

NATURAL HISTORY: THE CURIOUS CAREER OF HENRY MOUSLEY

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News



Mountain Men

Creating Montreal's Mount Royal Park

The Gold Watch

J. J. Curran's "Distinguished Attainments"

A Sense of Belonging

Profiling More Community Projects from *Belonging and Identity in English-speaking Quebec*

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Quebec Heritage News

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EDITOR'S DESK

Madding Crowds

by Rod MacLeod

It was a pretty disgusting spectacle. An army of xenophobic goons attacking the nation's legislative building while it was in session, smashing windows and charging in as legislators dispersed, occupying the speaker's chair, seizing and parading about with sacred symbols of democracy, and hunting down key politicians identified as sell-outs to the cause of constitutional justice and ethnic harmony – seeking, above all, the man who, despite his conservative credentials, had refused to take part in the plans for a coup and resisted calls to overturn the results of a legitimate election. The goons were egged on by right-wing media decrying the dilution of Anglo-Saxon culture and the political rise of other, long-oppressed groups. Moreover, they were roused to fever pitch at a rally by a vulgar demagogue directing them to march on the seat of democratic government.

As some of you may already have guessed, I am not referring to last January's attack on the American Capitol, but rather to Canada's own sordid example of mob violence directed against the democratic process and, indeed, against the seat of government. Of course, I'm going back 172 years to when parliament met upstairs in Montreal's St. Anne's Market, located just off McGill Street in what is now Youville Square. Because the goons in question burned this building to the ground, the British government decided that Montreal was not a safe city, and moved the capital elsewhere. Canada's history would have turned out differently had multilingual and multiethnic Montreal remained the nation's headquarters – which is a topic for another day. Suffice it to say that it is never a sign of good political health when the legislature is attacked.

Apart from using the word “nation,” which it would be a stretch to apply to Canada in 1849, my description of the

events in Montreal on April 25 of that year are, I think, accurate. Many of the legislators actually fought back against the invaders, something that their modern American counterparts were mercifully not obliged to do. But they did leave the room and the attackers proceeded to mess with the speaker's chair, paintings, books, and other paraphernalia they discovered, much as 2021's goons did. Politicians such as Francis Hincks, Robert Baldwin, and Louis-Hippolyte LaFontaine were every bit as hated for their liberal policies as were



the senators and representatives whom we saw being hurried down the backstairs of the Capitol last January. James Bruce, the governor general, had resisted taking part in what he called a “coup” proposed by a group of Tory leaders wanting him to refuse to sign the Rebellion Losses Bill; doing so would have gone against the tenets of responsible government. Although there were no open calls to hang Bruce, as there were recently for the American vice president, one witness in April 1849 described the crowd as being bent on killing the governor general. In any case, Bruce was pelted with eggs and stones even as he beat a hasty retreat back to his home at Monklands, where he and his family cowered in fear for their lives. Several Tory newspapers, including the *Montreal Gazette*, had been ranting about the

need for Anglo-Saxons to defend their way of life against the Catholic horde. Indeed, the *Gazette's* vitriolic editor, James Moir Ferres, had released a special call-to-arms issue the morning of April 25 and eagerly spouted hate at the rally held that evening.

But the demagogue who shouted the loudest and beckoned the mob “to the parliament house” was one of nineteenth century Quebec's most colourful individuals: firefighter, tinkerer, real estate speculator, museum promoter, insurance broker, Confederate secret agent, and insane asylum founder, Alfred Perry.

As an immigrant from England, albeit one orphaned as a child and obliged to make a living doing odd jobs about town, Perry came by a sense of ethnic superiority naturally – a sense cemented while still in his teens by service in the militia combatting the Patriote rebellion. He then became a firefighter – an occupation that was deeply divided along political and ethnic lines in the nineteenth century, with each company jealously guarding its own turf. Firefighting sharpened Perry's fanaticism to the point where he could only feel horror at the thought of the Canadian government providing financial recompense to those who had suffered at the hands of British troops during the rebellions. Not troubled by the fact that the Rebellion Losses Bill had been duly passed by the majority in the legislature, Perry unleashed his firefighter's fury on the parliament buildings and, ironically, burned it to the ground. For this act, he was punished, along with some of his fellow goons – but only with very minimal incarceration; he was released early thanks to the intervention of some of the city's influential Tories. Perry would continue to be a political agitator (playing an unsavoury role in the ethnically-charged 1853 Gavazzi riots, for instance) even while rising in status and respectability within Montreal

society. Such are the paradoxes of promoting ethnic supremacy; one can find friends in high places despite one's lowly origins. Perry even wrote a spirited account of the burning of parliament in a special 1887 issue of the *Montreal Daily Star*, which remains the most useful blow-by-blow description we have of the event, told with whimsy and an utter lack of shame or regret. Writing this self-congratulatory article was Perry's version of taking selfies in the midst of the Capitol mayhem.

Perry's remarkable trajectory has been thoughtfully reconstructed by Dan Horner, a historian, and member of Ryerson University's Department of Criminology. Horner specializes in the "crowd" as a historical subject, both in the realm of strikes and protests and in that of mob violence, such as the burning of parliament and the Gavazzi riots. In this field, Horner follows in the footsteps of George Rudé, the famous British scholar of the French Revolution (and member of Concordia University's History department back in the 1970s) who tackled the thorny question of crowds in history. Thorny, that is, because our received notion of a crowd acting in unison readily suggests a "mob," and most likely a mob bent on violence. Rudé strove (as does Horner) to present the members of a crowd as real people, with real motivations, and not just a monstrous force corraling aristocrats onto guillotines. The idea is to look beyond the seeming unity of purpose and identify individual agendas,

reasons why a person might choose to be allied with a particular cause. To do this, of course, requires researchers to overcome the obvious challenges posed by the limited historical footprint left by most ordinary people – people who appear merely as little blobs in paintings and speak only with one voice ("We have no king but Caesar!") in traditional accounts. It is comparatively rare to find a person in a crowd who has left the kind of footprint that Perry has.

Although he was a firebrand and clearly a rousing speaker, Perry was probably fairly typical of the crowd attacking the parliament in terms of outlook and experience – and even, arguably, in terms of class. Because this crowd was identifiably Tory, its members have often been presented as part of the social elite: in his otherwise vivid description of the events of April 25, 1849, John Ralston Saul has the "mob" getting into their carriages in order to pursue the despised governor general. This image of an "elite" mob is hard to reconcile with the likes of Perry, who comes across as more of a MAGA-hatted type. There were Tory leaders, for sure – ringleaders, we could call them. Above all, there was merchant George Moffatt, who offended Bruce by encouraging him to deviate from his appointed civic duty. But it was the rank and file of the Tory faction, lower-middle-class artisans and tradesmen for the most part, that made up the bulk of the crowd attacking parliament. That Perry went on to achieve status as an overseas *Gazette*

correspondent and founder of the Protestant Hospital for the Insane (later the Douglas Hospital) speaks to his ambitious nature and sense of self-promotion – and to having friends in proverbially high places.

Horner's study of Alfred Perry shows a man motivated by a sense of entitlement and also by hatred for those threatening his place in the pecking order. In that respect, he resembles the goons who stormed the Capitol in January 2021. Like them, Perry acquired his sense of entitlement from association with like-minded people who were eager to have their attitudes reinforced and were willing to take steps to defend their turf. Both groups were influenced by social media: unfiltered websites for the modern crowd, mainstream publications for Perry (ironically, the sort of thing today's goons would consider "fake news"). Both groups felt betrayed by the system: Perry because it seemed the British Empire was allowing undesirables to gain power, the Capitol crowd because they had been fed a steady diet of lies undermining the electoral process with wild accusations of fraud. Both groups believed their enemies had stolen something vital from them and the only way to get it back was to fight – like hell.

It is this sense of entitlement, this twisted sense of injustice, that makes both cohorts truly frightening. Given the bad press that crowds have received over the years, it is important to recognize crucial differences in their natures. We routinely criticize protests that lapse into riots, and even more strongly condemn riots that lead to looting or other violence. Even a charitable reading of the crowds during the French Revolution cannot ignore the bloody September Massacres, the destruction of churches, and the murder of clergy. But when people are driven by desperation, or when their anger is nurtured by centuries of oppression, one has to approach these incidents from a different perspective. As American writer Kimberley Jones said in her powerful speech last year about the Black Lives Matter protests, we need to focus less on what people are doing and more on *why* they are doing it: "Why are people that poor," she asks, that they are "walking through a broken glass window to get what they need?"



The Burning of the House of Assembly at Montreal.
The Illustrated London News, 19 May 1849



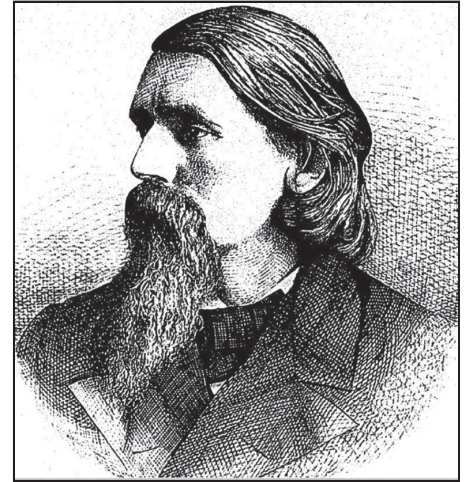
This sort of protest, even this sort of violence, is surely a world away from an assault on the legislature (and the equality and tolerance it represents) with clubs and guns and torches. The mobs of both 1849 and 2021 more closely resemble in motivation the goons who attacked Black communities in Tulsa and Rosewood a century ago and, as Jones declares, “burned them to the ground.” They did so, furthermore, with relative impunity. Perry’s early release from jail and subsequent rise to respectability thanks to his supporters in key positions of power has a parallel in the lenience shown by police and security guards to those who attacked the Capitol. Many have contrasted the civil treatment of these rioters to the violence inflicted on peaceful Black Lives Matter protesters some months earlier – to say nothing of the failure by so many lawmakers to condemn the man who

instigated the Capitol attack. Crowds clearly do not operate on a level playing field.

Yet, on balance, crowds have been a positive force in human evolution. Things change when people are upset enough by injustice to go out into the streets. They storm the Bastille in 1789 and achieve a modicum of political equality. They storm the military barracks in Madrid in 1936 and prevent the fascist coup from immediately succeeding.

They march on Washington in 1963 and then in Selma in 1965 for civil rights. They march to ban the bomb in cities around the world in 1983. They break the Iron Curtain through sheer numbers in 1989. They transform the Arab world in 2011. They agitate by the millions to save the planet in 2019 and again the following year to end systemic racism. Crowds are still pushing for change, albeit against great odds, in Hong Kong, in Belarus, in Russia, and in Myanmar.

There are times when it is wise to put oneself far from the madding crowd (perhaps to contemplate a country churchyard in silence), but there are also times when it is important to take up a cause and be counted. Even three, last time I checked, can be a crowd.



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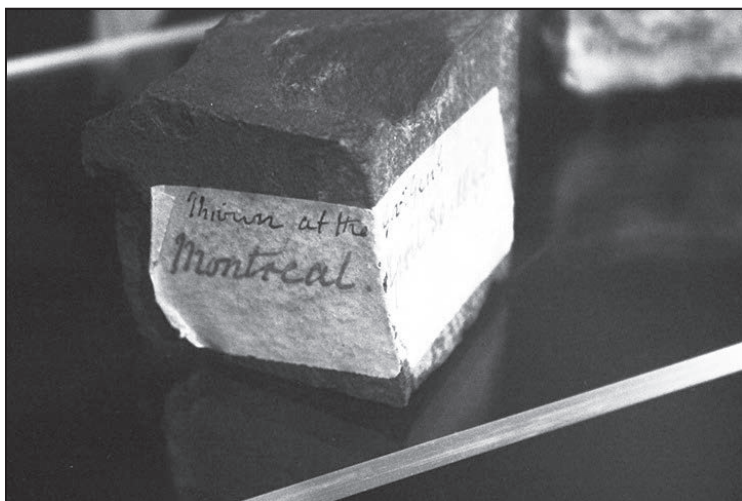
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Top left: Lord Elgin’s Carriage, 1930. McCord Museum, MP-0000.25.1045.
Top right: Alfred Perry at 54. Canadian Illustrated News, December 10, 1874.

Bottom left: Rocks thrown at Lord Elgin during the Montreal riots. Canadian Museum of History, 2008-118-13. Photo: Rod MacLeod.

