

# SOCIETY PAGES



PUBLISHED QUARTERLY ▪ NUMBER 5 ▪ AUTUMN 2004

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 Weekends 10:00-16:00

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### EDITORS:

PATRICK DONOVAN  
 AND VIRGINIA ROE

## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

I am delighted to report that the summer of 2004 has been the busiest ever at the Literary and Historical Society of Quebec. Many cultural events were held often filling the library to capacity. In addition to this, daily tours allowed locals and visitors to learn about English-speaking communities in the Quebec City region. Thanks to grants from all levels of government, we were able to hire staff that worked hard on promotion, research, fundraising, and inventory.

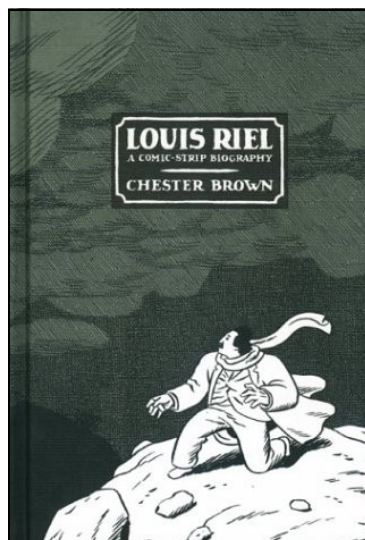
In fact, the Morrin Centre is now truly up and running. The English-speaking population of Quebec now has a unique cultural resource. Our mission and services will continue to expand in the next few years as more spaces within the building are restored and opened up to the public. We will then be able to attract more writers, poets, musicians, intellectuals and entertainment.

The following weeks will be very active at the Library and I am very proud to be counting on your support and understanding through these challenging and exciting times.

*David F. Blair*  
 President

## NOTABLE NEW ACQUISITION

English-language comics have come a long way since superheroes in tights and other pubescent power fantasies. Many are now using comics as a serious medium for non-fiction. It all began when Art Spiegelman won the Pulitzer prize for his treatment of the holocaust in the graphic novel *Maus*. Now, Chester Brown does an excellent job of providing a “comic strip biography” of Metis rebellion leader Louis Riel. The tale is told in a way that is concise without being trite. The artwork, inspired by Little Orphan Annie, is quite simple yet remarkably effective. If you gave up on comics after Archie and Superman, pick up *Louis Riel* and see how far the “ninth art” has come since those early days.



## JOHN H.C. MCGREEVY

John H.C. McGreevy was actively involved with the Literary and Historical Society of Quebec for nearly five decades. He served as president from 1961 to 1966, and afterwards as treasurer until 1997.

For most of his life, John McGreevy lived in Quebec City in an historic house on Des Grisons street. He attended Bishop's College School in Lennoxville for eight years. In 1931, he began his apprenticeship as an accountant in the firm of MacDonald Currie (later Coopers & Lybrand).

During the second world war, McGreevy joined the Royal Rifles of Canada. He was made an officer in the defense of Hong Kong. The battle took place less than three weeks after the Canadian troops were first deployed and lasted 17 days. It was a hopeless struggle with heavy Canadian casualties. There was a 30 to 1 ratio of Japanese soldiers, not to mention the unfamiliar terrain, lack of modern weapons, and no air support or artillery. Over one quarter of the Canadian troops deployed lost their lives. McGreevy survived but was marched off to a Japanese concentration camp, where he struggled in deplorable conditions for four years.

At the end of the war, McGreevy returned to Quebec and his accounting job. He became a partner of MacDonald Currie in 1949 and retired in 1975.

Retirement did not mean an end to his work life. McGreevy increased his volunteer work. He served as president, treasurer or financial advisor for several local institutions on both Protestant and Catholic-run boards: the Quebec Garrison Club, the Anglican Diocese of Quebec, the Quebec Ladies' Home Foundation, the Ladies' Protestant Home, St. Brigid's Home Foundation, Jeffrey Hale's Hospital and Foundation, the National Battlefields Commission, and the Citadel Charity Foundation.

McGreevy claimed the most interesting of his involvements to be the Lit and His, where "one felt close to everything."

"Many are the people who have listened to him rattle off statements of receipts and expenditures and I think we all agree his style is indeed unflappable; his spirit indeed committed," wrote R. Clive Meredith

In 1989, McGreevy was named Member of the Order of Canada for his volunteer commitment to local organizations: "They must have had people like him in mind when they created it; he made an outstanding contribution," says Mike McCormack.

The English-speaking community lost a pillar when John McGreevy passed away this spring at the age of 91. ■

## ROSEMARY POWER

Rosemary Power (AKA Posey Cannon) was the first and only woman to be elected president of the Literary and Historical Society of Quebec, which she considered "a jewel of a place." She served as president in the years 1977-1980 and was re-elected in 1985-1989. This took place 32 years after women were first invited to council and 54 years after they were first allowed as members. "I was the last choice," she said humbly, though most who worked with her claim she was popular, efficient, and got things done.

In her inaugural speech as president, Power said "I sincerely hope that our founding fathers do not agree with Kipling, who said that 'a woman's just a woman, but a good cigar's a smoke' and that in their separate heavens they are looking down on us with benevolence and tolerance."

During her presidency, Cannon researched and wrote one of the most thorough histories of the Society. She presented this history to the Hamilton Historical Society in 1979.

