September 2024

Negotiations of Empire: Rooting out the American Citizenry in the Borderlands of Upper Canada, 1805-1820

Emma C. Grant
University of Windsor, grant124@uwindsor.ca

Negotiations of Empire: Rooting out the American Citizenry in the Borderlands of Upper Canada, 1805-1820

By

Emma Grant

A Major Research Paper
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
through the Department of History
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Master of Arts
at the University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

2024

Negotiations of Empire: Rooting out the American Citizenry in the Borderlands of Upper Canada, 1805-1820

by

Emma Grant

APPROVED BY:

_____

M. Wright
Department of History

_____

G. Teasdale, Co-Advisor
Department of History

_____

G. French, Co-Advisor
Department of History

September 4, 2024

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I hereby certify that I am the sole author of this thesis and that no part of this thesis has been published or submitted for publication.

I certify that, to the best of my knowledge, my thesis does not infringe upon anyone's copyright nor violate any proprietary rights and that any ideas, techniques, quotations, or any other material from the work of other people included in my thesis, published or otherwise, are fully acknowledged in accordance with the standard referencing practices. Furthermore, to the extent that I have included copyrighted material that surpasses the bounds of fair dealing within the meaning of the Canada Copyright Act, I certify that I have obtained a written permission from the copyright owner(s) to include such material(s) in my thesis and have included copies of such copyright clearances to my appendix.

I declare that this is a true copy of my thesis, including any final revisions, as approved by my thesis committee and the Graduate Studies office, and that this thesis has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other University or Institution.

ABSTRACT

This research examines the negotiations that transpired between the people, the British imperial government, and the land within the Detroit River borderlands between 1805 to 1820. This work marries borderlands and imperial interpretations and forms a cohesive foundation for analysis, which interprets empire as a framework through which the people of this region maneuvered. Reciprocally, within this negotiated process the people themselves become a mechanism of empire. Therefore, this work amends a historiographical gap within the Detroit-Essex borderlands that often divides imperial and cultural methods. Focusing primarily on the years surrounding the War of 1812, this work draws nuanced connections between empire, land, and community formation specifically in Essex County, Ontario. Partly through its outright destruction, this imperial conflict drew both Detroit and Essex County closer into the orbits of the opposing metropoles thus challenging the resiliency of the woven kinship networks that spanned across the Riverlands community. This work considers the burgeoning free Black communities that emerged during the first half of the nineteenth century in Essex County and the correlation therein between freedom and the war itself. Ultimately, under the strain of empire, the community land matrix of the region was forever altered, while the personal relationships across the strait prevailed.

DEDICATION

To my parents and my sisters. I could not have done this without you.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research project has evolved in ways I did not believe possible at the outset, and it could not have manifested in this manner without the faithful support of so many in the History Department at the University of Windsor. Thank you to Dr. Steven Palmer who drilled methods and theories into my malleable brain in my first semester of graduate school. Thank you to Dr. Robert Nelson who reminded me that I would have to cut my project down eventually and that it would indeed feel like killing a part of my "research baby." Thank you to Dr. Miriam Wright who taught me about modernity, asked me to read monographs that re-wired my brain, and who acted as reader on this project. My most profound thanks go to Dr. Gregg French who ignited my exploration of imperialism and forever altered the historical lens through which I view the world. Thank you for treating me as a colleague rather than a student and for loaning me your copy of *The Professor is in: The Essential Guide to Turning your Ph.D. into a Job*, by Karen Kelsky to prepare for my first sessional instructor interview. Though mostly, thank you for asking more of me (even when I did not exactly feel like giving it) and for supervising this project. My deepest gratitude goes to Dr. Guillaume Teasdale who first inspired my passion for borderlands history within the Detroit Riverlands during my undergraduate studies and who noticed this spark within me. I would not have moved forward with an M.A. without your encouragement. Thank you for advocating for me within the larger field and for finding opportunities to help me along on my professional journey. Thank you for always bringing me back to the primary sources, for supervising this project, and for reading this paper so many times. Amidst personal struggles, there were moments when I considered giving up on this venture; thank you to those who would not allow that to happen.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

At the turn of the nineteenth century, the Detroit-Essex borderlands were often described as an idyllic frontier. Celebrated for its orchard lined river front, flowing blue waters, and twining French ribbon farms, the region represented an elysian wild country that was both simplistic and far removed from the pollution of the U.S. and British empires.[1] After surviving the transitions of power wrought by the Seven Years' War and the American Revolutionary War, the inhabitants upon the shores of the strait surely believed that their lives would continue in the same unspoiled manner.[2] However, a mere decade later, the War of 1812 brought violent conflict to the doorstep of the Detroit River borderlands and devastated the region. More specifically, both British and American forces used scorched earth policies that left the community ravaged by imperial conflict.[3]

In October 1813, the British were under imminent threat of an American invasion. Colonel Henry Procter responded by orchestrating a swift retreat from Sandwich (now part of Windsor, Ontario). Along the way the British army "dismantled the posts of Amherstburg and Detroit, and totally destroyed the public buildings and stores of every description" to keep invaluable resources out of enemy hands.[4] American General

---

[1] Frederick Neal, *Township of Sandwich, Past and Present* (Windsor, ON: SWODA: Windsor & Region Publications, 1909) 8-10. Guillaume Teasdale, *Fruits of Perseverance: The French Presence in the Detroit River Region, 1701-1815* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2019) 1-3 and 114.

[2] The Seven Years' War is commonly referred to as the French and Indian War when placed within the specific context of the North American conflict, while the former refers to the larger imperial war that took place within the North American, Asian, and European continents between France and Britain. However, Recent historiographical language has shifted, and many historians often generally refer to the conflict merely as the Seven Years' War. This work will follow the same linguistic trend; William M. Fowler Jr., *Empires at War: The Seven Years' War and the Struggle for North America, 1754-1763* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre Ltd., 2005): 1-10

[3] To learn more about the conflict of 1812 in the Detroit River region see Alan Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812: American Citizens, British Subjects, Irish Rebels, and Indian Allies* (New York: Vintage Books, 2010).

[4] George Prevost, "Headquarters Montreal, October 30th, 1813," Cambridge, England: *Cambridge Chronicle and Journal* (Newspapers.com by Ancestry) December 24, 1813, Page 2.

William Henry Harrison defeated Colonel Procter's army upon their chase out of Sandwich and up the Thames River and temporarily drove the British forces out of the Detroit Riverlands. By the end of the war, only two houses in the core of Olde Sandwich Town survived the conflict. The rest of the village was burnt to the ground upon General Harrison's subsequent withdraw later in 1813.[5] Following the cessation of hostilities on March 5, 1815, Judge Augustus B. Woodward of Detroit in the Territory of Michigan wrote a letter to James Monroe, the acting U.S. Secretary of War, and painted a telling picture of the region post conflict:

> The desolation of this territory is beyond all conception. No kind of flour or meal to be procured and nothing for the subsistence of cattle. No animals for slaughter…[and] many possessing neither firmness of mind or body sufficient to sustain the calamities with which they have been assailed have sunk into that asylum 'where the wicked cease to trouble and the weary are at rest.'[6]

This idyllic community sheltered by the wild frontier was left in ruin and despair due to a war that scourged their countryside. Following the conflict, the residents of the region were thus pulled more closely into a world of empires, and Essex County was rebuilt through the looking glass of the metropole from the ashes of a borderlands community that was never quite the same.[7]

The War of 1812 is a principal component within this work; however, politics and battles are not the scope of this study. Instead, the cultural impacts that affected community formation in Essex County following the conflict are assessed and intersect

---

[5] The Duff-Baby Mansion and the McGregor-Cowan House are the only two dwellings that survived the "torching" of the concentrated Sandwich core upon Harrison's retreat; see "Sandwich Heritage Walking Tour," Windsor, ON: Presented by the City of Windsor, updated, April 27th, 2018, 9. PDF.
[6] Clarence Edwin Carter, Editor, *The Territorial Papers of the United States, Volume X: The Territory of Michigan 1805-1820* (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1942), 513-514.
[7] In Lewis Carroll's novel, *Through the Looking Glass*, the author uses this expression to describe entering a new setting that is unfamiliar or a new world that is strange; Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass* (London: HarperCollins Publishers Inc., 2010).

with imperial struggles, borderlands theory, and land settlement. In the first decade of the nineteenth century, the Detroit River region was an isolated frontier wilderness dotted with shoreline communities due to the impenetrable interior of each district.[8] Sitting upon the precipice of empires, Essex County acted as a connecting point between the fur traders of Montreal and the American trade networks of the Old Northwest Territories, which included a vast expanse of land that now encompasses Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, and part of Minnesota.[9] This region rested on the rugged ridge of settler colonization. Isolated by the physical geography and distance to the administrative hubs of the U.S. and British metropoles, the actions of the people on the ground in Essex County were fundamental in shaping the culture of this interwoven space as well as building, and rebuilding, their wreathed communities.[10]

The Detroit River region was in fact a vast network of kinship ties that linked people across the water. Importantly, this work considers the definition of "people" within this borderlands community and attempts to include a mosaic of personal networks that stretched across the river, rather than infer the limited context of "people" to simply mean "white people." Because ultimately, the individuals of this sparsely populated community relied upon one another, and individuals on each side of the river saw themselves in the other. Lydia Bacon, a resident of Sandwich at the outbreak of the war, recorded in her diary, "For here had been such friendly intercourse kept up and been

[8] Sandy Antal, *A Wampum Denied: Procter's War of 1812* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011), 8-11.
[9] "The Northwest and the Ordinances, 1783-1858," in "The History of the Upper Midwest: An Overview," Library: Library of Congress, Congress.gov United States Legislative Information, accessed 5 June 2024.
[10] For more information on imperial metropoles: Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper, "Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda," in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World,* edited by Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 1-56.

cemented by marrying with each other, that it seemed like families taking up arms against their fellows."[11] Indeed, this conflict strained the intimate kinship networks of the Detroit River borderlands due to the fact that the War of 1812 moved the peripheral space of Essex County closer to the grasp of the British Colonial metropoles of Quebec and York (now Toronto).

How the inhabitants of Essex County rebuilt their community under targeted intrusion on the part of British authorities following the War of 1812 is another main component of this work. Following the conflict, the personal networks that defined this region still prevailed under the strain of empire. Thus, the community was forced to navigate a tumultuous imperial framework that attempted to interrupt the centuries old tapestry of friends and family across the Detroit River. Following the war, acts of resistance against the British government proliferated through deeds both large and small. In the end, British imperial influence affected land settlement in Essex County and interrupted the cross-border land matrix that ensconced American citizens and British subjects as partners in land transactions. Cross-border community interactions still defined the identity of the Detroit River region after the War of 1812. However, the process of community formation in Essex County was undeniably transformed and reflected a negotiated process between imperial authorities, the land, and the people on the ground. Ultimately, this research seeks to uncover what within the Detroit-Essex borderlands was an imperial device and what was locally derived, as well as how these

[11] François Baby House Collections, Research Binder, "The Invasion of Sandwich," Compiled by Madelyn Della Valle, Museum Windsor, PM 2580, June 2021.

two forces interacted to shape the Essex County community in the decades surrounding the War of 1812.

This work explores the understudied period within the Detroit River borderlands' historiography during the first half of the nineteenth century and the undeniable impact that the War of 1812 brought upon the society of the region. Following the initial investigation for this project, it became glaringly apparent why this hole within the historiography exists: there remain very few sources from Essex County that date from 1800 to 1820. Put simply, the region was shrouded under a proverbially "dark age." Historians today have access to many primary sources dating from the period 1760 to 1796 in the Detroit River borderlands; however, there remains far fewer sources pertaining to this same region from the first half of the nineteenth century. During this specific period, no village or township within Essex County had a circulating newspaper. Additionally, there remains no census records for the Essex County community in the first two decades of the nineteenth century. Although some assessment rolls are available for historical study, these documents glean little into the cultural and racial composition of the region. These barriers force the researcher to think creatively about source material and to re-conceptualize how one interprets the limited records that are still in existence for this time period.

This research seeks to investigate the historical and geographical diversity within the Detroit River borderlands and thus highlight the intimate social networks, patterns of land settlement, and imperial maneuverings that were unique to this region.[12]

[12] To learn more about historical and geographical diversity and a borderlands approach: Randy William Widdis, "Migration, Borderlands, and National Identity: Directions for Research," in John J. Bukowczyk *et*

Additionally, this work will assess how these social and imperial mechanisms were affected by the War of 1812. Primarily, a traditional borderlands approach navigates this work. Though additionally, imperial history is employed as a key mechanism of analysis. In this research, imperialism is conceptualized as a process of negotiation within the first half of the nineteenth century in Essex County and fluidly intersects with borderlands interpretations.[13] Ultimately, a large gap exists within the current historiography of Essex County that divides the history of Upper Canada into separate compartments of top-down history regarding imperial land authority, which was largely published in the 1960s, and the cultural, borderlands history of the community members themselves, which was mostly written in the early 2000s.[14] There remains very little interaction between these two methodological realms within the historic discourse. This research wishes to amend this gap between top-down and cultural methodologies used to assess Essex County in the first half of the nineteenth century and demonstrate how these two opposing analyses work in tandem with one another.

In order to establish a comprehensive methodological framework, this work must specify how imperial and borderlands theories are utilized for analysis as well as define the specific contexts used for inquiry. Importantly, this work defines empire as an omnipresent entity that was at once political, cultural, and social. This definition

---

al., *Permeable Border: The Great Lakes Basin as Transnational Region, 1650-1990* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005): 152-174.

[13] For more on imperial history see David Armitage, "Introduction," in *An Expanding World, The European Impact on World History, 1450-1800.* Volume 20: Theories of Empire, 1450-1800, edited by David Armitage. (Brookfield: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 1998), xv-xviii; John Darwin, *After Tamerlane: The Rise and Fall of Global Empires, 1400-2000* (New York: Penguin Books, 2007), x.

[14] For more information on imperial land authorities: Lillian F. Gates, *Land Policies of Upper Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968) and Gerald M. Craig, *Upper Canada: The Formative Years 1784-1841* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1963).

broadens the classical Roman categorization of empire as merely a political body that claims both *imperium*, the right to property, and *dominium,* the right to rule.[15] Cultural imperialism is perhaps the most difficult concept to define within this analysis for, as Russel Smandych and Bernd Hemm declare, the ambiguous abstraction of this idea lies along a "continuum."[16] Nevertheless, this analysis harks back to the fundamental works of Edward W. Said for guidance. In *Culture and Imperialism,* Said recognizes the role of religion within higher forms of cultural material, such as folklore, literature, and musical expression. However, without such sources to analyze during a dark age within the Detroit River borderlands, this work must rely upon religion itself as the main cultural influence that remained relatively outside of the political body during this period.[17] Thus, in the first half of the nineteenth century, this work conceptualizes Anglicanism simultaneously as an informal mechanism of cultural imperialism as well as a community mechanism that was loyal, above all, to the people. Moreover, this work conceives cultural imperialism as an instrument with which to shatter the antiquated American and British narratives of empire that continue to penetrate our historiographical dialogue under a uniformed interpretation. For, this research demonstrates that empires are in fact "contested, confused, and chance-ridden" whose fates are intimately linked to the uniqueness of a geographical space and the people who reside within it.[18] By centering attention to the Detroit River borderlands, this work gleans new insights into the cultures of the British and American empires in the early nineteenth century. Amy Kaplan

[15] Armitage, "Introduction," xv-xviii.
[16] Russell Charles Smandych and Bernd Hamm, *Cultural Imperialism: Essays on the Political Economy of Cultural Domination* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2005) 3.
[17] Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, Radom House Inc. 1993).
[18] John Darwin, *After Tamerlane: The Rise and Fall of Global Empires 1400-2000* (New York: Penguin Books, 2007), x.

declares that in order to understand American cultural imperialism one must "not only…understand how they abet the subjugation of others or foster their resistance, but also ask how international relations reciprocally shape a dominant imperial culture at home, and how imperial relations are enacted and contested within the nation."[19] Thus, a correlative exchange is underscored and demonstrates how American and British imperialism within the Detroit River borderlands shaped the imperial relations of the War of 1812, and therefore how the War of 1812 in turn shaped the culture of the Riverlands itself. The uniqueness of the Detroit-Essex borderlands during these years of conflict is brought to the fore and thus highlights the multifaceted dimensions of resistance and negotiation that defined this region and created an identity that "coher[ed] independently of international confrontations" thus demonstrating the "diversity and multivocality" of imperialism within this region. [20] By assessing the Detroit River borderlands through different theoretical concepts, this work adds nuance understanding to how imperialism is defined within broader borderlands contexts.

