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News



Growing up

Finding identity in Montreal's Little Burgundy

A Customary Practice

How February became known as Black History Month in Canada

In praise of older structures

Why conservationists think all heritage buildings are 'green'

Quebec Heritage News

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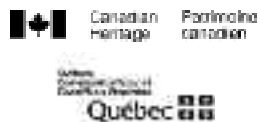
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Cover: Photographer Robert N. Wilkins captures marchers, a few of more than an estimated 2,000, who gathered in downtown Montreal's Dominion Square for a rally and memorial tribute for slain civil rights leader, Martin Luther King, on the afternoon of Sunday, April 7, 1968.

Growing up in Black Montreal

by Dorothy W. Williams

I don't remember the knives but the smells are still sharp, and part of the memories. Growing up Black in Little Burgundy: did I grow up Black, or did I grow up and become Black? Where did it all begin? My experiences of being Black are entwined with my sense of belonging, of community.

It was a multi-ethnic community, with Chinese families sharing my street with French families. And right around my corner was a whole new world: Italian neighbours who lived in their own enclave with smells of wine, spices and other herbs I still don't have words for.

Did I grow to be Black on summer streets so hot we tried to fry eggs on them? Or was it when the taunting, biting sounds of "Negre" or Nigger" rang out? Was it Black to jump on my second-hand bike, holding onto the walls until I could pedal two yards without falling? Was it Black to lug a bottle to the dispensary with a quarter, to bring back enough oil to pour into the oil tank? (Didn't everyone heat with oil?) Maybe it was playing neighbourhood hide-and-seek with my friends, regardless of their colour. Every backyard and

laneway had a possible nook or cranny to hide in. Or, was it instinctively, tacitly, knowing whose houses or yards to avoid because they wouldn't like our kind?

Even with forbidden areas the district of Little Burgundy was "home." Playing, we protected it from imagined foes. And sometimes on the streets we protected it from real ones. Perhaps that was why we all rallied with brooms, sticks and fists on one side of the Lachine Canal to stop a "gang" of Pointe St. Charles kids from coming across the bridge. We protected each other playing in the streets, knowing full well that at the first cry or fracas many adult heads would emerge

from opened windows and door stoops. Even when we wanted to get into mischief, we couldn't wander far from someone's eyes.

This shared feeling of community had its burdens, too. Respect and acknowledgement were expected by our elders. They might know your mother, or your grandparents or uncles: "You didn't say hello to Mr. or Mrs. So-and-So. They told me how rude you were, walking right by them, not even saying hello. Don't do that again."

Growing up Black was different at school, too.

The teachers sometimes made you feel that it was all a waste of time: Their time. It was the same with substitute teachers or student teachers from university. More than once we'd hear how they'd been given "the assignment from hell" because their fieldwork had brought them into our school. Maybe they were afraid? But I don't remember any knives.

Now I know what our school was to them. It's no longer a mystery. They did not see me. I was Negro. I was Black, assuredly "a problem." I was an aberration on the learn-

ing curve perhaps, because how could I possibly understand Orwell's 1984 in Grade 5? After all, were we not just cultural aberrations on I.Q. tests? Their textbooks said we were.

Our classes were sometimes 50 percent Black. Why did I notice that only when they took the annual class picture? Recess at elementary school was not always a racial battlefield. Yes there was an occasional spat, but wasn't it because those kids came from other parts of "home," from below the tracks, or on the west side of our





neighbourhood? They lived two blocks away and yet, I was sure that they weren't like us. "They don't understand..." This was the familiar refrain of my memory. Was all the conflict necessary simply because I was growing up Black?

Yet growing up a Black girl, I knew I had power. Many strengths buttressed me. I was not a child lost to low expectations. My mother believed in me and encouraged me. I was the oldest girl. Would it not be natural that she would depend upon me? The responsibility for the house in my mother's absence was heavy but was also character-building. Believe me, having younger brothers builds character.

Church did that too—built character, I mean. As long as our tight braids stretched our scalps, and the ribbons or pastel clips adorned them symmetrically, church attendance was permitted. Any church.

Growing up Black. That could mean maybe attending Anglican, Catholic, Gospel Hall, United or the non-denominational missions. Alternating was allowed if you weren't too conspicuous or loud. Some didn't always like our kind, you know.

It was this sense of difference and the need to truly belong that filled the halls of the Negro Community Centre up the street. We filled our after-school time, and even our Saturdays in that building with cooking classes, woodworking, crafts, sports, games, piano, ballet, majorettes, tap dancing and marching band. No one said these activities were only for Blacks and so

our community expanded with local neighbourhood kids and weekend friends, Black kids brought in from Verdun, St. Henri, Mile-End, Chateauguy, NDG or Côte-des-Neiges. With the guidance of the centre staff and the elders around us, we were often challenged to be the best we could and to face life's obstacles head-on. But we were not fooled—our dreams had their limits or so we thought.

I grew up at a time when Blacks in Montreal looked south and also dared to dream that real and substantial change was imminent, imminent, but when? For the impatient few the waiting was intolerable and they either gave up or dropped out. For the rest, many were content to quietly live their lives. For a small minority the goal was to climb up ever higher, to push the boundaries, to be the first to get a B.A. and to move beyond becoming first in their family to ever get a Masters. We were the lucky generation, as we no longer had to leave the city to get our education like some of our parents had had to. We were a blessed generation because as graduates we did not expect to work simply as maids or porters.

On our parents' shoulders my generation marched on knowing change was coming and we witnessed "Montreal firsts": our first Black police officer, our first Black judge, our first Black MP, our first Black MNA, our first Black at Rideau Hall and now, to the south, the first African-American at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

Opinion

Hope for a proud symbol by Leonard Jordaan

Plans for what is being billed as the New British Village, a refurbished and refreshed Gaspesian British Heritage Village, have gained enthusiastic endorsement by two of the major players on the national and international museum scene: Phyllis Lambert, founder and director emeritus of the Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montreal, and Francine Lelièvre, founder and director of Musée Pointe-à-Callières, also in Montreal.

“Team Britville,” as we local citizens working to re-energize the heritage complex call ourselves, are in the midst of redesigning the Village for its 20th season, with a focus on ten of the site’s 22 heritage buildings.

Once refreshed, cleaned and repaired they will be linked by a new network of boardwalks leading to a British Pub, English Garden and an exhibition labeled, *Everyday Treasures of the Village*. A photographic exhibit is also planned to introduce visitors to some of the present-day dwellers who are descendants of the original settlers.

Impressed by the idea of having year-round enterprises operate at the site, both Lambert and Lelièvre have expressed support for several new initia-

region.

The collection of heritage buildings at New Richmond on the Chaleur Bay coast was originally amassed between 1984 and 1989 during the bicentennial of Loyalist immigration to the Gaspé peninsula. It was a period in Quebec’s history marked by the linguistic changing of the guard triggered by Bill 101, a time that witnessed large numbers of anglophones leaving both the region and



the province.

In the midst of this turmoil, founders of the original heritage village decided not only to stay in the region, but also to create a symbol of pride for the local English-speaking community. The Village’s collection of humble 19th

which were moved to land of historical significance to the early settlers.

A fake in the sense of being a repository site, the Gaspé heritage village is quite different from various idealized historical reconstructions such as the Acadian Village in New Brunswick and the Fortress of Louisbourg in Cape Breton. Most of the buildings that make up the complex were well-used and rather tired when they were saved, having already experienced long working lives. Their 20-year stint as a tourist attraction has only augmented this patina of age—a patina which, when preserved, is a sign of their authenticity.

While the vigour of the effort to pay tribute to the Gaspé region’s anglophone heritage must be admired, the tension and bitterness surrounding application of Quebec’s Charter of the French Language also generated considerable paranoia; there were those on the side of the Village who exhibited a “siege mentality” at times, while those in control of public funding needed to operate the site seemed indifferent at best, resulting in a long and often difficult transition period.

Common sense precludes the total reliance on tourism as a source of income in a region with a season as short as that of the Gaspé

tives aimed at animating particular buildings, creating a “New British Village” brand of products, and re-engaging the greater community. To prosper, they agree that the Village has to become an integral part of the cultural and economic life of the greater Gaspesian

and early 20th century houses are typical of colonists’ practical response to the new, harsh realities of putting down roots in the region. Rather than letting them be demolished or changed beyond recognition, a few original supporters of the Village initiative donated buildings

Keeping up more than 20 buildings on a site the size of almost 70 football fields is a quixotic undertaking, particularly if only for a brief summer tourist season. The very name of the site has been a marketing nightmare — Village

Gaspésien de l'Héritage Britannique / Gaspesian British Heritage Village—sounding more like a recipe than a cultural attraction. And what to do with a logo that flaunts the Union Jack? An atavistic symbol of British colonial rule which is almost guaranteed to turn off Quebec's French-speaking majority and which, quite frankly, is also anathema to large numbers of anglophones, including those who identify with Irish, Scots or Welsh ancestry.

Add to this a setting that has been chronically under-utilized for too many years. The Village itself only occupies a small section of the overall acreage. One of too few effective uses is the annual Bluegrass Festival that uses an old airstrip. But Duthie's Point, with its wonderful views, beach and significant industrial past, is essentially ignored.

Despite a plethora of unimplemented studies, reports and plans and recently changing managers, the Village still enjoys great support by those living in New Richmond and, increasingly, the broader cultural and tourist sectors.

Solutions – Crucial to its redevelopment, at the heart of the Village is its mission to act as a bridge between the various regional communities.

A way to overcome the issues of name and logo would be to resurrect a symbol that depicts the area's historical origins of ship building. Situating the Village in this broader context recreates it as a major commercial centre rich with



multicultural exchanges.

Common sense precludes the total reliance on tourism as a source of income in a region with a season as short as that of the Gaspé, but allows it to fit in with other areas of interest such as the Forest Trails, the Airstrip/Festival zone, and Duthie's Point itself, thus a total destination point.

Recognizing the limited tourist base, plans are in the works for the creation of a cultural exchange where the people of the region gather, share and cooperate in an institution central to their socio-economic needs.

The Village will once again become a cohesive place based on shared genetic and traditional heritage. A place to explore similarities, bridge differences and create community models of the future. Chronically under-employed worker-volunteers will be helped to create mul-

multiple small enterprises or cottage industries in selected buildings with the products marketed as the Village Brand.

Another untold story to date is the progression of the region from a sail-based economy to one that has become one increasingly reliant on wind power, an opportunity for the Village to parlay its unique position, physically and historically, into not only a unique attraction for tourists but a symbol for the whole peninsula, and of the vitality of the Gaspesian spirit.

