

The Westmount Historian

NEWSLETTER OF THE WESTMOUNT HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

VOLUME 24 NUMBER 2

52nd EDITION

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Watercolour by Robert Findlay of Westmount Public Library, 1901

CREDIT: ROBERT FINDLAY FAMILY

WESTMOUNT PUBLIC LIBRARY: CELEBRATING 125 YEARS



Association historique de Westmount
Westmount Historical Association

The Westmount Historian

NEWSLETTER OF THE WESTMOUNT
HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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EDITOR'S MESSAGE



This issue of *The Westmount Historian* celebrates the 125th anniversary of the Westmount Public Library in 2024. As a prelude to the Library's own activities, the Westmount Historical Association held three lectures in the fall centered on the evolution of the Library. Articles based on the topics of these talks are featured in this special edition: the evolution of the Library's architecture; the growth of its collections, services and events; and the holdings of its archives. The lecture series was done with the support of the Westmount Public Library and its wonderful staff. We are grateful to speakers Peter McNally, Wendy Wayling, Mai Jay, and Lora Baiocco who wrote articles based on their talks and their expert knowledge. We have included many images in this issue from the Library's own extensive archives. Carolyn Singman, the WHA's archival assistant, has given invaluable help with images.

In 1995 Laureen Sweeney was commissioned by the City of Westmount to write about the Library's 1995 expansion and restoration project. She has given us permission to print the Conclusion of the resulting book, *Polishing the Jewel*. This important reference source is now available on the WHA website: wha.quebec.

Jan Fergus, head of the WHA's Westmount Memories Project, documents the use of the Library by the Goode family, with many excerpts from the diaries of J.D. Goode, now housed in the WHA Archives.

Maurice Poggi continues his writings from the fall 2023 issue, this time describing his father Vincent Poggi's work as a stained-glass artist carried out in his studio, located in his home across from Westmount Park.

In "From the Archives", WHA archivist Jane Martin features photos showing early views linked to our Library on the Park.

A painting of Westmount Public Library by its architect Robert Findlay graces the front cover of this issue. Findlay was a gifted artist and draftsman. His family has generously given us permission to include this watercolour.

CAROLINE BRESLAW

DONORS & PATRONS for 2023

The Westmount Historical Association wishes to thank the following people who have made personal donations of over \$25. We are grateful for the generosity of the nine WHA patrons in 2023.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



At the beginning of this New Year, the WHA's Board of Directors offers our members best wishes for 2024!

Since my previous message in the fall 2023 newsletter, we have resumed our regular biannual lecture series, beginning with the topic "Westmount Public Library since 1899". This 3-part series served as a prelude to the WPL's 2024 celebrations to mark its 125th anniversary. The first lecture "The Architectural Evolution of the WPL" covered the restoration of the original library designed by Robert Findlay. Julia Gersovitz and Rosanne Moss, founding partners of EVOQ Architecture, and Peter Trent, former Mayor of Westmount, presented an informative and beautifully illustrated talk. The second presentation by retired Prof. Peter McNally from McGill University and Wendy Wayling, Children's Librarian, and Mai Jay, Information Services Librarian, covered the WPL's growth as an insti-

tution regarding its collections, services, and events. In the final presentation, Lora Baiocco, Online Services and Archives Librarian, provided an overview of the treasures of the WPL's archives and special collections (post cards and art). All lectures were free of charge, open to all registrants and were held in the Library's beautiful Westmount Room. The WHA is grateful to the Westmount Public Library for its support and collaboration in this very well-attended series. We thank the following Westmount merchants for displaying the WHA lecture posters in their establishments: Boulangerie Le Fournil, Campbell Picture Framing, Chez Nick, Fruiterie Mont Victoria, Hogg Hardware, and The Visual Arts Centre. The electronic WestmountMag.ca also publicized our lectures.

In this new calendar year, we hope that members whose memberships ended in 2023 will once again join the WHA and continue to support us in our work and initiatives.

LOUISE CARPENTIER

WHA Winter/Spring 2024 LECTURE SERIES Chapels to Libraries: Transformation Challenges

The three talks in the WHA's 2024 Winter/Spring Lecture Series focus on the repurposing and transformation of the chapels of religious congregations into libraries in three educational institutions in and adjacent to Westmount.

Thursday, February 15, 2024

The Grey Nuns Reading Room, Concordia University: Reading in Silence

Speaker: **Robert Magne**, Architecte associé, Lapointe-Magne et associés, architectes et urbanistes

Thursday, March 21, 2024

Motherhouse of the Congrégation de Notre-Dame and the Chapel Library: The Heart of Dawson College

Speaker: **David Wigglesworth**, retired architect, former Partner of Dimakopoulos et Associés

Thursday, April 18, 2024

Sisters of the Congrégation de Notre-Dame Chapel to Marianopolis College Library: From Sacred Space to Study Space

Speakers: **Manon Asselin**, principal Architect of Atelier TAG & **Amy MacLean**, Coordinator, Library Services, Marianopolis College

Westmount Room, Westmount Public Library, 4574 Sherbrooke St. W., from 7 to 9 pm.

Admission free for members. \$5 for others at the door – wha.quebec – 514-989-5510

Series prepared by Louise Carpentier, & Irina Nazarova

WESTMOUNT PUBLIC LIBRARY'S ARCHITECTURAL EVOLUTION

The first WHA lecture in the fall 2023 series focused on the Westmount Public Library's physical expansion since the first building was opened in 1899. The three featured speakers – Julia Gersovitz, Rosanne Moss and Peter Trent – were closely involved in the 1995 Library project of a large addition and the restoration of the original building. This article is based on their talk and Laureen Sweeney's book "Polishing the Jewel". The lecture was divided into three parts and this article follows its structure.

BY CAROLINE BRESLAW

The Westmount Public Library to 1995

The 1890s was a decade of civic improvements in the Town of Westmount – the Glen Arch, public transportation, roads, building lots and new houses appeared. In 1892 the land for Westmount Park was assembled and purchased by Westmount, which planned to mark the 1897 Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria by building a library in the new park. Robert Findlay, a local resident, was chosen as the architect. He, with McGill librarian Charles Gould, researched the plan for the library and chose to follow the model of Henry Hobson Richardson, the most important American architect of the time.