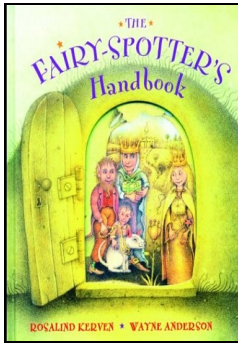
Growing up, Power spent half the year in Ottawa, as her father Charles Gavin Power was an MP. The passion for politics was transmitted from father to daughter, as Power herself became involved in many campaigns and would always discuss political issues fervently.

Power was also a pioneer of English television in Quebec. When CKMI started broadcasting in 1957, Power hosted several programs. One day, when a guest didn't turn up due to a snow storm, Power played a rubber of bridge on air with the staff. She claimed it was one of their most popular shows ever. In later years, Power continued to perform, both directing and acting in plays for the Quebec Art Company. Eleanor Carruthers, a close friend who worked with her on several productions, said "I thought she was absolutely marvellous. She was one of my favourite people."

In addition to this, Power worked as an assistant in aviation medicine for many years. She was also involved as a volunteer for the Canadian Women's Club. Power could occasionally be found on the other side of the staircase from the Society rooms doing voluntary work for the IODE (Imperial Order of the Daughters of Empire).

Posey Cannon passed away on July 19 at the age of 85. She will be remembered for her numerous contributions to the vitality of the English-speaking community in Quebec City. ■

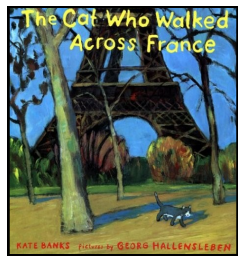
# NEW BOOKS FOR CHILDREN (BIG AND SMALL) by Caroline Lamothe, Head Librarian



## *The Fairy-Spotter's Handbook*

For fairy-spotters of all ages

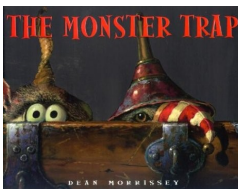
Have you ever wondered where Fairyland is? And how to get there? Do you sometimes find that your chores have been taken care of ...while you were gone? Then you *must* read the Fairy-Spotter's Handbook. It will teach you how to spot house-fairies, for one thing, and *finally* tell them you'd rather do your own chores!...Right? A richly illustrated little book for all to enjoy.



## *The Cat Who Walked Across France*

Ages 4 to 8

This is the tale of a cat whose owner, an old lady, passes away. This courageous feline travels far and wide in search of the home he's left behind. When the illustrations in a children's book are as uplifting as its story, you know you've found a gem.



## *The Monster Trap*

For ages 5 and up

When Paddy goes on an overnight visit to his grandfather's, he thinks his grandfather's house is bigger and darker and spookier than he remembered. When things start to go bump in the night, Paddy is sure he's hearing monsters. So his Pop does what any grandfather would do – he builds a monster trap..

*This is only a selection of the new children's books acquired monthly. You can find our latest selection of children's books on the red cart at the library, in the main reading room.*

## COLUM MCCANN (1965- ) by Catherine McKenna

*'He heaves the wheel out over the Liffey. It flares out over the river, then almost seems to stop. The wheel appears suspended there in the air, caught by a fabulous lightness, the colours from along the quays whirling in its spin, collecting energy from the push of the sky, reeling outwards, simultaneously serene and violent, a bird ready to burst into flight...In an instant, the wheel turns sideways and falls. The walls of the Liffey curl up to gather it down to its belly as it slices the air with the economy of a stone...Down below, on the surface, concentric circles fling themselves outward, reaching for the riverwalls in huge gestures, as if looking for something, galloping outwards, the river itself shifting its circles for another moment, moving its whipped water along, all the time gathering the wheel downwards to the riverfloor...'*

-From "Along the Riverwall" in *Fishing the Sloe-Black River*

The immensity of this spectacularly beautiful image of a simple, discarded wheel thrust into the Liffey is typical of Irish writer Colum McCann's vivid prose. His characters transcend similarly, uplifted out of their often bleak settings and complex and problematic existences by his often poetic lines. It is difficult indeed to find words beyond the praise that has already been generously doled out to McCann. He writes with a mesmerizing eloquence rarely found in combination with the preciseness and

**FISHING THE SLOE-BLACK RIVER** (1994)  
**SONGDOGS** (1995)  
**THIS SIDE OF BRIGHTNESS** (1998)  
**EVERYTHING IN THIS COUNTRY MUST** (2000)  
**THE DANCER** (2003)

AWARDS: Rooney Prize for Irish Literature, Pushcart Prize, Hennessy Award for Irish Writing, Irish Times/Aer Lingus Award for Literature, The Guardian Fiction Prize, first winner of The Grace Kelly Memorial Foundation Award and short-listed for IMPAC Dublin Literary Award.

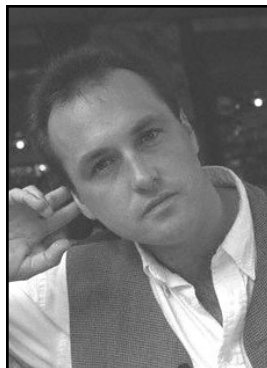
*Continued on page 4*

economy particular to his style, which is bold, uncompromising, raw, male. Compared to “powerfully influential men of feeling, like Hemingway and Kerouac...” by the New Yorker, and his work called “excellent – powerful and moving” by Roddy Doyle, McCann’s books have also been translated to global acclaim.

