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## **Colonizing the Landscape: Snowshoeing in the Environs of Nineteenth Century Montreal**

Drawing on the records of the Montreal Snow Shoe Club and contemporary songs, photographs, illustrations and newspaper reports, this paper considers the activities of nineteenth-century snowshoe club members as a performance of colonial exploration and colonization. Imagining themselves as “brave North Western

voyageurs,” groups of male, anglophone, Montrealers mustered together regularly at the foot of Mount Royal, and set off into the bush. Through charting their own course across country, they became proficient in navigating and surviving in the “wilderness” around Montreal, and could pride themselves on their stamina and pluck. Once the tramp was over, or at the half-way point, it became part of the ritual for club members to socialize and make merry, just as their British and French-Canadian predecessors had at the trading forts in the Northwest and at Beaver Club meetings held in Montreal in the winter season.

Snowshoe tramps were “meaningful dramatizations” by which urban dwellers became indigenized through contact with the Canadian landscape and climate. By emulating the clothing, activities and rituals of the voyageurs and early explorers, these middle-class men forged for themselves an identity as a new, British type of native-Canadian. Mount Royal and the countryside around Montreal was for the snowshoers a “fabricated landscape” which stood in for the North Western wilderness frontier – even when farm fences and protruding cabbage stalks insisted on its real identity as domesticated farmland.

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