Westmount became the first municipality in Quebec to build a public library. The 1899 building was a mixture of two styles – Richardsonian Romanesque, with compressed masonry and a steeply pitched roof, and Queen Anne Revival, with red brick and sandstone and an asymmetrical

profile. The entrance faced the park and featured reliefs by sculptor George Hill and a tower beside the door on the east façade. Large, leaded glass windows filled the men's and women's reading rooms with light and incorporated the names of writers and historical figures. A double-sided fireplace and arches divided the space into two rooms. Victoria Jubilee Hall, a community center also designed by Robert Findlay in a similar style, was built adjacent to the library in its park setting.

Robert Findlay was also commissioned to be architect of the 1911 Children's Library, which was the first municipally-funded children's library in the British Empire. It was designed as a separate wing, with its own entrance facing Sherbrooke Street. The red brick fireplace had a stone inscription and Arts and Crafts tiles showing scenes from *Alice in Wonderland*. The leaded glass windows held names of English authors of children's literature.

In 1924 Robert Findlay and his son Frank Findlay designed an extension to the first Library building. It housed another reading room, as well as a mezzanine for the music collection. This area was modified in 1936 by architect Philip J. Turner and included four demi-lune paintings showing the history of printing.

In 1959, the firm of Durnford, Bolton, Chadwick & Ellwood created a large annex to meet the growing needs of the community. The contemporary-style building housed the children's library on the top floor with the stacks on the two lower floors. The original Children's Library was carved up into small rooms for staff offices. In 1967, the firm of



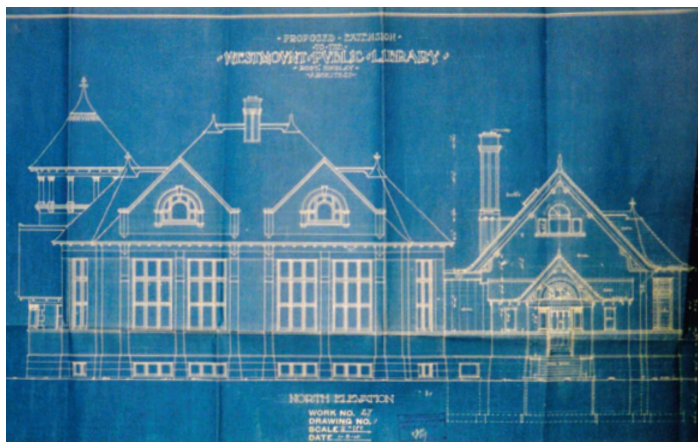
Postcard of the first Library building

CREDIT: WPL POSTCARD COLLECTION 3923



Postcard of the general reading room, with separate sections for men and women

CREDIT: WPL POSTCARD COLLECTION 3928



Robert Findlay's blueprint of the north facade of the 1899 Library with the 1911 Children's Library to its right, 1910

CREDIT: WHA ARCHIVES

Aspler and Kula demolished the North reading room's fireplace and arches to create one large space.

The Library Renewal Project of 1995

In 1990, 64% of Westmounters used the 20,000 sq.ft. library, which urgently needed both renovation and more space. There had been many changes made over time to the heritage building. The original Children's Library had been divided into three rooms and a hallway, painted white with Gyprock walls, acoustic tile ceilings and fluorescent lighting. The roof, covered in asphalt shingle, leaked. The main entrance faced a parking lot with a circular drive. Mayor May Cutler urged then alderman Peter Trent to launch a Library Project and run for mayor. In 1993, David Culver, the chairman of Alcan, took charge of fundraising for this initiative to lessen the tax burden on residents. David Johnson and David Lank were involved in major gifts, and Marjorie Bronfman became honorary chairman. Citizens actively participated in fundraising projects.

Architect Peter Rose was commissioned to write a feasibility study for the expansion and restoration of the library and became the project's lead architect. The 1959 children's annex, with its awkward entrance and dated design, was to be demolished. In its place, Rose designed a modern addition complementing the exterior of the Findlay wing in colour and building materials. The bay windows and metal cladding echoed the bays of the original. There were heated disagreements about the location of the Library's main entrance. The park entrance was eventually retained, but a new principal entry was created facing Sherbrooke Street,



Postcard of the reference room, with the mezzanine for the music collection

CREDIT: WPL POSTCARD COLLECTION 3932

with a hallway or 'spine' extending to the rear addition. This new southern wing housed the children's library and audiovisual centre on the lower level, staff offices and the reference section on the main floor, and stacks on the two top floors. A glassed atrium in the reference section overlooked the nearby Conservatory.

In 1993, architect Daniel Languedoc of Tétrault, Parent, Languedoc et Associés (TPL) was brought in to form a consortium with architect Peter Rose. The firm was known for finishing projects on schedule and on budget.

Restoration of the WPL and later interventions

Julia Gersovitz and Rosanne Moss of Gersovitz and Moss (now EVOQ Architecture) were hired in 1995 to restore and furnish the interior of the Findlay Wing in the spirit of the original. The two Findlay reading rooms were given a rich colour palette with many decorative finishes restored. Columns were marbleized, capitals were repaired, and blank panels were removed from large arches. Painted upper stencil bands were reproduced, based on archival photos. The four Adam Sheriff Scott panels depicting the history of printing were installed in the Cube Room housing newspapers and periodicals, behind the main circulation desk.

The original children's library, to be used for meetings, lectures, films and study, was renamed the Westmount Room. The architects employed an Arts and Crafts aesthetic, with Voysey wallpaper and furniture which they designed. A frieze of quotations from French and English authors was created.



