A Heritage Success Story: The Powerscourt Bridge

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Quebec Heritage News

Vol 6, No. 4 Winter 2011

The Future of Our Heritage

Interview with Heritage Montreal's Dinu Bumbaru

Rivers and Islands

Defending Canada after 1812

The Jackie Robinson Paradox

Black Athletes and La Grande Noirceur

Quebec Heritage News

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Cover image: The Percy Bridge over the Châteauguay River at Powerscourt, Quebec. Early hand-tinted photograph, signed by Paul Grover, no date. Photo - Matthew Farfan Collection.

Editor's Desk

11/11/11/11/11/11

by Rod MacLeod

You are reading this in the early days of 2012 with the madness of the holiday season behind you, but for me, as I write, the new year is still over a month away and I am thinking back over Remembrance Day. Not so much the ceremonies themselves and the perennially affecting minute of silence, but rather the moment shortly afterwards when I sat huddled with a loved one staring at a digital clock.

The moment came. It was the eleventh second of the eleventh minute of the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month of the eleventh year. Click. Never to be repeated.

What set it apart from the millions of other clicks that make up our lives if we only focus on them as they pass? Nothing, of course – except symbolism, and that counts for a great deal. Why else would we celebrate birthdays and anniversaries and (in the recent past for you, in the near future for me) New Year's Eve? As far as nature is concerned, one day is like any other, but we humans stake our lives out with symbolic points of reference.

Some of this is practical. I know there is a date in December by which I have to put my winter tires on or get fined. I know there is a date by which I must get all my gift shopping done or else face the wrath of people around me (I think it's December 24th).

Some of this is emotional. Every year on my birthday I stand outside by myself and stare up at the sky and marvel a little that I have made it through another whole year of this bizarre journey I am on. I don't do this other days – much to the relief of my neighbours, I'm sure – although it may well be the time will come when I will feel this sense of wonder (I hope) every morning. There are other days, of course, that make me stop and sigh – or light a candle or do some other ritual; I won't say what or it would inevitably make the symbolism sound silly. This time of year I also find myself thinking of the friends and family of the 22 women killed on December 6, 22 years ago, as it happens. I doubt any of them will find their grief any less than it was on the previous 21.

Some of this symbolism is also just plain crass. It was fun celebrating Montreal's 350th birthday some years back, and Quebec's 400th more recently – but I can't work up too much enthusiasm for my city's 375th other than as good an excuse as any for a party. For much of this year, McGill University has been festooning its grounds with signs saying "190" – a reference to the 190th anniversary of McGill's 1821 charter. 190th? Is there even an official substance for that (ie, gold, diamond, pewter, etc)? The kicker is, as anyone who has looked into it will tell you, McGill University wasn't doing a whole lot back in 1821. A body known as the Royal Institution for the Advancement of Learning had been bequeathed a farm on the side of Mount Royal where they were supposed to build a college within ten years or give the land back; realizing that the ten years were almost up with nothing to show for it, these guys madly applied for a charter and got it just under the wire, which was apparently good enough. There was no building on the site until 1839, actual teaching didn't start until 1843, and it wasn't until the 1860s when the place took off. But hang on a minute – "the ten years were almost up"? Yes, James McGill's will granting his farm to the Royal Institution was made in 1811, two years before his death. The university could now be celebrating that – with signs saying "200" and getting far more bang for their buck – but for that they would have to actually know their history. Oh well – again, any excuse for a party.

Except that, unfortunately, no one is much in the mood for parties at McGill these days. Whatever your take might be on the rights of non-academic staff, it isn't pleasant to have services cut, labs and libraries barely functioning, repairs not taking place. Like all strikes, there is also a human cost: anger, bitterness, even tightening of belts. Far worse, of course, is having the riot police called out to clobber people, even bystanders. I heard about that nasty incident the day after it happened, on November 11th. Sigh.

Ah well, enough with the serious stuff. It's time to start thinking of buying gifts and baking birthday cakes and finding those noisemakers.

And lighting candles.

Click.

Letter

Jersey Memories

It was interesting to read ("QAHN honours Heritage Achievement," Summer 2011) about the Achievement Award presented to the Miner Heritage Farm and that it will promote species unique to Quebec farms.

Your readers may like to know that W.H. Miner was a noted Jersey breeder for about 40 years. He specialized in imported breeding and developed bulls that were used in early A.I. units in Canada. The Pinetree Jersey herd was noted for its high butterfat, with many cows testing over 6% and as high as 7%. Most of the time, the herdsman was Walter Wright who was responsible for the high performance of the cows. My father and uncles purchased bulls at Pinetree in 1955 and 1956. I attended the dispersal sale, in 1961, and bought a young cow. Unfortunately, she died of milk fever on calving but did produce a heifer calf, so my investment was not a complete loss.

I also remember attending a Quebec Jersey Club picnic at Pinetree. The barn was painted white with green trim, in those days, and tucked back from the road behind huge pines. Even in the 1950s, to my recollection, the farm was right in the city of Granby.

One hopes that space will be made at the Miner Farm for a Jersey or two. I am sure there are close genetic links to the Canadienne.

Daniel Parkinson
Toronto

Attention Writers!

The Quebec Heritage News is looking for articles dealing with local heritage conservation projects, both successes and failures – we can learn from both! Recently the *QHN* has covered such topics as the Fairbairn house in Wakefield, the Redpath mansion on Mount Royal, and the Empress Theatre in NDG. In this issue you will read about the restoration of the Powerscourt bridge in the Chateauguay Valley. There are hundreds more!

Look around your communities and see what old buildings are thriving and what is at risk. Send us the saga of the heritage project nearest you! We hope to publish them in the next issue of the *QHN*.

Mystery Photo!

?

Can you identify this photo?
Where are these gentlemen from?
What are they doing?
Where is the train heading?
Send your answers to:
editor@qahn.org.

PRINTER'S AD

Image courtesy of the Missisquoi Historical Society

Timelines

Townships on Display

FSHQ Congrès 2012 in Sherbrooke

by Ann Montgomery

The City of Sherbrooke will be the scene of the 47th annual meeting of the Fédération des sociétés d'histoire du Québec (FHQ), from May 25-27, 2012. Hosted by the Société d'histoire de Sherbrooke, with the collaboration of the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network (QAHN), the conference will have as its theme:

Les Cantons de l'Est	**The Eastern Townships**
- lieu de passage	- Land of Passage
- terre d'acceuil	- Place of Settlement
- espace d'intégration	- Home of Communties

At its main session on Saturday, May 26, at the Delta Hotel, conference presentations will explore the history and current composition of the Eastern Townships, from the first Abenaki peoples who travelled through the region to the present day urban and rural communities. An organizing committee has been identifying speakers and resource people to provide delegates with an in-depth, wide-ranging and informative look at how the Townships came to be as we find them today.

On Friday, May 25, following the annual meeting of the Fédération, all delegates will be invited to the Sherbrooke Historical Society for cocktails, and then to the Granada Theatre, one of the rare theme theatres remaining in Québec, for a dinner of regional cuisine and the formal opening of the conference – with historical animation. A full schedule of historical and cultural activities is being planned for Sunday, May 27, to give delegates a taste of what the region has to offer.

Though the annual meeting and some of the sessions will be in French, it is the intent of the organizers that at least one presentation in each section of the conference shall be given in English, to properly reflect the diverse population of the Townships. The committee is actively recruiting volunteers, both English and French, who would be willing to help with the practical organization of the conference, as well as services to the delegates during the meeting. If you are interested, please contact either Matthew Farfan of QAHN (execdir@qahn.org), or Ann Montgomery of the Stanstead Historical Society (ann.montgomery @sympatico.ca).

All members of the Fédération and of QAHN are encouraged to participate in this annual meeting and conference, which promises to be an interesting and rewarding experience for everyone involved. Member groups will receive detailed information about program and registration early in 2012, so please watch for it both in the mail and on-line. You can also find information on the FHQ website: www.histoirequebec .qc.ca.

The Sherbrooke Historical Society. Photo: Matthew Farfan

If you have a "Mystery Photo" you think would be challenging to identify (see the one on the opposite page), send it to us–or, if you are near the Lennoxville QAHN office, bring it in to show us.

INHERIT

Heritage program seeks closer links between schools and communities

by Dwane Wilkin

Blame it on their overstuffed curricula. In the crowded agenda of a typical school year, with its centrally-directed, government-prescribed pedagogy, where will today's teachers ever find room to fit in a talk on local history or heritage? If it's not on the exam, why require students to consider the lay of the land, to acquaint themselves with nearby streams, rivers and seaways, or to contemplate the reasons why different groups of people at different times in the past chose these places for their homes. What could anyone possibly learn?

Outside Montreal and Quebec City, few students across the province will graduate next June having ever read a single word about the places they come from. Unless they involve a major battle or a powerful public figure, or – more rarely – skilful local historians have managed to bring them to light, most of the stories that situate hometowns and neighbourhoods in history's official grand narratives go unheard. This is the paradox of standardised education. Events acquire their meaning through the telling and retelling, but local knowledge, squeezed from the pedagogical mainstream, is regarded as insignificant because it isn't taught. Is it any wonder that students find history boring?

In a world awash in the chatter of smart phones and social media, it may be naïve to hope that Canadians know something about the history and heritage in their local communities. We live in an age of hypersonic digital communications, after all. In a world remade into the global village, who cares what country great-grandpa's family came from?

We all should, according to proponents of an approach to pedagogy known as "place-based education," which presupposes that real-world settings beyond the classroom can also provide valuable learning opportunities.

Educators have long recognized that the communities in which people grow up and live exercise a meaningful influence on the construction of their identities. Local heritage, culture, landscapes and of course, people, do constitute a ready-made foundation for the study of language, arts, mathematics, social studies, science, and many other subjects. Under the current school system, however, standardised curricula, media-saturated recreational activities and career-driven family relocations conspire to give young people only a superficial understanding of their local milieu. What's more, neglecting learning resources that exist locally implies that the neighbourhoods and hometowns where young people live have no past and can offer nothing of value in the future – not much of a sales-pitch to the next generation of entrepreneurs and community leaders.

The Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network (QAHN) recently launched a pilot program called Inspiring Heritage Renewal and Identity Together (*InHerit*) that aims to counter these trends by helping to strengthen links between schools and community volunteers who would like to be more active in local history and heritage. With funding from the Department of Canadian Heritage, the plan is to work with teachers, heritage workers and young people from communities around Quebec to spark fresh thinking about ways youth can learn from and contribute to their neighbourhoods and hometowns. Part of the funding will be used to support local partnerships between schools and community groups – eligible projects selected for financial support could receive up to $2,000 in development costs.

The program, which runs until June 2012, is attracting interest and support from many within Quebec's English school sector who are also looking to revitalise what are often considered to be the only institutions left in the province with a clear mandate to serve English-speaking communities. The InHerit program seems a perfect fit with the current Community Learning Centre (CLC) initiative, in particular. Inspired by similar institutions in Europe and supported by the Ministry of Education with a funding from the Department of Canadian Heritage, the CLC program in Quebec is based on the idea that schools can and should be centres of lifelong learning for the whole community. Since 2006, nearly 40 English schools around the province have worked with volunteers to develop a wide array of grassroots projects that tap into local curiosity and expertise, many with an intergenerational flavour. One of the more intriguing and suc-

Elementary students touring the Missisquoi Museum. Photo courtesy of the Missisquoi Museum

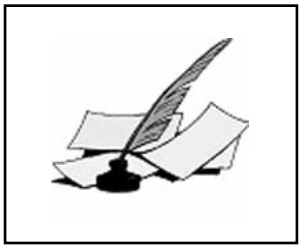
cessful projects last year involved students from Princess Elizabeth Elementary School in Magog who came together with older volunteers to research, design, assemble and sell a series of wooden "bat houses" meant to supply additional local habitat for colonies of this beneficial, insect-eating species.

Local heritage workers who believe that schools have no interest in the work may be surprised to learn that CLC coordinators are, in fact, eager to partner with community groups on InHerit-style projects, too. Proposals known to be in development as of mid-December include creating an historical shipbuilding exhibit on the Gaspé Coast, recording oral histories of a North Shore town's industrial origin and evolution, making a documentary video about an Eastern Townships community's agricultural roots, and putting together an online exhibit featuring a teenage Loyalist from southern Quebec who partook in the capture of two American warships during the War of 1812. Many more proposals are expected. Students who help create the most outstanding local history and heritage projects in 2012 will be invited by QAHN to present their work at the Young Heritage Leaders fair to be held by QAHN in St. Lambert on May 12.

What remains to be seen is whether these emerging partnerships will be short-lived or sustainable. A 2009 survey of QAHN-member historical societies, small museums and heritage conservation groups found that traditional, volunteer-run community groups in the heritage sector have failed, by and large, to connect with younger generations. It turns out that very few of QAHN's core groups have any ties to schools or teachers in their communities, and a very few would be able to offer any type of structured learning activities. Even class trips to the local museum rarely occur, in part because so few keep regular hours and generally do so only in the summer months. Ironically, most volunteer groups would benefit enormously from the interests and talents that youth possess in abundance, including their ease with digital communications technology. So, how should schools and volunteers go about engaging young people in ways that are enriching for the whole community?

Addressing this question is the main object of a series of workshops that QAHN is planning to organise over the coming months in collaboration with community learning centres, in which participating teachers and volunteers will be invited to learn, share and brainstorm ideas for getting youth involved in local history and heritage activities. During a recent presentation at the annual convention of the Quebec Provincial Teachers Association in Montreal, QAHN also announced that, starting in 2012, its volunteer recognition program will include a community service award for young Quebecers age 13 to 24. Members of the heritage network and the public at large are invited to submit nominations; the awards will be presented during QAHN's annual general meeting and banquet on May 12, 2012 at Champlain College, St. Lambert.

