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Heritage

Quebec

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News



A Sense of Belonging

Community Projects from “Belonging and Identity in English-Speaking Quebec”

Mechanical Music

Local and International Performers at Montreal's Mechanics Institute

Man of Many Hats

The Career of Orford's George Bonnallie



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Montreal Recorder's Court, 1906 Robert N. Wilkins

Cover photo: Orange Julep, Decarie Boulevard, Snowdon, Montreal, 2010.
Photo: Khayman.

EDITOR'S DESK

Wonderful World

by Rod MacLeod

"Don't know much about history," goes the song that I gleefully sang after successfully defending my doctoral dissertation in that subject many years ago. This was false modesty, you understand, masking genuine pride: passing an exam does tend to make one feel knowledgeable, and in any event I had dedicated so much time to learning how to "do" history I could surely justify a display of confidence. And yet, two and a half decades later of actively "doing" history, I continue to be amazed at how much I don't know.

In recent weeks we've seen an almost unprecedented outpouring of anger, sparked by particularly egregious acts of racism in the U.S., but also tapping into much deeper levels of frustration. The resulting wave of protest has caught the imagination of people right across the social and ethnic spectrum and right around the world. It has forced an unusual degree of reflection and sympathy. Even those who might have argued not so long ago that using a phrase like "Black Lives Matter" was akin to playing the "race card" are now realizing that something more is at stake. There are still people who resist the spirit of this movement, maintaining that "all lives matter," and many of them do so seemingly in an effort to appear moderate and reasonable. But most of us have come to understand that to say this is to say nothing. Well, of course, all lives matter, but that isn't the point. Maybe it's time to start thinking outside the box that so many of us imagine to be a place of moderation and reason. Maybe it's time to admit that we've got a lot to learn, even if we claim to be "A" students. Maybe it's time to walk the proverbial mile in someone else's shoes.

The point has certainly been brought home to me in recent months. Like a great many, I have always lamented the violence inflicted by police on people of

colour in both the United States and Canada, but I had not stopped to imagine, really imagine, what it means to be routinely perceived as a threat by the majority of the population and to live with a constant fear of assault. I'm not saying that I understand all that now – that would be presumptuous. But I am realizing just what a serious problem there is in our society. The scale of it is daunting. The solution requires a great deal of introspection and humility, particularly from those of us who have never experienced racism. We need to be thoughtful and humble, not just in our words and actions as we move forward, but in the



way we view the past.

It's easy to get defensive when it seems that everything we've always held sacred is coming under fire. We may admit that a police force or other public institution can be guilty of systemic racism, but it is quite another thing to accept that Western Civilization as a whole bears the Cain-like mark of racism for being literally its brother's keeper. We are quick to say: Sure, slavery was terrible, but that wasn't the West at its best, any more than antisemitism was characteristic of a culture that produced Michelangelo, Beethoven, and the Eiffel Tower. We readily resort to downplaying the importance of slavery and other evils in our history. The United States has consistently skirted around the centrality of slavery to the creation of the world's first

democracy, lauding the opposition to British tyranny while ignoring the integral violence of plantation economies. In Canada, without this sort of noble liberation trope to fall back on, we have simply styled ourselves as inherently kind and gentle: we are the place, for instance, where American slaves escaped to. Our kindly disposition and much-touted multiculturalism, like the wisdom of the United States' founding fathers and the welcoming words of the Statue of Liberty, are largely defensive positions: we hunker down behind them when we're accused of racism, antisemitism or genocide. When it comes to slavery, we are often even in denial. If there had been slavery in Canada, surely we would have learned about it in school. Or at least in grad school.

Equally striking in recent months has been the renewed effort to put key historical figures on trial for hitherto unrecognized crimes. One such figure close to the bone for me is the man whose name appears on my doctoral diploma, having founded what is now a world-famous university about to celebrate its bicentennial.

James McGill owned slaves, both Black and Indigenous. Furthermore, as a well-connected merchant, he may have profited from the Atlantic slave trade. Research has revealed the names of at least some of the slaves, though precision is always difficult with this sort of reconstitution. Certainly there was a woman named Marie Louise and a man named Jacques, and, above all, there was Sarah Cavilhe, who is well documented to the extent that we have a bill of sale – and evidence that she eventually gained her freedom. The last two individuals most probably worked on McGill's country estate, "Burnside," which he designated in his will as the future site of a university. Given this knowledge regarding "the founder," there is a move afoot to remove the statue of the jaunty

old man in the three-cornered hat decorating the main avenue through the campus so that students do not have to walk past this tribute to a slave-owner on their way to class. There are also voices calling for the university to change its name to something less offensive.

Again, it is easy to denounce “political correctness” and the apparent “erasure” of history. As someone who knows a fair amount about James McGill, I find myself instinctively going on the defensive. Yes, it’s true that James McGill owned slaves, but it wasn’t on the scale of the great southern antebellum plantations we might be imagining. By current reckoning, he acquired a total of five over the course of his career. He certainly wasn’t alone in owning slaves, which was a widespread (though by no means universal) practice prior to the abolition of slavery within the British Empire in 1833. I would also point to the man’s many positive achievements: James McGill was an important civic figure in Lower Canada, who helped shape both its democratic structure (as a founding member of the Legislative Assembly) and Montreal’s physical layout (as part of a major planning commission). Are all these accomplishments to be rubbed out because of one facet of his life? Should this individual’s contribution to history be reduced to a single sin? There is something intellectually limiting about doing that, something overly sensational – an echo of our current obsession with finding embarrassing or incriminating facts about people and then “cancelling” them. In historical research, surely one should resist the urge to draw swift conclusions from scattered evidence, satisfying though it may be to stumble upon an obscure fact and feel entitled to say: “Ah hah! This changes everything!” One should always strive for a broader reading. One should explore the humanity rather than focus solely on the villainy. Besides, who among us would feel truly entitled to cast the first stone?

Now, that’s all very well, of course. Yet, given the serious charge of racism and slavery, it may be disingenuous to start qualifying and rationalizing. Arguably, saying that James McGill owned “only” a few slaves is a bit like saying “I’m not racist, but...” It may be

distressing for those with a detailed knowledge of historical experience to see figures judged solely by their worst deeds – but then maybe that’s not really the issue here. Maybe the issue here is that most people don’t know that slavery existed in Canada pretty much from Contact through to Abolition. Maybe the issue is that we don’t acknowledge the



pernicious legacies of racism, anti-semitism and genocide that continue to mark our society. Maybe, in this light, to argue for a broader reading of James McGill is like insisting that all lives matter.

The Black Lives Matter movement has inspired a lot of out-of-the-box thinking regarding our society and how it functions. Such thinking also has serious implications for our understanding of history. Yes, we all need to learn more about the darker chapters in our past that are so inadequately covered in the curriculum, if at all. But the real challenge is to get beyond that knee-jerk defensiveness so many of us feel when we encounter an attack on the way we understand the world, present and past. This challenge is admittedly harder to face when the attack seems unrelenting and uncompromising – and, to many of us, unappreciative of our own expertise. I firmly believe that, at least at some stage, this expertise has to be incorporated into the conversation. But in the short term, we need to listen to the protests. It may hurt our feelings to be told we come from a place of “privilege” – an expression guaranteed to provoke a defensive reaction. Again, we need to

move beyond such responses. The issue is not, as they say, about us.

Recently, I was in a discussion in which someone stated the cliché about history being written by the victors. It occurred to me that it would be much more useful and accurate to say that history has been written by the privileged. By that I do not mean that only wealthy people write history, but rather that most history has been written from privileged perspectives. Privilege here refers not to status but to experience. Like all authors, historians write about what they find interesting and generally do not write about matters outside their comprehension. It took a wave of working-class scholars to show that working-class people had a history that was different from that of the kings and politicians and businessmen that filled the textbooks – to show, moreover, that ordinary people were not just interesting subjects but also historical players in their own right. It took a wave of women scholars to make similar points about the experience of women in history, adding that *gender* was not just a human trait but a lens through which people view, and viewed, their world. And now a wave of scholars of colour are showing not only how racial discrimination has played a much larger role in our collective evolution than we once thought, but also how race affects, and has always affected, our perception of the past. I have written and spoken about James McGill’s Burnside for a good three decades, but only in this past year have I incorporated Jacques and Sarah Caville as indispensable players in the story. Truth be told, it’s a richer, more interesting story with those two in it, whatever one may think of McGill himself.

I’m not saying I agree with the idea of changing the university’s name. For one thing, the confusion that would cause in the academic world would only facilitate the transformation of the institution into an elite private establishment – which is one likely outcome of the financial squeeze on English-language public post-secondary education that seems to be in the works as I write. But to erase the name McGill is to let the university off the hook when it comes to its dubious history. For two centuries now, McGill University has used the

persona of James McGill as a drawing card and comfortable cultural icon, even though the man had no direct influence on the creation of this institution; he was merely the first in a very long list of people to leave it money. Yet, his statue has decorated the campus since 1996, and long before that there was the “founder’s elm.” The man is even buried on campus, right in front of the Arts Building – a detail that those who are offended by his statue do not seem to have twigged to yet. There are awards, scholarships, fellowships, lectures, and even a society in his name. There are even celebratory songs: I can still hear my mother (who never darkened the university’s door, but dated people who did) burst into choruses of “He’s our father, well yes rather, Jaaaames McGill!” just as she would sing old advertising jingles if the subject came up. Such is the power

of ear worms. And there is nothing wrong with any of that in itself, but it has served the university’s interests enormously. James McGill is a brand, arguably even a mascot like Colonel Sanders or the Marlboro Man. His persona adds considerably to the university’s cachet. And cultivating the fictionalized image of James McGill as a convivial old man with a passion for learning has meant suppressing the reality of James McGill as a slave owner. If only for credibility, the university needs to recognize and accept its role in distorting the past, especially as it looks forward to its third century. My humble suggestion: create the McGill Centre for the Study of Reparations and Restitution.

Again, we don’t need to harp on guilt, just privilege. Those of us who are White, and particularly those of us who

are White and Male (the use of upper case here is an issue for another day), are being asked to be good allies in the Black Lives Matter movement, and, to a great extent, this means admitting our privilege. It means getting over the knee-jerk defensiveness we so easily resort to. It means accepting the impact of race on so much of our daily lives, as well as its impact on history. And, by acknowledging the prevalence of race as a major determinant throughout history, we recognize how little we know about it. We can learn, of course. In the process, we might just find that these added levels of complexity actually make the past infinitely more interesting than we once thought.

Coming to terms with our history is a major step towards creating a wonderful world tomorrow. To this end, we should all strive to be “A” students.

FINDING PHILLIS

Postscript to “Slavery at Rawdon”

by Daniel Parkinson

It was my good fortune to attend the September 3 Zoom lecture given at the Quebec Family History Society, entitled “Black History: Why weren’t we taught this in school?” To my surprise, Frank Harris, the presenter, mentioned Mrs. Sawers of Sorel and her slave, Phillis. This provided another piece to my story (“Slavery at Rawdon,” *QHN*, Fall 2020), but came too late to be included in the article.

On October 15, 1798, Moses Hart of Trois-Rivières was instrumental in arresting Phillis in Quebec City. Hart was a prominent businessman and landowner who had contested a Legislative Assembly seat at William Henry (Sorel). He was a friend to Mrs. Sawers. I remember reading about the Hart family in articles by the late Anne Goulding Joseph in, I believe, *Connections*. Moses’s brother Ezekiel was the first Jew elected to the Quebec Assembly, in 1807 and 1808, though he was not allowed to keep his seat because he could not pledge “on the true faith of a Christian.”

Magistrate John Blackwood and a

Mr. Scott arrested Phillis “at Mr. James Gray’s, and she was conveyed on board a vessel by a constable at 10 o’clock at night, under charge of Scott... The vessel went off in the night and I hope he has delivered her safe to you before you receive this. Scott will inform you of the other particulars. He got \$12 from Mr. Blackburn and the constable got a guinea, which he merited, as he exerted himself.” (This account, from a letter written by Moses Hart to Mrs. Sawers, leaves one wondering exactly how the constable exerted himself.)

“She has interested the Attorney-General [Jonathan Sewell, who was then the sitting member of the Assembly for William Henry] and several others here in her favor by very lamentable stories of her treatment, and I am afraid if she gets away again it will be attended with difficulty to reclaim her. She has said that if she is obliged to remain in your house, she will commit suicide or do some mischief to your family. She is willing to be sold, and there are people here, she says, will purchase her. All this urges me strongly to recommend to you

to dispose of her, and Mr. Blackwood is of this opinion also.”

We do not have a record of what happened on her arrival at the Sawers home. Years later, Judge Samuel Gale (1783-1865) gave testimony at a proceeding of the Court of Queen’s Bench in Montreal for a case in Missouri about the status of slavery in Lower Canada after the conquest. “I knew two or three individuals when a child who were held... as slaves,” he recalled, “but who were induced to apply to the Courts of justice to be declared free, and... were so declared. One of these... was called Phillis, and lived at Sorel... These things are... fifty years bygone or more, and I do not now recollect having myself seen any more recent instances of persons residing in Lower Canada who were held as slaves.”

It is clear that owning slaves was, at this time, an accepted part of life for many in the upper and ruling class of Lower Canada. Slaves were property and could be “disposed of.”

QAHN NEWS

by Matthew Farfan

2020, QAHN's much-anticipated 20th anniversary year, has been a challenge, to say the least. As Covid-19 continues to ravage our country and its economy, the heritage sector soldiers on under these highly difficult circumstances.

