

Stop 1 – Introduction



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In the early days of the colony, the first pilgrimage destination in Montreal was the cross that Maisonneuve and the first Montrealers raised on the side of Mount Royal on the feast of the Epiphany 1643.¹ At some distance from the settlement, at a time when leaving the enclosure of the fort was risky because of Iroquois raids, the cross met a number of the “criteria” associated with places of pilgrimage. Unfortunately, the colonists didn’t go there very often because of the dangers surrounding travel outside the fort.

In the coming hour, we invite you to visit Notre-Dame-de-Bon-Secours Chapel. It will be our pleasure to help you to discover this historic chapel whose influence is closely tied to the charism of Marguerite Bourgeoys. You will find a place containing many attractions. In addition to the richness of its décor, you will be enchanted by the furnishings, paintings, votive offerings in the form of boats recalling its function as a place of pilgrimage, the “miraculous” statue and, of course, the museum.

To begin the visit, go to the intersection of de la Commune East and Bonsecours streets. Please stand beside the pillar of the wharf of the Old Port of Montreal.

The visit begins outside the building with a presentation of the immediate surroundings on de la Commune East, Bonsecours and Saint Paul streets. This part of the visit allows you to admire the exterior architecture of the chapel and the adjacent buildings and to better understand the particular socio-historical context of the construction of this place and the development of the district.

We then invite you to enter the chapel to discover its lovely décor, parts of which were hidden for years. This décor is evidence not only of the devotion of pilgrims to the Blessed Virgin but also of the important contribution of Marguerite Bourgeoys and the Congrégation de Notre-Dame to the development of Montreal.

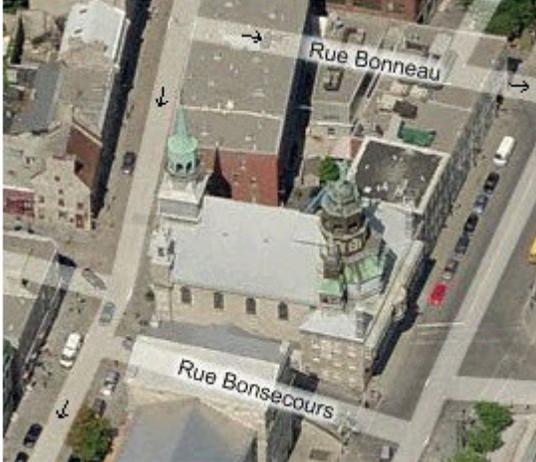
The flyer you received or downloaded with this podcast shows the recommended tour route and points of interest. The numbers appearing on the diagrams indicate the starting point for each of the Stops on the tour.

We now invite you to discover Notre-Dame-de-Bon-Secours Chapel, from yesterday to today, a place of worship, art and history.

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

¹ SIMPSON and POTHIER, p. 31.

Stop 2 – The neighbourhood



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You are now at the corner of de la Commune East and Bonsecours in Old Montreal, in the district once known as the *Faubourg Bonsecours*.

Originally located outside the fortifications that encircled Ville-Marie, the Faubourg Bonsecours was included within the fortified perimeter when the city developed to the North East. Rebuilt mostly during the 19th century, this area is distinct from the rest of Old Montreal by the fact that, throughout its history, it has maintained a residential aspect even after the historic upheavals resulting from the industrialization of the metropolis. Strolling through the district, you can still find a few houses dating back to the second half of the 18th century.

To your left, you can see the building housing Bonsecour Market. It was the architect William Footner who constructed the present building between 1844 and 1848. This first large-scale building, erected by the *Corporation de la Ville de Montréal*, was commissioned to mark Montreal's new status as capital of the United Canada, in 1843². This building has served many functions, among them reception hall, theatre, shopping space, House of Parliament and, for more than 25 years, Montreal's City Hall.³

Look around and imagine the old days when the streets of this neighbourhood were filled with merchants, wagons and horses. Think of the settlers, then of the immigrants disembarking from the boats moored in the port of Montreal and discovering the New World. Recall the upheavals that resulted from great historic events, and then from the industrial growth of Montreal its direct impact on the population explosion of the city. Notice too the railway tracks behind you, the trade link following the river and crossing the entire country from coast to coast.

Please select Stop No. 3 to learn more about the period of the construction of Notre-Dame-de-Bon-Secours Chapel.