Individuals, youth groups, or student teams who have exhibited dedication and commitment carrying out activities that support the work of community heritage volunteers, may be nominated for an InHerit Award. Complete details and a nomination form may be found on the QAHN website, www.qahn.org. Nominations deadline is March 30, 2012.



HOMETOWN HERITAGE ESSAY CONTEST
2012
Open to students in grades 4, 5 and 6 across Quebec!
Cash prizes! Great publishing opportunity!
Deadline: April 30, 2012
For contest details, contact QAHN at:
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Tel: (819) 564-9595
Toll free at: 1 (877) 964-0409

1ST ANNUAL HERITAGE PHOTO CONTEST!
2012
Open to High School Students across Quebec!
Cash prizes! Great publishing opportunity!
Deadline: April 30, 2012
For contest details, contact QAHN at:
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Toll free at: 1 (877) 964-0409

Spanning river and time

The Powerscourt/Percy covered bridge

by Kevin O'Donnell

Saturday, October 15 was a cool, showery day. But the weather didn't dampen the spirits of approximately 200 people who had gathered near a wooden bridge spanning the Chateauguay River close to the Valley towns of Elgin and Hinchinbrooke. The crowd had assembled to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the erection of the Powerscourt Covered Bridge. It is also known as Percy Bridge, this name possibly surviving from earlier bridges of that name that had washed away.

Fittingly for a road bridge – though built according to "McCallum inflexible arched truss" plans conceived for the more rigorous requirements of a railway bridge – a parade of antique cars figured in the festivities. So did a large white tent set up in local farmer James Ross's nearby field, its inside walls lined with tables featuring local antiques, crafts and food offerings as well as displays by organizations involved in the anniversary festivities.

Heirloom Timber Frames, a local company, was on hand to explain how they had carried out much of the restoration work on the elderly and much patched-up wooden structure. Along with other publications, the Chateauguay Valley Historical Society sold copies of the 1989 issue of their Journal, which featured historian Robert Passfield's article on the construction and historic significance of the bridge.

The front of the tent was reserved for speeches and special presentations. The MRC du Haut Saint-Laurent, which had coordinated planning committee activities, had invited a brace of officials from all levels of government, as well as Quebec lieutenant-governor Pierre Duchesne and Andrew Parker, the Consul-General of the United States in Montreal. Retired judge John Gomery served as master of ceremonies.

To give celebrants a historical perspective, Duchesne noted that the1861 construction project took place in the same year that Abraham Lincoln was sworn in as president of the United States and that the Civil War erupted. For a Canadian context, he noted that 1861 was the year Sir Charles Stanley, fourth Viscount Monck, became governor-general of British North America. He went on to say that Powerscourt is not only a fully-functioning bridge today, but also serves as a symbol of the harmonious relations between "two universes – two languages, two cultures."

During his turn at the podium, Jean-Pierre Proulx, the former mayor of Elgin and a major figure in the restoration saga, noted that Powerscourt /Percy can claim to be the oldest covered bridge surviving in Canada as well as the last example anywhere of a McCallum inflexible arched truss bridge. McCallum truss bridges were once common in mid-nineteenth century United States and Canada; they solved swaying and load-bearing problems encountered when ever-heavier freight trains rumbled over wooden bridges of inferior design. But by the 1870s railway iron-truss bridges rendered the wooden McCallums obsolete, and they fell victim to upgrades, vandalism and fire. The Powerscourt /Percy Bridge remains as the last of its kind in existence.

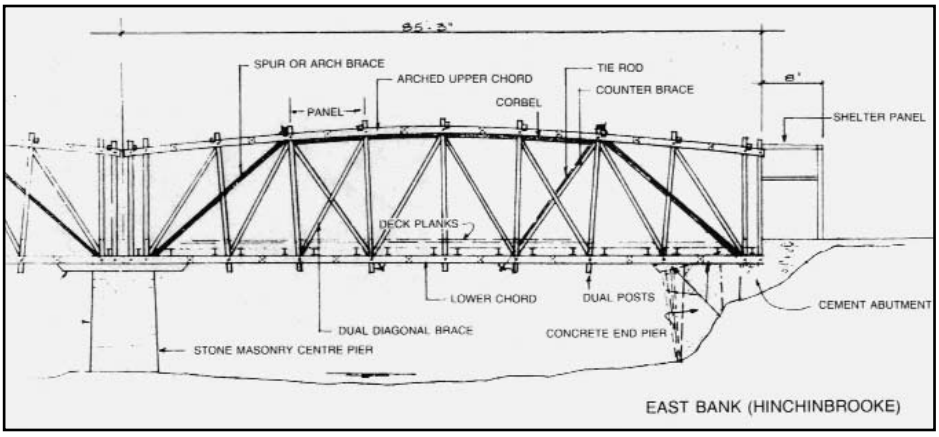
Proulx paid tribute to the heritage activism of a local citizen, Alain Guilbault, who also addressed the crowd. Guilbault recalled that in the 1970s, while in Montreal's Central Station, he had come across a book on Canada's covered bridges and discovered the pride of place wooden bridge aficionados gave to this local structure. But he knew that the Powerscourt/Percy Bridge was in a serious state of disrepair.

He began lobbying the Elgin town council and concerned citizens about the need to take steps to save the bridge. Former mayor Peter Partridge was sympathetic to the cause, but repair costs were too heavy for a small municipality to bear. (Even today fewer than 500 people live in Elgin; larger Hinchinbrooke is home to only about 2,400.)

In 1983 came the grim news that the Quebec Ministry of Transport would no longer repair the old structure, and would even replace it with a concrete bridge. The administrations of Elgin and Hinchinbrooke and MRC officials began lobbying federal and provincial ministries for heritage designations and financial support. Their efforts paid off: the bridge was declared a historic monument by both government levels in the '80s. Unfortunately heritage designations do not come with repair funds attached. More years of tugging at

Photos: Kevin O'Donnell

the sleeves of Quebec cultural and transport ministries ensued, but by 2007 the $900,000 necessary funding had been put together. Work was completed in 2009.



Saeed Mirza, an emeritus professor of civil engineering at McGill University and now famous in Montreal for his critiques of the city's crumbling infrastructure, also addressed the group. Professor Mirza had nothing but praise for the original construction and renovation efforts, noting the problems that the Powerscourt /Percy builders faced – strong spring floods and eroding banks in particular. Renovations involved raising the bridge to replace rotten beams and changing the entries to the structure. Mirza showed pictures of famous covered bridges around the world – including early photographs of Montreal's Victoria Tubular Bridge, called the Eighth Wonder of the World in the 1860s. (The tubular structure was replaced in the 1890s).

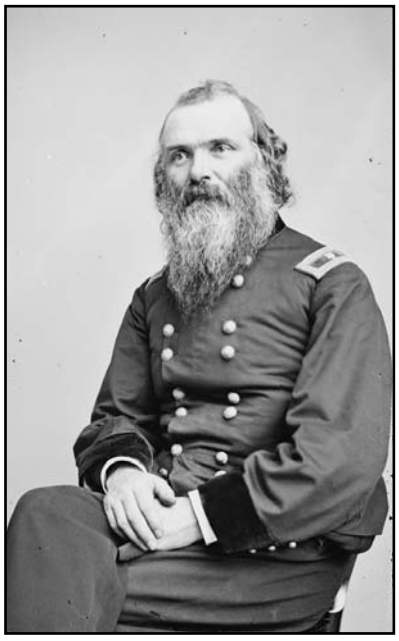
Although truss designer Daniel Craig McCallum was not directly involved in the building of Powerscourt Bridge, Mirza described the remarkable career of this important figure. With only a limited education, this Scottish-American carpenter-by- trade became a bridge architect, a pioneer management theorist, a Civil War major-general in the Union army – and a published poet.

Mirza also noted that covered bridges not only protected wooden trusses from the weather, but made it easier for skittish horses to cross over rivers. He added that covered bridges acquired reputations with sweethearts as "kissing bridges"!

Following the speeches, Judge Gomery invited participants, some dressed in period garb, to join the lieutenant-governor as he unveiled a plaque marking the 150th anniversary. Led by the Elgin District Pipe and Drum Band, whose haunting bagpipe wails reverberated through the structure, the celebrants walked to the other side of the river through the bridge, which was closed to traffic for the occasion.

A simple ceremony – a cloth curtain removed, the plaque read, applause, pictures taken – and the event was over. But people lingered, chatting with neighbours and with the notables from "away" who had joined them in this tribute to a bridge spanning a river and time.

Wooden covered bridges, obsolete for more than a century, are one of the most popular heritage structures. But maintaining them can be costly, and, as the 1983 Ministry of Transport demolition proposal shows, "practical" solutions can threaten to override heritage appeal. The Powerscourt/Percy Bridge was saved because committed individuals joined with local municipalities and regional administrative organizations in a collaborative effort to obtain the necessary legal protection and financial resources. Like other heritage triumphs such as Wakefield La Pêche's Fairbairn House Heritage Centre, Powerscourt Bridge is a monument to the tenacity, political skills and hard work of those who rallied to save it.



Top: Original technical drawing from the Châteauguay Valley Historical Society Annual Journal, vol. 22, 1989. Below right: Daniel Craig McCallum.

Heritage: Part of Our Meaningful Future

Interview with Dinu Bumbaru of Heritage Montreal

by Matthew Farfan

As a new feature of the Quebec Heritage News, we will be asking various experts in the field of heritage their views on the state of conservation and public policy regarding heritage in Quebec.

Dinu Bumbaru is a graduate in Architecture from the Université de Montréal and in Conservation Studies from the University of York in England. Since 1982, he has served as Policy Director for Héritage Montréal, a private not-for-profit organization founded to encourage the protection and revitalization of the architectural, landscape and neighborhood heritage of Montreal. In 2008, Bumbaru was awarded the Order of Canada for his contributions to the promotion and preservation of heritage, both in Canada and abroad.

Q: In your opinion what is the main challenge facing heritage preservationists in Quebec today?

A: Their main challenge would be to reinvent and maintain the foundation of their relevance as essential contributors to the future of lively communities, neighbourhoods, towns or regions. Somehow, our job is to advocate for a better appreciation of heritage but also for the creative process which adds on to it a layer of meaningful structures or memorable acts or creations. Just like the roots belong to and feed the tree, heritage is not part of the past as much as of the meaningful future. Making this our message is quite a challenge.

Q: Have things improved since you first became involved in heritage preservation? If so, in what way?

A: I started in 1980 and 1981 with studios on restoration and urban architecture, then joined Heritage Montreal in 1982. Sure! Things have greatly improved in Montreal and elsewhere – if anything as a result of greater awareness and enjoyment of heritage buildings, sites or landscapes by growing numbers of people.

Institutionally, more qualified staff are now involved in some form of cultural or historical heritage activity in municipalities, MRCs or boroughs, as well as in ministries or tourism organizations than ever before. Regulations and similar tools have also evolved.

That said, we might be nearing the return of the pendulum as many decision-makers tend to limit the impact of heritage actions to regulating good or bad taste as they shift to economical or green priorities, forgetting that conserving, enjoying and looking after one's heritage is a source of sustainable development.

Q: What would you say is Quebec's greatest achievement in heritage terms in the last decade?

A: The inclusion of the protection of cultural heritage as one of the fundamental principles in the Quebec Sustainable Development Act presented by Thomas Mulcair in 2005 or 2006. This is unique, possibly in the world, as sustainable development is the empire of the green guys. In Quebec, the duty of care for human legacy is part of sustainable development, stressing the heritage link and the need to acknowledge our valuable accomplishment and the sites, buildings or landscapes that bear witness.

Q: Locally?

A: Locally, I would say the designation of Mount Royal as an historic and natural district. Even though it took us 19 years to get this, and even though the boundaries of the district are more founded on political accommodation than on the heritage reality of the mountain (why isn't Westmount more part if it?), it's a great achievement to have convinced the whole government to proclaim for itself, its institutions (McGill, Université de Montréal, the McGill University Health Centre...), and everyone else a duty to do on Mount

Photo: Matthew Farfan

Royal, which is to respect the mountain as a living heritage landscape at the heart of the metropolis. It should inspire others to stop seeing heritage only as either natural or antiquated and to see the fun and sense of identity that comes from it.

Q: What is your opinion of Quebec's proposed new Cultural Heritage Act, Bill 82? Would this legislation be practical? What are its strengths and/or weaknesses?

A: The process of reflections, learning from our particular history of caring for heritage and it's current situation here, the research on experiences and works abroad, and the consultation Minister [Christine] St-Pierre carried out personally across Quebec on the Livre vert in 2008 were a remarkable exercise and quite a promising one, following with dignity and aspiration the past attempts at giving Quebec a heritage policy starting with Lise Bacon (1987), Agnes Maltais (1999) and Lyne Beauchamp (2006).

Yet, the new Cultural Heritage Act, which was adopted unanimously on October 19, 2011, after a very uncertain and slow negotiation between the parties, falls a bit short. It looks more like a cleaning up of the engine with some retooling and an oil change than the reform that would enable us to face major challenges such as we have with religious heritage buildings or the protection of iconic landscapes or builtscapes from banal and demeaning development. There are good ideas in there, but I fear from the lack of connectedness between the ministry and civil society. The more firm duties towards heritage and its protection are duties of the state. We may be headed for some foggy seasons.

Q: What would you say is the most effective way for local heritage groups to get involved in heritage preservation and promotion?

