Montreal’s Ship Fever Monument

AN IRISH FAMINE MEMORIAL IN THE MAKING

The Famine migration, which brought close to one hundred thousand Irish migrants to British North America in 1847, has persisted in public memory as the seminal event in the history of the Irish in Canada. Despite the efforts of many historians who have downplayed the significance of 1847 in relation to the larger wave of migration that brought Protestants and Catholics from Ireland to the Canadas in the thirty years prior to the Famine, images of starving Irish-Catholic refugees forced to embark on the long and perilous trans-Atlantic voyage only to encounter a typhus epidemic at quarantine stations on Partridge Island or Grosse-Ile have been deeply ingrained in Canadian popular historical consciousness. Large-scale Famine commemorations organised in the first and last decades of the twentieth century on Grosse-Ile helped project such images to a wide audience and ensured the island’s iconic status as Canada’s representative Famine site. Grosse-Ile, however, was not the only significant – or even the first – Famine site to be commemorated in Canada. In Pointe Saint-Charles, Montreal, where “the horrors of Grosse-Ile had their counterpart,” groups of Irish Catholics began commemorating the Famine as early as 1870. Yet, while Grosse-Ile has been the subject of a considerable amount of scholarly attention, with the exception of a recent overview of Famine memory in Canada by Mark McGowan, historians of the Irish in Canada have yet to examine how public memory of the Famine migration was contested and constructed in Montreal, the principal Canadian port of disembarkation in 1847.

While many Irish Famine migrants eventually moved on to the United States, they left a lasting impression on a number of Canadian port cities, but none more so than Montreal. During the summer of 1847 the city’s fifty thousand residents had to contend with the arrival of seventy-five thousand Irish who were dropped off at the waterfront by steamers sent up the St. Lawrence from the quarantine station on Grosse-Ile. By June the city was “inundated with thousands of the most debilitated and wretched beings, ever thrown upon [its] shores mostly in a sickly, and many in a dying state.” Those healthy enough to continue on their journey to destinations in the United States or Canada west waited at Montreal’s wharves for transportation, while immigrants exhibiting signs of typhus were taken to the site of two lazarettos and three sheds on the south bank of the Lachine Canal near Wellington Street, where one journalist observed “all the marks of wretchedness and misery in their most revolting forms.” Fearful of “the conversion of a populous city…into a virtual Quarantine Station,” citizen groups and the Board of Health demanded that all incoming immigrants be quarantined outside city limits on one of the Boucherville islands. However, the city’s Joint Emigrant Commissioners and Montreal’s Mayor, John Easton Mills, who would eventually fall victim to typhus, decided that the best way to manage the epidemic was to construct an additional twenty-two sheds on land near the riverbank in Pointe Saint-Charles, just one kilometre southeast of the original sheds. But the new facilities did little to alleviate suffering or contain the contagion, as thousands stricken with disease were overcrowded in unsanitary conditions. It was not until October 1847 that the epidemic finally abated, by which time as many as six thousand people had died, most of them Irish-Catholic immigrants who were hastily buried in mass graves in the vicinity of the fever sheds in Pointe Saint-Charles.

For many Irish Catholics in Montreal in the century following this tragic episode, the Famine migration represented a defining historical moment worthy of commemoration. The focal point of Famine remembrance in the city became the Ship Fever Monument, a boulder installed and inscribed in 1859 to mark the site of the reputed burial grounds adjacent to the fever sheds in Pointe Saint-Charles. Inaugurated by representatives of the Anglo-Protestant elite and a group of workers involved in the construction of the Victoria Bridge, the monument’s original intent was to preserve from desecration the final resting place of all immigrants who died during the typhus epidemic of 1847. Only over time and through a process that was often contentious, and at one point litigious, did it come to be widely recognised as a memorial to victims of the Famine migration. Analyzing commemorative events organised at the Ship Fever Monument in 1897, 1913, and 1942, this paper traces how groups of Irish Catholics laid claim to the boulder as Montreal’s Famine memorial.

More specifically, I will examine how collective acts of remembrance at the memorial site served as a staging ground for the negotiation and construction of Irish-Catholic identities in Montreal in changing socio-political contexts from the late nineteenth century into the mid-twentieth century. While there was generally a shared sense of purpose among Irish Catholics to honour the memory of Famine migrants who succumbed to typhus in 1847 and...
to safeguard their gravesite, particularly at moments when it was seen to be neglected by its Anglican caretakers or violated by incursive industrial operations in Pointe Saint-Charles, the commemorative events organised at the Ship Fever Monument uncovered a range of historical memories and exposed a variety of often competing political agendas. In their struggle to preserve the memorial site and in their search for meaningful commemorative rituals and rhetoric in the fifteen years following the Famine jubilee, Irish Catholics were often confronted with the class and ideological differences that divided their community. They were also regularly reminded of the relatively disadvantaged economic and political position that they, as a group, continued to occupy in the city, reflected in the near absence of Irish-Catholic symbolic space in Montreal’s crowded memorial landscape. However, as the centenary of the Famine neared, an increasing number of Irish Catholics, now several generations removed from Ireland and fully integrated into Canadian society, were enjoying a greater degree of affluence and influence in Montreal. In this context, the embattled undertones and nationalist tenor that resonated in Famine commemorations prior to the First World War gradually gave way to a new approach to recalling the events of 1847, one that tended to focus more on celebrating Irish Catholics’ considerable pioneering contributions to Canada and their historic resiliency in times of adversity.

Though many of the Famine migrants who remained in Montreal lived and worked in close proximity to the burial site – in the industrial milieu of Pointe Saint-Charles and across the Lachine canal in Griffintown – there was no immediate effort made to create a memorial to their compatriots who died in 1847. It was not until 1854 when construction of the Victoria Bridge commenced that the burial site began to attract commemorative attention. Over the next five years, thousands of labourers, including many unskilled Irish Catholics, found themselves working at the northern end of the Bridge at the very spot where the typhus victims were buried in 1847. As many as five hundred English and Irish workers even took up residence next to the mass graves in the fever sheds where Peto, Brassey and Betts, the British firm responsible for building the bridge, had converted into housing. If these formerly feverible environs were not unsettling enough, the presence of “a small mound and a cross” outside their doors would have served as a further reminder that they lived and worked at a “sacred spot.”14 As they hurried to complete construction of the bridge in the autumn of 1859, workers were purportedly so concerned that “the remains of their poor countrymen would be forgotten,” that they “determined to erect a monument upon the spot.”15

The monument took the form of a granite boulder that had either been dredged from the bed of the St. Lawrence during the construction of the bridge or taken out of a field a few hundred yards from the gravesite.16 On December 1, 1859, just three weeks before the Victoria Bridge opened for traffic, a group of workers under the supervision of chief engineer James Hodges, concluded “the Herculean business,” using a derrick to hoist the thirty-ton rock and affix it upon a six-foot stone pedestal.17 On this massive and misshapen tombstone the following dedication was engraved:

To Preserve from Desecration the Remains of 6000 Immigrants Who died of Ship Fever A.D. 1847-48

This Stone is erected by the Workmen of Messrs. Peto, Brassey and Betts Employed in the Construction of the Victoria Bridge A.D. 1859

