Joe Graham on Montreal's founders

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Quebec Heritage News

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Nov-Dec 2007

Mission Possible

Tracing the origins of today's Hindu fellowhip in Montreal

A Higher Calling

The extraordinary life of Inge Sell and her special-needs community

Temple Mysteries

History and myth behind Freemasonry in Quebec

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Cover: Dancing Shiva statue. In the Hindu religious tradition, Shiva is one of the supreme deities of the Hindu trinity, the Universal Godhead who dances the universe into creation and destruction, creating harmony in meditation. Image courtesy of the Musée des religions du Monde in Nicolet, QC.

Memorandum

Bring it on

Looking back through the archives of the *Quebec Heritage News*, we paused to consider that November 2007 is its seventh anniversary. The first issue, published in November 2000, contained only six pages, and every word counted. On page one there was a list of contents, and one of the headings reads, "Why we're doing this: A message from QAHN president Richard Evans." In his very short, direct message Dick, who is still on the Board and actively committed, said simply, "As an organization whose first goal is to strengthen the efforts of its supporting members through flow of information, we can use a newsletter to enrich that flow. Ultimately our members and other contributors will become key sources of that information, while also being prime users." That became the mission statement for the newsletter and the magazine that it has become. While we still strive to fulfill that role, maintaining the flow of information among our members, we also reach out to a broader readership sharing stories with a heritage perspective.

People with a passion for heritage, the kind of people who dedicate a lot of their private time to protecting and promoting the elements valuable in their cultural inheritance, often speak in a way comprehensible only to others with the same commitment. By appealing to a wider readership, we hope that the magazine can act as a bridge between those dedicated individuals and the general public.

With that in mind, we have solicited articles from people who have stories to tell from their communities. Denis Gaspé's story of Joseph Swan gives us the chance to understand the challenges of a Mohawk community, and Rajinder Sud describes the creation of a Hindu temple. A special way of telling a story is through an interview, and we had the pleasure of talking to Inge Sell, an immigrant to Canada who has created a very special community in the Laurentians. We especially appreciate the kind of detailed report that Jean-François Royal has prepared for us on the remarkable Musée des religions du monde, a museum of world religions of which he is the director. We recently had the good fortune to visit this institution. Originally we had intended to write a review, but were so impressed with what the small town of Nicolet has achieved that we invited Mr. Royal instead to share his special insight.

More than twenty years ago, Nicolet pulled its energies together and decided to make a museum. Since local traditions had always been very closely tied to their religious heritage, they decided to create a museum of world religions. Such an ambitious idea would have failed in a lesser town, but the people of Nicolet rose to the challenge and created the very first museum of religion, not just in Canada, but in the world.

The theme of religious heritage in this issue has also allowed us to incorporate articles that were first printed in other publications. The fascinating redevelopment of the Anglican church in Sorel, described by David Johnston, and the story of the last synagogue in Sherbrooke by Louise Abbott, were both first published in The Gazette of Montreal and are now available to our readers across the province.

We look forward to your feedback. Letters are most welcome as are the messages that we get from our members, many of which become Timeline articles. Nothing gives us greater pleasure than hearing from QAHN members and heritage and history societies across the province proposing to share their trials and victories. There is a power in the flow of information that continues to reinforce and strengthen the efforts of our members, readers and contributors. We encourage people to express their opinions and to create a dialogue. Asked if we are afraid of controversy, the simple answer is, if it contributes in a constructive way to knowledge of our history and strengthens our ties to our shared heritage, bring it on.

Joseph Graham and Sheila Eskenazi

Letters

Topical issue

Congratulations on your latest issue of *Quebec Heritage News [Sept-Oct 2007]* I read much of it as soon as the mailman delivered it and completed it the next day. Indeed I had trouble keeping my hands on it as our historical society meets here and several people wanted to take it home! (In fact one of them may have absconded with it as I cannot find it—and having just gone to check on the correct title, I realize that all of the 2007 issues have been "borrowed.")

I was particularly happy to find questions about Native heritage being discussed. Is there any way to learn more about the aboriginal peoples who lived on Montreal Island? Also, I was delighted to see your review of Charles C. Mann's book, *1491*. I bought it some months ago and was astonished to realize just how little truth we were told in school about the "empty" continents

Another topic I would really like to read about is how to deal with the question arising from many people being very sceptical about purchasing heritage homes because they feel that they will be penalized financially when they decide to sell. It is truly surprising to realize just how deeply held this concern is. Living in an eighteenth-century house recognized and controlled by the Ministère de la Culture et des Communications, I hear many concerns of this sort.

I am delighted to have made the QAHN connection and really enjoyed both the April event at the McCord Museum and your annual general meeting at Macdonald College.

Barbara Barclay, president
Beaurepaire-Beaconsfield Historical Society
Beaconsfield, QC

Letters

Virtual reunion

When you are blessed with something special, it should be shared. Some time ago while living outside Quebec I inherited some wonderful old documents and papers pertaining to the Restigouche area where some of my ancestors settled over 200 years ago. I scanned each item and loaded them all to a website. In one of my visits to Restigouche, before I moved here, I also took notice of several grave markers in the Kempt Road Cemetery. Some were so old you could barely read them. I wondered, what would they be like fifty years from now? So I photographed the entire cemetery and placed the pictures online. Now, people from afar who are unable to travel can at least see the stones they are looking for.

Once I began posting the information, people responded by sending me more old pictures of the area and their family histories, wishing to share with others. The website has turned into a very nice electronic gathering place.

With our move here, I decided to change servers. Not all was as easy as anticipated. The whole site had to be rebuilt. It is still a work in progress, but is now back online. I invite your readers to take a minute and visit us at here at www.retigouchekem-ptroad.net.

We must each preserve our own history. Don't assume that someone else will take care of it, that someone else will record the nscription on that fading tombstone in the cemetery near you. We each need to make our own contributions, so that our history is there for future generations.

Wendy Cosper
Restigouche, QC

Chelsea pioneers get some respect

West Quebecers rally behind historical society to fix vandalized burial ground

Adapted from the Gatineau Valley Historical Society newsletter, November-December 2007

Dignitaries and members of the local community joined Gatineau Valley Historical Society (GVHS) president Marc Cockburn at a special ceremony this autumn to mark the recent restoration of a pioneer burial ground in West Quebec.

"As President of the Society, I am very lucky to be part of an incredible team of individuals willing to step up and volunteer their time and effort to realize these kinds of accomplishments," Cockburn told the crowd, gathered at the Chelsea Pioneer Cemetery in Chelsea, Quebec.

The last time people had gathered at Chelsea Pioneer Cemetery and War Cenotaph was on Remembrance Day, 2006, when members of the community paid their respects to Canadian men and women who have served, and continue to serve, our country during times of war, conflict and peace. A month later the cemetery was the target of anonymous vandals who rampaged thorugh the heritage site smashing headstones, including that of Boer War hero Pte. Richard Rowland Thompson.

Not only were the bravery and sacrifice of war veterans dishonoured by this deed, vandals also assaulted the memory of Chelsea's pioneer families. But the local historical society that owns the property moved into action immediatedly to repair the damage, and was tremendously heartened by the response it received from members of the local and wider community. Cockburn thanked everyone who supported the historical society's efforts

" In particular, I thank Carol Martin and Allan Richens for their dedication and efforts in the last year to restore and maintain the essence and meaning of the Chelsea Pioneer Cemetery."

He also extended a special greeting to Mrs. Jean Pigott, former Chairperson of the National Capital Commission, and long-time supporter of the Society's efforts to maintain Chelsea's historic cemeteries.

Other honoured guests who spoke to the gathering included Mayor Jean Perras of the Municipality of Chelsea, Stéphanie Vallée, MNA for Gatineau, and Gerry Philippe, representing the Lawrence Cannon, MP for Pontiac. The prayers of gathering, blessing and conclusion were offered by the Reverend Christine Piper, rector of St. Mary Magdalene Anglican Church, Larry Dufour of St. Stephen's Roman Catholic Church, and the Reverend Jane Griffiths, rector of Chelsea United Church.

The ceremony ended to the strains of bagpiper Andy Moore playing marching tunes from the Boer War period, followed by refreshments and a guided tour of the site.

Audrey Trudeau, Grete Hale and Jean Pigott attend the Chelsea Pioneer Cemetery Restoration Ceremony

House appeal

French ministry helps breathe new life into historic Anglican community

by David Johnston

After the American War of Independence, Canada had a lot of issues to sort out. Not least was the orderly processing of a massive wave of refugees through Sorel, seventy kilometres downstream from Montreal. The newcomers were the United Empire Loyalists, then known simply as Tories to the Americans.

Because of its strategic location at the junction of the St. Lawrence and Richelieu rivers, Sorel became a major clearinghouse for the Loyalist influx, a gateway into Canada. It didn't take long, with all the new English-speakers arriving in Quebec, for the Church of England to open up a church. The mission it created in 1784 was the first such Anglican mission in Quebec, and only the second one in Canada.

Now, more than two centuries later, this first mission is on a new mission.

The traditionally anglophone congregation of the Anglican parish of Christ Church Sorel has all but disappeared. Only a few anglo parishioners are left—and they're not making it into the pews anymore. And yet, Christ Church is undergoing a modest revival, with a female anglophone parish priest conducting services in French to a congregation that is virtually all francophone and Roman Catholic.

Numbering about thirty in total, this small but devoted congregation recently launched a fundraising campaign to help renovate the parish's rectory, which was built in 1843, the same year as the adjacent church. The project has attracted support from some decidedly unconventional circles. One of the organizing committee members is Bloc Québécois caucus leader Louis Plamondon.

"We like the fact that the Anglican Church ordains women and looks at other religions with a spirit of openness," said Jocelyn Gravel, a Roman Catholic who joined Christ Church three years ago, after he and his wife, Louise Jutras, got married there. He said there has been no pressure on him to convert to the Anglican faith, although he thinks he will convert one day.

"This is certainly not about trying to convert Roman Catholics, and certainly not this generation," said Holly Ratcliffe, the parish priest. "It's about ecumenism."

It's also about the Anglican Church coming to grips with anglophone demographic decline and the question of whether or not to convert to a French ministry.

A generation or two ago, the prospect of an Anglican church operating entirely in French almost entirely for the benefit of Roman Catholics would have been unimaginable. But in 1999, the Diocese of Montreal, which includes Sorel-Tracy, approved a pilot project in French ministry for Christ Church. The Anglican diocese of Quebec that operates to the north and east of the Montreal diocese has also begun introducing French. Where it will all lead, only time will tell.

Christ Church had a thriving English congregation until the early 1960s, when anglophone control of the private sector of Quebec's economy collapsed with the Quiet Revolution.

The change happened very quickly. In 1964, local anglo executives of QIT-Fer et Titane, a metallurgical products company, financed construction of a new church hall for Christ Church, but by 1968 anglos were leaving Sorel in droves, and the parish had to sell the rectory to pay its bills. At the request of its small congregation, thirty-seven years later, in

Sorel's parish priest Holly Ratcliffe, above. Below, the neo-Gothic style Christ Church and rectory, courtesy of the Fondation du patrimoine religieux du Quebec (2003).

2005, the diocese arranged to buy it back.

Their vision includes this building as a vital element. While we tend to think of a church building as a place of worship, and other buildings as secondary, the Sorel congregation sees the need to interact with the greater community as being essential, and feels the rectory is needed for this end. They intend to collaborate with other community organizations wanting to strengthen the social fabric of their town, which became Sorel-Tracy following municipal mergers in Quebec in 2002 The plan now is to sell the church hall and renovate the rectory.

A fundraising dinner held last October kicked off an effort to raise a total of $300,000 that the congregation estimates it will need to carry out the building restorations. Other sources of funding are being sought as well.

