

The Westmount Historian

NEWSLETTER OF THE WESTMOUNT HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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Visit of Queen Elizabeth II to Westmount City Hall in 1959

CREDIT: WHA

MEMORIES of WESTMOUNT



Association historique de Westmount
Westmount Historical Association

The Westmount Historian

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HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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EDITOR'S MESSAGE



This Fall 2022 issue of *The Westmount Historian* marks the fifth edition published since the beginning of Covid. To celebrate the gradual return to 'normal', we culled the recently reinstalled WHA archives for unpublished writings about Westmount. What treasures were found! Some were written long ago. Others date from the 1960s and 1970s when Dr. Hélène Saly and Aline Gubbay were collecting material for their books *Old Westmount* and *A View of Their Own*. Among discoveries are a 1978 newspaper article from Andy Dodge, a delightful piece by former *Westmount Examiner* publisher John Sancton, and many contributions from residents and WHA members. We are printing them as written, with the spelling, grammar and syntax intact. The format has been altered to fit our layout. Together these articles build a vivid image of childhood in Westmount in the past and serve as a testament to the importance of anecdotal history.

Jan Fergus continues her recounting of Diana Martin's memoir of her childhood in our city. Jan has led the WHA's Westmount Memories Project, collecting both oral and written accounts about life in our city in the past. WHA Archivist Jane Martin honours the memory of our late queen, Elizabeth II, with photographs of several royal visits from our collection.

It has been a challenge to publish these five newsletters, none of them based on lecture series. It has made me very aware of our archives' treasures of photographs and documents. I am grateful for the technical expertise of our archival assistant Carolyn Singman, whose aid was invaluable. Other archival resources, from the McCord Stewart collection, Westmount Public Library, and the City of Westmount, have been very useful. A return to lectures, whether as in-person talks or zoom presentations, offering a wealth of information and multiple presenters, will be a very welcome change.

CAROLINE BRESLAW

Tribute to Julia Gersovitz

In February of 2022, Julia Gersovitz retired from serving as chair of PAC and the WHC (Westmount Heritage Council). She served as head of the heritage council from its creation in 2015 and chaired PAC from 2001-2008 and from 2014. She is a founding partner of EVOQ Architecture and an adjunct professor at McGill's School of Architecture. In 2019, she was invested into the Order of Canada for her four decades of contribution to the preservation of historic buildings.

Julia is a longtime Westmount resident. Her firm has worked on the restoration of Westmount Public

Library, the renewal of Victoria Hall and the addition of its Gallery, and the rebuilding of the Westmount Lawn Bowling Club pavilion. The City of Westmount and its citizens have been privileged to have had the leading conservation architect in Canada involved in PAC, the WHC, and the community for so many years.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



As the newly elected President of the WHA, I wish to introduce myself to our membership.

I have been a resident of Westmount for more than four decades, always in the same home. I was first elected as member-at-large on the WHA Board at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of May 2014.

Part of my role has been in the background, cataloguing newly acquired reference books under the guidance of the former archivist, Barbara Covington. I participated in offering several walking tours organized by the WHA and delivered in French. I continue to be a member of the Lecture Series Committee. Some of you may recognize me as I welcomed members and guests to the WHA lectures at the door of the Westmount Room, Westmount Library. In addition, I maintain the WHA membership list in collaboration with Anne Barkman.

I take this opportunity to thank Anne for her leadership and stewardship at the helm of the WHA for the past four years. The past two years were challenging ones due to the pandemic and its associated restrictions. With no in-person board meetings, Anne patiently facilitated the holding of Zoom meetings and the two most recent AGMs as president. Behind the scenes, she introduced the more rapid issuance of electronic donation receipts, continued to maintain the Association's website and the email distribution list for contacting our members. For the past

months and on a temporary basis, she enthusiastically participated in the preparation of the Association's monthly financial statements. She forwarded the digital copy of the February 2022 issue of *The Westmount Historian* and mailed out printed issues to a small number of members, and other relevant announcements to our membership, and sent a lengthy letter to the editor of the *Westmount Independent* about the hearing concerning the demolition application for the Goode House (*Indie*, May 31, 2022). At the 2022 AGM, the Board was pleased to welcome Marilynn Gillies, a long-time Westmount resident, as a member-at-large.

In the quiet days of summer, we continued to carry out routine tasks for the Association, including those in the Archives. The WHA was pleased to be invited to participate in the planning of the special Westmount event celebrating Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee, sharing information and supplying archival photographs.

As fall approaches, we have scheduled two lectures in a form suitable to the COVID situation (in-person, virtual or hybrid). Plans have been announced to our members by email and on our website.

As I assume the responsibilities of the position of WHA President I am counting on the continued support of our dedicated Board of Directors and our very supportive WHA members..

LOUISE CARPENTIER

WHA 2022 FALL PRESENTATIONS HERITAGE TOURS IN MONTREAL

Two presentations will be given this fall focusing on heritage walking tours in Montreal. The changes made to their format because of Covid will be discussed. Registration is required.

Thursday, October 20, 2022 7 pm

Online Zoom presentation

Speaker: **Françoise Baby**, Montreal tourist guide specializing in walking, biking, and cultural tours around Montreal

The Two Faces of Montreal's Irish Community

Thursday, November 17, 2022 7 pm

In collaboration with Westmount Public Library – in-person or Zoom

Speaker: **Nancy Dunton**, board member of Heritage Montreal, professor at McGill School of Architecture, co-author of *A Guidebook to Contemporary Architecture in Montreal*

Heritage Montreal's Walking Tours

For more information on the talks and on how to register for them, go to the WHA website: wha.quebec

Series prepared by Caroline Breslaw

ALICE LIGHTHALL and WALTER JACKSON: EARLY MEMORIES

ANDY DODGE, FROM *THE WESTMOUNT EXAMINER*, 1974

Andy Dodge graduated from McGill University in 1971 and by late 1972 was the reporter for The Westmount Examiner. This was the first of a series of articles he wrote in 1974 to celebrate the city's first hundred years.

Children played in the orchard covering Westmount mountain; they climbed in the trees and stole apples. Youngsters ran sleds and bicycles down Clarke avenue, Argyle and Church Hill. A cow fell into a cesspool near Olivier avenue, and had to be pulled out by the Westmount Fire Brigade.

These and other scenes are but few of the recollections of Westmount around the turn of the century still fresh in the minds of Miss Alice Lighthall, 422 Metcalfe avenue, and Walter Jackson, 469 Argyle avenue, who grew up in the Town of Cote St. Antoine, later to be known as Westmount, and got into their share of mischief here.

