

Hereford Forest / Observation Point and Memorial Site 1 Life on the edge of the Line

Station: All Saints Anglican Church – Route 141

We begin our tour of Hereford Township's heritage at All Saints Anglican Church. This picturesque church, recognisable by its orange roof, has stood proudly in the mountainous landscape of the hamlet of Hereford since 1865.

Religious heritage

Located less than 500 metres from the border with Vermont, All Saints Church was, until very recently, part of a border parish (Border Parish Anglican Episcopal) comprising churches in Canaan, Vermont, and Colebrook, New Hampshire.

The church stands out in the Coaticook RCM for its integrated and visible cemetery, meaning that it surrounds the entire church and is visible from the public highway. The integrated cemetery is characterised by the more or less concentric arrangement of the gravestones, with the oldest generally found around the church and the most recent on the periphery. This spatial layout was common mainly in the first half of the 19th century and was particularly favoured by Protestants.

As you can see, the parishioners, now fewer in number, take great care in maintaining the church, which was renovated in 1998, and its cemetery.

Built slightly above the road so that it can be seen from a distance, with a rear view overlooking the international Leach Stream, from which the music could probably be heard in the early days of the township's settlement in 1800.

This Anglican place of worship, built on land donated by Aaron Workman, the first mayor of Hereford Township (1860–1862), served in 1865 the hamlets of Hall Stream (now East Hereford) and Barford (now Saint-Herménégilde) in Lower Canada, as well as Beecher Falls and Averill Lake in the United States. Mr. Workman, whose grave is in the cemetery, was originally from Londonderry in Northern Ireland. An influential figure, he also served as Her Majesty's customs collector and postmaster (1853–1882), as well as an enumerator for several censuses. A bridge in East Hereford is named after him.

The Line House: literally a “border house”

Hereford has features unique to its geographical location. The “line”—as the border is known in the local vernacular—divides Lake Wallace between Vermont and Quebec. When travelling along Route 141 from Coaticook, just past the lake, you can see a six-meter-wide strip in the mountains that marks the boundary between the two countries. This border line is maintained by the International Boundary Commission.

Between the two customs offices on Route 141, less than 500 meters from here, stand the remains of a unique heritage site in the “borderland” of Hereford Township: the “Canaan Line House.” Straddling the border between Vermont and Quebec, the building served as a gas station, a general store, a chapel, and, during Prohibition (1920–1933), a “waterhole,” a notorious speakeasy.



Border houses are built straddling the border. There are two reasons for this. The first concerns the history of border demarcation, which was often imprecise: the exact boundary was frequently unknown to residents until quite late. The second factor relates to the desire to evade prosecution by the authorities of one country or the other, especially during the Prohibition era and the widespread smuggling that took place between Canada and the United States: one had to take refuge in the “right” part of one’s home to escape the police or customs officials.

During the 1960s, residents of the hamlet of Hereford and vacationers at Lake Wallace could do their grocery shopping on the Canadian side and fill up on gas on the American side. Contemporary accounts describe how a line inside the store marked the boundary between Canadian and American territory.

The two-story wooden structure of the *Canaan Line House*, with a facade over 35 meters (100 feet) long, has three doors: one leading outside on the American side, a second on the Canadian side, and a third inside connecting the United States to Canada.

The U.S. and Canadian customs offices, among the oldest in both countries, are located further up Route 141. The U.S. office, built in the Neo-Georgian style with brick walls and a gabled roof, is listed on the *National Register of Historic Places*. At the time, Route 141 was known as the “*Old Snag Road*.” A winding, twisting road, the Old Snag ran from Canaan, Vermont, to the village of Compton, passing through the Canadian customs post at Hereford Road and running along Lake Wallace, the international lake shared by Canada and the United States. Like all such early roads, stations or resting places were established at one-day walking intervals.

Cross-Border Cooperation

Cooperation and good neighbourliness have always been an integral part of life along the border. The Beecher Falls Fire Department describes its services as interstate and international, serving the entire territories of East Hereford and Saint-Venant-de-Paquette, as well as parts of Saint-Herménégilde and Saint-Malo.

It is known that the residents of Hereford Township, all of whom were English-speaking until around 1870, had close ties with those on the American side, particularly in Canaan (Vermont), West Stewartstown (New Hampshire), and Pittsburg (New Hampshire). These ties were driven by both economic and social needs, including education and medical care. Until the advent of health insurance, childbirth often took place in West Stewartstown, which explains the dual citizenship of several residents of East Hereford. Many who sold their land in the Township of Hereford went on to settle among our southern neighbours.

