WHA looks at some Prominent Westmounters

Alice Lighthall (1891-1991)
One of the founders of WHA in 1944
Order of Canada (1973) for work with Indian and Inuit Art

George Hogg (1865-1948)
Founder of Guaranteed Pure Milk Co.
Mayor of Westmount from 1927 to 1932

Hon. John Young (1811-1878)
Chairman of Montreal Harbour Commission
Owner of Rosemount Estate in Westmount

Harry Markland Molson
4th generation of the brewing, banking, steamship Molson family

Hudson and Bess Allison
Self made millionair
Partner in Johnson, McConnell and Allison firm
PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

This Spring 2008 Newsletter presents a glimpse into the lives of a few prominent residents who have helped shape the development of our city.

The diversity of the people who have contributed to the character and ambience of the City of Westmount over the years is great. The area is small, only one and a half square miles in area, but our early residents had visions and exerted a large influence during their lifetime.

You will read about George Hogg, who served as Mayor of Westmount from 1927 to 1930 and his descendents who continue to operate a business on Sherbrooke Street today. The little known story of Westmounters Markland Molson and the Allison Family, who were among the dead when the ill-fated Titanic ship sank in 1912, is told. In the present day you can still walk past the two large stone houses on Severn Avenue where John Young and his family lived when he was active with The Montreal Harbour Commission. We write about his vision that led to the improvement of the St. Lawrence River and the construction of Victoria Bridge, completed in 1860. One of Westmount’s most energetic heritage crusaders was Alice Lighthall who helped found the WHA in 1944 and served as Vice president and President in the early years.

Special thanks are due to the speakers in our 2007 Fall Lecture Series on prominent Westmounters whose careful research forms the basis for this Newsletter. I am always pleased to be able to add the information gained during our Lecture Series to our developing knowledge of local history and store it for reference in our archives.

DOREEN LINDSAY, FEBRUARY, 2008
The Honourable John Young (1811-1878)

The Honourable John Young, a resident of Westmount from 1852 to 1872, is best known for developing Montreal as Canada’s major port. Young was born in Ayr, Scotland in 1811. At the age of 15, he immigrated to Canada, settling eventually in Montreal where he was initially involved in trade. He married Amelia Jane Tilley with whom he had 13 children.

Young was fascinated by transportation. He realized the importance of the railroad for improving trade with the interior of the continent and was a partner in two railroad companies. He urged the construction of a railway bridge linking the south shore to the port of Montreal.

Young served in the government of Lower Canada and sat as a Member of Parliament in Ottawa after Confederation. His Liberal political position pit-
ted him against the Montreal Conservative business interests, above all against Sir Hugh Allan.

While he was Commissioner for Public Works for the City of Montreal (1851), Young acquired a lease from the government to provide water power to factories along the Lachine Canal. He also bought Sulpician land along the waterway to sell as industrial building lots. During this period, he purchased the Rosemount estate in Westmount.

In 1850 Young was appointed to the Montreal Harbour Commission and remained involved with it until his death. During his tenure, the Victoria Bridge was completed and the shipping channels were improved. In 1860, the successful and wealthy Young retired from active business at the age of 49.

In 1861, Young sold the southern part of his estate to Robert J. Reekie before going to Scotland for two years with his family. In 1871 he became the 1st President of the Dominion Board of Trade. In the same year, he became bankrupt when the Seminary of Montreal repossessed his land holdings in the Saint Gabriel area because the mortgage payments were not being met. He was forced to sell the remainder of the Rosemount estate at this time to Robert J. Reekie. John Young died of heart problems in Montreal on April 12, 1878. A statue commemorating his contribution to the development of the port of Montreal can be found near the waterfront of Old Montreal at the junction of rue de la Commune and rue St. Pierre.

CAROLINE BRESLAW

Monument to John Young, 1908
Standing bronze figure of John Young with Neptune and his trident on a stone base. The artist Louis-Philippe Hébert (1850-1917) sculpted the monument in 1908 for Place Royal. Today, after recently being restored, it stands at the junction of rue de la Commune and rue Saint-Pierre in front of the Société du Vieux-Port de Montréal building.

photo: © William Notman, McCord Museum, Montreal
The ancestors of Westmount’s Hogg family left the Selkirk valley in Scotland in the early nineteenth century during a period of massive emigration. In 1829 William Kerr settled in Montreal, renting the Samuel Gale farm near today’s Jacques Cartier Bridge. Kerr prospered by selling hay and vegetables to the British military. In 1863 his niece Margaret Laidlaw married fellow Scot Walter Hogg. In 1888 their eldest son, George Hogg, received part of Uncle Kerr’s recently purchased farm at Longue Pointe and began a career as a dairy farmer.