Both youngsters enjoyed the lush fields and orchards of the Murray and Raynes estates above Cote St. Antoine road, since Miss Lighthall lived within the Murray estate on what is now Murray avenue, while Mr. Jackson's father was one of the first to construct houses (still standing) along Argyle avenue, about 1895.

The two were among those who enjoyed tobogganing down "Brehauld's Hill," now about where Mountain avenue runs between Montrose avenue and Sherbrooke street, though Mr. Jackson admits he and other boys would also use Argyle and Clarke avenues for sleds and toboggans. If the boys used Clarke avenue, Miss Lighthall said with disfavor, it must have been "when their parents didn't know." She admitted, however, that she and her friends used to slide down short, very steep slopes at the top of Aberdeen avenue. "We used to shoot down," she said, this time with glee. "I don't think our parents ever knew that!"

Limestone quarries were an important part of turn-of-the-century Westmount. Mr. Jackson remembers one just outside his house, shaping in a crescent along what now is Thornhill avenue (the Stanton street steps go up the side of the old quarry, now covered by cement fronting) as far as Clarke avenue. Another quarry, which had a swimming-hole, (parents forbade their children to swim there, but that didn't seem to matter) was on the west side of the mountain



The Lighthall family home "Chateau Claire", on the west side of Murray Avenue, was demolished in 1936 as part of the creation of Murray Park.

outside present-day Westmount, near what is now Mira road. Miss Lighthall also can remember a quarry on top of the mountain near the Birks' summer cottage on Westmount Lookout.

Farmhouses dotted the rural area known finally as Westmount, a healthy travel from Montreal which only began to feel the effects of urban growth with the advent of the Canadian Pacific Railway early in the century. Scattered memories of the two veteran Westmounters might give readers a rough idea of what growing up in the town was like:

Mr. Jackson saw his first movie in Elm Hall, a theatre on Elm avenue just above St. Catherine street which remained standing until levelled for construction of Westmount



Sleighs for snow removal stand at the corner of Argyle Avenue and Côte St. Antoine Road in the 1930s. Walter Jackson's home was up the street.



Fields on the Murray property where Alice and Walter played as children, with wonderful views of the St. Lawrence River.

Square. The hall had become a commercial building before being torn down.

Miss Lighthall's home on Murray avenue was the second to be built on the Murray's private driveway which divided their property from that of the Raynes sisters. Though the house was torn down by the city in 1936, the property around it was saved from development by Mrs. William Scott, who was worried that her sons might have no place to play. One of Mrs. Scott's sons later became an alderman, and devoted himself to the restoration and preservation of green space in Westmount.

In 1902, 24 horses pulled equipment up Clarke avenue on a sleigh for construction of a steam pump to draw water up the hill. "At night you could hear the pumping of the engine," Mr. Jackson remembers.

When the Lighthalls built their house on Murray avenue, "the field had been allowed to run wild." Miss Lighthall and her friends found relics of the original Leduc farm there, and brought old kitchen tools and pottery home to show their parents.

In 1910, Mr. Jackson and a friend climbed the McGill Survey School's high tower atop Westmount mountain to watch Halley's Comet.

"We all snowshoed in the winter," Miss Lighthall remembers. Skiing became popular about 1910, and her brother and some friends built a ski jump on the back side of the mountain. "The sidewalks were cleared," Mr. Jackson re-

ported, "but the road never was cleared until it melted in the spring. There was a tremendous amount of horse manure then, and it kept the snow from melting."

Climbing trees was one of the major summertime activities for Miss Lighthall and her friends. They would have a "close system of clubs", each claiming a tree or territory where they would take their doll clothes, sewing and books. Each girl would have her own personal branch in a tree. In winter, the same system continued in snowhouses dug in the high banks around Westmount.

One source of entertainment for Mr. Jackson was the Montreal Park and Island Railway; "to take the 'round the mountain car was like an evening outing." It would travel from Westmount out to Girouard avenue, behind the mountain through Outremont to Park avenue, then south to Montreal and back to Westmount.

Miss Lighthall has fond memories of Miss Shanks' School, run by two maiden ladies who had taught her mother and aunts at Mrs. Lay's School. Miss Shanks' began on the second floor of a building opposite St. Leo's Academy on Clarke avenue, but later moved to Argyle and was renamed "Woodside Seminary." "It was always Miss Shanks' School," Miss Lighthall argued, however, refusing to accept the new name. One history class she recalls, which normally had been taught by the younger Miss Shanks, was taught by the elder sister, who was by then blind. She told the young girls to close their books and gave



St. George's Snowshoe Club (on the site of today's St. George's Elementary School), 1902

CREDIT: McCORD

them a dramatic "word-picture" of the era they were then studying. Miss Lighthall said much of their course had been "memory-work," but that "all of it was interesting."

A series of greenhouses had been constructed on the Greenshields estate between Montrose avenue and Sherbrooke street, just behind Mr. Jackson's home on Argyle avenue. Long after the greenhouses came down, snow would melt quickly above the underground water tanks which had been left behind.

Mrs. Alexander Murray used to make regular visits to one of the five Indian wells still operating nearby, from which she drew her day's supply of drinking water.

Mr. Jackson remembers watching one of his friends, sliding on a toboggan down Clarke avenue, pass directly beneath a street car on Sherbrooke street. The tramways had "sweepers" and plows mounted on front to clear the streets of snow as they passed – more or less similar to a railroad cow-catcher.

Once when her family was on holiday at the seaside in 1899, Miss Lighthall's father, then an alderman and later mayor, (1900-02) read a news report of some skeletons which had been found near St. George's Snow Shoe Club (now part of St. George's School) on The Boulevard. Police,

the story said, were investigating for possible criminal activity related to the find. Her father immediately wired the Westmount Police, ordering them to stop the investigation until his return. (Those were the days when city council had control over the local police.) When he returned, Mr. Lighthall had archaeologists study the bones; they determined they were Indian graves, some of which dated back to the Middle Ages.

At the corner of Argyle avenue and Cote St. Antoine road, just down the hill from Mr. Jackson's house, was a farm with an exercise yard for horses, as well as facilities for cows and chickens. The stable and coach house now are apartments, and the exercise yard is a lane.

The last piece of land in Westmount to be taxed as a farm was at the corner of Clarke avenue and de Maisonneuve boulevard, (then Western avenue) where the huge complex of 4300 de Maisonneuve boulevard now stands. Mr. Jackson remembers when corn and cabbage grew on the site, not so long ago.

