

WESTMOUNT HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION *Newsletter*

Volume 2, Number 2

August 1998

A Message from Our President

The year's lecture series, Fall and Spring, ranged over a variety of topics, from new developments in city services to the resources available for preparing a personal family history (see page 6). Once again our programme coordinator, Doreen Lindsay, is to be commended for a superb job in organizing the talks.

Our archives have been enriched by several donations and we are pleased to say we have been able to begin necessary repairs on some of the older items in our collection, including an album of photographs which once belonged to James Kewley Ward, a former mayor of Côte St. Antoine. We are continually seeking to expand our collection and would welcome any donations from the public.

Our second fundraising venture, notecards showing the Abbott Street and Victoria Avenue train stations, have proved very popular. These will be available for purchase at our upcoming lecture series.

Later this year we hope to launch the first of a projected series of booklets on Westmount topics. Tentative subjects include Westmount architects, places of worship, the streets of Westmount, and prominent women of Westmount. We welcome members who would be interested to help research these or other topics.

See you in September!



Aline Gubbay

Annual General Meeting

The Association's Annual General Meeting was held in the Westmount Room of the Westmount Public Library on June 18th. President Aline Gubbay provided a brief review of the Association's activities over the past year, Treasurer David Freeman presented the year's financial statement (available from the Association upon request) and Membership Secretary Joan Clarke provided a brief word on membership. The meeting also introduced three new trustees to the Association's Board of Directors, including Craig Davies, Andy Dodge and Colin Irving.

The new directors replace former Board members, John R. Bradley, Nancy Dunton and Jacqueline Varin-Holm. Those leaving were of immense help to the organization during the past year. John R. Bradley was very generous in making computer equipment available to the Association. Nancy Dunton provided many insights on preservation and heritage issues, while Jacqueline Varin-Holm was always diligent with her translation of the Association's publicity and newsletter. All three will be missed.

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The photograph to the left shows one of two views of the Westmount Train Station reproduced on WHA notecards. The cards are being sold by the Association in support of efforts to save the historic building.



WHA News

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ASSOCIATION

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Contributors

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Flora-Lee Wagner

Translation

Westmount City Hall

The Westmount Historical Association was founded in 1944 to encourage public awareness of Westmount's history and heritage and to promote research into its social and cultural development.

Board of Directors

Aline Gubbay, President
Flora-Lee Wagner, Vice-President
David Freeman, Secretary/Treasurer
Joan Clark, Membership Secretary

Craig Davies
Andy Dodge
Philip Dombowsky
Colin Irving
Doreen Lindsay
Lee Taylor



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Women of Westmount Series

The Westmount Historical Association is preparing a series of profiles on Westmount women. It is hoped that the series will provide an additional dimension to the 'Know Your Westmount' column in the *Westmount Examiner*.

What do we know about the past generations of women who made contributions and achieved significance within and outside Westmount? What about those whose contribution has remained hidden? The activities of many women who lived during the last century and during the early decades of the present have remained invisible. We hope that readers can provide names and stories of such people. Summaries will be considered for publication in the 'Know Your Westmount' column.

The first in our 'Women of Westmount' series will look at the life of Alice Lighthall. Who better to start with than the woman who inspired so many people to learn about Westmount? This gentle, but determined woman believed strongly in fostering and preserving the cultural heritage of Westmount. She had a mission and a quiet perseverance to carry out that mission.

In the memory of many local residents, Lighthall's name is synonymous with the Westmount Historical Association. Her work, however, reached beyond the boundaries of our city. She also supported the City of Montreal and the native community in their preservation efforts. In a future issue of the *Examiner*, we will tell you the story of this remarkable woman.

Anyone interested in the 'Women of Westmount' series and who is willing to assist in unearthing an important piece of Westmount's social history may contact the Association.

