

The Immigrant Element in Quebec City's Precious Metals and Stones Trades During the 1820s

By Ross Fox

Quebec City underwent the beginnings of a demographic and economic metamorphosis during the 1820s, evolving from a colonial outpost into a modern urban center over the next half century. It was also a time when Anglophones had a solid presence in the city. These changes, as reflected in the city's silver and jewelry trades, are analyzed here, with special focus on the immigrant contribution. Framing this study are the censuses of 1818 and 1831. Other key sources are the city directories for 1822 and 1826, and the census of 1825, which altogether provide the foundation for analysis.¹ This period was one of intense population growth, paired by concomitant economic progress. Population growth was due to both natural increase and new immigration. There was an unprecedented influx of immigrants from the British Isles after the Napoleonic wars owing to deteriorating economic conditions. Previous immigration to the Canadas was a mere trickle with the vast majority originating in the United States.

Immigrants to the Canadas from Europe had to pass through Quebec as the port of entry. Their numbers increased from 1,250 in 1816 to 8,400 in 1818, averaged about 12,000 yearly throughout the 1820s, and rose to 50,000 in 1831.² Scots were the most numerous immigrant group in the last half of the 1810s, followed by English. By the early 1820s Irish ranked first, followed by Scots, with English third. Approximately 20 percent of these immigrants remained in Lower Canada. Most continued on to Upper Canada and the United States.³ Immigrants, nevertheless, were a significant factor in the rise of the city's population from 15,839 in 1818 to 22,101 in 1825, and 27,141 in 1831.⁴ Among them were a significant number of skilled craftsmen and professionals who tended to prefer Quebec or Montreal, which, as the main urban centers, held the best prospects for opportunities. Anglophones comprised approximately 30 percent of the population of Quebec during this period, a large proportion of whom were recent immigrants. They played a great vitalizing role in the economic life of the city that exceeded their numbers.⁵

Quebec was the most populous city in the Canadas, until about 1825, when Montreal began to surpass it. Besides being the main port, it was also the capital of Lower Canada. Partially because of its situation as the gateway to the colonies, the

¹The 1818 census of Quebec City was in effect a record of all the inhabitants in the parish of Notre-Dame-de-Québec, both of which corresponded geographically, for purpose of determining religious affiliation and, hence, Catholic communicants. It is the most complete of the three censuses and names most people. The Lower Canada Census returns of 1825 and 1831 undertaken by the government only list heads of households, while the city directories are limited chiefly to merchants, traders, craftsmen and professionals. See H. Provost, ed., *Recensement de la Ville de Québec en 1818 par le curé Joseph Signay* (Quebec: La Société historique de Québec, 1976); Thomas Henry Gleason, *The Quebec Directory for 1822* (Quebec: Neilson & Cowan, 1822); and John Smith, *The Quebec Directory, or Strangers' Guide in the City, for 1826* (Quebec: T. Cary & Co., 1826).

²A. R. M. Lower, "Immigration and Settlement, 1812-1820," *Canadian Historical Review* 3, no. 1 (1922): 46-47; David T. Ruddel, *Quebec City 1765-1832: The Evolution of a Colonial Town* (Ottawa: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1987), 40. These are only rough estimates. As W. T. Easterbrook and Hugh G. J. Aitken note: "Statistics of arrivals at Quebec . . . do not accurately reflect the true volume of immigration." *Canadian Economic History* (Toronto: Macmillan Company of Canada Limited, 1956), 272.

³Fernand Ouellet, *Lower Canada 1791-1840: Social Change and Nationalism* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1980), 140; Bruce S. Elliott, "English: Arrival and Settlement to 1850," in *The Encyclopedia of Canada's Peoples*, ed. Paul Robert Magocsi (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 469.

⁴Edward H. Dahl et al., *La Ville de Québec, 1800-1850: Un inventaire de cartes et plans* (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1975), 25. The official census figures of the House of Assembly as posted in the *Quebec Mercury* (Feb. 4, 1832) were 22,021 for 1825 and 27,562 for 1831.

⁵Ruddel, 39.

city's immigrant community was characterized by a particular fluidity of movement and corresponding relative impermanence. Many of those who settled in Quebec did so temporarily, only to move onwards with the western flow. These same immigrants contributed considerably to the silver and jewelry trades, nevertheless, especially from the importation and retail standpoints.

Imports and the Retail Trade

Most locally made silver was by native Francophone silversmiths. They pursued traditional craft practices fashioning silver articles (and jewelry) largely on a bespoke basis, selling directly to customers, or sometimes supplying retailers. The latter sometimes added their own distinctive identifying marks to articles whether those of the maker were present or not. These marks can take the form of initials and/or pseudo-hallmarks. There was no consistency, and one or the other or both could represent a maker or retailer. This situation often confounds efforts to separate makers from retailers simply on the basis of marks. Among the Francophone silversmiths were Laurent Amiot, François Ranvoyzé, Joseph Sasseville, Jean-Nicolas Amiot, François Delagrave and Joseph Babineau. Most of their finer commissions were sacred vessels for the Catholic Church, a market that was all but monopolized by them, although they did produce some domestic hollowware and large quantities of flatware. But the broader trade was far more complex owing to an extreme reliance on imports for domestic silver and jewelry, and a surfeit of retailers relative to population, only a few of whom were makers as well as retailers, or producer-retailers.

At the high end of the trade was James Smillie (Figs. 5-14), a silversmith and jeweler from Scotland, who imported as well as operated his own workshop. Other new arrivals included the silversmith James Ellis (Figs. 1 & 2) and the watchmakers-cum-silversmiths William Northgraves (Fig. 3) and Charles James René Ardouin (Fig. 4), who were



Fig. 1 Fish Slice (or Knife) by James Ellis (c. 1790-1825), c. 1820-25. Royal Ontario Museum. (photo: Brian Boyle ROM)

Ellis trained in Dublin, Ireland, and was in Quebec by September 4, 1820 (*Quebec Gazette*). On February 8, 1822 (*Quebec Mercury*), an advertisement stated that he had twelve years experience as a silversmith before immigrating. There he listed the types of articles he specialized in: table, dessert and salad forks; asparagus and sugar tongs; fish and butter knives; soup, sauce and punch ladles; gravy, table, dessert and teaspoons; sugar, salt, egg and mustard spoons; marrow scoops, skewers, spurs and medals. He also repaired jewelry and old silver wares. Though his career in Canada was brief, a fair quantity of flatware with his maker's mark survives (see Fig 2)

