

The Westmount Historian

VOLUME 18 NUMBER 1

40TH EDITION

SEPTEMBER 2017



72 York Avenue, Photo: Mika Goodfriend

ORAL HISTORY

*Life-Story Interviews, T.C. Bulmer,
Women Volunteers, Ross Eveleigh Johnson*

The Westmount Historian

NEWSLETTER OF THE WESTMOUNT
HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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EDITOR'S VIEW

I am so sorry to leave you all. I have enjoyed working on *The Westmount Historian* for the past 13 years. Assembling texts, designing the layout, selecting photographs, and overseeing production and printing. It has been my mission to present historical information, gathered by our speakers, and WHA heritage news in an attractive printed form that can be kept for future reference. When I became editor in 2004, the newsletter consisted of four pages. It has developed over the years into a sixteen-page, theme-based newsletter providing awareness about the people, places and events of our community for our readers.

I wish to thank Bryan Demchinsky, editor of *Montreal Then and Now*, for working with me on this transitional issue. Also, thanks go to Caroline Breslaw and Jane Martin for their dedicated work over the years, and to Ted Sancton for his "pressman's" professionalism.

This 40th issue has a new design that will lead to future innovations by new editors as they continue to examine our Westmount history.

— DOREEN LINDSAY

WHA Fall/Winter 2017 Lecture Series

WESTMOUNT ANNIVERSARIES

Special anniversaries with a Westmount connection are being celebrated in the WHA Fall 2017 Lecture Series.

Thursday, September 21, 2017

Westmount Square: 50 Years On

Speaker: Francine Vanlaethem, Professeure émérite, École de design, UQAM; chair, Docomomo Québec
The speaker will alternate between French and English.

Thursday, October 19, 2017

Congrégation de Notre-Dame: 360 Years Ago in Montreal

Speaker: Prof. Gary Evans, University of Ottawa

Thursday, November 16, 2017

The Montreal Camera Club: an Overview of 125 Years

Speaker: Ann Pearson, MCC President, fine art photographer & educator
An exhibition of photographs of Westmount by MCC members will be held in the Gallery at Victoria Hall from November 9 to December 8.

Thursday, December 21, 2017

December Social: Celebrating the Aline Gubbay Photo Archives

Place: The Gallery at Victoria Hall

Westmount Public Library, 4574 Sherbrooke St. W., from 7 to 9 pm

Admission: free for members, \$5 for non-members at the door

Info @ www.westmounthistorical.org / 514-989-5510

Series prepared by Caroline Breslaw, Louise Carpentier & Lorne Huston

Westmount Historical Association

FOUNDED IN 1944

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2017 – 2018

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Aline Gubbay
founded the WHA
newsletter in 1995.
Aline was editor from
1995 to 1999

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Sept. 1999 to Feb. 2002

Philip Dombowsky, 2002

John Sancton, 2003

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The fall edition of *The Westmount Historian* reflects the content of the last lecture series of the Westmount Historical Association. The winter/spring 2017 talks focused on memories of Westmount, as revealed through oral interviews. How appropriate that the lead lecture was given by Sharon Gubbay Helfer, daughter of Aline Gubbay, who revived the WHA in 1995. Aline recorded many memories of Westmounters in her book *A View of Their Own*. Sharon is an oral historian who shares Aline's belief in the importance of oral interviews and has made this her vocation. Each of the speakers in our series also used interviews to learn more about their topic. Nicolas Paquin carried out intensive research on the young pilot Ross Eveleigh Johnson, meeting family members and friends. Sandra Stock and Doreen Lindsay told us about the QAHN oral history project, with Doreen hearing from three local women about their volunteer activities during the Second World War. Mika Goodfriend spoke to relatives and owners of houses built by T.C. Bulmer in order to learn more about this local developer. The WHA believes that oral history techniques can deepen our knowledge about the past, while giving it personal warmth. Unless we preserve memories, they are lost forever.

In 2017 the WHA was asked by the *Westmount Independent* to contribute a regular column on local history. *Westmount: Then & Now* features topics related to the season or local events. Two or more photographs, one archival, as well as a recent one of the same site, accompany each article. We have covered the heritage designation of the Glen Viaduct and the renamed Vimy Park. The possibilities in our heritage city are endless.

