perrault, admitting:

I have been invited to join these Lodges – to be 'initiated.' I have declined, for I do not

of a Winter Voyage to New York, and Journey Thence to the British Possessions; to Which is Added, A Review of the Condition of the Canadian People, Volume 1 (London: Richard Bentley, 1840), 157; Corey, *Crisis of 1830-1842*, 75; Kinchen, *Patriot Hunters*, 37; Graves, *Guns Across the River*, 50, 53; Dunley, "A. D. Smith," 68; McLaughlin, *The Patriot War Along the Michigan-Canada Border*, 84.

⁸⁶ Deposition of George U. Tihe, cited in Kinchen, *Patriot Hunters*, 53.

⁸⁷ Smith, "Within Arm's Reach," 226-29.

⁸⁸ Corey, Kinchen, and Graves all place the turn to secrecy as occurring later, in the spring-summer of 1838 after the failure of the first series of raids across the border from December 1837 to February 1838. Corey, *The Crisis of 1830-1842*, 70-71; Kinchen, *Patriot Hunters*, 26-27; Graves, *Guns Across the River*, 51-52.

⁸⁹ Julien Mauduit, "Vrais républicains," 153-55.

consider the means adequate to the end – if I am opposed, on principle, to such mode of proceeding altogether. They have been the ruin of Ireland, although the consequences there, as in every Country, of despotism. They put men of the purest morals and of the highest principle, whose honesty cannot be doubted, into the power of base spies who join these societies to betray those who belong to them, and take oaths for the purpose of breaking them.

O’Callaghan was referring to the many secret societies both for and against British rule, which had resulted in violent conflict and the continued presence of large numbers of British troops.⁹⁰ Henry O’Reilly, who also worked with Mackenzie, similarly questioned the propriety of secrecy. He wrote of his involvement that, “When I was invited to cooperate with parties friendly to Canadian Independence,—in *secret meetings*—I said that if the object was, as I believed it to be a *good one*, we should do openly whatever we did to promote its success. For myself, I said, I would ask openly, or not at all.”⁹¹ In the view of O’Callaghan and O’Reilly, secrecy was born of despotism, not independent men joining together to advance the cause of liberty.

William Lyon Mackenzie echoed similar concerns in public. Writing in the *Gazette* about the patriot Benjamin

Let, mostly known for reputedly bombing the monument to General Sir Isaac Brock in 1840, Mackenzie mused on the nature of secrecy:

Like myself, Benjamin Lett, if I understood him right, has a hearty contempt for the system of oaths and Hunter’s Associations, founded upon violent imprecations and threats. I administered not one back of Toronto, nor previous to it. I picked my men in all I had to do, and with all I can learn of both ways I would prefer to do so again. The villain will not be bound by the strongest oath—the honest man requires it not. On Navy Island we had no swearing, and where was there ever to be found a situation of more danger from enemies without and traitors within? From many circumstances I judge that plunder has been obtained by the unworthy through the machinery of sworn associations, and hence I dislike them the more.⁹²

Mackenzie had called for men to form broad-based political associations in the past.⁹³ However, as with O’Callaghan, Mackenzie had been influenced by past exposure to secret societies. He was perhaps reflecting here an understanding of the Family Compact whereby, through the Orange Lodge, those in Upper Canadian circles of power obtained wealth and patronage. For his part, Chris Raible traces Mackenzie’s aversion to secrecy to his interactions with Freemasonry around the Morgan affair, a major scan-

⁹⁰ Wisconsin Historical Society, Louis Perrault Papers (LPP), Letters 4 December 1838 – 27 April 1839, Edmund Bailey O’Callaghan to Louis Perrault, 22 January 1839. The ruin of Ireland could refer to the Apprentice Boys of Derry, the Orange Lodge, Defenders, and other sectarian orders. These concerns with spies were borne out in the case of the Hunters.

⁹¹ Rochester Historical Society, The Papers of Henry O’Reilly, Box 4, “1838: Time’s Changes” [later note on “attempted uprising in Canada, Aid from Western New York”]. Emphasis in the original.

⁹² *Mackenzie’s Gazette*, 7 November 1840, p2 c1.

⁹³ McNairn, *Capacity to Judge*, 97.

dal where Freemasons were accused of a murder and coverup in upstate New York. According to Raible, Mackenzie learned that “privileged information, private arrangements, clandestine agreements, secret pledges, [and] covert compacts are incompatible with democracy and public service.”⁹⁴

These members of the patriot press questioned the propriety of secret organizing. They drew on understandings of liberal voluntary organizing among independent and masculine men to critique such secrecy. They viewed oath-bound associations as problematic, binding men of “good character” with oaths to spies and oath-breakers, two examples of less “manly” men.