Fig. 2 Marks of James Ellis on Fish Slice Fig. 1. (photo: Brian Boyle ROM)

WILLIAM NORTHGRAVES,
WATCH and CLOCK MAKER SILVER-SMITH and
JEWELLER No. 15, Fabrique street, Quebec.
RESPECTFULLY informs his friends and the
Public, that he constantly keeps on hand a neat and
general assortment of goods in his line, which he will
sell low, consisting of excellent eight day and other
Clocks, gold and silver Watches, a neat assortment
of Jewelry, consisting of Chains, Seals, Keys, Finger-
rings, Ear-rings, Brooches, Pins, Shoe-buckles &c.
Silver Plate, all kinds of light silver goods, gilt and
plated Ware, Penknives, Scissors, Amulets, Dice,
steel Chains, Barrometers, Thermometers, rat gut
for Rackets, a few of Lay's Map of New-York and
Bouchet's do. of Canada, &c. &c. &c. Makes all
kinds of Silver Plate and Jewellery on the shortest no-
tice, all kinds of Watches and Clocks repaired and
cleaned in the soundest manner...Jewellery repaired,
buys old gold, silver and silver-lace
May 1822.

Fig. 3 Advertisement of William Northgraves (died 1864) in the 1822 Quebec Directory.

An early record of Northgraves in Quebec is his marriage on October 21, 1817, at Notre-Dame-de-Québec Cathedral. Born in Hull, England, this advertisement affirms that he was both a working silver-smith and jeweler. On July 17, 1821 (*Quebec Gazette*), he advertised "Canadian and English made Thimbles and Spoons." A small quantity of flatware with a "WN" mark is sometimes attributed to him. On October 10, 1825, an announcement appeared in the *Quebec Mercury* that his stock in trade at St. John St. was to be auctioned pending his departure for Montreal. Northgraves' stock included watches, clocks, jewelry, and a great variety of watchmaking materials. See Jane Varkaris and James E. Connell, *Early Canadian Timekeepers* (Erin Mills ON: Boston Mills Press, 1993), 197-98.

C. J. R. ARDOUIN,
WATCH and CLOCK-MAKER,
 (FROM LONDON.)
 No. 16, St. JOHN STREET, UPPER TOWN, QUEBEC.
RETURNS his warmest thanks to his friends
 and a generous public, for the liberal encourage-
 ment they have given him in the line of his pro-
 fession since his arrival in Quebec, and flatters
 himself by the extensive practice he has had in
 some of the first shops in London, and his us-
 ual assiduity to merit a continuance of their fa-
 vours.
C. J. R. A. has constantly on hand Watches
 in gold and silver cases, eight day and table
 Clocks, Time Pieces, Gold Seals, Chains, Keys,
 Brooches, Pins, Plain, Drefs, and Mourning
 finger Rings, hoop, top and drop ear rings plain
 and set, silver spoons, pencil cases, tooth and ear
 picks, thimbles, shoe and knee buckles plain and
 set, aromatic and snuff boxes, scent bottles, black
 ornaments, plated steel, leather and silk purses,
 purse and reticule mounts, steel and metal chains,
 keys, seals and snaps, miniature frames, &c. &c.
 Every article in the Silver line made in the
 newest stile and with dispatch.
 Watches & Clocks of every description clean-
 ed and repaired as usual.
 Old Gold and Silver bought or exchanged.

Fig. 4 Advertisement of Charles James René Arduin
 (1791-1837) in the 1822 *Quebec Directory*.

Arduin was born in London, England, of French, presuma-
 bly Huguenot ancestry. Primarily a watchmaker, he had
 worked in the London trade prior to his arrival in Quebec
 by 1816, where he also retailed jewelry and silver, as the
 above advertisement indicates. Some of his silver was
 imported, while at least some flatware was by his own
 hand. A reference to imports is found in the *Quebec Mer-
 cury* of June 29, 1819: "Has received by the spring's ves-
 sels a neat assortment of, Jewelry, Silver and Plated
 Goods." An impressed "C.A" mark in rectangle with
 clipped corners likely belongs to Arduin. Sometimes it is
 accompanied by either the impressed letter "Q", or by a
 pseudo-hallmark of a lion passant guardant in a rectangle
 with clipped corners. See John E. Langdon, *Guide to Marks
 on Early Canadian Silver, 18th and 19th Centuries* (Toronto:
 The Ryerson Press, 1968): 5 (above).

working craftsmen as well as retailers of imported wares.
 Two other categories of silver and jewelry retailers are jew-
 elers so-called, and watch and clockmakers.⁶ The terms jew-
 eler or merchant jeweler were usually generic umbrella
 terms which, in this period, had come to imply a retailer ex-
 clusively in the modern sense—dealing in silver, jewelry and
 watches and clocks, and related merchandise such as ceram-
 ics, glassware, fancy goods, etc. John Robb is a prominent
 example (see Appendix). James Orkney, though the leader
 among the city's watch and clockmakers, like that group as a
 whole, retailed merchandise consistent with that of jewel-
 ers. What differentiated them was their emphasis on watch-
 es and clocks and their repair.⁷ A rare reference to a retailer
 getting a silver shipment directly from overseas is found for
 Orkney in the *Commercial List* of May 6, 1819, when he re-
 ceived a case of plate from London.

Adding to the competition was the firm of George Savage &
 Son, the leading retail watch and clockmakers, silversmiths
 and jewelers in Montreal, which occasionally marketed in
 Quebec. On October 4, 1828 this advertisement appeared in
 the *Quebec Mercury*:

G. Savage & Son . . . most respectfully inform the Ladies and Gentlemen
 of Quebec, that they will exhibit for a few days at Mrs. Holt's No. 11,
 Market place, Upper-Town,—a splendid selection of Gold, Silver and
 Plated Ware, the Jewellery warranted to be total Sterling, Gold, and
 of every superior workmanship, consisting of Neck Chains, Watch do,
 Seals, Keys, Brooches, Pins, Lockets, Dress Rings, Ear Drops, Gold and
 Corral. Being Goods sent out upon consignment, part stock of a Manu-
 facturing House in London, now insolvent, the public may rest assured
 that the whole will be sold upon the very lowest terms.

The Savage firm announced a similar sale in the *Quebec Mer-
 cury* of August 20, 1831: "They have received for sale a
 splendid selection of new and rich fashionable jewelry, Gold
 Watches, Neck Chains, Guards: also, Plated Ware, &c. &c.,
 jewellery too numerous to mention, all of which is sent out
 by one of the most extensive manufacturing houses in Eng-
 land."

