

# FRAG on the Main

An **ATSA** project in partnership with the **Société de développement du Boulevard St-Laurent**.

**FRAG**: a permanent, 24/7 visual journey along Saint-Laurent Boulevard; a suite of graphic installations dotting the artery's façades, bearing powerful testimony to the manifold currents and impulses which have marked its urban, social, cultural and economic history. **FRAG**, for fragments — of history, of life, of culture. Each **FRAG** station constitutes a singular work, conceived in conjunction with the space it occupies along the boulevard, bridging the divide between the Montreal of yesteryear and the modern metropolis.

The journey comprises 32 **FRAG** stations, stretching from Saint-Antoine to Mozart streets. We've incorporated informative texts — also downloadable at [www.atsa.qc.ca](http://www.atsa.qc.ca) — by local historians Pierre Ancil, Catherine Browne, Susan D. Bronson and Bernard Vallée, and created postcard versions of 10 **FRAG** stations, available at ATSA's office, all with an eye toward making the visit more pleasant.

An educational circuit intended for neighbourhood schools is also available by contacting the Société de développement du boulevard Saint-Laurent. [www.boulevardsaintlaurent.com](http://www.boulevardsaintlaurent.com)

## On the Boulevard

To simplify matters, the numbering of the **FRAG** stations corresponds to their civic address on Saint-Laurent Boulevard. Also, the logo at the bottom of each **FRAG** entry indicates the preceding and following addresses from the current location.

## Enjoy your visit!

ATSA would like to thank:

The Société de Développement du Boulevard Saint-Laurent and Les Amis du Boulevard, Pierre Ancil, Susan Bronson, Catherine Browne, Bernard Vallée, Nazzareno Bulette, Luc Raymond, Éric-Paul Parent, Sophie Bissonette, Sylvie Lépine, André Vignault, Edward Hillel, Aline Gubbay, Martin Savoie, Normand Grégoire, Ben Dobrovsky, Joe Brick, Léa Roback Foundation, the Fisher family, the Schwartz family, the Schreter family, the Palmieri family, Orangetango, and all the participating businesses and property owners.



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**0902** St-Laurent  
 corner of Saint-Antoine

## Saint-Antoine Street

Before the urbanization of the area, the present-day intersection of Saint-Laurent Boulevard and Saint-Antoine Street (called Craig Street till 1976) was located at the foot of the old fortifications along which meandered the Saint-Martin River or the “little river” as it was known. In the early 19th century, following the demolition of the city walls, Craig St. was laid out and the river was channeled; the latter, having become a veritable open sewer, was eventually buried in an underground tunnel.

The suburb of Saint-Laurent which developed north of Craig St. witnessed some tragic upheavals, including the great fire of 1852, which ravaged part of the city and left many homeless. Following that, several large stores opened along Craig St. In the late 19th century, these disappeared gradually as the retail sector shifted to the new downtown, along Sainte-Catherine Street.

Closer to our time, in the early 1970's more specifically, the noisy, malodorous trench of the Ville-Marie autoroute ruptured the urban fabric and isolated Old Montreal from the rest of the city. Having survived the humiliations wreaked by urban development, the old building at the corner of Saint-Laurent and Saint-Antoine, long abandoned and recently renovated in a respectful fashion, is once again useful and provides a quality shelter to the homeless.

Original text by Bernard Vallée  
 Translation by Nazzareno Bulette

**1195** St-Laurent  
 corner of Charlotte

## The Monument National

Upon its inauguration by the Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste on March 25, 1893, the Monument National was considered a living symbol of the dynamic French-Canadian fact on Saint-Laurent Boulevard and in the entertainment district. A few months later, once the interior was finally ready, the building comprised a 1,500-seat hall — immense for its day — and cutting-edge electrical and acoustical technology. Carried away by their unbridled enthusiasm, the directors of the Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste even proposed creating an “Opera boulevard” in front of the Monument National to link The Main to Saint-Denis Street, thus replacing the Saint-Laurent market already in that location. The march of time, however, would prove otherwise: as of 1897, the Monument National became home to Yiddish theatre and Chinese opera in Montreal. Soon thereafter, people from all around flocked to the Monument to witness the turn-of-the-century's nascent art form: cinema.

Original text by Pierre Ancil  
 Translation by Nazzareno Bulette

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**0902 FRAG**

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**1195 FRAG**

**3495** St-Laurent  
corner of Milton

**3590** St-Laurent  
corner of Prince-Arthur

## On top of Baron Hill

It is difficult to imagine the intersection of Saint-Laurent and Sherbrooke streets in the early 19th century, when the area was still rural. Where lies today a rather sad service station had stood since 1818 the opulent villa of arms merchant Thomas Torrance, which later became the property of brewer John Molson and his family till 1910. Transformed into a garage in the 1930's, the villa was later destroyed. From the vantage point of this Côte-à-Baron ("Baron Hill") which dominated the old city and its outskirts, many rich Montrealers flaunted their sumptuous begardened villas: the Notman villa is one of the last remaining of these remarkable buildings. Commissioned in 1844 by Judge William Collis Meredith, the residence became the property of well-known Montreal photographer William Notman in 1876. In 1891, it was bought by George Drummond to house St. Margaret's Home for the Incurable. More recently, it was saved by the efforts of neighbourhood residents opposed to its devaluation by a mediocre real estate development project.

