



Westmount places
and their stories

Description

The history behind the familiar: places and objects that reflect the true social fabric of Westmount

By **Michael Walsh**

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There are aspects of small town life that I really like — the routine nature of it, the idea of people knowing you and your likes and dislikes.

Cress Williams

Imagine you are sitting in an airplane, going on a trip, and the person beside you strikes up a conversation. “Where are you from?” they ask; you reply “Westmount Quebec” — to that they counter, “Where is that?” Another person, in an adjoining seat, replies “It’s a place that everyone knows where is it and is also somewhere where each one of them would like to live!”

And the reasons are varied: it’s a place where families feel safe and belong. There is also a comforting routine of annual events that celebrate belonging to the community. There is also the historical aspect that is evident throughout the city: the houses, street names and plaques installed to mark important events. What follows is a glimpse of the places, the people who lived there and the objects that reflect the social fabric of Westmount.

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~~Andrew Rutherford, William Rutherford and Sons (1900).~~

Montreal Gazette, February 29, 1932: "Westmount Loses Prominent Citizen In W. Rutherford / Former Mayor and Alderman of Suburban City Dies in 68th Year / Leading Industrialist / Was Director of Lumber Business Bearing Family Name – Had Various Sporting Associations.

Over the city hall of Westmount a flag flew at half-mast yesterday. It signified that the municipality is mourning one of its most distinguished sons – William Rutherford, ex-alderman, former mayor, and widely known business man, who died on Saturday evening at his home, 458 Mount Stephen avenue. He was 67 years of age and had been ill for a long time.

Always interested in civic affairs, Mr. Rutherford was elected by acclamation to the highest post the municipality could offer, that of chief magistrate. He occupied the mayoral chair for the term of 1911-12 and previous to that had been an alderman for three years.

His business activities were centered in the Rutherford Lumber Company, formerly known as the William Rutherford Lumber Company. This firm was founded by Mr. Rutherford's father. At the time of his death he was a director of the company for many years as treasurer."



44 Rosemount

Arthur Lyman, Lyman Sons & Co. (1900).

"The main operations of the firm as chemists and druggists were located on St. Paul Street, where extensive premises were erected in 1855 (burnt 1888). Both wholesale and retail operations were carried on until about confederation, when the retail side was dropped. Manufacturing of pharmaceutical products, linseed oil, paints, and oils took place at a separate location on the south side of the Lachine Canal basin. These products won medals at the Exposition Universelle in Paris in 1855 and 1878. In addition, the Lymans were importers of drugs, and their products were known as 'Lyman's colours.'" (Canadian Bibliography)





Edmond McMahon, coroner (1899).

« Edmond McMahon. Maître de chapelle, chanteur, avocat, coroner (Sainte-Rose, auj. Laval, près Montréal, 18 octobre 1852 – Westmount [Montréal], 2 février 1942).

Il fut reçu au Barreau de Montréal en 1881 et devint ensuite coroner (1892) puis juge de paix (1894) de la ville de Westmount. Il fut successivement m. C. À l'église Saint-Joseph, à la cathédrale de Montréal (1888-93) puis à Notre-Dame (1897-1906).

Il fut rédacteur en chef de l'Album littéraire et musical de La Minerve et collabora (1896-99) à L'Art musical. Il est l'auteur d'une Méthode élémentaire de plain-chant romain (Montréal 1880) dont Ernest Gagnon a vanté les mérites : « À chaque page de votre livre, on constate que vous possédez l'érudition nécessaire pour donner à votre œuvre de plus amples proportions, et que c'est bien à dessein que vous restez dans les limites du cadre que vous vous êtes tracé.

