

ROBERT N. WILKINS: APATHY CLAIMS AN URBAN ICON

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Quebec Heritage

VOL 5, NO. 12

WINTER 2011

News



Empty Churches

Scenes from religion's retreat from our architectural landscape

Solemn Temples

Saints Charles and Gabriel, Madonna della Difesa, the Islamic Centre

Nile Deco

The craze for Egyptian motifs in the story behind the Empress

Quebec Heritage News

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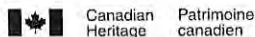
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Quebec Heritage Magazine is produced four times yearly by the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network (QAHN) with the support of The Department of Canadian Heritage and Quebec's Ministère de la Culture et des Communications. QAHN is a non-profit and non-partisan umbrella organization whose mission is to help advance knowledge of the history and culture of English-speaking society in Quebec. Canada Post Publication Mail Agreement Number 405610004. ISSN 17707-2670



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Cover Image: The new wing of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (aka Erskine and American Church), 2011 (Photo: Rod MacLeod)

EDITOR'S DESK

Thine honoured walls

by Rod MacLeod

When Quebec's oldest Protestant church closed its doors in 1886 because of flagging membership, the event prompted much emotion, especially among the doggerel-writing element within the congregation:

*Old house of stone! wherein men meet to pray;
In that same faith their fathers knew before,
And art thou doomed, alas! to pass away,
Destroyed, in all save memory, evermore! ...*

*Old house of stone! Men prophesy thy doom.
They say thine honoured walls must be pulled down,
That other new improvements may have room,
To meet the growing business of the town.*

This anonymous verse must have moved Robert Campbell, the self-described "last minister" of St Gabriel Street Presbyterian Church, enough for him to have reproduced it in the extraordinary history he wrote of his church and its congregation. Used by countless historians as a window onto nineteenth-century Montreal Society, Campbell's *A history of the Scotch Presbyterian Church, St Gabriel Street, Montreal* was in fact a memorial, written as the then century-old building was about to close.

At any rate, the sentiment in this verse echoes the distress many of us feel today at the prospect of an old church facing demolition. Somehow architectural loss is worse when it's a religious building: not only is the architecture likely to be interesting, but for a congregation to die it means another notch in the death of the spirit and a victory for mammon. Whatever your beliefs, churches and temples were built out of faith, and faith is the saddest thing to lose.

People were not always so sentimental. As Campbell's history reveals,

when Montreal's Protestants built churches it was usually either in a mood of dissent or to show off. Either motive spelled religious fervour, of course: there was a time when members of a congregation would get up and leave if they didn't like the minister and promptly establish their own church, and if anyone had money it made sense to make the building grander than its rival. Doctrinal and interpretive issues within the Presbyterian community in the first half of the nineteenth century saw the formation of St Andrew's and then St Paul's, and then the congregations of Americans, the followers of Ebenezer Erskine, and the Free Church movement. Only in the 1870s would Presbyterians start to readhere at the national level – and then sunder again in 1925. By that



time, all the original churches had been abandoned, and all but Erskine (now a Chinese Catholic church) and the Free Church (some of whose windows are visible in an old office building on Coté Street) demolished. The same can be said for the original homes of Montreal's Anglican, Methodist, Jewish, and Irish Catholic congregations.

But it wasn't the growing business of the town that spelled these churches' doom so much as the lure of greener pastures. Overcrowding prompted the St Andrew's congregation to sell their

old church on St Pierre Street and rebuild on the top of Beaver Hall Hill soon after land went on sale on this elevated ground in the 1840s. That area had also drawn the builders of St Patrick's, intended to replace the Recollet church where Irish families had worshipped for years. The Methodists were a bit more traditionalist, looking on their St James Street chapel as a mother house to serve the entire community – which did not stop them from rebuilding on the same site, on a larger scale, in 1845.

The Anglicans were even more reverential towards their elegant Christ Church on Notre Dame Street – Christ Church Cathedral after 1852 – and might not have moved had the structure not burned to the ground in December 1856. After much soul searching, the

congregation decided to look for a new site. They found an ideal location in what was being touted as Montreal's New Town on the slopes of Mount Royal, modelled after Edinburgh's New Town and London's West End. The selected site bordered on a fine English-style square (Phillips) and was surrounded by formal terraced housing. The only difficulty was acquiring enough land to build a big enough church as well as a rectory and a bishop's palace; this necessitated some negotiation with

adjacent landowners who, fortunately, had not yet built on their lots.

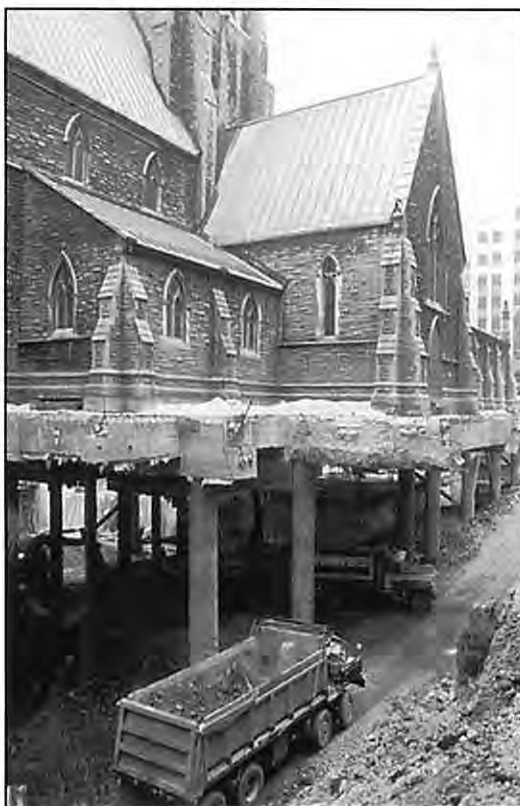
The shining Gothic edifice that soon rose in the New Town proved a beacon to other congregations, who began to look upwards in more than the usual sense. Land in the area was rapidly growing scarce, however. Luckily, by the late 1860s the St Antoine cemetery was being developed as a park (Dominion Square), Dorchester Street was extended across it, and nearby landowners began to sell more lots. Within a few years, the St Paul's Presbyterian, Ameri-

can Presbyterian, Free Church, and Erskine had all sold their old houses of stone and rebuilt in Gothic splendour on the side of the mountain – as did new Anglican parish churches such as St George’s. When the Methodists decided to join them by building a huge new 2,500-seat temple, rivalling Christ Church in ornate decor, some blocks to the east (the old location was commemorated in the new name, St James), that left only the eighteenth-century St Gabriel Street church in the old town. In 1886 it was sold to the provincial government, which at first rented it to the city for use as a police station and then by 1903 tore it down. The tiny St Gabriel’s congregation moved to new premises across from St James Methodist.

It was most likely these churches that Mark Twain meant when he said you couldn’t throw a stone without breaking the window of one. (He said it, after all, in the Windsor Hotel, which was a stone’s throw from a large number of church windows.) Within a generation of Twain’s 1881 visit, however, there were too many churches. To survive, many moved – often doubling up, as the Erskine and American congregations did in the 1930s, the latter moving into the former’s grand new church on Sherbrooke Street. Similarly, St Andrew’s overcame its earlier differences with St Paul’s and together built one of the city’s largest churches, also on Sherbrooke Street. The old St Andrew’s was demolished to make way for the Bell Canada building, while the

old St Paul’s was in the way of impending Central Station complex; it was purchased by the directors of the College St-Laurent and moved, stone by stone, to its premises north of the city.

Of the surviving downtown Protes-



tant churches, most are Anglican, including the still-prestigious Christ Church Cathedral – which nevertheless was obliged in the 1980s to sell – if not its soul then a significant part of its anatomy – to the growing business of the town which built a shopping complex

underneath it. This arrangement was an echo of the one made years before by St James United (née Methodist) whereby its entire façade was covered with shops. St James, along with the Anglican St James the Apostle (a parish church on St Catherine Street at Bishop) and St John the Evangelist are essentially inner-city churches, and do the kind of charitable work that their founders (though arguably not the founders of Christianity itself) would have found surprising.

Survival is not just a matter of escaping the bulldozer, although that is clearly an achievement in itself. Abandoned by traditional congregations, old churches have had to find a variety of uses for themselves, many of them quite creative – although it is a point of debate whether being refitted for condos is appropriate. Social work is vital to urban life, but hardly brings in revenue for maintenance. Some churches double as concert venues – a happy arrangement for building and audience, although again not lucrative enough for those who have to pay the bills.

At the end of the day, alas, one must admit that religious buildings and twenty-first century urban life are often a poor fit. Built in an age when men met to pray, they are all too often dinosaurs in an age when many people rarely meet at all – other than to drink or dance. It takes enormous creativity to keep such honoured walls from being pulled down. Sentiment and doggerel aren’t enough.

LETTERS

Memories of Marianna

I was shocked and profoundly saddened when I discovered from the tribute by Senator Dawson in the May-June issue of the *Quebec Heritage News* that my close friend Marianna O’Gallagher had died in late May. That was my first inkling of her passing, and the spark for a flood of memories dating back to the early 1970s when we first met.

Some of you may remember a paper on Edmund Bailey O’Callaghan, the noted patriot, that I had the honour to give at the *Fédération des sociétés d’histoire* (FSHQ) meeting in Quebec City in late 2008 (a presentation gra-

ciously serialized thereafter in this magazine). I was not surprised to confirm that it was at Marianna’s suggestion that I had been invited as a speaker, since she had been instrumental on several previous occasions in having me share my research on O’Callaghan with other groups, notably Irish Heritage Quebec. That meeting marked the last time Marianna and I met in person – an occasion which, for that reason, I will always recall all the more poignantly.

It was indeed our common interest in O’Callaghan that first brought us together, when, as a much younger scholar, I began my serious research on that

famous (though at the time seemingly unlikely) patriot. One of my first stops in my effort to get oriented was at the Archives de l’Archidiocèse de Québec, where I hoped to find information about the founding of St Patrick’s Catholic Church in that city. The archivist had been patiently addressing some of my initial questions when he interrupted our conversation to suggest I should be talking with the person he considered the real expert on the subject. He thereupon picked up his phone, dialled this unnamed expert, and turned the phone over to me. For the next several minutes I tried to explain in French to the pleas-

ant-voiced woman on the other end of the line who I was and what I was seeking, and she offered encouraging comments about the possible help she could offer. It was only after nearly a quarter hour that something about her accent struck me, and I asked if by any chance she spoke English. "Oh, indeed!" she replied. "My name is Marianna O'Gallagher, and I take it you speak English too!" After hearty mutual laughter, she gave me her address and invited me to come for a visit so we could explore together my interest in O'Callaghan and St Patrick's, about both of which she assured me she could furnish much useful background. I of course took her up on her offer immediately, and thus met the person who not only plied me with huge quantities of useful documents and knowledge but also became one of my closest personal friends.

As my research on O'Callaghan progressed, it quickly became evident that his Irish background and expertise as a physician in Quebec dealing daily with the flood of arriving Irish immigrants tied in intimately with Marianna's own similar interests and her extensive knowledge about nineteenth-century Irish immigration. In later get-togethers she regaled me with her dream – happily since realized, largely through her own efforts – of one day turning the immigrant station at Grosse Île into a national park. She published several books and monographs on the subject, ceaselessly lobbied the appropriate civil authorities until the park was in fact created, and personally led many tours of the park for visiting tourists and dignitaries, both Canadian and foreign. Although our conflicting schedules never permitted our going there together, I made a trip alone – a pilgrimage, really – to the park shortly after it was opened. It was one of my life's most moving experiences. This was before the erection of the commemorative Celtic cross that now stands on a tip of the island, the fulfillment of the tribute she had always hoped to pay to her own ancestors and particularly to her father. Though I didn't see the cross in person, Marianna sent me numerous photographs and newspaper clippings

showing both the site and some of the fortunate groups who had her as an escort there.

Over the years the friendship sparked by Marianna's and my mutual historical interests grew into an ever stronger personal bond as well. We exchanged many a letter and e-mail about our families, our political and religious



views, our adventures, disappointments and achievements. Our most recent contact was a large envelope I received from her in April 2010 with a long, bubbling letter about her triumph as the Grand Marshal of the Quebec St Patrick's Day parade that she had (typically) done so much to revive, along with a hefty supply of newspaper clippings and photos documenting the event. As I gradually come to grips with the shock of learning she has died, I can't help reflecting on what an appropriate "last hurrah" the parade was for a woman whose life was filled with so many adventures and well-deserved honours.

I miss you deeply, Marianna achara. God be with you, and may His face shine upon you.

*Marjorie A. Fitzpatrick
Carlisle PA, USA*

*

Publicly, Marianna O'Gallagher was a wise and dignified visionary. Through careful historical scholarship, founding and leading Irish Heritage Quebec, and helping to make that heritage manifest through the likes of the

Irish Summer (1997), the Quebec City Celtic Cross, and the Grosse Île and the Irish Memorial National Historic Site, Marianna helped put the Quebec Irish into our collective memory. As such, she was a role model for many, including me.

