

The Westmount Historian

NEWSLETTER OF THE WESTMOUNT HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

VOLUME 6 NUMBER 2

JANUARY 2006

Creative Artists Make Westsmount Their Home

New Spring Lecture Series

Robert Findlay Architect Of Westmount

Robert Findlay (1859-1951) designed public buildings which helped create the public face of Westmount. He was the architect of the Westmount Public Library (1899) the first Victoria Hall (1899) Westmount City Hall (1922) and the Pavilion in Murray Park. He was also commissioned to design more than thirty Westmount residences by prominent Montreal businessmen. Findlay lived for 56 years in the home he built in 1895 for his family at 419 Lansdowne Avenue.

• **Thursday, February 16, 2006 – Restoring Findlay: The Westmount Public Library**

Speaker: Rosanne Moss, Partner, Fournier Gersovitz Moss & Associates

• **Thursday, March 16, 2006 – The Public Face of Findlay: Findlay's Municipal Buildings**

Speaker: Claudine Deom, Architectural Historian, Université de Montréal.

• **Thursday, April 20, 2006 – The Private Man: Robert Findlay at Home**

Speakers: Margo Ravon, Landscape Designer, and Caroline Breslaw, WHA

• **Thursday, May 18, 2006 – A Findlay Residence: 15 Belvedere Road**

Speaker: Andrea Wolff – Architem Wolff Shapiro Kuskowski architects

Caroline Breslaw has prepared this Lecture Series to provide us with an indepth look at the work of the architect Robert Findlay who lived in Westmount for 66 years.

Tour Guides

We need tour guides for our planned walking tours. Guides should be interested in learning more about Robert Findlay, like interacting with the public, and be able to attend all four lectures, as well as four special workshops.

If you are interested, please phone Caroline Breslaw 939-3092



Aline Gubbay at the launching of her book A View of Their Own, The Story of Westmount in one of the original rooms of "Monklands" built in 1803, now Villa Maria School owned by the Congregation du Notre Dame since 1854. Photo: Doreen Lindsay for WHA

ALINE GUBBAY (1920-2005)

When author, teacher and photographer Aline Gubbay passed away this year, she left her vision of the place where we live for all of us. After living 48 of her 85 years among the varied architectural buildings, tree lined streets, parks and neighbourly people on the slopes of this south side of the mountain, her knowledge was extensive. She met Sally Hooff, Dr. Hélène Saly and Eleanor Earle when she gave a talk about *Discovering Westmount* to the Westmount Historical Society. Aline had the qualities of a leader, a leader who acquired knowledge about her chosen city and felt the desire to pass it on to others. Everyone who had the opportunity to attend one of the many talks she gave on the history of Westmount will remember that she was an inspiring speaker, with an unfailing knowledge of how to entertain and educate her audience. Of Westmount, she said *I think it is the most interesting concentration of varied architecture that I know of. It is a unique kind of environment, I love it.*

She had the inexhaustible curiosity of the truly creative individual who always seeks to know more.

DOREEN LINDSAY

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

So many talented and creative people have lived in Westmount over the years that I wonder if there is something special in the land that encourages growth of creativity. Or is it something in the air around us? Although I fully acknowledge that creativity can flourish in all disciplines, I have concentrated on the written and visual arts. Some of the internationally known are: A.Y. Jackson, founder of

The Group of Seven painters, returned to his family home on Hollowell Street in between painting trips. Leonard Cohen, poet, author, songwriter grew up beside Murray Park and left us with haunting descriptions of it in his novels. Philip Surrey painted his lonely people in wonderfully moody colours walking in Westmount Park or along our streets.

In this issue you will be able to read an article about each of the four artists who were profiled in our 2005 fall lecture series on *Creativity in Westmount*. The writer William Weintraub published four books while living here for over twenty-eight years. Judy Mappin who developed the Double Hook Book Shop to sell books by Canadian writers, has lived here for forty-two years. The painter, Edwin Holgate lived here as a child and returned to marry his Westmount Academy schoolmate. Eva Prager has lived and painted in Westmount for the past thirty years,

To help you appreciate the number of writers who have chosen Westmount as their home, there is a selection from the new listing of Westmount writers compiled this year by the Westmount Public Library.

