THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRANSPORTATION IN MONTREAL, 1820–1918

by Wayne Timbers

with the collaboration of Brian Young

Translated from French

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Introduction

This short review explains how the growth of transportation and industrialization influenced the lives of Montrealers between 1820 and 1920. It is intended as a guide to teachers helping students who opt for the Seasoned Reporter project. The goal of this project, it may be recalled, is to give students an understanding of the impact of technological innovations on modes of transport and life in Montreal, by having them step into the shoes of a journalist working in 1893. The following discussion provides the broader historical context for the information students will discover by visiting the virtual exhibit *Urban Life Through Two Lenses*, or by consulting the museum’s digital collection and other sources of information.

For ease of understanding, the text is divided into three parts. The first part reviews the impact of technological innovations on the development of transportation during the period from 1820 to 1918. The second part studies the development of Montreal against the backdrop of the Canadian goods transportation system. The third part looks at how Montreal’s industrial development was spurred on by the Canadian transportation network, and how the urban transportation of goods and people evolved over time.

I. Transport-Related Technological Innovations

The Steam Engine

More than any other technology, it was the steam engine that made the industrial revolution possible. It was first developed by the Englishman Thomas Newcomen (1663–1729) in 1704, but it was the Scotsman James Watt (1736–1819) whose numerous improvements made it suitable for use in industry. Steam was usually produced by burning coal to heat basins of water. Steam power drove marine and railway transportation, and also operated various industrial equipment. Before the era of electricity, it was the steam engine that made mass production possible.
The Industrial Use of Iron

The development of two construction materials, wrought iron in the late 18th century and steel at the end of the 1850s, brought about new industrial innovations in the area of transportation. Thus, the locomotive and the steamboat were invented in the first half of the 19th century. The world’s first railway line, between Liverpool and Manchester, England, was built by the English engineer George Stephenson (1781–1848) in 1825. In 1838, the Great Western was the first steamship to cross the Atlantic — a 14-day trip that heralded a new era in the history of transatlantic travel.

In short, human and animal power were progressively supplanted by new forms of energy — first steam, then electricity.

II. Montreal: the Hub of the Canadian Goods Transportation System

Canadian society underwent profound transformations during the 19th century, affecting all spheres of Canadian life. At the root of these changes were the phenomena of industrialization and capitalism. Montreal, of all cities, felt the greatest impacts of the modern industrial era: urbanization, ethnic diversification (see Table 1), the emergence of the bourgeoisie, and the increase in the working population all marked its history in the 19th and early 20th centuries. A crucial factor in the development of the Montreal and Canadian economy was the creation of a maritime and rail transport network that reached all the country’s markets, and also gave access to overseas markets.¹ The relationship between Montreal and Great Britain influenced the city’s economic development — it could take advantage of the British Empire’s trade network — and set it apart from other North American cities. Yet though Montreal was strictly a colonial city in 1800, it would be transformed into a modern metropolis by the end of the century. This transformation was due in large part due to the establishment of a system of transportation that traversed the city and linked it to other major urban centres.

TABLE 1
ETHNIC GROUPS IN MONTREAL, 1871–1901
(\%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic origin</th>
<th>1871</th>
<th>1881</th>
<th>1901</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>City</td>
<td>Island</td>
<td>City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>53.0</td>
<td>60.3</td>
<td>56.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British(^2)</td>
<td>45.0</td>
<td>38.1</td>
<td>41.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: the 1891 census gives no information on ethnic origin.
Source: Census of Canada.

A. The Lachine Canal

The Demands of Trade
Throughout Montreal’s history, the Saint Lawrence River and the Great Lakes have played a vital role in its development.\(^3\) The demographic explosion and the burgeoning economic prosperity of Western Canada created an intense demand for goods of all sorts. Both Lower and Upper Canada stood to gain from a seaway:\(^4\) on the one hand, Montreal merchants and industrialists could sell the products they produced and imported,\(^5\) and on the other, Upper Canadian merchants could export raw materials such as grain and wood to England via Montreal.