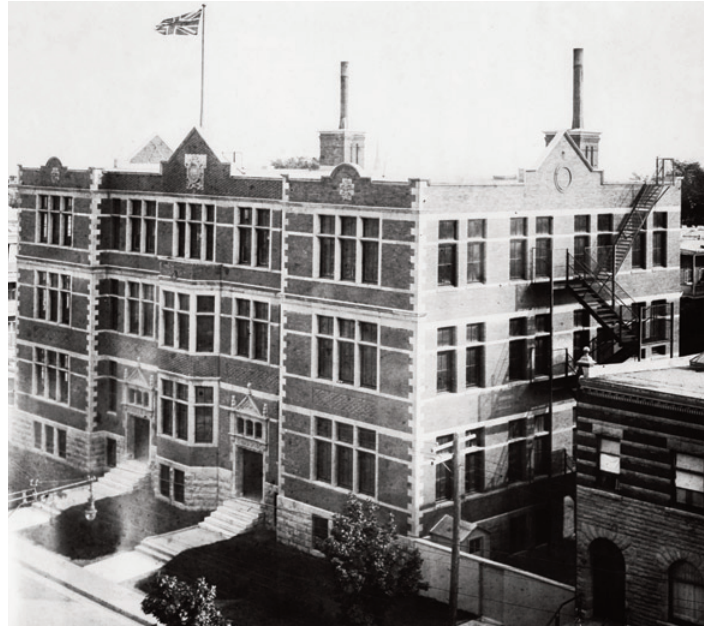
Westmount has changed immensely since the turn of the century, and the intervening years between these memories and today hold fond recollections for many present and former citizens.

MISS COHEN, GROWING UP ON WESTERN AVENUE

Who was the writer of this informative piece? We have called her 'Miss Cohen' because the Cohen family lived at 4262 Western Avenue (today's de Maisonneuve Blvd.) The Cohen siblings attended nearby Queen's School on Olivier Avenue.

The janitor of Queen's School was Mr. Buxton, who used to delight the younger children by making them "aeroplanes" by swinging by an arm and a leg. L... C... and I were his favourites; he called us his dark and his blond angel. The school yard was at the back, fenced in at the lane. Some of the classes were taught how to plant carrots, radishes, shallots, etc. and of course they only came up during the summer months, so we children in the neighbourhood used to reap the harvest! The area opposite the school was where the baseball and rugby? (boys) and baseball (girls) practiced for the teams. Teams competed with the other Westmount public schools.

This area was also used by the R.M.R. regiment, which usually had an admiring audience of a dozen or so children. Once when I was about five, I decided I wanted to watch them drill, but they were facing the back of the yard, so I left the other children and positioned myself in front of them, but at a fair distance. Suddenly, the order was given "fix bayonets" and they all came loping toward me, I back-



The Cohen children attended Queen's School on Olivier Avenue near St. Catherine Street. It was demolished in 1964.

CREDIT: CITY OF WESTMOUNT

ing up as they approached until I reached the back fence and could go no further. Terrified, I stood there shaking until a few yards from me, the order came to halt. They then turned right and started marching, but I stood there frozen



Atwater Park (1890-1927) on Atwater at Western Avenue, where professional baseball games were played. The CND Motherhouse (today's Dawson College) can be seen to the north

CREDIT: BANQ

until my brother Cecil's friend George Brand came (he was all of 8 or 9) put his arm around me and took me home. I'm sure those soldiers had a hard time keeping a straight face!

Looking eastward on Western Ave, the first apt. on the south side was where the Brands lived, Cecil's close friend, his brother John and sister Margotte. Further along was a spacious triplex where my cousins Frankie and Clarence Michaels lived with their two children, Harold and Lorraine. Harold, four years older than I, and an 'outstanding' athlete at Westmount High, was my idol for a whole year. On their right, where Alexis Neon [sic] stands, was a huge playing field, where, as far back as I remember, my father used to take me to watch the nightly baseball games. At the east end of the field was an ice storage place where the ice was kept packed in straw.

On the north side of Western Ave. opposite our house was a fairly large field where we used to pick buttercups (to test whether we liked butter, by putting a flower under our chins) and daisies to make daisy chains. It must have been [sic] I was still in public school that the present building was built. The houses from Oliver are the same as I remember them until we come to the lot next to the old Post Office. Set well back from the street was a little house that looked deserted, but we found otherwise one Halloween night. A group of us were dared by another group to ring the bell and ask "trick or treat?", so we bravely went up the long walk and rang the bell. To our horror, a little old crone opened the door and started to hit us with a broom. Needless to say, we fled in terror and told everyone there was a witch in the house, which immediately became known as the haunted house. I don't remember much about Green Ave. north of Western, except that the 3A streetcar came on Green from Sherbrooke and turned left along St. Catherine St. to the downtown stores. My world pretty much stopped there – Ogilvy's, then Simpson's (which may have still been Murphy's at the time) on to Eaton's, Morgan's, and of course



Westmount Post Office at the corner of Greene Avenue and De Maisonneuve Blvd., 1970s

Birk's across the street. Starting at the southeast corner of Green was the Charlie Soon Laundry, where all our bed and table linens were sent as well as Dad's shirts to be beautifully washed and ironed. There was a rumour at Queen's School that Charlie Soon kept a human finger in a box, so it was pretty scary.



Ogilvy's Ltd. Shoe Shop, 1929

CREDIT: McCORD



Henry Morgan's Store, 1916

CREDIT: McCORD



Goodwin's Department Store, c.1912, Future Site of T. Eaton Co. CREDIT: McCORD



Ogilvy's Ltd., 1929

CREDIT: McCORD

SARAH STEVENSON, MY HOUSE ON CLARKE AVENUE

Sarah Stevenson (née Aitken) lived at 609 Clarke Avenue from 1933-1944 with her siblings Allan and Jane.

In this house lived Sarah, my Di-Dee-Wettums doll and Hug-Me, Jane's teddy bear. They had beds with sheets and blankets, and complete wardrobes in little tin trunks. Nannie made all these and they were wonderful: highland outfits complete with lace jabots and sporrans, winter pullies and overcoats trimmed with swandown (not Hug-Me's: he was a boy), underwear and shoes – "Love in every stitch," said Nannie and we used everything with delight, and so tenderly that most of these clothes are still in perfect condition. Allan had an electric train and lots of other boys' toys, but nothing that bonded him as Sarah and Hug-Me bonded us.