Stop 3 – History

The history of Notre-Dame-de-Bon-Secours Chapel extends back almost as far as that of Montreal itself. It began in 1655. About two years after her arrival in Ville-Marie, Marguerite Bourgeoys decided to undertake the building of a chapel of pilgrimage dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary. At the time, pilgrimage was an important devotional practice, and Marguerite Bourgeoys wanted the Blessed Virgin to have a place especially dedicated to her in Ville-Marie. With the help of the early Montrealers, Marguerite Bourgeoys began her project. Unfortunately, the work was delayed. It resumed again only in 1675 and was completed three years later. The chapel was then the first stone church built on the island of Montreal and is the only church, with Notre-Dame Basilica, that still exists in what is now the historic district of Old Montreal.



© CPRQ, 2003.

² www.marchebonsecours.qc.ca/en/historique.html (consulted 2009-09-01).

³ www.vieux.montreal.qc.ca/inventaire/fiches/fiche_bat.php?sec=e&num=19 (consulted 2009-07-30).

We know very little about this first chapel. An archaeological dig carried out under the present building turned up the ruins of this first place of worship that measured approximately 14 by 8 metres. It had burned down in 1754, along with a large part of the eastern section of Old Montreal. The sisters of the Congrégation de Notre-Dame, founded by Marguerite Bourgeoys, were saddened by the destruction of this place of pilgrimage built by their founder. The only object that survived the tragic fire was a small wooden statue representing the Virgin and Child. The sisters still keep it as a treasure and a precious link to their past.

The years following the fire were not conducive to the reconstruction of the chapel, which was finally rebuilt in 1771. Still today, it maintains its original function as a place of pilgrimage dedicated to the Blessed Virgin.

The chapel is associated with two important Montreal personalities: Marguerite Bourgeoys and Paul de Chomedey, sieur de Maisonneuve.

Should you wish to learn more about Marguerite Bourgeoys and the Congrégation de Notre-Dame, please select Stop No. 4.

Should you wish to learn more about Paul de Chomedey, sieur de Maisonneuve, please select Stop No. 5.

To continue your visit with the description of the adjacent buildings, please select Stop No. 6.

Stop 4 – Marguerite Bourgeoys and the Congrégation de Notre-Dame

Sister Patricia Simpson tells you about Saint Marguerite Bourgeoys and the Congrégation de Notre-Dame



The True Portrait of Marguerite Bourgeoys
Photo © Bernard Dubois

Born in Troyes, a city in France, on April 17, 1620, Marguerite Bourgeoys left her mark on the history of the city of Montreal before her death on January 12, 1700. After opening the first school in Ville-Marie in 1658, the following year Marguerite Bourgeoys founded the Congrégation de Notre-Dame de Montréal. Her community of non-cloistered sisters opened schools not only in Montreal but also in many other regions of New France. The Congregation also collaborated in the Mountain Mission that the Sulpicians opened on Mount Royal. After Marguerite Bourgeoys' death, the sisters of the Congrégation continued the work begun by their founder. Today, the Congregation is involved in numerous educational and social missions in Japan, Latin America, France and Cameroon, as well as in Quebec, elsewhere in Canada and in the United States. Marguerite Bourgeoys was canonized by Pope John Paul II on October 31, 1982.

Should you wish to learn more about Paul de Chomedey, sieur de Maisonneuve, please select Stop No. 5.

To continue your visit with the description of the adjacent buildings, please select Stop No. 6.

Stop 5 – Paul de Chomedey, sieur de Maisonneuve



© City of Montréal, 1999

Monument in memory of Paul de Chomedey, sieur de Maisonneuve
(1895)

Louis-Philippe Hébert, in collaboration with
Mesnard et Venne, architects

Place d'Armes

Property of the City of Montréal, Public art's municipal collection

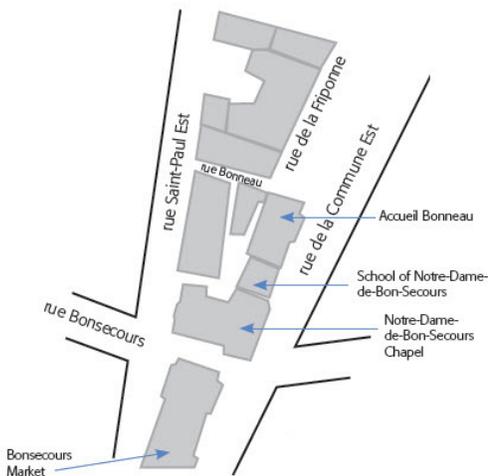
Paul de Chomedey, sieur de Maisonneuve, born February 15, 1612 at Neuville-sur-Vanne, was a French officer. Eldest son of the *seigneur*, he became the sieur de Maisonneuve in 1614. As a soldier, he fought in European wars before being sent by the *Société Notre-Dame de Montréal* to take possession of its concession in the New World: America.

