



*Hurtubise House 1739*



*Braemar 1847*



*1895 townhouse on Dorchester Blvd.*



*Percy Nobbs House 1914*

# **PRESERVING INTERIORS**

## *The Westmount Historian*

NEWSLETTER OF THE WESTMOUNT  
HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

September 2015  
Volume 16 • Number 1

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*The Westmount Historian* is published  
twice a year in February and September  
by the Westmount Historical  
Association, Westmount, Quebec,  
a non-profit charitable association.  
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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Many wonderful house interiors in Westmount have been demolished over the years. The WHA would like to stop this destruction of our architectural heritage. In order to encourage homeowners to preserve their original fireplaces, staircases, wood stairs, baseboards, and other design elements, this issue of *The Westmount Historian* presents four homes that have been lovingly restored by their owners over recent years.

The Arts and Crafts designed home of architect Percy Nobbs on Belvedere Road, with views overlooking the City of Montreal and the St. Lawrence River, has been brought back to its original exterior and interior splendor by owners Michael and Marina Blinderman. The extravagant Braemar Villa, built in 1847, with columned porches around the first and second story of the Regency style house (popular between 1810 and 1860) has been researched and restored by its fourteenth owner, Sharon Azrieli.

Our oldest house, the Hurtubise family home built in 1739 on our oldest road, Côte St. Antoine, has been preserved by its owners, Canadian Heritage of Quebec, who purchased it 55 years ago. The various stages of construction have been preserved and may be seen today.

Proud owners of a semi-detached Victorian townhouse on Dorchester Blvd., Michael McAdoo and Theodora Samiotis repaired, rebuilt, and reclaimed original windows, brass hardware, and radiators. Research and much of the physical work was done by Mr. McAdoo and Ms. Samiotis's father.

DOREEN LINDSAY

## WHA Fall/Winter 2015 Lecture Series

### *Repurposing Buildings in Westmount*

This series looks at the longstanding practice in Westmount  
of preserving buildings through change in use.

*Thursday, September 17, 2015*

**The Lives of 500 Claremont: From Protestant Home to Jewish Orphanage to Catholic Residence**

Speakers: Père François Breton, religieux de la Congrégation de la Fraternité Sacerdotale; Manny Cohen, resident 1935-1940, Montreal Hebrew Orphans' Home

*Thursday, October 15, 2015*

**Carriage House to My House: The Story of a Conversion**

Speakers: Sharon Sparling, homeowner, 543 Roslyn Avenue

*Thursday, November 19, 2015*

**Westmount Train Station: Moving On**

Speakers: Michael Leduc, Railway Historian; Joumana Chemaly, Master's candidate, Faculty of Environmental Design, Université de Montréal

*December 17, 2015*

**Members' Social in the Gallery at Victoria Hall**

Guide: Cynthia Lulham, Westmount City Councillor

*All events from 7 to 9 pm.*

*Sept. Oct. Nov. talks in the Westmount Public Library,  
4574 Sherbrooke Street West.*

*December event in the Gallery at Victoria Hall.*

**For more information please contact us: 514-989-5510**

**www.westmounthistorical.org – info@westmounthistorical.org**

# BRAEMAR 1847 RESTORED



*BRAEMAR, as it looks today, showing front door and rebuilt exterior columns surrounding house on two levels.  
photo: Doreen Lindsay July 2015.*

*“Brae” means upper slope of a hill and “mar” means beauty and harmony. The name Braemar was given to the villa overlooking the St. Lawrence River by owner Eliza Jane Ross in 1866. She was a lady-in-waiting to Queen Victoria when they visited the castle in Scotland called Braemar.*

Sharon Azrieli, the present owner of Braemar, showed how it is possible, with love, patience, and an understanding of the evolution of an historic building, to develop one of Westmount’s great villas into a friendly family home of today.

“Braemar” and a twin house “Clarevue” (demolished over a century ago) were built in 1847 and attributed to the architect William Footner (1799-1872), who worked with architect George Brown to design the Bonsecours Market on St. Paul Street in Old Montreal which also opened in 1847.

Since purchasing the 9,000-square-foot Regency-style plantation home on the slopes of Westmount in 2010, Azrieli

has planned and overseen a huge project to restore and preserve this unique 168- year-old house. She is the fourteenth owner of this grand villa, which underwent considerable changes over the decades, but with its exterior and interior preserved largely intact.