In 1901 George Hogg and partner William Trenholme purchased the fledgling dairy, Guaranteed Pure Milk Co. Being the first dairy in Canada to pasteurize milk, its products were in great demand because of high infant mortality caused by poor sanitary conditions. As well as being president of the GPM Co., George Hogg purchased the Purity Ice Cream Company in 1903. In 1948, George Hogg’s son, William Hogg, succeeded him as president of the two companies. William Hogg was followed as president by his son, David Hogg. The two dairy businesses were owned by the Hogg family until 1990.

Members of the Hogg family have lived in Westmount for almost a hundred years.

They moved to the city in 1914 when George Hogg and his wife Genty Drummond left their farm for their newly constructed residence at 3637 The Boulevard. George Hogg
In March 1992, George Hogg walked past the empty Pascal Hardware store on Sherbrooke Street and thought to himself that someone should open another hardware store in the same place. The three brothers, George, Dave and Allan, did just that. The family had closed down their dairy business in 1989, when the organization of large dairies made it impossible for smaller operations to continue to exist, and were looking for a new direction.

George and his wife Gigi are the inspired buyers who select the wonderful items we in turn buy for our homes. Dave and Allan are the dedicated managers who keep everyone in a good mood and the operation running smoothly. Their sister Grace is secretary for the George Hogg Family Foundation. In addition to their “Mother Ship” here in Westmount the family also manages a second store in Beaconsfield and a third on Nuns Island.

When I interviewed Dave Hogg during a busy Saturday afternoon between receiving merchandise at the back door and helping a customer out front, he explained that his family wants to operate an accountable store. “I care because I am the boss. The customer can always find me, they know where I am. We want to make a difference to people, to provide something that they cannot get in the newer larger Big Box stores. We still repair lamps and windows, deliver, and make special orders.”

© McCord Museum.

Caroline Breslaw
Based on talk by Grace Laing Hogg to WHA on Thursday, September 20, 2007.
The life of Alice Margaret Schuyler Lighthall (1891-1991) was a rich tapestry interwoven with her many roles as a historian, poet, volunteer, heritage crusader and humanitarian.

Her father, William Douw, was a lawyer, poet, historian and mayor of Westmount 1900-1902 and her mother, Cybel Charlotte Wilkes a life-long volunteer. Alice had a younger sister, Cybel and a brother, William. The family came to live in Westmount in 1894 building a family home on land purchased from the Murray estate. She describes her childhood as “In these days Westmount was largely composed of beautiful, large estates, farms and orchards with a great deal of open space. We rode the hay-cart in the upper meadows, and had picnic teas at the edge of the oak wood above the Boulevard, beside one of the Indian wells.”

Alice was greatly influenced by her parents: her father encouraging her to read widely and to question, to take an interest in the arts and support the First Nations people. Like them, she too, became a devoted volunteer.

Alice attended McGill University where she studied English, History, French and Economics, but her mother did not wish her to graduate. Philanthropy then dominated Alice’s life especially as an officer of the Women’s Art Society of Montreal in the 1920’s and a volunteer with the Canadian Handicrafts Guild. In 1944-45 she was vice-president of the Westmount Historical Association. She served at a British military hospital in the First World War.

Alice Lighthall 1891-1991

1891 July 24th born in Montreal
father, William Douw Lighthall
mother, Cybel Charlotte Wilkes
brother, William Schuyler Lighthall and sister Cybel
1894 family moved to Westmount
Lived at 158 Côte Saint-Antoine & 14 Murray Ave.
& 4351 Montrose & 422 Metcalfe (1958-1983)
1909 graduated from private school, Schank and Gardener
1909-1913 McGill University (English, French and Economics)
1913 member Junior League of Montreal
1916-19 Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) in Rouen, W.W. I War poems were published.
1920’s Volunteer with Canadian Handicrafts Guild
1944-45 Vice-president of Westmount Historical Association
1955 Alice’s initiative saved Hurtubise Family House from demolition
Volunteer librarian in house for Heritage Quebec
1960s President of the Women’s Art Society of Montreal
President of Poetry Group of Montreal
President of Canadian Author’s Association
Published poems in Five Montreal Poets
1967 advisor for Westmount High School book “Old Westmount”
1971-74 President of revived WHA
1973 Order of Canada for work with Indian and Inuit Art
1977 Letter to Canadian Government outlining English speaking population’s contribution to Quebec
1978 Queen’s Jubilee Medal
1981 WHA surprise 90th Birthday party in Hurtubise House
1991 died.
MA degree (honorary) McGill University
2001 Westmount Honour Roll / Vins d’honneur 2001

Based on research for a talk given to the WHA on December 13, 2007.