Whoever the retailers were, their wares were overwhelm-
 ingly imports, though some might be supplied locally, espe-
 cially smaller items. Confusing the situation was the general
 merchant, or general store, predecessors of sorts of the
 modern department store, though on a small scale. They
 retailed almost anything.⁸ Their presence only exacerbated
 the competitive environment. Then there were the mer-
 chant speculators, including auctioneers, who ordered con-

⁶ Colonial craftsmen designated as clock and watch-
 makers were, with few exceptions, repairers and
 retailers rather than makers.

⁷As Quebec was a port city, there was a demand
 for nautical instruments. A few persons, such as

Richard Catton (see Appendix), who were in the
 crossover trades of watch and clockmaker and
 chronometer maker may have actually made such
 instruments. This is a separate subject that re-
 quires study.

⁸Michael Bliss, *Northern Enterprise: Five Centuries
 of Canadian Business* (Toronto: McClelland and
 Stewart Inc., 1987), 111.

signments from Britain, which, once delivered, were sold wholesale or auctioned off, sometimes literally at dockside. Auctions of silver and jewelry were frequent enough. As an example, on August 30, 1831 (*Quebec Mercury*), the auctioneer and broker, James G. McLean, advertised: "For sale at prime cost in course of all next week either wholesale or retail, a handsome variety of jewellery, consisting principally of earrings, rings and locketts." Another importer among the auctioneers was J. C. Reiffenstein & Co. who on November 4, 1819 (*Quebec Gazette*), offered for sale: 33 fine gentlemen's gold seals; 6 ladies' gold watch chains with keys and seals to match; 100 gold rings of various patterns and shapes; 10 dozen gold keys, earrings, and breast-pins. Joseph Cary, another auctioneer, offered in the *Quebec Mercury* of December 18, 1824: "A most elegant stock of the best London made jewellery, consisting of gold chains, seals, keys, pins and brooches, finger and ear-rings set with pearls; Amethyst, cornelian, and topaz stones."

Perhaps one of the more remarkable auctions was that of R. W. Kelly & Co. advertised in the *Quebec Mercury* of October 6, 1831. It was billed as “without exaggeration, the most splendid and valuable stock of goods ever imported into Canada, remarkable not only for the richness of material, but the chasteness of design, and the superior workmanship.” Furthermore it was claimed, that the silver wares weighed one thousand ounces altogether in tea equipages, tankards, spoons, forks, snuff boxes, and so on. The jewelry consisted of “Solid Gold Rings, Brooches, Chains, Lockets, and other fashionable Trinkets, richly ornamented with Red Diamonds, Pearls, Emeralds, and other precious Stones.”

A scarcity of documentation handicaps any attempt at establishing clearly defined connections between Quebec retailers and their British suppliers. Existing records are limited largely to newspapers. Especially pertinent are the *Commercial List* (Quebec) and *Quebec Commercial List* for which only incomplete runs survive. Moreover, the names of importers contained therein do not necessarily reflect the final consignee. Many retailers purchased through a broker or commission merchant who functioned as an importer-exporter intermediary with suppliers in Britain. Sometimes the importer-exporters were based in Britain rather than Quebec. Heath & Co. was such a firm. Headquartered in Wolverhampton, England, its Quebec representative and partner was Alexander Moir in the firm of Moir & Heath. The *Commercial List* of September 30, 1819, reported three cases of silver plate shipped by that firm from London. Sheppard & Campbell were a Quebec firm of shipbuilders as well as ship owners who also engaged in the transatlantic trade. The *Quebec Commercial List* of May 25, 1825, reported the delivery to that firm of a box of silver plate shipped from Greenock, Scotland.

While some importers can be identified, their British suppliers and, ultimately, the true silver and jewelry makers, remain dauntingly elusive. Almost nothing has surfaced so far to shed

Fig. 6 Tea Service with Marks of James Smillie as Retailer, c. 1817-20. Royal Ontario Museum. (photo: Brian Boyle ROM) (see Fig. 7)



Fig. 7 Early Marks of James Smillie in Quebec, c. 1817-20.

The "J.SMELLIE" mark was used by Smillie during his first years in Quebec. It is found on pieces both from his own workshop or acquired from an external supplier, whether local outworker or from abroad. This same mark together with "QUEBEC" is found on the tea service Fig. 6.

Fig. 8 Snuff Box from the Workshop of James Smillie, c. 1826. Royal Ontario Museum. (photo: Brian Boyle ROM)

This snuffbox is unusually large and of a type found with Edinburgh silversmiths during the early 19th century. The exterior of the bottom bears the inscription: Mr. Cairns: / I have long felt greatly obliged / by your kind protec-



Fig. 7



Fig. 8

tion of the unfortunate boy / that you received at my request as an ap / prentice in your house, do me the favor to / accept this Box as an acknowledgement of / your Charitable and truly paternal care / of him. / With great respect, and sincere / good wishes for your health and welfare, / I am yours, Quebec, 25th Decr. 1826. Dalhousie. The Dalhousie coat of arms is engraved on a shield-shaped plaque of red gold that is inlaid in the cover (Fig. 9). The Earl of Dalhousie, Governor-in-Chief of the Canadas, presented this piece to Robert Cairns, a merchant tailor or clothier. According to the inscription, Cairns took on a waif as an apprentice at the request of Dalhousie, who had a longstanding reputation for benevolence, examples of which are memorialized here, both in his recommendation of the boy and expression of gratitude to Cairns. Robert Cairns had a clothing manufactory and shop at No. 6

Côte de la Montagne. Besides being a producer, Cairns both imported and retailed clothing and fabrics from Britain. It was undoubtedly the largest enterprise of its kind in the city. Its size can be gauged from an advertisement in the *Quebec Mercury* (July 2, 1825) where he sought to hire 25 journeymen tailors "to whom constant employment, and the highest wages will be given." Again on October 11, 1831, he advertised in the same newspaper for twenty to twenty-five journeymen tailors.