Elizabeth Henrik

Family Day in the Park (May 30)

The Westmount Historical Association was whipped into strenuous activity at our table in the Park by the lively breeze. There were brisk sales of the packages of excellent greeting cards showing photographs of the Westmount Train Station, with the proceeds going to the Save the Station Fund. Our president, Aline Gubbay, had brainstormed to produce four searching questions to enable us to find the 'Brain of Westmount' 1998. Unfortunately, they proved too challenging and we did not have a winner for this year. Also confused was Willy the squirrel, who had - in good historic fashion - hidden away a cache of nuts somewhere in Westmount. Adults and children sought strategies and locations. The finder was a young lady named Michelle, who was rewarded by a prize of more modern chocolate nuts and raisins.

The day was a delightful combination of introducing ourselves to the children in our community, and highlighting our campaign towards the preservation of the train station. It was satisfying to answer questions and queries from old and new supporters, and see so many friendly faces. We look forward to seeing you all next year.

Lee Taylor

WHA Sponsored Bus Tour

On March 10th, the weather was not the best for a walk-about but the buses that held the 102 members of the Stewart Hall Seniors from Pointe Claire enjoyed, from their seats, the first bus tour sponsored by the Westmount Historical Association, with guides Aline Gubbay and myself. We met at Sherbrooke Street and Claremont Avenue and toured east, south, west and then north. We covered the parks and the municipal buildings, churches, synagogues, private homes, some large or even larger, and the small. The ice storm damage was seen at Summit Park and on the low hanging branches which swept the roof of the two buses. The two drivers showed their skills turning from Gordon Crescent onto Sunnyside, one bus took three tries and another did it in one.

No one can count on the weather but what can be counted on is the interest that others have in our city. From the Hurtubise farmhouse to the former mansion of the Bronfman family, to the new ultra-modern homes being built at the higher levels of Westmount, these were all seen and commented upon. The views of our city and from our city were enjoyed. The knowledge of families and individuals who lived and live in Westmount - from the Indians, farmers, to the powers of business - this is what the tour was about. It was also about the homes built at the beginning and saved from demolition, and the pride of the Westmount Historical Association in our City. Pride that we wish to introduce to others, whether Westmounters or not. This first bus tour confirmed our beliefs.

Flora-Lee Wagner

FALL LECTURE SERIES 1998



All lectures will be held in the Westmount Room of the Westmount Public Library, 4574 Sherbrooke Street West, Thursdays at 7:00 p.m. Members free with membership card. Non-members \$5 at the door. For further information please phone 925-1404.

SEPTEMBER 17

Preserving Westmount's Heritage

Mark London, architect and city planner with the City of Montreal and Chairman of the City of Westmount Architectural and Planning Commission, will explain how residents can use the City's 'Character Area Studies' to understand the history of their own street and home, as well as how to preserve their unique character.

OCTOBER 15

87 Years of Travel by Tram in Westmount, 1872-1959

*Jacques Pharand, author of *A la belle époque de Tramways* and expert on the Montreal Tramway system, will discuss how the extension of the tramway led to the development of Greene Avenue and St. Catherine Street, the first area in Westmount to be urbanized. Slides will show early horse drawn trams (1877), as well as electric trams after 1892.*

NOVEMBER 19

Row Housing: Blenheim Place, Lewis, Irvine, and Abbott Avenues

Speaker to be confirmed. The development of modest row housing in Westmount began after the building of the first railway station at the foot of Abbott Avenue in 1896. During this period, the tramway extended west along St. Catherine and Sherbrooke streets and north on Victoria and Greene avenues. Stores and small businesses followed. Westmount Park was created by draining the Glen stream.

DECEMBER 17

Discovering the Treasures of Saint-Léon de Westmount

Claudine Déom, doctoral candidate in Art History at UQAM and active with various heritage groups since 1995, will present an illustrated talk on the architectural and decorative evolution of St-Léon de Westmount. During the 1890s, stone rowhouses were built on Olivier Avenue and over the next twenty years elegant luxury apartments were built on de Maisonneuve Boulevard.

