



## Lachine Canal National Historic Site of Canada

*Gateway to a system of canals linking the Atlantic Ocean to the heart of the continent, this site led the transportation revolution in Canada in the early 19th century.*



Peel Basin in 2002  
© Parks Canada / Kedl Collection, 2002

### Montreal, Quebec

## BACKGROUND

Located in Montreal, the Lachine Canal runs for 14.5 kilometers between the Old Port and Lake Saint-Louis.

Though its construction was first proposed during the French regime, it wasn't until the beginning of the 19th century that the Lachine Canal became necessary for Montreal merchants who wanted to make the city a major hub of North American commerce. Work on the canal began in 1821 and was completed in 1825.

The Lachine canal played a central role in the industrial development of Montreal, particularly as a source of hydraulic power. In addition, the area around this corridor became a major Canadian manufacturing centre, from the beginning of industrialization until the Second World War. The canal also influenced the urbanization of South-West Montreal.

With the opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway traffic declined until 1970 when the canal was closed.

The Lachine canal was declared of national historic significance in 1929, and was transferred to Parks Canada from the Department of Public Works in 1978.

The Lachine Canal bears witness to three major phenomena in Canadian history: canalization and navigation, the industrial use of hydraulic power, and industrialization.

## REASONS FOR NATIONAL HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

The Lachine Canal National Historic Site of Canada commemorates the role of the Lachine Canal in the 19th and 20th centuries as the port of entry for the system of canals linking the Atlantic Ocean to the heart of the continent via the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River. The Lachine Canal was the forerunner of the transportation revolution in Canada in the early 19th century, and recalls the first attempts at canal-building undertaken during the French Régime. It thus played a decisive role in the industrial and commercial development of Montréal, notably as a supplier of hydraulic power.

The Lachine Canal industrial corridor bears witness to the various phases of Canada's industrialization and the exceptional diversity of industrial manufacturing that took place along its banks. It is a reminder that the area was one of Canada's main manufacturing centres from the beginning of industrialization in the middle of the 19th century until World War II.

Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, 1996





Aerial view of the Lachine Lock area  
 © National Archives of Canada/PA-30760, around 1920

contribute several tens of millions of dollars. These funds are in large part used to promote historical aspects of the site and to restore the canal itself. Urban planning and other operations undertaken by the City of Montreal between 1997 and 2002 involve the area around the canal and the adjoining neighbourhoods.

**2002** The canal reopens to pleasure boating.

## MILESTONES

- 1670** François de Salignac Fénelon, head of the Saint-Sulpice Seminary, suggests digging a canal between Montreal and Lachine.
- 1689 and 1700-1701**, François Dollier de Casson attempts the construction of a canal between Lachine and Ville-Marie (Montreal).
- 1821** Construction work on the Lachine Canal finally begins; it will be completed in 1825.
- 1843** Work on widening the canal begins. It will be completed in 1848.
- 1873** Beginning of second stage of work on widening the canal. It will be completed in 1885.
- 1959** With the opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway, the importance of the canal greatly diminishes.
- 1970** The canal is closed to navigation.
- 1978** Parks Canada becomes the site administrator.
- 1997** A project for significant revitalization begins (phase 1 from 1997 to 2004). The goal is to enhance the commemorative and recreational value of the Lachine Canal. Various levels of government, community organizations, and entrepreneurs

## LOCATION

Located in the south-west of the island of Montreal, the Lachine canal links the Old Port of Montreal to Lake St-Louis at Lachine, on the St. Lawrence River. The national historic site incorporates the canal itself, its banks, the park that surrounds it, and part of the nearby area. It passes through the boroughs of Lachine, LaSalle, and of the South-West of Montreal.



## FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

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