I have included a special tribute to Aline Gubbay, a wonderfully creative woman who photographed and wrote about her beloved Westmount and passed on her vision in her books so that we may understand our City of Westmount through her eyes.

DOREEN LINDSAY

"No one will deny the profound inter-relation of artist and community. The artist depends on the community-takes his tone, his tempo, his intensity from the society of which he is a member. But the individual character of the artist's work depends on more than these: it depends on a definite will-to-form which is a reflection of the artist's personality, and there is no significant art without this act of creative will."

Herbert Read, *The Meaning of Art*, 1931

EVA PRAGER: PAINTER AND FOUNDER OF CHILDREN FOR PEACE



*Oil Painting of Eva Prager
by her father, Joseph Oppenheimer, 1938*



Eva Prager at home in Westmount, 2005

photo: Doreen Lindsay for WHA archives

Eva Prager, painter, who was awarded the Officer of the Order of Canada in 1999 for a lifetime achievement in the arts, has lived at 333 Lansdowne Avenue in Westmount for the past thirty years. Eva came to Montreal in 1949 with her husband, Richard (Richie) when their young son Vincent was only four years old. The couple had met in Berlin, the city where Eva was born on October 9, 1912. They lived in London, England from 1933 to 1949 before coming to Montreal. They were happily married for sixty-four and a half years.

Eva has been involved with art her entire life. She is the fifth generation artist in her family. While growing up, she watched her father Joseph Oppenheimer paint in his studio. A joint exhibition of their paintings was shown at the Kastel Gallery on Greene Avenue in 1999. As a student Eva studied at the Academia des Beaux Arts in Berlin, the Royal College of Art in London and the École Paul Colin in Paris. She had a natural talent, which was developed by classical studies, including detailed pencil drawings of animal skeletons and gesture drawings of the human figure.

Prager not only paints portraits of people, she befriends them as well. Her sure eye scrutinizes features of their face. With deft, sure brushstrokes she has painted remarkable likenesses of Pierre Elliot Trudeau, his sons Justine and Sasha, writer Roch Carrier and his wife Nina Safdie, artist Tobie Steinhouse, astronaut Marc Garneau, and many others.

Arising from her concern and love for children, Eva founded the *Children for Peace Organization* which coincided with the Year of Peace movement in 1986. Children were encouraged to create plays and perform them in Mary Queen of the World Cathedral, and Terre des Homme in Montreal and the United Nations in New York City. Eva donated two large paintings to the Montreal Children's Hospital.

In addition to portraits, Eva also loves to paint landscapes, both real and imaginary. Of particular local interest is one painting of flowers and trees from her porch looking into her back garden adjoining Westmount Park.

DOREEN LINDSAY

EDWIN HOLGATE: PAINTER (1892-1977)



Self-portrait by Edwin Holgate, 1934

In 1901 the Holgate family moved to Westmount to live in the white brick house at 44 Rosemount Crescent. Edwin attended Westmount Academy, graduating in 1910. He then studied art full time at the Art Association of Montreal, which later became the Montreal Museum of

Fine Arts. A solo exhibition of Holgate's work was presented at the Museum in 1933, and he was co-director of the Museum's art school from 1934 to 1936 and from 1938 to 1940. Twenty-eight years after the artist's death, in 2005, the Museum held a major retrospective exhibition of his work.

After two years of study in Paris from 1912-1914 and service in the First World War, Holgate returned to Montreal and on November 1, 1920, married his classmate from Westmount Academy, Frances Rittenhouse. After another period of study in Paris, Holgate and his wife came back to Westmount and by 1927 they were living at 65 Rosemount Crescent, up the hill from his parents' home. In 1929 he was invited to join the Group of Seven painters who were based in Toronto. They especially admired his portraits and his paintings of nudes in the landscape. In Montreal, Holgate was part of the very active group of modern figure painters working at that time in this city. Three of his paintings of archetypal Canadians, *The Lumberjack*, *Paul, Trapper* and the *Fire Ranger* were included in an international travelling exhibition of Canadian Art in 1930. In 1933 Holgate and his wife moved to 3535 Lorne Avenue in the McGill Ghetto where other artists lived so that he could combine studio and living space.

