On the evening of April 13, 1865, Washingtonians of all stripes celebrated the end of the Civil War. The city, reported the Evening Star, was all ablaze with glory. The very heavens seemed to have come down, and the stars twinkled in a sort of faded way, as if the solar system was out of order and the earth had become the great luminary. . . . Far as the vision extended were brilliant lights, the rows of illuminated windows at the distance blending into one, and presenting an unbroken wall of flame. . . . high above all towered the Capitol, glowing as if on fire and seeming to stud the city below with gems of reflected glory as stars light upon the sea. Away to the right a halo hung over the roofs, rockets flashed to and fro in fiery lines, and the banners waved above the tumultuous throng, where shots and cheers rolled up in a dense volume from the city, and with the increase of the grand conflagration, drifted away to the darkness of the surrounding hills.\(^2\)

The Confederacy for all intents and purposes lay dead. Four years of slaughter, despair, devastation, sacrifice, and uncertainty evaporated as a wave of unparalleled optimism and hope washed over Washington, D.C., and the Union. Abraham Lincoln rose the following morning

\(^1\) Preliminary versions of this article were delivered at the 2009 Abraham Lincoln without Borders conference hosted by the International Lincoln Center for American Studies at Louisiana State University-Shreveport, at the 2011 Civil War–Global Conflict conference at the College of Charleston, and at the 2011 meeting of the Association for Canadian Studies in the United States held in Ottawa, Canada. I thank the panelists and commenters for their thoughtful comments as well as the anonymous reviewers and editorial staff at the journal. I am also most grateful for the eyes, ears, and comments of William J. Bauer Jr., Cameron Cobb, Lisa Denmark, Andrew Holman, Scott McWhirter, William D. Pederson, Brenda Schoolfield, and Ronald D. Schultz.

in an uncharacteristically splendid mood. He eagerly chatted with his wife, Mary, about the future, and rejoiced at the return of his eldest son, Robert, from the war. A westerner by birth and character, Lincoln eagerly wished to see California, to marvel at “the production of her gold mines, and to say in person to [the] citizens [of California], ‘God bless you for your devotion to the Union.’” He never got the chance, for the day ended in tragedy with Lincoln’s assassination in Ford’s Theatre at the hands of John Wilkes Booth.

Devastation replaced hope and optimism. Caroline Cowles Richards of Canandaigua, New York, no doubt spoke for many northerners when she noted, “One week ago tonight we were celebrating our victories with loud acclamations of mirth and good cheer. Now everyone is silent and sad and the earth and heavens seem clothed in sackcloth. The bells have been tolling this afternoon. The flags are all at half mast, draped with mourning, and on every store and dwelling-house some sign of the nation’s loss is visible.” Although few bells rang in the South, for there were few bells to ring, southerners appeared to mourn. In New Orleans, Sarah Morgan observed that “to see a whole city draped in mourning is certainly an imposing spectacle, and becomes almost grand when it is considered as an expression of universal affliction. So it is, in one sense. For the more violently ‘secesh’ the inmates, the more thankful they are for Lincoln’s death, the more profusely the houses are decked with the emblems of woe.”

As news of Lincoln’s assassination swept the world, it mourned. Austria expressed the “deepest indignation” at the assassination. Brazil shared the “infinite pain thus inflicted upon American citizens.” China reeled with “inexpressibl[e] shock.” Egypt expressed “detestation of the abominable crime.” On Africa’s Gold Coast, “all true sons of Africa mourned for the cruel and untimely fate of President

Lincoln.” Horror enveloped England as “every public body in the British nation, . . . express[ed] their feelings of horror on learning of the dastardly murder of ABRAHAM LINCOLN.”6 Yet the most visceral, and surprisingly underinvestigated, reactions to Lincoln’s assassination emerged in British North America. The British North American colonies, later Canada, were and continue to be so deeply embedded in the American consciousness that they often escape reflection. This certainly holds true for Lincoln scholars. While Canadian scholars offer sprinklings and often disjointed glimpses of Lincoln, his assassination, and his meanings for British North Americans and later Canadians, American and international scholars have mostly focused on American or European nations to the exclusion of British North America.7 A case in point is Richard Carwardine and Jay Sexton’s edited collection, The Global Lincoln. Of seventeen chapters and 307 pages, only a sentence fragment on Canadian Confederation appears in Eugenio F. Biagini’s essay on connections between Lincoln, Italy, and Germany.8 The colonies, despite having the closest geographic proximity, tightest blood ties, and most deeply enmeshed history with the Republic, remain conspicuously absent in scholarship about Lincoln. Lincoln’s assassination loomed large in British North America. The ensuing reaction took on, for the most part, what in twentieth-century terms might be called the cult of celebrity and the spectacle of public mourning.

President Andrew Jackson’s passing in 1845 and his ensuing public funeral in New York City unleashed unprecedented public mourning


and commemoration within the United States. Colonial newspapers, however, are silent on not only Jackson’s funeral but also colonial reactions to it. Conversely, the December 1861 passing of Prince Albert barely caused a ripple in American daily life, for as the New York Times stated, it was “without political significance” and “we do not participate in their grief.” While colonists mourned for a man the Toronto Globe described as “of great worth, noble principles, and of sound judgment,” public mourning, perhaps because Prince Albert’s death occurred in the middle of the Trent Affair and news reached colonial ears only after his funeral, was rather muted in comparison with public colonial grieving over Lincoln.

