

### ***Saint Jovite Station: a village within a village***

Railway stations were not necessarily in the heart of a village. When this was the case, it was traditional to add the word *Station* to the name of the municipality to name the place where the train entered the railway station. Saint Jovite Station (in its English spelling), taken from the name of the former municipality of Saint-Jovite, has existed since 1893.

Starting that year, the arrival of the Perley forest industry company contributed to its development. It hired lumber-jacks, workers and foremen, most of whom came from the municipality and were French-speaking Roman Catholics. The managers were American, Protestant and English-speaking. The company set up its headquarters close to the railway station which led, late in the 19th century, to the rapid expansion of Saint Jovite Station. The director's residence and a few other dwellings which lodged management personnel formed the nucleus of this village.

When the head of Perley, Dawson Beattie, wished to marry Agnes Westgate, she refused to raise her family in a place where there was not a church of her faith, namely, a United Church. She agreed to exile herself in Saint Jovite Station on condition that there would be a church and a school. The president of Perley agreed to furnish the wood needed for their construction but required that his future wife find the minister who would be responsible for services.

In the end, the minister from Arundel, who was of the same denomination as Miss Westgate, was convinced to come and take on the role. In 1905, in this church recently built by Joseph Vanchesteing, Dawson Beattie was united with Agnes Westgate and the couple settled in Saint Jovite Station.

The school and the community recreation hall were built in the same years. But it was thanks to the Riordon company, which replaced Perley in 1912, that the Protestant village slowly became organized.

Several businesses appeared. Robert Godfrey Brown opened a general store and was responsible for the post office. Towards 1919, William Duncan came to settle here with his family. Once his forge was set up, he became the official blacksmith for the forest companies. He also shod the horses from the neighbouring areas.

In 1925, Canadian International Paper (CIP) succeeded Riordon, occupying the same premises as its predecessors. It arranged to have professionals come to Saint Jovite Station, including a locksmith, Aldéric Cadieux, who settled on Beattie Street. In the same sector, on rue Labelle, there was *le petit château*, known also as the Côté hotel. Unfortunately, a fire on March 4, 1968 destroyed the period hotel.

Saint Jovite Station provided all services for, and lodged individuals from, another culture, which made it a village within a village. To commemorate this fact, the district, called Beattie-des-Pins, has been identified since 1992 as a heritage site. In this way, the historical interest of this place, as well as the architectural value of its American-style private residences, is recognized.

With the exception of work relationships, the two communities had little opportunity to fraternize. At least one festival, however, brought them together every year: the feast of Saint-Jean-Baptiste.

The origin of this feast-day, which was initially pagan, was associated with the arrival of the summer solstice. In all European communities, it was celebrated around June 21 by the lighting of huge bonfires. Even though France had made this tradition – well rooted in folkways – a religious feast-day to honour Saint John the Baptist, the fires and festive spirit resonated in the collective imagination of the Anglophones.

Upon this shared base, the community organized a unifying event. Games for young and old were planned for the entire day. These were only interrupted in the afternoon by the traditional parade of allegorical *chars* representing organizations and the early days of the pioneers. Parading with great style, as well, were horsemen whose steeds were decorated for the occasion. Then came the much-awaited moment featuring little Saint John the Baptist, which ended the parade. He was represented by a young child with curly blonde hair, seated on a bale of hay and holding a flag in his right hand. It was an honour for the whole family when one of its children was chosen for the part.

Since 1977, it has been the *Fête nationale du Québec* – Québec's National Holiday – a witness to the French but open to all cultures.

In the end, what could bring people together better than a holiday? As a result, through these events organized jointly by the two communities, they mixed and fraternized.

Research and writing: Société du Patrimoine SOPABIC, heritage society  
Translation: Anne Johnston

You mentioned fraternization....

In the 1940s, the parish priest was not at all in agreement. He preached with great seriousness at anyone who became too close to the Protestants. Because as everyone knew, Catholics were in great danger of losing their souls, their religion, and even their French language if they went to the *Station* too often. You even risked excommunication if you registered to attend their school. It's the gospel truth!

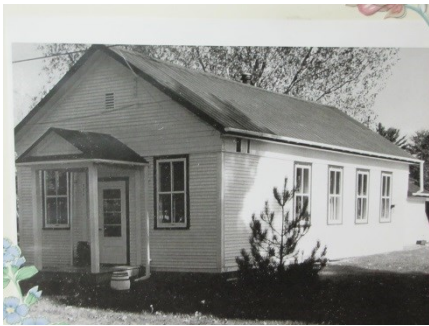


Legend: View of Saint Jovite Station.

Source: collection of the Société du Patrimoine SOPABIC



Legend: View of Beattie Street and its Protestant church.  
Source: *photo from Colette Légaré*



Legend: The Protestant school.  
Source: *collection of the Société du Patrimoine SOPABIC*



Legend: Saint-Jean-Baptiste parade at the *Station* in 1926.  
Source: *collection of the Société du Patrimoine SOPABIC*



THE HON. GEORGE HALSEY PERLEY, M.P.  
Acting Prime Minister of Canada (served as secretary in 1911).

Legend: George Halsey Perley, president of the first forest industry company to become established at the *Station* in 1893.

Source: *Archives of the Ville de Montréal*