The Construction of the Canal

Montreal businesspeople proposed the Lachine Canal project with an eye to stimulating these trade opportunities, since it offered a way of circumventing the rapids and opening up the internal waterways to oceangoing ships. A group of Montreal businessman\(^6\) began to raise the money necessary to build the canal in the early 1820s,

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\(^2\) The Irish are included in this category.
\(^3\) Tulchinsky, The River Barons, p. 6.
\(^4\) Tulchinsky, The River Barons, p. 4.
\(^5\) See museum artifact no. M997.45.7, dish, Jefferson Glass Co.
\(^6\) The group was called The Commission of Lachine Canal Proprietors and consisted of John Richardson (1754–1831), John Molson (1763–1836), Thomas McCord (1750–1824) and Joseph Perrault (1753–1844). See: Kathleen Lord, 2000, “Days and Nights: Class, Gender and Society
and it was completed by 1825. Renovations were undertaken in 1836, 1837, 1844 and 1875\(^7\) so as to open up the canal to larger shipping, including steamships.\(^8\) In 1875,\(^9\) the canal measured some 14 kilometers long and 4 meters deep. The construction and modernization would not have been possible without hundreds of labourers, who often worked under arduous conditions.\(^{10}\) The Lachine Canal was part of a canal system completed in 1834 that linked Montreal to Lake Erie.\(^{11}\) This system, which also reached the markets of the American West, rivaled that of the Erie Canal (built in 1825, linking New York to Buffalo).\(^{12}\) It was a major asset for Montreal in its economic competition against New York and Boston, expanding cities that served larger metropolitan areas. The investments of the Montreal businessmen bore fruit: from the 1830s to the late 1860s, traffic on the Lachine Canal grew constantly.\(^{13}\)
The Industrial and Urban Impact

The construction of the Lachine Canal in Southwest Montreal caused industry to build up gradually along its banks. Factories were located here for easy access to the maritime transportation network, taking advantage of the numerous small ports which served as loading and unloading zones. Even before the era of steam, factories used the hydro power generated by the canal itself. In the second half of the 19th century, as these factories attracted more and more people, the working class neighbourhood of Sainte-Anne and the suburb of Saint-Henri came into being. These were multiethnic neighbourhoods, where the French Canadians, the recent Irish immigrants (Catholic and Protestant), the Scots and the English lived side by side but preserved their respective cultures. These ethnic groups left their mark on the architecture of Sainte-Anne; it can be seen, for example, in the churches built by different religious congregations. Little by little, all over the city, a uniquely Montreal working class culture took shape.14

B. The Steamship

Regional Trade

In parallel with the development of the Lachine Canal, the arrival of steamboats on the Saint Lawrence in 1809\(^\text{15}\) touched off a genuine revolution in water transportation of goods and people, and contributed to the development of Montreal commerce.\(^\text{16}\) Several shipping companies\(^\text{17}\) traveled between Montreal and Toronto, but the Montreal-Québec City traffic\(^\text{18}\) was monopolized by the Richelieu company.\(^\text{19}\) This started out as a small local company with a fleet of sailboats and a few steamboats. In 1851, it set up offices in Montreal and withdrew from regional shipping on the Richelieu, which had become less lucrative, to focus exclusively on the Saint Lawrence River.\(^\text{20}\) The company’s move to Montreal is indicative of how the city’s economic dominance was then growing.\(^\text{21}\)

International Trade

In terms of international trade, the conversion to steamboats in Montreal was a gradual affair, beginning in the 1830s and 1840s. There were several reasons for this. First, Montreal was competing with certain US ports, New York and Boston in particular, which were open year-round and could thus support more international traffic. (Recall that the port of Montreal has to close during the winter months when it is icebound.) Halifax too, as of 1840, offered regular service to Liverpool with the Cunard Line.\(^\text{22}\) Regular steamer service between Montreal and England only appeared in 1853. Montreal was also at grips with another problem: the Saint Lawrence River and Lac Saint-Pierre were not deep enough to accommodate most steamers and many large sailboats.\(^\text{23}\) The river and lake were dredged many times between 1850 and 1870, increasing their depth from 6 to 8 meters. By the mid-1850s, steam power had

