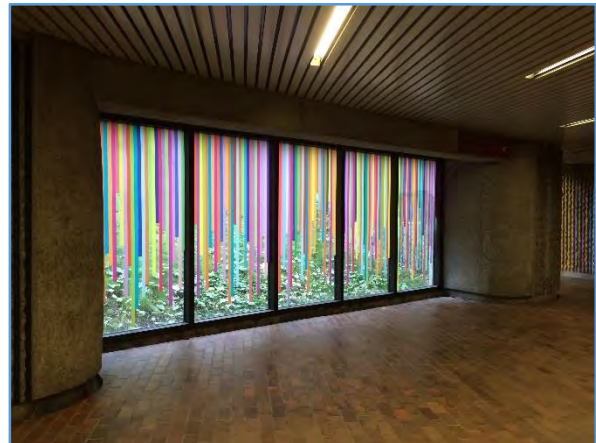


President's Travel Update
A Day in Old Montreal
Wednesday, October 22, 2014

I am writing this update from the VIA Rail station in Toronto on the last day of a week of UELAC related business and travel. Albert was able to take some time out of the office and so for this trip I had an attentive travel partner and luggage handling assistant. On Tuesday, October 21st we arrived in Montreal in anticipation of the Heritage Branch Charter Night Dinner scheduled for the following evening. On Wednesday morning Robert and Maura Wilkins met us at the hotel to take us on a personal tour of Old Montreal with stops at various sites of historic interest. We began the day on the Metro where I was impressed with the use of colour and light in the unique design and art at each station stop.



Our destination was the Chateau Ramezay, the first building in Quebec to be classified as an historic monument. A multi-media circuit traces the evolution of the home from its beginnings as a private residence in 1705. Under the direction of the Antiquarian and Numismatic Society of Montréal (ANSM), the Chateau was saved in 1895 and developed into a history museum, a national portrait gallery and a public library.

Included in the art collection are portraits of people influential in the history of Canada. We found General Gabriel Christie, a professional soldier born in England who took part in the siege of Quebec (1759). As the son of a rich Scottish merchant he inherited a large fortune and became involved in the lumber industry in Quebec. The last line in his biography deserves our attention. "He married Sara-Ann Stevenson, born of a Loyalist family."





Also of interest is an 18th century watercolour portrait of Benedict Arnold who from 1776 commanded the garrison city of Montreal. In the summer of 1776 the American army retreated across the border. "Re-affirming his loyalty to the British Crown, Arnold died in London in 1801."

On leaving the museum we admired the statue of Lord Nelson erected in 1809 at Place Jacques-Cartier. It is a monument that continues to impress in its longevity as an example of English presence in the city of Montreal. It is the city's oldest monument and now stands as the oldest 'Nelson's Column' in the world.

Our next stop was Notre-Dame-de-Bon-Secours Chapel, the first stone chapel in the city of Montreal. This beautiful chapel is also known as The Sailors' Church and small sailing ships with votive candles hang from the ceiling to commemorate protection at sea by 'Our Lady of Good Help'. As it turned out, the chapel was open and an organ concert was about to begin in a few minutes. We were all in agreement to take the thirty minutes and absorb the beautiful sounds of Pachelbel, Telemann, and Bach. Unknown to us at the time a crisis that drew the attention of all Canadians was unfolding on Parliament Hill in Ottawa.



Notre-Dame-de-Bon-Secours Chapel completed in 1678. (re built in 1771)

Steps away from this historic chapel, along a charming street, stands the Bonsecours Market, an impressive structure used in 1849 as the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Canada. And only a block away, walking toward the harbour of Montreal, one finds the marker indicating the location of the home of Sir John Johnson, Indian Commissioner and Loyalist.

It was during lunch at the Montreal Museum of Archaeology and History that we received news of the tragic events unfolding in Ottawa. As a precautionary measure, the Black Watch Armoury was included in the national lock down of military bases. The Heritage Branch Charter Night Dinner was cancelled. While everyone affected by the change of plans was disappointed, our thoughts were focussed on the wellbeing of those directly involved in the crisis taking place in Ottawa.

On behalf of UELAC, I would like to thank Maura and Robert Wilkins who handled the sudden alteration in plans with grace and efficiency. At that point in the day we parted ways with promises to meet for dinner that evening.

Finding ourselves with time on our hands and feeling some nervous energy I proposed to Albert that we climb Mount Royal. This is not a hike for the 'faint of heart' but once we reached the summit the views were well worth the climb. A brisk wind was blowing and the autumn leaves were showering down around us as we made our way along the trails. Stopping at an overlook to view the city below we took a moment to remember those still experiencing the after-effects of the attack on Parliament Hill.



We spent the evening with Robert and Maura. During dinner we talked about the successes and the challenges facing Heritage Branch and the UELAC. We even had a small certificate presentation ceremony. As President of Heritage Branch, Robert presented a Certificate of Loyalist Lineage which I accepted for my sister Amy Ferguson of Bay City, Texas. Shhh, don't tell her! It is a surprise belated birthday present. It was fitting that the certificate be presented in the city of Montreal where our Loyalist ancestor, Abraham Pastorius received his land grant following the American Revolution.

Thank you for the opportunity to represent the UELAC as I travel the country. And thank you for a fine day in Montreal, albeit a very different one than any of us expected.