The local Bloc Québécois party association, the Roman Catholic parish, the health and social services agency, and local media have all gotten together to support the old neo-Gothic and new neo-francophone Anglican presence.

"It's not a question of religion for us," said Germaine Gadbois, a catechism teacher in the Catholic parish of St. Pierre who is helping to save the old rectory. "This is a church that has gone to a lot of trouble to establish a new kind of outreach in the community, and it deserves to be supported."

"I guess what I'd like to emphasize," Ratcliffe said, "is that what we're doing in Sorel is very important for the future of the church—that is, trying to stay responsive to the needs being articulated by the community that surrounds us."

David Johnston is a reporter for The Gazette. *This article was adapted with permission of the author.*

Welding a memory

Mohawk students pitch in to build bridge disaster monument

by Connie Meloche

Kahnawake welding students and their classmates attending the Chateauguay Nova Training Centre are a step closer to completing work on a large memorial to commerate the centenary of the Quebec Bridge Disaaster.

Students fashioned a key steel section of the Quebec Bridge Disaster 100th Anniversary Community Memorial in November, which will now be galvanized before being placed at the community memorial site in the Mohawk community of Kahnawake, south of Montreal.

Scale model of the Quebec Bridge disaster memorial.
Photo courtesy of Connie Meloche

Nova Training Centre, a strong supporter of the grassroots Quebec Bridge Disaster 100th Anniversary Project donated the steel and their welding class time to fabricate this section of the memorial. The steel section consists of two half-circles with 33 plates on which 33 granite plaques will sit. The half-circles will form a circle at the inner perimetre of 33 trees, which will be planted in spring 2008.

A tree planting ceremony and celebration is planned for that time.

The memorial design respects the descendants of the 33 men who died at Quebec, as well as the community members who gave their input in 2006-2007 through community consultation meetings, and a survey regarding the community memorial design. Each of the 33 men will have a plaque with his picture, date of birth/death and immediate family members left behind. Three plaques will also be placed at the opposite side of the steel bridge replica, honouring the three men who survived the disaster. A two-sided granite monument will sit at the centre of the circle. It will depict the Quebec Bridge Disaster 100th Anniversary Project logo and will include some trilingual text explaining the memorial purpose as defined by the community and descendants of the 33 men.

Phelps nomination call

Is there someone in your community who has consistently worked towards the promotion and preservation of Quebec's English-speaking heritage? If so, the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network (QAHN) would love to hear from you.

The provinical network of English-language heritage organizations is currently inviting nominations for its 2008 Marion Phelps Award. *The deadline for submitting nominations is March 30, 2008.*

The Marion Phelps Award is given each year to honour a community volunteer who's made an outstanding contribution to the protection and preservation of English-speaking heritage in Quebec. Letters of nomination should be sent to the QAHN office in Sherbrooke (address on inside front cover) or directly by email to: execdir@qahn.org.

A future for story handlers

Montreal's high-tech oral history centre is a Canadian first

Concordia University in Montreal has received $400,000 in funding from the Canadian Foundation for Innovation and Quebec's Ministry of Education to establish what is being billed as Canada's first digital oral history research laboratory.

The Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling, which opened officially in September, is equipped with the latest in computerized recording and editing technology and has specially built rooms for training, conducting interviews, and for storing and cataloguing oral history collections in a variety of media, from audio cassetes to CDs and DVDs. In 2006 Concordia's history department launched Canada's first undergradualte-level programme in public history.

"It is an exciting time to be a public historian in Canada," Concordia professor Steven High enthused in the Centre's recent newsletter. "Everywhere you turn these days there is a new public history centre, program, web site, conference, or research project popping up."

Part of the grant will be used to help make existing collections of recorded interviews more accessible to researchers, an initiative that will likely interest museum curators and archivists across the country. In the past, interviews were collected and stored on older analog media such as cassette and video tapes. The recordings were quickly transcribed and the original audio or video sources often ended up collecting dust. Construction of "searchable databases" of existing recordings of life stories promises to give future researchers at Concordia unprecedented computerized access to this original source material.

Funding for oral history research has also been making a comeback. The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) has recently funded a number of large collaborative projects, including a five-year long study of Montrealers affected by state violence. *Life Stories of Montrealers Displaced by War, Genocide and other Human Rights Violations*, a research project being run out of Concordia's new oral history centre, explores the experiences of survivors who came to Quebec after fleeing war and persecution in Europe, Latin America, South Asia and the Caribbean. Life story interviews with 600 people will examine how events in various world regionshave shaped the lives of individuals and refegee communities.

Community researchers as well as scholars are encouraged to become affiliates of the oral history centre. Affiliates may borrow equipment, use the centre's facilities and benefit from opportunities to meet with other researchers. There are no fees.

To find out more, call (514) 848-2424, ext. 5465.

Culture budget rises

Quebec promises increase in infrastructure funding

The Quebec government has announced that it intends to spend an additional $320 million over the next five years helping to defray the cost of maintaining and repairing the province's cultural infrasturcture.

Christine St-Pierre, Minister for Culture, Communications and Women's Affairs, said in November that her ministry would invest a total of $885 million helping to improve to the province's wide array of cultural industries between now and 2012.

"The vitality of culture is the best asset Quebec has at its disposal to defend its cultural diversity and specificity on the world stage," Christine St-Pierre, Minister for Culture, Communications and Women's Affairs said in a prepared statement, which did not include mention of buildings or institutions of value to the heritage sector. However, many heritage properties would likely qualify, provided they are officially designated by the province's Commission des biens culturels.

Funding for the increased provincial investment is to come out of the Quebec's $30 billion infrastructure fund, dubbed the Plan québécois des infrastructures. In announcing the spending hike, the minister indicated that of the $885 million budgeted for cultural infrastructure projects, $277 million has already been earmarked for government agencies and departments, with $607 million set aside for community organizations, municipalities and individuals.

It remains unclear how the money is going to make its way into the hands of those responsible for showcasing Quebec's cultural heritage. A little over a year ago, the provincial government made headlines by establishing the *Fonds du patrimoine culturel québécois,* or heritage fund, to be financed in part by provincial tobacco taxes, and used to "enhance, restore and promote" Quebec's built heritage.

Anglo joins board of BaNQ

A retired Bishop's University librarian has been named to the board of Quebec's national library and archives. Wendy Lessard-Durrant, who also served for many years with the Bélanger-Gardner Foundation in Lennoxville, is one of 10 members overseeing the Bibliotèque et archives nationales du Québec.

Shul on the St. Francis

Sherbrooke was vibrant hub of Eastern Townships' historic Jewish community

by Louise Abbott

As we stood at the gate of the Jewish cemetery, Daniel (Danny) Heilig cinched the belt of his overcoat and then tugged on his tweed hat to keep it from blowing away. It was a chilly, wet day in early November. Most of the leaves from the tall, moss-covered maples lay in a sodden mat on the ground. But one faded orange straggler had caught on the cemetery fence and kept slapping against the chain links, unwilling, it seemed, to join the dead.

When Jews gather in Sherbrooke these days, it is to mourn. The graveyard on du Souvenir has become their main connection to an era that has passed, to a community that has disappeared. Vinebergs … Gillmans … Budnings … Cohens … Echenbergs … Greens … Smiths … Levinsons … Weinsteins. As we walked through the grounds high on a hill overlooking the city, Danny pointed out headstones and occasionally wiped away the drizzle that formed a fine mist on his glasses. Now eighty-six, he had been a friend, colleague, or relative of many of the deceased.

"My late uncle and aunt," he gestured. Ben and Rose Cohen raised Danny after his mother's death; he was just ten when he left Montreal to live with them. "Claire's mother," he gestured again. Claire is Danny's wife, who was waiting for us in the car at the cemetery entrance. Her mother was a Polish-born Jew who had settled in New York but chosen to spend eternity close to her daughter.

We saw small headstones of lichen-spotted white marble that dated from nearly a century ago and larger headstones of polished black granite from more recent years. We also saw one grave that had been freshly dug. Danny explained that a monument would eventually be placed, and then family and friends would gather for an official unveiling and mourners' kaddish, or prayer.

Congregation of Agudath Achim Synagogue in Sherbrooke. The buildng was sold to a local Pentecostal church in 1983. Photo courtesy of Louise Abbott

Like Danny and Claire, the woman who had died had once been part of a small but thriving Jewish community. Only a handful of Jews remain. As one of them, Danny had offered to escort me to the cemetery and then drive me around the city to show me where Jewish inhabitants used to live, work, and worship.

While he locked the gate, I looked up at the wrought-iron arch above it. It bore a Star of David and the words "Congregation of Agudath Achim Cemetery."

This burial ground in Sherbrooke's east end has been vandalized in recent years. But back in the car, the Heiligs emphasized that the desecration was a regrettable, but isolated, incident: the local Jewish community had traditionally experienced tolerance and goodwill. "We always had a very comfortable relationship with the English people," Claire said. "Well, also with the French, we had a very good entente," Danny quickly added. "But not as close," Claire concluded.

Even before pogroms caused them to flee the shtetls of Russia and other Eastern European nations en masse in the late 1800s, Jews had settled in various locales in the Eastern Townships. The greatest number took up residence in the commercial centre of Sherbrooke.

An advocate named Reuben Hart arrived first; he was listed in the 1863 census. By 1881 twenty Jews were registered. They continued to arrive throughout the 1880s and 1890s. Danny's uncle Ben founded the B. Cohen Corporation in 1887; he dealt in scrap metal, rags, and animal bones, hides, and furs. "Farmers and trappers would bring in raw furs, which were sold to coat manufacturers," Danny said.

In a pattern that repeated itself all over North America, Jewish newcomers often worked initially as peddlers. "They would take a pack and some merchandise and go out into

the countryside with a horse and cart," Claire explained. "They would sell their goods, make a slight profit, and buy more merchandise. They had nothing but innate intelligence, a great deal of ambition, the desire to survive, and a sense of charity—an ability to give part of what they had to relatives, to help them."

As they prospered, most of these itinerant salesmen opened clothing stores, furniture stores, or other retail businesses on Wellington in downtown Sherbrooke. For several decades, Jews owned almost half of the stores on this street. By 1907 the Jewish community had grown large enough to engage a rabbi, obtain a charter for their congregation, and rent quarters for services and other activities. After we had wended our way from the cemetery and crossed the St. Francis River, Danny slowed down at Dufferin and Frontenac. "That corner had the building that housed our first little place of worship."

Originally an anglophone stronghold, Sherbrooke had witnessed a demographic shift by the turn of the twentieth century: French Canadians had come to constitute the majority of the residents. Nonetheless, English-speaking locals remained economically and politically powerful, and it was with them that Jewish citizens aligned themselves. Jews usually started off in leased living quarters close to their shops. When they could afford it, they moved into the mostly middle-class, mostly English-speaking, North Ward.

Jewish children went to Protestant schools, and Yiddish gave way to English at home. Many Jewish parents did business with French Canadians, however, and urged their children to learn French.

With fewer than fifteen thousand people in the early 1900s, Sherbrooke was a "New World shtetl … a place to conduct small business and maintain solid family ties," Ruth (Echenberg) Tannenbaum and Myron Echenberg noted in a family history.

Today, with upwards of seventy-six thousand residents in its core, Sherbrooke still offers a relaxed tempo. "I get high blood pressure from the traffic and pace of a big city," Danny said, as he navigated slowly, cautiously, from downtown to the North Ward.

We stopped in front of a neo-classical brick building with white pillars on Montreal Street. Now a French Pentecostal church, it was erected in 1920 as the Agudath Achim Synagogue and served families not only from Sherbrooke, but also from outlying towns like Coaticook, Drummondville, Lake Megantic, and Thetford Mines.