The colonies responded to Lincoln’s assassination on a massive and unprecedented scale disproportionate to the esteem they held for Lincoln while he lived. British North Americans engaged in a surprisingly frenzied and frenetic outpouring of public grief and collective mourning of a man many disliked and few knew. The horrifying nature of Lincoln’s death gave birth to a cult of celebrity and the tight ties of blood, history, and geography uniting the colonies and the Republic explain the profound colonial reactions to his death. Such reactions helped thaw icy relations between the Union and the colonies and craft new, meaningful, and lingering images of Lincoln.

In the antebellum era, the British North American colonies initially seemed to favor the North. With slavery abolished and colonial courts refusing to extradite fugitive slaves to the United States, the colonies became a haven for runaway slaves, including Josiah Henson, “Uncle Tom” in Harriet Beecher Stowe’s famous novel. The colonies also

hosted John Brown who, in 1858, planned his raid on Harper’s Ferry, Virginia, from Chatham, Canada West. In the aftermath of the raid, the Globe applauded Brown for jeopardizing “liberty and life for the advancement of an alien and despised race.”14 By 1860 few British North Americans had heard of Lincoln, and the Ottawa Citizen expressed surprise that the Republicans had “thrown [William H.] Seward over for Lincoln, a fourth-rate Illinois lawyer.”15 The Globe, however saw Seward’s rejection and Lincoln’s election as typical, for “again has a great American party rejected the chief exponent of principles, to adopt an inferior and less known man as its candidate for the presidency.”16 When war broke out, however, the Globe vocally declared support for the Union, stating in 1861, “We cannot wish for the success of the Southern rebellion in the interest of the slave, and furthermore we object to the separation of the Republic in the interest of Canada.”17 The Quebec Morning Chronicle initially shared the Globe’s perspective. But as the “deplorable struggle” unfolded, “clouds of doubt and uncertainty” began to creep, the Chronicle argued, into the minds of British North Americans revealing that the war was really “simply one between the mob law and tyrannical abuse of the North against the constitutional freedom and the right in proper representation of the South, and a somewhat sudden revulsion of feeling displayed itself” toward not only the North but toward Lincoln, who “seem[ed] to have become the mere mouthpiece of the Northern rowdies.”18

Perhaps in part because of these mixed articulations, the colonies swirled with anxiety, ambivalence, and uncertainty. Prior to Fort Sumter’s fall and throughout the war, northern newspapers printed and

18. *Quebec Morning Chronicle* (Quebec City, Canada East), September 11, 1861. Reprinting the Chronicle’s statements were several American newspapers, including *Charleston Mercury*, October 15, 1861; *Memphis Daily Appeal*, October 12, 1861. For similar statements of an early swing away from the North see the *Halifax (N.S.) Acadian Recorder*, August, 21, 1861.
northern political tongues wagged with annexation threats.19 Thomas D’Arcy McGee, no doubt reflecting on events in 1812, warned the British North American public that the “shot fired at Fort Sumter was the signal gun of a new epoch for North America which told the people of Canada, more plainly than human speech can ever express it, to sleep no more except on their arms—unless in their sleep they desire to be overtaken and subjugated.”20

With rumors of impending annexation swirling and British North Americans enlisting in the Union and Confederate forces, public opinion remained largely pro-Union until the Trent Affair on November 6, 1861.21 The Union navy’s violation of British sovereignty caused, in the words of Haligonian George Johnson, British North America to “sw[i]ing round like a gate” toward the Confederacy.22 While the colonies prepared for war against the Union, British North Americans in the Union army prepared for desertion.23 Samuel Heck of Brockville, Canada West, spoke for many when he stated that he “could never


21. With enlistment illegal, some British North Americans lied about their birthplace, making enlistment figures spongy at best. Figures for the Union generally range from fifteen thousand to one hundred thousand, with fifty thousand appearing most often in the scholarship. Confederates figures lurk around five thousand. On the dizzying debate over the number of British North Americans in the Union army, see Winks, Civil War Years, 79–185.


raise an arm against my native land. I have enlisted in the American army. I am not a Yankee.” Colonial concerns ran deep. Although Lincoln’s good sense prevailed and the nation avoided war, bitter distrust and violation remained swirling in colonial mouths.

The Union’s continual practice of crimping and the increasing numbers of Confederate symbols, sympathizers, ships, and agents in British North America further fueled mounting distrust between the Union and the colonies. The New York Times noted on August 17, 1863, that “sympathy or good will toward us here in the North is a thing of the past in Canada.”


violation of territorial sovereignty in British North America by the Union army further strained an already tense relationship between the Union and the colonies and threw the colonies into an uproar.27

American newspapers inflamed the situation by threatening violence if the colonies refused to extradite the raiders, under the Webster-Ashburton Treaty, to the United States.28 Judge Charles J. Coursol served the raiders well, ruling that the extradition treaty did not apply and discharged the raiders “for want of jurisdiction.”29 Mixed emotions greeted Coursol’s ruling in British North America.30 Fury and bumptiousness greeted the ruling in American newspapers and political circles.31 The New York Times, for example, urged Americans to use their “own hands [and] apply the remedy. Canadian territory must be respected no more than Virginia or South Carolina territory.”32

Coursol’s detractors worried about the precedent set by the ruling. Some argued that the ruling opened the door for those committing crimes on foreign soil to flee to Canada, where the crime would be taken “out of the purview of the civil courts.” “A man,” for example, “who sneaked in at the President’s back door, and put a pinch of arsenic in his soup” might, having escaped to Canada, “plead these defences as a grounds of escape from extradition.”33 Few could imagine the prophetic nature of this statement.