In this house Jane and I had scarlet fever, a serious disease in those days and one for which we would have been banished to the "Contagious Hospital" (the Royal Alexandra), if Nannie had not been prepared to nurse us. A red warning sign was nailed up on the front door and milk bottles were sterilized before going back to the milkman. A sheet soaked in formaldehyde hung at the foot of the nursery stairs and Mum wore a mask, white cap and a long white cover-all when she came to see us. I don't remember Dad coming and certainly Allan wasn't allowed to. For a while we felt quite ill and Nannie scarcely slept. Later, we felt better but were demanding and Nannie scarcely slept [sic]. Young as we were, we knew she was tired, but the closed-in-with-Nannie-for-weeks feeling never palled. When at last we were germ-free, the mattresses were sent



A quarantine notice for scarlet fever had to be posted near the front door when someone in the building had the disease.

CREDIT: NEWYORKSARANAC.COM

out to be fumigated, the toys and books were burned (for this reason, Sarah and Hug-Me had not had scarlet fever with us) and Nannie was at last able "to call her soul her own." We were treated like convalescents for a while and taken for short drives, but before long we were happy to be in the real world again.

In this house we had wonderful birthday parties: frilled, sashed little girls at Jane's or mine and thrilling, grey flannel-suited little boys (calling each other by their surnames) at Allan's. Birthday tea (sandwiches, which we seldom otherwise had) was in the Dining Room (where we never otherwise ate), with games and movies in the Drawing Room (where we never otherwise played). Nannies would hover and sometimes Mums, but those came only if they were friends of our mothers.



Vintage Wettums doll, 1930s



'Pin the Tail on the Donkey' game at a birthday party



Hugmee teddy bear from the 1930s

JOHN SANCTON, CHILDHOOD IN THE 1920S

John Sancton was known to many Westmounters as the editor and publisher of the local newspaper The Westmount Examiner. As a boy, John lived in the Abbey Apartments across from Westmount Park.

The generation of Westmount children of the 1920s had a special relationship with the law. The Westmount Police were a special, hand-picked lot with a capacity to know everyone. (For some, this extended to the citizens' cats and dogs.) At least, they knew where everyone lived and when necessary saw all home safely. Each of the elementary schools – Roslyn Avenue, Argyle, King's, Queen's, St. Paul's and St. Leo's – had their favorite constables posted outside during morning, noontime and afternoon going and coming hours. Primarily they were there to see the children safely across the street. There was no horsing around in their sight. It was emphasized in classes that pupils were the responsibility of the school from the time they stepped out of their homes until their return and that any misbehavior would be detected, reported and probably sternly dealt with.

Constable Maxwell was a longtime familiar figure at Roslyn Avenue School (the "Avenue" was dropped years

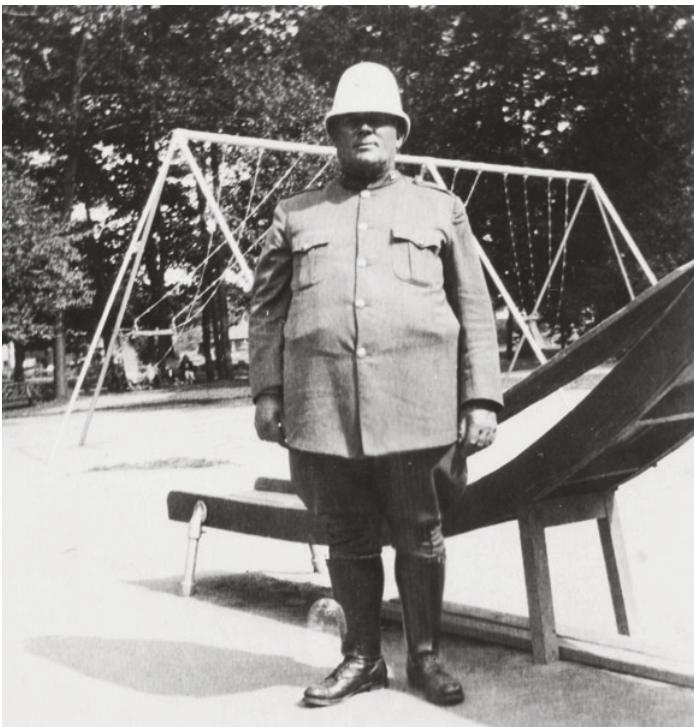


John, holding a toy sailboat by the pond in Westmount Park across from the Abbey Apartments c. 1927

CREDIT: SANCTON FAMILY

later by the centralisers of the Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal after the old Westmount School Board went the way of so much other local authority). This tall, red-haired Scot was respectfully addressed as "Mr. Maxwell" by everyone. There was a nice, safe feeling about being escorted across Westmount avenue, a small hand in his. All the Westmount cops including Mr. Maxwell were distinguishable from the various policemen of other municipalities by their headgear. They wore the same helmets as seen to this day on British "Bobbies" and probably contributed as much as anything to the persistent myth that Westmount is really a British enclave transplanted to Canada.

The conservatism of our local police was also to be



Westmount policeman in 1936

seen in their early patrol cars. They were all black – which mischievous boys could easily spot as the vehicles turned a corner intent on catching someone or a whole gang behaving, not just unlawfully but with lack of suitable decorum. When caught, a miscreant usually was escorted home and presented, with appropriate notice of the alleged misdeed, to a suitably stern parent. Punishment could be as severe as loss of that week's allowance (in middle-Westmount, usually five cents) which put a crimp in going over to J.S. Fry's wondrous stationery store on Sherbrooke street just east of Victoria (where Steinberg's [Metro – ed.] now stands) to stock up on one-cent candy. Honeymoons, rumored without substantiation to be made from sweepings from the candy factory floor, sold two for one cent. There also were jaw-breakers (four for a cent) which were hard round balls of indeterminate sweet material almost impossible to crack with your teeth but, when sucked for what seemed hours finally revealed at the centre a tiny nut, which didn't taste very good. Licorice whips, either black or red, cost a cent apiece.

Some kids had better financial resources than others due to more generous parents, indulgent uncles or aunts or odd-job income such as is not uncommon even today, like shovelling snow from front walks and mowing lawns. There was a select group of boys who sang in the St. Matthias' Church choir where they were paid 10 cents a service (morning and evening on Sundays) and five cents for turning out for a practice during the week. They were paid once a month with "shin-plasters," 25-cent banknotes which were not then uncommon. With these additional resources, those who were not saving up for something special, such as a bicycle, could spread themselves beyond the candy counter at Fry's. Toward the back of the store was a large table on which were spread the "comics." These were not just the sort of "funny papers" which wrapped

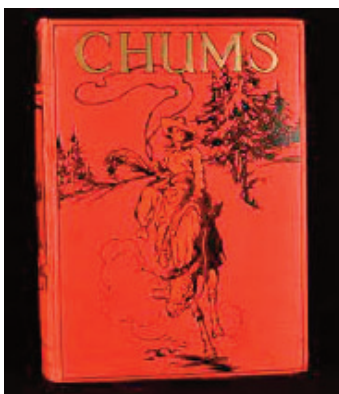


Scotch cart from the yard of Westmount Public Works

"The Standard" (English Montreal's long-defunct Saturday paper) or *The Star Weekly* from Toronto and which survive to this day in the not-necessarily-funnies section of *The Gazette* on Saturdays.