While the congregation was nominally Orthodox, secular Jewish institutions dominated synagogue life: B'nai Brith, Hadassah, Hebrew Ladies' Aid. A cheder, or elementary Hebrew school, was held after regular school classes and on Sunday mornings. By 1921 the number of Jews in Sherbrooke had reached 265 in an overall population of 23,660. A wave of Jewish immigrants arrived that year and the next. For some, Sherbrooke was a final destination, for others, a stopover. By 1931 the number of Jews had slipped to 152. The Great Depression was one factor in the exodus. The search for Jewish spouses was another.

In 1937 clothing manufacturer Sam Rubin moved his operation from Montreal to Sherbrooke to resist unionization. About twenty-five Jewish families accompanied him, bringing "stronger ties to Judaism and to Yiddish culture," according to Tannenbaum and Echenberg, and, in the younger generation, potential Jewish marriage partners.

Although forming a tightly knit community, Jews looked beyond their own ranks, too. Many served on the board of the Sherbrooke Hospital, the YMCA, the Rotary Club, and other anglophone organizations. In both wars, many enlisted for military service.

During the post-war boom, the Jewish community remained vibrant, and it was then that Danny and Claire began their life together. In 1947 Danny took over his uncle Ben's business with his cousin Sam. The same year, he met Claire in Montreal. She was visiting a friend; he was bowling in a B'nai Brith-sponsored tournament.

Claire, whose accent bears the unmistakable stamp of her New York Jewish childhood, has never forgotten the day that Danny proposed. "I asked: Does Sherbrooke have any movie houses? Does it have indoor plumbing?" She laughed. "I thought Sherbrooke was backward," she admitted. "I never asked about the Jewish community. Jewish culture was something I'd always taken for granted."

Claire married Danny in 1948 and upon her arrival in Sherbrooke, she immediately found a friend in another transplanted American Jewish woman. She also gradually found her place in the local Jewish community. For years, she "didn't wander out of it at all, didn't want to, didn't need to."

Continuing along streets in the North Ward, where the Heiligs themselves live, we saw the onetime homes of various Jewish families. The neighbourhood today is predominantly francophone. Danny speaks French and plays tennis once a week with longstanding francophone friends. Claire, however, never became fully bilingual. As the Jewish community shrank, she became increasingly involved in the broader anglophone community, only curtailing her involvement in associations like the University Women's Club after two strokes in 1997.

On our return to the Heiligs' apartment, Danny retrieved a box with photos from the 1950s and 1960s inside. He picked out a few, including the bar mitzvah of his son, Lewis; a Hanukkah party; and a B'nai Brith fund-raising dinner. He rhymed off the names of the smiling faces and then added wistfully, "It was a very friendly group."

In 1955, with three-hundred-odd members, the Jewish community was confident enough of its future to construct a two-storey extension to the synagogue to accommodate a Talmud Torah, or religious school, for bar mitzvah preparation; meeting rooms; and other facilities. Just a year later, Sam Rubin sold his King Street plant to an American company. A year after that, as the needle trades in Quebec faltered, the plant closed. Most of the Jewish employees departed.

In addition, the children of even deeply rooted Jews continued to go elsewhere for their education, marriage, and careers. Many became well-known professionals in Montreal, such as criminal lawyer Raphael Schachter, the grandson of the Rev. A.S. Mittleman, Agudath Achim's spiritual leader from 1919 to 1954.

During the 1960s, shopping malls sprang up in the suburbs, and Wellington Street stores found it hard to compete. Some of the Jewish owners pulled up stakes. By 1967 the Sherbrooke Daily Record reported: “Sherbrooke’s Jewish community struggles to continue.”

The back-to-the-land movement and staff hiring at local CEGEPs, universities, and hospitals brought a few new congregants. Among them were artists Chick and Marsha Schwartz. They had left Montreal in 1977 to settle on a farm outside Stanstead and wanted their three sons to study for their bar mitzvah. They soon discovered that the Sherbrooke congregation no longer had a resident rabbi, and the Talmud Torah had all but collapsed. Marsha set about resurrecting classes with the assistance of the Heiligs’ daughter, Robin, then a Bishop’s University student.

It became more and more difficult, however, to draw a minyan, or quorum of ten adult males required to hold religious services, and the remaining synagogue members faced crippling maintenance and repair expenses for the building. They made the painful decision to sell it, directing the funds to a foundation established for the cemetery’s upkeep. About seventy people from near and far attended the last service in 1983. “It was a reunion and a farewell,” Claire recalled.

Some former congregants took to commuting to synagogues in Vermont or Montreal to worship and educate their children in Judaism. Others created the Eastern Townships Jewish Community. At its peak in the late 1980s, this informal group brought together fifty widely dispersed Jewish or interfaith Townships families. Members met in different homes for children’s instruction, special services, and communal celebrations.

The Heiligs were delighted to see this resurgence of Jewish life in the region and joined in. But in the intervening years, most of the children have grown up and left to study or work outside the Townships. Some of the parents have moved, too. Get-togethers are rare.

Danny put away the photos. “I was sad when my friends left,” Claire said. “But I’ve learned to accept it.”

The Heiligs decided long ago that they would stay in Sherbrooke forever; they have reserved plots in the Agudath Achim Cemetery for themselves and their two children. “We love it here, and our roots are here,” Danny told me. “When people used to ask me about moving, I’d always say, I’m going to turn out the lights in the synagogue, and we’ll be the last to leave.”

Louise Abbott is a freelance writer and photographer who lives in the Eastern Townships. This article first appeared in The Gazette *on April 7, 2001. It won the Norman Kucharsky Award for Cultural and Artistic Journalism given by the Professional Writers Association of Canada. She is also the author of several books, publications and films about Quebec history and heritage.*

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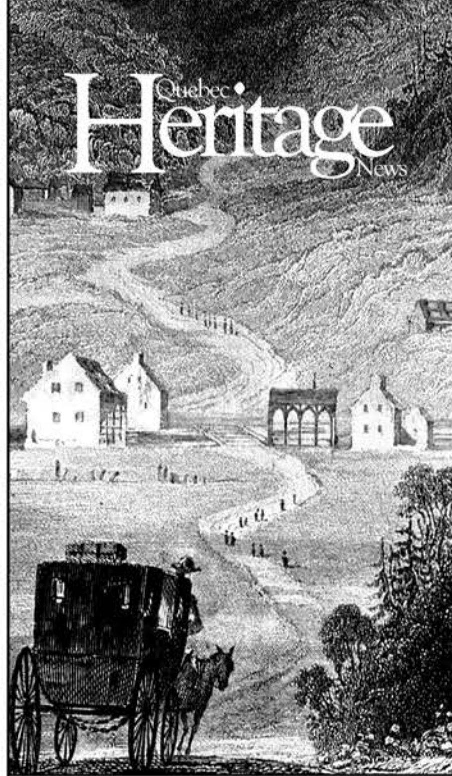

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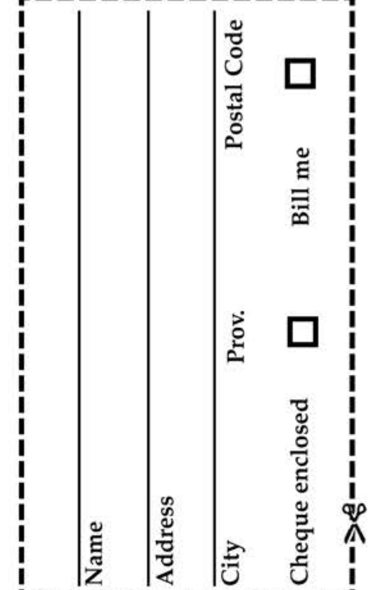

Higher Calling

The extraordinary life of Inge Sell and her special-needs community

Missions of devotion form part of our heritage. One only has to think about the many orders of nuns and brothers that once were central to the life of Quebec. Today there are still people among us who dedicate their lives to the needs of others. Inge Sell started a community of care for people in need. *Quebec Heritage News* editors Sheila Eskenazi and Joseph Graham recently spoke with Inge Sell about her life and she explained how she was inspired by Rudolf Steiner's movement called anthroposophy. Steiner, who was born in Austria in 1861, is probably best known for creating the Waldorf Schools. Inge Sell's community, Maison Emmanuel, thrives today in the Laurentians serving several dozen adults and adolescents with special needs, showing how, in a caring society, these people can live rich, full lives.

Q: What is Anthroposophy?

A: Anthroposophy, or awareness of one's humanity, is a path of knowledge and self-development which encompasses the realms of religion, philosophy, art and science. Founded in what is universally human, it offers a cohesive interpretation of human and world evolution, the reality of spiritual worlds, of which this material world is a part, practical methods of developing an objective consciousness of these realms, and deep insights into Christianity and the world's religions and philosophies.

Q: How did it begin?

Anthroposophy was established by Rudolf Steiner through books, lectures and other practical initiatives. He wanted no one to accept what was presented through blind faith and asked that everyone objectively test what was offered. He also insisted that individuals should be able to work in complete freedom with what he presented. Today there are about 60,000 adherents world-wide.

Q: How did you learn about it?

A: It was introduced to me by my brother with a lot of enthusiasm and conviction. It consists of about 4,000 lectures and several books by Rudolf Steiner—plus many secondary writers. I realized that to become immersed I would have to change the path of my life. I had been searching for meaning in life. My brother had found it in anthroposophy, and so did I.

Q: Is it a new religion or philosophy?

A: It touches on all the ancient religions and philosophies and imbues them with a new and modern scientific understanding. What made it even more interesting for me was that Steiner's philosophies apply to practical life, through education, for example, with the Waldorf Schools, and special needs through the Camphill Communities and Anthroposophical curative homes. It also has a practical application in agriculture through biodynamic farming, the arts through Eurythmy and painting, as well as architecture, medicine, religion and economics.

Q: It sounds like there's a lot to learn. Where would one start?

A: It depends so much on someone's interests. Basic

Fellowship is paramount to Inge Sell, pictured above with some of the people who live at Maison Emmanuel.

texts by Rudolf Steiner are, *Intuitive Thinking as a Spiritual Path*, also known as *The Philosophy of Freedom; Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and How to Attain it*; *Theosophy*, and *Occult Science*. There are books on the four Gospels and religion, on Waldorf and curative education, really on all aspects of life. Google 'Steiner books' or 'anthroposphy.' A wealth of information is available on these sites.

And there was the fundraising, for there definitely was not enough money to feed and clothe all the children. Each child had daily tasks according to his or her ability. We created workshops for weaving and pottery, and of course they went to school. They felt proud of their accomplishments and became citizens of this world. And the children thrived and became young adults, and more and more came to our doors.

"Everyone is equal to everyone else, whether disabled or not. We all strive to experience 'the other' to the best of our abilities, and in the process grow towards our humanity."

Q: How did it directly affect your own life?

A: Since my work experience was in special education, I strove to apply anthroposophy by creating a community for children in need of special care of the soul, the term Steiner used in the course he gave to special educators in 1924. Thus I met my destiny in 1982, becoming the founder of Maison Emmanuel. We registered a not-for-profit organization, and a local doctor, a notary and a friend became the first members of the Board of Directors. Effectively, I became the foster mother to special-needs children mostly coming from mental institutions and emergency shelters. Later on Maison Emmanuel became a "ressource intermédiaire," so designated by the Social Services department. My task consisted of creating a home for these incredibly needy and challenging children. I had to provide a loving, welcoming, accepting environment. It had to be aesthetically beautiful, for instance that meant definitely no plastics or synthetics. The houseparent, meaning me, and helpers, who were co-workers, mostly students, lived and worked with the children 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Wholesome, organic food is important with no artificial flavours nor colourings and the least amount of sugar. Cotton and wool were preferable over synthetic fabrics. There was plenty of anthroposophical literature describing the symptoms and treatments of the different disabilities—and I worked with them, using my own intuitions where necessary.

