# The Westmount Historian

Newsletter of the Westmount Historical Association

VOLUME 20 NUMBER 1

**43rd Edition** 

September 2019



Young bicyclist on a pennyfarthing, 1887

Credit: McCord Museum

# CHANGING INSTITUTIONS



Association historique de Westmount Westmount Historical Association

#### The Westmount Historian

NEWSLETTER OF THE WESTMOUNT HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

> September 2019 Volume 20 • Number 1

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Photos: WHA Archives unless otherwise indicated

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#### EDITOR'S MESSAGE



The last lecture series of the Westmount Historical Association focused on early institutions in our municipality that have survived in spite of enormous developments over the past century. This edition of the newsletter highlights the history of Protestant public schools in our community, with emphasis on the changes to Westmount Park School. Other articles based on the winter lecture series present the history of our local newspapers, the evolution

of the former Hillside Armoury, and the important connection of the Montreal Bicycle Club to today's Westmount Athletic Grounds. As well, architect Bruce Anderson looks at three houses at one street intersection, representing three centuries of architectural styles. Doreen Lindsay, WHA past-president, interviewed long-time residents Allan Aitken and Sarah Stevenson for the WHA's oral history project. Archivist Jane Martin describes a significant donation of photographs.

We are presenting the schedule for the upcoming Fall 2019 Lecture Series, which features talks on three prominent Westmount women. The activities of these individuals were important beyond our borders, as well as here at home. CAROLINE BRESLAW

#### WHA FALL 2019 Lecture Series PROMINENT WESTMOUNT WOMEN

This series focuses on three Westmount women who played an important role in the City of Westmount and the greater community. They dedicated themselves with great passion to their diverse interests, which ranged from public education to municipal and federal politics, publishing, and art.

> Thursday, September 19, 2019 Joan Rothman: Supporting Protestant Public Schools Speaker: Claire Holden Rothman, Montreal author

Thursday, October 17, 2019 **May Cutl**er: Beyond Politics Speakers: **Adam Cutler**, real estate developer, and **Peter Trent**, former Mayor of Westmount

Thursday, November 21, 2019 Marian Dale Scott: A Studio of Her Own Speaker: Gwendolyn Owens, Director, Visual Arts Collection of McGill University

Thursday, December 12, 2019 December Social – 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 wha.quebec/514-989-5510

Series prepared by Ruth Allan-Rigby, Caroline Breslaw, Louise Carpentier, & Marlene Chan

#### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Since our last newsletter appeared, the WHA has presented a series of four lectures based on the theme of Changing Westmount Institutions. Several more of our Then & Now features have been published in the *Westmount Independent* and

added to our website, and we continue to be represented on the city's Local Heritage Council by our past president, Caroline Breslaw.

At the AGM in May, the membership voted to approve four small changes to our bylaws; these redefine the WHA's mission, simplify the reporting requirements for the treasurer, and eliminate a restriction on the term of office for the secretary and the requirement for a finance committee.

One of the things the Association deserves to be proud of is that we have benefited so much from the volunteer work of our members. I would like to encourage members whose participation has been limited to consider becoming more involved. Of course we welcome attendance at our lectures and events, but you will get more out of the organization by also taking on a more active role.

As you may know, our lecturers receive no remuneration (unless a bottle of good wine and a couple of posters count as such) and they provide their own visual materials. Our Board members provide their services without reimbursement and have assumed other tasks in addition to attending monthly board meetings. These roles are not assigned, but have been taken on because they are a means of exercising or building on existing skills or acquiring new ones.

For our retired members, volunteering provides these benefits in circumstances where there is less pressure and one can work at one's own pace. Volunteering is also a way to make new acquaintances and build new friendships.

For those of you who do not have time to participate more actively, we welcome your suggestions about what aspects of our community's heritage you would like to learn more about. If you know a long-time resident or are one yourself, we are interested in interviewing you and hearing stories about what Westmount was like for you in the past. If you have special skills and are willing to share them, let us know and we will see if we can use them in some way. If your family has old photographs of buildings or events in Westmount, let us make copies of them for our archives.

In all of these ways you can add to the knowledge – visual, written, and anecdotal – that we have accumulated about our community's past, and can make a valuable contribution to both the Westmount Historical Association and to the Westmount community.

