

Student Booklet

Montréal Capital City: An Interactive Experience



Get ready to embark on an unforgettable archaeological and historical quest!

Welcome to the heart of Montréal, during the time when the city was the capital of the Province of Canada (1844–1849). In this faithful 3D reconstruction of the city’s neighbourhoods, embark on a journey to discover notable figures, authentic objects, and key events that shaped the history of the country.

Your mission, should you choose to accept it: explore the six areas of this capital and put your knowledge to the test. Access the web app by following this link: [Montreal Capital City: An Interactive Experience.](#)

Will you rise to the challenge?

It’s your turn... and happy quest!

Zone 1

Montréal Capital: Everyone to the Parliament!

What sets a city apart from a **capital**? Its parliament. When Montréal was chosen as the capital of the Province of Canada in 1843, the authorities decided to convert the imposing Sainte-Anne Market—a large neoclassical building—into a parliament, where the government would sit beginning in 1844. Five years later, on **April 25, 1849**, the building was devastated by a **fire during a historic riot**.

Today, this **exceptional site**—where the remains of the Parliament are preserved—has been excavated several times and studied through research in public archives. This work has revealed the site’s **symbolic importance** in the history of Montréal and of **Canadian politics**. So... everyone to Parliament!

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Point of Interest

1. Mission: In the Footsteps of Browne

What major challenge did architect George Browne face during the transformation of the Sainte-Anne Market into a parliament?



- Constructing a new building from scratch.
- Adapting an existing building to new political functions in a short period of time.
- Repairing a building damaged by fire
- Expand the building to accommodate more merchants.

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Point of Interest

2. Mission: Political Event

What political event triggered the riot that led to the burning of the Montréal Parliament on April 25, 1849?



- The adoption of the law compensating the victims of the 1837–1838 rebellions
- The abolition of the “Corn Laws” by the British government
- The decision to move the capital from Kingston to Montréal
- The establishment of a “responsible government”

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Point of Interest – Interior of the Parliament (Section B)

3. Mission: Archaeological Investigation

During the excavations, which object bearing a partial inscription was key evidence in identifying the apartment of the messenger André Leroux, known as Cardinal?



- A toothbrush holder
- A miniature tea set
- A porcelain egg cup
- A holy water font

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Point of Interest – Interior of the Parliament (Section A)

4. Mission: Clue to Connect

An object discovered during the excavations established a connection between an official marking instrument and a letter sent by MP Malcolm Cameron just days before the 1849 fire. What object is it?



- A hygrometer (an instrument used to measure air humidity)
- The Seal of the Library of the Council
- The postal stamp of the Legislative Assembly
- A stoneware inkwell

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Point of Interest – Interior of the Parliament (Section A)

5. Mission: Symbol of Power

Once suspended above the speaker's chair in the Legislative Assembly to symbolize the power of Great Britain, a wooden ceremonial object was discovered at a flea market by an antiques enthusiast. What object is it?



- The official portrait of Jacques Cartier
- The Royal Arms of Great Britain
- The seal of the Council Library
- The mass of the Legislative Assembly

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Point of Interest – Interior of the Parliament (Section B)

6. Mission: Memories of a Library

Despite the intensity of the 1849 fire, some remnants of books from the parliamentary libraries were preserved and discovered by archaeologists. How was this possible?



- They were made of a special type of fire-resistant paper.
- Citizens quickly removed them from the building before the fire.
- They were stored in metal chests that withstood the flames.
- Their charred state and deep burial have protected them from oxygen and frost.

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Point of Interest – Interior of the Parliament (Section C)

7. Mission: Under the Influence of Flames

The heat from the blaze in April 1849 was so intense that some glass objects melted.

What writing instrument, essential to the work of clerks and translators, is presented by comparing an intact model and a burnt one?



- A vial of medicine
- A travel inkwell
- An oil lamp
- A postage stamp

Zone 2

The Present-day Place D'Youville: A Waterway Turned Commercial Artery

Beginning in the 1830s, the **Little River** was buried in an imposing **vaulted tunnel**. This transformation opened, at street level, a **broad transportation corridor** between place de la Douane to the east and McGill Street to the west.

Around Parliament, **large stone warehouses** traced the outline of a booming commercial city. In this neighbourhood, French Canadian merchants shipped flour and potash to Great Britain, while British merchants gradually came to dominate trade and public life.

In the 1850s, the **English-speaking population became the majority**. Montréal began to look different: British immigration—especially Irish—swelled the population, and new modern infrastructure—widened streets, a canal, the port, railways—propelled the city into an era of rapid change.

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Point of Interest

8. Mission: Trade and Industry

In the mid-19th century, potash was a major export stored in buildings near the Port of Montréal.

What was its primary purpose?



- To feed livestock
- To preserve food for sea voyages
- To produce gunpowder for the army
- To bleach textiles and manufacture glass and ceramics.

Zone 3

Place Royale: An Era of Port Development

With the growth of trade, the arrival of travellers and rising immigration, the small, rudimentary 18th-century harbour was completely transformed. Through the efforts of the new **Harbour Commission**, created in 1830, the port became a more structured space, with wooden **wharves** and piers. A stone wall now protected the shoreline from spring ice, while carriage ramps linked rue de la Commune (formerly Commissioners Street) to the port facilities below.

By the late 1830s, the first Custom House dominated the square, replacing the market that had occupied the site for 160 years. Work carried out by the Harbour Commission cleared its south side, opening a **direct view of a rapidly expanding port**. All around, shops, **hotels and inns** multiplied, adding to the bustle of a neighbourhood in development.

