

REMEMBERING MARY PICKFORD'S SENSATIONAL WARTIME VERDUN VISIT

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Heritage

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News



The Men of “C” Force

Indigenous Soldiers in Canada's Wars

Bais in Cares

Unpacking the Ottawa Valley Accent

Sense of Belonging

Morin Heights, Orford, Stanstead, Richmond, Mile End and KlezKanada Explore Heritage

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Cover: Mary Pickford commemorative stamp, Canadians in Hollywood series, 2006.
Courtesy of Canada Post.

EDITOR'S DESK

Final Notices

by Rod MacLeod

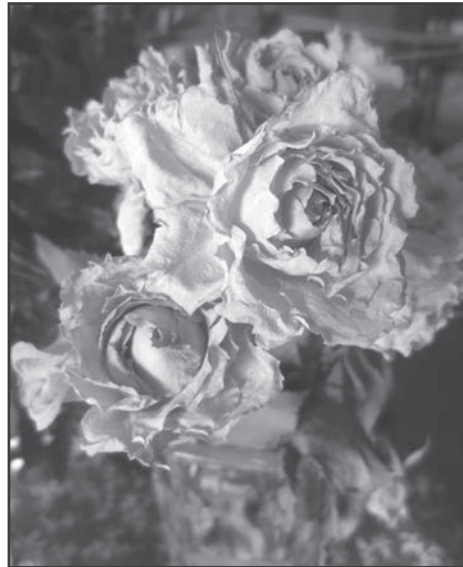
I remember thinking it odd, and a little sad, that my mother in her golden years religiously read the obituary section in the paper. She would nod grimly and announce that X, who had gone to school with her, or Y, with whom she had once worked, or Z, a former client, had died. The information did not seem to depress her, but it was hardly a cheery activity and I always felt that in brooding over the departed she was allowing herself to start sliding down her own slippery slope towards the grave.

Not being a devotee of the obits, I found it a challenge when the time came to write one for my mother. That is to say, I found it a *writing* challenge. One difficulty was getting the right tone, not just for me but for my father, who had willingly delegated this responsibility but did insist on a few sensible edits when he read over what I'd produced. Writing my father's obit a few years later was easier, in part because I didn't have to run it by anyone, but also because I'd done it before. We acquire curious skills as we stumble through life.

In time, I began reading the obituary section religiously myself, an indulgence I have maintained ever since. I now understand my mother's reverence for this distinct source of information, and find myself making the same sort of grim announcements – albeit silently. Those I live with are inclined, as I once did, to consider the perusal of these pages as evidence of an unhealthy preoccupation with that fine and private place, that field of bones, that undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveller returns. But the obits are actually quite interesting. And useful. And curiously life-affirming.

Obits have brought closure to friendships I've lost track of. Ditto relatives, particularly those I knew as a kid because our parents were close but have not kept up with merely for consanguinity's sake. Every once in a while I come across the face of a distant cousin and feel a pang of guilt that I ought to have written or called

more often. Then, a sense of closure sets in. That is the end of *that* story. The story that began when I was first introduced to the lanky teens and intense students (all of my cousins were older than me) that my parents remembered as toddlers. Who knew these people had been retired for so long, and had played golf, and had worked steadfastly for UNICEF? *That* kid who grudgingly tossed a football with me while the adults yacked? *That* girl with the bright smile who breezily poured me a glass of juice from their fridge? Survived by spouse and kids and grandchildren. In lieu of flowers, send a donation. A person



I could have known better, but did not. A life now fixed in a few lines of sober prose.

I have come across friends of my parents who survived them. Many of them attended my parents' memorial celebrations, occasions when we reminisced over events from my childhood that they'd been part of. One bachelor who I suspect had always been sweet on my mother. One lady I can never quite forgive for a well-intended comment she made about my father. One ex-husband of my mother's close friend and colleague, awkwardly claiming a bit of space in that room of solemn joy, to which he was welcome as

far as I was concerned. Two of my father's wartime buddies. One woman my mother had helped professionally, who then put us in touch with a wonderful obstetrician when we sorely needed one. These are not people I would ever have contacted just to catch up, but it gives me a distinct sense of connection to see their final curtain rung down in print.

Some announcements come as a shock; others confirm a long-held suspicion that someone must be gone, or at least they underscore its mathematical inevitability. I am surprised that A has died so young; equally that B has lasted so long. Sometimes I am profoundly grateful I saw an obit in time to pay respects. Over the last couple of years, my spouse and I lost beloved former teachers, and we faithfully followed the newspaper notices to funeral homes; the latter took place just as Covid was in the air, and it was awkward to not shake hands or hug the other attendees. Although few notices mentioned Covid as the cause of death in the spring and summer of 2020, I noted that the number of obits steadily increased – an impression confirmed by the sad toll the disease took on seniors' residences and nursing homes.

There are also moments when an obituary causes the breath to catch a little, and the heart to sink. This happened last summer when I noted the death of one of my neighbours, an elderly chap who lived too many doors away for us to be friends, but close enough for us to exchange pleasantries whenever our paths crossed. On many a fine day I'd pass him puttering about in his front garden and we would praise the good weather together. On many a snowy day I'd find him shovelling away, and we would shake our heads and admit that this was the price for living in Canada. I'd known him for some years like this before realizing he was a prof at McGill, and that I even owned a book he had co-written – but this knowledge was somehow too intimate to clutter our casual chats. When I saw his final notice, I felt the urge to say something profound to his

family, but our relationship had studiously skirted profundity, and there was nothing to say.

This will have to do. In lieu of flowers, I suppose.

Another time when my breath caught a little and my heart sank was reading of the death of David Freeman (1932-2021), who was a founding member of QAHN and its first treasurer (2000-2003). I knew him in that capacity, but also as the husband of Betty LeMaistre, who was also a founding member of QAHN and its first secretary (also 2000-2003). Simultaneous husband-and-wife board members is not something one encounters very often, but then David and Betty were a remarkable couple.

David was soft-spoken with a quick wit, a man able to convey considerable passion about a variety of subjects without raising his voice or losing his place. It was infectious. You paid attention, lest you missed hearing a gem. He was delightful to talk to, always interested and never critical, yet ready with an opinion, which always seemed to hit the mark.



One December, I drove with David and Betty to a meeting in Quebec City, and in an effort to make a contribution to expenses I grabbed the cheque at lunch. David kept insisting that it was not right, that it was no trouble to have me as a passenger – but I insisted. He brought it up again just as they were dropping me off at home at the end of the weekend. “Oh dear,” I said a bit too emphatically, “I’ll never hear the end of this.” David looked me square in the eye and quipped jauntily without skipping a beat: “You just did.” In retrospect, I feel rather guilty for having grabbed that cheque!

David and Betty had me to tea at their cozy flat on Marlowe Avenue in Notre

Dame de Grace – which I discovered lay right across the street from where I had lived a few years before getting to know them. I was there to discuss what to do with the Royal Commonwealth Society archives, which at the time occupied a high percentage of their floor space. As well as being consummate volunteers at that august institution, they were active members of the Westmount Historical Association. When my recently-widowed father moved to Westmount, they were instrumental in getting him to join the WHA. A few years later, I was delighted to receive them in my house on the occasion of my father’s memorial celebration and to point them out as his friends alongside cousins and former co-workers.

I last saw David and Betty in 2014 at a concert for the Montreal Lakeshore Women’s University Club featuring the light operatic music they were so fond of. Since then I have kept tabs only through occasional chats with David’s sister-in-law, Catherine, whom I ran into regularly at community events. I heard that David had been in a serious accident but was recovering determinedly. Alas, there are things one cannot recover from. I salute David as a wonderful individual, and I wish Betty my very best.

Letters

Not my club

Congratulations and a big thank you for the interesting article (*QHN*, Winter 2022) on the Sherbrooke Snow Shoe Club. The story of the club’s involvement in the 1909 snowshoe race was typical of its interaction with its Francophone counterpart, La Tuque Rouge, which lasted for decades, as well as to a lesser degree its association with various other clubs within the city and throughout the province, not to mention the northern New England states.

The article did contain one factual error. The caption for the Magog House photo incorrectly stated that the hotel served as the club’s home base until its recent destruction by fire. Actually, the club acquired its own property in the late nineteenth century, whereupon it erected a clubhouse of its own in 1888 on what is now Prospect Street. From that point on, the Magog House served only as a

rendezvous for tramps out into the countryside or up to the clubhouse in what was at the time the wilds of Orford Township. That clubhouse remains in use today, though it has been enhanced by various additions over the years.

While the club’s membership may have faltered somewhat in the aftermath of the 1909 race, it went on to become one of the most popular fraternities by mid-century.

At times there was a waiting list of over 100 individuals willing to undergo the infamous rigors of initiation to seek admission to the club. Even the magazine’s cover photo from the early 2010s does not reflect the actual total membership at the time, but rather a select group who showed up for a given tramp on a particular occasion.

The current roster continues to diminish though, like all other similar Anglophone institutions in the region. It must be said that the current pandemic has tended toacerbate this downward trend. However the club remains active to the extent that government restrictions

allow and strives to be around for as long as possible!

Steve Moore, SSSC Secretary
Sherbrooke, Qc.

Strike up the band

John Wilson’s article on music in the Chateauguay Valley (“Wilson’s Westernaires,” *QHN*, Winter 2022) brought back memories. Anyone who was raised in a small town in the 1950s, English or French, has heard a band playing that kind of music – only probably not so well! If you would like a taste of what Wilson’s Westernaires could play, you can find ONE piece by them on YouTube. Just insert “Wilson’s Westernaires” in the search engine, and it will probably be the first hit. It is live and low-fidelity, but you can hear the joy and enthusiasm of the musicians.

Wes Darou
Cantley, Qc.

Heritage and culture in our communities

Belonging and Identity in English-speaking Quebec

Secrétariat aux relations
avec les Québécois
d'expression anglaise

Québec

For the second consecutive year, the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network is partnering with heritage groups around the province to explore and share a broad range of stories and cultural traditions from English-speaking Quebec. Generously funded once again by Quebec's Secrétariat aux relations avec les Québécois d'expression anglaise (SQREA), the "Belonging and Identity" project supports initiatives led by

member-organizations based in the Eastern Townships, the Laurentians, the Gaspé and the Greater Montreal region. Presented here is the second in a two-part series about 11 creative and inspiring projects undertaken by local museums, history societies and cultural organizations.

- Dwane Wilkin, project director

STILL ROCKIN'

Music in Morin Heights

by Doug Simon

Like most small towns in rural Quebec, Morin Heights started out as a farming community. Early settlers of the 1840s and 1850s would have had no way of knowing that it would become a musical Mecca known nationally and internationally. How did that happen?

Early farmers soon realized that the rocky and mountainous terrain was not suitable for farming, but that the abundance of rivers, lakes and mountains was perfectly suited for vacationers and outdoor activities such as boating and skiing. In 1895, a freight rail line to Montreal began to move mail and goods to the area. Five years later, a passenger service was added, bringing vacationers north to the area. This was the beginning of the famous "ski trains" that were the main method of coming to the Laurentians until the early 1960s. The shift to tourism saw many large homes converted to rooming houses and several hotels built to accommodate the crowds. Live music was everywhere, ranging from small bands playing in the rooming houses and larger bands performing in the dance halls of the hotels. From the 1920s through the 1950s, you could enjoy dancing to big band music or try square dancing to fiddle music. The 1960s saw the dominance of rock music, while the 1970s brought folk music into prominence. Morin Heights was beginning to be known as a great place to enjoy the outdoors during the day and to party at night.

Most Laurentian towns were predominantly Francophone, but Morin Heights has been happily bilingual since its establishment. Because of this, English-speaking people arrived as cottagers and visitors, some becoming permanent residents. During the 1960s, conscientious objectors to the Vietnam War were looking for a quiet place to settle in the country, and, being English-speaking, they found Morin Heights was a good place for them to settle. No doubt they

contributed to the "hippie" vibe of that period, and a walk through town today will confirm that it is still alive and well. They are older, of course, but still rockin'.

Rock and roll arrived in Morin Heights in the 1960s with a big bang. Larger hotels like the Bellevue, the Carriage House, the Alpino Lodge, and the Commons hosted Montreal-area rock bands. The Commons, a highly successful bar, featured live music for over four decades. Its popularity peaked in the 1980s and 1990s as a show bar that featured big name acts such as Blue Rodeo, Levon Helms, Ronnie Hawkins, Tres Hombres, Jeff Healey, Honeymoon Suite, Dutch Mason, Rare Earth, Long John Baldry, Edgar Winter, Blushing Brides, James Cotton, Corey Hart, Downchild Blues Band, Minglewood, and Barb and Barband. A smaller downstairs bar that operated under various names over the years also offered live music. As William's Pub, it featured some of the big-name Irish-Canadian bands around the turn of the century.

