

The Westmount Historian

NEWSLETTER OF THE WESTMOUNT HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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WHA tour guide Richard Lord leading a walk through Westmount Park, c.2004

CREDIT: WHA

WALKING TOURS IN MONTREAL



Association historique de Westmount
Westmount Historical Association

The Westmount Historian

NEWSLETTER OF THE WESTMOUNT
HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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EDITOR'S MESSAGE



Covid began in Montreal three years ago. The two lectures held this past fall, one hybrid, the other Zoom, were the first ones given by the WHA since that time. As in the past, the scaled-down 'reboot' of our typical lecture series has provided us with the theme and material for this current issue, which focuses on heritage walking tours of Montreal. I appreciate our archival assistant Carolyn Singman's skilled help with the photographs. It is a relief to be getting back to normal.

Our first presentation was given by independent tour guide Françoise Bâby, who transformed many of her walking and cycling tours into Zoom presentations during the pandemic. She writes about the Irish in Montreal, concentrating on Griffintown.

In this issue, WHA member Maureen Kiely traces her Irish family's strong roots in Griffintown, where her paternal grandfather owned the Griffintown Horse Palace.

Nancy Dunton, instrumental in creating the Heritage Montreal walking tours, bases her article on her lecture that provided a history of this important initiative.

The evolution of spring and fall heritage walking tours given in Westmount by the WHA is traced in my article. Initially held in collaboration with the City of Westmount, our tours expanded to Jane's Walks and fall heritage tours, and later to online independent walks during the height of Covid.

In her Westmount Memories article, Jan Fergus provides the final instalment based on Diana Martin's recollections of winters as a young girl growing up beside Murray Park.

Concluding the issue is a selection of photos donated to our archives in recent months.

CAROLINE BRESLAW

WHA/WPL Lecture

Wednesday, April 12, 2023 at 7 p.m.

Victoria Hall

Free admission – registration necessary
<https://wpl-Westmount-Station-CPR.eventbrite.ca>.

WESTMOUNT STATION: CPR HISTORY AND A FUTURE VISION

David B. Hanna, PhD

Heritage expert and former professor of urban planning

Westmount Station was once an important community location featuring some of the most storied trains of the continent. Although saved, it stands unused. How can it become a community-building location once again? Would an economuseum work?

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



While we continue to cope globally with a number of health challenges due to the pandemic and other viruses, we hope that the New Year will be easier for everyone.

I am pleased to report that the WHA is slowly and successfully returning to a pre-COVID level of activity. In the fall of 2022, our scheduled events included two lectures. The Zoom presentation by Françoise Bâby, "Two Faces of Montreal's Irish Community", was made available to WHA members. The hybrid talk by Nancy Dunton, held in collaboration with Westmount Public Library, was "Heritage Montreal's Architectural Tours: Walking the neighbourhoods of Montreal".

The most recent issue of *The Westmount Historian* entitled "Memories of Westmount" was published last September and sent out to members either digitally or in paper format, depending on their expressed option.

Archival activities in the fall included the loan of a small collection of academic memorabilia to Westmount

High School for its display celebrating "150 years of Public Education in Westmount". In recent months, the WHA's entire archival collection of memorabilia was photographed and indexed to improve accessibility. Detailed work on the extensive Goode Fonds inventory continued, and some related genealogical research is underway.

The Westmount Memories Project is ongoing, with an invitation extended to those who grew up in Westmount or lived here for many years to share their experiences and memories in interviews or in writing.

It has been heartening to see our membership numbers rebound following the pandemic, and we urge our current supporters to ensure they have re-enrolled as members for 2023. As an organization run solely by volunteers, we also encourage individuals with interests or expertise relating to WHA activities (accounting, interviewing residents, maintaining the website, assisting with the lecture series) to contact us by phone or email.

LOUISE CARPENTIER

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The Westmount Historical Association wishes to thank the following people who have made personal donations of over \$25. There are five WHA patrons in 2022.

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WHA/AGM May 25, 2023

The WHA will hold its Annual General Meeting on
Thursday, May 25, 2023 at 7:00 p.m.

WHA members will receive advance notice of nominations for the election of officers and directors and the agenda for the meeting. They will also be informed if the meeting will be held in the Westmount Room of WPL or by Zoom.



Westmount Room of the Westmount Public Library

WALKING THE NEIGHBOURHOODS OF MONTREAL: HERITAGE MONTREAL'S ARCHITECTOURS

BY NANCY DUNTON

On November 17, 2022, Nancy Dunton gave a hybrid lecture on Heritage Montreal's walking tours. The WHA/WPL collaboration was held in the Westmount Room of Westmount Public Library

What makes an architectural walking tour good? Sometimes it's the chance to learn about a building or a park that you've walked past for years but didn't notice, sometimes it's realizing what makes a particular street remarkable or the discovery of a neighbourhood you've never been to before. Sometimes it's as simple as turning the corner and seeing a particularly wonderful balcony.

The reality is that what makes an architectural walking tour good is not only where you go and what you look at but the person who is taking you there and asking you to



ArchitecTours 2022 in Verdun

look – to truly look – at the street, at the building, at the city around you. A good walking tour guide invites people to look at a building and to think about it, to read it. What is it made of – brick? stone? glass and steel? What shape and size is it? When was the building built – and why? Who designed it? What style is it built in? What was it used for when it was built? What is it used for now?

