



Westmount places  
Gladstone Avenue

## Description

# The history behind the familiar: Gladstone Avenue, a street many residents can easily overlook

By **Michael Walsh**

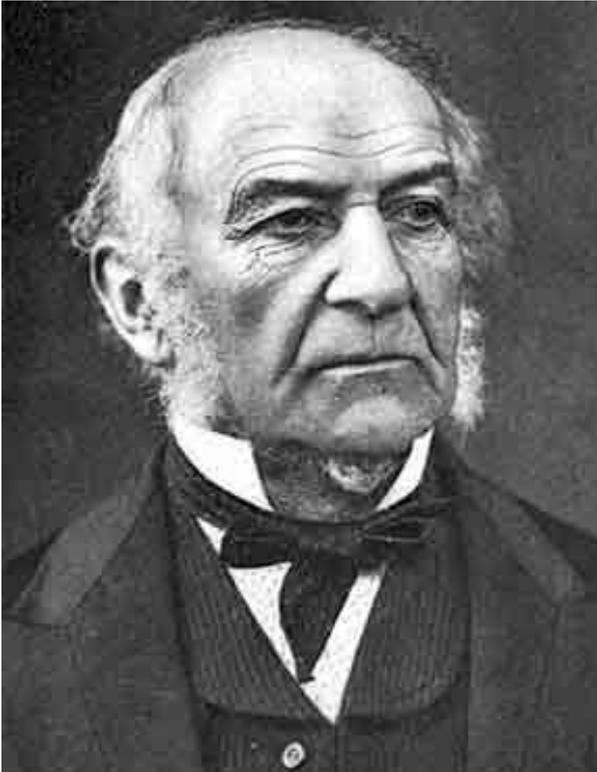
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... all these glass buildings, all these mirrored facades are the mark of a reflected image. You can no longer see what's happening inside, you become afraid of the shadows. The city becomes abstract, reflecting only itself...

[Robert Doisneau, photojournalism pioneer, 1912-1994](#)

Two questions: What is Westmount's most unremarkable street (aside from Tupper) and how did it become that way? (Hint: If you are, like myself, a daily Société de transport de Montréal passenger, one's only exposure to this street is the announcement "Prochain arrêt Gladstone").

Bordered by two large parking lots, modern commercial buildings, and a restaurant, Gladstone is a street that many residents can easily overlook. In fact, there are only two houses extant, paying silent testament to a former residential period.



The Right Honourable William Ewart Gladstone Image: Public Domain

The street's name honours [William Ewart Gladstone](#) (1809-1898), four-time Liberal Prime Minister of Great Britain. His government's many accomplishments included, "The creation of a national elementary programme and... major reforms in the justice system and the civil service. Ireland was always a focus for Gladstone. In 1869 he disestablished the Irish Protestant church and passed an Irish Land Act to rein-in unfair landlords." (BBC Historic Figures)

Before we delve in to the reason of the street's demise, let's imagine residential life on Gladstone Avenue in the 1800s. Picture a street lined with a canopy of large trees, residential houses with vegetable and flower gardens, businesses, a grocery, dressmaker shops, a boarding house – even a piano tuner's home. One can imagine the residents going about their daily routines, horses delivering their wares and children laughing and playing while enjoying their time outdoors.

'Picture a street lined with a canopy of large trees, residential houses with vegetable and flower gardens, businesses, a grocery, dressmaker shops, a boarding house – even a piano tuner's home.'

Residential and commercial life on the street must have been quite uneventful until their world changed on January 7, 1963. A day later The Montreal Gazette contained the following headline:

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"Westmount city council last night gave the go-ahead signal... on the long awaited project to widen the section of Dorchester St. that lies within the city limits... Last night's approval of the scheme gave no indication of its cost but Alderman **Peter M McEntryre** told members... by the time it is completed, will have cost several million dollars.

The council authorized the expropriation of 135 properties that now stand in the way of the street-widening plan. The section that will be widened extends from Atwater Ave to Hallowell St.

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Chairman **Lucien Saulnier**, of Montreal's executive committee commented... that a major reason for the city's not having gone ahead with widening (of Dorchester Blvd) from Guy to Atwater was that Montreal was waiting to know whether Westmount intended to widen the artery within its limits."

*The Montreal Gazette*, January 8, 1963.

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Gladstone Avenue looking northward from Tupper

Termed "Urban Renewal", the scope of which is quite staggering – the extent of the expropriations are well described in Council Minutes:

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(A) Any or all of the immovable properties in an area bounded to the north by Tupper Street, to the south by Dorchester Street, to the west by Gladstone Avenue and to the east by Atwater Avenue...