Rose's Cantina was one of Canada's best-known little coffee houses in the 1970s with concerts every weekend featuring some of the country's best folksingers. It began with



Bellevue Hotel, c.1940. BAnQ, CP021029 CON.



three people seeking asylum from city life and a burning desire to get down to basics and “back to the country.” The failing brakes on their trusty Volvo landed Penny Rose and musician friends Chris Rawlings and Bill Russell in the hub of Morin Heights at Gordon’s Garage. The trio found and rented a historic house in the village centre, and that was the beginning of Rose’s Cantina. Sold-out weekend concerts featured famous artists like Jesse Winchester, Penny Lang, Chris Rawlings, Bill Russell, Karen Young, Michael Jerome Browne, Stephen Barry Band, Colin Linden, and Lorne Elliott among many others. Penny Rose still lives in Morin Heights and regularly hosts small house concerts and large summer lawn parties with live music.

In 1972, Le Studio was built in Morin Heights by recording engineer and producer André Perry, Nick Blagona and Yaël Brandeis. The objective was to have a state-of-the-art studio in a rural setting with living accommodations for artists. This avoided the costs of hotels and meals that one would find in a big city location while allowing artists to move freely without being accosted by media and fans. A benefit for locals was that they often ran into famous artists in town or even enjoyed an impromptu jam by one of them at the Commons. The superior sound of a 32-track analog recording system and the location attracted groups such as Rush, Cat

Stevens, Ritchie Havens, Robert Charlebois, Chicago, The Police, the BeeGees, Sting, Corey Hart, David Bowie, Gilles Vigneault, Billy and Nanette Workman, and Felix LeClerc. The BeeGees booked a few days of recording but loved the facility and town so much that they stayed for five months! The tradition of recording studios in Morin Heights didn’t end with the closure of Le Studio. Sarah McLaughlin, for example, was one of many stars who recorded with Pierre Marchand in Morin Heights.

Local singer and musician Shawna Dunbar revived the festival tradition in the 1990s with the Wild Roots festival held at the Ski Morin Heights site. In 2017, Ian Kelly, a local musician and studio operator, launched “Superfolk,” a weekend event that attracted 2,000 people to its first festival. Performances by Martha Wainwright, Bobby Bazini and many other up-and-coming professional musical groups wowed the crowd. Its success saw a second festival in 2019 and a Covid-regulated version in 2021. Ian, and Director Penny Rose are looking forward to a bigger and better show in 2022.

With such a musical legacy, it was no surprise when Air Miles chose Morin Heights as one of its five top small musical communities in Canada in 2016. The Morin Heights Historical Association, with the assistance of the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network, is presently producing a one-hour documentary entitled “Music – the Language of Morin Heights” in order to record and recognize our unique musical heritage. It will contain a variety of musical footage and informative interviews with the likes of Robert Charlebois, Ryan Kennedy and Judy Diez d’Aux. The film will be released into distribution this year.



Doug Simon grew up in Montreal and then spent 25 years in Ontario working in sales. He and his wife retired in 2014 and returned to Quebec where they enjoy the outdoors and the cultural life in the Laurentians. As president of the Morin Heights Historical Association, Doug has been coordinating a project to document the rich musical heritage of Morin Heights.

Top: Robert Charlebois at Morin Heights.

Bottom: Rose's Cantina poster.
Photos courtesy of the Morin Heights Historical Association.

HISTORICAL IMAGINATION AT WORK

Telling the stories of the English-speaking community of Orford Township

by Jane Jensen

The *Société d'histoire du Canton d'Orford* (SHCO) seeks to uncover and share accurate historical information about the English- and French-speakers who have lived in Orford since the 1840s. The SHCO believes public knowledge and cultural well-being benefit from the dissemination of reliable historical information.

In the summer of 2020, the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network awarded a grant to the SHCO in support of its work, as part of QAHN's "Belonging and Identity" project. Some of the planned events were to be in-person, and they soon fell by the wayside. When it became clear that the pandemic was not going away as soon as we had optimistically hoped, members of the historical society turned their imaginations toward finding new ways to inform all those interested in the little-known history of their township. The project directors also pivoted, substituting for the lost events a virtual tour accessible from phones, tablets and computers: (www.histoireorford.com/decouvertes). In June 2021, they launched the virtual tour with a splash, holding an on-line event with over 30 participants. Members also distributed posters around the township describing the virtual tour and giving a QR code to access it (as well as a web address).

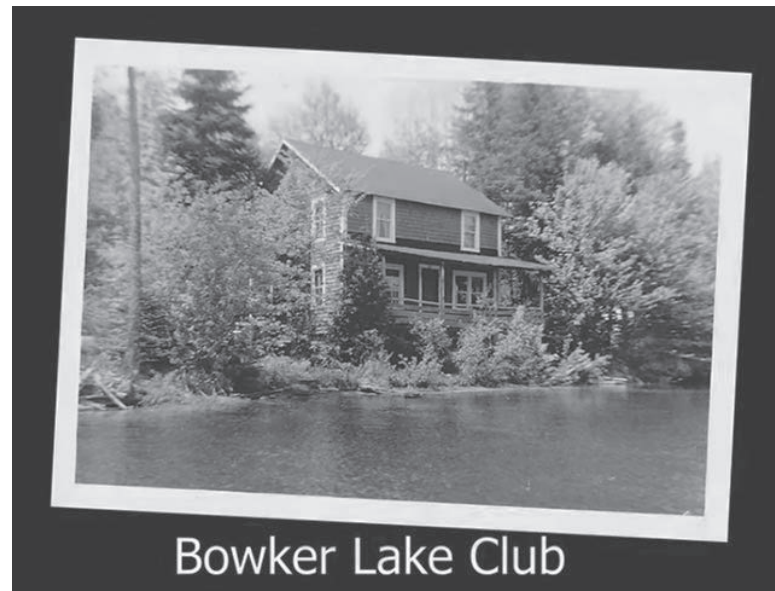
Reflecting on the difficult 2020-2021 experience, and in a more positive vein, the members also realized that their constituency extended well beyond the residents of Canton d'Orford who might be able to attend an in-person event. There were people who had a cottage at one of Orford's lakes or near Mount Orford Park, who only spent weekends in the area but were nonetheless fascinated by the history of the place. There were people across the Eastern Townships who were curious to know more about Orford. There were children and grandchildren of families that had once lived in Orford before moving away to other parts of Canada or the United States. There were inquisitive tourists passing through the region seeking historical information.

Such reflections led the SHCO to envisage reworking the relatively static virtual tour (a text and several photographs) into a dynamic mode. The video podcast appeared as the way to connect with all these groups, as well as, of course, to inform the

residents of Canton d'Orford.

QAHN's 2021-2022 "Belonging and Identity" project awarded a grant to the SHCO to produce eight podcasts with video, four in English and four in French. Each describes a place that has particular relevance for the history of the English-speaking residents of Orford Township, from the nineteenth century through the first half of the twentieth. The selection also emphasizes different dimensions of the township, from economic development in the nineteenth century to recreation in the twentieth, from architecture to memorials. Each video podcast lasts from five to seven minutes, accompanied by a musical background as well as a voice-over giving the story of each site. They are available on YouTube, from links on the SHCO website.

The production of these podcasts relied exclusively on unlicensed software, public documents, and publicly available photography. For example, Google Earth was used to create over-flights of a large area (see *A hunting and fishing paradise. Enjoying the great outdoors at Bowker Lake*). Equally valuable were old maps from public collections. The video can zoom in or out, whether to pinpoint specific places or to present a perspective of the whole (see *Bonnallie Mills. The hamlet that is*



no more). Video zooming also renders other historical documents, such as notarial records, dynamic and readable (see *A burial ground high on the hill*). And, finally, creative use of video over-writing tools can depict architectural changes and land boundaries in much more instructive ways than photographic stills or text (see *The Little White House* in Orford).

Beyond their primary purpose of making Orford's history readily available, the SHCO members hope that these experiments may provide an example to other historical societies seeking innovative projects within their limited means and resources. Using software and documents that are freely available, it only takes historical imagination to translate them into high-quality video material.

Jane Jensen is a member of the Société d'histoire du Canton d'Orford.

“LET ME TELL YOU A STORY”

An exhibition and education project at the Colby-Curtis Museum

by Samuel Gaudreau-Lalande

In 2012, the late Harry Isbrucker, then president of the Stanstead Historical Society (SHS), came up with the idea to record the memories of senior members of the community. He approached Marguerite Dunlop, a volunteer at the archives of the SHS, to ask if she would be interested in conducting these interviews. Dunlop, a regional history enthusiast and long-time contributor to the *Stanstead Historical Society Journal*, took up the project to seek seniors, prepare questions, sit down and listen for an hour or two, recording entire conversations.

Over the course of seven years, 20 such conversations were recorded and deposited in the archives of the Stanstead Historical Society, housed in the Colby-Curtis Museum. These pieces offer unique windows into the lives of the interviewees. They were generally conducted in the living rooms of the persons being recorded, putting them very much at ease and giving a casual tone to the conversation.

This kind of audio material is very precious because it contains so many funny, sad, and unexpected details about life in the Townships that never make it into the official histories. But how can they be shared with the public? The 30-odd hours of recordings needed considerable work to be presented in an accessible format. In the past years, two opportunities came up that would make a project demanding that much work possible: one was a grant from the Ministry of Culture on inclusion, and the other was QAHN’s “Belonging and Identity in English-speaking Quebec.” A project was born, with the working title “Let me tell you a story.”

“Let me tell you a story” uses as a starting point the interviews conducted by Marguerite Dunlop. Upon careful listening and copious notetaking from SHS archivist Kathy Curtis, three broad themes emerged: family stories, social life, and modes of living. These themes, which have been further developed into sub-themes like immigration, entertainment and country living, form together the basis of two closely linked undertakings: an exhibition at the Colby-Curtis Museum and a series of educational activities for the seniors living in Stanstead Manor, a local seniors’ residence.

The exhibition focuses on the presentation of the themes to the broad public. Photographs, artefacts, texts, and sound excerpts will present how people lived in the Stanstead area from 1930 to 1970. Through an innovative scenography by guest curator Vicky Chainey Gagnon, visitors will get to experience personally the peculiarities of life then, and take note of how much society has changed in the past decades.

Working with sound is proving to be quite a challenge, as it can easily become invasive in a space as quiet and dignified as Carrollcroft, which houses the Colby-Curtis Museum. The process and final product will certainly contain worthwhile teachings for historical societies and regional museums interested to work with similar materials.

From the onset, it was essential that this project include seniors who might find accessing the museum a challenge: the temporary exhibition halls of the Colby-Curtis are located on a second floor accessible only by a staircase. Education coordinator Stéphanie Robert, supported by the museum’s team, is working on a series of educational activities involving the sharing of memories through looking at historical artefacts and photographs. If you cannot go to the museum, the museum will come to you: that is the approach the Colby-Curtis is seeking to develop, by offering its activities inside the seniors’ residence and specifically tailoring them to their public.

“Let me tell you a story” will lead to other initiatives. It will provide an opportunity to make new recordings to enrich the archives of the SHS and perpetuate the memories of today’s elders for generations to come. The gathering and preservation of intangible heritage is extremely precious for future historians, for it is generally the mundane things of today’s life that will strike our descendants as so particular to our era. These recordings also highlight the point of view of women and their contributions to the life of their household, aspects that are generally absent from more traditional economic or political histories. An elementary school education project is also in the works, hopefully bringing together children and seniors to exchange perspectives on life, then and now. Again, it is hoped that the children’s views on their own lives can be preserved as well, as their voices are so rarely found in archives.

In short, “Let me tell you a story” marks the beginning of a new type of cultural project at the Colby-Curtis: deep-reaching multi-faceted undertakings that allow tourists as well as locals to experience the richness of the Townships’ border heritage through multiple means and events. Should it be as successful as its creators hope, more programming of this sort will likely be coming from the Colby-Curtis!

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



EXPLORING IDENTITY

Richmond County Historical Society

by Norma Husk

So much of who we are is tied to what we (and others) refer to as our identity. The word “identity” has its roots in Latin (*idem*, meaning same, a “oneness.” Thus, we may think of the word “identical” (as in identical twins) or we may think of identity as something that is unique to us: our individuality, a distinguishing feature of ourselves. Identity as such, is not fixed, it is a rather fluid concept, parts of which change over the span of our lives. It may be based on “large” concepts such as ethnicity, race, religion, language, or place. It may be based on individual features or characteristics: mother, artist, sexual orientation.

An interesting idea to ponder is: does identity give rise to a sense of belonging, or does belonging beget our identity? Or is it both? Perhaps, more importantly, does our sense of identity interfere with our sense of belonging? I would venture that, in the case of English-speaking Quebecers, this last notion is both an internal and external problem. That is, our self-identification as English-speakers limits our own notions of belonging to the wider Quebec society (internal problem), while the wider society reinforces this notion of us as not the “same” (external problem). And so, the identity dance continues.

