

Report of the Annual Meeting

Rapports annuels de la Société historique du Canada

Report of the Annual Meeting

The Study of American History in Canada Universities

Wallace D. Farnham

Volume 37, Number 1, 1958

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/300571ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/300571ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

The Canadian Historical Association/La Société historique du Canada

ISSN

0317-0594 (print)

1712-9095 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this article

Farnham, W. D. (1958). The Study of American History in Canada Universities. *Report of the Annual Meeting / Rapports annuels de la Société historique du Canada*, 37(1), 63–76. <https://doi.org/10.7202/300571ar>

All rights reserved © The Canadian Historical Association/La Société historique du Canada, 1958

This document is protected by copyright law. Use of the services of Érudit (including reproduction) is subject to its terms and conditions, which can be viewed online.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/en/users/policy-on-use/>

érudit

This article is disseminated and preserved by Érudit.

Érudit is a non-profit inter-university consortium of the Université de Montréal, Université Laval, and the Université du Québec à Montréal. Its mission is to promote and disseminate research.

<https://www.erudit.org/en/>

THE STUDY OF AMERICAN HISTORY IN CANADIAN UNIVERSITIES

WALLACE D. FARNHAM
University of Alberta

Approximately two years ago certain officials of the University of Alberta concluded that it was time to employ a specialist in the history of the United States and to permit him to devote his full time to that subject. They decided, further, that this person might suitably be a native American. The grave results of this latter decision are evident to your eyes. The decision to tolerate a full-time American historian did not appear at first to be revolutionary, for curiosity and concern about things American seem as lively in the ivory towers as they are on Parliament Hill. Subsequently, casual inquiry yielded accumulating evidence that the step was more novel than had been supposed, that historians of the United States were about as uncommon as the whooping crane that flies its lonely path between the two countries. The discourse to which you have subjected yourselves issues from that observation. It is in the nature of a census of American history study in Canada's universities, plus some remarks on the value of such study and a few suggestions for change.

We should probably get general assent to a proposition that Canadians should know something about the history of the United States. How much they should know is very likely debatable, and I should therefore like to spend a few minutes reviewing the case for the study of American history in this country. There would seem to be two fundamental reasons for studying the history of anything: (1) it appears to be related to some other subject in which we are interested; and (2) it has inherent interest for us. If we were addicted to the use of jargon, we might say that historical subjects are of either "derived" or "intrinsic" importance.

Clearly the history of the United States bears heavily upon at least two other subjects about which many Canadians are greatly concerned: Canada, and the plight of our contemporary world. Toward Canada the United States stands in the unorthodox relationship of parent and brother at the same time. Canada is probably unique, and very unbiological, in that it has three parents. We seldom overlook the British; those of us who speak English too often forget the French; and some think of the Americans as the inevitable rascal who is best cut down from the family tree and interred in some remote recess. Still, when we come upon the Loyalists, or the War of 1812, or the Methodists, we are obliged to exhume the old man for hasty examination. As a brother the United

States may sometimes seem to need to be shut out of the house. Yet some of his activities have been enough like our own that we grudgingly make comparisons in the hope of learning something about ourselves. Both have wrestled with frontiers, federal government, and disgruntled farmers, and there may be merit in comparing the results.

The enormous importance of the United States in the world in our day is hardly debatable, though some may think it unfortunate. Whether we consider the current stage of man's perennial crisis to be the threat of extermination, of Big Brother, or of Brave New World, our attention rests much of the time upon the United States. As historians we inevitably ponder not only the current behaviour of Americans, but also how they got that way. Along with the recent furious zeal to "explain" Russia, the Far East, and twentieth century Europe, we attempt to understand the nation that has given us Secretary Dulles, Senator McCarthy, and Elvis Presley.

