

# Every Building Has A Story

## The Heart Has Reasons

### Cover image:

Photo of the performance piece on the grounds of the Grand Séminaire. A figure of an old woman, dressed in black, with a long, black walking stick, is framed by the two remaining bastions of the former 17th century Fort de la Montagne. It is fall. She holds an apple. Her stick and apple are reminiscent, or perhaps parodies of a sceptre and orb with all the symbolism and irony that provides but her stick also harks back to the indigenous practise of the "talking stick" or speaker's staff. But the towers, the walking stick, and the apple are so much more, as is the woman. It's a photo that shouts "Tell me more!"

N.B. the current book cover is for placement only and features the David Lewis House c2000

### Book title:

The title comes from a notation found in the "Pensées" by Blaise Pascal: "The heart has reasons, reason does not understand". So it is with memories. Why are some of our memories as clear as day after many decades and others murky or that vanish completely? Why do we remember that name, that place but not another? This performance piece is a walk through a selection of my memories, beginning with my arrival in the Port of Montreal as a young 21-year-old immigrant. It isn't, of course, a life story per se. More a glimpse into the personal memories evoked by some of the buildings and places in and around the Shaughnessy Village area of Montreal's Ville Marie borough.

### Frontispiece:

"Le coeur a des raisons, que le raison ne connaît point" *Pensées*, Blaise Pascal, c1670

"The heart has reasons, reason does not understand" *Pensées*, Blaise Pascal, c1670

Note: *Pensées* written by 17th century mathematician and philosopher Blaise Pascal is a collection of thoughts and writings on theology and philosophy that can be understood as notebook of sorts in preparation for a longer work he was planning on his defence of the Christian religion; however, he died before completing it. A pioneer in mathematics and physics before the age of 30, Pascal's brilliance was appreciated in other fields well before he wrote about religion.



*Every building has a story...as does every apple...and every person*

Image: Courtesy Cynthia Hammond ©2018

# Contents

There are 4 parts to this living history ensemble:

- a soliloquy performance, part of a live event *promenade-parlante* (a talking walk)
- a concurrent panoramic digital slideshow presentation - a virtual *promenade-panoramique* of the neighbourhood
- a gift of a *pomme-memoire* or a memory apple
- a chapbook *The Heart has Reasons*, part of a future series: Every Building Has a Story

**I) A soliloquy performance piece entitled: "La fameuse - The Famous One"**

**II) A *promenade-panoramique* slideshow on the performer's heart tablet**

Title: *Promenade panoramique: a neighbourhood close to my heart*

100 slides showing gardens, streetscapes, buildings, and other neighbourhood elements representative of 40+ years spent in and around Ville Marie from the 1971 - 2018 and representative of memories that flicker through one's consciousness rising to the surface every so often to remind you of the past and the passage of time. Duration: 5 mins 15 secs

**III) Gift of a *pomme-memoire* or a memory apple**

Each participant in the *promenade-parlante* is given a gift of a fresh apple with an attached removable leaf bearing on one side the name of one of the buildings or places shown in the slide-show and on the other the URL address of a ALCC Living History website to access further information and a "work-in-progress" copy of the *Promenade-panoramique* chapbook.

**IV) *Promenade-panoramique* chapbook**

Contents:

Introduction: What is a *promenade parlante*? The origin story.

1 biographical story: *La fameuse* or *The Famous One*

30 micro-stories with accompanying photographic images

# Introduction

## What is a *Promenade-parlante*?

A "promenade-parlante" or "talking walk" is the outcome of a collaborative effort and partnership between Concordia University's award-winning Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling (COHDS) led by its Co-director, Professor Cynthia Hammond, and Professor Shauna Janssen, who, as the project leaders, are working in conjunction with the digital literacy media lab at the Atwater Library. They have obtained joint funding for a 1-year research, creation, and mobilization project called "Urban Witnesses". This partnership is developing creative, inter-generational relationships between Concordia professors - Cynthia Hammond and Shauna Janssen - Concordia students and the Atwater Library Living History team, currently comprised of a community of elder knowledge-makers, who engage in self-directed, experiential learning under the auspices of the Library's digital media learning laboratory, which is overseen by the library's Community Outreach Librarian, Eric Craven. The funding will help make visible those stories and perspectives the members of the current Living History project team have been researching through the lens of urban transformation and living memory in the Shaughnessy Village neighbourhood and its surroundings, and help make visible those stories and perspectives through the production of two, public "promenades parlantes" (talking walks).

In essence, the neighbourhood is being used as a stage, and the project leaders are curating the knowledge, stories and skills of a group of elders that can, at times, be forgotten in a culture of rapid urban change in combination with the stories some of the students have learned from interacting with them. Using creative performance, art installations, and the tradition of the soliloquy/soap box, the elders and the students will be empowered to speak their knowledge of this area of the city in the context of the two walks. The first walk will be presented at the Oral History Association conference, an international event that will be hosted by COHDS/Concordia in October 2018, thus ensuring from the outset an interested audience. The second version of the walk will be fully open to the public. It will be developed over the winter of 2018-19, and shown in connection with the 40th anniversary of the Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA), which has expressed verbal interest in collaborating with this partnership.

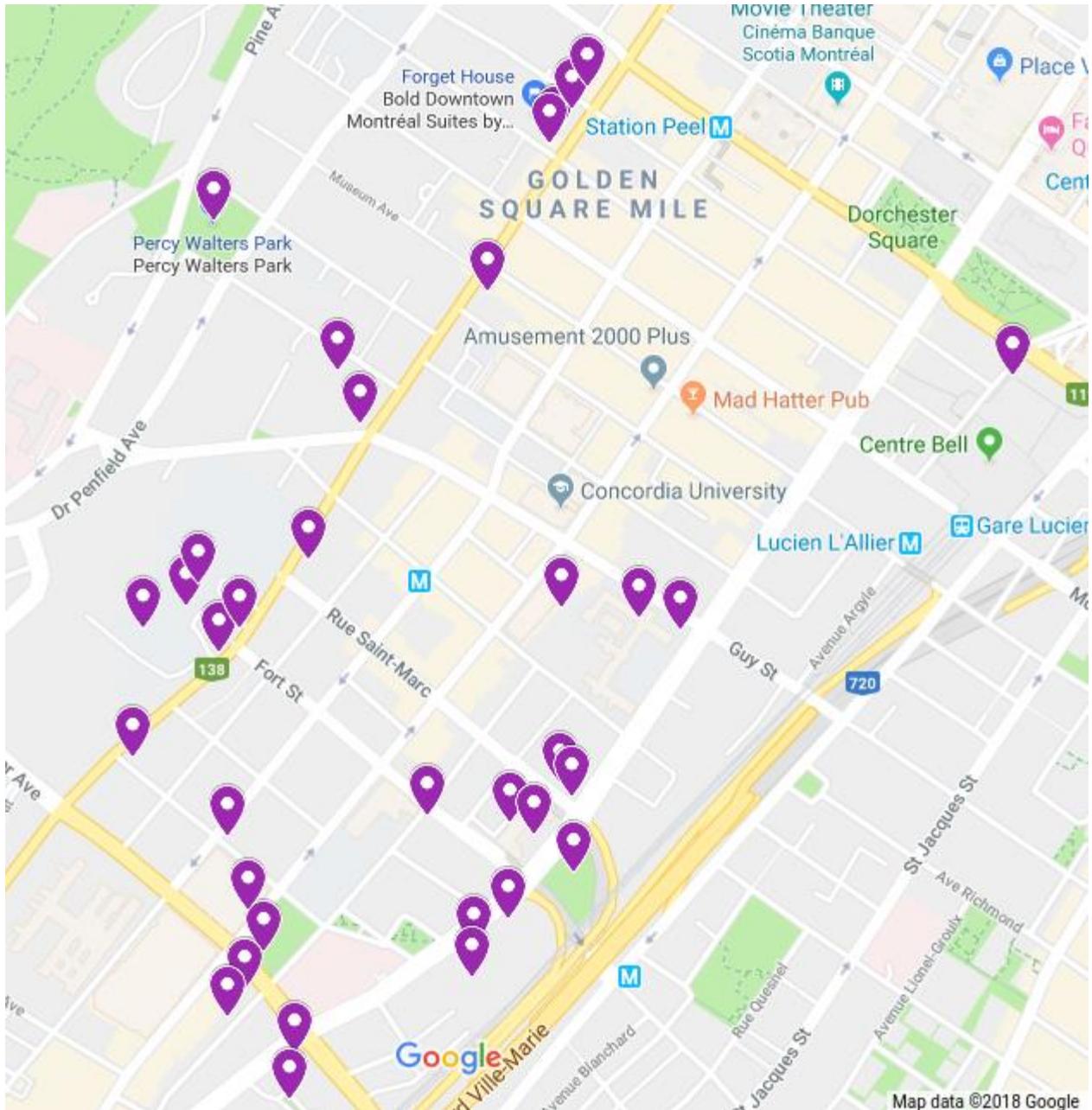
## What is a *Promenade-panoramique*?

A *promenade panoramique* - a neighbourhood close to my heart is a supplemental piece (a slideshow) that grew out of one of the stories presented in the *promenade-parlante*. A visual aid to further understand the impact of the surrounding neighbourhood.

Once created it gave rise to a third piece: *Promenade panoramique - Every building has a story* - a chapbook containing a series of stories that document the author's personal connection with 30 of the buildings and/or places shown in the slideshow. The book can be used as a source of further information to the initial soliloquy story presented during the *promenade parlante* (talking walk) and read separately as a background information to

those interested in understanding more and/or seeking some further insight on the district, or simply as accompanying information for a self-directed longer walk around the neighbourhood, with some personal insights into the different ways people and buildings connect one with the other. A map indicating the location of each of the buildings is also provided.

### Promenade Panoramique - a Neighbourhood Close to my Heart Self-guided Tour



Map indicating location of each story

## La fameuse or The Famous One - A Memoir

This is a story of a young immigrant, of a neighbourhood she fell in love with and of an apple - also called a heart fruit - since eating one daily is good for your heart and your health.

Forty-seven years ago on June 14, 1971 a young 21 year-old girl stepped off a transatlantic passenger ship called The Empress of Canada, operated by a huge Canadian conglomerate known as Canadian Pacific, which had docked early that sunny, summer morning at the Port of Montreal.

At the time, she paid no heed to the fact she was following in the footsteps of thousands of other immigrants arriving in a land that only a mere 104 years earlier had been named Canada. Later, she would learn its indigenous name, Turtle Island, and names other settlers had called it, such as La nouvelle France, or New France.

After a couple of years wandering from the Atlantic to the Pacific across the huge wide open land of Canada - nicknamed by its hobos as the "Big Lonely" - and even travelling north as far as the frozen lands of the Yukon, and what were then called as the Northwest Territories, she returned to Montreal to attend McGill University. It was time to settle her bones in one place and continue her education and embrace a profession.

She found a home in two rooms with a shared bathroom in the attic of a somewhat dilapidated Golden Square Mile greystone mansion just along Sherbrooke St from here, but the price was right for a young woman who needed to work her way through university.

Exploring her neighbourhood, a few steps from her new home, she located a beautiful hidden church inside a huge building called the Grand Seminaire, where she could attend Mass on a Sunday. Strolling one day around the back of the Seminary she found a hidden, tree-lined reflecting pool where the young priests-in-training and their teachers, also walked of an evening. On one side of the extensive, if somewhat unkempt, grounds was a wooded area, where Mount Royal, the island's central hill, on which this part of Montreal has been built, continued its ascent upwards. One fall day she found an apple tree, with misshapen fruit spoiling on the tree and on the ground around it. She picked a few to take home, wondering if they would make good apple sauce. They did. At the time she had no idea that solitary apple tree was quite possibly a remnant of the extensive orchards that had been first planted here some 300 years ago.

As the years passed, she wandered frequently around the neighbourhood that she learned was called Ville Marie, or Shaughnessy Village and latterly *le quartier des grands jardins*, or the place of large gardens. For it was here the Sulpician priests and their tenant farmers had cleared the native trees and planted the farms and apple orchards that helped feed the rapidly expanding population of Montreal. The problem was by the late 20th century, there weren't a lot of large gardens, or even very small ones left, apart from the secret one she had found hidden behind the Sulpician Seminary. They had all been built on.

She also learned the two round towers, or bastions, standing here today are two of the earliest extant 17th century buildings remaining on the island that were once part of the original *Fort de la montagne*, or Mountain Fort that once housed a Sulpician mission to convert the indigenous inhabitants. Over the years since the walls of the fort were dismantled, the towers housed a small school for indigenous converts, a dormitory for nuns, a chapel, storage facilities, and in the 20th century even a small advertising agency. But you can read all about this for yourselves, just as she did.

That young girl was me. My name is Wanda (as you might recognize, I was well-named) and as you can tell, I am no longer young, but my life in Montreal has brought me back frequently to the area I first settled in. As the years passed, I learned more about the neighbourhood and fell in love with its wide variety of architectural styles dating from almost all of the periods of Montreal's 375 year old history. Many of these are the buildings you have been watching projected on my heart-screen.

But what, you might query, has all this got to do with an apple?

An apple is a complicated fruit. Its seeds do not provide you with a copy of the fruit they came from but with another variety entirely. You only get the same type of apple if you graft wood from the tree the original apple came from onto another tree. North America's native apples are crab apples- good for sauces and jellies but far too sour to eat as is. The myriad dessert apples that grow in North America today are descended, in part, from the apples, and apple tree cuttings, the settlers brought.

One of these, originally it is thought from France, gave rise to what became a very famous local Quebec apple variety that became prized across the continent (it was reputed to be poet Robert Frost's favourite apple) and later in Europe too, when it was brought back there, in part because of its superb taste and texture. It was a small to medium-sized red apple with green or cream-coloured spots, juicy snow-white flesh and a strawberry-like aroma, coupled with spicy and sweet notes. So famous was it that it was given the name of La Fameuse, or the famous one. In English it was called the Snow apple. It once grew on the very land you are standing on.

Sadly over the years, tastes in apples have changed and, although in its heyday, La Fameuse was planted widely across North America, where it was known as the Snow apple (its French name falling into disuse everywhere, except the province of Quebec). However, it, too, has now fallen from fashion, and only the very elderly and the nostalgic pine after it. The last Fameuse apples trees in the commercial orchards of Quebec were cut down in the last 30 or 40 years, in favour of planting alternative varieties.

However, its memory lives on in another famous fruit, an apple which became, in fact, Canada's national apple - the McIntosh, named after the farmer who found it, in 1811, growing wild on his land in Dundela, in the neighbouring province of Ontario. Agronomists, or agricultural geneticists, have traced its antecedents back to Quebec's La Fameuse, now credited as being the apple from which Canada's world famous national apple has sprung.

So, as you continue your walk, please accept the gift of a freshly picked McIntosh apple - Canada's national apple, but which also serves today as a Memory Apple or a Pomme-

memoire. Since each one of these gift apples bears the name of one of the beloved buildings that flashed past your eyes on my heart screen. When you arrive at your destination, if you want to learn more, you will find a book that contains more stories about many of the various buildings in the neighbourhood that I have created a connection with, or treasure memories of even today.

Bonjour, thank you for your attention... and do enjoy the rest of your walk.



A box of La fameuse or Snow apples offered for sale at a farmer's market

## Every Building Has A Story

"Every old building has a story. That story is told through what we see now, but sometimes there is a lot more to tell. We can certainly understand a building's evolution by physical clues, but sometimes the clues are masked in layers or major interventions. Photographs play an important role in defining a building's history. They are a single moment in time, showing us how people lived and used the building's they occupied." Heritage restoration, Inc, Source: <http://heritagerestoration.net/every-building-has-a-story/> Retrieved July 18, 2018

Each of the photos in this book captures a moment in time, but what they don't quite show are the personal connections I made during the course of more than 40 plus years with each and every garden, streetscape, building, and element, both fixed and ephemeral, that are featured on the following pages. This is why each is accompanied by a personal story, providing an insight into one, or some, but not all of the reasons it had an impact on my life in a multitude of large and small ways. It is to be understood this is not the whole story of the building in question just a tiny insight into its connection to me. If readers wants to know more they have will have to explore the building or element for themselves, and discover their own connection (or lack thereof) with the images shown in the book.

This is, of course, a personal odyssey. The reader and/or viewer probably won't see exactly what it is that I witnessed over the years. Sometimes the building will have changed out of all recognition. e.g. the Montreal Forum. The imprint of the building is still there but as I write this in 2018, the exterior (and interior) has dramatically changed. For the worst, since many of us who remember it in its heyday of the 1970s to 1996 will probably also agree that is the case. One critic has even called its present incarnation "the architectural diarrhea style".

But the memory of what it used to look like continues to live on in photographs and fine art, which captured the building at that precise point in time where it still exists in some of our memories, and enables us to share it with you. Thus, it won't be today's Forum you will see in this book but artist Brent Arlitt's depiction of as it was in from 1968-1996, which is how it lives on my memory, the highlight being when I took my young son to the very last ice hockey game at the Montreal Forum on March 11, 1996.

Although to be honest, it wasn't snowing that night but it was chilly. And I had attended enough winter games over the years to make this artist's impression a bonafide medley of all the games I witnessed in that now "lost in time" ghost image of the building as it was then.



Montreal Forum c1975 - Acrylic on canvas painting by [Brent Arlitt](#)

My son, on the other hand, a die-hard hockey fan and a goalie, has never seen them win the championship cup, since the only time they did it in his lifetime was in 1993-94 playoff series in the year of the Stanley Cup's 100th anniversary. He was six at the time and doesn't remember all the hoopla having only just "begun" his hockey odyssey. He's 30 now and sadly still hasn't experienced the thrill of his home team being the leader of the pack, and the winningest team in the history of the game. For him "les Canadiens" being on top of the hockey heap is mere moments he sees featured in a coffee table history book but they're not part of his actual living history as they are for me; for whom it's part of the soundtrack of my earliest memories of Montreal; entwined with feeling a part of, and engaged with, the land I emigrated to all those years ago. Nevertheless, even I must admit, I took all those wins in the 1970s pretty much for granted. At the time, I had no idea I was witnessing the end of an era, of "les Glorieux" at their prime, with one cup coming fast on the heels of another.

So welcome to a walk down memory lane. My very own memory lane in and around the Shaughnessy Village area. Will you see what I see or saw? Probably not... Will that matter? Not in the slightest. Living History recordings are like that. In some ways they can be understood as snapshots of a time past, told in the present and watched, listened to, or read about at some time in the future.

The following memory images of this neighbourhood so close to my heart are a smorgasbord of all this and more.

### **The Empress of Canada** - a Canadian Pacific transatlantic passenger ship



This is a faded image of the CP passenger ship, **The Empress of Canada**, moored in the port of Liverpool, England in 1971, just prior to one of her last voyages across the Atlantic to Montreal. It was sold to a fledgling Carnival Cruise Line (CCL) later that fall and renamed the Mardi Gras, although the "official" date she entered into service as CCL's first ship was January 2, 1972.

But this was the ship I boarded on June 8, 1971 when I emigrated to Canada at the age of 21. I shared a cabin with 2 other girls, who were strangers at the beginning of that 'voyage to the unknown". Both slightly older than I was, one was from the same English county of Essex that I lived in, except my home was in Epping, hers in Southend (miles apart). Her name was Brenda. Later I would share an apartment with her in Vancouver. The other cabin-mate was from Ireland, Bridie - whose name, a derivative of Brigid, the Celtic goddess of fire and poetry so suited her, but who missed her boyfriend and, in fact, didn't stay long in Canada, moving back to Ireland after only a few months. We shared a very kindly steward named Eddy, who looked after us very well. I stayed in Montreal, while they moved straightaway onto Toronto to begin their Canadian lives there.

I met up again with Brenda on a CP transcontinental train a year later when we both moved across country to experience life on the shores of the Pacific Ocean, attending the Calgary Stampede and stopping off to enjoy the scenery and the Banff hot springs en route. Two young girls excited to taste as much as we could of the vast, empty country we had removed ourselves to that was so very big and so very different from the small, crowded island country we had left behind when we boarded that Canadian Pacific ocean liner in the Port of Liverpool, UK. Brenda lost her life in a traffic accident in 1975 on the Burrard St bridge in Vancouver, and soon after her funeral I returned to Quebec to attend McGill. Another good friend of mine from England, Marion, also accompanied us on part of that transcontinental train odyssey, travelling as far as Calgary before heading back to the UK. Some years later, she too would be dead and the three transcon musketeers were no more. For more info on [the Empress](http://www.liverpoolships.org/empress_of_canada_of_1961.html): [http://www.liverpoolships.org/empress\\_of\\_canada\\_of\\_1961.html](http://www.liverpoolships.org/empress_of_canada_of_1961.html)

**David Lewis Mansion - 3424A Simpson Street, Montréal, QC H3G 2J3**



David Lewis House c2012 - 3424 Simpson Street

Source: Jean Gagnon Wiki Creative Commons

This is the Golden Square Mile greystone mansion I rented rooms in from 1975-1984, while attending McGill University and afterwards in the early years of earning my living in Montreal, although the retaining wall, wrought iron balustrade, steps and gates as shown in the photo are later additions built after the underground garage was constructed in 1987.

When I first lived here I called it the Simpson mansion (since it was on Simpson Street), although the name on the rental lease was the Linton Annex, as my landlords were the Linton Apartment complex on Sherbrooke St, which was one of the first large, luxury apartment buildings built for the well-to-do of the Square Mile. I later learnt the mansion house dated from 1867-68 and had been designed by architect Cyrus Pole Thomas for David Lewis, a dry goods merchant, and proprietor of Lewis, Kay & Co for whom he also built the Recollets store and warehouse building in Old Montreal at 367 Notre Dame. Lewis lived in his house for only two years before running into money issues and selling to James Linton, a boot and shoe wholesaler, who resided there until 1907 when he sold the large magnificent front garden to a group of businessmen. They built what was then Montreal's largest apartment building complex (90 apartments). Some members of the Birks family, the Montreal jewellery magnates, lived in that building when it first opened in 1907. Constructed in the era just prior to cars becoming ubiquitous, the Linton Apartment complex was built without parking facilities, which as the 20th century progressed eventually led them to purchase the neighbouring greystone house in order to use what remained of its formerly huge gardens for parking. So yes, in my early years in Montreal I lived in the middle of a parking lot.

I resided in two different spaces here. The first in the attic level, entered by a door on the right side - hence 3424A and not the main front door facing Simpson St, which was a separate dwelling - 3424. The attic was up 3 flights of stairs, previously the servants' "back stairs". It was a sublet and consisted of two unconnected rooms and a shared bathroom down the hall, for which, in 1975, I paid \$95 per month, heat and electricity included. I later found out the man I had rented it from not only "forgot" to tell me the bathroom was shared (with another tenant - an alcoholic) he had also doubled the actual rent for the place, thus allowing him to live almost rent-free in the rooms next door. Nevertheless, even then, this was still a cheap rent to pay for a location so close to McGill.



David Lewis Mansion c1980 - 3424A Simpson Street - lower windows were my apt. Source: WSP

The second location, was on the semi-basement level, where I subsequently rented a total of four rooms, with my own kitchen and bathroom, although the bathroom was still not attached to any of my rooms, since it was on the other side of the entrance hallway; however, I enjoyed all this space for the princely sum of \$75 per month, heat and electricity included. I think by the time I left it had risen to around \$100. The walls of the mansion were so thick one needed to wear a sweater in the summer since it was so cool inside, and a t-shirt in the winter, because it was so warm, as the huge furnace next to my apartment belted out heat day and night. Of course, for that price, there were no thermostats provided...and writing term papers while wearing shorts and a t-shirt when it was minus 40C and snow was falling outside my windows was my own alternate reality experience. Back in the UK my memories are of being permanently cold in winter. No double windows or double or triple glazing at that time in most of England, so this was a big change.

The mansion was also the site and address of my first foray into entrepreneurial life, when I set up my own marketing communication business ACORN (an acronym for A Communication Objective Resolution Network) when Forrest Lithography - the employer I was then working for was foreclosed on by the Royal Bank during the 1981-1984 Category 4 recession when, almost at the same time, hundreds of other advertising and other communication industry workers were all looking for jobs as a result of their companies closing. To survive this economic challenge, I offered to complete, as an independent (or freelancer) some of the projects I had been working on for a few of my clients before the foreclosure happened, and so ACORN was born.

