

Sabotage, Security, and Border-Crossing Culture: The Detroit River during the First World War, 1914-1918

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This paper examines sabotage, security, and the Detroit River region's border-crossing culture during the First World War. It finds that deep social and economic transnational relations in the years prior to the war meant few Windsor residents demonstrated any concern that they might become the target of German Americans, or "enemy aliens", based in Detroit. And while these people were blasted out of their naïveté in June 1915, when the surrounding community was rocked by an explosion at a nearby uniform factory, over time fears associated with the border and Detroit's German population subsided at the local level. The result would be confrontation between Windsorites and the federal government, which in the years following the attack attempted to impose strict border-crossing regulations on a traditionally permeable section of the international boundary.

Le présent article porte sur le sabotage, la sécurité et la culture du passage de la frontière dans la région de la rivière Détroit au cours de la Première Guerre mondiale. Il fait ressortir qu'à la lumière des profondes relations socioéconomiques transnationales existant au cours des années d'avant-guerre, peu de résidents de Windsor auraient pensé s'inquiéter d'être la cible potentielle d'Américains d'origine allemande - sujets d'un pays ennemi - établis à Detroit. Tirés subitement de leur naïveté en juin 1915 lors de l'explosion d'une fabrique d'uniformes, les habitants de Windsor se sont remis sans tarder de leurs craintes liées à la frontière et à la population allemande de Detroit. La confrontation les opposera plutôt au gouvernement fédéral qui, dans les années suivant l'attaque, cherche à imposer de strictes conditions de traversée dans une section jusqu'alors perméable de la frontière internationale.

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DURING THE EARLY morning hours of June 21, 1915, residents of Windsor, Ontario, were awoken by a jarring explosion one local newspaper likened to a “volcanic blast.”¹ Rushing to the scene, police found a wing of the Peabody Overall Factory, which had been producing military uniforms for the British and Canadian governments, in pieces.² Upon further investigation, local police discovered that the destruction had been caused by sticks of dynamite attached to a timer. Shortly thereafter, frenzied local authorities found a similar device at the Windsor Armouries. The bomb, with a timer set to 3:15 a.m. and connected to 27 sticks of dynamite, had mysteriously failed to explode. Had such a device gone off, it might have killed dozens of soldiers stationed inside Windsor’s main recruiting and drilling facility.³

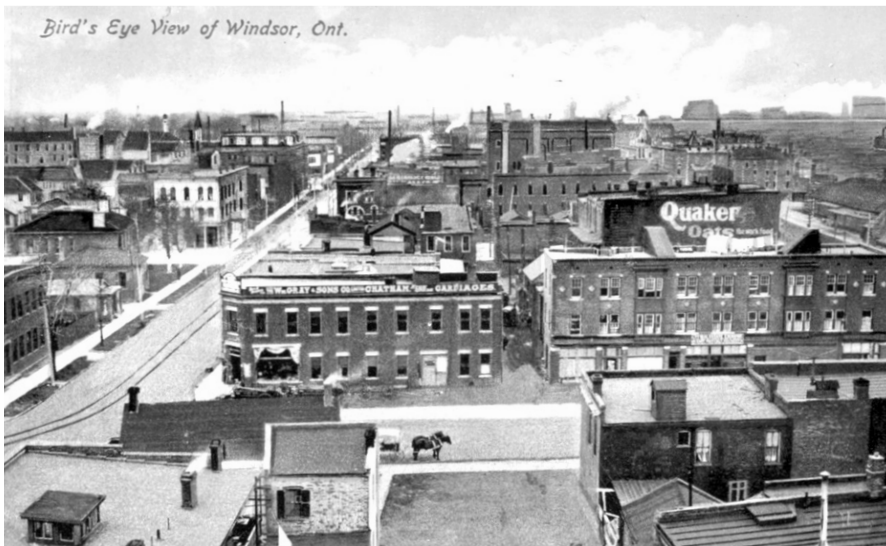


Image 1: A “bird’s eye view” of downtown Windsor in 1914. Local residents used an efficient ferry system to cross the Detroit River, which can be seen to the right. Postcard by Stedman Bros, 1914. Source: University of Windsor, Leddy Library, S.B. 6545.

Such attempted sabotage and the resulting heightened border security had a direct impact on transnational culture in the Detroit River region during the First World War.⁴ In the city of Windsor, Ontario, an economic dependence on nearby Detroit, Michigan, in the years prior to the war ensured the development of a vibrant border-crossing culture. Windsorites and Detroiters mingled frequently at this time,

- 1 “Alderman Ignored Warning by Girl of Windsor Bomb Plot,” *Detroit Free Press*, June 22, 1915.
- 2 Technically, the blast took place in Walkerville, an independent municipality adjacent to Windsor. In the spring of 1915 Peabody’s received a contract to produce 200,000 uniforms for the Allied war effort. See “Work at Peabody’s,” *Windsor Evening Record*, February 15, 1915; “Peabody’s Needs 200 More Girls,” *Windsor Evening Record*, March 4, 1915.
- 3 “Lefler, Held for Bomb Conspiracy, Denies His Guilt,” *Detroit Free Press*, July 20, 1915; “May Extradite Detroit Men in Dynamite Case,” *Detroit Free Press*, July 30, 1915; “Windsor’s Part in the War,” *Windsor Evening Record*, May 23, 1917.
- 4 This is a study of one community through the lens of security and is not meant to be a comprehensive examination of home defence during wartime.

whether on the baseball diamond, in the grandstands of local horse-racing tracks, or in bars, restaurants, and parks located just steps from the rapidly developing Detroit River waterfront.⁵ When Canada entered the war in August 1914, Windsor residents hoped the conflict would have little effect on the movement of people and goods across the dividing waterway. Despite the presence of thousands of German Americans in Detroit, most Windsorites did not express concern that their safety was threatened. While Windsor residents were shocked by the bombing of the local Peabody plant in June 1915, over time fears associated with the border's permeability subsided. As the war progressed, many Windsor residents came to dismiss the Peabody bombing as an anomaly and pressed the federal government to adopt a similar position. Unfortunately, many would be disappointed by the government's response.

At its core this is a study of changing conceptions of the citizen-state relationship through the eyes of one border community's residents. During the Great War, the state entered the lives of average Canadians like never before—shortly after war began in August 1914, Ottawa established the *War Measures Act*, giving it the power to invoke orders-in-council without parliamentary approval. To improve the country's economic efficiency and assist the Allied war effort, Ottawa introduced food and fuel regulations, a board for distributing munitions contracts, and the country's first income tax. It nationalized two of the nation's largest railways and established a Board of Grain Supervisors for regulating the price and distribution of Canada's most important commodity. Most controversially, in 1917 the federal government introduced military conscription, a measure that split the country between various factions.⁶ Many Canadian historians have focused in on this last issue in examining the changing relationship between citizen and state during the First World War era.⁷

This study examines the citizen-state relationship by focusing on a different issue: border security. Changes at the international boundary were hardly new in 1914. Between the end of the nineteenth century and the outbreak of war, the Canadian and American governments tried to control a tidal wave of newcomers by introducing immigration departments that stationed agents along the border

5 For more on the Detroit-Windsor border-crossing culture in the early twentieth century, see Brandon Dimmel, "South Detroit, Canada: Isolation, Identity, and the U.S.-Canada Border, 1914-1918," *Journal of Borderlands Studies*, vol. 26, no. 2 (2011); Thomas Klug, "The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) and the Making of a Border-Crossing Culture on the US-Canada Border, 1891-1941," *American Review of Canadian Studies*, vol. 40, no. 3 (Autumn 2010).

