



Westmount places:  
Hallowell Avenue

## Description

# The history behind the familiar: the former residents that called Hallowell Avenue their home

By **Michael Walsh**

March 10, 2022

Fine Horse for Sale. Combination. Half hackney and half thoroughbred. 5 years old, sound, over 16 hands, bay. Good to show. Apply – rear 99 Hallowell Street, Westmount.

– [Montreal Gazette, October 6, 1914](#)

When I was a child, one of my favourite television shows was CBC Television's *The Friendly Giant*. The show's introduction had the camera focusing on the giant's huge boots with his greeting: "Look up, look awaaaay up!" That is precisely what comes to mind when admiring the row of tall homes with beautiful sloped roofs and wooden balconies that grace the eastern portion of **Hallowell Avenue**. Many originally built as flats, today form a part of Westmount's unique architectural mosaic.

Before we delve into the hidden stories of these houses, let us become acquainted with **William Hallowell** (1771-1838), on whose former property today's street exists. The property was originally part of the **fief Saint-Augustin** owned by the **Hôtel-Dieu de Montreal** before Hallowell acquired several thousand arpents, including a road that extended from St. Catherine to St. Antoine streets into the City of St. Henry. The St. Henry portion was renamed Rose de Lima after the City's annexation into the City of Montreal in August 1905.

Hallowell was a fur trader and a partner in McTavish, Frobisher and Company, acting agents of the [North West Company](#). With headquarters in Montreal, the company competed with the Hudson's Bay Company in the Canadian fur trade.

Interestingly, in 1887 one finds mention of a “Hallowell estate” (650 feet long and 550 feet wide) located on Greene Avenue, later obtained by the Montreal Lacrosse Club.



Drawing of cottage on Sissons Lane – Image: courtesy of the City of Westmount

Most of the literature mentioning the street’s history describes a farm owned by [Strachan Hallowell Bethune](#) and William Hallowell comprising a lane (**Sissons Lane**) that joined Greene Avenue. This is a rather simplistic view – the full story being much more complex.

To begin with, Strachan Bethune was Hallowell’s grandson. In 1827, a portion of the land (102 feet by 590 feet) was owned by **Henry McKenzie** and **Norman Bethune**, and seized by the Sherriff of Montreal for non-payment of “ground rent.”.

Hallowell placed a lien on the seized property owned by Norman Bethune. The property was comprised of four lots in the fief St. Augustin, bounded by St. Augustin Street (City of Saint Henry), Chemin St. Antoine and Hallowell Street. Each lot was 10,404 square feet. In addition, there were four other lots, each containing 60,180 square feet.

In February 1833, Hallowell sold 102 feet by 532 feet by 437 feet of land, adjoining property owned by John Bethune, to **Francis Sisson**. This property formed Sissons Lane, which was later incorporated as a portion of St. Catherine Street.

Following the death of William Hallowell in 1839, the land was owned by his wife, **Elizabeth Hallowell**, and his sons **William, Robert** and **James**. In 1840, they sold a large parcel of the land to **Charles Montizambert**. A description of the property showed it was bounded by St. Antoine road, Francis Sisson (later named Sissons Lane), “by an intended street to be called Bethune” and, in the rear, by Hugh Brodie esquire, representing the Hotel-Dieu nunnery. The total area was 27 arpents and 43.5 perches (approximately 24 acres).