HISTORY FOR EVERYONE

Belonging and Identity in English-speaking Quebec

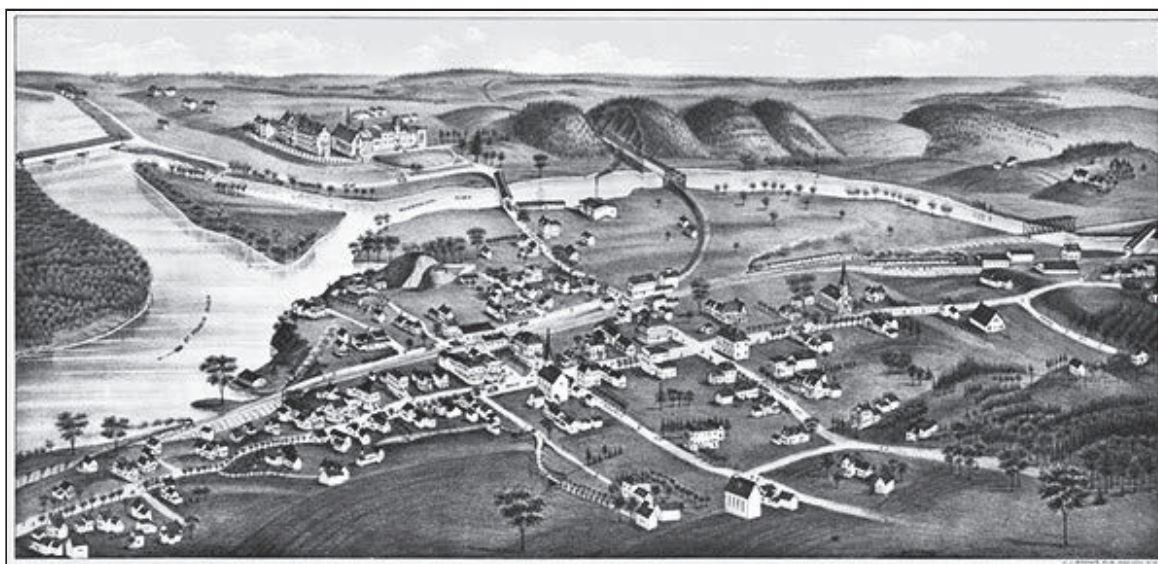
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Museums, historical societies and other civic groups have been working with the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network (QAHN) since September to explore local history in ten small communities across the province. Funded by the Quebec government's Secretariat for relations with Anglophone Quebecers (SRQEA), QAHN's project, *Belonging and Identity in English-*

speaking Quebec, supports a broad range of member-led initiatives. Presented in the following pages are articles spotlighting four of these initiatives. Together, these projects illustrate how heritage and culture can help contribute to community well-being, even during extraordinary times.

- Dwane Wilkin, project director



HERITAGE PANELS GET A FACELIFT

Stopping Townships traffic with local listory

The Lennoxville-Ascot Historical and Museum Society (LAHMS) will use a grant from the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network to refurbish or replace a set of bilingual interpretative panels first installed back in 1992.

Nearly 30 years on, the outdoor panels are showing their age, with texts displayed beneath weather-worn plexiglass increasingly difficult to read. A partner in QAHN's *Belonging and Identity* initiative, LAHMS received \$4,050 in financial support to carry out this work at eight different sites in historic Ascot Township, which now comprises part of greater Sherbrooke and the neighbouring rural municipality of Waterville.

Places on LAHMS's worklist include five heritage sites and buildings in the settlements of Huntingville and Milby, which were established by English-speaking colonists in the early nineteenth century. Two of these information panels, which tell about the historic mining community of Capelton, south of Lennoxville, are slated for repair; a third panel, describing a

covered bridge that was destroyed by fire in 2002, will be removed and replaced with updated text.

In addition to refurbishing existing panels, LAHMS is planning to create and erect an entirely new information panel at the busy junction of the St. Francis Street Bridge and College Street in Lennoxville. Foot and bicycle traffic here is quite heavy. It is hoped that many people, including students and staff from Bishop's University and Champlain College, will take a moment on their way through to learn a bit of local history.

The new panel will tell how the St. Francis River contributed to the area's development, including references to a pair of covered bridges that used to span both the St. Francis and the nearby Massawippi rivers, and a formerly substantial island near their confluence, now eroding.

Public health conditions permitting, an inauguration ceremony at one of the panel locations will be held in the spring of 2021.

FORTUNE'S SOLDIERS

German mercenaries and the Loyalist origins of Gaspé settlement

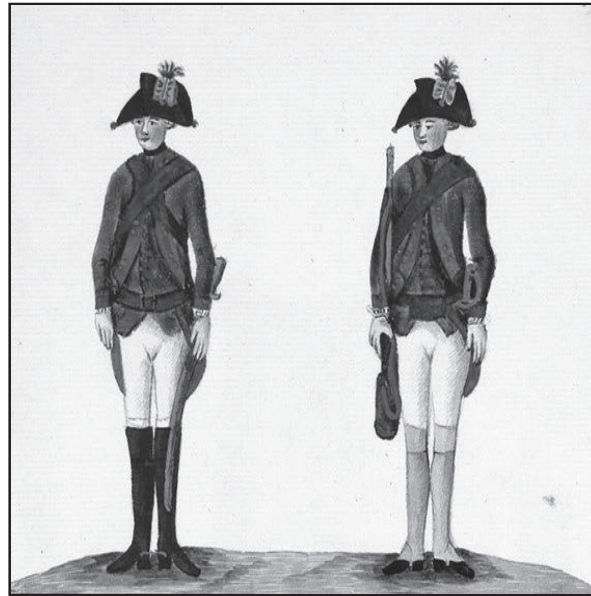
During the American revolutionary war, the British hired 30,000 German soldiers to help fight rebel forces. Many of these regiments went to battle in the Thirteen Colonies, but some were posted on the northern frontier, including the Hesse-Hanau Regiment, whose members were instrumental in defending the empire's Canadian possessions.

In the aftermath of the war, the lives and careers of two soldiers in particular would become intertwined with the future settlement of Loyalist families in Gaspesia: William Vondenvelden and Friedrich Ludwig Kempffer. Revisiting the legacy of these largely forgotten eighteenth-century immigrants is the main idea behind two permanent outdoor interpretation panels that are to be erected this spring in New Carlisle.

Once the administrative seat of Bonaventure County, New Carlisle is perhaps most famous today for having been the childhood home of René Lévesque, founder of the Parti Québécois and premier of Quebec from 1976 to 1985. Espace René Lévesque, a popular garden museum, receives three thousand visitors a year.

"We want to add something to the story of New Carlisle," said Sandi Beebe, director of the Kempffer Cultural Interpretation Centre, which is housed in a restored Victorian-period dwelling built in 1868 for a descendant of Friedrich Ludwig Kempffer. "It's information that is less known, and we think it will create interest as well as add to people's knowledge of local history."

A contribution of \$5,000 was awarded in the fall of last year through the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network's *Belonging and Identity* project to help with the cost of designing, making and installing the bilingual exhibition. Panels are slated to be erected when the ground thaws in the spring.



Though soldiering had brought them both to Canada and eventually to the Baie des Chaleurs, a comparison of their lives shows that Kempffer and Vondenvelden chose very different paths once they arrived. Vondenvelden sought his fortune in Quebec City, the seat of British government in Lower Canada, spending just nine years on the Coast. Kempffer, by contrast, married into a Loyalist family and settled permanently in New Carlisle.

Friedrich Ludwig Kempffer was born in 1739 in Neuhanau, Hesse, Germany. He enlisted with the Hesse-Hanau Regiment of Grenadiers around the time that the American colonies declared their independence from Britain in 1776.

A fleet of thirty ships put to sea from Portsmouth, England, on April 4 that year under the command of Major General Friedrich von Riedesel. They sighted land on May 16 and cast anchor at Quebec City nearly two weeks later, on June 1.

Kempffer was an ensign (second lieutenant), whose task it was to certify inspections of troops. His regiment saw action during several battles in New York, but exactly how he experienced the war

is not known. However, his name does not appear on any of the lists of soldiers taken as prisoners.

In August 1783, the British army granted Kempffer a discharge and gave him permission to settle in Lower Canada. This was a year before the first 171 Loyalist families arrived in New Carlisle aboard four ships from Quebec City. In January 1786, Kempffer's name was entered on the Cox register for Crown Grants in New Carlisle, though he was already living there, married to Elisabeth Caldwell, daughter of Robert Caldwell and Sarah Todd.

It would be another decade before lot number 56, in the second concession of the Township of Cox (New Carlisle), was officially registered as Kempffer property. When Friedrich died in 1796, ownership passed to his son Henry (Hans) Kempffer.

William Vondenvelden, born in 1753, tried his hands at several trades: army officer, translator, surveyor, office holder, printer, public servant and politician. Born in Hesse-Kassel, Germany, he had followed his father's example and started his career as a professional soldier. Arriving in Canada as a lieutenant and adjutant, Vondenvelden was soon dispatched with 60 men to the frontier garrison at Isle-aux-Noix on the Richelieu River, and then to Carlton Island in New York. In addition to German, the young officer was fluent in both English and French, a skill in high demand that would eventually lead him to a career in the colony's main port and capital.



Upon his retirement from the military in 1782, Vondenvelden settled in Quebec City to work as a translator for the *Quebec Gazette*. He also trained as a land surveyor and, in 1783, began to operate his own surveying practice.

In 1784, Governor Haldimand tasked Felix O'Hara from Gaspé Town with the survey of settlers' lots in New Carlisle. O'Hara was unable to see the work to completion, so, in 1785, William Vondenvelden was hired to draw up plans for the new village. A year later, Vondenvelden was made Justice of the Peace for the entire District of Gaspé and he moved to New Carlisle to take up his duties. In 1787, he also received a commission as Clerk of Common Pleas and of Peace, all the while continuing his surveying practice in the region. It was Vondenvelden, for instance, who first surveyed Bonaventure Island, in 1789.

Having accomplished what he set out to do, Vondenvelden returned to Quebec City in 1792, reportedly having sunk more than £1,200 of his own money into the Gaspé venture. In 1795, he was appointed Deputy Surveyor General for the whole province, carrying out several projects, notably in the old seigneuries of Bic, Lotbinière, Beauport and Côte de Beaupré. In 1799, he was named surveyor of the highways, streets, and lanes for the town and parish of Quebec.

In 1800, Vondenvelden was chosen to represent the Gaspé district in the Legislative Assembly of Lower Canada, but he withdrew from politics four years later to devote his full attention to his surveying business, helping the colonial government in its mission to settle lands along the south shore of the St. Lawrence River.

In 1803, with Louis Charland, Vondenvelden produced the

first authoritative map of the province, A new topographical map of the province of Lower Canada, and a book, *Extraits des titres des anciennes concessions de terre en fief et seigneurie*, describing the seigneuries in the province.

Vondenvelden died on June 20, 1809, as a result of a carriage accident, leaving his estate to his wife and son.

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GOOD MORNING MISSISQUOI

Veteran broadcaster and guest historians serve up three-course, radio-style talk show



Thinking outside the box when it came to its winter programming this season, the Missisquoi Historical Society has teamed up with veteran Radio-Canada journalist Guy Paquin to take a fresh look at two

defining periods in Missisquoi County's history: the attempted Irish invasion of Canada during the 1860s and the era of bootlegging in the 1920s and 30s.

The live talk show idea was greenlighted in September when the historical society received \$4,400 in support from QAHN as part of the heritage network's *Belonging and Identity* project. It is the first time that the historical society has experimented with this sort of presentation.

"The goal," said Missisquoi Museum's then curator Heather Darch, who has since retired after a 30-year-long career, "is to create an enjoyable, interactive way to learn local history and at the same time, engage our community in a discussion about the contributions made to the region by English-speaking people."

Irish-American rebels known as Fenians carried out several attacks on Canadian border communities between 1866 and 1871, and were famously defeated in Missisquoi County at the Battle of Eccles Hill in 1870.

"Good Morning Missisquoi" programs will not in fact be broadcast on radio, Darch added, but the format is meant to

evoke the look and feel of a radio studio, complete with a moderator, expert panelists and a live audience. Each session will be recorded and made available as a podcast on the Missisquoi Historical Society website. The live radio-style format will also allow for a bilingual question and answer period.

Recording sessions are expected to take place between January and March at community venues in three area municipalities: Stanbridge East, Cowansville and St. Armand. Audi-

ence members will be required to observe all Covid-19 health and safety protocols and, in the event that community gatherings are prohibited, the series will be hosted online using video-conferencing technology, and live-streamed on Facebook.

Scheduling for the events will be posted on the Missisquoi Museum's website (www.missisquويمuseum.ca) and Facebook page, and anyone who would like to attend is urged to contact the historical society at 450-248-3153.

HOPE SALVAGED FROM DOOMED MANOR

Community members share their vision for built heritage in Mascouche

Until 2020, the English Community Organization of Lanaudière (ECOL) had had almost no experience working with members to research and document the history of English-speaking communities in the region. So, when the opportunity to take part in the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network's *Belonging and Identity* project came along, Mathieu Desbiens jumped at the chance to tell the story of the Mascouche Seigneurie.

"The subject seemed perfect, since both Anglophone and Francophone communities have owned the estate at different points in history," said Desbiens, currently serving as ECOL's community development officer. "It is part of our region's collective heritage."

Although the origins of the seigneurie date back to the French Regime, the property was purchased in 1766 by a British officer and subsequently belonged to three generations of an English fur-trader's family. The manor house was constructed around 1790.

When ECOL and local partners began research for their video documentary about the Mascouche Seigneurie last September, the manor was badly dilapidated. The city had purchased the property in 2015, announcing plans to restore the building and create a park on the surrounding grounds that would be "bigger than New York's Central Park," according to Mascouche's mayor.

But in October 2020, that city suddenly changed plans, announcing that the building would be demolished to make way



for a new cultural centre. The news came as complete shock, Desbiens said. But ECOL also sensed an opportunity to bring community members together. A first meeting was called, and people talked about what they could do to save the manor. They agreed to meet again, and to coordinate with members of the Francophone community.

"The nature of our project had changed," Desbiens said, "from merely showcasing a piece of local history to documenting a community conversation and, potentially, an action plan to protect and preserve our collective heritage."

Then, on November 16, the city abruptly carried out the demolition, and once again the project's focus and scope shifted. The manor's fate had raised broader questions about the place of history and heritage conservation in people's lives – questions the documentary producers would now have to address head-on.

Over the winter, ECOL continued to work with a local cultural organization, the *Société de développement de d'animation de Mascouche*, to gather stories and information about the estate and its influence on local Francophone and Anglophone communities.

