



fig.1 Landing of the Prince of Wales Under the Triumphal Arch Erected By The Harbor Masters At The Bonsecours Market, Montreal — From a Photograph by Notman, *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* (New York), 8 September 1860, 246.

CONCORDIA SALUS

Triumphal Arches at Montréal, 1860

“**M**ontreal was in a state of mud - of unmitigated mud” when Queen Victoria’s son, Albert Edward, the Prince of Wales, landed at Bonsecours Wharf on 25 August 1860 to inaugurate the Victoria Bridge.¹ The Prince was greeted by an elaborate pavilion of welcome, constructed on the wharf by the Harbour Commissioners. Two weeks later, on September 8, *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper* of New York published an engraving of the pavilion made from a photograph by “Notman of Montreal” (fig.1). The engraving presents the scene of a busy harbour where three steamships have docked and a fourth, the *Victoria*, is just pulling in. The Prince of Wales had arrived on the *Kingston*, already at rest at the foot of the pavilion. It was a scene of order, ceremony, and anticipation; rows of honour guards lined the wharf, crowds gathered on the quay and ships docked alongside awaiting the disembarkation of the Prince.² Dwarfing all of this is the welcoming pavilion.

From Bonsecours Wharf the Prince proceeded through a series of nine temporary triumphal arches to his ultimate destination: the new Victoria Bridge - a two-mile-long tubular steel railway bridge spanning the St. Lawrence River from Point St. Charles in the west end of the city.³ The spectacle of the procession was recorded in a series of stereographs of the arches made and sold by the William Notman photographic studio of Montréal and by engraved illustrations of the arches published in newspapers in Canada, the United States, and England. These visual records are complemented by literary accounts published in installments in newspapers in Montréal, New York, and London and compiled in a book form typical of travel journals at mid-century.⁴ However, the surviving documentation forms a largely visual archive: the triumphal arches constructed for the event, the stereographs of the arches, and the engravings made from photos and drawings of the arches. It is my contention that the historical significance of these visual forms is not as a record of the Royal visit. Rather, the imagery served to picture a complex concept for diverse but equally interested audiences: that Montréal, the metropolitan centre of British America, was a model city of the British Empire, with ethnic dissension but also concord and ultimately defined as having a vibrant industrial economy.

Civic Concord: The Commissioning and Placement of the Arches

In *The Tour of H.R.H. The Prince of Wales Through British North America and the United States*, by a British Canadian, Henry James Morgan describes the landing

site at Bonsecours Wharf as a

massive pavilion...[which] although made of wood, was gilded and painted in a neat and masterly style. It was surmounted on the four sides by groups of flags, while at the top floated the royal standard. It looked really grand, contrasting with the wharf, which was laid out with trees, and carpeted where the Prince was to walk. The regular lines of soldiers, and the gay uniforms of the officers gathered there, gave the affair quite a festive appearance.⁵

The *Montreal Witness* reported on August 29 that:

At the landing-place on Bonsecours Wharf, the Harbor Commissioners erected a magnificent pavilion, or colonade [*sic*] of 60 square feet for the Prince's reception, supported by 12 Roman Doric pillars, beautifully pannelled [*sic*] and covered with cloth of all colors, the whole surmounted by a beautiful device of Venetian flags, while on each side were appropriate mottoes. The illuminated effect of the structure was unique and striking.

Two days later, Montréal's *La Guêpe* also expressed admiration:

Pendant la lecture de l'adresse, le spectacle qui s'offrait à nos regards était charmant. Le pavillon, où se trouvaient réunis tous ces personnages, offrait un coup d'oeil magnifique. Pour rendre un hommage au vrai mérite, disons, en passant, que l'habile décorateur, M. Gauthier, s'est surpassé en cette occasion; on ne pouvait pas réunir plus habilement l'élégance à la majesté, qu'il ne l'a fait dans ce chef-d'oeuvre de décoration.

The *Daily Globe* of Toronto on August 28 cited details:

[The canopy] is very large in size, and the most beautiful of the temporary structures I have yet seen built to do honour to his Royal Highness. The roof is supported by twelve large pillars, three at each corner. On all the four sides an arch is represented to view, bearing appropriate inscriptions, and hung with the British and French banners. The roof is flat, and made of alternate squares of red and white drapery. The pillars are also square, with red and blue panels, the remaining portions being left white, with the exception of the bead-work in different parts of the structure. On the right hand side of the canopy was a slightly elevated dais of red cloth, and the long broad wharf was ornamented by spruce branches placed along the edges.

The "appropriate inscriptions" above each arch defined the location and purpose of the pavilion: "Welcome to Montreal," on the north side and "Vive La Reine," on the west. These were the facades visible to the people standing on the wharf; an engraving made from a photograph by the Notman studio was published two weeks later in *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* of New York. "Vive la Reine" proclaims the allegiance of French Canadians to the British sovereign. The distinguishing characteristics implied by this motto are reinforced by the French and British ensigns described by the *Daily Globe* as flying side-by-side on the

pavilion. In *The Tour*, Henry James Morgan casually mentions that the ensigns were surmounted by the Royal standard, but these are absent from the *Frank Leslie's* engraving. A peaceful, unified and harmonious co-existence of Montréal's two linguistic communities is implied both by the manner in which the mottoes blend within the architectural whole and by the implication that these works, which had required significant sums of money to erect, could only have been accomplished in such a grand manner with a great deal of civic will. Not only the loyalty but the unity of the citizens was being proclaimed by this magnificent display.

The themes of civic harmony, loyalty and the city's economic prosperity and power were implied in Mayor Charles S. Rodier's address of welcome at the disembarkation ceremony on the landing pavilion. He made three points in this address which was delivered in both French and English. First, he expressed "to your Royal Highness our devoted loyalty and attachment to the person and government of our most Gracious Sovereign;" and second, that the "fame and prosperity" of Montréal would henceforth be linked to the Victoria Bridge, "that magnificent monument of enterprise and skill." His third point was that the bridge had been built in spite of "material obstacles, almost insurmountable in their ponderous strength" and with "complicated capital" and "Canadian energy and skill."

The Prince of Wales' reply in English acknowledged Montréal's agenda:

Deeply will the Queen be gratified by the proof which it [the Prince's welcome] affords that the interest which she takes in the welfare of this portion of Her Empire, and which she has been anxious to mark by my presence amongst you, is met in their part by feelings of affectionate devotion to herself and her family.

For myself, I rejoice at the opportunity which has been afforded me of visiting this city - the great emporium of the trade of Canada - and whose growing prosperity offers so striking an example of what may be effected by energy and enterprize under the influence of free institutions.

That this prosperity may be still further enlarged is my earnest hope and there can be little doubt that by the completion of that stupendous monument of engineering skill and labor, which I have come in the name of the Queen to inaugurate, new sources of wealth will be opened to your citizens and to the country; new elements of power developed, and new links forged to bind together in peaceful co-operation, the exertions of a widespread and rapidly increasing population.⁶

The triumphal arches were erected in the recently revived British tradition of commemorating a visit of the monarch.⁷ The size and finish of these structures made them appear solid and permanent attributing an age and stability to the city, then just over two hundred years old. A call for tenders by the Corporation of Montreal to build "six triumphal arches to be erected in different

parts of the city" for the procession from the landing wharf to the Prince's accommodations on Mount Royal had been issued in the French- and English-language newspapers on 12 June 1860. The notice specified that

Three kinds of Arches with Transparencies, Mottoes and Devices, &c., will be necessary to secure variety of style, construction and difference in cost....