A: Walk around and talk about it. Know your role and possible contribution and don't try nor pretend to play the roles of others (for example, the authorities). Never stop discovering the many dimensions of what is the normal reality for so many people and share this.

Q: What would you say was your greatest personal heritage success story and/or (if applicable) defeat?

A: Well, I never stop discovering new stuff about what I thought I knew of Montreal and that's already something. Otherwise, I helped to create a concern in the community for these buildings and places of many shapes, origins or ages, and a sense of enjoyment to feel them around and to see the next one built up to the task of making an interesting addition.

Stepping Out

The Birth of Montreal's Music Industry

by Dimitri Nasrallah

The English Language Arts Network (ELAN), as part of its ***Recognizing Artists: Enfin Visible!*** *project, commissioned short histories of English-language Arts and Culture in Quebec from the dawn of the 20th century up to the present day. Excerpts from these histories will be published in future issues of Quebec Heritage News. The full essays are available on-line at http://www.que bec-elan.org/histories and they were published in September 2011 in the Guernica Essay Series with an Introduction by Guy Rodgers.*

As archivist Nancy Marrelli notes in her book Stepping Out: The Golden Age of Montreal Nightclubs, "From the 1920s until the early 1950s Montreal had an international reputation as a glamorous wide open city with a lively nightlife." Fueling the growth of the city's music industry was the advent of radio. The first English-language commercial broadcaster in Canada was Montreal's XWA, which would become CFCF in 1920. For want of entertainment content, CFCF broadcasts often aired live from Montreal's hotels and clubs. With the rapid proliferation of radio stations across the continent came affiliation and licensing deals, and these arrangements transmitted Montreal's ample music scene across the continent. As a result, Montreal singers and musicians such as The Melody Kings, Louis Metcalf's International Band, and Vera Guilaroff rose to international attention.

Montreal's Jazz & the Working Musician

There was lots of work to be had for Montreal musicians of the era, and many used the swing and big band stages as a means to a living. But, as Marrelli describes it, "the Montreal club scene was one of complex race, class, and language relations, as well as territorial boundaries." The 'uptown' clubs – which were almost exclusively English-speaking – were in what is now considered downtown Montreal, on or close to Ste. Catherine Street West. Even though the black community was at the heart of Montreal's swing and big-band talent pool of instrumentalists, they weren't welcome in all venues and the musicians' unions set up for white musicians actively discriminated against them. In uptown clubs and hotels such as the Ritz-Carlton Hotel, Chez Maurice, and the Kit Kat Club, black musicians were welcomed on stage but not in the audiences.

The "east-end" clubs were clustered around St. Laurent Boulevard and Ste. Catherine Street, Montreal's Red Light District, and attracted more of a French-speaking audience. In the Red Light District venues like the Monument National, Chinese Paradise and the Stadium Ballroom, it became trendy at times for whites and blacks to co-mingle in the same venues.

However, the downtown clubs along St. Antoine Street presented a much different atmosphere. Of closer proximity to the black community, clubs such as Café St-Michel and Rockhead's Paradise became legendary for their showmanship, in large part due to their lax race rules. Here, black and white musicians could perform, dance, and drink together freely. The after-hours nature of a lot of these downtown venues meant that many of the city's black and white musicians would work at well-paying gigs uptown or, in the east end earlier in the evening, collect their pay, and then head down to St. Antoine Street to improvise, jam, and experiment. As such, the birth of Montreal's jazz scene – as it came to be distinguished from the more commercial swing and big band of uptown clubs – evolved in these boozy and druggy enclaves under a mantra of "anything goes." It was here that, as jazz historian John Gilmore notes, "for half a century, more jazz was made in Montreal than anywhere else in Canada."

"In Little Burgundy," internationally renowned jazz pianist Oliver Jones recalls, "there was the St. Michel, the Black Bottom, Rockhead's and the Latin Quarters. They were all in that area. So a lot of white musicians from what we considered uptown would come down to listen to the wonderful music played by some tremendous black musicians. There were trumpet players like Allan Wellman, Ralph Metcalf, and of course Oscar Peterson, Steep Wade, a wonderful family of saxophonists and piano players, the Sealy Family. They unfortunately were in a era that there wasn't any recording of them to speak of,

Calypso singer Lord Caresser at downstairs bar of Rockhead's Paradise
Photo by Louis Jaques, © Library and Archives Canada

and we really missed out on that. Other than Oscar Peterson, who was able to bypass all of that and went on to become our greatest jazz artist throughout the world."

In the eyes of many jazz musicians, the career of Oscar Peterson was viewed as an exception to the rule. The son of Canadian Pacific Railways porter, Peterson was born in Little Burgundy in 1925, at the height of Montreal's swing era and his neigbourhood's creative heyday. A regular of the Montreal club and ballroom circuit of the 40s, his talents were discovered one day as part of a radio broadcast, as Verve label impresario Norman Granz was being driven to the Montreal airport. By 1949, the Montreal pianist was performing at Carnegie Hall.

Another Montreal jazz musician to find audiences during the 50s was Paul Bley, a Montrealer born in 1932 whose parents came from Eastern-European Jewish roots and who had stakes in the city's thriving textiles industry. An important figure in the pioneering of the free and outjazz schools of performance, Bley first became active in the Montreal jazz scene in the early 50s and founded the Jazz Workshop in Montreal. Maynard Ferguson was another major jazz performer to emerge from that era. Born in Verdun in 1928, by age thirteen he was considered a child prodigy as a horn player and frequently performed with the CBC orchestra.

Like all good things, however, Montreal's jazz heydays would not last, at least not in their original form. Arriving in Montreal in 1952, the television era drastically reduced the numbers of people who went out to see live performances. In October of 1954, Jean Drapeau was elected mayor of Montreal, and shortly thereafter the city underwent a major crackdown on vice and corruption, which included closing many of the jazz clubs along St.Antoine Street. By the end of the crackdown, the Ville Marie Expressway cut along St-Antoine's north side, dividing the city in half.

The Post-War Years and Montreal's Folk Scene

Certainly no single artist came to define Montreal's blend of folk music, poetry, and contemporary romanticism more than Leonard Cohen. Like Oscar Peterson, Cohen would outgrow the local scene from which he emerged and become an industry unto himself. Born in Westmount in 1934 to a middle-class Jewish family, by the early 50s Cohen was enrolled at McGill University and was taught to play guitar by Penny Lang. He began publishing volumes of poetry in 1956 and novels in 1963, works that earned him considerable success within Canadian literary circles. In 1967, Cohen moved the United States and, shortly thereafter, he began recording his early folk songs, which would quickly overshadow his more literary work while simultaneously bringing the critical elements of poetry to folk music in a way that broke with the more traditional veins of the genre. Though much of his recording career would develop outside Canada, Cohen's subject matter was often seen as quintessentially Montréalais. His brand of folk music elevated his home city's artistic ambitions to mythical levels.

Leonard Cohen - performance at salle Wilfrid Pelletier, Dec. 1970
Photo: Peter Brosseau, Library and Archives Canada/PA-170176

The folk scene that developed around the universities in Montreal was inestimably influential on a generation of musicians and music fans. The circuit developed around venues in the McGill Ghetto such as the Yellow Door, the Rainbow, the New Penelope Club, and Café André. In the early- to mid-60s, folk singers were performing in numerous coffeehouses throughout the McGill Ghetto and other neighbourhoods as well.

Raised in Saint-Saveur-des-Monts, the McGarrigle sisters had first been taught to play piano by nuns and, like many others, arrived to Montreal in the early 60s in pursuit of university degrees. With perfectly bilingual

The McGarrigle sisters, Kate and Anna

roots, the sisters pulled in influences from both the British and American folk scenes, as well as the French chanson culture of Edith Piaf. In the mid-60s they often performed as part of the Mountain City Four.

Though the McGarrigles' musical activities didn't produce international success in the 60s – their first of their ten original albums was released in 1975 – by the early 70s they were already hotly tipped contributors to a growing North American folk scene. Kate McGarrigle married American singer-songwriter Loudon Wainwright III, and they produced two children together, Rufus Wainwright and Martha Wainwright, both of whom are active on the Montreal and international music scenes today.

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1812

Part I: A War of Islands and Rivers

by Sandra Stock

Lower Canada Before the War

In the early nineteenth century most of Canada was unexplored bush, mostly pristine wild nature, only traversed by some thinly scattered aboriginal tribes and even fewer European fur traders and explorers. In what later became the province of Quebec, settlement was only along the major river valleys of the St. Lawrence and the Richelieu. The only towns of any size were Quebec, Montreal and Trois Rivières, plus some much smaller military outposts like Sorel and Chambly. The seigneurial system still determined social and economic life for the majority of people with a tiny professional and merchant class resident in the towns and everyone ruled by the British colonial regime that had, merely fifty years previously, replaced the French colonial regime.

However, in the United States and in Europe the world had been changing radically. The American and French Revolutions had not received any effective support in the colony of Canada. The American invasion of Canada, even with the brief occupation of Montreal considered, had been a dismal failure. The French-speaking population did not sympathize with the Americans, even though American politicians had expected them to do so. There had always been extreme animosity between New France and New England since the beginning of settlement in the seventeenth century, plus the republican and democratic ideas of the American revolutionaries were alien to the cultural milieu of the "Canadiens" (as the French-speaking inhabitants of Canada were referred to then) along with the all-important religious differences that counted much more than language or government organization at that time. There had already been on-and-off warfare along the Lake Champlain-Richelieu River corridor for two hundred years, involving colonists, regular soldiers and various native allies.

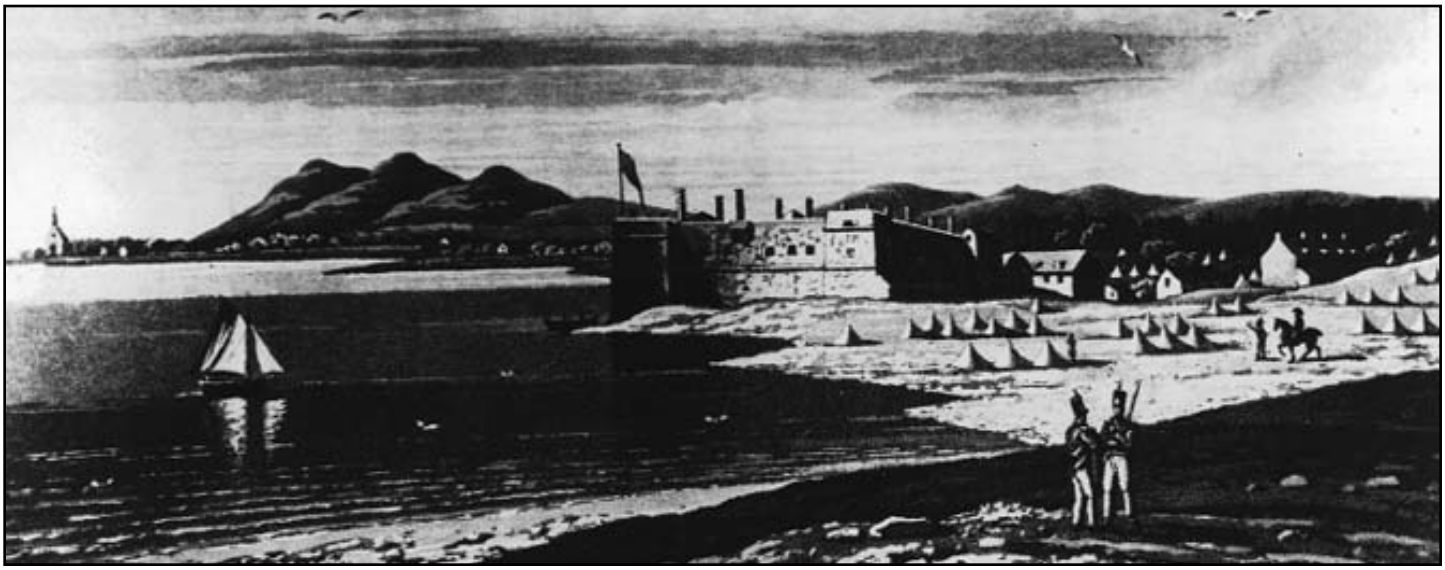
The colony of Canada had also received an influx of Loyalists from the American Thirteen, now the United States. These long-time North Americans of mainly English origin (with a significant Dutch and German percentage as well) were settled mostly in what is now Ontario and the Maritime Provinces, but many, from New York, Vermont and New Hampshire, came to Quebec. They were given land grants in what became the Eastern Townships, a then unoccupied area south-east and south-west of the long narrow seigneuries of the St. Lawrence and the Richelieu.

By 1810, Britain was involved in the war with Napoleon and, although Britain was probably the strongest European power of the time, this was a complex and almost worldwide war unlike anything experienced previously. Napoleon had, in a sense, highjacked the ideals of the French Revolution and set up a despotic reign throughout continental Europe. The progress of his Grande Armée was not checked until (like many mistaken others before and after him) he decided to invade Russia in 1812. He was defeated by a vast alien geography and the northern winter. Millions died.

However, before this, in 1810,

At the time of the War of 1812 to 1814, "Canada" meant the Colony of the Two Canadas: the present provinces of Ontario (called Upper Canada) and Quebec (called Lower Canada). "Quebec" then referred to only Quebec City, as the whole territory was not called Quebec again until after Confederation in 1867. The maritime provinces of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland were all quite separate colonies. This whole entity was referred to as British North America, which also had briefly included the thirteen American colonies before the revolution of 1776.The north of everywhere belonged to the Northwest Company or the Hudson's Bay Company or was unexplored. Vancouver Island and a bit of the British Columbia coast had just recently been explored and claimed for Britain but things were rather vague out there. The vast middle, beyond Lake Superior and out into the Rockies was still unknown for the most part.

