

# Following the Trail of Montréal, the 18th-Century Fortified City

Gaspard-Joseph Chaussegros de Léry, born in Toulon in 1682, was the King's chief engineer in New France from 1716 to 1756. During this time, he planned and supervised work on several defense systems in Montréal, Québec City, Fort Chambly, Fort Niagara, Fort Saint-Frédéric and Sault-Saint-Louis (Kahnawake). Today, the spirit of Chaussegros de Léry beckons us to discover these historic places by following these marks on the ground, the archaeological reminders of a bygone era.

## Did You Know That Montréal was a Fortified City?



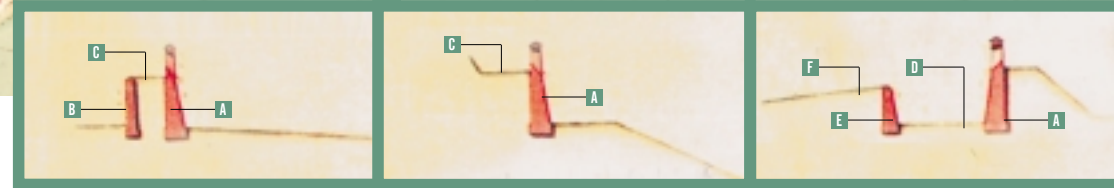
When it was first founded, Montréal was defended by fortified structures. As early as 1688, the colonial

administration urged its inhabitants to build a large number of small forts, houses, fortified mills and redoubts—outworks or fieldworks without flanking defences. The first stockade, made of wood, was erected between 1687 and 1689. Louis XIV gave his consent to build a stone fortification in 1712, and construction began in 1716.

The new stone ramparts, built between 1717 and 1744, were a symbol of authority and a guarantee of security, which both had a positive impact on the economy of Montréal. The ramparts were designed according to the rules of fortification, the construction art that takes the topography of the site into account. Since Montréal is situated on relatively flat land, it was easy to apply the principle of flanking, which requires that all parts of the fortified wall be in the defenders' full view. This strategy was intended to protect the city from the greatest threat to its security: a standard siege from a large military troop pulling small artillery.



Map of the City of Montréal, September 10, 1725 by Chaussegros de Léry. Archives nationales (France), n° 475B



Three Types of Ramparts

- A Scarp
- B Supporting Wall
- C Terreplein
- D Ditch
- E Counterscarp
- F Glacis

The perimeter of the stone ramparts totalled approximately 3,500 metres, and like the stockade that preceded them, the new ramparts consisted of strongholds and curtain walls forming 14 defensive fronts. The main wall, or enceinte, was roughly six metres high and included eight large doors—some with drawbridges—and eight posterns, or side entrances. The structures were constructed from grey crystalline and black limestone stonemasonry and all the rampart walls—consisting of three distinct types of ramparts forming an irregular-shaped enclosure—were coated with roughcast, a plaster made from lime and sand.

A stonemasonry wall was built on the side facing the St-Laurent River, where only attacks by boat were possible. This wall was mounted with a parapet, pierced with *meurtrières*, or gun sites, and, in some places, was reinforced by a supporting wall and a terreplein, or sloping bank.

A wall similar to the one facing the St-Laurent was built on the land side to protect the enclosure from small cannon fire. This wall was reinforced with a banquette—a step running along the inside of the parapet and supporting the wall-walk. A ditch and a glacis, or forward slope, were also planned and together, they formed a defensive barrier over 25 metres wide.

Many types of craftsmen were recruited: the most important were stonemasons and stonefitters, but haulers, carpenters, blacksmiths, sawyers, locksmiths, roofers and other craftsmen also lent their specialized skills to the site. However, most of the workers were labourers, hired by building contractors and construction supervisors to work alongside soldiers.

Tools used for stonework. Anonymous, circa 1740. Archives nationales du Québec



## Discovering the Fortified City of Old Montréal

# Fortified City

The 18th-century fortified city formed a dense urban mosaic, dotted with large buildings—many belonging to religious communities—landscaped with great walled gardens, and nearly 400 houses were built during this time of expansion. The fortifications were gradually dismantled between 1804 and 1817 following the adoption of *The Act to Demolish the Old Walls and Fortifications Surrounding the City of Montréal* in 1801.

Free from its enclosure walls, the city and its suburbs now opened directly onto the river. This soon changed the very pattern of the city, and as early as 1805, twice as many people were living in the suburbs as in the city.