RUTH ALLAN-RIGBY
her life especially as an officer of the Junior League and the Montreal Council of Women.

In the First World War she became a Volunteer Aid Detachment (VAD) and served at a British military hospital in Rouen, France. According to her diary her most challenging task was large surgical dressings. Her recovery from her experience in France was complicated and prolonged. However she did have some time for enjoyment. She received an invitation in August, 1927 to a garden party for the Prince of Wales in Westmount on Sunnyside Avenue. In September 1928 she had her first flight on a bi-plane single propeller aircraft and then travelled to Jamaica by steamship.

Alice is primarily known in Westmount for her role as a heritage crusader and her interest in local history. The great achievement of the early WHA association was the conservation of the Hurtubise house at 563 Cote St Antoine. It had been occupied by 15 consecutive generations of the same family until it was put on the market in 1955 by Dr Leopold Hurtubise. After Alice alerted the press, James Beattie, Colin Molson and Miss Mabel Molson bought the house and formed the Canadian Heritage of Quebec to maintain the house and land.

In 1981 there was a surprise party held for Alice at the Hurtubise House for her 90th birthday. It was a celebration of her life and had representation from many of the societies in which she had been involved. Dr. Margaret Gillett, McGill professor nominated Alice for an MA (honorary) from McGill University in 1991 mainly as, "a tribute to her and other pioneers of women’s fight for higher education."

The Canadian Handicrafts Guild proved to be a life passion for Alice Lighthall and her promotion of Indian and Eskimo Art at the Guild was the reason she was awarded the Order of Canada in 1973. She was the chairman of their Indian and Eskimo Committee for 30 years and organized the early Guild’s annual exhibitions and prize competitions. The director of the Guild, Virginia Watt, indicated that “Alice was an inveterate writer of letters to members of Parliament, Ministers of the Crown and various editors. She was outspoken, demanding, sympathetic and supportive.” Later John Houston, the artist who introduced Inuit Art to the Guild showed Alice some carvings. Realising their uniqueness, she arranged for them to be sold by the Guild in Montreal beginning in 1948.

Virginia Watt summed up Alice’s contribution as a woman of principle, never a spectator. If she was interested, she was involved and involvement for Alice meant loyalty and action.

RUTH ALLAN-RIGBY

Based on research for a talk given to the WHA on December 13, 2007.
**TITANIC TRAGEDY: THE ALLISON FAMILY AND HARRY MARKLAND MOLSON**

Hudson and Bess Allison travelled as first class passengers. They were returning from a six-week holiday in London with their young daughter Loraine who also drowned and Trevor, their baby son who was saved by his nursemaid. They had paid £151 for two staterooms on the upper deck.

When the Titanic set sail from Southampton, England on April 10, 1912, there were 37 Montrealers returning home. Five of them were from Westmount. The first was Harry Markland Molson, the wealthiest Canadian on board. He had inherited the brewery and banking business from his uncle and had built a home at 2 Edgehill Road. Molson had survived two other shipwrecks because of his strong swimming skills. When the Titanic began to go down, he swam towards the lights of a distant ship. His body was never found.

The Allison family lived at 464 Roslyn Avenue. The family of four had been visiting Britain for six weeks. They had purchased furnishings and horses for their stock farm in Chesterville, Ontario, and had hired a staff consisting of two nannies, a cook, and a chauffeur. Hudson Allison, aged 30, was a self-made millionaire and a partner in the firm of Johnston, McConnell, and Allison. He and his wife Bess, 24, were devout Methodists and teetotalers. They had two children, Loraine, 2, and infant son Trevor. The family was travelling first-class. They had paid £151 for two staterooms on the upper deck.

When the Titanic started to capsize, Trevor’s nursemaid, Alice Cleaver, took baby Trevor into a lifeboat. Bess Allison panicked when she could not locate Trevor and left her lifeboat with her daughter to search for him. Bess, Loraine, and Hudson Allison perished in the disaster. Loraine was the only child from first or second class to die. Only Hudson Allison’s body was recovered. He was buried in the family plot in Chesterville.

