



Westmount places
and the pleasure of living there

Description

One of the pleasures of living in Westmount is its small town feel

By **Michael Walsh**

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Living in a small town... is like living in a large family of uncongenial relations. Sometimes it's fun, and sometimes it's perfectly awful, but it's always good for you. People in large towns are like only-children.

– *Joyce Dennys*

One of the pleasures of living in Westmount is its small town feel. Contributing to this sense are, in part, its numerous green spaces, large parks, beautiful architecture, small stores, weekly newspaper and local civic services that form a small town atmosphere. It's a comforting feeling when you recognize, but not necessarily know, those that walk by you while walking through the streets. As such, one can easily forget that the town is located only minutes away from Canada's second-largest city.

What follows is another sample of places and houses with their stories – and, as the age-old saying goes “what stories they have to tell”.



Montreal Tramways Company conduit

An abandoned Montreal Tramways Company conduit in Westmount Park. The company ran Montreal's streetcars from 1911-1951.



Former Montreal Water & Power Company (1930) building on

Hillside

The Great Depression (1929–1939) brought to light the abusive practices — inadequate service, high rates, exorbitant profits — of the electricity monopolies that were operating in Québec. The government was urged to intervene and to regulate a service that had become essential.

On April 14, 1944, the Québec government created Hydro-Québec and gave it a mandate to manage the electric and gas facilities of the Montreal Light, Heat and Power Company. From the start, the new utility faced a formidable challenge: meeting demand that was spiralling upward at an astounding 7% per year. To cope with this growth, Hydro-Québec had to double its generating capacity every ten years until the beginning of the 1980s. (*Hydro of the Future*)





A site of two former markets: Falle's market (1920) and Laniel's market (1940). Today it houses a craft shop.



Former fire box

In use for over 75 years and decommissioned in 1987, near the Glen Yards.



4847 Sherbrooke West
Former Laura Secord Candy Shop (1930s).



255 Metcalfe

George Wood's home (1900s) – Hutchinson & Wood.

Among (Wood's) projects, designed independently or in partnership, are the Redpath Museum, McGill University, Erskine Church, Strathcona house and Macdonald College, Montreal. In 1877, he formed a partnership with A. D. Steele, a British architect who then lived in Canada. They practised together under the name of Hutchison & Steele until 1890. In 1890 Steele retired, and Hutchison formed a partnership with his eldest son, William B. Hutchison and his son-in-law, George W. Wood, to form the firm Hutchison & Wood. (*McGill Digital Library*)



17 Melbourne

Former home (1900s) of R. N. King, manager of the Ontario Bank. The Ontario Bank became part of the Bank of Montreal in 1906. Its general manager, in 1907, Charles McGill was convicted of filing false tax returns and sentenced to a five year prison term.



5 York

D.A. Doty Canadian Express Company (1897) – formerly the Dominion Express Company.

The Dominion Express Company was incorporated in Winnipeg in 1873 and taken over by the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1884, when the headquarters were moved to Toronto. The company provided the first all-Canadian express route between Eastern and Western Canada. Dominion's principal competition was Canadian Express, which had connections with the U.S. Wells Fargo and American Express companies. The Canadian Express Company operated mostly over the lines of the Grand Trunk Railway and built an express facility adjacent to Toronto Union Station in 1884. CEC introduced the first money order service in Canada in 1891. In 1921, CEC was taken over by the Canadian National Express Company. (*Railway Historical Association*)



Fading sign for A. Fisher Plumbers
On Dunlop Place off Greene Avenue.



Bell Telephone Exchange Sign

An old Bell Telephone Exchange sign – now used as an exterior (decorative) plaque on a Queen Anne style house on Prince Albert. (The sign is located on private property).



Tree Species Marker — King George Park

Many years ago, the trees in Westmount's parks had their species' names nailed into the bark. From the Montreal Gazette, April 14, 1920: Alderman Scott, Park Commissioner... said that it had been decided to place metal tags on the different kinds of shrubbery in the parks and also signs on trees denoting the common name as well as the botanical name. Over time, vandalism caused the removal of these plaques. I was fortunate to find one in King George Park.



4335 De Maisonneuve

Joseph Eveleigh residence (1920).

