

GRAND DRAPE: RAISING THE CURTAIN ON A LONG-HIDDEN WORK OF ART

\$10

# Quebec Heritage News

VOL 10, No. 4

FALL 2016



## The Mystery behind the Great War's Fallen MP

Revisiting George Harold Baker

## Fenians' Rainbow

The 150th Anniversary of the Irish Invasion of Canada

## Remarkable Ancestors

QAHN's Heritage Photo and Heritage Essay Contests

# Quebec Heritage News

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*Quebec Heritage News is published quarterly by QAHN with the support of the Department of Canadian Heritage and Quebec's Ministère de la Culture et des Communications. QAHN is a non-profit and non-partisan organization whose mission is to help advance knowledge of the history and culture of the English-speaking communities of Quebec.*

## Annual Subscription Rates:

Individual: \$30.00; Institutional: \$40.00;  
Family: \$40.00; Student: \$20.00.  
Canada Post Publication Mail  
Agreement Number 405610004.



ISSN 17707-2670  
PRINTED IN CANADA

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Cover photo: The grand drape of Lake Memphremagog, by William Gill, at its unveiling on the lawn of the Haskell Free Library and Opera House.  
Photo: Matthew Farfan.

## EDITOR'S DESK

*Anti-housewife, anti-heroine*

by Rod MacLeod

I don't want to give the impression that my mother was somehow *mercenary*. But she did not come by housewifery naturally and, during the war years anyway, she wasn't much of a heroine; that would come later. The war wasn't a challenge for my mother: it was liberating.

My mother did her share of war work. Her parents were heavily into the Red Cross, so I assume she helped out when she was at home, although sewing wasn't her forte: she was far better at reciting the adventures of Sister Susie than she was sewing shirts for soldiers herself. (As a toddler, I liked nothing better than my mother's rendition of "Sister Susie Sewing Shirts for Soldiers" to calm my nerves, unless it was a few rounds of "There is a Tavern in the Town" – an anthem that still gives me a warm fuzzy feeling.)

As a matter of fact, practically everything my grandmother was good at and felt was important wasn't my mother's forte. This was the source of much tension. Teaching was a notorious case in point: Miss McLaughlin had been a warm, nurturing den mother brimming with stories who loved every minute spent among the kiddies of Parrsboro, N.S., at least before she gave up teaching to marry Mr. Lavers upon his return from the WWI trenches. Their daughter was naturally channelled into a teaching career even though she loathed the prospect. Miss Lavers was especially petrified at having to teach the offspring of the kiddies her mother had taught; some of them were only a couple of years younger than she was and until recently had been her playmates. She wasn't a bad teacher, mind you – her cousin (and pupil) Vic often praised her skills in my hearing, even half a century after the fact. But at the time she hated it.

Sewing aside, my mother's main war work was at CIL in downtown Mon-

treau, something I heard about often without fully realizing what it was. Nothing heroic: a clerical job, a daily commute to 1135 Beaver Hall Hill to help coordinate the armed forces' need for paints and chemicals – substantially less creative than sewing shirts. The crucial thing about CIL for my mother was not that it did stuff to help win the war but rather that it was in Montreal. One evening my mother was pushing her way along St. Catherine Street (that thoroughfare was perpetually thronged with thousands even before VE Day) and as she stared about at that endless



sea of faces she had one gloriously giddy thought.

"Nobody knows me!"

In Parrsboro, N.S., everybody knew everybody. And what they were doing. And it mattered, because you were always but a step away from stumbling over that invisible line into that mysterious other category of people. My grandmother had cheerfully taught the Carmichael children, but when they became adult Carmichaels they were shirkers with large families who rarely washed and always smoked – just as you would expect from the Carmichaels. My grandmother's evidence for this was first hand: they lived next door. (There was no spatial segregation in Parrsboro.)

Smoking was a particularly sure sign of this fallen state – which was odd, given how many people smoked in those days. One day my mother came home from school to find her mother in tears because Betsy Malone had told her that her daughter had seen my mother smoking. My mother was never sure what bothered her most about this incident: that she had been unjustly accused of something she would never (out of personal distaste, not a sense of propriety) do, or that her own mother would so readily assume her guilt based solely on Betsy Malone's own testimony.

The Lavers family were comfortably on the safe side of that invisible line. My grandfather owned the general store in partnership with his brother, who had married my grandmother's sister – meaning that my mother was related to everybody in the family in at least two different ways. The closest thing she had to a sister was her double cousin Shirley, who was just three months older, lived around the corner, and was in her class at school. The two of them would hang out at the store after school watching Uncle Dave and Uncle Harry (each of them also Dad)

unpack exotic fruits from faraway places. I always loved the story of the barrel that also contained a spider the size of a big man's hand that began crawling up the store wall until my grandfather, a quiet gentle soul, calmly took out his pen knife and stabbed it through the thorax. Life in Parrsboro was not without its charms.

I know my mother tried. I have difficulty interpreting her willing baptism at the age of 17 as the product of religious conviction, and assume she was trying to please. That she hadn't been baptized at birth suggests that my grandfather (nominally Presbyterian) had conceded to my grandmother (Baptist) on the understanding that the ceremony



would take place sooner or later. But to formally join the Baptist church meant that my mother had to submit to total immersion – my mother who at no point in her life, despite having been raised near the sea, liked putting her head under water. It meant having to plunge completely to the bottom of a big deep bath, which was the preferred receptacle for Parrsboro Baptists, again despite being so near the sea. (It may be that the Bay of Fundy's huge tides made scheduling a natural immersion impractical; Gathering at the River loses much of its charm when the cleansing water lies half a mile away, as it does every 12 hours, across an expanse of brown, clam-infested mud.)

Teaching was another thing that my mother tried in order to keep the peace. With Grade 11 under her belt, she trooped over to the Teachers' College in Truro, 60 miles away, as her mother had done before her. One year later she was back, in charge of the multi-year class in her old school that she had so recently left. A spark of the intrepid warrior my mother would later emerge on her first day when one snotty kid announced that he wasn't gonna learn and she couldn't make him. "That's too bad, Jimmy," my mother retorted (I assume she got his name right), "I had you pegged as a smart guy who would help me out with the little kids." I paraphrase, of course – but it won her the day, and Jimmy's affection. My mother made the best of it, but it drained her, and after one year she gave up, proving a deep disappointment to my grandmother. Curiously, my mother took up teaching again forty years later, at Dawson College, in a room over a dressmaker's shop on St. Antoine Street; then, the equivalent of Jimmy in her class on International Adoption was an aggressive, ultra-cynical girl in dreadlocks who, nevertheless, after listening to my mother for some time, declared: "your head's where it's at!" – a redemptive highpoint in my mother's life.

But in 1940, with a war on, things

were moving. My mother realized that there was one thing a teaching diploma was good for apart from teaching, and that was shaving a year off a B.A. And of all the subjects she'd taught, the one she came close to enjoying was History. Halifax (Dalhousie) was a revelation: there was nightlife, there were men – even some whose families she didn't know – on their way overseas. She joined a sorority so she could have



friends for the rest of her life, and never saw any of them again. What she learned about History was enough to get her the B.A., but it wasn't the same as being part of history, which was clearly happening just beyond her vision. Her sister-cousin Shirley had joined the Women's Royal Naval Service and was off overseas "freeing a man for the fleet" (as the slogan went), whence she would return at the end of the war, with a husband. The prospect of a naval career did not appeal to my mother (nor would marriage for a great many years). Instead of going back to Parrsboro she took a train to Montreal.

My mother's efforts to reinvent herself, away from the eyes of Betsy Malone et al, took an ironic turn when she discovered social work. In Montreal, there were real issues: poverty, above all, despite the rosy wartime employment situation. My mother remembered the tramps who had come begging during the Depression and who had always been given a meal (on the back porch) by her charity-minded parents – but parts of Montreal were an entirely other

world. The Montreal equivalent of the Parrsboro Carmichaels were wretched indeed, particularly the children. At some point late in the war, my mother who hated teaching decided to devote herself to child welfare. She may have started as a volunteer, while still working at CIL, but she had her eye on it as a career. This decision caused her parents much confusion: social work, they proclaimed, was what everybody did, not a serious job like teaching or housewifery. But as Parrsboro's Jimmy and cousin Vic would testify, my mother was surprisingly good with children even if she hated the classroom.

This skill would be put to severe test when the Montreal Council of Social Agencies, noting my mother's teaching diploma and academic B.A., found her a position at the Girls' Cottage Industrial School in Sweetsburg, near Cowansville. These were tough kids; my mother got scratched and bitten, and had to assert her authority with infinitely more confidence than she had done in Parrsboro. This was not her thing either, but she stuck it out until the school closed in 1947. Spurs proved, she discovered a much gentler and pro-active environment under the wing of Muriel McCrea at the newly-formed Montreal Children's Aid Society, and soon after at the Children's Service Centre at Weredale Park, where she rubbed shoulders with people from child protection agencies, foster homes, and the Negro Community Centre.

My mother's forte, discovered at long last, was adoption. Not supplying wealthy couples with abandoned children, as had generally been the practice (and as much popular culture would have it), but rather finding homes for the children who had fallen between the cracks. The McCrea philosophy was for society to get beyond using orphanages and Industrial schools (for girls and boys) as a dumping ground for the deprived and the disturbed, and instead find ways to actually accommodate

these youngsters in real families. As well as being good with kids, my mother proved to have a sharp eye for who would make a good parent.

Over her long career as a social worker, my mother handled thousands of adoptions. According to one piece of in-house apocrypha, adopted children in Montreal Protestant circles were prone to ask other children whether they came from God or from Miss Lavers. Another story, also from my mother's days as a single woman, is much more credible. In the middle of a dinner date, she spotted a former client at another table and enthusiastically declared to her companion: "Oh, there's the father of one of my children!" Not surprisingly, the gent did not ask her on a second date.

My mother had found a job she enjoyed, but the challenge came in breaking down barriers and crossing frontiers. Historically, adoption in Quebec favoured placing like with like, a principle that generally informed the work of the Children's Service Centre: out of respect for culture and with an eye to easy integration, Protestant children went to Protestant families, Black children went to Black families, etc. But what Muriel McCrea had been arguing at least since the war (in clear opposition to the social work mainstream as personified by the prim Charlotte Whitton) was that adoption should be colour blind. To get beyond race as a serious social impediment, society had to start seeing families as (ideally) nurturing home environments rather than genetic units. In other words, adoption could be interracial. My mother came to apply her skill at matching willing parents with forsaken children to the challenge of placing Black or "mixed race" (we tend to say "biracial" these days) in White homes – or rather in homes that promptly ceased to be "White" with the arrival of the adopted child.

Or children. My mother eventually established lasting friendships with a number of families who adopted a great many children from several ethnic back-

grounds. One of these families lived near us in Montreal West, and had a (White) boy my age who was adept at maintaining indifference while the other kids in the class tried to work out whether it was odd or not that his older sister had jet-black skin. It had only been a couple of years earlier, shortly after my parents moved to the town, that they had opened the door to a couple with a clipboard seeking signatories to a

Interracial was one frontier; international was another. By the 1970s, the disasters in Vietnam, Cambodia and Bangladesh were producing huge numbers of orphans. A group of these multiracial families we had come to know began to urge the Canadian government to facilitate the transfer of some of these children, first to their own homes in the Montreal area, then to the homes of other willing adopting families. Again, the

emphasis was on finding good homes, not satisfying childless couples: "Families For Children" was the appropriate name of the organization formed by Sandra Simpson, Naomi Bronstein, and Bonnie Cappuccino – all of them middle-class housewives determined to alleviate the lives of children in war zones. They did so not only by goading local bureaucrats but by travelling to places like

Saigon and Phnom Penh, even in that disastrous year 1975. Early critics said that the organization was run by do-gooders, not professional social workers, but it was not long before Families For Children got its professional: my mother, who did pro-bono home studies for them for over two decades. In the winter of 1978, she went to Bangladesh with a FFC contingent and she worked in an orphanage near Dacca for several weeks; she then accompanied a number of orphaned babies back to Mirabel Airport. Catching sight of her getting off the plane, clutching in her arms an infant with a heart defect whom she'd spent the previous eighteen hours comforting, I was never prouder of her.

