

Stop 1 – Introduction



« The Cradle » in Vaudreuil
Sr. Marie-Azella (Juliette Marion, 1898-1943)
© Sisters of Saint Anne Historic Centre

In 1850, a small community of teaching sisters was formed in Vaudreuil, Quebec. The dream of its foundress was for countryside children, boys and girls alike, to be given an education. Her dream led to the opening of a number of schools in Quebec, the rest of Canada and the United States, as well as in Japan, Haiti, Chile, Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

On July 1, 2010, the Saint Anne Convent, which had been home to as many as 250 sisters at one time, was sold to the adjacent Collège Sainte-Anne so that the college could expand its campus. The college has been an educational institution for 150 years and is among the most highly-rated schools in the Quebec education system.

During the next hour, we invite you to explore the complex made up of the college and convent of Sainte Anne, located in Lachine. The complex, which evolved over the years to meet the needs of the local population and the small but growing religious order, is one of the main points of interest in the historic district of Lachine.

It is our pleasure to assist you as you visit these places, whose significance is closely linked to the teaching work of the Sisters of Saint Anne.

To start your tour, we invite you to walk to the parking lot of Saints-Anges-Gardiens Church at the intersection of 15th Avenue and Saint-Joseph Boulevard.

The visit begins outside, with a look at the immediate environment along Saint-Joseph Boulevard between 15th and 12th avenues. This part of the tour will give you an opportunity to admire the exterior architecture of the buildings that make up the Convent complex, and also help you to understand the social and historical background of the neighbourhood's construction and development.

After that, we will invite you in to the Sisters of Saint Anne Historic Centre to learn more about Marie-Anne Blondin and the religious order she founded.

The pamphlet you received, or downloaded with this podcast shows the recommended tour route and points of interest. The numbers appearing on the diagrams indicate the starting point for each of the Stops of the tour.

We now invite you to discover the Convent Complex of the Sisters of Saint Anne in Lachine and its Tradition of Education.

To begin your visit, please select Stop No. 2.

Stop 2 – The Neighbourhood

In 1667, the Sulpicians, who owned the Island of Montreal at the time, gave an area called Côte-Saint-Sulpice to René-Robert Cavelier de La Salle. But La Salle's deepest desire was to be an explorer. And so in July 1669, he sold his property and left for adventure, hoping to find a way to China by passing through Ohio, which back then was uncharted territory. In September, however, he had to give up his dream and return, for health reasons. Seeing him back so soon, the people of Côte-Saint-Sulpice laughingly nicknamed his former property "La Chine," which means "China" in French. Over time, the name evolved into Lachine, and remains the area's name to this day.

South of Saint-Joseph Boulevard is the "little canal" or "old canal." It's interesting that the idea of building a canal to bypass the Lachine rapids was first put forward in 1670. However, because of technical and financial difficulties, it wasn't until 150 years later, in the 1820s, that the Lachine Canal was finally built. The "old canal" was part of it, although it was quickly outgrown as the ships that travelled the canal became larger and larger. In 1840, the canal was enlarged by building a new entrance and navigation on the "old canal" was abandoned.

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The Lachine Canal had a significant impact on the borough's history, especially the location of the centre of town. In 1676, François-Xavier de Laval¹, the first bishop of New France, erected the parish of Saints-Anges-Gardiens of Lachine, the third parish on the island of Montreal after Notre-Dame de Montréal and Saint-Enfant-Jésus in Pointe-aux-Trembles.

Three churches preceded the present place of worship. The first mission chapel, the small Chapelle des Saints-Anges, was built in 1676 by Pierre Gaudin dit Chatelet. It was built in the heart of Lachine, which was then located on the site of Fort Rémy, on what is now LaSalle Boulevard, in the borough of Lasalle, close to the Mercier Bridge. The self-contained little parish, which was the heart of the village, consisted of the church, the rectory, the school, a convent and a mill.² You can see a replica of the first chapel near the parking lot of the present Saints-Anges church.

The second church was built in 1701-1702, also along what is now LaSalle Boulevard. It was built by Michel Lefebvre dit Laciserée, with the assistance of the master masons François Martin dit Langevin and Alexis Tabau. It was inaugurated in July 1703. In 1866, it was sold to the Oblate fathers, who demolished it in 1869.

When new businesses and industries started springing up near the Lachine Canal, many families migrated to the area in order to be close to their work. By leaving the area of Fort Rémy, parishioners found themselves farther away from their church. And because of the toll roads, the faithful had to pay each time they wanted to attend their parish church, which was source of great frustration.

A decision was made to move the church closer to the economic heart of the village, but choosing the site was not an easy task, and caused strife among many parishioners. Their discontent led to shots being fired at the rectory and to the resignation of three parish priests!

It was Father Nazaire Piché who managed to get the situation under control and obtained unanimous agreement regarding the church's present site at the corner of Saint-Joseph Boulevard and 15th Avenue. On the grounds of the church, you can see a statue of Father Piché.



The first church on the present site was built between 1863 and 1865.
© Sisters of Saint Anne Historic Centre

The first church on the present site was built between 1863 and 1865, on land bought from Louis Boyer, a Montreal businessman.³ The work was done by the general contractors Norbert Fafard and Herménégilde Viau, using the plans and specifications drawn up by architect Victor Bourgeau. Sadly, the church burned down in 1915; only the chapel, the sacristy and the rectory were saved.

The church you see today was built between 1919 and 1920 by the contractor Ulric Boileau, using plans developed by the architects Joseph-Dalbé Viau and Louis-Alphonse Venne. Note how the parts that were spared by the fire of 1915 have been integrated into the new design.

It wasn't until 1930, during the Depression, that the artist Ozias Leduc and his studio group – comprised of Charles-Ovide Berthiaume, Jeannot Cadieux and Paul-Émile Borduas – obtained the contract for decorating the church interior. Based on the theme "The angels adoring the mystical Lamb," 72 angels, all with different features, were painted on the vault of the choir, the transepts and the nave.

Please select Stop No. 3 to learn more about Bishop Ignace Bourget.

If you wish to learn more about the Father Nazaire Piché, please select Stop No. 4.

To continue your visit with a description of the Simpson Manor and the stone warehouse, please select Stop No. 5.

¹ http://eglisecatholiquedequbec.org/histoire/mgr_laval/index.htm.

² <http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/LaSalle>.

³ *Inventaire des lieux de culte du Québec*, fiche 2003-06-112.

