Three Came With Gifts

The Story of the First Hospital, The First School and the First Cloister in Canada and Their Heroic Founders

by

Anna B. Monteuril.

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Three Came With Gifts

1. Introduction

Among the remarkable women who have made history, the names of the French ladies who in 1639 founded in Quebec the first hospital, as well as the first convent for girls in North America, should be written in letters of gold.

Incidentally, in establishing these necessary institutions on this continent they also transplanted, in the colony of New France, the Old Latin culture of their native land. In the light of conditions as they exist at this time, these two Orders of Nuns—the Augustinian Hospitalières, and the Dames Ursulines —seem to have been predestined to become the depositaries, as well as the transmitters, of a culture and tradition now menaced with impending changes in a Europe that stands at the parting of the ways, and trembles on the brink of another era of civilization....

Penetrated as they were by the Christian ideal of regeneration for all, these noble missionaries diffused, with their religious teachings and practices, the ideas and customs of their native land. They thus contributed to the formation of several generations of Canadians whom they trained in the virtues most essential to the happiness and stability of the colony. The racial and

religious survival of the French element in Canada—which some might look upon as a miracle—is directly traceable to the influence they exercised.

Indeed, it is to the religious revival and apostolic fervour which swept across France in the second quarter of the seventeenth century that we are indebted for the ministrations, in Canada, of those dedicated men and women who, with breviary and crucifix, came to evangelize the natives of New France more, it has been claimed, "for the glory of God than for the benefit of the King of France!"

We cannot but marvel at the courage of these brave "soldiers of Christ" whose lives "present a picture rarely, if ever, equalled in the annals of privations and perseverance," and who became the very nuclei of the several colonies on the newly-settled continent of North America.

2. Three Widows

It is difficult to find, in fiction, more dramatic and interesting reading than that furnished by the story of three noble French widows—the Duchesse d'Aiguillon, Madame de la Peltrie, and Madame Joseph Claude Martin—who, giving up the honours of the Court and the happiness of the home, devoted their lives and fortunes to the realization of mystical dreams of service among the Indians of the new French colony. But they were destined to do more than this, for they were to change the tone of a whole continent. And to be qualified for this mission, which

was to have such far-reaching consequences, they must needs experience the whole gamut of human emotions: they must love, and grieve; mourn, and suffer!

3. La Duchesse d'Aiguillon

Outstanding for her great beauty, her high birth and unusual achievements was the powerful Dame Marie Madeleine de Wignerod, Duchesse d'Aiguillon. She was the daughter of René de Wignerod, Lord de Pont Courlai and de Glanai, a nobleman of English origin who went to France during the reign of Charles VII, in whose service he attained the most exalted honours, and of Françoise du Plessis, sister of Cardinal Richelieu.

From her earliest years, this pious young lady wished to become a nun, but her father would not give his consent. Her uncle, the Cardinal, was then gaining favour at the Court of Louis XIII. Ambitious for his niece, he made her Lady of the Bedchamber of her Majesty, Queen Marie de Médicis, and soon arranged her marriage to the most eligible nobleman of France, Antoine de Beauvoir du Roure de Combalet. High-spirited and full of courage, the daring warrior covered himself with glory in the army and was killed in action under the walls of Montpellier two years later.

His young widow of eighteen was heart-broken. Ignoring the opposition of her family, she entered the Carmelite Order; but her health was not strong enough to withstand the severity

of the novitiate and, much to her regret, she was forced to leave the cloister and resume her duties as maid of honour to the Queen.

From this time, however, the gaieties and pleasures of Court life palled upon her, and she dedicated herself to deeds of mercy. Using her influence and immense fortune for the relief of the poor and the afflicted, the Duchesse founded asylums, hospitals—among which is the Grand Hôpital de Paris. She also took a great interest in the reform of prisons, and expended considerable sums for the redemption of slaves, as well as for the care and establishment of galley-slaves and convicts for whom suitable work was provided in humane conditions.

In times of epidemics and famine, none was more devoted than the young Duchesse d'Aiguillon who ministered personally to the sick and to the unfortunate. Besides all this, her missionary fervour went so far as to equip a vessel destined for China, but the ill-fated ship never reached port; it was lost in a storm at sea.

Not long after this misfortune, the reading of the Jesuit *Relations* so impressed her that she conceived the plan to found a hospital for the Indians, in Kébec (Quebec). She therefore explained her project to the Augustinian Canonesses of Dieppe, who were reputed for their charity and for the successful operation of their hospital in that city.

They responded with enthusiasm, for they considered it not only a compliment but a privilege to be chosen to participate in a work of mercy so highly recommended by the noblewoman's Father Confessor and spiritual director, the admirable Vincent de Paul, since canonized as a saint in the Catholic Church.

Great became the emulation among the Augustinians, for every Sister hoped to be chosen to carry the work of God into

the new land of America. After some deliberation, it was decided that the vote should be taken, and the names of three Sisters under thirty years of age were drawn from the urn. These were Marie Guenet de St. Ignace; Anne Lecointre de St. Bernard; and Marie Forestier de St. Bonaventure de Jésus.

Marie Guenet de St. Ignace was thus given the opportunity to fulfil a vow she had made while ill, that if she recovered her health she would devote her life to the care of the Indians of Canada. Also, being the eldest she was elected Superior of the trio who were to realize the dreams of the Duchesse d'Aiguillon to found the first hospital on the continent of North America.

4. Madame de la Peltrie

In other parts of France at about the same time, fate was busy preparing the way for the establishment of the first Ursuline Convent across the Atlantic.

The lovely and wealthy Marie Madeleine de Chauvigny was but seventeen when she became the bride of the Chevalier Charles de Gruel, Seigneur de la Peltrie.

Left alone by the death of both her husband and her child, after only five years of wedded life, she dedicated her life and fortune to missionary work. So opposed were her friends and relatives to this course that, after trying in vain to dissuade her, they brought suit against her in order to prevent her from having the free use of her inheritance.

For a while everything seemed to go against her.

When she became seriously ill, her relatives thought that she would abandon her ideas of philanthropy, but they were mistaken. Instead of weakening her resolve, it served to strengthen it for she, too, made a vow that if her health were restored she would go to Canada and build a convent for the little girls of that country.

The beautiful young widow recovered her health. Shortly afterwards she won her lawsuit, and then set about to fulfil her vow.

Not knowing how to proceed nor to whom she should apply for nuns to carry out her plan, she consulted Father Poncet, a Jesuit priest, who was on the eve of returning to Quebec.

It was also through him that the charitable Madame de la Peltrie met the mystical Mère Marie de l'Incarnation, an Ursuline nun of Tours who, several years previously, had had a vision that she was to live and die as a teacher in a foreign land across the sea.

5. Mère Marie de l'Incarnation

This remarkable nun, née Marie Guyart, had been married to Joseph Claude Martin when only seventeen. Widowed at nineteen, with a babe of six months, she devoted herself to her little Claude with all the love of her ardent nature.

Gradually, however, her passion for the religious life, especially for missionary work, which had been thwarted by her parents' ambitions for her future, came to the fore with redoubled

intensity. When her son was nearly twelve, she persuaded him to consent to her taking the veil in the Ursuline Order founded by Sainte Angèle de Mérici, at Brescia, Italy, in 1535.

It was not long before the poor lad had cause to regret having agreed to his mother's plans. Desolate and lonely, the unhappy boy would leave the home of his relatives and run to the convent. Here, with his face pressed against the heavy, sieve-like iron door, he would sob and cry to the invisible nun on the other side, "I want my mother!" At other times he would enter the reception room and would shake the cloister grating, screaming at the top of his lungs, "Give me back my mother! Give me back my mother!"

Although it nearly broke her heart, Marie de l'Incarnation persisted in her new vocation. Her son was almost fourteen when she pronounced the vows that irrevocably separated her from him. He was twenty when she left with Madame de la Peltrie to found, at Quebec, the convent which, after three centuries, still keeps its foremost rank among institutions of learning for girls.

If the heroic widowed-mother-nun never again saw her son, she nonetheless kept very close to him through her unusual and regular letters.

What Marie de l'Incarnation was to accomplish in her convent at Quebec for the advancement of the Ursulines, her son was destined to do for the Benedictines. In 1641, when he was twenty-two, he became a monk in that Community at St. Maur on the Marne in France; and during his fruitful life of seventy-seven years, he was the most Reverend Abbot of various houses of his Order for a period of over forty-four years.

When his mother died in 1672, Dom Claude Martin published her remarkable correspondence. This, together with the

Jesuit *Relations,* constitutes one of the most precious sources of information on the early life and problems of the French colony in Canada.

6. Preparing the Way

Meanwhile, the Duchesse d'Aiguillon had not been inactive. The contract for the foundation of her proposed hospital in Quebec was signed on August 16, 1637, and grants of land comprising seven and a half acres in the town and sixty acres in the suburbs between Cap Rouge and St. Genevieve Hill were secured from the Company of One Hundred Associates which then held the fur monopoly in Canada.

The following year several workmen were sent to Quebec to clear the smaller forest lot situated on the flank of the mountain and extending to the St. Charles River, in the locality still called the *Palais* after the Intendant's Palace which was built near the river.

Up to this time great obstacles had delayed the success of the Ursuline Convent venture. There were, on the one hand, the antagonism of Madame de la Peltrie's family and the resistance that Marie de l'Incarnation was also encountering from her relatives; on the other hand were the difficulties they met in their quest for companions willing to help them in the foundation they both had so much at heart.

Madame de la Peltrie was given a gala reception at the Ursuline Convent of Tours where Marie de l'Incarnation had

become a nun. Here, the two enthusiastic pioneers succeeded in finding their first recruit in the person of a young nun of twenty-two, called Marie de St. Joseph. This interesting woman, whom the Ursuline *Annals* describe as "angelic," consented to accompany the foundresses to Canada despite the objections of her father to her exile from France.

One more nun must still be found to compose the customary trio.

Two unsuccessful visits were made by Madame de la Peltrie and Marie de l'Incarnation to Queen Anne of Austria to secure her aid in persuading the nuns of the Paris Grand Couvent de St Jacques to send one of their Ursulines to Quebec. But they would not be convinced.

Mère de Ste. Croix from the Convent of Dieppe at last agreed to complete the trio.

Marie de l'Incarnation was jubilant. Her forty years, as well as her greater experience, naturally designated her as the Superior of the Ursuline group, just as Mère de St. Ignace had been chosen for that of the Augustinians.

7. *Some Arresting Similarities*

It might be thought merely a coincidence that the two patronesses of the first hospital and of the first convent in America—the Duchesse d'Aiguillon and Madame de la Peltrie—should both have been christened by the same name of *Marie Madeleine.*

However, one cannot fail to be impressed by the strange likenesses also existing between the names of the two actual foundresses of the Augustinian and of the Ursuline Orders, in Quebec, who were *Marie Guenet* (de St. Ignace), and *Marie Guyart* (de l'Incarnation).

Yet, the significant parallels did not stop here, for the striking similarities of circumstances and motives that had so far encompassed and affected the organizers of the first teaching and of the first nursing institutions in North America, were to continue to the very shores of their country of adoption.

8. On the "St. Joseph"

It was an extraordinary destiny that brought the three Ursulines, their patroness, Madame de la Peltrie, and their maid servant, to share with the three Augustinians and their attendant the ship *St. Joseph,* which the Duchesse d'Aiguillon had chartered for her hospital project in Quebec. Three Jesuit Fathers, who were returning to Canada, completed the list of passengers of the flagship that weighed anchor at Dieppe on May 4, 1639.

In this age of speed, with its streamlined, floating palaces and swift aeroplanes, it seems hardly credible that the voyage lasted three whole months.

Forced to remain within sight of France by heavy winds, the *St. Joseph* was further delayed by being compelled eventually to flee to the coast of England to escape capture at the hands of the hostile Spaniards, who pursued them with a flotilla of some twenty vessels.

But no sooner had one danger been avoided than another arose to threaten the safety of the passengers. Icebergs off the coast of Newfoundland and, later, treacherous rocks, very nearly destroyed the ship. Through all these perils, never did a word of fear or of regret pass the lips of the missionaries.

9. The St. Lawrence River

Having reached Tadoussac, where all incoming ships had to stop, Captain Bontemps of the *St. Joseph* was obliged to tarry because a lifeboat he had ordered made was not finished. After waiting twelve days the impatient travellers continued their voyage with the second mate in a fisherman's bark, this being the only craft available.

Sailing by day, they would spend the night on shore in primitive huts which the sailors made of tree branches. At dawn the nuns would prepare a crude altar that they decorated with bedewed ferns and wild flowers. After mass and breakfast, off they would go, sailing until dusk.