Although it is too late to save the Mascouche Manor, there is hope for other historic buildings and monuments if people understand their value in our communities, noted Desbiens.

"We can learn to do better in the future."

The English language version of the documentary will be released later this spring and will be available online via ECOL's website and social media.



Bottom: Colville Manor, 1930s. Canadian Centre for Architecture, Ernest Isbell Barott fonds.

Top: The Mascouche Manor before its demolition. Photo: Le Devoir, November 17, 2020.



Until we meet again...

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CONSOLATIONS OF THE MARSH

Henry Mousley and the Natural History of Southern Quebec

by Dwane Wilkin

The Canadian Museum of Nature keeps its vast research collection in a sprawling cold locker in the Gatineau Hills, a half-hour's drive north of Ottawa. Though the building is modern, the faint smell of pickle and aisles of relic-stuffed cabinets are a throwback to the museum's Victorian early start as an offshoot of the Geological Survey.

Were he alive today, Percy Taverner, head of ornithology at the turn of the last century, could easily find his way round the drawers full of bird specimens. He might even recognize the ones he himself arranged to acquire from amateur collectors. One of the most prolific of those collectors was Henry Mousley, this country's "best all-round naturalist-ornithologist" of the twentieth century, according to the late science historian Marianne Ainley.

American essayist John Burroughs, channeling the expansive mood of the post-war 1920s, thought naturalists were "the most lucky men in the world." For such people, he wrote, the great book of nature was always open: they only had to turn the leaves. I don't know if Henry Mousley was a *born* naturalist, but he was certainly a very ardent one. Considering the plain bad luck in England that had forced him to leave, his accomplishments seem all the more impressive.

Mousley's name caught my attention several years ago when I came across an article about him in *Quatre-Temps*, the journal published by the Friends of the Montreal Botanical Garden. The authors, André Sabourin and Roger Perrault, judged him a "true pioneer" in the study of Quebec's wild orchids, though he is largely forgotten today. I live just a few kilometres from the birthplace of the only Canadian

botanist who could possibly rate as famous, Conrad Kirouac – better known as Brother Marie-Victorin – with whom Mousley had corresponded, and in whose memory a number of public spaces in Quebec are named. Mousley somehow sank into obscurity.

He might not be remembered at all had it not been for Ainley, who reviewed his contributions to natural history as



part of her doctoral research into the history of Canadian ornithology. Her 1981 tribute, "Henry Mousley and the Ornithology of Hatley and Montreal," printed in the annual report of the Province of Quebec Society for the Protection of Birds (PQSPB) 32 years after his death, is still the main account of his work on Quebec flora and fauna.

A century ago, or even sixty years ago, this prolific naturalist and early champion of conservation would have needed little introduction, at least not among birders and botanists. His observations and papers appeared frequently in several journals over the four decades that he lived in Quebec, including *The Auk*, official publication of the American Ornithological Association, the *Canadian Field-Naturalist*, put out by the Ottawa Field-Naturalists Club, and *The Wilson Bulletin*, published by the Wilson Ornithological Society. In the social

pages of the *Sherbrooke Record* of the 1910s and 1920s, he even gained minor celebrity as a bit of an oddball who passed his days in the fields and woods near his Eastern Townships home. What was needed was a bit of digging to bring his story back to light.

Though Ainley did not dwell on the personal and financial circumstances that led Mousley across the Atlantic, what is clear is that his early years were not spent contemplating nature at all, but were directed mainly at trying to master it. There are hints that he struggled with poor health, including depression. In retrospect, we might choose to see his money problems as the price of success. Had he managed to hold on to the family business, the list of birds native to Quebec might still be incomplete, and we would not know that in a certain peatbog on the outskirts of Hatley Village there once bloomed a rare and delicate Queen Lady's Slipper.

William Henry Mousley was born in 1865 in Taunton, near Bristol, southwest England. He was the eldest son of Sarah Anne Whittle and a civil engineer named William Thomas Mousley, whose business was building railways.

Railway history in Canada often comes across as a parable about nation building, with little attention paid to the railbeds, buildings, bridges and tunnels that made the spectacular growth of industrial societies possible in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Much has been written about railroad promoters and politicians, but oddly little about the actual business of digging, blasting, embanking, bridge-building and tracklaying. English historian R. S. Joby described the world that Victorian contractors inhabited in his 1983 book, *The Railway Builders*. He conveyed a rather heroic picture of

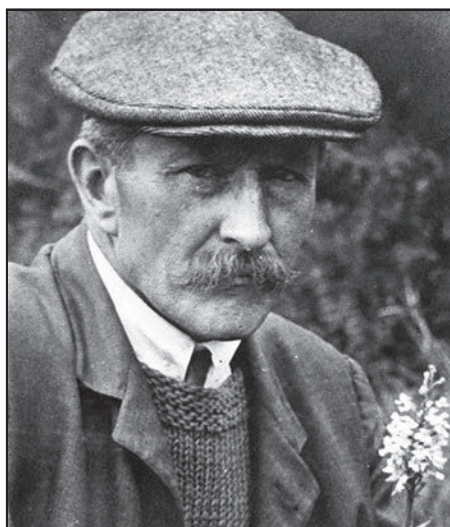
Henry Mousley with a killdeer's nest, St. Lambert, 1929. McCord Museum.

builders as great managers of money, men and materials whose skills allowed the plans of architects and engineers to take shape. Men like the legendary Thomas Brassey, Samuel Peto and Thomas Betts, whose feats included Canada's Grand Trunk Railway and its centrepiece, the Victoria Bridge.

As Joby makes plain, however, not everyone who started out with pickaxe and shovel achieved greatness. The Railway Age was also populated by many smaller firms of which the Mousleys were one. Competition was fierce, and risk ever-present. Census records suggest the Mousley household moved around a lot as Henry's father pursued work. As long as rail networks were expanding there was work to be had. The story goes that the family was living in Cumberland when six-year-old Henry discovered the nest of a spotted flycatcher. His friend and fellow ornithologist Lewis Terrill, writing Henry's obituary in 1950, believed the experience ignited a life-long interest in nature, although it would be decades before he was able to pursue it.

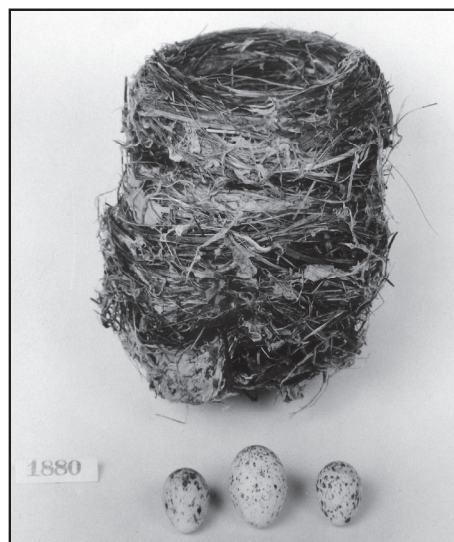
In the early 1870s, Mousley Sr. worked on the Ely and St. Ives Railway in Cambridgeshire. Later in the same decade, he won contracts to build the Wolverton and Tattenhall Tramway and to build a branch line for the Bristol and North Somerset Railway. Around this time, young Henry entered Clifton College, a school founded on the unconventional idea that science should be taught on an equal footing with religion and the classics. The school was equipped with a laboratory offering classes in zoology, physiology and botany, where Mousley must have learned the scientist's habit of watching life closely and recording what he saw.

Toward the end of the 1880s Henry married Mary Lake and accepted to go into business as his father's partner, building a branch line over hilly terrain in Yorkshire from Skipton to Ilkley that called for several beautiful – and undoubtedly expensive – arched viaducts for the Midlands Railway. In *The Railway Navvies*, historian Terry Coleman shows the elaborate system of financing and the network of mutual obligations that lay behind such undertakings. Work let to contractors depended on their capital and past record. It



was up to men like the Mousleys to recruit agents to look after each section of the line and these in turn were responsible for sub-contracting smaller parcels of the work. Contractors took huge risks, often borrowing against future earnings to secure supplies and make payroll. Underestimating the required amount of labour and materials could lead to ruin. "The savings of a life could be lost in a month," Coleman wrote. "And in the end, many more contractors went broke than made a fortune."

It appears that this is what happened to the Mousleys. Midlands Railway began to experience serious financial trouble shortly after opening the Skipton-Ilkley line, and the company was placed into receivership in 1889. The Mousleys seem to have kept their contracting business alive for another decade or so. There is a record of them working on a line extension from Bourne to Saxby in 1893. But this was a



period of mergers and consolidations in the English railway industry. Henry's last job as an independent contractor was to build the Mundelsey Branch to North Walsham, which he completed in 1898.

The Mousleys actually get mentioned by Joby to show the high-quality workmanship of Victorian builders. In the 1960s, a bridge the Mousleys built at North Walsham proved nearly impossible to demolish. "Attempts to blow up the foundations proved fruitless," Joby wrote, "so that a job scheduled to take one day lengthened to a fortnight as the demolition men attacked the abutments brick by brick with sledge-hammers."

As the Railway Age drew to a close, the Mousleys and their children faced a dilemma. There were now 120 railroads in England vying for customers, and no further line expansions could be justified. In Ainley's account, Mousley lost most of his money trying to stay out of bankruptcy, though he apparently tried sticking it out for a few more years: a newspaper notice from 1906 has him working on the engineering staff of the Great Eastern Railway. But the following year, Henry's 17-year-old son Gerald pulled up stakes and headed for Canada, where he seems to have taken work as a farm-hand in Hatley Township.

Deeming their own prospects ruined in England, Henry and Mary followed Gerald to Hatley three years later. They sold their home in the London suburb of Chelmsford, and crossed from Avonmouth to Quebec City on the RMS *Royal Edward*, bringing with them five daughters and a son who ranged in age from to six to nineteen. I imagine Henry kept himself busy during the crossing reading whatever he could about Canada's native birds and flowers. He was apparently acquainted with H. P. Gosse, author of *The Canadian Naturalist*, written in the 1830s, and he may have had a copy of John and James Macoun's *Catalogue of Canadian Birds*, published in 1909. The first book was out of date; and the second virtually silent about wildlife south of Montreal except for some notes on the warblers of Bury, contributed by Lewis Terrill. Mousley may have glimpsed a chance to fill in the gaps.

Aged 45, Mousley wasted no time getting to know his surroundings. He

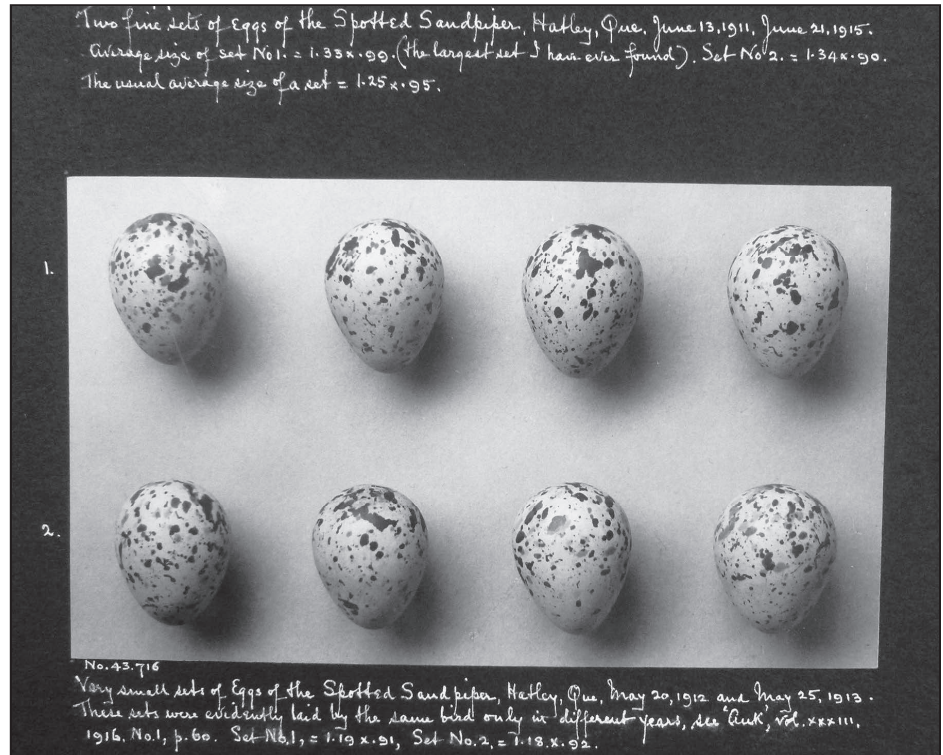
first set about making a systematic list of all the species he could identify in the Hatley district. When he published this list in 1916 in *The Auk*, he inserted a telling commentary on the depleted forests of Stanstead County: “The soil in its native state” he wrote, “was highly fertile and productive, the hills and higher grounds being covered with a heavy growth of maple, beech, birch, hop hornbeam and white ash, whilst the lower grounds produced elm, basswood, cherry, butternut, poplar, hemlock, spruce, pine, cedar, fir and tamarack. But in their mistaken idea that the strength of the soil would always continue, the earlier settlers devastated the County of most of its valuable timber, until at present day many of the farms have barely sufficient trees left for firewood and building purposes and to form sugaries.”

Nevertheless, southern Quebec turned out to be a naturalist’s paradise. Even with much of the old-growth forest gone, the woodlands of the Townships together with the many small streams and the rolling landscape made a fine home for dozens of species of breeding birds and a resting place for the migratory ones.

