

## The House of the Notaries

“Notaries, because of their calling, have long been the keepers of our collective memory,” states Julien S. Mackay, notary.

When colonization was in its early days, any hamlet without a firm of notaries used the services of an itinerant notary or scrivener to meet the needs of the budding community.

The itinerant notary traveled the parishes, horn inkwell on his hip and sealskin bag on his shoulder, looking for marriage contracts; bills of sale or of donation; deeds of obligation or other contracts to be written. The scrivener’s work was to record the bills or deeds without having undertaken the long studies required to become a notary.

Through his work, the notary was a privileged witness to financial, real estate and matrimonial changes in the lives of many. These archival materials, for which the notary was the depository and guardian, constitute a goldmine of information. They contribute greatly to our ability to reconstruct history, create a societal portrait or establish the stages of development of towns and villages through dates of contracts and descriptions of premises, old dwellings and ancient monuments that were acquired. Using these archives, we can identify a region’s pioneers and where they first settled, follow the succession of owners and new arrivals, and locate heritage homes.

In the same way, notary records are of great assistance to genealogical researchers because of the marriage contracts they contain. Real estate contracts also contain interesting material in terms of land passed along or shared from one generation to another. A combination of these data allow us to follow back along family lines or establish a basis for some events.

Notaries also occupied an important place in the community. In fact, they were often municipal councillors or members of a board of directors, particularly of the Caisse populaire and of the Fabrique (the parish corporation). Sometimes they assumed the role of matrimonial councillors through their writing of marriage contracts, or of mediators in conflicts between spouses or neighbours.

A lineage of records in Saint-Jovite<sup>1</sup> since 1890

During colonization, people used an English-speaking notary from Arundel, an itinerant notary, or a scrivener who traveled from Saint-Jérôme once a week. Quite early on, however, notaries established themselves in the town of Saint-Jovite.

At the end of the 1880s, Pierre-Abondius Barrette was the first notary to practice in Saint-Jovite. The first notarized deed, signed on June 20, 1890, marks the beginning of a long chain of documents thus signed...a notarial record now more than 125 years of age. In 1948 his successor, notary Calixte Proulx and his son Gilles, newly graduated, constituted the Proulx and Proulx notary office. They installed their new practice on this site on the rue Ouimet (now rue de Saint-Jovite). Later, Me Réjean La Salle and Me Réjean Villeneuve established themselves here, which meant that these premises

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<sup>1</sup> Saint-Jovite is the name of one of the former municipalities which merged to form what is today the Ville de Mont-Tremblant

retained their calling. In popular language, it was *la maison des notaires*, which stood here on this street corner for close to 40 years.

Things changed in 1985 when, in a break with tradition, *la maison des notaires* changed its calling. In order to have more space and more modern premises, the notaries moved their offices to the rue Charbonneau. In spite of this change, the building was referred to as *la maison des notaires* until it was torn down, following a fire, in 2017.

Research and writing: Société du Patrimoine SOPABIC, heritage society  
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And the lineage continues.... Me Léliane Villeneuve, daughter of Me Réjean Villeneuve, and Me Sophie Lasalle, daughter of Me Réjean La Salle, both notaries and now the keepers of the notary records, explain what it means to them to take over their fathers' business.

*It's a matter of pride to ensure the longevity of the professional achievements of our fathers...to continue their work. It's a heritage, our family heritage. The transfer happened naturally. It's a revival in the office. Our fathers passed on their passion for the profession. We are happy to continue to provide the excellent service provided in the past by La Salle & Villeneuve. We value our clientele; they mean a lot to us. We provide personalized service; we know our clients. Our history of property transfers dates to before 1900 and the same families come back to see us now.... We saw our fathers help people and we want to continue in the same way. There's a link of loyalty with all these clients who come back to our firm, from generation to generation.*

Extract from a *Tremblant Express*, *Xpress Affaires* interview conducted by Dominic Lavoie. December 30, 2013, issue.



Legend: Pierre-Abondius Barrette, first notary.  
Source: collection of the Société du Patrimoine SOPABIC

