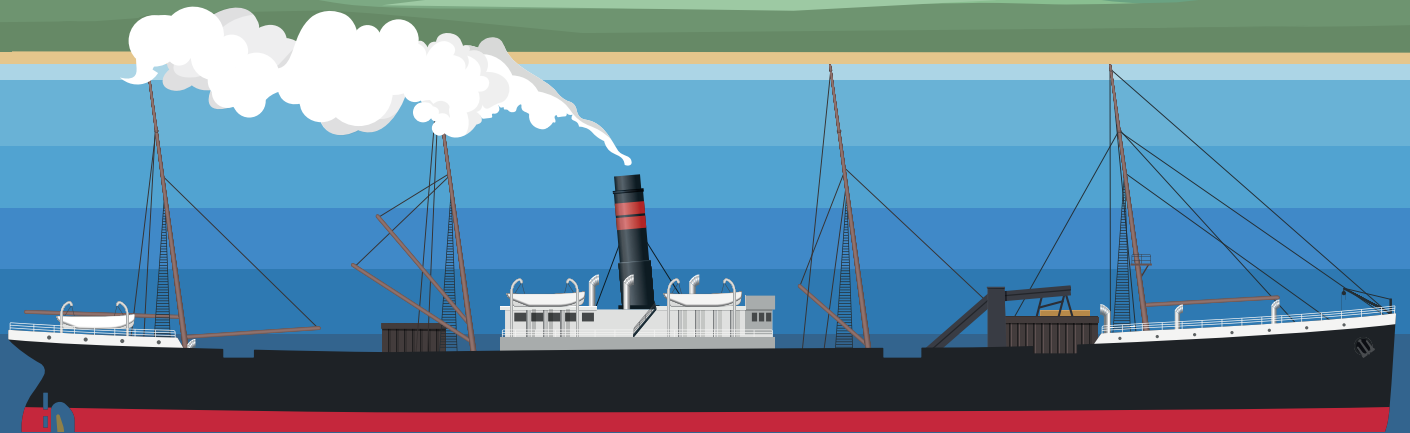


EXHIBITION

THE ST. LAWRENCE RIVER

ECHOES FROM THE SHORES

From November 30, 2023 to March 3, 2024



THE ST. LAWRENCE RIVER

ECHOES FROM THE SHORES

🌊 NATIONAL HERITAGE 🌊

An exceptional living environment, the St. Lawrence is designated as part of our “national heritage”. As the main axis of communication between riverside communities, the river’s watershed is home to over 23 million people, including over 2 million in the Montréal archipelago. Its 3,260 km length stretches from Lake Superior in Ontario to Cabot Strait in northern Nova Scotia.



▲ A diving suit allows the wearer to work underwater for several hours at a time. When port facilities were being built in the early 20th century, this type of equipment was used to carry out underwater construction. Diving helmet. Brass and copper.



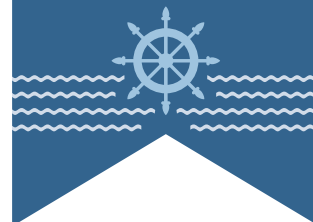
◀ Reproduction of the figurehead from the sailing ship *Lady Edmonton*.

AREA: 1.6 million km²

AVERAGE FLOW AT QUÉBEC CITY: 12,600 m³/s

GLOBAL FRESHWATER RESERVES DRAINED BY ITS HYDROGRAPHIC SYSTEM: 25 %

TRIBUTARIES: 244



THE FINAL VOYAGE OF THE EMPRESS OF IRELAND



▲ Built in Scotland in 1906, the *Empress of Ireland*, of a gross tonnage of 14,000, was 550 feet (167.64 metres) long. With 10 watertight bulkheads, it could carry equipment such as an iceberg detection system and 40 lifeboats with a total capacity of 1,850 people. Model of the ocean liner *Empress of Ireland*. 1998

The St. Lawrence remains one of the world's most difficult rivers to navigate. Currents can reach a speed of 5.9 knots (11 km/h) in certain zones. The impressive tides affect the water level four times a day, reaching an average height of up to 6 metres near Québec City. Unfortunately, many navigators, crews, and passengers have lost their lives or have been shipwrecked in these difficult waters.

The *Empress of Ireland's* last voyage took place on May 29, 1914, two years after that of the *Titanic*. This shipwreck remains the deadliest in Canadian peacetime history. Regularly linking Québec to Liverpool, England, the Canadian Pacific transatlantic ocean liner collided with the Norwegian coal freighter *Storstad* off the coast of Rimouski. In just 14 minutes, the *Empress* sank, with only 465 of the 1,489 people on board surviving the wreck.



◀ The *Empress of Ireland* had several dining rooms, salons, and bars where passengers could enjoy various types of liquor during their crossing. Bottles of wine or champagne from the wreck of the *Empress of Ireland*. Pre-1914.