Since 1988, Heritage Montreal's volunteer guides have been walking Montrealers through their city and together they have been reading every type of building, square and park. Save Montreal had presented the very first tours in 1974, based on the Chicago Architecture Foundation model. Then, in 1975, the Heritage Montreal Foundation was created to support Save Montreal, and in 1988 the two organizations collaborated to create a series of walking tours, the *Ateliers mobiles/ Mobile workshops*. That first summer, eighteen tours were presented to 1000 participants.



Les ateliers mobiles/ Mobile workshops



Balcony at corner of Somerville and Prince Albert in Westmount



Rain or shine

The not-for-profit Heritage Montreal Foundation has a two-pronged mission – education and representation. *ArchitecTours*, as the program of summer architectural walking tours was renamed in 1998, are at the core of the foundation's educational activities and public programs. Walking tours make Montrealers aware of the city and its neighbourhoods. As citizens, Montrealers who are better informed are better equipped to protect the city's heritage, and to work to improve their urban environment.

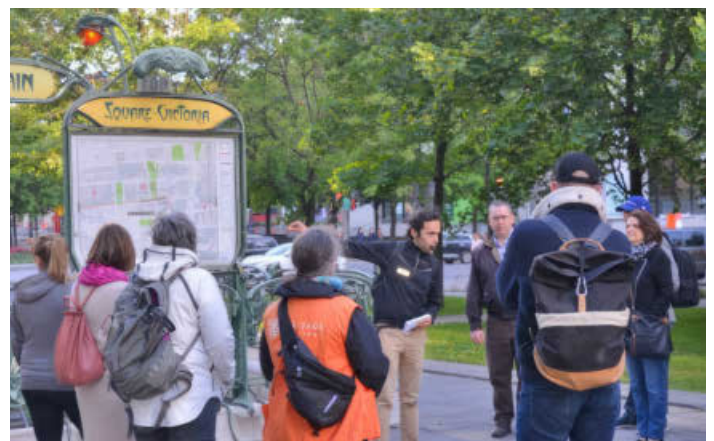
The format for the tours is much the same as it was in the beginning: starting from a metro station, groups of 20 to 25 people follow a two-hour tour offered by volunteers, one group in English and two in French. What has changed is that as summers have become increasingly hotter, tours now start on weekends in early August and finish at the beginning of October and departure times have shifted to earlier in the day. Participants reserve online to follow one of six different tours that explore the summer's theme.

And as always, tours happen rain or shine.

Volunteer guides

What makes a good guide? Heritage Montreal looks for people who are curious, who know something about Montreal and its architecture but want to learn more. P-

people with an ability to communicate and who take pleasure in doing so and in working with other people make good guides. The first volunteer guides in the 1990s were mid-career professionals – architects, urban planners, teachers with a knowledge of and passion for a particular neighbourhood. Now guides are often young professionals from many different fields, but what they all bring to their tours is a love for the city. Their ability to communicate the information about a neighbourhood infused with their expertise, with their enthusiasm, is what makes them good guides.



Guide with *accompagnateur*

There are 45 guides currently active, some of whom have been giving tours for more than ten years. Each year Heritage Montreal recruits, interviews and selects new volunteers – eight joined the team last spring. They follow an intensive four-session course including the history and heritage of Montreal and techniques – how to prepare notes, where to stand, how to answer questions. Candidates do mini-presentations each week and are evaluated at the end of the four-week course. Once accepted, they form teams with experienced guides and work together on researching and practicing one of the visits that are part of the summer's theme.

Another team of volunteers, *les accompagnateurs* in their orange vests, welcome participants and – very importantly – accompany tours and ensure the safety and security of everyone.

Where to go and what to look at

Heritage Montreal is interested in heritage that you can see and describe on a plan: commemorative, archeological, architectural, landscape and natural. The foundation is interested not only in older buildings or buildings and public places that have designation or heritage status, but in the whole gamut of places that have value from mid-century houses to factories to churches to 1960s schools to convents

that have been converted into condos. The value of buildings and places is determined not only by their history or architecture but also by their value to the community, by how they represent a certain time period or construction technique, by how they are a part of the urban landscape. The reuse of existing buildings – one of the pillars of sustainable development – is an overriding concern for the foundation.

The choice of theme for *ArchitecTours* every summer draws on current preoccupations, on what is happening on the island of Montreal. In 2009, COSA, the committee of nine people responsible for the conception of educational programs and activities (seven volunteers, the Director of Programmes and the Coordinator) launched the first series of walking tours based on a theme, as opposed to visits to a collection of neighbourhoods. In the last fourteen years, walking tours have explored themes such as public places, major projects under construction and institutions. In 2017, for example, the 375th anniversary of Montreal provided the opportunity to look at the layers of the city's history by walking and looking at eight different neighbourhoods. *ArchitecTours* also look at particular types of architecture: in 2018, it was residential architecture in the densifying city; in 2019, the architecture of workplaces.

The design of the summer series starts in January with

the choice of a theme. COSA members then propose neighbourhoods that best represent that idea – then the real work begins. Research includes digging through multiple sources and walking to produce a set of circuits of 12 stops each. Each stop, each building or street or park needs to contribute to the story that the tour is intended to tell.

ArchitecTours in the pandemic

ArchitecTours attract many Montrealers every year – more than any other educational program offered by Heritage Montreal. Since the late 1990s, more than 21,000 participants have followed these architectural walking tours. The creation and presentation of the program is supported by



ArchitecTours of Saint-Laurent



ArchitecTours 2020: social distancing

Ivanhoé Cambridge and by a grant from the City of Montreal/Government of Quebec but as a not-for-profit, Heritage Montreal relies on the participation in *ArchitecTours* as a source of revenue.