*Fishing the Sloe-Black River* is a collection of short stories set in Ireland and America that was touted by the Irish Press that year as “the collection the young carry in their rucksacks.” A subtle blend of humour and fatalism, sadness and beauty, these tales are about exile and displacement.

*Songdogs* was McCann’s remarkable and lauded debut as a novelist; a psychological portrait drawn by a wandering photographer’s son abandoned by his mother. “*Once he got caught trying to take pictures of the church housekeeper...My father had hidden in a clump of bushes but didn’t have time to take a single picture. The priest, a former hurley player, discovered him and knocked him to the ground with a single roundhouse, opened the back of the camera, held the glass plates to the light as if reading the holy scrolls. He gave a thunderous sermon next week, passages from the Old Testament about graven images, feverish words flying around the pens. My old man slouched at the back of the church with his hat on...*”

*Everything in this Country Must* gained McCann a starred review in Kirkus, which described his writing as follows: “. . .masterful. These emotionally charged, beautifully controlled tales can only enhance McCann’s already considerable reputation. . .” In the title story set in Northern Ireland, a father tries in vain to save the family draft horse from drowning with the help of his teenage daughter. She must choose between her love of her father and gratitude towards the soldiers who arrive on the scene, plowing through the hedge in their army truck. Katie hears in her father’s voice “*more sadness than when he was over Mammy’s and Fiachra’s coffins, more sadness than the day after they were hit by the army truck...more sadness than the day when the judge said ‘nobody is guilty, it’s just a tragedy’, more sadness than even that day and all the other days that follow...*” Emotions stepped in the Troubles and their impact on family relationships are the essence of this novella and two short stories.



Colum McCann

In *This Side of Brightness* McCann takes us to New York, up to the skyscrapers and down into the railway tunnels beneath the city. Historical fact and fiction combine in this saga that spans four generations. Beginning at the turn of the century, the sandhogs—Walker, two Irishmen and one Italian—the men who built these tunnels to feed their families—toiled in calm acceptance of the horrific dangers they faced daily. Walker “*knows that at any moment an avalanche of muck and water could sweep the men backward. They could drown with the East River going down their throats, strange fish and odd rocks in their bellies.*” And so they did: “*We started dying before the snow and, like the snow, we continued to fall. It was surprising there were so many of us left to die.*” Racism and homelessness contrast will to survive and innate goodness; the fellowship and the “democracy” of the underworld know no racial barriers. Years later, Treefrog, a skyscraper builder, descends into madness and slides into a homeless existence under what is now the subway system. Yet truth and the possibility for redemption shine through the

seemingly desperate lives of the marginal characters. The darkness, the subconscious, is perhaps that of the city itself. McCann spent “the best part of a year...three or four times a week...hanging out” with the people of New York’s subterranean world. A profoundly haunting and impeccably plotted and detailed work, this novel was greeted by the New York Times as “a triumph.”

McCann’s latest, *The Dancer*, is a fictionalized account of Nureyev’s life. It is a very humanizing portrait of the man and his entourage hosting several narrators: everyone from his shoemaker to his teachers, from Margot Fonteyn to his many lovers. McCann depicts his development as a dancer and unfolds his life and personality in intimate terms beneath the layers of his eccentricities and caprices. McCann also explores how deeply Nureyev’s decisions and actions affected those he loved and who loved him. Graciously devoid of sentimentality of any kind, the novel is rich in physical detail, describing the body in ways that reflect dancers’ innate obsession with limb, sinew and muscle. McCann writes from gifted intuition and insight; Judith Mackrell of the Guardian commented, “Like its subject, it spins with virtuoso, charismatic brilliance around a core of wilful mystery.”

Colum McCann was born and raised a Dubliner, has traveled extensively, biking around the country for two years, working at an eclectic variety of professions such as taxi driver, bike mechanic, motel worker, ranch hand, bartender, ditch digger, house painter, wilderness guide and journalist. He currently lives with his wife and daughter in New York City. ■

# UPDATE FROM THE MORRIN CENTRE PROJECT TEAM

Visibility within the community continues to grow as we hold major events and conduct tours. Grant applications for various projects are still being sent out and continue to bring positive results.

In addition to the head librarian and 3 part-time librarians, 9 full-time staff worked in the Society this summer to bring the Morrin Centre project forward. This staff is financed through grants from the provincial and federal governments. We continue to seek more grants to maintain staff for the duration of this project. In the month of August alone, two grant applications yielded positive results for the fall.

Two students were hired this summer to work on the inventory and packing of artifacts. Many interesting documents were found lying around in the Wood's Room, namely:

- an original watercolour blueprint of F. Wurtele's Notre-Dame Market, located in front of Notre-Dame Cathedral from 1815 to 1844.
- Military memorabilia, including a saber from 1789, a canon from the 18th century, and a mauser rifle used by Afrikaners during the Boer War.
- A vellum diploma from the Société Littéraire de Quebec signed by Philippe Aubert-de-Gaspé (predecessor to the LHSQ, see spring edition).

The two students who worked on the inventory were **David Pepin** and **André Chiquette**. David recently completed a Masters degree in museology at UQAM following studies in anthropology at Laval. He has done research on Amerindians and is interested in the interpretation of cultural groups. André completed studies in multimedia but later discovered that his true passion was history. He is currently working towards a B.A. in this subject at Laval University.