Stop 3 – Bishop Ignace Bourget



Portrait of Bishop Ignace Bourget (1884)
Marie-Arsène, s.s.a. (Poméla Latour, 1843-1930)
© Sisters of Saint Anne Historic Centre

The son of a farmer, Bishop Ignace Bourget was born in Saint-Joseph-de-la-Pointe-de-Lévy on October 30, 1799, and deceased in Sault-aux-Récollets on June 8, 1885. He left his mark on the history of Montreal through his works, his visionary spirit and his rigid conservatism. As the second Bishop of Montreal, from 1840 to 1876, he applied himself to strengthening ties between the Catholic Church in Quebec and the Vatican, while supporting Curé Labelle and the colonization efforts.

A tireless worker, he founded, among other things, an association to promote the colonization of the Eastern Townships. He supported the expansion of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul to help the poor, and the establishment of Saint-Enfant-Jésus hospital for the care of deaf-mutes, located in Côte-Saint-Louis (now part of Outremont).

It was during his time as bishop that the Vatican agreed to divide up Montreal's only parish, Notre-Dame, which was under the dominion of the Sulpician fathers. Between September 1866 and December 1867, Bishop Bourget quickly erected 10 new Catholic parishes.

The erection of so many parishes led to a boom in church building, particularly in the city of Montreal.

“Between 1841 and 1866, Bishop Bourget contributed to the arrival, or introduction, of 14 new religious orders in his diocese to look after orphans, the indigent, the mentally and physically ill, the blind, deaf-mutes, single mothers and female prisoners.”⁴

Today, we think of Bishop Bourget as a hard worker. Despite his often precarious health, he was a leader who inspired devotion in those close to him, and an effective administrator who helped to establish many enduring works, both within his diocese and outside it⁵.

If you wish to learn more about Father Nazaire Piché, please select Stop No. 4.

To continue your visit with a description of the Simpson Manor and the stone warehouse, please select Stop No. 5.

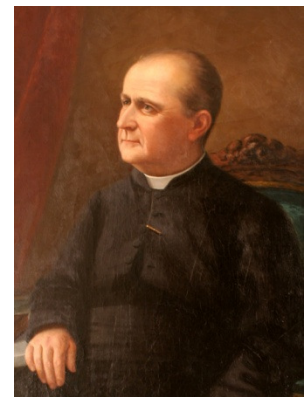
Stop 4 – Father Nazaire Piché

Please proceed to the statue of Nazaire Piché, located at the left side of the parking lot.

Nazaire Piché was born in 1831 in Saint-Sulpice, a village east of Montreal. He was the second of a family of eight, three of whom died at a young age. His father, a merchant, sent him to Collège de l'Assomption for a classical education. A brilliant student, he was soon attracted to the priesthood.

In 1854, at the age of 23, he was ordained priest. Over the following years, he was the pastor at Sault-Saint-Louis (present-day Kahnawake), serving at Saint-Jean, and then at Saint-Alphonse-Rodriguez in the Joliette region. But it was in Lachine that Nazaire Piché made his mark, where he was the parish priest from 1860 until his death in 1900.

He arrived in Lachine at a time of great upheaval. The opening of the canal had prompted many businesses to set up shop near its mouth, and its expansion had attracted taverns and inns. Following instructions from Bishop Bourget, Father Piché set out to conquer the hearts of his parishioners.



Father Nazaire Piché (detail), 1905
Marie-Hélène-de-la-Croix, SSA
(Élisabeth Martin, 1861 – 1956)
© Sisters of Saint Anne Historic Centre

⁴ Nicole Lemay, 1992, p. 11.

⁵ <http://www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?BioId=39507&PHPSESSID=g2ih5g5tjdkcugd5bs74h0a370>.

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He undertook his mission and succeeded with flying colours! Indeed his devotion to his parishioners made him a much-loved figure. He received many tokens of appreciation from them, especially donations. In fact, his wardens and parishioners even raised \$1,600 so that he could take a trip to Europe and the Holy Land. But even during his long travels, he kept in touch with what was happening at home, solved problems, gave advice and asked after specific parishioners.

Concerned about the lack of education in his community, he was the one who organized Lachine's school system. In 1861, he orchestrated the arrival of the Sisters of Saint Anne, who took charge of teaching the girls, and then in 1876, the arrival of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, who looked after educating the boys. He was the head of the school commission for several years.

During his years in Lachine, Nazaire Piché fought against the evils of alcohol. He vigorously opposed the establishment of taverns. "The love of luxury and drunkenness has ruined many families," he wrote. The statue you see of him shows him holding the cross of temperance, a symbol of the temperance movement that emerged in the 19th century and advocated abstinence from alcohol. It was shortly after a final impassioned homily against the drinking establishments that he died, in 1900. His passing marked the end of a significant period in the history of Lachine.

To continue your visit, cross Saint-Joseph Boulevard southward at the intersection of 15th Avenue. Once you are there, find the small bridge that crosses the old canal and go to the Promenade Père-Marquette. Head left (east) and go to the stone warehouse, today the site of the Fur Trade at Lachine National Historic Site of Canada.

To continue your visit with a description of the Simpson Manor and the stone warehouse, please select Stop No. 5.

Stop 5 – Arrival in Lachine: the Simpson Manor and the Stone Warehouse

The arrival of the Sisters of Saint Anne in Lachine was the result of a combination of circumstances: first, the new parish priest, Nazaire Piché, was interested in opening a girls' school near the future church, and second, Bishop Bourget decided he wanted the motherhouse of the Sisters of Saint Anne to be closer to his episcopal seat since, in those days, communications between the village of Saint-Jacques and Montreal were very difficult. These two desires converged over the sale of the home of Sir George Simpson, the former head of the Hudson's Bay Company, who died in the fall of 1860.

On February 7, 1861, over a meal to which he had invited the bishop, Father Piché told him that the Simpson Manor was for sale. The very next day, Father Piché, acting on the bishop's instructions, asked Edward Hopkins, Sir George's nephew and the representative of the estate, about the conditions of sale. By February 20, Sr. Marie-Jeanne-de-Chantal, the General Superior, signed the deed of purchase in Montreal for the sum of 2,000 *louis* (or \$8,000). The community, which had no resources, had to borrow to make the first payment.



Simpson Manor, before 1888
Photo retouch with charcoal and chalk
© Sisters of Saint Anne Historic Centre

Taking possession of the house was the scene of some interesting English traditions. Mr. Hopkins greeted the new arrivals at the front door. He put the key in the lock, closed and then opened the door, removed the key and then presented it to the superior, asking her to repeat his actions. After this little ritual, he said, upon taking his leave: "Madam, I am happy to have succeeded so well in carrying out Lord Simpson's wishes. I do not think I could have placed the keys of this house in worthier hands."⁶

In front of the old stone warehouse, on the first interpretation panel you will see an old picture of the Simpson Manor.