In the early 20th century, the construction of the Sharre Tfile synagogue on Milton Street marked the beginning of the Jewish community's migration from the old neighbourhoods toward the northern outskirts, and of the manufacturing plants, the workshops and the shops that were sprouting up along Saint-Laurent, officially a boulevard since 1905. In the 1950's, the synagogue became a Yiddish theatre, the Melody Theatre; then a night spot, the Chat noir, owned by singer-songwriter Claude Léveill  ; and finally, from the 1960's to the early 1990's, a repertory cinema house along with the   lys  e and the Cin  ma Festival. After being home to Business, the boulevard's first trendy bar, the Reitman's plant became the headquarters of multimedia pioneer Softimage.

Original text by Bernard Vall  e  
Translation by Nazzareno Bulette

## The Jardins Guilbault


Joseph-  douard Guilbault's first undertaking was a business and a garden of rare plants, where one could come walk about free of charge and take part in festivities featuring lights, fireworks, military bands and acrobats. This first "garden of delights" lasted from 1831 to 1838. Between 1852 and 1862, the businessman created a new botanical garden and zoo, the Jardin botanique et zoologique Guilbault, in the midst of the large estates and villas of well-to-do Montrealers below present-day Sherbrooke Street, between Bleury and Saint-Urbain. There, one could find wild gardens, theatre and circus shows, concerts, lights, fireworks, a gymnasium, animal and rare plant collections, refreshments, the annual exhibitions of the Montreal Horticultural Society, air balloon rides, and more.

The last incarnation of the Jardin Guilbault was from 1862 to 1869 in the quadrilateral bounded by Saint-Laurent, Saint-Urbain, Guilbault and Bagg (today's Prince-Arthur). Advertisements from that time depict structures designed to house a menagerie and a museum, while others were made for skating, dancing, and circus acts. These advertisements also show a large pavilion capable of welcoming 6,000 persons. The Jardin Guilbault thus lost its distinction as a landscape garden to follow the so-called Barnum formula, even playing host to the American circuses passing through town. After the earlier "gardens of delights," then, this last incarnation of the Guilbault gardens heralded the beginning of the age of amusement parks, and its popular attractions proved hugely successful with Montrealers right up to the time of Belmont Park and La Ronde.


Original text by Bernard Vall  e  
Translation by Nazzareno Bulette

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BOULEVARD ST-LAURENT

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**3495 FRAG**

S **3590** 3619 N  
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**3590 FRAG**

**3619** St-Laurent  
 Between Prince-Arthur and Des Pins

**Nelligan**

Just a stone's throw from Saint-Laurent Street, which was not yet a "boulevard," Émile Nelligan produced his exceptional body of poetry during the four years of his all-too-brief literary career. Born in 1879 in the house of his Irish grandparents on De La Gauchetière Street, he moved in 1886 with his family to 112 (present-day 3686) Laval Avenue, near Saint-Louis Square, and then, in 1892, to 260 (today's 3958) of the same avenue, near Napoléon Street. There, Émile kept a small room on the second floor, where he wrote prolifically under the worried, protective eye of his mother and the aggressive disapproval of his father. *"Ah ! comme la neige a neigé ! / Ma vitre est un jardin de givre. / Ah ! comme la neige a neigé ! / Qu'est-ce que le spasme de vivre / À la douleur que j'ai, que j'ai !"* [Oh, how the snow has snowed! / My window is a garden of frost. / Oh, how the snow has snowed! / What is this spasm of life to the pain I have, I have!]

At 543 (now 3639-41) Saint-Laurent Street lived Arthur de Bussière, a sign painter but also a poet, a friend of Nelligan's and, like him, a member of a circle of young avant-garde poets, the École littéraire de Montréal. In Arthur's room Émile frequently found refuge from the anger of his father, who was frustrated at his son's straying from the career path set out for him at the Post Office. Before being placed in an asylum at the age of 20 for the rest of his life, Émile drifted with his friend through the city's streets and alleys, port and taverns, church parvises and cemetery, from Laval Avenue to The Main.

Original text by Bernard Vallée  
 Translation by Nazzareno Bulette

**3653** St-Laurent  
 Between Prince-Arthur and Des Pins

**The lost Diamond of Baxter Block**

James Baxter was a businessman of Irish descent. He moved to Montreal in 1877, where he set up his offices at 120 Saint-François-Xavier, in the heart of that era's business district. Nicknamed Diamond Jim because of his diamond brokerage interests, he also managed one of Canada's largest privately held banks, the Ville-Marie. His interests in real estate development led him to hire the young architect Théodore Daoust to design what would be Baxter Block. Centrally located along a burgeoning Saint-Laurent Street, the initial project called for 28 stores, as well as a 2,500-seat theatre that would never be built. The multi-use neo-Roman building, with its 14 three-storey sections, looked like a prestige building and is considered one of the first "shopping centres"; it was also a manufacturing centre and office building. The man who gave The Main one of its most beautiful commercial buildings and who was known for his philanthropy was nonetheless found guilty of the 1900 embezzlement of \$40,000 from his bank. He was sentenced to five years' imprisonment and died soon after his release, at the age of 66 years.