In addition to the two tour guides profiled in the spring edition (**Gaelle Troude**, **Kimberly Thomson**), a third guide was hired thanks to the Young Canada Works program. **Shalaka Shah** had volunteered for the LHSQ on inventory, cataloguing and children's programming in the past. Originally from India, she has lived in Quebec City since age 4 and is completing her high school studies this year. All the guides worked on side-projects, including designing our new brochure and its distribution, a Society scrap book, kids' programs, and cataloguing.

## The Future

Autumn will be a period of major upheaval for the Society. After 136 years in the same charming rooms, the library will be emptied as interior restoration of the building begins. The selection of books accessible in our temporary library is completed. The rest of the collection, including our archives and artefacts, will be shipped off to appropriate storage facilities. Our James Wolfe sculpture will be welcomed back to the Plains of Abraham by The National Battlefields Commission. The site used for library services during the restoration will be announced shortly.

Regular monthly acquisitions and events will continue at the temporary library. From this location, we will keep members involved and posted on changes in the main building. The restoration process could also be explained to you through a series of site visits.

We have presently raised over \$1.5 million of the \$3.5 million estimated for this project. This gives us enough funding to bring the building up to fire and accessibility codes and ensure the modernization of major mechanical systems. Priority will be given to the restoration of the reading room and of the College Hall. More funds need to be raised in order to complete the restoration of all the rooms in the building. The library will lose none of its Victorian charm in the process. If anything, the atmosphere will be enhanced. The wooden flooring will be exposed and efficient lighting that is more in character with the library's atmosphere will be installed.

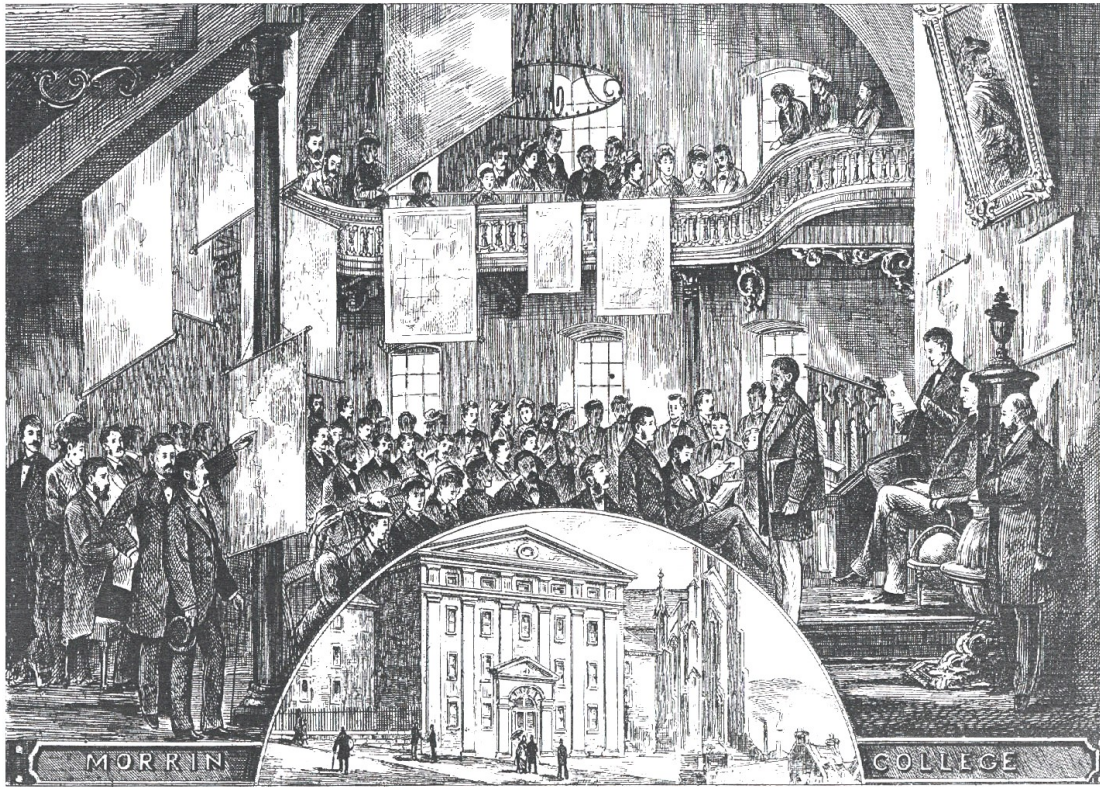
A grant of \$35,000 was also received from the federal government in August to computerize the library's catalogue. The typing of individual cards and tracking of volumes under the current system consumes an inordinate amount of time for librarians. It also results in many lost books. Computerization will allow librarians to use this time for more productive ends. Eventually, members will be able to check if books are available from home. We are sensitive to the historic atmosphere of the library, and any computer introduced in the reading room is likely to be a small laptop hidden in one of the drawers.

We need your help over the next few months to make this project a resounding success. Please contact us if you can offer financial support, old furniture, time, stories about the building, or expertise. ■



# MORRIN COLLEGE HALL: PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE

by Patrick Donovan



The illustration above shows Morrin College Hall during the 1879 convention of the Association of Protestant Teachers. This spacious room, which now slumbers under a film of dust and peeling paint, is located in the south wing of the building. It is similar in size and layout to the library reading room.