J. Eveleigh & Company – Manufacturers of trunks and travelling bags (Including: Gladstone, English Kit. Club, Salisbury & Brief). Their salesroom was located at 245 and 247 St. James Street and the factory at the corner of St. Elizabeth & Vitre Streets.



4331 De Maisonneuve

W. W. Hutchison residence (1910). Eastern manager of the Lake of the Woods Milling Company, manufacturers of Five Roses flour.

The Lake of the Woods Milling company (1887-1967) was at one point the largest flour mill in the British Commonwealth. Their headquarters were in Montreal and the milling operation was located in Keewatin Ontario. *Book* – which is still in print to this very day!





~~K. Gafftey residence, managing director, Montreal Terra Cotta Lumber Company (1900).~~

Advertisement from the Montreal Gazette, June 1, 1892: Porous Terra Cotta, Manufactured by the Montreal Terra Cotta Lumber Company, Now being laid in the Royal Victoria Hospital.



353 Olivier

James Cleghorn residence – John Hope & Co. (1900)

Lachute Bobbin and Shuttle Works. The largest shuttle manufacturer, in Canada, of bobbins and spools for cotton and woollen mills.



Westmount Summit

In 1943 the National Research Council had an experimental radio tower and service building in Summit Park. During that same period, the Verdun and District Sportsmen's Association introduced pheasants to the Summit. These were cared for by the Westmount Park authorities.



350 Olivier

A. A. Ayer residence – the Whitham Shoe Company (1900)

Advertisement from The Commercial: Vol. 5, No. 13 (Dec. 21, 1886): James Whitam A. A. Ayers Special Partners, Manufacturers of & Wholesale Dealers, Boots & Shoes, 43, 45 and 47 St. Maurice Street, Near McGill Street, Montreal, Represented by Thompson & MacDonald, 525 Main St. Winnipeg.



110 Abbott

George M. Webster residence (1897) – Webster Brothers & Parkes

Manufactures of wood mantels, mosaic floors and fire-place goods. Their office was at 694 Craig Street.



64 Bruce

Frank Lotty, superintendent, Peck, Benny & Company (1897)

Advertisement from the Railways of Canada 1870-1. J. M. Trout & E. Trout: Established 1838, Canal, Montreal, Iron Nail and Spike Works, Peck, Benny & Co., Manufactures of Railroad Spikes, Ship Spikes, and all descriptions of cut nails, pressed clinch and slate nails. Office 391 St. Paul Street. Works 61 Mill Street.

A by-product of the reconstruction of the Lachine Canal across the Island of Montreal in the 1840s was the provision of water power for manufacturing purposes at three sites. Two of them, Canal Basin No. 2 and the Saint-Gabriel Locks, were actually within the limits of the City of Montreal. This was enough to attract nail manufacturers back to the city from the fringes of the island. In 1847, Thomas Peck (1808-1874) opened a nail mill on Canal Basin No. 2.

Also probably in 1859, a second rolling mill was constructed at a cost of \$30 000 by Thomas Peck, who had been making nails on the basin since 1847. An 1864 description says that a turbine wheel drove an immense 22-ton balance wheel that transmitted power to the rolling mill itself. Another turbine drove 38 nail machines while a third turbine drove two large spike machines.

Alone in the middle was Thomas Peck & Co. (which became Peck Benny & Co. in 1870), which had a rolling mill but was water-powered. When a Royal Commission looked into the leasing of water power on the Lachine Canal in 1887, the company claimed to be the last water-powered rolling mill in North America. Steam power could easily have been produced by putting boilers on top of their heating furnaces as Pillow Hersey had done, but the company only paid \$1750 a year for water power. Converting to steam would have meant boilers, additional coal, engineers, firemen and annual repairs. It is possible that a steam-powered rolling mill was added when the company was restructured as the Peck Rolling Mills Ltd in 1903.

Peck Rolling Mills Ltd, took over the assets of Peck Benny & Co. in 1903. Both Stelco and Peck Rolling Mills continued to produce cut and horse nails well into the twentieth century. (source: *Larry McNALLY, volume 36, Fall/Autome 1992, Technical Advance and Stagnation : The Case of Nail Production in Nineteenth-Century Montreal, page 2*)

Images: Michael Walsh




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



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