The end of my era of cheap rent came when my neighbours and I were evicted in 1984, as the owners of the building, the aforementioned Linton Apartments next door, wanted to construct an underground garage on the land around the house. It turned out through a municipal zoning loophole the land our home was standing on was actually zoned "commercial", even though the mansion had always been strictly residential; however, since the garden had originally fronted on Sherbrooke St. the land had been awarded a commercial zoning so, when the front portion was sold to build the Linton Apartments, no one had changed the designation of the remaining land around the residential mansion, even though they had altered its front door to face a very residential Simpson St. Today, the now renovated "grand grey dame" mansion is no longer residential housing, and is currently rented out as corporate offices (Current tenants are Michael Kors Holdings Ltd. owners of the Versace and Jimmy Choo luxury brands, and thus continuing its long history with dry goods and footwear merchants).

## **Percy Walters Park - on Doctor Penfield between Simpson Street and Redpath Avenue**

I recently discovered this park is undergoing refurbishment and is being renamed by the Ville de Montréal as the Percy Walters and Thérèse Casgrain Park. This saddens me for a couple of reasons. One, this was the land the early 20th century owner Percy Walters, a Vice-President of Imperial Tobacco, bequeathed in perpetuity in the 1940s to the City of Montreal for a park, so that the ladies of the neighbourhood would have a secure place to take their children, where they could be safe to run and play ball without running the risk of being run down by the ever increasing traffic "like that around Western Park" - now Cabot Square. What would he think of Montreal traffic today - 75 years later, especially that passing on Penfield in front of his park since in his day seemingly "traffic was sparse" in the area? There had been two former houses on the property. The first home to Sir George Simpson after whom the adjacent Simpson Street was named, but in 1858 Sir John Rose acquired the land and built Rosemount, where King Edward VII stayed on his visit to Montreal to open the Victoria Bridge. This was the house demolished by Walters. Thus the park, with its safe and secure high brick wall to safeguard the children of the neighbourhood, was born.



Percy Walter Park - Summer 2018

Source: J. Townsend

During my years living on Simpson Street, this was my nearest neighbourhood green space. In the early years, I'd come here to read, get some sun in the spring and sunbathe in the summer until the dog droppings drove me away that is. It was somewhat disgusting and disquieting to try and find a place to spread out a blanket and basically having to give up because the neighbourhood dog owners hadn't bothered to pick up their pooches' poop. So much for mothers and their kids...children couldn't run here safely either without coming home covered in excrement...so basically there weren't any coming to play here either. Sunbathers couldn't find a clean space either since it smelled disgusting as feces tends to do in the hot sun, so in the end we departed too, leaving the green space to the dogs and their delinquent owners. Thus, I stopped using the park per se, except occasionally in the winter when the feces was frozen and smelled less bad, I would sometimes run through it on my way to the east-side stairs, which I used to bound up on my way to the Snake at the Peel, while on my runs up to the Mount Royal Cross and back. In later years, I read the park was being described as the Penfield dog park. I winced. Not quite what Percy Walters had wanted. To read more about who Percy Walters was and his aspirations for his park see a October 20, 1943 Gazette article reprinted on this [Coolopolis post](http://coolopolis.blogspot.com/2007/06/return-percy-walters-park-to-chillren.html) by Christian Gravenor: <http://coolopolis.blogspot.com/2007/06/return-percy-walters-park-to-chillren.html>

Fast forward to 2018. The dogs are still running there, but now their owners have been trained to pick up a little more after them. The park is now divided into two sections, one where the dogs can run free and another where they can't. But the park itself looks sort of lonely and unkempt. The refurbishments seem to be taking a long time to do, with piles of building materials and barriers dotting the landscape. It's not a huge park. Why the delay?



Percy Walter Park - Morning Glory on the fence -summer 2018

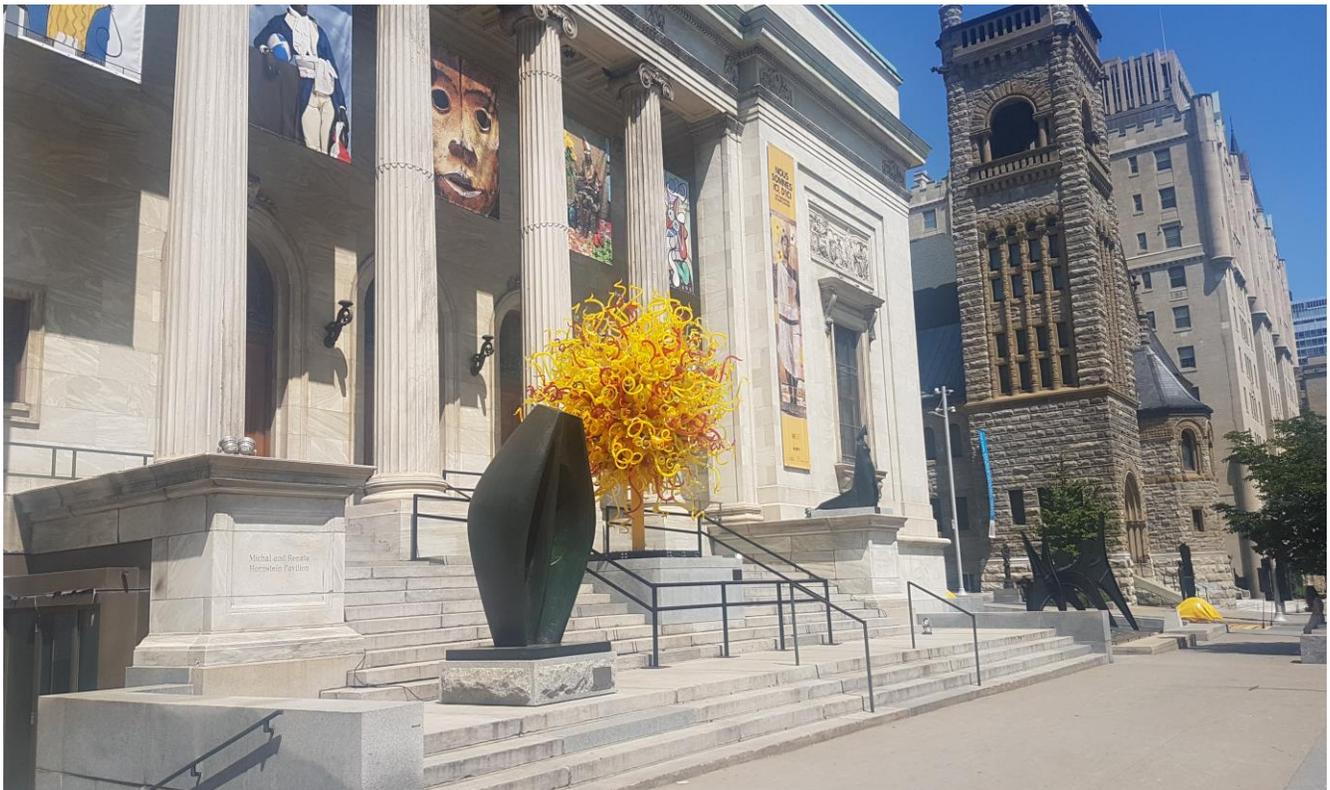
Source: J. Townsend

Which brings me the name change. Thérèse Casgrain was a pioneer in many senses of the word. "She was the first woman to be elected the leader of a political party in Canada. She had a long activist and political career and vigorously fought against social, economic and political injustices affecting both women and men." But she's best remembered for leading the campaign for women's suffrage in Québec. It's easy to forget that women's right to vote in Quebec was not obtained until 1940. Thérèse Casgrain fought to achieve that for us but during her long life she did so much more. Politician, senator, social and union activist, human rights defender, campaigner, radio personality, Québec president of the Consumers' Association of Canada, she fought for universal rights and reforms in the areas of unemployment, health care, education and housing. So, quite why is her name being coupled (rather like an afterthought) with that of a mid- 20th century philanthropist, who gave his garden for a park? Nothing against Percy Walters. I think his intentions were great. He just didn't have a crystal ball and couldn't have known that in the latter half of the 20th century and beyond the needs of dogs would triumph over the needs of parents and children, at least in some downtown neighbourhoods. However, Thérèse Casgrain needs a far more worthy monument of her own, not twinned with someone she had no connection with, and definitively not one attached to a location now used for dogs to defecate in. Just who was it that thought that would be a good way to honour her memory? Someone who either didn't think this through clearly enough, or with a definite misogynistic bent. Women of Montréal and Québec, time to stand up and ask that Thérèse Casgrain's memory is enshrined in something a lot more worthy of her place in history and representative of what she achieved for Quebec and Canadian womankind than a dog park! For more info on Thérèse Casgrain: <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/therese-casgrain/>

**Montreal Museum of Fine Arts - 1380, Sherbrooke Street W, Montreal, QC, H3G 1J5**

As a child growing up in post-WWII London, UK, entry to museums was free and my mother would frequently take her brood of 4 rambunctious children (later 5) to roam their extensive halls. Her rationale was probably: "it's warm, they're safe, they can run freely, and one of the attendants will police them if they get into any trouble, they might even learn something, and by the end of the day they'll be so tired out they'll fall asleep. What's not to like?" Personally, I like to think how lucky I was to have some of the world's greatest museums as some of my first playgrounds and that this early exposure to the National Gallery and the National Portrait Gallery on Trafalgar Square, the Tate Gallery, the Natural History Museum in Kensington and many others (my own persona fave being the Victoria and Albert museum of Decorative Arts - the V&A) helped form and foster my lifelong love of spending time in museums.

So, when I set up home on Simpson Street I was thrilled to realize I lived practically next door to the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (MMFA), and over my years in Montreal I have been privy to its period of great growth from one pavilion to five. In 1971, when I arrived in the city, the main pavilion was the 1912 building located on the north side of Sherbrooke (now called the Michael and Renata Horstein Pavilion) to the back of which was added, in 1976, the David and Lillian Stewart addition.



MMFA - Original pavilion c1912 - now the Horstein Pavilion

Source: Courtesy J. Townsend

As it turns out when I opened ACORN in 1981, I ended up meeting Lilliane Stewart, and the David M. Stewart Museum on St H el ene island in the St Lawrence became a client. I was

responsible for rebranding and redesigning its corporate image and producing some of its exhibition catalogues, as well as those of the Chateau Dufresne Museum of Decorative Arts, which was founded in 1979 and administered under the wing of the Macdonald Stewart Foundation, headed by Mrs Stewart. Later, in 1997-2000, its collection would be absorbed into the MMFA.

The third and largest pavilion, the Jean-Noël Desmarais Pavilion, designed by Moshe Safdie, was opened on the south side of Sherbrooke in 1991, juxtaposing the new, stunning, light-filled, white marbled atrium entrance with the Italianate brick facade of the building next door, which now houses offices, as well as the main museum and other stores. This pavilion is the gateway building, linked to the other pavilions across the street by an underground passageway below Sherbrooke. In 2008, although not housed in a separate building initially, the Bourgie Arte Musica collection was added to the museum offerings. It was supplemented, in 2011, by the marble-clad Claire and Marc Bourgie Pavilion and concert hall, which incorporated into the ensemble of architectural styles the 1863 Erskine and American greystone church with its 20 magnificent Tiffany stained glass windows in assorted sizes. Thus, providing an architecturally and acoustically superior space to showcase the museum's extensive music, religious art and Quebec and Canadiana collections, as well as allowing visitors to enjoy world-class musical performances. One little known fact is these dazzling windows were not commissioned from the Tiffany Glass and Decorating Company for this church, but were moved here in 1937-38 when the American Presbyterian church on Dorchester (the original location of these spectacular windows) was demolished.



View down Ave du Musée of the MMFA Max and Irene Stern Sculpture gardens

From my perspective, the multiple pavilion design of the MMFA complex has somewhat of a trickster or perhaps more a modified form of a 3D 'tromp-oeil' effect by keeping the great mass of museum buildings at a more human scale, in keeping with the surrounding mixed use neighbourhood. This is especially true in the summer months when the lower third of Ave du Musée, the residential street that separates the original 1912 pavilion from Bourgie Hall is closed off. Suddenly the narrow Max and Iris Stern sculpture gardens along the sides the two museum buildings on du Musée are increased in size by the installation of a seasonal modern sculpture garden in the street that seemingly blossoms overnight into summer season garden, which, if it doesn't technically qualify as an instantaneous popup garden, it almost does. As of 2018 there have been four different summer gardens, my overall favourite so far is still the colourful 2017 flower power garden, installed as part of Montréal's 375th anniversary city-wide celebrations. It included pink seats, so visitors and passersby could become a movable part of the exhibit. The 2018 garden has been the least successful design since the focal pieces were a series of large mirrored balls that proved to be so blindingly bright, they spent most of the summer encased in bright yellow covers to protect the eyes of those passing by.

In November 2016, the Museum's fifth building, the Michael and Renata Horstein Pavilion for Peace, opened, housing 700 works of international art, from Old Masters to the modern day, which includes the magnificent Hornstein Old Master donation. After sunset, the award-winning pavilion turns into "an illuminated lantern, offering a transparent and welcoming transition from the museum to the city". Designed by architects Manon Asselin and Katsuhiko Yamazaki of Atelier Tag and Nicolas Ranger of Jodoin Lamarre Pratte, it offers an "ingenious combination of generous gallery spaces and openness to the urban fabric".

It's not often one gets to witness in a lifetime such an extensive growth of a world-class museum happening almost on one's doorstep. Especially true since I vividly remember one of my first visits, when I was attracted by the MMFA publicity that crowed I would see works of art by Rodin, Henri Moore, Picasso, Cezanne, etc...some of the veritable "greats" of the European art world and art I had grown up experiencing in European museums. Imagine my dismay, however, when searching around that one lonely museum pavilion to find these works, it slowly dawned on me that yes, they did indeed have work by these artists but it was only a very small and very minor work and that there was only one of each! It was my first realization that museums in this part of the world weren't quite perhaps on the same level as those I had left behind on the other side of the Atlantic. I later learnt that wasn't quite the case, especially as far as some of the US museums were concerned. However the growth of MMFA in the last 40 years has been stupendous, due to the vision and hard work of a lot of people; and I must admit I have attended and brought my son to many a fine exhibit there over the intervening years. Some of my favourite exhibitions have included: the Tin-Tin (1980), the Picassos (1983, 2003, 2018), the Leonardo da Vinci (1987), the David Hockney (1993), the Monet (1999), the Tanagra (2004), the Emily Carr (2007), John Lennon and Yoko Ono (2009), the Chagall (2017) and most recently From Africa to the Americas (2018).



The *Residential School* totem pole - 21.45 metres high - installed in 2017 as part of the *Balade pour le paix* on Sherbrooke St outside the MMFA - designed by artist Charles Joseph of the West Coast Kwakiutl Nation  
Source: Courtesy J. Townsend

**The Corby Building, the United Services' Club, the Mount Royal Club, the Van Horne Mansion** - 1201 Sherbrooke St W, Montreal, QC H3A 1H9 to 1155 Sherbrooke St W, Montreal, QC H3A 2N3

These were four of many grand old mansion-type buildings that used to flank both sides of Sherbrooke Street in the area of Ville Marie known as the Golden Square Mile because of the richness of its inhabitants and the homes they lived in. Today, one of the four, perhaps the most famous for the wrong reasons, is gone and very few of the other Square Mile homes are left, although three of the four listed here are still there. In this instance, all the buildings on the north side of one block got saved, while the most impressive one on the neighbouring corner didn't. But in a strange twist of fate the one that was destroyed helped ensure the survival of the others.

**Van Horne Mansion** - 1155 Sherbrooke St W, Montreal, QC H3A 2N3 (corner Stanley St.)



Van Horne House demolition in progress - September 8-10, 1973

Source: Courtesy McCord Museum

It was in 1973 that the tragedy of the Van Horne Mansion happened. On Friday, Sept 7, 1973, Jean Drapeau, then Mayor of the City of Montréal, gave real estate developer David Azrieli a permit to demolish the historic 52-room Van Horne Mansion located on the north-east corner of the 1100 block of Sherbrooke St in Montreal's Square Mile district, stating it wasn't worth preserving for cultural reasons as "it was not part of Quebec's culture, its history being Anglo Canadian, not French Canadian". It wasn't dilapidated, in fact, it was stunning, with a glorious atrium greenhouse and it dominated the corner of Stanley and Sherbrooke. But the house was done and dusted within three days. There was an outcry heard across the land from Halifax to Vancouver. A few years later McGill (the university I was attending at the time) gave Azrieli a honorary doctorate. Many in the heritage community felt he was

not deserving of such an honour for the part he had played in the destruction of such an important landmark building, but then McGill, in turn, has been responsible for destroying many of the wonderful mansions and homes from Montreal's past entrusted to it over the years, so perhaps "like emulates and honours like". Who really knows? I recognize it's perhaps impossible to save all buildings from a certain era but far too many have been lost for the wrong reasons.

What is apparent is consistently through the 45 years since the Van Horne Mansion's demise the image of the pile of bricks and the gaping hole has been used as an example of something that should never have occurred. There's plenty written on the whys and wherefores of the issuing of that fateful permit. Architects such as Michael Fish and others had been working hard trying to save the mansion since news of Azrieli's request for a demolition permit had become public, but Jean Drapeau and the Province of Québec didn't see any value at the time in preserving examples of outdated Victorian architecture, especially those that had belonged to the anglophone rich.

Politically, this was the period that followed in the footsteps of "la révolution tranquille" (Quebec's Quiet Revolution) of the 1960s, "Vive Le Québec Libre" had been proclaimed by DeGaulle from the balcony at City Hall, the City had survived the October Crisis of 1970 but the damage to the fabric of the nation had been done and the Québec separatist movement was gearing up and lines were being drawn in the sand. It wasn't going to be so quiet after this. In retrospect, it was a period of great socio-economic and demographic change, and although approached to act, seemingly Québec's Ministre des Affaires Culturelles did not have the political will, or was not interested, in safeguarding the history of those viewed as oppressors. Irrespective of the fact this was a magnificent building, it simply wasn't considered worth saving at the time.



Salon - Van Horne Mansion

Source: McCord Museum

Nevertheless, the lost was keenly felt. The conservationists, extremely piqued, banded together and Sauvons Montréal was born. Later it would become Heritage Montréal, which

many still consider a very much weaker construct than its far tougher predecessor. For this wasn't just a part of Montreal's history, it was also Canada's history as Canadian Pacific Railroad (CPR), was Canada's first transcontinental railway of which Canadians were inordinately proud, and Thomas Van Horne had been its second president.

Van Horne, however, had not been responsible for the initial construction of the house, although he did considerably enlarge it. It had been built by architect J.W. Hopkins in 1869-70 for John Hamilton, then President of the Merchant's Bank of Montreal, and also a founding member, in 1867, of Canada's Senate.

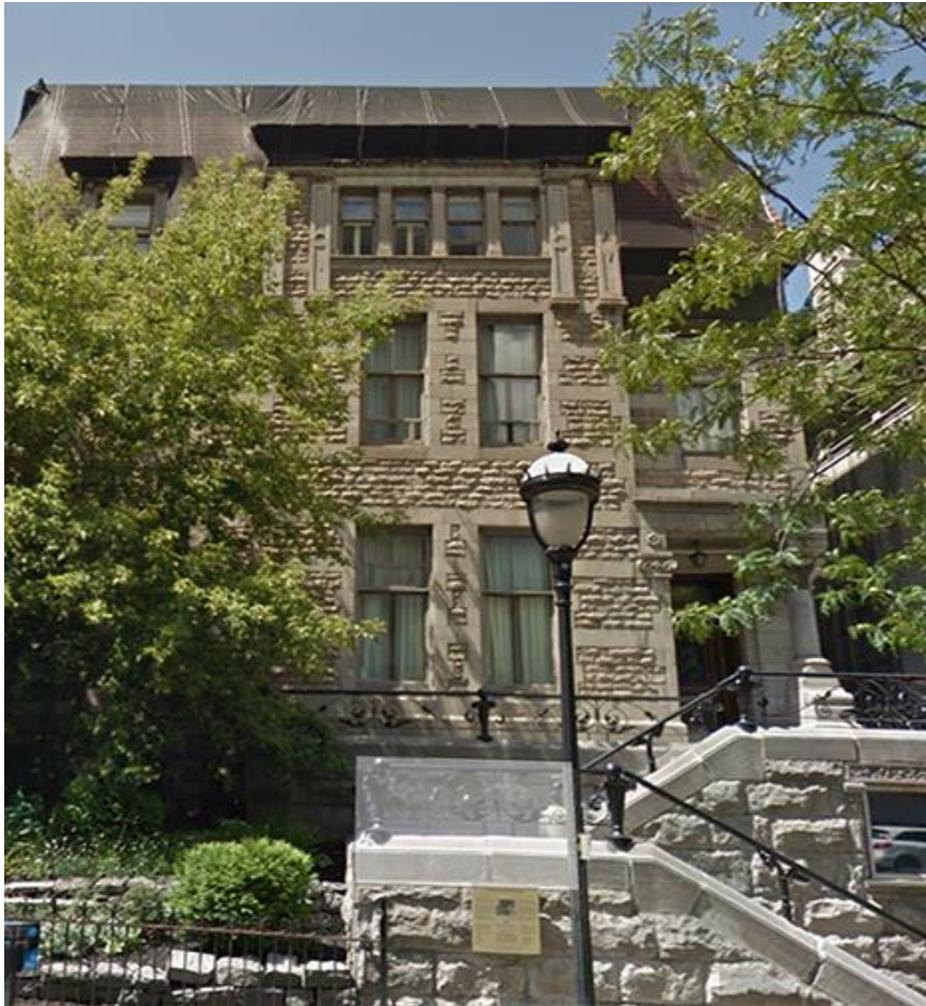
All I know is witnessing the destruction of this building, which was implemented in haste, almost overnight, meant those involved knew it was not a popular decision, marked me in ways I only later understand. Yet, even at the time, it underscored the fact this town did not value its history and its beautiful heritage buildings. Time would prove this assumption correct as there have been countless instances over the last 45 years where irreplaceable historic buildings in Montreal have fallen to the hammer, bulldozers and wrecking ball of demolition crews.

On the site of the former Van Horne Mansion now sits the Sofitel hotel. It contains one relic from the glorious mansion that was there before it. In the lobby is a bright, magnificent chandelier saved from the Van Horne mansion. Its presence doesn't, however, make up for the loss of the irreplaceable mansion. For further info:

[http://www.ameriquefrancaise.org/en/article-459/Van\\_Horne\\_Mansion\\_\(1870-1973\):\\_a\\_Demolition\\_That\\_Changed\\_the\\_History\\_of\\_Heritage\\_Preservation.html](http://www.ameriquefrancaise.org/en/article-459/Van_Horne_Mansion_(1870-1973):_a_Demolition_That_Changed_the_History_of_Heritage_Preservation.html)

**The Maison Reid-Wilson aka The Corby House** -1201 Sherbrooke St W, Montreal, QC H3A 1H9 (corner Drummond St.)

On the north-east corner of Sherbrooke and Drummond Streets, in a block that remains almost intact from the Victorian and Edwardian eras, the Reid-Wilson house is one of three extant Golden Square Mile houses, although at time of writing the house is in some peril as it is currently without tenants. The original house on the site, acquired from William Workman, was built in 1882 by architect John James Browne for banker Thomas Craig. In 1901, it was substantially modified (rebuilt) by American architect Richard Alfred Waite for businessman James Reid-Wilson, who lived there from 1901-1936. Waite essentially reconstructed the house by reconfiguring the floor plan and the facades, incorporating elements of Italianate Romanesque Revival and Gothic Revival design and by adding a new floor, which is perhaps why it now carries the Reid-Wilson name. Subsequently, the house had several owners, who transformed it in turn into doctors' offices, small apartments and student residences, albeit without irreparably compromising the integrity of its spectacular interior architecture, which is of significant heritage interest with a sweeping mahogany staircase, marble banquets, ornamental woodwork, columns, skylights and beautiful fireplaces in marble, walnut and plaster, although only one of its original stunning bay windows remains (on the Drummond side). I remember the renovations that converted the stable and conservatory into a reception hall for the 1976 Montreal Olympic Games.