The Tender will include the cost of material, construction, ornamenting, &c., also the fittings for being lit with gas, and the maintenance of the whole in good order during the whole time of the visit.... The whole of the six arches should not be of less value than four and not over five thousand dollars.⁸

The commission was awarded two weeks later to Montréal stained-glass manufacturers John McArthur and John C. Spence. The acceptance of their proposal came with "the understanding that the Committee of the City Council may make any alteration in the mottoes and devices that may appear to them expedient."⁹ The building of the arches had been undertaken by a Special Committee appointed by City Council to oversee arrangements for the reception of the Prince of Wales. Its responsibilities included a display of fireworks "of a style of grandeur commensurate with the occasion," illuminating public buildings and the triumphal arches, and "the erection of Floral and Triumphal Arches at the place of landing, and along the route therefrom to the intended residence of the Prince: the same to be ornamented with appropriate emblems, mottoes and devices and adapted for being lighted with gaz [*sic*]."¹⁰

The route selected to introduce Queen Victoria's representative to British North America's metropolitan centre paralleled an image of the city constructed by guidebooks published between 1857 and 1871. Civic and financial institutions, and sites of industry, transportation, education and religion were prominent along the route. The procession "representing the various trades of the city" was organized by the Committee of Citizens in cooperation with the Special Committee.¹¹ It departed from the quay by way of an arch west of Bonsecours Market at the foot of Jacques Cartier Square, then turned east along St. Paul Street past Bonsecours Market (which also housed the city's offices) and through an arch at Dalhousie Square where the British military barracks were located. It then turned back west along Notre Dame St. and the northern side of Jacques Cartier Square. This elevated side of the square afforded "a magnificent view of the Victoria Bridge and St. Helen's Island."¹² At Place d'Armes, across from Notre Dame Church, it turned north and passed through an arch towards Great St. James Street and the business district. Continuing east to an arch at a site of civic controversy, the newly-named Victoria Square (formerly Commissioners' Square), it then turned north along Beaver Hall Hill and St. Radegonde Street to St. Catherine Street. The procession then turned west, passing through an arch at University Street, arriving at the newly-built Exhibition Hall, called the "Crystal Palace" in reference to London's Great Exhibition of 1851. The procession was



fig.2 Arch, "Victoria," "Concordia Salus," 1860, stereograph, Coll. Notman Photographic Archives, McCord Museum of Canadian History, Montréal. (Photo: McCord Museum)

originally scheduled to continue through an arch at Simpson Street to the Prince's temporary residence on Mount Royal, where there awaited a crowning panoramic view of the City. Weather had delayed his landing by a day, however, and so after inaugurating Exhibition Hall, the Prince was conveyed with minimal ceremony to the Victoria Bridge in the west end of the city by way of the Wellington Street Bridge arch.¹³

Concordia Salus: Jacques Cartier Square

The arch of entry to the city of Montréal, at the foot of Jacques Cartier Square at Commissioners Street, most closely resembles the Constantinian form. Like all of the arches erected for this occasion, it was constructed in wood, painted, and adorned with evergreen boughs (fig.2). The imperial theme was amplified by inscriptions in English, French and Latin that paid tribute to the ruler. The Latin welcome, "Concordia Salus," was Montréal's corporate motto and the foundation of the theme of the celebration: civic harmony and well-being. On the south side,

the direction from which the royal procession approached, was written "Welcome to Our Future King;" the north side, visible from Notre Dame Street, was inscribed "Victoria, Notre Auguste Et [...] Reine," which was translated by the *Montreal Transcript* as "Victoria the Great and Good."¹⁴ The message evoked by this arch and its inscriptions, is couched in old-world tradition and suggests the transference of that tradition to the new world. Jacques Cartier Square was further decorated with a series of images addressing a theme of unity between Europe and America, and between those of French and British origins in Montréal:

Jacques Cartier had four transparencies. - The base of the Nelson Monument was surrounded with evergreens; and facing Notre Dame was a transparent bust of the hero, with the motto, 'Honor to the Immortal Nelson.'

The other was a portrait of Jacques Cartier in the costume of the time, and the motto, 'Honneur de Jacques Cartier, decouvreur du Canada.' The next was an allegorical representation of the Union of Europe and America. The centre figure was her Majesty the Queen, holding a wreath over the head of an Indian warrior and European girl, who stand below with hands clasped. The motto, in French and English was 'Union of Europe and America.' The fourth transparency was the Prince of Wales' Plume, with the motto 'Ich Dien [I Serve].'¹⁵

In 1861, 48% of the population of Montréal was French-Canadian and 24% was of British origin (two-thirds of whom were Irish).¹⁶ Every arch was inscribed with mottoes in both French and English suggesting that both linguistic communities participated equally in the festival. The response to this display was varied, however. The *Daily Globe* of Toronto, for example, bitterly reported that at the Bonsecours landing wharf:

large quantities of bunting were flying; but this fact all British people noticed - that, with the exception of two or three Upper Canada steamers which were there, the French tri-colour shone most conspicuous and completely eclipsed the limited number of Union Jacks which were shown. Indeed, judging from appearance, we might well imagine that to France Montréal belongs - that the British flag had been occasionally hung up, out of compliment to our Fatherland, by some few liberal-minded Frenchmen....¹⁷

The presence of the city's large French-speaking population was also noted by Kinahan Cornwallis of the *New York Herald*. The city:

is more than half French, and this French element seems ineradicable. When you speak to a cabman he answers in a French patois, or with an accent which tells you that French is the mother tongue; as you pass a group of children you hear them chattering French; whenever you look up at the name of a street painted on the walls, the chances are twenty to one that it is French also;...in fact, wherever you turn, you are constantly reminded that Montréal

was once a colony of France, and the features of the people, as well as of the city, confirm you in the impression.¹⁸

The mixed press response to the visibility of the French-Canadian citizenry suggests that all was not as harmonious as the official display implied. A tension crept into Cornwallis' lengthy description of the pervasiveness of a French culture that suggests not so much a cosmopolitan flavour as a view of French Canadians as a curiosity. The image of Montréal as a bilingual community did not rest easily with some English-speaking observers in 1860. The union of Upper and Lower Canada in 1841 had been recommended by the Durham Report of 1839 as the best means for consolidating English power and accelerating assimilation of French Canadians in the wake of civil unrest in 1837-38. While an expectation of assimilation was revealed by editorial comments, dissension was veiled by the show of unity produced by the decorations and addresses of the event itself - and nowhere more so than at the newly-named Victoria Square.

Civic Dissent: Victoria Square

The *Montreal Transcript* of 28 August provided an elaborate description of the Victoria Square site:

The Square was ornamented by transparencies at each corner. The first was a portrait of the Queen with the motto, 'Vivat Regina.' The next a portrait of the Prince Consort with the motto, 'Promoter of Arts and Manufactures.' The next was a likeness of H.R.H. the Prince of Wales with his plume, and groups of flags at each corner. A shield at the bottom exhibited the British and Prussian Arms. The other represented Canada, with the City Arms. There was also a figure of Britannia, and the motto, in both languages, proffered homage to the Prince of Wales. This Square, after the new improvements and the heavy rain, presented as brilliant appearance as any other in the city.

The "brilliant appearance" presented by this arch and square was one in which Montréal and Canada were tightly entwined with Britain: Montréal was cast as a distinctively British city. Moreover, the solid Roman arch and the exclamatory "Bien Venu!!!" suggested a happy conciliation of cultures.