It is apparent that the intelligent, responsible Canadian will have to absorb United States history in very sizable doses. The exact content of the prescription will probably be debated. Some persons will call for what seems the rule of efficiency. Under this device, persons studying the history of Canada dart briefly across the border each time their investigation suggests that the American may have had a hand in the Canadian stew, or have brewed a similar one. Such excursions would occur in 1775, 1812, 1837, and so on. Similarly, the student of contemporary issues would identify current American traits, reverse his gears, and rumble backward through time gathering evidence relating to isolationism, or treatment of Negroes, or presidential holidays. The efficiency approach yields courses on "The Rise of the United States to World Power", textbook paragraphs on the "War Hawks", and articles on the frontier hypothesis. The approach can be useful. It can also be crippling, and very inefficient in the long run. We may misunderstand topics that we have pulled from their context; we may overlook items that would turn up in a more systematic search; and we may remain quite innocent of any knowledge affecting the unforeseen problems that will torment us the day after tomorrow. We come down to what the scientists are calling "basic research". The man who discovered penicillin was not looking for it. It seems likely that Canadians who "derive" an interest in American history from their other concerns may proceed most efficiently in the long run by studying American history systematically and comprehensively, or by insuring that someone who shares their perspective does so.

We are thus led to the second reason for studying American or any other history, its intrinsic interest or importance. People reputedly peer out at their neighbors to appease idle curiosity, among other reasons. To say it another way, they wish to observe how another human being

conducts himself. A wise man has remarked that "an understanding of human life is the general theme and the ultimate aim of historical knowledge".¹ The historian as humanist studies the varied experiences of man in order the better to comprehend his nature. He will be doing the "basic research" that is ultimately profitable also to others whose immediate concern may range from the cold war to Canadian wheat markets. His subject is limited only by the bounds of the human race. It is as proper for him to study the history of other nations as that of his own. While some historians in Canada will conceive a humane interest in other Canadians, some will look elsewhere, which may mean any place from the United States to Outer Mongolia. Some people arouse our interest more readily than others; the student of the fifth century B.C. is more likely to study the Greeks than the Scythians. The student of modern history has a wide choice, among whom the Americans must be rated bright prospects. The American has seemed a baffling "new man" to generations of observers before as well as after Crèvecoeur sought to explain him, and book royalties have sustained many a European who crossed the Atlantic and returned to clear up the mystery for his countrymen. What people has more spectacularly acted out to happy or ominous conclusion the salient modern themes of democracy, progress, and industrialism? Where is the nation that has more dramatically unravelled the threads of man's nature than the millions who burst with little restraint upon what seemed limitless natural wealth? The American record offers a full portion of heroes and scoundrels, of hope and tragedy, of nobility and baseness. United States history is sometimes inspiring and sometimes disgusting, but it is not often dull. Its intrinsic qualities should commend it to significant numbers of Canadians.

I should like to suggest, with a trepidation I freely confess, that although some Canadians appear to study American history very successfully, too few study it for the reasons I have discussed, and that on the whole it would repay greatly increased attention.

As many of you know, this paper really has a great many authors. Several months ago the heads of the history departments in twenty-three universities found in their mail a questionnaire calling for seemingly endless details about their courses, instructors, and students in the field of United States history. Librarians in the same universities received appeals for information that might furnish clues to the contents of their shelves on the same topic. These questionnaires were no less nuisances than is normal, but the returns were excellent, coming from twenty-two departments and twenty libraries.² I did not canvass the junior colleges

¹ Ernst Cassirer, *An Essay on Man: An Introduction to a Philosophy of Human Culture* (Doubleday Anchor Book, New York, 1953), p. 232.

² The following history departments replied and form the basis of my analysis: Acadia, Alberta, Bishop's, British Columbia, Carleton, Dalhousie, Sir George Williams, Laval, McGill, McMaster, Manitoba, Memorial, Montreal, Mt. Allison, New

or the university branches such as those at Victoria and Calgary. The evidence that I am about to discuss is not exhaustive, therefore; but it is nearly so, and I believe it to be representative.

