



## Westmount's Police Department – Part 3

### Description

# Presenting John Carroll's impressive Westmount Police Department insignia collection

By Michael Walsh

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When one thinks of municipal integration, terms like “bills” and “amended charters” come to mind. Beyond that, there is a huge historical cost when the physical symbols once unique to each department are lost for future generations. Some might be stored away from view in various underfunded municipal archival departments or with volunteer-led historical associations.

The integration of Montreal's police departments was no exception – it left each municipality with scores of uniforms and badges that were no longer of any use. Some were retained by former members and, over the years, relegated to unlabeled family storage boxes. Others formed a part of “retirees' associations” whose members dwindled over the passing years. Sadly, the majority ended up in various dumpsters or sold to scrap-metal dealers.

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A small number, however, was retained by collectors. These are individuals who preserve these items and have an in-depth knowledge of their uniqueness and historical significance. More importantly, most collectors proactively share their items with those with similar interests.

I was fortunate to be approached by **John Carroll**, a collector of **insignia related to Westmount's former Police Department**. It is an impressive collection in terms of the years it spans and the historical significance at

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each point in time.

At this point, let us browse this collection and reflect on each item's original owner – their names and stories lost over time.

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Image 1

**Image 1:** Cap badge featuring the former city seal and the constable's number superimposed. The wear on the high points is from the years of polishing by the wearer.



Image 2

**Image 2:** Helmet plate worn on British style “Bobby” helmet. Said helmets were worn as late as the end of WWII. The city seal was changed in 1947 (from what I have been told), and it appears that insignia featuring the new seal was never used on that style of headdress.



Image 3

**Image 3:** Plated version of cap badge featuring the former seal. Given the lack of the word “POLICE,” it is possible this style was used by both the police and fire departments. Manufactured by J.R. Gaunt & Sons Ltd. in England.



Image 4

**Image 4:** Cap badge featuring the new seal. This style was used by the park rangers as well.



Image 5

**Image 5:** New seal cap badge with the badge number applied. It is unknown exactly when the numbers were added but, from what I have been told, the department added the bottom portion and reissued the badges.



Image 6

**Image 6:** Wallet badge with CANADA applied to the top. Manufactured by William Scully, Montreal.



Image 7

**Image 7:** Last issue wallet badge featuring new city seal.



Image 8

**Image 8:** Breast badge featuring former city seal. I asked George Payne about this breast badge. He said that he had heard about them but had never actually seen one. I know of three that survived, including one that was missing the rank/number from the centre. I obtained this one in 1987 from the historian at the Vancouver City Police.

There are several stories told as to why the department recalled the shields after only a short period of use. The one that seems to be told most often is that a policeman leaned over to assist a lady who had fallen and in doing so had the pin catch her (very expensive) dress causing her to file a claim against the City. Not wanting any further similar claims, the department elected to remove the shield from the uniform. Again, there are other versions of the story and, all these years later, no one really knows the true reason why they were removed. One thing is certain, however, unlike just about every other department on the island, Westmount never again wore a breast badge.





Image 9

**Image 9:** Uniform buckle with the former city seal.



Image 10

**Image 10:** Woven shoulder patch. Likely introduced in the 1960s.



Image 11

**Image 11:** Police/Fire Public Safety. The version on the left is twill, while the one on the right appears to be more of a nylon fabric. Unknown whether they were manufactured for different types of garments or simply a variation from one loom run to another.



**Image 12:** In 1970, the Quebec Government mandated that all police forces wear the same uniforms and cloth insignia. These patches are referred to as BNQ patches for the agency charged with regulating such insignia (the Bureau de Normalisation du Québec). As far as I know, Westmount was the only municipality in the province to include the designation (City/Town, etc.) only in English. Another version of the BNQ patch featuring only the city's name.

*Images and annotations: John Carroll (johncarroll8238@hotmail.com)*

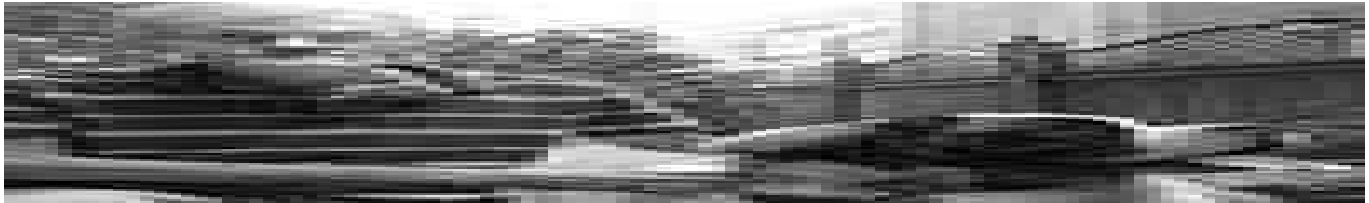
*Feature image: montage by Andrew Burlone*



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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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