Irene Owen gave birth to all her children at the hospital in West Stewartstown, she says: “It was easy, she says, instead of driving all the way to Coaticook to have your baby, you just filled out a form and crossed the border. Of course, you had to declare your baby on the way back.”

Canaan is a stone’s throw from Quebec and New Hampshire. Residents, Bill and Irene Owen, of Hereford Hill, crossed the border every Saturday for a night on the town. The draw was dinner and dancing at the local hotel.

Half Way Hotel: Albert Saint-Pierre

The *Half Way Hotel*, was located half a mile from Canaan, Vermont, and its *Bar Room* offered 24/7 service and beer for 10 cents a glass.



Frizzle Place, a den of counterfeiters in Villette, Barford Township

Around 1820, the area stretching from Hereford Township toward Barford Township was nothing but a vast forest. The first road was built from Canaan, through Hereford, along Lake Wallace and Barford, to reach Compton. On Route 141, at the Saint-Herménégilde turn-off, on what was then called *Old Snag Road*, you can see a renovated farmhouse that once belonged to a notorious forger in 1830.

Since all these trails were primitive, rest stops were established at intervals of one day's walk. Shortly before 1835, a man named Oliver Frizzle came to settle there. This outpost became a notorious gathering place for counterfeiters and was named **Frizzle Place**. As Father Albert Gravel notes in his **Précis historique de Saint-Herménégilde**: "He ran a sort of tavern there to provide lodging and refreshments for travellers. In his spare time, he made counterfeit money." He was arrested with his tools on November 26, 1839. Shortly thereafter, Frizzle Place served as an inn and *road stop* for loggers transporting wood to the Coaticook train station

Bootlegging in Hereford Township

From 1920 to 1933, Prohibition was in effect in the United States, meaning that **the consumption, manufacture, and sale of alcohol were prohibited**. In Quebec, many hotels and bars welcomed Americans seeking fun and a drink.

A hotel in Beecher Falls, the *Line House*, located on the border near *Comins Mills* (East Hereford), was particularly popular with Americans during Prohibition; it was destroyed by fire before 1928 and immediately rebuilt.

Alcohol smugglers, nicknamed "**bootleggers**," [literally, "a man who hides a bottle in his boot"), were numerous along the border, and Hereford Township was no exception.

On January 20, 1920, a few days after Prohibition began in the United States, *Le Soleil de Québec* reported that a bottle of whiskey cost about \$1.28. Once in Detroit, its value rose to \$4.40, or even \$7.04. The prospect of profit was very tempting for the people living in the border countryside, who were accustomed to the harsh conditions of rural life.

A rumour continues to circulate that Al Capone visited our region during Prohibition. Al Capone's criminal organisation is said to have conducted several transactions in Hereford Township and to have stayed there for some time. A sign at the Balsams Golf Club in Dixville Notch, New Hampshire, references this rumour.

Among other stories, it is said that in East Hereford, bootleggers used a clothesline strung across the Hall River—which serves as the border between Canada and the United States—to smuggle their goods.

A former resident of East Hereford recounts the story as follows: when he was a teenager, his father, like many others, used the Hall River in the spring and Grégoire Road to transport goods. A rope, attached to a pulley, spanned the river, and calves were tied to the rope and sent to the United States. Of course,

baskets arrived in exchange. His father forbade him from talking about it, and the contents of those “baskets” were never mentioned, but the money kept rolling in for the family.

Other ingenious methods were used to fool customs officers and police: boots put on the animals’ feet to deceive customs officers, horses harnessed without drivers that returned on their own to their starting point, a rigged dual gas tank, hearses, train cars, etc.

Moreover, it wasn’t just alcohol that was smuggled in the region.

Smuggling practices are said to have begun in the region during the period of the Republic of *the Indian Stream*, meaning that it is nothing new and that the phenomenon was very difficult to curb. Just about anything could be smuggled: goods (sugar, silk, beverages, cigarettes, etc.), animals, and even illegal immigrants, including Chinese nationals.

Chinese immigration had been strictly controlled since 1885, and the *Chinese Immigration Act of 1923*, also known as the *Chinese Exclusion Act*, prohibited nearly all Chinese immigrants from entering Canada until 1947. Also, a rumour suggests that Hereford Township was used as a passageway for fugitives from slavery, commonly known as the “*Underground Railroad*.”

Lake Wallace was also a popular crossing point, as was the famous route between Route 141 on the Quebec side and Route 114 in Vermont, where there is a bridge over Leach Stream.