Our most ambitious project this year is the digitization of the WHA photo archives. This enormous undertaking has begun with the assistance of an experienced archival graduate under the direction of our archivist Jane Martin. All the WHA images will eventually be inventoried, conserved, and made easily accessible for research or reproduction. We could not have contemplated this ambitious task without the financial support from the City of Westmount and from the Aline Gubbay Memorial Fund. We extend our heartfelt thanks to all those who have made this happen.

This fall edition of *The Westmount Historian* marks a change in editorship. Doreen Lindsay assumed the role in 2004. She has crafted our newsletter into the very fine publication it is today – visually appealing, well laid-out, and making full use of images. Doreen worked on this transition issue with local writer Bryan Demchinsky. The WHA thanks Doreen for the countless hours she has spent overseeing each edition of *The Westmount Historian*. She is a hard act to follow.

– CAROLINE BRESLAW



Sharon Gubbay Helfer, Photo: Diana Bruno

Exercises in Oral History

"...the recording of information through interviews with people having firsthand knowledge of past events"

The Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network (QAHN) recently undertook an exploration of oral history, defined as "the recording of information through interviews with people having firsthand knowledge of past events." A copy of its 2011 publication, Oral History Guide, from which this definition comes, is deposited in the WHA archives. This booklet contains practical information about the setting, conducting, and archiving of interviews. Material for the Westmount Historical Association April lecture called Women Volunteers in Westmount during World War II (see article in this issue) stemmed from QAHN interviews, its exhibition on housewife heroines, and its related newsletter.

A basic approach for interviews is to ask for a simple written outline of the individual's life, which can serve as a guide. The interviewer should also do background research about the person. Then several sessions are held, using a digital recorder.

The recorded material is edited afterwards. From the final version, a chronology of the most important points is prepared.

The WHA embarked on a preliminary oral history project in the fall of 2016, intending to interview and tape older Westmounters in order to preserve their memories and life stories. It is hoped that archival photographs and documents will form part of this material, which will be conserved in digital form in the WHA archives. The Winter 2017 Lecture Series, with the theme of Westmount: Exercises in Oral History, was a result of this initiative.

Montreal oral historian Sharon Gubbay Helfer is on the faculty of Concordia University's Institute for Oral History and Digital Storytelling. She has been carrying out oral history interviews since 1995 and has been involved in a number of large-scale oral history projects. Among individuals she has interviewed are McGill Principal and Vice-Chancellor Bernard Shapiro, Rabbi Adam Scheier

of Shaar Hashomayim Synagogue in Westmount, Dawson College librarian Beryl Moser, former Westmounter Shirley Simon, and the late Victor Goldbloom, prominent Montreal physician, politician and community leader.

Dr. Helfer has developed a method for processing the taped interview material by dividing interviews into clips, giving those clips short descriptive headings, and tagging them with key words to form an archived inventory. Her approach will help the WHA to archive its oral history material. When Dr. Helfer spoke to the WHA about her work, she stressed the importance of having these conversations now, using compassionate listening. She emphasized how touched she was by what was shared with her during the interactions.

— CAROLINE BRESLAW

Much of the material in this article was based on Sharon Gubbay Helfer's text for her talk on Feb. 16, 2017.

