[Re]Claiming Montreal's Memory:
Demolition and the Photography of Edith Mather

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Abstract

Demolition is essential to the evolution of the city, Montreal being no exception. In the decades following the Second World War, Montreal emerged as a world-renowned modern metropolis, so identified through the construction of modern architectural landmarks, mass transit systems and international host events. This ambitious construction program was fueled by the large-scale demolition of 19th and early 20th-century buildings throughout the city. As a result, the built environment reveals at best a fragmented version of the city's history. Demolition not only erases many buildings from the urban landscape, but threatens the heritage of citizens who identify with them. Yet, traces of this heritage linger in public and private archives and in the oral histories of those who witnessed their destruction.

In 2012, Edith Mather, a Montreal-based amateur photographer, donated 4293 black and white photographic prints and their negatives to the McCord Museum of Canadian History documenting Montreal's evolving streetscapes between 1965 and 1982. Her photographs challenge the built legacy of the city by revealing an alternative history of Montreal through their focus on sites of demolition. Through her photographs, Mather argues against the finality of demolition by paradoxically recreating her city in the image of what was threatened or lost.

This study explores the power and limitations of demolition to stabilize public memory. Three sites of demolition are selected from Mather's collection of photographs – Selby Street, Saint-Henri Church and 1938 Dorchester Boulevard. Long vanished, the sites are recreated through local archive and museum holdings. Through the event of their

demolition, the context leading up to it and the consequences following, each site tells a different story about the forces that have shaped the evolution of Montreal, and the efforts made by local citizens to preserve their heritage. In this way demolition becomes a unifying force in the evolution of cities by strengthening rather than destroying memory, bringing communities together through the will to remember.

Résumé

Les démolitions représentent une part entière de l'évolution des villes sans que Montréal ne fasse exception à la règle. Dans les décennies qui ont suivi la Seconde Guerre mondiale, Montréal fait figure de ville moderne à travers le monde, avec la construction de nombreux bâtiments phares, un nouveau système de transport en commun et la tenue d'évènements d'envergure internationale. Ce programme de construction ambitieux a pu être réalisé à la suite de nombreuses destructions datant de la fin du XIXe et du début du XXe siècle. Aujourd'hui, le tissu urbain n'offre donc au mieux qu'une image fragmentée de l'histoire de la ville. En effaçant plusieurs bâtiments du paysage de la ville, la démolition ne se contente pas d'effacer plusieurs bâtiments du paysage urbain, elle menace le patrimoine des citoyens qui s'y identifient. Des traces de ces héritages perdus demeurent néan-moins préservées dans des archives publiques et privées, ainsi que dans les témoignages oraux des témoins de ces destructions.

En 2012, Edith Mather, photographe amateure basée à Montréal, fait don de 4293 impressions photographiques noir et blanc ainsi que de leurs négatifs au Musée McCord, le Musée historique de Montréal. Ces images documentent l'évolution du paysage de rue entre 1965 et 1982 et révèlent des éléments de l'environnement bâti aujourd'hui invisibles, en proposant une lecture alternative de l'histoire de Montréal au travers des images de ses démolitions. À l'aide de ses photographies, Mather remet en question l'aspect définitif des démolitions en recréant paradoxalement une ville à l'image de ce qui a été menacé ou perdu.

Ce rapport de recherche explore la

capacité et les limites de la démolition comme outil d'ancrage de la mémoire publique. Trois sites détruits ont été choisis parmi les photographies de Mather : la rue Selby, l'Église Saint-Henri et le 1938 boulevard Dorchester. Depuis longtemps disparus, ces sites sont reconstitués à l'aide d'archives locales et de collections muséales. Au travers de leurs démolitions, de leurs conséquences, mais aussi des événements qui les ont précédés, chacun de ces sites témoigne à sa façon des différents acteurs de l'évolution de Montréal, et également des efforts fournis par ses citoyens pour préserver leur patrimoine. La démolition fait donc figure ici de force fédératrice dans l'évolution des villes, en commémorant plutôt qu'en effaçant la mémoire, en rassemblant les communautés dans un désir de souvenir.

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The Photography of Edith Mather

"What the masses want are monuments."
Jean Drapeau, Mayor of Montreal, 1954-57, 1960-86

On August 22, 2012, Edith Mather, a Montreal-based amateur photographer, donated 4293 black and white photographic prints and their negatives to the McCord Museum of Canadian History documenting Montreal's evolving streetscapes between 1965 and 1982. While this event marked the transition of these artifacts from personal collection to public archive, it also signified a shift in the topography of Montreal's public memory. In the decades following the Second World War, Montreal emerged as a world-renowned modern metropolis, so identified through the construction of modern architectural landmarks, mass transit systems and international host events. Mather's photographs challenge the built legacy of the city through their focus on sites of demolition, and reveal an alternative history of Montreal as experienced from the street.

This paper uses the literature of memory studies to argue that demolition stabilizes memory. Montreal's ambitious construction program was fueled by the large-scale demolition of 19th and early 20th-century buildings throughout the city. Demolition not only erased these buildings from the urban landscape, but threatened the heritage of citizens who identified with them. Mather documented the vanishing streets and buildings that framed her experience of the city, meticulously archiving her collection as a deliberate act of memory-making. Through her photographs, she challenged the finality of demolition by paradoxically recreating her city in the image of what was threatened or lost. Mather's experience demonstrates how demolition empowers individual acts of vernacular memory. Through oral history, photography and other ephemera, demolition becomes a unifying force in

the evolution of cities by strengthening rather than destroying memory, bringing communities together through the will to remember.

On April 27th, 1967, the eyes of the world turned to Montreal. 7,000 guests crowded Place des Nations on the south tip of Île Sainte-Hélène for the official opening ceremonies of the 1967 International and Universal Exposition. Over 700 million more sat in front of televisions and radios worldwide eager to witness the spectacle from afar.[1] The inauguration of Expo 67, as it was more widely known, was an invitation-only event; the public countdown was scheduled for the following day. Yet, extensive media coverage would not let the world miss Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson light the ceremonial flame. Front-page coverage by the *New York Times* reads "A 'Monument to Man' Is Opened", quoting the Prime Minister as he championed the theme of the sixth month spectacle *Man and His World*. According to Pearson, the legacy of Expo 67 would be its confirmation that "the genius of man knows no natural boundaries, but is universal".[2]

Like the aerial view of a picture postcard, this celebration of man

and his achievements was designed to reduce to insignificance the details or differences that threatened amicable relations between neighbours, both domestic and international. According to Kenneally and Sloan in *expo67 Not Just a Souvenir*, this vantage seduced "Expo visitors into concluding that the earth belonged collectively to humankind, to 'man'"[3] and that through its focus on modernism "Expo 67 made it seem as if modern life was accessible to all visitors, to embrace and take home".[4] The Quebec pavilion, designed by architects Papineau, Gérin-Lajoie, Le Blanc, and Durand embraced the International Style through its materials (concrete floors, Vierendeel steel façade and hollow steel structure) and bold design that showcased technology.[5] Like many of Expo 67's other temporary structures it made no reference to the local vernacular, or even national architectural traditions[6], but rather aligned itself with the new expression of Quebec, which was in the words of its designers: "consciously open and assertive, clear and light, independent and original".[7]

Expo 67 epitomized the spirit of Montreal as it emerged from a pe-

riod of stagnation in urban develop-ment following the economic crisis of 1930 and its recovery from the Second World War. Hosting the World's Fair marked "the culmina-tion of a period of euphoric growth and modernization"[8] and confirmed the city's status as a world-re-nowned modern metropolis. While the Expo 67 campus became a test-ing ground for leading-edge archi-tectural and urban planning ideas, Montreal's downtown core was also the site of massive transformation in the years leading up to the open-ing. Driven by the authority and vi-sion of Mayor Jean Drapeau, sev-eral large-scale urban development projects were achieved during this period, including Place Ville-Marie (1962), Place des Arts (1963) and Place Victoria (1964). New public infrastructure including the Met-ropolitan Expressway (1960), the Champlain Bridge (1962) and the Metro system (1966) responded to the need to connect the city to its outlying regions and beyond, and to move people about efficiently, via high-speed transportation networks that paralleled existing city streets. Linked to the region's steady popu-lation growth and projected explo-sion by the end of the 20th century,[9] construction defied the vertical and horizontal limits of Montreal.

Monumentality was the word on ev-eryone's lips. Drapeau's legendary axiom echoed Pearson's opening remarks several years later in his defence of the more ostentatious projects of his mayoral tenure. He conceived of monuments as mono-lithic works of art, inspiring individ-uals to forget the tedium and hard-ship of everyday life. According to Drapeau: "The ugliness of slums in which people live doesn't matter if we can make them stand wide-eyed in admiration of works of art they don't understand".[10] He used these projects to justify slum clearance and relocation schemes, champi-oning modernism as the solution to the social disparities manifest in Victorian era architecture.[11] Under Drapeau's leadership, part of Mon-treal's Red Light District was cleared in 1957 to build Habitations Jeanne-Mance (1959), one of the country's first social housing projects. Goose Village was demolished in 1964 to build the Autostade (1966), a foot-ball stadium and event venue for Expo 67. Fauborg à M'Lasse was demolished in 1967 to build Maison Radio-Canada (1973), the head-quarters for the Canadian Broad-casting Corporation's operations in

Montreal. Drapeau used buildings as monuments to forge a new identity for Montreal; arguably, he was less concerned with celebrating the built heritage of previous generations than he was of propelling the city into the international eye.

The 1960s introduced a new era of monument building to Montreal. In *Making Public Pasts: the Contested Terrain of Montreal's Public Memories, 1891-1930*, Alan Gordon examines the relationship between monuments, public space and the construction of public memory during the period of Montreal's history in which multiculturism consciously took root in the urban landscape. Monuments were plaques, statuary, and place names that explicitly referenced the past. They were tools used to frame a specific historical consciousness by encoding space with ethnic, class or gendered narratives. Gordon links the construction of monuments to prevailing structures of power to reveal public memory as a process of commemorating but also selective forgetting. Social groups excluded from power are also deemed unhistorical in that no reference to their past is officially celebrated in public space.

In this example, the public memory of a city is read through a more or less static landscape in which monuments are conceived of and constructed as permanent insertions in space. This reading excludes ground up commemorations, ephemera and public acts of performance or protest that engage marginalized groups in remembering, examples Gordon uses as evidence to underscore the contested nature of memorial sites and the problem of public memory. Memory tied to a specific place is contentious, and it defies a singular version of the past, that is a singular significance and meaning.