International adoption has also come under intense criticism in recent years, largely because it is widely identified with rich infertile couples meeting their own needs via legally questionable tactics. Even forty years ago, Families for Children was lumped in with other groups that were arguably guilty of cultural appropriation. FFC was adamant about not catering to prospective parents' requests: if my mother got any indication that a couple preferred one skin tone over another, they would be reject-



petition to keep out what would have been the town's first Black family. We had a long way to go. I know that in recent years interracial adoption has sometimes come under fire for effectively divorcing children of colour from their roots and submitting them to cultural appropriation. This is a legitimate charge, since so many of these adopting families brought their Black children up White – colour-blind, yes, but essentially White. Muriel McCrea's goal may not have been realistic. Even so, as I look at the world today, I can't help thinking that we could all use a little more of that integrative spirit that my mother brought to her little corner of Quebec society.





ed. The same was true if a couple were to insist on an absolutely healthy baby, particularly as peace returned to these far-off lands and the local integration of large numbers of orphans revealed that the children most in need of nurturing families were those with physical disabilities. This was, perhaps, another frontier.

But for all her enthusiastic involvement in these causes, my mother showed true heroism in an entirely different set of circumstances. A housewife she became upon giving birth to me and moving to the suburbs, relegating her career to carrying out home studies in the evenings and on weekends until I started school. And although cooking and cleaning were not things she pursued with great pride, she kept son and spouse happily fed and clothed. And although we were of different temperaments and clashed over a great many things (unimportant things, I would say in retrospect), she and I had a very affectionate relationship – infinitely more so than the one she had experienced with her own mother. That relationship moved to a new level when my grandfather died

when I was 11, and my parents, with a great deal of reluctance, invited my grandmother to live with us – during the winter, anyway; she would return to the house in Parrsboro from June to September. Even so, my grandmother's presence proved a strain on the household, even on my parents' marriage – not because she was needy or demanding, but because she brought back everything my mother had worked to escape: the gossip, the disapproval, the endless chatter about what the minister had said and how the previous night's bridge game had played out, even though the rest of us disliked the minister and had no time for bridge. Eventually, my grandmother began to have falls, and became bedridden and incontinent. My mother set to washing her, changing the bed, and cleaning the sheets, often several times a day. Over the course of five or six years, my mother's hair turned white and she grew arthritic and bent while still in her fifties.

But in this she was heroic. You could say that she was paying the price for her wartime escape from oppressive domesticity, but I think it was more a

case of her realizing, as we all eventually realize, that to everything there is a season. Did I say I was never prouder of my mother than when she came back from Bangladesh? Maybe. But her most moving moment in my eyes was when I arrived at the hospital and found her leaning stoically, and sometimes not so stoically, on my dying grandmother's bed. Some months earlier, with much guilt on my mother's part, my grandmother had been placed in a nursing home near Parrsboro, where her health declined; at last, she was removed to intensive care, rapidly fading, and soon reduced to a tiny, squirrel-like figure on life support sunk deep in a huge hospital bed. That was my last glimpse of her – and I see my mother leaning over her, muttering "Oh, Mum," an infinity of emotions running through her that were all the more shattering for containing large amounts of anger and resentment.

We fight our wars on many fronts. Some of us make peace. Most of us just get on with life – which is usually harder.

## QAHN News

### OUTREACH

This summer and fall, QAHN has been especially busy at events in communities around the province. In July, we brought the QAHN tent to the

2017 St. Mungo's Homecoming (Cushing).

In August, we participated at the Potton Multicultural Festival (Mansonville), the Lennoxville Street Fest,

and the roving consultations of Official Languages Canada (Bishop's University). We also hosted a lecture and a traveling exhibition at the Richmond County Museum (Richmond).

And in September, we co-hosted a meeting of historical groups in the Laurentians (Morin Heights), and (as part of Townshippers' Day) welcomed several hundred visitors to our tent on the historic Brome County Fairgrounds.

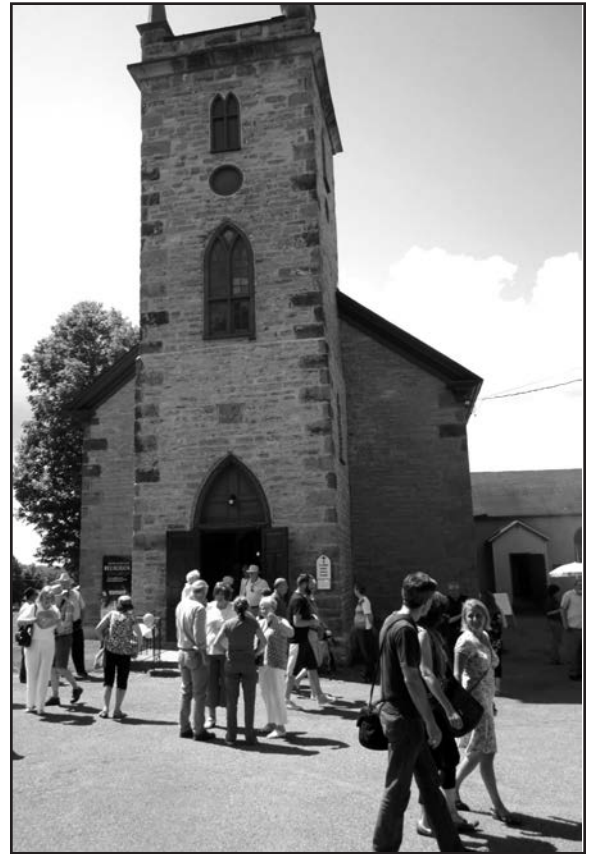
### FOREVER

The Fostering Organizational Renewal through Enriching Volunteer Experience and Recognition project (FOREVER) is winding down after what has been a successful 15-months.

The Volunteering Matters conference series has taken project managers Dwane Wilkin and Heather Darch to Montreal, Quebec City, Wakefield, Stanstead, Gaspé and, most recently, Knowlton, Quebec.



*At the QAHN tent, Townshippers' Day, Brome, September 17, 2016.  
Photo: Matthew Farfan.*



Experts in the field of volunteer management have provided various heritage and community organizations with valuable information and practical ideas necessary for building their volunteer programs.

QAHN's series of "Volunteering Matters" handbooks and a new *Guide to Volunteer Recruitment* can help organizations become more successful at attracting volunteers. Special work sessions using the *Guide* have been given to community and heritage organizations in Rawdon and Thetford Mines.

## DREAM

As one project finishes another new and exciting project begins. Diversifying Resources to Ensure the Advancement of Mission (DREAM) is a 15-month project funded by the Department of Canadian Heritage.

Community groups and heritage organizations are finding it increasingly difficult to sustain funding, increase revenue and generate additional income and community support for much needed projects and programs.

QAHN's DREAM project, under the direction of QAHN's own "dream team" Dwane Wilkin and Heather Darch, will address these concerns, explore new trends and present knowledgeable experts who will help organizations find answers to their financial issues. By focusing on how to financially equip and sustain QAHN's heritage community, we can hopefully all DREAM big!



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# UNSUNG AND OBLITERATED HERO

*George Harold Baker, 1877-1916*

by Serge Wagner

To most Canadians, George Harold Baker is a little known figure. His name is mainly associated with the fact that he is the only Canadian parliamentarian killed in action in a war. Some may know him from the few lines written on him in Wikipedia:

**George Harold Baker** was a Canada politician and lawyer. He was elected to the Canadian House of Commons in 1911 as a Member of the Conservative Party to represent the riding of Brome. He fought in World War I as a Lieutenant-Colonel with the 13th Scottish Light Dragoons (1913–1914) and commanded the 5th Canadian Mounted Rifles (5th CMR) which he led into action in France in July 1915. He was killed in action at Ypres, West Flanders, Belgium on June 2, 1916. His father was senator and MP George Barnard Baker.

More of us are probably familiar with his horse, the subject of a 2012 CBC news report (and the *QHN*'s "Back to Glenmere: Exploring the story of 'Canada's war horse,'" Summer 2015). This article will explore the political motives and military ignorance of George Harold Baker, commonly known as Harry.

## The 1917 narrative

Until recently, the main text regarding Harry Baker was a peculiar booklet published in 1917 exactly one year after Baker's death. It was "printed for private circulation" by Columbia University, and it was most likely paid for by the Baker family. The author-editor, John William Cunliffe (1865-1946), a British-American professor of English literature and journalism at Columbia, was a family friend.

The book brings together a set of texts: a short biography by Cunliffe, war letters from Harry, and two accounts of

the Battle of Mount Sorrel near Ypres, where Baker died. This is therefore a "commissioned work," an "authorized biography," whose content was supervised by two of Harry's sisters, Harriet (1866-1962) and Effie (1871-1927). Harry's letters also appeared to have



been "edited" in order to create a commendable portrait. And as for the June 1916 battle, the two descriptions published were censored versions: a newspaper article then under censorship and Lord Beaverbrook's official account.

What is surprising is that the narrative of 1917 was essentially never revisited, nor were some major historical events ever presented, either by the Baker family, by the Army, or by the government – particular not after the federal election of 1921.

## The Dundonald-Fisher incident, 1904

One of the key moments in the life of Harry Baker was probably the Dundonald Fisher Incident of 1904, unmentioned in most writings about Harry

Baker. For several decades, the Eastern Townships were the scene of a merciless feud between Liberals and Conservatives, then led respectively by two "honourable" politicians: Sydney Arthur Fisher and George Barnard Baker (Harry's father). The most famous episode of this clash occurred in 1904, when Canada's senior military officer, Douglas Cochrane, the Earl of Dundonald, appointed Senator Baker's son-in-law to the Light Dragoons Regiment of Waterloo. Sydney Fisher, acting Minister of Militia and Defence, blocked the appointment, declaring in the House of Commons that this regiment had been infiltrated by the Conservatives, naming in particular young Harry Baker. When Dundonald protested, the Laurier Government arranged for his recall to Great Britain, generating a broad public debate in Canada and overseas. It is possible that public accusations of nepotism practiced in the Baker family in the militia (and lack of competency of those promoted) afflicted young Harry.

In any case, the Baker family had its revenge when Harry stood as Conservative candidate against Sydney Fisher in Brome County in the 1911 general election, and won. Humiliated, Sydney Fisher ran as the Liberal candidate in a by-election two years later in the riding of Châteauguay, held by the Liberals since Confederation. Not satisfied at having beaten Fisher in Brome in 1911, Harry Baker got actively involved in that by-election and contributed directly to the second consecutive defeat of Sydney Fisher, putting an end to the parliamentary career of the man who had been Canadian Minister of Agriculture for 15 years.

## Public humiliation in Brome, 1923

Sydney Fisher died in 1921, but his influence remained strong in the Eastern Townships as well as on the federal stage. The enmity between the Fishers

*George Harold Baker as a soldier.  
Photo: courtesy of Patrimoine Bolton Heritage.*





and the Bakers took on the Shakespearean accents of the deadly struggle between the Montagues and Capulets. One of the places that one would expect the memory of Soldier and MP Baker to be perpetuated was, of course, Brome County – yet, some Brome county residents did not forget the double defeat he inflicted upon their former MP and federal minister.

