

Painting

Papineau en chasse-galerie

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Jean-Claude Dupont's painting *Papineau en chasse-galerie* illustrates the legend by means of a canoe flying over Montreal in the Saint-Henri district. In the foreground, we see a shopping street with brightly painted buildings, the Hôtel Sainte-Cunégonde and a fishmonger's, against a gray background of hills dotted with church steeples, with a cross atop the highest of them all, Mount Royal. This depiction is not without reference to the conclusion of the legend, in which a steeple is struck by the boat in flight. The canoe and its crew are shown traveling at twilight, against a colorful sky lit by a full moon. The canoe is guided by a flock of white geese, and its prow features two tricolored (green, white and red) Patriote flags and a figure wearing their bonnets, in reference to the famous politician and leader of

the Patriote Party, Louis-Joseph Papineau (1786-1871).

Accession Number 2010.01

Artiste / Auteur Dupont, Jean-Claude

Date 2009

Medium and Support oil, canvas

Measurements 56 x 70 cm

Historical context

The legend of the hunter-gallery, a fantastic hunt, has many versions, from its Poitevin origins of the cursed hunter among others, to that of the magical canoe trip in Quebec. According to the Poitevin legend, a lord named Gallery hunted on a Sunday during the religious service, which constitutes sacrilege. The hunter stalks a deer that has taken refuge in a hermit's cave, and kills it despite the hermit's prohibition, on pain of eternal curse. As punishment, Gallery must roam the skies of Poitou and Charente, with his pack of hounds, every night for eternity. Marie-Caroline Watson Hamlin's *La Chasse-Galerie*, published in 1881, is the first Canadian affirmation of the legend. It tells of a hunter condemned to lead a demonic hunt for eternity by means of a flying canoe, rather than a galloping horse. Honoré Beaugrand (1848-1906), a politician and writer, published the tale *La Chasse-galerie* in 1892, from which the Quebec legend draws most of its codes.

One version, widely circulated in Quebec, features a group of lumberjacks from Gatineau who want to visit their sweethearts, who live a hundred leagues away, on New Year's Eve. In order to get back to work on time the following morning, they make a pact with the devil so that their canoe can take off and transport them to and from their destination. However, they must not blaspheme or touch a cross, and they must be back before six in the morning. If they fail to do so, they lose their souls. To guarantee the success of their undertaking, they abstain from alcohol until the end of the journey. The conclusion of the legend varies, but it often ends with the travelers colliding with a church bell.