In March 2020, the summer's theme was the architecture of learning and scenarios for eight neighbourhoods were being edited. Then came the pandemic. As the city closed down, would it even be possible to give architectural walking tours?

Through that most difficult spring, COSA members continued to meet virtually and by early July, were able to put together a program that would adhere to public health constraints. Scenarios were redesigned to allow experienced guides to offer a shortened season of 90-minute tours of four neighbourhoods. Participation was limited to ten people per tour following very clear restrictions



ArchitecTours 2021 – Île Sainte-Hélène

with respect to masking and social distancing.

People who had previously participated were invited to register online for the limited 360 places available – these sold out in 24 hours! Adopting an approach of security, flexibility and adaptability to changing health measures, Heritage Montreal's remarkable volunteer guides gave tours of the educational buildings of the McGill and Université de Montréal campuses, Saint-Joseph Boulevard and the Saint-Jacques quartier.

To provide an introduction to Montreal's first schools in Old Montreal and the pioneering schools of Faubourg Saint-Laurent, the staff at Heritage Montreal used the scenarios originally developed as the basis of virtual walking tours – videos that allowed all Montrealers to learn about how the architecture of schools evolved.

In 2021 – pandemic summer #2 – the theme was *Montreal on vacation*. Four tours explored the timely idea of staycations in the city: Ahuntsic, Balconville (the Plateau), the Old Port and Île Sainte-Hélène. While the number of people per group was limited and adherence to public health constraints required, 1135 people participated. A virtual tour of Montreal parks capped off the series.

Summer 2022 was an appropriate time for *ArchitecTours* to look at transformation – how neighbourhoods are changing now. The theme meant looking at buildings that had been built recently and have changed the neighbourhoods that they are part of and at neighbourhoods that are about to be changed by projects yet to be built. Guides rose to the challenge of describing change in six neighbourhoods – Sainte-Marie, Verdun, Plaza Saint-Hubert, the new MIL campus, the western sector of downtown and the Quartier Latin – to more than 1250 participants.

There are, of course, many neighbourhoods still to visit, many buildings to look at, to read and to think about. To understand Montreal, nothing beats a good architectural walking tour.

CREDIT FOR ALL PHOTOS: HERITAGE MONTREAL

Nancy Dunton, board member of Heritage Montreal, has been involved with its walking tours since 1992. She is a consultant specializing in the presentation of projects on architecture and teaches a course called Reading the City: Montreal and its neighbourhoods at the McGill School of Architecture. She co-authored A Guidebook to Contemporary Architecture in Montreal.

THE HARP AND THE SHAMROCK: THE TWO FACES OF MONTREAL'S IRISH COMMUNITY

BY FRANÇOISE BÂBY

The following is a summary of a lecture given to the WHA on October 20, 2022 by Françoise Bâby. During Covid, she offered Zoom lectures about areas of Montreal, many based on her guided walking tours.

For over a century, Montreal's Irish community was divided along socio-economic and religious lines. They lived a few streets away from each other, but they were worlds apart. The vast majority of poor, Catholic Irish lived in the Griffintown/ Point St. Charles area on opposite sides of the Lachine Canal, built in the 1820s by 1,500 men – most of them Irish – with picks and shovels. Due to their common religion, many married French-speaking Quebecers, which explains why 40% of our province's population has Irish blood.

In order to better understand the contribution of these very resilient immigrants and their descendants to Montreal society, we must go back to one of the most defining moments in Canadian history – the Conquest of 1759. The first Irish arrived with the British regiment stationed in our city after the Battle of the Plains of Abraham. Emigration was not a rare occurrence between 1810 and 1840, since a major part of the foreign labour force in Great Britain and North America came from Ireland. The first residents of St. Ann's Ward, also known as Griffintown, (named in honour of Irish landowner Mary Griffin) were English, Scottish, and Irish.



St. Ann's Nursery



Vestiges of St. Ann's Church

At first, Irish Catholics had no choice but to attend mass in French at Notre Dame Church and Notre Dame de Bonsecours Chapel. Although Catholicism was the obvious common trait between the two groups, French Canadians and Irish didn't care much for sharing the same place of worship. Their compatibility allowed for political alliances and inter-marrying, but their competition for jobs was fierce, not to mention heated arguments over the schedule of religious services.

Meanwhile other Irish, Protestant and Catholic, living in the Golden Square Mile and near Westmount, became very influential in Montreal society, carving out a place for themselves in the city's elite as businessmen, lawyers, landowners, printers, journalists and politicians. William Workman, partner in a wholesale hardware company, became mayor of Montreal. Seven of his compatriots would hold that coveted position in the 19th Century. Journalist Thomas d'Arcy McGee, MP for a riding encompassing Griffintown, became a Father of Confederation. One of his rivals in the federal election of 1867, Bernard Devlin, went on to become city councillor. Undoubtedly his greatest contribution to the city was his proposal to create Mount Royal Park.

The Great Irish Famine, followed by a failed potato harvest, spelled disaster for the population of the Emerald Isle. Between 1845 and 1851, one million died and 1.5 million emigrated. In 1847, of the 60,000 refugees who arrived in Montreal, a city of 54,000, more than 6,000 died.