28. On threats see *Toronto Globe*, October 29, 1864; *Milwaukee Sentinel*, November 7, 1864, November 15, 1864.


31. For hostile American reactions to the ruling, including threats of retaliation, see *Boston Post*, December 22, 1864; *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper*, December 31, 1864; *Montreal Gazette*, November 1, 1864; *Toronto Globe*, January 30, 31, 1865; *New York Times*, December 24, 1864; *Vermont Watchman and State Journal* (Montpelier), December 16, 1864.


As debates over Coursol’s ruling continued, relations between the colonies and the Union became increasingly frosty. The re-arrest of the raiders, retrial of some of the raiders, and release of the raiders under Justice James Smith of the Superior Court did little to soothe American tempers. Lincoln, in retaliation, implemented spiteful passport controls and threatened to repudiate the Reciprocity Treaty. Relations iced rather than thawed.

News of Lincoln’s assassination “flashed along the wires on lightning wing, annihilating space” and interrupted outrage over the raiders. Colonial reactions initially ran the gamut from disrespectful comments to celebrations, and from justifications to deep mourning. The Montreal Herald, for example, chastised the Kingston Daily News for “not afford[ing] to waste a word of respect” on Lincoln in their coverage of the assassination. Toronto city councilman and Confederate sympathizer George Denison voted against sending a resolution of condolence to the American people: “he thought we should pass the matter by without noticing it. We could have our private sympathies, but we had plenty of things to attend to under our own Government without attending to those of another.”

More disturbing and more horrifying to colonial sensibilities than these distasteful sentiments were those who celebrated and justified the assassination. An Ontario paper noted that “soon after the news of the President’s death had been received” in Toronto, Confederates and their sympathizers drank to “the health of the assassin in bumpers of champagne in a public ballroom.” Montreal’s St. Lawrence Hall likewise entertained “a noisy debauch in honor of the event” in which a clergyman “said publicly at the breakfast table . . . that Lincoln had only gone to hell a little before his time.” Perhaps Lincoln’s trip to hell was justified by providence. Indeed, Brockville’s British Central
Canadian found American comparisons between President Lincoln’s Good Friday death and Jesus Christ’s Good Friday death blasphemous but typical of the Yankee penchant for “always overdo[ing] a thing.” The May 1, 1865, edition of Quebec City’s Gazette des Campagnes suggested that God punished the Union for the victory celebrations taking place on Good Friday by permitting Lincoln’s assassination. Lady Elizabeth Owen Monck witnessed a similar sentiment on her visit to Montreal’s Ursuline convent. The nuns, Monck recalled, thought Lincoln “‘daggered’ as a judgment for going to the theatre on Good Friday,” for it seemed, to the nuns, “an odd day to go to the theatre.”

Instead of citing divine justification, several colonial papers rationalized the assassination by laying blame on the actions of Lincoln and the Republican Party. The St. Thomas Weekly Dispatch pointed to Lincoln’s “lust of power and ambition” as a mitigating factor in his assassination; an assassination that the paper was unsure was for “better or for worse.” At least one colonial paper, which the Montreal Witness refused to name but was most likely either the pro-Confederate Toronto Leader or the Quebec Morning Chronicle, argued that Lincoln’s death illustrated the “liability of tyrants to the assassin’s weapon.” A curious letter in Jackson, Mississippi, resonated with a similar sentiment. Torontonian and Confederate captain Jonathan George Ryan urged the United States “and especially the South” to “rejoice over, and give unceasing praise to a man who righteously and courageously rid this continent of one of the greatest despots the world has even known.” He simply signed his statement “Respectfully Canada.”

The Toronto Leader explained Lincoln’s assassination as retaliation for “the numberless acts of wickedness commissioned in the South by the servants and emissaries of the Northern government.” The Weekly Freeman of St. John, New Brunswick, likewise suggested that

41. British Central Canadian, May 10, 1865.
44. St. Thomas (Canada West) Daily Dispatch, April 20, 1865.
45. Reprinted in London Evening Advertiser and Family Newspaper, April 20, 1865.
47. Toronto Leader, April 17, 1865. See also New York Times, April 19, 1865.
responsibility for the assassination may lie in the “many illegal and tyrannical acts . . . done in” Lincoln’s name for, according to the Prince Edward Island Vindicator, he was responsible for “more butchery than could even be charged Napoleon.”48 The Northern Advance offered a more pointed assessment that laid blame at the feet of the Republican Party, “which made its pretended desire for the abolition of slavery a pretext for committing the most disgraceful atrocities and carrying on, avowedly to the extermination of their opponents if necessary, a fratricidal and unjustifiable war, in opposition to the principles of the constitution of the Republic,” making the assassination somewhat comprehensible.49