It is vitally important that the people of the Detroit River borderlands are incorporated when assessing imperial actions before, during, and after the War of 1812. Just as Jane Burbank describes, following this conflict the United States and British empires attempted to control "connections and contacts" between the personal networks of the Detroit Riverlands.[21] However, many individuals, and particularly individuals of African descent, "saw something to be gained" from manipulating the policies of the

[19] Amy Kaplan, "'Left Alone with America:' The Absence of Empire in the Study of American Culture," in *Cultures of United States Imperialism* edited by Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 14.
[20] Kaplan, "'Left Alone with America,'" 15.
[21] Jane Burbank, *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010) 2.

opposing governments and thus deftly navigated an imperial framework that stretched across the Detroit River in order to create the best circumstances for themselves and their communities.[22] Thereby, people and empire cannot be divorced from one another but rather recognized for the intimate bond forged between them. Spatial theory is an important theoretical component when analyzing people as empire within the Detroit River borderlands. The spatial turn advocates that geography can no longer be an afterthought when analyzing social relations, but rather should be "intimately involved in their construction."[23] Fundamental to this research is the notion that in the first half of the nineteenth century the individuals of the Detroit-Essex region were both produced by the space and producers of history and geography within that space.[24] Additionally, the negotiations that transpired between the empire as a governing body and the kinship networks within the Detroit River region must be assessed. For this work was largely inspired by the work of Susan Shaw Romney who poignantly describes that the "intimate networks people constructed, rather than actions taken by formal structures or metropolitan authorities, constructed empire."[25] Once again, within the Detroit-Essex borderlands, the people were a fundamental mechanism of empire. While the high society of the governing metropole was distant, these individuals were ubiquitous and negotiated what empire looked like within this unique space on a daily basis. Thus, in the first half of the nineteenth century, empire within the Detroit River region was both the governments on high, religious institutions, and the actions of the people on the ground.

---

[22] Burbank, *Empires in World History,* 2.
[23] Barney Warf and Santa Arias eds. *The Spatial Turn: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2008) 1-4.
[24] Warf and Arias, *The Spatial Turn,* 5.
[25] Susanah Shaw Romney, *New Netherland Connections: Intimate Networks and Atlantic Ties in Seventeenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014) 18.

Paramount to this analysis is the declaration that in the first half of the nineteenth century the United States undoubtedly operated as an empire. This theoretical framework borrows largely from Paul A. Kramer who adamantly asserts that the United States functioned as an empire during this early period as an entity that was a "self-constituted nation possessing imperial aspirations, projects, and domains."[26] By the first decade of the nineteenth century, America's empire of citizens pushed west of the Appalachian Mountains and invaded Indigenous territories.[27] However, François Furstenberg asserts that the struggle to push the border of empire past the Appalachian chain began a century earlier with the French and British regimes and caused near endless violence between the European settlers and the indigenous nations within these contested zones. Finally, following Pontiac's War of 1763-1764, the British government officially declared that the lands west of the Appalachians were indigenous territory; however, that did not stop colonial settlers from trickling into the reserved region.[28] Thereby, although U.S. settlers were actively conquering Indigenous nations throughout North America by way of aggressive and violent expansion, they were merely following the precedent set by their predecessors demonstrating the connecting ability of empires within the old Northwest during the first half of the nineteenth century.[29] Robert Kagan further expounds that during Thomas Jefferson's presidency at the turn of the century, U.S. Indigenous policy was shaped largely by the will of the American people along the frontier line. The

[26] Paul A. Kramer, "Power and Connection: Imperial Histories of the United States in the World," *The American Historical Review* 116, no. 5 (December 2011): 1366.
[27] For information regarding US imperial actions against Indigenous nations in the first half of the nineteenth century: Julian Go, *Patterns of Empire: British and American Empires 1688 to the Present* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).
[28] François Furstenberg, "The Significance of the Trans-Appalachian Frontier in Atlantic History," The American Historical Review 114, no 3 (2008): 647-654.
[29] Kramer, "Power and Connection,"1350-1351.

conflicts that ensued across this racial boundary then shaped how the government enacted policy. The new conquers annexed traditional Aboriginal lands often forcefully re-locating the inhabitants that rightfully resided in these spaces through unequal treaty negotiations.[30] Thus, the United States also falls within this work's definition of empire; the people and the imperial government could not be separated from one another. During this pivotal period of imperial development, the United States not only actively conquered Indigenous territory in their expansion west but also sought expansion into British held North America during the War of 1812. The U.S. imperialists yearned for a new border set along the Ottawa River.[31] But of course, as William Earl Weeks keenly observes, during this early period the actions of the United States continues to puzzle historians as the nation also adamantly espoused anti-imperial rhetoric. However, Weeks cleverly elaborates that "Americans were not opposed to all empires, only to those different from their own."[32] Thus, it is important to address that this work refers to Americans within the Detroit River borderlands as "citizens" rather than "subjects," which is the typical terminology for those that inhabit an empire, given that this is the designation that the U.S. imperial government bestowed upon those of their realm. It can be surmised that the few American settlers who were migrating to this region prior to the War of 1812 would have conceptualized themselves as such. Thereby, this work is unconcerned with semantics because it follows one of the guiding principles of Kramer, which states that an empire is defined solely by how it operates.[33] Essentially, if

[30] Robert Kagan, *Dangerous Nation: America's Foreign Policy from its Earliest Days to the Dawn of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Random House, Inc, 2006), 83-93.
[31] Antal, *A Wampum Denied,* X.
[32]William Earl Weeks, *The New Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), xvii.
[33] Kramer, "Power and Connection," 1349.

Americans walked like imperialists and talked like imperialists, then they were in fact imperialists.

When analyzing dynamics between the British and U.S. empires in the Detroit River borderlands, interactions between race and empire took on a nuanced dynamic in the late eighteenth century when these empires were attempting to formerly solidify their realms through racial policies, which in turn entered the imperial negotiation process.[34] In 1787, the U.S. government passed the Northwest Ordinance that provided a method for admitting new states into the Union from the status of territory and listed the rights and freedoms guaranteed within those regions.[35] Michigan was only established as a territory of the United States in 1805, and the original form of government was composed merely of three judges and a governor who were all appointed by the President.[36] Upon the official creation of the territory, Michigan entered the Union under the stipulations of the Northwest Ordinance, which dictated under Article VI that "there shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude in the said territory."[37] However, Article II of the legislation guaranteed American citizens rights of property, thus territorial inhabitants who had already settled within Michigan and had previously owned enslaved individuals were allowed to keep those individuals in bondage.[38] The British empire took its own small steps toward abolition with the 1793 Act to Limit Slavery in Upper Canada. Passed under

[34] For more information on imperial racial policies: Anthony Pagden, *Lords of All the World: Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain, and France c. 1500–c. 1800* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press: 1995), 5-10.
[35] "Milestone Documents: Northwest Ordinance (1787)," National Archives.org, The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, May 10th, 2022.
[36] MS/Burton, C.M. Papers Works-I-Michigan-C box 19, Michigan-Citizens-Early comers to Michigan, Clarence Monroe Burton Papers, Burton Historical Collection.
[37] "Milestone Documents: Northwest Ordinance (1787)," National Archives.org.
[38] MS/Burton, C.M. Papers Works-I-Michigan-C box 19, Michigan-Citizens-Early comers to Michigan, Clarence Monroe Burton Papers, Burton Historical Collection.

Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe, what was meant to be a revolutionary piece of imperial legislation floundered under its compromises and concessions. The 1793 act declared that no new enslaved individuals were to enter into Upper Canada; however, any individuals owned as slaves were kept as slaves, children born to enslaved mothers were kept in servitude, and all children would be kept in bondage until the age of twenty-five.[39] Thus, as Gregory Wigmore highlights in his pivotal work "Before the Railroad: From Slavery to Freedom in the Canadian-American Borderland," for individuals shackled to the bonds of slavery within the Detroit Riverlands in the first decades of the nineteenth century, the shores on either side of the strait offered freedom merely a stone's throw away.[40] More recently, Veta Smith Tucker has elaborated upon Wigmore's research and asserts that individuals of African descent within the Detroit River region were "keenly aware that the boundaries rendered them ineligible to receive the social benefits and political rights that whites enjoyed, [thus] they engaged in a protracted struggle for inclusion, although restrictions, both legal and psychological, formed unyielding barriers around their humanity."[41] Each of these authors focus on the well documented lives of the Denison family as a primary example of how individuals of African descent maneuvered across the river to freedom, and this work incorporates many of the same sources. Although numerous pieces of recent scholarship regarding race and freedom in the Detroit River borderlands have centered around the Denisons'

[39] "An Act to Prevent the Further Introduction of Slaves and to Limit the Term of Contracts for Servitude Statues of Upper Canada Cap. 7, 33 George III, 1793," Ontario: Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery, Archives of Ontario, accessed June 5th, 2024.
[40]Gregory Wigmore, "Before the Railroad: From Slavery to Freedom in the Canadian-American Borderland," *Journal of American History* 98, no 2 (2011): 437- 454.
[41]Veta Smith Tucker, "Part I: Crossing Boundaries, Uncertain Freedom in Frontier Detroit," in Karolyn Smardz Frost and Vera Smith Tucker, ed. *A Fluid Frontier: Slavery, Resistance, and the Underground Railroad in the Detroit River Borderland* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2017) 25.

lives, this research ventures a step further. This family will not only be viewed as people of color navigating a path to freedom. Through an imperial lens, the Denisons' actions will be assessed as both subjects and citizens who navigated a twisting framework of opposing empires and the racialized theatre created therein. Through this gaze, this work forms important connections between race, freedom, empire, and borderlands spaces. Though sadly, this work cannot expound in great detail upon the early settlement of Black communities within Essex County because the historical records do not accurately reflect race in relation to land transactions between 1805 and 1820. Thus, the silence of individuals of African descent within early land records becomes a piece of evidence in and of itself. Be that as it may, this work is able to track early cross border interactions within the Black community of the Detroit River borderlands through religious records as well as interactions between race and empire that glean valuable insight into how people of color traversed the unique social and imperial landscape that stretched across the strait.

Because this study focuses on how land settlement interacts with imperial action and community formation, this research must investigate land transactions within Essex County before the formation of the Canada Land Company in 1825.[42] During this period, land was intimately linked to empire. John Clarke traces the roots of this phenomenon within Essex County assessing that these principles harked back to the British Motherland that composed "a society possessing particular values with respect to monarchy and to a 'natural' aristocracy based on the possession of land."[43] Additionally, Clarke emphasizes the pivotal importance of land ownership within the colony of Upper

[42] For more information on the Canada Land Company: Clarence Karr, *The Canada Land Company: The Early Years* (Ottawa: Ontario Historical Society Research Publications No. 3, 1974).
[43] John Clarke, *Land, Power, and Economics on the Frontier of the Upper Canada* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), 49.

Canada during a period when access to the land and subsistence agriculture was the very basis of life throughout the region.[44] Allen Greer adds to the narrative surrounding empire and land more broadly within early North America and marks the late eighteenth century as a pivotal period in the development of property philosophy as "sovereignties were broken down and reconstructed."[45] This process lead to "reconsiderations of the nature and legitimacy of property in land, property in human beings…and property as point of connection between society and state."[46] Additionally, Greer adds to the historiography by concretely defining colonization within early modern North America as a "historical process" that was intimately bound to the "real 'possession of land'."[47] It must be noted once again that this research is not concerned with semantics. Essex County is often referred to as a colony and the governing assembly of the colony as producing imperial legislation given that colonization acts as an instrument of empire. Ultimately, before the creation of a private land company in British North America, land transactions were simultaneously a mechanism of community building used by the people on the ground, and thus acted as a mechanism of the peoples' empire.

A discussion regarding the people on the ground within the Detroit River region would not be complete without defining the borderlands theory which guides it. In 1989, Lauren McKinsey and Victor Konrad provided the most palpable definition for a borderlands as a "region jointly shared by two nations that house people with common

[44] Clarke, *Land, Power, and Economics,* xxxi.
[45] Allen Greer, *Property and Dispossession: Natives, Empires and Land in Early Modern North America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 389.
[46]Greer, *Property and Dispossession*, 389.
[47] Greer, *Property and Dispossession,* 6.

social characteristics in spite of the political boundary between them."[48] While more recent interpretations of the study, as espoused by Randy William Widdis, point to the flexibility of borderlands study that can have both positive and negative consequences for the field. Widdis specifically describes the Great Lakes borderlands as a "physical, ideological, and geographical construct" that was sensitive to internal and external factors.[49] However, the term was originally coined by U.S. historian Eugene Bolton in 1920 as a way to reimagine the early frontiers between American and Spanish forces. Despite borderlands history marking a method to specifically analyze United States history, Pekka Hämäläinen and Samuel Truett now declare that "what was once the marker of a particular place has become a way of seeing the world."[50] Indeed, Hämäläinen and Truett assert that borderlands studies have entered a new age in which historians seek to broaden the conceptualizations of history more broadly. These two scholars point to the connection between imperial histories and borderlands histories and the union needed between them stating, "If imperial and national histories are about larger-scale conquests, borderland histories are about smaller-scale accommodations or pockets of resistance. If imperial and national histories fill the continent, borderlands history seeps into the cracks in between those studies."[51] This research will thus create a mosaic between these two theories, with the broken, ceramic pieces acting as empire and the mortar as the personal connections and people that hold it all together. Each piece of

[48] Lauren McKinsey and Victor Konrad. *Borderlands Reflections: The United States and Canada, Borderland Monograph Series #1* (Orona, ME: Borderlands Project: 1989), 4.
[49] Widdis, "Migration, Borderlands, and National Identity," 154.
[50] Pekka Hämäläinen and Samuel Truett, "On Borderlands," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 98, No. 2 (September 2011): 341.
[51] Hämäläinen and Truett, "On Borderlands," 351.

the work lends strength and purpose to the other and both are needed for the structural integrity of the piece.

Within the specific historiography of the Essex County region, borderlands histories have taken precedence in recent decades. A handful of borderlands historians, such as Guillaume Teasdale, focus their attention on the early French roots of this community within the eighteenth century and bookend their periodization at the turn of the nineteenth century. In the final chapter of his recent monograph, *Fruits of Perseverance: The French Presence in the Detroit River Region, 1701-1815,* Teasdale offered preliminary research regarding local French migration across the border in the early nineteenth century following the War of 1812. However, he did not attempt to understand the specific impact of British imperialism on Essex County following the conflict.[52] Other scholars, such as John Clarke and R. Alan Douglas, attempt to analyze the cultural components of this early period in Essex County yet tend to focus their perspectives from the 1820s onwards and often fail to recognize the prominence of the Detroit borderlands trans-imperial kinship networks.[53] In his most recent monograph, *Citizens of Convenience: The Imperial Origins of American Nationhood on the U.S.-Canadian Border,* Lawrence B.A. Hatter takes the same incorporated approach between borderlands and imperial theories as this work and conceptualizes the Detroit River region as a precipice of empires where individuals oscillated between the status of citizen and subject to suit their needs in the early nineteenth century. Importantly, Hatter also

[52] Guillaume Teasdale, *Fruits of Perseverance: The French Presence in the Detroit River Region, 1701-1815* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2019).
[53] John Clarke, *The Ordinary People of Essex: Environment, Culture, and Economy on the Frontier of Upper Canada* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010) and R. Alan Douglas, *Uppermost Canada: The Western District and the Detroit Frontier 1800-1850* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2001).

takes the definitive stance that the United States undeniably operated as an empire during this period and articulates how these "citizens of convenience" forged the border between the two realms.[54] However, Hatter remains focused on the actions of merchants, traders, and imperial agents within the trade networks during this time frame and neglects to accurately assess the intricate kinship networks that also molded empires on the ground.[55] Thus, this work fills in unmistakable crevices between these fundamental works that must be understood in order to properly conceptualize the Detroit River borderlands in the early nineteenth century.

The first chapter of this work will begin by evaluating the people and the land in Essex County prior to the War of 1812. This section will focus on the years from 1805 to 1811 through an assessment of the region's Land Registry books as well as the St. John's Parish register to glean insight into the cultural interactions forged by Anglicanism that transpired between the two shores prior to the conflict. Additionally, some sources from the John Askin Papers collection are analyzed to obtain greater contextual understanding of the borderlands' kinship networks. Subsequently, in the second chapter, the work shifts focus to the war time ruptures that plunged the Detroit River borderlands into upheaval. Once again, the Land Registry for Essex County is highlighted between the years of 1812 to 1816 and reflects the changing environment for land transactions and

[54] Lawrence B. Hatter, *Citizens of Convenience: The Imperial Origins of American Nationhood on the U.S.-Canadian Border* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2017), 1-13.
[55] By studying the case of a French-Canadian farmer from Essex County who ran into trouble with U.S. customs officials in Detroit in 1808 when he tried to cross the border to have his wheat milled (even though he intended to cross back with his grain), Catherine Cangany helps us understand how American imperialism was quietly beginning to have an impact in the Detroit River region. Catherine Cangany, "'The Inhabitants of both Sides of this Streight constitute a French Colony': The Detroit River and the Politics of International Milling, 1796-1837," in Guillaume Teasdale and Tangi Villerb, eds., *Une Amérique française 1760-1860: Dynamiques du corridor créole* (Paris: Les Indes savantes, 2015), 41-60.

settlement in the region during this tumultuous period. The St. John's Parish register is once again assessed to evidence the interruptions across the border. Additionally, this chapter begins the investigation of individuals of African descent within the Detroit River region during the war and the opportunities afforded to these individuals because of the imperial skirmishes that occurred within the Detroit-Essex borderlands. Thereafter, the third chapter highlights the heavy hand of British imperialism following the conflict. This analytical section is focused primarily on the colonial administrative policies that were passed in the Upper Canadian Legislative Assembly from 1814 to 1818 and the acts of resistance that proliferated upon their implementation. Lastly, the consequences of British imperial might within this unique region is reflected upon. Using various newspaper sources from the United States and Canada, the ramifications on the ground for the people of the Detroit-Essex region is highlighted. Of course, the St. John's Parish register is also assessed in order to contrast the imperial attempts to divide the region and the cross-border networks that prevailed. Lastly, a final assessment of the Essex County Land Registry in the year of 1818 will codify the undeniable cultural changes that the War of 1812 wrought upon Essex County community formation. Ultimately, this analysis tells the tale of a community destroyed, burdened by empire, and then left to re-negotiate the structure of their society, which is an ongoing process that echoes into our living present.