Fig. 9 Arms on Snuff Box Fig. 8. (photo: Brian Boyle ROM)



Fig. 9

The arms on the right (viewer's left) are those of Ramsay, for George Ramsay, 9th Earl of Dalhousie, those on the left of his wife Christian (née Broun), Countess of Dalhousie. She was the only daughter and heiress of Charles Broun, Esqr., of Colstoun, East Lothian, Scotland. In accordance with English heraldry, this status is reflected in her arms, which consisted of her own family's shield placed at the centre of her husband's shield. The heraldic term is "escutcheon of pre-

tence." The official description of the Ramsay arms is "Argent, an eagle Displayed Sable," that of Broun of Coulston "Gules, a chevron between three fleur-de-lis Or." The motto "Ora et Labora" is the Ramsay family's and translates as "pray and work." "Tria Juncta in Uno" ("three kingdoms joined in one") refers to the union of England, Ireland and Scotland and is the motto of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath of which Lord Dalhousie was a Knight Grand Cross.



Fig.10

light on this aspect of the trade

James Smillie (1784-1841)

Preeminent in Quebec's retail jewelry trade was James Smillie.⁹ A trained lapidary and silversmith, he operated a workshop and imported. Smillie had a workshop in Edinburgh for about a decade, succeeded by a couple of years in London,¹⁰ before immigrating to Quebec, where he is documented as early as April 9, 1817.¹¹ He would remain in Quebec until his death in 1841, except for at least two extended trips to Britain—presumably London. The first trip was previous to July 7, 1819, when he announced in the *Quebec Mercury* that he had just returned from Britain and recommenced business. The same notice states that he had brought several skilled workmen with him. The makeup of his workshop is uncertain but, in addition to journeymen, he is known to have had at least three apprentices over the years.

Assuming that his trade card (**Fig. 5**) accurately shows the types of silver he offered, it illustrates an array of large and small articles that would satisfy most colonial requirements. Apparent in the store-front windows on the trade card are candelabra, candlesticks, a cruet stand, pitchers, goblets, teapots, creamers, tureens and so on. The large articles were no doubt imported from Britain. A tea service (**Fig. 6**) is an example of such an import. A rare reference to imports concerns musical snuff boxes received by Smillie in 1825.¹² He also produced small silver articles in his own workshop, such as mustard pots and flatware of all kinds, and he was a specialist of sorts in snuff boxes (**Figs. 8 & 12**). Silver and gold medals were yet another staple.

Jewelry was paramount for Smillie and was largely the product of his own workshop. In 1821, he had a sale in Montreal a description of which provides an idea of the types of jewelry he made: "Gaspé Pebble Necklaces, &c. in complete sets; Cape-Diamond Rings in complete sets of incomparably fine Oriental Blood Stones from Ceylon, Cameo, Moco, and Lapis-Lazuli Broaches [*sic*]; Cameo and Emerald Rings, and Riband-Onyx ditto, from the Ferro Isles [*sic* Faroe Islands]." ¹³ (also see **Fig. 11**) Furthermore, it stated that Smillie manufactured most of these articles and that, in quality of workmanship, they were equal "to the finest productions of London or Edinburgh."

JAMES SMILLIE,
Jeweller and Lapidary, No. 24, Mountain Street Quebec.
HAS constantly on hand a variety of Pebbles collected in different countries, which he has made up in complete sets, consisting of Necklaces, Bracelets, Crosses, Ear-rings, Brooches, and Finger Rings. Among his collection are several of different descriptions procured on the shores of Gaspé, by R. CHRISTIE, Esqr. who was the first person that discovered them—Among this collection are the following:—
White Topaz, Fortification Pebble,
Moco, Blood Stone,
Cornelian, And a yellow pebble resembling the East India Cinnamon Stone.
Gold and Silver work executed in the neatest manner.
N. B.—J. S. Hopes by strict attention added to a thorough knowledge of the business (having wrought in the first shops in Edinburgh and London many years,) to merit a continuance of public patronage.—May 1822.

Fig. 11 Advertisement of James Smillie (1784-1841) in the 1822 *Quebec Directory*.

As indicated here, Smillie had a fascination for native gemstones, which he often incorporated into his jewellery. The Robert Christie referred to was a lawyer who held a number of government appointments, beginning in 1816 as law clerk to the House of Assembly. In 1819, he was appointed to a commission established to regularize land claims in the Gaspé. From this time on, he had a close association with that region and, in 1827, was elected to the Legislative Assembly of Lower Canada as member for Gaspé. In 1822 he resided at No. 29 Côte de la Montagne, not far from Smillie.

⁹The family name in Scotland was spelled "Smellie", which is pronounced "smailee" or "smaylih" in Scottish English. The Canadian pronunciation, because of its implied disagreeable meaning, no doubt motivated the spelling change to "Smillie". In newspaper advertisements from 1817 through 1820 James Smillie actually uses the spelling Smiley, though in a lease of Apr. 9, 1817, he

signed his name Smillie. Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, Centre d'archives de Québec (hereafter BAnQ), Greffe d'Archibald Campbell.

¹⁰ See the advertisement in **Fig. 11** where Smillie states that he had "wrought in the first shops in Edinburgh and London many years." A review of his activity in Edinburgh indicates that this is the only interval when

he could have worked in London, before going to Canada.

¹¹ See n. 9.

¹² *Quebec Commercial List*, 25 May 1825.

¹³ *Montreal Herald*, 17 Nov. 1821.



Fig. 12 Cowrie Shell Snuff Box from the Workshop of James Smillie, c. 1820-40. Royal Ontario Museum. (photo: Brian Boyle ROM)

Fig. 13 Marks of James Smillie on Cowrie Shell Snuff Box Fig. 11. (photo: Brian Boyle ROM) Cowrie shell snuff boxes were popular in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, especially in Scotland.

¹⁴ *Canadian Magazine and Literary Repository* 3, no. 16 (Oct. 1824): 380; *Boston Weekly Messenger*, 11 Nov. 1824.

¹⁵ William Marshall of Edinburgh received the lesser title of Jeweller to the Prince Regent. R. O. Bucholz, *Court Officers, 1660-1837*, vol. 11, rev. ed., *Office-Holders in Modern Britain* (London: University of London, Institute of Historical Research, 2006), 141-46. See British History Online <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/source.aspx?pubid=316>. Also see H. D. W. Sitwell, "The Jewel House and the Royal Goldsmiths," *Archaeological Journal* 67 (Jun. 1962): 147.

¹⁶ Mary Macaulay Allodi and Rosemarie L. Tovell, *An Engraver's Pilgrimage: James Smillie in Quebec, 1821-1830* (Toronto: Royal Ontario Museum, 1989), 8.

¹⁷ Before his departure he assigned power of attorney to James Thom, a schoolmaster. BANQ, Greffe Laughlan Thomas MacPherson, 18 Nov. 1823.

