



Ville de
MONT-TREMBLANT

Making their way



What is now rue de Saint-Jovite at the corner of rue Léonard, photographed in about 1920. The village has electricity, but the streets have not yet been asphalted.

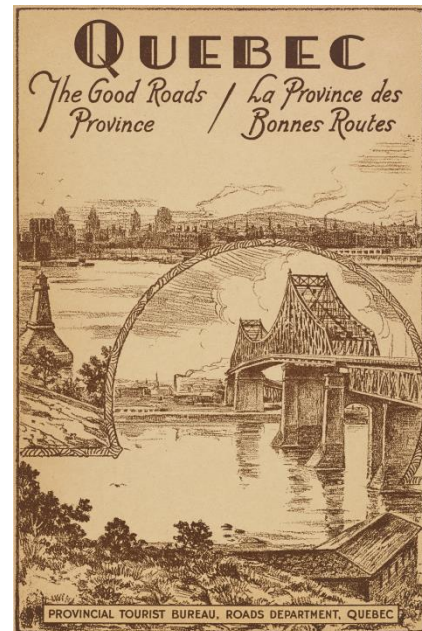
Source: private collection, photographer unknown.

built the roads for their area, once their request had been approved by a superintendent appointed by the municipal council, and it was the settlers who maintained them.

Construction could take several years. To begin, the prescribed width of road had to be logged and log bridges built to span the outlet points of lakes or to cross streams. Then the ground had to be leveled, ditches dug and fences installed. Over the years, roads appeared built parallel to the *rangs*, or ranges, in the territory of the united Townships of De Salaberry and Grandison (more or less the current Mont-Tremblant) as well as perpendicular *montées* that converged on the village of Saint-Jovite. In winter, after every snowfall, the snow on the roads was beaten down with the help of a good horse pulling a *traîne d'hiver*—a winter drag or grader. With the coming of spring, or after heavy summer rains, the earthen roads transformed themselves into canals of mud....

In the townships of the North where settlers went “to make new land”, there was nothing but thickly forested mountains and hills. It was a land of swamps, lakes and streams through which the Diabole river wended its way. In this time of colonization, which took place in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the building of roads and bridges was, both in reality and figuratively, a route strewn with pitfalls.

The responsibility for creating public roads belonged to the municipality. It was actually the settlers themselves, however, who



In 1926, the new Provincial Bureau of Tourism published this booklet to promote automobile tourism in Québec. The Laurentians are presented as “Canada’s Switzerland”. Highway 11 was referred to as a “splendid gravelled road, 30 miles of which has a bituminous concrete surface”.

Source: Provincial Tourism Bureau, *Voyez Québec d’abord* – See Québec first, designer unknown, Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, Collection nationale.



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Traveling by car



The pont de fer or “iron bridge” was built as part of the massive road construction activity undertaken by the government of Québec with the aid of the municipalities. In 2006, the bridge was closed to vehicular and pedestrian traffic for safety reasons.

Source: *Rapport général du ministre des Travaux publics et du Travail pour l'année finissant le 30 juin 1928*, photographer unknown, Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, Collection nationale.

were synonymous with dust, and asphaltting of the major highway of the Laurentians as far as Saint-Jovite was not undertaken until 1948.

During the prosperous years after the Second World War, the number of vehicles increased enormously and automobile tourism rose dramatically. On Sunday evenings, on the main street in the Northern villages, residents rocked on their porches as they watched the “machines” go by; Highway 11 was choked. To deal with the problem, the Maurice Duplessis government launched construction of the *Autoroute des Laurentides*—the Laurentians Highway—which was the first highway in Québec to have separate northbound and southbound lanes. The first ten-kilometre section was opened in the fall of 1958. The highway took twelve years to reach Sainte-Agathe-des-Monts, twenty-five kilometres south of Mont-Tremblant.

The appearance of the automobile on the roads of Québec, early in the twentieth century, changed the rules of the game. The government of Québec passed, in 1912, the *Loi des bons chemins* – the Good Roads Act—by means of which the State made a commitment to improve the communication network, notably through help to municipalities in financing their road construction.

In 1923, to attract tourists into the Laurentians and promote road transportation of merchandise, the State declared the road between Montréal and Mont-Laurier to be a regional road; three years later, gravelling of what became the famous Highway 11 was completed. But the “good roads”



In 1941, in the face of entreaties by the Laurentian Winter Roads Association and Joseph Bondurant Ryan, owner of Mont-Tremblant Lodge, snowplowing was begun of the section of Hwy. 11 leading to Saint-Jovite (photo) and the access to the ski resort.

Source: Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, photo by Joseph Guibord, 1951.



Covered bridges and an iron bridge

At the end of the nineteenth century, the first bridges to cross the Diable river were covered bridges. While they were more costly to build, these wooden structures, frequently painted red, had the advantage of lasting longer because the span was protected from the weather.

In 1927 the government, to replace a covered bridge at the end of chemin Champagne and with the financial contribution of the municipality, built a metal open-web bridge with a steel deck, officially called *le pont David*—the David bridge. At the leading edge of technology at the time, it was built by Dominion Bridge, which erected many other engineered structures including the famous Île d'Orléans bridge.

Research and writing: Danielle Soucy



In 1925, Highway 11 connecting Montréal and Mont-Laurier entered the village of Saint-Jovite, crossed the Diable river via the covered bridge on what is now chemin Champagne, and forked off towards La Conception at the outlet of Lac Mercier.

Source: Ministère de la Voirie (Department of Highways), Carte routière de la province de Québec et de l'Est d'Ontario, 1925, (extract).