

The Westmount Historian

NEWSLETTER OF THE WESTMOUNT HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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Interior of Grey Nuns chapel ca.1890 by Wm. Notman & Son
CREDIT: McCORD MUSEUM



Concordia University reading room in former chapel
PHOTO: MICHEL BRUNELLE FOR LAPOINTE MAGNE

FROM SACRED SPACE TO STUDY SPACE



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 2024 issue of *The Westmount Historian* presents the inspired work on three religious spaces built in the past and repurposed in recent years. The Congregation of Notre Dame and the Grey Nuns chose the outstanding architects J.Omer Marchand and Victor Bourgeau to design their mother houses. When the congregations vacated these properties, they were acquired by learning institutions – Marianopolis College, Dawson College, and Concordia University. These institutions thoughtfully transformed the nuns' former chapels into spaces devoted to study, thus continuing a tradition of quiet contemplation.

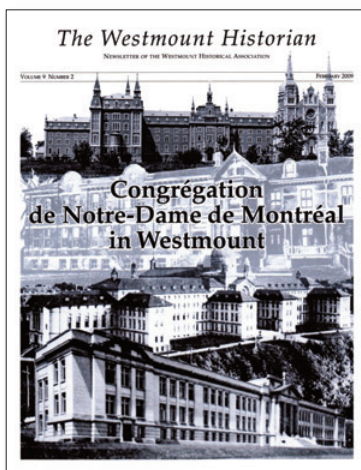
This issue contains three articles about these spaces. David Wigglesworth, as the architect in charge of the work on the CND Mother House on Sherbrooke Street, describes this major project. Images showing the transformation of the chapel into Dawson's present library accompany his article. Manon Asselin, Amy MacLean, and Marie-Josée Morin present the history

of the former CND building on Westmount Avenue and the repurposing of its chapel into the library spaces of today's Marianopolis College. The third article describes the project of architect Robert Magne, who headed the team that made minimal interventions to create a reading room from the former Grey Nuns' chapel. The speakers involved in the winter lecture series graciously provided images, information, and articles for this edition. CND archivist Marie-Josée Morin contributed precious archival photographs of the Congrégation's former buildings. A short presentation of the two original architects of these buildings is also included. The cover image highlights a past and present view of the former Grey Nuns chapel at Concordia.

In "Westmount Memories," Eleanor Motley Turner describes her childhood at 2 Sunnyside Avenue in the former Motley home, sharing family photos of those days. This article marks Jan Fergus' final contribu-

tion to the Westmount Memories Project that she has headed. We have all appreciated her editorial experience and charming writing style.

Our archivist Jane Martin introduces an important collection recently donated to the WHA Archives by former Westmount fire captain Craig Davis, who passed away last April. Archival assistant Carolyn Singman has provided invaluable help with the images in this issue. CAROLINE BRESLAW



Newsletter on the CND

The WHA newsletter of February 2009 centered on the CND in Westmount. The link to the section of the WHA website devoted to past newsletters is: wha.quebec/newsletters/.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



The WHA had a productive Winter/Spring 2024 period and records several important activities and changes. The first item of note is the successful lecture series entitled "Chapels to Libraries: Transformation Challenges."

The four talks focused on the repurposing and transformation of the chapels of religious congregations into libraries in three educational institutions in and adjacent to Westmount. We are grateful for the collaboration of the six knowledgeable speakers. This Fall 2024 edition of *The Westmount Historian*, our second highlight, reflects the contents of that lecture series.

Archival activities remained strong with detailed work carried out on the extensive Goode Fonds inventory and the acquisition from the Canadian Heritage of Quebec (CHQ) of the complete archives of the Wardleworth Family, formerly living at 168 Côte St. Antoine Road in Westmount. This collection consists of documents, photographs, correspondence, original artwork, ephemera, etc.

The third major archival donation is covered in this issue by our archivist Jane Martin.

There were several changes to the Board of Directors. Jane Martin, a longtime director and WHA Archivist, resigned effective December 31, 2023. Jane will continue serving as our Archivist. As of the June 11, 2024, AGM, two other significant departures took place: those of Anne Barkman, and Jan Fergus. Anne, a Board member for over 20 years, has worn several hats, including membership secretary, webmaster, president, and interim treasurer. Jan Fergus, elected in May 2019, headed the Westmount Memories Project and focused her expert research skills on the Goode Family Fonds, writing a detailed study of the Goode Family. The Board welcomed two new elected members, residents of Westmount: Liz McCallum, well-known volunteer, was elected as Treasurer, while Sabine Plummer contributes as a member-at-large.

I thank all Board members, other volunteers, lecture attendees and other members for their continued support of the WHA.

LOUISE CARPENTIER

WHA 2024 Fall Lecture Series Documenting the History of Westmount: On the 150th anniversary of the City

The three talks in the WHA's 2024 fall lecture series focus on the contributions of individuals who have documented different aspects of Westmount's history, architecture and streetscape. The December Social will be returning with the display of varied treasures from the WHA Archives.

