

Holding the Budget Line

By PETER DESBARATS

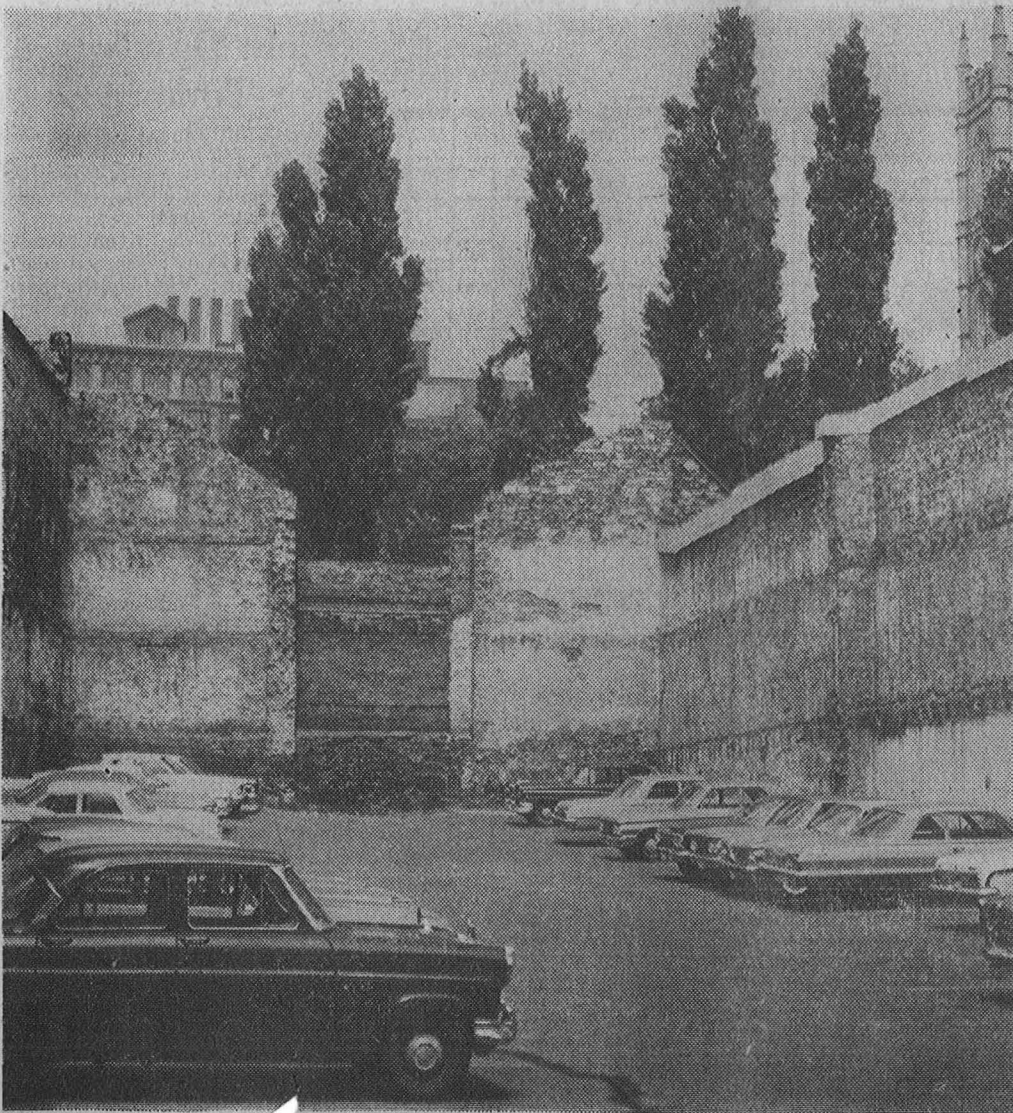
Around the Town on 20 Cents—Lazy Historians' Way



—Staff Photos by Gerry Davidson
An enterprising youngster sells corn-on-the-cob to longshoreman Nazaire Langlois near the waterfront. Visitors taking the "20-cent" tour in the centre of Olde Montreal are advised to bring their own salt for this quick lunch special.



No. 169 St. Paul street, with restraining timbers, once belonged to the famed French-Canadian statesman Benjamin Viger, who published a newspaper early in the 19th century in the dilapidated building next door, No. 177-181.



Part of old stone masonry walls give fortress-like appearance to parking lots. St. Paul street buildings occupy sites of the earliest structures.

What this city needs is a good 20-cent tour. Here it is—with food, refreshment, accommodation and literary entertainment included.

Last year, about this time, we mapped out a 21-cent tour of a Montrealer's Montreal which included such highlights as a parking lot with a marvellous view on Vitre street, the headquarters of the provincial film censor and a bagel bakery on Rachel street.

This summer, in line with Finance Minister Gordon's belt-tightening budget, we have slashed the price to 20 cents (19 cents U.S. currency.) The tour is designed specifically for lazy historians with no sense of direction. It follows a short, simple route in the centre of Olde Montreal.

The Special Deluxe version this year costs 30 cents compared with \$3.21 last year. The old Special Deluxe included lunch (still recommended) in a 19th century seafood restaurant on Notre Dame street near St. Francois Xavier. This has been replaced this year by one corn cob on the waterfront.