\(^\text{15}\) In 1809, the Accommodation was the first steamboat entirely built in Montreal to travel the Saint Lawrence. See Victoria A. Baker and Diana Dutton, 1982, *De la voile à la vapeur. La construction de navires dans les environs de Québec et de Montréal*, Saint-Lambert.

\(^\text{16}\) Tulchinsky, *The River Barons*, p. 103.

\(^\text{17}\) See museum artifact no. M19000, scale model of boat.

\(^\text{18}\) See museum artifact no. View-3189, photo of S.S. Canada, Cap-à-l'Aigle.


\(^\text{20}\) Tulchinsky, "Une entreprise maritime," p. 574.

\(^\text{21}\) Tulchinsky, "Une entreprise maritime," p. 574.

\(^\text{22}\) Tulchinsky, *The River Barons*, p. 88.

surpassed sail power on these bodies of water.\footnote{Marsan, \textit{Montréal en évolution}, p. 164.} In 1852, Hugh Allan (1810–1882) managed to persuade several entrepreneurs to join him in forming the Montreal Ocean Steamship Company. Within just two years, the company had become a leader in transatlantic transportation between Montreal and the British ports.\footnote{Brian Young and Gerald J.J. Tulchinsky, 1982, “Hugh Allan,” \textit{Dictionary of Canadian Biography, vol. XI}, Toronto and Québec City, pp. 5–15.; and Tulchinsky, \textit{The River Barons}, p. 103.}

During the 1860s, steamships\footnote{See museum artifact no. M989.146.1, scale model of the S.S. Québec.} became increasingly common, and by the turn of the century they had completely replaced sailboats as carriers of freight. In 1861, there were 40 ocean steamships making the journey up the Saint Lawrence from Québec City to Montreal; by 1869, there were 117.\footnote{Pierre Brouillard, 1976, “Le développement du port de Montréal 1850–1896,” master’s thesis, Montreal, Université du Québec à Montréal, p. 14.} In 1870, steamships accounted for 42.2 % of total tonnage; in 1896, 99\%.\footnote{Paul-André Linteau, \textit{Histoire de Montréal depuis la Confédération}, Montreal, p. 20.}

C. The Railway

Beginnings

More than any other mode of transport of that era, it was the railway that spurred the development of Montreal’s industry and commerce, by extending their reach into new Canadian markets.\footnote{Marsan, \textit{Montréal en évolution}, p. 165.} In fact, the railway even created some markets by opening up the Canadian West to colonization. Canada’s first railway line, the Champlain and Saint Lawrence, was completed in 1836, connecting La Prairie to Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu on Montreal’s South Shore.\footnote{Craig Brown, (ed.), 1990, \textit{Histoire générale du Canada}, Montreal, p. 340.} In the years that followed, railway lines proliferated and became a source of major economic growth.

The Grand Trunk

Until the 1850s, railway lines were generally small, short-distance operations owned by independent operators.\footnote{Stanley Triggs et al., 1992, \textit{Victoria Bridge: The Vital Link}, Montreal, p. 24.} Several railway lines followed waterways, providing a way for maritime freight to circumnavigate the river rapids. Among railway companies, the Saint Lawrence and Atlantic stood out for its ambitious expansion projects. In 1844, American railway developers unveiled a project to link Montreal year-round to the Atlantic seaport of Portland, Maine. Many Montreal businessmen were keenly interested
in the project. Construction began on three lines the following year. The main one connected Longueuil on the South Shore to the US border. There it met the second, or Portland line, which was completed in 1853. The third line, completed the following year, ran between Richmond and Lévis, across the river from Québec City (see Figure 1).