Chosen to found a colony on the island of Montreal, he arrived in New France in 1641. On May 17, 1642, some hundred years after the arrival of Jacques Cartier on Mount Royal, a group of about fifty French settlers, under his leadership, landed on the point where Place Royal, formerly occupied by Champlain, was located. He named the site Ville-Marie in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary. It was Maisonneuve who ceded to Marguerite Bourgeoys the land for the future Notre-Dame-de-Bon-Secours Chapel. Maisonneuve worked on the construction of the fortifications of Ville-Marie and of a number of its buildings. This settlement would develop into the city of Montreal. Despite the fact that he was a skilful organizer, he was not well regarded by the colonial government and was recalled to France in 1665. He died in obscurity in Paris on September 9, 1676.⁴

To continue your visit with the description of the adjacent buildings, please select Stop No. 6.

Stop 6 – The surrounding buildings

Move a few steps to the east, and face École Notre-Dame-de-Bon-Secours, located between Bonsecours and Bonneau streets.



To the right of the chapel you can see École Notre-Dame-de-Bon-Secours⁵. The school was founded in 1838 by the Sulpicians. In 1893, they took advantage of the widening of Commissioners Street (now known as de la Commune), which involved demolishing the old school that dated back to the end of the 18th century, to erect a new building to house the school.

The plans for the school were the work of the architectural firm Perrault Mesnard et Venne, which had previously done major work on the chapel. Notice the windows located at the top of the façade fashioned of Montreal grey stone. The same style of window is repeated at the back of the chapel.

Ever since the beginnings of the colony, the Congrégation de Notre-Dame had been responsible for the education of girls. Built as an elementary school, this school run by the Congregation opened its doors in 1893. At that time, the sisters taught in French, and their pupils were mainly the children of the poor families of the neighbourhood. This would continue until 1968.

⁴ http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_de_Chomedey_sieur_de_Maisonneuve ; www.vieux.montreal.qc.ca/inventaire/fiches/fiche_pers.php?id=106 ; www.canadianencyclopedia.ca/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=A1ARTA0005045 (consulted 2009-09-01).

⁵ www.vieux.montreal.qc.ca/inventaire/fiches/fiche_bat.php?sec=d&num=26 (consulted 2009-07-30).

In 1912, the Congregation established a residence there for the teaching sisters. After the school closed, this building continued as a residence. Between 1996 and 1998, major restoration work was done to set up the Marguerite Bourgeoys Museum. At the same time, the sizeable archaeological site uncovered under the chapel was organized to include exhibition rooms and was annexed to the museum. Still the property of the Sulpician Seminary, the old school now houses exhibition rooms and the administrative offices of the museum, as well as accommodations for the sisters.

To the east of the school is the Accueil Bonneau whose mission is to support the social reintegration of people who have lived or are living on the street.⁶ Built of grey limestone from Saint Marc-des-Carières, in the county of Portneuf (Québec), it had to be rebuilt after the explosion of June 9, 1998 that destroyed the original building.

As you return slowly, take time to admire the surroundings. Pay attention to the diversity of people here in the neighbourhood. Before going up Bonsecours Street, observe the tower of the chapel.

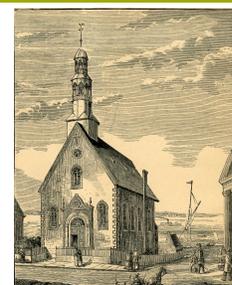
The tower of Notre-Dame-de-Bon-Secours Chapel overlooks the harbor. It is the relationship that this place of worship has had with the river that has earned it the title of *The Sailors' Church*. The majestic statue crowning its tower is rightly named *Star of the Sea*. It was erected in 1892 above the little chapel in the tower overlooking the port from which the ships and their crews were blessed before leaving for Europe.⁷

On the chapel's west wall, there used to be little stalls and workshops. These were demolished at the end of the 1880s during renovation work in the neighbourhood.

Continue your walk and stand at the intersection of Saint Paul Street, in front of Bonsecours Market, to be able to see the side of the chapel. Then select Stop No. 7 to continue your visit.