The Notman studio's photograph of the Victoria Square arch was made as the Prince of Wales' procession approached (fig.3). A guard of honour lines the street in front of the arch and awaiting crowds of people have gathered along the street behind. Large flags fly from the buildings, filling the top of the archway. The monumental size of the arch is emphasized as it extends beyond the frame of the stereograph so that the small side gates are excluded. The coats of arms and the oversized figures in the niches between the columns rise well above the heads of the honour guard formed below. The August 27th. *Montreal Gazette*, declared itself at a loss for words to describe the reception given Prince Albert at this square:



fig.3 Arch, "Bien Venu!!!," 1860, stereograph, Coll. Notman Photographic Archives, McCord Museum of Canadian History, Montréal. (Photo: McCord Museum)

St. Lawrence Hall, the Banks, and the dwellings in the vicinity were filled with ladies who, with the spectators, cheered most lustily and drew from the Prince another acknowledgment for their enthusiastic reception. A little further down the street, at the Wesleyan Church, the cheering was taken up, and, for a time, was deafening — description would be useless to convey an idea of the reception thence to the Victoria Square. Prancing onward, the horses drew the royal carriage through a multitude who gave his Royal Highness a perfect oration.

But consider the following *Times* editorial published on 31st August, the day of the Prince of Wales' departure from Montréal: "[In Canada] the English are the conquering race, and another people of the same European family sit down close beside them.... In fact, we are unable to point out any single grievance under which Lower Canada can even pretend she suffers, unless it be that she now remains, as she was a hundred years ago, a dependency of the British Crown." The editorial went on to explain that the Prince of Wales had travelled to Montréal with a specific purpose:

to honour with his presence the inauguration of a magnificent bridge, constructed almost entirely with British capital - not the least of the many advantages which Lower Canada has reaped from her connexion with Great Britain - by which the capital of the French province will be brought into communication with the trade of the United States. It was not unreasonable to suppose that such a compliment, shown to a people whose good will we have done so much to conciliate, would call for corresponding expressions of loyalty and affection.

The editorial continued, however:

We are by long experience hardened to any amount of ingratitude. We have protected some nations in their own country, and they turn upon us with the most furious and unprovoked hatred. We have made our own Island an asylum for all the fugitives and oppressed of the earth, and what reward have [we] received except the bitterest hatred and animosity? When we consider the feelings with which England is regarded by the senior, and we may add by the junior branch of the Bourbons, we have no reason to be surprised at this outbreak of impotent malignity and ingratitude on the part of a portion of the *habitans* of Canada.... Why, then, should we be surprised that this little people, whose very existence is owing to our kindness, our forbearance, and our protection, should, in its turn, lift its unarmed heel against us? It is the privilege of a great country to confer many benefits, but he who confers many benefits must expect a corresponding amount of ingratitude and hatred.

This latest debate about French-Canadian loyalty to Britain was sparked by a civic dispute three weeks prior to the Prince of Wales' arrival. On 3 August 1860, a resolution had been presented and passed at a Montreal City Council meeting changing the name of Commissioners' Square, named for the group that had dismantled Montréal's old city walls fifty years earlier, to Victoria Square in honour of the Queen and the upcoming visit of the Prince of Wales. The French-Canadian councillors, who usually formed a majority on council, were outnumbered by British-Canadian councillors that evening. The French Canadians disputed the change using language that was considered inappropriate by English and French newspapers alike, although the French-language papers were united in the opinion that, if inappropriate, such language was justified.¹⁹

Newspaper accounts of the matter reflected the views of the opposed sides. *La Guêpe*, on 7 August, interpreted events as a vigorous and legitimate defence of cultural symbols:

Quand on voit, par exemple, les Anglais venir proposer de changer les noms français des places publiques et des rues pour leur substituer des noms anglais, il serait vraiment difficile aux conseillers canadiens-français de restreindre leur indignation et leur juste colère dans les formes prescrites par

les règles parlementaires.... Quoi les conseillers anglais auront usé d'intrigue pour avoir une voix de majorité, à une séance; forts de cette majorité ils oseront essayer de proscrire la langue française, et les conseillers qui parlent cette langue ce bondiraient pas de fureur;...Ils voulurent aussi montrer aux Bretons que les Canadiens ne se soumettraient jamais aux lois injustes que l'on pourrait réussir à passer contre notre nationalité....

Allez-vous reprocher à nos conseillers d'avoir eu recours à un moyen violent, mais au seul moyen qu'il y eût de conserver à la ville son aspect français.

Six days later, the *Daily Globe* in Toronto saw it another way in an editorial entitled "Lower Canada Domination!:"

Is Canada a British or a French Province? But as if to show that no amount of favour and patronage, no unjust preponderance of power and privilege, no degree of servility on the part of the English, will ever excite feelings of gratitude or make them loyal subjects of the British Crown, the French inhabitants of Lower Canada have, through the Municipal representatives of their principal city, seized the occasion of this happy visit, to insult the Queen and pour contempt upon her loyal subjects of English origin, and even to threaten the existence of British power in this country!...the insolent language, and violent behaviour of the French speakers, the treasonable cries and threats of a French mob in the galleries, and the bold justification of these extraordinary proceedings, by French newspapers after the occurrence, are evidence of a state of feeling, and of the existence of hopes and designs in Lower Canada against British power and British institutions, on this continent, which cannot be mistaken and ought not to be overlooked....

The British population of Canada, as well as the people of England, will learn from this incident the direction and the force of the current which has during the last few years been gradually effacing those land-marks which told the stranger that Canada was a British colony.

The Toronto newspaper went on to call for the replacement of the Union Act of 1841 with something more "equitable." Although the object of that Act, according to the newspaper, had been "to enable the English to subdue and control the rebellious French, the effect now is to enable the French to rule over, insult, and plunder the loyal English."

The *Montreal Witness*, responded to the dispute on 11 August 1860, arguing that the dispute over the renaming of Commissioners' Square:

places our Corporation in a most awkward predicament at this time. Will the other members [of City Council] tolerate the presence of the coarse, malignant ruffians in question, or of the Mayor, who is the head of that party, when the address of welcome is presented to the Prince of Wales; and if not, how can the address of the city be presented? How will the Prince feel among those who have shown that they would spurn him with personal indignity if they durst.

The *Witness* followed its account with translated reprints of reports of the event from *La Guêpe* and *La Minerve*, as well as from the *Montreal Herald*. Sarcasm laced the *Herald's* description of events:

Her Majesty forsooth was only a British sovereign, and, therefore not good enough to serve for the title to a Canadian square, devoted to the commemoration of the office of two or three gentlemen, who had superintended the destruction of the old walls of the city.... Furthermore, it was the British, who desired to make this change, and it must, therefore, be opposed by all good French Canadians. This last reason was, we understand, supported by the most offensive observations against all those immigrants to whom the city owes its chief developments.

James McGill and John Richardson were the two anglophone commissioners appointed to oversee the demolition of Montréal's walls between 1801 and 1817; the third was Joseph-Dominique-Emmanuel LeMoyne de Longueuil, who was replaced on his death in 1807 by Jean-Marie Mondelet. As in the renaming of Victoria Square, the issue at stake was the visual imprint on the city of one cultural group at the expense of the other. In *Opening the Gates of Eighteenth-Century Montréal*, Phyllis Lambert argues that tearing down the walls "represented an extraordinary opportunity for urban planning, which was seized by the British colonial authorities. Symbols of the French régime would be replaced by powerful images to represent the British crown."²⁰ The commissioners who had been commemorated and whose memory the French-Canadian members of City Council were defending had, in fact, assisted in a prior dismantling of French-Canadian monuments. On 18 September 1860, the *Pilot* and *La Minerve* of Montréal took conciliatory approaches in their responses to the controversy. The *Pilot* noted and refuted the *Times'* claims:

That there are French papers whose "every article breathes hostility to British rule and institutions," is unfortunately too true. But they are the exception, not the rule; for, as a whole, the French press can vie with the British in its loyalty and devotion to the throne. ...Nor ought the whole French people in Canada to be made answerable for the ravings of a few unmitigated fanatics.... The writer is also wrong in his observations concerning the Mayor. That his Worship is a Frenchman is true; but his loyalty was never doubted nor suspected. He was elected by as many British as French votes.

