

Bolton Pass

Jon Breslaw¹

21 June 2004

Introduction

This is a draft document describing the scenic, ecological and historic significance of Bolton Pass, as well as its commercial importance from tourism.

Bolton Pass was part of the stagecoach route between Montréal and Boston; it is now part of Route 243, passing between Mount Sutton to the south, and Glen Mountain to the north. It is a very beautiful pass, with steep mountains on both sides, a stream, and marsh. Currently, logging is taking place on the north side, in the area under the Municipality of Bolton West. Presently, the zoning requirements for this region do not prohibit logging. The question that I am raising is whether the current zoning is appropriate – and hence my appearance at this committee.

During the research, I interacted with Vincent Geradine, a senior representative of Patrimoine Ecologie under the Minister of the Environment, with the consideration of putting Bolton Pass under the jurisdiction of a “Protected Area”. Patrimoine Ecologie is now evaluating this option, but it takes time, and primary responsibility initially rests with the local municipality. Other contacts include Louise Gratton, Scientific Officer for the Appalachian Corridor Project, and the Brome Missiquoi Tourist Information Bureau.

Bolton Pass is important for a number of different reasons. I will discuss them under the following headings:

- Scenic/touring
- Archeology
- History
- Art
- Ecology
- Tourism

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Touring

Salem Cyclery

We cycle east from Knowlton along a fairly flat route through a gap in the mountains known as "the Bolton Pass" to the hamlet of South Bolton. In earlier times this was part of the stagecoach route from Montreal to Boston. Further south to Mansonville, the road is gently rolling with lovely expansive mountain vistas. From Mansonville to our conclusion at Owl's Head, is a gradual but steady uphill ride.

Source: <http://www.salemcyclery.ca/qviten1.html>

Sentier de l'Estrie

This section runs over part of the Sutton range, from the Bolton Pass to mount Echo. It is noted for its many streams and abundant wildlife.

Source: <http://www.lessentiersdelestrie.qc.ca>

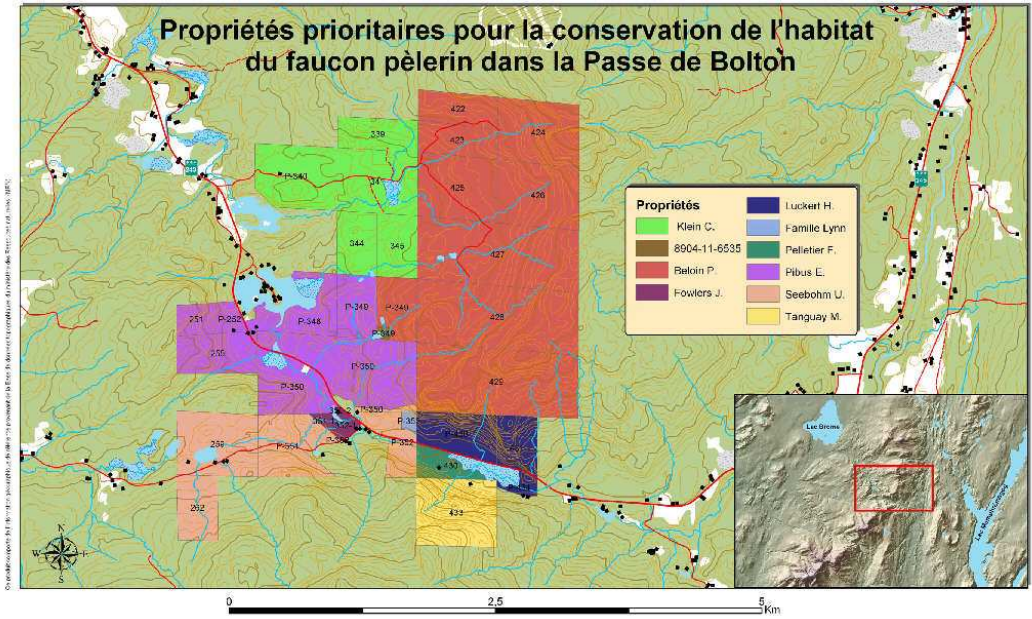
Véloberville: la Montérégie à vélo

Vous serez pardonné de continuer sur la **243** plutôt que de prendre Stagecoach. Votre espérance de vie en sera légèrement diminuée (à moins que vous ne soyiez cardiaque et craigniez les côtes) mais le paysage est très beau. Vraiment très beau. Le chemin idéal à parcourir en voiture ou à moto.

Tourner à gauche (South Bolton) et continuer tout droit sur la **243**. Chemin Baker Talc à gauche (KM 65,62). Vous roulez à travers la Bolton Pass. Dommage que la route soit si fréquentée car ce petit «col» est charmant. Le pavage est de bonne qualité et il existe même par endroit un petit accotement pour vous réfugier en cas de besoin. Il se peut que vous ayez, afin d'augmenter votre espérance de vie, à emprunter également l'accotement non pavé. À vous de juger.

