

S. M. BAYLIS  
808 UNIVERSITY STREET  
MONTREAL, QUE.

October 7, 1928.

17 Rue Taylor Sq.,  
Château Fortin ay,  
par Alere.  
Indre-et-Loire.  
France.

McFavish monument

Dear Sir - I have heard nothing of or from you since my letter  
of March 26 1927.

I enclose clipping of an article from the Herald, re: 1st  
written on the initiative of the Editor, who asked me for the data.  
I do not know what effect this may have upon an aroused  
public opinion or whether there may not be danger to know the  
identity of the "outside influence" which obstructed the City in its good  
intentions to do the work, the knowledge of which is "officially"  
known only to the Ferrault City Engineers, Mr. Brodeur having died since  
the correspondence with him ended with your letter to him of April 20 1926  
& his reply of May 26 following, yourself & me.

But for this untimely intervention, as you well know,  
the work would have been done two years ago & the place made  
a beauty spot - instead of the eye-sore which it now is.

I trust that you may now, at long last, be awakened  
to your self-imposed responsibility & the end that this shameful  
reproach may be at once removed from our City, generally  
but more particularly to those immediately & intimately  
concerned.

Yours truly,

Saul M Baylis

October 28, 1930.

Dr F.W.Gilday,  
Alderman St Andrew's Ward,  
Montreal.

MC TAVISH TOMB & MONUMENT

Dear Sir:-

You may know something of the unsightly desolation which disfigures this historic and, literally, "consecrated", Plot, and of my efforts to arouse public interest in its preservation and care.

I have told the whole story at length supplemented by views and documents, which those interested may see and read.

Simon McTavish was a big man in his day, one of the group of British merchants at the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th centuries, established Montreal's commercial supremacy. He was a friend and benefactor of his French-speaking fellow-citizens and married one of them. He and his partner, Joseph Frobisher, founded the North West Fur Company here in Montreal which operated successfully for many years against the old Hudson's Bay Co. until finally absorbed by it. He built the Tomb on the mountain and a mansion on the site of Sir Mortimer Davis' house on Pine Avenue. He died in 1804, was buried in the Tomb, and his nephews erected the Monument - one of our oldest - on its present site. The Wall was built about 1848 when the Plot was "consecrated", and now, like the Monument, is rapidly falling inot decay and ruin. The Tomb - containing the remains of about six persons - is covered up under a mound of stones and earth.

Following my activities, in which I was warmly supported by the French and English Press, the late Alderman Brodeur, then the Chairman of the City Executive, has arranged to do the necessary repairs in the public interest, beautify and maintain the Plot as an attractive adjunct of the Park, when some outside influence intervened to stop the work.

It thus remains an eyesore and a reproach, as well as a menace to the passers-by from the crumbling walls, and if you can do anything to have these deplorable conditions ameliorated, you will, I feel sure, win the approval not only of your own Ward but of the City at large.

Very truly yours,

James W. Baylis

June 22, 1931.

Alderman W.S. Weldon,  
Executive Committee,  
City Hall,  
Montreal.

SIMON MC TAVISH TOMB AND MONUMENT

Dear Mr Weldon:-

Following our conversation of Saturday last, I have pleasure in submitting in brief some data concerning this historic plot. I have covered the matter in full detail in an illustrated lecture which I gave some time ago and which is available to the Executive for reading or personal presentation should they desire.

McTavish was one of the most important of the group of British merchants who, like many of his associates, married a French Canadian girl of good family (Charlebois) and lived and worked here at the close of the 18th and beginning of the 19th centuries, and established the commercial supremacy of Montreal.

He and his partner, Joseph Frobisher, founded the North West Fur Company here which was a formidable rival of the old Hudsons Bay Company for years until it was absorbed by that Company.

His town house was on St Jean Baptiste Street and his country house on the site of Sir Vincent Meredith's house on Pine Avenue.

