

NO SHOES LIKE SNOWSHOES: SHERBROOKE'S HISTORIC WINTER CLUB

\$10

# Heritage

Quebec

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News



## On the (Rail) Road Again

A History of Montreal's Black Porters

## May I Have this Square Dance?

Ellis Wilson's Liting Legacy

## Sense of Belonging

Mile End, Greenwood, Gaspé, and the ETRC Explore Heritage

# Quebec Heritage News

**EDITOR**

RODERICK MACLEOD

**PRODUCTION**

DAN PINESE; MATTHEW FARFAN

**PUBLISHER**

QUEBEC ANGLOPHONE  
HERITAGE NETWORK  
3355 COLLEGE  
SHERBROOKE, QUEBEC  
J1M 0B8

**PHONE**

1-877-964-0409  
(819) 564-9595

**FAX**

(819) 564-6872

**CORRESPONDENCE**

EDITOR@QAHN.ORG

**WEBSITES**

QAHN.ORG  
QUEBECHERITAGEWEB.COM  
100OBJECTS.QAHN.ORG

**PRESIDENT**

GRANT MYERS

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

MATTHEW FARFAN

**PROJECT & CONTRACT STAFF**

CHRISTINA ADAMKO; HEATHER DARCH;  
GLENN PATTERSON; DWANE WILKIN

**BOOKKEEPER**

MARION GREENLAY

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Cover photo: Members of the Sherbrooke Snow Shoe Club, 2010.  
Sherbrooke Snow Shoe Club archives.

## EDITOR'S DESK

*Historic Fiction*

by Rod MacLeod

*How strange the change from major to minor*

- Cole Porter,  
"Ev'ry Time We Say Goodbye"

Boy, it's great to be historic.

No matter what happens, I know that I can get health and legal services in English, and I can proceed through the rest of my life confident that the Quebec government understands me and, in a limited but emphatic way, admires me. I am part of the best treated minority in the country, a status that clearly puts me above millions of Canadians who look and sound like minorities.

In other words, I am a creature of privilege. When I hear politicians reassuring me and my fellow Historic Anglos that I have nothing to fear from the linguistic and cultural measures of upcoming legislation, I hear undertones of clubby reassurance. Don't worry: you're not one of *them*.

Quebec's language legislation has always had the effect of dividing Anglophones. People often claim that it is all about suppressing "the English" or eradicating the English language, but I think the big issue has been the battle over souls. Bill 101 very pointedly articulated rights for Anglos – certain Anglos, at least. It also, implicitly, defined this group as a minority – a status that, like the acquisition of language rights, seemed distinctly odd. For most of the previous couple of centuries, English speakers did not feel like a minority here at all, because the continent was their oyster – to say nothing of Britain and the Commonwealth. And most people with other mother tongues who came to Quebec understood the importance of that

oyster – even if for religious reasons they couldn't eat shellfish. Language laws set out to break up this natural alliance around the English language.

Given the hegemonic strength of British culture across North America, it is odd to talk, however admiringly, about the Quebec Anglo community as having its "own" institutions. Such talk stems from peculiar hindsight, born of an ahistorical assumption that the status of French speakers and the French lan-

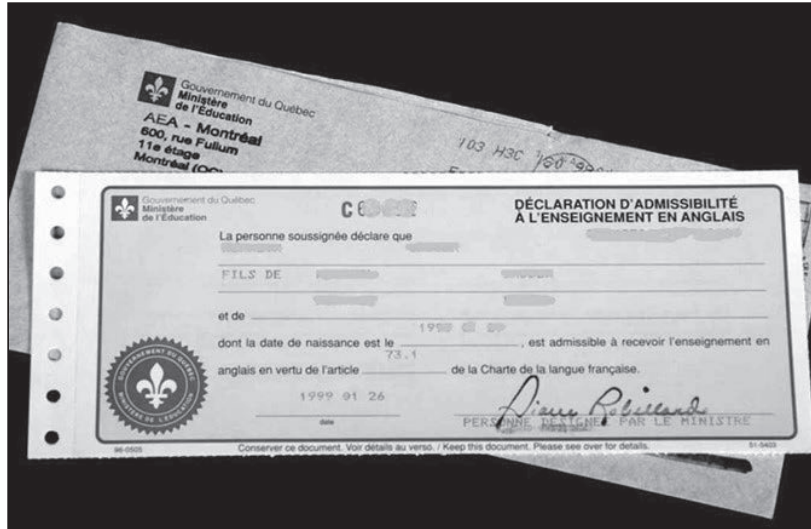
ular Francophones strove to carve out a separate space, in such organizations as the Institut Canadien or the Banque du Peuple. In this corner of North America, it was Francophones who created their "own" institutions.

To talk of "historic Anglophones," moreover, is to assume a monolithic community with no internal divisions, tensions, or prejudices – which was never the case for Quebec's English speakers. At no point was there a uniting cul-

tural thread; instead there were Scots and Irish and Jews and Blacks, Protestant and Catholic, Orange and Green, Sephardic and Ashkenazi, and so on to the ends of the censuses. Only by the 1960s, as old boundaries thinned and the world talked of civil rights, did people who had the English language in common cease to find all those quirks of identity so limiting. And only by the following decade, when Quebec became officially and

publicly French, did this cohort begin to think of itself as a community. Whether we howled about it or not, we became "Anglophones."

At the same time came the wedge. For two centuries, newcomers to Quebec had sought to integrate into the North American mainstream while Francophones preferred to carve out their own space. Creating the modern Quebec state meant reversing both those tendencies. Bill 22 sought to limit access to education in English to children who could prove they already had a sufficient command of the language. Bill 101, less arbitrary, replaced proven proficiency with an appeal to history: if, and only if, at least one of your parents had gone to school in English in Quebec (later expanded to Canada) you could do so



guage enjoyed today was inevitable. We forget the long struggle to keep the culture alive, beginning with the determined pressure from Catholic leaders to retain control over Catholic institutions – a core element of identity politics in the nineteenth century. Meanwhile, movers and shakers of British background, people with strong continental and transatlantic connections, were busily building public institutions such as schools, hospitals, banks, libraries, and museums as critical components of modern society. As was the case in most metropolitan centres across North America, these institutions were intended to be universal. Seeing themselves potentially lost in this universe, Francophone Catholics reacted by asserting special rights to separate institutions. Even sec-



too. If you were fresh off the boat, you would be directed to a French school – regardless of whether that boat came from Asia, Africa, England, California, or Jamaica. We who had been here for a while had rights; *they* did not.

And from somewhere in this process arose the notion of “Allophone,” an amorphous term that sometimes suggested ethnic distinction and sometimes referred to those deemed ineligible for English education. That the vast majority of people in this category once embraced English as a common tongue is conveniently overlooked in an effort to drive that wedge between supposedly historic and non-historic types. The term is as nonsensical as it is divisive. If “Allophone” is to mean someone whose mother tongue is not English (or French) then it would apply to huge numbers of immigrants over the years who originally spoke something else but embraced the English language in Quebec – including my grandfather, who grew up (in P.E.I.) speaking Gaelic. If, on the other hand, the term is to mean those not eligible for English schooling, then my

academic friend from the U.K. who came to Montreal 20 years ago to teach but who still struggles in French would be an Allophone – which is bizarre. Today, pundits are up in arms because it has been revealed that most students attending English Cegeps are “in fact” Allophones – a concept that makes sense only if you think the distinction has historical validity, which it does not.

All Quebec Anglophones are historic because they all have a history. They are Anglophones because they have an affinity with the English language and an interest in the history of those who have shared this affinity. For some, it is a question of *when*, not because: they feel this affinity when they wear their Anglo hat, and at other moments may embrace Peruvian, Egyptian, Greek, Indian or French culture. Some are even primarily French speaking. None of this has anything to do with the history of institutions, or the language of services provided at such institutions. And yet, the framers of legislation insist that they know better, that they can decide how people identify cul-

turally, that their narrow understanding of history is the correct one. Many who argue differently are typically patted on the head and assured that You’re All Right, Jack. No thanks.

Don’t get me wrong. However frustrating the discourse gets, however many hairs I tear out listening to politicians inventing problems and then professing outrage when not everyone sees things that way, Quebec is a fascinating place. Many love it despite its idiosyncrasies. Some, like me, love it because of said idiosyncrasies. But there are times when I wish we would stop arguing from notions and assumptions that have peppered public life for the last generation or so and actually study our history. It would be nice, for once, if we could acknowledge that the complexities of our past have made for a complicated present, a situation that can’t, and maybe shouldn’t, be resolved through arbitrary legislation.

Nice? It would be historic.

## Editor’s Notes

### Not Burning

Readers will have noted the error in the title of my Editor’s Desk article for Fall 2021, given as “Madding Crowds” – the title of the Spring 2021 article. The correct title was given on the Contents page: “The Burning Question.” Apparently, smoke got in our eyes.

### Hail Mary

A reader has pointed out that in the Letter by Dwane Wilkin (“Bogus Claims”) in the Fall 2021 issue Darryl Leroux is listed as a scholar from the University of Manitoba, when he is in fact at St. Mary’s University in Kijipuktuk (Halifax). We regret the error.

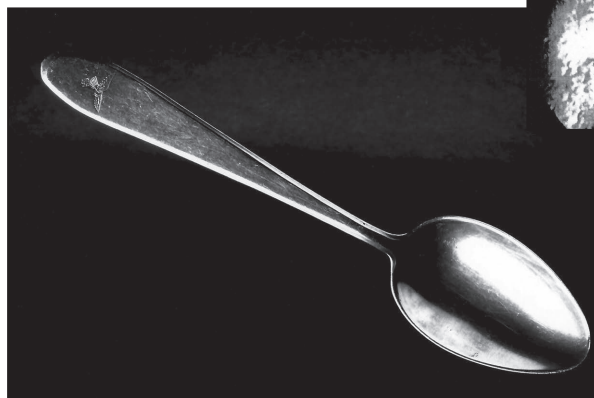
## Letters

### Fruit and Fjords

I read with interest Sam Allison and Jon Bradley’s “The Battle of the St. Lawrence” (*QHN*, Fall 2021). I remember hearing stories of German submarine officers going to a dance in Rivière-du-Loup, and of a German submarine captain going ashore to buy fresh fruit and vegetables in Sept-Iles during the war, as well as the weather station erected by the German navy in St. Martin’s Bay,

Labrador, which is now in the War Museum in Ottawa.

I have a friend who was a History professor at Loyola College and a soccer dad, and as such met other soccer parents at their sons’ soccer games. One mother he met at these games came from



the Bagotville area on the Saguenay Fjord, where her grandfather had a farm on the shore of the fjord. He had given her a beautiful spoon (see photos) which was from cutlery issued to German



submariners. When she asked her grandfather if he gave food to the Germans during the war, he replied, “No, I sold it to them!”

There is a very deep trench on the north shore of the St. Lawrence over 300 metres deep ending just off Tadoussac. The Saguenay Fjord is also very deep, with a long 300-foot depth area in the upper fjord, so it is very possible for a submarine to reach this area undetected.

Benny Beattie  
Ogden & Tadoussac, Qc.

## Kindness of Strangers

Congratulations on Sam Allison and Jon Bradley’s “The Battle of the St. Lawrence” (*QHN*, Fall 2021). A copy of *Quebec Heritage News* should be available to every high school student; imagine what they could learn!

Although I was very young at the time, I remember hearing the adults talking about the 1944 threat of the German U-boats arriving at Montreal.

Service men, gone for months, even years, with little or no contact with their families back in Montreal feared for the safety of their homes. They were persuaded to find shelter for their loved ones in the country. Rawdon was one area considered sufficiently removed from Montreal to harbour the fugitives. The service men were warranted in their fears of having long absences. Although a family stayed with us until the end of the war, I only remember the husband coming home for one short leave.

My parents felt it was their duty to share their home; our farm in Rawdon, about 45 miles north east of Montreal, had a spare room. A sailor brought his wife and five-year-old daughter, who needed a safe haven.

Although it might seem to be a no brainer, at the start it was not an easy time for anyone. Although I never heard my parents complain, surely they must have had second thoughts on their decision to bring strangers into their home. The mother and daughter were city people accustomed to all the conveniences of city living. In the country there were no conveniences, no electricity, no phone. My mother, already burdened with four young children and a husband to cook, clean, and care for, now had

two more mouths to feed, and extra washing to do. The lady did her best to help but understandably it took time and was difficult adjusting to the lack of facilities and isolation of life away from home. My mother was a kind, generous-hearted, lady, so in time the strain of sharing her home was eased and they were working together like old friends.

I was the victim of a complication that was not eased by time. Very different views of childrearing put a great strain on both families. The woman subjected her daughter to a strict, almost abusive regime with no consideration for her age or needs. This difference caused my parents much distress. We were allowed to be happy, carefree children and did not understand the harsh treatment of our new friend. I could not understand why they did not interfere and remember having nightmares, waking my mother with my cries.

Yes, many unknown, unrecognized, Quebecers were affected in many ways by the German invasion of the St. Lawrence. For my parents this was just one, very small, very difficult contribution that I remember vividly.

Beverly Prud'homme  
Rawdon, Qc.



## Valcartier Nights

The article on the 1980s music and dancing in Valcartier (*QHN*, Fall 2021)

brought back memories. It was a family tradition for many who had left Valcartier to return for the annual July 1st celebrations to renew relationships and to attend the picnics and the evening dance. At other times, there were weddings and anniversaries, also occasions for conviviality. When I was a young teenager in the 1950s, my family and I travelled to Valcartier to celebrate with family. Sometimes the dance was at the ski lodge and the “Lancers” and “Sets” were performed with enthusiasm until early morning. Other times it was held in the village or in the surrounding countryside.

In the 1970s, I made tape recordings of some of the Valcartier songs thanks to the voice and memory of William Lavallee and his wife, Mary née Smith. Sometime later, Ian Tait did a more professional recording job; these are available from the Eastern Townships Resource Centre at Bishop’s University. Some reflect the time of the settlement and origins of the first settlers at Valcartier (e.g., “The Bull Frog,” which mentions the Battle of Waterloo, or “The Old Woman who lived in Yorkshire”). Others were sung at house parties, including wakes (“It’s a Very Good Song”). Still others speak to the times that people left Valcartier to seek their fortunes elsewhere; one of these was composed by Charlie Wolff, “a Valcartier man,” as he is described in the recordings. Charles Wolff, a farmer and trapper, died in Valcartier (fifth concession) on January 1, 1907, aged 53 years. William Lavallee, who passed on these musical memories, died in 1983 in Sherbrooke.