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Point of Interest

9. Mission: Change of Purpose

After hosting travellers and parliamentarians, the Montréal House building underwent a new function starting in 1897.

What is this new vocation?



- The head office of a brewery
- A hospital
- The offices of a newspaper
- A refuge for sailors passing through the city

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Point of Interest

10. Mission: At the Heart of Commerce

In place Royale, the Montréal Customs House, built between 1836 and 1838 according to the designs of John Ostell, plays a key role in the city.

What was its main function?



- Serve as the official residence of the Governor General
- Inspecting cargo and collecting customs duties on goods.
- Centralizing the activities of the Bank of Montréal
- To house the offices of the Champlain & St. Lawrence Railway Company.

Zone 4

Place d'Armes: Prestige, Power, and Faith

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Place d'Armes: Prestige, Power, and Faith

First known as place de la Paroisse, this important public space became **place d'Armes** in 1721, when it was set aside for military drills. By the late 18th and early 19th centuries, it also served as a polling place and a market where hay, straw, and firewood were sold.

In 1848, after several expansions, the square presented a striking contrast: to the north stood **large banks**; to the south, **Notre-Dame Church** and the Sulpician **Seminary**; to the east, **elegant buildings**; and to the west, **aging structures** housing restaurants and small shops where ambitious redevelopment projects were slow to materialize.

A few years later, place d'Armes finally took on the appearance of a Victorian public square, with stone gateways, wrought-iron fencing, and a central fountain—a transformation that underscored its **prestige**.

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Point of Interest

11. Mission: Press and Agitation

During the crisis of April 1849, a conservative newspaper went so far as to call its readers to mobilize on the very day of the Parliament fire. Which newspaper is it?



- La Minerve*
- The Montreal Gazette*
- Le Canadien*
- L'Avenir*

2

Point of Interest

12. Mission: An Unusual Building

Designed by James O'Donnell, the new Notre-Dame Church transformed the urban landscape of Montréal at the time of its inauguration.

What characteristic makes it exceptional?



- Its architectural style is inspired by ancient Rome.
- It was the largest church in North America.
- She was the first to use gas lighting.
- It was built entirely by the Sulpicians.

Zone 5

Notre-Dame Street: Government, Justice and Commerce

Welcome to the **government district**! Here you'll discover the courthouse, the Government House and its gardens, as well as—near place Jacques-Cartier—the guardhouse and **Nelson's Column**, a striking symbol of the British presence. Despite the area's official role, the district also possessed an important commercial character, as demonstrated by the bustle of the **market at place Jacques-Cartier** and by the **retail shops** multiplying along this stretch of Notre-Dame Street. Civil servants, lawyers, soldiers, and passersby from every walk of life cross paths here each day.

At the head of the public administration stood the **Governor General**, who appointed the ministers of the Executive Council. In the 1840s, the main departments included Justice, Crown Lands, Public Works, the Receiver General and the Inspector General, who oversaw finances. And this is when **responsible government** emerged.

A quick reminder: anything to do with **foreign affairs**—defence, the army, trade treaties—still fell directly under London's authority.

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Point of Interest

13. Mission: A Twist of Fate

Shortly after the approval of its redevelopment project, Montréal's first courthouse faced an unexpected fate in July 1844.

What happened to it?



- It has been converted into offices for civil servants.
- It was demolished to make way for the government gardens.
- It was destroyed by a fire.
- Its renovation was completed by architects John Ostell and Henri-Maurice Perrault.

2

Point of Interest

14. Mission: Political Turning Point

The principle of “responsible government” marks a key milestone in Canada's political history.

Under which Governor General is this principle fully implemented?



- Sir Charles Metcalfe
- Claude de Ramezay
- Louis-Hippolyte LaFontaine
- Lord Elgin

Zone 6

Champ-de-Mars: Military Parades and Public Gatherings

From the late 17th century, Montréal was known as a garrison town. By the 19th century, British soldiers and officers, together with the barracks, residences and officers' messes which dotted the neighbourhood, lent the city a certain flair and a very "British" look. During the frequent, major fires of the 1840s, the army supported the civil authorities in fighting the blazes and maintaining order.

In the early 19th century, the **demolition of the fortifications** freed up and expanded the Champ-de-Mars, which had been used for military exercises since 1740. The **esplanade** became a vast space for parades, marching bands and drills, but also **Montréal's main public gathering place**: a site for strolling, socializing, and assemblies that could draw thousands of people, as in 1846 during the demonstration in support of building the **St. Lawrence and Atlantic Railway**.

And on an evening in April 1849, this same Champ-de-Mars became... the stage for a high-stakes **political rally**.

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Point of Interest

15. Mission: The Spark

On the evening of April 25, 1849, following the adoption of the Compensation Act, opponents gathered at Champ-de-Mars. A fiery speech urged the crowd to march toward Parliament. Who delivers this decisive speech?



- Lord Elgin
- Louis-Hippolyte LaFontaine
- Sir William Logan
- Alfred Perry

2

Point of Interest

16. Mission: Exploring the Territory

Founded in 1842 by Sir William Edmond Logan to study and map the resources of Canadian territory, an organization also established a museum of minerals and fossils.

Which organization is it?



- The Canadian Institute of Montréal
- The Royal Society of Canada
- The Geological Survey of Canada
- The Crown Lands Office