In the second half of the 20th century, ambitious entrepreneurs built some 60 factories in densely populated

Must-Sees in Griffintown

1. Lachine Canal
2. Vestiges of St. Ann's Church
3. Mount Temple Place, 175 Mountain St.
4. Lachine Rapids Hydraulic and Land Co., 290 Mountain St.

5. St. Ann's Nursery, 287 Eleanor St.
6. Fire Station No. 3, 1139 Ottawa St.
7. Former police station No. 7, 217 Young St.
8. Former New City Gas Works, 141-195 Ann St.



Griffintown. Between 1850 and 1870, that number and the population of the sector tripled. Well-paid jobs went to the English and Scots, while the Irish often took on dangerous jobs that paid one dollar a day. During this period, members of the elite and the middle class enjoyed paved streets, tap water and other collective infrastructure. However, in Griffintown, roads were not paved, while sewers and street lights were non-existent. In addition, Montreal had the highest mortality rate of any British North American city – largely due to the terrible living conditions in poor working-class neighbourhoods like Griffintown.

Industry was exploding, generating huge profits. Despite the chasm between the upper and lower classes, their lives were very much intertwined in the factories. However, by the turn of the 20th century, the lives of the poor Irish began to improve somewhat. In 1914, St. Ann's Nursery opened on Eleanor Street, where the building still stands, allowing mothers to go to work.

Since all work and no play makes Liam a dull boy, Irishmen started to partake in sports. The lacrosse team from Griffintown, the Shamrocks, excelled at the sport, which was a way to defend their national honour, playing on a field that eventually became the Jean Talon Market. In 1909, the Montreal Canadiens Hockey Club was established by Ambrose O'Brien. His compatriot, George Kennedy, became the first coach and manager of the team which went on to win the Stanley Cup in 1910.

Although Montreal's Irish community has shrunk somewhat to the benefit of other Canadian cities, it left its mark. In Griffintown, one can still see buildings or vestiges of what were once the Horse Palace (an urban stable from

1862 to 2012), New City Gas, the former police station, and on Mountain Street, the vestiges of St. Ann Church as well as Mount Temple Place, the oldest house in the neighbourhood. Let's not forget the St. Patrick's Society, the oldest national association of Montreal, founded in 1834 before the Société St-Jean-Baptiste, and the St. Patrick's Day Parade, that much-anticipated forerunner of spring.

Even though today Griffintown looks like a jungle of condo towers, why not go for a walk in the neighbourhood to see if you can find traces of the mythical heart of the city's poor Irish community which shaped the future of Montreal and Canada?

As for hints of their passage through the Golden Square Mile and elsewhere, perhaps you can spot the woman holding a harp on the Monument to King Edward on Phillips Square across the street from The Bay department store. Or the harp on the Horn Building at 4067 St. Laurent Blvd. Or the stained-glass windows designed by John Patrick O'Shea in the council chamber at City Hall.

No wonder one of the floral emblems on Montreal's flag is a shamrock. The harp and the shamrock are symbols of Ireland and the contribution of her people to our city and Canada, one of the only countries that never closed its doors to them.

CREDIT ALL IMAGES: FRANÇOISE BÂBY

Françoise Bâby is a trilingual Montreal tourist guide, specializing in walking, biking, and cultural/tasting tours around the city. The pandemic inspired her to turn some of her tours into online presentations. She will continue to do this during the off-season.

THE KIELY FAMILY IN GRIFFINTOWN

BY MAUREEN KIELY, PH.D.

Griffintown was home to Westmounter Maureen Kiely's great grandfather Martin Kiely I. His large family and later her two maiden great aunts lived in the Griffintown Horse Palace. Her grandfather Martin Kiely II established The Martin Kiely Company Limited General Machinery business on nearby William Street which her own father, James Kiely, eventually ran. This business was owned and operated by three generations of her family for 105 years. Recently Maureen has written a detailed family history which she has donated to the WHA Archives. This article is condensed from her biography of Martin Kiely I.

I am the daughter of parents whose ancestors originated in Ireland. My great grandfather, Martin Kiely I (1825-1905) was born in Tipperary, Ireland. After arriving in Canada in the 1840s, he settled in Montreal's Griffintown, situated on the St. Lawrence River. Shortly after his arrival, he began a cartage business ferrying goods back and forth from Montreal to Quebec City in summer and between Montreal and Sorel in the winter. The Port of Montreal closed each winter from November until March/April because the river was frozen solid. This, however, did not stop my great grandfather and his fellow carters from their year round deliveries. In summer, the carters would float the goods to be transported on wooden barges set in the river but controlled by ropes attached to the barge on either side of the St. Lawrence. The other ends of the ropes were linked to teams of horses on both sides of the river. In this way, goods were ferried to their destination. In winter, the same procedure was followed, but the goods to be transported were loaded onto sleds equipped with ice runners. Because the St. Lawrence was too wide between the river banks around Quebec City, the barges only went as far as Sorel in winter.

My great grandfather married Mary Anne Phelan from Boston in 1860. They had ten children: Daniel, Martin, James, John, Thomas, Anastasia (Annie), Mary Kiely Boyne, Catherine (Cassie), Susan and Ellen.

By 1862, with the cartage business up and running, my great grandfather Martin Kiely I acquired property in Griffintown at 1224 (originally 210) Ottawa Street at the intersection with Eleanor St. The land was near the river and was large enough for him to build a stable for the



Maureen Kiely's two great aunts Anastasia (Auntie Annie) and Catherine (Auntie Cassie) Kiely, daughters of her great grandfather Martin Kiely I, in the back yard of their home. They lived their entire lives at 1224 Ottawa Street.