Congratulations to all who strive to keep this history alive.

Marjorie Goodfellow  
Sherbrooke, Qc.



Right: Mary Smith (1899-1996) & William Lavallee (1896-1983).  
Photos courtesy of Marjorie Goodfellow.

Left: Charlie Wolff (1855-1907).

# Heritage and culture in our communities

## Belonging and Identity in English-speaking Quebec

Secrétariat aux relations  
avec les Québécois  
d'expression anglaise

Québec



For the second consecutive year, the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network (QAHN) is partnering with heritage groups around the province to explore and share a broad range of stories and cultural traditions from English Quebec. Generously funded once again by the Quebec government's Secretariat for relations with English-speaking Quebecers (SRQEA), the *Belonging and Identity* project supports initiatives led by

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

- Dwane Wilkin, project director

## STANLEY BAGG AND THE MILE END TAVERN

*Quebec notarial records yield vital insights*

by Janice Hamilton

**O**n October 17, 1810, in the afternoon, my great-great-grandfather Stanley Bagg and his father, Phineas, visited the office of a Montreal notary to co-sign a lease for the Mile End Tavern, along with the landlord John Clark. That lease was the first documented evidence of Stanley's relationship with his future father-in-law.

The Mile End Tavern was a drinking establishment in an excellent location: at the corner of St. Lawrence Street, the main road leading north from the city, and St. Catherine Road, which crossed the northern flank of Mount Royal.

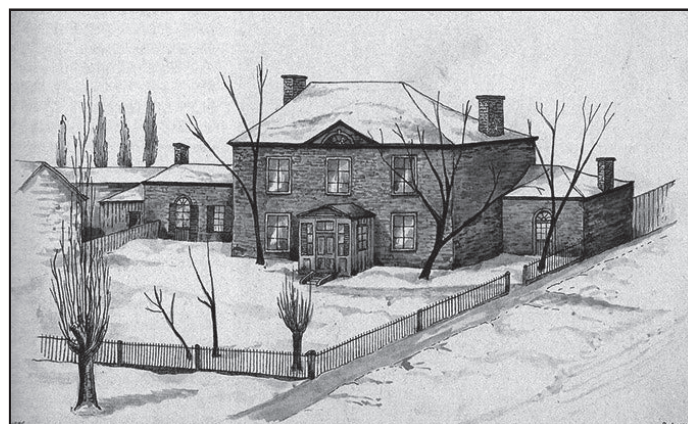
The district is well known today as a trendy home to musicians and software developers. But it isn't a mile from anywhere obvious, so how did it get its name? My research points to John Clark, and his English homeland.

Family historians with ancestors in Quebec have a gold mine of genealogical information at their fingertips: notarial documents, which are housed at the Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec (BANQ). Every time someone signed a lease, wrote a will, purchased a property or made a protest (usually because money was owed), a notary prepared the document.

For example, the Mile End Tavern lease, act #2874 in the records of notary J. A. Gray, suggests John Clark was a

knowledgeable farmer who cared for the land and valued his relationship with the nuns next door.

A butcher by trade and an investor by aptitude, Clark brought his wife and daughter from England to Montreal in the late 1790s. He was no doubt familiar with a village near London called Mile End. As well as the Mile End Farm and Tavern property, which he purchased in 1804, he built his own home in the area



and called it Mile End Lodge. The first written reference to the name, dated April 21, 1808, appeared in a notice Clark placed in the *Montreal Gazette* advertising "Good pasturage for horses and cows at the head of the St. Lawrence Suburbs."

Many notarial acts may now be accessed digitally, and advice on finding them is one of the services offered to family historians by the Quebec

Genealogy eSociety, which held its first online research conference in early 2021. The Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network recently awarded the Society a \$2,000 grant through its *Belonging and Identity* project to support the group's 2022 bilingual conference, which will feature workshops on researching ancestors from Quebec's various cultural communities. In my own case, by searching the notarial records I was

able to confirm a family story that the Baggs were Americans.

Phineas Bagg had moved to Quebec from Massachusetts with his young family in the mid-1790s, and operated a hotel in La Prairie for some years, so he had the experience to run a tavern. However, the Mile End property was also a farm, and the lease stipulated that the tenants had to manure the pastures, protect the maple

grove, and allow their cows to graze with those belonging to their neighbours, the sisters of the Hôtel Dieu convent.

Running a tavern and a farm would have kept father and son quite busy, but Stanley Bagg had greater ambitions. During the War of 1812, he and a business partner landed a risky contract from the British army to transport iron guns from Montreal to Kingston. Stanley used



the profits from this and other deals to buy shares in a steamboat, and, being a horse enthusiast, to help build a race-track near the tavern.

In 1821, he and three partners were awarded a contract to excavate the Lachine Canal, a project that took more than four years and involved hiring hundreds of Irish immigrant labourers. For many years thereafter he worked as a timber merchant. Then, in 1832, he made an unsuccessful foray into politics, running in a by-election that ended with British soldiers shooting several innocent civilians.

Records show that, back in 1815, Stanley and Phineas had renewed the tavern lease but, in 1818, with Phineas in his late 60s, they closed the business and placed an ad in the newspaper asking anyone with an outstanding account with the tavern to settle it. The following year, Stanley Bagg and John Clark signed another notarized agreement: a marriage contract between Stanley and John's only daughter, Mary Ann Clark.

As a wedding present, her father gave the couple a handsome two-storey stone house called Durham House, in which their only child, Stanley Clark Bagg, was born in 1821. The house was named for John Clark's own birthplace and that of his wife, in County Durham, England.

When Stanley and Mary Ann began their lives together in Mile End, Montreal was already 180 years old, and it was just starting to modernize. The family's former prominence in the neighbourhood is still evident today in the street names Bagg, Clark, Marie-Ann and Fairmount (Stanley Clark Bagg's villa).

### Tips for researchers

When I began my search for these ancestors more than 10 years ago, none of the documents I needed had been digitized yet, so I had to go in person to the Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec and read them on microfilm. Now, upon request, BANQ staff will send you a digitized copy of the act you are looking for. The archivists will also answer your questions by email.

Not all notarial records are digitized and available online, and some of the handwritten ones can be hard to read. Some are in French, others in English.

The BANQ's digital collection includes the lists (*répertoires*) that notaries kept of the contracts they wrote, as well as the acts themselves. Other good online



sources include Ancestry.ca, which has a collection of notarial documents accompanied by a good introduction, and Familysearch.org, which has a searchable document collection covering the



years 1800-1920.

To find the image of an act on the BANQ site, go to the *numérique* (digital collection) search page <https://numerique.banq.qc.ca/> and click on the three lines. Choose *Patrimoine québécois*, then *archives de notaires*. Search for the notary's name or type it in as a filter. Next, click on *fichiers*, on the right, to open up the chronological list of acts or the index to clients. The BANQ site also has a help page in French.

On the Ancestry website, look for your ancestor's name in the collection called "Quebec, Canada, Notarial Records, 1637-1935". The *répertoire* will give you the type of contract (*acte*), the names of the people involved, the date it was signed and its number in that notary's files.

*Janice Hamilton is a member of the Québec Genealogical eSociety. She worked as a journalist and freelance writer for more than 30 years, and has been blogging about her ancestors since 2013. She was a contributor to and co-editor of Beads in a Necklace: Family Stories from Genealogy Ensemble (2017) and wrote Reinventing Themselves: A History of the Hamilton and Forrester Families (2021), a history of her father's family in Scotland, Ontario and Manitoba.*

### Further reading

Janice Hamilton, "The Life and Times of Stanley Bagg, 1788-1853", *Writing Up the Ancestors*, October 5, 2016, [writinguptheancestors.blogspot.com](http://writinguptheancestors.blogspot.com).

Janice Hamilton, "John Clark, 19th century Real Estate Visionary", *Genealogy Ensemble*, May 22, 2019, <https://genealogyensemble.com>.

Justin Bur, Yves Desjardins, Jean-Claude Robert, Bernard Vallee et Joshua Wolfe, *Dictionnaire Historique du Plateau Mont-Royal*, Montréal, 2017.

Justin Bur, "À la recherche du cheval perdu de Stanley Bagg, et des origines du Mile End," Joanne Burgess et al, *Collecting Knowledge: New Dialogues on McCord Museum Collections*, Montreal, 2015.

Yves Desjardins, *Memoire du Mile End Memories*, 2014-03-18, "Mile End and its major landowners, part 1: the Bagg family and John Clark", [memoire.mile-end.qc.ca](http://memoire.mile-end.qc.ca).



# POWER ON DISPLAY

## *Local historians dust off rare British map*

by Karen Molson

Measuring roughly 160 by 75 centimetres, the unfurled map takes up the better part of a large dinner table. At some point in its hundred-year history it had been folded into eighths, its pleats firmly pressed, and placed in a cupboard where it remained untouched for decades. When it was finally rediscovered a few years ago, the so-called Dorchester Map was immediately unfolded, gently protected with acid-free tissue and rolled loosely over a large cardboard tube, to safely await conservation.

Exactly how a copy of the *Plan of Part of the Province of Lower Canada* came to be stored at the Greenwood Centre for Living History remains a mystery. The original map was drawn in 1795, and Greenwood's is one of just a few copies known to exist. However, the document is about to reveal some of its own secrets.

Making use of a grant from the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network, members of the group's Conservation and Curation committee are preparing the map for permanent display at the Centre's home in Hudson, and creating web-based learning tools that explore the role of map-making in Canada under British rule.

The group's priority will be to restore the document's "wove paper" with its imprint of inks made from black and some red pigments. Fold marks need to be coaxed to become flatter, and a few small tears need mending. Some discoloration is also present. Greenwood has called on the services of expert paper conservator Séverine Chevalier, who began work on the map in October, removing dust with soft brushes and different types of erasers.

Chevalier explained that the repairs are being carried out with the use of a special Japanese-made paper called Kozo that comes from a mulberry tree. "Fibres in this paper are strong, thin and flexible," she said, "and the paper is painted on with wheat starch paste." Though conservation cannot halt deterioration completely, it can slow it down considerably.

Mending is expected to be finished by March 2022, when Chevalier will place the map in a humidification chamber for a while before moving it into a purpose-built press. Here, it will be weighted down for several weeks. Developing a means of safely housing the document so that it may be shown to visitors without risk to its physical integrity is the final step in the conservation process.

Strictly speaking, the drawing discovered in Greenwood's collection is a plan, and not a conventional map. That is to say, it was created for the purpose of design and instruction, and it uses symbols in place of details. The *Plan of Part of the Province of Lower Canada* was not intended to be used as a representation of a geographical area or territory, but rather to give British governors-in-chief, lieutenants in power, and military leaders a framework within which they might exercise control.

At first glance, the 1795 plan shows power divided into three districts: Montreal, Three Rivers and Quebec. Each of these districts was further divided into counties, bearing the names of the seigneuries that had been established during the French regime.

But looking past these districts, you see an entire region presented at an angle, expressing the turbulent and volatile times in which authorities and colonists alike found themselves. Setting this region at an angle was, it seems, the most effective way to represent nineteen new British counties and their subsequent re-division into townships, all marked in red. A looming surge in immigration was behind the need for new counties and townships. The second main goal of Greenwood's "Belonging" project, therefore, is to develop web pages that explore these and other aspects of the plan in more historical detail.

British leaders in North America had a lot to contend with in 1795. They were trying to deal with newly-cleaved Upper and Lower Canadas and with a Constitutional Act that did not solve the problems it was meant to – not to mention crop failures, absentee leaders, and scattered responsibilities. There were conflicts between French and British and between the middle and upper classes. There was ongoing civil unrest with the United States over township borders. There was the presence and the rights of the St. Regis Mohawks to the south. There were disputes between colonists and Britain over political autonomy. But, most urgently, there were thousands of United Empire Loyalists who demanded accommodation.

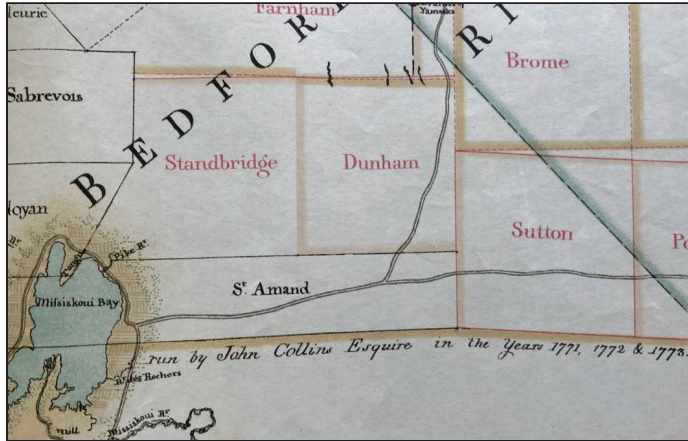
Guy Carleton (Lord Dorchester) and John Graves Simcoe were meant to work together on meeting the practical needs for the overwhelming numbers of Loyalists, but unfortunately they did not get along. Meanwhile, these refugees had been promised generous land grants, tools, and peaceful communities organized under British law.

Though Dorchester's name is displayed prominently in the upper corner of the map, this is more out of deference to his political title than a reflection of any involvement in its creation. Sir Guy ordered the plan in September 1794, and promptly resigned, his complaint being that he felt he had no civil or military authority.

In the end, it was left to the principal assistant to the Chief Justice of Lower Canada, Samuel Gale, to see that this plan was created. Gale, in turn, hired deputy land surveyor Jean-Baptiste Duberger to draw up the document. Duberger studied previous surveys and received information from Simcoe in order to insert the names and dimensions of the new counties.

A part of Greenwood's online history presentation, which is also slated for completion in March 2022, will show just how Duberger created the map. He would have required a deep knowledge of the workings of cartographic instruments, the measurements they yielded, and various symbols.

Duburger filled in the information by hand, day after day, leaning over the large sheaf of paper on the Surveyor General's Office table. By daylight and the light of oil lamps, it took him almost a full year to complete it.



It is staggering to consider that, at the time it was drawn, some areas beyond the edges of this plan had not yet been surveyed. In fact, while the original was being printed, David Thompson was still pushing through to the west of the Great Lakes. There and elsewhere were territories still considered hinterlands, about which fantastical legends continued to persist.

But the new settlements in areas formerly considered “wastelands of the Crown” (communities south of Montreal and all along the north shore of the Ottawa River) were directly aided by this very document. Settlers with hopes of better lives



would become a major influence in the development of their new country.

