

JOE GRAHAM ON ST. COLUMBAN'S ORIGINS

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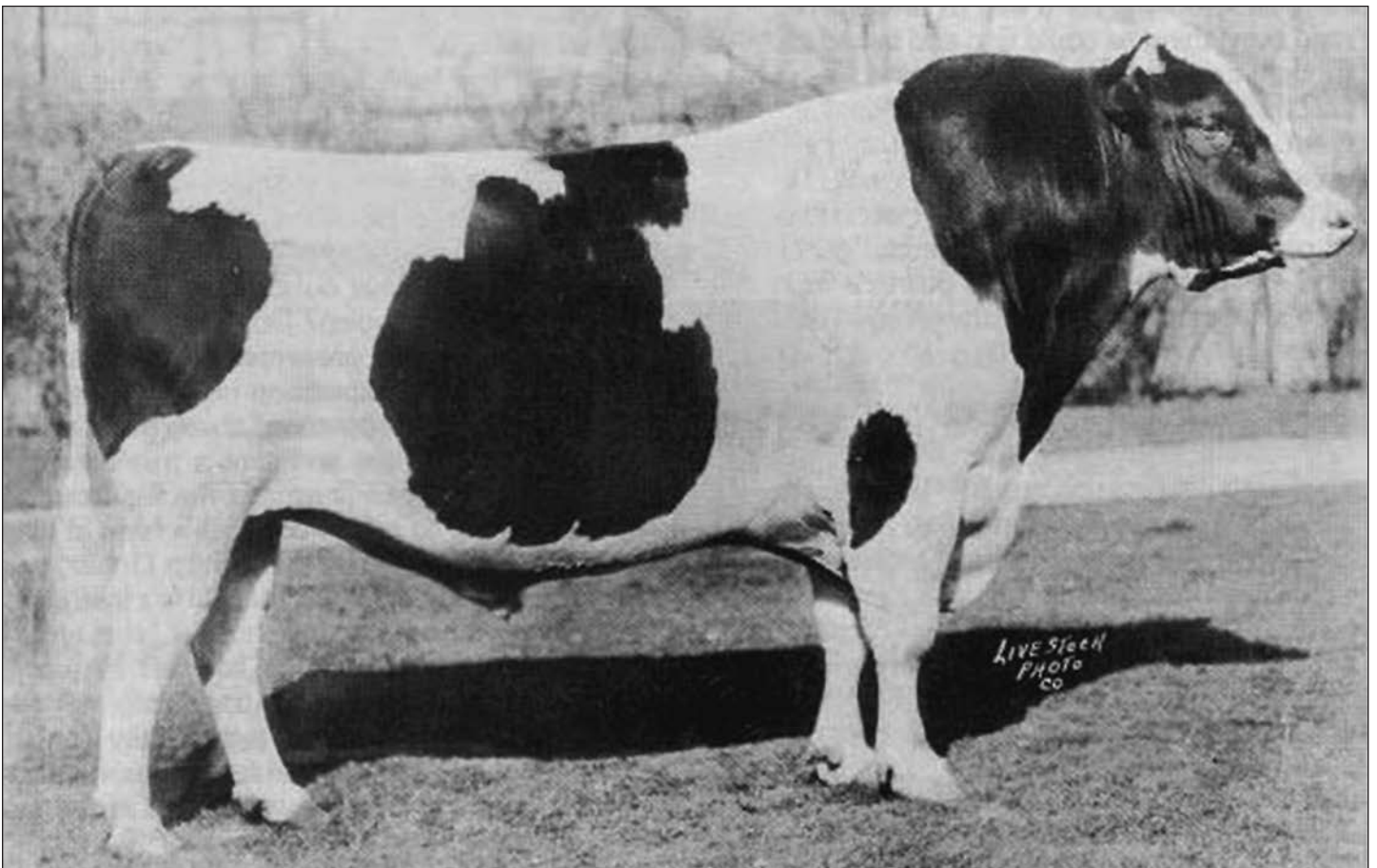
# Quebec Heritage

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VOL 4, No. 2

MARCH-APRIL 2007

## News



### Old Joe

Pride of Hudson's Holstein dairy legacy

### The Key of Shamrock

Irish music thrives in Quebec folk revival

### Mechanics' Institute

Crucible of learning, guardian of social justice

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# Quebec Heritage News

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*Cover photograph: Johanna Rag Apple Pabst, founder bull of Mount Victoria Farms' dairy dynasty. From the archives of the Hudson Historical Society.*

## *Balancing act*

by Rod MacLeod

The recent provincial election campaign devoted much time to the issue of “reasonable accommodation,” and in many ways, this issue seems tangential to a society burdened with the level of economic, health, environmental, educational and, well, constitutional problems that we face. As it has been presented, yes, it is a tangential issue: emotional squabbling over a set of well-intentioned but short-sighted municipal regulations and a definition of soccer attire that does not include headscarves. From a broader perspective, however, this is pretty crucial stuff, and speaks directly to the question of heritage.

*“Democracy, freedom of speech, women’s rights, and many other things we often take to be essential ingredients of our way of life were in fact achieved in spite of so-called Judeo-Christian values.”*

By the time you read this, QAHN will have held its first-ever Montreal Mosaic symposium at the McCord Museum, dealing with the interaction of identity, history, and language in Montreal. My hope for this event is that it has put on some kind of collective mental clipboard various ways that Montrealers have found to balance the preservation of a particular sense of cultural identity with the acceptance of a larger, common culture that is usually defined as

“mainstream.” It is my view that finding this balance is pretty much universal, even for those people who reject the mainstream (which still means acknowledging it) and for those who claim a “de souche” status which grants special proprietorship over the mainstream without really understanding it. I would also argue that cultural identity is often invented, or partly invented, and that the mainstream may be equally illusory—which does not at all mean that such terms are not valid, significant, or interesting.

OK, let’s get down to details. The issue of “accommodation” is usually reduced to a discussion of how much do newcomers have to give up in order to be able to integrate, and how much does the receiving society have to accept by way of foreignness. Multiculturalism is often seen as a policy that allows new-

comers to perpetuate cultural values that clash with those of the adopted society. Critics point to values such as children’s safety (the kirpan issue) and women’s rights (wearing the hijab or the burqa, tinting the windows of the “Y”) that should never be compromised. Such criticism is often labeled racist. This debate often gets very shrill, which is a terrible thing as we need to be able to talk about these matters if we are going to survive as a society and a planet.

Last time I looked, Quebec was an open, tolerant, liberal (small-*l*, of course) society which places very few legal restraints on its citizens in terms of cultural expression: you can think what you like, say what you like, wear what you like, and gather in groups for, among other purposes, religious worship of whatever stripe exists. Problems arise when cultural expression amounts to a criticism of another form of cultural expression—but even here, there is nothing wrong with such criticism so long as it doesn’t lead to violence. Many religious people, for example, feel that the way

*“The debate over cultural values often gets very shrill, which is a terrible thing as we need to be able to talk about these matters if we are going to survive as a society and a planet.”*

some young women dress is proof of, or even a cause of, society’s moral decay and inevitable slide into perdition. Well, they are certainly entitled to this view so long as they don’t start forcing young women into “acceptable” costumes they do not wish to wear.

Ah, yes, that’s the rub, isn’t it? What if the young women in question come from within a cultural tradition that forbids them to go out scantily clad? Does our tolerance of cultural expression mean that authorities within a particular tradition have the right to impose values on others within that tradition, or does it mean we support individual rights regardless of tradition? The law tends to hold up individual rights, but there are plenty of areas in which the law is not always clear, such as what rights an unborn child has, if any, or who gets to marry whom. Furthermore, where freedoms do exist they are usually hard won, the result of years or even generations of struggle and sacrifice in

the face of existing oppressive laws. In such cases, to be asked to be tolerant sounds a lot like being asked to betray that struggle. Is it reasonable to expect someone who has worked a lifetime to improve women's rights to accept that certain women should conform to certain types of behaviour because it is part of a cultural tradition? Admittedly, some say that modesty can be a kind of freedom just as the lack of it can be constraining—an argument that might be seen to serve the interests of men who have trouble with women. I learned a lesson many years ago from a feminist friend—and, I confess, I remember exactly what she was wearing at the time—that if men objected to a woman's appearance for whatever reason that was their problem, not hers. Touché.

**T**he debate around accommodation suffers from essentialism: “It is not in our nature to conform,” some people argue; “Our religion does not tolerate XYZ, so you who do tolerate must allow us this.” Or the flip side: “The freedoms enjoyed in this society are part of another tradition, and so we cannot accept them in any fundamental way.” The proponents of freedom are often equally confused about the essential nature of the receiving society: we talk of the West, and the Judeo-Christian tradition, often without the slightest idea what that means. Democracy, freedom of speech, women's rights, and many other things we often take to be essential ingredients of our way of life were in fact achieved in spite of so-called Judeo-Christian values and could as easily have arisen in Muslim, Chinese or aboriginal societies had circumstances been different. A society's values, like anything else, are determined by its history, not by

its nature.

The debate also suffers when people are too quickly labeled as intolerant. Yes, we should all be constantly examining our beliefs and assumptions, but this process isn't made easier if there are voices accusing us of racism just because we admit to having certain thoughts. In a way, that recent poll revealing a surprising degree of racism within Quebec society was a good thing: better than everyone going around thinking we were all just fine, which would be the mark of a truly racist society. Racism is real—you could call it a disease, and one we could all catch. For the most part, however, people suffer merely from occasional bouts of intolerance, which can be destructive but can also be cured through frank discussion with sympathetic ears. Some people argue that we can never achieve a peaceful world because we're wired for intolerance, even for racism. We're not. We are, however, wired for comfort, and things can easily happen to trigger discomfort, from the sight of a person of an unfamiliar skin colour in a certain place, to someone wearing a bizarre outfit, to a peculiar food smell. We should be permitted to feel that discomfort, but we should also recognize it for what it is.

If none of this seems straightforward, that's because it isn't. There is no one right way to answer the difficult questions, but that shouldn't stop us from asking them. And in order to ask the right questions, we have to learn. That's what Montreal Mosaic was all about: the sharing of stories and insight with the aim of getting at who we are, how we got that way, and what challenges we have had, and still will have, in finding that balance.

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# Letters

## Crash probe

I have an old photograph of a train wreck in Richmond, QC, given to me almost twenty years ago by Rachel Woodburn, a lifelong resident of the Melbourne-Richmond area.

On the back of the picture she wrote that the accident took place August 31, 1904 and it's always been known as the "accident at the wood yard," but locals don't seem to know any more than that.

Although a former resident of Richmond myself and a retired Canadian National Railway conductor, I have never been able to learn more about the wreck itself. The CN library no longer exists, so there is no help there. I also went through Richmond County Historical Society some years ago without success. It's one of those things that I've put away and remembered once in a while and now feel like a dog after a bone wanting to solve a problem. Perhaps one of your readers will be able to supply more information?

Apparently, the location of the wreck was just west of St. Anne's Cemetery at the east end of town. Several people were killed and many injured. I am given to understand the eastbound passenger train was a Sherbrooke Fair special.