Thursday, September 19, 2024 Westmount Room

Maison Hurtubise: Ancestry of the First Family of Westmount's Oldest House

Speaker: Donlon O. Hurtubise, Ph.D., retired geologist

Thursday, October 17, 2024 Victoria Hall

To know everything about Westmount: IMPOSSIBLE

Speakers: Pierre Beaupré, architecte senior & Josette Michaud architecte senior, Ateliers Beaupré Michaud; authors of the 1988 Heritage Study of Westmount

Thursday, November 21, 2024 Westmount Room

Edith H. Mather: Montreal and Westmount Street Photographer

Speaker: Zoë Tousignant, Curator, Photography, McCord Stewart Museum

Wednesday, December 18, 2024 The Gallery at Victoria Hall

December Social: A Taste of Treasures from the WHA Archives

Featuring a display of selected items from the archives of the WHA

Westmount Public Library, 4574 Sherbrooke St. W. – Victoria Hall, 4626 Sherbrooke St. W. from 7 to 9 pm

Admission for events free for members. \$5 for others at the door.

For more information contact www.WHA.quebec – Series prepared by Louise Carpentier & Irina Nazarova

FROM MOTHER HOUSE OF THE CONGREGATION OF NOTRE-DAME TO DAWSON COLLEGE

BY DAVID J. WIGGLESWORTH, RETIRED ARCHITECT

Dawson College, founded in 1967, grew in less than 20 years from 1,650 to more than 4,000 students and occupied 14 locations in downtown Montreal, adding to its original two at the Selby and Viger campuses.

Fifteen years later, the college obtained approval from Quebec to acquire the former Mother House of the sisters of the Congregation of Notre-Dame (CND). It was then that I was appointed as project architect on behalf of Dimakopoulos et Associés for the consolidation of the whole college into the one city block occupied by the Mother House, which became known as the Dawson College Atwater Campus. By the time the Atwater Campus had been completed in 1996, the enrolment was 8,000 students.

Following studies in Paris in 1904, J. Omer Marchand, of the new Marchand and Haskel architectural partnership, planned the Mother House as a simplified Beaux-Arts building, based on a traditional "H" configuration. This was to be the Sisters' sixth Montreal home. Not only was this a masterful neo-classical building, but its framework of supporting beams and slender interior columns within the load-bearing exterior yellow-brick masonry, based on a Parisian example, became the first reinforced concrete structure to be built in Canada. Comprising the four main wings, approximately 45 feet in width, the central core of the building contained the magnificent chapel that was transformed into the Dawson library Reading Room. This unanimous decision came after lively debates of the college

Facilities and Planning Committee. Permission to insert the grand staircase was a special concession from Quebec, allowing its upper level to have direct and controlled access to the main library extension in the south wing of the Mother House.

When I met with the resident sisters, they didn't hide their anxiety about the forthcoming changes to their former home. We visited other colleges, looking for clues, and were told that plaster, drywall or high-quality traditional surfaces to replicate the character of Marchand's interior design would result in irreparable damage. We were determined to respect the trust placed in us by the Sisters of the Congregation of Notre-Dame and to the legacy of its founder, Marguerite Bourgeois. Sarah Paltiel, the dynamic and dedicated Director General of Dawson (1981-1985), encouraged all of us to have faith in a commitment that all future teenage occupants would respect this new home for the College. That decision has long since stood the test of time.

The Mother House straddles the eastern border of Westmount with Montreal, and the original construction no longer conformed to current national, provincial, or municipal building codes. During investigations, we found more than 50 conflicting code standards that had to be reconciled. Work on the exterior of the Mother House, protected as an historical monument, was primarily a restoration project (with the exception of all the windows that had to be replaced), but most of the interior spaces had to be gutted to allow for major renovations. Efforts were made wherever possible to preserve heritage elements, such as the



Sisters of the CND at the entrance of the 6th Mother House on Sherbrooke Street ca.1946 CREDIT: ARCHIVES CND MONTRÉAL



View inside the Mother House chapel during mass, taken from the organ loft above the chapel's entrance

CREDIT: DAVID WIGGLESWORTH



Dawson College's library in the former chapel, looking toward the main entrance PHOTO: IRINA NAZAROVA, 2024

extensive oak base boards and panelling, but most was too brittle to save.

Creation of the campus was not just an exercise of re-planning and restoration, because an additional 100,000 sq.ft. of space was needed to accommodate all the college services. Permission to have the existing service buildings demolished was granted, but only for replacement by a continuous wing of three inter-connected pavillions, thus necessitating excavation down 60 ft. to bedrock for almost the entire length of the site, adjacent to the full depth of the Atwater Métro station below De Maisonneuve Boulevard. The vast volume of the triple gymnasium, weight rooms, dance studio

and changing rooms, with the mechanical and electrical technology departments, therefore had to be accommodated below street level in the huge subterranean underpinning of the new complex.