The necessity of studying some American history is generally admitted in Canadian history departments. Twenty-one of the twenty-two departments reporting offer at least one course devoted entirely to some aspect of United States history. Ten have more than one complete course, and two (Toronto and Alberta) offer four courses. Several of these courses are given only in alternate years, however, and only fifteen departments offer at least one complete course each year. In addition, six departments offer other courses in which the United States gets significant attention: less than 100 per cent of the time but more than $33 \frac{1}{3}$ per cent; such courses typically involve both Canada and the United States.

With a few exceptions the enrolment in these courses is small. Our figures come from sixteen universities, excluding Laval and Montreal because their classifications are different and a few others that fell victim to ambiguities in the questionnaire. Of all the students taking history courses in these departments in each of the past two years, just under 10 per cent were enrolled in courses in which at least one-third of the time was devoted to the United States. Nearly all of these students were undergraduates, among whom those pursuing an honours degree were approximately twice as likely as the rest to be studying American history; I shall not attempt to decide whether American history has more inherent appeal for ambitious students or whether honours students merely have more time to branch out from Canadian history. But these figures are averages, and like most averages they conceal at least part of the truth. If we exclude Toronto, Queens, and Alberta, for example, the percentage of honours students rises somewhat, but that of all students falls sharply, to 4.3 in 1956-1957 and 6.5 in 1957-1958. The range among universities is surprisingly wide, from around 3 per cent at Memorial University of Newfoundland and the University of British Columbia to over 25 per cent at Toronto, Queens, and Alberta. At nine of the universities the type of course we are discussing is compulsory, either for the honours or the general degree. Laval demands two such courses. As for graduate specialization: in the year just finished two graduate students wrote Master's theses wholly in the field of American history; there was no doctoral research. Obviously practice in these matters is uneven. We may conclude with some assurance, however, that a quite substantial number of those who study history in Canada hear very little of the United States.

Brunswick, Ottawa, Queen's, Royal Military College, Saskatchewan, Toronto, United, and Western Ontario. A questionnaire was also sent to St. Francis Xavier. Library questionnaires went to the same Universities and were returned by all except Sir George Williams, McMaster, and Ottawa. The questionnaires remain in my possession.

The fact that American history may be studied in some form in every Canadian university is gratifying, but the enrolment is not; and it occurs to me that the mere existence of such courses is not necessarily a valid index of our interest in the subject. Are not such courses practically unavoidable in our time? Any department might well feel professionally embarrassed without one, even if it is only taught in alternate years to six students. In practice our interests and efforts are probably better reflected in the qualifications of persons we choose for our departments, in the subjects of our research, and in the fields for which we request library materials. In each of these matters we have a considerable range of choices. The choices we have made so far betray an interest in American history that is somewhat less than passionate.

The composite professor in American history courses, if I may take the liberty of fabricating one, is a native Canadian who has earned a Ph.D. from a North American university, specializes in Canadian history and spends most of his time teaching it, and has done no research in American history. More specifically, thirty persons are reported to have taught courses including substantial amounts of United States history during the last two years. Twenty-six are natives of Canada, and two of the others are American. Of the thirty, thirteen received their highest degree from American universities, eleven from Canadian, and six from English universities. Most are probably acquainted with the United States from cultural contacts and travel, though I was unable to devise suitable questions on these points. Nine of our professors are specialists in Canadian history. Nine more report a dual specialty in Canadian and American history; I suspect, however, that most of these are Canadian historians who also teach American history, for only one lists research in the latter field, and only one holds membership in the principal society of American history. Five professors are primarily interested in the Empire and Commonwealth, and the others in British or European subjects. Apparently only one regards the United States as his primary interest. The distribution of teaching time is usually subject to a number of pressures, and only the larger departments have much flexibility in the matter. It is striking, however, that there are only two full-time teachers of American history in Canada, and three others who devote as much as half of their time to the subject. Two of those who teach American history are members of the leading professional group in the field, the Mississippi Valley Historical Association. Eight reported research and writing, but three of these had produced only review articles and three others discussions of Canadian-American relations.

