

June 18th, 2009

Collective photo project in the Plateau - Web exclusive!



La Maison de la Culture today  
photo: [www.histoireplateau.org](http://www.histoireplateau.org)

### **Mille Plateaux de Meg Hewings de Hour.ca - News**

Old photos wanted to build collective historical snapshot of Plateau district

They say there's plenty of history around every corner. Well, sure, if you live in the Old Port like I do, there's no arguing that point. But after talking with Richard Ouellet, a history buff and president of the Société d'histoire et de généalogie du Plateau-Mont-Royal, it turns out my grey stone apartment building (an old factory that still has one rounded corner thanks to decades of chafing by horses) was actually built from stones hauled from a huge quarry under what is now Parc Laurier in the Plateau. The quarry's beautiful grey stones were mined by Plateau labourers in the late 1800s and became the foundational stones of Montreal's oldest heritage buildings, including Notre-Dame Basilica.

Ouellet, for his part, knows the Plateau is a local historian's treasure trove. Since the Société opened four years ago, he has helped compile a huge photo archive of the neighbourhood's history. "The Plateau has a 150-year history as a neighbourhood, and that's not nothing," he says. "I think it is in people's interest people to know their environment and history, to know how their neighbourhood was founded."

While the Plateau may have gained some currency and hipster cred in recent decades for its artistic abundance, there is a long history of art-loving in the 'hood. Today, for example, the Maison de la Culture Plateau-Mont-Royal's primary mission is to host free or affordable cultural events, but the building, known as the Pensionnat St-Basile back in 1896, has also been an important centre for the teaching of vanguard art over the last century.

This Friday, the Société will help celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Plateau library and Maison de la Culture Plateau-Mont-Royal (465 Mont-Royal) with a special photo exhibition that traces the building's history through archival photos - and they're looking to add your historical photos to future exhibitions.

This weekend, Ouellet and the Société are making a special call-out to the public to submit their old photos of the neighbourhood as part of a giant community photo collection about the Plateau. Think of it as a hyper-local Antiques Roadshow, but with photos.

"We are looking for family photos, images of commerce, neighbourhood parties, old buildings, schools or childhood pictures. We're interested in all the forgotten photos sleeping in attics," says Ouellet. Photos from before 1940 are especially sought-after.

Volunteers will be in place June 20 and 21 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Plateau library (430 Mont-Royal) to digitize the photos on-site and give them back to owners immediately. They will also ask older residents to tell them their stories of growing up in the neighbourhood. "We're looking for people who are a bit older to tell their stories of living in the neighbourhood," says Ouellet. "Elders are living encyclopedias - we often forget them, but they have interesting stories to tell."

The collection will be organized and presented at future expositions. "We want people to identify with their neighbourhood, and to encourage locality. Often people don't always know the basic story of where they are from."

Plateau community photo exhibition

At Maison de la Culture Plateau-Mont-Royal (465 Mont-Royal)

To Aug. 22 For more info, visit [www.histoireplateau.org](http://www.histoireplateau.org)