Very quickly, during the first wave of the pandemic, QAHN moved to adapt its programming to a digital, online format. This entailed a steep learning curve for our staff as well as for our many partner-organizations and guest speakers.

Our 2020 Heritage Talks lecture series was a particular challenge to modify, as the program involved over a dozen speakers scheduled to give presentations at venues across the province. Happily, most of our guests agreed to give their talks online, using a combination of Zoom and Facebook Livestream. The results have been extraordinary, with some events reaching audiences of upwards of 1,000 people. One of the largest events in the series, "Irish Heritage in Quebec: History, Culture, Music and Dance," a co-production with QAHN's "A Different Tune" project, took place in May. The final event in the program, "The Evolution of Ski Trails in the Laurentians," took place in late November, partly online and partly in person in Morin Heights (which was located in an "Orange Zone" at the time, and therefore able to hold limited in-person gatherings). A special thank you to project director Christina Adamko for putting together an excellent program, and to Glenn Patterson, another QAHN project director, for all of his assistance and collaboration.

QAHN's colloquium "Reconciling History: Indigenous Voices in Quebec Heritage," overseen by Dwane Wilkin, had originally been planned as a one-day in-person event in April. The event was re-scheduled but ultimately had to be completely



transformed into a series of interactive online talks featuring Indigenous and Métis speakers. Over 500 participants took part in these virtual events, far surpassing what we could have hoped for in an in-person setting – a silver lining to Covid, if ever there was one! An offshoot of this project was the production of a special issue of *Quebec Heritage News* magazine in Fall 2020, spotlighting Indigenous heritage and culture. Recordings of all of the Indigenous-themed talks, as well as of the talks produced during the Heritage Talks series, are available on QAHN's Facebook page.

One of the most heavily impacted QAHN programs this year was "A Different Tune: Musical Heritage in English-speaking Quebec." A significant portion of this 15-month project had originally involved live performances. These were largely impossible once Covid shut down this type of activity. Fortunately, project director Glenn Patterson was able to adapt many project activities to an online format. Events ranged from free online fiddling and song-writing workshops, to performances of Klezmer music, to a special event featuring Black music traditions in Montreal, and much more. The result has been a surprising variety of high-caliber programming featuring talented performers and scholars, and partner-organizations ranging from KlezCanada to the Black Community Resource Centre to the Val-Cartier Historical Society and others. A special thanks to Glenn Patterson



Top: A Different Tune: "Black Music in Quebec," November 2020.

for his efforts, as well as his assistance on other online QAHN programming. Many of these events are available on QAHN's Facebook page.

QAHN's other recent programming includes our highly successful 4th annual (and 1st virtual) Eastern Townships Heritage Fair which included guest speakers, performers and a virtual "show and tell" by staff at museums across the region; the afternoon event was viewed live by over 700 people. Heather Darch, with assistance from Glenn Patterson, organized the event, and coached and rehearsed with all of the various presenters.

This past fall, QAHN undertook a series of special mini-documentaries. The series, called "The Scandal Makers," is hosted by Heather Darch, and will be made available in its entirety on Youtube ("QAHN Home"). As narrator, Heather takes viewers into some of Missisquoi County's oldest and most obscure rural cemeteries in an exploration of the seamier side of the region's distant past.

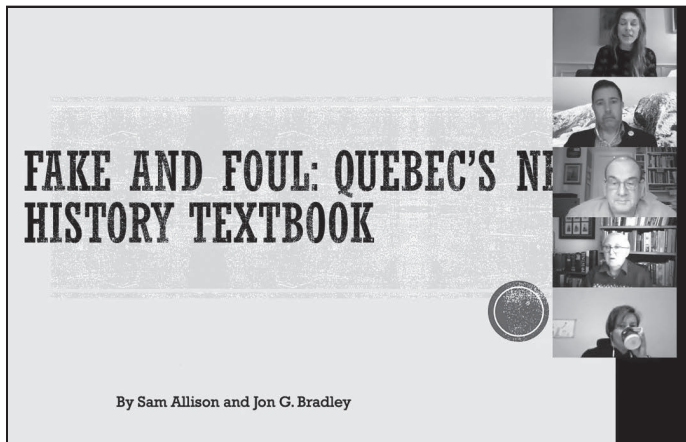


which is being overseen by Dwane Wilkin, QAHN is partnering with ten local heritage organizations in five regions to achieve a range of local history initiatives despite the challenges posed by Covid. (Six of these activities are discussed in more detail elsewhere in this magazine.)

Finally, two major QAHN undertakings are now in progress in honour of QAHN's 20th anniversary. Both are possible thanks to generous funding from the Department of Canadian Heritage.

The first of these is the streamlining and modernization of QAHN's eight websites; the technical aspects of this major project are being handled by QAHN's longtime website designer, Dave Myberg.

The second of these undertakings is the production of a two-volume anthology of articles from QAHN's celebrated print magazine, *Quebec Heritage News*. Once the idea was approved by the QAHN board, an editorial committee was formed to select the articles and determine the format for the anthology: Grant Myers (president), Sandra Stock (a director), Kevin O'Donnell (a past president), Rod Macleod (the magazine's current editor) and Matthew Farfan (QAHN's executive director). For the past couple of months, Matthew and Rod have been editing the close to 140 articles, while Dan Pinese is assisting with layout. The anthology will be published and launched sometime during 2021 – hopefully when we are all able to meet in person once again.



QAHN's annual Montreal Wine & Cheese had to be cancelled, as did our 20th anniversary convention and AGM, originally planned for June on Montreal's West Island. A virtual AGM was held, however, in November, with nearly 60 heritage delegates and other members and guests present. The event was skillfully chaired by QAHN president Grant Myers.

A highlight of the AGM was the announcement of our annual heritage volunteer awards. The 2020 Marion Phelps Award had already been presented to the Hemmingford Archives, with a socially-distanced, in-person ceremony in Hemmingford in October. The 2020 Richard Evans Award was given to the Montreal Irish Monument Park Foundation for its efforts to create a commemorative park around the Black Rock in Griffintown. An in-person presentation will take place at the Black Rock some time in 2021. Another highlight of the AGM was a presentation by retired educators Sam Allison and Jon Bradley called "Fake and Foul: Quebec's New History Textbook."

"Belonging and Identity in English-speaking Quebec" is a current QAHN project funded by Quebec's Secretariat for relations with Anglophone Quebecers, in partnership with QUESCEN at Concordia University. Through this project,



HISTORY FOR EVERYONE

Belonging and Identity in English-speaking Quebec

Secrétariat aux relations
avec les Québécois
d'expression anglaise

Québec



Museums, historical societies and other civic groups have been working with the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network since September to explore local history in ten small communities across the province. Funded by the Quebec government's Secretariat for relations with Anglophone Quebecers (SRQEA), QAHN's project, *Belonging and Identity in English-speaking*

Quebec, supports a broad range of member-led initiatives. Presented in the following pages are articles spotlighting six of these initiatives. Together, these projects illustrate how heritage and culture can help contribute to community well-being, even during extraordinary times.

- Dwane Wilkin, project director

THE KNOWLEDGE ORCHARD

Reaping the fruits of local history conservation in Hemmingford

by Myrna Paquette

Where are you from?

Such a simple question, yet one that drives human curiosity down all sorts of unexpected paths.

Take the example of Betty McKay Mackenzie. Her quest to learn more about her family's ties to an historic farming settlement near the United States border was the seed that gave rise to the Hemmingford Archives.

About the time the apple trees bloom next spring, Archives volunteers will be putting the final touches on their 2021 summer exhibit: a retrospective on the town's built heritage and the area's renowned apple-growing industry, which dates back more than two centuries. The core of the exhibit will feature four new display panels funded by the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network (QAHN) in partnership with the Secretariat for Relations with English-speaking Quebecers (SRQEA).

And it all began back in the 1980s when Betty, then living in St. Lambert, asked the Quebec provincial archives for information about her family's ancestral property. Her request elicited a response that included a document on Hemmingford Township's early

settlement. Betty would spend the next 20 years amassing a huge collection of documents related to the area's history – an impressive archive that has evolved into a priceless store of knowledge for visiting researchers and local community members alike.

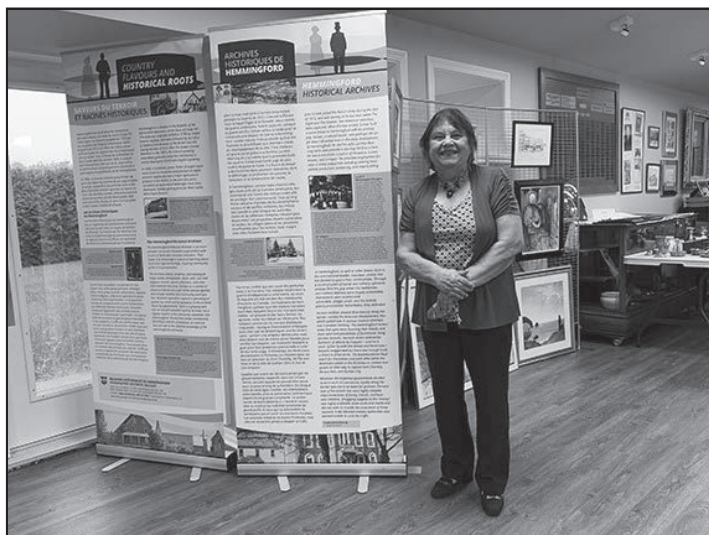
Turning a personal interest in family history into a vibrant community organi-

zation for the group the following year. By 1997, Betty had moved most of the Archives' documents from her St. Lambert basement to a room in the basement of the Hemmingford Town Hall, but over the years the problem of where and how to store the growing number of documents was a constant source of concern.

Betty retired in 2009, and the Archives' new president, Mary Ducharme, along with the group's newly formed board of directors, began their long struggle to find a suitable home for the burgeoning collection. The search ensued without success for three years. Then, in 2012, Hemmingford Elementary School gave the group permission to use a large empty classroom. During the four years spent there, with use of the gymnasium for events, the Archives' visibility in the community and

donations of materials increased. However, there was no space for researchers to consult documents on-site, and the collections quickly outgrew the room's capacity to house them.

When Betty McKay Mackenzie



zation has been quite a feat.

In 1992, Betty and a friend, Jacqueline Stoneberger, took steps to establish Hemmingford Archives as a recognized institution, obtaining both federal and provincial charitable status

Myrna Paquette in the Hemmingford Archives.
Photo: courtesy of the Hemmingford Archives.

moved to British Columbia a few years later, another 20 boxes of documents were received from her old home in St. Lambert. For a period, board members had to keep some of these materials in their own homes!

Then, in 2016, members of St. Andrews Presbyterian Church in Hemmingford offered to donate an old quonset hangar that had served as the church hall since 1965. Local municipal bodies agreed that if the Archives were successful in getting grants to renovate the building, they would also contribute financially. Volunteers were responsible for fundraising to buy supplies and equipment required to operate the new facility at an acceptable standard.

It wasn't easy. The first two grant applications failed before the Archives succeeded in raising money for the renovation from the Canadian Cultural Spaces (CCS) program, administered by the Department of Canadian Heritage, and the Quebec government's Economic Development Fund. Canadian Heritage subsequently contributed an additional \$20,000 for equipment.

With the approved government funding, municipal grants and generous

donations from the community, renovations and a substantial extension to the building were completed, and the new facility was officially opened on May 5, 2018. Hemmingford Archives now has state-of-the-art security, multimedia equipment and storage and display space sufficient for many years to come.

This 353 square metres (3,800 square feet) of space provides a home for the collections, displays, administration, and small events for up to 100 people. It is a warm and welcoming space for researchers and for volunteers who work to process, record and store the growing amount of donated material. As families downsize or settle estates, they know that they have a place where their family history documents can be preserved for future generations. Requests for help with research are regularly received from all over North America, mostly due to the Archives' visibility on the Internet.

Hemmingford Historical Archives is run entirely by a volunteer board of ten people assisted by a number of other volunteers. There are no paid employees and the building is mortgage-free. A \$15,000 municipal grant is provided

yearly for building expenses. Costs of maintaining the collections and administrative expenses are paid for by membership fees, community donations and fundraising events.

Partly in recognition of her outstanding volunteer involvement in the effort to modernize the Archives, QAHN recently presented Mary Ducharme with its 2020 Marion Phelps Award for long-term contributions to the preservation and promotion of Quebec's Anglophone heritage. In addition to a \$3,000 "Belonging" project contribution towards next summer's exhibit, QAHN partnered with Hemmingford Archives to present a live online concert on December 12, 2020, part of QAHN's "A Different Tune" project, highlighting the musical heritage of English-speaking Quebec.

Requests for information or help with research may be sent to hfordarchives@gmail.com. Many useful research links, photos and a list and description of the more than 3,500 items in the Archives' inventory may be found at: www.hemmingfordarchives.org.



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BRUSH WITH A PAST

Public mural to point up Richmond area's mixed cultural roots

Fundraising is challenging at the best of times. In the midst of a global pandemic, it can be downright discouraging. But heritage enthusiasts living in and around the Town of Richmond in the Eastern Townships have reason to hope they'll reach their ambitious goal for 2021.

Richmond County Historical Society, in conjunction with Richmond St. Patrick's Society, had been working for some time on their plan to commission an outdoor mural when Covid-19 hit last spring.