It is perilous to set about measuring scholarly competence by any such set of devices. I should certainly not pretend that those who have concentrated on American history invariably teach it more successfully than those who have not. Yet it is one of the conventions of our trade to insist that specialization and research have a bearing upon success in

teaching, and most of us probably accept this at least as a rule of thumb. Our enthusiasms are bound to wear off on our students, and nearly all of us are chiefly enthusiastic about subjects other than American history. And one may say without hesitation that the researches of historians in Canada have added to the understanding of American history only incidentally and as a by-product of our primary efforts. We may allow for exceptions and still conclude that in the historian's circus in Canada the United States is a side show and not a featured act.

Library facilities are not easily measured short of an exhaustive inventory, which I did not request of our librarians. I did inquire of them about selected items, and the reports parallel the evidence we have just reviewed to a point that seems to invite our confidence. All of the twenty libraries that reported receive the *American Historical Review*, and most of them have long files of it. But this is not necessarily significant, for, as you know, this journal does not concentrate on United States history. The leading journal in the field, despite its regional title, is the *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, which is as nearly indispensable in studying American history as a periodical is likely to be. Nine of the twenty libraries receive it. As for other, more specialized journals, nine libraries receive the *William and Mary Quarterly*, six the *Pacific Historical Review*, and three the *Journal of Southern History*. American historians are also blessed, or plagued, with a veritable host of state and local publications, many of them remarkably useful. A few of these dribble into a handful of our libraries, but Toronto and Western Ontario open their shelves to a virtual flood of them. Indeed, these two libraries currently receive approximately fifty and thirty periodicals, respectively, in United States history, and they hold long files of many others. With these two exceptions, Canada's periodical resources for the study of American history can scarcely be described as impressive, either for teaching or for research.

Other types of library facilities are less readily appraised, and my information can be no more than suggestive. It is distressing to learn, though, that half of our universities attempt to teach American history without buying the "New American Nation Series", which will likely be a basic reference for decades. Ten libraries keep files of the *New York Times*; most of the files are short and not one covers half the life of the paper, even though the whole thing may be purchased on microfilm. Other research materials appear to be fragmentary; nine libraries are buying the *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, eight get the *Foreign Relations of the United States*, and only four have any sort of file of the *Congressional Record*. Toronto and Western Ontario appear to have facilities for extensive research. A few other libraries are probably adequate for limited work. Most seem unimpressive, however, and one wonders how some of our departments can find library material for any program in American history of university quality. Altogether we may conclude

that our library acquisitions, for which the teaching staff usually bears chief responsibility, do not reflect the careful attention and planning that might issue from genuine concern for the history of the United States. Library resources in the field, like our professorial activities, require us to believe that we have entertained American history as a necessary subject to which we give perfunctory treatment.

In attempting to define more exactly the state of Canada's interest in the history of her southern neighbor, we may strike an analogy with the growth of American interest in the history of her own southern neighbors. As recent writers have shown, the field of Latin American history has been tilled with growing diligence of late in the United States, and it might with reason be considered a mature study.³ The first step toward maturity, after the romanticism of the nineteenth century writers, was paradoxically a fruit of American nationalism. During the first quarter of this century, when historians in the United States discovered the merits of studying their own nation's past, Herbert Bolton and others turned their eyes upon those portions of the country with a Spanish origin: the "borderlands". Latin American history came to notice in the World War I era, then, as "a broadening of American, i.e. United States, history".⁴ Only in the second quarter of the century did historians in the United States find the history of Latin America worth examining for its own sake, but they have lately been doing so with much industry.

I suggest that Canadian interest in American history is in the "borderlands" stage. For the most part we study American history as part of the history of Canada. The object is to untie the knots of Canadian history by turning up American influences or American parallels. The possibilities are innumerable. They begin with the American colonies, carry through Benedict Arnold, the Loyalists, and the War of 1812, and continue with various democratic currents, federalist political forms, and trade and foreign policy. The articles in our *Canadian Historical Review* touching on the United States deal with these topics. The books we review may be of wide import, but more often they are concerned with frontier problems, the Revolution, or recent foreign relations. The local American journals that come to our libraries, if any come at all, are almost certainly from New York and North Dakota rather than from North Carolina and New Mexico. I have already noted that American history is often taught as "North American" history, by an instructor who is primarily a historian of Canada. Doubtless Canadian history is better understood as a result of this procedure, but we should not imagine that we have comprehended the history of the United States at the same time.