At the end of the First World War, many communities began to erect memorials to honour their fallen soldiers. In 1920, Brome County Council decided to “subscribe to the erection of a War Memorial to the boys of the County Who Were Killed in the Great War” (Taylor). In 1921, the council decided “that the face of the Soldiers’ Monument at Knowlton Be That of the late Colonel Baker.” The vote was divided, however (5 in favour, 2 against), and a few months later the council unanimously rescinded its previous decision. The monument to the “Brome boys” was inaugurated in September 1923. Not only was the figure of Colonel Baker absent from the statue, but his name was omitted from the list of 63 fallen soldiers from Brome County. The posthumous humiliation of Harry Baker was complete.

Some have argued that the name Baker was missing because he did not reside in Brome at that time. This argument is weak since Harry Baker was the MP for Brome when he was killed; furthermore, he had a law office in Sweets-

burg (in Brome County), he had enlisted from his seasonal residence in Bolton Centre (in Brome), and the address of his “Next of Kin” was in East Bolton (also Brome). Colonel Baker had also raised the first regiment of the Great War identified as the *Eastern Townships’ Regiment*. Moreover, the Brome residence criterion was not applied to each of the 63 soldiers inscribed on the monument: a review of the names carried out in 1926 (Frizzle) revealed that twenty of these soldiers lived or enlisted outside the county, at least four resided outside the province of Quebec, and one was a U.S. soldier killed in France “under the U.S. flag.”

### National unveiling played down, 1924

Ottawa also decided to erect a monument to the fallen. In 1919, while the Conservatives were still in power, a joint committee of the Senate and the House of Commons planned a monument in honour of Baker, the former MP killed in combat. The project, like many, was delayed because of reconstruction on Parliament Hill following the fire of February 1916. The statue of Baker was finally inaugurated in February 1924, at a time when the Liberals were in power. Among the dignitaries’ present were Governor General Lord Byng of Vimy and Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King. The speeches were published in the *Parliamentary Memoir of George Harold Baker*, 1924. Reading

them creates a strange impression: there is little talk of the honoured.

In his speech, the prime minister said almost nothing of the celebrated hero, stating that the monument was “essentially symbolic.” He did mention Canada’s 600,000 troops, including its 60,000 dead, and paid special tribute to the Members of Parliament who had enlisted. As for the statue itself, King spoke much more about its sculptor than about its subject. He did mention that the Governor General had been in command of the Canadian Corps when Colonel Baker was killed. Yet the man who had been simply Julian Byng in June 1916 unveiled the statue without a word. The Governor General’s silence, and the Prime Minister’s near silence, may have resulted from political and military motives. Politically, Sydney Fisher continued to exert his influence in Brome even after his death; he left a trust fund of \$100,000, which contributed directly to King’s election as Liberal leader in 1919 (Courtney).

Militarily, the Canadian Army did not want to commemorate the Battle of Mount Sorrel near Ypres, which may have been one of the worst moments of disorganization in the early years of the War (Stewart). Indeed, Canadian soldiers were ill-prepared in Flanders, and the Canadian Corps was disorganized. During the first day of the battle, Canada suffered two major military losses: the Germans killed the highest ranking Canadian soldier to die in either world war (Major-General Mercer, commander of the 3rd Canadian Division), and they took the highest ranking Canadian prisoner of the war (Brigadier-General Williams, commander of the 8th Canadian Brigade). Lieutenant-General Julian Byng had just taken command of the Canadian Corps on the Western Front, and on June 3, when Baker died of his wounds, Byng ordered – against the Canadian command – an improvised and unsuccessful counter-attack. Ten days later, on June 13, the Canadian Corps launched a new counter-attack, which only achieved a return to the initial positions of June 2. In the end, after a battle of less than 12 days, Canadians managed to maintain their positions, but at the cost of over 8,000 casualties.

The Baker sisters experienced the humiliation of the Brome memorial.



Effie, present at the inauguration of the Ottawa monument in 1924, felt that the statue did not look like her brother. In November 1924, they wrote to General Dennis Draper, their brother's second-in-command at Mount Sorrel. While recognizing that the statue and the accompanying memoir were a "lasting tribute that will perpetuate the memory of Harry," the sisters expressed bitterness:

We have read the memorial book from Ottawa. For us nothing comes close to your tribute to Harry – couched in such words as only affection and sincerity can inspire. (Manson)

Harriet and Effie Baker, who had tried to promote the memory of Harry Baker, then distanced themselves from Canadian society, travelling and living abroad for long periods of time. Their sense of resentment seems justified: a review of publications about Harry Baker reveals that the 1924 inauguration was the last significant appreciation by the political and military authorities.

#### Appreciated by his soldiers

For more than fifty years, it was the soldiers of Colonel Baker's regiment who kept his memory alive. Several of them regularly visited Parliament on June 2 in an effort to commemorate their Colonel. Their last pilgrimage took place on June 2, 1966; the Speaker of the House of Commons acknowledged their presence, but nothing else was said.

The persistent appreciation of Harry Baker by his men is surprising. Maybe it can best be understood by reading Baker's letters, published in 1917. Initially, one is surprised by the man's positive attitude: he was never critical, his men were all worthy of praise, he loved animals, especially horses, and that drove his decision to raise a cavalry regiment. When he arrived in England, however, Harry learned that his regiment had been "dismantled," and he even lost his own horse, Morning Glory. Yet, he accepted the decision without complaint, and encouraged all his men to accept it too. Through the letters, we witness his mounting anguish: this trench warfare was clearly not what he had imagined. Yet Harry Baker maintained his enthusiasm and kept a positive attitude. He con-

tinued to reiterate his confidence in his men.

#### "To rise to the height of the event" (Hannah Arendt)

Born into a wealthy bourgeois family, George Harold Baker was elitist. In 1915, when completing his enlistment form, the word "recruit" was crossed out everywhere it appeared and replaced by "officer." Baker was clearly proud of his superior status, but he did not denigrate his men. On the contrary, while he celebrated his last Christmas meal in 1915 with his officers, he went first to wish a Merry Christmas to all his men who were also enjoying a special dinner. And he was pleased that most would enjoy a "sit-down dinner," which was uncommon.

George Harold Baker proved to be a "soldiers' officer." He was certainly a traditional and partisan politician. However, one feels that the experience of war transformed him. One can also believe that the charges of partisanship, nepotism and incompetence made and repeated in public in 1904 affected him deeply. This can be seen in an observation by Prime Minister Robert Borden during Parliament's tribute to George Harold Baker in January 1917:

He took up his work in a characteristic way. He knew the necessity of absolute thoroughness of training, and he searched not only Canada, but the other side of the Atlantic, and even India, to have associated with him a man who could undertake the duties for which he believed himself not adapted by previous training and experience.

George Harold Baker should be recognized as a truly authentic hero; he bravely paid with his life for his commitment to the defence of the Empire and Liberty.

*Serge Wagner is a retired professor at the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM) and a member of Patrimoine Bolton Heritage. Thanks to Alex Gieysztor for translating this article.*

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# MEMPHREMAGOG MASTERPIECE

*Long-lost grand drape finds a new home*

by Matthew Farfan

After languishing forgotten for decades in the basement of the Haskell Free Library and Opera House in Stanstead, a rare and unusual artefact now has a new home at the Stanstead Historical Society's Colby-Curtis Museum, just two kilometres away.

The artefact – or, rather, the work of art – is actually a 29-foot wide grand drape (complete with its original wooden roll) depicting Owl's Head Mountain and Lake Memphremagog. It was painted by the Canadian scenic artist William Gill (1854-1943). A "grand drape" is the decorative curtain that would be raised and lowered on the audience side of the stage at the beginning and end of performances or individual acts during plays.

Gill's curtain features a splendid view of Memphremagog from a beach on the east side of the lake, framed by tasseled trompe-l'oeil curtains. The name "Memphremagog" appears at the centre edge; the signature "Wm Gill," in the bottom left corner. A small steam launch chugs across the placid water. Sailboats are visible in the distance. A rowboat sits idle on the beach.

Gill was born in England but immigrated to Halifax, Nova Scotia, with his family when he was a small child. When his father died, he was just fourteen. According to the theatre historians Dianne and Patrick O'Neill, Gill "found employment as an usher in the Temperance Hall and the Theatre Royal. Observing and studying under various scenic artists. Gill mastered the techniques of the scenic artist and acquired a local reputation painting sets for amateur productions." (O'Neill and O'Neill)

Over the next few years, Gill worked on several more amateur productions, completing his apprenticeship and quickly building a name for himself as a professional. He received commissions for work in Halifax, Saint John, Montreal, Quebec City, Kingston, and Ottawa. His scenery for a production of *Around the World in 80 Days*, according to the O'Neills, was described by the

stored. It has been called a "masterpiece," and Gill himself "one of the finest itinerant scenic artists of the nineteenth century." (O'Neill and O'Neill)

A significant number of historic theatre curtains have survived in the United States, for example, in Vermont and other parts of New England. (Hadsell) Very few, however, may be found in Canada, where far too many small town opera houses and big city theatres have been demolished, and their painted scenery disposed of. This makes the William Gill curtain an extremely rare Canadian example of this art form.

According to local tradition, Gill's Lake Memphremagog drape originally hung at the old Olympic Skating Rink in Stanstead Plain. Built in 1892, this indoor rink was known in its later years as the Channell Rink (after Ernest Channell who was the rink's owner

from 1913 to 1945).

In June 1900, the *Stanstead Journal* reported that the then owners of the rink had "supplied the building with new seats giving it a seating capacity of fully 400. They purpose offering inducement to some 1st class theatrical companies during the summer season." (Parent) Henceforth the establishment was also known as the "Rink Opera House," and over the next few years, it hosted a variety of popular entertainments, including minstrel shows, vaudeville acts, dramatic performances, and concerts. The building was equipped with a stage.

During the summer of 1907, the *Journal* reported that an artist had been busy at the Rink Opera House painting scenery. The paper reported the artist's name as "Mr. G. Grill," of Boston. (Parent) This was likely a typo, a not uncommon



Saint John press as the "most gorgeous spectacle ever presented on a St. John [sic] stage." Beginning in 1878, when he was only twenty-four, Gill began work in Boston, where he painted scenery for the Boston Museum and several major theatres. He continued to receive commissions for work in Atlantic Canada, however, returning home on a regular basis. (O'Neill and O'Neill)

Until now, only one other example of Gill's work was thought to have survived: a backdrop known as the "Italianate Garden Scene," painted in 1892 for the Halifax Academy of Music, and housed since 1929 at the Musquodoboit Valley Bicentennial Theatre and Cultural Centre in Musquodoboit, Nova Scotia. This work, one of the oldest known surviving examples of scenic art in Canada, has recently been professionally re-



mon occurrence in the paper; William Gill (of Boston) in all probability was the artist in question.

The Rink Opera House apparently ceased operating a few years after the Haskell Opera House opened in what was then Rock Island in 1904. The facility continued to function, however, as a very popular skating rink until the mid-1940s, when

it was demolished.

It is not known how long William Gill's splendid curtain was in use at the rink, or if it was stored there after the establishment stopped hosting theatrical performances. But at some point, it was donated to the Haskell Free Library and Opera House, probably on the assumption that the Haskell could use another curtain.

As is well known, the Haskell Opera House was (and is) well equipped with its own original antique scenery. Its collection includes the famous and much photographed grand drape depicting Venice Harbour (complete with large steamship, a special request by patron Col. Horace Haskell), several backdrops and numerous other stage elements – all painted by the

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renowned scenic painter Erwin LaMoss in 1902. (Farfan) Coincidentally, LaMoss was also based in Boston, and knew and even worked with William Gill for a time. (O'Neill and O'Neill) The Haskell collection remains intact to this day, and represents the last work by Erwin LaMoss known to have survived. It is the pride of the Haskell and is still in use.