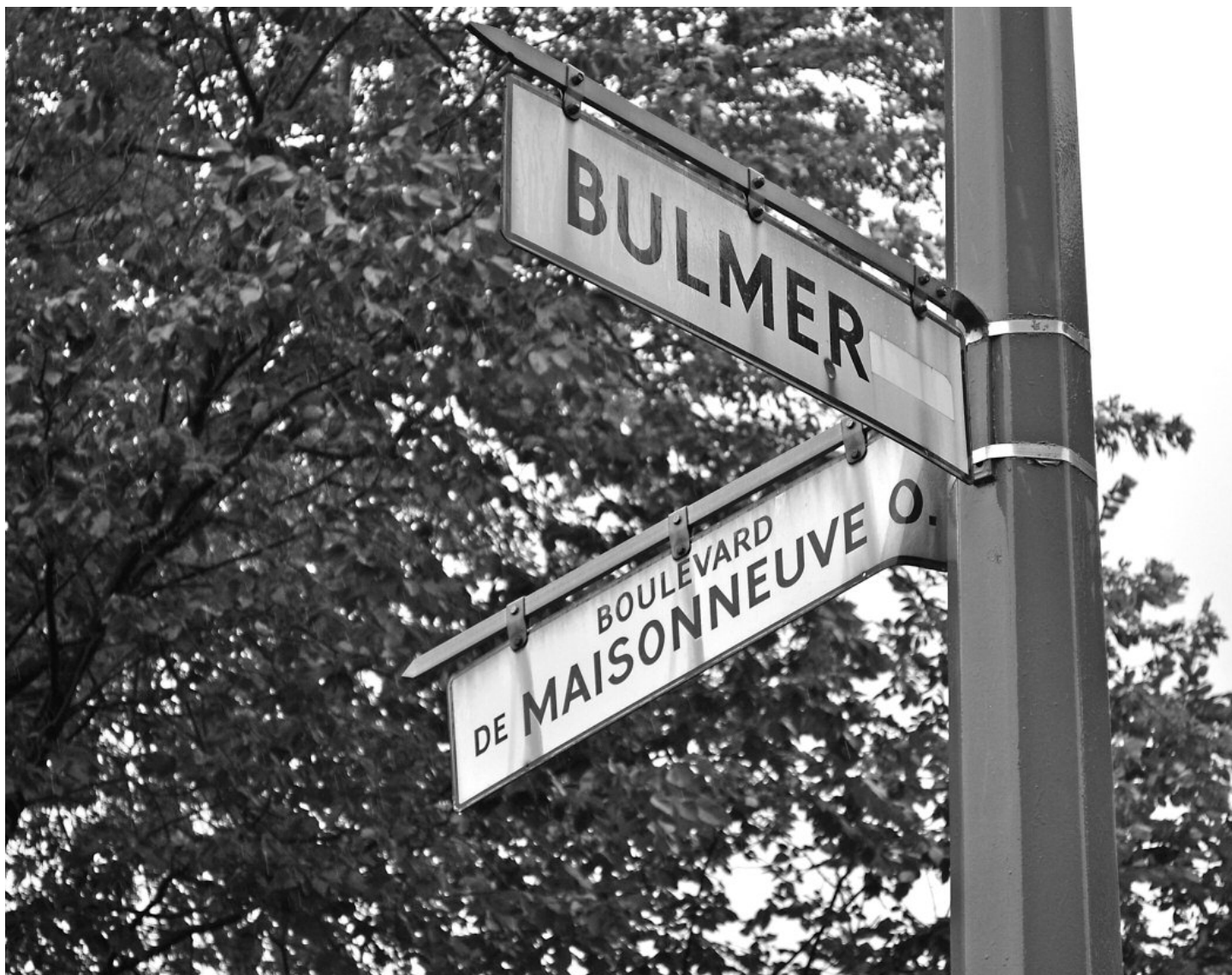


Photo: Bryan Demchinsky

T.C. Bulmer: A Father of Westmount

*The Bulmer legacy lives on through the twenty-nine Westmount houses
built by the family that remain today*

Most of us connect the name Bulmer with a street sign at the corner of de Maisonneuve Boulevard just west of Claremont Avenue. Local resident Mika Goodfriend carried out research on T.C. Bulmer and his family to uncover the developer's now largely unrecognized importance to Westmount. Over a two-year period, Goodfriend pored over archival records and interviewed family members, historians, architects, archivists, and owners of Bulmer houses.

Thomas Campbell (T.C.) Bulmer was born at Three Rivers, Quebec, in 1846. His family was involved in

construction in Montreal. He became a partner in the successful printing business of Morton, Phillips and Bulmer before turning to land development in Westmount. Bulmer, his wife Margaret, and their family lived in Victoria Cottage at 530 Côte St. Antoine Road from 1894 until 1940.

In 1888, T.C. Bulmer bought a large tract of undeveloped land in Westmount for \$30,000 from La Banque du Peuple. The holding stretched from Côte St. Antoine Road to the north, Victoria Avenue to the east, the C.P.R. tracks to the south, and Claremont Avenue to the



*1, 3 St. George's Place: Thomas Bulmer, T.C. Bulmer's son, designed and built the homes on St. George's Place.
Photo: Mika Goodfriend*

west. This land was originally part of the vast Hurtubise farm. With this purchase, Bulmer became the largest landowner in Westmount. He began building homes on the property with two of his sons, Thomas (T.C.M.) Bulmer and Horatio Ernest Phillips (E.P.) Bulmer.

Son Thomas Bulmer was a carpenter, builder, and architect. He worked out of 5 Albert Place and later at 30 York Street, both buildings constructed by the family. Another son, Horatio Bulmer, was an electrical contractor who worked with his brother and lived at 1 Albert Place. A third son, Frederick Lionel Tracey Bulmer, was a carpenter whose home was at 4 Albert Place. Their sister Edith Margaret Bricker lived at 1 St. George's Place **(photo)**, built by the firm in 1906.