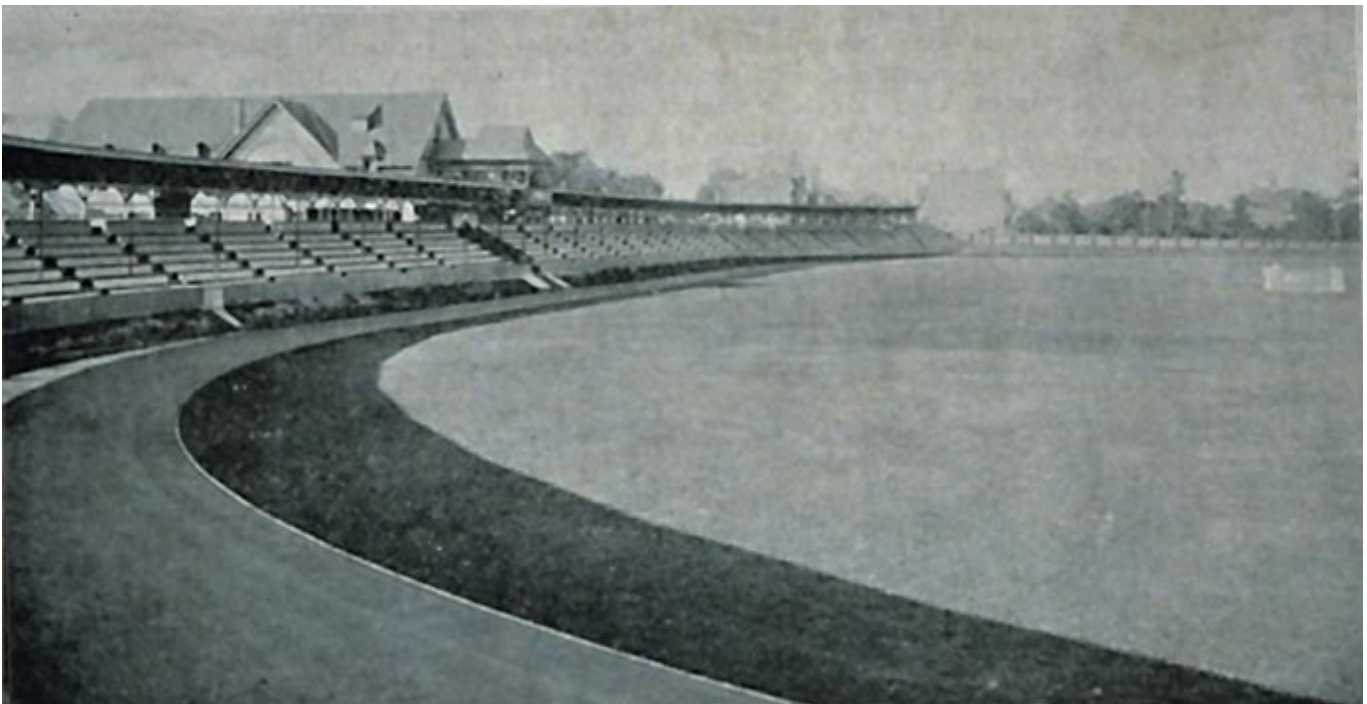
‘In January 1888, the Montreal Amateur Athletic Association acquired a portion of the Hallowell Estate for \$4,500 and asked Council to grant them a nominal tax of \$100 per year, as long as the ground is used solely for athletic purposes.’

That same year, **William Robertson**, a Montreal physician, purchased one-tenth of the remaining property to construct a “lunatic asylum” in the area. It appears this portion of land was passed onto **John M. McConnell**, also a physician, and seized, in 1897, by the Sheriff of Montreal...

*“...bounded in front by Hallowell Street... on one side... by a lane... with a cottage and other buildings thereon erected, with a right of passage in the aforesaid lane.”*

– Quebec Official Gazette, March 6, 1897

In January 1888, the **Montreal Amateur Athletic Association** acquired a portion of the Hallowell Estate for \$4,500 and asked Council to grant them a nominal tax of \$100 per year, as long as the ground is used solely for athletic purposes. Council agreed to this request and added that no liquor be sold on the premises.



MAAA Athletic Grounds adjacent Hallowell Avenue (1891) – Image: The Dominion Illustrated

In 1887, the City opened the **Athletic Grounds** (operated by the Montreal Amateur Athletic Association) to provide outdoor sports facilities. Over the years, the grounds hosted historic games of lacrosse, football, cricket, rugby, soccer, baseball, tennis, lawn bowling, softball and bicycle races. During the winter, the field was made into a skating rink and the track used for snowshoe races. There was a clubhouse with lockers, showers and a large restaurant. The outdoor grandstand could accommodate 5,000 spectators.

In 1959, a large portion was sold by the City for \$250,000 to the Protestant School Commission. The Commission erected **Westmount Senior High School**, which had moved from Côte St. Antoine Road after its purchase by Selwyn House. Following the sale, the grounds comprised a quarter-mile running track, the football field and spectator seats. The original clubhouse and entrance facilities on St. Catherine Street were demolished.

‘In 1959, a large portion [of the Athletic Grounds] was sold by the City for \$250,000 to the Protestant School Commission. The Commission erected Westmount Senior High School, which had moved from Côte St. Antoine Road after its purchase by Selwyn House.’