These anti-Lincoln sentiments and justifications seemed to be those of a vocal minority, for Lincoln’s death elicited a deep and surprisingly visceral shock and sympathy in most British North Americans. Lincoln never visited the colonies, his name rarely graced colonial papers prior to 1860, and his image was equally unfamiliar. Yet his death unleashed an unprecedented wave of mourning tied in part to the personal ties of blood, history, and geography between the colonies and the republic, and due in part to the cult of celebrity surrounding Lincoln. As the New York Daily Tribune wrote, “there is probably no precedent in the world’s history of a whole country paying such tribute of honor to the memory of the head of a foreign nation.”50

In Kingston, “when the news of the Assassination” arrived “people were incredulous” and “when it was confirmed one universal expression of horror pervaded the city.”51 A “thrill of horror” ran through the streets of Toronto, while in Montreal “the astounding news . . . created intense regret.”52 Residents of St. John viewed the news as “a disgraceful hoax and when there could no longer be any doubt of its truth, they were for a time almost stupefied.”53 Indeed, “whatever angry words may have passed between” the colonies “and our cousin, but one feeling is universally prevalent now—horror at the atrocity of this deed.”54 From the Atlantic to the Pacific, mourning enveloped the colonies and colonial sensibilities.

48. St. John Weekly Freeman, April 18, 1865; Charlottetown (P.E.I) Vindicator, April 17, 1865.
49. Barrie (Canada West) Northern Advance, April 19, 1865.
50. New York Daily Tribune, April 24, 1865.
51. Daily British Whig, April 18, 1865.
52. Hamilton Evening Times, April 17, 20, 1865.
53. St. John Weekly Freeman, April 18, 1865.
54. Montreal Gazette, April 17, 1865. See also Chatham Weekly Planet (Chatham, Canada West), April 27, 1865.
Colonial writers unabashedly and almost fanatically sang Lincoln’s praises as a family member, emancipator, and martyr. The Globe no doubt spoke for many when it expressed Lincoln’s death as “a personal loss” like that of a “familiar friend” or brother.\footnote{Toronto Globe, reprinted in New York Times, April 19, 1865.} Victoria’s Daily Chronicle lamented the loss of Lincoln on a universal level for “freedom has lost her champion, Human Rights its leader, and Liberty one of its ablest defenders.”\footnote{Daily Colonist, April 20, 1865. See also Unionist and Halifax Journal, April 17, 1865.} Prince Edward Island’s the Islander compared Lincoln’s assassination to that of Caesar and his death as detrimental to the “destinies of a people.”\footnote{Charlottetown (P.E.I.) Islander, April 21, 1865. See also Halifax Evening Express, April 17, 1865; Yarmouth Tribune (Yarmouth, Nova Scotia), May 3, 1865.} Colonial poets Charles Tomlison Waters and J. T. Breeze bemoaned Lincoln’s death through their art. Waters’s Lament for Abraham Lincoln offered nine stanzas of comfort that stressed and echoed the themes of emancipation, honor, virtue, patriotism, and family emerging from colonial papers and pulpits.\footnote{Charles Tomlinson Waters, Lament for Abraham Lincoln (Ottawa: Bell and Woodburn, 1865).} Breeze characterized his poem The Assassination of President Lincoln as “the spontaneous emotion of” his mind on the news of Lincoln’s assassination and likewise cast Lincoln’s death as that of a “noble martyr” and champion of freedom.\footnote{J. T. Breeze, The Assassination of President Lincoln (Belleville, Canada West: Independent, 1865).} Colonial officials and organizations expressed their formal condolences through letters to American officials. Halifax mayor William I. Holdsworth lamented on the “profound horror at the barbarous murder of President Lincoln” but expressed confidence that Lincoln’s assassination would not “retard . . . the utter extinction of slavery.” The St. John Sons of Temperance declared the assassination “a treason against the commonwealth of nations, a crime against Christianity and civilization, and a wickedness unparalleled in the pages of history for the horror and villainy of its conception.” Such condolences poured in from coast to coast.\footnote{U.S. State Department, Assassination of Abraham Lincoln, 232, 346. See also 172–73, 231–32, 309, 346. See also London Evening Advertiser and Family Newspaper, April 21, 1865; St. John Weekly Freeman, April 22, 1865.} Their wording revealed that in the eyes of British North Americans, Lincoln’s death held critical ramifications.

Mourning in the colonies, however, went beyond ink spilled on pages. Colonial sacred and secular spaces acoustically and visually approximated those of the Union. Churches across British North
America “unite[d] in expressions of grief, abhorrence of the great wickedness of [Lincoln’s] assassination, and sympathy for the nation in its bereavement.”61 As bells sounded mourning in public spaces, clergy took to the pulpit to comfort their congregations. In Ottawa’s Wesleyan Church, Reverend T. Wardrope’s sermon reassured Americans that “whatever differences had arisen, or might yet arise, Britons said Americans, over the grave of the President, brethren your grief is ours. Sprung from the same country as ourselves, inheritors of the same privileges, worshippers of the same God, we bewail with you the calamity with which you have been overtaken; and we pray that He, whoever ruleth all events for his own glory, may send you deliverance comfort, and Peace!”62 The Congregational Church of Danville, Canada East, held a multidenominational and bilingual gathering to express “sympathy and condolence with the American nation” and indeed the “whole human family.”63 Members of Zion Church of Brantford, Canada West, gathered for a funeral service in memory of Lincoln and vowed to “wear a badge of mourning for thirty days as a token of respect to the memory of the Illustrious Lincoln.”64 Reverend G. M. Inness of Christ Church in London, Canada West, reminded his parishioners that the “solemnity of the tragical event” required that “all differences of opinion in relation to political matters should be lost sight of.”65 Toronto’s African American and African Canadian citizens gathered in Queen Street Baptist Church. Decorated with only “a portrait of the late President ... suspended in front of the pulpit surrounded with crape,” Reverend J. H. Magee “sought the blessing of Heaven upon the bereaved family, their responses were solemn and ardent.”66 Religious institutions across the colonies respectfully mourned.