Mayor Peter Trent, former Mayor May Cutler, and Chief Librarian Caroline Thibodeau at the official opening reception of the renewed Library on Nov.9, 1995

PHOTO: LAUREEN SWEENEY

In 2018 EVOQ Architecture reorganized the reference library. A comfortable seating area was created in the sunny atrium, and the work tables were moved to an area behind the reference desk. Computer stations for public use were designed and installed. The children's library was also refreshed with new carpets and paint, and computer stations were created.



The speakers for the September 2023 lecture on the architectural evolution of WPL. Julia Gersovitz, Peter Trent, and Rosanne Moss.

PHOTO: DAVID MILLER

When the Library was reopened in 1995, the Findlay Wing had been restored, and the new wing added 10,000 sq. ft. of much-needed floor space. The Westmount Public Library has continued to evolve from the original small building of 1899 to a complex housing an array of attractive and functional spaces catering to multiple uses.



Scale model of WPL by Peter Rose, May 1994

CREDIT: WPL ARCHIVES

WESTMOUNT PUBLIC LIBRARY'S GROWTH FROM 1899 TO 2024

BY PETER F. McNALLY, WENDY WAYLING, AND MAI JAY

Established at the end of the 19th century, Westmount Public Library and its historic building have displayed a remarkable ability to meet the challenges – local, national, and international – of the past 125 years. It has remained true to its mission to encourage and support reading and learning.

Constituted in 1873 as Côte St Antoine, Westmount acquired its current name in 1895 in tandem with being identified as a desirable residential community – in easy commuting distance to Montreal – for middle class professionals, business men, and their families. Along with quiet, tree-lined streets the community offered desirable family amenities such as churches, schools, and parks. As its contribution to celebrations for Queen Victoria's 1897 Diamond Jubilee, Westmount elected to build a public library in the park running along the south side of Sherbrooke St.

Westmount Public Library emerged within the context of late 19th century social change and technological innovation that included mass literacy, mass education, and

the easy availability of cheap books and magazines. The growing demand for literate and educated people in a wide range of professions and occupations spurred the development of free public schools and free public libraries.

Precursors of public libraries emerged throughout 19th century Canada, with Ontario (1882) adopting the country's first public library legislation, followed by British Columbia (1891) and Manitoba (1899). Quebec took a different route with the 1890 Municipal Act giving communities the power to establish and maintain public libraries – Westmount being the first to do so. By comparison, Montreal was much slower developing a public library system, and in 1903 rejected Andrew Carnegie's offer to build a library for the city, similar to those built with his financial support in other parts of Canada and elsewhere.

Opening in 1899 and continuing to the present in what is probably Canada's oldest specifically-designed public library building, Westmount Public Library has benefitted from continuing advantages: loyalty of a prosperous community; support from Westmount officials; ready supply of trained librarians from McGill and later l'Université de



Head Librarian Mary Solace Saxe

CREDIT: WPL PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTION



Kathleen Jenkins, who succeeded Saxe as Head Librarian

CREDIT: WPL PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTION

Montréal; and never-ending streams of library users. That the community was sufficiently large to support a library is clear from its population statistics:

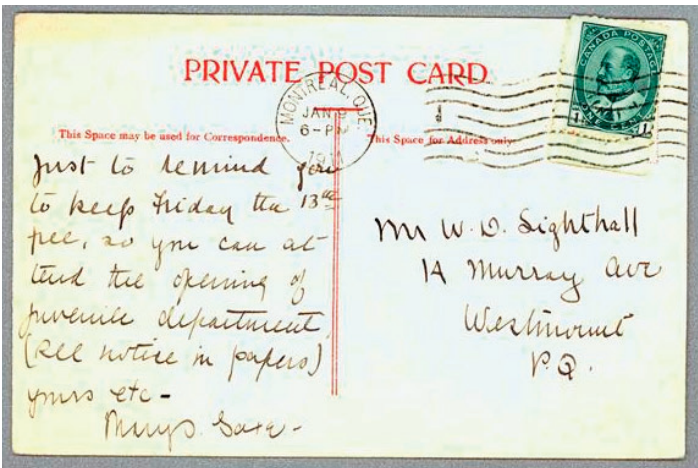
TABLE 1: Westmount's Population

YEAR	POPULATION
1899	7,716
1919	19,500
2021	19,658

A key element of the Library's success has been the quality of its leadership over the past century and a quarter, beginning with its second and third Chief Librarians – Mary Saxe (1901-1931) and Kathleen Jenkins (1931-1962) – who held office for nearly one-half the library's 125 year history! Educated, intelligent, and creative – they appreciated the need for change and how to accomplish it. They became immersed in librarianship and followed closely the profession's newly emerging theories, principles, and practice. They were actively involved in library associations – attending meetings, holding office, making presentations, and publishing articles in professional journals. Both were quickly identified as leaders in the profession and Westmount Public Library was soon identified as a model public library. Both women were also involved in civic organizations, and published books attracting general audiences.

A major accomplishment for Saxe was having library membership equaling 50% of Westmount's population. Growth of circulation during her years was equally impressive.

To cope with significant increases in collections and use, in 1911 and 1925 the Library building received additions, accompanied by reorganized space and services. Saxe also introduced changes that at the time were considered innovative but today are taken for granted, such as integrating separate reading rooms for men and women, opening the stacks for users to browse the collection, providing



Invitation sent to William Lighthall for the opening of the Children's Library in 1911
CREDIT: WPL ARCHIVES

reference service, accepting the public's demand for novels, and acquiring French language books for Westmount's relatively small but growing Francophone population. Perhaps her most significant innovation was introducing, in 1911, a children's section with a dedicated librarian. In fact, Westmount was one of the first public libraries in Canada to introduce service for children. During World War I (1914-1918) the Library provided books and related information dealing with the war and its social impact.