La Minerve, which from the mid-1850s represented the interests of the Cartier-Macdonald Liberal-Conservative alliance, noted that accounts of the City Council incident by British-Canadian newspapers, such as the *Daily Globe*, aligned with the conservative English-speaking bourgeoisie, had led the London *Times* to question the loyalty of French Canadians to the Crown. According to *La Minerve* on 18 September:

Mais il est bien établi que le langage des fauteurs de désordre a été désavoué



fig.4 Page of
Gates, 1860, Visit to
North America,
Captain Dawson's
Album, Coll. Norman
Photographic
Archives, McCord
Museum of Canadian
History, Montréal.
(Photo: McCord
Museum)

par tous les Canadiens-Français....

Avant d'en venir à la conclusion qui forme la dernière partie de son article, le Times fait un longue énumération des bienfaits dont nous sommes redevables au gouvernement de la métropole.

Certes, nous savions apprécier la conduite de l'Angleterre à notre égard: le gouvernement représentatif, la liberté de la presse, la liberté de gérer à notre guise nos affaires privées, sont autant de présents que la métropole nous a généreusement accordés.

La Minerve concluded that:

la conquête ne donne pas le droit de déchirer l'âme d'un peuple en le forçant d'adopter une langue étrangère, de renier la foi de ses ancêtres, pour pratiquer une religion que répugne à ses sentiments les plus intimes. Dieu a donné à chaque peuple une nationalité distincte; les hommes ne peuvent modifier à volonté cette loi du créateur. Lors que cette modification est nécessaire à l'harmonie universelle la Providence la prépare insensiblement par une suite de circonstances dont elle seule à le clef....

Lorsque le *Times* connaît la vérité sur la conduite que les Canadiens-Français ont tenu pendant la visite du Prince de Galles...il prendra pour thème l'ingratitude des Anglo-Canadiens de l'autre section de la province qui ont voulu faire violence aux sentiments intimes de l'héritier présomptif de la Couronne d'Angleterre.

The examples of the *Pilot* and *La Minerve*, are in keeping with the theme of loyalty emphasized by the arch at Victoria Square. The dispute over the change of its name is absent from all visual and textual descriptions of this contentious site.

Refusing subordinate status for its constituency, *La Guêpe* of 14 August countered the stances of the *Witness*, the *Herald* and the *Daily Globe*. Nevertheless, this show of unity was taken up and defended by both language groups in Montréal and by the press elsewhere. *The Illustrated London News* of 15 September reprinted the *New York Herald's* remarks that "the brilliant reception given to the Prince of Wales at Montréal has given a thorough refutation to the silly stories started some time since that the French-Canadians entertained no feeling of loyalty to the heir of Britain's throne." Québec's *Morning Chronicle* of 1 September agreed that Montréal had acquitted itself magnificently:

Considering that, on the eve of the Royal Visit, outsiders endeavored to persuade the public that a difference existed between the population here, as to the manner of receiving the Prince, it certainly cannot but be highly gratifying to the citizens of Montréal, to know that, in the eyes of the twenty thousand strangers who visited the city during the past week, every proceeding appeared so thoroughly successful.

The Visual Archive

The pageantry did not stop there, however, as the visual records of the event were then packaged and distributed. Photographs made by the Notman studio and the engravings carried in the papers of Montréal, London and New York were repackaged to present the pageant in a manner that differed in function, effect and scope from the original. Notman's photographs of the triumphal arches came into the possession of the Notman Archives of the McCord Museum in 1984 through the acquisition of a private photograph album.²¹ One page near the end is devoted to an array of photographs related to the visit of the Prince of Wales to Montréal (fig.4). An unattributed portrait of the Prince is surrounded by nine single frames cut from Notman stereographs of the arches, an interior of the Grand Ball Pavilion, Notman's group portrait of the Prince and his entourage outside their accommodations on Mount Royal, and Mathew Brady's studio portrait of the group made while in New York.

A list of stereographs made of the triumphal arches is included in the Notman studio's c.1861 sales catalogue.²² The images' unusual subject matter and their mass distribution as stereographs and, subsequently, as engravings mark

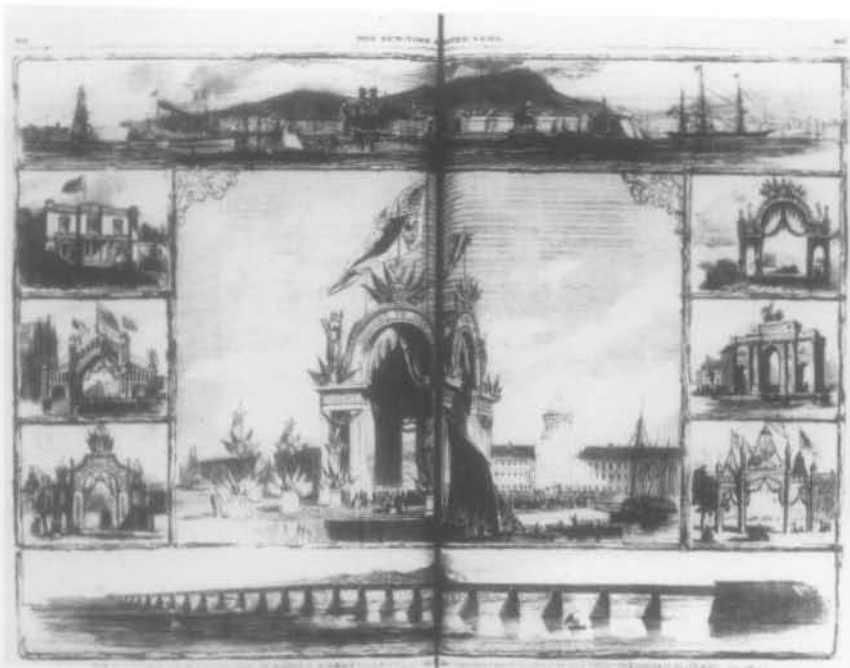


fig.5 The City of Montreal, *Demorest's New York Illustrated News*, 1 September 1860, 264-265.

them as significant visualizations of the kind of city Montréal's leaders wanted to portray.²³ Readers of the illustrated papers in Britain and North America became the extended audience of Montréal's pageant - or, more precisely, of a particular portrayal of that pageant. Much of this audience was the economic peer group of the Montréal businessmen and politicians who had organized the spectacle and had a vested interest in the promotion of Montréal as a place to do business. The programme's purpose was to advance Montréal as a stable metropolis where it was safe and wise to invest one's funds (the Victoria Bridge being a spectacular demonstration of that concept) and as a major city with the human resources to bring an investor's dreams to fruition.²⁴

Demorest's New York Illustrated News of 8 September 1860 published a two-page composite of the arches at Montréal, as well as a city view and a view of the Victoria Bridge (fig.5). One week later it printed a large and more elaborate engraving of the landing pavilion at Bonsecours Wharf (fig.6). The earlier *Demorest's* of 1 September shows a lavish two-page display of engravings that captures the splendour of the preparations made by the city to receive the Prince of Wales.²⁵ The top of the page offers a panorama of Montréal, taken from the har-