Original text by Bernard Vallée  
 Translation by Nazzareno Bulette

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**3653 FRAG**

**3662** St-Laurent  
 Between Prince-Arthur and Des Pins

**3710** St-Laurent  
 corner of Guilbault

## Saint-Laurent Road

Fearing attack from inland, the French authorities began in 1717 the erection of fortifications all around the existing city, which was basically Old Montreal as we know it today. The defense structure, designed by engineer Chaussegros de Léry, covered a perimeter of 3,500 metres and was about ten metres tall. The enclosure wall had but a single gate, on its north face, which was more vulnerable to attack, known as the Grande Porte Saint-Laurent, completed in 1732. The gate provided access to a narrow route, laid out in 1717 and called the Saint-Laurent Road, which ran toward the north and the island of Montreal's agricultural land. This small route, surrounded at that time by cultivated land and green fields, was to evolve over the next three centuries into today's Saint-Laurent Boulevard.

Original text by Pierre Anctil  
 Translation by Nazzareno Bulette

## GAIL SCOTT

# MAIN BRIDES

against ochre pediment ans Aztec sky

*roman*


( LES FIANCÉES DE LA MAIN )  
 ( sur fronton ocre et ciel aztèque )

Traduit de l'anglais par Paule Noyart


4. Le samedi, l'hiver était sur le point d'arriver : lumière grise. Lydia est entrée dans le bar, peau picotant de plaisir dans le souffle de chaleur parfumé au tabac et au café. Manteau d'homme usagé en poil de chameau. Sous le bras, les pages artistiques du *Devoir*. Elle espérait que la belle D., dont les cheveux roux lançaient des flammes, hiver comme été, quand elle pédalait sur la *Main*, ne s'arrêterait pas pour un brin de causette après sa petite séance de natation à la piscine des Bains Schubert.

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3710 FRAG

**3725** St-Laurent  
 corner of Des Pins

## Where the city's east meets west

In 1792, Montreal was almost wholly contained within fortifications dating back to the French regime, a containment which impeded the city's future growth. The walls were soon to be demolished so as to foster population growth and urban expansion. That same year, the British authorities decided to extend Montreal's city limits two kilometres farther north, to present-day Duluth Street. At the same time, they decreed that Saint-Laurent Road, the future Main, become the administrative dividing line between the city's east and west. So began in the outskirts at the foot of Mount Royal an urbanization process which contributed to the settlement 100 years later of the Plateau Mont-Royal and of the Mile End neighbourhood. In 1996, with an eye toward preserving these important heritage neighbourhoods, Parks Canada declared Saint-Laurent Boulevard a national historic site.

Original text by Pierre Anctil  
 Translation by Nazzareno Bulette

**3826** St-Laurent  
 Between Roy and Cuthbert

## Saint-Laurent Boulevard in the 20th century

In October 1905, the city's elected officials gave The Main the official rubric of "boulevard," a clear indication of the strategic role the artery played in Montreal life back then. That same year, Montreal street addresses were renumbered to accommodate the recent division of east and west of which Saint-Laurent Boulevard was the dividing line. Tramways had been traveling the boulevard from north to south since the late 19th century and traffic had increasingly intensified on this culturally rich route whose vocation was at once commercial and residential. In the mid-50's, to ease traffic on The Main, the tramways were replaced by buses, and city officials decided to make the boulevard a one-way running north.

Original text by Pierre Anctil  
 Translation by Nazzareno Bulette



**3861** St-Laurent  
corner of Cuthbert

## Antisemitism

A major influx of Jews emigrating from Russia arrived in Montreal between 1900 and 1914. Often poor and speaking only Yiddish, they at first settled near the port, then moved up along Saint-Laurent Boulevard to the Plateau Mont-Royal, where they formed the majority of the population between the two world wars. A proliferation of Jewish businesses, synagogues and cultural spaces occurred in this neighbourhood, a development which got the attention and the ire of the most conservative and insular elements of French-Canadian society. “Buy From Our Own” campaigns were organized and the Thirties saw the publication of certain newspapers that were very hostile to the Jewish presence in Quebec. Aside from these pressure groups, however, other Francophones discovered, quite to the contrary, the richness of the Jewish contribution to Quebec society, among them Yves Thériault, who in 1954 published the novel Aaron, whose characters were Jewish Montrealers.

Original text by Pierre Anctil  
Translation by Nazzareno Bulette

**3863** St-Laurent  
corner of Cuthbert

## Warsaw


The business vocation of Saint-Laurent Boulevard was to become more evident in the first part of the 20th century. It does not boast large, prestige stores such as does Saint Catherine Street, but rather offers a wide diversity of wholesale and retail stores which reflect the ethnic origins of the surrounding population. While many European immigrants, particularly East European Jews, found gainful employment in the garment industry, others earned their living as storekeepers, and many started out as peddlers. With a cart, or a horse-pulled sled in the winter, these traveling merchants sold their wares—be they fruit, vegetables, fish or fowl— on the street or door-to-door.

