



Montreal's Irish Mafia: The True Story of the Infamous West End Gang

D'Arcy O'Connor

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Their names resonate with organized crime in Montreal: the Matticks, MacAllisters, Johnstons and Griffins, and Peter Dunie Ryan. They are the Irish equivalent of the infamous Rizzuto and Cotroni families, and the "Mom" Bouchers and Walter Stadnicks of the Hells Angels. Award-winning producer, journalist and author D'Arcy O'Connor narrates the genesis and rise to power of one of Montreal's most powerful, violent and colorful criminal organizations. It is the West End Gang, whose members controlled the docks and fought the Hells Angels and Mafia for their share of the city's prostitution, gambling, loan sharking and drug dealing. At times, they did not disdain forging alliances with rival gangs when huge profits were at stake, or when a killing needed to be carried out.

The West End Gang—the Irish Mafia of Montreal—is a legendary beast. They sprang out of the impoverished southwest of the city, some looking for ways to earn enough just to survive, some wanting more than a job in an abattoir or on a construction site. In that sense, they were no different from other immigrants from Italy and other European countries. A shortcut to wealth was their common goal. And Montreal, with its burgeoning post-WWII population, was ripe for the picking.

The Irish Mob made headlines with a spectacular Brinks robbery in 1976, using the money to broker a major heroin and cocaine trafficking ring. It took over the Port of Montreal, controlling the flow of drugs into the city, drugs which the Mafia funnelled to New York. The West End Gang had connections to the cocaine cartel in Colombia; hashish brokers in Morocco and France; and marijuana growers in Mexico. The gang imported drugs on an enormous scale. One bust that took place off the coast of Angola in 2006 involved 22.5 tonnes of hashish, destined for Montreal.

The West End Gang is a ripping tale that unveils yet another chapter in Montreal's colorful criminal underworld.

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