The idea was to celebrate the Richmond area's history in a work of public art that pays tribute to the different ethnic groups who put down roots here in the last two centuries, including Irish, Dutch and French families. Alongside what is nowadays a predominantly Francophone local population, members of the



Tradition and Fraternity:

The Continuing History of
Golden Rule Lodge No. 5,
A.F. & A.M.,
1964-2020



Matthew F. Farfan

NEW BOOK!

**Tradition and Fraternity:
The History of Golden Rule Lodge No. 5,
1964 to 2020**

by Matthew Farfan

60 pages; softcover; full-colour; lavishly illustrated with nearly 300 archival and contemporary photographs. Includes an overview of the history of Stanstead's famous Golden Rule Lodge from 1803; a chronicle from 1964 to the present day; Owl's Head lore; reminiscences by lodge members and friends; Masonic trivia; and more!

Price: \$20 each (plus \$6 per book for postage in Canada / \$12 for postage to the U.S.)

All profits from the sale of this book go to Golden Rule Lodge.

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English-speaking community here continue to make significant contributions in the fields of culture, education, farming and industry.

By summer, promises of financial support had been secured from area municipalities, but with coronavirus cases on the rise, raising the estimated \$45,000 needed to bring the mural to completion still looked daunting. Spirits were lifted towards the end of September when the history-themed public mural received a warm reception from the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network, which has since contributed \$6,000 towards the Richmond County Historical Society initiative. The mural is one of four initiatives in the Eastern Townships that QAHN chose to support as part of its SRQEA-funded “Belonging and Identity” project.

Since then, the mural’s proponents have had more good news: MRC of Val-St. Francois, the Municipality of Melbourne Township and Townshippers Foundation have each confirmed financial contributions of their own, and they are confident that the project is on track for completion in the spring of 2021. Valuable preliminary technical guidance has also been provided by Sherbrooke-based artist Serge Malenfant, president of the Global Mural Association, who has also offered to help recruit a team of professional

artists to create the Richmond mural. Founder and long-time head of the artistic organization M.U.R.I.R.S., Malenfant was closely involved in the production of a renowned series of heritage-themed outdoor murals in Sherbrooke’s historic downtown.

Part of QAHN’s financial contribution will be applied towards development of the mural’s conceptual design and creation of a small-scale model for use in presentations to other potential funders, including local businesses and cultural agencies.

Steering committee members have a perfect site in mind for the mural: the exterior wall of a prominent main-street business, Quincaillerie Richmond Hardware, which extends along one edge of a public park on Rue Principale. Before Covid-19 restrictions, Place René Thibault was a popular gathering place and a venue for cultural events. With any luck, when the mural is unveiled in a few months’ time, face masks and social distancing restrictions will be a thing of the past – another milestone for the history books – and people will once again feel free to congregate.

Donations to the Richmond mural project are welcome and should be made to: Richmond County Historical Society, 1161 Route 243, Canton de Melbourne, QC, J0B 2B0. Tax receipts will be issued for all donations of \$20 or more.

OBJECT SORTING

Magdalen Islanders move to protect, modernize local museum collections

Not many Canadians know that three of the oldest English-speaking settlements in Quebec are situated on the Magdalen Islands, home to a unique maritime way of life that has been shared for centuries by local Anglophones and their Francophone neighbours.

Members of the Anglophone community have sought for years to promote and preserve this heritage by operating and providing public access to three historic sites. The Little Red Schoolhouse and the Veteran’s Museum in the village of Old Harry, and the Entry Island Museum are operated by the Council for Anglophone Magdalen Islanders (CAMI), a non-profit organization mandated to support local English speakers.

By partnering with QAHN to carry out improvements to museum management practices – including a key investment in artifact acquisition and cataloguing – the group was able to build on ongoing commitments to support historical education and further enrich local tourism offerings.

“Museums and cultural heritage sites are powerful assets for local development,” said Helena Burke, CAMI’s executive director, noting that heritage-led actions have been at the heart of the community’s development strategy for many years now. “They inspire creativity, boost cultural diversity, help regenerate local economies, attract visitors and create employment opportunities.”

CAMI used \$6,000 from QAHN as part of its “Belonging and Identity” project to work with community members to document the provenance and identity of all artefacts at each museum site

and organize this information into an electronic database.

It is hoped that the resulting searchable database will enable residents and future researchers to gain easier access to a wide range of themes in local history and heritage, while making the 250-year-old presence and contributions of English-speaking Magdalen Islanders better known.

Help setting up the artefacts registry was provided by the Musée de la Mer, an accredited regional and government-funded museum situated on Havre Aubert Island, one of eight islands that make up the Magdalen Islands archipelago in the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

Database information includes a photo of each artefact, its dimensions, the type of object it is, a written description of where it was used or for what purpose, as well as its current condition. Donor information is also included.

In carrying out their work, Burke said the community was careful to ensure that the artefacts were handled with utmost attention to professional conservation standards. The Anglophone community on the Magdalen Islands would like to seek provincial accreditation for their museum establishments in the near future.

Launch of the artefacts registry is planned for early 2021. Given current restrictions on public gatherings due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the launch is expected to take place online, by video conference. Later in the new year, CAMI is planning to host an educational activity for the local English high school.



*Heritage interpreters Rosanna Taker and Roxanne Boudreau.
Photo: courtesy of CAMI.*

UNTIL WE MEET AGAIN

A smartphone guide to local history on the Quebec-Vermont line

by Samuel Gaudreau-Lalande

Permanent settlement of Rock Island dates to 1798, just three years after neighbouring Derby Line, Vermont, was established. From the beginning, two geographical features, one human and one natural, had enormous influence over the shape of local development: the Canada-U.S. border and the Tomifobia River.

Proximity to the international border had a profound and lasting impact on the community's history and sense of identity. As late as 1840, fully 90 per cent of people living here had either been born in the United States or were of American descent (Kesterman, 114). A strong sense of cross-border kinship between Derby Line and Rock Island (now a part of the town of Stanstead) has been cultivated ever since.

While the coronavirus pandemic keeps the border and other public venues closed indefinitely, the Colby-Curtis Museum is hard at work on a novel way to explore this heritage, combining smartphone technology with local history.

With \$6,000 in support from the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network, the museum is developing two bilingual self-guided audio walking tours, designed to allow residents and visitors alike to delve deeply into the border region's past while respecting public health guidelines.

On the list of walking-tour stops is a famous building embodying the close relationship between Rock Island and Derby Line: the Haskell Free Library and Opera House. Built in 1904, it sits directly over the border and, even today, is freely accessible to visitors of both countries, who may come and go without having to stop at customs.

Another stop is the Butterfield industrial complex, made up of buildings based in both countries. Situated above the Tomifobia River gorge, Butterfield's was in former times a major manufacturer of tools, notably contributing to the production effort during World War II.

Rising in the hills east of Rock Island, and meandering north through historic Stanstead Township to become the main

source of Lake Massawippi, the Tomifobia River had been the main draw for early settlers and industrialists, including the Loyalist Charles Kilborn, who built Rock Island's first water-powered mills in 1803. Industry here flourished in the mid-nineteenth century and by the 1890s, hydro-electricity was powering streetlights and factories (Farfan, 78).

This industrialization, along with a connection to the railroad network, helped to drive Rock Island's historic prosperity and expansion. Flanked by industries to the west, farmland to the east, large residential properties to the north and the border to the south, the village core grew up around the junction of two streets. A town square now marks this intersection, named after local inventor Henry Seth Taylor, creator of Canada's first steam buggy, in 1867.

Notable buildings in downtown Rock Island include the former Royal Bank and the old Customs House. These and many other sites will be featured in one of the planned tours, which are due to be released in the spring of 2021.

A second smartphone tour will enable visitors and local residents to learn about Carrollcroft, the iconic granite villa that houses the Colby-Curtis Museum.

Both tours aim to increase public

awareness of the unique and valuable heritage of the Stanstead area while enriching museum visitors' learning experience. It is anticipated that they will also be used by area schools and other community groups, with the goal of sharing local history with younger generations.

Samuel Gaudreau-Lalande, an art historian specialized in Canadian art and the history of photography, is the director of the Colby-Curtis Museum in Stanstead, Quebec.

Sources

Matthew Farfan, *The Eastern Townships: On Lake and River*, Québec, 2008.

Jean-Pierre Kesterman, Peter Southam and Diane Saint-Pierre, *Histoire des Cantons de l'Est*, Québec, Quebec, 1998.



Rock Island Bridge, Postcard, c. 1930.
Photo: Stanstead Historical Society collection, PC124.

A PUBLIC PLAQUE FOR A PIONEER CEMETERY

Promoting local history a matter of grave concern in Western Quebec

Long before churches and adjoining graveyards were built, early settlers in Canada established their own “homestead” or family burial grounds, many of which have gradually disappeared over time – forgotten, overtaken by natural growth, or obscured by urban sprawl.

The Blackburn family burial ground in Quebec’s Gatineau Valley is a rare and striking exception. Nestled beside a granite cliff in the woods beside a horse pasture, the 178-year-old cemetery is one of the few remaining landmarks in Cantley that memorialize the municipality’s pioneer past.

Owned by Gary Blackburn, a direct descendant of Cantley’s first European settler, the old burial ground also pays tribute to generations of Blackburn family members who have taken care to preserve it.

At least 32 members of five generations of Blackburns and their neighbours were interred here between 1842 and 1920. More are probably buried, since prior to the establishment of church cemeteries in Cantley in 1858 official documentation of burials was dependent on “circuit riders” – clergymen who travelled to small settlements across the territory and who were not always available to perform last rites or record deaths.

But there are alarming signs that the future integrity of the site and the heritage it represents may be in jeopardy. Wary of encroaching development, a local historical society is taking steps to save the burial ground from any possible future depredations.

Cantley 1889 recently obtained \$3,000 in support from the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network, as part of QAHN’s ongoing Secretariat-funded “Belonging” project, to erect a bilingual commemorative plaque onsite and make it publicly accessible.

A white picket fence surrounds two large obelisks here, which are the only stone markers visible. Wild orange lilies carpet the burial ground, which extends well beyond the fence to the trees and a gravel laneway. Once the plaque is unveiled at a planned ceremony next spring, it is hoped the site will become a quiet focal point for local residents and visitors to learn more about Cantley’s place in the region’s early settlement history.

“For the past few decades, our earliest history has been generally forgotten, ignored or considered unimportant,” says Margaret Phillips,

Cantley 1889’s board president. This is because the municipality recognizes and celebrates its “birth year” as 1989, the year



Cantley residents won a 6-year-long struggle to gain independence from Gatineau.

In fact, Cantley’s political history began more than a century earlier. The first post-master gave Cantley its name in 1857 and, in 1889, the community was constituted as the Municipality of East Hull.

Educating residents about this history is viewed as particularly important in light of demographic changes that have seen a sharp decline in the proportion of Anglophone families who reside in the rapidly growing municipality. Situated just a few kilometres north of the cities of Ottawa and Gatineau, the municipality has one of the fastest growing populations in the province which, Phillips says, municipal leaders have sought to promote as a new and modern community.

The spectre of development on land adjacent to the Blackburn Pioneer Cemetery is raising fresh concerns about the site’s future integrity. It is hoped that the plaque will raise public awareness and local support for Cantley 1889’s long term goal of seeking official heritage-status designation for the cemetery, under Quebec’s Cultural Heritage Act.

The plaque will honour the memory of immigrant families from Scotland and Ireland who established the area’s first farms in early nineteenth century, including Andrew Blackburn, the Scottish immigrant who first settled here in 1829.



ON THE TRAIL OF ORFORD'S PAST

Pandemic can't stop local history group from pursuing and sharing knowledge

As some non-profit groups shrank their community programming this fall in the face of ongoing public health restrictions, members of the Société d'histoire du Canton d'Orford (SHCO) dug into the past, with an eye to the future.

Incorporated just two years ago, the historical society had made ambitious plans for research, outreach and public education when the coronavirus pandemic hit Quebec in the spring of 2020, threatening to bring their efforts to a standstill.

It looked as though the Eastern Townships-based historical society might be forced to cancel a public walking tour of the historic village of Cherry River during the province's annual Journées de la culture. And the fate of a planned heritage display hung in the air. Not a promising outlook for a new grassroots organization that depends on such annual events.

Journées de la culture take place around Quebec each September, offering crucial visibility to fledgling groups like the SHCO that don't operate venues of their own, yet depend on community support to carry out their work.

Restrictions on public gatherings last fall did indeed curtail the scope of the SHCO's planned activities, but members were nevertheless able to advance the group's mission to contribute to local historical knowledge. The Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network recently provided the historical society \$3,000 worth of support for its work, as part of QAHN's "Belonging and Identity" project.

In addition to putting up several plaques in the municipality, community historians have used part of the money to create a large photo reproduction of the historic village centre, which was kept on display for an entire month outside the Cherry River Gospel Chapel. And although plans for guided visits to nearby historic sites (these include a mill, a tub factory, a school and a cemetery) had to be put on hold, members Juanita McKelvey and Bertrand Larivée were able to organize a special walk-about for the mayor and town councillors in early November.

Getting word out to community members in both languages will be critical for gathering and sharing knowledge about Orford's past, says SHCO member Jane Jenson, a professor emerita at the Université de Montréal and a *Quebec Heritage News* contributor. "Our communication strategy relies on

material generated for all community members," she stressed, "whether they are present in Orford or not. Contacting these communities requires outreach to engage English-speakers living across Quebec, as well as Francophone *Orferois* and Township residents who have little information about our history."