The Warsaw grocery store was founded in 1935 by a Polish Jew, one Florkivitch, who had started his business as a traveling vegetable salesman. Like other immigrants wishing to improve their lot, he opened with his wife a store on The Main and named it after his native country’s capital, Warsaw. A typo on the store sign was to remain permanently in place. Warsaw Bargain Fruits Market, at first a small fruit and vegetable boutique, bloomed into a huge grocery store, later adding tableware and carpet departments. While no longer part of The Main’s landscape, Warsaw rides again in its current incarnation as a decoration store near Atwater Market.


Original text by Bernard Vallée  
Translation by Nazzareno Bulette

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**3863 FRAG**

**3886 3899** **St-Laurent**  
 Between Cuthbert and Napoléon

**The heart of Jewish life between the two wars**

Between the two world wars, the stretch of The Main between Prince-Arthur and Rachel streets constituted the heart of Jewish life in Montreal. One could find there a succession of businesses, restaurants and places of worship that all observed the Jewish holidays, the Yiddish language and the Eastern European traditions. Today, significant traces of this bygone era remain, albeit diminished since the Jewish population moved to the Snowdon neighbourhood and later to the municipalities of Côte-Saint-Luc and Hampstead. Most notably on The Main one can see the Berson grave monuments factory, founded in 1922, and Schwartz's deli, opened in 1929. Born in this neighbourhood in 1931, author Mordecai Richler described the area with great affection and bite in his novels *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*, *Saint-Urbain's Horseman* and *The Street*.

Original text by Pierre Anctil  
 Translation by Nazzareno Bulette

**3930** **St-Laurent**  
 corner of Bagg



**"Grocer Simcha Leibovich has passed on"**

La Presse, Monday, December 19, 2005

"Simcha Leibovich, the grocer whose eponymous store graced Saint-Laurent Boulevard for nearly 60 years, died last week. He was 75 years old. Mr. Leibovich was the owner of the Simcha's grocery, at the corner of Napoléon Street, a store that had barely changed since its opening nearly 40 years ago. Prior to that, Mr. Leibovich had run a stall at the old Saint-Jean-Baptiste market, corner Rachel. Finally succumbing to kidney complications, Mr. Leibovich worked right up to the final days of his life. His wife and associate, Fanny Schwartz, had died in February 2004. Since the announcement of his death, neighbourhood residents and business owners have been sticking handwritten notes on the grocery window: "Thanks and so long", "We'll miss you", "Rest in peace, Simcha." Ghislain Dufour, director of the Société de développement du boulevard Saint-Laurent, often used to drop by and chat with Mr. Leibovich. "His wife passed away during a trip to Florida. It was a hard blow for him and he missed her sorely. His wife was his associate, his confidante, his friend... They were always together, for 50 years." Born in Romania, Mr. Leibovich immigrated to Canada after the war, in 1946. He and his wife opened their first grocery store on The Main in 1948, at the Saint-Jean-Baptiste market, the site of present-day Parc des Amériques. In 1966, the Drapeau administration decided to shut down the market in order to "clean up" the city for the world's fair the following year. It was then that the couple opened a grocery store in the quarters occupied to this very day. Johnny Gonsalves, a cutter at Schwartz's for the past 31 years, knew Mr. Leibovich. "He used to come here to eat once in a while. He felt lonely after his wife died. They were inseparable, those two." Mr. Leibovich had become something of a familiar figure on The Main. But it never went to his head. The Société de développement du boulevard Saint-Laurent had already asked him to put his memoirs down on paper, to which he had replied with a shrug of his shoulders: "Me? I'm just a guy selling potatoes."

Original text by Nicolas Bérubé  
 Translation by Nazzareno Bulette

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**3936** St-Laurent  
 corner of Bagg

## The Schubert Baths and the Beth Shloime Synagogue

At the intersection of The Main and Bagg Street, passersby are invited to enter a public bath house built in 1931 by municipal councillor Joseph Schubert and bearing his name. Renovated in 2000, the building is a throwback to a time when many of Saint-Laurent Boulevard's residents had neither running water nor free access to sports facilities. First elected to City Hall in 1924, Schubert, a Romanian Jew, was for some 15 years the spokesman for the garment industry's unions and needletrade workers. A socialist by conviction and an admirer of Karl Marx, he espoused within the Jewish community an ideology championing the welfare of the masses. Passersby continuing on to Clark Street will see at the intersection the neighbourhood's last synagogue still in use, the Beth Schloime Synagogue or House of Solomon. Modelled in the early Twenties after an existing building, the synagogue embodies the piety and religious devotion of the East European Jews who settled on this particular stretch of The Main in the early 1910's.