Peter Thompson, who lived there for 44 years, had moved the front door to the east side in 1924. Azrieli had this beautiful Regency door restored and a copy made to serve as a new front door on the north side of the house. All oak wood floors have been restored. The entire plumbing and electrical infrastructure have been replaced. French drains and wells were dug for a new geothermal heating system. The many



*The Regency style front door installed in 1924 on the east side of house was restored and replaced on the north side.*

marble fireplaces throughout the house were saved and a new copper roof was installed. All living spaces, including those in the former attic, were adapted to modern needs, while preserving and enhancing their original charm. To accommodate parking, a large garage was built into the hillside near the house.

## WINDOWS AND DOORS

Azrieli insisted that all original hardware be saved and reused on doors and windows. The three large doors in the salon, extending almost floor to ceiling, and their folding pocket shutters were taken out, cleaned, restored, and replaced, a process that took four years. All of the original large ground floor windows have been completely restored. All original glass was preserved, as well as all original side shutters.

## KITCHEN HEARTH IN BASEMENT

In 1847 the house was built with two-foot thick fieldstone walls. When 20th century gypsum board was removed from



*The are 76 restored wooden columns surrounding the exterior varanda on two levels around the house.*

the walls in the basement, Azrieli discovered original windows that had been covered over. She had the windows uncovered and the “basement” level opened up to provide more family living space. An exciting discovery was the original basement kitchen hearth where all the cooking was once done. It was restored to its natural beauty by numbering, removing each brick and cleaning before re-assembly.

## WOODEN COLUMNS, FLOORS and STAIRS

The 76 exterior wooden columns surrounding the exterior verandas on two levels around the house had rotted and required rebuilding. Wooden floors and staircases were also restored.

**BRAEMAR was recognized as an HISTORICAL MONUMENT by the Ministère des Affaires culturelles du Québec in 1984** when requested by the owner of the house at that time, Gerald Benjamin. All work done on the house is subject to regulations by the *Ministère* and the City of Westmount.

DOREEN LINDSAY



*The three large doors, almost floor to ceiling in the living room, have windows overlooking the St. Lawrence River. Wooden shutters the full height of the doors fold into the wall of the living room.*



*Detail of folding wood shutters for doors in living room.*



*Sharon Azrieli spoke to the WHA on 16 April 2015 in the Westmount Public Library, explaining how she has been restoring Braemar since purchasing it in 2010. Sharon's operatic career necessitates travelling to many cities in Europe, but she maintains this historic villa in Westmount as home.*



*All windows were removed, cleaned, repaired and replaced with special care taken to retain the cord pulley system shown here.*



# RESTORING PERCY NOBBS' HOUSE



*This Arts and Crafts style house at 38 Belvedere Road was designed by architect Percy Erskine Nobbs between 1913 and 1915 for himself and his new wife Mary Cecilia Shepherd.*

*"When Percy Nobbs designed this house for himself and his bride Cecilia Shepherd in 1913, he incorporated their initials into the wrought iron railings along with detailed tulip heads."*

Percy Erskine Nobbs (1875-1964) was Director of the McGill School of Architecture and the architect of many important Montreal projects. He built his own brownish-red brick home at 38 Belvedere Road in Westmount between 1913 and 1915 in the Arts and Crafts style. It is tall and asymmetrical, with large windows and French doors emphasizing the views of the St. Lawrence River and the mountains beyond. The light-filled interior of the residence has a simple elegance.

Michael and Marina Blinderman purchased the home in 2009 and searched for archival material to help in their planned restoration. Nobbs' watercolour drawings for his home were found at the University Club in Montreal. Floor plans were consulted at the John Bland Archives at McGill University. The Blindermans hired the firm Fournier

Gersovitz Moss Drolet, known for its sympathetic treatment of heritage buildings, to restore the architectural integrity of their home. It was a long and painstaking project. Original features, such as the intricate wooden radiator covers and the carved floral staircase panels, were lovingly restored. Missing or damaged elements, such as the glazed living room fireplace bricks, were recreated as exactly as possible. The unusual parquet oak flooring on the ground floor was reproduced. Copies of the original wood windows and doors were made. Bricked-up windows in the basement were revealed. The slates of the steeply-pitched roof were replaced. Intricate exterior metalwork on the terrace was conserved.

