

# Doncaster Ballyhoo

FOR LAURENTIAN WATERFRONT AND RECREATIONAL PROPERTY

Number 30

Autumn 2002

## 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Issue

Residents of Ivry are seeing red as a result of a new communications tower that has been erected near Highway 117 and is casting its light over neighbouring properties and Lake Manitou. A citizens group is very upset and is asking some pretty direct questions, pointing out that there are now seven such towers between Ste. Agathe and St. Jovite. They feel that a moratorium should be put on the placement of any further towers and want to review the planning that has gone into the current ones. They are willing to work on all fronts to correct the situation but need your help. You can express your concern by emailing the mayor, Pierre Circé, Claire Leduc, city councillor, or Denis Savard, DG, at [direction.generale@villesainteagathe.com](mailto:direction.generale@villesainteagathe.com). Will Dubitsky of Ivry is the contact person at the citizens group and he can be reached at [dubitsky.will@ic.gc.ca](mailto:dubitsky.will@ic.gc.ca) or by getting in touch with us. The night sky is a treasure that we all possess like clean water and clean air. If we let it go, we will slowly lose our whole reason for being here. In the meantime, keep an eye on Main Street and the other local papers.

*Congratulations to the Heritage Committee for the publication of the monograph on the history of Ste. Agathe written by Serge Laurin. It is called Sainte-Agathe-des-Monts, un siècle et demi d'histoire and is available at Librairie Ste-Marie in Ste. Agathe. It covers the period from 1849 to the present and has numerous illustrations and sidebars, some of which relate to the minority communities. It is a good reference book for the serious student of the parish and a fitting send-off for committee president René Girard who is leaving us to return to his roots in the Eastern Townships. He will take up the position of head of urban planning for the City of Sherbrooke. René helped pilot many projects through the committee and the municipality and has played a leading role in the redevelopment of Parc Lagny. We wish René well in his new career.*

Emily Mussells, a Ste. Agathe artist who has some of her work on display in our office, will be at the vernissage of a show of her etchings, monotypes, watercolours, collagraphs and woodcuts at the Commensal du Musée, 3715 Queen Mary Road in Montreal on December 16<sup>th</sup> from 4:00 pm to 8:00 pm. The show will continue until February 1, 2003 daily between 11:00 am and 10:00 pm.

*I was very surprised and pleased to have been honoured by the Chamber of Commerce as one of its 'Personalities' of the year. It is good to know that the greater Ste. Agathe community sees and appreciates the need for heritage preservation and the building of bridges among our various communities. Volunteers often feel like they are working in a vacuum, and recognition helps build a good civic morale.*

Maurice Morin, a consultant in the telecommunications field, has informed us that a 250-kilometre fibre optic network is being built deploying high-speed capabilities from Saint Sauveur to La Minerve. Municipal governments will share the cost of the new network, with the Commission scolaire des Laurentides acting as lead partner. Ste. Agathe Academy is located at the hub and will benefit, but some communities, such as Morin Heights, Arundel and Lachute may be left out. There is a serious time concern relating to the possibility of getting these out-lying schools and communities connected. Keep an eye on Main Street for more details.

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# J. C. Wilson

## Five Generations on the North River

The North River's name can be traced back to the time of the granting of the first seigniority of Argenteuil in 1682. The focal area was at its mouth where it joins the Ottawa River and early maps show the West River flowing into the North River just downstream of where, as G.R. Rigby notes in his 1964 history of Lachute, the first surveyors marked La Chute (*The Falls*).

It is not surprising that the mouth of the river was settled well before the source, but each end of the river system held attractions for James Crockett Wilson and his descendants.

James Crockett Wilson was born in Ireland in 1841, the son of Samuel Wilson and Elizabeth Crockett. They arrived in Montreal in the spring of 1842, five years before the beginning of the Irish potato famine. While his father had no marketable skills upon their arrival, he taught himself the rudiments of carpentry and mechanics and eventually landed employment with the Grand Trunk Railway making their cars. He is credited with the design of the first railway snowplough.

J.C. Wilson initially followed his father in mechanics until an accident left him injured. Thanks to the kindness of a friend, he enrolled in a Model School, then the McGill Normal School, a teacher's college. J.C. Wilson met his future wife, Jeannie Kilgour, while working in Beauharnois.