John Bodnar suggests a broader approach to public memory in his exploration of public commemoration in Cleveland, Ohio. In this case public memory includes both the 'official' and the 'vernacular', terms which he uses to delineate societal forces that shape public commemoration in urban areas.[12] He links official memory to the power of leaders and authorities who rely on traditional monuments to promote and sustain social unity, the continuity of existing institutions and loyalty to the status quo. Vernacular memory on the other hand, is diverse and changing. It grows out of more spe-

cialized interests of smaller communities that are often threatened with repression by the official narrative.

Inherently at odds with each other, these two commemorative strategies frame the past in different ways. The official narrative describes a past that is timeless and sacred, an idealized version of reality. It is based on a singular or dominant viewpoint and designed to marginalize or erase dissenting views. By contrast, the vernacular narrative is naturally heterogeneous. It relays the past through a variety of first-hand experiences, describing these experiences in realistic terms. According to Bodnar, "vernacular expressions convey what social reality feels like rather than what it should be like".[13] These two versions of the past are constantly battling with each other for primacy in the collective imagination, especially as it is vested in physical objects or monuments in the landscape. Public memory is where the official and the vernacular meet, 'contested terrain' in the words of Gordon.

Although at odds with each other, both official and vernacular expressions of memory are alike in their power to unify. According to James E. Young, monuments and memorials are "places where [groups of people] tell the constitutive narratives, their 'shared stories of the past'".[14] As Drapeau implies, monuments are vehicles for unification. They bring people together, creating masses, or groups of people united through shared identity. They are storehouses for memories that are then accessed and sustained through social relations. The intersection between collective and individual memory occurs through the act of recall; according to Maurice Halbwachs, "it is individuals as group members who remember".[15] The relationship between identity, memory and place gives monuments their power.

In *The Power of Place*, Dolores Hayden challenges the monument's exclusive right to public memory by looking for traces of ethnic and women's history in urban space. Historically underrepresented by traditional monuments, these experiences, she argues are latent in the cityscape even though they are not typically celebrated in monumental form. For Hayden, ordinary urban landscapes have the power "to nurture citizen's public memory, to encompass shared time in the

form of shared territory".[16] Urban landscapes, like monuments, are triggers for social memory because they impart a similar sense of continuity and permanence to individual experience. Although not deliberate acts of memory-making like monuments, "natural features such as hills or harbours as well as streets, buildings and patterns of settlement, frame the lives of many people and outlast many lifetimes".[17]

According to Gordon, "a people's rootedness to a given place is a product of both its sense of the history of that location and their ancestors' connection to it".[18] These connections are more often made at the scale of the urban landscape than the individual monument. Individuals see themselves reflected in the city by their homes and the homes of their families and neighbours, their places of work and leisure, the streets that give form to their daily routines. Although the city itself is constantly changing through cycles of construction and demolition, the pace of change is managed through the repetition and familiarity of daily life. Large-scale acts of construction and destruction in short periods of time however destabilize these connections, threatening the collective quality of memory as individuals are unable to see themselves in their surroundings.

After almost a decade of monument building in Montreal, citizens witnessed an unprecedented amount of destruction. Buildings, streets, and entire neighbourhoods constructed between 1880 and 1930 during the city's previous period of growth and prosperity were demolished in short-order. Set against "the dizzying construction site of a metropolitan area in full transformation mode"[19] that was Montreal in the 1960s and 70s is a collection of black and white photographs by Edith Mather, a Montreal-based amateur photographer. The collection of over 4000 prints documents the evolving streetscapes of the city between 1965 and 1982. Yet there are no images of the pavilions of Expo 67 and the glass and steel skyscrapers celebrated as modern architectural landmarks appear as background only. Instead, Mather focuses her lens on Montreal as a city of demolition, challenging the built legacy of these decades by tracking architecture threatened by erasure and under attack.

According to Pierre Nora, "the less

collective the experience of memory is, the greater the need for individuals to bear the burden".[20] In the wake of Montreal's construction and demolition spree, Mather assumes the burden of memory, using photography to relocate herself in the disappearing city. Buried deep within the volumes of photographs is a single self-image of Mather, or rather her reflection repeated in triplicate in an urban storefront window (M2012.113.1.15.1). In this reflection, she reveals herself as a young, attractive woman, a mother accompanied by her child in his pram. Her expression is serious but kind, focused intently on her subject. She looks like exactly the type of person you would trust to take your picture while out walking in downtown Montreal. More often than not, pedestrians like herself are peripheral to her photographs and rarely engage with the viewer through direct eye contact. In its uniqueness, this image describes an implicit context for the entire collection. If, as Sontag suggests, the camera is "the ideal arm of consciousness in its acquisitive mood,"[21] this image gives form to the consciousness behind the lens. Perhaps it is her signature, her own comment on the nature of photography and its ability to reproduce

memory by freezing moments in time and space. Through her program of documentation, Mather's experience illustrates one version of what can happen when individuals no longer see themselves reflected in the public memory. In this photo, her self-image is analogous to the disappearing city as she disappears and reappears through different versions of her real self. Her reflection reveals both the potential and the limitations of her lens. The closer we are to the original subject, Edith, the more complete the picture and the more legible both she and the city are. But context dissolves through the distance of multiple reflections, and the image becomes increasingly abstract. She is at once located and dislocated in time and space. This process of relocation and dislocation, of perceivable facts and absences describes the subjectivity of the personal archive or collection. Context is most abundant the closer the audience is to the individual, and the time and place the collection was generated. Moving away from this brings a broader context to the work at the expense of intimacy. This essay aims to reconcile the abstraction of her personal collection as it transitions to public archive with details drawn from personal in-

"Edith Mather mirrored 3 times! Notre Dame St. West"
Photograph by Edith Mather, 1966.
Courtesy of the McCord Museum M2012.113.1.15.1.

terviews with Mather about her life and her photography. Mather's oral history compensates for the limitations of the photographic record by relocating fragmentary images of a city that no longer exists within the context of contemporary Montreal.

Edith Mather was born on March 8th, 1925, in Hampstead, Quebec. Now an affluent Anglophone suburb of Montreal, prewar Hampstead was just emerging in the image of earlier Garden City models in Great Britain. Early zoning restrictions precluded any development other than single-family homes; and although streets linked the town to its surrounding locale, public transit was several years away from making the connection.[22] Despite over a decade of development, the former farmlands remained pastoral, filling Mather's early memories with the play of young children from families like her own, and the freedom of empty and abandoned fields. Mather left Hampstead's large landscaped lots and curving green streets in 1946 for the density and diversity of downtown Montreal's burgeoning streetscapes. Recently married, she moved into a boarding house on McKay Street. She was twenty years old, and soon to be well-educated,

having just enrolled in a Bachelor of Science degree program at McGill University.

Not far from her university campus, Mather's new home was embedded in the built legacy of Montreal's commercial aristocracy whose architecture reflected the tastes of a predominantly British heritage. By 1945, the neighbourhood was in transition as downtown crept north from the port towards the mountain and the families who built the 'Golden' Square Mile as an elite Victorian suburb were leaving their stately mansions for other affluent neighbourhoods of Montreal.[23] Despite this, the architecture continued to reflect what Jean Claude Marsan calls "an impression of exuberant profusion illustrating the wild optimism characteristic of the Victorian age."[24] The picturesque and flamboyant treatment of building façades with their extravagant ornamentation and detailing projected the wealth and prestige of their owners into the public space of the street. They borrowed from a myriad of stylistic influences including Second Empire, Renaissance Revival, Queen Anne, and neo-Tudor, often mixing historic periods for greater effect.[25] Not limited to mansions, middleclass hous-

ing in the area embraced the same exuberance with its extremely ornate 'gingerbread' houses featuring balconies with lathe-turned spindle balusters, tin cornices, plaster capitals, columns of various styles, and multi-coloured stained-glass windows.[26] Together, the buildings lent a cohesive character to the neighbourhood streets that welcomed the pedestrian into a well-defined social environment. Designed to catch the eye, the architecture catered to the passerby drawing attention to itself rather than what was going on inside it. Mather's early experience of downtown Montreal was framed by the whimsy and romance of its Victorian era architecture that looked to the past for stylistic references.

Several years passed. Mather, her husband, and their three children moved around the city until the family separated in 1960. She stayed in Montreal, surrounded by its familiar streets and the communities she now called home. In 1964, she met and married her second husband, and together they moved into a two-storey flat above Ohman's Jewellery at the intersection of Greene Avenue and St. Catherine Street in Westmount. It was a new beginning, marked by the birth of their son.

Mather's program of documentation began shortly afterwards. She had received her first camera as a gift from her father at the age of eleven, wanting to become an artist even at this young age. Yet there was little space for artistic endeavours in her early life. She pursued biology and botany courses instead of arts in university, and then committed all of her time and energy to taking care of her family. It was not until she was reintroduced to the camera in the mid-1960s, this time a Yashica,[27] that she put it to use. Advertised as a 'modern miracle', camera technology had become increasingly accessible to amateur photographers and hobbyists, especially women.[28] Cameras were lightweight, easy to operate, affordable, and regularly marketed in women's magazines. Mothers in particular were celebrated by these ads as the family's photographer and gatekeeper of the family memory.[29]

Mather's new life existed on the fringes of Montreal artistic life. Her husband, Bryan McCarthy, a published poet, was well acquainted with the Canadian poetry scene. Yet, at a time when 'art' was synonymous with freedom, and artistic life asso-

ciated with cafés, bars and intimate music venues frequented late into the night,[30] Mather's daily routine was structured by her domestic duties. Each morning she packed the pram with her son, her camera and food for the day. Together they filled their time walking the city's streets, each day a new route with no fixed agenda other than to take pictures of what they saw. Each evening, Mather meticulously annotated the photographs of the day, noting the location, date and camera settings she used. Once the film was developed she catalogued them together with their negatives and her annotations. The scope of her journeys and her inventory reflects the discipline of an archivist and a desire, even if not fully realized, to create a comprehensive chronicle of the city's changing built environment. Eventually, as her son grew, she began working in the studio of local photographer Ken Bowe. Bowe helped her to refine her technique, and taught her to develop prints and how to run a professional darkroom. The apartment on Greene Avenue had a spare bathroom on the lower level which she converted to a darkroom to develop her own black and white photographs. In 1980 she left Westmount with her son

to return to the neighbourhood of her first Montreal apartment, close to the intersection of Maisonneuve Boulevard and Guy Street, now in the heart of Concordia University. She rented a generous unit next to the Mansions Apartments, a former garage and upscale apartment house, where she reconstructed her dark room in a spare closet. Mather continued to carry her camera when walking Montreal's streets, but her rigorous program of documentation ended with this move. She committed her time instead to developing and organizing the bounty of the last 17 years.

