

REDCOATS, DRUMS AND MYSTIC BARNs: QAHN VISITS MISSISQUOI COUNTY

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Quebec

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News



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January in July

Ice Palaces and Winter Camping

Containing Typhoid

Northern Electric's Emergency Hospital, 1910

Quebec Heritage News

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Cover photo: Cornell Mill, Mississquoi Museum, Stanbridge East, Quebec.
Photo: Matthew Farfan.

EDITOR'S DESK

Redpath's many mansions

by Rod MacLeod

So the infamous Redpath mansion is gone. Heritage activists mourn last March's demolition of the house's remaining fragile walls, although perhaps there is something to be said for being able to ring the curtain down on a particularly nasty, 28-year battle between developers and preservationists. (See *QHN*, Spring 2011.) In the end, one had the feeling that all that was holding the mansion together was the mud slung by opposing factions.

Even so, it is a loss. Aside from its architectural features, the house was the last surviving Montreal residence associated with the illustrious Redpath family. Their product, with their name on it, is still a household commodity – which is more than can be said for most of those great nineteenth-century purveyors of vice (Molson being the other notable exception, of course.) Yet, of more significance to Montreal than the sugar that sweetened its tea (itself considerable, given that prior to the opening of the Redpath refinery Canada had to import all its sugar) was the factory's role in launching the nation's industrial revolution in the early 1850s, situated as it was along the newly-widened Lachine Canal. Ironically, the factory is still there, albeit condofied, while all the Redpath houses are now gone.

These houses, I would argue, played an even greater role than sugar in shaping the city.

Long before there was a granular twinkle in his eye, John Redpath made a fortune for himself in construction and real estate. As a master mason, he supervised the building of such key 1820s stone structures as Notre Dame Church, the British and Canadian School (in today's Chinatown) and the Lachine Canal. He lived with his growing family in a house on Notre Dame Street in the old town, but when his wife Janet McPhee

died of typhus in 1834 he farmed the six children out to his sister Elspeth near Kingston. On one of his visits there, he also dropped in on an old friend, Robert Drummond, whose much younger sister Jane was also visiting from Scotland. One thing led to another, John and Jane were married, and the family returned to Montreal. In the spring of 1837, they moved permanently up to a country house in the midst of a 235-acre estate Redpath had purchased on the side of Mount Royal. This dwelling was a com-



fortable eighteenth-century farmhouse, which Redpath would later have refurbished as a state-of-the-art mansion called Terrace Bank. In the autumn of 1837, he rented the house on Notre Dame Street to General John Colborne, who needed a Montreal base from which to attack rebel forces.

In 1840, when the political situation calmed down, and Montreal was incorporated as a city, John Redpath got himself elected to council. Here, he served on, and later chaired, the Committee for Roads and Improvements, a body that supervised the building and repair of streets and generally regulated the city's expansion. Redpath saw to it that his own real estate projects were promptly green lit, his streets paved and the sewers dug. (Given mid-nineteenth century attitudes

toward business, there would have been no perceived conflict between Redpath the politician and Redpath the developer, much less a need for a proto-Charbonneau commission.) Along with fellow landowner Thomas Phillips and city surveyor John Ostell, Redpath opened the mountainside to urban development, which followed two general patterns: the villa lots on the higher ground above Sherbrooke Street, and a "New Town" of terraced townhouses on the plateau that is now Montreal's downtown.

One challenge emerged early on, which Redpath easily turned into an advantage. Feudal inheritance practices, still technically in effect in Canada East despite a growing campaign for reform, dictated that children had rights to a portion of a man's property even after it was sold. Redpath feared that potential purchasers of his building lots on the side of the mountain might be deterred by the prospect of his heirs making special claims later on – which was standard practice under the old regime. His solution was to draft formal agreements with his children whereby they would re-

nonounce any such claims in return for certain gifts – namely, gifts of land. As they came of age, the children received mountain lots on which they then built houses. As a result, Redpath kept his expanding family nearby – particularly his sons, who would soon be directly involved in running the sugar business. Moreover, by providing space for his grown children, Redpath was able to seed his property (as it were) with respectable residents, thereby removing any doubt in the minds of prospective lot purchasers that the mountainside was a proper place to move to.

The first of the Redpath offspring to take advantage of this arrangement was Elizabeth, the eldest (just four years younger than her step-mother), who married textile merchant and newspaper editor (the *Temperance Advocate* and later

the *Montreal Witness*) John Dougall in 1840, and received a large lot near Terrace Bank. For a few years, the young couple lived in a townhouse in the emerging New Town, one of the fifteen units of Beaver Hall Terrace, which John Redpath had also built. Before long, however, they moved into a new house on their mountain lot known as Ivy Cottage. It was here that their children grew up and played amid the orchards: John, who would succeed his father as editor of the *Witness* into the 1930s, and Lily, who would move to England and have a successful career as the writer of somewhat moralistic novels.

In time, the other Redpath children would take up residence in mountainside homes, helping to form the elite neighbourhood later known as the Golden Square Mile. Eldest son Peter, who would succeed his father as head of the sugar empire and underwrite the costs of the McGill museum and library that bear his name, lived with his wife Grace Wood in a semi-detached townhouse on Drummond Street, on the lower part of the estate. His sister Mary and her husband, broker Thomas Taylor, lived in the other half. Another sister, Helen, who married their step-mother's younger brother George Drummond, eventually built a grand home for themselves (George became the brains behind Redpath Sugar in the decades after John's death in 1869) on Sherbrooke Street. Slightly further west along Sherbrooke Street, the youngest sibling John James built a mansion on his land where he lived with his wife Ada Mills and several children. In was in this house in 1901, many years after John James' death, that Ada and her son Clifford were found shot to death, a mystery that was never solved thanks in part to its being quickly hushed up by the scandal-wary Redpaths. But then, everyone has skeletons, I suppose.

Frank Robert Redpath was a son of the second marriage and came of age after his father's death. By then, the building lots had all sold – but the family still owned a large part of the estate: Terrace Bank itself and surrounding lawns and gardens. Even after marrying Caroline Plimsoll in 1876, Frank continued to live at Terrace Bank with his bride, his widowed mother and several younger siblings. It was only in 1884, when he was nearing 40, that Frank obtained a portion

of the estate, a small piece of land below Terrace Bank fronting on Ontario Avenue (now Avenue du Musée), on which he built a house, “Inglenook.” Having waited so long for a place of his own, Frank did not budge from it, dying there in 1928 in his early eighties, two decades after Caroline.

By that time, the Redpaths were almost all gone from the mountainside.

Jane, the matriarch, spent the last 22 years of her life alone (except for servants) in Terrace Bank; when she died in 1907 in her early nineties, the house was torn down and what was left of the estate turned into building lots for a last bout of mountainside development.

John Redpath Dougall, Elizabeth's son, lived in nearby Ivy Cottage until a year or so before his own death, also in his nineties, in 1934; a bachelor, he went



to live with a cousin in Westmount. Ivy Cottage did not survive the eastward extension of McGregor Avenue in the 1950s.

Peter Redpath and Grace Wood retired to England and died there. The Taylors took over both sides of the semi-detached house and held onto it until the 1890s, whereupon it exchanged hands several times before being demolished to make way for Emmanuel Church, later the Salvation Army Citadel.

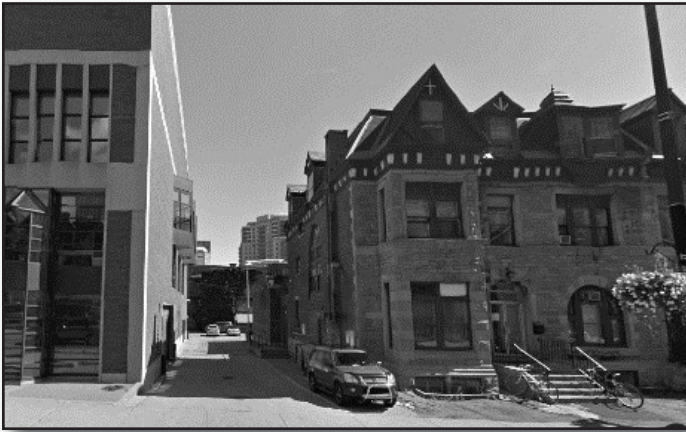
After the 1901 murder/suicide in John James' house on Sherbrooke Street, the youngest daughter Amy continued to live in the house, first with her husband, Dr. Thomas Roddick, who had been the

family physician at the time of the tragedy (and in whose memory she would commission the distinctive entrance gates to McGill University), and later with her beloved companion Mary Rose Shallow, who had been a housemaid at the time of the tragedy. (If any of these three knew more about the mystery than they let on at the time, such knowledge went with them to their graves.) Like so many of her family, Amy died alone in 1954, and eventually the house was razed and replaced by the massive and unlovely Port Royal apartments.

When Amy died, Frank's Inglenook had been empty for over a quarter century. It would remain unoccupied another fifteen years before being used as a convalescent home and then as a homeless shelter. In 1986 it was purchased by developers – who might have reconsidered had they known the lengthy battle ahead of them. This Redpath mansion was quite typical of the downtown “dinosaurs,” those former mansions rendered obsolete through neglect. For this state of affairs one cannot blame the Redpaths, so many of whom hung onto their houses into their lonely old age and had no successors. One would also be hard pressed to blame developers who saw a building that no one seemed to care for and that arguably could be put to better use.

And frankly, though I mourn the death of dinosaurs and the disappearance of Redpath abodes, I am left with the feeling that, so long as we refrain from putting high rises on the side of the mountain, the loss of another decrepit mansion will not alter the landscape. There are other more worrying desecrations, or potential desecrations, that cause me greater angst.

A case in point lies just down the hill from the Redpath mansion site. The developer in this case is the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, which deserves some credit for having objected to the height of the projected Redpath mansion condofication. (I'm coining this term!) The museum directors felt the condos would impinge on the view up Avenue du Musée – by which, presumably, they meant the view from the windows of the MMFA's fourth pavilion, namely the refurbished Erskine and American Church with a modern annex. (I've been reasonably satisfied with this fourth pavilion. Although the historic church is not being used as



exhibition space – its interior is viewable only when attending concerts there – at least it has been preserved. And in the rear annex, aside from the quirky layout and difficult access we've come to expect from the MMFA, the presentation of Canadian art is attractive enough.)

But in its apparently endless pursuit of lebensraum, the MMFA is planning a fifth pavilion. This latest expansion is ostensibly for exhibition purposes, although I am suspicious given that the museum has a habit of earmarking space for its permanent collection and then devoting it instead to grand entrances, stairways, and reception areas. In any event, just weeks ago, almost entirely without fanfare, the museum demolished two nineteenth-century townhouses on Bishop Street. These will be replaced by a modern glass annex, albeit one of modest scale.

Now, of all Montreal's rich architectural heritage, the townscape that is the saddest to have lost was, in my view, the New Town that Redpath, Phillips and Ostell created in the middle of the nineteenth century. From Beaver Hall Hill to Guy Street, Montreal once had a whole neighbourhood of streets lined with elegant stone terraced houses, resembling the Georgian and Victorian vistas in London's Mayfair or Belgravia, or Edinburgh's own New Town. Wherever such townscapes exist they are cherished. Even where residential use is impractical, such buildings lend themselves perfectly to small-scale offices and shops. You can see surviving examples here and there, even on St. Catherine Street; Concordia has put such terraced houses to great use for university department offices up and down Mackay Street, and McGill has

done this a little on McTavish. Crescent Street, of course, is famous for its boutiques and restaurants, all located in late-nineteenth-century terraces. Bishop Street is nearly as quaint – but that quaintness has been significantly diminished by the loss of the two top-most houses, sacrificed to meet the needs of the ever-expanding museum. Unlike the Redpath mansion, moreover, they were in good shape and not an eyesore on the street.