Source: <http://www.iro.umontreal.ca/~marcotte/Velo/Monter/Monter19.html>

Propriétés prioritaires pour la conservation de l'habitat du faucon pèlerin dans la Passe de Bolton



Archaeology

Date: Tue, 15 Jun 2004 18:24:34 -0400

From: "[iso-8859-1] Gérard Leduc" <leduc.potton@sympatico.ca>

To: Breslaw John <breslaw@econotron.com>

Subject: Bolton Pass

The Bolton pass presents an exceptional scenery and harbors very special archaeological remains.

The Pass was the Stagecoach road linking Montreal to Boston when travellers headed toward Knowlton's Landing where they took a ferry across Lake Memphremagog to reach Georgeville (then called Copp's Ferry).

It has an exceptional beauty, harboring sharp rocky escarpments with a sparkling stream flowing in the valley.

The Pass also holds some very intriguing archaeological sites. At the East end, stands a very large gravel mound which I believe to be of human origin. It is of an exceptionally large size but not a glacial kame. Look, numerous large mounds dot the Midwest in the United States why not here? To find this ancient feature here may be a surprise but there it is!

Across the road from it, stood very intriguing stone walls that went up and down at the base of the hillside. It is impossible that these walls were built by ancient farmers because the place was totally unfarmable. In addition, there were small cairns with a quartz stone on top. The stone walls then went a little further east along the road.

At the west end of the Pass, on the north side of the road, a path was carved on the side of a very ancient gravel mound offering from its top a bird's eye view on the Pass.

I believe that the whole pass was a very special place for ancient people who gathered there.

Logging has already destroyed much of the site at the east end on the north side of the road but every possible efforts should be taken to prevent any further damage.

I have taken several pictures in the Pass but they are all on slides.

If I can help, do not hesitate to contact me.

Gérard Leduc PhD

Potton Heritage Association Inc.

History

FODOR's 2003 Montréal and Québec City Knowlton (Lac Brome)

Auberge Knowlton

The 12-room inn, at the main intersection in Knowlton, has been a local landmark since 1849, when it was a stagecoach stop on the road between Bolton Pass and Gilman's Corner. The current owners gutted the building but retained the historic exterior. The inn attracts a corporate clientele (the rooms have Internet access) as well as vacationers and locals who like coming to the old, familiar hotel to celebrate special occasions. The on-site bistro (Le Relais) (\$-\$\$\$), serves local wines and cheeses and offers a wide range of duck dishes, such as warm duck salad served with gizzards.

Confit de canard is made with the leg of duck, roasted slowly in the oven, then marinated in its own juices for several days before being reheated. The result is tender, tasty meat.

Imprints II : Discovering the Historic Face of English Quebec * The Eastern Townships *

By Ray & Diana Baillie

Published by Price-Patterson Ltd., Montreal

Copyright 2002

Blinn's Inn, 286 Knowlton Road, Knowlton * The Eastern Townships *

Belden's Atlas (1881) called Knowlton pleasingly picturesque. The coming of the railway in the 1870s helped this lakeside village, set among hills, to become a resort and cottage area for English speakers. Edward Blinn built his hotel in 1849 when the stagecoach was the principal means of travel. The stagecoach passed right in front of the hotel on its way to the Bolton Pass, Knowlton's Landing, and Magog. In the 1850s, this building became well-known as Kimball's Hotel, and later, as Robinson's Hotel, and others. Today, it operates as Auberge Knowlton, carrying on a 150-year tradition.

Source: <http://www.aubergeknowlton.ca/Press.html>

[L'impact du chemin de fer sur la région de Sutton](#)

Le tracé proposant un arrêt à Knowlton et la continuation vers Newport, impliquait la construction de la voie ferrée dans le Bolton Pass ; un passage escarpé dans les montagnes. Le coût projeté de cette option était de \$1,800,000. La proposition privilégiant Dunham, était moins coûteuse, c'était donc celle que favorisait la Compagnie.

Source: <http://www.virtualmuseum.ca/>

Art

CANADA: PASS OF BOLTON. EASTERN TOWNSHIPS.

DATE PRINTED: c.1842.

ARTIST: William Henry Bartlett.

IMAGE SIZE: 7x5 inches (18x12.5 cms) approx.

OVERALL SIZE: 10x7.5 inches 25.5x19.5 cms) approx.

Hand colored (Coloured). This fine steel engraving appeared in *CANADIAN SCENERY* by Nathaniel P. Willis and was published in London England by George Virtue of 26 Ivy Lane. Good condition. Coach and horses following the track through the pass. Fairly primitive wooden houses with dramatic mountain scenery.