6 French Canadians opposed conscription on the grounds that it was undemocratic, while in the western provinces Canadians pressed for the "conscription of wealth." For more on these topics, see J. L. Granatstein and J. M. Hitsman, *Broken Promises: A History of Conscription in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1977); James Pitsula, *For All We Have and Are: Regina and the Experience of the Great War* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2008); Jim Blanchard, *Winnipeg's Great War: A City Comes of Age* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2010).

7 For more on the subject of Canada's expanding state during wartime, see Jeffrey Keshen, *Propaganda and Censorship during Canada's Great War* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1996); Desmond Morton, *Fight or Pay: Soldiers' Families in the Great War* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2004); and two articles by Gregory S. Kealey, "State Repression of Labour and the Left in Canada, 1914-20: The Impact of the First World War," *Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 72, no. 3 (September 1992), and "The Surveillance State: The Origins of Domestic Intelligence and Counter-Subversion in Canada, 1914-21," *Intelligence and National Security*, vol. 7, no. 3 (1992).

and tasked them with weeding out “undesirables,” including the physically and mentally ill, criminals, and visible minorities, particularly Asians.⁸ Still, the border remained permeable, particularly to white, native-born citizens of Canada and the United States. According to historian Bruno Ramirez, for every Canadian traveller denied entry to the United States, 90 others easily passed through inspection.⁹ Inspections hardly resembled the process involved in crossing today’s Canada-US border: rather than approach each individual attempting to cross the boundary, immigration agents at busy border crossing points like the Detroit River evaluated groups of travellers and only interrogated those people considered especially undesirable. Few travellers carried passports (or any other form of personal identification for that matter), meaning immigration agents read bodies rather than documents.¹⁰ For visible minorities and the visibly impoverished, the border often meant an end to their journey, but for the vast majority of Canadian, American, and white European travellers it presented no serious obstacle.

This practice changed during the First World War. Immigration inspectors no longer held up only presumed crooks, the poor, and those with physical and psychological problems. Instead, they were tasked with restricting the movement of several new groups, first and foremost “enemy aliens” (including people of German, Austro-Hungarian, Bulgarian, and Turkish descent). Initially the fear was that these people would flee for their homelands, where they might don uniforms and point rifles at members of the Canadian Expeditionary Force. Shortly after war was declared, rumours about plots to attack Canada led the authorities to regulate the incoming as well as outgoing traffic of enemy aliens. As the Canadian government moved towards conscription in 1917, immigration inspectors were also tasked with preventing military-age men from deserting across the boundary.

Examinations of state security during wartime remain rare. One of the few exceptions is Graeme Mount’s book *Canada and Her Enemies: Spies and Spying in the Peaceable Kingdom*, which includes a brief discussion of plans by Detroit-based German Americans to disrupt the Canadian war effort by targeting border communities like Windsor.¹¹ The fact that most of these attempts at sabotage were complete failures is the central focus of Martin Kitchen’s article “The German Invasion of Canada in the First World War,” which reveals a deep misunderstanding of North American culture and society on the part of German authorities, who appear to have legitimately believed they could disrupt the Allied war effort by paying freelance secret agents to blow up Canadian railways and factories.¹² Equally amateurish were the attempts by Canadian officials to prevent sabotage.

8 For more on border security before the First World War, see Klug, “The Immigration and Naturalization Service”; Marian Smith, “The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) at the U.S.-Canadian Border, 1893-1993: An Overview of Issues and Topics,” *Michigan Historical Review*, vol. 26, no. 2 (Fall 2000).

9 Bruno Ramirez, *Crossing the 49th Parallel: Migration from Canada to the United States, 1900-1930* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), p. 46.

10 Craig Robertson, *The Passport in America: The History of a Document* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 184.

11 Graeme Mount, *Canada’s Enemies: Spies and Spying in the Peaceable Kingdom* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1993).

12 Martin Kitchen, “The German Invasion of Canada in the First World War,” *International History Review*, vol. 7, no. 2 (May 1985).

Gregory S. Kealey notes that most of this work fell to the Dominion Police (DP), an agency originally established in 1868 to protect government buildings, investigate federal offences (such as mail fraud), and carry out a wide range of secret service activities. Kealey finds that the First World War was the DP's training period and that the organization only began to function in an effective manner in the conflict's twilight years. By that point the threat had shifted from Germans and Austro-Hungarians to Bolshevik revolutionaries from Eastern Europe.¹³ Finally, Jeffrey Keshen carefully studies the slow but steady rise of a centralized censorship apparatus in his book *Propaganda and Censorship during Canada's Great War*. Keshen finds that, under the management of the Chief Censor Lieutenant-Colonel Ernest J. Chambers, the government did its best to manage how the war was reported in newspapers, magazines, posters, and film.¹⁴ Both Keshen and Kealey highlight the challenges Ottawa faced at a time when many (but no longer all) Canadians continued to believe that the government which governs least, governs best.

This study analyses Windsorites' reaction to Ottawa's attempt to regulate traffic across the international boundary. To date, historians have examined how the government's expanding role in Canadian society affected other communities. For example, in his book *Hometown Horizons: Local Responses to Canada's Great War*, Robert Rutherford examines reactions to conscription in Lethbridge (Alberta), Guelph (Ontario), and Trois-Rivières (Quebec). In books on the war experiences of Regina and Winnipeg residents, James Pitsula and Jim Blanchard explore—among other themes—Western frustration with Ottawa's decision to award virtually every wartime munitions contract to central Canadian firms.¹⁵ The present study adds to these authors' underlying point that, to understand Canada's Great War experience properly, one must examine communities at the local level.

As one of Britain's dominions, Canada was automatically committed to fight when the mother country declared war on August 4, 1914.¹⁶ Although Canadians had no choice in the matter, in cities like Windsor recruiting offices were overwhelmed by young men anxious to enlist. Many of these early recruits were originally from Britain and sought to defend their homeland in a time of crisis. Others were simply excited about the prospect of adventure overseas, while still others were in desperate need of a job amidst an ongoing economic recession.¹⁷ Across Canada there was a rush to the recruiters in August 1914, so much so that scores of men were turned away during the war's early months.¹⁸ Windsor's

13 Kealey, "State Repression of Labour" and "The Surveillance State."

14 Jeffrey Keshen, "Cloak and Dagger: Canada West's Secret Police, 1864-1867," *Ontario History*, vol. 79 (1987), and *Propaganda and Censorship*

15 Robert Rutherford, *Hometown Horizons: Local Responses to Canada's Great War* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2004); Pitsula, *For All We Have and Are*; Blanchard, *Winnipeg's Great War*.

16 Despite having a permanent force army of some 5,000 in August 1914, Minister of Militia and Defence Sam Hughes successfully saw to the mobilization of 30,000 men by late September. See G. W. L. Nicholson, *Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1914-1919: Official History of the Canadian Army in the First World War* (Ottawa: Roger Duhamel, Queen's Printer and Controller of Stationary, 1962), p. 28.

17 "Americans Hasten to Aid of Britain," *Detroit News*, August 5, 1914.

18 Married men, men with minor physical defects, men under 5 feet, 3 inches in height, and men of Asian, African-American, or Aboriginal descent were barred from service in 1914. See Terry Copp, "The Military

women, like their counterparts across Canada, endeavoured to raise money and collect knitted clothing for the men serving overseas and their families back home. Windsor was home to several prominent patriotic organizations, including the Red Cross Society and the Border Chapter of the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire (IODE).¹⁹ In these ways, the residents of Windsor did not react to the declaration of war differently than other Canadians.

