



Westmount places
Braeside Place

Description

The history behind the familiar: Anecdotes embedded in the past of some of the houses in Braeside Place

By Michael Walsh

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The farmers... in the breas.

– J. Robertson, *General View of Agriculture in Perth, 1799*

There is a popular idiom that states "good things come in small packages". Many "good things" became evident while finding forgotten stories embedded in the foundations of less than a dozen homes. From housing Polish war refugees, Birks jewellery stores to Canada's ninth prime minister, the stories unfold as we go back through the years.

To begin, let's explore the origins of the street's name.

The word "braeside", a Scottish word describing a river's steep embankment, possesses an interesting etymology: it originated from early Scandinavian (bra) to Old Norse signifying an eyebrow. At some point in time, although lost in history, the word's meaning evolved from "eyebrow" to "brow of a hill".

Armed with this bit of word history – let us associate the name with the street.



The Study

The street was originally a farmland road ceded to the town in 1911:

“That the new street on the Brehaut property above Westmount Avenue be named ‘**Braeside Place**’ at the request of the proprietors as per their letter of the 15th August 1911...”

Council Minutes, 1911

That same year, the town drained the area and constructed permanent sidewalks. One year later, drains were laid (paid by the fronting proprietors) and the road paved and graded. It wasn’t until 1917 that the road, in its current configuration, was constructed.

That brings us to the, quite unremarkable, origins of the street. One in which the street’s name is more interesting than the horizontal engineering structure.

Things, however, become much more interesting when we step back in time and meet a variety of fascinating proprietors who called Braeside Place their home.



Image: Public domain

1 Braeside Place

G.W. Spinney, Joint General Manager, Bank of Montreal (1940)

“Lieutenant Wilbur Spinney, RCNVR... died at the Basingstoke Neurological Hospital, England, from injuries sustained on May 23 while attached to H.M.C.S. Ontario at a Northern Ireland Ports.” (1945)

“...after a lengthy discussion, the General Committee resolved to recommend to Council... that to grant a special permit to the Study Corporation to occupy 1 Braeside Place for the purpose of a girls’ school. Permit granted despite the protests from a number of local residents.” (1959)

News: “A horse, which had been stolen in Ste. Genevieve, Quebec at 1 o’clock on Wednesday morning was found in Braeside Place, Westmount, several hours later by Constable Struthers, of the Westmount police. The horse was taken to the pound and the city and provincial police notified.”

Montreal Gazette, January 12, 1923



Herald, Bank of Montreal – Image: Public domain

George W. Spinney, President, Bank of Montreal (1947)

A member of the executive committee of the Children's Memorial Hospital (and) served also as a governor of the Royal Victoria Hospital and McGill University.

Prime Minister King said: "The death of Mr. G. W. Spinney at the age of 59, constitutes a truly national loss. In his passing there has been taken away from us one of Canada's foremost citizens and financial leaders... Canada will gratefully remember at this time Mr. Spinney's patriotic services in the war years in connection with the organization of Canada's First Victory Loan and his chairmanship of the National War Finance Committee..."
Montreal Gazette, February 2, 1948



Thomas B. Macaulay – Image: Public domain

The Study (1959-present)

The school's former location was on Seaforth Avenue.

3 Braeside Place

Thomas Bassett Macaulay, President, Sun Life Association Company of Canada (1915)

“Outside his business, Mr. Macaulay’s interests were broad... one of his gifts was a building and a \$100,000 endowment of Edinburgh University for the study of animal genetics, and the most valued of his many honours was Quebec’s *Mérite Agricole*...”

“Typical of the man was his return in the capacity of benefactor to his father’s birthplace, Stornoway, in the Hebrides. Stornoway is a fisheries centre and fishermen in Scotland as elsewhere have gone through hard times in recent years. Mr. Macaulay extended help to the community on a large scale, including support of an ambitious project for reclamation of wastelands in the Hebrides. Stornoway gave him freedom of the city in 1938...”

Montreal Gazette, April 4, 1942



5 Braeside Place

Frank Fellows, chauffeur (1926)

John Kakko, butler (1940)

5 Braeside Place (“Braewell”)

Benjamin Tooke, President, Tooke Brothers Limited (1915)

Manufacturers of skirts, collars, neckwear and importers of men’s furnishings. Sample rooms: 235 Notre Dame West. Factory and Warehouse 298-302 Courcelles Street (today 640-644 de Courcelle), Saint Henry Ward.