(B) Any or all of the immovable properties in an area bounded to the north by the lane running between Gladstone Avenue and Greene Avenue north of Dorchester Street, to the south by Dorchester Street, to the west by Greene Avenue and to the east by Gladstone Avenue...

(C) Any or all of the immovable properties in an area bounded to the north by Ste. Catherine Street, to the south by Dorchester Street, to the west by Hallowell Street...

(D) Any or all of the immovable properties in an area bounded to the south-east by Dorchester Street, to the north-east by Greene Avenue, to the north-west partly by Ste. Catherine Street...

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THAT, in its notice to each expropriated party the City offer to pay to such expropriated party, by way of indemnity for the immovable property so expropriated, the amount set forth in the estimate of valuation of the said immovable property prepared by the said Warnock Hersey Appraisal Company Ltd. which is submitted herewith...

– Council Minutes, January 7, 1963

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Parking lot at Gladstone and Dorchester

In total, 135 buildings were lost – the “urban scar” from these expropriations remains with us to this day. (In case you are wondering, the City’s mayor at the time was Mr. **John Crosbie Cushing**).

The objections to this resolution from commercial and residential residents were numerous and deserve a separate article. Sadly, we cannot undo what has been done. We can, however, become cognizant of what was there before our time – and, as such, prevent a similar event from reoccurring.

‘In total, 135 buildings were lost – the “urban scar” from these expropriations remains with us to this day.’

Let’s step back into the 1800s and early 1900s and pay homage to some of Gladstone Avenue’s original residents.



On the right, the last of the Gladstone homes now converted to offices

**1 Gladstone** (former civic number)

A. Rowland, piano tuner – 1900

**3 Gladstone** (former civic number)

H. R. Lockard, superintendent, R. E. Power House – 1894

G. H. Porteous, editor, *Witness* – 1895

Robert J. Hartley, journalist – 1896

Miss A. M. Hamilton, dressmaker – 1900

**5 Gladstone Avenue** (former civic number)

H. W. Stephanson, assistant manager, **Massey-Harris Company** – 1896

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“The community’s connection to the farm machinery business dates back to 1872 when Alanson Harris moved his farm implement manufacturing shop to Brantford. Harris had originally opened his shop in Beamsville, Ont., in 1857.

A decade earlier, Daniel Massey opened a blacksmith and farm implement shop in Newcastle, Ont. In 1867, Massey started exporting products overseas with the first shipment of reapers and mowers being shipped to Germany.



Share of Massey-Harris

Image: Edhac-Edham (Public domain)

Massey moved his company to Toronto in 1879 and several years later, in 1891, A. Harris, Son and Company

Ltd. merged with Massey Manufacturing to form **Massey-Harris**. The new company's headquarters were in Toronto.

The merger spawned decades of innovation and growth, which included manufacturing plants in Europe, as well as in North America.

In 1911, the company moved into the United States farm machinery market. It also purchased other companies both in North America and Europe, including: F. Perkins Ltd. in Peterborough, England; G. Landini and Figli S.P.A. in Italy; and the tractor assets of Standard Motor Co., England and France.

By 1961, the company, now known as **Massey-Ferguson Ltd.**, had worldwide net sales of \$519 million, up from international sales of \$89 million in 1947. It was the world's largest producer of tractors, combines and diesel engines and had 27 factories in 10 countries including Canada.

In the early 1960s, the company employed more than 40,000 people and sold farm machinery, implements, light industrial tractors, equipment, diesel engines and steel office furniture in 161 countries and territories."

