

The Montreal Forum:
The Final Season?



Rob Coles

September 2010

As a site of identity for the multiple affiliations of the people of Montreal, the Montreal Forum represents much more than a hockey arena. Between 1924 and 1996, the Forum hosted thousands of events, from professional hockey, to rock concerts, circus performances, religious gatherings, professional wrestling and events of the 1976 Summer Olympics. In 1996 the Montreal Canadiens Hockey Club, the main occupants of the site, moved from the Forum to the Molson (now Bell) Centre. After the departure of the Canadiens was announced, many Montreal residents feared that the Forum would be destroyed. A huge public outcry to save the building ensued. The Forum was ultimately saved and transformed into an entertainment complex called the Pepsi Forum that incorporated some memorabilia from the site's history into its design. With this attempt to keep the local affect of the Forum alive in mind, this essay asks why so many were opposed to the demolition of the Forum? Was the adaptive re-use of the Forum successful in capturing the essential and important aspects of the building for its fans?

The Montreal Forum was a key site of expression and identity in Montreal not only for supporters of the Canadiens hockey team. For the city's francophone population and fans of popular music, the Forum was also important. As this essay demonstrates, while the Pepsi Forum includes memorabilia in its interior design, important connections between the Forum and the rise of Quebec nationalism are only summarily represented, as is the impact of the Forum as a key music venue in Montreal; the "Forum Gallery", a small museum located on the second floor of the building, is out of the view and spatial experience of most visitors today. Foregrounding these crucial aspects of the history of the Montreal Forum, this paper argues that as a commemorative project, the Pepsi Forum represents what Alan Gordon refers to as a staged and contrived representation of public memory that is essentially commercial, retaining little of the

local meaning of the site.¹

Many books on the history of the Canadiens hockey team have been published along with one extensive study of the Forum itself, Chrystian Goyens' *The Montreal Forum: Forever Proud* (1996). This paper diverges from existing publications about the Forum by exploring the site in relation to literature that deals with the role of architecture in the public memory and identity of a city, paying particular attention to the work of Alan Gordon and Dolores Hayden, as well as Lawrence Grossberg's theory of fandom and the significance of popular culture in society.

Montreal's Hockey Mecca: a History of the Forum

The Montreal Forum is located at the corner of St. Catherine and Atwater Street on the western edge of downtown Montreal. The site was originally occupied by Christin's Forum, a roller and ice skating emporium built in 1908 and named for its owner Joseph Christin. Christin's Forum was the first of several buildings on the site to be called the Forum. Occupying about sixty percent of the city block between St. Catherine and St. Luke, now De Maisonneuve, the site was designed as a skating complex, containing a covered oval surface for roller skating surrounding an uncovered, inner ice skating rink. The building was a popular attraction for families and could accommodate up to three thousand skaters who listened to live music performed by an orchestra.² Noted for its excellent lighting provided by numerous windows and for the neoclassical grand arch as the main entrance on St. Catherine Street, the building also

¹ Alan Gordon, *Making Public Pasts: The Contested Terrain of Montreal's Public Memories, 1891-1930* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's UP, 2001) 11.

² Chrystian Goyens, *The Montreal Forum: Forever Proud* (Montreal: Les Editions Effix Inc, 1996) 12.

featured stone columns lining the walls, and domed turrets at the corners.³

The next phase of the site began in 1924 when the Montreal Forum was purpose-built as a hockey arena (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1 The Forum, St. Catherine Street, Montreal, QC, 1924. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of the McCord Museum (Photo: MP-1977).

The architect, John S. Archibald was a specialist in institutional architecture such as hotels, hospitals and schools.⁴ The new rectangular arena, which kept the original name of the Forum, took 159 days to build at a cost of 1.5 million dollars and occupied the full city block, as it still does today.⁵ The capacity of the Forum was nine thousand and three hundred seats, including an unreserved section on the rez-de-chaussee and first floor. Rectangular fenestration surrounded

³ Guy Pinard, "Le Forum," *Montreal: Son Histoire, Son Architecture*, tome 3 (Montreal: Les Editions La Presse, 1986) 74.

⁴ Goyens 15.