“It is such a wonderfully interesting part of the country, this Eastern Townships,” Mousley declared in one of his early letters, which have also been preserved by the Museum of Nature. “One never knows what may turn up as so many birds, flowers, ferns and orchids just overlap.”

One day in the spring of 1918 Mousley was standing at the edge of a cedar bog near his house on the outskirts of Hatley Village, waiting for a Cape May Warbler to reveal her nest, when his eye fell upon a rare wild orchid blooming in the leaf litter. A whole new branch of inquiry unfolded. Over the next six years Mousley added orchid hunting to his regular outings and, by 1924, he had discovered 40 new species, varieties or hybrids growing between Lake Memphremagog and the Coaticook River. By one estimate, his list accounted for a third of all the known wild orchids in North America.

Very early on in his new vocation as naturalist, Mousley chose to focus on shorebirds and songbirds. In a letter to Percy Taverner during the First World



War, he said “waders and warblers” were his favourite birds, preferring them to hawks and owls “which two families do not interest me so much,” he confided, “perhaps because I am no climber.” Earning an income in his adopted country was another story. Though a qualified and experienced civil engineer, he was unable to find employment, except for brief stints at Chaffey’s Locks on the Rideau River canal and with the Ottawa-Toronto rail line operated by Canadian Northern Railway. He even tried to land paid work at the Ottawa museum, vaunting his “thorough knowledge of office and detail work” in a 1915 letter to Taverner. It was not to be. “Technical help is very much desired,” Taverner replied “but there is little chance of that until after the war, for all our expenses when not reduced cannot be increased.”

In the end, Mousley had to settle for an arrangement by which he collected bird’s-nest and egg specimens for the museum in return for photographs of his specimens, which today form part of the Museum of Nature’s vast ornithological collection. But his curiosity extended further than simply cataloguing nests and eggs, a practice he evidently disliked. “Lucky the botanist who has none of these distressing things to contend with,” he once complained to

Taverner.

In one of his original field experiments designed to find out what happens when birds lose their first set of eggs, Mousley studied the nesting behaviour of 14 different species, mostly warblers, but also flycatchers, sparrows, horned larks and a pair of Downy woodpeckers. His observations showed 75 per cent of birds will lay a second set; 30 per cent will lay twice or three times again. His studies answered other questions too, such as how long it takes birds to build their nests – eleven days, on average, it turns out. Do birds rebuild in similar habitat and with similar materials? Yes. Do the eggs look like the original clutch, in number and markings? Yes.

Another of Mousley’s contributions was his theory of territoriality, which he presented in two papers for *The Auk*. In the first, titled “The Singing Tree,” published in 1919, Mousley proposed a way to find the nests of certain species that involved noting the behaviour of singing males and the direction of their flight on leaving the perch. In the second, published in 1921, he showed, contrary to what was then assumed, that it is the male bird that selects the general nesting site in spring, his singing tree both guiding the female to her mate and serving as a lookout from which the male guards his territory. The same year,

the Mousleys were dealt another difficult blow, just as Henry's fieldwork was beginning to gain notice: their 30-year-old daughter Georgina, now married and living in England, was dying of leukemia. Her husband wrote to Mary and Henry asking them to come as soon as possible. "It is going to be a painful voyage for us," Mousley wrote to Taverner just before they sailed. "As yet our daughter knows nothing of the seriousness of her case, which must be kept from her, and unless a change for the better takes place I suppose we shall see her fade away."

Georgina died three weeks after her parents reached England. "As you can imagine, all the joy has been knocked out of our trip." Henry would write no papers that winter, but on his return to Hatley the following spring, he plunged once again into his studies. He would never return to England.

Mousley's interest in orchids began to deepen about this time. When they had first arrived in Hatley, the family lived in a house two-and-a-half kilometres south of the village. By 1917, Henry had recorded six different species growing in the vicinity. But these discoveries multiplied after they moved to the edge of a little marsh situated just one-and-a-half kilometres north of the village. In the summer of 1919, Henry found 12 more species here, and by the end of the year his tally had risen to 30 different species, hybrids and varieties. He would add ten more to this list by 1923.

In fact, nearly all of Mousley's observations during his years in Hatley were made on just six farms spread over 1,000 acres. The marsh was a key feature of the landscape. It had formed as a result of a dam built on a small stream in early settlement days. The dam leaked and in the summer, the water receded, leaving layers of silt and mud in which cattails grew, creating a rich bird-feeding ground. "Although there are several other small marshes in the neighbourhood," Mousley wrote in *The Auk*, "none of them present anything like the attraction that this one does."

Mousley continued to publish many papers based on his field work,



including "A Study of the home life of the Northern Parula and other warblers," published in *The Auk*. And sometimes he felt the need to remind himself that serious birding did not mean strolling leisurely around the countryside. In one letter, he exclaimed: "It is no child's play, such intensive work, keeping your eyes fixed on a nest for five or six hours at a stretch, especially when it is up 26 feet in a tree."

He also carried out studies on the American goldfinch, the Virginia rail, the sora rail, the sedge wren and many other species. In a detailed study of the nesting habits of the spotted sandpiper, which was not published until 1937, Mousley established the bird's incubation period (20-21 days), determined which parent cares for offspring (the



male), and was the first to describe the species' injury-feigning habit.

In 1924, the Mousleys moved to Montreal so that their youngest son Neville could attend McGill University. In the city, Mousley became active in the PQSPB and began to associate more closely with other scientists and collectors, including the ophthalmologist Casey Wood, an avid bird scholar in his own right. Wood eventually hired Mousley to help him build a collection of ornithological books at McGill, which was the

only permanent paid employment he would ever enjoy after coming to Canada. Today he is regarded as the first librarian of McGill's Blacker-Wood Library of Biology.

As he grew older, Mousley spent more of his time in botanical pursuits, often in the company of his friend Lewis Terrill. A photograph from the McCord Museum archives shows him standing proudly over a killdeer's nest in St. Lambert in the year 1929. If you look closely you can see Mousley holding his cane above the marsh. He would have been in his mid-sixties then, and perhaps not as spry as he was when he first took up the study of birds and orchids. But you can see he looks very pleased with his find. Indeed, when he was roaming outdoors on the lookout for underappreciated natural phenomena, he was probably at his happiest.

From the mid-1920s through the 1940s, Mousley and Terrill hunted orchids in St. Lambert as well as Mount Royal, Como, Oka, Mount Orford and Chambly. Mousley became quite an accomplished photographer, too, and he used photography in many of his studies. He is credited, for example, with being the first to publish a description of root-system growth in Helleborine orchids.

Indeed, his collection and studies of native plants, including the rare Round-Leaved Orchid, are considered to be among his most valuable contributions to science. From the 1920s through the 1940s, his observations and studies appeared in the *Canadian Field-Naturalist*, the *Journal of the New York Botanical Garden* and *The Orchid*

Top: Mousley at Burrough's Falls. McGill University, Rare Book Room, Mousley Family Collection.

Bottom: Queen Lady's Slipper. North American Orchid Conservation Center.

Review, published by Great Britain's Royal Horticultural Society.

In the course of his career, Mousley collected and photographed most of all the species of orchids in southern Quebec, describing their morphology, ecology and distribution in 33 scientific papers. He was 76 years old in 1941 when he found and identified another Quebec orchid, the Case's Ladies Tresses, growing at St. Dorothée, now in the city of Laval. This plant was formally recognized in 1974 as a distinct species in Canada. And toward the end of his life, Mousley donated more than 500 wild-orchid and fern specimens to the herbarium established by his old friend Marie-Victorin at the Université de Montreal. And so, the legacy he left to botany in Canada also lives on more than seventy years after his death.

It's hard to imagine today's academy making room for someone with such eclectic interests. Natural history fell out of fashion in the twentieth century,

replaced by a whole slew of specialized branches in the life sciences, from genetics to astrobiology: science that is cutting-edge and high-tech and expensive to do. Studying how wild-orchid rhizomes develop underground has become decidedly less prestigious than peering into the atom or measuring the size of the cosmos. Though he would live to see many of the marvellous and awful products of twentieth-century science, Mousley's tastes and methods always bore the unmistakable stamp of his Victorian upbringing.

And yet, anyone who has ever enjoyed the simple pleasure of naming a plant or bird in the wild owes a debt of gratitude to Mousley and others like him. They were pioneers of what we would call today "citizen science," close watchers of the natural world that human ingenuity is bent on destroying. Today we flip open field guides or smartphone apps and are gratified to match a bird or plant with a description

and a picture and maybe even a sound file or a video clip. Henry Mousley had no such aids; indeed, if orchids and birds may be readily identified in Quebec today, it is because he and others showed us they exist.

When he died, in 1949, the best all-round naturalist of twentieth-century Canada was buried in a cemetery off Côte-de-Liesse Road in St. Laurent. There are no large gravestones there. The grounds are grass-covered and planted with different sorts of trees and shrubs and flowers. It is as good a place as any to build a nest.

Dwane Wilkin works with the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network (QAHN) as a project director, researcher, writer, editor and community organizer, and is a former print journalist.



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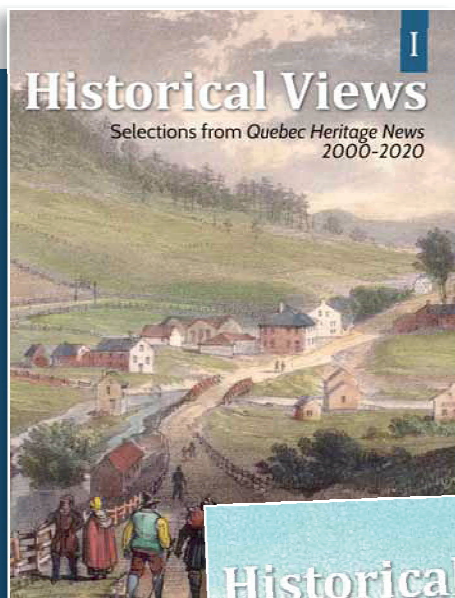
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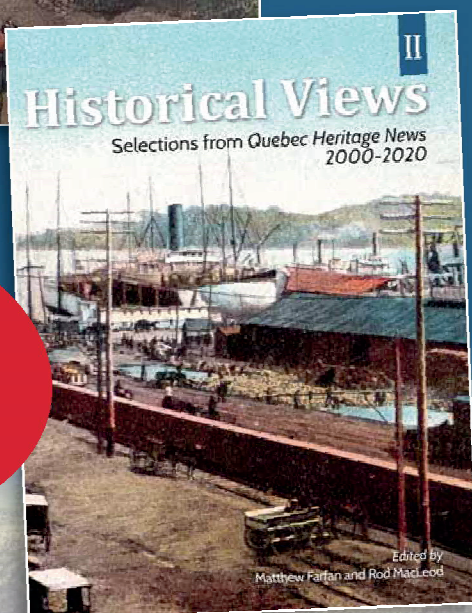
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A PARK FOR ALL MONTREAL

by Susan McGuire

In the early 1850s, Montreal's population of about 60,000 was rapidly expanding, and there was a dawning awareness of the coming need for public spaces where people could move about freely and enjoy fresh air.

The mountain in the centre of the city was discussed but it was sectioned into properties privately owned by some 16 citizens. The lower slopes of the mountain were farmed or residential, and the higher elevations were sources of lumber for the landowners. To make it into a park, the land would have to be expropriated by the city. The landowners were not happy.

The potential for a Mountain Park had been discussed as early as 1819, when Benjamin Silliman, a Yale University chemistry professor, visited the city. "Nothing is wanted to render the mountain a charming place for pedestrian excursions," Silliman wrote, "but a little effort and expense in cutting and clearing winding walks and in removing a few trees from the principal points of view" (quoted in Collard).

Cemeteries established

By the time discussions began in earnest about public parks in Montreal, parts of the mountain had already been acquired for cemeteries. In the mid-1840s, it was deemed inadvisable to have graveyards close to residential areas, so the downtown cemeteries needed to be re-located.

The first purchase of land for a cemetery on the side of Mount Royal was made by a Protestant group that established the Mount Royal Cemetery Company in 1851. The purchased land

was "Spring Grove," the mountain farm of Michael McCulloch, a professor in the medical faculty at McGill University. More property was acquired from John Redpath and William Tait.

The Jewish community also moved



at mid-century. The Spanish and Portuguese Congregation bought land from the McCulloch estate adjacent to the Protestant cemetery, and this was followed by the purchase of an adjoining strip of land by the German and Polish Congregations (Shaar Hashomayim).

The Roman Catholic diocese needed to move its cemetery from what is now Dorchester Square. In 1853, they bought a farm and woodland property adjoining the McCulloch farm from the estate of Pierre Beaubien, a prominent Montreal physician. There, they established Notre-Dame-des-Neiges Cemetery, which runs along part of Cote des Neiges Road and up the slopes of Mount Royal.

Overtures for a park

About 1850, Sir James Edward Alexander, an officer with the British forces, urged the city to turn some of Mount Royal into a park, a position supported by Mayor Wolfred Nelson, who encouraged city council to spend the money to

buy the necessary land.

However, there were obstacles. The people who owned the land were not in agreement. Others thought the expense to acquire the land would be too great. To some, the mountain seemed inaccessible; few, they thought, would be able to scale the steep cliffs.

Nevertheless, by the early 1860s, civic leaders began to push ahead. Among them was city councillor Alexander Stevenson, a Scotsman who owned a printing company and was a senior officer in the Montreal Field Battery. He was the first to make a motion at

city council to acquire the mountain as a park.

Stevenson laid out a secret plan to prove how accessible the mountain could be. In 1862, he would lead his Battery, without benefit of a road, up the heights that some city councillors deemed beyond reach. To gain the attention of Montrealers, he and his men would fire a noon-time salute to honour the Prince of Wales' birthday.