In the presence of the Anglican Bishop of Montreal, Francis Fulford, Reverend Canon Leach, who had ministered to the small minority of Protestants in the fever sheds twelve years earlier, and Reverend Ellegood, the current chaplain to the Protestant construction workers, performed the dedication from atop the pedestal. Bishop Fulford then addressed the assembled crowd. Standing in front of the monument erected just a stone’s throw from the entrance to the newly constructed Victoria Bridge – a powerful symbol of engineering ingenuity and industrial progress – Fulford vowed that “the bodies of those lying here interred be preserved from any irreverent usage.” While recognising that “the great and destructive pestilence” of 1847 denied a proper burial to its victims, the Anglican Bishop brought the ceremony to a close with the assurance that “the bodies of the faithful rest undisturbed until the day of resurrection.”18

Despite the preponderance of Irish Catholics buried in the mass graves, representatives of the Roman Catholic hierarchy were not invited to the 1859 dedication ceremony and thus denied the opportunity to consecrate the ground in which lay the bodies of their faithful. Their notable absence at the ceremony was indicative of the growing animus that existed between Catholics and Protestants in Montreal, where religious bigotry was routinely preached from the pulpit and propagated by the press. The same edition of the Montreal Witness, a paper well known for its anti-papist views, that reported on the dedicatory ceremony also featured an editorial characterising Roman Catholicism as “a sect which takes no care to conceal its reasonable designs.”19 Such outbursts were inextricably linked to rising sectarian tensions in the city where, since mid-century, to be Irish in Montreal was increasingly associated with being Catholic.20 In this context, representatives of the Anglo-Protestant establishment were clearly not interested in identifying the victims of typhus as predominantly Irish-Catholic and risk inaugurating a monument that might lend credence to a nascent movement of radical Irish nationalism, which looked to the Famine as evidence of British misgovernment and even genocide.21 As dutiful Christians, they would do what they could to “treat the dead with reverence and regard,” but would steer clear of any memorial exercise delving into the increasingly politicised history of the Famine, for fear of exacerbating strained relations between Irish Catholics and Anglo-Protestants in Montreal.22

Less than twenty years after the Irish influx into Montreal, Famine memory also had the potential of fracturing Irish-Catholic relations with their francophone coreligionists and even exposing fissures within the city’s Irish-Catholic community itself. Unlike those who advocated a radically nationalist construction of the Famine, an influential cohort of Irish Catholics in the city did not see the advantage of dredging up memories of the Famine, particularly while they were attempting to maintain the

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integrity of Irish parishes in the city. In 1866 when Bishop Ignace Bourget, in an attempt to allay Irish fears about the realignment of parish boundaries, wrote a pastoral letter reminding the Irish of the assistance they were offered by their French-speaking Catholics in 1847, many Irish Catholics reacted with outrage. St. Patrick's congregation, represented by Father Patrick Dowd and Thomas D'Arcy McGee, let it be known that they were not interested in dwelling on the Famine experience, as it would only weaken their already vulnerable position in Montreal. Clearly some Irish Catholics, particularly those who were more established and longer settled in the city, were eager to project an image of respectability and preferred not to be pushed to recall the destitute state in which the Irish arrived in 1847.23

In the wake of this controversy, however, a growing number of Irish Catholics in the city, primarily those affiliated with St. Ann's parish in Griffintown, were beginning to show interest in remembering the Famine and began to look upon the Ship Fever Monument as an important Irish-Catholic landmark. The first collective, albeit informal, act of remembrance by Irish Catholics at the memorial site took place in July 1870, ironically the same year that title to the memorial site was transferred to the Anglican Bishop of Montreal in perpetuity. Father Hogan, the pastor of St. Ann's, led a small group that brought Father M.B. Buckley, a visiting priest from Ireland, on a tour of notable Irish sites in the city. Significantly, Buckley was brought to see the plot of land "where so many of [his] fellow countrymen so miserably perished." For Buckley, his visit to the monument was particularly moving, but he was perplexed by the mention of "6,000 immigrants" in the monument's inscription.24 "Why," he wondered, "did they not say Irish?"25 Despite this glaring omission, Irish claims to the monument were further strengthened by the mid-1880s, when the Fathers of the Redemptorists assumed control of St. Ann's Church. They introduced the tradition of visiting the memorial site to hold an annual Requiem service in June "for the repose of the souls of the thousands of Irish Catholics whose bones are there interred."26

These commemorative acts, however, were infrequent and small in scale, leaving the site unattended for much of the year. The True Witness and Catholic Chronicle, the mouthpiece of Irish Catholics in the city lamented the fact that "the tall, tangled grass and the sturdy weed riot luxuriantly over the neglected plot where man's feet seldom stray."27 By 1895, Montreal's chapter of the Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH), formed just three years earlier, was equally distressed by the desolate state of the burial grounds.28 As a Catholic fraternal organisation with a mandate to maintain a sense of the history and traditions of Ireland among the diaspora, the AOH took it upon itself to act as guardians of the site (a role it continues to play to the present day). As the most militantly nationalist of the Irish societies in Montreal, the AOH were also interested in the memorial site for political reasons. For nationalists of their ideological persuasion, the Famine was viewed as the most heinous of the many historical wrongs committed by the British against Irish Catholics, and was, therefore, a powerfully symbolic historical event that could be invoked as part of the struggle for Irish independence.

In their bid to gain ownership of the site, delegates from the Order approached Anglican Archdeacon Ker, promising to construct a fence around the monument, erect a plain cross at the entrance to the cemetery, and landscape the plot with grass and flowers. However, Bishop Bond, speaking on behalf of the Archdeacon, denied their request on the grounds that "men of more than one denomination were buried there."29 This scuttled attempt to take possession of the burial site served as an unwelcome reminder to the AOH that the Ship Fever Monument was never intended to be an Irish-Catholic Famine memorial and its Anglican trustees were intent on keeping it that way.

Though increasingly disillusioned with the monument and its caretakers, Irish societies were not deterred from appropriating the memorial site to mark the Famine jubilee. On September 19, 1897 a commemorative event was organised on a scale "never before seen in the history of the Irish Catholics of Montreal."30 In addition to the five thousand Irish Montrealers carrying banners and bunting who walked the two-kilometre route from St. Ann's church in Griffintown to the reputed burial grounds, some twenty thousand spectators lined Wellington Street and followed the procession to the commemorative site.31 As the united choirs of the city sang a requiem, the immense crowd gathered around a platform erected for the occasion and the guests of honour took their positions on stage. After Catholic Archbishop Bruchési offered prayers, several of the city's most prominent Irish-Catholic leaders, including Father Strubbe, pastor of St. Ann's parish, Dr. J.J. Guerin, then president of the St. Patrick's Society, Michael Quinn, M.P. for the riding of Ste. Anne, and Mr. Justice Frank Curran, Judge of the Superior Court of Montreal delivered orations that drew upon familiar nationalist tropes. From their perspective, the Irish who were exiled in 1847 and perished on the shores of the St. Lawrence died as martyrs preserving their nationality and their faith. Their courage was only matched by that of the priests, nuns, and French-Canadian families who took in orphans and ministered to the needs of the Irish throughout that calamitous summer.32 But the most consistent message that came across during the commemorative ceremony oscillated between self-flagellation and self-congratulation. Collectively remembering 1847 not only presented an occasion to celebrate the degree to which Montreal's Irish had overcome adversity in the fifty years since the Famine, it also served as a reminder of how derelict they had been in their duty to honour the memory of their predecessors.