⁵ Camile DesRoches, "The Montreal Forum," *The Montreal Canadiens: An Illustrated History of a Hockey Dynasty*, ed. Claude Mouton (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 1987) 109.

the building except at the corners and the main entrances, which sported dramatic, arched windows.

Although the Forum would eventually become the home of the Montreal Canadiens, the original occupants of the building were the Montreal Maroons, the Stanley Cup winners of 1926 and 1935. The Canadiens moved to the Forum from the Mount-Royal Arena in 1926, and the two teams shared the building until the demise of the Maroons in 1938. Many of the games between the Canadiens and the Maroons at the Forum were heated battles, not only between the players, but also between the teams' fans. Montreal's large francophone community supported the Canadiens, while English hockey fans, for the most part, supported the Maroons. As William Brown pointed out in his book about the Maroons, games between the two Montreal teams at the Forum were highly emotional confrontations, and off-ice battles were as much about the French-English rivalry as they were about hockey.⁶ In the early years of the Forum, therefore, the building was already establishing itself as a site of political expression, the arena providing a spatial location in which the feud between Montreal's primary two linguistic communities could play out.

Clashes between hockey fans at the Forum often took place in the notorious north end section of the building known as "Millionaires' Row", a horseshoe-shaped area behind the net that could hold about two thousand people.⁷ Tickets for this section cost only fifty cents, but with no reserved seating fans were squeezed tightly onto uncomfortable wooden benches. Supporters of both the Maroons and Canadiens shared "Millionaires' Row", and this section became

⁶ William Brown, *The Montreal Maroons: The Forgotten Stanley Cup Champions* (Montreal: Vehicule Press, 1999) 64.

⁷ Brown 59.

especially emotional and violent during games between the rival Montreal teams. The intense atmosphere of the Forum, fuelled by confrontations between French and English hockey fans, was just as charged in the stands as it was on the ice.

After the demise of the Maroons, the Forum's main occupant became the Canadiens. The bitter Maroons vs. Canadiens rivalry no longer had a presence at the Forum, but the emotional atmosphere continued. In response to safety concerns, a fence was erected inside the building to separate the non-reserved section from the more expensive, reserved seats. Charles Biname's film, *The Rocket* (2007) refers extensively to this physical barrier separating the interior space of the Forum. In *The Rocket*, the fence is shown to prevent contact between the two parts of the Forum's interior, and the communities these spaces represent.⁸

The Rocket depicts the fence as a separation of the space of the Forum between the reserved and unreserved sections of the building, but also between wealthy English fans and working-class French fans of the Canadiens. In the film, one of the characters, Maurice Richard's brother-in-law, summarizes the feelings of his fellow Francophone friends in attendance at a Canadiens game: "I was in the section for the poor. That section is surrounded by a fence, so that the poor couldn't bother the rich. The poor are in a cage."⁹ In the film as in life, this physical barrier represented an attempt to control the tense and emotional atmosphere of hockey games at the Forum. Moreover, the fence also symbolized the divisions between fans of the Canadiens who identified with Montreal's French, English, working class and wealthy communities.

⁸ *The Rocket*, dir. Charles Biname, Palm Pictures, 2007 (124 minutes).

⁹ *The Rocket*.

Although the fence was removed during the 1952 season, it was not until 1968 that the Forum had a complete renovation (Fig. 2). The new building was designed to accommodate bigger crowds and eliminated the physical barriers between classes. The Forum, therefore, became a more socially responsive building with an idealistic goal of opening its doors equally for the whole community, as long they had a ticket. Socially responsive architecture, according to Kim Dovey, reflected architectural research in human-environment studies during the 1960s.¹⁰ At the Forum this effort translated into better accessibility for larger crowds, thus requiring extensive modernization of the site. The Forum was also becoming a major venue in the city for rock concerts and other non-hockey events that required air-conditioning and year-round access to the building.



Fig. 2 The Montreal Forum, 1968. Photograph: www.hockeyforum.com

¹⁰ Kim Dovey, "The Silent Complicity of Architecture," *Habitus: A Sense of Place*, ed. Jean Hillier and Emma Rooksby (Aldershot, UK, Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005) 293.