I was a fledgling historian when we first met. For some reason, she took a shine to me, becoming a sort of mentor and source of unstinting professional support. When I finished my doctorate, she and fellow writer Louisa Blair toasted me with champagne in a swanky bar overlooking the Plains of Abraham. Afterwards, when my resources were scarce, she convened a kind of Irish posse to help me get work – culminating in a memorable meeting with Thomas Mulcair. Picture the then environment minister for Quebec, fancy suit, top-floor office suite and all, politely referring to the "Sister Marianna" who had taught him history at high school so many years be-

fore. Once I became more established, she helped me extensively when I curated the McCord Museum's "Being Irish O'Quebec" exhibit. Marianna's ideas flowed like water: she read drafts of my text, lent artifacts – and, just as valuable, lent her name for me to use as the key into many a home within the Quebec Irish community.

In private? Here we get to the heart of why I loved Marianna O'Gallagher so much. Endlessly joking, warm and loving, always a kind word for my son Benjamin. How many lifts did she give me, enlivened by her wonderfully nostalgic stories about the places we were passing? Who would have known she was so full of whimsy, wishing, on her eightieth birthday, for a convertible car? Marianna was also deeply spiritual: she talked to God, and referred to Him with deep love and respect, right up to her last days when she confessed to wondering why he had reserved this particular fate for her.

Her life was deeply meaningful. May she rest in peace.

*Lorraine O'Donnell
Quebec English-Speaking Communities
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Fate of the Empress still uncertain

by Chris Hanna

The likelihood that people will be lining up at the Empress Theatre in the Notre-Dame-de-Grace district of Montreal this year is low. But members of the board currently holding the building are optimistic that the right project will come along to put the building to good use.

“Sherbrooke Street has some seriously untapped potential,” believes board president Paul Scriver.

The building at the corner of Sherbrooke and Old Orchard, which used to house the Empress Theatre and later Cinema V, has been abandoned since 1992 when a fire damaged most of its interior. The building stands across the street from the popular Notre Dame de Grace Park and the right project could propel that neighborhood into the cultural hub of NDG. A handful of projects have attempted to find use for the more than eighty year old building, to no avail.

The Empress was a popular burlesque hall in its heyday, and later became a first-run theatre and then repertoire cinema. “I remember seeing movies here,” says board treasurer Jason Hughes, who came to the theatre regularly.

A petition with over 2,000 signatures was presented at a recent borough council meeting, which shows community members’ interest in the building being repurposed. The council’s main concern is securing the building and making it safe to operate. Scriver explains that the roof, one of the building’s biggest problems, is “not leaking as much anymore” and is in much better shape than it used to be.

Scriver believes that ideally, the project should “serve the community, be financially sustainable and answer the needs of the community in the best, most responsible way.”

Scriver and Hughes agree that the Empress project will get a kick start when there is a perfect blend of funding and viable ideas. Scriver referred to the project that revitalized the area around the Palais des Congress as the model that should be followed for the Empress in NDG. Scriver says a “visioning process” is needed



to facilitate communication with people who may be able to get this project going. Such people include those with great ideas and stakeholders who may be willing and able to fund the multi-million dollar reconstruction.

Hughes acknowledges that the last few boards have all failed in getting a project going, either because funding was not there or the ideas were just not viable. As a community member himself, he would like to see

the building be put to use for cultural enterprises and sees this as a definite possibility. The key, he believes, is appropriate and exciting programming that will lure audiences in.

Geordie Productions, the McGill Music Conservatory and Black Theatre Workshop, which recently celebrated its 40th anniversary,

have reportedly been at the forefront of the reconstruction. These Montreal institutions are not that closely involved but, according to Hughes, would be interested in using the space eventually.

Scriver hopes the Monkland Street redevelopment project in the '90s will inspire city and provincial governments to see that a cultural and economic facelift for the Empress can do the neighborhood a lot of good.



Briffa gem stages comeback

by Rod MacLeod

A heritage theatre on Montreal's Park Avenue seems to be enjoying a new lease on life. Like the Empress, the Rialto was built in the age of Vaudeville and over eighty years later is still a showcase of gilt and plaster. Its original design by Emmanuel Briffa has weathered the years, including the last two decades when the seating was removed with the intention of turning the theatre into a night club or restaurant. The new owner, Ezio Carosielli, who sees himself as the custodian of the community's heritage, wants to restore the Rialto's structural dignity and make it a venue for local theatre – something that is in very short supply in Montreal.

Carosielli clearly has his work cut out for him. The Rialto's lovely bones – marquee entrance, lobby, balcony, glorious ceiling – are intact, but lack of seating means that audiences have to sit in chairs on the level floor as if in a high school gym. More problematic is the lack of wings: actors must enter the stage from the house and must make use of on-stage screens to hid behind if their characters need to be out of a scene. On the plus side, there is a state-of-the-art kitchen directly under the stage.

Such challenges will be met in stride by most the-



atrical companies, who are grateful to have a venue, especially one so grand as the Rialto. The holiday season featured a successful run of Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, directed by Kevin John Saylor of the Turtle Island Theatre Company, Kahnawake. Carosielli hopes to turn the show into a yearly event; instead of Christmas pantomime, Montreal parents may take their children to see Scrooge at the Rialto.

Web tours highlight Point's history

by Celia Ste Croix

On January 18th the Société d'Histoire de Pointe-Saint-Charles (SHPS) invited everyone to join them in celebrating the launch of their website and logo facelift.

Board of Directors Vice-President, Nathacha Alexandroff was happy to show curious on-lookers the perks of the new site. "It is much easier for us to maintain and update now," she said. "And it has so many interesting new features."

The site is well laid out and easy to navigate. Publications written by the society on subjects like the local fire stations and how the streets in Pointe Saint Charles got their names can be bought from the site. It also has information in French and English on the churches of the area, the building of the Victoria Bridge and much more. For educators, there is a section called Kid's Corner that can be used in the classroom.

Another fun and interesting feature of the site is

the walking tour section. Through the site, history buffs can schedule a guided walking tour. And, for those more independent explorers, you can download a self-guided tour of the fire stations of Pointe Saint Charles and follow it at your own pace, on your own time. The self-guided tour includes a map, a download-

able audio guide to listen to on your tour and an optional text version of the audio guide.

Upcoming features include information on Father LeMaistre, the Sulpician who was killed in an Iroquois attack on Saint Gabriel Farm 350 years ago this August.

Another addition to look out for is an exploration of the life of local impressionist painter Emily Coonan. Board

President Gisele Turgeon-Barry is very excited about the Society's recent discovery that the Beaver Hill painter lived most of her life in Pointe Saint Charles. "Four of her paintings are in the National Gallery. That gives you an idea of her calibre."



Group vows to keep church put

by Serge Wagner, George Baylor and Lizanne Ryan

A few months ago Holy Trinity Church in South Bolton was to be sold and moved. It appeared as though the weekend of September 24-26 commemorating the church's 150th anniversary was to be its swan song. With festivities spread over the same three days as the Journées de la Culture, two opposing sentiments prevailed: resignation in the face of the church's possible closure and mobilisation for its survival.

The celebrations, which brought out dozens of citizens, was organised by the East Bolton Association for the Preservation of Heritage Buildings (EBAPHB) in collaboration with the local congregation. It benefited from financial support from Canadian Heritage, the Municipality of East Bolton, MLA Pierre Paradis and other partners such as O'Donoughue & Associates.

The mayor of East Bolton, Royal Dupuis, was present at the inaugural event as were three other mayors from neighboring municipalities: Jacques Marcoux (Potton), Dom André Laberge (St-Benoit du Lac), and Lisette Maillé (Austin). All had been especially invited because of the historical ties their municipalities share with the establishment of the Anglican Church in the region. Jacques Marcoux first praised the regional aspect of the celebration and expressed his intention to work towards an enhanced sense of regional belonging throughout the northern Missisquoi Valley. Then Dom André Laberge expressed his pleasure at the ecumenical aspect of the event. "The times are changing," he said, finding it urgent that the "different Christian churches meet each other on such occasions to reaffirm their faith together."

For her part, Sheila Needham, rector's warden at Holy Trinity, recalled the tempestuous reception of the Anglican community in 1860 when members of other Protestant denominations threatened to destroy the newly constructed building. She also cited the contributions of many generations and finished with a hope for the future of Holy Trinity. Archdeacon Stuart Martin, representing the Anglican Bishop of Montreal, paid tribute to all those who had permitted Holy Trinity to survive. In closing, Royal Dupuis underlined the challenge ahead to ensure the survival of the building.

During three days the little church vibrated to the sounds of music, musicians coming from the immediate region and elsewhere in the Eastern Townships or beyond: world music with Choromundo, a women's choir from the Eastern Townships and Vermont; country gospel with Rus-

sell Coates and his friends Les Duke et Alec van Zuiden; some classical church music sung by the soprano Brigitte Caron accompanied by Anne Stairs; and Celtic music with the Dave Gossage Trio.

La Troupe Enchanteresse from Mansonville brought together a dozen children who presented sketches with the puppets they had made at school for the occasion. Lizanne Ryan, co-chair of the festivities, emphasized that the children's theatre assured the presence of the whole range of ages during the weekend.

The activities also included a religious aspect, a commemorative Anglican service, which was financed exclusively by Holy Trinity Church. It was celebrated jointly by Archdeacon Stuart Martin and the Reverend Mark Gudwin with the participation of other clergy. The sermon emphasised that it is not the building that makes up a church community, but the people. On the other hand, Sheila Needham did express her hope in a viable future for the building.

Before the closing concert, George Baylor, co-chair of EBAPHB, reiterated the Association's desire to create, with the support of the local congregation, a broader vocation for Holy Trinity. This could be done by enlarging its spiritual dimension to a larger ecumenical one and welcoming events compatible with its religious character. In fact, he added, the program of activities over the weekend reflected quite well what is hoped for. The former mayor of East Bolton, Joan Westland-Eby, who played a role in creating the Association, noted that the church congregations diminish in size and that the fabric of communities has changed. She recalled, "It is because our collectivity recognized that the churches do not represent only a patrimony and a place of worship but the very essence of what makes up a whole community. That's why the Association was formed and it is looking for ways to ensure that this heritage building does not disappear."

It is said that faith can move mountains. Time will tell if the coalition of people who organized and celebrated the anniversary of this heritage building in South Bolton will succeed in forging a lasting alliance between the few remaining members of the congregation and more recently arrived citizens who now live in the area. Holy Trinity does not want to die. This will to survive was strengthened by the support of the couple hundred people who came to honor its 150th anniversary.



This piece originally appeared in the Townships Heritage WebMagazine: townshipsheritage.com

Beyond repair

by Matthew Farfan

Is there any symbol more poignant of our dwindling rural communities, any sign more obvious that organized religion no longer holds the place in our society that it once did, than an abandoned church? There is perhaps no church, or rather former church, in the Eastern Townships that is in a sadder state of repair (or lack of it) than the former United Church in the hamlet of Tomifobia.

The church, which was built as a Methodist Church around 1890, went into a long period of decline in the middle of the twentieth century. In the end, the parishioners were too few in number to maintain the church as a place of worship, and, about twenty-five years ago, the building was sold.

Since that time, the building has basically been abandoned, and the once lovely edifice has deteriorated to well beyond the point of no return. Last winter, in fact, the roof on the steeple, which has gradually become detached from the rest of the building, actually collapsed.

How long the rest of the structure will withstand the elements is anyone's guess. For now, it has been



fenced off and is strictly off limits to passers-by. The current owner could not be reached for comment.

This item originally appeared in the Townships Heritage WebMagazine: townshipsheritage.com.

Playing with fire

by Robert N Wilkins

The suspect fire of February 2010 which destroyed the old Franciscan Chapel on René Lévesque Boulevard underscores the sorry fact that Montreal's city centre has lost three historic churches to flames in just a little over twenty years.

The first of the three conflagrations occurred on January 16, 1986 when Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church was heavily damaged by a blaze of equally dubious origins. The tattered shell of what was originally the old Sherbrooke Street Methodist Church stood for many years afterwards before eventually being torn down and replaced with yet another non-descript modern hotel. The demolition took place despite the fact that the City of Montreal initially insisted that, because of its architectural value, the 1865 place of worship be re-



stored to its original state.

A little over a year later, in 1987, the Church of the Messiah, also situated on Sherbrooke Street, was the victim of an arsonist in a spectacular conflagration which took with it not only a remarkable ecclesiastic building but also, tragically, the lives of two firemen. Little remained to suggest the possibility of a restoration and so the site now accommodates a fashionable new condominium complex while the Unitarians have moved to a new location in Notre Dame de Grace.

So, whether Protestant, Roman Catholic, or Greek Orthodox, that is three century-old religious temples – buildings in which our civic ancestors once worshipped – which were lost in relatively rapid succession to this city's spiritual heritage.

The Scotland synagogue

by Rod MacLeod

Off a small road on the outskirts of the Laurentian village of Sainte-Sophie lies one of Quebec's few remaining rural synagogues. Open only for high holidays, it shelters a dwindling congregation. Despite their deep roots in the area going back over a century to the early days of the Jewish colonization movement, and despite the working farms many continue to own, the members have all moved to Montreal.