Orford Township attracted English-speaking colonists from the time of its official establishment in 1801, and descendants of early settlers still live in Orford today, though the current population is overwhelmingly Francophone. The township remained sparsely populated well into the twentieth century, and late take-off may help explain why knowledge of its history – including the contributions of English-speaking inhabitants – has only recently received attention.

Local researchers have so far been able to uncover a number of little-known stories of English-speaking pioneers, revealing a pattern of early settlement. By the 1830s, the American-born William Rider and his Quebec-born wife, Isabella Hoyt, were living in Orford Township's southern sector. A second group was

in Orford West, near lakes Stukely and Bowker, where, by the late 1840s, several recently settled Francophones were living alongside English-speaking families. A third settlement area arose around a sawmill near Lake Fraser, which was developed by two Englishmen: William Hopps and Henry Naylor.

Anglophones and Francophones have been living in Orford for at least 180 years, and the SHCO wishes to understand and make this history better known. Forthcoming research will focus on the arrival of three settler groups: immigrants from the United States, immigrants from the British Isles, and Francophone settlers arriving from elsewhere in Quebec.

Part of the support received through the "Belonging" project will help to develop this material into a series of bilingual exhibition banners expected to be ready for display in early 2021. Society volunteers are also working to track down and reproduce, as high-quality digital copies, historic photos currently in the private collections of local Anglophone families, and make them available online.

Do you have photos of information to share? Send an email to orfordshco19@gmail.com. Learn more about Orford Township's history at www.histoireorford.com.



A SUNDRY PLACE

George Bonnallie and the Settlement of Orford Township

by Jane Jenson

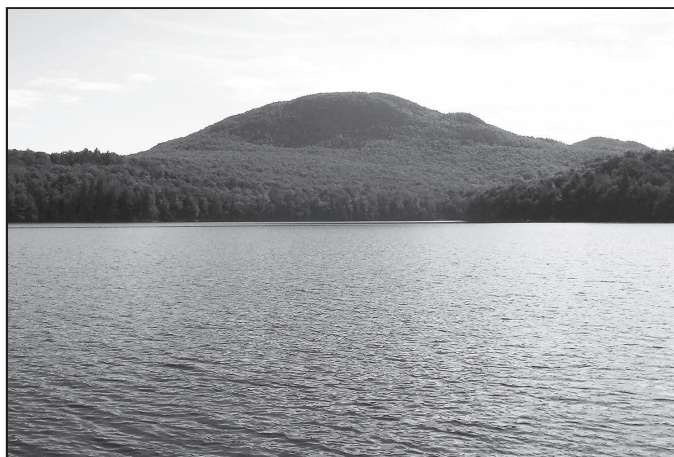
In November 1856, the Montreal business and civic community held a gala celebration marking the extension of the Grand Trunk Railway from Montreal to Stratford, Ontario. The organizing committee invited over 4,000 people from Canada East and West as well as the United States and England for two days of festivities. Newspaper reports grouped invitees' names by the cities from which they hailed, such as Toronto, Boston, Smith Falls or London. Reports also used a generic category of "sundry places" for those coming from less important – in the eyes of the committee – locations. George Bonnallie was the only representative of one such sundry place, Orford Township.

Why might a small-time businessman from one of the least important townships have received an invitation? At the time of the fête, Bonnallie was among the township's most prominent citizens, and this for several reasons. The first was by elimination. When created in 1801, the township included half of what became the Town of Sherbrooke, particularly the residential blocks preferred by the town's elite. Subsequent reform carved away parts of the township: in 1855, the newly-established municipality of Orford Township was separated from the city and its business community.

A second reason for Bonnallie's prominence was lack of competitors. The township was developing at the snail's pace predicted in 1815 by a scornful Surveyor-General of Lower Canada, Joseph Bouchette: "Little can be said of this township, and that little not very favourable. It is mountainous, rough, and almost unfit for tillage" (Bouchette, 276). In the mid-1850s, one of the few areas with any significant settlement was north of Orford Mountain, along the road

between Sherbrooke and Granby and bordering Stukely Township. George Bonnallie was the settlers' link to Sherbrooke and to the resources they needed.

The third reason probably best accounts for Bonnallie's invitation to the Montreal celebrations: he understood the forms of networking that today's business schools preach. He was an ambitious young man, and the connections he made with other entrepreneurial young men served throughout a career that was



of necessity multifaceted. He was a rural trader and he operated mills. He was an agent for absentee landowners and even tried mining exploration. Frontier settlement depended on such small-time local entrepreneurs, who are too often left out of the frame in more familiar histories of development, whether in the Eastern Townships or elsewhere in Quebec.

Who was George Bonnallie?

The fourth child of William Bonello and Margaret Miller (Millar), he was born in Dysart, Fife, Scotland. According to Scottish records, it was 1812, but he always claimed 1811. The spelling of the name also remained indefinite. When he witnessed his brother's christening at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Quebec City in February 1823, his childish signature was Georgy Bonnallie. Several of his brothers, who were the first generation to be able to sign their

names, retained that spelling into their adult lives, but George later consistently used two n's and two l's.

The move from Scotland to Lower Canada was an immigration chain. Margaret's brother, John Miller, married Isabella Torrance in Scotland and moved to Quebec City, where her brothers were importers and merchants. John Miller joined the firm William Torrance & Co, but, in 1817, he set up on his own as a "grocer, wine and spirit dealer." Arriving in Quebec with five sons already, the Bonnallie parents saw this connection to prosperous merchants as helpful for their futures, and reminded everyone of it when naming sons number six and seven Andrew Torrance Bonnallie [sic] and Benjamin Torrance Bonnallie. Andrew, born March 1826, and Benjamin, born March 1826, were both christened at St Andrew's Presbyterian Church. Another link in the family chain was George's training. With his father's consent, in 1825, he was

apprenticed to his uncle, John Miller, to learn the grocery trade. He would receive room and board, and, at the end of the six-year term, £29 to begin his career.

His apprenticeship over, George returned to his parents' home on Edward Hale's Barony of Portneuf, where Julia Cecilia Kearney, daughter of Michael Kearney and Deborah Doherty (Daugherty), also lived. Born in 1812, Julia too immigrated as a child. The 1825 Lower Canada census page for Cap Santé (p. 1685) identifies "new settlements begun in 1821 by Europeans from Ireland organised by Edward Hale, Esq" [translation]. Her father was first on the list. On September 17, 1833, George and Julia married at St Andrew's Church. Less than 10 days later, identified as a trader (*marchand*) by the notary, George bought a house and shop on the Chemin du Roi in the village of Portneuf. By the

time he paid off and then sold the property in 1838, however, he had moved on to other business and other places.

Although married in the Church of Scotland, Julia Kearney ensured the children received Anglican baptisms and all five, as well as their mother, are buried in St. Peter's cemetery in Sherbrooke. The traveling missionary of the Church of England christened the second son, George Michael, born in November 1836, in Portneuf, where the young family resided. By the next summer, however, they were on the Orford township side of Sherbrooke. On September 23, 1837, George Bonnallie advertised in the *Sherbrooke Gazette* the stagecoach line to Granby that he operated three times a week.

A sub-contract to carry the Royal Mail between Sherbrooke and Granby, notarized by F. X. Bureau on July 18, 1837, made the enterprise financially feasible. The sub-contract signed with Benjamin Pomroy exhibited all the characteristics of George Bonnallie's later business dealings. It included a loan from Pomroy, one of the leading landowners and civic figures in the region. The loan was for £200, and, as the agreement said, was made "in order to enable the said Contractor to fulfil this present contract," that is, to start up. Yet this relationship with the older Pomroy was not sufficient. Bonnallie also had to depend on a "caution" from Henry S. Cutter, a young man clerking in A. G. Woodward's store, and a principal in the new firm George Bonnallie, Hawley and Cutter. Abel Hawley, with Henry and Isaac H. Cutter, sub-contracted with Pomroy to carry the mail from Granby to Montreal. The enterprise did not last, however; by May 1839, a new stage-line proprietor was carrying the mail to Granby three times a week.

The economic difficulties of Lower Canada no doubt spurred Bonnallie's move to Sherbrooke in the politically tumultuous year of 1837. Several years of crop failures had impoverished farmers, particularly in the District of Quebec, thereby undermining the livelihood of rural merchants like him. The agricultural crisis somewhat spared the Eastern Townships, however, where

wheat production was less important (Greer, chapter 2). In addition, the 1834 charter of the British American Land Company (BALC) generated hope that colonization would boom. Hostility to the BALC from Patriotes in the Legislative Assembly contributed to a slow take-off, but Sherbrooke's economic elite remained optimistic and their opposition to the Patriotes was firm. In October 1837, merchants (including several of American origin like Samuel Brooks, Pomroy and Hollis Smith) declared their loyalty to the Crown (Kesteman, chapter 5).

In the second wave of rebellion in

arrived in the Townships. Names of militiamen began appearing on early promises of sale for BALC lots in the western part of Orford township, including George Bonnallie, Carey McClellan Hydeman, Henry Beckett and James Reside. Bonnallie also had a family link to Galt, who became Commissioner of the BALC in 1844. The wife of George's uncle, John Miller, was the aunt of Galt's first and second wives – Elliott Torrance and Amy Gordon Torrance.

Alexander Galt remade the BALC's business plan so that it focused primarily on industrial and railroad development for Sherbrooke. The plan now also favoured settlers who were accustomed to Quebec's climate and farming over new (and impoverished) British immigrants, a change that made French Canadians attractive as settlers. The company offered long credit sales (a decade might elapse between the promise of sale and the deed transfer), accepted payment in kind, and supported infrastructure such as mills (Skelton, 40-51). Therefore, it needed company agents with a particular skill set. Installing settlers, and converting squatters into settlers, required agents who could construct and oversee transfers and deals as well as collect payments. Settling French-Canadians required bilingual agents.

Both the BALC and absentee landowners needed representatives with this skill set, and George Bonnallie possessed it. He became an on-the-ground agent in Orford West (along the Sherbrooke-Granby road from Lake Brompton to the border with Shefford County) and North Stukely. In 1847, Captain William Rhodes and Ann Catherine Dunn gave him power of attorney to manage their land in Stukely that had been granted in 1816 by the Crown to her grandfather, Thomas Dunn, or purchased later. Beginning in 1849, Bonnallie represented Bishop George Jehoshaphat Mountain, whose father, Bishop Jacob Mountain, had also received a Crown grant in that township the same year. Bonnallie likewise represented the BALC, and, in turn, the company and its young commissioner were key nodes in the network sustaining his multiple enterprises.

Mr Bonnallie 16 Aug 49. 18

*The Right Reverend
The Lord Bishop Montreal
Reverend Sir.*

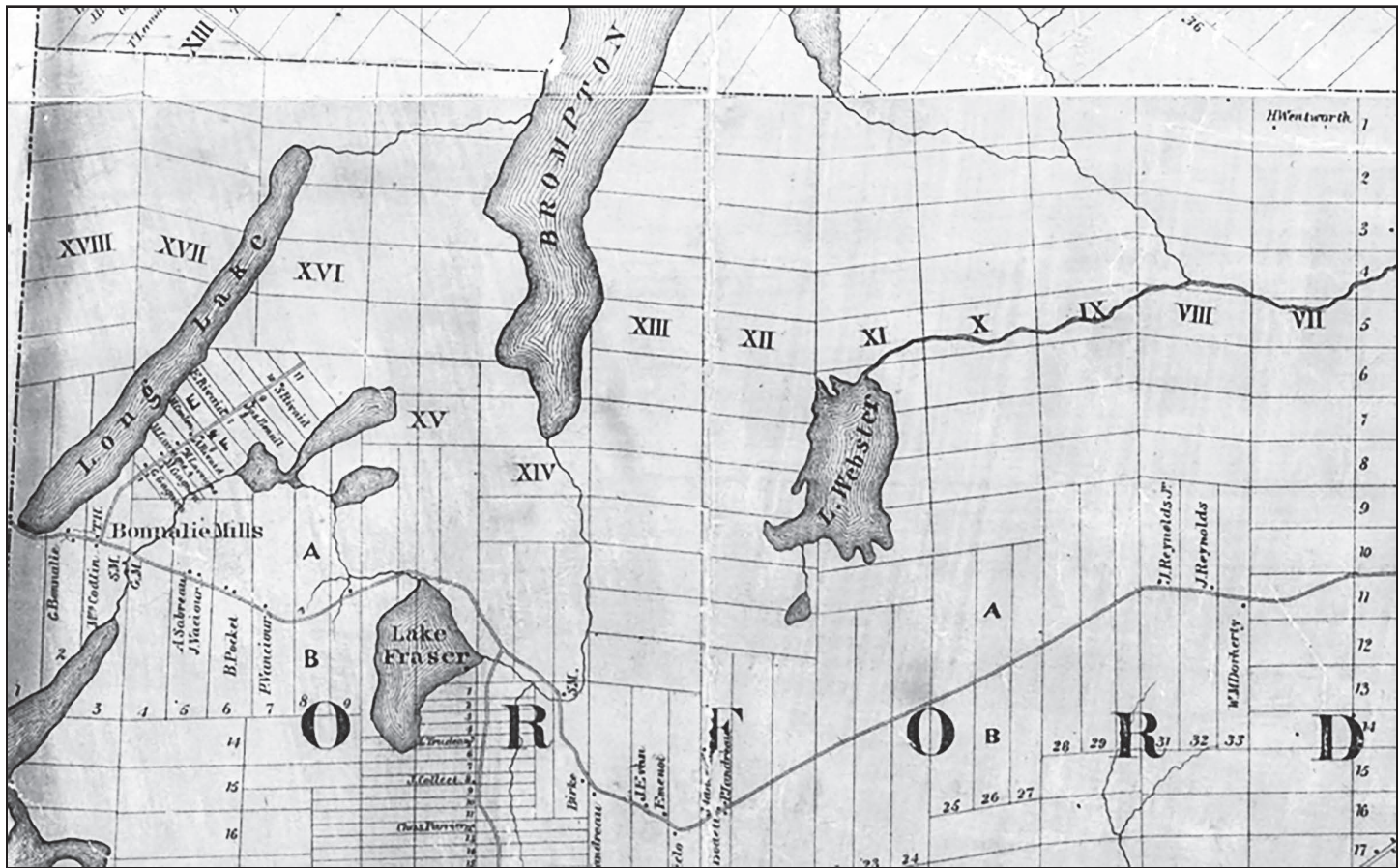
*I find it necessary
to have the names of the
coheirs inserted in the
Location Tickets.*