Indicative of the legacy bequeathed by Saxe to the citizens of Westmount were these comments in the 1933 report, *Libraries in Canada*, published by the Carnegie Corporation of New York: "...there is only one [Quebec public library] that functions in any way comparable to the good city libraries of the rest of Canada – the public library at Westmount." The report went on to say: "It is housed in a beautiful building in the municipal park, has a fine collection of books and a fully trained staff. It was a pioneer in introducing the children's room and the trained children's librarian...Through the influence of Miss Mary Saxe...the library has exerted a distinct influence on the cultural life of the city." In addition to her professional activities, Saxe was active in civic associations, wrote plays – some of

TABLE 2: Circulation: Volumes (Adult) Volumes (Children) Total (Volumes) and Membership – Westmount Public Library

YEAR	ADULT Circulation	CHILDREN Circulation	TOTAL Circulation	MEMBERS
1899	1,902		1,902	694
1905	38,414		38,414	3,586
1909	48,064		48,064	3,160
1914	40,014	18,839	58,883	6,090
1919	72,170	18,740	90,910	10,580
1930	85,374	30,955	116,329	10,000

SOURCE: WESTMOUNT PUBLIC LIBRARY, ANNUAL REPORTS, BOOK CIRCULATION REGISTER, 1899-1930

which were produced – and published a children’s book, *Our Little Quebec Cousin* (1919).

Saxe’s final contribution to the Library was hand-picking her successor, Kathleen Jenkins (1931-1962). Jenkins had to cope immediately with the Great Depression of the 1930s, including service to the poor and indigent. In 1936, the Library was remodelled and a small annex built. During World War II (1939-1945) service was provided to members of the armed forces, and war-related information to the general public. Due to wartime shortages, acquiring new books became increasingly difficult, which led to declining circulation. This permitted the staff, however, to re-catalogue the collection into the Dewey Decimal System. Post-war prosperity and the baby boom resulted in the 1959 construction of large new addition to the Library. It permitted major expansion of the children’s department, and expanded shelving for 100,000 volumes.

Like her predecessor, Jenkins was active in both library and civic communities. She lectured in the McGill Library School, as have many other Westmount librarians. She was also active in library associations, serving as President of both the Quebec Library Association and the Canadian Library Association. Her book – *Montreal, Island City of the St. Lawrence* (1966) – is still read today. In 1967, Sir George Williams University (a predecessor of Concordia University) awarded her an Honorary Doctorate in recognition of her contribution to the community.

Jenkins’ retirement in 1962 coincided with the start of Quebec’s Quiet Revolution, characterized by nationalism, secularism, and government involvement in the economy, culture, education, health, and welfare. Language legislation promoted French and limited English. Proposals to separate Quebec from Canada were defeated in 1980 and 1995 referendums. In 1964, a staff member began curating the Library’s French language collection.



The Children’s Library ca. 1930s

CREDIT: WPL ARCHIVES

Other late 20th century developments affecting Westmount included the introduction of audio-visual material into library collections, and computers into library operations. Joining networks and providing internet access to patrons also emerged as priorities. Community groups and organizations such as the Westmount Historical Association began meeting at the Library. The widespread introduction of public libraries within Quebec’s Francophone community reduced the singularity of the Westmount’s accomplishments and provided it with effective partners. From January 1, 2002 to January 1, 2006, Westmount and its Library were part of the merged City of Montreal. Today, membership is free to residents of Westmount, and available to non-residents for a fee.

In 1997, following the major renovation and rebuilding project of 1994/95, the Library adopted as its mission statement: “...to enrich the community by providing a welcoming environment in which to read, learn and discover.”

Head Librarians:

1898 – Beatrice Glen Moore; 1901 – Mary Saxe;
1931 – Kathleen Jenkins*; 1962 – Norah Bryant*;
1982 – Rosemary Lydon*; 1993 – Caroline Thibodeau;
2000 – Anne Moffat*; 2009 – Julie-Anne Cardella;
2021 – Anne Marie Lacombe

*Served as President of the Quebec Library Association/
Association des bibliothécaires du Québec

Highlights of the Last 30 Years

- 1994** The Library becomes the first public library in Quebec to connect to the Internet.
- 1995** The Library renovation and new addition are completed, and the catalogue is automated.
- 1996** The Library’s website is launched.
- 1998** Programming Librarian position is created.
- 1999** Centenary celebrations are marked with special activities all year. A Victorian Teddy Bear Party for children and a Centennial Author Gala are held on June 20.
- 2000** A Friends of the Library group is formed.
- 2007** Online Services and Archives Librarian position is created.
- 2009** An eBook collection is added.
- 2010** The Library’s Storytelling Garden wins the top landscaping award in a competition held by Les Arts et la Ville.
- 2011** The Children’s Library celebrates its 100th anniversary with a sleepover in the Library.
- 2013** A new teen area is unveiled on the first floor.



Children's Library's Drag Storytime with Barbada de Barbades, held December 3, 2023 CREDIT: WPL



Launch of the 125th anniversary celebrations for the WPL, held on January 4, 2024. Some members of the 125th Anniversary Committee, shown l. to r. – Lora Baiocco, Elisabeth Roux, Wendy Wayling, and Daniel Miguez de Luca. PHOTO: RALPH THOMPSON

2015 The Children's Library wins First Place for its TD Summer Reading Club. With the prize money, a new owl mascot is created: Sir Findlay Featherton.

2016 Seed lending library, documentary film club, multi-touch table are a few of the new services added. The first StoryWalk® is installed in Westmount Park.

2020 Fines on all children's materials are abolished in January.

Covid-19 Pandemic: the Library closes to the public on March 13, 2020. Curbside pickup, online storytime, take-and-make crafts for children, online reader's advisory, and online events are implemented, including documentary film club, Zoom lectures, McEntyre Literary Competition. The Children's Library wins First Prize for its first-ever online TD Summer Reading Club.

2021 In-person browsing for members starts July 5th. As of December 13, restrictions are lifted, but the Library closes again December 20 due to an increase in Covid cases and new government restrictions. It remains closed until January 19, 2022.

2022 Curbside pickup resumes. Library reopens for browsing February 14 and by June regular opening hours are reinstated.

Fines on all adult material are abolished.