*Karen Molson is an active board member at the Greenwood Museum for Living History in Hudson, Quebec, and also volunteers for the Canadian Heritage of Quebec. Her passion for history has expressed itself in biographies, articles, films, exhibitions and podcasts.*

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## BLACK IN THE TOWNSHIPS

*Exhibit research grapples with uncomfortable truths and fragmented archives*

by Sunita Nigam and Fabian Will

**B**lack presence in the Eastern Townships is glossed over by historians and oral traditions alike. And yet Black people have lived and worked in this mostly rural region of southern Quebec for at least 230 years.

The earliest known Black inhabitants in the Townships were enslaved people brought from New York to Lower Canada by the Loyalist settler Philip Luke (1753-1824) in the last decade of the eighteenth century. Luke had settled at St. Armand, Missisquoi County, in 1784, establishing a general store and potash factory there. A decade later, he inherited six enslaved persons belonging to his late mother's estate. In 1794, these people moved north across the border to St. Armand, where Luke put them to work in his home and business. They included two young men, an elderly woman, a young woman, a five-year-old girl, and a two-year-old boy. No record of their names has ever been found.

When Philip Luke died in 1824, ownership of these and other enslaved people passed to his son, Jacob Vedeer Luke. By then their number had grown, through births and purchases, to eleven people. An unmarked burial ground, situated at the bottom of a natural rock formation known locally to this day as "N\*\*\* Rock," is said to hold their remains. It is not known how many people were finally laid to rest here.

It is common for Canadians to regard their country as having been a "safe haven" for Black people escaping slavery in the United States, but that image does not tell the whole story. About 30,000 people did arrive in the Canadian colonies from the United States along the Underground Railroad in the early to mid-nineteenth century; and by the 1850s Townships settlements in what is now Brome-Missisquoi were part of this network, helping former slaves gain their freedom in Lower Canada. What is less known is that, for decades prior to slavery's 1834 abolishment in the British Empire, the movement of freedom-seekers across the Canada-U.S. border flowed in the opposite direction.

Black migration from pre-Confederation Canada into free Northern states, described by some scholars as the "reverse Underground Railroad," resulted from abolitionist laws in these states that predated Canadian anti-slavery legislation, in some cases by decades. The state of Vermont, for example, outlawed

slavery in 1777, long before slavery ended in the Canadas. During the late eighteenth century, therefore, it was not uncommon for enslaved Blacks in what is now Quebec to escape slavery by fleeing south.

After abolition in Canada, the direction of traffic on the Underground Railroad largely reversed, as escapees fled the American South for safe houses in Vermont, and then on to "stations" across Canada. The town of Philipsburg, in Missisquoi, served as one of these stations. Local tradition holds that, during this period, whenever someone unknown to the community passed through town, villagers rang the bells of the Methodist Church, warning freedom-seekers to stay out of sight.

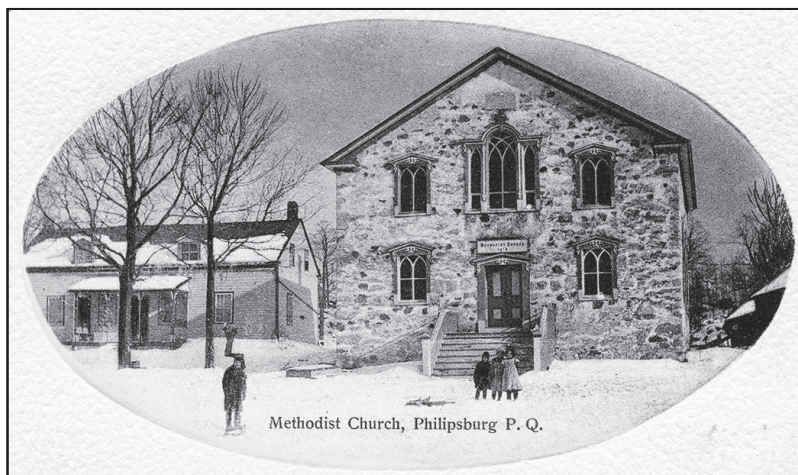
While research remains to be done on the fate of Black travelers and settlers in the Townships, it is known that many immigrants who came to Canada returned south to rejoin their families after the United States formally abolished slavery in 1865.

In the early twentieth century, the idea of Blackness in the Eastern Townships, as in other parts of Canada and the United States, became closely associated with popular musical and theatrical entertainment. Local reporting on carnivals and fancy-dress masquerades in the Townships during

the 1910s shows that "negro," "negro woman," and "N\*\*\* baby" costumes were popular attire at these events. This phenomenon is not a record of the presence of local Black populations; rather, it attests to the stereotypes of Black identity that occupied white Townshippers' cultural imagination during this period.

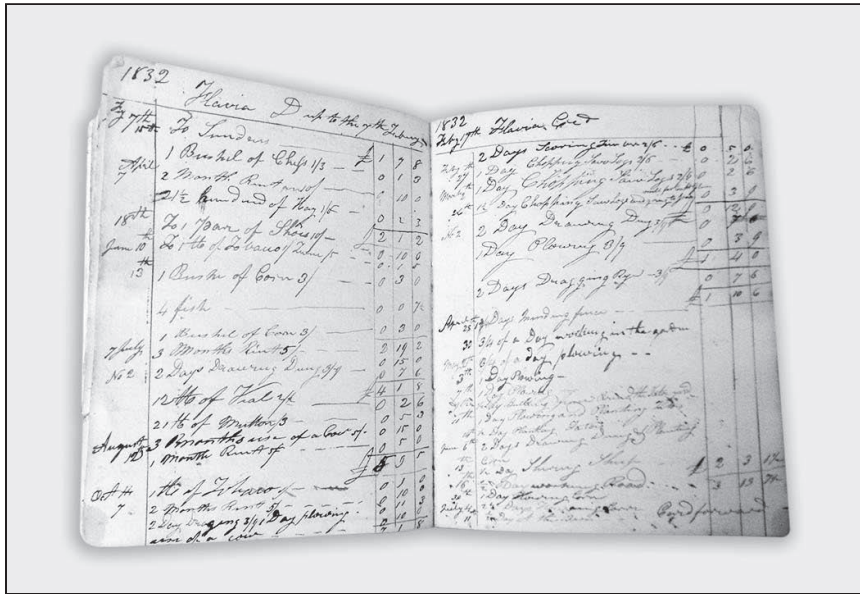
Throughout the 1910s, 1920s, and 1930s, local and touring Blackface minstrel shows became a highly popular form of entertainment for audiences across the region. Blackface minstrelsy was a form of theatrical entertainment, typically involving song, dance, and comedic monologues, in which usually white men and women (though some Blackface performers were also Black) would darken the skin of their faces with burnt cork and perform clownish caricatures of Black identity.

A look at the *Sherbrooke Daily Record* from the time reveals advertisements for minstrel shows in East Angus, Georgeville, Sherbrooke, North Hatley, Danville, Cowansville, Lennoxville, Windsor, Drummondville, and other communities.



Methodist Church, Philipsburg P. Q.





While most of the Blackface performers that animated the Townships’ stages in the early twentieth century would have been white (it was common for local high-school students and Boy Scouts to put on Blackface minstrel shows), there are also records of “negro comedians,” most likely from Montreal, though possibly from across the border, performing in the area.

One of the more vibrant moments in the archives of Black history in the Townships is the jazz craze that swept across the region in the 1920s. During this era, in which racially segregated bands were the norm, the Townships came alive with the syncopated rhythms of jazz music as Black orchestras from Montreal toured the region. Advertisements from the time betray a local fascination with “real” jazz music. The Elite Dancing Academy on King Street in Sherbrooke, for instance, promised to teach students “real” jazz, the African-American style of dance that arose alongside the music.

The Eastern Townships saw a jazz revival from the late 1940s through the early 1960s, with various performance venues hosting such world-class musicians as Louis Metcalf, known for his revolutionary bebop sound and his racially diverse band. Metcalf and his International Band even opened Sherbrooke’s first Commercial Exposition in April, 1949. Other famous jazz players to visit the area included Gene Cooper, and (white) jazz composer Galt MacDermot, a two-time Grammy award-winner and Bishop’s alumnus.

In the 1920s and 1950s, Jazz performers in the Townships connected the region to a trans-local Black diasporic network and served as an important site for the performance of Black culture in Quebec.

Until the 1960s, most of the Black people who passed through or settled in the region were English-speaking; this would change with the waves of Haitian immigration to Quebec in the 1960s and 1970s. Today, the Black community in the Townships is predominantly French-speaking.

According to the 2016 census, 3,940 people in the Eastern Townships identify as Black, with the vast majority of this population concentrated in Sherbrooke.

In 2020, Aissé Touré and Angélique Goguen-Couture, inspired by the Black Lives Matter movement and in the midst of the public grief and outrage over the death of George Floyd in the United States, launched Black Estrie, an online platform that shines the spotlight on the talents of the Black community in the region. This platform, which focuses in particular on entrepreneurs, artists, and athletes, is creating a public space for Black voices and stories in the area with

hopes of fighting prejudices. New and recovered archives of Blackness in the region promise to open up regional imaginations that acknowledge the long and diverse Black history of the Eastern Townships.

To make this part of Townships’ history better known, the Eastern Townships Resource Centre (ETRC), will launch an outdoor and online exhibit in February 2022 titled *Black Histories in the Eastern Townships*. As an accredited archives centre, the ETRC’s mission, mandate, and ongoing activities are meant to be inclusive of all communities present in the Eastern Townships. Through events and projects, the ETRC seeks to find representation of the region’s diverse heritage.

With support from the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network, *Black Histories in the Eastern Townships* will shed light on important chapters in the Black history of the region. The exhibit will contribute to public knowledge of English-speaking history in Quebec by creating a space for reflecting on some of its racial and political complexities.

*Black Histories in the Eastern Townships will be launched at the ETRC’s annual 22nd Robin Burns lecture on February 2, 2022, at Bishop’s University. Guest speaker and exhibit curator Sunita Nigam will discuss why Black archives in the Townships and in Quebec and Canada more*

*broadly, are as fragmented and incomplete as they are today. The exhibit will be available online at [www.black-histories.com](http://www.black-histories.com)*

*Fabian Will is the executive director of the Eastern Townships Resource Centre (ETRC).*

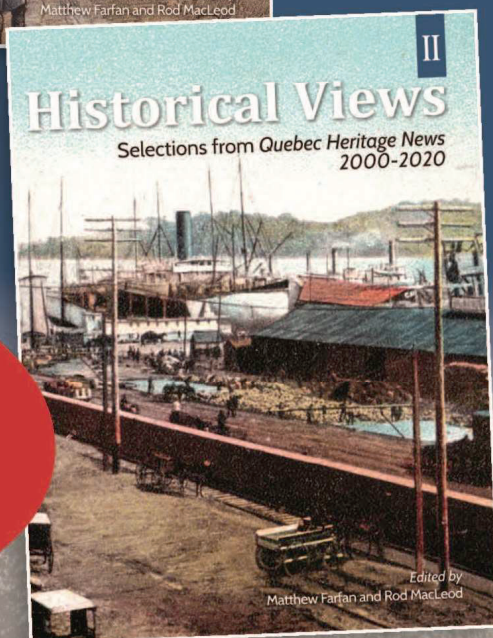
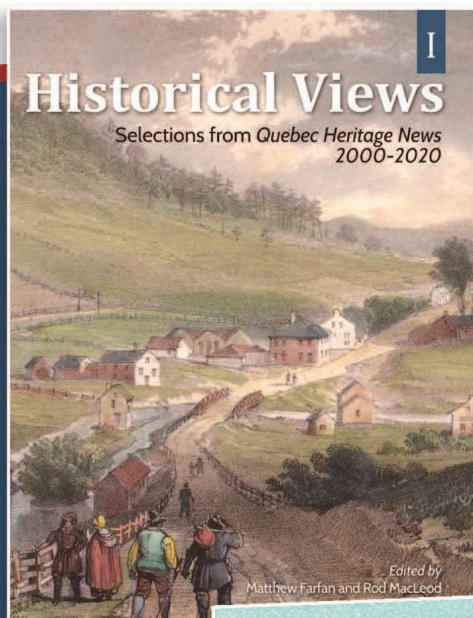


Top: Philip Luke’s business ledger, kept by a woman (“Flavia”) who may have been enslaved. Image courtesy of the Missisquoi Historical Society.

Bottom: William Notman & Son, “Mr. Hickey, blackface theatre performer, 1896. McCord Museum, II-115185.1



# Historical Views, Selections from Quebec Heritage News 2000-2020



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*Mary Anne Ducharme (Hemmingford Archives)*

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*Douglas Brown (John Abbott College)*

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## ENSEMBLE ENCORE

*Gaspesian Way highlights Anglo Quebec culture, traditions in regional festival series*

The music never stopped. The Gaspesian sound was not silenced when the old festivals came to an end.

But after a decade-long hiatus, followed by the Covid pandemic, the melodies rang a little sweeter this autumn as local performers and audience members gathered once again in person to celebrate the Gaspé region's English-speaking culture and heritage.

"What a great success," beamed Anne Nober, project coordinator with Vision Gaspé-Percé Now and one of the organizers of the Douglastown edition of the Gaspesian Way Festival, which made its 2021 debut along the Coast in three different communities.

The program featured displays of local arts and crafts, workshops, a market, food and, of course, both traditional and contemporary music and dance. More than 300 people turned out on a rainy Saturday in late September to soak in the sounds and sights. The Douglas Community Centre hadn't played host to that many Anglophones since the last Irish Week festival, back in 2012.

As is true across much of rural Quebec where Anglophones form a minority, English-speaking Gaspesians are meeting the challenge of keeping their communities vibrant while fitting in with the broader cultural fabric of French-speaking Quebec. For 25 years, a fierce sense of attachment made the legendary Wakeham-York Homecoming Festival a huge success, luring hundreds of former residents back to the Coast each summer, before petering out in 2004.

"English-Speaking communities strongly identified with these celebrations," Nober noted, "and they expressed a need and desire to bring back or create a culturally-based festival, which has been missing from the area for years."

Inspired in part by tourism marketing strategies that have proved successful elsewhere in the Maritimes, community organizations in the Gaspé have joined forces over the last two years to develop and showcase the arts, culture and heritage of English speakers who make their home here. The idea is to nurture a sense of belonging and identity through regular events and activities that bring people together – online, when necessary – that will prompt more Gaspesians to act as informal "ambassadors" for the places where they live.

"If people love their region and its heritage," said Nober,

"they will be excited and engaged to share, present and promote it to others around the country, and even to the world."