¹⁸ *Liverpool Mercury*, 23 Jul. 1824.

¹⁹ *Quebec Mercury*, 3 Nov. 1829.

²⁰ BANQ, Greffe William de Léry, 20 Mar. 1830.

²¹ *Star and Commercial Advertiser* (Quebec), 19 May 1830.

²² He took possession of his shop on May 1. BANQ, Greffe Errol Boyd Lindsay, 26 Mar. 1831.

²³ Smillie died in a fire that destroyed his building on February 4, 1841. *Quebec Gazette*, 5 Feb. 1841.

Smillie's gemological endeavors extended to the promotion of Canadian gemstones, as attested by a widely publicized notice in 1824, which credited him with the innovative use in jewelry of minerals from Gaspé and Labrador: "Beautiful specimens of the Quartz family particularly the different varieties of Carnelian, Agate, Opal and Jasper have been . . . cut into different ornamental articles by Mr. Smillie." The true source for these minerals was Mingan, on the North Shore of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and not Gaspé. Special attention was given to Smillie's use of Labradorite, particularly the "sky-blue variety," although "green, yellow and pearl grey" are also mentioned. In this period the chief source for Labradorite was Paul's Island off the northern coast of Labrador. The most attractive quality of Labradorite was its iridescence. The blue variety was the most desirable: "It is hard and takes a fine polish; the changeability of color, from a dark grey to the most bright and vivid sky-blue, is beautiful, and makes it very valuable and well adapted for cutting into snuff boxes, ring stones, &c."¹⁴

Jewelry by Smillie has yet to be identified and studied, but he must have had extraordinary talent for, on February 19, 1824, he was appointed Jeweller & Lapidary to His Majesty (George IV). That was truly an esteemed honor. He is the only colonial known to have been so designated. In the previous three decades only three other jewelers were accorded this honor—John Bridge, Philip Rundell and Philip Gilbert, all of whom were also Goldsmiths in Ordinary to the King and at the very pinnacle of their trade.¹⁵ The implication is that Smillie must have made jewelry for the king himself. The surmise that this honor was bestowed on Smillie upon the recommendation of the Earl of Dalhousie, Governor-in-Chief of the Canadas, is warranted (see caption for **Fig 8**). Three years later Dalhousie arranged for free passage to London and a letter of introduction for Smillie's nephew, James Smillie, Jr., in his search for an apprenticeship under a master engraver.¹⁶ Royal appointments such as Smillie's were usually restricted to craftsmen in London and Windsor. The fact of its award coupled with Smillie's presence in London during the winter of 1824, lends credibility to the conjecture that he must have worked in the city during his stay. He sailed for London sometime in late November or early December 1823,¹⁷ and returned to Quebec on June 7, 1824.¹⁸

Illness forced Smillie into retirement at the end of 1829. He placed his stock at auction "comprising a splendid assortment of Jewellery, Plate, and Plated Ware."¹⁹ Four months later he purchased a farm in the Seigneurie of Sainte-Marie-de-la-Nouvelle-Beauce where he settled.²⁰ His nephew, David Smillie Jr., set up business in his stead at his shop on Côte de la Montagne. Though David called himself a jeweler and lapidary, his skills and business were certainly more limited as can be seen in his underscoring: "Engraving in all its branches; metal gilding executed; military ornaments made, or repaired; silver and brass crests made to any pattern."²¹ That list echoes his own previous business as well as his father's, rather than his uncle's. James Smillie's retirement did not last long for, on May 24, 1831 (*Quebec Mercury*), he announced that he had "resumed his business

in all its branches” at his former shop.²² He remained there until his death in 1841.²³

Côte (Rue) de la Montagne (or Mountain Street)

Smillie’s shop (Figs. 5 & 14) was located approximately midway on the Côte de la Montagne (Mountain Street), which the *Quebec Mercury* (October 12, 1824) called “one of the greatest thoroughfares in this city.”²⁴ Côte de la Montagne was aptly named. Steeply sloped it follows a natural ravine that winds up the side of the massive promontory of Cape Diamond, linking Quebec’s Upper and Lower Towns. It was but a section of interconnected major streets beginning with St. Peter Street in Lower Town, up Côte de la Montagne and, in Upper Town, through Buade Street and Côte de la Fabrique and continuing into St. John Street. At the top of Côte de la Montagne was Prescott Gate (Fig. 16), the entryway through the fortifications that enwrap Upper Town, and its enclave of principal government buildings, churches and religious institutions, and residences. Located there were government officials, gentry, well-to-do merchants, professionals, and skilled craftsmen. Lower Town is a narrow strip of land lying between cliff and river, where wharves and warehouses received transatlantic shipments in what was the commercial heart of the city. As a consequence, Côte de la Montagne was advantageously situated for those engaged in the luxury trades.

On October 16, 1824, a contemporary observer wrote to the *Quebec Mercury*: “Passing up Mountain-street . . . curiosity led me to count the number of silversmiths and watchmakers resident in that avenue, and I found that between the turn opposite to Mr. Neilson’s house and Prescott-Gate there were no less than seven shops in which one or both of those trades are carried on.”²⁵ There was a great deal of mobility during this period as reflected in the frequent relocation of craftsmen. Individual craftsmen sometimes moved several times during the decade, even on the very same street, or only lived there briefly. Any attempt to track them all would be futile. A few salient examples only will be noted to underscore the existence of a concentration of jewelers, watch and clockmakers, and silversmiths in the neighborhood.

The 1818 census enumerates 25 houses on Côte de la Montagne altogether. James Orkney, the leading retailer of watches and clocks, was at the upper end of the street near Prescott Gate, at No. 26. Next to him was François Lehoullier, a perfumer and retail jeweler. Five