Vous avez bien fait de vous en tenir à un traité élémentaire : il importe de vulgariser l'étude et la pratique du plain-chant et pourristes nous les leçons qu'il faut que l'on atteindra ce but » (lettre du 25 août 1880 à l'auteur, publiée dans The Canadian Encyclopedia)



96 Columbia

T. M. Todd – Manager Allan Line (1899).

“Allan Line was a Scottish-Canadian shipping company founded by Captain Alexander Allan (1780-1854) with his newly purchased brigantine, Jean, which sailed from Greenock, Scotland, to Québec in 1819. In 1826 his second son, Hugh Allan, came to Montréal and developed a successful shipping business there; in 1839 Hugh was joined by a younger brother, Andrew. Two other brothers established offices in Greenock and Liverpool. In 1854 the Allan consortium incorporated the Montreal Ocean Steamship Company, which in 1856 won the government mail contract from Montréal to Liverpool.

With innovative engineering and design the Allan ships prospered on the Atlantic and other trade routes. The first steel liner to sail the Atlantic was the Allan Line's Buenos Ayrean in 1880. After the turn of the century the company and was sold to Canadian Pacific Steamships Ltd in 1909.” (The Canadian





G. E. Wolfkill – Dominion Bridge Co. (1899)

“The Dominion Bridge Company, founded in Toronto in 1879 under the name Toronto Bridge Company, moved to Lachine in 1883 to manufacture iron and steel superstructures for bridges and buildings. Attracted by the vast expanses of low-cost land along the canal, the company was directly linked to Lachine’s development. It gradually expanded its complex, buying more land and adding a machine shop in 1897, then making more additions between 1925 and 1935.

A major employer in Lachine, Dominion Bridge built numerous skyscrapers and bridges across Canada, including the Reversing Falls railway bridge in Saint John, New Brunswick, and the bridge between Kanahwake and Lachine. The company and its subsidiary, Davie Industries, went bankrupt in 1998, and, following the concerted efforts and protests of the unions, the assets were bought by the Group ADF Inc and the FTQ Solidarity Fund. In 2003, the facilities, which were then bought by Cintube, a former partner of Dominion, specialized in the bending of tubes, pipes, beams, and channels.” (Canada Heritage)



Westmount Park’s Crows

They are an interesting species of birds. An interview with Kevin McGowan, an ornithologist from Cornell University, provides a fascinating insight into their behaviour:

What is a group of crows called?

“The poetic term used in literature is a “murder.” Scientists would call them a flock.”

Why do crows roost in cities?

“Urban living offers crows several possible advantages. Cities are often 5 to 10 degrees F warmer than rural areas, an advantage in cold weather, and may offer protection from human hunters. Great horned owls, which frequently prey on crows, presumably number fewer in urban areas. Artificial light may assist crows in watching for owls at night, and cities may provide some of the largest roost trees in a given area.”

How can you attract crows?

“Crows have an endearing characteristic that apparently is not shared by other birds — they can identify people as individuals. While you can get chickadees to eat out of your hand, any old hand will do, and I suspect the chickadees do not know you as an individual. Crows will! If you toss them peanuts (preferably unsalted, in the shell)



on a regular basis, they will wait and watch for you. Not just any person, but you. If you do this often enough, they will even if you're in your car."

The Richelieu Apartments

I am not certain how many feet Westmount's border extends west on Claremont Avenue. There is however, an interesting apartment building on 418 Claremont Avenue facing this boundary. It's named The Richelieu – built in 1926 and designed by C. P. Tetley.

The stairs are made from Italian marble and their banisters are solid mahogany. The floors in the halls are covered with French ceramic tile.



artwork (although deteriorating) in the halls and lobby. One story relates to a man who had financial difficulties and created the paintings in lieu of paying rent.

65 Arlington

James Crankshaw, advocate (1897)

J. Crankshaw. "The profession of the Law is one, the importance of which cannot be over-rated, and in this work, where the commercial and industrial enterprises of the City of Montreal are described, the Local Bar comes within its scope.



Among members of this profession, Mr. J. Crankshaw deserves a passing tribute. This popular barrister began practice in 1883, which has steadily increased, having during the intervening period drawn about him a very extensive and influential clientele.

Mr. Crankshaw has always taken a high stand in his profession, and has had many years' experience in this country as well as in England, where for many years he was manager for a Law firm in Manchester, thus fitting him for conducting all the details in Law.

