



City of Westmount
Council Minutes – 1933-1950

Description

A fascinating glimpse of the City prior to and following the Second War

By **Michael Walsh**

From Japanese Cherry Trees to His Majesty's Canadian Ships Westmount and Westmount Park – these are some of the stories chronicled in Council minutes prior to and following the Second War.

Unlike the period during the Great War, when Council made a concerted effort to maintain a sense of normalcy, this time line shows a City showing great austerity by diverting financial resources towards the war effort.



Crab-apple trees in Westmount Park
Image: Michael Walsh

One gets the sense of a war-weary group of citizens. Not a surprising observation give that the interwar period lasted a mere 21 years.

Let's visit this period, through the Council minutes, meet some interesting citizens, relive some extraordinary events and gain an historical insight into the City of Westmount.

March 28, 1933

Mayor John Jenkins reported that on Saturday the 25th of March he had received a beautiful basket of flowers from the Mayor of St. Louis, Missouri, conveying the good will of the Mayor and Council and citizens of St. Louis to the Mayor and Council and citizens of Westmount, these flowers having been sent on the occasion of the opening of the 14th International Flower Show.

April 11, 1933



4880 Sherbrooke Street – Image:
RentersPages.com

The Secretary Treasurer submitted letter of date March 18th from the Hon. H. M. N. Marler of the Canadian Legation, Tokyo, Japan, advising that he had forwarded to the City of Westmount fifty Japanese Flowering Cherry Trees and requesting the City to accept these trees with his compliments.

July 27, 1933

Your committee recommends the Council authorize the granting of a permit to McGill University for the erection of a garage on their property 4880 Sherbrooke Street...



Canada Postage 1934 –
Image: (Public Domain)

August 30, 1934

The Mayor recommended that Saturday the 1st September be observed as a civic holiday in recognition of the Jacques Cartier Celebrations and in honour of the distinguished personages who are visiting this district in connection therewith.

September 18, 1934

Reference was made by the Mayor to the recent death of Mr. John Redpath Dougall, #618 Belmont Avenue, a citizen highly esteemed and known for his activities in all that was good and high minded and it was unanimously resolved that the Council records its sense of the loss suffered to the community and the journalistic world through the passing of a citizen of such high character and attainments.



John Redpath Dougall, Montreal, QC, 1863
Image: © McCord Museum N-I-6765.1

October 2, 1934

Letter of date August 14th 1934 was submitted... on behalf of Mrs. Pauline Weinfield, owner of the property on the northeast corner of Greene Avenue and St Catherine Street respectfully requesting that a permit be issued allowing Mrs. Weinfield to erect a Theatre on part of her property.

In connection with the foregoing application there was also submitted a Petition... from numerous citizens... strongly protesting against the granting of such permit contending that Westmount being a strictly residential district of better class building and homes (like) a Moving Picture Theatre in their midst would certainly detract from the benefits derived by the peaceable homelike surroundings that exists in this present day.

Your Committee having considered the application... cannot recommend to Council the granting of such application.



115 Fighter Squadron Badge

April 14, 1936

Your committee recommends that Council confirm the offer... for the purchase and temporary leasing of the Montreal Athletic Association's property in Westmount, including land, buildings, furnishings and equipment exclusive of pictures in Club House... situate(d) west of Hallowell Street, between St Catherine Street and the Canadian Pacific Railway have an area of 330,300 superficial feet... for the price of \$185,000.00...

August 4, 1936



Plaque King George Park – Image: Michael Walsh

Your Committee recommends the Council authorize that the City Engineer proceed with regrading of Murray Park, made necessary by the demolition of the Old Murray House and the proposed erection of a new shelter, the building of new paths, removal of walks and temporary roadway...

Your Committee recommends that Council authorize... the amount of \$20,157.00 for the erection of the Murray Park Shelter according to plans and specifications proposed by R. & F. R. Findlay, Architects.

February 21, 1938

Your Committee recommends that a permit be granted to the Department of National Defence to make alterations to the building at corner of Metcalfe Avenue presently occupied by #115 Fighter Squadron... to include provision for an indoor rifle range...