Mather's photographs foreground Montreal's built environment. They describe buildings and streetscapes, chronicling materials (iron, wood and stone) and typologies (churches, schools, fire halls). The photographs are divided into albums, each album with its own collection loosely organized around a common theme. With the exception of the album dedicated to the Saint Henry Church 1968-1969 (*My City, Montreal, volume 15*), they are not organized around a specific place or time. Rather, they meander through neighbourhoods constantly shifting focus from façades, to rooflines

and other intricate details, to long distance views. The surreal juxtaposition of places from different dates reveals routes well-travelled through the repetition of elements, a particular stone pilaster or the rhythm of quoins at the corner of a building. The narrative that links one image to the next is rarely explicit, but never random. It follows instead the imagination of the photographer who moves through the streets according to her own intuition, choosing which direction to follow, which corners to turn, and at which point to retreat and head for home. Her journeys are guided by her determination to commit the city to memory by preserving it through photography, each photograph a moment in her collection.

Hidden throughout the urban streetscapes and architectural details are glimpses of the people who inhabit Mather's urban explorations. At the end of the third album in her series *My City, Montreal*, there is an image of a man and young child enjoying a quiet moment together on a swing in a park. This photograph stands out in an album entitled 'Houses and Streets', despite its setting in a park. Scrolled on the back in Mather's hand, the caption reads "Stathcona Park, Dorchester Blvd, August 5, 1967. Bryan and Geoffrey McCarthy". In the warmth and sunshine of an early summer afternoon Bryan, Mather's second husband, and Geoffrey, their son, indulge her with an impromptu familial shot. Geoffrey appears in only a few photographs – sitting on the lowest step of a flight of stairs, posing behind an ironwork gate – but this is the only glimpse of Bryan. Perhaps they walked together that morning or met up to follow the last few blocks home. Strathcona Park eludes capture on a contemporary Montreal street map, despite its specific coordinates. Dorchester Boulevard was renamed Boulevard René-Lévesque in 1987, and Mather confirms that this little park, which once celebrated the intersection's northeast corner and the view south over the escarpment, was demolished not long after her photograph was taken. Today the Canadian Centre for Architecture sits on the same parcel of land. Returning in time to this moment recalls the former character of this once intimate residential street where a green oasis however modest like Strathcona Park celebrated nature in the city and humanized an otherwise inhumane urban environment.[31] Person-

al and collective memories collide in this image anchoring Mather's experience in the urban landscape of Montreal, confirming for her and her audience that this place and these people once coexisted.

More prominent in the collection are the photographs of demolition, urban ruins caught in various stages of collapse. From the crumbling walls of a turn-of-the-century catholic church in Saint Henry, to the shattered windows of a Victorian mansion on Dorchester Boulevard these images touch many neighbourhoods of Montreal. Harbingers of urban change, Mather's photographs track the evolving streetscapes of Montreal through the structures that have vanished. They announce the collapse of institutions, the widening of streets and the construction of expressways, documenting shifts in power by capturing as evidence the buildings that gave way to change. During the1960s and 70s the dissolving streetscape was as much a part of Mather's experience as the solid one.

These images of demolition resonate most closely with those of Mather and her family. To use Sontag's words, all photographs are 'memen-

to mori' or reminders of the inevitability of death; she argues that "to take a photograph is to participate in another person's mortality, vulnerability, mutability,"[32] that freezing time in a photograph marks its passage. The inevitability of death frames life through its finality and irreversibility. It creates a sense of the past separated from the present by the absence of the one who died. Mather's photographs attest to the mortality and inevitable vulnerability of the built environment despite any confidence in its permanence and durability. The act of demolition suggests that buildings, like people, have lives, a realization that brings us closer to our own encounter with death. In her writing about the relationship between architecture, memory and place, Shelly Hornstein maintains "the visceral response we have to a house in the process of demolition … speaks to the deep pain of loss of a place where memories were formed, and are often the most tender."[33]   Like premature death, demolition disrupts the natural process of age and decay, creating, in Yi-Fu Tuan's words an "awareness of 'never again'" and "a past that slips away constantly and resists capture."[34] Here demolition provides the ultimate catalyst

"Strathcona Park. Fort & Dorchester"
Photograph by Edith Mather, August 5, 1967.
Courtesy of the McCord Museum M2012.113.1.3.58.

for memory, and the opportunity to defy mortality and the impossibility of return.

Sontag links early camera use to the point in history when the human landscape began to undergo rapid change. The act of picture-taking was motivated by the need to record a vanishing world.[35] Freezing moments in time and collecting their images are ways of imposing control on an uncontrollable world in an effort to bring stability to a place amidst its rapid change. Through her photographs, Mather transforms the demolished city into an artifact that can be revisited. As the urban landscape grows increasingly foreign, her albums become opportunities to reorient herself in the city. She uses the album as a device to recreate her world in the image of what has disappeared.

Mather's photographs entered the public imagination with her first and only publication, *Touches of fantasy on Montreal Streets (Les rues de Montréal, façades et fantasie)*, published by Tundra Books of Montreal in 1977. She launched her book at the Double Hook Book Shop (1974-2005) on Greene Avenue, a local literary landmark celebrated for

its exclusively Canadian merchandise and its tireless commitment to Canadian publishers, authors and readership. The book, like her albums, documents Montreal's architecture by focusing on its Victorian-era detailing and ornamentation. The black and white photographs present the city's streetscapes in a pattern book format, cataloguing built elements in isolation from their greater context. Few images describe entire buildings or facades, but rather explore the visual texture of the stone, wood and iron detailing, linking the materiality of the buildings to a prosperous craft industry that flourished in Montreal at the turn of the century.[36] The book celebrates the contribution of Victorian architecture to the overall character and quality of Montreal's built environment and suggests that the uniqueness of the city stems at least in part from its Victorian roots.

René Chicoine's bilingual narration of her prints included in the publication introduces a moral stance to the collection. His conclusion, *Demolition*, underscores the real threat faced by this particular era of architecture through speculation and modernist planning approaches. He uses Mather's photographs to challenge

"Sussex. E side, N of Dorchester (GM)"
Photograph by Edith Mather, February 15, 1969.
Courtesy of the McCord Museum M2012.113.1.2.62.

the myth of progress embraced by the city over the previous decades and to champion efforts to preserve the built environment and protect Montreal's heritage. Chicoine's text echoes the convictions of a number of local preservationist groups mobilizing during this time in response to the demolition of historic buildings. Proposed development projects that hinged upon large-scale demolition or the destruction of notable landmarks such as the residences of Milton Park (1968), the Van Horne Mansion (1973) and the Grey Nun's Convent (1976) galvanized public concern for the loss of Montreal's architectural character. In each case, the threat of demolition is linked to the genesis of the city's heritage conservation movement.[37] Mather's images were appropriated by *STOP*, a local social activist group committed to preserving historic buildings through marches and staged demonstrations. They used her images of the demolition of Selby Street to protest the construction and expansion of the expressway. Like Mather, demolition inspired several local photographers including Brian Merrett, David Miller and Jeremy Taylor to document buildings slated for destruction,[38] assuming the role of moral witness by documenting a

past that would be easily forgotten if not preserved in photographs.

In 2012 at the age of 87 Mather contacted the McCord Museum of Canadian History with the idea of donating a selection of her photographs to the Notman Photographic Archives. In its dedication to the social history and material culture of Montreal, the McCord was a natural home for her personal archive. Here, her collection joined the museum's ranks of family albums, celebrated as examples of amateur photographic activity and illustrations of the preoccupations and possessions of typical Quebec households.[39] With her emphasis on the built environment, Mather's photographs play another important role in the collection by illustrating the changing urban context of Montreal during a period of rapid transformation. Their meticulous annotation makes tracing the evolution of the city's streets accessible to a broader public audience, and brings additional, often forgotten, context to the histories of particular buildings and landmarks. Through the act of walking, photographing, developing, organizing and cataloguing, Mather discovered her own enthusiasm, skill and discipline as an

archivist which inspired her return to academia as a mature student. She received her diploma in Library Studies from Concordia University in 1985, and continued to work in the university's library for 25 years until retiring at the age of 85. By entrusting her personal albums to a public museum, she committed her photographs to public memory. This gesture is both an act of preservation of Montreal's buildings and streets now long demolished, and her mark on the urban landscape. Mather's and Montreal's history intersect in her photo albums, which are both typical of the pedestrian experience of downtown Montreal in the 1960s and 70s and uniquely shaped by her personal experience.

Indeed, Mather's images of demolition make up only a small fraction of her photographic archive, a fact which calls into question her motivations and the earlier assertions regarding the specificity of her focus on demolition. Taken in isolation, however, the quantity and diversity of her photographs of demolition intimate the ever presence of the phenomenon in the urban landscape of Montreal at the time. Whether Mather deliberately sought out these sites or stumbled upon them through her daily routine, demolition was an inevitable experience of the urban citizen walking the streets of downtown Montreal. Her experience is corroborated by other local archival collections, preservationist groups and 'now and then' literature which cite demolition and its threat as their raison d'être. In this way demolition becomes a unifying force in the evolution of cities by strengthening rather than destroying memory, bringing communities together through the will to remember.

Edith Mather was inspired by the changing streetscapes of Montreal. For her, taking photographs became an act of empowerment; it gave her licence to walk the city's streets and rewarded her day's efforts with tangible expressions of passing time. Photography was an opportunity to engage with the built environment, but also with a greater community beyond her home and immediate family. Eventually, she began to photograph the people she met on her walks, creating moments of intimacy with the action of taking a picture. Like her photographs of demolition, these were fleeting moments that she could freeze with her camera in time and space. Whether

of strangers or friends, she would often develop these informal portraits and carry them with her on her walks as offerings should their paths cross again. What began as a solitary exercise became a social activity and her unique way of engaging with her world.

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1 Jay Walz, "Pearson Lights Expo 67's Flame, and a 'Monument to Man' Is Opened," *New York Times*, April 27, 1967, accessed June 24, 2013, http://select.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=F1081FF83C5C107B93CAAB178FD85F438685F9.

2 Walz, "Pearson Lights Expo 67's Flame."

3 Kenneally, Rhona Richman, and Johanne Sloan. *Expo 67: Not Just a Souvenir*. University of Toronto Press, 2010, 5. Sloan elaborates on the imagery of Expo 67 postcards in her essay in Chapter 11 of the same collection, "Postcards and the Chromophilic Visual Culture of Expo 67".

