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Heritage in motion

Photo : Stéphanie Lafrance

CONQUERING THE EAST



The “Pearl of the Eastern Townships”—Coaticook—is celebrating its 150th anniversary this year. In the general fervour, it will be a celebration of the history and heritage of the entire region—a return to the roots of our settlement.

*By Jean-Pierre Kesteman
Translation by Stevenson
& Writers Inc.*

With 19 000 inhabitants in 12 towns and villages, the regional county municipality of Coaticook draws its name from its county town, founded in 1864. The town, like the region, is characterized by the cohabitation of Anglo-Protestant and French-Canadian cultures—a natural consequence of its location along the American border at Vermont and New Hampshire. Leaning into the upper part of the Appalachian plateau, at the base of Barnston, Pinnacle, and Hereford mountains, the region descends gradually from the south to north with

the flow of the Coaticook River and its tributaries, the Moe and Salmon rivers. The tops of its hills are often forested while the valleys are remarkably fertile.

Since the settlement era, sudden relief in the landscape has fostered the use of hydraulic energy for early manufacturing, industry, and hydro-electricity. The temperamental flow of the Coaticook led most farms and villages to settle on neighbouring hills, and water-level control dams to be built at the Vermont border.

At the start of the region's settlement, at the end of the 18th century, the current regional county municipality's territory covered the townships of Barford, Barnston, Clifton,

Compton, Hereford, and parts of Auckland and Stanstead. Here as elsewhere in the Eastern Townships, population came in successive waves, first American and British, then French-Canadian.

Families from New England came first, attracted by the fertile and affordable land. The region did not have many Loyalists. The pioneers came from Connecticut, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire clearing the rich soil east of Stanstead and west of Barnston and Compton. They arrived from the southwest, departing from Stanstead where the American roads ended, and from the northwest, travelling up the Coaticook River valley from Lennoxville. By 1830,

The mist is lifting over Saint-Venant. Founded by French Canadians from the Richelieu Valley in 1863, this village is proud of its heritage church, which dates from 1875.

Photo: Stéphane Lemire,
Tourisme Cantons-de-l'Est

5000 people had already settled in the territory of the future county municipality.

AUTONOMOUS HAMLETS

At the time, the region was largely influenced by distant trading centres, such as Stanstead and Sherbrooke, with the only internal

stopovers being the villages of Barnston Corner and Waterville (formerly Ball's Mills and Pennoyer's Mills). Next to the "frontier" (the line between uncleared forest and the settled areas), the site of the future town of Coaticook was but a bridge, mill, and several farms. During the greater part of the 19th century, the area's American population—of evangelical (Baptist or Methodist) or atypical faith (Universalist)—consisted of a rural society, hard-working and very keen on its own political and education systems. Population centred on hamlets and small villages at crossroads or near waterfalls. The streets held stores and trade shops, a school, and one or more Protestant churches. The fortunes of the Baldwin, Cutting, and Cleveland families were amassed in this region of prosperous farms. Some of the hamlets and villages remain today and have conserved aspects of their significant religious and civil heritage: Barnston Corner, Moe's River, Baldwin's Mills, Way's Mills, Kingscroft, Milby, Huntingville. Others are but the name of a crossroads, cemetery, or road: Cassville, Fairfax, Heath Corner, Hillhurst, Ladd's Mill, Perryboro, Ives Hill, Bickford's Corner, Corliss, Malvina...

THE WILDERNESS TO THE EAST

Around 1800, the frontier extended from Waterville to the edge of the Niger River, in Barnston. Twenty years later, settlement had reached east to the villages of Compton and Barnston Corner. Land speculation by owners foreign to the region halted the march to the current locations of Coaticook and Dixville. Only the arrival of the railway in 1853 unlocked this territory and fostered further settlement in the townships east of the Coaticook River, up to the American border.

For a long time, the eastern part of the regional county municipality had remained

wild, but started attracting in 1860 French-Canadian settlers from the seigneuries of the Saint Lawrence and Montreal plain. Several parishes thus came to be: Saint-Venant-de-Paquette, Saint-Malo-d'Auckland, Sainte-Edwidge-de-Clifton, Saint-Herménégilde-de-Barford. The human landscape had to adapt to a rougher land (Saint-Malo peaks at 500 metres altitude) and built itself around the parish church. The denser forest provided an essential complement to modest agricultural productivity, with logging operations and the sawmill industry, for example at East Hereford at the outlet of the Hall Stream. This waterway is the only one in the region to flow to the Connecticut River.

Starting in 1880, the emigration of many English-Canadians to the West enabled a new wave of French and Catholic population, often from the Beauce region, first in Compton, then Barnston, Stanstead East, Waterville, and Martinville.

COMPTON'S AGRICULTURAL RICHES

In the middle of the region, the fertile lands of Compton were for a long time the bastion of the rural Anglo-Protestant upper class. From the 1860s, its members favoured high-quality commercial agriculture focused on livestock. By importing animals from Great Britain in par-



ticular, Compton Township's model farms were avant-garde in assembling herds of excellence. The most famous was that of Senator Matthew Henry Cochrane, at Hillhurst. As of 1866, his lavish auctions were attracting livestock producers from all over North America, wanting to acquire the best purebred reproducers. His herd provided the livestock for Alberta's first ranches.

For its part, the dairy sector enjoyed success in processing milk into butter and cheese. In 1865, Compton was one of the townships that took cheese production from the farm to factory, with a milk supply from hundreds of cows. Following its example, other regions in Quebec developed their own

Built in 1873, the Milby covered bridge spans the Moe River. Typical of the hamlets and crossroads in the Eastern Townships, Milby also has an Anglican church (1869) and a former one-room schoolhouse (1822).

Photo: Stéphane Lemire, Tourisme Cantons-de-l'Est



Inspiring a sense of calm and serenity, this agricultural landscape in Compton illustrates the rolling hills of the Appalachians.

Photo: Lisette Proulx



The Coaticook train station dates from 1904 and reflects what was then the new Picturesque style used for the Grand Trunk's stations. Its roundhouse architecture at one end and diverse decorative elements earned it a citation as an historic site in 1999.

Source: Société d'histoire de Coaticook

dairy industries. Around 1900, Coaticook's Auguste Gérin owned six butter and cheese factories that received 21 000 pounds of milk per day. Most of his cheddar production was exported to the United States, then to Great Britain. The Compton region's reputation for its agricultural activities continues today, in apple production and dairy, as well as agri-tourism and heritage agriculture.