2023 Total loans: 265,569 items (physical and online)
Total number of programs/participants for all ages: 448/24,993

Total number of reference questions answered: 11,548

Total number of in-person visits: 289,657 (gate count)

Peter McNally, Professor Emeritus & Director, History of McGill Project; Wendy Wayling, WPL Children's Librarian & Member of the 125th Anniversary Committee; Mai Jay, WPL Information Services Librarian

Sources:

Elizabeth Hanson. *A Jewel in a Park: Westmount Public Library, 1897-1918*. Montreal, Véhicule, 1997.

Marcel Lajeunesse. "Mary Solace Saxe et la Bibliothèque publique de Westmount." *Pour une histoire des femmes bibliothécaires au Québec: portraits des femmes bibliothécaires au Québec*. Sous la direction de Marcel Lajeunesse. Montréal, Presses de l'Université du Québec, 2020. p. 27-41.

François Séguin. *D'obscurantisme et de lumières: la bibliothèque publique au Québec des origines au 21^e siècle*. Montréal, Hurtubise, 2016.

Laureen Sweeney. *Polishing the Jewel: A History of the Renewal Project: Westmount Public Library*. City of Westmount, 1995.

City of Westmount. Annual Reports

Westmount Public Library. Annual Reports.



Brass plaque from the office of architects Robert and Frank Findlay, donated by the family of Robert Findlay in 2006

CREDIT: WHA ARCHIVES

TREASURES OF THE ARCHIVES: POSTCARDS, EPHEMERA, AND ART

BY LORA BAIOTTO,
ONLINE SERVICES AND ARCHIVES LIBRARIAN

The Westmount Public Library (WPL) holds special collections and archives dedicated to the history of the institution – and these collections include numerous treasures. What is a treasure? The answer is surely subjective, but for our purposes it is anything that answers questions about the history of the Library or evokes stories about people and historical moments. This article explores some of the highlights and treasures of five distinct sub-collections: the Westmount Public Library Postcards Collection, the Art Collection and inventory, the Photograph collection, the Historical Items archive, and the Historical Documents archive.

The Archives: Historical Items and Documents

The WPL has always been a place to find information and inspiration. Throughout its history, the Library has been represented in the official archives of the City of Westmount. In addition to those official records, however, the WPL's back rooms were a repository for items and ephemera that generations of librarians thought interesting, important, or worth keeping. In 2007, the Library's then-director, Ann Moffat, created the position of Online Services and Archives Librarian, ensuring that what had been left behind for over a century would be identified and inventoried to archival standards. While it may not be common for a single-branch library to have an archive dedicated to its own history, it is precisely because of the importance of the WPL in the history of libraries in Quebec, and more broadly in North America, that these archival items and documents are worthy of our professional attention. The traces left behind are true library treasures that tell the story of the institution in unique ways.

The archives were formally established through a project the WPL undertook in 2011, with funding from Young Canada Works. At the end of the eight-week project the team had described and inventoried all the documents, historical items,

and photographs found throughout the library, using proper archival description and standards. One item, for example, which reaches beyond the history of the WPL itself, is a letter signed by Victorian poet and playwright Robert Browning. The letter was donated by Westmounter and soldier George Shirley St. John Simpson, stationed overseas in 1945. The letter has broadly acknowledged historical value for the signature alone, but the item is also accompanied by a thank-you letter by Kathleen Jenkins', former Library director (1931-1962) and published historian, dated May 29, 1945. The note highlights the history and reality of the WPL at the end of the Second World War:

Westmount Library will be glad to see you and many other old friends back in Canada. Most of our borrowers in the last few years have been older men and women, and children – with the addition of men and women from the Transport Command, many of them from England – evacuee mothers and children from England – and refugees from nearly every country in Europe.

Excerpt from Thank-you letter, dated May 29, 1945, from Kathleen Jenkins to George Shirley St. John Simpson on receipt of the donation of the Robert Browning letter. From Historical Items archive, F3-B72-D10.

Today, researchers can bring their questions to the Online Services and Archives Librarian, who will direct them to any resources the archive may contain.



Kathleen Jenkins, Chief Librarian of the WPL from 1931-1962

CREDIT: WPL PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTION, P159

The Westmount Public Library Postcard Collection

The WPL Postcard collection was created in 1974. A special project to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Library and the 100th anniversary of the City, the idea to collect postcards as a means of preserving the pictorial social history of Quebec came from John Mappin, then-Chairman of the WPL Committee. The call to Westmount-

ers to contribute to the collection ("The Centennial Postcard Collection is growing by leaps and bounds. Please give the Westmount Library your old postcards.") was printed on the back of a postcard, depicting the WPL, tucked into every household's hydro bill. The response was enormous and highlights the generosity of Westmounters. The collection, which started with 11 cards, grew quickly to 13,000 depictions of the province of Quebec. This

portion of the collection can be consulted at the Reference Desk via photocopied and geographically organized binders that include the recto and verso of each card. Depictions of Westmount are also included in the core collection. Those cards can be seen on the Library's Flickr account: www.flickr.com/photos/biblio-westmount/albums/72157626953902143.

The generosity of Westmounters did not stop at this core portion of the collection. They continued to donate cards to the collection, which now stands at over 40,000 cards depicting international landmarks – a world-class collection for any institution. Among the treasures in the collection are some of the earliest known depictions of the Library.



Postcard: "No.11 Children's Room, Civic Library, Westmount, Canada", by A.J. Rice, Rice Studio Limited, Montreal, circa 1910-1920.

CREDIT: WPL POSTCARD COLLECTION 3931



"View of Greene Avenue with Toll Gate at Corner of Sherbrooke" by J.H. MacNaughton, purchased by the City of Westmount, 1897

CREDIT: WPL ART COLLECTION

The Art Collection

The Library's art collection, part of the larger City of Westmount art collection, includes an inventory of works housed on the premises. Compiled as part of a Young Canada Works project in 2011, the inventory details 137 items including artist information, media and techniques, size, and notes on provenance and acquisition where available. Highlights of the collection include views of bygone Westmount, including a painting of the toll gate on Sherbrooke St. in 1897.