Holgate worked as a war artist in 1943, painting in England, and returned to Montreal at the end of the war. In 1946, Holgate and his wife moved north to live in Morin Heights in the Laurentian Mountains so he could live and paint in the landscape that gave him so much pleasure.

They moved back to Westmount when his health failed. He and Francis lived in the Saxony Apartments at the corner of Clark Avenue and Sherbrooke Street just two blocks from the street where he had grown up.

DOREEN LINDSAY



Page of contents illustration by E. Holgate



*Edwin H. Holgate
"Methinks it adds a charm
To spice the good with a little harm"*



*Frances Rittenhouse
"A girl with American accent,
But Canadian smile and heart"*

Illustration and photos from The Westmount Academy Bulletin, June 1910 source: WHA Archives

WILLIAM WEINTRAUB: WRITER / FILMMAKER



William Weintraub at home in Westmount, 2005
photo: WHA archives

William Weintraub moved to Westmount with his wife Magda in 1977 while he was working for the National Film Board of Canada. It was a year after the Parti Quebecois had come to power. Three good friends had lived here already – Brian Moore, Mordecai Richler, and Donald Brittain. The home Bill bought was on Wood Avenue, a quiet street close to downtown. It had a spacious room upstairs where he could write. In 1986 Bill took early retirement from the NFB in order to resume his freelance

career. In 2004 he was awarded the Order of Canada for lifetime excellence in his work.

Since moving to Westmount, Bill has written four books. *"The Underdogs"* appeared in 1979 and was turned into a play in 1998. *"City Unique: Montreal Days and Nights in the 1940s and '50s"* was published in 1996 and received the QSPELL Award for non-fiction in 1977. *"Getting Started: a Memoir of the 1950s"* came out in 2001. These books were all launched at the Double Hook Book Shop. His most recent

book is the 2005 novel *"Crazy About Lili"*. The hero of this book is a 17-year old student who lives on Murray Avenue in Westmount. The novel was launched at Nicholas Hoare Book Store on Greene Avenue. At the September 15, 2005 meeting of the Westmount Historical Association, William Weintraub read the second chapter from his newly published work.

William Weintraub was born in Montreal in 1926. After graduating from McGill University with a B.A. in 1947, he worked as a journalist at the Gazette and as a staff writer at Weekend Magazine. Then he became a freelance writer in Canada and Europe. His first novel, *"Why Rock the Boat?"*, was published in 1961. In 1966 Bill joined the National Film Board, where he was a scriptwriter, producer, and director of some 150 films. His film version of *"Why Rock the Boat?"* premiered at the Avenue Theatre (now demolished) on Greene Avenue in 1975. Bill and Magda lived in an apartment downtown until they moved to Westmount where they have lived for 28 years.



Portrait, 1960
David Bier Studio, Montreal

CAROLINE BRESLAW

WESTMOUNT: HIER ET AUJOURD'HUI / WESTMOUNT: THEN AND NOW *Exhibition of photographs in the Art Gallery of Victoria Hall January 1-13, 2006*



Dr. Hélène Saly, past president of WHA visiting the "Then and Now" exhibition in The Gallery of Victoria Hall with Doreen Lindsay WHA president and exhibition curator.

The Westmount Historical Association was invited by Karin Marks, Mayor of Westmount, to develop and install a "Then and Now" photographic exhibition to be part of the January 1st celebration of Westmount as a newly restored city. Black and white photographs were selected from our archives to show what existed here before we were even a city. They were enlarged and paired with "now" colour photographs taken by Doreen Lindsay during the past three years to show what these same places look like today. Some buildings remain the same, others have been renovated, but some need renovation if they are to be saved for the future.

The public was invited to view the exhibition after attending a four o'clock afternoon tea served in Victoria Hall. Earlier, they had joined Mayor Karen Marks, former Mayor Peter Trent and Westmount City councilors George Bowser, John de Castell, Nicole Forbes, Patrick Martin, and Tom Thompson, in a flag raising ceremony at City Hall.