As a growing community of roughly 25,000 people straddling the international boundary, however, Windsor was, in some ways, exceptional.²⁰ Its economy and culture were both extensively integrated with neighbouring Detroit, Michigan, a booming city whose population exceeded half a million when the war began.²¹ One of the most important developments in the economic advancement of these communities was the founding of the Ford Motor Company in 1903; the following year, Ford Canada was established across the river in the municipality of Walkerville, directly adjacent to Windsor.²² Although operations at the Walkerville plant were overseen by its Canadian manager, Gordon McGregor, the latter turned to Ford Detroit for advice, materials, and engineering expertise.²³ Both the American and Canadian facilities flourished in the years that followed, particularly after the introduction of the affordable Model T in 1908.²⁴ On the Canadian shore, the expansion of Ford Canada was so rapid that the number of jobs exceeded the number of homes, creating a serious housing shortage.²⁵

Ford was not the only American firm to open in and around Windsor. In 1914 there were 26 American-owned companies operating in the area, and by 1920 the number was closer to 200.²⁶ While American companies flocked to Windsor,

Effort, 1914-1918" in David Mackenzie, ed., *Canada and the First World War: Essays in Honour of Robert Craig Brown* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), pp. 37-38; James W. Walker, "Race and Recruitment in World War I: Enlistment of Visible Minorities in the Canadian Expeditionary Force," *Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 70, no. 1 (March 1989).

19 The IODE sent clothing, tobacco, and postcards to soldiers stationed overseas. In Windsor, it raised an estimated \$25,773 during the war years. See Windsor Public Library Archives, Bowlby Estate Collection, Box 2, Edith Bowlby correspondence; Neil F. Morrison, *Garden Gateway to Canada: One Hundred Years of Windsor and Essex County, 1854-1954* (Windsor: Herald Press Limited, 1954), p. 254.

20 Windsor's population was reported as 22,000 in May 1913 and 27,000 in May 1917. However, it is worth noting that approximately 30,000 to 35,000 lived in the wider "Border Cities" region. See "Windsor and Vicinity Rapidly Becoming the Pittsburg [sic] of Canada," *Windsor Evening Record*, May 6, 1913; "Windsor's Fascinating Record of Civic Growth & Industrial Progress," *Windsor Evening Record*, May 23, 1917.

21 "Half City's People Have Foreign Ties," *Detroit News*, August 9, 1914; "City's Death Rate Decreases in Spite of Population Gain," *Detroit News*, January 9, 1915.

22 In the early twentieth century Windsor was just one of several municipalities located opposite Detroit. In 1914 these municipalities included Ojibway, Walkerville, Sandwich, Ford City, and Windsor, and together they were known locally as the "Border Cities." In 1935 all five were amalgamated to form the City of Windsor (Morrison, *Garden Gateway to Canada*, p. 297).

23 David Roberts, *In the Shadow of Detroit: Gordon M. McGregor, Ford of Canada, and Motoropolis* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2006), pp. 39-43.

24 In 1908 the base version of the Model T cost \$975 (or roughly \$20,000 in 2013 dollars), about half the price of the Cadillac and the Toronto-built Russell motorcar. However, by 1916 the base version had dropped in price to under \$400 (just \$6,500 in 2013). See Roberts, *In the Shadow of Detroit*, pp. 55-77; Bank of Canada Inflation Calculator, <http://www.bankofcanada.ca/rates/related/inflation-calculator/>.

25 Morrison, *Garden Gateway to Canada*, p. 235; "Handling New Settlers," *Windsor Evening Record*, April 18, 1913.

26 Windsor Public Library Archives, Bowlby Estate Collection, Box 1, F. Maclure Sclanders, "A Little

Windsorites took their hard-earned dollars to Detroit, where retailers offered a better variety of goods at lower prices.²⁷ Many Detroit-based businesses knew they held the advantage and advertised directly to Windsor consumers. “Windsor people are always in our store,” read an advertisement of July 3, 1914, for Steeve’s Fine Jewelers. “The reason is that we give them better jewelry values than they can get at home.”²⁸

Cross-border shopping and employment represented just two parts of a wider and vibrant border-crossing culture. American holidays became Canadian events for the many Windsorites who worked in Detroit, and vice versa. The two communities shared baseball and soccer leagues, with fans and athletes regularly crossing the border to attend games. Social organizations, including church groups, were also integrated. Residents of Windsor and Detroit even shared the bonds of marriage.²⁹

During peacetime, this close relationship with Detroit brought Windsor economic and cultural prosperity. However, the global conflict beginning in August 1914 aroused new questions about that connection. Thousands of German Americans resided across the international boundary from Windsor, and it remained unknown how they would react to war between the British Empire and their homeland. Would there be plots to attack Canada, and specifically Windsor, from Detroit?

Almost immediately Canada’s federal government prepared for such a possibility. Shortly after the British declaration of war, the Dominion Police arranged for undercover agents to be dispatched to Detroit. The need for such an investigation was made all the more urgent when, in late August 1914, a report suggested Germans based along the east coast were preparing for an invasion of the Canadian Maritimes from Vermont and Maine.³⁰ Although newspapers in the region dismissed the story as foolhardy gossip, Canadian military authorities took no chances. That month, Colonel W. E. Hodgins, commander of the 1st Divisional Area (encompassing Southwestern Ontario) based in London, Ontario, suggested to the Department of Militia and Defence that “it might be found advisable if Officers Commanding Divisions could have the services of a Secret Service Officer to aid him in investigating and dealing with reports ... as to the movements of German and Austrian Officers and Reservists.”³¹ Within weeks Canada had

History of the Border Cities”; Roberts, *In the Shadow of Detroit*, p. 4.

27 See “Claim Windsor Woman is Artful Smuggler,” *Windsor Evening Record*, June 17, 1914; “Extra Special Values in Jewelry,” *Windsor Evening Record*, July 3, 1914; “Ferry Tie-Up Aids Windsor Dealers,” *Detroit Free Press*, December 24, 1914.

28 “Extra Special Values in Jewelry,” *Windsor Evening Record*, July 3, 1914.

29 According to historian Bruno Ramirez, almost 30 per cent of the English-Canadian men living in Detroit in the 1890s married native-born Americans. Only 21 per cent married English Canadians (*Crossing the 49th Parallel*, p. 32). For more on cross-border marriages, see in *Windsor Evening Record*: “Border Towns Celebrate the Fourth of July,” July 6, 1914; “Walkerville Plays Detroit Athletics,” July 10, 1914; “Big Soccer Game Here Saturday,” December 4, 1914; “A.Y.P.A. Meeting,” November 24, 1914; “Social and Personal,” February 5, 1915; “Churches of United States and Canada Observe Peace Sunday,” February 13, 1915.

30 “German Raids from Maine?” *Saint Croix Courier*, August 20, 1914.

31 Before 1916 eastern Canada was organized into six “divisional areas.” In 1916, divisional areas became military districts. As a result, the 1st Divisional Area became Military District 1. See Library and Archives

secret agents stationed in a number of American border communities, including Detroit.³²

No American community appeared to pose a greater threat to Canadian national security than the "Motor City," with its substantial German population. In August 1914, the *Detroit Free Press* estimated that 130,000 city residents were of German extraction, representing more than one-fifth of the local population. The 1910 United States Census, however, found approximately 43,500 German-born people living in Detroit. Either way, Germans accounted for Detroit's largest foreign-born ethnic group.³³ For their part, Detroiters insisted the local German population posed no threat to their own community or the residents of nearby Windsor (where only 943 people of German heritage resided).³⁴ In a letter to the *Free Press* in early August, Detroit-area German-American lawyer Christopher Liedich insisted that "sounds of strife from over the water will not disturb the bulk of the 130,000 German residents of Detroit to the extent that they will be tempted to participate in the way and battle for the Fatherland," stating that "where the German lives, there is his Fatherland."³⁵ Detroit pastor Earl R. Rice agreed. In a sermon before the Windsor Literary and Scientific Society in December 1914, Rice proclaimed that there was "no reason to fear a German invasion."³⁶

For generations this attitude had prevailed in Canada as well. Most Canadians, along with their federal government, preferred Germans over immigrants from virtually every other nation, the only exceptions being Britain and the United States. In the eyes of many white North Americans, German immigrants were seen as educated, hard-working, and loyal. Prior to the outbreak of hostilities, Canada's Superintendent of Immigration, W. D. Scott, specifically pointed to Germans as ideal settlers for the country's untamed western frontier. "Of the different races the Germans are the most desirable in every respect," argued Scott, who pointed to Germans' higher "educational standard" as evidence that "their ideals more closely [approach] those of Canadians than is the case with the other races."³⁷

The outbreak of war in August 1914 changed Canadians' perception of Germans, who would now become known as "enemy aliens" alongside Austro-Hungarians, Bulgarians, and Turks. Fearing these enemy aliens would return to Europe and eventually face Canadian soldiers on the opposite side of the firing line, on August 7 Ottawa ordered federal immigration agents to halt and seize German and Austro-Hungarian reservists attempting to leave the country.³⁸

Canada [hereafter LAC], RG24 4262, File C-13, W. E. Hodgins to Militia Council, August 13, 1914.