ENGINES OF INDUSTRY

Lacking in navigable rivers to the Saint Lawrence, the Eastern Townships unshackled itself with the railway. In 1853, the Grand Trunk from Longueuil to Portland ran

along the Coaticook River valley, providing a link to the Montreal region and to New England. The combination of the railway and harnessing of waterfalls—in Dixville, Waterville, and Coaticook—added a manufacturing component to the economy and its agricultural wealth (see "Of Water and Steel," p. 10). Unlike other towns in the Eastern Townships, Coaticook was not dominated by a single industry or large company. It incorporated as a village in 1864. Like Sherbrooke, although at a smaller scale, Coaticook enjoyed a diversified industrialization, with the processing of wood, the mechanical industry, and various textile sectors: cotton, wool, hosiery, and narrow fabrics. Agricultural machines were made in Coaticook, children's toys, rubber goods, lift jacks for locomotives, and fire hoses. Finally, dairy production strengthened the presence of creameries and cheese factories.

ONE TOWN, TWO CULTURES

The proximity of French-Canadian townships to the east and Anglo-Protestant ones to the west made Coaticook a commercial, service, and administrative centre for both

communities. Its industrial development in the second half of the 19th century was largely due to the wealth of the Anglophone upper class. By investing in many businesses, it attracted hundreds of working class families, mostly French-Canadian. Between 1880 and 1940, the cohabitation of the two communities—which found peaceful ways to share power and enjoy their respective cultures—created a bicultural town. The Catholic elites—such as Reverend Chartier and the Gendreaus, Gérins, and Bachands—rubbed shoulders with the Sleepers, Adams, Thorntons, Cleveland, Akhursts, Lovells, and Shurtleffs.

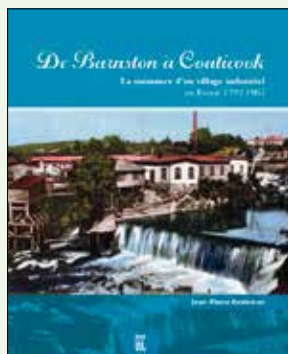
While Coaticook suffered the reversals of deindustrialization starting in the 1960s, it has since strengthened its role as an administrative, commercial, cultural, and tourist centre. Indeed, the territory of the regional county municipality has expanded since 1980 to extend from Stanstead East to Saint-Malo.

With its contrasting human and geographical landscapes, diversified economic past, and dynamic agri-tourism, the region has everything to build on the promise of its future.

Jean-Pierre Kesteman is a historian.

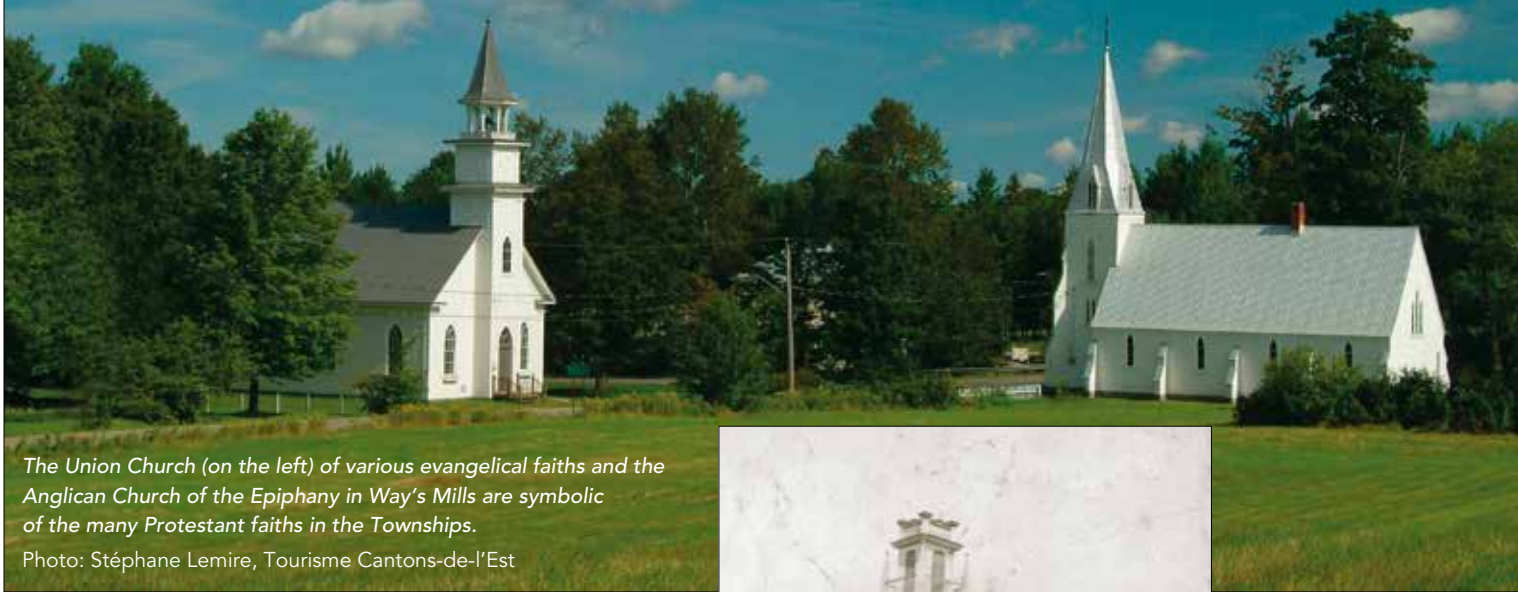
TO READ

To learn more about Coaticook's history, read *De Barnston à Coaticook. La naissance d'un village industriel en Estrie 1792- 1867* by Jean-Pierre Kesteman (Éditions GGC, 2011).



WORSHIP OF DIVERSITY

With its Baptist, Methodist, Anglican, and Catholic churches, as well as cemeteries of multiple confessions, the regional county municipality of Coaticook is blessed with a diverse religious heritage.



The Union Church (on the left) of various evangelical faiths and the Anglican Church of the Epiphany in Way's Mills are symbolic of the many Protestant faiths in the Townships.

Photo: Stéphane Lemire, Tourisme Cantons-de-l'Est

by Monique Nadeau-Saumier
Translation by Stevenson
& Writers Inc.

The American and British Protestants who first settled the Coaticook region gave its religious architecture a particular hue. The early 19th century saw the construction of many rural churches of so-called “evangelical” confession: Baptist, Methodist, and Congregationalist.

One of the oldest and most significant links to the region’s evangelical heritage is located at Barnston Corner, a hamlet now part of the municipality of Coaticook. Built in 1837, Barnston’s Baptist Church was given an A rating, *incontournable*, in other words, a vital asset in the Quebec inventory of places of worship (*Inventaire des*

lieux de culte du Québec: lieux-deculte.qc.ca). Its neoclassical architecture, simple window design, and Spartan interior make it a quintessential meeting house—which French-Canadian Catholics nicknamed *mitaine* (normally translated as “mitten”)—a modest gathering place distinguished from the first homes of American settlers by its larger dimensions. For about 10 years now, the Heritage Barnston committee has taken on restoration of this church whose wooden interior remains intact. Even the large bath where members of the congregation were immersed for baptism is still in place.

