

HERITAGE TRAIL



MONTREAL BROADCASTING PIONEERS 1919-1945

This heritage trail will introduce you to some of the historic places of radio broadcasting in Montreal.

Two routes are proposed: Circuit 1 will take you mainly through the streets of Old Montreal. Circuit 2 takes place in downtown Montreal as well as in the southwest districts of the city. Each circuit is about 5 kilometers.

XWA was the first radio station in Canada. It began transmitting experimental broadcasts in December 1919 from its location on William Street in Montreal. In May 1920, members of the Royal Society of Canada, meeting in congress in Ottawa, had the opportunity to hear a brief recital and speeches transmitted from Montreal. This was a first in the country, an achievement that made the front page of all the newspapers!

The year 2020 marks the 100th anniversary of broadcasting in Canada. The Musée des ondes Emile Berliner and the Société Québécoise des Collectionneurs de Radios Anciens (SQCRA) have joined forces with other institutions in the Montreal region to highlight this event.

HOW TO USE

If you do not use a smart mobile phone or a tablet, you can print the maps and descriptions of the circuit in PDF format and take them with you.

With a smart device, you can follow the circuit using the online interactive map and the electronic version of the descriptions.



CFCF

Mount Royal Hotel, 1555 Peel St.

During its first five years of existence, the CFCF studio was installed in the Canada Cement Building, on Cathcart Street. In 1927, the station moved to the top floor of the Mount-Royal Hotel to establish a professional studio with the most modern equipment.

This hotel had been inaugurated with great fanfare in December 1922 in front of a crowd of more than 1,000 people. The architectural firm for the Mount-Royal Hotel was Ross and Macdonald, the same firm that designed Ottawa's Laurier Castle. When completed, the hotel had over 1,000 rooms, each with a private bathroom. It was said to be the largest hotel in the entire British Empire.

The idea of installing a radio studio on the top floor there had significant advantages. At the time, it was common for radio stations to have musicians in the studio or to transmit music from concert halls or dance halls. As there was on the ninth floor of the hotel a banquet hall that could accommodate 2000 people as well as a ballroom, the hotel became an extension of the radio studio.

The CFCF station moved again in 1931 to settle at 1231 Sainte-Catherine Street West.



CFCF, CNRM, CBF AND CBM

King's Hall Building, 1231 Sainte-Catherine St. West

In the United States, radio stations created networks which facilitated the retransmission of programs over long distances starting in 1920's.

In Canada, the first networks were created around 1927 by railway companies, in particular Canadian National. In 1932, in order to give Canada a national broadcasting institution, the Canadian government created the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission (CRBC), a national bilingual network. Then, in 1936, the CRBC made way for Radio-Canada, which had two separate networks: one French-speaking and one English-speaking. It was at this time that the Montreal stations CBF, francophone, and CBM, anglophone, were inaugurated.

In 1938, the two stations shared three studios installed in the King's Hall Building, at 1231 Sainte-Catherine Street West. CFCF moved there after being at the Mount-Royal Hotel for five years. It's also where Canadian National's CNRM station was located.

CFCF, CNRM, CBF and CBM continued

One of the CBF/CBM studios was the size of a concert hall while the other two were used for performances of small ensembles or radio plays, with each studio having its own control room. With a power of 50,000Watts, CBF competes with CKAC and can be received in Eastern Ontario and the Maritimes.

In 1939, Radio-Canada planned to build studios and offices in Toronto and Montreal at a cost of \$800,000 in each city. The Second World War put a stop to this project. However, major changes were to occur in 1948 when an explosion forced CBF and CBM to permanently leave this building.



CJAD

1191 De la Montagne St.

When it opened in 1945, the English language station CJAD moved into the magnificent Canadian Legion building located at 1191 De la Montagne. This building now houses a private educational institution.

The station was founded by Joseph Arthur Dupont, a commercial director of Radio-Canada since its creation. CJAD enters the air on December 8, 1945 and broadcasts on 800KHz with an initial power of 1000Watts. The transmitting antenna was initially located in Brossard, on the south shore of the St. Lawrence.

Joseph Arthur Dupont wanted to build a station that would emphasize quality programming, partly American, including entertainment and information. Rather than airing short 15-minute shows, as was the norm at the time, it broadcast shows like Make Believe Ballroom, Club 800, and All Time Hit Parade, which lasted one or two hours, with news every hour.



RADIO-CANADA

1425 René-Lévesque West

At the end of the Second World War, CBF and CBM gained momentum, notably thanks to the News Service, which became essential during the war. Later, in 1946, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation inaugurated FM stations. Prime Minister McKenzie King wanted to create an International Service. Also plans were made for the arrival of television (1952). Then it becomes necessary to consolidate the services and this decision becomes reality after the King's Hall Building was destroyed by the explosion of 1948.





NORTHERN ELECTRIC
971 Lucien-L'Allier St.

Radio-Canada continued

The CBC then moved to 1425 Dorchester Blvd. West, today René-Lévesque Blvd., a former hotel built in 1929. Radio-Canada occupied it from 1948 to 1970.