CHAPTER 1:

BEFORE THE WAR OF 1812

Fort Ponchartrain du Détroit was founded on the straits of the Detroit River in 1701 by Antoine Laumet de la Mothe Cadillac under the early French regime in North America.[56] Within the preliminary years of its founding, Cadillac invited Indigenous nations to settle around the fort in order to develop trading networks, though the Detroit River region had previously been inhabited by various Indigenous nations throughout antiquity.[57] Although there was undoubtedly friction between these racial groups, this budding settlement crafted the legacy of interwoven French allegiances that stretched across both sides of the waterway.[58] The Seven Years' War ended the French reign within the Detroit River borderlands and drove the colonial government out of the region in 1760. However, this conflict did not displace the hundreds of *Canadien* settlers who had made the Detroit riverway their home decades before. The British imperial project took control of the territory, but the population was left relatively undisturbed in what became known as the Western District, a hinterland to the British colonial metropoles of Montreal and later York (Toronto). By 1768, the British government was attempting to enumerate their new population within the Detroit River region and calculate the inhabitants of the north (Detroit) and south (Essex) shores. The census created recorded a total population of 1,367 individuals who lived upon the shores of the strait under British rule. Of these

---

[56] Guillaume Teasdale, "Public Powers on the Margins of Empire: How Feudalism and Absolutism Clashed in French Detroit, 1701-1734," in Andrew Sturtevant and Karen L. Marrero, eds., *A Place in Common: Rethinking the History of Early Detroit* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2025), 47-76.
[57] For more information on indigenous habitation of the Detroit River region pre-European contact: Thomas W. Killion, Thomas M. Urban, and James Conway, "Mounds, Towns, and their Surrounds: An Archaeological, Historical, and Geophysical Approach to Burial Mounds, Residential Space, and Cultural Landscapes of the Late Woodland Springwells Site (A.D. 800-1400) at Historic Fort Wayne, Detroit," *Journal of Field Archaeology* 44, no. 6 (2019): 383-400.
[58] Teasdale, *Fruits of Perseverance,* 11-51.

inhabitants, forty-six were recorded as enslaved men and thirty-nine as enslaved women. In 1779, the British government conducted another census amid the American Revolutionary War. Due to the conflict brewing across the region, the Brits also included the imprisoned soldiers that were held within Detroit. For that reason, the calculations of this census were skewed. However, the population of the northern and southern shores were approximated at 1,468 inhabitants with 353 hired lodgers. Of this total population in 1779, sixty of these individuals were recorded as enslaved men and seventy-seven as enslaved women. In 1782, just before the end of the war, a final census was conducted by the British within the Detroit River borderlands. There was a substantial increase in residents within these three years with the total population upon the shores of the strait recorded as 2,191 inhabitants. Of this populace, seventy-eight were recorded as enslaved men and one-hundred-and-one as enslaved women.[59] Prior to the implementation of the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 and the 1793 Act to Limit Slavery in Upper Canada, the population of enslaved individuals within the Detroit River borderlands consistently increased. Clearly, at the end of the eighteenth century the British colonial government was attempting to bureaucratically catalogue the various peoples who inhabited this unique space. Though dictated as British upon a map, the Detroit River borderlands remained a French region with racially diverse kinship networks that twined across the water.

By 1783, the American Revolutionary War was won, and the Treaty of Paris was signed between the United States and Great Britain. Under Article 2d of the treaty, the

[59] Donna Valley Russel, ed., *Michigan Census 1710-1830 Under the French, British, and Americans* (Detroit, MI: Detroit Society for Genealogical Research, 1982), 35-49.

Great Lakes were declared as the official boundary line between the two territories driving an international border between the Detroit River community.[60] In 1790, McKee's treaty was signed between King George III and the leading members of the Ottawa, Chippewa, Potawatomie, and Wyandot nations that relinquished extensive lands within the Essex region and paved the way for British migration to the southern shore.[61] However, the French settlement of the British frontier remained unchanged for over a decade after the war. Eventually, the Jay Treaty of 1794 was enacted and the lands on the northern shore surrounding Fort Detroit were taken under control of the American government in 1796.[62] By the end of the eighteenth century, the legislatively crafted boundary line along the Detroit River was more a figment of the imperial imagination rather than a mechanism of community formation on the ground.

Echoes of the Revolutionary War continued to ripple across the Detroit Riverlands at the beginning of the nineteenth century and the aftershock affected the region's growth. During the previous conflict, the British imperial forces were keenly aware of the advantages of liberating individuals of African descent who were enslaved within the United States to fight for their cause. Thus, between 80,000 to 100,000 Black men and women crossed the lines into British military camps and thus to freedom during the Revolution.[63] By the war's end thousands of Black Loyalists were sent to settle the lands of British held North America and many petitioned for land grants as United

[60] "Treaty of Paris: Transcript," National Archives, Archives.gov, revised May 10th, 2022.
[61] Wyandotte Papers, Folder W-93, "Loyalists and Land Boards: Indian Deed of Present Southwestern Ontario to King George III, May 19, 1790," Marsh Historical Collections.
[62] "British-American Diplomacy: The Jay Treaty; November 19, 1794," Yale Law School: Lillian Goldman Law Library, The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy, 2008.
[63] Carol Berkin, *Revolutionary Mothers: Women in the Struggle for America's Independence* (New York: Vintage Books a Division of Random House, Inc., 2005), 122-123.

Empire Loyalists in the same manner as their white counterparts.[64] The colonial Legislative Assembly of Upper Canada eventually adhered to these requests, although the Black veterans were generally granted only half the acres granted to white veterans, and more importantly, the government refused to allocate land grants to individuals of African descent that were adjacent to one another. Thus, community formation for Black individuals living in Upper Canada was stunted in the first decades of the nineteenth century due directly to imperial actions.[65] Moreover, following the implementation of the Jay Treaty in 1796 and the transition of power in the Detroit River region, many British Loyalists left for the southern shore to continue to live in Upper Canada and brought with them the individuals of African descent whom they held in bondage. The Jay Treaty of 1794 upheld the property rights of these migrating Loyalists, thus the newly arrived enslaved peoples who were held by these white individuals remained subjugated to slavery in Upper Canada. Importantly, in the eyes of the U.S. and British governments the Detroit River was no longer a shared waterway, but rather an imperial boundary line. Though simultaneously, the river continued to act as a porous gateway between a shared community. Thus, the United States' Norwest Ordinance of 1787 and the British 1793 Act Against Slavery in Upper Canada took on new meaning.[66] Given that each piece of legislation banned the importation of new slaves on either shore, individuals of African descent now had a passageway to freedom across the Detroit River. Resting precariously upon the precipice of empires, Detroit and Essex County remained under the guise of one

[64] For more information on Black Loyalists: J. Walker and St. G.J. Walker, J., *The Black Loyalists: The Search for a Promised Land in Nova Scotia and Sierra Leone, 1783-1870* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993).
[65] Steve Oitt, *To Stand and Fight Together: Richard Pierpoint and the Coloured Corps of Upper Canada* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2008), 50-60.
[66]Wigmore, "Before the Railroad," 438.

people. In the eyes of the borderland inhabitants, the Detroit River did not create a rigid boundary, but instead remained a fluid channel for travel, trade, communication, and freedom.

By the turn of the nineteenth century, the Western District in Upper Canada was a multi-ethnic region that held approximately 3,000 to 4,000 residents composed predominately by the descendants of French colonists, Indigenous nations, and both free and enslaved African Canadians with some white Loyalists who settled in the budding villages of Sandwich and Amherstburg.[67] Because the north and south shores of the Detroit River had long been administered as one colonial space under both the French and British regimes, it was not only the *Canadiens* of Essex County who shared ties with those across the strait. In 1796 upon implementation of the Jay Treaty, the residents living in Detroit were given one year to either make a declaration stating their intent to remain British subjects living in American territory or else be universally considered American citizens. Many British occupants in Detroit made the declaration, enough to alarm the new American administration.[68] Still many other British subjects decided to leave Detroit for Essex County. Just one of many examples, Catherine Reynolds was born in Detroit in 1782 and upon the transition to American power the Reynolds family moved to Amherstburg in Essex County. Catherine never married, and instead followed her pursuits as a talented painter of Canadian landscapes. It is impossible to imagine that Catherine, as an unmarried woman, lived in a world where her cross-border social ties

[67] Antal, *A Wampum Denied,* 3-15.
[68] Ernest J. Lajeunesse, ed., *The Windsor Border Region: Canada's Southernmost Frontier a Collection of Documents, Fifth Edition* (Windsor, ON: The Essex County Historical Society, 2012), cxvii.

were ceremoniously severed upon her family's re-settlement on the southern shore.[69] This multi-cultural region inhabited one social space within a wild frontier. Isolated by the impenetrable marshy forests of the interior, impassable roads, and great distances to the centralized political metropoles, the people of the Detroit River borderlands were ultimately left to rely upon their cross-border networks that were cemented across centuries and regimes and remained largely outside the reach of domineering state influence.[70]

1.1: The Kinship Networks

When discussing the relationship between the land and kinship networks within nineteenth century Essex County, John Clarke solely investigates the Canadian side of the Detroit River and ignores the cross-border relations that defined the region. Clarke clearly states that "while significant in particular cases and circumstances, these [kinship networks] are, in the author's view, secondary to the central issue of land in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries."[71] This work refutes Clarke's definitive stance. In order to understand land transactions and community formation in Essex County prior to the War of 1812, one must understand the vitality and significance of the peoples' network within the Detroit River borderlands. John Askin, a Scotch-Irish trader, lawyer, and military man, was one of the most distinguished and notable actors that lived and operated within the Northwest Territory throughout the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Beginning his career at Mackinac around the middle of the

[69] "Her stories: Lives of Women in the Detroit River Region A Booklet Based on the Exhibition at the François Baby House: Windsor's Community Museum," FC 3095. E8 Z48, 1993. Leddy Library Archives & Special Collections, University of Windsor.
[70] Antal, *A Wampum Denied,* 8-9.
[71] Clarke, *Land, Power, and Economics,* xxxiii.

eighteenth century, Askin created a vast grid of friendships that stretched from the western Great Lakes to Montreal. Such notable men as James McGill, Isaac Todd, and Alexander Henry composed part of his retinue, and these friendships and business partnerships only ended upon his death in 1815. In 1772, while still employed at Mackinac, Askin married Marie Archange Barthe of Detroit. This union ingratiated Askin into the affluent French kinship networks forged under the old regime within the Detroit River borderlands. In 1780, the family moved from Mackinac to Detroit, and in 1802, they moved from Detroit to Sandwich following America's transition to power on the northern shore of the strait. By the time the Askins settled in Sandwich, John had acquired a wealth of lands on both sides of the river. Notably, the entrepreneur sired many kin of his own, including three children prior to his marriage with Marie who were born to an Indigenous woman in Mackinac. Each of Askins living heirs carried on his legacy and contributed to the intricate cross-border latticework of kinship that defined the quarter. In 1802, Adelaide (also known as Alice) Askin married Detroit resident Elijah Brush, who acted as one of the towns first American lawyers. That same year, the Askins left for the southern shore, and Brush took over occupation of Mrs. Askin's ancestral home upon the Detroit River front of the northern shore.[72] John Askin's vast network of friends, family, and business associates that knitted across the Detroit River borderlands was the rule, rather than the exception during this period. This singular example of one prominent historical figure lends insight into a greater societal trend that traversed all classes and defined the region.

[72] Milo M. Quaife, *John Askin Papers Volume 1: 1747-1795* (SWODA: Windsor & Region Publications, 1928), 12-16.

Greater insights can be gleaned regarding the intricate community that crossed the Detroit River borderlands through assessment of the religious communities. First and foremost, St. John's Anglican Parish was founded in Sandwich in 1802. The original log structure, built in 1807, was a place for community gatherings, children's education, and worship. Rector Richard Pollard was the founder of the parish, its first priest, and a local registrar of deeds.[73] This early British community center was pertinent not only to the individuals of Essex County, but also to their brethren across the water as well. Although religious institutions can easily be conceived as informal mechanisms of cultural imperialism, within the early frontier of the Detroit River borderlands, St. John's Parish held no specific loyalty to either citizen or subject. For by the early nineteenth century, Anglican worshipers resided on both sides of the river, though Detroit did not have its own active church. Instead, Reverand Pollard crossed the river in a canoe to minister to his flock that resided on the northern shore.[74]

Yet, many Detroiters still made the trip to Sandwich for religious ministration. On August 27, 1804, Thomas and Sarah Nowland baptized their two-year-old daughter, Frances Nowland, "born at Detroit" within the primitive construction of St. John's in Sandwich. It remains unclear from the sources if Thomas and Sarah themselves lived across the water at the time of the baptism, but Reverand Pollard's record reflects that their daughter was born upon the northern shore.[75] Elijah and Alice Brush made the trip

[73] Neal, *Township of Sandwich,*179-181.
[74] "History of the Parish," The Cathedral of St. Paul, Detroit, The Cathedral Church of St. Paul, revision 2023.
[75] St. John's Registers, Vol. I. Marriages, Christenings, and Burials. 1802-1820. Accession 1995-054. F 0032. St. John's Anglican (Sandwich). Leddy Library Archives & Special Collections, University of Windsor.

to Sandwich from Detroit to baptize their son, Charles Reuben Brush, on June 25, 1805.[76] By this time, the Brush family had lived in the Barthe ancestral home in Detroit for three years and, observably, the family continued to cross the river for religious services. Though, the importance of the cross-border religious system within the Detroit River borderlands is most notably exemplified in death rather than through birth. On June 25, 1805, Richard Donovan, a merchant, who was "late of Detroit, County of Wayne," died on the northern shore yet was carried to the southern shore and buried at St. John's cemetery in Sandwich.[77] Undoubtedly, the Anglican faith operated as an unofficial channel of British cultural imperialism within the Detroit-Essex region in the first decades of the nineteenth century. However, the religious institution also acted as an important binding agent to this borderlands region that connected citizens and subjects within a shared community.[78]

The St. John's Parish Register also highlights the growing number of free individuals of African descent who utilized the Anglican institution within the Detroit-Essex borderlands community. One of the earliest records from September 24, 1802, documents Peggy Park who was marked as "a negro woman aged forty years" and was baptized at the preliminary log church.[79] It is unclear if Park resided in Essex County, Upper Canada or Detroit in the Territory of Michigan, though evidently Peggy sought religious services and opted to align with the British Empire for godly ministration rather

[76] St. John's Registers, Vol. I. Marriages, Christenings, and Burials. 1802-1820.
[77] St. John's Registers, Vol. I. Marriages, Christenings, and Burials. 1802-1820.
[78] To learn more about the binding nature of religion see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (New York: Verso New Left Books, 1991).
[79] St. John's Registers, Vol. I. Marriages, Christenings, and Burials. 1802-1820. Accession 1995-054. F 0032. St. John's Anglican (Sandwich). Leddy Library Archives & Special Collections, University of Windsor.

than the dominant Catholic Church. Peggy Park's baptism is the only Black record present in the parish register from 1802 to 1807. Therefore, it can easily be surmised that the free Black population within the Detroit River borderlands remained squarely on the fringes of society during the first decade of the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, on April 2, 1809, Alen and Grace Clark baptized their adult daughter Elenor, along with Thomas and Grace Smith who also baptized their grown child, Ann. These baptism entries were grouped together on Easter Sunday and labeled by Richard Pollard as "people of color."[80] Simultaneously, these records showcase the racial categorization employed by the British Empire, the desires of the individuals of African descent within the Detroit River borderlands to align with the powerful white nucleus, and the connecting ability of religion for people of all races on the ground.

