Place, Culture and Community

Place, Culture and Community:
The Irish Heritage of the Ottawa Valley

By

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CAMBRIDGE
SCHOLARS

P U B L I S H I N G

In memory of my grandmother
Rosina McParland Devlin of Newry, Co. Down
for her stories
and
in memory of my grandfather
Gilbert Trew of Belfast, Co. Antrim
for the music and the laughter.

This book is lovingly dedicated to my mother,
Margaret Devlin Trew (1938-2009).

Culture comes from another country but it's what we do with it that makes it our culture after that.
—Ron Gain, fiddler, Smiths Falls, Ontario

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

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INTRODUCTION

THE OTTAWA VALLEY

> I have tried to keep faith with Thoreau's aversion to running after the esoteric, and with his conviction that the whole world can be revealed in our backyard if only we give it our proper attention.
> —Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory*

The Ottawa Valley

For some the Ottawa Valley is simply a place; for others it is also a state of mind or an affair of the heart (Finnigan 1981, 2). A basic geographic definition is easy, as a river runs through it. The Ottawa River is one of the great rivers of North America, if not the world. This river was a major part of the voyageur canoe route that was the main highway through this rugged hill country to the west of Canada for early explorers, fur traders and settlers. Later, the railroad and today's Trans Canada Highway followed the same route, up the Ottawa to the Mattawa River, then west to Lake Superior. The centre of the Valley, then, is clear, but defining its boundaries has proven to be problematic due to local perceptions regarding which areas belong to the Valley and which remain outside. Roughly speaking, it is the land which follows the length of the Ottawa River from Lake Temiscaming to its mouth at the St. Lawrence River, bordered on the Ontario side by the Opeongo hills and by the Gatineau hills on the Quebec side.

Travelling through the Ottawa Valley, one has a sense of coming face to face with history. The impact of the past can be seen and felt all around. While its dramatic history is filled with incidents of extreme hardship and tragedy, the overriding impression one receives is that of a triumphant survivalism associated with its strong men of the past; the voyageurs, the *coureurs du bois* and the lumbermen. Unused and often dilapidated pioneer farm buildings and fencing stand next to modern houses and barns; icons to first settlers and the lifestyle they carved out of the bush.

Many pioneer log cabins remain inhabited and plaques bestowed by the Century Farm Program are prominently displayed around the region.

Figure 0-1. Location of the Ottawa Valley (map)

   The Ottawa River, or the Rivière des Outaouais as it is known in French, has a basin of 146,334 square kilometres (65 percent in Quebec and 35 percent in Ontario) and flows 1130 kilometres from its source to its outlet in the Lac des Deux Montagnes at the juncture of the St. Lawrence River. There are several major tributaries (Dumoine, Petawawa, Noire, Coulonge, Bonnechere, Madawaska, Mississippi, Gatineau, Rideau, Lièvre, Petite Nation, Rouge) as well as many smaller ones. The surrounding land consists of narrow plain and eroded hills on bedrock known today as the Laurentian Shield. The eroded hills form plateaus intersected by river valleys and holding thousands of lakes. The hills are heavily forested with mixed coniferous and hardwood trees, but with white and red pine predominating. There are enough hardwood species (e.g. maple, hickory, ash, bur oak, red oak, linden, elm, yellow birch and black cherry), however, to ensure a breathtakingly colourful display every autumn. The Valley has a temperate continental climate that is cold and humid, with predominantly western winds. Temperatures can range from -30s Celsius in the winter to plus 30s C in the summer with approximately 145 frost-free days per year. While average precipitation is relatively low (1020mm to 850mm), a full twenty-five percent of it is in the form of snow. Fauna

include: white-tailed deer, moose, black bear, beaver and numerous smaller mammals, birds, waterfowl and more than seventy species of fish.