Ecology

Open spaces - a playground for flying acrobats

On a casual spring car ride, you might notice raptors hunting in the sky. The Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus anatum*), slowly returning to many parts of Québec, has often been observed lately in the **Bolton Pass**. Slightly larger than a crow, there is no mistaking a falcon when it dives, hitting speeds of up to 200 kilometers per hour and killing its prey instantly.

<http://www.apcor.ca/engl/aca6.htm>

Sunday May 25 the overcast sky didn't deter more than 25 people from gathering at the West Bolton townhall for an afternoon talk and excursion based on the wetlands of the region. The event was led by ACA's ecologist Louise Gratton who addressed issues regarding the definition of a wetland, its roles, the different types of wetlands, the important indicator plant and animal species, and the laws and regulations governing the use and protection of these unique ecosystems.

On the Bolton Pass we saw Mounts Pevee and Becky. "A pair of peregrine falcons was seen in the cliffs of the Bolton Pass last summer. There are fewer than 20 known nests of this species in southern Quebec," Louise explained.

Source: <http://www.apcor.ca/engl/Oiseaux.pdf>

Peregrine Falcon anatum subspecies

Scientific name: *Falco peregrinus anatum*

Taxonomic group: Birds

Range: YT NT NU BC AB SK MB ON QC NB NS NL

Status under SARA*: Threatened, on [Schedule 1](#)

Last COSEWIC designation:** Threatened (May 2000)

*SARA: The Species at Risk Act

**COSEWIC: The Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada



Dear sir,

Please find attached (in separate pieces) our report on the Peregrine Falcon in the Bolton-Pass. Often these "white lands" are logged and then sold for construction. This means irreversible loss of habitat for the species.

Just to give an idea how important the Pass is to global conservation of the area. Aesthetically, we would all agree that the Pass's landscape is a key feature in this municipality. Moreover, ecologically, it is a critical link to maintain the movement of wildlife in the Sutton Mountain Range.

On the Appalachian Corridor territory, the greatest pressures exerted on animal populations are directly related to habitat loss and fragmentation. The most important threats, notwithstanding the fact that the territory is entirely made up of private lands, are logging (loss and reduction of habitat, drainage, etc.), real estate and tourism development. Currently, the areas protected or in the process of being protected within the territory aim to conserve the large unfragmented forests, in order to preserve their ecological integrity. However, even the largest forest fragments we have are insufficient to maintain viable populations of wide-ranging species. To prevent these forest fragments from being separated by obstacles or hostile environments to animal dispersal, we need to protect these critical links.

As for the Peregrine, since it is by Quebec's Law, designated threatened and also recognized threatened by the COSEWIC, I think a request to act to the Minister of Natural Resources, Wildlife and Parks in Quebec and to the Minister of Environment in Canada would be appropriate.

Finally, Terri Monahan, ACA's Executive director, would be glad to accompany you at the municipality. Up to now she is only that has brought up this problematic logging in the Pass to the Bolton's council meeting. Please feel free to call her : (450) 538-5444

Louise Gratton, Scientific advisor
Appalachian Corridor
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Sutton, Quebec
J0E 2K0



**RAPPORT D'OBSERVATION ET ANALYSE DE
L'HABITAT DU FAUCON PÈLERIN DANS LA PASSE DE
BOLTON**

**DOCUMENT CONFIDENTIEL
AUCUNE DIFFUSION N'EST PERMISE SANS
L'AUTORISATION ÉCRITE DE ACA**

Mars 2004

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Introduction

Au printemps 2002, Denis Duteau, biologiste, notait dans la Passe-de-Bolton (municipalité de Bolton Ouest), un couple de Faucon pèlerin (comm. pers.). Pendant plusieurs journées consécutives, il observa leur comportement nuptial incluant parade et copulation répétée. Ainsi, tel que présenté dans l'Atlas des oiseaux nicheurs du Québec (Gauthier et Aubry, 1995), ces observations permettent de classer cette occurrence dans la catégorie *Nidification probable*. Durant toute la saison estivale, le couple de faucon pèlerin a été observé dans le secteur mais aucun nid ou jeune n'ont été observés.

Bien qu'il s'agisse d'une première mention de nidification probable, le faucon pèlerin avait déjà été observé en période de migration par des ornithologues dans ce secteur et l'altération des rochers, noté à deux endroits dans la Passe-de-Bolton, il y a plus de 3 ans (L. Gratton et F. Morneau, obser. pers.) laisse croire que les falaises étaient ou avaient été utilisées par des rapaces diurnes auparavant.

La réalisation d'une stratégie de conservation du secteur Glen/Bolton du Corridor appalachien est actuellement en voie de réalisation. La présence du Faucon pèlerin est un élément clé de cette stratégie. Pour tenir compte des exigences de cette espèce et justifier les actions de conservation auprès des propriétaires, il est jugé important de confirmer sa nidification dans le secteur et d'inscrire à la stratégie de conservation les mesures de protection appropriées.