Stop 7 – Visit of the exterior

As was previously mentioned, today's Notre-Dame-de-Bon-Secours Chapel is not the first place of worship built on this site. In 1670, a little wooden shelter was erected in which to hold religious celebrations. It was replaced by a stone structure in 1675 that, unfortunately, was ravaged by fire in 1754.⁸ It was only in 1771 that the *fabrique* of Notre-Dame Church, owner of the land, managed to rebuild the chapel. The plans for this new chapel, which provided for a building much larger than the original, were mainly executed by mason Joseph Morin and Pierre Raza, *dit* Rangeard.⁹



Notre-Dame-de-Bon-Secours Chapel
Source: *Sœurs Grises de Montréal*

Photographs taken before the renovations began in 1885 show a façade embellished by a large central door and flanked by arched windows. Above the door was another arched opening, surmounted by an *oeil-de-boeuf*. On either side of the nave was a row of four arched windows. A single double-lantern steeple stood on top of the front of the roof¹⁰ and a cut-stone cross had been inserted in the gable.

The distinctive location of this chapel exposed it to the possibility of demolition time and again. Indeed, in the late nineteenth century, the ground on which the chapel stood was highly prized by the City of Montreal and Canadian Pacific Railways as a possible site for a train station. The project was eventually abandoned because of strong public reaction. Taking advantage of this passionate reaction, the Sulpicians decided to begin major renovations of the chapel.¹¹

⁶ www.accueilbonneau.com (consulted 2009-07-30).

⁷ www.vieux.montreal.qc.ca/inventaire/fiches/fiche_bat.php?sec=e&num=2 (consulted 2009-07-30).

⁸ CONSEIL DU PATRIMOINE RELIGIEUX DU QUÉBEC, *Inventaire des lieux de culte du Québec*, 2003 (fiche 2003-06-289).

⁹ www.vieux.montreal.qc.ca/inventaire/fiches/fiche_bat.php?sec=e&num=2 (consulted 2009-07-30).

¹⁰ www.vieux.montreal.qc.ca/inventaire/fiches/fiche_bat.php?sec=e&num=2 (consulted 2009-07-30).

¹¹ www.vieux.montreal.qc.ca/inventaire/fiches/fiche_bat.php?sec=e&num=2 (consulted 2009-07-30).

Between 1885 and 1886, the changes were completed according to plans drawn up by architects Perreault et Mesnard. A new façade in an eclectic architectural style, including neo-Baroque and neo-Renaissance elements, surmounted by two lateral pinnacles, was built up against the old one. It combined cut-stone with rustic stone. This façade included a niche to hold a statue of the Blessed Virgin, above a large entrance to the porch, where the following exhortation can be read: “*Si l’amour de Marie, en ton cœur est gravé. En passant ne t’oublie, de lui dire un Ave.*” (If the love of Mary is written in your heart, don’t forget to offer her an Ave as you pass.)

Please select Stop No. 8 before going into the chapel.



Please note that the museum entrance, located to the left of the chapel, is wheelchair accessible.

Stop 8 – The Narthex

You are now standing under the steeple, in the narthex, commonly known as the portico. This place marks the passage from the tumult of the outside world to the serenity of the sacred space.

Take time to observe the canvas lining by Delphis-Adolphe Beaulieu, decorating the vault of the narthex. Notice the care taken to brighten up this small space.

Open the door and move toward the nave. Take time to absorb the richness of the place. Sit in one of the benches and select Stop No. 9.

Stop 9 – The Nave

To this day, the 1771 chapel has preserved the essentials of the original building. The old façade and the wall of the apse, the rounded wall whose shape you see in the sanctuary, still exist under more recent additions.

Look up at the vault suspended from the original ceiling of the chapel, itself supported by a wooden framework in the French style. The choirloft at the back dates from the same period as the vault, between 1885-1886.

The decoration of the chapel, as it exists today, was completed in stages since the 1880s.

Please pay special attention to the decorative painting of the chapel where pink, turquoise and grey tints are enhanced with gold. Notice that the colours are a bit brighter in the sanctuary than in the nave, no doubt to draw attention to the scene of the *Crowning of the Blessed Virgin*. Each of the scenes illustrates an episode from the life of the Virgin Mary. Dating from 1886-1889, this decorative painting of grisaille on wood slats is the work of painter-decorator François-Édouard Meloche.

Meloche was a master of the art of *trompe-l’œil*, the technique that gives a three-dimensional appearance to painted scenes. The décor that he completed for the chapel used the entire space of the vault and the work of *grisaille* and *trompe-l’œil* enhanced the span of the barrel vault. At the beginning of the 20th century, this form seemed to fall into disfavour with patrons of the arts, some of whom went so far as to call it deceiving. The chaplain Jean-Emmanuel Filiatrault did not escape this “trend” and in 1908 hired another painter-decorator to bring the chapel back into fashion.

And so, Delphis-Adolphe Beaulieu was given the task of washing the vault and covering it with four layers of paint. For some unknown reason, Beaulieu didn’t do exactly what was stipulated in his contract. He decided to use the technique of *marouflage*, which consisted of painting canvas in his workshop and then glueing it to the vault of the chapel. In using this procedure, was he perhaps hoping to preserve the works of Meloche? In any case, that was the final result.