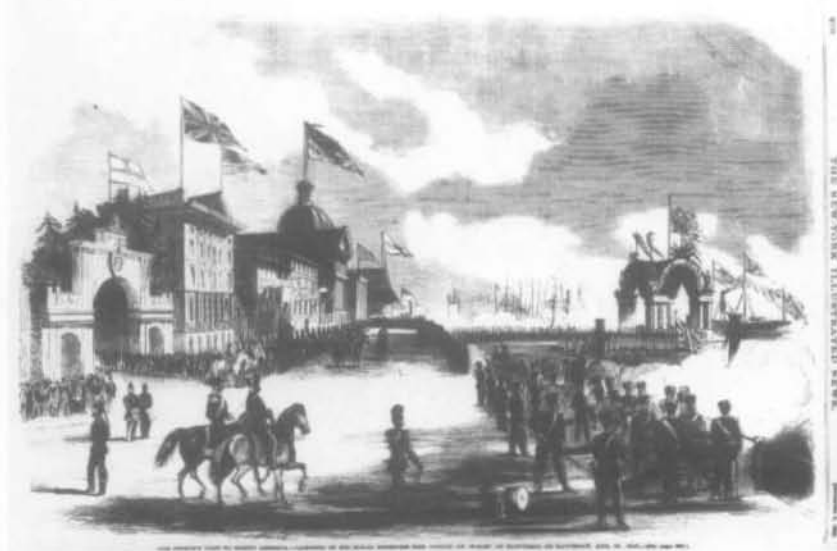


fig.6 The Prince's Visit to North America, *Demorest's New York Illustrated News*, 8 September 1860, 276.

bour. Mount Royal rises darkly in the background, offsetting the well-lighted city whose major landmarks, Bonsecours Market, Notre Dame Church and the harbour - made familiar to the readers by descriptions of the procession - are prominent. These pages are anchored by a panorama of the Victoria Bridge. The city of Montréal, suggested most clearly by Mount Royal, is sketched in the background.

Prominent at the centre of the illustrations is an elegant image of the welcoming pavilion constructed on Bonsecours Wharf. Again, the view is from the harbour, showing the domed Bonsecours Market and the inscription on the pavilion, which clearly marks the location of this event. The pavilion rises monumentally above the gathered crowds; the corner figure of Britannia is many times life-size and the standards surmounting the structure are massive. Framing each side of the main illustration are smaller images. One shows the Prince's accommodations in Montréal: "Rosemount," the home of John Rose, Commissioner of Public Works for the Canadas and one of the men responsible for the visit. The other five are of the triumphal arches. The first arch, at Jacques Cartier Square, is not shown, but included, clockwise from the upper right, are those built at Dalhousie Square, Victoria Square, Place d'Armes, Simpson Street, and St. Catherine Street. The

1 September issue of the *Demorest's New York Illustrated News* accompanied the engravings of the arches (fig.5) with the following remark: "This beautiful group of pictures cannot fail to be doubly interesting to our readers in connection with the historic drama which is being enacted in the Canadas."²⁶

Two weeks later, *The Illustrated London News* commented that:

We are making history in Canada, and it is the business of the great journals of the world to record it.... But intelligent Englishmen cannot be uninterested spectators of an event which proclaims to the world the sympathies of the four millions of people who uphold British power and maintain a British system of government over half the continent of North America.

Elaborate productions such as that of *Demorest's New York Illustrated News* imply the scale of Montréal's enterprise. \$10,000 was granted by the Corporation of Montreal for the celebration of the Prince's visit. The arches alone consumed half of this sum: \$4,992 was paid to McArthur and Spence for their work and \$150.97 to the New City Gas Company for illumination. Other significant expenses included \$2,000 for fireworks, \$1,500 for lighting public squares, and \$500 for a torchlight procession.²⁷

The costliness of the pageant is represented in turn by the size and splendour of the engravings produced from sketches made by *Demorest's* "own artist." The display published by *Harper's Weekly* (fig.7) on 25 August has much the same aim and effect as *Demorest's* but in a more simplified format. The top half illustrates the six official arches, seen without frames or backgrounds, surrounding a sketch of the temporary building constructed for the grand ball held for the Prince. Copy describing the construction of the Victoria Bridge flanks this illustration. The bottom half carries an elaborate panoramic engraving of the west side of the Victoria Bridge. The bridge cuts across the composition at a diagonal, and is viewed from a low angle. The city of Montréal, identified as was customary by Notre Dame Church and Mount Royal, fills the background beneath the bridge's span. This image is marked by attention to detail: the stonework of the bridge supports, the atmospheric effects of the sky, the small buildings of the city in the distance and the vessels making their way along the river.

The "traditional" arches mark the education and erudition of the segment of Montréal society that commissioned these works. This adaptation of ancient and early-modern traditions to a new age and continent provides a dual impression of Montréal's business elite: conservative and stable; imaginative and forward-thinking. The magnificence of the pageant and the worthiness of the city to host such an event are clearly evinced in this representation. These same themes compose the programme of the arches produced for the Prince's visit and run through the texts of guidebooks to the city. The images of the pageant decorations in both *Harper's Weekly* and *Demorest's New York Illustrated News* in turn took up this programme without critical analysis of its contents. Rather, these newspapers

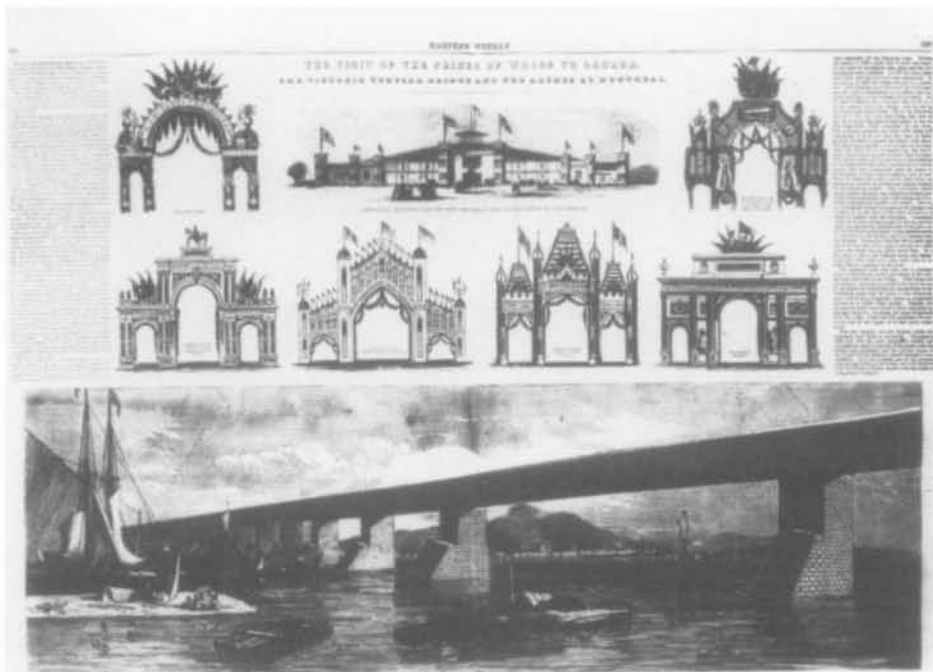


fig.7 The Visit of the Prince of Wales to Canada, engraving, *Harper's Weekly*, 25 August 1860, 536-537.

became enthusiastic contributors to the spectacular nature of the event. Ironically, *Harper's* commented on this fact in the same edition that ran the decorative engravings:

Our humorous poets have thus far forgotten to seize the humors of the Prince's tour through the Canadian Provinces. The exuberant loyalty of the colonists; the funny servility of some learned bodies; the desperate partisanship of some petty politicians...the lavish expenditure of money in honor of this youth, who will probably gaze with more interest on Canada's natural beauties than on her triumphal arches - all these are rare topics for a humorous pen, and we hardly understand how they have been neglected so long.... Perhaps there never was a royal progress which left so little room for serious criticism.

The images printed in the *Montreal Gazette* suggest that the primary visual concern was the style and inscription of each of the arches.²⁸ These are modest illustrations, interwoven with an extensive text which describes the procession of the Prince of Wales through the city two days earlier. The *Gazette* rarely carried illustrations and that it felt compelled to do so suggests both its enthusiastic

THE PRINCE OF WALES AT MONTREAL.