Also rated A, the Huntingville Church (in the municipality of Waterville) was the first Universalist Church built in



The architectural simplicity of Barnston’s Baptist Church (here in its original state, circa 1880) is characteristic of meeting houses, which served for community gatherings and places of worship.

Source: Musée McCord, MP-0000.1027.5



With its triangular pediment and corner pilasters, the Huntingville Universalist Church illustrates the neoclassical style that characterizes most churches in New England, the birthplace of this faith.

Photo: Conseil du patrimoine religieux du Québec



The interior of the Musée-église Saint-Venant, a museum located in the church, showcases the talent and expertise of local craftspeople from yesteryear.

Photo: Pierre LaRue, Les Amis du patrimoine de Saint-Venant



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Canada. The Hunting family actively contributed to construction of the temple by donating the land on which the neoclassical structure was raised in 1845. Closed to worship in 1951, the church is enjoying a renaissance today thanks to the work of a group of local citizens. To cover the costs of maintenance, it is used for weddings, concerts, and seasonal activities. The site includes a school, cemetery, mill, and dam on the Salmon River. This village core—one of the oldest in the Eastern Townships—is preserved in an exceptional state.

In Way's Mills, the Church of the Epiphany illustrates the symbolism of the neo-Gothic architectural vocabulary with its steeple rising up from the centre of the church's façade and the vertical lines emphasized by triangular buttresses. In a vernacular version, this architectural current characterizes many rural Anglican churches in the Eastern Townships. Constructed with a generous contribution from the Anglican Bishop of Quebec, the Church of the Epiphany was inaugurated in December 1888. The Quebec Religious Heritage Council recently gave a large grant to a group of community citizens—of diverse faiths and origins—which is involved in its restoration.

The Way's Mills Anglican Church stands facing the multi-confessional Way's Mills Union Church. Built in 1881, it serves various evangelical faiths. The two places of worship are located in a magnificent setting and represent the Eastern Townships' two most important founding Protestant faiths.

CATHOLIC SETTLEMENT

With the arrival of the first French-Canadian settlers during the latter half of the 19th century, the region saw itself enriched with many beautiful Catholic churches, integrating harmoniously with the built landscape of villages. Most are distinguished by their modest scale, adapted to local residen-

tial architecture, such as the picturesque church in Sainte-Edwidge-de-Clifton, built in 1884.

The same can be said of the church in Saint-Venant-de-Paquette, raised between 1877 and 1887, with its exterior clapboard siding—a material most often used in rural Protestant architecture. Its interior décor is the work of architect Jean-Baptiste Verret. For Catholic places of worship in the Estrie region, the Saint-Venant-de-Paquette church ranks first among the 17 churches classified as having an exceptional heritage value (B rating). Today, it operates as a church-museum, highlighting the work of the craftspeople who designed its interior—of outstanding artistic quality.

Some Catholic churches are the work of major architects, such as the brick church in Waterville with its rose window in the façade. It was built in 1919 according to the plans of Louis-Napoléon Audet. This Townships' architect also designed the basilica at Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré, the seminary in Trois-Rivières, and the Saint-Michel cathedral-basilica and episcopal palace in Sherbrooke.

A VARIETY OF CEMETERIES

The diversity of built religious heritage in the regional county municipality of Coaticook finds its reflection in the many cemeteries that dot the land. Whether Catholic, Protestant, multiconfessional, or family, they are arranged in various familiar forms: the park cemetery, the churchyard cemetery, and the humble family graveyard next to a settler's farm.

Created in the 19th century by influence of the Picturesque movement, park cemeteries are inspired by English gardens. The Crystal Lake Cemetery is the oldest of the Coaticook regional county municipality's three park cemeteries. It was opened in the early 19th century. Located on the shores of the lake of the same name, it is

home to the graves of border-region pioneers from Stanstead East, such as artist William Stewart Hunter (1823-1894). A citizen of Stanstead, Hunter was one of the first bards of the Eastern Townships, whose beauty he celebrated in words and engravings. Crystal Lake Cemetery also preserves the memory of pioneer families from Stanstead, such as the Curtis and Colby families, to whom we owe the Colby-Curtis Museum.

Since 1868, the Saint-Edmond park cemetery, behind the eponymous church, dominates the northern part of the town of Coaticook. From that time on, it bore witness to the presence of the French-Canadian and Catholic community in the region. At the same time, the Mount Forest Cemetery, also located on the heights of Coaticook, received the tombs of Protestant notables who contributed to the growth of the border town. It features a sculpture by Orson Wheeler of Way's Mills. The artist produced the bronze head of a woman on a stone stele in homage to a lost friend, poet Dorothy Marder.

Other more modest cemeteries, such as family graveyards, enrich the scenic drives through the rural part of the Coaticook regional county municipality. The Brown pioneer family cemetery, on Brown's Hill, is one of the oldest in the region. In the small graveyard located next to farm buildings, the inscriptions on simple limestone markers bear witness to burials in the first decade of the 19th century. Located near the road, it overlooks a breathtaking landscape that stretches to the mountains of Vermont and New Hampshire.

While the religious confession of Coaticook-area cemeteries may not always be easy to determine, one clear indication remains: only the Catholic cemeteries have a Calvary, distinguished from a simple cross by the presence of Christ. Five cemeteries feature a Calvary with the main figures of the

Passion. Saint-Edmond is one of them, and it includes two angels from the Last Judgement. This large Calvary attests to the importance of the French-Canadian Catholic community in this region of many faiths.

Monique Nadeau-Saumier is an art historian and heritage consultant.



The historic St. James the Less Anglican Church (1887) overlooks the Compton Cemetery. The quality of some of the gravestones, such as the one in the foreground featuring an urn covered with a veil, is tangible evidence of the importance of the Anglophone community in the region's history.