Outside the walls of the colonies’ religious institutions, mourning swaddled public spaces. Black bunting graced storefronts, mourning wreaths festooned public buildings and private homes, bells tolled,

61. Hamilton Evening Times, April 19, 1865.
62. Ottawa (Canada West) Union, April 21, 1865.
63. Sherbrooke (Canada East) Gazette, April 22, 1865.
65. London Evening Advertiser and Family Newspaper, April 20, 1865.
66. Toronto Globe, April 20, 1865. See also Robert Norton and Robert F. Burns, Maple Leafs from Canada for the Grave of Abraham Lincoln (St. Catharines: E. S. Leavenworth’s Book and Job Office, 1865).
and flags flew at half-mast. In Montreal, the Transcript reported that many homes
were draped in black; many citizens wore crape on their left arm. . . . Over the lower entrance to the Royal Insurance Building, a handsome funeral trophy was erected, the balcony being draped in black cloth, and the Royal arms in front of the tower being brought out in a strong relief by a screen of black cloth erected behind them, which was ornamented at the centre with a small white metal Maltese cross. On either side were the British and American flags draped in black. The whole had a very fine effect.67

The Hamilton, Canada West, Great Western Railway station likewise reflect the mourning of the day and displayed “every mark of sympathy and respect, appropriate on the occasion. . . . [T]he numerous flag-staffs . . . were hung with flags at half-mast high.”68 Businesses across the colonies, as a mark of respect and unity, closed during Lincoln’s funeral services.69 In Victoria, Toronto, Kingston, Hamilton, Prescott, and Woodstock, Canada West; in Montreal, Sherbrooke, and Quebec City, Canada East; in Halifax, Nova Scotia; in St. John and Fredericton, New Brunswick; in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island; and in innumerable locations in between, such scenes mirrored each other.70 “No fitting mark of neighborly sympathy has been withheld” for “a great nation, our nearest neighbor, and of our own blood and language,” declared the Evening Times.71

Citizens of British North America gathered in public services to pay homage to Lincoln. In Victoria, “citizens of every nationality joined with Americans in rendering homage to the memory of a great and good man.”72 The residents of Sherbrooke, Canada East, gathered at the town hall for “the largest meeting . . . for many years on every public occasion.” There they expressed shock at the “fiendish and

67. Montreal Transcript, April 29, 1865. See also Quebec Mercury (Montreal, Canada East), April 21, 1865.
68. Hamilton Evening Times, April 19, 1865.
69. U.S. State Department, Assassination of President Lincoln, 228.
70. Victoria Weekly British Colonist, April 25, 1865; Daily British Whig, April 20, 1865; Chatham Weekly Planet, April 27, 1865; Montreal Transcript, April 19, 1865; Sherbrooke Gazette, April 22, 1865; Quebec Mercury, April 19, 1865; Halifax (N.S.) British Colonist, April 18, 1865; Morning Freeman, April 20, 1865; Fredericton (N.B.) Head Quarters, April 19, 1865; Toronto Globe, April 24, 1865.
71. Hamilton Evening Times, April 19, 1865.
72. Victoria Weekly British Colonist, April 25, 1865.
dastardly murder of Abraham Lincoln,” and praised him for determining that “his Country should be forever free from the stain of Slavery.” Montreal’s Mechanic’s Hall hosted a bilingual meeting, “one of the largest and most influential that ever assembled within the wall of the institute,” replete with “persons of all shades of political opinion—of the enemies as well as the friends of the late President’s administration.” Here “the Dead March in Saul was performed on the organ” and politicians condemned the assassination as an “unmanly, un-English, and unchristian act” which robbed the Republic, indeed the world, of a great man “who valued liberty and free institution.” Hamiltonians crammed Mechanic’s Hall, united in their desire to publicly express to “a great nation, our nearest neighbor, and of our own blood and language, our sympathies upon the loss of its honoured Chief Magistrate, under circumstances of unusual and most atrocious wickedness on the part of his murders. We feel for them on . . . the occasion as we believed they would for us on a similar one, were such to occur. And we have the gratification—a melancholy one, necessarily, in its associations—of recording that in Hamilton no fitting mark of neighborly sympathy has been withheld.” In those moments, visitors to the colonies could hardly distinguish where the Union ended and British North America began. As one citizen of Canada West wrote, “anyone attending the memorial service might have supposed they were in New York or Boston, with the American flag flying.” Indeed, across the colonies, tears fell, politicians mused, ministers preached, bells tolled, and Union Jacks at half-mast fluttered aside newly raised American flags giving birth and form to an imagined continental community united in grief over Lincoln.