In 1888, the street became a cul-de-sac when its connection to the City of St. Henry was closed with the

expropriation of 14,200 feet of land by the **Atlantic and North West Railway Company**. This closure led to protests concerning the danger posed by the street's level rail crossing. Residents requested the construction of a bridge over the crossing. The railway company, however, invoking The Railway Act, refused to cede any of their land for a "highway bridge". As such, as a safety measure, Council stationed guards at the crossing.



Canadian Pacific Railway tracks south of Hallowell

That same year, the street was opened and graded from St. Catherine to St. Antoine streets, with the costs divided between the towns of Côte. St. Antoine and St. Henri. Interestingly, the original road was "S" shaped and made to the same grade as the intersection of the railway crossing. One resident, **James Hourley**, seizing an opportunity offered to bear the cost of opening and grading the street, provided his property south of the railway (bounded east by the property of **William Kerr** and west by the property of the Estate Robertson) keeps its current taxable evaluation frozen for twenty years. It is not clear if Council accepted his offer.

The safety issue concerning the railway crossing was still not resolved. Residents petitioned Council for an archway allowing safe passage. The railroad company ignored their complaints for two years, forcing some residents to consider legal action. As appeasement, the company installed cattle guards on their locomotives to prevent derailments from striking stray cattle.

'That same year [1893], the Town informed the Canadian Pacific Railway that it is waiving its right to a crossing on Hallowell Avenue... provided they fence their land on Hillside Avenue from the MAAA to Abbott avenue.'

In 1893, another portion of the street was obtained by the Atlantic and North West Railway with the sale of 2,500 square feet by the Montreal Amateur Athletic Association.

The first houses were erected (by Mr. Marseille) in 1893. That same year, the Town informed the **Canadian Pacific Railway** that it is waiving its right to a crossing on Hallowell Avenue (and Metcalfe Avenue) – provided they fence their land on Hillside Avenue from the MAAA to Abbott avenue.

One year later, the street was macadamized and widened to thirty feet. These costs were paid by the fronting proprietors in fourteen annual instalments.

Further railroad acquisitions occurred in 1907, with a lot extending from Selby Avenue to Hallowell street being purchased from the **J. Cradock Simpson Company** to the **Ontario & Quebec Railway Company** for providing for a branch line to leave the main line of the Canadian Pacific Railroad.

In 1925, the street had a pharmaceutical factory owned by the **Charles E. Frosst Company** adjacent to St. Antoine Street. (This was later converted into **Dawson College's Selby Campus.**)



Park at Dorchester Boulevard where Hallowell used to join St. Catherine Street

Further changes to the street occurred in December 1966 with its closure between Dorchester Boulevard and St. Catherine Street. This was necessitated with the extension of Dorchester Avenue to join St. Catherine Street as part of the City's urban renewal scheme. Luckily, the street was withdrawn from the scheme in 1976 and retains its original (although modified) character.

However, the year 1976 was the “calm before the storm”. Three years later, 3,976 square feet of the street were

expropriated by the Government of Quebec Minister of Transport for the construction of Highway 720 (renamed 136). The government paid \$448,636 for a huge swath of land encompassing Selby Avenue and a portion of the Corporation Yards, including all immovables.

‘... the year 1976 was the “calm before the storm”. Three years later, 3,976 square feet of the street were expropriated by the Government of Quebec Minister of Transport for the construction of Highway 720...’

With the additional vehicular traffic and the existing railroad lines, residents’ noise complaints increased. By 2013, the noise level exceeded the permissible 65 decibels. The City approached the Provincial Government to conduct a feasibility study and the erection of a sound barrier. The City agreed to pay \$42,000 amounting to their fifty percent share of the study. To date, noise abatement in the area is still a “work in progress.”

One must agree that is quite a story for a street that by all appearances seems quiet and serene. In fact, between sheriff sales, railroad and government expropriations, a 1970s proposal to mark it as a “bicycles only” route and urban renewal plans, it is remarkable that the street exists to this day.

At this point, let us visit Hallowell Avenue on a sunny autumn afternoon and discover the other stories waiting to be told.



