

SITE TIMELINE

HISTORY OF PEACE PARK AND THE LOWER MAIN



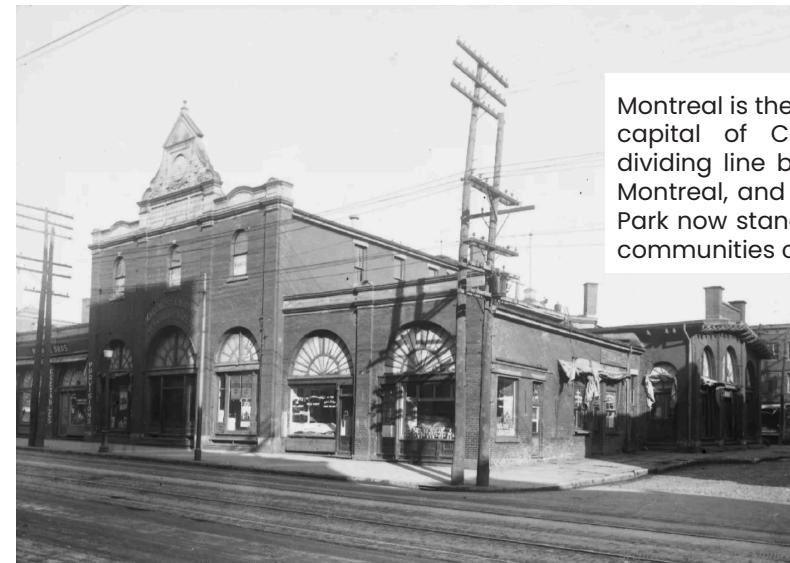
1891-1893

Monument National is built.



1890s

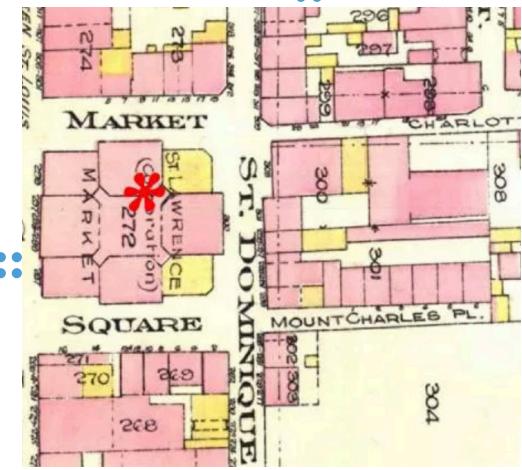
Construction of many buildings on the Lower Main, directly across from the St-Laurent Market, including those that would later house the Montreal Pool Room, Épicerie Importations Main and Café Cléopâtre.



Marché St-Laurent circa 1861

1829

Marché St-Laurent becomes the first public market outside the walled city of Montréal, built on the site of what is now Peace Park.



Location of the market, map circa 1912

1800s

Montreal is the commercial and economic capital of Canada. St-Laurent is the dividing line between English and French Montreal, and the empty lot where Peace Park now stands is a place where the two communities congregate.

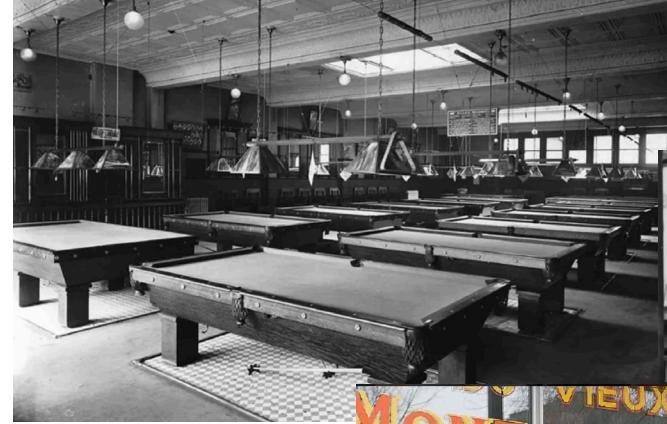
1900s



The bustling corner of St-Laurent and Ste-Catherine, circa 1910.

“ORGANIZED RIGHTEOUSNESS AGAINST ORGANIZED VIOLENCE”

The Committee of Sixteen leads the effort to clean up the city. It is characterized as a battle of “Organized Righteousness against Organized Viciousness.” The area around our site is a target.