JUDY MAPPIN AND THE DOUBLE HOOK BOOK SHOP



Judy Mappin in The Double Hook Book Shop, 2005.

photo: WHA

Judy Mappin owned the Double Hook Book Shop, the only all Canadian bookstore in the country, for 31 years. Judy was born and raised in Toronto. She received a BSc. in Chemistry from McGill University in 1950. In 1963 she, her husband John Mappin, and their five children moved into the house at 598 Argyle Avenue in Westmount. They have lived there for 42 years.

When her youngest child was 10 years old, Judy, who had completed a library technician course, was looking for something to do. Her friend, Hélène Holden, and Joan Blake, who had just arrived from North Carolina, had



Postcard

design/photography Peter Drummond

decided to open a bookstore selling only Canadian books. It was agreed that Judy would join them. They all lived in Westmount and decided to locate the store here.

The first store opened on the south side of St. Catherine Street just to the east of Henrietta's Antiques. Margaret Atwood attended the October 17, 1974 opening. The business was named The Double Hook after what is said to be the first modern Canadian novel, Sheila Watson's "Double Hook". Knowing that their building was to be demolished, the three partners moved in 1976 to a house built in 1895 which was located at 1235 Greene Avenue.

The Double Hook was well known for its book launches and readings by authors. Some of the Westmount writers who have been featured over the years are Mary Meigs, Ted Philips, Terry Rigelhof, Julie Keith, Michael Blair and William Weintraub. This Canadian institution closed its doors on July 31, 2005.

Judy was a founding member of the Quebec Society for the Promotion of English Language Literature (QSPELL) and also of Westmount Initiative for Peace (WIP). She was a volunteer at Westmount High School in the library and also coached several students. In 1995 she received the QSPELL Community Award and in 2005 the Libris Lifetime Achievement Award from the Canadian Booksellers Association. She remains the owner of the 1895 building on Greene Avenue that housed the Double Hook Book Shop for 28 years.

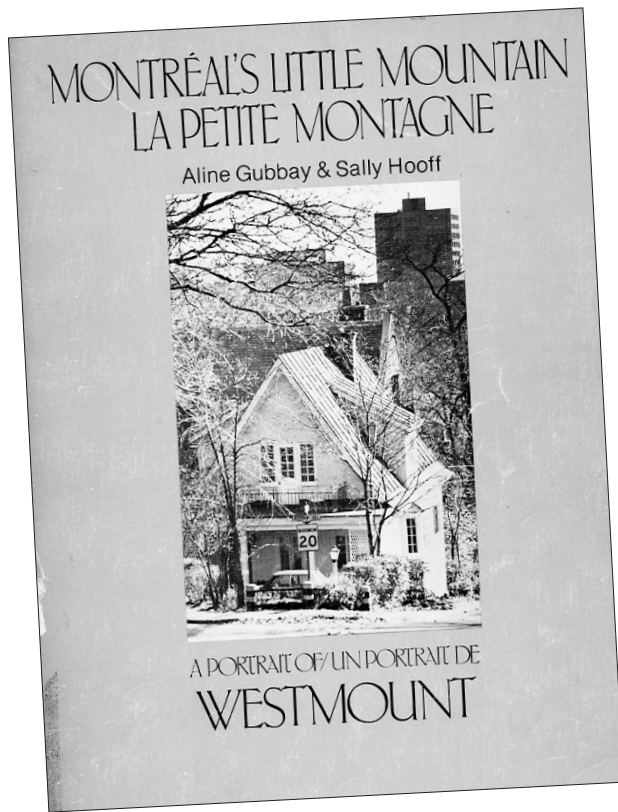
CAROLINE BRESLAW

WESTMOUNT AUTHORS

A list of writers who have lived or are now living in Westmount was compiled this year by Alexandra Yarrow and may be consulted at the Reference Desk of the Westmount Public Library:

