



City of Westmount
Council Minutes – 1919-1932

Description

A fascinating glimpse of the City's early days

By **Michael Walsh**

The history of the City of Westmount makes compelling reading as recorded within Council minutes. One can be transported back in time and almost relive the day-to-day lives of the citizens.



The Westmount Armoury

This portion of the minutes reflects the City's functioning following the Great War and into the Great Depression. A lot of effort was placed on widening streets to accommodate the increase in automobile ownership. Interestingly, the City had to purchase strips of property from owners with land fronting the affected streets. In addition, in an effort to control traffic, the city started installing stop signs and traffic lights.

The Great Depression affected many residents. In fact, a special fund was raised through property taxes and used to alleviate hardships imposed through unemployment. In today's dollars, that amount exceeded \$1.1 million.

Finally, the issue of women's voting rights in municipal elections was brought to City Council by Idola Saint-Jean, a person who tirelessly lobbied to have equal rights for women in Quebec.

Let's step back in time and visit our fair city during the period 1919-1932.

The Great Depression affected many residents... a special fund was raised through property taxes... to alleviate hardships imposed through unemployment.

October 7, 1919

Commissioner R. L. Scott reported having received an offer from Mr. Lorne C. Webster of some beavers for the Park and while appreciating Mr. Webster's very kind offer, and after considering the whole matter together with

the General Manager, he regretted that they were unable, in the meantime, to accept the gift.

February 12, 1924

With reference to the public meeting held in Victoria Hall... the Mayor reported that the following resolution, moved by Mr. A. D. Thornton... had been carried unanimously:

“This meeting is in favour of the City Council granting a lease for 99 years of the vacant land as herein described, at the rental of \$1.00 per year, on conditions to be agreed upon, for the purpose of enabling the Westmount Armoury Association to build and continuously maintain an Armoury for the 1st (Westmount) Battalion, The Royal Montreal Regiment. The land comprises subdivisions... and situated on St. Catherine Street, West of Park Place.”

July 6, 1926



Commissioner A. L. Robertson stated that the very handsome floral design and the work in connection with the Floral Clock was greatly appreciated and he suggested that an expression of the appreciation of the Council of the work done by the gardener, Mr. J. McCreath be conveyed by the Secretary Treasurer to him.

Commissioner R. L. Scott expressed appreciation of Mayor McLagan's bringing to the Council from Edinburgh, the suggestion that a Floral Clock be constructed and stated that he had learned that with the exception of the one in Edinburgh, one outside Scarborough and one in Switzerland, the Floral Clock in Westmount was the only other one in existence.

July 22, 1926

Letter of date July 15, 1926 was submitted from the Montreal Gardeners and Florists Club... complimenting the Council upon the very excellent display of bedding plants now showing at Westmount Park... with particular reference to the Floral Clock...

October 26, 1926



Queen Marie of Romania by George Grantham Bain

With reference to the visit of Her Majesty Queen Marie of Romania to Westmount on Wednesday, October 27, 1926 at 4 o'clock pm, it was intimated that on behalf of the citizens of Westmount bouquets be presented:

“To Her Majesty Marie Queen of Romania – as a slight expression of the cordial esteem in which she is held by the citizens of Westmount because of her gracious personality, her literary and artistic talent, and her devoted service to the wounded, the sick and the poor during the Great War.”

November 23, 1926

Your Committee recommends that Council authorize that an application be made to the Minister of Municipal Affairs for permission to loan temporarily to the Montreal Metropolitan Commission a sum not exceeding \$200,000 at a rate of interest of 5% per annum.

Letter of date November 18 was submitted from the Westmount Municipal Association reporting that a delegation representing a large body of citizens of... urging the necessity of the City purchasing the Murray property... for park and playground purposes...

At 8:30 pm, on the eleventh day of November 1926, an inaugural organ recital was given in Victoria Hall by Mr. Lynnwood Farnham of New York City. The Mayor gave a brief address telling the citizens how this first municipal

organ in Canada had been built in Westmount's Municipal Social Centre...

December 7, 1926

Your Committee recommends that Council authorize granting a permit to Messrs Reipert & Foster to erect stores with dwellings above on the south west corner of St. Catherine Street and Metcalfe Avenue...

February 8, 1927

Your Committee recommends that Council authorize the granting of a permit for the erection of The Women's



April

5, 1927

Letter of date March 30 was submitted by the Royal Automobile Club of Canada... that the thanks of the Club be extended to the Public Works Department of the City of Montreal and also the cities of Westmount, Montreal West, Outremont, Verdun, Mount Royal etc. for the satisfactory manner in which the roads have been maintained during the present year for vehicular traffic.

Left: Royal Automobile Club of Canada grill badge

May 17, 1927

Diamond Jubilee of Confederation Celebrations in Westmount Park ...children would sing "O Canada", one verse in English and one verse in French which would be followed by addresses by one of the Speakers, after which dances and Patriotic Exercises be held, followed by another address... and to be finished up with the mass singing of "God Save The King".