Anne Barkman



Victor Bourgeau exhibition held at Hurtubise House from April 24 to May 5: Soeur Jeanne-Éva Trottier, RHSJ (Religieuse Hospitalière de Saint-Joseph/Hôtel-Dieu de Montréal), architect Peter Lanken, and agent Véronique Robert, with Lanken's elevation of the chapel at Hôtel-Dieu CREDIT: PETER LANKEN



Architect Julia Gersovitz, seen here with her father Ben Gersovitz, daughter Francesca Boretsky, and son Jesse Boretsky. Julia was appointed an Officer of the Order of Canada on February 1, 2019 for her work in conservation architecture in Canada and abroad. She chairs Westmount's Planning Advisory Committee (PAC) and the Local Heritage Council. Photo: MARK BORETSKY

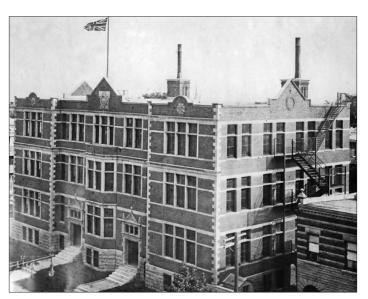
## WESTMOUNT'S PUBLIC PROTESTANT SCHOOLS

In 1875 the first public Protestant school in what is now Westmount was opened in a house on Stanton Street where the firehouse stands today. The Stanton Street School was a two-storey brick building with two classrooms on either side of a centre hall. There were 30 students and two teachers who taught all classes up to the 7th or 8th grade. Students were sent to private schools or the High School of Montreal for higher education.

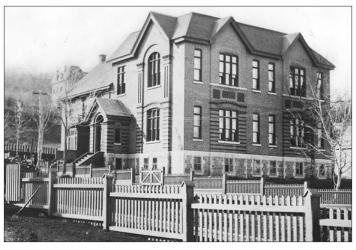
To accommodate the rising population, a new brick school, with a capacity of 200 students, was built on an adjoining property on Stanton Street in 1885. Accounts differ as to its name, but in 1891 it became Côte St. Antoine Academy as an acknowledgment of the municipality's name.

By 1894 Côte St. Antoine Academy needed more space due to an increase in enrolment. Land was acquired on the next block, the corner of Argyle and Côte St. Antoine where Selwyn House now stands, and a much larger building was erected. The new Côte St. Antoine Academy had room for 600 students and was originally an all-grade school. It was renamed Westmount Academy soon after opening, as Westmount became the new name for the municipality.

In addition, the branch schools that had been created in rented premises on Victoria Avenue in 1892 and on Elm Avenue in 1893 were closed in 1895 with the construction of the new school. The original Côte St. Antoine Academy building on Stanton Street was sold to the town in 1895, becoming the



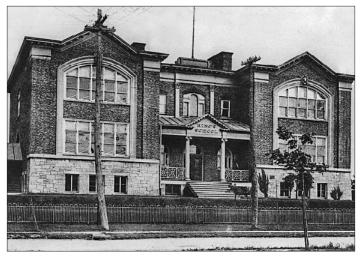
Queen's School on Olivier Avenue near St. Catherine Street Credit: City of Westmount



Côte St. Antoine Academy on Stanton Street



Westmount Academy on Côte St. Antoine Road at Argyle Avenue Credit: BANQ



King's School on Western Avenue at Roslyn Credit: McCord Museum



Westmount High School on Academy Road, c.1918 CREDIT: BANQ

town hall and the police and fire station. Upon the opening of Westmount High School on Academy Road in 1914, Westmount Academy on Côte St. Antoine Road would be turned into Argyle School, serving elementary school students.

Resources were once again stretched beyond their limits in the new Westmount Academy with about 700 students, so two new schools were built in the area below Sherbrooke Street where the growing population was most heavily concentrated. In 1896 the Glen School, with space for 350 students, was built at the foot of Roslyn Avenue on Western Avenue, today's De Maisonneuve Boulevard. It was renamed King's School in 1899. Queen's School was built in the eastern sector on Olivier Avenue, just north of St. Catherine Street, in 1899. It accommodated 550 students.

To serve the fast-growing district above Sherbrooke Street, another elementary school, originally called Roslyn Avenue School, was built on land fronting a new street, Westmount Avenue, at that time still only a dirt road through fields on the Raynes and Murray properties. It opened in 1908 with a projected capacity of 550.

Around 1910 King's, Queen's, and Roslyn elementary schools were rapidly approaching capacity, and Westmount Academy, the district's only high school, was already overextended. Westmount High School opened on Academy Road in 1914. The school was built to hold 1,000 students, but it was expanded in 1929 and 1931 for 1,200 to 1,500. The school had grades 7 to 11, twice the capacity of the old Westmount Academy. Grade 12 was added in 1930.

