

Heritage

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News



Changing of the Guard

Ruins of French fort at Bout de l'isle have new protector

Gilbert's Gallopers

The rise and fall of an Eastern Townships battalion

Heritage and Horror

Makeover in progress at Montreal's Empress Theatre

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War Measures by Rod MacLeod

I am writing this a week after the 5th anniversary of the attack on the World Trade Centre and a week and a bit after the attack on the Dawson College students. At the time of 9/11 I knew no one directly involved and so was not anxious about anyone in particular; my horror was not compounded by concern for friends and family. Since then I have met several people who did live through the experience, including one now close friend from New York who, during a visit here last winter, kept us riveted with her account of the terror and confusion of that day nearly five years before. Curiously, it was she who phoned up in a panic this September 13th, having seen the Dawson story on CNN and remembered that I had some connection with a Montreal college.

I am not, as it happens, affiliated with Dawson. However, as almost everyone I have spoken to has noted, when you start listing the people you know who do have a connection it makes for a lot of worry. Many of our friends have children there, including the person I was meeting that afternoon downtown whose anxiety for her son was lessened after a cell phone call but then exacerbated by not being able to get home because of the street closures.

Other friends sat for hours waiting for news of their daughter, who eventually walked in expressing considerable relief but slight puzzlement at the degree of hysterical affection showered upon her by fraught parents. We know several people who teach at Dawson, including one woman whose efforts to help in the evacuation were complicated by a student with a pace-maker that chose that moment to stop working. And then there are stories from people I never expected to have to worry about, such as the former student, now at McGill but with a girlfriend at Dawson whom he chose to have lunch with that day; both were shot, badly but not fatally — but at least he didn't have to sit at home worrying where she was!

Of course I don't mean to suggest that it's harder to worry about loved ones than it is to be in the middle of danger yourself: that would be some very special pleading. Even so, on November 11 as we remember those who gave their lives in battle, let us spare a thought for the people left behind who worried about them — indeed, for those who are worrying right now for their friends and family risking their lives overseas. Sad to say, the reports of Canadian military casualties in Afghanistan and the debates surrounding our presence there should remind us that we are at war, with all the danger and the worry that entails.

Now, a cynic might very well argue that, if the point of going to war is to make our lives safer, then

we have failed: we (i.e. the good guys) have failed at every war undertaken in the past and we are failing now in Afghanistan and other places and the U.S. is failing spectacularly in Iraq. A slogan in the past has been “make the world safe for democracy” — but none of that stops car bombs abroad or nutcases at home from shooting up teenagers. We are not perfectible as a species, least of all through the agency of war.

Not being a cynic, however, I would argue that going to war to -- make the world (or parts of it) safe for democracy has very often achieved that. Canadians who fought in the Second World War made democracy possible in France, Italy, Holland, Belgium, Germany, Greece, India, Japan and many other places. The pursuit of democracy occasionally got a bit cloudy during the Cold War, but clearly in recent years democracy has been brought to Afghanistan and Iraq. I am not necessarily approving of either war or the people who have led them, nor am I saying that the consequences of democracy in these countries are not at times horrifying. Making Iraq safe for democracy clearly has not made Iraq safe.

Churchill famously remarked that democracy was the worst form of government, with the exception of every other form yet devised. I have on occasion heard people in countries that have made the shift from dictatorship to democracy speak ruefully of the good old days when you could walk the streets at night without fear of being mugged. But is that a reason to opt for the War Measures Act? Most dictatorships make it difficult for crazed civilians to saunter into colleges and open fire, but what is the alternative? It isn't that democracies shouldn't be concerned that such citizens have access to rapid-fire machine-guns and the like, or that they shouldn't take measures to restrict this access — but it is in the nature of democracy not to be able to ensure public safety. Indeed, safety all too often comes at democracy's expense. We opt for it out of fear, in the belief that being safe will bring an end to fear.

It doesn't work. The only way not to live in fear is to acknowledge that time and chance happeneth to us all. Get on with it, and enjoy what's in front of you now. I might have been visiting New York five years ago. I might have been at Dawson College the other day. Or I might have been sitting at home, stomach churning, as I waited to hear whether my child was out of the building and on his way home or lying in the street under a blanket.

I might have been, but I wasn't. That challenge may come tomorrow. We'll see.

Letters

Potton Springs memories return

The memory of the old Potton Springs Hotel in the Eastern Townships has been brought to life again with the rediscovery of a ledger that Mr Roger (Joe) Lapierre of Cowansville recently donated to the Potton Heritage Association.

This famous site of our local heritage owes its origin to the discovery, in 1828, of sulphur springs at the base of Mount Pevee, at the north end of Potton Township. The hotel was built in 1875, which coincided with the opening of the first section of the Missisquoi and Black River Railway which included a stop at the hotel.

The purported therapeutic properties of the sulphur waters attracted a large clientele and the place acquired a widespread reputation. In 1912, the hotel underwent a major addition and up to 75 vacationers could be accommodated at a price of \$2 a day. Business prospered until 1930 but later declined. On December 12, 1934, a fire levelled the hotel, then owned by Mr F. Larin.

The ledger's heading reads: Potton Sulphur Spring Hotel, J.A. Wright Proprietor. A notice spells out the following: "Guests without Baggage are requested to pay in advance". It would seem that some may have been inclined to make a rapid departure!

For each daily entry, the weather was noted, the guests' names entered as well as their provenance, time of arrival, day or evening, the room number and the number of cars, for which a large garage had been built. There was even a column for horses but no entry in the ledger appears for that period of time. There was however a nice horse stable for guests coming by carriage. It still stands today.

Vacationers at the Potton Springs Hotel came from across the Eastern Townships, Magog, Knowlton, Sherbrooke, Sutton, while others came from Montreal, Toronto, Paris, Chicago and elsewhere. The place welcomed many couples, possibly on Honeymoon! Groups of tourists also came as, on July

12, 1912, 46 guests from Newport, Vermont, registered.

Anyone wishing to discover some of their relatives who frequented this famous hotel can consult this ledger at the Mansonville Legion Memorial Library.

On behalf of the Potton Heritage Association, I wish to thank Mr. Lapierre for his generous donation to our archives.

Gérard Leduc

*Potton Heritage Association
Mansonville, Que.*

Harper government shafting museums

The Canadian Museums Association feels betrayed by the federal government's recent decision to eliminate the Museum Assistance Program ["Tories take aim at heritage," Timelines, Page 8] especially since the Conservatives under Prime Minister Stephen Harper have been promising to bring in a new policy and a new investment for Canada's museums. Nothing else in the museum sector was cut from the budget. Only MAP was singled out in the name of "efficiency." This is utter B.S. in my opinion.

MAP was an excellent program that could not meet the needs of museums because of the paltry amount of funding available — only \$9 million per year, unchanged since 1972. It was a good program that needed more resources and a new approach.

The "inefficiency" has been in the program's delivery, in its lack of timely decisions and its over-management, not the applicants or their needs. Many of our members, for instance, are still waiting for a word on project proposals they submitted in November 2005. This is an outrage.

Worse is the public impression being manufactured that Canadian museums are wasteful, inefficient and not valued by the Harper government. This impression can have a very harmful long-term effect on the heritage sector as a whole.

It is time for everyone to get active and to speak out. Canadian Heritage Minister Bev Oda has said she wants to bring in a new museums policy within a couple of years. Heritage organizations have power at the local level like never before to help design this policy. Please get involved in our campaign by asking your readers to visit our website at www.museums.ca and add their names to an online petition to save Canada's museums. It's not too late.

John McAvity

*Canadian Museums Association
Ottawa*

Thanks for closing the loop

The magazine was nice this month. I like the paper upgrade and enjoyed the write-up on Fessenden. Yeah, it is time he got his due. Great man!

In my work as a computer network administrator we often name our servers in odd ways. One computer network I manage has servers named after Morse, Marconi and, you got it — Fessenden.

More than 20 years ago I was in Douglas, Arizona and someone told me this town was named after a man from Montreal who was president of the Phelps Dodge company for a time. I had no idea of the connection...

Thanks for closing the loop. I now know the complete story!

Christopher C. Goodfellow

Arundel, Que.

A quantum leap

My compliments on the July-August issue of QHN, which I just received. Have not yet analyzed the change in paper-layout-printing, but was immediately struck by the impression that you have made a quantum leap in quality. Bravo.

Guy Rodgers

*English Language Arts Network
Montreal*

Opinion

Afghanistan is our problem

by Joseph Graham

Like an animal that soils its nest, Western Culture has never learned social hygiene. The problems that we in the West face in the world today are of our own creation. We have never been tolerant of “the other,” as Jews, Gypsies, blacks and indigenous people know, and so the other must move elsewhere or adjust. That is largely how Israel has come into being in our time. As these words flow out, I can hear the arguments that the Coalition of the Offended will echo back, comparing our record to others, but be careful of your facts, because we have never measured up. Moslem culture, as found in its large urban capitals throughout history, was demonstrably more tolerant and cosmopolitan than Christian culture was.

When the Turks first took Constantinople, Jews fleeing persecution in Christian lands swarmed to the welcoming city, and even before that, the Moors of the Iberian Peninsula more than tolerated their minorities. Chinese children have been taught from time immemorial the stories of tolerance through the legends of the Monkey King, and the indigenous peoples of the Americas initially fed and clothed the first Europeans to arrive, only shunning them when they discovered how dirty and diseased they were. Even if one accepts the arguments of the Offended who will cite intolerance in Moslem culture today, it is too easy an answer because in many ways, they are in reaction. Our actions and colonial adventures have contributed to their current behaviour.

It is not only in ethnic matters, though, that we hurt ourselves. Our intolerance of the needy among us, our indifference to our environment and our heritage of entitlement send ripples out through the world that come back to wash over us, while our unimaginative response is to make war — on terrorists, on drugs. We

have the capacity to reduce our need for petroleum to a point where our purchasing power could be used to positive influence, choosing to buy from countries who invest the proceeds in the betterment of their citizens, but instead our appetite swallows all available supply. We declare war on the misguided drug victims of our society, forcing them to buy illegally, and then we attack the farmers in Afghanistan who are supplying the illicit market that we created.

Should Jack Layton sincerely wish to make a difference with his policy of withdrawing from Afghanistan, he should reach out, not to the Taliban, but to the farmers who are producing over 90 per cent of the world’s opium poppies. In order to do so, though, he would have to make the bold move of legalizing government-administered heroin and start treating drug users as patients instead of criminals. The rest of us can make a difference by drastically reducing our fuel consumption. Even the Taliban, who, like the Hezbollah, are not simply terrorists, but community groups who use drastic and violent means in the course

of enfranchising their members, receive help from the very people who satisfy our huge appetite for oil.

We are theoretically in control of these things, but our self-centred sense of entitle-

ment has us endorsing a civil policy that dumps the needy into the hands of the criminal communities while we smugly drive around in cars and SUVs bragging about our anti-theft devices. Today we protect ourselves from street gangs, but what happens when they discover God, or Allah? What happens when they become righteous? How long will it be before “terrorists” begin to enfranchise the children of the needy in our cities? How long will it take for us to recognize our hubris and to clean up our own act?



Intolerance, indifference and our heritage of entitlement send ripples through the world

Dangers of peace

Highlander burned when musket explodes

by Michele Thibeau

Corporal Simon Farnell Morisset of the 78th Fraser Highlanders experienced the worst of all accidents for a soldier recently when the musket he was reloading exploded in his face.

Farnell Morisset had just fired his musket during a free fire exercise with two colleagues in Quebec City. He was reloading the muzzle of the weapon with a powder cartridge when the accident occurred. The weapon was about 20 centimetres from his face when the powder exploded prematurely, likely due to a burning ember that remained in the barrel from a previous discharge.

The day was saved by the quick work of ensign Erik Plourde, a trained medic, and an ophthalmologist in the crowd watching the parade. They immediately began rinsing Farnell Morisset's eye with water while waiting for the ambulance.

The paramedics took him to Hôpital St-Sacrement because of its ophthalmology department.

"I was properly patched up by the staff, who were no doubt confused as to just how a kilted man could wind up at a hospital with a black powder gunshot wound," offered Farnell Morisset, his sense of humour untarnished.

"I got mild first degree burns (no worse than a typical sunburn) on my lower face and on my right hand. I currently have no feeling in the lower part of my index finger, though it is working just fine and will likely return once the burn subsides. I also have grains of gunpowder embedded in my skin there, as well as on much of my lower face," he explained. "I was temporarily blinded by the smoke and gunpowder that went

into my eyes."