CREDIT: MAUREEN KIELY

horses he needed for his cartage business, as well as a home for his growing family. The stable held stalls for about 8 horses and there was sufficient room to store his carriages and sleds in additional unheated shelters. He also built several sheds where he could store goods ready to be transported. He was able to provide a small, very primitive dwelling for rent to out-of-town carters requiring shelter for themselves and their horses when they delivered goods to Montreal. I should note that many Montrealers will recognize this property as "The Griffintown Horse Palace", which well-known calèche driver, Leo Leonard, purchased from my father, James Kiely, in 1977.

The home my great grandfather built consisted of a one floor dwelling for his family and two smaller dwellings on

the second floor. In the kitchen of the main house was a coal stove used for cooking and hot water which also kept this area warm. There was another coal stove (later replaced by a gas-fired heater) in the adjacent dining room which supplied warmth to the remainder of the lower floor. However, as one used to 70°F houses, I always found this home cold in winter! Adjacent to the kitchen was a glass enclosed porch which was unheated. As the Kielys were a large family, I assume this location was used primarily as a cold pantry. My great aunts, Anastasia and Catherine Kiely, used this area for growing plants and parsley, etc. There was a trap door in the floor in the kitchen. When the trap was opened, it revealed wooden steps to the next level which had a dirt floor. Shelves had been made for storage. The area was a root cellar for winter storage of foodstuffs and preservatives. As it had a low ceiling, it seemed a little spooky to my brothers Martin and Brian and me. We children delighted in exploring this area as long as we had our Dad with us! It became a ritual that each time we made a visit to our aunts, we had to go to the root cellar. Toilet facilities consisted of a toilet and sink in a small closet separate from the bathtub. The bathtub appeared to have been installed much later in one of the bedrooms.

By the 1940's my great grandfather had passed away and his cartage business was closed. As families prospered in the post war era, many moved westward to Westmount, Notre-Dame-de-Grâce, Montreal West and the Town of Mount Royal. However, my father kept the stables rented for his aunts so we, of course, often visited whichever horses were in residence. We were always welcomed by the horses' owners and were allowed to pet and help feed and

water them. These were magical times for my brothers and me.

The storage units which had been built by my great-grandfather were now rented from my great aunts by their brother Mart (Martin Kiely II) for storage of large machinery. The location was ideal as it was only one block from his company building at William and Murray Streets. This arrangement also provided security for the two elderly ladies, as our company employees were often seen going to and from the property on no set schedule.

In those days, it was customary to serve the main meal of the day at noon. As all the Kiely men worked close by, my great aunts Annie and Cassie prepared this meal for the entire family. The tradition continued long after the brothers' deaths as my father James (Mart's son) always had lunch with them. This ensured that they had a visitor each day, and enabled him to confirm that these elderly ladies were well and also permitted him to handle any problems.

In 1970, my last great-aunt Annie passed away, having lived in the Ottawa Street home her entire life. Subsequently, my father sold her property to Leo (Clawhammer Jack) Leonard, the well-known Montreal calèche driver. The stables, known as the Griffintown Horse Palace, remained open until his retirement, whereupon the property was sold, and the stables were demolished. The house, where the family of Martin Kiely I lived, remains.

CREDIT ALL PHOTOS: MAUREEN KIELY

Maureen Kiely is a longtime Westmount resident and a past president of the Westmount Municipal Association. As a college student, she emptied the house on the Horse Palace property that her father had inherited from his aunts.



This entire building was owned by Martin Kiely I. The left door was the entrance to the family home, which occupied the ground floor. The right door led to the two rental units. The laneway to the left of the building provided access to the rear of the property and the stables – storage for carts, buggies and sleds, and temporary storage for goods to be transported. In later years, the Kiely family's machinery company rented these sheds from the two great aunts for storage of large pieces of machinery.

CREDIT: MAUREEN KIELY

The Griffintown Horse Palace

The two previous articles both referred to The Griffintown Horse Palace, which stood on the site of the former Kiely property. The stables dated from the days of Martin Kiely I.



Stables of the Griffintown Horse Palace, March 17, 2012

PHOTO: DARIO AYALA FOR *THE GAZETTE*



Maureen Kiely's family home at centre, end of street, with new apartment building behind.

PHOTO: DAVE FAVELL

Recent Events

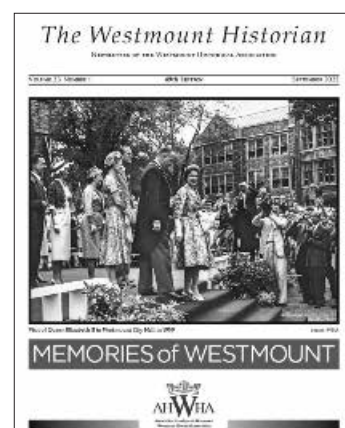
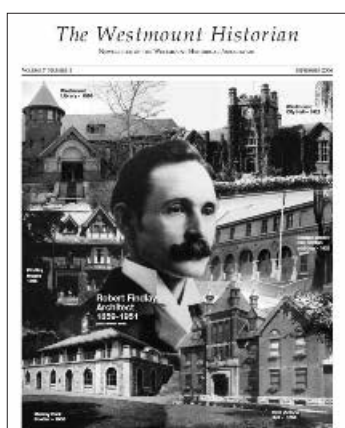
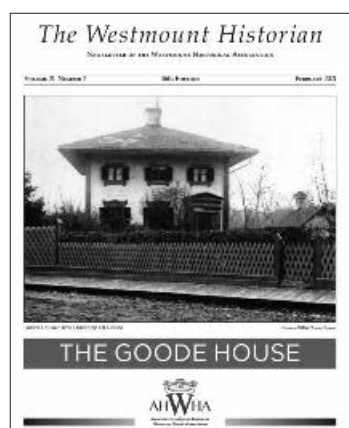


Last September 17th, Mayor Christina Smith fired Westmount's historic 1810 cannon in honour of recently deceased Queen Elizabeth II.