In this manner, four days—not devoid of pleasure—were spent on the St. Lawrence River whose awe-inspiring grandeur astonished and charmed the Europeans.

On July 31, as Cap Tourmente came into view, joy filled every heart, for they were nearing the end of their long, weary journey. But contrary winds pushed their craft towards the coast of Beaupré, and evening found them on the shore of the uninhabited Island of Orleans where they had to spend the night.

While the sailors prepared their three huts, the virgin forest resounded to exulting psalms sung by the nuns, for they were in sight of their destination, at last!

10. Quebec

Next morning, August 1, 1639, before leaving the Isle of Bacchus as the island was then called, the sailors fired several shots from their muskets and lit a bonfire as a signal to the sentry at Quebec that something unusual was afoot.

A gaily decorated canoe was despatched by the Governor, Monsieur de Montmagny, Chevalier de Malte, to meet the long-expected missionaries, for the smaller vessel—loaded at Dieppe by Madame de la Peltrie with provisions, furniture and other necessities for the new convent—had arrived a few days before, and the monastic party was anxiously awaited in Quebec.

Concerning that festive occasion, Father Lejeune wrote in the *Relations:* "When we were informed that a ship was on its way to Quebec carrying a Jesuit college, a hospital of Nursing Sisters, and a convent of Ursulines, the news, at first, seemed to us like a dream!"

The Governor, accompanied by his troops, the clergy, and the colonists, then numbering some 250, gathered on the shore to watch the arrival of the eagerly awaited Sisters, nuns, and Jesuits.

The cheers of the crowd and a salvo of artillery from the Fort of Quebec greeted them as they landed with Mère St. Ignace in the lead.

All knelt down and kissed the ground.

With quickened hearts, they dedicated themselves to the service of this country of their adoption which was, henceforth, to be the theatre of their deeds of mercy and, some hoped secretly, of their martyrdom.

After a religious ceremony of thanksgiving in the Church of Notre Dame de Recouvrance, on the site of the present Basilica, the Governor invited the nuns and the Jesuit Fathers to lunch at his residence, the Chateau St. Louis, on the site of the present Chateau Frontenac.

In the afternoon, the Ursulines and Augustinians were taken to their respective quarters: the nuns, with Madame de la Peltrie, to the house at the foot of Mountain Hill, until lately occupied by the Hotel Blanchard; the Hospitalières, to the new storehouse erected that year by the One Hundred Associates, on the site of the present Anglican Church, on St. Ann Street.

That first night, as neither the Ursulines nor the Augustinians had any of their furnishings, they slept on the floor on fir branches. In her account of the first night in America, Mère St. Ignace wrote in the *Annals of the Hotel-Dieu* ". . . these were so filled with caterpillars that we were all covered with them. . . ."

11. Visit to Indian Settlement at Sillery

On the morrow they were invited to visit the Christian settlement of Algonquins and Hurons at Sillery, on the St. Lawrence River three miles above Quebec.

We read in the history of the Ursulines, that the beautiful Madame de la Peltrie, moved by the sight of the Indian children bent down to caress and kiss each one, and the nuns and Sisters did the same, whether the little ones were clean or filthy.

By nature cold and reserved, the Indians were astonished at such demonstrations of kindness. They gazed on in wonder and curiosity at these strange beings, the like of whom they had never before seen.

This was to be the nuns' last holiday, for upon their return that evening each Sisterhood cloistered itself within its temporary abode.

12. Learning the Indian Language

Once settled, the great preoccupation of both the Augustinians and the Ursulines was to learn the Indian language. Under the direction of the brilliant Father Lejeune, they therefore set themselves without delay to that difficult task, at which the Ursuline Superior, Marie de l'Incarnation, was to become so proficient that the *Dictionary of Indian Words* which she compiled is still valuable as a book of reference.

13. The "White Virgins"

From the first, the Algonquins and the Hurons brought their tents and lived around the house of the "White Virgins," as they called the Hospitalières, whom they found most unusual and

attractive in their long, white woollen dresses and knee-length linen surplices, the latter being the symbol of their rank as true Augustinian Canonesses.

The Dames Ursulines are dressed in black, but the becoming headdress of immaculate linen that swathes the head and falls in a rounded guimpe to the shoulders, as well as the long black veils, are very similar in both orders.

14. Epidemic of Smallpox

No sooner were the Ursulines established in their small house in Lower Town, than six Indian girls were brought to live with them.

By the end of that first month of August an epidemic of smallpox had broken out in the colony. In the sixteen-foot room which served as refectory, living-room, dormitory, and classroom, mattresses were laid on the floor for the sick Indians and these so filled the space available that the nuns had to step over them in order to move about from one patient to another.

At the hospital it was even worse.

All the Indians being ill, they were brought in such numbers that the large ward reserved for them was soon filled to capacity.

Outside in the court, within an enclosure of wooden stakes, long birchbark huts were quickly set up and within a few weeks these were so littered with plague-stricken patients that the kitchen had to be converted into an extra dormitory.

Often the Sisters would find their patients rolled in their blankets and lying *under* the beds instead of *in* them! It was very difficult to accustom these natives to civilized ways of living. It was also quite a problem for the Sisters to find material with which to clothe the Indians, who wore nothing save beaver pelts that were abandoned only when these fell to pieces! There was also an urgent need for bandages, and a time came when the bed linen had to be sacrificed. Then, as a last resort, the Augustinians gave up their own extra garments, even to their surplices and guimpes.

15. Difficulties

Privations of every sort—overwork in primitive, crowded, unsanitary quarters where they faced revolting conditions of squalor among the victims of the distressing infection; no water except what was brought up from the St. Charles River down the hill, where the hospital clothes had to be washed in the primitive way—it was under such handicaps that these three heroic Augustinians, with only the help of their young French servant, Catherine, organized the first hospital in America.

Weakened by incessant toil and insufficient sleep, it is no wonder that the three Sisters took sick with the dread disease. Some devoted women of the colony took care of them, while the Jesuit Fathers attended to the Indians.

Fortunately, the Sisters were not long in recuperating. As

soon as they were strong enough to walk they resumed their care of the sick, never giving a thought to their own convalescence.

Their implicit faith in a special providence which stood watch over them not only helped them through many tribulations, but exercised a sustaining influence on the colonists who were overwhelmed with misfortunes.

This was only the beginning of that long period lasting one hundred and fifty years, in which war, plague, pestilence, earthquake, famine, fire, death, and every imaginable distress and hardship assailed the new colony.

16. The "House of Death"

The smallpox epidemic lasted six months.

The stricken Indians died in such numbers that their relatives avoided the hospital in horror, calling it The House of Death. They fled to their forest retreats where the plague followed them and continued its ravages.

The following spring the survivors returned from the woods and, because they no longer had the strength to carry their canoes uphill to the hospital grounds, where they had encamped since the Augustinians' arrival in Quebec, they grouped themselves in the small village of Sillery.

The Sisters occupied the warehouse of the One Hundred Associates, which they had fitted out with relative comfort, until

the fire that destroyed the Jesuit Church and Convent, in June, 1640, obliged them to offer half of their hospital to the afflicted priests.

17. A la Pointe à Puiseaux

The inconvenience for both the Sisters and the Jesuits of such reduced quarters was so great that it could not be long endured. It was therefore with gratitude that the Augustinians accepted the offer of a house at the Pointe à Puiseaux, not far from the residence of the Lieutenant-Governor of the Province of Quebec, at Spencer Wood, now called *Le Bois de Coulonge.*

At this time the Indians again begged the Sisters to come to their settlement at Sillery. And as building operations on their Palace Hill lot in Quebec had been discontinued because there was no water on the land, the Augustinian Hospitalières accepted the invitation.

18. The Hospitalières at Sillery

The building was begun at Sillery in July of that year, and in the late fall, although the work was far from finished, the Hospitalières entered their new convent.

The outbreak of war beween the Iroquois and the Hurons caused great concern to the Augustinians, who feared for themselves and for their Hotel-Dieu. However, to their immense relief the next three years passed without untoward incidents from that quarter.

Still, they had many causes of worry besides the Indians, for three of the five Hospitalières were ill, and had it not been for the two new arrivals from their Mother-house at Dieppe that summer, the Hotel-Dieu would have been in a sorry predicament indeed.

These courageous women must have had strong constitutions to withstand the cold of that first winter in a building that had been raised so quickly, with unseasoned wood, that rain and snow entered through the cracks. The only means of heating was with open fires in the hearth, which "roast us on one side while we freeze on the other," as one of the Sisters wrote in the *Annals.*

As they were three miles from Quebec, there was great difficulty in securing food. This was so scarce and hard to get that after spending one whole day on the road the messenger frequently returned at night with but one egg, and very often it was frozen.

Their regular fare consisting of coarse bread, pork, and peas, with an occasional dessert of raisins or prunes, was far from a suitable diet for their patients, one of whom was desperately ill. At exorbitant cost a she-goat was finally bought, and there were hopes that her milk might help the delicate Mère Ste. Marie to recover her health. But it was too late. The young woman from Normandy, an only child brought up in luxury, could not survive so many hardships. She died at the age of twenty-eight, after spending but eight months in this country.

The annalist who recorded her death notes that, strangely enough, although not previously ill, the she-goat that had been bought specially for the ailing Sister also died on the same night.

19. The First Ursuline Convent

That same year, 1641, the Ursulines were building their first convent. So eager were they to leave their crowded quarters in Lower Town that they entered their nunnery on the hill before it was completed. Only the lower floors were laid, while the roofs were far from being weather-proof; but the nuns were as happy as queens to be in their own house, although "we sleep in wooden chests lined with serge or broadcloth in order to keep warm at night; and often, there is snow on our blankets," wrote Marie de l'Incarnation to her son.

Four fireplaces provided the only heating in the three-storey building, which measured 92 feet by 28 feet. In one of her letters the Superior explained that there was one fireplace at the end of the large room containing their cells, which were made of pine wood. "And do not think that one can long remain at a distance from the fire; it would be an excess to stay away one hour, and then, one's hands must be well covered. . . . Except for our religious observances, the place to read, write, or study is, of necessity, by the fireside. . . . We burn 175 cords of large logs in our four chimneys. . . . And despite the intensity of the cold, we have held our

offices in the Cloister Choir, although we do suffer, a little, from the cold. . . ." Not before 1668 were there any stoves in the building.

20. The Iroquois

The era of the Canadian martyrs had begun and in 1644 another Iroquois uprising wrought terror among the colonists of Canada. Now well supplied with arms and munitions by the Dutch of New Amsterdam (New York), and emboldened by their success at Ville-Marie (Montreal) and at *Trois Rivières,* the implacable barbarians were now planning to attack the Fort of Quebec.

The history of the Augustinian Hospitalières of the Hotel-Dieu and of the Ursuline Nuns in these years of tribulation is the history of Quebec.

The Governor, Monsieur de Montmagny, had received a message that Father Bressani, then held captive by the Iroquois, who did not suspect his knowledge of their dialect, had hastily written a message on a piece of birchbark and attached it to a stick that he had planted nearby. A friendly Huron captive, having found it, had managed to escape and had brought it to the Governor, who was horrified to read that the Iroquois were planning not only to attack the colony at Quebec but also to kidnap the White Virgins at Sillery.

Notwithstanding this new menace, the Sisters would not seek safety within the fortifications. "We would prefer death and torture rather than desert our patients," they said as they refused to leave the hospital.

Six soldiers were posted as sentries and new timbers and posts were added to strengthen the palisades surrounding their quarters. However, these entrenchments afforded but little protection for we read in the *Annals* that "the edge of the forest is removed from the palisades only the distance of a stone's throw."

21. Return of the Augustinian Nursing Sisters to Quebec

The danger became so imminent that the Governor forced the Sisters to return to Quebec where the militia were on the alert. The establishment at Sillery which was abandoned that year, 1644, was never reoccupied.

There was no choice for the Augustinians but to accept the house in Lower Town that the Ursulines and their native neophytes had previously inhabited.

This they transformed into a temporary hospital for, with the acquisition of two acres of land adjacent to their Palace Hill lot, through which ran a stream of clear water, work had been promptly resumed on the building of the Nursing Sisters' Convent and Hospital.

22. The Hotel-Dieu

The spring of 1646 marked not only the inauguration of the Augustinians' permanent establishment at the Hotel-Dieu, but, also, the return to their lovely white costumes which the squalor

at Sillery had forced them, "to dye with walnut bark and India wood, which give our garments the colour of chimney-sweeps' clothes."