32 LAC, RG24 4262, File C-13, Report of F. R. J., October 22-23, 1914.

33 In 1890 German-born people accounted for 43 per cent of Detroit's population. In 1910 this total had declined to 28.4 per cent. See Olivier Zunz, *The Changing Face of Inequality: Urbanization, Industrial Development, and Immigrants in Detroit, 1880-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 106.

34 *Fifth Census of Canada 1911: Religions, Origins, Birthplace, Citizenship, Literacy and Infirmities, by Provinces, Districts, and Sub-Districts, Volume II* (Ottawa: C. H. Pamlee, 1913), Table XVI, p. 391.

35 "Detroit Germans Mostly Peaceful, Declares Leidich," *Detroit Free Press*, August 3, 1914.

36 "No Need to Fear German Invasion," *Windsor Evening Record*, December 8, 1914.

37 W. D. Scott, "The Immigration by Races" in A. Short and A. C. Doughty, eds., *Canada and its Provinces*, vol. 7 (Toronto: Glasgow, 1914).

38 LAC, MF C-10616, File 801552, Part 3, Austin to W. D. Scott, October 16, 1915; and D. H. Reynolds to W. D. Scott, November 30, 1915.

Eventually, many civilians of enemy origins were also apprehended. Over the next four years Canadian immigration agents sent most of these people back to their homes in Canada. Those individuals the authorities considered a threat to national security, however, were sent instead to internment camps where their activities could be monitored round-the-clock.³⁹

Even these measures were deemed insufficient by Canada's federal government, which in August 1914 discharged agents to American border communities to track German activity and gauge the threat it posed to Canadian national security. On behalf of Canada's Dominion Police, in October a Canadian secret agent known only as "F. R. J." began reporting on the activities of German Americans in Detroit.⁴⁰ The agent's task was relatively straightforward: visit establishments known to be frequented by Germans and make inquiries about the possibility of an attack on Windsor or other Canadian cities. That month F. R. J. entered such discussions at various German bars and restaurants, including the Heinze Café, the German American Hall, the Heidelberg Café, the Edelweiss Café, and Schiller's Hall. It was not an easy task getting information, F. R. J. soon found. "They are very reserved and will not talk on the subject," the agent reported on October 22, 1914. As for those German Detroiters who did respond to the agent's inquiries, they showed little interest in the war and "scoffed" at the idea of invading or attacking Canada.⁴¹ Given these findings, Chief Commissioner of Dominion Police Percy Sherwood told Hodgins that "there does not appear any real reason for alarm."⁴²

By and large the people of Windsor dismissed the idea that German Americans were poised to strike at local government buildings or other vital facilities.⁴³ In 1914 the city's militia unit, the 21st Regiment, was tasked with protecting the Canadian side of the Detroit River. However, it struggled to find recruits that could be used to patrol popular border crossing points or protect possible targets such as industrial facilities and government buildings. "It is a pity that the regiment is not stronger than it is," complained a 21st Regiment officer who estimated that there were "hundreds" of young Windsor men who "refuse to volunteer to defend their own city." By contrast, the *Evening Record* reported that Ontario cities London and Toronto experienced no such difficulty enlisting men for home guard duty.⁴⁴

Not even when Windsor and Detroit newspapers began reporting rumours of an impending attack by German Americans did the home guard recruiting situation improve. "Information has been received here and has been forwarded

39 In total, 8,579 people of enemy origin were interned by Canadian officials during the First World War under the *War Measures Act*. For more on internment, see Desmond Morton, "Sir William Otter and Internment Operations in Canada during the First World War," *Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 55, no. 1 (1974); George Buri, "Enemies Within Our Gates": Brandon's Alien Detention Centre During the Great War," *Manitoba History*, no. 56 (October 2007); Lubomyr Luciuk, *In Fear of the Barbed Wire Fence: Canada's First National Internment Operations and the Ukrainian Canadians, 1914-20* (Kingston: Kashtan Press, 2001).

40 Gregory S. Kealey, "The Empire Strikes Back: The Nineteenth-Century Origins of the Canadian Secret Service," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association*, vol. 10, no. 1 (1999).

41 LAC, RG24 4262, File C-13, Report of F. R. J., October 22-23, 1914.

42 LAC, RG24 4262, File C-13, Percy Sherwood to W. E. Hodgins, October 29, 1914.

43 "Americans Hasten to Aid of Britain," *Detroit News*, August 5, 1914.

44 "Recruits Drill in Armories Tonight," *Windsor Evening Record*, November 24, 1914.

to divisional headquarters at London that some hot-headed German sympathizers across the boundary are drilling in secret to make a raid on Windsor and inflict what damage they can,” reported the *Evening Record* in November 1914.⁴⁵ The rumour started in Detroit, where the *Free Press* learned that a local nurse had overheard German-American housewives discussing their husbands’ plans to bomb Windsor’s Armouries, its Remington Arms munitions factory, and the Hiram-Walker whiskey distillery.⁴⁶ The nurse, whose allegiances lay with the Allies, reported the plans to a member of the Detroit Board of Commerce, who promptly relayed word of the threat to Windsor city authorities.⁴⁷

Few Windsor residents believed the rumours. There were no attempts by locals to prevent such an attack, and enlistments in the 21st Regiment remained slow throughout the fall.⁴⁸ Eventually, the situation became so desperate that military authorities in Windsor attempted to raise and train an overseas battalion locally so that it might dissuade Detroit’s German Americans from attacking the area.⁴⁹ The request, which would have seen at least 1,000 troops stationed in the Windsor area, was turned down because military authorities feared that too many recruits would desert to Michigan—an ironic decision given that many Americans enlisted in the Canadian Expeditionary Force at Windsor.⁵⁰

In February 1915, a German reservist attempted to destroy an international railway crossing at Vanceboro, Maine, located at the boundary with New Brunswick. With the exception of the mid-1860s, when members of the Irish-American Fenian Brotherhood had launched a feeble attempt to invade New Brunswick from Campbello, this had been a quiet section of the international boundary.⁵¹ Not until 1912 did Scott and the Canadian immigration authorities appoint a full-time inspector to St. Stephen, New Brunswick, the region’s busiest border crossing.⁵² Perhaps this complacency was why Franz von Papen, Germany’s ambassador to the United States, chose serene Vanceboro for an attack. In early 1915 von Papen paid 37-year-old Werner van Horn, a German army reservist, \$700 to destroy the Vanceboro railway bridge.⁵³ On January 30, van Horn travelled

45 “Windsor Should Prepare Itself for Invasion,” *Windsor Evening Record*, November 25, 1914.

46 Remington Arms was an arms manufacturer based in Madison, North Carolina, that moved to Windsor between January 1913 and April 1914. See “Diversity in Our Industries,” *Windsor Evening Record*, July 6, 1914.