Since launching the brand in early 2020 – just as the first wave of the Covid pandemic was starting to hit – the Committee for Anglophone Social Action (CASA) and their local partners in the region have pulled together an impressive program of activities, including livestreamed concerts and online workshops for writers, artists and musicians.

"The English-speaking population of the Gaspé Coast is culturally distinct from the French-speaking population and we thought it was about time for us to recognize it, cherish it and share it with others," said Dave Felker, a community development consultant who has been coordinating efforts to build and promote the Gaspesian Way.

Building the brand, Felker said, has meant focusing on two related goals: boosting Anglophones' pride and curiosity in their community heritage, and making the talents and creations of Anglophone Gaspesians



better known to visitors. "We are really trying to appeal to both publics, locals and tourists," Felker said. "We're convinced that there is much to offer, and the Gaspesian Way seeks to expand promotion around the English speakers to re-establish the Gaspésie as a prime tourist destination for Anglophones as well."

Putting on virtual events was not how the Gaspesian Way was supposed to roll out. The original plan was for each community along the coast to advertise all their cultural and tourist-oriented activities on the Gaspesian Way website, which CASA would then use to promote the Gaspé at trade shows, conventions and fairs. But when the pandemic shut down in-person gatherings, everything shifted to social media.

The brand's Facebook page became a virtual stage for Gaspesian culture, broadcasting more than 60 live and pre-recorded events last year to as many as 100,000 viewers worldwide. Musicians, storytellers, artists and entrepreneurs from the region enjoyed an unprecedented opportunity to expand their audience, while offering a taste of home to former Gaspesians living away.

All these efforts seem to be paying off. The Gaspesian Way Facebook page now has more than 2,500 followers, and some of the videos posted there have been viewed upwards of

*Organizers Anne Nober (left) and Dave Felker (right) helped make the festival's Douglastown edition in September a success. Photo courtesy of Vision Gaspé Percé Now.*



16,000 times.

But it isn't the same as being together. Day-long Gaspesian Way festivals in Shigawake, Douglastown and New Richmond offered Covid-weary residents and visitors a much-needed excuse to gather once again in person. The Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network was among several partners who pitched in, donating \$3,500 in support of the Douglastown edition, as part of its "Belonging" project.

The Gaspesian Way now runs a website where visitors can find out about things to do and see in various communities

across the region. Partnerships with local community organizations such as Vision Gaspé-Percé Now and the Douglas Community Centre continue to be formed. Some in the community see the brand evolving into an online marketplace for bringing local products and services to global consumers.

In the meantime, there's an online store where fans of the Gaspé Peninsula can order t-shirts and ball caps bearing the Gaspesian Way logo.

## PICTURING QUEBEC'S RECRUITS

*New digital exhibition explores soldiers' identity in the First World War*

by Zachary Mitchell

**O**f the nearly 620,000 men who enlisted with the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) during the First World War, roughly 88,000 attested in the province of Quebec. Who were these men?

The answer, it turns out, is more complicated than it seems, according to recent research undertaken by the Canadian Centre for the Great War. In partnership with the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network, the Centre has created a new exhibition, *Picturing Quebec's Recruits*, launched on the Centre's website ahead of

Remembrance Day last autumn. The project draws on military records and personal documents found in the Centre's collection, including files on 60 recruits who were living in the province when the war was officially declared. The exhibition offers a glimpse into the lives and identities of soldiers from Quebec who either volunteered or were conscripted for service.

As with their counterparts elsewhere in Canada, Quebecers who served in the First World War were mostly in their mid-twenties and unmarried when they enlisted, but their personal stories reveal many dissimilarities. They came from different communities and backgrounds, they differed in their motivations to serve, and they would go on to have diverse wartime and postwar experiences.

Take the case of Geoffrey Pike, just twenty years old when he signed up with the 13th Battalion (Royal Highlanders of Canada) on December 2, 1914. Born in Buckingham, England, the Montreal bank clerk was one of the thousands of British-born men living in Quebec who were motivated to enlist, in part, by strong familial and cultural ties to Great Britain. Men born on the British Isles made up a large proportion of Canadian

troops in the First World War, accounting for roughly 38 per cent of all Canadian recruits over the course of the conflict. In fact, Canadian-born men only formed a (slim) majority of the CEF in 1918 after the introduction of conscription.

Pike trained with the unit in Canada and England before landing in France in May 1915. In October, he was wounded during a German bombardment, suffering a compound fracture to his femur as well as multiple minor shrapnel wounds. Infection set in soon after and Pike became dangerously ill; his right leg had to be amputated at the thigh on November 13.

Pike remained in the army for nearly a year following surgery as he underwent further treatment and rehabilitation. During this period, he was issued an artificial limb, with which he learned to "walk well" after some months of practice, according to a report on file. After being demobilized as medically unfit in October 1916, Pike apparently returned to his job at the Union Bank of Canada on St. James Street (now rue St. Jacques). Despite the severity of his wound, he would live to the age of 80, dying in 1975.

Pike's story conforms fairly closely to First World War

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narratives in the popular imagination. Other recruits, such as Charles Thomas Hughes, had markedly different experiences.

Hughes, a native Montrealer who lived on Jeanne Mance Street near what is now the campus of l'Université de Québec à Montréal, enlisted with the Canadian Field Artillery (CFA) on February 27, 1917, at the age of 18. Thanks to his diary, which he kept from January 1917 through February 1918, we know that Hughes was an avid athlete who played a variety of sports, and that he attended Sunday church service and related activities in a number of different parishes. Given such strong social connections at home, his reasons for enlisting defy easy explanation. Social pressures and intrinsic motivation evidently played a role, as they did with all recruits. However, the timing of Hughes' enlistment suggests another possible factor: the onset of conscription. The federal election of 1917 had essentially been a referendum on the highly contentious issue of conscription. The victory of Robert Borden's government in December signaled to Canadians across the country that conscription was coming – it was simply a matter of when and the specific bounds the legislation would take.

Unmarried, and employed as a clerk, Hughes would have almost certainly been aware that he would be among the first to be drafted. Volunteering, then, at least offered the possibility of choosing one's service branch and avoiding the "sharp end" of the infantry battalions. This is, of course, simply speculation, but it shows how many different factors could be at play in men's minds at the time as they considered enlisting. Hughes' diary offers no hints as to why he chose to volunteer, either. His entry for February 26 simply states: "Went to Guy St barracks [and] passed for the 79th Battery. In afternoon went to Medical

Board."

Whatever his reasons, his service took a fortunate turn. In October 1917, Hughes was assigned to the 4th Canadian Divisional Ammunition Column, an auxiliary formation principally responsible for the transport of munitions, where he would remain for the duration of the war. Aside from a few instances of disciplinary action after running afoul of his superiors, Hughes describes a rather uneventful string of days spent on duty, his evenings filled with reading, card games, letter writing, and the occasional YMCA-sponsored entertainment. Hughes returned to Canada and was demobilized in April 1919.



Hughes later joined a unit of the Non-Permanent Active Militia during the interwar years. He enlisted in the Canadian Army during the Second World War, though, but little is known of his service save that he survived the war. He died in 1957 at the age of 59.

The sixty men explored in *Picturing Quebec's Recruits* constitute a tiny sample of the enormous legacy of Canadian First World War veterans. It is a legacy that underscores the great diversity of men from across the country, including Quebec, who served and sacrificed at a pivotal moment in Canada's history. The conflict was a commonly shared experience for a generation of men who called Canada home; and in its aftermath, these veterans emerged as a significant bloc of Canadian society exerting social and political capital out of proportion to their numbers.

Fledgling organizations such as the Great War Veterans Association (GWVA) would come into existence, helping to maintain and affirm veterans' identities. These processes were perhaps less prevalent in Quebec given the lower number of veterans and the contentious debates surrounding the province's support for the war effort, but they can nevertheless be observed as part of a developing sense of Canadian identity amongst many individual Quebecers. Acknowledging the lives of Quebec's recruits allows us to understand the conflict in greater depth and offers us a more nuanced understanding of the postwar societies that emerged in its aftermath.

*Zachary Mitchell* is a curatorial assistant at the Canadian Centre for the Great War, Montreal.



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# MONTREAL'S BLACK PORTERS

*A Legacy to Celebrate*  
by Dorothy W. Williams

The railroads began in the early industrialization of Montreal. The Canadian railroad infrastructure was the most significant source of innovation and employment across the continent in the nineteenth century. The emergence of the railways fostered the development of an early Black community in Montreal. Montreal was not alone. This story played out in Winnipeg, Toronto and many other Canadian hubs where, coincidentally, Blacks lived. Montreal had a special role for decades as Canada's headquarters of the railway industry.

Within that railway industry, Black porters were strongly linked to its growth and success. They handled all the responsibilities of customer service. In those early years, Black porters became the face of rail travel.

The stories of Shadrach Minkins, John Anderson, and other fugitives remind us that in the 1850s Montrealers exhibited positive sentiments and were fervent supporters and activists (Collison). However, the largesse so visibly demonstrated to runaway slaves waned quickly in the 1860s as the propaganda of America's Civil War took its toll on the continent.

Fearful of a conflagration over Blacks spilling across borders, Montreal began to retrench. Social and economic segregation ramped up. It was the beginning of anti-Black racism that was to continue right into the 1950s. Negrophobia and the post-Civil War fears enveloped Canada, giving rise to Black antipathy and the popular denigration of Blacks with Black-face minstrelsy. This antipathy produced systemic racial reaction and anti-Black immigration government policies.

Yet, it wasn't always this way. In Canada's early railroad development, Black men helped to lay down thousands of miles of railroads. Blacks also cleaned up the roadkill when trains hit stray cattle and hogs. In these early years, they worked as baggage-masters, cooks and dining car attendants on the trains, as well

as brakemen, night-watchmen, oilmen, shunters, and switchers – who kept the trains running along the tracks (Mathieu). These jobs were little different than the positions held by White trainmen. Nevertheless, by the 1880s in Montreal, any semblance of equality in labour receded with the institutionalization of George Pullman's Palace Company. Echoing American practices, Canadians followed Pullman's lead and deliberately targeted Black men to be porters.



The adoption of the Pullman business model in Canada can be traced to the training of William Van Horne himself, who would eventually run the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR). Van Horne had honed his railroad acumen in Chicago, Illinois, home of the Pullman Palace Car Company. Van Horne became quite familiar with Pullman's tactics and strategies with Black labour. It is not surprising, then, that Van Horne and other Canadian rail owners caught on quickly. Once the Pullman ethos hit Canada, Canadian-based railway companies accepted the supposed natural order of their workforce. Within a couple of decades, many of the jobs that Black men had been doing became exclusively the

purview of White men. The variety of tasks that Black men were allowed shrank; some were eliminated altogether.

George Pullman wanted to romanticize rail travel and his passenger revolution began in Chicago. Pullman Chicago was a built-up factory town specializing in the design and manufacture of non-motive cars for public use. It billed itself as a passenger car company. The Pullman Palace Car Company erected several sprawling sites for the manufacture and assembly of the railcars, including Montreal. With its four rail lines, the island would play a significant role north of the border. In the early 1860s, the first sleeping cars were built in Point St. Charles railyards owned by the Grand Trunk Railway. Later, Pullman cars were lent out or leased to the CPR, the CNR, and the GTR.

George Pullman and his company did not initially hire Black people to work in their factory towns. However, Blacks would become part and parcel of Pullman's vision for rail travel service. As Pullman would often remark, echoing fresh memories of their prior slave status, Black men belonged to the company. As Reconstruction faltered, increasingly Pullman work became their only option.

Pullman's company revolutionized rail travel for passengers, creating an experience like what luxury travellers would expect when they travelled on transatlantic ships such as the *Queen Elizabeth*. Pullman also capitalized on the fact that the middle class would want Black service like the upper classes had. Marketing promised the traveller that they could buy their own Black maid or personal servant with just the cost of a train ticket.

To achieve this level of service, workers needed Pullman training. Only a trained porter, familiar with the Pullman car layout and how they worked, could provide the optimum level of service passengers expected. Pullman porters learned the right way to make a bunk, clean a toilet, prepare a bar drink, fluff a pillow, care for linens, shine passengers' shoes, and



iron passengers' clothes. Pullman-trained men needed to know what each car contained; there were many models. Pullman porters learned the proper use of each utensil or tool in the car, as well as emergency evacuation and dining procedures. There were non-trained tasks that were often part of their routine such as caring for young children or babysitting, entertaining the drunk passenger or cleaning up his vomit. Despite this specialization, their work was classified as hospitality. This required low paying wage earners – for which Blacks were earmarked.

The porter was there to make the White travelling public happy, comfortable, and pampered. Black porters were used to advertise the glamour associated with rail travel. Pullman's success did not happen without the fact that rail was promoted as the preferred travel experience. Even the harried businessman could demand services from his assigned valet. It was a perk that millions willingly paid for.

The images used to attract rail passengers could not have made the point better. Ads often depicted a housewife travelling alone. The service that train porters provided allowed even the aspiring middle-class woman to feel pampered while on the train because the Black porter was there for her every need and she had nothing to fear from the Black men on the train.

The public knew that the porter was the stand-in host, representing Mr. George Pullman. On the job, porters were expected to respond to passengers' "Hey George." The men roiled at being called George. They fought to wear name tags, to break the prevailing stereotype that Blacks all look alike. Over the decades, this was simply one battle the men waged to maintain a semblance of individuality and personal dignity on the railroads (Grizzle).

This was not a glamorous occupation for Blacks. Memoirs of Black porters are replete with accounts of humiliation, abuse and insignificance (Grizzle). They recount incidents where they were spit at, cursed, kicked, and punched. Early on, porters learned they were at the mercy of the customer. Porters could be fired on the spot with just a word from a passenger. Unlike the White rail worker's union protections, until 1954 Black porters had no right to a fair hearing or respect for their seniority. (For details on the protracted fight that Montreal's porters engaged in, see

Mathieu).

Despite these conditions, the Pullman Palace Car Company became the largest single employer of Blacks in North America. For most of the company's 101-year existence, the Pullman porter was one of the very best jobs a Black man could aspire to, in status and eventually in salary (Williams, 1989).

The Canadian conditions in passenger rail travel differed little for Black men in Montreal, the headquarters that set the tone. The needs of the industry eclipsed the border. While on the job, Black men in Canada experienced the effects of Jim Crow. They were segregated and toiled under a two-tier system of recognition with differing privileges.