One of six Oak trees planted in 1937, north of the tennis courts, as part of Westmount's coronation celebrations for King George VI. Five of these trees still exist

Image: Michael Walsh

September 12, 1938

Your Committee recommends that Council authorize the granting of a permit to Steinberg's Wholesale Groceries to erect stores with apartments above on their property on the north side of Sherbrooke Street between Victoria Avenue and Grosvenor Avenue.

May 8, 1939

Your Committee recommend that in commemoration of the visit of Their Majesties to the City of Westmount, the Park and Playground presently known as Murray Park shall be renamed "King George Park" and that this name shall be officially announced by the Mayor at the proposed planting of oak trees in the Park.

May 15, 1939

Mayor Merrill called attention to the Autographed Photograph of King George VI purchased by the City and which would be suitably hung in the Council Chamber.



Camp Flag Royal Montreal Regiment
Image: (Public Domain)

June 12, 1939

Alderman C. K. McLeod was thanked for the flag which he had presented to the City, the flag having been part of the decorations on the McGill Medical Building when the Duke of Cornwall and York visited the City in 1901, also having been used at the Coronation of King George VI and again on the occasion of the visit of the King and Queen to Canada.



Distinguished Flying Cross

October 2, 1939

Your Committee recommends the Council authorize contributions of \$5,000... to be made to the Reserve Association of The Royal Montreal Regiment towards providing for comfort, equipment and other expenses... for the wellbeing of the Canadian Active Service Battalion...

June 17, 1940

Your Committee recommends that the Mayor be and is hereby authorized, from time to time, to appoint and swear in... special policemen not exceeding five hundred in number, to be known as the Westmount Patrol.



National Air Raid Defence Fund poster

July 15, 1940

Your Committee recommends that the Mayor... be authorized to sign a lease... of the City of Montreal's property on Clarke Avenue for use as a playground...

August 12, 1940

On Alderman's Scott's recommendation... to send a letter to Professor and Mrs. C. V. Christie expressing the congratulations and best wishes of the Council on the occasion of their son, Flying Officer George Paterson Christie, being awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

January 7, 1941

Cablegram was submitted from the Lord Mayor of London, thanking all concerned for the generous gift of \$5,000, made on behalf of the Citizens of Westmount to the Air Raid Distress Fund.



Charles Basil Price – Image: Public Domain

March 10, 1941

Alderman Scott referred to the recent announcement that Brigadier C. B. Price had been appointed to command the Third Canadian Division with the rank of Major-General... it was unanimously resolved... an expression of the pride and pleasure of the Mayor and Alderman and Citizens of Westmount in the fact that a former alderman and greatly esteemed citizen of Westmount had been appointed to such an important Command.

September 22, 1941



Third Canadian Division
Formation Patch

Your Committee recommends that Council authorize the granting of a permit to l'Institut de Notre Dame du Bon Conseil, to occupy their property at 4287 Western Avenue as a social and educational centre.

October 1, 1941

Your Committee recommends that the Mayor... be authorized to sign a lease... for the rental of basement rooms in 4652 Sherbrooke Street... for use by the Civilian Protection Committee.



George Cross

December 22, 1941

Your Committee recommends that Council grant a permit to D. W. Ogilvie & Company to allowing the building at corner of St. Antoine Street and Brooke Avenue to be used by the Bristol Myers Company for the packing of their products...

May 18, 1942

It was reported that Lieutenant William Gaston Tellier, R.C.N.V.R., has been awarded the George Cross, for "courage and coolness in a bomb disposal incident".

Reference was made to the passing of Miss Mary S. Saxe. "News of her death revives the recollection of the quarter-century in which she built the Westmount Library from the proportions of a small private one, to thirty to forty thousand volumes. It was not a big library when she left, but it was a good one. It was Mary Saxe's library,

and in a pitifully library-starved greater Montreal it was an oasis. Her greatest contribution to the culture and amenities of her community – indeed, of all of Canada – was of course the children’s library, the first in the country. It took her ten years to get it... A fine citizen of Canada is lost by her death.”

During the thirty years that Miss Saxe was chief librarian at Westmount her Library grew from its first 2,000 volumes to one of 36,000 volumes. At first she worked alone, without any assistant and with only a part-time janitor. There was a bell in a tall elm outside the Library door, which she could ring if the park policeman was needed. It took her ten years to persuade her committee to build the Children’s Room “not in the Basement, nor in the attic, but a wing with separate entrance, separate hours, and their own librarian.”