Ethnographic Beginnings

I first came to the Ottawa Valley in the 1980s when I began an undergraduate music degree at the University of Ottawa. My knowledge of the region was scant, encompassing a few experiences of the City of Ottawa itself garnered through a couple of obligatory school visits to the Parliament Buildings; an experience common to Canadian children of my generation. Recollections of the place did not inspire me and I was completely unaware that the city was located in the centre of a place known as 'the Ottawa Valley.' During my three undergraduate years in Ottawa, however, I gradually became aware of the existence of this mythical Valley, mostly through regular exposure to the local CBC[1] radio station which insisted on reporting the events and lore of Valley communities with what seemed to me to be a dogged regularity. I met a few students who had actually grown up in the Valley, but most of the student body originated from the region's large urban centre, Ottawa-Gatineau, or like me, from other cities such as Montreal. My contact with 'the Valley' during those early years was minimal. It wasn't until the summer at the end of my final year, when I joined an early music group which had obtained a government grant to spend the summer entertaining at senior citizens' residences throughout the Valley, that I had my first real encounter with the its culture and people. At our concerts I noticed the enthusiastic response of the elderly residents to the Renaissance dance tunes we played; tunes that are not dissimilar in form or spirit to the traditional dance music repertory of jigs and reels. After the performances, conversations with the residents revealed that many of them used to play the fiddle or dance, and they recounted anecdotes about their lives which conveyed a deep sense of connection to their past and to their place.

After a few intervening years back in Montreal, I landed again in Ottawa, this time to take a job which, as circumstances would have it, provided me with the opportunity to travel around the Valley and actually work with people in local communities. It was during these Valley travels and encounters that I noticed what appeared to be a tremendous amount of musical and dance activity going on; that the storytelling art and lore was highly developed; and, that these cultural activities were strongly community based and appeared in fact, to be inextricably part of what I'll call, for lack of a better term, Ottawa Valley identity. Irish, Scottish and French elements predominated in the expressive culture; English cultural

traits were less obvious although the British influence was notable in the regional infrastructure that had been put in place during colonial governance. During the five years I spent working in the Valley, I became more and more aware of its culture and history; from its tall tales to its fiddle music and step dancing. I came to recognise that these cultural practices were what Henry Glassie has called "significant texts" and described thus, "These will not take the shape of philosophical treatises, and they may not even be verbal. They will emerge as recurrent actions recognized to compress most richly the essence of right thinking" (1982, 14).

This study came about from a desire to document some of these "significant texts." While my primary interest was in music and dance, once I began the fieldwork I soon realised that the storytelling, the customs and even the landscape itself were cultural texts, each of which was intimately interconnected with the others. They played a role, like glue, in bonding people together both within particular small communities and throughout the greater Valley community. There were communities within communities that intersected at different points and in different ways. It also became apparent that Valley identity was multi-faceted. For example, someone who, when asked about their origin, responded in the usual way, 'I'm from the Valley,' might be a step dancer, an Irish Protestant, a Quebecer, an Anglophone, and a resident of Shawville; with each of these different facets of their identity predominating at different times depending upon the situation. For many of my informants, ethnicity was terribly important to their personal sense of identity; almost all had knowledge of and interest in their own family's particular emigration story that often dated back some 150 years. Most of them, whether Anglophone or Francophone, claimed at least partial Irish ancestry. But clearly, 'the Valley' was much more than a simple geographical designation. It represented a 'way of being' that encompassed a value system, having as its principal tenets: a sense of history; a sense of place; and the importance of community.

When I began to plan the study, the methodology appeared straightforward: conduct an ethnographic survey employing methods such as: interviewing; recording or videotaping music and dance performances; attending fiddle and dance events such as the fiddle and step dancing contests which take place regularly throughout the year; attending more informal events such as house parties; and adding in some historical research, including statistical data. In reality, however, the process was much more complex. First of all, I was an outsider and this, in the Valley, does not go unnoticed. But I was not an unredeemable outsider: I had

worked in the Valley for a period of time, thereby gaining some insider (emic) knowledge; I am a fluent French speaker and thus had an 'in' with francophones; but perhaps most importantly was the fact that I am Irish. This opened more doors for me throughout the Ottawa Valley than anything else. In addition, my Irishness comes from both Irish Catholic and Irish Protestant traditions (one parent of each background from the North of Ireland) and I found that this granted me a sort of immunity in discussing political matters such as Orangeism, whether with Irish Protestants from Shawville, Quebec, or Irish Catholics from Mount St. Patrick, Ontario.