The verdict: "The good news is that thanks to the proper security procedures and musket handling movements taught me by the 78th, I will be fine."

Farnell Morisset attended the closing of the Celtic Festival concert that



evening, where he received a standing ovation.

Paddy Keenan and Agincourt performed, but the corporal missed seeing the black and white plaid border piper costume worn by Agincourt piper Alan Jones.

"My right eye may be blurry for some time and my right hand is somewhat crispy, but there should be very little or no lasting effects of this accident," said the corporal.

He described it as a "freak accident," adding, "I have fired this particular weapon several dozen times, and I have fired others hundreds of times. I have seen thousands of shots fired from the same Long Land Pattern Brown Bess Muskets without any incident whatsoever."

Soldiers respect a strict safety perimeter when they conduct an exercise. Safety measures are being reviewed by the Highlanders' officers.

"One of these measures will be for our 18th century soldiers to wear 21st century eye protectors while using their muskets," said Guy Morisset, commanding officer of the 78th Fraser Highlanders, Fort St. Andrew's, and Simon's father.

More than that, Morisset is looking for pictures or videotapes that anyone might have of the accident. "We would like to understand what happened and use these photos or videos to inform musket owners and operators of the risks involved and to show the importance of following procedures."

Morisset confirmed that "everything seems to have been done correctly, procedures followed, muskets well maintained. The possible causes for the accident are limited to a few possibilities such as burning paper not expelled from the barrel on the preceding shot or powder sticking inside after the first shot because of humidity inside the barrel before the first shot. But we want to make sure we understand what happened so we can apply corrective measures."

They also include using no-nonsense training materials.

"Simon was well trained, and this probably saved his fingers from being severely burned," said Morisset. "Being able to use photos or video in our training could be a great incentive for musket users to be careful."

Messrs. Callander and Alexander fencing, 78th Highlanders, Montreal, 1869, by William Notman (1826-1891). Courtesy of McCord Museum.

There oughta be a law

From an article by Christopher Wiebe that appeared in the summer 2006 edition of Heritage Magazine, a publication of the Heritage Canada Foundation. The Foundation's full policy statement can be found on its website at www.heritagecanada.org.

The Canadian government gravely needs to champion comprehensive legislation that will hold federal departments, Crown corporations, federal agencies and their employees accountable for the treatment of historic places in the custody and control of the federal government.

Canada is the only G-8 country without laws to protect heritage buildings, sites or engineering works owned by its national government. Where is national pride and civic engagement in a federal process that continually discounts its cultural symbols?

The new Conservative government has articulated its interest in accountability and transparency. Support for a "Canada Historic Places Act" could be a true hallmark for them, ensuring public consultation and helping to protect those places Canadians cherish.

The United States is 40 years ahead of us. Rooted in the Historic Preservation Act of 1966 is a robust system of legislation effecting projects involving the nearly 79,000 buildings on the U.S. National Register of Historic Places. Moreover, this U.S. legislation dovetails with progressive tax legislation that has greatly encouraged the designation and rehabilitation of historic places south of the border.

Canada has federal heritage legislation but it is very limited in scope. Spurred by the recommendations of the 1951 Massey Commission, the Historic Sites and Monuments Act of 1953 gave the federal government the power to "commemorate" sites deemed of national significance, although unless it owned these sites actual "protection" remained a provincial matter.

Government of Canada policies now in place to protect the heritage buildings it owns are flawed and inadequate. They leave many significant places unacknowledged and unprotect-

ed. Even those sites that are formally recognized come under policies that are unevenly applied and non-binding. The main instrument for protection of federal heritage properties is the Treasury Board Heritage Building Policy, administered by the Federal Heritage Buildings Review Office (FHBRO), created in 1982. This agency has done much excellent work evaluating and classifying federal heritage properties over the last 25 years. However, a glance at the growing list of heritage buildings demolished since the program's inauguration—three classified and 51 recognized—quickly dampens enthusiasm.

A broader vision needs to be entrenched alongside rejuvenated protection of federal buildings, one that takes into account how historic buildings in Canadian communities may be jeopardized by federal actions, projects, and investments.

For instance, the federal government could emphatically demonstrate its commitment to heritage by locating more of its government offices in heritage buildings. A "heritage first policy" would see historic buildings given priority when departments are looking for more office space.

Regrettably, proposed new historic places legislation at the federal level has never gone beyond the discussion-paper stage. "Towards a New Act Protecting Canada's Historic Places," a policy paper circulated in 2002, gave some inkling as to what such an act might look like. In short, it would provide strong protection for heritage buildings (even to those beyond present scrutiny that are owned by crowns and agencies), would ensure they were properly maintained, and would commit the government to following the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada developed in 2003.

The crafting, debate, and enactment of new laws protecting federal heritage buildings would send a very strong message. It would not only encourage provincial and municipal governments to similarly scrutinize how they treat their own buildings, but would resonate with the private sector and the public at large.

Joseph Graham

Naming the Laurentians

a history of place names 'up north'



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Smoke taxes fund conservation

Quebec government unveils new heritage strategy

As promised in its budget tabled in the National Assembly last March, the Quebec government has established a special fund for heritage conservation, the *Fonds du patrimoine culturel québécois*, using revenues generated from provincial taxes on cigarettes.

Details were unveiled by Premier Jean Charest and Culture minister Line Beauchamp this fall, and include new measures aimed at supporting initiatives designed to enhance, restore and promote Quebec's built heritage.

The Fund became operational on September 15. According to some reports, the new heritage fund's eligibility criteria will be less restrictive than past government heritage programs, thereby encouraging more owners of historic properties, especially those already designated by municipalities, to undertake restoration projects. However, in most cases the amount of restoration subsidies will be capped at 25 per cent of the total cost. Properties that have a cultural vocation or which are open to the public may be eligible for up to 50 per cent of the cost.

The available money will also be used to restore

some churches that were not previously admissible under Quebec's Religious Heritage Foundation program, as well as certain works of art that are integrated into the architecture or the environment surrounding heritage buildings. A portion of the Fund is earmarked for museums to help spruce up permanent exhibits.

The Heritage Fund is financed in part by provincial tobacco taxes, which have for decades been used by the government to pay down the debt created by the 1976 Olympics in Montreal. A sum of \$5 million will be invested in the Fund immediately, an amount that will rise to \$10 million beginning next year. Quebec anticipates that financial contributions from various partners will boost total investment in the Fund to \$200 million within five years.

Minister Beauchamp also announced that the government will table a formal policy on heritage conservation this fall, and begin work on revising the province's current Cultural Property Act.

For more information, visit the Ministry of Culture and Communications website at www.mcc.qc.ca.

Tories take aim at heritage

Museum sector reeling from federal spending cuts

Hopes for a renewed federal commitment to Canada's ailing heritage sector were dashed when the Conservative government under Stephen Harper announced this fall that it will cut its assistance to museums by \$4.6 million over the next two years.

The museum assistance program helped fund more than 417 projects between 2003 and 2005 to the tune of almost \$18 million, including a \$10,000 contribution to the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network (QAHN) for a study of Anglophone heritage resources in Quebec. Most of the MAP money, which is administered through the Department of Canadian Heritage, has been spent developing and maintaining exhibits.

Not surprisingly, a Treasury Board statement issued September 25 when the 2006 federal budget was unveiled linked the cutbacks to a widespread Conservative perception that government-sponsored heritage and culture initiatives have not been delivering value for money and are not worthy of public support. "Canadians want to know their hard-earned tax dollars are invested responsibly in effective programs that meet their priorities," the statement read in part.

Canada's regional institutions have lobbied for three decades for increased funding for MAP, to pay for everything from upgrading exhibitions and hiring curators to conserving artifacts. Launched in 1972, the program was originally worth \$7.5-million; it's now

around \$10-million. Ironically, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, which is chaired by Conservative MP Gary Schellenberger, tabled its recommendation for a new museums policy just a week before the spending cuts were announced.

Schellenberger was quoted in the *Toronto Globe and Mail* as saying he was "somewhat surprised" and "a little disappointed" by the loss of the museums assistance program. The Standing Committee even passed a motion October 5 urging Ottawa to adopt a report calling for an increase in MAP funding to properly service the needs of Canada's 2,500 small and regional museums, which welcome more than 55 million visitors each year.

But Finance Minister Jim Flaherty and Treasury Board President John Baird made it clear that the spending cuts were based on what the minority Conservative government feels are priorities, with many cuts coming to programs nurtured by previous Liberal governments. Total cuts to spending amounted to more than \$1 billion, with \$33.1 million of that coming from the Department of Canadian Heritage.

"We're going to budget much closer to line," Flaherty said. "No more March (spending) madness, no more so-called surprise surpluses at the end of the fiscal year." Ottawa recorded a \$13.2-billion surplus in the last fiscal year, which the Tories have said they intend to use to pay down the national debt.

Crystal Falls scholarship launched

Laurentian group honours church building, pet-blessing clergyman

A new scholarship has been launched in honour of a prominent clergyman in the Laurentians. At the annual board of directors' meeting of Knox Church Crystal Falls Memorial Fund following the September 3 Labour Day service on September 3, 2006 at the church near Arundel. It was unanimously agreed to establish, and fund on an annual basis, the Canon Horace G. Baugh Memorial Scholarship, to be awarded annually to a student entering his or her first year of university and who is descended from one of the families buried in Knox Church Crystal Falls Cemetery.

Canon Baugh, who resides in Morin Heights in the Laurentians is known throughout Quebec and has devoted much of his life to the support of education. He has served as a school commissioner for more than 50 years. In 1951 he built the well-known church of St. Francis of the Birds in St. Sauveur and was also instrumental in building Christ Church in Mille Iles, Quebec. Among his many duties he was for many years an airport Chaplain at both Dorval and Mirabel, and he continues to preside at his annual "Blessing of the Pets" on Mount Royal every September. He has also been inducted into the skiers Hall of Fame in the Laurentians.

Canon Baugh was directly involved in preserving Knox Church Crystal Falls from destruction when a road was re-routed. He has performed the Labour Day service for over 25 years at this small historic Presbyterian church and cemetery. The Directors proposed the establishment of this scholarship in tribute to Canon Baugh's invaluable contribution to preserving the church, his support of education, and as a way of involving young people in the ongoing tasks of her-

itage preservation.

This church serves as a beacon to all who travel along Highway 327 between St. Jovite and Arundel following the valley of the Rouge River — one of the most picturesque stretches of highway in the province. Knox Church Crystal Falls Memorial Fund was started by Mr. Edmund Bennett in 1977. The objectives of the fund are to preserve the historic church structure and maintain the graveyard as well as to support other worthy endeavours. The Fund also underwrites the perpetual illumination of the structure.

The first scholarship of \$250 will be awarded in June 2008 as part of the church's centenary celebrations and annually thereafter.

In other news, the Fund hired a student this summer to do a new map of the graves in the cemetery and to take photos of the gravestones and record the details. The results of this can be seen on the church's web site at www.laurentian.com/knox. The interactive map of the cemetery is apparently the first of its type in Canada.

"It might be a good example for other small heritage cemeteries to follow," says Christopher Goodfellow, one of the Fund's main volunteers, "since all the stones are deteriorating these days It's a useful tool for genealogy and heritage work." More information about the Fund and its activities can be found on the website at www.laurentian.com/knox or you may email knox@laurentian.com.

Tax receipted donations to the Fund may be mailed to: Knox Church Crystal Falls Memorial Fund, 339 Crystal Falls Road, Arundel, Quebec, J0T 1A0.

Curtain falls on historic theatre trust

Archives donated to Canadian Centre for Architecture

The Historic Theatres' Trust, a national charitable organization dedicated to the preservation and cultural use of Canada's historic theatres, cinemas, vaudeville and burlesque houses, opera houses and community halls, has closed its doors and donated its archives to the Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA) in Montreal.

"It has been an incredibly worthwhile endeavour, but one that I now feel the greater community can take up with success," Janet MacKinnon, the founding and ongoing president of the trust said in a prepared statement issued in September following the board of directors' decision. With a membership that included professionals world-wide, the trust provided technical expertise to municipalities and heritage groups to better research, restore and operate historic theatres, as well as helping to save several of them, including the Vogue Theatre in Vancou-

ver, and Toronto's Eglinton Cinema.

For many years, the trust organized tours of Montréal's 28 historic theatres, and in 1999 and 2001 hosted conferences in Quebec and British Columbia which brought together theatre owners, operators and historians from around the world.