23. Two Great Martyrs

Some time later the Iroquois resumed their war of extermination against the Hurons. Not satisfied with the wholesale massacre of four hundred persons at the village of St. Louis, they also captured and tortured Fathers Brébeuf and Lalemant.

It was on this supreme occasion that the heroic Brébeuf, mutilated and streaming with blood, told his companion who was gazing on him with infinite sorrow, "My brother, we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men!"

A bust of silver representing Father Brébeuf and containing the martyr's skull, as well as the bones of his companion, Father Lalemant, are among the most treasured and interesting relics owned by the Augustinians of the Hotel-Dieu of Quebec.

24. Fire at the Ursulines

On the bitter cold night of December 31, 1650, fire destroyed the first Ursuline Convent of Quebec.

Half-dressed, many of them barefoot, the nuns managed to save all the children under their care. Marie de l'Incarnation rescued the important papers and documents of the house and,

once out of danger, the Superior was so grateful that none of her household had perished that she gathered her nuns about her and, then and there, kneeling in the snow in the blinding glare of the flames that were consuming their beloved convent and all their earthly belongings, the heroic Ursulines recited the *Te Deum*.

After spending three weeks as the guests of the Augustinians at the Hotel-Dieu, the nuns took refuge in the small house built for Madame de la Peltrie six years before. This two-storey house, measuring 30 feet by 20 feet, had been erected some one hundred paces from the convent, and having escaped damage from the fire became the abode of the Community during the eighteen months the new convent was being raised on the original foundations, which the fire had fortunately left intact.

25. Birchbark Huts and the Famous Ash Tree

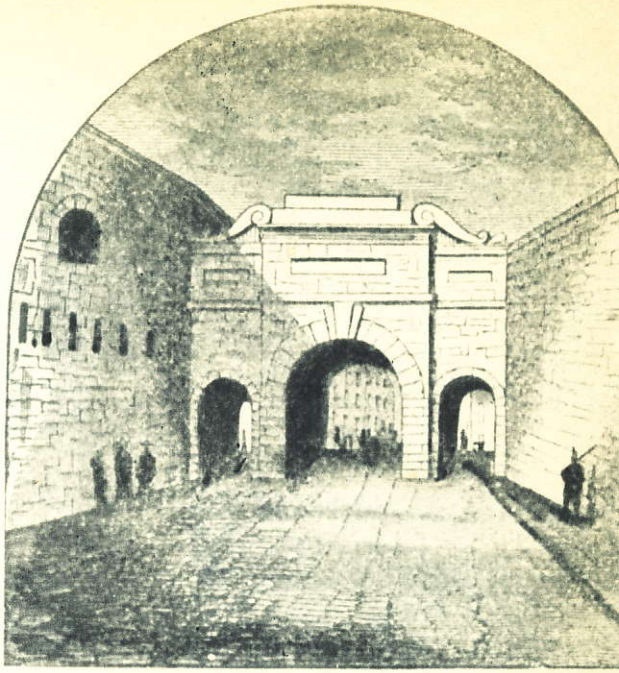
The Indian girls, meanwhile, were housed in birchbark huts during the summer months. Many a lesson was given them by the beloved Mère Marie de l'Incarnation under the shade of the famous centuries-old ash tree that was first mutilated, and finally broken, by violent storms, after having provided comfort and beauty to the Ursulines and their pupils for nearly two hundred and fifty years.

The new convent, inaugurated on May 30, 1652, was a much larger building than the first, and contained special quarters for

▶ Marie Madeleine de Wignerod, Duchesse d'Aiguillon, niece of Cardinal Richelieu, foundress of Hotel Dieu, first hospital in North America, 1639.

◀ Marie Madeleine de Chauvigny, Dame de la Peltrie, foundress of the Ursulines of Quebec, 1639. She lived and worked with them for 32 years.

▶ Mère Marie de l'Incarnation at age 40. Formerly Madame Joseph Claude Martin, she entered the Convent of Tours and came to Canada as an Ursuline.

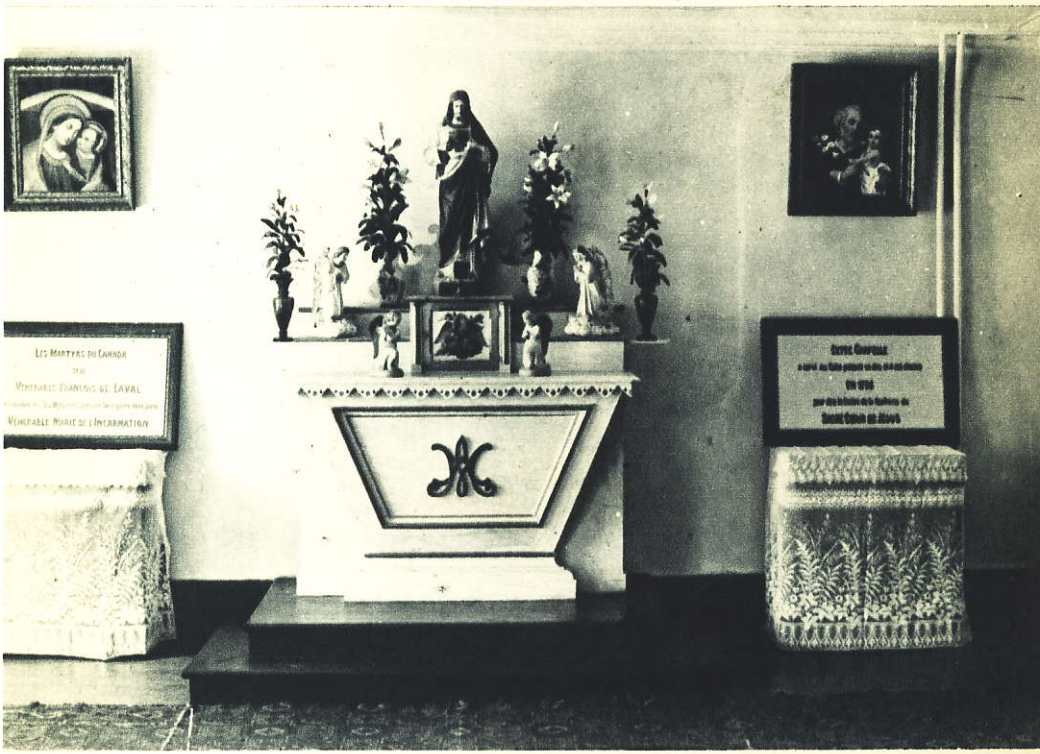


▶ Palace Gate, Quebec, built in 1750, rebuilt in 1831, razed in 1871.

◀"View of Quebec from Point Levy, as drawn by Richard Short, after th Conquest.

▶West part of Quebec from the River St. Charles, as drawn by Richard Short, after the Conquest.

▲Jesuit Church and College, built 1728-32. Used by the Government after suppression of Jesuit Order. Present City Hall erected on its site.

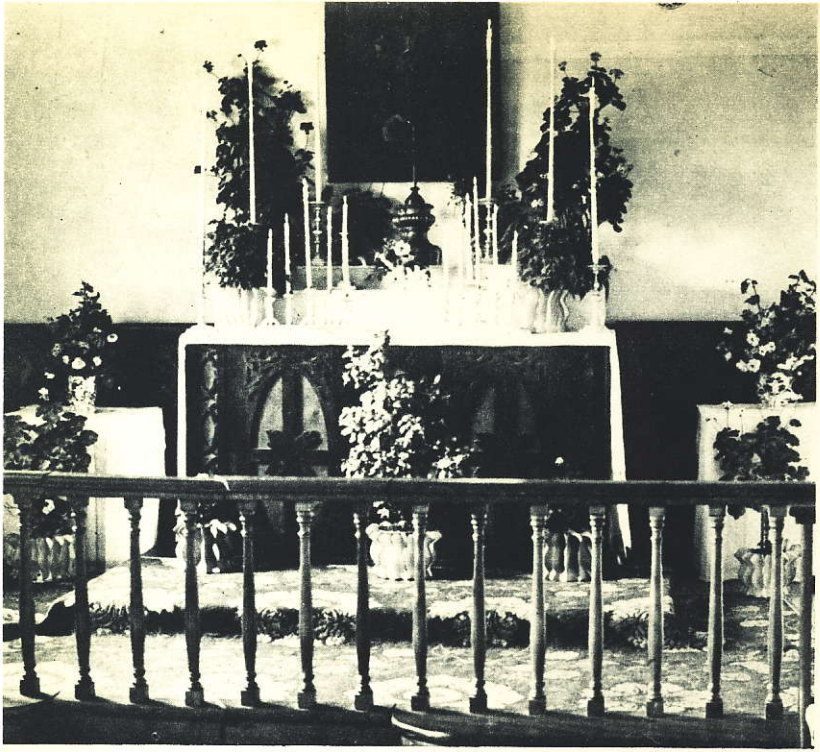


Primitive Altar in Ursuline Convent at which the martyred Jesuit Fathers officiated. Still used as an Oratory by the Ursulines.

◀ First Ursuline Convent, Quebec, 1641. Madame de la Peltrie's house and Huron tents in foreground. Painting by Légaré.

▶ The St. Louis Gate, Quebec, built in 1693, razed 1871.

◀ Hotel Dieu, Quebec, in 1800.

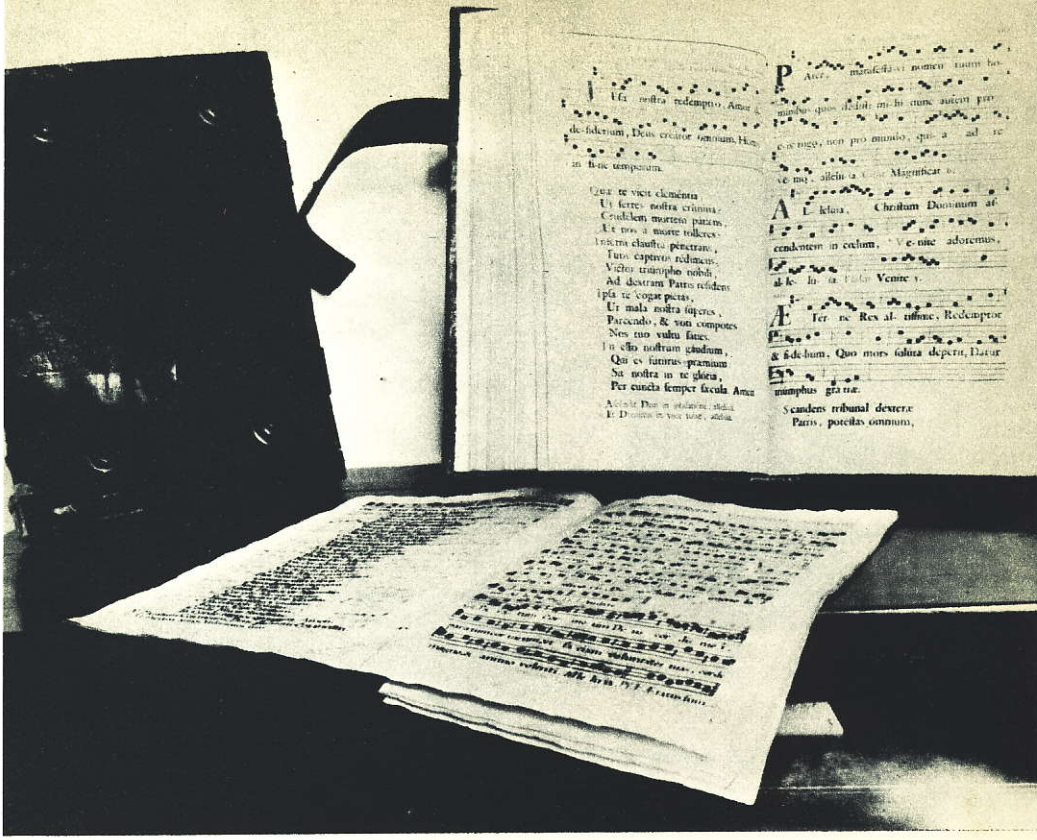


▲Infirmary Altar at Ursuline Convent.

▼Ex-voto painting of vessel miraculously saved from storm, sent by sailors from Havre to Augustinians of Quebec, 1739.

▲Hotel Dieu, Quebec, 1939.

▼Interior Court of Cloister, Hotel Dieu, Quebec, with harbour in background.



▲Antiphony used by Augustinian Nursing Sisters in their Cloister for over two centuries.

◀Notre Dame des Anges, revered by Ursulines of Quebec.

▲"Our Lady of All Graces"—a gift from sailors at Havre.