While there is no single predominant ethnic group in the Ottawa Valley today, I do believe that there is a predominant culture, particularly in the rural areas and that this has been largely influenced by the substantial numbers of Irish, particularly Irish Catholics, who settled the region during the nineteenth century. Many others have also noticed this Irish-influenced culture and identity. It prompted linguists Ian Pringle and Enoch Padolsky of Carleton University in Ottawa to embark on a linguistic survey of the region (1981), while others like historian Julian Gwyn were instrumental in encouraging historical research. As Gwyn (1988, 355-6) says, "My own interests arose from the shock of discovering, from my first winter at the University of Ottawa in 1961-62, the Ottawa Valley Irish in their villages and towns and on their farms. I kept urging others to study them." It was through the Irish community in Ottawa that I made my initial contacts and began the process of building a network of informants and setting up interviews throughout the region. Over a 3-year period, I spent 18 months in the Valley conducting the fieldwork; alternating half of each year there with a half year back in Ireland. I interviewed local people involved in music, dance and other community activities, a few local historians, and a few people from outside the region to gain the outsider's perspective. I attended a large number of fiddle and step dancing contests, and house parties and, as I travelled around the Valley, availed of the opportunity to talk to people from a variety of backgrounds and occupations. From the earliest days of the research, almost everyone I met was most encouraging and generosity, openness and enthusiasm were characteristic of the manner with which Valley residents greeted my frequently naïve and sometimes intrusive queries.

Ottawa Valley Economic and Political Development

Europeans were first attracted to the Ottawa Valley during the seventeenth century to participate in the fur trade. By the nineteenth century, however, it was the timber trade that dominated the region's economy. With its bountiful forests full of both hard and soft wood, the Ottawa Valley was one of the richest timber regions in North America. Log and square log timber were floated down tributary rivers to the Ottawa River and then in large rafts downriver to markets in Montreal and Quebec City. By the mid-nineteenth century, sawn lumber had replaced log as the mainstay of the Valley timber trade. Saw mills were set up throughout the region and employed thousands of men. In the twentieth century, the pulp and paper and wood products industries took hold in the region, particularly at the E.B. Eddy mill in Gatineau, Quebec and at the Consolidated Bathurst mill at Portage-du-Fort in Pontiac County.[2]

Mining was also an important industry in the Ottawa Valley, flourishing particularly from 1886-1940. It had all but disappeared by 1980 due to the closure of many mines during the late 1960s and 1970s. Most of the mining took place on the Quebec side of the river and minerals mined included: lead, zinc, iron-ore, aluminium, nickel, copper, feldspar, graphite and quartz. Hilton mines, known locally as Bristol Mines, an open pit iron-ore operation that closed in 1977, was especially important to the industry.

While agriculture was a primary industry until the 1940s, by the 1980s only about 3 percent of the region's workforce was making a living in farming. Other industries such as manufacturing, nuclear power (Chalk River Nuclear Plant), trade, transport and construction all operate in the region, but the major employment sector has switched to the public sector (e.g. government) and related services. Ottawa has a rapidly developing high technology sector employing people from all over the region—hence its nickname of Silicon Valley North – with particular concentration in: technology services, telecommunications, software development, micro-electronics and wireless technologies, semiconductors, and developing areas in photonics and security technologies (OCRI Report 2005).

In 2001, the city of Ottawa amalgamated with several suburbs and rural townships to form a single municipality. On the Quebec side of the river, five municipalities (Buckinghmam, Aylmer, Gatineau, Hull, Masson-Angers) were amalgamated in 2002 under the name Gatineau. Thus the name for the urban region is now Ottawa-Gatineau with a combined population of 1,148,800 in 2005 and encompasses an even larger area than the former Ottawa-Hull. Employment opportunities

outside the national capital region are extremely limited and rural residents feel that a solution to the problem would be to expand what they feel to be an underdeveloped tourism industry. Currently, tourist ventures in the Valley take advantage of its spectacular wilderness in such activities as canoeing, camping, fishing (including ice-fishing), white-water rafting, skiing, snowshoeing and hiking.

The Ottawa Valley, or the 'Outaouais' as it is known in French, has no precisely definable geo-physical limits, nor is it a political entity, and there is no predominant single ethnic or linguistic group resident within its territory. And yet, despite this basic lack of definition, the Valley has very definite distinguishing features: a rich folklore of legends and tales, a strong tradition of music and dance, distinct dialectic features, and a unique history and economy tied to the Ottawa River. Valley oral historian, Joan Finnigan (1981, 1), has referred to the region as a metaphoric island with the Ottawa River, along which provincial borders are paradoxically drawn, at its centre and the Gatineau and Opeongo hill ranges on the east and west, respectively, cutting the region off from the rest of the provinces of Quebec and Ontario.