Mr. Fry's great assortment was quite different. These papers came from Britain, arriving each week by one of the many ocean liners which then plied between the Clyde, Liverpool or Southampton and Montreal. Among the more popular publications was *Chums*, which had a varied content to appeal to every red-blooded boy's interest and imagination. These weekly issues were passed over by some who knew that they would receive the lot at Christmas as a gift of the massive bound *Chums Annual*. Instead, there was a lot of blood-and-thunder stuff like *The Thriller* ... devoted to gruesome murders and other evils which even television (blamed for so much "going wrong" in today's kids could not match.

Youngsters could and did "go wrong" back then. Many boys, and some girls, too, took pleasure in riding on horse-drawn milk, grocery, ice, bakery and other delivery wagons (sleighs in winter) which plied Westmount streets daily. Some drivers were tolerant of these young hangers-on. When they were not so welcoming, it was considered good sport to hang onto the back of the rig and, if the driver was regarded as particularly nasty, to pinch some goody. Highly prized were fancy iced cakes made at Mr. Dent Harrison's bakery at Prince Albert and Somerville avenues where, by the way, an open house week was held annually for visitors, who came away with miniature, freshly-baked loaves of bread. These were baked in what the Harrisons boasted was Canada's longest oven.



CHUMS 1939 annual



Illustration from 1939 annual

ROSE SIMPSON, EARLY DAYS NEAR WESTMOUNT PARK

Rose Simpson lived beside Westmount Park soon after it was created. In her writing, she captured many elements that played an important role in residents' lives.

My parents and two small children came to Westmount in 1906. They chose a section of a large vacant lot on Elgin Avenue, between Melbourne and Western Avenue next to the Melville Church (built 1900). The street was named, I presume after Lord Elgin (James Bruce, 8th Earl of Elgin who could trace his ancestry to Robert the Bruce) and as you know Western Avenue is now de Maisonneuve Blvd. He was Governor General of Canada from 1847-1854. The property my parents chose was part of the Henry Thomas Estate, left to his daughter Mrs. Aird from whom my father bought the land. There they had our home built, and with the exception of a ten year absence we have lived there ever since. When we came to live the street was a quiet one, dirt road with a boulevard of trees and flowers down the center; a three wide plank sidewalk – very difficult for a small girl to guide her doll carriage along or roller skate. We had a wood and coal stove and a coal furnace (and a furnace man). We had a lovely vegetable and flower garden, thanks to our German maid, who planted hollyhocks which have continued to the present day in my garden.

As we had moved from the heart of Montreal, Stanley Street, where we lived in a row of houses of professional men – my father was a dentist – you can imagine the joy it was to live by a park such as Westmount Park – endless space to run and play, ponds to sail boats, ducks, pigeons and squirrels to feed; to run up and down the gullies which ran through the center of the park, these were boarded by rustic fences to protect us from falling into the streams below. We played cowboys and Indians to our hearts content. We had picnics at all times of day summer and even winter.

I think the greatest pleasure was in going to the Children's Library (now office section) [Westmount Room today – ed.]: the endless books to choose from low shelves and read at small tables with the sunshine streaming in from tall windows, was a treat indeed: or to go through to the greenhouse and smell and see the lovely flowers there. As we grew older we were allowed to into the big library



Elgin Avenue (today's Melville Avenue), after 1914 from adjacent Westmount Park

PHOTO: J.D. GOODE FROM WHA GOODE FONDS

and sit, chins propped on hands, at the long tables which were lit by low greenshaded lights, and pour over our books and listen to the fire crackling in the big fireplace.

The ponds were magnets, you really weren't a Westmounter until you fell in at least once, or drank at the stone fountain at the corner of the pond – by standing on the doggies' drinking place small children could reach the tap – how we survived pollution is a puzzle. I also remember the drinking tap under the arch of the mound in front of the big library and a tin cup on a chain.

The trees in those days were so numerous and lovely. In looking down, or up Sherbrooke St. was like looking through a green tunnel of huge spreading elms. There were many pine trees in the park and one tree, my favourite, was



A stream in Westmount Park with J. B. Goode on the bridge

PHOTO: J.D. GOODE FROM WHA GOODE FONDS



The Children's Room in Westmount Public Library as it was when Rose used it
CREDIT: WESTMOUNT PUBLIC LIBRARY

a little umbrella tree with a bench beneath it. Another group of trees near the pond were balsam, I think, with clusters of pink and white flowers and later long skinny bean pods.

Of course we all played on the two old cannon, placed on a mound in the center of the park, with a flagpole between them on which fluttered the Union Jack.

There were always great beds of tulips throughout the park and our dog, Jack, a red and white setter, just loved to chase the pigeons, especially through the tulip beds – result – the dogcatcher finally caught him, but not I must admit before we had been warned to keep him tied up.

In winter the park was fairyland to see and to enjoy; slides down gullies and on Murray Hill; skating rinks – then open ones, were here and there – we had one in front of our house. Murray Hill seemed like the country to us and we picked wild violets under the apple trees on the lower slopes. Another rink we enjoyed when we were older was the old M.A.A.A. On Saturdays and one night in the week, a band played while we skated. We had programmes – just like a dance – which were filled out before we arrived.

Rose Simpson included many other anecdotes:

Snow removal – This was collected in low wooden horse-drawn sleighs into which the men shovelled the snow. The sleighs had a step at the back for the driver – and sometimes a small boy. We knew all the horses of the delivery carts, baker, butcher or milkman. We used to feed them and watch at noon when the driver would hang a canvas and leather nose bag filled with oats on the horse's head. It had holes in it for the horse to breathe but I often wondered why he didn't sneeze his head off with the dusty oats. I remember one old horse who used to rest his front feet on the sidewalk while waiting for his driver's command to move on. Driving or walking in winter was slow and difficult as great mounds of snow were built up beside the



Westmount Public Library in its early days before the additions
CREDIT: J.D. GOODE FROM THE WHA GOODE FONDS

road, so high at times one couldn't see across and had to wait for an opening. All this lovely white snow in the park was an invitation to build forts and tunnels – and snow angels – remember lying on your back and swinging your arms to make wings? Snowmen were fun, with coal for eyes and a "corncob pipe" as the song goes. Happy days.