4 Kenneally and Sloan. *Expo 67: Not Just a Souvenir*, 11.

5 Lortie, André. *The 60s: Montreal Thinks Big*. Montréal; Vancouver: Canadian Centre for Architecture ; Douglas & McIntyre, 2004, 56.

6 Kenneally and Sloan. *Expo 67: Not Just a Souvenir*, 11.

7 Lortie. *The 60s: Montreal Thinks Big*, 56.

8 Germain, Annick. *Montréal: The Quest for a Metropolis*. Chichester, West Sussex; New York: Wiley, 2000, 85.

9 Lortie, André. *The 60s: Montreal Thinks Big*, 77. Demographers anticipated the urban area of Montreal to contain 7 million inhabitants by end of 20th century with 4.8 million by 1981. In reality this population was just 2.11 million by 1961 and 3.3 million by 2000.

10 Germain. *Montréal: The Quest for a Metropolis*, 84.

11 Germain. *Montréal: The Quest for a Metropolis*, 59.

12 Bodnar, John, "Public memory in an American city: commemoration in Cleveland" in *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity*, ed. Gillis, John R. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994.

13 Bodnar, "Public memory in an American city: commemoration in Cleveland", 75.

14 Young, James Edward. *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993, 3.

15 Halbwachs, Maurice. *On collective memory*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

16 Hayden, Dolores. T*he Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995, 3.

[17] Hayden, *The Power of Place*, 9.

[18] Gordon, Alan. *Making Public Pasts the Contested Terrain of Montréal's Public Memories, 1891-1930*. Montreal; Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001, 126.

[19] Lortie. The 60s: Montreal Thinks Big, 107.

[20] Nora, Pierre. *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996, 11.

[21] Sontag, Susan. *On Photography*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977, 4.

[22] Wolfe, Jeanne M, and François Dufaux. *A Topographic Atlas of Montreal = Atlas Topographique de Montréal*. [Montréal]: McGill School of Urban Planning, 1992, 42.

[23] MacKay, Donald. *The Square Mile: Merchant Princes of Montreal*. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1987, 8. The nostalgic adjective 'Golden' was added to the neighbourhood in the 1950s by journalists marking its decline.

[24] Marsan, Jean Claude. *Montreal in Evolution: Historical Analysis of the Development of Montreal's Architecture and Urban Environment*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1981, 291.

[25] Germain. *Montréal: The Quest for a Metropolis*, 47.

[26] Germain. *Montréal: The Quest for a Metropolis*, 47.

[27] The Yashica Electro 35 was the world's first commercially successful electronically controlled 35mm camera. It eventually sold 8 million units.

[28] Langford, Martha, and Musée McCord d'histoire canadienne. *Suspended Conversations the Afterlife of Memory in Photographic Albums*. Montreal, Que.: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001, 24.

[29] Langford, *Suspended Conversations*, 27.

[30] Lortie, *The 60s: Montreal Thinks Big*, 48.

[31] Germain, Montréal: *The Quest for a Metropolis*, 49.

[32] Sontag. *On Photography*, 15.

[33] Hornstein, Shelley. *Losing Site: Architecture, Memory and Place*. Farnham, Surrey, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011, 83.

[34] Tuan, Yi-Fu. "The Significance of the Artifact." *Geographical Review* 70, no. 4 (October 1, 1980): 462–472. doi:10.2307/214079, 468.

[35] Sontag. *On Photography*, 15.

[36] Mather, Edith, and René Chicoine. *Les rues de Montréal, façades et fantaisie = Touches of fantasy on Montreal streets*. [Montréal]: Livres Toundra, 1977.

[37] Lortie. *The 60s: Montreal Thinks Big*, 108.

[38] Lortie. *The 60s: Montreal Thinks Big*, 64.

[39] Langford. *Suspended Conversations*, 7. Refer to Appendix One for a summary of the McCord Museum's photographic collections.

The Battle of Selby

"The Trans-Canada Highway is going to pass through Lower Westmount.
 Selby Street must be demolished to make way for it.
 This is a well-known and simple fact."

 - The Westmount Examiner, August 31, 1967

"Selby. House on left was on Greene."
Photograph by Edith Mather, January 1, 1968.
Courtesy of the McCord Museum M2012.113.1.6.55.

"Greene Avenue. (formerly SE cr. Selby)"
Photograph by Edith Mather, October 3, 1971.
Courtesy of the McCord Museum M2012.113.1.2.12.

In 1967, the Selby Street Situation or the Battle of Selby was the biggest news ticket in Westmount, according to its local daily the Westmount Examiner.[1] Stories tracking Montreal Mayor Jean Drapeau's controversial construction of the Ville-Marie, the new east-west expressway through the prestigious suburb, the province's expropriation of Selby Street and its adjacent properties, and the demolition of 239 family homes consistently made front page news. The irony of Selby's story, however, was that until its imminent demolition, the street had played a virtually silent role in the history of Westmount. Located in Lower Westmount, or the area to the south of the Saint-Jacques Escarpment and the Canadian Pacific Railway, Selby Street shared little of the picturesque verdurous character for which the affluent Montreal suburb was historically celebrated.

Construction

Westmount, as its name suggests, locates itself on the western slope of Mount Royal and the plateau that extends from the mountain's base to the south. Less than three percent of its land dips below the plateau's escarpment and sits a full fifteen metres in altitude lower than the rest of the suburb. While the municipal boundary officially separates affluent Anglophone Westmount from Saint Henri, its traditionally working class Francophone neighbour to the south, these fifteen metres mark the informal divide between opposing worlds. From its inception, Westmount was designed as a bucolic haven for Montreal's affluent trying to escape the rapid urbanization of downtown.[2] Its stunning views, fresh air, sense of privacy and quiet linked its location on the mountain and surrounding lush landscape to a quality of life sought

Photograph centre left courtesy of Edith Mather's private collection.
Remaining photographs by Jennifer Harper and Brian Merrett for the Westmount Action Committee.
Courtesy of the Westmount Historical Association Archives.

after by Montreal's wealthy aristocracy whose tastes favored the British ideal of a home in a park-like setting. Both local developers and the municipality of Westmount colluded to create what became known as 'Canada's model city' by appealing to this population and deliberately excluding those who lived at or below the poverty line.[3] Developers implemented restrictive covenants on properties that prevented cheap methods of building and mixed land-use in residential areas. The municipality imposed high construction standards through its detailed and highly technical building by-laws that generated housing the working classes could not afford. Westmount developed into a neighbourhood of grand detached and semi-detached homes, well-constructed from durable, permanent materials, set back on large lots, surrounded by gardens and trees, transformed from a once pastoral landscape into a prestigious residential suburb.

By contrast, the strip of land to the south of the escarpment, literally the wrong side of the tracks, became the catchall for buildings and behaviour that had no other place in Westmount. In 1908, the municipality banned the construction of new apartment buildings and duplexes to the north of the Canadian Pacific Railway, reserving this land exclusively for detached and semi-detached homes. In 1913, all light industry, workshops and warehouses were pushed to the south of this line, corralled into what became the suburb's industrial zone. This south part of the city was given over to small investors and building contractors whose speculative interests guided its development rather any interest in preserving its idyllic park-like image. Here, they were free to "disfigure by closely built terraces" the part of the city hidden from view by the escarpment, according to the Real Estate Record in 1897.[4]

Selby Street was an anomaly in the development of Westmount. The street takes its name from Dr. D.W. Selby, who bought the former stone mansion and surrounding 100-acre property of William Hallowell, of the North West Company, in 1825. According to the Westmount Archives, his land stretched along the hillside from the Moffatt property on the east, to what is now Hallowell Street on the west, and extended from Sisson's Lane, now St Catherine Street in the north, down into the valley to Notre Dame Street to the south.

Photographs by Jennifer Harper and Brian Merrett for the Westmount Action Committee.
Courtesy of the Westmount Historical Association Archives.

He called his estate Selby Grange, and lived there for twenty years before selling it to Thomas Allan Staynor, Deputy Postmaster General, in 1845. The portion of this property that is now Westmount, south of St. Catherine and Dorchester Boulevard, belonged to the former St. Augustin and St. Joseph fiefs. These parcels developed separately from the Côte-St-Antoine lands that formed the basis of the rest of the suburb, and followed their own pattern of street openings and subdivisions. The type of construction and buildings that emerged in this area reflects its independent development.[5]

Selby Street first appeared on the map at the turn of the centuryduring a period of significant growth for Westmount. The development of this area in particular was linked to the creation of the tramline along Greene Avenue. By the mid-twentieth century, Selby was lined on both sides with three-storey multi-family residences, a building typology "historically held in contempt in Westmount"[6] that had nevertheless found their place in this zone otherwise committed to industry. As products of Westmount's strict building by-laws, these structures were of sound construction and built to last, yet at a much higher density than was typical of the suburb. Predominantly rental units, they were affordable for the working class, and could accommodate sizeable families. According to the Westmount Examiner in November, 1967, "Selby Street was one of the very few areas in metropolitan Montreal where a flat suitable for six or seven persons could be had for eighty dollars a month."