47 “Has Detroit a ‘Bombbund’ to Blow Up Windsor? Nurse Who Heard Women Gossip Says So,” *Detroit Free Press*, November 4, 1914.

48 “Recruits Drill in Armories Tonight,” *Windsor Evening Record*, November 24, 1914.

49 “May Train Regiment of Third Contingent Here for Protection,” *Windsor Evening Record*, December 7, 1914; “West Ontario Troops May Train in Windsor,” *Detroit Free Press*, December 8, 1914.

50 Windsor would eventually raise its own battalion, the 241st Scottish Borderers, but not until 1916. See Kevin R. Shackleton and Sandy Antal, *Duty Nobly Done: The Official History of the Essex and Kent Scottish Regiment* (Walkerville: Walkerville Publishing Company, 2006), pp. 315-316; “Canadian Troops Will Not Train in Windsor,” *Detroit Free Press*, December 19, 1914; “Recruiting for Third Contingent to Start at Once,” *Windsor Evening Record*, December 28, 1914; “Tearful Scenes as Soldiers Go,” *Detroit News*, February 1, 1915; “Formation of 2nd Essex Battalion is Recommended,” *Windsor Evening Record*, May 29, 1916.

51 Kealey, “The Empire Strikes Back.”

52 LAC, MF C-10632, File 805189, W. D. Scott to W. W. Cory, April 16, 1914.

53 Adjusting for inflation using the Bank of Canada’s inflation calculator, \$700 would be roughly \$14,385 today.

from New York City to Vanceboro, where he acquired a supply of explosives that he attached to one end of the bridge. On the morning of February 2, 1915, van Horn detonated the charge, sending real and figurative shockwaves throughout the surrounding community. Luckily, the explosion inflicted no injuries and failed to destroy or even significantly damage the railway bridge. Within hours trains could be seen passing over the tracks. By then van Horn was already in custody, eventually charged, convicted, and jailed by American authorities in connection with the attack.⁵⁴

Werner van Horn's attempt to destroy the international railway bridge at Vanceboro made front-page headlines across Canada and the United States. In Detroit, the *Free Press* suggested it could "create indignation against Germany" and potentially lead some Americans to view German residents as "undesirable aliens." The *Free Press* even suggested that the incident could lead some people to push for the "expulsion from America" of once highly-regarded German immigrants.⁵⁵ However, Vanceboro, Maine, is a long way from the Detroit River.⁵⁶ The incident failed to arouse much concern in Windsor, where the *Evening Record* insisted that, locally, "no fears of an invasion from the United States are entertained."⁵⁷ In fact, Windsor's newspaper appears to have been pleased with the news, suggesting that it could negatively impact relations between Germany and the United States, much to the benefit of the Allies.⁵⁸ The *Detroit News*, meanwhile, maintained that there was nothing to worry about because American neutrality was "sincere" and that all would be done to prevent attacks from that city on Canada.⁵⁹ In the end, the Vanceboro railway bombing was considered little more than a case of mischief, and hardly an indication that Detroit-based German Americans were plotting against Windsor.

Among Canadian officials in distant Ottawa, the Vanceboro incident was taken much more seriously.⁶⁰ Canada's Superintendent of Immigration, W. D. Scott, warned agents placed at the international boundary that it was possible "similar attempts may be made at other Border Points, and you are hereby advised to exercise vigilance in handling all suspicious strangers and also to detain for investigation where that action seems necessary."⁶¹ Using diplomatic channels, Canadian officials also requested that American President Woodrow Wilson's administration place more guards at the international boundary in order to prevent Germans or Austro-Hungarians from easily entering Canada.⁶² However, fearing

54 "Plot to Embroil U.S. with Britain, Canada's View of Bridge Attack," *Detroit Free Press*, February 3, 1915; Mount, *Canada's Enemies*, p. 32; Henry Landau, *The Enemy Within: The Inside Story of German Sabotage in America* (New York: Van Rees Press, 1937), p. 21.

55 "Plot to Embroil U.S. with Britain, Canada's View of Bridge Attack," *Detroit Free Press*, February 3, 1915.

56 Roughly 1,500 kilometres, or 1,000 miles, separate Vanceboro and Windsor.

57 "The Van Horn Defense," *Detroit Free Press*, February 4, 1915; "Guards to be Put on Tunnel," *Windsor Evening Record*, February 10, 1915.

58 "Van Horn's Bridge Plot," *Windsor Evening Record*, February 4, 1915.

59 "No Cause for Excitement," *Detroit News*, February 7, 1915.

60 The distance between Ottawa and Windsor is roughly 800 kilometres, or 500 miles.

61 LAC, MF C-10632, File 805189, Circular to Border Inspectors from W. D. Scott, Superintendent of Immigration, February 6, 1915.

62 LAC, RG25, 1160, File 312, Sir Cecil Spring-Rice to Duke of Connaught, Governor-General, February 8, 1915.

such a move would alarm the country's substantial German-American population and weaken the United States' official policy of neutrality, Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan politely refused to accommodate the request. "Since the United States is at peace with all countries and there is no proof that any country is using our territory as a base for military operations, I do not see how we can, under the guise of military operations, place guards within the several states for the purpose indicated," Bryan told British ambassador to the United States, Sir Cecil Spring-Rice. Perhaps assuming that the Vanceboro incident was little more than a random stunt (especially since von Papen's connection would not become known until much later), Bryan insisted the associated investigation was a local affair that warranted a local (and not federal or international) response.⁶³

With the neutral American government reluctant to assist in securing the border, Canadian military officials attempted to establish their own emergency plans for an invasion by the enemy. In a note on March 5, 1915, to Colonel L. W. Shannon, the officer commanding the 1st Divisional Area, Chief of the General Staff Willoughby G. Gwatkin wrote, "There is an off chance that Germans from the States may try to raid your area.... What precautionary arrangements have you made?"⁶⁴ Shannon, operating out of Wolseley Barracks in London (approximately 200 kilometres northeast of Windsor), replied that threats of this kind had been reported before, but with little substance. He doubted Detroit Germans were really hatching a devious plan to attack Windsor, but even if they were the threat was minimal. "The raiders could not be other than an irregular force only partially trained, not uniformed, without artillery and probably poorly and not uniformly armed," Shannon noted in a letter to Gwatkin on March 13. "The only possible time an organized raid could be made with even a remote chance of temporary success would be either in the winter time when the roads are frozen hard, or in the summer and early fall when dry. In the spring and late fall the roads are almost impassable for any large number of troops, especially if they have any transport or administrative services attached." Shannon assured Gwatkin that the military authorities in Sarnia, Windsor, Point Edward, and Port Burwell had been instructed to train their men for just such an attack and to alert the railway authorities in case of an emergency. Beyond that, Shannon saw no reason to change things. "I do not propose taking any further active measures at present," he said. "Should the threatened danger appear to justify it, however, I would be prepared to submit a more definite scheme of defence for approval."⁶⁵

Despite Shannon's assurances, Gwatkin remained convinced that Detroit's German population constituted a threat and insisted an emergency action plan be devised.⁶⁶ In response, Shannon suggested inserting a Canadian customs official on every ferry boat navigating the Detroit River, placing a mounted regiment of soldiers at points along the waterway, and issuing active service uniforms

63 LAC, RG25, 1160, File 312, W. J. Bryan to Sir Cecil Spring-Rice, February 27, 1915.

64 LAC, RG24 4262, File C-13, W. G. Gwatkin to L. W. Shannon, March 5, 1915. Shannon replaced Hodgins, who was promoted to adjutant-general in 1915, as the officer commanding the 1st Divisional Area.