Rapport d'observation 2003

Au printemps 2003, Daniel Krupa, un bénévole pour le compte du Corridor appalachien reprend le suivi du site dans la passe de Bolton. Bien que le faucon pèlerin ait été observé à plusieurs reprises à ce moment et au cours de l'été 2003, aucun comportement indique qu'il ait niché ou tenté de nicher sur le site. De plus, en 2003, un seul faucon pèlerin est observé dans le secteur de la passe de Bolton, ce qui suggère l'absence d'un partenaire. Autre fait important à mentionner est la présence d'un couple nicheur de grand corbeau sur la falaise au printemps 2003. L'observation de comportements peu agressifs face au couple de grand corbeau laisse croire que le faucon pèlerin n'a pas niché dans la falaise en 2003.

Caractéristiques écologiques de l'habitat du faucon pèlerin

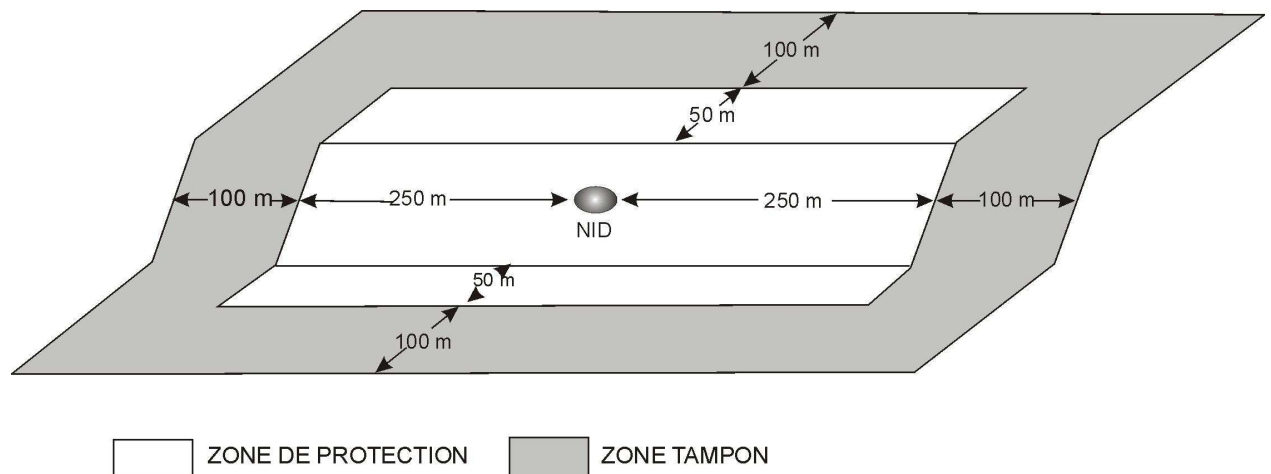
À l'aide de cartes et de photographies aériennes du secteur de la passe de Bolton, les caractéristiques écologiques du milieu jugées essentielles au faucon pèlerin ont été répertoriées. La recherche des titres de propriétés pour le secteur a également été effectuée. La superposition de ces deux couches d'informations a permis d'identifier les propriétés prioritaires où des mesures de protection devraient être mises en place pour assurer la pérennité du site de nidification ainsi que des milieux naturels environnants

nécessaires à la survie de l'espèce. La grille d'analyse est présentée à l'annexe 1. Les caractéristiques évaluées sont les suivantes :

Position des propriétés par rapport à l'habitat du faucon pèlerin

Selon Environnement Canada en 2004, l'habitat du faucon pèlerin se divise en trois composantes principales et chaque propriété située à proximité du lieu d'observation du faucon pèlerin est classée dans l'une ou l'autre de ces aires utilisées par l'espèce.

1) le site du nid² : les nids sont habituellement construits sur des falaises, normalement près de terres humides, ou des falaises artificielles telles les édifices et les carrières. Le périmètre de protection proposée par la Société de la faune et des parcs et le ministère des Ressources naturelles (2002) est la suivante : une zone de protection intensive et une zone tampon. La zone de protection intensive comprend une zone de 250 mètres de chaque côté du nid sur toute la hauteur de la paroi rocheuse ou de l'escarpement ainsi qu'une zone de 50 mètres à partir de la limite de la rupture de pente en haut et en bas de la paroi rocheuse ou de l'escarpement. Toute activité est défendue dans cette zone en tout temps. La zone tampon comprend, quant à elle, une bande de 100 mètres additionnelle à la zone de protection intensive en haut et en bas de la paroi rocheuse ou de l'escarpement et de chaque côté du nid. Toutes les activités y sont permises du 1^{er} septembre à la fin février seulement.