Sherbrooke Street was already the primary east-west vehicular artery when the Mother House was built. All the prestigious mansions bore Sherbrooke Street addresses, and the impressive neo-Romanesque entrance of the Mother House, with its striking copper dome, was oriented northward towards Sherbrooke Street. However, the tunnel for the Métro green line, completed in 1967, had become the infrastructure for the new De Maisonneuve Boulevard. Consequently, the orientation for primary access to and from the campus needed to be added, and the new De Maisonneuve wing was integrated into the new



Detail of the original cast iron balustrade of the library's balconies, with the chapel light fixtures PHOTO: IRINA NAZAROVA, 2024

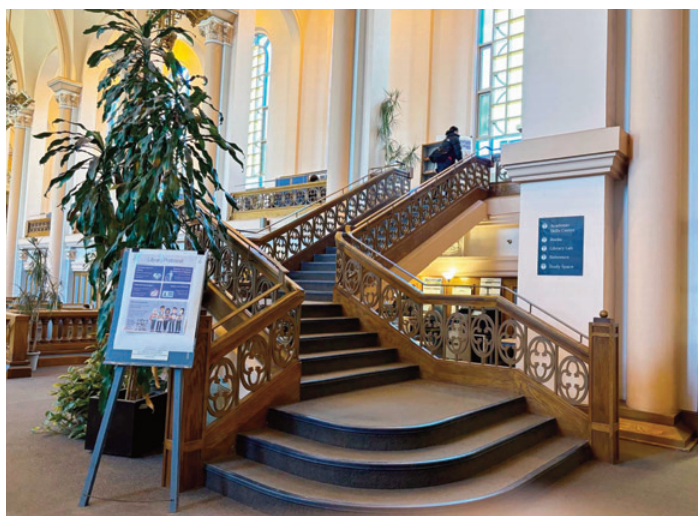


The Dawson library stacks, formerly the attic space of the Mother House

PHOTO: DAVID WIGGLESWORTH, 2024

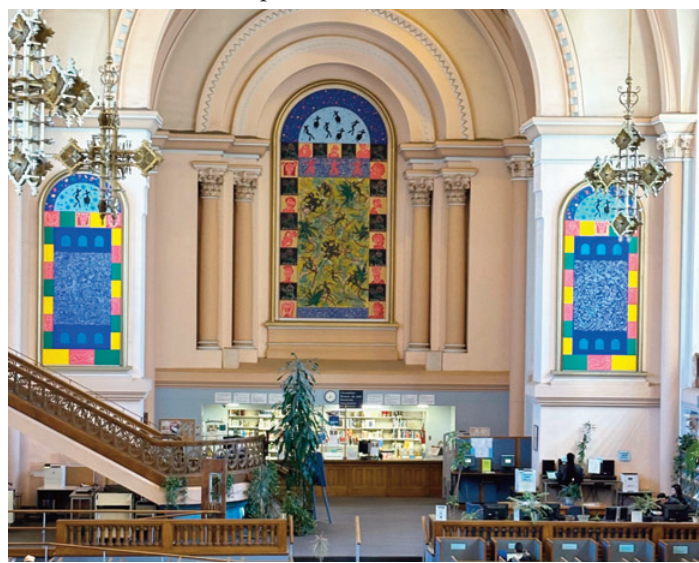
construction with a direct connection to the Atwater Métro station mezzanine. Westmount allowed a maximum height of only 50 feet above street level for this new wing, and so the De Maisonneuve Boulevard entrance had to be designed to rather modest dimensions.

The project was a major challenge. I have some sense of satisfaction in having been associated with the project for over two decades with a remarkable group of educators and colleagues. These included engineers and specialised consultants, collaborating under the inspiring leadership provided by Sarah Paltiel and Patrick Woodsworth, the last two of the four Directors General for whom I had the privilege to serve as we concluded the rebirth of Dawson College at its new Atwater Campus.



Grand new staircase leading from the college library to the upper gallery level of the reading room

PHOTO: DAVID WIGGLESWORTH, 2024



Triptych of artwork by Pierre-Léon Tétreault, commissioned to replace the original liturgical paintings

PHOTO: IRINA NAZAROVA, 2024

MARIANOPOLIS COLLEGE LIBRARY: TRANSFORMATION OF A SACRED SPACE

By MANON ASSELIN, AMY MACLEAN
AND MARIE-JOSÉE MORIN



Original building at 4873 Westmount Avenue in 1926, as designed by Jean-Omer Marchand

CREDIT: ARCHIVES CND MONTRÉAL



The 1950 Audet enlargement with wings on the left and right-hand sides of the central building

CREDIT: ARCHIVES CND MONTRÉAL



The chapel addition of 1950 by architect Louis-Napoléon Audet

CREDIT: ARCHIVES CND MONTRÉAL

The Marianopolis College Library, formerly a chapel built for the Sisters of the Congrégation de Notre-Dame, is a prime example of how educational institutions can repurpose sacred spaces to meet modern needs while preserving historical and architectural integrity. This article explores the journey of this transformation, the architectural influences, and the continuing educational mission of the Congregation.