His Farm marched alongside that of James McGill who left his farm to found McGill University and the McTavish farm was disposed of as his will provided. Both farms ran from the mountain top to Dorchester Street, then open country, but now worth many millions of dollars. About 1800 he built a mansion on the site of Sir Mortimer Davis' house and a Tomb, or family vault, on the plot at the angle of the upper reservoir and the Allan wall, both of course then non-existent. The mansion fell into ruin and was pulled down about 1860. The Tomb remains and so far as we know contains other bodies besides that of McTavish himself, his infant child, and one of his nephews. He died in the prime of life in 1804 and his nephews, William and Duncan McGillivray, erected the monument to his memory, still standing though shaky, shortly after his death, probably the oldest monument in the Province. He left a large fortune and bequeathed considerable sums to relatives and friends and £1000 each to the Hotel Dieu and the Grey Nuns.

The plot was consecrated in 1848 and a wall erected, all now in a ruined and dangerous condition. This "Consecration" placed the plot "Hors de Commerce", exempt as such from all deeds and now practically "no-man's-land".

As you may know, I dug up the story and agitated to arouse public opinion to restore and preserve the plot from utter and impending ruin. Backed by public opinion and the Press, both French and English, the late Alderman Brodeur, Chairman of the Executive, placed the matter on his agenda for attention in the spring of 1926, as the files will

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show, and I was pleased to think that the restoration and upkeep were assured. Unhappily, a gentleman, formerly a resident of Montreal, now living in France, hearing of this, intervened and expressed his intentions, for sentimental reasons, to do the work himself. This blocked Mr Brodeur's good intentions and the plans were dropped, since when nothing has been heard from this gentleman or done by the City.

I have urged and again press that the City, on public grounds and by right of eminent domain and for its own protection in case of possible damages to passers-by from the crumbling walls do, without delay, undertake the restoration and preservation of the walls and monument, clean up the plot, uncover the Tomb now buried under a mound of stones and earth, and make the place a beauty spot in the Park instead of the hideous eyesore and dangerous menace which it now is.

It is surely incumbent upon the City that it should have this reproach upon its good name removed. I do not think it likely that this gentleman will trouble you further, but if need be he can be protested and all costs and damages held against him.

No one has any proprietary rights ~~right~~ or interest in the plot or any business to meddle and I take it there is nothing to prevent the City going ahead with repairs as part of Park improvements, at the estimated cost of a mere \$2000. as I sincerely hope it will do.

I have written to Dr Gilday who as Alderman for the Ward is naturally and sympathetically interested and I am at your service, and the call of the Executive to meet them at their office or on the spot and furnish all information which I have, at any time before July 4 when I leave town for the summer.

Faithfully yours,

Paul M. Baylis

Comité Exécutif

Hôtel de Ville



Executive Committee

City Hall

J-ALLAN BRAY, PRÉSIDENT  
TANCRÈDE FORTIN, C.R.  
ALFRED MATHIEU  
J-M. SAVIGNAC, N.P.  
WM-SMILEY WELDON

Montréal , June 23rd, 1931.

Paul M. Baylis, Esq.,  
3574 University Street,  
M o n t r e a l.

Dear Sir:

Simon McTavish Tomb and  
Monument.

I beg to acknowledge receipt of  
yours of the 22nd inst., and will be pleased  
to put same before the Executive Committee, and  
hope for a favorable solution.

I remain,

Yours very truly,

Member of the Executive  
Committee.

Comité Exécutif

Hôtel de Ville



Executive Committee

City Hall

J-ALLAN BRAY, PRÉSIDENT  
TANCRÈDE FORTIN, C.R.  
ALFRED MATHIEU  
J-M. SAVIGNAC, N.P.  
WM-SMILEY WELDON

Montréal, November 19th, 1931.

S. M. Baylis, Esq.,  
3574 University Street,  
M o n t r e a l.

Dear Sir:

I beg leave to acknowledge receipt of your letter of the 12th inst., re repairs to McTavish Monument, and to state that same cannot come out of unemployment relief funds, but Mr. Parent, Director of Services, to whom I handed your letter says that same will be taken up after the New Year, when our new budget will be in operation.

Therefore, I sincerely hope that, by the Spring, the monument will be put in good shape.

I remain,

Yours very truly,

Member of the Executive  
Committee.

Toronto, Ontario.