A few years later, its three wings were grouped together to increase rental space. By acquiring the Ford Hotel, the CBC groups all of its Montreal facilities under one roof. It then had 600 employees and broadcast 6,000 hours of programming each year. The building that houses it included 26 ultramodern studios, four transmitters of 50,000Watts each and two shortwave transmitters to allow Francophones in northern and western Canada to have access to radio service in French.

In 1970, the CBC left this place for the Maison de Radio-Canada located at the east end of René-Lévesque Boulevard.

Originally a manufacturer of telephones, the Northern Electric company diversified its production over the years and relocated to different places in Montreal:

- 1880 – Garth Building (44 Saint-Antoine St. West)
- 1886-1891 – Warden-King Building (now part of the Palais des Congrès de Montréal)
- 1891-1904 – 371 De L'Aqueduc St.
- 1904-1928 – 1600 Notre-Dame West
- 1929 – Nordelec Building, corner of Shearer and Saint-Patrick

The building at 971 De L'Aqueduc Street, today Lucien-L'Allier is interesting because it also housed the first Berliner Gramophone factory, around 1897. In 1908, Emile Berliner built a factory at 1001 Lenoir Street for the production of gramophones and records. You can visit this factory at the end of this route.

Canada

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CHYC/NORTHERN ELECTRIC

1600 Notre-Dame St. West

In 1922, while continuing to manufacture telephones, Northern Electric began manufacturing radios, including the R-1 model, the first mass-produced radio in Canada. The company was then established on Notre-Dame Street West. The Northern Electric and Manufacturing Co. Building was erected in 1906. It occupied more than 70% of the block bounded by Notre-Dame, Guy, William and Richmond streets. It had a floor area of almost 20,000 square meters in several buildings distributed around the edges of a set of interior courtyards.

This was also the location of the CHYC radio station owned by Northern Electric. This station broadcasted only a few hours a week and shared the same frequency as CKAC and CFCF. When Northern Electric moved in 1927, the station also moved.

CHYC stopped broadcasting in the early 1930s.



NORTHERN ELECTRIC

1261 Shearer St.

Faced with the accelerated growth of the telephony market, the Northern Electric Company - merger of the companies Northern Electric & Manufacturing Company and Imperial Wire & Cable - had an impressive electrical wire and cable factory built in Pointe-Saint-Charles in 1913.

Over time, production increased and diversified, particularly with the manufacture of radio receivers and other household electrical appliances. While keeping the factory at 1600 Notre-Dame West for some time, production gradually moved to the Pointe-Saint-Charles factory.

The Shearer Street plant was extended several times by adding annexes and stories. An immense company, Northern Electric manufactured some 30,000 different components in the 1930's and employed up to 4,500 people during the following decade. In addition to different wires and cables, the company also manufactured a multitude of telephone and electronic devices. Each product category had its own department and the factory was divided into workshops.

Following the evolution of technologies, Northern Electric moved from the production of simple telephones to satellite telecommunications systems. The buildings on Shearer Street were no longer suitable for this new production. Because of this, in 1974, Northern Electric transferred its activities to different factories on the outskirts of the city, taking the name of Northern Telecom (or Nortel).

In 1975, the building was sold to the Nordelec Industrial Plaza and became a multifunctional complex called Nordelec.



RCA-VICTOR
1001 Lenoir St.

In 1900, Emile Berliner, struggling with many legal problems concerning the rights of production of the flat disc in the United States, decides to move the company to Montreal. He first installed four disc presses on De l'Aqueduc Street. In 1908, the German engineer built a factory in Saint-Henri, on Lenoir Street, very close to Saint-Antoine Street. This is where the company's products would now be manufactured and shipped across the country.

Starting in 1900, the gramophone grew greatly in popularity. After 1912, approximately two million records are produced by the Berliner Gramophone Company annually. The company expanded after the First World War and products were now sold in other Canadian cities, in stores such as Eaton and Simpsons.

In 1924, the Victor Talking Machine Company, an American company founded in 1901, bought the Berliner Gramophone Co. Later, in 1929, Victor Talking Machine was merged with the Radio Corporation of America, creating RCA-Victor.

In Saint-Henri, RCA-Victor set up a recording studio in 1943. Recognized for the quality of its acoustics, the studio produced in its early years the music of several great stars. In addition to sound recording, the first Canadian satellite, Alouette 1, is also designed and built in the Saint-Henri plant.

In 1978, the RCA left the building.

The recording studio, previously closed in 1958, reopens its doors under the name of Studio Victor between 1985 and 2015. Several Quebec artists have recorded their songs there, including Ariane Moffatt, Daniel Bélanger and Luc De Larocheville.

You are at the end of Circuit 2, but not at the end of your discoveries. Head to the second floor (near the restaurant) and take time to visit the Musée des ondes Emile Berliner, a community engaged museum that holds great treasures! You will continue to learn a lot about the history of radio and music in Montreal.

ORGANIZERS



MUSÉE DES ONDES **EMILE BERLINER**



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