PHOTO: PATRICK MARTIN, 2022



WHA memorabilia on loan to Westmount High School for 150th anniversary of English public education in Westmount.



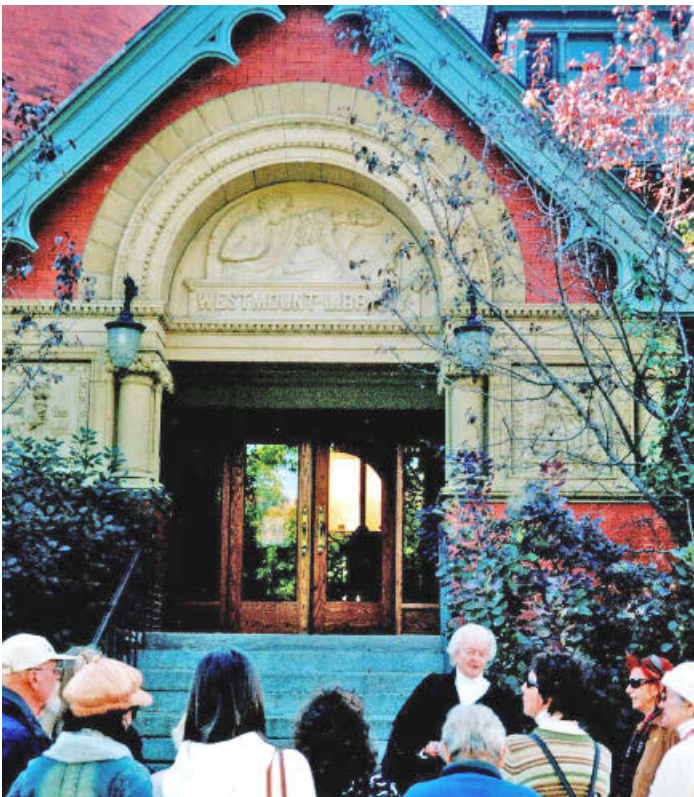
Issues of the WHA newsletter selected for the time capsule being re-installed under the 1922 cornerstone of Westmount City Hall

PHOTO: CAROLYN SINGMAN, 2023

WESTMOUNT HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION'S WALKING TOURS

BY CAROLINE BRESLAW

For decades, the Westmount Historical Association has offered free walking tours, allowing people to discover different areas and aspects of Westmount. All these walks have emphasized the historical and architectural elements of the areas visited. Many were given in collaboration with the City of Westmount during Montreal's "Opération patrimoine architectural de Montréal", held for many years in October. Some of the ground covered in these tours included Robert Findlay's buildings, Westmount Park and its municipal buildings, Côte St. Antoine Road, Dawson and Marianopolis colleges, Église St. Léon and the Grey Nuns, innovation in the vicinity of Westmount Park, and the Hurtubise House. The several guided tours we offered of the Hurtubise House interior and its grounds were always fully booked. When Montreal's heritage programme ended, the WHA continued giving fall heritage tours. The sections of both Sherbrooke Street and Côte St. Antoine Road in our municipality were walked their entire lengths.



WHA tour guide Barbara Covington with group in front of Westmount Public Library, 2006



Caroline Breslaw giving Dawson College tour, October 2009

Jane's Walks, held throughout North America, are named in honour of urban activist Jane Jacobs. They focus on current local issues and provide an opportunity for participants to also share their thoughts. The WHA has organized several walks for this May event. In the past, we have focused on the hidden streams under Westmount Park, Victoria Avenue from Sherbrooke to the Glen, family businesses on Sherbrooke Street, and Greene Avenue's evolution.

Our walks have all been researched, scripted, and led by trained WHA volunteers. Many have been offered in both English and French. During Covid, when in-person guided tours were not feasible, WHA members were emailed edited versions of some past walking tours, so they could enjoy them safely and independently. During this period, the walk of the houses of worship in Westmount was expanded from a shorter one originally written for the City to a version encompassing all of the religious buildings in Westmount. This spring, we hope to resume our group walking tours, beginning with one offered exclusively to WHA members.