The revitalized site would thus incorporate year-round commercial activity based on traditional craft skills and techniques adapted to the changing economic base, emphasizing bilingual training, and encouraging the preservation and restoration of the architectural heritage of the peninsula—all in the context of the 21st century technologies.

The members of Team Britville are proud of its building momentum that suggests the upcoming 20th season will be a roaring.

Leonard Jordaan, who develops promotional materials for print and website publications, is currently working with Team Britville to help implement their vision of a successful, revitalized New British Village on the Gaspé coast. He also serves on the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network Board of Directors.

Letter

The show still goes on

In the last edition of *Quebec Heritage News* (Nov-Dec 2008) two excellent articles about English-language theatre in Quebec were featured. However, one very successful local group, Theatre Morin Heights, was not mentioned. This entirely volunteer company has been entertaining our local community since at least 1984. The group was founded by Sarah Soley, who for several years ran Books & Things, a stationary and bookstore, in Morin Heights village, and by Penny Rose, who has a wide experience as a impresario of musical festivals and

other types of events.

After Sarah Soley retired and her business was closed, this group had a few thin years, but Penny Rose and a few other interested volunteers revitalized the effort in 2002, and have been putting on comedies, mysteries and one very interesting historical drama, ever since. This historical piece, *Nature's Victory*, written by local author, Don Stewart, was based on the pioneer life of Irish settlers in the Laurentians.

Theatre Morin Heights productions are now held in November, and they include a short one-act piece with the Christmas Choral offering at the Morin Heights United Church. Usually they

produce three performances of each play over a weekend, with one show being a Sunday matinee.

As there is really no suitable theatre venue in Morin Heights, this company has had to be very inventive with locations, stores, schools, restaurants, church halls, and recently the dining room of Ski Morin Heights, have served as playhouses. There is a long-term municipal plan to build a real community centre, and hopefully this will contain more adequate facilities.

*Sandra Stock
Morin Heights, QC*

TIMELINES

In praise of older structures

Why conservationists think all heritage buildings are 'green'

by Dwane Wilkin

The question of whether to preserve or destroy old buildings in Canada is often framed narrowly in terms of monetary costs and benefits, even where properties of remarkable historical or architectural value are at stake. In spite of decades of government legislation intended to recognize and protect them, critics complain that heritage buildings continue to be jeopardized by the false economy of short-term profits.

Now some heritage activists are following a different tack; instead of trying to invoke history as a defence for Canada's dwindling stock of 19th and early 20th architecture, conservationists in Ontario say historic buildings are good for the environment. They are calling for a shift in public policy to adjust the balance of new construction, renovation and restoration in Canadian communities.

Natural spaces and heritage buildings have a lot in common, it turns out. Beth Hanna of the Ontario Heritage Trust, a presenter at the annual Heritage Canada Foundation conference in Quebec City last autumn, draws parallels between the best architectural traditions of the past and the principles of sustainable development. When green space is lost, Hanna says, communities lose natural systems that help clean their water and air; wildlife diversity is reduced and overall human well-being is eventually impaired.

When historic buildings are torn down, these effects are compounded because of something known as "embedded energy"—energy already invested in materials and labour to construct and maintain a building over its lifespan. Once a building is demolished, this embedded energy is lost, with far-reaching consequences for communities and their natural surroundings.

With as much as 30 percent of Canadian landfill sites already filled with demolition rubble and waste-disposal costs each year taking a bigger bite out of municipal budgets, the Ontario Heritage Trust—a provincial government agency whose purpose is to identify, preserve, protect and promote Ontario's heritage—hopes that effective conservation policy, supported by incentives to adapt and re-use old buildings, will become a routine part of community planning. Manufactured "green" products are no solution either. "We

can't buy ourselves out of this one," says Hanna. "We have to think differently."

According to architect Roman Bubelis, old buildings have a lot to teach contemporary societies about the value of conserving scarce resources. For instance, the windows in office buildings of the 19th century were always placed in such away as to maximize use of natural light. Glass light refractors, also called "day-lighting devices" or "prism glass" were common in buildings of this era and were used to introduce outdoor light into dark interior spaces. Canopies of prismatic glass were mounted over entranceways to direct light inward, and light wells at street level drew light in through basement-floor windows.

Square and squat masonry construction also has an inherent environmental advantage over towering glass-and-steel skyscrapers, when it comes to heating and ventilation. For one thing, square buildings expose less

surface area to the elements than tall rectangles. But older buildings also relied more on simple technologies such as radiant heating and windows to control temperature. Old office buildings, for instance, could be fitted with adjustable awnings to offer shade, and allowed for manual control

of draft and heat circulation through transom windows.

And contrary to popular belief, new buildings are not necessarily more cost-efficient than older ones; indeed when factors such as the loss of embedded energy, replacement value and the costs of demolition-waste disposal are considered, historic buildings may offer better investment value. One heritage organization in England has recently calculated that repairing and renovating Victorian-era homes is 40 to 60 percent cheaper than demolishing and building from scratch.

The problem, according to the Ontario Heritage Trust, is that modern real-estate developers typically seek maximum short-term returns on their investment. This has led inevitably to an over-reliance on cheap materials and what Bubelis terms "a 30-year cycle of disposable architecture." A more progressive economic philosophy would adopt values closer to those espoused by conservationists, who define a "green" building is one that's already standing.



Au Repentant Quasar

by Andrew Mahon

This is the winning entry of a writing contest sponsored by the Quebec Writer's Federation and the Morrin Centre, a cultural centre based in Quebec City. Participants were asked to submit an excerpt from an imaginary novel that introduces a fictional character exemplifying attributes of contemporary anglo-Quebecers. Historian Louisa Blair, author of The Anglos: The Hidden Face of Quebec City, presided over the contest jury. Montrealer Andrew Mahon pocketed \$500 in prize money.

Fusion is my objective. Not the polite mosaic of nationalities or the gentle melting pot of heritage but rough, instinctive fusion. For me it's all about the here and now and what we can do together. I'm talking about food, of course. That's how I view the culinary arts and it led me, along with two friends (brads from the Institut de tourism et d'hôtellerie) to a dingy, vacant storefront on Rue Saint-Jean.

People (especially older people) inevitably ask, "Where are you from?" I get tired of saying: "Quebec." Not that it matters, but my roots are Anglo-Indian (a post-colonial mixed-race misfit from Bombay). Charles is actually from the Huron-Wendat nation, and Hanh, for all her funky tattoos and piercings, is the dutiful daughter of Vietnamese refugees. Okay, so maybe we look more like an Indie band than traditional 'Quebeckians' but this is where we grew up, the city declared by us, our parents (and UNESCO) as a heritage site.

In 2008, the three of us were no more than arrogant paupers in our hometown, bored with all the familiar haunts and familiar news stories (snow rage in winter, public peeing in summer). It was Charles' idea to

make our stand here. "This is where we belong," he insisted. With a little money, a lucky government business grant and a lot of gall, we went to work on our grand plan. We argued constantly but we shared a vision. Our restaurant would be the ultimate *tabla rasa*, a fresh canvas for expression across borders, cultures and spice routes.

That was all well and good but we still had to pay bills and buy equipment. They say that most restaurants fail within the first year. 'Repentant Quasar' almost foundered in the first month — before we ever opened our doors. How did we have the collective temerity to challenge the establishment in this city? We had no kitsch, no *ké-taine*, no tourist *tourtière*, no historic site and no experience. But we were unfazed by the haughty inspectors from the Régie, the apathetic contractors and the gastronomic orthodoxy that ruled the city from Aux Anciens Canadiens to the Café de la Terrasse.

On opening night, the paint barely dry on the walls and only a few IKEA candles for ambience, we coaxed from our tiny kitchen a joyous parade of dishes for friends, family and passers-by. There were spicy corn fritters with cool yoghurt raita, tiny brochettes of sweet shrimp and pork, salads with lemon grass, vegetable curries with sweet squash and green beans, bowls of fragrant rice, grilled fish with chilies and black pepper, warm gulab jamins, almond cookies, fruity summer wines and exotic teas.

"What does that mean?" asked a small man wiping his lips with a white napkin. "Repentant Quasar?"

"It's an anagram," replied Hanh, and she looked over at Charles and me, "an anagram for Quarante Arpents."

It was just the omen we were looking for.



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NFB celebrates with birthday gifts

Free DVD box set give-away and online flicks

by Barbara Lavoie

The National Film Board of Canada is offering Canadian schools and libraries a free DVD set of films on Quebec City history to mark the 400th anniversary of the province's capital.

A mix of nine short and feature-length films, chosen from the NFB collection from the 1950s to 2008, make up the three-disc set.

The films include "Carnival in Quebec" and "The Caleche Driver" from the '50s; the animated short "Dreams of a Land," done in the '80s; "The Fate of America" from 1996; and "Quebec Forever," which was released in 2008.

The board also chose a film released by internationally acclaimed director Denys Arcand in 1964 for the collection – "Samuel de Champlain – Quebec 1603."

Online film screening room accessible 24/7

More than 700 productions, films, trailers and clips from the NFB's world-renown collection are available for home viewing in Canada's both official



languages in the online Screening Room found on their website www.nfb.ca.

To celebrate its 70 years, the National Film Board of Canada was created in 1939, as the nation's public film producer and distributor, the NFB is offering a gift to Canadians and web users of all ages, following the digital transformation of its collection of historical films dating back to 1928 to current releases, award-winning social-issue documentaries, and shorts and full-length features in animation and fiction, and more.

Each week new films are added, along with playlists where visitors can find discussions by filmmakers, descriptions, and closed captioning. Special options are available for educational and institutional users.

For more information, contact Jennifer Mair, NFB Publicist, at (416) 954-2045, j.mair@nfb.ca, or Melissa Than, NFB Publicist, at (416) 952-8960, m.than@nfb.ca. Visit nfb.ca.

2009 Hometown History Essay Contest

Attention all students

by Barbara Lavoie

It's that time again when QAHN invites you - any student attending an English elementary school in Quebec – to become a history detective.

Maybe you've always heard stories around the kitchen table about how great-grandmother tackled a wild black bear with her bare hands when it threatened to attack your grandfather playing in their farm yard.

Or how that story the community elders always like to retell at every summer picnic but you were always too busy playing with your friends to listen?

Sometimes it only takes one question to get the ball rolling, your imagination going, and your pen writing.

Whether you're interested in researching stories about your family, your hometown or why people like

studying history in the first place, send us your essay and win prize money and an opportunity to have your story and two others printed in this magazine.