Baby Trevor and the servants all survived the sinking.
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Members of the Hogg family have lived in Westmount for almost a hundred years. They moved to the city in 1914 when George Hogg and his wife Genty Drummond left their farm for their newly constructed residence at 3637 The Boulevard. George Hogg as a young man about 1880

Born in Montreal on November 26, 1865. He began to work when he was thirteen years old. By 1883 he was a dairy producer and distributor in Longue Pointe at the east end of Montreal Island. By 1910 the company expanded to Ste. Catherine Street West. In 1931 a larger plant was built on Aqueduct Street near Dorchester Boulevard. George Hogg was mayor of Westmount from 1926 to 1930. He died in 1948.

Titanic, the largest passenger ship afloat at the time, left Southampton, England on April 10, 1912 with 2,200 passengers and crew on board. Four days later, on April 15 she collided with an iceberg and 1500 people perished, 700 survived. Of the 37 Montrealers returning home, 5 were from Westmount.

Trevor was a ward of his two uncles, one of whom lived on Roslyn Avenue. Shortly before coming of age (when he would have inherited his family’s estate), Trevor died in Maine of ptomaine poisoning. He was buried beside his father.

Caroline Breslaw
Based on talk by Alan Hustak to the WHA on Thursday, October 18, 2007.

All photos are from Titanic: A Canadian Story by Alan Hustak. Véhicule Press, 1998.

UPDATE ON WHA ACTIVITIES

Westmount Day in the Park
May 26, 2007
WHA had a table at the City of Westmount annual celebrations in Westmount Park. Jacqueline Varin-Holm and Doreen Lindsay gave out information to the public and sold our posters and photo-cards.

Photo Exhibition in Westmount Library
Sept. 20 to Oct. 7, 2007
Photographs and architect’s drawings of buildings designed by Robert Findlay were displayed on the new black panels. Old and new photographs of other historical locations such as Westmount Park and the Train Station were also shown.

Walking Westmount with Robert Findlay
Sept. 30, 2007
Congratulations to Ruth Allan-Rigby, Caroline Breslaw, Barbara Covington, Doreen Lindsay and Virginia Elliott who conducted the tours on Sunday, September 30, as part of the City of Montreal’s L’Opération Patrimoine Architectural de Montréal 2007. A brochure was also printed in partnership with the City of Westmount to mark the occasion.

We thank our MEMBERS for their financial support of producing Lectures and Newsletters, and their attentive attendance at our specially designed Lecture Series during the year.

A SPECIAL “THANK YOU” to our DONORS who contribute to our programming and ongoing office and archive work.
Aitken, Sally
Carnegie, Marjorie
Claxton, Patricia
Hutchison, J. Lawrence
Johnston, Norma
Moisan, Constance-Marie
Randall, Ramona
Scott, Sharyne
Vachon, Michel
**A SHORT HISTORY OF THE “ROSEMOUNT” ESTATE**

The Honourable John Young was the most prominent owner of the Rosemount estate. The land was originally part of a Sulpician grant made in 1708 to the Lavallée-Bouchard family. In 1802, 156 arpents of the farm were purchased by William McGillivray, a major shareholder and director of the North West Company. McGillivray created the first estate on the property. His country residence was reached by a private gravel road from a gate on the Côte near the St. Antoine tollgate. From his home, McGillivray had a view of the town of Montreal, the river, and the distant mountains.

The estate was purchased by Asa Goodenough in the 1840’s. Goodenough, manager of the Exchange Coffee House, renamed it ‘Rosemount’. In 1846, the residence was advertised as “a first class THREE STOREY CUT STONE DWELLING, 45 feet by 36, together with two extensive graperies (stocked with the choicest Grapes, Peaches and apricots). A COACH HOUSE, STABLES and OFFICES complete.” The remainder of the property was described as building lots with “a highly cultivated GARDEN including two hundred of the choicest plum trees, together with choice pear and dwarf apple trees”.

John Young purchased the entire property in 1852. The estate remained in his hands for 20 years, undergoing many additions and improvements to the buildings and grounds. The original country villa (today’s 16 Severn Avenue) was not large enough for the prominent Montrealer’s needs, so he made a three story addition on the west side (today’s 18 Severn Avenue) which was bigger and higher than the original house. Both were constructed of Montreal grey stone. There was a verandah on the southern side. Beside the original house were stables. The orchards and gardens were said to be the finest on the island.

