

A PRIMER ON BILL 82, QUEBEC'S NEW HERITAGE LAW

\$10

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Stones and Bones

Sherbrooke's Winter Prison and Sir John Johnson's Vault

Producing Potash

Horatio Gates and Others Do a Roaring Trade

Heritage on Tap

The Career of Ethel May Bruneau

Quebec Heritage News

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Editor's note:

Please note that the previous issue of Quebec Heritage News (Vol. 6 No. 7) was the final issue of that volume. With the current issue (Vol. 7, No. 1), we are "rebooting" our numbering system to better reflect our quarterly format. Henceforth, each volume will include four numbers.

Cover image: For sale! Sherbrooke's Winter Prison, 2012. Photo: Matthew Farfan

EDITOR'S DESK

Wee kiddies on picket duty

by Rod MacLeod

So, you thought this past year in Quebec saw a shocking level of student protest and clashes in the streets? Small potatoes. Nothing compared to the scene one hundred years ago this February when Montreal's St. Louis Square was turned into the strike headquarters of hundreds of picketing students whose actions would have revolutionary consequences for education and ethnic relations in Quebec.

And most of them were under ten.

There were lots of strikes in those days – vicious ones, too, with police and/or private goon squads breaking up marching workers, both collectively and individually. 1912 saw a particularly bitter dispute in Montreal's garment industry, which was close to my story's home in that both factory owners and workers were Jewish. The workers were Yiddish-speaking, secular, and socialist, their political views imported from the Pale of Russia from which they (unlike the factory owners) hailed. The children of these families earned their Poli-Sci degrees around the kitchen table, just as they learned English, Math, Geography, and how to be a good citizen of the Empire at the local Protestant school.

There was also lots of anti-semitism in those days. Very few Canadians of non-Jewish persuasion were immune to this form of mental illness, although for most the symptoms either did not manifest or were cleverly concealed. Protestant school administrators were usually adept at masking whatever distaste they may have felt towards the growing number of Jewish children in their classrooms with expressions of concern for maintaining the "Christian character" of schooling and for having to provide education to hundreds of pupils whose parents, as renters, did not pay school taxes. Even though a 1903 law equated Jews

with Protestants "for education purposes," the position of Jewish children in classrooms was always precarious, even in schools such as Mount Royal, Lansdowne, and Aberdeen where Jews made up the majority of students. There were virtually no Jewish teachers working in the public system. Certainly cultural sensitivity training was not part of the Normal School curriculum.

In early 1913, however, the issue that would have dominated discussions around kitchen tables in homes on and

in part excuse certain discriminatory tendencies on the part of one Miss McKinley, teacher of a Grade Six class at Aberdeen School, her sense of timing was clearly abysmal. On the morning of Thursday, February 27, 1913, she told her almost entirely Jewish class that Jews were dirty and should be banned from the school. Given the political climate, this outburst electrified the students – five boys in particular: Harry Singer, Frank Sherman, Joe Orenstein, Moses Skibelsky, and Moses Margolis went straight to the principal to complain. Unfortunately, although a staunch disciplinarian, Principal Henry Cockfield was no diplomat. Seeing only pre-teen troublemakers, he dismissed the boys out of hand.

So they called a strike.

Applying what they had learned from their parents, Aberdeen school students from all grades picketed in front of the school gates Friday morning, February 28. Soon over 200 children (some said as many as 600) had gathered, at which point they crossed St. Denis Street to the park in St. Louis Square,

which became strike HQ. There, they vowed not to return to class until they received an apology, and declared that any student who did so would be considered a scab. Someone, possibly a resident of this otherwise tony square, called the police. Two officers arrived and tried to force the children out of the park, but this proved harder than herding cats. According to reporters, who also turned up in search of curious news, the children were slippery but neither aggressive nor provocative; apparently not even a single snowball was thrown. Their sense of calm purpose is especially impressive given that these children had reason to be afraid of police after witnessing what had occurred during the



off The Main was the Plamondon affair. Three years earlier, notary Jacques-Edouard Plamondon, addressing a gathering of the Association catholique de la jeunesse canadienne-française in Quebec City, denounced Jews and Judaism, evoking no less than the ancient blood libel as evidence of a mounting conspiracy. This speech provoked several instances of street fighting and vandalism between Jews and Catholics, and these in turn spurred the provincial Jewish leadership to sue Plamondon for libel – an unprecedented course of action. The trial was set to begin in May 1913, its outcome eagerly awaited by the entire Jewish community.

And so, although upbringing might

recent garment workers' strike.

This was good publicity, but not enough. The savvy strike leaders sent a delegation to march on the offices of the *Keneder Adler* (the "Canadian Eagle"), Montreal's principal Yiddish newspaper, whose editor Reuben Brainen and publisher Hirsch Wolofsky proved sympathetic to the children's cause. Over the following days, Brainen's numerous articles about the strike presented it as evidence of a nascent sense of Jewish dignity and solidarity: "What interests me is that the children did not seek justice for themselves," he wrote. "It was their national sensibility that was offended and that provoked their little fists against their highest government (for to children their teachers and schools are the highest government)."

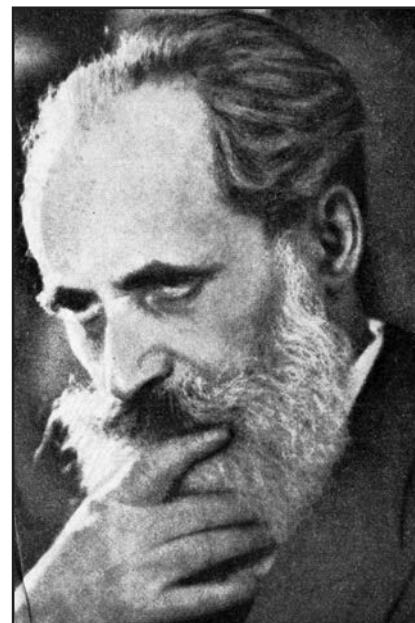
Another delegation of students was sent to the Baron de Hirsch Institute, where the city's Jewish political leadership (including Samuel Jacobs, one of the lawyers in the Plamondon case) held their meetings. The Institute's legislative committee agreed to send a negotiating party to Aberdeen School, consisting of Jacobs and Rabbi Herman Abramovitz.

Later that day, these two men arrived by sleigh to wild cheers from the crowd of striking children. The meeting with the uncouth Principal Cockfield did not go well, although, when summoned, Miss McKinley (like all public figures caught making obnoxious statements) expressed regret that her remarks had been taken out of context. Cockfield did agree to leave the issue in the hands of the school commissioners. On condition that no child would be punished for taking action, the students agreed to return to classes on Monday morning. Once again, they cheered the negotiators' sleigh as it sped off into the gathering dusk.

The matter was resolved over the course of several subsequent back-room discussions between Abramovitz, Jacobs, and the chair of the school board, Herbert Symonds. No recriminations against any of the parties would take place. Order was restored on the condition that the commissioners look into

the matter of hiring Jewish teachers. Sure enough, after legal counsel declared there was no impediment, the board began to accept non-Protestant applications for teaching positions. In the fall of 1913, Misses F. Novick, L. Chaskelson and Rebecca Smilovitz (all clearly identified as "Jewesses") took charge of classrooms in various Protestant schools. Within a decade of the Aberdeen School Strike, the board was employing over seventy Jewish teachers – hardly enough to go around all the schools with large Jewish populations, but a definite improvement over the situation at the beginning of the century.

A colleague and I first learned of the Aberdeen School Strike some time ago from a book of articles taken from the early years of *Keneder Adler*, but felt much more could be done with the story. We particularly wanted to explore the variety of reactions to the strike, from support to hostility, both within the Jewish community (Abramowitz, for one, was initially very skeptical) and outside. We also wanted to present a story of resistance to anti-semitism, especially by children, who are too often relegated to the sidelines in history. Indeed, much of the newspaper coverage at the time was condescending in tone: for example the *Montreal Herald's* front-page headline "Wee Kiddies on Picket Duty." (That phrase became the working title for our project until another colleague pointed out that we seemed to be perpetuating the condescension; we changed it to "Little Fists for Social Justice," but I'm offering the original here as it is hard to



let go of.)

And so, after countless drafts and numerous conference presentations (including Klez Canada Laurentian Retreat and the LeMood festival of "unexpected Jewish learning") we lucked out on a fast publishing turnaround at *Labour/Le Travail* and the story of the Aberdeen School Strike will see print in January 2013. But that's not all. In collaboration with the Canadian Jewish Congress and the Jewish Public Library, we will be commemorating the centenary of the strike on February 28 at the CJC offices (corner of Côte des Neiges Road and Dr. Penfield Avenue in Montreal) with a roundtable discussion, a short dramatization of some of the events I've described, and the launch of a graphic novel about the strike geared towards young people. Those of you who have been involved in major commemoration projects will know how they can take on a life of their own, and can easily leave the organizers distinctly less sane. But the cause is just: those kids deserve whatever honour and recognition we can give them.

After all, it isn't every day that students go on strike.



TIMELINES

QAHN joins in Traf's 125th

A century after it first opened its doors to the old building on Montreal's Simpson Street, Trafalgar School for Girls celebrated in style with a weekend homecoming event that brought Old Girls from across the globe.

In addition to a number of organized events, "Traf" held an open house on the afternoon of Saturday, October 20, 2012. Grads, sometimes two or three generations from the same family, filed though the venerable halls to relive old memories, rekindle almost forgotten friendships, or just see what they'd done to the place. Two rooms in the oldest part of the school (those immediately behind the ancient door depicted on the cover of the Fall 2012 *Quebec Heritage News*) were devoted to historical memorabilia: photos, old school books, prizes and trophies, and an old hand bell that must once have summoned the faithful to the halls of learning. What did not fit on the walls went into a looped video that visitors sat to take in.

QAHN's Sandra Stock (herself a former member of the Traf staff) and Rod MacLeod joined Janet Allingham, one of the reunion's organizers, in greet-

ing visitors to the heritage rooms. It was an occasion to introduce people to QAHN in general and the *Quebec Heritage News* in particular. Janet's recent article on the history of Traf proved a draw. The two from QAHN were well supplied with food and drink, and given personal tours of the school from Janet. It was a privilege to help Traf commemorate its prestigious history, and always a pleasure to make new acquaintances.

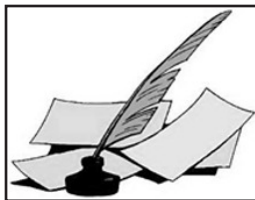


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Sherbrooke's Winter Prison inside and out

Awaiting a promising future

by Jessica Campbell

An ominous feeling still hangs in the air in and around Sherbrooke's derelict Winter Prison. The prison, which is reputedly the oldest stone structure in Sherbrooke and the city's third oldest public building, is the province's oldest prison outside of Quebec City and Montreal. Hidden on quiet Winter Street in Sherbrooke's Borough of Jacques-Cartier and overlooking the Magog River, the Winter Prison functioned as Sherbrooke's only penitentiary for well over a century.

Michel Mercier, a member of the Société de sauvegarde de la vieille prison, the organization that currently owns the building and is dedicated to preserving it, once wrote an article reminding Sherbrooke residents of the heritage they would be losing should the old prison be demolished. Mercier's article was written around 1989, when the building was first condemned and after the Société de sauvegarde had purchased it amidst public fears that it would be torn down.

Mercier's article, originally written in French, includes a brief sketch of the Winter Prison's history, focusing on the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries:

Construction of this large Palladian structure began in 1865 and was completed in 1872 at a time when Sherbrooke had only 4,000 habitants. The Winter Prison was meant to replace the older prison on the corner of Montreal and William streets [...] The prison was designed by the renowned architect at the time, Frederick Preston Rubidge. Inspired by the prison style in vogue in the United States, Rubidge designed a larger building, which allowed for a more humane treatment of the prisoners. His rooms could accommodate many prisoners in separate double or single cells that aligned in a row, rather than a few common rooms that would have to hold many prisoners piled on top of one another [...]

The Winter Prison was mixed; it held long-term prisoners, people awaiting trial, people with fewer than two-year sentences, and even those awaiting execution for capital offenses. The location of prisoners' cellblocks depended on the duration of their stay and ultimately on the nature of their crime.

While the prisoners were treated relatively well in terms of forced labour, other aspects made living in the

prison harsh; only two years after opening, the prisoners began complaining about the poorly functioning chimney, which made breathing difficult, and the toilets [...] Moreover, it took until 1913 for the authorities to install modern plumbing and replace the wood burning stove with a hot water boiler.

Whether given good treatment or bad, inmates still wanted and managed to escape Winter Prison, most notable among them being a man named Guillenette, who escaped in the 1930s and was never found.

People today may cringe at the idea of preserving a prison, an institution made for punishment and for housing criminals, but it stands as a doorway to the past and a beautiful piece of architecture. It would be unfortunate if we erased this building from the history of Sherbrooke, there is no reason for us to find it to be less hauntingly beautiful and awesome today, simply because it was a prison.