The best time to start the tour is about 10 a.m. and the first order of business is 15 minutes of compulsory sitting in the garden of the Sulpician Seminary on Notre Dame street near Place d'Armes. Don't time yourself by the old wooden clock atop the seminary. It hasn't worked for decades.

This is the oldest building in the city of Montreal, according to Paul Leduc of the Montreal Municipal Tourist Bureau, historian by appointment to the 20-cent tour. It was opened in 1685 and the gardener quit a few years later. Today the seminary garden with its hollyhocks and weedy petunia beds betrays a suitable disregard of things material. It is an ideal place to forget the 20th century.

19th Century Financiers

East of the garden, a few steps along Notre Dame street, is Place d'Armes where you can see perfect replicas of 19th century financiers stalking to their offices through coveys of stenographers. Notre Dame Church, facing the square, was opened in 1829. Its towers were christened Temperance and Perseverance, virtues which might appear contradictory to some.

The next portion of the tour must be traversed quickly. Between Place d'Armes and the Old Court House along Notre Dame street there are few buildings of outstanding historical interest. Note in passing, as matters of cultural interest.

At the corner of St. Gabriel street there is a tavern with authentic stained glass windows and swinging doors. For a nominal charge of 10 cents, one is permitted to enter this establishment and soak up a certain amount of atmosphere.

Free accommodation is provided across the street, on a low concrete wall fronting the grounds of the Old Court House. Join the old men sitting on the wall and gaze across the street at a beautiful house. It was constructed by Sulpician priests about 1720 and used until recently as a night club. The city restored the building to grace this year by cancelling an essential permit.

Just east of this structure, on the corner, is a building dating back to 1803 which once housed the "Silver Dollar Saloon." Its floor was paved with 350 silver dollars. In this progressive age the silver dollars have been replaced by "patates frites."

"Olives, Onions and Gherkins"

Cross the north end of Jacques Cartier Square, visit the museum in Chateau de Ramezay on the south side of Notre Dame street and continue to No. 320, identified by a large sign as "Importers, Packers of Olives, Onions and Gherkins." This building, originally of two stories, was constructed before 1796. Before the olives took over, it contained a Justice of the Court of King's Bench, counts, viscounts, fur magnates and the president of French Canada's largest national association, the St. Jean Baptiste Society.

Further along Notre Dame street, execute a sharp turn to the south at Bonsecours street. The second building down the street to your right was formerly the residence of Louis Joseph Papineau, famed French-Canadian statesman; recently a flophouse and currently the home of THE MONTREAL STAR's music critic, Eric McLean. The interior of this house, inhabited by six generations of Papineaus, is now being restored.

The next building on the same side of the street contains a fish packing company which commands a certain amount of attention. Hurry past it to view Notre Dame de Bon Secours Church, rebuilt in 1772 and modified slightly in 1885. Across from the church, on the northeast corner of Bonsecours street and St. Paul street, is a house built about 1770 and once owned by Pierre Du Calvet, a Huguenot who was jailed for supplying information to invading Americans in 1775.

Times change. Today the city spends thousands to do the same thing.

Turn west on St. Paul street, stop at a newsstand at the corner of Bonsecours Market (1845) and invest five cents in a French-language newspaper. It is worth the money. Disguised as a native in this manner, you can purchase a peach for five cents at one of the sidewalk stalls ranged along the market building. Without the newspaper, the peach might cost 10 cents. Bonsecours Market is an ancient stronghold of free enterprise.

Dickens Slept Here

The facade of an old building across the street still bears traces of lettering: Rasco's Hotel. Charles Dickens slept there in 1842. The structure now houses, among other establishments, the Klondike Restaurant and "Chez Mische, Reine des Hot Dogs Steamer."

If you are taking the Special Deluxe tour, look for a small boy carrying a huge kettle in the vicinity of Jacques Cartier Square. Purchase a cob of hot corn, squat against a nearby building with munching longshoremen from the nearby waterfront and enjoy lunch. Bring your own salt. Even the Special Deluxe can't provide everything.

Cross Jacques Cartier Square again and continue west on St. Paul street. This is probably one of the most "European-looking" streets in Montreal. If you walk quickly, you might reach No. 169 before it breaks through restraining timbers and crashes into the street. This 18th century structure once belonged to the famed French-Canadian statesman Benjamin Viger, who published the newspaper "Le Spectateur" early in the 19th century in the dilapidated building next door, No. 177-181.

West of St. Laurent boulevard, most of the buildings standing along St. Paul street date back to the 19th century but they occupy the sites of the earliest buildings in the colony. Portions of the old stone walls can still be seen, particularly in the few places where buildings have been demolished to make room for parking lots.

Just past Place Royale, on the south side of St. Paul street, is one of the shortest lanes with one of the longest names in the city. Ruelle Chagouamigon acquired its title as early as 1697 from the name of an Indian settlement.

Walk up St. Francois Xavier street to Notre Dame street and prepare grimly to re-enter the 20th century.



This is Notre Dame de Bon Secours Church as viewed down Bonsecours street. It was rebuilt in 1772 and modified slightly in 1885, according to historians.



A woman rests and reads paper while waiting for customers for strawberries at Bonsecours Market. In background is Rasco's Hotel. Its guest book once recorded the name of Charles Dickens. The building now contains a restaurant.



"Les Saltimbanques," a new theatrical troupe now occupies this old building at Bonsecours and St. Paul streets. It is almost directly opposite the site of the famous "Théâtre Royal," Montreal's leading theatre for many years.