Incidentally, I worked for CN for 31 years in two stints. I was first hired in Montreal to work for the Auditor of Passenger Accounts in 1954 and transferred to the Transportation Department as a main line brakeman in 1955. Being continually laid off I resigned, but I went back in 1965 as a brakeman and in 1973 I moved my family to Richmond and worked out of that terminal on freight to Island Pond, Sherbrooke, Saint Lambert



and the Windsor switcher. Being the only qualified passenger conductor I also worked the few passenger excursions that happened along in those days. In 1987 I returned to Montreal to work VIA Rail's Montreal-Toronto passenger trains and in 1989, faced with the option of remaining with VIA or going back to CN, I chose to go back to CN and work freight as a conductor until my retirement in 1994.

My principal hobby is philately, with a special interest in Railway Post Office cancellations, particularly those from RPOs that operated on the Grand Trunk and Great Western railways between Island Pond and Sarnia and Windsor and connecting lines. Without boasting, I have to say I have one of the finest collections in this area of the field. I recently made digitized copies of all my Richmond County postal history including a nice collection of postcards that will be set up this summer as an exhibit at the Richmond County Historical Society museum in Melbourne.

*Peter McCarthy  
London, Ontario*

## Sign language

So, the Quebec government intends to invest public funds dollars developing the Chemin des Cantons/Townships Trail project to help promote tourism in the Eastern Townships focused on the region's English-speaking heritage ["Lead role for anglo heritage" Jan/Feb, page 10]. Shouldn't the road signs be erected in English as well as French, to attract tourists from outside of Quebec? My family settled in the Townships in 1860. We still own property in the region and I myself am a founding mem-

ber of the Townshippers' Association.

The main tourist sign welcoming visitors entering Quebec from Ontario along Highway 401 east of Montreal is in French, English and Spanish. It's important that visitors realize that the Townships were first settled by English-speakers, and that all groups and nationalities who have contributed to the betterment of the region are respected.

Please show your support for bilingual signs by working with the regional tourist association.

*Don Martin  
Melbourne, Ontario*

*As a supporter of the Townships Trail project, the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network is already working with Tourisme Cantons de l'Est to provide English versions of tourism promotional materials, including an audio CD guide, a map, a website, a DVD and a printed guidebook. However, the regional tourist association has been advised by the Ministry of Transport that the road signs to be erected along Townships highways this summer must be in French only, in order to comply with Quebec's French-language Charter provisions.*

## Rough passage

In the September 2003 issue of *Quebec Heritage News* I was very interested in an account related by Sandra Stock ("The Voyage to Quebec...", page 8) regarding Martha Clarke who was a child aboard the ship *Miracle* when it was driven by storm into a sandbar and wrecked off the Magdalen Islands on 19 May, 1847. My great-great grandfather James Clarke and his family were the ones who supplied food and shelter to survivors, many of whom it turned out were also sick and dying with typhus and cholera.

I have since learned that descendants of Martha Clarke still live in the Laurentians region. It might also be noted that well over 400 of these passengers were Irish immigrants who had boarded the 626-tonne timber ship at Liverpool,

England and that they had already spent more than four weeks at sea when the wreck occurred.

In my book, *Gleanings on the Magdalen Islands*, you will note the declaration made by H.H. Elliot, captain of the *Miracle*, the original still in possession of the Clarke family here on the Islands. Elliot reported that “the exertions of James Clarke and his sons succeeded in saving nearly the whole” of the 446 passengers aboard. Visiting the Islands three years later, however, the Anglican bishop G.J. Mountain learned that more than a hundred people drowned trying to swim to safety; several more apparently died aboard the stranded ship and were thrown overboard, their bodies later washing ashore. About 150 of these people were buried in the sand dunes at East Point where no stone marks their grave.

Byron Clark  
Grosse Ile, QC

## His rightful place

Farmland once owned by Philemon Wright, a prominent figure in Canadian history and the founder of Hull, Quebec

is at risk of being lost forever. The current owners of the farm in Winchester, Massachusetts have received an offer to purchase from AvalonBay Communities Inc., a large developer of residential properties. I am appealing for guidance and suggestions as to how to preserve such an important part of Canadian and U.S. history.

Philemon Wright was born in Woburn (now Winchester) in 1760. He owned and occupied the 45-acre farm in question until the winter of 1799-1800 when he sold the property to Josiah Locke and, with a party of 63 people, traveled by sleigh to Canada. Over the next 35 years Wright, a United Empire Loyalist, became an astute businessman and helped open up the Ottawa River to commerce and steamship travel. The Locke family occupied the farm for four generations before selling the property, by then reduced to 20 acres, to Bertha and Curtis Hamilton in 1974.

In 1980, the Government of Canada, in recognition of Wright’s significant contribution to the settlement of the Capital Region, erected the large bronze plaque that is prominently displayed on the Winchester property. In 1983 the farm was individually listed on the U.S. National Register of Historic Places and

also on the Massachusetts State Register of Historic Places. The farm is the most significant heritage landscape in Winchester and will be irreversibly destroyed if AvalonBay is allowed to proceed with its development plans.

In June 2000 Yves Ducharme, then the mayor of Hull, along with three descendants of the Philemon Wright family and a host of Canadian officials and dignitaries met in Woburn with then-mayor Robert Dever, and it was noted how close the two cities had become due to their shared connection with Wright’s story. Today the Wright Farm remains unique in many respects: the site is the last working farm in Winchester and the sole place where the town’s pre-railroad era agricultural history survives essentially intact; the site has been owned and farmed by only three families—Wright, Locke and Hamilton—since the 1630s. And it’s the closest intact historic farm to downtown Boston.

I anticipate this issue will be of great concern to you, and most respectfully call on your readers for support in preserving and honouring Wright’s memory.

Charlene Band  
Winchester, Mass.  
USA

Hosted by La Table des Sociétés d'histoire & Le Conseil de la culture des Laurentides

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## TIMELINES

# Ripples in time

*Montreal oral history project makes waves with teachers, students*

by Carolyn Shaffer

It was an ordinary assignment, or so media teacher Frank Tiseo thought seven years ago, when he asked his students at Laurier Macdonald High School to bring in some old family photographs and tell the story behind them. Little did he know where and how far the project would go.

As old albums were dusted off and shoeboxes full of photos taken from the closet, out flowed stories of life in the old country and immigration to Canada, complete with romance, struggle and intrigue. The students tapped into family history that many of them had never heard before. Excitement mounted and the project grew, until it eventually became a book. And an annual project. And now, a movie.

As the school prepares to launch the seventh edition of the book, entitled *Living Heritage*, they are also working on a distribution deal for *Ripples in Time*, the film adapted from the sixth edition of the book of the same name, launched last February. Produced by students and teachers, the 46-minute docudrama combines archival footage and historical re-enactment, bringing to life four of the stories collected in the book by the same name.

An ambitious and elaborate project to say the least, the film, which had a budget of just over seven thousand dollars, took over six months to make and had students and staff recreating everything from a bar scene in 1940s Lebanon to an army unit on the Russian front. The *Gazette* called *Ripples in Time* “a stunning, moving chronicle... [of] the often daunting immigrant experiences of the students parents and grandparents” and says that the production values of both the film and the book “surpass many” in the adult world.

*Ripples in Time* illustrates the power of simple story-telling to capture the imagination, as well as easily-lost memories. “If the stories aren’t told they’ll fade away,” says Pat Buttino, principal of Laurier Macdonald. “This was the whole idea behind the project.”

Buttino says students developed an increased rapport with their families as their questions about the

photos sparked an avalanche of stories from relatives. Maria Filippone, 17, a Secondary V student and supervising editor of *Living Heritage* says it was a very personal and unique experience for all involved. “We all tell our stories very differently, but in the end we have the same goal—to keep our heritage alive. That’s what I love about it,” she says.

According to media teacher Michael Penning, the students jumped on the opportunity to work on the film, which “took up most of everyone’s waking hours last year,” he said. Students wrote the stories and assisted teachers with production. One student composed and produced the musical score. Several of the students were bit by the film bug, said Penning, who took over from Tiseo after he retired last year. “The students get

to incorporate what they’re learning in class into the film and book projects,” Penning said.

Sixteen-year-old William Cordeiro is a supervising editor of *Boxes Reopened, Stories Retold*, which will be launched next year. “It’s a bit stressing, but it’s a fun experience,” he said. “You feel proud that you’re actually producing a book.”

The teachers involved have made presentations on the project at educators’ conferences in Canada, the United States and New Zealand, and the film has also been shown at several other high schools. Most recently, it was screened at Montreal Mosaic, a symposium at McCord Museum sponsored by the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network. “We get requests about the project from all over,” Buttino says. Several other schools, including one in Edmonton, are now doing similar projects.

Situated in the traditionally anglophone Italian neighborhood of Saint Leonard, often affectionately referred to as “San Leonardo,” Laurier Macdonald’s students are predominantly of Italian heritage, with a mix of many other nationalities. The film tells stories of immigration from Italy, Lebanon and Ukraine. The stories were also chosen specifically because the protagonists were still alive and could be featured in the film.





One of the major benefits of the project is that it's gotten students thinking about their family and cultural history and realizing its importance to them. Daniel Fiorilli, whose grandfather's childhood story is included in *Ripples in Time*, is a case in point. As he writes in the book, "Until this project my family name was just a label. [Now]... it feels like much more." Ditto for Sara Paoletti, who wrote the story of her grandfather's experience as a soldier in World War Two. "I gained an understanding of my grandparents' generation that can't be learned in any book. I would have gone my entire life without knowing the incredible, and at times terrible sacrifices it took just to stay alive," she writes.

In terms of getting high school students passionate about family history, you couldn't find a better project. "This is determining the heritage that I'll leave for my kids," one student told the principal. "When you hear that from a 16 or 17 year-old," said Buttino, "you know you've struck gold."



## Memory thieves

*Recent spate of theft and vandalism is sign of the times*

Historic monuments have been in the news recently, for all the wrong reasons. The Gatineau Valley Historical Society, a Core member of the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network (QAHN), is still reeling after vandals smashed seven headstones at a pioneer cemetery in West Quebec. On Montreal's South Shore, a bronze plaque bearing the names of local war heroes was removed by thieves from a stone wall surrounding a veterans memorial in St. Lambert's Hooper Park. And in Sherbrooke in the Eastern Townships, members of the historic Plymouth-Trinity United Church are counting their lucky stars after recovering a century-old bell stolen in February and apparently sold into the scrap-metal trade.

The 486-pound bell, which was described by a church spokesman as "a part of history that can't be replaced," was traced by police to a Montreal metal recycling facility in early April, about a month after it was stolen from the church lawn. The owner of the American Iron and Metal Co. reportedly purchased the bell from a scrap metal dealer in Victoriaville.

High metal prices may be a factor contributing to the spate of monument thefts. Once it was melted down, thieves might have collected about \$1,000 for the brass in the bell, according to some news reports. That's as much as an anonymous Montreal war veteran has offered as a reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of culprits who made off with the St. Lambert war memorial plaque, which measures about 1.2 metres by a half-metre. But surely scrap-metal dealers themselves must abide by some code of honour?

"It feels good to give back such a historical monument," Jacques Cossette told *The Record* newspaper in April after police traced the Trinity bell to his premises, where at least one other

bell was also in queue waiting to be melted for money. According to Cossette, it isn't unusual for bells of a certain vintage to end up at metal recycling facilities: it happens when a church is deconsecrated and slated for demolition. And in Quebec these days, with church attendance plummeting and many congregations struggling to maintain their buildings, demand for bell-ringing is definitely on the downswing. Still, it begs the question: oughtn't merchants assume some responsibility for ensuring that their legitimate business dealings do not include fencing stolen goods? One can only imagine the sort of character who would pay a thief to deface a veteran's monument by stealing a plaque.