New elements were designed to blend with the original property. A stone garden wall was built to match the one



*Nobbs incorporated intricate tulip head designs into the metal railing on three sides of the porch situated at the rear of the second level of his house.*

shown in a Nobbs' watercolour. The top floor attic space was never actualised by the architect, but his detailed drawings allowed his vision, including 'Scottish' dormer windows, to be fulfilled. Nobbs' plans had not included a garage; a separate 2-car space was designed that matched the house. The servants' staircase, which serviced only the basement, was removed to make room for a powder room on the main floor. The 1914 kitchen and butler's pantry had not existed for decades, so a large and airy kitchen with simple Arts and Crafts-style cabinets was installed. The original dumbwaiter remains in use.

The steep slope of the land made planning the garden a challenge. Marina Blinderman worked with garden designer Stuart Webster to plant an informal English garden in the style of Gertrude Jekyll, a prominent English garden designer of the Arts and Crafts period. The house has views of the perennial garden on three sides.

This home of eclectic architect Percy Erskine Nobbs has been lovingly restored, using his plans and drawings. The homeowners and architects have rendered great service to a special house.

CAROLINE BRESLAW



*Nobbs designed a carved floral panel in the wooden staircase in the entrance hall.*



*An archway that was originally in the wall separating the living room and dining room was rebuilt according to early photographs.*



*Original tiles in front of fireplace*



*Marina Blinderman, owner, and Julia Gersovitz, architect, presented a lecture to WHA on May 21, 2015. Gersovitz has been a Westmount resident for 40 years and is a senior partner in the firm Fournier, Gersovitz, Moss, Drolet et associés architects.*

# CONSERVATION of the HURTUBISE HOUSE



*The stone farm house built for the Hurtubise family in 1739 on Côte Saint Antoine Road. Today it is owned and maintained by Canadian Heritage of Quebec. Situated at the corner of today's Victoria Avenue, formerly called Hurtubise Lane. Photo taken after Phase II of CHQ restoration.*

*"We preserve the heritage value of our buildings – the traces of time of the different eras, their integrity and authenticity."*

JACQUES ARCHAMBAULT

The Hurtubise House, located at 561 Côte St. Antoine Road, was constructed in 1739, and is the oldest building in Westmount. It was acquired in 1956 as the first property of Canadian Heritage of Quebec (CHQ). In 2004 the Hurtubise family property and house were declared an historic site and monument by the *Ministère de la Culture et des Communications du Québec* (MCC).

Major repairs and restoration have been carried out in the past decade, under the caring supervision of Jacques Archambault, CHQ's Director General. Because of the heritage status, government permission is necessary for all interventions. The provincial government subsidized work to the roof and chimneys in 2005. Cedar shingles were installed on

the 1739 stone house, and a tin roof was put on the 1870s annex. The dormer windows were redone.

In 2011 the fieldstone façade on the west and north sides was repointed, and the front gallery was rebuilt. This project was given financial support by MCC, the City of Montreal, and CHQ. Archaeologists were on site whenever digging on the historic property was carried out.

Interior restoration work in 2005 included resurfacing the walls of the second floor, which were badly water damaged and required new plaster board and paint. Interventions since 2011 have sought to reflect the history of the house. Rather than focusing on a specific date or period, it was decided to preserve elements from different periods to show



*Restorer cleans the wood with a dry sponge.*



*The plaster wall on the north side of the first floor shows cracks that were filled and remain visible.*

the house's evolution. This treatment is evident in the 2014 restoration of the main floor, where many original elements still exist.

On the ground floor, great care was taken in the choice of all products used. Testing was done, so that the original finishes could be preserved. Surfaces, such as plaster walls, were cleaned with a dry sponge. Cracks in walls were filled, and the new work is clearly evident. (photo) Five layers of linoleum on top of the wood floor in the kitchen were exposed. The wooden floors were cleaned and then stained for preservation. Remnants of wallpaper were removed and preserved.

Because of the home's protected status, holes may not be drilled in the walls. Technical systems for the second floor were installed through the attic. This floor currently provides office, archival, and meeting space for the CHQ. On

the ground floor, all modern elements for plumbing and wiring were concealed. Electrical and communications' cabling was hidden in a shaft located in the kitchen. Plugs on the baseboards were wired through the cellar. The old floor registers were used to conduct heat from the new thermal pump in the basement. (photo)

### **THREE CEDAR BEAMS in BASEMENT**

Discoveries were made during the restoration. Of special interest are samples taken from the three cedar beams in the basement with their bark still intact. (photo) It is estimated that they were logged on the property around 1700 from trees that were about 200 years old at the time. It is believed that they were set aside until used by the Hurtubise family for the construction of its stone house in 1739.