ARCHIVES UPDATE

DOCUMENTS CAST LIGHT ON ASSOCIATION'S EARLY DEVELOPMENT



The above photograph, a view of William Murray's residence 'West Mount', was among the early donations to the Westmount Historical Association. The photograph was included in the Association's first exhibition held in the Public Library in February 1945.

Among the many items recently catalogued in the Archives is a series of documents, including correspondence, minutes of meetings and newspaper clippings, relating to the formation and early development of the Westmount Historical Association.

Several items, including a letter written by Alice Lighthall in 1971, indicate that it was Roy Campbell who initiated the process that led to the formation of the Westmount Historical Association in early 1944.¹ Elected President of the Westmount Municipal Association in December 1943, Campbell was deeply concerned about the lack of knowledge regarding Westmount's past and felt that an organization should be formed to collect, classify and preserve historical material relating to the city.

In February 1944, Campbell issued a letter inviting members of the Municipal Association to a meeting in Victoria Hall to discuss the question.²

Minutes from the meeting, held on February 24th, provide a record of the Association's official formation. Twenty-two individuals sharing Campbell's concerns attended and early on in the evening a resolution establishing the Westmount Historical Association was adopted as follows:

That the persons here present, interested in the accumulation and preservation of historical and similar information concerning the City of Westmount, its predecessor municipalities and surroundings, do now become associated for these objects under the name of the Westmount Historical Association.³

The first meeting also established that the new organization "would function in cooperation with the Municipal Assc." A number of prominent Westmounters were named to the Association's first Board. Two former Mayors of Westmount, Dr. W. D. Lighthall and Peter McLagen, were elected Honorary President and Honorary Vice-President, respectively. The Association's first President was Mr. W. B. Scott and the first Vice-Presidents were Alice Lighthall and Mr. Archibald Robertson. Kathleen Jenkins, head of the Westmount Public Library, was appointed curator of the historical material gathered by the Association.

The Association's first year was, by all accounts, a productive one. Two committees were established soon after the formation of the organization. The first, led by the energetic Alice Lighthall, took on the task of copying historic maps at the Archives of the Montreal Court and the Seminary Archives. The second committee, on a proposal put forward by Roy Campbell, undertook to contact Westmount's oldest families, as a way of locating letters, maps, photographs, and other historical material relating to the community.

The success of both committees during the year benefited from the support of Kathleen Jenkins and the Westmount Public Library. The initial expense of photostating maps was paid from the Library's budget. Later, the Library Board was successful in applying to City Council for a grant of \$500.00, to be used for the Westmount Historical Association at the discretion of the Library Board. The Library also contributed by writing letters to more than fifty Westmount families, in support of the Association's efforts to

uncover historical material.

The Association's efforts during the year paid dividends in the form of an exhibition in early 1945. Again the Library helped ensure the success of the project by accepting gifts and loans of historical material from the public and allowing the exhibit to be held on the premises of the Library. Consisting of photographs, paintings, maps and other documents, the exhibit - 'The Story of Westmount' - was opened by Mayor R. Percy Adams on February 27th, 1945, almost one year to the day of the Association's formation.

To be continued. . .

Philip Dombowsky

NOTES:

1. Letter from Alice Lighthall to the Chairman of the Library Board, May 15, 1971. In the words of Lighthall: "This Association was formed during the last war, by the Westmount Municipal Association, at the request and inspiration of the former Mayor Roy Campbell."
2. Letter from Roy Campbell inviting WMA members to a meeting at Victoria Hall, February 11, 1944.
3. "Minutes of a meeting called by Mr. Roy Campbell, President of the Westmount Municipal Association, and held in Victoria Hall on Thursday, February 24, 1944, at 8:15 p.m."
4. A list of many of the items included in the exhibition appeared in the article, "Local Exhibit Loans and Gifts are Acknowledged," *Westmount Examiner*, April 6, 1945, p. 2