Today, the prison's ghostly feel makes it the perfect setting for a horror film. In fact,

I toured the prison recently with an amateur film crew planning to spend the night inside to film the eerie halls and cells, and even (we hoped) signs of supernatural activity. Our tour guide, Société de sauvegarde treasurer Jean-Michel Longpré, told us that recent and current uses for the old prison include accommodating the activities of Art Libre, a local art association, and storing the collection of antiques belonging to the prison's caretaker. The building has also been a film location for historical documentaries, including a production focusing on Canadian outlaw and folk hero Donald Morrison.

The prison is now for sale, although there is no sign on the building. Its interior can be altered according to a buyer's wishes. Longpré told us that "if buyers are serious about renovating the building and provide proof of their plans, then we will sell the prison to them for the same price we bought it for from the Ministry of Culture – \$1.00!"

Although the building is not protected by any municipal or provincial heritage status, it has been included in the City of Sherbrooke's zoning guidelines, known collectively as the *Plan d'implantation et d'intégration architecturale*. So there is at least some meas-

ure of protection for the building's exterior.

For the past 23 years, the Société de sauvegarde has encouraged multiple uses of the prison's interior: as a heritage centre or museum, a tourist site, offices, or even a condo complex. Despite some community members' interest in restoring the prison as a museum, the Société is not stressing any grandiose plans or links to Sherbrooke's heritage for the interior. The organization's main desire is for the building to be put to use rather than to fall into further disrepair.

As it is, few people are interested in investing money in such a massive structure, and the more time that passes, the more the building will decay and the harder it will be to sell. The Société de sauvegarde does not have the funds to restore the building or even to properly maintain it. A 2010 article about the status of the prison stated that "the Conseil des monuments et sites du Québec has already urged local stakeholders...to integrate the prison in future revitalization plans," but thus far no one has made a serious offer.

Because of its "advanced state of disrepair," the prison was condemned for a second time in its history in 2007 by the Régie du bâtiment. As it is, most rooms and hallways are cement or neatly cut stone and some walls remain in decent shape, while others are decaying and the doorways are so small that one needs to duck to get through them. The only recently renovated area, located in the front, far right part of the building, are two now vacant offices used during the last decade by a law firm and a moving company.

The Winter Prison's interior is a maze consisting of two symmetrical side-wings, which once housed the prisoners' quarters, workshops, showers and a small cafeteria, where the prisoners would eat their meals – which consisted mainly of oatmeal or bologna. The most interesting feature of these side wings are the prisoners' double- or single-cells, the latter measuring approximately 0.61 x 2.4 metres (2 x 8 feet). These tiny cells, wherein the prisoners were only supposed to spend eight hours at a time, were eventually considered inhumane and were cited as a reason for the prison's closure and relocation to the newly-built Talbot Detention Centre.

The side wings flank the private residence of the prison's governor who lived rent-free with his family. According to Mercier's article, the governor occupied this apartment until the 1940s, when he moved to a private annexation built around that time. Sharing the top floor with the governor's bedrooms is a chapel –

supposedly for the use of the prison inmates, although far too small to hold all the prisoners and employees at any one time.

Besides the chapel, which has a recently-built skylight, most of the windows in the building have thick bars, and some have shutters, so little natural light enters the prison halls, making navigation throughout difficult.

While there are technically four floors in the prison, there are also a multitude of small independent

sets of steps leading into different rooms and areas; the term "nook and cranny" is quite applicable to this maze-like building. Given the Winter Prison's many renovations through the years, the exact purpose of each of these many little rooms is not certain.

But perhaps the most impressive thing about the Winter Prison is its exterior. Apart from its imposing stone

façade, its interior courtyard and the 5.5 x 144 metre (18 x 472 foot) stone wall surrounding it are truly remarkable. Stepping into the courtyard is like stepping onto the set of *The Shawshank Redemption*. The feeling one has is of utter imprisonment.

At the far right is the area where the guards surveyed the prisoners. At the front right, a small corner was dedicated to a three-storey-high hanging scaffold, where six prisoners between 1880 and 1931 were executed. Due to the sloping green space, the wall dips a few feet behind the location of the scaffold. Ironically, this is where some prisoners attempted to escape.

"This portion, the outside, and the interior court must remain authentic," Longpré emphasized. Clearly, the Société de sauvegarde de la vieille prison is ready to pass the building on to new buyers. But until a suitable buyer is found, the status of the Winter Prison will remain as it is.

Sources:

Interview by the author with Jean-Michel Longpré (October 6, 2012).

Michel Mercier, "La Prison Winter," no date [circa 1989].

The Heritage Canada Foundation. "Winter Street Prison." <http://www.heritagecanada.org/en/issues-campaigns/top-ten-endangered/explore-past-listings/quebec/winter-street-prison>. 2010.



Right step or misstep?

Quebec's new cultural heritage law

by Kevin O'Donnell

Did the earth move for you last October 19? In case you missed the tremors, that was the day Quebec's new Cultural Heritage Act (Bill 82) came into force. Frankly, I would have to rate the changes and improvements the new legislation brings as low-to-moderate on the heritage Richter scale. But read on.

Parts of the legislation might prove useful to willing heritage guardians. There even appears to be new money available for cherished projects as well as ventures in new areas. The English-speaking minority should not miss out on potentially significant opportunities.

To see what is positive in the Cultural Heritage Act requires a little background information. As can be expected from a province with *Je me souviens* as its motto, Quebec has had heritage legislation on the books for a long time. The first law, passed in 1922, focussed on protecting monuments and historical works of art. By 1972, the Cultural Properties Act reflected a then-modern consensus concerning heritage that had emerged from such international conventions as the Charter of Athens (1931) and the Charter of Venice (1964). The new law and its subsequent updates offered protection to properties of aesthetic, historic and monumental significance. Archeological sites were now protected, and the law extended to objects and documents. Property tax reductions were added to the law in 1972, and municipalities were compensated for lost revenues starting in 1986. The year before, municipalities had been given powers to enact bylaws, to designate heritage sites and historic monuments, to grant financial and technical assistance to owners, and to expropriate heritage.

As time marched on, the province began playing an important role in the international evolution of what should be considered "heritage." In 1982, Quebec's own Deschambault Declaration stressed the need to "identify our cultural personality, and thereby define the special nature of our heritage." The Deschambault Declaration appeared under the aegis of ICOMOS, the International Council on Monuments and Sites, as did the 2008 UNESCO-ICOMOS "Quebec Declaration on the Preservation of the

Planning and Development Act, the Cities and Towns Act, the Sustainable Development Act, and others.)

"We must therefore develop a new approach that will embrace the extraordinary diversity of our heritage and help it survive the next decades, for ourselves and on behalf of generations to come," St-Pierre declared in *A Fresh Look at Cultural Heritage*, the Green Paper that laid the groundwork for her remake. "We are passionate about our shared heritage and committed to demanding that the right steps be taken to ensure its long term survival."

These stirring words set off a round of public hearings across the province, which were followed by National Assembly committee hearings with briefs submitted by interested parties (including QAHN), and impassioned articles in the French-language media. Finally, after a clause-by-clause review resulting in 69 amendments, Bill 82 was adopted on October

19, 2011, to come into force one year later.

It's little wonder that the very first section of the Cultural Heritage Act is in the spirit of the Quebec Declaration: "Cultural heritage consists of deceased persons of historical importance, historic events and sites, heritage documents, immovables, objects and sites, heritage cultural landscapes, and intangible heritage." At first glance this seems like a jumbled if not bizarre formulation, but then, on November 1, the Ministry made the first move under the new law. The "Premiers of Quebec Deceased since 1867" were given designation status, and were entered in the *Registre du patrimoine culturel*. The premiers are the first, but presumably not the last, to enter the Hall of Fame section of the



Spirit of Place," given international ratification in 2011. This declaration defined Spirit of Place as "the tangible (buildings, sites, landscapes, routes, objects) and the intangible elements (memories, narratives, written documents, rituals, festivals, traditional knowledge, values, textures, colors, odors, etc.), that is to say the physical and the spiritual elements that give meaning, value, emotion and mystery to place."

These new perspectives, as well as the patchwork nature of Quebec heritage legislation, led Christine St-Pierre to announce in 2007 her intention to champion a new law. (The Cultural Properties Act had been updated several times from 1972 to the mid-90s, and several other laws had a direct impact on municipal and individual practices: the Land Use

province's Register of Cultural Heritage.

In fact, to underline that the Ministry was taking seriously the implications of “intangible heritage,” on the day Bill 82 came into force the new Minister of Culture and Communications, Maka Kotto, announced that a new component had been added to Quebec's shadowy \$5.5 million Cultural Heritage Fund. This fifth component, for which new sums will be added in 2013 from tobacco tax revenue, “aims to provide grants for conducting studies and outreach activities related to awareness, inventory and project development. It will, for example, provide financial support for local municipalities or regional jurisdictions to undertake steps to obtain a heritage designation for a culturally significant landscape.” (This from a press release, *Loi sur le patrimoine culturel: Une loi pour connaître, protéger, valoriser et transmettre notre héritage collectif*. In fact, this was recycled news – the fifth component had been added in January 2012. See: www.mcc.gouv.qc.ca/index.php?id=2766)

Non-profits (e.g. museums and registered historical societies) and municipalities can take advantage of this funding. Recently, QAHN director Richard Smith participated in a meeting with officials of the Ministry of Culture and Communications. The officials mentioned that “they have an interesting sum of money available for cultural projects,” especially with regards the new fifth component of the Fund.

Aside from this interesting expansion of heritage areas, and the willingness of the government to subsidize new projects, the rest of the law is disappointing. In spite of the consultations and amendments – or maybe because of them – Bill 82 has a slapdash, throw-together feel to it. For example, the final wording regarding property tax reimbursements given to municipalities is not indicated in the law. Provisions in the old law remain for this year, and will continue if they don't get around to adding new sections to the Cultural Heritage Act. Another example: the preamble to Bill 82 notes that “the Act prescribes that the fines collected are to be paid into the Quebec Cultural Heritage Fund, except the fines collected by local municipalities or Native communities, which belong to those municipalities or

communities,” but then section 207 implies that certain fines will go, not to the towns or the Cultural Heritage Fund, but will “belong to the prosecutor.”

Municipalities are granted important rights and responsibilities under the Cultural Heritage Act to protect heritage within their jurisdictions – but this may turn out to be where problems begin.

Bill 82 calls for Local Heritage Councils to be set up, to serve town councils in an advisory capacity, and to hear representations from local citizens. Impressive sounding, but the law imposes no obligation to establish such Heritage Councils and even implies that these advisory bodies can simply be added to the chores of Town Planning Advisory Committees (also known as *Comités consultatifs d'urbanisme*). TPAC/CCUs are established under the Act Respecting Land Use Planning and Development, and there's one in every Quebec municipality, the result of a law that is meant to be taken seriously. To ensure that heritage issues are taken seriously, architect Michael Fish has proposed a solution: municipalities which fail to set up properly constituted Local Heritage Councils should have these responsibilities taken up by their Municipal Regional Councils on the reception of a petition of 25 citizens from that municipality.

In fact, municipalities, for all their new but more-or-less traditional, powers and responsibilities granted under Bill 82, are the Achilles heel of the new heritage law. This is the informed opinion of QAHN Executive Director Matthew Farfan, who spent 11 years serving on a municipal council, including nine on a CCU. According to Farfan, town councils and CCUs are over-represented by developers, for whom heritage buildings should not stand in the way of progress, such as building parking lots. He points out that the new law makes no provision to provide training in heritage matters for relevant players such as city council-

lors, municipal staff and CCU members.

Ministry documents boast that since 1985 some 275 municipalities have taken advantage of the provisions of the old Cultural Properties Act, designating some 200 heritage sites in their jurisdictions. There are 1,112 municipalities in Quebec. Furthermore, the Ministry's 2011-12 annual report notes that only 68 recipients had been reimbursed less than \$5 million for taxes.

So far, the Quebec experience seems to bear out Canadian heritage expert Robert Shipley's gloomy observation that “heritage laws, almost alone among our legislative framework, are not taken seriously by the people charged with upholding the law.”

But maybe things will change. The Ministry seems to be serious about implementing the law, and about providing (some) funds to encourage compliance. QAHN will be on the lookout to publicize these resources from the Ministry, as well as from other sources, so that your museum or historical society can continue to make known the both the tangible and intangible heritage of Quebec's English-speaking minority. It's important that our “physical and spiritual elements that give meaning, value, emotion and mystery to place” be recognized as a vital element in Quebec society.

A detailed analysis of the Cultural Heritage Act (Bill 82) can be found on the QAHN website: www.qahn.org.

Links to Bill 82 can be found at <http://www.assnat.qc.ca/en/travaux-parlementaires/projets-loi/projet-loi-82-39-1.html>.