The Simpson Manor, built in 1834, was a seigneurial house in cut stone. It had two floors, a main floor and an attic that measured 50 by 60 feet (or 15.24 by 18.29 metres). A triangular pediment overhung the façade, and Doric columns bordered its wide portico, supporting a large balcony. In 1888, it was decided to demolish the house in order to build the wing where the Sanctuary of Saint Anne would be located, in the centre of the Convent complex.

The spacious grounds measured 2 arpents by 72 rods (or 117 by 362 metres) and included other buildings, such as the stone warehouse built in 1803 on the edge of the old canal.

⁶ Notes of Father. Piché, in Marie-Jean-de-Pathmos, SSA, 1950, p. 200.

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In 1803, Alexander Gordon, a clerk in the fur trade for the North West Company, had the stone warehouse built “in the southwest corner of the property, on the edge of the Saint Lawrence River opening into Lake Saint Louis, just at the edge of Lachine’s first canal, on its first bank [...]”⁷

This building, 63 feet long by 39 wide (or 18.28 by 11 metres), was used for commercial storage. In 1806, after the death of Alexander Gordon, the property went to his son William. In 1833, William sold a portion of it to the Hudson’s Bay Company. Initially, the building had a gable roof. Between 1833 and 1861, the Hudson’s Bay Company enlarged the building and gave it a hip roof. As a necessary protection for the warehouse, it had only one entrance, two windows in the front and a third in the gable.



Le hangar de pierres
© Centre historique des Sœurs de Sainte-Anne⁸

The Sisters of Saint Anne purchased the property in 1861. Over the years, the building underwent a number of transformations depending on the purpose for which it was used—a dormitory, classrooms for day students (from 1863 to 1870), a laundry (until 1898) and lodgings for an employee and his family. Around 1923-1924, it became a “bourgeois-style”⁹ home (with a basement, main floor and attic) that could accommodate four employees and their families. In 1977, Parks Canada acquired it and, since June 1985, it has been The Fur Trade at Lachine National Historic Site of Canada.

We invite you to stay in front of the old stone warehouse and turn around to face the Convent.

Select stop No. 6 to learn about the foundress of the Sisters of Saint Anne, Mother Marie-Anne.

To learn more about the Sisters of Saint Anne, please select Stop No. 7.

Select Stop No. 8 to continue your tour of the Villa-Anna boarding school.

Stop 6 – Mother Marie-Anne¹⁰



Sister Marie-Anne (1881)
Henry Carey

© Sisters of Saint Anne Historic Centre

Mother Marie-Anne, or Marie-Esther Sureau dit Blondin, her lay name, was born on April 18, 1809, in Terrebonne. She came from a devout family of farmers, but was poor and illiterate, like many other French Canadian families of the 19th century. She learned to read and write only at the age of twenty. After experiencing life as a novice in the Congregation de Notre-Dame, she settled in Vaudreuil, where she began teaching.

In 1848, during a long convalescence, Esther realized that God was asking her to found a religious congregation that would educate needy youth of the countryside, boys as well as girls. It was an audacious project in the Quebec of that time! Bishop Bourget nevertheless permitted her to try.

Her religious community, the Daughters of Saint Anne, was born two years later in Vaudreuil on September 8, 1850. Esther Blondin, now called Mother Marie-Anne, became its first superior.

The young community increased in number and developed so rapidly that the motherhouse was relocated to Saint-Jacques during the summer of 1853. Father Louis Adolphe Maréchal was named chaplain for the Sisters. The 29-year-old priest soon began meddling with the internal life of the Convent, and he even tried to impose himself on the Sisters’ consciences, as well as in the school and the administration of the house. The foundress tried to maintain a climate of peace, which was almost impossible under the circumstances. To end the conflict, Bishop Bourget required the resignation of Mother Marie-Anne in August 1854.

⁷ Michel Dozois, 1985, p. 20 (translation).

⁸ MARIE-DE-JÉSUS-AGONISANT, s.s.a., 1950, p. 45.

⁹ Michel Dozois, 1985, p. 23 (translation)

¹⁰ Christine Mailloux, *Blessed Marie Anne Blondin*, 2008 (leaf).

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The 45-year-old foundress entered into a new stage of her life. She was isolated in the Convent at Saint-Genevieve, where she was put in charge of the school. But she continued to be harassed by community authorities. The influence of Father Maréchal gained ground at Saint-Jacques and at the diocese of Montreal. As a result, four years later, Mother Marie-Anne was recalled to the motherhouse under pretext of poor administration on her part, with instructions from Bishop Bourget to give her “all possible means to rest without bothering anyone.”

After a year with no ministry assignment, a period she called her “zero year,” she spent the rest of her life, some thirty years, limited to doing hidden, out-of-the way tasks, and was without any apparent influence or title since the Sisters were forbidden to call her Mother. At Lachine, where the novices were astounded to find her ironing in the basement, she often said: “The deeper a tree sinks its roots into the soil, the greater its chances of growing, branching out and producing fruit.” The tenderness and serenity of “Sister” Marie-Anne was disconcerting... “There is more happiness in forgiving injuries than in seeking revenge,” she said in all truthfulness. She left this world “happy and content” after having had the joy of seeing her community branch out to the Canadian West, the United States and Alaska. It was January 2, 1890.

On the 29th of April 2001, the Pope John Paul II beatified Marie-Anne Blondin. You can learn more about her extraordinary life while visiting the Sisters of Saint Anne Historic Centre.

To learn more about the Sisters of Saint Anne, please select Stop No. 7.

Select Stop No.8 to continue your tour of the Villa Anna boarding school.

Stop 7 – The Sisters of Saint Anne¹¹

In 1850, Marie-Esther Sureau dit Blondin, touched by the pitiful situation of the rural schools, surrounded herself with companions who were passionate about Christ and His mission. They would dedicate their lives to education, hospital care and evangelization.

From the very beginning, the Sisters of Saint Anne have devoted themselves to teaching in parish schools as did their foundress. Even today, they are highly motivated to serve in this ministry, are characterized by a zeal for developing the mind and the personality, wherever they may be teaching. They work in elementary or high schools, colleges and universities, these “women of their times” meet various needs, including the literacy work with immigrants and pastoral instruction of their fellow citizens.

In the area of health care, the Sisters of Saint Anne provide medical care in their community infirmaries, in dispensaries and hospitals and at organizations that help fill the gap in hospital systems. Led by the compassion of Christ, they also listen to and support the sick and their families.

Journeying with young people in their search for the meaning of life, supporting women in their plans to improve their living conditions: these are yet more of the ways the congregation supports all who seek to become more human.