H.M.C.S. Westmount – Image: ReadyAyeReady.com

This room was opened in 1911. Eleven years later another wing was added which contains a Reference Room. In 1926, the library building was connected with the Palm Room, a part of Westmount’s beautiful conservatory. She says: “To take charge of a young two year old Library in 1901 was not easy. However, I was allowed to introduce open shelves, a Children’s Room, a Reference Room, and finally a beautiful conservatory.” – National Reference Book on Canadian Men and Women, Fifth Edition, 1936

September 21, 1942



Royal Red Cross medal

Presentation by Walter A. Merrill, K.C. Mayor, of Plaque bearing the City of Westmount’s crest in silver and the

following inscription: "Presented to H.M.C.S. Westmount September 21st 1942 – Sail on, nor to breast the seas; our hearts, our hopes are all with thee." – Longfellow

(The Royal Canadian Navy turned over the Bangor minesweeper Westmount (J318) to the Turkish Navy in 1957, and served as Bornovo until 1972, as part of the mutual aid programme.)

October 26, 1942

Your Committee recommends that a permit be granted for the use of property 9 Braeside Place... as a residence for Polish War Refugees...

July 12, 1943



Order of the British Empire

Names after two Montreal district parks, the SS Lafontaine Park and SS Westmount Park slid down the ways at an Eastern Canadian shipyard on Saturday after christening by the wives of the Mayors of Montreal and Westmount, Mrs. Raynault and Mrs. Merrill respectively.

June 12, 1944

The Secretary-Treasurer reported the Lieutenant Effie Beryl Webster R.C.A.M.C, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. A. H. Webster, 631 Victoria Avenue, had been named in the King's Birthday Honours List as an Associate of the Royal Red Cross, and the Lieutenant Colonel P. A. Piuze, E.D., had been awarded the Order of the British Empire.

June 19, 1944

The Secretary-Treasurer reported that Flight Lieutenant F. Duncan McKechnie... had been awarded the Air Force Cross in the King's Birthday honours...



Air Force Cross
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October 10, 1944

Honour Roll of Citizens of Westmount Serving in the Armed Forces.

On Thursday evening, October 5th at 5:30 p.m. in Victoria Hall, a short ceremony was held... the purpose of which of which... to formally hand over to the City the Honour Roll which had been compiled under the chairmanship of Major P. Lindsay Hall, D.S.C. M.C.... further, that the Honour Roll Plaques on each side of Victoria Hall, had been donated by the Masonite Company of Canada, and designed by Mr. A. Campbell Wood, Architect, the names being in movable gold lettering to allow additions being made in alphabetical order; that there were 2153 names on the Roll at present and of these, 120 indicated by a gold star had paid the supreme sacrifice.

Major Hall said that he was proud to hand over the Honour Roll over to the City for preservation as a lasting tribute to those citizens of Westmount who had served their King and Country in a great cause.

November 13, 1944



Committee recommend that Council authorize that the following Petition be forwarded to the Right Honourable the Lord Lyon, King of Arms, Edinburgh:

...wherefore Your Petitioners pray that it may please Your Lordship to authorize the Lyon Clerk to prepare Letters Patent granting licence and authority unto said City to bear and use such Insignia Armorial as may be found suitable according to the laws of arms...

June 27, 1945

The following awards were reported and Council directed that letters of congratulations be forwarded to those concerned:

Companion of the Order of Bath:

Major General Charles Basil Price, D.S.C, D.C.M., V.D., 64 Forden Crescent

Air Vice-Marshal Frank S. McGill, 4 Grenville Avenue



Civil Knight Grand Cross Star
of The Order of the Bath,
Národní museum, Praha

February 4, 1946

Your Committee recommends that Council authorize the Mayor... to sign an agreement between the City of Westmount and "400" Taxis Limited... for the operation of a taxi stand... on the east side of Victoria Avenue... all drivers operating from the stand shall furnish the Chief of Police with satisfactory references as their

character, qualifications and dependability.

March 18, 1946

...it has been decided that the lots on York Street purchased by the City at tax sale, be retained for park purposes.

It was reported that the Purple Heart had been awarded posthumously to Pfc. Alfred A. Wickham Jr... the son of Alfred A. Wickenden, 265 Melville...