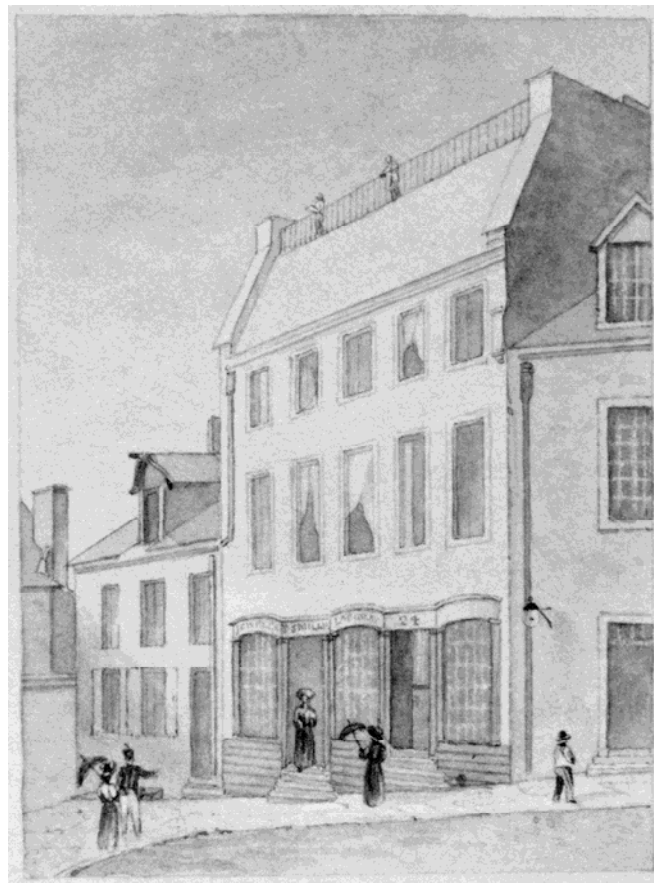


Fig. 14 Building Owned by James Smillie at 16 and 24 Côte de la Montagne, c. 1824-26. Drawing by James Smillie Jr. reproduced in Allodi & Tovell, *Engraver’s Pilgrimage*, 57, no. 45.

Smillie’s building was located at approximately the halfway point on the incline of Côte de la Montagne, where a 90 degree curve occurs. It contained two shops on the main level; a large shop (No. 16) on the right with two large display windows and a smaller shop (No. 24) on the left with a single display window. At the back of the large shop was a workshop and, above, living quarters on two levels. The smaller shop also had a workshop or room at the back, while above were two flats. Tenant leases often mention a right to access the gallery on the roof. No doubt it provided a spectacular view of the St. Lawrence River (see Fig. 17).

²⁴ Also see Serge Courville et Robert Garon, “Un exemple de rue historique: La Côte de la Montagne,” in *Québec, ville et capitale* (Sainte-Foy: Presses de l’Université Laval, 2001), 348-63.

²⁵ For a discussion of Côte de la Montagne as a hub for the luxury trades, see Serge Saint-Pierre and Robert Côté, *La fonction commerciale de Place-Royale entre 1820 et 1860: Synthèse*, Groupe de recherches en histoire du Québec rural inc. (Québec: Direction des communications du ministère des Affaires culturelles, 1990), 155-56.

²⁶ Over the years Smillie’s address is variously given as No. 16 or No. 24 Côte de la Montagne, reflecting the division of his building into approximately two vertical sections. See caption for Fig. 14. Smillie’s occupancy was at No. 16, though he may also have opted for the smaller quarters of No. 24 at some time(s).

houses down at No. 20 was the watchmaker and jeweler, James Reeves. Four houses down from him was James Smillie at No. 16.²⁶ Down another two houses at No. 14 was the watchmaker, Edward Wells. Across the street at No. 1 was the shop of Laurent Amiot, the city's celebrated silversmith. And further down still at No. 9 was the hairdresser and retail jeweler Frederick Wyse.

According to the 1822 Quebec Directory, Orkney remained at the top of the street at No. 34, as did Lehouiller at Nos. 32-33 (now in partnership with Adolphus Sarony), while Reeves was at No. 28. James Smillie was at No. 24; followed by Wells & McKenzie, watch and clockmakers, at No. 22; and John Bean, watchmaker, at No. 21. Amiot and Wyse remained unchanged.

The directory of 1826 notes more changes. Orkney is at No. 26; Adolphus Sarony, perfumer and retail jeweler, at Nos. 24-25—which means the latter was renting Smillie's small shop. Smillie was next door at No. 16; John Bean on the other side at No. 13; while Wyse and Amiot were still at their earlier locations. A new listing is William Burgess, watch and clockmaker, and jeweler, at No. 14. Such a high concentration on a single street in a relatively small city meant an intensely competitive environment.

Appendix

The following consists of summary information on selected persons involved in the retail end of the Quebec silver and jewelry trades for the period 1818-1831. None are known to have made silver or jewelry, with exception of the Smillies, David Sr. and David Jr. Further investigation may prove otherwise for some. While it is not possible at this time to ascertain the place of origin of each person, it can be safely stated that the overwhelming majority, if not all, were immigrants. The mentions to imports are but samplings with no pretense of being comprehensive. (See list of Abbreviations below for references cited.)

Bean John (c. 1787-1830): from London; in Quebec 1819; watchmaker 21 Côte de la Montagne (QD 1822); QC 1825; watchmaker 13 Côte de la Montagne (QD 1826). Aug. 26, 1823 (QM) advertised as watch & clockmaker 13 Côte de la Montagne: "Gold Seals, Keys & Chains, Finger Rings, Broaches [*sic*], Pins & Ear-Rings, Silver Pencil Cases, Thimbles, Tooth and Ear Picks . . ."

Bennet, James: jeweler St. Stanislas St. Upper Town (QC 1831). As silversmith at baptism of son James Aug. 9, 1831 (records Notre-Dame-de-Québec Cathedral).

Burgess, William (c. 1790-1833): in partnership with Thomas Guthrie Cathro (q.v.) as Burgess & Cathro Notre-Dame St. Lower Town (CC Mar. 25, 1820); dissolution of Burgess & Cathro (QM Mar. 19, 1822); watch & clockmaker corner Notre-Dame St. and Market Place Lower Town (QD 1822); watch & clockmaker 14 Côte de la Montagne (QD 1826). May 7, 1822 (QM) announced dissolution of firm of Burgess & Cathro: "He will continue his business as Watch and Clock maker, Jeweller, &c." (see Fig. 15)

WM. BURGESS,
WATCH MAKER & JEWELLER.
 MOST respectfully informs the Public that he has removed from his former residence to the House of Mr. Joseph Languedoc, Lower-Town Market Place, where he has constantly on hand, Watches in gold and silver cases; eight day Clocks, together with a general assortment of Jewellery which he will dispose of on the most reasonable terms for cash.
 N. B. Watches and Clocks of every discription repaired and cleaned at the shortest notice.
 May 1822.