2) le territoire de nidification, c'est-à-dire le territoire défendu par le faucon autour de son nid, peut avoir un rayon de plus de 1 km, ce qui assure une quantité de nourriture suffisante pour chaque paire de faucons et leurs oisillons. Le nombre de nids dans une région semble être lié à la disponibilité de nourriture.

² Puisque le site précis de la nidification du faucon pèlerin dans la Passe de Bolton n'a été identifié, l'ensemble de la falaise est considéré comme site potentiel et la position des propriétés évaluée en conséquence.

3) la sphère d'activité, c'est-à-dire la région non défendue par le faucon qu'il utilise pour chasser; cette région peut s'étendre jusqu'à 27 km du nid. Les faucons pèlerins préfèrent les régions dégagées telles que les milieux humides, la toundra, la savane, les côtes, et les pelouses alpines, quoiqu'ils chassent également en milieux boisés peu denses.

Présence de milieux humides et cours d'eau

Une étude de Blais réalisée en 1992 démontre que, dans les régions boisées du sud du Québec, les gros passereaux comme le carouge à épauettes composent une bonne part de l'alimentation du faucon pèlerin. Puisque le carouge à épauettes opte surtout pour les marais et les prairies pour nicher, une valeur additionnelle est accordée aux propriétés à proximité de la paroi rocheuse qui présentent ces habitats.

Topographie

Les falaises demeurent, pour le faucon pèlerin, l'habitat de nidification de prédilection, surtout lorsqu'elles sont voisines d'un plan d'eau (BIRD, 1997). Une valeur additionnelle est accordée aux propriétés possédant cette caractéristique.

Ouverture du couvert

Les espaces ouverts comme les cours d'eau, les marais, les plages, les vasières et les champs offrent une bonne visibilité et facilitent la poursuite et la capture des proies (Palmer, 1988). Les propriétés possédant un ou plusieurs milieux ouverts sont donc affectées d'un pointage plus élevé.

Fragmentation

Les propriétés les moins fragmentées sont ciblées car la perte ou la fragmentation d'habitat de nidification et d'alimentation, autant au Québec que dans les sites d'hivernage, sont peut-être aujourd'hui les facteurs limitants les plus significatifs pour les populations de faucons pèlerins (Bird, 1997).

Menaces

Le dérangement associé aux activités humaines, en particulier par l'escalade sur les falaises, peut nuire à la reproduction du faucon pèlerin en provoquant l'abandon des nids, le bris des oeufs, l'envol prématuré des oisillons et éventuellement en attirant les mammifères prédateurs qui suivent les pistes des humains (Bird, 1997). L'organisme Les Sentiers de l'Estrie qui fait la gestion des sentiers de randonnée pédestre dans le secteur sera donc avisé de la présence du faucon pèlerin sur cette falaise. Il doit s'assurer que leurs sentiers ne représentent aucune menace au succès reproducteur du faucon pèlerin. Si tel est le cas, une relocalisation des sentiers sera nécessaire.

Priorité

Le tableau 1 présente les propriétés prioritaires à la protection de l'habitat du faucon pèlerin du secteur de la Passe de Bolton. Celles-ci sont identifiées en fonction de leur position par rapport au site d'observation du faucon, de leur superficie, de leur degré de fragmentation, de l'ouverture du couvert, de la présence de milieux humides ou de cours d'eau et de la topographie du terrain. Une carte localisant les différentes propriétés prioritaires du secteur est présentée à l'annexe 2.

Tableau 1. Propriétés prioritaires à la protection de l'habitat du faucon pèlerin du secteur de la Passe de Bolton.

Propriété	Lot	Priorité
Luckert, Hans J.M.	<i>P430, 431, P434</i>	1
Pibus, Edna	<i>P350, P349, P348, 255, P252, 251</i>	2
Beloin, Paul (9020-8349 Québec inc.) #1	<i>422, 423, 424, 425, 426, 427, 428, 429</i>	3
Klei, Constance	<i>339, 340p, 341, 344, 345</i>	4
Seebohm, Ursula #2	<i>P352, P351, 259, 262</i>	4
Pelletier, Fernand	<i>430</i>	4
Tanguay, Michel	<i>433</i>	5
Seebohm, Ursula #1	<i>P350, P352</i>	6
Lynn, Famille	<i>P352</i>	7
Fowlers, John et Lepcer, Kathleen M.	<i>352-1, 351-1, 350-2</i>	7
Beloin, Paul (9020-8349 Québec inc.) #2	P349	8
8904-11-6535	P349	8

Références

BLAIS, B. 1992. *Suivi des nids de faucons pèlerins dans le sud du Québec. Été 1992.* Rapport soumis au ministère du Loisir, de la Chasse et de la Pêche et au Service canadien de la faune. 33 p.