In 1940 Westmount High School on Academy Road became Westmount Intermediate School, renamed Westmount Junior High School in 1943. It included grades 7, 8, and 9.



Argyle School, Côte St. Antoine Road at Argyle



Roslyn School, Westmount Avenue

Argyle School on Côte St. Antoine Road, having been torn down in 1934 due to foundation problems and re-built as a junior high school (in greystone to harmonize with Westmount City Hall across the road), became Westmount Senior High School, handling grades 10, 11, and 12. Grade 12 was dropped in 1951, and graduates could enter a four-year university program following grade 11.

Westmount's senior and junior high schools were merged in 1961 into a single institution on St. Catherine Street, the new Westmount High School. The junior high school on Academy Road was renamed Westmount Park School in 1961. After extensive renovations, it reopened in 1963, offering elementary school grades for the district below Sherbrooke Street. The private Selwyn House School purchased the former Westmount Senior High School building on Côte St. Antoine Road in 1961, and Roslyn School continued to function as the elementary school for the area above Sherbrooke Street. King's and Queen's Schools were closed and demolished in 1963 and 1964.

#### CAROLYN SINGMAN

Information obtained from the WHA Archives, Aline Gubbay's A View of Their Own, Lovell's directories, Westmount High School yearbooks, The Westmount News, and The Westmount Examiner.



Westmount High School, St. Catherine Street, c.1961

Credit: City of Westmount

### WESTMOUNT'S LOCAL NEWSPAPERS

There have been four major, long-lasting local newspapers devoted exclusively to Westmount since its incorporation in 1895. In that same year, the *Westmount Weekly News* began publishing. The *Westmount News*, owned by S. Groves & Sons, followed on Oct. 5, 1907 and continued printing into the mid-1920s.

In 1935 *The Westmount Examiner* was founded by N.D.G. native Hugh E. McCormick who had established *The Monitor* in N.D.G. in 1926. John Sancton, an experienced newsman, took over as its publisher in 1957. In 1968, he became the owner, with the offices of J.W. Sancton & Sons at 4630



"The local community paper, already lively at Confederation, is resurging as a force in Canadian life," says John W. Sancton, 46, who this week becomes president, Canadian Weekly Newspapers Association. He says a new breed of publishers and new techniques are quickening changes in the weekly press. Sancton (see p. 6), publisher, Westmount (Que.) Examiner, speaks for 498 weeklies with a combined circulation of 1.4 million.

John Sancton newsclip

CREDIT: THE FINANCIAL POST, AUG.6, 1966

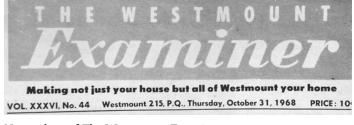
St. Catherine Street – the paper's first office in Westmount. The paper played a major role in recording and helping shape the dramatic changes in the community over the next quarter century.

When John Sancton took over *The Examiner* in 1968, he added features that became its hallmark: monthly listings of real estate transfers, weekly lists of fire calls and building permits, comprehensive police reports, as well as extensive coverage of local issues and strong editorials, many of them advocating for greater transparency in municipal affairs, as well as protection for the rights and powers of small cities such as Westmount.

Two of John's sons, Don and Ted, started working fulltime at the newspaper as soon as they completed their educations in the early 1970s. Don was initially news editor and worked on the accounting side of the business, while Ted built and operated the typesetting and graphic production business, Adcomp. The offices were moved to 155 Hillside Avenue in 1977. In the mid-1980s, as John Sancton gradually retired, Don took over as editor and publisher. The family sold the paper to the Cogeco media group in 1989, and Don remained with it until 1992. In 2007 Transcontinental became the paper's owner, and soon thereafter closed its local office. The last edition of *The Westmount Examiner* was circulated in October 2015.

Don Sancton identified three key roles of a good community newspaper which he had learned from his father: to help create community identity, to educate and empower residents, and to hold public officials accountable.

David Price founded the *Westmount Independent*, which went to press on May 16, 2007. He had been involved since 2004 in a publishing business with his father, printing books, calendars, and two papers. Using his business background, David assembled a team, with Laureen Sweeney serving as the main reporter and graphic designer Ted Sancton. Local activist Don Wedge, art critic Heather Black and real estate



Nameplate of The Westmount Examiner Credit: Sancton Family



# WESTMOUNT INDEPENDENT

Weekly. Vol. 11 No. 5a We are Westmount

May 2, 2017

# We turn 10 this month. **Thank you, Westmount!**

IN THIS ISSUE:

Publisher looks back on 10 years, p. 10 10 years of news, change and continuity in local politics, p. 12 One year of real estate transfers, p. 27

Cover of the 10th anniversary edition of the Westmount Independent

Credit: David Price

columnist Andy Dodge were soon involved in the publication.