However, Stevenson did not take into account that on the chosen early November day there would be a big snowstorm, and that he and his men would have to take the horse-drawn wheeled carriages on which the cannons were mounted through a foot of snow. They were not deterred. The soldiers went up from what was at the time John Redpath's private avenue, and then pushed on above "Ravenscrag," the home of the Allan family, located beyond the top of what is now Peel Street. (The building is now the Allan Memorial Institute). After that, it was a hard climb to the plateau at the summit of the

Mount Royal, c.1900. Matthew Farfan Collection.

mountain. The horses struggled, gradually zigzagging upwards; stumps were in the way, the sleighs toppled over. The men tramped ahead to beat a path for the horses. Thick bushes were cut with axes. But they made it.

At noon, round after round was fired. At first residents were shaken, but recovered when the news spread that Major Stevenson was not only honouring a royal birthday, but was also proving the accessibility of the mountain. He did it all again in March 1863, and that convinced a lot of people of the feasibility of the project, including Patrick McQuisten, the city surveyor who noted in his 1863 annual report that a new road would make for easy access to the upper mountain.

It was not until 1869 that the Quebec Legislature amended Montreal's charter to allow the city to borrow up to \$350,000 to acquire the necessary privately-owned land and establish a public park on the mountain.

Some were not pleased

In 1872, when expropriations for the park began, there were some 16 private mountain landowners. A few fought expropriation so fiercely that the mayor in 1874, Dr. Aldis Bernard, wondered whether the city should go on with the effort. They did go ahead, but it became necessary to secure permission from the Quebec government to increase the funding for land acquisition to

\$1 million.

The legal battles went on until the end of 1875. The largest property acquired, 160 arpents, was from the estate of Hosea Ballou Smith. This included Smith's 1858 thick-walled stone house, which would become the home of the park superintendent, William McGibbon, for some 30 years; it is still in use as an administrative building for the non-profit Les Amis de la Montagne. Other properties were acquired from the estate of Benjamin Hall, and from the Redpath, Bagg and Law families, as well as 20 arpents of land from the Ladies of the Hotel Dieu. A portion of Sir Hugh Allan's estate "Ravenscrag" was claimed, but the house itself was too large and costly for expropriation.

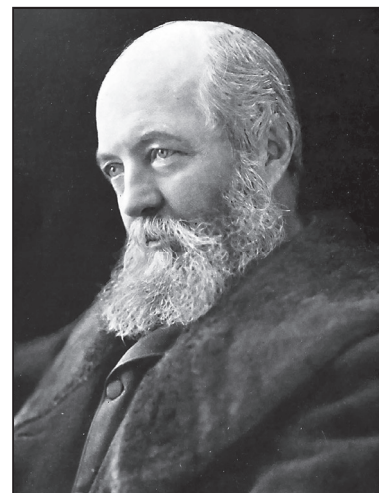
Landscape architect

In 1874, the leading American landscape architect, perhaps the greatest ever, was hired by the city to design Mount Royal Park.

Frederick Law Olmsted, then 52 years old, had designed and executed the 800-acre Central Park in New York in the late 1850s. That was followed by a contract in 1863 to manage a gold mining property in California. Then came a contract to design Yosemite national park, which he described as a series of linked experiences that had to be preserved in their entirety: cliffs, waterfalls, meadows, streams. He described it as a kind of public park where ordinary

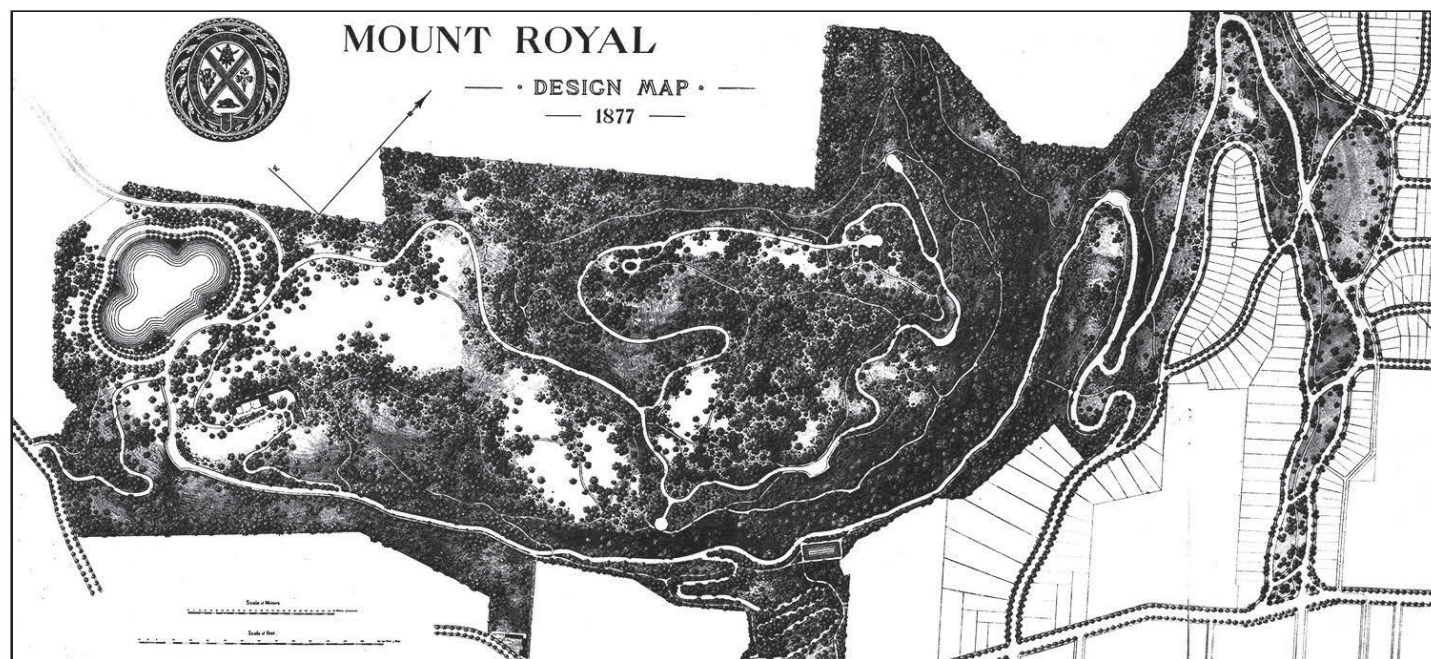
people could get away from their urban surroundings – a theme in Olmsted's working life.

After two years in California, Olmsted returned to New York, where he



worked with his partner, English architect Calvert Vaux. Among other parks and residential systems, they designed Prospect Park in Brooklyn, the Buffalo park system, and Chicago South Park. The partnership broke up. By that time, Olmsted had become the preeminent landscape artist in the country and was invited to design the grounds of the United States Capitol in Washington.

When Olmsted was invited to Montreal to design the public park on Mount Royal, he looked dubiously at the mass of rock, about one and a half miles long and half a mile wide, and wondered



Top: "Frederick Law Olmsted," from *A World's Work: A History of Our Time*, vol. VI, New York, 1903.

Bottom: Frederick Law Olmsted, *Mount Royal Design Map*, Archives de la Ville de Montreal, 01-VM105-Y-1_0756-01.

if his ideas would be accepted. Somewhat reluctantly, he accepted the job.

Nothing should be done, Olmsted said to “prettify” Mount Royal. He identified the qualities inherent in each section of the mountain, and set out to heighten their advantages or mask their shortcomings. It was no place for flower beds, he said, but there should be wildflowers, in keeping with the scene.

Olmsted planted vines and low shrubs to make the crags look higher. He designed carriage drives that would be integrated into the slope to create the minimum disturbance and would be gently but not uniformly graded so that “a good horse, with a fair load, can be kept moving at a trot without urging in going uphill and without holding back in going down.”

The work did not go smoothly. The park commissioners had no particular qualifications for overseeing the construction of a park. The design had to be altered to meet their requests, and Olmsted did not always have accurate information about park boundaries. He was not a patient man. Nevertheless, he presented the finished plan in October 1877, and wrote his final report in 1881. His hope was that the “dignity, serenity and strength” of the mountain itself would be respected.

Actually, the park had been officially inaugurated in 1876. Aldis Bernard had been alderman and mayor during the difficult early parts of the process, but he had resigned because of ill health in 1874, so presiding at the official ceremonies on Victoria Day, May 24, 1876, was former Mayor Wolfred Nelson. He invited the new mayor, William Hales Hingston, to officially open the park.

All done

Then there were financial setbacks and delays for a number of years. The park was finally completed in 1889. John Nolen, who would become one of the most accomplished town planners in the United States, wrote in 1906 of Mount Royal: It is “one of the most successful designs in the history of landscape architecture... because the conditions were understood and appreciated, [resulting in] a park that is convenient and beautiful and that becomes more and more satisfying each year.”



Timeline of Mount Royal Park

1535 Jacques Cartier sailed up the St. Lawrence River and landed on the island at the Indigenous village of Hochelaga. Legend says he was led up the mountain in the centre of the island, which offered magnificent woods and impressive views. Perhaps thinking of his king, he called the mountain “Mont Royal.”

1642 A torrential downpour threatened the colony of Ville Marie. Paul Chomedey, Sieur de Maisonneuve, prayed to the Blessed Virgin, promising her a cross on the mountain if she spared the residents from a dangerous flood. His prayer was answered. In the early days of 1643, he carried a wooden cross on his shoulders to Mount Royal.

1874 Frederick Law Olmsted was hired to design a park for Mount Royal.

1876 The park was inaugurated on May 24, Victoria Day.

1877 Olmsted presented his finished plan.

1881 Olmsted wrote his final report. Progress on the park was slowed because of lack of funds.

1884-1918 The Mountain Park Railway, an incline railway, took people from Fletcher’s Field (today’s Jeanne Mance Park) to the top of the mountain. At its opening, the up fare was 5¢, and the down fare was 3¢. Cost for children was 3¢ up, and 1¢ down. Inmates of charitable institutions and orphan asylums travelled for free.

1889 Mount Royal Park was completed according to Olmsted’s plans.

1924 The St. Jean Baptiste Society illuminated a metal cross, in memory of the wooden cross installed by Maisonneuve in the seventeenth century.

2003 The Quebec government declares Mount Royal a historic and natural district, by virtue of the Cultural Properties Act.

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ALDIS BERNARD

Montreal's Dentist Mayor
by Susan McGuire

Aldis Bernard may have been born near Beebe Plain on Lake Memphremagog in the Eastern Townships about 1810. His parents may have been United Empire Loyalists, settling in Canada sometime after the American Revolution in 1776.

It's all vague, because the family did not stay in Canada, but moved back to the United States.

As a young man, Aldis Bernard trained as a dentist and then practiced in the southern United States as an itinerant dentist – meaning that he travelled with his dental equipment in a backpack or in a wooden chest. He did that for about ten years – a common practice at the time. He married Mary Webb Meredith from Maryland, and the two moved to Niagara for about a year, then relocated to Montreal in 1841, where he set up practice.

Aldis Bernard was about thirty years old when he arrived at the city near where he had spent at least part of his childhood.

The Spooners

There were just a few resident dentists practicing in Montreal at the time. These included John Roach Spooner, who came to Montreal from Massachusetts about 1830, and practiced in Montreal until 1841. Spooner was, according dental historian Charles R. E. Koch, the first person to practice dentistry as a distinct profession in Quebec.

Shearjashub Spooner came to Montreal to apprentice with his brother, and then moved to New York City, where he became a medical doctor as well as a dentist. He also became an art historian; in 1852 he published the only American edition of Boydell's *Illustrations of The Dramatic Works of Shakespeare*, containing the refurbished engravings of William Leney, who was by then a resident of Montreal's Longue Pointe. (It is

possible that Spooner and Leney knew each other. See "Discovered by Descendants," *QHN* Summer 2011.)



Early dentistry was painful

At this time, a problem with a tooth was not likely to be a pleasant experience. In rural districts, men like Knowlton's Jeremiah Pettes (1820-1914) ran a grocery store and pulled teeth as a sideline. Primitive as it was, Pettes provided a needed service in the community. A photo in the 1956 booklet *Along the Old Roads* shows some of Pettes' dental equipment. At the centre is a turnkey that has a handle and spindle and a hinged claw. "The claw would be jammed down into the gums and then by twisting and turning the turnkey, out would come the tooth and perhaps a piece of jaw," wrote author Harry B. Shufelt.

Dentistry regulation

Soon after beginning his practice in Montreal, Aldis Bernard identified the need for government regulation of dentistry in Quebec. He echoed the 1838 clarion call from Shearjashub Spooner in the United States: "The dental profession should be protected by legislative enactment; every person before he be

permitted to practise it, should serve a term of pupillage and pass an examination before a competent board of dentists" (quoted in Wynbrandt).

Henry Davis, a clinical instructor in the College of Dentistry at University of Oregon, spoke about Dr. Bernard in a talk before the California State Dental Association in 1880:

In Canada, the dental profession has had dental legislation protection since 1868. My former partner, Dr. Aldis Bernard, deceased, of Montreal, with whom I was associated from 1866 to 1870, was the father of dental reform in Canada. As far back as 1842, he strove to get a clause inserted in a medical act, then before the legislature, to regulate the practice of dentistry in Lower Canada; and it was mainly through his efforts, he being one of the most prominent and able speakers in Canada, that the Act of Incorporation (in Quebec) of 1868-69 was passed.

Aldis Bernard was the first president of the new professional group in Quebec.