After holding down an assortment of jobs in Toronto and New York, he found himself a position with a paper manufacturer back in Montreal. In 1870, he set up his own paper bag factory and is credited with making the first flat-bottomed paper bag as well as being the first to supply paper bags to grocery stores in Canada. He also published some of Canada's earliest postcards, known to collectors today as Pioneer, or Patriotic, Cards. In 1880, he built a large paper mill in Lachute.

Whereas today we talk about the rag content of quality paper, we generally accept that paper comes from trees. When James Crockett Wilson founded J.C. Wilson Paper, this was not the case. Paper came from rags, flax and linen. Cardboard came from trees. Charles Fenerty of New Brunswick appears to have been the first to develop the process of making

paper from wood fibre but was not the one to patent it. J.C. Wilson felt the idea had market potential and in 1893 he purchased the Delisle pulp mill, which had been set up in 1880 in St. Jerome and subsequently moved to Saunderson Falls in Cordon, just to the north. The Delisles' mill turned wood pulp into cardboard boxes. Delisle and Wilson were in no way competitors nor was one the supplier to the other.

Soon after the purchase, Saunderson Falls became Wilson Falls or *Les Chutes Wilson*. Wilson Falls is now a park just to the east of the Autoroute where it turns from three lanes into two.

James Crockett Wilson died in 1899. In addition to his role as founder of J.C. Wilson Paper, he served two terms as Alderman for the St. Lawrence Ward of Montreal, was elected MP for Argenteuil in 1887, served as president of the Fish and Game Protection Club of Quebec, president of the Irish-Protestant Benevolent Society, vice-president and life-time governor of the Montreal Dispensary, was a governor of the Protestant Insane Asylums of Quebec and served on the board of the Protestant School Commissioners of Montreal. After his death, Wilson Paper continued under the skilful guidance of his son William Walter C. Wilson, with the help of two more of his sons, Frank Howard and Edwin Howlett Wilson. E.H. Wilson guided the mill while his brothers ran the business from Montreal. It became one of the largest paper companies in Canada having mills in Lachute and St. Jerome together with a factory and warehouse at Montreal, and warehouses at Winnipeg and Vancouver. Although it became a publicly traded company, it stayed in the control of the family into the 1950's. The Price Brothers, today Abitibi Paper, eventually absorbed it.

Frank Howard Wilson, the third president of J.C. Wilson Paper, explored the source of the North River and found himself at Lac Brûlé. He also found his wife, E. Graham Stewart, daughter of Eliza Shearer and William Stewart. F.H. Wilson engaged the Maxwell brothers to build a country home for him, but it burned down in 1928. Undaunted, he engaged David Robertson Brown, a Montreal architect, who designed a striking cedar shake home, and this historic house is still in the family today.

# What's It Worth?

## Mount Sinai Hospital



Photo courtesy of Sandra Cohen-Rose

### TO BE DEMOLISHED

**T**he Mount Sinai Hospital building sits on a 25-acre parcel of land and was in continuous operation from 1930 to 1998. It is a stunning example of Art Deco, or Northern Deco, architecture and was designed by Charles Davis Goodman and David Jerome Spence. Goodman was a McGill graduate while Spence, somewhat his senior, was from Louisville, Kentucky and graduated from MIT. The building is described in Sandra Cohen-Rose's book **Northern Deco, Architecture in Montreal:** *Although Art Deco was essentially an urban architectural style, Mount Sinai Sanatorium...is a rare example of its use in a country setting. Except for the addition of a grey stone entrance with arched windows, the front façade of the sanatorium has changed little since the days when tuberculosis-afflicted Montrealers flocked to the country to breathe its fresh air...With its buff stucco, set off by dark brown metal spandrels and trim, and turquoise-glazed tiles, Mount Sinai Sanatorium is reminiscent of Southern Deco and would seem more appropriate surrounded by swaying palm trees rather than gigantic pines. Judaic symbols are found everywhere. A central copper dome houses a chapel with a large stained-glass window. On the wall at either side of the chapel window are gold mosaic menorahs (candelabra), with candles of white mosaic, set against a background of blue mosaic. Stylized menorahs are also used below the raised portions of the crenulated roofline. Stone bas-relief Stars of David decorate the main entrance, which, like that of the 1932 Montreal Botanical Gardens, steps down to a path leading to an octagonal-shaped pond.*

The institution itself moved to Montreal 10 years ago, but the building was used by the Centre hospitalier Laurentien until it was mothballed in 1999. This building replaced the original sanatorium that opened its doors around 1909 at the same location and may have been the first Jewish community-funded health treatment centre in Canada.