65 LAC, RG24 4262, File C-13, L. W. Shannon to W. G. Gwatkin, March 13, 1915.

66 LAC, RG24 4262, File C-13, W. G. Gwatkin to L. W. Shannon, March 15, 1915.

to all militiamen stationed near the boundary.⁶⁷ The 21st Regiment designed its own defence plan in late March, which included the sounding of alarms, the requisitioning of local vehicles for use by militiamen, the elevated defence of local armouries and ammunition stores, the protection of railway lines, and the use of motor car, bicycle, and horse-mounted patrols. All of these measures were essentially part of a general stalling manoeuvre, however, that would attempt to safeguard the town until the arrival of reinforcements from Military District 1 headquarters in London.⁶⁸

After considering these proposals the 21st Regiment established five alarm posts, made alternative arrangements for ammunition stores (in case the armouries were taken), and warned the Detroit River ferry drivers to be extra vigilant when scrutinizing passengers. In addition, 21st Regiment Captain W. L. McGregor posted additional guards to various vital landmarks, including the ferry docks, banks, government buildings, the ferries themselves, and other points along the river.⁶⁹

Still, these new measures failed to protect Windsor from an attack, as demonstrated by the June 1915 bombing of the Peabody factory and the attempted bombing of the Windsor Armouries. Unsurprisingly, these events shocked Windsor residents, who to that point had expressed little concern about Detroit's German population. In the days that followed the attack, Windsorites scrambled to find out who was responsible and whether any other threats to their safety existed. Dynamite was discovered at other locations, including Windsor's Gramm Motor Truck Company, the Tate Electric Company, and even the homes of Ford workers. There were also rumours that Germans were plotting to release all of the horses from the local remount station and encourage a deadly stampede along busy downtown streets.⁷⁰ To bring calm back to the city, local authorities organized a new Essex County Home Guard to assist the 21st Regiment in protecting the Windsor frontier against attack. These troops were tasked with patrolling several critical areas along the border, including the ferry dock at the foot of Church Street and the Michigan Central Railway tunnel, from where freight trains travelled underneath the Detroit River.⁷¹

Within months of the Peabody bombing, three German Americans from Detroit were arrested in connection with the attack. The first suspect arrested was William Lefler, a local night watchman. Enticed by the \$200 offered by his superior in the scheme, Albert Kaltschmidt, Lefler had agreed to plant explosives at the armouries and the Peabody plant.⁷² After the bombing, several sticks of dynamite were found on the grounds of the Tate Electric Company where Lefler worked. After being pressed by the Dominion Police, Lefler confessed to having taken part

67 LAC, RG24 4262, File C-13, L. W. Shannon to W. G. Gwatkin, March 18, 1915.

68 LAC, RG24 4262, File C-13, Lieutenant F. F. Lovegrove to Major S. C. Robinson, March 27, 1915.

69 LAC, RG24 4262, File C-13, Memo from W. L. McGregor, Captain, 21st Regiment, April 5, 1915.

70 Mount, *Canada's Enemies*, p. 30; "Windsor's Part in the War," *Windsor Evening Record*, May 23, 1917.

71 Morrison, *Garden Gateway to Canada*, p. 253.

72 Lefler's \$200 payment would have been about \$4,000 today. See Jennifer Crump, *Canada Under Attack* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2010), p. 150.

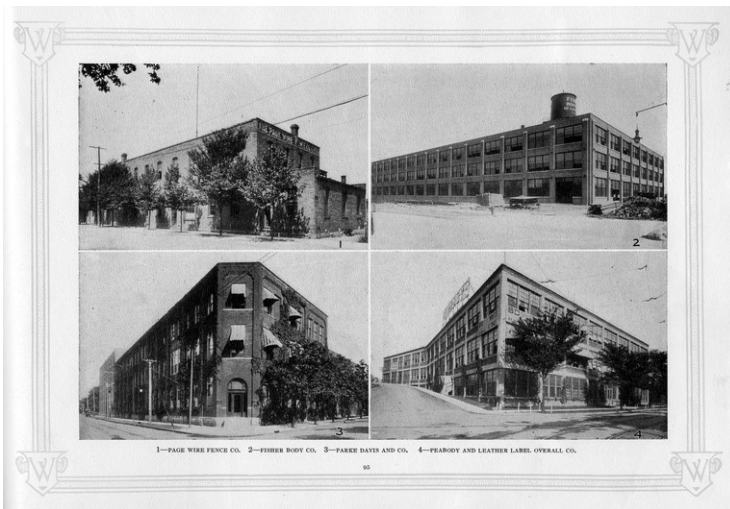


Image 2: A 1913 photograph of four of Windsor's many industrial facilities, including the Peabody and Leather Label Overall Co. factory targeted by Detroit-based German Americans in June 1915. Photograph by The Evening Record (The Record Printing Co.) Limited, 1913. Source: University of Windsor, Leddy Library.

in the scheme.⁷³ In August 1915 Lefler was convicted and sentenced to ten years in prison, to be served at Ontario's dreaded Kingston Penitentiary. As the sentence was handed down, the Windsor courtroom became something of a Hollywood stage, with Lefler's wife crying out, "Good bye Will, you know that I will always remember you as an innocent man and one who has suffered from the crimes of others," between sobs of "dear God, dear God."⁷⁴

In seeking a reduced sentence, Lefler agreed to testify against Charles Respa, a Detroit factory worker and German national who had designed the bombs (later planted by Lefler) for a fee of \$200 (paid by Kaltschmidt).⁷⁵ Ultimately, Respa, who was tried in Canada, received a life sentence in prison. However, the scheme's mastermind, Albert Kaltschmidt—a prominent Michigan businessman and owner of the Marine City Salt Company—received only a four-year prison term after being convicted of conspiracy against the United States in a Detroit courtroom.⁷⁶ By that point, December 1917 (eight months after America's declaration of war), opinion in Detroit had clearly swung against Germany. Describing Kaltschmidt's appearance in court, the *Detroit Free Press* noted that the accused stood "defiantly erect, his face denoting all the veiled insolence and cynical pride of Prussianism."⁷⁷

73 David Ricardo Williams, *Call in Pinkerton's: American Detectives at Work for Canada* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1998), pp. 177-182.

74 "Find Dynamite at Auto Plant; Nab Detroit," *Detroit Free Press*, June 26, 1915; "Lefler Begins 10 Years' Term as Dynamiter," *Detroit Free Press*, August 14, 1915.

75 However, it appears Kaltschmidt paid Lefler only \$25 before the latter was arrested. See Williams, *Call in Pinkerton's*, pp. 177-182.

76 Conspiracy was a non-extraditable offence, meaning Canadian authorities could not try Kaltschmidt. See Williams, *Call in Pinkerton's*, p. 177.

77 "Respa Will Be Tried Oct. 4 as Dynamiter," *Detroit Free Press*, September 24, 1915; "Kaltschmidt

When news of the Peabody attack first broke in June 1915, Windsorites were understandably stunned. For older residents of the community, the event unearthed frightening memories of the Fenian Raids, when Irish-American rebels had threatened to invade Ontario from the United States.⁷⁸ Most aghast at the Peabody bombing were members of Windsor city council, including Mayor Arthur Jackson, who had received anonymous warnings of impending violence but had dismissed them.⁷⁹ To be fair, Jackson did pass the information he received on to the local authorities, but later admitted to the *Detroit Free Press* that he “considered it nothing more than a joke at the time.”⁸⁰ The *Free Press* confirmed that residents of both sides of the boundary had regarded such threats with an “element of humor.”⁸¹ The news must have also shocked Canada’s Department of Militia and Defence, which had dismissed an April 1915 report of a German plot to attack Canada from Detroit, Milwaukee, or Chicago.⁸²