Until 1913, the Jews of the Sainte-Sophie parish held religious celebrations, as well as informal Hebrew classes for their children, in private homes. Some children also attended the local Catholic school in Sainte-Sophie, although they were not made to feel welcome there. Seeking better treatment, a group of parents petitioned the Department of Education for the right to establish a dissentient school board – meaning one that represented the local religious minority. Although this provision

technically reserved such a right for Protestants (in a Catholic area), Jews had been declared Protestant “for educational purposes” in legislation passed a decade earlier. The Sainte-Sophie Protestant Dissident School Board was created, run by Jews, who kept their records mostly in Yiddish. The Department sent teachers to give classes in English, although it was not keen for the new school to have a Jewish name. A compromise was reached: it would be called the Scotland School, in homage to the many Scots who had settled the area in the previous century.

The school doubled as a synagogue; the Rabbi provided Hebrew instruction, apparently with half the class while the English teacher took the others in the upstairs room. The school closed in 1949, but the synagogue continued. In the woods behind this modest structure lies a large cemetery, a lasting testament to the Jews of the Laurentians.



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The synagogue in Sainte-Sophie, 2000. Photo: Mary Anne Poutanen

THE MOON

The curious story of a family newsletter

by Anne Joseph

Who could possibly have known during the early days of 1896 that the rather inane scribblings of a schoolboy would attract family favour, take root and blossom into an annual newsletter known as *The Moon*? The 116th annual edition is about to be prepared.

Looking back over my incomplete set of 64 copies, it is clear that there have been three distinct eras in the life of *The Moon*. The first era covered its founding and the early years of total input by a single writer. It was during the second era that gradually more and more people submitted contributions, but participation was mostly limited to a single branch of the family. As the third era came into being in the mid 1990s, a dramatic change took place in both style and content. The ever-increasing use of email communication enabled a new editor to increase the invitation list for submissions to the entire extended family of descendants from David Aaron deSola, and desktop publishing enabled him to prepare a newsletter worthy of the approaching twenty-first century.

The First Era: 1896-1911

The boy's name was Pinto Joseph, and he was 12 years old. His great grandfather, Henry Joseph, had left England more than a century earlier to become part of the pioneer Anglophone community that settled in Quebec after it came under British control in 1760. Henry Joseph, had married a local girl named Rachel Solomons, whose father, Levy Solomons, had first moved to Montreal as a young man in the 1760s. Around the same time Levy's much younger wife-to-be, Rebekah Franks, had also settled in Montreal as a young girl with her father, Abraham Franks. The Joseph, Solomons and Franks fami-

lies were all Jewish, and had all crossed the Atlantic from homes in England. Their pioneer role as part of the newly arrived Anglophone community ran parallel to their role in establishing the Montreal Jewish community that thrives

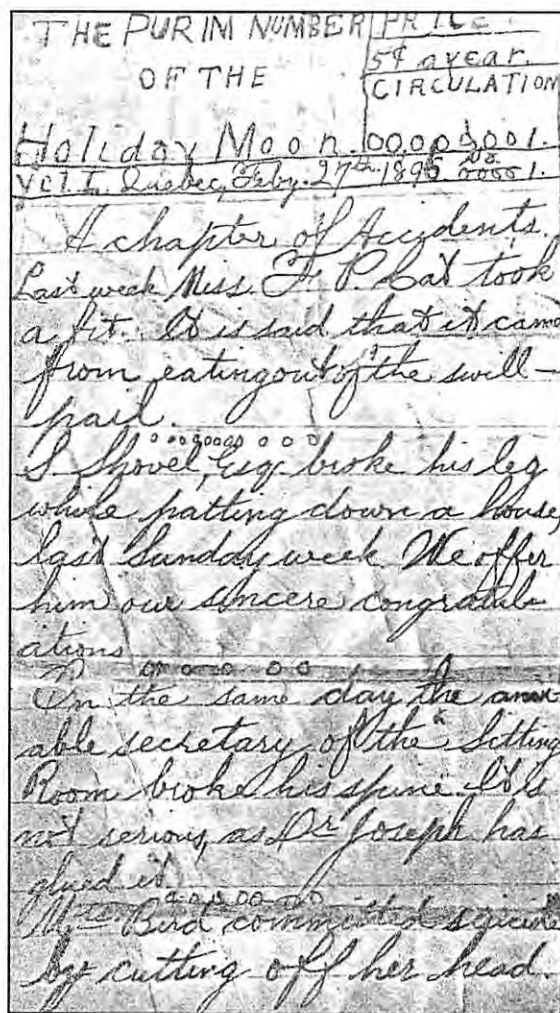
to this day. cement the British connection even more, two of Montefiore's sisters married two of Annette's brothers and settled in London. All this to make the point that letter-writing was an important component of this family's life, the means by which they remained connected.

In February 1896, Pinto lived at 113 Grande Allée in Quebec City with his parents and four siblings, 10-year old Irene, 9-year old Edward (who later became my father-in-law), 4-year old Kenneth and baby Rosetta who was just 18 months old. Pinto was hard at work on his project for the upcoming Jewish holiday of Purim.

The story of Purim is told in the Scroll of Esther. Very briefly, the word Purim means Lots, and refers to the way in which the villain, Haman, chooses a date for the annihilation of the Jews of Persia. The long and involved tale continues until the heroine, Esther, outwits Haman and saves the Jews. Purim is a time for merry-making, and in the Joseph family one mode of its expression was in the use of words, with witticisms, puns and just plain silliness taking centre stage. There was also the exchange of small gifts, and Pinto's project was to devise a gift in the form of a letter to the family, which he called the *Holiday Moon* and in which he would indulge in such manipulations of language as he felt would amuse the reader. In all fairness, it should be

added that this was not a totally original idea. For several years in the 1840s, Pinto's great uncles in Montreal had put out a family newsletter which they called the *Blue Book* and for which they wrote semi-topical items expressed with a wry sense of humour.

The first edition of *The Moon* was handwritten on both sides of a piece of paper that had been folded into a four page document. Pinto ambitiously plant-



to this day.

As the great-great-great-grandson of Abraham Franks, Pinto was a sixth generation Quebecer. Even though more than 130 years had passed since the arrival in Quebec of Pinto's ancestors from England, the British connection remained strong. His father, Montefiore, had picked as his bride the London born Annette Pinto – which explains the boy writer's rather unusual forename. And to

ed the number 00000001 at the top of page one. Among his news items come reports such as: "Miss F. P. Cat took a fit. It is said that it came from eating out of the swill-pail." Then, tales of a man who broke his spine, but "it is not serious as Dr. Joseph has glued it." Among announcements was news of the birth of a girl doll to Miss Irene Joseph, and the death by suicide of Mary Jemina, beloved wife of James Bird: "Mrs. Bird committed suicide by cutting off her head." At the weekly meeting of the Joseph card club, cribbage was played instead of euchre. Farm news and recipes for totally inedible food filled the gaps, and on the final page Pinto, again with great ambition, announced the Holiday Moon would come out on Purim, 2 days of Passover, Pentecost, Rosh Hashanah, Kippur, 2 days of Tabernacles and the first night of Hanukah. When asked how he came up with a name for his paper, Pinto is said to have replied that there already existed papers called *The Sun* and *The Star*, so he would have *The Moon*. The title stuck, but the plan for multiple issues per year never got off the ground.

For Purim in 1897, issue number 2 was released. It held the same sort of ghastly accident reports and awful recipes, but in a moment of slight easing towards reality, spoke of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, ending with a suggestion that all schools get a month of extra holidays to celebrate. Remembering their own school days, everyone can relate to hopes such as these.

After four years, phase 1 of this early era ended as Pinto Joseph left Quebec City for McGill University in Montreal, and phase 2 began when his brother Edward took over the writing tasks, mainly as a solo act but incorporating ideas from his siblings, for another twelve years. Edward's passion for absurdity ensured that Pinto's early style would continue, with reports on events such as the reciprocity question: "It is stated that a straw vote amongst the wheat growers shows strongly in favour of reciprocity - it is believed, however, that this is merely chaff, and is not binding." It was during these years that Edward began to refer to himself as the "Eddietor."

The Second Era: 1912-1995

By 1912, the Joseph siblings were growing up, and Edward recognized the need to expand both the content and distribution of *The Moon*. Pinto had left town in 1899, first to Montreal and then to America, where he married in 1909: "The bride was attired in white, the groom in



black, and the carriage was "tired" in rubber: guests were not tired at all." Irene also married in 1909 and moved around a bit before settling in Montreal: "papa junior and mamma junior were united in woolly matrimony - the happy couple were shoo'ed away and had a ferry good send off." Kenneth left for McGill and after his

1913 graduation moved around for a while before marrying in 1917 and settling in Toronto. Edward married in 1918, but remained in Quebec, and their sister Rosetta also remained in Quebec.

Slowly, Edward got more and more relatives to contribute items, and then he hit on the idea of remaining Editor-in-Chief, but appointing someone else each year to do the creative donkey-work needed to produce an issue. *Typewriters* and carbon paper had entered the picture as publication aids, and it was up to the guest editor to laboriously type up to 20 pages a year.

The Moon for 1936 begins solemnly with the notation that it is an In Memoriam Issue for His Late Majesty King George the Fifth. And there is a more serious expression: "We were very sorry to hear of the recent illness of Aunt Clarisse and wish her a speedy recovery." But mostly, the writings are meant to amuse. Such as:

A dog from Quebec was named Bubbles,
Who formerly made many puddles;
When this he outgrew
He set right in to chew,
So we're not at the end of our troubles.

People wrote of their travels, their achievements, their visitors: "We were visited by two newly-found cousins, Francesco deSola from San Salvador and Lily Lightstone from Paris, as well as our well-known cousin Charlie Davis from London and cousin Buena Blok from London." But actual bits of news are rare indeed. Pieces in line with Pinto's early absurdities were still the preferred bits of nonsense

There were a few news items in the 1945 editorial, including "the departure from Montreal of Nancy overseas with the Red Cross Nurse Corps" and "we hope and pray that by the time next year's edition goes to press, final victory will be ours." But the remaining 14 pages are filled with the usual bits of nonsense.

Very slowly over the next 25 years, two things happened. Firstly a few extra members of the family contributed letters (including the Davis sisters from England in 1947), but this quickly ended with a reversal to the "family with the Grande Allée connection." Sadly there was tension in the family over who could or could not contribute, but fortunately Edward, the eternal

Pinto Joseph at a family wedding.

peacemaker, kept things from getting too difficult. Secondly, the letters begin to give more information, even though many were still liberally sprinkled with unidentifiable initials and nicknames. Clearly, in those days, nobody foresaw the need for copies of *The Moon* to be source material for family historians.

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the Grande Allée connected family increased enormously by marriage and the addition of new generations. After more than six decades in the role of Editor-in-Chief, the by now almost totally blind Edward handed over *The Moon* archives, along with the role of assigning the annual guest editor, to Rachel Esar in Montreal. Rachel was the daughter of Edward's sister, Irene. It was during the 1980s that people seemed to



awaken, at least a little bit, to the realization that *The Moon* could also be a repository of family history. Nonetheless, the original style of inane scribbles set by Pinto all those years ago still lived in the writings of contributors. It seems to have become a family trait.

Along came the 1990s. My husband, Bill, was one of those who began to think about holding a family reunion in Montreal in the summer of 1995 to mark the 100th issue of the family newsletter. As the only son of Edward Joseph, who had died in 1979, Bill wanted his own now grownup son, David, to lead the organization of the reunion and take over editorship of *The Moon*. The personal computer era had arrived, and David had both the skill and personality to handle the role of editor, assum-

ing the mantle held for so many decades by his grandfather. As the saying goes – you win some, you lose some. The family agreed to David's leadership role in organizing the family reunion, but voted for Sarah Orkin to edit the 100th edition of *The Moon*. Sarah was the eldest sister of Rachel Esar who had recently died. David would take over for the 101st edition in 1996.

The reunion was an enormous success, and in 1996, our family newsletter entered the third era of its existence.

The Third Era: 1996 to date

The 100th issue of *The Moon* straddled the 2nd and 3rd eras. The usual collection of photocopied pages included not only letters from the core contributors of the past, but also from other descendants of David Aaron deSola. In other words, the invitation list for the August 1995 reunion doubled as the invitation list for submissions to the family newsletter. By now it was known that David Joseph would follow his role as organizer of the reunion with that of editor of *The Moon*. The archival collection was already in his possession.

When volume 101 appeared in 1996, with its banner heading "The Moon – Since 1896," recipients were delighted. This professionally printed booklet included 33 family letters supplemented by 9 more segments, including social, cooking and humour sections, a kiddie korner and, of course, birth and death announcements. Tastefully written obituaries provided welcome tributes to respected family mem-

bers, and the writings reflected a more informative approach to reportage, without being dull. But the annually anticipated forays into fun, with humour ranging from the subtle to the totally ridiculous, were still evident throughout many of the pages. The silliness was – and still is – around.

Each subsequent issue has followed basically the same pattern, with adaptations as indicated by current needs and circumstances. The kiddie korner didn't last long, but the family history section that David started in 1997 continues. One of the columns David regularly writes covers, in jocular fashion, all the milestone birthdays for the coming year. Illustrations for articles and letters are encouraged, and while they remain black and white in the printed version, they can be viewed in colour on the family website, which is password protected. The mailing list is updated most carefully each year, with everyone identified by reference to their antecedents and descendants. And the e-mail list has grown from 14 to 130 people. The 2010 issue of *The Moon* was 160 pages long, compared to 84 pages in 1996.