Photo: Lisette Proulx

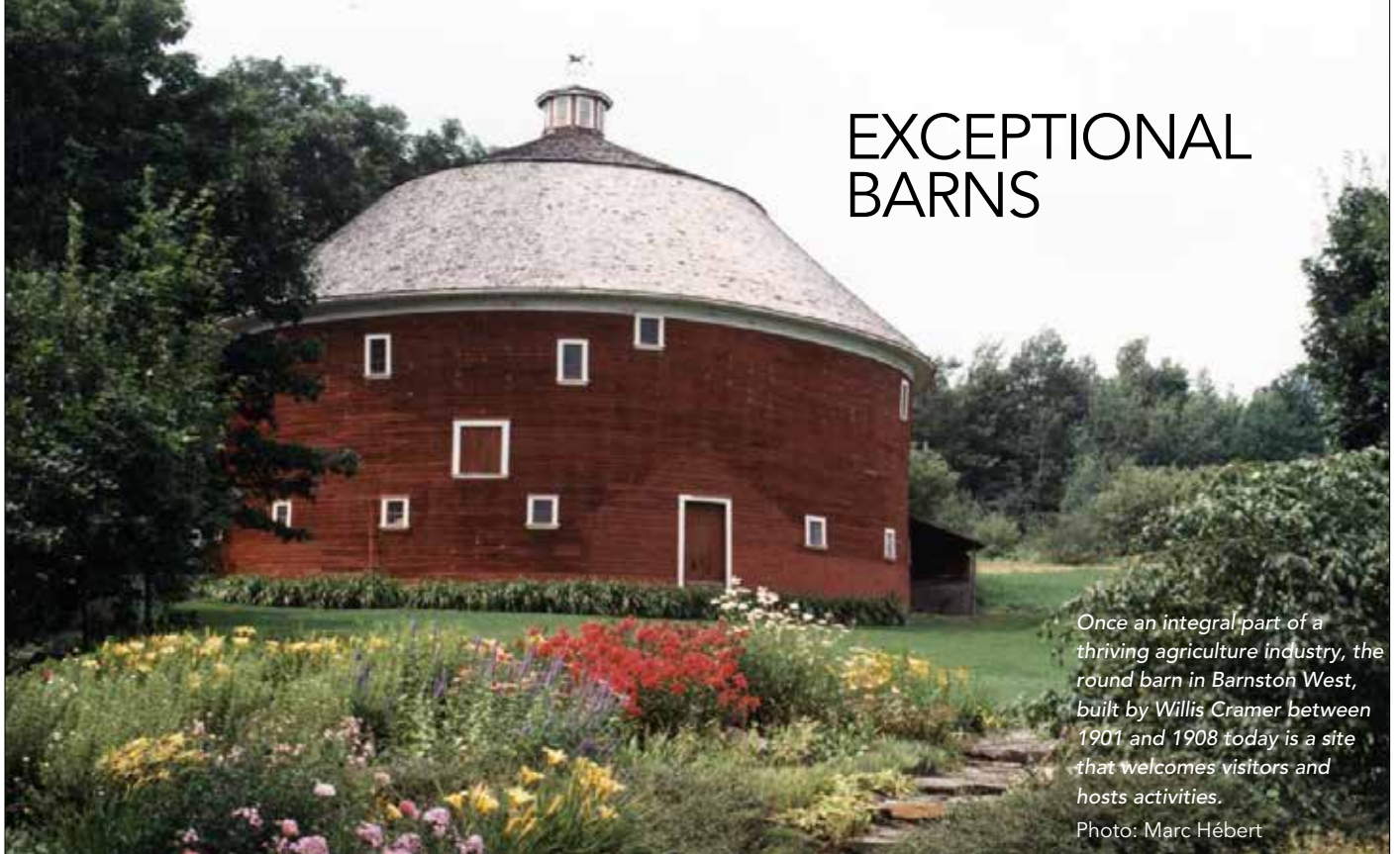
RECENT ROADSIDE CROSSES



Roadside cross of Dixville
Photo: MRC de Coaticook

From the time New France was founded, roadside crosses—sometimes called Calvaries—have sprouted along the roads of the Saint Lawrence Valley. Not until the early 20th century did they appear in the Eastern Townships, though, since the first French-Canadian Catholic colonists arrived only in the latter half of the 18th century. Once settled in this Anglo-Protestant land, they sought to show their presence by erecting roadside crosses.

The inventory of cemeteries and roadside crosses in the Coaticook regional county municipality found over 30 crosses—often the naïve witness to an expression of faith. Sometimes simple and modest, sometimes decorated with hearts, suns, or instruments of the Passion, these roadside crosses from popular culture perpetuate tradition. Their symbolic and iconographic richness leaves nothing to be desired of the older roadside crosses immortalized by painters like Clarence Gagnon at Baie-Saint-Paul and Horatio Walker at Île d'Orléans.



EXCEPTIONAL BARNs

Once an integral part of a thriving agriculture industry, the round barn in Barnston West, built by Willis Cramer between 1901 and 1908 today is a site that welcomes visitors and hosts activities.

Photo: Marc Hébert

Our inventory of agricultural heritage in the Coaticook regional county municipality includes 183 buildings and sites. The famous round barns, which evoke the Eastern Townships, are among the most exceptional.

by Jean-Pierre Pelletier
Translation by Stevenson
& Writers Inc.

Round barns are outstanding examples of the creativity and know-how of the American pioneers who settled this region in the 19th century. More than 30 of them graced the Eastern Townships at the start of the 20th century; only six remained in 2010. The regional county municipality (RCM) of Coaticook has four: two in Barnston West, near Way's Mills, and two in Coaticook. One of the latter is a reproduction built in 1995 to serve as the welcome centre for the Parc de la Gorge in Coaticook.

Most round barns were built between 1890 and 1910 in the southern part of the Eastern Townships. They had two floors: the animal stables on

the ground floor and the hay loft, where equipment was also stored. The loft was accessed by an upper ramp from outdoors, often covered. These barns were built around a central core, made of a wooden framework that supported the silo and floor of the loft. They were often located next to a slope, making access by the upper drive easier. The Holmes family's round barn, on Holmes Road in Barnston West, is still in use and an excellent example of this remarkable architecture.

Popular folklore held that round barns kept the devil away since there were no corners to hide in. The belief came from the Shakers, a Protestant group known for its austere furniture. They raised the first round barn in New England in the 1820s, at Hancock, Massachusetts.

THE PROS AND CONS

Round barns are evidence of the pioneers' strong practical sense and interest in economy and efficiency. Windows around the barn meant light could enter all day long, and ventilation was much better than in a rectangular barn. The



Built by Eugene Orson Baldwin, the Plateau de Coaticook barn (1912) was for many years the longest barn in North America (104 metres).

Photo: Centre d'initiatives en agriculture de la région de Coaticook

central silo provided efficient distribution of feed to the animals and was naturally protected against frost. Farmers could store large quantities of bulk forage in the loft. And since the surface area of the walls relative to interior space is less than in rectangular barns, lumber was maximized.

Despite the benefits, round barns aren't perfect. Cutting and assembling the framework required more expertise and care. Expanding the barn with an annex or shed was also difficult. A round barn's configuration didn't suit new agricultural technologies, either. In fact, mechanized cleaning systems and centralized milking units in dairy farms spelled the end of the round barn in the 20th century.

DIFFERENT ROOFS FOR DIFFERENT RESULTS

While the round barn left its mark on the Coaticook region, the rectangular gable-roofed barn remains the most common. Familiar to the settlers of the Saint Lawrence River valley, this model was built on a stone foundation and covered with a roof of two straight slopes. The animals were kept at ground level and forage in the upper hay loft. Often next to country roads, these barns were similarly built by slopes, when possible, to facilitate access to the loft.