Celebrating the Richmond area’s history in a work of public art is the “Belonging and Identity” project we at the Richmond County Historical Society (RCHS) have undertaken to challenge these notions. Created for us by Raphaëlle Coulombe-Allie of *MurMura*, the mural celebrates identities of many groups of people who have touched this place – the W8banakiak and “settlers”: English, French, Irish, Scots, Welsh and Dutch.

We chose to work through identity from a sense of place. As such, we have sought to celebrate those who have had a hand in touching this place we call home. We recognize that the place we call home influences us and our identity, while we influence the place. This notion of place brings us to our connections with the W8banaki Nation, for whom this place was home long before any of the “settler” peoples arrived. Indigenous appreciation for the land, for place, for nature is integral to their sense of identity. Place gives rise to bounties and challenges – no doubt our ancestors could speak to these much more so that we “moderns.”

Alsigtew, the St. Francis River, has played a key role in the lives of all who have lived in this place. Whether for fishing, for transportation, for key businesses past and present (basket



trading, pulp and paper), or due to its seasonal variations and their effects on our lives (ice jams, flooding, washing out of bridges large and small), the river is literally central to our sense of place. We cannot take it for granted. All else is, as is said, commentary.

History is objective primarily in a subjective sense. We can celebrate accomplishments we feel are positive, and fail to acknowledge that what we see in a positive light often is seen as negative from the perspective of others. With this in mind, our “Belonging and Identity” project includes an image that serves to remind us that not all that has happened here has been positive. Specifically, we have included an image of a home, circa 1835, that was a distribution centre for British Home Children in the late nineteenth century. Other images include key industries in the settlement of the immediate area: the railway, agriculture. Long-standing cultural practices are featured: the agricultural fair, the St. Patrick’s Day parade.

We have sought to acknowledge these various identities in symbolic images whose interpretation is to form part of the mural when it is installed later this spring. The interpretation panel includes descriptions in French, English and Abenaki. But what binds us together is the sense of belonging to this place we call home.

Norma Husk is the president of the Richmond County Historical Society. A retired nurse (Dawson College) and a graduate of both Bishop’s (BA Honours) and McGill (PhD) universities, Norma taught sociology at Bishop’s for 21 years.

DANCING IN THEIR SEATS

KlezKanada celebrates the return of live Yiddish music to Quebec's cultural scene

by Dan Rosenberg

"If you want to teach dance, people need to stay in their chairs."

Those were the instructions Avia Moore received from Montreal's public health department for her first in-person class since March 2020. KlezKanada's lead dance instructor was standing before 100 socially distanced people gathered at Montreal's Rialto Theatre for one of the first Yiddish cultural events in Canada since the outbreak of the Covid pandemic.

How do you teach people to dance if they aren't allowed to stand up?

When the world was locked down, Moore found ways to conduct her classes online, teaching Yiddish dance moves via Zoom video conference.

"One of the biggest pieces of feedback I received," she remembers, "from people who spent a year and a half sitting in front of their computers – I want to emphasize 'sitting' – is that these were opportunities for them to actually move. A lot of people reported back that it felt wonderful to be prompted to move."

Of course, the challenge of preserving Yiddish culture – its language, poetry, music and dance – started long before Covid. Moore attended her first outdoor KlezKanada retreat in 2003, just six years after the organization was founded. For her, the week-long series of performances and workshops, held each summer in the Laurentians village of Lantier, was life-changing.

"After several years of taking part in KlezKanada's classes, they invited me to join the dance faculty," says Moore. "That really led to me teaching on a much larger scale." She now directs KlezKanada's dance program while pursuing her PhD in Theatre and Performance Studies at York University.

Last August, mid-way through the festival's 2021 edition, a weekend of thunderstorms forced organizers to move activities indoors. That's when Moore learned about the public-health rules her students would have to follow. "I wasn't allowed to get them to move in a circle. I had originally wanted them to work with long handkerchiefs to keep each dancer distanced, but I was told it wasn't allowed either as it didn't conform with the safely protocols."

So, Moore resorted to teaching participants how to move to folk rhythms such as *freylekhs* and *bulgars*, while remaining seated. "It almost becomes an exercise in listening instead of an exercise in dance," she recalls.

Teaching seated dancers was the sort of challenge that cultural workers found themselves up against throughout the pandemic, and might be a good metaphor for trying to preserve Yiddish music when so few people speak the language.

In its thousand-year history, Yiddish culture has contended with challenges far worse than the pandemic, of course. Perhaps its most remarkable achievement is that that it continues to

exist, despite the Holocaust, globalization and Jews adopting other languages as their preferred vernaculars. The language is still spoken by an estimated 15,000 Montrealers, forming one of the largest Yiddish-speaking communities in Canada. But that community is a lot smaller than it was in the first half of the twentieth century when Yiddish was the third most spoken language in the city (behind French and English).

Today the majority of Jewish schoolchildren in Montreal attend English-language schools, and have done so for generations, owing to the history of publicly-funded education in Quebec, formerly divided into Catholic- and Protestant-run institutions.

"Jews were the first large immigrant group to come to Quebec that didn't fit into these categories," KlezKanada's executive director Sebastian Schulman says. "So, Jews ended up in the Anglo-Protestant school system. There were lots of schools in Montreal where the kids started the day with the Lord's Prayer, God Save the Queen, and singing hymns where 90 per cent of the kids were Yiddish-speaking Jews."

Jewish immigrants went on to establish cultural institutions of their own in Montreal that were "more robust than elsewhere in North America," according to Schulman, and that included a Yiddish-language private-school system, Yiddish theatres and a Jewish public library.

KlezKanada, which was founded in 1996 by Hy and Sandy Goldman, belongs to this ongoing tradition. At the time, Yiddish language and culture in Canada seemed to be on the brink, and its founders were determined to preserve and revive it. They also hoped to spark interest in younger generations about the music of their grandparents and great-grandparents from the pre-Holocaust era in which Yiddish was spoken by most of the world's Jews. So, the Goldmans organized an immersive week-long "music retreat" with language and music classes during the day and concerts at night. They also set up a scholarship program to attract music students interested in learning klezmer music from the artists performing at the festival.

Avia Moore has been involved in running the scholarship program since 2007. Initially, KlezKanada's scholarship program began with grandparents who tried convincing their grandchildren to learn something about Yiddish culture. "Increasingly we are now getting scholarship students who come and then bring *their parents*," Moore says. "There is this skipped generation, these parents who grew up assimilated, not engaged in Yiddish culture and then their kids say, 'You have to come – you'll love this.' It's really beautiful."

In the 26 years since KlezKanada's founding, the institution has trained more than 1,000 scholarship students, premiered dozens of new Yiddish cultural works, and has launched the

careers of numerous artists including the “godfather of Yiddish hip hop,” Josh Dolgin (a.k.a. Socalled) and Moore herself, both of whom performed during this year’s festival.

KlezKanada finally returned to the open-air stage on October 3, co-producing a concert with the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network that featured the Juno-nominated klezmer group, Oktopus. Celebrating outdoors was how Hy and Sandy Goldman originally intended to share their love of Yiddish music and culture.

Proof of vaccination and social distancing were still required, but live Yiddish music was back – and people could actually leave their chairs to dance.

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ST. MICHAEL'S LEGACY

In Search of Irish Mile End

by Justin Bur

Mile End is a neighbourhood in central Montreal, best known for bagels and its biggest employer, the video game company Ubisoft. The name is one of the oldest English place names in Montreal, going back to about 1805. Mile End has been known over the centuries for its country inn, its race track, its quarries where the grey stone for building much of Montreal was extracted, and its French Catholic church of 1858, which was at first the only church in a wide radius. After the Canadian Pacific Railway's first transcontinental line was built, factories soon followed; when the electric streetcars started running, Mile End also gained an upscale commuter suburb planned by developers from Toronto. After the First World War it was the most important Jewish neighbourhood of Montreal, where Mordecai Richler was born and grew up. After the Second World War, it was the most multicultural area of the city, with Greek, Italian, Portuguese, Yiddish and many other languages often heard. Later, artists and musicians made it home and now... the housing prices are a little too high for comfort. Among all that variety and change, Mile End in 1915 was the site of the largest English-language Catholic parish in Quebec.

St. Michael's and St. Anthony's Catholic Community is located in a spectacular building designed by local architect Aristide Beaugrand-Champagne in a style borrowing from medieval Constantinople and Venice, using brand new twentieth-century concrete technology. The church has been largely Polish since the 1960s. By its appearance casual observers think it must be Eastern Orthodox, or even a synagogue or mosque (if they don't notice the crosses). But no, it was built for Mile End's once very numerous Irish community.

The story starts two decades earlier, at the dawn of the electric streetcar era in the early 1890s. Mile End lay outside city limits in the village of Saint-Louis-du-Mile-End (annexed by Montreal in 1910). The new streetcar technology was eagerly anticipated by real estate speculators who understood its potential to drive an unprecedented wave of suburban growth. Toronto developers McCuaig & Mainwaring purchased two rural estates to launch "Montreal Annex, A Strictly High-Class Suburb." In their vision, thousands of middle-class office workers would build Queen Anne style row houses just steps away from the streetcar stop where the electric cars would whisk them downtown in 12 to 15 minutes.

On the east side of St. Laurent Boulevard, the Beaubien family had a different approach. A generation earlier, when the area was still populated by quarry workers, Pierre Beaubien had been eager to start development and offered land for the area's first church, Saint-Enfant-Jésus, which opened at Christmas in 1858. His son Louis (1837–1915) lobbied long and hard to have a railway line pass through Mile End. That railway became part of the

Canadian Pacific system in 1882. In the 1890s, the Beaubien strategy focused on attracting industry along the railway line, as well as workers' duplexes near the factories and upscale housing near the church. But Louis Beaubien controlled only three-quarters of his father's estate – the other quarter had gone to his half-brother Hannibal Maguire, who moved to Louisiana and sold his share of the Mile End property to developers. Most of it was acquired by James Baxter.

Baxter was a colorful character. Born in rural Upper Canada to Irish parents, he came to Montreal in his forties. A diamond merchant, banker, and real estate developer, he had a tendency to get his name in the newspapers – generally in connection with court cases, either accusing or being accused of some sort of breach of contract. It is perhaps not surprising that his banking career should end in a spectacular case in which he was convicted of defrauding a minor bank, the Banque Ville-Marie, just before it collapsed in 1899. On the positive side, he is responsible for one of the more attractive sequences of façades on St. Laurent Boulevard, between Prince Arthur and Guilbault Streets: the Baxter Block, designed by architect Théodore Daoust in an exuberant Romanesque Revival style and built between 1892 and 1894. One of Baxter's sons, Quigg, died on the *Titanic*, as recounted by Alan Hustak in *Titanic: A Canadian Story* (1998).

It was James Baxter who enticed the Shamrock Lacrosse Club to Mile End. Before hockey became Montrealers' sport of choice, lacrosse was enormously popular. The Shamrocks were founded in 1868 as the Irish Montreal team, doing battle with the Montreal Lacrosse Club (Anglo-Protestant) as well as teams from Ottawa and Toronto. (Another local team, the Iroquois Indian Lacrosse Club of Kahnawake, was regularly excluded from competition because they completely outclassed the Anglophones.) The Shamrocks' fan base from Griffintown was legendarily turbulent in the early years, which incited the team's owners to seek respectability by moving their stadium to Westmount in 1878. This was a rental arrangement, so when James Baxter tipped the club management off about the fabulous investment opportunity in Mile End, it was clearly tempting. The Shamrocks bought a 12-arpent plot in October 1891, giving them plenty of room for a stadium, stands and clubhouse, and a nice strip of land to be sold off for building lots. There were no electric streetcars in Montreal yet, but all the developers *knew* it would be just a matter of months before they arrived.

As it happened, it took more than two years before electric streetcars ran through Mile End, with an infrequent service beginning in December 1893. The Shamrocks didn't waste any time signing a 10-year agreement in February 1894 with the suburban streetcar company, the Montreal Park & Island Railway, ensuring a major stop on their grounds. Construction finally began on the

lacrosse stadium. And yet, no matches were played here until July 1895, after the spotty Park & Island service was complemented by a proper city carline on the other side of the stadium. Good thing: even with two lines serving the stadium, the spirited newspaper report of the inaugural match (*Montreal Gazette*, July 8, 1895) described the streetcar ride as “how the lively menhaden feels when in boiling oil he is christened sardine.”

