



Westmount places
Chesterfield Avenue

Description

The history behind the familiar: Anecdotes and intrigues on Chesterfield Avenue

By **Michael Walsh**

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Whatever is worth doing at all, is worth doing well... Never put off till tomorrow what you can do today.

– Lord Chesterfield, *Letters to His Son on the Art of Becoming a Man of the World and a Gentleman*, 1752

Do you remember the first time you came across those maxims? I certainly do – growing up as a child in a family with a British (colonial) father – these were ingrained in children to build what was called “character”.



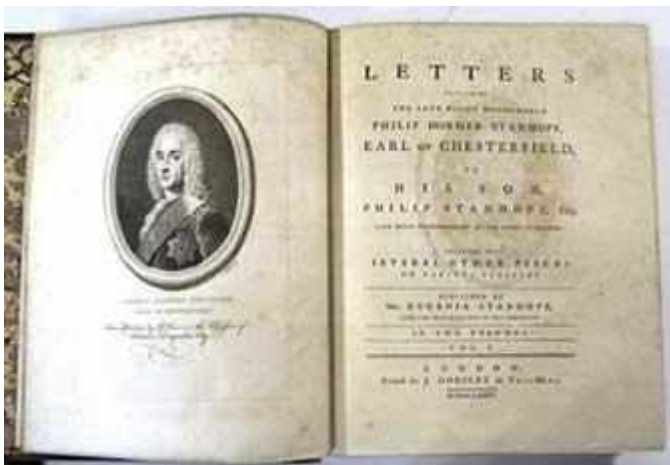
Philip Stanhope, Earl of
Chesterfield – Image:
Jacques-Antoine Dassier

It's only recently I discovered these sayings and many more were the work of [Philip Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield](#), whose name is honoured in Westmount's Chesterfield Avenue.

Many resident's and visitors' sole exposure to the street occurs when the local grocery store's parking area is full and one doesn't feel like paying for parking in the nearby municipal lot.

With that observation behind us, let's leave our cars at home and take a leisurely walk along Westmount's Chesterfield Avenue and listen to the many stories that the buildings have been longing to share.

As we discovered the street was named in honour of Philip Dormer Stanhope, 4th Earl of Chesterfield (1694-1773), a British statesman and diplomat. His legacy lasts, to this day, in two books: *Letters to His Son on the Art of Becoming a Man of the World and a Gentleman* (1774) and *Letters to His Godson*. In sum, they are instructional letters, addressed to his son and godson covering many subjects, such as geography, history, and classical literature as well as interpreting society's morals and manners.



Thorn Books, Tucson Arizona

Another little-known legacy of Philip Stanhope was Britain's move from the Julian (used throughout the Roman Empire and by various Christian churches) to the Gregorian calendar (as known as the Western or Christian calendar) in 1752 – a decision for which he was largely responsible.

Finally, his legacy also lives on in the term "chesterfield" (largely a British term) that describes a deep-buttoned leather sofa, a piece of furniture that he first commissioned.

The origin of the street can be traced through city council proceedings, where it first appears in 1893 running from Victoria to Prince Albert Avenues. Two years later, the Town macadamized the street and laid water mains and drains.



32-36 Chesterfield

In 1897, several citizens presented a petition to the Town asking that the street be continued to Victoria Avenue:

“Submitted and read the petition of Narcisse Nolin and seven others praying that the Council take proceedings for the expropriation of land necessary for the continuation of Chesterfield Avenue through to Victoria Avenue. The said petition having been considered it was decided that the request could be entertained and it was laid on the table.”

–November 2, 1897

Council approved the request; however, a proportion of the cost would be paid by the fronting proprietors: “...that Chesterfield Avenue be extended from its present terminus to Victoria Avenue and that the cost of expropriation be paid for in the proportion of sixty per centum by the Town generally and the balance by the fronting proprietors and that a By-law be prepared for the same.”



42 Chesterfield

The required land was purchased (1898) and additional footage ceded in 1905:

“That Mr. Hamelin’s offer of the land necessary for the extension of Chesterfield Avenue be accepted for the sum of \$2500... that the Mayor and Secretary-treasurer be and they are hereby authorized to sign the necessary deeds of same.”