Several speakers at the commemorative event took the opportunity to express their disappointment that Irish Catholics had yet to secure proprietary control over the site from Anglican authorities. For Father Strubbe, it was essential that the land upon which the monument stood be transferred to the Catholic Church, so that the cemetery could be properly consecrated and prayers for the dead performed regularly.33 Under such circumstances that prevented Irish Catholics from acquiring the property, Strubbe and Justice Frank Curran suggested transferring "the bones of the departed…to a more fitting place, namely, Côte des Neiges Cemetery."34 This proposal to relocate the remains is not that surprising considering that since the mid-nineteenth

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century Catholic and Protestant Montrealers had looked to the romantic landscape of cemeteries on Mount Royal as respectable and dignified burial sites for their dead.35 When compared to the 365 picturesque acres of Côte des Neiges Cemetery, designed by surveyor and architect Henri-Maurice Perrault, the bleak, industrial milieu of Pointe Saint-Charles struck some at the commemorative ceremony as a highly inappropriate, even sacrilegious, resting place for Famine migrants.

Irish-Catholic leaders at the jubilee commemorative ceremony expressed even greater disenchantment with the Ship Fever Monument that marked the site of the burial grounds. To some, the boulder appeared crude in comparison to the polished bronze and marble statuary that was being erected at a feverish pace in Montreal and cities throughout North America and Europe at the end of the nineteenth century. In this context it is easy enough to see why Justice Curran referred disparagingly to the 1859 memorial as “that primitive rock” and recommended that a monument to the Famine Irish should be as worthy of commemoration as the monumental shaft built a year earlier in Côte des Neiges cemetery, honouring the memory of the Patriotes of 1837 and 1838.36 In addition to petitioning for a Famine memorial that was more appropriately dignified in design, there were voices that called for what they imagined would be a more authentically Irish monument to the victims of 1847, one that would enhance “the reputation of the Irish people, not only of this city and Dominion, but of the Irish race the world over.” In its coverage of the event The True Witness and Catholic Chronicle pronounced that the Ship Fever Monument “came from stranger hands and is in no sense an Irish monument,” echoing a sentiment that resonated throughout the jubilee ceremony.37

Encouraged by the lack of regard that a number of prominent Irish Catholics had for the Ship Fever Monument, the Grand Trunk Railway (GTR), which since 1852 had helped transform much of Pointe Saint-Charles into Montreal’s hub of industry and transportation, began in 1898 to lobby Bishop Bond and the Anglican Church to sell the memorial site. Intent on acquiring the track land near the entrance of the bridge, the GTR viewed the monument as an impediment to development. Bishop Bond, though reluctant to relinquish ownership of land that was passed to his predecessor in trust, agreed to organise a committee that would take statements from people having personal knowledge of the memorial site, and dig a series of test pits near the monument “to ascertain whether or not there were any remains in the vicinity.”38 Apart from the bones of a dog, no remains were discovered. The lack of evidence obtained by the Anglican committee persuaded Bishop Bond that the site was not a burial ground, increasing the likelihood that GTR would soon succeed in moving the monument and acquiring the land it was designed to protect.

Many Irish Catholics were incensed by the GTR’s attempt to violate the sanctity of the memorial site. The possibility of this collective anger turning to violence was put quite plainly to the railway’s management by M.P. Michael Quinn and Father Strubbe, who insisted that “if [the GTR] had any desire to prevent serious trouble and perhaps violence at the hands of the Irish people of St. Anne Ward they would refrain from any desecration of the last resting place of the unfortunate Irish emigrants at Point St. Charles [sic].”39 These sentiments were given more formal expression when representatives from Irish societies met in Hibernia Hall on November 29, 1898 to protest the sale of the site to the GTR and pass a resolution objecting to “the desecration of the remains of 6,000 Irish immigrants…interred in the cemetery at Point St. Charles.” Together they pledged “to prevent by every means in their power the carrying out of such a project.”40

Determined to have their resolution be seen as representative of the views of all the Montreal Irish, the delegates at Hibernia Hall attempted to muzzle dissent, denouncing as "unauthorized and unworthy any action by individuals presuming to act on behalf of Irish Catholics who may favour the proposed desecration."41 As the delegates anticipated, however, it would not be easy to maintain the appearance of consensus, given that Irish Catholics in the city did not speak as one regarding the proposed sale of the burial site to the railway company. While some – including renowned author Mary Anne Sadlier, one of the few women whose voice registered in the commemorative discourse – did continue to look upon the boulder as “a holy and a righteous object” that ought not to be moved, a variety of alternative memorial sites were suggested as news spread of the projected sale.42 One proposal assigned the monument to a piece of property on the dividing line of the Mount Royal and Cote des Neiges cemeteries.43 Another, which soon proved prescient, was to relocate the boulder to St. Patrick’s Square “in the heart of St. Ann’s Ward [sic], the greatest Irish Catholic Parish in all Canada…where so many survivors of the terrible scourge still worship.”44 By the turn of the century these varied responses by Irish Catholics in Montreal led to considerable uncertainty about the fate of the monument and the surrounding burial ground.

All of “the loud protestations and warmly debated opinions and resolutions” that had been put forth by Irish Catholics since 1898 ultimately proved irrelevant, however, as the Ship Fever Monument was unceremoniously moved several blocks west to St. Patrick’s Square, near the Wellington Street Bridge.45 In the early morning of December 21, 1900 seven carpenters set to work constructing a platform.46 A few hours later “the famous monument” was conveyed to the Square on a flat car that was run down the track on St. Patrick Street and quickly set into place.47 After much speculation about who was responsible for the sudden move, it came to light that the GTR, having failed to secure ownership of the site from its Anglican trustees, had gone ahead and taken the monument out of the path of progress and into the heart of Griffintown.

Though some Irish Catholics had themselves at one point contemplated moving the monument or constructing a deemed more authentically Irish, the railway’s heist had the effect of generating an unprecedented amount of affection for the site and its stone memorial. With its displacement to St. Patrick’s Square, the boulder now not only stood as a memorial to the martyrs of 1847 but also came to symbolise the indignities suffered by their descendants living in Montreal a half century later. Presenting a united front in
condemning what they perceived as an act of iconoclasm, representatives from Irish societies met on May 5, 1901 in the basement of St. Gabriel’s Church in Pointe Saint-

Charles.

Three weeks later a larger meeting was organised in St. Patrick’s Presbytery, this one including representatives from each of the five Irish parishes of Montreal. Together

they formulated a document described as “a unanimous expression of the sentiment of the Irish Catholics of Montreal” that was sent to newspapers, Anglican Archbishop

Bond, and to Montreal’s City Council. Referring to the various forms of persecution culminating in the Famine that the Irish had historically suffered “for Faith and Fatherland,” they insisted that “Irishmen to-day still look upon this burial place as holy ground, not only because it is the resting place of Christians, but also for the reason that it is a spot marking a sad but heroic epoch in the history of our race.” Expressing “bitter regret that the monument should have been removed from the old cemetery it was intended to preserve from desecration,” they urged the Anglican Archbishop to force

the GTR to restore the monument to the site in Pointe Saint-Charles.