The gambrel-roofed barn, for its part, recalls an American

type of farm architecture. It was adopted in the latter half of the 19th century as agricultural operations grew: the so-called "hip-roofed barns" provided more storage space in the loft than a gable-roofed barn.

Cited as a historic monument, the Ferme-du-Plateau-de-Coaticook barn is a beautiful example of the gambrel roof. It was built in 1912 on a long, rectangular plan, and has a steel framework, which was rare in early 20th century barns. Seven roof vents line the ridge. The size of the windows is small to limit heat loss in winter. A little-known fact: the doors are sliding rather than swinging. But the most distinguishing features of the barn are its maple-leaf-stamped aluminum roofing tiles and exceptional length.

In Quebec as elsewhere, new agricultural practices, the industrialization of farm processes, and the arrival of mechanized equipment for storing forage brought major change to the use of barns. If some historic ones in the regional county municipality of Coaticook are still used for goats, sheep, and dairy production, many others stand empty and abandoned, their doors and windows open to the elements.

Jean-Pierre Pelletier teaches at the Université de Sherbrooke.



The peak-roof barn is the most common design in the Coaticook region

Photo: Anthony Roy

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Louise Abbott & Niels Jensen, *The Heart of the Farm: A History of Barns and Fences in the Eastern Townships of Quebec*. Price-Patterson Ltd., Montreal, 2008.

Thomas Durant Visser, *Field Guide to New England Barns and Farm Buildings*. University Press of New England, Hanover, New Hampshire, 1997.

Daniel Coulombe, "Les granges rondes de la MRC de Coaticook. Le charme de la différence," *Continuité*, n° 69, Summer 1996, p. 51-53.

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- **CREATING** a partnership among the local stakeholders.
- **DEVELOPING** strategies designed to improve the business and service mix.
- **BRINGING** new life to municipality and effectively promoting it.
- **IMPROVING** the public spaces and making the buildings and general environment more attractive.

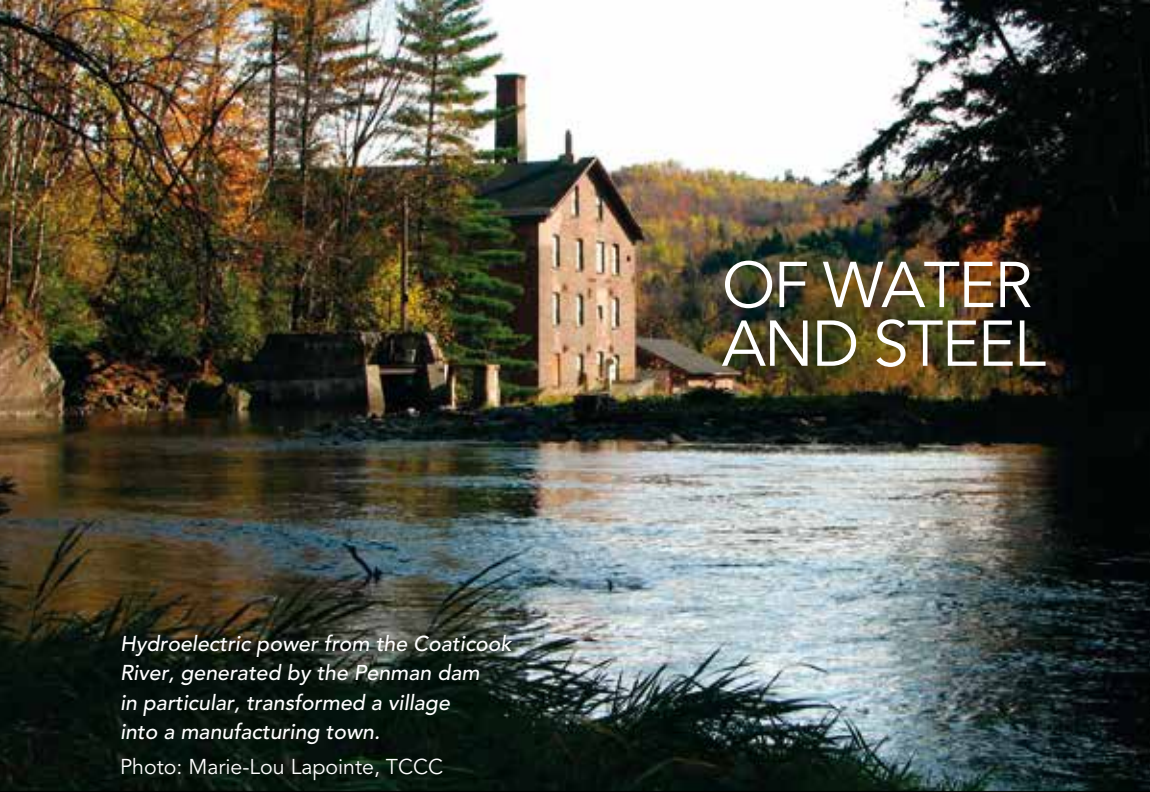
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Hydroelectric power from the Coaticook River, generated by the Penman dam in particular, transformed a village into a manufacturing town.

Photo: Marie-Lou Lapointe, TCCC

Waterfalls and steel rails drove Coaticook's industrial growth from the 1850s to the 1960s. Several buildings and structures continue to bear witness to that golden age.

by Jean-Pierre Pelletier
Translation by Stevenson
& Writers Inc.

July 1853: Waterville and Coaticook's destiny is about to change. The first trains of the Saint Lawrence and

Atlantic Railway (amalgamated into the Grand Trunk the same year) pulled into the stations of the two villages. The agreement between Alexander Tilloch Galt, commissioner of the British American Land Company, located in

Sherbrooke, and John A. Poor, a merchant in Portland, called for the construction of a railway linking Montreal and Portland, the latter being a large port in Maine on the coast of the Atlantic Ocean and open year round. The project was competing against a similar one between Montreal and Boston merchants, whose rail line would not have run through Sherbrooke and Coaticook. The Portland project won the day through a winter race to Montreal of stagecoaches on runners leaving from Portland and from Boston.

The railway quickly opened up the region and helped it to grow economically. The Coaticook station (see inset) housed the largest railway customs post in Canada at the time. The railway also diversified the town's industrial activity. The small flour and sawmills of the 1840s gave way to large-scale manufacturing shops, ranging from

the hosiery, cotton, and wool sectors to wood processing and industrial mechanics.