Cities across the colonies received thank-you letters. In Halifax, for example, M. M. Jackson, the U. S. consul, thanked the people of Nova Scotia for “the expression of the respect and sympathy of a kindred people” and acknowledged that it “will be fully appreciated by the Government and people of the United States.” The citizens of Pictou, Nova Scotia, were likewise given “most heartfelt thanks” for “their sympathy for the great loss this country has sustained . . . by virtue of condolence and the hoisting of their flags at half-mast.”

73. Sherbrooke Gazette, April 22, 1865.
74. Montreal Transcript, April 20, 1865; Quebec Mercury, April 22, 1865.
75. Hamilton Evening Times, April 19, 1865.
76. Hamilton Spectator, April 20, 1865.
77. Halifax (N.S.) Sun and Advertiser, April 24, 1865.
78. Pictou (N.S.) Colonial Standard, April 18, 1865.
The New York Times reported that “the contrast between the icy blasts and shifting snows of January and the balmy air of the leafy month of June, is not greater than the change in public sentiment toward the United States.”\textsuperscript{79} “Even the New York Herald, not given to seeing much good in Canada,” found “it worthy of particular mention that the Canadians have shown friendly sympathy for the stroke which has fallen on their neighbours.”\textsuperscript{80} Halifax’s Acadian Recorder echoed such sincere sentiments, for “now that a dreadful death has removed the ruler of the neighbouring Republic, public opinion has somewhat changed with reference to the actions of the illustrious deceased.”\textsuperscript{81} The Montreal Transcript reported that the colonies’ outpouring of grief “has, we are pleased to note, produced an excellent effect in the neighboring country.”\textsuperscript{82} The Carleton Place Herald concurred, stating that “our neighbors, already, appreciate the attentions which have been paid to the memory of their late chief magistrate, and as their spontaneous universality becomes known to the people of the United States, we may expect the better feeling to enlarge and take the place of that unkindliness which before has driven the people of Canada to prepare for their own security.”\textsuperscript{83} Lincoln’s death and colonial reaction united the Republic and the colonies in shared public grief, which helped thaw frosty relations and cement “a warmer friendship between the two countries.”\textsuperscript{84} This warmer friendship and thawing of icy relations did not preclude a lingering Confederate sympathy in the colonies. While Lincoln’s cult of celebrity drew British North Americans to him in death, Jefferson Davis’s celebrity drew Canadians to him in life.

An antebellum haven for Confederates, the colonies remained so after the Civil War, and Confederate communities began to emerge. In Halifax, a wartime “hotbed of Rebel activities,” prominent Confederates such as Commodore Josiah Tattnall, Captain John Wilkinson, and Captain John Taylor Wood made their postbellum homes.\textsuperscript{85} Wood lived out his remaining years unmolested as a merchant, proudly

\textsuperscript{79} New York Times, June 12, 1865. For similar comments see Toronto Leader, April 19, 20, 1865; New York Herald, reprinted in Toronto Globe April 19, 1865; St. Thomas Weekly Dispatch, April 27, 1865.

\textsuperscript{80} Montreal Daily Witness, April 18, 1865.

\textsuperscript{81} Acadian Recorder, April 19, 1865.

\textsuperscript{82} Montreal Transcript, April 24, 1865.

\textsuperscript{83} Carleton Place (Canada West) Herald, April 26, 1865.

\textsuperscript{84} Hamilton Evening Times, April 19, 1865.

displaying the Confederate flag atop his business. Before his death in 1904, Wood chose burial in Halifax’s Camp Hill Cemetery under a stone marked clearly with his Confederate credentials. Niagara-on-the-Lake, on the border of Canada West and New York State, served as the headquarters for Confederates in exile. It represented the largest Confederate population in the colonies, with such prominent Confederate luminaries as Generals John C. Breckinridge, Jubal A. Early, John B. Hood, and John S. Preston and diplomat James Mason, among others, calling the village home. It was a home they were most welcome in, for as the Niagara Mail reported, “[i]t is a subject of great pride to the Canadians that they can offer the hospitality of their soil and the shelter of the British flag to so many worthy men.”

It is not surprising that in this village, Confederates and British North Americans gathered to welcome Jefferson Davis in 1867.

Following his release on bail from Fort Monroe, Virginia, Davis slipped relatively unnoticed into Montreal to rejoin his wife Varina, their children Maggie, Willy, Jeff, and Winnie, and his mother-in-law, Margaret Howell. His trip to Niagara-on-the-Lake, however, electrified communities along the St. Lawrence River, Lake Ontario, and Lake Erie. British North Americans, attracted in part by his extraordinary notoriety, enthusiastically gathered and greeted Davis. Unaware that his trip itinerary had “been telegraphed from point to point,” crowds surprised Davis during his stop in Kingston, resulting in “a delay of two hours” as eager Kingstonians pressed “around the President with cheers and congratulations, each begging to shake hands with him” as “heartfelt cheers” filled the air. In Toronto the scene replicated itself as “between six and seven thousand persons” welcomed Davis at “Milloy & Co.’s wharf at the foot of Young Street” as “all the Confederates in the City, besides large numbers of Canadians, paid their respects to him.” President Davis “was received with the most enthusiastic cheering.” Awestruck by his presence, the crowd surged forward with “everybody anxious to claps the hand of the fallen hero” and “it was only for the constables that the distinguished man succeeded in getting through the surging and excited mass of enthusiastic spectators.” Davis’s celebrity status attracted crowds during his brief visit to Toronto. Former Confederate Major McLean of the 13th Infantry arranged for Davis to