*You will please send them to
me, and cannot make any
delay, until I get them.*

*I find a great many
Squatters on the Lands, and
the soil generally good.*

*I am Revd Sir
Yours Obedient
Before Augt 16th 1849 Geo Bonnallie*

1838, with martial law imposed in the St. Francis and Montreal districts, George Bonnallie, along with other young men, was mustered into the Sherbrooke Troop of Calvary, under Captain Henry Beckett. He was posted several times between January and April 1839 to the outposts of Orford Woods and Barford Woods. Alexander Galt, working as secretary for the BALC, was a lieutenant in the Fifth Battalion of Sherbrooke County, Orford Company, in 1838-1839. The "soldiers" seem to have quite enjoyed their war, if we generalize from Edward Hale's letters from his posting in Stanstead. The collective action certainly strengthened ties among young men, especially those recently



The assignment from the landowners and BALC was similar: ensure regularized settlement and, eventually, sales. The agent negotiated terms of a promise of sale with settlers; outright purchase by new arrivals happened infrequently. The terms required settlers to improve the land, pay “rent,” and eventually complete the purchase and obtain a deed. Agents often had to negotiate terms again, when discouraged or indebted settlers moved out without getting a deed. They also collected annual payments, sometimes taking livestock or produce in lieu of cash. Even this seemingly straightforward task was not simple, however. As George Bonnalie wrote to Bishop Mountain in November 1850, “The Settlers on your Lands, similar to those in the other new parts of the Eastern Townships, are generally poor as a matter of course, although they are rapidly progressing in their improvements and it may be fairly inferred, will eventually make their payments as promptly as could reasonably be expected.” The Bishop complained, however, about late payments from his agent.

Squatters might become settlers with a claim to title. The lack of surveillance by absentee owners made it feasible

simply to take up land and “improve” it. Wrangling in the Legislative Assembly over property rights on private as well as Crown lands made simple ejection difficult (Little, 390-393). After an initial assessment, Bonnalie reported to Bishop Mountain in August 1849, “I find a great many Squatters on the Lands, and the soil generally good.” His job was to convince squatters to accept promises of sale and oversee what were essentially installment payments. In an 1856 letter, Hollis Smith said that the company was pleased with Bonnalie’s “settlement with squatters,” having made “a favorable arrangement with them by sales as stipulated in articles of agreement.” The company complained, however, about his high commission.

Smith feared too that the BALC’s interest might take second place to the agent’s own, because George Bonnalie’s main business was his store; notarized documents consistently identified him as a trader. He provided items the settlers could not produce themselves with stock he purchased from wholesale merchants in Sherbrooke. As did rural traders across Quebec, he provided credit, with customers usually settling bills after harvest. And, as did settlers everywhere,

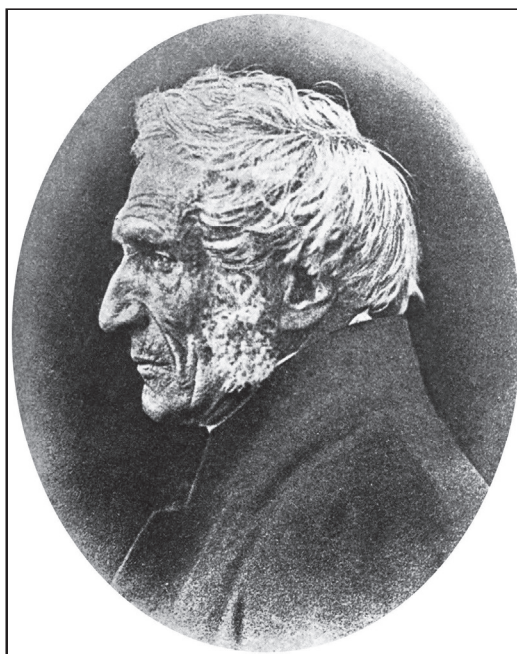
some accumulated heavy debts, with the result that land transfers frequently included significant amounts paid by the purchaser to settle the vendor’s debt to a trader. Bonnalie’s name appeared frequently in such transfers. He also continued practices begun during his business partnership with William Brooks. Almost the same age as Bonnalie, Brooks was a third-generation merchant whose large wholesale business in Sherbrooke put him in contact with rural traders. In the situation of fluid settlement in the Townships, merchants often held mortgages, purchased debt, and bought land. Brooks and Bonnalie had several such dealings in various townships, but Bonnalie’s main area of operations after 1850 was along the Stukely-Orford boundary. He gave mortgages covering store debts to settlers, who might default. In addition, he sometimes purchased a lot from a farmer seeking to buy elsewhere, return to the place from which he had come, or move to the United States. Bonnalie then tried to resell the land as quickly as possible to newcomers or adult children of earlier arrivals.

Such transactions meant that traders as much as settlers juggled their credit.

Here the relationships that had been developed in Sherbrooke in the 1830s were crucial. With Galt as Commissioner, the BALC lent Bonnallie £500 in 1854, with the final payment due only in 1861. The company's interest in such a loan was to ensure that settlers holding the company's promises of sale would not be driven to default because of debts to a merchant who was also squeezed to pay his debts. Nonetheless, still short of cash, Bonnallie turned to various people in his Sherbrooke network to endorse bank loans, including William, Charles and Edward Brooks, Hiram Moe, and A. T. Galt. He also got credit from Sherbrooke merchants, including A. G. Woodward, to whom he promised in February 1855 to settle within a month a £50 debt with "good, fair pine boards." Unfortunately, they were still undelivered in June 1856, because the supply of boards was hostage to a teetering transaction he was brokering near Fraser Lake.

The economic precariousness of the region meant that in addition to being a trader and an agent for several landowners, George Bonnallie relied on a third significant string in his entrepreneurial bow; he operated mills. In partnership with William Brooks, he purchased lot 3 in Range B in Orford West (at the outlet of Lake Stukely) for £75 in 1848. The lot was a good waterpower site and the year before the BALC had sold it to Carey Hyndman for £27 Halifax currency (approximately £25). No reason for the jump in price was given, but undoubtedly the payment schedule of £43 as down payment and the rest spread over two years was to accommodate Bonnallie's limited purse rather than Brooks', who was then investing thousands of pounds in cotton and sawmills in Sherbrooke. The partnership with Brooks to buy that lot was the cornerstone of Bonnallie's future. Mortgages on the lot would anchor many of Bonnallie's subsequent initiatives. In 1849, he received an interest-free loan of £250 from the BALC for the grist mill that the company hoped would attract settlement. He hired a miller and sold pieces of the lot to raise cash, including a piece for a schoolhouse in 1853. In 1854, he bought Brooks' share and, in 1856, he acquired the sawmill built by Stephen Cushing Bowker and operated by him

since 1846 on lot 4W of Range B, just across the road. This consolidation gave the area the unofficial name "Bonnallie Mills," a designation used well into the twentieth century. Like the store, the mill provided detailed local knowledge of settlers' situations that was useful in land transactions, whether his own or those



brokered for the BALC and absentee landowners. Hollis Smith recognized this asset when he commended his work with settlers: "Mr. Bonnallie resides in the neighbourhood and has considerable influence with them."

This influence was used politically, too, generally on the side of Bonnallie's usual Sherbrooke network. On February 5, 1850, the *Montreal Herald & Daily Commercial Gazette* reported that, with Hollis Smith and two others, Bonnallie formed the Orford township committee for the election of J. S. Sanborn to the Legislative Assembly seat vacated by A. T. Galt's resignation. Sanborn's appeal to his Sherbrooke supporters was his backing of the Annexation Movement, which major merchants, along with Galt, had been promoting since 1849. When Galt was later back in office, George Bonnallie was among the 25 or so voters (including several Brooks and Becketts) who called for a public meeting in Sherbrooke to express outrage at "an imputation cast upon" the MPP, as the same paper reported April 22, 1857. Bonnallie also held office himself. Canada East

instituted municipal government with large district councils in 1841, enabling Bonnallie's modest start. The decade's records are spotty at best, but, in January 1845, John Felton, the returning officer for Orford township, informed Edward Hale, the Warden of the District of Sherbrooke, that George Bonnallie's name had been forwarded as one of the Overseers of Highways, Fence Viewers or Inspectors of Drains. When the 1855 Lower Canada Municipal and Road Act placed both the town of Sherbrooke and the municipality of Orford Township in Compton County, he attended the meeting of the county council in September 1855 as mayor of Orford (Channell, 48).

Bonnallie's career in Orford was reaching its height, as the invitation mentioned at the beginning of this article indicates, and he was ready for a larger initiative. In the 1850s, a "copper rush" began in the Eastern Townships and the need for copper during the American Civil War (1861-65) pushed the frenzy further (Farfan). When promising traces of copper appeared in Stukely and Orford, Bonnallie joined the rush. To obtain and exploit mineral rights, he formed a company in August 1860 with another major trader of the area, M. A. Bessette, as well as Malcolm McFarlane, Jr. and S. Paquette. When that company was dissolved after only a year, Bessette and Bonnallie joined a consortium of Montreal-based financiers, including A. T. Galt, Thomas McCaw, Donald Lorn McDougall, and Walter Shanly, incorporated by the British Parliament as Orford Mining and Smelting Company of Lower Canada (27 Victoria, Cap 78) in 1863. Both local traders had been actively purchasing mineral rights, with Bonnallie concentrating on the western ranges in Orford in active collaboration with Galt and Shanly. A promising report of one of his finds appeared in the *Montreal Herald & Daily Commercial Gazette* on May 4, 1864, followed by the *Geological Survey's Report of Progress from 1863 to 1866* (pp. 302-303) listing good results on several lots in Ranges E, F and A of Orford township, all near Bonnallie Mills, where the company's directors had been acquiring rights. Nonetheless, as happened to many in this copper rush, the deposits were insuffi-

cient to merit mining; when the Civil War ended and the copper market contracted, the venture fizzled.

Also fading was George Bonnallie's attachment to this sundry place, Orford township. By 1860, his many notarized transactions no longer described him as a trader. Thanks to his efforts as agent, most the BALC and Dunn lots had been sold or had stable arrangements for sale, and Bishop Mountain's lots were being sold after his death. By 1865, three of his adult children were married: Deborah (to Henry McFarlane); Celia (to Henry's brother, Malcolm, Jr.); and George (to Helen Beers). William, the older son, and Elizabeth, the youngest daughter, were courting with two Beckett children, Rosanna and Frederick, and would soon marry. In March 1865, Bonnallie settled one of his lots in North Stukely on his son George. He also charged William with managing certain properties to provide a lifetime pension for his mother, Julia. When she then agreed to renounce her marital rights and those of her children, George and Julia were essentially divorced. In a complicated series of transactions a year later, including loans and mortgages from A. T. Galt, Bonnallie transferred land at Bonnallie Mills to William in exchange for his son settling a series of debts. George Bonnallie had already left Canada with a widow from North Stukely, Domatilde Amelotte (whose husband Simon Raymond died in 1862) and several of her young children, who took the name Bonnallie. On April 28, 1865, George Bonnallie, son of Domatilde and George, was born in Lewiston, Maine, and another chapter began.

Jane Jenson is a professeure émérite at Université de Montréal and a member of the Société d'histoire du Canton d'Orford.

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Note: George Bonnallie left no written documents except for seven letters sent to Bishop Mountain between 1849 and 1857, copies of which are in the Brome County Historical Society archives (Acc #85-62). The *registre foncier*, as well as newspapers and notarial acts in

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LET'S TALK OF GRAVES

Released from all his earthly cares...

by Heather Darch

This is the third in a series of articles on interesting people buried in Eastern Townships cemeteries.

*Let's talk of graves, of worms, of epitaphs;
Make dust our paper, and with rainy eyes
Write sorrow on the bosom of the earth.*

-Shakespeare, Richard II

The solitary gravestone of Ephraim Knight is located in the Stanton Cemetery in Stanbridge East, Quebec. It is embellished with oak leaves and acorns, a symbol of memory, and the title “Esquire” follows his name. Knight was the bailiff for the District of Bedford and represented Missisquoi in the Legislative Assembly of Lower Canada from 1834 until the suspension of the constitution in 1838. What is not generally well known is that he had a habit of getting into predicaments.

Ephraim Knight, the son of Amos Knight (1748-1808) and Susannah Maynard (1748-1813), was born in Shrewsbury, Vermont, on February 27, 1786. Sometime prior to the War of 1812-1814, the Knight family settled in Dunham, Quebec. They were not considered Loyalists, but came into the county early enough to be part of the founding settlers in the region. Ephraim married Philenda Beeman in 1819, and was appointed to the position of bailiff in 1820.