– April 29, 1898

“A letter dated 5th June 1905 from the Estate of John McDougall was read confirming an agreement made by the heirs to cede to the Town the land necessary to extent Windsor and Chesterfield Avenues through the property of the Estate at a width of 55 feet... land required for the extension westward of Windsor and Chesterfield Avenues... subject to the exclusion from public use a strip of land 2 feet in width at the west end of each such street.”

– June 5, 1905



48 Chesterfield

By 1910 the extension of Chesterfield Avenue had a water main and cement sidewalks.

At this point, the genesis of the street is hardly a “gripping tale”; however, every street has a backstory – and Chesterfield in no exception to this rule.

Chesterfield Avenue rose to prominence in May 1903. The *Montreal Gazette*'s headline read “A Prisoner For a Day – Mr. D. C. Brousseau Deprived of Clothes and Locked Up – His Life is Threatened.”

The story continues: “Mr. Brousseau said that he made the acquaintance of the woman in the case when she called at his office to examine a safe that he had advertised for sale. She suggested to him that she could sell

the safe if he would allow her a commission. Mr. Brosseau agreed to her proposition afterwards accepted an invitation from the woman to call on her at her residence in Westmount. He first visited her at 5 Thornhill and there made an appointment with her to go to 21 Chesterfield Avenue when the woman said they would meet a party who wanted to purchase the safe."



50 Chesterfield

"When they reached the house in Chesterfield Avenue, the door of a wardrobe in the side of the room opened and a big man, armed with a revolver and a knife faced them. 'Now I have got you', he shouted. 'I will teach you to act in this way with my wife; I will have your life'... He finally consented, however, to save Mr. Brosseau's life if that gentleman would pay him \$50,000 and sign a confession acknowledging improper relations on his part with the woman."

"Mr. Brosseau was kept prisoner in the house until Tuesday morning, his captor having locked up all his clothes. After he had been left alone in the house he managed to secure most of his clothes, and made his escape after climbing out of a window onto the balcony and jumping to the ground."

Montreal Gazette, May 1, 1903



56 Chesterfield

Interestingly, forty-five years later, 21 Chesterfield Avenue appeared, once again, in the newspapers when a fire occurred:

“Four families were forced to evacuate their dwellings in Westmount last night when a fire of unknown origin broke out in the ceiling between the third and fourth floors of a four-story apartment building at 21 Chesterfield Avenue. No one was reported injured but the damage was said to be “fairly heavy” in the two upper floors of the building...”

Montreal Gazette, October 11, 1948



63-65 Chesterfield

With those stories behind us, let's take a leisurely walk along Chesterfield Avenue and become acquainted with a few of the street's earliest residents.



James Coristine & Co invoice Sept. 9, 1926 –
Image: Public Domain

25 Chesterfield

David Cowan, manager, James Coristine & Company (1901)

James Coristine & Co. Limited, manufacturers and importers of furs, hats & caps, lumbermen’s supplier.

27 Chesterfield

James R. Greig, manager, Greig Manufacturing Company (1901)

“Licorice... We manufacture everything in the Licorice line carried by the Grocery, Drug and Confectionery trades. We might mention – Y & S Stick Licorice, all sizes; Acme Licorice Pellets; Y & S Licorice Lozenges, in cans or glass jars; A B C Blocks; Purity & Dulce Brand one-cent sticks; Bundled Licorice Root, etc. In Pliable Licorice, Triple Tunnel Tubes, Mint Puff-Straps and Navy Plugs. Write for illustrated catalogue. Young & Sylle Established 1845. Brooklyn, N.Y. Unequalled For Purity And Strength. Greigs Crown Extracts – The Greig Manufacturing Company Montreal.”

Canadian grocer July-December 1898



Image: A Chronology of Montreal and of Canada

from A.D. 1752 to A.D. 1893, 1893

39 Chesterfield

Antoine Blancheri, ladies tailor (1901)

42 Chesterfield

John A. Tees, John A. Tees and Company (1901)

48 Chesterfield

Thomas Brady, Wells & Richardson Company (1901)



Ad for Celery Compound – Image:
peachridgeglass.com

“Founded in 1872, the pharmaceutical firm produced medicines, infant formula, fabric dyes, and other household products. By 1894, Wells, Richardson had \$2 million in annual sales (some \$51 million in today’s dollars), employed more than 200 people at its Burlington manufacturing plant and offices, and had branches in London, Montreal, and Sydney.”