All in all, *The Moon* provides family members with a wonderful communication vehicle that keeps over 150 households in touch with one another – if they so wish. The evolution of *The Moon* from 1896 to 2010 is astonishing. While I never met Pinto Joseph, I certainly did know Edward Joseph, and feel confident that both brothers would be mightily pleased with the way *The Moon* of today has adapted to the 21st century. They would salute their grandnephew/grandson, David Joseph. As do I.

“The Moon”

Since 1896

Volume 115

Purem 2010 / 5770

The Moon is now Electronic

We have now arrived at the electronic age with our 115 year old publication – *The Moon*. Although a hard copy will always be printed for *The Archives*, we will no longer be doing a mass printing and snail mailing of the paper. Of the more than one hundred names and addresses on our mailing list, only 6 do not have internet

access. For those readers with parents that do not have a computer, the complete pdf file can be sent to you and you can have it printed for around the same cost as you were paying before. For everyone else, *The Moon*, which has been posted on-line to the Family website for the last several years, will continue to be there, live and in

colour. Obviously, it is not necessary to explain how to access it, as you wouldn't likely be reading this if you weren't already there! As you will see as you scroll through the pages, all the photographs are in colour and any links that you might want to add to your letters are active (in other words, you can click on the link which most of

the time will be coloured blue, and you will be able to open the linked website). I suppose that if *The Times*, *The Washington Post* and *The Gazette* can do it, well, so can we.

The Editorial staff will save a lot of time and money with this format, as well. No charges for shipping and handling will be incurred! Happy days!

NILE DECO

Egyptian motifs in the story behind the historic Empress

by Sandra Stock



In the 1920s and 30s, the Art Deco style of architecture flourished in Montreal. Some of the major surviving examples are the main building (with the tower) of Université de Montréal and Central Station's interior decor. However, many post offices, banks and schools as well as some older apartment buildings in Montreal maintain their Deco elements. Deco is recognizable by geometric lines, bas relief, and symbolism from modern life rather than classical or Beaux Arts styles.

Some of the finest examples of Montreal Deco are theatres built in the prosperous 1920s, an era when urban entertainment became popular, – movies, night clubs, jazz bars, burlesque and vaudeville as opposed to opera, classic theatre and symphony concerts. Although these “elitist” entertainments still did very well in that period, a much larger number, and cross section, of society suddenly had both more leisure time and a wider choice of past times available.

The 1920s was a boom period for Montreal – probably not to be equaled

again until Expo '67, if at all. The city was expanding, especially into its western areas such as the formerly agricultural district of Notre Dame de Grace (NDG). The melon fields were disappearing and residential streets were being established. Old Orchard was now an avenue, not an orchard, and so on. This was a very desirable location in Montreal, mainly flat, with good street-car service along Sherbrooke Street (east-west) and Decarie (north-south). Sherbrooke was the main shopping artery with stores, banks and something new – gas and service stations for automobiles. Along with all these, NDG erected its Deco style theatre – the Empress, in 1927.

The Empress, 5560 Sherbrooke Street West, was built and decorated using an Egyptian motif. This was the height of fashion as the world had gone silly over the discovery of King Tutankhamen's tomb by Lord Carnarvon and Howard Carter a few years previous. This stupendous find – actually one of the greatest in all archeology – had

caused enormous spin-offs in what we would now call “pop culture.” Jewellery, clothing and even make-up and hair styles for women were effected. The harsh, geometric “bob” of the flapper is rather reminiscent of an Egyptian wig, for example. Graphic art and advertising, and even architecture, also followed this craze.

The Empress is the only Egyptian style theatre in Canada. Although in poor condition now, much of the exterior and interior design remains. Across the Sherbrooke Street facade, large panels show Egyptian characters (are they Tut and wife?) in quite authentic poses. The decoration over the door and windows, the remains of the starry blue ceiling inside, are all fairly intact.

The architect of the Empress was Joseph Alcide Chaussé (1868-1944), a noted professional in his time who most importantly led to the enactment of stricter fire prevention laws for Montreal and the general improvement of architectural standards. He was the building inspector for Montreal between 1900



to the United States in 1912 and moved to Canada in 1920. Briffa decorated about 100 theatres, usually using historic themes like the Empress. In Montreal Briffa also did the now official historic site Rialto on Park Avenue in a neo-Baroque “Paris Opera House” style. This theatre ceased operation in 1990 and is for sale. Luckily, its historic site status may preserve it. Briffa also decorated the late Seville (pseudo-Andalusian-Moorish), the York (also gone), the Snowdon (Deco exterior still a bit obvious) and an out of town theatre in Sherbrooke, Quebec. The Granada Theatre (another Briffa, built 1928) has been recently very well restored and refitted as the Théâtre-Denise-Pelletier, at 4345 Ste Catherine Street East. Although the architect was different (Emmanuel-Arthur Doucet), it looks very much like the Empress. Of course, its historic theme was again Andalusian, not Egyptian.

When the Empress opened in 1927, it presented vaudeville, burlesque and movies. As it was placed in a quiet middle class residential area, we assume the burlesque was rather tame! Vaudeville and burlesque did not last very long, and within a few years, the Empress was exclusively movies. Its heyday was the 1930s through to the 1950s, but as television bit into the movie trade, business slowed and alternates to first run films had to be attempted. In 1962, the Empress became a dinner theatre, the Royal Follies, as it had kept its full stage from the vaudeville days. However, dinner theatre was popular for awhile but didn't seem to have much staying power. The complications involved in the dinner (food services) part probably was the reason. In 1968 the Empress became the Hermes/Cinema V, an art movie house, then a venue for repertory theater from 1970 to 1992. The Cinema V period is mainly remembered for being from 1975 the home base of the notable Rocky Horror Picture Show.

After the fire of 1992, various groups of local citizens have tried to restore and revitalize the Empress. Its

ideal location on Sherbrooke West between Marcell and Old Orchard, opposite NDG Park on easy public transportation, and central to a very ethnically, mixed, mainly English-speaking, neighbourhood, would make it a good venue for English language theatre and many other community events and entertainments. After tremendous bad luck and several false starts, the Empress has recently (August 2010) been taken over by the city of Montreal and has a new group of directors hoping to once again bring the building back to life. This group plans to hold a Community Visioning Process in the coming months to attract people from the NDG area and beyond who are interested in assisting with development, organizing, legal rights and heritage issues. Also, all levels of government, federal, provincial and municipal, will be invited to participate.

To access more detailed information about the Empress project, and to view an excellent video clip about the Empress, go to their new website www.renaissanceempress.org

For some excellent views, visit the website www.artdecobuildings.blogspot.com/2009/11/empress-theatre-montreal.html



and 1918 and prominent in the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada. The Empress was built to the highest possible fire prevention criteria. Ironically, its greatest recent damage has come from a fire in 1992.

The influence for the interior decoration and design was from Emmanuel Briffa (1875-1955), a theatre decorator originally from Malta who immigrated



“Thanks for the lovely conference. It was both entertaining and educational, and I met some fine people.”

Terry Loucks, family historian, Fitch Bay, Qc.

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SIDE BY SIDE

Two Catholic churches in Montreal: beyond language

by Celia Ste Croix

In many ways the history of this province is built on a structure of religion and language. They can be delicate subjects to explore but as time passes and each new generation grows, we can see our history with fresh eyes. Sometimes what documents and records we have collected do not show the whole story. Sometimes the elements of everyday life have been overlooked. And sometimes these details speak volumes about what really happened and how people related.

There are two churches in Pointe Saint Charles that sit resolutely shoulder to shoulder. One is Saint Gabriel Catholic Church, the other Eglise Saint-Charles-Borromée. I have wondered how it came to be that an Irish church and a French church could end up such snug neighbours and how the two congregations have gotten along through time. When I looked into it, it seems the question had not yet been fully explored.

Montreal in the 1880s was an ever expanding hub of industry and commerce. Hard-working immigrants arrived from Europe by the shipload to dig the canals, fill the factories and, hopefully, have a better life. With the rapid growth of the working-class neighbourhood of Pointe Saint Charles and the Catholic community living there, the little St Gabriel chapel was getting crowded. The *Registers of Baptisms and Marriages from 1873 to 1883* reveals an almost equal number of anglophone names and francophone names.

There is a story passed down that Father Salmon, the first pastor of the newly created St Charles parish, gave a sermon to the mixed French and English

congregation that so incensed the francophone members that they demanded from the Catholic diocese their own place of worship. The French community had been petitioning for a place of their own for some time, but it is suggested that Father Salmon's sermon was less than welcoming. It is not known exactly what he said that day.

The bustling population continued to grow and the pastors of both Saint Gabriel and Saint Charles approached

ic architecture and, coincidentally or intentionally, they were designed by the same architects: Maurice Perrault and Albert Ménard. The churches were filled with many kinds of marble, great vaulted ceilings and bell towers to call the faithful.

What a splendid thing it must have been for the members of these congregations, all of such simple means, to walk through those huge doors and know that this opulent place was for them. The keepers of this grand, gilded edifice welcomed them despite their worn shoes or crumpled hats. Could it have made them feel proud knowing that this place had been built for them to worship in?



the Sulpicians, owners of the last farmland in the area, for some land to build their churches. It is not known if the French-speaking and English-speaking pastors acquired their plots at the same time, if they went together or if they even knew of the plans of the other congregation, but by luck or planning the two churches gained plots right next to each other on Centre Street, sharing the same block. The Sulpicians were generous enough to only charge half price for the properties.

Saint Gabriel's church was built from 1891-1895 and Saint Charles' was finished in 1905. The buildings were marvellous examples of the classic goth-

In 1913, just eight short years after its completion, a fire ravaged Saint Charles' church. Rebuilding started quickly and the church was restored to its former splendour with Italian marble and the huge organ, No. 646. According to la Société d'Histoire de Pointe-Saint-Charles, the

original gold brocade vestments survived the fire and are still in use today. I could find no record of how the congregation of Saint Gabriel's responded to the disaster.

In the summer of 1956, fire broke out in Saint Gabriel's church and the blaze was so devastating that it reduced the structure to a stone shell. The Saint Gabriel's Centenary document, published in 1970, notes that Saint Charles' congregation placed their church hall at the disposal of Saint Gabriel's for Mass during part of the reconstruction. "The French and the Irish always help one another out in times of disaster," one man is quoted as saying.

Father Jim McDonald, who has been at Saint Gabriel's on and off for over 50 years, says the priests of both congregations always knew each other because they all studied together in the seminaries. If this is so, it would suggest that the administrations of the churches likely communicated and may have well been on friendly terms.

In 1965, the Catholic churches of Pointe Saint Charles – the Irish Saint Gabriel, the francophone Saint Charles, the Polish Holy Trinity, and the Ukrainian Holy Spirit – performed a united Corpus Christi procession. It was followed by a collective outdoor Mass. Prayers of the Mass were said in Polish, Ukrainian, French and English to reflect the diverse cross section of neighbourhood's Catholic community. It was the last public tribute of its kind in the area.

Can you imagine the scene? All the catholic congregations of The Point standing in Saint Gabriel's Square opposite Holy Trinity church. A choir in full robes sang in Ukrainian. Maybe some in the crowd were preoccupied with the brewing Vietnam War. Or the fact that Prime Minister Pearson was trying to de-rail the separatist movement. South of the border, Malcolm X had been assassinated and Martin Luther King Jr



was leading huge protests and demonstrations. Maybe a little boy was looking up at the sunny sky wondering if a cosmonaut was floating overhead. Perhaps the twangy notes of "Like a Rolling Stone" were wafting across the park from an open window nearby. And amidst all this, in 1965, all the Catholic congregations of Pointe Saint Charles stood together and prayed.

Many times in this article I have said "it is not known" because the records have not yet been found or because no evidence exists of some of the interesting details of the relationship of these two churches. But I like to think

that what details there are of how these two congregations related reflects larger aspects of our history. Revisiting seemingly simple questions such as, Why are those two churches side by side and how did they get along? can tell us more about the lives of our ancestors and give a fuller picture of our heritage.

God is in the details, so the saying goes. And in the recording of history, so is life.

Celia Ste Croix is a journalism student at Concordia University and lives in The Point where she has been discovering the area's rich history.

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ITALIAN ICON

The church of Madonna della Difesa

by Renee Giblin

Tucked away in the heart of the green, white and red district of Montreal's Little Italy stands an inauspicious dome structured church named Madonna della Difesa. For many tourists the orange brick façade on the corner of Dante and Henri-Julien streets represents a history rife with controversy. Due to its infamous Montreal mobster funerals and fresco painting of Benito Mussolini, the church has a colorful heritage, but for the Italian-Canadian community living in the area the historic site ties them to their ancestral roots.

"The church is a source of pride for the community," Guiliano D'Andrea, a leader in the Montreal Italian community said.

D'Andrea's parents were married, he was baptized, several of his cousins had their first communions and his grandfather's funeral was held in the

church. He feels the first generations of Italians who immigrated to Canada needed to recreate something to remind them of their homeland. He added that even though many Italian-Canadians now live in bordering suburbs the church holds an iconic meaning. He emphasized that many Italians gather there for special occasions to remember their heritage began in Italy.

"The church is a little gem," D'Andrea said. "It's worth a visit."