▲Cloister and Convent School of Ursulines, Quebec, 1639.

▲Ursuline Convent and Cloister a hundred years after founding. General Montcalm is buried here.

◀Gilded wooden statue of "Our Lady of Great Power," the Ursuline Order's Suzerain Queen, brought from France in 17th Century.

◀ Mgr. Jean-Baptiste de la Croix-Chevrières de St. Vallier, who became second Bishop of Quebec in 1688 at the age of 36 and founded the General Hospital.

▶ Jeanne-Françoise Juchereau de la Ferté, Mère St. Ignace, first Canadian Superior of the Augustinians (1650-1723).

▲Cloister with Nuns' cells, Augustinian Convent.

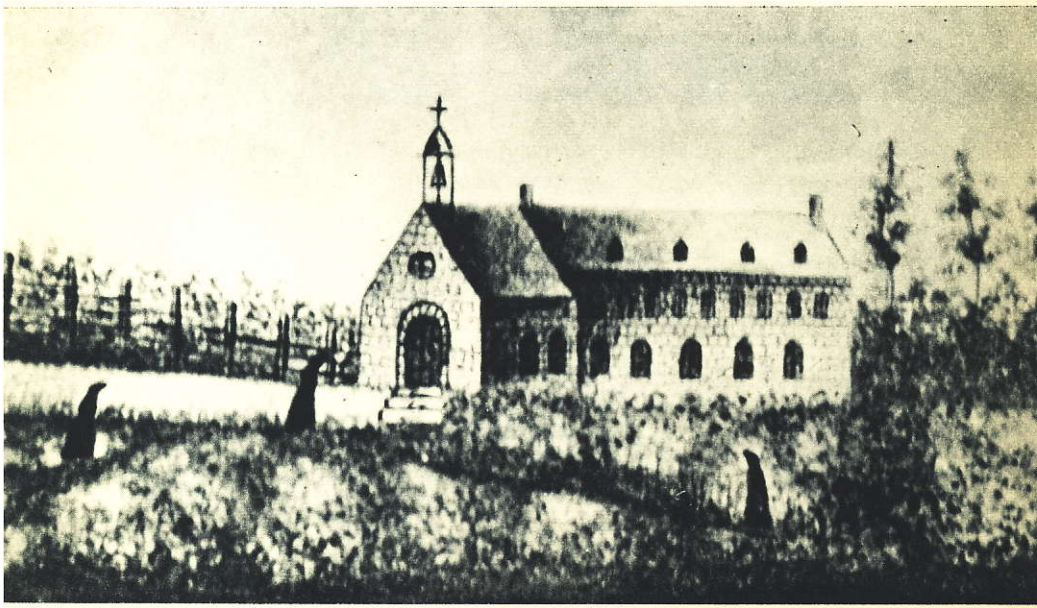
▼The General Hospital in 1800.

▲High Altar, outside Chapel, at the Ursulines, 1732.

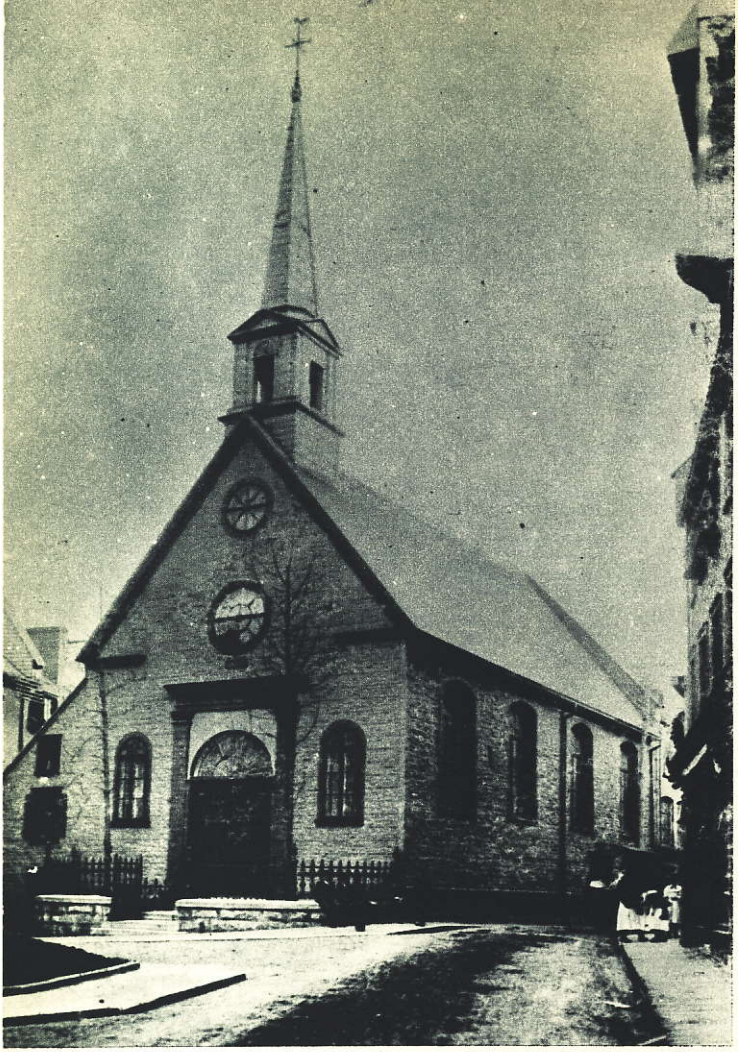
▶ Defence of Quebec, 1758-59, drawn by Richard Short.

▲Subterranean Vaults at the Hotel Dieu.

◀Venerable Mère Marie de l'Incarnation, Foundress of the Ursulines of America and first Superior (1599-1672).



Second Convent of the Recollets, built in 1671, upon their return after capitulation of Quebec was declared void.



◀ Church of "Notre Dame des Victoires"

▶ Church of the Recollets

◀This stone corridor was a refuge when cannonballs fell on Chapel during bombardment of 1759. Pine table was used by General Murray when Convent became his temporary quarters.

Dormitory at Ursuline Convent at end of the 19th century.

▲Embroidery representing Mary Magdalena in her grotto in Marseilles (early 18th Century), sent by Duchesse d'Aiguillon to Augustinians at Quebec.

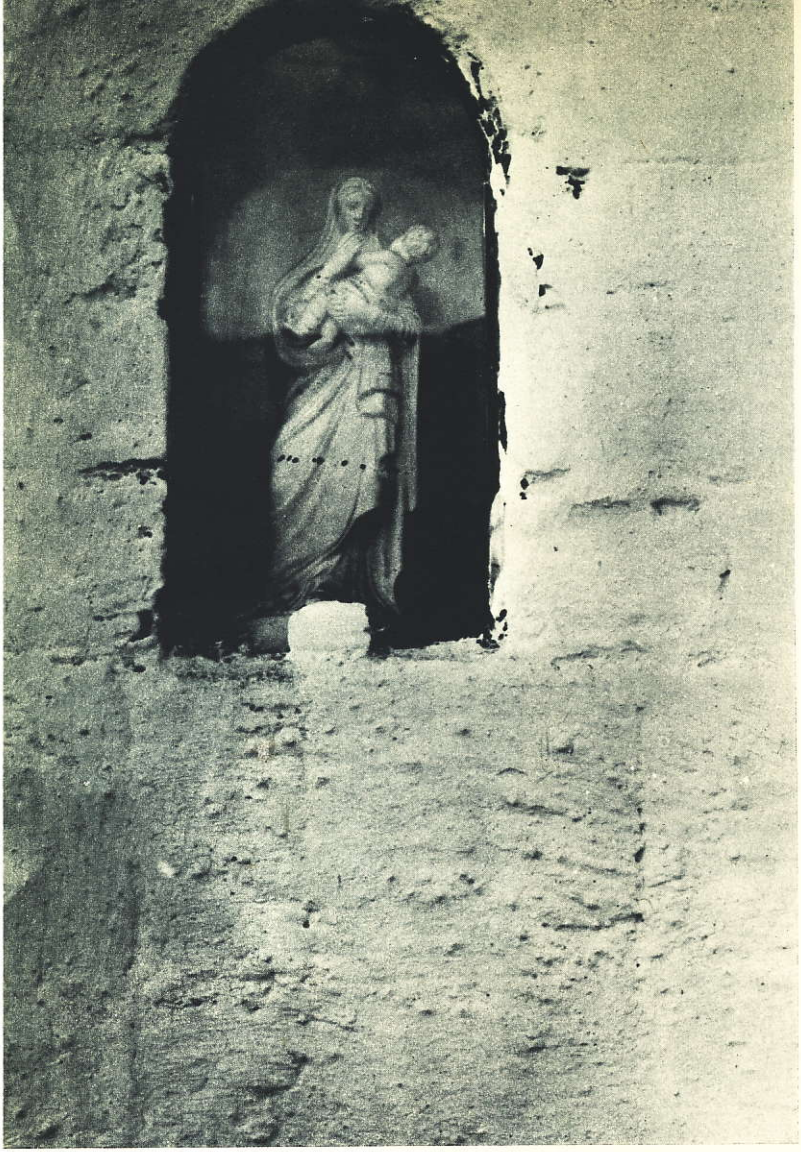
◀Cell used by Mère Marie d l'Incarnation. Oak sarcophagu contains her bones and those Madame de la Peltrie and her com panions. Boat represents the "S Joseph" which brought them fro Dieppe to Canada in 1639.

▲Ruins of Interior Choir, Ursuline Cloister, begun 1715, showing graceful windows and thick walls.

◀Cloister Choir as it was from 1722 until demolished and rebuilt in 1901.

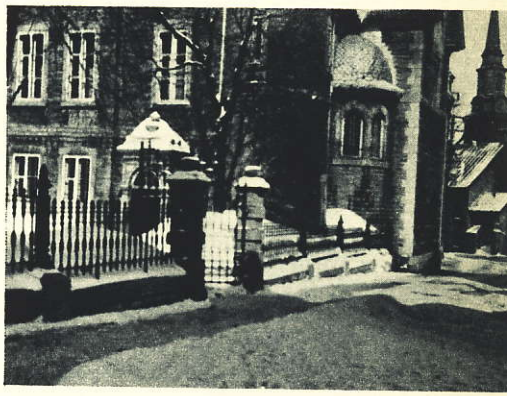
▲Basilica and Market Place, Quebec, 1832

◀Oratory in crypt of Hot
Di Wooden statu
survived the fire of 1755.



▲Stone Statue encased, according to custom, in outside wall of the first Hotel Dieu, built in 1646. It escaped injury in the fire of 1755, and occupies a niche in one of the walls of the present Augustinian Cloister.

◀Quaint "ru
Parloir" fro
reception wi
Ursuline Con
Quebec (1
1939), seen
St. Louis St

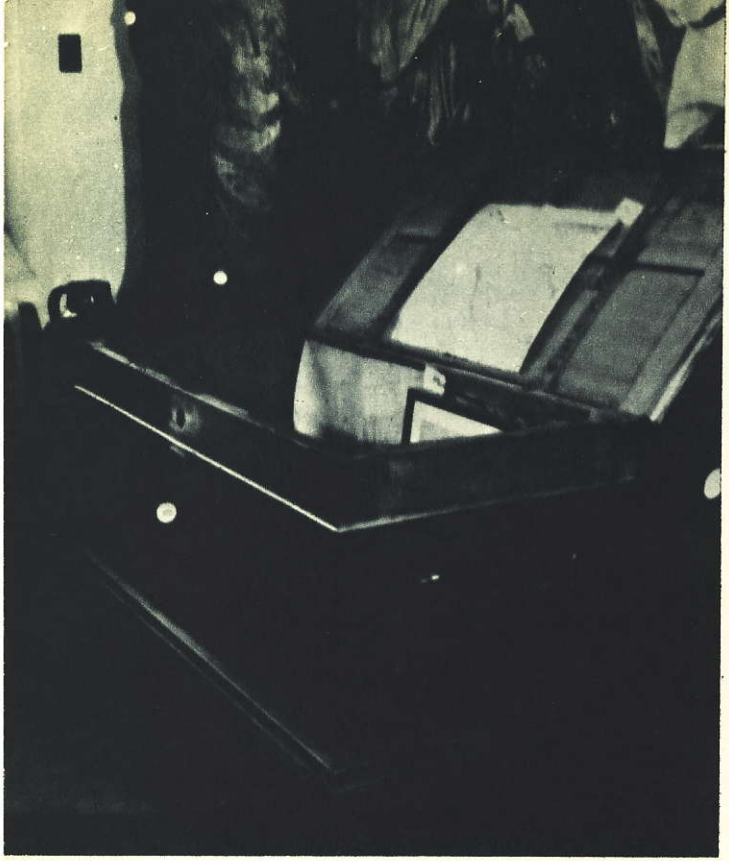


▶Entrance Gate, Ursuline Convent, Parlor Street, showing Chaplain's apartments, private door and east wall of Chapel.