Sleighs – Do any of you remember the big long sleighs, called Kingfishers (don't ask me why, maybe after someone who built them), they had long seats facing each other and were drawn by one or two teams of husky horses. They were hired for birthday parties, Sunday School outings, etc. I remember an older cousin taking me in her red cutter (a high two seater drawn by one horse) for a sleigh ride, we were wrapped in buffalo robes. Unless you have had a sleigh ride in the frosty air, gliding over the snow with the bells on the horse jingling – you really haven't lived.

Stables – Westmount had its share of stables. The bakery on our street had horse-drawn waggons, and large stables. There was a small brick stable on Metcalfe Ave., facing our garden and we could see the horses peeping out of the small windows at the back. Another stable was on Lansdowne and Western Ave., which belonged to a friend, they kept ponies. Horse troughs were provided and kept filled – one of them still remains at the foot of that street.

Freedom – What I remember was the freedom we had to play. Every night before dark and bedtime we played "run sheep run" in groups in and out of peoples gardens. Everyone knew us and did not seem to mind – at least they didn't complain. I also remember catching fireflies on warm summer nights just after dark and of placing them under a tumbler on a table by our beds in the dark – we soon fell asleep and I suspect our mothers released them outside. I still have fireflies in my garden. We were told they were fairies looking for each other with lanterns.

Sports – One of the nicest "picture memories" I have is

of the cricket teams all dressed in white on the green cricket pitch. The ladies served tea to the players and friends at the intervals. The Westmount Amateur Athletic Association had several grass courts behind the Greenhouse and tea was served on special occasions, followed by a dance Saturday night in the old Victoria Hall. The Bowling Green, which is still there, was a pleasant spot to linger and watch the bowlers – in white also but with long, long skirts on the ladies.

Street cars – Remember the good old rattley ones? I loved them. In the good old days, we had a car stop on Sherbrooke Street by the pond and also one on St. Catherine St. – (I see the old rails peeping through the road now.) It was fun to ride on the street cars, straw seats and a conductor at the back to take tickets. I remember one gallant old chap who used to get off and help old ladies on and off. The motor man who drove the car at the front, had a metal knob on the floor under one foot, which he stamped on to ring a bell warning people to get off the track. One more job the conductor had was to change the trolley, he lent out the window at the back and lifted the trolley switch to another wire at intersections – in winter it used to spark. Remember the Golden Chariot, (or golden bedstead). It had seats with an aisle up the middle which graduated up higher and higher. What a treat to climb aboard and go up to the very highest seat at the back, one felt like a king or queen – even a small one. At night it had hoops of lights every few rows. It made a tour of the city.

Nuns' Farm – This was a large tract of land (now 4300 de Maisonneuve) run as a small farm by nuns, who I pre-



The Roper children in front of the cannon in Westmount Park in 1905
CREDIT: McCORD MUSEUM

sumed lived in the little clapboard house on Clark Avenue. One could see them in their voluminous habits bending over the long rows of vegetables. One could smell the cabbages at times. Opposite their property on St. Catherine St. was a row of what I always called "Dolls' Houses." They were in a terrace and alike as two peas in a pod. My mother's aunt lived in one of them. I believe they were also known as "Bride's Row."

Fires – Do you remember the smell of fresh baked bread which used to waft from the windows of the Canada Bread Company on Elgin Avenue? I remember when it caught fire in the middle of the night – in winter. Grace Cunningham, the Manager's daughter, appeared at the foot of my parents' bed, crying, "The bakery is on fire!" You see by this we apparently did not lock our front door in those days. The fireman arrived and put out the fire. The fire station was then



Streetcar heading east along Sherbrooke Street from Victoria Avenue in 1912, with C.E. Box Grocer at the corner



The houses of Brides' Row to the left of the entrance to the MAAA clubhouse, with the farm of the Grey Nuns in the foreground, 1956



The fire that destroyed Victoria Jubilee Hall in Westmount Park in 1924

at the top of Victoria Avenue if I remember correctly. Next day we children collect [sic] pans filled with ice and opened a pretend bakery of our own, complete with icicles for candles. When the bakery was rebuilt they only made cakes and the odour from them was not nearly so nice. The bakery was torn down later and town houses built on the property, but when the stables were demolished the whole stable rat population moved into the houses nearby – ours included. We had a difficult time to exterminate them. Did you ever see a stable rat – huge gray hairy ones the size of a small cat. – well I did one day while peacefully ironing, the cupboard door, where the gas meter is kept – opened and one of these creatures came out and ran across my ironing board and off into the basement – I nearly fainted with fright! Speaking of fires – many of you will remember when the old Victoria Hall burnt down – I felt so sad – another landmark of my life gone – I was horrified to learn that 16 pianos went up in smoke at the same time, many music teachers held classes there.

Stores – I only remember Mrs. Frys on Sherbrooke St. near Victoria Ave., a mecca for small ones with a few pennies to spend, we poured over our purchases while little Mrs. Fry – a Victorian doll, waited patiently. She lived upstairs.

Fêtes – The park was the scene of many fêtes – the I.O.D.E. Fred Fisher Chapter had an ice cream booth at one – see snap – some of you may be in it. The Monday night Band concerts were very popular for some years. The band

played the same tunes year after year, but we enjoyed it – used to be crowded.

Police – The policemen I remember mostly were the ones who used to be on foot, going round and round our block, we felt very safe. I used to love watching the ones on sleek horses controlling the crowds by just edging their way sideways along the crowd, the horses being very careful not to step on anyone's toes but one got the message and moved back. The only crime that sticks in my memory was when they found a girl's skeleton in the bushes behind a fence on the corner of either Metcalfe Ave., or Kensington and Western Ave. I never lingered going home after that episode.



Policeman at the corner of Greene and Dorchester, 1936

MILLIE HICKMORE, MY FONDEST MEMORIES

We conclude these articles from the WHA Archives with a piece written by Millie Hickmore, who passed away in 2002 at the age of 105. It is taken from a booklet she made containing photos and reminiscences of her childhood in Westmount.

Some of my fondest memories of living in Westmount, peaceful times when one could look up at the sky without seeing an aeroplane; walk the streets where there was rarely an accident except for an occasional run-away horse. As children we knew all the policemen by their Christian names, two of them who used to doff their caps and have a turn at bat when we were having a game of baseball on Hillside Avenue. Westmount Park was a popular place to stroll and see the graceful white swans swimming in the small waterways; watch the cricket games opposite Melville Presbyterian Church; or the little children sailing their boats on the pond at the corner of Melville Avenue and Sherbrooke Street.