Every year since the first contest was held in 2005, more than 100 students have sent in their stories showing how history and heritage are important to them, or how it has touched them in some way.

To get you started, read the winning stories submitted in our 2007 contest by going to our website Documents at www.qahn.org/document.aspx, clicking on Volume 4, Number 3 (May-June 2007), then going to Page 24.

For more information, contact the QAHN office by telephone at (819) 564-9595 or 1-877-964-0409 (toll-free in Quebec), or send email to home@qahn.org.

TRIBUTE

Yours, aye

William James Campbell. Born April 5, 1944. Died February 1, 2009

Captain William James Campbell turned his boyhood love of playing soldiers into a grown-up passion for Scottish military traditions. Born in Glasgow and raised in Karachi, Pakistan, Bill moved to Montreal in the 1960s where he studied at Ecole des Beaux Arts and eventually met Marilyn, his wife of 30 years.

Bill reveled in history's texture and feel. Whether getting out a group for a musket drill, parading with pipes and drums or simply donning kilt and hose to liven up a banquet, Bill knew that good cheer was the ultimate goal of fellowship. His recent death from prostate cancer has been deeply felt by family and friends and is a great loss for Quebec's heritage community at large.

In addition to Bill's close involvement with the St. Andrew's Society of Montreal, he served actively in the 78th Fraser Highlanders, a re-raised ceremonial regiment modeled after the infantry unit that helped British forces to defeat the French at Louisburg and Quebec City during the Seven Year's War. In 2004, freshly returned from a goodwill tour of the regiment's historic recruiting grounds in Scotland, Bill's enthusiasm spilled over the pages of *Quebec Heritage News* magazine. "I never thought I would say, 'Your Majesty' or 'Your Royal Highness to anyone—in earnest,' Bill wrote about his meeting with Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip on the grounds of Balmoral Castle. Later, when the regiment marched a mile and half through the countryside in full regalia to a small, ancient inn for sup-



per, "It was like going back to the eighteenth century," he remembered. "Pure magic. Talk about heritage."

A playful sense of humour and friendly manner fitted Bill for the many ways he embraced life: as a husband and father, accomplished artist and graphic designer, avid sportsman and sailor, connoisseur of fine food, seasoned traveler, and entertaining raconteur who enjoyed regaling dinner companions with tales of trekking through the Scottish Highlands and visits to French castles. He served for many years as Master of Ceremonies for the St. Andrew's Society ball and was a recipient of the Queen's Golden Jubilee medal for service to the Scottish Community. Bill also served more than four years as a volunteer on the board of directors of the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network.

As fortune would have it, one of the most tragic events in modern Canadian history made a particularly lasting and personal impression on Bill. Working as a courtroom artist for a Montreal newspaper, he was assigned to cover the 1971 trial of FLQ terrorist and murderer Paul Rose.

On occasion, Bill was known to turn his hand to lethal caricature. Anticipating the recent political controversy that has erupted over a planned re-enactment of the Battle of the Plains of Abraham 250 years ago, Bill drew up a poster for an imaginary seminar that might take place to mark the anniversary. There, below a dry academic title and his expert artistic historic rendering of French and British soldiers was the tag line: "We won. Get over it."

2009 Annual Marion Phelps Award

Many volunteers give willingly and generously of their time and resources to the heritage community of this province, but do you know of someone who stands out among the crowd for her or his dedication and commitment?

The Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network (QAHN) is seeking nominations for its 2009 Annual Marion Phelps Award that recognizes outstanding long-term contributions to the protection and preservation of Anglophone heritage in Quebec.

Inaugurated in 2001 and named after its first well-deserving recipient, Marion Louise Phelps, the selection committee has made the nomination easier by designing a nomination form, downloadable from our website at www.qahn.org/document.aspx.

Nominations should concisely describe the scope and significance of the nominee's work in the heritage field by using specific examples, and building an articulate and coherent reason why the individual would merit the award. If desired, two or three letters of support can be included to strengthen your submission.

Please send the completed nomination form and letters of support, if included, before 5 p.m. on Monday, April 30, 2009, by mail to QAHN, 400 – 257 Queen Street, Sherbrooke, QC J1M 1K7, by fax to (819) 564-6872, or email to home@qahn.org.

For more information, contact Dwane Wilkin, Executive Director, at Tel: (819) 564-9595 (toll-free in Quebec 1-877-964-0409).

A Customary Practice

How February became known as Black History Month in Canada

by Barbara Lavoie

Black History Month is a custom that began in the United States in 1926 but the custom, like the history it was intended to celebrate, has been a long time in the making.

Through the efforts of scholar Dr. Carter G. Woodson to raise awareness and understanding in the school curriculum of the African experience around the world, a week each year in February was set aside as Negro History Week or Negro Appreciation Week. It's believed Woodson chose this month as an observance of the February birthdays of renowned abolitionists Frederick Douglass and former American president Abraham Lincoln. Other sources suggest the significance of

February is due to the many rebellions by enslaved people of African descent that took place during this month.

Formal celebrations didn't begin until the 1960s when the name was changed to Black History Week. In 1976 three more weeks were added, and the annual commemoration became known as Black History Month

It would be many years before the practice was introduced to Canadians. Following a motion introduced in 1995 by the first black Canadian woman elected to Parliament, the Honourable Jean Augustine, MP for Etobicoke-Lakeshore. Augustine, who served as parliamentary secretary to prime minister Jean Chrétien at the time, unanimous support of the House of Com-

mons was garnered to recognize February as Black History Month.

The province of Quebec appears to have already sanctioned the custom in 1991. In January of this year, 2009, Quebec's Minister of Immigration and Cultural Communities, Nelligan MNA Yolanda James, launched the province's 18th edition of February activities under the title, *Mois de l'histoire des Noirs au Québec*.

In her statement James encouraged the building of a society that is "fraternal, just and harmonious where the role of every citizen is recognized." However, both the press release and the webpage found at www.quebecinterculturel.gouv.qc.ca/fr/index.html appear online in French only.

Historic Highlights

The first person of African heritage known to have set foot in what would become Canada arrived here more than 400 years ago. In 1604, Mathieu Da Costa, a free man, came with French explorers Pierre Du Gua De Monts and Samuel de Champlain. Da Costa worked as an interpreter, providing an invaluable link with the Mik'maq people.

Slavery existed in Canada from 1628 until it was abolished in Upper Canada in 1793 and throughout the British Empire in 1833. The first known slave, Olivier LeJeune, was brought to New France in 1628 as a child from Africa and given the name of one of his owners, a priest.

In 1779, during the War of American Independence (1775-1783), the British invited all black men, women and children to join the British cause and win their freedom from slavery for doing so. Many accepted, and as a result 10 percent of the United Empire Loyal-

ists coming into the Maritimes were of African ancestry.

In 1793, the Abolition Act was passed in Upper Canada. This law freed slaves aged 25 and over and made it illegal to bring slaves into the colony. Consequently, Upper Canada became a safe haven for runaway slaves. The Abolition Act also made Canada the first jurisdiction in the British Empire to move toward the abolition of slavery.

In 1833, the British Imperial Act abolished slavery throughout the Empire, including Canada. Between 1800 and 1865, approximately 20,000 American blacks escaped to Canada via the Underground Railway.

During the War of 1812, the Coloured Corps fought in the Battle of Queenston Heights, a decisive engagement with the Americans. The Corps had been established thanks to Richard Pierpoint, a Black Loyalist and true Canadian hero.

Railway porters played a major role in the struggle for black civil rights in Canada. Starting in the late 1880s, they emerged as leaders of black communities in Montreal and other urban centres. Through their unions, such as the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and the Order of Sleeping Car Porters, they gained recognition for workers.

During the First World War, black Canadians were prevented by racist military policies from joining combat units, but they still contributed to the war effort. In 1916, a segregated battalion made up of black Canadians, the Number 2 Construction Battalion, carried out crucial work building bridges, digging trenches and clearing roads.

In the Second World War, their persistent efforts to join the armed forces was rewarded with success and black Canadians served with distinction in all branches of the military.

(Source: Citizen and Immigration Canada website www.cic.gc.ca)

Greenfield Park librarian honoured

Muriel Brown (nee Pennoyer) 1914-2007

by Kevin Erskine-Henry

The City of Longueuil has acted on the lobbying efforts of the South Shore Community Partners Network (SSCPN) to recognize the late Muriel Brown, the Cookshire native who became Greenfield Park's first librarian.

Until the early 1960s, residents of the former municipality of Greenfield Park, now a borough of Longueuil, travelled to neighbouring St. Lambert to make use of the only South Shore municipal library. While the new town hall was being constructed on Churchill Boulevard in 1963, Greenfield Park's mayor Lawrence Galetti asked Brown, a retired teacher and former RCAF officer, to set up a library in a small space located upstairs. Brown and a dedicated team of volunteers, Agnes Harper, Ella Goldthorpe, Wylie Spencer, Freda Kendrick, Madeline Montmigny and Emma Ste.Mare, after completing their training in library science, then organized a book drive to stock the library's shelves.

Various community events such as afternoon teas helped raise money for the new library. Brown also

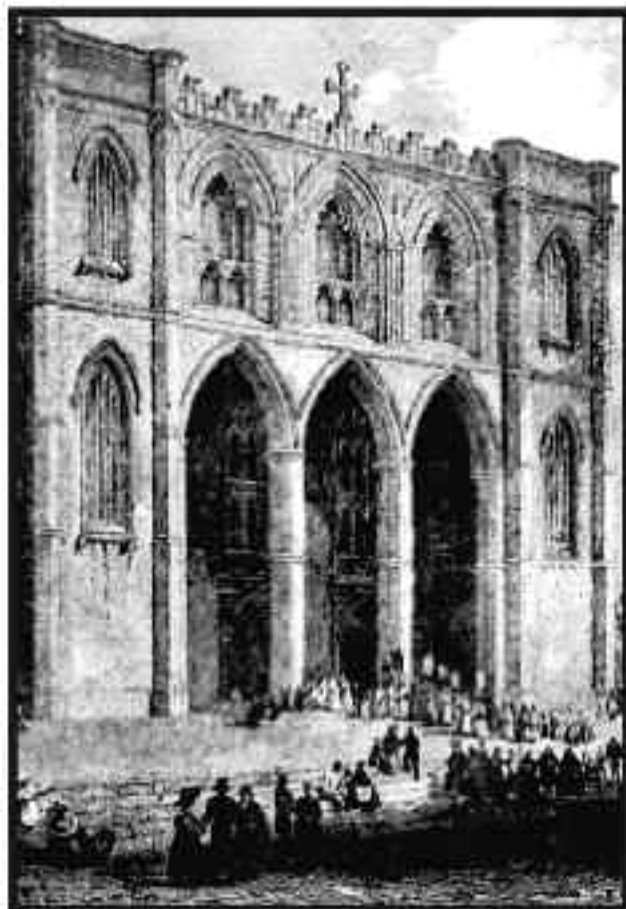


started a book club, and promoted reading among a generation of Greenfield Park youth. Visitors to the library were always impressed by her extensive knowledge of books, and how she was able to suggest titles she thought they would enjoy.