In Detroit, the immediate response to the attack was to call for calm and to insist that Windsorites pause before blaming Detroit’s German-American population for the incident. The *Free Press* insisted that such ideas were “not to be accepted” until the emergence of “positive and conclusive proof.” The greatest threat, the *Free Press* suggested, was that fear would negatively impact a tradition of harmonious relations across the Detroit River. “The people of Detroit naturally regret the outrages in Walkerville and Windsor,” the *Free Press* noted, “because there is a danger that they may bring about a temporary clouding of the free intercourse which hitherto has been carried on regardless of all the alarms of war in other parts of the world.”⁸³

When investigation by Canadian and American law enforcement officials revealed that Detroit Germans were, in fact, responsible, for a brief period following the Peabody attack Windsor was the site of considerable fear and paranoia. Residents reported hearing that Detroiters favourable to the German cause were planning to fight their way into the Sandwich jail in a desperate attempt to free the imprisoned Peabody bombers. (Eventually it was revealed that the jailbreak rumour was the work of a practical joker.⁸⁴) Many worried that Germans would attack from above, dropping bombs from airplanes. In one instance, a man hurried to the Armouries to insist troops shoot down a plane he was sure belonged to the

Angered, Quits Tennis Club,” *Detroit Free Press*, February 13, 1916; “Kaltschmidt in New Charge,” *Detroit Free Press*, May 23, 1917; “Windsor’s Part in the War,” *Windsor Evening Record*, May 23, 1917; “Kaltschmidt Sentenced to Four Years in Prison,” *Windsor Evening Record*, December 22, 1917; “The Kaltschmidt Sentence,” *Detroit Free Press*, December 24, 1917.

78 The goal was to negotiate an exchange with Britain: Irish independence for the return of a conquered Canada. See Morrison, *Garden Gateway to Canada*, p. 253.

79 “Aldermen Ignored Warning by Girl of Windsor Bomb Plot,” *Detroit Free Press*, June 22, 1915.

80 “Warning of Bomb Plot Received by Windsor’s Mayor,” *Detroit Free Press*, June 23, 1915.

81 “Aldermen Ignored Warning by Girl of Windsor Bomb Plot,” *Detroit Free Press*, June 22, 1915; “War Across Border,” *Detroit Free Press*, June 22, 1915.

82 In a memo dated April 20, 1915, Gwatkin told Shannon that “the Police attach no importance” to reports that Germans were planning an attack on Windsor. See LAC, RG24 4262, File C-13, W. G. Gwatkin to L. W. Shannon, April 20, 1915.

83 “War Across Border,” *Detroit Free Press*, June 22, 1915.

84 “Report of Dynamite Plot Scares Sandwich,” *Detroit Free Press*, September 21, 1915.

enemy. Already made aware of the flight, the recruits assured the fear-stricken man that it was only a local pilot en route to the Michigan State Fair.⁸⁵

Windsor was hardly the only Canadian city where some residents feared enemy aliens would strike from above. Historian Robert Bartholomew has shown that many communities feared the Kaiser would dispatch secret agents to North America and that they might commandeer airplanes that could be used to drop bombs on unsuspecting Canadians. In August 1914 there were mistaken reports of enemy airplanes flying above the Ontario centres of Sweaburg (near Woodstock), Alymer, Tillsonburg, and Port Stanley. Within two years there would be similar reports in Sault Ste. Marie, Toronto, and Montreal.⁸⁶

In response to these fears, Windsor city council made the rather significant grant of \$5,000 to the Essex County Home Guard in order to secure new rifles and uniforms, while the local commanding officer, Major S. C. Robinson, attempted to bolster security along the international boundary.⁸⁷ In August, Robinson requested the Dominion government purchase a river steamboat that could be used by the 21st Regiment to patrol the international waterway.⁸⁸ However, the request was denied, the government claiming that there were no funds available for such a purchase.⁸⁹ Throughout the remainder of the war Robinson would fight hard to improve local defences against a possible attack from Detroit.⁹⁰ However, he faced several insurmountable challenges. The Dominion government placed the burden for supplying home guard units on municipalities, forcing Windsor city council to come up with funds for rifles, ammunition, and uniforms. With many fundraising campaigns under way during the war years, council suffered from a lack of resources to improve home defence.

The most significant obstacle for Robinson might have been widespread apathy among Windsorites towards border security in the years following the Peabody attack. Although locals remained wary of Detroit-based German Americans in the months after the bombing, by the end of 1915 life along the international boundary had returned to business as usual. In April 1916 the amount of cross-border traffic was so high that immigration inspectors complained of being unable to examine travellers properly. That June residents of the Detroit River border region set a new record for the number of automobiles that crossed the border in a single day, with the ferry companies forced to put extra boats in service just to

85 "Windsor in Panic When 'Bird Man' Flies Over Border," *Detroit Free Press*, September 5, 1915.

86 Fear of aerial bombardment was not unique to Windsor. See Robert Bartholomew, "Phantom German Air Raids on Canada: War Hysteria in Ontario and Quebec during the First World War," *Canadian Military History*, vol. 7, no. 4 (1998).

87 Adjusting for inflation, this gift would be worth more than \$100,000 today. See "Windsor's Part in the War," *Windsor Evening Record*, May 23, 1917.

88 LAC, RG24, Box 892, File HQ-54-21-16-19, Major S. C. Robinson to A. A. G., 1st Division, August 6, 1915.

89 LAC, RG24, Box 892, File HQ-54-21-16-19, Quartermaster General to Officer Commanding 1st Divisional Area, August 12, 1915.

90 Robinson repeatedly requested funds from the Dominion government in 1915 and 1916, complaining that most uniforms and rifles in the possession of the 21st Regiment were outdated or beyond repair. See LAC, RG24, Box 1042, File 54-21-33-102, S. C. Robinson to Secretary of Minister of Militia, Ottawa, October 22, 1915; S. C. Robinson to 1st Division Headquarters, London, February 12, 1916; S. C. Robinson to Oliver J. Wilcox, May 4, 1916; and S. C. Robinson to Oliver J. Wilcox, June 3, 1916.

meet the demand.⁹¹ Both customs revenue and collections were up that summer, an indication that fears associated with the Peabody bombing had not translated into a decrease in cross-border traffic.⁹²

Why was cross-border traffic so high just one year after the Peabody bombing? There are a number of explanations, all of which suggest most residents of the Detroit River region felt the same about crossing the border in 1916 as they had prior to the war. Detroit residents continued to visit Windsor's horse-racing tracks, baseball diamonds, and restaurants.⁹³ Like other Canadian communities, Windsor experienced a remarkable increase in the cost of living during the war, which resulted in many locals going to Detroit in search of cheaper items.⁹⁴ As for concerns about their safety, the prevailing opinion appears to have been that the Peabody bombing was an anomaly. In February 1916 *The Globe* of Toronto reported that Germans based in the United States had amassed hundreds of thousands of Mauser rifles for an attack on Canada, with invasions likely coming across the Niagara and Detroit rivers. But in Windsor the *Evening Record* dismissed *The Globe's* call for securing the border, noting that "thus far Windsor and vicinity have escaped any serious violence at the hands of incendiaries and German plotters."⁹⁵ Detroit's *Free Press* also rejected claims that German Americans would attack across the border and implied that *The Globe* was unfamiliar with local geography. "Does the Globe imagine the Detroit River a creek?" the *Free Press* asked. "We assure the Toronto publication that the stream is too deep for wading, and the water too cold for swimming." The *Free Press* also dismissed the idea that German Americans could commandeer a river ferry, insisting that local law enforcement officials would be quick to squash such a threat.⁹⁶

In fact, throughout the war's remaining years, Windsorites would bristle against government efforts to protect the international boundary when it meant making the border-crossing experience more difficult and time-consuming. The best example is local protest against PC 1433, a May 1917 order-in-council preventing Canadian men of military age (18 to 45) from crossing the border without new government-administered photo identification. In essence, the government required men to carry a passport—a rather alien concept for most Canadians in 1917.⁹⁷ Although

91 The traffic at the border was so intense that in July Windsor's *Evening Record* expressed concern about the ferry boats being "jammed to a point of dangerous congestion." See "Record Number of Border Cars Cross River on Sunday," *Windsor Evening Record*, June 26, 1916; "Windsor Growing Faster Than Any City in Canada," *Windsor Evening Record*, July 6, 1916.