◀Ursuline Convent in winter, see
from St. Louis Street.

▲Cloister Grate, Ursulines, Quebec. Plaque marks burial place of Montcalm.

▼Cloister Choir, Ursulines, Quebec, facing organ loft.

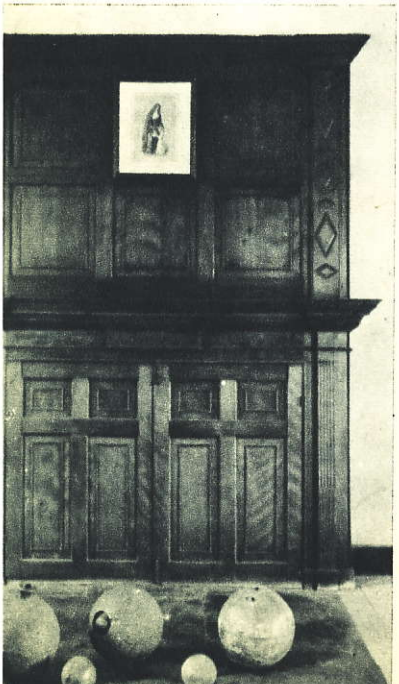


◀Mahogany Chest brought from Dieppe b founders of Hotel Dieu i 1639.

▶New Chapel of the Ursuline Cloister, rebuilt 1902.

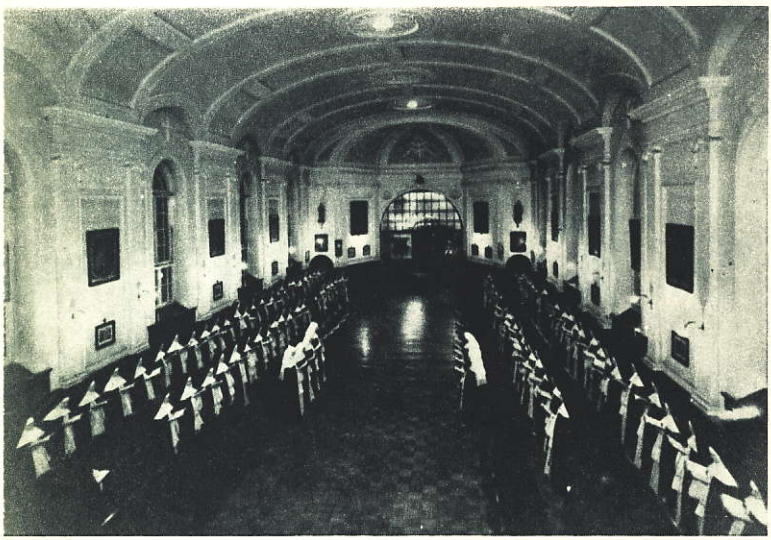
▲Convent of General Hospital, 1729-1868, with its boarding school for girls.

▲Subterranean Vaults, Hotel Dieu used as refuge during bombard ments of Quebec.

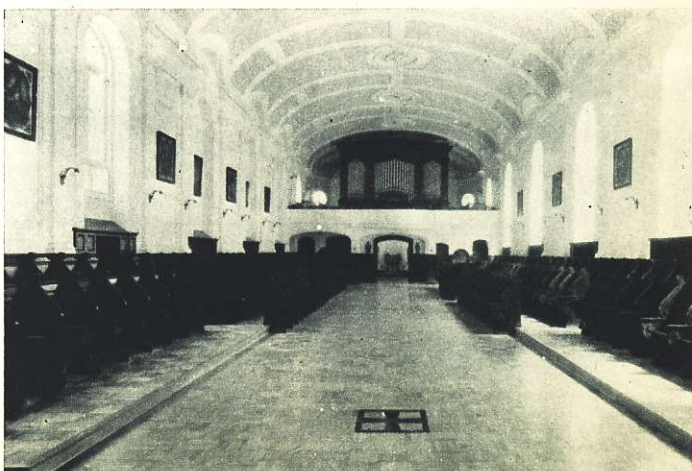


◀Mantelpiece in Community Room. These cannonballs were aimed at the Convent during siege of Quebec, 1759.

▶Outside Church, Hotel Dieu (open to public), with Cloister Choir seen through fence.



◀Hospitalières Matins in Cloist Choir, on Christm night, 1938.



▶Cloister Choir, Hotel Dieu, facing Organ Loft.

the boarding-school for French girls, in addition to those set aside for the use of the Indian seminarists who were, at this time, less numerous than in previous years.

26. The Siege of 1660

The most difficult and critical years were to follow for the colony at Quebec. Five times, was the Old City of Champlain besieged.

Long and sustained was the struggle covering a period of one hundred and fifty years, against the cruelty of the Iroquois, the pretensions of Great Britain, and the neglect of France.

Every one knows something of hostilities between the enemies who disputed the ownership of this continent when

> The flag of England and the flag of France
> Waved in war's alternate chance. . . .

The depredations of the Iroquois threw Quebec into a state of siege in 1660. This time their objective was to decapitate the "head" of the French settlement, and great was the danger for the colony.

The convents were barricaded against possible attacks from the Indians. The larger number of nuns and Sisters moved out into places of safety, but the cloisters were not completely vacated: Mère Marie de l'Incarnation remained at the Ursulines' with a few nuns and servants to help provide the necessary food and ammunition for the soldiers who guarded the precincts.

At the Hotel-Dieu it was the same. Mère Ste. Catherine de

St. Augustin and her companions found refuge within the three-foot thick subterranean vaulted foundations which were proof against assault.

During this siege, at the two convents as well as at the forts, huge mastiffs supplemented the vigilance of the armed guard. The Indians had a greater terror of the French dogs than of the soldiers themselves, for these ferocious beasts ripped them to pieces whenever they had the chance to leap at them.

27. The Intrepid Dollard des Ormeaux

Fortunately for the survival of New France, the heroism of young Daulac, better known as Dollard des Ormeaux, and his fifteen companions at Long Sault, had discouraged the Iroquois. If sixteen Frenchmen can put up so desperate a fight behind the rotten walls of an old fort, what will the colonists not be able to do, they reasoned, and abandoned their project of war.

28. The Earthquake of 1663

As J. Castell Hopkins says, in his *History of Canada,* "During the next eighty years, the history of the Indians, as far as the French were concerned, was one of attack and counter-attack; of plot and counter-plot."

This period, following three blessed years of relative peace, was heralded by perturbations of another nature.

On the eve of Shrove Monday, February 5, 1663, began the

dreadful rumblings of the earthquake that caused such serious landslides, especially at Les Eboulements.

We read in the *Annals* of the Ursulines that the rolling, muffled sounds were heard almost incessantly during a period of seven months. Doubly terrified by the phenomenon itself, and by the fear of impending death as punishment for their sins, the population of New France redoubled its pious practices and religious fervour. Public prayers were held in all the churches, and numbers of inhabitants who had, until then, enjoyed life at its fullest, became converted to a more restrained mode of living.

In the convents, the Augustinians and the Ursulines kept vigils in their Cloister Choirs all that week. Once, as they stood singing Matins, an uncommonly violent tremor sent them to their knees. All of them were prepared to lay down their lives for, with the mass of people, they believed that the end of the world was near.

The following week, exhausted by so much worry, and weary from lack of sleep, when they sought rest in their own cells instead of in the stalls of their Chapel Choirs, it was to throw themselves fully dressed on their hard cots: death, when it came, would not find them unprepared, even on the physical plane.

29. Lights and Shadows

In 1665, when the Viceroy's representative, Prouville de Tracy, arrived in Quebec from France, the Old City took on a gala atmosphere never before, and rarely since, equalled.

It is strange to read how differently this event affected the Ursuline Nuns and the Augustinian Hospitalières of the Hotel-Dieu.

For the Ursulines who owed so much to the King of France, the arrival of his representative meant an elaborate service in their Chapel, followed by a grand reception in the cloister.

We read in their records that the Marquis de Tracy proceeded to the church in the full splendour of his regalia, with his twenty guards and six pages in court costume, surrounded by officers in brilliant uniforms of glittering gold and silver, and followed by six liveried lackeys, then by the militia also in full array.

The Augustinian *Annals* note that on the day when the last companies of the famous Carignan Regiment, accompanying the royal representative, arrived in Quebec, as many as one hundred and thirty of their soldiers, ill with malignant fever, entered the Hotel-Dieu.

Seven of the fourteen Sisters took the contagious disease. It is worthy of note that on these occasions when, in insufficient numbers, these heroic women exercised their devotion at the bedside of their patients with such unflinching devotion; when, undermined by exhaustion and lack of sleep, their physical strength could no longer resist the invasion of the germs to which they were so constantly exposed; their unshaken faith in their special providence seemed to multiply their powers of recuperation.

They had often experienced the truth of the injunction of Jesus: "For whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it."

Comparatively few casualties were registered in their *Annals,* and this time, again, the seven Sisters suffering from malignant fever promptly recovered.

30. Toll the Bells

Within a period of five months the colony lost two of its most illustrious protectors, Madame de la Peltrie, and Mère Marie de l'Incarnation.

The first, aged sixty-eight, died on November 18, 1671, after only seven days of illness. The latter, four years her senior, breathed her last on April 30, 1672, exactly thirty-three years from the date of her sailing for New France on the *St. Joseph,* May 4, 1639.

These two young widows, attracted to each other by the striking similarity of their aspirations, and the ardour of their apostolic zeal for the salvation of souls, had not only founded their Seminary for Indian girls in Quebec, but had spent nearly one-third of a century, side by side, in its disinterested service.

Of course there had been that interlude of eighteen months which Madame de la Peltrie had spent in Montreal with Jeanne Mance, the foundress of the Hotel-Dieu of that city. That enthusiastic woman had been greatly influenced by this new-found friend with whom she shared so many of her ideals and projects.

Young, beautiful and conscious of her position in the colony's religious organization, it was natural that she should wish to assist in the foundation of the Hospital of Ville-Marie, and thus to

implement what she had begun with her Seminary for girls in Quebec.

And Jeanne Mance was human enough to recognize the advantages that such an interest on the part of the wealthy Madame de la Peltrie might have on the execution of her own plans.

But, all in all, it was a sad adventure which left Marie de l'Incarnation in the lurch in the spring of 1642 when every resource, as well as every energy, was being focused on the building of the Ursuline Convent, the first stone of which had been laid in early spring the previous year.

In going, Madame de la Peltrie had taken away not only her personal belongings, but also the furniture she had brought from France for the future convent. This had left the Ursulines in the greatest need. The young Indian girls were obliged to sleep on makeshift mattresses on the floor, for everything had to be imported from France, and it would be months before the necessities so unexpectedly removed could be replaced, when they had the means for the extra outlay.

Through it all, Marie de l'Incarnation retained her imperturbable calm. Many a time during those first years of a difficult beginning, when it seemed that the Community had come to the very end of its resources, she would say to her nuns, "God provides for the birds of the air and for the animals of the earth; would He let us die of hunger?"

Despite these new bonds of friendship that attracted the French noblewoman to Jeanne Mance, despite her beneficent interest in the needs of the colony at Ville-Marie, the destiny that had brought Madame de la Peltrie and Marie de l'Incarnation to Quebec together was to preside over their lives to the very end.

Realizing her mistake, the foundress of the Ursulines returned to Quebec in the fall of 1643. Not long after she started the building of her two-storey house that was to serve twice as a sanctuary for the afflicted nuns after the destruction of their convents by fire in 1650 and 1686. It was also to be used for two years as the quarters of the first Bishop of the country, the noble and saintly Monseigneur de Laval who arrived in Quebec in 1659.

Besides the priceless, massive, silver sacred vessels, given by Madame de la Peltrie to the Ursuline Nuns, she also left her jewels, from which a sanctuary lamp was made. This lovely work of art hangs in the outside chapel of the convent, a touching tribute from one whose life and fortune had been dedicated to the education of the young girls of Old French Canada.

As for the first Superior and actual Foundress of the Ursuline Order in North America, Mère Marie de l'Incarnation, she was forced regretfully to admit that it was a hopeless task to try to civilize the natives of the country. Three years before she died, she wrote to her son, "A Frenchman sooner becomes a Savage than a Savage can become a Frenchman. . . . Only one girl in a hundred retains the lessons given her. . . ."

