



On bâtit la première chapelle [Building the first chapel],
from the *Narration annuelle de la mission du Sault*
[*Saint-Louis*]..., by Father Claude Chauchetière,
1667-1686

FR AD33 Série H Jésuites fol. 16



New France
NEW HORIZONS

Worship

The early colonization of New France was closely linked to the spiritual revival that occurred in French Catholicism during the first half of the 17th century. The founders, both lay and clerical, saw this land as the ideal place in which to establish a religious practice that remained faithful to Christian virtues, in the spirit of the Catholic reform. In a colony composed of only a small group of French men and women, the Church initially played a missionary role, and focused its attention on the Aboriginal people, whose spirituality they strove to understand, in the hope of converting them—a project that was not as successful as anticipated. In a parallel fashion, Church representatives also devoted themselves to the French population. A number of religious communities settled in New France during the first few decades, and they soon founded schools, hospitals and hospices. François de Montmorency-Laval arrived in the settlement of Québec in June 1659 as apostolic vicar, opened a seminary there in 1663 to train new priests, and in 1674 became the first Bishop of New France. From this time on, the Church began establishing dioceses and parishes to meet the needs of a growing population. Since Canadians during the 18th century followed the rules and teachings of the clergy quite faithfully for the most part, Catholicism was one of the main pillars of society in New France, where Church and State operated in close unison.



Catherine Tegahkoutta, iroquoise morte en odeur de sainteté dans le Canada (1656-1680) [Catherine Tegahkoutta, an Iroquois woman who died in the odour of sanctity in Canada (1656-1680)], no date
CA ANC Peter Winkworth Collection P2042

The Missions

The main objective of the religious communities established in New France was the conversion of the "savages." The clergy, for the most part Jesuits, proceeded by establishing missions, either in the territories of the different nations or in the French settlements. The first such mission was created by the Jesuits at Sillery, near Québec, in 1637. By 1694, the La Montagne Mission, established in the Montréal region by the Sulpicians, was home to about 220 "domiciled Indians" and resembled a small European estate. This type of mission was considered the most effective for assimilating Aboriginal people into the French way of life. The case of the "venerable" Catherine Tegahkoutta (Kateri Tekakwitha) was unusual, in that she was a member of the Iroquois nation, a people particularly hard to convert. The results of evangelism were disappointing given the amount of effort expended, but the presence of the missionaries did help maintain political and economic relations between the French and the Aboriginal population.



New France
NEW HORIZONS

The Martyrs

During the 1630s and 1640s the Jesuits pursued their mission in Huronia, in the Great Lakes region. The Huron were the favoured trading partners of the French, and their principal fur suppliers. The two groups also had a military alliance against the Iroquois, the hereditary enemies of the Huron. In an effort to take over this flourishing trade association, the Iroquois wiped out Huron villages and Jesuit missions during the 1640s. A number of Jesuit missionaries were tortured and killed during these bloody conflicts, and later declared martyrs and canonized by the Church in the 20th century.



Novae Franciae Accurata Delineatio, map by the Jesuit François-Joseph Bressani showing the Huron missions and the missionaries martyred at the hands of the Iroquois, 1657

CA ANC NMC-6338 et NMC-194824



New France
NEW HORIZONS

Devotion to the Virgin

In New France, as in the home country, miraculous powers were attributed to the Virgin and the saints. They were worshipped by the faithful through the use of religious objects and images representing them, such as statues or relics. They were asked to assist in the curing of an illness or the lifting of a plague, and were thanked when requests were granted.



Declaration of the Jesuit Claude de Veroncourt concerning the statue of the Holy Virgin in the chapel of the Huron village near Québec, February 5, 1669.
CA ANC MG18-E18



New France
NEW HORIZONS

The Female Religious Communities



Titre pour la fondation des religieuses hospitalières de Québec[Title for the foundation of the Religious Hospitallers of Québec], April 1639
(copy made October 14, 1727)
FR CAOM COL F3 12 fol. 346-347v°

Before embarking upon a mission in New France, a religious community had to obtain permission from the King. In the spring of 1639, with the support of two wealthy benefactresses—the Duchess of Aiguillon and Madeleine de Chauvigny (Madame de La Peltrie)—the Hospitaller Augustines and the Ursulines received letters patent allowing them to settle in Québec, where they arrived in the summer of that year. A group of three Hospitaller nuns founded the Hôtel-Dieu in order to care for the sick, in particular for the "pagan savages." Mother de Saint-Ignace (Marie Guénet) became the Superior of this hospital, the colony's first. The Ursulines, under the leadership of Marie de l'Incarnation (Marie Guyart), a mystic and a woman of action, opened a school whose main goal was to instruct "young savage girls in the Catholic religion [and] to teach them to read and write." Faced with the failure of evangelization, the various hospital and teaching establishments, which were created initially to care for the Aboriginal population, began devoting themselves to the colony's inhabitants.



New France
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The Revenues of the Religious Communities

Depending on their affiliation, the priests of the seminaries of Québec and Montréal and various religious communities ran the hospitals, hospices, elementary and secondary schools, and were in charge of the training of secular priests and the missions for the evangelization of Aboriginal peoples. These clerical men and women supported themselves with donations from the King and charitable foundations, revenues from their seigneurial estates and, in some cases, contributions from the Mother House in France.



Estat des Revenus des Communautés Etablies en la Nouvelle France, avec les charges [Statement of the Revenues of the Communities Established in New France, with charges], 1701
FR CAOM COL F5A 3 fol. 32-34v°



New France
NEW HORIZONS



Plan of the Seminary of Québec, no date
FR CHAN AE II 2699

The Seminary of Québec

The Seminary of Québec was founded by François de Montmorency-Laval, apostolic vicar of Canada in 1663. Responsible for the training of the secular priests working in parishes and in some of the missions, and dedicated to the education of children and young people, the seminary was an important institution in New France. In 1730 it faced serious financial problems, resulting in part from the cost of repairing the damage caused to its imposing building by two fires in the early 18th century. The renovation process took more than 20 years to complete.