Illarion Pryanishnikov, "In the Year of 1812" (Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.)



Napoleon had even invaded Egypt and parts of the Middle East – unheard of for any European power since the Crusades. This was a very serious threat and Britain's main offensive against Napoleon was through sea power and a naval blockade of any ships trying to trade with France. This blockade led to hostilities with the United States, which, fairly enough, resented having its trade and ships interfered with or captured, and its many seamen taken prisoner. Relations were not good anyway and, in 1812, the United States declared war on Britain.

Compared to Napoleon's grandiose military campaigns into Egypt and Russia, the major naval victories of Admiral Nelson at the Nile and at Trafalgar, and the final later defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo, the frontier battles along Canadian rivers don't seem to stand out historically. Also, our part in this war seems small and inconsequential to British, French and American historians, and has not captured much of the media attention with regard to any 200th anniversary celebrations. The main reason for this lack of attention is probably that the British were (and are) more interested in Europe and a "big picture" view; their colonial past is also now considered a bit politically incorrect. The French ultimately lost the war, although many of the better ideas of the French Revolution were spread throughout Europe. The Americans, with the exception of a battle at New Orleans, lost miserably and had some shockingly inept military leaders, best forgotten. The 1812-14 conflict was also a disaster for the native peoples who were ultimately pushed off their territories by an expanding United States.

Yet for Canada, especially Lower Canada, the War of 1812 proved to be the seminal event that established us as an individual nation, rather than a colony, and certainly distinct from the United States.

The River and Island Forts

Half a century earlier, still in living memory of a large segment of the population, Montreal had twice been seized and occupied by invaders. In 1760, unlike Quebec, which had held out against a lengthy siege and then fought valiantly on the Plains of Abraham, Montreal just seemed to roll over and let the British army in through its unpopular and deteriorating walls. In 1775, the Americans also just seemed to wander in and take over without much opposition. However, unlike the British, who seemed to do their best to not completely alienate the local French-speaking and Roman Catholic population, the Americans, notwithstanding Ben Franklin and Fleury Mesplet, wore out any welcome they might have hoped for within a year. After the resounding defeat of Montgomery's army at Quebec – like Napoleon with Moscow, he took on a fortified city in winter – the Americans went home.

After the settlement of the American Revolution, the British authorities began a more serious policy in regard to the defenses of their very vast North American territories. Although Quebec was the administrative and cultural capitol, Montreal was the leading economic focus for the entire colony of Canada. The fur trade still dominated as in the French regime. Also, Montreal was a market for agricultural products and was beginning to increase the production of industrial goods.

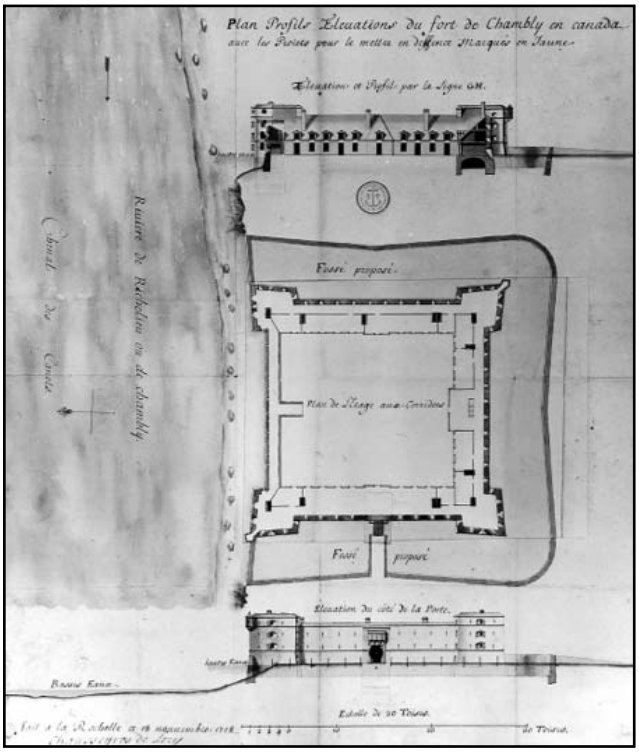
Montreal was also the obvious transportation hub for almost all the continent as all major travel was by water. There were only two roads – the old Chemin du Roi along the north shore from Montreal to Quebec and the Chemin Chambly (as it was later called) on the south shore that linked Longueuil, Chambly and Laprairie. It took four days by coach to travel to Quebec from Montreal: although a sturdy canoe could ply the river route to Quebec in two. Water was preferable as it was faster and usually a whole lot more comfortable.

How to defend Montreal, by restoring and beefing up what remained of earlier French-regime fortifications, was the colonial administration's chief objective. Also, the threat from both Napoleon and, more likely, the expansionist new United States, was increasing.

Fort Chambly

Fort Chambly, on the Richelieu River, has been a fortification of some sort for three hundred and fifty years. Early French colonists noted the natural and strategic advantages of the Chambly Basin: locat-

Fort de Chambly, engraving, 1814 - McCord Museum MP-0000.1002.6



ed on the Richelieu, but not too far from the Montreal part of the St. Lawrence by land, it was a portage point just below the rapids and a logical spot for boat building and stationing sailors. In 1665, "Captain Jacques de Chambly built a second outpost and a few miles above Colonel de Salières saw to the construction of a third. To link the Richelieu with Montreal, Governor de Courcelle cut through the wilderness from Laprairie to Chambly a strategic highway – the first important road in Canada." (Angus) The first fort had been built at Saurel (now Sorel), at the mouth of the Richelieu, by Maisonneuve in 1642, but this was quite far downstream from Montreal and far upstream from Quebec.

These were wooden forts built mainly to protect the nascent colony of New France from the Iroquois. With more settlement on the land, especially along the two rivers, warfare with the native groups abated but the threat from the New England colonies increased. The area was organized for development at the end of the seventeenth century. In 1672 Jacques de Chambly became the first seigneur. The next year he was sent to Acadia and this huge domain passed to his brother-in-law, François Hertel, who managed it until Chambly's death, then inherited it. The Hertel family were to play an important role in the colony well into the nineteenth century. Charles-Michel de Salaberry, the hero of Chateauguay, owed much of his advancement in his many spheres of endeavor to his very fortunate marriage to Marie Anne Julie de Hertel de Rouville, a distant connection of his mother's family.

Fort St. Louis, as it was called, at Chambly, was finally rebuilt in stone in 1710. The military engineer and map maker Gédéon de Catalogne insisted that Chambly be reinforced to withstand current means of warfare – gunpowder and cannons. By the autumn of 1711, the new fort was thirty-five feet high at its four bastions (towers) and had curtain walls thirty feet high. It was renamed Fort Pontchartrain for the minister of Marine and Colonies. The next year a permanent garrison was established. By 1748 Chambly had become a warehouse as more forts had been built further south, well into the area around Lake Champlain – which was part of New France and was divided into seigneuries even though there was not much actual settlement or development. This region remained a military outpost and was the scene of ongoing skirmishes with New England. However, the region around Chambly, St-Jean-sur-Richelieu, St-Mathias, and the good agricultural lands near the Monteregian hills of Ste-Hilaire (under the Hertel de Rouville family), St-Bruno (the Boucher family), and at Longueuil (the LeMoyne d'Iberville family) prospered as established, and for the time and place, wealthy, developed areas.

In 1760, Chambly surrendered to a large British force as the very small unit of French defenders did not have provisions to withstand a siege. After fifteen years of British occupation, the Americans invaded Canada and reached Chambly in 1775. There was a very inept defense from the British, and the fort was surrendered to the Americans, along with all its supplies. However, as things went badly for the Americans elsewhere, they burnt the fort in June 1776 and left. The walls still stood, but the interior wooden buildings were destroyed. The following year, Governor Sir Guy Carleton had repairs done and installed a garrison. The fort was used to house American prisoners of war. After a few years of peace, the War of 1812 began, and Chambly was again the base for troop movements and materiel. Over forty more buildings, mostly small, were added to the defensive complex east of the fort at this time. These housed infantry, cavalry and artillery along with medical and administrative buildings. As many as 6,000 soldiers were resident here.

After a bit of furor in the 1837 Rebellion and again during the Fenian Raids, the fort was deserted and started falling into ruin. Also the greater military development upstream at St-Jean resulted in Chambly loosing importance and it was dismantled in 1869.

However, all was not over for Fort Chambly. In the 1880s, a local citizen, M. Joseph-Octave Dion, started lobbying the government about the condition

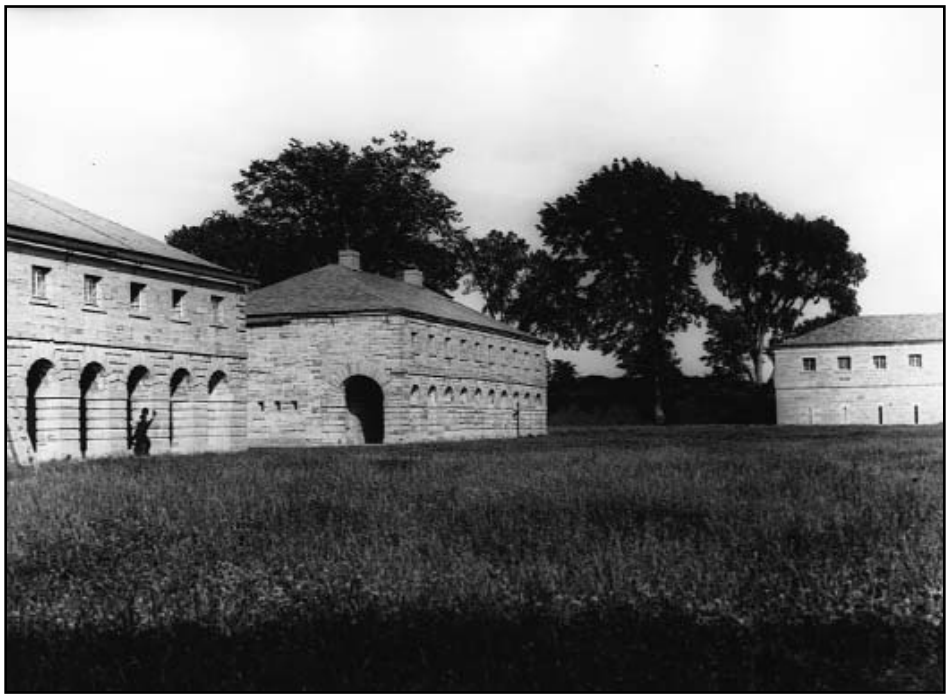
Top: Plan of Fort Chambly, 1718 - National Archives of Canada, C15885
Bottom: Fort Chambly, 1863 - McCord Museum, I-8139

of this now very historic site, and in 1882 the federal government carried out restorations. M. Dion personally repaired much of the fort himself. From 1965 to 1985 a major archeological dig was conducted at Fort Chambly, and the site was restored (as much as this is possible) to the period of 1718-20. It is now a national historical site of Canada under the direction of Parks Canada.

Ile aux Noix: Fort Lennox

This low-lying island in the Richelieu, named for its walnut trees, is some kilometres south from Chambly, and was a perfect strategic location. There was a French-regime fort there, which saw the last battle of the Seven Years War in 1760. The site was briefly occupied, like Chambly, by the Americans in 1775-76. In 1778, the British built a second fort and modified it during the War of 1812 to 1814. This was the first part of the star-shaped fortifications, complete with moat, that we see today. There was also a shipyard on the island, and, perhaps surprisingly to us, there was a major naval action – the Battle of Ile aux Noix – in 1813, in which two American sloops, the Eagle and the Growler (wonderful names!) were captured. This new stone fort was called Fort Lennox in honor of Charles Lennox, Duke of Richmond, the colonial governor general at the time.

Unlike the abandoned Fort Chambly, Fort Lennox remained a British military garrison until 1870. In 1819 to 1829, the elaborate stone works which remain were constructed. The fort was used as a temporary jail in the 1837 Rebellion, and then became a reform school from 1858 to 1862. The military presence remained however, especially thought important during the Fenian Raids of the 1860s. In World War II, Fort Lennox was used as a safe haven for Jewish refugees from Europe. Ile aux Noix is now a national historic site of Canada and an important component of the heritage activities of the Lower Richelieu region.



Part Two of "1812: A War of Islands and Rivers" will feature the Battles of Lacolle and Chateauguay and the career of Charles-Michel de Salaberry.

Sources

Several very informative and accurate Parks Canada websites
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Top: Main gate, Fort Lennox, Ile aux Noix, about 1890 - McCord Museum, MP-0000.1022.12. Bottom: Officer's quarters, Fort Lennox, Isle aux Noix, 1892 - McCord Museum, MP-0000.411.29

Wright's Rafts

The Lumber Baron of Hull

by Joseph Graham

Philemon Wright, the founder of the town that would become Hull, came north for a business opportunity around the same time as Jedediah Lane acquired the land that would become Lachute. He differed in some significant ways from Lane. Wright was a farmer from Woburn, Massachusetts, and believed in agriculture as the key to the success of any new settlement. Lane was more of a speculator looking to make money through a real-estate scheme. Wright tried to find settlers from the newly-minted province of Lower Canada, but when they did not respond, he sought people from back home, looking for farming experience. Lane looked for people back in Jericho, Vermont, a rugged mountain area with limited agricultural knowledge. His people came for the trees.