That the territory of the Valley is divided between two political entities—the provinces of Ontario and Quebec—complicates research on the region as a whole. It is also, perhaps, why historically the region has been underdeveloped, a characteristic of border or peripheral regions in general (Cohen 1982a). Ottawa Valley politicians and community activists have long been grappling with the issue of a regional identity but have received little attention or interest from either provincial government. It is perhaps this very lack of consensus on Valley identity—which areas are inside and which are outside; does the designation 'Outaouais' include the Ontario shore; are area Franco-Ontarians part of the same cultural community as their francophone neighbours resident on the Quebec shore, etc.—that keeps the identity debate alive in the minds of its residents. At the colloquium on regional identity held in Hull, Quebec in 1981, one speaker complained, "Politicians came here with their notions of geo-politics, to transform this wonderful linkage [the Ottawa River] into a barrier barbed with regulations and ideological taboos" (Lapointe 1982, 1).[3] In other words, while a river may make a convenient demarcation point on a map, in areas like the Valley settled before the construction of roads, it does not make a logical or convenient border since patterns of settlement spread along both shores with the river as principal transportation link. Quebec politics has also complicated the border issue in that Quebec politicians, "unfortunately have the habit of viewing the Outaouais through a prism distorted by Quebec nationalism; they don't

understand anything of the unique characteristics of the regions, ours especially" (ibid., 2).[4] The political divide also causes frustration and inconvenience in daily life. For example, two health care systems are operational within the region and it is not unheard of for Quebec-resident patients to be sent a few hours distance to Montreal for treatment that is available right across the river in Ottawa. This represents the type of problem that many residents would like to see addressed.

It is also worth noting that the ecclesiastical boundaries of the region do not coincide with the political ones. The entire region was originally part of the Archdiocese of Ottawa, run by the Oblate Fathers who established themselves there in 1844. Until 1963, when Pope John XXIII created the Hull Diocese, there was no Catholic diocese entirely on west Quebec soil. Pontiac County, Quebec still remains part of the Pembroke Diocese, which includes most of the Upper Ottawa Valley territory on the Ontario side. Ecclesiastical boundaries are historically extremely important in the development of the region as it was in the Diocesan capitals of Ottawa and Pembroke that the cathedrals and important educational institutions were built and therefore where cultural and intellectual life flourished.

In compiling research data on the region, one is always obligated to search at least two sets of documents; those for Ontario and those for Quebec. Regional histories, likewise, tend to treat either Ontario or Quebec jurisdictions rather than the region as a whole. Chad Gaffield's informative *History of the Outaouais* (1997), for instance, while documenting phenomena and historical events which had an impact on the region as a whole, had a mandate as part of a series on the history of the regions of Quebec, to discuss this from a solely Quebec perspective. As a result there is, in my view, a sense of incompleteness about the work. Then there is the additional complication of the division of the region into the Upper and the Lower Ottawa Valley areas; Upper being generally west of the cities of Ottawa and Gatineau—specifically west of the Rideau and Gatineau rivers—and Lower being to the east of said cities/rivers. While this division is a more natural one—as it follows historic settlement patterns—it nonetheless provides an additional complication for the researcher since much of the documentation on the region concerns one section or the other.

Ottawa Valley Demographics and Boundaries

Since there is no universally agreed definition of Ottawa Valley territory, I have had to impose my own and somewhat restrictive boundaries on the

Valley based on four criteria: 1) the counties in Ontario and Quebec which actually border the Ottawa River; 2) the counties traditionally considered to be part of the Valley; 3) the counties where most of the cultural activities (e.g. fiddling and step dancing contests) examined in this study take place, and; 4) the origins and/or place of residence of most of the informants of the study.