While the protests against the GTR came primarily from local Irish groups, there was also a concerted effort made to cast the stone as “a national monument” cherished by all Irish Canadians. The True Witness and Catholic Chronicle, a newspaper that just three years earlier had looked askance at the monument, reported that “the Irish Catholic press of the country has lent its voice to tell the Irishmen of Montreal and all whom it may concern, that the Irish of Canada insist upon it that sacrilegious hands be not allowed to touch the last resting place of the Irish victims of persecution, Famine and pestilence in 1847-48.” Prominent figures in the Irish community echoed these sentiments in the year following the removal of the monument, insisting, “It was that not the Irish of Montreal alone, but the Irish throughout Canada, from Sarnia to Halifax [who] were indignant and protested against this violent spoliation of the graves.”

Whether bowing to pressure applied by Irish groups in Montreal or from further afield, the Anglican Archbishop, still the official titleholder to the land, gave formal notification to the railway in August 1901, accusing it of illegally trespassing and interfering with the property, and demanded the return of the monument. But the GTR, which had laid down three railway tracks and was using part of the plot as a dumping ground, had no intention of replacing the memorial, and now publicly refuted the notion that the site was ever used as a cemetery. Though Archbishop Bond shared this opinion, he did feel strongly that the land should remain undeveloped “because a memorial stone [had] been placed upon it to indicate a very sad and important event in the history of the country.” Irish groups did not appreciate being told that the land they considered sacred was a spurious Famine burial site, nor did they relish having to consult with the Anglican trustees of a monument that they increasingly looked upon as their own. Nonetheless, some solace was taken in learning of the Archbishop’s shared determination to restore the Ship Fever Monument to its original site.

This uneasy alliance, however, could not compel the GTR to reverse its decision, and the monument remained a fixture in St. Patrick’s Square. In its new setting the boulder continued to attract its share of political controversy and soon became something of a touchstone by which to test Irishness in Ste. Anne Ward. Rumours had circulated since 1900 that some prominent figures within the Irish-Catholic community, including Daniel Gallery, then M.P. for Ste.

Anne, had collaborated with the GTR and “consented to the removal of the monument from the cemetery.” When this issue was raised at a meeting of Irish parishes and societies in December 1901, it became clear that even being suspected of maligning the memory of 1847 could ruin a reputation within the Irish-Catholic community. As The True Witness and Catholic Chronicle put it, “the desecration of the cemetery is so abhorrent to Irish sentiment that we would not forgive one of our own people who had allowed himself to be a consenting party to it.” Seizing the political opportunity, Gallery’s rivals in the 1905 municipal elections rekindled long simmering suspicions of Gallery by placarding the boulder “with posters charging him with its removal.” In celebrating their electoral win, his opponents once again made the monument the centrepiece of their smear campaign by covering it with crépe paper. While still an aide-mémoire to the victims of 1847, the boulder had been ascribed political and social meanings constructed at a local level. An object once promising permanence, originally meant to preserve the integrity of the Pointe Saint-Charles burial site, now stood displaced in the centre of Irish-Catholic Montreal as a symbol of the cemetery’s desecration and for some a shameful reminder that Irish Catholics in the city had failed to protect the graves of their forebears.

As the monument approached its ten-year anniversary in St. Patrick’s Square, it seemed unlikely that it would be restored to its original position in Pointe Saint-Charles, especially given that the attention of the city’s Irish Catholics was increasingly diverted from Montreal’s Famine site to Grosse-Île. The movement to build an enormous Celtic cross on the quarantine island generated interest from Montrealers, particularly those affiliated with the AOH whose Quebec City division was spearheading the project. By 1908, when it was announced at the annual banquet of the St. Patrick’s Society in Montreal that the Canadian government would provide a free site atop Telegraph Hill on Grosse-Île to mark the spot where thousands of Irish were buried, it looked like the quarantine station had supplanted the site at Pointe Saint-

Charles as the locus of Famine commemoration in Quebec and Canada. This notion was reflected in the official booklet published in conjunction with the large commemorative event held on Grosse-Île on August 15, 1909. Reference was made to the profound impact that the Famine migration had had upon Montreal in 1847, but the city’s Ship Fever Monument that had once marked the burial grounds was dismissed as a “monument standing wide of the mark.” For the organisers of the Grosse-Île commemoration, an event which drew eight thousand participants, “No other place was more appropriate for a proper and lasting national memento of so grim an episode in Irish and Canadian history.”

While the forty-six-foot Celtic cross on Grosse-Île cast a long shadow over Montreal’s Famine memorial, the 1909 commemorative event eventually had the effect of

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reinvigorating the movement to restore the Ship Fever Monument to the burial site in Pointe-Saint-Charles. The sorry state of the memorial site was mentioned in several speeches delivered during the dedicatory ceremony on August 15. Most notably, radical Irish nationalist Matthew Cummings, national president of the AOH, condemned “A greedy corporation in the city of Montreal [that] dared to lay tracks across the graves.” To great applause, Cummings urged the “Men of Canada [to] never rest until it is replaced on the pedestal where it was taken from.” With the commemorative event “still fresh in the memories of the citizens of Montreal,” members of the AOH and St. Patrick’s Society seemed to take Cummings’ message to heart. Along with the Irish parishes of the city, they managed in short order to procure several thousand signatures on a petition urging the Railway Commission to deny the GTR’s application and preserve the historic burial site. By the end of February 1910 Irish-Catholic societies had generated considerable interest in this issue through the press and had managed to enlist the support of City Council, which agreed to send a legal representative to a meeting of the Railway Commissioners in Ottawa to protest the expropriation of the burial site.

It was not until January 1911 that the matter was finally adjudicated by the Railway Board of Commissioners. The central issue debated during the two-day session was whether the plot of land in question was a cemetery and therefore whether the property could be bought or expropriated for commercial purposes. Charles Doherty, M.P. for Ste. Anne, and Henry Kavanagh, who presented evidence on behalf of the interests of Irish Catholics in Montreal, cited a number of affidavits given by long time residents of Pointe-Saint-Charles in 1901 after the monument had been removed. These affidavits, including one given by ninety-year-old Sister Reed, of the Sisters of Charity, stated that bodies were buried in 1847 in the spot marked by the monument and that it was common knowledge in the area that the site was a cemetery. Doherty and Kavanagh also called representatives of the Catholic and Anglican churches to the witness box to define what precisely constituted a cemetery. Father Callaghan, curate at St. Anthony’s, asserted that a cemetery is any plot of ground where a number of Catholics were known to be buried, regardless of whether records were kept. While Canon Ellegood, Anglican chaplain to the Bridge workers in 1859, who could not recall if the land had been consecrated as a cemetery, maintained that “it was understood that [the site] was never to be used for secular purposes.”

In response, the GTR, represented by W.H. Biggar, argued that the property was not a cemetery in the past and at present was essential to the railway “for the extension of their yards and to avoid congestion.” Referring to his own witness statements, which confirmed that burials of immigrants in 1847 took place in various sites throughout Pointe-Saint-Charles, the GTR’s lawyer argued that the main cemetery was located next to the old immigrant sheds located near the Wellington Basin some distance from the plot of land in question. Either ignoring or unaware of evidence to the contrary, Biggar even called into question the significance that the site in Pointe-St.-Charles had traditionally had for Irish Catholics, contending that “no person regarded the place as a cemetery, and that there was little in the fact that some people went down to the place and took part in some kind of ceremony.”