One little detail made the sale of the building lots around the stadium more difficult than planned. Mile End was divided into two parts by the railway, which ran close to the crest of the island of Montreal. On its south side, the land sloped towards the St. Lawrence River – and the sewer system, though even slower to arrive than the streetcars, was nevertheless in the process of being built. North of the railway, the land drained to the Back River and no practical sewage system was begun until 1910. The Shamrock stadium was in this remote sector, precisely where the Jean Talon Market is located today. Next to the stadium on its southern edge, the celebrated ophthalmologist Frank Buller also tried to launch a subdivision named Shamrock Park, with similar lack of success. The area was finally marketed as a way for the working class to acquire property with a tiny down payment. Even so, few houses were built before 1910. As for the Shamrock grounds, they were used for lacrosse until 1923, then served as soccer or baseball fields until being expropriated for the market in 1932.

In the end, the lacrosse grounds probably enticed few people to move to Mile End. The streetcars, and the possibility of a spacious modern row house in a new suburb, surely brought many more – especially on the right side of the tracks. As Mile End and the adjacent area to the east (the former village of Côte St. Louis, annexed to Montreal in 1893) urbanized, churches were built to serve the new population. They represented the three main divisions of late nineteenth-century Montreal society: Francophone Catholic, Anglophone Protestant, and Anglophone Catholic (mostly Irish). In 1902, the parish church of St. Michael the Archangel opened a short distance from the new St. Denis Francophone parish church and the Presbyterian, Methodist and Anglican churches. Ten years later, with the growth of the St. Michael’s congregation, it was time to think of a new building. The parishioners were spread over a wide area spanning Mile End and areas to the east and the west. The trend was westward, so St. Michael’s moved a bit west to the intersection of St. Viateur and St. Urbain streets, in an attractive part of the Montreal Annex project.

The new church, designed by Beaugrand-Champagne, was built quickly starting in 1914. The outbreak of war in August stalled the project briefly, but it was nevertheless completed in late 1915. The choice of reinforced concrete construction allowed the creation of vast interior spaces with no columns obstructing the view, surmounted by a huge dome 75 feet in diameter – an impressive volume both inside and out. Later, celebrated church decorator Guido Nincheri painted the inside of the dome with a giant representation of the archangel Michael and the fallen angels cringing under his gaze. The parish, 1,500 families strong, was under the leadership of Father Luke Callaghan. After his death in 1931, the



parish school was renamed in his memory.

What was the Mile End Irish community like? Compared to areas such as Griffintown and Point St. Charles, Mile End was a newer, wealthier area – but it was also mixed socially and economically. An important industrial zone gave work to thousands of nearby residents living in modest homes, while others with more spacious flats took the streetcar to work elsewhere, often in downtown offices. In the municipal ward of St. Michael’s, covering a large part of the parish, municipal election campaigns were won by creating a coalition of Catholic, Protestant and Jewish, Anglophone, Francophone and Allophone voters. Mile End was home to many and exclusive to none. From the 1920s to the 1950s, the Jewish community was the biggest single group, largely displacing the Protestants but not the Catholics.

But when a new wave of suburbanization took hold after the Second World War, Mile End had become old and somewhat run-down. That’s when most people who could afford to do so left the area, so it became much poorer. That’s when Mile End became home to New Canadians looking for a first home, many arriving from Portugal, Greece, Italy and Eastern Europe. It seems that it was upward mobility, and the trend toward new suburbs, that left St. Michael’s with a fraction of its former Irish population. A Polish Franciscan mission was looking for a home in the early 1960s, and the diocese of Montreal helped arrange a merger with St. Michael’s parish. It became St. Michael’s and St. Anthony’s Catholic Community in 1969, and today mass is still celebrated in Polish and in English – even if there are few Polish speakers nearby. The church serves a widely dispersed community. Its Irish roots, forgotten by many, have become a topic for historical societies...

Justin Bur has been a member of the board of *Mile End Memories* since 2008. A co-author of the *Dictionnaire historique du Plateau Mont-Royal* (Écosociété, 2017), he is particularly interested in the development of Montreal neighbourhoods during the electric streetcar era. He is a doctoral student in *Urban Studies* at UQAM and a *Montreal* tour guide.

OTTAWA VALLEY TWANG

by Wes Darou

G'day, bais.

We often think of the French language in Quebec as reelin' in regional dialects. Faith be, we see English as one solid linguistic block, sea to sea. But enough of the guff, there is a small region in the west of the province that has a unique dialect. And this dialect has been rated as Canada's sexiest accent! (The poll was conducted by Big 7 Travel in 2019.) It is the Ottawa Valley dialect, and it is found in the Outaouais region of Quebec.

So let's give 'er a go.

According to linguists Bridget Jankowski and Sali Tagliamonte:

Within Canada, the speech of the Ottawa Valley, in the watershed of the Ottawa River, straddling the Quebec-Ontario border [and the lower parts of the Gatineau Valley], has long been considered an area of particular dialectal interest, even "one of the most distinctive rural dialect areas in Canada." The English spoken in this area has been described as the "Ottawa Valley Brogue," the "Ottawa Valley Twang," the "Ottawa Valley Accent" and even "colonial Anglo-Irish." It has features from phonology to lexicon that reflect the substrate dialect of successive waves of American, English, Irish and Scots settlers in the region after 1814. The Ottawa Valley dialect is reportedly disappearing.

This is in contrast to the nearest urban centre, Ottawa, where standard Canadian English predominates.

Pringle and Padolsky documented at least ten possible founding dialects within the larger Ottawa Valley area based on settlement patterns. These include Southern Irish, Ulster Irish dialects as well as third "mixed" Irish variety with features of both, two distinct pockets of Highland Gaelic and Lowland Scots, as well as German and Kashubian Polish, all of which then had some contact with one another, and with the extant French and Loyalist-base [and Indigenous] populations. (Full references can be found in the Jankowski and Tagliamonte paper.)

Around the time of Confederation, according to the 1871 Canada Census, communities of the Quebec part of this region varied from 60% to 90% Irish and Scots ethnicity. While there are distinct dialects in the communities today, there are varying degrees of communality in the sources of these dialects brought by the early settlers. No one variety should be assumed to be the baseline variety.



The Ottawa Valley material contains a wealth of syntactic features, pronunciations and expressions not found in Standard Canadian English. (Although some are found in other vernacular English dialects.)

Some aspects of Ottawa Valley English can be found in other dialects. However, some common traits include:

- The actual "twang" referred to in the name. It comes from a vowel shift (fronting) for a particular "a" sound, especially before "car" becomes "care," "palm" becomes "pam" and "boys" becomes "bais." As a non-linguist, I would imagine that this is due to the "Great Vowel Shift" that occurred in the fifteenth century when most vowels moved over one position in the mouth. The vowel shift did not necessarily happen in Northern England, Ireland and Scotland. As a result, the original pronunciations could have shown up in Ottawa Valley settler communities.
- The accent lacks the "Canadian raising," a typical trait of Standard Canadian English where the first letters of diphthongs raise to mid vowels. This is the famous "out and about" trait that Americans notice in our English.
- Another trait is the non-standard use of "s" with third person plural: "My eyes is failing" and "They spoils their horses." According to the research of Jankowski and Tagliamonte, this trait is in decline.

- The use of “come” in the past tense is also typical: “They come here in 1870.” According to Jankowski and Tagliamonte, this trait is enduring.
- The second person plural in the dialect is “yous” (vs. “you-all”, “you guys” or “you two”). This allows the speaker to differentiate between the second person singular and the second person plural (you and you).” I always assumed this was because their French neighbours had tu and vous. But it is not so; the same trait is found in Northern England, Scotland and Ireland.
- Also typical is the use of “for to”, as in “For to go to Ottawa, I took the bus.” As a non-linguist, I assumed this too was an adoption from French: “for to go” equalling “pour aller”. Alas, it is also a trait of Belfast English.
- Considering the roots of the dialect, Scottish and Irish expressions are common: “Ben” for living room, “brose” for a type of thick porridge, “amadan” for a harmless fool. There are numerous other lexical features.

Sadly, the Ottawa Valley dialect is largely in decline. “Individuals who retain [the Ottawa Valley accent] ... have a strong affiliation with the local and agricultural way of life ... although there is some variation by age” (Jankowski and Tagliamonte). With this demographic in decline, we would expect a decline in the dialect.

In the same vein, the PBS Podcast, Dolly Parton’s America, Episode 7, speaks of the pressure from parents to lose the Appalachian accent. One respondent said her mother told her university-bound daughter, “If you want people to take you seriously, we have to work on your accent.” The respondent said they would spend hours practicing problematic words. Another, on arriving at university noted, “I’m different. I want to talk like them ... They realize where I come from. They thought I couldn’t read.” Parton herself took the position, radical at the time, of resisting this phenomenon and intentionally retaining her accent.

One blogger from Renfrew, Ontario, tells how, in high school, the nuns went to great lengths to “get rid of that dreadful Ottawa Valley accent.”

My father, born on a farm in Lanark, Ontario, where presumably everyone had the Ottawa Valley accent, moved to Montreal and came back with Standard English and was labelled a “city-slicker”.

My cousin had the full *twang*, and used expressions such as “Nuthin’ you’d notice from a galloping horse!” He only lost his accent when he worked in London, England, for three years. The post-war British mistook it for an American accent, something they loathed. Too bad he didn’t work in Glasgow or Belfast where he could have kept the accent.

While a student in Ottawa in the 1960s, I once met a girl who, on hearing my accent, said, “So, you come from the sh*t house valley, eh.” Ouch.

Local respondents (i.e. my neighbours) added some valuable insights. Hubert McClelland, a provincial agronomist specializing in intensive pasture management (hence the electric fence in the background of the photo), pointed out that a number of his ancestors had been raftsmen, and as a result were exposed to French and a number of different accents in English. His mother, the daughter of a Presbyterian minister educated at

McGill, corrected his language from an early age.

According to Mary Holmes, the *twang* aspect in her family was much stronger on the Ontario side of the Ottawa River. Mary’s paternal great-grandmother spoke Irish Gaelic at home.

The full Irish influence was particularly strong in the Outaouais. Some communities such as Low, Quebec, were 90% Irish. Similarly, many French speakers had an Irish spouse. This would result in a good deal of borrowing from both sources.

The Ottawa Valley Twang is a rural and often disparaged dialect – unjustifiably so. Its decline may be due to increased mobility, demographics, television, Americanization, parental pressure or simply individual convenience.

There is, however, a counter-current. Tagliamonte’s *Ontario Dialects Project* and its website document words and expressions of various Ontario dialects, including Ottawa Valley English. To quote from the website, “The Ontario Dialects Project aims to seek out and discover the wealth of Ontario’s people, their history, culture and importantly their ways of speaking.”

We can thank Tagliamonte’s for her efforts to help document and maintain the rural dialects and accents, and how life go down the Valley way.

After all, this is Canada’s sexiest accent.

Wes Darou holds a doctorate in Counselling Education from McGill University and a Master’s in Environmental Engineering from the University of Waterloo. He worked for 35 years in education, counselling and international development.

Source

Bridget L. Jankowski and Sal A. Tagliamonte, “A lost Canadian dialect: The Ottawa Valley, 1975-2013,” in Tanja Säily, Arja Nurmi, Minna Palander-Collin and Anita Auer (eds.), *Exploring Future Paths for Historical Sociolinguistics*, Amsterdam, 2017.



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WIDOWS ALONG THE ROAD

Orford Township in the Mid-Nineteenth Century

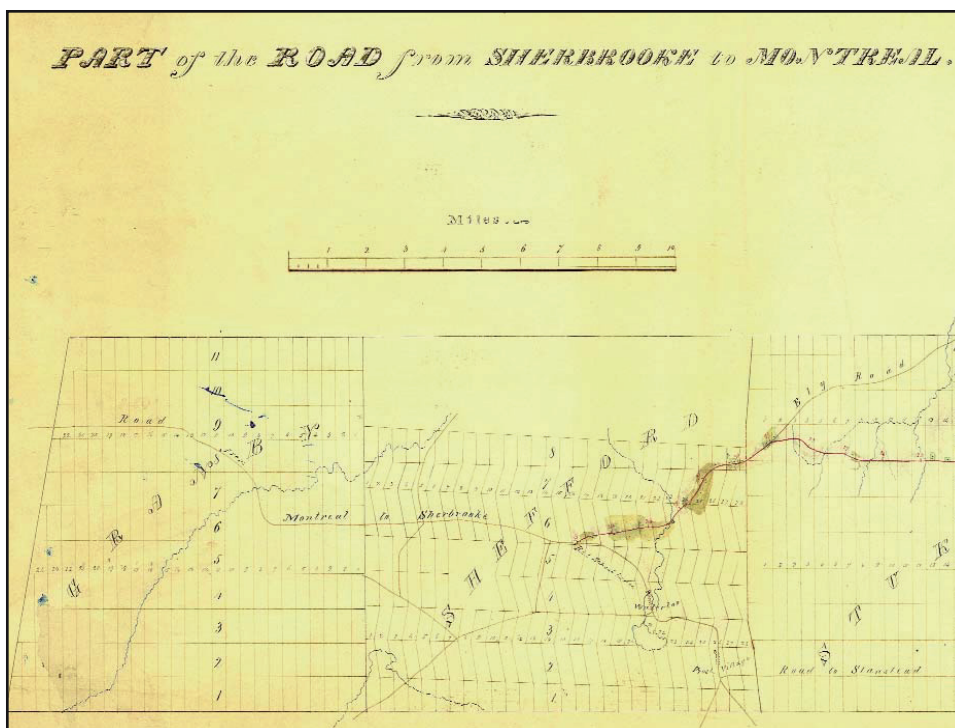
by Jane Jensen

By the late 1840s, settlement was taking off in the western sector of Orford Township along the “Montreal Road,” which the British American Land Company (BALC) constructed to link Sherbrooke to Montreal via Waterloo. The area was part of the traditional hunting and fishing territory of the Abenaki nation, but the imperial government’s 1834 charter of the BALC prompted its takeover by European settlers who arrived via Sherbrooke and by *Canadiens* from the Richelieu and Yamaska valleys. Among the newcomers were two Irish widows. Nancy Smith (b. 1786) emigrated from County Antrim in Ulster and, from the 1840s until 1860, lived near Lake Bowker (Long Lake) with the family of her son James Reside. Margaret Conlon (b. 1811) farmed with two sons near Lake Stukely from 1849 until she died in 1880. Both elected to make their Canadian lives on, and invest their limited financial capital in, pioneer farms. These stories of rural settlement supplement what we know about widows’ agency under the French regime or in cities.