The College Hall was quite lively during the 19th century. Friday evenings were reserved for weekly meetings of the Morrin College debating society. These were often accompanied by performances from the Glee Club. The Saint-Andrew's Society and LHSQ also used the Hall for their meetings. Many scholarly papers were read that were later published in the Society's *Transactions*; 3/4 of the people present at the reading had to approve for a paper to see print.

The room hosted larger public gatherings as well. In 1875, the centennial of General Montgomery's attack was celebrated in the room: "... the flags of many nations and many colours were drooping (from the galleries). The raised dais ... was flanked on either side with the blue and silver banners of St. Andrew's Society. Bunting and fresh spruce foliage gave an air of freshness to all the adornable parts of the room. Immediately opposite the lectern, which was illuminated with wax candles, placed in last century's candlesticks, and attached to the gallery

railings, was a fine collection of Lochaber axes, clustered around a genuine wooden Gaelic shield studded with polished knobs of glittering brass."

After the College folded at the turn of the century, the room's use decreased. Lectures were still held, though less frequently. The IODE (Imperial Order of the Daughters of Empire) rented it out and held meetings there.

Tables were laid out to pack clothes for air raid victims of the United Kingdom during World War II. Other groups, such as the Saint-Andrew's Society, the SPCA, St. John's Ambulance, and the Quebec Art Theatre used the room occasionally. Until 1959, the adjoining room contained a few curio cabinets with the remnants of the Society's museum: WWI memorabilia donated by the Price family, a painting of the last Huron chief, stocks from the gaol, etc. Over the last two decades, the room has remained practically unused.

The upcoming restoration of the Morrin College building will allow for the reopening of the College Hall in all its original splendour. The hall will become a central and active room for the Morrin Centre project as it will host many cultural, artistic and community events. Moreover, the rental of this special venue for corporate and private events will provide extra revenues to support the mission and services of the Literary and Historical Society.

*If you have additional photos or stories pertaining to these rooms in the 20th century, Patrick Donovan will be happy to record them. These will later be reflected in our programming. Stories from former members of the IODE would be particularly appreciated. Call 694-9147.*

# INDUSTRY VS. AGRICULTURE

A DEBATE HELD BY THE MORRIN COLLEGE DEBATING SOCIETY IN THE COLLEGE HALL

From the *Morrin College Review* Vol.1, No.4 March 1883

The subject debated Friday evening was: "Which should be encouraged by government, the manufacturer of the agriculturist?"

Mr. Mackie<sup>1</sup>, the leader on the affirmative, . . . upheld his side by referring to the different ways of supporting the manufacturer—by subsidies, by a tariff preventing manufactured articles coming in from other countries, and by exemptions from taxation. Referring to the policy of England, when aiding manufacture, shewed that the country was more prosperous at that time than when aiding agriculture. Viewing the northern part of the United States he pointed out its improvements as derived from manufacture, while the southern part, largely given to the cultivation of cotton, was lagging behind with few marks of improvements. He shewed the necessity of encouraging manufacture,—to make implements to lessen the labour of the farmers—to build up the country—to protect the machinist and all the different branches of manufacture until they have obtained sufficient strength and resources of their own. . .

Mr. McConehy<sup>2</sup>, leader of the negative, was next called upon. . . He maintained that the agriculturist should be the more encouraged, for the produce of his labours were always in demand and could never be over supplied. The agriculturist is the producer of the raw material for the manufacturer and has done more in opening up the country and for its prosperity than the manufacturer. It is absolutely necessary to have the soil tilled for from it man derives his maintenance and as such should be the chief object of care. Discussing the subject from the physical condition of the people, industry has something to do with the health of its people, hence the sanitary laws. The agriculturalist needs no such laws. From a moral view, he shewed the high standard of morality in the country as compared with the places where manufacture is carried on. . .

Mr. J. Ross<sup>3</sup>, in support of the affirmative, shewed that agriculture was largely carried on in every country and would necessarily continue and increase with the population, but manufacture was not carried on so excessively and should therefore receive encouragement from government. The encouragement of manufacture by the United States government made the republic what

it is. Reviewing the condition of Ireland, which has agriculture for its chief industry, and England which is chiefly a manufacturing country, he pointed out the depression of the one and the prosperity of the other as coming from their industries.

Mr. E. Joly<sup>4</sup>, when called upon was loudly applauded. . . in a few well cut arguments he placed his side of the question before them in a pleasing manner, shewing that "we are dependant upon the agriculturist for what he produces from the broad bosom of mother earth." Comparing the effect of a failure of manufacture with that of agriculture clearly shewed that man would return to his primitive occupation of tilling the soil, but if agriculture failed the result would be famine and utter ruin.

Mr. H. Campbell<sup>5</sup>, the last speaker on the affirmative, thought that little remained for him to say, as the previous speakers had dwelt at length on the important points. He was willing to support that which benefits the public in general. Treating the subject in a social point, civil society could not exist without manufacture. From manufacture, science and arts are produced. After replying to a few of the opposite arguments, he left the subject to the further consideration of the audience.

Mr. Holt ended the list of speakers for the negative. In a short and plausible speech he showed that the agriculturalist who. . . Furnished the manufacturer with flax, cotton, and raised the sheep, from which he gets his wool was the real support of the manufacturer. . . He treated the audience to a few choice selections from Adam Smith, appropriate to the occasion and strongly in favour of encouraging agriculture. . .

