

Slide

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Site of the bridge over the Little River. Paul Chomedey de Maisonneuve used it as the starting point for the terrier de Montréal.

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Artiste / Auteur Rajotte, Normand

Date 2004

Medium and Support color proof, cellulose acetate film

Measurements 6 x 6 cm

Historical context

Sieur de Maisonneuve and Jeanne Mance chose to settle on the point between the river and the Petite rivière, the current site of the Pointe-à-Callière Museum. This is also the site of Montreal's first stone bridge, named Franchère, which spanned the Petite rivière. It was built between 1809 and 1838. Until the early 19th century, the city of Montreal was criss-crossed by numerous streams and rivers. As urbanization progressed, they became more and more of a constraint, and bridges were built to bypass them. More than sixty bridges were built in Montreal between 1800 and 1840. These rivers were often used as open sewers for waste from artisanal production, farming and domestic activities. A hygiene problem began to emerge. Flooding was also a frequent occurrence. Water from rain or melting snow accumulates and remains in the streets for hours, sometimes even days. All the more so as, in those days, snow was not collected, but rather "tapped", and thus left in place. Bridges also required considerable maintenance. From the 1840s onwards, underground piping became technically feasible. The Petite rivière and the ruisseau Saint-Martin were the first to be canalized. They thus became the city's first covered collector sewers. This explains the demolition of the Franchère bridge in 1838.

This is a slide by Normand Rajotte, a Quebec photographer. He is particularly interested in natural places and the relationship between human beings and nature. This slide therefore makes perfect sense, as it shows a natural site that has disappeared, namely the Petite rivière.

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