Whenever Gill's painting was donated, the Haskell certainly did not need an extra drape. So it was stored on racks in the basement where it remained unseen, unused, and unappreciated – until this summer.

In February of this year, the president of the Haskell (the author of the present article) approached the Stanstead Historical Society to see if the museum would like the drape for its collection of local artefacts and art, and if it could accommodate such a large item. He and his fellow trustees felt that the basement of the library was not an ideal place for a piece of this caliber, especially since the basement is not equipped with the environmental controls and storage space required to properly care for a large antique painted textile.

The historical society's acquisition committee and its board of directors agreed that the Gill drape would be an important addition to its collection, as did director-curator Chloe Southam, who was very excited by the idea. All that remained was to choose a dry day during the summer when the curtain could be safely moved from its old home to its new one.

On July 15, the morning of the move, volunteers from the Haskell and staff from the Colby-Curtis gathered at the library. One member of the Haskell's building

committee brought his boat trailer to transport the curtain on its heavy roll. Despite the threat of a thunderstorm all morning, not a drop of rain fell, and the volunteers were able to pass the 30-foot roll through one of the basement's narrow windows and out onto the lawn. There it was unrolled for the first time in decades...

What would it be like after all those years in a moisture-filled skating rink, followed by even more years in a dank basement? What kind of shape would it be in? Would there be mould? Insects? Would the



paint have flaked off? No one knew what to expect.

When the moment of truth arrived, and the curtain was slowly unrolled for the first time in years, those present were absolutely stunned by the beauty of the artwork – and by its excellent state of preservation. The curtain was, and is, spectacular. Aside from a few small holes near the top

edge, and some paint loss at the sides, possibly from early water damage, the curtain is remarkably intact, its colours surprisingly vibrant.

After being measured and photographed by museum staff, the drape was carefully transported to the Colby-Curtis, where it is now stored in a proper climate-controlled environment, and where it begins a new chapter of its life. It is the hope of both the Haskell and the Stanstead Historical Society that a grant can be secured to have this magnificent piece professionally restored. Perhaps in the not-too-distant future, a suitable temporary venue can be found, where it can once again be enjoyed by all.

*Matthew Farfan is the President of the Haskell Free Library and Opera House. He is also a Director of the Stanstead Historical Society and the Colby-Curtis Museum.*

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# 2016 QAHN HERITAGE PHOTO CONTEST

*Editor's note: here are the short essays written by each of the winners of the 2016 QAHN Heritage Photo Contest to accompany their photos. The photos themselves can be found on the following pages.*

## FIRST PRIZE

### Alexander Hynes

Grade 11, Dr. Wilbert Keon School, Chapeau, Qc.

Title: "Logging"

Logging has always had a big influence in my family. Every weekend I would spend my days helping my father in the bush and it never gets old. It seems like every time we venture into a new cut or a foreign area in the forest there's always something new, from the fresh aroma of cedar trees, to the knocking echo of a woodpecker in the distance. The woods never cease to amaze me. But not only is logging a way of life for me but for most of the people living in the Pontiac. This area was built around the logging industry and to this day it's still going moderately strong. We can visit places like the chutes Colonge or even the locks right here on Allumette Island and see the strong influence it had on our community. Logging represents our heritage and hopefully it never ceases to stop.

## SECOND PRIZE

### Olivia Fellen

Grade 11, Trafalgar School for Girls, Montreal, Qc.

Title: "Holiday Happiness"

This photo of scattered Chanukah and Christmas themed cookie cutters represents my family and cultural heritage because I am a person born into a mixed family. Each year my siblings and I would help my mother bake holiday cookies, which we would share with our family members. Being a child born into two completely different religions has given me a diverse outlook on life. My parents have taught me to be accepting of everyone no matter the culture. These cookie cutters symbolize the union of my family and the lifestyle I live today. I am no more Jewish than Christian and vice versa. These cookie cutters also symbolize the diversity of culture within Canada. People from all around the world move to Canada to live prosperous lives. When walking down the streets of Quebec, they're are people living here of all races and cultures. I have never seen so much acceptance within the borders of a country. I am proud to be Canadian and to live in a country with such open arms.

## THIRD PRIZE

### Rosalie Simard

Grade 11, Rosemere High School, Rosemere, Qc.

Title: "Skates"

This picture represents my heritage and a big part of my childhood. These skates were my mother's first figure skating skates.

Figure skating was a huge part of my mothers' life; and she passes her love of skating on to me. I was on skates as soon as I could walk and the ice rink was like a second home for me. This picture constitutes heritage because the love of skating was passed on from many generations in my family. It is a very old pair of skates from my mothers childhood and they have always been kept in our home. Sadly they were not passed down to my sisters or I, but the meaning of figure skating was. You see how much history and memories lives in these skates from how scratched and old they look. The skates are now just a part of our history and they no longer go on our feet. Hopefully, I will pass on the tradition to my children that will past it on to their children.

## HONOURABLE MENTION

### Hailey Romain

Grade 11, Dr. Wilbert Keon School, Chapeau, Qc.

Title: "White Rose"

Stories shape not only history but who we are and what we will be. Listening to tales from old times, spoken in the wisest ways from my great grandmother did not only interest me but it was also captivating due to the amazement that I could see and touch the history she spoke of. There was a sign outside her house which read White Rose. It always had me wondering what it meant or where it came from. One day in the late fall I remember sitting with my great grandmother when my curiosity got the best of me. I asked her about the sign. She told me that it was hers and I didn't understand why she would have a sign that read White Rose outside her house. She continued by explaining how she used to live in another house in the same town and how she once owned a gas station that was called White Rose. When she moved she felt so passionate about how much the gas station had affected her and the many other stories that come with it she took the sign with her. She told me that when she saw the sign shining in the sun it reminded her of the good times she had when everyone knew what it meant and the rust on the edges didn't exist. Now looking back I guess the sign also reminded her of aging. As time went on the sign kept rusting and the colour faded like the seasons and she grew older. She passed away a year ago and like her stories and her memory the sign lives on.

## HONOURABLE MENTION

### Teagan Belley

Grade 11, Dr. Wilbert Keon School, Chapeau, Qc.

Title: "3 Generations"

Family is precious. They are always there for you when you think you have been abandoned and left alone. They give you hope when you think you have none. This picture is not just a picture of three hands. It is a picture of three different generations who each have a story of their own. The hand at the top is the first generation which belongs to my grandmother, Shirley



Quesnel, who was born on November 29th, 1939. Her hand tells a story of a strong and beautiful woman who has worked hard on a farm almost all her life and went through many challenges. After all her years of hard work, she can finally relax and enjoy all the rewards she worked so hard to get. On her hand, she wears her grandmother's wedding ring and her own wedding and engagement ring. She got married to my grandfather Hubert Lajoie on August 20th, 1960. The hand to the left is second generation which belongs to my mother, Lynn Lajoie, who was born on August 31st, 1965. Like my grandmother, my mother had also worked on a farm but only until she was 18 when they moved to Montreal. On her hand, she's wearing her wedding and engagement ring. My mother got married to my father Gerald Belley on August 8th, 1998. The last hand on the bottom is the third generation which belongs to me, Teagan Belley, and I was born on August 19th, 1999. There isn't much of a story for this last hand because unlike the other two, my story has just begun.

### HONOURABLE MENTION

#### Emily Gagnon

Grade 11, Dr. Wilbert Keon School, Chapeau, Qc.  
Title: "A House Full of Memories"

You see that house? I lived in that house for 15 years. My first steps, words, and tumbles were in that little house. From running down the hallway to playing tag or jumping from one couch to another pretending there was lava on the floor, there will always be so many memories from that house. One of my favourite memories in that house is when we would wake up really early, and we would look all over the floor and the dresser and there would be little Easter eggs everywhere! My 2 little sisters and I would get out cute baskets and run around the house and collect all the little eggs. Once we got them all from under our pillows and even in our beds, we would run to the living room and we would have our very own box with a big Barbie, Spongebob, or even Dora chocolate! When everyone was up we would go to our local church and sing with everyone about the celebration of Easter! What's so important about these memories is that they will last a life time! No matter where I live in the future, these memories will always stay with me, in my heart. In 2014 when I was 15 years old, I moved into my father's house that he grew up in. It was a big change; 3 bathrooms, everyone got their own room, and even a kitchen that everyone could function around! Every day when I take the bus to school I see that house and where I was raised. Someday it won't be there, and someday I won't be here either, but those memories will be. Memories never die.

### HONOURABLE MENTION

#### Nicole Tavares

Grade 7, West Island College, Dollard-des-Ormeaux, Qc.  
Title: "Luxury Speaks"

Luxurious from bottom to top, the Ritz Carlton says it all. The Ritz Carlton has taken many people including Queen Elizabeth II to Winston Churchill and the Rolling Stones. Recently they

spent 200 million dollars restoration, brought cutting-edge technology to the Grande Dame. It still is a historical building and yet a five star hotel that lures many guests. This building has great detail that must of taken such a long time to perfect around this gorgeous hotel.

I can imagine myself walking out of this hotel with a smile on my face and confidence in my heart. Feeling royal and free. Noticing every detail and carving being made, I began to think about the amount of effort that was put into this massive sculpture. Workers working hard for everyone else has some pleasure in enjoying the sight.

When I first laid my eyes on the magnificent building, I was so amazed and blown away by the architecture, my heart froze. The luxury spoke to everyone's heart who had the pleasure of walking by this masterpiece.

### HONOURABLE MENTION

#### Yoad Vered

Grade 10, West Island College, Dollard-des-Ormeaux, Qc.  
Title: "Paddle Through Time"

Cultural heritage often defines what it means to be human. It inspires a sense of belonging and is a source of pride. Heritage is a visible reminder of the beauty of the ancient civilizations and our shared history and identity. Culture has the unique potential to be used as a means of expression to remind us of the contributions and past experiences of humanity.

Canada's fascinating history goes back a long time. We, as responsible citizens, need to submerge ourselves in Canada's story-filled heritage that shaped our country. In fact, we all have our own ways to do so. Mine, is to go out kayaking in the great nature of Quebec.

Traveling in an environment that is similar to the one that existed in the past, in the means that were used to travel at that time is a very educational experience, as the First Nations who traveled these same rivers and lakes in canoes are an important part of our Canadian culture. Not only do I get to learn about our past, but I get to experience it. With every paddle in the water and every breath of fresh air, it is very easy to imagine how it felt to live in the past. When in the outdoors, there is only one thing that has changed since the First Nations walked through those forests: us.

Instead of focusing on the present, it is important to remember the past. We should spend our days remembering our heritage, learning about it, and living everyday traditions. Even though I don't transport furs to trade with French and British settlers, I am still able to embrace and experience their way of life by kayaking in one of Quebec's many rivers, breathing in our history as I paddle through time.





FIRST PRIZE



SECOND PRIZE



Surprised student contest winners, Dr. Wilbert Keon School, June 18, 2016. L-R: Hailey Romain (Honourable Mention), Alexander Hynes (First Prize), Emily Gagnon (Honourable Mention), and Teagan Belley (Honourable Mention). Photo: Karen McPherson.



THIRD PRIZE





HONOURABLE MENTIONS





# 2016 QAHN HERITAGE ESSAY CONTEST

*Editor's note: Once again, the top three essay contest winners all came from the same class this year: Ms Nina Wong's Cycle 3. It was again my privilege and pleasure to attend the class's end-of-term party at which I was able to present cheques and certificates to three very creative young writers: Griffin O'Neil, Jordan Cheng, and Sydney Levitt. I expressed my appreciation for the students' fine work, but I also pointed out how the success of a contest such as QAHN's depends so much on the enthusiasm of dedicated teachers – and Ms. Wong is clearly one. Quite apart from the welcome coffee and baked goods with which I was plied, I could see in the time I was there how Ms. Wong kept her class attentive and respectful, while eager to take part in discussion. We look forward to more outstanding entries from Gardenview's Cycle 3 in 2017.*



## FIRST PRIZE

### **My Grandfather and WWII**

by Griffin O'Neil, Grade 6

Gardenview Elementary School, Saint-Laurent, Qc.