◀ Order transmitter from the gangway or wheelhouse, used to mechanically communicate orders to the engine room. Circa 1910

🌊 A RIVER AT WAR 🌊

The St. Lawrence was the scene of some major battles. In 1690, American admiral Sir William Phips' attempt to conquer Québec City pitted the French against the British. The latter made their way along the river towards Québec, after having seized Percé. Led by Phips, the armed invasion first attacked Beauport, they attempted to take Québec City... to no avail. Phips and his troops were forced to retreat. At that point, violent storms sank several ships in his fleet, including the *Elizabeth and Mary*. Designated a heritage object by the Ministère de la Culture et des Communications du Québec, its wreck was found in 1994, near Baie-Trinité on the Côte-Nord.

A German Incursion

With the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, the Canadian government transformed the port of Gaspé into a naval base that could accommodate British Royal Navy ships. Observation posts were also set up along the coasts in Gaspésie, the Lower St. Lawrence, and the North Shore, for fear of a German incursion into the St. Lawrence. With the Germans trying to undermine Allied troops, the Port of Montréal was strategically important. Known as the "Battle of the St. Lawrence," this confrontation was part of the much wider Battle of the Atlantic.



◀ Traditional Scottish marriage brooch, given by the groom to his bride on their wedding day. The heart symbolizes love, and the crown represents loyalty. This type of accessory was among the objects used during the fur trade. At first reserved for chiefs, the brooches went on to be used as decorations on traditional First Nations dress in the 18th century. What was the "Heart of the St. Lawrence" brooch doing on the *Elizabeth and Mary*? It remains a complete mystery. Silver. Pre-1690.

Ministère de la Culture et des Communications Collection, Laboratoire et réserve d'archéologie du Québec.

Photo: Émilie Deschênes



▲ Archaeological research on the wreck of the *Elizabeth and Mary* (1995 to 1997) revealed a microcosm of the crew's Bostonian society of the time. Bowl used for food, with a decorated handle. Tin. Pre-1690.

Ministère de la Culture et des Communications Collection, Laboratoire et réserve d'archéologie du Québec.

Photo: Alain Vandal



▲ Handle with sword guard, used by officers and aristocrats. Silver, wood, copper alloy. Pre-1690.

Ministère de la Culture et des Communications Collection, Laboratoire et réserve d'archéologie du Québec.