Based in Westmount, the *Westmount Independent* provides local news and content not available in other publications. Citizens' comments on local issues appear regularly in the 'Letters' column. The paper is a commercial enterprise, deriving its revenues from paid advertisements. The recent passing of provincial Bill 122 had a negative impact, as the City of Westmount stopped publishing its official notices in the paper, posting them only online on the City's website. The *Independent* is delivered to all Westmount households, as well as to apartment buildings, municipal buildings, and a number of other public drop-off points.

*The Westmount Examiner* and the *Westmount Independent* have continued a long tradition of covering local news in Westmount. At a time when many newspapers have folded or have dropped their print editions, residents are privileged to still have a quality local paper in the community.

CAROLINE BRESLAW WITH ASSISTANCE FROM DON SANCTON Based on the talk "The Local News: The role of Westmount's newspapers in shaping the community" given to the WHA on February 21, 2019 by Don Sancton and David Price.



Lecture speakers Don Sancton and David Price Photo: Ann Pearson, 2019

### HILLSIDE ARMOURY: FROM RIDING ACADEMY TO ARMOURY

Lot 1416 on Hillside Avenue in southeast Westmount lies Inorth of the escarpment and just west of the Westmount Athletic Grounds on St. Catherine Street. It has evolved over time from a riding academy to a military armoury and is now awaiting a new life. In the late 19th century, this area was mostly residential, but was becoming more industrial, following the construction of the CPR railroad yard on the south side of Hillside Avenue.

Equestrian activities at that time were popular both as a spectator sport and a recreational sport. Several arenas were located in and around Montreal as many people wanted to learn, take part in competitions, and stable their horses. The privately-owned Montreal or Westmount Arena, located at Wood and St. Catherine, was used for ice hockey during the winter and for equestrian and other activities during the spring, summer, and fall.

In 1910 an imposing red brick edifice was designed by Rodden R. Montgomery (the co-architect who had also designed the Montreal Arena) for the Mount Royal Riding Academy and Stable at 1-3 Hillside Avenue. A company was incorporated with a capitalization of \$100,000, with stock



Mount Royal Riding Academy's official opening from *The Westmount News*, April 28, 1911

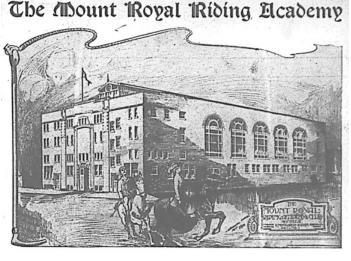


Proposed elevation of the new building

Credit: City of Westmount

sold to, among others, the influential Westmount directors of the company. There are major differences between the original grand, classically-symmetrical design and the American contractor's final building. These may have been due to cost factors, client requests, or changes made by the construction team hired for the project.

At its opening in April of 1911, the building generated huge excitement and celebration. The local press described the design as "superb, in appointment and furnishings elegant, exteriorly beautiful and arranged throughout plans infinitely practical, incorporating every modern and novel feature that can possibly add to the comfort and convenience of its patrons". The facility offered boarding for horses and indoor riding lessons



Mount Royal Riding Academy from the *Montreal Standard*, 1910 CREDIT: BANQ



Royal Canadian Engineers' entrance on Hillside Place

for all, including the military. The large arena, which originally had a clerestory roof, was used for very popular horse shows.

However, the building's initial mandate changed completely in the period during and just after the First World War. As the automobile replaced horses, the space at one point became a parking garage for local residents, since overnight parking was not permitted on Westmount's streets. In 1918 it served as military stables. Around this time, the arena may have been used on a rental basis, and part of the building may have been used to store ice blocks for refrigeration. In 1921 Canada's Department of National Defence assumed ownership. It was not until 1958, nine years after the 3rd Field Engineer Regiment had moved in, that it officially became known as "Hillside Armoury".

The area surrounding the armoury slowly became more densely built up. In the 1960s the nearby Montreal Amateur Athletic Association (MAAA) clubhouse and viewing stands were demolished. In 1961 Westmount High School was erected on its land with the athletic grounds (WAG) behind.