Located at 4873 Westmount Avenue in Westmount, Marianopolis resides in a building originally designed by the renowned architect Jean-Omer Marchand. Marchand was an influential figure in Montreal's architectural scene and was the first Canadian architect to graduate from the École des Beaux-Arts de Paris. His designs for the Congrégation de Notre-Dame, including the buildings now housing Marianopolis College and Dawson College, are notable examples of Beaux-Arts architecture.

The Marianopolis building's architectural lineage is deeply rooted in the educational mission set forth by Marguerite Bourgeoys, the founder of the Congrégation de Notre-Dame. The building's design, characterized by massive masonry walls and ethereal qualities, echoes the solemnity of its former sacred use. This architectural style is particularly vivid in academic libraries housed in former chapels, as seen in Marianopolis.

The building that currently houses Marianopolis College was inaugurated in 1926 for the Institut pédagogique and Collège Marguerite-Bourgeoys. The first institution was a place where female teachers could improve their professional skills, and the second provided women with access to university studies. Over the years, several wings were added to the original, central building, including the chapel, a pivotal part of the Marianopolis building, which was designed by architect Louis Napoléon Audet. The chapel was consecrated in 1950 and featured modern elements like a patterned marble floor and simple, yet elegant, architectural details. The space was initially intended to seat 300 people, highlighting its significance in the building's layout.

In 1974, due to a lack of space for books, the chapel was



Mass in chapel on November 15, 1958, celebrating the 50th anniversary of Collège Marguerite-Bourgeoys

CREDIT: ARCHIVES CND MONTRÉAL

transformed into a documentation and audio-visual center. This transformation required careful consideration of how to balance the space's sacred origins with its new secular function. The upper tier of the elevated altar platform was removed, and the area was repurposed to create a more functional library space. This transition from a sacred space to an academic one involved not only physical modifications, but also a shift in the perception and use of the space. The once solemn and contemplative environment of the chapel was reimagined as a vibrant center for learning and study. The marble floors and simple, elegant design elements were preserved, maintaining a sense of reverence and tranquility in the new library setting.

The Congregation was pragmatic in its use of space, and repurposed existing resources to meet its evolving needs.



Opening day of November 3, 2023 in the renovated library stacks, located beneath the study space

PHOTO: SHAOYU BA, MARIANOPOLIS PHOTOGRAPHY CLUB

This practical philosophy came into play when the complex on Westmount Avenue moved away from its pedagogical use to be transformed into a Mother House. The Mother House remained at this address from 1985 to 2005. As part of this new vocation, the library wing was converted back into a chapel.

In 2007, Marianopolis College moved from its location on Côte-des-Neiges Road to Westmount Avenue. As part of this next use of the building, the chapel was deconsecrated, and the sacred art and other symbols were removed by the Congregation. Marianopolis then transformed the chapel space into a library once again. Although some interventions were made in the space, many of the ecclesiastical features remained in place, including the altar, the organ loft, niches for the Stations of the Cross, and the smaller side-altar for the tabernacle. The main book collection was housed on the ground floor beneath the chapel, and the staff offices were located outside the chapel.

The most recent renovation, led by architect Manon Asselin and completed in 2013, aimed to restore the simplicity of the original space while making it functional for modern library services. The main entrance was freed up, and the library services were relocated to the altar space, reactivating the underused area and creating a central visual axis that connects the entire space. The transformation also included aesthetic changes, such as an all-white color scheme to capture the original simplicity of traditional sacred spaces and help to create a tranquil atmosphere conducive to study and reflection. The study spaces were redesigned to foster a serene and conducive environment for learning, reminiscent of traditional library reading rooms like those at the Boston Library or the



Renovated main floor of Marianopolis College Library, completed in 2013 by architect Manon Asselin, with origami cranes suspended from the ceiling

PHOTO: AMY MACLEAN 2024

Sorbonne.

The transformation of the Marianopolis College library is not just about physical changes, but also about preserving and honouring the heritage of the Congrégation de Notre-Dame. The Congregation's educational mission, established by Marguerite Bourgeoys in the 17th century, continues to influence the College's mission, vision, and values. This mission is reflected in the thoughtful design choices and the careful preservation of historical elements within the library. The integration of the chapel's architectural elements into the library's design required innovative solutions to functional challenges. For instance, altar space was repurposed to house library services, optimizing the space for modern use while maintaining its historical significance. The transformation also addressed accessibility issues, ensuring that all members of the college community could be served. The all-white interior, a choice that echoes the simplicity of traditional sacred spaces, helps to create a tranquil atmosphere conducive to study and reflection. This design choice also highlights the architectural features of the chapel, such as the barrel vault ceiling and the symmetrical composition typical of Beaux-Arts design. The use of natural light and minimalistic furnishings further enhances the library's serene environment.

The Marianopolis Crane Project, initiated in 2019, is another significant endeavor that showcases the library's role in community building and in fostering a sense of peace and hope. The project involved creating thousands of origami cranes, symbols of peace, which were suspended

from the library ceiling. This project not only enhanced the library's aesthetic, but also reinforced its role as a place of refuge and reflection for students. The cranes served as a poignant reminder of the library's dual role as a place of learning and a sanctuary. The project began on September 21, 2019, the International Day of Peace, and involved the community in a series of hands-on activities to fold the cranes from scrap paper. Despite challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the project adapted and continued to inspire students and staff alike.