Let's not let the tears we shed over decaying dinosaurs blind us to the threats facing healthy and useful buildings. Let's not chant so loud in the street that we fail to notice the bulldozer loose in the architectural china shop.

Letters

Don't wait for the obit

I just finished reading the article concerning the passing of Charles Bury by Carla Straessle (*QHN*, Spring 2014). What a man! The article was both well written and informative. I can't comment on the content of the article as unfortunately I did not know Charlie but I can say without hesitation – darn, I wish I had gotten to know him. I could have learned so much.

And in this general context I can also say again, without hesitation, that if there is someone out there that you know that you have not seen in awhile, don't text them, don't email them, don't Facebook them – but instead don't hesitate, go out of your way if necessary to visit them, face to face, eyeball to eyeball, even if you think they don't like you for they may have changed their mind. Worst case sce-

nario - they may not let you get past the door.

And I am taking this unrequested advice myself. I think I will find it rewarding and I believe so will you.

*Jim Caputo
Vankleek Hill, Ontario*

New England Forgues

Thank you very much for sending me the *Heritage News*. The magazine is really first class and I enjoyed reading all of it. My family was equally impressed by the high quality and, of course, the article and photo of good old Mom. ("A Quebec farming family moves to the Prairies," *QHN*, Spring 2014).

Recently I discovered an organization in the New England states, and particularly the Vermont branch, which assists investigations

into the French Canadian connection. According to my second cousin, living in Burlington, "the hills are alive with the name of Forgues." One very interesting and educational article I read was titled "Emigration from Quebec." I learned a lot about the French settlers of the nineteenth century and particularly those who emigrated from the Eastern Townships into the U.S.A.

Your organization focuses on the English presence in a French province and this organization focuses on the opposite settlement. Have you ever been in touch with this group? It is too bad that we wait to investigate our past after all our old relatives have passed away. Thank goodness for organizations and authors who take the time to investigate and record our history.

*Eileen Fiell
Invermere, B.C.*

Heritage news from around the province

by Jim Caputo



Western Quebec

The Scotch Road Cemetery

We had the opportunity to visit the old Scotch Road Cemetery thanks to Cecil McPhee, president of the Scotch Road Cemetery Association. This group is to be congratulated for their efforts in restoring and preserving this historic site. Please visit <http://www.scotchroadcemetery.com>.



The Grenville Canal

The walls of this historic canal are crumbling into the water. Evidence indicates that this has happened before. On hearing this news, we visited the canal (Grenville, Quebec) and saw the latest damage. (The photo was taken at the time of our visit.) It is suggested that you contact Mylene Freeman, MP for Argenteuil-Papineau-Mirabel, at her website <http://mylene.freeman.ndp.ca>. The canal, which dates from the early nineteenth century, was designed by the Royal Staff Corps of the British Army. It was part of a series of canals built to link Montreal to Ottawa, Kingston and the Great Lakes in time of war.

St. Mungo's United Church

Cecil McPhee has proposed celebrating the 180th anniversary of St. Mungo's Church in Cushing, Quebec in 2016. For more on these plans, please contact McPhee at <http://www.scotchroadcemetery.com>.

Gaspé

Generation Sacrificed

Heritage Gaspé/Heritage Gaspésie presents Tom Eden's "Generation Sacrificed: The Gaspé Soldiers of the Great War, 1914-1918." His photo and information exhibit will be held at St. James Anglican Church, Wakeham, from July 28 to August 2, 10:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. It consists of ten panels, each with a different theme outlining the activities of the war and the sacrifice of the lives of these young Gaspésians.

Tom will also be available to share his project with the community at a conference to be held at St. James Church on August 2 at 1:30 p.m.

A tour of the old Wakeham cemetery will take place and a pamphlet on the history of the church will be made available. The exhibit is free of charge but a good will offering would be appreciated. All proceeds will go towards St. James Church.

Pioneer Days

Once again, Gaspésians and those with Gaspé roots will be able to meet and greet at Pioneer Days – Fort Haldimand Camp this summer, from July 23 to 27. Wine and cheese, activities for both the old and young, handicrafts and exhibits – we have it all, plus the opportunity to meet people whom you haven't seen in years, and to appreciate the grand scenery of the Gaspé. A not-to-miss activity.



The Birthplace of Canada

The grand opening of “Gaspé: the Birthplace of Canada” takes place this summer. This faithful reconstruction of the commercial area of Gaspé, O’Hara’s Point, is something I encourage everyone to visit. Compliments of Fabien Sinnett, my family had the opportunity to get a sneak peak of the site. All those involved in making this vision a reality are to be congratulated for their efforts.

Irish Week

Once again the organizers of Irish Week have put together a very entertaining group of events this summer, from July 28 to August 3. For more details: <http://www.semaineirlandaise-irishweek.com>.

Patterson Family Reunion

All descendents of John Patterson, the first Patterson family member to settle in Gaspé (arrived mid-eighteenth century), are invited to attend a family reunion from July 27 to 31. For more information, visit www.gogaspe.com, or contact activity organizer John Patterson: pattejo@nb.sympatico.ca.

Gaspesian British Heritage Village

In 2014, the Heritage Village in New Richmond will create a travelling exhibition celebrating English-



speaking Gaspesians who have made a significant contribution to their community or the region. From well-known historical personalities to ordinary citizens, achievements at all levels will be presented via text panels, artifacts and photos. The exhibition will travel the coast next summer, after which it will be permanently housed at the Gaspesian British Heritage Village. An online exhibition will also be launched.

Magdalen Islands

Heritage Grosse Ile

This group is attempting to save a heritage building from demolition. The hall, owned by the Anglican Diocese of Quebec, was once a centre of community activity but has fallen into disrepair over the years. Heritage Grosse Ile would like to make the necessary repairs and use it as a community centre once again. Any help would be greatly appreciated. Please contact Byron Clark at bclark380@hotmail.com.

Jim Caputo’s Mystery Objects Challenge #4

Last issue, we ran a photo submitted by Jim Caputo of Heritage Gaspé with an object for readers to identify, with the following clue:



This handcrafted wooden object (machine) would make many a person more comfortable in the summer.

We received the following answer from Shelagh Glover of Montreal:

I believe it is a machine to compress or crush ice. The ice was placed in a cloth bag and then fed through the crusher and churned into ice cream.

While this is incorrect, the suggestion was so imaginative we decided to include it.

The correct answer is:

A machine to flatten straw to make straw hats.



Here is another instalment in the Mystery Objects Challenge -- a photo (above) of the mystery object and a clue from Jim:

What does this item represent? Please be specific. It would have been found in Quebec homes after 1840.

Send your answers to: editor@qahn.org.

The play's the thing...

A theatrical photo mystery

Ann Wondolowski of Toronto has sent us a curious puzzle. She possesses several old photographs of two plays featuring her parents, Charles (Chuck) and Lois Wondoloski.

She knows them only as the "staircase play" and the "curtained doorway play" because of their respective set designs.

She believes they were produced either in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu between 1950 and 1954 or in Trois-Rivières between 1954 and 1956.

It was an Anglophone company, and included the following other actors, whose names are scrawled on the back of one photo: Jim Weeks, Ray Dumas, June Goodall, Trevor Elphick, Dagmar Cutler, Peter Greenaway, Frances Benn, Bert Patterson, and Bill Montgomery.

Can anyone help identify the plays, the company name, and the exact performance dates?



The Curtained Doorway Play (right)

Charles is the fellow wearing a vest in all three photos.

The Staircase Play (left and below)

Lois is the lady in white in all four photos; Charles is the fellow with the bow tie in one photo.



PRESS PEDIGREE

A brief history of the Quebec Chronicle-Telegraph

by Charles André Nadeau

On June 21, 2014, the *Quebec Chronicle-Telegraph (QCT)* celebrated its 250th anniversary. Recognized as North America's oldest continuously operating newspaper, the present-day *QCT* is the result of the mergers of four city newspapers over the past two centuries. It started as a bilingual publication designed to serve not only the city's French-speaking people, who had not had the benefits of newspapers in New France, but also the smaller English-speaking community that had recently arrived in the colony.

The colony's first newspaper, *The Quebec Gazette - La Gazette de Québec*, was founded by William Brown, an American born in Scotland, and Thomas Gilmore, who had come from Ireland to settle in America. Brown and Gilmore signed an agreement in Philadelphia on August 5, 1763, to operate a printing shop in Quebec City, and published the first edition of their weekly on Thursday June 21, 1764. Initially their office was on Saint-Louis Street, on a site now owned by the Château Frontenac and the restaurant Le Petit Château. The newspaper moved a few times in the early years and the business finally settled on Côte de la Montagne. In 1772, when Gilmore died, Brown purchased his share. When Brown died in 1789, his nephew Samuel Neilson inherited the establishment. After Samuel's premature death in 1793, his younger brother John became owner and publisher. The Neilson family continued publication of the newspaper (which became a daily in 1832) until November 11, 1850, when Robert Middleton purchased it outright.

Middleton had worked for the Neilsons since 1834, but in 1847 he left and, in partnership with Charles Saint-Michel, founded *The Morning Chronicle*, which first appeared on the streets on May 18 that year. Their office was also on Côte de la Montagne, at the corner of Sault-au-Matelot. Shortly after the death of John Neilson, Middleton left

The Morning Chronicle to his partner and returned to *The Quebec Gazette* as publisher and part-owner.

The newspaper had by then become strictly an English publication, unable to compete with the many excellent local papers printed in French. Middleton operated *The Quebec Gazette* until his death in 1874. Meanwhile, Charles

William Price bought the business.

Shortly after the *Morning Chronicle* absorbed the *Quebec Gazette* in 1874, James Carrel founded *The Daily Telegraph*. The first edition came out on November 9, 1875. Carrel's office was at the corner of Buade and du Trésor. James Carrel died at age 47 in 1891 and his 20-year-old son Frank took over. The paper supported the Liberal party and was aimed primarily at the working classes, unlike *The Morning Chronicle* which was Conservative and catered more to the city's elite. Meanwhile, the English-speaking population of Quebec City had been steadily declining since 1860, and the town wasn't big enough for two English dailies.

Following Sir William Price's death in October 1924, talks began between the two competitors and another merger was made in late June the following year. As the premises at the corner of Buade and du Trésor were the more modern facility, they became the home of the new *Chronicle-Telegraph* which reached its first readers on July 2, 1925. It was a rocky marriage but with time the problems were ironed out. The name was changed to *Quebec Chronicle-Telegraph* on February 5, 1934.

A partnership led by Major Gwyllyn Dunn bought the majority of the company's holdings in June 1937. Dunn had been operating a small paper called *The Quebec News* and he merged it with the *Quebec Chronicle-Telegraph*. In 1949, the Thompson conglomerate purchased a portion of the shares of the company. A new facility was also opened that year on Saint-Sacrement Boulevard in the Saint-Malo district. Lord Thompson purchased the entire company in 1961. Since then there have been a number of owners and office locations. At present the office is located at 1040 Belvédère Avenue. In November 2010, majority shares were sold to Raymond Stanton of Ontario. His wife, Stacie Stanton, is the editor and together they are the publishers.