I have also been influenced in my choice of counties for inclusion in the study by the political boundaries that have been established in the region. Some counties have, for example, been united and large municipalities have also been formed **(see Figure 0-2)**. The Ontario counties or municipalities included in the study are: Lanark County, the greater municipality of Ottawa (includes the municipalities/townships of Cumberland, Gloucester, Goulbourn, Kanata, Nepean, Osgoode, Ottawa, Rideau, Rockcliffe Park, Vanier and West Carleton); the united counties of Prescott-Russell, Renfrew County; and the united counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry. In the case of the latter, since they do not border the Ottawa River, their inclusion is most particularly based on the position of Glengarry County within the region, and the prolific activity and influence of Glengarry musicians throughout the Valley. Some of the informants of the study reside in areas bordering but just outside this region in the northern sections of the counties of Frontenac, Hastings, and Lennox and Addington. Their activities, however, are primarily located within the study region so I have chosen not to include these counties for this study. The Quebec counties and municipalities included in the study are: Argenteuil County; Collines-de-l'Outaouais, the Communauté urbaine de l'Outaouais (includes Aylmer, Buckingham, Gatineau, Hull and Masson), since 2002 combined into the new city of Gatineau; Papineau County; Pontiac County; and the Vallée Gatineau.

Most of the population of the Valley (see Appendix A, Table 1) is centred in the region of the National Capital which includes the agglomeration of Ottawa on the Ontario side and the Communauté urbaine de l'Outaouais in Quebec. Together these two municipalities form a sort of super city where the principal employer is the Canadian Federal Government, its agencies and related service industries. Comparatively, the rest of the Valley is rather sparsely populated, particularly on the Quebec side of the river. Population growth is highest in the urban areas of the national capital and those bordering. High growth in Prescott-Russell, for example reflects the expansion on the eastern side of Ottawa into towns such as Embrun and Rockland, which are a commutable distance from the urban centre. Likewise, Lanark, on the western side of the region exhibits similar growth reflecting the movement of the Ottawa-

Figure 0-2: Map of the Ottawa Valley: counties, towns, village

Carleton workforce into towns such as Almonte, Arnprior and Carleton Place, all a commutable distance from the national capital. The substantial decline in areas of West Quebec where large populations of Anglophones reside (Pontiac, Vallée Gatineau) may reflect uneasiness with an unstable political situation in view of the October 1995 Quebec Referendum on Sovereignty.[5] The relative isolation and underdeveloped infrastructure of this region have no doubt greatly contributed to its inability to attract enough viable industry and employment.

I have chosen to report on demographics for the region as they have been surveyed for the Canadian census of 2001 with some comparison of 1996 data.[6] Table 1 shows the language breakdown by mother tongue. English and French, Canada's two official languages, are the principal languages spoken by the large majority of the region's population, proportions only slightly changed from the 1991 census. Table 2 shows that over half the Ottawa Valley population consider themselves to be of the Roman Catholic faith (54%) while almost one quarter are Protestants (24%), and again there has been no substantial change since 1991. The 'Other Christian' category consists mostly of Christian Orthodox; this group is particularly in evidence in the urban area of Ottawa. But even

considering only the Ontario part of the Ottawa Valley, Catholics still significantly outnumber Protestants at 46 per cent versus 29 per cent. While in the past, Protestants traditionally outnumbered Catholics in Ontario as a whole, by 2001 the Catholic (34.3%) and Protestant (34.5%) populations were almost equal. In Canada, Roman Catholics (43.6%) far outnumber Protestants (29.2%), while in Quebec Protestants account for only 4.7 per cent of the population; Catholics 83.4 per cent.

Census Data Pertaining to the Irish: The Ethnic Origin Question
As this study deals with the Irish in relation to other ethnic groups in the Ottawa Valley region, it is necessary, in my view, to understand their position within the Canadian, Ontario and Quebec contexts and in addition, the manner in which statistical data on Canadian ethnic groups in general has been collected over the years. The collection of ethnic origin data in the Canadian census has been anything but consistent. Changes in the framing of the census ethnic origin question over the last 40 years have rendered the recent ethnic origin data at the worst meaningless, and at the very least problematic. The terminology used and its interpretation, 'suggested' ethnic categories, the prioritizing (i.e. making 'visible') of certain groups over others, reflects the development of multiculturalism policies in Canada which have been framed in an essentially racist discourse. In March 2007, for example, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination openly criticised Canada's use of the term 'visible minorities' in its publications and census, as in their view, the term implies that whiteness is the norm and that non-whites are others.[7] And criticism of Canadian multiculturalism is not new. Back in 1994, for example, Canadian writer Neil Bissoondath (1994) wrote a profound critique of Canadian multiculturalism from a 'visible minority' perspective, describing the government's interest in its minorities as exploitative and tokenistic.