The transformation of the Marianopolis College Library from a chapel to a modern library exemplifies the dynamic nature of educational spaces. Through careful architectural preservation and thoughtful design, the library honours its historical roots while serving the contemporary needs of its academic community. This blend of heritage and modernity ensures that the Marianopolis College Library remains a vital and inspiring space for generations to come. The successful adaptation of this space underscores the importance of preserving historical architecture while meeting contemporary needs. By respecting the original design and purpose of the chapel, and through innovative design solutions, Marianopolis College has created a library that serves as a testament to the enduring legacy of the Congrégation de Notre-Dame and its commitment to education.

*Manon Asselin, Principal architect of Atelier TAG;
Amy MacLean, Coordinator of Library Services,
Marianopolis College; Marie-Josée Morin, Archivist,
Congrégation de Notre-Dame*



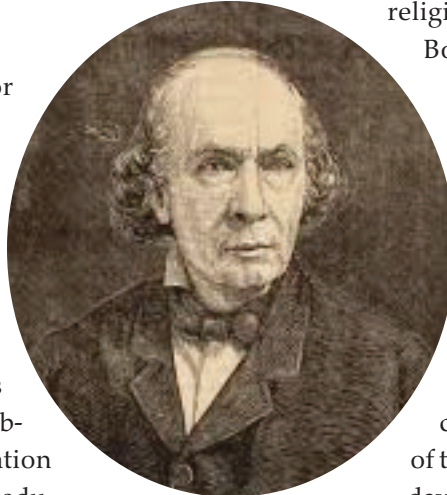
Marianopolis College library study space with view of former altar

PHOTO: ATELIER TAG, 2013

VICTOR BOURGEOU AND JEAN-OMER MARCHAND: MOTHER HOUSE ARCHITECTS

BY CAROLINE BRESLAW

Two Quebec architects, Victor Bourgeau (1809-1888) and Jean-Omer Marchand (1872-1936), designed the original mother houses of the congregations featured in the WHA's winter lecture series and in this edition of *The Westmount Historian*. Montreal architect Peter Lanken has spent years documenting Bourgeau's many churches which are scattered across Quebec. His website (peterlanken.com) provides information about this architect who, although self-educated, worked on the Marie-Reine-du-Monde basilica and the interior renovation of Notre Dame Cathedral and designed many other

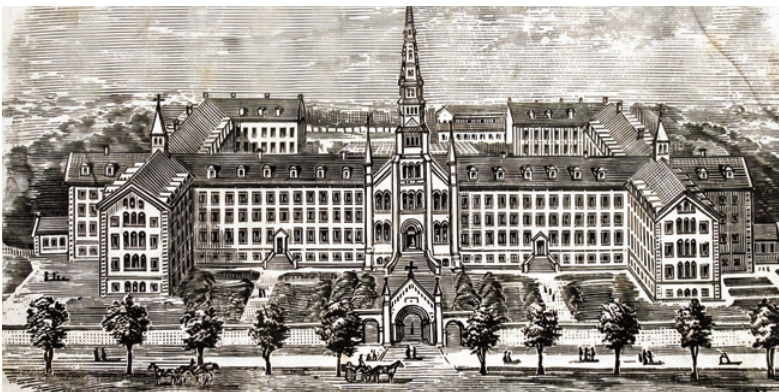


Victor Bourgeau
CREDIT: COLLECTION DES
RELIGIEUSES HOSPITALIÈRES
DE SAINT-JOSEPH DE MONTRÉAL

religious buildings throughout Quebec. Bourgeau made the original plans for the Mother House of the Grey Nuns on Blvd. René Lévesque, which is now owned by Concordia University.

Jean-Omer Marchand was a prominent Montreal architect who graduated from the prestigious École des Beaux Arts in Paris and went on to design many religious and residential buildings in the Beaux-Arts style. Among his accomplishments are the 6th Mother House of the Congrégation de Notre-Dame (present-day Marianopolis College) and the 7th Mother House of the CND (today's Dawson College), both constructed of yellow brick. He built his own home across from the Sulpicians' orchards (today's Queen Elizabeth Gardens), looking out over the Mother House on Sherbrooke Street.

Further information about these and other architects can be found on the website of the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (www.biographi.ca).



Mother House of the Grey Nuns on Dorchester Boulevard. Engraving by John Henry Walker

CREDIT: MCCORD MUSEUM



Jean-Omer Marchand
CREDIT: WIKIPEDIA COMMONS



Marchand's home at 456 Wood Avenue in Westmount

PHOTO: ALINE GUBBAY



Workers at the entrance of the future 6th Mother House on Sherbrooke Street ca.1904-1908, during its construction

CREDIT: ARCHIVES CND MONTRÉAL

THE GREY NUNS READING ROOM OF CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY

This article is based on the talk given on February 15th, 2024 to the WHA by Robert Magne, associé Lapointe Magne & associés, architects and urban planners.