Other works include a series of Rembrandt restrikes, Robert Findlay's original elevation plans for the 1899 building of the WPL, original artwork from local children's books illustrators, views of the old train station, and much more. Visitors to the WPL are encouraged to look around



and consult the full inventory of works available at the Reference Desk.

The Photograph collection

The Photograph collection spans the early days of the WPL to the present day. With over 1200 individual photos described on an item level as part of the 2011 archives project, and thousands more born digital, this collection provides unique views – both behind the scenes and in the Library's public spaces. The photos are formal, taken by professionals called in to document the library, and informal, taken by staff or citizens, depicting the life of the Library as they experienced it. Overall, it is a rich resource for researchers and historians. A selection of photos – both old and new – can be viewed online on the Library's Flickr account ([flickr.com/bibliowestmount](https://www.flickr.com/photos/bibliowestmount/)).

Enquiries about WPL holdings mentioned in this article, or elsewhere in this issue, can be directed to: lbaiocco@westmount.org

◀ Jan Antonides van der Linden by Rembrandt van Rijn. From the folio "200 Etchings", donated by W.D. Lighthall. This folio contains 5 restrikes from original Rembrandt plates

CREDIT: WPL ART COLLECTION



Stereoscope card depicting William Douw Lighthall, mayor of Westmount (1900-1903) and visionary for the creation of the WPL, in front of the Library, c1899.

CREDIT: WPL PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTION, P829

POLISHING THE JEWEL: A HISTORY OF THE RENEWAL PROJECT

At the time that the Library Renewal Project was being discussed at Westmount City Hall, Laureen Sweeney was covering municipal news for the *Westmount Examiner*. As the project neared completion, she was commissioned by Mayor Peter Trent to write a book chronicling the saga of the Library's 1995 rebirth.

He provided his personal notes and documents (now in the WHA Archives) to aid in the research. She took many of the photographs. Laureen continues to write for our local newspaper, *The Westmount Independent*. She has kindly allowed us to reprint the Conclusion of her book *Polishing the Jewel: A History of the Renewal Project: Westmount Public Library*. This documents in summary the need, intent, and financing of the project and was published by the City of Westmount in 1995.

The entire text can be found on the WHA website: wha.quebecunder.com/Publications.



Polishing the Jewel

A History of the Renewal Project:
Westmount Public Library

LAUREEN SWEENEY

Conclusion

Someone asked me during the preparation of this book how a library "extension" could possibly have taken so long or consumed so many hours of time and resources.

Although I had sat through the eight years of council debate over the project as a Westmount journalist and written thousands of words about it, the only answer I could muster at the time was: "It's a long story."

I'm still not certain there is any simple answer to the question. Maybe that's because Westmount is not a simple place. Maybe it's because the library has always held such a special place in the heart of the community that the easiest way not to make a mistake over it was to do nothing quickly. Or maybe it was simply that so many architects, financial people, professional librarians, builders and other highly qualified citizens make Westmount their home. When the design layout became a controversial issue, for instance, no fewer than 50 librarians, all of them ratepayers and most of them heading major Montreal-area libraries, turned out to contribute their "constructive" criticism.

The issue of spending money during a belt-tightening time also was a key factor because of the frugal and conservative mentality that historically has characterized successive city councils. When budget surpluses of nearly \$20 million were accumulated from 1986 to 1990, most of the windfall was used not to build new buildings but to write off loan by-laws to make the city effectively debt-free. No matter how prosperous the city's image, it's a municipality that pays off its credit cards at the end of the month, as it were, before buying more. The library project was put under a microscope from all angles. Then a new council came in with another microscope and even more angles. Just ask Peter Rose.

Two aspects fascinated me as a journalist. One was the relatively low return of ballots from the poll of all addresses in the city, roughly 18 per cent. Considering the potential tax load of the project, one had to assume that those who did not reply did not oppose. We usually hear from the malcontent. Of course, as it's been duly noted, the rate of return was actually 25 per cent of all property owners, since tenants are not as affected by the tax issue. The second point was the relatively little controversy that surrounded the \$4.5 million refurbishing of the library building. It was the new \$3 million building that created all the fuss. Is that because Westmounters are more accustomed to fixing up their older homes and more comfortable with the worn-look than with newer construction?

In any event, the gem has finally been polished. The torch has been passed to another generation. And the story has been told — thanks to the many people who were so candid in providing their recollections and, in some cases, even their personal notes to augment city documents and, of course, my own record and memories.

LAUREEN SWEENEY
OCTOBER 1995

J.D. GOODE: VISITING THE WESTMOUNT LIBRARY FROM 1912-54



The first Library building, photographed by J.D. Goode in the early 1900s. The roof line of the first Victoria Hall can be seen in the background at the right.

CREDIT: WHA GOODE FONDS

BY JAN FERGUS

John Dudley Goode, who lived many years at the Goode house on 178 Côte St. Antoine, left nearly 70 mentions of his visits over five decades to the Westmount Public Library. His methodically kept diaries include 63 small notebooks (1912-1926) and 27 larger ones (1933-1954). They are among the Goode Fonds in the WHA archives. The mostly brief entries indicate how central the library was to him even in his busy workaholic life: he was self-employed at times as a violinist, stage curtain salesman, mechanic, film maker and developer, eventually with six children. We can appreciate, despite months and years of missing diaries, how his use of the library shifted, but its importance remained.

Known to his family as 'Dudley', he lived as a young man with his parents at 178 and relied on the library primarily for cheap dates with his eventual wife, Marion Ellis, called 'M' in the diaries. In January 1913, he borrowed Conan

Doyle's *A Study in Scarlet* to read with Marion at her family home. In March he met her after supper at the library, where they 'read before wood fire go home afterward'.

Dudley also went to the library at this stage for his own amusement. He often read magazines and newspapers on his visits, favoring British sources like the *Illustrated London News*. In February 1917, he drove 'M to W. library & have nice read'. In May that year they agreed to marry so that he

could avoid possible conscription. On June 1, 1917, he wrote 'Meet M at 6 pm & tell her about our arrangements [to marry in Verdun] for tomorrow. Take her to library & home afterwards (XX). Despite being married, they continued to live with their respective parents for eighteen months. After Marion became pregnant in September 1918, they found and moved into a flat on Madison in NDG in December. From 1912-19, Dudley mentioned visiting the library 22 times.