Original text by Pierre Anciaux  
 Translation by Nazzareno Bulette

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3930 3936

BOULEVARD ST-LAURENT

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3936 FRAG

**3981** St-Laurent  
 Between Bagg and Duluth

## The garment industry

Saint-Laurent Boulevard has for almost 60 years been the centre of Canada's garment industry, as bear witness today several of the city's landmark buildings, such as the Balfour at the corner of Prince-Arthur, the Cooper near Bagg St. and the Vineberg at the corner of Duluth. In this once thriving industry, a great many owners and workers were of Jewish descent, although workers of all nationalities belonged to it, including in the Thirties a large number of French-Canadian women. The industry gave rise to labour movements and to large-scale social conflicts, such as 1937's women garment workers' strike, in which prominent figures from the political left, such as Léa Roback, participated. Today, these large buildings long abandoned by seamstresses and tailors have become a refuge for artists and multimedia firms, currently thriving on The Main.

Original text by Pierre Anciaux  
 Translation by Nazzareno Bulette

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3981 FRAG

**4040** St-Laurent  
 corner of Duluth

## Duluth avenue and Fletcher’s Field

At the northwest corner of Duluth Avenue and Saint-Laurent Boulevard is the Berman Building, one of Montreal’s earliest reinforced concrete highrises and one of the few with reinforced concrete exterior walls. Constructed in 1912 by Jewish businessman Solomon Vineberg to house the needlework trade, a growing industry on the Main at the time, it now accommodates commercial and residential lofts. Duluth Avenue was originally known as Saint-Jean-Baptiste Street as it was just north of the border between the city of Montreal and the suburb of Saint-Jean-Baptiste, which was annexed by Montreal in 1886. It defines the southern limit of Fletcher’s Field, the eastern section of which is now known as Jeanne-Mance Park in honour of the foundress of the first Hôtel-Dieu hospital (in Old Montreal) in the 17th century. Indeed, Fletcher’s Field, named after the farmer of landowner William Hall, was also part of the property of the Soeurs Hospitalières de Saint-Joseph, who inaugurated their new Hôtel-Dieu hospital just south of the park in 1859-60. The property was acquired by the City of Montreal as part of Mount Royal Park around 1870, and Park Avenue (formerly Bleury Street) divided it in two in 1880. In the late 19th century, its southern end (north of Duluth Avenue) was part of Montreal’s first golf course, and its northern section (south of Mont-Royal Avenue) had a race course that was used for activities related to the agricultural and industrial exhibitions at the Mile End Exhibition Grounds (north of Mont-Royal Avenue) until 1897. It wasn’t until the second decade of the 20th century that Fletcher’s Field was re-designed and landscaped to serve as a park, and since then it has continued its longstanding role as a popular venue for a diversity of sports, celebrations and leisure activities.

Original text by Susan D. Bronson  
 Translation by Nazzareno Bulette

**4062** St-Laurent  
 Between Duluth and Rachel

## The Keneder Odler and Montreal’s Yiddish press

In 1907, Hirsch Wolofsky, a young Polish immigrant arrived in the old city just seven years earlier, decided to launch a Yiddish-language daily newspaper, the Keneder Odler [“Canadian eagle”]. Although at the time Canada annually welcomed thousands of Jews fleeing the anti-Semitic climate of imperial Russia, the founding of a Yiddish press organ nonetheless represented a sizeable challenge both financially and for the community. Naturally, the paper’s offices were located on Saint-Laurent Boulevard, near Ontario Street. In spite of the obstacles faced, the Keneder Odler achieved great success and soon relocated to a building erected solely to accommodate it, at 4075 Saint-Laurent, just north of Duluth Street. For more than 50 years, Wolofsky’s daily put its finger on the pulse of the dreams, hopes and struggles of Montreal’s Yiddish-speaking Jews, so much so that it became a cultural touchstone for their community.

Original text by Pierre Anctil  
 Translation by Nazzareno Bulette

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4062 FRAG

**4131** **St-Laurent**  
 Between Duluth and Rachel

**The garment boulevard**

From the modest storefronts established in the early 20th century to today's trendy boutiques which offer the most daring fashions, The Main has consistently played a pivotal role in the design, manufacture and distribution of prêt-à-porter in Canada. More than any other area of Montreal, Saint-Laurent Boulevard has brought together in one cluster garment artisans in all the diversity of functions and trades which the industry involves. Once home to factories producing on a large scale, The Main today is rather a fascinating showcase of contemporary fashion in all its complexity and glamour, which does not in the least prevent those businesses established several decades ago to keep offering their services to consumers and trade workers alike.

Original text by Pierre Ancil  
 Translation by Nazzareno Bulette

**4190 A** **St-Laurent**  
 corner of Rachel

**The French-Canadian influence**

The dawn of the tramway era made the artery more accessible to populations living farther away from The Main, which in turn meant greater access to jobs and business opportunities in the area, particularly in the retail sector. Although generally not residing in large numbers in the neighbourhoods immediately adjacent to Saint-Laurent Boulevard, Montreal's French-Canadians were throughout the 20th century among the most assiduous and visible of clienteles on The Main, particularly in establishments offering credit and cheaper prices than their counterparts downtown along Sainte-Catherine Street. The artery thus resounded, regardless of the era, to the cries and curses of Francophones, who found it to be a warmer, more welcoming place than the Anglo-British neighbourhoods and better suited to their overall tastes; also, on the Lower Main many French-Canadian artists made a name and reputation for themselves, such as La Bolduc, Juliette Béliveau, Olivier Guimond and Gratien Gélinas.