³ Charles Gibson and Benjamin Keen, "Trends of United States Studies in Latin American History", *American Historical Review*, LXII (July, 1957), 855-877.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 858.

I should be interested to know — and I emphasize that I do not now know — whether the “borderland” concern for American history also describes Canadian interest in other nations. Certainly it would not in many cases. But would it be in any sense true that for some of us the study of medieval and modern Britain, which appears to occupy a large number of those who do not study Canada, is really an indirect method of studying Canadian history? The “borderlands” treatment of history has infinite potentialities and apparently widespread application. In the Alberta public schools, at any rate, the Grade X Social Studies course on the ancient world bears the remarkable title, “Ancient Origins of Canadian Civilisation”.⁵ If Alberta schools taught enough American history to support a title, which they do not, a suitable phrasing might be, “American Background of Modern Canada”. The attitude reminds one of a reported statue in the Soviet Union honoring the poet Pushkin, in which an enormous figure of Stalin stood with a volume of Pushkin’s writings in one hand.

I confess to gross ignorance of the history of history in Canada, and lest you conclude that this rash American should be shown to the door, I hasten to recall that the views I have offered are not original, except as to form. They have circulated in the meetings of this Association, and perhaps elsewhere, for at least thirty years. After a decade of post-World War I nationalist enthusiasms, D. C. Harvey remarked of historians in Canada that “with very few exceptions they have confined themselves to Canadian history”.⁶ Seven years later Chester W. New asserted that his “strongest conviction in respect to the study and teaching of history in Canada at the present time is that too much emphasis is being placed on Canadian history”. This reflected an unfortunate form of nationalism, he declared. “At this formative stage of our national culture surely there is more patriotism to be served in attempting to rescue the thinking of our people from its provincialism, its isolationism, and the crasser aspects of its materialism, than in focussing their attention on purely Canadian history”.⁷ As World War II was closing Professor Underhill commented with apparent disapproval that “Canadian historians never write anything except about Canada”.⁸ In his presidential address the following year he lamented Canada’s colonialism in the world of ideas. “One sign of this colonialism in our intellectual world is to be seen in the present state of Canadian historiography. The guild of Canadian historians confine their activities very largely to the writing of

⁵ Province of Alberta, Department of Education, *Senior High School Curriculum Guide: Social Studies* (Edmonton, 1955), p. 14.

⁶ D. C. Harvey, “Canadian Historians and Present Tendencies in Historical Writing”, *Canadian Historical Association Report*, 1930, p. 22.

⁷ Chester W. New, “The Rebellion of 1837 in its Larger Setting”, *C.H.A. Report*, 1937, p. 5.

⁸ Comment following Walter N. Sage, “Where Stands Canadian History?”, *C.H.A. Report*, 1945, p. 13.

studies in local national history".⁹ And in 1950 Professor Burt observed that "it might have been healthier even for Canadian history if there had been equal encouragement of research in other fields of history".¹⁰

Comments like these make it clear that the United States is not the only country whose history has been slighted, and Americans who wish it may find solace accordingly. The proximity and importance of the United States has made neglect of its history unusually striking, however. Twenty years ago one observer concluded that "For the enormous majority of students, there is no attempt to make American institutions understood *for their own sake*".¹¹ Meanwhile, H. F. Angus remarked that "Neither academic work in Canada, nor literary work as distinct from routine journalism, offers a livelihood to a Canadian who devotes his life to the study of the United States and its people. There is no room in Canada for a specialist on this subject".¹² Our universities almost certainly offer more courses in American history now than they did twenty years ago, and we have seen that there is room for at least some specialists. Yet the remarks of 1938 could still be made in modified form.

