

The Westmount Historian

NEWSLETTER OF THE WESTMOUNT HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

VOLUME 3 NUMBER 1

SEPTEMBER 2002

New Acquisitions

The WHA has received several interesting donations over the past couple of months. Ann Elbourne has donated several photographs and other documents relating to the Roslyn School History Project carried out in the 1970s. The photograph on page 2 of this issue is from the Roslyn collection.

A second donation, from Elizabeth Reid Russell, consists of 50 black and white photographs taken by her father, an amateur photographer. There are numerous views of Westmount Park, including a photograph of the boating pond, and three Russell cousins, Isabella, Muriel and May.

Barbara Covington is the new archivist for the Westmount Historical Association, replacing Philip Dombowsky, who is now in Ottawa. Barbara brings twenty years of experience as a librarian to the WHA, having worked at the Nurses Library at the Montreal General Hospital. Under Barbara's direction, the WHA Archives will continue to process incoming material the highest possible standards.

You may recall reading a request for information regarding the German soccer star Godfrey Fochs in a past issue of the *Westmount Historian*. The WHA recently received a response to this appeal, through which it was determined that family records relating to Fochs have been deposited in the Jewish Museum in Berlin. Needless to say, the individual researching the life of Fochs is delighted.



Westmount Historical Association

Native Peoples, Early French *habitants*, Priests and Nuns

Thursday, September 19

Early French *habitants* of Côte St-Antoine

Janet MacKinnon, research for Master's thesis, University of Montreal.

Thursday, October 17

The Sulpicians and the Grand Séminaire

Grand Séminaire de Montréal, 2065 Sherbrooke Street West at 6:00 p.m. sharp.

Commentary in French by Monique Lanthier, Curator of Collections.

Thursday, November 21

Nuns of the Congrégation de Notre-Dame

Joyce Roberts, Congrégation de Notre-Dame, Marguerite Bourgeoys Museum.

Thursday, December 19

Native Peoples of Kawenote Teiontiakon (the Island of Montreal)

Dr. Toby Morantz, Department of Anthropology, McGill University

With the exception of the second lecture, all lectures will take place in the Westmount Public Library, 4574 Sherbrooke Street West, from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. Our lecture on October 17 will be held at the Grand Séminaire de Montréal as noted.

Fall Lecture Series 2002

The Westmount Historian

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HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

September 2002
Volume 3 • Number 2

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ISSN:
1496-4066

President's Message

Sometimes unseen and unpredictable circumstances happen when all our intentions are honourable. I apologize for the late arrival of this edition of the *Westmount Historian*.

Many of you have attended our first two lectures in our series 'Before There Was a Westmount'. We welcome you back and a very special welcome to all new members. Again, our programme committee have planned a remarkable series for us to enjoy.

For our editor, Philip Dombowsky, this will be his last newsletter. Philip is now on contract with the National Gallery of Canada, a position that keeps him extremely busy and in Ottawa. We all wish him success. We also welcome our two new editors, Andy Dodge, together with his former boss on the Westmount Examiner, John Sancton; one former journalist and one former publisher!

You will notice that there is an increase in the cost of membership this year. Unfortunately, this is unavoidable as our costs rise. Even with the small increase, we offer more for your membership dollars than most. Our lecture series is attended more and more and the subjects get more and more interesting.

The Fall weather brings wonderful colours into our lives. The Westmount Historical Association I hope brings our wonderful heritage to you.

FLORA-LEE WAGNER



Roslyn School sports team from 1946. The person seated second from the right in the first row is Leonard Cohen.

Westmount Historical Association

LIVING HISTORY

Westmount in the Seventies

F. A. LECLAIRE

BACK IN THE 1950s the idea of progress was to tear down and rebuild with new and modern structures which gave a new, post-war image to cities in North America. Montreal was not immune from these ideas, nor was Westmount, which had rows of close-knit townhouses in its southeastern sector. The city fathers approved the destruction of many of these and encouraged the growth of high-rises and multi-use buildings such as Alexis Nihon Plaza and Westmount Square. Plans were in place to move further, indeed to clear out the entire southeast sector and replace it with high-rises. The removal of rows of townhouses on the north side of Dorchester Boulevard and the south side of Tupper Street was already accomplished by the mid-sixties.

At the same time that Westmount was being "modernized", Mayor Jean Drapeau was accomplishing similar results in the downtown sector, including Place Ville Marie and the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce building. He was also working on highway networks, including the Bonaventure Expressway which was prepared in time for Expo '67 but failed to accomplish what he had hoped. His next idea was to build what has become the Ville Marie Expressway, cutting a swath through lower Westmount.