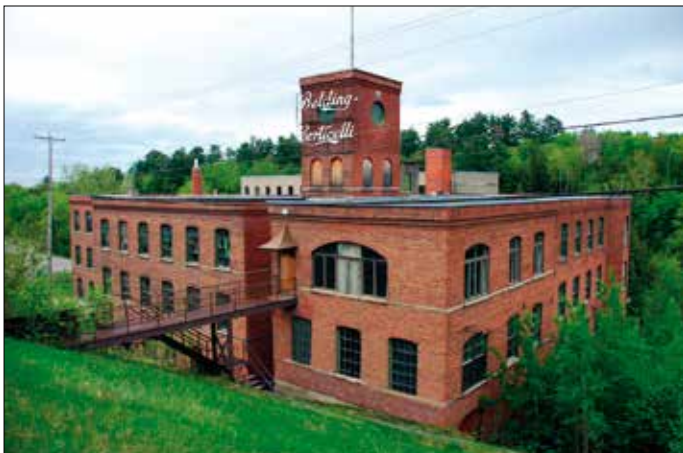
ELECTRICITY FROM WATER

In 1890, the Coaticook River Water Power company regulated the flow of the Coaticook River. It established dams at the outlet of three lakes in Vermont as reservoirs. At the turn of the 20th century, Coaticook was producing its own hydro-electricity. In 1903, the town took over the private local company. Over the years, the municipal government increased production capacity to meet the growing industrial and residential demand for electricity. It built a forced conduit through the bedrock, sending water directly to a power plant at the gorge outlet. Even today, Coaticook is one of nine municipalities in Quebec that produces its own electricity.

Given the importance of the river and its waterfalls, Coaticook's industrial buildings were concentrated primarily along the river. Water played an important part in the development of several other communities in the regional county municipality of Coaticook as well. The water tower on Dominion Street in Waterville, the mill foundations and former fire station in Way's Mills in Barnston West, and the dam in Dixville are examples.

INSPIRING BUILDERS

Among the businesses established in Coaticook in the 19th century was Belding Corticelli Limited. It started in 1883 with the purchase by John Thornton and Edwin F. Tomkins of a weaving loom from the Coaticook Cotton company. After operating under several different owners and names, the company stopped manufacturing silk goods to contribute to the war effort in 1940. Not only did a quarter of its staff enlist in the Canadian army, but the company also diversified production to manufacture parachute



Belding Corticelli has been an impressive part of Coaticook's industrial landscape since 1883. The building is soon to become a hotel.

Photo: Marc Hébert

ropes, army boot laces, electrical and surgical tape, service chevrons, and elastic bands for gas masks. The factory closed its doors in 2004. Work is now underway to convert the industrial complex into a hotel, scheduled to open in 2015.

The region's industrial development also benefited from the entrepreneurial spirit of Arthur Osmore Norton, a native of Kingscroft, which is a hamlet in Barnston West. In 1886, he became interested in the ball-bearing lift jack invented by Francis (Frank) Sleeper, a Coaticook machinist. He acquired the rights to the invention, which was designed to lift locomotives. While production started modestly in Coaticook in 1888, the company became international when it opened a plant in Boston in 1891. It was officially incorporated in 1906 under the name A. O. Norton Ltd., and operated until 1946.

One of the businessman's legacies was a splendid neo-Queen-Anne-style manor built in 1912, which became known as the Château Norton. The family lived there for several decades. It is now home to the Beaulne Museum.

Along with businesses in education, culture, and services,

Coaticook still has an important industrial sector in the agri-food (Laiterie de Coaticook), textile (Codet, Tissus Geo. Sheard), and industrial piping (Niedner) sectors.

Jean-Pierre Pelletier teaches at the Université de Sherbrooke.

PICTURESQUE STATION



Photo: Stéphane Lafrance, Tourisme Coaticook

Built in 1904 and cited as a heritage property by the municipality in 1999, Coaticook's old train station is a rectangular wooden structure with two floors and a rounded end. Its multiple-sloped roof surpasses the walls considerably to protect travellers. The building is one of several stations that adopted a new style at the turn of the 20th century, as the Grand Trunk changed its architectural approach. With its oriel windows, conical-roofed porch, and varied ornamentation, the former Coaticook train station

is a prime example of the use of Picturesque principles in train station architecture. Since 2010, it has been housing the offices of an agricultural and agri-food project management company.

OF WOOD AND WAY



by Jean-Pierre Pelletier
Translation by Stevenson
& Writers Inc.

You don't have to travel far along the roads and streets of this region to find that most

houses, barns, and Protestant churches are almost 100% wood. The many sawmills throughout the Eastern Townships at the time of settlement gave easy access to lumber and thus the construc-

Influenced by techniques that were current in New England, the buildings found in the regional county municipality (RCM) of Coaticook also took advantage of a local resource: wood. As well as vernacular architecture, there are also distinguished residences that reflect the fortune and style of the financial and political elite.

tion of many different buildings. Wood was used for their framing and covering, the latter most commonly in clapboard. This type of siding features relatively narrow horizontal boards that overlap to

Built in about 1852, the Cutting house in Coaticook has lacy gingerbread trim all along the roof and on its corner posts.

Photo: Marc Hébert



Now home to the Beaulne Museum, the Château Norton is a blend of the classical traditional and new architectural styles. This unique combination was intended to underscore the success of industrial baron Arthur Osmore Norton.

Photo: Stéphane Lemire, Tourisme Cantons-de-l'Est

keep water out. Added to the original post-and-beam frameworks, they not only weather-proofed but also strengthened the structure.

After 1860, the industrialization of lumber mills fostered the development of a simpler and cheaper balloon frame construc-

tion technique. Materials were mass produced by machines run by unskilled labour. After its appearance in the United States in the early 19th century, this type of building structure was adopted in the Coaticook region starting in the middle of the 19th century.

Here as elsewhere in the latter half of the 20th century, many buildings were re-sided in aluminum or PVC. However, villages and neighbourhoods have generally preserved a fair degree of architectural homogeneity.

EXCEPTIONAL RESIDENCES

The streets of Coaticook feature several exceptional

buildings that reflect the wealth and tastes of the political and financial elite.

Among them is the Cutting House at 40 Gérin-Lajoie Street in Coaticook. It was built in about 1852 and originally belonged to the Cutting family. The Gérins acquired it in 1899 and live there still. It is remarkable for the elaborate ornamentation along the roof's edge, the corner design work, and the balustrade and pillar work over the main entrance. The gingerbread details show a mastery of carpentry and the influence of the Picturesque movement.

Flanked by elegant Ionic and Doric influenced columns that rise skyward, the façade of the Thompson-Sheard House at 50 Union Street in Coaticook is distinguished by its imposing pediment. The transom and side windows beneath a depressed arch add to the monumental nature of this home built in 1853 by Captain James Thompson, Coaticook's first customs officer. Politicians and businessmen have also resided in the home (Charles Lovell, Guy Tillotson, Henri Gérin, George Sheard).

The Arthur Osmore Norton House at 96 Union Street in Coaticook, built in 1912, features several architectural influences, the most evident being neo-Queen Anne and the Shingle style. Frequent in resort architecture of the period, this eclectic approach evokes the success of the chateau's first owner, an industrialist who made his fortune manufacturing and marketing ball-bearing lift jacks for locomotives. An abundance of windows lightens the imposing body of the building, while the stone chimneys contrast with the wood shingles.