The trust's significant collection of photographic and archival materials includes books and publications, renovation-project feasibility studies and reports, files on hundreds of theatres across Canada and extensive audiovisual material. The donation also included the Emmanuel Briffa Archival Collection comprising period photographs, post-cards and original theatre programs.

"It is my goal to ensure that the collection remains available to the public. I am thrilled that the Canadian Centre for Architecture accepted our donation," said MacKinnon.

CHANGING OF THE GUARD

Fort Senneville is Canada's oldest privately built fortress
by Kevin O'Donnell

The ruins of Fort Senneville, one of over 200 forts built in the days of New France, still stand on the western edge of Montreal Island. In the 1680s Ville Marie merchants Jacques LeBer and Charles Lemoyne were granted the right to erect a fortified stone mill on their newly-acquired fief of Senneville.

The Sulpicians, seigneurs of the island, thought that this mill would encourage settlers to establish farms in the area. The western tip of the island was already attracting pioneers as well as a thriving fur trade, mostly illegal, in spite of attacks by the Iroquois.

In 1703, the Great Peace newly forged, LeBer's son, also named Jacques, built a fortified stone fort, which served as a trading post and manor house, near the mill. While a private operation, historians believe that the fort followed plans drawn up by military engineers.

The fort saw action during the American Revolutionary War. Following battles at Les Cèdres and Quinchien (today the town of Vaudreuil-Dorion) in May 1776, hundreds of American prisoners were imprisoned in Fort Senneville. By the time the American commander Benedict Arnold arrived on the scene on May 26, the POWs had been transferred to nearby Ile

aux Tourtes. On May 27 Arnold ordered the destruction of the fort because the owner, Testard de Montigny, had sided with the British.

Over the years the property changed hands a number of times. In 1865 it was purchased by John J.C. Abbott. (He was Prime Minister of Canada in 1891-92. The English-language CEGEP in Sainte Anne de Bellevue is named after him.) In building Boisbriand, his home designed by the well-known architect Edward Maxwell, Abbott was in his own way a pioneer. He was the first of the new breed of industrialists and bankers to take advantage of railway transportation to establish large estates on the shores of the Lake of Two Mountains and Lake St. Louis.

Sir Edward Clouston of the Bank of Montreal purchased the estate in 1893, establishing a gentleman's farm. With other names like Todd and Hackney associated with the estate, it remained in the family until last year.

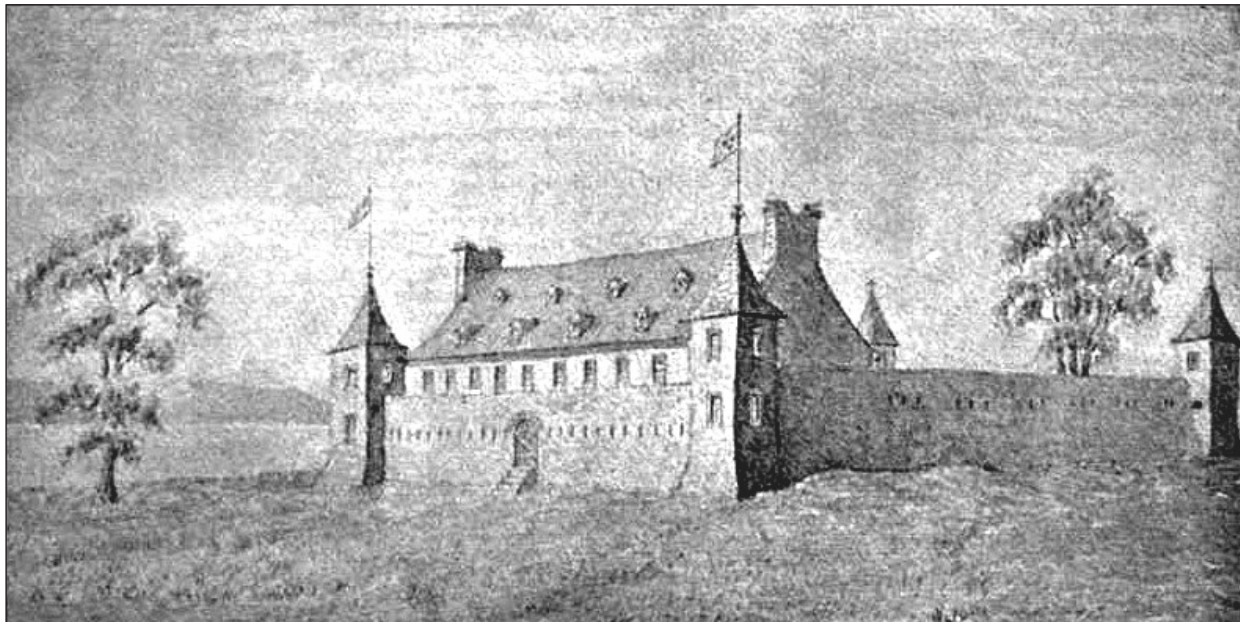
Since the late 19th century Bout de l'isle has attracted visitors interested in the history of New France and the fur trade. Thomas Moore of Canadian Boat Song fame is associated with the Simon Fraser house, still standing and operating as a restaurant in Saint Anne's. Groups from Montreal would also visit the

ruins of LeBer's Fort Senneville. Googling "Fort Senneville" reveals several century-old photographs of the ruins, often taken during visits by members of Montreal high society.

The Cloustons, Todds and Hackneys were always appreciative of the historic significance of the ruins on their property. In November 2003 la Commission des biens culturels of Quebec's Ministry of Culture and Communications (MCC) designated Fort Senneville as a Site historique et archéologique, awarding a



Above, members of the Hudson Historical Society toured the old fort in 2004. Photo by Scot Gardiner. Opposite, Fort Senneville in its heyday.

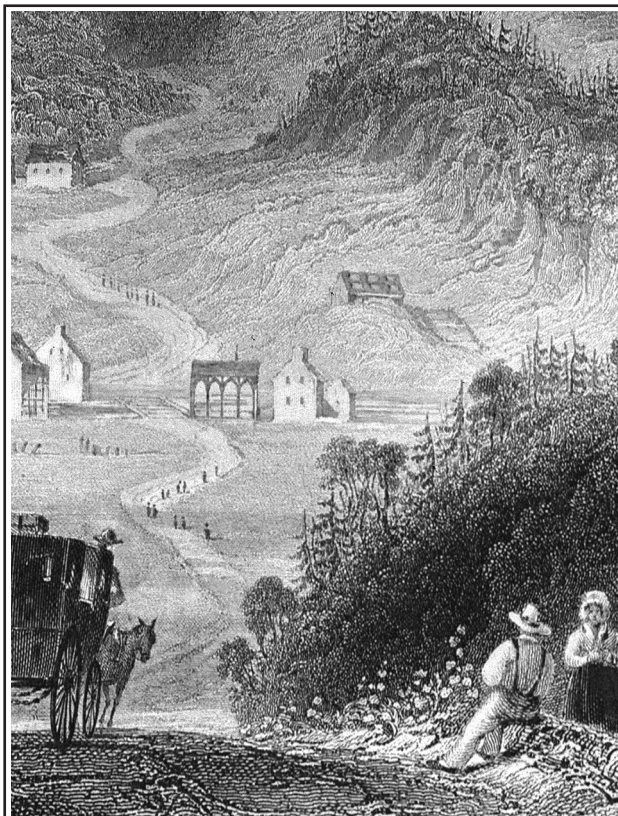


grant of \$410,000 to stabilize the crumbling ruins and carry out archaeological research. It is the only known remains of a private fortification (trading post) dating from the French regime.

The Hackneys had hoped that Parks Canada would purchase the fort and prime ministerial home and turn it into an historic site. Lobbying efforts by the family and by historical societies came to naught, however, and in 2005 the property was sold into private hands. Fort Senneville activist Alison Hackney says the new owners appreciate the historic significance of the ancient fort, and that the ruins are in no

danger of being bulldozed to make way for a new house. The MCC designation of the fort as an historic site makes such an action illegal. The archaeologist who has worked on the site will continue her work.

Ms. Hackney still maintains a link with the fort. She runs the neighbouring La Ferme du Fort Senneville, a 60-acre certified organic farm which maintains a 70-person CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) operation and an on-site market stand. On Saturdays in the summer and fall she can be found selling her produce in Saint Anne de Bellevue, at the Farmers' Market on the promenade near the canal.



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REMEMBERING LT.-COL. SCRIMGER

Montreal hero took time from career to save lives, find battlefield bride

By W. B. Howell, M.D.

Francis Alexander Carron Scrimger was born in Montreal on February 7, 1880. He was the younger son of the Rev. John Scrimger, Principal of the Presbyterian College, Montreal. His mother's maiden name was Charlotte Gairdner. Both parents were of Lowland Scotch descent.

He was educated at the Montreal High School and McGill University. When he left school to enter the Arts Faculty of McGill his parents took it for granted that he would study law after taking his B.A. degree. That he took up the study of medicine instead was largely a matter of chance. He spent one of the summer vacations of his Arts course with a geological survey in Manitoba. When the time came for the party to return, the cook was ill and could not be moved. It was therefore decided to leave someone behind to look after him. At the cook's earnest request Scrimger was the one chosen. It was a wise choice. The cook had the discernment to see that whatever happened, Scrimger would think first of him and last of himself.

Scrimger was left with directions to apply hot fomentations. No one who ever knew him would need to be told that the fomentations were applied regularly, and applied hot. So hot were they applied that in the process of preparing them Scrimger's hands became painfully red and inflamed from repeated scalding. The cook recovered under his ministrations, from what Scrimger in later life thought was either typhoid or appendicitis. On his return home, Scrimger announced to his parents that he had made up his mind to go in for the study of medicine. He took his B.A. degree with honours in biology in 1901, and his M.D. in 1905.

At that time it was the custom at the Royal Victoria Hospital to fill vacancies in the house staff each spring with the men who had taken the highest standing in the graduating class of the year. Scrimger's standing at his final examination was not high enough to entitle him to a place, but he was nevertheless chosen through the influence of the late James Stewart, then Professor of Medicine at McGill and Chief Physi-

cian to the Royal Victoria Hospital.

Scrimger spent four years on the house staff, one of them on the medical side, two on the surgical, and one as admitting officer. So completely was he engrossed in his work during these years that, although he was devotedly attached to his parents who lived only a quarter of a mile from the Hospital, he could only find time to visit them once every two or three weeks. This absorption was very characteristic of him, and was due partly to his rigid sense of duty to his patients and partly to his intense interest in his work.

One of his duties as admitting officer was to appear in court and give evidence as to the condition while in hospital of patients who had had accidents and were suing for damages. The impression that he gave to people who did not know him was deceptive. His unassuming bearing, his thoughtful face, his spectacles, and his low voice, were suggestive more of the somewhat diffident student than that of what he really was, a man of action. Upon one occasion an attorney with a loud voice and

bullying manner, who was cross-examining him, bawled at the future V.C., "Speak up, Dr. Scrimger, don't be afraid of me."

In 1909 Scrimger went to Europe for postgraduate study. He worked for some months under Professor Bier at Berlin. One of his friends meeting him at this time was shocked at his haggard appearance, and found that he was so engrossed in his work that he was neglecting his meals and not getting enough sleep. On his return to Montreal in 1910 he was appointed clinical assistant at the Royal Victoria Hospital, and demonstrator in surgery at McGill. In 1913 he was promoted to the position of associate in surgery at the Royal Victoria Hospital. He joined the Canadian Army Medical Corps in 1912, and was appointed medical officer of the Montreal Heavy Brigade of the Canadian Garrison Artillery. In the spring of 1914 he was promoted to the rank of captain.

At the outbreak of war he went, as medical officer to the 14 Battalion, Royal Montreal Regiment, to Valcartier and afterwards to England. While in camp on



Francis Scrimger received his medal from King George V at Buckingham Palace. Portrait courtesy Legion magazine

Salisbury Plain he was taken ill with broncho-pneumonia, and his battalion went to France without him. However, very soon after his recovery, he managed by pulling wires to be sent to France where he was attached for duty to a base hospital at Wimereux. Three weeks later he was transferred to No. 2 Canadian Field Ambulance. The second battle of Ypres was then beginning and Scrimger had his first experience of shell fire.

He was with the Field Ambulance for a very short time before being sent to rejoin the 14th Battalion (Royal Montreal). From April 22nd to April 25th he worked among the wounded in an inferno of shell fire, oblivious of peril and the discomfort due to fatigue, to lack of sleep, to filth. On the 25th a group of farm buildings, one of which he was using as a dressing station was heavily shelled and caught fire.