86. Toronto Globe, May 31, 1930.
89. Toronto Leader, reprinted in Cincinnati Daily Enquirer June 3, 1867.
inspect the troops. McLean “turned out the men with their arms, and passed by” Davis. Davis attended the wedding of Mr. Hyde and Miss Benson at St. James Church. Following “the ceremony, the organ struck up ‘Maryland, My Maryland,’ and as Mr. Davis was going out of the church . . . a large crowd collected outside [and] cheered lustily.”

Later that day, Davis, accompanied by James Mason and George T. Denison, departed Toronto for Niagara-on-the-Lake. There his celebrity shone brightly as “nearly the whole population were at the wharf to meet him many doubtless impelled by curiosity to see one not only well-known to the world from his high public position, but whose cruel and brutal treatment by the enemy after he fell into their power has made his name a household word in nearly every hut, as well as every place. There was also a large proportion who were anxious to evince their kind sympathy for the fallen chief.” Confederates and sympathizers feted Davis with “a reception and the town band serenaded him,” playing songs of the Old South and the Confederacy. A portion of the crowd retired to the home of James Mason. There, as Confederate and British flags fluttered and the bands struck up ‘The Bonnie Blue Flag” and “Dixie,” Davis gave his only speech on Canadian soil. He thanked Canadians: “the honor . . . shown to me . . . shows that true British manhood to which misfortune is always attractive. May peace and prosperity be forever the blessing of Canada, for she has been, the asylum for many of my friends, as she is now an asylum to myself. I hope that Canada may forever remain a part of the British Empire, and may God bless you all, and the British flag never cease to wave over you.” Vigorous applause and “three hearty cheers for ‘Jeff Davis’” followed.

Montreal proved equally hospitable as the Davis family mingled among the Montreal elite. Davis and other prominent Confederates, including General William H. Carroll and Colonel J. M. Vernon, helped Captain J. G. Ryan raise funds in Montreal for “the widows and orphans of the Southern states” through plays produced at the Royal Theatre. On July 17, 1867, Davis attended a production of The Rivals, and audience members “burst forth” with “loud cheers and hurrahs, hats were tossed in the air, ladies waved their handkerchiefs and the

90. *Baltimore Sun*, June 6, 1867.
name of” Jefferson Davis “rang loud and long from pit to dome. . . . The cry of ‘Dixie,’ ‘Dixie,’ ‘Dixie,’ echoed and reechoed as the orchestra sounded forth that air so sacred to Southerners” and Montreal’s Confederate sympathizers. 94 One audience member jumped to his feet, yelling, “We shall live to see the South a nation yet,” at which there was a reverent “amen” from the crowd.95 The “walls of the building re-echoed cheers, seldom heard before in the Theatre Royal.”96 Captain Ryan, clearly astonished by the pro-Confederate crowd, stated, as many had before him, “I wish England had recognized the South, and saved her from her present degradation, and her gallant hero from exile.”97 While Canadians wildly cheered and enthusiastically applauded, the New York Times and the Chicago Tribune sneered. The Tribune sharply criticized “the Canadians” for being “unmistakably full . . . of sympathy with Davis” and speaking “of him as the President.”98 The Times scoffed at Canada for permitting Davis to live “like a retired monarch courted by the Canadians and worshipped by those who followed his fortunes.”99

Davis, however, led anything but a royal life. He spent much of his time in the colonies preoccupied with his coming trial and his financial inability to look after his family. Such concerns led Davis, in October 1867, to flee the noise and attention of Montreal for the pastoral, less expensive, and familiar nature of Lennoxville, Canada East, where the family settled into the British-American Hotel. Jefferson Davis Jr. enrolled in nearby Bishop’s College, where his American classmates frequently taunted him by singing “John Brown’s Body.”100 Young Jeff and his friends, British North Americans and Confederates alike, shot back by singing, “But we’ll fight for you, Jeff Davis, Along the Southern shore.”101 Northern sympathizers subjected Davis to more than verbal abuse, as threatening letters revealed a murder plot.102

94. *New York Times*, July 20, 1867. See also *Baltimore Sun*, July 20, 1867; *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, July 26, 1867. It is quite likely that Captain J. G. Ryan was the same Jonathan George Ryan who edited a Jacksonville, Mississippi, newspaper cheering Lincoln’s assassination.

95. *Chicago Tribune*, July 26, 1867.

96. *Augusta (Ga.) Daily Constitutionalist*, July 28, 1867.


98. *Chicago Tribune*, July 26, 1867.


Despite all of the cheers and sympathy the colonies heaped on Davis following the Civil War, his death elicited none of the visceral reactions or outpourings of grief that followed Lincoln’s assassination. Perhaps Davis’s celebrity faded over time or the regular nature of his death, as opposed to Lincoln’s traumatic assassination, account for Canadians’ less emotional reaction. Although most papers in the colonies carried news of Davis’s death, few praised or condemned the leader of the Confederacy in the ways that the newspapers of 1865 had for Lincoln.