ARCHIVE ACQUISITIONS

January 1 - June 30, 1998

Mounted photograph showing a front view of 'Forden'
Gift of L'Apostrophe Antiquités Restoration

Mounted photograph showing Queen's School,
Grade Four Girls' Class, ca. 1925
Gift of Dorothy Crelinsten

Report sheets from Queen's School, 1914-1917
Gift of Cecil Cohen

Mounted photograph signed by W. H. Caradine showing view of
Westmount Park with Emmanuel Church in background
Gift of May Cutler

Montreal's Yesterdays (Edgar Andrew Collard, 1962);
Call Back Yesterdays (Edgar Andrew Collard, 1965);
Montreal: The Days That Are No More (Edgar Andrew Collard, 1976);
L'hôtel Château Versailles: Un Historique/A History
(Betty Guernsey, 1979)
Gift of Doreen Lindsay

Programmes including, 'Piano Recital by the Pupils of Viola Benson',
June 1st, 1929, Willis Hall (580 St. Catherine Street West); and 'A Rose
Dream: A Fairy Operetta in Two Scenes by the Pupils of Viola L.
Benson and Assisting Artists', June 7th, 1930, Victoria Hall, Westmount
Gift of Archibald Macleod

Maps including, 'Province de Québec, Département de Terres et Forêts
Nord de Montréal', 1955; and 'South Shore Municipalities in the
Vicinity of Montreal' (Canadian National Railways, Department of
Research and Development, April 1956)
Gift of Georges Saly

Recycling Historic Railway Stations: A Citizens Manual
(U. S. Department Of Transportation)
Gift of Barbara A. Smith

Growing Up At 609 Clarke Avenue: A Memoir (Sarah Aitken Stevenson)
Gift of Sarah Aitken Stevenson

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TIPS FOR THE FAMILY HISTORIAN

Editors note: The following research tips were provided by Gary Schroder, President of the Quebec Family History Society. Mr. Schroder presented a lecture on family research for the Westmount Historical Association in the Westmount Room of the Westmount Public Library on May 21st.

The following list provides examples of genealogical resources that are available on the island of Montreal.

1. Microfilm copies of church registers for the entire province of Quebec from the 17th century until 1899 are available at the Montreal branch of the Quebec National Archives.
2. You can examine the church and civil registers for the entire province of Quebec for the period 1900-1941 at the Salle Gagnon in the Montreal Municipal Library.
3. The most commonly used censuses in Canada for genealogical research are 1825, 1842, 1851, 1861, 1871, 1881, 1891, and 1901. The censuses for Quebec are available at the Quebec National Archives. The censuses for all of Canada, including Quebec, are available at the Salle Gagnon.
4. You should examine the Genealogical Registers and the annual Genealogical Research Directories to see if someone is already doing research on your own family. These are available at the Q.F.H.S. Library.
5. The Old Parochial Register Index is the definitive index to all baptisms and marriages in Scotland for the Church of Scotland prior to 1855. The index is available at the Mormon Family History Center.
6. The International Genealogical Index is the largest genealogical index including entries for most countries in the world. There are over 50 million entries for baptisms and marriages in England prior to 1832. The I.G.I. is available at the Mormon Family History Center and the Q.F.H.S. library.
7. The indexes to civil registration of Irish births from 1864-1921 and Irish marriages from 1845-1921 are available at the Mormon Family History Center.
8. Under pain of death do not write in ink on old family photographs or attach adhesive labels.
9. Interview, before it is too late, all living relatives. Each person will have a different perspective on various aspects of your family's history.
10. If you catch the genealogical research bug, your life will be enriched and changed forever.

Helpful addresses:

Montreal Branch of the Quebec National Archives, 1945 Mullins Street, Montreal

Salle Gagnon of the Montreal Municipal Library, 1210 Sherbrooke Street East, Montreal

Mormon Family History Center, 7110 Newman Blvd., Lasalle

Quebec Family History Society Library, 173 Cartier Avenue, Pointe Claire

Gary Schroder