The Ministry of Culture and Communications has just published, La Loi sur le patrimoine culturel: Guide pratique destiné aux municipalités: www.mcc.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/documents/patrimoine/guide-municipalites-19-10-2012.pdf.



Commemorating a Loyalist

The restoration of Sir John Johnson's burial vault

by Jessica Campbell

Mont Saint-Grégoire is known for its apple orchards, forest parks, sugar shacks and hiking trails. On the slope of the mountain, on land owned by the Centre d'interprétation du milieu écologique du Haut-Richelieu (CIME), lies the foundation of the burial vault of United Empire Loyalist Sir John Johnson, erected by Johnson's family in 1812. Except for the flattened grass leading to the site, the vault is nearly invisible to passersby.

By the late 1950s, the Johnson family vault had been looted and ransacked. It was in a dilapidated state, with only the foundation and the door, nearly hidden by overgrown grass, remaining. The owner, Romuald Meunier, believed that these were only the ruins of a root cellar. Landscaper Jean-Paul Lasnier was hired to "clean up a pile of rocks that sat in the middle of an apple orchard." And even though he immediately discovered that the rock pile was the remains of a tomb with human bones in the surrounding area, he continued his work bulldozing the site. In the 1960s, Meunier found Sir John Johnson's tombstone bearing a nearly illegible inscription: "...Honourable Sir John Johnson..."

Meunier brought the stone to the attention of the Sir John Johnson Centennial Branch of the United Empire Loyalist Association of Canada (UELAC), which was formed in 1967. It was discovered that the nearly destroyed tomb was the final resting place of a man who was worthy of commemoration for his contributions to Quebec history. (The stone is now embedded in the outside wall of the Missisquoi Museum in Stanbridge East.)

In the midst of the American Revolution, Sir John Johnson fled to Quebec with the Rebel army in pursuit. Having just barely escaped, he made the land north of the border his home and immediately invoked his loyalties to the British crown by claiming the area for King and Country.

In 1776, Johnson was commissioned to organize the King's Royal Regiment of New York. Over the next seven years the regiment raided and attacked the food supply of the Continental Army in the Mohawk Valley. Johnson was appointed Superintendent General and Inspector General of the First Nations loyal to Britain. He was also appointed supervisor of Loyalist refugee settlements, wherein he was considered a leader. In 1796, he was appointed to the

Legislative Council of Lower Canada.

Johnson is perhaps best remembered for his relationship with Native Americans. He was responsible for representing the Native peoples, and for maintaining their well-being and happiness. He quelled the feuds between the Natives and the settlers. He developed amicable relationships with their chiefs, and held councils with them. He also helped maintain long-held traditions, such as the British government's practice of gift-giving to the First Nations peoples.

Johnson's real estate endeavors are also noteworthy. Despite the British government's reluctance to allow settlement so close to the American border, he brought in a number of other Loyalists from the United States. He contributed to the establishment of an English-speaking community in a largely French-speaking

region. He acquired and developed properties in and around Montreal, Lachine, Kingston, and Cornwall, and on Lake St. Francis, the Raisin River at Gananoque, and on Amherst Island. Upon these properties, he built homes and mills. Along the rivers, he built dams and became involved in other commercial activities.

In the 1790s, Johnson acquired the seigneuries of Monnoir and Argenteuil. Monnoir included the land around Mont-Sainte-Thérèse, which he renamed Mount Johnson and which is now known as Mont-Saint-Grégoire. He spent the remainder of his days at Mount Johnson where he continued to welcome Natives as friends.

It was in the family vault at the base of Mount Johnson that Johnson was buried in 1830. Other members of his family to be interred here include his wife, Lady Polly Johnson, his son-in-law Col. Edward MacDonnell, and four of his sons, William, Robert, Adam and John Jr., all of whom fought on the side of the British.

Following Johnson's death, a grand military and Masonic funeral was held in his honour. It was attended by friends, family, admirers, members of the military, brother Freemasons (Johnson was a Mason), and several hundred Natives, including a Mohawk orator who called Johnson the "Indians' friend and fellow warrior."

It is uncertain when the truth reached Jean-Paul Lasnier about whose tomb he had bulldozed. In 1998, by which time he was Mayor of Sainte-Brigide-d'Iberville, Lasnier's conscience led him to co-found the Société de restauration du patrimoine Johnson, a committee dedicated



to restoring the burial vault as a historic site, and thus “restoring to Sir John Johnson the dignity that he deserves and to elevate his prominence in history.”

Lasnier’s committee has worked hand-in-hand with the UEL’s Sir John Johnson Centennial Branch to meet their common goals. However, according to Adelaide Lanktree, the branch’s past president, several setbacks have delayed the completion of the project.

First, the Quebec government ordered several costly archeological excavations and lab analysis of the human bones found at the site before it could be proven that the bones actually belonged to Johnson and his relatives. These measures did allow the Quebec Ministry of Culture to designate the site as historic, but once the site was designated, the government prohibited the restoration of the vault on top of the foundation, as had been initially planned.

The restoration team is now working on a new plan to build a replica of the vault beside the foundation. The replica will be modeled on an 1885 painting of the vault by artist Henry Richard S. Bunnett. The team also plans to install a memorial plaque recounting Sir John’s biography and his role in Quebec’s history.

Another cause for delay was the property changing hands. The restoration team had negotiated a right of way with the former owner, Marie Deschênes, in order to guarantee access to the site, but unfortunately the deed to a right of way was never signed, requiring a new set of negotiations with the new owner, the CIME.

Finally, as is the problem with most historic projects in Quebec, acquiring funding for the restoration has been a time-consuming process. Funds were raised through the government, the local historical society, the UELAC, and from private donors, totaling about \$14,000, representing just over half of the original estimate of \$25,000 for the entire project. Moreover, by 2010, estimates for the restoration had risen to \$80,000. The Sir John Johnson Centennial Branch and the restoration team have not yet begun asking for more funding, and will not do so until they have a clear idea of their new budget.

Sir John Johnson is not a well-known historical figure for most Quebec citizens. When asked for the location of the site, for example, a number of townspeople in Mont-Saint-Grégoire – even those who had lived there all their lives – said that they knew nothing of Sir John and his vault.

Hopefully the Centre d’interprétation du milieu écologique du Haut-Richelieu, a Francophone organization, will help to make Sir John’s story more accessible to the French-speaking community. CIME already wishes to preserve Johnson’s legacy, as it “maintains, and exploits for visitors, a network of interpretive trails that closely mirrors the pattern used by the Johnson family.”

CIME Director Renée Gagnon has said that CIME’s interest in preserving Johnson’s memory also lies in its desire to use the site as a tourist attraction. “Last year,” she said, “we had a Montreal theatre group come down during the summer. They performed one of their skits beside the vault’s foundations and reenacted Sir John’s history.”



The people of Quebec would do well to remember Sir John Johnson’s efforts in this country. This has been a key goal for the Sir John Johnson Centennial Branch of the UELAC for the past thirteen years: the reestablishment of Johnson’s burial vault, a landmark on the Loyalist trail.

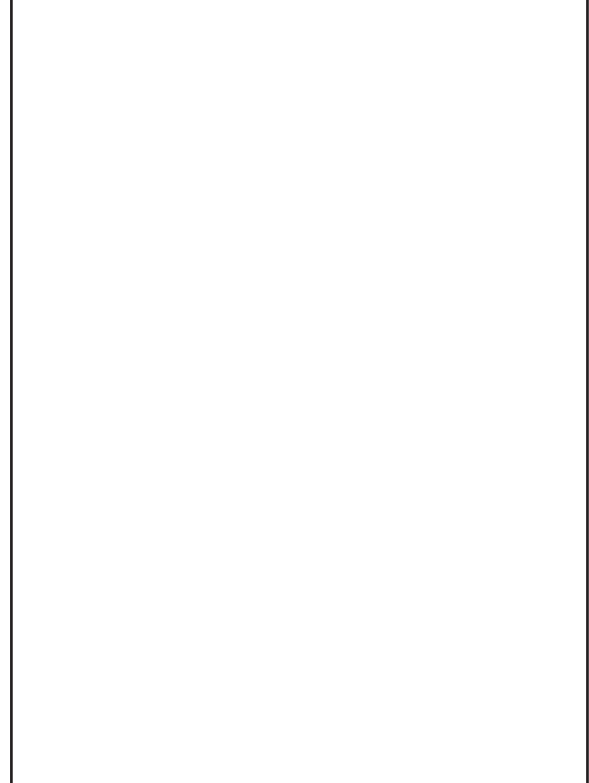
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Interviews by the author with UELAC members Raymond Ostiguy and Adelaide Lanktree, and CIME Director Renée Gagnon.

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GUIDED TOURS

MISS SWING

Ethel Bruneau from Harlem to Rockhead's

by Lys Stevens

She was called “Miss Swing” and “The Queen of Afro-Cuban.” Adored by her many tap students, among certain circles she is known as a Montreal legend.

Ethel Mae Waterman arrived in Montreal by train in the summer of 1953 at the age of 17, a long-legged girl with stars in her eyes and a swagger in her hips, confident in her new adventure. Travelling direct from Harlem at the tail end of the Harlem Renaissance, she had grown up surrounded by black cultural luminaries, the ‘royalty’ as she likes to put it, of jazz and show business.

She was joining a minor pilgrimage north of black performers settling in Montreal that had begun around the 1920s, including the likes of Charlie Biddle, Louis Metcalf, and Herb Johnson. She had a few personal contacts: she would be staying with her older sister, Miss Tanya Grace, a shake dancer who had danced at Minsky’s in her New York City heyday, and another relative, Rodricks Scott, who made costumes for the local showgirls. She remembers asking a police officer for directions to “Uncle Scotty’s” studio on St. Catherine Street, her first stop. “I remember getting off the train,” she says, “and it was like, ‘I’m in another world!’ That’s why I decided, ‘I’m going to stay here.’” The neon lights had hooked her in.

Now in her 70s, she lives here still, travelling regularly between the home in Brossard she’s owned since 1966 and the studio in Dorval where she continues to teach tap dance. With large coke-bottle glasses and walking with a cane, she doesn’t at first glance seem like a woman with a nightclub performance history. But her easy laugh and generous disposition make for easy company, and one quickly falls under her charm.

There is a magic that happens when someone you have come to know relatively well via an older person telling

stories about their younger days (as I have known Ethel over these past ten-odd years) invites you to delve into their physical archives. Suddenly the oral dimension – the words of it – gets replaced with the flesh of it. It’s ironic – a narrative coming from a living, breathing body should be more alive than a two dimensional image. And it is – it is.



But in that moment of peering across the window of time at this new, younger person, the stories re-align from the theoretical into the living past, and the imagination takes you on a voyage to a space and time you hadn’t considered.

This is what happened to me, in any case. After years of listening in rapture to Ethel’s stories of her childhood in Harlem, her experiences dancing in Montreal nightclubs in the 1950s, her listing off of heroic names from the Jazz Canon: she *danced* for Cab Calloway, *Bill Bailey* hit on her, Bill Robinson and Honi Coles were her mentors. Men I had read about in books and maybe seen in movies. And maybe only because I was

already a fan, a dance researcher who had, for whatever reason, sought out African American dance artists, sought to understand how race intersects with exclusion in the standard narrative of art history, did I register the import of these names.

But these were American stories, and as much as they intrigued me, I questioned their relevance in the context of Montreal, Canada, and to me, a Montrealer. Until I met Ethel. And lapped up her stories.

Ethel arrived in Montreal with a few contacts, and her gig: a two-week run at the famed Bellevue Casino on Bleury Avenue, dancing as the soubrette for Cab Calloway’s orchestra. She was no stranger to show business herself, having danced with her teacher’s elite dancers, the Brucettes and in a duo with her cousin Cornelius “Poppy” Scott on Atlantic City’s boardwalk, at USO shows, and in numerous television appearances (Ed Sullivan’s *The Toast of the Town*, Milton Berle’s *Texaco Star Theatre*, *The Jackie Gleason Show*, etc.), in certain cases breaking colour lines.

With legs and chops like hers, no wonder the agent Roy Cooper approached her before the run with Calloway was up, to offer her 365 days of work a year. She was sold in a heartbeat.

It was the City of Sin, the Neon City, with streets lit up from east to west with nightclubs. Managing to avoid total prohibition through the twenties, when the rest of the continent banned the legal sale of alcohol, Montreal developed an international reputation for its thriving nightlife. The momentum carried Montreal’s jazz era longer than other North American cities, where it was beginning to wane by the 1950s. Ethel claims that, “there were 980 clubs on St. Catherine Street alone,” although I can’t imagine who would have had the tenacity to count that far. She lists off venue names like a drum roll: Montmartre, the

Terminal Club, All American, Tourbillion, Casa Loma, and more. “The Top Hat was on the west part of St. Catherine, and all this from east of Frontenac all the way up to St. Lawrence: nightclubs. Then from St. Lawrence to Atwater: all nightclubs. Then you’re going to go on to St. Antoine, the most famous nightclub, Mister Rockhead’s, and then you had, in front of Rockhead’s, was the St-Michel. Around the corner was the Black Bottom, all on the sides there were clubs like the Aldo, the Maroon Club, the Cavendish Club. I worked from one club to another.”