Or what alloy of ignorance and hatred it requires to forge the sort of person who rampages through a cemetery breaking headstones. The cost of repairing six of the Chelsea Pioneer Cemetery monuments and a stone bench vandalized last December is expected to be around \$3,000, according to the historical society that owns the property. "The help we need is financial because repairing tombstones is a job for experts," historical society member Carol Martin told CBC following discovery of the vandalism. She said the base of each headstone must be levelled and broken pieces must be cemented back together, at a cost of about \$250 for each headstone.

Only repairs to the grave of Boer War hero Pte. Richard Rowland Thompson will be paid for by Veterans Affairs Canada. Thompson is the only Canadian ever given a Queen's Scarf of Honour, one of eight such awards crocheted by Queen Victoria herself in the last year of her life and presented to members of her forces fighting in South Africa. The scarf now belongs to the War Museum in Ottawa. Lucky for the museum, old wool isn't a high-value commodity.



# Spotlight on the Laurentians

## *Quebec history buffs to rally in St. Adèle for annual talkfest*

The Laurentians town of St. Adèle plays host to this year's annual conference of the Fédération des Sociétés d'histoire du Québec (FSHQ), offering up a full slate of presentations focused on regional history, including a session devoted to English-speaking settlement. More than a dozen speakers will be on hand at the historic Mont Gabriel Hotel on Saturday, May 26 and Sunday May 27, leading talks on subjects ranging from the history of the French seigneuries of the Lower Laurentians to the evolution and impact of rail travel on the growth and development of communities. A special feature of this year's conference, the 'History, Heritage and Genealogy Fair' scheduled for Saturday, May 26, promises members of historical and genealogical societies the chance to network and to promote their services and publications. Interested exhibitors are asked to reserve their space with the FSHQ no later than Friday, May 11.

The weekend gets started with the annual general meeting of the FSHQ, starting on Friday, May 25 at 1 p.m., followed by the conference's keynote presentation at 7:30 p.m., delivered this year by Gleason Théberge, past president of the Conseil de la Culture des Laurentides. Gérard Lajeunesse of the Société d'histoire et de généalogie des Mille-Iles will lead things off on Saturday morning with an review of the Laurentians' seigneurial heritage, followed by the history of St. Andrews's and Carillon. There follows panelist-led discussions on two practical issues of great interest to small heritage organizations: how electronic, or

"digital" copying and storage of archives is revolutionizing conservation practices; and the importance of diversifying revenue streams. Afternoon talks include a look at how Iroquois villagers residing on Lac des Deux-Montagnes resisted pressures of assimilation exerted on them in the 17th and 18th centuries by Catholic missionaries. Author Don Stewart of the Morin Heights Historical Society will review highlights of early anglophone settlement in Argenteuil County, the one session of this year's conference that will be delivered in English.

On Sunday, conference participants will be offered a choice of three different guided outings: a walking tour of the nearby historic town of St. Sauveur-des-Monts; a sightseeing excursion that traces the route of the historic rail line dubbed the 'P'tit train du Nord'; or an introduction to Loyalist architecture in St. Andrew's and Carillon, followed by a visit to the Argenteuil Regional Museum. Early registration fees for the entire conference are \$140 for FSHQ members and \$150 for non-members, which includes lunch on Saturday; after May 15, registration fees jump to \$160 and \$175, respectively. It's also possible to sign up for individual presentations, at a cost of \$15 each. Joining a Sunday excursion will cost you between \$30 and \$55, depending on your choice of outing.

*For complete conference details and registration information, go to [www.histoirequebec.qc.ca](http://www.histoirequebec.qc.ca). Or call (514) 252-303, or toll-free 1-866-691-7202.*

# Learning from Longwood

## *Lévis housing developer pays rare homage to the past*

Saint-Romauld, in the city of Lévis, lies on Benson Point fronting the St. Lawrence between the Chaudière and Etchemin rivers. Recently discovered evidence suggests that prehistoric people inhabited this jut of land more than ten thousand years ago. Though colonization under French rule began tentatively in 1651 with the establishment of a local fishery, its population didn't boom till the turn of the nineteenth century under British control. With hundreds of timber ships arriving each year to fill their holds and a thriving wooden shipbuilding industry, the coves along the shore became a lively port, with sailors, soldiers, craftsmen, merchants, travellers and thousands of immigrants drawn to the settlement called New Liverpool.

Overlooking it all was Wade Manor, home of the families who owned the shipyards. Nicknamed 'Longwood' by British military officers, in reference to the house on St. Helena Island where Napoleon Bonaparte lived out his last years in exile, the manor is actually a composite of two worker's houses stuck together, the whole dressed up with Victorian flourishes. During their heyday, Benson Point notables enjoyed well-appointed gardens, promenades and horse-riding paths. But following the decline of the wood trade in the early 1900s the manor was abandoned and in 1965 it burned to the ground. The estate slipped from memory until 1989s when, with refreshing foresight, the municipality of Saint Romauld commissioned preliminary ar-

chaeological research in the area. Now city officials are again showing remarkable respect for the land's history and heritage, *Continuité* magazine reports in its spring issue.

Working with Quebec's Ministry of Culture and Communications and the private land-developer who acquired the site in 2005, Levis has launched an ambitious heritage-prospecting and public-information programme aimed at making new home construction compatible with the Point's history and its natural, wooded setting.

The developer, Louis Lessard of LBJ Partenaires, reportedly embraced the idea of integrating the property's rich cultural heritage into plans for his Domaine Longwood project. On the drawing board new roads trace the remnants of old riding paths while the housing design scheme echoes British and Victorian-flavoured architecture of New Liverpool's past. What's more, an exhaustive inventory and excavation campaign, carried out between October 2005 and May of 2006 under the direction of the archaeologist Jean-Yves Pintal, has brought to nearly 15,000 the number of artefacts uncovered at the site so far. Lessard financed more than half the research costs, making him one of Quebec's largest private heritage funders. To raise awareness of Benson Point's history and its significant archeological yield, Lessard even hired a team of historians to compile a book that will be given to each Domaine Longwood homebuyer.

# THE KEY OF SHAMROCK

*Irish music traditions are thriving in Quebec's folk revival*

by Carolyn Shaffer

**F**ans of traditional music know there's no better place to hear an Irish jig these days than right in the heart of French North America, where Celtic tunes have been weaving themselves into Québécois musical culture for more than 150 years.

"If the Irish hadn't come to Quebec we wouldn't be playing any music," says recorder-player Philippe Du Berger, who has been performing regularly in Irish-music jam sessions at Montreal pubs since the 1990s. Du Berger, a self-styled old-stock Québécois francophone, compares the burgeoning Celtic music scene to a secret society: "It's almost like the Freemasons," he laughs. "There's a code of ethics, there are leaders. It's a whole little world. Each pub has its own spirit."

But, he adds, it's also a world without ethnic or cultural barriers.

"The first person I met who inspired me in the Irish music community was an Armenian man—he held sessions in his living room that were famous." Whether musicians trace their ancestry to Dublin, Calais or Damascus, Du Berger learned it doesn't make a whit of difference, as long as they can play. "If you know the tunes, you've got your ticket in."



Andriu MacGabhann, or "Belfast Andi" as he's known around town, is a singer and drummer who moved eleven years ago to Montreal where he was immediately struck by the number of French Quebecers playing and enjoying Irish-style music.



"When I first heard Québécois music I thought it sounded Irish," says MacGabhann, who teaches at Siamsa, Montreal's Irish music school. "And in a way it is. It has roots from both Irish and Scottish music. Lots of French people here came from Brittany, the Celtic region of France. There are instruments common to both styles: fiddle, flute, accordion. We play the same kind of accordion on the west coast of Ireland that they play here in Quebec."

The strong francophone presence on Quebec's Irish music scene testifies to the long history of intercultural mingling and a musical love affair that dates to the first waves of Irish immigration during the potato famine in the 1840s. It's a love affair that MacGabhann says is about much more than musical similarities: there is a strong sense of common history, culture and spirit

"Québécois are very like us, compared to people with strictly Anglo-Saxon upbringing in Quebec," MacGabhann says. "It's in how they approach life, their sense of humour, their joie de vivre—what we in Ireland call 'craic,' their sense of fun."

"We're alike" Du Berger adds, "because we are down-to-earth people who are capable of being in the moment, getting together and saying, 'Okay, let's have fun right now.'"

Music has long brought families of Irish and French ancestry together so perhaps it isn't surprising that so many Québécois today proudly claim some Irish heritage. The connections are also rooted in history, politics and religion.

"The Irish found the Québécois had the same enemies and the same religion as they did," Du Berger recalls. "Both hated the English and were mostly Catholic." Settling in a

new country alongside French-speaking neighbours “all they had was their instruments, their history of struggle, their emotions,” Du Berger says. “The music became the channel to transmit their history.” The mutual affection is at least partly rooted in the two cultures’ historic distaste for rule by royalty. “Coming from a republican background,” says MacGabhann, “not being a monarchist, here in Quebec I get more respect from Québécois and Native people as well.”

One of the best-known and most popular Quebec folk singers ever to make a hit record was Gaspé-born Mary Travers, a.k.a. La Bolduc, who mixed Irish-style music with French lyrics in the 1920s and 1930s. In the 1950s, it was Ti-Jean Carignan, a fiddler renowned for his virtuoso mastery of the Irish fiddle repertoire and style. He was named a member of the Order of Canada in 1974; the Canadian Encyclopedia describes him as “the leading exponent of the Celtic traditions in French-Canadian fiddling.”

In the 1970s, the Montreal band Barde combined the two styles and was seminal in the Irish music revival of the day. “They were the Quebec equivalent of the Chieftains,” MacGabhann says, referring to the legendary Irish group. Their band members were a mix of Irish and Québécois with a Jewish fiddle player.

“They played a mix of Irish and Québécois tunes, and they were a big influence on Quebec’s Irish music scene. I still hear their songs being played.”

Du Berger calls La Bolduc the “Edith Piaf of Quebec” and MacGabhann calls her an icon. “She really mixed the two styles. She did lots of lilting and some of her tunes that she put French words to were old Irish tunes.” Du Berger first heard about Montreal’s Irish music sessions at a Québécois kitchen session in Montmagny, where he lived during the 1980s. He soon became a regular after returning to Montreal.

Over the generations, Irish and Gaelic music has spread throughout the province, with Cree fiddlers from Northern Quebec playing in a Scottish style thanks to the region’s fur-trading legacy. Even native terms like “clan” and “bannock” have their roots in Gaelic culture.

Which is why the common language among musicians some nights is neither English or French, but music. “My French is horrible,” confesses MacGabhann, “but I can sing a couple of verses of some of those *chansons à réponses*.”

The tradition continues to evolve. Even Du Berger, who occasionally faces sceptics among musical purists in the audience because he plays a wooden recorder, called a *flute à bec*, instead of a tin whistle, always wins them over in the end. “I know the tunes,” he says, laughing.

## Madame Bolduc’s gift

La Bolduc (1894-1941), also known as Madame Bolduc, was Quebec’s most popular singer of her era and the first Quebec woman to make a living as a singer. The child of an Irish father and a French-Canadian mother, Mary Travers drew from both the Québécois and Irish folk music traditions, melding the two into a unique and original style that captivated Depression-era audiences in tours all over Quebec and New England.