Q: How did you cope? Your lifestyle must have been dominated by your work.

A: We created daily and seasonal rhythms. Our small family celebrated the festivals and birthdays with plays, music and singing. We got all dressed up for Sunday Service. I studied biodynamic gardening and grew our vegetables. We had goats for our milk supply and made our own cheese, and we had chickens.

Q: How old were your own children? Were they involved in the community as well?

A: In 1982 my own children were 22, 18 and 16 years old. My youngest daughter helped during her university breaks and joined the community in 1995. Also my oldest daughter worked in the community for some time. My son, who worked in construction, helped to build the schoolhouse in l984.

Maison Ceres, one of seven residences which house members of the Maison Emmanuel community in the Laurentians

Q: Did you ever feel imposed upon?

A: I needed to work daily on myself. Patience, peace, faith, tolerance, acceptance and enthusiasm—all of these create daily struggles with the egoistic, selfish self. The children became my teachers, for my mistakes were mirrored back at me instantly. I learned that the universe asked no more of me than what I could do, and it gave me the strength to do it. The people around me brought their angels with them. They knew more than I did, they knew what was necessary, and they helped to bring it about. I had to learn to accept when something did not work the way I thought it should. My ego—and it is a strong one—did not count. The entity that became Maison Em-

manuel had its own way and knew much more than I did. There are no such things as coincidences. Everything has a meaning. And since I did not always know the meaning, I just needed to accept what appeared on the horizon for Maison Emmanuel.

Q: Were there mistakes?

A: Oh my, so many of them. How do we know when we could have done better? The inner voice tells us, our conscience. This is where we find the Christ—so Steiner tells us. To strive to do better is the human condition—and not to despair is important. Love others as you love yourself. And above all. Love is the mission of our evolutionary stage of our planet earth, love as Christ lived it for us as an example.

Q: Maison Emmanuel seems like much more than a home. It seems more like a community. Was this in your original plan?

A: Yes it was. As more people joined Maison Emmanuel, a true community was formed around the core of our people in need of special care. The young and not so young arrived from all over the world, needing to be taught, accepted and supported.
It was quite an undertaking. This task seemed overwhelming at times. I had to overcome my emotional reactions to the people around me and truly meet them, ego to ego, inquire who they were, find out what their needs were and why their destiny brought them to Maison Emmanuel. However, there was one true miracle happening that came to light over and over again. The young co-workers—literally hundreds of them —were profoundly touched by their daily encounters with the people in need of special care. Many of them kept in touch with us for years afterwards, telling us that the experience had changed the course of their lives, and that they had found their destiny by choosing occupations in the helping professions. Some even returned for a second stay.

Q:Are there other activities for the co-workers?

A:We formed study groups and read and studied together. We were inspired by going to conferences on curative education and social therapy in Europe, the U.S.A. and Canada. We had visiting lecturers come to teach in our orientation course. Our model was the Camphill Communities, of which there are about 100 all over the world, originally conceived by a student of Steiner's, Dr. Karl Koenig. He created the first one in Scotland in 1940. To read his books on building community and to learn about his work with people in need of special care is a true inspiration.

Q: How could you afford to pay all the helpers and subsidise their living and the courses?

A: There are no salaries paid in Camphill communities, nor at Maison Emmanuel. Everyone is equal to everyone else, whether disabled or not. We all strive to experience "the other" to the best of our abilities, and in the process grow towards our humanity. Our work is done for the community, and in turn, the community sustains us.

Q: How many people with special needs live in the community ?

A: Maison Emmanuel is now home for 24 adolescents and adults in need of special care. They live in 7 houses with approximately 24 co-workers. There is also the office and the schoolhouse. The weavery, pottery and bakery, situated in a nearby town, have become their places of work, and these are real places of work that generate real revenue that help defray the costs of the community. In addition there are weekly workshops such as painting, theatre and a lot of singing to enliven their souls. And then there are the specialized therapies such as physiotherapy and occupational therapy. I often stand in awe of how solidly our special people are grounded in their identity and identification with the culture of Maison Emmanuel. Every new co-worker—and there are many coming every year—will quickly be taught by our special people what is acceptable behaviour. Should they forget a well-cherished ritual or festival, or neglect a customary routine, someone or several of the villagers will let their wishes be known, either by verbalizing or acting out.

Q: How does the community at large react to Maison Emmanuel and its special-needs people?

A: The community at large has contact with our special people on a regular basis. The stigma of being different or even offensive does not seem to play a role. Some people even make an extra effort to let us know how much they appreciate having our people in their midst. Gone are the days when we were not allowed to use a certain beach because the sight of our people could be offensive, or when we were forbidden to walk a certain road.

Q: Are you still involved in the community and anthroposophy?

A: Anthroposophy is a never-ending process of becoming. Now that I am retired from Maison Emmanuel, I have become live-in grandmother to two little ones. I also derive great satisfaction from reading Steiner's books—and those of secondary writers—on the transformation and new beginnings at the time of death.

To learn more about Maison Emmanual, visit www.maisonemmanuel.org.

Mission Possible

A father's wish and a will to fellowship united Montreal's Hindus

by Rajinder Sud

Among the immigrants from India who've made Quebec their home, Hindus probably form a majority. The first to arrive were students who came to Canada to attend university and for most that meant McGill. Some opted to seek employment and stay on after completing their education, but their numbers were few, not even a few hundred. It was only in the mid-1960s, when Canada liberalised immigration policies and started seeking professionals from overseas, that the Indian community really began to grow.

I was living in Kenya in 1967 when I met a man who had immigrated to Canada many years before. I invited him over for dinner one evening. Among other guests were two friends of mine, both doctors. As the evening progressed, this gentleman made a bold remark: we were wasting our time working in Kenya and would do much better by following his example. Canada was a land of opportunity. He told us how good it was, how we could make better lives there. But we were happy in the wonderful climes of Kenya, so we heard him out and let it pass.

The next week we met him again at another friend's house, and he encouraged us once more in his eloquent and convincing manner. When it happened a third time, we decided to get him off our back by filling out a formal application. Within two weeks, Immigration Canada sent me a letter inviting me to get a medical examination. If everything went well I would be welcome to come. My two friends eventually received similar letters, but had to go through other accreditation procedures, and they followed a little later.

Hinduism is not a religion in the Western sense, but a belief system whose origins can be traced back 8,500 years to the Indus Valley and the people living around the river Sindhu (Indus). Hindus believe in the Vedas and the Vedantic scriptures—the Upanishads, the Bhagwat Gita (God's words in poetry) and other teachings. Several branches of Hinduism profess similar beliefs, with some variations; Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism, developed from the same ancient tradition. Pursuit of a pious life is their adherents' common denominator.

In the late '60s, no formal facilities yet existed in Montreal where Hindus could congregate for prayer and fellowship. This was about to change, and for very personal reasons. After my mother died in 1972 I returned to India and asked my father to come back with me to my adopted country. He finally accepted, but only if a number of conditions could be satisfied. His first was that he be able to join an Arya Samaj—a reformist Hindu society also known as the Vedic Cultural Society. I gave him my word, and that is how Quebec's first Hindu religious organization came into being.

I was very fortunate that Pandit Gyan Chand, who was a priest at the Nairobi Arya Samaj, happened to be visiting in Canada at the time with his son. I approached him and he was extremely helpful. The three of us, Pandit, his son and I, registered the Arya Samaj of Montreal in 1972 and, in the absence of a community building, we began holding weekly Satsang, also called Havan—prayer meetings—in our homes. As more people learned about what we were doing, they also opened their houses and participated in these religious ceremonies.

Within a year, to our delight, some 400 people came to our very first fund-raising event, held at the YWCA on Dorchester Boulevard. Then, around 1974, another group of dedicated Hindus started conducting similar prayers in private homes while nourishing a dream that one day they would have a permanent place to meet and pray in a formal setting—a Hindu temple. This group, including some friends of mine, some who are no longer in this world, got together with the idea of giving their dream a practical shape. We joined them and lent our full support. Together, we could soon afford to rent a church basement with kitchen facilities in Pointe Claire, and we started meeting there. Next, thanks to one of our members, we moved to the future Sheraton Hotel on René Lévesque Boulevard, which we could use until it actually opened. For the balance of the decade, we were an

Montreal's practising Hindu community first began meeting for prayers in private homes in the 1970s. Photo courtesy of Rajnder Sud

orphan congregation, moving gratefully from site to site, always within a very limited budget.

It seemed a gigantic and an unrealizable goal, to be able to buy or build a place at a cost of hundreds of thousands given the small amount that our weekly collections took in.

Few of us were on a firm financial footing, and our family requirements seldom enabled us to spare large sums for donations. But the group was dedicated and forged ahead, determined to keep the faith alive. We felt it was a worthy cause and believed God would send help, somehow or other. And help He did send, in the form of some very large donations.

One day, also, it was decided that members of the executive committee of the Arya Samaj should have to earn their titles by showing personal commitment. Each was asked to come up with $5,000. In order to fulfill this requirement some of them had to mortgage their homes, others borrowed from friends. But in the end, they all rose to the challenge.

Next came the search for a place, and that meant coming to a consensus as well as finding a place we could afford. We were Hindus from India, a subcontinent and a nation with a large population that spans the spectrum of religious interpretation and practice, and we anticipated that in our microcosm here in Montreal we would all have to compromise to be representative. Besides these elements and the financial challenges, we experienced minor difficulties around personalities and egos—the normal growing pains of any community—and in some years leadership elections proved a very trying period.

After most of a decade of work and prayer, we finally raised enough funds to buy a building. Much as our group tried to represent the spectrum of Hindus from India, we also had to find a location that would accommodate a congregation spread over the island of Montreal and beyond. We found our location, a building that belonged to an Air Canada affiliate, and in 1980 the first Hindu temple, the Hindu Mission of Montreal, officially opened its doors at 955 Bellechasse Avenue East in Montreal. The building had formerly been used for trade union meetings and training, and consisted of an upstairs section suitable for prayers and a ground floor where we could have our cooking facilities. God blessed us with success and the temple is now a thriving institution.

Every Sunday the Hindu Mission hosts a community kitchen and regardless of colour, creed or religion anybody and everybody is welcome. The temple raises funds for the Sun Youth Organization, conducts blood donor clinics, organizes religious and community functions, and provides support to new immigrants. All operations are funded by the congregation, and the temple has never received government funding of any kind.

Today the temple support and membership encompasses the entire city of Montreal with members living in virtually every suburb. The temple is in a healthy financial position, thanks to regular tithing and donations from some wealthy devotees. It has undergone several costly phases of renovations and refurbishing. Our building now has an elevator, enabling the disabled easy access to all three floors. We continue to hope that one day we'll be permitted by the city to install a dome above our centre and change the building's fascia to make it look more like a traditional Indian temple.

Many of our members came to Canada originally to study and there are many others, all from the diverse regions of India, but today, most come from right here, Hindus who were born in Canada and know no other country as home; Hindus whose heritage is Canadian—Canadians whose heritage is Hindu.

Rajinder Sud is president of the Indo-Canada Association of Montreal (ICAM).

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Show of Faiths

Unique museum explores human heritage through religious traditions

by Jean-François Royal

Jean-François Royal works as the director of the Musée des religions du monde *in Nicolet, Quebec.*

The Musée des religions du monde is the only institution of its kind in North America and the oldest museum of religions in the world. Its mission is to study the world's five great religions: Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam.

A museum of ethnography, history and religious art, the Musée des religions du monde was founded by members of our community who wanted to develop an institution to interpret, explain and analyse religious practices around the world. For over 20 years, we have been mounting high-quality exhibitions on major religious traditions, reflecting the religious pluralism of Quebec, Canada and the world and becoming a key player in the development of religious studies in the province.