All of this has important implications for the examination of the Irish as an ethnic group in Canada. Table 6 provides population data for the Irish in relation to the total Canadian population and other British Isles origin groups from the Census of Canada dating 1871 to 1971. From 1971 through 1991, the British Isles group was not broken down by ethnicity and all peoples of the British Isles (e.g. English, Scottish, Welsh, Manx and Irish) were lumped together under the category 'British.' This decision at the official level reflects what was increasingly during the 1960s and 1970s, a concern with multiculturalism in Canada, and most particularly with 'visible' ethnic minorities.[8] The result of this policy change, however, was to negate the identities of ethnic groups from the

British Isles and indeed from other European regions. Since the Irish were neither a visible nor linguistic minority in most of Canada—they have always been a linguistic minority in Quebec—they were perceived as 'non-ethnic.' This change in census reporting also reflected the decline of the Irish as a proportion of the total Canadian population. In 1871 at the time of the first Dominion Census, 23 percent of the Canadian population was of Irish origin. The figures were particularly high in Ontario (34.5 percent) and New Brunswick (35.2 percent) with Quebec at 10.4 percent (Akenson 1993, 262-3). To look at these figures another way, 66.1 percent of persons of Irish origin in Canada lived in Ontario, 11.9 in New Brunswick and 14.6 in Quebec. By 1961, these proportions had significantly declined. Persons of Irish origin in Canada were 9.6 percent (1,753,351) of the total population, figures for Ontario at 14 percent, New Brunswick 13.8 and Quebec at only 2.5. Of the total number of people of Irish origin in Canada, 49.8 percent lived in Ontario, 7.4 percent in Quebec and 4.7 percent in New Brunswick (ibid., 267). By 2001 (Table 5) however, the census reports an increase in the Irish proportion of the population in Canada to 12.9 percent, 15.6 percent in Ontario and 4 percent in Quebec. It is difficult to explain this increase which may simply be due to the change in the census ethnic origin question.

For the Canadian censuses of 1996 and 2001 the ethnic origin question was changed to allow for a fairer coverage of ethnic groups. The question was open—respondents were instructed to write in their answer(s) instead of checking the appropriate box—but a list of ethnic groups, which included the Irish, was suggested in the instruction to the question. Respondents were encouraged to enumerate as many ethnic groups as applicable and there were four empty boxes available for completion. The implication then is that many people claimed at least two heritages and some as many as four (multiple responses). Note that responses on ethnic origin (Tables 3,4,5) are based on total responses (multiple plus single responses); and since approximately three quarters of all responses are multiple, this accounts for percentage totals that add up to more than 100 percent. Another important change implemented in the 1996 census (and maintained in 2001) was the addition of 'Canadian' as suggested ethnic origin group in the instruction to the question; this may have lead to some confusion among respondents and at least partially explain extreme fluctuations in the data between 1991 and 1996. For example, in the 1991 census for the Ottawa Valley region (before the suggested addition of the 'Canadian' category), only 2.1 percent of the population of the region reported as 'Canadian.'[9] 'Canadian' is reported for the region as 45.6 percent in 1996 and as 46.5 percent in 2001 (Table 3). These are above

average figures when comparing with 2001 percentages for Canada as a whole (39.4%) or Ontario (29.7%), but significantly lower than that for Quebec (70%), where Canadian/Québécois affiliation is the strongest in the country. In 1996, 45.6 percent of the Valley population claimed Canadian origin, 41.8 French, 30.6 English, 21.9 Scottish, 24.7 Irish, 9.7 German, 3.4 Dutch and 3.4 Polish. But even comparing the 1996 census with that of 2001 (Table 4), where the only change in the ethnic origin question was in the addition of a couple of ethnic groups in the instruction, changes in reporting are inexplicable. For example, the Irish drop from almost 25 percent in 1996 to 18 percent by 2001, while the decline in English affiliation is even more dramatic during the same period, from approximately 31 percent down to 19 percent; a drop of approximately one third. [10] Seeking to find an explanation for this I decided to examine the Valley statistics for 2001 excluding the urban areas of Ottawa and Gatineau but the proportions vary on average by only about 1 percent for most ethnic groups, with the exception of 'Canadian' where it jumps from 46 to 56 percent. Does this imply that there is stronger affiliation to Canadian heritage in rural areas? To what extent are any of these census figures reliable? What do these figures actually tell us?