Abbreviations

CC = *Canadian Courant & Montreal Advertiser*
 QC = Quebec Census
 QCL = *Quebec Commercial List*
 QD = Quebec Directory
 QG = *Quebec Gazette*
 QM = *Quebec Mercury*

Fig. 15 Advertisement of William Burgess (c. 1790-1833) in the 1822 Quebec Directory. (see Appendix for information on Burgess)



Fig. 16 Côte de la Montagne Looking Towards Prescott Gate, 1830. Watercolour by James Patterson Cockburn (1779-1847).

Royal Ontario Museum.

This view is from a vantage just above James Smillie's shop. Beyond Prescott Gate was Upper Town. Buildings lined the upper west half of Côte de la Montagne. Their exteriors appear stark bordering on foreboding. On the east side was the former Episcopal Palace of the Catholic bishop and its enclosure and, just below, the first cemetery. Today the Parc Montmorency is situated there. During the 1820s the palace was occupied by the House of Assembly and the Legislative and Executive Councils, and supporting government departments.

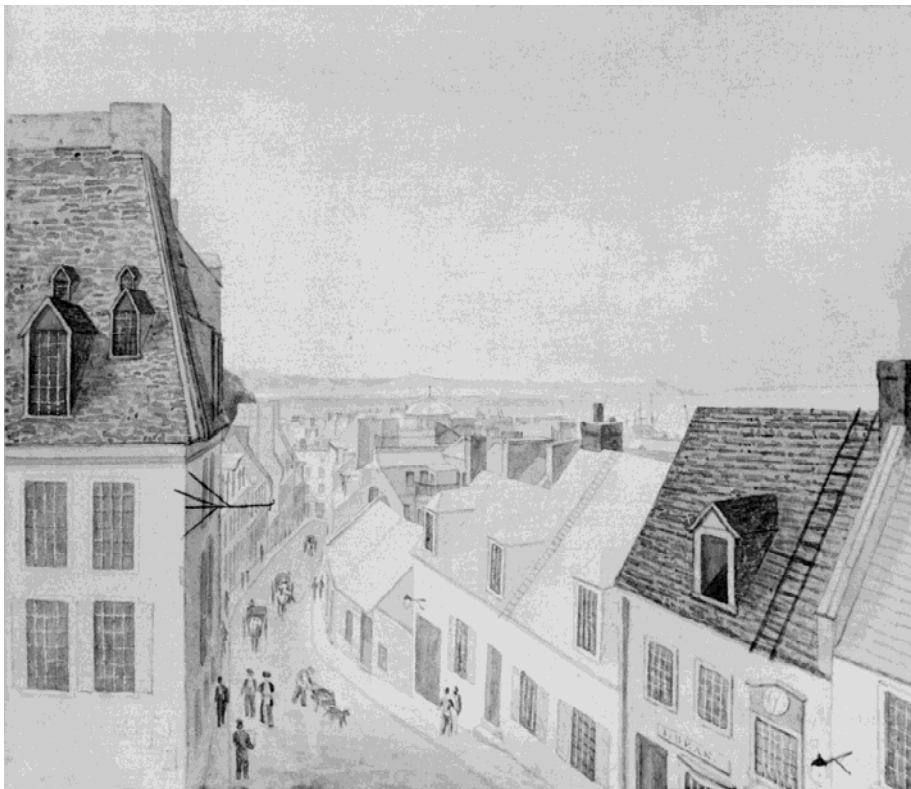


Fig. 17 Côte de la Montagne Looking Towards Lower Town, c. 1826. Drawing by James Smillie Jr., reproduced in Allodi & Tovell, *Engraver's Pilgrimage*, 58, no. 46.

The view is from the roof of James Smillie Sr.'s building looking north. Buildings line both sides of the lower part of Côte de la Montagne. On the immediate right is the shop of the watchmaker, John Bean. On the immediate left is the Neilsons' printing-house, at No. 3 Côte de la Montagne, the most important publisher in Lower Canada. In addition to the newspaper *Quebec Gazette*, the Neilsons published books, pamphlets, broadsides, and so on, and were the city's leading bookseller and stationer. John Neilson was owner-operator until 1822, when he turned over the business to the partnership of his son, Samuel, and William Cowan. Two buildings up from the Neilsons' was the workshop of the silversmith, Laurent Amiot.

Cary, John: jeweler Nouvelle St. Upper Town (QC 1831).

Cathro, Thomas Guthrie (c. 1782-1848): probably from Scotland; in partnership with William Burgess (q.v.) as Burgess & Cathro Notre-Dame St. Lower Town (CC Mar. 25, 1820); dissolution of Burgess & Cathro (QM Mar. 19, 1822); watch & clockmaker 15 Notre-Dame St. (QD 1822); QC 1825; watch & clockmaker 15 Notre-Dame St. (QD 1826). Apr. 5, 1822 (QM) advertised removal to Notre-Dame St. "where he intends carrying on the Watch-making and Jewellery business." Imported 1 box jewelry, shipped from Liverpool (QCL May 3, 1831).

Catton, Richard: from London; in Saint John NB 1817-18; chronometer, watch & clockmaker Upper Town (QM Nov. 2, 1819). Nov. 7, 1820 (QM) advertised as chronometer, watch & clockmaker 13 Côte de la Montagne, received from London "gold Seals, Keys, Earrings, Brooches, Fingerings, Silver Spoons, Plated Goods."



Fig. 18 Marks of James Orkney (1760-1832).

Orkney was primarily a retail watch and clockmaker who specialized in tall-case clocks. The mechanical works were invariably imported from Britain, as were many of the cases, though sometimes he turned to local cabinetmakers for cases. Similarly, he is not thought to have made any silver, which was obtained both from local silversmiths and from abroad. Orkney sometimes applied his own mark, as illustrated here, to wares supplied by the former. (see Appendix for information on Orkney)

Christmas, Denis S.: from London; watch & clockmaker Fabrique St. Upper Town (QC 1831). On Nov 9, 1830 (QM) advertised as watch & clockmaker, jeweler and silversmith Fabrique St.: "Just received an assortment of superior LONDON made Ladies' and Gentlemen's Gold, silver Patent Lever and plain Watches, Jewellery, Plated Goods, Cutlery, &c." Jun. 11, 1831 (QM) also listed as engraver: "He has received a fresh supply of goods of the best London Manufacture, consisting of Gold and Silver Watches, chains, seals, keys, brooches, rings, ear-rings, watch guards, cutlery, plated goods . . . and various other articles."

Clarke, William: watch & clockmaker 32 St. John St. Upper Town (QC 1818). Jun. 30, 1817 (QM) advertised as watch & clockmaker, silversmith, jeweler and engraver: "Has for sale, Watches, Clocks, diamond-cut and other Beads, Bracelets, gold Earrings . . . and a variety of seals, chains and keys." Jun. 3, 1828 (QM) advertised as watch & clockmaker, silversmith and jeweler.

