

# Teacher's Book

Montréal Capital City: An Interactive Experience



This educational booklet, offered by Pointe-à-Callière, Montréal Archaeology and History Complex, accompanies the website “Montréal Capital City: An Interactive Experience.” Designed as an exploration guide, the *Student Booklet* invites students to navigate the 3D reconstruction of Old Montréal in six zones and to put their knowledge to the test.

## Pedagogical Objectives (Central Objective of the Booklet)

Help students to understand the political, social, and historical context that led Montréal to become the capital of the Province of Canada between 1844 and 1849.

### Disciplinary Skills Engaged (PFEQ)

This booklet allows the student to develop the skill of:

- Questioning social realities from a historical perspective.

### Learning Outcomes

Through the proposed activities, students will be able to:

- Place in time and space the period when Montréal was the capital;
- Characterize the main actors, issues, and political institutions of the time;
- Interpret social realities using traces from the past (artifacts, iconography, documents);
- Establish causal links between historical events, notably the Parliament fire of 1849;
- Construct and communicate an interpretation based on sources.

## How it Works

The educational activity is designed to be carried out in the classroom with the students. Depending on the available time, two pathways are offered:

- **50-minute tour (Zone 1):** for an activity conducted in one session, it is recommended to focus on **Zone 1, *Everyone to the Parliament!*** At the heart of the experience, it addresses key concepts such as the architectural transformation of the building, the political context, and the fire of 1849.
- **Free exploration or at home (Zones 2 to 6):** these five zones are complementary and can be explored based on the themes studied in class (for example, commerce or justice) or assigned as homework to deepen students' knowledge.

## Necessary Materials

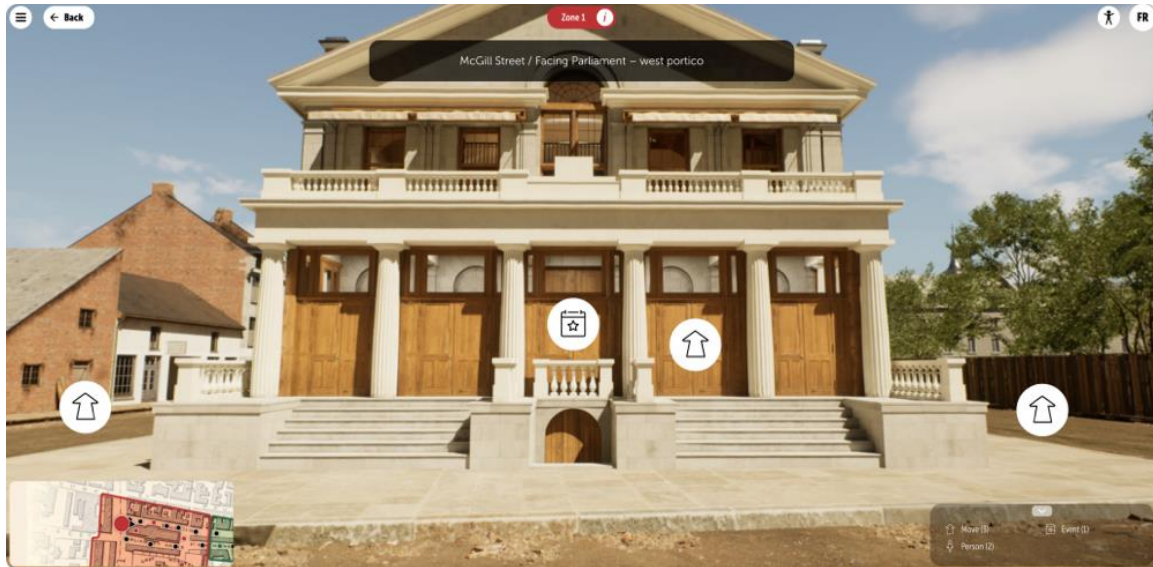
- The [Student Booklet](#)
- The URL link to the website "[Montréal Capital City: An Interactive Experience](#)"
- A computer or a tablet

## How to Navigate

The website "Montréal Capital City: An Interactive Experience" is divided into six zones made up of 360-degree panoramas.

- **Interactive map:** allows you to move from one area to another. You can return to it at any time by clicking the "Back" icon located at the top left.
- **Points of interest:** scattered throughout each area, they provide access to the panoramas. Within these, clickable pins open content carousels (texts, images, videos, etc.). To return to the previous screen, click the "Back" button (in the top left).

- **Mini map:** located in the bottom left, it allows users to locate themselves and navigate through the panoramas using the black arrow. Panoramas with content are indicated in colour, while those in black correspond to transition panoramas.



- **Non-linear navigation:** while the areas provide a thematic progression, the application allows students to choose the order in which they explore the content, thus promoting autonomy and discovery.
- **Interactive content:**
  - Explanatory texts;
  - Iconography and paintings;
  - “Then-and-Now”: this feature allows students to compare the evolution of a location by sliding a vertical bar, transitioning from the 3D reconstruction of 1848 to a contemporary photograph.
  - 3D modelling;
  - Artifacts;
  - Video capsules.

## The Quest Structure

The exploration of the website is organized into six thematic areas, providing a structured approach to the city. Each area is introduced by a short text. The document includes about fifteen missions.