Demolition

In October 1965, the province of Quebec announced that the extension of the Trans-Canada Highway would begin in late 1967. The Ville-Marie Expressway, the much needed east-west high speed connection between the Turcot Interchange and downtown Montreal, would follow the Canadian Pacific Railway tracks to the south through Lower Westmount. Construction required the expropriation of Selby Street and its adjacent lands, and the residents of Selby Street were given until June 30th, 1967 to evacuate their homes.
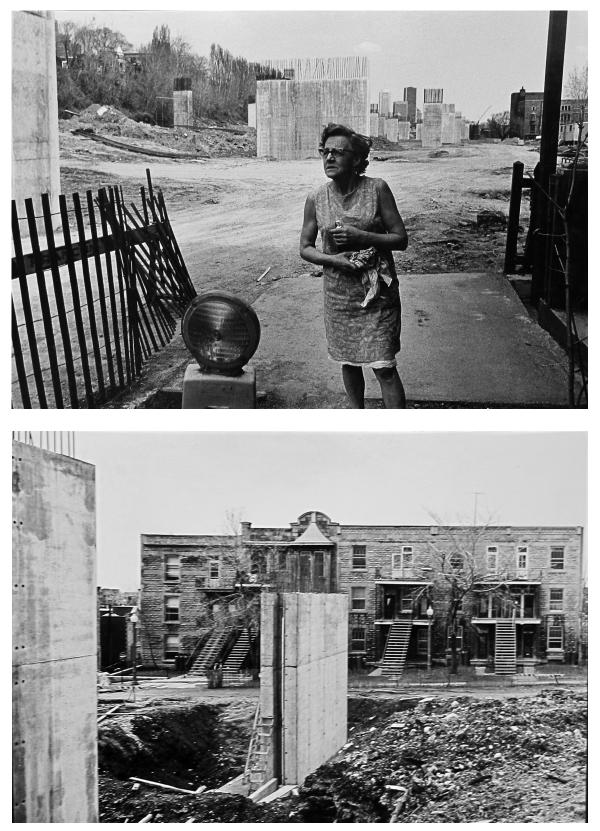
The evacuation of Selby Street, however, did not run as smoothly

Photographs courtesy of Edith Mather's private collection.

as originally planned. Escalating housing costs due to Expo '67 and the stigma attached to large family sizes typical of this area made it virtually impossible for the displaced households to relocate in Westmount. Families were reluctant to move outside of their neighbourhood, yet many had no other place to go. Some were able to stay in the short-term because of fixed lease agreements with property owners who waited for government resolution over compensation for their buildings and their land. According to the Westmount Examiner, as of the beginning of October, 1967, "families currently residing on Selby are living on borrowed time." Former tenants became squatters overnight as their homes were systematically expropriated by the Highway Minister. For months these families stayed while their world was dismantled around them. Crews moved in to remove light fixtures, electrical wiring, plumbing, and to shut off the water, then one by one the houses came down. The Public Safety Department consolidated families into lower level, empty flats in order to minimize the fire hazard left by so many empty units. Eventually however, all the buildings except for 178-188 Selby Street were system-

atically demolished.

The long and drawn-out process of expropriation and eventual demolition captivated the attention of the media and fueled the debate over the merits of 'progress' and large scale urban development strategies. The battle of Selby exacerbated the credibility gap between politicians and their citizens by questioning the obligations of government towards the welfare of the displaced families. In late fall, 1967, the Westmount Examiner reported "The city is under no legal obligation to relocate the families and is operating from a strictly humanistic motive" commending Westmount's efforts to find suitable alternate housing for its newly homeless citizens. Despite this, local architect and former City Councillor and Public Works Commissioner Charles Aspler was branded a communist for promoting low rental subsidized housing projects in the city, and suggesting that Selby Street's former tenants be relocated in a public housing project elsewhere in Westmount.[7] In August, 1967, the Westmount Examiner relayed Mayor Michael L. Tucker's rejection of such a project, quoting the following strategy: "The units we envisage will be woven

Photographs by Jennifer Harper and Brian Merrett for the Westmount Action Committee.
Courtesy of the Westmount Historical Association Archives.

into the fabric of the community in a number of locations in the urban renewal area rather than in one ghetto-like block that might carry a social stigma".

Urban planners had defined Westmount's 'renewal area' between Atwater Avenue to the east, St. Catherine Street to the north, the Glen on the west and St. Antoine, Hallowell Streets and the CPR right-of-way on the south when the province's plan for the highway extension was first revealed. The intention of the plan was to improve the area by accommodating the needs of those facing evacuation. In 1974, Westmount purchased the old CPR freight yard on Hillside Avenue for the construction of the Hillside Housing Project, a complex of public housing units of varying sizes to which the former Selby Street residents were given top priority. Despite their intention for integration, however, a 1988 study of Westmount's built heritage describes the design of these units along Hillside Avenue as "totally alien to any form of Westmount language, a fact which tends to stigmatize them unduly."[8]

Commemoration

In 1973, the province returned the land left over south of the expressway between Greene and Atwater Avenues to Westmount. The former site of Selby Street and its Victorian row houses was now a large, gravel plot sloping smoothly down from the Ville-Marie onramp towards the lane just north of St. Antoine Street. On June 21st, 1973, the Westmount Examiner quoted the Roads Department as they worked to regrade the empty site in saying, "It was all a mistake – presumably at the taxpayer's expense."[9] Whether or not the demolition of the street and its homes was necessary for the highway construction, once turned back over to the city the land became an opportunity for Westmount to give back to the community it severed. The city hired architect Michael Fish to interview local residents and develop a plan for the site. Selby Park was created the length of the former street between Greene Avenue and Atwater Street.

Fred Leclaire, a former resident and property owner in the neighbourhood, recalled the Selby Street struggle as a galvanizing moment in the history of citizen participation

178-188 Selby Street. Photograph by Author, August 2013.

in Westmount in his article in The Westmount Historian in February 2010. According to Leclaire, many people at the time thought that 'modernization' was "being done on the backs of the middle-class homeowners and tenants who were being pushed out of the city."[10] For Leclerc and many others Selby Park became "a memorial to our perseverance" and the Hillside Housing Project "one of the legacies of Westmount's willingness to listen to its citizens."[11]

Forty years after its construction, Selby Park feels like a modest slice of greenery, sandwiched between the expressway and the backs of the brick triplexes that still line the parallel stretch along St. Antoine Street. Unlike Westmount's grand parks of the early 19th-century, no stately mansions front onto Selby Park and no landscaped paths meander idly through it. Instead, the remaining west arm of Selby Street hits Green Avenue at a dead end of shrubs and overgrown grasses marking the park's north edge, and buffering the unsightly underbelly of the concrete overpass from the view of the playground beyond. Save for a lone historic lamppost, no evidence that the street ever

extended further east exists here and no commemorative plaque describes the former neighbourhood. The topography has been terraced into a gentle cascade of level plateaus sparsely populated by trees and park benches.

Seldom are boundaries between neighbourhoods as palpable as the monolithic concrete expressway; its hive of cars travelling at high speed divides the landscape definitively between north and south. Only one building stands as a testament to the battle of Selby by marking the often uncomfortable relationship between overt gestures of modernization and progress embodied in the expressway and the vestiges of Victorian-era architecture. 178-188 Selby Street retains its coveted Westmount address by staking its claim over what remains of the urban landscape that was Lower Westmount. Unlike the artificial manipulation of the park's topography, this isolated three-storey, stone-faced, brick building describes Westmount's urban evolution in a very visceral way, recalling the loss of its former neighbours and the generations of families who lived along this once residential street.

[1] "People, Places, Events made news in '67", *The Westmount Examiner*, January 11, 1968, 16.

[2] Walter Van Nus, "A Community of Communities: Suburbs in the Development of "Greater Montreal," in *Montreal Metropolis, 1880-1930*, ed. Gournay, Isabelle, and France Vanlaethem. (Toronto; Buffalo, N.Y.: Canadian Centre for Architecture : Stoddart ; Distributed in the U.S. by General Distribution Services, 1998), 62.

[3] Van Nus, "A Community of Communities: Suburbs in the Development of "Greater Montreal,"" 63.

[4] Westmount, Quebec, "Heritage study: a study carried out for the City of Westmount", by Beaupré et Michaud, architects, (Westmount: 1988), 39.

[5] Westmount, Quebec, "Heritage study: a study carried out for the City of Westmount", 65.

[6] Westmount, Quebec, "Heritage study: a study carried out for the City of Westmount", 100.

[7] "Charles Asplar 1916-2003: Westmount's 'communist'", *The Montreal Gazette*, September 13, 2003.

[8] Westmount, Quebec, "Heritage study: a study carried out for the City of Westmount", 56.

[9] "Smoothed Out", *The Westmount Examiner*, June 21, 1973, cover image caption.

[10] F.A. Leclaire, "Living History: Westmount in the Seventies," *The Westmount Historian*, Vol. 10 No. 2, (2010), 13.

[11] Leclaire, "Westmount in the Seventies," 14.

The Fall of Saint-Henri

"The parish appeared again out of the smog, falling into place with its own tranquil durability. School, church, convent: a close-knit, centuries-old alliance, as strong in the heart of the urban jungle as in the Laurentian valleys."[1]

- Gabrielle Roy, The Tin Flute, 1947.

"Église Saint-Henri. 4055 St. Jacques W."
Photograph by Edith Mather, May 20, 1969.
Courtesy of the McCord Museum M2012.113.1.16.4.

"The Pasteur looks at the wreckage of his church."
Photograph by Edith Mather, 1969.
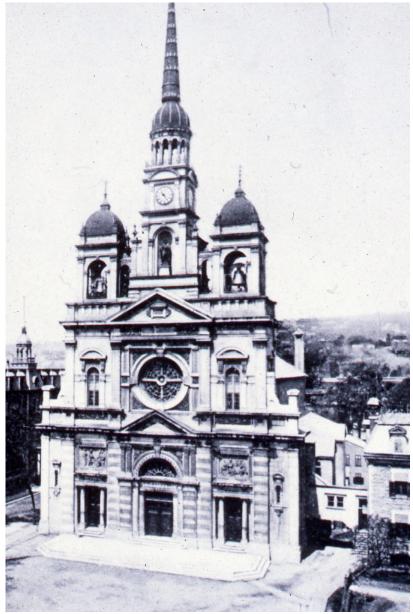*Courtesy of the McCord Museum M2012.113.1.16.55.*

"(Place) Saint-Henri"
Photograph by Edith Mather, May 20, 1969.
Courtesy of the McCord Museum M2012.113.1.16.5.

On July 30th, 1969, in front of a crowd of two hundred or more, Saint-Henri fell a full one hundred and fifty feet from the base of the church's central clock tower to the newly-paved parking lot below. The copper clad statue and namesake of the church, parish and community had stood guard over Montreal's industrial suburb for almost eighty years. His fall marked the beginning of a two year demolition spree that transformed the heart of the neighbourhood by razing its central district of religious and institutional buildings for the construction of a new polyvalente secondary school. By the end of these two years, two entire blocks were leveled and with them six historic buildings: Saint-Henri Church, Saint-Henri College, Saint-Henri Hospice, Sainte-Anne Convent, Sainte-Melanie Academy and Saint-Thomas Aquinas School, leaving a vacant Place Saint-Henri void of its original identity and raison d'être.

Construction

Since its formation in 1910, Place Saint-Henri marked the informal core of the neighbourhood after which it was named, yet, the church preceded the public square by almost half a century. Its origins were linked directly to the foundation of the community. Constructed in 1869, Saint-Henri Church replaced a modest Sulpician chapel that was built to service the village of Saint-Henri-des-Tanneries at the base of the mountain streams. Named after the Holy Roman Emperor, Henry II of Bamberg, Henri was also the first name of Father Jean-Henri Auguste Roux (1798-1832), the superior of the Saint-Sulpice seminary.