Another difference between the two men was that, while they both came out in the 1790s, Lane acquired a parcel of land in a seigneury and Wright thought he was buying four townships: Harrington, Namur, Grandisson and half of Hull. In Lane's case, the title was fairly clear, even though he did not seem to understand the seigneurial system. Wright's case was completely different. Having contracted to pay Jonathan Fassett of Bennington, Vermont, six hundred pounds sterling for his land grant, Wright experienced his first setback. Fassett's grant had been revoked.

Another man may have gone after the seller and spent angry years recriminating, but not Wright. He had become hooked on the Algonquin forests and rivers. He saw good agricultural prospects. Wright had to demonstrate to the government of Lower Canada that he was part of a large group wishing to establish a community – a colony. Without abandoning his ambition to own a large parcel of land, he focussed on acquiring the half-lot of the projected township of Hull, a fraction of his original dream. His settlement would comprise 37 men, 5 women and 21 children, virtually all sponsored by him, who agreed to repay his sponsorship by returning to him the major portions of the land they were granted. In that way, of the 13,200 acres they acquired for their settlement, Wright recovered all but 1,000 acres. The whole process took ten years, from 1796 to 1806.

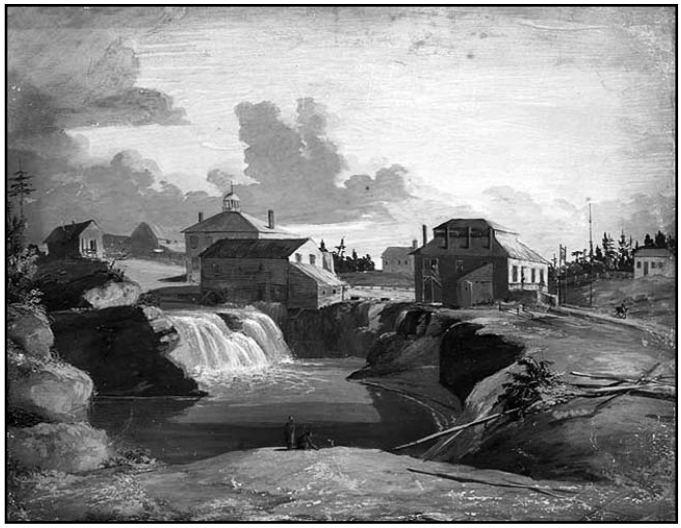
At the same time, he accepted to pay a lease to the Algonquin Indians who had been promised the land in the Proclamation of 1763, not all that long before. They welcomed him by visiting one of his early worksites with gifts of maple syrup, and sought an interpreter who could translate for them. Why, they wanted to know, was he cutting down the very trees that provided this wonderful syrup. The Algonquin, descendents of a large, powerful people who had blocked Samuel de Champlain from travelling freely on the Ottawa River and had lived and traded for thousands of years in the valley, were a small barely functional remnant of their once great nations. Struggling to recover from the many new European diseases that had destroyed their communities and their culture, they had become refugees in their own forests. They lacked both the numbers and the pride of their ancestors. They could not resist any kind of incursions from colonists. Wright, treating them as one would treat children, suggested that they should have more confidence in the wisdom of their father, the King. Eventually, even the charade of a lease was abandoned and the Algonquin moved further north to avoid starvation. They lost the great wealth their ancestors had stewarded for thousands of years, an injustice that has never been publicly recognized. Even today, some of their descendants are treated as squatters on their own land, unrecognised by our provincial and federal gov-

Timber booms, Ottawa River, 1872 - McCord Museum, I-78914.2

ernments.

Lane and his settlers, having had no delays like those that Wright experienced, proceeded to exploit the new-found wealth in a difficult market period. The demand for logs and the costs of transporting them meant that it was more worthwhile to burn the trees and sell by-products, such as potash and lye that they could make from the ashes. They saw the forests as a quickly harvestable cash crop, but because they lacked farming experience, they became dependent upon others for food. By 1810, those who had made cash could leave, but the remaining community succumbed to famine and collapsed. It was Thomas Barron and a group of fellow Scots with a strong farming background who rescued the agricultural land and set Lachute on its path to prosperity. Meanwhile, Wright thought himself a farmer from the outset.

Wright's determination to farm meant that his small community gave priority to producing the food needed to sustain it, and this, coupled with his 10-year delay in starting, meant that the Algonquin forests in Hull Township were still standing when Napoleon effectively blocked British access to the Russian port of Riga and its supply of pine.



The British Empire boasted the largest navy under sail in the history of the world. Aside from countless merchant ships, there were hundreds of battle ships patrolling the ports and seas, all in constant need of repair or replacement. A ship of the line could be 170 feet long, its hull and solid wood superstructure built to withstand the forces, not just of the sea, but also of the 74 cannons mounted on its two decks. The mainmast itself was made from a single timber 11 storeys high, with a base diameter of three feet and little tapering to the crown. One boat required over twenty masts and spars, each a unique timber, and the forests of the British Isles had long been exhausted.

As well as size, masts and spars had to be able to flex under sail. The perfectly tapering pines of Norfolk Island off the coast of Australia would "snap like a carrot" under load, according to Robert Hughes, author of The Fatal Shore, the story of the British colonization of Australia.

Philemon Wright had fought in the Battle of Bunker Hill during the American War of Independence, and in that war the British had lost access to the huge pine forests of New England. He may have known that the first American flag of independence featured a white pine. He may have recognized the white pine along the shore when he first sailed up the Ottawa to take possession of his new settlement. Still, he saw himself first and foremost as a farmer.

In the early decades of the nineteenth century, wheat was vying with furs as Lower Canada's major export. The lumber market was growing, and would surpass the other two, but Wright saw wheat as the backbone of the economy in his small settlement. By 1810, he had erected mills, and he was producing potatoes, oats, corn, hemp and wheat. His wheat crop alone rose from 3,000 bushels in 1813 to over 35,000 in 1820 and 76,000 three years later. He also maintained prize herds of cattle. By 1817, of the 135 labourers hired in the township, 120 worked directly for him.

From 1819, as land agent for the Crown he was accused of corruption and unfair practices, and while it is clear his powers were equivalent to those of a despot, his behaviour would have to be judged as desperate, given the huge debt he was acquiring to maintain his operations. Nothing would interfere with his vision of a healthy agricultural community, even the absence of money. An ambitious optimist, he teetered on the verge of bankruptcy, and as his sons grew, they learned to play a balancing act to keep his empire safe.

In spite of his priorities, market forces drove his operations, and lumber was the most ready source of cash. He floated rafts of wood down the Ottawa to the mighty St. Lawrence and on to Quebec City right from the beginning of the lumber boom, acquiring most of the lumber from other landowners. In so doing, he no doubt helped them establish prosperous farms, but in time, as their wood ran out, he began to harvest his own vast holdings. He also owned and controlled industries including brickworks, cement manufacture and even a mining company. He built chutes along the river and eventually he partnered in the building of a steamship, the Union of Ottawa, to control his huge lumber rafts.

Lumber was tied into cribs of 20 logs, round in the early days, but eventually squared, and the cribs were then assembled into rafts that could join as many as seventy cribs. Their crew could be 35 to 60 men, depending on the size of the raft, and included cabins, cookhouses, sails and steering oars. When arriving at the rapids, the cribs would be separated and run down individually over rapids or, once they were built, through the chutes. They were reassembled below. Liv-

Henry DuVernet, "A View of the Mill and Tavern of Philemon Wright at the Chaudière Falls, Hull on the Ottawa River, Lower Canada," 1828

ing on a raft became a way of life, as it floated slowly under the power of the currents to Quebec City. Sails and the steering oars could only serve to urge or cajole the large, floating islands this way or that and with enough planning, it was usually possible to tie up to the shore or to the long docks that would be built for them.

Ruggles and Tiberius, Philemon's two sons, were early captains of these large, unwieldy craft, but Philemon himself captained the very first one, dubbed the Columbo, in 1806. It consisted of 700 logs and 9000 boards along with thousands of staves, those oak planks that would eventually be curved into shape for shipbuilding. His were white oak and he set them on the cribs of logs. Trying to float them would have been difficult, since they were not buoyant and may have dragged too deeply in the water. The staves were his guaranteed cash product, and he had negotiated a good price should he be able to deliver before the end of July of that year.

He set off on June 11, floating 20 cribs, each about 24 feet wide, and a crew of five that included his son Tiberius – the first logging raft to attempt the Ottawa. They broke the cribs apart at Long Sault and again at Carillon, losing one crib in the process of floating them through the rapids. The cribs had to be reassembled afterwards, and Wright's judgement was that the missing crib would have to be replaced. Historians don't know whether this was a sign of Wright's extravagant pride or whether it was really necessary for the stability of the raft, but it caused delays. Next, he chose Rivière des Prairies to avoid the Lachine rapids and, once he won his way into the St. Lawrence, he discovered that his craft could not withstand the strong currents, causing further delays and hardships.

He failed to respect the contract, arriving on August 12, and it took him until the end of November to sell his lumber to new buyers. After that, he took the long journey home through the early winter countryside.

Years later, a large raft Ruggles captained – there were up to 8 a year – just about took out the British Merchant Marine stationed at Quebec as it caught an outgoing tide, hurling past the port. It turned around on the incoming tide and had a second run at the fleet, the whole incident caricaturing the chaotic management of the Wright family as they pioneered this new, cumbersome delivery technique.

Philemon preached the stability of agriculture whenever his finances threatened to topple his empire. He had offered £600 for three-and-a-half townships in 1796 but he was paying £2,000 a year for supplies by 1819. By 1826, he had committed to a mortgage of £12,000 just to secure a part of his debt. The bucolic life of the farmer carried great appeal to Wright and his sons, and they did maintain their farming operations, even introducing Hereford cattle from England, but their debts grew faster than their crops.

Their adventures were compounded and complicated with the arrival of Colonel John By across the river, and they lost good employees to the interloper. They learned that By was a tough taskmaster when they contracted to build diversion dams and a bridge for his Rideau Canal project. Having a new presence across the river in Upper Canada also caused jurisdictional problems, and in 1825 the deputy sheriff of Bathurst district seized a raft that Tiberius was captaining. To pull off the seizure, fearing that the Lower Canadians would resist with canon and other arms, they rounded up 50 'ruffians' and armed them with every gun on the By side of the river, including two the Wrights had left there for safe-keeping. The raft was confiscated, but, while the records refer to bloodshed, Wright and his crew never resorted to their cannon as had been feared. They were never compensated for the raft either.

Wright was elected to the Assembly and held every other important position; he secured the first school in Hull, built roads and even captained the Argenteuil militia, but he never succeeded in achieving financial stability, and his empire was on bankruptcy's doorstep at the time of his death in 1839. He built Wrightstown, and it was named for him, but he is credited with encouraging the town to adopt its official name from the township of Hull.

Joseph Graham is writing a book on the history of the Ottawa Valley, of which this is an excerpt.

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Tentative tolerance

Quebec's Jackie Robinson paradox

by Bill Young

This is the third part of Bill Young's Quebec and the Integration of Baseball series, with reflections on the nature of racism for Black History Month.

Shortly before Branch Rickey, general manager of the Brooklyn Dodgers, undertook his "Great Experiment" aimed at shattering baseball's colour barrier and signed Jackie Robinson to a Montreal Royals contract, he outlined the plan to his friend Lowell Thomas. Visibly shocked, the nationally respected American broadcaster cautioned: "Branch, all hell will break loose!" A confident Rickey replied: "No, Lowell. All heaven will rejoice."[1]

Throughout his long career in baseball, Rickey had always considered the game's institutionalized segregation not only anathema to the sport but an affront to his sense of social justice. When he finally saw an opportunity to do something about it in the waning days of World War II he took action. Recognizing that his intervention would have a major impact on the evolution of civil rights no matter what the result, he chose carefully – both the man who would first cross the invisible line and the community that would receive him. The result was "a truly major accomplishment in both baseball and the larger American society."[2] Robinson acknowledged as much toward the end of his career in a series of articles that appeared in Look Magazine in 1955. "Most people probably don't realize how much racial prejudice has been broken down by Mr. Rickey's determination to put Negroes into major-league baseball," he offered. "During the last eight years, when Negroes became identified with baseball, a lot of other Americans began to look upon them in a new light."[3] On the field and in life Robinson had revealed himself to be the epitome of courage and grace under fire.

As might be expected, Rickey's decision was greeted with all combinations of shock, praise and derision – "a baseball bomb," le Petit Journal called it. The Commissioner of Minor League Baseball, Judge William Bramham, portrayed Rickey as a carpetbagger: "Whenever I hear a white man, be he from the North, East, South or West, broadcasting what a Moses he is to the Negro race, right then I know the Negro needs a bodyguard!" The great Satchel Paige was encouraging: "they could not have picked a better man." Fire-balling pitcher Bob Feller was guarded: "I hope he makes it good. But frankly, I don't think he will." The St Louis-based Sporting News, baseball's bible, was cool and unimpressed: "Robinson has not been signed by the Dodgers," it huffed, "and insofar as has been discerned, will never play for the Brooklyn club at the National League level."[4]

Rickey decided to centre his experiment in Montreal, which of all the communities with Dodger farm clubs seemed the least divided along colour lines, and was certainly far less so than the average American urban centre.

The bemused Petit Journal called the signing a plus for Montreal, and offered assurances that the city would welcome Robinson with open arms. Indeed, when the Robinsons looked for lodgings in Montreal, they moved into a completely French-speaking area: it never occurred to them to restrict their selection to a black neighbourhood. And, not surprisingly, when called upon, the city did indeed emerge as a welcoming and generous host: "From the first, the French-Canadian fans had taken to Robinson."[5] This warming spirit went a long way toward ensuring that his transition into untested waters would be smooth as possible.