Original text by Pierre Ancil  
 Translation by Nazzareno Bulette



**4190 B** St-Laurent  
 corner of Rachel

## The Main's country markets

The Main has always been an important meeting place of rural and urban life, most notably during that not-so-distant period when the artery was the main transportation link between the more agricultural north of the island and Montreal's port. In the late 19th century and early 20th century, the municipality erected several marketplaces along Saint-Laurent Boulevard. These markets served as ports of entry for fresh produce from the surrounding countryside. Among them were the Saint-Laurent market, previously located in front of the Monument National; the Saint-Jean-Baptiste market, erected in 1908 at the corner of Rachel Street, and replaced by today's Parc des Amériques; and Jean-Talon Market, which still exists.

Original text by Pierre Anctil  
 Translation by Nazzareno Bulette

**4244** St-Laurent  
 Between Rachel and Marie-Anne

## Portuguese immigration

Constituting the first great wave of immigration of the post-war period, the Portuguese began arriving in Canada in 1953 to fill the country's need for agricultural and industrial labour. Originating for the most part from the Azores archipelago, located in the middle of the Atlantic, these immigrants settled from their very early days in Montreal on the edge of Saint-Laurent Boulevard, where they replaced the Jewish populations that were moving westward in the city. It did not take long for the Portuguese to open stores, restaurants and sociocultural organizations in the 50's and 60's. These gave The Main a new colour and enriched its heritage. In 1975, in recognition of their exceptional contribution to the revitalization and enhancement of the Plateau Mont-Royal, the Ordre des architectes bestowed upon the Portuguese community a collective award.

Original text by Pierre Anctil  
 Translation by Nazzareno Bulette

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**4244 FRAG**

**4247** **St-Laurent**  
 Between Rachel and Marie-Anne

## Rachel street and the George-Etienne Cartier monument

Rachel Street, a major east-west artery with a well-used bicycle path, connects Jeanne-Mance Park and Mount Royal Park to the west with Lafontaine Park, and then continues on to the Botanical Garden and Maisonneuve Park, to the east. The initial section of the street, just east of Saint-Laurent Boulevard, was constructed in 1834 when Jean-Marie Cadieux subdivided his large property. It was named after his daughter, and soon afterwards became a main street for the suburb of Saint-Jean-Baptiste, annexed by the City of Montreal in 1886. At the northeast corner of Saint-Laurent was the Jean-Baptiste Market, today the Parc des Amériques. To the east was the Church of Saint-Jean-Baptiste, whose origins date to the 1870s. To the west, at 4170 Saint-Urbain Street, is the former Chevra Shaas Synagogue, one of several reminders of the large Jewish population in this neighbourhood during the first two thirds of the 20th century; since 1972, it has housed the Portuguese Association of Canada. With the Portuguese Church and the Santa Cruz community centre across the street, this is the symbolic heart of Montreal's Portuguese community, which is still very present in the area. Rachel Street ends at Jeanne-Mance Park, but its axis continues through the park to the George-Étienne Cartier monument, and beyond to the cross atop Mount Royal. The monument, designed by George Hill in 1914 to honour one of Canada's fathers of Confederation, was inaugurated in 1919. Crowned by an angel, it is without question one of Montreal's most remarkable works of public art. It has been undergoing restoration since 2005. Every Sunday throughout the summer, the site around the monument is brought to life with African dancing to the beat of tam-tam drums.

Original text by Susan D. Bronson  
 Translation by Nazzareno Bulette

**4276** **St-Laurent**  
 Between Rachel and Marie-Anne

## Jewish unionists

In the early 20th century, the majority of workers in Saint-Laurent Boulevard's manufacturing workshops were Jewish immigrants, many of whom had left their country of origin to flee political oppression. Politicized and organized, these workers created labour unions that were to be the most combative of Montreal's unions and which enlisted French-Canadian female workers when the latter's numbers swelled during the 30's. Throughout the 30's, the garment industry was rocked by serious labour unrest. The International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (whose offices are located at 3575 Saint-Laurent Boulevard) was led by talented organizers, including Rose Pesotta and Léa Roback, thanks to whom the strike of 1937 ended in a resounding victory. Other Jewish militants played a political role. Fred Rose, an electrician by training, was elected to Parliament by the people in the riding of Cartier in 1943, thus becoming the only communist Member of Parliament in Canada's history. His political career came to a sudden end when he was arrested and convicted of spying in 1945. Having served his six-year sentence, he was a pariah upon his release and returned to his native Warsaw, where he died in 1983.

Original text by Catherine Browne  
 Translation by Nazzareno Bulette

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**4355** St-Laurent  
 corner of Marie-Anne

**Marie-Anne / Saint-Laurent**

In 1834, the heirs of notary Jean-Marie Cadieux de Courville subdivided his land and traced the streets which were to bear the names of members of the Cadieux family: Rachel and Henriette Cadieux de Courville, daughters of the notary and wives of the very patriotic brothers Chamilly and Chevalier De Lorimier; Napoléon, son of Rachel, deceased as an infant like many babies born in that period; Marguerite Roy, wife of Cadieux; Marie-Anne Roy, Marguerite's sister and wife of Hippolyte Cherrier. Prince-Arthur and De Bullion streets have previously been called, respectively, De Cadieux and De Courville, and Hôtel de Ville and Coloniale avenues once bore the respective names of Pantaléon and Hippolyte, the notary's two sons! Henriette Street eventually disappeared because of the more rapid expansion of Marie-Anne Street.