The architect chosen for the project was Ken Sledleigh, whose main goals were to remove the interior columns that obstructed the view from some seats, to add two thousand and four hundred new seats, create improved access to the site and modernize the interior.¹¹ Sledleigh's design also modernized the Forum's exterior, which has much the same appearance, in terms of overall volume and massing, today. Only the original infrastructure and stands were kept from the 1924 building. A redesigned south entrance of the building, which now supported four escalators to facilitate access to the stands, significantly improved entry to the interior of the building. The south entrance escalators could be seen from the street, and are fondly remembered by locals because they had the appearance of giant, crossed hockey sticks.¹² The interior columns that obstructed views from some sections of the building were removed, thus improving sight lines and making the venue more attractive for all of the Forum's spectators. Square footage of the interior went from 40000 square feet to 100000 square feet.¹³ Twenty four bathrooms, fourteen concession stands and two private clubs further improved comfort for the Forum's ticket holders.¹⁴ As a result of these changes, the 1968 renovation completely transformed the site, and the city of Montreal had a fully modern venue accessible to the whole community.

Renovations to the Forum in 1968 also reflected sweeping changes in the built environment of Montreal in the 1960s. Large scale buildings designed in this period of the city's history suggest the development of an urban culture whose social values reflected an assertion of

¹¹ Pinard 77.

¹² Caroline Beaudoin, personal interview, 1 Dec. 2009.

¹³ Pinard 77.

¹⁴ Pinard 77.

Quebec nationalism in the wake of the Quiet Revolution.¹⁵ French Canadians had won significant victories at the Forum, and a larger building that was more accessible to the city's population reflected the prominence of the site in Montreal's social history. The Canadiens and their French supporters, for example, survived the French-English rivalry of the Maroons era and claimed the space of the Forum after the demise of the Maroons. The Forum, as will be explained in the following section, was also the location of the "Richard Riot", an important event linked with the birth of Quebec nationalism and the Quiet Revolution. The Forum, therefore, was an important site where French Canadians historically had affirmed their identity and independence. The site also continued to be the home of the Canadiens, now a highly successful sports franchise that both Montrealers and French Canadians all over the province of Quebec passionately supported. The Forum's large-scale modernization in 1968 can be read as symbolic recognition of the importance of the site for French Canadian identity and for the Quebec nationalist movement.

In 1996 the Canadiens moved from the Forum to the Molson Centre, where the team currently plays their home games. After the Canadiens left the Forum, Montrealers began the fight to save the site of the Forum from the wrecking ball. Fans of the Forum and its history feared that the departure of the team meant the additional loss of the building itself. In the end, the Forum was saved, sold and transformed into the entertainment complex that is the Pepsi Forum today.

¹⁵ Andre Lortie, "Montreal 1960: The Singularities of a Metropolitan Archetype," *The 60s: Montreal Thinks Big*, ed. Andre Lortie (Vancouver: Greystone Books, 2004) 104.

The Politics of Identity

As a key site of popular culture from its conception in 1924 as a hockey arena to its renovation as a multi-use facility after 1968, the Forum was a prominent location for the expression of identity for many people in the city of Montreal. In her book, *Urban Landscapes as Public History*, architectural historian Dolores Hayden argues that “the politics of identity are an inescapable and important aspect of dealing with the urban built environment.”¹⁶ Identity, according to Hayden, is bound spatially to memory: not only individual and personal memory, but also broader, collective or social memories of families, neighbours and communities become part of the built environment, often locating in specific buildings and sites.

The Forum is a site that figures prominently in the collective memory of many people in Montreal. As discussed above, hockey and the Canadiens play a significant role in the collective memory of French people in Montreal, the Forum being the place where the Canadiens won many championships. Moreover, working class, French Canadians identify strongly with the site, not only because of the strong presence of French players on the Canadiens hockey team, but also because of the significant spatial victory won by working class people after the boundary of the fence was removed from the interior of the Forum during the 1952 hockey season. Victories by French people at the Forum, both on and off the ice, contributed strongly to French Canadian identity at a time when many members of this community felt they were treated as second-class citizens in a predominantly English nation. As Maurice Richard's barber comments during *The Rocket*, “it is important for a French Canadian to win, even if it's only in sports.”¹⁷

¹⁶ Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995) 7.

¹⁷ *The Rocket*.