Saint-Michel sold *The Morning Chronicle* to Samuel B. Foote in 1860, whose brother John J. Foote joined him three years later. Competition between the two newspapers made life difficult for both businesses. Consequently, when there seemed no interested successor to Middleton at *The Quebec Gazette*, the Foote brothers purchased their rival in 1874 and incorporated it with their own paper under the name *The Morning Chronicle*. Samuel Foote left for Montreal in 1878, and, after the death of John J. Foote in 1897, a local company was formed to buy the newspaper. The president was John Sharples Jr., a former mayor of Sillery. *The Morning Chronicle's* office moved to Buade Street, near rue du Fort, in 1900. Sir David Watson later purchased all the shares of the company. Upon Watson's death in 1922, Sir

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NORTHERN ELECTRIC'S HEROIC MOMENT

The Montreal Emergency Typhoid Hospital, 1910

by Robert N. Wilkins

While walking recently in the neighbourhood of the Lucien-L'Allier Metro Station, I noticed that the interior of an old, derelict building was quite open to public view. It would seem that someone removed one of the sheets of plywood used to board up the decaying structure and never put it back.

I could not resist taking a peek.

The inside was indeed quite a mess.

The Bell Telephone Company of Canada constructed the edifice in question on Aqueduct Street (today, Lucien-L'Allier) in 1891-92. In the early twentieth century, it was occupied by the Northern Electric Company, which had become the manufacturing arm of the telephone concern. In 1906, the "Northern" (as the firm was affectionately known by its employees) moved its operations to Guy and Notre Dame Streets, leaving the previous structure on Aqueduct Street essentially deserted. Throughout most of the rest of the twentieth century the building was used on and off by various manufacturing enterprises for their own purposes.

What most Montrealers do not realize, however, is what the edifice was used for in the first three months of the year 1910. The answer to that is really quite interesting. During that 90-day period, the old Northern Electric plant on Aqueduct Street served as a provisional crisis facility for those unfortunate citizens suffering from typhoid fever.

Styled the Montreal Typhoid Emergency Hospital, the then abandoned building was donated by Northern Electric, rent-free for a three-month period, to help deal with the explosion of typhoid cases in the city in late 1909 and early 1910.

While periodic outbreaks of typhoid were nothing new to Montreal, the sever-

ity of the situation at the end of 1909 was. Conservative estimates placed the number of instances in December of that year at 3,000.

At the beginning of that same month, it was reported that the five public hospitals (Royal Victoria, Montreal General, Western, Hôtel Dieu and Notre Dame)



were by then no longer in a position to accept any more typhoid fever patients, their wards being already full with nearly 200 cases in all. That simple fact left hundreds of other people at home with the disease being treated by their family doctor (if they could afford one), or wandering the streets, all the while carriers of the Salmonella bacterium. To illustrate how serious the situation was, that same first week of early December, one tabloid reported that eight people died of the malady in the Town of Westmount alone.

By late December, the typhoid epidemic was spreading into the northern suburbs of the city, as well. At the same time, the upsurge in the number of cases became the talk in all of Montreal's newspapers.

For instance, an editorial that appeared on December 27, 1909, in the now-defunct *Montreal Star* declared unequivocally that "typhoid is epidemic in

many well defined areas of the city and its cause is obvious – a polluted water supply." In consequence, the broadsheet constantly encouraged residents and schools to "boil the water." The following day, the same journal, in yet another scathing editorial, accused the town's aldermen of deliberately neglecting to give inhabitants pure water. "It is simple truth to say that aldermanic stupidity and graft are responsible for what we are suffering to-day," bellowed the newspaper.

In fact, it was a commonly held belief at the time that Montreal's recurring struggle with typhoid was due to the poor quality of the water source. Almost reluctantly, the city's Health Department acquiesced and agreed to allow the water to be tested at a local laboratory for the presence of typhoid. Throughout 1909, pressure was increasingly exerted on the municipal authorities to test systematically the water, and not just once or twice a year.

Montreal Water and Power Company, a private concern created in 1891, supplied the municipality's drinking water. That precious liquid was drawn directly from the St. Lawrence River (the same body of water into which city sewage was disposed of, and not that far away from the intake source) and pumped up to the McTavish Reservoir where it was conserved for eventual distribution to the residences and businesses of the town. It was unfiltered and untreated in any fashion; nevertheless, Montreal Water always denied responsibility for the epidemic and repeatedly claimed that the water was, in fact, pure.

It should be noted that because of its uncovered nature, the McTavish Reservoir became home to much aquatic life, particularly fish. It was not uncommon for tiny, and not so tiny, fish to come through the pipes and into one's home

during the Edwardian Era. Indeed, in early 1910, in the midst of perhaps the worst typhoid epidemic the town had ever seen, a local newspaper reported the odd story of how a family living on Bleury Street hired a plumber to determine why the water pressure in their house was so poor. To the amazement of all, the work revealed the decaying corpse of a lamprey within a pipe as the source of the problem. The gruesome discovery also accounted for the recent ill health of various members of the family of one Mr. F. F. Meagher.

It was in late December that the question of an emergency facility to handle the overflow from the established hospitals first came up. A nearly unanimous demand for one originated from those closest to the problem - the physicians of Montreal.

The city's Medical Health Officer, Dr. Louis Laberge, stated that while the municipal administration would like to have created such a resource, he did not believe that the necessary funds could be found, and this despite the fact that local hospitals could handle, at best, a small fraction of all the town's typhoid patients. One rather influential alderman, Dr. E. G. Dagenais (Chairman of the Health Committee, no less), went one step further when he proffered that "not a cent was available" from the city to help cope with the typhoid question. After further stonewalling on the part of local authorities, private citizens came together on the last day of the year and took the deadly matter, as it were, into their own hands.

Accordingly, on New Year's Eve 1909, fifteen individuals met at the Mansfield Street home of Dr. Thomas A. Starkey to discuss the setting up of just such an emergency typhoid fever infirmary. Despite Mayor Louis Payette's last minute claim that he would act on the contentious question if City Council didn't, Starkey and his group decided that, in this matter, it would be better not to count on anything coming from Montreal's City Hall. Dr. Starkey was a well-known critic of the municipality's water supply, having spoken on the subject frequently, most notably on February 1, 1909, in a lecture at McGill's Royal Victoria College.

Working closely with Lady Julia Drummond (one of the founders of the Montreal chapter of the Victorian Order of Nurses), Dr. Starkey was approached by Northern Electric about its empty



building on Aqueduct Street. Following this contact, Starkey, a Professor of Hygiene at McGill University, was offered the edifice rent-free for three months. The good doctor accepted and work rapidly began on making the structure suitable for a desperately-needed health facility.

Volunteers, both men and women, generously came forward and furnished the necessary labour in order to prepare the building for its first patients. Men from both the Prince of Wales Fusiliers and the Victoria Rifles cleaned, renovated, sprayed, and whitewashed the interior walls and ceilings. Sinks and faucets were installed, partitions raised.

Meanwhile, donations came forth from various members of the city's business community. Some offered money while others put forward badly needed supplies: beds, mattresses, pillows, towels, ice bags, hot water bottles, bottled water, etc. The Northern Electric also provided the edifice with 150 lamps and wired the structure accordingly before handing it over to the officers of the temporary hospital.

On Tuesday, January 4, 1910, the Montreal Emergency Typhoid Hospital opened its doors and received its first patient. Mrs. Alice Sole, 25, living at 1400a Des Erables Street, was brought to the facility, accompanied by her husband. Practically delirious from the dreaded disease, she was unable to speak. Mr. Sole immediately issued a written statement thanking the temporary infirmary for taking in his suffering wife. Other patients, equally ill and equally poor, quickly followed,

such that by noon the next day there were 16 admissions while at the same time another 30 were waiting for ambulances to transport them to the Aqueduct Street service. Within a week, there were over 100 typhoid patients being treated.

Unlike many of Montreal's institutions during the Edwardian Period, the Emergency Hospital was entirely non-denominational, open to "all creeds and nationalities." On its very first day of operation, Montreal's (Roman Catholic) Archbishop Bruchesi dropped by to express his full support. The following day, Governor General Grey and Lady Grey paid a visit, and the day after that, the Anglican Bishop of Montreal, John C. Farthing, was given a tour of each ward of the facility. It seemed that everyone wanted to lend their support to the noble effort undertaken by private citizens of Montreal.

Initially, the Emergency Hospital occupied the first two storeys of the Northern Electric Building. The men's ward was on the first floor, while the women's was on the second. Within days of its opening, however, it became necessary to prepare the third floor as a second location within the building to accommodate men stricken with the ailment. For some unknown reason, in this particular manifestation of typhoid fever in Montreal, twice as many men were being affected than women. Finally, with the completion of this additional work, the health centre could provide for the medical needs of approximately 300 patients.

Nevertheless, by the middle of January 1910, the epidemic was already be-

Old Northern Electric Building, Aqueduct Street (Rue Lucie- L'Allier). Photo: Robert N. Wilkins.

ginning to show signs of abatement, despite the fact that there had been 20 deaths attributed to the malady in the second week of that same month. The creation of the "Citizen's Hospital" (as the Aqueduct Street facility was sometimes called) seemed to be chasing away the typhoid epidemic, which had become a regular autumnal visitor to Montreal.

After denying the severity of the crisis throughout the entire year of 1909, the guilt-ridden municipal administration shrewdly offered a grant of \$15,000 to the emergency hospital within a few days of its opening. Annoyed with the intractability of the city throughout the affair, the Citizens' Committee (the administrators of the temporary infirmary) prudently refused to accept the eleventh-hour money. Needless to say, relations between the two bodies were very poor.

Near the end of January, and just two weeks before a critical municipal election, the city administration was pleading with the press and others not to belittle Montreal with regard to the typhoid situation, lest one bring harm to the "the city's good name." Indeed, Montreal's annual winter carnival was scheduled to open on January 27, in the midst of the typhoid outbreak, and the municipal authorities were already concerned for its success.

By the time the lease for the Montreal Typhoid Emergency Hospital was to expire on April 1, the worst phases of the epidemic were over, and the crisis facility

was vacated on that date, its last patient being discharged on March 26. Only a few days earlier, the one and only birth had taken place in the building when infant Antonea Van Minden came into this world, delivered of a mother stricken with typhoid. Happily, both survived.

There were other bouts of typhoid fever within the city in the years that followed. In fact, smallpox, diphtheria, and scarlet fever were also frequent visitors, but never anything as serious as the winter of 1909-1910. Regular manifestations of typhoid in the city dwindled when Montreal finally established its water filtration plant around the time of the end of the First World War. However, there was one other major outbreak of the disease in 1927, although this time it was due to the milk supply furnished by one particular dairy company.

The battered building that at one time served as the Montreal Typhoid Emergency Hospital has once again been boarded up. It is a credit to those devoted, hardworking angels of mercy, most of whom were volunteers, who toiled there well over a century ago that only six individuals died within its walls from the awful affliction.

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Interior, old Northern Electric Building, 2013. Photo: Robert N. Wilkins.

2014 QAHN CONVENTION IN STANBRIDGE EAST

by Matthew Farfan

A record-setting 70 delegates, members and guests from around Quebec took part in the annual convention of the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network. The event took place under sunny skies on June 7 in historic Stanbridge East in the Eastern Townships.