Today I'll be talking about a World War II Veteran, my grandfather Stephen Sheeran. He was born on April 7th, 1920 in Montreal, Quebec. He joined the Royal Canadian Air Force in 1941. He trained in an Air Force camp in Northern Quebec till October 1943. The group of young men crossed the Atlantic Ocean on a huge ship.

My grandfather told me that on the boat he got very sick, the waters were extremely rough. The boat docked in the United Kingdom. His auntie would send him over little care packages along with news from home during this period of time. They carried out many bombing missions over France and Germany. His crew was comprised of six Air men and on one mission their plane was hit by enemy fire. Luckily they were able to

make it back across the English Channel. Then in December of 1944 him and his crew were sent back to Canada and were discharged in May of 1945.

My grandfather's brother Terrance was also a part of the Second World War as an Air Force crew member but he was shot down in February 1945 by anti air craft fire. My grandfather was very proud of his younger brother and spoke about him often. All the members from my grandfather's crew had their first reunion 20 years later in Toronto, Ontario.



## SECOND PRIZE

### **My Great Grandfather**

by Jordan Cheng, Grade 6

Gardenview Elementary School, Saint-Laurent, Qc.

A long time ago in China, my great-grandparents had a very tough life but were blessed with a lovely child. Unfortunately, that child passed away at a very young age. My great-grandfather was so upset by the death of his son, he decided to start a new life in a completely new country. He chose Canada as his new home. It is in Canada where he became a neighbourhood hero in my eyes.

My great-grandfather is a hero to me because he escaped poverty and came to Canada to create a better life for his family. Not knowing much English or French, he learned to survive in a place he was totally unfamiliar with. When he had enough money, he brought over great-grandma and started a dry cleaning business. He took a big risk by starting his business in a run-down area of town. He was a pioneer and was one of the first new businesses in the neighborhood. He helped revive the community by opening up a store which encouraged many other businesses to follow his lead. He almost single-handedly revived and reenergised a very poor area.

I am very proud to be his great-grandson and he will always be a hero to me because he was strong enough to come to



an unknown country to start a new life and while doing so was able to help revive a poor community.

### THIRD PRIZE

#### Sergeant Benny

by Sydney Levitt, Grade 6

Gardenvue Elementary School, Saint-Laurent, Qc.

My family heritage shocked me and managed to fill me with lots of pride. At first, I doubted that ANYONE in my family made an impact on my community but digging a little deeper lead to me finding out that my great-grandfather, Benny served for the army during the second world war from 1939-1945.

Benny never fought overseas from a leg injury he received while falling down a flight of stairs. He had done all the training but was incapable of fighting. Since it was obligatory for men to be part of the army, my great-grandfather became a sergeant at Delson and taught the new recruits all he knew. Throughout the six years, he had experienced some life or death situations such as the time a bomb went off during a lesson and he risked losing the majority of his fingers to rescue others.

You may think that I only picked him because of his services in the Canadian army but I also chose him because of his remarkable values and qualities. My great-grandfather definitely had a big amount of determination and a superb work ethic knowing that he started out as a cutter in a clothing factory and climbed his way up the ranks to finally open a business in clothing of his own. Benny also had great values since he believed that respect was extremely important and demanded it mostly from his children but from the people surrounding him as well.

My great-grandfather identified very strongly with his Jewish identity, was quite spiritual, always looked far and wide for thrilling adventures and most definitely loved to sing and dance. According to my grandmother, he was commonly quiet and only those who knew him well saw his great wisdom and sense of humor.

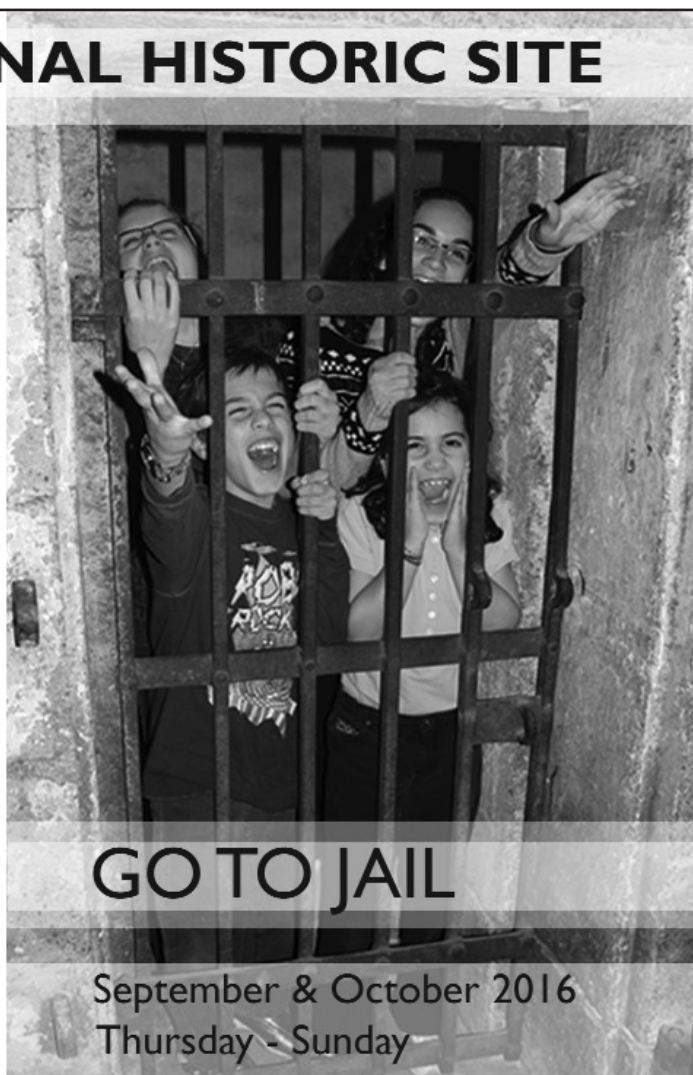
I hope that I've inherited his outstanding values and qualities to be able to thrive for greatness with hard work and effort and live life to its fullest just as he did.



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# THE UKRAINIANS OF VAL DAVID

## Part II

by Joseph Graham

*This, the second part of an article begun in the Summer 2016 issue, was adapted from a series first published in Main Street, spring 2015.*

Time and memory have swept away a lot of the details, but we know young Joseph Vosovitch, born in Kamenets-Ksaverooka, Podolsk, Russia, was thirteen when he took charge of his eight-year-old brother and left home. Family information and general research suggests that the town was present-day Kamenets Podolsk, Ukraine, a region with a large Polish and even Ottoman influence. It housed a prison tower made famous in the nineteenth century by peasant rebel Ustym Karmlyuk, a colourful folk hero who escaped from it at least three times. He led the peasants on raids to steal and share, Robin Hood-style, and commanded 20,000 rebels at the height of his career, leading 1,000 raids over a twenty-year period. Exiled several times, once even as far as Siberia, he returned to lead his people, the poor from every background. He was finally murdered, killed in a raid, and the Polish nobleman who led the raid received a medal and life-long pension from the Czar.

Joseph and his brother may have heard of Karmlyuk and might well have run with his rebels if they had lived a generation earlier. They were likely among the poor and were probably encouraged to leave to avoid service in the Czar's army. How they crossed Europe in 1910 and how they found passage on a ship heading to Halifax is a lost story but after their long adventure, young Joseph stepped ashore only to be told that his young brother was quarantined on-board and would be refused entry. Joseph never saw him again.

How Joseph maintained himself over the next few years is also lost, but

when the war began, he volunteered, lying about his age. He signed up as Josif Vozovitch but they called him Joe Voss, and he marched off with a unit of the Canadian Expeditionary Force, back to Europe to fight the Germans.

Shot through the jaw in the trenches during German gas attacks, most likely in the second battle of Ypres on April 24, 1915, he was sent to recuperate at a hos-



pital in Nottingham, England. His jaw was rebuilt around a metal plate and he was shipped back to Canada, where he found work in construction in Westmount. Within a few years he met Mary Eudokia Semegen who had come from Russia to visit her brother in New York just before the onset of the war. Trapped because of the war and the revolution that followed in Russia, she never returned home. They married in June 1918, and soon had two sons, James and Albert.

That was when Joseph's lungs began to give him trouble. He was recommended to take the rest cure for tubercu-

losis at the Laurentian Sanatorium in St. Agathe. Mary Eudokia followed, opening a boarding house at the corner of Demontigny and St. Joseph streets in St. Agathe to sustain herself and her young family.

When Joseph was finally released, he and Mary Eudokia determined that work in the fresh air would be more suited to their new situation and to Joseph's weakened respiratory system. Some exploring put them together with the Yarushevsky family in Val David. They struck a deal with Andrey and Maria to acquire a parcel of land where they developed a nursery, strengthening the small Ukrainian community.

In the meantime, Andrey and Maria had purchased the Leesinsky share of the farm that ran from the river up to and past the current location of Route 117. Vasily and Dora Leesinsky kept some of the land and managed to make a living for their family through loaning money to entrepreneurs whom they judged worthy but whom the banks had refused. Their skill in this form of risk-taking helped spawn or supported some important landmarks in the area, including a hotel that would rise to international prominence, La Sapinière in Val David. They contributed four children, George, Olga, Cecile and Willy, to the thriving Ukrainian community.

Andrey and Maria felt that their boys had to perfect their French. The public system could not offer them an education in French, so they sent George and Alexei off to a French boarding school in Pointe-aux-Trembles where they completed grades 10 and 11. In 1940, both George Yarushevsky and George Leesinsky enlisted in the war effort. Both were just 18 years old, and both went into aviation. The eldest of their families, they would be the only ones to serve. George Leesinsky became an airplane mechanic, a valued skill that

*George Yarrow and James Voss, c.1942. Photo: courtesy of Greg Yarrow.*



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kept him this side of the Atlantic down in Halifax, but George Yarushevsky, along with his unit, were given injections to protect them from disease in Europe. At full attention on parade, his body went into anaphylactic shock and he hit the granite face first. After three days in a coma, he was told he wasn't heading to the Front and was assigned to British Columbia as a technical airman, spending the war years stringing communications wires between Washington State and Alaska. It was during this period that he formalized the family name as Yarrow. Joseph Voss's elder son James signed up as well and served in the Black Watch, the prestigious volunteer regiment that dates back to the days of the militias. Voss's younger son, Albert,

became a flight instructor and flew in the squadron headed by Hartland Molson. By the time the younger Yarushevsky, Alexei, reached eighteen, a new law obliged at least one son to stay on the farm to assure its survival. Willie Leesinsky was simply too young to serve.

After the war, the two Georges moved back to the Laurentians, George Leesinsky with his Nova Scotian wife, Patricia Young, and George Yarushevsky, now formally George Yarrow, with Laura Engel, whom he met through the Ukrainian community in Montreal. James Voss married Lena Yarushevsky, and Albert and his wife Pierrette founded one of the early alarm companies in the Laurentians. George's eldest sister, and the third generation of Val David Ukrainians, joined the children of more recent immigrants at the St. Agathe school -- the Badenducks, the Andrens, the Kazimerskis and many others from a variety of countries.

While they were off at school, the second generation continued to build the Ukrainian community in Val David. George and Alexei continued to play hockey right into the 1950s, long enough for the older members of the next generation to be able to come and watch the games.