After two days of listening to these arguments, J.P. Mabee, the Chief Commissioner of the Railway Board, remained unconvinced that the Ship Fever Monument marked the precise location of the burial ground. He was, however, persuaded that bodies were buried in the general vicinity of the monument. In a ruling designed to accommodate the interests of both parties, Mabee granted the GTR permission to expropriate the entire site of the reputed burial ground except for a thirty-foot plot of land where the monument would be returned, fifteen feet from where it originally stood to allow for the construction of a road. The title to the memorial plot remained in the possession of the Anglican Bishop of Montreal, but by June 1912 the land surrounding the enclosed memorial site was sold to the GTR for six thousand dollars, with the stipulation that the Railway retained two thousand dollars to maintain the Ship Fever memorial site.

With the land transaction settled, the GTR returned the monument close to its original spot at the north end of the Victoria Bridge, by that time a busy network of railroad yards, sheds, and tracks. Although representatives of Irish societies were initially disheartened with the decision of the Railway Commissioners, “as they hoped to prevent the railway acquiring any part of the property,” by 1913 the GTR had done enough to improve the appearance of the memorial site, including installing an iron fence, to appease those who had fought for the return of the monument.

On August 17, 1913, after a year’s delay, the Ancient Order of Hibernians were at last ready to oversee a rededication ceremony, almost as grand in scale as the one organised sixteen years earlier to commemorate the Famine jubilee. An assemblage of Montreal Irish Catholics, led by representatives of the Ancient Order of Hibernians and St. Patrick’s Society, accompanied by a number of guests from Quebec City, Ottawa, and the United States, gathered at St. Ann’s Church. In procession they followed a route decorated with streamers and flags to the memorial site, where a platform had been erected for the occasion. Standing in front of the Irish flag bearing the harp and sunburst, T.M. Quigley, AOH County President, gave a short historical account of the memorial, proclaiming that “the Ship Fever Monument was now in its proper resting place for all time.” J.J. Regan, national president of the AOH, reiterated his colleague’s message by pointing to the boulder and promising, “As long as Irishmen live they will not be forgotten.” The memorial, for Regan, would forever stand as a potent reminder of the Famine, particularly the “fidelity shown by [its] victims” and the unparalleled “callousness displayed by authority.” Departing from this nationalist reading, Charles Doherty adopted a more conciliatory tone in his speech, paying tribute to the people of Montreal, “Catholic and Protestant, French and English, and Irish, who succoured the immigrants.” Having represented Irish Catholics in front of the Railway Commissioners two years earlier, Doherty chose to bring the rededication ceremony to a close on a cheery note by observing that the controversy surrounding the monument.

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“had produced the good effect of awakening in the breasts of Irishmen a duty that had perhaps grown dormant in the lapse of years.”

Despite such commemorative rhetoric, the movement to return the Ship Fever Monument to Pointe Saint-Charles was not simply motivated by a sense of duty to set straight the historical record of 1847, it was also a political struggle to protect what had come to be viewed as an Irish landmark: a rare, if rudimentary, symbol of power in the cultural landscape of Montreal. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the city was crowded with historic plagues and monuments promoting the two dominant ethnic groups’ competing notions of national identity, leaving Irish Catholics largely excluded in “the public contest to shape the city’s collective memories.”

Though the reinstallation of the Ship Fever Monument publicly affirmed Irish claims to the memorial site, it did not immediately signal a shift in the agendas of the heritage elites who decided what was historically significant in the city.

The absence of Irish sites in Montreal’s memorial landscape was in some ways a consequence of Irish Catholics’ longstanding position as a politically marginalised and economically disadvantaged group in the city. In Griffintown, where they comprised one third of the population, and in other working class neighbourhoods in Montreal’s industrial heartland such as Verdun, Victoriatown, and Pointe Saint-Charles, many Irish Catholics lived in overcrowded slums and worked as unskilled labourers.

However, Irish Catholics cannot fairly be lumped together and regarded as a powerless underclass in Montreal. Despite the adverse conditions experienced by many in the southwest region of the city, they managed to exercise considerable local political influence, repeatedly returning Irish Catholics as their elected representatives. Moreover, by the early twentieth century there were a significant number of Irish Catholics who had been integrated long enough into the Canadian socio-economic system to enjoy a degree of affluence, which was often accompanied by the move away from Irish enclaves to middle class neighbourhoods above the hill. Two generations after the Famine, Irish Catholics, while still disproportionately represented in the ranks of the working class and largely excluded from the Anglo-Protestant ruling elite, increasingly traversed class lines and residential boundaries. They were now much less likely to be castigated as outsiders, a label more often reserved for Jewish, Italian, Syrian, Ukrainian, and Chinese immigrants who had settled more recently in Montreal.

While it is likely that by the beginning of the twentieth century most Irish-Catholic Montrealers were “Canadian first and foremost,” it is also important to recognise that this identification did not necessarily loosen ties to Ireland or subvert allegiances to the nationalist cause. The experience of the First World War suggests that Irish Catholics in Montreal could simultaneously express loyalty to Canada and a strong desire for Irish independence. At the outset of the war Charles Doherty echoed the sentiments of John Redmond, leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party, by assuring that “nothing could aid the cause of Home Rule more than a united stand for the Empire by the Irish people.”

This call to arms inspired the Montreal Irish in 1914 to establish the Irish Canadian Rangers, a regiment that would eventually form the 199th Battalion of the Canadian Expeditionary Force. However, in the wake of the Easter Rebellion of 1916 and the growing controversy over conscription in Ireland and Quebec, enlistment in the Irish battalion dropped off and the Rangers were disbanded. For some Irish Montrealers the decision to break up the battalion was seen as a betrayal and a sign of the persistent distrust of the Irish at home and abroad. The AOH in Montreal, which in the early days of the war had distanced itself from the anti-British sentiment of its parent organisation in the United States, had by 1917 adopted a more militant stance and began to reject the symbols and rhetoric of Empire and challenge many of their fellow Irish Catholics who remained committed to conscription and the cause of war.

The competing ideas over how the war should be waged and how Irish independence could be achieved indicate that the process of assimilation into Canadian society was ongoing and complex, with many Irish Catholics in the city, even those several generations removed from Ireland, struggling to reconcile their dual national identities.

The exigencies of wartime left the Ship Fever Monument largely neglected, but by the early 1920s groups of Irish Catholics in the city were once again drawn to the Irish memorial as a powerful reminder of nineteenth century Irish migration to Montreal. It was at this time that annual walks to the Stone (a practice that continues to this day) became ritualised. Every year on the last Sunday of May members of the AOH and its Ladies’ Auxiliary, St. Patrick’s Society, the Gaelic League, St. Ann’s Young Men’s Society, and representatives of the Catholic hierarchy would gather in front of St. Ann’s church. Led by Irish pipers and mounted police, they would then walk in procession to the monument where wreaths were laid, prayers recited, and addresses delivered. For a relatively small group of Irish Catholics, often numbering no more than two hundred, this annual commemoration helped maintain some sense of connection to the events of 1847.