The annual general meeting was held within the cool confines of Stanbridge East United Church. Built in 1885, the lovely brick church has an unusual feature: a floor that slopes gently towards the pulpit, theatre-style, providing for greater visibility.

Treasurer Richard Evans emphasized the good financial health of the organization and the continuing support from the funders. He also said that he was “pleased to see among the familiar faces some new ones, suggesting that QAHN is continuing to reach new people who share our interests.”

President Simon Jacobs outlined the strategies that QAHN would be adopting in the coming years. These, he said, include increasing outreach, improving communications, broadening QAHN’s connections with organizations outside of traditional circles, and collaboration with the Fédération Histoire Québec.

The president welcomed several new member-organizations that had recently joined the network. He then explained that QAHN would be adopting a new strategic plan during the meeting.



The result of months of study, the plan, the president said, “would guide QAHN through the next five years.”

Executive Director Matthew Farfan explained that despite a new strategic plan,

QAHN’s mission remains as valid today as when it was adopted back in 2009. QAHN, he recalled, is ““engaged in promoting the preservation of the built, cultural and natural heritage of Quebec,” and “aims to advance the knowledge of the history of Quebec’s English-speaking communities by informing and connecting people through its activities. Membership is open to anyone with an interest in Quebec history, heritage and culture.””



Summing up what had been another busy year, the executive director said that QAHN had organized or partnered in four different student contests. He spoke of the Mapping the Mosaic website, which had received an award, and which had been praised in the Senate as “a community-driven chronicle of cultural identity and place.” He outlined outreach at community events around the province. He mentioned the Arts, Culture and Heritage Summit in Montreal, organized in partnership with the English Language Arts Network and the Department of Canadian Heritage. Finally, he noted QAHN’s efforts on the part of local heritage. He cited properties that had not fared so well -- like the Redpath Mansion. “The fate of these sites,” he said, “is a reminder that heritage

preservation is an uphill battle, and in many cases, a losing battle. But it is a battle that we as a group cannot give up on, and one that we will continue to wage on behalf of the heritage community of Quebec.”

QAHN Montreal Committee member Carol Meindl outlined her committee’s activities. She highlighted the Wine and Cheese held at the Black Community Resource Centre in Montreal in April. “That event,” she said, “was so successful, we plan to make it an annual thing.”

Heather Darch discussed the 15-month “Security for Heritage Outreach and Workshop Initiative” (SHOWI). She and Dwane Wilkin, she said, had organized conferences on various aspects of security at heritage sites, including the security of premises, collections, personnel and websites. To date, she said, conferences had taken place in Quebec City, New Richmond, Eaton Corner, Montreal and Wakefield, with another scheduled for Stanbridge East. She mentioned also that a series of 10 handbooks had been published and that a CD was in the works.



Following an overview by Simon Jacobs, QAHN’s new 5-year strategic plan was then adopted unanimously by delegates. The meeting concluded with elections, with all directors returned and former director Sandra Stock elected to a vacant seat on the board.

After the meeting, participants gathered at the Stanbridge East Community Centre

for an awards ceremony and a delicious banquet catered by Les Saveurs d'Antan of Bedford. Following a welcome by Stanbridge East Deputy Mayor Ron Stewart and MRC Brome-Missisquoi Cultural Agent Edward Humphrey, guests were treated to a presentation on the McGill-Des Rivières Family of Notre-Dame-de-Stanbridge. Brian Young, an emeritus professor at McGill University, and Béatrice Kowaliczko, a passionate local historian, enthralled guests with a chronicle of a heritage property known as Malmaison.

A highlight of the day was the presentation of QAHN's annual heritage achievement awards.

For the first time, the Marion Phelps Award, named after Quebec's doyenne of local history, was presented to two people – two remarkable sisters, in fact. The award, which honours outstanding long-term contributions by individuals to the preservation and promotion of Anglo-phone heritage in Quebec, went to Louise Hall and Adelaide Lanktree.

Between them, the sisters have totaled over a century of outstanding volunteer contributions to local community and heritage organizations.



For over 20 years, they have been members of the Sir John Johnson Centennial Branch of the United Empire Loyalists' Association of Canada. Lanktree is the treasurer of La Société de restauration du patrimoine Johnson, a group working to restore the Sir John Johnson burial vault on Mont Saint-Grégoire.

Hall has volunteered at the Brome-Missisquoi Perkins Hospital in Cowansville for an astonishing 70 years. Since 2002, she has been a member of Le Petit Musée BMP Heritage, a museum committed to preserving the hospital's history. Both sisters have served on the Comité du patrimoine in their hometown of Farnham. Hall founded the Farnham library, which now bears her name. Both have been supporters of QAHN since the beginning.

According to nominator Jim Caputo of Heritage Gaspé, "No one more deserves this honour and displays what Marion Phelps stood for."

Michel Racicot, of the Sir John Johnson Centennial Branch, said they ranked "among the finest examples of true volunteerism."

During their acceptance speech, Lanktree and Hall said that they were surprised and humbled. "We knew Marion Phelps personally, and we feel very honoured," they said. "We have been members of QAHN since it was founded in 2000, and we have many happy memories of this wonderful organization."

The Richard Evans Award, named after QAHN's founding president (and current treasurer), is presented annually to an organization or group of volunteers who, collectively, have contributed to preserving or promoting their community history, including some aspect of Quebec's Anglo-phone heritage.

This year, the Missisquoi Historical Society of Stanbridge East was selected for the honour.

Established in 1899, the MHS is one of the oldest historical societies in Quebec. The Missisquoi Museum, established by the historical society 50 years ago this year, includes the Cornell Grist Mill on Pike River (1830); Hodge's General Store (1841); and the 12-Sided Walbridge Barn in Mystic (1882).

In the words of the Hemmingford Archives, the MHS is "an inspiring example of community museums at their best." Or, as nominators Brian Young and Béatrice Kowaliczko (themselves residents of Stanbridge East) have said, "the museum's exhibitions have been central factors in encouraging an understanding of Missisquoi history, and objects from its collection have traveled to exhibitions across Canada... Over the past years, the historical society has accelerated its involvement in local heritage. In 2010, for example, it erected a panel on the Eccles Hill site of a Fenian Raid. Hodge's Store was re-designed in 2012 and is now equipped with a multi-media system. Perhaps the historical society's most exciting recent innovation was the installation in 2010 of its agricultural collection at the Walbridge Barn. This marriage of an outstanding agricultural collection with one of the architectural gems of rural Quebec represents perfectly the historical society's

commitment to its heritage mission, its capacity to adapt to changing conditions, and its facility in collaborating with other heritage partners. Now in its 116th year, the historical society is a fitting recipient of the Richard Evans Award."



MHS president Michel Barrette accepted the award on behalf of the MHS. "We are honoured, and we invite you all to visit the museum, which is currently featuring an exhibition called '50 Objects for 50 Years: Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Missisquoi Museum.'"

Following the awards ceremony, attendees were treated to guided tours of Hodge's Store and the Cornell Mill, both within short walking distance of the community centre.

Staff and volunteers with the historical society then led a convoy to the nearby village of Mystic, where visitors explored the splendid Walbridge Barn, which is unique in the world.



This year's convention was supported in part by the MRC of Brome-Missisquoi, the Municipality of Stanbridge East, and local MP Pierre Jacob.

Feedback from participants has been very positive. One delegate reported that her group had been "inspired." Another told us that "everyone had enjoyed themselves thoroughly." Still another called the AGM "one of the best I have been to."



Lunch time. Photo: Rohinton Gandhi.



Guest speakers Brian Young and Béatrice Kowaliczko. Photo: M. Farfan.



Left to right: President Simon Jacobs; Adelaide Lanktree; Louise Hall; and Michel Racicot. Photo: M. Farfan.



Left to right: Executive Director Matthew Farfan; MHS President Michel Barrette; and Simon Jacobs. Photo: Kathy Teasdale.



Hodge's Store. Photo: M. Farfan.



Touring Hodge's Store. Photo: M. Farfan.



After lunch. Photo: R. Gandhi.



At the Cornell Mill, Missisquoi Museum. Photo: M. Farfan.



Walbridge Barn, Missisquoi Museum. Photo: M. Farfan.



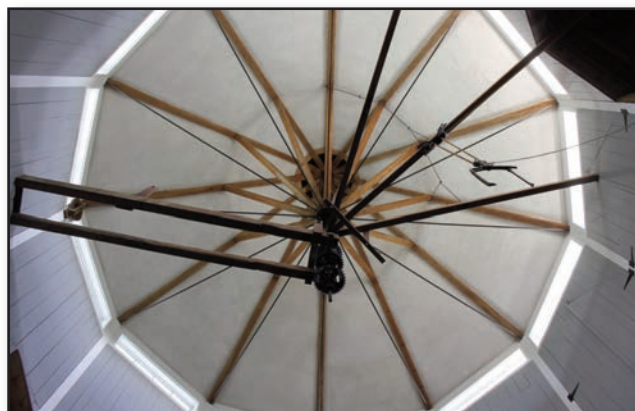
Exhibits at Missisquoi Museum.
Photo: K. Teasdale.



Exhibits at Missisquoi Museum.
Photo: M. Farfan.



Agricultural collection, Walbridge Barn.
Photo: M. Farfan.



Ceiling, Walbridge Barn.
Photo: M. Farfan.

Scenes from the 2014 QAHN Convention.

CANADA DAY, MONTREAL-STYLE

by Elisabeth Dent

It's July 1st, 2012, and I'm in a car stopped behind a large moving truck. People are moving washers, dryers, fridges, and all kinds of "stuff" into the truck from the sidewalk. There are more people taking boxes from a different pile of "stuff" and moving them up the winding staircase to an apartment on the second floor. The moving truck is parallel-parked dangerously close to a Hyundai on the right-hand side of the one-way street. But I can't get through the left-hand side because there is a car parked there too. I'm trapped with cars lining up behind me. Impatient honking squawks from several cars back. Damp, hot garbage is piled up on the sidewalk and the smell intermingles with the exhaust. I'm sweat-drenched and only half-way through my move.

Since moving to Montreal almost nine years ago, this is my dominant memory of Canada Day. In Quebec, Canada Day is Moving Day. Moving Day is the day on which most of the leases for rental properties begin. That means that if you are going to move, you'll likely be doing it at the same time as tens of thousands of other households (the numbers vary) on July 1st.

If that sounds insane, it is. From my rudimentary research, it seems that this "tradition" comes from laws from feudal times. Seigneurs were forbidden to evict tenant farmers until after the snows had melted. The old "Fête du déménagement" was May 1st. In the 1970s, the Quebec

government decided to change the law so students could complete their school year without having to move. Instead of abolishing the everyone-moves-in-one-day rule, they moved it to July 1st.

Everyone moving on the same day has parking, financial, and logistical implications. Moving trucks are booked solid for weeks, and the price goes up exponentially during this period. And you don't get the truck all day either, it's booked by the hour.



It's a race against time and space as you move into still-occupied, still-filthy apartments.

I've lived in seven different rental apartments since living in Montreal. I've only moved on Moving Day three times, yet the trauma will be forever etched into my memory. I admit I've mostly forgotten about Canada Day altogether. Each "stationary" July 1st is peppered with overwhelming relief. I escaped la journée nationale du déménagement! I'm distracted

by the smug satisfaction I feel when I see people moving large appliances down rickety winding stairs in the hot sunshine. Glad it's not me. My friends in BC could never understand.