Beyond the toll booth that marked the north city limit of Montreal till 1886 (present-day Duluth Street) lay the village of Saint-Jean-Baptiste, whose heart and lungs were the market square (today's Parc des Amériques) and Vallière Square (now Parc du Portugal). Saint-Laurent Street, which crossed the entire island of Montreal, from the old city to the Rivière des Prairies (sometimes called the Back River), saw the passage of wagonfuls of cut stone, cartloads of produce, and stagecoachloads of travelers stopping at the hotels alongside the farmhouses and tradesman workshops at the foot of the large elms.

The arrival of the tramway disrupted this bucolic tranquility, and the industrious, immigrant and festive Main extended northward, transforming the old villages into neighbourhoods teeming with urbanity and the influences of Jewish Central Europe and later of Portugal, Greece, South America and the West Indies.


Original text by Bernard Vallée  
 Translation by Nazzareno Bulette

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**4358** St-Laurent  
 corner of Marie-Anne

**The Main's Jewish authors**

Throughout the 20th century, Saint-Laurent Boulevard attracted authors of Jewish origin, starting with the writers of Montreal's Yiddish literary school who had emigrated after 1905 from Poland, Russia, Ukraine and Lithuania. Between the two wars, poets such as Jacob-Isaac Segal, Sholem Shtern, Ida Maze and Noah Gotlib sang the praises of Montreal in Yiddish and described with fondness their neighbourhood surrounding The Main. They were succeeded after 1945 by Jewish authors this time Montreal-born and writing in English, such as Abraham-Moses Klein, Mordecai Richler and Irving Layton, whose collective works for the most part showcased the landscape of Montreal's Plateau Mont-Royal and its residents. Today, the Parc du Portugal remains a pied-à-terre for the most famous of them all, Leonard Cohen, who penned the song "Suzanne" and is an important figure of the international folk music scene.

Original text by Pierre Ancitil  
 Translation by Nazzareno Bulette

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**4404** **St-Laurent**  
 Between Marie-Anne and Mont-Royal

**Mrs. Steinberg's grocery store**

Circumstances led to Ida Steinberg's opening a small grocery store at 4419 Saint-Laurent Boulevard. She had no way of knowing in 1917 that her family business would eventually evolve into the province's leading grocery chain for several decades. The family's heir, Sam Steinberg, put the enterprise on the road to success by introducing in the late Thirties Montreal's first modern supermarkets. This was followed by a long series of innovations capped by the construction in all Quebec cities of shopping centres equipped with free parking. At the height of its expansion, the Steinberg chain had nearly 25,000 employees in over 200 big-box locations throughout the province, almost all of whom were Francophones. In spite of the family's Jewish origins, Steinberg grocery stores were quick to comply during the Seventies with regulations introduced to safeguard the French language, thus ensuring themselves a unique place in the mainstream Québécois culture.

Original text by Pierre Ancil  
 Translation by Nazzareno Bulette

**4475** **St-Laurent**  
 corner of Mont-Royal

**The Montreal Hunt Club**

Back when Mont-Royal Avenue was called the Mile End Road, there lay at the corner of Saint-Laurent Road the first building owned by the famous Montreal Hunt Club, which brought together Montreal's hunting aficionados. The Club's kennels and stables were located near the current intersection of Mont-Royal and De Lorimier avenues. The Mile End Road was the confluence of the winding path from the quarries and the Saint-Laurent Road used by the heavy carriages loaded with grey stone extracted from the top of Saint-Louis Hill by workers known as the "pieds noirs" ("black feet", in reference to their walking barefoot), stone then transported to the construction sites of the old city's nicer buildings.

The first of many horse racetracks to sprout up in what is today called the Plateau Mont-Royal was the Mile End race-track. It was part of the attractions of the 1878-1896 Exposition provinciale, whose pavilions spread out between present-day Duluth and Saint-Joseph streets. A fire destroyed this vast area where city dwellers and country people alike congregated to learn of developments in science and modern production techniques in an entertaining forum.

In the early 20th century, two more entertainment centres competed for the patronage of Montrealers near the intersection of The Main and Mont-Royal Avenue: a movie theatre, the Belmont Moving Picture Theatre (1921-1959), gone today, and the Mount Royal Arena (1920-1937), home to the Montreal Canadiens hockey team. Artists hailing from around the globe performed there as well, such as the tenor Caruso, and in the midst of the political turmoil of the Great Depression, the huge edifice often echoed to the sound of "The Internationale." Converted to a commercial space, the building was razed by fire in 2000.