1.2: The British Imperial Land System and the People's Land System

Although the Detroit River borderlands had not yet swooned under the spell of imperial state authority in the first decade of the nineteenth century, it was not for lack of trying on the part of the British colonial administration. Under the terms of the royal instructions enacted in July of 1783, British Loyalists who fought in the American Revolution were to receive one hundred acres of land in Upper Canada, usually half that amount for Black Loyalists, and fifty additional acres for each member of their family. However, it was the Late Loyalists who sought land in the province beginning in the 1790s that plagued the imperial government. It was thus declared that these individuals, in their tardiness, would have their loyalty reviewed and would not receive the same perks as the previous wave of

[80] St. John's Register, Vol I. Marriages, Christenings, and Burials, 1802-1820.

staunch Loyalists. Indeed, the Land Committee in the Legislative Assembly decided that *all* settlers seeking land in Upper Canada were to have their loyalty inquired upon. However, as this was the only administrative avenue to receive land in Canada, the process slowed to a crawl after having only gained the momentum of a backward sprint. In order to receive land in Upper Canada, individuals had to take an Oath of Allegiance to the British Crown and make a declaration acknowledging the King in Parliament to be the supreme legislature of the province.[81] The inefficiencies of this administration were made apparent not only by flagging immigration to the region, but also by the number of immigrants enticed to leave Upper Canada for new opportunities in the United States. Moreover, this antiquated land system allowed for settlement policies that were dictated by the ruling elite who shrewdly determined which individuals were worthy of holding land within the British North American frontier.[82] This bias process lent to inefficiencies in land administration, but it did not change one pivotal and simple fact: Upper Canada needed more people. Although weary of Americans, the Legislative Council, also known as the Family Compact, continued to allow settlers from the United States to take the Oath of Allegiance to the Crown and settle within the imperial territory.[83] The members of the Family Compact included the exclusive white men who composed the Upper Canadian administration including the executive councilors, senior officials, and some members of the judiciary. In the words of Gerald M. Craig these powerful individuals were "in control of the day-to-day operation of the machinery of government."[84] Despite

[81] Gates, *Land Policies of Upper Canada,* 10-22.
[82] J. K. Johnson, *In Duty Bound: Men, Women, and the State in Upper Canada, 1783-1841* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014) 15-47.
[83] Craig, *Upper Canada,* 43.
[84] Craig, *Upper Canada*, 107.

their efforts, the colonial council of Upper Canada could not render their land system legible, and thus imperial control had not yet taken hold in the Detroit River region prior to the War of 1812.[85]

The Essex County Land Registry records from 1808 to the first months of 1812 reflect both the autonomy of the people and the French roots of the Detroit-Essex borderlands. Prior to the War of 1812, the transactions recorded in the Land Registry books were agreements bartered between individual residents and then recorded by a notary public. This is an important variable in understanding early land transactions within Essex County. These negotiations and settlements were made by individuals on the ground and merely recorded by the local government. Early land transactions in the region were more autonomous ventures that demonstrated how individuals directly shaped their communities. Moreover, the land transactions recorded from 1808 to 1811 inadvertently reflected the resiliency of French culture within Essex County. The measurements of the British acre and the French *arpent* are used interchangeably within the surveyance accounts and there seems to be no definitive correlation in its usage within transactions between individuals of French or English descent.[86] On October 11, 1811, André Peltier, or the anglicized version Andrew Pethie that the British government documented, and François Drouillard registered, signed, and sealed an old deed bargained between the two men in 1795 in which Drouillard purchased a plot of land in Sandwich upon the southern shore from Peltier. Peltier hailed from Quebec where he was born in

[85] To learn more about state control for legibility: James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition have Failed* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998).
[86] Essex County Land Registry, South Detroit "C," #1-272 Events Apr. 3, 1805 to July 30, 1817, pages 1-89, Leddy Library Archives & Special Collections, University of Windsor.

Saint-François-du-Sud Parish in 1737. In 1760, he migrated to Detroit and married Marie Catherine Meloche in 1764. Between 1765 to 1769, the children from this union were recorded to have been born in the Côte du Nord-Est upon the northern shore. Yet, by the 1782 census, Peltier was recorded as residing on the southern shore in Sandwich.[87] After 1800, Peltier was remarried and the children of this second marriage were born in Detroit.[88] François Drouillard was also born in Quebec at the Saint-Joseph de la Rivière-des-Prairies in 1741 and migrated to the Detroit River region sometime in the 1760s. By 1766, Drouillard married Marie Anne Villers dit St-Louis at the Huron Mission in Sandwich prior to the creation of Assumption Parish. All of the many children from this union were born at the said Parish between 1766 and 1792, and in the 1782 census, Drouillard was also recorded as living upon the southern shore in Sandwich.[89] However, in the Essex County land registry record for this deed both men were declared to hail from Detroit. Given that the original agreement that this transaction was legitimizing was dated prior to the British evacuation of the northern shore, it seems that the community legislature on the ground still conceptualized this region as one "Detroit" space even though Peltier would have lived in Detroit proper by the time of purchase and Drouillard in Sandwich. Moreover, it is evident that both men fluidly traversed the shores of the strait and that Peltier held land on both sides of the water. The details of this purchase were scantily outlined in English and instead the register transcribed most of the particulars of the purchase in French.[90] This is only one of several land transactions that

[87] Christian Denissen, *Genealogy of the French Families of the Detroit River Region, 1701-1936, 2nd ed.* (Detroit: Detroit Society for Genealogical Research, 1987), 957-958 and Russel, ed., *Michigan Census 1710-1830,* 51-52.
[88] Denissen, *Genealogy of the French Families,* 957-958.
[89] Denissen, *Genealogy of the French Families,* 369; Russel, ed., *Michigan Census 1710-1830,* 50-52.
[90]Essex County Land Registry, South Detroit "C," #1-272, Events Apr. 3, 1805 to July 30, 1817, No. 127, page 84-85.

were recorded in French during this period. The use of language and the systems of measurement utilized in the administration of land provide evidence to the Francophone culture that still proliferated throughout Essex County society and the local colonial government before the War of 1812.

Early nineteenth century land records in the Essex County Registry preceding the outbreak of war demonstrated the cross-border kinship networks of the region. Prior to the conflict in the Detroit River region, three sales took place between individuals in Sandwich who sold land within said village to individuals from Detroit. Additionally, three transactions took place in which individuals who held land in Sandwich, yet lived in Detroit, sold their land to residents of Sandwich.[91] On February 1, 1812, Jean Baptiste Piquette, a silversmith from Detroit, and his wife, Elenor Piquette, sold a parcel of land in Sandwich, which was deeded in Elenor's name, to Louis Labadie of Sandwich. The transaction stated that this land holding was "devised by the late Antoine Labadie" unto Elenor Piquette, thus it can be surmised that Elenor was born upon the Southern shore and that Antoine, as well as Louis, Labadie were close relations.[92] Later in February of 1812, a transaction was recorded between Augustin and Cécile Lagrave and, once again, Louis Labadie. The parcel of land sold laid within the southern shore; however, Jean Baptiste Piquette, husband to Elenor who was a relation to Labadie, crossed the river to be a witness to the transaction on the Lagraves' behalf.[93] Plainly, the kinship networks of the borderland region were not impaired by American weariness on the part of the

[91] Essex County Land Registry, South Detroit "C," #1-272, Events Apr. 3, 1805 to July 30, 1817.
[92] Essex County Land Registry, South Detroit "C," #1-272, Events Apr. 3 1805 to July 30, 1817. No. 155, 107A-107B.
[93] Essex County Land Registry, South Detroit "C," #1-272, Events Apr. 3, 1805 to July 30, 1817, No. 124, 107.

Legislative Council of Upper Canada. Similarly, the intimate networks wrought by John Askin were displayed in 1811 when Isaac Todd and James McGill, Askin's close friends and business partners in Montreal, appointed Askin as their attorney to freely sell their land holdings in both Upper Canada and the Territory of Michigan. Todd and McGill chose Askin for the job as they were close acquaintances since their early years of fur trading in Mackinac. However, Askin's appointment as lawyer over expansive parcels of land in the cross-border region also represented the power of Askin's kinship networks within the Detroit River borderlands and the importance of such intimate dealings within this region. These records evidence the multi-faceted nature of the kinship networks that entwined with land transactions and were representative of how the people's empire on the ground hardly reflected the same anti-American sentiment as the Legislative Assembly of the metropole. Prior to the War of 1812, the Legislative Assembly of Upper Canada was extremely weak and, although land policies were enacted, they floundered upon implementation. Thus, a process of negotiation between the two mechanisms of imperial power on high and the power of the people's network took place within the Detroit Riverlands. Ultimately, the legislative powers acquiesced to the actions of the borderland inhabitants and turned a blind eye to Americans who settled upon British North American soil.[94]

Ultimately, the recorded property negotiations of the Essex County land registry prior to the War of 1812 represent a community driven affair in which the official policies of the Upper Canadian legislative authorities were not interpreted verbatim on the ground. For how could the inhabitants of the region shun their American counterparts

[94] Craig, *Upper Canada,* 100-130.

when they viewed themselves as one community? Therefore, in the eyes of the Essex County inhabitants, they were upholding the standards set forth by empire through their own interpretations and within their own property dealings. Furthermore, many of these community members possessed land on each side of the strait thus rendering the policies of the Legislative Assembly moot. However, no repercussions from the colonial administration rippled throughout the region. Thus, the local customs of the semi-formal land proceedings followed the impetus set forth by the citizens and subjects. Consequently, the community relied heavily upon one another, and this is reflected in the land transactions between 1808 and the beginning of the War of 1812 that further demonstrates the cooperation between individuals of French and British descent within the community of the southern shore. During this period within Essex County itself, nine transactions were recorded to take place between individuals with a French surname as the grantor to an individual with a British surname as the grantee. Moreover, seven land sales were documented that transpired between a grantor of British descent and a grantee of French descent.[95] These transactions indicate that the members of Essex County crossed ethnic divisions in order to shape their communities within an imperially delineated space. During this period, the Crown held most of the Sandwich district within Clergy and Crown land reserves limiting the land available to residents.[96] Moreover, the Land Council of Upper Canada floundered administratively, which placed barriers to accessing land through colonial processes. Thus, regardless of the rising imperial tensions

[95] Essex County Land Registry, South Detroit "C," #1-272, Events Apr. 3, 1805 to July 30, 1817, pages 1-89.
[96] Douglas, Uppermost *Canada,* 191.

within the region, the residents of Essex County relied upon one another on the southern shore as much as they depended upon their brethren of the northern shore.

CHAPTER 2

RISING IMPERIAL TENSIONS IN THE BORDERLANDS AND THE OUTRBREAK OF WAR

Though war between the American and British forces did not begin until 1812, tensions toward imperial conflict began in the Detroit River borderlands early in the first decade of the nineteenth century. The causes for the War of 1812 remain infamously ambiguous within the historiography. However, one of the driving components of this conflict was the United States' imperial agenda for expansion into Indigenous held territory as well as the American desire to claim land in British held Canada. However, another force that fueled the war was American perceptions of Indigenous weaponization on the part of the British Empire within the Detroit River region.[97] Fort Malden in Amherstburg acted as the headquarters for the British Department of Indian Affairs in the Western District and colonial officials were unabashedly courting Indigenous favor during this period. In the American perspective, the colonial administration of Upper Canada was arming the Indigenous nations of the region and readying for war long before a formal military conflict took place.[98]

2.1: Negotiations of Black Freedom and Empire

By 1807, General William Hull, Governor of the Michigan Territory, keenly recognized the warfare that brewed within the borderlands region and decided to take precautionary measures. On October 17, 1808, Judge Augustus B. Woodward composed a report to the

[97]Antal, *A Wampum Denied,* 10-20.
[98] To learn more about Indigenous participation in the War of 1812 and the role of the British Department of Indian Affairs see John Norton and Carl Benn, *A Mohawk Memoir from the War of 1812* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019).

Sundry Committee for the government of the Territory. One of the principal items of interest within this account was Governor Hull's creation of a Black militia in Detroit, more specifically a militia that was composed of "slaves belonging to the inhabitants of his Britannia Majesty residing in the Province of Upper Canada."[99] Thus, Hull not only created a Black militia but a corps of Upper Canadian Freedom Seekers. And although Hull officially declared that this militia was created to protect Detroiters from an Indigenous threat, he in fact created an imperial military mechanism that acted as a form of psychological warfare that intimidated America's very close neighbors.[100] Although in his report Woodward made apparent his apprehension and resistance to a Black militia composed of Freedom Seekers, he also endorsed Hull's Black militia as "not only proper but highly commendable…when the safety and protection of the territory appears to require all the force which could be possibly collected."[101] Woodward did not specify an Indigenous threat in this part of the report, but rather a more generalized threat that affected the stability of the entire territory. Given that the British government was clearly in league with many of the Indigenous nations of the Michigan Territory amidst escalating tensions, it can further be surmised that armament against Indigenous nations was also an armament against the British colonial government across the water. In September of 1807, John Askin wrote a letter to his son and explained that "our runaway negroes have had arms given them and mount guard."[102] Undoubtedly, some of the individuals within the Black militia of Detroit were Freedom Seekers from Essex County,

[99]A.B. Woodward Papers Fonds. MS/Woodward, A.B. 1806-1808, Box 3 Vault. "Judge Woodward's Resolutions on Sundry Subjects, and the Report of the Committee on the Same," Burton Historical Collection.
[100] Tucker, "Part I: Crossing Boundaries," 30.
[101] A.B. Woodrow Papers, Judge Woodrow's Resolutions on Sundry Subjects, Burton Historical Collection.
[102] Quaife, *John Askin Papers,* 570.

though many were also free individuals of African descent who lived within the Michigan Territory. There seemed to be little effort made on the part of the Americans to amend this sweeping generalization. Instead, the militias of Detroit flaunted and practiced their drills upon the shores of the river with Askin commenting that "our neighbors…have their militia constantly out, I think not less in general than once a week and sometimes oftener. They are really well disciplined."[103] Though hardly a new tool of empire, upon the eve of war race was a wielded weapon within the theater of the Detroit River borderlands and was just one of many intimidation tactics used across the region.

The creation of a Black militia in the Territory of Michigan was revolutionary in and of itself, but General Hull took his actions one step further when he appointed a freed man of African descent, Peter Denison, to command the troops. Despite his reservations regarding the implications of people as protected property that convoluted the formation of a Black militia in Detroit, Judge Augustus B. Woodward went on to defend the rights of the individuals who composed the ranks citing Article VI of the Northwest Ordinance as his justification. The judge documented that the "constitution of this territory [Michigan] contains the following article: There shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude in the said territory otherwise than in punishment of claims whereof the party shall have been duly convicted."[104] Thus, all the appointments Hull made to the Black militia were upheld. However, Peter Denison did not hold his post for long. Denison had only recently acquired his freedom when he was granted this military position. Previously, Peter and his wife, Hannah, had been enslaved by William and Catherine

[103] Quaife, *John Askin Papers,* 570.
[104] A.B. Woodward Papers, Judge Woodward's Resolutions on Sundry Subjects, Burton Historical Collection.

Tucker who lived on a farm on the outskirts of Detroit in what is now Macomb County along with the Denison's four children. Upon William's death, he declared in his will that Peter and Hannah were free once Catherine joined him in the afterlife. Catherine mercifully decided to immediately free the enslaved couple; however, their children were not released from the bonds of servitude. Peter and Hannah decided to fight for their children's freedom in the Michigan Supreme Court and given the ambiguity of the 1787 Northwest Ordinance, the 1793 Act Against Slavery in Upper Canada, along with the Jay Treaty of 1794, which attempted to bridge the afore said legislations, the fundamental case could have had any outcome.[105] Elijah Brush represented the Denison family in court but to no avail. Judge Woodward ruled on September 24, 1807 that Elizabeth, James, Scipio, and Peter Denison would be returned to Catherine Tucker on the grounds that the Jay Treaty upheld the property rights of both American citizens and British subjects and that the Denison children were considered property under Michigan law.[106] Thus, the Denison family was left to negotiate their freedom within an imperial landscape that simultaneously upheld and opposed their rights.

Instead of submitting to their children's enslaved fate, Peter and Hannah Denison resolved to utilize another mechanism towards freedom that was wrought by the Treaty of Paris in 1783 with the creation of an international border. The Denison family quietly absconded across the Detroit River and settled upon the southern shore in Sandwich and thus reached freedom upon soil that outlawed the induction of new slaves.[107] The St.

[105] Tucker, "Part I: Crossing Boundaries," 29-33.
[106] Clarence Monroe Burton Papers Fonds, MS/Burton, C.M. Papers Works-I-Michigan-C box 19, MS Burton, C.M. Works- Legal Notes, Burton Historical Collection.
[107] Tucker, "Part I: Crossing Boundaries," 34.

John's Register lends some evidence as to when the family safely arrived within the community. Recorded in the parish register as "free negroes," on October 9, 1808, Peter and Hannah Denison were baptized at the Anglican church in Sandwich. That same day, another Hannah Denison, aged nine, Charles Denison, "aged about six years," and Elizabeth Denison aged seven, were also baptized at St. John's. In the margin's Reverend Pollard wrote: "daughter of Willoby and Grace Denison."[108] Seemingly, the Denisons had relations within the Detroit Riverlands community, though it remains unclear if Willoby and Grace had previously resided on the southern shore or had followed their relations across the water. Less than a year later, on April 2, 1809, Peter and Scipio Denison were baptized as children next to their adult sister "Lisette."[109] Hence, the Denison family manipulated the mechanisms of empire which sought to divide the Detroit River borderlands in order to protect their kinsfolk. Furthermore, the family used the Anglican faith and their baptisms as a more formal tool of British imperialism that protected their freedoms within a shared neighborhood of imperial legislation. Nevertheless, the Denison family remains unseen within the property records of Essex County from their arrival on the southern shore to 1820. Veta Smith Tucker points to a possible reason why the family was absent from the documented land transactions within this period, and surprisingly the answer is entwined with the other kinship networks that wove across the river. Elijah Brush assisted the family in their escape from Detroit into Upper Canada, and it is widely believed that it was John Askin, himself an enslaver, who received the family upon their arrival to the southern shore. Thus, in their bolt for freedom the Denison family became enmeshed within the distinguished and far reaching

[108] St. John's Anglican (Sandwich), Vol. I. Marriages, Christenings, and Burials 1802-1820.
[109] St. John's Anglican (Sandwich), Vol. I. Marriages, Christenings, and Burials 1802-1820.