The votes cast were 27 for the affirmative (manufacture) and 30 for the negative (agriculture). ■

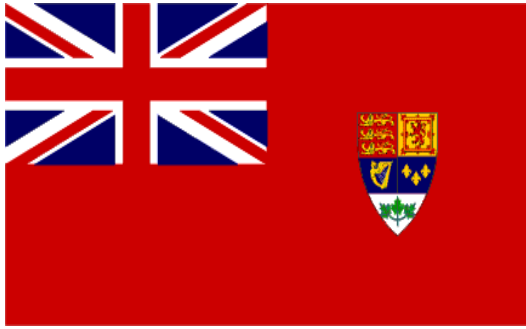
1. John Mackie, graduated with a B.A. from Morrin College in 1883.

2. Archibald McConehy graduated from the faculty of divinity at Morrin College and served in the Presbyterian Church

3. John T. Ross, graduated with a B.A. from Morrin College in 1883. He founded the Alma Mater Society and his family contributed sums in excess of Joseph Morrin's original amount. Son of millionaire senator James Gibb Ross—shipbuilder, lumber merchant..

4. Son of Sir Henri-Gustave Joly, seigneur of Lotbiniere. H.G. Joly was president of Quebec's council of agriculture from the moment of its foundation. Although born in France, attached to his French heritage, and opposed to confederation, he was

## THE LHSQ AND FLAG DEBATES OF THE 1920S by Patrick Donovan



1. THE RED ENSIGN

Canada did not have its own flag in the 1920s, at least not officially. The official flag remained the British Union Jack. The country did have an unofficial flag, however: the red ensign (**FIG 1**). Despite its unofficial status, this flag flew from the masts of Canadian buildings abroad whereas the Union Jack was still used on federal buildings in Canada until 1945.

Some groups in the country were militating for a distinct Canadian flag and the LHSQ's opinion was solicited in 1926. The Literary and Historical Society was caught between a strange dynamic of progress and conservatism during the 1920s. The first Irish presidents were elected in this decade: Rev. O'Leary and Dominick O'Meara, . The Society also made inroads with francophones by participating in St. Jean Baptiste day celebrations. Despite this opening up, a conservative streak remained. A censorship committee was formed for "the immediate destruction, at their discretion, of any books of an undesirable nature." The Society also remained a solid bastion of imperial pride. Loyalty to the Queen was reaffirmed periodically at council meetings.



2. THE LHSQ'S PROPOSITION FOR A NATIONAL FLAG IN 1926

would however approve the expression of Canadian autonomy, within the one United Empire, by the placing of a golden maple leaf at the point of the junction of the crosses in the Union Jack (**FIG 2**)."

How would the LHSQ council of the 1920s feel about today's flags? In a sense they would be happy, as the Union Jack is still an official flag in Canada to this day. It is required to be flown at Canadian federal government facilities on Victoria Day, the anniversary of the Statute of Westminster (Dec 11), and Commonwealth day. The maple leaf takes precedence in all cases except during a royal visit.

The Canadian flag as we know it today was adopted as a national symbol in 1964, sixteen years after Quebec got its own national flag, the *fleurdelisé*. ■

NEXT ISSUE: *The Constant Nymph* and other banned Books at the LHSQ

## "QUI PREND MARI, PREND PAYS" by Kirsten Harris

Quebeckers have an expression (that practically everyone tells me when they learn why I came to Québec) that goes something like this: "You take the lover, you take the country." A simple and romantic phrase on the surface, but quite loaded. I mean, take a whole country!? What can that truly mean? But, to some degree, that is what I did when I decided to leave New York City and start another life with my Québécois sweetie in *la Ville de Québec*.

It was an incredible leap of faith, not necessarily an insane gesture made while I was in a love-struck coma. I was looking forward to the change. I was sad to leave what I had come to love about New York (friends, a job I adored, the energy, the pace, the multiculturalism), but I was hopeful and eager to come to a new place. There was something about starting over with a clean slate with my new love that had an intriguing flavor to it.



I couldn't fully know what I was in for. I was somewhat ignorant of my newly chosen digs. I hadn't thoroughly checked it out. While my husband and I were dating, I visited Québec a lot. We managed to see each other on average of one weekend per month; I would come here or he would go to Brooklyn. During those visits, we would spend a good percentage of our time in bed, (obviously, we had a lot of catching up to do) just being cozy, discussing one another's dramas and activities. When we went out, we naturally gravitated to the best things that each location had to offer. Back then, the place was incidental compared to the person who was there.

And so, when I arrived, I had a slightly skewed image of my new country. That's probably the case with every immigrant. How do you truly know a place until you make your life there?

### **Adaptation #1: The Language**

I obviously knew that people in Québec spoke French but since I was always in bilingual situations when I visited, I falsely assumed that the city was mostly bilingual; people spoke French to be cute! Not so. One of the first times I realized I wasn't "in Kansas anymore" was when I made a simple trip to the grocery store. It's not so much that the grocery stores in Québec are from another world—there are no Twinkies, but they have Jos Louis stuff—it was my interaction with the cashier that let me know I'd better figure out what people were saying and not expect an English translation at every turn.