CAROLINE BRESLAW



*Linoleum showing the original design is still in place on the kitchen floor.*



*The original metal floor registers now used to conduct heat from the new thermal pump in the basement.*



*Jacques ARCHAMBAULT is the Executive Director of Canadian Heritage of Quebec. He gave a lecture to the WHA on March 19, 2015 explaining the restoration project carried out in 2011 and 2012 by the CHQ.*



*The unpainted wood armoire in kitchen remains in place. The family used it to store preserves and baked goods.*



*This cedar beam was found to be 200 years old when it was cut in 1700 before being used as support for the first floor of the Hurtubise house.*

# RESTORED 1895 HOUSE on DORCHESTER BLVD.



*Semi-detached red brick townhouse built in 1895 at 4274 Dorchester Blvd. The owners were awarded the Montreal Architectural Heritage Award for residential restoration in 2006. Photo: Theodora Samiotis*

*“One never stops working to maintain a heritage home, but I would say the major projects took place over a six year period (2001-2007).”*

THEODORA SAMIOTIS

Michael McAdoo and Theodora Samiotis were awarded the 2006 Montreal Architectural Heritage Award for residential restoration of their 1895 Westmount townhouse on Dorchester Boulevard. This award is given to “recognize owners who restore and maintain their properties”.

The red brick, semi-detached townhouse was built in 1895. Little is known about the first owner of the house, a man named Judge, however, the name “Judge” could be seen written in wax pencil on several parts of the wood structure that became visible during the 2001-2007 restoration of the home. Another remnant of Mr. Judge is a capital “J” emblazoned in an embossed shield which features prominently in the masonry surround of the wood-burning fireplace in the

main entry hall.

While built during the late Victorian era, the home features an eclectic set of architectural features, including a wide Georgian-style fanlight and fluted ionic columns surrounding the front door. Meanwhile, layers of rough-hewn pink sandstone within the red brickwork as well as Doric sandstone columns and a roman arch surrounding a stained-glass window on the side of the home are reminiscent of the then-emerging Richardson Romanesque architectural style.

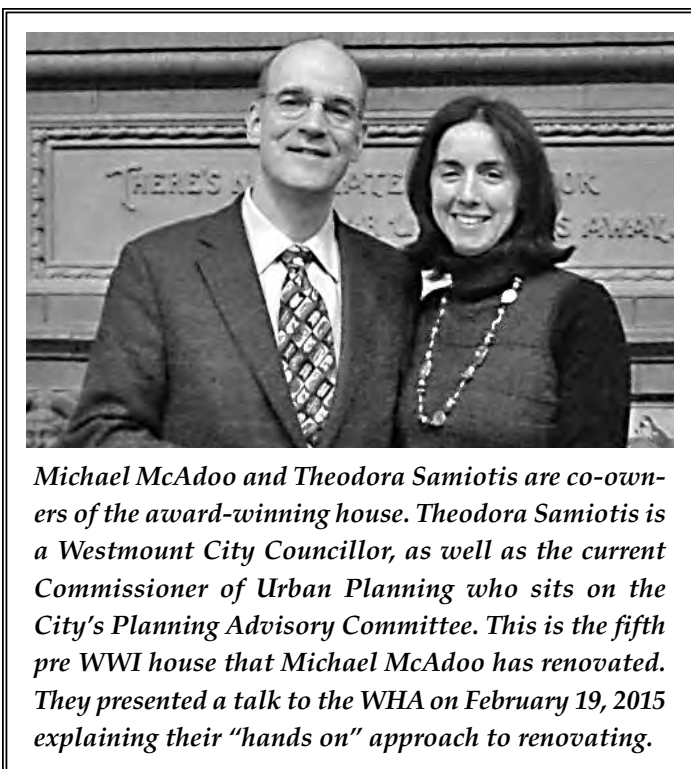
At some point between 1895 and 1915 the house was purchased by Mr. E. Donald, Esq., a senior manager in the ticket office of the Grand Trunk Railway. In 1916 Donald undertook a major project to create a large wrap-around “gallery”