Among his first challenges was to prevent the unlawful trespassing and cutting of trees on lands belonging to the colonial administrator, Thomas Dunn. He was also somehow to stop the production of counterfeit money along a road called Cogniac Street in the hills of Dunham; “Cogniac” was the slang term for counterfeit. The counterfeiting business was under the direction of three violent and competing gangs, including the enterprise of Seneca Paige, the Gleason family and the Wing family. Cogniac Street was the leading supplier of counterfeit money throughout the United States, and, by the 1830s, an extensive network of wholesalers, distributors and dealers looked to the Dunham gangs to supply them with money.

Ephraim Knight tried, with little success, to stop them. On one occasion he approached brawling gang members and commanded “peace in the name of the King,” but was “immediately robbed and clubbed unmercifully.” Perhaps forgetting that he needed back-up, Knight made the same mistake only a few weeks later. As a mob assembled on a bridge and fired their guns, proclaiming that the “street was theirs and they meant to keep it,” he stepped into the fray only to have the rioters hit him with clubs and knock him into the river, where they continued beating him until citizens of Dunham came to his rescue.

In the 1830s, Knight became increasingly involved in the political unrest of the decade that culminated in the Rebellions of 1837 and 1838. He became increasingly agitated about the



lack of funding from the government for road and bridge construction in Missisquoi, the government’s refusal to give compensation to volunteer soldiers who fought in the War of 1812-1814, the mismanagement of Crown land, and the cronyism exhibited by the Executive Council for lucrative government appointments.

Some of Knight’s correspondence at the time reveals his growing connection with other pro-Patriote supporters. A letter dated 1834 derided the “moss head” anti-reformer James Moir Ferres, editor of a weekly newspaper called the *Missisquoi Standard and Farmers’ Advocate*, who was helping to fuel the pro-government cause in Missisquoi. Knight learned that Galloway Kemp had been appointed the new landing waiter (customs agent) at the “Port of Frelighsburg” for a salary of £75/year – “lucky fellow aint he.” In 1835, John Pickle wrote to suggest that having a gathering of Reformers in Missisquoi “would be a great history.” He recommended that Ephraim “not show himself openly” and to keep “intentions as secret as possible.”

Knight’s political passion was on full display on July 4, 1837, when he led a procession of 1,000 pro-Patriote supporters

*Ephraim Knight monument, Stanton Cemetery.
Photo: Heather Darch.*

through the village of Stanbridge East; so much for keeping a low profile. With political banners and American military musicians, the gathering must have been quite the scene. The threat of the advancing militia heightened the excitement of the crowd, and they were further provoked by Patriote leader Thomas Brown, who called for the boycott of British goods. Knight addressed the crowd, too, and asked the rhetorical question: “Are we not told by the conduct, of not the words by the grumbling and haughty officials, that the working classes, to wit, the farmers, the mechanics, and artisans for whom they obtain all their necessary supplies of food and clothing, may continue in their slavish employment, to procure them those necessities, as they are only fit for such dirty work?” The crowd loved it and burned the British flag to emphasize their approval.

That happy day for Knight ultimately resulted in his imprisonment in Montreal from January 5 to 11, 1838. Hoping to expedite his release, he had supporters write recommendations on his behalf. One such note stated that he was “a true loyal subject.” That was likely not believed, but his promise to be an “unofficial informant” for the government certainly aided in his discharge from prison. While Missisquoi County had both pro-Patriote and pro-conservative government supporters, Knight did not help himself by playing into both camps. He lost his position as bailiff and, as citizens could neither forgive nor forget, his debts started to mount. A predicament indeed.

In 1842, he declared bankruptcy and signed over his affairs to Zebulon Cornell, the court-appointed “guardian of goods and chattel.” A list of Knight’s household goods for sale at an auction included two sofas, a cherry wood writing desk, a sleigh and double waggon, and six cows. His luck did not improve, as he was repeatedly summoned to the Commissioner’s Court to answer for his unpaid debts; the verdicts went against him. Another blow came in 1856, when an ominous notice from Prevost Masonic Lodge in Dunham declared that a special meeting was to be held to discuss the “conduct of our late treasurer E. Knight.” The 1851 and 1861 Census records indicate that

Knight and his wife lived separately – Knight, with their son in Stanbridge East, and Philenda, with their daughter in Dunham, Quebec. The marriage did not survive.

A heartbreaking note to Knight’s daughter reveals a broken man: “My dear girl... it rejoices my heart that I am so kindly remembered by you... I shall return and when the dark clouds of trouble and domestic perplexities shall have passed away, we shall enjoy a serene unclouded sky.” Ephraim Knight died on February 3, 1868, in Stanbridge East, at the age of 81. His wife died later that same year, but was buried in Dunham.

Heather Darch is a project director at QAHN. She is currently overseeing the organization’s 2021 Heritage Talks program. She is also the host of a new series of mini-documentaries, “The Scandal Makers,” produced by QAHN. The series, which is available on Youtube, takes viewers to some of Missisquoi’s most obscure burial grounds.

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ESTÉREL

The Last Act in the Lac Masson Saga by Joseph Graham

On a fateful summer day in 1958, Fridolin Simard was flying over the Laurentians, headed from his home in Alma to Montreal. From the window of his small floatplane, the rolling hills of the Laurentians unfolded, their jewel-like lakes twinkling in the sun, but off ahead of him, to the southwest, he was heading into dark thunderclouds piled above the horizon. His radio crackled with a message from the control tower at Dorval warning him and all small planes to change flight plans because the storm was playing havoc with the airport.

Below him, Simard could see a good-sized lake, easy to land on, and his charts told him it was called Lac Masson. The charts could not tell him that, like him, Joseph Masson had moved from the Quebec countryside to Montreal and gone into

business there. When Masson arrived in Montreal in 1812, he had no money, but he had apprenticed as a shop clerk in St. Eustache, and he soon proved his worth to Hugh Robertson. With no capital to invest, he nevertheless grew to become a junior partner, and eventually a full partner, in the Robertson brothers’ firm. A visionary and risk-taker, he became the purchaser and a partner in the Robertsons’ concerns in Glasgow, Scotland, as well. Trading principally in potash and woollens, Masson encouraged the firm to buy ships, and he was also a co-founder of the Company of Proprietors of the Champlain and St. Lawrence Railroad in 1846.

Masson, like Simard, did not know that French-Canadians were handicapped in business, since, during the difficult period of the 1830s, he was one of the most important businessmen in

Lower Canada. He was a member of the Legislative Council, the ruling elite known as the Château Clique, and, while he was sympathetic to the objectives of the *Patriotes*, his loyalty was to the mercantile class. He eventually became the sole owner of the import-export companies in both Scotland and Montreal when the Robertson brothers retired, and he brought his sons into the business. Joseph Masson, Sons and Company had offices in Montreal, Quebec City and Glasgow with marketing and buying offices in Three Rivers, Liverpool and Toronto. Eventually he acquired the Seigneurie of Terrebonne, and it was his son, Edouard Masson, who undertook to colonise the area around Lac Masson in the 1860s.

Simard landed safely before the storm and found his way to a dock where he could secure the plane. His business expertise was in asphalt and concrete blocks, pier, bridge and tunnel construction, and his family concern, Simard-Beaudry, had grown out of their hometown offices in Alma to spread across Quebec and Ontario. Taking shelter in a building near the dock on Lac Masson, Simard discovered that he was in an elaborate, abandoned Art-Deco inspired complex. On one wall, he found a map describing the whole lake with projections for a development. He explored further.

In 1864, Edouard Masson had been accorded 1,600 acres to establish his colony, and even though it was not a seigneurie, he invested heavily to develop it, building both saw and flour mills. Most of the colonists came from further south in the old Seigneurie of Terrebonne. The first post office, called Lac Masson, opened in 1868. Its naming served the dual purpose of honouring Edouard Masson and confirming the name of the lake. By 1880, the municipality took its name from the parish mission and the post office and became Sainte-Marguerite-du-Lac-Masson. Like many of these Laurentian projects, Masson's small colony experienced difficulties when the bulk of the wood was gone and the farmers had to rely on the thin mountain soil. While the railroad brought some improvement, it would take the Belgian, Baron Empain, to identify the lake's real potential in the 1930s. He envisioned a tourist centre on the lake, and he engaged the best people he could find to plan and build it. To complement his hotel, cinema and shopping centre and give it a fresh identity, he established a post office in 1939, calling it *L'Estérel*, after the Massif de l'Estérel, in the south of France.

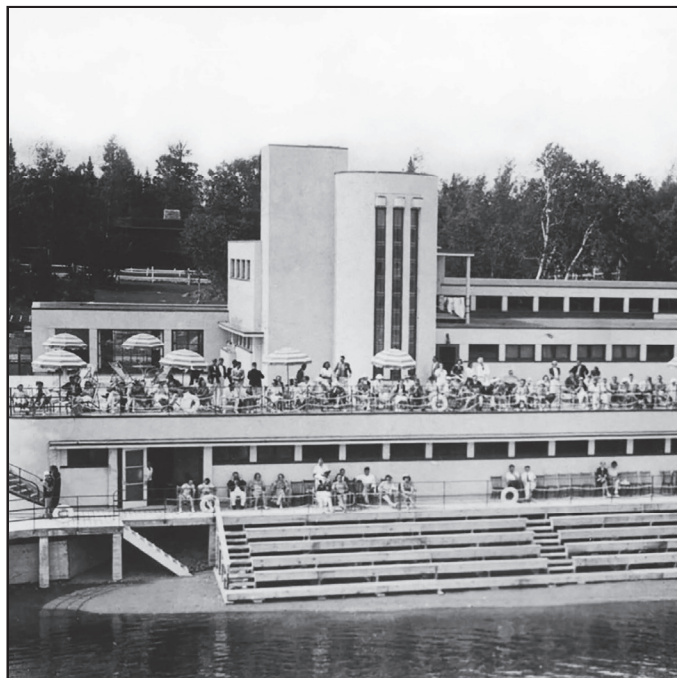
Among the properties Empain left behind when he returned to Europe at the beginning of the Second World War was this large art deco recreation and tourism complex which sat abandoned for years until Simard stood in it examining the map posted on the wall. Empain's plans, Simard discovered, involved the construction of 300 houses, a hotel and a cultural

centre. But no provision was made for Empain's absence.

Fridolen Simard and his brother, Thomas, began their own business career with a service station at the corner of two roads in Amos, and within three years set up a company to bid on road and bridge construction. They turned their rural business into a Quebec economic success story well before Premier Jean Lesage's election in 1960 and the beginning of the Quiet

Revolution. Even with their great success in their engineering and construction business, they are as much remembered for what they realized with the initial dream of Baron Empain.

As though the spirit of the place had conspired to grab him out of the sky for the purpose, Simard discovered that the property was for sale. Piqued by the ruins of Empain's vision sitting on the pristine lake named for Masson, Simard and his brother determined to complete the dreams of both of their predecessors. Acquiring the remaining Empain-Masson holdings, Simard entrusted planning to Jean-Claude La Haye, the man remembered today as the father of urbanism in Quebec. They created a ground-



breaking concept of larger lots on the waterfront, chosen and subdivided to give the maximum privacy possible, and they designated wet zones and many intersections as parks. Their project became a destination of choice for many wealthy English-speaking Montrealers, and, in 1962, they added a large hotel that was itself a ground-breaking novelty for a vacation resort. They added a golf course to complete the sporting concept that Empain had envisioned, and, in order to better manage their project, they obtained a separate municipal status. Inspired again by Empain, they called it *Estérel*, the name of the post office that Empain had conceived.

Joseph Graham, author of Naming the Laurentians, is writing a book that re-examines much of our early history, the elements that drove European society, and the extraordinary damage these ideas inflicted on North America.

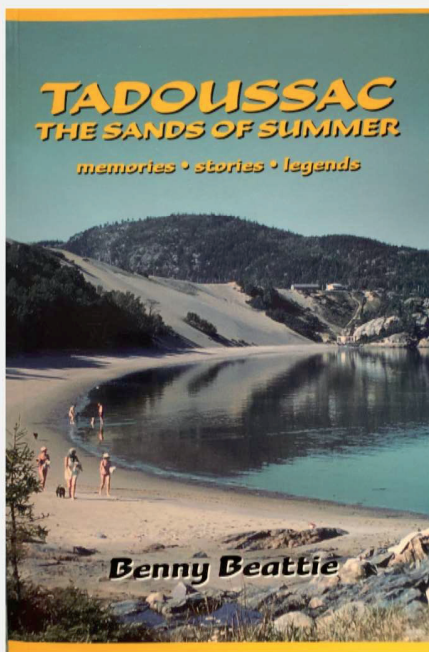
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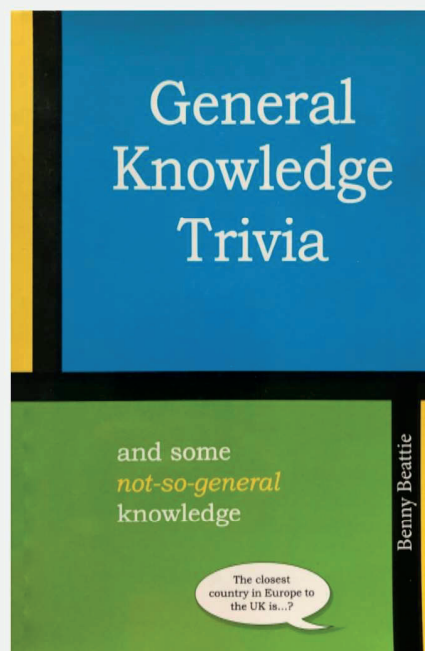
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BLACK SWANS AND NATIONAL GLORIES

Music Thrived at the Mechanics' Institute
by Susan McGuire

At the 1853 Mechanics' Festival in Montreal, president Henry Bulmer declared the aim of the Mechanics' Institute (founded 1828) was "the Elevation of the Moral and Intellectual Condition of the Working Classes." That may sound stilted and a bit presumptuous in today's world, but builder and art collector Bulmer had high hopes for the institution he headed, as it prepared to open its first building in 1855, on St. James Street, in what is now Old Montreal.