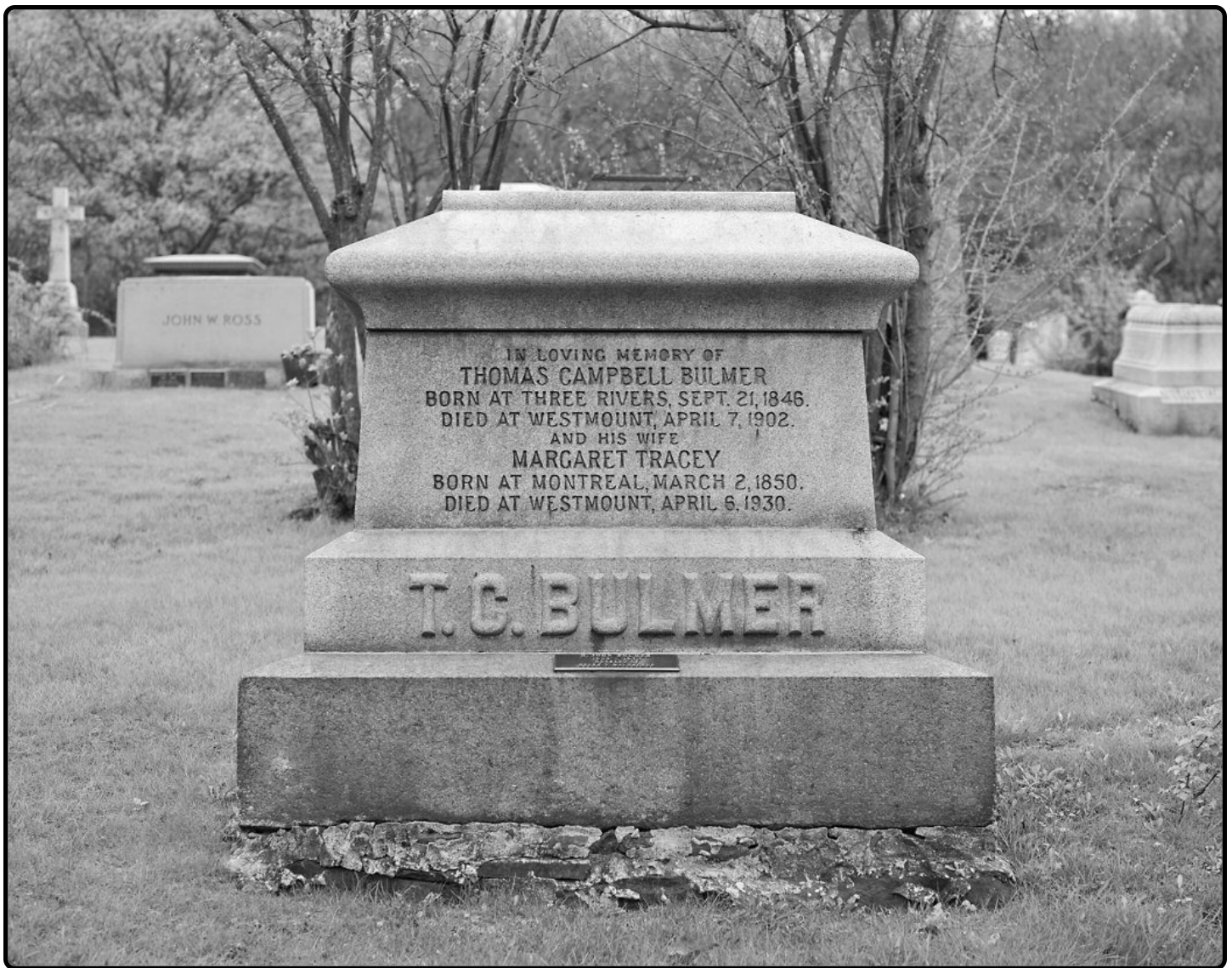
T.C. Bulmer and his sons built at least 39 houses between 1888 and 1914 in the western part of Westmount. Most of them were rental properties; T.C. Bulmer, son Thomas Bulmer, and Robert Findlay were their architects. In the York Avenue area, they built 21 houses between 1892 and 1905. Albert Place was opened in 1899, with four semi-detached houses on the north and south sides and a single house at the eastern tip. When Westmount extended Ste. Catherine