Once children arrived, and the family lived in NDG, library visits were fewer and primarily



J. D. Goode in his 20s

CREDIT: WHA GOODE FONDS

afforded Dudley downtime – a way to postpone going home to his growing family. He recorded a total of 12 between 1920 and 1925. After work all day in his basement machine shop at 178, he would often walk to the library before proceeding to NDG, perhaps hoping the children would be asleep. In fact, on a Saturday in October 1922, he had lunch at the flat, and wrote that later his 'Mother wants some ice cream which I get. Afterwards to library. Take balance of the ice cream to M. Both babies are in bed'.

When the diaries resume after eight years, in 1933, Dudley and Marion were living in their house at 119 Lewis Avenue (bought in 1923) and had six children, the youngest born in 1931. As many did with the Depression in full force, Dudley used the library for information and relaxation, making 23 visits 1933-1941. No longer a mechanic, he primarily developed and printed film stock, making occasional advertising films, all of which provided an unreliable income for a family of eight. Thus in 1935 he went with Marion to the library to 'get a look at the Toronto Globe for advertising'. But usually he read and relaxed, perhaps forgetting his worries in the library. In November with Marion he found the library 'quite a relaxation. I notice stocks are climbing for which I am very grateful.' On his own in March, 1936, he went 'to library for half an hour. Pleasant read. Nothing new in the Amateur Photographer' and the next year wrote 'interested in L[ondon Illustrated] News and Photographic papers', and another time, 'enjoy reading the magazines'.

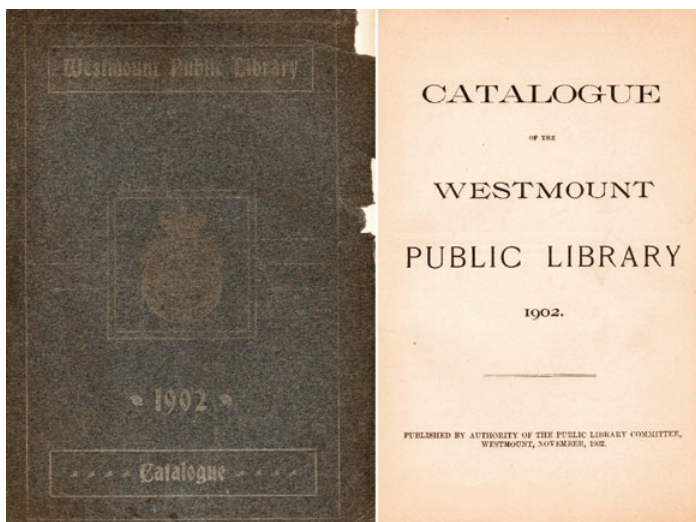
Late in 1940, Dudley was hired as a draftsman by Dominion Engineering Works making artillery in Longueuil. His money problems were ended by a good salary and renting



The reference room where J.D. Goode spent time reading, sometimes with his wife Marion, 1936

CREDIT: WPL PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTION

out Lewis Avenue after his mother died in 1942, when he moved back into 178 with his family. No library visits were noted again until after the war, and just 12 more were mentioned before his death at age 69 in 1954. Two of Dudley's excursions were to attend a Music Appreciation Group with Marion at the library in 1946-47. He still read the *Illustrated London News* and *Punch*, but finally we hear of his interest in withdrawing a specific book – something most of us consider our primary reason for visiting the library, but not often Dudley's. His interest was captured by a 'lovely book of English lakes' which Marion withdrew in March, 1949, and renewed in April, returning it in May. In October Dudley withdrew the 'book of English Lakes' again. Sadly, the actual title is not noted.



1902 Catalogue of Books in Westmount Public Library

CREDIT: WHA GOODE FONDS

WHA/AGM June 11, 2024

The WHA will hold its
Annual General Meeting on
Tuesday, June 11, 2024 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. The meeting will
be virtual and prior registration will be required.

FROM MILAN TO WESTMOUNT: AN ARTIST'S JOURNEY

BY MAURICE POGGI

Westmounters are familiar with the life and work of stained-glass artist Charles Wilson Kelsey, whose home and studio were on Metcalfe between de Maisonneuve and St. Catherine. What is not as well known is that another stained-glass artist, my father Vincent Poggi, lived and worked just a couple of blocks away on St. Catherine between Lansdowne and Grosvenor.

He was born in Milan, Italy, in 1900. In 1917 he enrolled in Milan's Brera Academy of Fine Arts. The Academy had a traditional curriculum that emphasized drawing, and it was only in his fifth and sixth years that he specialized in painting. On leaving the Brera in 1923, he was considering a career as a portrait artist. He decided to go to Paris, perhaps attracted by its artistic milieu. He found work there with a painting and decorating firm. My mother said that he painted decors in luxury homes in Paris. He also was a house painter for the firm. He once said that someone who saw him paint could tell from his brush stroke that he was not a house painter by training.

The 1924 Summer Olympic Games were held in Paris. My father was painting one of the Olympic facilities when he saw the American Olympic swimmer Johnny Weissmuller practising in a nearby pool. Weissmuller won several gold medals at the Paris Olympics and played Tarzan in feature films in the 1930s and 40s. In his youth my father had been a competitive amateur swimmer and I remember how fast he could swim the crawl. It must have been a thrill for him to see Weissmuller swim.

Around 1926 my father returned to Milan, deciding there that he would earn his living from stained glass. Though he continued to paint portraits all his life, he chose stained glass because he was uncomfortable chatting with sitters, particularly female sitters. In Milan he learned how to design and make stained-glass windows. However, he did not have steady work. According to my mother, this prompted his decision to come to Montreal in 1929 to work for Guido Nincheri (1885-1973), an artist from Prato, Italy, who had a successful studio on Pie IX Blvd in east-end Montreal.