Select Stop No.8 to continue your tour of the Villa Anna boarding school.

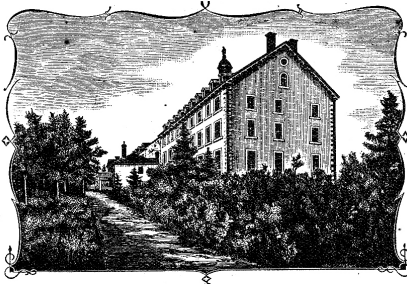


Logo de la Congrégation des
Sœurs de Sainte-Anne

¹¹ www.ssacong.org.

Stop 8 – The Villa-Anna Boarding School

Please walk east on Saint-Joseph Boulevard until you reach 12th Avenue. Cross the street and go west on Saint-Joseph Boulevard, up to the College property fence, and then stop. From this vantage point, you can see the first building in the Convent complex: the Villa-Anna boarding school.



Villa-Anna Boarding school, before 1888, engraving
© Sisters of Saint Anne Historic Centre

On May 1, 1861, the Daughters of Saint Anne took possession of the Simpson Manor. After considering the religious order's financial situation, the Bishop of Montreal thought it would be prudent to open only the boarding school and to postpone transferring the motherhouse and the novitiate to Lachine. The sisters assigned to setting up the Manor had their work cut out for them: they had to make all the necessary renovations to the house themselves in order to make it a suitable boarding school. Meanwhile, Father Piché used his influence and enrolments quickly grew.

On September 2, the Villa-Anna boarding school, which in 1876 became the Saint Anne boarding school, opened its doors to 68 students, 20 of whom were boarders. The number of boarders later increased to such a point that the sisters had to cross the Chemin du Roi every night to sleep in the attic of the warehouse, which they nicknamed the Ottawa Hotel after a well-known establishment of the time. The main floor of the warehouse was already being used as classroom space for the day students.

When the school outgrew the Manor, boldness dictated building, but the Sisters of Saint Anne were facing a serious financial problem. Authorized by François-Zéphirin Tassé, the local member of the provincial legislature, to use rock extracted from the canal, the sisters undertook to build the east annex of the Manor. It had an area of 110 by 60 feet (or 30.48 by 18.28 metres) and was completed in September 1864.

At the time, the building was surmounted by a steeple on which stood a statue of Mary Immaculate. In 1873, it was violently struck by lightning, which scattered fragments that caused damage. In fact, the bust of the statue fell through the roof and came to rest on some thin strips of wood, sparing, by supernatural forces, the novices who were asleep in the dormitory. Today, a cross has replaced the statue on the steeple.

If you look closely at the building, you can see a juncture in this wing, marking an extension that was built in 1888.

Walk along Saint-Joseph Boulevard heading west and stop in front of 1300. Select Stop No. 9.

Stop 9 – Saint Anne Convent

In 1864, the building of a new boarding school wing freed up part of the Simpson Manor. It then became the new seat of the motherhouse and novitiate, which since 1853 had been in the village of Saint-Jacques (then called Saint-Jacques-de-l'Achigan). The foundress of the order, Mother Marie-Anne, was one of the new arrivals. She lived in Lachine from October 17, 1864 to January 2, 1890, the day she died. She served in turn as portress, sacristan, wardrobe mistress¹², laundress, nurse, pharmacist and catechist for the girls taking their first communion.

The number of sisters in the novitiate and at the motherhouse increased from year to year. In 1870, the shortage of accommodations became serious at the Manor. The health of the most robust was put to a harsh test: to make room for students, the novices had to be moved to the attic, where they endured Siberian cold in the winter and unbearable heat in the summer. In a letter to Bishop Bourget, Father Nazaire Piché was critical of the situation:

...The infirmary is thus filled with young sisters. And in such an infirmary, which is only an attic, how can they recover their health? What kind of air do they breathe? It is certain that there is no Community in Montreal that has had to suffer on all accounts as the Sisters of Saint Anne have done.¹³



Saint Anne Convent, 1872
Luis M. D'Astudillo, photograph, 2010
© Sisters of Saint Anne Historic Centre

¹² "The wardrobe mistress is in charge of making clothing or having clothing made for the Sisters, in the forms and dimensions prescribed by the rule of dress," *Constitutions et coutumier des Filles de Saint Anne*, 1872, p. 78 (translation).

¹³ Letter from Father Piché to Bishop Bourget, Archives of the Archdiocese of Montreal, March 13, 1871 (translation).

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Following this letter, some benefactors and collaborators decided to lend their support to the building of a new novitiate. The superintendent of the Lachine Canal, Michael Conway, went to Ottawa and obtained permission from the Honourable Hector Langevin, Minister of Public Works, to deliver the rock that was extracted from the ground to the Sisters of Saint Anne, without measuring it (with a “toise”).¹⁴ Some volunteers, with the encouragement of Father Piché, transported it to the site. Donations poured in from everywhere, especially from Antoine-Olivier Berthelet, an important Montreal businessman who devoted part of his fortune to philanthropic activities.¹⁵ In mid-June, Théophile Paré, the son of the mayor of Lachine, offered his services as an architect free of charge. And so, to the west of the Simpson Manor rose a building of 125 by 50 feet (or 38.1 by 15.24 metres). The wing was blessed by Bishop Ignace Bourget on July 26, 1873.

Improvements were made gradually over time: cherry wood and maple floors replaced the softwood floors, electricity replaced oil and acetylene gas. In 1889, a Bell apparatus completed the audiophone¹⁶ of 1887, and in 1890, the aqueduct was equipped with conduits. In 1899, the board fence was taken down and replaced with the stone wall you see today. In 1894, at the request of the ecclesiastical superior Paul Bruchési, a covered balcony surrounded by a trellis was built for the benefit of the sick. It was not taken down until 1940, after the sick were transferred to 1950 Provost Street in Lachine, where the motherhouse of the order is now located.

In 1961, a special wing, the *seniorat*, was inaugurated for elderly sisters who were still able to live independently.

With the addition, rooms and community halls were set up, bringing the number of sisters living at the Convent to 256 at the time. Known as the Pavillon Esther-Blondin (or the Esther Blondin Pavilion), this wing became a residence for sisters during the transition between active life and the community's infirmary on Provost Street, from 1961 to 2010.

We invite you to direct your attention to the central wing of the building (at your right) and select Stop No 10.

