

THE MC TAVISH TOMB AND MONUMENT

To the Mayor and Aldermen,
of the City of Montreal.

Gentlemen:-

THIS MEMORIAL of the ANTIQUARIAN & NUMISMATIC SOCIETY,
concerning the burial place of a worthy citizen of the olden days -
situated to the West of the Allan property, below the Upper Reser-
voir and within the limits of the Park,

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITS:-

THAT the enclosure presents a sad state of neglect; the Tomb has mysteriously disappeared under a mound of debris; the Monument - the oldest in the City - and the surrounding wall have fallen into decay; and the whole place will become an utter ruin unless immediate steps are taken to preserve it.

THAT so far as we can discover there are no representatives of the McTavish family living here, nor do we think that should there be found any living here or elsewhere they would be sufficiently interested or willing to undertake this care, or object to anyone else doing so.

THAT while the Plot itself is still registered under Cadastre 1799 in private ownership, the "approach" in front and the reserved avenue leading up to it are in the occupation of the City without apparent warrant of purchase or ownership.

THAT having to this extent entered into possession and at least tacitly assumed responsibility, the City should now undertake the full charge of restoration, repair and preservation of this historic spot, consecrated to the memory of those whose remains lie buried there, so that this reproach be removed.

THAT the cost of such restoration, if undertaken at once before further deterioration sets in, should not be great, and that when completed the expense of up-keep would be negligible compared with the satisfaction which citizens and visitors would have in viewing the ornament which this little known and neglected corner of the Park could easily be made.

AND WE FURTHER SUBMIT

in support of this MEMORIAL a brief resumé of such facts as our researches have disclosed concerning the later life, death and burial of

SIMON MC TAVISH

He was one of that coterie of enterprising merchants who flourished here at the close of the 18th century and firmly established the foundations of Montreal's commercial supremacy. He, with his partners and associates, founded the North West Fur Company, afterwards known as the "X.Y.Z." and later merged in the Hudson's Bay Company. He amassed what in these days was a great fortune, and computed in terms of the present that of a millionaire. He owned, and lived during the winter in, his "town house" on St Jean Baptiste Street, lately demolished, and resided in the summer at his "country seat" on his "farm" on the Mountain, which reached from the summit to what is now Dorchester Street and from about McTavish Street, which bears his name, where his farm joined that of James McGill, the founder of McGill University, whose own house, "Burnside", occupied the site of the Jewish Tabernacle on McGill College Avenue, then all open country; besides which he owned property at Terrebonne, and a small estate in Scotland.

He was an early and notable example of The Bonne Entente, having

Madamezelle

x to about
Ontario Avenue
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THE MC TAVISH TOMB AND MONUMENT (2)

married Mlle Chabailles, sister of Louis Chabailles, a prominent Notary of the day, and also of the Curé of Longueuil, a noted scholar and writer. The Chabailles family was one of the most distinguished and wealthy of the time, and is represented through the female line by descendants now living. The couple had four children, two sons and two daughters, who apparently died in early youth, and the widow married an English officer, Major Plenderleath, of the 100th Regiment, four years after the death of her husband. He had a pew in the Notre Dame Parish Church, and bequeathed £1000 each to the Grey Nuns and Hotel Dieu.. He was a member of the Old St Gabriel Parish Church where he had a pew, and was buried by the Anglican Rector, the burial certificate being signed by two French and two English relatives or associates.

He was held in the highest esteem by contemporaries and business associates as an upright, enterprising, if masterful, man, and his obituary is written in words of warmest approval of his "talents", "hospitality", and as "a man of generous and distinguished character", and his "many virtues" are attested in the inscription on the Monument erected by his nephews in "grateful tribute" to his memory.

He built a palatial mansion on the site bounded by the present Pine Avenue, McTavish and Peel Streets, facing south, which, however, was never completed, but from extant drawings and sketches and the recollections of old citizens, its imposing dimensions can be established. In its unfinished, deserted state, it became the prey of ~~XXXX~~ vandals who removed everything portable, and the ruin afforded matter for the wildest legends of ghosts, apparitions &c, and even the tragic death of the owner by his own hand became a tradition attached to the so-called "Haunted House", all of it without any basis of fact. The plain truth is that Simon-McTavish died July 6, 1804 in his bed "at his 'country seat' on the Mountain" from a cold contracted in the Spring while inspecting the building of his new house, and was buried in the Tomb already prepared as a family mausoleum on the lonely spot in the rear of the mansion. The Monument was erected at some unknown date between the time of his death and that of his nephew, Duncan McGillivray, one of the builders, who died in 1808 and was buried in the same Tomb. The wall was built about 1846 and the burial plot was consecrated by the Lord Bishop of Quebec in 1848, thus constituting it forever "hors de commerce". The House was demolished in 1861 and some of the materials are said to have been used in the construction of adjoining buildings.