BY ROBERT MAGNE & CAROLINE BRESLAW

Situated in the historical former Grey Nuns chapel at 1190 Guy Street, the Grey Nuns reading room is one of Concordia Library's silent study spaces. The transformation of the chapel into a reading room for Concordia University by Lapointe Magne & associates was part of the university's major renovation project of the Grey Nuns Mother House complex on René Lévesque Boulevard into student residences for its downtown campus.

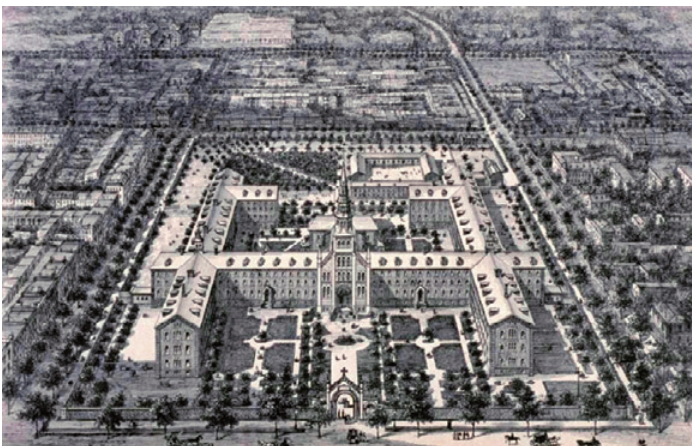
From the founding of the order in 1737, the Sisters of Charity ("Grey Nuns") and its founder Marguerite d'Youville played an important role in the early settlement of Montreal. The Grey Nuns took over the General Hospital in Pointe-à-Callière as a hospice for the aged, the ill and the poor in 1747. As the congregation expanded, in 1868 it was decided to relocate the General Hospital and a new mother house in the country at Mont Sainte-Croix (today's location).

The Grey Nuns Mother House was built over 30 years. Architect Victor Bourgeau's master plan was for a convent in the form of the letter H, with a chapel at its centre. The east side (Guy Street wing) would house the congregation, while the west side (St. Mathieu wing) would be for the aged, the ill and orphans. The chapel linked the east and

west wings. While the completed project did not completely follow Bourgeau's master plan, the exterior was very much in keeping with his initial design.

Because of its continuous occupation by the Grey Nuns congregation for more than a century, the Mother House as a whole had retained an extraordinary quality and integrity. In 1974, the chapel was declared an historical monument by Quebec's Cultural Property Act, as were the entire convent of the Grey Nuns and its site in 1976. In 1995-1996 the chapel was completely renovated. The colour of the original walls, pews and floors was restored, and the mouldings on the ceiling and vault were refurbished.

With the dwindling population of the Grey Nuns congregation, the Mother House and property were sold to Concordia University in 2007. The transformation was initiated in two phases: **Phase 1** of the renovations of the complex on St Mathieu Street in 2007 included the renovations of the rooms and washroom facilities on the various levels for student residences, the integration of a daycare at the ground level, as well as upgrades for the present-day building codes. During this phase, the nuns and staff of the congregation were housed in the east wings,



L'Hôpital Général des Soeurs Grises, tel que projeté en 1875, selon une gravure de Haberer

CREDIT: INVENTAIRE DES BIENS CULTUREL, FONDS MORRISET



Exterior of Grey Nuns chapel ca.1890 by Wm. Notman & Son

CREDIT: MCCORD MUSEUM



Concordia University reading room

PHOTO: MICHEL BRUNELLE FOR LAPOINTE MAGNE

with the use of the chapel at the centre of the complex. **Phase 2**, initiated in 2012, included the renovation of the original east wings of the Mother House, built in 1869-71, as well as the central kitchen and the former boiler building into student residences and academic facilities.

Various options for the use of the chapel were studied, such as a flexible reception area for university events or a concert venue, but it was decided to maintain it as a quiet meditative space for reading and study for the Concordia population. The transformation of the deconsecrated chapel, built between 1874-90, into a reading room was a key of the transformation of the Grey Nuns Mother House in this second phase. Accessible from the Guy Street entrance, the chapel and auxiliary spaces were dedicated to the library services of the university.

In order to avoid detracting from the historical qualities

of the chapel and its interiors, the design philosophy of the interventions in the transformation of the religious space into a study and reading room was minimalistic. The principal intervention was the removal of the pews, some of which were reinstalled in the student residences. With their removal, perception of the space was greatly modified, providing new points of view which replaced the original formal axis focused towards the apse and principal altar.

The crypt below the chapel houses the remains of the deceased nuns, which had been transferred from the chapel in Old Montreal in 1870 at the time that the new chapel was built. Since some nuns had died from smallpox in the 1755 epidemic, the remains in the crypt were encapsulated with a concrete slab. The crypt thus became an integral part of the historical character of the Grey Nuns chapel and the new reading room.