Stop10 – The Sanctuary

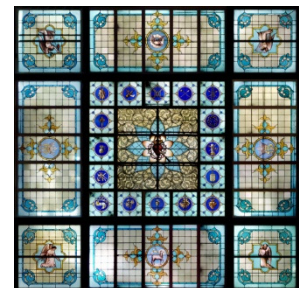


Interior of the first chapel, the “brick chapel,” between 1867 and 1888. To our knowledge, there is no photo of the exterior of this chapel.
© Sisters of Saint Anne Historic Centre

In October 1864, the arrival of the sisters from the former motherhouse in Saint-Jacques and the constantly growing number of students at the boarding school meant building a chapel big enough to hold everyone. In 1866, a chapel was built behind the Manor. It had no foundation, was made of brick and was two stories high with a back gallery. Completed in 1870, it was used for worship until 1888, at which time it was torn down, along with the Manor, to make room for the wing with the Sanctuary of Saint Anne, today the central section of the Convent complex, which extends outward toward Saint-Joseph Boulevard.

After the first chapel was built, the sisters saw that the ever-increasing number of personnel meant that a new, bigger chapel would have to be built in order to accommodate all the personnel of the motherhouse, the novitiate and the boarding school.

In 1878, came an initiative known as the *Billets d'affiliation à l'œuvre de la Construction du Sanctuaire de Sainte-Anne* (or the tickets of affiliation with the building of the Sanctuary of Saint Anne). The tickets, authorized by Bishop Édouard-Charles Fabre, the third bishop of Montreal, led to the recruiting of close to 16,000 people both in Lachine and in other areas where the Sisters of Saint Anne were present. Donations arrived from across Canada and the Eastern United States for the work of building the sanctuary. At the beginning of the following year, the parishioners again pitched in by grouping themselves into teams to transport the stone, and organized fundraising activities such as concerts, bazaars and lectures. Every effort was made to raise the money necessary for the project, and the proceeds from these activities were added to the donations.



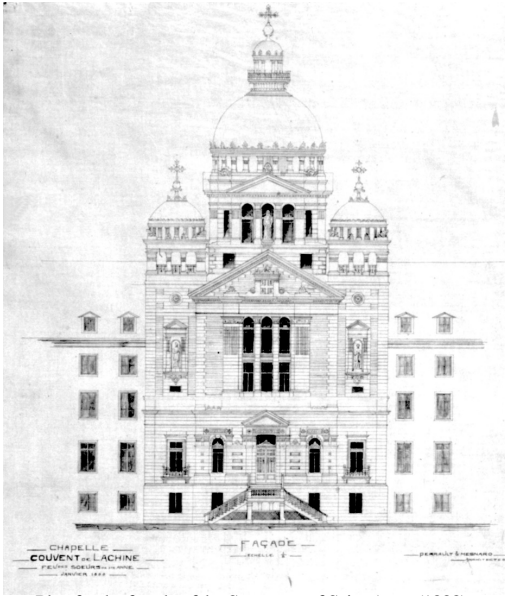
Stained glass of the skylight of the Sanctuary
© L'étude de Louis Brillant, Architecte, 2005

¹⁴ Measuring area or volumes using the “toise” as the unit of measurement. The “toise” was a measure used by masons and surveyors before the adoption of the metric system. It corresponded to six feet, or slightly less than two metres, or 1.949 metres in Paris (www.le-dictionnaire.com et www.cnrtl.fr).

¹⁵ www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-f.php?&id_nbr=4830&&PHPSESSID=q2i76f180cqjfbcbgmbm6m6s41 and www.vieux-montreal.qc.ca/inventaire/fiches/fiche_pers.php?id=392.

¹⁶ Service that allowed information to be broadcast to a large number of people from a single telephone line (www.granddictionnaire.com).

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Plan for the façade of the Sanctuary of Saint Anne (1888),
Perrault and Mesnard, architects
© Archives of the Sisters of Saint Anne (LQ11/147,B1)

On July 26, 1888, the cornerstone was finally blessed. The architects Maurice Perrault and Albert Mesnard signed the plans and directed the work. The firm Georges Beaucage & Co. did the masonry work, and Dominion Bridge of Lachine was responsible for the casting and steelwork.

On May 14, the writer of the Annals of the Sisters of Saint Anne noted, "The work on the Sanctuary is progressing very actively. The elegant cupolas of the domes and towers, almost completed, stand out against the blue sky, with the cross standing above them. The two floors below the Sanctuary are being divided up. In July, we hope to be able to use the main floor, which will include the kitchen and the refectory."¹⁷

Indeed, the architects were inspired to build the chapel on the third floor in order to provide additional living space below it for the sisters. As the writer of the Annals mentioned, the first floor consisted of the kitchens and a refectory. The second floor had an apartment for the chaplains, offices, a dormitory and a music room. In 1942, some of this area was remodelled to hold the Musée Sainte-Anne (Saint Anne's Museum), a museum of natural science that operated for 30 years. Today, the entire second floor is occupied by the Sisters of Saint Anne Historic Centre.

We draw your attention to the exterior construction. Look closely at the architectural details of the façade, especially the triangular pediment and the blocks of cement added to imitate cut stone. These architectural elements are reminders of the neoclassical style of the Simpson Manor. Unfortunately, the niches that decorate the façade have never held any statues.

Look up at the statue between the two towers.

On July 26, 1889, giant cranes lifted a statue of the *Education of the Virgin*, representing Saint Anne with Mary as a child, into place between the two towers. The sculpture, of embossed copper over a wooden frame and weighing 1,200 pounds (or 544.29 kg), was ordered from the Maison Gratton & Laperle and cost \$300¹⁸.

In September 1889, the major council of the order decided not to finish the interior of the sanctuary due to lack of funds. Nevertheless, Midnight Mass was celebrated there on December 25.

It was during this Mass, held in a very cold church, that Mother Marie-Anne caught a fatal case of pneumonia. She died on January 2, 1890. As she had predicted some days earlier, the first funeral service to be celebrated in the chapel was her own. "The good Lord will grant me the grace of hearing Mass in this chapel, but the first funeral could well be mine," she had said to her sisters.¹⁹

In 1894, Bishop Fabre authorized the project to continue. The contract for the decoration and interior finishing was then given to the Montreal firm Perrault, Mesnard et Venne.



Interior of the Sanctuary
Photo of Normand Rajotte, 2001
© Sisters of Saint Anne Historic Centre

In 1895, Joseph and Georges-Félix Héroux from Yamachiche, ornamental sculptors and contractors, completed the interior decoration according to the architects' plans. That same year, the feast day of Saint Anne, celebrated on July 26, was chosen as the official day to inaugurate the sanctuary dedicated to her.

¹⁷ MARIE-ÉMILIE, SSA, *Journal communautaire*, mai 1889.

¹⁸ Guy PINARD, *Montréal, son histoire, son architecture*, t. 5, Montréal, Éditions du Méridien, 1987, p. 354

¹⁹ *Idem* (translation).