The 2012 move actually started in early June, and was an exercise in teamwork and logistical planning. My soon-to-be roommate Nick wanted to rent a truck and move items ourselves. I was having none of it. I like to think of myself as a capable woman, but where I come from, fridges, stoves, washers and dryers come with your apartment. I have no prior skills for heavy, awkward lifting into 100-year-old doorways. Nick reluctantly agreed to get movers. To compile our furniture, we coordinated a pick-up at his house in St. Henri, followed by mine in Verdun. We then arrived at our new home which was still occupied by the previous tenants for another month. They allowed us to move the majority of our furniture into a large, unoccupied bedroom. This saved us from paying the exorbitant mark-up that movers and moving trucks charge within

the surrounding weeks of Moving Day. We were lucky that the previous tenants (a punk-rock couple with matching extended earlobes) let us do this; however, it took a leap of faith to have our stuff sitting in someone else's house for a month.

For the rest of June, Nick and I slept on the old furniture we no longer wanted at our respective homes. We had only our clothes, amenities, and the few items we needed to prepare food that didn't require refrigeration. It was kind of like camping. Nick allowed the new tenant replacing him to move her furniture in early. He lived in a maze of her boxes while his cat, Squigit, hid in the packed furniture.

Finally, when July 1st rolled around, we rented a car, collected the cat, and arrived at our new home. The punk-rock couple were still in the process of moving out. There were two large turtles in a tank

This story, and the following ones by Casey Lambert and Amy Fish, are the results of the "StoryNet" project, administered by QAHN in partnership with the Quebec Writers' Federation and with funding from the Department of Canadian Heritage. Emerging authors were matched with established writers who served as mentors through the process of producing original non-fiction articles. *Quebec Heritage News* is pleased to publish these articles as an ongoing feature.

in my new room which terrified the already inconsolable Squigit. We were delighted to discover that the punk rockers had cleaned the house before exiting, which is a rarity here in Montreal – I've never moved into a clean house before. We offered them some whiskey around 11 p.m., when they had come for the last of their things.

This year, with all the hullabaloo about the Best Buy flyers and their “Moving Day Sale,” I thought about Canada Day – the other holiday. I realized that I had never actually celebrated it since moving to Montreal. This wasn't just because of Moving Day, either. The real national holiday here is St. Jean Baptiste. I only attempted to partake in *Bonne Saint Jeans* once but made a hasty retreat. I've never been able to sort out the differences between separatism and nationalism with my limited understanding of French and outsider status. While I live, work, and vote in this province, I don't always feel part of its political debate.

My first exposure to la Fête nationale was when I lived and worked in Lake Louise in 2001. While I had moved there from BC, the national parks were well-populated with twenty-something Québécois. It was hard to keep staff in the parks, so youth from all over Canada flocked there with the promise of guaranteed work and adventure. Ironically, Banff and Lake Louise tourism focuses heavily on marketing Canadiana. Tourists come on the Canadian railway to drink Canadian wine. They eat Canadian bison burgers on a terrace flanked by the Canadian Rockies. On June 24th, in the staff accommodations of the hotel in Lake Louise where I worked, a bunch of the staff were getting ready for a bush party, and I asked Celanie if I could come.

“Um, you can but...well, no one will be speaking English there,” she warned, her brow scrunching.

I decided not to go. I didn't really know what St. Jean was about, anyway.

Since I lived in Montreal, I attempted the St. Jean Baptiste parade in 2008. I had been taking Francization classes through the provincial government and this time was ready to use my *français*. I arrived at the parade, full of folk music and large puppets. People were dressed in blue and waving Quebec flags. I didn't relate. When I found out that Anglophone bands were removed from the celebrations in 2009, I felt the same way I did when Celanie

warned me about the bush party. Unwelcome.

This year, having realized that I had never attempted to celebrate Canada Day in Quebec, I set out for le Vieux-Port for Montreal's Canada Day celebrations. I searched for the telltale colours of red and white as I approached, dressed in a red tank-top and off-white capris. Until moving to Quebec I never considered my national or linguistic identity. Now “where I was raised, and the language I speak” are considerations of daily life. I realized, as I entered the Canada Day horde, that I rarely think of myself as Canadian anymore. I'm a west-coast girl. *Nature lover. Anglophone.* At times, I feel like I have more culturally in common with people from Oregon or California than I do with people from Ontario or Quebec.

Approaching the throng at the Old Port, I was in a conflux of children, strollers, couples, and families. I crossed the street from Place Jacques Cartier to a collection of people who were line dancing to Lady Gaga music. As I wove between food stands, food trucks and lineups, the *fête* reminded me of other popular festivals on the Montreal calendar. Canada Day was just a re-branded Fête nationale. Red and white instead of blue and white. National holidays blend together. When I worked at the hotel in Lake Louise, we'd serve pieces of a giant white cake with strawberries shaped in the Canadian flag to tourists on Canada Day. We did the same thing three days later on the 4th of July, only the cake had strawberries and blueberries (to show the stars and stripes.)

Contemplating the fanfare, bouncy castles, and children-oriented games, I was ready – within an hour – to return home. No fireworks for me. Canada Day wasn't any more relatable than St. Jean Baptiste was.

I headed home, sweaty and annoyed, as I get when I am in masses of people. Fortunately,

my day was still largely intact. I noticed that, unlike on St. Jean Baptiste, stores, restaurants, even grocery stores were open. Canada Day simply stood as one of many excuses to have a day off (or a party) in the middle of summer. Except that there was more furniture out on lawns and curbs.

While the overall sensibility of Quebec is heritage and culture-focused, my Canadian-ness doesn't permit me to be so. Celebrating Canada Day makes sense for tourists and families, but for me (if I'm not moving) it's simply a day off. An extra day to get my groceries, do my laundry, clean my house, or soak up the sun. I celebrate by not celebrating at all. A day of rest is precious no matter what colours you end up wearing.

Elisabeth Dent ended up in Montreal after her employment onboard a passenger train that did trips between “la belle provinc” and her native Vancouver ended abruptly in 2004. In order to convince friends at home that she wasn't a total loser, she started taking writing workshops a few years later. She never really learned French very well but she definitely got better at English.

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WAS SOLOMON GURSKY HERE?

Literary ghosts in the snow

by Casey Lambert

It wasn't the tree-cracking cold spell of 1851, like when Ephraim Gursky and his team of twelve dogs "emerged out of the winds and swirling snows of the frozen Lake Memphremagog," but I still found myself in the dead of a Quebec winter amidst a stiff breeze strong enough to propel kite-skiers at breakneck speeds along the lake's icy surface. Ephraim, the patriarch of the Gursky clan, Canada's own Jewish Corleones, who romp through the pages of Mordecai Richler's charged novel *Solomon Gursky Was Here*, was a small fierce character arriving in Magog wearing sealskins with Orthodox Jewish tassels and a clerical collar. When asked where he was from, he replied "the North." When asked where in the North, he simply said, "Far."

While Magog's menfolk looked on, Ephraim unsheathed a broadsword from his sled and carved out large blocks of hardened snow that he used to build an efficient igloo. "The men turned up early the next morning, fully expecting to find Ephraim dead. Frozen stiff. Instead they found him squatting over a hole in the ice." Not only had he already pulled some perch from the lake, there was a buck hanging on a pole that had just been dressed.

I was thinking about Ephraim when I cycled up the western shore of Lake Memphremagog this past summer. I was looking forward to seeing the lake and the cottage country that I had read about in Richler's novels. I envisioned setting up camp on a secluded cove before going for a drink at one of his old watering holes. But from my bike I managed only cursory glances at the lake's tranquil waters as all the lakefront acreage seemed to be swallowed up by private cottages, private roads, private yacht clubs. Running out of

daylight I was forced to pedal onward, leaving the region without seeing much of anything.

That night, I hatched an idea to return to Lake Memphremagog during the winter and make myself at home on the ice just as Ephraim had done in the opening pages of *Solomon Gursky Was Here*. Lacking a broadsword and igloo-building skills, I read up on how to make a quinzhee (pronounced Quincy), which is



just a fancy word for a pile of snow with a hole in it.

Part of the allure was to see whether spending a night out in a frozen landscape could bring me a slice of Gursky fortitude. Ephraim had it in spades when he swindled himself and his kosher food onto the *Erebus* during the Franklin expedition, and his chosen grandson Solomon had it when, as a teenager, he won the deed to a hotel in a high-stakes poker game.

Solomon and his brothers, Bernard and Morrie, went on to become the continent's premier liquor barons, bootlegging their way to immense riches. But before moving into their Upper Westmount mansions, the Gursky brothers were kids growing up in Saskatchewan. One winter day, a 91-year-old Ephraim arrived at

their school in a dog sled and picked nine-year-old Solomon to accompany him on a long journey. He told a friend they were heading to Montana, but when they were out of sight he steered the dogsled north. When Solomon asked where they were going, Ephraim said, "Far."

To which Solomon responded, "Are you drunk again, zeyda?"

They travelled through the night for the first week and in the morning Ephraim would brandish his broadsword to cut snow blocks and build an igloo. After months together on the trail they made it to the top—the Polar Sea, which was where Ephraim revealed to Solomon that he would be staying to live among the Inuit. Solomon was given the dogs, one rifle and half their ammunition for the return trip on his own.

The notion of being recognized by a grandfather as someone with a unique gift was also a theme in Richler's earlier novel *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*. Charles Foran's biography Mordecai suggests that Richler felt a special connection with his maternal grandfather, Yudel Rosenberg, a prominent Montreal rabbi. Although the rabbi died when Richler was a young boy, the impression that his zeyda saw something in him was carried well into his adulthood.

On a sunny Saturday afternoon I stepped onto the frozen Memphremagog Lake at the beach in Magog expecting to share the ice with only a few idle ice fishermen. Instead, I stumbled into an almost carnival atmosphere with colourful kites pulling skiers and snowboarders across the ice, dozens of mobile shacks scattered near the beach, most of them occupied by people waiting for a fish to tug on their line, and an assortment of vehicles buzzing along the ice—cars, trucks, quads

*Author's quinzhee, Lake Memphremagog, Quebec.
Photo: Casey Lambert.*

and, most of all, snowmobiles. I even spotted a guy riding a bicycle. There was a thin hard layer of snow covering the ice so I was anxious about where I would find enough material to build my quinzhee. Leaving my fellow ice-lake enthusiasts behind, I plodded south on plastic snowshoes hoping to walk as far as Sargent's Bay, the location of the Richler family cottage.

Noah Richler once called this "the place where my father had been happiest, and which told him, I imagine, that he'd arrived." Mordecai grew up on St. Urbain Street in Montreal, but as a 19-year-old he ventured across the Atlantic for a short but boisterous stay in France and then a much longer stay in England, where he established himself as a writer, a husband, and a father. After a 20-year absence he returned with his wife Florence and their five children to his cherished city and, like the Gurskys, bought a house in Westmount. Two years later they added a second home with the purchase of a white cottage perched above Sargent's Bay. It had everything they wanted, according to Foran, "including a central second-floor space for an office for Richler and plenty of fairly level ground for a garden for Florence."