Italian immigrants built and completed the Madonna della Difesa in 1919. The Italian population living in the area donated the materials needed to construct the church. D'Andrea mentioned that even if many Italian immigrants at that time did not have immense fortunes they offered their time and opened their wallets to help create a small piece of Italy in their new backyard. According to him, many immi-

grants depended on the Italian priest to be the leader of the community. Since there was no public health care system then many people asked the church to assist and to provide social support. The church was the central part in bringing the community together, D'Andrea said. Because of this, the immigrants chose Romanesque architecture to replicate the style found in Italy.

"I was surprised when someone told me there was a church with a Fresco of Mussolini on it," said Dario Brancato, a Concordia University Associate Professor in the department of Classics and Italian Language and Linguistics.

Ten years ago, Brancato moved to Canada from Messina, Sicily. He said that in Italy one does not see portraits of Benito Mussolini, the Fascist ruler of Italy from 1922 to 1943, in any religious building. He stressed that in Italy Mussolini represented a black spot in its his-



Ceiling painting with Benito Mussolini.

tory. He was shocked that in Montreal there was not even a pamphlet at the church explaining the history of Mussolini and his role aligning Italy with Nazi Germany during the Second World War. Brancato said that after the war Italian families were divided and they felt the world no longer viewed them as a friendly nation. They were woven into the tangled webs of Fascism.

“Let’s not forget that Mussolini approved racial laws, he approved the holocaust and he deprived the country of its basic freedoms,” Brancato said.

Sitting in the front pews of the Madonna della Difesa one simply needs to shift one’s eyes upward to view Guido Nincheri’s opulent mural depicting the union of the Roman Catholic religion and the Italian government. Before the War, Mussolini played a central role in

signing the Lateran Treaty in 1929. According to Brancato, the agreement unified a country that was split between religion and state. The signing made the Catholic Church independent of the way that Italy was governed and brought the citizens of the country together.

“The church is a lot more than Mussolini on a horse,” D’Andrea said.

D’Andrea asks visitors to take a closer look at the period when Italians immigrated to Montreal. While Mussolini is remembered today chiefly for the war crimes he committed, the church in Little Italy was built at a time when the Fascist leader was well liked. Also, he added that people immigrating to Canada needed to forge ties with their heritage and culture back home.

After viewing the fresco for the first time, Brancato felt he needed to understand why Italian Montrealers preserved a mural that depicted Mussolini as a mythical hero. In Italy, he said the practice of Fascism is banned and it shocked him to see the painting nestled in the heart of the Italian business district. So he started his education by participating in the Madonna della Difesa weekend festival. He quickly realized that that Montreal Italians participated in the event to respect their forefathers.

“People go to church not because they totally believe,” Brancato said, “but because the church is loaded with history and is a symbol of being Italian.”

D’Andrea agrees. He said in the early twentieth century the church was instrumental in creating a bi-lingual school to help Italians learn French and English. He mentioned the significance of the statue of a soldier in front of the building. Inscribed on the pedestal are the names of the Italian immigrants who fought for Italy in World War One. Later, a couple more were added for the men who fought and died for Italy in the war against Spain.

According to the church’s website, the founders originated from the Molise region located in the south of Italy. They christened the church Madonna della Difesa to recall the vision that four Italian farmers reportedly shared of the Virgin Mary atop a mountain in this region called La Difesa. When tourists walk up and down the narrow streets of Little Italy they may notice the church is more than simply a name to second, third, fourth, and fifth generation Italians. Rather, it is a temple to their Italian-ness. As with the pizzerias, restaurants and Italian flags, it is all a reminder of where they came from.

“The area is a shadow of its former self,” D’Andrea said, “but to Italians it is a reflection of what it used to be.”

Renee Giblin is a journalism student at Concordia University, where she combines writing with a love of research. Her passion for history started some years ago at university where, after a course on twentieth century world history, she quickly switched from Childhood Education to reading documents about fifteenth and sixteenth century culture and lifestyle.



Exterior; Nave of the church. Photos: Renee Giblin.

LOVES' LEGACIES

Reflections on Islam's history in Canada

by Shereen Ahmed Rafea

James and Agnes Love were a young Scottish couple who immigrated to Ontario in the mid nineteenth century. In 1854, their first son, James, was born. James Love Jr. was not only the first of the eight Love children, but also the first official Muslim born in Canada.

During that time there were not many Muslims in Scotland. It is unknown how the Loves became Muslims, but they began a wave of cultural diversity and Muslim presence in Canada that would continue to this day.

After the Loves, other Muslims started to immigrate to Canada dreaming about successful jobs, prosperity and adventure in a new country. In Quebec the first wave of Muslim immigration was during the 1920s, after the First World War. They came from Lebanon, Syria, India, and countries in Europe. Some Muslims found jobs working on the railway. Others opened successful businesses or became educators in schools.

Another story of an early immigrant is about Ali Abouchadi, known as Alexander Hamilton (not to be confused with the famous American founding father). At the tender age of twelve, filled with dreams of gold and riches, he walked 50 kilometres from Beirut in Lebanon to board a ship bound for Montreal. He planned to strike it rich in the Klondike. Though he did not make a fortune in gold mines as he hoped, Abouchadi settled in Lac La Biche, Alberta where he eventually became one of

the most successful businessmen in town. By the late 1920s, Abouchadi owned a department store, a car dealership, a gas station, a grain elevator, and a mink and cattle ranch.

After the Second World War, the number of Muslims further increased. Businessmen, teachers, and construction workers traveled to help mend the broken economy.

"Mr. and Mrs. Love were almost



the sign of what was to come," says Salam Elmenyawi, president of the Muslim Council of Montreal. "The Muslim community in Canada is a very diverse community."

Elmenyawi is originally from Egypt and has been living in Montreal since 1972.

"When I came in the seventies, there were already a number of Arabs and Muslims who came before me," he says. "There were also Christian Arabs, and a very large number of Egyptian Copts."

As an Egyptian himself, it was important to Elmenyawi to be connected with the Arab community living Montreal. He says it wasn't very difficult for him to fit into Quebec society, but he notes that Christian immigrants had it easier than Muslims because the majority of people in Quebec at that time were Christians.

Elmenyawi recalls that when he first came to Canada, many of the difficulties that Muslims face today did not exist. After the attack on 9/11, a wave of Islamophobia spread in the country. While, for the most part, the relationship between Muslims and other Quebecers is friendly and respectful, incidents of racist remarks and unfair treatment do occur. Some people started to have misconceptions about Islam, and to associate most Muslims with terrorism. These incidents rarely occurred in the 1970s and earlier.

There were many conflicts in the world at the time that Elmenyawi immigrated to Canada. One was the war between Egypt and Israel, and the conflict over the Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip. Another was the ongoing war between Israel and Palestine. The political issues of the day led to tension between Muslim and Jewish communities.

"There was a very serious problem, of course," says Elmenyawi. At the time, Elmenyawi was working for a Jewish employer.

"We had a fantastic relationship," he says, laughing at the memory. "But

when we use to take our break, we used to walk with a straight face in front of each other." He says that everyone was formal and stiff with each other.

But, he explains, the tension did not last for long, and eventually the atmosphere became friendly between the co-workers again.

"There was a little bit of cooperation to a certain degree," says Elmenyawawi. "We disagreed openly about the Palestinian issue, but we agreed that we had to live together in a good way. It was very nice," he adds fondly.

Although Muslims were accepted into Quebec society, and had good relationships with the people on the whole, they still faced some accommodation issues. Islam is a religion that is practised by performing five prayers throughout the day. Part of the religion is to perform the Friday prayer in the mosque each week, just after noon. Without mosques and prayer rooms, Muslims could only worship in their own

homes. Another hurdle was not being able to perform Islamic marriages. All marriages had to be performed in the church because Islam was not recognized as a religion in Quebec.

But in 1965, acknowledgment of Muslim rights took a big leap forward, and many significant changes began to take place in Quebec. That year, the National Assembly put Bill 194 into effect. This had a tremendous impact on the lives of Muslims, as their religion was officially recognized and those practising were granted rights associated with their faith. The bill allowed them to perform Islamic marriages and burials.

Another important event that took place that year revolves around the creation of Quebec's first mosque. A small group of Muslims worked diligently, organising community fundraising campaigns and donations. They finally had

enough money to buy a house and open the Islamic Centre of Quebec. The house was built on 2520 Laval Road, St Laurent.

"At that time it was far away from Montreal, in the suburbs," says Elmenyawawi, "I remember when I arrived in Quebec in 1972 I went to visit the mosque. [It was so far] it seemed to me like I was going to another city."

The mosque had a positive impact on the community. At first Muslims would only come to pray on the week-

population, more mosques were built and prayer rooms were opened at Concordia and McGill universities. Today there are over fifty mosques and prayer rooms in Quebec.

Elmenyawawi describes French Canadians as the people who have supported Muslims more than anyone else in North America during the Iraq war and the war in Palestine. He cites the massive demonstration that took place in Montreal in 2003, against the war in Iraq as an example. Over 25,000 people marched that day.

He believes that Quebec is the biggest supporter of Muslims when it comes to civil issues and unfair laws, but the issue of religion itself brings up sensitivity in the society.

"You get the media ignoring the positive side and bringing out a fear of the culture instead of trying to integrate it," says Elmenyawawi. "People that came to live here," he says, "they understood that they came to a very diverse society and

they were willing to integrate."

The first Muslim settlers in Canada were adventurous and ambitious. Though we may not know how James and Agnes Love came to Islam, we do know they had the same strong pioneering spirit that all new immigrants to this country had. And the Muslim heritage of Quebec enriches the diverse tableau that is this complex and layered province.

Shereen Rafea is a journalism student who moved to Montreal from the Kingdom of Bahrain in September 2009. She is majoring in both print and broadcasting, and contributes articles to The Link and The Concordian.



end. They were embarrassed to ask their employers for permission to perform the Friday prayer.

"Everyone who came in didn't realise their rights, there was no charter of rights and freedoms in Quebec," says Elmenyawawi.

Eventually people became more comfortable asking their employers for permission to pray on Friday. The mosque was then filled with people praying on Fridays and on weekends. Islamic education was also put into effect. Young Muslims would come to the Mosque on Sundays to study their holy book, the Qur'an, and to learn Arabic. Some Quebecers would also come to learn Arabic.

The Muslim population had grown since the 1920s. By 1971, their numbers were close to 5,000. With the increase in

SAVING ST PAUL'S

Community unites around remnant of rural English past

by Gordon Alexander

This article originally appeared in the Quebec Diocesan Gazette, April 2007 (Vol. 113, Number 8). It is adapted here with permission.

A structurally beautiful 166-year old wooden Anglican church sits at the intersection of two remote country roads on the outskirts of St-Félix-de-Kingsey, a mainly francophone, traditionally Catholic village. In spite of the church's architectural beauty it cries out for a new coat of paint and new stained glass windows just to name a few things.

This particular French-speaking community, comfortable with its own culture, is struggling to help preserve a cherished anglophone landmark: St Paul's Anglican church at Sydenham Place, built in 1842. After more than 100 years serving a rural anglophone community, the church stopped having weekly services in the mid 1950s and now is only open for an annual Harvest or Thanksgiving service. "The Church was never deconsecrated,"

explained Elizabeth Moore Mastine, treasurer of the church and cemetery restoration committee. "That is why we can still have marriages, funerals, and baptisms there, which has happened periodically."

The altar and pews are still there, even though Thanksgiving is the only service celebrated during the year, usually presided over by the Reverend Andrew O'Donnell from St Anne's Church in Richmond. The rest of the year, the 55 remaining living descendants of the church's founders attend Anglican services in Richmond, Danville or Denni-

son's Mills. These families include the Mastines, Moores, Shaws, Taylors and Lockwoods.

Over the years, vandals have broken the stained glass windows and the bell was stolen. On the grounds is an old cemetery, the resting place of parishioners from that era and some of their descendants. There have been a few recent burials in the cemetery, "the last one being in 1996 when we buried my Father," Mastine said.

St Paul's was designed by William



Footner (1799-1872). Footner, born in London, emigrated to Canada and settled in Sherbrooke, where he was credited with designing the William Street Courthouse. He later moved to Montreal, where his many landmark works included the Bonsecours Market and St George's Anglican Church.

St Felix's largely francophone population embraces this anglophone heritage, which they really feel is part of theirs. A few years ago, the town's cultural committee took the lead in having St Paul's Church and cemetery declared a historic site, making it eligible for

grant money from the Fondation du Patrimoine Religieux du Québec.

St Paul's restoration committee subsequently submitted an application to this foundation for grant eligibility and received approval. "To date we have only received a fraction of the estimated cost from them but at least it has permitted us to have a new roof installed," Mastine said.

In 1995, the Ministère de la Culture et des Communications du Québec established a programme to conserve religious heritage. Since that time, the Quebec government has granted some \$147 million for religious heritage restoration.

The Ministère had signed an agreement with the Foundation for the management of the programme. According to the agreement, the Ministère would provide up to 85 per cent of admissible costs for restoration projects.

Eligibility for funding is extended to religious communities, congregations and parishes of all faith traditions throughout Quebec, who possess religious build-

ings, furnishings and artwork. Projects qualifying will be any work considered essential for the maintenance of a heritage building and for the conservation of its visual appearance, including work on roofs, walls, windows, masonry, painting, fire detection and sprinkler systems, mechanical, electrical and lighting systems. This will include all work necessary for the preventive maintenance and restoration of heritage furnishings, artwork and organs. Professional honoraria for specialists (architects, engineers, historians, archaeologists, restorers, artisans or others) related

to the work mentioned above would also be eligible.