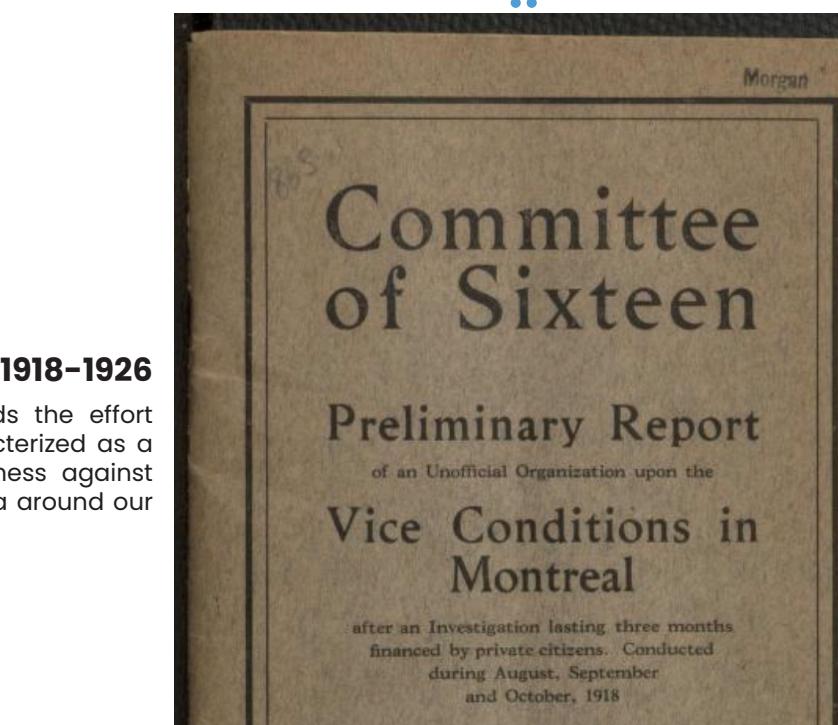
Montreal Pool Room, circa 1925



circa 2009



circa 1974



1918-1926

Committee
of Sixteen
Preliminary Report
of an Unofficial Organization upon the
Vice Conditions in
Montreal

after an investigation lasting three months
financed by private citizens. Conducted
during August, September
and October, 1918



Our site in 1932

1924

Épicerie Importations Main opens across from the Marché St-Laurent. It is the first Arab grocery store in Montreal.



circa 2009



1926

Mae West's notorious Broadway play «Sex» causes a scandal. Its opening scenes are set in a brothel in Montreal's red-light district. The street referenced — Cadieux — is renamed «de Buillion» in an effort to rehabilitate its image.

Organized crime gains prominence.



1920s-1930s

MONTREAL BECOMES NORTH AMERICA'S ORIGINAL «SIN CITY»

Prohibition drives people looking for a good time to Montreal. The Main becomes a mix of highbrow and lowbrow culture. The area around our site is the heart of Montreal's flourishing Red Light District.





1933

Poster for the opening of Connie's Inn, near our site. Inspired by a famous New York venue of the same name, it is a place where Black performers play to white audiences.

1940s-1950s

THE HEYDAY OF MONTREAL'S
RED LIGHT DISTRICT CONTINUES.
SO DO MORALITY SQUADS.

1940-1950

Pax Plante, a lawyer and police officer is appointed head of the morality squad. He wages war on illegal establishments and is able to shut many down. The closing of brothels pushes sex workers onto the street.



Famous striptease artist
Lili St-Cyr
«The Queen of Montreal»



1954

Jean Drapeau is elected mayor, promising to clean up corruption and redevelop the city.