After leaving the library in 1976, Brown remained active at St. Paul's Anglican Church, making fine quilts, helping at the local food bank, and always promoting the love of reading and books. She died on June

24, 2007, at the age of 93.

In recognition of her long-time contribution to the community, Longueuil city council has named a room in the Greenfield Park Library in her honour. The Muriel Brown Reading Room was officially dedicated during a special presentation last November. The Greenfield Park Library is Longueuil's only fully-bilingual library. Friends joined Mayor Claude Gladu and Greenfield Park Borough Mayor Bernard Contantini to pay tribute to a fondly remembered librarian who influenced so many members of the English-speaking community of Montreal's South Shore.



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Blacks in Montreal 1628-1986:

An Urban Demography

Dorothy W. Williams



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[Small, illegible text on the book cover, likely a blurb or review.]



Author

Historian Dorothy W. Williams, Ph.D., specializes in Black Canadian history. Growing up black in Little Burgundy has given her a credible lens on the movement of Blacks in Montreal. Public institutions and organizations have recognized her passion and dedication in revealing the history of Blacks in Canada. In 2002, she was named as Québec Laureate and awarded the *Anne Greenup Prize for the Fight against Racism and the Promotion of Civic Participation* by the Government of Québec.

BLACKS IN MONTREAL 1628-1986: An Urban Demography (Reprint) by Dorothy W. Williams

ISBN: 2-89073-690-3 \$29.95 Cdn

This book is a reprint of *Blacks in Montreal 1628-1986: An Urban Demography* by Dorothy W. Williams published in 1989. Deemed groundbreaking, it was the first demography to explore Montreal's Black diversity. This work reveals the 400 years of Black mobility across the island of Montreal. This comprehensive study examines the impact of Canadian discrimination, skewed immigration, job market segmentation, and housing exclusion, which fueled the socio-economic disadvantage that continues to reverberate throughout Quebec society.

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WHEN MONTREAL MOURNED MARTIN LUTHER KING



One of the first demonstrations in which I ever participated was on Sunday, April 7, 1968, a few days following the assassination of Martin Luther King in Memphis, Tennessee. His killing had precipitated civil unrest and rioting throughout the United States, but shock and anger were also palpable in Montreal.

I was 21 years old and a student at Sir George Williams University, today known as Concordia. Along with students from McGill, we gathered that morning in front of the Hall Building waving signs that read, “We shall overcome,” and “Somewhere I heard about freedom,” and “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” My all-time favourite was, “All wars are civil because all men are brothers.”

About 700 of us began the march to Dominion Square, but by the time we arrived, our numbers had swollen to around 2,000. At the square, flowers were placed at the cenotaph and a minute of silence in Dr. King’s memory was observed. Among the civil-rights activists to address the crowd were Stokeley Carmichael and Rosie Douglas.

King was a man of singular strength and profound conviction, transcending both racial and religious interests in his pursuit of a universal common good. His famous and deeply moving “I Have a Dream” address at the Washington Monument in the American capital five years ago was and remains among the 20th century’s most brilliant public orations.

Unlike the disastrous situation south of the border, there was absolutely no violence that early spring day so many years ago in Montreal.

I felt it then and feel it still: our very troubled world could do with a few more of his kind.

Robert N. Wilkins is a researcher and writer with the Quebec Family History Society, an anglophone genealogical association based in Pointe Claire, Quebec. He can be reached at montreal_1900@hotmail.com.



*Photos and text
by
Robert N.
Wilkins*



WHAT'S IN A NAME? LOUIS-HIPPOLYTE LA FONTAINE

by Joseph Graham

John A. Macdonald was the first prime minister of the Dominion of Canada, but that was the end of a story. It was his predecessors, Louis-Hippolyte La Fontaine and Robert Baldwin, who made self-government possible. In fact, La Fontaine was the first Prime Minister.

His contributions are commemorated in the place names of parks, towns, streets, bridges and even a tunnel, yet when our children learn Canadian history, they are taught that Canada began in 1867.

Thankfully, place names, like time capsules, guarantee that our history will not be completely forgotten. In their simple naming, they carry the memory of the struggles that our founders endured to create the fair and peaceful country that we take as our birthright.

La Fontaine was among the brightest of students, a good-looking young man and an unrivalled tennis player during his school days, but, at the first opportunity, he rejected the academic life and, articling in a law office, chose a more public career.

He first rose to prominence in the colourful period leading up to the rebellion of 1837. At the invitation of Augustin-Norbert Morin, he began to write in *La Minerve*, the newspaper Morin had founded in support of the Patriotes. He was elected Representative to the Assembly for Terrebonne in 1830, and was re-elected in 1834.

He actively supported the Patriote movement, appearing beside Louis-Joseph Papineau dressed in the simplest homespun garments to show solidarity

with the working man, and was considered among the most radical of the movement; but something changed his views in the lead-up to the violent uprisings.

Historians have suggested that his change of heart was opportunist, but he was not alone in feeling that a violent uprising would not succeed. The Catholic Church, headed during that pe-



riod by the politically astute bishop of Montreal, Jean-Jacques Lartigue, had also condemned the turn the Patriotes had taken.

Morin and La Fontaine were two of the most important leaders in the fight for responsible government in Canada. After the rebellions, when the Colonial Office took a firm hand, forcing the two Canadas to unite under one administration, they made common cause with such men as Robert Baldwin and Francis Hincks of Upper Canada, reasoning that they would have more influence if they acted together. All four men had been associated with the reforms that degenerated into rebellion, but only Morin had played a role in the uprisings.

The British engaged Lord Durham to appraise the situation in both colonies, with the objective of restoring to the colonists as much of the costly, routine administration as possible. Durham had anticipated that the task would be simple and straight-forward, but after spending time here, he concluded that the French culture did not have a strong enough middle class to govern itself and that Lower Canada, as a result, would not be governable as long as the French were in the majority.

His famous assessment is often quoted today in an attempt to show him as having been heavy-handed, but many historians have painted him with a much darker brush than he deserves. The part they like to quote is, "I found two nations warring in the bosom of a single state." The quote continues, "...I found a struggle, not of principles, but of races; and I perceived that it would be idle to attempt

any amelioration of laws or institutions, until we could first succeed in terminating the deadly animosity that now separates the inhabitants of Lower Canada into the hostile divisions of French and English.”

It is worth noting that he was referring solely to Lower Canada, Quebec, where the English were a minority. His recommendation, to unite the two Canadas, would make the English a majority in the new, single province. It was his successor, Charles Edward Poulett Thomson, later Lord Sydenham, who was charged with the implementation of his recommendations.

During the violence, the British army mistreated many innocent people, especially in French Canada, and the public feelings, independently in both Canadas, were that they should be compensated. In fact, the general mood was that their compensation would be a measure of the fairness of the British overlords and a demonstration of the good faith of any new administration.

Thomson's orders came from the Colonial Office and it was not concerned with fairness or the feelings of the colonists. Thomson was expected to create a single government that would reinstate the Assembly but leave the control of the Executive Council in the governor's hands; in other words, to forestall any risk of a loss of the governor's power. Misinterpreting Durham's recommendations, Thomson remained focused on his orders and tried to solve complex problems with a heavy hand.

The Colonial Office had created a 'Special Council' to replace the roughly one hundred members of the Assembly of Lower Canada dismissed in 1837. Thomson, not sure that even these loyal, hand-picked supporters of Britain would approve of his intentions, convened them with little notice during the snowy November of 1839.

Only 15 showed up at the Montreal meeting, but he pressured them to pass legislation giving Thomson the power to dissolve Lower Canada and take the necessary steps to create the new united Province of Canada. In Upper Canada, he confronted a more organized Assembly that insisted on concessions.

He succeeded in uniting the two

Canadas, but to do so, he gave in to the less-populated Upper Canada, accepting terms that would only exacerbate the problem of “two nations warring in the bosom of a single state.”

He gave Upper Canada the same weight in the assembly as Lower Canada would have, despite Upper Canada's smaller numbers. His intention was to make sure the greater population of Lower Canada would not overwhelm the British of Upper Canada, ignoring the fact that the sum of British colonists in both Canadas was greater than the sum of Canadiens in both Canadas.

By obliging the assembly to equal numbers of seats for each side, he guaranteed that the two original colonies would maintain a separate identity in the new Province of Canada, a move that implies Thomson did not fully appreciate the recommendations of Durham, whatever we think of them today.

He also accepted that the new Assembly would maintain its documentation in English only. He demonstrated no interest in the rebellion losses, his only real objective being to create an administration that would divide the colonists, obliging them to rely on the governor and his appointed Executive Council.

If he achieved Durham's goal of uniting the two colonies into one province, and the Colonial Office's goal of assuring that absolute power would remain in the governor's hands, he was promised a lordship, and this was something he coveted.

La Fontaine publicly deplored the decision, as did most of the political elite of Lower Canada, but when the true scale of Thomson's manipulations came to light, these men were shocked into radical splinter groups, splitting into different factions of opposition.

They discovered that, not only was Union being forced upon them, but that the smaller portion, Upper Canada, would carry the same political weight as all of Lower Canada, that the official proceedings would be recorded in English only, and that the new government would assume responsibility for the debts and obligations of Upper Canada.

La Fontaine summed up their anger, “It is an act of injustice and despotism ... it deprives Lower Canada of its legitimate number of representatives ... it

deprives us of the use of our language in the proceedings of our legislature ... it forces us to pay ... a debt we have not contracted ... to take illegally an enormous part of the country's revenues.” Still, it was La Fontaine who saw that even this game could be won, if Thomson would play by his own rules.

La Fontaine, Baldwin, Hincks and Morin, working together from both sides of the original borders, shared the goal of self-government (called responsible government at that time). They united and waited for the game to begin.

**

In order to establish a credible Assembly in the Province of Canada in 1841, Thomson needed to hold an election. His mandate was to re-establish the Assembly in the new province as an advisory body with limited powers. In order to accomplish this, the population had to choose representative members.