However, it would take 85 years before this magnificent décor was rediscovered. Indeed, it was as a result of insulation work in the roof in 1994 that the glue holding Beaulieu's canvas started to dry out and the canvas began to come loose. To the surprise of all, the works of Meloche appeared once more. You see them today in almost the very same state as in 1889.

Beaulieu hired Ozias Leduc to paint certain scenes on his canvases. You can still see part of the contribution of Ozias Leduc to the decoration of the chapel. First of all, if you turn toward the main doors of the chapel, you will see two medallions, one on either side: the first representing Marguerite Bourgeoys and the other Paul de Chomedey, sieur de Maisonneuve. If you look toward the sanctuary, you will notice two paintings on the lateral walls, each showing three angels. They are located on either side of the *Crowning of the Blessed Virgin*, slightly above the chandeliers.

In 1906, the Delphis-Adolphe Beaulieu workshop fashioned the coloured glass windows of the chapel.¹² They replaced the old grisaille windows. Notice that on the eastern side, the scenes in Beaulieu's windows correspond to the same scenes as those Meloche illustrated on the ceiling.

To learn more about François-Édouard Meloche, Delphis-Adolphe Beaulieu and Ozias Leduc, please select Stop No. 10.

To continue your visit, please select Stop No. 11.

Stop 10 – The chapel's artists



Photograph of
François-Édouard Meloche
published in *L'album
universel*, January 1907

© Bibliothèque et
Archives nationales du
Québec, Revues
anciennes, 4110

François-Édouard Meloche¹³

François-Édouard Meloche, born February 27, 1855, was a painter-decorator. Native of Montreal, he was the son of watchmaker Charles Meloche. He received his artistic training from Napoléon Bourassa who taught him architecture, painting and sculpture. Like several of Bourassa's other students, among them the sculptor Louis-Philippe Hébert, he participated in the decoration of Notre-Dame-de-Lourdes Chapel in Montreal, carried out between 1875 and 1882. During his career, Meloche completed the interior decoration of some forty places of worship in Canada, notably in the regions of Valleyfield, Québec City and the Lower Saint Lawrence. The eight scenes painted on the vault of Notre-Dame-de-Bon-Secours Chapel between 1886 and 1889 are an excellent example of Meloche's style. His work, in which the use of *grisaille* and *trompe-l'œil* dominates, takes its inspiration from the style of Hippolyte Flandrin and François-Édouard Picot.

Meloche taught at the *Conseil des arts des manufactures* from 1886 to 1899. His disciples were Joseph Saint-Charles and Joseph-Charles Franchère. Meloche ended his life in relative obscurity and died in Montreal in 1914.

¹² Invoice taken from the archives of Notre-Dame-de-Bon-Secours Chapel.

¹³ www.vieux.montreal.qc.ca/inventaire/fiches/fiche_pers.php?id=352 ; www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?id_nbr=7601&interval=20&&PHPSESSID=ychzfqkvzape (consulted 2009-09-01).



© CPRQ, 2003.

Delphis-Adolphe Beaulieu¹⁴

Born in 1849, deceased on September 10, 1928 at the age of 79¹⁵, Delphis-Adolphe Beaulieu was a painter-decorator and a painter of stage sets. Beaulieu probably received his training at the Joseph-Chabert school in Montreal. He devoted himself to a variety of activities such as giltwork on glass, painting of signs and decorative illustration, decoration of houses and painting building interiors. In 1878, he teamed up with Onésime M. Lavoie. Together they completed many projects, particularly the decoration of the vaults of the church and the baptistery of the church of Sainte-Famille in Boucherville, that of the chapel of the Carmelite convent in the Hochelaga district of Montreal and the decoration of Saint-Sauveur church in Québec City. In 1888, Beaulieu, “decorator and fresco painter” decided to go out on his own.

Beaulieu completed numerous church decors, notably those of the churches of L’Annonciation in Oka and Saint-Vincent-de-Paul in Laval, the Cathedral of Marie-Reine-du-Monde in Montreal and, of course, Notre-Dame-de-Bon-Secours Chapel in 1908.