Montreal jazz historian John Gilmore states that “the scale of Montreal’s nightclub industry during its peak in the late 1940s and early 1950s was staggering.” The archives that he amassed working on his 1988 book *Swinging in Paradise: The Story of Jazz in Montreal* is housed at Concordia University’s Historical Archives. His and the other private collections that make up the Jazz Fonds and Collections formed the backbone of the documents behind *Stepping Out: The Golden Age of Montreal Night Clubs* (2004), by archivist Nancy Marrelli. Although Ethel doesn’t appear in these archives, her story intersects with those that do. Her intention is to one day add her documents to the collection.

“In those days you had to do two spots. I would open with my Afro. You did 15 minutes. And then I came back and did my tap, and sang, and that you had to do twenty minutes. I did drum solos until they ran out of my head. Tap and Afro.” For her tap act she’d open with a song, go into a tap dance routine

with some singing, and then transition into a big tap number. After that she would throw in some comical stuff, turn around, put on her top hat and pick up her cane, and do a soft shoe, all in one act. “Open with something really hot, and you close with a bang,” she states. For her Afro-Cuban act, she’d come out in a gown, again singing, and then whip off the dress, revealing a decorated bikini, and go into a big drum number. It cost her around \$1,000 to have her music written out for the band – a section for the drummer, a section for the trombone, another for the piano.

Rockhead’s Paradise, on the corner of St. Antoine and Mountain, was a special club. Owner Rufus Rockhead was a former railway porter who smuggled bootleg liquor for Al Capone, a dangerous but lucrative occupation that afforded him the luxury of opening his own nightclub in 1931, featuring the best of black entertainers. He was, in fact, the only black nightclub owner in Montreal, by most accounts. He enlarged the three-storey brick building “by cutting an oval hole in the third floor so it was possible to look down at the second-floor stage,” states Marrelli in *Stepping Out*. This feature is clear in Gilmore’s pictures as well as Ethel’s own, where she performed her act and later worked a stint as an MC. Mr. Rockhead was “such a gentleman,” remembers Ethel fondly. “And this club – judges and lawyers – everybody came back because he had the best shows.”

“And the only time you didn’t work was when you didn’t feel like working,” she continues. “Every club had a band, and every club had a chorus line. And every club had a shake dancer (a stripper), and an MC, and a tap dancer – or tap dancers!” She’s shouting it a bit, like a preacher, hitting you with the truth: “And seven nights a week: tap dancing!” It’s a truth that’s been just about forgotten. “I worked at the Chez Paree, with 45 strippers, they came up from the States. I worked with [famous striptease artist] Lili St. Cyr... When I worked with the strippers, I was considered the star, the Vedette. I was always either an MC and [I brought] on the strippers, or [I’d] sing and dance between them.” Marrelli’s book focuses on the

venues, and Gilmore’s book focuses on the (mostly male) musicians. A clear picture of the acts, which by Gilmore’s own admission was the real draw to the



clubs, not the musicians, is relatively unexplored in the history texts. Which makes Ethel’s testimony all the more valuable. The NFB documentary *Show Girls* is one exception, exploring the lives of three Montreal-born performers, Tina Baines Brereton, Olga Spencer and Bernice Jordan, from a slightly earlier era than Ethel’s.

It must have been a bit of a world apart, among the nightclub entertainers and musicians. They worked nights, slept through the morning, and socialized afternoons. Ethel recounts how some afternoons a gang of them would take a special bus up to Ideal Beach, a boardwalk and amusement park in St-Martin on Laval’s south shore. “You met so many entertainers,” remembers Ethel. “That’s when I met Tina Baines. That’s when I met Bernice Jordan.” She’s still in touch with the ones still living – many have passed on. “All these people! Because we all worked together, we danced in the clubs together. We all became really good friends, life-long friends.” They were young, and they were talented; the world was their oyster.

In some ways Montreal must have appeared like an oasis of racial harmony, in contrast to the heavy cloak of racial prejudice in the United States. By the 50s, Montreal musicians had been playing in mixed-race bands for a few decades, and the musicians’ union had desegregated in 1939. Interracial marriages were not uncommon – both Ethel



Top: Ethel dancing in Rockhead’s Paradise’s distinctive performance space.

Bottom: Ethel performing at Rockhead’s Paradise, 1970. Photos: courtesy of Ethel Bruneau.

and her sister before her married French-Canadians. (Hers was the legendary Mansfield Tavern waiter Henri Bruneau, considered the best waiter in Montreal. "He looked like Mickey Rooney, and I loved Mickey Rooney," she remembers. "I started calling him the Mickey Rooney of Montreal," but most knew him as "Ti Rouge" or "Big Red.") And although Ethel had been raised in what seems to have been a cradle of black-positivity, she still knew the sting of racism.

Ethel tells the story of returning to the States in 1959 to tour with Pearl Bailey's Big Review. Due to a life-long fear of flying she travelled by bus, and remembers the bus driver leaving Montreal asking her to sit in the seat behind him, to make sure no one asked her, once south of the border, to move to the back.

In St. Louis, the first stop on the tour, no white taxi driver would take her, and the eventual black taxi driver would not drive her to the assigned hotel because it was in the 'white' part of town.

On the other hand, Montreal was not entirely without discrimination. Some clubs still banned the mixed race bands as late as the 1960s, and certain establishments would not admit black clients into the 50s.

Ethel is well aware of the limits that have been placed upon her career as a tap artist, a dance technique that is seen as mere entertainment -- not, until recently, as a legitimate art form.

Certainly Mayor Jean Drapeau's

campaign against crime and corruption contributed to the decline of Montreal's jazz era, although television and the increasing popularity of rock music played their part as well. Ethel seems to have ridden the wave until the very end, performing in gigs through the 1960s and



into the 70s. In the early 1970s, now a mother of two kids, she received her Diploma in Early Childhood Studies from McGill University and became a nursery school teacher. She's been teaching tap -- rhythm tap, 'hoofin', for close to 50 years now.

When I finally took my interest seriously enough to write about her for publication, I felt worthy enough to ask for a peek into her archives. Not for my own sake, mind you, simply because I knew the magazine would require it. Readers require it. Did I not? I had her in flesh and blood in front of me, or on

the other end of the phone line when I wanted her -- although I wondered, when time would go by between moments of contact, if she would actually be on the other end, her heart still ticking away at 76 years old. In her Brossard home, in the middle of renovations, on a sticky day in July just before a flash rainstorm that would blind my view of Montreal as I crossed the bridge on my drive home, she handed me a disintegrating but still sturdy plastic bag that held two photo albums, one framed photo and a few VHS cassette tapes.

Through the black and white photos and newspaper clippings, I began to see an Ethel anchored not only in her wavering voice and her animated but aging soul, but in the images. I saw a glamorous woman, a self-assured woman, with a dynamite body. She had sass -- even then. As one of her first tap students put it: you could tell she was the real thing.

This is a story from QAHN's "StoryNet" project, which matched emerging writers with established mentors to produce innovative works of non-fiction with a heritage theme.



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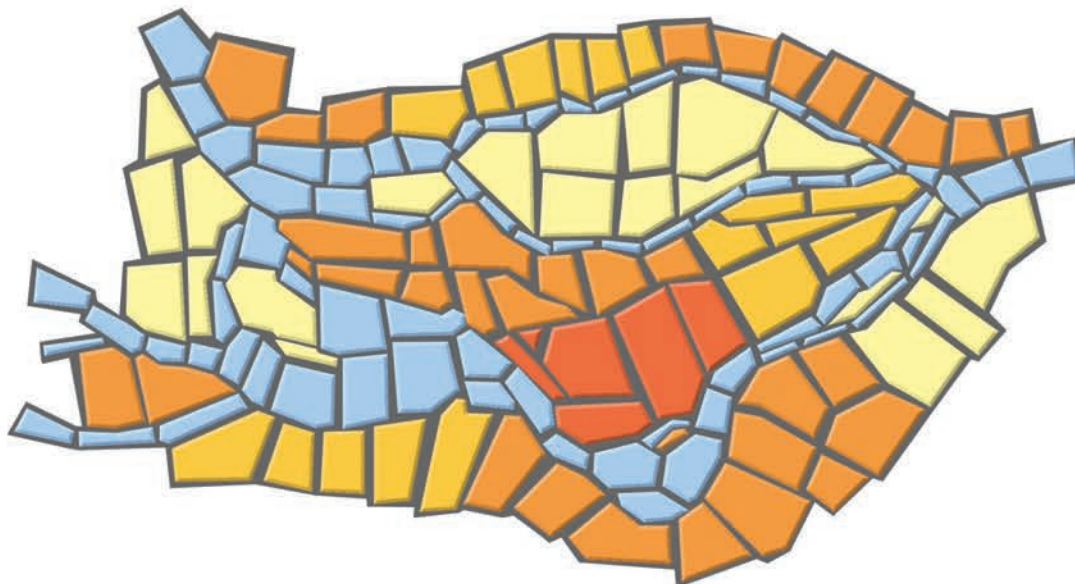
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TRUDEAU PARK'S HIDDEN TREASURE

The Human Rights Walkway

by Myra Shuster

It's business – no, pleasure – as usual on this hot and humid midsummer day in Côte Saint-Luc's Pierre Elliott Trudeau Park. Children build sandcastles in the sand box, moms and dads offer up treats from picnic baskets, and couples walk peacefully hand in hand along the quiet pathways encircling the park. A refreshing mist wafts up off whooshing fountains near the baseball diamonds, and two geyser fountains cast a gentle spray over Centennial Lake. A plaque overlooking the lake states it was so-named to commemorate a “euphoric nation celebrating 100 years of nationhood.” Pedal boats create ripples through the water, like waves of memory spanning Canada's century of rich history. Just beyond the lake, children squeal with delight in the water park as they refresh themselves against a backdrop of forest veiling the CP yards in the distance.

“What do you say?” says a mom leaning over to her son, who is proudly gripping the super-sonic water pistol a fellow warrior just handed him – ammunition in a game of little-boys’ war. “Thank you,” says the boy to his comrade, and dashes off to join his allies in soaking another buddy – the enemy.

Just past this imaginary war lies a hidden and little-known treasure dedicated to those who have fought the real thing in its every form, those who have devoted their lives – often at great risk to themselves – to the upholding of human rights, justice and equality. Past a rock garden framed by magenta coleus, pink hibiscus and purple salvia, lies the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Park's Human Rights Walkway. A path, winding through a forested area sheltered from the sun by the natural overhang of maple trees, bears nine plaques devoted to honouring human rights heroes and activists from around the world. The dedication at the entrance states that the Walkway

is devoted to “heroes who, by their steadfast commitment to mankind, have held high the torch of human rights.” Below it is an inscription of a quote by Eleanor Roosevelt: “The destiny of human rights is in the hands of all citizens in our communities.” Côte Saint-Luc appears to have taken Roosevelt's statement to heart in creating the Human



Rights Walkway.

The Walkway was inaugurated in 2000 as the city's New Millennium project. Architect Robert Libman, an MNA in the 1980s and 90s and the founder of the Equality Party, was Côte Saint-Luc's mayor at the time. He and other council members came up with the idea for the Walkway following the death of John Humphrey, who was a legal scholar, McGill law professor and human rights advocate. In 1946, he was appointed as the first Director of the United Nations Division of Human Rights within the

United Nations Secretariat.

“Humphrey had been instrumental in drafting the Declaration of Human Rights, and because he was from the area, there was some discussion in Council as to how to honour him,” Libman said in an interview. “We wanted something more substantial than a bust in his honour, something educational and inspirational, and we hoped it would feel like you're in an outdoor room. We came up with the idea of creating a roof-like, enclosed setting in that beautiful walkway part of the park.”

John Humphrey and René Cassin were the first honorees. In addition to his role in drafting the Declaration of Human Rights, René Cassin was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1968.

In 2001, four more honorees were added. Raoul Wallenberg was the Swedish diplomat who rescued over 100,000 Jews by forging false passports to facilitate their exit from Germany; he also set up a “Jewish Guard” disguised in Nazi uniforms, and arranged for the distribution of food, medicine, and clothing. Jules Deschênes, Chief Justice of the Quebec Court of Appeal, was appointed chair of the Commission of Inquiry on War Criminals in Canada (the Deschênes Commission) in 1985, which inaugurated the pursuit of Nazi war criminals worldwide. Maxwell Cohen was Dean of McGill Law Faculty in the 1960s and chair of the federal Special Committee on Hate Propaganda. Cohen's work on hate propaganda became part of Canada's criminal law; in the 1970s and 80s, he represented Canada on the Canada-United States International Joint Commission and on the International Court of Justice. Mary Two-Axe Earley was a Mohawk woman from Kahnawahke who lobbied the Canadian government and succeeded in having the Indian Act amended in 1985 to allow

A plaque along the path. Photo: Myra Shuster.