In nineteenth-century Quebec, the death of their husbands endowed widows with the legal autonomy enjoyed by men. Their right to make their own choices was in stark contrast to the legal dependency of married women. Having this autonomy did not make life easier, however, as the household economy shrunk due to the loss of the husband’s labour and earnings. Widows faced hard choices about where to live, whether to live alone or with others, and what work to do. Margaret Conlon’s decision to farm on her own with only two young boys was unusual for the time. Nancy Smith made the more familiar choice of living with her son’s family. Nevertheless, both chose to commit to wresting a farm from the “wild lands” of the BALC. Towns offered easier living conditions and both widows had a choice between living near Sherbrooke or along the Montreal Road. Each opted for the second. Their stories provide a window on the lives of ordinary widows who immigrated to rural Quebec determined, despite the risks and challenges, to pursue a settlement project.

The very ordinariness of these women means that information about them is partial. They left no diaries or letters; indeed neither could sign her name. Their stories have been extracted from church, notary and census records, the latter impoverished by the loss of the 1861 returns for Sherbrooke County. Gone too are relevant records from Ulster. Despite these limits, it is possible to learn something about these long-time neighbours.

Nancy Smith was already a widow when she left Ireland with her daughter Agnes, her son James Reside and his wife, Ann Given, and their two young daughters and infant son. They arrived in Sherbrooke in November 1838, during the second wave of the Patriote Rebellion. James was a corporal in the Orford Company of the Fifth Battalion of the County of Sherbrooke, serving with Lieutenant Alexander Galt of the BALC. This connection helps account for the Resides’ move to a BALC lot in Orford West. Even after Agnes married her neighbour, Archibald Bonnallie, in 1843, Nancy remained with James and Ann. Nor did she later move to Sherbrooke, where the 1851 census reports her grown granddaughters Sarah and Mary Ann working as milliners, with their younger



sister Helen in their care. Nancy chose instead to invest in the farm, lending money to James to cover payments to the BALC and to buy stock. It fell to her grandson, also called James, to repay the loans after his parents died. By 1858, the accumulated debt was \$750 and James relinquished his inheritance to his grandmother. Nancy Smith continued to live on the farm with William, a younger grandson.

William and Margaret Conlon immigrated to Quebec in 1846 with two daughters and three sons. Although notarial records show that William farmed in Orford, we cannot say where or when he died. However, we know Margaret was a widow when she and John (the eldest son, b.1825) each purchased half of a BALC lot in Orford West in 1849. Two years later, they sold the practically virgin

lot to another settler, and John went to Sherbrooke, where his sisters lived. Margaret chose to continue farming. In 1854, she paid £62 to George Bonnallie for 54 acres, land she had been farming for several years along with two young sons, William (b. 1836) and Henry (b. 1844). In the 1851 agricultural census, she reported 25 acres under cultivation and 15 under crops, only 10 less in each category than James Reside, who had been farming in the area for much longer. She jealously guarded her status as farmer, naming that as her occupation in all property transactions; the 1851 deed lists her and her son John as “*tous deux cultivateurs*.”

Even with daughters Elizabeth and Emily married to successful farmers in Lennoxville and Brompton, Margaret never opted to live with one of them or with John in North Sherbrooke. She continued to farm along the BALC road with her bachelor sons until her death. Henry then married a neighbour and took over the farm, paying his four siblings for their share of the inheritance.

These two stories of quite ordinary women demonstrate, as do more complete studies by historians such as Bettina Bradbury, that widows could act as agents in their own lives. Both used the social freedom of their age (even Margaret Conlon would have been too old to remarry easily) and the legal autonomy of widowhood to invest their small capital as they wished and to choose with whom

along the Montreal Road.

A note on spelling

Both Reside and Conlon can and were spelled in various ways. Ministers and census takers preferred Rayside or Raeside, but James Reside could sign his name, writing it thus in the military documents, as did his sons in numerous legal documents. This spelling was common in Ulster. Conlon was also written Conlan and Conlin. I have selected the first spelling because it appears most often in Northern Irish genealogy collections. Nonetheless, the only one for whom one signature remains was John, who used Conlin.

A note on birth dates

With the exception of William and Helen Maria Reside, both baptized in Quebec, the years of birth are all approximate, drawn from census sources. Given the variety of ages that appear in the censuses, I chose to calculate from that of 1851, conducted in Canada East in January 1852. The exception is for Margaret Conlon who reported her age as 35 in 1852 (1817) and 56 (1815) in 1871. When the 1901 census finally asked for a precise birthdate, John Conlon said he was 75, born 3 December 1825, making either of Margaret's reported birth years unlikely. I have relied, therefore, on the death record of the Waterloo Methodist Church which states she was in her seventieth year in May 1880, making 1811 her probable year of birth.

Jane Jenson is a member of the *Société d'histoire du Canton d'Orford*. Research for this article was conducted as part of the SHCO's QAHN-funded 2020-2021 “Belonging and Identity” project.

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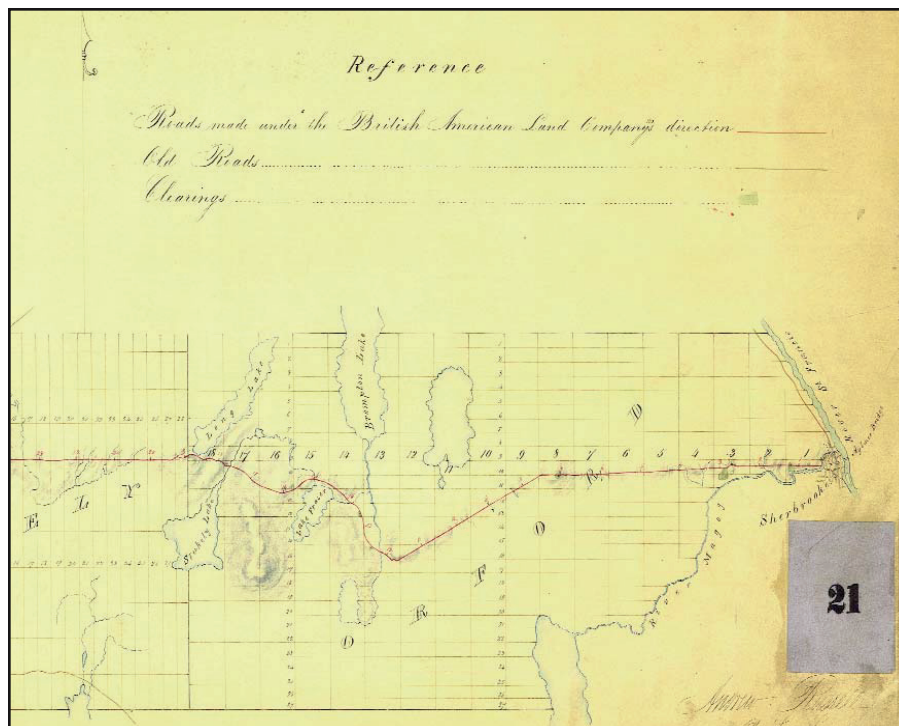
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and how to live. Each managed her money independently. Nancy Smith kept a careful account of her loans and collected the debt owed her. Margaret Conlon never pooled her funds with son John. Indeed the two purchases in her own name were highly unusual in both the BALC's records and the land registry. Despite the challenges of immigrant life and the harsh farming conditions of an area of rural Quebec only recently opened to settlement, both Nancy Smith and Margaret Conlon rejected what many might have considered the logical choice of living with a child nearer to the town life of Sherbrooke and retiring to grandmotherhood. Each chose instead to stay in the tiny community of English speakers

CANADA'S AMERICAN SWEETHEART

When Hollywood Royalty Swept through Verdun

by Rohinton Ghandhi

Stars in her Eyes

It was on a cold Monday evening on May 31, 1943, that a sold-out crowd paid a dollar each (50 cents for children) for either a fold-out chair on the rink's floorboards or a higher seat in the stands at the Verdun Auditorium. The floor seats faced a raised stage dotted by large floral bouquets on the southern end of the arena. In the front rows, eight-year old Ann Duhamel proudly sat beside her Granny Maxwell amongst the local dignitaries awaiting the arrival of what she was told was a "real" Hollywood star.

Until that evening, Ann was still too young to be fully aware of Mary Pickford's global reputation as a great silent-film star, as one of the founders of United Artists Studios in 1919, and as a champion of war efforts in both world wars.

As the master of ceremonies made his way to centre stage, the excitement of the filled-to-capacity crowd made it clear that they were about to experience something that only came once in a lifetime. The atmosphere was electrified by countless streamers and flags of welcome hanging from the auditorium's rafters, including a massive banner reading: "Welcome to Mary Pickford – Lions Club of Verdun." The house lights were dimmed and the brighter spotlights swung into action over the pathway to the stage, which had the look of an actual Hollywood premiere. The crowds continued their thunderous clapping in the dark as they awaited the arrival of Hollywood legend Mary Pickford, "Canada's American Sweetheart" of silent-film, onto their own local stage of wartime Verdun.

The Cause

Mary Pickford's appearance held all the glamour of a Hollywood gala, yet the

underlying reasons for this event were much more profound. She was touring to raise funds for the British War Child Victims Fund, a project she had started to help children in Great Britain and Malta who had suffered from bombings. She had further donated one of her



Toronto properties to the Canadian Lions Clubs, who then sold it to purchase new land in residential Toronto and built a house called the "Mary Pickford Bungalow." In 1943, it was the very first house built in Toronto's Woodbine area. (It still stands today: 90 Glenwood Crescent, in East York.) This home was then raffled off into "shares" or lottery tickets at \$1 each, with the winner having the option to live in it, rent it out, or accept its \$12,000 cash value. The winning ticket was to be drawn in the coming weeks with all proceeds going directly into the British War Child Victims Fund.

Mary Pickford who?

The elders attending that night remem-

bered Mary Pickford as the once curly-haired child actress who had captured the hearts of millions in the era of silent motion pictures. From those early years, she had been given the titles of "America's Sweetheart" and "The Queen of the Movies" for her screen portrayals of remarkably strong women. Her fans adored her well into her later years, as she remained that spunky young heroine they had first fallen in love with.

Mary Pickford was born as Gladys Louise Smith on April 8, 1892, to John Charles and Charlotte Smith (nee Hennessey) in Toronto. Three years later, her father abandoned his small family and moved out of the home. At the age of four, Gladys was baptized by a Catholic priest, who then changed her middle name to Marie. In 1899, her mother began renting out rooms in their home. One of her tenants suggested that her children be cast in a play. On January 8, 1900, "Baby Gladys Smith" made her stage debut at Toronto's Princess Theatre playing two different roles in a production of *The Silver King*. Gladys's seven-year old sister Charlotte and four-year old brother Jack both had roles in the production. With the play's great success, the three siblings, along with their mother, began touring in travelling plays across North America.

In 1907, theatrical producer David Belasco suggested that Gladys Smith change her name to Mary Pickford, which was derived from her middle name, Marie, and her maternal grandfather's name, John Pickford Hennessy. Mary Pickford began a two-year run on Broadway in William de Mille's hit play *The Warrens of Virginia*. At the end of its run, she found herself unemployed until her sister steered her into the new medium of motion pictures.

First Flicks and Flings

On April 20, 1909, Pickford was cast as a young girl in D. W. Griffith's *Her First Biscuits*. She soon landed her first starring role, in *The Violin Maker* of Cremona, under contract with Biograph studios at \$10 per day. She continued to take on major roles in several short films with Biograph in New York City. Her performances in these early films gave her the critical acclaim and the attention she needed from the movie-going public.