Inspired by classical libraries, such as Ste-Geneviève in Paris, long reading tables were custom-designed and arranged in a formal layout about the central axis of the chapel. Simple and sober in character, the poplar tables with dark laminate surfaces were electrified with integrated task lighting and outlets for contemporary technologies. The electrical conduits for the tables were installed in the crypt below the chapel. Brightly coloured upholstered reading chairs were organised in clusters in various alcoves of the chapel, sacristy, and the apse of the principal altar, redefining the transformation of the historical spaces. The new chapel reading room provides seating for 192 students; there are also 14 group study rooms adjacent to it. The end result is subdued, with peace and quiet enveloping the historical space for its renewed vocation of meditation, reading and study.



Side view of the reading room

PHOTO: MICHEL BRUNELLE FOR LAPOINTE MAGNE



Front of Concordia reading room where chapel altar once stood

PHOTO: MICHEL BRUNELLE FOR LAPOINTE MAGNE

WESTMOUNT MEMORIES

THE MOTLEY FAMILY AT 2 SUNNYSIDE: The House with the Red-Tiled Roof

BY ELEANOR MOTLEY TURNER

My parents' house at 2 Sunnyside Avenue was my father's home for over 90 years and was also the place where I grew up. The house was sold in 2004, a year after my father died, and just before my mother moved to Manoir Westmount. Sad to say, it has sat vacant ever since. I hope that some of my recollections of growing up there might indicate what a vibrant and beloved home it once was.

The house, an Arts-and-Crafts style cottage, was built in 1907, one of the first on the mountain of Westmount, with my grandfather overseeing its construction. An early photograph of a painting shows the house in complete isolation, the only other dwelling being one, since demolished, next to the Westmount Lookout. The house has a cement stucco finish and the peaked roof is covered in red terracotta tiles. The view looking south is stunning, with the blue ribbon of the St. Lawrence River visible, and on a clear day, the mountains of Vermont and the Eastern Townships.

The interior of the house, as well, is representative of the Arts-and-Crafts style, with bronze window and door hardware, fabric wallpaper in the living room, a very ornate mahogany fireplace mantle, and the stairway to the upstairs has gold-leafed inserts of faces and lions' heads on the railings. There were two original Tiffany lamps, one in the living room and one very distinctive green one hanging over the dining room table, as well as several William Morris fabric wall hangings. A lot of the furniture came from my great grandfather's antique furniture



Back of the house with part of the long, sloping garden and young Phillips Motley ca.1915

CREDIT: MOTLEY FAMILY ARCHIVES



Partial view of front façade and garage with grandmother Helena Motley and father Phillips ca.1922

CREDIT: MOTLEY FAMILY ARCHIVES

store in Old Montreal. There are three spacious bedrooms upstairs and two rooms in the attic. These were originally the maid's quarters. In later years my two brothers were delighted to have their own space up those steep stairs. The two bathrooms were never modernized and both have claw-footed bathtubs and the original fixtures.

My grandfather was Phillips Bathurst Motley (1871-1946). He was born in Calcutta, India, educated in England, and came to Canada in 1892. In 1911 he became Engineer of Bridges for the entire C.P.R., overseeing all design and construction throughout Canada. My grandmother was Mary Helena Scott (1872-1958) whose father, William Scott, came from England to establish one of the first firms of art dealers in Montreal, on Notre Dame Street. My father, Phillips Carey Motley, was actually born in the house at 2 Sunnyside on July 12, 1912. He developed a keen interest in music, started first on piano and then organ and had a distinguished career as a church organist and choirmaster that spanned over 60 years. In 1942 he was stationed in Ottawa with the RCAF and here he met my grandmother, Ethel Armstrong, who was organist at a church there. He then met and fell in love with her daughter, Doris, who was an active singer there and they were married in June, 1945. They then settled in Montreal in an apartment on St. Mark Street. I was born in 1947, my brother, Ian, in 1949, and Donald, in 1952.

We moved to the house on Sunnyside in 1949 as Granny Motley, who was still living there, was in need of care. She died in 1958. In 1964 Grandma Armstrong sold her house in Ottawa and came to live with us. She brought her beloved piano, so we had two pianos in the living room, and she and my Dad would enjoy playing many of the Bach 2-part Inventions together. There were often musical evenings with choir parties in our living room. My brothers and I took piano lessons from Dad and Grandma (the boys less than keen!). My mother had a busy life giving full-time loving care to three active children, managing a large house and garden, and tending to an aging mother-in-law and later her own mother. She was very active in church work and this gave her a needed break from us! She was a marvelous cook, always producing delicious full-course meals. She baked many loaves of oatmeal bread, learning some basics from our friendly Pom Bakery delivery man, Mr. Leroux. He would also slip us kids free Alouettes, a cream-filled cake covered in chocolate. Mother supported Dad in his musical career by singing alto in several of his choirs and also by turning pages at the organ during many of his recitals.