With the inauguration of the Lachine Canal in 1824, Saint-Henri emerged as one of Montreal's earliest industrial suburbs. It quickly surpassed industrial development in Montreal's southwest by attract-

Saint-Henri Church c.1914 .
Courtesy of the Société Historique de Saint-Henri 29ph1.1.

ing an increasingly broad economic base through tax exemptions, cash bonuses and lax zoning regulations.[2] The population of Saint-Henri exploded overnight. Without modern communication technology and inner-city mass transportation, labourers lived close to the factories in which they worked in densely packed working-class housing. Hardship was everywhere, evident in the long hours of work, low salaries, the exploitation of women and children, and the thick pollution that coated everything in black smog.[3] Slums embodied this hardship, imprinting it on the urban landscape. In *Montreal Evolution*, Marsan describes the industrial district created by the three adjacent communities of St. Gabriel, St. Cunégonde and Saint-Henri as "a festering ground for social vices" where "the environment was degraded to an extent that was unfortunately all too characteristic of nineteenth-century industrial cities."[4] The institution of the church marked the growth of a thriving community and provided its much-needed social and moral centre.

In 1865 Ignace Bourget, Bishop of Montreal, divided the old parish of Montreal into several small parishes, a gesture that had significant impact on the urban development of Montreal's suburbs.[5] At that time a parish was both an ecclesiastical administrative unit and the basis for the social organization of a community. After the law on municipal corporations was passed in Quebec City in 1876 allowing parishes to incorporate as civil municipalities, a parish became a territorial civil entity as well. Saint-Henri formed an autonomous parish in 1867 and became a municipality in 1876. Civic pride found its symbolic expression in the construction of Saint-Henri Church in 1869, in a gesture typical of catholic religious and educational buildings at the time.

Bishop Bourget chose the site for the church in Saint-Henri at the intersection of the major circulation routes that gave rise to the community: the Upper Lachine Road (now Rue Notre-Dame), Rue Saint-Bonaventure (now Rue Saint-Jacques) and the railway tracks of the Lachine Railroad. In 1869, the Church Parish purchased a parcel of land from the former Brodie family farm for $10,000, and set aside another $9,500 for the building's construction.

Photograph by Gérald Quintal, 1969.
Courtesy of the Société Historique de Saint-Henri 179ph1199.

Photograph by Gérald Quintal, 1969.
Courtesy of the Société Historique de Saint-Henri 179ph1151.

Despite the rapid growth of the community, economic hardship overshadowed the parish, especially during its first twenty years when accumulating debts and impending bankruptcy threatened to close its doors. This did not stop the parish, however, from building what became the grandest, most ornate structure in Saint-Henri. Eventually the church's clock tower and cupola dominated the suburb's skyline of low-rise working class housing and industrial architecture, marking from a distance the social and moral nexus of the community.

Designed by architect Adolphe Lévesque, the church of Saint-Henri was inspired by the church of Santa-Maria-Maggiore in Rome. The building as originally constructed by developers Payette and Perrault, however, was primitive, a raw shell of a structure that could be decorated and expanded as funds became available. In 1887, the parish added the stone front façade based on the design of architects Maurice Perrault and Albert Mesnard, including the embellished portico and the clock and bell towers. In 1889, the high altar was built by Félix Mesnard and its wood sculptures by Louis-Philippe Hébert. In 1890, the statue

of Saint-Henri, the building's namesake, was constructed by Olindo Gratton and Philippe Laperle, and hoisted into its niche at the base of the central tower, below the four-sided clock. Finally in 1914, the remaining exterior walls were reclad in stone and brick, completing the building as it would be demolished in the year of its centenary.

As Saint-Henri and its parish continued to grow, the land around the church and Place Saint-Henri continued to develop. The church provided the impetus for a series of institutional buildings constructed to provide for the healthcare and education of the neighbourhood, including: the Sainte-Melanie Academy (1870), the Saint-Henri College (1877), the Saint-Anne Convent (1897)the Saint-Thomas Aquinas Church (1923), the Saint-Henri Presbytery (1927,)the Saint-Thomas Aquinas School (1929) and the Saint-Henry Hospice (1929) which replaced the Saint-Henri Orphanage (1885). By the late 1920s, Place Saint-Henri itself had become a monument to the vitality of the Saint-Henri community.

Photograph by Gérald Quintal, 1969.
Courtesy of the Société Historique de Saint-Henri 179ph338.

Photograph by Gérald Quintal, 1969.
Courtesy of the Société Historique de Saint-Henri 179ph319.

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Demolition

In 1969, the year of the church's centenary, the parish of Saint-Henri sold the church building and the adjacent hospice to the Commission des Écoles Catholiques de Montréal (C.E.C.M.). The C.E.C.M. took possession of the building on July 11th. Three days later, demolition began. Since the beginning of the Quiet Revolution, the government of Quebec had gradually assumed control over the administration of education and healthcare, which had formerly been managed by the religious communities. By 1969, the C.E.C.M. controlled the majority of institutions built around Place Saint-Henri, and had been eyeing the property, once consolidated, for the construction of a new polyvalente secondary school. The polyvalente was a modern concept put forward by the new Ministry of Education, a single massive institution dedicated to making education available to all.[6] Its design and construction were part a significant investment by the province in the public education system. Once completed, the new institution would accommodate 2,600 students.

In January or February, 1968, the

C.E.C.M. approached the parish with an ultimatum. The Ministry of Education had already approved the project for a polyvalente in the southwest sector of Montreal and endorsed the expropriation of the church and hospice if the parish was unwilling or unable to put forward an acceptable offer as soon as possible. The parish was given no other option but to sell its buildings, at $700,000 for the church and $825,000 for the hospice.

Regardless of this inevitability, the debate among the parish was impassioned. Several argued that the church had become a liability, being used only a few hours during the week and on Sundays. The maintenance and cost of heating required to keep it open had already pushed several of the surrounding archdioceses, like Montreal and Hull, to endorse policies to deter the construction of large churches because of the unnecessary expense of their upkeep. The C.E.C.M. offered to allow the parish to build a new, smaller church as an annex to the auditorium of the school. On its own, the church would accommodate a regular mass of 200 to 300 patrons, and could expand into the auditorium at high mass to double

Photograph by Gérald Quintal, 1969.
Courtesy of the Société Historique de Saint-Henri 179ph344.

Photograph by Gérald Quintal, 1969.
Courtesy of the Société Historique de Saint-Henri 179ph358.

its capacity. Many, however, were fearful of accepting this option because it impinged on the autonomy of the parish.

Arguably the loss of the church led to the demise of the parish. The parish acquired Saint-Thomas Aquinas Church in 1972. The only remaining building of the institutional and religious complex, it had been semi-abandoned by its congregation as well, and required substantial renovations to prepare it for reopening. But the controversy surrounding the sale of Saint-Henri Church divided its congregation, and many refused to attend mass in their new parish church. Eventually the parish dissolved, and anyone remaining joined Saint-Irénée in 2001. Saint-Thomas Aquinas Church was bought in 2000 by l'Hôtel Des Encans de Montreal Inc. and has since been restored and repurposed.

Demolition of the Saint-Henri Church quickly turned into a public spectacle. Its progress was tracked in the local weekly, the Voix Populaire, which featured dramatic images of its destruction on the front page. Amateur photographers like Adrien Dubuc, Michel Dufour and Abbé Gerald Quintal documented

the entire process including the demise of the clock tower and cupola, frame-by-frame.[7] According to the Montreal newspaper La Presse, Arthur Vaughan, an employee of A to Z Renovations Ltd., kicked off the demolition by climbing two hundred and seventy feet to remove the weathervane from the top of the clock tower. A symbol of the French nation and a religious sign for hope and faith, he sold the ironwork rooster to an antique dealer, M. Martin, on Rue Notre-Dame.

A to Z Renovations Ltd were hired specifically to demolish the clock tower. Rather than disassemble it in-situ at a height of two hundred and seventy feet, the crew used steel cables to lower the tower to the ground where it was bulldozed on the church's property. Images of this and other dramatic moments continued to circulate throughout the demolition process.

The scale of the demolition in Place Saint-Henri was shocking. The "unexpected solidity" of the church extended its demolition into the fall. It was followed by the demolition of the Sainte-Melanie Academy (1969), the Saint-Henri College (1970), the Saint-Henri Hospice (1970), the

Photograph by Gérald Quintal, 1969.
Courtesy of the Société Historique de Saint-Henri 179ph1139.

Photograph by Gérald Quintal, 1969.
Courtesy of the Société Historique de Saint-Henri 179ph425.

Sainte-Anne Convent (1971) and the Saint-Thomas Aquinas School (1971).

For many in the community, the event was emotionally charged. Those with intimate memories of the building including baptisms, weddings and funerals felt the loss of the building threatened the loss of their memories of these significant life events. Since the decline and closure of the Lachine Canal, the exodus of industrial workers and their families signalled a decline in the industrial base of Saint-Henri as well as its sense of community. Demolition of the institutions around Place Saint-Henri was considered a gesture of progress by clearing the slate of Saint-Henri's past, and opening it up to modernity. Above all, demolition marked the transition of power from the church to the C.E.C.M. to shape the urban landscape. It signalled the end of an era, and underscored the fragility of even the strongest buildings and their institutions.

Commemoration

In his report "Il y a quarante ans à Saint-Henri", Daniel Guilbert tracks the spolia of the demolition of Saint-Henri Church, the redistribution of which was governed by both sentimentality and speculation. Once lowered to the ground by steel cables, the statue of Saint-Henri disappeared for fifteen years until it was found in the basement of a home in Boucherville. It was donated to the Quebec Museum of Fine Arts and has since appeared at the Pointe-à-Callière Museum in Montreal for an exposition on the Lachine Canal. The Historical Society of Saint-Henri is currently lobbying to return the statue to Place Saint-Henri to be reinstalled in the metro station as a gesture towards the square's past. Before demolition began, the cadavers from the crypt below the church were removed and interred in the Notre-Dame-des Neiges Cemetery on top of Mount Royal. The Sacré-Coeur bronze sculpture by Henri Hébert was relocated from the front yard of the church to Montreal's Museum of Fine Arts, and the wood relief of the Last Supper by Louis-Philippe Hébert formerly inside the hall was conserved and reinstalled in the Church of St. Thomas-Aquinas. The demolition crew salvaged the church's stained-glass windows to sell to other church parishes, and with no barrier surrounding the demolition site, anyone was free to pick

Saint-Thomas Acquinas Church. Photograph by Author, August 2013.

through the debris. Many salvaged copper and other metals for resale for their own profit. Local residents explored the site after construction hours, and took photos, or painted pictures to document their experience of the demolition.