The Executive Council, a board of men selected by the governor, would retain the real power. This was the way the colonies had always been governed. Thomson could count upon the loyal Tory, William Henry Draper, as his key man in Upper Canada, but depended upon an unstable combination of Tories and ex-Patriotes in Lower Canada.

La Fontaine, Baldwin and their associates were a nascent political party that cut across the language barrier and the old border. They hoped to control the Assembly by winning the majority of the seats.

From Thomson's perspective, these provincials presumed that by demonstrating the support of the majority of colonists, they would have a greater authority to govern than the governor had. These men had already been black-listed by Thomson.

He had tried to buy them, naming La Fontaine to the role of Solicitor General, only to see La Fontaine refuse his terms. To his mind, the Assembly should be composed only of men who could be called upon to gratefully and loyally perform specific tasks that the governor mandated. He was even willing to name some of them to the Executive Council, where they could govern with the elite, non-elected men of the governor's choosing – but to govern themselves?

No, that was not what he envisaged. That was how things worked among the limited number of landowners in the mother country, a worthy ruling minority, but never in the colonies.

To his mind, it made no sense at all, especially because the landowners in the colonies were far too numerous. They were almost all landowners. If the Assembly were to govern, the people of the Province of Canada would have more power over their destiny than the people of Britain had.

In Lower Canada, the British colonists representing the business elite dutifully backed the status quo, represented by the Colonial Office and the governor. Members of the elite, they had no desire to seek radical change.

For Thomson's plans to work, the population had to choose as many of these loyal men as possible, members who would support the governor knowing that his interests and theirs were the same. A majority of disloyal members in the Assembly would be ungovernable.

Thomson went about reshaping electoral boundaries in both Canadas, reorganizing the public service, offering land grants to supporters and doing whatever he could to control the results of the election. He lacked the vision and imagination to see that the newly formed colony could administer itself, and as a result he most feared those who had the greatest ability to govern.

While he declared that he was restoring control "over their own affairs, which is deemed the highest privilege of Britons," his every action belied his words. He handed out pensions and government patronage, named returning officers and strategically located polling booths all in the finest form of a modern tin-pot dictator, even to the point of distributing and using troops and goons to intervene if his selected candidates were threatened with defeat.

The scene was set for an election that no modern observers could have condoned, yet it was to become one of the first great steps that the Province of Canada took towards self-government. One of the most significant abuses took place when Thomson chose to locate the poll for Terrebonne just outside of New Glas-

gow, a small English hamlet in the large French riding.

La Fontaine, elected to the Assembly for Terrebonne in 1830 and returned in 1834, was the clear local favourite. He had to be defeated.

During the election of 1841, there were no secret ballots nor other refinements that we take for granted in our time. Elections were not even held at the same time everywhere.

Robert Berrie, an election official in Kingston who voted against Thomson's choice, was immediately dismissed, becoming an early example of how disloyalty would be punished. Polls were set up outside of towns to make voting inconvenient, and in the case of Terrebonne, the election was called for early March, during the spring thaw, to assure rough travel over soft, muddy roads. On top of that, Thomson sent goons to assure the results.

When La Fontaine and his supporters walked towards the New Glasgow poll that March day in 1841, they were confronted by a rowdy English mob.

There had already been fights in other ridings, and any violence would be judged in a court stacked in favour of Thomson's goons. La Fontaine was aware that six men had already died in three similar confrontations around Montreal. Even in Upper Canada, there had been deaths in at least three ridings and there were 15 documented cases where

Thomson refused to send in troops to protect opposition candidates. A physical battle in Terrebonne would make little difference to the election outcome even though his supporters were ready to fight. Faced with a bloody confrontation, La Fontaine announced he was withdrawing his candidacy.

The election results record simply that La Fontaine was defeated in Terrebonne in 1841.

After avoiding the riot, La Fontaine conferred with Robert Baldwin and they determined that it was essential to assure La Fontaine be elected.

They were both protégés of Baldwin's father, who was a doctor and a lawyer with a reputation for fairness, a powerful presence that not even Thom-

son would dare to cross. It was he who had first promoted the notion that the Colonial Office should peacefully confer the responsibilities of government onto the colonists, and he steadfastly maintained the notion of a peaceful transfer.

He described the Rebellion of 1837 as a five-year setback. The two younger men met with him to consult and in an act of selfless leadership rarely seen in politics, Dr. William Warren Baldwin withdrew his candidacy for the riding of York (Toronto) in favour of La Fontaine, daring Thomson to interfere.

While La Fontaine and Robert Baldwin were elected, most of Upper Canada succumbed to the pressure tactics of the bully, and the Tories dominated.

The story was different in Lower Canada, though, where many ridings deep in French territory, and therefore out of Thomson's reach, returned La Fontaine supporters. Lower Canada was larger than Upper Canada at that time, but because Thomson had insured that Upper Canada would have just as many ridings, the La Fontaine-Baldwin alliance found itself in a minority position.

After the election, Thomson smugly declared, "I have gained a most complete victory. I shall carry the measures I want." His delegates were not a united group, consisting as they did of Tories in the English areas and the Rouges, descendants of the Patriotes, in the French areas.

This second group, the Rouges, were determined to oppose Union itself at all costs. Counted with the Tories, they were not a united, cohesive majority.

The governor, who had accomplished all that Parliament and the Colonial Office had asked – if by means foul – was rewarded as promised by being conferred the title of Baron Sydenham.

Around the same time, like the villain in a poorly written play, he had a riding accident from which his leg became infected and, in mid-September 1841, he died in agony with lockjaw.

This is the first of a two-part article researched and written by Joseph Graham on renown politician Louis-Hippolyte La Fontaine.

TREACHERY REVEALED

Why E.B. O'Callaghan's Vindicator piped the notes of open rebellion
by Marjorie A. Fitzpatrick

This is the third in a four-part series of articles chronicling the life and times of Edmund Bailey O'Callaghan, an Irish-born doctor-turned-newspaperman who was among several prominent anglo-phones in Lower Canada to side with the Patriote struggle for parliamentary reform in the early 19th century.

Factional tensions intensified throughout 1836 as protest meetings multiplied everywhere to a new Patriote rallying cry: "Six Months' Supply." The resolutions voted at these meetings, where O'Callaghan was now regularly a speaker, were a curious blend of references to the American Revolution, stock phrases about British constitutional rights, and catchphrases such as "anti-Coercion meeting" borrowed from Daniel O'Connell. Taking to heart a theme that O'Callaghan had already suggested in print, the mostly French crowd at one of the biggest gatherings in Vaudreuil voted to boycott all imported merchandise. O'Callaghan's militancy continued to startle even some of his fellow radicals as he now classified Lord Gosford with ex-Governors Dalhousie and Aylmer as an "enemy of the country" for spending the people's money without their consent.

The fates of the men involved in three apparently unrelated events that summer would be woven together the following year during the Patriote rebellion.

Monseigneur Jean-Jacques Lartigue was named the first bishop of the newly created diocese of Montreal. Although he was Papineau's and D.-B. Viger's first cousin, he was strongly anti-patriotique, as was the rest of the hierarchy in both Canadas.

Wolfred Nelson, a prominent Richelieu Valley Patriote, sought permission from the parish priest of Sorel to erect a monument in the parish cemetery there to the memory of Louis Marcoux, the young man from that village who was killed during the election violence in 1834. The curé consulted his superior, Monseigneur Lartigue (still at the time a suffragan bishop), who eventually granted his approval, but only on condition that the monument's inscription bear no mention of politics. That, of course, was completely unacceptable

to Nelson, who, infuriated, instead erected his monument with a stinging inscription in the public square of his own hometown, Saint-Denis.

Finally, Sir John Colborne, the recalled ex-Governor of Upper Canada, was in New York on his way home when he received a dispatch from London naming him a Lieutenant-General and appointing him Commander-in-Chief of His Majesty's forces in Upper and Lower Canada, currently stationed in Halifax. So he turned around and headed back north to assume his new command.

In Lower Canada's parliamentary session convened in September '36, Gosford's throne speech, like the assembly's reply, was temperate in tone but firm in content. Nothing had changed in London. There was nothing left for the Assembly to discuss. With matters at a standoff, Gosford prorogued the session on the fourth of October. It had lasted just 12 days.

Assembly members now had the rest of the fall and all winter to devote to other activities. Reporting on the usual St. Patrick's Day scrum in March '37 between the Montreal Hibernian Society and the hostile Patrick's Lodge of Quebec, O'Callaghan, still president of the Montreal group, wrote that the Quebecers had had to reduce their quorum from 26 to nine in order, he said with wicked sarcasm, "to make war, conclude peace, and enter into alliance with foreign states, etc."

But, unbeknown to the patriots, the whole situation had just gotten much worse in London; the report of the Royal Commissioners had gone for consideration to the Commons on second of March. Its contents were in fact unexpectedly mild, including an admission that some of the Assembly's grievances, especially the Executive's spending of the province's revenues without that body's consent, were indeed justified.

Gosford, breaking with his colleagues, had even recommended that both Councils be liberalized to include more men sympathetic to the Assembly's popular majority, thereby sowing some seeds of possible compromise. But any such hope was abruptly destroyed just four days later when Lord John Russell, the current Home Secretary, laid before the Commons 10 resolutions he had composed

that were inimical to everything the reformers had ever demanded, and even to Gosford's mild attempts at reconciliation.

The Patriotes' allies in the Commons tried frantically to stem the tide they could feel turning against them, but in vain. An amendment to one of them proposed to make Lower Canada's Legislative Council elective, the Patriotes' most cherished dream, was defeated by a vote of 318 to 56. Then, one by one, Russell's resolutions eviscerated every single one of the Patriotes' demands. By March 9, 1837 the reformers' vision for Lower Canada, at least as a British colony, was officially dead.

But popular momentum couldn't just be turned off like a spigot. When the news arrived in Canada in April, O'Callaghan printed the complete text of the Russell Resolutions in the Vindicator on the fourteenth of April, and the following week he published probably his most famous editorial. The last two short paragraphs give the tome of the whole:

"Our rights must not be violated with impunity. A howl of indignation must be raised from one extremity of the Province to the other, against the ROBBERS, and against all who partake of the plunder.

Henceforth, there must be no peace in the Province; no quarter for the plunderers. Agitate! AGITATE!!AGITATE!!! Destroy the Revenue; denounce the oppressors. Every thing is lawful when our fundamental liberties are in danger. 'The guards die; they never surrender'."

In short, if Britain refused to heed the will of the people, they should make their colony ungovernable. On the seventh of May, O'Callaghan advocated outright smuggling. He still insisted that all this was not a call to rebellion, but rather a plea for civil disobedience on so massive a scale that England must yield before rebellion became a necessity.