In January 1910, Pickford travelled with Biograph to southern California, where the continuous mild weather allowed filming throughout the year. The following December, she left Biograph for a contract with Independent Moving Pictures (IMP) at \$175 per week. Her rising popularity in films allowed her to demand a higher wage with each new contract, and, by late 1911, she had moved to Majestic Pictures at \$225 per week. In that year, she also married a handsome young actor, Owen Moore, whom she had met during *Her First Biscuits*.

A Star is Earned

As 1914 arrived, Pickford moved to Famous Players to make *Tess of the Storm Country*. Her performance as Tess, a poor heroic young woman raising the child of an unwed mother, catapulted her into Hollywood stardom. On March 20, 1914, she became the world's highest paid movie actress, earning a \$1,000 per week at Famous Players (under Adolf Zukor). The owner of Hollywood's famous Grauman's Chinese Theatre then gave her the title of "America's Sweetheart."

In May 1916, Pickford renegotiated her Famous Players contract to earn \$10,000 per week after making over twenty successful films with them. The new terms also allowed her full control over her projects, including the right to produce her own films under Famous Players distributor Artcraft. She became the first movie star to form her own production company called the Mary Pickford Film Corporation, which would solely produce her future films.

The World at War

On April 6, 1917, the United States declared war on Germany and joined its allies on the battlefronts of World War I. Within a year, Pickford joined fellow



actors Douglas Fairbanks, Marie Dressler and Charlie Chaplin in a tour across America and sold over \$18 million in Liberty Bonds for the war effort. Their success confirmed the great power that movie stars held with the public.

Pickford supported American troops in her films as well, starting with the release of *Johanna Enlists* on September 29, 1918, which encouraged allied soldiers not to come home until they had taken "the germ out of Germany!" Although the war ended on November 11, 1918, Mary considered it her patriotic duty to personally welcome returning American soldiers home well into 1919, often greeting them in her own fitted army uniform.

United Artists We Stand

On February 5, 1919, Mary Pickford formed the United Artists Corporation along with Douglas Fairbanks, Charlie Chaplin, and D. W. Griffith. Their aim was to keep financial and artistic control over their own films rather than possibly lose them in contracts with other studios. She then created the Mary Pickford Company to produce films which would only be distributed by United Artists. By retaining these production rights, Pickford became a rarity in those times, a woman of power with full control, in Hollywood.

Her success, however, had its own casualties. In late 1919 she and Owen Moore divorced.

The PickFair Affair

On March 28, 1920, Mary married actor Douglas Fairbanks and moved into his renovated hunting lodge in Beverly Hills. The lodge was later transformed into the famous "Pickfair" estate, a social hotspot for many of Hollywood's elite. An invitation to Pickfair meant that you had "arrived" in Hollywood. The couple's guest lists regularly included actors Rudolph Valentino, Gloria Swanson, Charlie Chaplin, Clark Gable, Joan Crawford, and Norma Shearer. Their invitations went beyond Hollywood: world-class guests Amelia Earhart, Albert Einstein, Babe Ruth, Jack Dempsey, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and H. G. Wells also partied with them at Pickfair.

The marriage combined each actor's



Top: Grauman's Chinese Theatre, Los Angeles, 2010.
Photo: sailko.

Bottom: Residence of Mary Pickford, Beverley Hills, California.
Postcard, 1930s. Boston Public Library, 06_10_009422.

individual popularity, and created one of the first power couples in film history. Wherever they travelled they were swarmed by their loving fans. In 1921, Pickford helped create the Motion Picture Relief Fund to assist film industry workers in need. (The fund celebrated its 100th anniversary at the 2021 Oscars.) Within a year, Mary and Douglas opened their own Pickford-Fairbanks Studio on Santa Monica Boulevard, still making films on their own terms. Their fame made them the very first stars to imprint their hands and feet in cement in front of Grauman's Chinese Theatre in Hollywood, on April 30, 1927. Soon after, the couple became a part of the original 36 founders of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, with Fairbanks as its first president.

Pickford released her final silent film, *My Best Girl*, in October 1927, knowing that she would need to transition into sound films to continue her acting career. She succeeded with her first "talkie" picture, *Coquette*, in April 1929; her performance won the Best Actress Academy Award. Her success was short-lived, as movie-goers could not accept Pickford with a voice on screen. She soon stopped acting and refocused her career as a film producer.

Her marriage to Fairbanks also ended. Pickford filed for divorce in December 1933, although it was only finalized in January 1936. Fairbanks got their ranch, but Mary kept PickFair. The magic was over.

The Buddy System

In February 1936, Pickford started hosting a CBS radio program called "Parties at Pickfair." The upscale show was unpopular with a depression-era audience and was cancelled after 13 weeks. Pickford then continued making films by partnering with other producers to ride out the Great Depression.

The following year, her luck changed with a chance encounter with Charles "Buddy" Rogers, her old silent-film co-star of *My Best Girl*. The two fell in love and were



married in late June 1937. In private and in the press, they showed that they had found their perfect partners. Time would prove them right.

Off to War, Again

On December 7, 1941, the attack on Pearl Harbor brought America into World War II, and with it entered Mary Pickford. She and Buddy went into action, using their Hollywood connections to encourage Americans to contribute their time and money to the war effort, including the sale of Liberty bonds. The couple soon focused on helping children who had lost their families in air raids and needed to be adopted. In 1943, Mary and Buddy set an example by welcoming two child refugees into their own family: first seven-year old Ronnie, then nine-month old Roxanne.



Calling All Canadians

Pickford looked to her native Canada for its great success in raising funds through Victory Loan campaigns. She donated \$5,000 to Lions Clubs International to set up her Canadian tours from Toronto to Montreal, in support of her newly-founded British War Child Victims Fund. Canada's Lions Clubs controlled every aspect of her tour and designed it to sell as many raffle tickets for the upcoming Mary Pickford Bungalow Project as possible.

In late May 1943, Pickford flew directly from Hollywood to Toronto and put her signature on the front door of her newly-built bungalow. Prior to her arrival, over 5,000 people had visited the prize home and had already bought 800 chances to win it.

After several Toronto appearances, she flew to Montreal and arrived at the Windsor Hotel on the evening of May 28. The next morning, she held a press luncheon at the hotel with Montreal's Mayor Adhemar Raynault and together they promoted her wartime programs. She spent the following days touring various war plants on the island, including Verdun's own D.I.L. plant, to witness their production of equipment and ammunitions. Her passionate speeches of the horrors of war and of each person's ability to help end it were genuinely received at every stop.

Verdun's Golden Book

On the evening of May 31, Mary Pickford's motorcade wound its way from downtown Montreal to Verdun under a full escort of "Verdun's finest" motorcycle policemen. Always the mother, she worried that their police sirens would awaken sleeping babies along the route, as it was already past 7 p.m.

Upon her arrival at Verdun's City Hall, Mayor Wilson welcomed her and invited her into his office to sign Verdun's Golden Book of distinguished visitors. Pickford added her signature alongside her "Beverly Hills, California" address,

which became a permanent part of Verdun's history. After Mary met with event organizers and officials, the mayor accompanied her back to her car, which was now surrounded by throngs of high-school students. The youngsters cheered loudly as Mary stopped to tell them that she was still "une canadienne."

Pickford's car and its entourage then made its way to the Verdun Auditorium where over 4,500 people awaited her arrival. On the way, hundreds of Verduners lined the streets, waving to her car as if to an old friend.

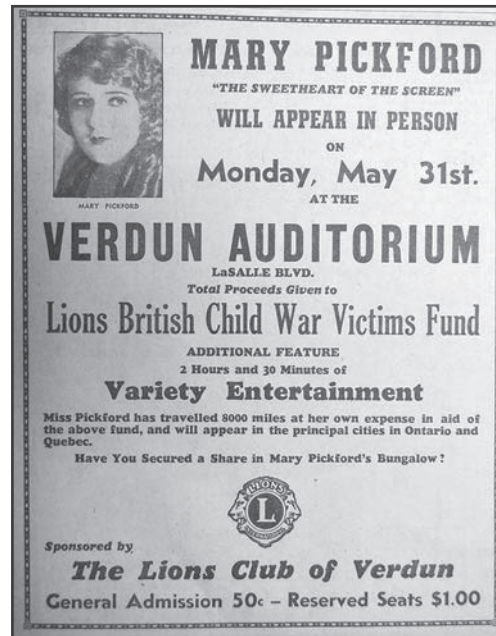
The Lady Enters Stage Left

The moment finally arrived with all spotlights focused on Mary Pickford as she entered the arena on the arms of Mayor Wilson and Lions President J. W. MacGillivray. Dozens of reporters walked ahead of them, snapping their front-page photos, replacing their flashbulbs as they went. The crowd's thunderous applause continued well after Pickford had taken her seat, and it was some time before Wilson could formally open the event.

The mayor welcomed Pickford to Verdun as a distinguished Canadian, referring to her birthplace in Toronto. He then revealed a little known fact that "Miss Pickford" had French-Canadian roots in the Province of Quebec under the family name of Beaumont. With his signature smile he added that she was christened Marie, not Mary, and that she would soon speak to them in a "tongue known to many of us, but not enough of us... French." He concluded by proudly reporting Verdun's record for the largest enlistment per capita in all of Canada.

The Lion's Share

MacGillivray then took the stage to extend a heartfelt welcome to Pickford, adding that her visit was one of the greatest moments in his life. He thanked her for sacrificing her personal time and expense in supporting the war effort, including her current Pickford Bungalow project. Looking across the audience, he spoke of how many



of them still remembered Mary as "America's Sweetheart" and "The Queen of Movies," and of how she had remained the selfless, supportive person they knew from long ago. He challenged the crowd to buy a \$1 ticket (or to split one with a friend) to help her war victims fund and for a chance to win her lottery. He reminded them that if this one lady, our "Sweetheart of Canada," could accomplish all this alone, then how much could they do together. In his own debonair style, MacGillivray then thanked Pickford on behalf of the Canadian Lions Clubs and invited her into the spotlight.

The Lady Speaks

The crowd went wild as a smiling Mary Pickford gracefully walked to centre

stage and then bowed to each section of the arena. The Hollywood legend was dressed modestly in an elbow-length white blouse with a beaded turquoise and silver neckline, caped with a shrimp-coloured shoulder bolero. A long black crepe skirt and turquoise suede gloves completed her polished look. Speaking over the frenzied ovations, she began her address in fluent French by thanking all those attending and confirmed that she was somewhat French Canadian herself. Continuing in English, she thanked the Lions Club for their invitation to Verdun and for their great support with her project.

Pickford then provided the reason for her visit, referring to a recent bombing of a British Sunday School and asking: "What if the Germans had bombed a Verdun Sunday School, would you not come to their aid?" She described the horrors of children who were still enduring the nightly Nazi air-raids over England and explained that "buying a share in the bungalow project meant buying a share in humanity." As if speaking directly to each of them, she urged everyone to open their hearts and pocketbooks to help those who had much less. To the ladies in the audience, she described the bungalow's kitchen as a young bride's dream, equipped with the latest modern appliances. She admitted that at first sight it made her want to jump in and get supper ready for her husband. Her informal sense of humour mixed equally with the urgency in her voice, giving her listeners a feeling of trust in her words and in her cause. In French, she spoke of how pleased she was to be back in Canada for the first time since Pearl Harbour and of her love for its patriotic citizens in fighting the Nazi menace. Returning to English, she thanked everyone for attending and reminded them that even their smallest contributions would help lead them to victory.

Waving to her sea of fans, Pickford said goodnight to Verdun and returned to her seat as the crowd continued its applause. Moments later, Wilson and MacGillivray escorted her out of the auditorium to her



Top: Advertisement, Verdun Guardian, May 31, 1943.

Bottom: Pickford arrives at the Verdun Auditorium with Mayor Wilson, May 31, 1943. City of Verdun Local Archives, Mary Pickford press photos.

awaiting limousine. We can only imagine the final words they exchanged before her car left small-town Verdun to return to the lights of Hollywood.

Pickford had left the building.

Ann Duhamel Plays her Role

It is rare that we have the opportunity to meet people who have actually witnessed history and who can clearly describe it from so long ago. Still living in Verdun, Ann Duhamel is one of those treasured persons. At 86, she can distinctly recall Mary Pickford's visit from when she was eight years old.

She remembers her mom telling her that her grandmother was taking her to see "a real star" at the Verdun Auditorium. Until then, Ann's only knowledge of Pickford was from watching her earlier films at Verdun's Park Theatre with her grandma.

On the morning of the event, her teachers at Woodland School were so pleased that Ann was going to see the Hollywood legend, yet her young classmates did not know of Mary Pickford at all.

After school, Ann's grandmother, Mary Maxwell (nee Hay), curled her hair and gave her a new dress. Looking like a movie star herself, Ann squeezed her grandma's hand ever tighter as Mary Pickford exited her limousine right in front of them at the arena's main entrance.