Marie de l'Incarnation died as she had lived, like a saint. And the influence of her teachings and of the training that she gave to her girls at the Ursuline Convent contributed in no small degree to the happiness and stability of homelife in the colony of New France.

Three years later, on April 17, 1675, the Augustinians of the Hotel-Dieu were to mourn their generous friend and benefactress, the Duchesse d'Aiguillon.

From the first, this noble *grande dame* of the French aristocracy had interested her uncle, the eminent Cardinal Richelieu,

in her hospital foundation of Quebec. Their joint concern in the welfare and success of the distinguished Augustinian Hospitalières in charge of the Hotel-Dieu never wavered.

The Duchesse lost no opportunity to shower upon her protégées, not only the necessities of life, but treasures of all sorts, comprising notable paintings, vessels of massive silver, embroidered vestments, and panels of tapestry for their chapel and choir, besides various other works of art, among which was a remarkable painting of the Duchesse with the great Richelieu himself.

31. Second Fire at the Ursulines

One Sunday morning, October 20, 1686, while all the personnel of the convent and cloister were at chapel, fire broke out in the kitchen. The flames, fanned into fury by a north-easterly wind, had gained some headway before the alarm reached the nuns and the premises were vacated.

Once again the Ursulines accepted for three weeks the hospitality of the Augustinians at the Hotel-Dieu. Then, as before, while their convent was being erected for the third time, the nuns settled within the small house built for Madame de la Peltrie. But their number now reached twenty-eight, and one can imagine their discomfort over a period of eighteen months in such reduced quarters.

We read that, to save expense, all the nuns helped clear the débris of the ruins. In this they followed the example of the

Augustinians who had helped the masons build their hospital years before, at a time when workmen had to be imported from France and none were available at Quebec.

The three-foot thick foundations and crypts, which remained intact, were used for the new convent which, for over two hundred and fifty years has contained the living quarters, library and cells, of the Ursuline Cloister.

While in the course of three centuries of progress many wings have been added to the convent, this central building has preserved its primitive simplicity. On the first storey is located the historic stone corridor which served as refuge during the war of 1690, as well as that of 1759, and subsequent sieges of the Old City of Champlain. It was in this first storey, also, that General Murray and his staff established their temporary quarters after the English conquest.

Here, until lately, there was no electricity; each nun carried her own picturesque lantern, lit with a tallow candle. This was the only means of illumination in the corridors as well as in the nuns' cells. At the Hotel-Dieu, this old custom persists to this day.

The Ursulines were kept busy sewing during that winter of 1686, for the fire had destroyed all of their house-furnishings and spare garments. The following spring a long, covered gallery was erected over double rows of wooden stakes to serve as a shelter for their Indian day scholars. Shortly after classes were resumed, an epidemic of measles attacked the colony, and neither old nor young, men, women, nuns nor children, were immune from the disease which claimed many victims.

Although sickness in some form or other was common among

the Indians of Canada, smallpox predominated as an epidemic in the winter of 1669-1670. Some 1,500 natives—from Sillery to Tadoussac—were affected, and history tells us that not one of them recovered. The Attikameg Tribe was almost entirely destroyed.

In 1703 an old Indian, emigrating to Quebec from New England, brought the horrible infection within the city gates. The Hotel-Dieu was filled to capacity. Whole families were ill at the same time. Exhausted by overwork and insufficient rest and sleep, five of the Hospitalières took sick, and died. It is claimed that one-fourth of the population of Quebec succumbed during the two years that the epidemic lasted.

32. The Siege of 1690

The three cannon shots heard on the night of the 19th of October, 1675, which spread panic among the inhabitants of Quebec and drove the Augustinians and the Ursulines to carry all their movable effects of value to the security of their subterranean vaults, were a false alarm. But the news, on October 7, 1690, that a flotilla of thirty-four vessels of English troops had already reached Murray Bay was all too true.

In feverish haste the Ursulines once again carried all that could be moved to a hiding place in one of their vaults. And while some of the Hospitalières of the Hotel-Dieu were busy dig-

ging a cache in a corner of their garden where many of their most valuable treasures could be safely hidden, their companions were helping many of the leading citizens of Quebec to place their own paintings and other priceless belongings in the hospital's subterranean crypts.

With only two hundred men in Quebec, and the Governor away in Montreal, it is no wonder that there was panic in every colonist's heart. Willing hands hastily built barricades across the streets; and batteries of cannon were posted in Lower Town.

It was understood that the Ursulines and the Augustinians were to seek refuge outside the city, but when Count de Frontenac returned to Quebec, he persuaded the nuns and Hospitalières to remain in their respective convents, as their leaving would alarm the population and that must be prevented at all costs, for it would stand in the way of his plans.

Every one knows how haughtily the intrepid Governor replied to the envoy of Admiral Phipps who, watch in hand, told Frontenac that Quebec must be surrendered within the hour. "I will answer your General by the mouths of my cannon, that he may learn that a man like me is not to be summoned after this fashion."

Forthwith, the daring Frontenac opened such a furious bombardment that the English were forced to retreat. Beaten, they sailed away during the night of October 21, for everything had conspired to the defeat of their plans.

At the first alarm the patients had been removed from the Hotel-Dieu and returned to their own homes. Throughout the siege, the Augustinians sought refuge from shot and shell in the

subterranean crypts of their cloister. Here they lived and prayed and kept vigils. Situated on the flank of Palace Hill and overlooking the St. Charles River as well as the harbour, the hospital and convent were plainly exposed to the enemy's artillery.

As many as twenty-six cannon balls fell within the precincts of the convent in one single day. Signs of their passage are still seen on old rafters that have been preserved as relics of the early struggles of the colony.

It is amusing to read in the *Annals* of the vagaries of two cannon balls that wrought more fright than damage at the Ursuline Convent that first night. One of these, crashing through shutter and window, fell at the foot of a bed in the dormitory of the Indian Seminarists; while another, whizzing past one of the nuns, tore off a corner of her apron.

If the regular patients had gone, the wounded soon took their place, and every one at the Hotel-Dieu was kept busy, not only tending to them but also cooking whatever victuals could be procured. There was a disquieting scarcity of food; bread was rationed to two ounces per day. The provisions of the Augustinians were almost exhausted, both in their convent and in the hospital. Furthermore, the gardens had been denuded by the famished troops who begged the Sisters for something to eat. A mixture of vegetables was cooked in large pails and dispensed to the hungry combatants who considered themselves fortunate to have a few spoonfuls of the fresh food. Indeed, so famished were they that, sometimes, when bread was being baked in the Hotel-Dieu kitchens, soldiers would come in and take out the loaves even before they were ready.

At the Ursulines', it was the same story.

The convent sheltered many women and children, and both orders of nuns would often forego their meagre portion of food in favour of their protégés.

33. How the Church of Notre Dame des Victoires Got Its Name

When, on October 22, the people of Quebec found that the English, with a loss of six hundred men, had weighed anchor during the night and abandoned all the artillery and munitions they had landed, it was no wonder that they thought this unexpected deliverance a miraculous answer to their prayers, and to the fasts and vigils of the Augustinians and the Ursulines.

Exuberant with joy and relief, the grateful colonists lit bonfires on the shores of the St. Lawrence; and a decree was issued by the Bishop that, in thanksgiving, the statue of the Virgin be carried in procession to the four churches of Quebec.

The Ursulines, more than the others perhaps, felt that there had been special protection from above due, they were sure, to the virtue of the intercession of the Holy Family. The Bishop had borrowed their precious painting of the Family and placed it on top of the Cathedral steeple to signify that the city was under the care of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. It is noteworthy that every shot aimed at the steeple missed fire! (This painting is still

treasured as one of the most precious historic possessions owned by the Ursuline Nuns of Quebec.)

It was on this occasion that, in fulfilment of a vow, the Church of Lower Town, built in 1682 and dedicated to the Infant Jesus, was consecrated to the Virgin Mary under the name of Notre Dame de la Victoire.

In similar circumstances, this name was changed to Notre Dame des Victoires when, in 1711, the English fleet, consisting of eighty-eight vessels carrying six thousand five hundred men under Admiral Walker bound to besiege Quebec, was destroyed on the reefs of Egg Island, on the north shore of our great river. Again, this was considered as an act of God to protect the new colony.

34. Caterpillars!

The following year, a peril of a new sort menaced the country.

Public prayers, fasts and processions in the churches seemed the only recourse of the helpless population against an alarming pest of caterpillars.

It is recorded in the *Annals* of the Ursulines that as the procession entered the Cathedral an immense swarm of the crawlers covered the roadway to a depth of six inches.

It is notable that the very faith of the Ursulines seemed to ward off the dangers that threatened them. We read in their *Annals,* relative to this plague of caterpillars, that "our grains

were surrounded by this pest, yet we did not lose one single ear of corn, although these insects did not spare the thistles and other weeds that abounded thereabouts."

35. The Foundation of the General Hospital

The saintly de Laval, after twenty-five years of incessant toil as first Bishop of the colony, finally obtained a coadjutor. Accepting the suggestions of the Jesuit Father de Valois, the choice fell on Jean-Baptiste de la Croix-Chevrières de St. Vallier, a young man of thirty-six, who became Bishop of Quebec in 1688, when Monseigneur de Laval, thenceforth called Monseigneur l'Ancien, retired.

Numerous were to be the occasions upon which the older prelate would have cause to regret his unfortunate choice. History shows that the reign of the new Bishop was far from one of peace and serenity for the colony and for the religious institutions of Old Quebec.

Imbued with a genuine and intense charity for the poor and the afflicted, Monseigneur de St. Vallier, shortly after his arrival in Canada, resolved to found an asylum for their care. He decided to apply to this end the funds for the needy amounting to two thousand pounds, which up to this time had been administered by a Bureau of the Poor.

Gaining his point, he bought a house in Upper Town and for four years his asylum for the indigent and the aged and crippled was under the supervision of the Nuns of the Congrega-

tion, founded in Montreal by Marguerite Bourgeoys twenty years before.

At this time, the Bishop exchanged for a piece of ground in Upper Town the Convent of Notre Dame des Anges, built in 1620 on the St. Charles River by the Recollet Fathers. The latter, having long wished to transfer their Community within the limits of the town, had accepted the Bishop's offer with alacrity.

And so it was that this convent—one of the oldest buildings in Canada—became the General Hospital of Quebec.

The transfer of the needy and of the invalids took place on October 30, 1692. It must have been a picturesque sight to see these ragged and lame protégés of the large-hearted Monseigneur de St. Vallier, followed by the nuns and their assistants, trudging along joyfully, two by two, over those two miles downhill to their new home.

From this moment the Bishop's main ambition was to establish his foundation on a firm base. To this end, he conceived the idea of entrusting the new hospital to the Augustinian Hospitalières of the Hotel-Dieu, and so signified his intention to them.

Out of respect for their ecclesiastical superior, the Augustinians acquiesced in his wishes. But from the very first they did not like this change. It was, therefore, with reluctance on their part that in the beginning of January, 1693, was signed the deed of foundation whereby the new General Hospital, as well as its staff, would always be subordinated to the management of the Hotel-Dieu.

The four Hospitalières chosen for Monseigneur de St.

Vallier's project left their Cloister on the last day of March. Their regret at leaving their dear companions was somewhat mitigated by the joy of spending the day at the Ursuline Convent, before they proceeded to their new home, on the St. Charles River.

The disturbance caused among the Augustinians by these untoward alterations in the rule of their Order had barely subsided when, in the fall of that same year, the Bishop demanded two more Sisters from the Hotel-Dieu. Already the personnel, composed of only twenty-two professed Mothers and nine Lay Sisters, was far from sufficient for the administration of their convent and hospital. However, to keep the peace, the Bishop's request was again granted.

This state of uneasiness continued until the beginning of 1699, when the Bishop asked for six more Hospitalières. He insisted that he must have at least twelve of them at the General Hospital. Furthermore, he claimed from the Hotel-Dieu a yearly income of twelve hundred pounds.

This was too much! The capable and courageous Mère Juchereau de la Ferté de St. Ignace, the first Canadian-born Superior of the Order at Quebec, flatly refused. She protested to the Bishop that such a loss of personnel and of income would ruin their primary institution.

Filled with zeal for his good work, Monseigneur de St. Vallier saw only his own side of the question and would not consider any of the objections made to him.

After many unpleasant incidents, and corresponding anguish among the Augustinians, who multiplied their prayers and penances for a speedy deliverance from these tribulations, the climax was reached at election time. The Bishop exercised pres-

sure to prevent the Mère de St. Ignace from being elected to any charge of responsibility whatsoever.