THE PRINCE OF WALES, SURROUNDED BY HIS MOUNTED GUARDS, AT MONTREAL.



THE PRINCE OF WALES, SURROUNDED BY HIS MOUNTED GUARDS, AT MONTREAL.

The Prince of Wales, having been invited to visit the city of Montreal, arrived on the 22nd inst. The Prince, who is now in the 25th year of his age, is a very popular and popular figure. He is a very popular figure, and his visit to Montreal is a very popular event. The Prince, who is now in the 25th year of his age, is a very popular and popular figure. He is a very popular figure, and his visit to Montreal is a very popular event. The Prince, who is now in the 25th year of his age, is a very popular and popular figure. He is a very popular figure, and his visit to Montreal is a very popular event.

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fig.8 The Prince of Wales at Montreal, engraving, *The Illustrated London News*, 22 September 1860, 271.

participation in the pageant and the pragmatic recognition that it must be competitive with the many papers covering the event. The Prince of Wales was still in Montréal when the *Gazette* and its rival the *Montreal Herald* published their illustrated numbers. The *Herald* printed finer engravings and more carefully detailed descriptions of each arch. These engravings were the same as those published two days earlier in *Harper's Weekly*. Neither newspaper credited the source of the engravings.

In contrast, *The Illustrated London News* did not print engravings until a month after Prince Albert's progress through Montréal, when much of its issue of 22 September 1860 was dedicated to an elaborate visual account of his tour through North America. One page was set aside for Montréal (fig.8). Six unattributed engravings included two of the Exhibition Building, one of the Grand Ball Pavilion, and three of arches: the Pavilion at Bonsecours Wharf, the arch opposite Notre Dame Church at Place d'Armes, and one described as "at the head of M'Gill Street," which was in fact the arch at Victoria Square.²⁹ *The Illustrated London News* engravings are distinguished by the amount of detail they include; in contrast, the accompanying articles made no mention of the arches.

The authority of these artists' sketched versions of the events in *Demorest's*, *Harper's* and *The Illustrated London News* was none the less exceeded however by the images of the arches reproduced on 8 September in *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* of New York. *Frank Leslie's* images were engraved from "Photographs by William Notman of Montreal" (fig.9). Included are the six arches commissioned by the city, a view of the Prince of Wales' residence in Montréal and two images attributed to the newspaper's "special artist:" an exterior and interior view of the Grand Ball Pavilion. Text describing the visit and the participants in the procession is interspersed with these illustrations.

Comparison of the *Frank Leslie's Illustrated News* engravings with original Notman photographs, however, demonstrates that liberties were taken when making the engravings, although basic architectural styles and elements remained the same. For example, the engravings were produced to represent the most exciting moment in the pageant when the procession passed by spectators and through an arch. In the engraving, crowds are gathered, honour guards positioned, and various riders and carriages depicted at every arch. In fact Notman photographs captured this moment at only two sites. This and other changes seen in other newspapers can be attributed in part to the need to concentrate as much information as possible in single views. Therefore, details such as the inscriptions were altered to adapt the engravings to the perceived needs and interests of the reading audience. For example, the photograph of the first arch at Jacques Cartier Square, shows the north side inscription "Victoria, Notre Auguste Et [...] Reine" (fig.2). This was changed for the American, English-speaking audience to the south side inscription "Welcome to Our Future King," clarifying that the visitor

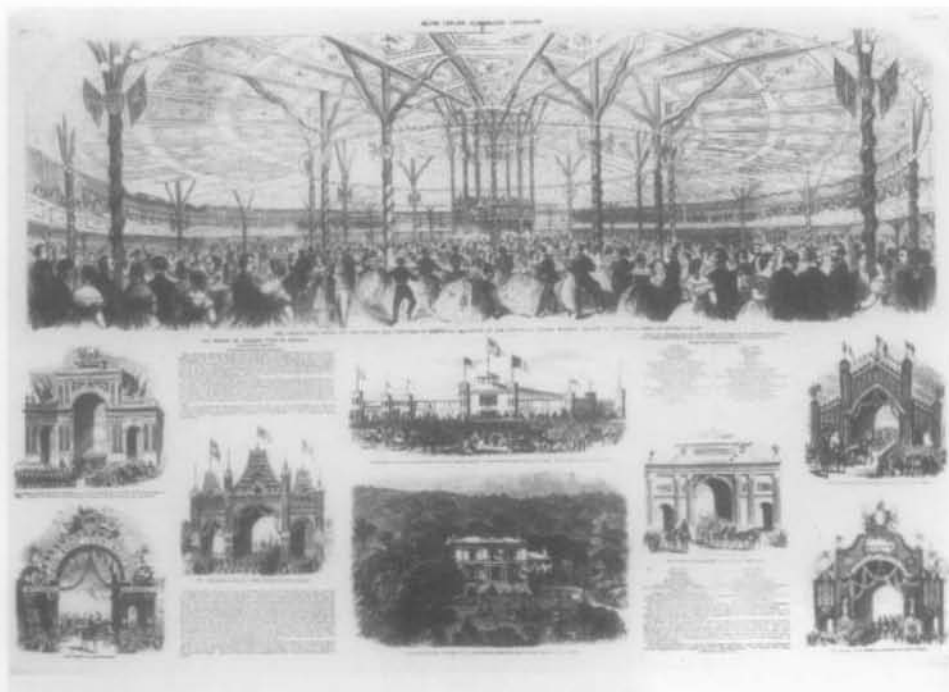


fig.9 The Prince of Wales's Tour in America, engraving, *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, 8 September 1860.

was the Prince of Wales and not, in fact, Queen Victoria. The exuberant French inscription, "Bien Venu!!!" on the arch at Victoria Square (fig.3) was translated to read "Welcome to Canada." And the city motto in Latin on the arch in the photograph of the Exhibition Building was replaced by the English inscription from the reverse side: "Arts, Agriculture and Commerce."

On the surface, these changes served to locate the pageant geographically for the audience, to clarify that the Prince of Wales rather than the Queen was the object of the display, and to allow those who read neither Latin nor French to understand the arches' inscriptions. The effacement of French from the photographs, however, substantially changed the meaning of these decorations. The social nuances and variety in the original programme of decorations contrived to display harmony and unity but this is nowhere evident in the *Frank Leslie's* engraved representations published for an American audience.

In his description of the Prince of Wales' tour, Henry James Morgan subsequently drew a link between the issues of loyalty, civic harmony, progress and prosperity, labour, and the decorations made for the occasion:

Montreal is to Canada what London is to Great Britain - the metropolis....

No wonder, then, that, as the richest city in British North America, she should give the Heir Apparent to the British Throne a reception so magnificent, which cannot but be always remembered, by, not only the Prince himself, but by all that had the good fortune to witness it.³⁰

The magnificence of the pageant and its decorations impressed upon viewers such as the British-Canadian Morgan the idea that Montréal was a city of opportunity and prosperity. Nor was it surprising to Morgan that such an obviously prosperous city should demonstrate its loyalty to its sovereign so ostentatiously. Morgan cites the arches as the outstanding representatives, in a particular way, of this magnificence: "The whole city was beautifully ornamented with flags, banners, trees, flowers, evergreens, transparencies, and arches, which for taste, skill, architecture, and varied beauty, can hardly be excelled; they appeared so very neat, beautiful, and substantial, and were adorned and painted so very elaborately."

As carriers of "taste, skill, architecture, and varied beauty," the arches portrayed an image of the cultural sophistication expected of any city with pretensions to metropolitan status in a global empire. Nicholas Woods, writing primarily for a London audience, agreed: "At such a capital, and among a people so celebrated, colonially speaking, for their wealth, taste, and refinement, it may readily be guessed that the preparations for doing honour to the heir apparent were made on a scale of unusual grandeur and magnificence."³¹

Visual representation is potent. Montréal could not have chosen a better means to engage the attention of an international audience and to persuasively articulate an identity engendering abstract values of loyalty, diversity, concord, and progress.