One incident in particular illustrates this assertion of French Canadian identity at the Forum. On March 17, 1955, a riot broke out at the Montreal Forum during a game between the Canadiens and the Detroit Red Wings. The event, known as the “Richard Riot”, was a key moment in the birth of Quebec nationalism; the emotions it stirred among French people in the province went far beyond hockey. Five days before the riot at the Forum, Maurice Richard, a star player with the Canadiens and a Francophone Montrealer, was involved in an incident in Boston in which he hit an opponent from behind with his stick in retaliation for another incident. Richard also punched a referee who held the Canadiens player from behind while the Boston player hit him in the face. NHL president Clarence Campbell suspended Richard for the rest of the 1955 season in response to his aggressive behaviour. Campbell was at the game when the Canadiens returned to the Forum a few days later and the Montreal fans immediately began to boo the NHL president and pelt him with eggs, vegetables, and other debris. At the end of the first period, a tear gas bomb was set off in the Forum not far from where Campbell was sitting. The Forum was evacuated and the game forfeited to the Red Wings. After the tear gas incident, the mood of the crowd turned destructive and violent. They continued the riot outside the building, causing approximately one hundred thousand dollars in damage to the neighbourhood and to the Forum itself.

Fans of Richard and the Canadiens believed that the suspension was unfair, seeing Campbell’s disciplinary action towards Richard as prompted by an anti-French attitude among the elite of Anglophone society in Canada. The event, which made national headlines in the Canadian news, has been linked with the birth of Quebec nationalism and the Quiet Revolution.¹⁸

¹⁸ Benoit Melancon, *The Rocket: A Cultural History of Maurice Richard* (Vancouver: Greystone Books, 2009) 2.

Many Francophones in Montreal and throughout the province remember the “Richard Riot” as an important moment when French Canadians began to retaliate against the perceived oppression of French people in Canada. The Forum, therefore, represents an important site in the identity and collective memory of French Canadians, not only because their team achieved greatness on the ice, but also because the site became an arena for the emotional expression of discontent among French Canadians in the stands.

The site of the Forum is intimately associated with the “Richard Riot” in the memory of many people in the city. The connection between the Forum and this incident, therefore, represents how groups of people, such as French Canadians, associate their collective memories with specific places. As historian Alan Gordon points out, individual and collective memories tend to focus on key sites such as the Forum.¹⁹ Public memory, according to Gordon, “influences the ideological associations of a given place by privileging specific sites.”²⁰ The Forum’s significance for the Francophone people of Montreal goes beyond hockey and the Canadiens because the site is ideologically connected with the “Richard Riot” and, therefore, the birth of Quebec nationalism.

The protest to save the Forum after the Canadiens hockey club moved to the Bell Centre, thus, represented more than an acknowledgment of the many victories and championships won by the team at the Forum. In this fight, the people of Montreal were also concerned to preserve the physical location where important events and movements, such as the Quiet Revolution and the birth of Quebec nationalism, had spatialized. Although the Forum Gallery today includes a few photos of the “Richard Riot”, these images are located on the second floor of the building,

¹⁹ Gordon 5.

²⁰ Gordon 11.

away from the primary commerce and circulation areas of the entertainment complex. Another crucial aspect of the Forum with regard to public memory is the prominence of the venue for music concerts. The Forum Gallery briefly touches on the importance of the Forum for music fans in the city, but like the “Richard Riot”, the concert and music themed collection is both small, and out of the central focus of the complex. For many people in Montreal, the Forum was a place with which they strongly identified, because of hockey and the myriad other events of popular culture that occurred in the building. When the Canadiens moved east, many Montrealers mourned. Clearly the Forum Gallery attempts to offer a space of commemoration. To what degree could this space be said to be successful?

In preparing this paper, I conducted interviews with Montreal residents who attended events at the Forum. Although my interviewees discussed some of their hockey memories of the site, a key aspect of the building’s importance to emerge from the interviews was the excellence of the Forum as a live music venue. Specifically, the concerts and other events attended at the Forum figured prominently in individual memories of the interviewees’ youth. Many major musicians and groups performed at this famous venue, from Bob Marley and the Wailers to Iron Maiden. The interviewees recalled the bands that performed there, of course, but remarked as well upon the general atmosphere of the venue and the excellent acoustics. One of the people I interviewed, a long time supporter of the Canadiens, mentioned that it was an ACDC concert at the Forum he remembers most fondly, not the hockey games.²¹