*Massey's glory days, The Expositor*



Ad in Construction, November 1916

W. J. Withrow, manager, Feathersonhaugh & Company – 1897

**7 Gladstone** (former civic number)

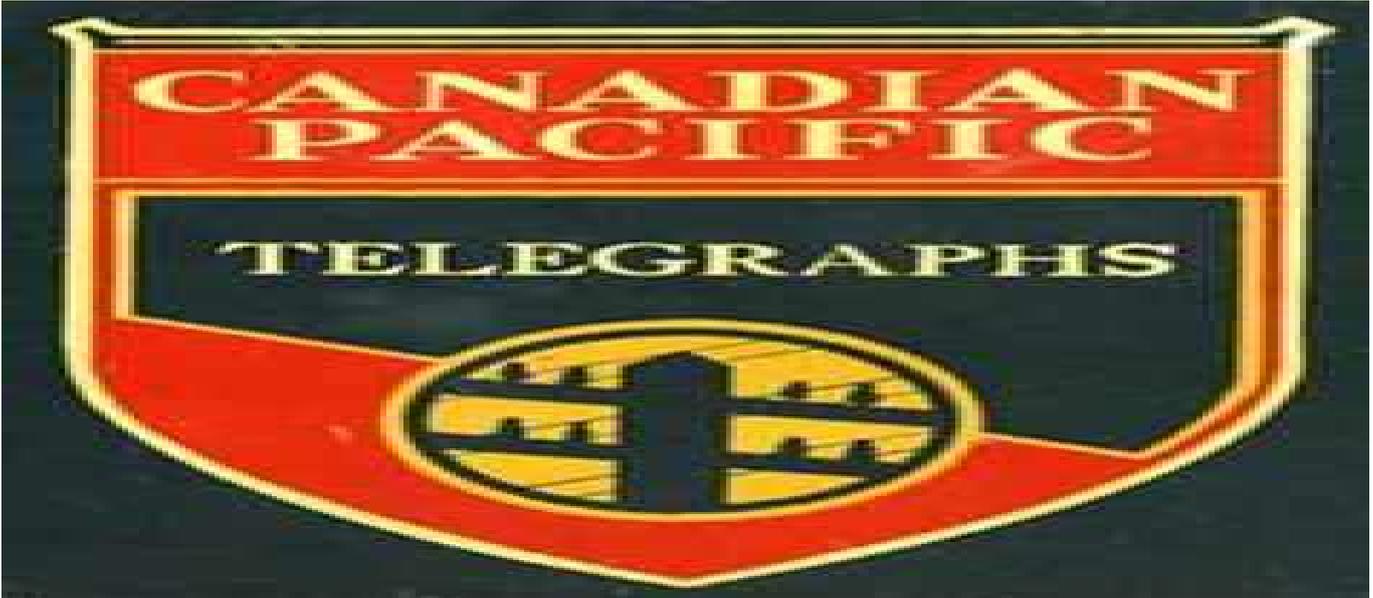
Richard Mitchell, **Robert Mitchell & Co** – 1894

**8 Gladstone** (former civic number)

William Minto, comptroller, Cote St Antoine Corporation – 1894

**9 Gladstone** Avenue (former civic number)

William Smith, secretary, Guardian Insurance Company – 1894



Founded in 1860 the company still operates as **The Guardian Life Insurance Company of America** and is one of the largest insurance companies in the United States.

**10 Gladstone** (former civic number)

Charles Wittman, furrier – 1894

**11 Gladstone**

George A. Neville, secretary, Chief Engineer's Office – 1894

**12 Gladstone** (former civic number)

C. W. Cousins, cutter – 1894

**13 Gladstone** (former civic number)

James Kent, manager, **C.P.R. Telegraph** – 1894



Grand Trunk Building, 360, McGill Street,  
Montreal Image: Jean Gagnon (Public  
Domain)

**14 Gladstone** (former civic number)

H. Sawyer, B.C.L., lawyer – 1894



E. W. T. Raddon, bookkeeper, **Grand Trunk Railway** – 1895

**18 Gladstone** (former civic number)  
Westmount Market, George & Thomas Dionne proprietors – 1900

**19 Gladstone** (former civic number)  
Miss O. Demers, dressmaker – 1900



Ad in Grace's Guide to British Industrial History

**21 Gladstone** (former civic number)  
Miss A. Tustin, boarding house – 1899  
Art Cook, **Elder, Dempster & Company** – 1899  
J. R. Paquin, J.R. Paquin & Company – 1902

**22 Gladstone** (former civic number)  
Dionne & Dionne, grocers – 1902

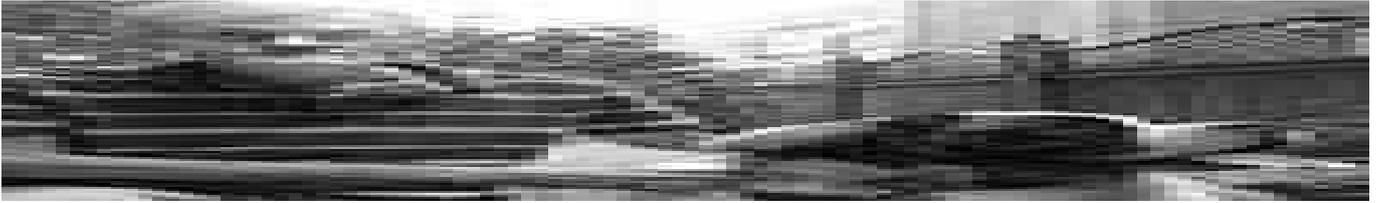
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**Michael Walsh** is a long-time Westmount resident. He is happily retired from nearly four decades in the field of higher education technology. A “professional student” by nature, his academic training, and publishing, include statistical methodology, 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](mailto:michaelld2003@hotmail.com) or through his blog [Westmount Overlooked](#)

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