## What Do These Marks Mean?

Ground Marks. Photo: Ville de Montréal

You can literally follow in the footsteps of history in Old Montréal. The granite paving stones throughout the streets, sidewalks and public spaces of Old Montréal mark the buried remains of the 18th-century fortified city's stone walls and main sites.

Markings in the Ground

## Discovering the Fortifications of Montréal...

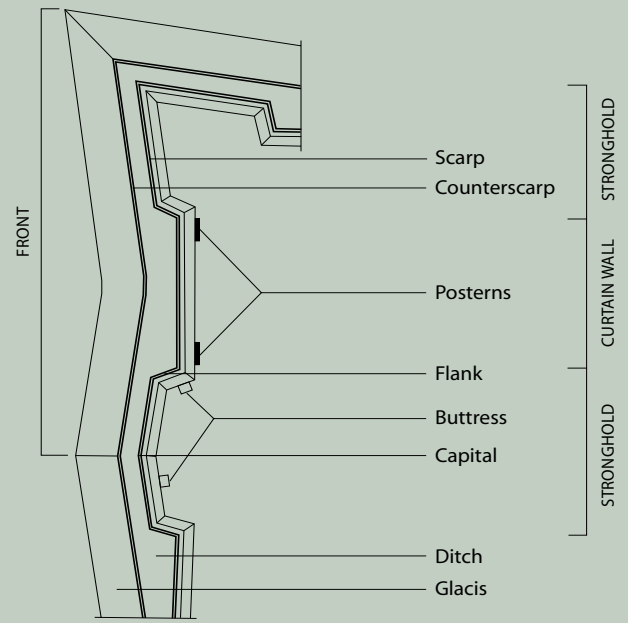
**A** **Parc du Champ-de-Mars**—This is the only public space in Old Montréal where we can discover, *in situ*, the remains of a complete front from the 18th-century enclosure wall. The scarp—the inner wall or slope of a ditch, the counterscarp—the outer wall of a ditch; and the ditch itself are exposed along more than 250-metre which encompassed half of the Saint-Laurent stronghold to the west, and the Jesuit stronghold to the east. These elements exemplify a complete fortified front and demonstrate the rules of symmetry governing the construction of a fortified wall. Pieces of metal set in stone and linked to the door fastening system were found in two posterns. Vaulted passages carved into the scarp were reserved for military use

**B** **Rue Gosford**—The scarp and counterscarp of the Jesuit stronghold can both be seen here.

**C** **Rue Bonsecours**—This W-shaped flank is a type of layout caused by constraining topography in the construction of a fortification. In this case, the area between the citadelle and the marsh below is problematic.

**D** **Rue de la Commune, stronghold of Québec**—At the Faubourg Québec, we find the archaeological remains of the fortification and the military quarter: warehouses, barracks and the King's stores. The King's "Canoery", where canoes were crafted, was built in 1709 and was the site of a recent archaeological excavation.

### Terms for the Fortifications



**E** **Place Jacques-Cartier**—The remains of both the government stronghold and the residence of the Governor of Vaudreuil (1723-1803) are marked in the ground here. Archaeologists unearthed one house, its outbuildings, latrines, gardens, orchards and a street. In 1672, the door of Government House opened directly onto rue Saint-Charles (Place Jacques-Cartier East), and a steep embankment ran along rue Saint-Paul.

**F** Dating back to 1676 and a stronghold of the Port, **Place Royale, rues Place-Royale East and West** constituted Montréal's first public place. The position of the scarp, the supporting wall of the *terreplein*—a level space used to mount a battery of guns—and the *terreplein* itself, are all visibly marked on the ground. The market door, which opened onto the river was also located here.