BIRD, D.M. 1997. *Rapport sur la situation du faucon pèlerin (Falco peregrinus) au Québec.* Ministère de l'Environnement et de la faune, Direction de la faune et des habitats. 76 p.

Environnement Canada. 2004. Faucon pèlerin de la sous-espèce anatum.
http://www.speciestrisk.gc.ca/search/speciesDetails_f.cfm?SpeciesID=29

PALMER, R. (ed). 1988. *Handbook of North American birds.* Vol 5. Diurnal Raptors (Part 2). Yale University Press, New Haven and London. 465 p.

Société de la faune et des parcs et le ministère des Ressources naturelles (2002).
Protection des espèces menacées ou vulnérables en milieu forestier. Le faucon pèlerin (*Falco peregrinus*), 8 p.

Tourism

Tourism is extremely important to this area. While farming used to be the main economic activity, this was replaced by logging and gravel as the main sources of employment. However, the main source of economic activity in the region is now derived from tourism and cottagers. This group has significantly different requirements – the quality of the scenic environment is now a paramount issue.

Bolton Pass is an important tourist resource, both for its history, and also for its scenic beauty. Tourists visit the pass specifically in the fall as part of the fall colour packages. However, Bolton Pass is on Route 243, which is used by tourists for a number of activities:

- Route to Knowlton for tourists from the US
- Route that is part of the Tour des Arts
- Route to the St-Benoit-du-Lac Abbey
- Access to Owl's Head ski and golf resort
- Cycling and cross country touring

The importance of Tourism can be understood by looking at Tourist Expenditure in the Brome Missisquoi region – for 2001 this was \$40 million; for 2002 it doubled to \$79.7 million. (Statistics Canada).

KNOWLTON: A LIVELY VICTORIAN VILLAGE ON THE SHORES OF LAKE BROME

Association des plus beaux villages du Québec

(Reproduced with permission)

About 100 kilometres southeast of Montreal, on the shores of a magnificent five-kilometre wide lake, Knowlton is at once a blooming, shady and festive village, especially during the summer and weekends. Vacationers gather here to enjoy aquatic activities on the lake, the beauty of the surrounding landscapes, and the quaint charm of the streets, which are lined with specialized boutiques, antique shops, and cafés.



The village was founded in 1821 with the construction of the first mill, a flour mill built in 1836 by Colonel Knowlton. A sawmill and the general store then followed. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Knowlton became the administrative, legal and postal centre of the region.

As is typical of the region, the presence of three different churches (one Catholic, one Anglican and one 1875 Victorian-style Methodist) epitomizes the co-existence of different cultures and religions.

Beautiful residences spread across the village, particularly in the wooded area near the north entrance. Visit Masonic Hall (61, chemin Lakeside), which dates back to 1843 and once housed a tannery. A scenic little pond drawn from Cold Brook Creek decorates the village centre.

A number of interesting public buildings are worth visiting, notably the P.H Knowlton Memorial (1854, now the Brome County Museum), the former post office (1904, now city hall), the former Eastern Township bank, and the old library of 1894.

Duck farming is a Lake Brome specialty. Purchase or sample the variety of duck products available. For your intellectual cravings, a summer theatre features performances in English.

The Anglo-Saxon charm of Knowlton makes a winter visit worthwhile, too. Enjoy the inns, winter ice-fishing, window shopping, and winter sports at Mount Glen. For a rejuvenating visit, try the lakefront health spa.



THE TOUR DES ARTS: A MOVEABLE SUMMER FEAST

(May 3, 2004)

Frank Nixon

No matter how cold and miserable the winter may have been, there will always be a summer of warmth and sunshine. And if you're thinking of taking in an art tour this summer - think no more. The art tour you will not want to miss, is the much fêted and prestigious Tour des Arts of the Eastern Townships, from July 17 to July 25.



For the professional and amateur art enthusiast alike, this annual summer extravaganza can be likened to a warm and moveable feast - for both the mind and the senses. It is a fitting occasion to witness the world of the artist - not in the limited confines of an art gallery - but where the artist actually lives and works. It is also a unique opportunity to touch, to learn and to experience the creative aspects of a work-in-progress.

Reilly House in Mansonville, one of the stops on the Tour des Arts.

What else can you expect if you decide to take in this year's Tour des Arts? You can expect to see the works of 37 accomplished artists and artisans, who have been jury-selected, for the excellence of their work. You can also expect the participants to warmly open their studios to you, for daytime visits (10 am -5 pm), in various locales throughout Brome-Missisquoi. Moreover, you can expect to experience exquisite and exceptional pieces of art, in a variety of media, such as watercolour and oil painting, glass, ceramics, photography, folk art, wood sculpture, jewelry and quilts. Finally, as an added bonus, you can expect to encounter, as you journey from studio to studio, the beauty of Brome-Missisquoi, its landscapes and gardens, its unique architecture and local fine cuisine.



