

Villas and Gardens

Now accessible by wharf, the enchanting western tip of the île d'Orléans with its micro-climate attracted Quebec City's well-to-do as of the middle of the 19th century.

A Different Accent

And so, arose, at times hauled up on the heights of the rocky spur in order to have an unparalleled view, pure white villas of wood, opening onto bounteous nature with lots of windows and broad verandas. They followed the curve of the point and the shape of the riverbanks thereby forming a contrast with the traditional positioning of île d'Orléans houses determined by the parallel division of farm lands.

Expressing the cultural origins of their owners, these "cottages" added a British and American flavour to French-inspired architecture, giving the area its own unique cachet. Added thereto was their positioning at times in the middle of luxuriant gardens, whereas the rest of the island had for generations sacrificed much of its trees to farming.

The crowning touch was a small, three-hole golf course, on the property of the Dunn family, which added to the pleasures of the visiting well-to-do. Serving as the beginnings of the current Sainte-Pétronille golf course, it is said to be the oldest in America.

The Porteous Estate

The most impressive piece of property was that of Charles E.L. Porteous, a member of a family associated around 1820 with the founding of the Bank of Montreal. In 1900, he began construction of an imposing residence whose official rooms were decorated with scenes of the countryside painted by famous artists William Brymner and Maurice Cullen, works considered cultural assets of national interest. An impressive Italianate garden, sprinkled with balustrades, fountains and statues over a succession of terraces, pools and clusters of exotic and indigenous plants was attended by five gardeners. Given up by the Porteous family and having a new vocation as of the 1960s, the estate looks back nostalgically at its former glories.