Photo: Joey Leblanc



▲ Four of the Canada Steamship Lines' white boats, the matching *Richelieu*, *Quebec*, *Tadoussac*, and *St-Lawrence*, sailed the St. Lawrence and the Saguenay from 1928 to 1965. This is a model of the *Tadoussac*, a ship built by Davie Shipbuilding in 1928. 1989.

~~~~~ FUN ON THE RIVER ~~~~~

Steamboats outfitted with paddle wheels brought about a whole revolution in maritime transportation and in the development of holiday resorts on the shores of the St. Lawrence. In 1809, brewer John Molson launched the *Accommodation*, Canada's first steamboat. Faster and more reliable than sail boats at the time, "steamers" could also carry more passengers. This type of navigation reached its peak around 1845, when John Molson Jr. put into service two boats that could sail between Montréal and Québec City in about twelve hours. The St. Lawrence Steamboat Company owned some 36 vessels, the largest fleet of steamboats in America!

The merger of several maritime transport companies in 1913 led to the creation of Canada Steamship Lines. The company operated the famous "white boats" cruise circuit, as well as luxury hotels for its wealthy summer clientele. The boats could carry around 500 passengers. At the time, the most popular resorts were in the Lower St. Lawrence region. In 1965, Canada Steamship Lines announced that it would be ending its cruises due to a decrease in clients, as cars had replaced ships as the preferred means of tourist transportation.



▲ Gravy boat from the Clarke Steamship Company, which carried both goods and passengers.

CHARLEVOIX'S WATER CARS

In the early 19th century, wooden boats were built at small and larger work sites along the shores of the St. Lawrence. By the end of the century, no less than 2,000 boats had been built. Some 550 vessels constructed in Gaspésie between 1760 and the end of the 19th century were used for transporting cod, commerce, coastal navigation, hunting marine mammals, and fishing. Nicknamed “water cars” in the Charlevoix region, St. Lawrence schooners, adapted to the specific conditions of the river, allow villagers to export farm and forest surpluses to urban zones and to return with manufactured goods.

▼ The shallow depth of Lac Saint-Pierre (3.3 m) limited the passage of large vessels with a deep draught. With the dredging of the lake, beginning in the mid-19th century, the Port of Montréal could finally accommodate transoceanic ships, thereby gradually supplanting the Port of Québec City. Model of the dredger Hopper Barge No. 1, built at the George T. Davie & Sons shipyard in Lauzon. 1913.



▲ Cap worn by navigator Joseph-Elzéar Bernier who made 267 Atlantic crossings and explored the Arctic. Seal skin. 1904-1925.

The first woman to run a shipyard

The saga of the Davie shipyard on the shores of the river begins with a love story. In 1817, Captain Allison Davie berthed in Québec City to have his ship repaired by Georges Taylor. Élizabeth, the shipbuilder's daughter, fell for Davie... and love blossomed! In 1829, the spouses founded a shipyard in Lévis. Seven years later, Allison drowned in the waters of the river. Élizabeth courageously took over as head of the company. She became the first woman in Canada to operate a shipyard, a role she would hold for the next 15 years. Today, Davie remains one of the most esteemed shipbuilders in Québec and Canada.



◀ The St. Lawrence schooner is the embodiment of a whole period in the history of navigation in Québec. Model of the schooner *La Juliette*.



During their travels, sailors would decorate and personalize their trunks. Trunk used to hold personal effects. Wood covered with sealskin. 19th century. ▶

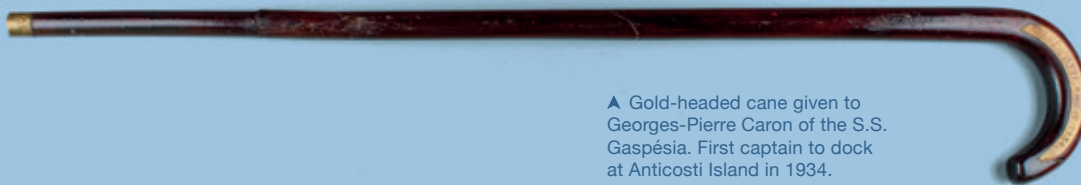


🌊 CROSSING THE ST. LAWRENCE 🌊

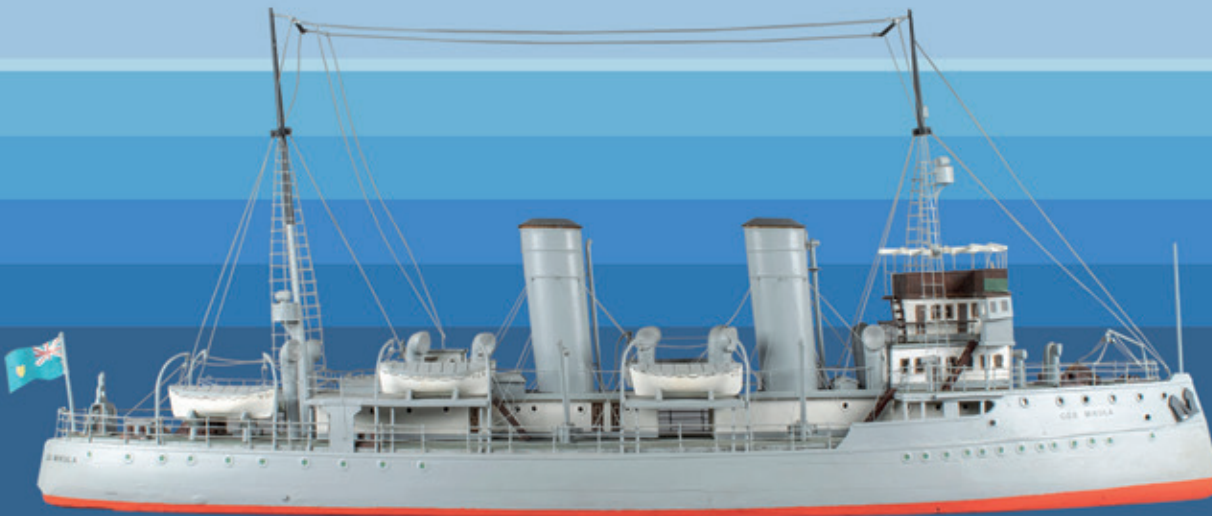
Inaugurated in 1836, Lachapelle Bridge, which spans Rivière des Prairies, was the first bridge to link Montréal and Île Jésus (Laval). Originally built out of wood, it was replaced with a metal structure in 1882 and rebuilt starting in 1930. The most recently inaugurated bridge is Samuel-de Champlain Bridge—linking Montréal to Brossard—, which opened to traffic on July 1st, 2019. It replaces the outdated Champlain Bridge. The lanes are spread across three independent decks, making it one of the widest bridges in the world.

Travelling under some of the bridges that span the St. Lawrence, the captain of the first ship arriving at a Québec port from overseas, without having made a stop since its departure, receives a gold-headed cane. This tradition goes back close to 200 years, often leading to “races” between foreign captains.

In 1904, icebreakers were put into service—not to facilitate wintertime navigation but rather to prevent ice jams, protect against flooding and, in the winter, supply isolated villages in eastern Québec. Winter navigation on the St. Lawrence River began in 1955.



▲ Gold-headed cane given to Georges-Pierre Caron of the S.S. Gaspésia. First captain to dock at Anticosti Island in 1934.



▲ Model of the icebreaker C.G.S. Mikula. Circa 1940.