Canadian historians who have complained that the history Canadians study is too limited in scope have been ready with diagnoses for the ailment. They are nearly unanimous in detecting an excess of misdirected nationalism. Herbert Butterfield remarked of national history generally that:

New nations are particularly sensitive about their historical past, particularly jingoistic in their national pride. And it seems that small nations, especially if they are new nations too, are liable to be more intense and local in their prejudices—they are sometimes more narrowly self-concentrated than the greater ones.¹³

Butterfield was saying little that R. G. Trotter had not said of Canada in 1943:

... in the process of approaching national maturity, Canada passed between the wars through a period of adolescence and Canadians suffered the discomforts of spirit incident to that process.... Our guild became indeed the spearhead of an introverted national self-consciousness, hypersensitive about the whole situation.¹⁴

The study of American history has borne this ailment in a peculiarly virulent form. The fabled "unguarded frontier" has seemed to many Canadians a chronic peril to their newly-found nationality, and if the

⁹ F. H. Underhill, "Some Reflections on the Liberal Tradition in Canada", *C.H.A. Report*, 1946, p. 7.

¹⁰ A. L. Burt, "Broad Horizons", *C.H.A. Report*, 1950, p. 1.

¹¹ H. L. Stewart, in H. F. Angus, ed., *Canada and Her Great Neighbour* (New Haven, 1938), p. 107.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 342.

¹³ Herbert Butterfield, *History and Human Relations* (New York, 1952), p. 160.

¹⁴ R. G. Trotter, "Aims in the Study and Teaching of History in Canadian Universities Today", *C.H.A. Report*, 1943, p. 56.

frontier lacked guards the schools and universities must provide them. Among the refinements of this sentiment, apparently widespread, is the conviction "that it is humiliating for Canadians to devote more attention to learning about the United States than Americans devote to learning about Canada".¹⁵ Each of us could suggest additional explanations for the inattention to American history. Many universities have been too small to permit much specialization outside Canadian history, which is doubtless their first obligation. Library facilities have been meagre, and American universities are never far away. I wonder also, and this is pure speculation, whether the necessarily frequent glances at the United States along the path of Canadian history have not satisfied many that the Americans were getting their due. Has it perhaps seemed unnecessary to hire specialists in American history because Americans were not difficult to understand? Besides, any alert Canadian could get insight into American life without burying himself in it!

Over the years Americans have yielded to no one in their passion for national history, explained in fashions largely patriotic. State legislatures, prodded by "patriotic" societies, commonly impose the study of American history upon university students. The number of professional historians of the United States runs into the thousands. The remarkable sway of Frederick Jackson Turner over American historians must surely be credited in great part to the nationalistic appeal of his ideas. The evidence could be multiplied. But it is equally true that historical study in the United States has not been monolithic. As early as 1929 Carlton Hayes observed that the United States had "begun to take rank with other countries in the prosecution of researches in the history of Europe and, indeed, of the whole world".¹⁶ In 1952, 65 per cent of the historians in the country listed as their "first specialty" subjects outside the United States.¹⁷ The next year a student of American historiography reported that "almost every portion of the long story of the human race has been the subject of intensive study by Americans in the twentieth century".¹⁸ American neglect of Canadian history is notorious. Yet we are bound to recall that American universities have been hospitable to the major endeavors of two former presidents of this Association, and that standard works on French Canada and on railroad land grants and agrarian movements in Canada came from the pens of Americans employed in American universities.

Meanwhile, we can report that American history is increasingly the subject of serious study outside the United States and, indeed, outside

¹⁵ Angus, *Canada and Her Great Neighbour*, p. 107.

¹⁶ Carlton Hayes, "History", in Dixon R. Fox, ed., *A Quarter Century of Learning, 1904-1929* (New York, 1931), p. 29.

¹⁷ J. F. Wellemeier, Jr., "Survey of United States Historians, 1952, and a Forecast", *American Historical Review*, LXI (January, 1956), 343.