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In 1900, a gilt-copper balustrade, surmounted by a polished oak communion table, was added to the interior decoration. For ease of access, it was decided in 1922 to reduce the number of steps around the communion table from four to two. In 1941, the architect Paul-Marie Lemieux made the most of a small space to create a new vestibule so that future pilgrims could enter the sanctuary more easily.

Today, the chapel is no longer a place of worship. It will be turned into a large library for the Collège Sainte-Anne.

To learn more about the architects Perrault and Mesnard, select Stop No. 11.

To learn more about the architect Joseph Venne, select Stop No. 12.

To learn more about Saint Anne, select Stop No. 13.

To continue your tour, select Stop No. 14.

Plage 11 – Les architectes Perrault et Mesnard



Portrait of Maurice Perreault

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Réf. : P1000, S4, D83, PP31

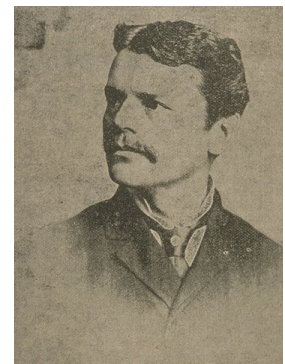
Born in Montreal on June 12, 1857, Maurice Perreault was the second of 14 children from the union of architect and surveyor Henri-Maurice Perrault and his wife Marie-Louise-Octavie Masson. On September 24, 1879, Maurice Perreault married Marie-Sara-Arthémise Hébert. He had many children with her, but only three of their daughters reached adulthood. Perreault died of throat cancer on February 11, 1909, in Longueuil, and was buried two days later at Notre-Dame-des-Neiges Cemetery in Montreal. He was 51 years old.

Maurice Perrault grew up in an eminently respectable Montreal family, and was active in a number of areas, including politics, religion, business and construction. His father, Henri-Maurice, was descended from important lumber merchants; his uncle was the architect John Ostell and his first cousin was Édouard-Charles Fabre, the first Archbishop of Montreal.

Perrault studied at Montreal's Petit Séminaire from 1867 to 1875. During that time, he became friends with Paul Bruchési, future Archbishop of Montreal, who later was useful in introducing him to certain members of the clergy. Between 1875 and 1879, he continued his education at Perrault et Rielle, where he learned the rules of surveying, and then with his father, who taught him the rudiments of architecture.

Ten years older than Perrault, Albert Mesnard was born in 1847 at Saint-Lin, in the Lanaudière region, and died in Montreal, on September 6, 1909. Mesnard studied at Collège de L'Assomption, and then moved to Montreal to work as an assistant to the architect Victor Bourgeau. In 1873, he opened his own office. Over the next 40 years, he worked alone or in partnership with such Montreal architects as Théodose Daoust (1897-1898), Joseph-Arthur Godin (1901-1902) and Charles H. Bernier (1903-1907). His most successful collaboration, however, was with Maurice Perrault.

In January 1880, when Perrault was only 22, his father gave him control of the office. In order to ensure the firm's survival, Perrault formed a partnership with the chief draftsman Albert Mesnard, who had worked for his father for several years. Known as Perrault & Mesnard, the new firm quickly made a name for itself on the Montreal scene, specializing in religious and institutional architecture.



Portrait of Albert Mesnard

© L.-G.-H. Archambault
Le Monde illustré, vol. 6, n° 289, p. 225
(16 novembre 1889)

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Thanks to their clients, the family network and the advice of Perrault Senior, the two partners soon saw themselves commissioned to do the plans for vast churches. Their output was particularly extensive during the 1880s. It was during this period that they designed the plans for Saint-Gabriel's church in Pointe-Saint-Charles (1891-1895), the church of Saint-Lin in the Lanaudière region (1887-1890), the church of the Annunciation in Oka (1879-1883), and Saint Anne's Basilica in Varennes (1884-1887), not to mention the cathedrals of Saint-Charles-Borromée in Joliette (1887-1892) and Saint-Antoine-de-Padoue in Longueuil (1884-1887). Even though their commissions were mostly in the greater Montreal area, they also had several buildings to their credit in other Canadian provinces and in the north-eastern United States.

The architects had two very different styles: Maurice Perrault's was simple and unadorned, while in contrast, Albert Mesnard preferred a multiplicity of picturesque effects and opulent decoration, an inclination that was perhaps due to his early training as a sculptor.

At the beginning of the 1890s, they were the best known French-speaking architects in Quebec. In 1892, they decided to partner with their chief draftsman, Joseph Venne, in order to create the firm Perrault, Mesnard et Venne. From a technical viewpoint, at the end of the 19th century, the firm boasted some of the most innovative architects in the use of steel. The iron and glass atrium of the People's Bank (1892-1894), inspired by American models, shows how quickly they grasped the latest developments in construction and aesthetics.

In 1895, the architects decided to bring their association to an end. For some years already, Perrault had entertained political aspirations that sometimes led him to neglect his first profession.

Following the dissolution, Venne went on to have a brilliant career, traces of which can still be seen in the metropolis. Mesnard also continued to work at his profession, but without the success he had known in his past association with Perrault.

For his part, living in the city of Longueuil since 1895, Perreault served as mayor from February 1898 to August 1902. In December 1900, he was the elected representative for the county of Chambly in the Quebec legislature. He was re-elected in 1904 and, by a narrow margin, in 1908.

Always on the lookout for technical innovations and with a view to keeping his productions up to date, Maurice Perrault left behind a reputation for being an honest architect. His great passion for politics, whether sincere or opportunistic, has earned him a place in history.

To learn more about the architect Joseph Venne, select Stop No. 12.

To learn more about Saint Anne, select Stop No. 13.

To continue your tour, select Stop No. 14.

Stop 12 – Joseph Venne, Architect



Portrait of Joseph Venne (1920c.)
William Notman & Son

© Fonds Famille Venne, Écomusée du fier monde

Joseph Venne was born on Montcalm Street in the Sainte-Marie district of Montreal on June 14, 1858, and died on May 9, 1925, in the same city. Eldest son of the carpenter Joseph Venne and Hélène Raymonde dit Labrosse, he married Philomène Boucher on October 17, 1882, with whom he had 11 children.

Although he applied himself to his studies, they initially did not seem to prepare him for the career for which he was destined. In fact, when he arrived at Henri-Maurice Perrault study in May 1874, he was turned away and sent back to his drawing board. It took a month before the firm was willing to accept him as an apprentice. His training lasted five years, after which he continued his career at the firm as a draftsman.