Nonetheless, patriot editors—including Mackenzie—would use references to Hunters as a rhetorical tool. The patriot press used three tactics in this regard: first, it used a hidden meaning for the word “loafer,” second, it transmitted redacted messages on patriot organizing, and third, it displayed coded fictitious messages. Such tactics were likely to build community by projecting a sense of power and organizational reach.

The patriot press turned a common

epithet—“loafer”—that constitutionalist papers aimed at them into a marker of patriot community. An ardent opponent of the patriots, Toronto editor Thomas Dalton complained of the descriptions by “The *Radical* and *Loafer* presses” of the treatment of state prisoners in the Canadas.⁹⁵ The epithet was common enough that Americans used it too. Patriot editor Thomas Low Nichols of the *Buffalonian* complained that “a certain class of our fellow citizens chose to stigmatise [sic] [the patriots of Navy Island] as loafers and vagabonds.”⁹⁶ Used as an insult to patriots, this epithet was adopted—and co-opted—for themselves.

The references to loafers and lazy clubs could bind the patriots in exile around a shared marker of community. The patriot press could address itself directly to “loafers” as a marker of shared membership. The *Lewiston Telegraph* carried a notice “Look out ye loafers who are selling liquor sauce without a licence. There is a small fine for such wickedness” and the *Mercury and Buffalonian* contained the simple statement—emphasized with a manicule on each side—“LOAFERS !”⁹⁷ The use of quotation marks around loafer by the *Mercury*

⁹⁴ Chris Raible, “The Threat of being Morganized will not deter us’: William Lyon Mackenzie, Freemasonry, and the Morgan Affair” *Ontario History* 100:1 (2008), 24. Mackenzie’s concerns were also personal as he had been blackballed from Masonic membership at York in 1827. See Raible, *ibid.*, 3.

⁹⁵ *Patriot*, 25 September 1838, p2 c4. See also *Western Herald*, 23 January 1838, p11 c3. See also the *Kingston Chronicle and Gazette*, which carried an update contradicting an earlier report “that loafers at Rochester” tried to burn the Upper Canadian Ship *Gore* while it was in port. *Chronicle and Gazette*, 28 November 1840, p3 c4.

⁹⁶ Buffalo History Museum, Thomas L. Nichols, *Address Delivered at Niagara Falls, on the Evening of the Twenty-ninth of December, 1838. The anniversary of the Burning of the Caroline* (Buffalo: Charles Faxon, 1839), 9.

⁹⁷ *Lewiston Telegraph*, 31 May 1839, p2 c6; *Semi-Weekly Mercury and Buffalonian*, 5 March 1839, p3 c2.

and *Buffalonian* suggests an understood second meaning of the term only appreciated by patriots. Patriot readers would understand these references to loafers and their clubs as references to patriots and patriot organizing, thus forming a distinct language and understanding. Theller even published humorous notices of two associations—the “Loafers’ Club” of Detroit and the “Lazy Club” in Buffalo—showing a self-reflexive understanding of the liberal voluntary tradition that the patriots otherwise took very seriously—and possibly a veiled reference to the Hunters.⁹⁸

The selective use of redaction by patriot papers—in their reports on secret patriot organizing—was another way the press’s engagement with secret societies helped to foster a sense of community amongst their readers. James Mackenzie’s *Freeman’s Advocate* contained two articles in the same issue referencing the “C—.” Possibly “committee” or “chasseurs,” the first article reported that “The C— met and have taken measures” to achieve “more efficient action and greater results” than previously. The second article reported that “J. Ward Birge

submitted his conduct of the C— who exonerated[sic] him [...] after a rigid investigation.” Birge was supposed to have led the Hunter expeditionary force in its attack on Prescott but never reached Upper Canada. In the aftermath, Birge had been subjected to withering criticism and accusations of cowardice.⁹⁹ In the wake of the failures of the Battle of the Windmill and the Battle of Windsor, James Mackenzie used these articles to reveal how patriots were organizing and learning from their mistakes. However, he could have conveyed this information without his cryptic references to the “C—,” suggesting that James Mackenzie could have been conveying the illusion that all patriots were united by an insider knowledge.