In 1992-94 a major federal study of the armoury was undertaken. Photographs from then and later emphasized the very poor condition of the building, most evident below the



Coat-of arms of Royal Canadian Engineers

windows, where deteriorating brick work was extensively patched.

The Army's 712 Communication Squadron moved into the section listed as 1 Hillside Lane in 1954, but relocated in late 1996 to the Westmount Armoury on St. Catherine Street in Westmount, the home of the Royal Montreal Regiment Armoury.



Hillside Armoury for sale credit: Canadian Montreal Engineers Association

By the 2000s the Hillside Armoury's neighbouring buildings included St. Margaret's Home, residential apartments and new condos. The building, by 2014, was in need of serious repair and no longer met fire code standards. The military unit left the site in April 2015 and took up new quarters at Canadian Forces Base Longue Pointe in east-end Montreal.

The Crown-owned property was originally offered to the City of Westmount, and eventually was listed for sale for around \$3 million in 2017. After interest from six developers, the property was sold. The first buyer gave up on his plans to convert it into a sports club, and the building was resold. At the time of the lecture, the current owner was carrying out studies to see if the building could be converted into residential condominiums.

#### RUTH ALLAN-RIGBY

Based on the lecture by heritage consultant/architect Sue Bronson to the WHA on March 21, 2019.



**2019-2020 WHA Board of Directors** Caroline Breslaw, Marlene Chan, Ruth Allan-Rigby, Anne Barkman, Mavis Young, Claudette Stecher Lopez, Louise Carpentier, Jan Fergus. Absent: Jane Martin, Ann Pearson

### THE MONTREAL BICYCLE CLUB & THE MAAA

The invention of the high wheel bicycle in Europe inspired a wave of bicycle clubs that quickly spread to North America. The Montreal Bicycle Club was founded in Montreal in 1878 by two British immigrants, along with A. T. Lane, the first person to ride a high wheel bicycle in the city. The club's bylaws specified that only amateurs could be members, a dark blue knickerbocker suit was to be worn for all rides, and riders were to be assigned ranks.

The club members developed a close connection with the Montreal Lacrosse Club and the Montreal Snow Shoe Club, and the three clubs jointly founded the Montreal Amateur Athletic Association (MAAA) in 1881. In 1885 the club adopted the image of a winged wheel as its symbol. Events were organized such as rides, races, parades, social excursions, and competitive bicycling. In 1887 the MAAA moved its bicycling activities to Westmount, where a large track, clubhouse, and viewing stands were installed on former farmland that lay along the south side of St. Catherine Street. (This site was eventually purchased by the City of Westmount and developed into the Westmount Athletic Grounds, located to the rear of today's Westmount High School.)

The Canadian Wheelmen's Association (CWA) was established in 1882 and was the club's governing body. In 1883 it started to organize annual meets in Canadian cities. The CWA's Annual Meets of 1886 and 1894 were held in Montreal and were hosted by the Montreal Bicycle Club. The 1894 meet took place at the MAAA grounds in Westmount. A commemorative booklet and official programme entitled *Our City, and Our Sports* was published for the event. Its contents included a poem in praise of Montreal by Westmount's



Bicycle Club race, August 1893

Credit: Montreal Star



A.J. Darling of the Montreal Bicycle Club on a pennyfarthing in 1885 Credit: McCord Museum ll-78701.1

future mayor W.D. Lighthall.

Since that time, bicycling has had its ups and downs, as it evolved from an elitist, competitive sport for wealthy male urban riders to a means of transportation and recreation available to many. The invention and availability during the early part of the 1890s of the modern or "safety" bicycle with two equal-sized wheels led to an early bicycle craze with increasing number of cyclists, both men and women. Additional bicycle clubs appeared in Montreal. However, by the early 20th century, the number of such clubs was in decline world-wide. The last annual report of the Montreal Bicycle Club covered the year 1901. In Montreal, the electric street car started to replace the bicycle as a primary mode of transportation, followed by the automobile. In recent decades



MAAA grounds in 1891

Credit: The Dominion Illustrated

interest in cycling has resurged in North America, including Montreal, and the Montreal Bicycle Club has been refounded. LOUISE CARPENTIER



MAAA clubhouse on St. Catherine Street (demolished 1910)

Based on the talk given to the WHA on April 18, 2019 by Malcolm McRae. For more information, go to the website of the Montreal Bicycle Club. www.montrealbicycleclub.com



At centre, entrance to the second MAAA Clubhouse, 1956

#### WHA POSTERS

Since the winter of 2016, Fern Breslaw has volunteered her professional talents to design an outstanding series of posters for the lectures and walking tours of the WHA. After graduating from the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, Fern embarked on a career in advertising. She is now a busy creative director in an advertising agency based in Manhattan. Fern has stamped the association's posters with a clear, strong image, and the WHA is grateful for the vision and expertise she has brought us.

