

The question of Kateri's resting place still lingers



COURTESY VILLE DE MONTREAL ARCHIVES

A far-away look at Kateri Tekakwitha's alleged tomb along the water in 1890 in Kahnawake.



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A closeup of the tomb, a structure made of wooden posts, roof and fence.

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The remains of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha now rest at the St. Francis Xavier Church in Kahnawake, but how they got there is a story in itself.

These two photographs were found on the Ville de Montreal website on the archives page. They are both images taken in Kahnawake by Montreal photographer Edgar Gariépy in the early 1900s. Gariépy took a series of photos in the community of various places and people.

The photo on the left is a shot of a house on the water and on the right is supposedly Kateri's tomb be-

fore she was moved to the Catholic Church. The photo on the right is a close-up of the tomb, built out of wood.

Underneath the photograph, there was an incomplete inscription that says the Saint-Marie church in Albany, New York commissioned the tomb in 1890, however it is unclear as there is missing text.

The Eastern Door was unable to reach the appropriate parties from the Catholic Church and the Kanien'kehaka Raotitiohkwa Cultural Centre as to the truth behind this tomb.

The documentation that could be found often contradicts one another or leaves gaps in the story.

The photo on the right was featured in a 1922 book, 'Historic Caughnawaga', written by E.J. Devine. In his book, Devine makes mention of Kateri several times. One passage reads, "She was buried in a little cemetery close to the edge of the river and her tomb became a trysting-place for pilgrims who began to invoke her intercessory power with God."

Because she died on April 17, 1680, the location of her original tomb could not be the same as the one in this photo. In 1680, Kahnawake was located at the modern day site of Cote St. Catherine.

There are other writings, on website www.levillee.net, that say

her remains were stored in the church of Cote Sainte-Catherine after her death. Devine's book says her remains had been buried in that church, but only after they were removed from the cemetery by the missionaries who brought them into the church.

"The missionaries believed they were but paying a just tribute to her virtue when they removed her remains...the removal was completed in the night in the presence of the most devout of the village, who began to kneel and pray at her tomb," reads another passage from *Historic Caughnawaga*.

Leveillee.net's page about Kateri reads, "White-haired pilgrims

may remember having seen them (her remains) in a sealed glass box which would be taken out of the rectory vault every morning with great veneration."

The site also states that when the Saint-Francis Xavier Mission finally settled down in the modern day location of Kahnawake, opposite Lachine, in 1720 her bones were also brought there. If the church was opened by this year, and Kateri's remains were brought in at that time, why then would there be a need for a tomb in 1890? These questions remain unanswered, for now.

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