A grisly discovery in 1942 once again raised the profile of the site, renewing Irish Catholics’ sense of ownership of the monument and the burial site it marked. In August workers employed by Kennedy Construction Company engaged in the excavation of a passenger tunnel at the city approach to the Victoria Bridge unearthed what test pits dug by the Anglican Committee forty-four years earlier had failed to uncover: the remains of typhus victims in the vicinity of the Ship Fever Memorial. Over the course of a month, workers inadvertently disinterred “coffins of rotting pine wood, blackened by time,” holding the remains of twelve individuals who had been buried in 1847 in “a long trench-like grave at the foot of Bridge Street.” For Irish-Catholic organisations in Montreal, who immediately claimed the remains as those of Famine refugees, the discovery served as a poignant reminder of the approaching centenary of 1847, and once again stirred popular interest in “the sad and terrible story of the great migration of the Irish people.”

The discovery was also a vindication for those who had long argued that the Ship Fever monument stood on hallowed ground. This was not the first time that remains

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of Famine migrants had been unearthed in Montreal. Bones were found in the 1870s during the excavation of the Wellington Basin (near the old emigrant sheds), in 1886 when the foundation of the Royal Mill on Mill Street was dug,91 and in 1914 during a construction project on the site of the Seminary of Saint Sulpice.92 But what made the exhumation near the Ship Fever Monument particularly significant was that it provided material evidence that Irish immigrants had also been buried around the memorial site. No longer could Irish Catholics be dismissed as having “a mistaken impression...that the six thousand unfortunate immigrants were buried in the plot about the monument,”93 as suggested by the GTR and Anglican authorities in 1898. For John Loe, the President of the United Irish Societies of Montreal, the discovery of the bodies “prove[d] that this area comprises the burial ground of the 6,000 victims of...ship’s fever,” putting to rest any lingering misgivings about the authenticity of the memorial grounds as the cemetery of Irish Famine migrants.94

In conjunction with the Ancient Order of Hibernians and the St. Patrick’s Society, Loe’s United Irish Societies decided that the final step in establishing the sanctity of the site would be to rebury the bodies next to the monument. Approval was sought from Anglican authorities, who officially remained proprietors of the memorial lot, and from the Canadian National Railways (CNR), which had absorbed the GTR in 1923 and assumed ownership of the land where the bodies were unearthed. To the relief of Irish associations, the Bishop and the Railway were amenable to re-intering the remains next to the monument. Unlike their predecessors, the CNR were quick to accept the location of the monument and to develop its network of tracks and shops around the site.95 The Anglican Bishop, Arthur Carlisle, also sanctioned the re-interment, believing that the discovery of bones in the area was what had originally motivated his predecessors to establish the stone monument in 1859.96

While representatives of the CNR and the Anglican Church initially showed little more than a superficial understanding of the origins of the memorial site, they were aware of the controversy it had attracted in the past, involving “some litigation about ownership of the land and/or the trusteeship thereof.”97 More importantly, they recognised the historic significance that the site had for Irish Catholics in Montreal and were quick to appreciate “some of the delicacies which enter into a ceremony of this character.”98 In his dispatches to Irish organisations in the city and to Bishop Carlisle, the CNR’s general superintendent, R.C. Johnston, who assumed responsibility for organising the re-interment of the remains, set out to be “sympathetically appreciative of both the religious and the sentimental interest therein of so many in Canada, the United States and in other lands who...have a connection with this epidemic and its victims.”99 While recognising that, “as much as the majority originated in Ireland it is assumed that the Roman Catholic religion was the faith of most of the victims,” Johnston acknowledged that “the victims of the Ship Fever Plague represented all denominations,” and thus organised a re-interment observance on November 1 (All Saints’ Day) that accommodated Irish Montrealers from across the religious divide100

The day’s religious observances began a few blocks away from the memorial site at St. Ann’s Church where at 2:30 p.m. a solemn Libera was held in honour of the 1847 typhus victims. The event had been carefully choreographed to ensure that by the time Irish-Catholic participants in the ceremony had made their way from St. Ann’s to the Ship Fever Monument, John Dixon, Dean of Montreal, was bringing his brief Anglican service to a close.101 By 3:10 p.m. the contingent of Irish Catholics had joined a small group of their Protestant compatriots at the memorial site for the civil component of the ceremony. They gathered next to the freshly dug grave, in which twelve plain gray caskets were visible. As a “raw wind swept across the plot,” the crowd faced a platform draped with purple and black bunting and listened to a range of speeches recounting what happened during the summer of 1847 and expounding on the site’s historic significance. This commemorative moment was indeed unique as it brought together Catholics and Protestants at a memorial site that had often kept Irish-Catholic organisations at loggerheads with Anglican authorities. The newfound spirit of cooperation summoned by the ceremony even inspired the President of the Irish Protestant Benevolent Association, C.B. Brown, to present Emmett McManamy, President of the St. Patrick’s Society with a cheque for five hundred dollars as a gesture “marking their interest in the Re-Interment of the Ship Fever victims and...their goodwill for and towards their friends of St. Patrick’s Society.”102

Such bridge building between Catholics and Protestants is illustrative of the extent to which perceptions of Irish ethnic identity in Montreal had changed since the last large-scale public ceremony at the site of the Ship Fever Monument almost thirty years earlier. By 1942 the historical contributions of the Irish in Montreal had become part of an Anglo-Canadian national meta-narrative. In his correspondence to the AOH and St. Patrick’s Society during the run-up to the 1942 ceremony, R.C. Johnston felt it fitting that the Irish as “pioneers who contributed so much to the early life of this country” be honoured for their contributions to the nation.103 Taking a very different track than the GTR had a generation before, the CNR promised to “endeavour to preserve with respect and dignity their earthly resting place as a tribute to their memory” of “members of a large group who contributed so much to the pioneer life of this country.”104 These accolades bestowed by a powerful national institution like the CNR indicate that by the time of the Second World War the patriotism of Montreal’s Irish Catholics was beyond reproach.

In speeches delivered during the re-interment ceremony Irish Catholics also cast themselves as Canadian pioneers and patriots. Dr. L.P. Nelligan, past president of St. Patrick’s Society, urged those in attendance at the memorial site to look upon the plight of Famine refugees in 1847 as more than a tragedy: “their passing...has served to build a great nation where hatred and spite and bigotry have disappeared.” Acknowledging that “Ireland is not in this war officially,” Nelligan took great pride in pointing out that “the Irish people are in it, fighting now as always that liberty may triumph, that men's souls may be free, that tyranny and
oppression and hunger and fear, may, by God's help, no longer shadow the onward march of humanity." Though there were Irish Catholics in 1942, including John Loye, the President of the United Irish Societies, who rejected the symbolism of empire and militarism, most Irish Catholics in the city were supportive of the war effort, willing to accept Canada's place in the British Commonwealth, and, as was made evident at the re-interment ceremony, prepared to use their past to reconstitute themselves as Canadian patriots in the present.