We are fortunate that Carmen Jensen Davies is now taking over this ongoing design challenge. Carmen trained at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design. She was senior designer and later art director for 25 years in the McGill University graphics department, where she worked on a wide range of visual materials. We look forward to seeing her posters. The WHA is very fortunate that such experienced graphic artists have stepped forward to create our posters, which are an essential means of advertising our activities. Thank you to both.



Fern Breslaw blading to work on Park Avenue in Manhattan Photo: courtesy of Fern Breslaw



New WHA poster designer Carmen Davies, wearing a silver pendant she designed and made Photo: COURTESY OF CARMEN DAVIES

## WESTMOUNT PARK SCHOOL: MOVING ON



The three building phases of Westmount Park School on Academy Road

Westmount Park (Elementary) School opened in 1963 in the building on Academy Road which previously housed Westmount High School (from 1914-1940) and Westmount Junior High School (1940-1961). These schools moved together into a large, new building on St. Catherine Street. Westmount Park School is now part of the English Montreal School Board, but its building originally belonged to the Westmount School Commission.

Westmount Park School's recent evolution was partially determined by two factors: the political situation in Quebec and the desire and need for Anglophone children to acquire fluency in French. The Protestant School Board of Greater



The 1913 cornerstone of the school

Montreal (PSBGM), which was established in 1951, became the English Montreal School Board (EMSB) in 1998, a board based on language instead of religion. By 1998 three main language programs had been introduced: French Sector, French Immersion with approximately 70% of the program in French, and an English Core Program offering about 30% in French. Westmount Park School provided the English Core Program.

In 1977 Bill 101 had permitted foreign diplomats and employees of international companies, here on a temporary basis, to send their children to English schools in Quebec. With its strong English program, Westmount Park attracted students from around the world.

By the 1980s the school was struggling with enrolment because of the popularity of French immersion programs and changing demographics. The closing of other PSBGM schools, such as Royal Arthur and Lorne, which were experiencing similar difficulties, forced additional changes in the composition of Westmount Park School. It became a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, inner-city school. An inspired and diligent staff developed programs to ensure the academic achievement and potential of each child.

As an inner-city school, additional funds and resources were channeled into the school for teacher's aides, nutrition programs, enrichment programs, pre-kindergarten classes,



The stone squirrel 'boss' beside the front entrance

and money for field trips. A multitude of initiatives was developed: strong language arts, music and dance programs, excellence in sports, an intergenerational Interlink Choir, breakfast and subsidized lunch programs, daycare services for the Board's teaching staff, and an after school program.

Space was also made available for autistic children at Giant Steps, a Saturday Japanese Language school, the Montreal Oral School for the Deaf, an outreach storefront program for school dropouts, a Discovery Room supported by McGill's Redpath Museum, and a junior and senior Chorale open to all children of the Board. Movies, such as *Jacknife, Grey Owl*, and Bon Cop, Bad Cop were filmed there.

Since 2010 the population of the school has increased from 335 to 702, due in large part to the international and temporary-stay students. On Sept. 30, 2018, they together accounted for 63% of the school population. The largest group of foreign students at that time came from South Korea, followed by India and Saudi Arabia.

Over the coming two years, extensive renovations will necessitate the relocation of students to two separate campuses outside Westmount, at Marymount Academy and St. John Bosco School. To maintain the integrity of the school and its activities, there are plans to develop continuous programs that keep the separate campuses in contact, with the administration planning to undertake a smooth and effective transition.

MARLENE CHAN

Based on the talk given to the WHA on May 16, 2019 by Paul Saunders, the principal at Merton, Bedford, and Westmount Park Schools from 1972 to 2003.

#### **Three Centuries of Architecture at One Corner**

I am pleased to live in Westmount with its great diversity in residential architecture. When I walk west from my home on Côte St. Antoine Road near Lansdowne Avenue, I pass streets with names of British gentry and royalty such as Lansdowne, Roslyn, Victoria, Somerville, York, Prince Albert, Claremont and Burton. Crossing Victoria Avenue, I am presented with three superb examples of domestic architecture from the 17th to 20th century. At the northwest



corner is the Hurtubise farmhouse dating from 1739, an exceptional example of French Canadian farmhouse architecture with very thick rubble stone walls and a sloping

gable roof sweeping out over the front entry porch, with elegant dormer windows on the second floor. The brick annex on the east side dates from the 1870s. Adding a vernacular look is the adjacent carriage house, clad in natural weathered, vertical wood siding.

