

NEWSLETTER

Westmount Historical Association

Volume 2, Number 1 (Fall 1996)



THE PAST YEAR

The past year was highlighted by two events - the opening of the Library, enlarged, restored and renovated, and the launching of our Association's first fund-raising venture, 'Posters of Westmount'.

The library opening has meant that since December 1995 we now have a regular meeting place in the beautiful 'Westmount Room'. We have been made very welcome there by Chief Librarian, Caroline Thibodeau and her assistant, Norma Barrow, and we thank them for their generous help. There are improvements to be hoped for. For example, we need, on occasion, to darken the windows with blinds for the showing of slides, and a microphone would be helpful as not every speaker is able to project his/her voice sufficiently to be heard at the back of the room.

While we were still without a regular place to meet we held our talks in various locations. These included Selwyn House School, St. Andrew's Dominion Douglas United Church, Atwater Library and the Royal Montreal Curling Club. Many of you expressed interest in these changes of venue and we hope to arrange similar visits from time to time.

The two posters, one of 'Westmount Doors', the other of 'Westmount Balconies', were entirely a Westmount initiative with photographs by WHA President, Aline Gubbay, and printing by Ted Sancton of ANLO Inc. on Hillside Avenue. The posters have been very well received and we learn they have travelled the world, from British Columbia to Australia. They continue on sale at the Library and at the Double Hook Bookstore on Greene Avenue. The price of each poster is \$15.

THE ARCHIVES

The return to the Library from temporary quarters in Victoria Hall and St. Catherine Street proved more protracted than anyone had expected so that the space allocated to the WHA for our Archives is not yet accessible. It is reasonable to hope we shall be installed by the end of the summer.

In the meantime, we ask you and your friends to bring us any photos, letters, memorabilia related to Westmount, for safe keeping. Phone: 488-4677. Here is a sample of the interesting material we have received over the past few months:

- A family album from the Ward family (James K. Ward was Mayor of Côte St. Antoine/Westmount from 1875-83).
- Several views together with some historical notes on the residence at 22 Summit Circle, the subject of so much recent controversy.
- A large framed photograph of the 'Westmount Chess Club Inc.' c. 1910. J. R. Walker is one of the six members shown (J. R. Walker was Mayor of Westmount from 1898-99).
- A framed copy of the 'Westmount Thespians' crest, dated 1922, together with comprehensive material on the history of this unique theatrical group.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Walking tours of Westmount are planned for September/October. Watch the *Westmount Examiner* for further details.

The Hurtubise house, built c. 1688 at the corner of Victoria and Côte St. Antoine Road, is currently undergoing extensive restoration and we hope to organize a visit there when the work is completed in the Spring.

There is good news for another heritage home at 168 Côte St. Antoine Road. A recent acquisition by Canadian Heritage of Quebec, the house is undergoing the slow process of careful restoration. This is a long term project and there are no current plans to open it to the public (see photo and accompanying article).

Our next big project is an exhibition on Westmount's history to be held, we hope, in the Spring of 1997.



Patricia Harris, Vice President, WHA (left), joins Susan Bronson and Penny Mandell, speakers at the meeting June 6th on 'Greenwood - Restoring a Heritage Property.' Photo: Doreen Lindsay.

FALL PROGRAMME

The schedule for the Fall lecture series is enclosed. Please note, in response to many requests we have added an extra talk on September 5th, 'Discovering Westmount', to be given by WHA President Aline Gubbay. The talk is open to the general public and is free to current members. The price for non-members is \$5.

See you in September!

AN INTERVIEW WITH ANNETTE WOLFF

168 Côte St. Antoine, recently acquired by Canadian Heritage of Quebec, is one of an original row of four houses known collectively as Metcalfe Terrace, in honour of the current Governor-General, Sir Charles Metcalfe.

The terrace was built during the 1840s by Captain Moses Judah Hays, whose descendant, Ms. Annette Wolff, a member of our Association, spoke to us recently about her ancestor.

"Captain Hays was a remarkable man of broad interests and many talents. His father, Andrew Hays - the name was adapted from the original Dutch Haas - emigrated north from New York in 1763.

Montreal was just emerging from its fortified walls and it was not unusual for a man of ability to become involved in several public activities. Moses Hays was an engineer by training and first became known for improving and extending the network of pipes bringing water to Montreal. He was also the owner of 'Hays Theatre' and Hotel, properties which burned down in the devastating fire which swept the city in 1859.

As judge in the Court of Special Sessions, Hays held office during the civic crisis of 1836 and late in life was made Chief of Police. When asked to become a magistrate, Hays and a fellow Jew, Benjamin Hart, insisted on being sworn in on the Old Testament Bible, the first men in Canada to succeed in doing so.

Hays also acted as President of the Montreal Agricultural Society and when Metcalfe Terrace was built, Hays and his family lived in one of the houses and farmed the land around it. Another tenant late in the 1840s was Casimir Gzowski, employed at the time as chief engineer on the St. Lawrence and Atlantic Railroad and later as consulting engineer for the harbour works in Montreal. Other occupants included the *Aides-de-camp* of the Governor General.

When Hays died in 1861, his obituary in the *Gazette* read in part, 'Mr. Hays was a gentleman who was identified with and inaugurated most of the great improvements which have helped the city to its present maturity and high position'."



168 Côte St. Antoine, currently undergoing restoration under the supervision of Canadian Heritage of Quebec. Photo: Aline Gubbay.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

Name

Address

Postal Code

Telephone

☐ \$ 10 Annual Membership fee

☐ Donations are welcome \$ _____



Please return this form and your cheque payable to the **Westmount Historical Association** at the Westmount Public Library, 4574 Sherbrooke Street West, Westmount, Quebec, H3Z 1G1.