The Succession to the entailed "farm" property, passing over the testator's deceased children, came to his nephew, John McTavish, who had removed from Montreal to Baltimore, Md. U.S.A., where, in 1816, he married Emily Caten, a member of a distinguished family of that place. He was British Consul at that City 1834-1852, when he died and was there buried, leaving all his property to his wife. Reservation of the burial plot, its approach, and communicating road was expressly stipulated in all deeds from the first sale by John McTavish in 1843 to the last purchase by Hugh Allan in 1854. In 1861 the widow McTavish instituted suit against the purchaser for encroachment of his newly-built wall on the reservation, and after years of litigation the action was decided in Appeal in 1869 in favor of plaintiff, with the result seen in the present boundaries between "Ravenscrag" and the Park, since which date the records are silent. The Tomb has disappeared, and in its place and over the site and its presumed ruins has been constructed a mound or cairn of stones and earth, but by whom, or at whose orders, it does not yet appear.

WHEREFORE

in consideration of the foregoing (which synopsis of the facts Mr S.M. Baylis, one of our Vice-Presidents, has compiled) your

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Memorialists petition that the City assume responsibility for the restoration, repair, and preservation of the McTavish burial place and its appurtenances to the end that this Monument be protected and the memory of a great man and good citizen kept alive among us.

We have the Honor to be,

Gentlemen,

President

Recording-Secretary

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LE MONUMENT ET LE TOMBEAU

MC TAVISH

Au Maire et aux Echevins
de la Cité de Montréal.

Messieurs:-

LA REQUÊTE SUIVANTE DE LA SOCIÉTÉ D'ARCHÉOLOGIE ET DE
NUMISMATIQUE;- au sujet du monument et du tombeau de famille
d'un personnage éminent du Montréal d'autrefois, situés à
l'ouest de la propriété Allan, au pied du réservoir à ~~haut~~ ^{haut}
niveau, et dans les limites du parc de la Montagne-.

EXPOSE RESPECTUEUSEMENT:-

QUE l'enclos est dans un triste état de négligence; que le
tombeau est mystérieusement disparu sous un amas de débris;
que les murs qui entourent le Monument- le plus ancien de la
Cité- sont tombés en décadence, et que le tout est destiné à
une ruine complète si des mesures immédiates ne sont prises
pour y remédier.-

QU'EN autant qu'il a été possible de s'en assurer, il n'y
a pas à Montréal de représentants de la famille Mc Tavish; que
s'il y en avait ici ou ailleurs nous sommes persuadés qu'ils
ne seraient pas suffisamment intéressés ou désireux d'entre-
prendre les travaux de restauration, & qu'ils ne s'objecteraient
pas à ce que d'autres s'en occupent.-

QUE bien que le terrain lui-même figure encore au cadastre
(No 1799) comme propriété privée, il n'en est pas moins vrai
que l'espace en face du monument et l'avenue qui y conduit sont
en la possession de la cité, sans autre mandat apparent comme
acquéreur ou propriétaire du susdit terrain.-

QUE la cité ayant ainsi jusqu'à un certain point pris possession & assumé la responsabilité de ce terrain, il s'en suit qu'elle devrait prendre sous ses charges de restorer, réparer & conserver cet endroit historique, consacré à la mémoire de ceux qui y sont inhumés, de façon à encourir aucun reproche.

QUE le coût de restauration, si elle était entreprise avant des déprédations plus considérables, ne saurait être élevé, et que le coût d'entretien serait bien minime comparativement à la satisfaction que les citoyens et les étrangers éprouveraient à la vue des améliorations apportées à ce coin du parc de la Montagne, demeuré jusqu'ici peu connu et négligé.-

NOUS VOUS SOUMETTONS EN PLUS,

afin de justifier notre requête, un résumé succinct des faits dévoilés par nos recherches sur la vie, la mort, et le lieu d'inhumation de

SIMON MC TAVISH.

Il appartenait au groupe des marchands entrepreneurs qui prospérèrent à la fin du 18^e siècle et établirent les solides assises de la suprématie commerciale du Montréal actuel.- Avec ses associés il fut le fondateur de la fameuse compagnie du Nord-Ouest pour le commerce des fourrures, bientôt connue sous les initiales de N.Y.C., et qui plus tard s'amalgama avec la puissante compagnie de la baie d'Hudson.- Il amassa à cette époque ce qui était considérée comme une grande fortune. Propriétaire rue St Jean Baptiste, d'une "maison de ville" aujourd'hui démolie, il y passait l'hiver, et pendant l'été il allait demeurer dans sa maison de campagne sur sa "ferme" de la Montagne, comprise entre le sommet de cette dernière et l'enlignement actuel de la rue Dorchester d'un côté, et de l'autre entre la rue Mc Tavish qui porte son nom et l'enlignement de l'Avenue Ontario, le tout en pleine campagne.- Cette ferme

ferme touchait à celle de James Mc Gill, le fondateur de l'Université du même nom, & dont la maison Burnside occupait le site actuel du Tabernacle Juif, sur l'avenue du collège Mc Gill.- De plus M. Mc Tavish était grand propriétaire terrien à Terrebonne et en Ecosse.-