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When Perrault and Mesnard formed their partnership in 1880, Venne was promoted to the position of chief draftsman. Even before being invited to be a partner, he played an important role at the architectural firm, which was very busy and in great demand, especially by the Catholic Church (in Quebec, in British Columbia and in the United States), by various levels of public administration and by the province's French-speaking bourgeoisie. It was during this period that the firm developed expertise in steel structures, and then became more interested in concrete structures.

The firm Perrault, Mesnard et Venne was founded in 1892 and dissolved three years later, in 1895. Joseph Venne then worked independently until 1911, when he formed a partnership with his student Louis Labelle. On occasion he also worked with Max Doumic, Joseph-Arthur Godin and Alphonse Venne.

In spite of all the demands of his work, Venne made every effort to promote the architect's craft and have it recognized as a profession. Between 1895 and 1899, he taught public courses in construction and architecture at Montreal's Monument-National, under the auspices of the Council of Arts and Manufactures of the Province of Quebec.

In 1890, he was involved in founding the Province of Quebec Association of Architects, in which he held several positions, including, twice, that of president (in 1902 and 1912).

In 1911, he worked with Joseph-Alcide Chaussé on a commission formed to revise the building regulations for the city of Montreal; he took part in writing the first Building Code governing construction in the city.

In 1923, although he was in poor health, he continued to work at his profession with his sons Adrien and Émile. Émile, who trained at the École des beaux-arts in Paris, taught at the École des beaux-arts in Montreal and the École polytechnique.

Joseph Venne's career was especially noted for his output of religious buildings, for which he is considered one of the leading representatives of late 19th-century Victorian architecture in Quebec.

Among his achievements, he designed the new façade of Saint-Enfant-Jésus church in the Mile-End district of Montreal (1900-1901), the rebuilding of Sacré-Cœur-de-Jésus church (1922), the expansion of Saint-Clément church in Viauville (1913-1914) and Notre-Dame-des-Sept-Douleurs church in Verdun, a project he worked on in collaboration with Louis Labelle (1911-1914), as well as the parish church of Sainte-Anne-des-Plaines (1899-1902) in the Lower Laurentians. Saint-Pierre-Claver church (1915-1917) forms a parenthesis in his work, characterized by a more ornamented, complex and intimate architecture.

To learn more about Saint Anne, select Stop No. 13.

To continue your tour, select Stop No. 14.

Stop 13 – Saint Anne

According to tradition, Saint Anne is the mother of the Virgin Mary, and a model for mothers. From the early days of the Church, Christians have venerated her and a shrine was erected in her honour near Nazareth, and another in Jerusalem. In France, the most popular place of pilgrimage in Brittany, Sainte-Anne d'Auray, dates back to July 26, 1625.²⁰

Devotion to Saint Anne crossed the Atlantic and took hold in North America, especially in Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré, in 1658. Saint Anne officially became the patron saint of the civil and ecclesiastical province of Quebec in 1876.

On September 12, 1848, Father Paul-Loup Archambeault of Vaudreuil gave the developing community the name of *Filles de Notre-Dame-de-Bonsecours et de Sainte-Anne* (Daughters of Our Lady of Good Help and of Saint Anne).

On September 8, 1850, the evening of the first religious profession, Bishop Ignace Bourget stipulated that the Congregation would be known officially as the Filles de Sainte-Anne (Daughters of Saint Anne). "The purpose of your new Community will be to spread, through every means within its power, devotion to a saint who has always been a good and tender Mother to this country."²¹ On May 2, 1884, according to the decree of approbation from Rome, the Congregation took the name of the *Sisters of Saint Anne*.

The feast of Saint Anne, celebrated on July 26, has been the patron feast of the Congregation since it was founded. The day is marked by large gatherings wherever there are Sisters of Saint Anne.

To continue your visit, move a few steps to the east and stop in the Collège Sainte Anne parking lot. Select Stop No. 14 to learn more about the development of the Boarding School.



Saint Anne, Saint Joachim and the Virgin Mary (1870)
Ippolito Zapponi (1826-1895), Italy
Given by Father Nazaire Piché to the Sisters of Saint Anne for
their first Chapel in Lachine
© Sisters of Saint Anne Historic Centre

Stop 14 – Development of the Boarding School

From 1880 on, parish schools of the United States that were led by the Sisters of Saint Anne began sending large numbers of their pupils to the Lachine boarding school. During this period, boarders also came from British Columbia, where the order had been working since 1858. With enrolments constantly rising, it was decided, at the same time as the sanctuary was being built, to double the size of the boarding school by building an addition measuring 90 by 20 feet (or 27.43 by 6.1 metres) on the east side.

In 1861, the students had recess across from the river, on the lawn of the boarding school. In spring 1899, a schoolyard was inaugurated, measuring 278 by 220 feet (or 84.74 by 67.06 metres), located in the block formed by 12th and 11th avenues, Saint-Louis Street and Saint-Joseph Boulevard. Scattered around the schoolyard were four eight-sided buildings, big wooden swings and rustic chairs and benches so that the children could rest after noisy games. In the centre, a statue representing Our Lady of Lourdes overlooked an artificial lake; the statue is now located in front of the Marie-Esther building on 12th Avenue. A tall wooden fence surrounded the schoolyard until 1933, when it was decided to lengthen the playground by 205 feet (or 62.48 metres) and replace the wooden fence with a solid metal one.

Notice the east wing of the building which stretches out towards Saint-Joseph Boulevard. That wing was built for the students of the superior music school and Collège Marie-Anne.

To learn more about the College, select Stop No. 15.

²⁰ *Revue Sainte-Anne de Beaupré*, June 1982, p.114

²¹ Ignace Bourget, *Mandement d'Institution des Filles de Sainte-Anne...*, September 8, 1850.

Stop 15 – Collège Marie-Anne



© Mathieu Dubois, Collège Sainte-Anne de Lachine

In 1940, the general council of the Congregation of the Sisters of Saint Anne decided to build an extension to the boarding school. The architects Aristide Beaugrand-Champagne and Joseph Anastase Gravel were chosen for the project, which was executed by the contractor Wilfrid Lalonde.²²

In 1941, the annex to the boarding school welcomed the students of the music school and Collège Marie-Anne, which were opened during the 1930s in the Saint-Henri district of Montreal. The college, affiliated with the Faculty of Arts at the University of Montréal, offered higher education to young women wishing to continue their studies.

The transfer of Collège Marie-Anne to Ahuntsic, in the northern part of Montreal in 1958, enabled the boarding school to offer classes in literature and rhetoric until 1965 under the name of Collège Saint-Anne, a name that the establishment has retained even though the classical course no longer exists.

Move further eastward to exit the College enclosure and walk toward the north. Select Stop No. 16.