◀ *The original stained glass window remains in the entranceway.*



◀ *Refinished wood stairway in central entranceway was completely restored.*



*Michael McAdoo and Theodora Samiotis are co-owners of the award-winning house. Theodora Samiotis is a Westmount City Councillor, as well as the current Commissioner of Urban Planning who sits on the City's Planning Advisory Committee. This is the fifth pre WWI house that Michael McAdoo has renovated. They presented a talk to the WHA on February 19, 2015 explaining their "hands on" approach to renovating.*



▶ *Reproduction wallpaper frieze in the dining room and breakfast room.*

(balcony) at the rear of the home. Donald employed the architectural firm of Hutchinson Wood and Miller whose name can be seen on an original 1916 plan obtained by McAdoo and Samiotis when they purchased the house in 2001. This structure had fallen into disrepair over the years and the couple were determined to restore the gallery, a major character-defining element of the house.

While restoring the gallery required replacing significant parts of the structure, the greater challenge was in sourcing period-appropriate detail elements such as spindles, railings, floors and ceilings – none of which could be sourced



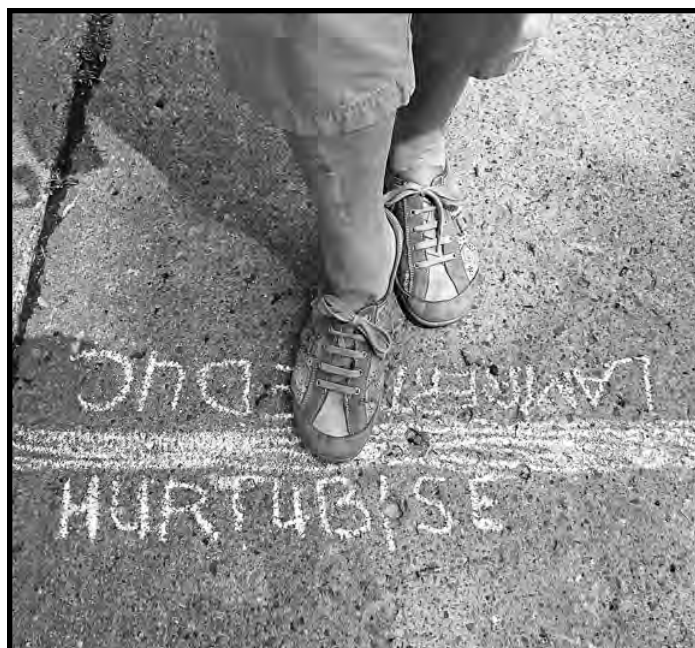
*Façade of 4274 Dorchester Blvd.*

at any local building centre or lumber yard. The project took approximately 12 months of planning and six months to execute, due in part because McAdoo preferred to do much of the work himself. But all this effort paid off, as it was the gallery project that caught the jury's attention when the couple earned the 2006 prize for residential restoration from Heritage Montréal.

The interior of the house carries on with the architectural eclecticism. Fluted mahogany columns are topped by egg-and-dart capitals. Two sets of eight-foot high mahogany pocket doors separate the parlour and dining room from the main entry hall. McAdoo and Samiotis were scrupulous about maintaining these features and enhancing them with historical reproductions or salvaged period hardware. For example, mother of pearl light switches with unlacquered brass covers replaced plastic throughout the public rooms on the main floor. A formerly bricked-up French door to the exterior was restored and new door casing trim was milled to precisely match the original.

Samiotis' father, a retired professional painter and specialist in wood finishes, took the initiative to restore many of the wood features in the house including the guillotine shutters in the parlour and the central wood staircase. To return the wood to its original beauty, he repaired, sanded, stained, and varnished the stair treads and handrail. He also installed reproduction wallpaper friezes in the dining room and breakfast room.

The couple's approach reflects a mindset seen less and less these days. Says McAdoo: "Real 'Old House' people don't think of themselves as "owners" but rather as "care-takers".



## **WALKING TOUR of HURTUBISE HOUSE**

**Sunday September 27, 2015  
at 1 pm.**

**Meet at Hurtubise House on  
Côte St. Antoine, corner of Victoria Ave.**

WHA guides will conduct a walk around and through Westmount's oldest house. French and English guides will describe the up-to-date preservation techniques being carried out by Canadian Heritage of Quebec, who have owned the house since 1960. Thanks to Westmount Historical Association, Canadian Heritage of Quebec and the City of Westmount.