To the northeast sits a splendid 19th century example of Victorian architecture in brick called Riverview. It has a front entry porch with a broad veranda carried around three sides of the house, and a central four-storey tower capped with a multicoloured slate roof and topped with wrought iron architectural details. The remains of the original 1847, one-and-ahalf storey brick house with its mansard roof lie



at the back of the Second Empire style addition made in 1876.

Diagonally to the southeast at the Victoria intersection of

Côte St. Antoine is situated a fine, elegant example of 20th century architecture, one storey with regularcoursed stone, unitmasonry walls and a shingled bungalow-style roof



 reminiscent of some of Frank Lloyd Wright's suburban Chicago homes.

BRUCE ANDERSON

Bruce Anderson is a prominent architect and Westmount resident. He is a former Dean of Architecture at McGill University and a former member of Westmount's Planning Advisory Committee (PAC) He recently closed his Westmount office.

Photos: Bruce Anderson, 2019

## ORAL HISTORY: ALLAN AITKEN & SARAH STEVENSON

The three Aitken children – Sarah Anne (b. 1930), Allan Osler (b. 1932), and Margaret Jane (b. 1934) – lived at 609 Clarke Ave. from 1933 to 1944. Their parents Phyllis Amy Osler (1902-1978) and Allan Anderson Aitken (1887-1959) had moved with baby Sarah from Holton to Cedar, where Allan was born, and then to 609 Clarke, where Jane was born. Both Allan and Sarah reside in Westmount today.

Allan and Sarah remember growing up in the spacious red brick house at the top of Clarke Ave. They both declare that "it was the best place to grow up... home life was busy and happy and filled with joy." Since there was not much traffic and lots of open space, their playground extended between the neighbouring streets of Belvedere Avenue and Braeside Place. They learned to ski as young children.

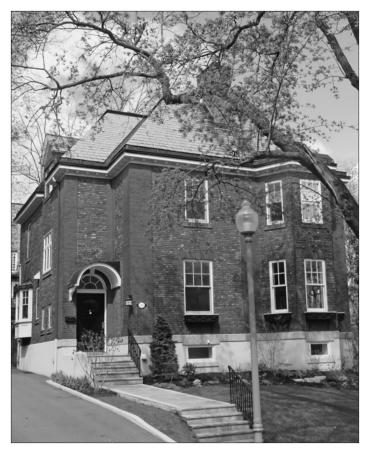
**Allan's Memories:** Allan made a ski run between their house on Clarke Avenue and the neighbouring street Braeside, from Sunnyside down to The Boulevard. He and his friend David McCall would skate on their neighbour Mr.



Allan, Sarah and Jane Aitken on Clarke Avenue Credit: the Aitken family archives

Ross's private curling rink, much to his annoyance. Allan went twice on Sundays to the Church of the Advent in Westmount with two friends, where they served as choirboys. After receiving their small allowances, they went to a drugstore/soda fountain at 1424 Guy Street. Allan vividly recalls the Lincoln Zephyr car owned by Dr. Gurd of the Gurd soft drink company who lived in the house above them, and the Gurd son who played the saxophone.

Essentials were delivered to the house. Bread came from POM Bakery. Ice was carried with ice tongs into the house and put into the icebox. Coal was carried in a bag slung from the man's forehead and dumped into the coal chute leading to the basement. Laundry was picked up and delivered. Milk came from the Elmhurst Dairy on Upper Lachine Road. The milk wagon horse would stop at the house and back up a few steps to place the wheels against the sidewalk to prevent the wagon from rolling down the hill. The horse seemed to recognize each customer. After renting 609 Clarke



Former Aitken family home at 609 Clarke Avenue Photo: Doreen Lindsay, 2019

for 10 years, their father bought a house at 1733 Cedar Avenue in Montreal. At that time, Sarah was 14, Allan was 12, and Jane was 10 years old.

Allan began his schooling at Selwyn House School when it was on Redpath Avenue. He remembers it as "the best school in Montreal." He was picked up by the school bus that came along The Boulevard. After Selwyn House,



Sarah Stevenson and Allan Aitken in Place Kensington Photos: Doreen Lindsay, 2019

he attended Trinity College, a boarding school in Port Hope, Ontario, where he "was covered with honours and prizes" and was given the privilege of taking his books and a lunch outside the school grounds to sit by the Ganaraska River to study. He graduated in 1950 and attended McGill University. He then worked for the Royal Bank of Canada for ten years in Toronto, followed by ten years in London and Kitchener, Ontario.