The Museum's mission is to present and protect Quebec's multi-religion heritage and to acquire, preserve, restore, collect and exhibit objects and works of religious art. Although Nicolet's historical and cultural identity is deeply rooted in Catholicism, the institution's founders chose to create a museum of world religion, in part, to place the Catholic heritage taught to most Quebecers into global perspective.

The museum's mandate is to showcase the world's major religious traditions. It is the instigator and leader of a number of projects to inventory the heritage of Quebec's religious communities. Pioneers in the field, we have catalogued and classified more than 20,000 objects from 17 different Catholic communities to date. Through these initiatives, we have increased our knowledge of the heritage objects of some of the religious and lay communities that have played a role in the history of Quebec. We are serving as advisers and stakeholders with respect to the preservation of Quebec's religious heritage. Building on our experience in the area of physical heritage, the museum is currently working on a project to inventory the province's non-material heritage. Our goal is to inventory Quebec's religious know-how and ethnological practices, fields that are in danger of disappearing.

Of course, the museum faces a number of problems when collecting non-Catholic heritage objects. Although we have observed a growing interest in the museum on the part of various religious groups its activities, minority religious communities still have a relatively small presence in the museum. Some of the solutions to these challenges and questions lie in the religious practice itself, in people's behaviour and the relationships they have with the sacred, and with the ceremonial objects that might serve as museum artefacts. This relationship with religious objects varies with the characteristics of each religious tradition.

A number of other reasons help explain why the traditions or religious minorities remain under-represented. For instance, the influx of Muslim immigrants to Quebec is quite recent, hence the near absence of Islamic heritage in the province. Another major factor is the lack of a real awareness of other religious traditions and their historical importance in Quebec society. For instance, it is not unusual to hear members of a minority religious community say to us that they do not belong to the "noble culture." That expression was coined by Jean Simard in a publication entitled *Le patrimoine religieux au Québec*. By noble culture he meant the "parishes and communities set up under the French regime or the objects generally known through exhibitions and publications produced by art historians."

Even today, religious communities that have been present in Quebec since the mid-19th century still feel that they are part of a second-class religious culture. According to Jean Simard, "this category consists of objects that are neither old nor made of precious metals." However, "we have no idea of the wealth and variety of vessels, vestments and liturgical objects" that form the very essence of Quebec's ethnological heritage.

The public's unfamiliarity with our institution is a challenge that will have to be addressed much more seriously in the next few years in order to increase the museum's profile in the community at large, but also to connect with minority religious communities. The Musée des religions du monde has to build closer ties with the province's various religious groups to ensure that as many people as possible become acquainted with its mission and mandate. A number of campaigns have been conducted to sensitize religious communities to the importance of preserving their heritage. The time has come to build awareness among the various religious communities in Quebec to ensure that their development and respective histories are preserved and made available to the public.

Objects and collections are not the only means used to showcase other religious traditions, and the museum is fortu-

nate to be able to develop exhibitions that advance visitors' knowledge. Although artefacts provide concrete expressions of reality and belief, we feel that we can only really know a community or religious group through research and the development of exhibitions.

Thematic exhibitions give us an opportunity to explore and analyse the beliefs, practices, rites and traditions of different religions in Quebec and around the world. Since 1986, the Musée des religions du monde has presented over a hundred exhibitions, including:

- Four Seasons of Symbols
- Hanukkah, Festival of Lights
- To the Ring of Another Bell: Francophone Protestants in Quebec
- In the Name of Allah: Islam and Muslims in Quebec
- Dkyil-'khor: the Tibetan Mandala and the Art of Jean-Pierre Trépanier.

These exhibitions have provided a brief incursion into a religious world different from our Catholic past, but much closer to our present. This type of exhibition puts us in more direct contact with the communities concerned and provides a more intimate, more sincere entry into a cultural universe with its own rules, limits and experience. Such exhibitions help us explain the relationship that people have with their native environment, their adopted environment and their god or gods. They also allow us to explain the behaviour and beliefs of their neighbours to people from different backgrounds. Lastly, exhibitions help us to increase, however little it may be, knowledge of the different religious communities that make up Quebec today. Exhibitions are the vehicle the museum uses to fulfil its mission.

The Musée des religions du monde plays an essential and critical role in the discovery and acquisition of knowledge of the world's religions. For the past 20 years, we have been helping to raise public awareness of the richness and variety of Quebec's religious heritage. During this time, organizations such as the Fondation patrimoine religieux and the Mission patrimoine religieux and many religious communities' museums have helped to convey the message more forcefully and allowed us to be more than a simple player in this complicated undertaking.

The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts and the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec have made an enormous contribution to the conservation and exhibition of objects of the "noble culture." That is fortunate for us because a number of significant objects would probably not exist anymore without them. The creation of the Musée des religions du monde, the Musée de la civilisation in Quebec City and many other community museums whose mission is to save the province's heritage has raised awareness of the immense wealth and importance of religious ethnological heritage.

The study of religions is essential to furthering knowledge and understanding of different human behaviours. Although other religions in Quebec have a very short history here, there is still a wealth of heritageto discover. In addition to its collections, the Musée des religions du monde has developed various special projects to forge solid ties with Quebec's different religious communities, both major and minor, in order to increase public awareness of them. Much remains to be done. We will continue to be among those working at the forefront to develop and diffuse this knowledge.

Musee des religions du monde is located at 900 Louis-Fréchette Bouevard. in Nicolet, QC
(819) 293-6148 or www.museedesreligions.qc.ca.

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Canada

Courage of their Convictions

How religious dreamers sowed the seeds of Quebec's island city

by Joseph Graham

At the limit of his westerly journey, Jacques Cartier described a mountain rising from an island above the town of Hochelaga sitting in a wide, flowing river of drinkable water. He called it 'Mons realis' – Latin for Mount Royal. Forty years later, in 1575, in the modestly titled *Cosmographie universelle de tout le monde*, François de Belleforest recorded it as Montréal.

In the early 1600s the French began settling in the St. Lawrence valley, establishing a colony at Quebec. In 1627, Cardinal Richelieu established the Company of 100 Associates to settle and develop trade in the colony. Champlain was one of its members, as well as the Commander of New France, while Jean de Lauson became intendant, or director, in France, acting for Richelieu in the latter's absence.

Over the course of the century, the French hold on the colony was tenuous and they were faced with very hostile neighbours to the south. The Iroquoian people that Cartier had met were gone—absorbed into the ranks of the Iroquois Confederacy, according to the Mohawks. Like the Iroquois, they had farmed and hunted, trading their corn with the northern tribes. The Iroquois were the dominant people before the arrival of the Europeans, the ones most likely to recognize the threat these new traders posed. The French settlers had to be armed and on guard at all times to keep their hosts at bay as war canoes moved up and down the river with impunity.

They also had to fear pirates and privateers, and the small colony was claimed by the Kirke brothers in the name of England in 1629, but was given back to the French through negotiations three years later.

Jean de Lauson, the shrewd director of the Company of 100 Associates, after negotiating the colony back from the British in 1632, staked claim to most of the territory in the names of himself or his sons. In the process, he became the first French owner of the island of Montreal. While he was acquiring property up and down the river, the Iroquois were in the ascendance, effectively masters of the river. As their power increased, threatening the very existence of the colony, an unlikely series of events was unfolding in France. A tax collector named Jerome Le Royer de la Dauversière had a spiritual experience in which he heard a voice instructing him to acquire the island of Montreal and set up a hospital there to minister to the local heathen population. Absurd as the notion sounds—and to be sure, his spiritual advisor, Father Chauveau, dismissed it as a pious chimera—he could not get it out of his head.

Le Royer had inherited responsibilities that he did not seek. He wished to become a Jesuit, but when his father died unexpectedly, he took over his father's role as tax collector and supported his family. He soon married, and eventually had five children. By 1639, when he experienced his vision, he had already entertained another spiritual request in which a voice instructed him to set up a mission of hospital workers, sisters dedicated to helping those in need. While Chauveau also dismissed this more feasible undertaking, Jerome Le Royer did manage to establish les Filles Hospitalières de Saint-Joseph in La Flèche, France in 1636.

To augment his income, Le Royer rented out a room in his home to a wealthy student named Pierre Chevrier, Baron de Fancamp. Chevrier became absorbed by Le Royer's religious obsession to create a hospital on an unexplored island on the other side of the world, inhabited, to the best of their knowledge, by a hostile band of what they considered uncivilised savages. Somehow this seemed like a good idea. Together, they began to solicit support for their project, calling themselves the Société Notre-Dame de Montréal, or the Société des Messieurs et Dames de Notre-Dame de Montréal pour la conversion des Sauvages de Nouvelle-France, but soon the adherents became known simply as the Montréalists. When they approached Jean de Lauson to buy the island, the businessman is reputed to have quoted the astronomical sum of 150,000 livres. With the help of the influential priest and Montréalist Father Charles Lalemant, they managed to acquire the island in 1640. Soon a group of Montréalists led by Paul de Chomedey de Maisonneuve, and including Jeanne Mance and other historical notables, headed off on their missionary quest.

View of the Pointe-à-Calliere-Museum, Montreal, site of the first French Catholic mission. Photo by Sarah Howard

Arriving in separate ships and weeks apart, the party's plans were delayed until the spring of 1642. De Maisonneuve met an elderly man, Pierre de Puiseaux de Montrénault, the owner of two seigneuries, whom he convinced not only to house their party for the winter, but also to donate his seigneuries and join their expedition in the spring. Throughout the winter, though, they were encouraged to stay put—in fact they were told that they did not have permission to proceed upriver, that the colony did not have the means to protect them. The governor, Montmagny, even offered them Île d'Orléans if they would abandon their irresponsible mission, but de Maisonneuve, speaking on their behalf, declined the offer. The intrepid and determined missionaries ignored all advice to the contrary and paddled upriver to their destiny in the spring of 1642, landing at the place we now call Pointe à Callières, where they established the mission of Ville Marie.

That first summer was the easiest one they would have. Somehow the Iroquois did not know they were there. Among their greatest challenges, once a fort was built, was not losing courage completely when floodwaters threatened to wash them away towards the end of their first year. As the waters rose up towards their settlement, splashing against the gates of their fort, de Maisonneuve exercised leadership by declaring that if the floodwaters resided, he would carry a large cross to the summit of the mountain and erect it there. His faith in this appeal gave the others courage and once the waters subsided he fulfilled his promise.

Eventually the Iroquois did find them. They were as few as about 70 men and women, and the Iroquois warriors numbered in the hundreds. De Maisonneuve wisely forbade his men from going on the offensive, limiting their strategy to defence, holing up in their fort when necessary. Jeanne Mance tended to the wounded. On one occasion, de Maisonneuve authorized a foray against their painted opponents, discovering rapidly how ill equipped the colonists were. De Maisonneuve was forced to call for a quick retreat, holding off the enemy himself to allow the others to get to safety inside the fort. Grabbed by a powerful Iroquois chief, he managed to push his musket into the chief's naked chest and fire it, killing the man. This was hardly the mission that Jerome Le Royer had described in his vision. There was no ministering to hundreds of angry, taunting warriors, although between skirmishes they did receive visits from the mountain people, the Algonquin and Innu. Their supporters in France faithfully kept them supplied, responding to their needs and even finding other Montréalists to join them.