Askin network. Tucker states that most of the Denison family became employed as hired help within the households of the most prominent members of Essex County society, with Peter Denison recorded as a servant to Angus Mackintosh upon his death.[110] Thus, the family members would not have owned property of their own but instead would have lodged in the large estates of those who employed them. Once again, the Denison family demonstrates the rule rather than the exception within the Detroit-Essex borderlands in the beginning of the nineteenth century. This is but one example of individuals of African descent who navigated the Detroit River borderlands' ambiguous imperial framework in order to negotiate their freedom and build their own community.

2.2: Indigenous Participation in Very Different Conflicts

Before the War of 1812, the accusations of British imperial meddling within Indigenous politics to win allyship were not unwarranted. However, it was ultimately U.S. imperial actions that drove Indigenous nations into the arms of America's neighbor. Henry Rowe Schoolcraft reflected that the 1795 Greenville Treaty made between the Wyandot, Delaware, Chippewa, Ottawa, and U.S. government was reached due to the Indigenous nations' exhaustion at warring with a "phantom" because the native citizens "imagined themselves to have been engaged in preventing the colonies from progressing beyond the Ohio."[111] John Strachan, a prominent Upper Canadian politician, wrote in November of 1812 that the Indigenous nations of the Mississippi, Ohio, and Wabash territories in the United States had been at war with the empire for years and "not at the instigation of the

[110] Tucker, "Part I: Crossing Boundaries," 34.
[111] Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, *Historical and Statistical Information Respecting the History, Condition and Prospects of the Indian Tribes of the United States, Volume 6,* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo and Co., 1857) Alexander Street online, 329.

British," but rather because the Americans drove them from their hunting grounds and made fraudulent purchases of their lands.[112] Moreover, the American trading posts across the western frontier encroached upon Indigenous sovereignty, which in turn became U.S. military centers. Though ultimately, Strachan claimed that Indigenous nations backed the British forces in the War of 1812 "because the American government neither attend[ed] to the feelings nor rights of the poor Indians but as they are independent, they have a right to the privileges of independent nations."[113] In the early nineteenth century game of empires, the British colonial government of Canada held an advantage in Indigenous negotiations due to the brute force of the U.S. Empire's expansionist desires.

Although, the British Department of Indian Affairs at Amherstburg was unabashedly courting Indigenous favor, they were also simultaneously holding back Indigenous violence toward the United States at least until the government was readied for war. In 1805, an Indigenous council was held at Amherstburg with the Ottawa, Potawatomie, Sakkie, and Fox chiefs at which an Indigenous orator proclaimed that the nations had lived "happy for many years under the protection of the British Government" and asked for cooperation, because "the King your Great Father has strenuously recommended peace and good neighbourhood between the Indians of this country and the people of the United States."[114] In July of 1808, British Canadian Lieutenant Governor, Francis Gore, visited the Indigenous nations gathered at Amherstburg, and a council was held, which was organized by the chiefs of the Ottawa, Shawnee, and Wyandot nations.

---

[112] George W. Spragge, ed., *The John Strachan Letter Book: 1812-1834,* (Toronto: The Ontario Historical Society, 1946) 22.
[113] Spragge, *The John Strachan Letter Book*, 23.
[114] *Michigan Pioneer & Historical Society, Volume 23* (Lansing: Robert Smith & Co., State Printers and Binders. 1895) 40-42.

Gore gave a speech to the collected nations offering support and cooperation, along with a wampum belt used to seal alliances, to which the assembled confederation seemed "much pleased."[115] Though just as the Americans paraded their militia exercises upon the shore of the river as a fear mongering tactic, the meetings between the British Canadians and the Indigenous nations of the region also invoked dread throughout the American district.

General William Hull was particularly anxious over the imperial competition for Indigenous diplomacy during this tenuous period before open conflict. On September 7, 1810, Hull sent a letter to the U.S. Secretary of War, William Eustis, which stated that the chiefs from the Indigenous nations of the "north and northwest of Ohio, from the Mississippi, and the [S]ix [N]ations" had previously spent some time at Fort Malden in Amherstburg where they had "been liberally fed and supplied with clothing" before moving on to a larger council held at the Wyandot village of Brownstown in the Territory of Michigan laying just southwest of Detroit.[116] The governor stated that he would attend the council in order to provide American provisions in an attempt to sway the favor of the nations assembled there. Further, the anxious politician claimed that he would "employ a number of confidential people to obtain information respecting their proceedings" and additionally asked permission to assemble the local militia.[117] It is clear that the United States knew that they were on the back foot within these dealings and that Indigenous power within the Detroit River borderlands carried a direct threat against the safety and

[115] *Michigan Pioneer & Historical Society*, 57.
[116] Clarence Edwin Carter, ed., *The Territorial Papers of the United States, Volume X: The Territory of Michigan 1805-1820* (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1942), 326.
[117] Carter, ed., *The Territorial Papers,* 326.

authority of their government. Thus, above all, the Governor of Michigan sought to find out if the Indigenous nations would side with the Americans, the British, or oddly the French.[118] For François Furstenburg asserts that following the expulsion of French authority at the end of the Seven Years' War, "dreams of a resurrected French empire" were kept alive by the Indigenous nations that were pushed west of the Appalachian Mountains.[119] Thus it would seem that within the Detroit River region even though French imperial authority had long been ousted from the region, by 1810, the decades of strife, negotiation, compromise, cooperation, and intermarriage between the people on the ground cemented a binding allegiance between the French individuals on the north and south shores and the Indigenous inhabitants of the region. Despite his anxiety over imperial maneuverings within the Detroit-Essex borderlands, General William Hull himself crossed the river on December 3, 1810, to stand as witness to the marriage of Henry Jackson Hunt and Ann Mackintosh. Hull completed this religious community service alongside another prominent witness, Angus Mackintosh, who by that time employed Peter Denison, Hull's former commander of the Michigan Black militia, as a servant in his household. Despite the budding tensions within the region, it would seem that no one within the Detroit Riverlands was free from the intricate kinship networks that knitted the two shores together.

In 1811, the confederation of Indigenous nations under the leadership of Shawnee chief Tecumseh offered an alliance with the British against their shared American foe. In exchange for their cooperation, the Indigenous nations were promised a Native State

[118] Carter, ed., *The Territorial Papers,* 326.
[119] Furstenburg, *The Significance of the Trans-Appalachian Frontier,* 652.

south of the Great Lakes to be negotiated by the British Empire on behalf of the confederation.[120] The British required an Indigenous alliance in order to hold Upper Canada under threat of American invasion, as the Loyalists were too few and the *Canadiens* too unconcerned to bother with imperial aspirations. Moreover, the Indigenous nations needed the British in order to secure a state of their own away from the prying hands of American imperial encroachment.[121] Thus, this was an allyship between various nations with very different political agendas. And finally, after years of agitation, on November 5, 1811, President James Madison asked the United States Congress to ready for war and on June 18, 1812, the United States officially declared war on the British Empire in North America.[122]

2.3: The Conflict: Shifting Boundaries, Shifting Land

By July of 1812, the Essex and Kent County Militias were readying for armed conflict across the Detroit River border, which had quickly turned into a strategic military theater. Be that as it may, the apathy of the Essex County residents to the hand of imperial power was apparent in early desertion rates. Before American General William Hull's initial invasion of Sandwich on July 12, 1812, half of the militia men mustered in Amherstburg had abandoned their posts.[123] The precedence of subsistence farming practices throughout the agricultural borderlands was a main cause for the high number of deserters. R. Alan Douglas asserts that both the French *Canadiens* and the British in Essex County "were more concerned with reaping their harvests than with fighting each other across the

[120] Antal, *A Wampum Denied,* i.
[121] Antal, *A Wampum Denied,* 20-30.
[122] Carl Benn, *War of 1812* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2003), 21.
[123] George Sheppard, *Plunder, Profit, and Paroles: A Social History of the War of 1812 in Upper Canada* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), 51.

river."[124] The British imperial government knew that they could not fend off an American intrusion with only their militiamen. The government thus turned to their Indigenous allies whom they had long attempted to woo as part of their intricate imperial dance. Even with Indigenous allies assisting the British in the defense of the southern shore, Hull's American forces successfully invaded Sandwich and took up residence in the François Baby House directly opposite Fort Detroit. Despite the apathy of Essex County's fighting men, in September of 1812, the *Kingston Gazette* reported that British Major-General Sir Isaac Brock had successfully capitulated Fort Detroit on August 16, 1812, and won a substantive victory against the American forces.[125] That same day, Brock issued a proclamation to the conquered people of Detroit that declared "without any other condition the protection of private property."[126] In the initial stages of armed conflict within the Detroit River borderlands, Essex County remained relatively safe from the prospect of destruction, and it seemed even American land was protected by the British invader. However, the reality of war had surely set in upon the region.

The Essex County Land Registry records from the time of British occupation in Detroit reflects the tenuous circumstances that the borderlands inhabitants were forced to navigate upon the outbreak of conflict. On September 29, 1812, approximately one month after British Major-General Brock took control of the northern shore, Elijah and Alice Brush of Detroit sold six hundred acres of land in Essex County's Maidstone township to Richard Pattison of Sandwich. Alice, also known as Adelaide, was the

[124] Douglas, *Uppermost Canada,* 79.
[125] "Capitulation of the Fort of Detroit, Aug.16, 1812," *Kingston Gazette,* Vol. II, September 19th, 1812, page 2.
[126] Carter, *The Territorial Papers,* 402.

daughter of John and Marie Askin, and Richard was the husband of Ellen Phyllis, the youngest daughter of the Askin family.[127] The land that the Brush family sold to Pattison was deeded in Alice's name and granted under a King's Patent before her marriage. For the six hundred acres of land, Elijah and Alice charged their brother-in-law only one hundred- and-twenty-pounds Halifax currency.[128] The Brush family of Detroit recognized their uncertain condition as conquered Americans living under British military control. The Askin family understood the need to dispose of cross-border holdings, whether for need of funds or for fear of losing the holding altogether. Luckily, the intimate network had the choice to keep the land within the family. The intricacies of cross-border networks were further evidenced on February 18, 1813, when George Meldrum of Detroit and Richard Pattinson of Sandwich sold off thirty-seven acres of the purchased land in Maidstone Township to Pierre Vallé for seventy-three pounds and seven shillings of New York currency. In this transaction Meldrum is recorded to have hailed from "Detroit in the Territory of Michigan, formerly in the United States of America."[129] Clearly, under British control the borderland territory was reacclimating to the administration of the north and south shores as one district. On that same day, February 18, Vallé recorded a transaction in which he once again sold the thirty-seven acres of Maidstone land to Joseph Napper of Sandwich for ninety pounds New York currency thus making a profit of almost seventeen pounds.[130] The cooperation of Meldrum and Pattinson, who lived upon opposite shores, to sell the land to Vallé, who in turn sold the land at a profit,

[127] Quaife, *John Askin Papers Volume 1,* 16.
[128] Essex County Land Registry, South Detroit "C," #1-272, Events Apr. 3, 1805 to July 30, 1817, No. 148, page 103A-103B.
[129] Essex County Land Registry, South Detroit "C," #1-272, Events Apr. 3, 1805 to July 30, 1817, No. 157, page 107-108.
[130]Essex County Land Registry, South Detroit "C," #1-272, Events Apr. 3, 1805 to July 30, 1817, No. 158, page 105.

indicates once again how the intricacies of the people's network that wove across the Detroit River effected land transactions. Even in times of conflict, the borderland inhabitants sought to create the best circumstances for their shared community and actively participated in the shaping of their shared space. These two records highlight the initial impact of the War of 1812 upon the people of the Detroit River region and how these residents quickly adapted to navigate the changing tides.

Circumstances on the ground shifted rapidly within the Detroit River borderlands during the first year of war, and the outcomes for the residents of the region varied drastically. In 1813, whilst the Detroit River region was under British control, some residents of the borderlands took advantage of the opportunities attributed to the shifting boundaries. On March 29, 1813, an indenture of mortgage was recorded between Robert Innis of Amherstburg and James Chittenden "late of Amherstburg, Upper Canada, but now of Detroit."[131] Chittenden deftly navigated the fluctuating imperial border and abandoned the southern shore to take residence upon the northern shore and thus mortgage his lands in Amherstburg. Violence continued to escalate throughout the region, and while some inhabitants could take advantage of the revolving legal framework within the region, for many others their fates would end in tragedy. On May 27, 1813, James Fleet, a mortar on his Majesty's ship the *Queen Charlotte,* recorded his last will and testament in the Essex County Land Registry book "considering the uncertainty of human events" and "being in sound mind, but sick and weak."[132] Fleet

[131] Essex County Land Registry, South Detroit "C," #1-272, Events Apr. 3, 1805 to July 30, 1817, No. 177, page 119.
[132] Essex County Land Registry, South Detroit "C," #1-272, Events Apr. 3, 1805 to July 30, 1817, No No., page 112.

appointed George Benson Hall and Robert Richardson of Amherstburg (husband to Madelaine Askin) as his executors and charged the men to handle his final affairs as they saw fit. However, the ailing sailor of his Majesty's Navy asked that his uncle, John Fleet, be tracked down in the Orkney Islands of Scotland and in the event that he had borne children, all of James' land and personal effects would be left to his kin.[133] On June 16, 1813, the St. John's rector recorded that James Fleet had "departed this life on Lake Erie" and was buried at Amherstburg.[134] Thus James' Fleet tragic end highlights an intra-imperial component to the people's network of the Detroit-Essex borderlands. Not only did this intimate matrix stretch across the river, but across the Atlantic Ocean to the motherland as well.

Woefully, conditions within the Detroit-Essex region only worsened as the war progressed. On September 10, 1813, American Brigadier-General William Henry Harrison won the Battle of Lake Erie and planned to march upon Amherstburg. On September 29, 1813, Harrison issued a proclamation from U.S. Headquarters at Detroit which stated that the British enemy had been expelled from the Territory of Michigan and that the Civil Government of the territory would be reinstated. The inhabitants of Detroit were once again American citizens with all rights and privileges of the said empire.[135] In early October of 1813, upon Harrison's march on Amherstburg British Colonel Henry Procter fled the region and scorched the earth in his wake, and by October 5, 1813 the Essex County region was once more under American control.[136] Yet again, the residents

[133] Essex County Land Registry, South Detroit "C," #1-272, Events Apr. 3, 1805 to July 30, 1817, No No., page 112.
[134] St. John's Registers, Vol. I. Marriages, Christenings, and Burials 1802-1820.
[135] Carter, *The Territorial Papers,* 449-450.
[136] Benn, *War of 1812*, 30-60.

of the Detroit River borderlands were forced to adapt to an ever-changing military landscape that continued to ravage their community.

2.4: The Resilient Community of the Borderlands

Oscillating between imperial control, the inhabitants of the Detroit River borderlands were forced to adapt to American rule upon the southern shore. In September of 1813, following the Battle of Lake Erie, Alice Brush sent a letter to her mother in Sandwich and advised her that she was safe amongst her American friends. Alice further told her mother that Robert Richardson, Madelaine Askin's husband, had been taken prisoner in the recent battle and was held on board the *Queen Charlotte*.[137] As an American citizen through marriage, and residing on the north shore, Alice's fortunes were much improved following Harrison's invasion of Essex County and the American reconquest of Detroit. However, the rest of her family's fortunes took a turn for the worse. All of John Askin's sons served in the British military during the conflict and most of the husbands of Askin's daughters served the Crown as well. Many of the British Loyalists on the southern shore were forced to flee, and thus the family was scattered to the winds. One of the Askin children, Theresa McKee (who was married to Thomas McKee of his Majesty's Army) sent a letter to her father on October 10, 1813, in order to "relieve the anxiety" of her parents.[138] Theresa would not disclose where she and her husband had fled to, but she assured her family that she was safe.[139] John Askin's position within the Detroit River borderlands became precarious, though his affluence, prominence, and

[137] Milo M. Quaife, *John Askin Papers Volume 2: 1796-1820* (SWODA: Windsor & Region Publications, 1931), 768-9.
[138] Quaife, *John Askin Papers Volume 2*, 769.
[139] Quaife, *John Askin Papers Volume 2*, 769.

arguably, his personal networks in Detroit assisted him in receiving official protection from William Henry Harrison on October 15, 1813. The declaration dictated that "all officers and privates of my army are hereby required to…abstain from any acts of violence or outrage towards the said John Askin and his household."[140] The prominent community figure of the Detroit River borderlands was thus successful in navigating the shifting allegiance of the region during the war.