Reid-Wilson House aka The Corby Mansion

Source: Google street view

As of 1951, the mansion proudly bore the name “Corby,” the distinctive emblem of Corby Distilleries Ltd., whose company headquarters then occupied the premises. They restored and renovated the building, and used it as marketing tool for their distilled products as the general public could visit on a regular basis since they rented out the ground floor to various groups and associations who held public access events there, thus giving Corby's the chance to showcase (and sell) their products, of course. In light of the outcry over the Van Horne Mansion destruction, it was quickly recognized as a historic monument by the government of Quebec in 1974. Corby was replaced by Les Vins Philippe Dandurand Inc., distributors of Tattinger Champagne, among other famous brands of wine; however, when they moved to Greene Avenue in Westmount, there have been no further purchasers, or tenants, except the occasional short-term rental to film crews. The front garden is no longer maintained and is full of refuse, and the great worry is when a heritage home is left unoccupied, it deteriorates and is likely to suffer irreparable damage. Such a shame, since it was cared for well throughout the 20th century, but it seems Montreal City Hall and Montrealers still don't have a handle on how, or what it takes to preserve their heritage buildings, or why they should do so, nor does the city have enough corporate entities with enough social responsibility or conscience to underwrite their upkeep.

In recent years, Montrealers have witnessed the fabulous Lord Mount Stephen house turned private club on Mountain St closed, put up for sale, barely rescued from a serious fire, and eventually incorporated into a boutique hotel. Are we to see the demise of the Reid Wilson mansion too? Although, in my head, its name will always be the Corby House since that is where my memories of it have been fixed in time.

For it was in 1983, while attending an event there, an Irish author and poetry reading, I met an amusing, witty, charming, courtly and much older gentleman by the name of John Pratt. An ex-mayor of Dorval, where he lived in a marvellous old riverside heritage home I later visited. He was also a former Canadian naval officer and had performed as part of the *Meet the Navy* revue, entertaining troops in WWII. He sang the showstopper, 'You'll get used to it', with words he had reworked set to music by Freddy Grant. On learning I also liked ballet, as well as literature and poetry; he invited me to go see Les Ballets Jazz de Montréal perform at a fundraising picnic event at Ste Hélène Island. We were to be part of a larger group that would car pool to get there so, the invitation included an additional invite to a house in Westmount for a pre-picnic cocktail. That is how I met the Nicholsons, hosts of the Wednesday Night Salon described elsewhere. I will be always grateful of the fact that a love of Irish literature and poetry caused the serendipitous meeting that brought into my life the highly amusing and erudite John Pratt and the gregarious and "one of a kind power couple" the Thébaud-Nicholsons, as well as their countless guests, whose friendships have enlivened and enriched my life over the last 35 years.



Reid-Wilson House (left) and Forget House - Macdonald Stewart Foundation (right)  
Source: Google street view

## **The United Services Club and the Macdonald Stewart Foundation aka the Forget House - 1195 Sherbrooke St W., Montreal, QC. H3A 1H9**

An important point to bear in mind while lamenting the loss of Montreal's upscale Victorian heritage homes is the basic fact these houses were constructed to serve as single-family homes of the extremely well-to-do, and purchasing and maintaining them, especially when they are accredited heritage homes, is far from a given as they are no doubt far too expensive a proposition for many to take on. Plus many of them are now also zoned commercial fronting as some of them do, or did, on Sherbrooke and other major commercial streets. There is a tendency to forget over time that when they were originally constructed these were not in commercial but in residential neighbourhoods. Nevertheless, once the original families moved out and on, or died, it was mostly associations and businesses, such as private clubs that could effectively use their sumptuous layouts to their advantage, without having to dismantle too much of the interiors to do so, since dining rooms and salons could easily be converted to meeting, banquet and reception rooms.

However, in 21st century Montreal, private members' clubs are dwindling in number. The United Services club closed in 1995. The fabulous Mount Stephen Club (former home of Lord Mount Stephen, financier and president of the Bank of Montreal and of Canadian Pacific Railway) closed in 2011. The University Club moved out of its purpose-built premises in 2017 and its building was sold and it now shares space at the St James Club. There doesn't appear to be too many eager buyers lining up to buy or rent the former Corby/Reid-Wilson House to use for whatever. However, the Forget House next door was slightly luckier (so far) but as we can see with the neighbouring Reid-Wilson house, time passes and luck changes.

Louis-Joseph Forget was one of the few, extremely rich French-Canadian business men among the predominantly Anglo social elite of the time, and a man who chose to live in this area of town. Others existed but they didn't live in the Square Mile. An influential financier and stockbroker, he was elected Chairman of the Montreal Stock Exchange in 1895 and 1896 and was the first francophone director of the CPR. He was involved in many Montreal companies, serving as president of the Montreal Street Railway Company from 1892 to 1910 and overseeing, with his nephew and then partner, Rodolphe Forget, and Herbert Holt, the merger that created Montreal, Heat, Light and Power in 1901. Forget was appointed a Senator in 1896. He was an early mentor to his nephew Rodolphe Forget (later Sir Rodolphe), likewise a businessman, stockbroker, chairman of the Montreal Stock Exchange (1897-1907), politician, senator, and father of Thérèse Forget Casgrain, mover and shaker in the Women's Suffragette movement, who also became a politician and senator. They were a notable example of three generations of an extremely powerful and well-to-do French-Canadian family and they were indeed formidable on a great many levels.

The house was built in 1882-1884 by architect Maurice Berrault for Louis-Joseph Forget and remained in the Forget family until 1927. When the Forget family heirs relinquished the house, it was bought by the United Services Club, who operated it as a residential, dining and meeting facility, meaning little of the luxurious interior was destroyed. They owned the building until 1975 when they sold to the Macdonald Stewart Foundation, but continued in residence as tenants of the Foundation until 1995 by subletting the kitchens and the downstairs rooms. In early years that I worked with Lilian Stewart, James Carroll, Bruce Bolton and the Macdonald Stewart Foundation, and the club continued in operation, part of

the rental agreement meant the Foundation could also entertain guests to lunch or supper on the Club floor, which enabled me to enjoy the facilities when I was there for business matters, and it was a nice, elegant and personal touch being welcomed by name by the doorman when I arrived for a meeting.

When the club finally moved out, the Foundation undertook significant restoration work on the layout and interior details of the structure and over the years, it has also updated the electrical components, the wiring and plumbing, heating and stonework, including the long steps up to the handsome front door, so the house is in extremely good condition. The Foundation is an excellent example of how corporate responsibility in action works. As for the neighbouring Corby House, new owners could have a sizable bill to face to update it to meet heritage status requirements. Not for the faint of heart or light of pocket. I can but hope an interested and committed buyer comes soon before we lose another handsome heritage house. And long may the Macdonald Stewart Foundation remain at the Forget House.

**The Mount Royal Club - 1175 Sherbrooke St W., Montreal, QC. H3A 1H9**



Front facade of the Mount Royal Club

Source: Courtesy Mount Royal Club

Unlike the Forget House next door, a former home, which was bought by the United Services Club, and converted into a gentlemen's club, the Mount Royal Club building that

exists today was a purpose-built private club and despite its stately grandeur and appearance, was never anyone's sole personal residence, although it was constructed on the site of a previous house, built in 1884 for Sir John Abbott (1821-1893). Abbott had been the CPR's chief lawyer, a mayor of Montreal, Dean of Law at McGill University, a member of the Canada's Senate (succeeding his former neighbour, John Hamilton upon his death in 1888) as well as Canada's second Prime Minister, serving a short term from 1891 to 1892. After Abbott's own death in 1893, the colourful, stylish house, designed in the then popular Queen Anne style, remained vacant until the winter of 1894-1895, when it became a temporary home of Lord Aberdeen, Canada's then Governor-General and his wife.

In 1899, this large three-and-a-half storey red brick and stone mansion became the first home of the newly created Mount Royal Club, established by twenty former members of the St. James's Club (then located at the corner of Dorchester Boulevard and University Street) who had elected to break away and form a new association, which they felt would be "more suited to their elevated stations in life and more in keeping with their ideas of what club life should be", and, incidentally, also down the street from where many of them already lived in houses of similar opulence. They were unlucky, after a series of renovations undertaken by Edward Maxwell, a prominent Montreal architect, to create a more club-like atmosphere, the house suffered a series of several costly fires in the period 1899-1903, the last of which on January 5, 1904 completely destroyed it, with the loss of two lives. Thus, the members decided to commission, from the American architectural firm, McKim, Mead and White, a completely new, purpose-built club house, in a radically different style, which is the building that exists today on the corner of Stanley and Sherbrooke.



Sir John Abbott House 1884-1904 - First Mount Royal Club 1899-1904

Source: McCord Museum

The McCord Museum has a photograph entitled The Mount Royal Club 1890 but as Sir John Abbott was still alive then and since the club itself didn't open until 1899, it should be probably more correctly re-titled, in order to be less confusing, as the Abbott House that became the first Mount Royal Clubhouse. The newly designed club premises opened in 1906 and have been operating as an exclusive private members club since then, and recently underwent some additional refurbishments. Membership is still regarded as a privilege and it remains quite a convoluted and lengthy affair to obtain, with strict protocols that have to be adhered to gain membership status.

Notwithstanding, my lack of accredited membership, as an invited guest, I have attended a considerable number of functions and gatherings there over my years in Montreal that have included: cocktail parties, wedding receptions, business luncheons, and presentations. The doorman, although always polite, never recalls my name like the United Services Club doorman did, but then I wasn't coming in to meet with his landlady. For further info: <https://www.themountroyalclub.com/>



Late 19th century view looking east of the Thomas Craig (before remodelling), Louis-Joseph Forget and Sir John Abbott homes on the 1201-1175 block of Sherbrooke Street West Source: Heritage Montréal

**CPR's Windsor Station** - 1160 Avenue des Canadiens-de-Montréal (formerly 1160 De la Gauchetière Street) Montreal, QC H3C 2H8



Windsor Train Station

Source: Public Domain

During my first year on Montreal island I lived in the then City of Lasalle (now, since the forced island-wide merger of the island cities in 2002, known as the Montreal Borough of Lasalle) and commuted to work downtown by train from the CPR station, then situated close by the steep banks of the St Lawrence River and the Mercier Bridge crossing. In the fall mists from the river swirled around us early morning commuters waiting on the platform. Very atmospheric. The short train ride took us to the grand old CPR Windsor train station downtown on Peel and De La Gauchetière streets, which was constructed in 1889 and remained the headquarters of Canadian Pacific Railways (CPR) until 1996. I have fond memories of that morning commute from the somewhat bucolic elevated platforms of the little riverside station on the approach the Mercier Bridge to the agitated hustle and bustle of arrivals and departures as we arrived in the majestic Windsor station, so redolent of those I had known and grown up with in the UK. But sadly, CP soon cut that service and gave up carrying passengers, and turned its attention to the more lucrative freight business.

A year later, in November 1972, the train tracks in Windsor Station were pulled up amid rumours that the station too would be demolished. Eventually, it seems, reason prevailed, and although the neighbouring, somewhat "futuristic looking" Laurentian Hotel - a building either loved or loathed by Montrealers - did meet its demise in 1977 - Windsor Station, along with the former luxury hotel of the same name "The Windsor", managed to escape that '60s and '70s push to build ever higher and "modernize" the city, much of it spearheaded by then Mayor Jean Drapeau. Nevertheless, the station building as it is today

is a mere ghostly remnant of a time past and remains in my heart as a desolate reminder of the busy terminus it once was with its friendly ghosts, as epitomized by photos of the great snorting, belching steam trains that loaded and off-loaded their passengers onto the once busy station platforms, and of all that history contained within its walls when the trains departed for the long transcontinental trek across Canada.

I grew up in the UK at the tail end of the steam train era, with admonishments from my mother "not to stick my head out of the train window in case I got a smut in my eye" i.e. the dirt and debris blowing back from the coal-fired engines up front. I arrived in Canada too late to witness the great steam trains that traversed the land but in time to experience its great transcontinental rail system being modified, with stations across the land being boarded up or demolished and CP and CN relinquishing passenger service and in 1978, the advent of VIA Rail, a rail company that doesn't "own" any rails but rents passage from the others and has to pull aside to let the mighty freight trains with their hundreds of cars pass. I grew up riding trains. But motorized road transportation superseded it, so that my son, along with many other Canadians of his generation, have never experienced much, if any, long-distance, train travel, so very different in so many ways from the seat-bound, long-haul rides in cars and on buses.

The more modernistic, but cold CN rail station under the Queen Elizabeth hotel with its hidden tracks can never compete with the Windsor in my heart and mind but then I never saw it as a standalone station. By the time I arrived in Montreal, its futuristic exterior Art Deco sculptured relief panels had been hidden by the surrounding 1960s construction of the towering Place Ville Marie and the Queen Elizabeth hotel. Word on the street says there is a move afoot to rehabilitate these exterior panels and open them up to being viewable. In addition, there is also talk of reopening Windsor station as a train station once again with underground train tracks. It won't be quite the same as before but one wonders perhaps if the building will seem a lot less ghostly since its original focus will be restored to it, if not its ground-level train tracks and platforms and its snorting, belching steam trains?

**The Grey Nuns Motherhouse complex - now part of Concordia University** completed in stages from land purchase in 1861 to 1900 with a variety of street addresses including: 1190 Guy, 1200 Guy, H3H 2L4 and 1175-1187 St Mattieu (formerly St Matthew) and 1211-1215 St Mattieu, Montreal, QC H2L 1R5

"The first phase, under the supervision of Mere Slocombe, entailed the construction of the eastern wing along Guy Street. Comprised of several rectangular blocks, the initially plan resembled a reverse "F."

Even though there were a number of ancillary structures (referred to as "les dépendances") that preceded construction of the convent itself, located in the rear, toward the corner of Guy and Ste-Catherine streets, which included a cowshed, a stable, a storage shed, and a forge housed in a roofed open-sided shed. Later other buildings were added, including a laundry and furnaces and various warehouses. The religious community took possession of their new home and Hôpital Général on 7 October 7, 1871, the day following its consecration to God.



Grey Nuns in their summer shelter on the grounds of the Mother House

Source: Public Domain

My association with this complex of buildings is of long duration. I have attended meetings and conferences in the main building, eaten in its refectory, attended Mass in the former chapel with its soaring and octagonal tower and spire (now deconsecrated and serving as a library and study room), but which, at that time, still housed the sepulchre (encased in a mahogany altar) of the founder the Grey Nuns, or the Sisters of Charity, Ste. Marguerite d'Youville. Not to be confused, although the two often are, with Marguerite de Bourgeoys founder of the Congregation Notre Dame (CDN) and whose remains now lie in Notre Dame de Bon Secours, or the Sailors' chapel, in Old Montreal.

Marguerite d'Youville was the first Canadian elevated to sainthood but it seems even saints aren't permitted to rest in peace. Her remains have actually been moved six times before. Let's hope she will eventually lie in peace in Varennes, QC, where she was born and her bones are currently residing. She was moved when the nuns relinquished the building but her sister nuns were not. They continue to lie in 276 neat graves in the crypt area of the building, which I have also toured. The remains cannot be disturbed for public health reasons as apparently typhus, cholera and smallpox viruses remain virulent even after 150 years or so in the ground. Thus, it seems the physical remains, but one hopes not the ghosts of the previous occupants, remain in situ as a reminder of a piece of Montreal religious history that helped shape the city we now live in.

Nevertheless, when Concordia University finally purchased and took over these premises, seemingly long "promised" to them, one of the most marvellous things about it was (I thought with some relief) the stewardship of the property granted to the university would save in perpetuity the valuable green space that many, especially property developers, long

had their eyes on. Not only important for the health, welfare and benefit of its staff and students and their neighbours, it provided Concordia with an advantage long enjoyed by neighbouring McGill, with long-term access to vital greenspace so important for a city-centre based university that's located in a city administration that doesn't appear to value or understand the need for natural (not faux or paved) green spaces, especially downtown. Thus, I had presumed the green spaces that still comprised a significant part of the grounds of the complex would be secure, especially since part of the building is being used as residences for students, who to date have had very few mature tree-shaded spaces they can avail themselves of, especially since Concordia had been vocal about having garden space for its students when it opened the building to them in September 2014. Sadly, as of 2018, a mere few years after incorporating this historic space into its domain, it appears this is not the case.



Grey Nun's gardens - Concordia University - summer 2018

Source: Courtesy J. Townsend

Located as the site is in a neighbourhood, known somewhat ironically as "le quartier des grand jardins", although there are very few "big gardens" or indeed gardens of any size left, it was recently reported (CBC and Concordia Communications) that the university is giving up an "empty lot on its Grey Nuns' site, on the corner of St Mattieu and Ste Catherine" so a new primary school can be built. What the reports don't say is the University is relinquishing the green space and gardens on the St Matthieu side of the complex for that new primary school, justifying it by saying it will be "a teaching laboratory for fostering next generation learning".

Yes, the area does need a new primary school but Montreal had a perfect opportunity to build one on the former site of the Children's Hospital a little further west along René-Lévesque, which the neighbourhood was begging for, along with the addition of more green space. However, Mayor Denis Coderre and the City preferred to see that site sold for high density private development with marginal green space provided, and most of that not on ground level but "constructed" on plinths and off-limits to the public. Now, apparently, they are permitting more existing and desperately needed "natural" green space to be built on

and allowing more life-giving, oxygen creating, carbon dioxide absorbing, century old trees to be cut down. Shame on Concordia, who either needs the money from the leasing or sale of the land, or is "perhaps" in the process of having its proverbial arm twisted to sell or lease it? One wonders what the Grey Nuns think? (Surely one might have hoped they would have "tied up" the property to "prevent" such plunder?) and double shame on the Ville de Montréal for pushing through the purchase and permitting the destruction of such a vital and desperately needed downtown green space. I would hope future generations will potentially condemn you for this unwise decision.

My solution: Since the Children's site is no longer available, why doesn't the City purchase the lease of the dilapidated Faubourg Ste-Catherine building and convert it into a primary school instead, and leave the green space and the trees on St Mattieu alone for all in the neighbourhood to enjoy, including the primary school children? For more information on the Grey Nuns' site: [https://www.pc.gc.ca/apps/dfhd/page\\_nhs\\_eng.aspx?id=13051](https://www.pc.gc.ca/apps/dfhd/page_nhs_eng.aspx?id=13051)

**La maison des hommes - a rubble-stone 1.5 story house designed in the 18th century French style located on the grounds of the Grey Nuns Motherhouse - now part of Concordia University - located just to the right of the gate at 1200 Guy, Montreal, QC although oddly enough the street address is: 1211-1215 St Mattieu, Montreal, QC H2L 1R5**



Maison des hommes - Grey Nuns Annex building Source: Courtesy Concordia University

Possibly the oldest extant building on the site, this rubble-stone house is a hidden architectural gem few today now really notice or know about. It was used for a variety of

functions that first included the site's first bake house and quite possibly housing for the nuns supervising the initial construction work as it would have been a longish and fairly rigorous journey back to their riverside convent at the end of each work day. Later it housed non-religious workers and became known as "la maison des engages" or "the "hired help house". Today is referred to, more politely, as "la maison des hommes" or "la maison des ouvriers". To find this wonderful old stone building, which is located at the northern end of the huge 3.4 hectare (8.5 acres) site of the Grey Nuns motherhouse and Hôpital Général enter from 1200 Guy Street entrance. It is there on the right.

"These former workers' quarters are now called the Grey Nuns Annex Building. It houses researchers and administrators from the Department of Education. Its centrepiece is the Observation Nursery, a model school that promotes development and understanding of young children. Education students from Concordia visit the nursery regularly to observe toddlers at play and discuss childhood issues with parents, carrying on the Grey Nuns' tradition of service to all age groups." Source: <https://www.concordia.ca/about/history/grey-nuns-heritage/history/maison-des-hommes.html>

In essence, the house is all that is left of a number of ancillary structures that had preceded construction of the huge modified H-shaped convent building itself. The former collection of buildings on this northern portion of the site that was initially used as a small farm or extensive vegetable garden area to feed the nuns and their charges, once included a cowshed, a stable, a shed (remise), and a hangar (an open-sided shed) under which a forge was located as well as the bake house housed in this building.

What is less known is during part of the time I lived on Simpson street (1975-1984) this gracious stone building was also operated as a fine dining restaurant, although its now name escapes me, but I was invited to eat there a few times. In the basement, however, was a discotheque where my friends and I would go dancing on a Saturday night. I seem to remember we entered it from the alleyway at the back between it and the Faubourg Ste Catherine building. The "anonymity" of the somewhat "secret" entrance adding to the mystique and magic of the place for us. It also used to have sculptured cedar trees out front that softened its look but they have now disappeared in favour of parking spots.

Thus I have fond memories of this lovely building, hidden as it is from the people passing on Ste Catherine St. The back and the adjacent stone warehouse forms the south side of the paved alleyway behind the former bustling Faubourg market building, with its atrium and once very busy foodcourt, and which had been a designated heritage building constructed on land leased from the Grey Nuns in 1925. However, it has since "partially" lost that designation as greedy building owners continually raised the rents and the Cineplex Odeon cinemas as well as the market vendors, shopkeepers and restaurateurs departed in droves to other locales and the building deteriorated and emptied out. Such a shame, as I know many friends and former neighbours who loved that bustling covered market and meeting place, especially bright and welcoming during the long winter and are pained to see its agonizingly slow demise. For more info on the [Mother House of the Grey Nuns of Montréal](https://www.pc.gc.ca/apps/dfhd/page_nhs_eng.aspx?id=13051): [https://www.pc.gc.ca/apps/dfhd/page\\_nhs\\_eng.aspx?id=13051](https://www.pc.gc.ca/apps/dfhd/page_nhs_eng.aspx?id=13051)

**The Red Cross circa 1767 - on the grounds of the Grey Nuns' Motherhouse - Corner of Guy and René Lévesque Blvd, Montreal QC**



The Red Cross shrine c1767

Source: Courtesy J. Townsend

Few who pass by this red wooden crucifix and shrine on the south-east corner of the former Grey Nuns' Motherhouse land know much, if anything, as to why it was erected; possibly presuming it has something to do with the history of the Grey Nuns and their Hôpital Général. In fact, it actually predates their arrival in the area by some hundred years. As still happens today in Québec when people are killed in traffic accidents and/or other brutal killings, a make-shift shrine is often erected by those to want to show support for the families and grief for the senseless deaths. So it was this fairly substantial "shrine" was constructed to commemorate two brutal murders that took place near this spot in the 18th century when a baker and his wife were killed, supposedly for the takings of their market stall.

Formerly located in what is now the middle of the Guy-René Lévesque intersection, it was moved to this location when the roads were widened, and the nuns ensured it was kept in good repair. The crucifix was used to mark the grave of the murderer - Jean Baptise Goyer Belisle - who had been interred in the grounds of a small chapel that was once located close to here on the former Grand Chemin (which in those days was a dirt road that later became Dorchester Street, and in 1987 was renamed Blvd René Lévesque) as people were often interred in those days close to where family and friends lived. The story goes that in 1752, Belisle, a house-breaker or burglar, living down the street, had broken into the home of neighbours, Jean Favre, a baker, and his wife Marie-Anne Bastien, who lived up the

street, since he had heard they kept money in the house. His eventual sentence for this crime was that of "trompu-vif" (live breaking), carried out when he was still alive, so that death would ensue slowly and painfully as a result of having his body stretched apart and broken on a wheel.

It was a particularly brutal form of punishment exercised in La nouvelle France (New France) at that time, supposedly intended as a deterrent, but like any death sentence it only seems to affect those who aren't on trial for murder because by the time you are, it is too late to be a deterrent. I always found it strange the historical records tell us it marked the grave of the murderer but not the grave of the two people he murdered?

But then it's also strange Christians use another form of painful death - crucifixion - as the over-riding symbol of that religion and of death and rebirth, but then the cross, in and of itself, is a symbol that comes with a great many contradictions. Once a cruel form of execution and yet a major worldwide religion chose to make it the symbol of life in the company of a great many conflicting oppositions. Death promises life, from violence there's peace, hate gives rise to love, accusation to forgiveness, brokenness vs wholeness, all is lost yet everything is gained, etc. The cross has come to symbolize many things to many people, not all of it good.