Bulmer houses at 4864-4866 Ste. Catherine Street West. Photo: Mika Goodfriend

Street west to Claremont, Albert Place, with the four homes on the north side, disappeared. All Bulmer homes were noted for quality of construction and design, but two of the homes on York, No. 72 (**cover photo**) and No. 30, are Victorian jewels. The new street of St. George's Place, a cul-de-sac off Prince Albert, was likely opened between 1904-1905. All seven homes on its north side were designed and built by son Thomas Bulmer from 1905 to 1914. Robert Findlay designed the seven houses in the Chesterfield Avenue – Prince Albert area, built from 1898 to 1900 by cousin John Bulmer. Twelve of Bulmer's buildings, mainly of wood construction, were demolished between 1940 and 1959.

T.C. Bulmer had the vision to develop the southwestern section of Westmount into the residential district that it is today. He served as a Westmount city councillor for 18 years and acted as chairman of the Railway, Light and Legal committees, supporting the construction of wide streets and the introduction of the electric streetcar. He declined an invitation to be mayor of the city several times. T.C. Bulmer died tragically on April 8, 1902, of a self-



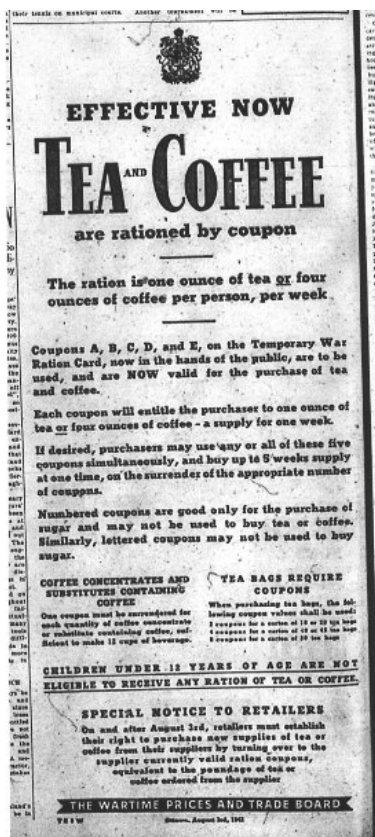
T.C. Bulmer's headstone in Mount Royal Cemetery. He died in 1902. Photo: Mika Goodfriend

inflicted gunshot wound. His widow continued to live in their home until her death in 1930. The children kept the rental properties for several decades, and then gradually sold them off. The Bulmer legacy lives on in the 29 Westmount houses, built by the family, which remain today.

– CAROLINE BRESLAW

Based on the talk given by Mika Goodfriend to the WHA on May 18, 2017.

Mika, who grew up in a house constructed by the Bulmer family, developed a personal project to research and photograph all the houses constructed in Westmount by the Bulmers. His finely detailed, colour photographs of the Bulmer houses look back to a time and a place in the history of building in Westmount. Goodfriend's research included interviewing most of the residents before photographing their homes as well as extensive research into the Bulmer family, their history and importance to Westmount.



Newspaper clippings illustrate rationing and collection campaigns undertaken during the war: At left, an announcement for the rationing of tea and coffee in the Westmount Examiner, Aug. 6, 1942, and, at right, notice of a Victory Bonds drive, also from the Examiner.

Housewife heroines: Women volunteers

We see the flavour of the times and the attitude towards women and their families in society during the Second World War

On Thursday, April 20th, 2017, as part of the Westmount Historical Association's Winter/Spring 2017 Lecture Series, Sandra Stock of the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network (QAHN) and Doreen Lindsay, past president of the WHA, were the co-presenters of "Women Volunteers in Westmount during World War II," at the Westmount Public Library. The presentation had two parts, the first of which focused on the QAHN project itself, entitled Housewife Heroines.

This project, funded by Canadian Heritage and QAHN, has been one of QAHN's most successful and popular. It was started in 2015, and initially researched and curated by Dr. Lorraine O'Donnell of Concordia University (QUESCREN) and Patrick

Donovan, doctoral student in history at the Université de Montréal. Both of these historians specialize in Canadian history with emphasis on English-speaking Quebec. The project manager was Dwane Wilkin at the QAHN office in Lennoxville and further input was from Matthew Farfan, QAHN Executive Director. Local assistance was from Barbara Barclay, Beaconsfield & Beaurepaire Historical Society, Sharon Edey, Black Community Resource Centre, with Dr. Dorothy Williams (QAHN), and Doreen Lindsay, WHA.

