

# How History Comes Full Circle

## Gifts from Kensington Church

The congregation of Knox, Crescent, Kensington and First Presbyterian Church (now known as Kensington) has had to make some very difficult decisions lately. Burdened by a large and expensive structure, which once welcomed over 1500 members, they are now a much smaller congregation. It was decided to sell the '1950s' sanctuary and concentrate church activities in the older two-thirds of the building. Their dilemma - What to do with the important artifacts once proudly displayed in their church?

A bit of history: The Kensington Church (as denoted by their former name) incorporates the traditions of many former Presbyterian congregations – Knox (1863) Crescent (1845) Kensington (1909) and First (1906) – all of them, particularly First Presbyterian Church, tracing themselves back to the original St. Gabriel Street Presbyterian Church

(1786). The old stone church (pictured above) was built in 1792, near the Champs de Mars, where the modern Palais de Justice now stands. Often called “the fur traders church” the Scotch Kirk on St. Gabriel Street gave birth as well to St. Andrew’s (1803) and St. Paul’s (1832). When the ‘mother’ church was demolished, its artifacts were removed to First Church and eventually Kensington Church in Notre Dame de Grâce.

With the closure of the NDG sanctuary, the oldest artifacts were given to The Church of St. Andrew and St. Paul. These include the original church bell (said to be the oldest Presbyterian bell in Canada), a 1792 clock and the cornerstone of the St. Gabriel’s Street Church. There is also a plaque in memory of the Reverend James Somerville, who played an important role in the history of our city - a founder of the Montreal General Hospital and

the Royal Montreal Curling Club.

Although grateful for these gifts, we share the sorrow of the Kensington congregation at their loss, promising to keep safe these precious relics from the past. The Heritage Committee is now looking at their placement – possibly in the Memorial Tower and Narthex – and would welcome the suggestions of the congregation.

History has come full circle. Just think, our forebears in the faith here at St. Andrew and St. Paul once tapped the foundation stone, heard the bell calling them to worship and perhaps – looked up at the clock, more than once, during an hour long sermon!

*Bruce D. Bolton, convener  
Heritage Committee*



Top left: The 1792 clock on the wall.

Left: The bell, hanging in the Kensington sanctuary.

Above: The bell, a very heavy piece, was tricky for Michael and Luca Cristofaro to lower from the wall.