Nevertheless that red cross is a part of Montreal history (if now a mostly forgotten part), which was saved, possibly because of where it was relocated to on the Grey Nuns' land, and yet, 260 years later, still it sits there facing, not the public street but a building that now houses part of a secular educational institution entrusted with helping form young minds. I wonder if there will be any outcry should one day the administration, or the government, decide it should be removed? Is it covered by the heritage status of the property (it isn't mentioned), and if so, where will it go? Who will champion its survival? Not a lot of info about that on the Concordia website. [For further info:](http://coolopolis.blogspot.com/2007/06/monument-to-murderer)  
<http://coolopolis.blogspot.com/2007/06/monument-to-murderer>

**The John Schreiber House and the Solominium** - 1167 St Marc, Montréal, QC H3H 2E4 and 1875 René Lévesque West, Montréal QC H3H 1R4

John Schreiber, architect, was one of very many interesting people I met at David and Diana Nicholson's Wednesday Night (WN) salon in the early years (see the WN story on Haddon Hall). He was an absolutely fascinating person, a former Polish naval captain in WWII, and he, like my Polish father, who was an army man, had chosen not to return to Poland at the end of war since their country had been "given" to Communist Russia by the Allies. Both of them stayed in the UK. My father returned to his pre-war profession of chef, working in a restaurant in the Soho district of London where he met my mother and the rest, as the saying goes, "is history"...my family history.

Whereas John Schreiber went back to school, enrolling in the School of Architecture at Glasgow University. Eventually, he emigrated to Canada and was hired to teach at McGill's School of Architecture. He had a brilliant questioning mind, a fascinating career and was a prime example of someone who kept an open mind about everything. Once in North America, he added to his impressive credentials by studying landscape architecture. Much of his work in this area still remains visible in and around Montreal island. In the late 1970s,

he relocated his office from McGill College Avenue to a dilapidated row-house he purchased at 1167 St. Marc Street just above Boulevard René Lévesque, opposite the Shaughnessy Mansion and what would become the Canadian Centre for Architecture. "This row-house became John's laboratory: he renovated and rebuilt it over a 15-year period, moving every brick from one place to another at least once" relates fellow architect and friend, Ray Affleck. He created a number of apartments upstairs, including one for himself, equipped with a secret access to his ground-floor office, its concrete floor painted a cheery cadmium yellow. "This building became the new host for recycled materials of all sorts: old slate blackboards, steel beams, which had somehow come all the way from England, thick red pine joists from torn-down buildings - all found their way into what turned out to be perfectly integrated compositions." So runs an extract from an eminently readable essay on John's extremely extensive and wide variety of work that you can access using the link below.

At his St Marc street home and offices, John inaugurated a monthly tradition of Last Fridays, when he would throw open his building to friends and their families for a monthly wine and cheese get-to-gether, meet 'n greet, with a chance to learn something new from someone else. It was also his way of repaying them for all the meals they invited him to over the previous month. John wasn't a cook but he was a fascinating dinner guest, so the Last Friday's were his return invite. He provided baskets of crusty French bread (baguettes), seemingly gallons of cheese fondu and green grapes and a bottle or two or three of wine. If you wanted something else you brought it, along with a bottle, of course. We all seemed to imbibe a lot in those days. These regular monthly gatherings attracted a wide range of friends and acquaintances who, in turn brought their friends and families. John adored children and children adored John, but especially John's house, to which they were given free rein to run amok in and were permitted to explore every nook and cranny they wanted to, just as the rest of us were. It was a fascinatingly complex building, secret doors led to other parts of house through closets and hidden staircases.

John was a master of reuse and recycle. He devised endless and fascinating ways of storing stuff and repurposing material and containers into something else. I met the father of my son there. I also learnt more than I could ever repay John for. I loved the way he "saw" the world and translated it, along with its detritus, into something avant-garde and fresh. I remember being awed by his description of the plans for a revolutionary underground residence in the Eastern Townships for a long-time client, Mrs. Sydney Duder, though I've never actually seen the house itself.

In 1985, John purchased an empty lot on the corner of St Marc and René Lévesque, next to his office to build a multi-use building he had designed and that he called the "Solominium". It was Montreal's very first passive solar building with a marvellous atrium up top facing the CAA grounds with the solar panels positioned to gain maximum exposure. Quoting again from the McGill essay on John's work by architects Ewa Bieniecka and Ron Williams: "In this highly original design for an eminently visible site, John was able to bring together all his concerns for sustainability and urban integration. These concerns once again attracted a circle of enthusiastic young people" but sadly not praise from the established architectural community in the guise of Save Montreal (now Heritage Montreal) who, at the time, lambasted it, seemingly hating every part of forward looking design and its recycled interior and exterior. Those hidebound traditionalists even went so far as to award it that

year's "Architectural Lemon Award", a hurtful, award, that they had re-established in 1982 (though I am not sure who first created those self-righteous 'Oranges and Lemons' architectural awards, since the Save Montreal/Heritage Montreal site only says they "revived them in 1982". *A Guidebook to Contemporary Architecture in Montreal*, co-authored by Nancy Dunton and Helen Malkin, credits the inauguration of the awards in 1974 to the Société d'architecture de Montréal but I couldn't find anything on who they were, who their members were, or what or who they might have transmorphed into.



The Solominium 1986

Source: courtesy John Schreiber Fonds

In light of the wall of architectural monstrosities that 30-32 years later now face the Solominium building across René Lévesque, it was an award the building never deserved in the first place. Or perhaps today, it should be awarded to the newly-built O'Nessy condos at 1800 René Lévesque, in particular, for their particularly awkward melding of a 15-storey, modern, glass, curtain-walled condo building with the handsome, heritage, greystone chapel dating from 1892 and the adjacent Maison St Édouard, built and added to in stages from 1907 to 1935, and which is also sometimes referred to by some as the Maison St Gregoire (though it hasn't proved easy to discover why). From the street there is absolutely no visible green space or design-saving features to commend it, although the confusing marketing literature mentions some sort of interior courtyard but it's not clear where exactly that can be found.

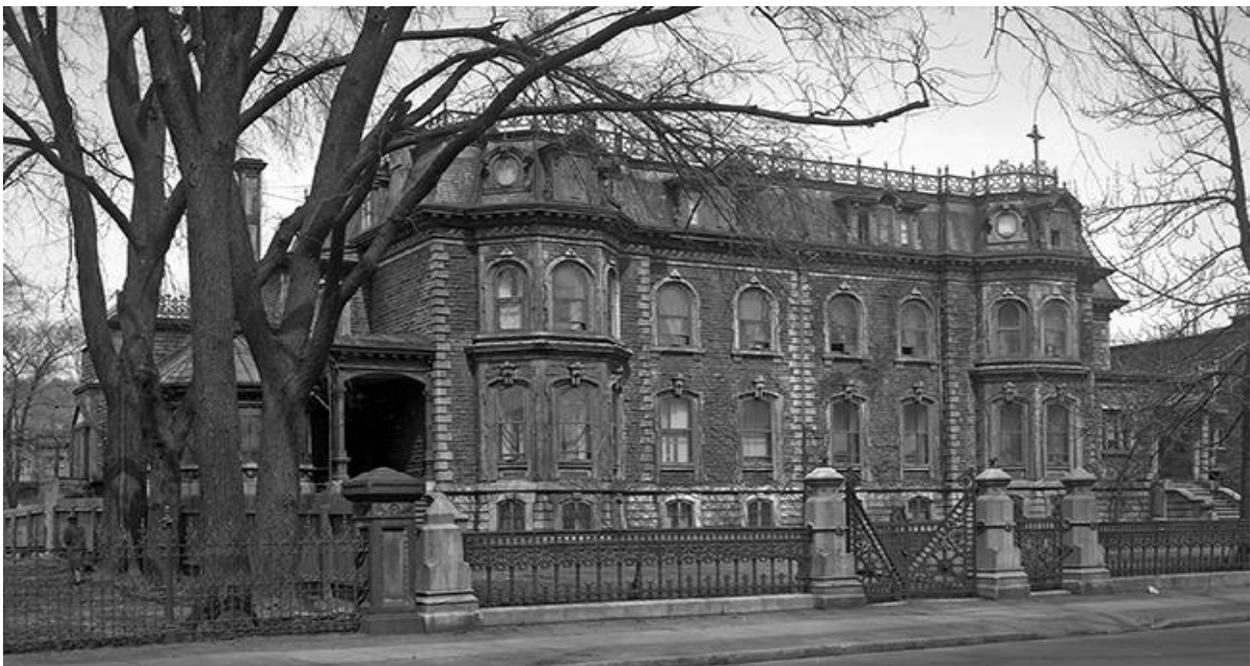
Perhaps you can't judge a book by its cover but Devimco's architects, it appears, could have definitely done with John Schreiber's, or probably one of his acolyte's input and vision before they embarked on finalizing that unfortunate looking project. Although it could also be a case of "too many cooks" since it has taken the best part of 10+ years to complete that development; one of the perils of trying to incorporate disparate elements into a cohesive whole. From the outside, it seems they have failed, miserably except perhaps in the

shoehorning of a great many condo apartments into a restricted space. A feat they are seemingly in the process of repeating with their Square Childrens' development.

However, back in 1982, I remember John Schreiber was affected by the Lemon award at that late stage of his career. Even at the time, it was not a popular decision by Sauvons Montreal. I loved John's homes, they were human-sized, avant-garde and quirky and perhaps not to everyone's taste but that shouldn't have made this one a "lemon". Far from it, as the first passive solar house in Montreal, it had a plethora of innovative features and has aged well and continues to have its local fans. Its garden is now a leafy barrier shielding it from the passing traffic on the six lane, tree-poor boulevard in front of it. In particular, I loved all the "little" details such as the ground floor wall mural, made by embedding John's collection of distinct and disparate antique keys in a concrete wall and the car elevator.

In the mid-1990s, Solominium briefly housed the SDA - the Sustainable Development Resource Centre, which was operated on a volunteer basis, and in which John Schreiber was a member. It held weekly lectures, some of which I attended, on wide-ranging facets of sustainability, typically in matters related to architecture, engineering and urban planning, providing free public and private consultation to a few thousand visitors during its years of operation. It also housed a library and showcased a variety of sustainable products and materials. John eventually moved to Perth, Ontario, where he built the last of his innovative homes. He died in 2002. I miss him, his playfulness, his ideas, his visions, the conversations and (some) of the people attending his Last Friday gatherings. For further info on the works of [John Schreiber](http://cac.mcgill.ca/schreiber/essay1.html): <http://cac.mcgill.ca/schreiber/essay1.html>

**The Shaughnessy Mansion and the Canadian Centre for Architecture** - 1923 Boulevard René Lévesque W, Montréal, QC H3H 2S6 and 1920, rue Baile, Montréal QC H3H 2S6



Shaughnessy Mansion in 1960s-70s

Source: Courtesy CCA

In 1971-2, this was the first of the large boarded up, dilapidated mansion-style homes I passed on my way to and from work downtown while riding the 150 bus to and from Cabot Square. It always looked so very sad. Having witnessed the destruction of the Van Horne Mansion in 1973, I later wondered on many occasions if the Shaughnessy House, too, would eventually meet its demise at the end of a wreckers ball. On my permanent return to Montreal from Vancouver in 1975, it looked even more pitiable and shabby, although it had been with some small relief that I had read about its purchase in 1974 by architect Phyllis Lambert, who was "putting her money", as saying goes, "where her mouth was" to try and prevent that from happening. In 1973, she had been very vocal about its survival, even going so far as to demonstrate in the streets about its need to be preserved.

However, it took another 15 long years and a lot of money and effort for the Second Empire style mansion to rise phoenix-like from the ashes of heritage heartache and despair, so to speak. It had metamorphosed from a former palatial pair of mirror-image, semi-detached residential mansions, located on the edge of Montreal's famed Square Mile of upper-crust homes, to a revolving door of a life as a hospital, a nurses' home, a convent, a destitute ladies home, a boarding house and finally a boarded up house to its current hybrid form - part heritage mansion - part museum - part research and study centre. Its transformation was a beacon of hope for the conservation movement at the time, as well as those of the general public like me, who had been concerned about it ever surviving the neglect of the 1970s and early 1980s.



Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA)

Source: Courtesy CCA

Sadly though instead of being the start of a brave new world in heritage conservation in Montreal, it really wasn't. Thirty plus years later, although we have witnessed many buildings in Montreal being awarded heritage status, we are still a long way from seeing that category actually assure the survival of the buildings and their gardens long-term. The Reid-Wilson House (the former Corby House) on Sherbrooke St. is a current case in point. It was awarded heritage status in 1975 but in 2018 its future is very indeterminate and unsettled as it stands desolate and empty. The former Faubourg Ste Catherine market building was also awarded heritage status in 1975, but in 2015 it was "partially withdrawn", whatever that means? Maybe due to its dilapidated state? It seems in Montreal that sometimes the "heritage" nomenclature doesn't mean a site is secure, since it is apparently a category that can be withdrawn at will, if no one steps forward to take it on and care for it, and yes, spend money on preserving its heritage features; however, I might be oversimplifying things. At times, it's hard to uncover all the whys and wherefores, though it would be nice to know where one could easily get that type of information?



The greystone chapel (1892) and Maison St Édouard (1907-1935) - O'Nessy Condos (2018)  
Source: Courtesy J. Townsend

The greystone chapel (1892) and Maison St Édouard (1907-1935) located across the road and just to the southeast of the Shaughnessy mansion was given heritage status of some sort in 2004 since it was classified as "having exceptional historical value" (the problem is, it's difficult to ascertain what that actually means as there is very little information in the public domain about the actual buildings themselves and the reasons for their historical significance).

What it meant for the property developer, Devimco - the purchasers of the 75,000 sq ft site - was that they were not permitted to tear down the existing greystones to build their

proposed condo/rental development, although they could alter their interiors. During my time in Montreal these handsome greystone buildings have served as a chapel, a convent and as an old-age home run by nuns (a French order - the Little Sisters of the Poor - who arrived in Canada in 1889) and in the latter half of the 20th century as offices, a school and premises for a tech business. The site itself is considered part of the ancient St-Joseph Fief, but apparently during excavations no artifacts of any sort were found on the site. I do wonder how hard anyone really looked? However, once entrusted to Devimco, their architects (MSDL?) seem to have made a veritable dog's dinner of incorporating the greystone buildings (in particular the chapel) into their new O'Nessy condo development. The St Édouard convent and old age home portion at the back of the site along the Falaise now houses 22 condos in the refurbished greystone building and even though the interiors might be acceptable with their 15 foot ceilings but architecturally speaking the side view of the chapel, as incorporated into the new development when looking east along Blvd René-Lévesque, isn't at all aesthetically pleasing.

This is now raising concerns for the Judah and Masson houses further west along the street on the former Domaine des Franciscains. What are they going to look like dwarfed by two 60m condo towers and will they be rental, commercial or residential, and will the magnificent interior details of the houses be maintained intact and undamaged? So many unknowns in the heritage conservation business. For further info from a [heritage perspective](http://www.heritagemontreal.org/en/documentation/resolutions/): <http://www.heritagemontreal.org/en/documentation/resolutions/>

The area had originally been granted to the Religieuses hospitalières de Saint-Joseph as far back as 1660 by the Compagnie des Cent Associés and later awarded to the Sulpicians in 1675. Like the rest of the area it was subsequently developed as farms, orchards, and quarries. Then, in the latter half of the nineteenth century a number of additional institutions and religious communities settled in the area along with wealthy individuals moving to large homes with extensive gardens, such as the 1874 Van Horne/Shaugnessy House property.

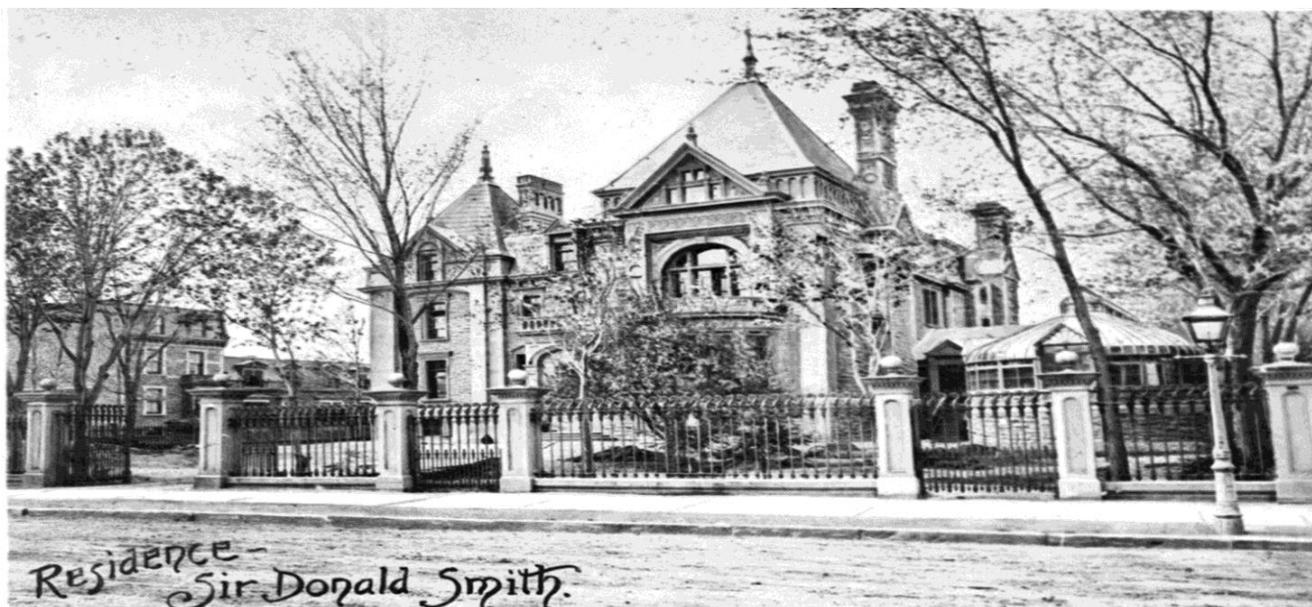
Ah yes, Van Horne's first house in Montreal, not to be confused with the opulent 1870 mansion on Sherbrooke Street that the City permitted to be destroyed in 1973. Thus the house that the City of Montreal heritage division keeps referring to as the Van Horne/Shaugnessy Mansion, as if hoping that if they say it often enough people will forget about the more significant Van Horne mansion they allowed to be demolished. It seems, however, that most people steadfastly ignore that bit of confusion and refer to the Shaughnessy Mansion as simply that, ignoring the City's efforts to attach Van Horne's name to it, especially since he lived there for such a short time.

Shaugnessy House, the historic greystone mansion, between St Marc and Fort Streets facing René Lévesque, was originally built in 1874 as two semi-detached private 'country' residences surrounded by gardens and orchards and it remained two mirror image homes for the next 67 years. In fact calling it the Van Horne/Shaugnessy House is a bit of misnomer on several levels as both men lived in the same eastern half of the mansion. The architect of record is William Titus Thomas, who also designed, in 1883, the George Stephen home (later the Mount Stephen Club and now part of a boutique hotel) at 1440 Drummond Street.

The west-side house was first owned by Duncan McIntyre, merchant, businessman, financier, and early promoter and first Vice-President of the CPR (who in fact helped negotiate in conjunction with George Stephen the original government contract to build the CPR), whereas the east-side house was for its first six years the home of Robert Brown, a timber merchant and friend of McIntyre. William Cornelius Van Horne of Milwaukee, CPR's 2nd president after George Stephen, was, it is reported, very much taken with McIntyre's imposing, greystone, Second Empire home (rich classical sculptural effects and high mansard roofs) and sought McIntyre's help to negotiate with Brown to sell him his half of the house, so he would have a handsome home to bring his family to, and so ease their passage into Montreal society. The sale went through in 1882 but the Van Horne family did not live there that long. Van Horne soon sold it to Thomas George Shaughnessy, also from Milwaukee, who became president of CPR after Van Horne. In 1916, he was awarded a UK peerage as the 1st Baron Shaughnessy.

Donald Alexander Smith (also later raised to a UK baronage and known as Lord Strathcona) lived up the street from the Shaughnessy Mansion at 1167 Dorchester, in a large stone mansion built in 1869 by Jean-Baptiste Auger, a shipbuilder and manager of the Montreal and Ottawa Forwarding Company. Smith had a lifelong connection with the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) becoming one of its biggest shareholders in the process and rising from a mere pelt grader to being the Governor of the HBC; however, he was also a financier, President of the Bank of Montreal, and a director of CPR, whose influence was so great he was given the honour of driving in the last spike where the eastern rails met the western rails near Sicamous, BC.

Smith later bought more land from the Sulpicians and built another house on what became the 1000 block of Dorchester. In 1888 he also purchased McIntyre's half of the Shaughnessy mansion to use as a guest house and linked it by means of a walkway to his new home. He added the handsome solarium that still exists today on the west-side of the Shaughnessy building.



*Residence -  
Sir Donald Smith.*

Sir Donald Smith (later Lord Strathcona) House - Blvd Dorchester

Source: National Archives Canada

At one point Richard B. Archer, another Bank of Montreal director and co-founder of CPR also lived in the west-side house, but not for long as he built a handsome home at 240 Drummond Street that was eventually left by his heirs to McGill University, who installed its Conservatory of music there. It was destroyed in 1957. For a time though, it seems the entire neighbourhood around the Shaughnessy Mansion became somewhat of a CPR enclave, as many of the neighbours were associated in one way or another with the construction, management and/or consolidation of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR).

The two semi-detached houses were only converted into one house when a Toronto based religious order, the Sisters of Service, bought the building in 1941 and pierced the mitoyen wall. Yet prior to that time it had briefly housed a hospital (St Mary's), and when St Mary's moved to larger purpose-built premises in Cote-des-neiges, it became their nurses' home for a while. However, I've always wondered how it did that work for the hospital and the nurses if the building was still divided into two homes? It seems somewhat awkward or maybe it was operated with the hospital on one side and the nurses' home on the other?

This point serves to highlight an ongoing problem with how Montreal, indeed how Quebec and Canada provide information on our heritage buildings. So many details are left out and therefore the public is confused and a trifle misled by the omissions. By arbitrarily assigning names to the properties chosen from among the previous occupants of them without any details as to why this person was chosen over another to "name" the "heritage" house after, causes confusion and promotes misinformation.

Take the Shaughnessy House for example. It was designed and built as two mirror image homes and supposedly remained that way until the Sisters of Services decided to make it into one home (71 years after it was first built) and which was a long time after William Van Horne and Thomas Shaughnessy lived in one half of the house only and the same side of the house at that. Yet it is their names that have been affixed to the house. Begging the question "Why"? Duncan McIntyre (once estimated to be the fifth richest man in Canada at the time of his death) was the man who originally bought the land from the Sulpicians and in conjunction with his friend, Robert Brown, to whom he sold half the land and also the other half of the building, were the first owner-occupiers. It was McIntyre who commissioned architect William Titus Thomas to build it and it was he who lived there for 14 years before selling out to his west-side neighbour Donald Smith (later Lord Strathcona). Yet the house ends up being named after two owners, one of whom didn't actually live there very long but who both happened to be successive Presidents of Canada's then mighty CPR. Thus leading one to conjecture, is it more the corporate prestige of the name of the owner, or in this case owners that governs the naming process? Perhaps it doesn't always work that way but when it does, it raises unanswered questions. Isn't it time to develop a standardized naming system that is consistently applied and that makes sense to citizens, visitors and researchers alike?

As for the future of the heritage buildings in Montreal, the Shaughnessy Mansion transformation even 30 years later continues to raise troubling questions. It is often held up by the City of Montreal and others as a successful melding of the old and new. A stellar repurposing, if you will. However, it's still an outlier and not a trend-setter, since its metamorphosis has not been successful in saving or pointing the way forward for the historical residential and institutional properties around it, though much blame has to be

also affixed to the City of Montreal and Ministre de biens culturels du Québec, or as it is now known, the Ministre de la Culture et des Communications du Québec, for not clarifying the process as regards the safeguarding of our built heritage.