As the decade turned, many people began to worry that all of this "modernization" was being done on the backs of the middle-class homeowners and tenants who were being pushed out of the city. Citizens began to fight back and one of the first examples of this was in Westmount, where the Selby Street struggle actually brought a Governor-General's Award for citizen participation. This is the recollection of one of the leaders of that struggle.

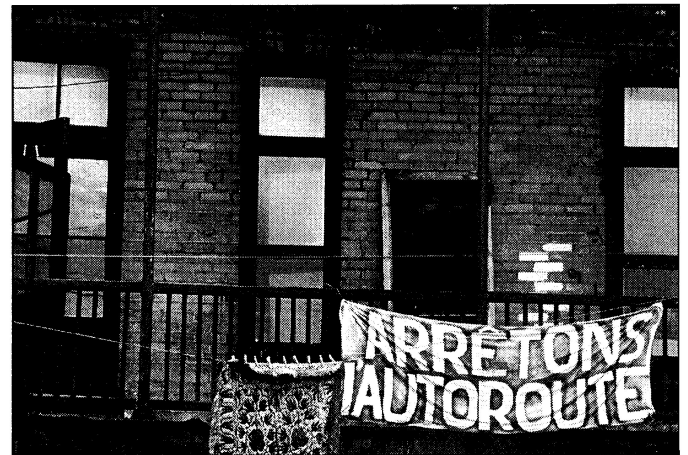
In 1968, I acquired a pair of turn-of-century greystone triplexes on St-Antoine Street; what my wife and I thought was our dream to gain some financial security. We soon discovered that our dreams were slated for demolition due to a grandiose plan of urban renewal sponsored by the City of Westmount and subsidized by both the federal and provincial governments. This obviously was a complement to Jean Drapeau's vision of Highway galore and remaking the face of Montreal, willy-nilly of its inhabitants.

The project called for public consultation. I wrote a

brief in opposition and was invited to present it at a meeting in Victoria Hall. Family Service Association, concerned about the effect of this project on the Lower Westmount citizens, invited me to work with a coalition of residents to oppose it; being quite unused to this sort of thing, I expressed some doubts but was promised close assistance and coaching.

With the help of sociologist Marc Zannis and social worker Bob Davis, I stirred up local tenants and a few landlords, most of whom were mainly interested in getting their money back from the near-abandoned buildings. Nevertheless, Westmount-Bas was born with some hundred or so members.

City of Westmount Municipal Council was not unanimously enthusiastic about the project, either. Councillor Douglas Robertson provided us critical support and sub-



Photograph by Brian Merrett

stantial advice. He recruited McGill University's Dean of Architecture, Joseph Baker, and eminent architect Norbert Schoenauer and other concerned citizens from above the track, to lend us professional advice and moral support.

At another public meeting on the matter we told the mayor that he was misinformed about the condition of life in our area. I was asked to arrange a visit of a few homes by the councillors. This we did, one week before Christmas, when groups of three councillors walked into warmly decorated homes. They were enchanted, and I

continued on page 4

believe this was the turning point, even though one councillor could not understand how people lived without central heating!

From then on we were invited to address City Council at their statutory meetings, we assiduously attended en masse and I regularly made little speeches to the salons. We became endeared to the media, both printed and electronic; we fed them all we could and they provided us with the public attention needed to plead our case. Eventually the City abandoned the project and promised new public housing for the Selby Street evictees.

The relief was short-lived; the Ville-Marie Expressway construction began and despite City of Westmount opposition, active demonstrations and public meetings, destruction, noise and pollution rendered life unbearable for local residents. Eventually concrete pillars arose out of the moonscape. Suddenly the threat of home demolition loomed again, this time to connect an access ramp directly with Atwater Tunnel, thus destroying Westmount-en-Bas and a large part of St-Irénée.

Professor Baker, with students from McGill, made plans and models in a rented store-front to demonstrate how the access ramp could be modified to save the area. Sponsored by Minister of Municipal Affairs Victor Goldbloom (himself a Westmouter), we presented our cause to a panel of ministers and civil servants. The impossible became the possible.

Suddenly, dishes rattling in kitchen cupboards became bearable because cranes with balls were breaking up the concrete pillars and the highway project was delayed for months. The access ramp was now in line with Greene Avenue, the houses

were saved – or so we thought.

In the mail one day I received anonymous copies of the Métro plans showing Lionel-Groulx Station located where our homes stood! I presented the plans at a City Council meeting the following evening, causing a major shuffle and a sudden change of location. Some politicians were red-faced and Mayor Peter McIntyre both reacted and acted.