Allan and his first wife Sally married in 1963, just six months after meeting at a friend's dinner party. They raised three children – Ian, Jamie and Jennifer – in their home at 95 Arlington Avenue, which was purchased for \$35,000 in 1964. Allan and Sally moved into a condo on St. Catherine Street. Sally died in 2010. Allan and Judy Anderson were married by Westmount Mayor Peter Trent in 2012.

**Sarah's Memories:** "The bathroom (on Clarke Ave.) had a huge tub on lions' feet and a window so high up it was nearly a skylight. Later, the bathroom had a red ceiling, white walls and navy blue floor, with a Union Jack for a curtain. The nursery dining room was meant to be a library, with leaded glass doors covering the built-in shelves. It was a small room, with a high window seat that we weren't supposed to climb on, a table and chairs, a huge doll's house and an enormous cabinet gramophone."

There were "wonderful birthday parties; frilled, sashed little girls at Jane's or mine and thrilling, grey-flannel-suited boys (calling each other by their surnames) at Allan's birthday tea (sandwiches, which we never otherwise ate) in the dining room, followed by games and movies in the drawing room (where we never otherwise played) made them memorable."

Sarah's education began when she was driven by Shaw, the family chauffeur, to Miss Dunlop's nursery school on Crescent Street. Later, she went to The Study, a private girls' school, which was then at the corner of Seaforth Avenue and Côte des Neiges Road. School sports were held in Murray (today's King George) Park. When Queen Elizabeth and King

George VI were driven past on their Royal Visit to Canada in 1939, children were given a flag to wave and a periscope to look through to see over the crowds. Following The Study, Sarah went to Rothesay Netherwood School in New Brunswick, where she excelled in history. After graduating in 1948, Sarah and her mother took a ship to England where she studied 'Commonwealth Affairs' at a college called the House of Citizenship. Back home in Westmount, she enrolled in Miss Brown's Commercial College above the Royal Bank on Sherbrooke Street at the corner of Victoria Avenue and worked briefly as a secretary, earning \$120 a month. Her family was at Canada House in London in 1953 to watch the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. In Westmount, she became a volunteer with the Junior League. Her favourite work was at the School for Crippled Children on Cedar Avenue where she learned how to teach youngsters with cerebral palsy.

Sarah married Dick Stevenson, an investment dealer and World War II veteran, in the Church of St. Andrew and St. Paul in 1958. They had three children – Matthew Allan, Diana Rosemary, and Willa Deirdre. After living for 30 years in their first home at 453 Mount Stephen Avenue, they moved to 250 Clarke Avenue where they remained for 20 years. Dick Stevenson died in his early 80s in 2012.

Sarah has resided for the past 10 years at Place Kensington. She was joined in April of this year by her brother Allan and his wife Judy. Their sister Jane has lived in Toronto for the past 25 years.

Allan and Sarah were interviewed by Doreen Lindsay in May and July of 2019.

# **FROM THE ARCHIVES**

#### **Special Donation**



In 1992 renowned photographer and local resident Gabor Szilasi took a series of colour photos documenting the entire streetscape of Sherbrooke Street in Westmount - with its public buildings, residences, leafy parks, and many small businesses and shops. This year the WHA was privileged to receive PHOTO A. SZILASI Gabor's donation of all the images in this

Gabor Szilasi

collection, several of which are shown here.

Viewing all 164 images reveals how this streetscape has largely remained unchanged over the past 27 years. Many businesses have come and gone, storefronts have been modified to varying degrees, and a few structures have been repurposed. But few elements of the streetscape have been lost or altered beyond all recognition. Notable exceptions are telephone booths, newspaper stands, and individual parking meters! Westmount's main thoroughfare retains much of the historical character and charm that help make our JANE MARTIN, WHA ARCHIVIST community so special.



SW corner of Metcalfe



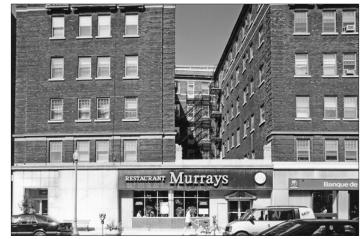
Between Prince Albert & Claremont (south)



Between Victoria & Prince Albert (north)



SW corner of Grosvenor



Just west of NW corner of Claremont



Greene Avenue