For several years a group of people have been working together to find a new use for the building, but time is running out. One of the major blocking points has been that the site is contaminated and decontamination could be very costly. Once the Centre hospitalier Laurentien becomes the legal owner at the start of the year, they intend to call for tenders for demolition.

If you have any ideas that could help us save this important element of our community heritage please contact us at the office of Doncaster Realities Inc. by phone, fax or email. Time is of the essence.

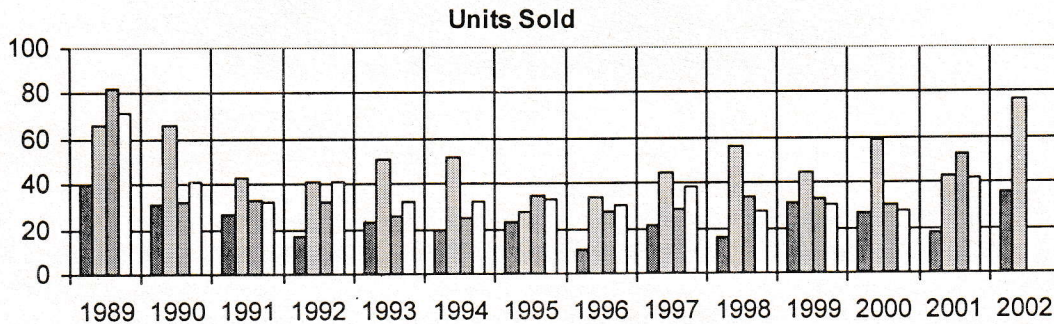
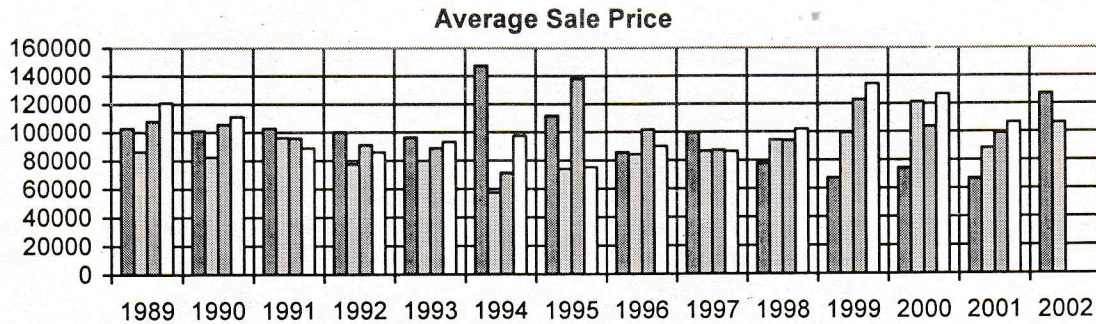
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#### J.C. Wilson (continued)

Over the one hundred and twenty two years that the Wilson family and its descendants have been in the Laurentians, they have migrated from the mouth of the North River in Lachute to its source in Ste. Agathe. Although few of them carry the Wilson name, several members of the fifth generation still live at each end of the river today.

Acknowledgements to George (Duff) Mitchell, *Our Kindred Spirits*, Serge Laurin, *Histoire des Laurentides* and with special thanks to Patty Brown, great-great-grand-daughter of J.C. Wilson and Tony Hungerbuhler great-grandson-in-law of J.C. Wilson.

# MARKET TRENDS



The market has been generally very busy this summer but our graph numbers run only to June 30<sup>th</sup> since the figures for the next quarter are not yet tabulated. The second quarter is when the majority of year-round residences change hands causing the slightly reduced average price. Vacation-home owners remain bullish, resulting in fewer offerings, but the buyers of holiday homes are still nervous. Country home buyers tend to look for an average of 2 years before they commit, and as a result they are generally seasoned, cautious purchasers.

If you would like back issues of the Doncaster Ballyhoo, give us a call or drop by. We will happily add the names of your friends or neighbours to our list if they would like to receive their own copy. Please let us know if you change your address. Having an accurate mailing list helps us keep our costs (and waste) down.

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