

Guided tour of historic Saint-Vallier
By Paul St-Arnaud, honorary member of the
Historical Society of BelleChasse

Of the six essential areas of Saint-Vallier, five originate from a seigniorial regime and one from a municipal regime.

The first sector is that of the **cemetery**, the institutional nucleus of the parish of Saint-Philippe-Saint-Jacques since 1715, on land given to the ecclesiastical corporation by Lord Morel the same land as that of monsieur Laurent Tarreau dit Champagne. The first church was being finished in 1716 replacing the Saint-Anne chapel of 1702, a first rectory was built there, then a second one built at the end of the seigniorial regime in 1848-1849. The latter would be relocated to the faubourg (inner suburb) of quatre-chemins (four roads) behind the current church, thus completing the transformation of the suburb into a town.

The second sector is that of the **Petit Canton mill**, a water mill that replaced the chemin du Roy (Kings Road) windmill built to the east of the village near the current Fromagerie du Terroir (cheese factory). Fed by the discharge water of the Lac aux Canards, aka Lac Saint-Michel, the water mill was the one that the Hospitaller Sisters, seigneuresses of the place, had built at the Montée Station in 1747-1748 to serve the censitaires (indentured servants) of the Saint-Vallier seigniority. The actual location of the mill, the *montée du moulin* that leads us there and the *rang* will be called *vide-poches* (empty pockets) referring to the farmers pockets of grain that millers would empty of their contents into the mill hopper to make flour. Note that three mills were built along the Vide-Poches climb between the St. Lawrence at the South River. It was a communication route maintained by the habitants, a climb that allowed to pass from one row of land to another beginning with the *Chemin du Roy* located on the edge of the river which was maintained by the State. Divided into three sections, the climb now bears the following names: *Route de l'église* at the first rang, *Montée de La Station* at the second and third rang, and *Montée du Sault* at the fourth rang.

The third sector is **Pointe-Saint-Vallier**. It is there that the grandchildren of Madelein de Verchères, heirs of the Saint-Vallier seigniority, bought from the Hospitaller Sisters by their father François Tarieu de Lanaudière in 1716, built their manor in 1810 with an even older house that according to historian Yves Guillet dates from 1745-1747. It belonged to André Poiré, pioneer and tenant of the Saint-Vallier seigniority under the seigniorial government of the Hospitaller Sisters. For several years now, various seasonal cultural activities have been organized here. In winter, you can go hiking, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing. It is a unique site in Quebec noted for its historic buildings, ancient forest, cliffs, beaches, gardens and breathtaking views of the St. Lawrence estuary.

The fourth sector is that of **quatre-chemins** (four-roads), the institutional heart of the village, formed by the junction of the main street and the church road. It is here around 1830, as suburb, that the village agglomeration takes form. As planned by the King's engineer, Pierre Robineau de Bécancour in 1713 le chemin du Roy (King's Road) did not pass along the church. It formed a four-way road with the church avenue and it was there that artisans, merchants, notables, professionals and annuitants settled to form a village. The village became a town at the beginning of the twentieth century when a church was built there and when the rectory was moved from below.

The fifth sector is that of the **road stop** at the mouth of the Boyer River at the St. Lawrence, an excellent place to walk and observe the Greater Snow Goose, American Eagle and other birds

such as Woodcocks, in autumn and spring. This extraordinary site was part of the eastern portion of the seigniorial domain of Lord Olivier Morel de La Durantaye then occupied by the Augustinian Sisters of the General Hospital of Quebec who became seigneuresses of Saint-Vallier in 1720. This is where the Labrecque family, and before them the employees of the Hospitaller Sisters, fished.

The sixth sector is that of the **railway**, that being the suburb Saint-Vallier-Station with the arrival of the train and the construction of a two-story municipal station in 1855, the year after the abolition of the seignior. A warehouse backed against the station facilitated the transport of goods. In 1934 a **water cistern** and a **coal tower** were installed. During the time between 1943 and 1960 all the trains pulled by a steam locomotive had to refuel with water and coal, which gave work for 25 people. Not far from the station, the Agricultural Cooperative, still in place, had a junction that could accommodate four wagons of merchandise. Very near there and long before the formation of the suburb Saint-Vallier-Station lived in the second rang (Village Saint-Jean-Baptiste) of the seignior, the very infamous Marie-Josephe Corriveau, convicted without proof by a military court in 1763 for the murder of her second husband, killed in all likelihood, and in all legitimacy, by her defending herself from violent aggression by her husband under the influence of alcohol. She was hanged in Quebec City and suspended in a cage in Pointe-Lévis for 41 days. The legend created *La Corriveau*, a kind of witch, a daughter of a bad life possessed by the devil, who would have killed twice before once. However be careful not to mistaken legend from reality. It is in the second rang of the Saint-Vallier seignior once called the village of Saint-Jean-Baptiste rang that Marie-Josephe will raise her three children alongside her first husband, Charles Bouchard, on a parcel of land one and a half arpents in frontage (width) by 40 in depth given to her by her father. Patriots, she and her husband would have served in the resistance at the time of the Conquest of Canada by the British army, he as a soldier, and she as a lookout in surveillance of the river on the sandbar where she went on horseback by way of the *Montée du Moulin*. After greeting her grandfather Jacques in passing and the parish priest, she lit lights if necessary to signal the presence of English boats coming from sea.