Their working life of a porter was a fundamental contradiction: he had the best job in his community and the worst on the train. The Black porter could be trusted with his White passengers' children and with their safety, but only for the five days of a cross-country trip. The Black porter remained an enigma if not suspicious, even though he was expected to share his



riders' most private moments. Still, within their communities, the porter commanded great respect and often it was the porter who led the community's economic and social development. In Montreal, the porters and their families underwrote the establishment of the three Black organizations that formed the foundation of the community's life: Union United Church, the Universal Negro Improvement Associ-

ation, and the Negro Community Centre.

The Black porter community in Montreal was transnational, made up of three distinct cultures: American, West Indian, and Canadian. The most important group in terms of numbers and influence were Americans. They responded to the urgent, aggressive recruiting campaign by Canadian railway companies. And until the Depression era, the African Americans created the reputation, lifestyle, and economic life of the St. Antoine district of Montreal (Williams, 1997).

Then there were the West Indian porters, who for decades had been recruited for work in the resource sectors. Off ships from the Caribbean, they quickly became dissatisfied with working conditions in Nova Scotia's mines and were unwilling to continue seafaring. They were easily lured by promises of rail work out of Montreal.

Roughly 10% of Black porters were comprised of a small core of Black Montreal families (Williams, 1989). They were joined by other Canadian-born men from the Maritimes and Ontario. This trickle of Canadian Blacks were often considered by West Indians and African-Americans to be uneducated and crude and, as a result, the Canadian Blacks in Montreal, often just called "Scotians," occupied the lowest rung in Montreal's Black community. (Sociologist Wilfred Israel does an excellent job breaking down the contemporaneous ethnic culture of these groups.)

At the train station, porters worked either in sleeping cars, serving passengers inside the train, or as Red Caps. Red Caps met you at the entrance of the train station. The sleeping car porter took care of tickets, the dining room, the bedrooms, and the cleaning on the train. They stayed on the train for days or even weeks at a time. Red Caps were train station valets. They took your luggage and brought it to the departing train. Red Caps met the arriving train as well, bringing your luggage right to your car, taxi, or bus. Red Caps were generally the last Black employee you would encounter during a trip.

Unlike sleeping car porters, Red Caps were not salaried; rather, they lived on tips. They went home every night after their shift. Though day labourers, they were so critical to the whole train experience that Red Cap porters were in place in just about every major train station in North America. Porters set the tone for passenger

rail travel.

To Black neighbors and friends, the uniformed porter personified sophistication and urbanity. He was a man of worlds they would never see or experience. And the porter did more than pass through those worlds. He helped spread the culture he saw, heard, and tasted to other Blacks and his White passengers in ways seldom understood (Tye, Foster). It was not unusual for the porter ranks to include engineers, doctors, and lawyers. With this advanced education some Black porters created conversations with commuting MPs to advance their causes, particularly labour fairness and immigration.

Railway companies recruited Black men for many reasons. First, Black men were perfect for their business model. Due to low expectations and few options in the labour market, it was accepted that, because Black men work for low wages, they were intricately welded to company whims and its arduous demands. For instance, sleeping car porters often worked for hours before their shift started. Once it began, they were captive. It was not unusual to work almost round-the-clock without overtime pay. Another perk for the employers: Black men did not intersect White lives, which made train travel an upscaled, catered, comprehensive experience where secrets and dalliances stayed on the train.

Another reason for their popularity with rail companies was that most of the men recruited for Canada were intelligent and educated. Indeed, to succeed, railway recruiting became quite sophisticated. Canadian hiring agents travelled to areas of high Black unemployment, which made it easier to entice them to cross the border. By the twentieth century, the recruiter's go-to places were Black college and university campuses. Here they could recruit summer students with one or more years of university. Recruiters knew they had a gold mine for they now had a Black worker who could speak about Shakespeare or talk economics or Plato while serving customers' needs. Recruiters took the cream of local communities and paid them a pittance. Along with their promotion of luxury travel, the rail companies were confident that the educated Black man allowed them to promote an upscale travel experience.

Being a porter was a means to an end. The men coveted the job despite knowing

from the outset that:

- a) you were hired because you were Black;
- b) you would get starvation wages, thus worsening the struggle to make ends meet;
- c) you would be low man in the company, probably for your whole career;
- d) you might never work in the field of your education.

*"How I stepped into the most surprising role of my career"*

by Gloria Aronson

One of Hollywood's brightest stars takes you behind the scenes of her latest motion picture, "THE PULLMAN" - a Warner Production, distributed by Warner Bros., now being shown at your neighborhood theatre.

"From the start, the part was a natural," says Glenda. "I appreciate myself. But even I was surprised to find how completely 'Pullman' provided all the comforts of home."

"Whether you're hungry for the finest service or good food, I can promise you both when you go Pullman. Because, I found the food so delicious, so expertly served it almost made the scene from the exciting cinematography."

Glenda... while Glenda goes her merry way, you will see why you can't wait to see "The Pullman" on the big and medium-sized. And there's nothing on your mind but that soft, fluffy pillow.

"Really, this has been a most delightful one," adds Miss Freeman. "But I've no longer Pullman experience has left me so relaxed as you find it, so glad that I'm looking forward to a quick return engagement."

**Take it easy... GO PULLMAN**  
COMFORTABLE, CONVENIENT AND SAFE

Porters also had to confront the fact that, once on their shift, they were all but invisible, so they would always be "George" (Tye). Yet, the job conferred a measure of community status, not taken lightly. They wore a cleaned and pressed uniform that looked officious. Walking through their district, wearing a smart uniform that looked almost military, they stood out. This created a certain type of bearing in many of the men. Porters talked about that status and the respect they got in the community just by being porters (Mathieu). But the contradiction was that, as soon as they walked into their workspace, the uniform, along with the colour of their skin, immediately conferred low-status worker to other employees and to the travelling public.

The other upside was that sleeping car porters were paid employees. A steady paycheck meant one could plan and make certain life choices. To offset the low income, occasional tips became part of the allure or measure of job satisfaction.

With low financial means, few Blacks would have ever considered a trip to

British Columbia, the Yukon, or Philadelphia, yet this became one of the perks. On long treks, they could visit the district around the rail station. These were often Black porter communities like the one in Montreal. Once disembarked, they would patronize local Black businesses. In this way, the porter from Montreal became a conduit for national conversation. Whether in a barber's chair, in a restaurant or on a street corner, porters shared news from afar, swapped newspapers, picked up local news, and brought personal messages or packages. A two or three-hour stop was just enough time to scope out opportunities for relocation, schools or even partnerships.

A sense of belonging was also an important driver. Indeed, the porter unions, both the legal and social groupings, became structure for the men. There were some porters who had been initiated into fraternities on campus, but the reality for most was that their labour association was the men's first affiliation. Porters became an aristocracy in the community. Its membership included doctors, lawyers, engineers and others who supported Black fraternities, co-operative unions, benevolent societies, lodges, and social clubs. Much of these associations were geared to the betterment of their communities and Black life in Canada. In this way, the porters' relationships and affiliations enhanced their sense of belonging and spoke to their desire to make Canada a more safe, welcoming, and inclusive country.

Canada's labour history has been fraught with demonstrations, violence, strikes and concessions. Black porters struggled to attain fair labour practices and a living wage. Their abysmal working conditions impelled them to be at the forefront of union activism. Ironically, their effort to gain recognition had a unique twist. Black porters could not expect support from their White co-workers, creating a toxic bifurcated workplace. This led to a protracted struggle between unionists, one that Canada's rail companies exploited.

As advancement opportunities were closed to Black labour, Jim Crow practices became part of the Black porters' working lives. Then, in 1908, the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Employees and Other Transport Workers (CBRE) was formed to unite Canada's rail workers. At their founding meeting, the CBRE passed a



motion ostracizing Black tradesmen and labour. Originally, sleeping car porters could join CBRE provided they were not Pullman. The meeting's tenor darkened and the CBRE members voted to exclude Black rail workers. This clause became a part of CBRE's founding charter. They then insisted Canada's railway companies hold separate labour negotiations. Every railway company complied. Black labourers were not to be considered when negotiating with CBRE (Mathieu).

In Montreal, the industry's fulcrum, the biggest private rail company was Canadian Pacific. Moreover, the federal government became a player in the rail sector when the Grand Trunk and the Canadian Northern systems were absorbed into Canadian National Railway (CNR) in June 1919. Unfortunately, although Black porters were now working for a federally chartered company, the CNR became quite adamant that Black porters, particularly American-born Pullman-trained men, were not to be recognized. The CNR shifted to hiring either Canadian-born Blacks or Black British subjects.

CNR policies moved in lock-step with Canadian immigration policies designed to bar African-Americans and "Keep Canada White" (Sessing). This did not lead to better conditions for Black porters. Subsequent CNR contracts ensured that a colour line was established within the Canadian railway service. On both the CNR and the CPR, Black Canadians could only work as sleeping car porters, as all other jobs were reclassified to exclude them.

The porters fought back. By 1917, Black rail employees in Montreal organized themselves under the Order of Sleeping Car Porters (OSCP) for their defence. It was one of the first Black railway unions in North America. The men began challenging the White unionists in Montreal, but they hit a wall because the rail companies did not have to negotiate with an association that was not protected under labour law. Nonetheless, the porters continued to agitate for their right to unionize. Their agitation worked to some measure because, during the Ottawa convention of the CBRE in 1921, the White-only members' clause was deleted from their charter. With the efforts of the porters, the CBRE made history on that October 1, 1921. It became the first Canadian union to remove its racial barriers.

In addition, the OSCP finally gained recognition as an affiliate union of the CBRE, Local 128. Still, the CBRE negotiations continued for the porters and other Black railroaders. To soften the neglect of its Black workforce, the CPR supported local Black causes and even underwrote some non-union associations. In Montreal, Blacks felt the largesse of the rail companies. The CPR created the Porters Mutual Benefit Association (PMBA). Moreover, they provided a building for social and leisure activities. Other benefits included insurance and rooms for porters to sleep over between shifts. The CPR's largesse in St. Antoine's Black community often fractured the resolve of the Black porters. Some were determined to keep the employer's money coming. Others felt it dampened enthusiasm when in collective bargaining. Supporting community efforts while denying labour concerns was probably the most destructive tactic. Further, the CPR invited compliant porters to join the PMBA and pitted this toothless union against Local 128. These non-union incentives were plied at the same time the companies denied porters' requests for workplace safety, overtime, time off, dignity on the job, impartial arbitration against dismissal and the like. No wonder most porters saw these company associations as "puppet employee bargaining units."

As the decades wore on, the porters' struggle for real union recognition rarely wavered. To end labour segregation and unequal labour practices, the Black porters in Montreal under the Order of Sleeping Car Porters realized they needed to expand their clout. Almost from the beginning of the Order, they maintained contacts with porters in the United States. So, in 1925, when the Americans set up the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP), the OSCP reached out to their confreres in the States. This massive African American union dwarfed the OSCP and the American Pullman porters began to make gains. Not surprisingly, then, in early 1939, Charles Russell, a Black porter working out of Montreal, invited Asa Philip Randolph, the guiding force behind the establishment of the American Brotherhood, to come to Montreal to help organize CPR porters. This made Montreal the brains of the Black union movement across the country.

Asa Randolph found a seasoned ally, Arthur A. Blanchette, whom he dubbed

the Brotherhood's Canadian representative. Blanchette crisscrossed the country intent upon registering every porter as a member of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, making it the porters' official bargaining unit. They amalgamated all locals, and Black porters in Canada were now members of the International Brotherhood. The sheer number of union members and the clout of international unionism began to wear down the railway companies, but it took until May 18, 1945, for the porters to reach another milestone. The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters became the first Black union in Canada to sign a collective agreement with a White employer. Some vestiges of the two-tier unionization remained, because it was not until 1955 that Black porters acquired the right to be promoted to Sleeping Car Conductor. This was the first union in Canadian history to racially integrate. The BSCP's organizing efforts and civil rights advocacy left a powerful legacy, one that thereafter influenced human rights policy and labour relations in Canada.

Finally, porters had won the right of due process that White co-workers had had for decades. Porters also got two-week vacations which they did not have before. They got paid for set-up and dead-time, a big jump in pay, and at least 3 hours guaranteed sleep on the train for every 24 hours worked. The economic benefits of unionization brought a measure of mobility not previously seen amongst the Black residents of Montreal's St. Antoine district. (Although a majority of Blacks lived in St. Antoine or St. Henri, others lived in de Maisonneuve, Park Extension, Notre Dame de Grace, Verdun, Ville-Emard, and Cote St. Paul.)

There, non-discriminating facilities, and services sprang up. Blacks could get a room, a haircut or a shave, and have their clothes cleaned without fuss or rebuffs. These venues were welcomed and supported to counter the ostracization and discrimination experienced elsewhere. In Montreal, businesses could refuse to serve you if they didn't like the colour of your skin or perhaps your religion. (The 1939 Fred Christie ruling by the Supreme Court of Canada reinforced the prevailing anti-Black Jim Crow business practices.)

Despite the many difficulties experienced day-to-day, the porters came together in fraternal institutions to better Montreal. Several organizations were imported

branches from the United States, while others were created to deal with unique Montreal circumstances. It was the porters and their families who created the city's first Black-established church and they founded many of the iconic Black organizations that continue today.

Their legacy was felt beyond the island, which was home to the largest concentration of porters. Indeed, Montreal Blacks threw their weight behind many human rights battles being waged elsewhere. They worked to change national labour laws. They protested against injustice, challenging segregation and other discriminatory laws (Mathieu). As they travelled from one town to another, they helped to mobilize. Moreover, they became a significant voice in the movement that eventually pushed Canada to change its anti-Black immigration policies. Canada's railroads became a proving ground for human rights and social justice activism that spilled over into the post-war civil rights era.

As they intersected with communities located near the rails, porters promoted and moved culture. In the first Harlem migration, porters brought jazz to Montreal. Eventually, jazz made Montreal a favoured tourist destination. Before the Depression, millions of dollars flowed into the city's businesses and attractions. Decades later, jazz remains an integral part of the *joie de vivre* in Montreal.

In Montreal, we have several examples of Black porters who invested in businesses. One such enterprising porter was Rufus Rockhead of Rockhead's Paradise on St. Antoine Street. His restaurant, dining-room and jazz bar created jobs. He stood out in the quiet way he dealt with chronic homelessness. Rockhead was a doer. He purchased buildings for temporary and long-term housing (African-Canadian Founders). He knew that finding safe and affordable housing was always a challenge for Blacks, even in St. Antoine.