A self-taught musician, La Bolduc grew up singing and playing accordion, fiddle and harmonica for family and friends in her home town of Newport, Gaspé. In intertwinning her Irish reels with “turlutes,” Acadian mouth music, the young musician is said to have laid the foundations of the Quebec chanson.



La Bolduc was a prolific songwriter, penning over 300 songs in her short life of 47 years. Most of her lyrics are in French with the odd word or phrase in English thrown in. Today, only around 100 of her

songs are known. Among the most popular is *Si Vous Avez une Fille qui Veut se Marier* (If You Have a Daughter who Wants to get Married). Her music is now being rediscovered by a new generation of Quebecers.

The eldest of twelve children, Travers left home at age 13, moving to Montreal to find work. She first toiled as a housekeeper and later in a textile mill. At age 20, she married Edouard Bolduc, a plumber, and moved into a small unheated apartment. Living conditions in Montreal were poor and only deteriorated with the advent of World War I; disease claimed all but four of the couple’s thirteen children.

La Bolduc began her professional musical career almost inadvertently. One day, with her husband out of work, she jumped on the opportunity to replace a fiddler in ‘*Les Veillées du bon vieux temps*,’ a popular folklore show of the 1920s. Her music won accolades and her career took off. She began writing songs in 1927 and two years later nabbed a contract with Starr Records to record five 78 rpm records. She produced many more in the 1930s. Coming from a poor family in the Gaspé, La Bolduc knew about hardship, and this came through her songs. She sang about the everyday struggles of ordinary folk, with a mocking eye cast on the local characters around her — the town gossip, the policeman, the cheating grocer. Later she took on the governments of Quebec and Canada, denouncing poverty and unemployment.

Until close to the time of her death from cancer, La Bolduc toured regularly, her simple, poignant and irreverent songs lifting the spirits of her peers, the working-class Depression-era crowds that adored her.

- C Shaffer



WHAT'S IN A NAME?

# GOING TO THE CROSS

*Spur to St. Columban colony was heir to Ireland's priestly legacy*

by Joseph Graham

In the province of Leinster, Ireland, in the year 560 CE, Columcille, a student of St. Finnian, was obsessed with the beauty of his master's book of psalms. In the dark of night, he secretly copied it. Although a monk, he was also a capable warrior, once named Crimthann the Fox, and was the descendant of kings on both his mother's and father's sides. When the High King Diarmuid ordered him to give up his copy, he felt wronged. The same king had executed a boy to whom Columcille had given sanctuary. He sought revenge and led a rebellion that saw the king toppled. Once victorious and in possession of his copy of the psalms, his confessor called him to do penance for the three thousand people killed in the battle, and sent him into exile with the task of converting 3,001 souls to Christianity.

Columcille took twelve followers and established an abbey in the most challenging part of the realm. At his first place of exile he pined for home, and because he could see it across the waters, he moved his followers further, to Iona, where he settled. Still missing home, he erected a special cross that combined the crucifix with the spoked circle, symbol of the ancient Celtic god of the sun. When he felt far from home, he could go to the cross and pray.

Columcille is best remembered as St. Columba, from the Latin for dove, the Irish monk who set the pattern for the Irish monastic tradition that brought writing back to Western Europe after the fall of Rome.

In 406 CE, one hundred and fifty years earlier, the Rhine River had frozen solid. The Rhine and the Danube had always kept the eastern tribes out of the Roman Empire, but that winter the Rhine ceased to be

a barrier to the Vandals, allowing them to establish a permanent beachhead on the far shore. Thereafter, barbarian hordes poured west destroying the very fabric of Roman society. While the Church hierarchy withstood the onslaught, most of the written culture on the continent was lost. In Ireland, however, the Church documents survived beyond the range of the invaders.

The abbey structure that Columba established included simple huts for the monks, a dining hall, a kitchen, a scriptorium for transcribing documents, a library, and the fundamentals of a good farm. When an abbey's population reached 150 monks, a leader would choose twelve monks, as Columcille had done upon his exile, and would set off to re-establish at a new location. St. Columba's fame spread, as did his cross. He is said to have opened the castle gates to King Brude of the Picts by making the sign of the cross, after which the king and his subjects converted to Christianity. While he died in Iona, he did return to Ireland during his lifetime, his penance fulfilled, and he brought back with him the cross design that he had created. Today, it is known by the names "Celtic cross," "Ionic cross" and "Columba's cross." His greatest legacy, though, was realised

through his successors. One of these men, St. Columban, also of Leinster, was a monk with a much less violent past. Following St. Columba's example, he set off for the Continent with twelve monks and established some of the most important abbeys of the seventh century. Building their simple huts, scriptorium, library and the fundamentals of a good farm at each location, the tireless monks diligently transcribed and preserved the old documents. They spread copies of the lost documents throughout



through his successors.

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Europe during the Dark Ages. Eventually their mission was also fulfilled and many of them joined the Benedictine movement.

Father Patrick Phelan, a Gentleman of the Order of St. Sulpice, was born in that same Irish province, Leinster, in 1795. While his family moved to Boston, his vocation took him to the Grand Seminary in Montreal. His ordination to the priesthood coincided with the arrival of a first wave of Irish immigrants at the end of the Napoleonic wars, and the Bishop of Montreal encouraged him to join the Sulpicians and take responsibility for these new, impoverished arrivals.

The Sulpicians, whose founding vision had resulted in the creation of Montreal, owned a seigneury north of Laval, centred in Oka. Like St. Columban, their vision was of an order of brothers and priests who would minister to the needy and spread the Word in the name of the Holy Roman Catholic Church.

Father Phelan would have known about his Leinster predecessors, and about St. Jerome, among the earliest of monks, and St. Scholastica, the soul sister of St. Benedict whose movement eventually absorbed many of the abbeys. Phelan encouraged his Irish immigrants to colonize the territory in the northeast of the Sulpician seigneury and they created a small farming community.

As early as 1825, there were 250 people in the homestead, and others in nearby St. Jerome. The success of a settlement of Irish Catholics was dependent upon a strong parish priest, but in the beginning they had not even a chapel, traveling to nearby St. Scholastique, now a part of Mirabel, to attend mass or go to confession. This lack was mitigated by the erection of a cross, allowing them to go to it and pray when time did not permit the longer overland trip to the nearest church. Well after their first chapel was finally built in 1835, at the location of the cross, the early settlers continued to refer to a trip to the chapel as "going to The Cross."

Their first priest, Father Blythe, moved on to become the first priest of St. Jerome, and their second lasted only two years, but the third, Father John Falvey, arrived in 1840 and remained for 45 years. A priest in a small community was much more than a spiritual advisor. He was the person that parties would come to in order to settle differences, draft agreements, register a family event such as a birth, death or marriage or offi-

ciate at any community event. He was expected to take the community's needs to the higher authorities and argue them, and he was also expected to have a business mind, be kind and patient, set an example of generosity and establish proper education for the children. Father Falvey, according to all the records, went beyond expectations.

They had no railway connection, nor even a decent road access, and the soil, like so much of the higher lands of the Laurentians, was thinly spread in crevices in a rocky terrain. Farming, with long, cold winters and hot, dry summers left no surpluses. Seeing what they had to deal with, Falvey encouraged his congregants to build mills on the North River and they fared better with lumber, eventually boasting five mills.

Father Falvey was assisted in his mission by the niece of Father Phelan. Sister Mary St. Patrick, born in County Kilkenny, Leinster, Ireland, took her vows at her parents' home in St. Columban and worked for the parish, caring for the sick and teaching at the small school until her death at 77 in 1905.

Most of the Irish of St. Columban eventually moved away, perhaps unwittingly following the pattern of the saints, building different parts of Canada and the United States. They took with them their memories of family gatherings, children playing on grey Laurentian rock, the music, the wagon in a field, horse-drawn and piled high with hay, the Northern Lights and the quiet

of winter. Somewhere in their memories, the quilting bees go on, the pump organ plays and the sap is being gathered in the maple grove. Trout fishing, walking to the schoolhouse by familiar short-cuts, they are all far in the past today, but the Irish descendants, the people of St. Columban, return nostalgically, and inevitably end at the place where the cross once stood, at the church where the cemetery bears witness to their roots.

Over the past year, they have been working diligently to rebuild the cemetery and are contemplating placing a monument that would bear witness to their time in the Laurentian parish. It will be interesting to see what they choose for their descendants who, in their turn, "go to The Cross."

*Ref: www.catholic.org; How the Irish saved Civilization, by Thomas Cahill. Thanks to Fergus Keyes, www.stcolumban-irish.com.*

Contact the author at [joseph@doncaster.ca](mailto:joseph@doncaster.ca)



# OLD JOE

*Hudson's famous holsteins changed Canada's dairy industry*

by Kevin O'Donnell



Visitors to Hudson can't miss the array of rustic and stately homes, many of heritage value, that line the town's Main Road. But only those who venture up a side street flanked by estate pillars will come across one of Canada's most important agricultural heritage buildings. The street is Mount Victoria, so-named in 1837, the year the teenage queen ascended the throne. A large barn and several outbuildings, once the hub of Mount Victoria Farms, dominate the upper end of the street. Locals call the large gambrel-roofed structure 'the Macaulay barn.' The important heritage is not attributable to Victoria or to the stately homes, but to the legacy of a bull—and his master.

Mount Victoria Farms flourished from the early years of the 20th century until 1942, fading into history on the death of its founder, Thomas Bassett (T.B.) Macaulay.

The name lives on among those familiar with Holstein cattle, the mainstay of the modern dairy industry. Dairy men

around the world know the famous Montvic Rag Apple family of Holsteins and its founder bull, Johanna Rag Apple Pabst. It is more than likely that bloodlines of their animals can be traced back to 'Old Joe' and the founder dams of Mount Victoria Farms.

Today T.B. Macaulay would probably be called a 'gentleman farmer,' a slightly pejorative label to describe a man inducted into the Canadian Agriculture Hall of Fame in 1961 for his significant agricultural accomplishments in both plant and cattle breeding. It is true that his upbringing and day job were far removed from the orchards and fields of his beloved Mount Victoria estate, where he made his mark.

Born in Hamilton, Ontario in 1860, Macaulay was destined for a career in insurance. His father, Robertson Macaulay, moved the family to Montreal after joining the Sun Mutual of Montreal. After attending Montreal High School, young Thomas followed his father into the firm. Company actuary at the young age of twenty, he succeeded

his father as president of the Sun Life Assurance Company in 1915.

Although he played a major role in turning Sun Life into a globe-spanning insurance company and was much involved in the affairs of his church and community, Macaulay was drawn to the country. By the 1890s, married to Henrietta Bragg and blessed with five children, he and his family would take a CPR train to the largely English-speaking rural community of Hudson Heights. After a few years boarding with local farmers or renting a cottage for the summer (\$75 for the season, no running water), he bought a 300-acre estate in Hudson Heights from Dougal Pyke in 1899. The following year the family moved into an Adirondack-style log home built from trees cut on the property and situated on an escarpment offering a spectacular view of the Ottawa River.