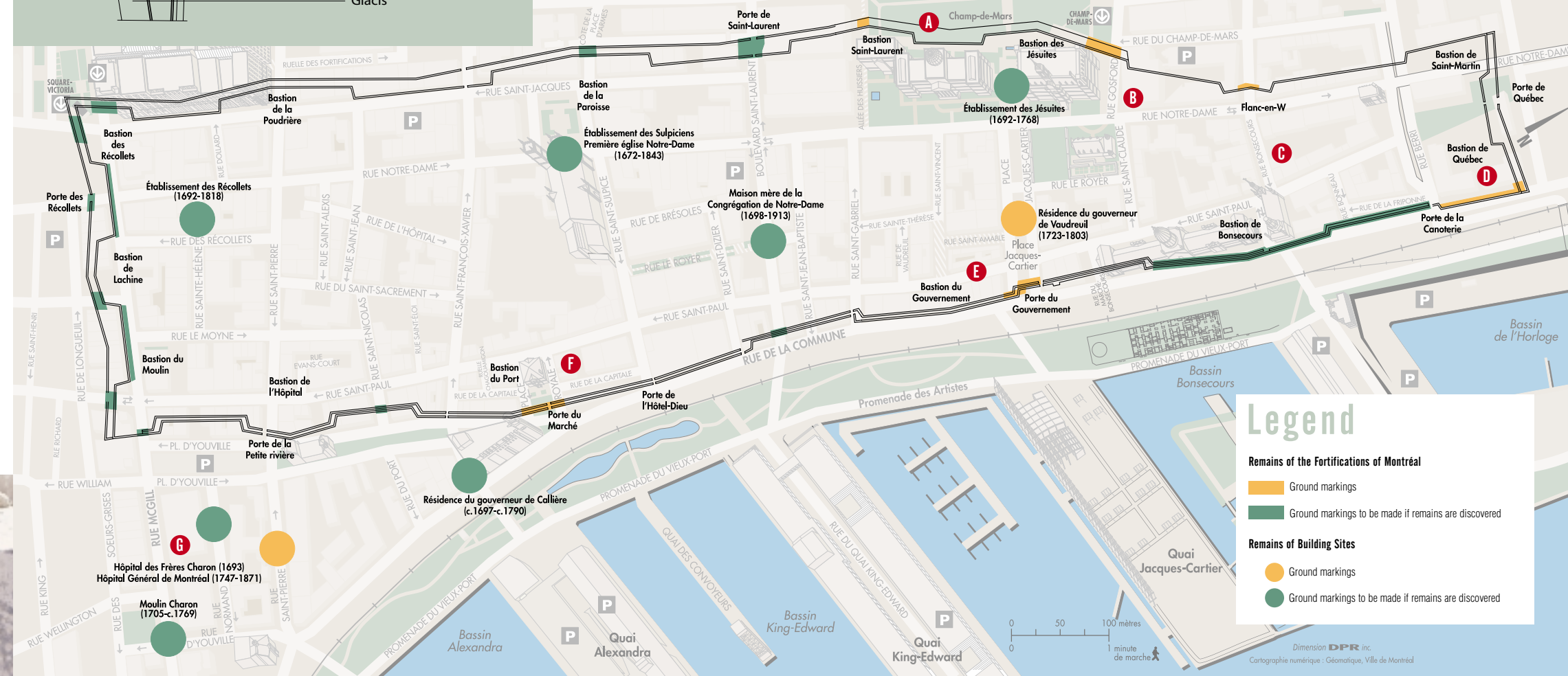
Archaeological recording. Photo: Ville de Montréal

## ... And its Building Sites

**G** **Hôpital Général de Montréal (1693-1871), rue Saint-Pierre**—The hospital occupied a large 4.5 hectare tract of land outside the walls at Pointe à Callière, and touched the shores of both the Saint-Pierre (Place d'Youville) and St-Laurent Rivers. This important building complex consisted mainly of a church—part of which still stands west of rue St-Pierre—a convent, a washing house, a windmill, gardens and cemeteries. Some remains of the church and the wing for the poor can both be seen on rue Saint-Pierre.

# The Trail of Discovery

We hope that following this trail through time will give you a glimpse of the urban landscape of 18th-century Montréal, as well as some insight into the impact the fortifications had on city planning.



### Legend

**Remains of the Fortifications of Montréal**

- Orange line: Ground markings
- Green line: Ground markings to be made if remains are discovered

**Remains of Building Sites**

- Yellow circle: Ground markings
- Green circle: Ground markings to be made if remains are discovered

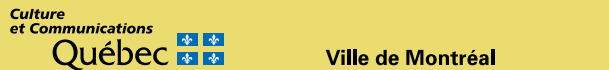


Champ-de-Mars site, bush-hammered stones and pieces of metal. Photo: Ville de Montréal

The sites depicted on this map illustrate the enclosure wall and the main buildings of the 18th-century fortified city. All of these structures are located within, or immediately outside, the city limits on the side facing the St-Laurent River. These sites were chosen because remains were already discovered there, or because there is a good chance of accessing and excavating more remains without major obstacles.

Some of the remains of the stone fortifications were unearthed, *in situ*, at Parc du Champ-de-Mars, at Pointe-à-Callière, Montréal Museum of Archaeology and History, and at Les Remparts Restaurant on rue de la Commune.

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