The Montreal-Portland lines solved the transportation problem caused by the port of Montreal’s being icebound in winter, and new business opportunities sprang up for Montreal merchants and industrialists.

The Grand Trunk Company, incorporated in 1852, would dominate rail transport until the creation of the Canadian Pacific Railway in the 1880s. Financed largely by British capital, the Grand Trunk undertook to build two railway lines, one along the Saint Lawrence and Lake Ontario between Montreal and Toronto (completed in 1856), and the other between Toronto and Sarnia (completed in 1859). In 1853, the Grand Trunk acquired five railway companies, including the Saint Lawrence and Atlantic.

The Victoria Bridge

The construction of a bridge over the Saint Lawrence in Montreal was essential to the Grand Trunk’s plans to offer year-round access to the Atlantic Ocean at an ice-free port (Portland, Maine). Begun in 1854, the completion of the Victoria Bridge bolstered Montreal’s position at the heart of the Canadian transportation system. The bridge took 3,040 workers to build. By the time it was completed in 1859, the 2,010-meter structure had cost $6,600,000. It was a technological and architectural tour de force, the crowning moment of the British presence in Montreal, and an embodiment of the Victorian sentiment that progress knew no bounds.

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32 Triggs et al., *Victoria Bridge*, p. 28.  
33 Triggs et al., *Victoria Bridge*, p. 30.  
34 Triggs et al., *Victoria Bridge*, p. 30.  
35 See museum artifact no. M969.81, print of Victoria Bridge.  
36 Triggs et al., *Victoria Bridge*, p. 68.  
37 Triggs et al., *Victoria Bridge*, p. 68.
FIGURE 1
Railway Connections of Montreal 1853

From:

**From Sea to Sea**
From the late 1840s to the end of the 19th century, the development of the railways coincided with Canada’s political and economic development, and even played an important role in bringing about Confederation.\(^{38}\) Canadian capitalists were in favour of Confederation. They hoped that it would bring economic benefits (such as the abolition of tariffs) similar to those that had followed the customs union (Zollverein) of the German states, and the American union.\(^{39}\) It was thought that uniting the British North American colonies would inevitably encourage trade and the free circulation of goods,

and that it would facilitate the creation of new railway lines. This was indeed borne out: after Confederation, the expansion of Canada to the west necessitated a transcontinental railway link, and a new company, Canadian Pacific Railway, incorporated in 1882, was mandated by the government to build it. The new line was completed in 1885 after numerous difficulties.\textsuperscript{40} Earlier, in 1876, Montreal was joined to the Maritime provinces by the construction of the Intercolonial railway. In this way, the city became the hub of the entire Canadian railway network, and reaped the economic harvest afforded by that status.\textsuperscript{41}

Conclusion

Technological revolutions in water and land transportation, combined with factors such as the availability of capital, the abundant supply of labour and natural resources, and a newly centralized government, gave great impetus to Montreal’s industrialization in the late 19\textsuperscript{th} and early 20\textsuperscript{th} centuries. As the hub of the Canadian transportation system, Montreal enjoyed remarkable economic growth and contributed to the development of Canada.

However, the construction of a complex and extended railway system had social and cultural impacts as well. It was at this time that an important phenomenon in the development of Canadian society took place: the arrival in Canada of new ethnic groups such as Ukrainians, Russians and Scandinavians. Their immigration to Western Canada — or for that matter, the internal migration of Québécois and Ontarians to the Prairies — would not have been possible without the railway. In cultural terms, as historian Gilles Lauzon writes:

thanks to the railways, tours of international artists became more feasible; works of art, foreign newspapers, and books traveled faster than before. Scientific clubs and associations proliferated […] Distances were no longer an obstacle; the latest artistic and cultural developments were within arm’s reach.\textsuperscript{42}

In short, the railway did more than simply stimulate industrial production in Montreal: it revolutionized trade, communications (with the installation of telegraph and later telephone wires along railway lines), and patterns of population settlement.

