

# *History of Centennial Hall and Memorial Park*

By:

Isabelle Ouimet



Centennial Hall and Memorial Park have been a big part of my life. The park is the closest to my house and I have been going there all my life. I've played in the playground, waded in the water, fed the ducks and watched the sailboats go by. I've learned about the life of the early settlers on Saint Jean Baptist Day and watched shows and went in the bouncy houses on Canada Day. I've had scavenger hunts and treasure hunts and collected the most beautiful leaves there. I even did an African dance performance there for the West Island Chronicle. To me, it's a place of fun and nature. It is a place I really like. That is why I wanted to learn more about the history of Centennial Hall and Memorial Park.

To understand this you have to understand some of the history of Beaconsfield. All of the land that is now Beaconsfield would have once belong to the native Indians, although they may not have thought about it that way. Once the French began settling Montreal they divided the land into seigneuries and then the seigneurs decide which farmers would settle the land.

In 1699, the Sulpicians, seigneurs of the Island of Montreal gave a piece of land called Terrier 136 to Jean Charlebois dit Jolly. This land included the land that would later be the spot where Centennial Hall and Memorial Park are today.

Others who would go on to own the land were:

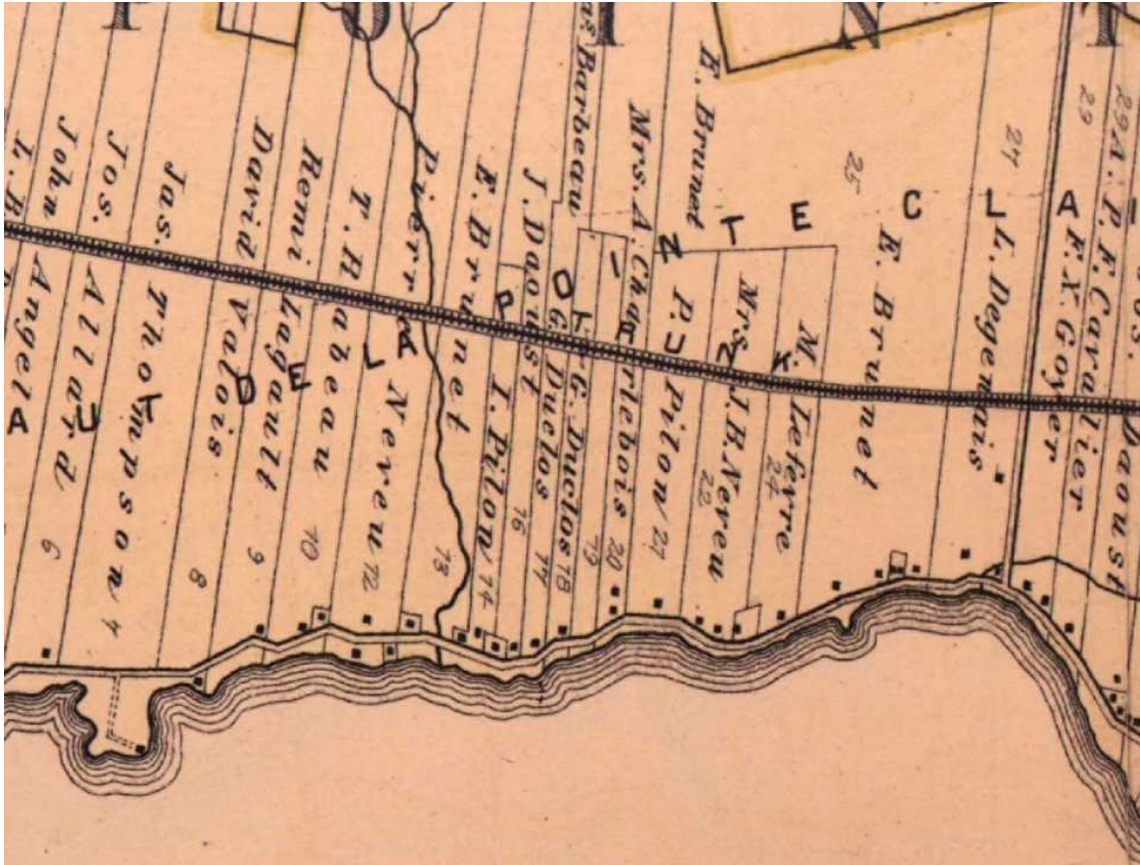
1731 Jean Denis dit St. Denis

1781 Jean Cerat

1851 Jean Baptiste Denis, Israel Roy and Michel Legros

Then later: Charles Barbeau, Veuve Joseph St. Denis, G. Duclos and Tancrede Barbeau

The map below from 1879 shows G. Duclos's name



Map of Beaconsfield 1879

By then the land had been divided into lots and Centennial Hall and Memorial Park would later be on lots 18 and 19. You can also see on the map that the only road is Lakeshore road that runs along the waterfront and the railway line that reached Beaconsfield from Montreal in 1853.

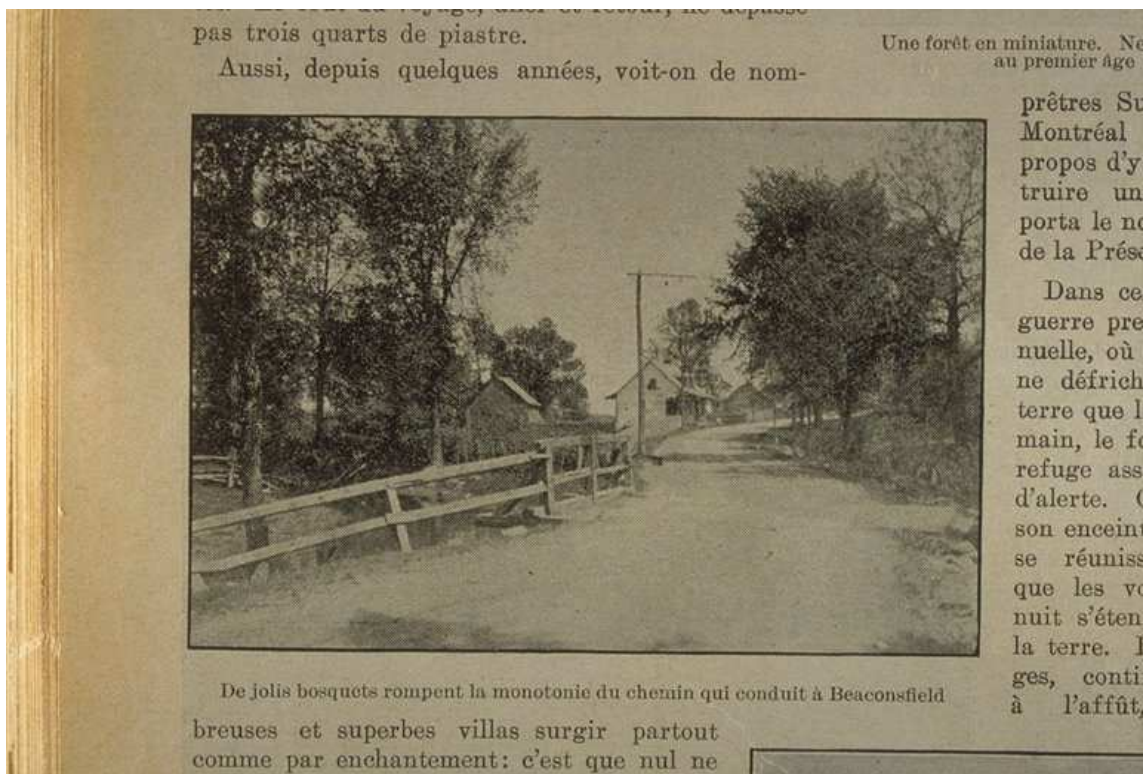
In 1906 Joseph Léonide Perron (who lived from 1873 to 1930) bought farm 18 and 19.