A busy man

Bernard was not only a dentist. He was active in a dizzying variety of organizations within the Montreal community.

Four years after his arrival in 1841, he was proposed for membership in the Mechanics' Institute, an organization with which he was actively associated for more than 20 years, serving a term as president in 1850-1851. He joined the Natural History Society, which was a centre for discussions of scientific topics. He was a founder of the SPCA. He was a harbour commissioner, a director of the Northern Colonization Railway, and a justice of the peace. He was a member of St. James Methodist Church,

where seven of his eight children were baptized. An active Freemason, he was one of the founders of the Grand Lodge of Canada and its first deputy grand master.

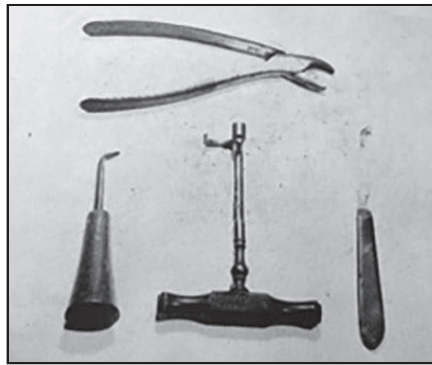
Bernard served as a Montreal city councillor from 1858 to 1861 and then from 1866 to 1873. During the time he was chairman of the Police Committee, police salaries were raised from 50¢ a day to one dollar a day, and later to between eight and nine dollars a week. During that same period, he proposed regulations that created the City Passenger Railway Company, provided for the inspection of milk and the planting of trees, and forbade the sale of spirits on Sunday.

Bernard was a councillor in 1873 when Mayor Francis Cassidy died in office. He was elected by his fellow councillors to replace Cassidy, and won the subsequent election in 1874. During his tenure as mayor, twelve areas were secured by the city for municipal parks, including Mount Royal Park, Lafontaine Park, Dominion Square and St. Helen's Island. The city charter was modified to give the city more powers of regulation in the public health field; an infectious diseases unit was established, which required citizens to keep their properties clean, and prevented the keeping of pigs within the city limits. A new city hall was underway.

In 1875, Bernard resigned as mayor because of ill health and moved to California. He died the following year, and his body was returned by rail to be buried in Mount Royal Cemetery with full Masonic honours.



Aldis Bernard's American-born first wife and child had died in 1845. He



had remarried in 1852 to Sarah Couch, with whom he had seven children, some of whom died very young. His wife survived him for nearly half a century; she died in 1925 at the age of 92 in Brooklyn. Bernard, his first wife, and five of his children are buried in Montreal's Mount Royal Cemetery.

Aldis Bernard Prize

The esteem with which Bernard was held by his colleagues is evidenced by the Aldis Bernard Prize being awarded each year by the Ordre des Dentistes du Quebec at both McGill University and the University of Montreal to the student with the best cumulative results in the graduating class.

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ALEXANDER STEVENSON

The Colonel with the Cannons by Susan McGuire

Alexander Stevenson was just seventeen, ambitious and energetic, when he arrived in Montreal from Scotland in 1846. He was not all alone in his new city, because he was a cousin of the wealthy Montreal-based Allan shipping family, but none of his many accomplishments appears to have been related to that family's business.

Shortly after his arrival, "Sandy" Stevenson became an apprentice in a printing firm, and that led to his establishing a general printing company in 1853. His partners over the years were Moore and Owler. Until 1879, the company printed a variety of periodicals, books, and booklets. Among its jobs was *The Medical Chronicle, or, Montreal Monthly Journal of Medicine and Surgery*, edited by doctors William Wright and D. C. MacCallum.

Mechanics Institute

One of the first organizations that Alexander Stevenson joined was the Mechanics Institute of Montreal (MIM), which accepted him for membership in 1850 at age 21. He became recording secretary in 1854, was president in 1865 and again in 1886-89.

Stevenson was a bachelor, and a social being. For some 50 years, he often used the MIM reading room to meet with his out-of-town guests, as recorded in the MIM guest book. These guests came from such diverse places as Coteau du Lac, Prescott, Clarenceville, Ottawa, Lennoxville, Toronto, Matapedia, Saint John (New Brunswick), New York, Boston, Albany, and St. Louis (Missouri), as well as from London, Bristol and Windsor (England).

Military involvement

The military side of Stevenson's life began at the MIM in 1855, when, in a

chance meeting, Major William Francis Coffin announced that he was organizing a battery and needed some help. Stevenson demurred, saying that the military was not in his plans, but he was persuaded. He was a junior officer in 1856, became the commander just two years later, and eventually was named Lieutenant-Colonel Commanding, Montreal Field Battery of Artillery.



Stevenson headed the Montreal Battery at the Huntingdon front during the Fenian Raids in 1866 and 1870, and he led the corps during visits to Quebec, Chambly, Knowlton, Kingston, Toronto, Hamilton, St. Catharines, Niagara Falls, St. Albans, Boston and Portland. His battery was present at the military demonstrations in New York to celebrate the laying of the first Atlantic cable. At his farewell address, in 1891, he noted that he had been present at every outdoor parade of the corps for nearly 36 years.

Montreal Curling Club, St. Andrew's Society & Caledonian Society

Given that the sport of curling was imported from Scotland, it is not surprising that Alexander Stevenson was an enthusiastic curler, and joined the Montre-

al Curling Club soon after his arrival in Montreal. The club had been formed in 1807 by a group of Montreal merchants who first played on the ice behind Molson's Brewery, but had since moved to other surroundings. Stevenson was its president in 1880, and taught the game to the Prince of Wales who was visiting in Canada that year.

Shortly after his arrival in Montreal, Stevenson joined the St. Andrew's Society, and was its president in 1878-1879.

In 1855, the Caledonian Society was formed as an adjunct to the St. Andrew's Society to encourage Scottish games and the cultivation of Scottish history, poetry and song. Stevenson was its president for many years. The tenth anniversary of the Society was described in the *Toronto Globe & Mail* of November 4, 1865: "At about 8 p.m. the Crystal Palace was filled with some 2,000 people. The Chair was taken by A. A. Stevenson, president of the Caledonian Society. Present were J. J. Day, Esq., President, St. George's Society; Stanley C. Bagg, President, English Working-men's Society; J. C. Beckett, Vice-President, St. Andrew's Society; B. Gardner, President, Thistle Society; Dr. Pierre Beaubien, St. Jean Baptiste Society; Rev. Dr. De Sola; Hon. John Rose; Principal Graham of St. Francis College, Richmond; Wm. Bristow, Esq. and others, together with a number of ladies."

Masons

An evolving organization in Montreal in the mid-nineteenth century was the Masonic Order of Canada. Alexander Stevenson joined the St. George's Lodge in 1856, and served from 1868 to 1871 as Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Canada. He was also Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Quebec in 1869, the year of its formation. In *The Dominion Annual Register and Review* 1882, editor Henry James Morgan noted: "At a dinner given

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by the Lord Mayor of London at the Mansion House, to officers of the Masonic Fraternity, Lt. Col. A. A. Stevenson of Montreal, is a specially invited guest and responds to the toast of ‘The Sister Grand Lodges.’”

City Council

Stevenson entered municipal politics first in 1861, when he was elected councillor for the West Ward. One of his main interests was the Montreal Fire Brigade; he supported the establishment of a fire alarm system, and became chairman of the Fire Alarm Telegraph Construction Association. Some 50 fire call signal boxes were installed around the city, and the first alarm sounded in 1863.

In 1862, Stevenson made the first motion to the city council to acquire Mount Royal as a public park. He was told it could not be done; accessibility would be too difficult.

Stevenson would prove those councillors wrong. Later that same year, as major in the Montreal Field Battery, he was ordered to stage a 100-gun salute to honour the birthday of the Prince of Wales (later Edward VII). Normally that would have been held in the centre of town; but the morning of the planned salute, he secretly led the men in the battery (with the help of horses) in hauling four cannons mounted on sleighs through the forests to the top of Mount Royal. They arrived in time to join the noon-time salute of the ringing church bells.

He repeated the stunt again in 1863. He made his point: Mount Royal could be made accessible for a park. When Mount Royal Park was formally dedicated on



Queen Victoria’s birthday in May 1876, Stevenson, by then a lieutenant colonel, commanded a 100-gun salute to the Queen.

Stevenson left city council in 1867, but he was persuaded to run for office again in 1882. He won. Following the major flood of 1885, he was appointed chairman of the Inundation Committee. There was no provision at the time for dealing with spring flooding, so water would overflow from the open sewers onto the streets and into the houses of the lower town. Stevenson conceived a plan to close the sewers and pump the overflow water over a dam into the river. The Grand Trunk Railway lent the city several locomotives to supply the needed power. This scheme was laughed at as “Sandy’s Pumps.” But the system worked. “It was a small beginning,” wrote Edward A. Collard in *The Gazette* of April 9, 1945,

“but it went far to teach Montrealers that the annual floods were not really a necessary evil.”

In 1886, Stevenson became chairman of the city’s Fire Committee, and, that year, he accompanied a detachment of the Fire Brigade to London, where it participated in the World Fire Congress.

About 1890, Alexander Stevenson retired into private life. He died in April 1910 and was accorded full Masonic honours at his funeral. He is buried in Mount Royal Cemetery.

Susan McGuire is a historian at the Atwater Library and Computer Centre

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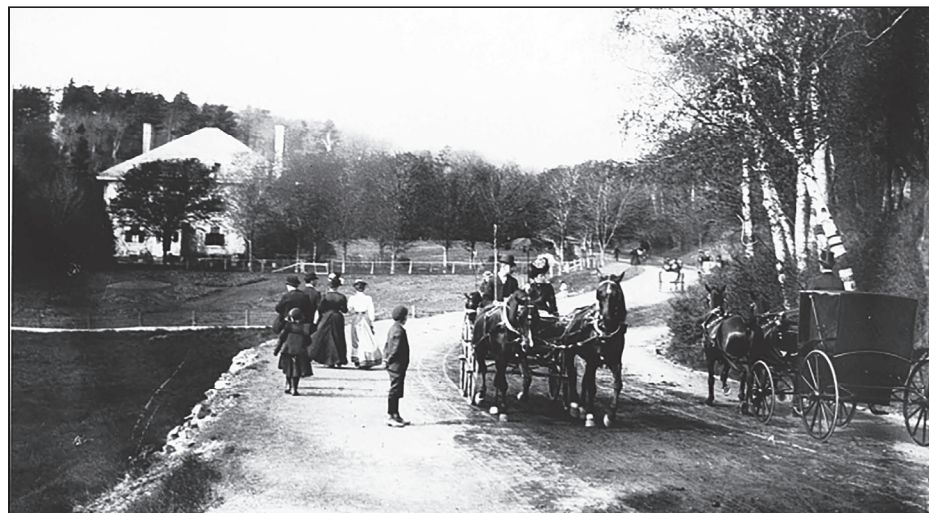
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Top: Alexander Stevenson monument, Mount Royal Cemetery. Photo: Rod MacLeod.

Bottom: Wallace and Shepherd, “Park ranger’s house, Mount Royal Park, 1899. McCord Museum, MP-0000.27.105.

MONTREAL'S MOST POPULAR IRISHMAN

The Forgotten Life of J. J. Curran
by Brendan O'Donnell

In Concordia University Libraries' Special Collections unit is a small box that is filed under the title *John Joseph Curran fonds*. In this small box is a gold pocket watch, with an inscription on the casing that reads: "J. J. Curran, Q.C., LL.D., on his 40th birthday by the Irishmen of Montreal, February 22, 1882." There are no other documents or photographs in the fonds, only an accompanying brief archival biography of Curran. No explanation is provided as to why Curran was honoured with this watch by "the Irishmen of Montreal" in 1882, or why prior to receiving the gold watch Curran was lauded in a magazine article as "Montreal's most popular Irishman." There is no mention of his role, from the 1870s to the 1890s, as a leading proponent in Canada's Home Rule movement for Ireland.

Here is the story behind the gold watch.

John Joseph Curran, better known during his life as J. J. Curran, was a lawyer, community historian, university administrator, federal politician, Quebec Superior Court judge, civic booster, and Irish Home Rule promoter. Born on February 22, 1842, in Montreal's Griffintown, he was one of eleven children of Charles C. Curran, an immigrant from County Down, Ireland, and Sarah Kennedy, originally from County Wexford, Ireland. Like many of the Catholic Irish diaspora in Montreal, Charles and Sarah encouraged their children to acquire an education and urged at least some to enter religious life. One of their sons joined the Christian Brothers and became a noted educationalist and author in the United States. Three of their daughters joined the Soeurs de la Charité, a Francophone religious order (known popularly in French as the Soeurs Grises and in English as the Grey Nuns) devoted to serving the poor in Canada.

J. J. Curran's early education began under Robert Begley, who is described in the *Canadian Biographical Dictionary* as "an Irish gentleman of distinguished attainments who taught select classes in Montreal for many years." Curran then commenced his classical studies at Montreal's St. Mary's College,



a Jesuit-run school for Irish Roman Catholic boys and the English sector of Collège Sainte Marie (later Loyola College, now part of Concordia University). He stayed there for three years, and then concluded his classical studies in 1859 at the Collège de Bytown (later Collège d'Ottawa and then the Université d'Ottawa / University of Ottawa), a bilingual institution founded by the Missionnaires Oblats de Marie-Immaculée. Curran maintained a long association with this institution after his graduation, more so than with the other schools he attended, participating as an active member of the university's alumni association for the remainder of his life. He also served as Vice Dean of its Faculty of Law when the faculty was first established in 1892.