Ruth Allan-Rigby leading a Jane's Walk in front of Victoria Hall, May 2010

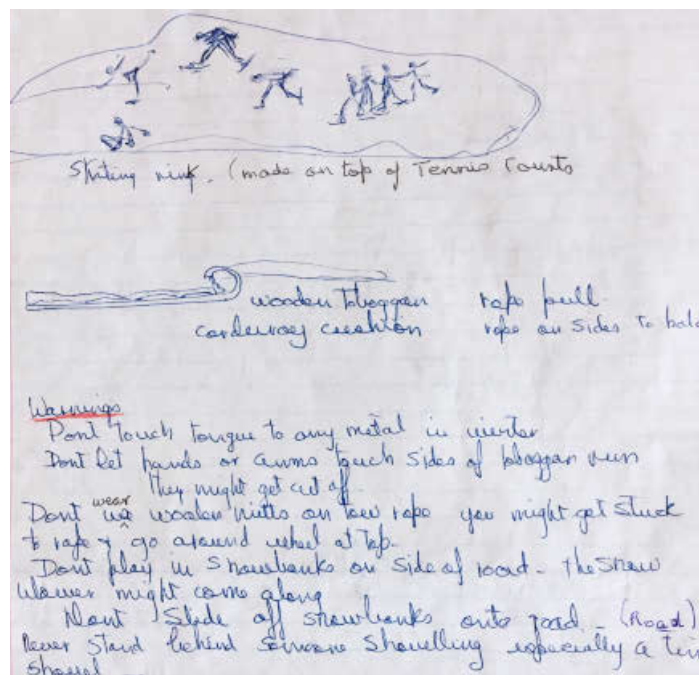
WESTMOUNT WINTERS A CENTURY AGO

This is the fourth and final article based on Diana Martin's memories about growing up in Westmount. Jan Fergus, head of the WHA's Westmount Memories Project, has crafted these articles from interviews between Diana and her daughter Wendy Hodges and from handwritten pages featuring Diana's own illustrations.

BY JAN FERGUS

What were the winters outdoors like in the "old days" for Westmount children, when thick snow covered the ground for months and men harvested blocks of ice from the frozen St. Lawrence for kitchen ice boxes? In our last excerpt from the memories that now 98-year-old Diana Martin, née Wilson, has donated to our archives, she illustrates both in evocative words and especially in vivid drawings the child's wonderland that she remembers in Murray Park nearly a hundred years ago.

These winter playgrounds were created by workers and the Fire Department. Diana Martin has described how "On the hill in Murray Park the workmen made a wonderful toboggan slide – they shoveled snow in two long sides – each about 3 feet high and about 2 ½ feet apart, all the way to Cote St. Antoine – but ... curved just before the trees at the bottom so perfectly safe. When the snow slide was finished, again the Fire Department would come with their hoses and spray the slide until it was completely frozen. And then the children would come with their toboggans



Diana's illustration of skating with list of warnings

and have a wonderful speedy ride to the bottom." See Diana's first illustration where to the right of the hose, she also draws skiers on the hill, one who seems airborne while two others glide down.

Diana describes even more work by adults to establish play areas for children. "Every winter we would watch as the city sent workmen to set up the sideboards for skating rinks – which in no time were put in place, and after sufficient snow had fallen, the city Fire Department came with their long hoses, and plumes of water soon became ice and in no time the boys would be playing hockey – NO HELMETS WORN!" Because children played outside alone, without parental supervision, they had to memorize rules, for instance, as Diana writes: "We were always warned to hold onto the side rope of the toboggan and never touch the sides of the slide – as we might lose some fingers." The second illustration lists several more warnings and demonstrates that a skating rink in addition to the hockey rink was created, with some children shown playing "crack the whip," others trying acrobatic moves, and one apparently having fallen.

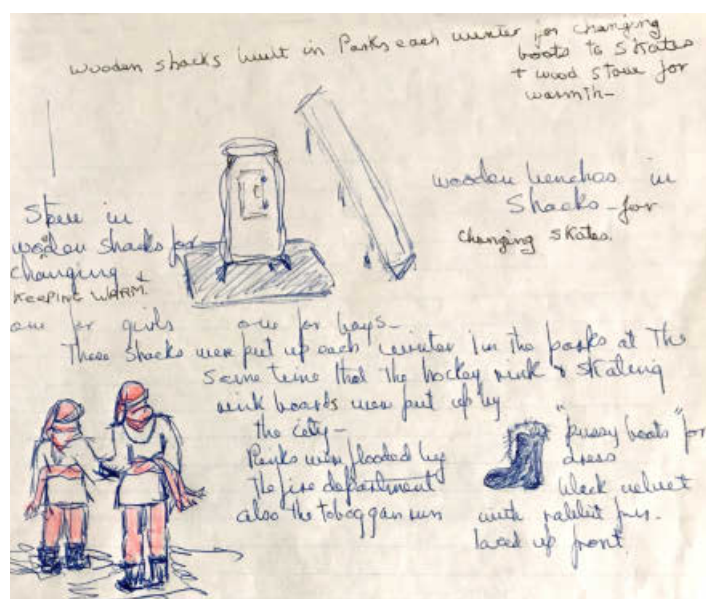
But how did everyone put on skates? Diana explains and shows in the third drawing that "There was no 'Comfort Station' in those days or for children to change into skates,



Diana Martin's drawing of the toboggan slide in Murray Park

but each year as winter approached, the city had workmen erect a 'Warming Shack' with a 'pot-bellied' stove which gave off the necessary heat to keep us all warm and cosy – situated about 100 yards from the rink." There were benches for "changing skates," a stove that burnt wood, and separate shacks for girls and boys, as the descriptions point out. Diana tells us elsewhere that the shack "always smelled of wet wool," a smell that permeated winter indoors and out before down-filled coats and synthetic fabrics supplanted wool. The two girls seen from the back in this drawing were wearing woolen Red River outfits – a coat, leggings, scarf, and hat – still popular in the 1940s. "We did not wear slacks" in winter, she writes, but "pullovers," some of which came with an attached vest top. Snow that "formed on our wool leggings ... had to be whisked off" once children went inside. That was an advantage, she remembers: the snow was "good on carpets – made air more humid and we didn't get so many shocks." Older boys could wear slacks in winter, though girls did not, but younger boys had "Jodhpurs and high socks."

