

We are writing to object to the demolition of our former home at 462 Lakeshore Road. Our father, Frank E. Scott, built this 3,728-square-foot stone house in 1950. It replaced the original wooden house on the property, which burned down in January of that year. At our ages, (85 and 82), it saddens us to think that this solid house, built to withstand fire and flood, must be torn down to suit the whims of today.

Frank Scott, the president of the Stevenson and Scott advertising firm, was among the first Montreal businessmen to establish his permanent residence in Beaurepaire when he bought the property in 1940. At that time, mustard fields lined Beaconsfield Boulevard and farms stretched all the way to the Rivière des Prairies. Majestic grounds with many varieties of trees then surrounded the oldest structure on Thompson's Point, the Maison Beaurepaire, a heritage jewel built in 1770-71. Large summer residences dating back to the turn of the 20th century dotted the rest of the Point.

Our original house at 462 Lakeshore Road was one of those former summer cottages. After spending the summer of 1940 there, we moved back to Westmount for a few months while our father had the house winterized so we could live in Beaurepaire year round. Living on the water was a priority for our father, the son of a Great Lakes captain who operated a steamship company in Collingwood, Ontario. We swam in the lake in summer and skated on it in winter. During the summer holidays, we would sail up to the Thousand Islands in our father's cabin cruiser. Our mother ordered groceries from Godin's store in Beaurepaire village and bought other necessities in Pointe Claire.

Our father was a highly creative man whose advertising campaigns included the famous Black Horse Ale ads for Dawes' Brewery and the Dingbats illustrations for Frosst pharmaceuticals, seen on calendars in doctors' offices across Canada. When he rebuilt the house after the fire, he looked to traditional Quebec architecture for inspiration, choosing natural materials like local fieldstone. The sloping roof and dormer windows echo French-Canadian farmhouses, while the sunken living room with its massive fireplace and stone porch overlooking the lake harmonized with the scenic setting. The builder was Adam Meloche of Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue, a distinguished, silver-haired man whose son, an architecture student, drew up the plans with our father.

It saddens us to see generic suburban houses made of engineered materials gradually replace all of the dwellings that tell the story of the area's origins. Preserving heritage should not just be a matter of saving a single historic building, shorn of its context, like a butterfly pinned behind glass. If possible, it should be possible to read the layers of the past in the built and natural environment – from First Nations occupation to the fur trade, agricultural settlement, summer tourism and suburbanization. When you destroy all traces of that narrative, you end up with a bland environment that could be on the outskirts of anywhere – from Arizona to Alberta. As the American writer Gertrude Stein famously said, “There's no there there.”

Thompson's Point is an exceptional heritage sector that merits protection under Quebec's Cultural Property Act (now Cultural Heritage Act), according to a 2005 report by the City of Montreal's heritage department. (At that time, Beaconsfield had been merged into Montreal.) In addition to its extraordinarily picturesque setting, the Point has maintained

the same urban form, in terms of the scale of its buildings in relation to the site, since it was designed as a vacation community for members of Montreal's bourgeoisie in the late 19th century, the report states.

“Nous recommandons... de créer le site du patrimoine de la pointe Thompson incluant le 13, rue Thompson, et les 460-462-472-474-476-478, chemin du Lakeshore,” the report recommended. It is a pity that the de-merged town of Beaconsfield never acted on this recommendation. Destruction of buildings that if properly maintained could outlast us all is contrary to sustainable development, defined as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

“Today heritage conservation in Canada is embarking on an environmentally-conscious paradigm which promotes the retention and integration of the existing building stock into future development plans with a view to promoting healthy and vital communities, saving energy, reducing the exploitation of new resources, and reducing the amount of waste from demolition,” according to a 2012 paper by Christienne Uchiyama of Carleton University's School of Canadian Studies Heritage Conservation Programme.

What are the values of a community that sanctions and encourages the waste of precious resources, the loss of historical memory and the proliferation of banal buildings unrelated to their settings? Beaconsfield's apparent lack of concern for the heritage of one of its most picturesque and significant sectors is disappointing. We consider it regrettable that this proposal is under consideration and hope that permission for demolition is not granted.