As another example, exiled Upper Canadian editor Samuel Hart published an article where he offered “A PROPHECY [sic],—We shall resume the publication of the “Plain Speaker” in Belleville U.C., on the ————.” As for William Lyon Mackenzie, one of the resolutions of the Canadian Association he helped organize was redacted in its entirety.¹⁰⁰ Here a patriot newspaper purported to

⁹⁸ *Spirit of ’76*, August 17, 1839, 27 August 1839. A second purpose could have been to “ridicule the sacred philosophies of voluntary associations” as historian Darren Ferry said of the satirical press coverage of the Peterborough “Lime Juice Club.” Regardless, in Ferry’s view, these fictional vice-filled clubs demonstrated a “fascination and enthusiasm for voluntary associations.” Darren Ferry, *Uniting in Measures of Common Good: The Construction of Liberal Identities in Central Canada* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2008), 3-4. For a later example of such a club in the United States see an article in the *Kansas News*, 25 July 1857 quoted in Linda S. Johnston, ed. *Hope Amid Hardship: Pioneer Voices from Kansas Territory* (Guilford, Connecticut: Globe Pequot Press, 2013), 85.

⁹⁹ *The Freeman’s Advocate*, 11 January 1839, Graves, *Guns Across the River*, 92, 133; *Mackenzie’s Gazette*, 22 December 1838, p1 c2.

¹⁰⁰ *Lewiston Telegraph*, 26 April 1839, p2 c6; *Mackenzie’s Gazette*, 30 March 1839, p320 c1.

¹⁰¹ *Mackenzie’s Gazette*, 18 November 1838 Extra p2; 24 November 1838, p227 c2.

withhold certain information to hint at other plans or large-scale organizing. In this way, patriot readers could feel that they were part of a vaster organized enterprise. Mackenzie's references to the Hunters' Lodges served a similar purpose. Just before the planned Hunter attack on Prescott, Mackenzie published the song "The Hunters of Kentucky" without explanation and again after the patriots had been defeated.¹⁰¹ Later, Mackenzie reprinted the Celebration of St. Patrick's Day by the Sons of Erin, which included toasts to "sympathizers" [sic] accompanied by the air "Hunters of Kentucky."¹⁰² A melody about the Battle of New Orleans, "The Hunters of Kentucky" was a popular song sung by supporters of Andrew Jackson. The song became associated with the Hunters' Lodges, as another way by which patriots attempted to associate their cause with American resistance to Britain.¹⁰³ The reference to the song, even after the failure of the last failed invasion—at Windsor, Upper Canada in December 1838—was an attempt to allude to a larger movement that encompassed more than just one paper's readership, just as that movement was waning.

Patriot newspapers also made references to spies to bind together the patriot community as well as demonstrate its supposed reach. The *North Ameri-*

can published an exposé of a spy, Major Richardson, who took on the guise of a lumber merchant from Michigan to lure a Colonel Gagnon into Lower Canada. The article mentioned that "the unhanged villain" was now on a tour along the Michigan frontier and included a physical description of Richardson. Theller copied the article and gave it the title "Hunters – Look out!"¹⁰⁴ On other occasions, Theller warned "Friends of Canadian liberty beware, – there are spies among you."¹⁰⁵ These evocations of "friends" surrounded by spies fostered a sense of solidarity and common cause.

The use of coded messages proved one of the most powerful ways to place readers within a supposedly extensive network of shared aspirations. For instance, Theller exposed—in an almost gleeful tone—a possible constitutionalist kidnapping plot: in an article in his *Spirit of '76*, he offered advice to

some of the Tory residents of Windsor and Sandwich. We would in good faith and honesty, advise them, if they will persist in having any idea that they can abduct, or kidnap, any person from this side of the river, that they will be more liberal in their offers, and they will employ a more decent person than their last. The poor wretch got drunk, and told his plans. It won't do.

Theller then called out a "certain English grocer" on Detroit's Woodward Avenue

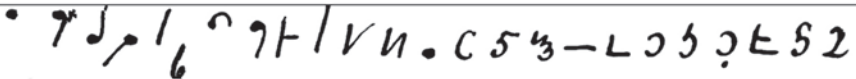
¹⁰² *Mackenzie's Gazette*, 23 March 1839.

¹⁰³ Graves, *Guns Across the River*, 243.

¹⁰⁴ *Spirit of '76*, 18 September 1839; *North American*, 4 September 1839, p86 c4. The *North American* may have been referring to patriote Colonel Julien Gagnon, who accompanied C.-H.-O. Côté at the Battle of Lacolle. Richard Chabot, "Lucien (Julien) Gagnon," *DCB*.

¹⁰⁵ *Spirit of '76*, 1 October 1839.

Table 2: Patriot editors and examples of their respective “codes” with a comparison of the code developed by Charles Duncombe.

