

Chronicle  
**#6**

# HISTORICAL RALLY

## THE PORT AND THE GREAT PANDEMICS OF PAST CENTURIES

### The decline of the Grosse-Île quarantine station

Québec City welcomed 1.6 million between 1901 and 1920 versus only 658,000 immigrants from 1921 to 1941, 94% of whom set foot directly in the Capital itself.

The infrastructures were left derelict during the war and rebuilding them would cost more than previously forecast. Consequently, patients were sorted according to diagnosis with only the most serious and urgent cases (including cholera, smallpox, typhus and yellow fever) kept on the island. The others were sent to the Parc Savard Hospital where an isolated wing was reserved for them.

On February 26, 1923, Grosse-Île was relieved of one of its main missions: without exception, all boats would undergo pre-quarantine inspections at the Pointe-au-Père advance station, where Saint Lawrence River pilots took charge of the transatlantic vessels.

The 1926 international convention on hygiene held in Paris decreed that the new inspection and quarantine arrangements were up to medical standard.

Employees began leaving the island because severe cases were increasingly rare. A few years later, the government decided to close down the Grosse-Île station completely. In the fall of 1937, Dr. Charles-Henri Laurin of the Parc Savard Hospital had all potentially useful medical equipment brought over by tug and barge to Québec City.

The Pointe-au-Père station also ceased its activities at this time. Practical radio use began, enabling ship captains to communicate with immigration service physicians to obtain passes or medical assistance in cases of illness. It took over a century to get around the Grosse-Île quarantine station, but science finally made it happen.



Source unknown. Immigrants and travelers arriving in Québec City around 1920



### The future of Grosse-Île

Many possibilities were considered for the future of Grosse-Île: a bird sanctuary, a summer camp for disadvantaged children, a penal institution. However, National Defense requisitioned it yet again, this time to study wartime diseases. The site was also used to experiment with vaccines for animals. Canada's Department of Agriculture set up its veterinary pathology division and quarantine facilities for imported livestock have been in service there ever since.

Today, Parks Canada has rehabilitated some of the island's quarantine stations and turned Grosse-Île into a historical site open to the public during the summer season: except for 2020, ironically because of the current pandemic, it has reopened only in July.

It is thanks to the brilliance and hard work of many scientific visionaries and devoted people that thousands of lives were saved. They dedicated their lives and energy to protect their fellow citizens and to care for immigrants.

Since their arrival in Québec City via Grosse Île and the Port of Québec, we can see the many contributions of immigrants and their descendants in all fields.

Hardworking and resilient, Irish immigrants founded villages throughout Québec and beyond. Stoneham, Valcartier, Lac-Beauport, Rawdon, Armagh, Coleraine, Ireland and Inverness are just a few of the Irish colonies bearing witness to our common history and this community's contributions to today's Québec and Canada.

We can thank the many at the Port of Québec and the Grosse-Île quarantine station for the reception, science and care of thousands of immigrant who integrated and contributed to the building of our country.

We cannot end these chronicles without enthusiastically recommending a visit to Grosse-Île and the Irish Memorial. During the guided visit and presentation you will witness the tangible remains that helped improve the destiny of thousands of immigrants. You'll also see how today's governments and public health directors put their hearts and souls into avoiding an uncontrolled propagation of the current pandemic, even if we too must sacrifice.



*Inauguration of the Celtic Cross Irish Memorial, Grosse-Île 1909 Livernois BAC, PA-024001 mikan 3362504*



## RALLYE HISTORIQUE | CHRONIQUE #6

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**You are now able to answer the last question of the Quiz. Please complete both sheets of the Quiz and send to this address: [marketing@portquebec.ca](mailto:marketing@portquebec.ca) before November 13th, 2020 to be eligible for the draw.**

For details on the draw refer to: "Rally information and draw": <https://www.portquebec.ca/en/were-committed/were-proud-of-our-history/historic-pedestrian-rally> For more information on Grosse Île and the Irish Memorial National Historic Site please refer to: <https://www.pc.gc.ca/en/lhn-nhs/qc/grosseile>



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