A quotation was submitted from Messers Henry Birks & Sons and J. A. Nichols for supplying medals or medallions but the Committee decided that they were not required as flags were being presented to the children and it was expected that medals were to be received from the National Committee for distribution to the school children... *Westmount Palm House Opens* – Montreal Gazette November 2, 1927

August 18, 1931

Your Committee recommends that Council authorize an expenditure of \$475 for the construction of an office in the Park Green Houses alongside the Superintendent's office for the use of the Play-grounds Supervisor.

September 1, 1931

Your Committee recommends that Council authorize the City Engineer to proceed with the construction of the proposed Lookout on Summit Circle as per plan submitted, of date August 28, 1931, subject to changes of detail if considered advisable, the estimated cost being \$35,200

Your Committee recommends that an expenditure of \$2,175 over the amount committed for the filling and improvement of the Park ravine...



Summit Lookout – Image: Andrew Burlone

October 30, 1931

A Deputation comprising Brig. Gen G. E. McCuaig, Norman Dawes, F. G. Pedley and Norman Holland waited on the Committee with reference to Emergency Unemployment Relief:

Brig. Gen G. E. McCuaig addressed the Council ... giving details of the work being carried on at present, applications increasing at the rate of 200 families per week... In addition to family relief, he reported that about 3600 single men were being fed daily at premises on Vitre Street and sleeping accommodation provided for 1130... Reference was made the provision being made by the City of Montreal, which estimates that an amount of approximately \$960,000 would be required for the care of unemployed men... One third of the total to be raised by the City of Montreal, one third by the Provincial Government, one third by the Dominion Government. Distribution to be made on a population basis in proportion to the number of French Catholics, English Catholics, Protestants and Jews.

In making an appeal now Brig. Gen McCuaig said they did so feeling assured that the City of Westmount would gladly and willingly do its share and make a substantial grant in aid of relief... and whatever amount granted by the City of Westmount, would be contributed by the Provincial and Federal authorities.

Mayor Hogg assured the delegation... that they had a sympathetic audience and the Council was glad to have the citizens come in support of the appeal.

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November 17, 1931

Your Committee unanimously recommends that the Council do create a special reserve fund under Bylaw 436 and do pay into said Fund the sum of \$72,340...

Your Committee further recommends that payment out of the said Fund (for the) direct relief of the poor and needy as far as practical in proportion of the number of Protestant, Roman Catholics and Jewish residents in Westmount as established by the latest census taken by the City of Westmount.

November 24, 1931

The General Manager submitted the census of the City as recently taken by the Police and Fire Department showing a total of – 25,394 – The number of unemployed being (Males) 399 – (Females) 166 – (Dependents) – 384.

December 15, 1931

Your Committee recommends that Council authorize an appropriation of \$5,000 from General Reserve to provide for unemployment relief work in connection with snow removal, work to be paid for at rate of 25 cents per hour...

January 5, 1932



Idola Saint-Jean – Image: public domain

A large delegation of ladies introduced by Brig. Gen C. A. Smart waited on the Council requesting an amendment being made to the City's Charter to allow married women voting in Municipal Affairs, the City of Quebec having such provision since 1854 and the City of Verdun and City of Montreal having recently had their Charter amended to allow of married women separate as to property having voting rights. Miss Idola St. Jean, Mrs. Allan Smith and Mrs. John Scott spoke in support of the request.



The Mayor in replying said that he was very glad that the ladies had come to see the Council and that, whilst it was too late to have anything done at the present session of Legislature, the question would be referred to the City Solicitor for report...

February 16, 1932

Your Committee recommends that Council authorize a commitment of \$250 for providing material and paying for sewing work to be done by a number of unemployed women, in Victoria Hall...

June 9, 1932

Letter of date May 30 was submitted from the National Societies Empire Day Committee thanking the City for the beautiful floral tribute placed on the Victoria Monument on Empire Day.

Images: Michael Walsh, unless specified.

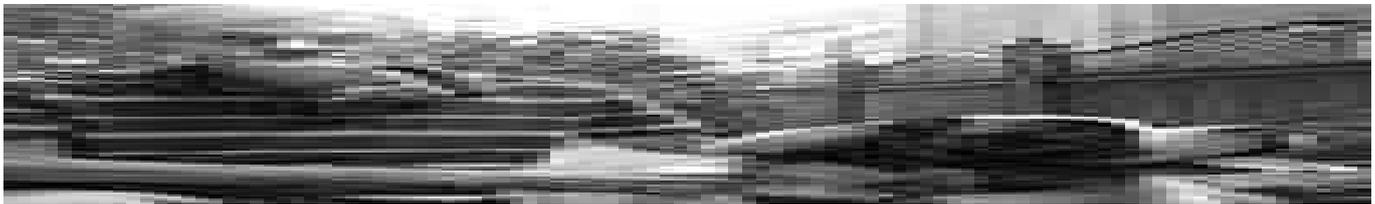
Feature image: Andrew Burlone

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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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Tags

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