¹⁸ W. Stull Holt, "Historical Scholarship", in Merle Curti, ed., *American Scholarship in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1953), p. 99.

the Western Hemisphere. Professor H. C. Allen recently described the increased attention given the subject in Britain, and he called for still more, "at the cost of teaching less European, and even British, History".¹⁹ Professor Allen and Professor C. P. Hill have edited a collection of quite respectable essays in American history by Britons, reflecting the fact, as they remarked, "that the study of American history in Britain has reached a stage at which seventeen British scholars may have a number of things to say which will be interesting, not only to students and general readers but even to professional historians".²⁰ German scholars are showing serious interest in American history, and the Gesellschaft für Amerika-studien is presently compiling a catalog of American materials available in German archives.²¹ In the Far East, India's Delhi University created in 1955 a lectureship in United States history occupied by a native of India trained in American history in the United States.²² All this is in addition to the host of Americans who annually descend upon the world's universities under subsidy from the Fulbright program. It is not at all unlikely that the history of the United States is more seriously studied in several countries much further from American soil than Canada.

It is not hard to imagine that American history might be studied in Canada with less difficulty now than at any former time. The growing empires of our history departments allow us to do more specializing. Increased numbers of students are waiting with an appetite for American history, in my experience at least, that is gratifying to encounter. Canadians have never been exactly remote from the source materials of American history in the way that the English, for example, have been; and the sources become annually less remote. The number of foundations willing to subsidize travel seems to increase geometrically. Library budgets grow, though often at a glacial rate, and the resources of American libraries are at hand through inter-library loan. Publication and microfilming projects permit any library with money to become a major research center for American history. Whether Canadian nationalism is less sensitive than before to the American peril I am in no position to say. It would be pleasant to believe that Canada's intellectual "colonialism" has given way to maturity in a time when Canada's star is rising. That Americans know little of Canadian history is perfectly true. It is also irrelevant. If American history is worth studying it ought to be studied. And of any "colonials" among us, we might inquire whether one can successfully resist that which he does not understand.

If American history is to be studied for its own sake we might proceed along several paths. Some departments need to offer more

¹⁹ H. C. Allen, *American History in Britain* (London, 1956), p. 19.

²⁰ H. C. Allen and C. P. Hill, *British Essays in American History* (London, 1957), v.

²¹ *American Historical Review*, LXII (July, 1957), 1045.

²² *Pacific Historical Review*, XXV (February, 1956), 109.

courses and some do not. More than new courses we need a serious attitude toward the subject. If we treat it as a subject having high intrinsic value, if we avoid the demonstrably false assumption that it is easy for Canadians to understand Americans, if our purpose is to understand and not merely to explain seeming eccentricities — if we display these attitudes we must inevitably draw in more students and transmit to them such enthusiasm as students ever absorb. Some departments will not be able to hire specialists in American history, but several others might be expected to do so. I see no reason why such specialists should be native Americans, though as a matter of self-interest I must believe that this practice is not automatically disastrous. I do suggest that many Americans would delight in teaching their subject to students for whom it is not “old hat”, in departments not overrun with other American historians, and in universities that contrive a calendar with five months of summer. Of whatever nationality, our teachers of American history are as properly specialists as those who teach Russian or medieval history.

At the same time we must look to our libraries for resources comparable to those we require in other fields. Certainly all libraries should receive the *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* as a minimum and purchase such standard sets as the “New American Nation Series”. Many more should acquire additional journals, build a microfilm file of the *New York Times*, and buy basic sets of sources such as the Jefferson papers and the Foreign Relations series. A half dozen of our libraries could readily provide the materials for graduate and faculty research. Primary sources are issuing from the presses in remarkable quantities: new and exhaustive sets have appeared or will soon appear of the papers of Jefferson, Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, the Adams family, Franklin, Madison, Hamilton, Clay, and Calhoun; the *Journals of the Continental Congress* may be purchased from the Government Printing Office; the fat volumes of Territorial Papers offer materials on western empire and are soon to be augmented by microfilm copies of the mountains of papers not printed.²³ It seems not unlikely that research libraries may in the future consist largely of tidy, narrow shelves of microfilm and microcards paralleled by long rows of projection machines. Hundreds of American newspapers can now be studied in this fashion, early government records are being issued, and rich manuscript collections such as those of the Adams family and the inveterate collector Lyman Draper, have been filmed. If the Lost Cause Press of Louisville avoids the fate of its namesake it will eventually have translated onto microcards every word printed in the South before the Civil War and many printed later. American research libraries are accessible from most of our universities, and we shall always need to visit them. But there is no good reason why