Choosing law as a career following his classical studies, Curran enrolled in

McGill University's Faculty of Law and graduated with a Bachelor of Civil Law degree in May 1862. He was admitted to the Bar on March 2, 1863, shortly after his twenty-first birthday. In 1865, Curran married Elizabeth Mary Brennan, the youngest daughter of Montreal entrepreneur Patrick Brennan, and together they had ten children, one of whom died in infancy.

While still in university, Curran began his involvement in Montreal's St. Patrick's Society, the city's leading Irish fraternal organization. He advanced to assistant recording secretary in 1860 and then recording secretary in 1861. In 1863, as a new lawyer, he was one of the signatories on a petition to the Province of Canada legislature seeking incorporation of the St. Patrick's Society of Montreal. He served as the Society's corresponding secretary in 1864-1865 and again in 1873-1874, and was elected president in 1891 and in 1892.

The 1850s and 1860s were a tumultuous period within Montreal's Irish community, and especially within the city's oldest Irish national organization, the St. Patrick's Society. Founded in 1834 as a non-sectarian fraternal organization, Irish Protestant members opted to split from the society in 1856 and establish their own organization. Religious animosity between Catholics and Protestants in Canada during this period, especially involving the most virulent Protestant organization, the Orange Order, often resulted in bloody riots. In Montreal, the 1853 Gavazzi Riot between Irish Catholics and Protestants, which resulted in at least six people being killed when the city's British Army garrison opened fire on protesters, was fresh in everyone's mind. Equally fresh was the memory of political and social events in Ireland, from the rebellions to break the yoke of British domination in 1796, 1803 and 1848, to the failed

attempts of Daniel O’Connell to peacefully liberate Ireland from the Act of Union, to Britain’s perceived indifference to Ireland’s famine of the 1840s. These events led some within Montreal’s Irish community, including some members of the St. Patrick’s Society, to believe that the only way to liberate Ireland was by revolution.

The idea to establish a “physical-force” Irish republican revolutionary movement in North America was first conceived by the New York-based Irish-born Gaelic scholar and revolutionary John O’Mahoney. Known as the Fenian Brotherhood, the original objective of O’Mahoney’s organization was to ship money, arms and men to Ireland to join that country’s Irish Republican Brotherhood in a revolutionary uprising against British domination. By the 1860s, the American Fenians were recruiting Irish veterans of the United States Civil War to their cause, and the movement soon caught the attention of the Irish of Montreal. J. J. Curran reportedly wrote to O’Mahoney in 1862 on behalf of the St. Patrick’s Society of Montreal, inviting O’Mahoney to visit the city and meet with Montreal’s Irish community – an invitation O’Mahoney never took up.

There is little evidence that in his youth Curran was a proponent of a revolutionary liberation of Ireland, although there is no doubt that Curran’s view of Ireland was nationalistic. Like his political mentors – Father Patrick Dowd, pastor of Montreal’s St. Patrick’s parish, and businessman and future senator Edward Murphy – Curran chose to espouse a constitutional approach to Ireland’s liberation, promoting an arrangement similar to Canada’s at that time: a self-governing colony within the British Empire. It was a view, he later remarked, that he had held since he was a boy, and it was one that would eventually lead to his being one of the founders, with Edward Murphy, of the Home Rule League in Montreal in the 1870s, after the Fenian movement in North America all but collapsed under its internal divisions and overall military failures.

The organization of the Home Rule League in Montreal was made public on October 22, 1873. At a meeting held that day in the rooms of the St. Patrick Society, a discussion took place “to take into

consideration the propriety of organizing a Branch of the Irish Home Rule Association in Montreal,” as reported in Montreal’s weekly Irish newspaper, the *True Witness and Catholic Chronicle*. On October 31, the *True Witness* reported that the meeting chairman, a Mr. Kehoe, announced that “some time ago a number of young Irishmen in the city met together and discussed the propriety of organizing this Association; that they had communicated with head-quarters in



Dublin and their proposition had been formally received. They had secured reading-rooms, etc., on Craig Street, and had finally determined, having gone so far, to ask the approbation of their Irish fellow-citizens at a public meeting, and leave to this meeting to decide what further steps should be taken for the promotion of the noble object of the Association.” Although the names of these “young Irishmen in the city” are not given, Curran was undoubtedly prominent among them, for at the meeting he was called upon, in “answer to loud and repeated calls” from the audience, to speak in favour of the association. Following “an eloquent address, which was loudly cheered,” Curran proposed the following resolution: “The time has arrived when the Irish people in the Dominion of Canada should publically express their sympathy with the cause of Home Rule in Ireland.” Four hundred names were reportedly enrolled on the list of membership before the meeting closed that evening. Edward Murphy was elected president of the association and Curran was elected vice-president, a position he continued to hold throughout the 1870s. The Association, later referred to as the

Home Rule League of Montreal, promoted an Irish Parliament within the British Empire. It was the first such association to be successfully established in North America.

While Curran’s interest in Ireland’s future was developing during this period, he was also becoming involved in Canadian politics. At the age of nineteen, he “joined and fought” for the Conservatives at the invitation of George-Etienne Cartier, the political party’s Quebec lieutenant. His first tentative foray as a candidate in an election campaign took place in 1871, when he considered running for the Quebec legislature in the Montreal West riding, with its large Irish constituency, but dropped out in favour of another Conservative candidate, Francis Cassidy, who won the seat by acclamation. Three years later, in 1874, he plunged into federal politics, running against Liberal incumbent Lucius Seth Huntington in Shefford County in Quebec’s Eastern Townships. It was Huntington who, in 1873, first exposed to the House of Commons the details of what became known as the Pacific Scandal. This scandal centred on allegations of bribes being accepted by the Conservative government of Sir John A. Macdonald from interests led by Montreal businessman Hugh Allan to influence the bids to build the Canadian Pacific Railway. The Macdonald government was eventually forced to resign and a general election was called. It was later reported in the *Montreal Gazette* that the thirty-two-year-old Curran ran in Shefford “to prevent Lucius Seth Huntington being elected by acclamation.” The Conservative Party was soundly defeated in the 1874 general election. According to an 1881 *Harp* magazine article on Curran, the neophyte would-be politician “was defeated. He was slaughtered with the other innocents of his party; he was swept away by the Liberal flood which overwhelmed so many of the followers of Sir John Macdonald.” Curran lost the Shefford seat by 446 votes but succeeded in preventing Huntington’s election by acclamation.

Curran did not run again for political office for another eight years. During this period, he took an active part in political contests on behalf of friends of his party. He also served on the execu-

tive of the Montreal Young Men's Conservative Club. As a fluently bilingual orator, he was sought-after to garner political support for the Conservative Party not only among Irish Canadians, but also among French Canadians. He was also often asked to speak at non-political events, including those promoting Irish Catholic education. In 1881, Curran was awarded an LL.D. degree by Cardinal John McCloskey of New York City, President of Manhattan College, a Christian Brothers school, for his work promoting Catholic education, especially higher Catholic education. (Curran received a second honorary LL.D. in 1891, this one from his alma mater, the University of Ottawa.) Curran's work in promoting education reached a high point in 1899 when he and other notable Irish Montrealers were the founding governors of the newly-opened Catholic High School of Montreal, the first English-language Catholic "high school" in Quebec.

During this eight-year period, Curran also built up his law practice, and his reputation as a legal tactician and pleadings' orator grew. He was a sought after barrister in a number of criminal cases that made newspaper headlines. For several terms, Curran also acted as Crown prosecutor for the District of Beauharnois and for the District of Joliette, and, for eight months in 1877, he acted as the English secretary to the Commission struck to codify Quebec's general statutes, chaired by Judge Thomas-Jean-Jacques Loranger. During this period, Curran also sat on the Board of Examiners of the Montreal branch of the Bar of the Province of Quebec, and remained active in the Montreal branch of the Irish Home Rule League, continuing to serve as its vice-president until its dissolution in 1878. Curran was appointed a Queen's Counsel of Quebec on February 24, 1876, and of Canada on January 23, 1882. In 1880, he was appointed one of Montreal's Fire Commissioners, and, that year, he became a member of the Central Executive Committee of the newly formed Montreal branch of the Irish Land League Relief Association. In 1881, the year before he received the gold watch, *Harp* magazine declared him "undoubtedly the most popular Irishman in the city of Montreal."



Curran ran again for political office in the 1882 federal election, this time as the Conservative candidate in Montreal Centre, a riding that included most of the old Montreal West constituency. He was elected to the House of Commons as a member of the winning party under the leadership of Sir John A. Macdonald. As a back-bencher between 1882 and 1892, Curran gained a reputation for being a civic booster for Montreal. The Ottawa correspondent of one Montreal newspaper noted that Curran was the only active representative of the three MPs Montreal had in Parliament. He really seemed alive to the interests of Montreal, the correspondent wrote, and on all occasions when those interests were discussed he seemed to be there. He was also the member who piloted nearly all the Montreal deputations that came to Ottawa to lobby Parliament.

But Curran was also accused of being too supportive of Prime Minister Macdonald on most matters, even of going against the position of some of his Irish constituents in Montreal Centre, especially on the issue Home Rule for Ireland. The Irish Montreal daily newspaper, the *Montreal Post*, and its sister publication, the weekly *True Witness and Catholic Chronicle*, both edited by Henry Joseph Cloran in the 1880s, and formally a supporter of Curran, ran a vitriolic campaign between 1886 and 1887 against the member for Montreal Centre. Henry J. Cloran was a social democrat who both strongly opposed the hanging of Louis Riel and strongly supported Irish Home Rule, both of which became an issue in the House of Commons. When John A. Macdonald, a wily politician who had to juggle the sentiments of his party's Protestant members

with those of his Catholic (Irish and French) members, proposed a watered-down version of an 1886 motion that Liberal Party leader Edward Blake wished to have Canada's Parliament send to the Queen supporting Irish Home Rule, Cloran's newspapers lashed out, referring to the Conservatives as that "Orange Tory Government." Curran stood up in Parliament in defence of the Conservative's pragmatic motion, pointing out that an 1882 motion on Irish Home Rule that Canada sent to the Queen was rebuffed by the British Colonial Secretary, who had told Canada to mind its own business. When Curran argued that it would be better to merely pass a motion of support for Home Rule, and let that speak for itself, Cloran's newspapers began referring to him as a traitor and a coward.

The issue of whether Curran or Cloran was the stronger proponent of Irish Home Rule was fought out during the 1886 federal election. Cloran quit his job as editor of the two newspapers and ran as the Liberal Party candidate against Curran in Montreal Centre riding. The new editor of the paper kept up the attacks on Curran, referring to him as a scurvy sneak, informer, spy and traitor, even someone who was employed by the British Government to bring Irish patriots to the gallows. Curran was to be buried out of sight beneath the ballots of Montreal Centre, the paper predicted. But it was not to be.

Curran maintained his Montreal Centre seat, with the support of most of his Irish constituents, and he continued supporting Irish Home Rule in and out of Parliament. And, soon after the election, the two Irish Montreal newspapers once again began to support the Member for

Montreal Centre.

After a decade as a back-bencher, Curran was appointed to Cabinet in 1892 in the position of Solicitor General, a position he would hold until 1895. In that year, he left federal politics and was appointed to the Bench of the Quebec Superior Court for Montreal. He held that appointment for fourteen years.

Curran's health slowly began to fail in 1907, and by the spring of 1909 he was much worse. He took a short vacation in May of that year to Caledonia Springs in eastern Ontario, a tourist destination noted for its "curative" mineral water, and returned to finish the term on the Bench. He then immediately set sail for a vacation rest in England and Ireland, but his health did not improve. When he returned to Montreal after what was reported to have been an unpleasant passage, he was confined to his house, growing rapidly weaker. J. J. Curran died shortly after noon on Friday, October 1, 1909.

None of his surviving children appear to have had any children themselves, and the family died out with the death of a daughter, Clara Curran, in 1968. Before she died, Clara bequeathed her father's gold pocket watch to Loyola College. Today, the watch sits in its small box, the only reminder of a man who was once "Montreal's most popular Irishman."

Brendan O'Donnell is the author of the on-line open-access "Bibliography on English-Speaking Quebec," available on the website of the Quebec English-Speaking Communities Research Network at <http://quescren.concordia.ca/en/search>.

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LET'S TALK OF GRAVES

My life with you long did last...

by Heather Darch

This is the fourth in a series of articles on interesting people buried in Eastern Townships cemeteries.

Let's talk of graves, of worms, of epitaphs;

Make dust our paper, and with rainy eyes

Write sorrow on the bosom of the earth.

-Shakespeare, *Richard II*

When we walk through historic cemeteries and see the sad succession of children's deaths in a family, it is easy to think that everyone died at an early age. If you look closely, however, you will appreciate that among the stones there are some that indicate people did make it well into their eighties and beyond.

The gravestone of Elias Truax Jr. is situated in the large cemetery behind Bishop Stewart Memorial Church in Frelighsburg, Quebec. It is wedged in between other stones as if he was the last to go into the ground in his family plot. He likely was! Elias died at the extraordinary age of 102. He lived a life not unlike many of the first Loyalist settlers who came to Missisquoi County in the 1780s and 1790s, but his name appears in the historical record most notably when he was a nonagenarian – a man in his nineties.

Elias (or "Yelles") Truax Jr. was born in Albany, New York, on January 4, 1772, to the Palatine German family of Elias Truax Sr. (1727-1820) and his third wife Nancy McKinney (1738-1819). Refusing to join the American Revolutionary forces, Truax Sr. lost his property in New York and had no choice but to seek refuge as a Loyalist at Missisquoi Bay in 1783. Within ten years, the Truax family had been granted land for their allegiance to King George III and settled in Saint Armand East (Frelighsburg), where they built a log cabin in the small hamlet of Lagrange.