Scrimger directed the removal of the wounded, and carried one of them, Captain H. F. McDonald, to a moat where the two men lay partly in the water under the precarious shelter of a bank of earth which threatened any minute to slide down and overwhelm them. Scrimger crouched over McDonald to protect him from flying splinters of shell and from being buried alive. When the firing slackened, he went in search of stretcher bearers and had McDonald carried to a dressing station. In a diary which Scrimger kept for a short time, he says of the incident. "I got all the wounded out, among them a staff officer. We lay together at the side of a ditch while they poured in seventy-five six-inch shells, five within but fifteen feet of us, and we were half smothered in mud. I got a good deal of credit for the show and understand something may come of it." Something did come of it — the Victoria Cross.

As McDonald later testified: "Captain Scrimger curled himself around my wounded head and shoulder to protect me from the heavy shell fire, at obvious peril to his own life."

Scrimger's behaviour during this time is not to be explained merely as that of a brave man rising to the occasion. It was a revelation of another side of his character. There was in him a rigidity, a fixity of purpose, which made him inexorable in going through with anything he made up his mind to do. Nothing inspired him to effort like opposition or difficulty. The German army might try to prevent him from doing his job; he would go on with that job until he had finished it or been blown to pieces.

He remained with the 14th Battalion until December 31, 1915, and was then sent to No. 1 Canadian General Hospital at Etaples. Five weeks later he was invalided to England for infection of one of his fingers

which had to be amputated. After he recovered he was on duty in England for a year, and then, in March, 1917, was sent to No. 3 Canadian Clearing Station (C.S.S.) at Remy Siding with the rank of Major. During the summer and autumn of that year he worked incessantly, for there was hard fighting in front of Ypres. During the following winter the work was lighter, and Scrimger took to visiting the nursing sisters' quarters.



His fellow-officers are said to have accused him at this time of being "almost human".

When the great German attack of 1918 began a shell fell among the huts occupied by the nursing sisters of the Clearing Station, but fortunately did not explode and no one was hurt. Thereafter there was occasional shelling of the neighbourhood and the nursing sisters were sent to St. Omer. The commanding officer of No. 3 received orders to send a surgical team to reinforce a C.C.S. of the 5th Army, east of Amiens.

Scrimger, now senior surgeon of No. 3, urged his commanding officer to send him and accordingly he was chosen to go. His team consisted, besides himself, of Captain W. G. Lyall, who acted as his anesthetist, two operating orderlies, and a batman. One member of the team, Nursing Sister Ellen Carpenter, who had for some time been working with him in the operating room and had been sent to St. Omer, was called for on the way. The C.C.S. to which Scrimger and his team were sent was near Roye. The wounded were being brought in in great numbers, and the team worked incessantly for three days and nights. Then, as the Germans were rapidly advancing, all nursing sisters were ordered to withdraw, and he was left without his operating-room nurse. The work of the C.C.S. soon became that of a Field Ambulance dressing station. A little later its personnel was ordered to evacuate camp and proceed toward the base.

There were still 40 to 50 severely wounded men who would have been left behind to fall into the hands of the enemy. This was more than Scrimger could

stand, and he and his team and an Irish R.A.M.C. (Royal Army Medical Corps) officer stayed behind. They carried the wounded to a neighbouring road which was crowded with retreating artillery, with ammunition and transport wagons, and begged accommodation for them. In time all were disposed of, some even being carried on gun carriages. Not till then, did he feel free to leave. He and his team walked off with the greater part of the equipment on wheeled stretchers. They even took with them their operating table. Their personal effects were left behind.

All the technical equipment of the C.C.S. fell into the hands of the enemy. By this time the thin line of infantry which was holding back the enemy was close to the camp. Scrimger and his team, wheeling their stretchers, walked to Mont Didier, a distance of twenty miles, arriving about midnight. They found there Nursing Sister Carpenter working among the wounded and the team was once more complete. There followed days when on their way further down the lines of communication they set up their operating table and worked over the wounded, sometimes in houses,

sometimes in sheds, once at least in a field. Upon one occasion, in a village where the inhabitants were unfriendly to the British, Scrimger could not at first get accommodation for Nursing Sister Carpenter, so that she could get a night's sleep. Scrimger helped himself to a mattress in one house and carried it to another, the front window of which he burst open. He put the mattress on the floor and there the nursing sister got her night's rest. There was nothing about Scrimger when he

was thoroughly angry that encouraged argument or even discussion, though he did not lose control of his temper or raise his voice, and there was little change in the expression of his face.

In April, 1918, Scrimger and his team returned to No. 3 C.C.S. and his engagement to Nursing Sister Carpenter was announced. The wedding took place in September. After the honeymoon, Scrimger returned to France with the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel, and was for some time in charge of the surgical side of No.

3 Canadian General Hospital. Later, after peace was declared, he was for three months on the staff of the Plastic Surgery Hospital at Sidcup. He returned to Montreal in May, 1919, was demobilized and went back to civil practice. He was that year appointed as-



sistant surgeon to the Royal Victoria Hospital. In 1934 he was advanced to the rank of surgeon, and in January, 1936, he became director of the Department of Surgery and Associate Professor of Surgery at McGill. He was appointed Surgeon-in-Chief of the Children's Memorial Hospital in 1934.

As the years after the War went by, Scrimger worked harder and harder. When he reached an age at which he would have been wise to take life easily, he was as unsparing of himself as he had been when he was young. His private practice steadily increased. More and more responsibility was laid on his shoulders at the Royal Victoria Hospital. He gave a great deal of time and thought to teaching and to preparing papers to be read upon medical subjects.

He was appointed consulting surgeon to the Laurentide Pulp & Paper Company, and had often to motor at night to Shawinigan to operate, a distance there and back of about 200 miles. Many times his usual strenuous day's work followed a night spent in this way. The short holiday he took every summer at Bic, where he had a cottage, was almost as strenuous as his working days. His chief amusement there was sailing, his crew being his children and their friends; another was being his own stonemason and building additions to his property.

In November, 1934, he received sudden unmistakable warning that the time had come for him to stop overworking his body. On his way to a meeting of surgeons at Philadelphia when he was lying in his Pullman berth he was attacked by a sudden violent pain which extended from the region of the heart into the neck. He at once realized the significance of the pain, and reaching for his notebook wrote a message to his wife. He then sent a telegram to his friend Dr. Eltinge at Albany, describing his condition. Dr. Eltinge met him at the station and took him in an ambulance to a hospital. He was brought home shortly afterwards and for six weeks was kept at complete rest. He submitted



to this treatment with characteristic thoroughness, but with self-forgetfulness, equally characteristic. On resuming his duties he continued to work too hard. He received no second warning. The next attack occurred on February 13, 1937, and after a few hours ended in death.

Scrimger was a man of unusual ability and character. He was a born surgeon. Sound in diagnosis, sound in judgment, he was a quick and dexterous operator. He had the power of making up his mind quickly, one of the most important gifts of a good operator; and he knew what very few surgeons know, when to stop.

He inherited the best qualities of his Lowland Scotch forefathers. He was a "quiet" man, to a certain extent "dour." His inflexible honesty, helped perhaps

by his sense of the ridiculous, kept him free from even the slightest taint of humbug or snobbery. There was not an atom of laziness in his composition. It was this that led to his death at a comparatively early age, for he allowed his work to kill him. Though he had complete confidence in himself he was without conceit. He was never heard to allude to his V.C. nor to any of his other achievements during the Great War. No one ever practised his profession with less mercenary motives. A public patient got just as much of his attention as a private one. What faults he had were of the kind that the hosts of friends who mourn him would not have wished to see amended.

From the Canadian Medical Association Journal, March 1938.

Doctor also helped fight gas attacks, save famous poem

Soldiers of 13th (Royal Highlanders of Montreal) Battalion, some of the same troops who had been repairing trenches the night before, were among the first Canadians to notice the peculiar phenomenon — "a cloud of green vapour several hundred yards in length" — over to their left near the French trenches, and drifting slowly southward.

They were not sure what to make of it. They weren't long in finding out.

Fortunately for the Canadian troops, two medical officers, Lieutenant Colonel George Nasmith of Toronto and Captain F. A. C. Scrimger, a surgeon from the Royal Victoria Hospital of Montreal, were both near Ypres and quickly assessed the situation. Nasmith immediately began working on a chemical solution to the gas problem.

Scrimger had a more immediate solution. He told men to urinate on their handkerchiefs or puttees (a long strip of cloth wound spirally around the leg for protection and support) and tie them over their nose and mouth. The action would save many.

And yet it was hardly the only war story he could have told. It was this same Francis Scrimger who once hauled a friend's poem out of the garbage, smoothed it out and talked the friend into sending it in to Punch magazine rather than tossing it out. The friend was John McCrae, another young Canadian doctor; the poem was *In Flanders Fields*.

The little doctor, all 5 foot 7, 148 pounds of him, shielded McDonald's body with his own while he continued to work on the wound. The building was demolished and on fire as Capt. Scrimger somehow managed to hoist the larger McDonald onto his back and carry him through the fire and blinding smoke to safety in a ditch. He became the first medical officer ever to win the famous medal, receiving it from King George V himself at Buckingham Palace. He returned to Montreal, taught at McGill University and died young at 57, only rarely speaking of the war.

Adapted from from the website, www.worldwar1.com and Roy MacGregor; Globe and Mail

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GILBERT'S GALLOPERS

The rise and fall of the 117th Eastern Townships battalion, C.E.F.
by Craig Meyers

On November 5, 1915, the Parliament of Canada issued an Order in Council authorizing the organization of the 117th Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force, to be recruited in Sherbrooke, Quebec. The city of Sherbrooke had already provided soldiers for the 12th Battalion, as part of the first Canadian Division, and soldiers for the 5th Canadian Mounted Rifles (5 CMR), as part of the third Canadian Division. By November 1915, the soldiers of the 12th Battalion were hardened veterans of the front lines in France, while the soldiers of 5 CMR were in England and preparing for their initiation on the front lines.

The citizens of the Eastern Townships, then largely of British descent, were still eager to serve king and country. City and military officials decided that the 117th would be named the 117th Eastern Townships Overseas Battalion, CEF, and be recruited from men from the Eastern Townships. The rationale for this decision was that it would be the first battalion to have a distinct Eastern Townships demographic which would thus help with recruiting. It was a decision that proved successful.

The recruiting drive, spearheaded by the Sherbrooke Recruiting Association and the Eastern Townships Associated Boards of Trade, officially began in November 1915. With the 117th headquartered at the Sherbrooke Exhibition Grounds, Commanding Officer Lieutenant-Colonel Levi Jerome Gilbert, together with adjutant Captain Abel Whitehead and Staff Sgt. Clifford Oughtred, opened the office doors and welcomed their first recruits.

Within months, recruiting offices

appeared throughout most of the Townships. Recruiting was strong in the towns of Richmond, Danville, Coaticook, Bury, Stanstead, and Sherbrooke. Even the smaller communities such as Lennoxville, Rock Forest, Hatley, Compton, Milby, Ayers Cliff, Cowansville, Knowlton, and East Angus were busy recruiting for the 117th. By April 1916, the 117th had recruited 944 men from across the Townships. The numbers were as follows: English Canadian, 327; French Canadian, 255; British, 280;



and others 82. The majority of the men were farmers and labourers.

By the end of May 1916, the 117th Eastern Townships Overseas Battalion, CEF, stood at a strength of 1278 men and 39 officers. Though not all of these men would sail to England, due to poor health, age, or other reasons, the total numbers attest to the dedication of the people from the Eastern Townships.

On August 12, 1916, the 117th left Valcartier for Halifax, where they would sail aboard the *Empress of Britain*. With the voyage taking ten days, the 117th arrived in Liverpool on August 24, and made its way to Bramshott for further training and garrison duties. Letters home to loved ones share the soldiers' experiences while crossing the Atlantic. Some told of seasickness, cramped conditions, and boredom. However, the general theme of the letters was that the sol-

diers were happy and felt a certain esprit de corps within the 117th.

The 117th had an honour bestowed upon them in September 1916, when they were chosen for guard duty at Buckingham Palace. To this date, it is an honour that has only been extended to a few Canadian battalions.

By November 1916, rumours were rampant that battalions in England would be broken up to reinforce battalions already serving in France. Soldiers' letters home highlighted these rumours and enraged the citizens of the Eastern Townships.

Newspaper editorials served to remind military officials that the 117th was a distinct battalion recruited with the promise that the men would fight as a battalion and that the people of the Townships would take pride in keeping the battalion

up to strength. Letters and calls from the Sherbrooke Recruiting Association and the Boards of Trade to the Premier and military officials demanding the battalion remain intact went unheeded.