The order of protection granted to Askin by the American forces in Detroit allowed him to assist those in his neighborhood, but it also meant that he had to delicately traverse his communication with his fugitive children. On November 12, 1813, John Askin sent a letter addressed to Charles, James, and Alexander Askin of the British Army. John explicitly stated that he would not keep correspondence with any other individuals with British allegiance as the Commanding Officer at Detroit had only permitted communication with these of his three children. The patriarch then reported that he had not suffered any losses of land since the American takeover; however, the family had suffered a far more precious loss. Ellen Phyllis Pattison, the youngest Askin daughter, died on October 12, 1813, while she followed her husband Richard and the British Army as they fled up the Thames River. John and Marie Askin took in two of Ellen's children, as Richard Pattinson was still on the run with the British forces and their grandchildren were effectively orphaned. Askin further relayed that Mr. Barthe, who was an assumed relation to Marie Askin, had lost a great deal of property in the conflict and his family was thus spending the winter at their Strabane Estate on the outskirts of

[140] Quaife, *John Askin Papers Volume 2*, 769-770.

Sandwich.[141] In March of 1814, George Meldrum reached out to John Askin and stated that he and his family in Detroit were near starvation. Meldrum humbly asked the Askin family to send over five or six quarts of salt upon Alice Brush's next visit to Sandwich.[142] Within the undulating state of affairs in the Detroit River borderlands, the kinship networks within the region were fraught by the imperial conflict. Even St. John's ceased religious ministration evidenced by a memorandum written in the parish registry which stated that "Reverand Richard Pollard Rector of Sandwich was absent from that place from February 1814 to June 1815 on account of the war."[143] During this period, Harrison famously used the church as a stable for his Kentucky horses before he evacuated the southern shore and burnt the church to its foundation.[144] Nevertheless, the people on the ground were able to navigate the caging framework of imperial conflict and continued to support their community members to the best of their ability despite the incredible challenges imposed on the region.

By the winter of 1814-1815, both the British and American governments recognized the futility of the fight and the destruction wrought by the conflict. On December 10, 1814, U.S. Military Officer Duncan McArthur sent a letter to the Secretary of State, James Monroe, and advocated that the garrisons at the posts of Fort Detroit, Fort Malden, and Fort Gratiot (built in 1814 on the St. Clair River) would have to be abandoned in due time if the army could not secure supplies "from the interior."[145] At this point in the conflict, supply lines had long been cut and the majority of the agricultural

[141] Quaife, *John Askin Papers Volume 2,* 772-774.
[142] Quaife, *John Askin Papers Volume 2*, 777-778.
[143] St. John's Anglican (Sandwich) Fonds, St. John's Registers, Vol. I. Marriages, Christenings, and Burials 1802-1820.
[144] Neal, *Township of Sandwich, Past and Present*, 179-180.
[145] Carter, *The Territorial Papers,* 497.

fields, stores, and public buildings were burnt by the two armies. Thus, the Detroit River region was left to starve as imperial powers calculated how to feed their soldiers.

On December 24, 1814, the Treaty of Ghent was signed ending the war, and by February 17, 1815, the campaign was officially over.[146] The borderlands region was then faced with the daunting task of rebuilding their community. Tilly Buttrick, a self-proclaimed adventurer, recorded during his travels through the Detroit River borderlands in 1814 that he was "struck by the devastation which had been made by the late war…provisions of all kinds [were] very scarce; where once peace and plenty abounded, poverty and destruction now struck the land."[147] Though hardship proliferated, in the early days of peace families separated were reunited, communication networks resumed, and friends were able to aid one another across the water once more. On May 1, 1815, John Askin Jr. sent a detailed letter to his father outlining news of many of their acquaintances and family members. John Jr. confided to his father that during Harrison's occupation of Essex County he had "only wrote two letters…being fearful that they might have fallen into the enemy's hands and have caused your being suspected."[148] The intimate lattice work of friends and families across the Detroit River region had survived the conflict and surely felt relief upon the culmination of warfare. However, the ruination from the War of 1812 created an impending journey of reconstruction. Although communication between family and friends eased the spirits of the residents, the British

[146] Benn, *War of 1812*, 92-94.
[147]Tilly Buttrick, *Buttrick's Voyages, Travels, and Discoveries 1812-1819,* Voyages, Travels, and Discoveries 1783; edited by Reuben Gold Thwaites, 1853-1913; in early Western Travels, col. 8: Buttrick's Voyages, 1812-1819, Evan's Pedestrious tour, 1818 (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1904) Alexander Street Online, 73.
[148] Quaife, *John Askin Papers Volume 2*, 779-781.

imperial government of Upper Canada soon attempted to lay a heavy hand upon the project of rebuilding.

CHAPTER 3

IMPERIAL MEDDLING POST-CONFLICTAND CHANGES IN THE RIVERLANDS

The Legislative Assembly of Upper Canada had long held anti-American sentiment, and the War of 1812 only agitated the colonial administration's grievances.[149] Before the conflict had officially ended in March of 1814, the Assembly passed An Act to Declare Certain Persons, therein Described, Aliens and to Vest their Estates in his Majesty. This piece of colonial legislation had a substantial impact on land settlement within Upper Canada, but especially within the borderlands space of the Detroit River region. Stretching the hand of imperial influence, the act not only granted the British colonial government the right to seize the lands of Americans who had previously received grants from the Crown, but it also allowed for the government to take forcible possession of land from all those in Upper Canada who left the province for the United States upon the outbreak of war on July 1, 1812. The Essex County Land Registry book records the imperial influence that was penetrating the Detroit borderlands following the passing of the Alien Act. On June 4, 1816, it was declared that William Ambridge had the permission of Colonel Reginal James, Commander of the Western District, to take possession of lot number five on the garrison grounds within the community of Sandwich. This plot of land had previously been "granted under like authority to a man named Le Esperanie [Lespérance] but who during the late war…[had] born arms against his majesty [and had] fled the country."[150] The British imperial government of Upper

[149] Craig, *Upper Canada,* 106-123.
[150] Essex County Land Registry, South Detroit "C," #1-272, Events Apr. 3, 1805 to July 30, 1817, No. 211, P. 139B.

Canada was undergoing a process of othering in order to solidify their own identity and subjecthood.[151] Plainly, this was not a clear task amidst the murkiness of the Detroit River borderlands resting upon the frontier of the Western District.

The Alien Act of 1814 was the initial step on the part of the Legislative Assembly to bar Americans from buying or receiving lands in Upper Canada. American citizens had long been required to take an oath to the Crown and the Legislative Assembly of Upper Canada prior to purchasing lands in the colony. Though given the early illegibility of the colonial system, this was largely for ceremonial purposes. However, following the implementation of the Alien Act, all Americans whose loyalty was questioned had to not only swear the Oath of Allegiance but were also required to be tried by a jury of twelve men in the said district of settlement in order to be found unequivocally loyal.[152] This imperial mechanism sought to root out Americans within the colony and, more generally, individuals of American descent thus creating a fool's errand within the Essex County community.[153] Surely, this piece of legislation placed the colonial government of Upper Canada in direct conflict with the individuals of the Detroit River borderlands whose ties across the water had not been severed even by a violent and costly war. However, the leaders of Upper Canada would not back down on their anti-American stance. In October of 1815, Lieutenant General Sir Frances Gore issued a proclamation to all districts asking that British subjects identify Americans within their communities who they believed were

[151] To learn more about "othering" see Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978).
[152] Canada - 32 George III - 3 Victoria, 1st-13th Provincial Parliament, Upper Canada, 1st-5th Sessions 1792 (1972-1840) Chap. IX, passed 14 March 1814: 192.
[153] Jeffery Wasson, "Inventing a Foundation Myth: Upper Canada in the War of 1812," Bachelors of Honors Thesis Clark University, 2014, 87.

aliens and continued to block the issuance of the Oath of Allegiance needed for subjecthood and land title to any individual of American descent.[154]

The War of 1812 demonstrated the strategic importance of this isolated Essex County hinterland and moved the district closer to the grasp of imperial authority. This trend is represented by the slew of imperial policies that were enacted in the years directly following the conflict. In March of 1815, the Assembly passed an act which amended previous legislation regarding Upper Canadian courthouses in order to "make further provision for proceeding to outlawry."[155] This act increased provincial court capacity and expanded the power of the Upper Canadian court systems. Sandwich was chosen as the location for judicial power within the whole of the Western District because the isolated village had the "closest ties, familial and economic, with the ancestral home across the river."[156] The placement of a courthouse within the frontier fringes of the Detroit River borderlands was strategic and represented a commanding assertion of imperial power in Essex County, both symbolically and administratively. However, the residents of Sandwich resisted the courthouse within their district. In 1817, many individuals of Essex rallied together and delivered a petition to the Assembly, which stated that the courthouse would be better situated in Amherstburg. In their argument, the subjects cited that Amherstburg was the center of the county and expounded on the geographical barriers of the swampy marshes that surrounded the Town of Sandwich.[157] The inhabitants' justification for moving the courthouse seems rather convoluted. Yet, it

[154] Wasson, "Inventing a Foundation Myth," 87-88.
[155] Canada - 32 George III - 3 Victoria, 1st-13th Provincial Parliament, Upper Canada, 1st-5th Sessions 1792 (1972-1840), Chapt. II, 197.
[156] Douglas, *Uppermost Canada,* 194.
[157] Douglas, *Uppermost Canada,* 192.

is obvious that the community members were loath to receive imperial authority within their immediate neighborhood and would rather have the courthouse placed within the already established military jurisdiction of Amherstburg and Fort Malden. Resistance aside, the Legislative Assembly continued to impress its force upon the Essex County community. In April of 1817, An Act to Establish a Police in the Towns of York, Sandwich, and Amherstburg was passed. The ramifications of a surveillant police force dictated by colonial powers within the central cultural hubs of the Essex County community are easy to imagine.[158] The imperial authorities of the Assembly recognized the strategic importance of these communities in their battle of otherness against the United States, and this entity went to great lengths to have its power felt within the Detroit River borderlands community.

3.1: The Effects of Imperialism on the Ground

The consequences for the heavy hand of British imperial might was felt in the Detroit Riverlands immediately upon the culmination of war. Once the Treaty of Ghent had been signed and invoked on February 16, 1815, the opposing military powers within the Detroit-Essex region delayed transferring their captured holdings across the strait. The American and British forces stalled the official handover due to a discrepancy regarding ownership of the Bois Blanc island, which laid immediately adjacent to the Canadian shoreline in Amherstburg and rested at the front door of Fort Malden. This small but mighty island had been occupied by the British upon their official landing to the southern shore in 1796, though following the war, the Americans claimed ownership over the

[158] For more information on policing and surveillance see Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punishment: The Birth of the Prison,* translated by Alan Sheridan (New York: Random House Inc. Second Vintage Books Edition, 1995).

island citing the 1783 Treaty of Paris. Thus, a stalemate ensued, and the British remained at Fort Detroit and the Americans at Fort Malden.[159] Finally, in June of 1815, William James of the U.S. Army reported to Anthony Butler, acting Secretary of War, that the Britons and Americans in the Detroit River borderlands had agreed to transfer power throughout the region by July 15, 1815.[160] However, upon evacuation American imperial forces refused to give up the island of Bois Blanc. During this early period post conflict, Colonel Reginal James was the acting British military commander at Fort Malden and thus held great power not only over the British military and Essex County militia but also held great governing influence over the civilian population as well. The general public of Essex County were certainly alarmed by the American intrusion on Bois Blanc, but Colonel James became enraged.[161] One of the most powerful imperial actors within the region resolved to have his wrath felt throughout the Detroit River borderlands.

Despite the imperial tensions that simmered across the region post-conflict, the inhabitants of the borderlands community attempted to return to their typical daily cross-river patterns. On May 30, 1815, long-time resident of Detroit Jean Baptiste Comparet (or "Comparé" in other sources) used the ferry to cross the river into Sandwich.[162] Comparet was employed by U.S. Major Frederick Falley who asked his young charge to go to the tavern of Augustin Roy on the southern shore to collect a debt owed to him. When Comparet came upon the tavern he saw Colonel Reginald James in the doorway. Not

[159] Carter, *The Territorial Papers,* 532.
[160] Carter, *The Territorial Papers,* 555-557.
[161] Robert S. Allen, "The British Indian Department and the Frontier in North America, 1755:1830: The End of an Era (1815-1830)," Parks Canada, Government of Canada, 10 Oct. 2006.
[162] Born in the St. Lawrence Valley in 1738, Jean Baptiste Comparet was listed in the Detroit Census of 1796. He died in Detroit in 1833. Russel, *Michigan Census*, 72; Denissen *Genealogy of the French Families of the Detroit River Region,* 299.

wanting to deal with any unnecessary questioning, the Detroiter continued into the village for some shopping. He eventually made his way back to Mr. Roy's tavern where he settled the debt and "afterwards laid himself down on the grass…in expectation of seeing the morning parade and of meeting with some of his acquaintances living on that side of the river."[163] Comparet was eventually met by his friend, and they broke bread together upon the river's edge. However, their peaceful rendezvous was soon interrupted by some of his Majesty's soldiers who came to question the American on British soil. Comparet was then taken to Colonel James' living quarters within the Sandwich barracks and was brutally questioned. Once the colonel realized that the American man would not change his story, he had him bound and held in his cellar. After some time, Mr. Askin then came to question Comparet and promised that he would not hurt him if he spoke the truth. Comparet told the same story he had relayed previously, and Askin untied him and brought him back before Colonel James. The Detroit resident was ordered to leave Sandwich immediately and informed that a fifty-pound bounty was placed upon his head if he was ever seen in Sandwich again. This record was made by Jean Baptiste Comparet as an affidavit made to a Justice of the Peace in Detroit and these statements were circulated throughout many U.S. newspapers, including in Washington D.C.[164] The social dynamics of the Detroit River hinterlands were thus symbolically moved towards the U.S. metropole as well. Clearly, the heavy hand of British imperial authority was not merely a figurative narrative, but a true manifestation of power felt throughout the region immediately following the war.

---

[163] "Domestic: To the Editors of the National Intelligence Washington, June 20th, 1814," *The Enquirer (Richmond, Virginia)* Sat, Jul 1, 1815, Page 4.
[164]"Domestic," *The Enquirer,* 4.

The affidavits of two other men who crossed into Sandwich on May 30, 1815 were transcribed alongside Comparet's and provide further evidence that this incident was not an isolated experience within the borderlands community. John Gunn crossed over to Sandwich to inquire upon the British authorities for use of a flat to float his cattle across the Detroit River to the Sandwich market. He was refused use of the flat on the grounds of his U.S. citizenship and was ordered to leave the southern shore. That same afternoon, André Germain of Detroit rode the ferry across the river to inquire on the purchase of some window glass due to a short supply of the material while the region restored itself. Upon his arrival, Germain also went to Mr. Roy's tavern for a mug of grog. By this time, Comparet had already been seized by Colonel James, but it seemed that Germain had a more intimate connection with Roy, for the tavern owner warned the American man as "a friend of mine: I would advise you to go back to Detroit as quick as possible."[165] It is unsurprising that Roy and Germain were so closely affiliated, for Augustin Roy was listed in the 1810 Detroit Census as residing on the northern shore.[166] Thus, Roy was able to gain the trust of the most powerful British imperial actor within the region, evidenced by Colonel James frequenting his establishment, though the proprietor clearly held ambiguous allegiance between the shores. Germain, the alien American on British soil, obeyed his friend's warning and went directly back to the ferry. Enroute to the vessel, an American man named Tallard walked in front of him to the river front. Tallard was stopped by British regulars and taken into custody.[167] The latticework of kinship networks and the cross-border commerce of the region are displayed within

[165] "Domestic," *The Enquirer,* 4.
[166] Russel, *Michigan Census,* 88.
[167] "Domestic," *The Enquirer,* 4.

these affidavits. Comparet stayed on the southern shore to enjoy the company of his Upper Canadian friends, Gunn requested help from the British imperial forces to take part in the cross-border market, and Germain was ultimately saved by his former fellow Detroit resident, Mr. Roy. These records undoubtedly show the mechanisms of imperial power that were attempting to infringe upon the shared society of the Detroit borderlands. But the affidavits, more importantly, showcase the resiliency of the personal relationships that created an iron clad foundation across the water.

3.2: Acts of Resistance against Heavy Handed British Imperialism

Amidst the tensions between imperial authority and community networks, acts of resistance echoed throughout the Detroit River region post-conflict. On October 24, 1815, the *Buffalo Gazette* reported upon the hostilities within the frontier. The paper declared that another young man from Detroit was "imprisoned for some time" early in the summer after crossing into Sandwich to collect a debt from Mr. O. Williams, and evidently, the subjects of Sandwich chaffed under the pressures of imperial authority.[168] During the late summer of 1815, a few young men on the southern shore "being well acquainted with the irritable disposition of the said British Commander" crept into Colonel James' garden in the dead of night and took "its richest produce."[169] In the morning, the young men returned to the colonel's quarters and informed him that it was the Americans who had plundered his vegetable patch. Furious, James sent a letter to Governor Lewis Cass of Michigan to issue a formal complaint; Cass never responded to the colonel's inquiry. Although only a small act of playful resistance, the event

[168] "Extract of a Letter from a Respectable gentleman at Detroit, to the Editor dated October 24th, 1815," *Buffalo Gazette* (Village of Buffalo, New York) Tue, Nov 14, 1815, Page 3.
[169] "Extract of a Letter from a Respectable gentleman at Detroit," *Buffalo Gazette,* 3.

highlighted the displeasure of the Essex County community towards the hand of imperial power.