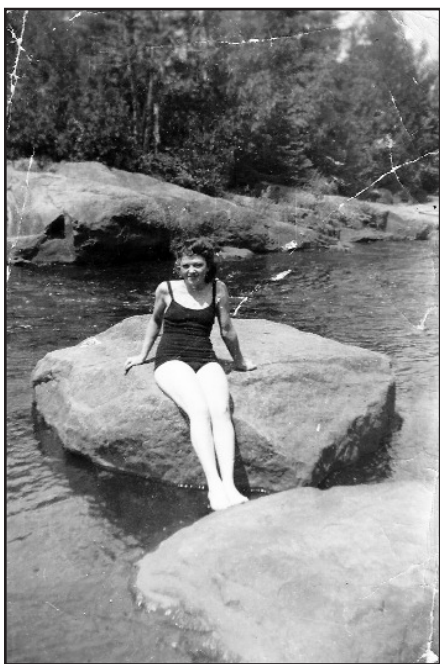
Through the 1950s, the Laurentians grew as a holiday destination. Both the Yarushevskys and the Leesinskys of Val David began building small summer cottages for rental. Andrey Yarushevsky's project involved building a bridge and cottages, educating his sons in the art of construction. With his bushy moustache

and stern composure, he was a difficult, demanding teacher, a patriarch to his family, who felt he had to correct Maria when all around suspected that she was the brighter one. George and Alexei had to learn a bit faster than they were taught, a skill they no doubt picked up from Maria.

In the early days, their tenants came mostly from the rapidly growing Yiddish community, people who had come from perhaps even greater hardships in Eastern Europe and Ukraine. Many worked in the needle trade or as urban entrepreneurs. They tended to holiday as a group because, in order to pray on the Sabbath, they had to form a *minyan*, ten men who had been Bar Mitzvahed -- called to the Torah and able to read it. For Andrey and Maria, these Yiddish immigrants were a special clientele; they shared their discoveries with their friends in Montreal, hoping to expand their cottage communities and, no doubt, to assure a minyan. Andrey and Maria encouraged them by providing vegetables, eggs and chickens, even going to the trouble of finding a *shochet*, a kosher animal slaughterer, to prepare the birds.

The summer population explosion sent culture shocks through the local community. These tourists appeared as an anonymous series of strangers and were not always welcomed. At one point, George Yarushevsky/Yarrow caught word that a particular group of rowdies was going to do something about the 'problem of the Jews' and, in anticipation, George climbed up on the roof of the first cabin along their road and waited there with his rifle. When a pickup truck pulled up and a small gang of toughs tumbled out of it looking for trouble, George calmly made sure they could see him up there with the rifle across his knees and then addressed them quietly, encouraging them to rethink their plans. George and Alexei had a lot of friends in Val David and they had established a reputation for being as good as their word, so his quiet admonitions carried the necessary weight to calm matters.

Over time the cottage movement swelled the summer population to ten times the winter numbers and provided business for everyone. There was potential for winter cottages, too. Deciding to build a number of them on the way up



Top: The Yarushevsky siblings and friends, c.1940.



towards Route 11, the Yarrows used blue roofing material purchased wholesale and called the road fronting on this series of blue-roofed cottages Blue Valley Road. Next, they built a ski hill at the end of a private road, calling it Windy Top. George eventually sold it to John Lingat and Frank Juodkojis who changed the name of the ski hill to Vallée Bleue, for the original Blue Valley Road. George needed the proceeds of the sale to pay for abdominal surgery a few years before Medicare was introduced in Canada.

In 1952, Andrey passed away. He was young, in his mid-fifties, but what a life he had lived. His children wondered about the causes of his illness, remembering things like the fixing chemicals in his darkroom and his lack of any precautions around them, dipping his hands in the fix to take out the pictures and hang them to dry. He reinvented himself throughout his life, leaving home, the son of a mayor obliged to abandon his dream of being an actor, swimming across an important river, all to avoid serving in the Czar's army, making his way through unfamiliar countries and eventually finding an opportunity to cross the Atlantic to the New World. He worked wherever he could in Montreal, selling food from a pushcart, learning photography in its early days and becoming a photographer, learning to farm and to build houses, always adapting to the needs of the situation. Difficult at times, he was still the patriarch, the one around whom his family revolved.

When he died, Maria moved in with her son George and his family for the winter months, but returned to the old farmhouse for the summer, living upstairs of the summer kitchen. She rented the rest of the house out and maintained a vegetable garden and some hens, selling produce to the tenants out of habit and for a little extra cash. George and Alexei tried their hand at gravel transport and other enterprises. They even formed a small band, with Alexei's American wife singing, while George and Alexei played their guitars along with their friend and partner André Monette on the fiddle. Until recently André taught violin in Val David, mentor to a whole generation of aspiring musicians from the Laurentians.

George Leesinsky, who had married



in Nova Scotia during the war, used what he learned from cottage building and his east-coast experiences to set up a general contracting business. He operated it successfully for some time, but it was his youngest brother Willie who got lucky, exploiting the land he inherited to supply gravel when the Autoroute was extended.

Some of the grandchildren still live in the area but most followed opportunities elsewhere and are spread so far west today that some are almost as close to their ancestral Ukraine coming at it from the other side of the world. Some, like Cecile Leesinsky, returned every sum-

mer that the Ukrainians could appreciate but that others may have found strikingly exotic, like herring and pickles offered from large wooden barrels.

The Ukrainian community left an imprint not only in the naming of streets and landmarks, but in their entrepreneurial and community-oriented spirit, a part of the history of the Laurentians and more particularly of Val David.

*Special thanks to Gregory Yarrow, Brigitte Voss, Jay Voss and Peter Leesinsky for their help and the reminiscences they provided.*

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mer with her husband and ran an unusual grocery store perched practically over the North River down the hill from the Laroche dance hall on a little promontory below the falls that is now contained in Parc des Amoureux. They sold prod-

# HOUSOLDIERS

## *The mobilization of Quebec housewives for World War II*

by Lorraine O'Donnell

When someone mentions women in World War II, many of us think of the ones who streamed into munitions factories or military service. Did you know that the wartime contributions of housewives were equally important? The Canadian government of the time certainly did. Government programs to mobilize the country's labour force for the war effort included stay-at-home wives. Popular publications and media picked up on this and likewise represented housewives' work as war work, even sometimes calling them "housoldiers."

English-speaking Montreal housewives were part of the trend. This was a theme explored in a 2016 Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network project called "Housewife Heroines: Anglophone Women at Home in Montreal during WWII." The project exhibit, along with the present article, drew on period sources such as newspapers and posters, current history books and interviews of Montreal women who lived through the war. The sources concur on a key point: whether toiling on traditional household tasks or taking up new ones, wartime planning and propaganda mobilized Montreal housewives and portrayed them as war workers.

### Traditional housework as war work

Before and during WWII, most of Montreal's married women were housewives looking after their homes and family needs. A typical day of housework involved cooking, cleaning, sewing and shopping.

These tasks were harder to do during the war because of shortages of ordinary household goods. Food scarcities due to trade disruptions and other

wartime conditions made cooking a challenge. Shopping was more complicated: stores reduced delivery services due to gas and rubber shortages, and buses were crowded with war workers. Housewives still had to dress their loved ones, but fabric went to uniforms first, families second.

Montreal housewives were not deterred and carried on by making do. The interviewees for our project recalled many of the ways their mothers coped

rior. It said, "She's in there fighting too. YES, she's in there...all five feet, five inches of her...fighting courageously—tenaciously—resourcefully!" Both of these ads praised housewives' tenacity in the face of difficult wartime conditions. They also said that by being thrifty, housewives could buy Victory Bonds: special loans by citizens to the government to finance the war. Through messages like these, many links were made between the household economy and the wartime economy.

Popular media echoed this message that traditional housework was war work. An ad for breakfast cereal showed a housewife saying, "It's my war job to keep my family fit!" A cookbook cover featured a drawing of an aproned housewife shouldering a wooden spoon like a rifle and saluting. It was called *Economy Recipes for Canada's Housoldiers*. The WWII-era housewife with her aprons, mops and spoons was being represented as a kind of soldier in the space of her home; words and images in effect militarized housework.

### New work for housewives

Wartime planning and propaganda went beyond incorporating women's traditional housework into the war effort. They also recruited housewives to carry out new tasks for the cause.

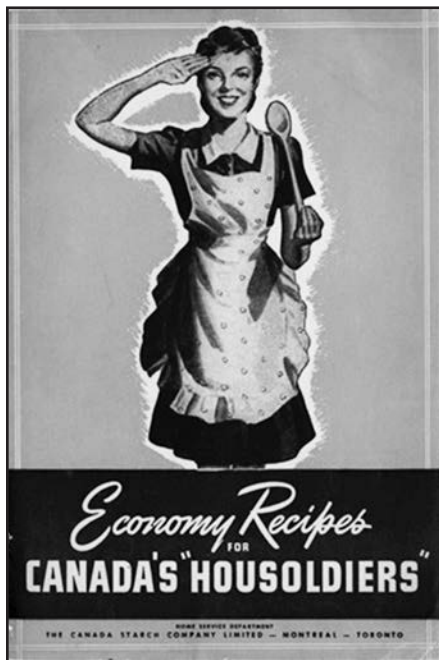
One new task was salvaging, or what we now call recycling. The government set up a Salvage Division in 1941. It called on housewives to recycle the oil, fat and bones left after cooking, and typical household materials including rubber, metal, paper, glass and clothing. These were sent off to government depots and used in war industries. Interviewee Charlotte Bouie remembered rendering cooking fat, canning it and sending it off: "they asked for these kinds of



with shortages. Florence Phillips, for one, remembers her mother using sheets to make clothing.

Canadian government announcements targeted housewives specifically, encouraging them to be thrifty, resourceful and adaptable. In so doing, the announcements suggested, they turned their housework into war work. Some government advertisements, for instance, represented the household tasks of washing, cooking and sewing as part of the war effort. One called housewife-ly thrift "practical patriotism." Another went further, and literally described a woman shown washing dishes as a war-





things because they were good for making munitions and implements.”

Another new job for housewives was managing rations. Starting in 1942, government regulations ensured fair distribution of household items in short supply by introducing ration booklets with coupons for gas and food. Housewives had to manage them when shopping. Our workshop participants had memories of their mothers standing in line to buy goods and giving coupons for the many restricted foods including coffee, sugar, butter, chocolate and alcohol.

Government and popular media acknowledged and promoted this new work for housewives as much as they



had done for the more traditional household tasks already discussed. A cookbook showing dazzling gelatine dishes on its cover endorsed rationing; it was called *Bright Spots for Wartime Meals: 66 Ration-Wise Recipes*. Many striking government posters promoted salvaging to housewives. One showed a woman with arms full of recyclables under the slogan, “Dig in and dig out the scrap.” Another poster returned to the “houseoldier” theme, showing three civilian women carrying salvaged materials and walking abreast, as if in military formation. The catchphrase on top: “We’re in the army now.”

Perhaps the culmination of these government efforts was “Mrs. Consumer Week” in May of 1944. This special government campaign thanked women for their war efforts as housewives and volunteers and encouraged them to keep it up. Publicity for the campaign included a photograph of a mop-wielding woman wearing what my grandmother used to call a housedress. A text panel on the picture thanked this “Mrs. Consumer” for “manning mops and waging war on grime” and “for knowing the morale value of a clean and tidy house.” A second campaign photograph showed Mrs. Consumer again, this time dressed for outdoors and carrying a shopping basket. The text thanked her “for thinking first before you buy, and then buying what you need” and “taking to rationing with a smile.” In the Mrs. Consumer campaign, the economic labour of handling shortages and being thrifty, and the basic tasks of housework itself, were recognized as part of the war effort and worthy of public recognition and gratitude. The *Montreal Gazette* concurred. An article in the paper stated, “it would be difficult to pin medals on 3,000,000 Canadian women but next week – May 22 to 27 – has been set aside by the Prices Board as a time to do the next best thing – to salute ‘Mrs. Consumer’ and to say ‘thank you’ for a job well done.”