The Foundation's principles of conservation and restoration include repair, rather than replacement, of deteriorated architectural elements, the use of traditional materials, and the retention of the original design, textures, and colours, while avoiding any modification or replacement that is not documented by historic photos, archival documents, or surveys of the building.

Unfortunately, the committee has been frustrated by the slow pace at which the funds are being forwarded to them. They feel that their church restoration project has met all the eligibility criteria set down by the Fondation du Patrimoine Religieux du Quebec.

Four years ago the Parish church in St Felix hosted a bilingual ecumenical service, preceding a fundraising spaghetti lunch at the local community centre a block away. Francophones and anglophones poured into the centre for this fundraiser

organized to help finance the necessary repairs at the old church.

The town's ex-mayor Denys Fontaine, an avid supporter of the restoration project, thanked his Anglican friends for inviting local francophones to the fundraising dinner. The entertainment was multicultural too, with a country-and-western singer from New Brunswick, who recently moved in to the area, accompanying a francophone singer who called herself Jeannie Cash. Jeannie could not speak English but performed a repertoire of Johnny Cash songs with a touch of a Southern American accent. This was followed by Irish step dancing by girls from nearby Richmond and some Quebec folk songs from a local francophone guitar picker who did a selection of Willie Lamotte songs. For the children there was a magic show by Corey Morin.

"We hope this spaghetti dinner will net us at least one thousand dollars for the church and are so grateful that the whole town and our friends and neighbours in other communities showed up

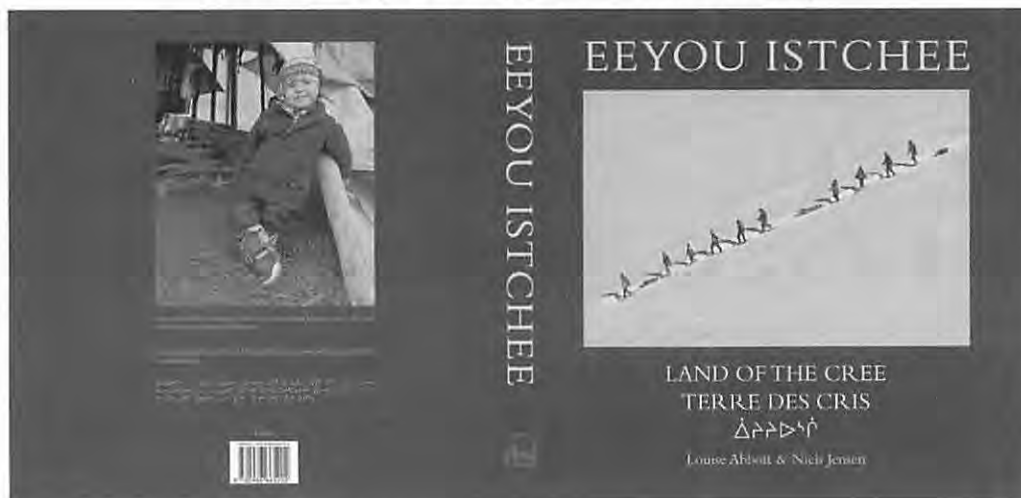
to support us in this restoration project," Elizabeth Mastine said. "We think we now can finish paying for that new roof that was installed last year. Meanwhile we want to paint the building, replace the windows and front door and steps, and some day restore the stained glass windows."

"We have applied to the Foundation for further funding to help cover some of these costs but if we want the work done we will probably just have to raise the money ourselves," Mastine said.

The funds needed include the \$545 yearly insurance premium on the church and cemetery and an estimated \$400 to cover the seasonal cost of keeping the grounds mowed, according to Mastine. "We rely on and are more than grateful for all the volunteer work cleaning the church, as well as keeping the grounds and cemetery maintained."

Meanwhile, completion of the restoration project seems to be quite a few Spaghetti Dinners short of a done deal, but determination is spelled the same in French as it is in English.

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SHRINE OF THE TIMES

Bidding final tribute to historic Trinity Anglican on St Denis Street

by Robert N Wilkins

The early English Gothic church has stood on St Denis Street since 1865. Trinity Anglican (as it was known at the time) officially opened in September of that same year. In its very first half-decade, the church was frequented and supported by a number of red-coated officers of the British garrison that then protected Montreal from the threat of an American invasion. In fact, many of the officers married there and embellished the church with numerous artifacts normally associated with just such a religious building. Remarkably, a few of these gifts survive still but, sadly, in a barren, desolate structure.

The church building was the creation of the Montreal architectural firm of Lawford & Nelson. The exterior of this fine fabrication is essentially unchanged from the time of its construction all those years ago. The rather thick walls are of native limestone and its original steeple (a gift of William Molson) rose 218 feet above the ground. The length of the church inside is 114 feet while its width is 65 feet. The chancel, which is in the shape of an apse, is 36 feet by 23 feet. The nave is 40 feet wide with a “groined” ceiling, which extends to a height of 32 feet while the piers of the nave are made up of clustered shafts. Old Trinity is well-illuminated with the main body having 12 windows of three lights each. As part of the original roof, there were also alluring clerestory windows that added even more light and beauty to this once magnificent religious temple.

Beneath the church there is a rather large and well-lighted fourteen foot high basement which, at the time, was used for Sunday and day school. It contained both classrooms and a library. In its heyday, Trinity Anglican Church could comfortably accommodate an impressive 1,400 people. Yet, for all its radi-



ance, it’s worth noting that by 1871 Trinity was just one of 74 churches in Montreal, a city of just 107,225 people at the time. Today less than a dozen of these beautiful buildings remain, Trinity being one of them.

Almost immediately after the withdrawal of the British garrison from Montreal in 1870-71, the church and parish began to fall upon hard times. And, although Trinity did still experience brief periods of good fortune, it

was finally decided to sell the building in the early 1920s. The last Anglican service in the church took place on December 6, 1922, at which time the rector, Rev. J. M. Almond, revealed that it would have cost \$100,000 to restore the aging facility, money the now poor parish simply didn’t have. Only a few days later, the yet striking Christian shrine was sold to the Roman Catholic Diocese of Montreal in order for it to become the spiritual home of the Syrian



Catholic community of this city.

The refurbished ecclesiastical edifice was scheduled to celebrate its first service in its new liturgical rite on March 11, 1923, but only weeks earlier, on Valentine's Day, the historic landmark was entirely gutted in a spectacular nine hour fire the likes of which this city had not seen in some time. It was on this tragic occasion that the beautiful Eastern Townships slate roof with its clerestory windows and the upper part of the church steeple were completely destroyed. The organ, which the Anglicans

an over-heated furnace. Fortunately, the font had already been removed and taken to the new Trinity Memorial Church on Sherbrooke Street in Notre Dame-de-Grace. It was said that the regimental flags that hung in the old edifice were so tattered and fragile that they nearly fell to pieces in the process of the transfer from one church building to another.

Eventually, of course, the burnt-out shell of Trinity was magnificently restored (albeit that the building's second steeple was fifty feet shorter than the first) by the Syrian community under the determined leadership of Reverend Simeon Nasre. The church was then re-christened, taking the name St Sauveur. Miraculously, down through the decades, it had survived constant threats of closure until it



Trinity is found the Quebec Archives, itself a brilliant example of building conversion and preservation.

Today less than a dozen of these beautiful buildings remain; Trinity was one of them. It was as such a silent witness to this city's vibrant past.

Robert N. Wilkins is a local historian and freelance writer. His 'BLOG' is found at www.forgoodmeasure.tk and he can be reached at 514-524-5247, or at montreal_1900@hotmail.com



were to have taken with them somewhat later, was also a complete loss. Total damage was estimated to have been well over \$100,000.

Initially, the origin of the conflagration was considered to have been suspicious, although it was later attributed to

was finally abandoned and sold by that same congregation in the late 1990s.

There is no reason why this historic edifice could not have been incorporated into the CHUM blueprint, and thereby preserved. The city itself has followed such policies in days gone by; for exam-



REVIEWS

EAST AND WEST OF MORGAN'S

"St Catherine Street Makes the Headlines"

Pointe à Callières Museum, Montreal

December 7, 2010 – April 24, 2011

Nearly as infamous as the unilingual fat lady at Eaton's was the proud Montreal society matron, hailing from the Square Mile or Westmount, who declared that she never went "east of Morgan's." This is arguably a more pernicious stereotype: while the fat lady had her education to blame for not preparing her to serve customers in French, the society matron must surely have known that civilization did not come to a grinding halt at Phillips Square and that, whatever challenges lay to the east,

dragons were not among them. Indeed, the cosy retail paradise created by Messrs Morgan, Simpson and Eaton had its eastern counterpart in the store built by the brothers Dupuis, just as the Capitol and Loew's cinemas had the Champlain and the Ouimetoscope,

and St James the Apostle and Christ Church had Eglise St Jacques. Even so, the culture was distinct. Nowhere did Montreal's infamous Two Solitudes play out so strikingly as on St Catherine Street, surely the most fascinating street in Canada.

Not that you would know this from a visit to the current exhibit highlighting St Catherine Street at Montreal's Pointe à Callière Museum of Archeology and History. Those already familiar with the city will find the collection of quaint old objects and photos fun to peruse, but it doesn't really add up to much. Anyone new to Montreal might well wonder what the fuss was about, or else assume the museum had picked a street at random and might as easily have mounted an exhibition on Côte St Luc Road.

The problem begins on the first wall where a series of old maps do not show you where St Catherine Street is. The street did not exist in 1760, and even its line is nowhere near the territory covered by the 1760 map – so why show us the 1760 map? OK, by 1801 St Catherine was a tiny street segment far to the north of town in the St Laurent "faubourg" and by 1846 it was a much longer street segment stretching as far

west as what would be Morgan's (now "The Bay") a half century later, but on both maps the street is hard to spot. To be fair, someone placed a solitary sticky dot on the 1846 map at the level of St Catherine Street near Bleury – but would it be that hard for a museum to create a single map showing the relationship between the street and the old town as well as the rate at which it was laid out?

Pinpointing is not the show's strong point – and nor is providing a sense of place, which is surprising in

an exhibition with a geographical theme. I would have expected the introductory wall to feature a schematic drawing of the street's 8 km length, from Claremont in the west to Frontenac in the east, with icons showing where important landmarks were located, like dates on a timeline.



Such a device would have countered my later confusion when confronted by images of the Art Association, the Lovell family home, the Quartier Latin, the Princess Cinema, the venue where Lili St-Cyr did her bubble dance, and even the Forum, none of which is even accompanied by an address. Apparently, having the theme of "St Catherine Street" was simply a way for the curators to limit the range of objects and images they could assemble. Linking, and therefore learning, wasn't a priority.

Basic questions go unaddressed. What was it about St Catherine Street that drew this array of movie palaces, concert halls, nightclubs and gay bars in a way other, equally desirable streets did not? There is a section on Morgan's, featuring some of the early items on sale and a blow-up of the Gazette headline announcing the big event in 1891 – but what was it that made Henry Morgan think it was good business to relocate his emporium from the old town to a residential neighbourhood, and next to a Gothic cathedral at that? Furthermore, how did the presence of big retail stores and movie palaces transform such a street, both for local residents and for people who had to travel some

distance to shop or see a show – or a game? Instead of exploring these sorts of issues we get a few photos of theatre exteriors and hockey souvenirs. True, we get a wall sporting images of speakeasies in the 1920s and *Le Super Sexe* in the 1980s, but we learn nothing about how and why entertainment changed on this strip.

Am I asking too much of a small exhibition? Not really, because these days technology allows for maps to explain spatial relationships, and for the juxtaposition of images to tell stories, without costing a fortune. Get some historians of Montreal's cultural geography together with experts on graphics and museum design, and it would not be difficult to come up with some entertaining and provocative displays. Bringing treasures out of the attic is relatively easy; to have an impact, you need to make them tell a story.

I love the Pointe à Callière Museum for the way it shows you that a city's history is a tangible thing (the

past is literally on display beneath your feet) – and also a living thing that has grown from something much smaller and is constantly changing. The exhibition should have worked the same way, presenting a street as a thing that grew from faubourg segment to retail and entertainment heartland, and that its many parts are

deep with significance, not just a laundry line on which to hang memorabilia. I mentioned linguistic identity above, but that is only one of countless ways you could present the saga. Photos of Maurice Richard and Sally Rand, streetcars, prostitutes, *Complexe Desjardins*, the Protestant Orphan Home, UQAM, and those ladies who worked

at one department store and never went east of another, are more than just artifacts to be placed on a wall or in a case; they are layers of onions that it is the museum's job to unpeel.