**11 Hallowell** (formerly 350 Selby Street)  
Dawson College (1969)

**51 Hallowell**  
Henry Lampard, mechanical engineer (1917)

Upon his death, he bequeathed his library to the Mechanics’ Institute of Montreal and his mineral collection to the Montreal Natural History Society (1827-1928). The remainder of his estate was willed to Miss Alice Maude Mitchell, 49 Hallowell Avenue.



51 Hollowell

*“WHEREAS under the Act respecting Land Use Planning and Development (CQLR, c. A-19.1), the council of a municipality may, by by-law set standards and prescribe measures for the occupancy and maintenance of buildings, and require, if a building is decrepit or dilapidated, restoration, repair or maintenance work on it;”*

*“WHEREAS, in accordance with the law, the City has sent the owner of the building located at 51 Hollowell Avenue, a written notice indicating the work to be done to make the building conform to the standards and measures prescribed by the Permits and Certificates By law, and the delay for carrying out the work;”*

*“WHEREAS the required work has not been carried out and the requested reports have not been provided to the City within the allotted time frame;”*

*“WHEREAS the Urban Planning Department recommends that a notice of deterioration be registered in the land register for the said immovable.”*

– Council Proceedings, September 2019



55 Hollowell

**55 Hollowell**

Clarence Thomson, F. Thomson & Company, a subsidiary of The Royal Electric Company (1905)

**61 Hollowell**

C. B. Powter, Montreal High School physical education instructor (1897)

**67 Hollowell**

W. E. Dyer, Manufacturers Life Insurance Company (1899)

Today, operated by its holding company, Manulife Financial Corporation.

**69 Hollowell**

Harry Brown, Montreal Lumber Company (1899)

Henry A. Jackson, Father of Alex Y. Jackson, artist (1915)

*“The basement furnace in the Hollowell St. house played a dubious role in Canadian art history, for it consumed countless early Jacksons, some of which may have fetched a small fortune today had the self-critical artist not destroyed them.”*

– Wayne Larson, *Montreal Gazette*, October 31, 2015





L to R: Frederick Varley, A. Y. Jackson, Lawren Harris, Barker Fairley (not a member), Frank Johnston, Arthur Lismer and J. E. H. MacDonald (ca. 1920) – Image: [Arthur Goss](#), Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons



67-71 Hallowell (rented as flats in 1943)

*“In 1933, Jackson founded the Canadian Group of Painters, which included former Group of Seven members Lawren Harris, A.J. Casson, Arthur Lismer and Franklin Carmichael. Having taught at the Ontario College of Art (now the Ontario College of Art and Design University) in 1925, from 1943 to 1949 he taught at the Banff School of Fine Arts. In 1954, he was commissioned by the Canadian Pacific Railway to paint a mural in one of the cars on the new transcontinental train; Jackson painted Kokanee Glacier Provincial Park in British Columbia. In 1963, he submitted a design as part of the Great Flag Debate. He spent his final years as artist-in-residence at the McMichael Gallery (now the McMichael Canadian Art Collection) in Kleinburg, Ontario, where he is buried.”*  
– Ann Davis, *The Canadian Encyclopedia*

### **71 Hallowell**

Edwin Ezard, insurance clerk (1895)  
Cuthbert Featherstonhaugh, bookkeeper (1895)  
James Griffin, confectioner (1897)

### **73 Hallowell**

Alexander Jackson (1945)  
His son, Alexander James Jackson, was killed in active service with the R.C.A.F.



73-75 Hallowell

### **75 Hallowell**

Charles Pierce, superintendent of the Sun Life Assurance Company (1899)

The company still exists as Sun Life Financial.

### **89 Hallowell**

Charles Cooley, The Royal Electric Company (1897)

*“At the end of the 19th century, the Royal Electric Company patterned itself after the American business model of a public electricity system that included invention patents, equipment manufacture and distribution. Founded by Montreal entrepreneurs in 1884, the company concentrated primarily, until the end of the century, on producing and selling arc and incandescent lamps, globes, streetlights, and generators based on models developed by Edison, Thompson and Houston. In 1886, it also took on lighting the streets of Montreal, first using arc lamps and then, in 1888, incandescent lamps.”*



93-95 Hallowell

*“During this period, the Royal Electric Company set up 70 electrical stations across Canada, from Victoria to Charlottetown, to supply arc lamps and another 145 stations for incandescent lighting. For the production and distribution of electrical equipment, however, the company had to compete with subsidiaries of American firms like Canadian General Electric and Canadian Westinghouse, which set up their plants in 1892 and 1897, respectively.”*

*“In 1885, the Royal Electric Company set up the first street lighting systems in Charlottetown and St. John’s, Newfoundland. The following year, it created a subsidiary, the Prince Edward Island Electric Company, to provide this service.”*

– Canada Science and Technology Museum

Wladyslaw Konarski, photographer (2010)

Wladyslaw Konarski served with the Polish Second Corps under General Anders. He was decorated with the Cross of Valour for bravery at the Battle of Monte Cassino.