The city's population was about 60,000, the largest in British North America, and the centre of Canadian culture. A major element of Henry Bulmer's high hopes were the musical events that were presented at the Mechanics' Hall over the following some 30 years, when the Mechanics' Institute was a cultural centre in Montreal.

The artists who performed were a diverse group.

Elizabeth Taylor Greenfield (1819-1876)

Packing the new Mechanics' Hall for three nights in June 1855 was 36-year-old Black American singer, Elizabeth Taylor Greenfield. Known as "The Black Swan," Greenfield was one of the first African-American performers in the United States. Just four years previously, she had made her public debut in Philadelphia.

Born a slave's daughter in Natchez, Mississippi, Elizabeth Taylor was raised by her female Quaker benefactor who moved north to Philadelphia when Elizabeth was just a child. Elizabeth took her name, and became known as Elizabeth Taylor Greenfield. She was educated and encouraged to develop her musical talents. Her benefactor died in 1845, but Elizabeth was able to continue her musical education and performed publicly in

Buffalo, Boston, New York and Chicago. While Greenfield was on tour in the United States, the Wisconsin *Free Democrat* declared: "we hear the voice of an angel."

Elizabeth Taylor Greenfield was assisted in her career by, among others, Harriet Beecher Stowe and the Duchess



of Sutherland, the latter becoming her sponsor. Money was raised so that she could go to London in 1853, and, in 1854 she performed before Queen Victoria at Buckingham Palace.

In *Black Then: Blacks and Montreal*, Frank Mackey describes her 1855 performances in Montreal that featured both opera pieces and traditional ballads: "She packed Mechanics' Hall three nights running and left audiences begging for more." She travelled to Quebec City to perform, and then returned to Montreal to give three more concerts, again to full houses. Among her selections were "Annie Laurie," "Charlie is My Darling" and other Scottish songs, to the delight of Montrealers of Scottish descent.

Emma Albani, nee Marie-Louise-Cecile-Emma Lajeunesse (1847-1930)

Perhaps the youngest musician ever to perform at the Mechanics' Institute was Emma Lajeunesse, who gave her first concert there in September 1856 at the age of eight.

Both of Emma's parents were musicians, and very early recognized and encouraged her talent. Emma's mother died in 1856, and her father accepted a post as music teacher at the Sacred Heart Convent in Sault-au-Recollet on the north side of Montreal Island, where Emma and her sister, Cornelia, became boarders.

Emma gave another concert at the Mechanics' Institute in September 1862. By then 14, her voice was described in the newspaper *La Minerve* as "sent from heaven." Shortly thereafter, she gave concerts in Chambly, Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, L'Assomption, Sorel, Joliette and Terrebonne.

Around 1865, unable to raise sufficient funds in Montreal to send his daughter to Europe to study, Joseph Lajeunesse took his family to New York state, where he had worked, and where his late wife had relatives. They settled in Albany, where Emma earned money by singing, playing the organ and directing the choir at the parish church. A few years later, with savings and financial help from Albany parishioners, Emma went to Paris and Milan to study. In Italy, she took the stage name of Albani.

In April 1872, Emma Albani joined the Royal Italian Opera (Covent Garden) in London, and continued performing there until 1896. In the 1870s, she went to Moscow and St. Petersburg, where she sang in the presence of Tsar Alexander II. In 1874, she was invited to give a private recital for Queen Victoria at Windsor Castle, thereby beginning a friendship that lasted until Victoria's death in 1901;

Elizabeth Taylor Greenfield.

Photo: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/quincypics/2245684376>.



she sang at the Queen's funeral.

Emma became one of the most sought-after Wagnerian performers of her time, and was probably Canada's first world-famous musician. Emma married Ernest Gye, son of the director of the Royal Italian Opera, who would become his wife's impresario. They had a son, Ernest Frederick, who became a British diplomat. She always had her sister, Cornelia, nearby. A talented pianist, Cornelia studied in Germany and taught music to the children of the Spanish royal family.

In 1883, Emma came to Montreal after some 20 years away. Newspaper reports said 10,000 people were waiting to greet her. She returned nine times between 1883 and 1906 for tours that took her across Canada. During one of those trips, in 1896, she met Canadian poet Dr. William Henry Drummond, who dedicated his poem "The Grand Seigneur" to her. The poem was set to music by Percival John Illsley, and she included it in her repertoire.

Emma Albani was widowed in 1925 and died impoverished in London in 1930.

Jean-Baptiste Labelle (1825-1898)

Born of Canadian parents in Vermont, Jean-Baptiste Labelle is thought to have received his musical training in Montreal and Quebec City. From 1849, he was the organist at Notre Dame Church for more than 40 years, while teaching at many different schools in Montreal. With nine children to bring up, he was also a com-

mercial importer of pianos and a music dealer.

According to the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, he was probably the first Canadian soloist to perform abroad, doing so on an 1857 concert tour of cities in the United States and South America.

From time to time, he produced concerts, including the 1857 Grand Operatic Concert at the Mechanics' Hall, where he presented excerpts from works by a number of nineteenth century composers, including Bellini, Donizetti and Schubert.

Calixa Lavallée (1842-1891)

In 1864, Calixa Lavallée, the future composer of "O Canada," was billed at the Mechanics' Hall as a piano, violin, and cornet virtuoso.

Born in 1842 into the eighth Canadian generation of the Pasquier dit Lavallée family in the Beauce, he was given lessons by his father and soon played piano, violin, organ and cornet. The family moved to St. Hyacinthe, where he first went to school, and then Montreal, where Calixa studied piano. He left Canada for the United States in 1857, and then went on a tour of South America, the West Indies and Mexico. He returned to the United States and fought in the Civil War as a "musician, first class." He was then briefly in Canada, then California, then Boston, then New York. In 1872, he was back in Montreal, then off to Paris for a short stay, then in Quebec City, then finally Montreal, where he opened a studio with Frantz Jehin-Prume and Rosita Del Vecchio.



In September 1875, Lavallée presented some of his works at the Mecha-

tics' Hall. Guillaume Couture, writing in *La Minerve* in December 9 and 10, acclaimed Lavallée as "one of our national glories," having learned how "to be by turns brilliant, elegant, fiery, tender and impassioned."

According to *The Encyclopedia of Music in Canada*, "Lavallée must be considered one of the first musicians of completely professional calibre born in Canada and one of the musical pioneers of his own country."

Frantz Jehin-Prume (1839-1899) & Rosita Del Vecchio (1846-1881)

Probably the first musician of international reputation to settle in Canada, violinist and composer Frantz Jehin-Prume played an important role in Canada's music development through his concerts and teaching.

Born Francois Henri Jehin into a Belgian family in 1839. With both of his grandfathers organists, he began his musical training at the age of 3; he started to learn the violin at the age of 4. He became known as Frantz. He gave his first violin concert at the age of 6, following which an uncle, distinguished musician Francois-Hubert Prume, accepted him into Liège's royal conservatory, where he remained until the age of 9. His uncle died, and young Frantz adopted the name Frantz Jehin-Prume.

He began his first recital tour in 1855, and continued touring through much of Europe until 1863. The following year, he toured in Mexico on the invitation of Emperor Maximilian, who was the son-in-law of Belgium's King Leopold. In May 1865, he arrived in New York City, and while there, received an invitation from fellow Belgian violinist Jules Hone to go hunting and fishing in Quebec.

What followed the fishing trip was a series of concerts in Montreal, including one on June 8, 1865, at the Mechanics' Hall. A short time later, at a reception given by Mayor Jean-Louis Beaudry, Frantz met 19-year-old Montreal-born Rosita Del Vecchio. He was smitten. The rest of that year, he gave concerts in Quebec City, Ottawa, Kingston, Toronto, Hamilton, London, the Maritimes, Detroit and New York. Another tour took him to Quebec City, Rimouski, Halifax and

Saint John.

In the summer of 1866, Frantz married Rosita (Rosa) Del Vecchio at Notre Dame Church. Having displayed musical talent from an early age, and following training by her husband and by a teacher in Brussels, Rosa began performing as a mezzo-soprano. She and Frantz gave many concerts in the United States, Canada, Cuba and Belgium. They decided to settle in Montreal and Frantz became a Canadian citizen. They had a son, Jules, in 1870.

In the early months of 1871, Jehin-Prume gave six classical chamber concerts at the Mechanics' Hall. With colleagues, he performed quartets by Haydn, Mozart, and Mendelssohn, and concertos by Viotti, Mendelssohn and Beethoven. Canadian tours included Joliette, Trois-Rivières, Joliette, St. Hyacinthe, Sherbrooke, Lachute and Aylmer.

The Lavallée, Jehin-Prume and Del Vecchio public concert at the Mechanics' Hall in 1875 included a string quartet that took the place of an orchestra for both Mendelssohn's *Capriccio brilliant* and *Violin concerto*. The ensemble was expanded to a double string quartet for Beethoven's *Prometheus* Overture, and for the Kreutzer overture to *Das Nachtlager in Granada*.

In March 1877 at the Mechanics' Hall, Jehin-Prume and Rosita DelVecchio gave a concert to raise money for a production of *The Widow*. At this event, they presented the Canadian premiere of a Schumann Quintet, Boccherini's Minuet and opera selections from Gounod, Bellini and Felicien David. Frantz performed his fantasy on themes from *Faust*, and Max Bruch's *Violin Concerto No. 1 in G Minor*. Lavallée played the Von Weber *Konzertstück* and several shorter pieces.

Rosa died in 1881 at the age of 34 from bronchial pneumonia, after giving birth to a child who did not survive. Frantz remarried (unhappily, it turned out) in 1882, and went on tour in Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick and Manitoba, and then for a final tour of Belgium and France.

In 1885, Frantz Jehin-Prume returned to Montreal, where he devoted himself mainly to teaching. In 1892, with his brother Erasme Jehin (also a violinist), violist Robert Gruenwald, cellist Jean-Baptiste Dubois and pianist Maurice Heynberg, he founded the Association



artistique de Montreal, the first professional chamber music society in Quebec, which lasted only four years. Jehin-Prume died in 1899.

Mendelssohn Choir (1864-1894)

"Perhaps the most noted musical organization which Montreal has ever possessed was the Mendelssohn Choir." So claimed W. H. Atherton in *Montreal 1835-1914*. Founder Joseph Gould acted as the organization's sole business manager and conductor for the entire 30-year life of the organization, 1864-1894. From small beginnings, Atherton says, the Choir grew to become one of North America's leading amateur unaccompanied choirs, with a membership as high as 100.

Gould was born in the United States in 1833 and moved with his family to Montreal in 1848. A church musician, piano and organ dealer, and journalist, his choir started in 1864 as a group of eight singers who met at his home to sing unaccompanied parts-songs by

Mendelssohn. Later, concerts were given at the American Presbyterian Church.

Like many choirs that had started in churches and temples, the repertoire gradually became secularized and, thus, needed a more neutral setting as it became more professional and could attract a wider audience. It was mainly an Anglophone organization. A large proportion of singers were women.

In his McGill University thesis, "Joseph Gould and the Montreal Mendelssohn Choir," Kelly Rice notes that some ten concerts were given at the Mechanics' Hall between 1876 and 1880.

In 1894, Joseph Gould became ill and the choir disbanded. It donated some 250 volumes of musical history and literature to McGill University, where the collection is now located at the Marvin Duchow Music Library.

Susan McGuire is a historian at the Atwater Library and Computer Centre, and a frequent contributor to Quebec Heritage News.

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SNOWDON

Remembering the Streetcar

by Sandra Stock

All large cities have unique neighborhoods, and Montreal is no exception. Unique to begin with, at least among North American cities, Montreal and its distinct areas are generally well-known to most Canadians, and beyond, through common anecdotal references, through the media, and even through our fiction and historical writing. Westmount, the Plateau, St. Henri, Point St. Charles, and many other communities instantly bring to mind images both geographical and social – often incomplete and facile, even inaccurate and prejudicial, but definite. We know where they are, we know a bit of their history, who lived there in the past and who lives there now, the kind of businesses and institutions we find there – the mini worlds apart that such sectors can become.

However, some Montreal districts do not conjure such ready images, and even their physical locations are vague and indefinite for most of us. One big example in the west-central part of metropolitan Montreal is Snowdon. It was not always so, but for the past fifty years its identity has faded and its imagined boundaries have constantly shifted.