\textsuperscript{40} Nick Mika and Helma Mika, 1972, \textit{Railways of Canada. A Pictorial History}, Montreal andToronto, p. 100. 
\textsuperscript{41} Marsan, \textit{Montréal en évolution}, p. 167.
III. Urban Transportation in Montreal

The industrial and financial development of Montreal in the 19th century effected an in-depth transformation of the city in geographical, demographic and social terms. As we have already noted, transportation and the circulation of goods were central factors in this process of economic growth. The establishment of a railway network across Canada created jobs in Montreal, as witness the soaring manufacturing sector, which doubled in size in twenty years (see Table 2). The metallurgy industry, for example, had to supply new demand for rails, nails, hardware, engines, locomotives and wagons. Industrial development in Montreal created an increased demand for skilled workers, such as machinists, as well as many unskilled factory workers. The labouring masses were housed in crowded, unsanitary districts near the factories, where conditions favoured the spread of diseases such as cholera, smallpox and tuberculosis; upper-class homes were built well away from these industrial areas.

TABLE 2
GROWTH OF MONTREAL MANUFACTURING SECTOR, 1870–1890

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of manufacturers</th>
<th>No. of employees</th>
<th>Value of production</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1870</td>
<td>1095</td>
<td>21 187</td>
<td>$32 731 966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>1907</td>
<td>42 268</td>
<td>$77 051 977</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


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42 Triggs et al., *Victoria Bridge*, p. 114.
44 See museum artifact no. M979.87.5024, print, *Messrs, Clendinning's Foundry-Moulding Shop*.
45 Paul-André Linteau, *Brève histoire de Montréal*, Montreal, p. 82.
46 Linteau, *Brève histoire*, p. 82.
A. Transportation of Goods in Montreal

In the 19th and 20th centuries, “the carriage of freight played a fundamental role in Montreal’s economy.” Since more and more goods were passing through Montreal each year, it became necessary to transport them within the city itself: from the docks and the canal to the factories or the downtown area, from a factory to a warehouse, or from a warehouse to the market or the train station. Transportation workers — carters, railway workers, stevedores — played an essential role in the day-to-day handling and transportation of goods. Most of these tasks were accomplished by individuals rather than service companies. These were seasonal jobs that did not require many special skills.

Little by little, technological innovations transformed the urban transportation of goods and affected the Montreal freight industry. The advent of the Lachine Canal, and then the railways, cut into the territory served by the carters, but the improved Canadian transportation system and the increased volume of trade offered them new job opportunities. Generally speaking, the development of the railway in the 1840s made it possible to ship goods faster and more efficiently to many points of the city. The carters adapted to these changes by becoming railway workers and, later, truckers, for after the First World War, trucks would increasingly be used for the urban transportation of goods.

B. Passenger Travel in Montreal

Urban passenger travel was also transformed with the introduction of new technologies. The cost of transport was a decisive factor for most Montrealers. While a bourgeois citizen could afford the luxury of travelling alone or taking mass transit, workers, until the 1890s, often had no choice but to go to work on foot. As a result, a

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51 See museum artifact no. M979.87.5000, print, Montreal: the strike of the labourers in the port.
52 Heap, "La grève," p. 372.
53 Heap, "La grève," p. 373.
54 Heap, "La grève," p. 373.
55 For example, where it had taken two hours to transport goods from the Lachine Canal downtown by animal power, it now took 20 minutes. See Lord, Days and Nights, pp. 50 and 172.
large majority of workers lived near their places of work.\textsuperscript{57} This was particularly true of the residents of a working-class neighbourhood like Sainte-Anne, which grew up around the Redpath sugar refinery, the Ogilvie Flour Mills Company and the Grand Trunk yards.