To shouts of "Agitate!", some 1200 participants rallying that day at Saint-Ours affirmed Papineau as God's own chosen saviour and proposed the creation of a 'Papineau Tribute' like one Daniel O'Connell had once enjoyed.

Le grand chef was now more popular than ever, and his oratory more effective. On the fifteenth of May he gave at Saint-Laurent what the historian Gérard Filteau would call

“le discours le plus retentissant de toute sa carrière.”¹

Anyone who thought Papineau was at heart a moderate, misled by more radical colleagues, would find no evidence to support that view in his two-hour speech. He lambasted Lord Gosford, denounced British treachery, exhorted boycott and smuggling, praised American liberty, and warned of the consequences if England failed to heed the will of the Canadian people. Like O’Callaghan, he denied that he was calling for armed revolt, but warned England not to misconstrue the motives for his present restraint and reserved the right to change his mind.

In fact, everyone’s game plan that summer and fall of 1837 seemed to be brinkmanship. In mid-June Gosford issued a proclamation that fell just short of declaring martial law and ordered it posted on every church door in the province. Militia officers, many of them patriots themselves, were among those who ripped down the declarations in many parishes for which they were punished with dismissal.

Papineau himself was one of the militia officers whose commission was revoked based on his remarks at Saint-Laurent. Far from increasing the peace, Gosford’s proclamation provoked many ugly incidents throughout the province. Worried by developments, the Governor ordered Sir (now general) John Colborne to bring the 83rd regiment from Halifax to Quebec where the troops arrived in mid-July. More would be ordered to various flashpoints in the ensuing months.

The Patriotes’ trickiest balancing act concerned how to deal with the Church. Many of them, like most of the citizens whose allegiance they were courting, were practising Catholics, but the hierarchy, especially in Montreal where the patriots were strongest, were anti-*patriotiques* to a man. Monseigneur Lartigue had already warned against them the previous summer.

Now, according to the pro-Tory *Ami du peuple*, the new bishop said during a private banquet that patriots should be denied absolution for preaching the legitimacy of smuggling and for encouraging revolt against “the government under which we have the *happiness* to live.” Treading carefully – it was he who italicized the word “happiness” in his answering column – O’Callaghan took the time-honoured route of impugning the credibility of the messenger, saying he hoped the Tory press had misquoted Lartigue, especially His Eminence’s implied approval of the regime. If the bishop had in fact used the language cited,

wrote O’Callaghan, “he has evinced very little discretion or wisdom.”

The most startling event in July was Lord Gosford’s announcement that he planned to summon the Lower-Canadian Parliament back into session on the eighteenth of August, *comme si de rien n’était*. O’Callaghan could only express bewilderment, and warned his readers to remain on guard. Gosford, it turned out, was simply obeying instructions from London directing him to issue the Assembly an ultimatum either to stop their obstructionism or to face enforcement of the punitive Russell Resolutions. What no one in Canada knew at the time was that the King had died on the twentieth of June, the new young Queen Victoria had succeeded to the throne, and on the twenty-third, Lord Russell, on the grounds that her reign should not get off to an unpleasant start, had called for a delay in enforcing his own Resolutions.

When word of the sudden lifting of the “coercion” threat reached Canada, however, it merely looked like a vindication of the Patriotes’ agitation-and-smuggling strategy, which they accordingly continued. Muskets, like liberty poles and homespun, now became a regular feature of their rallies.

As the day for convening approached, the Montreal contingent to the Assembly set the tone, debarking in Quebec wearing an assortment of ill-fitting homespun garments described in mocking detail in Neilson’s *Quebec Gazette*. Lord Gosford’s throne speech was grim as expected, with London simply reiterating its demands. And that, said Gosford, was all the business he had.

Once again, the Assembly voted not to rescind its position with regard to the Six Months’ Supply, and once again rehearsed its own grievances and demands. While the Assembly’s debate lasted a bit longer than expected, its unyielding reply to the throne speech was finally approved and delivered to Gosford on the twenty-sixth of August. When the deputies returned to their Chamber, they found on the Speaker’s chair the Governor’s royal proclamation proroguing the session and fixing the fifth of October to reconvene, but in fact the Lower Canada Parliament would never meet again.

Developments now flowed thick and fast. Late in August, young Patriote activists in Montreal formed a paramilitary-style organization of their own, called the Sons of Liberty, to counter the Doric Club. On the first of September, O’Callaghan threw caution to the winds and attacked Monseigneur Lartigue head-on for having ordered a *Te Deum* to cel-

brate Queen Victoria’s enthronement. Out in the rural areas, disturbances were breaking out regularly between opposing demonstrators, Patriote parishioners and pro-government priests, young radicals and their more cautious elders, loyal and rebellious militiamen. Some of the latter even organized themselves into so-called “people’s militias,” prepared to fight at a moment’s notice.

Pierre-Dominique Debartzch, the unhappy *seigneur* of Saint-Charles, was among seven new French-Canadian Councillors recently named by Gosford, thus incurring hostility from Tories, moderates and patriots alike. At his behest in mid-October, Colborne moved troops to Three Rivers, the County of Two-Mountains, and nearby Sorel. Calling it a Convention instead of a rally, the patriots issued invitations to a huge gathering on the twenty-third of October at Saint-Charles, where delegates from five surrounding counties would be asked to create an actual confederation.

This *de facto* regional government—what we would now call a “fact on the ground”—was to be empowered by and responsible only to the people. The individual who seconded one of the thirteen resolutions voted that morning later testified that they had all been composed by Papineau and O’Callaghan themselves.

That may well have been the case, since the first resolution was an almost verbatim copy of paragraph two of the American Declaration of Independence. In one other piece of business that morning, the delegates answered a passionate last-minute plea from the neighbouring county of L’Acadie and voted unanimously to let its delegates join their number. The occasion thus went down in Quebec’s history as the “Convention of the Six Counties.”

O’Callaghan disingenuously described the Convention in the next day’s *Vindicator* as “moderate in spirit, given the times in which we live,” but the patriots’ enemies well understood the grave significance of what had just happened. Monseigneur Lartigue issued a *mandement* that same day admonishing the faithful not to be lured into rebellion against the established order on the pretext that they belonged to the “people *souverain*.” Tory politicians and their allies, the Constitutionalists, were in some disarray, very disappointed when a rally they too had called for the twenty-third of October in Montreal’s Place d’Armes drew less than a third of the number who had assembled at Saint-Charles.

FINDING HISTORY OVER THE HOLIDAYS

A book that peaked a daughter's interest in the Holocaust

by Rod MacLeod



Somewhere in the middle of applying for high schools, becoming a fashion diva and sparring with boys, my daughter has turned into a historian. Glory be.

The fateful day occurred at the end of last November when she came home in tears. What happened at school, teasing? Lost at basketball? Somebody knocked her down? No, no.

The Holocaust.

My daughter knew about WWII from her grandpa's RCAF stories, *The Sound of Music*, and careful discussions of the nasty treatment of peoples. I say careful because we've always felt that you have to have a certain level of maturity in order to deal properly with horror. The Holocaust is particularly tricky. A vital chapter in history, the absolute lowest point in Western civilization - it must be studied, analyzed, and understood - but the sheer enormity of its evil makes it hard to grasp. And people often get understandably bogged down in numbers and technical details without taking in what it cost in lives.

Not my daughter. Preparing the Grade Six class for an upcoming visit from a Holocaust survivor, her teacher gave them a no-holds-barred account of the final solution which had an appropriate effect on virtually everyone in the class. For my daughter it was a question of raging anger, gut-level fear, and not being able to get the image of the showers out of her head. At home, once the tears had dried, she got up from my lap (it was one of those moments) and headed straight for the bookshelf to find book, *The Diary of Anne Frank*. She hasn't looked back. Her appreciation for Anne made Christmas shopping easy: Monique Polak's re-

cent *What World Is Left*, a novel based on her own mother's experience as a Jew in wartime Holland. (Not that the book was easy to find: like most English-Quebec literature I have looked for in recent years, it did not seem to be available in bookshops, even when the webpage said there was a copy in stock. And I'm talking downtown Montreal here!)

After the Holocaust survivor's visit to her school, my daughter came home and recounted his story in minute detail: his forays out of the ghetto to scrounge in the city for food, forced marches to and from Dachau, his escape from a transport train and long wintry flight through the forest only to be recaptured, his liberation from Auschwitz and his ultimate decision to settle and spend the rest of his life in Montreal. A month after his visit when I raised the subject again, my daughter recalled all the details as if it had been the day before - that was the kind of impression he had made. She wrote the fellow a long letter thanking him (and her teacher) profusely for having, in her own words, "changed her life."

In her thirst for war-related stories she was intrigued to learn that two of her own great uncles were victims, if not of the Holocaust per se, but clearly of the Nazi machine. Refugees from the Spanish Civil War, they were rounded up by Vichy, France, and sent off to be worked to death at Mauthausen concentration camp near Linz, Austria. (That was Hitler's birthplace, and I read recently in the *Gazette* that local promoters have put the town's infamous son and the nearby camp on the tourism circuit - which goes to show you the power of Heritage.)

Given my daughter's new interests we found our-

selves wondering whether she was ready for Schindler's List or The Pianist, both of which await her on home DVD – and decided not quite yet. Fortunately, however, we found a perfect sample of the genre in theatres just in time for the holidays – which for us always means seeing more movies than usual, on both large and small screens. The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas was not only a wonderful introduction to the subject for young historians, but one of the most moving films I have ever seen.

To see the Holocaust from the inside and from a child's point of view is especially chilling: to some kids, the final solution was just daddy's job. I thought I had seen pretty much every angle on the Holocaust, but this was absolutely fresh and blew me away. When it ended, the three of us sat in the empty theatre, drying our eyes and bonding.

Over the next two weeks we found lighter fare. My daughter showed little interest in Australia until she realized it had a war element to it. Indeed, the part of the film dealing with the 1942 Japanese bombing of Darwin was what I enjoyed most, intrigued especially by what computer effects can do for historical re-enactment. I assumed I would be the only one of the family to want to see Valkyrie, having studied the German Resistance as an undergraduate many years before – but no, it turned out to be another family excursion, and we all thrilled at the efforts of Claus von Stauffenberg to blow up Hitler and the top Nazi brass which proved so frustratingly unsuccessful. It was a competent and engrossing treatment of this unsung aspect of the war, and I was pleased to see credit given to my old McGill professor Peter Hoffmann, the world expert on the subject, as an advisor.