Champlain College Library



50 Chesterfield

William F. Graham, R. Graham & Company (1901)

54 Chesterfield

David M. Johnson, Johnson & Copping (1901)

Johnson & Copping Gallery was located on Saint Catherine Street West.

56 Chesterfield

Frank Percy Jones, Dominion Iron & Steel Company (1901)

57 Chesterfield

(Converted into a two-family dwelling in 1945)

A. Milne, commercial traveller (1901)

The Dominion Iron
and Steel Co., Ltd.
SYDNEY, NOVA SCOTIA,
CANADA.

**WIRE NAILS
WIRE RODS
BILLETS.**

Bar Mill, Rounds, Flats, Squares.
Basic Pig Iron.

LONDON OFFICE:
90 FENCHURCH STREET, E.C.3.

Telephone: Avenue 4649.
Telegrams: "Dominsteel, Fen, London."

Dominion Iron & Steel ad

59 Chesterfield

John B. Delorimier, contractor (1901)

61 Chesterfield

Eben Dowie, construction engineer (1901)

Eben Dowie & James Oxley were the first people to patent the use of chilli powder, in 1899, as an extermination ingredient. This substance is still used to this day.

“Be it known that we, Eben Dowie, consulting engineer, and James Macdonald Oxley, insurance manager, of the city of Montreal, in the county of Hochelaga, in the Province of Quebec, Canada, have invented a certain new and useful Composition of Matter to be Used for Evicting Rats and other Vermin, of which the following is a specification. Our composition consists of the following ingredients, combined in the proportions stated, viz: Chilli pepper, twenty percent; hellebore, five percent; sulphate of lime, eight percent; phosphate of lime, eight percent; carbonate of lime, fifty-four percent; oxide of iron, five percent. This mixture is thoroughly mingled and makes a fine powder.”

USPO, Aug 22, 1899, Publication number US631738 A

63 Chesterfield

William Percival, Percival Brothers (shoe jobbers) (1901)

65 Chesterfield

James Beckham, Beckham & Scott (1901)



68-70-72 Chesterfield

70 Chesterfield

George McBean, Oliver Gilmour Grain & Milling Company (1903)

72 Chesterfield

A. H. Mason, Mason & Risch Piano Company (1903)



MASON, RISCH & NEWCOMBE,

IMPORTERS OF

PIANOS,

AND

CABINET ORGANS.

FROM THE CELEBRATED MANUFACTORIES OF

DECKER BROS., N. Y.,

HAMILTON BROS., N. Y.
BLOOMFIELD & OTIS, N. Y.

BURNING & KAIS, N. Y.
PINSKY & CO., FREIBURG.

MASON & HAMLIN, BOSTON.

*Grand Hard Pianos.
Pianos for Hire.*

*Pianos taken in Exchange.
Pianos Tuned & Repaired.*

MASON, RISCH & NEWCOMBE, 81 King Street East.

Ad for Mason, Risch, Newcombe – Image:
antiquepianoshop.com

“Thomas G. Mason, Vincent Risch and Octavius Newcombe entered into a partnership in 1871 to form the firm of Mason, Risch & Newcombe, in Toronto. The firm started out as retailers of pianos, organs and musical merchandise, initially importing their instruments from the United States.”

“Mason, Risch & Newcombe begin building their own instruments in Toronto in about 1877, and these instruments were met with great success. In 1878 the firm was reorganized as ‘Mason & Risch’ when Newcombe left the partnership to open his own firm. Mason & Risch quickly became one of the largest music store chains in Canada. Mason & Risch built high-quality pianos for decades, and enjoyed a very good reputation.”

“In 1900 Mason & Risch entered into a contract with Eaton’s Department Stores, Canada’s largest department store chain, to build pianos under the brand name of T. Eaton. Instruments labelled as T. Eaton were sold in Eaton’s Department Stores for decades, giving Mason & Risch the revenue needed to survive the economic downturns of the 20th Century. The firm also produced a successful line of organs under the ‘Vocalian’ brand name.”

“In the 1950s, the firm was purchased by the Winter Piano Company of New York, and it became part of the large Aeolian-American Corporation. The Mason & Risch brand name was discontinued in 1972.”
antiquepianoshop.com

Images: Andrew Burlone unless indicated otherwise

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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 to evaluate 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 michaeld2003@hotmail.com or through his blog [Westmount Overlooked](#)

35% off lens upgrades
Including blue light lenses

clearly

SHOP GLASSES

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