In the 1930s the Nincheri studio had a large commission to decorate Église St-Léon, on De Maisonneuve between

Kitchener and Clarke, with murals and stained glass. The stained-glass artist Matthew Martirano (1908-1996), who also worked in Nincheri's studio, told me that my father painted some of the aisle windows in the church. As a



The Poggi home (now demolished) on Saint Catherine Street between Lansdowne and Grosvenor CREDIT: MAURICE POGGI



Vincent Poggi painting a portrait in Milan in 1928

CREDIT: MAURICE POGGI



Vincent Poggi with son Maurice in his Westmount stained glass studio
CREDIT: MAURICE POGGI

portrait artist my father would have painted at least the heads and hands of figures in some of these windows. He was also responsible for the portraits of the church's altar boys in the sacristy's stained glass. Some years ago, the parish priest told me that a parishioner remembered posing for my father when he was an altar boy.

After Italy declared war on Great Britain and France in 1940, my father was one of several hundred men of Italian origin interned by Canada as enemy aliens. While interned in Ontario and New Brunswick, he drew scenes of everyday life in the internment camp and painted and drew portraits of fellow internees. He also painted the portrait of a camp adjutant and, from a photograph, the portrait of the wife of a camp guard. Many of these works are now in the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa. After his release in September, 1943, he briefly worked as a draftsman for an engineering firm and as a painter of wooden toys for a toy manufacturer.

In early 1944, my father found work as a stained-glass artist at J.P. O'Shea, a Montreal glass firm that maintained a stained-glass department. Late that year my parents married, and I was born in 1945. In 1947, while working for O'Shea, my father founded his own studio, working out of their apartment on Mountain Street downtown and a rented garage on Sherbrooke near Amherst. My mother recalled walking to the garage with me and pieces of painted glass in the baby carriage.

Around 1949-1950, the O'Shea studio closed and my family moved to a large house at 4789 St. Catherine St. West, between Lansdowne and Grosvenor avenues. The 222 Lansdowne condo building now stands on part of the site. We lived upstairs, and my father converted the first floor into his studio. He followed the traditional steps in

making a leaded stained-glass window, from designing the window in a small watercolour sketch to executing the design in coloured glass. Perhaps the easiest way to visualize a stained-glass window is to think of it as a puzzle made up of separate pieces of coloured glass joined by strips of lead. The key to appreciating my father's work is how he used the colour of glass. He did not use colour to realistically portray what a scene or figure would look like. Rather, he chose colours that gave an overall decorative effect to the window. When you see one of his windows, you are aware that it illustrates a particular figure or theme, but your eye is also drawn to the harmonious colours of the composition.

Throughout the 1950s my father had many commissions, mainly in Montreal and the surrounding area. During those years his style changed. He undoubtedly saw the stylized stained glass from France that began to appear in Quebec in the 1950s. He simplified compositions and made his figures more abstract. The changes in his style were also due to the influence of artist Matthew Martirano, whom, as I



Vincent Poggi working on stained glass in his studio

CREDIT: MAURICE POGGI

mentioned, my father knew from the Nincheri studio. Matthew Martirano once told me that my father had learned a lot from him and that he had learned a lot from my father.

In the late 1950s my father received a commission for two memorial windows in the Church of the Ascension of Our Lord on Sherbrooke, between Kitchener and Clarke. For most commissions, his stencilled signature at the base of windows was STUDIO V. POGGI MONTREAL. For the Ascension, he substituted Westmount for Montreal in the signature.

Around 1960 he made a memorial window for the new Presbyterian Church of the Town of Mount Royal that was designed by Francis Nobbs, Percy Nobbs's son. A Westmount resident, Percy Nobbs was a prominent architect who had also designed stained glass. Francis Nobbs arranged for his father to visit my father in his studio. Next

door to us was an office building with an architects' office on the second floor overlooking our house. When my parents and Percy Nobbs went to our back yard the architects recognized Nobbs and stuck their heads out the window to catch a look at him.

My father's last commission was around 1967 for the aisle windows of Église St-Antoine in St. Jérôme. Around 1970 he moved to a house on St. Catherine, opposite the RMR Armoury. He died in 1988.

In growing up, I was too young to appreciate my father's windows. I do now. I have also come to value what was behind his work: years of preparation to be an artist; adapting his skills to another medium, stained glass; and an entrepreneurial spirit that allowed him to establish his own studio. My father was proud to be an artist and was happy to live in Westmount.



Two sets of memorial windows by Vincent Poggi in Ascension of Our Lord Church in Westmount, Studio Poggi, 1960. Left, Mr. and Mrs. R.J. McCauley Memorial Window; Right, Michael Murphy and Family Memorial Window

CREDIT: ©REGISTRY OF STAINED GLASS WINDOWS IN CANADA

FROM THE ARCHIVES

By JANE MARTIN, WHA ARCHIVIST

Along with its graceful architecture, a key element of the Westmount Public Library's early appeal was its urban setting within a wooded park filled with winding paths and streams, as well as built elements such as rustic railings and

footbridges, and a children's sailing pond. The archival photos shown here help us imagine Westmount Park (created in 1898) as it was in roughly the first decade following the new library's opening. While the setting has undergone changes over the years, some of the views are still easily recognizable.



Play area in Westmount Park near Sherbrooke Street
CREDIT: WPL POSTCARD COLLECTION 13933



Mother of Charles N. Valiquet near sailing pond, 1912
PHOTO: C. N. VALIQUET, WHA ARCHIVES



Alfred Jr. and Vennor Roper in Westmount Park near Sherbrooke St and Strathcona, 1905
CREDIT: MCCORD MUSEUM



Strolling in Westmount Park, 1897
CREDIT: WHA ROBERT HARVIE FONDS



J.B. Goode, photographed by his son J.D. Goode, on a rustic bridge in Westmount Park PHOTO: J.D. GOODE, WHA GOODE FONDS



Sailing pond in Westmount Park in the 1890s with Melville Avenue in the background. J.B. Goode is shown with his two sons and the sailboat he made for them.
CREDIT: WHA GOODE FONDS