Review by Rod MacLeod



OPENING UP A VITAL ARTERY

The Lachine Canal

Riding the Waves of Industrial and Urban Development, 1860-1950

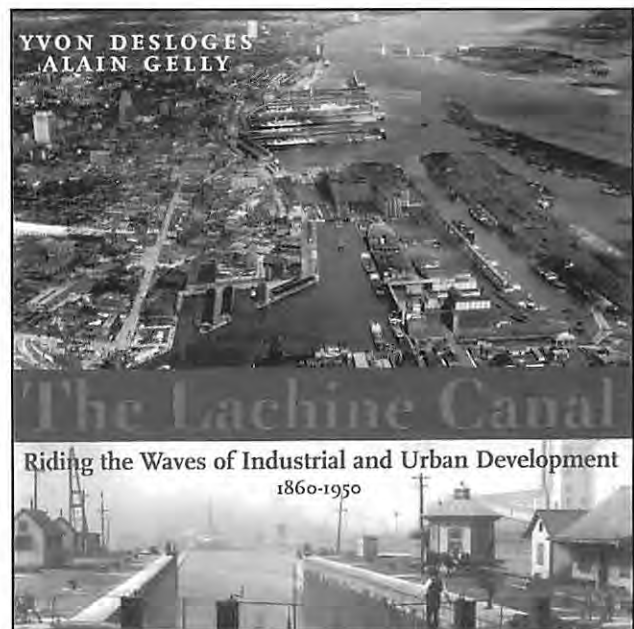
by Yvon Desloges and Alain Gelly

translated by Donald Kellough with revisions by Jane Macauley

Septentrion/Baraka Books, 2002

If there is a right way to explore a critical piece of urban space in book form, this is it. Yvon Desloges and Alain Gelly, both historians with Parks Canada, have created an ideal lens through which to observe and learn about the Lachine Canal, which is both a distinctive thoroughfare in south-western Montreal and the cradle of modern commerce and industry for the entire country. They chronicle the canal's use, from the edge of the city's port in the east all the way to the village of Lachine in the west, over the course of its working life – and do so in a thoughtful and thoroughly engaging manner.

Montreal owes its existence to the Lachine Rapids, which required all upriver traffic to stop at the town before proceeding over land to Lachine and points west. The canal between these two points was built as of 1821 in order to uncork this traffic. Ships could now cruise right through to the Great Lakes – small ones at first, but as the canal was widened in the 1840s and 1870s, increasingly larger boats. However,



as the authors are keen to point out, the benefits were limited. The volume of traffic to or from the vast hinterland was such that there was never anything but a bottleneck at the Lachine Canal – frustrating for long-distance trade, although it meant that Montreal retained its status as a major stopping-off point. It was only with the construction of the Seaway in the 1950s (the book’s terminal point) that this pressure was relieved – at the expense, one could argue, of Montreal’s usefulness.

But the Lachine Canal had another function: as the site of Montreal’s, and by extension Canada’s, industrialization. So much is the stuff of textbooks – but exactly why was this? I’m not sure I’ve ever thought this matter through, but Desloges and Gelly certainly have. Sure, factories had to be convenient to transportation so that raw materials could be delivered and the finished products exported; for this reason, factories were also located near the railway. But the railway was a major industrial producer as well as a transportation system (in fierce competition with the canals, to boot) and was therefore itself drawn to the canal area.

The key to the canal’s success, the authors note, was water power. When the 1843 widening project was undertaken, during that period of giddy entrepreneurialism following the Union of the Canadas, government planners were careful to install a system of turbines along the length of the canal. When the trend-setting John Redpath built his sugar refinery at the edge of the canal, it was not because of ships or trains but because running water would power his factory and its waste would have an easy place to be dumped. Of course, the fast flow required to power factories was just what passing boats did not want – but when the chips were down industry won over shipping.

This story is told in the form of concise introduc-

tory essays to each of the book’s four sections, and then shorter texts accompanying the photographs of which there is generally one per page. The book has the look and feel of an exhibition catalogue, and one browses through it, reading in order to understand the images, without realizing how much fascinating information one is absorbing. The content is rich and meticulously constructed, but it doesn’t come across like required reading.

The book’s structure is satisfyingly logical. The first section provides an overview of the canal’s geography from east to west, showing the use of space at every juncture over the entire period. (This kind of overview is exactly what was lacking in the Pointe à Callières St Catherine Street exhibition and in its catalogue – which did not feel like a catalogue, more’s the pity.) The second section deals with the Lachine Canal as a transportation artery, and the third shows it as industrial space, with the occasion along the way to profile different kinds of boats and different industries. Finally, there is a section on the canal as a place of work and (because long commutes were impractical) a place of residence. The canal gave birth to the communities of Griffintown, St-Gabriel and Ste-Cunégonde (now more properly Point St Charles), St-Henri, Côte-St-Paul and Ville St-Pierre. Photographs make it clear how tough life was in these neighbourhoods, and the authors’ accompanying text conveys both a sense of injustice and admiration for these families, without sacrificing their primary focus, which is geographical. Labour unrest, public health, diet and even religion are all components of this amazing thoroughfare in this highly rewarding volume. We never lose sight (literally) of the Lachine Canal.

Review by Rod MacLeod

LOYALISTS AND AMERICAN HEGEMONY

Shadow Soldiers of the American Revolution:

Loyalist Tales from New York to Canada

by Mark Jodoin

The History Press, 2010

A painter friend once told me that the landscape paintings people buy to hang in their homes, much more often than not, will be very similar to the landscape they see when they look out their windows. We like what is familiar. The same can be true with respect to the books we enjoy reading.

I mention this right off the top by way of explaining why I may not be the best person to review Mark Jodoin’s new book, *Shadow Soldiers of the American Revolution: Loyalist Tales from New York to Canada*.

Shadow Soldiers is a slim, attractive soft-cover that

runs to just under 160 pages. (Its size corresponds to what I think of as a good ‘travel book’ and, in fact, I read the book over the course of a week-long trip to Newfoundland.) The book offers a very large number of photos, maps, and illustrations—a number of the latter beautifully done in charcoal by the author.

At first glance, it’s a book I should like. It’s certainly a book I was quick to accept when it was handed to me in QAHN’s Lennoxville offices with the words, “If you feel like reviewing a book...”

How could I possibly not feel like reviewing such an eye-catching book?

My answer came before I read a single sentence by Mark Jodoin. *Shadow Soldiers* begins with a foreword penned by David Wilkins who was the American ambassador to Canada under George Bush.

Wilkins finishes a laudatory two-page text expressing the hope that *Shadow Soldier* “leads us to better appreciate our shared stake in tomorrow.”

Our shared stake—or our shared steak? Is Wilkins talking about mad cow? About softwood lumber? About Canadian sovereignty in arctic waters? Is he talking about foreign wars started on false pretences—fabulously lucrative for the American arms industry, whatever the cost to others.

Wilkins (a lawyer by training and long-serving legislator) is an eloquent writer. *Shadow Soldiers* offers much to appreciate and even to laud. It’s regrettable—and I use the word in its diplomatic sense—that the Ambassador’s foreword should reduce the book to yet another opportunity to promote American hegemony.

Politics aside, it’s only too easy to imagine how the Canadian writer and the American ambassador might have crossed paths, and why inviting Wilkins to introduce the book—in an apolitical world—would be quite appropriate. *Shadow Soldiers* was published in Charleston; David Wilkins is from South Carolina. David Wilkins served in Ottawa; Mark Jodoin lives in Ottawa. The particular, personal interest of the President of the Rideau Township Historical Society is eighteenth and nineteenth century American History, a subject on which Wilkins would have at least a passing knowledge and possibly even a keen interest.

Having found an American publisher, an author’s note tells us, it is “appropriate” that American spelling be used.

Yes. But how much more refreshing it would have been for the American publisher to say, “To better accommodate our Canadian readers, we have used Canadian spelling throughout.” If we’re going to share a future, as David Wilkins proposes, maybe such a statement would be a good place to start.

Mark Jodoin begins with an introduction that defines the title of the book. He tells us both what a shadow soldier is in the context of twentieth century warfare, and what the term meant in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. He also draws attention to the distinction between a heritage writer and an historian, and even though he identifies himself as the former, I would have been happier to have him articulate the difference.

Simply put, *Shadow Soldiers* is a collection of 11 short biographies. While they are not identified as such, I wonder if they might not originally have been intended, even if not actually penned, as articles for the military magazine, *Esprit de Corps* for which Mark Jodoin is the

history feature writer.

The subjects seem well chosen, at least to a reader who likes history without being much of a student of it. A few names I recognized: Joseph Brant, Molly Brant, Sir John Johnson. (It’s Sir John Johnson’s steady gaze that looks just past you from the front cover of the book.) Of course there’s quite a gap between recognizing a name and knowing something of the person behind it. For me the book was unquestionably informative and in several ways, pleasurable to read.

There were stories to prove the dictum that fact is stranger than fiction: the story of Mary Hoople who was abducted by Delaware warriors and 70 years later met her brother who had been similarly kidnapped. Or the story Rice Honeywell who fought on the winning side of the American Revolution but, for love, came to Canada to join his Loyalist inlaws.

I don’t go to cocktail parties, but if I did, Mark Jodoin’s book would make me feel well armed with offbeat, little gems of knowledge. For example, the aforementioned story ends like this: “Rice Honeywell’s son, Ira, was the first settler in the future capital of Canada. Ironically, he returned to live in the United States, where he died in 1852.”

Later, I learn that Simon Fraser – one of those great Canadian explorers who have been in my imagination since Grade 5 – was born at the outbreak of the American Revolution and his father, Captain William Fraser, died shortly after in a Patriot prison.

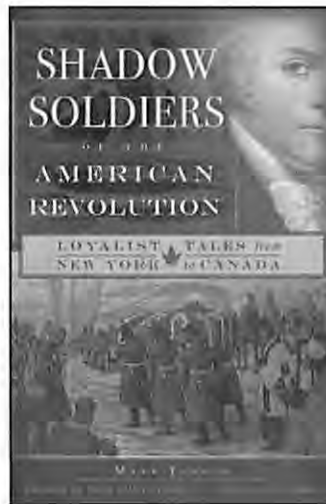
Perhaps the most intriguing quotation offered by the book is found on the back cover. It’s from George Washington: “In letting loyalists leave, we are depriving ourselves of the best and brightest men in our country.”

That is high praise indeed!

Yet, for me, *Shadow Soldiers* wasn’t totally satisfactory. The biographies had an unfortunate sameness about them. In part this is because there was considerable overlap in the background information that served to introduce the subjects of the 11 essays.

I finished the book wondering how I would have reacted to it if I were of United Empire stock, or even if I had friends and neighbours who were of that heritage. Perhaps if I lived in what used to be the Western Townships of Upper Canada instead of where I do live, the Eastern Townships of Lower Canada, I might have found the book more appealing. I have no doubt that my geographical location explains why, if I had to select ‘the best’ biography in the book I would immediately chose that of Sir John Johnson – the only one of the 11 to have a connection with the Eastern Townships. Johnson and I may be separated by three centuries, but we share the same landscape.

Review by Nick Fonda



UPTOWN HIGHLANDER

A Bard of Wolfe's Army

James Thompson, Gentleman Volunteer, 1733-1830

Earl John Chapman and Ian Macpherson McCulloch, editors

Robin Brass Studio, 2010

Here at last is the potential Great Canadian Television Miniseries, if not a feature film possibility. If truth is really supposed to be stranger, and more interesting, than fiction, this work certainly qualifies, along with finally debunking the myth that Canadian history is dull.

A Bard of Wolfe's Army: James Thompson, Gentleman Volunteer, 1733 – 1830 is a book in three parts:

the life story of James Thompson, the collection of his memories of his very long life (as compiled by his son, James Thompson Junior), and an extensive biographical section describing the famous and not so famous people whom he encountered. There are also informative notes, and first rate maps and illustrations. The book was published in collaboration with the Stewart Museum (The Fort, Île-Sainte-Hélène, Montreal) and the 78th Fraser Highlanders. Editors Earl John Chapman and Ian Macpherson McCulloch have produced an outstanding portrait both of the times of the Seven Years War and after, plus of a surely unique individual – James Thompson.

Born at Tain (near Inverness), Scotland, in 1733, Thompson was an acute observer of the period and of his own experiences. Also, he was the last survivor of Wolfe's army at the battle for Quebec. Thompson, from an educated middle class family, volunteered for the Fraser Highland regiment in hopes of receiving an officer's commission. This, through no fault of his own, did not happen, but had the eventual advantage of allowing him to experience how life was for the ordinary soldier. He was a lively raconteur of his experiences, both with the army and in civilian life in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth century Quebec City. His son wrote down many of these anecdotes, as he calls them, in the form of journals and also a few of Thompson Sr.'s stories were

published in his later years in various newspapers.

Thompson was trained as a civil engineer and was involved in the building and rebuilding of many structures in the city of Quebec. Quebec was very badly pulverized by bombardment during Wolfe's campaign and the description of the first winter after this massive destruction certainly would change the opinion of anyone who might think war is glorious. Thompson's fellow highland troops, for example, were generally illiterate, Gaelic speaking only (Thompson was first-language Gaelic, but educated in English, plus knew some, and learned more, French) and poorly clad in chilly kilts. The excellent colour illustrations in this book show the famous picture of the Ursuline nuns knitting them long woolly stockings – sort of leg warmers – funny to us, but not funny then!

There is also a lot of description in Thompson's recollections of the local inhabitants, struggling to maintain themselves in spite of the predations of both French and British armies upon their cattle and pigs and generally disrupting their farming and trade. Thompson was friendly and sympathetic to all kinds of people of all languages and social backgrounds and recorded all kinds of incidents – even some really spicy gossip – about everybody.

This is a well organized, very interesting book that brings to life North America two hundred and fifty years ago. It is also a portrait of an individual from a now lost culture and marginal language. However, it also recreates the Highlands culture and sensibility of Scotland that influenced so much of the development of modern Quebec and Canada.