The subjects of Sandwich were not the only inhabitants who chaffed under such choking conditions; the citizens of Detroit were just as agitated. In September of 1815, a cohort of British colonial officials from Essex County led by Alexander T.E. Vidal, a lieutenant in the British forces at Malden, took a public vessel upon the waters to survey the surroundings of the straits that connected Lake Huron and Lake Erie. While at anchor below Fort Gratiot, eight of the British seamen deserted and took with them all the surveying equipment, documents, and other goods from the vessel. The runaways landed ten miles above Detroit and sold the instruments for cash. Vidal went into Detroit and found one of the deserters, bound him, and sent him back to the British vessel at anchor. However, the citizens of Detroit were alarmed by the "foreign force being in arms on [their] territory [and] soon collected a number of citizens who thought proper to make prisoner of the Lieut. commanding the party."[170] Vidal was taken to the Detroit courthouse, bailed for $6,000, and called to appear for trial at the session of the Supreme Court in Michigan. It seems that the American inhabitants of Detroit had had enough of British imperial intrusion within their borderlands network. Thus, the people on the ground took initiative and negotiated how imperial authorities operated by way of reprimanding how said authorities behaved within their jurisdiction through official government channels. Therefore, it was not only the American and British governments that created a more concrete political system that implemented increased mechanisms of imperial control, but the common inhabitants as well. However, it must be noted that

[170] "Extract of a Letter from a Respectable gentleman at Detroit," *Buffalo Gazette,* 3.

these individuals were negotiating with bureaucratic control in an attempt to protect those from across the river from a manic British imperial force, but more importantly, to protect their own rights on their own land from the same oppressing power.

While the proceedings for Vidal's case reached the Michigan Supreme Court, it was clear that the Territory of Michigan wished to flex its muscle against the imperial might of the British Empire. The Lieutenant was indicted for seizing one of the deserters, who was under the protection of the Michigan government, and thus for causing a riot through this seizure. Vidal was also charged for conveying the deserter onboard a British vessel. Vidal was eventually acquitted on the second count but found guilty on the first count and fined $631.48.[171] Initially, the British lieutenant paid the fine, as well as the lawyer fees incurred, and then entered a protest "against the legality of the Courts proceedings" in Michigan.[172] On October 14, 1815, the records of the Michigan Supreme Court reflected that Vidal was acquitted on the riot charge, though he was not reimbursed for his paid fines.[173] These two cases of resistance within the Detroit River borderlands are integral to understanding the cross-border networks that repelled imperial authority. Not only did the citizens of Detroit directly check the powers of a British officer, but they also simultaneously protected the deserters from Essex County. Although the young men who harassed Colonel James in Sandwich by destroying his garden falsely blamed their actions upon the Americans, it was done to make a mockery of the imperial authority that so irked their community. The individuals of the Detroit River borderlands continued to

---

[171] "Extract of a Letter from a Respectable gentleman at Detroit," *Buffalo Gazette,* 3.
[172] William W. Cook, Ed., *University of Michigan Publications Law Vol. III, Transactions of the Supreme Court of the Territory of Michigan 1814-1824 Vol. I* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press. 1938) 57-59.
[173] *Historical Collections: Collections and Researches by the Michigan Historical Society Vol. XXXVI* (Lansing, MI: Wyncoop Hallenbeck Crawford Company, State Printers. 1908) Digitized, HaithiTrust, 320.

navigate the formalized power of British imperialism following the War of 1812 and they relied upon their cross-border network to do so.

Although acts of resistance against the British government proliferated throughout the Detroit River region through acts both large and small, ultimately, the imperial influence affected land settlement and thus community formation in Essex County. On April 1, 1818, the Legislative Assembly passed An Act to Provide for the Registering of Deeds, Conveyances, Wills, and other Incumbrances, which may affect any Lands, Tenements, and Hereditaments, the same being Executed in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, or in any of His Majesty's Colonies. Essentially, the imperial government began to infringe upon the autonomous nature of the Essex County Land Registry books. What before were land sales orchestrated between community members and then documented by a notary public, now had to be recorded, declared, and approved by the Chief Justice or the Judge of the Supreme Court of the Colony.[174] The individuals of Essex County had lost some of their power in negotiating the transactions of their own community to the imperial authorities. Cross-border community interactions still defined the identity of this region, though the process of community formation in Essex County was undeniably transformed through the various acts of power inflicted upon the community on the part of British authorities.

3.3 Changes in the Community

Although there were many changes within the Detroit River borderlands immediately following the War of 1812, other aspects of community life returned to the same flow of

[174] Canada - 32 George III - 3 Victoria, 1st-13th Provincial Parliament, Upper Canada, 1st-5th Sessions 1792 (1972-1840) Chap. VIII, page 238.

cross-border interaction as before the conflict. Once Reverand Pollard returned to Sandwich, religious services began anew upon the burnt grounds of St. John's Church. On May 11, 1816, William Macomb and Jeanette Godet dit Marentette, both of Detroit and "of this parish," were married by license.[175] On June 23, 1816, Major General Alexander Macomb of the United States Army at Detroit and his wife Catherine baptized their infant daughter, Octavia Elizabeth.[176] It is not specified whether these individuals traveled across the river to Sandwich for their religious ministrations. Given the tensions that still rippled across the region, it is possible that Reverand Pollard rowed across the river in his canoe to minister to these Detroit parish members. However, it is apparent that the prestigious flock of the Detroit Riverlands community continued to seek these shared religious services, and in order to access such resources the individuals on the ground had to utilize the cross-border network as well as the informal mechanism of British imperial power within the region to do so.

Other parish members made their final journey across the strait immediately following the war. On September 2, 1816, Elizabeth Bummell of Detroit died and was taken to Sandwich and buried at St. John's Church. A few days later, on September 9, 1816, William Sawyer "a native of the United States" passed away and was also brought to St. John's cemetery.[177] Clearly, these individuals held no allegiance to the boundaries forged by empire. Instead, they continued to view the region as one land with little care for which side of the river remained their final resting place. Still, other members of the

[175] St. John's Anglican (Sandwich) Fonds, St. John's Registers, Vol. I. Marriages, Christenings, and Burials 1802-1820.
[176] St. John's Anglican (Sandwich) Fonds, St. John's Registers, Vol. I. Marriages, Christenings, and Burials 1802-1820.
[177] St. John's Anglican (Sandwich) Fonds, St. John's Registers, Vol. I. Marriages, Christenings, and Burials 1802-1820.

St. John's Parish wished to remain nearer to their ancestral homes upon their deaths. On April 11, 1817, George Meldrum, esquire of Detroit and friend to the Askin family, died and was buried by Reverand Pollard in Detroit. On April 14, 1817, Harriet Smith of Detroit died and was also buried by the Rector upon Detroit soil.[178] Although these individuals were laid to rest upon the northern shore, in the eyes of the St. John's community, they were still a single flock. Following the War of 1812, the competing imperial powers within the Detroit River borderlands attempted to infringe upon the ingratiated society, though the legacy of the shared community would not be so easily severed.

While many individuals of the white nucleus within the Detroit River community resisted British imperialism, following the war many other individuals of African descent flocked to the arms of the King. During the conflict, many African Canadians participated in the fight alongside their white Upper Canadian counterparts, and thousands of U.S. soldiers were sent to the main military theaters of the northern borderlands from the far reaches of the U.S. Empire. Karolyn Smardz Frost asserts that upon the cessation of hostilities the enslaved servants that American officers took with them to the northern frontier returned home and shared the tales of the free Black men in uniform who fought for the British Empire and preached that freedom was within reach right across the porous border. Thus, post-conflict there was a marked increase of Black migration into Upper Canada, and of course, one of the easiest points of passage was

[178] St. John's Anglican (Sandwich) Fonds, St. John's Registers, Vol. I. Marriages, Christenings, and Burials 1802-1820.

along the narrow Detroit River.[179] After arrival to the borderlands community, it did not take long for these migrants of African descent to align themselves with the informal mechanisms of British might. Thus, the Black community within Essex County consistently grew within the arms of the King. On January 19, 1816, William Bird who was "a negro servant to George Benson Hall," one of the most prominent gentlemen of Essex County society, was baptized at St. John's.[180] A few months later, on June 9, 1816, Juliet aged seventeen, who was another daughter of Peter and Hannah Denison, made it across the water to Sandwich and was also baptized. Additionally in September of 1816, Hannah Butler, William Williams, and Elizabeth Williams were all baptized as adults of color at the Anglican parish.[181] On June 27, 1819, Scipio Denison and his wife Charlotte baptized their son, James. That same day, Lewis and Jude Wilson, also documented as people of color, baptized their son Wilbert. Then on July 11, 1819, John and Amy Fields baptized their daughter Mary at St. John's Church. It is evident that the free Black community within Essex County was growing following the War of 1812 and the imperial conflict was the catalyst for the increased migration. Gregory Wigmore attests that following the conflict "slavery had nearly disappeared from the Detroit border region."[182] However, it cannot be forgotten that the Detroit-Essex community remained shrouded within a dark age that was only exasperated by the destruction wrought by the late war. Thus, immediately following the conflict the fates of enslaved individuals is difficult to properly assess. Though, the St. John's register lends some evidence to the

[179] Karolyn Smardz Frost, "Two: Forging Transnational Networks for Freedom: From the War of 1812 to the Blackburn Riots of 1833," in Karolyn Smardz Frost and Vera Smith Tucker, ed. *A Fluid Frontier: Slavery, Resistance, and the Underground Railroad in the Detroit River Borderland* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2017), 43-48.
[180] St. John's Registers, Vol. I. Marriages, Christenings, and Burials 1802-1820.
[181] St. John's Registers, Vol. I. Marriages, Christenings, and Burials 1802-1820.
[182] Wigmore, "From Slavery to Freedom," 453.

remnants of slavery that clutched to the Detroit Riverlands. A mere three years before the surge in free Black baptisms within the church, in 1816 "two negro children *belonging* to the family of Captain Thomas McKee" were also baptized at St. John's Church.[183] Individuals of African descent found freedom in Essex County directly following the war and were dawning upon a new era of Black community building. However, many other individuals of color within the region remained enslaved. Thus, free African Canadians and enslaved individuals of African descent lived beside one another within the same community network if only for a short period of time post conflict.

This work has previously stated that there is wanting evidence for Black landownership within Essex County in the first decade of the nineteenth century. However, the trickle of Black migrants that flowed into the region following the War of 1812 acted as a mechanism of change within the community. On January 18, 1816, William Bird, who was recognized in the St. John's parish register as a person of color, purchased lot number three in Amherstburg from Mary Brown for thirty-five pounds and ten shillings. The very next day William Bird went to St. John's Church to be baptized. Mary was recorded in the land registry as being "late of Amherstburg" meaning that she was one of the many community members who left the Detroit River borderlands following the conflict. Interestingly, the land registry also outlined the particulars of her original land title, which was a "grant under the authority of the Commander in Chief, granted to Francis Morin, dated the fifteenth of June 1799, signed by Hector McLean, esquire, Captain Royal and at that period commanding at Amherstburg."[184] Individuals of

[183]St. John's Registers, Vol. I. Marriages, Christenings, and Burials 1802-1820.
[184] Essex County Land Registry, Book: South Detroit "C," No. 194, 129A-129B

African descent who purchased land within Essex County was a relatively rare occurrence in the first two decades of the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, the example of William Bird highlights the changing circumstances for individuals of African descent within the region following the war and the opportunities afforded to budding Black communities, which directly correlated to imperial conflict.

While one ethnic group was carving out space within Essex County following the War of 1812, another began their slow migration to the periphery. This conflict marked an era of British cultural supremacy throughout the Essex County region and meant that the French *Canadiens* who had long dominated the Detroit River borderlands culture and society slowly became Anglicized. The first evidence of this transition to Anglophone culture was recorded in the Essex County Land Registry in the first pages of the new registry book in 1817. On October 14 of that year, a transaction between Charles Labadie dit Badichon and Alexis Luke Réaume, both of Sandwich, made a particular point to define and standardize the French measurement of the arpent. The record equated the arpent to the surveyor's measurement of seventy-three degrees and clearly defined the arpent as the "French acre."[185] In a later transaction that took place on February 5, 1818 between Jean Baptiste Feré and Alexis Lafferté, the account distinctly calculated that 405 arpents converted to 332 acres.[186] The standardization of the French system of measurement to the British system of measurement may seem trivial. However, if one conceptualizes the land registry books as a mechanism of community power before the war and following the war a mechanism of imperial power due to the changed

[185] Essex County Land Registry, Book #2: South Detroit "D," No. 4, 6A-6B. Leddy Library Archives & Special Collections, University of Windsor.
[186] Essex County Land Registry, Book #2: South Detroit "D," No. 37, 34A-35A.

bureaucratic legislation, then this transition takes on greater importance. Additionally, the new land registry book of 1817 no longer recorded transactions between inhabitants in their native French vernacular. Instead, all transactions were transcribed in English.[187] Following the War of 1812, the colonial government of Upper Canada began to eat away at the cultural power generated by the community through acts passed by the Legislative Assembly of Upper Canada. These new imperial regulations superimposed Anglophone standardization upon a multi-ethnic community that long abstained from the grasp of the British metropole.

[187] Essex County Land Registry, Book #2: South Detroit "D."

CONCLUSION

Prior to the War of 1812, the inhabitants of the Detroit River region shared in cross-border relations and commerce that negotiated community spaces through land transactions and cultural exchange. These relations were based upon vast and friendly personal networks that crossed the strait. During the conflict, the residents of the Detroit-Essex region traversed an oscillating imperial theater that threatened their identity, community, and property. Simultaneously, this war of empires opened avenues for community formation within Essex County for individuals of African descent while also beginning the slow migration of the French people and culture to the periphery. Following the conflict, the borderlands community was forced to navigate a turbulent imperial framework that attempted to interrupt their centuries old tapestries of kin woven across the Detroit River as they rebuilt their ruined society. Ultimately, the cross-border transactions of land that were commonplace between 1808 and 1811 abruptly halted due to imperial meddling in the years immediately following the conflict. Between the outbreak of war in July of 1812 to 1818, only one American citizen was granted land in Essex County. On September 8, 1818, Robert McDougall of the late eighth regiment of Detroit, was granted a deed of Conveyance at the back of the King's Patent. This transaction was originally bargained between John Askin, who died in 1815, and McDougall in December of 1810.[188] Surely, the war had interrupted the finalization of this sale, but it was the barriers of the Legislative Assembly that delayed the granting of the deed for eight years. McDougall's loyalty would have been tested under the newly codified channels of colonial land administration, and he was ultimately found worthy.

[188] Essex County Land Registry, South Detroit "D," events July 30, 1817 to Oct. 10, 1822, No. 67.

Thus, McDougall was granted land by the powers of the Legislative Assembly rather than by the community power of John Askin. Interestingly, this was not the first time that Robert McDougall had owned land in Sandwich. On June 7, 1809, McDougall was recorded in the Essex County Land Registry as hailing from "the town of Sandwich in the county of Essex, in the Western District of the Province of Upper Canada."[189] The gentleman sold lot number eleven on the east side of Bedford Street in Sandwich to James Woods.[190] McDougall was later registered on the 1810 Census for the District of Detroit in the Territory of Michigan as residing on the northern shore.[191] Clearly McDougall was enmeshed within the lattice work of kinship, commerce, and land that twined the Detroit River. Prior to the conflict, McDougall had resided within the communities of both shores. Yet upon the outbreak of war, this individual pledged himself to the American cause, moved across the strait, and thus lost his privileges as a community member in the eyes of the imperial British government.