By mid-November 1916, the men of the 117th were being drafted into other battalions. Many accused Lt.-Col. Gilbert of not being strong enough to stand up to the other commanders, as the original draft saw 120 men transferred to the 148th and 100 men transferred to the 150th Battalion. Those not drafted in November were transferred to the 23rd Reserve Battalion and awaited further disposition. The second draft saw 165 men transferred to the 5th CMR, giving them at least some solace in serving with a somewhat homegrown battalion.

On January 11, 1917, the last of the 117th men were drafted into other battalions and left the shores of England for

France. Self-proclaimed the “diehard,” a group of 13 NCOs marched out of Shoreham wearing their 117th cap badge until joining their new battalions in France. Quite possibly the only ones proudly to wear a 117th cap badge in France, they continued to “carry them in our pockets to wear back to good old Sherbrooke.”

The disbandment of the 117th Eastern Township Battalion was complete as the last of “Gilbert’s Gallopers” marched out of the gates of Shoreham. The soldiers of the 117th went to reinforce the following battalions: 5th Canadian Mounted Rifles, 1st Bn, 7th Bn, 13th Bn, 14th Bn, 16th Bn, 22nd Bn, 24th Bn, 42nd Bn, 43rd Bn, 60th Bn, 87th Bn, Canadian Field Artillery, Canadian Machine Gun Corps, Canadian Army Service Corps, Canadian Engi-

neers, Canadian Labour Corps, Canadian Forestry Corps, as well as various administrative and garrison positions.

Deemed Surplus

Without a battalion to command, Lt.-Col Gilbert was deemed surplus to CEF requirements and released from military duties. He returned to Sherbrooke in 1917 with the daunting task of trying to explain why his battalion was disbanded.

In total, 162 men who attested with the 117th Eastern Townships Battalion gave their lives between 1916 and 1918. Another seven men would die as a direct result of their wounds between 1919 and 1921.

For further information on the 117th Battalion, please visit www.117thbattalion.com.

World War I vet gets proper burial at last

On September 17 this year, 37 years after his death, Private Roy Lester Trussler finally received the send-off he was denied at the time of his death.

Roy Trussler passed away in July 1969. However, due to bureaucracy between Veteran Affairs, the Royal Canadian Legion, and the ANAF, a headstone was to be delivered, but no group could decide who



would take control of the case. After a few years of fighting with various departments, the family eventually dropped the matter and the gravesite of Private Roy Lester Trussler went unmarked for 37 years.

Although Private Trussler did not win any awards for valour or bravery, nor was he killed in action, I do feel that he deserves to be remembered as a proud soldier who did his duty for King and Empire. Despite never fully recovering from wounds suffered on Vimy Ridge in 1917, he again volun-

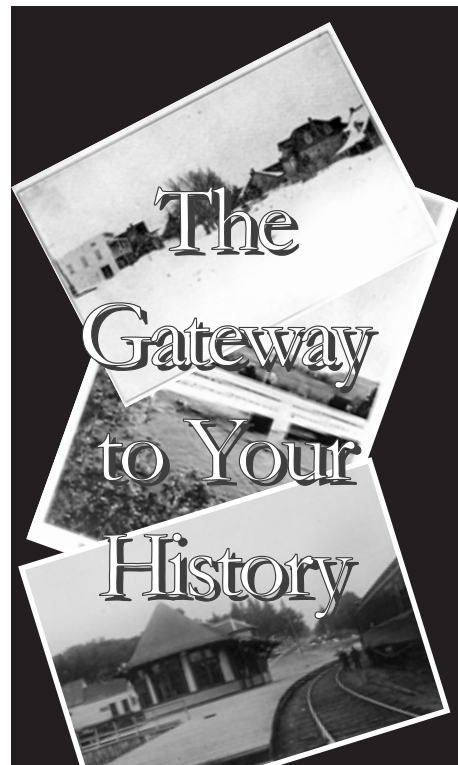
teered for service in the Second World War. He was deemed medically unfit.

In 2005, I noticed this oversight and with permission of the family took steps to correct it. With assistance from various groups and individuals — particularly The Last Post Fund of Montreal a headstone was ordered and delivered in August 2006.

To meet the goal of remembering a former soldier of the 117th Battalion and 5th Canadian Mounted Rifles, I requested assistance from The Sherbrooke Hussars who graciously allowed their padre to officiate the ceremony.

On a crisp cool Fall morning at Malvern Cemetery, Sherbrooke, Quebec, four generations of the Trussler family, seen here, came out to dedicate a grave marker and to remember a father, grandfather, great-grandfather, and great-great grandfather.

Story and photo by Craig Meyers.



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HERITAGE AND HORROR

Restoring Montreal's Empress Theatre
by Rod MacLeod



*There's a light... there's a light...
There's a light in the darkness...Of everybody's life...*

Now there's a sentiment familiar to anyone whose car has broken down on a deserted road in the middle of a stormy night, and one that resonates with anybody who's ever been overwhelmed by the endless tribulations of a major heritage restoration project.

Jodi Michaels has finally seen the light after months of contemplating how the roof of Montreal's historic Empress Theatre would look after contractors finally finished long-awaited repairs.

She may well have been humming the above song as she did so, as it's hard not to think of the Empress' previous incarnation as Cinema V, where so many of us in misspent youth cheerfully hurled rolls of toilet paper on cue during late-night screenings of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*. The repertory cinema was an institution for generations of N.D.G. residents; indeed, for most Montrealers.

For \$1.99 you could get an evening's entertainment (and I'm only going back to the 1970s) from second-run to revived classics to the downright esoteric. I have special memories of the *Pleasure at Her Majesty's* screening where I just "happened" to run into my future spouse.

But like the hapless pair whose car breaks down at the beginning of the *Rocky Horror*, Jodi Michaels was to discover that the "light" she thought she saw last autumn was anything but. Instead, she encountered a horror every bit as shocking as actor Tim Curry in fishnet stockings: the roofers had taken a portion off the top of the Empress and then gone away for the Christ-

mas holidays.

Remember that huge snowfall we had last December? By the new year the theatre had sustained incalculable water damage to ceilings and walls, and a pervading damp soon produced spectacular mould. Horror indeed — and hope rather snuffed.

Restoration of the Empress has been on the cards since 1992 when the cinema's interior sustained major fire damage. Since then, the building has stood proudly on Sherbrooke Street West, the sphinx on its facade staring out across the expanse of Girouard Park, its columns, pediments, and other Egyptian features forming a striking, if comfortable, contrast to the shops, cafés, and apartments in the neighbourhood. These details are almost certainly safe; they would be incorporated in any rebuilding project, be it the usual offices, condos, or hotels.

The scheme to take this restoration beyond the fiscally trendy and reopen the building as a performance space has been placed in the hands of the Empress Cultural Centre, a non-for-profit organization which holds a 60-year lease from the City of Montreal. Jodi Michaels is the Centre's co-ordinator.

This organization seeks to bring back some semblance of the place's former glory, but it also wants to make the Empress a cultural centre for the N.D.G. area. The complex will feature a 352-seat theatre at ground level for use by community groups, a 246-seat concert hall upstairs, and an intimate space for cabaret or art exhibits. Although raising funds for the whole project will require a number of strategies, the plan is to get the downstairs theatre cleaned up enough so that it can be rented out to community groups, thus helping to pay for the restoration of the entire building, including

bringing the theatre up to state-of-the-art specs.

This is welcome news. I can tell you, there aren't many such facilities available to not-for-profit performance companies that don't cost an arm and a leg. For such a place to feel like a community institution is an equally welcome feature.

The Empress came out of vaudeville. Built in 1927 (on land, incidentally, that once formed part of my great-grandfather's farm) it served as both a cinema and a venue for the dancing, juggling, and magic acts that were all part of an evening's entertainment in those days (something my great-grandfather would not have approved of, I'll wager). The ornate Egyptian decor, which covers the façade and still survives here and there inside, came out of a tradition that valued what you saw on the walls as much as on the screen or stage. When vaudeville died, the Empress continued to provide live entertainment in the guise of the Royal Follies burlesque house. Eventually the glamorous interior was covered over and in the 1960s the theatre was divided horizontally in two, allowing two films to be shown at once. Most of us Cinema V patrons had no idea there had once been Egyptian details on the walls or a blue starry ceiling. (The latter fortunately remains largely intact, thanks to the 1960s re-modellers' decision to suspend a new ceiling rather than completely remove the old one.)

If the Empress Cultural Centre people have their way, this interior will rise like a phoenix from the ashes — or, if you prefer, like Dr Frank-N-Furter's Creature after a bolt of lightning.

I'd met Jodi last May at a workshop where we were discussing arts and culture. After hearing about the Empress project, my thoughts turned immediately to the Montreal West Operatic Society, which like countless community-theatre organizations, is constantly looking out for venues. Before long, one of the Operatic Society's many enterprising volunteers had arranged for Jodi to give us a tour. Eleven of us, including my entire family, all of whom are movers and shakers in the theatre group, turned up for the chance to visit behind the scenes. Even the kids appreciated the Empress's considerable heritage value — it is, after all, where Mum and Dad had their first date.

We met Jodi in the Centre's headquarters at the corner of Sherbrooke and Old Orchard. This space, currently the only functioning part of the building, was once the Sesame Health Food Store. On display here is a maquette of the future complex. Jodi did her best to answer a barrage of technical questions: dimensions of the stage, access to dressing rooms and wings, location of an orchestra pit, handicapped access, loading and unloading facilities, and lighting. Some of this is, of course, still theoretical, and may, we hope, be adapted to the needs of community organizations such as the Operatic Society.

Then we saw the interior. Jodi led us outside and along the street to the big padlocked doors which she opened with considerable effort. She had warned us that the water damage had left the atmosphere rank and mouldy, and that anyone with asthma or other allergies might think twice about entering. Indeed, when the door finally opened, we gagged and put handkerchiefs to our faces. It was rank, it was mouldy.

Once away from the opaque front windows it was also very dark, but Jodi, playing usherette, led us with flashlight down to the stage and, once we were settled and accounted for, illuminated the structural features and occasional traces of original decor: here and there, antique columns and Egyptian mouldings emerged from the runny grime of the walls. Enough remains to enable the old theatre to re-emerge in the mind's eye. However, even before real restoration begins there are mountains of junk to be gotten rid of and jungles of green mould to eliminate. Don't expect the Empress to be ready for another couple of years.

Jodi figures the Centre still needs \$8 million to complete the restoration, and at the moment they are still struggling to undo damage caused by the leaky roof. The city has been supportive, but only up to a point, and the feeling within the Centre is that the restoration isn't a high priority, even for the borough. Clearly, it's in the interests of community organi-

zations and heritage enthusiasts (including cult-movie enthusiasts), to get behind this project -even to donate financially, if possible.

To learn more about this exciting renovation, visit the Centre's website at: www.empressndg.org, or contact Jodi Michaels at jodihope@gmail.com or 514-245-



TEENS GOT A TASTE OF WAR

German prisoners fought boredom by pushing their limits

A report by the Canadian Press

The bizarre story of five young Espanola girls exchanging love letters with German war prisoners in the Northern Ontario internment camp, and of one of the girls sending letters out of the country and buying a camera for a prisoner, was unfolded in magistrate's court here today (March 19, 1942).

The five girls, aged 15 and 16, pleaded guilty to charges under the Defence of Canada Regulations of communicating with the prisoners and were placed on suspended sentence after Magistrate E. Arthurs and Crown Attorney E. D. Wilkins of Sudbury, thirty-five miles east of here, reprimanded them.

Of the girls' action in sending letters to the United States for the prisoners, Magistrate Arthurs said, "It may mean the loss of thousands of lives overseas," and the Crown Attorney declared: "The Nazi will stop at nothing, and he has apparently tried to use these girls as tools for his nefarious work."



Letters were exchanged between the girls and the prisoners; letters described by Burger as "silly love-affair things" which contained nothing incriminating. The girls sent the prisoners pictures of themselves; some of the girls received presents, such as locket and rings, from the prisoners.

The oldest of the group was the "ringleader," Burger testified. She mailed letters in German for a prisoner, received money from the United States and bought the prisoner a camera and picture-developing equipment.

A regular post office system was set up between the prisoners and the girls. A place would be chosen for letters to be left, used for a while and then changed.

The girl who bought the camera said she was afraid not to help the prisoners because she had been told by a guard the prisoners would remain in Canada after the war and "because I was told the prisoners would double punish us after the war when they got free if we did not help them."