Many other exceptional residences can be seen along the streets and roads of the Coaticook area. Enjoy a Discovery Tour to find them (circuitsdecouvertcoaticook.org).

Jean-Pierre Pelletier teaches at the Université de Sherbrooke.

TAKING ACTION FOR CONSERVATION

How can we best preserve the diverse heritage of the regional county municipality of Coaticook? How can we make residents and visitors aware of this rich resource?

How do we encourage and strengthen a sense of belonging to our region and its heritage? Local organizations and residents have been answering these questions and implementing various individual and collective initiatives.

by Michèle Lavoie
Translation by Stevenson
& Writers Inc.

Descendants of Walter G. Belknap look through the silhouette of their ancestor at the unveiling of one of the 20 stops along the historic Pioneer Trail.

Photo: Stéphane Lafrance, TCCC

Heritage conservation has become a priority in the Coaticook regional county municipality (RCM) in recent

years. Municipalities have identified buildings and sites and transformed some into locations for cultural activities: the arts pavilion, library, and museum in Coaticook; the church museum in Saint-Venant-de-Paquette; the municipal office



in Stanstead East; the artist workshop project in Barnston West...

In 2011, the Coaticook RCM produced an exhaustive inventory of cemeteries (85) and roadside crosses (32) within its territory. Three years earlier, it published a guide on best agricultural heritage practices. Both documents are available online (see inset). We are also the first RCM in the Eastern Townships to characterize our exceptional landscapes.

At Coaticook's La Frontalière High School, Grade 9 students have been participating since 2012 in the "Expérience photographique du patrimoine," a Quebec-wide photo contest on cultural and landscape heritage.

Many conscientious property owners have also been carefully maintaining their heritage: houses, barns, mills, railway stations, rural school-houses, antique objects, and more. Even industrial complexes are being cared for: after restoration and transformation into a hotel, Coaticook's Belding Corticelli will open its doors to customers in 2015.

STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

The conservation or promotion of heritage often falls to groups and organizations in the cultural milieu. Their accomplishments are remarkable and often volunteer driven. This is true of our three historical societies in the RCM, including the "Société d'histoire de Coaticook," the most active. It operates a Web site featuring an increasing number of old photos, holds breakfast conferences, and archives historical documents, especially newspapers and photos, which are available for consultation.

Coaticook also has a municipal cultural committee, which makes recommendations to town council. It organizes several heritage tours, including one of cemeteries in the region which is guided by smart phone. In Saint-Venant-de-Paquette, the organization

"Les Amis du patrimoine" shows outstanding initiative in heritage promotion by working to save the historic church and its cemetery, while also promoting French Quebec poets along the "Sentier poétique" hiking trail. Barnston West and Compton have created citizen committees whose main activities involve heritage conservation. Increasingly, municipalities are assigning their cultural responsibilities to a councillor who is supported by the RCM's cultural development officer in implementing initiatives that are often heritage related.

MULTIPLE TOURS

Since the early 2000s, the "Table de concertation culturelle de la MRC de Coaticook" (TCCC), a regional committee on culture for the RCM, has organized several projects and activities that promote heritage across the region. Six Discovery circuits have been developed throughout the RCM's 12 municipalities and highlight their built and landscape heritage with a series of entertaining questions and landmarks indicated on road maps. Since 2002, rallies and photo exhibitions on the Discovery circuits have attracted many visitors from outside the region while appealing to citizens of the RCM as well.

The Discovery Circuit complements the Townships Trail, which features the region's American and British heritage along a marked 418-kilometre tour throughout the entire Eastern Townships.



Located in the Château Norton, the Beaulne Museum has several exhibition rooms where the works of artists and artisans are showcased.

Photo: Émilie Morin, Musée Beaulne

In 2010 in cooperation with the municipalities and the financial support of The Neil & Louise Tillotson Fund of the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation, the TCCC began creating a historical tour entitled "The Pioneer Trail." Life-sized silhouettes cut from steel panels have gradually been installed along country roads or in the heart of villages, often near historic churches. An onsite audio track in French and English brings the historical characters to life with first-person accounts of their village and personal lives. Access to these animated steles, from May to December, is free of charge. A kind of travel log encourages 5- to 12-year-olds to learn about the pioneers in a playful way with their family or school group. The booklets have been given to all students in the RCM and are also available at the tourism office in Coaticook.

SAVING THE CHURCH STEEPLES

Reporting to the TCCC, a religious heritage committee works to preserve and promote

churches, cemeteries, and roadside crosses. The RCM in fact set aside an emergency fund for this purpose through a three-year agreement with the Quebec Ministry of Culture and Communications. The committee seeks community participation, analyzes potential projects, and makes recommendations to the region's committee of mayors for the allocation of public grants. Twice annually, it publishes *Par chemins et parvis*, an online newsletter written by volunteers in charge of our religious heritage sites. With limited funding, be it from the emergency fund or other sources, we don't expect miracles. The many projects in Coaticook-area heritage conservation have nonetheless made people aware of this extensive and important cause and will hopefully raise the interest and contributions of generous patrons.

Michèle Lavoie is chair of the Table de concertation culturelle de la MRC de Coaticook.

ENJOY ONE OF OUR DISCOVERY TOURS

Inventory of cemeteries and roadside crosses in the Coaticook RCM: mrdecoaticook.qc.ca/fr/culture-loisir/documents/inventairecemetiere2.pdf

Guide to best agricultural heritage practices: mrdecoaticook.qc.ca/fr/culture-loisir/guide.shtml