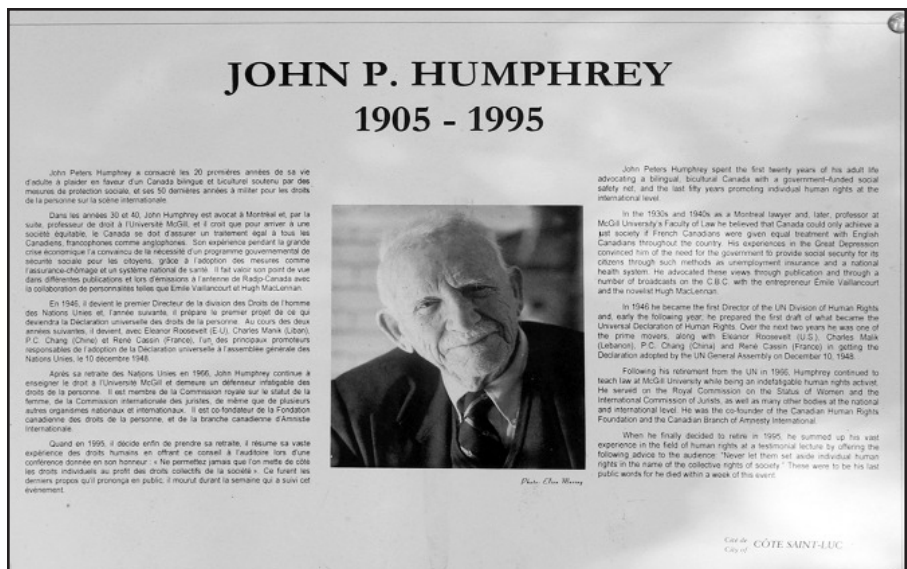
Native women married to non-Natives to regain their Indian status.

The next honoree plaque was established in 2007 and devoted to Helen Suzman, an anti-apartheid human rights activist and politician in South Africa noted for her criticism of apartheid at a time when it was unusual among whites. She was noted for her response to an accusation by a minister in South Africa's Parliament that her questions embarrassed South Africa: "It is not my questions that embarrass South Africa, it is your answers."

Supreme Court Chief Justice Antonio Lamer was honoured in 2008 for having been a staunch defender of the independence of the judiciary and for having been instrumental in interpreting the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms during the twenty years he spent on the Supreme Court.

In 2009, Miep Gies was chosen as an honoree. She was one of the Dutch citizens who hid Anne Frank and her family during the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands. After Anne Frank's arrest and deportation, Gies discovered and preserved her diary which was published after the war.

The year 2010 marked the first dedication to a group of people: Human Rights Activists for Oppressed Jews in Foreign Lands. This plaque aims to honour the many Jewish Canadians who helped create a grassroots campaign to



enable Jews to escape from three oppressive countries: the Soviet Union, Ethiopia and Syria. Montreal took a leading role in this campaign, and the activists were greatly inspired by *Tikkun Olam*, a concept fundamental to Judaism which holds that we are all responsible for healing the world.

The most recent dedication, in 2011, went to Aung San Suu Kyi, a major leader in the movement to re-establish democracy in Burma. She was released in 2010 after having spent 15 of 21 years under house arrest. She won the Nobel Peace Prize while under house arrest in 1991.

Côte Saint-Luc city councillors Mike Cohen and Allan J. Levine currently co-chair the 2013 committee responsible for the Walkway. Council is expected to announce another honoree in the coming months. Mayor Anthony Housefather says the choice of who to honour in the Walkway is made after taking several things into account: "We consider what is happening at the time in the world as well as nationally, provincially and locally, and look at individuals making, or who have made an important difference in the area of human rights. We also consider any links to the Côte Saint-Luc community and the English-speaking community at large, but these are not the only criteria. Council considers various factors including previous honorees and representatives of groups who have not yet been honoured."

A stroll along the Walkway's serpentine path invites introspection, a wandering of the mind as one's feet wander along the soft, winding path. From the natural beauty of the park, there is a disconcerting sense of several landscapes converging: our internal landscape, as we acknowledge the heroic feats inspired by the great works of self-sacrifice we read in brief biographies on the plaques, and the tranquil landscape of the natural setting surrounding it. The intellectual stimulation of a museum merges with the free-spirit-edness and beauty of a park.

As a Shakespeare-in-the-Park crew was dismantling their *Taming of the Shrew* set and untangling a web of elaborate wiring, sound technician and John



Top: The plaque honouring John P. Humphrey.

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Abbott College theatre student Marc-Antoine Legault said he was well aware of the Walkway in the park. He'd noticed many people strolling along its path during the time his crew was set up there. He had managed to read several plaques while dashing back from brief water breaks, and was particularly taken by those devoted to Maxwell Cohen and Aung San Suu Kyi.

"If these people had an impact on the community here, I think it's a good thing they're being honoured," he said. "Not so much for their ego, but it's important for us to remember those who suffered for us." A native of Vaudreuil-Dorion, which was also home to Quebec artist Félix Leclerc, Legault said that ever since he was a young boy, the bust of Leclerc in Félix Leclerc Park has made an impression on him.

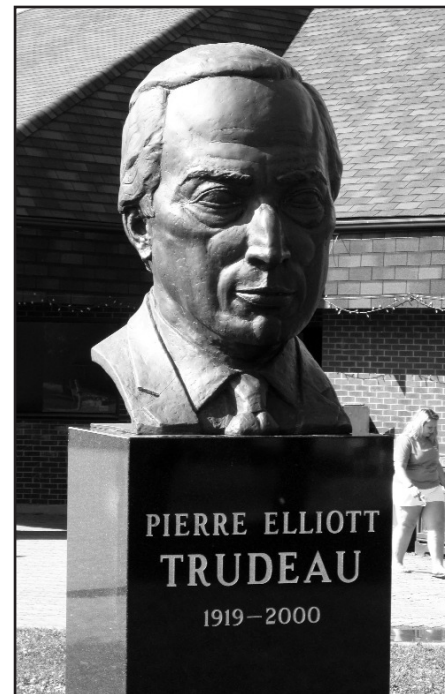
Youths come to an awareness of those who came before them in many ways, and visual tributes such as those of Leclerc and the honorees in the Walkway appear to leave a deep and lasting impression. This is the case with young campers who sometimes play in the Walkway, says Trudeau Park camp counsellor Mike Rappaport. He explains its significance to them in general terms they can understand. Children often ask about the bust of Janusz Korczak which sits near the entrance. Rather than explain Korczak's heroic decision to die at the hands of the Nazis along with the kids he oversaw at a Warsaw orphanage, Rappaport presents a watered-down version he believes they can digest.

Students as far away as Hangzhou, China, recently brought stories of the Walkway back home with them. A group of youths ages 11-16 who were in Montreal studying English came to visit for a few days. "They wanted to see what camp here in Canada is all about," day camp supervisor Stewart Wiseman said. "We played some of our typical games with them. We taught them how to throw a football. They'd never seen one! Afterwards they were really interested in the Walkway, especially the plaque in honour of Burmese activist Aung San Suu Kyi."

It is fitting that this museum-in-a-park should be found in a park named after Pierre Elliot Trudeau, one of Canada's greatest human rights champions, and for many a true Canadian hero. A

plaque in Trudeau's honour reads:

He defined our nationhood by making Canada officially bilingual. He strengthened the national bond by repatriating the Constitution. He crystallized individual rights by bringing home the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. May we follow in his footsteps and commit ourselves to keeping alive his rich legacy.



A bust of Trudeau casts a watchful eye over the park. It bears his contented but enigmatic, Mona Lisa-esque smile. His expression seems to say: "Please do follow in my footsteps. Begin with a walk along the Human Rights Walkway, which pays tributes to rights and freedoms, and causes I've always held dear. Thank you my friends, for keeping alive my rich legacy. Merci mes amis, for honouring me here in my beautiful name-sake, Pierre Elliot Trudeau Park."

This is another story from QAHN's "StoryNet" project, which matched emerging writers with established mentors to produce innovative works of non-fiction with a heritage theme.

THE GHOST OF THE OTTAWA

by Joseph Graham

As a hydraulics engineer, Thomas Mears had worked on the design of several mills, including the paper mill at St. Andrews and the original mill that the Hamiltons had taken from him and David Pattee at Hawkesbury. In 1816, looking for a new project to champion, he partnered in the construction of a steamboat that would be able to climb the rapids at Vaudreuil. Mears hoped to be the first to establish a steamboat service on the Ottawa River.

Steamboats were coming into more common usage. The first Canadian one, put into service by the Molsons, was the *Accommodation*, travelling between Montreal and Quebec City. Even the engine parts were homemade, coming from the Forges du Saint-Maurice near Trois-Rivières, the oldest blast furnace in North America, dating back to the French regime. The engine was only 6 horsepower and the boat was a business failure, but that did not stop the age of steam in Canada, or the Molsons. Their next boat, the *Swiftsure*, had a much more powerful engine, built by Boulton and Watt in Great Britain; all of the boats built in Montreal during the decade ending in 1820 used imported engines.

Thomas Mears and his associates did not import their engine, but instead relied on one of their partners, Joseph Lough, to build it. They started by helping Lough set up a proper furnace. Over the next three years, Lough proved incapable of managing his business and several of the partners withdrew. Mears, who had moved to Montreal, returned to Hawkesbury and all but abandoned the project. By 1819, though, Lough had lost his stake, and a new partnership took shape, bringing Lough back in on the basis of a strict contract. Lough also made a deal with John Bruce, a shipbuilder who had worked for the Molsons, building their first steamboat in 1809.

One of the new partner's conditions was that the boat itself be built under the auspices of Mears in Hawkesbury.

Dubbed the *Ottawa*, the boat was finished on schedule and floated down to Montreal to be outfitted with Lough's steam engine.

True to form, Lough fell so far behind schedule that they lost the first summer and had only enough time to try the boat out in the autumn just before winter set in. The trial, held on Lake St. Louis in mid-October, caused a sensation. The side-wheeler was considered attractive, the engine was Canadian-built and the boat ran at around 10 miles per hour. Things looked promising for the *Ottawa* for the 1820 season, but there was a concern. With her engine onboard, she had a draft of three and a half feet, which would make it unlikely she would ever be able to climb the rapids. She might never make it back to Hawkesbury.

Sure enough, even during the high water of spring, the *Ottawa* was beaten by the Ottawa River. Seventy feet long, twenty wide, and with a hold of four and a half feet, she sat three and a half feet below the waterline. Her captain, William McMaster took her out on an unrecorded spring day to find her way up into Lake of Two Mountains but discovered there was only three feet of depth of water for a long portion of the passage between the lakes. Still, she became the toast of Lake St. Louis that summer, proudly running a circuit from Lachine to the Cascades and transferring passengers to more suitable batteaux and Durham boats. These were large, sturdy, flat-bottomed boats that could be poled or towed up the rapids to calm water.

While the summer proved exciting for passengers and even for sightseers, and real estate promoters began to claim that the steamboat made up-river property much more valuable, the owners saw things differently. The *Ottawa* was not paying her way. When Captain McMaster "jumped ship" in the fall to join in the building of a rival boat better designed to climb between the lakes, the partners saw their *Ottawa* as a liability and put her up for sale. The auction took

place in May of 1821, but after the bidding, one of the backers, Alexander Allison, ended up as the sole owner and continued to offer the boat for sale until his untimely death in December. His estate took over the next spring and sold the boat in parts, leaving only the hull on the shore at the entrance to the Lachine canal. She sat on the river bottom in the spring but broke the surface as the summer water level dropped, suffering the indignity of serving as a dock.

Meanwhile, the *Perseverance*, the new boat in which Captain McMaster had partnered, succeeded in getting up the rapids at Vaudreuil. She did so only once, at great expense, and then returned to Lake St. Louis, where she basked in the glory of her defeated rival's old routes.

Thomas Mears did not let go of his dream of having a steamboat on the Ottawa though. He had quietly acquired the steam engine from the Allison estate and had it carried up to Hawkesbury and installed in the *Union*, the first steamboat to offer regular service on the Ottawa River. She first sailed in the spring of 1823 between Grenville and Gatineau.

A few years later, in 1827, a heavily-laden Durham boat, the *Louisa*, heading down the St. Lawrence from Kingston and riding high on the spring flood, mastered all the shallows and rapids including the legendary 82-foot drop between Lake St. Francis and Lake St. Louis. Approaching the Lachine Canal, all her worries behind her, a vindictive old ghost ripped her apart as she glided serenely over the abandoned hull of the *Ottawa*.

Joseph Graham joseph@ballyhoo.ca is writing a book on the history of the Ottawa Valley.