The residents of lower Greene Avenue had been evicted, their houses expropriated by the Highway Minister. Squatters occupied the premises with the tacit approval of the City, while they suffered harassment from the minister's requests. The squatters remained.

With the assistance of Dr. Goldbloom and Councillor Robert-

son, we formed a non-profit corporation to acquire properties from the Province and rehabilitate them, though the support was not unanimous. Eventually the government agreed to save them and we were to sign the documents one certain morning. Just as we were standing on Greene Avenue with the ministers to complete the deal, demolition crews started to wreck the houses. There is now at the corner of St-Antoine and Greene a gaping hole where once stood a magnificent stonefront building with two stores and two fourteen-room flats. Westmount created Selby Park as a memorial to our perseverance and the Hillside Housing Project became one of the legacies of Westmount's willingness to listen to its citizens.



Demolition of property on Greene Avenue.

Photograph by Brian Merrett

SPRING LECTURE SERIES IN REVIEW

THE SPIRIT OF WESTMOUNT

Annette Wolff, Lilian Trudel, & Andy Dodge
March 21, 2002

Three members of the Westmount Historical Association presented their personal experiences of living in Westmount over the years. Lilian Trudel presented an overview of ten years of Arts Westmount, a cultural organization founded in 1982 by Edith Germain and Sally Hooff. The two set up committees of local painters, musicians, writers, and theatre people who organized successful art exhibitions, concerts, plays, children's art in tents in the park, guided bus tours and an international food evening.

Annette Wolff recalled growing up at 442 Argyle Avenue. She and her five sisters learned about Westmount from Dr. Lighthall, a professor at McGill University who was one of several interesting visitors to their home. She recalled many childhood experiences: climbing a tree in the back yard, being protected by the police and firemen who were stationed behind them on Stanton Street, and serving tea to a taxi driver who was frightened to drive down the icy hill in winter.

Andy Dodge drew on his thirty years experience as a real estate appraiser and journalist to describe the evolution of bathrooms and kitchens in Westmount. In older homes kitchens were often in the lower level; 168 Cote St. Antoine still has its kitchen in the basement. He explained how in the past food was prepared in the basement and taken upstairs by means of a dumb waiter. Ice was delivered on horse drawn carts and melted into a pan under the ice box. Early bathrooms had wooden toilet tanks with chainpulls. Today designer bathrooms often include saunas and large spas with picture windows with a view of the mountain or river.

DOREEN LINDSAY

ARTS WESTMOUNT is pleased to invite you to a **PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION**

September 17-28, 1984
Opening: Monday, Sept. 17, 5-8 pm

JOEL BESNER • HARRY MAVEROVITCH
NINA BRUCK • ANN PEARSON
DEREK CARON • DAVID SAXE
NEIL CHAPMAN • NORMAN SLATER
RONALD DIAMOND • ROBERT SLATKOFF
DAVID EVANS • GABOR SZILASI
DOREEN LINDSAY •



"DEVELOP A TASTE FOR PHOTOGRAPHY"
Thursday, September 20, 4 pm

TEA-TALK

with ANN PEARSON

Miss Pearson, a freelance photographer and lecturer at
Yates College will talk about the photographs in the
exhibition and discuss photography as an art form.
This will be a special occasion. Admission is free.

ONE WESTMOUNT SQUARE

Six, Catherine and Wood Aves.
9 to 6 daily except Sunday

Printed and published by
Le Centre Café Gourmet, 4868 Sherbrooke St.

Photography by
Doreen Lindsay

CENTRE CAFÉ GOURMET

Rita Stafford
April 18, 2002

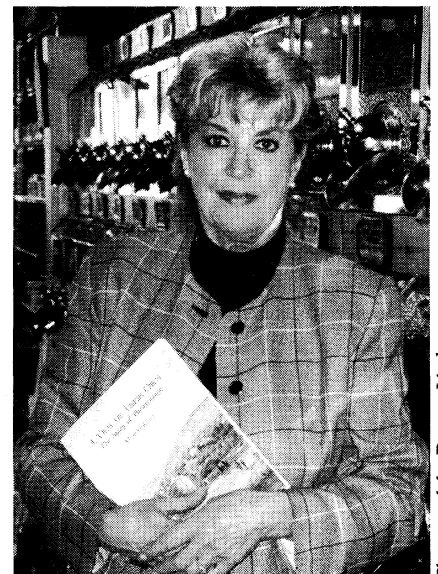
Since 1977, the Stafford family has owned and operated a business in Westmount. Their store Le Centre Café Gourmet has been on both of Westmount's main shopping streets, Greene Avenue and Sherbrooke Street.