The porters in Montreal contributed to the national economy in ways yet untold. Until the Second World War, the wealth generated through Pullman's system of North American passenger rail travel centred in Montreal, and gave rise to the Golden Square Mile in downtown Montreal. Canada's rail headquarters of Montreal became a hub for these Black porters whose tireless work helped to define the character of this unique island

and challenged Canada to do better.

**Dorothy Williams** is the author of *Blacks in Montreal: 1628-1986 An Urban Demography and The Road to Now: A History of Blacks in Montreal*. She also established *Blacbiblio.com Inc.*, which has produced an educational kit for teaching *Black history*, *The ABC's of Canadian Black History*.

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# WILSON'S WESTERNAIRES

## *Square Dancing in the Chateauguy Valley* by John Wilson

*This is the second installment in a series inspired by QAHN's 2019-2020 project "A Different Tune: Musical Heritage in English-speaking Quebec," which was funded by Canadian Heritage. Featuring community voices, this series showcases the vibrant musical heritage of English speakers across the province.*

*"Honour your partners, corners address, all join hands and away to the west."*

These words still reverberate in the minds of square dancers in the Chateauguy Valley of southwest Quebec. One band that played at dances for close to forty years was Wilson's Westernaires, founded and led by Ellis Wilson. Tall and lanky, with a wry sense of humour, Ellis had a big heart and a generous nature. A cousin to my father, a friend and neighbour, he inspired me to learn to play the fiddle as a teenager. I always thought Ellis was a born entertainer.

The first place I remember the Westernaires playing was at an anniversary party at the Maple Garden Pavilion on the First Concession Road near Herdman, Quebec. I was probably five or six years old. It was a smoky place, like most dance venues in those days. Alcohol was forbidden in the Hall, though it would be consumed outside in the parking lot during a break. I was intrigued by the sounds of the music from the band. Music captured my imagination and I was spellbound. The style was raw, yet mesmerising. They had only one microphone on stage for the vocalist and caller-emcee. The violin and other instruments were amplified through a public address system – quite rudimentary, yet serving the purpose. Sometimes a tube would burn or a fuse would blow, but Ellis would patch things up and be back in business. Ellis recounted a time when a wire needed soldering, but he

had no soldering iron. With a book of matches and some help from Westernaires steel guitarist Bud Pearce, the job was completed and the dance went on.

A self-taught musician, Ellis had a style of his own. He held the fiddle low on his chest rather than under his chin. He was hard on the bow. Sweat pouring from his brow, cigarette dangling from his mouth, eyes closed and back to the audience, he hammered out the tunes, never missing a beat. While it was not the most polished sound, Ellis had a



unique style and the Westernaires put a lot of feeling into their music, becoming a popular band in the area.

Ellis Weston Wilson was born October 17, 1913, to Norman Wilson, a farmer in Brooklet, Hinchinbrooke Township, Quebec, and Gertrude Iby, from Earlville, New York. He spent his early years on the First Concession, a road that runs parallel to the United States border, or the "lines" as the locals called it. As a youth, his life revolved around the farm, school, and Rennie's Methodist Church. He tended livestock,

made hay for winter feed, and gathered sap in the spring for maple syrup. The sugar shanty nestled in the woods produced golden ambrosia, and many a happy hour was spent there, hoping to break up the routine of farm life. Ellis raised and sold poultry as well as strawberries, and in winter cut ice on the pond to sell to local farmers for cooling milk in summer. Brooklet also had a baseball team and Ellis loved to play, competing with local farm teams.

Ellis received his early education at MacKay's one-room schoolhouse northeast of the farm, and later attended Huntingdon Academy in nearby Huntingdon. It was at MacKay's school that the teacher had the class make musical instruments from cardboard. Ellis chose the violin, and later pestered his father to get him a real one. Thinking it a passing fad, Norman borrowed an old fiddle from a relative. Ellis practiced until he could play well enough for local house parties. Someone would pass the hat and he would get 50 cents, or, if lucky, maybe even a dollar. Those times he came home with nothing, he would chalk up to practice.

Ellis kept a little notebook in the 1930s with birthdays, business transactions from the farm, and special occurrences. One entry ran: "August 6th, 1932. A fire broke out at Amos Myatt's barn, burning it to the ground. Caused by spontaneous combustion. A new barn was started instantly and two barn dances were held (24th, 26th)." Spontaneous combustion, or hay fires, was a common phenomenon when improperly cured hay, with too much moisture, was stored in barns. The organic matter would continue to break down, releasing heat, which could start an upward spiral of temperature and eventually combustion. With winter around the corner and a farmer's livelihood dependent on having a barn, neighbours would pitch in their labour and lumber to have a new

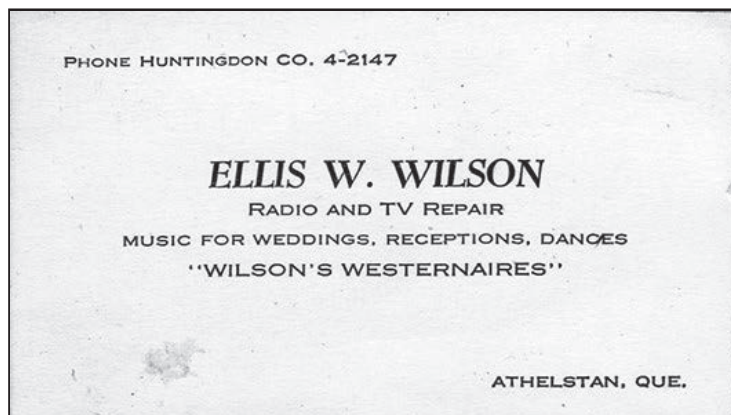
*Don Wilson's Westernaires shirt, January 2020.  
Photo: Glenn Patterson.*

barn up within a few weeks. This was the era before building permits and agricultural by-laws for construction were required. While barns were not usual venues for music and dance in the 1930s, when a barn was lost to a disaster, it was common for neighbours to celebrate the completion of a new barn with a barn dance. In the 1950s and 60s, to make extra income, several farmers built secondary “barns” that never held livestock but were used for barn dances featuring local talent and national celebrities like Don Messer, Bobby Hill and the Country Boys, and others.

Ellis was 18 years old when he played at Amos Myatt’s new barn in 1932. He played along with local fiddler Fred Sweet and his grandsons, Freddie and Allan Elliott. Both brothers played violins with Freddie sometimes playing Hawaiian guitar. Fred Sweet was also the master carpenter for the barn, so his engagement as the fiddler at this event is not surprising.

It was about this time, while at a house party, that Ellis met a pretty young piano player by the name of Ina May Milne. He was smitten. He asked her out, and they were married in 1936. Ellis cut wood, delivered groceries, and drove a school bus to make ends meet. In 1838, when their son Donald was born, the family needed more income. Ellis started to haul milk to Montreal for Otis Trivisee of Herdman, and later, the family moved to Ormstown, where Ellis hauled milk for Raymond Graham Transport. On his trips into Montreal, he would often visit the city’s record stores on the lookout for 78 rpm records of country and fiddle music so he could learn from the recordings. Ellis and Ina’s second son, Harold, was born in 1943.

During their time in Ormstown, the couple were



the nucleus for what would become the Westernaires over a decade later. Ellis and Ina, on fiddle and piano respectively, were joined by Ina’s brother, Arnold, also on fiddle, and Arnold’s wife, Marjorie Rosevear, on guitar. They became quite popular in the area during the late 1930s and into the 1940s. Their style was influenced by Don Messer and George Wade, well-known Canadian radio and recording artists of the era. On

occasions when the venue had no piano, Ellis would hire two stout lads who would load the upright piano from his living room into his milk van and return it after the dance. By the late 1940s, the handling of milk cans (100 pounds when full) was taking its toll on his health. Family commitments also became more demanding and the group reduced their engagements.

In 1946, Ellis bought an old house near the “lines” and had it moved about a mile to his father’s farm. After work, he would come up to the First Concession to work on the house, adding a kitchen and garage. He was also taking correspondence courses in radio repair. Ellis, Ina and their family finally left Ormstown for the First Concession in 1950. Ellis ran his father’s farm and increased the herd, always milking by hand. While farming, he steadily increased his radio (and later television) repair business.

He also cut hair for local men in his shop. But he still had a desire to form a band again.

In the early 1950s, after the Wilsons return to the First Concession, the Westernaires came into being. This latest musical initiative of Ellis and Ina was for enjoyment as well as a bit of extra income for the family. They were joined by singer Helen Collum and drummer Harvey Reddick. Later additions were

Bud Pearce on steel guitar and Franklin Cameron as dance caller and master of ceremonies. Later, Ellis’ son Donald replaced Harvey, who had moved away. Peggy Tramble, who now lives in Cape Breton, joined the group as a teenage vocalist in the mid-1960s. Joyce Lindsay also sang in the band and Bill Hooker would call in lieu of Franklin Cameron. Eventually, they acquired



Top: Wilson westernaires, Ormstown Fair Square Dance Contest, 1958. Roberta Wilson collection.

Middle: Ellis Wilson’s business card. John Wilson collection. Bottom: John and Ellis Wilson’s fiddle, January 2020. Photo Glenn Patterson.





a P.A. system and a Wurlitzer electric piano, considerably easier to transport than the upright piano of the Wilsons' earlier performing years.

The Westernaires had a loyal following throughout the Chateauguay Valley during their heyday in the 1950s and 60s, from Dundee to Hemmingford and down to Howick and Chateauguay. They played at barn dances, fundraisers, wedding anniversaries, and square dance competitions at local fairs. Popular venues were the Maple Garden Pavilion in Davignon Park, the Grange Hall in Kensington (near Huntingdon), Dumas' (later Robidoux's) barn and Erskine's barn in Ormstown, local high schools and church halls, Herdman and Dundee Town Halls, the Temperance Hall in Howick, and the Huntingdon Legion.

Ellis started every dance with the early country music standard "New River Train" and always ended with Gene Autry's "Goodbye Little Darling." Ina made matching western outfits for the group. A typical evening would usually start with round dances (single couples dancing to a slower piece, usually a waltz, fox-trot, or even a popular country song of the era). Then, for the square dances, the caller would invite couples to form sets. Four couples made a square, with the first or head couple having their backs to the orchestra. The first dance, or change, would be in jig time (6/8 time). The second change was always a "singing call," for example "Nellie Gray," "Silver Bell," "Marching through Georgia," where the caller,

rather than speaking the dance steps, would sing them to the melody of the tune being played.

The third change would be a fast tempo breakdown in reel time (2/2 time). In addition to square dance music and country & western songs, the Westernaires also tried to keep up with current evolving musical tastes, incorporating popular pieces from the Hit Parade as well as early rock & roll. They even played Chubby Checker's "The Twist."

Admission to a dance was usually between 60 and 75 cents. A dance could last until 2 a.m., with a break for a "lunch." This term, used in rural areas, meant refreshments served at midnight. Sometimes neighbours would be asked to contribute cake or sandwiches. The sandwiches would often sit on a table at the back of the Hall for several hours until consumed. (No confirmed cases of food poisoning!)

By the end of the 1960s, musical tastes were becoming more cosmopolitan. Square dancing was losing popularity. Ironically, television, which had become Ellis' bread and butter business, probably contributed to the decline in local small dance orches-

tras. Tastes changed, times changed. The Westernaires played their last dance in the early 1970s, likely at another barn raising, this time for Ina's cousin Harold McCaig, whose barn outside of Ormstown had burned. Ellis died in 1977.

I still have the fiddle that Ellis played. Farming life in Brooklet still goes on, and the Westernaires' music is still remembered fondly by many around here.

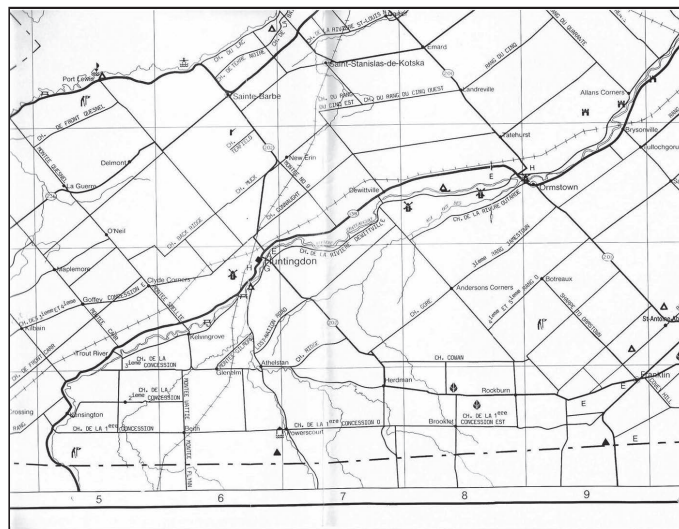
*John Wilson is a retired dairy farmer and old-time fiddler who was born and still lives in the farmhouse built by a Scottish ancestor in 1837. He and his wife, Connie McClintock, who plays piano, frequently perform at seniors residences, 4H square dances, open mics, and at public and private events. Between them, they are active volunteers with Hillside Cemetery in Rennie's Corners, Rennie's United Church, and the Chateauguay Valley Historical Society.*

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# WAVES OF CHANGE

*Experiencing the Turbulent Years*

by Guy Rex Rodgers

## Myth de-Making

ELAN conceived its Waves of Change documentary project as an oral history of Quebec's English-speaking community with a 200-year narrative arc from 1820 to 2020. Filming the first episodes coincided with the fiftieth anniversary of the October Crisis. We defined the groups of participants recruited for ELAN's project by periods of immigration. In this article, I will examine the first three waves: families that arrived during the period of two solitudes prior to 1945, immigrants who arrived during the transitional period between 1945 and 1970, and people who arrived during the turbulent years from 1970 to 1995.

One of the prevailing myths in Quebec's language conflict is that Anglos are WASPy descendants of the British ruling class. The oldest group we recruited – families that arrived prior to 1945 – reflected a lived history that is remarkably unWASPy. Black communities have deep roots in Quebec, and a large nineteenth-century Yiddish-speaking community, as well as significant numbers of Chinese immigrants, demonstrate long-standing diversity among “Anglos.” Most of the descendants of the British Isles that we interviewed self-identified as Irish or Scottish Celts, and those who self-identified as “British” Anglo Saxons were more often from Catholic rather than Protestant families.

The second wave of immigrants – those arriving between 1945 and 1970 – was even less WASPy. Most of them fell into the newly-minted linguistic category of “Allophones,” who arrived in Quebec with various languages and non-Protestant or non-Christian religions. By the time the third wave of immigrants arrived – during the politically turbulent

years between 1970 and 1995 – Quebec was in the process of transforming from one of the most religious societies in the world to one of the most secular. ELAN's Waves of Change project sought to explore how different waves of immigrants experienced this turbulent period of history.