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THE POTASH PROCESS

Exploring a grand old trade
by Susan McGuire

Silas Knowlton and a friend set out on the 70-mile trip from Stukley to Montreal, each with an oxen-drawn sled carrying two barrels of potash. They went through Granby to the Yamaska River, where they left the sleds and loaded the barrels onto a ferry for a six-mile trip downstream. There, carters were hired to take them to the Richelieu River, where the carters loaded the horses, sleds and cargo onto oar-driven scows – large flat boats formed of planks. They travelled across the Richelieu and reached Longueuil, where the settlers and their cargo were transferred to a larger oar-driven batteau to cross the St. Lawrence River. From the wharf at Montreal, the barrels were taken by carters to the inspection office. After clearing inspection, each of the settlers sold his two barrels of potash for \$100. Out of that they bought essential supplies, and then returned home the way they had come. They arrived after an absence of 18 days and expenses of \$20. (The time was the late fall, when the days were short; in summer, the journey might have taken 10 to 12 days.)

This is how a sales trip to Montreal in the early nineteenth century was described by Mrs. C. M. Day in *Pioneers of the Eastern Townships* and the Rev. Ernest Taylor in *History of Brome County*.

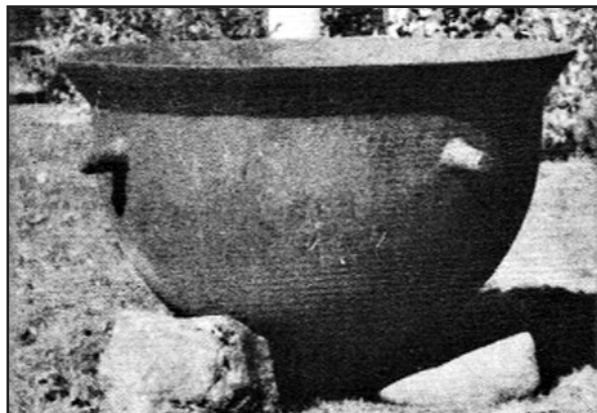
Potash was big business in the Eastern Townships and in the Ottawa Valley during the first half of the nineteenth century, but producing it and getting it to market wasn't easy. Fortunately for the pioneer settlers who needed a cash crop right then, there was a ready market for potash in Britain.

From antiquity and until about 1860, wood-ashes potash was one of the world's major sources of alkali, an essential raw material for the making of colour-fast cotton, woolen goods, soap and glass; it was also used in soil fertil-

izers. In the early nineteenth century, all of these industries were expanding rapidly under the impetus of the Industrial Revolution. Since trade disruptions were frequent between England, the United States and Europe, with wars imminent, Canada was a secure source of potash for Britain.

Potash at the time was made from the ashes of the hardwood trees, and such trees thickly covered a narrow belt about 50 miles deep and stretched for about 700 miles east from Quebec City to the Great Lakes. The settlers needed to clear the land before they could start farming and building homes.

The earliest settlers on the forested lands in Lower Canada couldn't get the trees to market to sell as lumber, so they



burned the trees in the clearings or in their fireplaces. They collected the ashes and carried them to the nearest merchant who had a potasherie – such as the Fabrique de potasse de l'Assomption, opened in 1798 by former fur trader Laurent Leroux and his partner Pierre-Amable Archambault. At these potasheries, in exchange for the hardwood ashes, the would-be farmers would obtain essentials such as flour and salt pork. Some farmers invested in their own potash-making equipment, and arranged to sell it themselves.

To turn the burned trees into a mar-

ketable product, the ashes were put through a leaching process, by which the ashes were placed into a perforated trough, water was poured over them, and the resulting lye was caught in containers and transferred to "pot ash" kettles. The lye then had to be boiled for hours until very thick, then cooled and hardened, put in barrels and transported to Montreal or Quebec.

According to Sutton resident Henry Miller in the federal Mines Branch 1968 publication "Canada's Historic First Iron Castings," 1850 marked the peak of the Canadian exports of pot and pearl ashes. In that year the value was about \$1.2 million – out of total Canadian exports of \$11.6 million; some 10% of Canadian exports. However, by then the winds of change had already taken hold. In the 1830s, a process developed in France produced soda, a competing alkali, from inexpensive raw materials, and in 1861 the first potash salts were recovered from deep mines in Germany. The world price for potash soon fell dramatically.

By the time the new sources of potash had taken hold, the roughest phase for the pioneers in the hardwood areas of Eastern Canada had been pretty well completed. Canadian potash exports died out completely until the discovery in the early 1940s of underground deposits of high-grade potash in Saskatchewan, the largest supply of potash yet discovered in the world. More than 90% of that production is now used for fertilizers. In 2011, the shipped value of the mined potash industry to Canada was \$8 billion.

In his *Travels through Canada, and the United States of North America, in the Years 1806, 1807, & 1808*, John Lambert describes the early process of making potash:

Trees are cut down and burned. The ashes are mixed with lime and put into several large vats that stand in rows

on a platform. Water is pumped into them, and leaches through the lime and ashes to dribble out of a spicket into a long trough that is placed in front of the vats for that purpose. The water thus drained becomes a strong lye of a dark brown colour.

The lye is then put into large iron boilers generally called pot-ash kettles. Large fires are made underneath and the lye is kept boiling for many hours, until it approaches a fine claret colour, after which it is taken out to cool, and becomes a solid body, like gray stone, and then it is called potash.

When potash was put into an oven and continuously stirred, it would eventually become "pearl ash," which was worth more than potash, and was used in the production of pottery, china and soap.

According to Lambert, 700 lb. of potash could be obtained from 400 bushels of ashes. The harder and better woods made the most alkali:

1000 lb of oak ashes	111 lb potash
1000 lb of hickory ashes	189 lb potash
1000 lb of beach ashes	219 lb potash
1000 lb of elm ashes	166 lb potash
1000 lb of maple ashes	110 lb potash

Engineer Henry Miller in 1968 described the potash-kettle part of the process in detail:

The kettle was first filled with strong lye from the leaches. This was boiled down to a dark-coloured residue of syrupy consistency. This was not only the potassium and other salts from the wood-ashes, but much contaminating matter, such as soil and bits of charcoal, from the rough-shod collection of the bonfire ashes, and the careless operation of the crudely made leaches. This residue was known as "black salts" or merely as "salts."

At this stage, the "salts" were ladled out into a series of smaller, thin-walled, cast iron vessels called "coolers." The kettle was then refilled with lye for the second batch boiling, and so on. When a full kettle-load of salts had thus been accumulated in coolers, the whole was dumped back into the kettle. The complete boiling of all the batches of lye took several days of round-the-clock operation.

The fire was then brought to a truly



For several decades, the job of pearl and potash inspector for Montreal was held by James Edward Major; who began as an assistant in 1843, later becoming a full inspector. It was clearly a lucrative office; by 1859 Major was able to build Erin Cottage, a beautiful villa on Guy Street. After Major's death in 1890, the house was acquired by the Anglican Church for use as a home for elderly ladies, a function it retains today: the Fulford Residence.

roaring condition. The bottom of the kettle and its contents were raised to a red-heat. The salts had become a bubbling, molten mass and the charcoal was soon burned out of it. Inorganic contaminant was scummed off. This "fusion boil" was continued until the molten mass was motionless, which took about two hours.

After careful preheating, the coolers were brought into use again. The molten potash was carefully ladled into them and allowed to cool overnight. The finished potash was almost as hard as stone, and could be broken with an axe into large chunks, grey on the outside and pinkish within. This was quickly packed into barrels to minimize absorption of moisture. The barrels, each weighing about 560 lb., were the recognized form for the sale of potash in early 19th century world commerce.

Weighing as much as 1,000 pounds, potash kettles could be 44 inches wide and 27 inches deep. The kettles, like the one on the grounds of the Brome County Historical Society in Knowlton, were mounted about two feet off the ground on a circular masonry structure of flat fieldstones that were ledged under the

flared lip. A side opening in the masonry allowed for stoking the fire with birch or maple logs; on the opposite side, a vent allowed smoke to escape and provided a cross-draft for the fire.

The kettle in Knowlton was made in Scotland. Similar ones were made in Lower Canada, including at the famed Forges du Saint-Maurice, and by Montreal manufacturer Bartley & Dunbar. The kettles are now sometimes used in maple syrup production.

The importance of the export potash trade can be judged by the government-appointed board of examiners for the job of "inspectors of pot and pearl ashes" in Montreal.

In 1824, this board consisted of prominent citizens Thomas Blackwood, John Forsyth, Henry Mackenzie, George Auldjo, Horatio Gates, George Moffat, François-Antoine LaRocque, Thomas Porteous and James Leslie. In 1825, the leading Montreal exporter, Horatio Gates and Company, shipped 6,726 barrels of potash.

HORATIO GATES

An American in Montreal during the War of 1812

by Susan McGuire

With the 200th anniversary of the War of 1812-15, a theory has come to the fore that some influential Americans didn't want to engage in a major war with Upper and Lower Canada. It has been claimed that they lobbied in Washington to have the war fought in areas where it would not disturb commerce between the American and British parts of the continent.

Historian Alan Taylor has written in *The Civil War of 1812* that among those who lobbied against all-out war was David Parish, the wealthy German-born developer of Ogdensburg, New York. He had built the area on the south side of the St. Lawrence into a commercial hub for selling food to British troops on the other side of the river at Prescott, Upper Canada, and he didn't want to jeopardize that lucrative business.

Horatio Gates may have been of the same mindset. Born at Barre, Massachusetts in 1777, the son of an officer in the American Revolution, Gates moved at an early age to Vermont. There, he was associated with Boston merchant Abel Bellows in transporting farm and other products to Canada by way of Lake Champlain and the Richelieu and St. Lawrence rivers. By 1807, Bellows, Gates and Company had opened in Montreal, and Gates was familiarizing himself with the intricacies of trade between the United States, the Canadas, and England.

When the War of 1812 broke out, Gates was well-positioned to develop a business supplying the British troops who were arriving in the Montreal area; most of these provisions were imported clandestinely from the United States. Because of his American roots, some people questioned Gates' loyalty to the British crown, but he avoided confronting this issue until 1813 or 1814 when he took the oath of allegiance; he was exempted from military service against his native land.

He maintained close ties with his family and business colleagues in the United States. In 1814, he married New England-born Clarissa Adams in Highgate, Vermont. He brought his nephew Nathaniel Jones, of Boston, into his business. Shortly after, they were joined by Charles Bancroft, also from Boston, who had been working with the Phoenix Bank of New York. The three men were the principals in Gates' lead firm, Horatio Gates and Company. Charles Ban-



croft soon married Mary Ann Jones, Gates' niece, so it was all in the family.

Various Gates companies exported potash, wheat, flour and pork from Montreal and Quebec City—some of it produced in the northern United States, and some in Upper and Lower Canada. In *The River Barons*, Gerald Tulchinsky writes that Gates was Montreal's biggest dealer in upcountry staples, handling mostly pork, flour and potash from the Black River and Genesee area of New York.

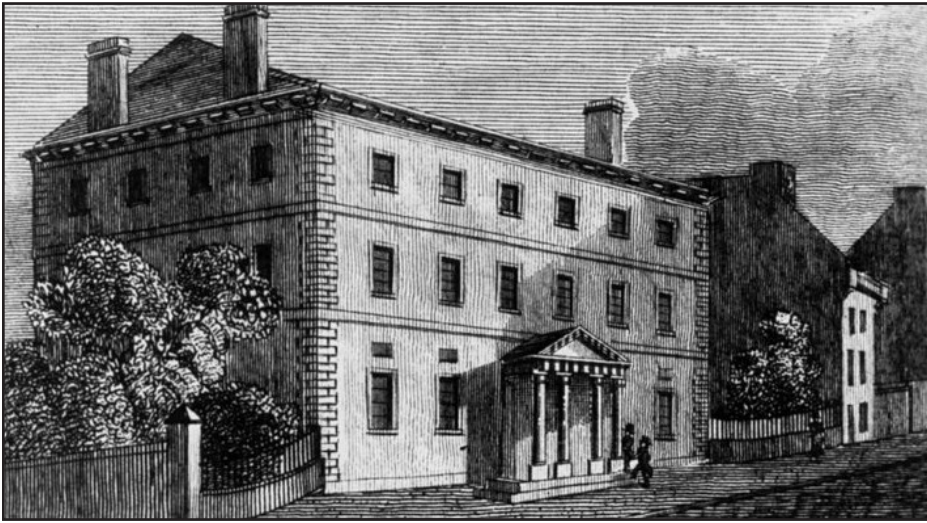
With his American, Canadian and British trading experience, Gates had become conversant with the methods then current of paying for trade goods, and so

began to conduct transactions involving banknotes, cash and bills of exchange. There were no Canadian banks at the time.

Within a few years, he and others started to raise capital to form Canada's first bank. Through his extensive American contacts, Gates raised nearly half the funds needed, which enabled the Bank of Montreal to open in 1817. Gates was one of the nine founding directors. He also helped establish the Bank of Canada in 1818, which may have been formed to specialize in trade with the United States. He was president of the Bank of Montreal in 1826 and of the Bank of Canada from 1826 to 1831. After the two banks amalgamated in 1831, he served as president from 1832 to 1834.