In my view, we can really only make broad assumptions based on the census ethnic origin question. First of all, it is fairly safe to say that the large majority of the Ottawa Valley population is of white European origin and is of English (53%) or French (32%) mother tongue (Table 1). The population on the Quebec side of the Valley is even whiter than the Ontario side. British Isles and French groups make up the majority ethnic origin of the Ottawa Valley, while non-European groups, particularly 'visible minorities' reside mostly in the urban area of Ottawa-Gatineau (Table 3). Other European settlement groups, the Germans, Dutch and Kashubs/Poles, still maintain a significant presence in urban areas, in original settlements in Renfrew County, and in the case of the Dutch in the united counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry, and the Polish in Vallée Gatineau (Table 4).[11] Overall population decline (Table 1) particularly in the Pontiac (-6.5%) and Vallée Gatineau (-7.5) counties is particularly significant among English and Scottish ethnicities (Table 4).

The impact of the Ottawa Valley settlement groups in historical context is also important for their strong influence on the cultural development of the region; the subject of this study. Professors Pringle and Padolsky of Carleton University have summarised this data in a series of maps for the Linguistic Survey of the Ottawa Valley (1981a) conducted in the 1970s and 1980s. Borrowing from their analysis, Figure 0-3 shows

the pockets of ethnic settlement in 1881, the Irish being the predominant group. Note that each district is identified with its dominant ethnic group; the presence of the other ethnic groups is not indicated. But even in districts where the French, Scottish or German groups predominated, Pringle and Padolsky report that the Irish most often formed the second largest group and that therefore, the claim to being Irish may be fairly reliable in the Ottawa Valley, "because there is good reason to suppose that the belief that one is of 'Irish' ethnicity will correlate fairly strongly with the maintenance of what are taken locally to be 'Irish' cultural traits, and in particular with the persistence of Hiberno-English linguistic traits" (Pringle and Padolsky 1981b, 342).
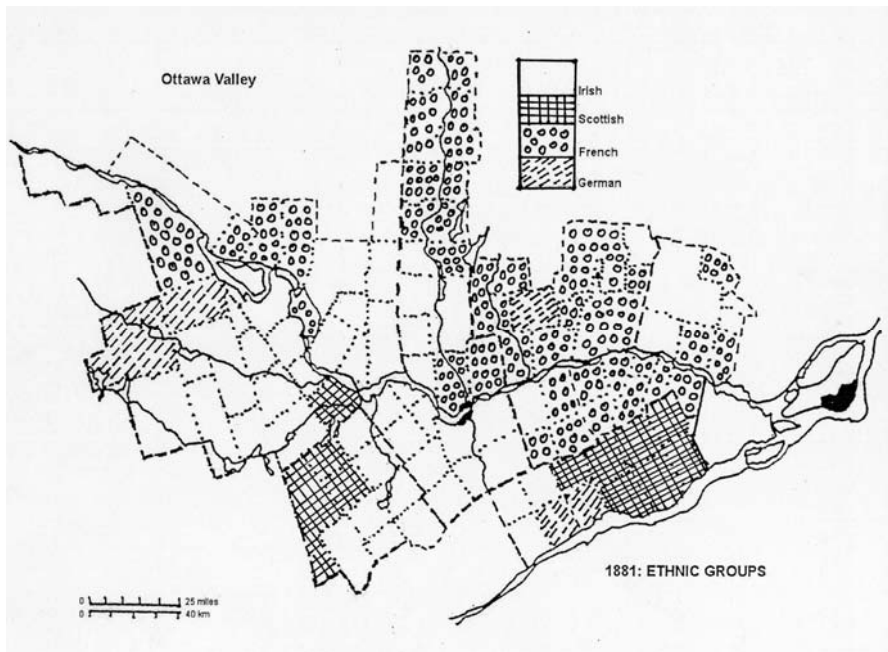

Figure 0-3: Map: The Ottawa Valley: settlement by predominant ethnic group, 1881

Notes on the Text

This study is largely based on information obtained from in-depth interviews conducted with local people all active in the Ottawa Valley

culture in some capacity as well as on my own participation at many local events. In order to provide a proper context for the reader a few preliminary remarks are necessary concerning the nature of the research material.