Armed with my debit card and anticipating a casual, dismissive grunt from the cashier as recognition of my presence (typical of such interactions in NYC), when I heard "Montant juste?" I didn't know what to say. Always positive and polite, I responded with a "Oui, Merci." Fortunately for me, it was the right answer. But I realized I had to do a bit better than that if I wanted to really be involved with my new home.

### **Adaptation #2: Culture Shock**

Once I began to understand what people were saying and could make credible responses. I ventured out into the community to make a place for myself. There was a bit of culture shock: from the various kinds of poutine to realizing how minuscule the minority community was.

As for the poutine, after trying some, I just couldn't go there on a regular basis. I'm all for fried foods and sauce, it's just the cheese curds that throw me. But thankfully,

with the multitude of other culinary delights, I was, and am, in no way starving!

Being an African American, and coming from a multicultural environment, looking for minorities and seeing how I could fit into this seemingly unicultural society was a challenge. From advertisements with no faces that looked like mine to finding a salon to get my hair done, Québec was not inviting to me on the surface. I realize that living almost anywhere after New York and moving to a smaller city could evoke those feelings of cultural isolation.

When I found myself the only "person of color" in some setting or another, people seemed curious rather than malicious. There was the general assumption that I wasn't several generations removed from my African ancestors. I can't recount how many times I heard that Québec winters must be awful for me since there's no snow in my country. (By the way, in my opinion, Québec winters can be awful for the non-native, but not because one comes from somewhere near the equator!) At finding out that I wasn't from Haiti or any number of African countries, I couldn't help but see a hint of disappointment in their faces. After all, even I can admit that there's nothing truly exotic about coming from the U.S.

So, navigating myself through this new world and feeling even more like an outsider because I couldn't blend into the masses (like one can in a city of 8 million), was my existence. My husband and I joked that I couldn't rob a bank because as soon as a description came in of a tall, black woman, the police would be at my door in less than an hour. So how do you manage in a place where you'd be fingered immediately after a bank heist? Probably, scratching "Bank Robbery" off the To-Do list would be a start.

Blending in is not an option. And it's good that it's not. It's been suggested that I tell people I'm an African Princess attempting to live as the common folk. But, for sure, living in a new country allows me to reinvent myself; to start afresh. The cultural make-up of Québec may allow me to shine and be in the forefront in a way that has never happened before.

To truly follow the expression and "take the country," I think acceptance is the primary step. First realize that it's different from where you come from. I've tried to relish the journey, to take the trials and mistakes as they come. It's an ongoing process and not at all automatic, but if you tell yourself that you are here to stay, you can make it your home and find what's best from it. ■

# LIBRARY BULLETIN BOARD

## Past Presidents

A call to all past (or current) presidents of the LHSQ, their families, friends or admirers to supply us with a black and white portrait to grace the gallery of presidents in the entrance hall.

### Missing portraits:

P-J-O Chauveau,  
P.B. Casgrain,  
H. Neilson,  
Justice McCorkill,  
E. Chambers,  
Rev. O'Leary,  
Col. Count de Bury.

E.C. Woodley,  
W. Godfrey Brown  
George A. Clare  
John McGreevy  
J.H. Bieler  
Rosemary Cannon  
Cameron McMillan  
Tomas Feininger  
David F. Blair

We are actively looking for books on **Quebec City history**. If you have anything to donate, please fill out our new book donation form at the front desk.

## Family History Workshop

The **Société de généalogie de Québec**, normally closed on Fridays, is opening up for members of the Literary and Historical Society on October 15th. Their workshop on family history and genealogy will take place from 13:30 and last throughout the afternoon. English-speaking volunteers will be available on site to introduce you to their resources and help you start researching your own family history. The cost to participants is \$5. Reservations are essential.

**Thanks** to all who volunteered time and energy to making our events and activities a success. This summer we hosted more events than ever before in Lit & His history!

## The Writers' \* Circle

is an active group of writers, poets and journalists who meet once per month to share and receive feedback, exchange writing suggestions and organize activities.

They plan to eventually publish an anthology of local writing. The Writers' Circle has met three times so far. Call us for more info.

## Car-Free Day!

The Lit & Hist is located in the centre of the historic district of Quebec. Pleasing to the eye, with its old buildings and narrow streets, Old Quebec can be a tough place to find parking. Very few restaurants, boutiques or visitor centers in the area have parking, so you probably won't be surprised to find out that we don't either. Please respect our neighbors by parking in one of the many public parking facilities nearby, or in front of a parking meter. Be advised that staff are unlikely to show much sympathy towards parking woes; most of us cycle, walk or bus to work, many from quite far away with strong convictions against the impact of automobiles on the environment, heritage, pedestrian safety and community life. Many buses pass in front of the Morrin Centre. Cleaner for the environment and stress-free, buses are very popular in Quebec City this fall as we move towards car-free day on September 22. Metrobus lines (800, 801) run every 5-10 minutes, cost less than parking, and allow you to read on the way home instead of cursing at traffic. Bus 11 runs half-hourly on all main arteries in Sillery.

**WE NEED VOLUNTEERS** Please get in touch with Virginia at 694-9147

# CALENDAR OF EVENTS AT MORRIN CENTRE

44, chaussée des Écossais, Québec City, G1R 4H3

☎694-9147

✉info.morrimcentre@bellnet.ca

Wednesday September 22

**DEATH AND BURIAL IN 19TH CENTURY QUEBEC**

A lecture by McGill University's Dr. Brian Young, author of *Respectable Burial*.