However, in general, I found I wasn't getting as much personal mileage as I might have liked out of my daughter's new fascination with history, mostly because 19th century Quebec isn't anything like as...well...sexy as the horrors of the Second World War – I mean as an area of expertise, of course.

Was there anything local that could provide a hook for her interest to rival what she could get out of a movie? When the penny dropped in my brain I had to hit myself in the head for being thick. Why of course, Montreal has its very own Holocaust Memorial Centre, of international repute, located at 5151 Côte-Ste-Catherine Road or 1 Cummings Square.

And so on New Year's Eve my daughter and I parked the car across the street from the Snowdon YMHA and the Saidye Bronfman Centre, and made our way into Cummings Square, the complex that houses the museum.

This experience was truly eye-opening. Tucked away as it is, the museum is surprisingly large (we

took a good two hours to get through it without reading everything) and extremely thorough, with clear and engaging displays on every part of the horrific story from the rise of Nazism through persecution, the ghettos and the camps, to liberation. Both Anne Frank and Oskar Schindler make an appearance. My daughter was struck by a photo of a dog lying on a park bench which bore a sign forbidding Jews from sitting there; presumably nobody minded the dog. Quebec did not escape mention; two whole panels spoke to the many local places (eg. Laurentian resorts) from which Jewish Quebecers were excluded in no uncertain terms during the earlier decades of the last century.

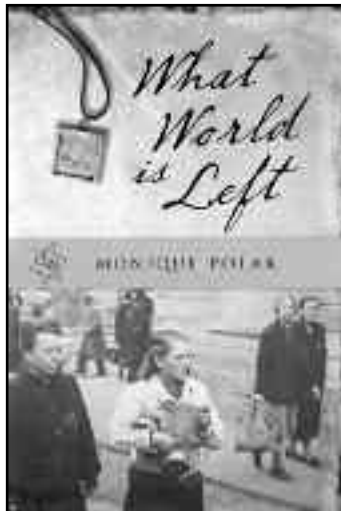
Although the museum is more about information than artefacts, there are a great many objects on display, over 400 of them donated by Holocaust survivors who live or lived in Montreal – a city that, according to the museum, has the third largest survivor population in the world. That is a statistic we should all be proud of, making up as it does, at least in a small way, for Canada's miserable track record regarding European Jews before the war.

Presumably, in the late 1940s there was something particularly appealing about Montreal for people who had seen the worst that humanity had to offer. We look back on the period as *la grande noiceur*, but for so many, like the fellow who so inspired my daughter in school last November, it seemed a kind of bliss – after the ghetto. St. Urban Street didn't seem so bleak – after Hitler; Duplessis was at best – a nuisance. The museum at the Montreal Holocaust Memorial Centre

is a fitting tribute to these Montrealers who survived – and of course to the uncountable numbers who did not.

The exhibit that most touched me was a tiny heart-shaped book, filled with expressions of love and hope, which a group of girls doing slave labour at Auschwitz put together as a birthday gift for another girl. She, at least, survived. As I contemplate my own daughter as she turns away from childhood, one step of which is the lack of innocence that comes from an awakening to history, I see the inevitable heartaches and struggles ahead of her, even as I try to keep on the periphery the image of a girl receiving a heart-shaped treasure with poisonous showers and ovens a stone's throw away. Or of a girl writing in a hidden attic that, in spite of everything, she still believes that people are really good at heart.

As a parent I naturally wish that my child not have to endure hardship. At the same time, I don't wish her innocence or ignorance, as neither makes for much of a life. In point of fact she is already losing both, and will continue to do so regardless of what I want. And that is good. What she is gaining is a sense of history.



REVIEWS



Passchendaele - A Film by Paul Gross

Canada's coming-of-age First World War sacrifice undergoes cinematic treatment in epic Hollywood style

Paul Gross, award-winning star of television and film, came to Bishop's University in Sherbrooke in mid-January bringing with him his recently released full-length feature movie on the First World War's historical battle of Passchendaele. Not shown in English in the Sherbrooke area when first released in November 2008, it wasn't surprising to find Centennial Theatre packed to capacity.

The story begins in Vimy during the second battle of Ypres and follows Michael Dunn (Paul Gross) back home to Calgary to recover from wounds, physical and mental. There, he falls in

nurses. There were thousands of war brides during this period. It was visually realistic as well. During the question and answer period after the viewing, Gross explained that he selected certain scenes from actual war movies and set out to duplicate them, which he did to great effect.

The images of the battlefield - the mud, rain, corpses, rats, mine craters and aptly named duckboards - are vivid. Many soldiers from that battle actually die not by enemy fire, but by drowning in the massive water-filled craters left behind after the first bombardments. The scenes of battle in this movie brought

battle. And there is a segment in the very middle about the nurse's addiction to morphine that serves no visible purpose in the story, and is rarely referred to either before or after.

As he introduced his production, and as noted at the beginning of the movie, Gross shared some very real statistics about the Battle of Passchendaele. Nearly 10 percent of Canada's total population served overseas during World War I, and of those nearly 10 percent were killed, and another 10 percent injured. Close to 16,000 men died in the battle for Passchendaele alone. It took three months to gain that position, a po-



love with his nurse (Montreal's Caroline Dhavernas)). Declared a neurasthenic, he is assigned to the local recruiting office. When his sweetheart's brother (Joe Dinicol) is determined to join up, he returns to the front to protect him, which he does, through the third battle of Ypres - Passchendaele.

The story is romantic, perhaps overly so, and certainly realistic. We may cringe to hear it - how obvious - but many soldiers did fall in love with their

that home, helped you understand how exactly a man can drown and disappear in what is essentially mud.

It wasn't all good - to be kind. Perhaps Gross over-extended himself by being writer, director, producer and lead actor. His performance decidedly lacks an emotional edge. "Benton Fraser" goes to war. The romantic side of the story takes too large a part, and the actual military exercise too small for a movie named after this epic

situation which was reclaimed in only a week the following year.

We take pride in the fact that Canada wasn't formed through the crucible of war, but wasn't it? Wasn't the Great War, the War to End All Wars, a defining moment for Canadian nationhood?

And this is how Gross saw it. Aside from honouring his grandfather for his service overseas, and aside from honouring all those who fought for Canada, this movie attempts to show this birth of a

nation. "We may not agree about the mission," Gross said, "but we can honour those who fought it".

Our history is valorous, but little known. The enemy called us storm-troopers, and feared the Canadian Corps. The British command themselves admitted that they could win positions with the Corps they couldn't win with other troops.

There are great stories to be told, great movies to be made. Gross admitted that movies about Canada's military history aren't made because of the associated high costs, though he would like to make more.

Passchendaele was made with \$20 million – an astonishing figure for the Canadian film industry, a paltry one in comparison with our neighbours to the south. Gross stated that Hollywood wouldn't have considered making this film for less than \$100 million. As a result, many of the special effects, the battlefield scenes specifically, were done the old-fashioned way, with hard work and trickery, rather than through the



magic of computer imagery. Gross was determined to keep things Canadian, and because of that, the whole production took 12 years to write, film, fund and produce.

There's a certain pride associated with watching a Canadian story, made by Canadians, with Canadians, funded by Canadians. The Canadian Armed Forces was involved as extras in the production. It wouldn't have been the same story if

Hollywood had had its hands in it, aside from the fact that American flags would have been waving wildly and conspicuously throughout. Look at what they did to Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient* – the Torontonian nurse from the book becomes American in the movie. There would have been a need to add poignancy to an already poignant story, add despair to a situation rife with it. This is our story, told our way.

Gross' visit to Bishop's University was made possible through the Drama Department, specifically Professor JoJo Rideout, with help from the Speakers Committee.

The film, *Passchendaele*, was released on DVD in early February.

Reviewed by Valérie Bridger. Valérie Bridger was Executive Director of QAHN from 2000-2005. She holds a Bachelor's Degree in History and English from Concordia University and is the mother of three boys between the ages of five and one.



Raise the Flag and Sound the Cannon: The Northernmost Battle of the Civil War

*By Donald J. Davison
Published by Shoreline, 2008*

I don't know if any of you noticed this, but a new president of the United States of America has recently assumed office. And he's Black.

Of course, this shouldn't be an issue. The skin colour, ethnic origin, religion and gender of any political figure should be of no importance, and if we lived in a truly liberal and multicultural society it wouldn't be. Martin Luther King's dream that all of this sort of thing

one day wouldn't matter is clearly still that: a dream. Even so, when African-Americans celebrate that "one of us" got into the White House, and when non-African-Americans and, indeed, people of good will around the world celebrate alongside them, it's a wonderful thing. The earth has shifted. King's dream is one giant step closer to reality.

Obama's election, as he implied in his inaugural address, would have come as a great surprise to his own grandfa-

ther who could not have been served in stores and restaurants across large parts of the United States of America.

It would also have come as a surprise, or maybe a painful shock, to Bennett Young, leader of the "northernmost battle of the American Civil War" and one of the principal characters of Donald J. Davison's recent book on the raid on St Alban's, Vermont.

Young was an officer in the Confederate army who had escaped capture by

fleeing to neutral Canada, from which base he plotted the raid across the border as a means to sow confusion and, with stolen money, help bankroll the fading Rebel cause.

He hailed from Kentucky, a state that was technically neutral during the war, and his background was modest. According to Davison, Young was raised like “the majority of Kentuckians” – free Kentuckians, I assume – “on small farms with one or two slaves.”

The right to own slaves – one, two, or hundreds – was arguably the most significant thing that people like Young were fighting for.

The St Alban’s Raid is fairly well known, but it is brought effectively to life by Davison, who originally from Hudson, Quebec, is now retired and living in Knowlton after a career as a financial counsellor.

I certainly applaud Davison’s second career as a writer, particularly given the obvious expertise he brings to it. One of the things I enjoyed about this book was the detail about banking and currency, which may not sound very exciting but is an important part of the minutiae of this kind of story. As anyone who has ever tried to cash a traveller’s cheque in the U.S. can attest, the American banking system is a complicated one. Anyone who tried to rob a bank in the 1860s would also probably agree.

The book’s storyline begins in Montreal where Young and his twenty southern gentlemen (some fit that description, but others are much less couth) planned the raid in exile, then moves to St Alban’s where they pose as tourists; Young passed himself off as an itinerant preacher.

After robbing several banks in the town, engaging in gunfire with locals, and killing at least one man, they rode madly off in all the directions that led to Canada, and we follow the adventures of each of the rebel “sections” (4-man gangs) as they struggle to reach such havens as Stanbridge East, Frelighsburg, Dunham, and Abbott’s Corners.