In 1977, when many people were leaving Quebec, the late Don Stafford decided that the time was right for selling quality coffee beans in a speciality store. The first premises was at 1265 Greene Avenue at the corner of de Maisonneuve. At the time it featured eight different types of coffee beans. The business remained in this destination shopping area for twelve years.

When their building was threatened with demolition the Staffords circulated a petition to prevent it. However, the building was torn down, and they relocated to 4868 Sherbrooke Street near Victoria Avenue where the store is today. Here the business is more transient and heavy-duty than in the first location.

Le Centre Café Gourmet has all its coffees privately roasted to its own specifications. In response to the customers' needs, teas, cheeses, jams, cookies, and other products are also sold. Over the years, the business has expanded to include a cafe, deliveries, gift baskets, and a web site.

Rita, with her two daughters Lynn and Donna, continues to operate Westmount's first coffee centre. It has been firmly established business in Westmount for twenty-five years.



Rita Stafford, 2002

Photograph by Doreen Lindsay

CAROLINE BRESLAW

SPRING LECTURE SERIES IN REVIEW

ALEXANDER HUTCHISON

Susan Bronson and Janis Zubalik
May 16, 2002

Alexander Cowper Hutchison (shown seated in the photograph below) was the mayor of the Village of Côte St. Antoine from 1884 to 1886 and served as an alderman in the community from 1884 to 1891. He was also a School Commissioner for the Stanton Street School. From the 1850s to the 1920s, he had an important architectural practice in Montreal.

By 1879, Alexander and his wife Margaret had moved to the Village of Notre Dame de Grace at the corner of Little Côte St. Antoine Road and Metcalfe Avenue. They later lived in a smaller home on Kensington Avenue across from the Heather Curling Club. Hutchison and his partners designed St. Andrew's Church on Stanton Street in 1909. In 1895 he converted the original Stanton Street School just above Côte St. Antoine Road into a Town Hall and Fire Depot. He also designed the new Westmount Academy on Côte St. Antoine Road.

Hutchison was the architect for a number of large, traditional Westmount homes, including 476 and 478 Mount Pleasant Avenue, 365 Olivier Avenue, 49 Rosemount Avenue, 202 Côte St. Antoine Road, 3637 The Boulevard near the junction of Westmount Avenue, 32 Belvedere Road, and 4299 Montrose Avenue.

In 1911, the firm Hutchison, Wood and Miller designed Westmount's first synagogue, Temple Emmanuel, at the corner of Sherbrooke Street and Wood Avenue. They also erected the Stanley Street Presbyterian Church on Westmount Avenue at Victoria Avenue in 1913. The last project the firm completed before Hutchison died in 1921 was a new building for the Mechanics' Institute (Atwater Library) on Atwater Avenue at Tupper Street.

CAROLINE BRESLAW

THE WESTMOUNT HISTORIAN

THE ROTARY CLUB OF WESTMOUNT

Haagen Kierulf
June 20, 2002

A meeting to form the Rotary Club of Westmount was held on May 21, 1930 at the residence of Dr. Charles Crutchlow, 660 Lansdowne Avenue. The 30 charter members consisted of business and professional men with various Westmount connections, each representing a different profession, including banking, ice manufacturing, coal retailing, farming, real estate, organist, plumbing, police and fire chief, dentist, hair dressing, postal service, and sports forum manager. The first president was the prominent Westmount builder, John H. Hand. The first woman to be accepted as a member was Henrietta Anthony. The current president is Richard d'Auteuil. The first of Rotary's weekly meetings was held at the YMCA and later at Victoria Avenue. Over the years the Rotary Club has organized many fund raising events on a regular basis. Carnivals were held early on until 1968 and garage sales from 1976 to 2000. Over the past two years an antique sale and auction has been held.

In continuing to fulfill their mandate of helping the community, Westmount Rotary built and developed the Unity Boys and Girls Club a 1090 Greene Avenue in 1950 to involve young people in meaningful activities. In 1979, they established the Manoir Westmount to enable senior citizens to remain in the community longer. In 1981, they purchased training dummies for use by the Fire Department and YMCA in CPR education and recently donated a computer to the TAG Teen Centre.

DOREEN LINDSAY



Westmount Historical Association



Unity Boys' and Girls Club participants during the 1950s.

Westmount Rotary Club