
The Congregation de Notre-Dame broadens its horizons and faces new challenges.

- *The text below covers the period from 1850 to 1960. Read the text, and then find the word or phrase that does not belong in the statements below.*

The Historical Context in Canada.

During the 1850's, United Canada experienced a certain political instability. Following a series of alliances, two political parties emerged and succeeded one another at the head of the Government: this is known as a bipartisan or two-party system. On July 1, 1867, The British North America Act created the Dominion of Canada, which divided three colonies into four Provinces: Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. The other Provinces and Territories joined the Confederation later. Tensions were still being felt among the Amerindians, the French-speaking Canadians and the English-speaking Canadians.

From 1850, following the implementation of free trade with the United States, the country began a first phase of industrialization. The manufacturing industry flourished. This era was also marked by railway expansion which connected the country from sea to sea. Important needs in manpower resulted in continued waves of immigration, especially toward the Canadian West. In the East, over 400,000 French Canadians immigrated to the United States for work. Also, the emigration of many farmers and rural workers towards the cities resulted in the growth of urban centers. A French Canadian bourgeoisie emerged.

The 20th century witnessed a second phase of industrialization tied to the exploitation of natural resources (aluminum, hydroelectricity, pulp and paper, mining, etc.). This period brought about economic expansion, however working conditions in the urban centers deteriorated. Thus, unions were born. Many groups against poverty, delinquency, alcoholism, etc. were organized. Movements sprang up advocating women's rights: women very rarely had access to higher education, and obtained the right to vote only from 1916 to 1940, depending on the Province.

Three tragic events occurred during the first half of the 20th century: two world wars that killed millions and, between them, the Great Depression of 1929. After World War I (1914-1918), Canada became an independent country within the British Commonwealth. Following World War II, Canada went through a period of prosperity. Its population increased thanks to a steady flow of immigration and a baby boom.

As for the Congrégation de Notre-Dame...

From 1855 to 1900, the Congrégation de Notre-Dame established 90 new Catholic missions, 44 of which were outside of the Province of Quebec. On the eve of the 20th century, the Congregation numbered 1,157 Sisters active in Canada and the United States. It was essential for them to learn and adapt to the system of education in each Province and each State in which they were located. They also had to take into consideration the various needs of their students: daughters and sons of fishers, miners, industrialists and merchants from rural areas or urban centers.



In 1860, the first mission of the Congregation in the United States (Bourbonnais, Illinois) is established.

Photography: [between 1883 and 1910]
Archives Congrégation de Notre-Dame - Montréal



In 1899, the women's branch of the École normale Jacques-Cartier de Montréal opens under the jurisdiction of the Congregation. In 1911, the school moves to this building.

Photography: [19-]
Archives Congrégation de Notre-Dame - Montréal

Some schools were private while others were public or parish schools. The Sisters thought that it was particularly important for them to develop education programmes for girls. From 1881 to 1898, they wrote eleven manuals for their classes and for other schools. These manuals covered various subjects: grammar, history, geography, drawing and accounting.

In 1900, the Congrégation de Notre-Dame was awarded a medal and a diploma at the Paris World Fair for its presentation of works done by students in their different schools. At the end of the 19th century, the Sisters opened the first Catholic college for women in North America in Antigonish, Nova Scotia. Also in the first decade of the 20th century, the Congregation became involved in a struggle which provoked suspicion and hostility: the access to university studies for women! In 1908, it succeeded in establishing the École d'enseignement supérieur in Montreal, which became, in 1926, Collège Marguerite-Bourgeoys. In 1944, the English-language section of the Collège Marguerite-Bourgeoys separated and became Marianopolis College. The Congregation also opened women's colleges in New York and Ottawa, in 1931 and in 1932 respectively.



Mount Saint Bernard College, first Catholic college for women in North America, established by the Congregation in Antigonish, Nova Scotia in 1883.

Photography: [ca. 1897]
Archives Congrégation de Notre-Dame - Montréal



Culinary Art class at École normale classico-ménagère, Saint-Pascal-de-Kamouraska.

Photography: [19-]
Archives Congrégation de Notre-Dame - Montréal



Typewriting class at académie Marguerite-Lemoine.

Photography: [1925 or 1926]
Archives Congrégation de Notre-Dame - Montréal

Beginning in 1907, young women could take business classes, designed for them by the Congregation. Those who graduated from this excellent programme easily found jobs which were better paid than those in the manufacturing industry. Furthermore, the Congregation continued to play a major role in the establishment of domestic sciences programmes and specialized courses in the various trades within the French-speaking and English-speaking institutions in Quebec and in Canada.



Class in educational methods for children with special needs at collège Marguerite-Bourgeoys.

Photography: [1940 or 1941]
Archives Congrégation de Notre-Dame - Montréal



Schoolyard at Chofu, Japon

Photography: [ca. 1980]
Archives Congrégation de Notre-Dame - Montréal

During the first half of the 20th century, the Congrégation de Notre-Dame became a leader in the training of religious and non-religious teachers. Affiliated with the Université de Montréal, it established programmes of higher education in pedagogy and music in 1926.

In May, 1932, the Congregation made a major decision: to open a mission in Japan! Like Marguerite Bourgeoys, the five Sisters who were sent to Asia could not open their school right away. They therefore found other ways to be of service, namely by helping the women in the region. They opened a dispensary and a kindergarten. They also taught catechism and gave private lessons in French, English and music. Their numbers increased. When World War II broke out, life in that part of the world became very difficult for the Sisters living in Japan who, as enemy aliens, were prisoners of war. They were forced to close their schools. Their convent was seized and used as a prison for enemy prisoners of war. Some of the Sisters were sent back to Canada in exchange for prisoners of war; the others were sent to live with another religious congregation and, like all the population of Japan, lived terrifying and painful moments. After the war, the Sisters resumed their work. Their schools multiplied; they received and educated children, very few of whom were Christian.

⇒ Which answer does not belong?

1. The four Provinces of Canada at the time of Confederation in 1867 were New Brunswick, Quebec, Ontario and Manitoba.
2. In the 19th century there were still tensions among the French, the Amerindians, the French-speaking Canadians and the English-speaking Canadians.
3. From 1850, Canada saw: a first phase of industrialization, the building of a railway system, the creation of Nunavut, continued waves of immigration and the emigration from rural areas and the growth of urban centers.
4. In the first half of the 20th century, Canada witnessed the following events: a second phase of industrialization, economic expansion, unions, groups against poverty and delinquency, movements advocating women's rights (including the right to education), the first man on the moon, World War I, the Great Depression, World War II and a baby boom.
5. During the 19th and 20th centuries, the Congrégation de Notre-Dame developed several educational programmes for elementary and high schools as well as for universities. They covered grammar, history, drawing, accounting, business, domestic science, trades, aerospace science, pedagogy and music.
6. From 1850 to 1950, the Congregation extended its missions throughout Quebec, in the rest of Canada, in the United States, in Spain and in Japan.
7. The Sisters of the Congregation taught girls and sometimes boys, young women, children of fishers, miners, industrialists or merchants, in rural areas or urban centers, the poor and the rich, Catholics and non-Catholics, religious and non-religious teachers, political leaders, etc.