*Lorraine O'Donnell, Ph.D., is an affiliate faculty member of the School of Community and Public Affairs at Concordia University. Along with Patrick Donovan, she researched and curated QAHN's "Housewife Heroines" exhibit.*



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# CLEAR AND PRESENT DANGER?

## *The 150th Anniversary of the 1866 Fenian Raid*

by Tim Belford

In the year 1871 an article concerning the Fenian raids on Canada was published for the *Montreal Witness* by the Steam Printing House of Montreal. The author, who chose to remain anonymous, gave a detailed outline of both the campaigns of 1866 and 1870. His concluding remarks concerning the raid of 1866 contained a dramatic and forceful condemnation:

The raid and the panic of our helpless people as well as the tardy movements of the military authorities will be long remembered amongst us.

Yet in history classes throughout the country, Canadian students have long been taught that the Fenian raids were a glowing example of the bravery, courage and efficiency of a young Canadian nation repelling the odious American-encouraged foe. Why then was the author of the article, a man who had undoubtedly lived through both invasions, so angry and caustic in his denunciations? How dangerous in fact were the Fenians and how badly prepared was the Canadian government?

The 1840s in Europe had been an era of revolution. Unrest in Italy, Germany and Ireland, among other countries, had seen the forces of nationalism and republicanism play havoc with the political life of most of the continent. In the case of Ireland, famine combined with the political unrest to cause an unprecedented migration of hundreds of thousands of poor, disgruntled and desperate human beings who were united in one thing: their abiding hatred of the British Crown.

Many of the immigrants to the United States had been members of an outlawed society called the Young Ireland Movement and it was from the remnants of this organization that there evolved the Fenian Brotherhood. The word Fenian was coined from an ancient Celtic word that had been the name of an early

Celtic militia. Indeed, the organization was drawn up on strict military lines with officers, enlisted men and, at its head, a general.

When the American civil war broke out in April 1861, Fenian leaders saw a perfect opportunity for young Irish-American revolutionaries to learn the trade of arms in actual combat. The Fenian command played an active role in recruiting volunteers for the Union army. As a result, when the war ended in 1865, recruiters for the Fenian cause found



themselves with a huge pool of suddenly unemployed young men with nowhere to go and difficulty adjusting to civilian life. In a decade, Fenianism had evolved from a small group of theoretical radicals, four thousand miles from their homeland, into a large, militarily-experienced army within striking distance of Britain's largest possession: Canada.

Much of their new-found strength, however, was on paper. As Herward Senior pointed out in an article in the *Canadian Historical Review* in 1967, "Fenian leaders were too often violent, emotionally unstable, and incompetent conspirators who were careless about financial matters and appeared, at times, to be exploiting nationalist sentiments

among poor and excitable Irish immigrants for the sake of ill-defined personal ambition."

They were also badly armed and unable to maintain themselves in the field for an extended period. More importantly, the post-war United States government held, and wished to maintain, a policy of neutrality towards Britain and her colonies.

Undaunted by these potential difficulties, the Fenian Brotherhood called a convention in the fall of 1865 in Philadelphia to discuss the best method of attacking British-controlled Ireland. The convention split, with the majority under William Roberts opting to attack Canada and use success there to force concessions from Britain. At worst, such an attack, it was thought, would likely force Britain into a war with the United States and give the Fenians a free hand in Ireland.

The question remains, why did the Fenians feel an attack upon Canada would not only be possible but relatively easy? To answer this, one must examine their base of support outside the Brotherhood itself. Apart from Congressmen Banks and Butler, and Senator Fitzgerald of New York, the Fenians had little official influence. Yet there were still two areas of encouragement: surely both Irish Canadians and French Catholics would rally to their cause and happily aid in the throwing off of British tyranny.

As early as 1865, they had received favourable reports: "The agents sent with your approbation, exhibit a good state of feeling among the French of the Eastern Provinces: who will, doubtless afford us much assistance."

It was also true that several French-language papers, such as the *Rouge Pays* and *Le Canadien*, had published violently anti-British editorials. Yet for the most part, French Canada, although not necessarily loyal to the crown, were anti-Fenian. *The Bleu Minerve* summed things up:



Le Fenianisme est un crime...S'ils (les États-Unis) persistent, par une coupable negligence, à laisser nos frontières à la merci de la première troupe de brigands qui voudre s'organiser à l'ombre du drapeau américain, ils peuvent être assurés que leur protégés d'aujourd'hui expieront leur faute.

In the case of Irish Canadians, things were different. One third of the population of Toronto was first-generation Irish. Here, the Hibernian Society, the Catholic answer to the Orange Lodge, was a major factor in political life. In Montreal, Fenian influence had been observed as early as 1861 by D'Arcy McGee. A one-time Irish nationalist himself, and later a Father of Confederation, McGee continually warned the population of the Fenian menace in letters to both the *Gazette* and the *Montreal Herald*. But once again, support for the Fenian cause looked infinitely better on paper than in fact. When the conflict finally commenced, no overt support for the Fenians was offered by Irish Quebecers. In Quebec City, the Irish population went as far as cancelling their 1866 St. Patrick's Day parade for fear of causing trouble. The *Montreal Witness* summed up the general attitude:

All classes seem to entertain a kind of grim joy at the opportunity about to be afforded of repulsing the men who for so long and so unjustly have annoyed Canadians with the threats which are now being carried into cruel lawless execution.

The Catholic Church too was vehement in its denunciation of the Fenian cause. In an interesting twist, the Church went to great lengths in the early months of 1866 to prove to the public that Fenianism was neither Irish nor Catholic. Its leaders, the Church announced, were avowed Protestants (Roberts being a Unitarian and Sweeny an Episcopalian), its ranks contained not one Irish Catholic of respect, and it had supported the revolutionary party in Catholic Austria!

On March 16, the day before St. Patrick's Day, and what was believed to be the impending invasion, *The Quebec*

*Daily Mercury* summed up the foe:

What then is Fenianism as it has now declared itself, in its aims, its alliances and its sympathies? It is the offshoot of the tree of evil whose branches are the Illuminati of Germany, the Carbonari of Italy, and those countless secret and unholy associations whose name is legion, whose Prince is Lucifer, whose aims are universal anarchy, and whose favourite march to battle is the church plundering, priest murdering refrain of the "Ca Ira."

So much for the invaders. But what resistance were they to meet? What defense could a colony of a mere three million people provide? Perhaps it would be advantageous to take a discerning look at the military in Canada at the time.

As early as the year 1841, Lord John Russell, at that time Colonial Secretary, wrote to the Governor General, Lord Sydenham, concerning what he felt to be the excessive expense of maintaining suitable military forces in Canada. Lord Russell suggested the sum of one hundred thousand pounds would, if one



eliminated all needless expenditures, be ample to pay, outfit and maintain Canada's fledgling militia. By 1854, Britain had announced its wish to withdraw all regular troops with the exceptions of those manning the Halifax and Esquimalt naval bases. The decision would leave Canada dependent on the strength of its own local militia units.

In the case of Lower Canada, the law required all men physically and mentally able between the ages of 16 and 60 to be deemed fit for military service. The duty,

however, was somewhat limited since members of a militia unit were required to muster only three days a year, one day each in June, July and August. During those days they were required to "review arms, to fire at marks, and for instruction in the exercise." By 1846, significant changes had been made: the age limit had risen to between 18 and 60, divided into two sections (18 to 40 and 41 to 60). The government also demanded that 30,000 men be placed in an active role with the remainder liable only in time of emergency.

A few years after the invasion of 1866, a *Report on the State of the Militia of the Dominion of Canada* (1873) suggested that "men join the corps...from different motives combining patriotism and love of service in various degrees, and for various reasons aside from pay." This is not surprising since, as late as 1870, a Lieutenant Colonel received \$4.87 ½ per day, an Ensign \$1.28 and an enlisted man \$.50. In 1866, it could only have been worse. Nevertheless, many men were happy to sign up. Some figures taken from a report in Military District number 5 in 1870 – admittedly after the invasion – still give us an idea of the relative strength of the militia. In Missisquoi County, we find 3 officers, 35 troopers and 38 horse; in Brome County, 3 officers, 34 men and 37 horse, and in Hemmingford, 2 officers, 35 men and 37 horse. A total of 112 men to guard three crucial areas along the U.S. border.

It is interesting to note that, just as the ranks of the Fenian movement swelled immediately after the Civil War, so too did the ranks of the militia, expanding from 19,597 to a nominal strength of 33,754. Also of interest is the fact that immediately prior to 1866 applications were made from the Montreal headquarters of the Canadian militia to the government for more arms and ammunition. The application was ignored. The result? The Canadian militia that met the Fenians was badly prepared, poorly drilled and inadequately armed. It was composed of soldiers guided by patriotic and romantic dreams. Its officers were, for the most part, the rich and influential who had enough money to equip a company but lacked the military experience, and in some cases the brains, to lead them. In short, when the invasion of Quebec came in June of

1866, the combatants were a revolutionary rabble facing a slightly better organized group of amateurs.

The first attack came in April when an attempt to capture Campobello Island in the St. Croix River was foiled. In June, Roberts ordered an invasion of Fort Erie at the mouth of the Niagara River. Even then, the authorities remained confident. An article in the *Toronto Daily Globe* in May of 1866 – overshadowed by a piece on the Upper Canada College cricket match – showed little concern:

Secrecy has been well preserved as to the point of attack, but we fancy that the American and Canadian government will be equal to the emergency. We hope that Sweeney's movement will not be nipped too soon. If it is only allowed to come to a head it will be the last we shall hear of Fenianism.



In Montreal, excitement ran rampant. Upon hearing word by telegraph of the Fort Erie attack, and the resulting casualties, the city became alive with a spirit that combined patriotic zeal, tempered by anxiety and fed by rumour. According to first-hand reports from St. Albans, Vermont, appearing in the *Quebec Daily Mercury* on June 1, 300 Fenians had arrived -- 50 from Boston and the remainder from Lowell and Rutland. The headlines were frantic: "The Fenians in Canada" and "The Province Invaded." As to the militia: "The volunteers are enthusiastic and every man is ready to take to the field." Still, the troops were not mobilized. Unlike the militia, however, the press mounted a fe-

rocious attack:

The reptile of Fenianism has crept into daylight on Canadian soil, and will be stamped out by the well-armed heel of British power in North America... No needless ferocity must stain the fair name of Christian and generous Canada.

Meanwhile, along the U.S. border and in the Eastern Townships, there was considerably more activity. Lt. Colonels Smith and Brown were dispatched to Huntingdon where they immediately called out the First and Second Huntingdon Companies, the Durham Company, the Hinchinbrooke Rifles and the Athelstan Company. The Sherbrooke Regiment was also activated along with the Bishop's College School Cadet Corps, the latter assigned to guard the Massawippi and St. Francis bridges in Lennoxville.

Saturday's dawn saw an awakened and active city. Yet the activity seemed in many ways sporadic, still being governed by rumours that arrived every minute by telegraph. 27 companies had been called out in Canada East and 12 more were called out that day. Meanwhile, 150 more Fenians had been observed passing through Rutland, Vermont, while 50 had arrived at St. Alban's that morning.