92 "Dominion Customs Revenue Increase" and "July Customs Returns Increase 30 Per Cent," *Windsor Evening Record*, August 1, 1916.

93 "Overdoing Racing Business," *Windsor Evening Record*, August 18, 1916; "Large Crowd on Attendance at Devonsire Inaugural; Favorites Go Down in Defeat," *Windsor Evening Record*, August 23, 1916.

94 Some Detroit stores, like Michigan's Greatest Grocery, advertised directly to Windsor residents, for instance insisting their 25-cent coffee was better than the 35-cent coffee available in Canada. See "Nero Coffee 25c," *Windsor Evening Record*, June 9, 1916; "Views of Readers – Absence of Price Tags," *Windsor Evening Record*, August 26, 1916; "Suggests Joint Probe of High Cost of Living," *Windsor Evening Record*, September 2, 1916.

95 "Guarding the Frontier," *Windsor Evening Record*, February 11, 1916.

96 "For the Defence of Canada," *The Globe*, February 8, 1916; "Calls on U.S. for Guard on Detroit River," *Detroit Free Press*, February 9, 1916; "Nother Horrible Invasion," *Detroit Free Press*, February 10, 1916.

97 PC 1433 was invoked overnight, meaning there was no warning that such requirements were to be introduced at border crossing points. As a result, Windsor men who worked in Detroit were in no way

the system was also designed to protect Canadians by helping authorities monitor the movement of enemy aliens, it was enormously unpopular in Windsor, where many businesses and labourers relied on a permeable international boundary.⁹⁸ Despite new reports of saboteur activity by Detroit-based German Americans in June 1917, the *Evening Record* chastised a visiting immigration official for being too thorough when searching men crossing the international boundary, suggesting the agent was “unfamiliar with the local situation and local conditions.”⁹⁹ Ottawa was also criticized by Windsor’s newspaper for stationing Dominion Police along the Detroit River, the goal being to prevent Canadians from fleeing conscription across the border. “Complaints come to the Record on the activities of the Dominion Police over the holdup at Windsor and Walkerville,” the *Evening Record* reported. “It really is funny to watch the procedure when a Dominion [Police] officer ... throws back his coat lapel, like a stage detective, and points to the badge of authority on his vest.” Days later, the *Evening Record* insisted that “Ottawa authorities need to be reminded that the United States is a friendly country—one of our allies, not an enemy.”¹⁰⁰ In fact, in April 1918 the *Evening Record* noted that locals were becoming so frustrated with border security that they might be in the mood for joining the United States. “Red tape in crossing the border is getting so annoying that [one] of these fine days the officials may wake up and find the two countries joined together,” the *Evening Record* reported.¹⁰¹ Windsor city council also protested increased border security by mailing a formal letter to the Canadian Immigration Department insisting that inspections be relaxed so as to maintain the “friendly relations and social intercourse” that had long prevailed along the Detroit River.¹⁰²

Little changed, however, and when the war ended in November it had become more difficult than ever before for Windsorites to visit their neighbours across the international boundary.¹⁰³ Although Ottawa would rescind PC 1433 just days after the signing of the Armistice on November 11, a new chapter in the history of the Canada-US border had already begun. After the war, Ottawa’s concern about the movement of German Americans and other enemy aliens would give way to a fixation on the activities of radical labour groups and eastern Europeans. This new

prepared for the new orders and scrambled to secure the necessary documentation. See “Thousands Detained at Ferry Dock,” *Windsor Evening Record*, May 25, 1917; “Ban at Border Halts Throngs,” *Detroit Free Press*, May 26, 1917.

98 “Thousands Detained at Ferry Dock,” *Windsor Evening Record*, May 25, 1917; “Passport Order Being Strictly Enforced To-Day,” *Windsor Evening Record*, June 9, 1917; “Voice of Readers – Passports at the Ferry,” *Windsor Evening Record*, September 6, 1917.

99 A report in the *Evening Record* on June 6 revealed that German reservists were allegedly preparing for an invasion of Canada from Detroit and through Windsor. See “Canada ‘Raid’ From Detroit Revealed,” *Windsor Evening Record*, June 6, 1917; “Passport Order Being Strictly Enforced To-Day,” *Windsor Evening Record*, June 9, 1917.

100 “Those Dominion Police,” *Windsor Evening Record*, April 2, 1918; Editorial, *Windsor Evening Record*, April 4, 1918.

101 “Plot to Invade Canada,” *Windsor Evening Record*, April 17, 1918; Editorial, *Windsor Evening Record*, April 18, 1918.

102 Windsor Public Library Archives, RG 2 AIV-1, Windsor City Council Minutes, June 11, 1918.

103 In October 1918 the United States introduced its own passport requirement for men of military age. See “American Citizens of Draft Age Must Secure a Passport,” *Windsor Evening Record*, October 21, 1918.

focus, coupled with concerns about the trafficking of alcohol during the prohibition era, resulted in an extension of state control over the international boundary in the 1920s and 1930s. During the interwar period, new customs and immigration policies were designed to monitor more closely who and what got across the border. These policies also faced their fair share of criticism from residents of border communities. In Windsor, extensive support for illegal rum-running operations demonstrated that residents of this particular border community continued to challenge state power and Ottawa's control of the international boundary.¹⁰⁴

Prior to the First World War, the cities of Windsor and Detroit enjoyed the economic, social, and cultural advantages of a very open international boundary that owed its permeability to *laissez-faire* Canadian and American federal governments. The war brought new challenges to national security, forcing Ottawa to respond in a rather unprecedented way. Immediately after the British declaration of war in August 1914, the Canadian government dispatched secret agents to American border communities, including Detroit, to search for evidence that German Americans were plotting to attack Canadian cities. Although these agents found nothing to suggest a raid or invasion was imminent, a torrent of frightening rumours kept Ottawa and the military authorities on high alert.

For their part, Windsor residents hoped to see the vibrant social and economic cross-border activity of the pre-war years carried on after war was declared. At first most dismissed the idea that German Americans living in Detroit would target their city; even after just such an attack occurred, the border-crossing culture of the pre-war years slowly but steadily returned. When Ottawa moved to secure this section of the international boundary through more intensive immigration inspections and a passport scheme during the war's latter stages, Windsorites loudly protested these measures designed by a state "unfamiliar with the local situation and local conditions." Such findings reveal how Ottawa's expanding powers during the First World War were interpreted and combated by residents of Windsor, Ontario, who, it would appear, were at least as concerned about the expanding powers of a distant federal government as they were about German Americans living across a traditionally permeable international boundary.

104 For more on changes at the international boundary during the interwar period, see Thomas Klug, "Residents by Day, Visitors by Night: The Origins of the Alien Commuter on the U.S.-Canadian Border during the 1920s," *Michigan Historical Review*, vol. 34, no. 2 (Fall 2008); Dave McIntosh, *The Collectors: A History of Canadian Customs and Excise* (Toronto: NC Press Limited, 1984); Philip P. Mason, *Rumrunning and the Roaring Twenties: Prohibition on the Michigan-Ontario Waterway* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1995); Ninette Kelley and Michael Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic: A History of Canadian Immigration Policy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998); Patrick Renshaw, "The IWW and the Red Scare, 1917-1924," *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 3, no. 4 (1968); Valerie Knowles, *Strangers at the Gates: Canadian Immigration and Immigration Policy, 1540-1990* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1992).