Almost all of them were captured by troops of the Canadian Militia, much to the irritation of a posse sent from St Alban’s and of the Union government in general. The prisoners were put on trial in Montreal where large numbers of people hailed them as heroes, though others saw them more as notorious

gangsters; in either case, crowd control was an issue for local authorities.

Arguing that the men had been involved in military rather than criminal activity, the defence proved successful and all of them, including Young, were freed.

For me, the legal issue was the most interesting part of the story, and one that I wish Davison had dwelt on a little more directly and forcefully. The motivations of Canadian legal and military authorities are not clear in the book. Although the tension between posse and militia over areas of jurisdiction is shown, the latter seem keen to arrest the rebels as obvious criminals. Yet, the freeing of the prisoners led to the accusation that judge, police and militia were conspiring to keep the rebels out of the hands of the Unionists for whom they were prisoners of war.

Much has been written about Canada’s attitude towards the Civil War, including the view that, for strategic reasons at least, it was inclined to side with the South. For the militia rather than the posse to arrest the St Alban’s raiders, and for the Canadian court to free them, was either a travesty of justice or an unconscionable breach of neutrality.

Davison keeps his cards close to his chest on this issue; I would rather he had contributed to the debate by taking a stand rather than glossing it over.

You will notice I have not described this book as a work of history, even though it is. The title page presents it as a novel – which it isn’t really, although it is a fictional account. By that I mean that it works the way a great many histories have worked, at least until the age of modern academia which has drawn a line between two genres.

We tend to see fiction as something that isn’t true, which does a terrible disservice to literature. Fiction is really a genre, the telling of a story (including true stories) using a number of devices such as dialogue and point of view – typically found in novels, but also in much classical history. Davison tells this story by providing physical details about his characters and having them engage in dialogue.

However, we don’t get much in the way of tension or conflict (other than when people shoot at each other) which is the mainstay of novels. But it isn’t dry analytical history either; in fact, Davi-

son’s style works rather well for his subject by engagingly narrating events, and providing lists, maps, and illustrations along the way, without the sort of reflection that I associate with academic history, and missed only when it came to the legal issue at the end.

I mention all this lest anyone approach this book expecting a kind of military thriller. But anyone seeking a straightforward and sympathetic account of the St Alban’s raid, however, would do well to read *Raise the Flag and Sound the Cannon*.

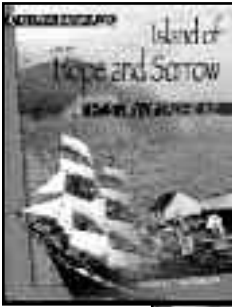
By “sympathetic” I don’t mean that Davison approves of the rebels’ actions – but the men are presented as human beings, with human weaknesses. To them, the actions of the Northern army, especially those of General Sheridan in the Shenandoah Valley (which admittedly don’t exactly rank up there with history’s great philanthropic gestures), as atrocities to be revenged. In one telling moment Davison describes Young et al’s astonishment at coming across a village where people are celebrating Sheridan’s victories. It had apparently never occurred to Southerners that there was anything wrong with their cause – and the same is true, of course, for the bad guys in any conflict.

Apart from the reference to the one or two slaves belonging to the average Kentuckian, there is only one Black person in the book, a small boy who peers out at one of the rebel groups as they approach a village near the Canadian border and after hearing their Southern accent runs very quickly away.

This tiny incident speaks volumes. Although the rebels wonder briefly what the boy, obviously a fellow southerner, was doing so far north, they are far more concerned with getting to safety with their loot.

Bennett Young and his followers, along with a great many Canadians, did their best to destroy any possibility of Martin Luther King’s dream becoming reality. That battle is still going on. But we can now say with confidence that the great, great, great grandson of that boy could grow up to become president of the United States.

Reviewed by Rod MacLeod



*Island of Hope and Sorrow:
The Story of Grosse Île*

Pier 21:

Stories from Near and Far

*Both by Anne Renaud, with
illustrations by Aries Cheung*

*Lobster Press 2007, 24 pages,
reading level ages 9 to 12 \$18.95*

Those of you lucky enough to have gone on a tour of Grosse Île with acclaimed Quebec historian Mari-anna O’Gallagher will probably argue there is no other way to appreciate the place. It is true that there is nothing like being in an actual historic site for bringing a sense of history alive. Failing that, however, you would do well to pick up Anne Renaud’s engagingly written and beautifully presented *Island of Hope and Sorrow*, which tells the story of Grosse Île from the time when it was a mere island in the river through its long and too often grim service as an entry point for immigrants to its recognition as a historic site and restoration as a place to visit.

While you’re at it, you should pick up *Pier 21: Stories from Near and Far*, also by Renaud, for an equally exciting journey through another of Canada’s great entry points and historic sites. Both books are part of a Canadian Immigration Series produced by publisher Lobster Press, of which I hope there will be many more.

You will notice I haven’t yet said these are children’s books. They are, but in a way that’s irrelevant. Some books are clearly not suitable for children. But if a book is written with a younger reader in mind and proves effective, it can and should be enjoyed by those of all ages.

I know people who refuse to read anything they think children are enjoying as though it is somehow beneath their dignity, but that would be to lose out on a whole lot of first rate literature. C.S. Lewis once observed that children’s books were often the best way to convey certain information, and I think he was right – particularly so when it comes to history. Others have tackled these same

topics, but few are as pleasurable as those of Renaud and Cheung.

If you were in the higher elementary grades and doing research on immigrants to Canada, or knew someone who was, this is ideal material. Both books are well laid out, featuring attractive maps, drawings, old photos and period documents (i.e. a health certificate issued at Grosse Île that declared the bearer “washed and purified,” and a “ditty bag” containing soap, toothpaste, cigarettes and corn flakes issued to many newcomers disembarking at Pier 21) all of which delight the eye and engage the mind.

The text is lively and clear without oversimplifying in any way. Renaud pulls no punches with the darker elements to these stories (the deaths on board ship or in quarantine on Grosse Île; the plight of refugees before and during World War II), but is never gruesome, which I think is wise: adult readers know the additional details and younger ones will learn.

I particularly liked the device of providing additional information in side bars, linked to the text with clever icons - what future students of history will come to know as footnotes. The effect is not unlike what one encounters on web-sites, but again it does not seem gimmicky.

Author Renaud and illustrator Aries Cheung, and the editors of the Canadian Immigration Series at Lobster Press have struck just the right balance to make these books suitable for every bookshelf, or better still, for being left lying around.

Reviewed by Rod MacLeod

**Island of Hope
and Sorrow:
The Story of
Grosse Île**

by Anne Renaud



**The award-winning children’s
author of *A Bloom of
Friendship: The Story of the
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traces the history of Grosse
Île and of the island’s role in
the building of Canada.**

**... a powerful and moving
account of a little island of
great historical
significance.**

-Montreal Review of Books

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EVENT LISTINGS

Eastern Townships

Lennoxville-Ascot Historical and Museum Society

Uplands Cultural & Heritage Centre

9 Speid Street, Sherbrooke

Info: (819) 564-0409

www.uplands.ca

Opening hours: Wednesday - Sunday

1 to 4:30 p.m.

Beginning February 2009

Saturdays and Sundays

1 to 4 p.m.

Afternoon Tea in the English Tradition

March 29 to May 31, 2009

Exhibition: Ena Greyeyes and Paula

Curphy

Stanstead Historical Society

Colby-Curtis Museum

535 Dufferin, Stanstead

Info: (819) 876-7322

www.colbycurtis.ca

Closed until Spring 2009

Special events and activities TBA

2009 Lecture/Luncheon Series

Anglican Church Hall

550 Dufferin, Stanstead

May 2, 2009 – 10:30 a.m.

Lecture: Scenic Tourism on Lac Memphrémagog: The Era of Steamship and

Resort Hotels 1850 – 1900

Speaker: Dr. Jack Little, Department of History, Simon Fraser University

Georgeville Historical Society

Seeking assistance with new oral history project

Contact Valerie Pasztor

Info: (819) 868-4314

Valerie.pasztor@mcgill.ca

Montreal

Westmount Historical Association

Westmount Public Library

4574 Sherbrooke Street West,

Westmount

Info: (514) 925-1404 or (514) 932-6688

www.westmounthistorical.org

Spring Lecture Series

March 19, 2009

Westmount Municipal Association: Celebrating a Centennial

Speakers: Tom Thompson and Kathleen Duncan, Westmount City Councillors and Past Presidents of WMA

April 16, 2009

Pom Bakery, Pride of Montreal or Pain

Orgueil de Montréal

Speaker: Peter Harrison, great-grandson of founder Dent Harrison

St. Patrick's Society of Montreal

Suite 1, 6767 Cote St. Luc Road,

Montreal

Info: (514) 848-8711

www.stpatricksociety.com

www.cdnirish.concordia.ca

March 6, 2009

Annual Charity Ball

Montreal Marriott Chateau Champlain

March 17, 2009

St. Patrick's Day Luncheon

Charitable Fundraiser

March 22, 2009

St. Patrick's Day Parade

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Hudson Historical Society

St James Anglican Church

642 Main Road, Hudson

2009 Meetings

March Lecture: Hiking from Hudson to

Rigaud – Natural History

Speaker: Jim Duff

April Lecture: History of F1 Boat Racing and its Hudson connection

Speaker: Tony Gravina

May Lecture: The Law Family of Côte

St. Charles

Speaker: Tony Gravina

Exporail, Canadian Railway Museum

110, rue Saint-Pierre, Saint-Constant

Info: (450) 632-2410

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April 24, 2009 – 7 p.m.

Slideshow: 50 years Fred Angus railway enthusiast

In French only

Quebec City

Morrin Centre

44, chaussée des Écossais, Québec

Info: (418) 694-9147

www.morrin.org

March 23, 2009 - 7 p.m.

Annual General Meeting

April 18 & 19, 2009 – 1 to 5 p.m.

Quebec: English-Language Literary Weekend

Meet and discuss Canada's finest writers: Saturday: Panel focuses on the Urban/Rural divide in literature - Sunday: Weight of History

Virtual Exhibit with Eclectica

www.morrin.org/eclectica/demof.html

Virtual Library

www.transactions.morrin.org

Outaouais Pontiac

Gatineau Valley Historical Society

Box/C.P. 1803, Chelsea

Info: (819) 827-6224

www.gvhs.ca

March 16, 2009 – 7:30 p.m.

Chelsea Community Centre

Lecture: Changes in the Forests of the Gatineau Valley – From First Nations to the Future

Speaker: Michael Rosen, President of Tree Canada, historian and forester

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