Il fut un des premiers à donner un bel exemple de bonne-entente, en se mariant à une demoiselle Chaboillez, appartenant à une famille distinguée et riche de l'époque, la sœur de M. Louis Chaboillez un homme instruit & un écrivain de marque. De ce mariage naquirent quatre enfants, qui décédèrent en bas âge, et madame Mc Tavish devenue veuve se maria en secondes nocces à un officier anglais, le Major Plenderleath, du 100^e régiment, quatre ans après le décès de son mari.- Ce dernier avait un banc à l'église Notre-Dame pour son épouse, et à sa mort il légua une somme de mille louis à chacune des communautés des Soeurs Grises et de l'Hôtel-Dieu. Membre de l'ancienne Eglise paroissiale St Gabriel où il avait un banc pour lui-même, Simon Mc Tavish fut inhumé par le curé anglican, et son acte de décès portent les signatures de deux Canadiens-français et de deux anglais, parents et associés.-

Tenu en très haute estime par ses contemporains comme un homme droit, entreprenant et d'un esprit supérieur, sa notice nécrologique en parle avec de grandes louanges, énumère ses talents, son hospitalité, sa générosité, ses manières distinguées, et de plus ses nombreuses vertus sont attestées dans l'inscription figurant sur le Monument élevé à sa mémoire par ses neveux, en témoignage de reconnaissance.

Sur un terrain borné par l'avenue des Pins, les rues Peel, et Mc Tavish, faisant face au sud, Simon Mc Tavish avait entrepris la construction d'une somptueuse demeure qui, toutefois, ne fut jamais terminée.- Il a été facile d'en reconstituer les dimensions imposantes à l'aide du souvenir des anciens et de nombreux plans & dessins.- Inachevée et située dans un endroit désert cette demeure devint bientôt la proie de vandales qui

qui emportèrent tout ce qu'ils purent en détacher, et de ses ruines sortirent de fameuses légendes de fantômes et d'apparitions, et l'imagination populaire aidant on alla jusqu'à dire que la Maison hantée l'était par l'âme de son propriétaire qui serait mort tragiquement en se suicidant.- A la vérité Simon Mc Tavish mourut le 6 Juillet 1804 dans son lit, à sa maison de campagne sur le flanc de la Montagne, d'une maladie contractée le printemps précédent pendant qu'il surveillait les travaux de construction de sa nouvelle maison, et il fut inhumé dans le tombeau déjà construit par lui-même pour servir de mausolée à sa famille.- Le Monument fut érigé peu après par un neveu, Duncan Mc Gillivray qui mourut en 1808 et qui fut inhumé lui aussi dans le même tombeau que son oncle.-

Le mur d'enceinte du tombeau et du monument fut construit vers 1846, et le terrain enclavé fut consacré comme lieu de sépulture par le Lord Evêque de Québec en 1848, le mettant ainsi "hors de commerce".-

La maison de campagne fut démolie en 1861 & les matériaux, dit-on, servirent à la construction de dépendances voisines.

La ferme de Simon Mc Tavish, ses enfants étant décédés, passa à son neveu John Mc Tavish, demeurant à Baltimore, Etats-Unis, où en 1816, il se maria à Emily Caton d'une famille distinguée de l'endroit. Il fut consul anglais à Baltimore de 1834 jusqu'à sa mort en 1852, laissant tous ses biens à sa femme.-

Dans les différents contrats, depuis la première vente faite par John Mc Tavish en 1843, de sa propriété de Montréal, jusqu'à la dernière par sa veuve à Hugh Allan en 1854, réserve expresse du terrain d'inhumation, de ses approches, et de l'avenue y conduisant est toujours spécifié.- En 1861 la veuve Mc Tavish fit un procès au nouvel acquéreur pour avoir construit un mur qui empiétait sur le terrain ainsi réservé comme lieu de sépulture, et après de multiples procédures judiciaires le litige fut décidé en cour d'appel en 1869, en faveur de la

la plaignate, avec ce résultat que les bornes actuelles, entre Ravenscrag et le parc de la Montagne, ont été exigées et maintenues jusqu'à nos jours.- Le tombeau de famille est aujourd'hui disparu, et à sa place, sur ses ruines présumées, s'élève un monticule de pierres et de terre, sans que l'on sache comment cela s'est produit,-

C'EST POURQUOI.

la SOCIÉTÉ D'ARCHEOLOGIE & DE NUMISMATIQUE, pour les faits ci-dessus relatés & compilés par l'un de ses vices-présidents M. S.M. Baylis, prie la cité de Montréal d'assumer la responsabilité de restorer, de réparer et de conserver le tombeau et le monument de la famille Mc Tavish, afin que la mémoire d'un citoyen méritant soit conservée vivante au milieu de nous.-

Nous avons l'honneur d'être,

Messieurs,

Président

Secrétaire- Archiviste

LA SOCIÉTÉ D'ARCHEOLOGIE & DE NUMISMATIQUE DE MONTREAL.