The cottage is no longer in the Richler family, and the contents of his second-floor study have recently been transferred to the English Department at Concordia University. Spread across two adjacent rooms on the 6th floor of the Library Building are Richler's books, desk, typewriter, a photo of Maurice Richard and even a final Davidoff cigar that he never got to light up before his death in 2001. The doors are locked but one can peer through the windows any time of the day or night.

My march down the lake took most of the afternoon. After three hours of uneventful walking by the wooded shoreline, I came to a small island that had been barely visible from the beach in Magog. On the leeward side of what I would later learn is Lord's Island, I was delighted to find eight inches of soft snow covering the ice. Not far from where I would establish camp was a shoddy staircase leading to the island's interior, and at the top of the stairs stood what must be the

best-selling signs at local hardware stores, "private property" and "do not enter".

With only an hour or two of daylight left I retrieved a compact shovel from my backpack and started shifting snow into what I hoped would soon be a functional home. For the first ten minutes, my shovel seemed as useful as a spoon, as repeated scoops of snow had no perceptible impact on the height of my meagre pile. Eventually a hump took shape and hundreds of shovel loads later it was above my knees. I worked continuously for the next hour and was relieved to see a conical pile of snow that peaked near my shoulders. I smacked it with my shovel to pack the snow and shape it so it would be long enough to conceal me while lying down.

Ideally the pile should be left alone for several hours allowing the snow to bond, but with daylight fading and no



idea how long it would take to hollow out a sufficient cavern, I started in almost immediately. I was half of a body length in when I heard a thud and felt snow collapsing on me. Luckily it was only a small chunk above the entrance that had fallen, but a fracture on both interior walls was now visible. Undeterred I kept burrowing on my hands and knees, emerging often to clear the discarded snow. When I thought I was getting close to the end I went outside and stuck a series of twigs into the walls. Crawling inside with my headlamp to see if the twigs were visible, I was alarmed to see almost the full length of one poking in at the end of the tunnel.

By 7 p.m. I was inside my sleeping bag inching my way headfirst into the cave. Pleased with myself, I took a photo with my phone looking down towards the dark entrance and sent it to friends with

the caption "my bed for the night." I am not sure when I fell asleep but at 10:30 p.m. I woke abruptly, no longer pleased. I struggled to loosen the cords cinching my sleeping bag around my face, but that didn't alleviate my claustrophobia—something I haven't contended with since I was a child stuck underneath a bed. I wasn't in panic mode yet, but, unable to divert my thoughts from the cracked walls and the mass of snow above me, I knew that the status quo was not going to do.

My backup plan in case my quinzhee failed was to drive back to Montreal and spend the night in the dilapidated Mordecai Richler Gazebo in Mount Royal Park. Not eager to walk three hours back to my car in the dark, I squirmed out of the tunnel and re-entered it feet first.

Sleep would not come easy—I was now kept awake by a steady assault of snowflakes on my face. When I did fall asleep, my dreams were vivid but far from pleasant. In one I was attacked by a pack of wolves, in another by a pack of teenagers, and more than once I awoke from a nightmare only to discover I was still dreaming, forced to contend with some new menace.

As disagreeable as all this sounds (and I haven't even mentioned peeing on the inside walls of my cavern or eating pad-thai noodles without utensils) part of the reason I was out there was to see what happens when forced outside my comfort zone—to explore what suppressed emotions creep out in the middle of a cold, lonely night. But perhaps the real payoff from this type of experience is seeing how quickly distress and impending doom evaporate at dawn's first light.

Because of their tribulations in the Far North, Ephraim and Solomon Gursky stand apart from the other characters in the novel. They exude extreme confidence and they instill in others, the reader included, the belief that they can achieve anything, even the impossible: Ephraim surviving the Franklin expedition (in part because his kosher food wasn't contaminated), Solomon staging his own death in a plane crash during a murder trial and surfacing years later across the Atlantic as a knighted aristocrat.

His older brother Bernard, partner and rival, recognized a change in

Solomon after his return from the north. In a seminal event in the novel the three Gursky brothers were at the fence watching their father conduct a horse auction, when Solomon casually jumped “into the flow of nervy horses in the corral.” Bernard conceded that “Solomon had returned blessed with a certain grace, an inner stillness. And watching him now, at ease with the wild mustangs, Bernard grasped that had he been the one to jump into the corral, probably stumbling in the dust, they would have smelled his fear and reared up on their hind legs, snorting, looking to take a chomp out of him... he watched Solomon crossing that corral, he watched choking on envy and hatred, and yet, for all that, he yearned for Solomon’s approval.”

I am not naive enough to think that one sleep-deprived night on a frozen lake will be enough to bless me with stillness, grace or Gursky chutzpah. My only hope is that any glimmer of wisdom accrued during this ice capade will stay with me longer than the blisters on my feet.

The first thing I did after dressing and packing in the morning was to climb atop my quinzhee and try to collapse it. Jumping up and down, it felt like I was on solid ground. Back on the ice with my shovel I was able to break off small sections, whack by whack, but I couldn’t trigger the catastrophic collapse I had feared all night.

Determined to see Sargent’s Bay I resumed my trek southward. At least ten centimetres of wet, heavy snow had fallen during the night so my pace was sluggish. Turning the corner at the mouth of the bay, I could see the pyramidal spire of Saint-Benoît-du-Lac Abbey high above the trees, but a more interesting piece of architecture made to house cattle, not holy men, was visible in the foreground. Next to a rare farmhouse persisting along the lakefront is one of only seven round barns that remain in the Townships.

To find Richler’s cottage, Charles Foran had told me to look for a white house in the farthest recess of Sargent’s Bay. It would be recognizable by an addition made to accommodate a snooker table. Looking towards the deep recesses in the bay I saw two white houses perched above the lake; either could have been the Richler home. By this point I wasn’t concerned with its precise location. From my

vantage on the lake’s surface I had seen what I came to see—Richler’s pocket of the Townships. The wooded hills, twisting around the secluded bay, backdropped by low mountains in the distance. The place where he was the happiest.

Richler wrote three of his six major novels there, *Joshua Then and Now*, *Solomon Gursky Was Here*, and *Barney’s Version*. Cottage life on Memphremagog appeared in all three novels, but it was most prevalent in *Solomon Gursky*. Not only did Richler write the Gurskys into actual historical events like the Franklin expedition, Marilyn Monroe’s death,



Mao’s Long March, and Watergate, he also wrote his real Townships drinking buddies into the Gurskys’ fictional world. Their local pub the Owl’s Nest became the Caboose, and Richler’s associates Sweet Pea, Dipstick, Buzz, Coz and Buff became Strawberry, Legion Hall, Rabbit, Bunk and Sneaker.

The more controversial Quebecers to inspire characters in the novel were the Bronfmans. In the author’s note on the final page, Richler claimed, “I made the Gurskys up out of my own head.” While that may have been true for Solomon and Ephraim, there are too many similarities between the Gurskys and the Bronfmans for Richler’s claim to be taken seriously. Both Bernard Gursky and Samuel Bronfman got their start on the prairies trading horses and buying up hotels before becoming liquor magnates with Upper Westmount mansions, and both counted Eleanor Roosevelt as a house guest.

An epigraph for *Solomon Gursky Was Here* reads: “Cyril once observed that the only reason for writing was to create a masterpiece. But if you haven’t got it in you to make a great work of art there is another option – you can become

one.” This was a paraphrased remark from literary critic Cyril Connolly, that Foran claims “had meant so much to the young Mordecai Richler.” Asked by Rex Murphy if *Solomon Gursky Was Here* was his attempt at a masterpiece, Richler answered: “They were all attempts to make a masterpiece but they were all failures ... You start off with dreams of perfection. It never ends up that way.”

Whether or not Richler thought *Gursky* was his best work, it is undeniable that he put more into it than any other novel. Rex Murphy said it “stole five years from Richler” but the elapsed time from start to finish was closer to 16 years. Foran notes that a “small but tenacious group, Florence Richler prominent among them, believed the hard-won *Solomon Gursky Was Here* to be his masterpiece.”

For my part I concur. *Gursky* is among only a handful of novels that I would consider a masterpiece. It is clear to me that I have a better chance making my fortune at a high-stakes poker game than writing anything close to as complex, biting, imaginative, beguiling or funny. That leaves me with Cyril’s second option, turning my life into a masterpiece. Unfortunately my dim financial prospects mean that this masterpiece will have to make do without a sprawling cottage in the woods above Sargent’s Bay. But in the dead of winter I can always go back to the ice, summon my inner Gursky, and spend the night in a snow cave.

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Casey Lambert is a mechanical engineer and Mordecai Richler enthusiast who enjoys traveling and writing in his spare time. He would like to thank Mark Abley for his adept guidance in writing this article.

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JUST VISITING

The world inside the gates of the Trois-Rivières prison
by Amy Fish

My husband is poring over the travel section of *The Gazette* and I'm thinking, oh good. Maybe he'll find a cheap trip to Cuba. I must be one of the twelve Montrealers who has never been to Club Varadero Beach Palace.

"Hey look at this! Great place to take the kids!" he says, tearing out the article.

I mentally pack my beach bag, wondering if I'll have time for a pre-flight pedicure.

"The Prison in Trois-Rivières has been converted to a museum. Tours are available every –"

A prison? In Trois-Rivières? I glance down at my toes sadly, already missing Cuba. Instead, I say nothing, but prepare to let his brilliant idea fade.

Fast-forward a few months. An old friend of my husband's invites us all to a Nativity-Christmas-in-Bethlehem re-enactment.

"I know you're Jewish," the email reads, "but I thought maybe you would be interested in learning more about the birth of Jesus Christ."

I politely decline the invitation and offer an alternative family outing: Let's all go to the Prison Museum in Trois-Rivières.

And that's how, on a very cold but not yet snowy day in November, we came to load our three children (14, 12 and 8) into the car along with another couple and their 14-year-old to head for a place 86 kilometres northwest of Montreal. My grandmother used to call it Three Rivers.

We park across the street from the large, greystone building that looks exactly like what you would expect a prison opened in 1822 to look like. A large, rectangular building, surrounded by a tall stone fence, also grey.

We enter through large glass doors by way of an attached modern building – le Musée québécois de culture populaire – and are confronted by a giant Christmas tree with plastic bananas and cherries instead of ornaments. For a minute I think they've managed to sneak a Nativity re-enactment past us, but no.

Being Jewish, we do not grasp the symbolism, and turn to our friends for guidance. They're mystified too. We guess it's a Trois-Rivières thing, and move on.

The first section is a series of sculptures and moving toys based on fables written by a guy named Fred Pellerin. Never heard of him, but he clearly has a wild imagination.

The toys are interesting, colourful and invite you to explore an alternate world, similar to *The Hobbit* or the *Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*.

Videos explain how the toys were made, and how, had they not been encased in glass, they would be able to move around. The exhibit offers no background about Mr. Pellerin – we are expected to be familiar with his work. I take a picture of the exhibit sign and make a mental note to read up on him later.

Meanwhile, my eldest beckons me to the next stop: Crimes of Quebec. "Razors! Used in a criminal's suicide! C'mon Mom. Seriously."

He is truly amazed by the range of artefacts on display – a bank safe blown open, knives used in bank robberies, and a few original police uniforms from throughout Quebec.

I notice the explanations are printed in English, French and... Spanish. I am pleasantly surprised, but at the same time wondering what the museum's motives are. Are they trying to

encourage tourism? Do they want to accommodate English-speaking Quebecers like ourselves? Are they recipients of a Federal grant that was only willing to support the museum if there were English subtitles?