The patriotic proclamations of Irish Canadians in 1942 must be considered in light of the fact that Ireland was the only member of the Commonwealth to remain neutral during the Second World War, a policy that led to considerable tension between Ireland and the allied powers. In 1942 Canada became entangled in its own contretemps with Ireland when the Irish government objected to the wording of the National Resources Mobilization Act, which categorised Irish citizens living in Canada as British subjects. While the situation was quickly diffused when the Canadian government agreed to grant Irish citizens in Canada deferrals from military service, Ireland's political efforts to assert its independence during wartime did make for uneasy relations between these Commonwealth nations.

This did not prevent the High Commissioner for Ireland in Canada, John Hearne, who was at the centre of this diplomatic spat, from making an appearance at the re-interment ceremony in Montreal. As a well-known advocate of restoring "the integrity of the whole national territory of Ireland," Hearne viewed the monument and gravesite from a somewhat different perspective than the Irish Canadian representatives with whom he shared the platform. Looking down upon the open grave, he claimed those who died in 1847 as Ireland's own: "Out of this clay will speak forever a voice which calls across the ocean, as here today it calls to us across the century, telling of old suffering and old sacrifice." While avoiding making explicit reference to his aspirations for the reunification of north and south under an Irish republic, he did speak of "the great destiny of the race from which these men sprang," urging the crowd to "have no fears for the future of the people and the land from which these men came." For both Hearne and the Irish Canadians who spoke at the re-interment ceremony, the graves of Irish immigrants in Pointe Saint-Charles symbolised the foundation upon which nationhood was constructed in the intervening century. However, unlike the Irish diplomat, who interpreted the sacrifices of Famine refugees as part of the historical journey taken to fulfill Ireland's national destiny, the representatives of local Irish organisations were more inclined to interpret the significance of the site in terms of the Irish contributions to Canadian national development.

Even though participants in the 1942 ceremony at the Ship Fever Monument were ostensibly united in the twin tasks of re-interment and remembrance, the rhetoric surrounding the event reveals that various meanings were ascribed to the memorial site. Much like the commemorations in 1897 and 1913, which transmitted a range of historical and political messages, the 1942 event was a multi-vocal orchestration. The process of socially constructing the Ship Fever Monument was indeed ongoing and complex. From the latter half of the nineteenth century into the mid-twentieth century, Irish Catholics not only had to contend with changing, and sometimes conflicting, popular memories and political priorities vying for prominence within their own community, they were also forced to negotiate with systems of power brought to bear by the GTR, the CNR, Anglican authorities, and various levels of government. Given the number of competing interests at stake, it is not surprising that close to a century after the Famine migrants arrived in Montreal, the meaning of the monument marking their gravesite was still not set in stone.

One thing that Irish Catholics in the city could agree upon, however, was that the Ship Fever Monument was never quite what its Anglo-Protestant architects in 1859 had intended it to be: a mute tombstone marking the 1847 graves of typhus victims of no particular national or religious identity. This certainly did not deter Irish Catholics in Montreal, especially those residing in the working class neighbourhoods below the hill, from taking a vested interest in the Pointe Saint-Charles burial grounds, and by extension, its memorial stone. While rarely looked upon with unbridled affection before the turn of the twentieth century, the Ship Fever Monument came to be seen by various groups of Irish Catholics as an object with a certain utility: it directed attention to what was deemed a sacred site and a pivotal historical event. Thus, in ways unintended by its makers, the monument became "an emblem of the Irish race," an artefact used by Irish Catholics to nurture social memory of the Famine migration. By 1942, the Ship Fever Monument's ownership, historical integrity, and placement had been fiercely contested and negotiated, but in the process Irish Catholics had succeeded in transforming it into the most evocative and cherished Irish historical landmark in Montreal.

Pierre Nora's Lieux de Memoire offers one paradigm that helps explain how this boulder become imbued with so much meaning for Irish Catholics in the city. Nora argues that historic sites and monuments were constructed to fill the void created by the disappearance of spontaneous or "true memory" in pre-modern societies. Over the course of the first half of the twentieth century Irish Catholics in Montreal, several generations removed from Ireland, had become an increasingly diverse group for whom living memory of the Famine migration was remote. Within Nora's conceptual framework, we can see that the urge to preserve and fix the monument in Pointe Saint-Charles as a Famine memorial was in some ways driven by Irish Catholics' "need to represent what ostensibly no longer existed." Irish Catholics may well have been motivated by an unconscious urge to resurrect a buried past, but their interest in the memorial site was also mediated by the conscious desire to assert themselves politically in Montreal. Declaring an historic site significant in Montreal at the beginning of the twentieth century was, after all, a political act – one that conscripted "the past in defence of present power relationships." In this context, the ceremonies and protests performed by Irish Catholics around the monument between 1897 and 1913 transformed the burial grounds in Pointe

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Saint-Charles into an ideologically charged site. The refusal of Anglican authorities to relinquish their role as trustees of the Ship Fever Monument and its removal by the GTR in 1900 provided the necessary impetus for Irish Catholics to position themselves as custodians of the site. By questioning the authenticity of the Famine burial grounds, the railway also ensured that the monument’s desecration became part of the mythology attached to the memorial site, as Irish Catholics were determined that past transgressions against the Irish not be repeated in the present. The eventual homecoming of the monument to Pointe Saint-Charles allowed Irish Catholics to celebrate their success in preserving the integrity of the memorial site and to reflect upon the extent to which they and their Famine forebears had overcome adversity. By 1942, when the discovery of remains inspired another large-scale memorial event at the site, the Irish were very much integrated and assimilated in Canadian society. Now in a position to use the Ship Fever Monument to promote the pioneering and patriotic contribution of the Irish to Canada’s national evolution, Irish-Catholic Montrealers were more confident that invoking the memory of the Famine migration would lend them a certain political legitimacy in relation to other Anglophone Montrealers and their Francophone counterparts.

While Famine memory in Montreal was largely negotiated at a local political level, the commemorations at the Ship Fever Monument were also shaped by broader contexts of remembrance and identity. The GTR’s removal of the monument in 1900 brought a certain ignominy to the memorial site, but in the process it garnered an unprecedented amount of interest from Irish-Catholic newspapers and organisations across Canada. The 1909 commemoration on Grosse-Île also led Irish organisations in Canada and the United States to take more notice of the site in Pointe Saint-Charles, which ultimately worked as a catalyst for Montreal’s Irish Catholics to lay claim to the Ship Fever Monument. This interest directed from the outside Irish world towards Montreal was reciprocal. Many Irish Catholics in Montreal kept abreast of the affairs of their counterparts throughout the diaspora and in Ireland, and were interested in drawing on shared historical experience to project an identity that was relevant beyond Canada’s borders.

Like their counterparts in the diaspora, particularly those in Boston, New York, and Liverpool, groups of Irish Catholics in Montreal in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries periodically remembered the Famine experience as a means of constructing identities and maintaining a meaningful sense of connection to their Irish heritage. Considering the power and resiliency of Famine memory, the struggle in Montreal to claim the Ship Fever Monument as a Famine memorial was more than a political exercise in manipulating the past to shape the present, or simply a consequence of the decline of traditional, unmediated forms of remembrance. Amidst the politicking and posturing that went on around the memorial site in Pointe Saint-Charles, multilayered narratives about the past were produced which reflected the historical consciousness of ordinary Irish Catholics in the city, whose understanding of the Famine was shaped by family and parish life, Irish community associations, and larger national and diasporic networks across the century since 1847. By looking at what Raphael Samuel refers to as “unofficial sources of historical knowledge,” like commemoration, in which history and memory intersect, it is possible not only to bring new perspectives to our understanding of the past but also to gain insight into how social groups in changing socio-political contexts have used history to construct local, national, and transnational identities.114
Notes:


2 John Francis Maguire, The Irish in America (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1868), 145.


4 Mark McGowan, *Creating Canadian Historical Memory: The Case of the Famine Migration of 1847*, Canada’s Ethnic Group Series Booklet, no. 30 (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 2006).