Mount Victoria Farms seems to have started modestly enough, but as his daughter-in-law Althea Macaulay recalled in a 1985 interview, "The farm just grew and grew." Along with acquir-



ing more land, he developed an interest in breeding. When the Department of Agriculture decided in 1923 to develop hybrid corn suitable for Canadian growing conditions, a large portion of the germplasm for this work came from Macaulay's experiments at Mount Victoria Farms. His citation in the Canadian Agricultural Hall of Fame reads in part, "Mr. Macaulay made a great contribution to agriculture in the selective breeding and in-breeding of corn and carried out extensive experiments with the growing of soy beans under Canadian conditions."

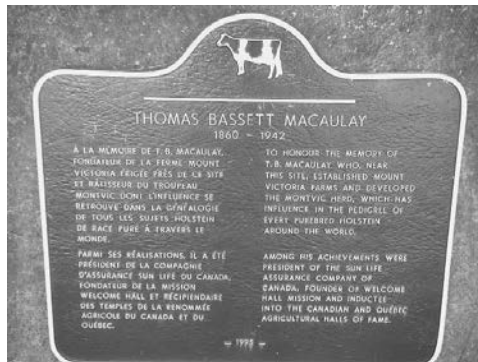
Macaulay's agricultural interests included livestock. Althea Macaulay recalled the various kinds of horses that helped work the farm – Clydesdales, Hackneys, and, to the children's delight, Shetland ponies. He kept pigs and sheep for a period, and even a herd of elk, but T.B.'s main interest was cattle. He started with a herd of French Canadian cattle, travelling around the province seeking good stock. They were succeeded by milking Shorthorns and finally, around 1920, by Holsteins.

**H**olsteins (or Holstein-Friesians) originated in the Netherlands. Farmers in Ontario and Manitoba purchased the original Canadian stock in the early 1880s. Holstein cows were famous for the large quantities of milk they could produce. There was a problem, however: the milk was 'blue', or low in butterfat. The challenge to farmers was to breed animals able to produce the winning combination: large quantities of milk along with a higher quotient of butterfat. Four percent butterfat became the Holy Grail for T.B. Macaulay

In 1924 Macaulay sent his newly-hired farm manager Joe Chandler to Ontario to purchase cows of the well-known Abbekerk and Posch lines. Two years later Chandler traveled to Wisconsin to acquire a five-year-old bull registered as Johanna Rag Apple Pabst 346005. Althea Macaulay recalled that at \$15,000, the family "thought he paid a very high price" but the bull "raised the quality of milk, and Johanna Rag Apple

Pabst's sons and daughters were in great demand."

Indeed. The daughters of 'Old Joe,' as well as the herd's foundation cows Oakhurst Colantha Abberkerk and Ingle-side Pietje Posch, posted impressive '7-day Records of Performance' of rich 4 percent butterfat milk. As the Holstein Canada website points out, "Without a doubt, Johanna Rag Apple Pabst (VG-Extra) ranks as one of the most significant bulls of all time in Canada. Consid-



ered to be the foundation of the present day Rag Apple line, it was through linebreeding at Mount Victoria Farms and dissemination of his great genes throughout the world that today approximately 95% of the world's Holsteins and 99.5% of all Holsteins in Canada are his descendants."

The late '20s and early '30s were the glory days of Mount Victoria Farms. Old Joe and his progeny regularly won top prizes at the Royal Agricultural Win-



ter Fair and other shows. The family outgrew the log home, and Macaulay built a stone mansion on the escarpment, this new house commanding the same breathtaking view. Once a year the laird of Mount Victoria greeted Sun Life employees spilling out of a charter CPR train at the Hudson Heights station. The

revellers climbed aboard gaily-decorated cars and hay wagons to make the mile trip to the farm for a day of picnicking and games in the orchards and fields. The city folk could marvel at the Boss's fields of corn, the stalks as high as fourteen feet, or wander through the apple and pear orchards. They admired the mini-village of farm workers' homes and their social club, the entire scene dominated by the massive double-silo barn with the gambrel roof, the largest in this area.

T.B. Macaulay died on April 3 1942, and at 82 he was still on the board of Sun Life Assurance Company. He was buried in the cemetery of St. James Church, on the banks of the Ottawa River not far from his farm. A few months later, though the country was deep in war, the little town on the Ottawa became the centre of the dairy world. Over 1,500 people flocked to Hudson Heights, "from all over the United States and Eastern Canada," the Holstein-Friesian World exulted, "despite gas rationing, the tire situation or any other reason." They came to attend the Dispersal Sale of the famed Mount Victoria herd of 70 top breeding Holsteins, seven sires and 63 foundation cows. Old Joe had died following a leg injury in 1933, but many of his progeny would be on the block.

A large tent was erected near the barn to provide shelter from the elements. The dairymen bid an average of \$1,926 for the animals. The first cow sold, Montvic Bonheur Pietje, "one of the great cows of all time" sold for \$6,500 after a bidding duel lasting less than two minutes. While Old Joe's legacy was divided and spread around the world, the imposing barn on Mount Victoria Street in modern-day Hudson still stands in mute testimony to the memory of Thomas Bassett Macaulay.

*The barn and outbuildings, surrounded by a few acres of the original farm, remain. This small remnant of a world-famous farm is of considerable heritage and architectural interest. The May/June issue of Quebec Heritage News will recount the efforts being made to preserve this heritage site.*

## PERIOD FAKERY

*Elena Cerrolaza's basement prop shop outfits Yeomen of the Guard*

by Rod MacLeod



In an ordinary basement in a house on a quiet Montreal West street there is a small but thriving manufacture of arms. Not, you will be very pleased to learn, arms that actually shoot—but guns nevertheless, or at any rate one gun. And spears, various torture instruments, and an executioner's chopping block. You should also know that these items are not for sale, or for export, nor intended for any really nefarious purpose. You may see them, if you wish...but you will have to buy a ticket to see *Yeomen of the Guard*, the latest production of the Montreal West Operatic Society (MWOS).

Elena Cerrolaza is the MWOS's set and props designer, as well as chief builder. As an artist, art historian, and general all-purpose tinkerer, she comes by the job naturally. "I love to work with my hands," she says, "and I also

love trying to create convincing-looking objects out of cheap materials."

This is Elena's third year in charge of props, having created baskets of fruit, plates of spaghetti, and pseudo-antique magazines out of bits and pieces from around the house or the dollar store. This year, however, the challenges are much greater, as *Yeomen* is a more ambitious production and director Jeff Freeman is strict about period detail. That means sixteenth century weaponry.

*Yeoman of the Guard* is set in the Tower of London under the Tudors, and features plenty of conniving characters and cases of mistaken identity like all Gilbert and Sullivan shows. In the second act, the Tower jailor, Wilfred Shadbolt, has to come on stage with an arquebus—which he has just fired, conveniently off-stage. How do you go about building an arquebus in 2007, even one

that doesn't have to fire? "Well, first the internet," Elena explains. "It's amazing what you can find just googling." It turns out the Stewart Museum at the Fort on Ile Ste-Hélène has a nice one on display.

She arrived at the Fort after phoning ahead, and even then there was some doubt: "I asked the fellow who answered if they had an arquebuse on display, and he went off for about five minutes and then came back saying they didn't actually have a cornemuse. I had to explain that what I wanted was a firearm, which seemed to worry him a little."

She was much less direct when trying to assemble the arquebus parts. "I went around several hardware stores, always in a bit of a hurry to spot what I wanted. If you look undecided, the assistants come up and ask if they can help you, and I had to be careful. I couldn't

exactly say I'm building a gun!"

Elena found various bits of hardware which, when affixed to a long piece of wood which she sawed and sanded into the shape of a primitive shotgun, mimicked the trigger mechanism and the heraldic devices along the handle and barrel. An actual trigger that moved the flashpan into contact with the wick proved too difficult to devise, but she acquired a specialty drawer handle in the shape of a salamander which gives this arquebus an elegant touch. "I can now tell you anything you want to know about how sixteenth-century firearms worked," she says. Peter Blair, who plays Shadbolt, was delighted with his new toy, although Elena had to warn him to be gentle with her creation.

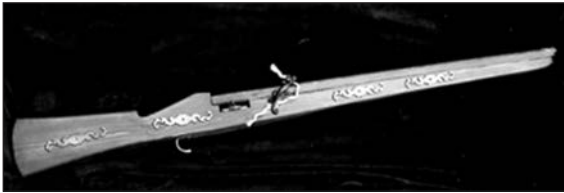
Another challenge was the executioner's block, which Elena carved out of wood. She then molded plaster around the concave part of a half-flowerpot, which is where the prisoners put their heads awaiting the axe—

an early version of the slot in the guillotine. She then painted the whole thing an ebony colour,

with even darker streaks running down the front to simulate execution residue. Fortunately for the props person no one actually loses a head in Yeomen, but the block has to look used.

Next up: partisans for the Yeomen, those long spear-like staffs the guards carry: they are not halberds, apparently, as most people think, including W.S. Gilbert himself. Round dowels, plywood spikes, and dollar-store tassels did the trick here. Elena also fashioned a tree from a 4-by-4 inch fencepost, set in a cement base, wrapped in chicken wire, and covered in papier maché. In between the bigger jobs she made a set of old jangly keys which the heroine has to steal from Shadbolt so she can free her beloved from jail—except that they're not supposed to jangle, so Elena had to make them out of popsicle sticks in such a way that they look like iron keys. And after all this she still has to paint Tudor houses and part of the Tower onto backdrop panels!

Although Elena brings an unusual degree of craftswomanhip to the production of these props, creating such items is part



of a long tradition of community theatre in which cast, crew, and various family members and other hangers-on join in with the sawing, nailing, painting, etc. MWOS also has weekly sewing workshops at which volunteer seamstresses and even seamsters spend hours creating knock-out costumes under the direction of Rachel Germinario, who is a graduate student in theatre design. In years gone by the company hired professionals to do all this work, but it can no longer afford to do so—and by tapping into the considerable in-house talent the results are often spectacular.

One downside to this sort of work is that it takes over your life for a period of time. At the moment, and pretty much until showtime, Elena's house will be congested with these curious items, which are created in her basement workshop but once completed have to be moved out. Visitors may look askance at the executioner's block in the front hall, and at the

tree rising in the middle of the living room—and if they are not careful they may trip over an axe or sit

on a cat-o-nine-tails. "You should hear how my children explain all this to their friends," she laughs.

When it's over, the props designer will take a break from building weapons and put her feet up, hopefully outside in the garden. And the arquebus? "Over the mantelpiece, I think," she says with a touch of pride.

*The arquebus will be fired, partisans waved, keys stolen, and executioner's block almost used—there's always a plot twist to save the character's life at the last minute—on four occasions this spring in Montreal and once in the Townships. The Montreal run will be at the Marymount Adult Centre (formerly Wagar High School), 5785 Parkhaven Avenue in Côte St-Luc, May 4th and 5th at 8 p.m., and May 5th and 6th at 2 p.m. MWOS takes Yeomen on the road to the Haskell Opera House, the theatre on the border straddling Rock Island, QC and Derby Line, VT, on May 19th at 7:30pm. To purchase tickets, contact the Operatic Society by email at: tickets@mwos.org.*

# The Gateway to Your History

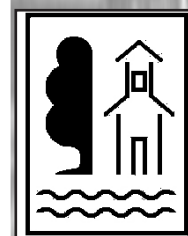


Quebec Tourism Information

Heritage Trails

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[www.quebecheritageweb.com](http://www.quebecheritageweb.com)



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# MECHANICS' INSTITUTE

*Crucible of adult learning, guardian of social justice*  
by Carolyn Shaffer



**I**t's 1853. John Anderson, an escaped slave from Missouri is nearing the Canadian border when a would-be captor attacks him. In panic, Anderson grabs a rock and fights the man off, dealing him a death-blow to the head. Now even more desperate, he continues north, finally slipping into Canada.