The Tours des Arts was the brainchild of Townshipper and potter Stanley Lake, who came up with the idea in the 1980's, while taking in an art workshop tour in Maryland. Doris May, another artist in the area, suggested the name

"Tours des Arts", from the To not an art tour in the Brome area?" they thought. After all, they knew of many

talented artists and artisans in the county, who would very much love to have a venue to exhibit their works. Then, in 1988, with the help of fellow Township artists - Maya Lightbody, Rhonda Price, Irma Côté and Gordon Ladd - the Tours des Arts was born.

Tour co-founder Stanley Lake, with one of his creations.

Over the years, the Tour des Arts has grown in reputation and importance - but not in size. The Tour des Arts is still limited to not more than 40 artists and artisans. The organizers of the event cite two reasons for this. First, to have the Tours des Arts any larger would simply be too impractical for the visitor "to take it all in" over a nine day period. Second, and more significantly, the quality of the artwork displayed is of utmost importance to the organizers - not just the sheer



period. Second, and more significantly, the quality of the artwork displayed is of utmost importance to the organizers - not just the sheer quantity of works produced.

Right: One of the artists' workshops along the route of the Tour des Arts.

For instance, this year, there were more than 20 applicants who wished to be part of the tour - but just four were accepted. In addition, for those participants that are already part of the tour, they must periodically submit their work for re-evaluation by a jury, approved by the Tour des Arts Administrative Council.

The four new participants this year are: Nicole Côté, of Glen Sutton, who creates clay sculptures and murals; Marc Famelart, of Mansonville, who makes art bookbinding and leather albums; David James, of Sutton, who creates sculptures cast in glass; and John Fowles, of West Bolton, who principally produces acrylic paintings, as well as India ink drawings of the surrounding towns and countryside.

If you wish to receive a brochure detailing all of this year's Tour des Arts events, contact the Sutton Tourist Bureau at 1 (800) 565-8455, 1 (450) 538-0605 or check out their web site at: www.tourdesarts.com.

(Photos: Matthew Farfan)

ST-BENOÎT-DU-LAC ABBEY

(April 26, 2002)



Matthew Farfan

"In a civilization more and more mobile, loud-sounding and speaking, zones of silence become a vital necessity. So monasteries more than ever are called to be haunts of peace and interiority. Never let internal or external pressures affect your traditions and your means of recollection. Rather do what you can to educate your guests and retreatants to observe the virtue of silence. Cherish your separation from the world so comparable to the biblical desert. Paradoxically, this desert is not emptiness; that is where the Lord speaks to your heart and associates you closely to his work of salvation."

Pope John-Paul II, 1980

An imposing structure overlooks the western shore of Lake Memphremagog near the village of Austin. It is the Benedictine monastery, St-Benoît-du-Lac. Viewed from across the lake, St-Benoît calls to mind a French chateau. With its turrets, green copper roofs, and walls of stone, it sits in striking contrast to the green hillside that slopes gently down to the water. Mount Owl's Head looms majestically in the distance. Surely the monks could not have chosen a more stunning setting!

St-Benoît-du-Lac.

(Photo: Matthew Farfan)

PERSEVERANCE

The history of St-Benoît-du-Lac is one of perseverance. The monastery dates back to 1912 when a handful of exiled French monks arrived in Canada from Belgium. Their leader, Dom Paul Vannier, had found an ideal spot in the Eastern Townships. With the blessing of the Bishop of Sherbrooke, he purchased an old farm on the shore of Lake Memphremagog. Ironically, the spot he chose was on the very site chosen by the Quaker pioneer of Bolton Township, Nicholas Austin, 120 years before. Great men think alike.

For the first years of its existence, the tiny monastic community struggled. Poverty, isolation, and hard work took their toll. Making things even worse, Dom Vannier drowned in a boating accident on the lake. At one point, the monastery (then a mere "cella" occupying a simple farmhouse) was nearly closed. When two Canadian monks went to Europe to plead for support, the group was granted a reprieve.

The view from the abbey. (Photo: Matthew Farfan)



In the years that followed, the situation improved and the community began to grow. In 1935, St-Benoît was granted the status of an autonomous monastery. St-Benoît was by then a sprawling three-storey wooden building, but in 1938 the monks decided to construct a more substantial, more ambitious monastery. They enlisted the help of a French Benedictine architect, Dom Paul Bellot.



TRANQUILITY

Today, St-Benoit-du-Lac is famous not only for its spectacular architecture and surroundings, but for being a place of respite for pilgrims from around the world. Visitors can either come for the day, or (if they have a reservation) stay over night at one of the abbey's two hostels, which accommodate up to 50 men and 15 women. Reflection, prayer, and tranquility are the rule.