Being in the import-export business, Gates was interested in developing improvements to the routes from the American border to Montreal, and so became involved with others in steamships, canals and railways. In 1818, along with foundrymen Guy and Joseph Warwick and others, Horatio Gates and Company were part-owners of the *Montreal*, a steamboat that ran from Montreal to Laprairie. In 1828, he was part-owner with John Molson and others in the Ottawa Steamboat Company. Also in 1828, with several businessmen including John Molson, he applied for legislative approval to build a railway connecting St. John's and Laprairie, which they received in 1832. Gates was also involved with Montreal businessmen Peter McGill and George Moffatt in organizing insurance companies to cover shipping risks, among them the Canada Inland Assurance Company.

Gates was a warden of Trinity House, the entity responsible for the administration of Montreal's port. He was also a commissioner for the Lachine Canal, and one of the founders of the Committee of Trade, which later became the Montreal Board of Trade.



Education was one of Gates' interests. He was on the committee of the Montreal Centre Auxiliary Society for Promoting Education and Industry in Canada. He was the founding president of the British and Canadian School Society of Montreal in 1822. A free or low-cost, non-denominational school for English and French children from low-income homes, it was supported by prominent businessmen, including John Torrance and John Frothingham, Francois-Antoine LaRoque and Olivier Berthelet, as well as Louis-Joseph Papineau. Gates's wife, Charles Bancroft's wife, and other family members were on the school's committees.

In 1828, Gates was a founding vice-president of the Montreal Mechanics' Institution, the first effort in Canada to provide basic and technical education to apprentices and young immigrants.

Gates was also active in Montreal's religious and cultural life. He was president of the Montreal Auxiliary Bible Society in 1820, at the same time that Charles Bancroft was treasurer. He was a member of the St. Gabriel's Street Church, and later St. Andrew's Church.

He was a trustee with John Molson in the development of Montreal's first theatre, Theatre Royal, in 1825. He was a trustee of the Society for the Support of a House of Industry in 1829. He was grand treasurer in the Masonic Provincial Grand Lodge of the District of Montreal and the Borough of William Henry.

He was a justice of the peace, and was appointed to the Legislative Council of Lower Canada in 1832.

With that dizzying array of business and community activities, it is perhaps not surprising that Horatio Gates died in 1834 of a stroke at age 56, apparently brought on by the difficult business climate of the time. His business partner, Charles Bancroft, died one week later, also of a stroke, at age 46. The company finances were too difficult and complicated for younger family members to run, and so, a short time later, the Gates Company was liquidated.

The *Montreal Gazette* of April 22, 1834, notes that "Within one week we have seen numbered among the dead two of the most efficient partners of the most extensive commercial establishment in British America, and by a

singular coincidence by the same malady. The death of Mr. Gates as well as Mr. Bancroft will have a powerful influence on the mercantile transactions of the city—and will tend in a great degree to make some extensive changes in the trade of the province."

Tragedy had also struck the Gates family earlier. Mount Royal Cemetery records indicate that five of Horatio Gates' young children, aged between five months and six years, died in the years 1828 and 1829.

A surviving Gates daughter married Montreal merchant John Gordon MacKenzie; a great-granddaughter married Montague Allan, son of the founder of the Allan Line. Charles Bancroft had four children, and several members of his family were to become prominent and beloved in the Anglican church community.

Susan McGuire is historian for the Atwater Library and Computer Centre, formed in 1828 as the Montreal Mechanics' Institution.

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ALEC C. BOOTH

Richmond County's "Working Man" poet

by Nick Fonda

In 2012, the Richmond County Historical Society marked its fiftieth anniversary, a fitting time to look back on the Society's own history and reflect on past events and past personalities.

The RCHS's first achievement was the publication of a book on local history, and one of those who played a major role in this notable accomplishment was Alec Crabtree Booth. At the founding meeting of the Richmond County Historical Society, with 77 charter members present, Alec C. Booth was elected one of the three vice-presidents. A few short years later, Alice Dresser, the Society's founding president, passed away and Booth came to the helm of the fledgling society.

In 1965, Booth, in his role as president, penned a short 16-page essay entitled "County Historical Society." The following year, under his presidency, Volume I of *Tread of the Pioneer, Annals of Richmond County and Vicinity* was published.

The publication of the *Annals* (Volume 1 in 1966, Volume 2 in 1968) represented not just a first flowering of the newly sprouted Society but also the culmination of a project initiated by the Richmond County Women's Institute. As the first paragraph of the *Annals* notes, "At a meeting of the Richmond County Women's Institute on October 21, 1961, a committee composed of Miss Alice Dresser, Mrs. A. T. Smith and Mrs. S. Husk was appointed to gather and compile a history of the county."

The *Annals*, as Booth indicates in the Dedication and Introduction of the

first volume, are "a collection of articles" written by "many of Miss Dresser's old friends." The articles are not signed, nor is there a list of contributors, so it is impossible to know which, if any, of the articles were penned by Booth, although, as he was from Windsor, he might be the author of the second-to-last essay, "Brief Outline of Windsor History."

If so, it's an atypical piece of writ-

ing from him because the two other short works that Booth published, "County Historical Society" and *Out of My Days as a Working Man*, unlike the article on Windsor, sparkle with wit and insight. In his writing, Booth comes across as perceptive, thoughtful and insightful, but also as very witty and very funny. Even when dealing with a serious topic, he will use a turn of phrase that brings a smile to the reader's lips. The photo on the back of his book of poetry shows a man whose thin, white moustache contrasts with his dark eyes that seem to brim with youthful mischief.

Opening the cover, one can read: "The cost of publication of this essay has been borne by the following friends of the Society." The ensuing list takes up

an entire page and enumerates over fifty names and institutions, divided according to the towns of their provenance: Asbestos, Danville, Richmond, Windsor. Curiously, virtually all the donors from Windsor were French while all but two of the Richmond donors were English.

A few pages into his essay, Booth, with humour, describes the demographic of his era: "The population is now for the most part French speaking, but with isolated and diminishing English speaking com-

munities still existing as, let us say, ethnic and linguistic pockets of resistance. But it is an amiable resistance." Booth's description is as apt today as it was in 1965.

Closer to the end of his essay he proposes, "A historical society properly incorporated is a public body and here in the Province of Quebec ought to be bilingual." Almost half a century later, the RCHS is still striving—with very little noticeable effect—to become truly bilingual.

This point notwithstanding, if Booth intended his essay to serve as a set of guidelines for the future functioning of the RCHS, he achieved considerable



The cover of his essay "County His-

ing from him because the two other short works that Booth published, "County Historical Society" and *Out of My Days as a Working Man*, unlike the article on Windsor, sparkle with wit and insight. In his writing, Booth comes across as perceptive, thoughtful and insightful, but also as very witty and very funny. Even when dealing with a serious topic, he will use a turn of phrase that brings a smile to the reader's lips. The photo on the back of his book of poetry shows a man whose thin, white moustache contrasts with his dark eyes that seem to brim with youthful mischief.

success. He mentions “a sense of history” and enumerates the several ways in which this “natural gift” reveals itself. He stresses the importance of the roles played by the archivist, the chronicler and the custodian. He describes how historical societies come by their artefacts as well as how “a historical society will miss getting something it would appreciate having” because the item has gone “to a bigger institution such as a university library.” He wryly concludes the passage: “There is nothing you can do about that but gnash your teeth, somewhat difficult to do while smiling at the person who is telling you why he is not going to give this something to the society that it expected to get.”

Booth’s own “sense of history” expresses itself in his admiration for the early settlers: “I always have a feeling of personal inadequacy, of an inferiority to these people,” he writes, but without nostalgia, warning that “people speak frequently about the old days, seldom the good old days.” Yet he is not without concerns about the future. He points out that “the best things of the old days have been lost along with the bad,” and, as the population left the farms to live in towns and cities, “we have evolved from a free society to a planned society, and if life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness really comprise our aim, we may have evolved without sufficient precaution against a loss of direction.”

Some two decades after penning his essay, Booth published his poems. Curiously enough, the final words of his 1965 essay (“to catch sight and scent of an empty virgin land that the avarice of man had not corrupted”) are picked up in the first paragraph of the Author’s Foreword of *Out of My Days as a Working Man*: “We say our hope is heaven, but what we are really looking for is a Garden of Eden at the beginning of time when there were no complications. A place that the avarice of man has not corrupted, where we can be our own free selves.”

Out of My Days as a Working Man is a slim, 86-page volume. It was self-published and not dated. More than a collection of poems, Booth informs us that it is “a chap book in which the reader is not released from his responsibility of working for an understanding by reading between the lines, being in part

a shout at the state of affairs or a play of poems in several indignations with sundry other unrelated ballads and somewhat sentimental sermons composed in content and discontent by Alec C. Booth. It is recommended that the poems be performed rather than perused.”

The words are arranged vertically and symmetrically and several of the lines are written in full capital letters across the page. If Booth’s verbal dexterity and subtle humour don’t capture our attention, the layout of the page certainly does. The poems that follow carry through on Booth’s promises. He is indignant and angry, but also playful with his language; the poems are eclectic and provoke sudden turns of mood. Above all, they spark our imagination and prompt us to rethink and re-examine ourselves and our surroundings.

Booth’s dedication page reads: “To My Wife / Who Has Put Up With It. I / Do Not / By Modish Chatter / Change / A Simple / Into / A Complicated Matter.” To follow Booth’s instructions and perform this poem, we would want two characters on the stage: Booth’s exasperated wife, telling him “Tu complices toujours les choses, Alec!” and Booth, calmly and eloquently enunciating his lines. It’s easy to imagine, given Booth’s penchant for posing probing questions of the soul, that this scene might have played itself out innumerable times.

Booth’s preoccupation with avarice, and its close cousins greed, ambition, and envy, appear suddenly and unexpectedly in several poems, including “Glad Hand Samson,” which ends with the lines:

I’ll tell you—“Glad to know you,”
--“And here’s my hand my friend,”
But do not stand between me,
And my promised land,
Or you’ll feel the subtle pressure,
Of my unfriendly underhand.

Much of Booth’s anger and indignation is directed towards the bosses under whom he works, men who are, in his eyes, both stupid (despite their academic qualifications) and corrupt. He finishes the poem “Was That Your Mind I Heard Closing” with the lines: “Oh! It’s nice to be well educated, / And have nothing whatever to learn.” In “Hear Now! The

Boss Beaver,” he writes, “For why make the social pot boil, / With opinion pro and con, / On some silly little issue-- / Concerned with right and wrong?” For Booth, the workplace itself is a “prison of production lines” where “Fifty years attention / Accumulates a pension.”

Many of us may feel some degree of workplace frustration, but could we express it with as such wit and humour?

It’s probably safe to assume that the poems in this collection were written over four or even five decades. “Old Soldier Re-Enlisted” describes the death of a superannuated soldier. The poem is all Kiplingesque, slapdash glory; a vigorous, devil-may-care ballad in which the dying soldier reflects that life’s been an unexpected bounty because “the fact is plain and clear, / It’s the [bullet] I missed in Africa, in / eighteen ninety-nine.” It’s easy to imagine that this poem, even though placed at the end of the book, could have been written in the late 1940s or the 1950s. On the other hand, in “The Predicament,” the poem’s narrator is not an angry underling railing against his superiors but rather “Middle aged, and middle classed, / Having made the grade at last.”

In the same poem, he writes: “Why this lack of satisfaction? / Why this yearning for distraction?” These lines remind us of the lack of direction that Booth noted in his essay.

A short essay and a book of poems, regardless of their merit, are hardly enough to keep body and soul together, let alone raise a family. Who was Alec Crabtree Booth and where did he live and what did he do?

“You have to understand that my father was born in England and even though he’d been in Canada since he was a teenager, he was very much a British Imperialist,” says Ronald Booth, a retired teacher who now lives in Sherbrooke. “That explains why, when WWII broke out, even though he had been studying Theology at McGill, he left university to enlist. That was where his duty lay, and he was ruled by duty, just like the waves were ruled by Britannia. He was British at heart.”

Nonetheless, by 1939, part of that British heart had taken root in the Eastern Townships and, before shipping off to war in 1940, he married Rita Codère. He made it no closer to the front than

London, where he was stationed with a corps of mechanical engineers.

"Among his papers," Ron recalls, "were preliminary drawings for amphibious tanks capable of functioning while fully submerged."

It was during the war years that Alec C. Booth acquired a range of engineering skills, and it was these that led to a 25-year career at the Windsor paper mill. He was 32 when he was demobbed in 1945, and came home to his wife and a young son he had not yet seen.

The war having been won, his duty now was to his young family (two daughters were to ensue) and he was hired on at the mill as a draftsman.

"He was paid as a draftsman," Ron says, "but he was doing much more than draftsman's work."