Some months later, realizing at last that the Hotel-Dieu could not, in justice to its own functioning, sacrifice any more Sisters, the Bishop issued a deed of separation between the two hospitals.

By this act, the General Hospital became completely independent, having its own administration as well as its own novitiate, which latter was not recognized as valid by the Chapter of the Hotel-Dieu.

With justifiable indignation at losing her six Hospitalières, as well as the amounts of their dowries, Mère de St. Ignace did not submit meekly to such an arbitrary ruling. She addressed a memoir to the Count of Pontchartrain, then Minister of State in France and in the following year judgment was pronounced in favour of the Hotel-Dieu.

Naturally, the Bishop was displeased at this turn of affairs. His greatest interest in life was the success of his two foundations: the Hôpital Général for the care of the poor and the incurables; and a branch of the Ursuline Convent which he had founded in Trois-Rivières in 1697.

When told that the edict of the King decreed the dissolution of his pet hospital project and of the return of the Hospitalières to the Hotel-Dieu, his grief was so genuine that the Sisters themselves were moved to compassion over his disappointment.

Resolved to plead his case in person, he therefore embarked in October of that same year, 1700, on the *Seine* for France. There he remained four years; and when he was returning to Canada on the same vessel, the ship was captured by the English.

Brought to England, the unfortunate de St. Vallier was kept a prisoner in the Tower of London for five years. And while he

was there, his predecessor, Monseigneur l'Ancien, died in Quebec. For more than a year the diocese was administered by the two young priests left in charge by de St. Vallier before he sailed for Europe.

As soon as he was set free the Bishop crossed over to France, where he hoped to obtain from the King permission to return at once to Quebec. Instead, however, Monseigneur de St. Vallier was kept there by repeated delays extending over a period of four more years, and it was intimated that he must eventually send in his resignation.

But the Bishop did not—or would not—face the fact that his return to Canada was not awaited with eagerness. When he realized that the way was deliberately being made difficult for him, he embarked on a mean little vessel and finally reached Quebec in August, 1713.

The differences between the two hospitals having been settled in 1701 by mutual consent of the authorities of both houses, a complete reconciliation was effected eleven years later when the Hospitalières of the Hotel-Dieu were allowed to leave their Cloister and spend the day with their former companions at the General Hospital. The visit was returned on the first suitable extraordinary occasion. Since that time, the Augustinians of both hospitals have maintained the most cordial and sympathetic relations.

Such were the stormy beginnings of the General Hospital which was destined to become a blessed haven of refuge for the colony during the siege of 1759.

It was within these beloved walls and among the poor unfortunates to whom he ministered with the utmost devotion and humility that the Bishop lived upon his return to Quebec.

It was also here that he died the day after Christmas, 1727, at the age of seventy-four. The poor and the sick lost in him not only a generous benefactor but a true and sympathetic friend.

It is told of him that Monseigneur de St. Vallier endured incredible hardships and fatigue on his diocesan visits, when he often travelled three hundred leagues in the most trying and primitive conditions.

His episcopate, covering a period of forty years, was marked by a succession of quarrels which one might have expected would end with him.

Such was not the case, however. Even his death was a cause of contention between rival factions of the Civil Government: the Intendant and the Governor each wanted his favourite priest to officiate at the funeral service of the late Bishop of Quebec!

It is a revelation of the strife then prevailing in the Colony of New France, to discover that the Intendant Dupuy and some of his friends witnessed *behind closed doors* (*à huis clos!*) the funeral ceremony performed at nightfall by Archdeacon Lotbinière.

While this was going on at the General Hospital, the Governor and his group of friends, with the Curé Boullard, recently made Grand Vicar by the Chapter, were preparing solemn obsequies at the Cathedral and awaiting the transferring of the late Bishop de St. Vallier's body from the hospital to the Church!

In consequence of this quarrel, the burial took place only on January 2, seven whole days after the venerable prelate had passed

away. He carried with him to his very grave the discords that had characterized his long administration as second Bishop of New France.

36. The Ursuline Convent

Although the main object of Madame de la Peltrie and of Mère Marie de l'Incarnation in founding a convent for girls in New France had been the proselytizing of the natives, the education of French girls had also been of great concern to the Ursulines.

From the very first, the colonists of Quebec had entrusted their daughters to these distinguished teachers, and this tradition has been followed for the past three hundred years by the élite of the country.

Indeed, so great was the influence of this institution in the new colony, that its existence in Old Quebec kept on this continent many of the French nobility who would otherwise have been obliged to return to France for the education of their daughters. This was also the reason, no doubt, that encouraged many important families to settle on Canadian soil, and of the corresponding increase of inhabitants, which reached a total of twenty-five thousand for the whole of Canada in the census of 1721—seven thousand of whom lived in Quebec.

As time went on, the Ursulines realized more and more the truth of the statement made by Marie de l'Incarnation three years

before she died, that it was completely useless to try to civilize the natives.

In 1720, therefore, the sentence, "I promise instruction to the Indian girls of New France," was revoked from the vows pronounced by the Nuns of the Ursuline Order of Canada; and henceforth the convent became primarily a select convent boarding school for girls in which there were, at that period, sixty pupils from all over the country.

37. The Light That Shall Never Be Extinguished

Among the many young girls who entered the Novitiate of the Ursuline Order in Old Quebec was Mademoiselle Marie Madeleine de Repentigny, of Montreal.

This favourite of birth and fortune had looked forward to a life of pleasure and prestige as the wife of a brilliant young naval officer, who was her cousin.

She was expecting her fiancé's return with impatience when the news came to her that he had died.

For several months, Mademoiselle de Repentigny went into deep mourning. After a while, unable to find peace or happiness in her seclusion, she tried to forget her grief in dizzy rounds of gaieties. Still happiness eluded her.

Shortly after her sister had entered the Novitiate of the General Hospital in Quebec, she decided to take the veil at the Ursulines.

Great were the torments that assailed her in her cloistered retreat!

One day, more tempted than usual to return to the elegant society into which she had been born, the young novice, named Ste. Agathe, came to the Chapel and, kneeling at the foot of the statue of Our Lady of Great Power she begged the Blessed Virgin to deliver her from her present distress.

As she prayed, her doubts seemed to melt away and a great peace filled her soul. On the impulse of the moment, she lit a votive lamp in thanksgiving and promised to keep this light burning forever in commemoration of her victory over herself.

Since that day, in 1717, when she lit her taper, the lamp has never ceased to burn. In 1903, on the occasion of the restoration of the two Chapels of the Ursuline Convent, Miss Anthon of New York, a distant cousin of Mademoiselle de Repentigny, donated a magnificent sanctuary lamp of gold, silver, enamel and blue Tyrolian lapis lazuli, to hold the votive light "that shall never be extinguished."

The statue of Our Lady of Great Power, at whose foot the votive light, lit by Marie Madeleine de Repentigny de Ste. Agathe, has been burning for over two hundred years, has been in the possession of the Ursulines of Quebec since 1700.

Sculptured from a single block of wood, and standing three feet high, the statue represents the Virgin holding an exquisite Infant Jesus in her left arm; while the sceptre, symbolical of her royal power, is held in her right hand.

This special homage of the Ursulines for the Virgin took its inception in 1673 when a pious nun of Issoudun, France, obtained so many remarkable favours after having invoked the unlimited

prerogatives of the Divine Mother that Our Lady of Great Power became their favourite devotion.

Every year on February 25, prayers are recited, hymns sung, and a kiss is respectfully bestowed on the sandalled feet of the gilded statue by all the personnel of the Ursuline Institution as a mark of submission and homage. Every third year, after the election of the officers of the Order, a more solemn ceremony is performed when the new Superior humbly lays down the keys, rules, and constitutions of the house she has just been chosen to govern. This is to signify that the Heavenly Queen is truly the reigning Queen of the Ursuline convent and cloister.

38. "Our Lady of All Graces"

At the Hotel-Dieu, the cult of Our Lady of All Graces was introduced in the Cloister of the Augustinian Hospitalières of Quebec in a manner worthy of note.

Every one who has lived in a convent or college will agree that nowhere in the world are feast days and anniversaries so well observed as in religious communities.

It was on a day of *grand congé* late in the summer of 1739, during the celebration of the first centenary of the foundation in Quebec, of their Hotel-Dieu, that the Hospitalières received a mysterious wooden case, bearing no address, brought to them by some sailors just arrived from France.

Hesitating to accept what they feared might not be meant for them, the Sisters were told that the present had been sent from

Le Havre in fulfilment of a vow taken by the crew when their vessel was in imminent peril in a violent storm at sea.

Great was the excitement of the Hospitalières as they knelt about the well-packed case and removed from its many wrappings an exquisitely sculptured wooden statue of the Madonna and Child.

Accompanying this were an ex-voto, consisting of a painting on wood of the ship which, it is claimed, was miraculously saved from destruction, and a framed inscription attesting that the thirty sailors who had been saved from shipwreck were fulfilling a vow they had made while in distress, to spread the devotion to Our Lady of All Graces, as the Virgin is especially honoured at Le Havre, France.

Since then, Our Lady of All Graces has become the patron saint of the Augustinian Hospitalières of the Hotel-Dieu of Quebec, where the lovely statue, received in such unusual circumstances, has been treasured for over two hundred years.

39. A Prophecy

Were the writer to record all the tribulations, vicissitudes, wars, epidemics, pestilences, and privations to which the brave colonists of Old Quebec were exposed, the reader would be under the painful impression that one affliction followed another without any respite.

This was not so. But when the calamities came they came unannounced. However, the destruction by fire of part of the

Hotel-Dieu was foretold by a humble Hospitalière four years before the disaster.

It was on July 22, 1751, during her hour of meditation in the Cloister Choir, that Mère du St. Esprit suddenly heard an inner voice which said, "I suffer evil for a greater good. My House shall be destroyed: not one stone upon a stone shall remain!"

She reported her experience to her Superior and to her companions as well but no one paid much attention to her tale. Convinced of the truth of her premonition, the fifty-eight-year-old nun, a native of St. Laurent on the Isle of Orleans, composed some verses about the impending catastrophe. During recreation, while busy making her paper flowers for the altar, she often sang these in plaintive accents much to the amusement of the other nuns but especially to the annoyance of the brilliant Mère du Sacré-Coeur who riposted with these rhymes:

Dear Mother of Holy Spirit
Is exercising all her wit
To exchange her paper garden
For the trowel of the mason
To build, for her Lord, a Temple,
And thus, become an example . . .

Unmoved, and biding her time, Mère du St. Esprit composed a prayer in which she stated the coming needs of the Augustinians. In the Cloister garden, she picked up a stone and placed it, together with copies of the two ballads and her prayer, within a linen bag upon which she fastened this note: "You are requested to place this stone in the foundation of your new Church—it is destined for that. By a miracle, it has been saved from our fire."

Being vestry-warden, she kept this bag ever at hand with the precious vestments and massive sacred silver vessels in her charge. All of these were so disposed that they could be carried out at a moment's notice. This she did faithfully for four years, and never was there any doubt in her mind that she was a true prophet.

The predicted fire broke out during lunch on June 7, 1755.

The patients, as well as a dying nun, were removed from the burning building while, with frantic haste, most of the Hospitalières tried to save some of their Community treasures.

The Depositary of the Poor, confined to her bed by illness, hurriedly slipped on her garment and ran out, but the flames pushed her back into her cell, which was located on the fourth storey of the Cloister.

Seeing her at the window calling for help, some men of the militia hoisted a ladder which, being too short by a couple of feet, they held up to reach the window. With every nerve and muscle strained, the Sister clung desperately to it, while down below every one gasped at the danger she was running. Bravely she held on, and almost fell, for her hands had been burned as she had climbed over the window-sill. When she felt the ladder lowered on solid ground, she rested a moment on the highest rung before starting the perilous descent.

During this time one of her companions, also eager to save something of value, had rushed up to her own cell and thrown out a package from the window before she disappeared from view. This was the clever Mère du Sacré-Coeur who had ridiculed the prophecy.

Not until all the Hospitalières were assembled together that

afternoon was her absence noted. Her charred bones were found in the smoking ruins.

This is the strange episode of the prophecy made by Mère du St. Esprit in 1751.

Many years later it was learned from France, that the fire had been of incendiary origin. On the eve of their execution for serious crimes, two scoundrels had confessed their guilt. They said that while they were patients at the Hotel-Dieu of Quebec, they had developed a grudge against one of the Hospitalières. When they were released they had spread, out of spite, some inflammable substance on the roof and set fire to it on a very windy day. Several persons had seen these men, but all of them thought that they were workmen, repairing the building.