"When we got to the auditorium," Ann remembers, "there were so many people, cars and flashbulbs popping... people cheering and then this lovely blonde lady emerged from her limo so loved by everyone and so totally enamoured. There were loud noises from the crowd and there was too much clapping for my small being to understand."

Ann recalls how very cold it was getting to their chairs on the rink's floor, which was usually covered in ice. Granny Maxwell had been given front-row seats because of her work as a respected Verdun community organizer. Ann appreciated their clear view of the stage and proudly sat upright smiling at her grandma. The Montreal Locomotive Works Band was first to start playing in a chain of entertainers scheduled



to perform before and after Pickford's appearance.

Many of these artists were from Montreal's famous nightclubs, including the El Morocco Club Orchestra, a juggler from the Normandie Roof, a comedian from the Tic Toc Club, and a singing duo from the Samovar Club. Each one of them had volunteered their talents in support of Pickford's cause.

After a few upbeat numbers, the music stopped and all spotlights were focused on the arena's main entrance. In an instant, Mary Pickford and her entourage made their grand entrance and walked to the stage. Ann remembers a glamorously beautiful Mary Pickford speaking eloquently of her wartime efforts in a voice that everyone could understand.



Pickford's speech was frequently paused by the deafening cheers of her fans, until her last goodbye. At that mo-

ment, Ann knew that this was a memory she would never forget.

Star Struck

By the end of that evening, the Verdun Lions club had sold all of their tickets for the Pickford Bungalow raffle, in addition to the hefty profits they made at the gates. After the show, people returned to their world of food-rationing, scrap-collecting, and Victory gardens, not knowing that they were witnesses to a piece of Verdun's history.

Rohinton Ghandhi is a local author and historian who loves writing stories of Montreal in times gone by, specifically stories local to Crawford Park and the southwest part of the Island. He is also a member of QAHN's board of directors.

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INDIGENOUS CANADIANS IN HONG KONG

by Julien Lehoux (translated by Amy Butcher)

While researching for their recent virtual exhibition, "Impossible Odds," Je Me Souviens had the chance to speak with Ivan Gray, whose grandfather, Patrick Metallic of the Listuguj Mi'gmaq First Nation, fought at the battle of Hong Kong. In fact, three men from Listuguj, which sits on the border of Quebec and New Brunswick, fought with the Royal Rifles of Canada, a Quebec English-speaking regiment, in Hong Kong. Unfortunately, the participation of Indigenous soldiers in World War II is vastly underexplored today. This article aims to shed light, not only on the lives of these three men, but on the journeys of Indigenous soldiers before and after World War II.

Note that the spelling of the word Mi'gmaq varies and often appears as Mi'kmaq or Mi'kmaq in other sources. This spelling was chosen to reflect the spelling used by Listuguj First Nation.

While the many soldiers sent by Canada to fight in the Second World War have been commemorated time and again for their service, Indigenous veterans have not received the same attention. Official figures show that at least 3,090 Indigenous people, 72 of whom were women, joined the Canadian military during the war, which does not include the thousands of Métis, Inuit and non-registered First Nations people who also reportedly enlisted. By some estimates, 14,000 soldiers from these communities served in the Canadian army during the Second World War.

Fighting in the Second World War with the Canadian Army

Systemic racism plagued the military

services at the time, as the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) and Royal Canadian



Navy (RCN) required their recruits to be of "Pure European Descent and of the White Race" until 1942 and 1943, respectively. The Army also imposed strict health and education requirements that blocked the recruitment of many volunteers from Indigenous reserves. Due to these obstacles, it is estimated that only 29 Indigenous people served in the RCAF, 9 in the RCN, and at least 1,800 in the Canadian Army at the beginning of the conflict.

Many Indigenous people enlisted voluntarily in the military for various reasons. Like other Canadians at the time, many Indigenous people were probably attracted by the benefits offered by the military. With its regular meals, salary and pension, the army represented an attractive option at a time of economic crisis. As one Métis veteran explained:

We couldn't find jobs... In the army, the pay was one dollar and fifty cents [per day]. To work here on a farm or whatever, you would get a dollar at most. A dollar fifty was hard to resist.

Soldiers such as Charles Byce, Tommy Prince and Brigadier Oliver Martin also had a strong desire to serve Canada and went on to have long careers in the military. Some volunteers had specific reasons for joining, as they feared their treaties with Canada would be annulled if the Axis Powers won. According to Elder Isabelle Mercier of the Mishkeegogamang Nation:

When an Aboriginal person goes in and makes a contract, they will do everything they can to fulfill that contract, and many of our veterans stepped up to ensure our treaties were secure. Because, if the other side won, the other signatory was no longer able to commit to those Treaties, and the Treaties would be non-existent. This was talked about in my family many, many times.

The draft that started in 1944 directly affected Indigenous communities, as many men were called up to join the army. In return, some leaders organized protests, arguing that it was unfair to force people to serve a country that did not recognize their basic rights. While we know that some Indigenous people were drafted into the army, it is hard to pinpoint the exact number who served and even harder to know how many were sent to the front lines.

In Hong Kong

Very little formal documentation and research exist about First Nations, Inuit and Métis soldiers. Many soldiers were not registered as Indigenous for all sorts of reasons. This lack of documentation makes it difficult to get an accurate idea of who these soldiers were. While we do know that some Indigenous soldiers



served in “C” Force, the military contingent sent to the British colony of Hong Kong in October 1941, we do not know their exact numbers.

According to some sources, 16 Aborigines served in “C” Force and 9 died during the fighting or while held in captivity at POW camps. Unfortunately, we have little information about them.

In the database of Indigenous soldiers maintained by amateur historian Yann Castelnor, John Murdock Acorn of the Royal Rifles of Canada is listed as being of Mi'gmaq origin. John Murdock Acorn and his cousin Joseph Amon Acorn reportedly enlisted in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, in 1940. During the fighting, the two cousins were part of a group of soldiers who retreated from the Repulse Bay Hotel, which was seized by the Japanese after intense fighting. They were ambushed by machine-gun fire on their way to their new position and killed instantly.

Three other Mi'gmaq soldiers from Listuguj in the Gaspé region, Paul Martin, Frank Methot and Patrick Metallic, were also in Hong Kong. A boxer before the war, Metallic is described by his grandson, Ivan Gray, as being very involved in his community. All three voluntarily enlisted in the army. As Ivan Gray explains:

They did not have the right to vote as Canadian citizens. And... it was just out of emotion, I guess, and a desire to help and do something for their country.

The three men joined the Royal Rifles of Canada and were sent to Hong Kong. Paul Martin may have died during the battle. According to historian Tony Banham, Paul Martin was among the 39 soldiers who died during the assaults on Stanley Mound and Stone Hill on December 22. Martin probably died at the same time as the Acorn cousins, but few details exist beyond this information.

The survivors of the battle were taken and held prisoner by the Japanese until the war ended in 1945. Most soldiers returned home with many scars from the atrocious conditions in the camps and abuse by the guards. Ivan Gray mentioned that his grandfather contracted malaria and died at the age of 55 of an aneurysm. Gray thinks that this illness could have been caused by some trauma that his grandfather sustained during his imprisonment.

Back Home

Medical institutions at the time did not recognize post-traumatic stress disorder, and many veterans of the war and camps received little care for these mental health conditions. Some men resorted to self-medicating with alcohol and drugs to quell their personal demons. Patrick Metallic, was one of these men. Ivan Gray reported that his grandfather would sometimes have attacks and wake up in a panic.

While Canadian soldiers received benefits for their service, Indigenous veterans were denied these rights, and the benefits were refused to most for discriminatory reasons. Very few Indigenous veterans received the pensions they were promised or any financial compensation.

The military bureaucracy did not work in favour of Indigenous veterans. While their Canadian comrades were under the responsibility of the Department of Veterans Affairs, which was created in 1944, Indigenous veterans did not fall under this department's responsibility. The management of Indigenous peoples on Canadian soil varied from one part of the government to another; for example, from 1936 to 1950, the Department of Mines and Resources was responsible for Indigenous Affairs. From 1966 to 2019, the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development oversaw veterans issues. However, officials in this department were ill-equipped to deliver the

compensation deserved by Indigenous veterans, few of whom received what they should have for their services.

The relationship between Canada and the Indigenous communities within its borders has been fraught, to say the least. For many reasons, the role of Indigenous soldiers has long been overshadowed and under-recognized in our national memory. Although a national monument was put up in Ottawa in 2001 to honour Indigenous veterans from the World Wars and the Korean War, little has been done to redress the many wrongs against them. These people served their country, but it took a long time for their service to be recognized.

Julien Lehoux has a Master's degree in History from the Université du Québec à Montréal. His thesis was about the internment of the Canadian civilian population in Hong Kong during World War II and their repatriation in 1943. He is currently completing his second Master's degree in Museology, also at UQAM, and works as the content coordinator at Je Me Souviens. He would like to thank Ivan Gray, Joel Beauchamp-Monfette, Simon Berger and Marina Smyth for their help in the writing of this article.





Je Me Souviens is an educational program that works with several Quebec regimental museums to provide free teaching materials to supplement the Quebec history curriculum. Offering turnkey activities, travelling exhibitions, and interactive online exhibitions, *Je Me Souviens* strives to help students have a greater knowledge of Quebec's role in military conflicts throughout the last 100+ years. For more information: www.jemesouviens.org.

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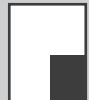
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THOMAS DUNN AND THE ROYAL NAVY

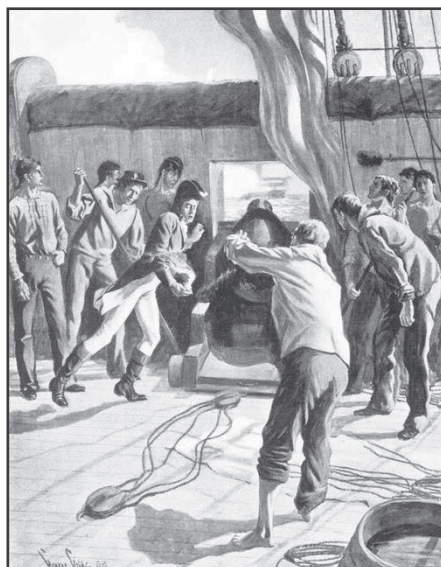
by James Brierley

When I acquired a disused farm, over sixty years ago, in what was then the township of Dunham I knew nothing of Thomas Dunn (1729-1818). *The Dictionary of Canadian Biography* had yet to appear. Now it contains a twelve-page online biography of him. He arrived in Quebec in 1760, was active in numerous business schemes and held many public offices. Together with a number of associates, he acquired Dunham Township in 1796, the first such grant in Lower Canada. He had purchased the seigneurie of St. Armand in 1788 and other properties elsewhere in the colony even earlier.

From 1805 to 1807 he was president of the Executive Council and so was temporarily civil administrator of Lower Canada in an interval between Lieutenant Governors. At one point, fearing hostilities would break out with the United States, he issued a general call-up of the militia – something that had not been done since the Conquest. His anxiety arose from the shelling by HMS *Leopard* (Captain Humphreys) of USS *Chesapeake* in June 1807 off Virginia.

Britain was at war with France at the time and the Royal Navy was suffering desertions of its seamen, often to American ships. The *Leopard* stopped the *Chesapeake*, believing the American warship had British seamen aboard, which it did. *Chesapeake's* commander refused to hand

anyone over, whereupon *Leopard* opened fire on her – “a devastating broadside by twenty-six cannon at close range” (Taylor). This was followed by two more broadsides. Three men on the *Chesapeake* were



killed and eighteen wounded, the ship was rendered helpless and it surrendered. The two countries were not then at war and there was no treaty between them requiring the surrender of deserters. The United States had, however, permitted the French navy to recover its own deserters on land and this determined the British authorities to exercise the same right at sea, if necessary by force.

Dunn's anxiety may have been justified. In a pithy comment, Harvard historian Samuel Eliot Morison said, “If Jefferson had summoned Congress to a special session, he could have had war at the drop of a hat, and a more popular and successful war than the one he finally declared in 1812.”

According to his

biography in the *Dictionary*, one Lieutenant Elmes Steele (1781-1865) was a gunnery officer on *Leopard* at the time (Stagg). In 1915, Lieutenant Steele's son, Samuel, wrote a memoir, *Forty Years in Canada*, which contains an interesting note on the role played by his father:

He was on the Leopard at the time of the famous “incident” with the Chesapeake when they enforced the right to search foreign ships for British deserters and commanded a broadside in the encounter. This extraordinary action was brought about by the direct orders of the British government through the admiral commanding the North American squadron, but the powers that controlled the navy at that time went back on their officers, and meted out some punishment to all, including my father, although he was only acting under the orders of Captain Humphries (sic), whom if he had not obeyed, he would no doubt have been tried by court-martial and shot.