However, Rickey would have also been sufficiently astute to recognize that the city and the province were not without their own share of racial issues. After all, this was still the era when the upscale Ritz Carleton Hotel rashly sought to ban Montreal-born jazz pianist Oscar Peterson from playing its ballroom; and when the equally posh Chateau Frontenac in Quebec City would not register blacks who showed up without reservations, and actively discouraged them from eating in its main dining room; and when the permanent black community in the province was pretty well isolated within the Little Burgundy section of Montreal and depended on the railroads for much of its survival.[6]

Dorothy Williams, a historian who specializes in Black Canadian history, believes that racism was in fact a major, if not obvious, source of social tension in Montreal at the time. Contrary to the beneficent declarations made at the Jackie Robinson signing, "the perceived climate of [racial] tolerance in Montreal was a myth." She underscores the stark

Jackie Robinson signs his contract with the Brooklyn Dodgers as Branch Rickey looks on

disconnect that separated the perception of broad acceptance enjoyed by the black athlete from the real hardships endured by Montreal's permanent black community: "From the beginning, Jackie Robinson was well received on and off the field. He became a lasting source of pride for the city, proof that Montreal had a high degree of racial tolerance. But racial tolerance was not so evident to Blacks living in Montreal. They experienced severe discrimination in jobs, in housing and in the city's social life."[7]

Jazz musician Oliver Jones made a similar observation in a brief comment about the brilliant Oscar Peterson. Both men were raised in the black community described by Williams. "Back then, there was not a great amount of opportunity for young black musicians," Jones wrote, "other than finishing high school and going to work on the railway. Men who came from different parts of the globe had degrees, but were stuck shining shoes and having to work on the railroad because of their colour."[8]

Clearly, Montreal was not a city free from racism when Jackie Robinson came to town. The lot of Montreal's black community was not made better by his presence, nor did attitudes or opportunities noticeably improve upon his arrival. Throughout this period, the white community continued to embrace its own form of racism – different perhaps, more subtle, from what one found in the United States, but in its own way, just as pernicious. Up here, because the black population was miniscule, "white Canadians could afford to be indifferent to their fellow blacks, and for the most part they were."[9] And that perhaps was the unkindest blow of all.

Nevertheless, Rickey was convinced "there was no deep tradition of racism in Canada."[10] And, at least when applied to spectator sports in Quebec, this generalization seemed valid, for over the years Quebec had shown itself receptive toward sports figures of colour. Dink Carroll of the Montreal Gazette ascribed this acceptance to "the absence here of an anti-Negro sentiment among sports fans," adding that it "was what Mr. Rickey doubtless had in mind when he chose Montreal as the locale of his history-making experiment."[11]

And therein lies what one might call the Jackie Robinson Paradox: how is it the integration of professional baseball – and, for that matter, football and hockey – took place in Montreal, and Quebec, even as the province's black community lay pinioned beneath a stifling form of racism that left it isolated and bereft of opportunity? There is no ready answer except to acknowledge that somewhere within the ever-changing ebb and flow between the ready acceptance of black sports figures and the attenuated intolerance of Montreal's white populace, some measure of accommodation found the light of day.

1940s' sports fans in Quebec loved their heroes, and if these happened to be black, even more so, because of the verve and exoticism they brought to their sport. Throughout the decade, hockey fans thronged to watch three black players – Manny McIntyre (also a baseball pioneer) and his line-mates Herbie and Ossie Carnegie of Toronto – wield their magic on ice rinks across the province. Often called the "Dark Destroyers," they had come together as a line in 1940 playing for the Buffalo Ankerite mining company's hockey team in Timmons, Ontario.

In 1944, the three signed on with the Shawinigan Cataracts of the Quebec Provincial League, presaging the stardom that was to follow for the next several years. One year later, the trio moved to Sherbrooke, where they continued to display their skill and draw fans wherever they went. When the line disbanded following the 1949 season, Herbie took his formidable talent to Quebec City, joining superstar Jean Beliveau on the hometown Aces.

The fourth black hockey player to make it to the professional ranks, once again in Quebec, was Stan Maxwell, in 1955. After playing junior hockey in Quebec, the Truro, Nova Scotia native put in four solid years with the Aces, until the league disbanded in 1959. He went on to enjoy a long career in the Western and International Hockey Leagues.

In 1956, Willie O'Ree, also from the Maritimes, joined Maxwell in Quebec. A year later he made hockey history when he became the first black player to participate in a regularly scheduled National Hockey League game, fittingly against the Canadiens in Montreal. The Boston Bruins, which enjoyed a working agreement with the Aces, had called O'Ree up for a two-game trial. Coincidentally, during this interval, his roommate was Fleming MacKell, a Montreal native. O'Ree deeply appreciated the significance of the moment. "On the night of January 18, 1958, I became the first black man to play in the NHL. Nothing was made of it in the papers or on the radio and TV. Nobody called me the 'Jackie Robinson of Hockey' then, but that's how I felt… I was in a place where no black man had ever been."[12]

O'Ree did get one more chance with the Bruins, during the 1960 season when he garnered 14 points in 43 games. He remained in the game for an extended period, mostly in the Western Hockey League where he once again teamed up with friend and teammate Stan Maxwell and his former roommate MacKell.

Montreal was also home to the integration of football in Canada. In 1946, the newly-formed Montreal Alouettes, anxious to capitalized on the popularity Jackie Robinson enjoyed in the city, recruited Herb Trawick, a highly regarded African-American graduate of the "all-coloured institute of learning," Kentucky State University [13]. "He was a revelation almost from the opening whistle" wrote Montreal Gazette columnist Dink Carroll.[14] Trawick enjoyed a stellar 12-year career in Montreal and was elected to the CFL Hall of Fame in 1975. During his Alouette years Trawick took up professional wrestling and became a great fan favourite, always in the role of the good guy. Trawick remained in Montreal following retirement. He died in 1885, at age 64.

Trawick was not only the first black player in the Canadian game, but also one of the first professional African-American footballers anywhere. The rigidly white National Football League had been forced to bend in 1946 when the Los Angeles Rams signed first Kenny Washington and then Woody Strode, two black back-fielders from UCLA. Perhaps not surprisingly, Jackie Robinson had been a UCLA teammate of both men. Robinson was the only UCLA athlete ever to letter in four sports – football, basketball, track, and baseball.

In 1946, the Cleveland Browns of the up-start All-American Football Conference (AAFC) signed two African-American players, Bill Willis and Mari-

on Motley. Willis had been head coach and athletic director at Kentucky State, Trawick's alma mater, and was considering the Montreal Alouettes when the Browns opened the door. [15]

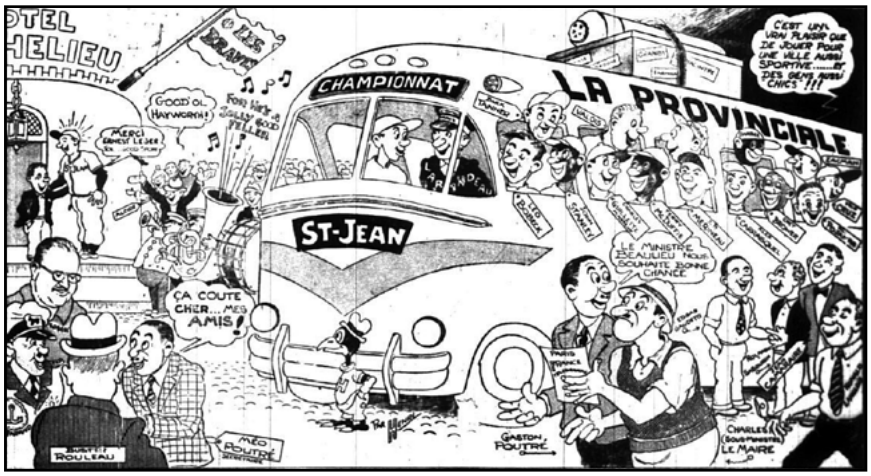
All this to say that by the end of 1946, the seminal year in the history of integration of sports in America, a total of 13 black athletes played on professional teams in the United States and Canada. Six were engaged in baseball, five in football and three hockey players. (Note: Manny McIntyre played both baseball and hockey). Of those, eight plied their trade in Quebec. Two others, Roy Campanella and Don Newcombe, would later spend time in Montreal before establishing themselves with the Dodgers.

Clearly, when it came to the question of racism and spectator sports in Quebec in the period immediately following World War II, Dink Carroll was right. What he called "the absence here of an anti-Negro sentiment among sports fans" was already opening doors for minority-athletes, doors that elsewhere remained firmly closed.[16]

In 1946, early in spring training, the Montreal Royals were scheduled to play an exhibition game against the Jersey City Giants in Jacksonville, Florida. At the last minute it was cancelled by city authorities solely because of the presence of Jackie Robinson and his black teammate John Wright. "It is part of the rules and regulations of the Recreational Department," said a municipal representative, "that Negroes and whites cannot compete against each other on a city-owned playground."[17]

While conditions in Quebec were diametrically contrary to those decreed in Jacksonville, it was a fact that, no matter how popular black players were playing in front of home fans, they could never really escape the incipient racism that was the bane of their existence. Both Carnegie and O'Ree spoke frequently of racism in their autobiographies, and both had similar reactions to the treatment they received from the fans on and off the ice. Speaking of his time with the Quebec Aces, O'Ree wrote: "[Stan Maxwell] and I were the only two black guys in the Quebec League, and we were treated like royalty in Quebec City. The problems happened when we were on the road… Every time I played in Chicoutimi I had problems… As soon as I hit the ice I could hear the chants and name calling. 'Maudit nègre' was the most common one."[18]

Carnegie made a similar observation in his autobiography A Fly in a Pail of Milk.[19] "The out-of-town crowds demonstrated a mixed reaction. On the one hand, they would applaud us politely. On the other, they hurled epithets at us. Most often we heard 'Maudit noir' or 'Maudit nègre'…Opposing players, however, never resorted to such demonstrations of verbal ignorance… Our on-ice successes and our colour brought us the lion's share of media and fan attention," he wrote. "There were times when we won applause in the opposition's arena. Given the highly partisan nature of fans, we considered it as the ultimate compliment."



Cartoon published in a St. Jean weekly in 1949 when the club was on a winning streak. It is not difficult to determine which of the players are African-American

But such observations were separate from the reality of daily living, where, no matter how vigilant, one could be blindsided by unforeseen systemic acts of racism. These were almost harder to bear than an opposing fan's ugly taunts. "When [my wife Audrey and I] were confronted by racist attitudes, action and behaviour, naturally our feelings were hurt," noted Carnegie. He gave examples: entering a restaurant wondering if you will be served, sensing that you are not really welcome at the local Saturday-night dance, or not bothering to visit a new housing development because you have learned that your offer to purchase will be courteously, but firmly, turned down.

Perhaps most hurtful was Carnegie's inability to break into the NHL. It had been his life-long dream, and he knew he possessed the skill. His one chance came at the start of the 1948 season when the New York Rangers invited him to attend their pre-season training camp. He was ready: "On a daily basis for ten years, I had been preparing myself both mentally and physically." He was certain he would make the team, until manager Franck Boucher informed him he was being sent to the Rangers' American Hockey League farm club in New Haven. "I just want to be sure," said Boucher.

"I just want to be sure." Carnegie could interpret racist code as well as the next person. Devastated, he turned his back on the offer and returned to Sherbrooke, where he knew he could make more money – and be better appreciated.

"I was certain that I had the talent, the skill and the attitude to play in the NHL. The only thing I lacked, to the everlasting shame of the NHL, was white skin." It now seemed to him that a remark made some years ago by Conn Smythe, the owner of the Toronto Maple Leafs and a major force in hockey circles who saw Carnegie perform, had cut a very broad swath. "I'll give $10,000" Smyth reportedly said, "to the man who can turn Herbie Carnegie white." In other words, as a black man Carnegie had no value; as a white man, he was priceless.

To Carnegie, the dream that he would play in the NHL, that one day Foster Hewitt would "announce my name to hockey fans from coast to coast," was so real that when it went unfulfilled it generated a lifetime of hurt. "The pain has never left me," he wrote.

It was a hard lesson. Despite accept-

ance on the field of play, once away from it, the black athlete was still subject to segregation's bitter slings and arrows. That fact remained a disturbing constant far longer than it took professional sport to become fully integrated.

Sometimes racism can best be countered through humour. Stan Maxwell provided a wonderful example with the perfect off-the-cuff response to a reporter's awkward question about him and Willie O'Ree when the tandem was teammates with Los Angeles in the Western Hockey League. During a postgame interview, the host asked "how come the two of you are such fast skaters?" Maxwell never hesitated. "If you were one of only two black men out there playing on that ice," he said, "and all those white guys were chasing after you, I am sure you could skate fast too."[20]

Some years earlier O'Ree had run into a level of virulent racism that truly shocked him. Although hockey was the cornerstone of his career, he was also a pretty good ball player, and in 1954 he was offered a minor-league try-out with the Milwaukee Braves. He was given an airplane ticket and flown to the club's training facility in Waycross, Georgia, on the edge of the Okefenokee Swamp. He was a black Canadian man about to be dropped into the heartland of the Deep South. It was a revelation.

What with the "Whites Only" and "Colored Only" washrooms in the Atlanta airport, the all-black hotel "recommended" to him by a cab driver, and "the Waycross dorm with eight to ten other ballplayers… black guys like me," he "got the picture all too well." The final affront occurred when he narrowly avoided a nasty confrontation at a Waycross drug store on a Sunday following church "with a group of white guys sitting at the soda fountain… Sure enough they started in with racial remarks and name calling… We got out of there before there was real trouble."