Stop 16 – Collège Sainte-Anne and Recent Constructions

The boarding school closed in 1972 and the sisters' residence was concentrated on the 5th and 6th floors, which allowed the institution to double and even triple the number of day students in order to respond to the constant increase in applications for admission.

In 1979, to give the students a better all-round education, a sports centre called Le Goéland (The Seagull) was built in the middle of the park, which had been used as a schoolyard since 1900. In 1987, the Pavillon Marie-Esther (Marie-Esther Building) was erected beside Le Goéland for boys and girls in Secondary I (grade 7) — a welcome innovation since until that time, only girls could attend the institution.

In 2004, a new complex of considerable size was built that encompassed Le Goéland, expanding and modernizing it and even adding a swimming pool.

For an overview of the external architecture of the Sisters of Saint Anne Convent, select Stop No. 17.

Stop 17 – Exterior Architecture of the Sisters of Saint Anne Convent

The architecture of convent complexes is usually characterized by a series of buildings and additions to accommodate various functions, according to the needs and customs of the religious community living there. In these complexes several special areas can be found, including areas for worship, medical services, teaching boarding school students, kitchens, laundry facilities and lodgings. In addition, these complexes often grow out of a single building: new constructions are attached to older ones to meet the order's increasing needs. The later additions are often built with an eye to ensuring that they blend in smoothly with the original building. That is why certain complexes stand out for their great architectural unity, in spite of the different phases in which construction took place. The convent complex of the Religious Hospitallers of the Hôtel-Dieu de Montréal on Pine Avenue, the Grand Seminary on Sherbrooke Street and the convent complex of the Sisters of Saint Anne are a few very good examples of this.

The Sisters of Saint Anne Convent complex that can be seen today adopts the recognizable shape of a capital "E", opening onto Saint-Joseph Boulevard, with the sanctuary forming the middle branch. Six constructions built from 1864 to 1961 make up the complex.

The oldest building is the Villa-Anna boarding school, built between 1862 and 1864. You can identify it by counting 11 windows over from the right side of the sanctuary. After the eleventh one, you will see where the wall joins with the adjacent building; the stones on the left project outwards slightly. The boarding school was built by the contractors Perrault et Lamoureux. The architect is unknown. This building with its neoclassical style, which can be recognized for its simplicity, its order and the symmetry of the different architectural elements, would set the tone for the other structures. It

²² Louise Roy, p. 270.

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has a basement, a main floor and four storeys. The top two floors are located beneath the attic of the gable roof, of sheet metal with rods. Gable dormer windows let daylight into the attic space. Note that the style and divisions of all the windows are different from the original.

The second major structure of the complex, built from 1871 to 1873, is located to the left of the sanctuary. This was the new novitiate and the motherhouse. The architect Théophile Paré drew the plans and the specifications for the building free of charge, as well as those for the expansion of the Villa-Anna boarding school. This third construction, built from 1886 to 1888, was attached to the right of the boarding school.

From 1888 to 1889, the firm Perrault et Mesnard was mandated to build the central part of the complex, the building which at the time held the refectory in the basement, the generalate on the main floor, and in the upper portion, the sanctuary crowned by the great dome. Here is a translation of an excerpt from the book *Montréal, son histoire, son architecture* by Guy Pinard, describing the exterior architectural features:

[It] has a façade with a classical pediment resting on slightly projecting pilasters, framed by two small domed bell towers, showing a Byzantine influence. Where the chapel and the main building meet, there is a neoclassical dome 30 feet in diameter, resting on a square base decorated with classical elements (arched openings, Doric pilasters, pediments, cornices with dentils, etc.). A small dome with a cross at the top crowns the building.

That cross stands 120 feet (or 36.28 meters) above street level. The complex therefore serves as a landmark, not only on Saint-Joseph Boulevard, but for the entire borough of Lachine.

Originally, the main entrance featured a stairway with two branches that joined at the second flight of stairs. In 1941, the architect Paul Marie Lemieux was mandated to make changes which, unfortunately, took away some of the majesty of the façade of the complex's central building. In 1889, a stone wall replaced the wooden one.



© Sisters of Saint Anne Historic Centre

Finally, the last two constructions were the wings located on the far east and west sides. On the east, Collège Marie-Anne was built in 1940 and 1941, according to the plans of Aristide Beaugrand-Champagne and Joseph Anastase Gravel. This building which, like the other constructions, respected the design of the complex, stood out for the turret that enclosed the staircase, and for its pinnacle, which had a more slender silhouette. On the west side, the Pavillon Esther Blondin was built in 1960-1961 using plans and specifications provided by the major firm Larose, Larose, Laliberté et Pettrucci. Although it has one extra floor and galleries, the stone brick construction blends in perfectly with the rest of the complex, the first building of which was built more than 100 years earlier.

We invite you to select Stop No. 18 to listen to an excerpt from the musical repertoire of the Congregation of Sisters of Saint Anne.

Stop 18 – Musical Excerpt

The piece you will hear is “Seigneur, glorifie” (Lord, glorify). The Sisters of Saint Anne sang that piece in anticipation of the beatification of their foundress. The music is by Sister Pierrette Courtemanche, SSA. It is performed by the choir of the Motherhouse of the Sisters of Saint Anne, in 1992.

The musical excerpt lasts 1 minutes and 20 seconds. We hope you enjoy it!

Before you leave us, select Stop No. 19, for a few closing remarks.

Stop 19 – Closing Remarks



© Centre historique des Sœurs de Sainte-Anne
Photo de M. Luis d'Astudillo

For the Congregation of the Sisters of Saint Anne, the sale of the Saint Anne Convent to the adjacent college is in the spirit of continuing their mission of education. If these buildings, more than a century old, are a sign of the sisters' presence and devotion in Lachine, as well as of the sacrifices made by the pioneering sisters of yesteryear, they also recall the local population's attachment to this religious order. More than once, indeed, parishioners were asked to participate in the erection of the various parts of the complex, whether by doing chores at the request of Father Piché, through their support for the work of the sanctuary or with their generous donations. Finally, the stone walls of the complex are also a silent witness to an important era for the region: the development of the Lachine canal.

And now it's time to say goodbye. We hope that this guided tour has helped you learn more about a pivotal time for education in Quebec. Should you wish to

continue your visit and learn more about the Congregation of the Sisters of Saint Anne and its foundress, we invite you to return to the entrance of 1280 Saint-Joseph Boulevard (the entrance to the sanctuary wing) and tour the Sisters of Saint Anne Historic Centre. You can view items from the various places where the sisters have worked, exhibits on education and health care, and works of art. There is no admission charge. Enjoy your visit!

Production credits

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