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Notes

- 1 "The Prince in Montreal," *Daily Globe* (Toronto), 28 Aug. 1860, 2. Although the Prince's ship arrived on 24 August the landing was delayed a day because of heavy rain.
- 2 40 000 persons were estimated in "The Prince of Wales at Montreal," *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, 8 Sept. 1860, and in Henry James MORGAN, *The Tour of H.R.H. The Prince of Wales Through British North America and the United States, by a British Canadian* (Montréal: John Lovell, 1860), 93. The crowd was estimated at 60,000 in "The Prince of Wales in Canada. The Prince at Montreal," *The Illustrated London News*, 15 Sept. 1860. 90,000 in "Arrivée du Prince à Montréal," *La Guêpe* (Montréal), 31 août 1860.
- 3 A civil engineer involved with the construction of the Victoria Bridge characterized it as "the addition of an eighth wonder to the world's museum;" see Charles LEGGE, *A Glance at the Victoria Bridge and the Men Who Built It* (Montréal: John Lovell, 1860), 30. See also Stanley TRIGGS, "The Bridge," in Stanley TRIGGS, et al., *Victoria Bridge: The Vital Link* (Montréal: McCord Museum of Canadian History, 1992), 36-73.
- 4 At least six books recounting the Prince of Wales' tour to North America were published. See Robert CELLEN, *Visit of His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales to the British American Provinces and United States in the Year 1860: Compiled from the Public Journals* (Toronto: Henry Rowsell, 1861); Kinahan CORNWALLIS, *Royalty in the New World: or The Prince of Wales in America* (London: A. Hall, Vertue, 1860); [Sir John] Gardner D. ENGLEHEART, *Journal of the Progress of H.R.H. The Prince of Wales Through British North America; and His Visit to the United States, 19th July to 15th November, 1860* (London: Chiswick Press, c.1860); Henry James MORGAN, *The Tour of H.R.H.; Relation du Voyage de Son Altesse Royale le Prince de Galles en Amerique: reproduite du "Journal de l'instruction publique du Bas-Canada" avec un appendice contenant diverses addresses* (Montréal: Eusebe Senecal, 1860); N.A. WOODS, *The Prince of Wales in Canada and the United States* (London: Bradbury and Evans, 1861). For an overview of a variety of activities and visual materials manufactured for the event see Conrad GRAHAM, "The Celebration," in *Victoria Bridge: The Vital Link*, 74-95.
- 5 MORGAN, *The Tour of H.R.H.*, 91.
- 6 *Montreal Transcript*, 28 Aug. 1860. See also the *Daily Globe*, 27 Aug. 1860, 2; and MORGAN, *The Tour of H.R.H.*, 92-93.
- 7 For a history of British royal entries see Robert WITHINGTON, *English Pageantry: An Historical Outline*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1918; New York and London: Benjamin Blom, 1963).
- 8 "Corporation of Montreal: Tenders for Arches," *Pilot* (Montréal), 13 June 1860. This as well as a French call for tender is found in a photocopy "Corporation de Montréal: Soumissions pour Arcs-de-Triomphe," dossier, VM1/B1-1860-3, Ville de Montréal, Gestion de documents et des archives.
- 9 Charles Glackmeyer, City Clerk to Messrs. McArthur and Spence, 26 June 1860, dossier, VM1/B1-1860-3. McArthur and Spence's original proposal and designs have not been located.
- 10 "Report from the Special Committee on the celebration in honor of the visit of H.R.H. the Prince of Wales," 12 June 1860, dossier, VM1/B1-1860-3. Building the welcoming arch at Bonsecours Wharf was later taken on as a project of the Harbour Commissioners who had been asked to make necessary arrangements to accommodate the Prince's arrival. Four additional arches were reported to have been erected by private citizens: one at the entrance to McGill College, photographed by the Notman studio; one at St. Lawrence Main Street and Dorchester, erected by "Messrs. Morrow, Walker and other spirited tradesmen." Although discussion of the "private" arches falls outside the purview of this essay, they were described in the local press: "Preparations for the Prince in Montreal," *Montreal Gazette*, 13 Aug. 1860. See also "The Arch in St. Lawrence Main Street," *Pilot*,

- 22 Aug. 1860; another on Wellington Street at Nicholas, put up by Griffintown residents "Preparations," *Gazette*, 13 Aug. 1860, and "The Illuminations. The Triumphal Arches," *Montreal Witness*, 29 Aug. 1860; and a fourth on the Wellington Street Bridge installed by the Canal Commissioners and photographed by the Notman studio, "The Triumphal Arches," *Montreal Witness*, 4 Aug. 1860.
- 11 "Report from the Special Committee on the celebration in honor of the visit of H.R.H. the Prince of Wales," 12 June 1860, dossier, VM1/B1-1860-3.
- 12 *Chisholm's Stranger's Guide to Montreal* (Montréal: Chisholm and Bros., 1871), 31.
- 13 The most complete description of the route is found in an advertisement headed "Prince de Galles" placed by the City of Montreal in *La Guêpe*, 7 août 1860. See also MORGAN, *Relation du Voyage*, 38; *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, 8 Sept. 1860; and "The Prince of Wales at Montreal," *The Illustrated London News*, 22 Sept. 1860.
- 14 *Montreal Transcript*, 28 Aug. 1860.
- 15 *Ibid.*
- 16 *Census Report of the Canadas 1860/61* (Québec: S.B. Foote, 1863-64), Table No. 1, 4-5. Montréal's population was 90,323 persons.
- 17 "The Prince in Montreal," *Daily Globe*, 28 Aug. 1860.
- 18 Kinahan CORNWALLIS, *Royalty in the New World; or The Prince of Wales in America* (London: A. Hall, Virtue, 1860), 4-5.
- 19 "Conseil-de-Ville," *La Guêpe*, 7 août 1860; "Continuation de l'Itinéraire du Prince," *La Minerve*, 18 septembre 1860; "Regret et étonnement du Globe etc.," *Le Canadien* (Québec), 27 août 1860.
- 20 Phyllis LAMBERT, "Removing the Fortifications: Toward a New Urban Form," in *Opening the Gates of Eighteenth-Century Montréal*, ed. Phyllis Lambert and Alan Stewart (Montréal: Canadian Centre for Architecture, 1992), 80.
- 21 The album was acquired from Captain John P.T. Dawson, R.C.N. (Retired) of Victoria, B.C. The volume contains images of various sizes, from 3" x 3" single stereograph frames to 8" x 10" prints of Canadian views made by the Notman, Henderson and Livernois studios between 1860 and 1872, as well as photographic portraits of politicians including Abraham Lincoln and D'Arcy McGee and photographic copies of paintings and sculptures.
- 22 Notman's stereograph catalogue lists twelve photographs of Montréal's arches as well as eleven of the arches at Québec. See #539-545, #553-555 and #559-560 in [William] Notman, (...) *Victoria Bridge, Niagara Falls, Principal Cities and Places of Interest Throughout Canada*, c.1861, 25-26.
- 23 The engravings, like the stereographs, served a secondary purpose as souvenirs.
- 24 The *Times* of London was the only paper to acknowledge the financial problems of the Grand Trunk Company (which was receiving much attention in the Canadian press) in connection with the Prince's visit, commenting that "we certainly could have wished that the journey of the Prince had some better chosen object than the opening of a work the proprietors of which were notoriously in a state of insolvency," 31 Oct. 1860.
- 25 These illustrations would have been especially provocative in New York where the press indulged in a great deal of hand-wringing prior to Prince of Wales arrival there. Their concern that the welcome accorded him be of sufficient splendour was not in deference to his title but for the good of New York's reputation. Judging by the accounts in the New York press, the performance there did not measure up to the pomp at Montréal.
- 26 "The Triumphal Arches at Montreal in Honor of the Prince of Wales," *Demorest's New York Illustrated News*, 1 Sept. 1860.