Review by Sandra Stock



RAISING THE EMPRESS (OF IRELAND)

Into the Mist

The Story of the Empress of Ireland

by Anne Renaud

Dundurn Press, 2010

When the Empress of Ireland slipped below the frigid currents of the St Lawrence River with over a thousand souls, the memory of the disaster seemed to fade with the swiftness of her sinking. A greater tragedy unfolded in Europe over the summer of 1914, and exhaustive casualty lists of the Great War would soon trump mourning of the Empress on both sides of the Atlantic.

The “rediscovery” of the Empress in the 1960s prompted a spate of histories on the ship and her demise. Even so, R.M.S. Titanic and the ongoing hoopla subsequent to James Cameron’s 1997 film continues to clutter up the memory and consciousness of young Canadians about our own marine catastrophe, the thousand and fourteen lives lost, and the thousands more bent out of shape by its memory. With her latest book, Anne Renaud has gone to great lengths to change this.

Into the Mist a book for young people, and the author’s discursive handling of the topic seems particularly apt for her target audience. In fact, the actual collision between the Empress and Starstad, and the fourteen-minute sinking of the former takes only nineteen pages out of the 103 in the work. This is not surprising as, unlike the Titanic, the Empress of Ireland went down with few messy loose ends: she was close to shore, was in wireless communication with the telegraph station, Pointe au Père, carried an adequate provision of lifeboats, and was sailing cautiously through a dense fog. The physics of her swift fate left little room for dramatic speculation.

Instead, Anne Renaud places the Empress’s loss in a much wider historical and social context. Opening chapters introduce the young reader to the origins of the CPR and its stop-start railroad construction to the Pacific. Along the way, she adds time capsule asides which, among other things, concisely reveal the fate of “lesser” characters in the building of the rail-line, such as the eight thousand or so Chinese labourers, little short of penny-slaves, who carried out the most dirty and dangerous jobs, and died by the hundreds accordingly.

The Last Spike in 1885 is just the prologue for the

rest of the story. Renaud points out that the profitable movement of goods and people was the grail for the CPR investors, not Pacific sunsets. To this end, Canadian Pacific Steamships put to sea in 1887.

Into the Mist shows the reader just how significant the sea-rail-sea route from Britain through Canada to Asia was at the outset of the twentieth century, rendering this country the Empire’s express lane to and from the Far East. In this strategically profitable context, the Empress of Ireland and her sister, the Empress of Britain, were launched in 1906.

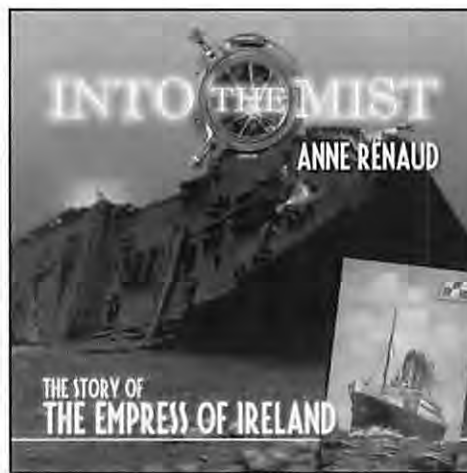
Renaud’s descriptions and asides on maritime travel in that age are a trove of detail. Readers will be fascinated, or horrified, to note that a third-class passenger could greet the day with Irish stew or stewed steak and onion for breakfast, and end it with a supper of gruel! First-class passengers, however, could ditch children in a kids-only dining

room, while catching a leisurely round of deck golf. Of note, also, is the surprising fact that, while 79,000 people had sailed for Canada by 1911, some 46,000 had travelled in the opposite direction. Leaving aside the miniscule numbers of people who could afford touring in Europe, the figures suggest many new Canadians found life here disagreeable enough to prompt a return home. This is borne out, in part, with the sketches of Blomquist family and Alma Assafrey who, for whatever reasons, tried to make their ways back to Europe, but who found final rest in Canadian waters.

With dozens of photographs and personal narratives, Renaud has humanized this century-old disaster in ways a conventional history book cannot. Moreover, she has provided such a wealth of contextual detail and information that the inquisitive student may be drawn into other areas of research and interest.

Anne Renaud has rendered a great service to the memory of the Empress of Ireland and the history of that era. Indeed, she might well have titled her work “Out of the Mist,” since that is what she has accomplished for this event, its time and its place.

Review by Kerry McKeown



BEATEN PATHS

Roads to Richmond:

Portraits of Quebec's Eastern Townships

by Nick Fonda

Baraka Books, 2010

I got to know the Townships first at Richmond. A decade or so ago, a colleague and I were after school board records, and Esther and Don Healy offered to show us material in their possession. Some of it was at the Richmond County Historical Society archive at the stately brick Melbourne Township Hall, where Esther had been the archivist since 1976. The rest was at St Francis Elementary School (the successor to St Francis High School, which was in turn the successor to St Francis College – a demotion that says something about the way things have gone in that part of the world) in a vault off the Kindergarten class; we went through the old minute books seated on little stools, the tables only two feet off the floor. When it was time for lunch, the Healys took us home and gave us soup and fresh rolls and pie, and on the way back pointed out the sights: the grand old train station, the Old Bridge with its checkered past, and the Melbourne Old Stone Schoolhouse with the rather ominous tombstones on its grounds. When it was time to return to Montreal, Don suggested a shortcut along Route 116, which proved much more scenic and slightly quicker than the way we'd come.

I read the first 170 pages of Nick Fonda's *Roads to Richmond: Portraits of Quebec's Eastern Townships* thinking that the Healys would have made a perfect addition to the book. In so many ways they personify the characteristics I have since come to associate with the Townships and which Fonda uncovers repeatedly in his journeys: dedication, competence, courtesy, confidence, good humour, and above all a profound connection with one's surroundings. I realized, of course, that an author can only profile so many subjects – and then I turned the page and found a whole section on Esther: "The Archetypal Archivist." The discovery was an added delight: I felt a connection, felt that I was right to have found so much about Fonda's characters familiar.

The Healys may only make their entrance towards the end of the book, but the roads appear right at the start – in the book's title, yes, but also in the first chapter heading ("Getting There: Roads, Rails and Bridges") and even the first sentence, which describes the author's favourite route into town. We also get a discussion of the railway, the river, and the bike path. All roads may not quite lead to Richmond, but enough do to make you feel you are in the middle of somewhere significant.

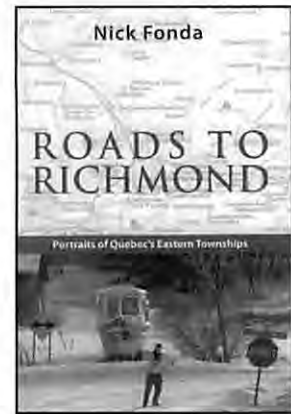
And you are. Richmond is a small town (even with Melbourne annexed) with a disproportionately heavy history: the train station and the old college building speak to a time a century and a half ago when the place stood on the crossroads of Montreal, Quebec and New England, when Sherbrooke and Drummondville were but way-stations. This past glory haunts Richmond a little, but mostly it serves to draw people there – along with the lovely rolling countryside, the slow pace, and a sense that linguistic and ethnic distinctions don't matter.

Fonda is keenly aware of history, but the book doesn't set out to show you how the place grew, with the customary peppering of narrative with the institutions and personalities that made up the local infrastructure. We get this, but the real focus is the land, and how people live on it, live off it (bread, wine, milk, beer) and move over it (the roads). We are introduced to an astonishing array of characters who show by their occupations and idiosyncrasies how connected they are to this land. The guy who clears the snow off the rural routes, the farmer who sells the meat from his own cows off the back of a truck, the deer-hunting mayoress, the Rwandan coffee plantation owner, the gent who painted Richmond's Old Bridge as a boy without a safety net, the recluse with the entirely wind-and-solar-powered property, and of course the Healys – all are part of this landscape and they form, we realize, its history.

Fonda himself is not native to the Townships but, like many he describes, fell in love with the area as an adult and let it cast its spell. He discovered its highways and byways bit by bit over thirty years as a local teacher, and then became involved in the Richmond County Historical Society – which is a great way to further one's understanding and love of a place. His sympathy with those who have consciously adopted a Townships life shines through in all his descriptions, as does his respect for those who have been working its roads and fields for fifty or sixty years.

I was not surprised to learn that these places and characters had been the subjects of stories Fonda put together over recent years for the *Sherbrooke Record* – but the book is in no way a compilation, nor does it read like one. Although relatively self-contained, each of these episodes links to others: characters share a love of local food, or experience similar challenges from weather and wildlife, or simply use the same roads. Their stories flow effortlessly together – or perhaps I shouldn't say effortlessly, as the author's own experiences and reflections provide a unifying and highly entertaining voice, and that kind of writing doesn't come easily. At every juncture, indeed at every juncture, we have Fonda as narrator, unveiling these characters with sympathy and interest. At the same time, he isn't detached; he passes no judgement other than tacit approval of these people for being themselves, important parts of a fascinating whole. Perhaps without realizing it, he, too, is one of these characters, part of this landscape, doing his own idiosyncratic thing.

Fonda has taken the landscape and the people of his corner of the Townships and stitched them together into a gloriously quirky quilt – the way the land itself is stitched together by its roads.



Reviewed by Rod MacLeod

HINDSIGHT

Triumph of apathy

by Robert N Wilkins

Stone by stone, joist by joist, the unsavoury business of removing yet another heritage building from the Montreal landscape is earnestly underway.

It's hard to reconcile the present demolition of the old Trinity Church on St. Denis Street with the much-touted motto of the Conseil du patrimoine religieux du Québec: "Patrimoine religieux: c'est sacré."

That's not too say that the Conseil itself is responsible for the early English Gothic church's demise but, like many other authorities, including long-established heritage groups, it certainly does not appear to have made much of an effort to save the near ancient structure.

It's difficult to appreciate exactly what transpired with regard to the pre-Confederation religious edifice, some time ago considered to be one of the most beautiful churches on the Island of Montreal. In the days leading up to the building's dismantling, no statement was issued by either the City of Montreal or the Centre Hospitalier de l'Université de Montréal (CHUM), the French language super hospital. For all that is known,

the demolition permit could just as easily have been issued in the middle of the night. Was this what the Tremblay Administration meant in its 2004 master plan for urban planning by promising to respond 'proactively' in the defense of heritage buildings?

What is clear is that the presence of so many different jurisdictions involved in the file did not facilitate anyone inclined to try and save the ecclesiastic edifice. Who was ultimately responsible for the building's preservation – the borough of Ville Marie, the City of Montreal, Cultural Affairs Quebec? Certainly it was not CHUM whose only purpose, despite an enormous budget, was Trinity's removal from the surroundings. There was never a thought on their part of attempting to integrate in any serious fashion the celebrated structure into their plans.

In the end, however, the City of Montreal must assume the better part of the blame with regard to the loss of Trinity. Despite the fact that the city itself had long ago classified the church to be "of significant historic interest," it later paradoxically issued the necessary papers permitting CHUM to proceed with its destruction. Obviously, City Hall did not make life as difficult for CHUM as they did for earlier bidders to the building's future prospects.

Take, for example, an extensive proposal presented to the city in the year 2000 to convert the abandoned struc-

ture into a restaurant and concert hall (Dossier No. S00054116). The submission would have left the magnificent greystone exterior entirely untouched, giving the edifice a new lease on life. While City Hall and its various departments went through the necessary legal motions of seeking the opinions of others with regard to the scheme, it was clear from the beginning that it would not be easy for the bidding company.

True to form, municipal bureaucrats immediately found all sorts of shortcomings in the plan, not the least of which was the amazing claim that a restaurant and concert hall were not really appropriate in a church building of such historic importance! Understandably, the offer was

eventually withdrawn and Trinity was left to decay yet another decade. Not surprisingly, given the complexity of dealing with the various levels of jurisdiction in this regard, no further proposals from the private sector came forward.

Even so, City Hall seems to have one set of rules for itself and a different set for others. Years ago it essentially obliged Concordia University to preserve and integrate the façade of

the Royal George Apartment building into the university's new library pavilion on Bishop Street. Similar examples of imposed 'facadism' can be seen opposite McGill University on Sherbrooke Street and at the campus of UQAM, not too far from where Trinity's dismantling continues today.

So the question remains: why did the municipal administration or Cultural Affairs Quebec not insist that CHUM integrate the landmark structure into its architectural plans? At the end of the day, is not CHUM getting its considerable money from the public purse?

Failing that, the sacred edifice (which, for one reason or another, is being removed stone by stone in any event) should have been transported elsewhere and re-assembled in its entirety. This was done in 1931 with the then St Paul's Presbyterian Church on Dorchester Street that was put back together on the campus of College St-Laurent where it still survives to this very day as a beautiful art gallery and museum. If that could be done in the midst of the Great Depression, there is no excuse for it not being done today.

Meanwhile, Montreal loses yet another historic church building as the provincial motto "je me souviens" is beginning to look less and less relevant in this city, not to mention the now somewhat meaningless "Notre Patrimoine Religieux: C'est Sacré."



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Photographs: *Chinatown and Somerled* - Rod MacLeod,
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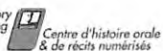
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