97-99 Hallowell (converted into two family dwellings in 1940)

### **93 Hallowell**

*“One of the few remaining links that connected the pioneer days of the Canadian Northwest with the present, passed... in the person of Mrs. John Clark, at the very advanced age of 105 years. She died at the residence of her daughters, 93 Hallowell Street. Mr. John Clark died 57 years ago. He was for many years chief factor for the Hudson’s Bay Company and the present Lord Strathcona served under him as a clerk. In 1825, Captain Franklin (Sir John) stopped at Fort Garry, and Clarke accompanied a short distance when he started his exploration of the Mackenzie...”*

– *Montreal Gazette*, November 19, 1934

### **99 Hallowell**

James Zephcott, Montreal Lithographing Company (1897)

W. J. Wilson, C. O. Beauchemin, publishers (1899)

### **156 Hallowell** (former civic number)

George Climie, horse trader (1895)

### **158 Hallowell** (former civic number)

Robert Roe, caretaker, Grace Baptist Church (1897)

Frank Roe, George Roe, G. H. Harrower, Manufacturers of shirts, collars, cuffs, overalls, white wear and underwear (1899)

### **160 Hallowell** (former civic number)

John McLeod, City weigher (1899)



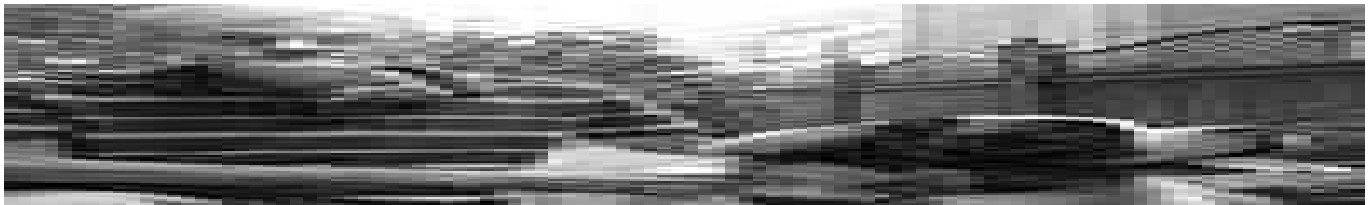
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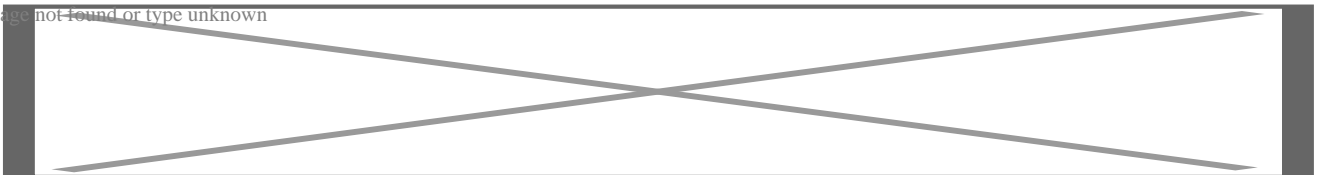
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**Michael Walsh** is a long-time Westmount resident. He is happily retired from nearly four decades in the field of higher education technology. A “professional student” by nature, his academic training, and publishing, include statistical methodology, mycology and animal psychology. During this period, he was also an officer in the Canadian Armed Forces. Prior to moving to Montreal, he was contracted by the Ontario Ministry of Education evaluating bilingual primary and secondary school programs. Today, he enjoys spending time with his (huge) Saint Bernard while discovering the city’s past and sharing stories of the majestic trees that grace the parks and streets. He can be contacted at [michaelld2003@hotmail.com](mailto:michaelld2003@hotmail.com) or through his blog [Westmount Overlooked](#)

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