Joseph Léonide Perron

He bought the land at a time when rich people were first coming to Beaconsfield to build summer houses (the winter ones were in Montreal). Montreal was a very polluted city back then and there was a lot of diseases so a house in the countryside would have seemed like a good idea. Perron became the first ever mayor of the Town of Beaconsfield (he was mayor from 1910 to 1916). He was a lawyer, having graduated from Laval University in 1893, and was appointed to the King's Counsel in 1903. Perron built a summer house on farm 18 in 1906 and made the property into a model farm, raising prize cattle and horses and cultivating a vineyard. Perron was elected to the Québec Legislature in 1910 and became the Provincial Minister of Roads in the Alexandre Taschereau government in September 1920. He was appointed Bâtonnier of the Bar of Montréal in 1922 and was a director of many corporations, including Canada

Cement, Montreal Tramways and Shawinigan Water and Power. He was obviously a powerful and important man. Mr. Perron and his neighbors who built houses close to the water didn't like the fact that everyone passed on Lakeshore road in front of their house making dust and disturbing the residents.



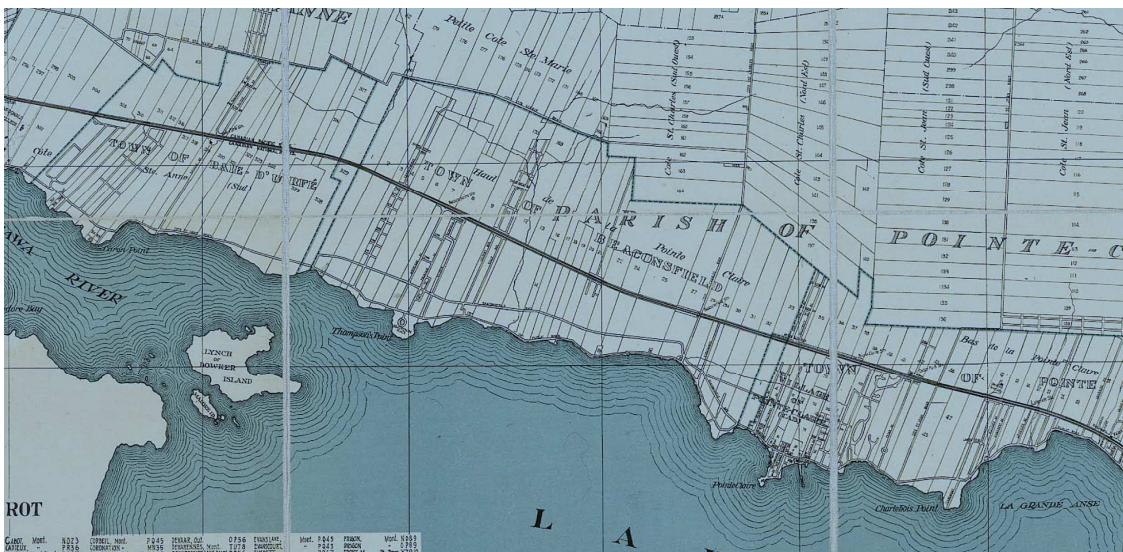
A road leading to Beaconsfield 1905

Perron and his neighbors wanted the old Lakeshore Road relocated. So a by-law



was passed in 1911 that allowed for a new road to be built behind the houses. The landowners traded land at the back of their properties so that they could have the land where the road ran in front of their properties. The new road was Beaconsfield Boulevard. Other residents were unhappy about the change and fought it in court. This lasted for over 15 years. It finally got sorted out in 1928 when the owners paid the city for the Lakeshore road land. Perron bought the land on lots 16 to 19.

A member of the Beaconsfield Citizens' Association, S.D Cunningham, suggested to Mayor Shaw that: "the manner in which this deal was handled by the council smelt badly to the average citizen." Others suggested that the Mayor and Council should not be the Mayor and Council any more, but the Mayor and Council said "no". Perron had lots of power and ability.





In this 1924 map, made while the conflict was still happening, you can see both Lakeshore road and Beaconsfield Boulevard are there.