Ozias Leduc, 1936

Photo: Albert Tessier
© Archives du
Séminaire de
Trois-Rivières
(FN-0014-P2-34A-54)

Ozias Leduc¹⁶

Ozias Leduc was born in Saint-Hilaire de Rouville (today Mont-Saint-Hilaire) on October 8, 1864 and died on June 16, 1955 in Saint-Hyacinthe. He was a painter, church decorator and illustrator. Around 1881, he worked for the sculptor Carli in Montreal. Then around 1883, he assisted Adolphe Rho with various commissions. Around 1890, he was working under Luigi Capello, an Italian painter, to complete his first monumental decorations at the church of Saint-Paul-l’Ermite. Later, he received his first church decoration project at the cathedral of Saint-Charles-Borromée, in Joliette, for which he completed a group of 23 paintings.

Leduc completed the decoration of more than thirty churches and chapels in Québec, Nova Scotia and in the Eastern United States. Among his major work is the decoration of the churches of Mont-Saint-Hilaire (1894-1899), Saint-Romuald in Farnham (1905), the vault of the chapel of Sacré-Cœur de Jésus and that of Saint-Enfant-Jésus in Mile-End district of Montreal (1917-1919), the chapel of the archbishop’s residence in Sherbrooke (1921-1933), the baptistery of Notre-Dame Basilica in Montreal (1927-1928), as well as the church of Notre-Dame-de-la-Présentation in Shawinigan-Sud (1943-1955). His work at Bon-Secours dates to 1908-1909.

To continue your visit, please select Stop No. 11.

Stop 11 – The Irish, Bishop Bourget and Notre-Dame-de-Bon-Secours

In the first half of the 19th century, the practice of pilgrimage fell into decline at the chapel. Fully integrated into the neighbourhood at the time, the chapel was used rather as an annex to Notre-Dame Church, still the only parish in the city. Moreover, many English-speaking Catholic immigrants now lived in the neighbourhood and the chapel became the cradle of that community. One of the inhabitants of the district was Jackson John Richards.

Jackson John Richards was from Virginia. A Methodist itinerant minister who arrived in Montreal in 1807 with the intention of converting Catholics to the Protestant faith, he himself became a convert to Catholicism and then became a Sulpician priest. From 1815 to 1820, he was *chaplain* of Notre-Dame-de-Bon-Secours Chapel, gathering together the English-speaking Catholics of Montreal, the majority of them Irish. In 1847, the opening of Saint Patrick’s Basilica provided them with a place of worship large enough for their needs.

You are now invited to move to the front of the chapel, near the mosaic representing Bishop Ignace Bourget.

¹⁴ KAREL (1992), p. 54-55.

¹⁵ Burial deed of Delphis-Adolphe Beaulieu, Registre des sépultures, 1928, vol. 2, Archives of the parish of Notre-Dame-de-Montréal.

¹⁶ KAREL (1992), 483-484; www.canadianencyclopedia.ca/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=A1ARTA0004608 (consulted 2009-09-01).



Mosaic of Mgr Ignace Bourget
Photo © Normand Rajotte

When Bishop Bourget became titular bishop of the diocese of Montreal, in 1840, he deplored the fact that pilgrims had deserted the chapel. A dramatic event, however, allowed him to revive the practice of pilgrimage there.

In 1847, a terrible epidemic of typhus struck Montreal. This epidemic was the sad result of the massive immigration on disease-ridden boats of the Irish fleeing the famine. Bishop Bourget, himself victim of the disease, went to Bon-Secours and promised to fulfill the following three vows if the epidemic would subside: revive the practice of pilgrimage to the chapel, offer the chapel a statue of the Blessed Virgin and commemorate the end of the epidemic by means of a votive painting. He survived the disease and, the following year, began to honour his promises.

Just beside you is the statue Bishop Bourget gave to the chapel. Made in Paris, it was brought here in an impressive procession, in May 1848.

You are now invited to move to the back of the chapel under the choir loft and to look up.

To complete his promises, Bishop Bourget commissioned a work commemorating the end of the epidemic from the painter Théophile Hamel. In this painting the distress of the sick is striking. At the very top, the Blessed Virgin casts a benevolent regard over the sick and the sisters caring for them. In the distance, the towers of Notre-Dame Church indicate that the action is taking place on the outskirts of the city, in Pointe Saint-Charles, where the sick were crammed into sheds. The three sisters represented are, from front to back, a Grey Nun, a Sister of Providence and a Religious Hospitaler of Saint Joseph. Close to the latter, a priest administers the Sacrament of the Sick to a dying person. This priest is possibly Jackson John Richards who died as a result of contracting the disease or Bishop Bourget who, following the example of many other donors of votive offerings, had himself represented in the painting he was giving.

To continue your visit, walk up the centre aisle and sit on a bench in the middle of the chapel. Select Stop No. 12.