Booth designed small dams, and laid out logging roads. He built the Windsor curling club. He won a pulp and paper industry award for design innovations to specialized machinery. He might have been skilled, imaginative, and resourceful, but without an engineering degree, Booth remained a draftsman until, one day, he cleaned out his office desk and went home to tell his wife that he had quit work. Their kids were grown, the two of them were adequately provided for, his duty to family was done.

"When my father started to work, the mill belonged to the Canada Paper Company. It then was bought by Howard Smith before changing hands again and becoming Domtar. At this point, they were bringing in new methods and my father recognized it was a good time to quit. He travelled for a year, wrote poetry, grew a beard. He was almost unrecognizable," Ron says.

But Windsor was home and it was not as if Booth's sudden retirement had gone unnoticed. He came home and considered some of the job offers that had come to him. He joined a major consulting firm in Toronto and, ironically, his first job was to help with the design and installation of a new Domtar mill. He suddenly found himself giving orders to the very same people who, just a year before, had been his superiors. He also worked for several years in a senior position with the Kruger pulp and paper mill in Bromptonville before taking a final retirement from engineering.

"I remember my father as a very good athlete," Ron recalls. "I was a good runner when I was young and I used to come home with ribbons and trophies from track meets. Well, when I was 16 or 17, we all went on a holiday to a beach in Virginia. My dad challenged me to a race on the hard-packed sand and he blew right by me, left me in the dust," Ron laughs.

Alec C. Booth was occasionally a speech writer for local politicians and also a land speculator. He purchased 180 acres of what was mostly woodland at the edge of the town, cut most of the trees for pulp, and subdivided the land into building lots. The subdivision he planned enjoys both very spacious lots and wide streets—characteristics that initially displeased the town planning committee, but which are cherished by those who live on the streets off Crabtree today. (Booth is the shortest street in the subdivision; Crabtree the longest. Both are eponymous.)

The woman Alec Booth married, Rita Codère, was an active, forceful, and very successful individual in her own right. "She was very involved with the Liberals, both at the provincial and federal levels," Ron re-

calls. "We had René Lévesque in our house more than once during the time that he was in the Liberal government of Jean Lesage. Rita was a tremendous organizer and was largely responsible for the surprise victory of Tobin over the Social Credit incumbent in the early 60s." (In the general election of 1963, Joseph Patrick Tobin Asselin of Bromptonville stepped in to replace the Liberal candidate who had withdrawn less than a month before election day. To the surprise of the Union Nationale candidate, Asselin won the race by a few hundred votes.)

Alec C. Booth and Rita Codère spent their last days at the Wales Home.

Alec Crabtree Booth was born in 1913 and passed away in 1997. Of the 20 or so individuals who have served the RCHS in the role of president, it is arguably Booth whose influence has been the most lasting.

Nick Fonda is a past president of the Richmond County Historical Society and the author of Roads to Richmond, published by Baraka Books.

REVIEWS

Worthy of the Annals

Irish Settlement and National Identity in the Lower St. Francis Valley

By Peter Southam

Richmond St. Patrick's Society, 2012

Not since the *Annals* has a book on local history been so anticipated in Richmond County.

"Eleven years," says Gordon Irwin, who along with Bob Dalton, Joe Kelly, Bev Smith and Mark O'Donnell was part of the project team acknowledged in the opening pages of Peter Southam's new book, *Irish Settlement and National Identity in the Lower St. Francis Valley*. "We started talking about this when the Celtic Cross was put up, and that was 2001; that's eleven years."

The Annals of Richmond County and Vicinity ended up being a two volume set, the first published in 1966 and the second in 1968. As the Richmond

County Historical Society, which published the *Annals*, was only founded in 1962, it is safe to assume that *Tread of the Pioneers* (as the *Annals* are properly titled) wasn't more than four years in the making.

If you're familiar with some of the history of Richmond and the Eastern Townships, it's perhaps unavoidable to frame Peter Southam's new book in the context of the *Annals*.

For all their merit, the *Annals* are not without their flaws; perhaps the greatest of these were pointed out by Alec C. Booth, who was president of the RCHS in 1966. "This is not a history so much as a collection of articles concerning the early settlement of the County of

Richmond,” Booth noted in his Introduction. In his Dedication to Alice C. Dresser, who was founding president of the RCHS, Booth wrote, “It is particularly appropriate that this volume contains the writings of Miss Dresser’s old friends, and that the very hard work of compiling the articles and of getting the volume into print has been done by those who were her close associates.”

It would be both unfair and politically incorrect to describe the *Annals* as a mix of dull reading and poor writing. Neither Booth nor any other self-respecting president of the RCHS would ever use those words, but it is easy to imagine that Booth might have considered *Irish Settlement*, which deals with the same small corner of the world, and much the same time period, as something of a counterpoint to the *Annals*.

This contrast begins with the books’ titles. *Tread of the Pioneers* may sound a little dated but still has at least some allure for the general reader. Unless you’re an academic – or writing a paper for a credit course because you’re hoping to become an academic – you’re rather unlikely to pick up *Irish Settlement and National Identity in the Lower St. Francis Valley* on the strength of its title. (The exception to this, of course, will be members and friends of the Richmond St. Patrick’s Society who will buy the book through a mixture of pride and curiosity.)

Most readers who get past the title won’t be disappointed. Unlike Alice Dresser’s friends who penned reminiscences, Peter Southam is a trained historian who taught the subject at the Université de Sherbrooke until his retirement several years ago and who was a co-author, along with Jean-Pierre Kesteman and Diane Saint-Pierre, of *Histoire des Cantons de l’Est*, a seminal work as far as Eastern Townships history is concerned.

If the title of Southam’s book doesn’t mark it as a history text, then the last forty pages do. The endnotes run to twenty-five pages, there are two appendices and, what Richmond readers in particular will especially appreciate, an

index of names.

The *Annals* were written as two volumes but could well have been one. *Irish Settlement and National Identity in the Lower St. Francis Valley*, as the title indicates, is two relatively short books brought together under one cover.

The first part, entitled *Between Two Worlds: Emigration and the Richmond Irish Community 1815-1855*, is just a little longer than the second part, *The St. Patrick’s Society of Richmond and Vicinity*.



Southam begins his story in Drummondville, at a small military settlement that came to be in part because of an economic recession in Great Britain and in part because of a lingering mistrust of the United States following the War of 1812.

Disbanded soldiers, many of them Irish, were given land to settle in the Drummondville area. As this land proved poor, many moved a little upstream on the St. Francis to settle closer to Richmond, where the land was far more arable. Southam follows the fortunes of two such soldiers: Peter Plun-

kett, a Catholic, and William Mountain, a Protestant, who were typical of the first wave of settlers. It occurred frequently that a first family member would be followed by siblings or parents or in-laws. Southam also traces the Evans family, who came to the Townships in search of better prospects, which turned out not to be particularly good.

Land not held by the Crown or the Clergy was largely held by speculators who were glad to have tenant farmers improve the land and increase its value but were unwilling to contribute to the building of roads or community, a situation Francis Armstrong Evans sought to change.

In the second part of his book, Southam examines the 135-year history of the Richmond St. Patrick’s Society which began as a Catholic institution, survived periods of dormancy and eventually metamorphosed into the non-denominational entity it is today. He points out the numerous influences that led to its creation, from local events like the “provocation by the Protestant Orange Order” and the presence of the dynamic Father Patrick Quinn, to economic growth in the area and the more active role taken by the Catholic Church in secular affairs.

The “national identity” of the book’s title has nothing to do with becoming Quebecois or Canadian, but rather with identifying with Ireland. For most early settlers from Ireland, Southam tells us, “the sense of self was parochial and family centred,” and it was living next to French Canadians and Scots and Englishmen in an arable corner of the British Empire that the Irish immigrants learned to become Irish, even while Ireland was negotiating its difficult path through Catholic Emancipation and Home Rule.

Southam’s prose tends to be a little dry at times and his text would have benefited from at least one more proof-reading. Pedants will find any number of typos: St. Bibiana instead of St. Bibiane; Dunham where clearly Durham was intended. At one point (p.68), a description of a ferry crossing on the St. Francis confuses Kingsbury with Saint-Félix-de-

Kingsey. There are also errors that come with frequent revision: "brought together various units to created an 'Irish company' in 1757" (p.23).

Still, *Irish Settlement* is unmistakably a history and a readable one, accessible to most lay readers. "The first part rolls right along," said a member of the project team who is a self-avowed non-reader. For him, it was the familiarity of the names in the book that captured his

imagination and held his interest.

It's easy to imagine that many readers in the Richmond area will have a similar positive reaction. For historians, Southam's book is another contribution to the study of the Irish Diaspora, the experiences of the Plunkett and Mountain families to be compared and contrasted with those of the early Irish settlers in New Zealand or Argentina.

If a reader is at all curious about the

early settlement of the Richmond corner of the Eastern Townships, Peter Southam's *Irish Settlement and National Identity in the Lower St. Francis Valley* is an interesting read, and the kind of book that merits a place on an amateur historian's bookshelf, possibly even next to the *Annals*.

- Reviewed by Nick Fonda

New History, Old Dilemmas

An Illustrated History of Quebec: Tradition & Modernity

By Peter Gossage and J. I. Little

Oxford University Press Canada, 2012

This new *Illustrated History of Quebec* tackles our past from the retreat of the glaciers to the approach of Pauline Marois.

This excellent effort is very well written with, in general, fast moving, accessible prose, somewhere between a third year university standard text and popular journalism for the thoughtful reader. The work keeps to its main theme of the contrast between the forces of change (modernity) and the forces of ideology (tradition) in Quebec.

Gossage and Little are professors of history at Concordia University and Simon Fraser University, respectively, with distinguished careers as both teachers and writers of history. They have managed to avoid many of the pitfalls of historical writing. To begin with, they are concise: although *An Illustrated History* is very much an overview, the contents constantly refer the reader to further sources of information that are much more detailed. These sources are always clearly cited and each chapter has explanatory notes.

Of course, this is a Big Topic. Quebec probably has the most complex and potentially contentious history (in terms of interpretation) of any part of North America. Our historical writers, in both French and English, have tended to have hidden (or not so hidden) agendas to further their own, or

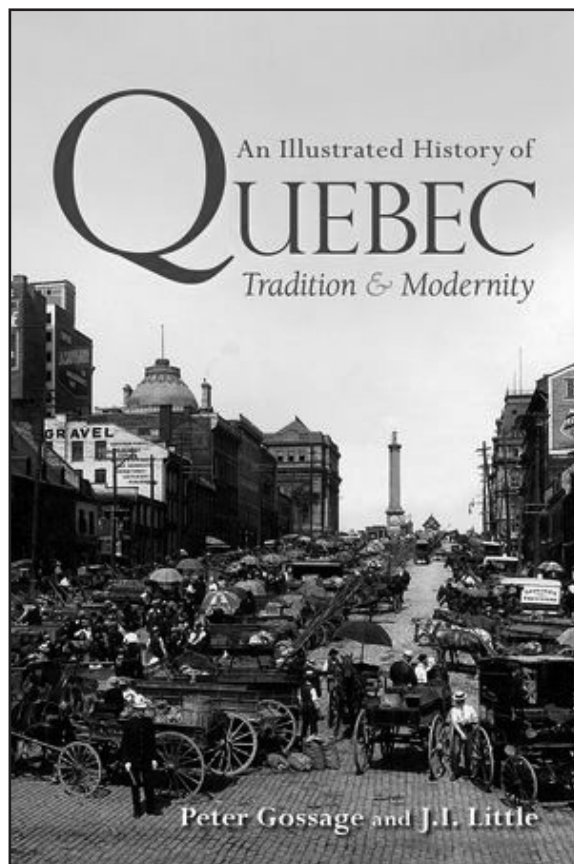
some ideological group's, political and social view of Quebec and of Quebec in Canada. Gossage and Little, however, have managed to steer away from parti-

fort to include the histories of certain populations all too often ignored or outlined negatively: women, First Nations and the working-class are fully represented in this publication. "A Great Darkness ?" (Chapter Ten) particularly stood out as insightful in its treatment of the Duplessis (Union Nationale) and Godbout (Liberal) governments during the 1930s through 1950s. The book's unifying theme of tradition and modernity is especially evident here: even as Quebec becomes a modern industrial society, the political elites and French-speaking Roman Catholic hierarchy attempted to maintain the agrarian and isolated world of the eighteenth century. The stresses of this period were perhaps greater than in the actual Quiet Revolution that followed in the 1960s.

The book's many illustrations are well chosen, even though many seem rather small, and are of a good variety, including newspaper cartoons, political propaganda materials, pre-photography art work and some maps. Many are unintentionally (or perhaps intentionally) humorous and certainly augment the text very well.

This up-to-date history is highly recommended to anyone interested in Quebec and how we came to our present social and political reality.

-Reviewed by Sandra Stock



sanship; even hoary old debates like the Conscription Crisis of World War I are presented quite objectively, often giving more than one point of view.

They have also made an obvious ef-



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