²³ See Clarence E. Carter, “The Territorial Papers of the United States: A Review and a Commentary”, *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XLII (December, 1955), 510-524.

we cannot establish in every major region in Canada research libraries with basic materials for the use of our students and ourselves.

A good many Canadians might insist that the American explanation of American history is more convincing for Americans than for others. American historians have taken some pleasure in iconoclasm and self-criticism, but it seems not unlikely that the chief fault with American history is that it has been largely written by Americans. The opportunity to provide a different perspective should be as alluring to Canadians as it now is to historians in Britain. Undoubtedly a more intensive study of American history would yield fruits in the better understanding of some parts of Canada's past. But Canada's historians should also produce original work on America's wars, her political tussles, and her economic and cultural enterprises in order to illuminate the history of the United States and to sharpen our view of the human comedy in general. Canadians possess unique geographical and psychological advantages for research in the field of United States history, and we might properly expect it to become a major subject of research in this country. The results should find release through Canadian journals and Canadian publishers.

Some universities have created special programs, sometimes impressively known as "institutes", for the cultivation of knowledge of the Far East, or of Russia, or of International Relations. It would be no less appropriate to establish Institutes of American Studies, with special chairs and lectureships, subsidized graduate students, and ambitious library programs. Money ought to be at least as plentiful for these as for existing projects. It taxes the imagination only slightly to think of numbers of well-cushioned American foundations for which such enterprises would be well-nigh irresistible.

The study of American history in Canada on this scale would no more be equivalent to surrender to the United States than our present study of Russian history is equivalent to defeat in the cold war. It would only be evidence that Canadians had shed their "colonial" sensitivity and had turned to mature scholarship in place of national self-justification. Indeed, it might happen that sympathetic study of American history would help in relaxing the suspicion and resentment that often describe popular attitudes toward the United States in Canada. Canadian students of the United States might profitably learn that Americans have often been as uneasy about their northern boundary as Canadians have been about their southern boundary. An English scholar has just written what Canadians might have understood generations ago, that Americans "have talked about their Manifest Destiny even more consistently than they have followed it, and at times the vacuum during a generation of relative territorial stability has been filled, by way of compensation, with an

inordinate amount of talk about their need and right to expand".²⁴ If Canadians, and others, studied more carefully the history of the South and of American Negroes they might regard segregation problems with more patience and sympathy than one sometimes observes. A dispassionate view of American constitutional government might persuade many admirers of parliamentary rule that American methods have not been a "dead loss" and that they differ from Canadian practice more in form than in operation. Many Canadians are aware of these things, but most are obviously quite innocent.

Thus it is not histories of Canadian-American relations that we need so much as histories of the United States by Canadians. I rather regret having introduced the subject of Canadian-American relations at all, for the other arguments for the study of American history seem to me even more persuasive. The Americans form an interesting and significant nation that deserves study for sound intellectual reasons. The "borderland" approach is inadequate and immature. Professor H. C. Allen claimed the right to insist at the University of London "that the advanced and specialized study of the history of the United States shall be a live and vigorous subject at all our universities, and that it be accepted in them as the equal of any other historical subject".²⁵ In the best interests of historical scholarship, we should insist upon the same policy in Canada.

²⁴ John A. Hawgood, "Manifest Destiny", in Allen and Hill, *British Essays*, p. 123.

²⁵ Allen, *American History in Britain*, p. 23.