Original text by Bernard Vallée  
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4475 FRAG

**5900 St-Laurent**  
 Between Bernard and Bellechasse, under the CP viaduct

**6797 St-Laurent**  
 Between St-Zotique and Dante

## The railway line and former Mile End Station

The railway line that crosses Saint-Laurent Boulevard was constructed in the mid-1870s as part of the Quebec, Montreal, Ottawa and Occidental rail system connecting Montreal to Saint-Jérôme and beyond. This line, taken over by the Canadian Pacific Railway in the early 1880s, helped to promote agriculture, forestry and recreation in the Laurentians. It also divided the former town of Saint-Louis into two distinct parts, and quickly became a corridor for diverse industrial activities that benefited from easy access to rail transport. The first Mile End station, located on the south side of the tracks near the intersection of Saint-Dominique and Bernard Streets, was erected before 1879. Milk from dairy farms up north arrived here and was picked up for delivery throughout the island. A larger station was constructed around 1911, but by the 1950s was used for other purposes and has since been demolished. Nearby, at the northeast corner of Bernard Street and Saint-Laurent Boulevard, was the CPR Hotel, built in the 1890s and demolished in the 1980s. The Pratte Pianos factory and showroom, constructed in 1909-10, was at the northwest corner of the same intersection; today this building houses the Whisky Café and offices. On the west side of Saint-Laurent Boulevard, south of the tracks, a large storage warehouse was built by the Saint Lawrence Warehousing Company in 1924, replacing a smaller warehouse on the same site. North of the railway line, on the east side, is the lumberyard of the company founded in 1872 by Léonidas Villeneuve, mayor of the town of Saint-Louis from 1896 until 1900. The underpass was constructed in 1910, when the population of the area north of the tracks was increasing rapidly, to ensure the safety of pedestrians, streetcars and other vehicles. The overpass, which connects Van Horne Avenue with Rosemont Boulevard, dates to the 1960s, when efficient traffic circulation was considered more important than the quality of the urban environment.

Original text by Susan D. Bronson  
 Translation by Nazzareno Bulette

## Italian Immigration

The first two decades of the 20th century witnessed the arrival, in Montreal, of a large number of Italian immigrants. The city's population of Italian origin increased from about 2,000 in 1901 to over 7,000 in 1911, and doubled to almost 14,000 in 1921. At first, many of these new arrivals were men who came to work, often on a seasonal basis, in the railway and construction industries. Soon, however, growing numbers of families arrived with the intention to stay. While the initial flux of Italian immigrants lived in the area south of Sainte-Catherine Street between Saint-Laurent Boulevard and Saint-Denis Street, more and more families settled in the new homes near the CPR line, in the northern sector of the former suburb of Saint-Louis. In 1910, the Italians constructed their own church in this area. By 1916-18, it was replaced by the much more monumental present-day Church of Madonna della Difesa, designed by Italian artist Guido Nincheri. Ties with the mother country remained strong. The Casa d'Italia, at the corner of Jean-Talon and Lajeunesse Streets, was constructed in 1936 to serve as a social centre for the community. By this time, there were around 6,000 residents of Italian origin living in the neighbourhood now known as Little Italy. During the decades following the Second World War, another wave of Italian immigrants, including many well-educated people interested in strengthening local organizations, arrived in Montreal. The Italian population of Little Italy continued to flourish until the 1960s, when many families of Italian origin moved to new suburbs such as Saint-Léonard. Nevertheless, today this multicultural neighbourhood possesses a thriving Italian identity thanks to several landmarks, a wide array of specialty stores offering Italian food and products of all kinds, an abundance of Italian cafés and restaurants, a number of parks named in honour of Italians, and a few remarkable gardens tended by residents of Italian origin.

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 Translation by Nazzareno Bulette

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**6875** **St-Laurent**  
 Between Dante and Belanger

**Jean-Talon market**

Jean-Talon Market, located a few blocks east of Saint-Laurent Boulevard at the end of Shamrock Avenue, was the site of the Shamrock Lacrosse Grounds. The Shamrock Lacrosse Club was founded in 1868 by a group of lacrosse players, mostly of Irish descent. In the 1890s, it moved its home field, located at the corner of Sainte-Catherine Street and Atwater Avenue, to this location near the northern limit of the suburban town of Saint-Louis and the end of the Saint-Laurent streetcar line. Inspired by the First Nations games “Baggataway” and “Tewaarathon,” lacrosse was one of Canada’s most popular sports at the time, and as many as 10,000 spectators attended the matches on this field. In 1931, at the height of the Great Depression, the City of Montreal purchased the property and constructed the “chalet” on the west side. This building, today a bakery, has been used as a social services centre, a terminus for bus service between Laval and Montreal, a municipal library, and municipal offices. The Jean-Talon Market was inaugurated by Mayor Camillien Houde in 1933 and has since offered farmers from all over Québec a venue to sell their fruits, vegetables, and other produce. As North America’s largest open-air public market and Montreal’s most multicultural market, its lively atmosphere and wide array of products attract residents from all over the island and beyond, including gourmet chefs, food experts, and others seeking special ingredients or fresh produce for their culinary pursuits. In 2004-05, the addition of an underground parking lot and new indoor market facilities helped to alleviate traffic problems and accommodate expanding needs.

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