That Elmes Steele was not shot has had a lifelong interest for me: he was my great-great-grandfather.

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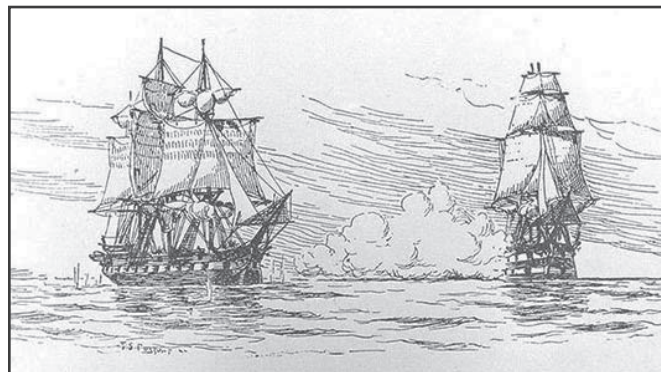
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Bottom: Fred S. Cozzens, “The incident between HMS *Leopard* and USS *Chesapeake*,” 1897.

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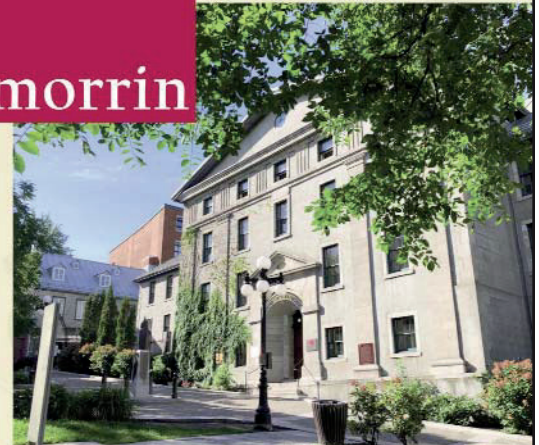


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FEELING UNCOMFORTABLE?

Opening Remarks at the Arts, Culture and Heritage

Working Group Meeting, February 14, 2022

by Grant Myers

On behalf of the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network, it is our pleasure to join you in the 12th Annual Meeting of Working Group on Arts, Culture and Heritage with the English-Speaking Communities of Quebec. I would also like to thank the organizing committee that never fails to deliver a great event.

The theme of this year's meeting – resilience – is apt. From its very beginnings, the story of Quebec's English-speaking community has been one of resilience. The last couple of years have been particularly challenging for all Quebecers as many of us have struggled to get back on our feet and put the nightmare that is Covid-19 behind us. But for English speakers, and indeed anyone that does not fit the nationalist vision for a Quebec that is linguistically and culturally homogeneous, there have been additional challenges.

Notwithstanding paternal reassurances from our premier, the establishment of the *Secrétariat aux relations avec les Québécois d'expression anglaise*, and modest amounts of dedicated funding, the current regime has regrettably seen fit to attempt to both pacify us, and bring legislation forward that imposes further restrictions on the use of English in our day-to-

day lives. One might say the timing is ill-advised and reminds us once again that our language and cultures are considered by



some to be an unwelcome presence in this province.

The English-speaking community has made immense contributions to Quebec economically and culturally, yet it is difficult for us to dream of a vital future when we must endure constant state-sponsored stigmatization and marginalization. We are often told that we are the “best treated minority in Canada.” Yet we live in the only place in Canada where speaking one of our country's two official languages is

subject to legal sanction. As a population, English speakers living in Quebec exhibit higher rates of poverty and other forms of economic disparity than the majority. These facts serve to remind us that we are vulnerable politically, socially, and economically. Why should we accept these injustices in our own “house”?

If these words make some uncomfortable, that is my intent. To criticize something that is clearly wrong does not make me “anti-Quebec.” Rather, we all have an obligation to both resist injustice and support a vision of Quebec where every citizen, regardless of language and culture, feels safe and welcome.

The Government of Canada's ongoing support for Quebec's English-speaking Official Language Minority Community (OLMC) is much appreciated. This support has been built on a vision of our country that values thriving French and English communities from coast to coast. Meetings like this demonstrate the creative potential of enhanced co-operation between the federal government and Canada's linguistic and cultural minorities. However, recent signals from Canada's Liberal Government have left many of us fearful that shifting federal priorities related to support for Official Languages may leave Quebec's English speakers without substantive assistance from Ottawa. There seems to be a political move to favour the demographic challenges facing Canada's Francophone population despite the fact that Quebec's English-speaking community faces challenges that are equally compelling. Thus, the question hanging over this meeting is this: Will the Government of Canada do the right thing and maintain a direct, steadfast, and sustained commitment to both of Canada's Official Language Minority Communities – or, as English speakers in Quebec, will we be left to fend for ourselves?

Thank you.



OPINION

Municipal Action and the Environment: Mercier, Quebec

by Barbara McClintock

The long-term prognosis for climate change is grim, and it is time to seek solutions. In the wake of COP26 (the 26th United Nations “Conference of the Parties” Climate Change Conference), the environment must be a priority to save our planet for future generations. So what can we do as individuals to reduce greenhouse gases and stop the melting of glaciers and mass extinction? The popular environmental slogan “think globally, act locally” (a phrase attributed to Patrick Geddes, an early twentieth century Scottish urban planner) offers hope and guidance.

This article discusses an example of local action on environmental issues in Mercier, a bedroom community south of Montreal. Mercier holds the dubious distinction of being the site of one of the worst environmental disasters in North America. The events in Mercier are very complex and resulted in years of legal proceedings. This article is only a brief introduction to the topic. The dates and main facts were taken from the city’s *InfoMercier* special environment bulletin and from the Master’s thesis of an environmental expert, Maude Laberge, the former mayor of St. Martine. The opinions expressed in this article are solely those of the author.

First, let us understand what happened.

The story began in 1968 when the Quebec government gave permission to a private company called LaSalle Oil Carriers to dump toxic waste on a site known as the *lagunes de Mercier*. These lagoons were located in an old sand and gravel quarry on Sainte-Marguerite Boulevard in one of the province’s best market garden areas. Unfortunately, contaminated oil was pumped directly into the water table; technology did not exist in the 1960s to identify the table’s exact location.

As a preliminary solution, a private company was authorized to build a hazardous waste incinerator on the site of the old sand and gravel quarry. The intention was to burn off the waste, but the company continued to dump waste on the site until 1971. The site even contained waste on the ground, such as barrels of used oil and chemicals.

After nearly 38 years of poor environmental management, the contaminated site extends to an area of 30 square kilometres, depriving access to the source of water in the water table for thousands of people. (Laberge, 2)

A long legal saga ensued, during which time the incinerator was allowed to continue to operate under new management. A *Bureau d’audiences publiques sur l’environnement (BAPE)* Commission was held about the problem under the leadership of engineer André Delisle. The report, published in 1994 in French only, concluded that no technology existed that would make it feasible to decontaminate the site, which is also the case today. The simplest solution was to supply water from a neighbouring city, Châteauguay.



For many years, environmental activists, the most notable one being Daniel Green of Société pour Vaincre la Pollution (SVP), pushed for the closure of the incinerator.

The Mercier incinerator was still in operation in 2003, when an environmental group in Nova Scotia alerted national newspapers that materials potentially containing cancer-causing PCBs from the Sydney Tar Ponds in Cape Breton might be sent to Mercier to be burned. I made copies of a *Journal de Montréal* article on the

toxic waste shipment and posted them in nearby bus shelters to inform commuters. Local people started talking about the shipment and a public meeting was held at city hall. Journalists were invited and we talked to a Global News reporter (in English). Citizen action was able to draw attention to the importing of toxic waste from the other side of the country to be disposed of in a facility that was not designed to manage PCBs.

The plan was to send about 100 tons of coal tar oil to Mercier that was to be extracted during the clean-up of the Cape Breton Tar Ponds and Coke Ovens. Upon learning of this... the citizens of the municipality called it a scandal... The protests could not prevent the contents of the coal-filled trucks from being burned in the incinerator. Nevertheless, this event triggered a debate and citizen mobilization in the region. A committee of citizens was formed to put pressure on elected officials. (Laberge, 93).

Hazardous wastes were trucked over long distances to supply Mercier’s incinerator. Explosive substances were required to allow chemists to make mixtures to bring the incinerator up to the extremely high temperatures necessary to burn toxic waste. An environmental disaster could have happened if a truck transporting toxic waste had had a collision and spilled its contents on the

streets. To raise awareness about emergency preparedness, I wrote an article that was published in *Le Soleil*, the local newspaper.

The Mercier incinerator was not finally closed until December 2, 2011.

Environmental disasters can happen anywhere, at any time. People need to be aware of what is happening at a local level. Translators and interpreters have a role to play in spreading news about the climate crisis and possible solutions in many languages in order to inform French- and English-speaking Canadians and newcomers.

Barbara McClintock has worked for over 25 years in both the public and private sectors. She writes articles on language and translation and contributes regularly to *Circuit*, the magazine of the *Ordre des traducteurs terminologues et interprètes agréés du Québec*. In January 2022, she wrote "The benefits of the circular economy and recycling: Update for language professionals," published in Issue 153, *Translation and the Environment*, which she coedited. She has lived with her family in Mercier, Quebec, for 30 years.

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ST. CRISPIN'S DAY

by Rod MacLeod

QAHN's former president Kevin O'Donnell recently reminded me of a message I sent out five years ago to QAHN's Montreal Committee marking the 10th anniversary of "Montreal Mosaic."

"If my math calculator (i.e. my fingers) is accurate," Kevin wrote, "April 1, 2022 will be the 15th anniversary of the "band of brothers" getting together to hold the Montreal Mosaic conference." Kevin suggested I do some sort of commemoration in the *QHN*, if not in the Spring issue then on the occasion of St. Crispin's Day in October – a reference to the Shakespearean tone of my original message.

So, in honour of Montreal Mosaic, and in tribute to Kevin, I send out my 10th anniversary message once more... into the breach.

Being a fan of commemoration, I realized recently that tomorrow, April 1, is (apart from being April Fool's - and this is not a joke) the 10th anniversary of Montreal Mosaic: the "Heritage Summit" (to use a phrase that I believe Dwane worked out rather carefully) at the McCord Museum.

Those of you who were there will remember all those fascinating talks from Dorothy Williams (QAHN was just a glint in her eye then!), Rahul Varma of Teesri Duniya theatre, Mathew Barlow (who offended the Irish), Dinu Bumbaru, Stanley Asher, Donna Goodleaf, Janis Zubalik (Mile End Memories), and many others - including the Hon. Marlene Jennings, our keynote speaker, who spoke to us in Italian.

You will remember the bouzouki players, the Highland flingers and the Afghan dancers. You will recall the delights of that groaning board of dishes from around the world and those vast quantities of Hibiscus juice. Many of us took several jugs of Hibiscus juice home with us (maybe we ordered a bit too much) and I remember packing our project leader, Carolyn Schaffer, into a taxi with a huge urn of Hibiscus juice that occupied one side of the cab.

Speaking of Carolyn, this event was the result of a great amount of work - Dwane put his heart and soul into it, but I am also still grateful for the time put in by Matthew, other QAHN staff, and the members of the Montreal Committee (which was born as an advisory committee for this project). A special dubbing should go to the then-QAHN VP Kevin, who foolishly volunteered for KP and then spent much of the day washing dishes in a tiny sink in the museum's basement, assisted only by my son who was specially dragged out of bed on a Sunday to help. (Maybe we goofed a bit with our glassware & crockery, too.)

To those who did not attend, I would not go so far as to say that they should think themselves accursed they were not there, but I will say that we few, we happy few, who do remember it should give ourselves a pat on the back for a job very well done. I have a feeling that that event was my favourite day of a great many wonderful days I have spent working with QAHN.

*Kevin had no strength to eat after washing hundreds of dishes.
Photo: Renee Arshinoff.*

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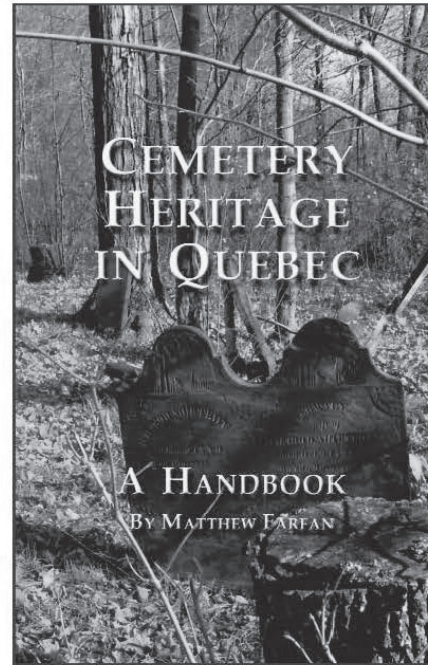
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