Inside the new abbey church.
(Photo: Matthew Farfan)

TOURISM

St-Benoît is a major tourist site, attracting between 100 and 200,000 visitors per year, according to Dom Jacques Bolduc. Dom Bolduc, whose official title is "cellarer", is responsible for all things administrative. He says that the abbey is an enormous benefit to the region's tourism industry. He estimates that between 1000 and 2000 people visit each week in the peak summer months. Some of these people stay at the hostels, he says, but many come just for the masses that are celebrated daily at 11 a.m. with Gregorian chants in the abbey church, which seats 500 and which is usually full on Sundays. Other visitors come to sample the famous St-Benoît cheese, which the monks produce on the premises. Others come for the apple cider, produced from apples grown in the Abbey's orchards. A boutique boasts a selection of produce as well as musical recordings, books, and religious articles.

Miraculously the Abbey is able to maintain its primary vocation of meditation and prayer, while at the same time welcoming large numbers of people. This is due in part to the fact that while certain areas are open to the public, others are strictly off-limits. The population of St-Benoît-du-Lac varies between fifty and sixty, depending on the number of novices in residence at any given time. Monks divide their time between religious and agricultural duties, explains Dom Bolduc.



MUNICIPAL CURIOSITY

St-Benoît is something of curiosity. The Abbey, along with its 225 hectares (560 acres) of land, is actually a municipality unto itself, a kind of Vatican City in miniature. "Yes, you could say that," laughs one official at the Quebec Federation of Municipalities. "It's certainly the only one in the province we know of."



Dom Bolduc and colleague Dom Langlois sharing a joke. Bolduc, 74, has been at St-Benoît for 53 years.
(Photo: Matthew Farfan)

Carved out of the municipality of Austin in 1939, St-Benoît was created in part because Austin, itself carved out of Bolton East the year before, was worried about having to provide the monks with the usual services (water, electricity and so on), while the monks would legally be required to pay no municipal taxes. The people of Austin and the monks agreed that it would be in everyone's interest for the monastery to form its own town. Dom Bolduc says that this sort of thing was rare in Quebec at that time, but not unheard of. There were, he says, other institutions that were municipalities. One example was a hospital in Quebec City.

Today St-Benoît still maintains its independence. Dom Bolduc, in the role of pro-mayor, attends regular meetings of the Memphremagog MRC (regional county). St-Benoît, however, forgoes the traditional municipal organization and is administered by a corporation composed of Benedictine monks.

St-Benoît in 1913: a simple farmhouse. (Photo: Courtesy of St-Benoît-du-Lac)



Asked if the monks are worried about the government's forced municipal mergers, Dom Bolduc explains that since its creation, the little enclave has rarely if ever asked the province for anything. "In 1958, we were the first ones in the area to build a water treatment plant. We had to because, with our cheese making, we didn't want to cause any pollution. We didn't ask for a cent, and paid for it all ourselves." He adds, chuckling, "No, we're not worried. We ask for nothing, so they leave us alone."

For more information, visitors may contact St-Benoît-du-Lac by phone: (819) 843-4080; by fax: (819) 868-1861; or by email: abbaye@st-benoit-du-lac.com. For those wishing to

stay at the men's hostel, reservations are required by phone. For reservations at the women's hostel (Saint Scholastica's Villa), call (819) 843-2340. The Abbey Website may be visited at: <http://www.st-benoit-du-lac.com>.

St-Benoît Tower.
(Photo: Matthew Farfan)



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Informations et commentaires - For more information or comments

2002
MRC de Brome-Missisquoi
Estimation des recettes touristiques globales

Touristes québécois	
Achalandage	Recettes globales
573,000	\$54,6 millions

Touristes canadiens hors québec	
Achalandage	Recettes globales
44,000	\$9,8 millions

Touristes américains	
Achalandage	Recettes globales
140,200	\$14,3 millions

Touristes outre-mer	
Achalandage	Recettes globales
4,700	\$1,0 millions

FRÉQUENTATION TOTALE TOUS MARCHÉS CONFONDUS
761,900 touristes

RECETTES GLOBALES TOUS MARCHÉS CONFONDUS
\$79.7 millions

Ventilation des dépenses 2002

Dépenses des touristes dans la MRC Brome-Missisquoi:	\$63.4 millions
Dépenses touristiques résidents locaux pour des voyage hors québec	\$16.3 millions
Total des dépenses touristiques de la MRC Brome-Missisquoi (2002):	\$79.7 millions

Ventilation des dépenses 2001

Dépenses des touristes dans la MRC Brome-Missisquoi:	\$28.2 millions
Dépenses touristiques résidents locaux pour des voyage hors québec	\$11.8 millions
Total des dépenses touristiques de la MRC Brome-Missisquoi (2001):	\$40.0 millions

Dépenses par touriste:	2001: \$42.47;	2002: \$66.75
Tourists:	2001: 513,900	2002: 761,900

SOURCE: Statistics Canada