The Sailing Pond in Westmount Park at the corner of Sherbrooke and Melville Avenue. J.B. Goode is seen with his grandchildren who are playing with a sailboat.
PHOTO: J.D. GOODE PANORAMIC PHOTO FROM WHA GOODE FONDS



Pool deck built over the ravine in Westmount Park, c. 1908



Post card of boat races in the Sailing Pond in Westmount Park, c. 1908

CREDIT: WESTMOUNT PUBLIC LIBRARY



The lower playground in Murray Park, c. late 1930s

WESTMOUNT MEMORIES: DIANA MARTIN A NEIGHBOURHOOD A CENTURY AGO

BY JAN FERGUS

A number of those who remember old Westmount are choosing to write their memories rather than to be interviewed about them. As a result, the WHA's Oral History Project has been renamed the Westmount Memories Project.

Many of us in the so-called baby boomer generation that arrived after the Second World War remember growing up on a street full of other children, often of the same ages. Diana Martin experienced something very similar twenty years earlier. Then Diana Wilson, she and her older sister Shura lived with their parents at 613 Belmont Avenue, a property that backed onto Murray Park between Westmount Avenue and Belmont Crescent. Her lively, evocative written memories describe for us what a Westmount neighborhood was like then, in which all the children knew one another and their parents, visiting each other's houses, porches, back doors, front steps, and balconies – and at the same time she captures a child's

constant sense of discovery, of the wonderful in the familiar.

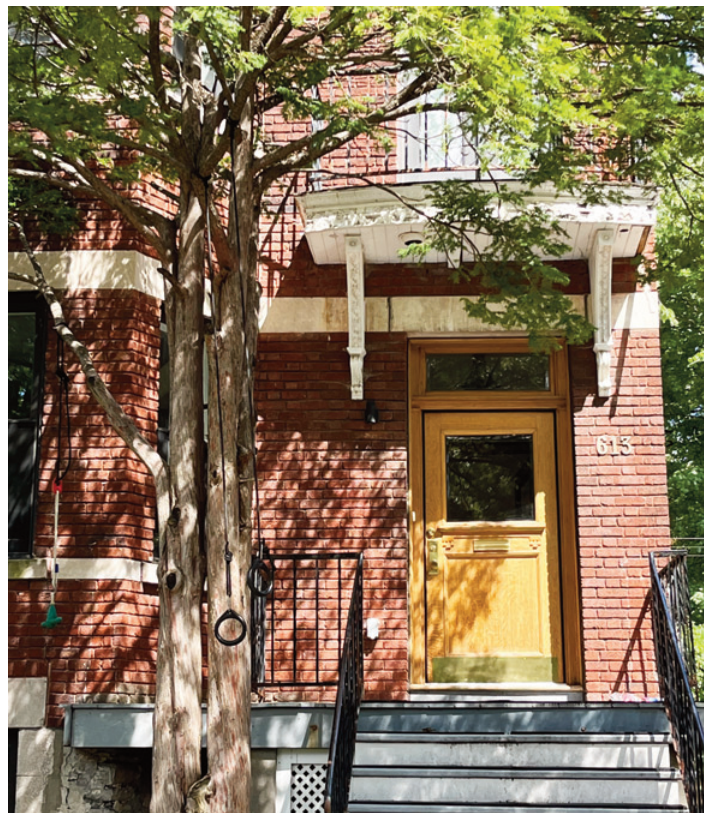
Diana sets the stage: “We were good friends and a tight knit group and pretty much the same age, boys and girls,” and she adds that on the short one-way Belmont, “cars could only go down, so it was very quiet and safe for children to play on the street” and that “With three exceptions, we knew the name of everyone on our short street.” Adults were friendly too. “On many evenings in summer Mr. Phelan would come on his front porch with a book – this was a signal that anyone around could come and sit on the front steps and listen to a story. We looked forward to those times.” Even the patrolling motorcycle cop Frank was a friend: sometimes he “would give some of us a ride in the side car. We would be so proud and excited! Just up and down the street –.” Diana notes that all the children held Frank in the highest regard, and that he was known as a “cop” as distinct from a policeman because he rode a motorcycle.

But other children were central to adventures. “Augusta



Shura (left) and Diana (centre) Wilson with their friend Mary Allen on the front porch of their home in the early 1930s

CREDIT: MARTIN FAMILY



Diana's home at 613 Belmont Avenue as it is today

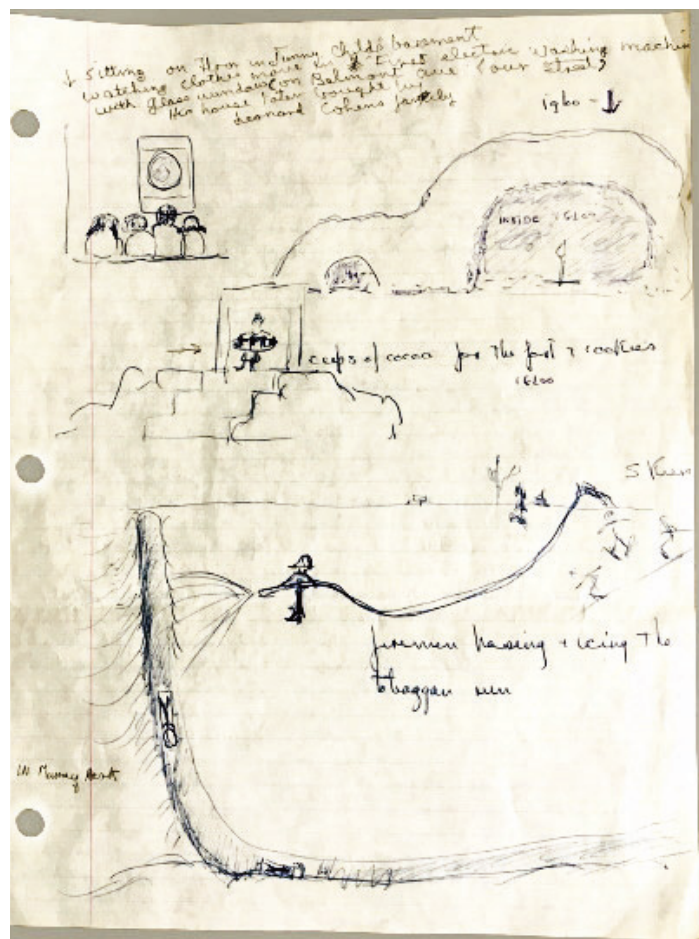
CREDIT: JAN FERGUS, 2022

and Trina lived a few doors down and one day we (a group) went to their backyard as their pear tree was in bloom. We were allowed to take some pears (they were delicious) and then we all went into their garage – first time I had been there, and on the back wall was a huge piece of polished wood – looked twisted and in the middle was a metal circle. I asked what it was! Augusta said it was the propeller from her father's plane from the 1914-1918 'Great War.' We were all so impressed."