Several other buildings existed on Young’s property – today’s 70 Rosemount Crescent, 451 Mountain Avenue, 52 and 60 Rosemount Avenue. In 1861, Young sold the southern part of his estate to Robert J. Reekie. The remainder was bought by Reekie in 1872. John Young’s original estate of Rosemount gave the names to Rosemount Avenue and Rosemount Crescent and established street patterns in the eastern part of Westmount.

**CAROLINE BRESLAW**

Based on research for a talk given to the WHA on Thursday, November 15, 2007.
From the Archives

Researching Alice

It was one of those hot and sticky days in July in Montreal, when you always chose your coolest outfit and try to ignore the oppressive, moist heat. I was traveling downtown on the 24 bus to the Rare Books Department of McGill University to study the Lighthall Family Collection, specifically those archival boxes pertaining to Alice Lighthall. This was in preparation for the fourth lecture given this Fall by Ruth Allan-Rigby on the life and times of Alice Lighthall, entitled “Alice Lighthall: A Beloved Westmounter”.

I met Ruth on the ground floor of McGill’s McLennan Library, and we took the elevator up to the Rare Books Department on the fourth floor. As we got off the elevator we were hit by a blast of very cool air, and by the time we had negotiated several doors and actually entered the Rare Books Department, the air was even cooler and we were almost shivering. Such a contrast to the outside temperature was somewhat disconcerting, and we had not brought an extra jacket or sweater!

The Rare Books room is very beautiful with many lines of book shelving, interspersed with exhibits, paintings and sculptures. In a glass case are the keys of James McGill, alongside a beautifully preserved Jacobean wooden Bible Box, dated 1620. There are oil paintings on the walls, notably Peter Whiteford, 1890, who was associated with the Redpath Library. There is a bronze bust of William McLennan, 1856-1904, for whom the Library was named. There is also a bronze sculptured head of Lawrence Lande, who made an impressive donation of Canadiana which can be examined on the shelves in the Lande Collection section. Behind glass-fronted cases are many old maps and drawings of Montreal and surrounding areas. I also noticed a green marble sculpture of a lovely woman’s head by Epstein, but when I asked who she was I was told the piece was entitled “Elizabeth” but nobody seemed to know who she was or why she was associated with the Rare Books Room.

Ruth had previously arranged for us to view the four archival boxes pertaining to Alice Lighthall from the forty metres of the whole Lighthall collection and we settled down at the study table to examine the files and folders. Before we did this we were asked to leave our bags and parcels in a special open wooden cupboard at the side of the room. As well, we were instructed that we could only use pencils, which were supplied to us, to take notes. No nasty ball-point pen marks on the old correspondence and papers we were about to examine!

I started examining one of the archival boxes, which were well arranged in chronological order and clearly labeled. As I began to read the correspondence and papers included in the collection I was transported in time to an era before my birth when young Anglophone ladies of a certain class entered McGill University at their own peril, because higher education for women was not considered an asset in the marriage market. From there I became involved in the patriotism and loyalty to Britain that came to a head with the beginning of World War I. I went with Alice to her rudimentary nurses’ aid classes, (her actual notes from these classes are in the files) which were supposed to prepare her for the field hospital work that she would do in France. Then I traveled with Alice to England where the VAD’s were housed before being sent to France. I read letters from her brother William, who was also in England with the army, who wanted to find the time to visit Alice before being sent overseas.

Apart from feeling that I had entered a time capsule, I was also able to appreciate the fact that Alice had carefully kept all this correspondence, and was able to donate it to McGill intact at a much later date. I wondered how many of us today would be able to produce such a volume of old correspondence from our past. The other striking thing about this correspondence was that it was all hand written. How did they find the time in the middle of a war to sit down and compose a hand-written letter to their family and friends?

After a fascinating three-hour trip back to the life and times of Alice Lighthall, Ruth and I left the Rare Books Department, and entered the real world of hot and humid Montreal in July. We both felt disoriented and it took a little while to adjust to reality. We had just been handling papers and correspondence which Alice herself had handled; the paper for the correspondence had been chosen by the writer as suitable for the letter they wished to compose; the pen and the colour and texture of the ink, had also been chosen by the writer. These are tangible artifacts which link us to the past of nearly 100 years ago. It will be interesting to see what future generations think of the electronic paper trail which we are leaving to-day for them with our emails and text messages. I doubt that our legacy will have the same profound effect as those handwritten papers had on me that July day in 2007.

BARBARA COVINGTON, ARCHIVIST
DECEMBER 2007
NEW ACQUISITIONS


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