## Inequalities and Elites

Inequalities that triggered the Quiet Revolution, FLQ violence, and decades of social upheaval had multiple causes.



After Duplessis was gone and the power of the Church curtailed, the oppressive Anglo boss/capitalist became a convenient lightning rod for collective outrage. The significant detail was lost that the oppressive boss/capitalist represented only the wicked 1%, and all Anglos became part of the problem. The earliest groups of immigrants, who had peacefully coexisted (or so they thought) with their Francophone neighbours, were stunned by the anger directed at them during the 1960s and 70s.

**Lorraine** (ancestors arrived in first wave/roots Ireland): *There is a very prevalent narrative of the rich Anglo*

*boss. There is some truth to that, and my own ancestors, who were poor, were not bosses, but they definitely benefited on the English-speaking side from the fact that there were bosses who spoke English and that their businesses operated in English. I find that in the media and in history books there's too often reference only to the wealthy elite, the 1% of English-speakers, as if they represented everyone. I think that's a heavy burden and it has to go.*

**Stephanie** (ancestors arrived in first wave/roots Romania): *The idea that only French-Canadians were repressed or suppressed economically and politically in Canada is false. Every ethnic group was barred from jobs. My uncle, who graduated top of his class at McGill in physics, took two years to find a job. As Jews, we are used to being excluded. In every country it has been our experience, but here in Canada, I should say here in Quebec, a lot of people were suppressed and it was not only French-Canadians.*

**Deborah** (ancestors arrived in second wave/roots Barbados and Jamaica): *When we talk about the English ruling class, the myth has always surrounded those people in Westmount and even on the English side there was a recognition of that truth, but that's where the myth is, because they were a very small part of who we are. In terms of the media's place in that, I think there's a political bent that keeps it going, but I also see a perpetuation of the myth of the Francophone as oppressed in Quebec. I think that one is more problematic in the sense that as long as you're seeing yourself as oppressed you can't see yourself as the oppressor.*



## Arriving in Isolation

During the post-war period, immigrants received little support from government to make a new life. They received assistance from friends and family already established in this new land, which was primarily seen as North America or Canada. Immigrants had little knowledge of what they perceived to be the provincial politics of Quebec.

**Meir** (grandparents arrived in second wave/roots Morocco): *I think all of the immigrant communities that came from different countries came to Canada, we didn't come to Quebec. We had heard about Canada. We didn't know Quebec from Ontario. We knew that there was maybe French or English but we didn't know any of the other differences and so we just came here to settle down and we were happy in either language.*

**Isabelle** (parents arrived in second wave/roots Portugal): *I think most of us have the same experience who immigrated in the sixties. There were no social services to help immigrants that we were aware of. So the family that sponsored us was responsible for us and that gave us the incentive to be self-sufficient.*

**Maria** (parents arrived in second wave/roots Argentina): *Immigrants are so well informed now. In those days we had nothing, so basically it was my family, my cousins that were here, who helped us. We had nobody else to count on, or we did not know where to go, but the family was already structured enough to be able to help us out.*

## Religious Barriers

Most Anglos have often arrived in Quebec not speaking French. Many of the families in the second wave arrived here not speaking English. Large numbers of Allophones were excluded from Catholic schools because of religion and they became Anglos by default, educated in the Protestant/English system where they were not exactly welcomed. Non-Protestants (and non-Christians) were permitted to enrol in Protestant schools but they had to fight for full rights within the system. The complex story of Catholic Italians in the post-war period would have merited an entire episode of *Waves of Change*. Many Italian students were educated in bilingual Catholic schools (until those schools were made

unilingually French, which triggered the St. Leonard riots in 1969), while others joined the Irish in the English Catholic schools.

**Meir** (grandparents arrived in second wave/roots Morocco): *My grandparents spoke perfect French, perfect Moroccan French, not Québécois French. They came here and it was a product of government policies that we ended up speaking English. My grandparents had to learn English. There was no English in their household. They spoke French and they spoke French to my parents but my dad went to an English school.*

**Thalia** (grandparents arrived in second wave/roots Hungary): *When my grandparents and my father arrived, he was 7, just about 8 years old, and at that point there was absolutely no Bill 101. He was an immigrant and he was Jewish; there was no way that he would be accepted in the Francophone schools. That was just not done, period. So he wound up going to one of the Protestant schools, which was very Jewish: Baron Bing.*

**Domenic** (parents arrived in second wave/roots Italy): *I always find it interesting that in Montreal there were the French-Canadians, who were Catholic. There were all the immigrants, who were not Catholic, like the Jewish people and Greek Orthodox, who wound up at the Protestant school board. And then there were the non-Francophone Catholics, like the Italians who didn't really have a spot so, we ended up with the English sector of the Montreal Catholic Schools Commission. I think Quebec is still in denial about this. There was one segment of Quebec that wanted to preserve the purity of French: the French language, the French culture, the French race maybe. There was another segment that said, "We want to welcome and accept and integrate and assimilate non-Quebécois, non-Francophones." These two dichotomies were at war for many years from the 1940s and 50s until about Bill 101, in 1976.*

## Unloved Anglos

Allophones who arrived in the post-war period were caught in a conflict that was not theirs. Most wanted to learn both official languages but many were denied access to the Catholic (French) school

system, which created a demographic time bomb because so many immigrants were anglicised.

**Louise** (ancestors arrived in first wave/roots Slovakia and China): *I've always been called, "Hey you! Tête Carrée! English!" or whatever, and it's not always negative. I was very happy to be bilingual and know many languages, but at one point I was walking in the street when a person called me a Tête Carrée, you know, an Anglo. I said, "I don't have an ounce of English blood in me. It's Slovak, Chinese, French, Scottish and Russian." And it made me realize that it's because of the language that someone is talking to me like that. There is a huge misunderstanding of why we're speaking English, and it's got nothing to do with our blood for a lot of us.*

Of the five groups we interviewed for *Waves of Change*, the Allophones who arrived in the 1945-1970 period (and their children and grandchildren) had the weakest sense of belonging in Quebec, which is not surprising given their experience as collateral damage during decades of French/English conflict. The second referendum on independence in 1995 was a bitterly contested campaign that divided friends and families. A handful of votes determined the razor-thin result and the decision could easily have gone the other way had militant separatists understood post-war immigrants better and made them feel included in their sovereigntist vision. Instead, Premier Jacques Parizeau blamed "money" (usually a code word for Anglos) and the "ethnic vote," ensuring that non-Francophones would continue to feel that Quebec's project of national affirmation did not include them.

In the next article, we will examine the dramatically different experience of groups that have arrived in Quebec after 1995.

*The six Waves of Change episodes can be seen at [wavesofchangequebec.ca](http://wavesofchangequebec.ca). Guy Rex Rodgers is currently directing a feature length documentary using additional material from the 20 hours of Waves of Change interviews. What We Choose To Remember will debut at the Hudson Film festival in March 2022 and will subsequently be available online.*

# SNOWSHOE RACES, 1909

*The Sherbrooke Snow Shoe Club*  
by Duncan Crabtree

The Sherbrooke Snow Shoe Club (SSSC) is “the oldest, continuously operating snowshoe club in the world,” according to Stephen Moore, historian and past president of the club. In 2013, Moore profiled a member’s jacket dating from the late nineteenth century, and presented some of the club’s history, within the context of QAHN’s “100 Objects” project. The following article focuses on one particular event in the club’s history, an event that was well-recorded in its minutes, which are housed at the Eastern Townships Resource Centre: the 1909 Sherbrooke Snowshoe race.

While present-day snowshoe championships can be international affairs, races were decidedly more regional in 1909. The two hosts for the Sherbrooke event were the two largest clubs in town at the time: a Francophone one named La Tuque Rouge and the Anglophone SSSC.

The Sherbrooke Snow Shoe Club was founded in 1877 at Magog House in the city’s downtown. As Moore points



out, the club’s leadership was dominated by economically and socially prominent men. The SSSC modelled its by-laws on those of the Montreal Snow Shoe Club, and kept meticulous minutes of its meetings.

The approaching snowshoe “carnival” was first discussed at a meeting in

early December 1908. A fund was raised from among the all-male membership using a subscription list: all were expected to contribute except first-year members. The event would take place from Friday, February 5 to Monday, February 8, 1909.

Around three weeks before the carnival, the club’s membership decided that it would be a polite gesture to greet members of other snowshoe clubs as their trains pulled into Sherbrooke’s Union Station from places like Montreal and Quebec City. Doing so would also enable them to inform visitors of the local hotel accommodations for their weekend stay.

Planning for the race continued at the meeting held two weeks prior to the carnival. The club decided to open its clubhouse during the races to serve coffee and sandwiches to visiting snowshoers while a “quiet smoke was enjoyed around the fire.” Although this was seemingly a big event for the club, the club’s secretary was told to buy flags for the races at a “nominal” price.

The club made final preparations at its meeting of February 3, 1909, two days before the first event. Planners



Top: Magog House, c.1900: home to the Sherbrooke Snow Shoe Club until the building burned down. Courtesy of the Sherbrooke Record.

Bottom: Members of the Sherbrooke Snow Shoe Club, c.1930. Sherbrooke Snow Shoe Club archives.



accepted a local minister's invitation to attend Sherbrooke's Episcopal church on Sunday morning. They also finalized a menu for the Saturday afternoon gathering at the clubhouse, and organized pipe smoking materials. A team and team captain were chosen for a Friday hockey match between the SSSC and the Tuque Rouge Snowshoe Club. Finally, the members were invited to join a "Subscription Ball" hosted by the Sherbrooke Snowshoe Carnival President on the Monday evening at "Air Hall." Now that sounds like a winter weekend to remember!

SSSC minutes do not reveal the locations and times of the 1909 weekend races, but Stephen Moore explains that "the short distance races, like a modern-day track meet, would likely have been held at what is commonly known as the Parade Grounds, a park still in use on Queen Victoria Boulevard, north of Montreal Street." Long distance races, on the other hand, "would have been held in the surrounding countryside."

According to the Sherbrooke Snow Shoe Club's meeting minutes from the winter of 1909, the Sherbrooke Snowshoe races were a remarkable event. Four days of festivities included a hockey match, long and short distance snowshoe races, an Episcopal church service attended by all members, and lots of social engagement: refreshments and smoking after the races and a Monday evening Subscription Ball.

Although today's Snowshoe World Championships are very different, and probably involve less smoking, the

tradition represented by the Sherbrooke Snowshoe "carnival" carries on. Shortly after the 1909 races, interest in the SSSC seems to have wavered: the club recorded its lowest meeting turnout ever on February 1, 1911, with only nine members in attendance. Nevertheless, the club forges on to this day – even during the Covid pandemic.

*Former Bishop's University student Duncan Crabtree interned for QAHN in 2019.*

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Reviews

# NOT YOUR MOTHER'S CANADIAN HISTORY

*Insatiable Hunger: Colonial Encounters in Context*

by Joseph W. Graham

Black Rose Books, 2021

A Dakota elder once told me that the Sioux word for Whiteman was the generic term for anything that comes in herds. He was putting me on, of course, but he would have enjoyed the new book by Joe Graham.

The book's title, *Insatiable Hunger*, refers to European Colonial behaviour. The expression comes from an Iroquoian foundational story that involves a strongman named Adodaroh who would consume everything in his path.

The book essentially gives the back-story to a number of historical events we know well: Jacques Cartier's "discovery" of the St. Lawrence River, the Conquest / Seven Years War, the Pilgrims, the Christian martyrs, The Great Peace, the American War of Independence, and the War of 1812, among others. One conclusion in *Insatiable Hunger* is that some individuals produced great wealth for themselves, and built colonies "on the backs of slaves, exploited workers and the disenfranchised" (p.172). To quote Elisabeth Paice, OBE: "This is not the Canadian history I was taught in school."

The European Wars of Religion (1530-1630) led to invading cultures swinging between tolerance and extremism as they embarked on colonization. Most European adventurers could not grasp the Indigenous concept of a society based on gift-

giving, and the Indigenous peoples could not grasp the idea of societies built around patriarchy and owning land. The approach to war was also completely different, keeping in mind that the European wars killed about 12 million during the period covered.

Few of the Europeans are presented as courageous. There are no "noble savages" here either, although that is certainly how the Seneca perceived rapacious American settlers.

In 1930s Montreal my mother had trouble finishing her high-school history tests because she had to answer questions three ways: with the Quebec version she learned at the convent, the English version from her mother, and the American version from her father. In school, we all studied cleaned-up, self-serving, politicized accounts, but Joe Graham's book presents some unruly truths. History moves forward in chaotic and random ways. There is some cause and effect, complex and nuanced as it may be, but the outcomes could have been entirely different if the power dynamics had changed.

There is no reconciliation without truth. For the sake of Mother Earth, we must learn to satiate our hunger and challenge patriarchy. Joe Graham's book moves this dossier forward. Buy the book!

– Reviewed by Wes Darou



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## OPINION

# *The Secrétariat aux relations avec les Québécois d'expression anglaise*

by Joseph Graham

The Quebec government has created the Secretariat for Relations with English-Speaking Quebecers. We have become a mystery to them, perhaps from as early as Josée Legault's 1992 publication *L'invention d'une minorité: Les Anglo-Québécois*. We, the "invented minority," seem to lack a strong sense of belonging. Of course, the Secretariat's existence acknowledges that we exist, and the idea that we are a fictional minority seems to be understood, generally, as false. The Secretariat's first job, according to an excellent article written by Guy Rex Rodgers ("Waves of Change," *QHN* Fall 2021), was to figure out who we are. Though well-intentioned and welcomed, the Secretariat's creation is a good example of how difficult it is for a colonizing power to understand how to decolonize itself, to examine its own history thoroughly and with an open mind before drawing conclusions about its minorities.

I know, your first reaction is to wonder how I can call Quebec a colonizing power, but there is little question that Quebec has dominated and colonized its territory. There are many Indigenous examples of this. The first one that comes to mind is the Oka Crisis, but there are many other incidents, before and since, that indicate a cultural hierarchy inherited from France.

We, the remaining members of the English-speaking communities, are those who chose to stay in Quebec when we did not have to. We endured the closed attitude to hiring our children in the public service and the slow decline of our cultural voice until our only significant number was in Montreal. There are expectations that we will die out and whoever of our descendants remain here will become real Québécois, somehow. The Secretariat and the majority thinking may not rise to the challenge of decolonization, but they are inviting us to share our voices.