The names of these early missionaries and their supporters live on in place names, street names and institutions in Montreal and elsewhere in Quebec. Among them, Lambert Closse who became Chomedey's right-hand man, Marguerite Bourgeoys who followed in Jeanne Mance's path, Mme Claude de Bullion in France who silently backed Mance and the hospital she founded, as well as Father Jean de Brébeuf, captured among the Hurons, who was killed by the Iroquois, Mme de Peltrie who joined them from her mission in Quebec for awhile but returned, and of course Jerome Le Royer himself. One other that is less recognizable is Jean-Jacques Olier, the effective founder of what would become the most influential and powerful force in New France and is still very influential to this day. Vincent de Paul, Jean Eudes and Olier, all resident in France, began the Concile de Trente, their goal being to retrain French priests and to give meaning back to the priesthood of their time. Only priests could benefit from their retreats and training programmes. There was no congregation and there were no initiates from the lay community. Their role was pivotal in rebuilding the community and self-image of priests and through it they gained enormous influence. Their initiative soon came to be known as the Company of the Seminary of Saint Sulpice, more commonly known as the Sulpicians. Olier was also a Montréalist.

By the mid 1650s, in spite of their great faith in the efforts of the missionaries in far-away Montreal, the members of the Société Notre-Dame de Montréal in France were aging and not being replaced with younger benefactors. Even though they found men to send to the defence of the mission, their fundraising efforts were producing less fruit. The Iroquois still dominated the river, and even Lauson, by then Governor of New France and living in Quebec, declined to stand up to them. In one telling incident in May 1656, three hundred Iroquois attacked a Huron village allied with the French on Île d'Orléans, burning it and taking the survivors prisoner. As they paddled their war canoes back past Quebec, they hurled insults at the French, who stayed put, incapable of an adequate military response.

In this atmosphere, the missionaries in Montreal, even less well defended than Quebec, held on as their backers in France melted away and French colonists further down the river contemplated abandoning the colony and returning en masse to France. Responding to a plea from Jeanne Mance, by this time an older woman with a disabled arm, Olier, who was himself nearing the end of his life, committed the Sulpicians to supporting the missionaries.

It is hard to understand to what extent the Montréalists and Sulpicians in France understood that Ville Marie was not capable of fulfilling its mission of ministering to the infidels. There were certainly Indians in their care, but their major task was to fight for survival against a superior military force, and the Hôtel Dieu, the hospital that Jeanne Mance founded to care for the heathens of this far-away island, was busy with the sick and wounded French soldiers. Jerome Le Royer was also nearing the end of his life, and soon support for the missionaries fell almost completely to the Sulpicians. In 1657 the Société Notre-Dame de Montréal donated their title of the seigneurie to the Sulpicians, and the European colonization of the island picked up its pace. Finally, at the beginning of the 1700s, the Iroquois and French signed a peace treaty, and a number of years later the Sulpicians, still mindful of the mission they had inherited, petitioned the French king to give them a new seigneurie, relocating some of their new allies further from Montreal to present-day Oka.

Over time, the mission of Ville Marie grew into a colony of French immigrants and the name of the mission became eclipsed by the name of the place, Montreal.

Temple Mysteries

Probing the history and myths behind Freemasonry in Quebec

by Patrick Donovan

The first time I became aware of Freemasons was in my late teens. My interest in history had led me to Jules-Paul Tardivel's science-fiction novel *Pour la Patrie*. Written in 1895, it is a preachy tale set in an independent 1950s Quebec with electric cars and telegraphic pens. The novel's bad guys are a group of Freemasons, described as devil-worshipping "ouvriers des ténèbres" seeking to undermine the nation. The author of this book was born and raised in English in the American Midwest. He moved to Quebec at eighteen and soon became more zealously Catholic and nationalistic than many of his contemporaries. Though arguably the ravings of a religious fanatic, it still piqued my curiosity about Freemasons.

Opposition to Freemasonry began in the nineteenth century. The Catholic clergy accused it of all evils. To this day, Catholics who become Freemasons are subject to excommunication. The current pope claims their teachings are still "irreconcilable with the doctrine of the Church." This is why many Masons have traditionally been Protestant (though Quebec's current grand master is a Sikh). Opposition to Masons was not the sole preserve of the Catholic Church—the "Anti-Masonic Party" in the United States was a major player on the political scene for some years.

Suspicion of Freemasons was related to the fact that many influential individuals were part of the order. High-ranking Freemasons have included revolutionaries such as George Washington, Napoleon, and (closer to home) Louis-Joseph Papineau. Intellectuals such as Benjamin Franklin and Voltaire were also part of the organization. A look at the membership roster in Canada reads like a who's who from the past: Lord Durham, John A. Macdonald, Peter McGill, John Molson, Samuel Bronfman, etc.

The group's secrecy also fuelled suspicion. Masonic beliefs are progressively revealed to its adherents by "degrees," with the 32nd degree being the highest. Whereas Freemasons claim they are a moral and benevolent order that gives to charity, others still claim the secrets revealed at the higher levels are more evil than Tardivel's most paranoid nightmares.

My curiosity about Freemasons resurfaced when I realized that a Masonic Temple existed close to home, occupying a prominent spot in Old Quebec. Built in 1861, the four-storey neoclassical limestone building stands on the corner of Des Jardins and St. Louis streets, a few blocks from the Château Frontenac hotel. Topped with a copper mansard roof, the three symbols of masonry are engraved in its pediment: the volume of sacred law, the compass, and the square.

The temple itself occupies the upper floor, while the lower three floors have always been rented out to other occupants. Morrin College, Quebec City's first English-language institution of higher learning, had its headquarters in the Masonic Temple building from 1862-1868. In fact, it was through a loan from Dr. Joseph Morrin that the Masons received the funds to build their temple. The Literary and Historical Society of Quebec, along with its library and museum, also moved into the Masonic Temple during the same years after suffering two fires in less than a decade. Later in the nineteenth century, Quebec's wealthy uptown Jewish community rented rooms for their synagogue in the building for a few years. Today, these rooms are rented out to private law firms, with two restaurants on the ground floor. All four floors were initially connected by an elegant curving staircase with 66 steps (representing the total number of books in the bible), later replaced by an elevator.

Masons continue to hold their rites on the fourth floor of the building today. Their vaulted meeting

Former Masonic temple in Old Quebec, corner of Des Jardins and St. Louis streets. Photo by Patrick Donovan

room is lined with dark-stained chairs from the late nineteenth century, all elegantly upholstered with blue velvet. The central chair is the hand-carved Throne of Solomon used by the Grand Master. The altar with its holy book sits in the middle of the room.

Freemasonry in Quebec has both an official history, and another shrouded in myth. Most historians consider everything up to the eighteenth century suspect. Some Masons claim that the order is as old as the art of building itself. Others say the order was founded by the builders of King Solomon's Temple, or the pyramids of Egypt, or the Druids of Stonehenge, but even Masons tend to see these as allegorical foundation myths.

Some believe that France's Freemasons are direct descendents of the Knights of the Order of Malta, which date back to the medieval era and the Crusades. It is believed that Champlain was a Knight of Malta (and by extension a Freemason). Montmagny, the second governor of New France, was definitely part of the order. During his mandate, a stone with a Maltese Cross carving was added to his mansion. This stone, dated 1647, was later discovered by archaeologists and integrated into the Château Frontenac.

Stone carved with Maltese cross, circa 1647 , once decorated New France governor Montmagny's mansion; it was later embedded in the Château Frontenac hotel. Photo by Patrick Donovan

Theories that Masons descend from guilds of stonemasons, who eventually developed rituals and allegories, are more widely believed. If the order did exist before the eighteenth century, its activities were obscure and private.

Masons come out of the shadows and into the history books in 1717, with the creation of the Grand Lodge of England, grouping several independent factions (or "lodges") within London. This British Freemasonry came to Quebec with the conquest in 1759. Before the construction of the Masonic temple in Quebec, the city's numerous lodges met in taverns, barracks, and hotels. A single Grand Lodge of Quebec was formed in 1869 with its headquarters in Montreal. Today it oversees all 91 lodges in the province, with over 4,500 members. Most of these are in the Montreal area, but some are also found in Quebec, Gatineau, and the Eastern Townships. Eleven lodges are francophone.

Though the link between Freemasons and the Knights of Malta may be a complete fabrication, it is conceivable to think that francophone Freemasons existed in Quebec before the British conquest. Freemasonry in its modern form began to spread as early as 1725 outside the British Isles, particularly France. It is likely that this filtered through to New France, but there is no conclusive proof. Many claim that both Generals Wolfe and Montcalm were devout members of the same Masonic organization. One of the earliest monuments erected in Quebec City, the Wolfe-Montcalm obelisk, commemorates both victor and vanquished at a time when most citizens still took sides. The fact that local Freemasons played a major part in the erection of this monument may explain the origins of the story. To Masons, it is more likely that this memorial was about reiterating the Masonic brotherhood between Wolfe and Montcalm than it was about bolstering Canada's creation myth of two founding peoples.

There's undoubtedly a religious edge to all this, but should Quebec's Masonic heritage—the temple, the stone, the monument—be considered part of our religious heritage? For one, Masons themselves claim they are not a religion but a fraternal order. However, religion is defined by some sources as "a set of beliefs and practices held by a group of people, codified in prayers and rituals." According to this definition, it could be argued that Freemasonry is a religion (or, at the very least "religious"). Freemasons follow a moral and spiritual code and have a large amount of iconography and symbolism. Their rituals and prayers are more developed than those of many organized religions. Belief in a superior power (given the ecumenical name "Grand Architect of the Universe") is essential - atheists or agnostics cannot join. The fact that some Masons call their meeting places temples, which include altars and sacred books, certainly gives these places a religious aspect. But then again, it could be argued that many secular institutions have religious overtones, and certainly there is no evidence of biological inheritance of freemasonry. The son of a Mason is not automatically a Mason.

Patrick Donovan is a director of QAHN and a frequent contributor to these pages.

Take a 3D tour of Quebec City's Masonic Temple at the website of the Quebec Masonic Benevolent Association: www.francmaconnerie.ca. *Find out more about the Grand Lodge of Quebec at* www.glquebec.org.

Rebel Chief

Joseph Swan defended Mohawk rights against religious order

by Denis Gasp©

Samuel de Champlain reported that he encountered both Iroquois and Algonquin during his visit to the Ottawa River in 1612. There is nothing unusual in this. Everywhere the Europeans went they encountered other people, and everywhere they settled they displaced other people. Bringing their own concept of ownership of the land, they dispossessed others without making any attempt to understand the laws already in place or to explain their own concepts of land ownership. The French rules for the settlement of the seigneury of the Lake of Two Mountains were different, though. The difference was that the Sulpicians, who acquired the title, came to minister to the Indians. They did not come to establish their families; in fact they had taken vows of celibacy. Morally, they came to serve, not to possess. In human terms, regardless of what may have been written, this would have been easy for the Mohawk and Algonquin to understand, and it was what they were encouraged to understand.

The Mohawks of the Lake of Two Mountains began to be Christianized by these Sulpicians in 1721, when the latter set up a mission nearby, bringing other Christianized Iroquois and Algonquin Indians to the region ostensibly to keep them from fighting each other.

The Mohawks at Kanesatake, the Kanesatakeronon, were not immediately in favour of the plans of the Sulpicians and at first the mission was not allowed into their village. They tolerated cabins and a wooden church about two kilometres downriver at a creek now called ruisseau Raizenne. The first families moved from Sault aux Recollets in February 1721 and the natives dragged their possessions over the ice. The move took several years to complete.

In the highly ritualized manner of the Iroquois, the Sulpicians and their Native converts would have to signal with a fire when they wished to enter the Mohawk village. A runner would be sent to convey a message describing the nature of the visit. Over time the Sulpicians gained the trust of the Mohawks and in 1728 were allowed to build their church in the village. The converted Natives played a major role in convincing the Mohawks that the King of France had declared the grant of land for the "Indians under their (the Sulpicians') care." The Mohawks have always maintained it was already their land and it was inconceivable that the King had any right to grant it to them.