Purple Heart medal

January 14, 1946

Your Committee recommends that Council authorize the acceptance of the tender of Henry Morgan & Co. Limited to construct a notice board for the City Hall for the Quarter Century Club Membership Roll at a cost of \$278.20, plus 50 cents for each name on the roll...

October 20, 1947

Letter of October 15th was submitted from Captain R. B. Warwick Commanding Officer H.M.C.S. Donnacona, with reference to the presentation of the bell of H.M.C.S. Westmount to the City of Westmount...

February 9, 1947

Captain R. B. Warwick R.C.N. (R), Officer Commanding H.M.C.S. Donnacona, on behalf of the Department of

National Defence, presented the “Bell” of the Minesweeper, H.M.C.S. Westmount to the City of Westmount with parchment containing a record of the gallant Ship’s services on Atlantic Convoy Duty, 1942-1945.



Presentation of the Bell to the City of Westmount (February 9, 1948). Those not in uniform are: (L-R) Alderman Jacques Sénécal, Alderman Gordon L. Fowler, Mayor R. Percy Adams, Alderman William F. Macklaier, Alderman James S. Cameron, and Alderman W. S. Greene. Image: City of Westmount



Bell, H.M.C.S. Westmount
Image: Anthony Caisson, City of Westmount

Mayor R. P. Adams... said it was fitting that it should be hung in the City Hall of the City whose name it bore and by whom it was sponsored, and that it would be treasured as a memento of the valiant services of its gallant Commander and Crew.

November 22, 1948

Letter of November 18th was submitted... conveying the thanks of His Excellency the Governor-General, conveying the thanks... for the resolution adopted by the City Council of Westmount... relating to the unveiling of the War Memorial and for the presentation of the silver salver on the occasion of His Excellency's visit to Westmount.

May 16, 1949

In connection with Parks and Recreation Week the Mayor made the following proclamation:
"I hereby proclaim that in cooperation with the Parks and Recreation Association of Canada, the City of Westmount will observe the week of May 23rd to 27th inclusive, as Parks and Recreation Week. A programme of sports... has been arranged to provide an opportunity for community participation..."



H.M.C.S. Westmount letter
Image: Anthony Caisson, City of Westmount

December 4, 1950

A delegation appeared from the Herbert Reddy Memorial Hospital, 4039 Tupper Street.

Mr. Callard introduced the delegation and Colonel Hovey acted as a spokesman... their nursery is the most modern in Canada. Their financial appeals to the public have not been very successful and this factor combined with continual increase in cost of operation has left them with staggering deficits... They feel that the income required for an efficient and continuous service can only come from the friends of the Hospital and the City of Westmount... it was submitted that the City should do for this Hospital... namely, finance the hospital on a similar basis... to a public library... and suggest a beginning by inserting in its name "Westmount General".

The Mayor assured the delegation that their proposition would be given serious consideration.

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I would like to thank Kayleigh Girard and Anthony Chiasson, City of Westmount, for their assistance in researching portions of this article.

Feature image: Royal Tour of Canada, 1939 (Public Domain)

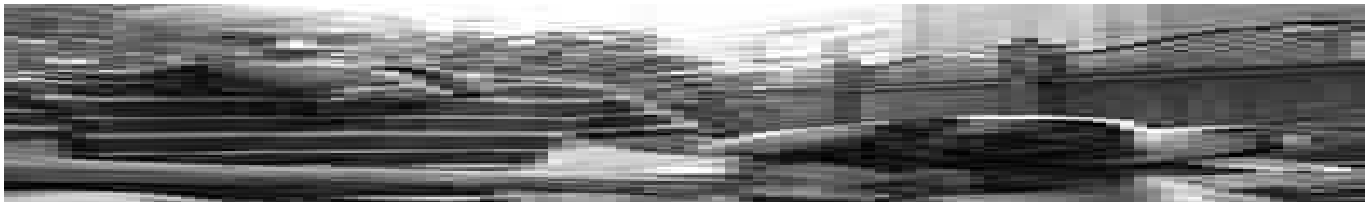


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Michael Walsh is a long-time Westmount resident. He is happily retired from nearly four decades in the field of higher education technology. A “professional student” by nature, his academic training, and publishing, include statistical methodology, 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 or through his blog [Westmount Overlooked](#)



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SHOP GLASSES

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