Martin (also Martyn), John: QC 1825; watch & clockmaker Champlain St. Lower Town (QC 1831). May 24, 1825 (QM) advertised as watch & clockmaker &c. "expects from London a handsome and well selected assortment of Jewellery and Plated Goods." Oct. 6, 1832 (QM) "the shop of Mr. Martin, watchmaker, foot of Mountain street, was entered . . . [four chronometers, three watches] and a quantity of gold seals and rings, were taken off. . . Mr. Martin estimates his loss at about £250."

Orkney, James (1760-1832): from Scotland ²⁷; watch & clockmaker 26 Côte de la Montagne (QC 1818); watch & clockmaker Côte de la Montagne (QC 1831). Jan. 13, 1818 (QM) sale of "the whole of his stock in trade, consisting of Clocks, Gold and Silver Watches, Seals, Chains, Rings, Necklaces, and Jewellery, of every description . . . Plate and Plated Ware, Chandeliers, &c." Imported 9 cases clocks and jewelry, shipped from London (CL Jun. 24, 1819). See **Fig. 18**.

Reeves, James: in Quebec by 1816; watchmaker (records St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church); watchmaker, jeweler and pawnbroker (QM Jan. 16, 1818); watch & clockmaker 20 Côte de la Montagne (QC 1818); watchmaker and jeweller 28 Côte de la Montagne (QD 1822); watchmaker Fabrique St. Upper Town (QM Aug. 27, 1825); watchmaker and jeweller 6 Fabrique St. (QD 1826). Nov. 22, 1828 (QM) "jewellery to the value of £25 or £30" was stolen from the shop of Reeves, jeweler, Cul-de-Sac.

Robb, John (c. 1788-1831): in Quebec by 1819; at various locations in Lower and Upper Town; merchant jeweler (records St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church and Cathedral of the Holy Trinity); QC 1825; merchant 39 St. Peter St. Lower Town (QD 1826). He also operated as a shipping/port agent. Jun. 25, 1822 (QM) advertised: "A large stock of very superior London made jewelry, in silver and plain gold, of elegant patterns, set with pearls,

²⁷René Villeneuve, "Orkney, James," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 6 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 556-57.

²⁸He was likely of Jewish background. His son Napoleon, the prominent New York photographer, is named in 1879 by Harry Hananel Marks, editor of New York's *Reformer and Jewish Times*, as among outstanding American Jews. H. N. Marks, "Down with the Jews!" in *American Jewish Archives Journal* 16, no. 1 (1964): 7.

²⁹See Allodi & Tovell, 3 & 117, fn. 14.

³⁰In literature his year of birth is often given as 1781, but he was baptized on May 6, 1780, at St. Cuthbert's Church, Edinburgh.

amethyst, cornelian and topaz stones, and a great variety of silver goods, watches . . . Old silver and silver lace, diamonds, pearls, &c., bought.” He traded in a wide range of goods: watches, jewelry, plated goods, hardware, Britannia Ware, Japan wares, earthenware, glassware, etc. (QM Jun. 28, 1825). Jun. 18, 1830 (QM) advertised: “A large assortment of the best London made jewellery and plated goods of all sorts.” Other advertisements affirm a reliance on London for his goods. Imported 3 cases plated ware, 5 boxes jewelry, shipped from Liverpool (QCL Jun. 26, 1826).

Sarony, Adolphus (also Adolph) (c. 1790-1841): born in Prussia;²⁸ marriage Jul. 29, 1818, clerk to perfumer François Lehoullier (records Cathedral of the Holy Trinity); merchant (records Notre-Dame-de-Québec Cathedral); merchant 24 Côte de la Montagne (QC 1818); in partnership with Lehoullier as Lehoullier & Sarony perfumers & jewelers 32 & 33 Côte de la Montagne (QD 1822); QC1825; alone as perfumer 24-25 Côte de la Montagne (QD 1826); 1831 in New York City. Jul. 21, 1826 (QM) advertised under heading Sarony’s Bazaar having imported from Britain “general stocks of jewellery” as well as having “the greatest variety and extensive assortment of many different articles.” Imported 1 case jewelry, shipped from London (QCL May 28, 1825).

Smillie (also Smellie), David, Jr. (1804-1865): from Edinburgh, Scotland; in Quebec 1821; apprenticed under his uncle, James Smillie; in business with father David Sr. (q.v.) and brother James Jr. as David Smillie & Sons silver platers and engravers 10 St. Anne St. Upper Town (QD 1826); in partnership with brother James Jr. as jewelers and engravers St. Anne St. (QM Aug. 12, 1828); alone 24 Côte de la Montagne (QM Jun. 12, 1830); by late 1831 in New York City.²⁹

Smillie (also Smellie), David, Sr. (1780-1827)³⁰: brother of James Smillie Sr.; from Edinburgh, Scotland; in Quebec 1821; silver plater and engraver 8 Garden St. Upper Town (QD 1822); QC 1825; in business with sons David Jr. (q.v.) and James Jr. as David Smillie & Sons silver platers and engravers 10 St. Anne St. Upper Town (QD 1826); died Oct. 26, 1827, silversmith and jeweler (records Cathedral of the Holy Trinity).

Wyse, Frederick (c. 1791-1877): born in England; marriage Nov. 16, 1814, hairdresser (records St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church); hairdresser (records Cathedral of the Holy Trinity); perfumer 9 Côte de la Montagne (QC 1818); hairdresser & perfumer 9 Côte de la Montagne (QD 1822); hairdresser, wigmaker and perfumer 10 Côte de la Montagne (QM Sep. 11, 1824); QC 1825; hairdresser and perfumer 9 Côte de la Montagne (QD 1826); hairdresser Côte de la Montagne (QC 1831). May 24, 1828 (QM) advertised as just received at 10 Côte de la Montagne “jewellery of the latest fashion”: earrings, tops and drops, finger rings, watch chains, watch seals, watch keys, neck chains, brooches, and pins, all of gold. Jun. 11, 1831 (QM) advertised as received from London: “An Elegant assortment of Jewellery, consisting of Gold Sets, Earrings, Brooches, Finger Rings, Locketts, Neck-chains, Watch Guards, Necklaces . . . Silver Snuff Boxes . . . and a large assortment of Spectacles &c.”

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