November 1, 1929

Dear Sir, -

My attention has been directed just recently to an article in Le Devoir of July 23, 1928 on the McTavish Monument and as I am writing a short biography of Simon McTavish, I was greatly interested in the information it contained. <sup>four or five years ago.</sup>

The article mentioned that M. S. M. Baylis had traced the descendants of Simon McTavish. As it is quite probable that he also traced the ancestors of McTavish as well, this would be of great value to me and I would consider it a great favour if I might have a copy of the result as well as any further information you may have concerning McTavish.

I paid a visit to the monument this summer and was rather dismayed at the neglect displayed. I would therefore be delighted to hear that further developments in placing the monument in the hands of the city had been undertaken since the article mentioned above was written.

Thanking you in anticipation, I am

R. Harvey Fleming  
59 Pine Crescent  
Toronto.

Yours truly  
R. Harvey Fleming

SAMUEL M. BAYLIS,

3574 University Street

TEL. MARQUETTE 3476

MONTREAL

*Copy*

November 13th

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R. Harvey Fleming Esq.,  
59 Pine Crescent,  
Toronto, Ont.

IN RE SIMON MC TAVISH

Dear Sir:-

Your letter of November 1st was read at the monthly meeting of the Council of the Antiquarian & Numismatic Society yesterday - I, being one of the Vice-Presidents, and in the Chair - and was passed on to me for reply.

You seem to be informed of my activities in this matter, and of the support which these have received from the public and the Press both French and English.

Nothing has since been done to remedy the deplorable condition of the McTavish Plot and Monument which you have seen for yourself, and which is getting worse as time passes.

Being assured of the support of all sections of our City, the late Alderman Brodeur, then Chairman of the Executive Committee, wrote me on December 9 1825 that the City would undertake the work of restoration and upkeep of the Plot and that "the necessary instructions would be given to this effect".

This was all that I could wish in fulfilment of hope and long effort and I looked to see the work begun in the Spring of 1926 and completed during the Summer.

To my great surprise and deep chagrin I received a letter of date May 28 1926 from the Director of Public Works, enclosing copy of a letter from a gentleman, formerly of this City and now living in France, who claims connection with some of the persons whose remains are said to rest in the old Tomb, deprecating the intervention of myself, the City, or anyone else in the responsibility of the repairs which he claimed as his sole privilege and which he declared his intention to assume.

This, of course, put a stop to the City's laudable activities, and notwithstanding official communications and my own personal letters asking that this gentleman implement his promises by immediate action, he has said and done nothing!

I made no extended research into the McTavish history and shall be glad to be informed of yours. Thinking that you may like to know of my illustrated lecture in detail, I send you the MS - still unpublished - which please return after reading.

Very truly yours,

SAMUEL M. BAYLIS

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*no reply yet -  
please return M.S.*



November 13, 1929.

Dear Doctor Morin:-

I enclose copy of My reply to Mr Fleming's letter which I was asked to write.

I fear that one of these days there will be an accident to passers by or boys clamvering over the crumbling walls of the McTavish Plot in which the City might be involved in an action for damages.

Perhaps, in your dual capacity of Antiquarian and Historic Sites Commissioner, you would take occasion to suggest to Mr Terrault and Alderman DesRoches that the City should even yet do the work, protest Mr Reid-Taylor, and send him the bill.

If he paid it, well and good; if not, as is probable, the City would only be where it intended in 1896 and everyone would be pleased.

The official files of 1925-6 will disclose the correspondence between Mr Reid-Taylor, the City, and myself, in the matter.

Faithfully yours,

SAMUEL M. BAYLIS

Dr Victor Morin,  
97 St James Street,  
CITY.

Toronto, Ontario,

December 27, 1929

Dear Sir, —

I am very sorry if, by not returning your manuscript on Simon McTavish, you have been caused any inconvenience. I should at least have acknowledged your kindness in sending it to me but I was very busy at the University towards the end of the term and neglected to do so. Then I wished to read it in connection with a great deal of material I have collected about McTavish which was at my home.

Now, I have read the manuscript along with the material and discovered how very little I knew about McTavish before I received your lecture. Much of your material was entirely new to me, especially the history of the tomb and monument, the memorial to the children in England and the Report and Inventory of Estate, R. Griffin, 1815. I hope to be able to read this last along with the Will, for I am sure from your quotations that they are both very interesting.