While the Legislative Assembly of Upper Canada became fixated on barring entry into the province for those of American descent after the war, individuals of African descent were offered new pathways to freedom and settlement. Although these early Freedom Seekers undoubtedly hailed from the U.S., their loyalty was not scrutinized in the same manner as their white counterparts. In essence, the individuals of African descent within the Detroit River borderlands were accepted as subjects of the British Crown yet were not hailed as citizens from the American empire. In essence, they remained a category all their own. Thus, the budding Black populace of Essex County

[189] Essex County Land Registry, Book: South Detroit "C" March 13th 1809-July 1st, 1817, No. 35, 26A.
[190] Essex County Land Registry, Book: South Detroit "C" March 13th 1809-July 1st, 1817, No. 35, 26A.
[191] Russel, *Michigan Census 1710-1830,* 90.

was left to craft communities in relative peace and away from the watchful eye of the British Empire. By the 1820s, the Black militiamen who fought for the defense of Upper Canada during the war began to receive their grants of land from the Legislative Assembly for their service. White militia men were given preference during this process, thus explaining why Black soldiers had to wait five years or more for their allocations. Additionally, instead of the standard 200 acres of land usually gifted by the crown to United Empire Loyalists, soldiers of African descent often received only 100 acres. The same troubles plagued the Black veterans of the War of 1812 as the Black Loyalists of the American Revolutionary War: The British government did not allocate land grants to individuals of African descent that were adjacent to one another. Thus, once again Upper Canada's loyal service men of color were left to fend for themselves in a sea of white neighbors.[192] However, an anomaly took place within Essex County during this period that strengthened the ability of the Black population to effectively form a cohesive community. In 1851, Henry Bibbs, a major political actor in Essex County's Black community throughout the mid-nineteenth century, reflected in his newspaper, *The Voice of the Fugitive,* that the British Crown donated land in Essex County to individuals of African descent "around 1820" this being "the first and only donation of land" by the government.[193] Although, this land was not donated to Black veterans in Essex County, this record clearly evidences that the number of Black migrants to Essex County was so great that the Crown recognized the need for organized plots of land adjacent to one another within this growing community. The War of 1812 undoubtedly shifted conditions

[192] Pitt, *To Stand and Fight Together* 95-100.
[193] Henry Bibb, "Colored People in Canada—Grant of Land to them—Settlements—Difficulties—advantages &c.," *The Voice of the Fugitive,* Vol. I, No.6, March 12,1851.

for individuals of African descent within the Detroit River borderlands and allowed these individuals to navigate an imperial pathway to a new home across the strait. The shifts created by imperial negotiations across the Detroit Riverlands forever altered this unique quarter and evermore changed the patterns of racial community formation within this borderlands space.

By 1815, the picturesque landscape of the Detroit River borderlands was in ruins. The weary inhabitants on both sides of the strait began to rebuild their communities under new and grating imperial regulations. Thus, when analyzing the evolution of the Detroit Riverlands society within the nineteenth century, all roads lead back to the War of 1812. One cannot appreciate the cataclysm of change that jarred this community without dissecting the interactions of empire, people, and land in accordance with the conflict. The heavy hand of imperialism can no longer be relegated to separate spheres of inquiry within this region, but instead must be intimately tied to the analysis of the people on the ground with a succinct focus on the negotiations wrought by the two forces. Undoubtedly, the game of empires within the Detroit River borderlands forever changed the community. Yet, despite it all, the intimate kinship networks that defined the region still prevailed. The community that crossed the strait resisted imperial authority and thus entered a process of negotiation with the domineering British. Ultimately, the first decades of the nineteenth century in Essex County tell a tale of an intimately enmeshed community that survived a war, rebuilt their community, and navigated imperial policies that targeted the kinship networks, which acted as the beating heart of the region. Though undeniably, the imperial actions implemented upon the inhabitants of Essex County following the War of 1812 aligned land policies and practices with colonial

administrative powers and forever transformed the autonomous nature of Essex County community formation.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Leddy Library Collection

Essex County Land Registry, South Detroit "C," #1-272 Events Apr. 3, 1805 to July 30, 1817. Leddy Library Archives & Special Collections, University of Windsor.

Essex County Land Registry, South Detroit "D," events July 30, 1817 to Oct. 10, 1822. Leddy Library Archives & Special Collections, University of Windsor.

St. John's Registers, Vol. I. Marriages, Christenings, and Burials. 1802-1820. Accession 1995-054. F 0032. St. John's Anglican (Sandwich). Leddy Library Archives & Special Collections, University of Windsor.

John Askin Papers

Quaife, Milo M. *John Askin Papers Volume 1: 1747-1795* SWODA: Windsor & Region Publications, 1928.

Quaife, Milo M. *John Askin Papers Volume 2: 1796-1820.* SWODA: Windsor & Region Publications, 1931.

Burton Historical Collection

MS/Burton, C.M. MS Burton, C.M. Works- Legal Notes. Papers Works-I-Michigan-C box 19. Clarence Monroe Burton Papers. The Burton Historical Collection.

MS/Woodward, A.B. 1806-1808. Judge Woodward's Resolutions on Sundry Subjects, and the Report of the Committee on the Same. Box 3 Vault. A.B. Woodrow Papers. The Burton Historical Collection.

MS/Burton, C.M. Papers Works-I-Michigan-C box 19. Michigan-Citizens-Early comers to Michigan. Clarence Monroe Burton Papers. The Burton Historical Collection.

Marsh Historical Collection

Loyalists and Land Boards: Indian Deed of Present Southwestern Ontario to King George III, May 19, 1790. Folder W-93. Wyandot Papers. Marsh Historical Collections.

Other Sources

"An Act to Prevent the Further Introduction of Slaves and to Limit the Term of Contracts

for Servitude Statues of Upper Canada Cap. 7, 33 George III, 1793." Ontario: Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery. Archives of Ontario, online. Accessed June 5th, 2024.

Bibb, Henry. "Colored People in Canada—Grant of Land to them—Settlements—Difficulties—advantages &c." The Voice of the Fugitive, Vol. I, No.6. March 12,1851.

"British-American Diplomacy: The Jay Treaty; November 19, 1794." Yale Law School: Lillian Goldman Law Library. The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy, 2008.

Buttrick, Tilly. *Buttrick's Voyages, Travels, and Discoveries 1812-1819,* Voyages, Travels, and Discoveries 1783; edited by Reuben Gold Twaites, 1853-1913 in Early Western Travels, Vol. 8: Buttrick's Voyages, 1812-1819, Evan's Pedestrious tour, 1818. Cleveland, OH: Arthur Clark Co., 1904. Alexander Street Online.

"Capitulation of the Fort of Detroit, Aug.16, 1812." *Kingston Gazette,* Vol. II. September 19th, 1812. INK ODW Newspaper Collections, page 2.

Canada - 32 George III - 3 Victoria, 1st-13th Provincial Parliament, Upper Canada, 1st-5th Sessions 1792. 1972-1840. Hein Online Database.

Carter, Clarence Edwin. Editor. *The Territorial Papers of the United States, Volume X: The Territory of Michigan 1805-1820.* Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1942. Digitized, HathiTrust.

Cook, William W. Ed., *University of Michigan Publications Law Vol. III, Transactions of the Supreme Court of the Territory of Michigan 1814-1824 Vol. I.* Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press. 1938.

"Domestic: To the Editors of the National Intelligence Washington, June 20th, 1814." *The Enquirer (Richmond, Virginia)* Sat, Jul 1, 1815. Newspapers.com by Ancestry.

"Extract of a Letter from a Respectable gentleman at Detroit, to the Editor dated October 24th, 1815." *Buffalo Gazette.* Village of Buffalo, New York. Tue, Nov 14, 1815. Newspapers.com by Ancestry.

François Baby House Collections, Research Binder. "The Invasion of Sandwich," Compiled by Madelyn Della Valle. Museum Windsor. PM 2580. June 2021.

Michigan Pioneer & Historical Society, Volume 23. Lansing: Robert Smith & Co., State Printers and Binders. 1895. HathiTrust, Public Domain, Google digitized online.

Historical Collections: Collections and Researches by the Michigan Historical Society Vol. XXXVI. Lansing, MI: Wyncoop Hallenbeck Crawford Company, State Printers. 1908. Digitized, HaithiTrust.

Prevost, George. "Headquarters Montreal, October 30th, 1813." Cambridge, England: *Cambridge Chronicle and Journal*. Newspapers.com by Ancestry. Dec. 24, 1813, page 2.

Russel, Donna Valley Ed. *Michigan Censuses 1710-1830 Under the French, British, and Americans.* Detroit: Detroit Society for Genealogical Research, Inc. c/o The Burton Historical Collection Detroit Public Library, 1982. Essex and Community Historical Research Society.

Schoolcraft, Henry Rowe. *Historical and Statistical Information Respecting the History, Condition and Prospects of the Indian Tribes of the United States, Volume 6.* Philadelphia, PA: Lippincott, Grambo and Co., 1857. Alexander Street online.

Spragge, George W. Ed. *The John Strachan Letter Book: 1812-1834.* Toronto, ON: The Ontario Historical Society, 1946.

"Treaty of Paris: Transcript." National Archives. Archives.gov, May 10th, 2022.

"The Northwest and the Ordinances, 1783-1858," in "The History of the Upper Midwest: An Overview." Library: Library of Congress. Congress.gov United States Legislative Information. Accessed 5 June 2024. https://www.loc.gov/collections/pioneering-the-upper-midwest/articles-and-essays/history-of-the-upper-midwest-overview/northwest-and-ordinances/

Secondary Sources

Allen, Robert S. "The British Indian Department and the Frontier in North America, 1755-1830: The End of an Era (1815-1830)." Parks Canada, Government of Canada. 10 Oct. 2006.

Antal, Sandy. *A Wampum Denied: Procter's War of 1812*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011.

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism.* New York, New York: Verso, 1983.

Armitage, David. "Introduction," in *An Expanding World, The European Impact on World History, 1450-1800.* Volume 20: Theories of Empire, 1450-1800, edited by David Armitage. Brookfield. Vermont: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 1998. xv-xviii.

Benn, Carl. *War of 1812*. London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2003.

Berkin, Carol. *Revolutionary Mothers: Women in the Struggle for America's Independence.* New York, NY: Vintage Books a Division of Random House, Inc., 2005.

Burbank, Jane. *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010.

Cangany, Catherine Cangany. "'The Inhabitants of both Sides of this Streight constitute a French Colony': The Detroit River and the Politics of International Milling, 1796-1837," in Guillaume Teasdale and Tangi Villerb, eds. *Une Amérique française 1760-1860: Dynamiques du corridor créole*. Paris: Les Indes savantes, 2015.

Carroll, Lewis. *Through the looking glass*. London: HarperCollins Publishers Inc., 2010.

Clarke, John. *Land, Power, and Economics on the Frontier of Upper Canada*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000.

Clarke, John. *The Ordinary People of Essex: Environment, Culture, and Economy on the Frontier of Upper Canada.* Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010.

Craig, Gerald M. *Upper Canada: The Formative Years 1784-1841.* Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1963.

Darwin, John. *After Tamerlane: The Rise and Fall of Global Empires, 1400-2000.* New York: Penguin Books, 2007.

Denissen Christian, *Genealogy of the French Families of the Detroit River Region, 1701-1936, 2nd ed.* Detroit: Detroit Society for Genealogical Research, 1987.

Douglas, R. Alan. *Uppermost Canada: The Western District and the Detroit Frontier 1800-1850.* Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2001.

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punishment: The Birth of the Prison,* translated by Alan Sheridan. New York, New York: Random House Inc. Second Vintage Books Edition, 1995.

Furstenberg, François. "The Significance of the Trans-Appalachian Frontier in Atlantic History." The American Historical Review 114, no 3 (2008): 647-654.

Frost, Karolyn Smardz. "Two: Forging Transnational Networks for Freedom: From the War of 1812 to the Blackburn Riots of 1833," in Karolyn Smardz Frost and Veta Smith Tucker, ed. *A Fluid Frontier: Slavery, Resistance, and the Underground Railroad in the Detroit River Borderland.* Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2017.

Gates, Lillian F. *Land Policies of Upper Canada.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968.

Greer, Allen. Property and Dispossession: Natives, Empires and Land in Early Modern North America. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018.

Go, Julian. *Patterns of Empire: British and American Empires 1688 to the Present.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Hämäläinen, Pekka and Samuel Truett. "On Borderlands" The Journal of American History, Vol. 98, No. 2. September 2011. 338-361.

Hatter, Lawrence B. *Citizens of Convenience: The Imperial Origins of American Nationhood on the U.S.-Canadian Border.* Virginia, U.S.: University of Virginia Press, 2017.

"Her stories: Lives of Women in the Detroit River Region A Booklet Based on the Exhibition at the Francois Baby House: Windsor's Community Museum." Leddy Library Archives & Special Collections. University of Windsor. FC 3095 .E8 Z48, 1993.

"History of the Parish." The Cathedral of St. Paul, Detroit. The Cathedral Church of St. Paul. Revised 2023, https://detroitcathedral.org.

Johnson, J. K. *In Duty Bound: Men, Women, and the State in Upper Canada, 1783-1841*. McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014.

Kagan, Robert. *Dangerous Nation: America's Foreign Policy from its Earliest Days to the Dawn of the Twentieth Century.* New York, NY: Random House, Inc, 2006.

Kaplan, Amy. "'Left Alone with America:' The Absence of Empire in the Study of American Culture," in *Cultures of United States Imperialism* edited by Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease. Durham: Duke University Press, 1993. 3-21.

Karr, Clarence. *The Canada Land Company: The Early Years.* Ottawa, ON: Ontario Historical Society Research Publications No. 3, 1974.

Killion, Thomas W., Thomas M. Urban, and James Conway. "Mounds, Towns, and their Surrounds: An Archaeological, Historical, and Geophysical Approach to Burial Mounds, Residential Space, and Cultural Landscapes of the Late Woodland Springwells Site (A.D. 800-1400) at Historic Fort Wayne, Detroit," *Journal of Field Archaeology* 44, no. 6 (2019): 383-400.

Kramer, Paul A. "Power and Connection: Imperial Histories of the United States in the

World," The American Historical Review 116, no. 5. December 2011. 1348-1391.

Lajeunesse, Ernest J. Ed. *The Windsor Border Region: Canada's Southernmost Frontier a Collection of Documents, Fifth Edition.* Windsor, ON: The Essex County Historical Society, 2012.

McKinsey, Lauren and Victor Konrad. *Borderlands Reflections: The United States and Canada, Borderland Monograph Series #1.* USA, Borderlands Project: 1989.

"Milestone Documents: Northwest Ordinance (1787)," National Archives.org, The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, May 10th, 2022.

Neal, Frederick. *Township of Sandwich, Past and Present* Windsor, ON: SWODA: Windsor & Region Publications, 1909.

Norton, John and Carl Benn. *A Mohawk Memoir from the War of 1812*. University of Toronto Press, 2019.

Oitt, Steve. *To Stand and Fight Together: Richard Pierpoint and the Coloured Corps of Upper Canada.* Canada: Dundurn Press, 2008.

Pagden, Anthony. *Lords of All the World: Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain, and France c. 1500–c. 1800*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press: 1995.

Romney, Susanah Shaw. *New Netherland Connections: Intimate Networks and Atlantic Ties in Seventeenth-Century America.* Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2014.

Said, Edward W. *Culture and Imperialism* New York, NY: Vintage Books, Radom House Inc., 1993.

Said, Edward W. *Orientalism.* New York. NY: Vintage Books, 1978.

"Sandwich Heritage Walking Tour." Windsor, ON: Presented by the City of Windsor, Updated April 27th, 2018.

Scott, James C. *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition have Failed*. Yale University: Yale University Press, 1998.

Sheppard, George. *Plunder, Profit, and Paroles: A Social History of the War of 1812 in Upper Canada.* Canada: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994.

Smandych, Russell Charles and Bernd Hamm, *Cultural Imperialism: Essays on the Political Economy of Cultural Domination* Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2005.

Tucker, Veta Smith. “Part I: Crossing Boundaries, Uncertain Freedom in Frontier Detroit,” in Karolyn Smardz Frost and Vera Smith Tucker, ed. *A Fluid Frontier: Slavery, Resistance, and the Underground Railroad in the Detroit River Borderland* Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2017. 25-42.

Stoler, Ann Laura and Frederick Cooper. "Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda," in Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper, eds. *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997. 1-56.

Taylor, Alan. *The Civil War of 1812: American Citizens, British Subjects, Irish Rebels, and Indian Allies.* New York, NY: Vintage Books, 2010.

Teasdale, Guillaume. “Public Powers on the Margins of Empire: How Feudalism and Absolutism Clashed in French Detroit, 1701-1734,” In Andrew Sturtevant and Karen L. Marrero, eds., *A Place in Common: Rethinking the History of Early Detroit.* East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2025.

Teasdale, Guillaume. *Fruits of Perseverance: The French Presence in the Detroit River Region, 1701-1815*. McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2018.

Warf, Barney and Santa Arias eds. *The Spatial Turn: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*. London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2008.

Wasson, Jeffery. “Inventing a Foundation Myth: Upper Canada in the War of 1812.” Bachelors of Honors Thesis. Clark University, 2014.

Weeks, William Earl. *The New Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations. of The New*
Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Widdis, Randy William. “Migration, Borderlands, and National Identity: Directions for Research,” in John J. Bukowczyk *et al*., *Permeable Border: The Great Lakes Basin as Transnational Region, 1650-1990.* Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005. 152-17.

Wigmore, Gregory. “Before the Railroad: From Slavery to Freedom in the Canadian-American Borderland,” Journal of American History 98, no 2 (2011): 437-454.

VITA AUCTORIS

NAME:	Emma Grant
PLACE OF BIRTH:	Naperville, Illinois USA
YEAR OF BIRTH:	1992
EDUCATION:	Adlai E. Stevenson Highschool, Livonia, MI 2010
	Schoolcraft College, Associate of Arts, Livonia, MI 2017
	University of Windsor, B.A. Honours History Windsor, ON 2022
	University of Windsor, M.A. History Windsor, ON 2024