According to Germain in *Montréal: The Quest for a Metropolis*, the demolition of Place Saint-Henri typified Montreal's 'demolition-redevelopment oriented urban renewal program' of the 1960s. Public backlash towards this strategy for redevelopment fueled its reconsideration in the mid-1970s. Consequently, improvement or revitalization came to mean instead subsidies for street infrastructure and park development, the construction of public housing on infill sites, and grant programs for home-owners and small landlords to rehabilitate their dwellings. [8]

As per the C.E.C.M's schedule, construction of the polyvalente began on July 8th, 1971, and was completed to welcome students in September, 1972. Today, the building contains three schools: a high school for young students, a vocational training centre, and a centre for adult learning. The munici-

pal pool adjacent to the school was opened in 1977. According to David Fontaine, Pierre Malo and Eric Paquet in their report on the evolution and analysis of Place Saint-Henri, the new school and pool destroyed Place Saint-Henri through the scale of the development and its architectural treatment. Many consider these modern buildings oversized and disrespectful of their local context, with little architectural merit especially in comparison to the buildings they replaced. The gesture of the monumental façade celebrated by the church and surrounding institutions, and their entry procession that linked the public life of the square to the social life of the buildings has been lost by a complex with no clear street address or obvious entry point. A walk around the perimeter of the two blocks reveals two modest green spaces commemorating its evolution: Parc de la Ferme-Brodie and Parc Polyvalente Saint-Henri. Except for the remaining shell of the Saint-Thomas Aquinas Church, no built memory remains of Saint-Henri Church and its surrounding institutions.

[1] Roy, Gabrielle. The Tin Flute. New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1947, 33.

[2] Walter Van Nus, "A Community of Communities: Suburbs in the Development of "Greater Montreal," in Montreal Metropolis, 1880-1930, ed. Gournay, Isabelle, and France Vanla-ethem. (Toronto; Buffalo, N.Y.: Canadian Centre for Architecture : Stoddart ; Distributed in the U.S. by General Distribution Services, 1998), 60.

[3] Marsan, Jean Claude. Montreal in Evolution: Historical Analysis of the Development of Montreal's Architecture and Urban Environment. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1981,179.

[4] Marsan. Montreal in Evolution,179-180.

[5] Marsan. Montreal in Evolution, 182.

[6] Guilbert, Daniel. "Il y a quarante ans à Saint-Henri", (La Société Historique de Saint-Henri: 2010), 56.

[7] Archival Photographs of the demolition of Saint-Henri Church and surrounding buildings included in the archives of La Société Historique de Saint-Henri.

[8] Germain, Annick. Montréal: The Quest for a Metropolis. Chichester, West Sussex; New York: Wiley, 2000, 184.

The Disappearance of 1938 Dorchester

"The historical importance of Shaughnessy House rests with its close and sustained association with leading members of the syndicate responsible for the financing, construction and early administration of the Canadian Pacific Railway. These include William Cornelius Van Horne, Thomas Shaughnessy, Duncan McIntyre and Donald Smith (later Lord Strathcona) …

The power and influence exerted by these men during the period of their ownership of the Boulevard René-Lévesque residence was enormous and placed them in the top echelon of the Montréal business establishment, which controlled much of the nation's wealth and commerce."

   - *"Shaughnessy House", Announcement of the construction of the Canadian Centre for Architecture: press kits, 1985, 9.*

"Dorchester W. looking E from Seymour"
Photograph by Edith Mather, February 16, 1969.
Courtesy of the McCord Museum M2012.113.1.3.65.

"Dorchester West. (pillar still extant, 1982)"
Photograph by Edith Mather, March 22, 1969.
Courtesy of the McCord Museum M2012.113.1.2.60.

In many ways, the disappearance of the stately mansion at 1938 Dorchester Boulevard was inevitable. The transformation of Dorchester from a quaint Victorian residential street to a grandiose metropolitan boulevard was essential to Montreal's emergence as a world-renowned modern metropolis. As was the construction of the Ville-Marie Expressway a few years later. Yet many of the prestigious homes of the former aristocracy built in and around the 'Golden' Square Mile evaded erasure, managing to embed themselves if not in the physical landscape then in the collective imagination of the place. If demolition was unavoidable, their loss was commemorated in some way, either through protest or ceremony, or holdings in local museums or archives. 1938 Dorchester Boulevard has been all but lost, save for a series of photographs by Edith Mather.

Construction

The narrow strip of landscape along the upper crest of the Saint-Jacques Escarpment between today's Guy and Lambert Closse Streets, had changed little over the last century despite the rapid urbanization of its surroundings. Coveted for its panoramic views south towards the Lachine Canal, the St. Lawrence River and the South Shore, this strip of land was set aside as far back as the mid-17th century when the Sulpiciens began opening up the territory of Montreal for settlement. Directly to the north, the land was known as the Priest's Farm, the summer residence of the Messieurs Saint Sulpice characterized by its large open areas of intensively cultivated agricultural land. The territory surrounding the farm was quickly subdivided into building lots of various sizes, the largest located south along the escarpment. Dorchester

Photographs by Edith Mather. Courtesy of the McCord Museum.
Clockwise:
M2012.113.1.1.10, February 16, 1969, "Dorchester W, S side opp. Fort. taken from second floor of Casgrain house";
M2012.113.1.3.34, April 24, 1971, "Dorchester West, N side, W of St. Matthew. (5 houses on right are gone)";
M2012.113.1.1.12, July 8, 1966, "Casgrain House from Strathcona Park".

Street grew from a well-worn path through pasture land to the firm boundary between the farm and its neighbouring properties.

Dorchester Street takes its name from Guy Carleton, Lord Dorchester (1724-1808), former Governor of the Province of Quebec and Governor-General of Canada, and an Anglo-Irish soldier. Originally named Saint-Jean Baptiste, the gesture to recognize Lord Dorchester marked the influx of English bourgeoisie to the area. From as early as the 1790s, Montreal's business leaders were leaving the industrial confines of the old city to build spacious new homes on the verdurous slopes of Mount Royal. The top of the escarpment offered the perfect vantage from which to overlook their prospering empire.

Dorchester Street marked the south border of Montreal's Square Mile, a prestigious neighbourhood that developed along Sherbrooke Street between University Street and Guy Street. By the last half of the 19th century, this area had become home to Montreal's commercial aristocracy, those families that controlled two-thirds of Canada's wealth including the country's rail,

shipping, timber, mining, fur trade and banking. They were, in effect, responsible for building the city as the country's unrivalled cultural and financial capital.

While the properties south of the Priest's Farm fell outside of the 'square mile' to its west, the area followed a similar pattern of development, attracting a similar clientele who built homes in a similar scale and style. Well-known families like the Drummonds and the Dandurands built their homes on Dorchester Street within the limits of the neighbourhood. But the street stretched westward, its south side lined with equally large stone villas on generous lots, among them the houses of lawyer Henry Judah (1830); Joseph Masson, Lord Terrebonne (1850-1851); and Frederick Thomas Judah, director of Montreal City and District Savings Bank (1874-1875). At the time, Dorchester Street was considered one of the most elegant streets in Montreal, second only in prestige to Sherbrooke.[1]

The *Atlas of the City and Island of Montreal* compiled by Henry W. Hopkins in 1879 reveals the footprint of the estate of F.W. Torrance, a Montreal lawyer and judge, at

"Dorchester West, S side, W of des Seigneurs. Casgrain House."
Photograph by Edith Mather, March 22, 1969.
Courtesy of the McCord Museum M2012.113.1.2.59.

1938 Dorchester Street, just to the north of the home of A.W. Ogilvie. Across Dorchester between Fort and St. Marc Streets the properties included that of the Hon. D.A. Smith, Lord Strathcona, and Augustus Cantin, shipbuilder and owner of the Montreal Marine Works. By 1907, according to the A*tlas of the Island and City of Montreal and Ile Bizard* compiled by A.R. Pinsoneault, the Hon. P.B. Casgrain, prominent Quebec lawyer, author and political figure, purchased the former Torrance mansion. The house opposite the Casgrain estate now belonged to Sir Thomas Shaughnessy.

The construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1881 along the top of the escarpment introduced a second wave of urbanization to the area. Several properties along Dorchester Street were subdivided. The north side opened up to increased residential construction and development while the villas along south were redeveloped as single-family townhouses or semi-detached houses. East-west interior streets were laid out across the former Priest's Farm and rows of stone and brick townhouses constructed to accommodate Montreal's professional and business class.

Starting in the 1930s, many of the former Square Mile residents began selling their properties and moving to other affluent Montreal neighbourhoods – Westmount and Outremont – and even as far as Toronto. The economic crisis of 1930 and the growth of Montreal's commercial district northward from the Old Port to the mountain prompted this exodus. Yet, 1938 Dorchester remained despite significant changes to its surrounding context.

In the mid-1950s, 1938 Dorchester narrowly eluded demolition again, falling just west of Jean Drapeau's reconstruction program to transform the intimate Victorian residential street into a modern eight-lane thoroughfare. Shortly after taking office as mayor in 1954, Drapeau's administration put into action part of the Montreal City Planning Department's master plan for the central portion of Montreal Island by ordering the demolition of buildings along Dorchester from de Lormier Avenue in the east to Guy Street in the west. The process of expropriation, demolition and consolidation took fifteen years, but by the end Drapeau had created a major artery in and out of the city. This gesture not only relieved traffic in the sec-

Photographs by Edith Mather. Courtesy of the McCord Museum.
Clockwise:
M2012.113.1.2.61, February 16, 1969, "Casgrain House, Dorchester Blvd. SW cr. des Seigneurs";
M2012.113.1.4.4, March 22, 1969, "Dorchester entrance of Casgrain house. Dorchester West";
M2012.113.1.4.5, March 22, 1969, "Casgrain House. Dorchester West".

tion of the city centre devoted to business, but greatly increased the potential value of land all along the new monumental space.[2] Construction triggered a wave of large scale office developments as iconic modern skyscrapers like the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce Building, the Hydro-Quebec Building and Place Ville-Marie rose in close proximity. The street was renamed Dorchester Boulevard in 1960 to reflect its new cosmopolitan character.