For fans of music and professional sports, two important examples of popular culture, the Forum was a unique place of energy in Montreal. The building was a world-class music venue,

²¹ Gerard Nantel, personal interview, 2 Nov. 2009.

not only due to the artists that performed there, but also because of its excellent atmosphere and acoustics. The Forum, thus, became a significant location for rock fans in the city. According to Lawrence Grossberg, the affect of popular culture for its fans can be organized into maps which express where and how fans are most likely to become absorbed in and into the world.²² Points of energy on what Grossberg terms “mattering maps” are locations in which fans have invested time, money and emotion. These locations are significant, personally and collectively, because they are places where fans construct their own identity and assert their desired, collective affiliations.

Fandom, or the psychic and financial investment of groups of fans also constructs specific differences with which people strongly identify. Being a fan of the Canadiens, for example, or of a particular rock group is thus not only a personal choice but also a selection that marks the fan as belonging to a group who shares his or her passion for that team or band. These choices, according to Grossberg, are always augmented by differences, such as class, race or language, which complicate and striate fandom.²³ The Forum, as mentioned, was a site of identity for French Canadians because of the success of the Canadiens and the French players on the team, such as Maurice Richard. Many fans also identified with the working class heroes of rock music and hockey who performed night after night at the Forum. Live music and sporting events matter for many people because they become a way out of the daily routine of life. The Forum, therefore, was a site of tremendous significance on the mattering maps of many Montrealers; fans identified with the site itself and their heroes who performed there, while the

²² Lawrence Grossberg, “Is There a Fan in the House?: The Affective Sensibility of Fandom,” *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*, ed. Lisa A. Lewis (London: Routledge UK, 1992) 57.

²³Grossberg 57.

²⁴Grossberg 58.

investment of energy by these fans during events and performances became part of the space of the Forum itself.

Just as the Forum was a unique place of energy for fans of music and hockey in the city of Montreal, the site was also a hub of activity for the city's primary two language groups. Since the early days of the Maroons-Canadiens rivalry, the Forum was attended by French and English hockey fans. Bordering the predominately English area of Westmount, the Forum was well located to attract fans representing both languages. Although Boulevard St. Laurent has been called a border zone of a multicultural and bilingual city,²⁴ the Forum also represented a border zone between the city's dual language populations who converged on the site during a game or concert.

The Forum also added a special character to the neighborhood surrounding the building. This character has been lost since the Forum closed, as many of the businesses along St. Catherine Street are closed, and the street now has a dilapidated appearance. It was not always like this in the bustling area around the Forum. Locals and hockey fans used to converge on the many bars and watering holes around the site, such as the Bistro au Forum, where regulars would sit and talk about hockey over pitchers of beer. The Seville Theatre is gone, along with a St. Hubert chicken franchise; the local police station and the Reddy Memorial Hospital likewise have all disappeared.²⁵ Homeless people who used to gather around the building have also left the area because it no longer attracts enough visitors to support panhandling.²⁶

²⁴ Julie Podmore, "Lesbians in the Crowd: gender, sexuality and visibility along Montreal's Boul. St-Laurent," *Gender, Place and Culture* 8.4 (2001): 333.

²⁵ Bill Brownstein, "The Crumbling of a Community," *The Montreal Gazette* 10 Mar. 1996: C2.

²⁶ Brownstein C2.

The closing of the Forum and opening of the Pepsi Forum have undoubtedly contributed to changes in the character of the urban context of the building. As a theatre and shopping complex the Pepsi Forum does still attract audiences and users, but the communities that used to visit the site for events no longer identify with the area or the building's new purposes. Significantly, many of the businesses that once thrived upon the influx of regular crowds have closed.

The Pepsi Forum – Hall of Fame or Commercialized Commemoration?



Fig. 3 Pepsi Forum façade, St-Catherine Street entrance, Montreal, 2009.
Photograph: Rob Coles.