All is quiet until 1860, when an American man issues a warrant for his arrest and deportation. At a hearing in Toronto, two out of three judges rule that Anderson must be sent back to the States. Across Canada, a public furor ensues. At a packed meeting held at the Mechanics' Hall in Montreal on the frosty night of January 17, 1861, prominent citizens including the mayor get up one by one to speak passionately in Anderson's defence.

Susan McGuire, former vice-president of the Atwater Library, alluded to the above story in her opening remarks at the library on March 6th 2007. Attended by about sixty dedicated supporters, the event highlighted the founding of the Mechanics' Institute of Montreal 178 years ago. The Atwater Library of the Mechanics' Institute is Canada's oldest lending library, and it grew out of the Institute's tradition of social justice, concern for

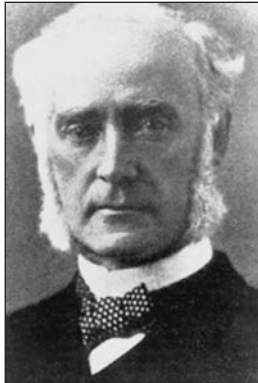
working people and minorities, and emphasis on technical knowledge and innovation.

Alan Hustak, well known Montreal journalist and author of several books on the city's history, began his talk with a description of the living conditions in Montreal around the time the Mechanics' Institute was founded in 1828. "Back then, when you were sailing up the St. Lawrence toward Montreal, you'd probably smell the town before you saw it," he said, noting that around 27,000 people lived in the city at that time, mostly in the area we call Old Montreal, but also spilling up St. Lawrence Boulevard. What is now St. Antoine Street was a garbage-filled creek. Sidewalks were made of wood under which street rubbish was swept. This was fine in winter, but in spring, "the sweet scent was rather unappetizing," Hustak quipped. It was a garrison town, he added, "with horses and cows in the streets." The *Montreal Gazette*, which was then published three times a week, reported that "intoxication, profanity and disturbances" were common to Montreal's unpaved, unlit, alternately frozen, dusty and muddy streets.

Educational opportunities were very limited and illiteracy rates were high in the 1820s. McGill University

had not yet opened and there were no technical colleges. Immigrants' choices were even more restricted because the various churches ran the schools. At that time, master craftsmen had stopped housing their apprentices, who were spending increasing amounts of time in taverns, to the chagrin of upstanding members of society. As *Gazette* writer and historian Edgar Andrew Collard described it much later, their message was, "Stay out of the taverns, save your money and improve your minds!"

Thus it was that a group of Montreal's business and intellectual leaders, several of them Freemasons, came together to form the Mechanics' Institute, with the objective of providing educational opportunities for young tradesmen and professionals in the rapidly growing industries of Montreal. It was to be non-political and open to those of any religious affiliation.



**W**hen it first formed as the Mechanics Institution, the patron was Sir James Kempt, Governor of Lower Canada, and among the leading early members were Rev. Henry Esson, pastor of St. Gabriel's Presbyterian Church; John Molson of John Molson and Sons; Horatio Gates, merchant and one of the founders of the Bank of Montreal; Louis-Joseph Papineau, lawyer and Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Lower Canada; Louis Gury, Sheriff of Montreal, and Moses Judah Hayes, businessman and sword bearer of the Masonic Provincial Grand Lodge.

The first Mechanics' Institute had opened five years previously, in London, in 1823. Today, a college at the University of London, it still holds evening classes for working people. Montreal's Institute was the first in continental British North America, and by the late 1850s, there were at least fifteen branches in Quebec alone. The numbers

reached nearly 200 in Ontario by the 1890s, and there were hundreds if not thousands across the United Kingdom, United States, Australia and New Zealand.

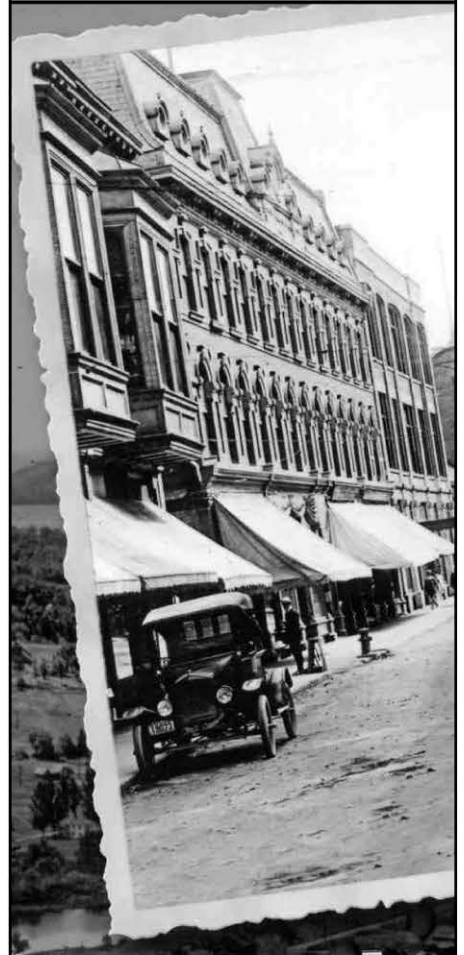
The term "mechanic" had a much broader meaning than it does now, Susan McGuire explained. At first, it referred to the elite of the working class in both technical and professional fields. Later, membership ranged across social strata from shoemakers and bricklayers to doctors and lawyers. Montreal's Mechanics' Institute changed its name to the Atwater Library of the Mechanics Institute in 1962, reflecting its broader focus, however the library function had always been a key element of the institute.

Although it started to offer day classes at the elementary level in 1833, they were soon dropped. The Institute offered lectures on topics from vegetable physiology to the life of Joan of Arc, and evening classes for working apprentices in reading, writing, arithmetic, French and drawing. At the beginning, the library had technical texts and a reading room with newspapers. By the 1940s, it was the premier technical reference library in Canada with about 40,000 volumes, but the technical texts were gradually phased out after the opening of specialized schools, and the emphasis switched to fiction, non-fiction, travel and Canadian history.

Operations were suspended in 1835 as a consequence of the cholera epidemics in the 1830s and the tense political times that culminated in the Rebellions of 1837-38 in Lower Canada, but the institute started up again as the Mechanics' Institute in 1840 with builder and contractor John Redpath at the helm. By the 1850s, its peak years, the original membership of 200 had swelled to 1,250. Depending on a mixture of government grants, membership fees and donations, "things were always up and down,"

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McGuire said. The exact year women were allowed to become permanent members is unknown, although McGuire thinks it was some time after 1850. Curiously, in 1843, facing a slump in membership, the Institute's directors permitted women to join—but that lasted only one year.

**B**y the early 20th century, the business and industrial sector had swallowed the neighbourhood around the Mechanics' Institute on St. James Street, and in 1911 the building was sold and a new site was chosen in a more residential location at the intersection of Atwater and Tupper Streets. The new building was finished in 1920 and opened that same year.

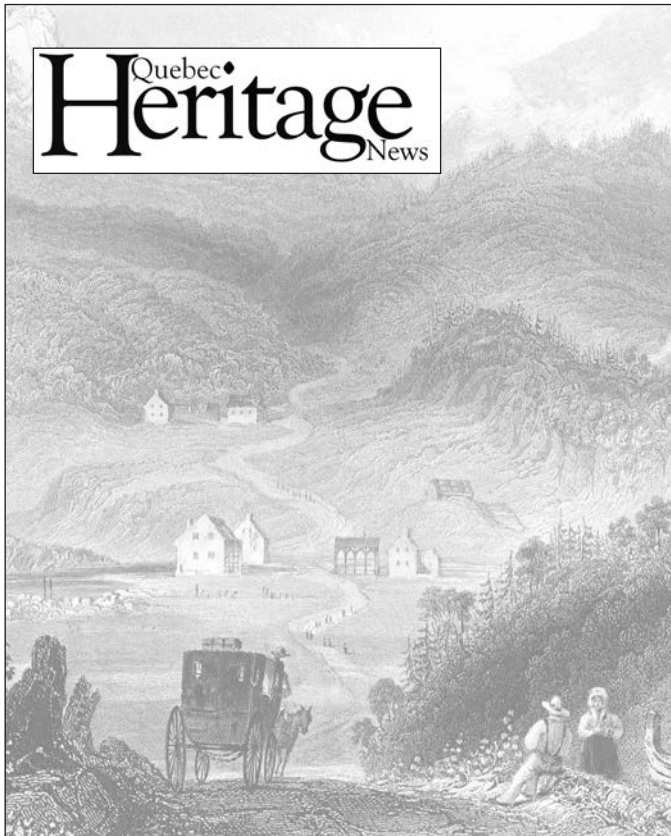
Today, the Atwater Library retains its focus on providing access to education through its library, lecture series and website ([www.atwaterlibrary.ca](http://www.atwaterlibrary.ca)), and to technology through programs in its computer centre. In 1984 it became the first computer centre to open to the public in Montreal. The library's his-



toric emphasis on aid to working people and minorities is a legacy that continues. As well, it is the home of the Quebec Writers' Federation, the Association of the English-Language Publishers of Quebec, the Montreal Children's Library and the Peter McGill Community Council. The Atwater Library building is also the new home of The Stanley Bréhaut Ryerson Research Centre (<http://www.fondationaubin.org>) whose collection focuses in large part on Canadian labour history.

Following up on the story of

John Anderson, the escaped slave, McGuire recommended an article written by Edgar Andrew Collard published in the Gazette in 1956. It described how Montreal's mayor, Charles Séraphin Rodier, along with many other prominent citizens "spoke with the force and fire of indignation" at the 1861 meeting at the Mechanics' Institute to discuss Anderson's case. William Hingston, secretary of the Institute, and a prominent Montreal doctor, was an active agitator on Anderson's behalf. Public indignation eventually carried the day and the original judicial decision to send Anderson back to the U.S. was overturned. By refusing to send him back to the U.S., says Richard Lord, a retired Montreal engineer and immigration judge, Canada made its first major decision independent of the British courts. Collard quoted Mayor Rodier as saying that he "felt proud to live in a city where there was so much spirit of philanthropy as he had seen exhibited (that) evening."



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## REVIEWS



## *The October Crisis, 1970: An Insider's View*

By William Tetley  
McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007  
235 pages; \$39.95

Before 9/11, before the arrest and detention of Canadians for secret security reasons had received the blessing of so-called anti-terror laws, there was the Front-de-libération-du-Québec (FLQ) and the October Crisis. Nearly forty years have passed since the FLQ brought their campaign of revolutionary violence to its murderous climax, and still the memory of those turbulent days following the abduction of British trade minister James Cross has the power to stir debate. Despite an impressive accumulation of academic literature devoted to the subject, no aspect of these events has received so much attention as the methods used by the Quebec and federal governments to defuse the crisis.

William Tetley, now a McGill law professor, served in Quebec premier Robert Bourassa's cabinet when Cross and subsequently Bourassa's labour minister Pierre Laporte were kidnapped. His book rejects the view repeated by social commentators, historians and other intellectuals that the official response to FLQ terrorism—imposing the War Measures Act—was a gross abuse of civil rights. To his credit as a scholar, he has mustered a considerable body of research, historical analysis and personal recollections to support his case.