Delight was offered by a "man on the street [Mr. Locke, who] was much older than our father – he and his wife did not have children, but we loved him, and he was special to us. For as we ran to greet him, he would stop and greet us and say, 'Why Diana (or Betty, or Jimmy) your hair ribbon looks so pretty today – much larger than usual – why whatever is different' and he would reach out and touch my ribbon and what came out was a lollypop! For the boys, it be something else! He was a great favorite! A real magician!"

Excitement was everywhere. "Anything that happened on our street was always of great interest to all the children. Such an event was the new electric washing machine at Jimmy Child's house. We were all invited to come and see this new marvel. It even had a round glass window in front, so you could see the soapy water and clothes go round and round. Four of us went to the basement to watch – and sat fascinated for over an hour." She adds that Jimmy Child's driveway was long and "After a very heavy snowfall, some men would arrive with shovels to clear driveways and left huge banks of snow at the end of the driveway in the backyard. So the snow piled up like a huge igloo. A group of us on the street would arrive with our own shovels, to scoop out an opening on the snowbank until we had cleaned out a space for a cave, big enough for 2 or 3 children to move about. Jimmy's mother would call for someone in the cave to come up to the kitchen and bring back to the cave some hot chocolate and cookies! And we had a delicious snack – and then time to go home." [See Diana's delightful illustration of children watching the basement washing machine as if it were a television and of the serving of chocolate to the igloo.]

Unsurprisingly, neighborhood food treats loom large in memory. "The daughter of a family right around the corner of our street was to be married – her brother who knew us told us we (on the street) were invited to come to the house and we would have ice cream to help celebrate the occasion. We were so excited! Big containers were on their back balcony and we were given scoops!" And "Most of the boys



An illustrated page done by Diana Martin showing the children seated on the floor watching a friend's washing machine going round and the serving of cocoa to the backyard igloo. At the bottom, a fireman using a hose to make ice for the toboggan run in adjacent Murray Park

CREDIT: DIANA MARTIN

and girls on the street went to Roslyn School. But every Thursday after school as we walked toward home, a most wonderful smell was in the air, it was the smell of fresh baked bread! And we knew Mrs. Williamson was baking – and we had an open invitation to come to her kitchen door and she would give each one of us a fresh baked hot buttered bun! A never to be forgotten treat!"

Diana's warm and happy neighborhood stories sometimes have serious notes. The same Mr. Phelan who read to the children on his porch had three of his own, his youngest, Michel, just three years old. "One day Mr. Phelan came out and we all assembled. However, this time there was no story. He told us little Michel was in the hospital and was very sick with pneumonia. It frightened us, as we had heard that people died of pneumonia." But even this frightening story had a happy ending for all the children. Mr. Phelan "asked us all to say prayers for Michel to help him get well. We did for days and Michel recovered."

EVENTS



Queen Elizabeth's Platinum Jubilee – June 4, 2022

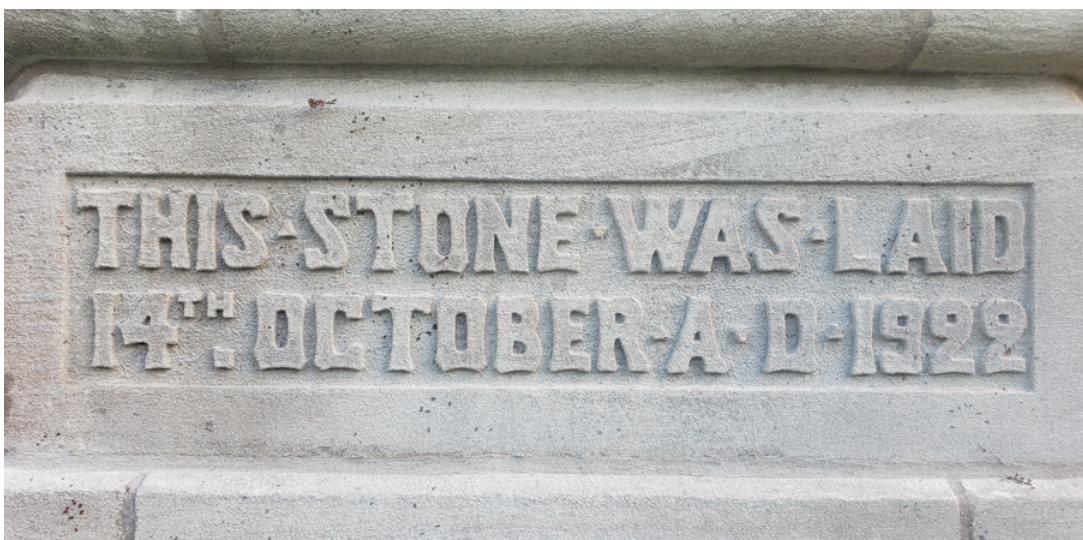
The Westmount Battery in period uniform salutes the Queen's 70 years on the throne. Two bronze cannon from 1810 were fired for the first time since the 1897 Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria.

PHOTO: PATRICK MARTIN, 2022

Shaar Hashomayim Centenary

The cornerstone of Shaar Hashomayim, at the corner of Côte St. Antoine Road and Kensington. In September the Shaar held a rededication service in celebration of its centenary in Westmount.

PHOTO: JON BRESLAW, 2022



Westmount City Hall Centenary

The cornerstone of Westmount City Hall was laid in October of 1922. The municipal building was designed by the father-son team of Robert and Frank Findlay, both Westmount residents.

PHOTO: JON BRESLAW, 2022

FROM THE ARCHIVES

By JANE MARTIN, WHA ARCHIVIST

With the recent death of Queen Elizabeth II, we recall that Westmount has been privileged to enjoy visits by this beloved monarch, and by other leading members of the

British Royal Family, for over a century or more. Glimpses of these momentous occasions are captured in many images from our archival collection, including the following examples.



Awaiting the Prince of Wales in Westmount, 1919



Prince of Wales with Westmount Mayor Peter McLagan, 1919



King George VI and Queen Elizabeth in Westmount, 1939



Queen Elizabeth II & Prince Philip in Westmount, 1951



Decorations along Sherbrooke St. W. for Royal Visit, 1959



Spectators awaiting Queen Elizabeth II's arrival at Westmount City Hall, 1959



Queen Elizabeth II receiving maple syrup gift from Westmount Mayor J.C. Cushing, 1959



Princess Margaret at St. Matthias' Church, 1967