“... founder of the firm Tooke Brothers... he has also served on the directorship of the Spanish River Pulp and Paper Company... Mr. Tooke who was an ardent golfer, about 20 years ago founded the Beaconsfield Golf Club and was the first president. He maintained his interest in the club throughout, the erection of the magnificent clubhouse receiving much of his attention (destroyed by fire in 1929)...”

Montreal Gazette, January 6, 1919



Tooke Brothers factory on de Courcelle (1945) – Image: Public domain

John W. Peck (1920)

John W. Peck & Company Limited, manufacturers of clothing, shirts, hats and caps. Office and factory 2275 St. Lawrence Boulevard.

Ernest Rossiter, President, St. Lawrence Sales Company Limited (1930)

St. Lawrence Sales was a holding company that controlled subsidiaries that manufactured newsprint: St. Lawrence Paper Mills Co. which controls St. John Power and Paper Co. and Brompton Pulp and Paper Co.

A. Stevenson, Vice President, Barclays Bank (1940)

The Study (1968)

Request made, in 1968, by The Study Corporation to the City of Westmount to amend By-Law 655 allowing them to use 5 Braeside Place for school purposes.



6 Braeside Place

6 Braeside Place

Gerald Birks, jeweller (1926)

The son of William Birks owner of Henry Birks and Sons. He enlisted in the Royal Flying Corps of Canada, during World War One, and was credited with twelve aerial victories between March and June 1918. Upon de-enlisting, he was awarded the Military Cross and bar. Following the war, he rejoined the family business. He lived by his philosophy “keep well, keep smiling, have fun” up to the age of 96 when he died in Toronto.

H. B. Norris, Wood Gundy & Company Limited (1930)

Wood Gundy Inc. (today named CIBC Wood Gundy Corp) was a major investment corporation. Founded in 1905 it remained in business until its acquisition, 1988, by the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce.



Ad for Henry Birks & Sons – Image: Public domain

7 Braeside Place

Tara Susan Kathleen (1984)

Deputy Chairman, Power Corporation of Canada Ltd., chairman and director Cablecast Ltd., president Dromore Investment Co. Ltd., president and member board trustees North American Wildlife Foundation.

Helene Kostadinova (1995)

Listed for public auction, by the City, in 1995 for tax arrears. The procedure of sale was stopped when the City employed a law firm to recover outstanding municipal taxes amounting to \$44,771.12. The matter was eventually settled out of court (2001).



7 Braeside Place

9 Braeside Place, “Braemar” (Polish House)

Alexander F. C. Ross, P. S. Ross and Sons, chartered accountants (1941)

“Mr. Ross... was born in Montreal... He was a twin brother of Dr. John W. Ross, another well-known Montrealer... Another brother, Maj.-Gen. J. G. Ross, is also a senior partner in the same firm... His father was the founder of the firm P. S. Ross and Sons, which he joined in 1890. He was one of the oldest members of the Chartered Accountants Association of Quebec, and was also one of the charter members of the Dominion Association of Chartered Accountants... In 1900 he was one of the Canadian delegates to a conference in the United States at which the Certified Public Accountants Association was formed...”

Montreal Gazette, December 22, 1941



9 Braeside Place

“Your Committee recommends that a permit be granted for the use of 9 Braeside Place belonging to the Estate A. F. C. Ross, as a residence for Polish War Refugees...” (1942)

Six Polish refugee families, aided by the Canadian National Committee on Refugees were formerly housed at Douglas house at the corner of Sherbrooke Street and Greene Avenue.

Aldo Bensadoun, Aldo Shoes (2019)

Founded in Montreal (1972) with its first store opening in 1982, the company has expanded to nearly 3,000 stores in 100 countries operating with three banners: ALDO, Call it Spring/Sprint and GLOBO.



Polish coat of arms – Image: Public domain

The house was sold, in 2019, for \$9 million to a New York-based buyer with children attending school in Montreal.