By the end of his second week at camp, O'Ree was ready to call it quits. This time there was no plane ticket; he had to take the bus home. "The trip was five days long, so that meant I was at the back of the bus for nearly three days. I was only allowed out to use the washroom or grab a sandwich at a rest stop… By the time we got to the Canadian border, I was sitting up front. I was home and knew more than ever the truth of my life. I was going to be a hockey player."[21]

It was experiences like those brooked by O'Ree – or, to be more precise, their absence – that attracted black ball players to Quebec. They understood they were stepping into a white man's world in a foreign land, but they also knew that at the very least they would be welcomed and given the chance to play. In a recent letter to the Montreal Gazette, Quebec historian Sam Allison had this response to an Op-ed piece on racism in Quebec: "In 'colonial Canada' from 1783 onward…both native peoples and African-Americans realized that Canada was no paradise." Nevertheless, both groups were quite pragmatic in recognizing that this so-called "colonial status" was still "infinitely better than the alternative to the south."[22]

The African-American and dark-skinned Hispanic ball players who had been excluded from the integrated game before Jackie Robinson, and who now turned toward Quebec in large numbers, would have agreed with Allison. The majority came via the Negro Leagues, a venerable institution that had kept baseball alive and well within black America since the late nineteenth century. Negro baseball was losing its lustre, however, and as players kept hearing that Quebec had a lot to offer, the province quickly became a destination of choice.

One of the drawing cards was the cordial greeting proffered by the Francophone population in their host communities. Jackie's Robinson's wife Rachel has often commented on this generosity, especially when she and Jackie first moved into their modest lower duplex on de Gaspé Street, a very Francophone area – and how deeply it affected the rest of their lives. Neighbours "were friendly, they were protective, they were supportive," she said. "It was not something that I'd have expected."[23]

Rachel had selected the flat, more or less at random, from a list of possible lodgings around Delormier Stadium. Somewhat amazed, she told biographer Jules Tygiel: "The first apartment I said I wanted I got… That alone was very exciting."[24] Much later she elaborated: "We were not looking for black people. We had found an apartment which was the most important thing, in a supportive, friendly neighbourhood." She was surprised and delighted that the Québecoise who greeted her spoke some English. "She received me so pleasantly," Rachel said. "Then she poured tea for me and agreed to rent the apartment to me furnished and she insisted I use her things – like her linens and her china. It was an extraordinary welcome to Canada."

More than six decades later, given the current widespread belief that racism is a problem in Montreal, it is easy to romanticize – or, worse, trivialize – the importance of the Robinsons' home life that summer. "What was nourished there in that house…had widespread influence in our society," Rachel Robinson told the Canadian Press in 2011.[25] "It's where the experiment started and the experiment went on to be a national success, so it led to something."

Montreal's French Canadian fans had taken to Robinson from the beginning: the hospitality the couple experienced on de Gaspé Street "was, in part, an extension of the adulation at Delormier Downs."[26] There is a story that, one day Jackie was walking down the street and a neighbour driving by stopped to offer him a lift. The driver vaguely recognized Jackie as being from the vicinity, but other than that had no idea who he might be. When Robinson indicated he was headed to the ball park, the neighbour replied that he was only going part way but could take him at least him that far. In recounting the story years later, the neighbour said that, had he realized just how famous his passenger would become, he would have driven him right to the stadium!"[27]

One of the reasons French Canadians warmed to Robinson and black ballplayers in general might simply be a reflection of just how seldom they had reason to interact with people of colour, almost regarding them as 'exotics' alien to the natural landscape.[28] Consequently, according to Bill Brown, author of Baseball's Fabulous Montreal Royals, while Montreal "like other places, had its own sources of social tension…they weren't the same as those in the United States." In these parts, social cleavages were more likely to be based on linguistic and religious matters than skin

colour.[29]

However, this did not mean that the Francophone population was free of racist tendencies. In fact, racial stereotypes in casual conversation were common – for example, swarthy Quebec men were often referred to, in jocular fashion, as 'p'tit nègre' – while within the popular media offensive cartoons and jokes appeared frequently.

During the era often referred to as La grande noirceur, Quebec was very different from the dynamic pacesetter it is today. Ham-strung by the ultraconservative politics of Premier Maurice Duplessis' Union National government and the over-arching authority of the Roman-Catholic Church, French-Canadians, especially those living in the hinterland, found themselves offered few opportunities and little hope – unlike their English-speaking counterparts. In a time of limited pleasures, playing or cheering on the home team in baseball or hockey became a source of great joy – and, in a winning season, pride. Any player who could help make that happen was all right in their books.

History has shown that the societal frustrations borne by Francophones of this era ultimately spawned the seeds of discontent that gave rise to the Quiet Revolution of the 1960s and the upheavals that followed. As Montreal Political Scientist Herbert F. Quinn wrote in 1963, French Canadians "strongly resented the fact that the ownership and control of their province's wealth and natural resources were in the hands of foreigner capitalists, [particularly English and American] while the French Canadians had become, to use the expression popular at the time, 'hewers of wood' and 'drawers of water.'" Indeed, French Canadians commonly saw themselves as the underclass of Quebec society, not unlike their perception of African-Americans in the U.S., and in some ways this unconscious connection brought them closer to their baseball-playing guests. Much like American blacks, their nemesis was "the man." To Quebecers, "the man" was English and rich, the boss in a crippling world of big business beyond their ken.[30]

This identification with black America was sufficiently vivid that in 1968, as the first flames of the Quebec separatist movement began to crackle, FLQ leader Pierre Vallières published a highly controversial jeremiad called Nègres blancs d'Amérique (White Niggers of America), in which he compared the sorry circumstances of what he considered a colonized French Canadadian society with the civil rights struggles consuming America at this same time. Le Devoir called his somewhat autobiographical work "le meilleur document québécois sur le bouillonnement de ces années-là." [31]

Thus it was that the visage presented to black baseballers migrating into French-speaking Quebec appeared anything but intimidating. Rather, to them, weary from the uncertain travails of the Negro Leagues and searching out new hope, it was almost inviting.

For to a man, they recognized that as a consequence of Jackie Robinson's courage, and the willingness of Quebecers to give him a chance, their universe was about to open onto untold potential.

To them, Jackie Robinson was no myth, his legacy no flight of fancy. They knew. They were living it.

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Tarzan Makes a Splash

Dipping into the History of Verdun's Natatorium

by Rohinton Ghandhi

It was a dark, wet Wednesday afternoon: March 2nd, 1938. Reporters stood silently in the drizzling rain at the Los Angeles Pet Cemetery, keeping their flashbulbs dry under their overcoats. At any minute, Hollywood stars, including Dorothy Lamour, Ray Milland, and Bing Crosby, were about to arrive to pay their last respects to "the actor with a face of a monkey and the heart of a gentleman." Born in '29, the year of the crash, in the Belgian Congo, he had died of pneumonia at the age of nine, only days before.

The news was out: "Jiggs" was dead.

At times, he had earned as much as $110 a day, and, like a true gentleman, he kissed the hand of every actress he met. As a trained movie chimpanzee, "Jiggs" had headlined with many of greatest stars of the 1930s, including Buster Crabbe in the 12-part series Tarzan the Fearless, which had enjoyed a great weekly run in 1933 at Verdun's Park Theater.

Just like the reporters at the gravesite, we were unaware that Jiggs would continue leading us into deeper jungles. As we swung through the vines and cleared a pathway within our own local canopy, our lost Tarzan connections slowly bubbled to the surface, at the deep-end of the Verdun Natatorium.

As Jiggs was being lowered, on the opposite corner of the continent, Verdun engineers Henry Hadley and chief designer H.C. Sturgess were preparing to build the greatest outdoor public pool in the country. In 1938-39, Verdun was still in the midst of the Great Depression, with a large number of its residents hired as city "relief" workers for various municipal projects. The Natatorium idea would provide another opportunity for work and would showcase the ingenuity of our city planners, some of whom are still named on a plaque at the pool's entrance. Yet not all names would be remembered.

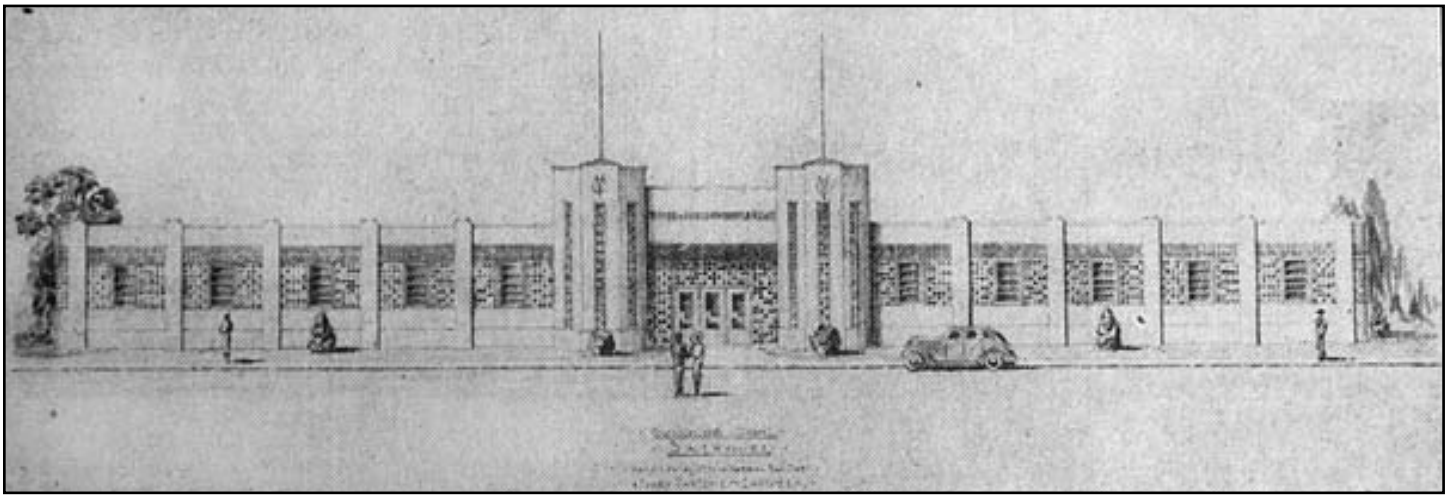
On June 14th, 1940, a month before the pool's opening, Verdun's city council reversed its decision to award Mr. Minicucci, of Italian descent, the right to lease the restaurant atop the new Natatorium, stating that "the entry of Italy into the war on the side of the Nazis caused the change." On June 28th, without any further reasoning, the council awarded the space to Mr. W. Gunhouse under the same terms. In these times, a foreign country's alliance with the Nazis gave us the name "Gunny's" for the rooftop restaurant, after its new owner, while the Minicucci name sadly became an indirect casualty of war.

It was opening night: Friday, July 12th, 1940, 7:00pm. Crowds of people excitedly rushed across Bannantyne Avenue and LaSalle Boulevard, eager to see the Natatorium open its doors for the first time. With lights shining on its double castle-like front turrets and Union Jacks waving above them, the building took on an amusement-park feel, like at the gates of Belmont Park. More than 2,000 spectators paid the 50-cent admission (25 cents for children) and filled the pool area, gathering tightly on the roof. The scene was almost surreal against the night sky, as the smell of fresh paint still lingered in the air. The two pools were illuminated by 22 underwater "submarine" lights, allowing a clear view of their bottom floors. The lamp posts overhead and atop the pool house lit up the deck areas, which surrounded each pool with 30 feet of non-skid concrete laid in contrasting shades. The two "island fountains" of the larger pool had coloured lights below them and jetted water into the air through their extended spouts, while the deeper pool looked more official with its five Olympic-regulation-sized diving boards. The brick posts of our 3-mile boardwalk dotted the riverfront, as a reminder of where we all had swum before. These early moments would not last, as the Verdun Natatorium was about to be launched into history, as host of the 1940 Dominion Swimming and Diving Championships!

At 8 o'clock, the MP for Verdun, Mr. Leo-J Comeau, officially inaugurated the new Verdun Natatorium and opened the championship, earning wild applause from the crowds. Within the fanfare, our Mayor, Edward Wilson, Chief Engineer Henry Hadley, and many of our city councillors stood alongside, proudly smiling at their achievement. They had not only put Verdun on the local stage, but by inviting swimmers from the "Atlantic to the Pacific" they had put our town in the spotlight across the Dominion of Canada. The competitions were planned that way, with events held exclusively for Verdun residents amidst the national trials. For those few days, news of the winners headlined across the country, with the Natatorium front and centre, quickly gaining its reputation as "the finest pool in Canada."

Our city councillors ensured that the Natatorium would keep us financially safe as well. By first floating a loan for

Images all courtesy of Rohinton Ghandhi and are all from the Verdun Guardian



$200,000, they decided to keep admission prices as low as possible, just enough to cover operating costs and to keep paying back the loan. As annual attendance grew, the pool paid back $9,500 each year from 1941 to 1945, about $11,000 each year from 1946 to 1951, and was on target to return a profit by 1961. Planned within the hardest of economic times, the Natatorium never lost money. To this day, it remains a true example of responsible public-spending.