Sally Aitkin - Henry Aubin - Irene Aubrey - Dianna & Ray Baillie - Catherine Bates - Monty Berger - Manuel Betanzos-Santos - Elena Botchorichvi - Bowering George - George Bowser - Donald Brittain - Roma Gelblum Bross - Julie Bruck - Burnstyn Irene - Roch Carrier - Ann Charney - Anne Cimon - Elizabeth Cleaver - Clement Peter - Leonard Cohen - Marnie Copland - Curran Colleen - Kier Cutler - May Cutler - Robert Davies - Virginia Douglas Dawson - Dalaunois Angèle - Louis Dudek - Carole Epstein - Donald Ginter - Sibyl Fleming - Martin Franklin - Robert Galbraith - Elyse Gasco - Donald Ginter - Gerald Glass - Marcia Goldberg - Nancy Grant - Simone Grenier-Bibeau - Aline Gubbay - Eric Gubbay - Agap Hacikyan - Michael Harris - Joan Heney - Allan Hepburn - Tod Hoffman - Hélène Holden - Sally Hooff - Valmai Howe - David Howes - Anita Jacobs - Kathleen Jenkins - Julie Keith - Dayal Kaur Khalsa - Catherine Kierans - Catherine Kid - Thomas B. King - Yvonne Klein - Loren Lerner - David H. Levy - William Doud Lighthall - Margaret Lock - Andree Maillet - Judy Mappin - Harry Mayerovitch - Neale McDevitt - Louise McDiarmid - Ian McGillis - Neil McKenty - Mary Meigs - Yvette Mintzberg - Paul Morin - Terry Mosher - Elizabeth Mrazik-Cleaver - Edward O. Phillips - Sylvia Raff - Jacqueline Reid-Walsh - Stuart Richardson - Terry Rigelhof - Bruce Roberts - Hélène Saly - John Sancton - F.R. Scott - Bonnie Shemie - Rabbi Wilfred Shuchat - Sharon Sparling - John Starnes - Neville Terry - Michelle Tisseyre - Adrian Waller - Don Wedge - William Weintraub - Gerald Wexler - Ruth Roskies Wisse.

FROM THE ARCHIVES



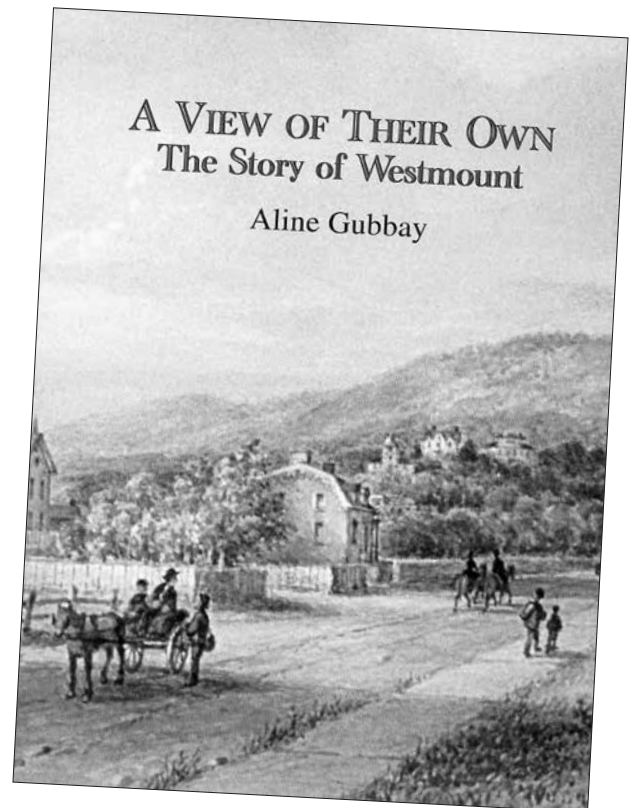
ALINE GUBBAY – photographer, author, historian

About thirty years ago I read a book that completely changed the way that I looked around my community, its green spaces, its institutions and above all, its built environment. Instead of walking with my focus on what was ahead and what errand I would be doing next, I looked up, way up to the marvelous architecture which we are so fortunate to have preserved for us in Westmount... an original stone farmhouse, terraced houses, coach houses, row houses with Victorian gingerbread, Montreal greystones with the outside staircases in the vernacular architecture style, rural style country homes, grand villas with mixed architectural styles of Gothic and Classic, Queen Anne style houses, and so on. The book that hooked me on Westmount architecture was, of course, Aline Gubbay and Sally Hooff's *Montréal's Little Mountain; A Portrait Of Westmount*.