In considering the present and latest phase in the history of the Forum, my goal was to establish whether the Pepsi Forum has succeeded in commemorating the affect and heritage of this historically significant site. According to one of the people interviewed for this project, one

of the key problems with the current development was the addition of the corporate brand, Pepsi to the name of the Forum.²⁷ For her, this name change negatively reflected the commercialization of the entire site. Although the names of sports venues now commonly include a corporate brand, for example the Bell Centre, since 1924 the Forum was known simply as “The Forum”. By changing the name of the building, the developers of the Pepsi Forum clearly intended to mobilize sports fans as consumers in order to profit from the history of the site. Fans, however, are not cultural dopes and as Grossberg argues, they are often conscious of their role in the structures of power and domination, and of those moments when there is an attempt to manipulate them through these very structures.²⁸ Although the re-naming of the site may appear insignificant compared to the extensive physical changes that have taken place since the building’s construction, the Forum’s new name is highly visible and represents the unfortunate commercialization of both the exterior and interior of the site.

Beinhaker Architects, the firm responsible for the project of adapting the building for its new use as an entertainment complex (Fig. 3), had the goal to integrate historical aspects of the building with the needs of its new commercial clients. According to the developers, “the problem was to create a contemporary design within the shell of a building that architecturally is nothing more than a big box”.²⁹ The developers of the Pepsi Forum who negatively referred to the building as a “big box” failed to appreciate the progressive and populist architectural design of the Forum after the 1968 renovation that reflected socially responsible architecture and asserted Quebec nationalism.

²⁷ Caroline Beaudoin, personal interview, 1 Dec. 2009.

²⁸ Grossberg, 53.

²⁹ Jack Todd, “Forum More of a Forum than an Arena Now,” *Montreal Gazette* 5 May 2001: D1.

The following images are taken from two different eras of the site, taken in 1956 and 2009, respectively (Fig. 4 and 5). The later photograph of the Pepsi Forum illustrates that the building has basically the same exterior as the Forum after the renovations of 1968 (Fig. 2), except for the addition of trestles that are used to support advertising banners, signs and lights. Corporate logos, including Future Shop and AMC Cinemas, are now a highly visible aspect of the new development.



Fig. 4 Tramway 200, once located south of the Forum on St-Catherine Street (looking east).
Photographer unknown, 1956. Courtesy of Les Archives de la STM, S6/11.1.2.



Fig. 5 Pepsi Forum exterior, Montreal, 2009. Photograph: Rob Coles.

It is inside the building that the developers attempted to commemorate the history of the site by creating a museum dedicated to the Forum. The showpiece of their attempt to salute the past is the re-creation of centre ice, featuring the Canadiens logo in the middle (Fig. 6).



Fig. 6 Pepsi Forum interior, Montreal, 2009.
Photograph: Rob Coles.

Watching over centre ice is a cement and steel statue of Maurice Richard, an unattractive monument for one of the greatest Canadiens to have played at the Forum. Behind the statue, a bank of original Forum seats has been preserved along with the steep steps that once ushered spectators to their row. A statue of a cheering Canadiens fan watches an imaginary hockey game from the edge of his seat, perhaps attempting to recreate the emotional and tense atmosphere once characteristic of the stands (Fig. 7).



Fig. 7 Paule Marquis, *Maurice "Rocket" Richard*, cement and steel, 2001, Pepsi Forum, photographed in 2009. A bank of preserved Forum seats, section 210, can be seen to the left of the Richard monument.

Photograph: Rob Coles.

In contrast to these nostalgic gestures, the Forum Gallery on the second floor of the Pepsi Forum consists of a few small glass cases that document some of the important events in the history of the site. One of these cases visually depicts the many layers of architectural development during the history of the Forum (Fig. 8).



Fig. 8 Display case in the Forum Gallery, Pepsi Forum, Montreal, 2009.
Concept, design and production by l'Atelier du Press-citron.
Photograph: Rob Coles.

The other cases feature various memorabilia from the building, such as concert photographs, ticket stubs, newspaper clippings, and press releases. A hall with photographs of all the Stanley Cup winning Canadiens teams completes the commemoration of the former site.