Patriot	Code Example
Theller (Detroit)	3. Z S T !—A. U. L ! ! !—N. X. R. ½ S ₂ ! ! W. 9 U. M ! !
Nichols (Buffalo)	2?— t7?,—vj 8:u t;i—u7v;—t;4f.
Underhill (Cleveland)	Wo,uv;tuE?hHn?fi;u—,t;Ot;s!;uv;fv?Æ,cv—,uU?!tæœ,i;pvu[-]
Duncombe (Cleveland)	

for his treatment of a fellow patriot, ominously stating:

It is cold weather for riding now, and tar sticks. While we are on the subject, we would caution another resident of this city from attempting to carry into execution the plans, which with three others of Malden, he concocted, on Monday night last, between nine and ten o'clock, in the back room of Bullock's Tavern there. The wretched fool—does he not know what he said? If he doubts it, let him come and see us, and we will tell him, word for word, the whole dialogue. It is strange that men will be so foolish as to put themselves in the power of those whom they wish to destroy. Twice now, has that customer been caught tripping, beware, we tell him, of a third time —HUNTERS 3. Z S T !—A. U. L ! ! !—N. X. R. ½ S₂ ! ! W. 9 U. M ! !¹⁰⁶

Theller's article harnessed secret code

to at once foil constitutionalist plots, show the organizational reach of the patriots, and issue major threats. Rather than patriots being sufferers, in this case they were the ones in a powerful position with surreptitious control over the constitutionalist plotters. The use of Hunter “code”—in reality, no more than pretentious blustering—magnified this effect.

Other papers also used codes. The *Bald Eagle* of Samuel Underhill included in its issues of 21 and 28 December 1838 and 1 January 1839, a short one-line statement written in code.¹⁰⁷ Thomas Low Nichols, in the *Mercury* and the *Mercury and Buffalonian*, also included short, coded statements.¹⁰⁸ These “codes” are transcribed in Table 2.

There was indeed a patriot code,

¹⁰⁶ *Spirit of '76*, 28 November 1839.

¹⁰⁷ *Bald Eagle*, 21 December 1838, p3 c2, 28 December 1838, p4 c2, 1 January 1839, p3 c1.

¹⁰⁸ *Semi-Weekly Mercury and Buffalonian*, 5 March 1839, p2 c4. See also for example *Daily Mercury*, 29 November 1838, p2 c1, 1 December 1838, p4 c3.

¹⁰⁹ For the use of this code by patriots see the commission of Lucius Verus Bierce as “Kommandr and shief of the Patriot Army in Upper Kanada.” Western Reserve Historical Society, MSS 1081 Lucius Verus Bierce (1801-1876) Papers, 1838-1876, Container 1, Folder 4 “Correspondence and notes,” Appointment as Commander in Chief of the Patriot Army of Upper Canada, 18 August 1838. For the letter from

developed by Charles Duncombe, seen here, which used symbols, *not* letters or numbers. The example of Duncombe's code in the table above is in fact the alphabet: he developed a symbol for each letter of the alphabet except for c and j. As seen in the table, Duncombe's code bears no resemblance to the ones used by Theller, Nichols, or Underhill.¹⁰⁹

Then why did patriot editors use these codes? Could all these instances of coded messages above be actual covert communications amongst members of an expansive secret organization? That is highly unlikely. The codes of the three editors were simply rhetorical devices—gibberish. They were used rather to imply an ominous secret network and to reassure patriot readers that their newspapers were part of it. It is especially interesting to note that this tactic is used by the press in late 1838 and early 1839—right as the movement is floundering after a series of failed raids and uprisings in November and December 1838. For patriots, allusions to secret organizing and the Hunters served a bigger purpose of forming a community among refugees and sympathizers in the difficult circumstances of military defeat and exile.

Conclusion

As a milestone in this increasingly heated political rhetoric, Mackenzie's founding of the *Constitution* saw the first developments towards the formation of a patriot press defined by its republicanism and commitment to independence for the Canadas. This press was committed to erasing the boundary between monarchy and republic in North America. With the outbreak of armed insurrection in November 1837, the members of the patriot press were compelled to flee into exile. Rather than patriot voices being silenced after November 1837, the patriot press re-formed as a community in the United States. There, the patriot press remained crucial to continued patriot organizing. While some patriot editors expressed aversion to secrecy, some of those same editors now used references to secret organizing, doing this through oblique references, redaction, and the use of secret code. All these ploys had a single purpose: to gesture to readers that they were part of a larger, highly active, and highly successful organization committed to Canadian independence—regardless of the truth of that.

Charles Duncombe outlining the Hunter code and containing a coded version of the snowshoe degree see "Documents: The Hunters' Lodges of 1838" *New York History* 19:1 (1938), 68 and Kinchen, *Patriot Hunters*, picture obverse from page 49. Kinchen provides a translation of the snowshoe degree from said letter on page 55.