It is our duty to take care of the house so that it will be all that it was originally meant to be, all for the next generation of care-takers"

MICHAEL MCADOO WITH DOREEN LINDSAY

### **Restoration Sources:**

Rejuvenation Hardware for reproduction fixtures; Classic Accents for reproduction lightswitches; Bradbury and Bradbury for Reproduction wallpapers; Old House Journal and Fine Homebuilding magazines for structural and design ideas.

# WHA SPECIAL EVENTS IN 2015

## JANE'S WALK: Sunday May 3 FAMILY BUSINESSES ON SHERBROOKE ST. W.



50 people, most from outside Westmount, joined French guide Louise Carpentier and English guide Caroline Breslaw on a walking tour of the independently owned businesses on Sherbrooke St. in Victoria Village between Grosvenor and Claremont Avenues.

## TALK to WESTMOUNT MUNICIPAL ASSOCIATION – June 8

Doreen Lindsay and Caroline Breslaw presented information about the “Family and Independently Owned Businesses” on Sherbrooke St. at the WMA meeting in Westmount Library. They emphasized the need to retain independently owned businesses and to maintain consistent building height and treatment of façades.

## WHA EXHIBITION in WESTMOUNT CITY HALL – June 20 to October 20



### BUSINESSES of SHERBROOKE STREET W. in WESTMOUNT

Exhibition of new recent photographs of businesses on both the north and south sides of Sherbrooke St. W. taken during 2015 by D. Lindsay. Family or independently owned businesses are indicated. Open Mon. to Thurs. 8 am to 4:30 pm and Fri. 8 am to 1 pm.

## WHA/AGM JUNE 3



*Some members of WHA Board of Directors 2015-16 from left, back row: Pina Santillo treasurer, Anne Barkman membership and web manager, Louise Carpentier new secretary, Jane Atkinson retiring secretary, front row: Jane Martin archivist, Doreen Lindsay president, Caroline Breslaw former vice president, now member at large. Absent from photo are Sharon Sparling retired member and the two new board members Elizabeth Currie and Lorne Huston.*

The WHA held its Annual General Meeting on June 3 in the Board Room of the Westmount Public Library. Annual reports were read followed by the election of directors and officers for 2015-16. Six of the 2014-15 directors were installed by acclamation along with two new members.

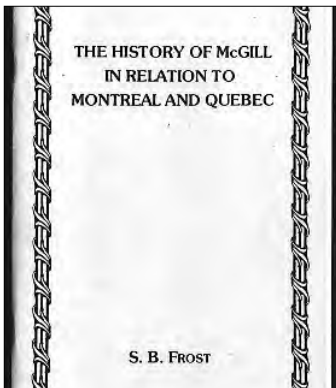
## TALKS TO THOMAS MORE GROUPS in WESTMOUNT

Thomas More asked WHA to give talks to their groups meeting in Westmount. Caroline Breslaw talked about “History of Sherbrooke St.” on March 25 and Doreen Lindsay talked about the “Evolution of Westmount” on March 6.

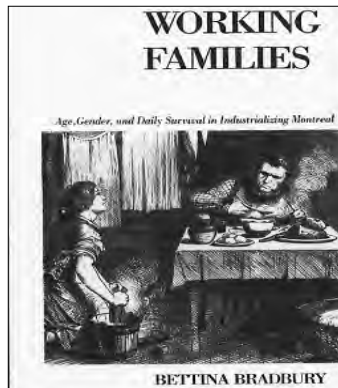
*Doreen Lindsay  
with map*



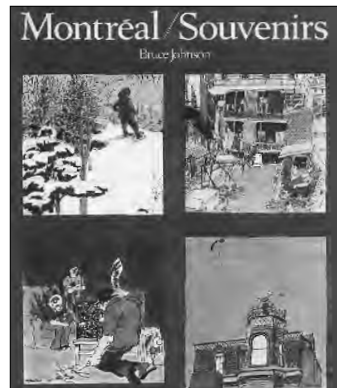
# NEW ACQUISITIONS



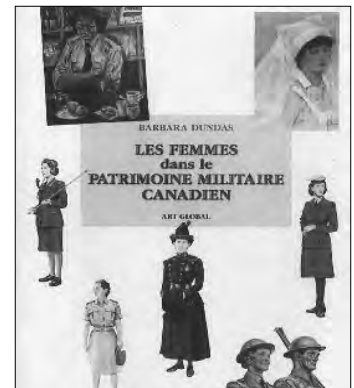
**THE HISTORY OF MCGILL IN RELATION TO THE SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL ASPECTS OF MONTREAL AND QUEBEC** by S.B. Frost, 1979. (published essay commissioned in 1978 by the *Commission d'étude sur les universités*.)