6 Report of the Board of Health for the City of Montreal, 12 August 1847, City of Montreal Archives, Fonds de la Ville de Montréal, 1847 Immigration file.

7 A lazaretto is a hospital designed for the treatment and often quarantine of patients suffering from infectious diseases.

8 Pilot and Journal of Commerce, 12 June 1847. Facilities at this site were eventually expanded to include an additional six buildings but still could not accommodate the influx of sick immigrants.

9 Pilot and Journal of Commerce, 19 August 1847.


11 Hundreds of ordinary Montrealers died from typhus in 1847—some while tending to the immigrants in the fever sheds, including fourteen nuns, eight Catholic priests, one Anglican clergyman, and at least four employees of the Emigration Department.


13 The Ship Fever Monument has had many monikers over the years, including the Immigrant Stone; the Typhus Stone; the Irish Stone; and, most recently, the Black Stone or Black Rock.


15 Ibid., 76.


19 Ibid.

20 Just three years prior to the monument’s inauguration, the Saint Patrick’s Society, a fraternal organisation long open to all Irishmen, reconstituted itself as an exclusively Catholic Irish Society.

21 Mark McGowan, *Creating Canadian Historical Memory*, 8.


25 Ibid., 65.


27 *True Witness and Catholic Chronicle*, 7 April 1897.

28 Founded in 1836 in New York City, the AOH eventually expanded throughout the United States and to Ireland, Australia, Scotland, and England. The first Canadian chapter was established in Montreal on November 20, 1892. By 1909, almost six thousand Irish-Canadians had joined divisions in Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island.


30 *True Witness and Catholic Chronicle*, 22 September 1897.

31 *Montreal Gazette*, 20 September 1897. The Irish societies represented in the procession included the Ancient Order of Hibernians, the Catholic Order of Foresters, the Catholic Mutual Benefit Association, the Irish Benevolent Society, and St. Patrick’s Society.

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33 A special committee appointed by Montreal’s City Council to draft an address to the Queen, the Imperial government and to the three branches of the provincial government estimated “the number of Orphans, amounting within the first fortnight, to about five hundred, and likely to increase at the end of the season, to thousands.” Minutes of a meeting of the City Council of Montreal, 23 June 1847, City of Montreal Archives, Fonds de la Ville de Montréal, 1847 Immigration file.

33 True Witness and Catholic Chronicle, 22 September 1897.

34 Ibid.


36 Montreal Gazette, 20 September 1897. Côte des Neiges, the main Roman Catholic cemetery, was founded in 1855, three years after Mount Royal, the main cemetery for Protestants, opened its gates.

37 Montreal Gazette, 20 September 1897.

38 True Witness and Catholic Chronicle, 22 September 1897.

39 Montreal Herald, 30 November 1898.

40 Montreal Daily Star, 30 November 1898.

41 Montreal Herald, 30 November 1898.

42 Ibid.

43 True Witness and Catholic Chronicle, 24 February 1900.

44 Montreal Herald, 30 November 1898.


46 True Witness and Catholic Chronicle, 5 January 1900.

47 Montreal Daily Star, 22 December 1900.

48 Montreal Gazette, 22 December 1900.

49 General Meeting Minutes of the Saint Patrick’s Society of Montreal, 24 April 1901, Concordia University Archives, Montreal, P026 – Saint Patrick’s Society of Montreal funds, 1864-1984.

50 These parishes included St. Patrick’s, St. Ann’s, St. Mary’s, St. Anthony’s, and St. Gabriel’s.

51 True Witness and Catholic Chronicle, 1 June 1901.

52 Ibid.

53 True Witness and Catholic Chronicle, 27 April 1901.

54 True Witness and Catholic Chronicle, 15 June 1901.

55 True Witness and Catholic Chronicle, 28 December 1901. J.J. Guerin would go on to serve as Mayor of Montreal (1910-1912) and Member of Parliament for the riding of Ste. Anne (1925-1930).

56 The Reverend William Bennett Bond, Lord Archbishop of the Diocese of Montreal to the GTR Company of Canada, 1 August 1901, LAC, RG 30, vol. 2077, file “Documents Regarding Monument at Point St. Charles, Montreal.”

57 True Witness and Catholic Chronicle, 28 December 1901.

58 St. Anne’s Ward included Griffintown and much of Pointe Saint-Charles.

59 True Witness and Catholic Chronicle, 28 December 1901.

60 Ibid.

61 Montreal Gazette, 24 January 1911.


63 Ibid., 5.

64 Montreal Gazette, 16 August 1909.

65 Montreal Gazette, 28 February 1910.


67 Ibid.

68 Montreal Gazette, 24 January 1911.


70 Montreal Gazette, 24 January 1911.

71 Montreal Daily Star, 24 January 1911.


73 True Witness and Catholic Chronicle, 22 June 1912.

74 Montreal Gazette, 25 January 1911.

75 Montreal Gazette, 18 August 1913.

76 Montreal Daily Herald, 30 September 1912, reported that a commemorative event was organised for 29 September 1912 but was called off due to inclement weather, to the disappointment of thousands of local Irish Canadians and hundreds more who made the trip from Quebec City and Ottawa to celebrate the return of the monument from St. Patrick’s Square.

77 Montreal Gazette, 18 August 1913.


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Montreal Gazette, 14 September 1914.


85 Montreal Gazette, 30 May 1927.

86 English language newspapers in the city reported on the discovery and the re-interment ceremony, but with the exception of La Presse, which ran stories on August 5 and October 31, French language newspapers in the city did not take much notice of the Irish cemetery in 1942.

87 Montreal Gazette, 4 August 1942.

88 Montreal Gazette, 31 October 1942.

89 Montreal Gazette, 4 August 1942.

90 Montreal Gazette, 1 March 1910.

91 Liverpool Catholic Herald, 6 June 1914.

92 Montreal Daily Star, 30 November 1898.

93 Montreal Gazette, 4 August 1942.


95 Memorandum Re: Old Burying Ground – Point St. Charles, 4 August 1942, Anglican Archives of Montreal, Ship Fever Memorial file.

97 Ibid.


99 Ibid.


101 Montreal Gazette, 31 October 1942.


105 Montreal Gazette, 2 November 1942.

106 Montreal Gazette, 16 March 1942.


108 After helping to draft the new Constitution of Ireland, Hearne was appointed High Commissioner to Canada in 1937, a position he would fill until 1950, when he was named ambassador to the United States.

109 Montreal Gazette, 16 March 1942.

110 Montreal Gazette, 2 November 1942.

111 Montreal Gazette, 18 August 1913.


113 Gordon, Making Public Past, 168.


60 McMahon Montreal’s Ship Fever Monument