Varina Davis continued to visit Canada following her husband’s death. The Toronto Mail reported that Mrs. Davis held “Canada very dear to her; the kindness shown her and her distinguished husband by Canadians shortly after the war will ever cause her to look upon them as friend and their country—a place of rest.” Canada was indeed a place of rest for Varina’s mother; Margaret Howell lies buried beneath the rich soil of Montreal’s Mont Royal Cemetery. Yet on Varina’s death, the newspapers acknowledged the event as they did Davis’s but failed to reflect on it in any meaningful way.

Nonetheless, it is Jefferson Davis, rather than Abraham Lincoln, who boasts a commemorative plaque in Canada. Lincoln boasts no such physical memorial on Canadian soil. His legacy lingers in a more influential way. Following his assassination and the genuine outpouring of grief radiating from the colonies, flare-ups occurred between the new Dominion of Canada and the Republic over the Fenian Raids, Thomas D’Arcy McGee’s assassination, the Alabama Claims, Seward’s drive to annex British Columbia, and the Washington Treaty of 1871, to name a few. Yet relations remained stable and strong.

Lincoln continued to guide Canadians, especially in times of great national consternation. On Lincoln’s one-hundredth birthday in 1909, Victoria’s Centenary Church hosted a well-attended celebration. With “the church handsomely decorated with American flags” and “suitable American songs” playing, Reverend S. J. Thompson drew “conclusions from the life of Lincoln as applied to the problems of the day.” The Calgary Herald, on that same occasion, called for Canadians, “Americans, and all the people of the earth” to “join . . . in doing honour to the memory of [Abraham Lincoln] whose proudest monument shall be the broken fetters of the slave.”

As Canada stood on the cusp on World War II, Hamiltonians formed the Lincoln Fellowship. From 1939 to 2007, the fellowship remained dedicated to preserving and promoting Lincoln, the friend of democracy. On the occasion of Lincoln’s 132nd birthday and in the midst of World War II, the Winnipeg Evening Tribune stressed the significance that Lincoln held for Canadians in that “[t]he ‘New Order’ proclaimed by Hitler would place a ‘master nation’ over lesser breeds. Against this champion of the new slavery, Lincoln, the prophet of democracy, speaks quietly and insistently of the victory of common humanity.”

That same birthday also marked the first time Canada officially celebrated Lincoln’s birthday. Leonard W. Brockington, at the behest of Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King, attended the ceremonies in Springfield, Illinois. There Brockington stated that “Lincoln has become part of Life in Canada... His speeches are in our schoolbooks, our pupils learn the Gettysburg address.” Brockington brought Mackenzie King’s words to the crowd, stating the prime minister’s “privilege of sharing in homage to the memory of the man who, above all men personified the cause of the union and liberty. That cause is at stake in the race of forces that are seeking to divide and destroy. This occasion is surely symbolic of the unity of the people of this continent in defence of their freedom.”

In 1989, as Canada faced the prospect of a separate Quebec, politician Preston Manning invoked Lincoln: “On behalf of my fellow Western Canadians. We do not want nor do we intend to leave this house ourselves. We will, however, insist that it cease to be divided.” In the wake of Quebec’s narrow defeat in the 1995 referendum on separation and the continuing conversations on unity, Canada searches for an Abraham Lincoln to remind the various factions, “We are not enemies but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break, our bonds of affection.” As Canadian blood soaked the soil of Afghanistan, politicians frequently reminded Canadians to “strive to finish this work we are in... to care for him

107. Winnipeg Evening Tribune, February 12, 1941.
108. Ottawa Citizen, February 11, 1941. Mackenzie King’s fascination with Lincoln was well known, and his diary reveals Lincoln’s influence on Mackenzie King and his policies. In 1946, on the occasion of King’s seventy-second birthday, his cabinet presented him with replicas of Lincoln’s death mask and casts of his hands, and a program from Ford’s Theater, all of which are currently on display at Laurier House in Ottawa. See Diaries of William Lyon Mackenzie King, National Archives of Canada, Ottawa, Ontario; Heritage Ottawa 1979 (7): 1.
who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and Orphan.” 111

The year 2017 will mark the 150th birthday of Canada. It will also mark the unveiling of a new monument at Upper Canada Village near Morrisburg, Ontario, which is in honor of Canadians who served in the Civil War. No doubt Lincoln’s words will be front and center at the unveiling.

Largely because of his death and the colonies’ overwhelming, spontaneous, and sincere response to it, Lincoln continues to influence the Canadian people. The cathartic mourning brought on by his dramatic assassination revealed itself in public collective mourning; public mourning spurred by not only his horrifying death and ensuing celebrity but also the tight ties of blood, history, and geography uniting the colonies and the Republic in ways foreign to other nations. Lincoln in death became perhaps what he was not or might not have been in life: the great emancipator, the universal citizen, and the ultimate defender of democracy. These images of Lincoln forged in the immediate aftermath of his assassination helped thaw relations between the Union and British North America and certainly contributed in some fashion to the remarkable stability between the United States and Canada. While Davis’s celebrity dissipated with his death, Lincoln in death looms larger perhaps in the Canadian consciousness then he did in life.