Perron died on November 20, 1930. There are different reports on his death depending on where you read. Some say he died of a heart problem and others report that he died of gunshot wounds. His death was a cause of sadness as he was highly regarded in legal, political, business and social circles. Thousands showed up at his funeral.

After his death the house was rented to the Archangeault family.

In 1940, 10 years after Joseph Léonide Perron died. Léo Dandurand, the co owner of the Montréal Canadiens Hockey Club and a well-known restaurateur, bought a piece of the property (6 acres of farm 18) where the house was located.



Léo Dandurand

The home was badly damaged by a fire a few weeks after he purchased it, however, Dandurand had it rebuilt almost exactly how it was built before. This is the house that would later become Centennial hall. Dandurand was very active in Montréal sporting circles, being involved in horse breeding and hockey.



Dan Acres -Léo Dandurand house 1940s



In 1945, the city purchased the eastern part of the property from the Joseph Léonide Perron's estate for \$ 5000 and made it a park. It was named Memorial Park in memory of all the soldiers who died in the Second World War.

The waterfront became a popular place to swim. It was a public beach until 1980 when it was closed because of pollution. It opened and closed a few times until it was permanently closed in 1984.

In November 1953, Dandurand's Dan Acres was sold to the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, who started a Youth Protection School for young English Catholic girls. While they lived there, the girls received elementary and high school education. The new school was named Marian Hall because it was begun in the Marian Year in Mary's city (Ville-Marie). Bishop L.P. Whelan, the Federation of Catholic Charities and the Minister for the Social Welfare and Youth all gave a lot of support to the project, but eventually the property was too small for the school program, and was sold to the City of Beaconsfield on January 12, 1965 for \$190 000. Because of this, the city now owned the bottom part of lots 18 and 19.

When the new City Hall was opened in 1968, Marion Hall was turned into a cultural center and renamed Centennial Hall to commemorate Canada's centennial year (1967). The two pieces of land came back together to make what is now Centennial Hall and Memorial Park.

So that's how Centennial Hall and Memorial Park came to be and I hope you enjoyed reading the story as much as I loved telling it.

I have included my painting of Centennial Hall. I love doing art and I felt that the project would not be complete without it.

I would like to thank the historical society for having this contest. I have learned a lot while doing this project. The hardest part was taking the little bits and pieces of information and putting them together so they made sense.

I was surprised at the many interesting stories about the people who lived in Beaconsfield in the past and I didn't realize that a piece of land could belong to so many people over time. It feels like I have learned about a small piece of a big puzzle that is history of Beaconsfield.

References:

Most of the information came from the book: Beaconsfield and Beaurepaire written by Robert L. Baird and Gisèle Hall, 1998.

Association des Artistes de Beaconsfield website [www.artbeaconsfield.com](http://www.artbeaconsfield.com)

Atlas of the city and island of Montreal including the counties of Jacques Cartier and Hochelaga, 1879: Bibliotheque et archives nationales web site

service.banq.qc.ca

La Pointe-Claire: de jolis bosquets rompent la monotonie du chemin qui conduit à  
Beaconsfield. L'album universel., Vol.22, no.1106, pp266(1 juillet 1905)

Bibliothèque et archives nationales web site [www.banc.qc.ca](http://www.banc.qc.ca)

Gordon and Gotch Map of Montreal 1924: Library and Archives Canada website,  
[www.collectionscanada.gc.ca](http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca)

Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online: Perron, Joseph-Léonide  
[www.biographi.ca](http://www.biographi.ca)

Beaconsfield 100 website: [100.beaconsfield.ca](http://100.beaconsfield.ca)

Photo Leo Dandurand: [Sport.ca.msn.com](http://Sport.ca.msn.com)

Photo Joseph Léonide Perron: [www.barreaudemontreal.qc.ca](http://www.barreaudemontreal.qc.ca)

Photo Centennial Hall: [patrimoine.ville.montreal.qc.ca](http://patrimoine.ville.montreal.qc.ca)