In contrast, the upper class increasingly deserted the downtown area, seeking to isolate their families from the grim industrial realities of Montreal.\textsuperscript{58} They settled on the slopes of Mount Royal, at first in the Golden Square Mile, and then spreading out at the end of the century into the suburbs of Westmount and Outremont. This migration transfigured the map of Greater Montreal. The bourgeois citizens could afford private means of transportation, such as carriages in summer and sleighs in winter,\textsuperscript{59} or later the automobile, which made its appearance in Montreal in the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century. It is worth remembering that before the era of assembly lines, cars were too expensive for any but the richest households to afford one.\textsuperscript{60}

**Mass Transit**

Getting around in the city became easier with the advent of the horse-drawn streetcar lines in 1861\textsuperscript{61} — the city’s first public transit system. Being dependent on animal power had its limitations, especially given the city’s precipitous terrain and severe winter weather. For example, when the streetcar approached a hill, passengers had to wait while new horses were yoked to the team.\textsuperscript{62} In winter, the streetcars were fitted out with skates, since the rails were buried under snow and ice.\textsuperscript{63} The system’s territorial extent, too, left much to be desired. By way of a partial explanation for this, it has been suggested that the Montreal Street Railway was taking bribes from property owners.\textsuperscript{64} Nevertheless, by 1888, more than 8 million trips per year were taken on Montreal Street Railway cars, an impressive number considering that the population of the city in 1891 was only 182,695.\textsuperscript{65}

\textsuperscript{57} See museum artifact no. M18169.1-2, caulks.
\textsuperscript{58} See museum artifact no. M11910, print by Krieghoff, *Place d’Armes à Montréal*.
\textsuperscript{59} See museum artifacts nos. M21647, sleigh; M976.90.1–4, bearskin hat, gloves and cape.
\textsuperscript{60} Note too, that the bicycle, accessible to a larger number of people, became popular at the turn of the century even in working class neighbourhoods. A bicycle licensing bylaw was passed in Saint-Henri in 1897. See Lord, *Days and Nights*, p. 188.
\textsuperscript{63} See museum artifacts nos. M2001X.6.40, ticket; MP–1979.22.64–D1, snow on Craig Street.
\textsuperscript{64} Cooper, *Montreal*, p. 104.
\textsuperscript{65} Cooper, *Montreal*, p. 104.
Electrification of the Streetcars

The transportation innovation that had the greatest impact on the life of Montrealers in the 19th century was the electrification of the streetcar system in 1892. As the historian Paul-André Linteau emphasizes, the streetcars became an important factor in the expansion of urbanized space. Montrealers could live further from their places of work, since they now had a rapid, efficient means of transport at their disposal.

Thus, one consequence of electrification was that neighbourhoods such as Sainte-Marie and Saint-Jacques grew rapidly, as did new industrial suburbs like Saint-Henri to the west or Hochelaga-Maisonneuve to the east (see Figure 2). The

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66 See museum artifact no. M930.50.7.523, print by Walker [This illustration shows a horse-drawn streetcar and we’re talking about electrification???
67 Linteau, Histoire de Montréal, p. 132.
68 See artifact no. M992.110.69, streetcar sign.
population of the outlying city neighborhoods tripled, while the downtown areas experienced a population decline (see Table 3). The population growth in the suburbs was even more vigorous, growing by a factor of five in the case of Saint-Jean-Baptiste, or even ten, in Hochelaga (see Table 4). A natural result was the increased demand for mass transit services.\textsuperscript{69} In 1892, the Montreal Street Railway used 8 electric streetcars to cover the city of Maisonneuve, while in 1904, it needed 300.\textsuperscript{70} The low price of a ticket (five cents between 1861 and 1910) undoubtedly strengthened the attraction of this mode of transportation for the working classes — as did the reduced peak hour rates following electrification.\textsuperscript{71} Data collected by historians Christopher Armstrong and H.V. Nelles confirm the trend: the proportion of Montreal workers who took the streetcar every day rose from only 11\% in 1892 to 41\% in 1901, and 63.1\% in 1911.\textsuperscript{72} Streetcars dominated Montreal until the economic crisis of the 1930s\textsuperscript{73} when usage declined. After the Second World War, buses — and especially cars — became affordable to many more workers, and were increasingly the vehicle of choice.