New France
NEW HORIZONS

The Québec Cathedral

When the diocese of Québec was created in 1674, the parish church of Notre-Dame-de-l'Immaculée-Conception became a cathedral. About 1740, the growing population of the town was the impetus for a new construction. The Bishop of Québec, Henri-Marie Dubreil de Pontbriand, entrusted this task to Gaspard-Joseph Chaussegros de Léry, the colony's chief royal engineer. He drew up plans to extend the choir, add two side aisles and heighten the nave. The cathedral's reconstruction was complete by 1749.



Plan, section and elevation of a new cathedral in Québec,
by Gaspard-Joseph Chaussegros de Léry, January 4, 1745
FR CAOM 3DFC 424a



New France
NEW HORIZONS



Noms des habitants qui doivent clore le cimetièrre suivant leur place; Noms des habitants qui doivent donner le pain bénit les fêtes de l'année; Dépense pour l'année 1756
[Names of the inhabitants responsible for enclosing the cemetery, according to their places; Names of the habitants responsible for distributing consecrated bread at the annual feast days; Expenses for the year 1756],
parish of Notre-Dame-de-Foy, 1756
CA ANQ-Q P48/13 Fonds Paroisse Notre-Dame-de-Foy,
Document 39 : Délibérations et comptes, 1756-1817, p.1-2

The Parishes

In New France, the decision to create a parish was made by the royal administration, while that of appointing of a parish priest was made by the Bishop. Generally speaking, a parish was established when the population of a region had grown sufficiently large and affluent to build a church and pay the salary of a parish priest through the levying of a tithe. The priest conducted the religious services, administered the sacraments, and kept the parish registers—official records of baptisms, marriages and burials. The administration of the parish's property was the responsibility of the church fabric, which consisted of the priest and a number of churchwardens elected by the parish congregation.



New France
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The Chapels on Île Royale

After ceding Acadia to England under the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713, France established new settlements on Île Royale (Cape Breton Island), which remained French: Port-Dauphin, Louisbourg and Port-Toulouse. In 1716, the Récollets, sent by the royal administration to serve in the new chapels of these three settlements requested various liturgical and decorative items necessary for conducting religious services.

Statement of what is absolutely necessary for the King's chapels in Port-Dauphin, Louisbourg and Port-Toulouse, by Father Bruneau, Superior of the Récollets for the province of Brittany, ca. 1716

FR CAOM COL C11A 106 fol. 485-486



New France
NEW HORIZONS



Precedence in the Church

As in French society under the Ancien Régime, members of the colonial elite placed a great importance on the prestige connected to their title and their rank in the hierarchy. As a result of these endless quarrels over precedence, the King was forced to stipulate the place to be taken by notable persons during church services and processions, as well as the order in which they were to receive the various distinctions.

Reglement pour les honneurs dans les Eglises du Canada
[Regulation concerning honours in the Churches of
Canada], April 27, 1716
FR CAOM COL C11A 106 fol. 377-380



New France
NEW HORIZONS

Feast Days

With Sundays added to the 37 mandatory feast days, there were many days during which the population was required to attend Mass and abstain from working. During some periods, however, it was difficult to interrupt the various daily tasks—particularly those associated with farming—without having a negative effect on the colony's economy. The Bishop of Québec, Henri-Marie Dubreil de Pontbriand, became aware of this problem in the course of his pastoral visits and issued a decree reassigning 18 of the mandatory feast days to Sundays, which reduced the number of days without work.



Pastoral letter from the Bishop of Pontbriand reassigning the celebration of a number of feast days to Sundays, November 24, 1744
FR CAOM COL F3 13 fol. 190-191v°



New France
NEW HORIZONS

Prayer Book

In the tradition established by their company and its founder Jean-Baptiste Olier, the Sulpician priests wrote prayer books to introduce the faithful to spiritual life. In a society where religion played an important role, prayer became a widely practiced act of devotion.



Prayer Book in Latin and French, by Jean-Pierre de Miniac, priest of the Compagnie de Saint-Sulpice, ca. 1724
CA ANC MG18-E22



New France
NEW HORIZONS

Book of Gregorian Chant

The solemn nature and regular rhythm of Gregorian chant helped in the recruitment of the faithful. In 1767, François Borel, parish priest of Sainte-Foy for nearly a quarter-century, transcribed in his own hand, the music and Latin words of the liturgical chants in this book. It was used for many years in this parish, situated near Québec.



Book of Gregorian chant, François-Xavier Borel, 1767
CA ANC MG18-E21



New France
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The Certificate of Catholicity

The Catholic religion was the only one permitted in France following the 1685 Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. This royal decision obliged all persons wishing to assume an official position to first prove their Catholicity. A certificate of Catholicity could also be useful in ensuring a Christian burial for those who died far from home.



Certificate of Catholicity issued to Sieur Michel Leneuf de La Vallière, captain in Port-Toulouse, October 13, 1730
FR CAOM COL C11B 11 fol. 217



New France
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Wills

Wills of the time reflected the importance of religion and the preoccupation with life after death. Like Champlain, founder of Québec, and Frontenac, Governor of New France during the 17th century, the vast majority of testators made bequests for the saying of prayers and masses, and for charitable works.



Will of Samuel de Champlain, November 17, 1635
FR CHAN LXII 138 Rés 282



New France
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