**The CAA Sculpture Garden and Esplanade Ernest Cormier - 1900 Boulevard René Lévesque W, Montréal, QC H3H 2S6**

Great Britain and France once had a significant period in time, primarily in the 18th century, where the construction of "follies" or incongruous pieces of architecture (usually somewhat miniaturized) on the lands of the great houses, manors and chateaux was all the vogue, although these "symbolic statements" had appeared in previous centuries too. They were used as picnic spots, playhouses, artists' creative lairs or simply as decoration to "improve the view" from the windows of the great houses. The nearest example we, in Montreal, have to such constructions, albeit fashioned in the late 20th century, is the CCA's Esplanade Ernest-Wormier, located on the clifftop, overlooking more than three centuries of expansion of the city on part of the former sea-bed of the ancient Champlain Sea below.



Esplanade Ernest Cormier - CAA Sculpture Garden Source: Courtesy J. Townsend

The "garden" is the inspired work of local Montreal architect Melvin Charney, and is composed of four parts, representative of a range of deconstructed and disparate elements: a) A living apple orchard, in memory of the great orchards that the Sulpicians and their tenant farmers planted in this area, and that later some of the landowners of the huge houses that once lined Dorchester maintained in the grounds of their "country" houses; b) A reproduction or reprise of the base of the Shaughnessy Mansion that faces it, recalling in part, or perhaps even paying homage to the fact that the CAA "saved" that example of

Montreal's 19th century 'Second Empire' architectural style (employed for both large residential and public buildings) from destruction by incorporating it into a modern museum for the study of and research into architecture, but also changing its function in the process i.e. from residential to institution. Even so, the CAA Shaughnessy mansion section remains one of the few interiors of the Golden Square Mile mansions that once existed throughout the area that the public can actually visit. That idea of destruction is further underscored since the masonry at the back of this faux base construct is covered in greenery as a symbol of how quickly, left to its own devices, nature can reclaim that what man builds; c) The lawns on the side are there to evoke memories of the fields that the tenant farmers in this area cleared in the 17th and 18th centuries; d) Whereas the windswept, wide-open esplanade at the very back on the edge of the escarpment itself acts as a sort of condensed history of the architectural forms of both buildings and furniture, especially those found in Montreal. A reminder in some ways of the Montreal's early stature as Canada's premier city and centre of commerce and manufacturing, which included the production of both homes, furniture and furnishings.

Its wide open space also echoes John Schrieber, Ron William and David Farley's winning landscape design of Champ des Mars and Place Viger Square further east, with the emphasis on 19th century parade ground emptiness. I always thought this element of the Esplanade would make it a wonderful place for moonlit dance event or some sort of wild costume urban picnic. Charney's fantastical garden is whimsical and thought-provoking and a stroke of genius in many ways. Its location doesn't make it easy to visit situated as it is in a high density living and traffic area but visited it is, particularly in the spring and fall.

Architect and philanthropist, Phyllis Lambert, the principal mover and shaker behind the CCA and Heritage Montreal (at one time), is to be commended for her audacity and steadfastness in pushing through her demands that Montreal "save" this space as a public park. Especially prescient in light of what the City of Montreal has allowed this western end of Dorchester to become - a ghastly collection of ugly, high-density, mixed use condo towers that a former Mayor of Westmount once described in his brief to the OCPM (Office de Consultation Publique de Montréal) as the "Griffintownization" of the Shaughnessy Village area (and it wasn't meant as a compliment). And all in spite of the fact area residents have been repeatedly petitioning Montreal over the years for more green space, so desperately needed in a neighbourhood that the City is, oh so ironically, trying to rebrand as "le quartier des grand jardins".

Meanwhile the property developers working in the area, such as Devimco and Prével, have enthusiastically bought into the rebranding idea in their marketing and sales materials but Devimco, in particular, have failed spectacularly in the process to provide any of those "big gardens". Devimco's Square Children's development is mostly co-opting existing small green spaces (Place Henri-Dunant and Place Hector-Toe-Blake) along with Cabot Square into its marketing materials, so giving lie to whole idea the rebranding exercise is promoting. If they had opted for more "green over greed" that might have helped demonstrate there was even a smidgen of a ring of truth to both Montreal's and their claims of a neighbourhood of large gardens.



CAA Sculpture Garden - Orchard

Source: Courtesy J. Townsend

Prével's adjacent Union Park development's promotional material even "acknowledges" downtown Montreal lacks green space: "Union Park is your chance to own a piece of one of downtown Montreal's rare green spaces, with over 30,000 ft<sup>2</sup> allotted within the project itself. " Unfortunately though, their green space won't be accessible to any of the neighbours.



CAA Sculpture Garden - Apple Orchard

Source: Courtesy J. Townsend

Why do I feel such an affinity to the CCA's unique Montreal park space? Quite simply: "The heart has its reasons, reason does not understand" so the answer is complex; however, I love the CCA's sculpture garden's eccentricity, its multiple layers of meaning that challenge the mind and the senses. Where in other downtown public gardens do you have the fresh, delicate scent of apple blossoms in the spring and apples in the fall? Through her persistence Phyllis Lambert forced the City of Montreal to create a fascinating public access green space, thus preserving that view across Montreal to the river that recent developments along the street have shown us are now being blocked to the pedestrian Montrealer by the wall of high rise constructs Montreal has permitted to grow seemingly willy-nilly along the escarpment. It allows us to remember that single family homes, their occupants, visitors and workers, once enjoyed that view with their gardens and orchards reaching to the edge of the cliff. Lambert's choice of iconoclastic architectural outlier Melvin Charney to come up with the design, in hindsight was inspired. Not everyone may like it, but I, and others, certainly do appreciate and enjoy its multi-faceted demands on the mind and the senses. Try it for yourselves...you might just find you like it too. For further info on [follies](https://www.britainexpress.com/History/follies.htm): <https://www.britainexpress.com/History/follies.htm>

**The Falaise or Cliff-side park aka the St-Jacques escarpment** - runs from Fort Street to the town of Montreal West alongside the railway line and the former A720 highway, now being renamed NR136.



La falaise park in winter - January 2016

Source: Courtesy Sauvons la falaise

It's a very narrow strip of greenery to be sure (covering approximately 20 hectares or 49 acres) but what many do not probably know is that it is the remnant of a very ancient part

of the land we now live on. For it is the natural remains of the cliff that bordered part of the Champlain Sea, a 55,000 square kilometre shallow, brackish inland sea, dating from approximately 10,000 to 12,000 years ago, that occupied the depressed land portions of the St Lawrence lowlands between Quebec City, Lake Champlain and Brockville, and extending up the Ottawa River Valley. My son and I (and others) have come across the odd seashell there. It's also a very precarious part of our natural heritage that needs protecting.

During the reconstruction and rebuilding of NR 136 (the former 720 autoroute) and the Turcot interchange, Transport Québec completely denuded a two-hectare section of the western end of the cliffside or "falaise" or the Saint-Jacques escarpment (its official name) by clear cutting its century old trees and undergrowth. Thus weakening the soil and potentially creating an unstable terrain leaving it liable to mudslides. They tried to justify it by claiming an environmental review process said it had no ecological merit. The "biologist" who did the review couldn't have spent much time there, or didn't seem to know much about urban wilderness areas and how animals and birds use green corridors, such as those found along railways lines or natural formations such the St Jacques escarpment, to travel and hunt.

"The falaise is also an important part of a green corridor. A corridor is a habitat, either natural or man-made, that connects isolated green spaces, making them accessible to birds and wildlife. There are green spaces at Meadowbrook, at the falaise, beside the Lachine Canal, in Angrignon Park, around the Douglas hospital and along the banks of the St. Lawrence River. Without the trees of the falaise, the distance between Meadowbrook and these other green spaces would be too great."  
Source: <http://lesamisdemeadowbrook.org/uncategorized/protecting-the-falaise-st-jacques/>

The "Sauvons la falaise" or "Save the Falaise" organization has been lobbying hard to have this unusual strip of land rescued and saved as an urban wilderness park or ecoterritory, which they hope will one day connect up to the Meadowbrook lands, which others are also attempting to save from developers. It's a unique area, which is not only good for our minds, and a salve to our spirits, it's also a great teaching ground for our urban kids, especially those of us who don't have a summer cottage for them to escape to. It runs alongside the commuter rail line and the highway for approximately 4kms and is home to a variety of urban wildlife (foxes, skunks, raccoons, groundhogs, rabbits, shrews, voles, etc) as well as snakes, plants, insects and bird species (some 60 different species have been seen there at various times of the year), including hawks and peregrine falcon nesting sites. Neighbouring residents cross country ski there during the winter and hike and bird and animal watch, or walk their dogs there the rest of the year. Transients and the homeless have also fashioned themselves summer homes or camps there. Their version of a summer retreat from the heat of the city streets. The members of Sauvons la falaise kept hoping the City of Montreal would make an announcement on the creation of the park this year; however, due to pressure from CPR, who own the rail line that the park skirts in places, it seems it will now have to go to a public consultation process, delaying the decision even further and creating additional doubts in the minds of its proponents. Montrealer islanders need to keep up the pressure to safeguard our unique and vital urban cliffside green space. For [more info](#): (do pay close attention to the Feb 10, 2016 post from a young man who grew up exploring the St Jacques escarpment, his descriptions explain in part why it is important to retain our urban wilderness spaces): <https://www.sauvonslafalaise.ca/en>

**The Franciscan Church and Priory, the neighbouring Judah and Masson Houses - 1980-2080 Boulevard René-Lévesque W, Montréal, QC H3H 2T8**

The Dorchester (then René-Lévesque) Franciscan Church and Priory and parish, also referred to as the Domaine des Franciscains and dating from 1863 are no more. The handsome fieldstone church burnt down in a spectacular winter time fire in 2010 along with the priory with its unusual, somewhat modernistic, vertical stained glass windows that once housed a variety of monasterial elements (chapel, novitiate, seraphic college, theology school, library and print house) that was collectively known as the Saint-Joseph Convent but more often referred to as the Domaine des Franciscains. It's worth noting Franciscans use several terms interchangeably for their monasteries (friary, convent, monastery). This site was formerly their headquarters in Canada. In 2007, they reluctantly decided to leave the property due to their decreasing numbers.

The area of the site that had included the priory, the church and the Masson House had gone up for sale (for an estimated seven million dollars) when the Franciscans moved out in 2007 citing diminishing numbers of parishioners and no available funds (approx. \$5 million) to effect the much needed repairs to the church. After the disastrous fire of 2010 that destroyed the church, the priory and part of the Masson House, the friars opted to spend \$3 million to restore the Masson House but nothing else and the remains of the other fire-damaged buildings were removed. After standing abandoned for a considerable time, the property was eventually bought by real estate developer Prével and in 2018 they are in the midst of constructing two 20-story (60m) condo towers on the site of the former church and priory.



The Masson House c2007

Source: Creative Commons

The two neighbouring 19th century mansions, the 2-storey greystone Masson House (1850), which is now the oldest existing example of all the former grand mansions that once lined Dorchester Street, and the unusual 3-storey red-brick Judah House (1874), also known as the Villa Rosa and later as La Maison Ste Famille (after it was taken over by the 3rd Order of Franciscan nuns of the Holy Family) that will now flank the towers, are being saved since they are heritage buildings; however, they will be dwarfed by the condo towers, and it is unclear as to whether they will be resold, or rented out as residential housing, or as commercial buildings. Perhaps their fate will be somewhat similar to what happened to the David Lewis Mansion I once lived in i.e. corporate offices of some kind.

**The Masson House:** Built in 1850 for Wilfred Masson, Seigneur of Terrebonne, the 9,090 sq ft Masson House is the older of the two heritage homes. The money spent by friars to restore it after the fire, allowed its ornate historical details to be preserved and/or restored to their original condition. It has an impressive lobby, with large wooden pillars and arches, decorated with Canadian motifs, like the beaver, the fleur-de-lys and the maple leaf. The ground floor has twelve original stained glass windows, each depicting a different month of the year. There are four handsome, decorative fireplaces and numerous other architectural details from the period such as built-in buffets fixed to the wall flanking the fireplace in the dining room and period mouldings throughout.

**The Judah House:** Meanwhile, the Judah House was put up for sale separately (asking price \$3.95 million) along with nearly an acre of land. When I first came to Montreal, the Judah House was being used as a convent by the Holy Family nuns administering to the priests and brothers in the adjacent Franciscan priory. I always knew it as Villa Rosa since my aunt confided she had always loved that house telling me if she had her choice of any house in downtown Montreal that would be it. I first saw it, perched up on the escarpment as I came to work downtown by train from Lasalle, as well as from the 150 bus that passed along Dorchester, and I always wondered who lived there, which is what first occasioned my aunt mentioning that was her all-time favourite house. Walking past on Dorchester (later René Lévesque) one could see the site had extensive gardens and lots of mature trees.



The Judah House aka Villa Rosa

Source: Courtesy J. Townsend

The Judah House is an unusual building in many ways and not just architecturally. When it was finally listed for sale, the upscale sales brochure touted the fact that the house had never been sold since it was first constructed; thus raising the question: Did the Judah family or subsequent owners donate it to the Franciscans or the nuns, or was the bill of sale simply not recorded, or did it simply get lost? Thus the claim made by the agency representing the vendors that it had never been sold, did it simply mean there was no extant record available of any sale having occurred? Or did someone at the real estate agency just not do their homework? In other previous sales literature for the adjacent lots, it is mentioned that the Franciscans had "acquired" the Masson House in 1940 and the Judah House in 1949. However, once the Judah House did get listed for sale, finally some photos of its majestic, 5000+ sq. ft. interior became available, including that of a simply spectacular staircase, several fireplaces, and the views from its rear windows were nothing short of fabulous. Originally, it had been the home of Frederick Thomas Judah, director of the Montreal City and Savings Bank (la Banque d'Épargne) who was also an established Montreal merchant and store owner, and whose warehouse and store building still survives in Old Montreal on rue de l'Hôpital.

These two properties were saved from destruction as they are considered to have superior historical heritage characteristics and are both classified as "properties of significant value" by the City of Montréal. Apparently the entire parcel of land, formerly known as the Domain Franciscan, is zoned for both residential and commercial use. How lucky for Prével! But further digging uncovered that the properties only became saleable when the City amended the zoning to allow both residential and commercial use. Prével are "promising" landscaped green space to replace some of the gardens and green space that local residents had been enjoying around these buildings but are also stating it won't be public space; however, they are also committing to provide some sort of public "access" through the development to the escarpment below "if" that area becomes part of the long-requested St Jacques Escarpment ecoterritory park. Until that actually happens, nothing can be taken for certain, especially as regards the exact length and territory of the proposed park.

For a time I used to attend Sunday Mass at the priory site, always in search of the type of parish life I had experienced in Vancouver but have never been able to find since my return to Montreal in 1975. I missed the church services there once the Franciscans left even though they had long been held in the church hall, situated below the Church, as the community had been dwindling and funds weren't ever seemingly available to repair the actual church, which had been boarded up for some time before the Franciscans actually moved out.

Personally, I have good memories of Franciscan priests and brothers. Partly because I spent part of my adolescence connecting with some of them. It happened that my secondary school in the UK was a Holy Family convent school and we would attend mass, and later on a youth club in a converted house named "Ivy Lodge" located next door to the church at the Franciscan priory just up the street from our school. The priest in charge of the Youth Club was a young, vibrant man, and most of us girls had a schoolgirl crush on him but he was liked equally well by the boys who attended our disco and dance nights. As the parlance goes: "he was one cool dude". (Yes, probably dating myself with that remark!) On the other side of the Franciscan church of my teenage years was a Poor Clares convent but they were a cloistered order and so remained very secretive and a fascinating topic of conversation to

the young, inquiring minds of my friends and I. None of us had any inclination at all to join the religious life, especially not a cloistered one, this was the 1960s after all, but it didn't stop us from speculating what it possibly might be like to enter a convent and never leave or talk to another man again, except to a priest through a grill in a confessional box. In fact, one year when some of my friends were being asked by the odd nun or two at our school "if they thought they might have a vocation?" I remember asking one particular nun why she didn't ask me. The reply came briskly back: "Wanda, the day you walk in the front door of our convent, we'll all walk out the back!" Guess they didn't see me as "religious life" material. The ironic thing was, the girls they were querying about their "potential" vocations were all "goody two-shoes" on the outside, or at least as demonstrated by their demeanour in school but little hellions once they escaped the school boundaries. I was completely the opposite. Funny how unperceptive some adults can be at reading schoolgirls' characters. At the time, everyone, including the nun in question, just laughed. Though she was probably right about me. I wouldn't have adapted to the religious life. I need to wander the world and in that respect I was well-named.

As for the Domain Franciscan, it is just another example of the waning importance of religious institutions in Montreal. Very much a fabric of the city's past history but no longer a vital part of the landscape as they had been in the city's first 350 years. This is especially evident along René Lévesque, which in the last 100 years has lost the majority of its many churches, convents and religious buildings, either through destruction or conversion to other uses. For further info on the priory fire:

<http://www.montrealgazette.com/news/Historic+Montreal+church+burns+ground/2532094/story.html>

### **The Shaughnessy Village Pocket Park - South-west corner of Tupper and Fort Streets**

What is it about Montreal and its pocket parks? Initially I always thought they were a Montreal phenomenon that grew into existence because most Montrealers are so desperately short of green space that they were a result of residents taking initiative and banding together to create some green and flowered niches to brighten up their overheated, hot, paved and asphalted neighbourhoods. It turns out that is not quite the case. It is more of a worldwide urban phenomenon that I simply became aware of by being exposed to it in Montreal. Research has shown that urban green spaces are incredibly important and a requisite element vitally needed to promote health and well-being, especially mental health, in urban dwellers, and the smaller they are the more important two features, in particular, become. These are the 'rest and restitution' and the 'socializing' or gathering aspect the park provides. For 'rest and restitution', the main results of recent studies conducted in Copenhagen, Denmark show that 'green ground cover' and 'enclosed green niches' are important, while 'disturbing features' (playground, view outside park) should be avoided. That latter one is particularly hard to accomplish. Most Montreal pocket parks face traffic laden streets and are flanked by parked cars, not the most picturesque or calming of views. Montreal has both good and poor examples of pocket parks but the Shaughnessy Village one remains a perennial favourite of mine as do the grates of colourful flowers that also appear along the street in summer.

One of the unique and exciting characteristics of pocket parks is that they are often created by local residents out of vacant lots, or otherwise forgotten spaces, as this one was.

Many others are the result of community groups, private entities or foundations reclaiming these spaces for the benefit of the local neighbourhood. Unfortunately, they are sometimes easier to create than to maintain because without functional design, community support, use and maintenance, they may fall into disrepair or suffer from overuse. This little gem was fashioned and is maintained, by a group of Shaughnessy villagers, out of a scruffy scrag end of a city lot covered in refuse and invasive weeds, in part because this area is so short of the desperately required green space their city administration consistently fails to provide them with, so they simply commandeered and created their own.



Shaughnessy Village Pocket Park

Source: Courtesy J. Townsend

Over the years, I have stopped here to rest, read a book, chat, drink a coffee, eat a sandwich, and watch birds and butterflies enjoy the space along with me. Lately, I even witnessed a piece of performance art being practised here. I love this little oasis, appreciate the beauty and tranquility it offers to passersby and heartily applaud its creators and those who help maintain it.

**Montreal Forum** - 2313 Saint-Catherine St W, Montreal, QC H3H 1N2

So many memories, so many stories. Sporting News called this building "the most storied building in hockey history" and this image featuring the unforgettable hockey stick escalators is how I choose to remember this iconic building, which has undergone a number of major architectural interventions during the course of its 94-year history. It was

constructed in 1924 on the site of an equally famous open air ice hockey and roller skating rink, dating from 1900, also called the Forum. Hence the origin of the building's name. This artwork, featured here and painted by artist Brent Arlitt and kindly reproduced with his permission, freezes in time my strongest memories of this incomparable ice hockey shrine. And my most favourite memory is that of taking my almost eight-year-old son to his first, and his last, hockey game there as an early birthday present.



Montreal Forum - acrylic on canvas painting by Brent Arlitt

Source: courtesy Brent Arlitt

### **Memorable Memories - Short Story "Crafting Caring Memories"**

One of the most important tasks a human can be called upon to do in a lifetime is to parent a child. It's a mission that most of us are ill-trained for. Some of us are cavalier: "How hard can it be?" Others of us are terrified: "What if I mess up?" I belong in the latter category.

Yet, in spite of my misgivings, I took on the challenge, not only of motherhood, but of single parenthood. And in case you want to know - it wasn't and hasn't been an easy road to travel. However, one of the goals I set myself was to take care to craft, or orchestrate for my son, some unforgettable (I hoped) memories of childhood. Did I succeed? For that you will need to ask my son - for they are his memories not mine.

Nevertheless, one memory I thought he should perhaps have, especially for a Canadian kid, who liked to play hockey, was a trip to see the Canadiens play at the Montreal Forum that

iconic shrine that looms so large in the hockey annals of our nation, and which was located not far from where he was born and we lived.

As the last months of the Canadiens' tenure at the venue approached, life kept interfering and then the final few days were upon us and I hadn't yet managed to take him to a game there. The Molson (later the Bell) Centre was built, and the last Saturday night game in the Forum against the then expansion team Ottawa was at hand. I hadn't bought tickets, and time was swiftly running out on me. So one cold, wet, blustery Saturday morning in March 1996, close to his 8th birthday, I pulled up in my old grey Chevette and parked illegally on the corner of Ste Catherine and Atwater. A scalper lurked in the doorway.

I jumped out and asked: "How much for two tickets for the game in the blue?" (which I knew were the cheapest but also the place for the die-hard fans). "\$50" he said. I handed over my precious folded bills, got back in the car. "Here you are, kid, happy early birthday birthday present" I said, thrusting the tickets into the surprised hands of my (almost) 8 year-old son, "we're off to see the Senators tonight at the Forum!". "But Mum", he responded, "These tickets don't say Ottawa, they say Montreal vs Dallas".

By this time we were headed home, west along de Maisonneuve. I pulled the car over and grabbed the tickets. He was right. They weren't for that night's game but for the actual very last game at the Forum on the following Monday night, March 11, 1996, against the Dallas Stars (another expansion team) and to which I had never even considered going to, as I had imagined the price for scalped tickets would be too high and way out of my limited budget.

Did the scalper make a mistake? I'll never know. But in the end my effort to craft a caring, unforgettable memory for my son, gave him one neither he, nor I, will forget.



The event included a moving ceremony where each former captain passed the torch along to the next in line ending with Pierre Turgeon, the last Canadiens' captain, to lead the team on to the ice at the last game on the Forum; although, the loudest ovation was for Maurice "Rocket" Richard with a resounding ovation that lasted almost 10 minutes. This photo features gentleman player Jean Beliveau who retired from active play on June 9, 1971, having won 10 Stanley Cups.

With the Forum as their home address, the Canadiens recorded over 1,500 wins, scored over 10,000 goals and hoisted the Stanley Cup 22 times. In the last game at the Forum Montreal beat Dallas 4 to 1.

A great many Montrealers and many visitors have their own stories of the Forum. No need to repeat them here, except to say the Forum's current incarnation needs work or a new vocation. Hopefully one day that will be a good story to tell.

**Moe's Café aka 'la casse-croute de coin'...now the Shaughnessy Café** - corner of Lambert Closse and Blvd de Maisonneuve - Moe's: formerly at 2214 Maisonneuve W. / Shaughnessy Cafe: 1455 Lambert-Closse, Montreal, QC H3H 1Z5

Le "casse-croute de coin" or local diner is a part of a vanishing Montreal scene, especially where neighbourhood gentrification is taking place. Moe's was an iconic an example of this breed of basic eateries that you could ever hope to find. A Montreal institution since 1958, Moe's was Montreal's 24-hour breakfast café long before it was de rigeur to offer all day breakfast (plus, of course, the ubiquitous hamburger or hotdog) but if that's what you wanted, no matter what time of the day or night you could find it here along with hot coffee, a friendly welcome and fast service. You definitely didn't come here for the decor, it was very basic and pretty dingy and usually crowded. However, it was the most egalitarian place in the world. Everyone was treated the same here and you could rub shoulders with a wide range of Montrealers, whether they were young or older, hockey and pop stars, prostitutes, musicians, indigenous people, cops, students and lawyers, families and street people. I loved this place for its warmth and heart, and long before my son came arrived it was my "go to" place and later it became "our" breakfast place. It closed forever at 6 am, December 7, 2013. I miss it still. Its new incarnation is okay... a lot brighter to be sure, but it's now really just a neighbourhood coffee shop. It's just not quite the old "Moe's" but then the Forum isn't the "old Forum" either. Yeah, years pass and stuff changes.



