

## Robert Wilkins - Preliminary Draft Interview Questions

### Questions for interview

Good day Mr Wilkins, my name is Wanda...Wanda Potrykus...may I call you Robert?

Just to recap and to make sure we both have the same understanding that we are recording this interview in English for use in the Atwater Library 2017 Oral History project currently in progress. The participants of which are interviewing Montrealer islanders, former residents and workers as well as those just passing through and we are asking for stories about the area surrounding the Atwater Library.

Your own story is of great interest because among the long list of your many talents it seems you are a local Montreal historian, writer and blogger and a recent author... having published this year a book about Edwardian Montreal entitled *Montreal 1909* ? However, if it's okay with you, I like to perhaps start at the beginning...

- 1) You grew up in Verdun, were you born there? If so, were?
- 2) Do you have memories you would like to share with us about your childhood in Verdun?
- 3) Which school(s) did you attend?
- 4) Did you marry? Did you have any children? Did you ever have occasion to take them to the Montreal Children's hospital?
- 5) What made you decide to be a history teacher? Did you always want to teach or did you have any other career ideas?

You became a history teacher and over the last 20 years or so have written various columns for the Gazette newspaper, topics include: Opinion pieces, life, and Montreal history. You have also called yourself a Montreal local historian.

- 6) What fascinated you about Montreal that made you want to write about it?
- 7) You have recently also written a book - *Montreal 1909* - about life in Edwardian Montreal where you concentrated on researching one year in particular - 1909. What was it about that year that so attracted you that it became your focus? Why Edwardian Montreal?

You also write a personal blog entitled: *For Good Measure: It's all about Montreal! Quelle ville!!*

- 8) The archives go back to 2006? Is that when you began? What made you decide to write a blog? What satisfaction does it provide?
- 9) How much time does blogging take out of your day?

One of your blog posts from 2014 (an abridged version of which appeared in the Montreal Gazette in March 14 of the same year) which is entitled: *Montreal Typhoid Emergency Hospital, 1910*, which was created for 3 months out the abandoned and boarded up Bell Telephone, then Northern Electric building on Aqueduct Street (which was renamed Lucien L'Allier) due to a typhoid epidemic running rampant in Montreal and Westmount at that time.

It mentions the 5 Montreal hospitals open at that time: Hotel Dieu, Notre Dame, the Royal Victoria, the Montreal General, and the Western hospital that were overflowing with patients, so a temporary refuge was needed. What many people listening may not know is that the former Montreal Children's hospital that opened in 1957 was built up around the former Western hospital, whose buildings were absorbed into it as its pavilions D and E. in addition, the construction also swallowed up an entire street (note to self: insert name of street).

10) Do you know of anything of the history or any anecdotes about the Western Hospital, traces of which are soon to disappear forever as the buildings on this site are torn down and the site redeveloped into 6 residential tower blocks?

11) You mentioned in one of your blog posts that you used to take the bus or was it a tram, from Verdun up to the bus transfer point around Cabot Square (opposite the Atwater Library) in order to go shopping with your brother and parents along Ste Catherine Street....what are your memories of that bus ride and of the square itself? Do you remember what number bus it was? Or if you cut across the square or walked around on the outside? Have you been there since its most recent refurbishment? Any comments?

12) Did you ever visit the Atwater Library across the street from Cabot Square?

13) Along the north side of Cabot Square is the famed Montreal Forum...

"Called "the most storied building in hockey history" by Sporting News, it was the home of the National Hockey League's Montreal Maroons from 1924 to 1938 and the Montreal Canadiens from 1926 to 1996. The Forum was built by the Canadian Arena Company in 159 days. " Source Wikipedia

14) Did you play hockey as a child, as an adult? If not, did you have any particular sport?

15) Did you attend any games at the Forum as a child? As an adult?

16) Do you have any stories to share with us about the Montreal Forum? Either personal, or as a result of your role as a Montreal historian?

17) Do you have any opinions on what should be done with it? For a building once called "the most storied building in hockey history" it seems to be so sad and underutilized these days?

18) As someone who has lived or who is living close to both the Montreal Forum and its replacement the Bell Centre, do you think the Bell Centre has any chance of becoming a similar pilgrimage venue for today's hockey fan as the Forum was in its heyday?

From reading through your blog posts it appears as if you have certain "causes célèbres" or maybe 'pet peeves' might be more accurate. Some of them include the walkability of our city, more traffic free or traffic 'reduced' zones, bike and walking paths, etc, right up to the current regime at Montreal City hall who seem to want to replace natural turf with artificial turf so heating up our city even more saying "Montreal needs more soccer fields".

19) Do you have any insights or hopes or wishes for our city now or in the future that people listening to this recording in the future might benefit from (or grimace that it was never done)?

20)???? Anything else you might like to add?