Stop 12 – The Sailors’ Church

Perhaps you’ve noticed the nine little boats hanging from the vault? They are votive offerings, gifts given by pilgrims in thanksgiving for a favour received or a grace conferred. In the 18th century, and especially at the beginning of the 19th century, the port of Montreal was expanding right behind the chapel. The sailors often came to pray on the eve of an ocean crossing, and the chapel began to be called *The Sailors’ Church*.

In 1872, a Canadian contingent of Papal Zouaves, part of the papal army, gave the small silver boat located in the centre of the chapel in gratitude to the Blessed Virgin. These soldiers were Catholic men enlisted in the defence of Pope Pius IX against the forces of Garibaldi, who was attempting to bring about the unification of Italy at the time. More than 500 of them left Canada in 1868. On their return voyage, they met a violent storm that lasted three days. One of the Zouaves, it seems, invited the others to pray to Mary, imploring her protection. They made a promise that, if they survived, they would carry a votive offering in pilgrimage to the chapel. The votive offering they presented to the chapel in 1872 was a reminder of their boat, the *Idaho*, thus beginning the tradition of the gift of votive boats, reinforcing the reputation of the chapel as *The Sailors’ Church*.



Votive boat
Photo © Normand Rajotte

Votive boats were offered until at least 1945. The cargo ship at the front of the centre aisle, presented by the administration of the Port of Montreal in 2003, marks the 350th anniversary of the arrival of Marguerite Bourgeoys in Ville-Marie.

To continue your visit, move toward the statue of the Pietà enclosed in the glass case against the right-hand wall of the chapel and select Stop No. 13.

Stop 13 – The Pietà

You are now in front of the statue of *Notre-Dame-de-Pitié* or The *Pietà*. Originating in France, it was probably sculpted in the 15th century. It is made of wood covered in painted plaster. The name of the sculptor and the workshop where it was made are unknown.

The *Pietà* was a gift of the Sulpician Étienne-Michel Faillon to the Congrégation de Notre-Dame. It arrived in Montreal in 1855. The sisters of the Congrégation de Notre-Dame built a chapel to house it on the property of their mother house and the *Pietà* was enshrined there in 1860, where it remained until 1912. It was then that the mother house and all of its outbuildings were demolished to make way for Saint Lawrence Boulevard. The *Pietà* was subsequently moved to the new mother house of the Congregation.

In March 2008, the *Pietà* arrived at Notre-Dame-de-Bon-Secours. The inside of the statue contained many prayer notes, photographs and other small objects left there by the faithful who had prayed before it.

To continue your visit, move toward the sanctuary and select Stop No. 14.

Stop 14 – The sanctuary



View of the sanctuary
Photo © Normand Rajotte

The three altars of the sanctuary were made of Italian marble at the beginning of the 20th century, and are the work of the Montreal firm Trefflé Rochon et Fils. They replaced the monumental wooden altar installed about twenty years earlier.

Take time to examine the different elements of the sanctuary. Dominating the sanctuary, a painting by Joseph Saint-Charles, after a painting by Murillo, illustrates the *Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary*. Behind the paintings to either side, two mosaics are hidden, gifts of Cardinal Léger to mark the 300th anniversary of the chapel.

Observe the high altar. On the ends, statues of Saint Paul and Saint Peter, the pillars of the Catholic Church. Notice the reliefs recalling the life of Mary in scenes of the Annunciation and the Assumption.

In niches to either side of the sanctuary, are statues of Saint Anne and Saint Joachim, parents of Mary, reminders that the chapel is dedicated to her. These wooden statues are the work of sculptors Olindo Gratton and Philippe Blandier, *dit* Laperle. Above the *Sortie* panels, you will see a series of votive hearts, inside which pilgrims left prayer notes or small objects.

Please move toward the left altar, near the mosaic of Father Pierre Chevrier.

To learn more about the miraculous statue, select Stop No. 15.

Stop 15 – The miraculous statue



Photo © Normand Rajotte

In a niche on the altar of Saint Joseph, notice the little wooden statue of the Virgin and Child. Marguerite Bourgeoys received this statuette from the priest Pierre Chevrier, Baron de Fancamp. The latter attributed miraculous powers to the statue after he was cured of a serious illness while praying to the Blessed Virgin in front of it. In 1672, he gave it to Marguerite Bourgeoys to place in her chapel, which she did on her return to Ville-Marie.

The statuette was the only thing found intact after the fire of 1754. It has been very preciously preserved by the Congrégation de Notre-Dame. After many years at the mother house, it was returned definitively to the chapel in 1988.

To learn more about the tombs of Saint Marguerite Bourgeoys and Jeanne Le Ber, select Stop No. 16.