So simple do the events of that sombre autumn and their consequences for history appear in hindsight, how crude the reviled provisions of the War Measures Act seem next to the sleek efficiency of today's public security apparatus, which can nimbly detain suspected enemies of the state indefinitely and even deport people abroad for torture, safely unencumbered by Canadian constitutional protections. Of course, the first

threats to any civil society emerge not at the point of a gun or in the blast of a bomb, but when ordinary citizens habitually prefer the easy lie to a hard truth.

One of the enduring misconceptions of the War Measures Act regulations is that their application in October 1970 took away all civil rights in Canada; in fact, as Tetley points out, the regulations permitted public meetings and demonstrations against the government, even against the Act itself—only aid or support of the FLQ terrorists was prohibited. Another myth is that the application of emergency war measures reduced or interfered with the Quebec governments' political authority, a revisionist view of history that has served over the years to stoke nationalist rhetoric but which Tetley reminds us has no basis in law or history: throughout the crisis it was the chief of the Sureté du Québec, reporting to the provincial government who was in charge of all police and security operations, even after the Canadian army was called in for support. The War Measures Act was, and indeed could only ever be invoked, after the city of Montreal and the Quebec government made this request to Ottawa.

Why these facts bear repeating is central to this book's second, and in many ways more serious contention: that the existing literature on the October Crisis is overwhelmingly the work of FLQ sympathizers "actively at work with their publications, conferences and websites." A main impetus for the present work may have been a 2002 conference on Bourassa's career organized by former FLQ member Robert Comeau and jointly sponsored by the Université du Québec à Montréal and Concordia University during which former mem-

bers of Bourassa's cabinet and Parti-Quebécois figures were noticeably absent. "Instead," recalls Tetley, "a Laval professor presented an outrageously and factually unsupported theory that Bourassa was the murderer of Pierre Laporte..."

It's hard to read *The October Crisis, 1970* without reflecting on that paradox of democratic freedom: its preservation occasionally needs defending by extraordinary means. Perhaps in some way it is a tribute to the strength of such freedom that so many nationalist politicians, including future Quebec premiers René Lévesque and Jacques Parizeau, could publicly advocate negotiating with terrorists for the release of Cross and Laporte without condemning FLQ violence, "but instead condemn the action of the governments of Quebec Ontario and Canada." Surely it is to the credit of Canadian society, warts and all, that such figures, as Tetley writes could "give comfort to terrorists whose cause was the weakening, if not the overthrow of the Quebec government" by their statements, if not in deed. So let it be remembered that among the jailed and convicted criminals whose freedom the terrorists and their sympathizers sought in exchange for the lives of innocent men, were killers and thieves responsible for six violent deaths in the 1960s.

Another yet unanswered question concerning the events of October 1970, a question that clearly continues to haunt Tetley, is the true measure of support the FLQ terrorists enjoyed at the height of the crisis. Drawing from his review of Pierre Duschene's 2001 biography of Jacques Parizeau, former "felquiste" Carole de Vault's 2002 memoir, *The In-*

former, as well as Marc Laurendeau's 1974 study, *Les Québécois Violent* and works by Louis Fournier, Serge Mongeau and Manon Leroux, Tetley brings into question crucial findings of a 1981 report, commissioned by Lévesque's Parti-Québécois government to examine the October Crisis, in particular the official claim that the FLQ had only 35 members by 1970; he puts the count at more than 180 persons who were "FLQ members, participants, and sympathizers or were involved in related movements or related events that turned violent." He's even posted them on his website, [www.mcgill.ca/maritimelaw/crisis](http://www.mcgill.ca/maritimelaw/crisis).

Which brings Tetley to his book's most compelling charge of all: that far from simply allowing factual errors to insinuate themselves into the historical record, many influential persons "with so much to forget and to hide" about their own role during this period have kept deliberately quiet. "René Lévesque" notes Tetley, "wrote almost daily newspaper articles criticizing the Quebec and Ottawa governments during the October Crisis. Yet after the brutal

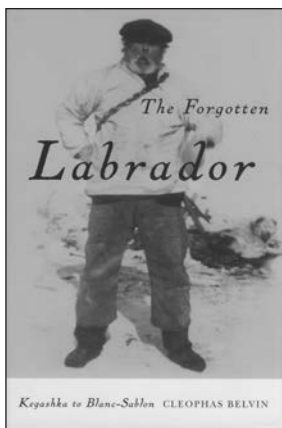
murder of Laporte, Lévesque soon turned to writing revisionist articles, and he continued to do so for years afterwards." Could it be that some of Bourassa's most vocal and influential critics, including Lévesque, Parizeau and, *Le Devoir* editor and publisher Claude Ryan, various union leaders, and other self-styled "eminent personalities" who called on the Quebec government to essentially "recognize the legitimacy of terrorist kidnapping as a solution to political problems" actually envisioned some kind of role for themselves in a "parallel government?"

In the end, Tetley takes to task the narrow scope and findings of the 1981 Duchaine Report, which he concludes "has to be seen as a cover-up, carried out by a party anxious to conceal the story of its role in the October Crisis."

To be fair, Tetley is hardly an unbiased observer. However, for a member of Bourassa's inner circle who contributed to the fateful decision to call in the army and eventually to ask for the application of the War Measures Act, resulting in the arrest and detention of

nearly five hundred people— four hundred and thirty five of whom were later released without charge— he also writes with formidable insight and frank acknowledgment of the government's own mistakes: the sweep of the arrests was too broad, many detainees were denied the right to speak to a lawyer or their families right away, nor was the public given any immediate explanation for the government's actions. Earlier this year, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that the security certificate provisions of Canada's Immigration and Refugee Protection Act are unconstitutional and in violation of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Somehow, it seems hardly likely that the plight of Mahmoud Jaballah, Mohammad Mahjoub and Hassan Almrei, who've been held in prison in Canada for more than five years without charge or conviction or even knowledge of the evidence against them, will ever figure in the memoirs of any current federal cabinet minister.

*Reviewed by Dwane Wilkin*



## *The Forgotten Labrador: From Kegashka to Blanc-Sablon*

*By Cleophas Belvin*

*McGill-Queens Press, 228 pages, 28 images*

*\$39.95*

**B**arren, rocky hills and long, brutal winters led some early visitors to believe that this remote, 400-kilometre long swath of coastline hugging the lower north shore of the St. Lawrence was the most inhospitable place in the world. However, seal-hunting and fishing drew a surprising number of Native peoples to the Labrador Peninsula over the millennia, among them Inuit, Innu, and the Beothuk, whom European colonists later exterminated. Cleophas Belvin's aptly titled new work is the first to recount the history of those who've lived for genera-

tions on the peninsula's Quebec side.

Starting in the early 1800s, formerly itinerant French- and English- speaking fishermen decided to settle on the coast and it is the forever changing lifestyle of these "Coasters" whom Belvin strives admirably to describe. Ambitious though this book is, the fascinating account of these settlements suffers from weak framing and a lack of commentary that cannot be entirely blamed on the scarcity of historic material.

Decades before Cartier, some of the first contacts between Aborigines and Europeans occurred along this coast,

when Basque whalers and Breton fishermen would spend many summer months ashore processing their catch. With the beginning of a French colony, favoured entrepreneurs were quick to value the Quebec-Labrador coast's marine wealth, and were granted seigneuries. Teams of fishermen would leave Quebec in the spring to engage in the seal hunt, the salmon-fishery and the fur-trade before returning home in the fall.

These local industries, which had been partially destroyed during the Seven Years' War, were rebuilt by the British. There was much furious letter-

writing to London as representatives from the Province of Quebec squabbled with those from Newfoundland over who was better suited to protect such an isolated but lucrative place from American fishermen, who destroyed nets and huts during wartime and generally disregarded the rule of law during peacetime. The stretch of coastline switched hands many times and in 1825 Quebec's limits were set just east of Blanc-Sablon.

At the beginning of settlement, many Coasters seemed to lead quite comfortable lives by selling seal and salmon to passing trading vessels. Unfortunately, Quebec and Newfoundland officials were more intent on symbolic control than actually backing up claims of ownership through regular naval patrols. The decades-long territorial dispute, a penchant for inaction and a lack of local management permitted both the coast's eventual overcrowding and continued foreign encroachment. Shockingly, Belvin shows that the large-scale ruin of the region's seal fishery was already complete by the middle of the nineteenth century. Ever-resourceful, residents of the Quebec-Labrador coast quickly focused their efforts on cod.

**A**round this time Catholic and Protestant missionaries started to travel thousands of kilometres in yearly dog-sled trips that visited the many isolated hamlets and cottages dotting the coast. Slowly, people began settling in larger villages, drawn by the churches, schools and hospitals being established by religious orders. Quebec officials, while sometimes still lethargic, began investing in infrastructure, setting up regular ferries, mail service and telegraph services. By the twentieth century, many improvements were coming at the behest of communities that eventually banded together to push for local representation and municipal status.

Seasonal fluctuations in the cod fishery brought bouts of prosperity followed by years of hardship. Often residents were forced to run up debt from monopolistic trading companies. Belvin notes how by 1911, one local official was seriously considering relocating hundreds of families to coastal

British Columbia. War booms helped tide the industry over. Through government initiatives and subsidies, fishermen tried to keep up with the technological advances in the fishery and increased competition. But gill nets and longliner boats, along with government mismanagement, led to over-fishing: by 1992, the cod were all but gone.

While conveniences such as roads, electricity and plumbing began to arrive in the 1960s, Belvin points out that today many of the younger Coasters only know the thoroughly modern lifestyle now present in these communities. And with the timeless reliance on the sea now disappearing, the new generation of residents from Kegashka to Blanc-Sablon find themselves once again trying to redefine their relationship to their coast and their traditions.

As a former researcher and archivist, Belvin is preoccupied more with chronicling the history of the Quebec-Labrador coast than making much of an argument, but that's understandable for a pioneering work such as this. Yet even in a regional saga one expects a certain narrative focus. Occasionally, the author will develop a topic in detail without tying its relevance back to an overall theme, or leave some questions unanswered. While he is at the mercy of scarce historical resources—one cannot forget that the region's population has never exceeded six thousand—in the end consistent flow is at the author's discretion. Tackling barely-documented issues often leads to copy-and-paste generalisations, and when dealing with events within the author's lifetime, an inability to colourfully illustrate the Coasters' life ways cannot possibly stem from a lack of sources. Also, the writing is at times dreary and opaque, with, for example, long lists of people, terms or places that the author assumes everyone can appreciate. Most will buy this book because they already have an interest in region, and *The Forgotten Labrador* is a good introduction to its European heritage, but much remains to be written before readers can become as intimate as they might like to be with the Coasters' stories.

*Reviewed by Tyler Wood*

## A MEETING OF THE PEOPLE

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Well over a hundred people turned up at McCord Museum for *Montreal Mosaic*, a day-long conference on the city's multicultural history, hosted on April 1 by the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network (QAHN).

Thanks to a delicious buffet lunch showcasing a cross-section of Montreal's multiethnic cuisine, there was ample opportunity to network. The Honourable Marlene Jennings, MP for Notre Dame de Grace/Lachine, Dr. Victoria Dickenson, director of the McCord Museum, and Rod MacLeod, QAHN president, delivered the conference's opening remarks.