Having grown up in Quebec, I expect language to be fraught with emotion. Even the telephones you can pick up to learn more about the exhibits are tri-lingual. I feel a twinge of shame for being suspicious of the museum's motives.

Maybe the Musée québécois de culture populaire is genuinely trying to welcome Anglophones like us. I have no reason to think the worst. But I can't help myself.

The sudden, familiar sound of shrieking coming from the hallway snaps me out of skepticism. My boys are having a wrestling match, just centimetres from the next exhibit. While reading them the riot act, I notice a timeline on the wall, introducing the final exhibit before the prison tour: La Petite Vie... which translates literally as the small life.

Whose life? I wonder. Francophones living in remote rural communities throughout the province? Not knowing much about the outside world, and therefore having a Petite Vie? Or will the exhibit sing the praises of a sepia toned time when the world was a smaller and therefore a simpler place?

As it turns out, neither.

La Petite Vie is the longest running television show in



Quebec history. From 1993 to 1999, some 80% of the possible viewing audience tuned in to see the adventures of a dysfunctional family, week after slapstick week.

At one point, the show was being aired the same night as a provincial election and there was concern citizens would forfeit their turn at the polls to tune in. Somehow, we missed the whole thing.

I'm a third generation Quebecer. Fairly – but not perfectly – bilingual. I have French-speaking friends and work with many Québécois colleagues.

Not once have I heard mention of this popular show that is now compared to *Seinfeld* in terms of shaping – and reflecting – the culture of an entire (Québécois) nation.

Shame on me. I've spent so much time wondering what "they" think of "me" and almost none immersing myself – or at least becoming passingly familiar with – the culture of my own province.

The mother in the show was played by a man. The father talks to his garbage. And there's a running joke about shepherd's pie – oddly called *pâté chinois* in French.

The exhibit turns out to be a recreation of the show's set, including all the living room furniture, the bedroom and the kitchen, where the wallpaper is pink with cherries and bananas.

Oh! Cherries and bananas.

The universal symbol for *La Petite Vie*.

Any one of the other eight million Quebecers walking into the Musée would have seen the Christmas tree in the lobby and gotten the joke immediately.

I'm on the outside looking in. I'm a tourist. How interesting, to see a show that swept a nation. Sort of like being in Charlottetown and first hearing about *Anne of Green Gables*.

After taking pictures of our kids on the set of this TV show that we've never heard of, we continue on to the guided prison tour. English tours are available, but we opt for French. I'm not one to order a burger at a pizzeria.

Our relaxed and entertaining university student shows us the women's prison, the men's cells, the very small eating area and courtyard, and the pitch-black and disturbing solitary confinement.

Kids were focused on the complete absence of bathrooms in the prison. The buckets, how they were, uh, filled, and where they were emptied.

For me, walking through the halls of one of the oldest detention centres in the country was made even more poignant in contrast to the evidence of an ever changing and evolving Quebec culture that I know very little about.

I walked out of the prison both grateful for the opportunity to learn about history and resolved to watch all 59 episodes and 3 specials of *La Petite Vie*.

A few weeks later, my sister's mother-in-law was at our house for Shabbat dinner. She was born in Egypt and moved to Montreal when she was 11 years old. Her first lan-

guage is French but her husband spoke English and so – typical of most immigrants in those days – they raised their children in an English milieu.

Her big news was meeting a celebrity. She was on a plane, sitting next to young guy. Everyone was pointing at him, asking for his autograph, taking his picture. "I think I saw one young girl fishing his used napkin out of the trash," she tells us, over chicken soup and matzo balls.

"Finally I couldn't take it anymore. I said to him: you are clearly very important. Who are you?"

Turned out it was Fred Pellerin. One of Quebec's most famous singer-performers, and creator of a fantastical world that inspired an entire exhibit of Quebec artisans to build toys based on Pellerin's fables.

"I couldn't believe it," she said. "Here's this celebrity, everyone making such a huge fuss about him. I've lived in Montreal for decades and I've never heard his name mentioned. Kind of

makes you think."

Yes, it does.

I wonder if we'd say the same after a trip to Memories Paradiso Beach Club.

Amy Fish's first book The Art of Complaining Effectively was published in March 2013. Amy blogs regularly at www.complaintdepartmentblog.blogspot.com.



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DISCOVERING THE ICE PALACE

Montreal's winter carnivals, 1883-89

by Justin Singh

The Ice Palace... reflecting the rays of the sun, moon, or lesser constellations, or sparkling with the myriad scintillations which their great earthly rival, Electricity, can conjure from its glacial angles and prisms... a wondrous play of colours.

Recently, while searching online through some historical websites, I stumbled upon a photo of a large castle constructed in Dominion Square (today's Dorchester Square). The castle was in fact made completely of ice, though easily large enough to contain hundreds of people. The photo was black and white, but I could still imagine the bright shimmer of sunshine reflecting off the central tower, which rivalled the height of the Windsor Hotel behind it

Never having heard of anything like this before, I set out to find out more about the structure and where it fit into the city's past. Although I have lived in the suburbs of Montreal my entire life, it is only recently that I have taken an interest in the character and culture that has developed here in the almost 400 years since its founding. What I discovered in the photo was one of the earliest examples of our city's long-standing and well-earned reputation for festivals and culture: the Ice Palace created for a Montreal Winter Carnival, five of which were held between 1883 and 1889.

Walking through Montreal streets in the 1880s, one would have seen a rapidly growing city, in fact the most important city in Canada. The population of Montreal at the beginning of the decade was a substantial 140,000 people (not including the suburbs), but would grow to 180,000 in less than ten years. Its crucial position

along the St. Lawrence, made more so by the upgraded Lachine Canal (1840s), allowed for the new, working-class neighborhoods of Saint Anne's Ward or Point Saint Charles to develop on its banks. Closer to the city's centre, locals would have noticed the fruits of an expanded



railway network, as the Canadian Pacific Railway had just completed Dalhousie Station in 1884 on the corner of Notre-Dame and Berri. Only three short years later it would be overshadowed by the iconic Windsor Station, which stood as CPR headquarters until 1996.

This growth stimulated increased commercial wealth, as well, and it was this rising commercial and merchant upper class that truly reveled in Montreal's development, expanding their department stores and shops throughout the heart of the city. While one would still have headed to Saint-Jacques or Notre-Dame streets for the majority of one's groceries, clothing, and market items, large department stores such as W. H. Scroggie, Henry Morgan & Co, and Ogilvy all established new premises on St. Catherine Street in the 1880s, slowly transforming it into the commercial artery we know today.

Despite this impressive growth, the

winter season was still a much slower time of year for many merchants. There was a general sense among international investors that Canadian winters were far too snowy and cold to warrant much travel to the city, not to mention the unfortunate fact that the St. Lawrence River was frozen from November to April. Commercial activities would largely come to a stop during Montreal's winters, but in the 1880s some intrepid groups of entrepreneurs attempted to make the best of a difficult situation.

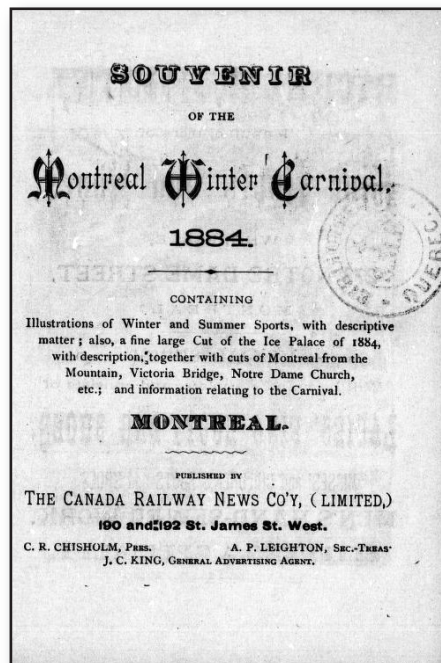
It was a lawyer by the name of Robert D. McGibbon who first came up with the idea to capitalize on Montreal's cold season. McGibbon's idea in 1882 was to hold a Winter Carnival, which would showcase Canadian winter lifestyle to tourists and upper-class Canadians alike – all the while stimulating Montreal's economy during an otherwise slow time of year. Leading this endeavour was the Montreal Snow Shoe Club, along with several of Montreal's major hotels and sporting clubs. McGibbon's leadership would result in five carnivals being held, in 1883, 1884, 1885, 1887, and 1889. Each carnival celebrated a variety of winter activities, including snowshoeing, hockey, tobogganing, skating, and curling. Complementing these events were skating masquerades and a society ball for the more affluent and well-known Montrealers.

The picture that caught my eye was of the Winter Carnival held from February 4-9, 1884, the largest of the five carnivals with an estimated 60,000 in attendance. Planning for the event began the previous September. In the new year, locals would begin to see the sculptures being built, ice rinks set up and maintained, and other preparations made throughout the city. In particular, walking through Dominion

Square one would have seen the collection and placement of thousands of blocks of ice, which would eventually become the centrepiece of the carnivals. Those living in the Golden Square Mile or closer to the mountain would have seen the construction of the large ramps and hills to be used for tobogganing. In the weeks leading up to the event, pamphlets were circulated, both locally and abroad, advertising the coming event and detailing the variety of activities. These pamphlets explained to foreign visitors, most of them American, how Canadian men and women alike thrived in the cold environment and embraced outdoor activity. One could experience the “rush” and “feeling of flying” associated with tobogganing, the “poetry of motion” on the skating rink, and the native-inspired yet quintessentially Canadian tradition of snowshoeing. In 1884 in particular, one would have seen a description of lacrosse, which was played on ice for the carnival despite being a summer sport, and was abandoned in subsequent years because it was not well understood by spectators.

Arriving in the city on February 4 would certainly have been an impressive sight to any visitor to Canada. The Grand Hockey Tournament had begun earlier in the day on the outdoor skating rink on the McGill University grounds, drawing substantial crowds. The inaugural ceremony took place in the evening at the Ice Palace, which was illuminated by electric lights and a display of pyrotechnics. In fact, fireworks would be set off every night of the week! The opening festivities were complemented by an Illumination of the Grounds by the Montreal Tobogganing Club on Sherbrooke Street, and closed out with a hockey game on the Victoria Skating Rink.

For those willing to take part rather than observe sporting events, the festivities began the following day. The tobogganing hills were open to all during Carnival week, and with a guide from the Montreal toboggan club, men and women alike could take part in an exhilarating slide down the slopes of Mount Royal. Skating rinks were also open to visitors to the carnival, with free skating before and after major games or events. For those who did not have the necessary equipment to take part, there were, of course, ample numbers of merchants and shops throughout the city from which to buy sporting



goods and traditional Canadian apparel such as felt and fur boots, tuques, and moccasins. The souvenir pamphlets detailed all the best stores and shopping destinations for those who arrived in the city with money to spend. After all, this was the main reason behind McGibbon’s plan for the carnival and the organizers were nearly all merchants and entrepreneurs.