Stop 16 – Tombs of Saint Marguerite Bourgeoys and Jeanne Le Ber

Also on the left side-altar, you will see written *Sainte Marguerite Bourgeoys 1620-1700*. After a number of moves, the mortal remains of Marguerite Bourgeoys were placed in the chapel. This return to the chapel, that she herself had founded, was celebrated with a grand procession through the streets of Old Montreal on April 24, 2005.

On the railing, there is a photograph of the chest containing the mortal remains of Marguerite Bourgeoys. This chest lies behind the marble plaque bearing the saint's name. To the left of her name, you can see the copper plaque that was affixed to her original tomb. On the left wall, you can read the transcription of the text engraved on the plaque.

Please move toward the tomb of Jeanne Le Ber, opposite the Pietà. The presence of her remains is indicated in the inscription on the left wall.

Jeanne Le Ber was the daughter of Jacques Le Ber, one of the richest merchants of New France. Despite the assurance of a future in colonial high society, Jeanne Le Ber decided instead to consecrate herself to prayer and a life of reclusion. Begun in her father's house, this reclusion would become formal and official in 1695.

At that time, the Congrégation de Notre-Dame was beginning the construction of the chapel of its mother house. In exchange for a financial contribution to support construction costs, Jeanne Le Ber had a small set of rooms built for her attached to this chapel where, in total reclusion and great poverty, she lived a life of silence and contemplation.

Jeanne Le Ber is also well known for her talent for embroidery. During her lifetime, she embellished many magnificent liturgical vestments and altar cloths. The inhabitants of the city called her "the angel of Ville-Marie".

Now please choose a bench to sit on from which you can see the organ, then select Stop No. 17.

Stop 17 – The organ

The titular organist of Notre-Dame-de-Bon-Secours Chapel, Benoît Marineau, presents the organ.

The Opus 401 of Notre-Dame-de-Bon-Secours, was built by Casavant Frères, of Saint-Hyacinthe in 1910. It was restored between 1999 and 2002 by the firm Guilbault-Thérien. The instrument is a two-manual and pedal organ of 15 stops. The case is of oak and the front pipes are of painted metal. This is a relatively modest instrument since it has only 817 pipes. By comparison, the organ of Montreal's Notre-Dame Basilica has 7000 pipes, while that of Saint Joseph's Oratory has about 6000.

The musical excerpts used to illustrate my comments are taken from the *Livre d'orgue de Montréal*, a 540-page manuscript brought from France in 1724 by a cleric named Jean Girard, who had come to New France as a teacher at the boys school and as organist at Notre-Dame Church. Le *Livre d'orgue de Montréal* constitutes the most voluminous manuscript of French organ music from the time of Louis XIV. It was rediscovered in Montreal in 1978 by musicologist Élisabeth Gallat-Morin. Even though there are no composers' names mentioned on any of the pages, it is possible to establish a direct link with the music of Nicolas Lebègue, one of the organists of the King of France and a contemporary of Marguerite Bourgeoys.



Photo © Bernard Dubois

You are invited to listen to an excerpt from the Magnificat in D from the Livre d'orgue de Montréal, on Stop no. 18.

Before leaving, please remain seated and select Stop no. 19.

Stop 18 – Musical excerpt

The pieces you will hear are played by the titular organist of Notre-Dame-de-Bon-Secours Chapel, Benoît Marineau. Mr. Marineau interprets three pages that open one of the Magnificats from the *Livre d'orgue de Montréal*: first a prelude on the *pleins-jeux*, followed by a duet and by a trumpet piece. In accordance with the religious tradition of the period, the organ verses here alternate with *plainchant* verses. Sister Monique Beloin, of the Congrégation de Notre-Dame, sings the *plainchant* verses.

The musical excerpt lasts 7 minutes. Happy listening!

Before leaving, remain seated and select Stop No. 19.

Stop 19 – Closing remarks

Notre-Dame-de-Bon-Secours Chapel is marked by a rich history and by many works of art that make it one of the essentials landmarks of the religious heritage of Montreal. This place, visited by pilgrims, school groups, tourists and people in search of tranquillity, deserves to be known.

We have come to the end of the visit. We hope you have enjoyed it and invite you to share your comments and suggestions. We also invite you to visit the Marguerite Bourgeoys Museum beside the chapel. For the price of the entrance fee, you have access to the tower of the chapel, the crypt and to the exhibition rooms on the life and work of Marguerite Bourgeoys, as well as to the temporary exhibition. You may also consult the web site, or speak to the volunteers present, to learn more about the many events taking place here.

Credits

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