It is remarkable to me ~~how~~ different our viewpoints have been with respect to McTavish. I started as nearly as possible to his arrival ~~in~~ this continent and followed his subsequent career, at Detroit, Michilimackinac and Grand Portage, his success at Montreal and ending with rather a shock at the ruin of the tomb and monument. You have commenced your task <sup>there</sup> urged on by the neglect of the

Burial Place and from that point of view brought to light  
a mine of material.

I am afraid I have unearthed very little about McTavish  
as compared with your valuable researches, but it might  
be interesting to compare notes at some later date. I also  
believe there is some further information in the early volumes  
of the Montreal Gazette beginning about 1785 the only copies of  
which are in the Public Library here.

Again, thanking you for your kindness and  
hoping you may forgive my unpardonable delay,  
I am

Yours truly

A Harvey Fleming

R. Harvey Fleming,  
59 Pine Crescent,  
Toronto.

December 28, 1929.

R. Harvey Fleming Esq.,  
59 Pine Crescent,  
Toronto, Ont.

IN RE SIMON MC TAVISH

Dear Sir:-

I have just received your kind letter of 27th enclosing the McTavisk MS.

I had no wish to hurry you in your reading and notation, but not hearing from you I naturally wanted to know that you got the MS and found it useful and interesting, as I am now glad to hear that you did.

I shall be very pleased to have you drop in some day when you are in Montreal so that we can compare notes. I can then show you my photos and documents - noted in the two lists in the MS. - which, as they cost me a couple of hundred dollars, I do not care to entrust to the mails.

I should be glad to know the scope of your activities and what you intend - whether book, pamphlet, lecture, or what not. If you contemplate a biography in extended book form, perhaps my material could be made very useful and helpful in some way. I should like to have the earlier personal data as I made no attempt to dig up anything of this kind. I aimed at brevity and concerned myself chiefly with the Tomb and Monument and such data as turned up incidentally with a view to arousing public interest in its restoration.

The file of the Gazette in your Public Library should afford much of value. There is no complete file here and I only got by chance in some odd numbers in McGill Library the meagre notes I have in my paper.

Very truly yours,

Paul M. Bayly

Toronto, Ontario,  
January 22, 1930

Dear Sir, —

Your further information concerning Simon McTavish in your letter of December 28<sup>th</sup> raises many points of interest. I am also puzzled as to what could be done with the material which has been collected from the two different viewpoints as mentioned in my last letter. Simon McTavish is very much of a dice issue with me for I am more concerned with the history of the North West Company and its trading activities from Montreal. However, since McTavish was the head of the concern during the years of its greatest expansion, I followed his career with some care. If some facts were available about his early life and family in Scotland, material for a complete life would be at hand. I have made a few casual enquiries but without result.

Mr. W. B. Wallace, librarian of the University here and as you know don't know, author of Canadian Bibliography has assured me that any additional information about McTavish would be welcomed for the facts concerning his life that could be relied upon were few and far between. He also said that he thought McTavish had earned a place for himself in Canadian History and deserved to be remembered. From my own study of his work and life at Montreal, I have come

to very much the same conclusion. There is also another source where interest might be encouraged. McTavish was a merchant at Detroit for a number of years and there is a very live interest in things historical in the motor-city at this present stage of its cultural development. As for Montreal, some day the tomb and monument may be comparable to the mevents at Mecca, to which all the great merchant princes and financiers of Canada will make pilgrimages to do homage to <sup>the</sup> originator of organized commerce in Canada. There will probably be a fifty-story building on the site of his place of business and the monument, instead of needing a little plaster or cement to hold it together, will be pointed with pure gold.

I hope to look through the file of the Gazette after 1790, but up to that date there were very few references to McTavish. I noticed at St. Sulpice library some letters to McTavish and a few written by him. Have you collected these together or copied them? They might indicate the source from which more letters would be forthcoming.

I would be very interested in seeing your collection of documents and I will take advantage of your business at the first opportunity which will not be before summer I am afraid.

R. Harvey Fleming  
59 Pine Crescent Toronto.

Yours sincerely  
R. Harvey Fleming