Zone	Main Theme	Topics Covered	Missions
1	Everyone to the Parliament!	Transformation of Sainte-Anne Market, construction by George Browne, the fire of 1849 and its causes, archaeological discoveries (Leroux's holy water font, charred books).	7 missions (1 to 7)
2	The Present-day Place D'Youville: A Waterway Turned Commercial Artery	Urban growth, potash export.	1 mission (8)
3	Place de la Douane: An Era of Port Development	Modernization of the port and the creation of key institutions: Harbour Commission and Customs, Montréal House Hotel.	2 missions (9 and 10)
4	Place d'Armes: Prestige, Power, and Faith	Evolution toward a Victorian public square (place d'Armes), financial institutions (Bank of Montréal), partisan press (e.g., The Montreal Gazette), construction of Notre-Dame Church.	2 missions (11 and 12)
5	Notre-Dame Street: Government, Justice, and Commerce	District of administration featuring the courthouse, recognition of "responsible government," British symbols (Nelson Column)	2 missions (13 and 14)
6	Champ-de-Mars: Military Parades and Public Gatherings	Montréal as a garrison city, the role of Champ-de-Mars as a political gathering place, actors of the riot (Alfred Perry), scientific institutions (Geological Survey of Canada).	2 missions (15 and 16)

## Answer Key

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.

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.

**Additional details:** In less than a year, a market that had thus far been dedicated to the sale of beef, fish, and vegetables must be transformed into a parliament worthy of hosting multiple official functions. A significant challenge, entrusted to architect George Browne, whose expertise enables the successful execution of this ambitious transformation.

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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”

**Additional details:** The riot was triggered by the adoption of a law aimed at compensating the victims of the 1837–1838 rebellions, with the approval of Governor Lord Elgin. Contested by conservative circles, this decision sparked intense tensions that culminated in the burning of the parliament.



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**

**Additional details:** This small domestic holy water font was seen as proof that one was indeed at the home of Leroux, known as Cardinal. On the back of the object, traces of handwritten text can still be seen, appearing to read “Ler...”.

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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

**Additional details:** Archaeologists discovered an oval brass postmark inscribed with “LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY CANADA.” This object was linked to a physical letter, mailed from Montréal to London, Ontario, one week before the fire, bearing in green ink the impression of the same seal.

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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

**Additional details:** These are the royal arms. In the Assembly Hall, they display a lion and a unicorn framing the motto “Dieu et mon droit”; they symbolize the authority of the monarch over official acts.

Around 1990, the Honourable Robert P. Kaplan revealed that he had found this object at a flea market near New York. The animal figures were decapitated, bearing, it seems, the marks of the violence from the 1849 riot.



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.**

**Additional details:** In a rare occurrence in archaeology, remains of burnt books were uncovered at the site of the parliament. Preserved as charred remnants, they were trapped in the soil and debris after the fire. Protected in this way, they survived through time until their discovery by archaeologists. Their preservation is attributed to the absence of oxygen and their high carbon content, which shielded them from destructive bacteria.

With these burnt fragments, it was even possible to identify certain works, providing a concrete glimpse into the collections of the parliamentary libraries before 1849.

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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

**Additional details:** There was a lot of writing in Parliament for public administration! The comparison between an intact model of a glass inkwell and the burnt inkwell found on the site illustrates the intensity of the fire, whose heat was sufficient to melt the glass.

## 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.**

**Additional details:** Potash is used in the bleaching and dyeing processes of textiles, as well as in the production of glass and ceramics, where demand is skyrocketing. Derived from wood ashes, it was an essential resource for several industries and a key export product.

## 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.



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**

**Additional details:** The hotel remains the preferred stopover for travellers, particularly for parliamentarians in session. However, in the 1890s, it closed its doors. In 1897, the building was reborn as the Montréal Sailor’s Institute, a refuge for sailors passing through the city.



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.

**Additional detail:** Requested for nearly 50 years, the Montréal customs office finally opened in 1838—a victory for local merchants, who no longer had to go through Québec.

From now on, everything is done on-site: inspection of cargo and collection of customs duties, the taxes on imports paid by merchants and individuals.

## Zone 4

### 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*

**Additional details:** This refers to *The Montreal Gazette*. An influential conservative newspaper, it published calls for mobilization that contributed to escalating tensions leading to the riot and the burning of the parliament.



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.

**Additional details:** At the time of its inauguration, Notre-Dame Church was the largest church in North America, making it a remarkable building both for its size and its architectural ambition. In 1843, the construction of Notre-Dame Church was finally completed with the addition of the two towers.

## 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.

**Additional detail:** Approval for the redevelopment of the courthouse is finally granted on July 8, 1844, but, as luck would have it, just ten days later, the courthouse burns down. The renovation project goes up in smoke along with the courthouse.



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**

**Additional details:** James Bruce, Earl of Elgin, arrived in Montréal in January 1847. In 1848, he agreed to govern with the support of the elected majority, led by Louis-Hippolyte LaFontaine and Robert Baldwin. With this move, he endorsed the first true responsible government of the Province of Canada.

This gesture marks a turning point: the executive power must now be accountable to elected representatives, rather than solely to the British authority.

## 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**

**Additional details:** The gathering of discontented Tories took place at 8 p.m. at Champ-de-Mars, following a call from The Montreal Gazette. Nearly 1,500 people protested the sanction by Governor Elgin of the Victims of Rebellions Compensation Act. Alfred Perry, a volunteer firefighter—alongside James Moir Ferres, the newspaper’s editor—was one of the main instigators, urging the crowd to march toward the building: “The time for petitions is over. If the men present here are serious, let them follow me to Parliament.” This event sparked the riot that led to the burning of Parliament and the loss of Montréal’s status as the capital.



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

**Additional details:** This refers to the Geological Survey of Canada, founded in 1842 by Sir William Edmond Logan. Through his work, Logan contributed to a better understanding of the natural resources of the territory and helped to organize the first scientific research in the country.

The mineral and fossil museum established by the Survey also makes these discoveries accessible to the public, marking an important step in the dissemination of scientific knowledge in Canada.