Before the Natatorium, many Verdun residents fell ill from swimming in the increasingly contaminated St. Lawrence waters. The new pool was clearly designed with public safety in mind. Its three large automatically-controlled pressure filters could produce 1,250 chlorinated gallons per minute, when required. The main building housed a first-aid room, a "tote-box" room for your belongings, and the men's and women's dressing rooms each with 16 hot-water showers. A shower and a foot bath were mandatory before entering the pool. "Gunny's" restaurant would provide a hot snack-bar menu to hungry swimmers on the ground floor and on the roof. Verdun policeman were stationed at the pool as lifeguards, security guards, and as swimming instructors to the public. With numerous ladders within the pools and elevated lifeguard chairs around them, the Natatorium gave us a safer way to cool off in the humid days, before central air.

A year later, in early June 1941, people were turned away from their morning swim and curiously began gathering at the pool's outer fence, as patrolmen walked the interior. All went silent, as a lone silhouette exited the men's dressing room and headed for the diving pool. The well-muscled man dropped his towel, climbed the steps, and walked into the sunlight at the tip of the 3-metre high board. Onlookers burst out in excitement when realizing that they were in the presence of Tarzan himself, as Hollywood star Buster Crabbe completed his first dive into our Natatorium's history. The spectators cheered after every dive, as Buster waved back to them. He was practicing as a star of the 1941 Water Follies, being held over the next four nights (June 5 -8) at the Montreal Forum. Many felt fortunate to get his autograph that day as Buster "Tarzan" Crabbe, even though Jiggs (Cheeta) was no longer at his side. He would visit the Natatorium many times in the following years, not only to practice, but to sell Victory Bonds in support of Canada's war effort.

Buster Crabbe was twice a US Olympic swimming champion, winning bronze for his 1,500m freestyle at the 1928 Amsterdam games, and gold for his quick 400m freestyle at the 1932 Los Angeles games. His lead role in the 1933 Tarzan the Fearless series successfully launched his acting career and allowed him to star in over one hundred films, including his famous Flash Gordon series of 1936.

In 1941, he decided to entertain us off-screen as well, by showing us his amazing swimming skills, as the main attraction of the travelling "Water Follies" show, which required a temporary natatorium to be built at each of its 34-city stops. Montreal Forum staff would work for 48-hours straight, to install a 325-ton pool structure that would hold 80,000 gallons of water, for the performances of over 100 aquatic stars. The events included thrilling feats of diving and speed, from our own Buster Crabbe, Betty Wilson (NYC's best swimmer), and famous trick-diver Joe Peterson of Panama. The comedy acts included Charlie Diehl, the "235-pound marvel of the springboard," with Clayton Mains and Frank Foster as some of the many "funny men in bathing suits." The "Aquabelles," twenty synchronized mermaids, highlighted each show with their intricate water ballets, beautifully set to orchestrated music. The Forum was decorated like a Miami Beach

club, with palm trees, tropical flowers, and eel grass waving throughout. After the shows, "The Coquettes," an all-girl band, would open the new 3,600-foot dance floor to the audience, to swing the rest of the night away. We can only imagine the beauty and excitement of these shows, with our Tarzan of '33 diving at centre ring.

Today, Gunny's lights continue to glow above the pool house, with the upper deck now closed to the public. The "submarine" lights and the fountain lamps remain dark in their receptacles below the waterline, awaiting an opportunity to shine again. The pedestal lines of the diving boards have long been painted over, hiding the echoes of championships past. The Natatorium once invited swimmers to swim into the night, at times closing at 10pm or later. As we stand by the pools at today's 8pm closing time, we can still revisit those magical nights by simply closing our eyes and smiling in remembrance of what was once the finest pool in Canada.

After 71 years, our Natatorium is still a wonderful place to swim on a hot summer's day, although many of us are unaware of its former glory and of the great civic pride we all once held for this wonderful place. No longer hosting national competitions nor welcoming celebrities to its doors, the Natatorium endures as a testament to our early city planners. Sitting quietly at the riverfront awaiting the next perfect day, it has become a proud part of our Verdun identity and heritage. Remembering a time when a true-to-life Tarzan and his world-famous chimp had swung their way off the silver screen to make a splash within the deepest pools of our Southwest Corner.

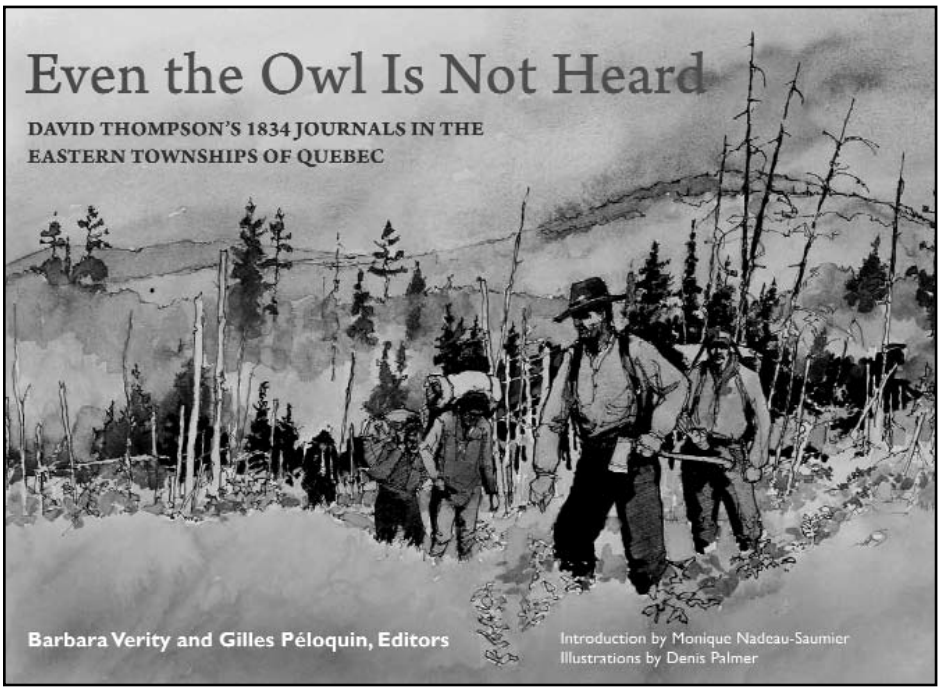
Rohinton Ghandhi is a Verdun historian and writer; his column "The Southwest Corner" appears frequently in The Suburban.

Overlooked adventures

Even the Owl Is Not Heard: David Thompson's 1834 Journals in the Eastern Townships of Quebec

Edited by Barbara Verity and Gilles Péloquin

Townships Cantons Publication, 2011



Even the Owl Is Not Heard: David Thompson's 1834 Journals in the Eastern Townships of Quebec, edited by Barbara Verity and Gilles Péloquin, offers readers a wealth of information and new insight into the early history of the Eastern Townships. This 102-page, superbly illustrated, soft-cover book relates one of the lesser-known episodes in the career of world-renowned explorer and mapmaker David Thompson: his 1834 survey of the Eastern Townships for the British American Land Company.

On a trip to western Canada in 2006, Barbara Verity and Gilles Péloquin discovered that the famous explorer David Thompson had spent most of 1834 surveying territory in the Eastern Townships of Lower Canada. They obtained a microfiche of his 1834 journals from the Archives of Ontario in Toronto, and found what they were seeking: Thompson's handwritten journals, pertaining to his exploration of the Townships. Their research also informed them that historians had mainly overlooked Thompson's adventures in this region. Indeed, they found no evidence that these journals had ever been transcribed.

Verity and Péloquin took on the arduous task of transcribing Thompson's Townships journals. They had to learn the eccentricities of Thompson's handwriting and survey notes, as well as the literary conventions of the day. Microfiche images were not always clear, compounding the difficulty of their mission, but they persevered and prevailed. As stated in the book's prologue:

> "Twenty-six thousand words later, we had transcribed the explorer's entire account of his time in the Townships—journeying by scow, canoe, and on foot with his assistants up the St. Francis and Salmon rivers, over to Mount Megantic, and on to Lake Megantic; struggling through forests so thick the men's clothes were shredded; surviving on fish while camped on the lake shore awaiting fresh supplies; all the whole describing what was seen—the rocks, soil, tress, animals, birds, and weather. Every page was fascinating."

As a reader, I was delighted that Verity and Péloquin decided to augment the journal entries with additional material. David Thompson's transcribed journals contribute an important new chapter to the historical geography of the region, but the multitude of enlightening sidebars within the book provide historical context, biographical background, and interesting anecdotes gleaned during the research process, enhancing our understanding of the topic and greatly enriching the reading experience.

The book is also replete with captivating visuals. Over 100 photographs, drawings, and maps are integrated into this book, and their inclusion helps to render the historical content more palatable to a general readership. Contemporary photographs by Verity and Péloquin, archival images, and superb sketches by Denis Palmer add yet another layer of interest to this rich volume.

Anyone interested in the early history of the Eastern Townships, or explorer David Thompson, should find this a fascinating read. This book enhances the recorded early history of our region, and should prove to be an invaluable reference resource.

Even the Owl Is Not Heard *is available at bookstores around the Townships and online at Townships.ca.*

Reviewed by Brenda Hartwell

Esther

The Remarkable True Story of Esther Wheelwright Puritan Child, Native Daughter, Mother Superior

by Julie Wheelwright

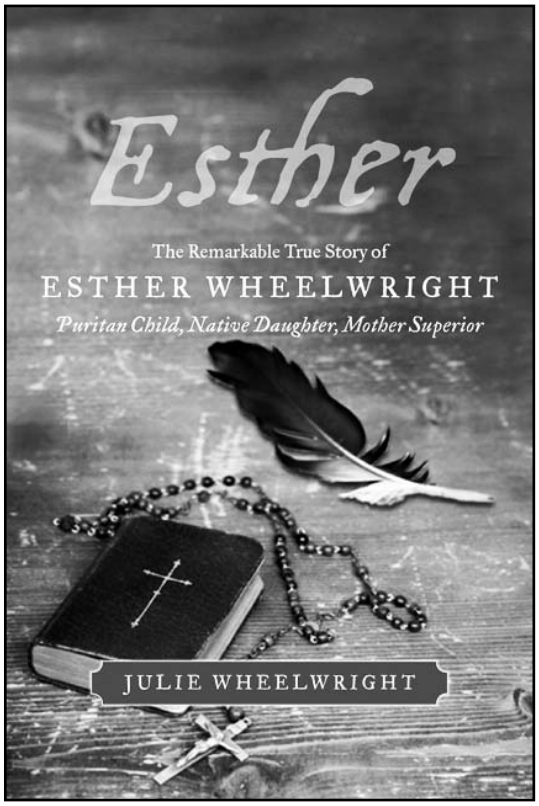
Harper Collins Canada Ltd., 2011

Some periods of history are definitely more interesting and exciting than others. The time of the subject of this meticulously researched book, Esther Wheelwright, was one of them. Also, Esther's own very long life was certainly very unusual as well. She was born in 1696 into a prominent but rather contentious Massachusetts Puritan family that had been resident in the Boston area since 1636. The Puritans were an extreme denomination – a sort of rigid "no frills" version of English Protestantism. Many left England for North America where the colonies offered, compared to England, greater religious freedom.

There was constant warfare in America at that time, with economic and territorial rivalry between the New England colonies and New France to the north. Also, this was made more complex by the interactions of these European newcomers with the very diverse native tribes whose lands and lives were being disrupted, and by distant European wars. When Esther was seven years old, she was stolen from her family, then living in Wells, Maine, by the Abenaki native tribe and adopted into an aboriginal family. This kind of incident was quite prevalent at this time: people, often children, were taken either as hostages, to be returned in prisoner exchanges or ransomed, or as replacements for their members who had died in conflicts or of natural causes. Esther was well treated, learned the tribal language, and became proficient with native crafts.

Even though Esther's distant (seven generations) relative, author Julie Wheelwright, did outstanding research on Esther's life, it was impossible to learn the names of, or anything about, her adoptive family. This absence of information is itself an indication of the attitudes of the period towards the native peoples.

The Abenakis were eventually pushed out of New England, so Esther, along with them, was moved to an area of New France along the Saint-François (St. Francis) River and settled somewhere opposite the Trois Rivières vicinity. This particular group of Abenakis were loosely Christianized by the Jesuits and, ultimately, Esther was "rescued" through the intervention of the clergy and various government officials in Quebec.



Various circumstances always seemed to prevent her from being returned to her New England family, even though they certainly continued trying to have her back. By the time this could have been possible, not only was Esther completely immersed into the upper echelons of French Canada, both by education and social position, but had developed a vocation to become a Roman Catholic nun at the Ursuline Convent in Quebec. Given that her whole older childhood and adolescence had been spent first among the Abenakis and then in French and Catholic New France, this is quite understandable. However, her still very Puritan family were quite shocked and never really achieved any depth of acceptance of her choice.

Esther was highly intelligent and gifted with good linguistic and organizational skills. She rose to become the mother superior of the Quebec City Ursulines. She experienced the siege and capture of Quebec in 1756. The devastation of buildings and harsh winter following, as well as now having to deal with the British military administration, must have tested her courage. However, once again, Esther triumphed and eventually became much admired by the newcomers. The Ursuline Convent offered what was, and what remained, probably the best available education for girls in much of North America. The Ursuline order was not sequestered, but held their mission to be "in the world," working in society. Their school was open to all denominations and all languages – quite advanced for the time, although the emphasis did appear to be upon producing good household manager wives for the local seigneurial class and their British equivalents. One of the areas encouraged was art in all its aspects, which was also unusual for the period.

The most interesting theme of this book is definitely the contrasts among the three different environments that Esther experienced in her life: the New England Puritans, the Abenaki tribe and the French of New France. To able to portray these three differing milieus so accurately and at such a distance in time, is a major achievement.

Reviewed by Sandra Stock

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