

### Arrival of Dr. Montizambert, a VIP for Grosse Île and the health of immigrant and settled people



Dr. Frederick Montizambert  
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Von Iffland's successor at Grosse Île was **Dr. Frederick Montizambert**, who had been working under him. Montizambert acquired his knowledge at Laval University in Quebec City, Edinburg University in Scotland, and Johns-Hopkins University in Baltimore during an internship specializing in bacteriology. It made him the ideal candidate for the superintendent position he acquired in 1869.

A direct descendant of Pierre Boucher, former *Seigneur* of Boucherville, he was familiar with his fellow citizens whom he would be protecting against disease. In his first year as superintendent, he treated nearly 500 people of whom only 44 died. This added weight to the importance of keeping the quarantine station open. He took advantage of a lull around 1879 to refine quarantine regulations by closing loopholes and remedying shoddy practices.

Grosse Île was interwoven with the Port of Québec, sharing with it a desire for modernity and efficiency. Montizambert thought this leitmotif must manifest itself primarily as a true medical revolution.

After a few fires and the construction of a new brick hospital, stability reigned. Montizambert could finally focus on modernizing the station's scientific standards. Prosperity returned to the country and the flow of immigrants resumed with great ethnic diversity from 1870 on: Scandinavians, Russians, Belgians, French, Swiss and Italians. Québec City welcomed 45,000 people in 1882 alone.



Québec City's immigration office could be proud of this rebound and the excellent health of the new arrivals. However, the superintendent of Grosse Île, was much more skeptical. He warned that the arrival in Québec of ships carrying contagious diseases was a common discussion point and a topic of criticism in the papers.

Montizambert, well aware of all the diseases proliferating on the five continents, insisted that ship captains respect the quarantine rules. The captains, however, spurred on by their owners, preferred to head straight for the city and pay the \$400 fine rather than stop at Grosse Île to have their boats disinfected, their passengers disembarked and examined and to lose valuable time.

### A scientific revolution

Montizambert thus demanded that the rule-breaking captains be jailed. He won his case in 1887, decreeing: "Any ship arriving from abroad shall be inspected by a responsible physician [...] before it is allowed to continue beyond the quarantine station and head for the population centres in the ports of Quebec and Montreal."

From Montizambert's perspective, the great scientific revolution took a step forward and enabled the quarantine station to fully play its protective role.

The outstanding work of researchers like microbiologists Louis Pasteur and Robert Koch, led to a great scientific revolution and the discovery of the pathogenic agents underlying many diseases.

These discoveries spurred the Grosse Île station to undertake new initiatives. Firstly, the sick were promptly segregated from the healthy. They were quickly inspected and forced to wash themselves and have their wounds disinfected. Disinfection vessels were used immediately to sanitize arriving ships and luggage. Vaccines were offered, laboratory analyses were conducted and a new 100-bed hospital was built. This reduced the stopover time at the island, but ship owners remained highly critical.

Montizambert could also rely on a brand new telegraph line passing through the Island of Orleans around 1884-1885 to prevent any appearance and progression of infectious disease. Shipowners and captains also benefitted from the new technology as it kept everyone abreast of operations.



The "Druid" disinfection steamship  
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## The Port of Québec and its new facilities

The Pointe-Lévis portion of the Port of Québec, served by the Grand Trunk Railroad, offered rail access to Montréal and the West. In the 1880s, burgeoning numbers of immigrants passing through soon overwhelmed the station and facilities.



Bâtiment de la gare vers 1900, avant la construction de la gare de 1902. On remarque la présence du quai qui était alors situé très près du bâtiment, le long de la voie ferrée. Source : Jean-Marie Lemay.

Source: Jean-Marie Lemay. Source: Extract from *Secteur de la Traverse*, January 2013 - David Gagné, Heritage Advisor, Service du Patrimoine et soutien à l'urbanisme, City of Lévis



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Immigration Buildings, on Louise Pier, Quebec.

Two views of the New immigrant building on Louise Pier.QPA.

In 1879, the Canadian Pacific Railway acquired the North Shore rail line linking Hull, Montréal and Québec. In 1888, the decision was made to build a modern intermodal station on the Louise Basin Pier.

The 120 m long building housed a dining hall, bedrooms, stores, the immigration office, a medical office, customs, a telegraph service, a CP Rail ticket office and trains with sleeper cars. These trains welcomed immigrants whose stopover in Québec City was thus reduced to a minimum. The Grand Trunk in Pointe-Lévis offered a similar service and remained more popular for a while.



Hospital laundry and immigration detention centre, around 1911



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Main dining hall, government immigration centre, around 1911 and the main hall, government immigration hangar, around 1911

Men's dormitory at the immigration centre, around 1911 and Women's infirmary at the immigration detention centre hospital, around 1911



Source: ANQ, Old Québec district, Lower Town, Port of Québec (P-134) Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec and is part of the J. E. Livernois Ltée trust Left background, we see the port's immigrant hangar on the Louise Pier.

**You are now able to answer question 8 of the Quiz, to be eligible for the draw.**

In our next chronicle, we'll explore the addition of a new facility to treat the sick in Québec City and the turn of the century in Grosse Île.