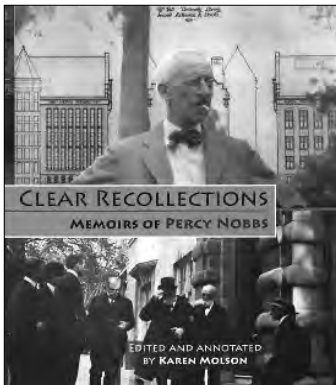
**WORKING FAMILIES: AGE, GENDER, AND DAILY SURVIVAL IN INDUSTRIALIZING MONTREAL** by Bettina Bradbury. McClelland & Stewart Inc., 1993.



**MONTREAL/SOUVENIRS** by Bruce Johnson. Tundra Books, 1979.



**LES FEMMES dans le PATRIMOINE MILITAIRE CANADIEN** by Barbara Dundas, 2000.



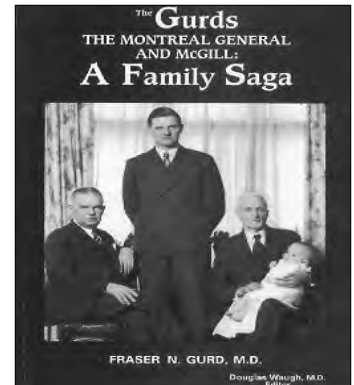
**CLEAR RECOLLECTIONS: MEMOIRS OF PERCY NOBBS** edited and annotated by Karen Molson. Shoreline 2015. Donated by Mark Boundy.



**DES SOCIÉTÉS DISTINCTES: GOUVERNER LES BANLIEUES BOURGEOISES DE MONTRÉAL, 1880-1939** by Harold Bérubé. McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014.



**ST. GEORGE'S SCHOOL OF MONTREAL: RECOLLECTIONS 1930-1980.** (printed essay, illustrated with photos)



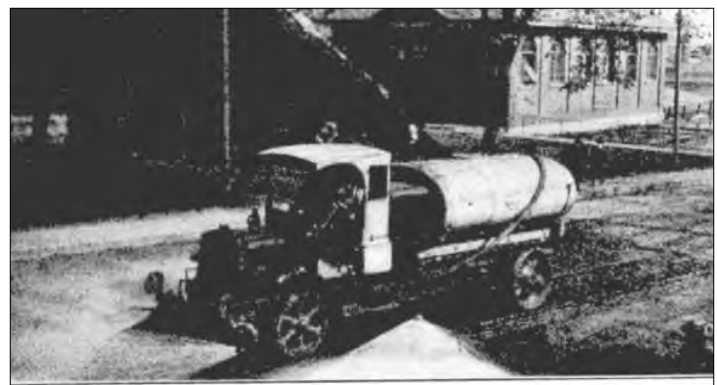
**THE GURDS: THE MONTREAL GENERAL AND MCGILL: A FAMILY SAGA** by Fraser N. Gurd, M.D., edited by Douglas Waugh, M.D., 1996.



**LEAVINGS: A CANADIAN LOVE STORY** by William Richard Christmas, 2011. Donated by Gerry Christmas.



**MONTREAL MEMORIES OF THE CENTURY: FROM THE SKETCHBOOKS OF JOHN COLLINS**, 2000.



**WHITE 5-TON "STUDEBAKER MODEL" FLUSHER USED BY CITY OF WESTMOUNT, CANADA**  
The cost of sprinkling with this outfit was 1.28 cents per 1,000 square feet; cost of flushing where double trip was required, 4.11 cents per 1,000 square feet, and for single trip 1.53 cents. These costs include gasoline, oil repairs, depreciation, insurance and the wages of two men

**PRINTED PAGE** (showing photo of an early Westmount public works vehicle) from the *Monthly Bulletin of the Department of Health, New Haven CN*, April 1921. Donated by Mayor P.F. Trent

The WHA is proud of its growing archival collection, which is rich in photographs of our evolving cityscape, and also contains a range of documents, maps, and memorabilia relevant to the community's

long history. We sincerely thank all those who have donated original items to the archives, or published materials for our reference shelves..

JANE MARTIN, WHA ARCHIVIST