The first item on the list is to tell the truth about our history. If Quebec was abused in its past, it was by the Catholic Church. Both here and in France, the Church looked after its parishioners and was responsible for over half the services we receive today from our provincial government. But, beyond its tithe, the price it charged was to reformulate its people, changing the way they thought and functioned. Its influence was mitigated in a lot of other European countries, for better or worse, during the Wars of Religion, but Cardinal Richelieu, Louis XIII's prime minister, set in motion the destruction of the Huguenots (French Protestants), and Louis XIV completed it.

New France was the dream of the Huguenots, who made four or five attempts to establish it in South America and the Carolinas before settling here, but the homogenizing vision of

Richelieu left no room for minorities. In the 1620s, the cardinal forbade Huguenots from doing business in New France, and all births, marriages and deaths could only be recorded by the parish priest. That served to define French culture almost up to the present. Even the French Revolution did not kill it. Difference is not tolerated.

With no Huguenots allowed legally in the colony, the Church took over administration, and their shared objective was to create a Catholic colony by converting the people who were here already, and by accepting colonists who were obliged to declare themselves as Catholic. Even so, a great number of those colonists were Huguenot, a fact that is coming out in genetic research today. They were oppressed in France and hoped to be able to find greater freedom here. Many became the independent-spirited Canadiens. Many others moved on to New Amsterdam, where there was religious freedom.

In 1629, a Huguenot, David Kirke, sailing for the English king, took Quebec, but then England was forced to return it to France. The colony would remain French Catholic until 1763 when it was transferred again to the British, under the guidance of Jean Louis Ligonier, the 77-year-old Huguenot general who masterminded the British side in the Seven Years' War. Once again, New France (Quebec) became a British colony where Christian religious freedom was accepted.

Still, the homogenizing of culture is there, in our French history. It goes beyond its roots in the Catholic Church and guides policies of immigration and assimilation in both France and Quebec. For Quebec to properly decolonize itself, it must first accept that it is a North American culture, and that its greatest victory was earned through the recognition of its people, *les Canadiens*, as a nation at the Great Peace of Montreal in 1701. It must also acknowledge that the Church stole that victory, and did so again in the 1830s, when it undermined – instead of assisting in establishing – the secular and multicultural vision of Louis-Joseph Papineau.

For the first time, Quebec became Roman Catholic during that decade, a step deeper into the Catholic culture than the Gallican, or French, Catholicism that prevailed in both France, and in the French and then British colony. This change happened when Bishop Jean-François Lartigue of Montreal began to suspect that the British Colonial Office, perhaps preoccupied with the Patriote Party, was not paying attention to the Catholic Church.

When the British took over the colony seventy years earlier, Bishop Henri Pontbriand, Bishop of Quebec, declared to the church: "The Christian religion requires for victorious princes who have conquered a country all the obedience, the respect,

that is owed to the others... The king of England now being, through conquest, the sovereign of Quebec, all the feelings of which the apostle St Paul speaks are due him.” He died three months before the surrender of Montreal, but his successor and personal secretary, Vicar General Jean-Olivier Briand, executed his instructions with humility and great skill. He guided the church to accept its role so successfully that the British administration consulted with it, and General James Murray recommended Briand as the new bishop of Quebec.

This created a dilemma.

Briand sailed to England for discussions with the colonial authorities and he charmed them into holding the conviction that he would be the ideal person to run the church in New France. But neither the Anglican Church nor the colonial office could name a Catholic as bishop of a British colony. Briand expressed his desire to see his family in France, where he was named Bishop of Quebec, a title bestowed by the pope but subject to Gallican Catholic rules, and was endorsed by the king of France. He resolved the dilemma for the Anglican Church and the colonial authority.

Over the ensuing years, the Catholic Church of Quebec respected Gallican Catholic rules, obtaining secular endorsement for any appointments where they could and finding other solutions where they could not.

Being a bishop carries a certain authority in the Catholic hierarchy, and the colonial office was not always willing to see that authority bestowed. When the church determined that Montreal needed a bishop, rather than go through the onerous process of creating a bishopric, the church named Lartigue as titular bishop of a no-longer-existing diocese in the Ottoman Empire. Carrying the title of Bishop, he could do the work of a bishop in Montreal without the need to ask for colonial permission. The clergy could not easily have gone to France to have a title bestowed, as Briand had done. While Napoleon was gone and France had a king, the power relationships between the new kingdom and the pope were no longer the same. The French (Gallican) Catholic Church was in disarray and there was a movement to recognize the pope independently of the king, removing secular influence in the naming to offices of the Catholic Church.

This may seem like religious triviality, but Lartigue saw its importance. After having served as bishop for over a decade, he calculated that if the pope were to recognize him as the Bishop of Montreal, rather than a bishop working in Montreal, the colonial authorities might well accept it as a trivial matter. He made his request without addressing the colonial authorities, and in May 1836 he was named Bishop of Montreal.

The clergy of Catholic Lower Canada cringed in anticipation of British reprisals, but, to the astonishment of many of them, within two weeks he received a simple letter acknowledging his status. To test the new independence he had sought, he named his officers without consultation, again breaking Gallican protocol, and received no further reaction from the colonial office.

With those gestures, the Roman Catholic Church of Lower Canada was created, an entity independent of secular authority,

reporting directly to Rome. Through its church, Lower Canada had achieved independence.

Lartigue’s next step was to aggressively undermine his cousin Louis-Joseph Papineau’s attempts to secularize Lower Canada and create a republic.

The British Colonial Office had created the assemblies and wanted them to take on greater responsibilities, but slowly. The Church could work with that. In fact, through providing education, health and social services, and having responsibility for the registry of marriages, births and deaths, the Church already had a lot of power. Mother Church could easily take on the power of controlling how people would vote, as long as they had the time to do it – slowly. Papineau had to be stopped.

After Papineau’s failed rebellion, the church was only just warming up. With Catholic France still re-establishing itself, many of its religious orders were open to coming to this new Roman Catholic British colony and, by the time of the election of the Province of Canada’s first prime minister, Louis-Hippolyte-Lafontaine, political decisions were made with a view to assuring the consent of the Catholic Church, not the other way around.

Throughout the nineteenth century, this new Roman Catholic Church drove its people ever deeper into the Catholic hierarchy, even to the point of raising the first international military force in Canadian history, the Zouaves, to protect the Papal States. The *Grande Noireur* was not caused by the English, but by the Church. If the British Colonial Office had a role, it was in being completely outflanked by the extraordinary minds at work in the Church.

We, those minorities that the Secretariat wonders about, succeeding those *Canadiens* who came for religious freedom, are the spiritual heirs of the Huguenots, those people who sought a state that allowed for freedom of religion, freedom from the insidious control of the Catholic Church. Our claim to Quebec runs very deep, right back to its founding, and while Captain David Kirke was capturing Champlain’s Quebec in 1629, the English navy was attempting to save the French Huguenots at La Rochelle from ethnic cleansing at the hand of Cardinal Richelieu. While a Huguenot general guided the British to recapture the Huguenot dream of freedom of religion, the Catholic Church went underground and rose to continue its mission.

Our ancient minority, opposing the homogenizing force of the Catholic Church, has been a part of Quebec since the beginning.

*Joseph Graham’s new book, Insatiable Hunger, reinterprets our historic understanding of the colonial period, here and in New England. It tells some of the stories that we were not taught in school.*





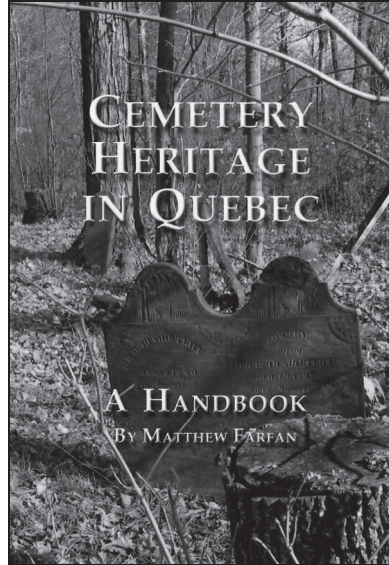
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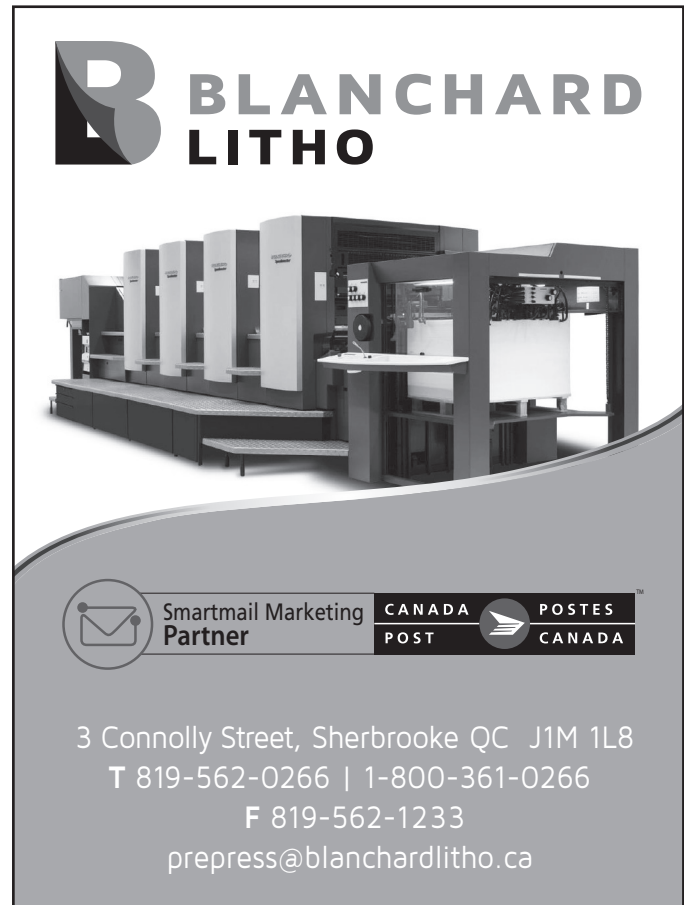
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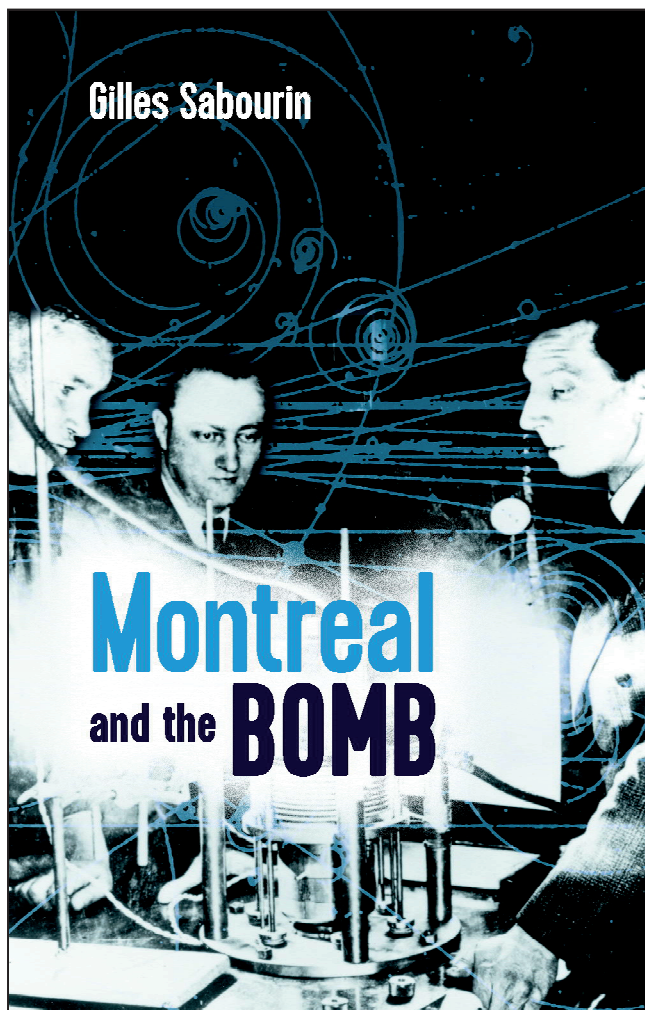
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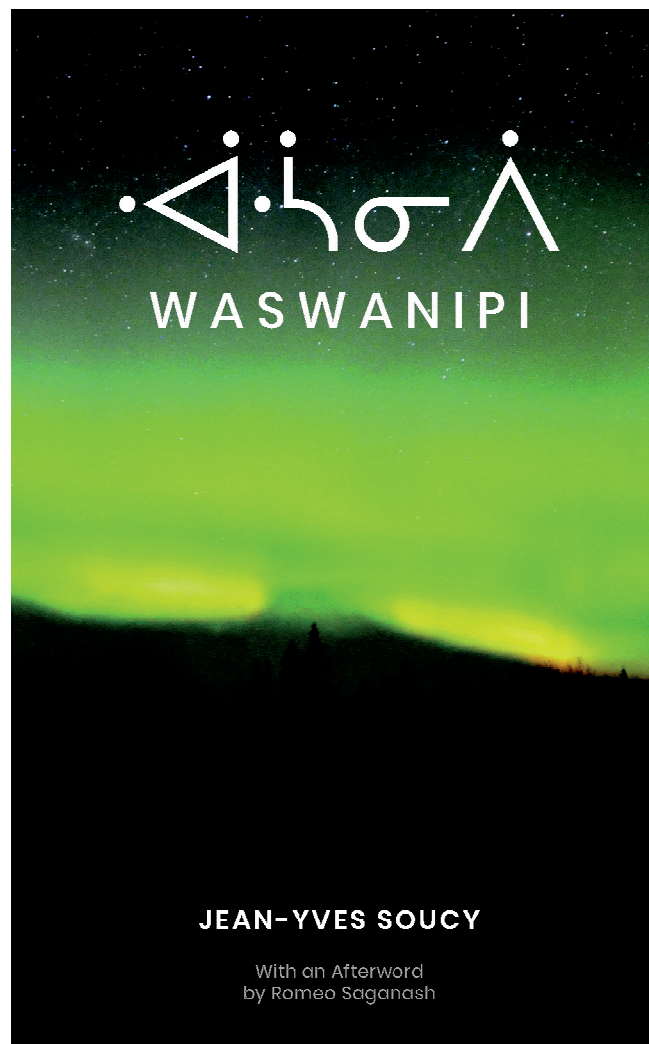
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