Shaughnessy Cafe - formerly the site of Moe's Casse-croute du coin

Source: Courtesy J. Townsend

**Cabot Square** - Bounded by Ste Catherine W., Atwater, Tupper (formerly Quiblier) and Lambert-Closse.

I have a long personal history with Cabot Square starting with my very first year in Montreal when it was the terminus for my bus from Lasalle and was where I had to change onto the 150 bus to get downtown in the morning and back home in the evening. I've watched its metamorphosis over the years from a vibrant busy place when crowds streamed through while filling or emptying the Forum before and after hockey games in the 1970s to a scruffy, dilapidated, no man's land in the 1990s, hemmed in by glass bus shelters and encircling STM buses arriving and departing on schedule all through the day and night, and as a nightly stop for the Dans La Rue camper van dishing out hotdogs, hot chocolate, comfort and a listening ear to the street kids, right on through the years of several City attempts to "clean it up". With fights, loud quarrels, drug deals, sirens and police cruisers routinely parked on the interior walkways, refuse everywhere, with the benches often occupied by prone bodies catching a nap, and so on up to the present, in 2018 when, after another large infusion of cash and sadly, a further concretization of the park and diminution of actual greenery, plus the installation of brighter lighting along with benches that are impossible to lie down on, it finally seems to have become a place all Montrealers whether, street people or passersby, indigenous or not, can share and enjoy but no longer really live in, as some did in the past.



Vintage postcard of Western Park

Source: Public Domain

For a patch of land, supposedly dedicated to socializing, rest, leisure and recreation activities, the square has had a long and somewhat rocky history starting with its purchase in 1870 from the Sulpicians with the goal of creating a gathering place or park for the people moving into the area. It was first named Western Park, since it was on the western edge of the expanding City of Montreal facing what was to become the City of Westmount

across Atwater Avenue and later the Western Hospital was built to the south of it and Western Avenue and the Congregation Notre Dame motherhouse to the north. It originally featured trees, walkways, benches and a large central fountain similar to ones in many other parks and squares of the era. It was the place citizens came to walk, talk and socialize after work and on days off. At the turn of the 20th century, it was supposed to have been expanded into a much larger park; one that had been initially proposed to extend all the way north up Atwater to Sherbrooke St. Unfortunately those grandiose plans never came to fruition.

In the beginning it served the recreational needs of not just Montreal but other neighbouring towns, such as St. Henri and Ste. Cunégonde (today, Little Burgundy), both of which were later annexed to the larger city. At some point in time it was converted from a park to a square since parks have curfews but a square can be accessed by the public 24 hours day. At the time (and still today), it is one of the few public somewhat larger green spaces to be found in what was then the western end of Montreal.

What is particularly ironic though, in the last 50 years or so, Cabot Square has become a gathering place for the city's indigenous population, some transient, others homeless, others just looking to connect, perhaps with friends from home. This means it also showcased some of the lasting negative effects of the European colonization of North America, which could be, and can still be, seen just about every day gathered, sometimes sharing morsels of northern foodstuffs, sometimes inebriated, but latterly chatting, laughing and exchanging ideas and information, manning a seasonal cafe that serves indigenous fare, and holding art exhibitions and cultural performances, in a square dedicated to a man who is viewed as the Canadian equivalent of Christopher Columbus, and is thus a symbol of the opening up the New World to colonization.

Ironic too because neither Columbus nor John Cabot (Giovanni Cabota) were the first Europeans to reach the Americas, they were preceded long before by the 11th century Viking Leif Ericson. Plus the Vikings didn't 'discover' the Americas either - since this was accomplished by the ancestors of the indigenous peoples some ten to fourteen thousand plus years before. Nevertheless, it remains the official position of the government of Canada and the UK that John Cabot landed on the coast of Newfoundland in 1497, and laid claim to the "new" land in the name of King Henry VII of England. Fact is, Cabot never made it as far as Montreal, which was originally claimed for Frances's King Francis I by Jacques Cartier in a later voyage in 1534, when the name "Canada" was first used, but even he didn't get as far as the island of Montreal until 1535, which begs the question: "Why do we now have a downtown square named after an Italian explorer (some say pirate)?" It certainly complicates it even further in people's minds, unless you know Cabot was a European explorer-for-hire, based in Spain, whose exploratory expeditions to discover a western passage to Asia, were funded by the King of England, but that ended up with him arriving somewhere in the New World instead. Where exactly no one really knows for sure.

As to why the original Western park was renamed Cabot Square instead of retaining its original name, well, that's got to do with the gift, in 1931, of a large bronze statue of Giovanni Cabota (John Cabot), by Italian sculptor, Guido Casini that was presented in the name of the growing Italian population of Montreal by the then fascist government of Italy. A gift that for some years no one at City Hall quite knew what to do with and it languished

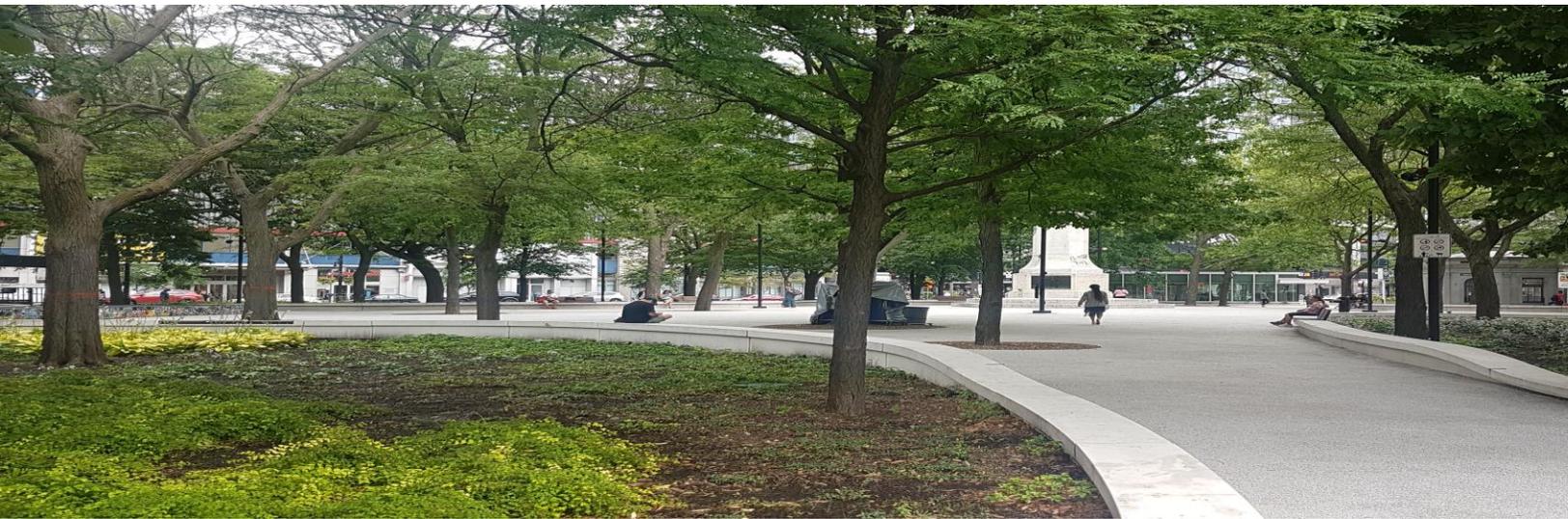
in storage. Under Mayor Camilien Houde (imprisoned during WWII for his fascist sympathies) the statue was eventually installed in Western Square in 1935, replacing the beloved fountain, but it was only in 1957 (22 years later) that its name was changed to Cabot Square.

For many years Cabot Square was as desirable a place to go as any other large urban green space. It acted as the 'front yard' for the famous Forum throughout its time as home to the Montreal Canadiens and the team's amazing streak of 22 Stanley Cup wins. It was also immediately adjacent to what was first the Western, then the Montreal Children's Hospital and across the road from the Women's Hospital, later the Reddy Memorial Hospital, and now the Y Refugee and Migrant centre. The Atwater Library, its light-filled reading room, its concerts and courses, and later its state of the art computer centre, had been established across from the square in 1920 with its front door facing the square and always welcoming the local inhabitants to visit no matter what socio-economic class they belonged to.

In the 1960s and 70s, the area was further bonified by the construction of the avant-garde Westmount Square, the Alexis Nihon complex and the Montreal Metro, all early components of Montreal's famed Underground City. Metro Atwater at the time was the western terminus of the Green Line with one of its exits opening right onto Cabot Square, allowing easy access to the Montreal Forum; thus integrating the city's premier arena, with multi-floored shopping malls, as well as residential and commercial towers. This was considered the cutting edge of modern urban design at that time. The Forum was expanded in 1968 and throughout the next two decades was not only home to the most exciting franchise in the NHL, but also served as the city's premier large-capacity performance venue, the Beatles appearing here in 1968. It hosted the Olympic gymnastic events in 1976, and Billy Graham in 1990. Even into the mid to late 1980s the general area around the square was developing and improving: the commercial office towers were added to Place Alexis-Nihon in 1986, Dawson moved into its current home in 1988, the new Lasalle College campus opened further east along Ste Catherine, and the Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA) was completed in 1989.

By the mid-1990s, however, the situation had changed considerably. The Canadiens left the Forum in 1996 and the subsequent 'entertainment complex' developed to replace hockey in the renovated building never quite took off. The Reddy closed in 1997 and Cabot Square and then Ste-Catherine Street West began its steep decline into a prime example of urban decay. Stores closed and remained vacant for well over a decade and everything looked shabby and dilapidated. The Seville Theatre remained boarded up for years and was eventually torn down. In 2015 the Montreal Children's hospital campus moved, and the site has since been dismantled in extremely short order in preparation for the construction of seven mixed used tower blocks that will dwarf the area and probably block sunlight from the square.

In spite of this, in 2016-17 Cabot Square underwent a 6.4 million makeover that has pleased some and disquieted others. However, the seasonal Roundhouse cafe, co-occupant of a former Camilienne or public toilet (although never actually used as one) that were constructed according to plans drawn up by noted architect Jean-Omer Marchard and built



Cabot Square looking north from Tupper - summer 2018

Source: Courtesy J. Townsend

as municipal make-work projects during the Great Depression in early 1930s and as a result were named after Montreal's then Mayor Camilien Houde, is doing well with summer visitors; who are seemingly enjoying the indigenous offerings along with the Moccasin Jo Coffee roasted on Kanehsatake, a local indigenous reserve. More and more people seem to be walking through and sitting in the square; the buses are still there, but new condos have been added around the square and more are being built. Westmount has approved plans to begin rejuvenation of its part of Ste Catherine St West and the Adonis grocery store is anchoring the formerly dilapidated block east of the Forum and appears very busy. It seems change is in the air. Time will tell if the makeover will hold this time and if the indigenous population, which has staked out a vibrant and vital place in the square feel comfortable about staying on and integrating further. It will take goodwill and concrete efforts from all the residents of, workers in and visitors to the area. It may not have the shady lawns and bubbling fountain of the past but finally it does seem as though the square has opened back up as a more welcoming meet-up and gathering place as well as place of exchange and sharing. Long may it last. Come enjoy a coffee, a piece of bannock or some Three Sisters Chili, talk to an indigenous person, pay a coffee or a meal forward for a less fortunate person. Reconciliation starts with a single step. Cabot Square is now a good place to start the process.

**The Atwater Library and Computer Centre - 1200 Atwater Avenue, Westmount, QC H3Z 1X4**

Known now by most users as the Atwater Library and Computer Centre, its official name is the Atwater Library of the Mechanics' Institute of Montreal. It is the sole survivor of a network of Mechanics' Institutes that once existed in Canada and across North America. They were the forerunners of the community and technical colleges and grew out of the need for workers to continue learning and upgrading their skills, especially during evening hours after work. The men behind the Institutes set up libraries and reading rooms and instigated lecture programmes and weekly information sessions, often on a Saturday night, something not usually available to the working man of the time. And yes, they were working men's clubs, not open to working women whose place was still very much in the home. Improving women's educational skills in the secular world would come later...much later.

Montreal's institution was unique in many ways since not only was it the first Mechanics' Institute established, in 1828, in the land that would, 40 years later, be called Canada, it was also funded by a group of both French and English businessmen and clergy who "saw a need to educate workers for the emerging industries of the growing city". The Atwater Library and Computer Centre carries on those traditions but is very much anchored in the needs of present day Montreal islanders and others who travel onto the island to avail themselves of its varied services.

But why is it important to me? In my late childhood and adolescence I lived in a small town in the county of Essex, England called Epping. We had moved there from Forest Gate, in the east end of London, when I was six or seven years old. I remember there was still a Mechanic's Institute in the town, which was how it was always referred to it, although its "official" name was The Epping Literary and Mechanics Institute since they also housed our local library in a small prefabricated building next door. It was on Hemnall Street, which ran parallel to the High Street, and which we entered via Station Road. It had been built in 1908 for the people of the town by Ernest Wythes of Copped Hall, a local landowner, although Copped Hall when I lived in Epping was a burnt shell of a building on a hillside out of town on the edge of the Epping Forest (once a royal hunting preserve) and visible from miles away. Today, it's been restored and renovated and is run as a market garden coop. Plus the old library is no longer where it used to be, having been taken over by the local municipality and moved to much larger purpose-built premises; however, the Mechanics' Institute still exists but has been renamed and is now known as The Hemnall Social Club.

Nevertheless, when I moved to Montreal and came across the Atwater Library and learned it was formerly part of that huge 19th to 20th century organization known as the Mechanics' Institute that had spread out from Scotland into England and from there across the world, well, in some ways it was like coming across an old friend, or at least a fond memory of home. My first use of the Atwater library was for its computer courses. So in some ways the Library performed for me a similar function to its original mandate by upgrading the skills of a working person. I was applying for a job and the job description said I needed to know MS Word. I already knew Word Perfect, so I needed a quick course in the alternative word processing system. At the time, I think I looked in the Gazette newspaper ads for computer courses and discovered a small advertisement for the Atwater Library, phoned up to inquire

about prices, which were very reasonable and within my price range, and thus my long association with the library commenced.



Atwater Library and Computer Centre - 1200 Atwater Avenue

Source: Courtesy Atwater Library

Over the years since then I have taken courses in other software such as Access, PowerPoint and Excel and web site design, and sometimes also, when I needed, refresher courses to update or refresh my skills, since the old adage "use it or lose it" remains as true today as ever. If you don't keep practising you forget a lot of stuff, especially software codes, formulas, and short-cuts. Thus, for me, the Atwater Library has been always there to step into the breach with affordable, timely computer courses and help. Even personal one-on-one tuition should it be needed. If I ever join the cell phone or tablet age, I will probably sign up for "Smart Phones for Dummies" so I can learn how to navigate my way around those pesky devices.

Later, when time permitted, I got involved as a volunteer, organizing fund-raising events and was once awarded a small contract by the Library Board to provide a marketing plan to increase public awareness of the Library's range of computer lessons and the computer centre. One of my recommendations was for the computer classroom to be moved from a small, overcrowded space to the larger one it continues to occupy today. Having experienced, as a paying student, how claustrophobic, cramped and uncomfortable it was to learn in the original classroom, it was evident even that small change would make a huge difference, if not to initial telephone sales, at least to future sales. To help that happen I also refurnished the "new" room with computer desks, brightly coloured chairs and an equally colourful file cabinet as well as brighter lamps and other accessories. The equipment and furnishings came from a friend I knew who was closing down an office.

I also organized an auction and a bazaar to help fund raise for its literacy programmes. It was called The ABC Bazaar for Literacy where A = Art and Antiques, B = Books and Bric a brac and C = Computers, Cameras and Courses. These days, I mostly attend lunchtime concerts and talks, poetry and author readings and continue to improve my own literacy skills...digital literacy that is, having becoming heavily involved in the Digital Literacy and Media laboratory run under the auspices of the Library's Community Outreach Librarian. I am also having fun helping the Library build its Living History Collection.

For further info on the library: <https://www.atwaterlibrary.ca/history-and-archives/history-of-the-mechanics-institute-of-montreal/>

**St Stephen's Anglican Church aka The Open Door Church** - Corner Atwater and Dorchester, 1 Weredale Park, Westmount, QC H3Z 1Y5

Also known as the Open Door church, it was a functioning place of worship and an Anglican Church of Canada parish in its present location from 1903 until 2016 when the land and buildings (church and manse) were sold to property developers Devimco, and the Open Door drop-in day centre for homeless and street people was given notice to leave after 30 years at St Stephen's. Moving to new premises proved hard, especially for a "wet" centre i.e. one that allows inebriated clients, a rarity in Montreal. It seems no one much wants a day centre for the less fortunate in life in their backyard. Frankly that was always what I liked about St Stephen's but I recognize I may have been in the minority with that opinion; however, I am not a believer in covering up the less pleasant aspects of urban living. When stuff is full view, often people step up to do something about it. Hide the less salubrious parts away and humanity tends to ignore the issues i.e. "Out of sight, out of mind". Personally, I liked that the drop-in centre was pretty much out there. It was well-named, as when the good weather permits the front door is left open during the hours of operation and on the nicer days those using its services sit outside on the steps and the grass. I also liked the fact the centre was in Westmount, very much on the edge of Westmount, but yet still very much a part of that presumed well-heeled municipality.

Ah yes, Westmount. Long thought of and consistently described as a Montreal island enclave for the extremely 'well-to-do' and, even today, it appears the City of Montreal and few Montreal islanders don't wish to change their opinion of that often quoted description. Yet I, for one, currently live there and know more about Westmount's undersides than those who still prefer to think everyone living there is part of the tony one percent club. We aren't. Well, not all of us at any rate, for Westmount and its current residents are a lot more multi-faceted than most people are willing to concede. Over the years I have resided here, I have seen several day centres for the poor and the homeless come and go. There is a public housing complex dating from the 1970s, which is still very much needed, the Public Security division of City Hall collects, sorts and distributes Christmas baskets of food each year to Westmount's low income households, there are two CHLDs and another retirement home subsidized by the Rotary Club, plus an ever growing number of senior citizens living on subsistence income levels.

Westmount has always had, and still has, rooming houses, although lesser in number than there were before. Yeah, rooming houses, those larger houses or low rise apartments where low income tenants rent by the room and if they're lucky share a kitchen and if they're not,



St Stephen's Church - Open Door Day Centre

Source: Courtesy J. Townsend

manage with a hotplate in their room and wash their dishes in the shared bathroom sink. Forty five years ago I did that. It wasn't pleasant, but for cheaper rent you did what you had to do, but in Westmount there are people still doing that in 2018. One of the houses I lived in until three years ago on the south-western edge of the city (near the CP Glen rail yards) had obviously once been on the transient telegraph - a "word of mouth" list, which meant throughout my years living there I regularly had people ring the doorbell to ask "if I had a room available to rent". Times change but it seems the needs of the less affluent don't. The local Westmount cubs and scouts troops have an annual fall/winter "sock" drive, collecting new pairs of socks, underwear, hats and gloves to donate to the clients of the Open Door. When you live on the street, warm, clean socks or new underwear may seem like a small thing but in fact, they're a huge and appreciated gift.

I, for one, am sad to see the Open Door move. It has, after a long, hard search found a new locale further east, downtown, that are prepared to open its doors to it, although not without some of the new neighbours petitioning their borough to block it from setting up there. Some of its daily visitors will move to the "new" place. Others won't. But, who will step up I wonder to provide the hot soup, laundry services, fresh clothing, socks and a friendly ear to those who are staying behind? Just because the Open Door is moving, it doesn't mean the street people will.

As for the church and the manse, it's going to be interesting to see how the Devimco plan to incorporate them architecturally speaking into the new condo development, no doubt in the planning stages for the corner of Atwater and Dorchester, since the same company made a quite horrid architectural mess-up of incorporating the heritage greystone convent and chapel, just down the street at 1800 René-Lévesque, into the O'Nessy, one of its most recent condo developments. Oh yes, the O'Nessy, the power of names. No doubt coined to be a cutesy play on words and a diminutive of Shaughnessy (as in Mansion, Village, Lord, etc) but actually Nessy is the diminutive long applied by the Scots to their famous Loch Ness monster. Thus, inadvertently I'm sure, the name is quite apt for that monstrous piece of architectural design that condo development now is. Unfortunately, just one more ugly, awkward building added to the high-rise canyon land that the western end of Blvd. René-Lévesque has become, with yet more to follow. Surely Devimco you could have done better?

I'm not holding out a lot of hope they will succeed, unless perhaps they change architects and maybe marketers. There is one ray of hope (perhaps) since this time they will have to deal with the Westmount Planning and Advisory committee, who hopefully won't be as lenient as it seems Montreal City Hall currently is with what it allows to be permitted and built. Time will tell if Westmount will have better luck in demanding and obtaining a higher level of architectural melding of disparate building elements than Montreal has proved capable of doing. I hope so for us, and all future generations of Montreal islanders.

**Weredale Park** - off Dorchester West between Clandeboye and Atwater Avenue, Westmount, QC H3Z 1Y5



Bench under the maple tree - Weredale Park - summer 2018

Source: Courtesy J. Townsend

This is a tiny hidden park on my personal roster of Montreal island's "tiny or pocket parks"; however, unless you take a right turn down a narrow, one-car-wide alleyway just off

Dorchester Street in Westmount near the intersection with Atwater Avenue, most passersby, either on foot or by car, have no idea this tiny square of green lawn space is even there. And that's literally what it is. A small patch of green grass with a solitary bench that is on occasion moved around. Sometimes it will be located by flowering bushes at the north end and at other times under the lone maple tree. But for some weird reason I love this little area. Surrounded as it is by a motley collection of townhouses anchoring the "in" entrance with the redbrick St Stephen's church on the "out" exit corner, the u-shaped roadway opens up into this secret garden area once you've navigated your way through the narrow alleyway entrance.

There's a low-rise redbrick apartment building on your right, and an assortment of office buildings of various ages and designs that house the Batshaw Family and Youth services, one of which is an imposing edifice that once used to be the Weredale House Boy's Home that one or two of the neighbourhood's current street people recall attending. It's tucked in there along with the St Stephen's manse and a few town houses. At first glance, it's a jumble of disparate buildings crammed into a small multi-use space. I discovered it, when coming to visit a friend, who moved briefly into the apartment building some years ago.

Over time, I've seen that central "lawn" being used by children from the apartment building to blow bubbles in spring, roll in the grass, play ball in summer, and to build snowmen in the winter, along with other folks like me sitting on that solitary bench taking a breather from the bustle and noise of the surrounding traffic. It's a peaceful, hidden oasis, although I'd like to see the City of Westmount provide a few more flowers to spruce it up but then that would cut down the green space for the kids to run on...and did I mention ...it's tiny. Ah well, in life you can't have everything and Weredale Park is definitely a pocket park worth keeping.

### **Y Migrant and Refugee Centre - 4039 Tupper Street, Westmount, QC H3Z 1T5**

The Migrant and Refugee centre is based in a part of the former Reddy Memorial hospital, which prior to that was known as the Women's Hospital of Montreal. I never knew it as the Women's Hospital but I did record the story of a 94 year old man in 2017, for inclusion in the Atwater Library Living History collection, who had been born there in 1924. One of twins, his brother had been killed in the closing years of WWII but he had lived and worked and raised his family in and around this area for his entire life. An accident during military training had kept him out of the arena of war his twin died in.

By the time I needed to use the services of this hospital it was already well established as the Reddy Memorial Hospital, a name change in effect since 1945. Hebert Reddy had been one of the most beloved obstetrician at the Women's Hospital, which was originally a local maternity hospital. By the 1970s and 80s, it was very much a general hospital and a mishap with a motorcycle had occasioned my visit there. I had inadvertently burned myself on the tailpipe of a friend's motorbike. In an error of judgment, I hadn't worn my high boots and the unprotected skin of my leg between my sock and my jeans touched the hot tailpipe giving me an extremely large and painful burn. The wound had got infected and I ended up in the emergency room to have it cleaned and dressed and rather large oozing blister dealt with. The pain was excruciating and I must admit I never made that mistake again. Talk about learning a lesson the hard way! Recently a friend's 30-year-old son made the same

mistake by riding his motorbike while wearing shorts and was suffering from a similar bad burn. I could almost feel the pain he was experiencing in my own leg. Talk about ghost pains!

