



Westmount places  
Kitchener Avenue

## Description

# The history behind the familiar: Exploring Kitchener Avenue's historical roots

By **Michael Walsh**

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Don't talk to me about atrocities in war; all war is an atrocity.

– Lord Kitchener



British World War I recruiting poster, 1914 – Image: Wikimedia Commons

Do you recall seeing this World War One recruiting poster? First published in 1914, variations of this poster's theme are still used, particularly in the United States, to this day.

The original image featured Field-Marshal [Horatio Herbert Kitchener](#), 1st Earl Kitchener of Khartoum and of Broome. A man of many facets – regarded a military hero during the Victoria age for victories in Britain's colonial wars with Sudan and Egypt and despised by others for the inhumane treatment of captors and the senseless destruction of ancient tombs. His reputation was so powerful that any criticism faced huge repercussions:

“Lord Northcliffe, owner of *The Times* and *Daily Mail*, attacked Kitchener over the ‘shells scandal’ of 1915 when he was reproached for allegedly not supplying the army in France with enough military ammunition. The result was that Northcliffe’s papers saw a huge drop in circulation, and *The Daily Mail* was publicly burnt.”

*More than a Great Poster*, K. Surridge, 2001

Kitchener's demise occurred in 1916 while sailing to Russia; his boat struck a mine near the Orkney Islands.

Many published accounts attribute the street's origins from land ceded by the Grey Nuns in lieu of municipal taxation. This is true in part: Other proprietors also ceded or sold portions of their properties.



340 Kitchener

That, in short, is a succinct history of Lord Kitchener. His public adulation makes one think of how many serving senior army commanders can we name today?

Let us move on to the street, in the City of Westmount, that bears his name.

The street was originally named Oxford Avenue and changed to Kitchener Avenue in 1915 to avoid confusion with Oxford Avenue in Notre Dame de Grace.

Many published accounts attribute the street's origins from land ceded by the Grey Nuns in lieu of municipal taxation. This is, in part, true; however, it is an oversimplification. The [Sisters of Charity of the General Hospital of Montreal](#) (Grey Nuns) did cede 50,710 feet of property to the town in 1901.



342 Kitchener

Other proprietors also ceded (or sold) portions of their properties: Robert MacKay, Alexander Hutchison, James Jackson and John Coward.

These additional properties allowed the town to extend Kensington Avenue to Saint Catherine Street and open Redfern and Kitchener Avenues.

In 1916 the Grey Nuns also ceded a lane on the northwest side of Western Avenue (today de Maisonneuve) running westward from Kitchener Avenue.

'The street was originally named Oxford Avenue and changed to Kitchener Avenue in 1915 to avoid confusion with Oxford Avenue in Notre Dame de Grace.'



350 Kitchener

That brings us to the end of the street's origins and the etymology of its name. Interestingly, the word 'kitchener' entered the English vocabulary, in 1897, as a noun describing a person who, like Lord Kitchener, had an imposing personality.

At this point, we will step back in time and become acquainted with some of the street's former residents

**336 Kitchener** (former civic number)

Lt.-Col. William Barton Clark, President, C. O. Clark & Brothers Ltd., bell manufacturers (1949)

**340 Kitchener**

Leopold M. Fortier, President, Fortier & Company, stockbrokers (1949)

### 342 Kitchener

Denis T. O'Brien, Engineer-Superintendent, Montreal Harbour  
Construction Engineer, Lachine Canal (1930)



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### 350 Kitchener

(formerly 352 – the civic number was changed in 1957)

Nevil Norton Evans, Chemistry Professor, McGill University (1948)

Author of *Laboratory Manual to Accompany Elementary Chemistry for High Schools*



358 Kitchener

### 358 Kitchener

Francis Cole, Manager, Bank of Ottawa (1922)

Established in 1874, comprising 96 branches, eventually merged in 1919 with the Bank of Nova Scotia.

### 366 Kitchener

Major-General J. P. E. Bernatchez (1952)

The property was purchased, that same year, by Her Majesty the Queen in the right of Canada. It was used by the Department of National Defense as married quarters. (Government properties are exempt from municipal taxes.)

### 375 Kitchener

Rectory, Church of the Ascension of Our Lord  
Msgr. Wilfrid Emmett McDonagh, pastor (1954)



366 Kitchener



375 Kitchener

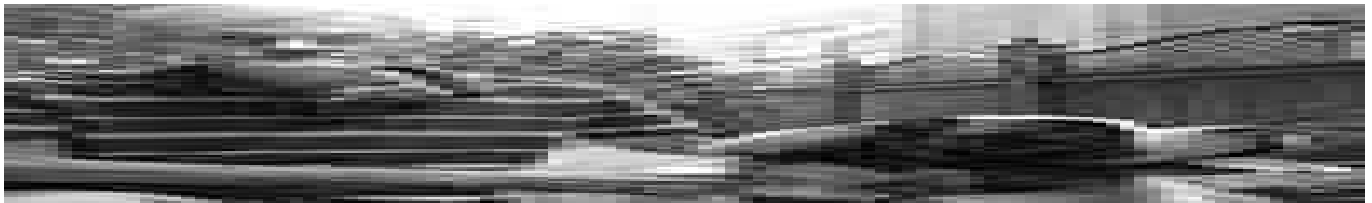
*Images: Andrew Burlone*




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



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