

# La vie sur le bord des lignes

## DANS LE CANTON DE HEREFORD

Carte du District de Saint-François éditée par Putnam and Gray en 1863  
 Map of the District of Saint-François published by Putnam and Gray in 1863  
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### Life on the Line

#### IN THE TOWNSHIP OF HEREFORD

How can one describe something that exists neither on one side nor the other, but in between? Who remembers how border dwellers lived? Snippets come to us in pieces, blurred like faces in black-and-white photos. Even laws lacked clarity in these high places of smuggling, from the Frizzle Place counterfeiters to bootleggers and their blinding moonshine.

#### DAILY LIFE STRADDLING TWO COUNTRIES

Imagine life in the vicinity of Canaan Line House on the border. Wallace Pond cottagers would pay "at par" for their groceries, gas and beer depending on the value of the currency in their pockets. Across the street, in the Marsh household, they slept in Canada, ate breakfast in Vermont and made international collect calls between the living room and the kitchen phones. Not to be outdone, Hereford Hill residents would marry in one country, give birth in the other and declare the baby to customs when crossing back.

#### THE FOLLIES OF PROHIBITION

Imagine the days of prohibition, when bootleggers mingled with card players at the Canaan Line House Tavern or Half-Way Hotel. They'd run from the cops or customs officers and once safely seated in the tavern on the right side of the border, they'd deride the useless laws. It is said that Al Capone (1845-1947) himself hid in Hereford. With 10 cent beers, amid cursing and fist-pounding on tables, men dreamed of great fortunes. It was down to who would come up with the wildest plan to smuggle alcohol across the border: be it hanging bottles on a clothesline stretched from one bank of the Hall Stream to the other; on the frozen Wallace Pond, loading barrels on the backs of cows wearing upside-down boots on; or rigging ghost carriages pulled by horses that would return home on their own on dirt roads. Ordinary human genius serving vice!

The border is a rumor mill. So why do lives on the line slip so easily through the gaps of oblivion?



Line House Beecher Falls - East Hereford  
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#### LES IDÉES FOLLES DE LA PROHIBITION (1920-1933)

Imaginez encore, dans la taverne du *Line House* ou encore au *Half-Way Hotel*, à l'époque de la prohibition, les *bootleggers* se mêlaient aux joueurs de cartes. Ils fuyaient les policiers ou les douaniers américains et une fois bien assis dans la taverne du bon côté de la ligne, ils narguaient les lois inutiles des autorités. On raconte qu'Al Capone en personne se serait caché à Hereford. Devant des verres de bière à 10 ¢, entre les sacres et les coups de poing sur la table,

les hommes rêvaient de grandes fortunes. C'est à qui inventerait le plan le plus fou pour passer de l'alcool à la frontière : accrocher les bouteilles sur une corde à linge tendue d'une berge à l'autre de la rivière Hall; sur le lac Wallace gelé, charger les tonneaux sur le dos des vaches chaussées de bottes à tuyaux à l'envers; sur les chemins de terre, gréer des attelages fantômes tirés par des chevaux qui reviendraient par eux-mêmes à la maison. Le génie ordinaire des hommes au service du vice!

La frontière est une fabrique à rumeurs. Alors, pourquoi les vies sur la ligne se glissent-elles si facilement entre les interstices de l'oubli?



Half-Way Hotel, Hereford vers / circa 1930  
 © Canaan Historical Society



Line House Canaan - Hereford vers / circa 1932  
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Line House Beecher Falls - East Hereford  
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