In 1997, the Reddy (as it was commonly known) and other smaller west-end neighbourhood hospitals, such as the Queen Elizabeth in NDG were closed as part of the changes in how Quebec healthcare was being delivered. 20 years later they continue to be greatly missed by many, including me. The emergency room waits were never as long at the smaller hospitals and at the larger centres the waits have only got longer and longer since the smaller centres closed.



Migrant Centre - former Reddy Memorial Hospital

Source: Courtesy Michael Walsh

After standing empty for some time, parts of the Reddy were divided up. Some is currently rented to the Batshaw Youth and Family services, part was made into a hostel for Inuit and northern Quebec indigenous peoples who come to Montreal for treatment, part became a migrant and refugee centre administered by the YMCA (the Y) and part of it houses the Y's Saveurs YMCA a catering service that cooks up nutritious and affordable meals. The Inuit hostel moved out to new quarters in Dorval in 2016 and the Y Migrant centre expanded into the space as a result of the influx of asylum seekers crossing the border from the US into Canada in 2017 onwards.

For much of the past 20 years, many refugees and migrants have made their way to the Atwater Library next door to the Y centre on Tupper to avail themselves, in part, of its computer centre in order to keep in touch with friends and family overseas. Lately though,

as cell phones became more and ubiquitous, it now seems they now use phones more and more to accomplish the same connections. At least that's what it looks like these days as I walk past each week en route to the library, as nearly everyone seated outside, except for the children, has a cell phone in hand. Since I can't afford a cell phone on my budget I wonder how they do. Perhaps the Y has a special deal with some of the telecom providers. Some of the recent asylum seekers have also started to avail themselves of services such as clothing, toiletries and food at the Chez Doris women's shelter located across Cabot Square on Lambert-Closse, thus taxing local social services more and more. With the neighbourhood's Open Door day centre leaving but space at the Migrant and Refugee centre still apparently desperately needed, it seems the area will remain, probably for some time to come, the multi-cultural reception area that it evolved into in recent years. For further info: <https://www.ymcaquebec.org/en/Community-Programs/Housing-Services>

**The Parliament of Poets in Westmount Square - 1, Westmount Square, Westmount, QC H3Z 2P9**



Westmount Square c1967

Source: Courtesy Westmount City Archives

This black facaded landmark building (opened in December 1967) is made of anodized aluminum with curtain walls and smoked glass windows that is supposedly modelled on Chicago's 1951 Lake Shore Drive complex - the first of Mies van der Rohe's towering "glass house" buildings. It has special meaning for me but not perhaps for some of the reasons one might think. Yes, it's an iconic and famous piece of modern architecture in the International Style designed by architectural great - Ludwig Mies Van de Rohe - and yes, I used to work for a time for KLM Royal Dutch Airlines, who moved from the Standard Life building on the north-west corner of Mountain and Sherbrooke St. to a new building located

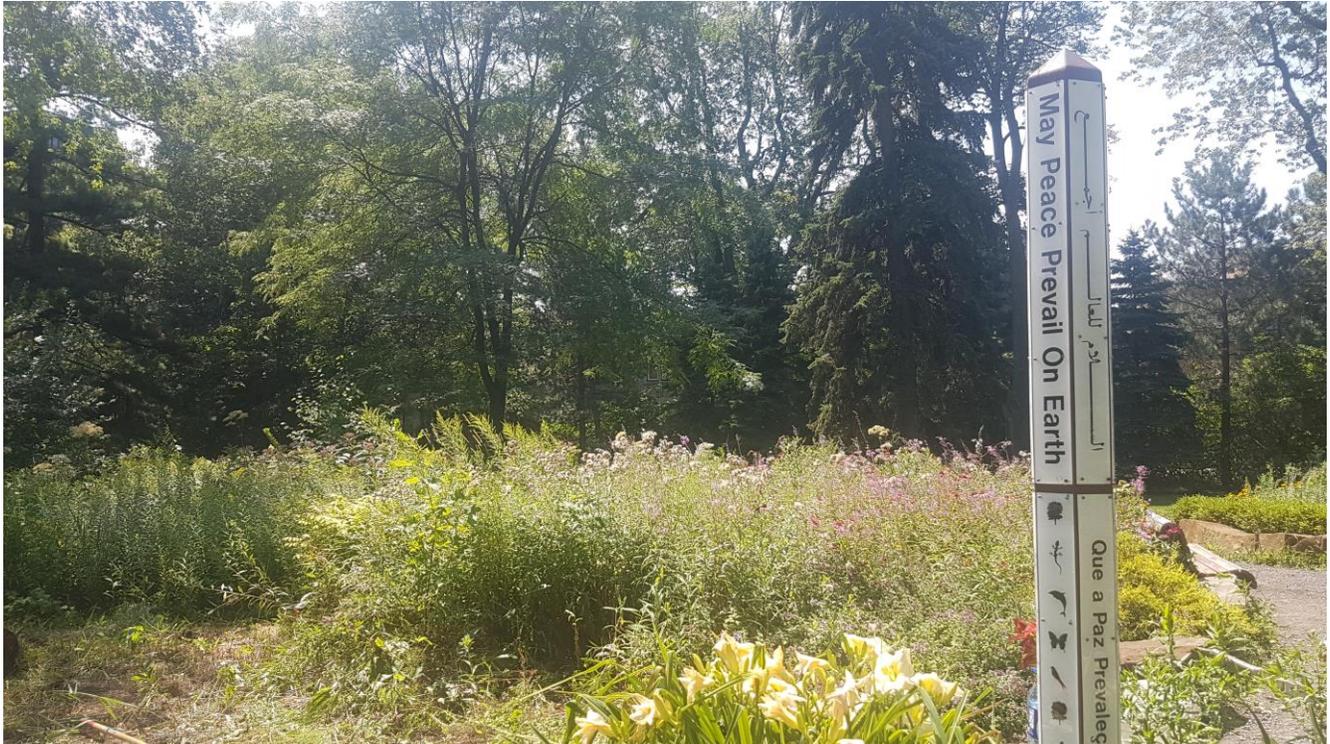
just next door to it. And the iconic Eastern Airlines (once one of the US's Big Four airlines brought to prominence by WWI flying ace Eddie Rickenbaker) was once the anchor tenant of the smallest of the towers known as the "Pavilion" (where RBC has now resides) in the golden era of aviation when all the airlines who were anyone all had prestige downtown street front reservation centres and people actually walked in and bought or changed their flight arrangements at ticket counters. And yes, after the mall level supermarket closed the space was converted to an excellent market-type food court with plenty of places to sit and eat lunch, especially on those cold winter days; and even though most of its below ground level was filled with boutiques and the type of stores my budget could never stretch to shopping in, but I could always look and dream. However, it has been part of my life for a long time as I have visited friends in apartments there and I have used its medical clinic and its radiology centre, shopped at the former, and sadly missed, neighbourhood SAQ located there, bought birthday cards in a great little "notions" store that used to be next to it, banked at the Royal Bank branch there, browsed through the annual antique fair held there each November and in bad weather, walked through the tunnel to the Atwater metro. All mundane facets of a life working and living and passing through the neighbourhood of which Westmount Square is an integral part.

However, none of these are the principal reason this building holds special memories for me. For me, what made it special was the fact it was the location of drop-in meet-up of local poets. The self-styled Parliament of Poets. The organizer had received permission for a motley group of poets and wordsmiths to meet there on Mondays, or sometimes Wednesdays, once the food court on the mall concourse had closed for business to share our work, chat, provide tips and feedback to anyone brave enough to voice their words in public. Combining the fashioning of poetry with Mies' "less is more" minimalist philosophy of architecture is, for my perspective at least, the most perfect pairing, since most poets tend to try and express in few words the deepest and loftiest of thoughts. I think Mies would have approved.

At the time I had no idea that the "Parliament of Poets" was actually a long epic poem written by Frederick Glaysher (published in 2012) as writing this in 2018, I've only just become acquainted with it. The thing is I had always assumed it was a marvellous name for our group, dreamed up by the man responsible for our gathering there, and who wrote under the name of October Charles. And maybe it was. We've fallen out of contact, maybe more my fault than his I imagine. I got so busy with my own life as sometimes happens. I regret I wasn't more involved with it, as the Parliament of Poets meets no more. I wish it still did.

**Dawson Peace Garden** - 3040 Sherbrooke St W, Westmount, QC H3Z 1A4.

My son was an 18 year-old student in the Liberal Arts programme at Dawson College at the time of the September 13, 2006 shooting where one young girl - eighteen-year-old Anastasia De Sousa - was killed and 16 others wounded. This garden was created as a green space that is: "commemorative and also symbolic of life and renewal, peace and remembrance, beauty and serenity, and that inspires teaching and learning, while making a positive environmental impact and acting as a living testament to those who suffered pain and immeasurable loss".



Peace Garden \_ Dawson College - Summer 2018

Source: Courtesy J. Townsend

It's a beautiful tranquil spot, especially when the spring bulbs are in flower. It also has plantings to attract butterflies in the summer and the migrating monarchs in the fall. I like to sit here at various times throughout the year - spring, summer and fall - while my thoughts dwell on my son; his half-sister whose life was impacted by the terrible shooting at the École Polytechnique in December 6, 1989, which marks her still since when she heard about the Dawson shooting she rushed out of work, commandeered a taxi and insisted the driver fight his way through traffic to our house to see if her brother was okay; and on another somewhat older friend, who was studying nursing at Dawson as a mature student and who saw the bullets start to fly (and who now works nursing contracts in Northern Quebec and with the international Red Cross in war zones); and about the other young lives, and those of their parents and family who, like me, were affected by those terrible deeds, included those of the shooters and their families. It's a beautiful corner of our island home and a fitting memorial to all lives lost and damaged. For more info:  
<https://www.dawsoncollege.qc.ca/peace-garden/>

**Wednesday Night Salon at Haddon Hall** - corner- of Lambert Clossé and Sherbrooke St W.  
2255 Sherbrooke Street West, Montreal, QC H3H 1Z9

4th floor, every Wednesday night without fail from 8.30 pm to 11.00 pm, the Nicholsons are home. The ship's bell rings at 9.00 pm to start proceedings. Bring a bottle and your listening cap. Introduce a friend but clear it first with the hostess, as space is limited. Every guest has to be introduced by another guest. No one gets in by just knocking at the front door.



Haddon Hall - Sherbrooke Street

Source: Courtesy J. Townsend

Conversation is fascinating, mind-expanding, limitless, and has been for over the 1900+ successive Wednesdays (that's over 36 years and counting) that the Wednesday Night (WN) Salon has endured. On the very rare occasions the host and/or hostess aka the Chairman and the Mouse, couldn't be there, there was a guest chairperson, so the string of successive Wednesday Nights remains unbroken. As of April 9, 2018, the Chairman has passed on (one hopes) to join the illustrious Wednesday Night alumni who have preceded him. "Mouse" is now the Chairperson and the salon continues on. The Wednesday Night Salon officially began (in February 1982) at another location at 33 Rosemount Crescent, Westmount, a little further along Sherbrooke St W. from Haddon Hall. "The house with the yellow door and the admiral's port and starboard lights outside". Mouse's dad - Leo Hewlett Thébaud - was a 3-star US Admiral.

When 33 Rosemount was sold, the proceedings moved - without missing a salon - to the apartment in Haddon Hall. "What is discussed at Wednesday Night stays at Wednesday Night" is the over-riding rule, so regular guests and invitees can be honest and forthright with their opinions, and they are. As for what is discussed, the topics range far and wide but always include some references to the state of the economy and/or the markets, the local, provincial, national and international political scenes, as well as the current affairs, environment, business, education, health care, arts, sciences and society.

Guests have included prime ministers, Quebec premiers, Montreal and Westmount mayors, politicians of all stripes, diplomats, heads of corporations, doctors, lawyers, technicians of all sorts, the media, architects, economists, financiers, engineers, business men and women, philanthropists, social activists, students, artists, actors, musicians, singers, writers, film-makers, geologists, miners, oil and gas honchos, teachers, researchers, professors and lecturers. No topic is off-limits and every evening is interesting.

I haven't attended them all but I have attended, off and on, for approx 35 of those 36+ years, bringing my small son in his early years and putting him to bed upstairs while I listened downstairs, and introducing him as a guest in his mid-teens. Attending the Nicholsons' Wednesday Night salon has been a special part of my life and has helped keep me informed about the world and in contact with many an interesting person. I never leave without having learnt something new. For further info: [www.dianaswednesdays.com](http://www.dianaswednesdays.com)

**Masonic Lodge Memorial Temple - 1805 Sherbrooke Street W, Montreal, QC H3H 1E4.**

I don't know a lot about freemasonry per se but it was this building that first made me aware that buildings could also be war memorials. Until I came face to face with this imposing classical revival style memorial "temple" on Sherbrooke Street, I had always thought war memorials came as a standalone monuments, usually adorned with towering sculptures and lists of names, such as the one further west along Sherbrooke in Westmount, or as simple plaques in churches. This imposing Masonic Lodge made me conscious of the fact that entire buildings could be conceived with this function in mind. Designed by Scottish born architect, John Smith Archibald, it includes meeting rooms for lodges and other related associations and is the home of the Grand Lodge of Quebec. It is worth noting that Smith Archibald was also the architect of record of another famous Montreal secular shrine - the 1924 Montreal Forum building. Dedicated on June 22, 1929, it opened on February 12, 1930 for meetings, fraternity, fellowship and philanthropy, as well as to commemorate the lives of members lost in war. Commissioned initially in memory of the dead of the brotherhood of Masons who died in the First World War, it later added the names of those who perished in the WWII and in the Korean War. It was added to the register of National Historic Sites of Canada in 2006.

It's somewhat ironic, due to the feud that long existed between the Roman Catholic Church and the Masonic Brotherhood (that resulted in Pope Clement XII excommunicating Masonic associations in 1738) that the temple was built on land facing the huge Grand Séminaire and College de Montréal building on Sherbrooke Street i.e. two long time adversaries still facing off but this time in magnificent buildings just across the road from each other.

Free Masonry, one of the most ancient of the craft guilds, was introduced into Quebec by the military, during the Seven Years' War (1757-1763). Freemasons like to describe their fraternity as a "beautiful system of morality, veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols." It teaches that each person has a responsibility to try and make the world a better place. Thus, masonry is deeply involved with helping people as evidenced locally by the funding of Montreal's renowned Shriner's Hospital all the way down to the simple act of paying someone's heating or electrical bill along with everything in between.

Each November, an annual fundraising event, entitled the Memorial Tea, is held here, which anyone can attend as long as you book in advance and pay for your tea, of course, with money going to support Montreal seniors' groups. So, if you'd like to see beyond the palatial doors of this national historic site to perhaps catch a glimpse of the grand lodge library, and the historic murals, this might be a good opportunity to do so.



Masonic Lodge Memorial Temple

Source: Wiki Creative Commons

As of 2018, however, word has it that as membership in the Masonic order in Quebec is dwindling, the building is now for sale, since like all heritage buildings it is costly to maintain and upkeep coupled with the fact it is not heavily utilized, with parts of it currently being used, somewhat ignominiously, for such a beautiful building for the storage of surplus furniture belonging to McGill University; although another section has, for quite some time, housed a daycare space, as evidenced by the brightly coloured children's play equipment along the rue St Marc side of this grandiose building. So I now wonder, if this story is true, what might it be converted to in future years, and whether the children will be permitted to stay on along with the names of the Masonic dead? [For more info:](https://www.glquebec.org/index.php/history/memorial-temple/masonic-memorial-hall)  
<https://www.glquebec.org/index.php/history/memorial-temple/masonic-memorial-hall>

**Le Grand Séminaire and the Collège de Montréal buildings and grounds - 2065 Sherbrooke St. W, Montréal, Québec H3H 1G6.**

Sometimes it's not the only shell of the buildings that are awarded heritage status, architectural elements within those buildings can also be designated as heritage assets.

In 2017 this happened to five specific elements within the majestic 160-year-old Grand Séminaire de Montréal built by the Sulpicians from 1855-1857 on the site of 17th century Fort de la Montagne (also referred to as the Fort des Messieurs and Fort Belmont).



Grand Séminaire - Collège de Montreal Entrance

Source: Courtesy J. Townsend

These elements encompass the principal or main staircase, the library, the chapel, the miniscule, crypt-level employees' chapel and the crypt itself, which continues to be used as an active interment site. Basically it means if the building is sold or radically altered these elements must be kept intact. Maintaining heritage buildings are always an expensive proposition. The Grand Seminaire costs the Sulpicians about \$1 million a year to maintain and that's not including the elevated administration and other costs (apparently upwards of \$20 million) that are required to operate the seminary itself. Currently, it runs an operating deficit of \$1 million per annum and enrolment is dropping, which means the Sulpicians are looking for opportunities in keeping with their mission to help defray these elevated costs. One such option could be leasing the western wing to a university or school and apparently several schools are already interested in the imposing space.

I have such personal memories entwined in this place that span almost my entire time in Montreal. (See *La fameuse - the Famous One* story). Initially, it was my Sunday church-going place, as in the 1970s, it was my closest Catholic Church since Sunday mass was then open to the public. That is no longer the case, although there is talk of opening it up once again to the public for certain feast days, if not weekly, as it used to be when I went there.



Crypt - Grand Seminaire de Montreal

Source: Courtesy Maisa Mreiwed

The chapel, designed by John Osteel, had been first completed in 1864 but had been subsequently enlarged 40 years later (between 1904 and 1907) when the current chapel with its glorious painted ceiling (inspired by San Miniato al Monte, an 11th century basilica in Florence, Italy) was refurbished in the Beaux Arts style, following plans drawn up by Jean-Omer Marchard. One wonders what it was that occasioned such a major design overhaul only 40 years after the first chapel had been completed?



Main altar Chapel of the Grand Seminaire

Source: Courtesy Maisa Mreiwed



Grand Seminaire - Reflecting Pool Summer 2018

Source: Courtesy Maisa Mreiwed

The grounds of the seminary, until they were designated off-limits to the public, sometime in the last 20 years, served for most of a decade as my local green space, where I went to walk, think and watch the seasons change through the reflections in the tree-lined reflecting pool and smile at the antics of the ducks, pick apples, and to run, when I didn't feel like heading up the Snake (Serpentine) to the cross on Mount Royal.



West and East bastions of the Fort de la Montagne c1684

Source: Courtesy J. Townsend

In my early years in Montreal, I was intrigued with those two somewhat mysterious round towers fronting on Sherbrooke Street, and well before I learnt they are two of the earliest extant buildings on the island of Montreal. They always seemed so incongruous standing there with their windowless backs turned to the busy road.

Once I uncovered their history, I marvelled how they had managed to avoid destruction since it was already very evident this relatively young city I had settled in did not much value its historical past and was allowing its heritage buildings to be destroyed willy-nilly in favour of constructing a modern metropolis. Its eyes firmly fixed on the future instead of its past. As to what happened to the two northern corner towers (bastions) of the old Fort de la Montagne built in 1684, they were dismantled when the walls of the oldest wing of the current Grand Séminaire building was erected in 1855.

In 1999, my son almost went to school here, at the Collège de Montréal (C de M), as he passed the entrance exams, for both here and for the Collège Jean-de-Brébeuf, and he had quite liked the idea of this high school and some of its innovative teaching methods, but decided finally to stay on, with his friends, at the publicly-funded École internationale de Montréal, where he had also attended primary school. C de M was Montreal's first secondary school (boys only, of course). George-Etienne Cartier, Louis-Hyppolite Lafontaine, Emile Nelligan and Louis Riel were among its famous alumni. It has only occupied its present building since 1870, having moved into temporary quarters in Grand Séminaire a few years prior in 1862, where it had taken over floors and had use of the chapel, until its new permanent quarters, designed by architect Henri-Maurice Perreault, were built. The

school had been first established on Longue Pointe as a minor seminary and boarding school in 1767, a hundred years before Canada was created, and had expanded to two other locations in Old Montreal before moving up the hill to the Grand Seminaire building. Today, this imposing east wing addition continues to operate as a private, although now co-ed day school.

For more info: <https://www.historicplaces.ca/en/rep-reg/place-lieu.aspx?id=14541>  
In French: [http://patrimoine.ville.montreal.qc.ca/inventaire/fiche\\_bat.php?&id\\_bat=9839-12-6740-03](http://patrimoine.ville.montreal.qc.ca/inventaire/fiche_bat.php?&id_bat=9839-12-6740-03)

### **The Stanley Clark Bagg House - 1541 Sherbrooke St. W, Montréal, QC H3G 1L7**

This house concludes the walk through my memories. Not because it is the most important but because every story stops somewhere. I chose this one to end with because it stands down the street and around the corner from the Linton Annex (aka the David Lewis House), which was my first Montreal home (although not the first place I lived on Montreal island) and so the walk comes full circle. To be truthful, the house today is somewhat of a shadow of its former glory, but a photo in the Notman Archives of the McCord Museum (see below) does showcase its original splendour.



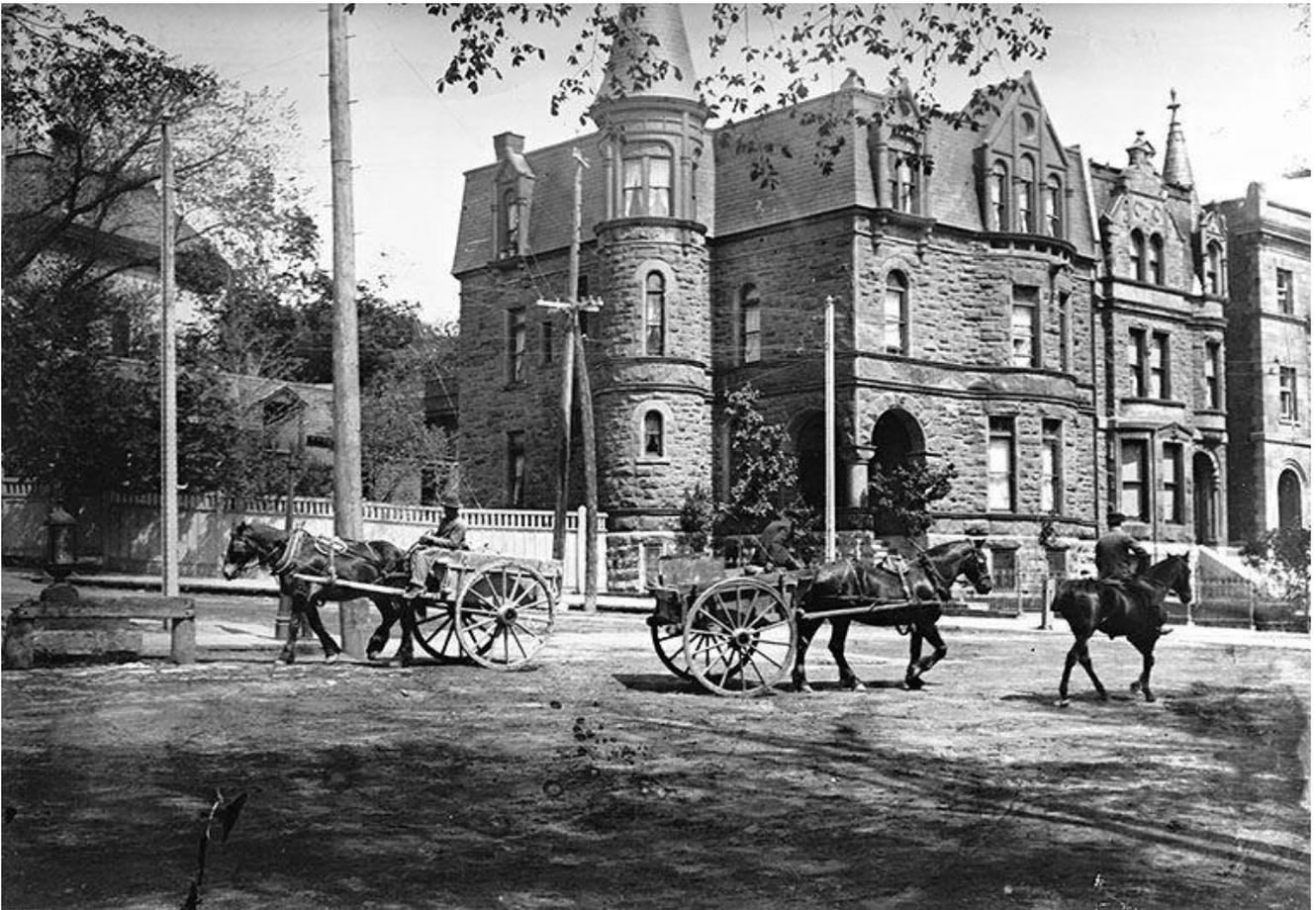
Stanley Clark Bagg House

Source: Courtesy J. Townsend

It was also chosen also because it is one of Montreal's iconic red sandstone homes. Around Old Montreal and the Ville Marie borough, in particular, you can see a number of homes, offices, warehouses, and banks built of this attractive soft red stone, often worked into fanciful shapes. Montreal's dark red sandstone buildings were constructed or faced with blocks of Scottish red sandstone brought as ballast in ships traversing the Atlantic to pick up the furs, fish, oil and wood being shipped back to Scotland, England and France for sale - the spoils of the New World in effect.