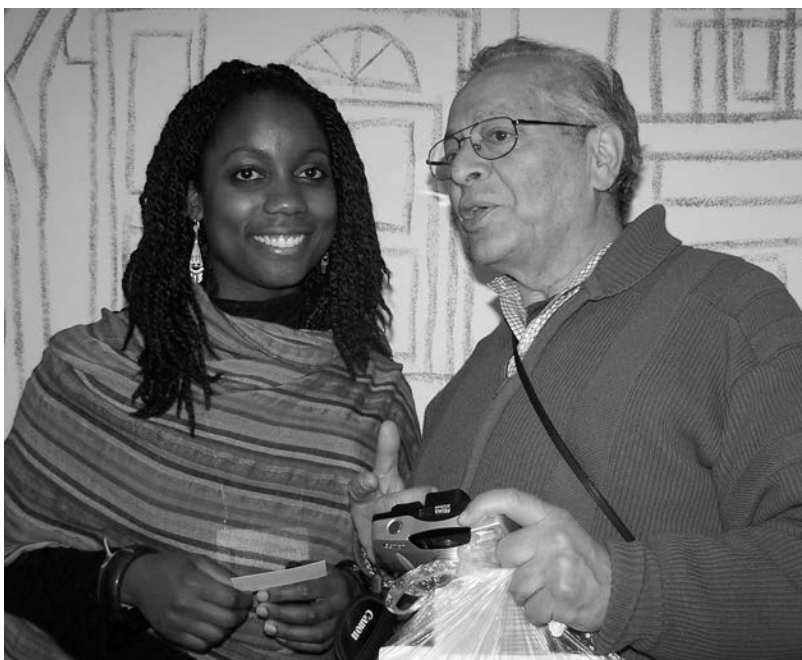
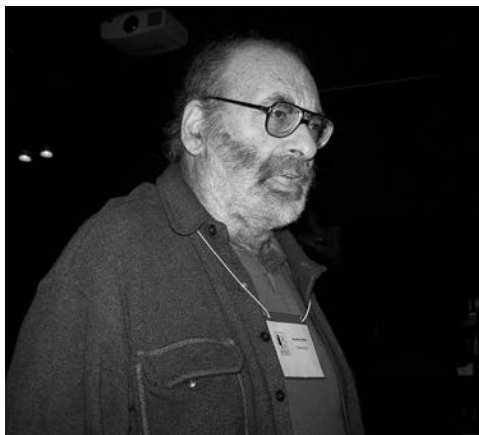
Eleven speakers, including historians Dorothy Williams, Stan Asher and Matthew Barlow, playwright Rahul Varma, heritage activist Dinu Bumbaru and local community leaders presented their views on issues ranging from racial prejudice to language and cultural identity. Discussion often touched on the difficulty that some members of historic English-speaking cultural communities have accepted the term "anglophone."

The day included a documentary film screening as well as a Greek musical duo and Afghan and Scottish dancing.

While participants generally acknowledged the special identity and cultural diversity of Montreal, the most troubling single message to emerge from the symposium was that members of cultural minorities in the city continue to feel that their history and contributions to society are often overlooked or not recognized at all by their fellow Quebecers. It's hoped that this gathering will encourage greater future collaboration among Montreal's cultural communities on a range of heritage issues.

A detailed summary of the Montreal Mosaic conference proceedings will be posted on the QAHN website as soon as it is available. To request a complete list of speakers and a copy of the Mosaic programme, please send an email to [home@qahn.org](mailto:home@qahn.org).





# Montreal Mosaic

2007

Heritage summit  
at the McCord

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Photos by  
Renee Arshinoff





## HINDSIGHT

*Parallel Perspectives*

by Patrick Donovan

In a recent interview for the literary magazine *Spirale*, writer David Homel argues that the idea of “Anglo-Québécois” literature is baseless. Homel thinks “Anglo-Montreal” is a more appropriate adjective, there being no sign of literary life outside the metropolis.

I was baffled when I read this. Not only because Quebec City writers have won QWF literary prizes over the past few years, but also because I have been compiling a bibliography that suggests a vibrant history of English-language writing in Quebec City. The same could probably be said for other regions of the province, and deserves a closer look.

The story of English-language writing in Quebec City begins soon after the British conquest. The first to sit down and write was Frances Brooke, who came to Quebec with her husband in 1763. She wrote North America’s first novel, *The History of Emily Montague*. “The elegant arts are unknown here,” she writes, “the rigor of the climate suspends the very powers of the understanding; what then must become of those of the imagination?”

But the imagination flourished. The eighteenth century saw the publication of several long poems extolling the beauty of Quebec’s landscape and praising British might. The only one by a local writer was Abram’s Plains, published in Quebec by newspaperman and librarian Thomas Cary. There are others, written in the same genre: J. Patrick’s *Quebec: A Poetical Essay* (1760), J. Mackay’s *Quebec Hill* (1797) and Cornwall Bayley’s *Canada* (1806).

Some early poets were more than mere parrots for the Empire. George Longmore spent the first sixteen years of his life in Quebec City before being posted abroad in England, Mauritius and Cape Town. He wrote several poetic works, among them *The Charivari* (1824), which recounts the tale of a wedding procession gone haywire in Montreal. Irish-born Adam Kidd, who lived in Quebec City throughout the 1820s, wrote a collection of poems about evil Europeans and noble natives entitled *The Huron Chief* (1830). Bishop G.J. Mountain’s *Songs of the Wilderness* (1846) is another collection of poems from

this period, well-received upon publication.

From the 1840s to the 1940s, the roman du terroir was a dominant form in French Quebec, glorifying the rural peasantry and extolling traditional moral and religious values. A few examples within this genre exist in English, such as the work of Quebec-born James-Edward Le Rossignol, whose *Jean Baptiste* (1915) glorifies the life of the habitants. Whereas Le Rossignol praises their self-reliance, *The Little Sergeant* (1905) commends them for their loyalty to Empire during the American invasion. It was written by J.M. Harper, rector of the High School of Quebec.

Many Quebec City writers collected stories from the past, retold history as fiction, or wove folktales of their own. The work of George Moore Fairchild, E.C. Woodley, James and Charlotte MacPherson, and Hazel Boswell are examples of this. Lévis-born Louis Fréchette, the first Quebecker to be lauded by the Académie Française, tried his hand at writing in English with a collection entitled *Christmas in French Canada* (1899).

The popular fiction of the period reveals much about the relationship between different classes and linguistic groups in Quebec City. Anna Chapin Ray, who split time between New Haven, Connecticut and Quebec City, wrote over 40 romances. By *The Good Sainte Anne* (1904) and *Hearts and Creeds* (1906) are examples of her work dealing with French and English society in Quebec. Some writers tried to create new popular genres, such as J.M. Harper’s *That Norward Business Romance* (1905), a timely tale where the quest for a girl’s heart gets in the way of a colonization railway scheme.

A history of local literature would be incomplete without a look at F.G. Scott and F.R. Scott. The former became rector of St. Matthew’s Anglican Church in Quebec at the age of 25. His poems were well-regarded albeit conservative, focusing on the landscape and British imperial might. Canon Scott served in World War I and played a part in the propaganda effort through his writing. His son, F.R. Scott, broke with his father’s tradition and profoundly influenced the evolution of our artistic culture. He is credited with

bringing Canada into the modern era. Born in Quebec City, this graduate from the High School of Quebec later became a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford. In addition to a poetic output that garnered many awards, Scott translated French-Canadian poets, played a part in founding the New Democratic Party, and even went to Burma to help build a socialist state.

The 1960s and 1970s saw few new faces on the literary scene. Fleur Gameau-Whitworth echoes the Trudeau doctrine in her novel entitled *Two Families: One Culture* (1966). Gordon Pape, who lived in Quebec City for many years (and now writes books about RRSPs), penned a political thriller entitled *Chain Reaction* (1979) where the independence issue rears its head. Quebec-born poet Grant Johnson also published his first book, *Compass of Open Veins* (1970), during this period, following a few decades later with *Mirrors on Uncertain Mornings* (1988).

In recent years, English-language writing has picked up momentum in Quebec City. Although the English-speaking population is at a historic low of less than 2%, it is encouraging that more is being published by local writers than ever before. We have seen the rise of fiction and poetry written by visible minorities who have migrated to Quebec. Neil Bissoondath, H. Nigel Thomas, Nalini Warriar, and Madeleine Thien are the most prominent examples. Although their works are usually set outside the city, Nalini Warriar’s novel *The Enemy Within* is a rare example of an immigrant’s tale set in Quebec City. Set against the backdrop of the 1995 referendum, the novel features long walks through Vieux Quebec in which Sita, an Indian immigrant, confronts her own sense of belonging and difficult marriage.

While these authors are associated with Quebec City, English-Quebec is composed of many small communities that often follow parallel courses and live in ignorance of each other, lending importance to a magazine like this one. Perhaps David Homel’s comments reflect our parallel perspectives. Perhaps the English-Quebec community that he is a part of really isn’t aware of the wealth that the sum of those communities represents.



## EVENT LISTINGS

### Outaouais

Aylmer Heritage Association  
Info: (819) 684-6809

**May 16**, 7 p.m.

La Basoche, Centre culturel de Vieux  
Aylmer. 120 rue Principale  
Heritage House Awards and Annual Gen-  
eral Meeting

**May 21**, 7:00 p.m.

Gatineau Valley Historical Society  
Info: (514) 925-1404 or (514) 932-6688  
Annual Dinner  
Guest speaker: Fred Ryan, Publisher and  
Editor of the West Quebec Post and  
Aylmer Bulletin

### Laurentians

Morin Heights Historical Association  
Info: 450-226-2618

**April 15**, 1 p.m.

Morin Heights library  
Annual General Meeting

**July 14**

House & Garden Tour  
Featuring historic homes and beautiful  
gardens

### Eastern Townships

Colby Curtis Museum, Stanstead  
Spring Lecture Series  
Info: (819) 876-7322

**May 12**

Ronald Sutherland author of *How Elvis  
Saved Quebec* and *The Massawippi Mon-  
ster and Other Friends of Mine*.

**Montreal**, April-June

McCord Museum  
Info: (514) 398-5045

**April 26**, 1:30 to 3:30 p.m.

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Learn how to recognize a signed Notman  
photograph in this hands-on workshop.  
Bring in your old pictures. (Bilingual)

**May 1**, 1:30 to 3 p.m.

*Embroidery and Moose Hair*

Aboriginal artistic tradition and its con-  
servation. With Anne MacKay, chief con-  
servator. Given in English

**May 17**, 1:30 to 3:30 p.m.

*The Silver Collection of the McCord Mu-  
seum*

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lection and the stories associated with it.  
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**June 15-17**, *Roots 2007*

The Quebec Family History Society  
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the largest genealogical conference in  
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Program details and registration form:  
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### Westmount

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

**May 17**, 7 to 9 p.m.

Westmount Public Library  
Spring Lecture Series  
*'Greenhythe', a Country Home in 1846*  
Speaker: Michael Ellwood  
Members: Free  
Non-members: \$5.

### Quebec City

Morrin Centre  
Info: (418) 694-9147

**June 10**, 8:00 p.m.

'Les Irlandais de Québec au 19e siècle'  
Historian Mathieu Rompré shares re-  
search on the Irish of Sillery in 1870.  
Marie-Claude Belley will present her  
study of Irish famine orphans. Enjoy this  
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\$10, members and students, \$12 others

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