Rare archival photograph of Sosé Onahsahenrat
From the Helen Simon Collection

While their mission was ostensibly to Christianize and to keep peace between the various Indian cultural communities, the Sulpicians retained not just the title to the seigneury of Two Mountains, but also commercial control over trade, which they contracted out to French—not local Indian—entrepreneurs. The fact that there were already people living in the region was an inconvenience that had to be resolved. Luckily for the Sulpicians, none of the Indians were educated in French title law. They simply trusted these priests, their vows and their good will, just as many others have over the centuries.

The Sulpicians were not motivated to trust or develop the intellectual capacity of their charges. If they were successful in fulfilling the spirit of their mission, they would ultimately become redundant. They worked their charges as they had in two previous locations, where they used Indian labour to clear, prepare and develop property, which was subsequently sold to French colonists. In 1704, the mission of the Sulpicians at Hochelaga had been moved to Sault aux Recollets. The Sulpicians appropriated and sold the houses natives had built and the fields they had cleared. The mission of Sault aux Recollets was built at an important portage where Natives had already established themselves and the Sulpicians had built mills, using the power of the rapids. They were put to work clearing fields and building houses. Dissent among the Natives was starting to build up as they realized they were being dispossessed.

The Sulpicians convinced the local governor to have the King grant them a seigneury upriver, on the Lake of Two Mountains on condition that they build a fort at a strategic location, but the ideal spot was already occupied. The Mohawk village of Kanesatake sat on a very strategic point of land jutting out into the lake from which the Mohawks once controlled travel on the Ottawa River. The priests argued that if they could convert these Mohawks, they would be friendly to the French settlers and provide added protection to Montreal from attacks coming down the Ottawa River. Moving the mission to this new location would also give the freshly dispossessed residents of Sault aux Recollets hope that they would be able to live in a community of their own in the new location. These people had no understanding of the machinations of French law or of French concepts of property

ownership. Their information depended upon the good will of the Sulpicians, and it is easy to see that doubters of this good will would have been admonished for a lack of faith.

From time to time, a bright young Mohawk would rise among the Sulpicians' charges, one whose intellect and leadership abilities could not be ignored, but would have to be assimilated. One such individual was Sosé Onahsahenrat, or Joseph Swan. Born in Kanesatake on September 4, 1845, he was sent to the Séminaire de Montréal, the Sulpician boarding school, at the age of 15, where he would have shared classes, and likely a lot of impressions about their worlds, with Louis Riel. He excelled in his studies and at 18 was brought back to the Mission at Lake of Two Mountains to work as a secretary for the Sulpicians. Fluent in both Mohawk and French, Joseph was seen by the Sulpicians as a potential leader who would share their priorities and help overcome communication problems that had manifest themselves on several occasions. As early as 1787, the Mohawks are on record as having alerted Sir John Johnson, the Superintendent of Indian Affairs, that the Mohawk land title was not recognised. One of the most worrisome developments for the Sulpicians was the arrival of a Methodist preacher in 1851, when Swan was still just 6 years old. The Sulpicians resolved the problem at that time with threats of excommunication, some of which were carried out.

There is little doubt that the Sulpicians did not treat those in their care well. Building a large warehouse on the eastern side of the village to store the crops, the Sulpicians would extend credit to allow Natives to buy potatoes, corn and grain. The Natives had no money. When the amount owed reached three hundred dollars, the Sulpicians would take possession of the Native's home and property in lieu of payment, eventually selling it to pay the debt. The buyers were never Indians. Thus a proud people was whittled down to a poor subservient, although Catholic, population. Keeping the Kanesatakeronon uneducated and destitute was thought to bring and keep them under Sulpician control.

The Sulpicians identified Swan as a worthy intermediary and obviously felt that he had been adequately assimilated. Subsequently, though, Joseph Swan is reputed to have come across a document in the Sulpicians' files referring to the concession from the King. It showed that the Kanesatakeronon actually owned their land. Word spread like wildfire across the village. The Sulpicians called it a rumour and worked hard to calm the people down. They denied the existence of any such document. It would come as a shock to the Sulpicians that Swan's first loyalty would be to his people, and far from becoming a mediator, he took up the active role of contesting the Sulpicians' rights and claims to property. One Sunday, in July 1868, Joseph Swan attended mass at the Sulpician church in the village. The priests thought he had seen things their way and welcomed him. During the service Joseph spoke from the pulpit. He gave an impassioned speech in Mohawk during which he declared that the Sulpicians were robbing the Kanesatakeronon of their lands and hoped to banish them to some faraway place. The place in question had already been set aside in the form of a reserve in the Laurentians. He asked the congregation, "Who are you to follow? The robed priests who steal your land while they say mass, or me?" With that he exited the church through the main door and had the vast majority of the Native people follow him out. On July 25, 1868, Joseph Swan, and two others, were chosen as chiefs of the Kanesatakeronon. He was 22 years old.

The plight of the Kanesatakeronon just got worse. They were forbidden to cut wood in the commons to build their houses and fences—or even for firewood to cook their meals and to keep warm in winter. Only those few who remained loyal to the Sulpicians were allowed these privileges. Swan had learned fluent English and drafted his first petition sent to the Governor General. In it he said "these pretended successors of Saint Peter live in a sumptuous place and dress in purple and the finest fabrics;" the priests, he said, were directly responsible for the "poverty and misery" of his people.

In October 1868 one of the other chiefs went up to the commons and gave each person a section of land which he staked out and authorized the people to take possession of. Chief Swan challenged the Sulpician authority by cutting a large elm tree. After a confrontation, the Sulpicians had him arrested, but the authorities had no real charge against him and he was soon released. On March 31, 1869 there was a conversion to Methodism of 58 Kanesatakeronon and two Algonquin. Within weeks they decided to build a chapel and set about cutting wood for construction material. More arrests followed. Many Kanesatakeronon began learning English, much to the dismay of the Sulpicians, and by December 1869, Swan sent another petition to the Governor General questioning the validity of the Sulpicians' claim to Kanesatake and the lands at Lake of Two Mountains. In it he stated "From what our fathers have told us we always believed as they believed, that these lands were given in the first instance by the King of France to the Seminary for our use and interest; now however we are told that the lands belong to the Seminary, and that we live on them and use them only because they permit us to do so."

Despite the hardships, a chapel was finally built and in full operation by 1874. The Sulpicians obtained a court order to have the chapel dismantled as they claimed that the land it was built on belonged to the Sulpicians, not the Kanesatakeronon. With the support of police, the chapel was taken down on December 8, 1875 and the materials taken to the church courtyard.

It was common practice for the Sulpicians to wait until the lumber was sawn into boards, firewood split and dried, canoes, paddles and barrel hoops finished before they would confiscate the items on the pretext that the Sulpicians did not give permission for the wood to be cut. This was to pressure the Kanesatakeronon to convert back to Catholicism, but only served to galvanize the hatred directed at the black robes.

On June 15, 1877, the Catholic church and presbytery burned to the ground and 14 Kanesatakeronon including Swan and his father were hauled off to jail, suspected of arson. Four separate trials ended in hung juries and the case was finally dismissed in 1881.

During the trial, Swan, who was re-

leased on bail, translated the four Gospels into Iroquois and became ordained as a Methodist minister. In 1881, he was assigned a mission at Kahnawake, and making one last effort to broker a peace between his people and the Sulpicians, he encouraged them to consider an offer from the Sulpicians in which the latter proposed to acquire land in Gibson, Ontario, for the Mohawks. Whatever was in his mind during these negotiations will never be known, because after accepting to meet the Sulpicians at his old alma mater and sharing supper with them, he returned home feeling ill and was dead before morning. He was 35 years old. Early that same morning, the village priest and several men showed up at Joseph's house, told his wife they would look after everything and immediately collected his clothes and the bedclothes he had soiled in his death throes. They even washed the floor. They then spirited his body away and he was buried in the Côte des Neiges cemetery.

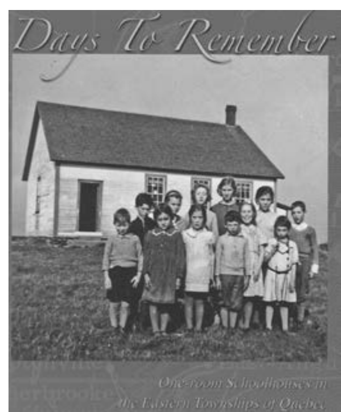
Many people feel that Joseph Swan was poisoned that night, and his young age and evident health along with the priests' quick steps to look after his body and linens certainly leave questions for posterity. While the federal government did reserve property in Gibson, Ontario, funded to some degree by the Sulpicians, and while some Algonquin and a few Mohawks moved there, the overwhelming majority of the Mohawks rejected the offer. By 1910, the Supreme Court ruled in favour of the Sulpician land titles, but was anything resolved?

Joseph Swan's death made headlines in the Montreal press of his day and he is listed in the Dictionary of Canadian Biography—but although he is a hero to many, the history books generally have neglected his valiant fight for his people's rights. The struggle for land rights at Kanesatake continues and will likely outlast the Sulpicians.

Denis Gaspé, a Mohawk whose father Laurent also attended the Séminaire de Montréal, is a recently retired engineer living in Kanesatake. Denis has just begun digging into the history of Kanesatake. The reader is directed to the following publications dealing with the struggles at Kanesatake:

At the Woods' Edge, *Gabriel-Doxtater, Van den Hende, 1995, ISBN 1-896729-00-2;* People of the Pines, *York, Pindera, 1991, ISBN 0-316-96916-8*

There are also historical plaques erected at sites in Oka by the Société d'Histoire d'Oka.



Days To Remember: One Room Schoolhouses in the Eastern Townships

Edited by Brenda Hartwell

Canadian Federation of University Women Sherbrooke & District

178 pages; $16

The one-room schoolhouse, so long the focus of folklore and nostalgia, is the subject of a new book. *Days to Remember: One-room Schoolhouses in the Eastern Townships of Quebec*, is the culmination of years of work by the Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW) Sherbrooke & District. The book, which is lavishly illustrated with vintage and contemporary photographs, features over sixty biographical sketches of former schoolteachers (most of them women), pupils and one inspector. The material was distilled from hundreds of hours of taped conversations with people who are now in their eighties or nineties, and who taught at or attended one of the Townships' rural schools.

This spiral-bound, 178-page book is part history, part photo album and part agenda. Biographical sketches and photographs are interspersed with blank pages for the days and months of the year. More than anything, this book is a treasure trove of local social history. The reminiscences contained therein seem as fresh in the minds of the tellers as though they had just happened yesterday, and we are fortunate indeed that they have been preserved for posterity.

Days to Remember is also proof that hard work by volunteers with good leadership—in this case Bev Taber Smith and Carol McKinley—does on occasion pay off. The University Women were fortunate to have received funding from a number of sources, including Townshippers' Foundation and others, and this funding allowed them to hire a very competent editor, Brenda Hartwell, to oversee production. Hartwell, whose past editorial work has included, among other projects, several editions of the literary anthology *Taproot*, exhibits her customary perfectionism in the finished product. The University Women chose well.

The texts in *Days to Remember* are lively, informative and filled with personal experiences and anecdotes. The photographs, many of them action shots of schoolchildren and their teachers, complement the stories beautifully. The permanent agenda format will ensure not only that the book will be in use for many years to come, but that it will serve as a poignant reminder of the courageous part that so many young women played in educating our children in the first half of the twentieth century.

Days to Remember can be purchased at local bookstores, through Townshippers' Association (819-566-5717) and the club's website www.cfuwsherbrooke.org. Books will also be available at the following Townships retail outlets:

Bishop's Bookstore, Black Cat, Tri-Us in Lennoxville; Papeterie 2000, Trillium, Wales Home Shop in Richmond, Le Petit Danvillois in Danville, Magasin Général d'Ayer's Cliff in Ayers Cliff, Brome Lake Books in Knowlton, Librairie Le Livre d'or in Sutton., Colby-Curtis Museum in Stanstead.