For three weeks after the fire, the Ursuline Nuns extended to their bereaved friends the hospitality which they themselves had received from the Augustinians of the Hotel-Dieu when, twice in thirty-six years, their own Cloister had burned down.

The Jesuit Fathers were also happy to return to the Hospitalières the courtesy they had received from them in similar circumstances in 1640. They therefore offered the use of one of the wings of their spacious College. This the Augustinians accepted gratefully while their convent and Hotel-Dieu were being rebuilt.

The rooms fitted out for hospital quarters were soon filled to capacity for, to crown all, an epidemic of smallpox again spread its ravages that summer.

Two years later, on the historic date of August 1, the new Hotel-Dieu was inaugurated. The Hospitalières, as usual, had much to contend with. They were not half settled in the build-

ing when it was invaded by a large influx of fever cases among the soldiers and sailors, of whom as many as eighty-seven entered on the same day! Moreover, they had twenty-two of their own Sisters down with the fever, and five of them died.

40. War Again! — The Siege of 1759

The Seven Years' War, which was to end in Canada with the capitulation of Montreal in 1760, was ruining the country.

France, also officially at war abroad since June 9, 1756, in her own Seven Years' War was neglecting her colony of New France.

All too soon, alas, the inhabitants of Canada were to realize that King Louis, like Voltaire, cared little what happened to them—nor to their "several acres of snow!"

Canada was reduced to the most cruel distress.

The cost of bread, rationed to a daily allowance of four ounces, was so exorbitant that only the very rich could afford the price. All the men being under arms, only the women and children were left to work on the farms, and many of the latter were abandoned altogether.

During the siege of Quebec, the Augustinians of the Hotel-Dieu, leaving only five Lay Sisters in charge of their hospital, sought refuge at the General Hospital where they had sent their beds and as many provisions as they could for their own sustenance.

Save for eight of their numbers who remained in their Cloister, the Ursulines, also, left their convent. They wept over their sorry plight as they walked the two miles to the General Hospital that was to become the refuge not only of the nuns but of a part of the population of the besieged city.

The General Hospital, founded by Monseigneur de St. Vallier amid such a storm of protest and untoward incidents, was to shelter six hundred persons at the beginning of the siege! By the month of September, 1759, the calamities of war had brought together in hospital, barns, stables, out-houses, tool-sheds—wherever there was a roof to shield them—nearly one thousand refugees, counting the sick and wounded.

Every one knows the glorious victory of the English under Wolfe, and the no less glorious defence of the French under Montcalm, in the battle of September 13, 1759, which cost the life of the two intrepid generals: Wolfe, dying on the Plains of Abraham, "with the sounds of success in his ears"; Montcalm, mortally wounded, who, when told that he had only a few hours more to live, replied, "So much the better, I shall not see the English in Quebec!"

Taken to the house of surgeon Arnoux on St. Louis street, after asking his attendants to save the honour of France, the noble Montcalm thought only of his imminent death. He prayed, received the last rites of the Church with great fervour, and died peacefully at five o'clock on the morning of the 14th.

We read in the *Annals* of the Ursulines: "Such was the confusion everywhere in Quebec that it was impossible to find a carpenter to make a coffin for the illustrious general. Seeing

this difficulty, one of our foremen, an old Frenchman of Dauphiné, called Old man Michel, picked up a few boards and, shedding abundant tears, hastily nailed together a misshapen box little in keeping with the precious remains it was meant to enclose."

As there was no other suitable place available, Montcalm was buried in a hole made by the enemy's shells near the cloister grating of the Ursuline Church.

We read further in the *Annals* "that on the same night of the 14th, at about nine o'clock, in the fitful glimmer of torch-light, the funeral ceremony took place. Gloom and silence hovered sadly over the ruins of the city, while the mournful procession—composed of the clergy, civil officers, the militia, and a number of old men, women, and children—made its way to the Ursuline Convent. The Church bells were mute; the cannon, silent; and the bugle sounded no adieu for the most valiant of soldiers!"

"But what a scene in the interior of the Convent Chapel! Behind their cloister grating, the eight Ursulines who had remained as guardians of their convent joined their fervent prayers to the sobbing—restrained until then—that now burst from every throat. It seemed that with the remains of the General, the last hope of the colony was also being laid in the grave!"

Among the children who attended the burial service was a girl of nine named Amable Dubé. Destined to become an Ursuline nun under the popular name of St. Ignace, it was she who, seventy-two years later, indicated the exact spot in which General Montcalm had been buried.

Within the crude box that had served as coffin, only the skull remained. This precious relic has since been conserved in a glass case at the Ursuline Convent.

41. France Loses Canada

Food was inadequate and insufficient in quantity, and the coarse black bread given to the sick and dying precipitated many to the other side. More than ever before was the great voyage considered as a happy release from "this valley of tears."

At the General Hospital, two Ursuline nuns had passed away on that fateful day of Montcalm's death.

"A chaos of misfortunes and bitterness seemed to envelop the lost colony of France, and never did the future appear more gloomy, more hopeless!" writes the annalist of the Ursuline Convent. She continues, "On that first night of the defeat, while the bright bivouac fire blazed in the conqueror's camp, the valiant Frenchmen, with death in their hearts, wandered disconsolate in the surrounding country in quest of something to allay their gnawing hunger. Suddenly a great noise was heard at the cloister door of the General Hospital. Disturbed and trembling, some nuns and Hospitalières on night duty, who were carrying broth to their patients, thought they would faint at sight of a troop of Scottish Highlanders. Seeing them so pale and mute with terror, the commanding officer, Captain McDonnell, forbade his soldiers to cross the door-sill. In perfect French, he asked to see the Superiors of the three Orders which, he knew, found sanctuary here; and he added that he had come to deliver an important message from General Murray. The purport of this was that the English troops would surround the building and take possession of all avenues leading to it, in order that the French should not storm them in their stronghold."

Thus it was that the English troops became the guardians of the refugees of the General Hospital!

The latter, from the safety of their retreat on the St. Charles River, had watched the movements of the rival armies in the Battle of the Plains of Abraham. With heavy hearts, they had witnessed the defeat of their brave Montcalm, and the victory of Wolfe which gave half a continent to Great Britain. What they did not realize then, however, was that they had just heard the first cannon shot of American Independence!

42. The Nuns Return to Their Cloisters

The joy of the Ursulines and of the Augustinians at returning to their respective cloisters was not to be unmixed with disappointment, for General Murray, who was destined to become the first Governor of Canada, was to turn these into lodgings for his English troops, and twenty-five years were to pass at the Hotel-Dieu before the Augustinians could resume their regular role as Hospitalières.

At the Ursulines, the nuns lived in the second and third storeys of their cloister, while Murray and his staff occupied the first storey of the main building through which runs the historic stone corridor before mentioned.

It was here, on an oval table of pine, that the General signed many an important paper during those first years of English domination. The soldiers had been forbidden, under penalty of death, to set foot outside the rooms allotted for their use; but

one of them, more curious than the rest, followed to the chapel a young nun who was on her way to ring the Angelus bell. Condemned to be shot, he was saved by the venerable Mother Superior who, forgiving the Englishman's temerity, had interceded for his pardon.

At the Hotel-Dieu, several companies of soldiers and their officers occupied the hospital wards. Here, too, a similar incident brought severe punishment. In this case, it was a soldier who had rashly tried to kiss one of the Sisters in the garden! For such a terrible offence, the culprit was condemned to bread and water in a dungeon; and the General this time refused to mitigate the penalty inflicted.

43. After the Conquest

The period of transition was long, painful, and accompanied by the usual famine, illness and general distress.

Not the least among the many minor problems facing the nuns was the difficulty they had in obtaining from France the material they needed for their garments and veils. These important items, not being in demand in England, could not be found there, and there was nowhere else to get them outside of France! As all importations from that country were strictly forbidden by the conquerors, it is interesting to note how these measures affected the religious orders of Canada, and it is amusing to discover the innocent subterfuges that were invented to smuggle the indispensable materials into Quebec!

We read in the correspondence of 1766, that one hundred ells (an ell measured forty-five inches in length) of bolting-cloth were sometimes folded between layers of ordinary cotton and lightly quilted. Some years later, the material was sent from France in the form of packets of letters. But alas, the bolting-cloth was so very sheer that it could not be used at all!

The Ursulines and the Augustinians remained in their respective cloisters during the last two sieges of Quebec; in 1760, when the Chevalier de Lévis tried to recapture Quebec from General Murray; and in 1775, for six weary and nerve-racking months, when the Americans invaded Canada, and Montgomery was repulsed by Governor Carleton.

During the bombardments, which were announced by an alarm bell, the Ursulines found safety in their historic stone corridor; and the Augustinian Hospitalières, in the subterranean crypts of the Hotel-Dieu which neither war nor time has impaired.

The parallel between the history of the Ursulines and of the Augustinians of the Hotel-Dieu, so striking in many respects, is again noticeable in the length of time these two orders waited before the building and the rebuilding of their respective Churches. The Ursulines hoped and prayed for fifty years, and gathered material with which to build it for a quarter of a century before their dream was realized, in 1736.

At the Hotel-Dieu, since the fire of 1686, only a small chapel had served for the religious exercises of the Community. One day, forty-five years later, a group of young Hospitalières at recreation, protested more bitterly than usual against the poverty that prevented the rebuilding of their much desired Church.

Hearing them, the Superior of the Order, the seventy-year-old Mère de St. François, suddenly recalled seeing a bag on a shelf

in a closet, with a bit of paper attached to it, on which she had read something about the foundation of a new Church.

The bag was found and opened, and the prayer and the ballads were read, to the great amazement of all the Sisters.

The Superior was deeply moved. She had been a young novice of fourteen and a half years at the time of the fire, and she remembered certain allusions, relative to the strange prophecy of the humble Mother who had saved the precious sacred vessels and vestments, and who had survived the disaster by ten years. Taking the finding of the bag as a sign that their time of waiting was at an end, the rebuilding of the Church was decided upon, and ways and means were found to realize the project.

The corner-stone of the new building was laid on May 22, 1800, and the linen bag, with its stone, prayer and ballads, was laid in the foundation as requested by the prophetic Mère du St. Esprit.

And so ends the romantic period of the history of the first Ursulines and of the first Hospitalières of North America, whose preponderating role in the settlement and development of Old Quebec, in New France, cannot be passed over in silence.

Three Came With Gifts

BY ANNA B. MONTREUIL

This is the story of the first hospital, first cloister, and first school in Canada, and of their heroic founders. Though constantly being made aware of the rich culture of French Canada, few Canadians know that its seeds were mostly planted back in 1639 by the heroism and devotion of three French ladies. First was the youthful Duchesse d'Aiguillon, niece of Cardinal Richelieu, who, widowed at the age of eighteen, devoted her life to charity and, after reading the Jesuit *Relations*, conceived a plan to found a hospital for the Indians in Quebec. Aided by three nuns of the Augustinian order, she established the first hospital on the continent of North America. Then the beautiful Madame de la Peltrie, also widowed in youth, vowed that she would go to Canada and build a convent for the little girls of that country. With her went Mère Marie de l'Incarnation who, as Madame Martin, had lost her husband when only nineteen, and had entered the Ursuline order.

This, then, is the romance of the founding of the Augustinian Hospitalières of the Hotel Dieu, and of the Ursuline Convent of old Quebec. Only unshakeable faith could have carried them through as they nursed hordes of Indians smitten with smallpox, faced fires, famines, wars and petty human squabbles. Five of the sisters died from fever brought to their hospital by the sailors, and Mère Marie died at twenty-eight. But, through their devotion, and the teaching of the young girls by the Ursuline nuns, they brought all that was best in old France to Canada. No more pitiful or thrilling story has been written in our history.

About the Author

Anna B. Montreuil was born in Webster, Massachusetts, of French Canadian parents, and educated in convent schools in Lowell, Massachusetts, and Ste. Anne's Convent in Lachine, P.Q., where she won honours in English and music. In 1905 she married Dr. Lorenzo J. Montreuil, and became a resident of Quebec City. As a concert pianist, she was a frequent performer at State functions in Quebec City. In 1929 her first book was published in Boston. She is also the author of three novelettes, published in Chicago. Dr. Montreuil died in 1941, and since then Mme. Montreuil has occupied the position of translator in the publicity branch of the Quebec Department of Highways. She has also done several English translations of French films for the Cine-Photography Department of the Provincial Government. *Three Came with Gifts* is the outcome of her deep interest in early Canadian history.

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