Although the Pepsi Forum may be a commercialized, profit-driven attempt to capitalize from the illustrious history of the Forum, the building has nonetheless survived to share some of its memories. Unfortunately, this is not the case with another historic Montreal hockey arena. On February 29, 2000, a fire destroyed the Mount-Royal Arena, which had stood at the corner of Mount-Royal Avenue and St. Urbain Street since 1920. This arena had been the home of the Montreal Canadiens from 1920 to 1926, during the first years of the notorious Maroons-Canadiens rivalry. It was also where the team won its first Stanley Cup as an National Hockey League team in 1924. The Mount-Royal Arena may not have been as well known in the city as the Forum, the building was, however, mourned by local historians and hockey fans alike.³⁰

Yet for many years, the history of this brick structure and its significance as one-time home to the Montreal Canadiens, was unclear.³¹ After the team moved to the Forum, the Mount-Royal Arena was subdivided into a factory in 1938, its façade later transformed to accommodate stores and a thrift shop run by a women's shelter. The fate of the arena was decided after the fire of 2000 when the site was completely levelled and redeveloped. Today, a Provigo supermarket stands on the location; only a sign at the store's Mount-Royal entrance alludes to the significance of this site in Montreal's hockey history.

In contrast, the Pepsi Forum has had some success in creating a space of commemoration for Montreal's many nostalgic hockey fans. Some of the most memorable aspects of the Forum, such as the atmosphere of being in the stands at a Canadiens' game or for a rock concert, are arguably impossible to recreate. Although the Forum Gallery does provide visitors with a brief

³⁰ Ingrid Peritz, "Costly Morning Fire Claims Early Home of NHL's Canadiens," *Montreal Gazette* 1 Mar 2000: A3.

³¹ Peritz A3.

overview of some of the significant events in the history of the site, its position on the second floor makes it spatially less important than the newer commercial clients that occupy the first floor of the building. Moreover, the fascinating history of the Maroons-Canadiens rivalry has only been acknowledged with one small photograph.³² The connection between the Forum and the rise of French Canadian identity and Quebec nationalism is also not sufficiently acknowledged in the present site. However, given the tragic outcome of the Mount-Royal Arena, the ghosts of the Forum can, perhaps, rest in peace.

³² William Brown has extensively researched the Montreal Maroons and his book about the team should be required reading for anyone interested in hockey history. Please see bibliography.

Works Cited

- Beaudoin, Caroline. Personal Interview. 1 Nov. 2009.
- Brown, William. *The Montreal Maroons*. Montreal: Vehicule Press, 1999. Print.
- Brownstein, Bill. "The Crumbling of a Community." *Montreal Gazette* 10 Mar. 1996. Print.
- DesRoches, Camil. "The Montreal Forum." *The Montreal Canadiens: An Illustrated History of a Hockey Dynasty*. Ed. Claude Mouton. Toronto: Key Porter Books, 1987. Print.
- Dovey, Kim. "The Silent Complicity of Architecture." *Habitus: a Sense of Place*. Ed. Jean Hillier and Emma Rooksby. Aldershot, UK, Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005. Print.
- Gordon, Alan. *Making Public Pasts: The Contested Terrain of Montreal's Public Memories, 1891-1930*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's UP, 2001. Print.
- Goyens, Chrystian. *The Montreal Forum: Forever Proud*. Montreal: Les Editions Effix Inc., 1996. Print.
- Grossberg, Lawrence. "Is There a Fan in the House?: The Affective Sensibility of Fandom." *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*, Ed. Lisa A. Lewis. London: Routledge UK, 1992. Print.
- Hayden, Dolores. *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995. Print.
- Lortie, Andre, Ed. *The 60s: Montreal Thinks Big*. Montreal: Canadian Centre for Architecture, 2004. Print.
- Melancon, Benoit. *The Rocket: A Cultural History of Maurice Richard*. Vancouver: Greystone Books, 2009. Print.
- Nantel, Gerard. Personal Interview. 2 Nov. 2009.
- Pinard Guy. "Le Forum." *Montreal: son Histoire, son Architecture*. Tome 3. Montreal: Les Editions La Press, 1986. Print.
- Peritz, Ingrid. "Costly Morning Fire Claims Early Home of the NHL's Canadiens." *Montreal Gazette* 1 Mar 2000: A3. Print.
- Podmore, Julie. "Lesbians in the Crowd: gender, sexuality and visibility along Montreal's Boul. St-Laurent." *Gender, Place and Culture* 8, 4 (2001): 333-355. Print.
- The Rocket*. Dir. Charles Biname. Palm Pictures, 2007. Print.
- Todd, Jack. "Forum More of a Forum than an Arena Now." *Montreal Gazette* 5 May 2001: D1. Print.