But the development of transportation in Montreal had more than just economic consequences. At the turn of the century, electric streetcars enabled workers to travel to public parks where numerous activities were held: picnics, outdoor concerts, sports, exhibitions, and so forth. Thus, the electrification of the streetcar lines had beneficial effects on the social and cultural life of Montreal.

\textsuperscript{69} Paul-André Linteau, 1981, \textit{Maisonneuve, comment des promoteurs fabriquent une ville}, Montreal, p. 123.
\textsuperscript{70} Linteau, \textit{Maisonneuve}, p. 126.
\textsuperscript{71} Linteau, \textit{Histoire de Montréal}, p. 170.
\textsuperscript{73} See museum artifact no. MP–1986.53.6, photograph of streetcar 529, Notre-Dame Street, Montreal, 1906.
### TABLE 3

**POPULATION OF MONTREAL NEIGHBOURHOODS, 1861–1901**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neighbourhood</th>
<th>1861</th>
<th>1871</th>
<th>1881</th>
<th>1891</th>
<th>1901</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total (1792 city limits)</strong></td>
<td>90 323</td>
<td>107 225</td>
<td>140 747</td>
<td>182 695</td>
<td>203 078</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Central Montreal</strong></td>
<td>6 750</td>
<td>5 264</td>
<td>4 635</td>
<td>5 119</td>
<td>4 110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centre</td>
<td>1 424</td>
<td>1 110</td>
<td>827</td>
<td>675</td>
<td>1 094</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>2 831</td>
<td>1 265</td>
<td>842</td>
<td>1 007</td>
<td>439</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East</td>
<td>2 495</td>
<td>2 889</td>
<td>2 966</td>
<td>3 437</td>
<td>2 577</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>West End</strong></td>
<td>44 288</td>
<td>55 670</td>
<td>68 606</td>
<td>85 513</td>
<td>91 377</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sainte-Anne</td>
<td>16 200</td>
<td>18 639</td>
<td>20 443</td>
<td>23 003</td>
<td>21 835</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saint-Antoine</td>
<td>15 190</td>
<td>23 925</td>
<td>33 834</td>
<td>44 626</td>
<td>47 653</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saint-Laurent</td>
<td>12 898</td>
<td>13 106</td>
<td>14 318</td>
<td>17 884</td>
<td>21 889</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>East End</strong></td>
<td>35 967</td>
<td>46 291</td>
<td>67 506</td>
<td>92 063</td>
<td>107 591</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saint-Jacques</td>
<td>13 104</td>
<td>17 680</td>
<td>25 398</td>
<td>32 393</td>
<td>40 041</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saint-Louis</td>
<td>12 667</td>
<td>14 916</td>
<td>19 375</td>
<td>24 924</td>
<td>26 919</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sainte-Marie</td>
<td>10 196</td>
<td>13 695</td>
<td>22 733</td>
<td>34 746</td>
<td>40 631</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious institutions</td>
<td>3 318</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of Canada.

### TABLE 4

**POPULATION OF SUBURBAN MUNICIPALITIES, 1871–1901**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>1871</th>
<th>1881</th>
<th>1891</th>
<th>1901</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saint-Gabriel</td>
<td>4 506</td>
<td>*9 986</td>
<td>*15 959</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sainte-Cunégonde</td>
<td>4 849</td>
<td>9 291</td>
<td>10 912</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saint-Henri</td>
<td>6 415</td>
<td>13 413</td>
<td>21 192</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saint-Jean-Baptiste</td>
<td>4 408</td>
<td>5 874</td>
<td>*15 423</td>
<td>*26 754</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saint-Louis</td>
<td>751</td>
<td>3 537</td>
<td>10 933</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Côte Saint-Louis</td>
<td>2 215</td>
<td>1 571</td>
<td>2 972</td>
<td>*9 025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hochelaga</td>
<td>1 061</td>
<td>4 111</td>
<td>*8 540</td>
<td>*12 914</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Annexed to Montreal.