One of the girls was quoted by Burger as saying a prisoner smiled back at her when she smiled at him, "at a hockey game" in February, 1941, and shortly afterward she began writing him letters. Another girl said once one of the prisoners kissed her.

One of the girls testified that her acquaintanceship with the prisoners began when her father brought her a letter from a prisoner. Her father delivered her answer and three other letters before he joined the Veterans' Guard at another Northern Ontario point.

"They likely did it in a spirit of romance, but it goes beyond that when prisoners make dupes of them like that," Mr. Wilkins said, adding that "it is amazing that, such a thing as a camera from the outside world could be got into the compound. Just what else could be smuggled in if the camera got in!"

Sent Prisoners Camera, Love Notes, Girls Admit

The story was unfolded for the most part by Corporal Sack Burger of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and bits were filled in as the chastened girls, part of the time in tears, answered questions of the magistrate and Crown Attorney. The court was closed except to the press.

As told by Burger, who testified that the letters mailed for the Germans "might have contained information very valuable to the enemy," the story had its beginning about February, 1941, and continued for a year.

Boredom was Axis prisoners' worst enemy in Canadian prison camps. Chess helped the hours pass at Farnham, near Montreal.

Blundering Legacy

Laurentian township preserves memory of failed British general
by Joseph Graham



The Township of Abercrombie, comprising Shawbridge, a part of Piedmont, the village of Ste. Adele, and Fourteen Island Lake, was named for General James Abercromby. Exactly why he should have been so honoured is a bit of a mystery. It could be someone's sense of humour — an encrypted message to the future inviting us to look back and see that the victors in war are not always winners.

Abercromby, who spelled his name with a 'y,' as on some of the older maps, was one of the slew of British generals who played their parts during the Seven Years' War. Running from 1756 to 1763, the war is considered by some historians as the first global conflict. It started as a result of frictions between the French and the English in the Ohio Valley. A young George Washington, interloping in French territory, surprised a French party under the command of Joseph Coulon de Villiers, Sieur de Jumonville. Jumonville had been sent from Fort Du Quesne to admonish Washington for violating the Peace Treaty of Aix la Chapelle, signed in Aachen, northwest Germany, in 1748.

When Washington's men saw the surprised French going for their guns, they began to fire, but Jumonville managed to make his presence felt and calmed the two sides. Through his translator, he suc-

cessfully communicated that he and his party were messengers representing the French authorities, and then he began to read a proclamation reminding them of the terms of the treaty. Each party was in a serious position of weakness — the French, because it was just a small group of messengers, and Washington's party, because they were in French territory and could be easily overpowered at any time.

This should have been the end of the encounter, with Washington proclaiming his purpose in being there and both parties withdrawing with messages for each other's commanders. However, as his translator repeated the proclamation in English, a Seneca chieftain named Half-King shot Jumonville in the head at point-blank range. In the *mêlée* that ensued, nine other members of the French party were shot dead and the rest, except for one, were taken prisoner.

The sole escapee returned to Fort Du Quesne, and the French responded by overwhelming Washington at his hastily erected Fort Necessity. They served him with a humiliating defeat but allowed him and his men to return to British territory unarmed and on foot. The humiliation cannot be overstated because the First Nations in the Ohio Valley were crucial allies to both European powers, and lacking any other means of evaluating these two warring European nations, they tended to back the stronger side.

Abercromby, above, depicted on the field at Fort Carillon. From www.britishbattles.com.



In fact, Half-King had been wooed by the French, but had judged the English to be a stronger force. While he had been let into the French confidence, and knew, according to the French, that Jumonville was not leading a war party, he seems to have concluded either that the French desire for peace and discussion was a sign of weakness or that it was in the interest of his own people for the French and English to fight. As a result, he led Washington to the small French party and instigated the confrontation. His action precipitated the most widespread war that the world had yet seen, but he was equally disappointed in both parties after the French overwhelmed Fort Necessity and then let their captives go.

This remote skirmish inflated into a world conflict when the British decided to retaliate. Even though they had been at peace since the signing of the Treaty of Aix la Chapelle, they were trade rivals who were incapable of sharing territory. Their differences were not limited to the Ohio Valley, as France was England's major competitor for a worldwide commercial empire, and the ensuing war would be one for European — and world — hegemony.

The European powers rapidly lined up against each other: The British, Prussians and Hanoverians stood against France, Austria, Sweden, Saxony, Russia, and eventually Spain. General Abercromby, who had achieved his status through political connections and had little field experience, was dispatched to oversee the English military operations in the colonies. The French sent more troops under the command of Marquis Louis Joseph de Montcalm.

One of the first North American objectives of the English was to capture Fort Carillon (Fort Ticonderoga) situated at the southern end of Lake Champlain. Abercromby relied upon one of his most experienced generals, George Howe, to plan and execute the attack. Montcalm, the defender, had 4,000 troops,

while Howe had 15,000. Howe and his troops travelled up Lake George, and then along the five miles of river and portages to Lake Champlain. Along the river they easily routed the advance parties and captured the small settlements of the French. The first real confrontation was with troops trying to return to Fort Carillon, and in the ensuing skirmish, Howe was killed.

The death of this crucial leader left Abercromby at a loss for what to do. He dallied so long that his troops nicknamed him Mrs. Nambie-Crombie. By the time he had finally resumed the advance, Montcalm had received reinforcements and ordered his men to pile up barriers of brush and fallen trees around Fort Carillon. Abercromby ordered the storming of these barricades, but neglected to await the arrival of his superior artillery.

As the battle progressed, the British troops were bogged down and slaughtered, losing 2,000 men and being forced to retreat. The French losses were 350 killed and wounded. Abercromby, overwrought and panic-stricken, signalled a retreat and withdrew, not simply along the five miles of river and portages that they had captured, but to the far end of Lake George.

When word of the catastrophe reached England, Abercromby was recalled and General Jeffrey Amherst was sent out in his place. Amherst would successfully push all the way to Montreal, taking it in 1760, the year after Wolfe had taken Quebec City.

Abercromby found himself a safe seat in Parliament from which he became a staunch supporter of the Stamp Tax and opponent of any opinion that favoured the colonists in their bid for independence. Today his name stares out at us from Laurentian maps as a goading reminder of one of Great Britain's worst military blunders in the New World.

This article is from Joe Graham's book Naming the Laurentians, and is the first in a series that will describe places around the province. He can be

FAMILY BLAZED TRAIL FOR RECYCLERS

New environmental centre named for Rose Cohen

by Brion Robinson

Generous, moxie and shrewd are just a few of the words used to describe Sherbrooke business woman and recycling pioneer Rose Cohen.

An immigrant from Lithuania, Cohen moved to Sherbrooke with her Russian husband Benjamin in the early 1900s. After years of collecting and selling scrap iron and glass with a horse-drawn cart, the couple leased land on Wellington Street South (then owned by the Grand Trunk Railway) and started the B. Cohen Corporation. By the 1950s, the company had grown to about a dozen employees and two scrap-collecting trucks.

Although the business was among the first in the Eastern Townships to make money from scrap, most who knew Rose Cohen remember her best for her philanthropy. "Rose was a very generous person," said Cohen's nephew,

movies and took me to the Granada Theatre on Saturdays," he said while poring over black and white photographs of Sherbrooke.

Heilig lived with Cohen and her three children until he was a young man. "I was a member of the family," he said. "She was very kind to me and gave me a wonderful present when I got married." Heilig eventually took over the business after Cohen passed away in 1954. Although the business was named after her husband, Cohen had been the figurehead. Heilig said she was a shrewd business woman who was "nobody's fool." She was responsible for expanding the business and invested in real estate in Lennoxville and throughout the city. She took over sole ownership after Benjamin died in 1947. "She was the owner and had people doing the work for her." Heilig said Cohen had moxie and was very different from her husband who "would give away his shirt."

Although Rose Cohen could manage a successful business, she was also very charitable with her money. Some of her contributions to the city included furnishing the Sherbrooke Hospital library and a room in Saint-Vincent-de-Paul hospital. Her generosity also made headlines one Christmas after she challenged a Sherbrooke bank manager (who was also her friend) to match the number of bills folded and put on a Christmas tree in the bank.

Grandson Michael Goldstein vividly remembers a bus trip from her home on Gillespie Street to downtown when she treated everyone to some fresh fruit. "On the way downtown she told the bus driver to stop," he told this reporter during a telephone interview from Toronto. "She went into the store and bought some bananas and apples and handed them out to



the bus driver and passengers."

Although Cohen lived a comfortable life, there were hardships. A daughter Molly died of meningitis, Goldstein said, noting his grandmother was very distraught following the death. "The doctor said she should have another child," he said. "That was my mother Helen." But Rose's spirit never faltered. It's been over 50 years since his grandmother passed away, yet Goldstein still remembers her distinct laugh when she came to visit him in Montreal. "I remember her laughter," he said. "She always enjoyed a good laugh." Goldstein, who recently returned to Sherbrooke for the opening of the new Rose Cohen eco-centre, took some photos of his mother's old neighbourhood where she and Heilig lived for years. "I took them back to show my mother," he said, noting his 98-year-old mother still has fond memories of living with Heilig. "She always said he was her little brother." The eco-centre is a municipal store-front receiving centre for hard-to-recycle refuse and providing other waste disposal services.

Goldstein said Cohen's funeral was packed with people who knew her and wanted to pay their last respects. Her memory lives on. "She was a larger-than-life person," said Heilig, who attended the centre's opening with Goldstein, family members and city representatives.

Brion Robinson is a reporter for the Sherbrooke Record.



Sherbrooke resident, Daniel Heilig. Heilig, 91, lost his mother (Cohen's younger sister) when he was 10, and moved in with the Cohens in the 1920s. "I had an umbrella over me," he said, explaining that Cohen treated him like one of her own. "She loved to see

Rose Cohen, at the left above; the Wellington Street storage plant in Sherbrooke.

Glenn Ford to be buried in California

Hollywood star took stage name from Portneuf landmark



California's Woodlawn Cemetery will likely be the final resting place for Quebec-born actor Glenn Ford. Ford died last month at the age of 90.

Gwyllyn Samuel Newton Ford was born at the Jeffrey Hale Hospital, lived in Quebec City and summered in Portneuf.

Ford's father was a train conductor for the Canadian National Railway between Quebec City and Montreal.

Despite living far from his Canadian roots, there are signs that Ford was still attached to Portneuf, where he spent his summers until his family moved to California when he was eight.

Ford's parents, Hanna and Newton Ford, are buried in Portneuf, northwest of Quebec City, in Woodend Cemetery, which bears the name of the former Ford family home in Portneuf. Glenn Ford had a stone engraved with his birth date and placed next to that of his parents.

Woodend was the name of a nearby mill, so called in memory of a mill back in Scotland where Ford's relatives had worked.

A gate at the Woodend Cemetery was a gift from the actor in honour of Ford's cousin, Second World

War Lancaster pilot Stewart Bishop, who is buried in Germany.

Glennford was the name of the place on the Ste-Anne River, north of St-Christine, where Ford's father, Newton, was born. That's where the actor took his stage name.

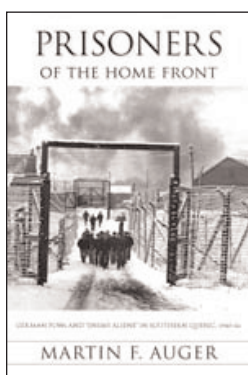
Former Portneuf resident Amy Ford Kupecz, now of Ontario, was second cousin to the actor. Their grandfathers were brothers. At 88, she is three years younger than her famous cousin. She never really knew him, but he's a hometown boy who did well and always remembered his roots, according to his cousins and folks in Portneuf.

Glenn Ford had been living in California with his son Peter Ford, who worked with his dad in films.

While Amy Ford Kupecz said she did not know her cousin, she recalled running into a large photo of the actor in a western museum in Colorado while visiting her daughter Rosemary. She never did see all of his movies, but her favourites are Blackboard Jungle and The Teahouse of the August Moon, and of course the cowboy movies that helped make him famous.

This report is by Michèle Thibeau, assistant editor of the Quebec Chronicle Telegraph.

BOOK REVIEWS



Prisoners of the Home Front: German POWs and 'Enemy Aliens' in Southern Quebec

By Martin F. Auger
UBC Press, 228 pages
\$29.95

When one thinks of Canada's contribution to the World War II effort, one thinks of its navy maintaining open sea lanes to North America, its air force playing a significant role in Britain's Bomber Command and its army assuring victories in various campaigns in Italy and Northwest Europe. These significant contributions represent the crux of historical research and our knowledge of Canada's story during the war, the action and drama of the battle field often obscuring events on the home front.