Three groups of older women who were housewives and volunteers during the Second World War were interviewed on the West Island, Little Burgundy and Westmount.

Several articles on the topic of home life in this period were written

for three issues of the QAHN magazine *Quebec Heritage News*. Graphic designer Martha Lodge created a travelling exhibit illustrating the period with sixteen large panels. Lorraine and Patrick created an excellent power point presentation and also some further poster displays illustrating specific trends of the times. I also included a handout of two recipes of the period as food was an important aspect of our project.

Throughout the project we see the flavour of the times and especially the attitudes toward women and their role in the family and in society. The efforts of government to make the family part of the war effort are evident and we see a kind of militarizing of ordinary life.

— SANDRA STOCK



Marigold Hyde, Sarah Stevenson, and Gwen Harris, Photo: Doreen Lindsay, October 2, 2015

Volunteering as a way of life

*An interview with three women who volunteered
in Westmount during the Second World War*

I met Marigold Hyde, Sarah Stevenson, and Gwen Harris in Sarah's comfortable, sunny apartment in Westmount, on October 2, 2015 to talk about their volunteer experiences living in Westmount during the Second World War. All three women attended The Study, a local private school for girls, and have remained friends since graduation. In asking them to think back to the war years and their activities, I learned that they shared many experiences. Volunteering was a way of life for them.

My incentive for embarking on this interview was a request from the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network (QAHN) to interview Westmount women who had vol-

unteered during the war. The four of us met and talked while sharing tea and cookies. I wrote as fast as I could (no recording) and ended the session by taking a photograph of the women. All three women remembered that as students at The Study they bought Victory Bonds and saved things. They were well aware of and took part in many of the activities common to women in Montreal and across Canada during the war: buying Victory Bonds, using food stamps, planning nutritious meals, knitting socks for soldiers, writing letters, saving paper and scrap metal.

Everyone saved elastic bands, buttons, silver paper from cigarettes and candy wrappers and metal foil from toothpaste tubes. A special

appeal was made by the government to collect aluminum needed in the manufacture of bomber and fighter airplanes. The women told me that butter, meat, sugar and tea and coffee as well as gasoline were rationed.

During our first group meeting, Marigold explained how she and her mother had developed a News from Home newsletter for the men who were overseas. They cut out and glued articles from the local newspapers about hockey teams, marriages and deaths, and what was playing at His Majesty's Theatre in Montreal. Marigold mailed these newsletters to her brother who was serving overseas, and he would pass them around to his friends. Marigold also told us that her mother took in

*Ration books donated
to the Westmount
Historical Association.*



one child who came to Canada from England to escape the bombing. Local Westmount schools took in more than 100 children. Some were alone without siblings or parents and were lonely. Others made friends for life during their time in Canada.

Women rolled bandages, sewed and saved garments

Much of our conversation concerned their activities with the Junior League of Montreal. Created in 1912 in New York, it operated out of the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Montreal and was run by women for women. During the war years, members worked with the Red Cross to contribute to the war effort as well as maintaining a second-hand clothing shop. Women rolled bandages, sewed garments and knit wool socks that were sent to Canadians in the military.



*Everyone saved everything: People collected elastic bands, buttons, and silver paper.
Photo: Doreen Lindsay*

Sarah joined when she was 19, Marigold and Gwen soon after. In Westmount, the Junior League met in Victoria Hall, the Westmount cultural centre.