In the beginning, the ships travelled on the west bound leg across the Atlantic empty, so rock ballast was used to help keep them upright. Once ready to be loaded for the return journey, the rock was dumped at the port of Montreal and enterprising builders scooped it up as a cheaper alternative to quarrying local stone. An early form of reuse and recycle if you will. Red sandstone is not native to Quebec as the ubiquitous greystone is. Ontario quarries red sandstone but it's of a lighter red colour (almost bordering on pink). The building to the right of the Bagg Clark house adjacent to the cream brick Linton Apartments is possibly faced with sandstone from Ontario as the colour is somewhat different in tone and texture, but it could also be because it has been smoothed and is not rough hewn like the stone used on the facades of the two neighbouring houses.

The Bagg family were in construction and property management. The first Stanley Bagg (1786-1853) built the fort on Ste Hélene's island and was part of the consortium that built the Lachine Canal and opened up the Mile End area of the Plateau. In fact, he and his father, Phineas, ran the first Mile End Tavern on St Lawrence St. Their story is interesting and worth reading but as it's focused on a different area of town, I won't reproduce it here. Stanley Clark Bagg (1820-1873), his son, was a notary and property owner as was his only son, Robert Stanley Bagg (1848-1912). Robert Bagg was reputed to be one of the largest landowners and property administrators in the area after the Sulpicians. The building he had constructed to house his business interests still stands down the hill from the Clark Bagg house at 1607 Ste Catherine Street.



The Bagg House circa 1900

Source: Courtesy McCord Museum

I have included the Bagg House (in part because I always loved its name - a quirk of mine) and also because the histories of the Square Mile mansions tell us that they often suffered from fires that either greatly damaged or completely destroyed them. The Clark Bagg house, built in 1891, was,

however, a house whose fire I actually witnessed in 1982. Thus long after the wood and coal fired fireplaces and furnaces and poorly installed electrical wires that caused some of the 19th and early 20th century fires in the area, had been done away with, which had subsequently resulted in greatly reduced fire risks, especially since the city by the late 20th century had installed fire hydrants and had much improved fire-fighting methods and equipment.

Nevertheless, the house that exists today on the corner of Sherbrooke and Cote-des-neiges is not as handsome as it was in its Notman photograph, partly as a result of that 1982 fire that engulfed it. The house was saved but much of its roof line was damaged and unfortunately the house was not restored to its former glory. In fact, it stood boarded up for a few years until 1985-86 when it was finally refurbished; however, for years afterwards the scorch marks on its wooden roof parapet at the front continued to be visible to passersby on Sherbrooke (they have only quite recently been painted over) and the pointed roof of the "round tower" on the Cote-des-neiges side was not rebuilt. It was simply replaced with a flat roof that detracts greatly from the architectural harmony of the building.

Was money an issue? Perhaps the owners didn't have "replacement" insurance coverage and so merely secured and repaired it the best way they could afford? One day it would be good if these elements were restored, if only to give the building back a semblance of its initial glory. Even though it was great it was saved from further damage, but the present unbalanced "look" for a cornerstone building on a major and historical intersection at Guy and Sherbrooke streets does it no favours, demonstrating that securing and repairing a building is one thing, restoration and maintenance is quite another.



Stanley Bagg Corporation Building 1607 Ste Catherine St. W. Source: Jean Gagnon Wiki Creative Commons

## Conclusion

What has become clearer and more evident while writing these stories of my personal and emotional connections with these places and buildings is the deep, almost guttural concern I have for preserving the wonderful heritage buildings, gardens and rapidly disappearing green spaces of this island city I live in, along with highlighting the ongoing need for lobbying for significantly increasing the amount of green spaces, not just maintaining the status quo, especially downtown.

Montreal provides less than 50% of the recommended amount of green space for its citizens as equivalent cities of same size do. The recommended amount is 4 hectares or 10 acres per 1000 citizens but the City of Montreal falls a good 50% below that recommendation as the average in our metropolis is only two hectares per 1,000 residents and much of that is not evenly distributed. On the Island of Montreal, public green space amounts to only 3.3% of available land, which does not even meet the minimum provincial or international standard of 8%. Various city and borough governments have allowed many zone changes, developed, leased or sold to private interests publicly accessible green spaces, even though they have simultaneously adopted "conservation and heritage policies" knowing such policies are not legally binding. Some of the island cities such as Westmount exceed the recommended amount. Others fall far below. Some areas are woefully under-served by their municipalities. For instance, in the Shaughnessy Village area there are only 0.6 hectares (one and a half acres) of green space per 1,000 residents and with the influx of new residents into the burgeoning recently constructed condo developments, along with those currently under construction that ratio is only going to get worse over the coming years.

In addition, I have an ongoing concern that we must continue lobbying hard our municipal and provincial governments for the preservation of the remaining green space on the island, so important for the mental and physical health and well-being of urban and suburban dwellers, of which I have always been one. I was born in a large city (London) that can trace its roots back almost 2000 years (The Romans founded the City of Londinium/Londinios in 50 CE, which is roughly translated from a Celtic word meaning "place of the bold one"). Today London has 47% of its area as designated green space and is home to 8 million trees! That's one for every inhabitant. However, I chose to live in a much smaller island city that is only 375 years old with a population of just under 2 million. Do we have 2 million trees?

Nevertheless, the land underneath my feet is a great deal more ancient. And today it is the land that speaks to me through the legends, myths and memories of Turtle Island's indigenous peoples. Much like those early years in the library of the Mechanics' Institute in Epping, when I read every fairy tale and folk tale I could lay my hands on from all around the world, now as an adult I continue to seek out the myths, stories and legends of that belong to the huge, beautiful land I chose to settle in and adopt as my home.

Another underlying but very much serendipitous connection seems to be Canadian Pacific (CP), although more by happenstance than intent. Nevertheless, CP was a huge corporate Canadian conglomerate when I first arrived here in 1971. Its development and history paralleled Canada's own. By the latter half of the 20th century, it had a finger in nearly

every type of large transportation medium there was. For instance, I first travelled to Canada on a CP passenger ship. I commuted much of that first year in Montreal on a CP commuter train until CP closed the Lasalle station and cut the service, although the freight trains still operated on the line. A proportion of the houses I have an emotional connections with were owned and lived in at one time by CP personnel. I flew back and forth across the Atlantic in the early years on CP passenger airplanes, until another corporate *virage* or deal had Air Canada take over all passenger services, just as VIA had done with the CP and CN passenger rail services. Still even after that the connection lingered since I lived across from a CP rail track and former passenger rail yard for 16+ years....somehow my connection with CP endures, although it's a lot more tenuous of late. To everything there is a season.

Finally, there is the Living History aspect of this chapbook. These stories contain some of my autobiographical details and notes and are composed of my own very personal connections and memories that are not the stuff of most social history books. Well no one's social history book except my own. Then there are the varying social commentaries that accompany some (but by no means all) of the stories, and which I hasten to underscore are all my own opinions, even though some people might, or might not agree, or be in tune with them, or may feel they are too harsh or full of errors. Can I suggest you take them for what they are, in essence, simply my personal reflections and musings.

Summing up, I do hope you have enjoyed your walk past some of the buildings of my adopted home town and you will seek out more stories of your own about them, or carve out some personal memories of your own about the buildings and places that have marked your sojourn here.

### **Pliable Boundaries of the Golden Square Mile and Shaughnessy Village**

The buildings, gardens and green spaces that have been included in this personal account are not all located in the Shaughnessy Village area, as its boundaries are to be recognized as being somewhat pliable. To the east my reflections spill over into the area known as the Golden Square Mile and to the west into the eastern part of Westmount. Apart from the border of the City of Montreal and the City of Westmount, which was pretty well fixed by 1896, the borders of the other two areas have tended over the years to be somewhat more malleable since both were never "official" City of Montreal nomenclatures or districts, rather more colloquial or local ones appended to them by the media and/or in real estate and advertising and marketing materials. For instance, in a history of the Mount Royal Club we find a definition of the Square Mile (the adjective 'Golden' was added later in the mid-20th century by a journalist and the name stuck) as it was thought of in the year 1899 when the club first opened and reads as follows:

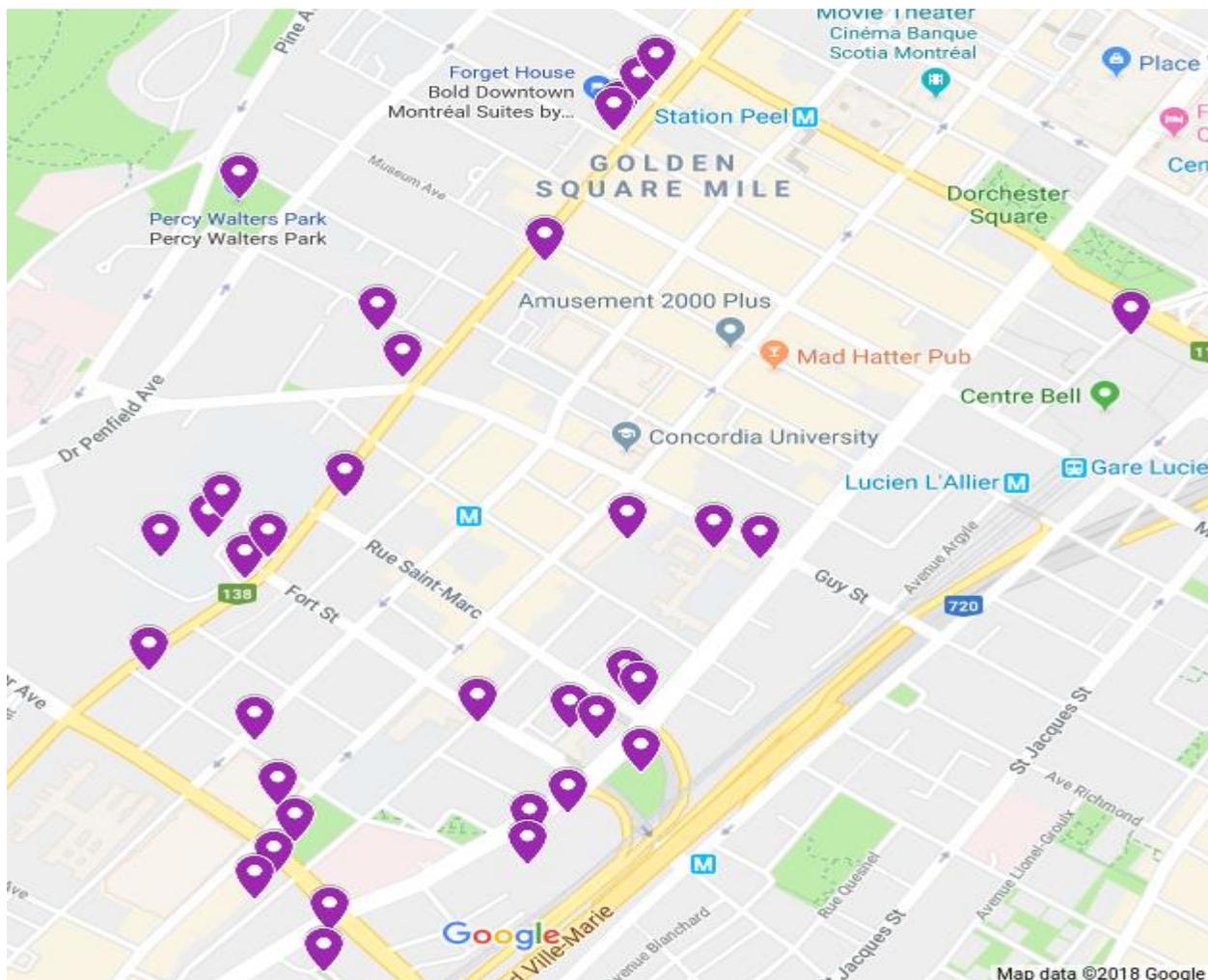
"While not obviously a walled city, Montreal's Square Mile was a homogeneous, exclusive district with precise boundaries: Atwater Avenue to the west, Bleury Street and Park Avenue to the east, Mount Royal Street to the north and the Canadian Pacific Railway tracks and de la Gauchetière Street to the south. Its main artery was Sherbrooke Street which for some time was often referred to as "the Fifth Avenue of Canada". This whole area measured roughly one square mile." Source: Chapter 1, Quebec History, C. Belanger, Marionopolis College, McCord Museum Archives

Whereas other, more recent, delineations of this area now have the Square Mile borders stopping at Guy Street, which would mean, of course, the Masson, Shaughnessy, and Judah houses, and large apartment houses such as Haddon Hall would not be included and yet

they most definitely are examples of Golden Square Mile homes constructed in the period between 1850 and 1930. In a similar fashion, the Shaughnessy Village area - a somewhat newer appellation, as is the term the "quartier des grands jardins" (place of the large gardens), with which the City of Montreal is currently attempting to rebrand the area - is sometimes described as beginning at Atwater Avenue and stopping at Guy Street, and at other times extending a little further east as far as Bishop and even Mountain streets. The fact is, the two areas consistently overlapped somewhat depending on the portion and era of their history and development under study. Ditto for the westernmost reaches of the Golden Square Mile.

### Why these buildings?

I have chosen these buildings since they form a sort of panoramic walk through an area of my life and times, touching a number of homogeneous topics of interest to me. There are more buildings that have been omitted (such as the Maison Alcan block of Sherbrooke, Mount Stephen House, MAS, McGill University, the Cormier House) as well as others that perhaps that should have been included, but one has to draw the line somewhere, even if is somewhat arbitrary, a bit like the above definitions of these two areas of Montréal.



Map indicating location of each story

## Author-Director's Notes and Musings

### Rationale for the performance

This is a story, part autobiographical, part history lesson, part social commentary, part internal musings. Like the human condition there are many layers to it and a multitude of meanings. However, it's not necessary for the audience/reader to comprehend them all or even relate to them. As human beings, it's a natural progression as we approach the end stage of our lives to look back and as we do, we see we are a product of our life's journey, of our heritage, the places we have chosen to live and the experiences and emotions we have experienced along the way.

### Rationale for keeping the multi-level story-telling aspects of the Pomme-memoire performance project

The "less is more" argument: Although I concur, at times, with architect Mies van der Rohe's perspective, and I do agree the "performance" as evidenced by the first on-site rehearsal, on August 24, may have "satisfied" the audience in attendance; however, the project as initially envisioned consists of many more layers that simply weren't demonstrated during that initial in situ bare bones performance. Plus, I do tend to prefer performance art that operates on various levels of comprehension i.e. poems and stories should challenge the reader or listener, and make them think: "What's that there for, I wonder?"

Bear in mind, on Aug 24, I only performed a portion of the entire piece. Here's a description of how I see the piece progressing at the next (dress) rehearsal:

Scene 1: The group of walkers comes up St Marc to Sherbrooke Street. They see across the road a huge building located behind a high concealing wall. Crossing the street they start to ascend the path leading from the entrance gate from Sherbrooke. To their right are the walls of building with stained glass windows that they may, or may not, recognize as a church. To their left is a leafy glade with a solitary grey-haired figure clothed in a long black raincoat holding a cane and sitting hunched over on a black chair with her back, then profile to them. They gather on, or around, the steps, leading down from the pathway to the glade, now facing the figure, who is framed in the background by two squat, stone towers, located close to the road they walked up from.

Silence.

Scene 2: The figure rises to her feet. Suddenly animated, she throws off her coat to reveal a small white tablet hanging from her neck and nestled on her chest.

She presses the start button on it to start the slide show and begins to speak:

"This is the story of young immigrant, of a neighbourhood she fell in love with and of an apple..."

Note: I think the action of the figure rising to her feet, throwing off the long coat, revealing the tablet on her chest, will be extremely dramatic. It calls the audience to attention, back from looking around their surroundings and rivets their eyes.

**Re the images on the tablet:**

I fully recognize the audience (unless their eyesight is 20-20 or perhaps ventures more towards long-sightedness) will not actually see, or perhaps even understand what all that flickering light from the tablet on the performer's chest denotes and some may wonder quite what it has to do with the performance in progress.

However, that is the beauty of it. The object of this project was to create a multi-layered performance piece. The audience "enjoys" the on-site story but queries the inclusion of the flickering images they can't/couldn't quite see. "What's the point of it all? What does she think she is doing with that odd little tablet hanging round her neck that we can't fathom the purpose of since the images on it aren't big enough to actually see?"

The answer is given at the end as they discover there is more to the project than they first thought i.e. the gift of the memory apples (*pommes-memoires*) with the names of buildings and street location, the existence of a chapbook waiting for them at their journey's end...at a Library i.e. a fitting place for a book?

Note: I liken it somewhat to the kaleidoscopes used in the previous installation. Until the audience has experienced the view through the "magic" cylinders, they have no idea how it impacts the story they are listening to at the same time.

**Re: the symbolic purpose of the gift of a memory apple:**

Like the tablet (discussed below) the apple is also a symbol of several things. Mostly the gift of an apple is timeless dating from time immemorial and appearing in many different cultures.

"An overview of the history of culture shows that the motif of apple has varied meanings and functions, such as abundance, fertility, peace, wealth, and proliferation; for this reason it is considered as a valuable gift. For instance, according to the Chinese it is "an acceptable gift, especially since the apple (ping) can stand as a symbol for 'peace' (ping)" (Eberhard 1986: 16). Besides, "in China wild apple blossom denotes female beauty" (Hall 1996: 142). Apart from being a symbol of beauty, it also has a therapeutic property in many cultures, since it is thought to be a magical fruit which can cure all the diseases. For example, the Celts believe that apple is an excellent medicine and it can cure most ills (Macbain 1885: 72)." Amet Emre Dağtaşoğlu, University of Trakya, Turkey

In Biblical terms, the apple is commemorative of the tempting of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Where it was also referred to as the "fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil". And as explained in the first paragraph of the *Famous One* story, the apple is also known as the heart fruit "since eating one daily is good for your heart and your health".

**Re: the symbolic purpose of the tablet:**

This project stems (in part) from work accomplished at the Digital Literacy Media Lab at the Atwater Library. Thus the tablet is a symbol of several different things.

a) Digital storytelling - using technology as a means to adding an additional dimension to the story. In this case seniors learning to incorporate and use technological elements in their storytelling.

b) Incongruity of senior performer doing a "classical" one-person, open-air "theatre" performance by telling a story in a sylvan setting, but who complicates things by adding to it an unexplained digital dimension as represented by the tiny tablet affixed "close to her heart". It's potentially a little unsettling and perhaps also a little funky (offbeat, odd, etc) in its own way as it could also pose several questions, such as: is this a real person, or half-woman-half robot creation? Or, why can't I see the images clearly? And why not?

c) Whether the audience understands the rationale for the tablet or not, and/or doesn't realize the images on the tablet represent places in the neighbourhood that have meaning to the performer, is immaterial to the overall performance. It is simply an element of the performance that may, or may not, come clear at the time. I don't think it will detract. I suggest its presence might simply add an extra dimension, even if the audience doesn't fully work out or comprehend what it is at the time.

d) The initial view of an old woman sitting alone and hunched over is meant to symbolize universal concerns about aging and growing old. Alternatively, the old woman could also represent an archetypal figure symbolizing the wise woman (or the witch) along with knowledge, wisdom, insight, guidance and/or feminine power. Especially when she rises to her feet and vigorously throws off the black cape-like coat i.e. "the power awakens".

e) I like the incongruity and the juxtaposition of the age of the performer, with the "techyiness" of the tiny tablet (symbol in part of the miniaturizing of knowledge, although for many of us using the technology today the "how" isn't always understood but we older folks, along with kids, push on regardless i.e. we 'use' the technology even if we don't quite understand how it works)...all materializing in a timeless setting in front of two of the oldest continuously-used buildings on the island of Montreal i.e. buildings almost as old as the city itself (though the audience may not know that). And, perhaps for some, it's also a given, particularly if some of the audience members are from Europe, where buildings are used for a long time. Plus, for Europeans and Asians, 330 years isn't that long in historical terms for them. However, what is clear is that in the last 25 years digital technology has progressed swiftly. The role of the tablet is partly to make the audience question: "Just what is going on here?"

### **The parody of the sceptre and the orb vs the talking stick:**

In spite of the fact the performer actually has need of the walking stick (for health reasons) on another level it can be also be looked at as a performance prop, even if many in the audience may not make the connection with the use of the long black walking stick and the hand-held apple that parody and mimic the sceptre (staff of power) and the orb (symbol of royalty) and represent, in the mind of the author if no one else, colonial power (whether the King of France or the King of England) since both made claims to the "new land" of Canada. I grew up in a country with a monarchy - the UK. Its Queen is still Canada's "titular" head of state. The English have mixed, somewhat ironical feelings about the monarchy, mostly condemning it as foolish and anachronistic while actually loving its pomp and

pageantry (well some of them at least). These props also link back to the fact the "immigrant" in the story comes from England.

However, the walking stick can simultaneously be understood to symbolize the indigenous talking stick, or speaker's staff. which were/are as much about giving everyone a chance to speak as holding rambling talkers in check. It was and still is (where its use hasn't been debased) a tool of democracy and mutual respect, and it conferred the opportunity to both listen and be heard. Once again, even with the props, those myriad levels of meaning are at play.

### **Why the long black coat?**

The use of black clothing has been chosen to evoke a memory, a symbol of the black habits of the priests and nuns in the 17-20th centuries, although most non-cloistered nuns out in the world today wear more secular clothing, the priests still favour black. Also when the performer throws off her coat, she reveals not only the white tablet hanging from the black stole around her neck but also a long white t-shirt that parodies the surplice worn by both priests and altar servers, all items of clothing with a religious connotation in keeping with the location on the grounds of active seminary devoted to training of Catholic clergy. The black colour also represents sadness, grief and mourning - perhaps, in this instance, for lost youth and memories and also maybe for religion.

### **Use of colour versus black and white:**

Although most of the photos used in slide show were shot in colour, and the glade setting in the Grand Seminaire grounds will be full colour (potentially fall colours) but certainly green and shady flanked by the two stone towers. The performer and assistants will be dressed in black and white. The tablet also is white, so one possibility is for the slideshow also to be in shown in black and white underscoring the old vs new vs timeless theme. Although the juxtaposition of the colour photos with the few older b/w photos used from the McCord Collection will be lost, but depicting all the images in black and white, potentially homogenizes the performer's memories, indicating time is immaterial. Buildings stand stoic encompassing all the memories of all those who passed by or into them since to the building, they are, in effect, one continuous stream.

On another level, if the chapbook is printed in black and white it continues along the same continuum of time and, of course, on a production level is much less expensive to produce.

Also the colours and the term "black and white" are traditionally understood as representing two polar opposites. Reality is, as we all know, far from being that simple.

### **Summary:**

Thus, from my perspective, the performance piece, as initially conceived, operates on a myriad of levels, age vs youth, useless vs useful, traditional vs technical, black vs white, personal vs universal, archetype vs anomaly, frozen in time vs timeless, knowledge vs ignorance, indigenous vs settlers vs colonialism, religion (Christianity) vs secularism, paganism vs naturalism. So, I support continuing with the multi-level approach...though I respect your call should you prefer to keep it simple but the fact is: humanity isn't simple.