At home and as a result of the war, Canada became an industrial giant, producing a variety of armaments for the allied cause. Though there is no disputing the fact that Canadian society was deeply affected by the war, the Canadian home front is one that is historically looked upon as directly untouched by the destruction of war. Canada exported its contributions — its soldiers, its goods, and its industry — and, as a result, history rarely recognizes what was imported to Canada during the war.

Indeed, to read Martin F. Auger's book, *Prisoners of the Home Front* is to encounter one of the rare

accounts of enemy troops and non-combatants setting foot on Canadian soil in the 20th century. In his detailed and precise language, Auger's book takes the reader away from the battlefield and into the intriguing drama of one of war's inevitable results: prisoners of war. It is Auger's contention that Canada treated its prisoners humanely and in accordance with the stipulations outlined in the Geneva Convention, a fact that is well argued and impressive as Auger takes the reader through some of the pitfalls associated with the detaining of nearly 40,000 German POWs and non-combatants in makeshift camps converted from disused building like farmhouses.

Away from interesting statistics and policy that brought about the creation and regulations of the camps, Auger also details the lives their detainees. The activity of detainees was highly scrutinized and monitored for fear of escape and possible relay of intelligence back to Germany. Detainees were classified according to the potential threat and importance as a result of programs offered at the camps, programs meant to "re-educate" those infused with Nazi doctrine with the benefits of a democratic society. It is these attempts to re-create the often para-

noid mentality that is inevitably associated with controlling a camp full of possible enemies that makes Auger's book a fascinating read. Though written in the fact-based prose that can often alienate readers from any historical text, Auger maintains interest by also focussing on the inner-workings of the camps in southern Quebec. For example, Auger recounts the formation of the HARIKARI Club among the German soldiers in the camp at Grande Ligne (Sainte Blaise, south of Saint Jean). Here prisoners grouped themselves according to rank and maintained Nazi sections of Gestapo, propaganda and intelligence in hopes to "prepare a suicidal mass escape in order to slaughter as many Canadians and inflict as much sabotage and destruction as possible before being killed ... as soon as the Nazi prisoners regarded the war as absolutely lost or in the event of Germany's unconditional surrender."

Prisoners of the Home Front illustrates the lesser known behind-the-scenes facts of war and Canada's, specifically Quebec's contribution to the effort to humanely accommodate the captured.

Reviewed by Dan Pinese



Royal Commonwealth Society Montreal Branch: 75 Years, 1930 to 2005

*By Fiona Malins
published by the Royal Commonwealth Society, Montreal
56 pages, not priced*

My first connection with the Royal Commonwealth Society was being the spouse of a recipient of its international scholarship. This very generous award gave us a monthly income to live (albeit frugally) in the U.K., as well as a most welcome “spousal allowance” which enabled me to obtain a master’s degree. The scholarship puts one in the company of studious people from all parts of the globe — or, at any rate, all parts of the Commonwealth, which is very nearly the same thing. Rubbing shoulders with Kenyan doctors, Bengali engineers, and chemists from Hong Kong provides a good foundation in the benefits of multiculturalism, and I say this with some emphasis in an age that appears to be seriously questioning said benefits. I am convinced we will live more sensibly on this planet when we stop identifying skin colour with certain types of behaviour, and both with particular countries and social classes.

I remember being first struck by this glorious blurring of ethnic and cultural assumptions during an orientation session held at the beginning of our tenure of the scholarship. People of all creeds and colours were assembled in a large room awaiting instructions, while an elderly gent from the Society was doing the rounds, asking everyone in turn where they were from and doing his best to say something polite and knowledgeable about Ghana, Sri Lanka, Uganda, Malaysia, Jamaica, etc. When he reached a fellow sprawling near the door who was clearly African or West Indian, he gave him the same treatment: “And what part of the Commonwealth are you from?” The fellow started at having been addressed, blinked nervously, and stuttered: “Liverpool!” He worked in the building.

Another pleasure connected with the Royal Commonwealth Society has been reading the recently-compiled history of

its Montreal Branch, which celebrated its 75th anniversary last year. As well as articulating the philosophy I have described above, this compact tome provides a fascinating overview of the activities of this local group since 1930. As an offshoot of the Royal Commonwealth (previously Empire) Society of Canada, the Montreal branch served the province of Quebec through its championing of education and human relations issues. Over the years the Society has promoted awareness of and interest in the Commonwealth by means of a regular essay competition, support for immigrants settling in Canada, sponsoring volunteers to work overseas (CUSO), and many fundraising events. Guest speakers at Montreal Branch gatherings have included various high commissioners from Commonwealth countries as well as such notables as Lord Mountbatten, James Cross (two years before his abduction), John Diefenbaker, and Sir Edmund Hillary. These people took their work seriously!

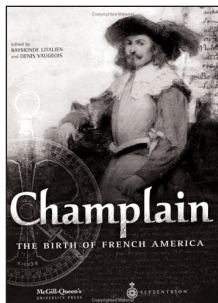
Apart from wanting this story commemorated, the impetus for the book project was the vast quantity of Society records which filled numerous boxes — and which needed a more appropriate home than the corridors of past-president Betty LeMaistre’s house. A couple of years back, Betty (also a former QAHN board member) contacted me wondering if I could recommend ways to generate a history from these records and ultimately arrange for them to be deposited somewhere safe. This is a problem that comes up time and again with private collections, and increasingly with the minutes and correspondence of small organizations. There is no easy answer, but it is my belief that most collections are of interest to someone, and if archives can be made sufficiently aware of this potential interest they will be more likely to give them a home and make them accessible. For a while we talked about finding an

MA student willing to turn the material into a thesis, but it proved not so easy to match demand with supply. In the end, I was delighted to hear, the committee found a professional writer and historian, Fiona Malins, to produce the history, and the documents had been deposited with the McCord Museum.

The committee were nice enough to invite me to attend the launch of their history last autumn and to say some brief words about it. I will repeat here what I said then: that Ms. Malins’ work does all the right things when it comes to presenting 75 years of an organization’s existence concisely. It has a human face — one is conscious of the key players and the fascinating people who were touched by the Society’s actions — without dwelling endlessly on the great personalities at the expense of the ideas. It puts the activities of the Montreal Branch in a context — that of dedicated private citizens from various walks of life giving their time in order to help others and broaden their own experiences — without getting bogged down in social and ideological analysis (as, perhaps, an MA student might have done...). It provides a clear and detailed outline of the many great things the Society’s Montreal Branch has undertaken, without reading like a mere list of notable achievements or a kind of collective CV. Indeed, there is a real sense of humility within these pages, accurately reflecting the approach of a group of people who have nothing to be humble about. It is rather difficult to do all this right, but Ms Malins has succeeded.

Anyone touched by the Royal Commonwealth Society comes away at least a little wiser, a little broader in outlook, a little more careful in judgment. The same could be said for readers of this well-crafted history.

Reviewed by Rod MacLeod



**Champlain:
The Birth of French America**

Edited by Raymonde Litalien and Denis Vaugeois

Translated by Käthe Roth

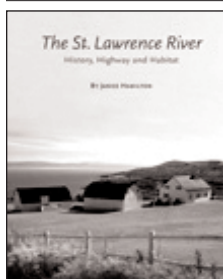
Septentrion and McGill-Queens, Montreal

398 pages, \$89

This is a huge book, in both scope and tonnage. Its 389 pages are full of pictures, maps and articles about the founder of New France, Samuel de Champlain. Its 9¾ by 13¼ size makes it a real coffee-table book - big enough to make into a coffee table. It is a collection of essays by dozens of experts in the field, each one detailing something of Champlain's

origins, his ambitions, his accomplishments, and the pitfalls and pratfalls of his adventurous life, on both sides of the Atlantic and in the middle of it. This is one of the most important books of Canadian history to be published in recent years. It's way too much to digest at once so I'll probably be going back to it for years.

Reviewed by Charles Bury



**The St. Lawrence River:
History, Highway and Habitat**

By Janice Hamilton

Redlader Publishing (Price-Patterson)

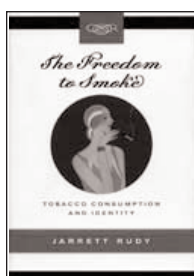
Montreal

132 pages, \$34.95

Author Janice Hamilton has put together an interesting combination of history, geography, scenery and stories about the vast river which slices Quebec in half from east to west like a lopsided ear-to-ear-grin. Hamilton's text is complemented by the work of half-a-dozen photographers. It's not quite coffee-table

size and is loaded with colourful facts and photos of the Saint Lawrence from the Gulf to Lake Ontario. The St. Lawrence River book looks like a twin to Price-Patterson's 2005 book Four Seasons in the Eastern Townships. I suspect a series has begun...

Reviewed by Charles Bury



**The Freedom to Smoke:
Tobacco Consumption and Identity**

By Jarrett Rudy

McGill Queens University Press

234 pages, \$75

The title of Freedom to Smoke is somewhat misleading. This well-researched book is more about the business, culture and practice of manufacturing, marketing and smoking tobacco than about the freedom to take a puff. In a way, it is also the story of manufacturing and merchandising in 19th and 20th century Montreal. It takes an interesting close-

up view of smoking from many angles and through various lenses.

Like tobacco itself, Freedom to Smoke is quite expensive. So also like tobacco, it is probably aimed at a captive market if not an addicted one - in this case not smokers but students buying textbooks.

Reviewed by Charles Bury

Heritage Minute Video Contest

Students, Tell us your story!

The Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network is offering Secondary Level students cash prizes for true stories about remarkable people from Quebec's past.

For complete contest details, visit our website, www.qahn.org and click on News

First prize \$250.
Second prize \$150

Send your entries to:

Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network
400-257 Queen Street,
Lennoxville, Quebec
J1M 1K7

Deadline for submissions is April 30, 2007

Commonwealth author: SPEAKERS' LIST INCLUDES SURPRISES

By Fiona Malins

For most of the winter of 2004-2005, I immersed myself in the archives of the Montreal Branch of the Royal Commonwealth Society (RCS). I studied pile upon pile of carbon copies of laboriously typed minutes, as well as letters, pamphlets, newspaper clippings and the like. Some people might think this sounds a dull task. Well, it was not; every so often I came upon a little gem of information which brought the times to life and even made me laugh. I'd like to share some of these with you.

For example, the Montreal Branch of RCS has frequently invited guest speakers to their meetings. Over the years, invitations to High Commissioners of Commonwealth countries have been common but I noted that the Australians were by far and away the favourites. The reason for this was simple: they generally turned up with a few bottles of Australian wine! Then, on one occasion, the High Commissioner of Barbados arrived bearing rum and, not to be outdone, on another occasion, his Jamaican colleague supplied spicy patties.

As part of Commonwealth Day celebrations, the Branch has also hosted a number of extremely prominent people including two Governor-Generals: Georges Vanier who was for many years a member of the Branch, and Roland Michener. Other guests included Lester B. Pearson during his time as Prime Minister; Joey Smallwood; John Diefenbaker; Lord Louis Mountbatten; and Paul Martin — Senior (no, his son has never received an invitation — yet!).

Other speakers in 1966 included a certain economic advisor to the Quebec government by the name of Jacques Parizeau! Unfortunately the minutes didn't recount what he talked about. And, in no way connected to the above, in 1968, the British Trade Commissioner spoke about Malaysia

from whence he had just arrived — that was a certain James Richard Cross...

For many years, there was a separate Ladies' Committee in the Branch which organized all kinds of activities. In fact, the oldest surviving document of the Branch is a 1944 report of the Ladies' Committee in which it is proudly reported that "There is a bank balance on hand of just under \$20.00." In the 1960s, this committee was run by Norma Gordon, wife of the indomitable Donald Gordon, President of Canadian National. She organized Commonwealth fashion shows and cooking demonstrations given by none other than Madame Jehane Benoit. Changing times finally led to the dissolution of this committee but the minutes of their meetings are a joy to read.

In the early days, the Montreal Branch worked hard helping immigrants from Commonwealth countries find work on their arrival in Montreal. They even found a mechanic a job on Baffin Island with which he was reportedly delighted; the minutes don't record whether this was before or after he actually went there. And then, a young lady was found work which enabled her to stay in Canada when otherwise she would have been shipped home far away from her fiancé with (and I quote from the minutes) "her chances of happiness ruined."

Branch activities have traditionally included a Christmas party. These have been held in a number of different places including, in the 1970s, the Chateau Ramezay. The Branch President at that time was Major George Norman who was famous for the rum punch he concocted for such occasions. In 1973, the minutes record "after a round of singing, everyone moved over to the punch bowl"...