Source: Census of Canada.
Transportation Services: A Private Monopoly

Wealthy businessmen held a monopoly over the Montreal streetcar system. Their company, the Montreal Street Railway, became the Montreal Tramway Company in 1907 after a merger with several suburban transit companies.\(^74\) This company exerted great influence over the development of transportation in the city.\(^75\) Its attempts to preserve its monopoly resulted in the delayed introduction of buses into the Montreal mass transit system.\(^76\) Indeed, during the 1910s, the company did all it could to derail any plans for bus service that might be proposed to the city by rival companies.\(^77\) However, once it obtained a new contract to provide streetcar service in 1918, the company decided to gradually implement bus service in Montreal of its own accord. The decision was hastened by problems such as downtown congestion, an increasing number of accidents with cars, and higher road speeds.\(^78\)

The case of the streetcars is not unique: rail transport, too, was the preserve of a few large capitalists. As mentioned earlier, the Grand Trunk bought up other lines in the 1850s, and its monopoly would not be seriously challenged until the creation of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CP) in the 1880s. CP progressively became Canada’s dominant railway company. These companies won exclusive government contracts, e.g. for carrying mail and transporting immigrants to the west. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that there was also a monopoly in the Montreal streetcar system. In the second half of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, several private Montreal and Canadian monopolies were nationalized, becoming public monopolies.

Urban Expansion

The increasingly dense working population and the electrification of the streetcars both transfigured the urban landscape. At the turn of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, Montreal was expanding, swallowing up suburbs like Maisonneuve.\(^79\) Moreover, the daily lives of Montrealers were changed by transportation. It became possible to live far from one’s place of work, and easier to visit the city’s recreational areas.

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\(^{74}\) See museum artifact no. M992.110.110, scale model of a streetcar.

\(^{75}\) Linteau, \textit{Maisonneuve}, p. 123.


\(^{78}\) Veilleux, “Buses, Tramways,” p. 103.

Montreal’s strategic position at the centre of the Canadian transportation system gave it the status of a veritable metropolis. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, the city became the industrial, financial and commercial heart of Canada.

Conclusion

Nineteenth century technological innovations such as steam power, metal processing (iron and later steel), telegraph and telephone created conditions that favoured the growth of communications in the 20th century.

The establishment of maritime and railway transportation networks allowed Montreal to reap considerable economic benefits that would be essential to its development. The resulting industrial expansion attracted many workers to the city. However, unskilled workers experienced many hardships and earned low wages.

The increase in Montreal’s population necessitated the creation of a mass transit system. The electric streetcars greatly contributed to the city’s territorial and economic expansion. Thanks to this mode of transportation, workers could take up residence far from their places of work. The streetcars also made it easier to visit Montreal’s parks, where more and more activities and festivals were being held by associations of all sorts, and by the city’s many religious congregations.80

In the second half of the 19th century, Montreal, on the strength of its strategically important transportation system, consolidated its position as Canada’s metropolitan centre. It was no longer just a colonial city of the British Empire. The urban fabric was transformed, first by the electric streetcars and then, in the 20th century, by the automobile and the many changes that accompanied it.

Transportation has always played a key role in Montreal’s development. The city’s industrial expansion was in large part an outgrowth of the construction of the railways and seaways. However, following the Second World War, the axis of Canadian industry shifted to Toronto. Not only did the latter benefit from trucking routes but also
from the new Saint Lawrence Seaway completed in 1959, which made it possible to for transoceanic cargo ships to reach the heartland of North America.  

Bibliography


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