27 "Statement of the expenses incurred by the Special Committee appointed to make arrangements for the reception of His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales," 10 Sept. 1860, dossier, VM1/B1-1860-3. The total cost of the reception, as outlined in this statement, was \$10,669.86.

28 "The Prince's Progress," *Montreal Gazette*, 27 Aug. 1860, front page. Reprinted in the *Montreal Weekly*, 1 Sept. 1860. The poor quality of these engravings precludes reproduction here.

29 This arch was called "Haymarket" in *Harper's Weekly* and the *Montreal Herald*. There was some confusion in the coverage between the official arches and two privately-subscribed arches at the entrance to McGill College and at Haymarket Square in the Irish section of Griffintown west of the Victoria Bridge. No photograph or illustration of the latter arch has been found.

30 MORGAN, *The Tour of H.R.H.*, 93-94.

31 WOODS, *The Prince of Wales*, 112-113.

Résumé

CONCORDIA SALUS

Des arcs de triomphe à Montréal en 1860

De la visite du prince de Galles à Montréal, en 1860, et du spectacle du défilé sous une enfilade de neuf arcs de triomphe temporaires, il nous reste un important fonds d'archives visuelles. Elles se composent d'une série de stéréographies des arcs, réalisées et vendues par le studio de photographie William Notman de Montréal, ainsi que de gravures reproduites dans des journaux au Canada, aux États-Unis et en Angleterre. Cette abondance de vestiges visuels est complétée par des rapports dans des journaux de Montréal, New York et Londres, réédités sous forme de livres. Je voudrais démontrer que la signification historique de ces témoignages visuels ne se trouve pas dans ce qu'ils semblent rapporter mais qu'ils devaient plutôt servir à présenter, à certains auditoires divers mais également intéressés, un concept abstrait complexe: celui que Montréal, métropole de l'Amérique du Nord britannique, était une ville modèle au sein de l'empire britannique, culturellement diversifiée mais loyale, où l'on trouvait des dissensions ethniques mais aussi la concorde, et finalement définie comme une économie industrielle. Bien en évidence sur les inscriptions des arcs de triomphe, ainsi que sur les descriptions et représentations subséquentes des arcs, se retrouvent les thèmes de la loyauté et de l'harmonie civique au milieu de la diversité linguistique. De plus, les arcs, par leur taille et leur splendeur, donnaient l'image de la prospérité économique et de la puissance.

L'accueil mitigé devant la visibilité des deux communautés linguistiques suggère, cependant, que tout n'était pas aussi harmonieux que pouvait le laisser croire le spectacle officiel. Une certaine tension s'insinue dans les commentaires britanniques, américains et du Haut-Canada à propos de la place envahissante de la culture française de Montréal. Ainsi, une attaque cinglante du *Daily Globe* de Toronto, à propos de l'image de Montréal comme ville essentiellement de langue française, exprime le souhait et montre l'espoir que le défilé, et ce qu'on en raconterait, ait un caractère résolument britannique. Au lieu de cela, les décorations le long du parcours suivi par le prince, lors de sa réception par la ville, montraient une juxtaposition harmonieuse de groupes français et anglais. Alors qu'à l'extérieur les commentaires éditoriaux révélaient l'espoir de l'assimilation, à Montréal toute dissension était occultée par l'apparence d'unité produite par les décorations et les allocutions au cours de l'événement, tout particulièrement au nouveau *Victoria Square*.

Lors d'une réunion en 1860, le conseil municipal de Montréal avait adopté une résolution visant à changer le nom du *Commissioners' Square*, qui rappelait les responsables de la démolition des vieux murs de la ville cinquante ans auparavant, en *Victoria Square*, en l'honneur de la reine et de la visite prochaine du prince de Galles. Les conseillers canadiens-français s'opposèrent au changement en utilisant un langage jugé inapproprié dans les journaux anglais aussi bien que français, bien que les journaux français aient été unanimes à trouver que leur comportement, bien qu'inapproprié, était justifié. Ironiquement, le changement de nom du square pour honorer la reine était dans la ligne de pensée des anciens commissaires. Néanmoins, la vigoureuse polémique au sujet du changement de nom est absente de toutes les descriptions visuelles et écrites de ce site, objet d'une dispute passionnée.

Au milieu du siècle dernier, à Montréal, la presse et la photographie permettaient la diffusion d'images de la visite royale bien au-delà de la portée géographique et publique de l'événement. Les lecteurs des journaux illustrés, en Grande-Bretagne et en Amérique du Nord, devinrent le public élargi du spectacle montréalais - ou, plus précisément, d'une certaine représentation de ce spectacle. La plus grande partie de ce public appartenait à la même classe économique que les organisateurs de l'événement de Montréal et avait un intérêt matériel dans la promotion de Montréal comme endroit propice aux affaires. L'intention de présenter la ville comme une métropole économiquement stable et pourvue d'amples ressources humaines se retrouvait sous une forme modifiée et concentrée au moyen des images diffusées internationalement.

Une liste des stéréographies des arcs de triomphe est incluse dans le catalogue de vente du studio Notman, vers 1861. Le sujet inhabituel des images et leur large diffusion, d'abord sous forme de stéréographies puis comme gravures, montrent qu'elles sont des représentations significatives de la sorte de ville que les édiles montréalais voulaient représenter. C'est ainsi que *Demorest's New York*

Illustrated News publie un luxe de gravures, sur deux pages, pour faire voir aux lecteurs la splendeur des préparatifs mis en œuvre par la ville pour recevoir le prince de Galles. Des productions aussi soignées que celle de *Demorest's* donnent une idée de l'envergure de l'entreprise montréalaise. Les rédacteurs qui ont rapporté l'événement l'ont fait visuellement avec une emphase comparable, laquelle, à son tour, embellissait et amplifiait le spectacle original. Les images des décorations du défilé reprenaient ce propos sans donner une analyse critique du contenu. Ces journaux ont plutôt contribué avec enthousiasme à l'aspect spectaculaire de l'événement.

La valeur des croquis d'artiste de l'événement, reproduits dans *Demorest's*, *Harper's* et *The Illustrated London News*, était cependant contestée par les représentations des arcs gravées à partir des photographies de William Notman, de Montréal, et reproduites dans *Frank Leslie's Illustrated News* de New York. Une comparaison des gravures de *Frank Leslie's Illustrated News* avec les photos originales de Notman montre qu'on se permettait des libertés en faisant les gravures.

On peut attribuer les modifications en partie au besoin de concentrer autant d'information que possible dans une seule image. On a, par conséquent, modifié certains détails, comme les inscriptions, pour adapter les gravures aux besoins et intérêts supposés des lecteurs. À titre d'exemple, l'inscription sur le premier arc, square Jacques-Cartier, qui, sur la photo, se lit: «Victoria, Notre Auguste Et [] Reine», a été changée en: «Welcome to Our Future King», et l'inscription française «Bien Venu!!!» sur l'arc du square Victoria a été traduite en: «Welcome to Canada». Ainsi, alors que les nuances sociales et la variété du programme décoratif original tendaient à démontrer l'harmonie et l'unité, cela n'est nulle part en évidence dans les représentations gravées de *Frank Leslie's*.

La représentation visuelle était très efficace. Montréal n'aurait pu choisir de meilleur moyen d'attirer l'attention de la classe moyenne internationale et de formuler de manière persuasive une identité porteuse des valeurs abstraites de loyauté, diversité, concorde, modernité et progrès.

Traduction: Élise Bonnette