10 Braeside Place

Honourable Gordon W. Scott, P. S. Ross & Sons and President, Canadian Independent Alcohol (1940)

“Associate of the Montreal firm of P. S. Ross & Sons from 1914 to 1940. Administrative advisor to several companies and accountant for various government and municipal organizations. Director of the following companies: Power Corporation of Canada Ltd, General Steel Wares, Canadian Tube and Steel Products Ltd, St. Lawrence Corporation Ltd, J. S. Mitchell and Co. Canadian Corporation Ltd. and Burge Carbon Paper Co. and Cockfield, Brown and Co. Ltd, Montreal Lithography Co. Ltd, Anglo Telephone Co. Ltd, Canadian Bridge and Deck Co, Montreal Trust Company, Canadian Industrial Alcohol Ltd and Hydro Electric Securities Corporation. Financial advisor to the Federal Department of Munitions and Supply in 1939 and 1940.”



Gordon Wallace Scott – Image: Public domain

“Defeated Liberal candidate in Huntingdon in the by-election of November 4, 1930. Provincial Treasurer in the Taschereau Cabinet from October 16 to November 27, 1930. Sworn in as Minister without Portfolio in the same cabinet on November 13, 1930. Legislative Councillor for the Wellington Division from November 13, 1930 until his resignation on August 4, 1931. Supported the Liberal Party. Defeated Liberal candidate in Montreal-St. George in 1931. Appointed Legislative Councillor for the Victoria Division on June 17, 1932. ”

“President of the Board of Audits of Canada, the Montreal Chapter of the Royal Empire Society, the Verdun Protestant Hospital and the Protestant Committee of the Board of Education. Member of the Royal Albert Masonic Lodge, the Mount Stephen Club, the Engineers Club, the Montreal Reform Club, the Montreal Club, the Mount Royal Club, the St. George Club of Sherbrooke, the Garrison Club of Quebec and the Halifax Club.”



10 Braeside Place

“Died in office on December 14, 1940, during rescue operations in the Atlantic Ocean following the torpedoing of the liner Western Prince, age 53 years and 2 months. ”

Translated from Quebec National Assembly Biographies

G. Meredith Smith (1945)

Senior partner of Touche Ross & Co., chartered accountants and director of BP Canada Limited. In addition, governor of the Boys' Home of Montreal (Weredale House) and the Royal Victoria Hospital.



16 Braeside Place

16 Braeside Place

Rort Shiell, C.A. of Clarkson, Gordon and Dilworth (1926)

“Mr. Shiell was born in Brechin, Scotland, and educated at Trinity College, Glenalmond, Perthshire where he captained the junior schools and won his colours in the cricket eleven. He became apprenticed to the firm of Chien and Tate, chartered accountants, Edinburgh, and about eighteen years ago joined the firm of Clarkson, Gordon and Dilworth, in this city, becoming later a resident partner of that firm.”



Military Cross with Bar – Image: Public domain

“He had a distinguished war record, receiving the Military Cross with Bar. He went overseas with the 134th Battalion as major and he reverted to the rank of captain to go the France where he served with 19th Battalion.”
Montreal Gazette, February 18, 1927

Theodore Roosevelt Meighen & Dame Margaret de Lancey Robinson (1970)

Theodore Meighen practised law in Montreal as a senior partner in McMaster Meighen. He also established the T. R. Meighen Family Foundation that provides grants to community-based activities in education, health, social welfare, cultural and environmental conservation. His father was Arthur Meighen, the ninth Prime Minister of Canada (1920-1921 and 1926).

His son, Michael Meighen was appointed, by Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, to the Senate (1990).



Right Honourable Arthur Meigen PC QC – Image:
Public domain

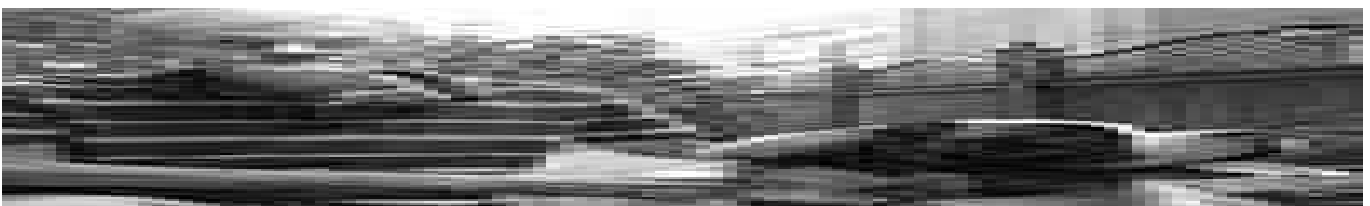
Margaret Delancy Robinson is a descendant of the Loyalist Beverly Robinson whose forfeited lands comprise Putnum County in New York State.

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 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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