Reviewed by Matthew Farfan

HindSight

Blind hopes

by Dwane Wilkin

The same ignorance which renders barbarians incapable of conceiving or embracing the useful restraint of laws, exposes them naked and unarmed to the blind terrors of superstition.

— E. Gibbon

The origins and evolution of religion are tightly interwoven in the fabric of history, and its unravelling reveals the separate strands of countless attempts by people in every age to make sense out of life and death. Given its overwhelming influence on the development of arts and writing, it's no surprise that, in the western tradition, at least, the violent output of religious sentiment figures so prominently in the historical record.

The first English historian was a seventh-century Catholic monk named Bede who regarded all events as proof of God's will and whose *History of the English Church and People* was principally concerned with tales of Anglo-Saxon kings donning the mantle of the Roman faith. A missionary vocation and proximity to the apparatus of monarchical governments gave ecclesiastical authorities special influence over the affairs of European states and their future colonies, a force still felt in our most basic civic institutions, even though public enthusiasm for the practice of religion itself has fallen off steadily in Quebec for decades.

Shallow sanctimony holds little sway over a populace whose members are grown accustomed to living free of dogma's tyranny. But even rational terms of reference blur at the edges of comprehending the unseen. The Latin notion of 'universe,' for instance, arbitrarily encloses all existing things in a single sphere of possible understanding, whereas the Greek equivalent 'cosmos,' conjures up an ordered system of ideas. These terms can shape one's understanding of religion. An imperial closed-world view, inherently conducive to the propagation of universal doctrine, was no doubt instrumental in the rapid spread and development of a monotheistic cult originally devoted to the teachings of an obscure preacher who lived in a remote province of the Roman Empire.

Edward Gibbon, whose *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* appeared in print in the same year as the American Declaration of Independence, observed how rulers of the ancient cosmopolitan capital valued the advantages of religion—lessons clearly not lot lost on many a despotic regime operating in the world today:

> They managed the arts of divination as a convenient instrument of policy; and they respected as the firmest bond of society the useful persuasion that either in this life or a future life, the crime of perjury is most assuredly punished by the avenging gods.

It would be folly to try in a few lines to list all of the ways in which Roman Catholicism and the numerous Protestant denominations have shaped Quebec's cultural identity, so closely entwined are these institutions with the province's historical development. From the perspective of the present, moreover, this legacy appears to have been far less beneficent than most people were willing to believe even a generation ago. The systematic assault on aboriginal cultures, abuse of Native children forced into church-run residential schools and the horrific past treatment of orphans also form part of Christianity's wide-embracing heritage. Were such crimes the inevitable result of unjust religious policies or moral sins committed by believers who simply failed to obey the standards of their own creed?

There is a scene in the Greek writer Aeschylus's tragedy, *Prometheus Bound*, in which Prometheus, chained forever to a rocky cliff as punishment for giving men mastery of their own minds, explain's the cause of Zeus's jealous fury. "I caused mortals to cease forseeing doom," he proclaims. "I placed them in blind hopes."

As much as traditional religious modes of thinking and codes of behaviour influenced the past development of civil laws and institutions, it seems quite plain that the real and practical object of holy adoration in contemporary western society dwells not in heaven but in the image of ourselves reflected in a quarterly financial statement. Faith in the free market and its sacred doctrines of supply and demand, survival of the fittest and limitless growth, is our best guarantee of a blessed communion with the economic caste system of capitalism. It is a wonder that the old gods get any attention at all.

Recent public hearings into Quebecers' attitudes towards cultural and religious minorities and a proposed body of legislation which would deny certain political rights to non-French speakers explode cherished illusions about our self image as a multiethnic society: the spectre of xenophobic racism still hovers menacingly on the fringes of civil society. Which rather defies the logic of Canada's complex history with its "three founding minorities and dozens more added on," to quote the author John Ralston Saul.

Canada's history of communicating shared ideals across the boundaries of ethnicity may help explain why this country has so far been spared the calamity of violence that plagues many other societies: the rebel William Lyon Mackenzie and the Patriote leader Louis-Joseph Papineau corresponding during the Rebellions of 1837-38; Robert Baldwin and Louis-Hippolyte Lafontaine assembling a coalition of progressive English and French leaders from Upper and Lower Canada in the early 1840s and serving as co-premiers of the unified province; George-Etienne Cartier and John A. Macdonald parlaying these relationships into the Confederation that united British North America between 1867 and 1871. These were the architects of a country that could only exist within the bounds of laws and institutions created for all.

In his 1997 book, *Reflections of a Siamese Twin*, Saul characterized Canada's evolution from colonial outpost to modern democracy as the inspired and strategic imaginings of leaders capable of seeing beyond the conformist straightjackets of their respective ethnic and religious traditions, the one anglophone and Protestant, the other francophone and Catholic. The two "great tragedies" of Canada's first century, he notes—in a sense, the template for divisive linguistic tensions ever since—were the victories of the conservative religious Ultramontane movement in Quebec and the Orange movement in Ontario. "Each in its own way," wrote Saul, "was a spearhead of intolerance and a manipulation of fear." Thanks to the Ultramontanes, clerical authorities insisted on church control of education and politics in Quebec from the 1820s to the 1960s, thereby delaying social and democratic reforms; protestant Orangeman, meanwhile, imported Ireland's religious prejudices and employed them in their assault on francophone rights. But this 19th-century fantasy of one race, one religion never reflected the true complexity of Canada: it merely masked the insecurities of leaders unable to break free of their own irrational fears. The blind hope of reason is much better suited to produce a climate of civility.

Quebecers today are living in a fascinating period of social change, in many ways more significant than the era ushered in by the so-called Quiet Revolution of the 1960s. Ending the omnipotence of clerical doctrine on public affairs was a gradual, singular achievement that has served to clear the path toward Quebec's present-day cultural make-up with its multiple traditions, blended identities, linguistic diversity and sometimes controversial—or just plain misunderstood—outward displays of religious devotion. History reminds us that progress never comes from fear and intolerance. As we negotiate the ground rules for our shared future, we can take heart knowing that juggling complexity through mutual respect has always been one of Canada's great strengths.

Know thyself

Quebec English as a tongue of many cultures

Exerpted from a brief prepared by Rod Macleod, president of the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network (QAHN) and submitted to the Bouchard-Taylor Commission. In the autumn of 2007 public hearings were held on the issue of accomodating religious and cultural minorities.

In recent months, much of the public discourse surrounding "reasonable accommodation" might suggest that there is a widely-held view that Quebec's identity is rooted in the cultural, religious, and linguistic tradition of one group, and that all others constitute "les autres." The experience of Quebec's English speakers points to a much greater diversity within the province's history.

The British presence in Quebec goes back nearly 250 years: initially in the form of a conquering army but also very soon in the form of a varied population intent on settling what they, like most Europeans, perceived as unoccupied terrain—what early maps referred to as "waste land." This population consisted of "the English," native speakers of the English language who for the most part were Protestant, although of many differing and often mutually hostile denominations. It also consisted of Scots, another recently conquered people many of whom saw the English language and assimilation with Englishness as a means of social advancement, or in some cases survival; other Scots retained the Gaelic language well into the 19th century. Most Scots were Protestant (mainly Presbyterian) but a fair number were Catholic. Many Protestant Scots and some English hailed from Ireland, especially the northern part known as Ulster; these people counted among the first settlers in British North America, but they were soon joined by large numbers of Catholic Irish, many of whom adopted English there as working language. Other groups from the British Isles, considered ethnically distinct at home, such as the Welsh and Cornish, found themselves lumped in with the English in the new world. Finally, a small but significant number of British immigrants were Jewish, originally Sephardim from Spain by way of northern Europe, all fairly anglicized by the early 19th century.

A final category of British immigrant to Quebec were the Americans, people of English, Scottish, Irish, and Jewish background who had been living in the colonies for several generations before relocating north of the border that was established in 1783. Some of these people were Loyalists, others were what we call "late Loyalists," meaning that their loyalties may well have been to the British Empire but more importantly were to the business of making a living.

Of the American immigrants let us note two additional groups whose numbers contributed significantly to Quebec's English speakers. First, those of African or Caribbean origin, who were for the most part former slaves from the English-speaking colonies. The second group constitutes people—Protestant, Catholic and Jewish—from Germanic, Central-European countries who had been anglicized for many generations before settling in Lower Canada.

Among the great variety of First Nations within the borders of Quebec are a number whose most comfortable language is English despite recent efforts to reconnect with traditional tongues. Since World War Two a much larger wave of immigrants reached Quebec, many of them from parts of the world where English was a common language, including India, the Middle East, South-East Asia, parts of Africa, and the Caribbean. Others came from Central and Eastern Europe, China, and South America; again, the choice for a second language, a language of adoption, tended to be English, and schools accommodated—not always easily or willingly, but in the end successfully.

Contrary to the received idea that there were always "two solitudes" in Quebec, people have shown a striking willingness to intermarry, thereby blurring efforts to distinguish sharply between linguistic communities, let along ethnic ones. To a large extent, people we consider Anglophone married into and assimilated with Francophone families: statistically, some forty per cent of Quebec Francophones have some Irish or Scots ancestry. In this sense, the contribution of "the English" to Quebec society has been very direct.

Event Listings

Quebec City

Morrin Centre
44, chaussée des Ecossais
(418) 694-9147

January 10, 2008
400th Anniversary Tea Contest
Contestants create new tea blends of their own: winner gets chance to join Earl Grey in the pantheon of tea legends.
1st Prize: teapot valued at $100
2nd Prize: gift basket of tea valued at 50$
3rd Prize: $20 grocery gift certificate
info@morrin.org

January 24 through 27
Rosina: an Operetta, written by Frances Moore Brooke
First Canadian presentation since 1794
Performances Thurs. to Sat., 8 p.m.
reservations@morrin.org

Eastern Townships

Société d'histoire de Sherbrooke
275 Dufferin, Sherbrooke
(819) 821-5406
Sherbrooke 1802-2002:
Two centuries of history
info@socetehistoire.com

Colby-Curtis Museum
Stanstead Historical Society
(819) 876-7322

November 29-January 6
Christmas Tea, Victorian Ambience
Thursday through Sunday, 1 to 4 p.m.
info@colbycurtis.ca

Montreal

Westmount Historical Association
Fall Lecture Series 2007
Westmount Public Library
(514) 925-1404 or (514) 932-6688

December 13, 7-9 p.m.
Alice Lighthall (1891-1991): A Beloved Westmounter
Speaker: Ruth Allan-Rigby

Quebec Family History Society
(514)-695-1502
roots2007@bellnet.ca
www.qfhs.ca

March 8, 2008, 1:30 to 3:30 p.m.
Historic Montreal Place Names
St Andrew's United Church, Lachine
Speaker: Dinu Bumbaru

Exporail Canadian Railway Museum
(450) 632-2410 or www.exporail.org

Dec. 8 to Jan. 6, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.
Christmas at Exporail
Discover the museum at Christmas-time. Come see the Eaton's Toyland Miniature train that ran through the store from 1945 to the 1960's.

Van Horne's Overcoat: A Christmas Eve tale. Bring the kids to hear this true story of the former general manager of the Canadian Pacific Railway.

Ornament Making for Children
Special holiday children's activities held every day at 10:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m.

Christmas Tea aboard the private railway car of GTR president Charles M. Hays
Limited to nine guests at a time
Cost: $14 plus admission fee.
Reservations: 450-638-1522, ext: 223

West Island

Beaureaire-Beaconsfield Historical Society
Centennial Hall, 383 Beaconsfield Boul.
(514) 695-2502

February 12, 2008
Benedict Arnold in the West Island
Speaker: Rudy Okker

Hudson

Greenwood Centre for Living History
(450) 458-5396

December 9, 1:30 to 3:30 p.m.
Old-Fashioned Greenwood Christmas