This natural wonderland has disappeared. Our ice doesn't now withstand recurrent winter thaws without refrigeration, and snow doesn't accumulate or last long enough to build the toboggan runs of the past. But many of us have seen the huge artificial snow machines used to build long



Warming shack stove and winter outfits, as drawn by Diana

runs for sledding in Murray Park and the artificial outdoor skating rink set up in Westmount Park during the pandemic, thanks to the City Council. And for three winters now many children have enjoyed outdoor pleasures in Westmount that Diana Martin and others can remember – and adults have seemed equally enthralled, gathering to watch and perhaps reliving their own childhoods.



Skating in Westmount Park near Academy Road c. 1930 with Westmount High (today's Westmount Park School) having an addition built

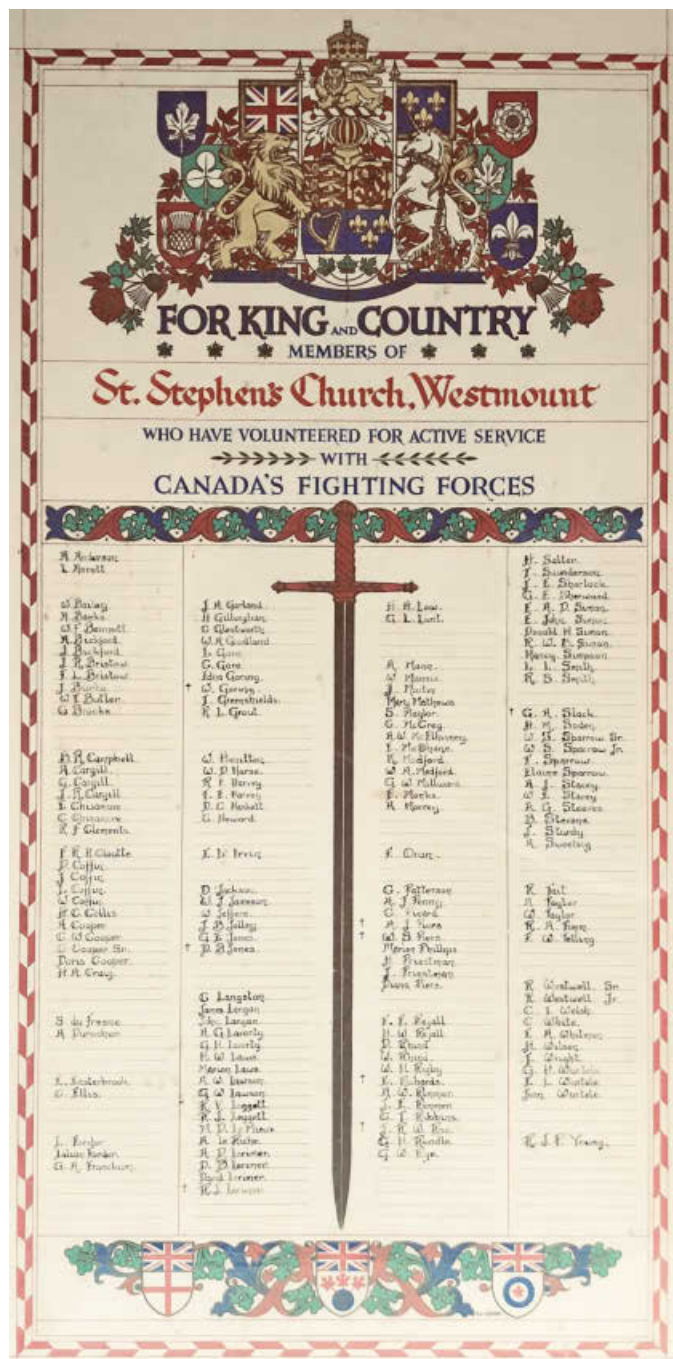
CREDIT: CITY OF WESTMOUNT

FROM THE ARCHIVES

By JANE MARTIN, WHA ARCHIVIST

Westmount has lost two different Protestant church congregations with long local histories. Both St. Stephen's Anglican Church (Dorchester and Atwater) and Mountain-side United Church (Roslyn and The Boulevard) have new owners, with redevelopment of the properties dependent upon necessary approvals from the City.

The WHA has received historic photo images and other items for archival conservation, some of which are shown below. We are thankful for the work of church members Nancy Walkling and the late Judy Johnston who organized the Mountainside donation, and to antiquarian Cary Leclair who brought us the St. Stephen's memorial plaque.



St. Stephen's Anglican, built c. 1902 – WWII honour roll



Dominion-Douglas (later Mountainside) United - winter view from The Boulevard, c. mid-20th Century



Old St. Andrew's United, built on Côte St. Antoine in 1909, destroyed by fire in 1965



Framed drawing of Douglas Methodist Church, 1875, St. Catherine & Chomedey



Laying the cornerstone for Dominion-Douglas (later Mountainside) United, Apr. 24, 1926



Chancel of Dominion Douglas (later Mountainside) United, c. mid-20th Century



Erskine Church, built 1866, Peel and St. Catherine