*Time* : 19:00

*Price* : \$2 (members), \$5 (non-members)

Tuesday September 28

**THE LAST WORD II: ABORIGINAL HERITAGE AND CULTURE**

Discussion group with David Pepin, esq., specialist on Amerindian heritage and anthropology.

*Time* : 17:00 - 19:00

*Price* : \$10 (members), \$15 (non-members)

Saturday September 25

**JOURNÉES DE LA CULTURE:**

**THE GHOSTS OF QUEBEC PAST**

A rare chance to visit the entire Morrin Centre building and its cells and classrooms with the help of ghosts of Quebec's past. In partnership with Quebec Art Company, Archives nationales du Québec and Société de généalogie de Québec.

*Time* : All day *Price* : **FREE**

Saturday October 2

**FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS**

Metaphysical poet John Donne (1572-1631)

demythified by Dr. Anthony Raspa, a world authority on Donne who is renowned for colourful and controversial lectures.

*Time* : 14:00

*Price* : \$2 (members), \$5 (non-members)

Tuesday October 26

**THE LAST WORD III**

*Subject to be determined.*

*Time* : 17:00 - 19:00

*Price* : \$10 (members), \$15 (non-members)

Tuesday November 9

**THE LAST WORD IV: SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENTAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE CASE OF BEAUMONT\***

Discussion group with Harvey Mead, president and founder of the Union Québécoise de Conservation de la Nature and retired philosophy professor.

*Time* : 17:00 - 19:00

*Price* : \$10 (members), \$15 (non-members)

Sunday October 31

**EDGAR ALLAN POE:**

**TALES OF MYSTERY AND IMAGINATION**

A tribute to nineteenth-century poet Edgar Allan Poe with short stories and poetry by the author, biography of Poe's life and a discussion about his controversial death.

*Time* : 20:00 *Price* : To be announced.

Wednesday November 10

**BLACK GRACE:**

**THE LATEST POETRY OF RAE MARIE TAYLOR**

The launching of vibrant Montreal poet Rae Marie Taylor's latest, *Black Grace*, with musical compositions and arrangement by David Gossage.

*Time* : 20:00 *Price* : To be announced.

Saturday September 18

**HÔPITAL GÉNÉRAL**

Visit to the museum of the Hôpital Général.

*Time* : 14:00, foot of Langelier Boulevard

*Price* : **FREE**

Monday October 18

**KRIEGHOFF HOUSE**

Conference on the restoration of the

Krieghoff House by Esther Greaves.

*Time* : 7:30PM at McMahon Hall, St. Patrick's

Church, 1145 de Salaberry, Free parking

*Price* : **FREE**

**g**

*Call Marianna O'Gallagher for info: 651-5918*

Saturday November 27

**PIERRE DUGUA DE MONS:**

**THE FORGOTTEN EXPLORER**

Presentation by Jean-Yves Grenon, author of *Pierre Dugua de Mons: Founder of Acadie (1604-5)*, *Co-Founder of Québec (1608)*.

*Time* : 15:00

*Price* : \$2 (members), \$5 (non-members).

Saturday December 4

**CHRISTMAS PARTY & BAKE SALE**

Our annual bake sale is here! After the bake sale the Lit & Hist invites you to stay and enjoy an evening of music, dancing and egg nog!

*Time* : Bake sale 12:00, Party 17:00

*Price* : **FREE**

*\*To be confirmed*

## Irish Heritage Events

Saturday September 18

**HÔPITAL GÉNÉRAL**

Visit to the museum of the Hôpital Général.

*Time* : 14:00, foot of Langelier Boulevard

*Price* : **FREE**

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# IMPRINTS III

## Discovering the Historic Face of English Quebec



Many of you have met Ray and Diana Ballie on their travels throughout Quebec in quest of stories and photographs of heritage and significant buildings.

For those who have not met them, they are the authors of three books on English landmarks in the Province, the first two books

recently published, the third book about the Quebec City area, the North Shore and the Gaspé to be launched **September 23 at Carter Hall** (Holy Trinity Cathedral), downtown Quebec.

For those interested in the subject or perhaps thinking of a Christmas gift: books, authors, wine, cheese and publishers and will be at Carter Hall from 5.30 to 8 pm. An early bird reply at [pp1dmp@aol.com](mailto:pp1dmp@aol.com) will entitle the early bird to a publishers' prize from Michael and David Price.

The SOCIETY PAGES is published quarterly for members of the Literary and Historical Society of Quebec, 44 chaussée des Écos-sais, Québec, QC, G1R 4H3; (418) 694-9147; for library enqui-ries, send an e-mail to [lhsg.library@qc.ca](mailto:lhsg.library@qc.ca); all enquiries directed to [info.morncentre@bellnet.ca](mailto:info.morncentre@bellnet.ca)

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# SOCIETY PAGES

THE LITERARY AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF QUEBEC

44 chaussée des Écos-sais ; Québec, QC ; G1R 4H3

**STOP PRESS:** The **Book Committee** is looking for new members. The committee meets in the library on the second Thursday of each month. Interested? Why not become a guest member of the committee for three months? Please leave your name at the desk.....**Boxing Bonanza** number 2 is coming up on the weekend of October 16-17. Tea + coffee served to all volunteers who help us with the move.