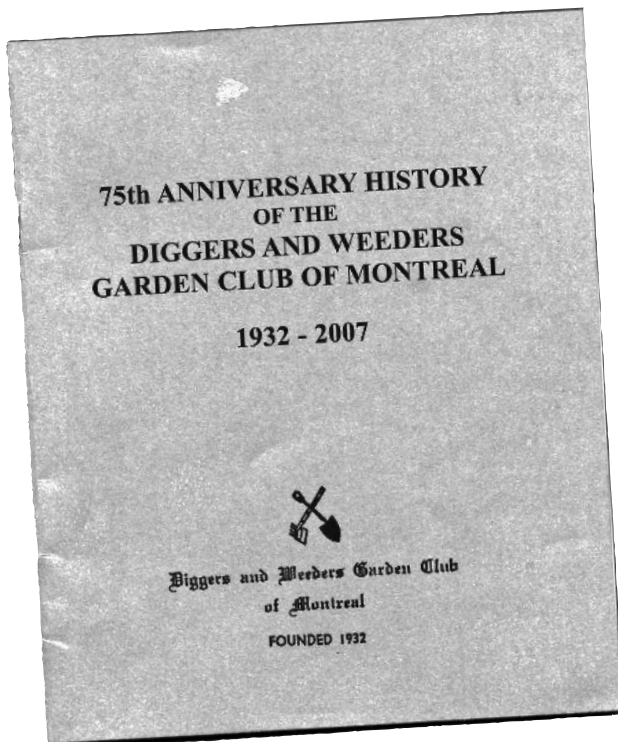
The Diggers and Weeders Garden Club of Montreal, founded in 1932, was an important part of the women's lives following the end of the war. Sarah, who was president from 1974-1976 and again from 1997-98, explained how club members created gardens for hospitals in Montreal including Queen Mary Veteran's Hospital. After five years, the club transferred maintenance of the garden to the hospital and the Department of Veterans' Affairs. They explained, "If you take flowers to the sick, you perform a kindness, but if you teach that sick person to grow a beautiful flower or tree or shrub himself, then you are helping to heal a sick body and mind, and that is "Garden Therapy."

— DOREEN LINDSAY

Information compiled for the WHA lecture on Thursday, April 20, 2017.



Newspaper clippings announce drives for war materials.



Diggers and Weeders continues today

The Diggers and Weeders Garden Club of Montreal continues today. The members are protesting the proposed construction of condominiums on land behind the Notman House at the corner of Sherbrooke Street and St. Laurent Boulevard. The club planted shrubs and flowers there many years ago for the enjoyment of the women in Ste. Margaret's Residence.

Diggers and Weeders Garden Club of Montreal, 75th Anniversary booklet.

A stained glass window in Mountainside United Church, created by Charles Kelsey, commemorates the life of Westmounter Ross Eveleigh Johnson. Its inscription reads: "To the Glory of God and in loving memory of Ross Eveleigh Johnson, age 21 years. Erected by his parents and sister."



Ross Eveleigh Johnson: From Westmount to Eternity

*RCAF pilot who grew up on Upper Belmont Avenue
died for a cause he believed in*

One hundred thirty-nine young men from Westmount died while serving in the military during the Second World War. Among them was Flight Lieutenant Ross Eveleigh Johnson, an RCAF pilot commemorated with a stained-glass window in Mountainside United Church on The Boulevard at Roslyn Avenue. Quebec novelist Nicolas Paquin recently carried out detailed research into the brief life of the young flyer, reading 72 letters he wrote, combing through military records, and speaking to

family members and people who had known him. Ross Eveleigh Johnson became the inspiration for the main character, also a WWII pilot, in Paquin's novel for young adults, *Théâtre de Guerre*, published in 2016.

Ross Eveleigh Johnson was born in Montreal on September 7, 1922

His father, Frederick Ross Johnson, director of JC McLaren Belting Company, had been a bomber pilot during World War I. His middle name derived from his mother Elsie

Eveleigh's maiden name. His sister Claire was his only sibling. Although small in stature, he was a strong gymnast, swimmer, and water polo player.

At McGill, Ross studied commerce, hoping to become a businessman. He played with the McGill water polo team. When he was 19, he joined the military corps of cadets. At this time, he had a girlfriend (referred to as J.M. in his letters) who lived on Arlington Avenue. During the summer of 1942, Ross worked at Camp Nominingue with his cousin



Ross Eveleigh Johnson, at left, in 1943, standing on the wing of his Hawker Typhoon. With him are pilots from 438 Squadron, (from left to right) Lieutenant R.F. Reid, Lieutenant H.E. Dawber and Lieutenant R.M. McKenzie. Johnson and McKenzie were killed in combat, respectively, on 15 and 18 July, 1944.

Photo: National Defence Service PI22802



Ross Eveleigh Johnson: Born Sept. 9, 1922, in Montreal, he enlisted in 1942 in the Royal Canadian Air Force and died July 15, 1944, during the Battle of Normandy.

Photo: McGill University Archives

Fred Johnson. At the end of the summer, he enrolled in the RCAF. He was 5 ft. 7 in., the perfect height for the cockpit of a fighter plane.

Ross's initial training was in Victoriaville, followed by a flying course at Cap-de-la-Madeleine. He was assigned to the 438 Squadron, based on Annette Island in Alaska, where he completed his training and learned to fly solo. At age 20, he became Intelligence Officer of the squadron.