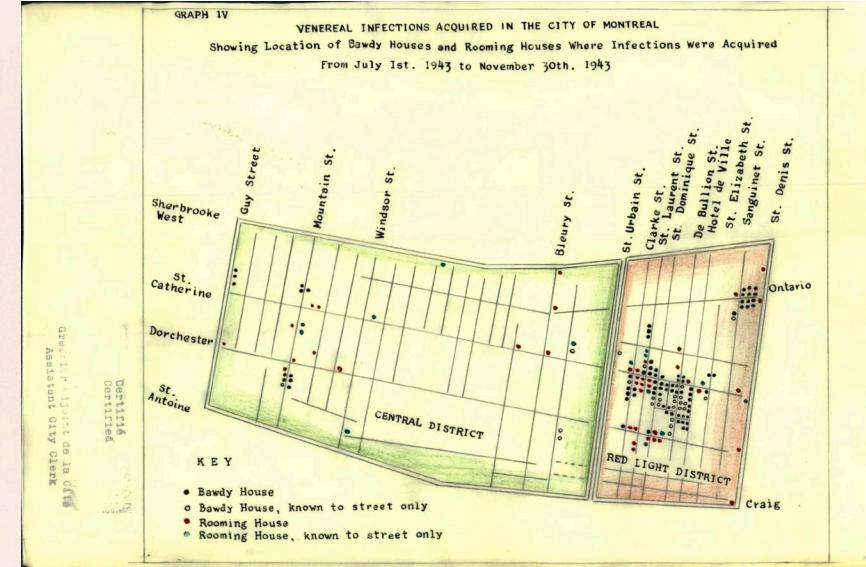


Jean Drapeau and Pax Plante circa 1954

1957

Whole neighbourhoods around the Lower Main are razed to the ground, making way for the Jeanne-Mance housing project, Place des Arts and vacant lots.







1960s-1970s

QUEER PLACE MAKING. URBAN DECLINE.

Starting in the 1950s into the 60s, more and more drag performers are found on the stages of the Lower Main. The district is an increasingly important locale for Montreal's queer and trans communities.

Homophobic rhetoric is wrapped up in the discourse around the Lower Main and urban decline.

1963

The Marché St-Laurent is demolished. Our site eventually becomes a parking lot.



1962

Drag performer Lana St-Cyr is arrested. Her name is a derivative of Lili St-Cyr, notorious burlesque artist of the 1940s and 1950s.

1972

The Ville-Marie Expressway is constructed. It cuts across St-Laurent, creating a barrier between the Lower Main and the Old Port. The Lower Main falls into decline.



Map of gay, lesbian and trans spaces in the area, 1950s-1960s





circa 1962



Johnny Zoumboulakis is barman in the 1970s. He buys Café Cléopâtre in 1985.

ACROSS FROM OUR SITE. CAFÉ CANASTA BECOMES THE ICONIC CAFÉ CLÉOPÂTRE IN 1976.

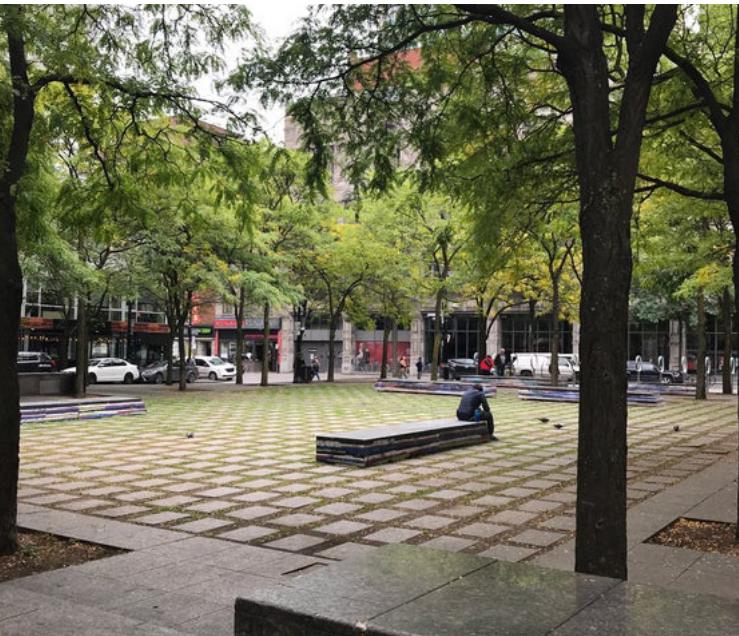




City will build peace park, Doré says

1992

In an effort to clean up the area, Jean Doré outlaws signs depicting «any images representing the human body» outside of strip clubs. The law is struck down.



1994

PEACE PARK IS INAUGURATED

It becomes a hangout for street people and skaters. The housing market crashes and the condos planned to surround the park are never built.

1987

Newly elected mayor Jean Doré pledges to build Peace Park and revitalize the Lower Main. He buys up more lots around the future park for condo development.

1980s-1990s



1980s

Hydro Quebec buys out most of the small businesses across from our site, with the intention of expanding their offices. They are blocked by certain hold-out businesses:

CAFÉ CLÉOPÂTRE

ÉPICERIE IMPORATIONS MAIN

MONTREAL POOL ROOM

The buildings, built in the 1890s, are sold to another developer.



2000s-2010s