The highlight of Carnival week in 1884 came on the Wednesday night, and centred on the Ice Palace. That year’s palace was made of roughly 10,000 blocks of ice and measured some 160 feet high – roughly three-quarters the height of the Notre Dame Basilica in Place d’Armes, which stands at 220 feet. Situated across from the Windsor Hotel, the impressive castle-like structure would catch the sunlight during the day and shine with “crystal brilliancy.” At night, the palace would be illuminated by electric lights so onlookers could still admire the structure as they walked or took sleigh rides from event to event. More than just a visual attraction to locals and tourists, the palace was also the stage for the climax of Carnival week. Dominion Square was the site of a great battle, a siege between “armies” of hundreds of snowshoe-clad soldiers. Around eight o’clock, as the crowds gathered in Dominion Square, the attacking army would approach and arrange in formations outside the castle. The defending soldiers would line the walls and prepare for the oncoming siege. As the battle began, fireworks would be launched from both armies, and from the walls of the

castle. The spectacular light show was described as a “fairy land,” with the fireworks and burning coloured lights turning the sky into a “rainbow hue” that lasted half an hour. As the battle came to a close, the attacking army would overtake the palace and claim victory. The battle over, both sides would converge and begin a torch-lit snowshoe walk up Mount Royal. From there, more fireworks were set off before the train worked its way back down the mountain. This battle and subsequent walk would mark the peak of the Winter Carnival. The ice palace that served as a setting was one of the only attractions available to wealthy and poor alike.

In contrast to these public events, certain aspects of the carnival were tailored exclusively to well-to-do Montrealers and foreign socialites. Masquerades, fancy-dress skating balls, and banquets were scheduled throughout the week. While the initial cost for attendance at social events was between \$4 and \$6 for men and women respectively, already beyond the reach of many local working and middle-class families, these further required fancy dress and costumes that had to be approved beforehand by the Costume Committee. This meant that these events were almost exclusively attended by foreign businessmen, carnival organizers, and local elites. The largest and most prestigious social function was the Grand Ball, held on the Friday night of Carnival week. Invitees to this event included Canadian Governor General Lord Lansdowne and



Pages from Souvenir of the Montreal Winter Carnival, 1884, Canadian Railway News Company Limited, Montreal, 1884.

United States President Chester A. Arthur. This event was so exclusive that many of Montreal's own elites were unable to attend.

The last day of the carnival saw the final matches of the hockey and curling tournaments, and a last fireworks display from the Ice Palace as a send-off to the many foreign visitors. The Montreal Snow Shoe Club managed, with difficulty, to have another carnival the subsequent year but these events eventually became costly to organize – it was simply too difficult to raise heavy sponsorship from the local sports clubs. This problem was exacerbated by the limited group who could participate in and support the carnivals; the wealthy, Anglophone community could only do so much. Only one year later, an attempt was made to include Francophone sport clubs, but tensions between the groups eventually led to protests and a withdrawal of the French-speaking clubs from the events. Despite these internal conflicts, the early carnivals

were indeed a successful endeavour even beyond their economic goal. The carnivals had helped to crystallize aspects of Canadian national identity, establish Montreal as a tourist destination, and prove that “Canadian winters could not only be enduring, but enjoyable.”

Justin Singh is a history student at Concordia University. He completed an internship under the joint supervision of QAHN and Concordia's Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling.

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GUIDED TOURS

NEW FRANCE

The Spanish connection

by Joseph Graham

The religious wars of the Iberian Peninsula happened well before those of France and had much different players. The twin kingdoms of Aragon and Castile, united through the marriage of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, became a force that would ultimately crush the Muslim Moors. In 1492, the last city, Granada, surrendered with the understanding that the Muslim majority would be free to continue to practice its religion and culture. The Spanish monarchy's promise lasted seven years.

While some Jewish families emigrated towards Egypt and Palestine, others initially found opportunity among the Christians, who needed their skills in dealing with the Muslims. Jews were so valued in the Christian kingdoms that their rising importance generated a backlash whose severity grew more serious as the Muslim power waned. In the terms of surrender of the last Muslim stronghold, the Muslims were guaranteed religious freedom and the Jews were guaranteed protection, but as early as 1460 the Statute of Toledo had declared that conversion would not be adequate to declare a Jew to have become a Christian, and a period of ethnic cleansing began. The Inquisition is remembered for its public burnings of heretics after they were offered the opportunity to make an act of faith. If they professed their conversion, they would be mercifully strangled before being burned. Jews fled Spain in many directions, including the Ottoman Empire, the American colonies, Holland, Italy and France, while Muslims found refuge in North Africa.

During the early 1500s in France, Spanish, and later Portuguese, Jews were perceived as nationals. Their skills were appreciated and, as long as they did not parade their religion, they were not persecuted. In fact, for the public record, they would declare themselves to be Protestant or Catholic. They were also among the supporters of French Protestants who wished to create New France in the Ameri-

cas, where they hoped to practice their religion freely. When news of the settlement at Quebec spread across France, many determined to go there and many succeeded, arriving up until the mid-1600s. Over time, their descendants forgot their Jewish heritage as they assimilated into the Catholic colony.

In the 1970s, Jean-Marie Gélina, a Quebecer who was responsible for a group of civil servants visiting France, did extensive research into his family's roots and found himself in the small parish of Saint Eutrope, inland from both La Rochelle and Bordeaux. In discussion with the knowledgeable parish priest, he was discouraged to learn that there were no records in the parish, neither of anyone called Gélina nor of any of the variations in spelling that he offered. Towards the end of their meeting, the regional vicar, Father Robert, arrived. The priest introduced him to Gélina who asked if he could shed any light on Gélina's mission, but the vicar concurred with the parish priest that there was no such name in the parish registries.

Mr. Gélina had already discovered that the first Canadian Gélina had actually married a Robert in the seventeenth century, a woman who was born in the parish of Saint Eutrope. He was delighted to at least meet a Robert and enthusiastically shared this information, offering his hand in friendship. To his surprise and dismay, the vicar recoiled, visibly angry, and shouted at him, "Be assured, sir, that we are not of the same race! Be assured that my family never contracted a marriage with anyone of your race. Your race has always lived on the blood of Europe and of France. Germany tried to eliminate your entire race from Europe and France and those of you who survived went to America, where you should stay. Europe and France do not need you..." If Gélina was discouraged before, now he was shocked and intrigued. He further reported that, back in Paris the night before his departure from France, an official of the ministry of justice offered to introduce him to a number of his compatriots

before he left for home. Asking to know what compatriots the official referred to, he learned that his family name, or some variation thereof, was on the ministry's official list of French Jews compiled during the Nazi occupation. Upon exploring further, he discovered that somewhere close to four dozen Québécois de souche family names figured on the same list, showing to what extent New France was considered a refuge of religious freedom, even late in the seventeenth century.

Most of these immigrants, arriving in New France, declared themselves to be Catholic because they knew that as Jews they would not be accepted. Still, they believed there was a better chance of finding freedom of religion in the colony than there was in France. After all, the whole concept of New France had been a French Protestant project from its beginning and Cardinal Richelieu, who had ruled France in the seventeenth century, had dealt severely with French religious minorities. That story will follow.

Spain, in attempting to correct the horrors of the Inquisition, has offered descendants of those who fled the Iberian peninsula the right to reclaim Spanish citizenship. This offer even extends to some Quebecers today, among them my wife and her family, whose ancestors fled to Istanbul and whose father was born there. Other Quebecers of Sephardic ancestry might also be eligible.

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Special thanks to Jean-Marie Gélina.

Joseph Graham joseph@ballyhoo.ca is the author of Naming the Laurentians: A History of Place Names Up North and a forthcoming book on the history of the Laurentians.

REVIEW

Unexpected Fever

A Mind At Sea

Henry Fry and the Glorious Era of Quebec's Sailing Ships

by John Fry

Dundurn Press, 2013

For centuries, Psalm 107 has encouraged Englishmen (assuming they had the King James Version) to “go down to the sea in ships” and “do business in great waters” – a passage that became the mantra of early seafaring merchants. The first part of that verse may also have inspired poet laureate John Masefield to write the immortal “Sea Fever,” whose imagery has always thrilled even a confirmed landlubber like me. The thought of following “the gull’s way and the whale’s way” in a tall ship with only “a star to steer her by” is hopelessly captivating. A part of me has always agreed that something truly real lies in putting aside the clumsy cares of everyday and sailing off into the unknown. The saner part always prevails, but... Someday, perhaps.

One such Englishman was Henry Fry, who as a child saw the tall ships coming in and out of his native Bristol’s busy port and dedicated his efforts relentlessly to pursuing a career as a sailor, merchant, and ship-builder. He finally shipped out of Bristol in 1853 at the age of 27, and after a short spell in New York, settled in Quebec City, where he spent the next quarter-century making a fortune for himself. Prosperity, a comfortable residence and a devoted family did not ground him in his adopted city, however. With a regularity that impresses today, given how long and potentially dangerous such journeys were, Fry sailed to England in search of new buyers and sellers and to keep abreast of the latest in ship design. And then he would sail back again. No matter how successful or influential he became on dry land, Fry’s mind always seemed to be at sea.

The book that Fry’s great-grandson John has written has a brilliant title – and an appropriate one, given that so much of the narrative deals with Fry Sr.’s ocean-related exploits. But *A Mind*

at Sea takes an unexpected turn before it is through, and one is left reflecting on just how brilliant that title is.

John Fry might be said to have inherited his subject, but this is much less an exercise in genealogical reconstruction than it is a scholarly treatment of an important, if overlooked, figure from nineteenth-century Quebec and of the



oft-mentioned but rarely explored world of ships. Fry, a long-time journalist and editor, brings an engaging style to this treatment, and the book is replete with photos and sketches for those who like their history well-illustrated.

The life of Henry Fry is engaging enough – it certainly meets the challenge inevitably faced by any author hoping to hook readers without the bait of high drama expected from biographies of more famous folk. It is the mark of good writing and good presentation that we find ourselves truly caring about Henry Fry.

But the heart of the book is shipping and sailing. I learned plenty. Apparently – with all due respect to John Masefield – having a tall ship and a star to steer her


by is not really enough. There were many kinds of ships, differently rigged (one comes to appreciate the distinction between a schooner, a barque, and a sloop) and differently powered. Steam versus sail was not only a question of speed but also of politics, since not every port could handle the larger coal-burning vessels. It is telling that Henry

Fry almost always made his overseas journeys out of New York, by steamship, and yet greatly preferred to build wooden sailing ships and long resisted the inevitable change to steam in Quebec City. The book’s many illustrations of Fry’s ships, drawn by the man himself in pen and ink sketches, are not only educational in their own right but allow us a further glimpse into this mind so resolutely focused on the sea.

Except that eventually the fever took hold of him. The call of the sea is a wild call, and one day in his early fifties Henry Fry fell into a melancholy that would end his involvement in business and eventually end his home life. The last two decades of his life were spent in various institutions or in convalescence in rural retreats, far from his wife Mary who soldiered on in a kind of limbo between marriage and widowhood. *A Mind at Sea*, the title taking an ironic turn by the later chapters, becomes a tale of unexpected decline into bewilderment. The author’s straightforward account of his ancestor’s failing mental health is all the more poignant for not engaging in potential explanations or making too much of how the mighty fall. Time waits for no man, and neither do the tides when the mind is at sea. We can only hope that Henry Fry enjoyed a sweet dream when his “long trick” (as Masefield calls it) was finally over.


Reviewed by Rod MacLeod

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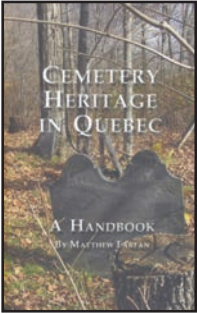
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