Demolition

Inevitably, the rapid redevelopment of the central business district of Montreal and the modernization of the boulevard sealed the fate of the few remaining mansions along Dorchester, in particular those to the west of the stretch previously widened. In late March, 1969, demolition crews arrived to clear the properties to the south of the boulevard, between Dorchester and the Canadian Pacific Railway. The plan to widen this final stretch of Dorchester was part of the construction of the Ville-Marie Expressway, the high-speed extension of the Trans-Canada Highway, scheduled to begin later that year. Saint-Marc and Fort Streets were to be extended across Dorchester to the south to create the exit and entry ramps for the expressway and to reconnect vehicle circulation the fifteen metres from the top of the cliff to its base.

Demolition solicited little attention. The loss of a few stately mansions paled in comparison to the number of homes that had already been demolished to widen Dorchester Street. Construction of the Ville-Marie Expressway between the Turcot Interchange and Sanguinet Street promised to level at least another 1,100 residences.[3] The new expressway was a necessary improvement to alleviate traffic congestion downtown, and a direct effect of the rapid increase in population Montreal had witnessed since the end of the Second World War. Furthermore, the pastoral residential character along the top of the escarpment from the last century had long since disappeared.

In the days before its demolition, 1938 Dorchester Boulevard was known to the community as the former home of Thérèse Casgrain, the first woman to head a political party in the province of Quebec. Born Thérèse Forget on July 10, 1896,

Canadian Centre for Architecture Sculpture Garden. Photograph by Author, August 2013.

she was raised in affluence as the daughter of Lady Blanche MacDonald and Sir Rudolphe Forget. With her marriage to lawyer and politician Pierre-François Casgrain on January 19th, 1916, she joined the ranks of Quebec's Casgrain dynasty. Yet she would not be overshadowed by the achievements of her husband's family. Casgrain was involved in political, social and labor activities her entire life. She was appointed to the Canadian Senate at the age of 74 by Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau in recognition of her lifetime of achievements. She was a staunch supporter of women's suffrage in Quebec following the First World War, and later set up the Fédération des Femmes du Québec to effectively coordinate the efforts of different women's organizations in the province. She was president of the League for Women's Rights and a member of both the National Health Council and the National Welfare Council. According to the Library and Archives Canada, "Although born into affluence, Senator Casgrain steadfastly battled against an indifferent and ultra-conservative society, not only for women's rights, but for reforms that benefited both men and women alike".[4]

Commemoration

By 1983 only 30% of the stately mansions in the north half of the Square Mile remained, with only 5% south of Sherbrooke Street.[5] Rémillard and Merrett track the demolition of the houses of the Square Mile in *Mansions of the Golden Square Mile Montreal 1850-1930*, and highlight Lord Strathcona's House and the Dandurand House as Dorchester Boulevard's significant losses. Lord Strathcona, the richest man in Canada at the turn of the century, was a politician, diplomat and financier, whose achievements included governor of the Hudson's Bay Company and president of the Bank of Montreal. He was also a key figure in the creation of the Canadian Pacific Railway. His home at the northeast corner of Fort and Dorchester Streets was demolished in 1941, after the family had moved out.

The controversial sale of the home of Ucal-Henri Dandurand attracted considerable media attention when it was purchased by Baystate Corporation in 1974 on the condition of its demolition. Despite the irony of saving the home of a prominent speculator and real estate developer responsible for considerable demoli-

tion himself, local heritage activists fought unsuccessfully to preserve the building. Five years after its destruction in 1981, a budget-class hotel was built on the site at the southeast corner of Dorchester Boulevard and Saint-Mathieu Street.

The greatest success story of the boulevard is attributed to 1923 Dorchester, former home of Thomas G. Shaughnessy, Vice President of the Canadian Pacific Railway. The house was put up for sale in 1974 when Phyllis Lambert bought the property to save it from demolition and the area from redevelopment. It was quickly declared a site of national historical and architectural significance by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada and designated an historic monument by the Ministère des Affaires Culturelles du Québec. In 1989 it reopened as part of the Canadian Centre for Architecture.

Mackay's description of the powerful men who called the Square Mile home in *The Square Mile: Merchant Princes of Montreal* is reflected in the homes that received attention as historically significant. Despite her obvious social significance, no proposals were made to save Thérèse

Casgrain's home. Her memory on Dorchester all but vanished with the destruction of her former mansion.

Instead, Casgrain is commemorated in Montreal's urban landscape by a modest park, designated August 24, 1994, on Avenue des Pins Ouest in the borough of Ville-Marie and a quiet residential avenue in Anjou. Her body is interred in the Cimetière Notre-Dame-des-Neiges, on the northwest flank of Mount Royal. Dorchester Boulevard itself all but disappeared in 1988 when it was renamed Réné-Lévesque Boulevard after Quebec's former premier. Only in Westmount between Clarke and Atwater Streets and in Montréal-Est is the name Dorchester still in use.

The demolition of the home at 1938 Dorchester Boulevard leaves a void in both the collective imagination of the Square Mile and the urban landscape of René-Lévesque Boulevard. Unlike the Dandurand House, the Van Horne House and many others, the Casgrain House fell in silence. Today, its former site to the south of Réné-Lévesque Boulevard houses the Canadian Centre for Architecture sculpture garden. The design, by artist and architect Melvin Charney includes a mirrored reproduc-

tion of the base of the façade of the Shaughnessy House. No reference is made to 1938 Dorchester Boulevard.

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[1] History and Culture Committee, Shaughnessy Village Association, "History and Culture Research Project of the Shaughnessy Village Neighbourhood Montréal, Québec". Shaughnessy Village Association: August 1999, 15.

[2] Lortie, André. *The 60s: Montreal Thinks Big*. Montréal; Vancouver: Canadian Centre for Architecture ; Douglas & McIntyre, 2004, 84.

[3] Jacques Benoit, "L'Autoroute est-ouest la pire de toutes les monstrositiés urbaines." *La Presse*, October 29, 1976.

[4] "Celebrating Women's Achievements, Themes-Activism, Marie Thérèse (Forget) Casgrain," Library and Archives Canada, accessed August 20, 2013, www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/women/030001-1339-e.html.

[5] Rémillard, François, and Brian Merrett. *Mansions of the Golden Square Mile, Montreal, 1850-1930*. Montreal, Quebec: Meridian Press, 1987, 49.

Conclusion

Is demolition always a political act? And is preservation always the work of activists? Certainly, the crowds of STOP (of which Edith Mather was sometimes one) who took to the streets in protest of the construction and expansion of the Ville-Marie Expressway self-identified as social activists, trumpeting their message to anyone who would listen. But Edith Mather, despite the discipline and determination with which she documented the changing streetscape of Montreal in the 1960s and 70s, likely would not agree. While her camera preserved Montreal for future generations, perhaps her motivations were more intimate. For Mather, the camera was a tool of empowerment; taking pictures gave her licence to walk the city's streets, and developing the photographs rewarded her efforts. Photography was an opportunity to engage with her city, both with the built environment and the greater community of people be-yond her home and immediate family.

The unprecedented amount of construction in Montreal at this time was fueled by the large-scale destruction of an already urbanized downtown core. Sites of demolition were not exceptional in the urban landscape. They were ever-present, as were the stories of those who were displaced. Demolition naturally brought people together – the families forced out of their homes on Selby Street and those who marched with them in protest; generations of Saint-Henri residents for whom the church had been the cornerstone of their community, and the backdrop to their significant life events. Even the demolition of 1938 Dorchester Boulevard which received little media attention inspired an emotional connection for Mather. She was drawn to the former home of Thérèse Casgrain, re-

turning frequently to take photos of the site before it disappeared.

Today, demolition often goes unnoticed, an inevitability in a constantly changing city. This study, however, positions demolition as a critical event in the evolution of the city, and one that foregrounds architecture in the public imagination. Public outcry surrounding sites of demolition is the collective reaction of a community under threat. What is considered worth saving or fighting for is a measure of what a particular group of people at a particular point in time deems significant. Preservation itself is a collective activity that grows out of individual acts of memory-making. In this way demolition is a stabilizing force for the heritage or history of a place. Through demolition the city questions its own permanence, and engages the public in its rebuilding.

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Appendix

McGill Certificate of Ethical Acceptability

McCord Museum Permission Letter

McGill

Research Ethics Board I
Certificate of Ethical Acceptability of Research Involving Humans

REB File #: 105-0713

Project Title: Memory, Demolition, Montreal: The Photography of Edith Mather

Principal Investigator: Tanya Southcott   **Department:** Architecture

Status: Master's Student   **Supervisor:** Prof. A. Adams

Approval Period: <u>July 29, 2013 to July 28, 2014</u>

The REB-I reviewed and approved this project by delegated review in accordance with the requirements of the McGill University Policy on the Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Human Participants and the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct For Research Involving Humans.

Deanna Collin
Ethics Review Administrator, REB I & II

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* All research involving human participants requires review on an annual basis. A Request for Renewal form should be submitted 2-3 weeks before the above expiry date.
* When a project has been completed or terminated a Study Closure form must be submitted.
* Should any modification or other unanticipated development occur before the next required review, the REB must be informed and any modification can't be initiated until approval is received.

August 28th, 2013

Tanya Southcott
3478 rue de Bordeaux
Mtl, QC
H2K 3Z3

SUBJECT: Permission letter for scholarly research and presentation purposes (13-040)

Dear Tanya Southcott,

The McCord Museum hereby authorizes you to reproduce the following images from the Edith Mather fonds in your research project, and any related presentations (notably at the UAAC conference in October, 2013 and at the McCord Museum colloquium in November 2013):

M2012.113.1.15.1	**Photograph** (high resolution TIF file) *Edith Mather mirrored three times, Notre Dame Street West, Montreal, QC, 1966*
M2012.113.1.2.12	Photograph Greene Avenue, formerly SE corner of Selby, Montreal, QC, 1969
M2012.113.1.2.62	Photograph East side of Sussex, N of Dorchester, Montreal, QC, 1966
M2012.113.1.3.34	Photograph Dorchester Blvd West, N side, W of Saint Matthew, Montreal, QC, 1971
M2012.113.1.3.58	Photograph Bryan and Geoffrey McCarthy, Strathcona Park, Dorchester Blvd, Montreal, QC, 1967
M2012.113.1.3.65	Photograph Dorchester, looking E from Seymour, Casgrain house in distance, Montreal, QC, 1969
M2012.113.1.6.55	Photograph Selby Street, showing house on Greene Ave, N of Selby, Montreal, QC, 1968
M2012.113.1.16.45	Photograph Couvent Sainte-Anne, Montreal, QC, 1969
M2012.113.1.16.50	Photograph Presbytery of Saint Henry church, Montreal, QC, 1969
M2012.113.1.16.55	Photograph Sad farewell: The Pastor looks at the wreckage of his church, Église Saint-Henri, Montreal, QC, 1969

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