First of all, in addition to the interview material, much information was gleaned from casual conversations with individuals, some of whom were also interviewed formally and others who, for a variety of reasons, were not. These conversations were invaluable to me in developing an understanding of life and culture in the Ottawa Valley.

Secondly, I have chosen to use the term 'informant' to designate individuals who provided me with information. I am not altogether happy with this term but am even less comfortable with more trendy terms such as 'consultant' which, I feel, serve to obfuscate the researcher/informant relationship in a manner which appears personally less honest.

Thirdly, quotations originally in French—from published texts and fieldwork interviews—have been translated into English and appear in the main body of the text with the original French in the chapter endnotes.

Fourth, some informants have been quoted more than others. This does not, however, indicate a higher value placed on the contributions of those individuals. Partly, this has been determined by the range of subjects I have chosen to address in this book. I have, for example, spoken at length with certain individuals about particular aspects of Ottawa Valley life which, for a variety of reasons, I have not included here. Some informants, particularly those who were interviewed early on in the research process, were subjected to a greater degree to my ignorance and much time was spent providing me with contextual information which, subsequently, greatly influenced the direction of the research and the coverage of later interviews.

Fifth, the distribution of the quoted interview segments is not intended to be at all even. In some sections of the dissertation, such as Chapter 5 on style, for example, there was a tremendous variety of opinion expressed and the issue was one of considerable interest and debate. I have chosen, in such sections, to place a great deal of the discussion directly in the voices of the informants themselves and have kept my own interference to a minimum. Other sections rely almost exclusively on my own theorizing.

Sixth, there are textual references to some of the figures while others have simply been placed without reference where they illustrate a particular theme. All of the photographs were taken by the author.

Chapter Summary
In Chapter 1, a discussion which centres on the importance of local knowledge as the basis of this ethnography, is followed by an overview of

theories of community and cultural hybridity. A discussion of theoretical perspectives concerning place ensues and the chapter concludes with an outline of issues concerning ethnographical representation. Chapter 2, Transported Communities, looks at the historical basis for the study, primarily the settlement of the Ottawa Valley by various ethnic groups during the nineteenth century. Chapter 3, Oral Communities, contains an examination of particular aspects of oral tradition, including language, narrative, place names, and celebrations. The discussion focuses on the specifically Irish impact on the development of oral tradition in the Valley. Chapter 4, Music and Dance Communities, describes the main features of traditional music and dance practices in the region, from a primarily historical perspective. Chapter 5, Style Communities, is a discussion of the importance of musical style to the construction of Valley identity and ideology. The impact of media star, Don Messer, on Canadian and Ottawa Valley fiddle style is specifically highlighted. Chapter 6, Competition Communities, describes the circuit of annual fiddle and step dancing contests throughout the region. The negotiation of Valley identity in performance at these events is specifically emphasised. Chapter 7, Conflicting Communities, is a discussion about traditional culture in Canada; my thesis here links the promotion of Canadian unity with the neglect of the traditional arts. The role of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) is examined with particular reference to the widely contested cancellation in 1969 of the popular Don Messer television programme.

Notes

[1] Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

[2] The importance of the lumber industry in the Ottawa Valley and particularly its role in the oral traditions of the region is discussed in Chapter 3.

[3] Translation by the author. French text of original: Les hommes politiques sont venus, avec leurs notions de géo-politique, transformer ce formidable trait d'union, en barrière hérissée de barbelés réglementaires et de tabous idéologiques.

[4] Text of original: Ceux-ci [les mandarins du Québec] ont malheureusement l'habitude d'observer l'Outaouais à travers le prisme déformant du nationalisme québécois et ne comprennent rien aux particularisme des régions, encore moins la nôtre.

[5] The Quebec referendum was held on 30 October 1995 by the Quebec provincial government which was seeking a mandate from the Quebec population to negotiate a new constitutional arrangement within the Canadian federal system, including the possibility of a 'sovereignty-association' style of separation from