By this time, Elias Jr. was twenty, and it is generally believed that father and son became the first people to cut trees and open land for farming in the Township of Dunham. They established a small farm to support the family and grew beans, buckwheat, rye, oats, barley and potatoes and made crude potash (or 'black salts') from their felled trees. They sold this potash to the commercial ashery belonging to Philip Luke at Missisquoi Bay (now Philipsburg).

While it is unclear if it is the father or the son, the name Elias Truax appears on an associates list for the Charter of Brome in 1792. The government supported the idea of establishing a propertied elite in Lower Canada through the land scheme called the Leader and Associate system. A leader was granted a large holding of land and paid the expenses of surveying, opening roads and settling associates. In return, each associate was granted 1,200 acres of which 1,000 acres was returned to the leader. Associates had to swear an oath of allegiance to the Crown.

Leader Asa Porter did not have the funds to defray the expenses of the land, so he mortgaged the township. The mortgage was left unpaid for many years, which stopped settlers from coming to settle and slowed the prosperity and progress of the township as a whole. This was typical of the land scheme and eventually proved unsuccessful as leaders failed to invest in their holdings. It certainly kept both senior and junior Eliases from farming in Missisquoi County.

In 1796, Elias Jr. married Anna Wightman (1772-1837) of Hancock, Massachusetts, the daughter of Loyalists Thomas Wightman and Mary Tripp. That same year, they welcomed their first child, and, over the next twenty years, they brought eleven children into the world. It is rare to hear stories from this period concerning the interaction of parents and children, but a small notation in a family record reveals a sense of playfulness as Elias evidently

trained a bear cub for his children so they could have a family pet!

Elias' mother and father died in 1819 and 1820, respectively, and his wife Anna passed away in 1837 at the age of 65. Elias remained in his home and worked on his farm. Around this time, he began to manufacture sap buckets and gathering tubs, and continued to do so well into his nineties. In January 1864, he skated across Franklin Pond (now Lake Carmi, Vermont), a distance of 4 kilometres, to celebrate his 92nd birthday, a feat he had first accomplished when he was 15. He was also in the habit of walking nine kilometres a day to visit one of his daughters. These accomplishments were recorded in several sources and must have made an impression at the time, as they still do to this day.

It was a fairly busy and perhaps predictable life for Elias until June 1866, when hundreds of Fenians came into Missisquoi County and held the region captive in the name of Ireland. Elias' farm was on the front line and his was one of many that were raided by the marauding Fenians. He was 94 at the time. We can only imagine this poor old man's house and barns being ransacked

by Fenians who had abandoned their mission.

Following the Fenians' retreat, and until their return in 1870, men in the community formed the Missisquoi Home Guard, known locally as the Red Sashes because of the red scarf they wore across their chests. Their goal was to protect the border "at a moment's notice" against Fenian incursions. Elias Truax is not on the 1868 petition to form the guard, but following the 1870

victory against the Fenians, he is standing with the rest of the Red Sashes at Eccles Hill in the famous photograph by William Sawyer. The then 98-year-old Truax is pictured beside Asa Westover, the captain of the Red Sashes. Although he is not wearing the distinctive sash or carrying a rifle, one can only assume that there is an untold story as to why he is at Eccles Hill and standing in a place of honour in the photograph. Perhaps he actually defended his property in 1866. He must have had a fighting spirit worthy of respect at the very least, and was invited to stand among the home guard.

In 1875, Elias Truax Jr. died at the age of 102 in Franklin, Vermont, at the home of one of his children. His body was returned to Missisquoi County and buried in the Anglican Church graveyard.

Historian Cyrus Thomas said of Truax that "he had a good memory, a jovial nature" and that "this man affords a striking example of longevity and of the long time the human mind and body may retain their faculties."

There's hope for us all!

Heather Darch is the former curator of the Missisquoi Museum and a heritage consultant. She currently works for the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network, where she is director of QAHN's Heritage Talks program.

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Top: Truax gravestone, Frelighsburg. Photo: Heather Darch.

Review

FIRST ACROSS THE OCEAN

The PS Royal William of Quebec: The First True Atlantic Steamer

by Eileen Reid Marcil. Baraka Books, 2020.

On August 5, 1833, the Paddle Steamer (PS) *Royal William*, built entirely at Quebec City and Montreal, and owned and financed by Canadians, was the first ship propelled entirely by steam power to cross the Atlantic Ocean. Although there have been a few other contenders for the “first steamer across the Atlantic” title (mainly American, British and Dutch competitors), none of these also-rans actually used steam all the way and every day, and some were disqualified for other reasons.

Noted maritime historian Eileen Reid Marcil has done intensive research and has created a definitive and very readable book.

The *Royal William* began her career as a mail carrier operating between Quebec and Montreal. It was hoped that a steamer would have less difficulty navigating St. Mary’s current at Montreal, and also be faster and more reliable. However, the cholera epidemic of 1832 caused travel to be restricted, which led to delays in needed repairs and other ongoing financial problems. The *Royal William*’s owners decided to sell the ship, and to take her to Britain to try to find a purchaser. This led to the transatlantic crossing of 1833.

The *Royal William* used good-quality Cape Breton coal as fuel; not wood, as other steamers had done. Wood seems a rather dangerous, tricky fuel, especially at sea! Coal could be better controlled and was of less varying quality. However, the long and narrow *Royal William* – 160 feet long, 44 feet across at its widest point – with its two big paddle wheels on each side, would have been a challenging ship to take on the blustery Atlantic in hurricane season.

At the Grand Banks, the *Royal William* weathered a severe storm, which required very difficult managing, but ship and crew survived with no damage. Captain John MacDougall, three ship’s engineers and the crew continued onward after this potential disaster, landing at Cowes, on the Isle of Wight, 21 days after setting out.

At a time when a sailing ship could take up to two months to make a crossing, making predicting the exact date of arrival difficult, three weeks marked a definite step forward for navigation. With steam power, ships were no longer completely at the mercy of the winds and waves. This contributed to the eventual replacement of sail, especially for trade purposes, and was one more nineteenth century advancement towards the modern world.

The *Royal William* also carried seven (brave) passengers on this voyage plus a cargo of “245 chaldrons of coal, a box of stuffed birds, a harp, six extra spars, and some household furniture.” We know there was an enormous amount of coal required, but the other items are a bit unexpected, although the stuffed birds were probably for some natural history collection.

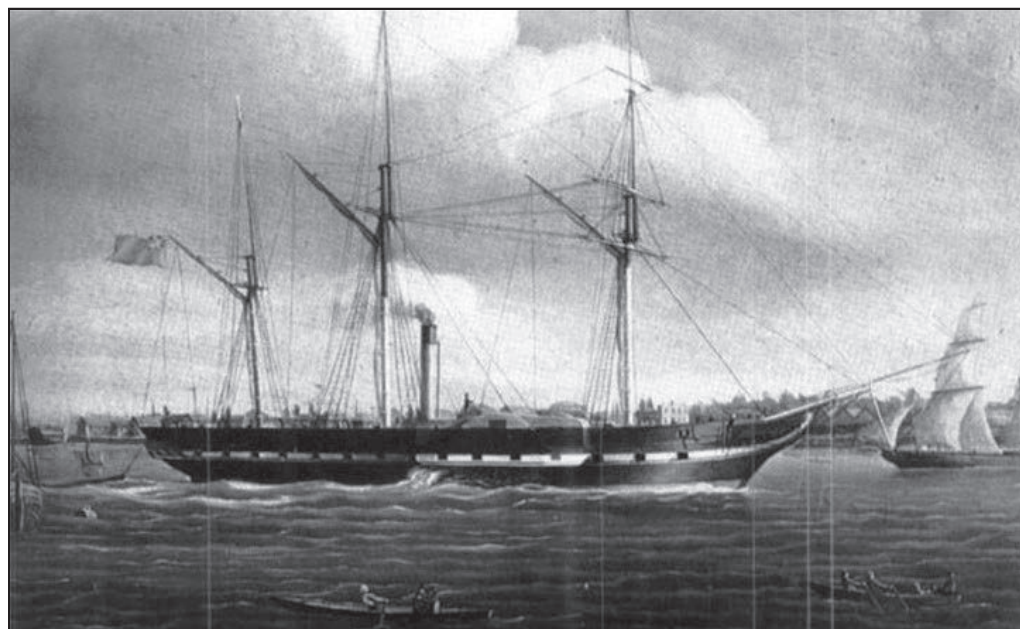
The accommodations on the ship for the passengers were, for the time, quite comfortable and even luxurious; the details that Marcil includes in the Appendices describe the work orders for finishing the interior. Lots of mahogany, oak and pine were used throughout for tables, chairs and beds, along with walls for sleeping quarters and the round house on the top deck.

After a few years in service with the Portuguese, and then being sold again to Spain, the *Royal William* – now called the *Isabel Segunda* (after Queen Isabel II of Spain), the Royal

William was ultimately wrecked in a storm off the Iberian coast near Algeciras in 1860. Yet her Canadian legacy did live on as one of her original financiers had been Samuel Cunard of Halifax, who famously created the Cunard Steamship Company, which revolutionized transoceanic travel.

Marcil’s excellent book includes many maritime-themed watercolours, prints and drawings, all well incorporated into the text, as well as several interesting appendices and a helpful glossary of seafaring terms.

- Reviewed by Sandra Stock



“P.S. Royal William,” from John Boileau, *Samuel Cunard: Nova Scotia’s Master of the North Atlantic*, Halifax, 2006.

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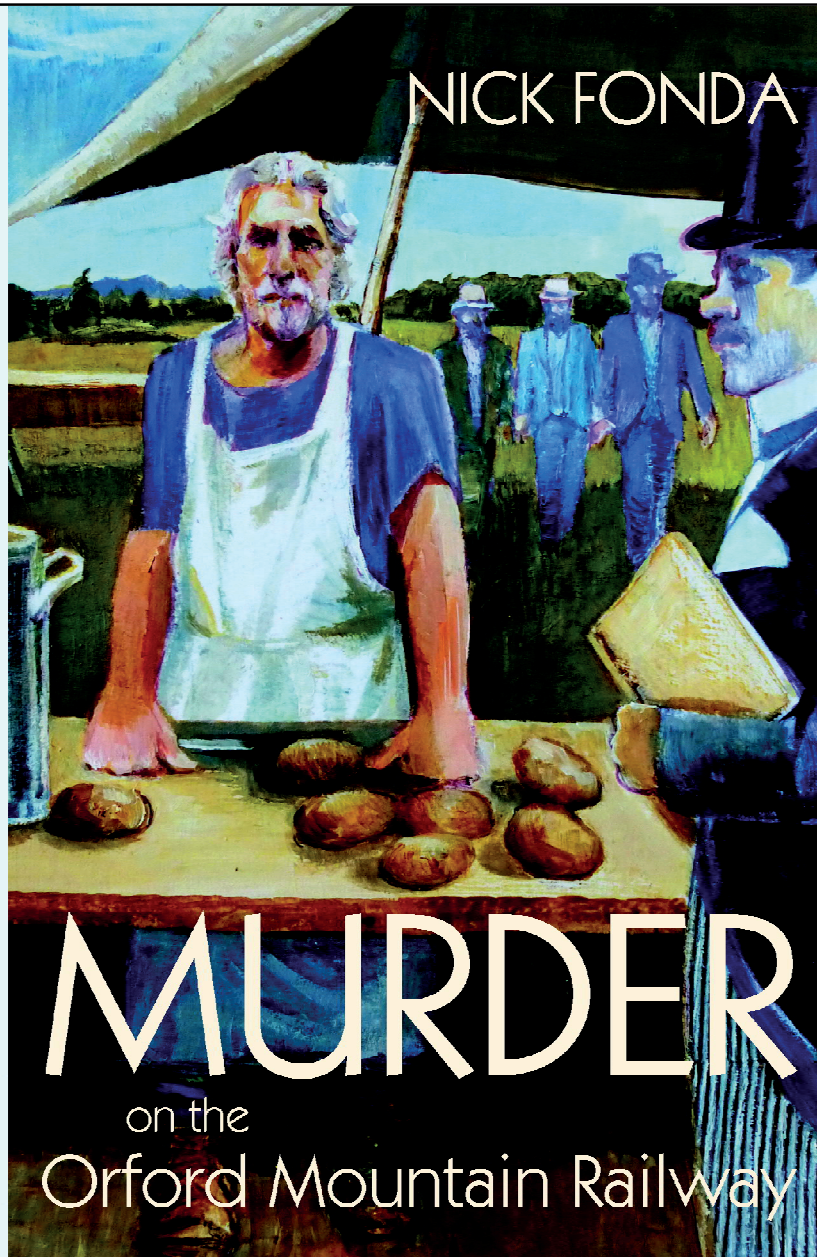
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A 12-year old boy, son of an Italian camp cook, is shot in the back and killed near the Orford Mountain Railway construction site in rural Quebec in August 1905. The crime is all the more staggering for being the second child murder on a railway in three days. A wave of shock and terror spreads throughout the area.

The police make arrests, but it becomes clear that the two suspects are not the murderers.

Fast forward a century. The archivist of a local historical society comes across the diary of a teenage girl who chronicled the weeks she spent with relatives nearby in August 1905. More by accident than design, she provides clues that help the narrator investigate and solve the century-old cold case of the murder on the Orford Mountain Railway.

In this historical true crime novel, Nick Fonda takes his mastery of local lore and story-telling skills to a new level.



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