Coaticook-region Discovery Tours: circuitsdecouvertcoaticook.org

Heritage photography contest: actionpatrimoine.ca/epp

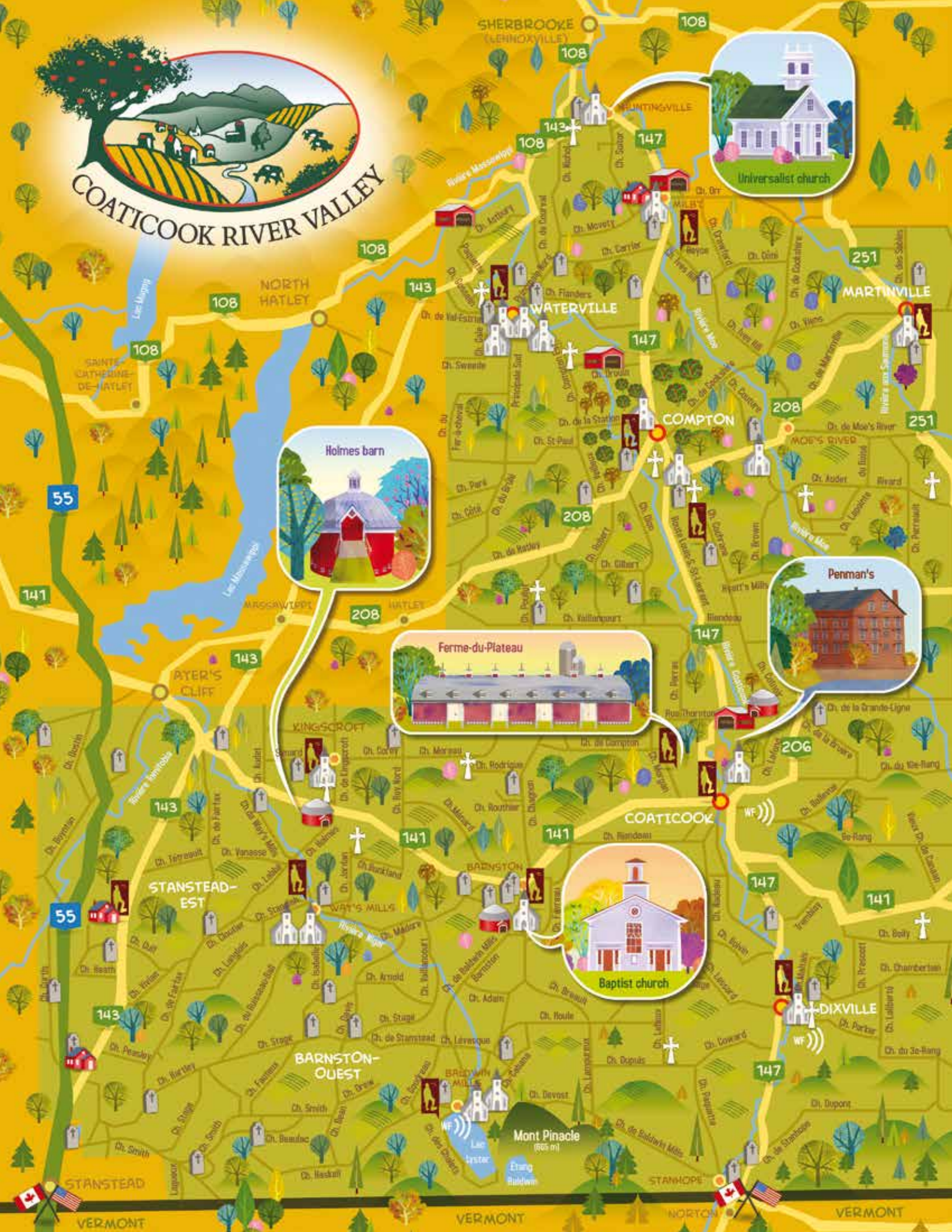
Townships Trail: <http://chemindescantons.qc.ca/en/home>

Pioneer Trail: http://voiedespionniers.com/index_en.shtml

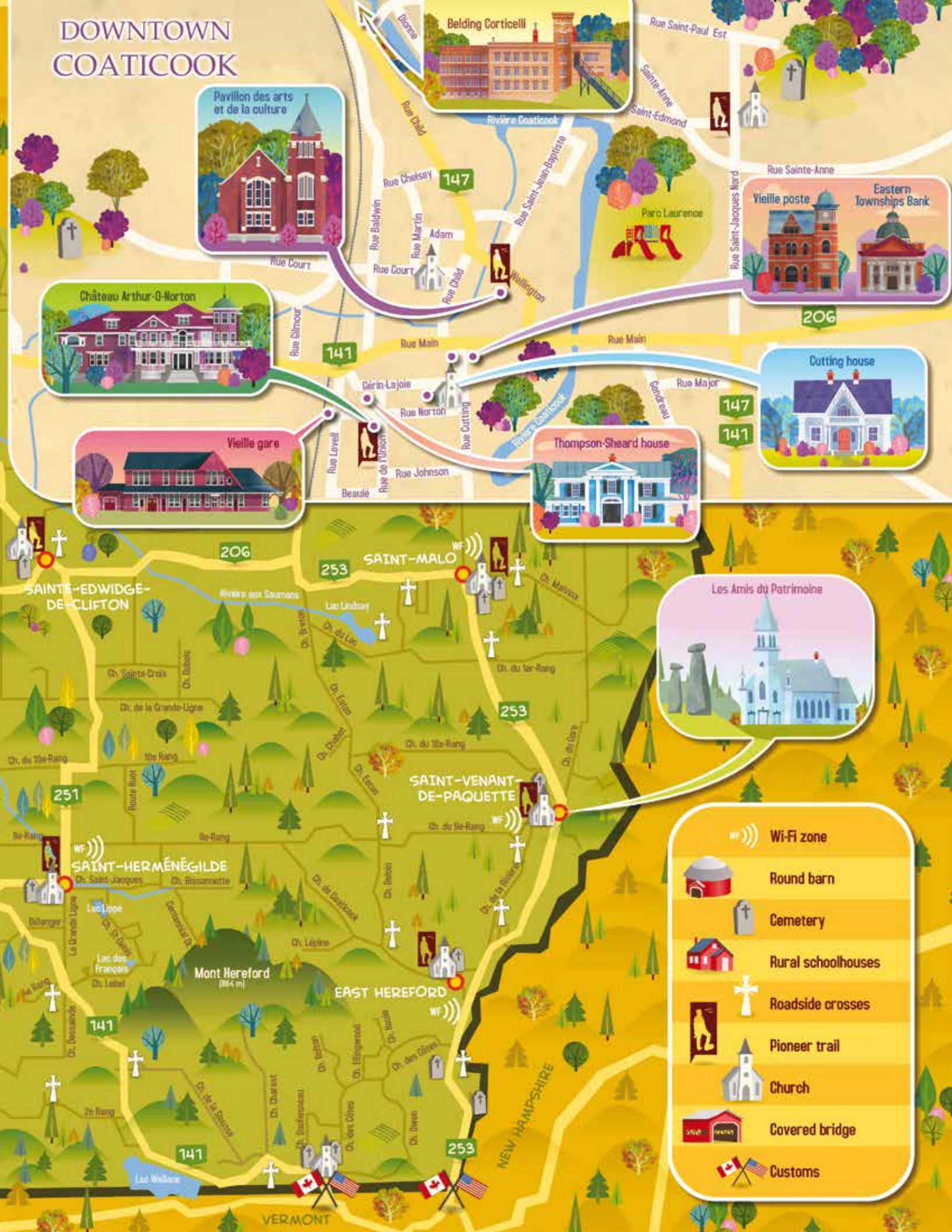
Amis du patrimoine de Saint-Venant-de-Paquette (friends of heritage): amisdupatrimoine.qc.ca

Société d'histoire de Coaticook (historical society): societehistoirecoaticook.ca

A Tour of Coaticook's Cemeteries «Voices from Another Time»: www.baladodiscovery.com



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www.coaticook150.ca
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www.mrcdecoaticook.qc.ca
www.cldmrccoaticook.qc.ca

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