The dining room with green Tiffany lamp hanging above table
PHOTO: MOTLEY FAMILY ARCHIVES

It was only later in life that I would become aware of how fortunate I was to grow up in that beautiful large house bordered by a long sloping garden. That slope in winter made our own toboggan and flying saucers hill, curving down to bushes that prevented us from heading down Braeside Avenue. In more recent years I remember my father joining in on his four grandsons' fun by speeding down the hill on a metal tray! Another vivid winter memory I have is of the classic "stick your tongue on a metal fence"! We were walking along Sunnyside, passing the neighbouring Timmins' elaborate wrought iron fence and for some reason I decided to see how cold it was so I placed my tongue on it. I was instantly glued there and I can still see my mother hurrying back from our house with a kettle of warm water. I had a difficult time eating for the next few



Doris and Phillips Motley in the living room with a Tiffany peacock lamp. Photographed by daughter Eleanor ca. 2000

CREDIT: MOTLEY FAMILY ARCHIVES



Neighbourhood children outside 2 Sunnyside at corner of Belvedere Avenue in 1952 (l. to r.: Eleanor Motley, Peter Russell, Billy White, Ian Motley)

CREDIT: MOTLEY FAMILY ARCHIVES

days! That spacious garden was home to a variety of birds: screech owls, indigo buntings, white-throated sparrows, song sparrows, and even sometimes white-crowned sparrows, lots of warblers. At one side of the property my grandfather had a small open-air gazebo built, possibly for my grandmother to enjoy her afternoon tea. We called it the Summer House and my friends and I would play there, climbing into the upper rafters.

My younger brother Ian loved tormenting and teasing, especially, maybe, an older sister? One time he set a real booby trap for me by tying a line of string onto the top of an antique grandfather clock and extending it to the front entrance door through which I came returning from school. The whole clock crashed onto the floor and I believe that was the first time I saw my mother cry!

Our house was a gathering spot for the neighbourhood kids: lots of skipping, hopscotch on the driveway, roller skating, snowmen-making and snowfort-building in the winter. We all had bicycles, and the close-by Westmount Summit and woods were a constant destination. The large Timmins house along the street (where my tongue met the fence one winter) had a long driveway with an entrance and an exit on Sunnyside, and it was fun to drive through there on our bikes as fast as we could without someone appearing and yelling at us.

Living where we did above The Boulevard meant there was no bus service to the east end of Sunnyside. This meant long walks up the hills from Roslyn School and later Westmount

High. In our younger days as we trudged up the long Belvedere Road both parents would make up exciting adventure stories to distract us from our complaints.

My brother Ian was passionate about cars and was very involved with Formula Ford racing at Le Circuit at Mont Tremblant. He and his racing buddies used our driveway for frequent repairs prior to and following weekend races. I vividly remember the fiberglass shell of a racing car propped up over the open oven in the kitchen, hastening its curing for a body repair. At the same time loud jazz/rock/fusion music emanated from the basement as my future husband, his brother, and a good

friend jammed together. Needless to say, my parents were away during those times!

There are sad memories as well, like the night, in June, 1970, when we received the terrible news that my youngest brother, Donald, had died in a motorcycle accident. Then later that year a happy event occurred when I married my dear husband, Ian, and a beautiful fall reception was held at the house.

I sincerely hope that some day another family will inhabit this house restored to its former grace, warmth, and beauty.



2 Sunnyside covered in snow ca.1995

CREDIT: MOTLEY FAMILY ARCHIVES

FROM THE ARCHIVES

By JANE MARTIN, WHA ARCHIVIST

The Archives has been privileged to receive a significant amount of historical material donated by former Westmount Fire Captain Craig Davis, who died this past April following a work-related illness. His diverse, personal collection of mostly original photographs, documents, ledgers, reports, clippings – and even his own former uniform jacket and badges – relate to the 110-year history and activities of Westmount's fire service beginning in the late 1800s. In meetings with the archivist, Craig identified many

items and provided a wealth of supporting information, drawing on his own experience as well as his interest in the evolution of fire services in the community.

Craig Davis was recognized in 1995 for an outstanding career on the Westmount fire brigade, where he began in the early 1970s and finished a few years after the takeover of fire services by Montreal in 2001. We are indebted to him for his commitment to supporting local history through the work of the WHA. Following is a sampling of items from his collection.



Captain Craig Davis receiving the Governor General of Canada's Fire Services Exemplary Service Medal, presented at Westmount City Hall by Mayor Peter Trent in November, 1995



Craig Davis' uniform badge (pre-Montreal takeover of fire services)



Stanton Street Station #1, c.1925



Fire in apartment building backing on Mountain Ave., corner Sherbrooke St. W., 1960s



Aftermath of major fire on St. Catherine St. W. across from Westmount Square, 1970s



Start of Westmount Fire Department's ambulance service, the first in Quebec, 1975. The service was discontinued upon the creation of Urgences-santé.



Firemen demonstrating rescue techniques, Westmount Park, 1950s



Civic funeral at Church of the Ascension for Westmount fireman Ronald Masson, who died in a Westmount Square fire in June, 1973



Fighting massive fire at Temple Emanu-El on Sherbrooke St. W., 1957

Firemen demonstrating resuscitation technique with equipment that was carried on every firetruck, 1931



Beginning of regular fire prevention inspections at businesses and public buildings, 1958