During his professional career in this city he has successfully handled many difficult cases, and his advice on all legal matters is widely recognized as an authority, clients visiting him from various parts of the Province.

He has at all times identified himself with the best interests of the city, and has for many years been a Commissioner for Ontario. He was admitted to the Bar of Quebec in 1883, and has ever since kept up with the times." (Gazetteer of Montreal)



Melville Avenue

Brachiopod fossils inside a slate stair on Melville Avenue. Dating from the oceans in the Palaeozoic era – 500 to 200 million years ago.



263-265-267-269-271 Melville

263 Melville

J. Marshall, manufacturing agent (1900)

265 Melville

George Johnston, conductor Intercolonial Railway (1900)

The Intercolonial Railway of Canada was in operation between 1872-1918 as one of Canada's first Crown corporations.

267 Melville

Alfred D Thorton, assistant manager Canadian Rubber Co. (1900)

"The Canadian Consolidated Rubber Company was headquartered in Montreal, and opened a branch in Edmonton in 1911 to serve as a distribution point for its products which were manufactured in Ontario and Quebec... supplied rubber belting, packing, hoses, waterproof clothing, felt footwear, automobile and carriage tires, and druggists' rubber sundries". (Philips Lofts)

269 Melville

Arthur Shibley, secretary-treasurer City of Westmount (1900)

271 Melville

Mrs. Louisa A. Simpson, daughter of Sir George Simpson (1900).

Sir George Simpson was the governor of the Hudson's Bay Company (1820-1860). "The governor of a territory stretching over most of British North America, Simpson had to be more than an efficient businessman. He had to be a politician, and, since part of the HBC's domain was disputed by the United States and Russia, a diplomat as well. The conflict with the Russian American Company over trading territory on the northwest coast dated from the reorganization of the HBC at the time of the merger in 1821. Simpson and HBC governor John Henry Pelly travelled to St. Petersburg (Leningrad, U.S.S.R.) in August 1838 to negotiate an agreement with Baron von Wrangel, the most influential director on the board of the Russian company.

These talks became the basis for a contract between the two companies, signed in 1839 by Simpson and Wrangel, by which the Russians leased the Alaskan panhandle to the HBC. In return the British company undertook to provide the Russians, based at Sitka, with foodstuffs at favourable prices. The strength of this arrangement, which ceded de facto control over Russian territory to the HBC, was such that in 1854-55 during the Crimean War the terms were respected and, at the suggestion of Simpson, both the British and the Russian governments agreed to

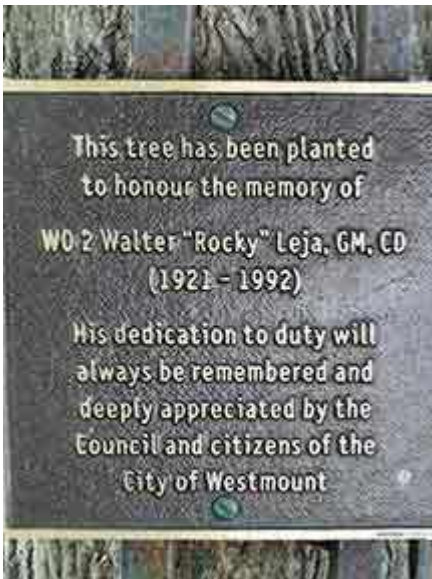


exclude the northwest coast from the theatre of war.” (The Canadian Encyclopedia)



27 Chesterfield

Charles Redlich, Cigar manufacturer – Reliance Cigar Factory, 5 & 7 Bresoles Street (1900).





Memorial Plaque – Westmount & Grosvenor

A largely overlooked plaque dedicated to Sgt. Major Leja. He was seriously injured while defusing a bomb (one of several), planted by the FLQ, in a letter box (on Westmount & Lansdowne Ave.) On May 17, 1963.



Westmount Park – Diana, Princess of Wales – Memorial

A memorial plate next to a Ginkgo tree planted by the Monarchist League of Canada in memory of Diana, Princess of Wales. (Located next to the children’s wading pond).

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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