In the United States, reactions were mixed. A *Toronto Globe* report told of how on June 1, at a meeting of Fenian supporters in the Buffalo Opera House, Senator Fitzgerald had given a fiery speech in which he said "the Canadian volunteers...were invincible in peace and invisible in war."

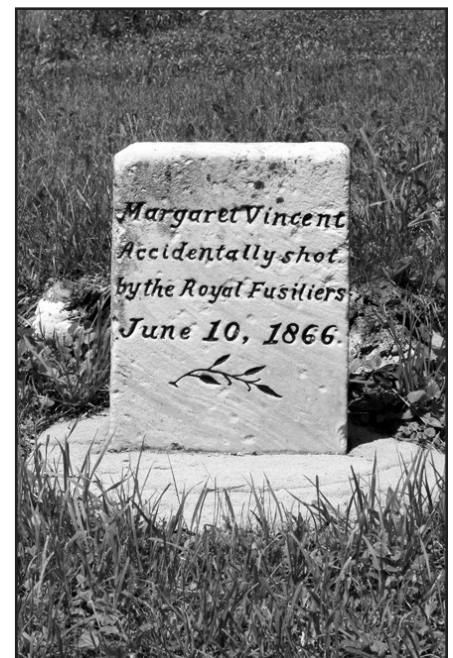
That same evening, the volunteers were called out and asked to report to the Victoria Armoury at five in the afternoon. By ten o'clock, both the Victoria Rifles and the Prince of Wales Rifles had departed from Bonaventure station amidst loud cheering on their way to Hemmingford. The journey was exceedingly slow due to the fear that the Fenians might have sabotaged the railway lines. However, by 2 a.m. on Sunday, all the troops had reached Hemmingford where they were billeted in barns. Prior to their departure, there arrived from the 'front' the first reasonable assessment of Fenian movement from "a Canadian gentleman, whose reliability we can vouch for." This gentleman maintained

that 400 Fenians had arrived in St. Albans without arms. Again, on Friday and Saturday, a total of about 450 more arrived, mostly from Boston and this time with several cases of arms. These arms, however, had been immediately confiscated and returned to Burlington by the United States Marshall.

Montreal was not alone in its excitement and activity. In Quebec City, the volunteers had been called out and were drilling each day from 9 a.m. to noon. Furthermore, the Fusiliers of Quebec had reached Montreal on Sunday. Having received letters from many American friends, a good deal of the population believed that Quebec City, because of its strategic position, ammunition stores and prestige, was to be the real target of the Fenian invaders. So worried were the people of that city that a plea to the mayor was placed in the *Quebec Daily Mercury* when he announced he would be going to Ottawa on business:

Mr. Cauchon must imperatively remain in Quebec. His nerve, his moral courage and his unconquerable determination are qualities which cannot be dispensed with and may not readily be replaced.

Along the border, the skies were overcast and the rain fell in torrents. Twenty members of the First Troop of Montreal Cavalry had arrived in Hemmingford along with members of the





First Prince of Wales Rifles under Capt. Bernard Devlin. Unknown to the troops, the Fenians had apparently invaded Frelighsburg, St. Armand, Stanbridge and Pigeon Hill. The war was on. In Montreal, the papers published the first report of an actual invasion along with the comment, "it is of much less dimension that at first supposed."

Government officials in the United States were also at work. 6,000 cartridges, ostensibly manufactured in Burlington, Vermont, were seized along with 13 cases of arms. General Meade of the U.S. army had moved troops into St. Albans, Malone, Rouses Point, and several other areas to control further Fenian action. Most importantly, the President of the United States had issued a proclamation through the office of the Attorney General:

By the direction of the President, you are hereby instructed to cause the arrest of all prominent, leading or conspicuous persons called 'Fenians' who you may have probable cause to believe have been, or may be guilty of violation of the neutrality laws of the United States.

At 8 a.m. on the morning of June 7, an informant was stopped by an advancing column of Fenians coming from Fairfield, Vermont, towards Frelighsburg. He was asked if this was the way to Canada. Most of the Fenians, he maintained were armed although some were mere boys. He also noted that the column did not exceed 500 and that their weapons were breech loading carbines, not Spencers.

By 7 a.m. on Friday, things were clear. The Fenians were in St. Armand, Frelighsburg, Cook's Corner and Pigeon Hill – robbing, destroying property and slaughtering animals. Although drunk and often without arms, the Fenians were safe from the equally defenseless farmers. Where were the troops?

500 men had left St. John's for the front, and the Granby and Waterloo volunteers, accompanied by Captain Balfour's battery and a cavalry regiment called The Guides, were also on the way. By the morning of June 9, there were still no troops facing the Fenians. The *Quebec Daily Mercury* summed up the situation:

The population of the Eastern Townships...are in a frightful state of alarm... Sweetsburg, Bedford, Stanbridge, Frelighsburg, Dunham and Cowansville are almost entirely deserted.

Finally, just before noon, the troops arrived, only to be met by two wagons of captured Fenians – "little scamps such as one sees about the streets of all great cities" that had been taken prisoner by the local volunteers. Stationing their artillery on a hill that commanded a good view of the forested valley of Pigeon Hill, The Guides slowly advanced into the woods. A shot was heard, then a second and then nothing. The Fenians had fled and the invasion was over. The Guides had not even a chance to "flesh their maiden swords," as one writer put it. Two Fenians had been killed and 16 captured in their abortive attempt to invade the Eastern Townships of Quebec. One company of soldiers remained at Frelighsburg; the rest returned to St. Armand, and thence to Montreal, where they were greeted by the cheers of thousands of thankful Canadians.

*Tim Belford was born and raised in the Niagara Peninsula but has lived in Quebec City and the Eastern Townships for the past 48 years. The former host of CBC's Quebec AM and one-time history teacher, he now acts as part-time curator of the Army Navy Air Force Veterans in Canada Unit 318 Museum in Lennoxville.*

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REVIEW

# The Gaol, the School and the Moose

*Iron Bars and Bookshelves: A History of the Morrin Centre*

Louisa Blair, Patrick Donovan and Donald Fyson, Foreword by Louise Penny  
Baraka Books, Montreal 2016

Every old public building carries within it the stories of its occupants and the times in which they lived. This is especially true of the Morrin Centre, an imposing neo-classical structure with a unique and varied past, located on a rise in the midst of Quebec City's Upper Town. The Morrin Centre's eighteenth and early nineteenth century neighbours are mostly buildings that started life as private homes but are now small hotels, restaurants and commercial venues; St. Andrews's Presbyterian Church, its manse and Kirk Hall, and a former Methodist church (now an arts complex) are almost equally venerable. Down the steep steps, below the Morrin Centre, is Rue Saint-Jean, the chief tourist and business street of Old Quebec.

At present, the Morrin Centre is a thriving multi-purpose community centre, focused on the city's small but active English-speaking population. It is under the aegis of the Literary and Historical Society of Quebec, established in 1824, the oldest (and only) English-language library in the city. In 1992-1993, the exterior of the building was restored, followed by a major interior restoration starting in 2002. Part of this was the conversion of the old jail cells section into an interactive visitors' venue. School tours and tourists have been going to jail ever since.

So where to begin to describe this book? There are three authors and all of them are excellent writer-researchers. There is a depth of information and meticulously accounted historical references in all three sections. All three sections are interesting and even exciting in spots. Donald Fyson is the author of part one, *Prison Reform and Prison Society: The Quebec City Gaol, 1812-1867*. He brings to life individuals, both prisoners and prison employees, and in doing so, creates a vivid picture of life in Quebec City in the first part of the nineteenth century. This was a very rowdy seaport indeed, before the days of police as we'd know them, and with a legal system that was still partly medieval yet beginning to reform itself under the influence of people like John Howard. In the gaol/jail were debtors (think Charles Dickens here), disorderly sailors and disobedient servants, prostitutes, a few major criminals (although not a high proportion of the truly dangerous), and, very sadly, many mentally ill people. It was chaotic, smelly and noisy. However, as the building was right in the middle of a busy residential and institutional area, the inmates had a fair amount of contact with passersby and could easily have food and tobacco passed in to them through the lower windows. The Methodist church next door made several complaints.



By the 1860s, this overcrowded and inadequate prison was moved to a newer, but much more enclosed and harsh building on the Plains of Abraham. In 1868, the old building became Morrin College, a Presbyterian-run offshoot of McGill in Montreal. It had been established by Dr. Joseph Morrin, originally from Scotland, and offered basic Bachelor of Arts education along with evening courses for the public. In this second part of the book, *A Presbyterian Stronghold in Catholic Quebec: Morrin College (Since 1862)*, by Patrick Donovan, the history of this admirable effort to bring English-language higher education to Quebec City is traced. The College closed as such in 1902, but carried on as a foundation, maintaining the building and granting funds for educational purposes. Its failure to thrive was twofold: the English speaking population of Quebec City had started to decline by the 1880s and never increased, and Morrin College was too intensely sectarian (Presbyterian) -- even in a very sectarian society. Yet it did espouse some modern ideas, especially in admitting women, and in finally updating a curriculum that was heavily weighted to the classics. Again, individuals who attended or taught at the College are described, along with the atmosphere of the times. What might have been rather the duller section of the book is lively and informative of the history of education in Quebec.

The third part is called *Moose in Flames: The Story of the Literary and Historical Society of Quebec*, by Louisa Blair. The moose was one of many stuffed specimens that was lost in a fire in the nineteenth century when the Society focused on natural history and appeared to be an enthusiastic example of the Victorian mania for collecting. However, this organization is the oldest learned society in Canada, was the main force in creating the Archives of Canada and those of Quebec, rescued the Plains of Abraham from developers (many times) and increased public awareness of the value of built and cultural history and heritage. It continues today, more reflective of our age, although Blair does record the hesitation of this group to digitize. Again this is a wonderful social history of a very special English-speaking community that is obviously aware of its past and present in Quebec.

This book is creative non-fiction/cultural history at its best. The illustrations are excellent and well reproduced. The appearance of the work is attractive. The notes and references are copious. Here is a world in miniature in a sense -- a Quebec City that has enriched its present time by the preservation and adaption of its past inheritance.

-Reviewed by Sandra Stock



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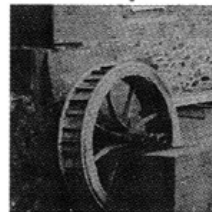
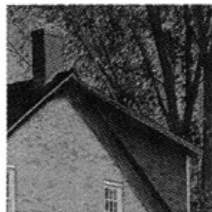
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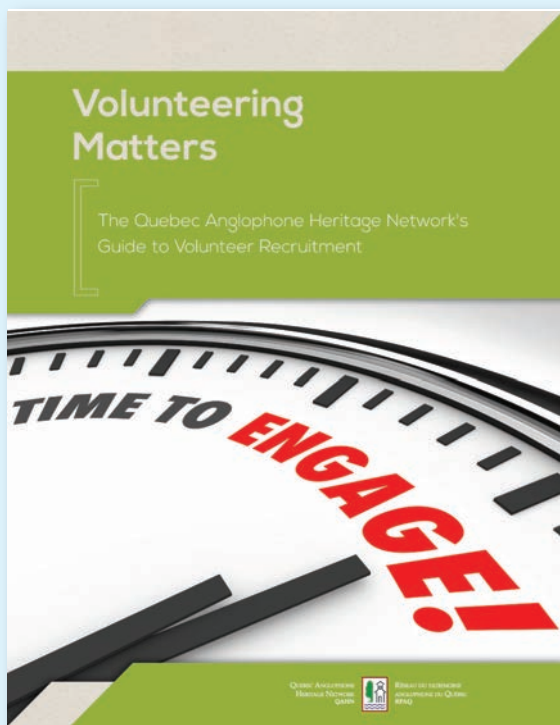
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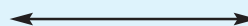
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