My grandmother lived on Coolbrook Avenue, just above Van Horne. In the 1950s, this was in Deepest Snowdon's residential area of detached houses with front and back yards, lanes, a lot of trees and a few large parks. This part was middle class and mainly English speaking: not wealthy but quiet, what we now call "family friendly." Although we had a car, most of the time my mother and I would go to visit on that most delightful (to a child) mode of transport: the streetcar. The highlight of this voyage was a section close to our destination where the streetcar tracks ran

through back gardens, leaving the actual streets behind, and emerged somewhere possibly near where Decarie Square is today – probably Vezina Street, or a bit before that. It was amazing to see lilac bushes, flower beds, back sheds, laundry hung up outside, people on back steps or sitting on lawns. This trip always



seemed to happen in spring and summer, although the details (like Snowdon itself) are blurred – I was probably between three and five years of age, so was not recording this expedition for creative non-fiction pieces many years later. It is interesting to note that nearly everyone who comments on remembering Snowdon mentions this off-piste streetcar (and later, for a while, bus) diversion through the behind sides of houses. It had a kind of romantic aura of the public transporter gone astray and heading out into the unknown, free from the constraints of the streets. There it went – off to join the Streetcar Underground.

Snowdon was named for an early nineteenth-century landowner from Scotland. In 1819, James Snowdon (1791-1864) came to Canada, and, in 1824, he purchased sixty acres from the extensive properties of the Hurtubise family on what was then the agricultural outskirts of Montreal. This region, just west of Cote des Neiges, was prime growing land, well-watered with springs

and the streams that flowed down from Mount Royal, forming the St. Pierre River that traveled along what is now Queen Mary Road towards today's Meadowbrook Golf Course in Cote St. Luc. Other than a brief airing at this golf course, the St. Pierre is almost entirely underground, lurking in our sewer system like so many of our island's streams and small rivers.

In the nineteenth century, Cote des Neiges was a village, quite separate from Montreal, on the other side of the Mountain. James Snowdon's property was in the country. His farm was described as "an apple yard" – an orchard – like so many of the farms at this time on Montreal Island. It was believed that the soils in proximity to the Monteregian hills were especially good for fruit trees. These locations are still apple-producing areas at off-Island hills like Rougemont. Commercial apple production has long gone from Montreal with only a few remnant orchards (Botanical Gardens, Morgan Arboretum) and private ornamentals existing today. However, the extensive fruit growing of the past lingers on with a few clues from street names like Old Orchard Avenue in Notre Dame de Grace.

James Snowdon had three sons: James Jr., William Comrie and John James. John James donated part of the family land to the Montreal Park and Island Railway in 1887 so that they could develop a streetcar line to access the Snowdon properties. During the rapid expansion and urbanization of Montreal, the Snowdon farm was subdivided into residential and commercial lots.

Industrialization and its attendant population growth had caused Montreal Island to develop quickly in the second half of the nineteenth century. Housing



was required beyond the old city limits. Little separate villages like Cote des Neiges and Notre Dame de Grace were gobbled up by an expanding Montreal, and quickly became unrecognizable from their rural beginnings. New streets were made and old streets extended to reach these areas.

The development of public transportation grew along with these new residential areas. In Montreal, the horsecar era began with the creation of the Montreal City Passenger Railway in 1861. Its first route was along Notre Dame Street from du Harve to McGill Street. By 1892, this street railway was electrified. These were true streetcars, running on tracks like a train but powered by overhead wires reached by a pole that extended from the back of the car to the wires. If the pole became detached, the connection to electricity ended and the streetcar was stopped.

By the 1920s, Snowdon was becoming a prosperous suburb, called the Snowden District, as a ward of Notre Dame de Grace. The business area, with shops and restaurants was located, as it is still today, around Queen Mary and Decarie. This area attracted shoppers from across Montreal's West End. The well-known women's clothing store, Reitman's (now closed), had its first shop on Queen Mary Road. A survivor of this period of rapid growth is the art deco Snowdon Theatre, which, although now a residential commercial conversion, has at least maintained its striking façade. By 1947, the Toronto-Dominion Bank had opened an important branch on the Decarie / Queen Mary corner.

Until the construction of the Decarie Expressway, opened in 1967, the most important transportation site in the district was the Garland Terminal. The Expressway demolished this hub for streetcars and buses; the private



automobile had taken precedence over public transport. Garland Place, a short residential street, just below Plamondon, running between Coolbrook and Decarie, is all that remains to mark this once important traffic transfer site. This spot was known as "Snowdon Junction," and, for a period of 25 years, the 17 Cartierville streetcar took riders between Cartierville and Snowdon. This was the route to Belmont Park, Sacre-Coeur Hospital and Val-Royal (now Bois-Franc) train station. The 17 streetcar (after 1959, the 17 bus) accessed the former Cartierville Airport, and the Norgate Shopping Centre. It continued south through the old part of Ville Saint-Laurent towards Gibeau's Orange Julip, Blue Bonnets Race Track, and the Snowdon Theatre. This route ended (or began!) at the former STCUM Saint-Henri bus garage – now the site of a Home Depot, just below the Glen. This Montreal landmark-rich trip covered an amazingly diverse selection of well-known places of mid-twentieth century Montreal. The only ones remaining active are the Orange Julip and the Norgate Shopping Centre (opened in 1950), the oldest strip mall in Canada and the oldest shopping centre in Montreal. The Decarie Strip was noted for restaurants such as Ruby Foo's, Piazza Tomasso, Bill Wong's and the Snowdon Delicatessen.

The Snowdon area, including the Decarie Strip, was severely altered by the construction of the Decarie Expressway. Starting in 1964, with the demolition of many houses, Decarie Boulevard was widened to a six lane, 20-to-30-foot-deep valley below the street level, with one-way service roads along the sides. Fill from these excavations was used to create the islands for Expo 67, along with more fill from the excavations for the first metro network.

On April 24, 1967, Mayor Jean Drapeau and other officials declared the Decarie Expressway open to traffic.

It is interesting to note that no Montreal bus route ever used the Decarie Expressway and that today's city buses (there is still a number 17) are confined to the crowded service roads along the sides. Although the Snowdon commercial

district is still thriving, and the surrounding residential streets are still desirable areas to live, things are not what they were in the 1920s, 1930s, 1940s and 1950s. The Expressway split Snowdon down the middle, and the expansion of automobile traffic led to congestion, few parking spaces, and challenges for pedestrians. The northern end remained an under-developed wasteland with all the closures of large destinations like the race track and Belmont Park. It is only recently that we have begun to see new projects being implemented.

Sandra Stock is a Montreal writer who, like Blanche DuBois, knows her streetcars.

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IN THE DOCK

Montreal Recorder's Court, 1906

by Robert N. Wilkins

Little tells us more about the heartbeat of a city than the day-to-day cases brought before its municipal court, and with *Montreal Recorder's Court, 1906*, I attempt to come to grips with the pulse of our metropolis as it was 114 years ago. Flouting the Edwardian Era by-laws of the time often saw wayward Montrealers land up in the prisoner's dock in the less than attractive, smoke-filled municipal courtroom in the old City Hall edifice (the original edifice was destroyed by fire in 1922) in front of the Champs-de-Mars. Streetwalkers, "habitual drunkards," reckless drivers (of both horse and automobile), loiterers, beggars, and children (a few of them as young as 8 years old!) frequently endured the indignation of the sitting Recorder, who sentenced them accordingly. In that regard, a total of 12,091 cases passed before the Recorder's Court in 1906, the majority of which ended in summary convictions.

The book's first section aims to put this study into some vital historical context. What was happening in Montreal in 1906, the origin of this city's Recorder's Court, and, finally, a wistful look at the old city jail at St. Mary's Current are just a few of the topics that are examined in some considerable detail, accompanied by some vintage newspaper images.

The second part concentrates on the children who were brought before the Recorder for prosecution. Many were so young that they could barely be seen over the half opened Dutch door in the prisoner's dock portrayed in the image above.

Kids got into all kinds of trouble during the Edwardian Period for all sorts of reasons - some serious, some less so. In the latter category, boys were often brought before the tribunal for taking part in various games on the roads of the city, like

tobogganing in the winter and playing ball in the summer. Many also liked to frighten adults by dropping firecrackers on the street – something I regretfully remember doing as a youngster!

In the more consequential category of crime, however, breaking and entering was not an unheard-of activity for young boys – some very young, as the book details. It seemed that a number of the more juvenile cash-starved lads needed money to pay their entrance fee into the various sordid movie houses that

were popping up here and there, often in the more disreputable corners of city. These tawdry theatres were, sadly, very popular with children, including many girls.

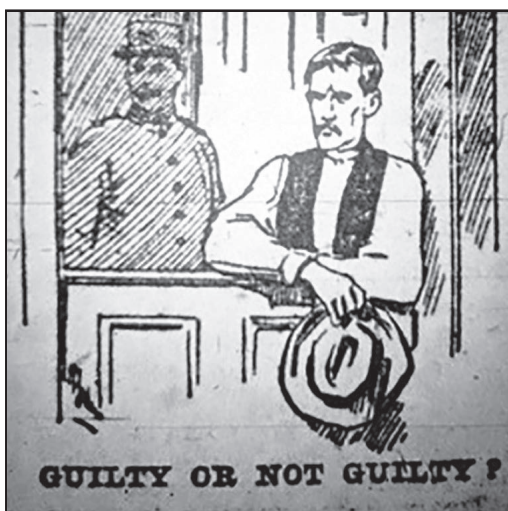
The book's final section dwells upon the adults who were brought to the municipal court, more often than not by city police, for reasons that were as diverse as they were numerous. Some were seemingly trivial (for example, failing to remove ice from a rooftop), while others were far more serious (like summertime sexual shenanigans on Mount Royal and in LaFontaine Park).

Occasionally, just occasionally, individuals were discovered parading around naked in one of the two cemeteries on the slopes of Mount Royal. One such case involved a 25-year-old by the name of John Howard, who, as a consequence, was brought before the Recorder's Court (fully clothed, I might add!) in June of 1906.

All such escapades are covered in considerable detail in the rather, at times, explicit story line of the Edwardian Period.

The Recorder's Court in 1906 mirrored Montreal as it was for so many at the time. Its seeming indifference to much that we hold precious today, particularly our children, is difficult to comprehend. The very thought of a child summoned before a fully-fledged court of law, let alone possibly sentenced to an adult prison, causes us to recoil with both astonishment and shame.

While my *Montreal 1909* was published by Shoreline Press, *Montreal Recorder's Court, 1906* is self-published. Although it is available at the Argo Bookshop (1915 St. Catherine West) and at Paragraph Bookstore (on McGill College), it is also easily procured directly from me. The price is \$20, including postage, and every cent will be donated to two city charities for homeless men and women: Chez Doris and St. Michael's Mission. Contact: robertnwilkins@yahoo.ca or 514-524-5247.



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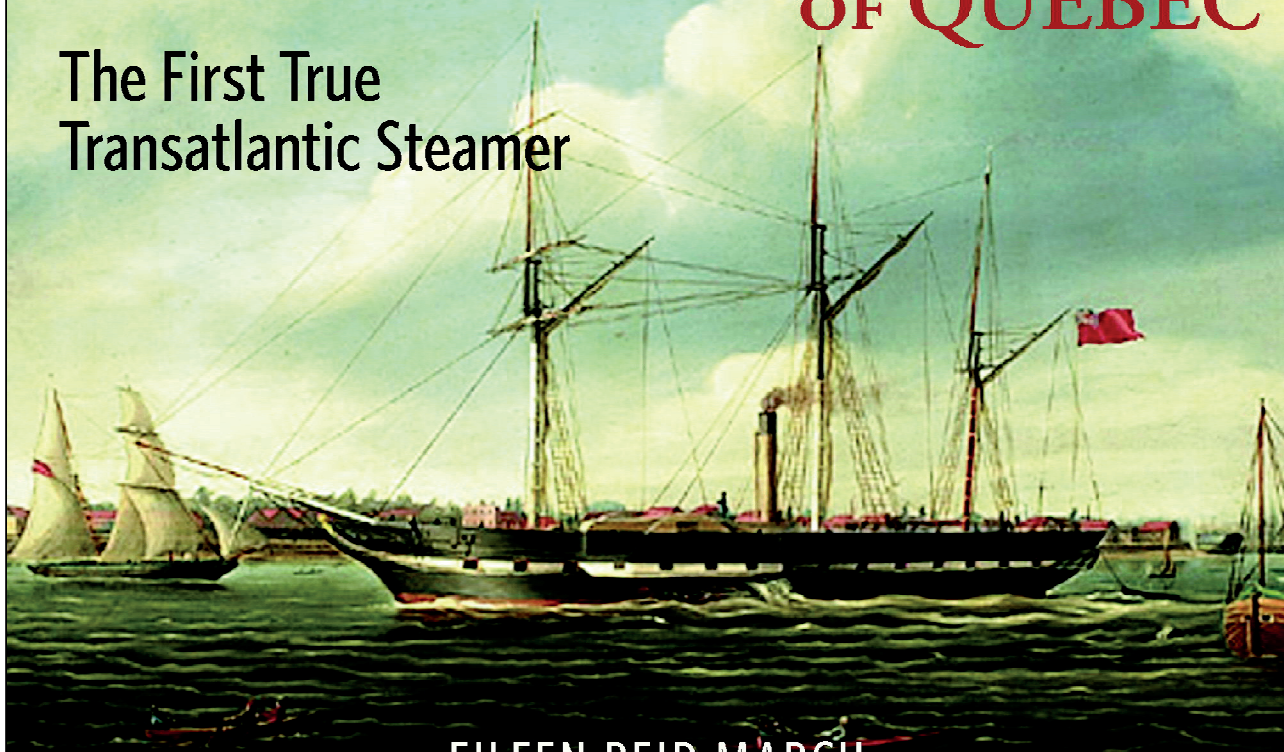

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