In the autumn of 1943, Ross paid a brief visit to the family's new home on Lexington Avenue in Westmount before leaving for England by ship from Halifax. Wherever posted, he wrote many numbered letters to

friends, extended family, and J.M., describing details from his daily life and omitting information that might cause worry or was classified.

In June 1944, Ross arrived with the 438 Squadron for active duty in France, where he would make a total of six flights. On July 15, 1944, an enemy shell fell near the truck where he and several other pilots were working. Ross was killed instantly. Fellow pilot Ross Reid wrote to the Johnson family: "One of the most difficult tasks in the world is to write the parents of a young man who has lost his life fighting for a cause in which he believed."

Ross Eveleigh Johnson was buried the following day. The chaplain

who conducted the service remarked on his "winning smile" and his "universal kindness." The Johnson family lost its only son; his sister Claire lost her only sibling.

The final resting place of Ross Eveleigh Johnson is at the Bény-sur-Mer Canadian War Cemetery near Calvados, France.

— LOUISE CARPENTIER with
CAROLINE BRESLAW and JANE MARTIN

Based on the talk given by Nicolas Paquin on March 16, 2017 to the WHA.

WHA events in 2017



WHA Board of Directors 2017-18

The WHA's AGM was held in the Westmount Public Library on June 15, 2017. Annual reports were read followed by the election of directors and officers for the coming 2017-18 season. From left to right: Anne Barkman, membership secretary and webmaster; Ruth Allan-Rigby, member-at-large; Caroline Breslaw, president; Louise Carpentier, vice-president; Cynthia Graham, treasurer; Absent from photo: Lorne Huston, recording secretary; Jane Martin, archivist.

Photo by Pina Santillo



Tour of Hurtubise House, May 22, 2017

Caroline Breslaw conducted a tour of the interior and exterior of the Hurtubise House on Côte St. Antoine Road on the occasion of Montreal and Its Histories, a joint meeting of Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network (QAHN) and la Fédération Histoire Québec (FHQ). Photo by Rod MacLeod



Talk at Manoir Westmount, July 24, 2017

Doreen Lindsay gave a talk to Manoir Westmount residents about Westmount women volunteering during the Second World War.

Photo by Simona Buth

Books



• **Mies Van Der Rohe: L'art difficile d'être Simple/The Difficult Art of the Simple**, by Phyllis Lambert. Montreal: Canadian Centre for Architecture, 2001.

• **Montreal's Little Mountain/La petite Montagne**, by Aline Gubbay & Sally Hooft, 1979.

Two extra copies donated by Helen Meredith

• **Un portrait de la ville de/Portrait of the city of Westmount: Photographs** by Jaroslava Miler. City of Westmount, 2017.

• **The Round of Sixteen: Two Hundred Years of a Family's History in Montreal**, by Kenneth Gifford Hague.

Donated by Kenneth G. Hague

• **The Yellow Painting: A Memoir**, by Virginia McClure, Visual Arts Centre, 2009.

Other items

• **Informal history of Sunnyside School**, compiled by former student, Mrs. Lois Margaret Gnaedinger Walkling (1924-2007).

Donated by Nancy Walkling

• **Items related to former Queen's School, Westmount**, including a uniform crest and personal memoir, plus **lapel badges**: "Non Merci,"

"Mon Nom est Québécois,"

"I remember LOIQIII."

Donated by Nancy Walkling

• **Photos (on six CDs) of Westmount**



Artisans' Festival 2010-2015. *Donated by Flora-Lee Wagner*

• **Trophy from former Heather Curling Club 1928-1929**. *Donated by Lilya Nevins, New Jersey*



Large photo of Victoria Hall façade under scaffolding by Ron Harris, taken July 2013. *Donated by Jane Martin*



Three digital images of northwest corner, Ste. Catherine Street and Lansdowne Avenue, circa 1960. (Former home and studio of stained glass artist Vincent Poggi.) *Donated by Maurice Poggi*



Photo panels (plus individual images) of Sherbrooke Street West streetscape (Victoria Village), by James Aitken, 1988. *Donated by James Aitken*

To our readers: please feel free to contact us if items of local interest come to light as you downsize, or clear out attics or drawers. In particular, we seek good quality photographs that show identifiable aspects of life in Westmount over the years. We are currently in the early stages of a digitization project that will help ensure long-term conservation and accessibility of our archival photo collection.

– JANE MARTIN, WHA ARCHIVIST