One of the major activities of the branch for the last 65 years has been the Commonwealth Essay Competi-

tion. The Branch solicits students from schools all over the province and subsequently judges their entries before forwarding them to London. It was interesting for me to note that there were a few well known names among the prize winners, including lawyer Julius Grey in the 1960s, and three generations of the Sancton family — John Sancton (former editor of the Westmount Examiner) in the 1930s, his son Don in the 1960s, and Don's daughter Kimberly Sancton in 1994. Quebec students have done outstandingly well over the years including winning the first prize in the top category in 2005.

I would like to finish by quoting from this winning essay written by Carolyn Jong of Bishop's College School who reviewed *Night* by Elie Wiesel. I quote "The hell that Elie Wiesel and millions of others endured was not something I wanted to confront, but it's something I had to confront. Like a slap in the face, it shook me out of my daze and opened my eyes... I'm no longer able to close my eyes to international events. I can't feel at peace with myself without contributing even a small token of my time to help the people for whom scenes like those from *Night* are very close to reality."

These days when we always seem to live in the fast lane, 75 years is a milestone worth celebrating. Not only is the Montreal Branch of the Royal Commonwealth society 75 years old, but it is also celebrating 65 years of organizing and administering this wonderful essay competition. It was fascinating for me to research and produce their official history and it remains an experience I will long remember with joy and pride.

Historian Fiona Malins was commissioned to write the official history of the Montreal Branch of the Royal Commonwealth Society. The above article was given as a speech on that

CELTIC FESTIVAL

photos by Patrick Donovan



Quebec City was alive with a Celtic flavour during the September festival which marked the re-opening of the Morrin Centre and the dedication of a monument. The Montreal Celtic band Agincourt entertained in the refurbished library of the Quebec Literary and Historical Society while the 78th Fraser Highlanders St. Andrew's garrison pipe band filled the skies outside. The monument in Lower Town was erected by the group Irish Heritage of Quebec to commemorate the 19th-century Irish potato famine and the subsequent epidemic of typhoid fever in which tens of thousands of immigrants to North America perished.

HINDSIGHT

Roberval and Charlesbourg Royal: What if?

by Peter Black

Archaeologists, historians, and politicians are proclaiming it as surely the most important archaeological discovery in Quebec history and the answer to one of Canada's most baffling historical mysteries. Last month Quebec officials announced to the world they had found the long-sought site of the Cartier-Roberval settlement of 1541-43.

The discovery is as much a cause for geopolitical speculation as it is for jubilation amongst archaeologists, anthropologists and historians.

It was almost exactly 465 years ago — August 23, 1541 — that Jacques Cartier landed near what is now Quebec City on his third and final voyage to the New World. Cartier had already assured his name in history as the first European to have found and explored the St. Lawrence River, as far as Hochelaga, a native village on what we now call Montreal Island.

His mission this time, under the command of French court fixturer Jean-François de la Roque de Roberval, was to establish a French colony in Canada — the Iroquois-derived name Cartier himself had given to the St. Lawrence valley.

Cartier dutifully got work started on his colony, named it Charlesbourg-Royal, then set off to explore the area. When he got back the natives were striking back at the untrustworthy and murderous French and winter was closing in.

Those who survived starvation, scurvy, or Indian attacks fled to France in the spring and most, including Cartier, would never return.

On their way back, though, Cartier and company stumbled upon Roberval's delayed expedition in Newfoundland. Though Roberval ordered him to return to Charlesbourg-Royal, Cartier snuck off by stealth of night and set sail for St. Malo.

Roberval ventured forth, on the way marooning his naughty niece Marguerite and her lover on an island off the Lower North Shore, thereby giving author Douglas

Glover the plot for *Elle*, which won the 2003 Governor-General's literary award for fiction.

Roberval's company — comprising a troublesome blend of nobles and criminals — rebuilt Cartier's settlement at Cap Rouge and, in turn, faced a cruel winter, made even more-so by Roberval's particularly harsh leadership style, which saw several settlers hanged for petty crimes.

When spring came, Roberval's expedition sacked their settlement to keep it from the natives, loaded their cargo of diamonds (quartz) and gold (iron pyrites) and headed for France to face an angry and frustrated

ed as many as 1000 people. The French fleet bound for Canada was so formidable that the Spanish, with whom France was spoiling for war, pondered sinking it.

By comparison, Provencher notes, Samuel de Champlain had a motley crew of only 30 with which to carve out a French toehold in the wilderness when he arrived at Quebec in 1608.

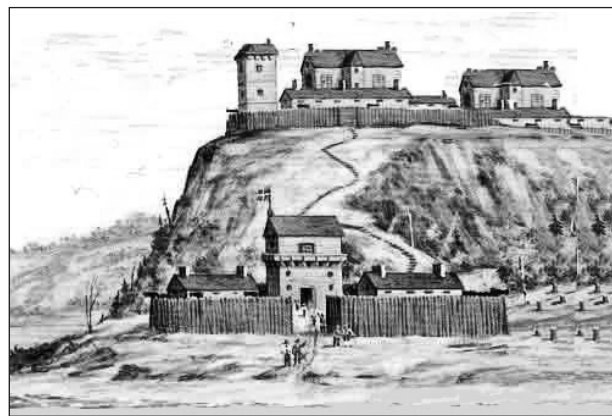
So, what if Roberval had not allowed Cartier to proceed ahead to Canada while he waited for his guns to be supplied? What if the two adventurers had arrived together and set up a more harmonious, durable colony? What if they had found more real gold as Cartier had done on his second voyage, or realized the potential of fur, fish and timber?

Had that colony of the mid-16th century survived and thrived along the St. Lawrence valley and Gulf, inevitably the burgeoning French explorers, merchants, and military commanders would have expanded further south into the as-yet-unclaimed North Atlantic seaboard.

Would the French not have had a several-decade jump on Dutch and English adventurers, traders and religious zealots in laying claim to what would become the north-eastern states of America? Would New England have been a part of Nouvelle France, and the bulwark for French expansion deep into the Ohio and Mississippi valleys, all the way to Louisiana?

Had they known the possibilities within their grasp perhaps Cartier and Roberval might have found a way to make their colony work. Instead, the ruins of their attempt to build a French empire in North America remained buried for four and a half centuries, uncovered by Champlain's more successful ancestors.

Peter Black of Quebec City is a CBC Radio-producer, a columnist on Canadian affairs, and a freelance writer.



king. The dismal failure of Cartier and Roberval's colony soured France on the New World for sixty years.

The Cartier-Roberval adventure raises an intriguing question: What if the colony had learned to brave the harsh winter, found resources to fill the royal coffers, and developed better relations with the natives?

As historian Jean Provencher noted at the announcement of the discovery, the Cartier-Roberval expedition was highly ambitious and relatively well-equipped. Between the two of them there were at least eight ships, each stocked with provisions and animals, and populated with soldiers, sailors, and the experienced craftsmen needed to build a settlement.

There were also many women of breeding age aboard — minus the frisky niece, of course. In all, the expedition count-

Above: Modern rendition of Charlesbourg Royal.

EVENT LISTINGS

Stanstead, Oct.14-Nov. 25

Stanstead County Historical Society
Colby-Curtis Museum
Information: (819) 876-7322
info@colbycurtis.ca

N.B September to December opening hours for the museum are: Tuesday to Sunday: 12:30 to 4:30 p.m.

Nov. 18, 1 to 5 p.m.

Tastes of the Region (2nd edition)

Local producers offering free samples at every table

Admission: 5\$

Nov. 19, 2 to 4 p.m.

Townships Expressions

English-speaking writers and musicians from the Eastern Townships display their books, music, crafts. Meet the authors and musicians over refreshments.

Nov. 25, 1 to 4 p.m.

Museum Boutique Christmas Fair

Mansonville Nov. 1-8

Potton Heritage Association
Mansonville United Church
Information: 450-292-3522

Lectures with Slides:

Nov. 1, 7:30 p.m.

Lake Memphremagog: New insights into the Early Discovery of the Eastern Townships (French) and **Nov. 8, 7:30 p.m** (English)

Refreshments served.

Entrance fee: 10\$

Chelsea, Nov 11-Jan 15

Gatineau Valley Historical Society (GVHS). Information: (819) 827-4432

Nov. 11, 10:45 a.m.

Chelsea Pioneer Cemetery
Remembrance Day Ceremony

Nov. 20, 7:30 p.m

Chelsea Community Centre
Douglas Cowden gives talk: Reminiscences of Growing Up in the Meech Creek Valley.

Jan. 15, 7:30 p.m

Chelsea Community Centre
Writer and historian Victor Suthren recounts the early Canadian years of explorer Captain James Cook.

Feb. 19, 7:30 p.m.

Chelsea Community Centre
Annual general meeting of the Gatineau Valley Historical Society (GVHS).

Upper Ottawa Valley Genealogical Group Inc. (UOVGG)

Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 72, Pembroke Ont., **Nov. 18** 10:30 a.m.

A tour of the Legion's Archives and Museum conducted by Curator Gil Jansen

Memorabilia relating to servicemen from the Pembroke area

UOVGG Reference Library

January 20, 10:30 a.m.

222 Dickson ST. Pembroke ON (lower level Masonic Lodge)

Show and Tell and Problem Solving

No problem to solve or an item to show needed.

All welcome!

Westmount Nov 16-Dec 21

Westmount Historical Association
Info: (514) 925-1404 or (514) 932-6688

Fall Lecture Series

Westmount Public Library

Nov 16, 7 to 9 p.m.

Bruce Anderson: Characteristics of Westmount's Architecture: The Classical Idea, The Medieval Idea, The Modernist Idea.

Dec 21, 7 to 9 p.m.

Edouard El Kaim:Economic Demystification: Renovating Old Homes at Less Cost

Quebec City, Nov. 4-Dec. 5

Morrin Centre, 44 rue des Ecosais
Info: (418) 694-9147

Nov. 4 and Nov 11, 1 p.m.

Saturday Kids' Readings
Literary and Historical Society Library

Nov 5, 2 p.m. to 5p.m

Lecture Series

Michel Boudreau: Restoration of the Morrin Centre, including development, difficulties and discoveries.

Admission: \$15

Nov. 14, 7:30 p.m.

Regular Haiku Group Meeting

Please sign up ahead

Dec. 5, 7. p.m.

World Affairs Discussion Group

In Focus - The Middle East

Admission: \$4, members,

\$6 non-members

Montreal, Oct 29-Jan 27

McCord Museum

Growing Up in Montréal, an exhibition exploring the daily lives of young urban-dwellers. A remarkable collection of clothing, toys and photographs.

Open Tues. to Fri., 10a.m. to 6 p.m.

Saturday and Sunday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Info: (514) 398-7100

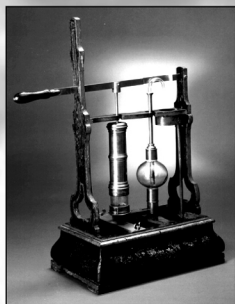
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CULTURAL CALENDAR



The Art of Teaching Physics: Until January 2007

This unique collection of scientific instruments of Abbé Nollet is displayed in a cabinet where visitors have access to instruments enabling them to experiment the principles of physics. Animated videos explain the use of the various instruments.



50 Years of Arms Collecting: Until January 2007

Over the last fifty years, the antique arms' collection has grown progressively through generous private donations from individuals and corporations enabling it to develop into one of the Stewart Museum's treasures. The collection of more than 1,400 pieces traces the evolution of the technical development of firearms, both civilian and military, from the 16th century to the late 20th century, from around the world.



Treasures from the Stewart Museum: Until January 2007

A thematic presentation of fifty treasures from the Stewart Museum collections accumulated over the years is the anniversary gift to the public. Grouped in five themes, Commerce, War and Peace, Fashion and Leisure, Voyages and Exploration, Decorative Arts and Beaux-Arts, Science and Technology, a selection of ten objects illustrates each of the themes: the indispensable, the unusual, the popular, the symbolic, the novel, the famous, the significant, the didactic, of popular use, the oldest and the most recent.

October 10, 2006 until May 20, 2007: the Stewart Museum is open Wednesday through Monday, 10 am until 5 pm. Closed on Tuesdays, Christmas and New Year's. Guided tours are available with a reservation.

Admission: Adult: 10.00, Student & Senior:\$7.00, Child under 7 years: Free, Family Rate (2 adults + 2 children or 1 adult + 3 children): \$20.00, Group rates available