The historical research, beautiful photographs and interesting text are the legacy of Aline Gubbay and Sally Hooff to present day Westmount residents. This book was published in 1979 and is, unfortunately, out of print now, but available on loan from the Westmount Public Library, and from the WHA Archives book collection to members of the Association. It is a wonderful source of historical informa-

tion about our community and its architectural heritage and well worth reading if you live in Westmount and have not come across it before.

Another historical legacy from Aline Gubbay were her frequent articles in *The Westmount Examiner* entitled "Know Your Westmount" 1995-1999. These articles were interesting, entertaining pieces of historical information concerning many topics, from Indian burial grounds to lawn bowling, tramways to toll booths, orchards to parks, and churches to cannons.



In 1998 Aline published another book on the 125 years of Westmount history, entitled *A View of Their Own – The Story of Westmount*.

This publication focuses on the development of Westmount from the village of Cote St. Antoine to the City of Westmount, its residents and their contribution to its culture and character, activities and events of the Twenties, Thirties, both World Wars and up to the Sixties. It is wonderfully illustrated with photographs of people, places and things. It is another legacy from this creative and dedicated Westmouter who did so much for our community in leaving us such a magnificent record of our past.

Thank you Aline.

BARBARA COVINGTON, DECEMBER 2005

NEW ACQUISITIONS

Books

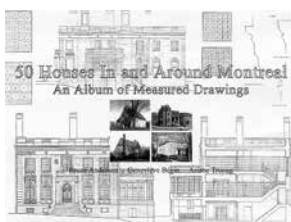
BRONFMAN DYNASTY: THE ROTHCHILDS OF THE NEW WORLD, by Peter C. Newman. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1978.

THE CANADIAN ESTABLISHMENT; VOLUME TWO: THE ACQUISITORS, by Peter C. Newman. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1981

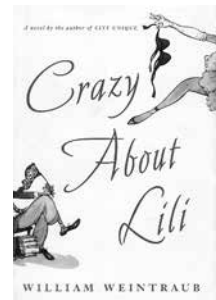


CRAZY ABOUT LILI, by William Weintraub. ♦
Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2005.

♦ EDWIN HOLGATE, by Rosalind Pepall, Brian Foss.
Montréal: Musée des Beaux-Arts de Montréal, 2005.



♦ FIFTY HOUSES IN AND AROUND MONTREAL:
AN ALBUM OF MEASURED DRAWINGS,
by Bruce Anderson, Geneviève Bégin,
Ariane Truong. Westmount:
Anderson Architects, [2005].



FLORALIE, WHERE ARE YOU? BY Roch Carrier; translated by Sheila Fischman. Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 1971

FOUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS; TWO JEWISH ORPHANAGES IN MONTREAL, QUEBEC 1909-1942, by Judy Gordon. Toronto: MJ Publications, 2002.

400 BROTHERS AND SISTERS: THEIR STORY CONTINUES, by Judy Gordon. Toronto: MJ Publications, 2004.

MARION DALE SCOTT: PIONEER OF MODERN ART, by Esther Trépanier. [Québec]: Musée du Québec, 2000.

A VOYAGE ON SUNDAY; A GEOFFRY CHADWICK NOVEL, by Edward O. Phillips. Toronto: Riverbank Press, 2004.



THE WESTMOUNT EXAMINER photo collection, 1970-1994.
Donated by Lauren Sweeney.

MAY CUTLER, MAYOR OF WESTMOUNT 1987-1991.
(5 cassettes) Donated by May Cutler. December 2005

Photos from The Westmount Examiner photo collection showing the fire that destroyed a three story greystone building at corner of Victoria Ave. and St. Catherine St. January 1977