

Canadian Branches of the

Lasallian Tree

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of Montreal*



Even in the time of St. La Salle thought was given to a Canadian foundation by Brothers of his Congregation, and though a hundred and twenty years (1717-1837) were to elapse before this idea became a reality, the mysterious designs of Providence shine forth in the development of one of the most fruitful and dynamic parts of the Institute.

In the fall of 1837, four French Brothers answered the call of the Canadian Sulpicians in Montreal and established a school in the Parish of Notre Dame already old as measured by the standards of the New World. Within two years a Novitiate was started whence came men who were destined to found communities and schools not only all over the North American continent but even on the continent of Asia and in the very heart of Africa.

How completely Canadian in origin were most of those who founded what are now the seven

Canadian Districts as well as the original four Districts of the United States (now six) can be seen from a few statistics. In the 19th century, 60 Brothers came from France while 284 left Canada to build up the Districts of the United States. Today, one-tenth of all Canadian Brothers are working in Mission Lands, and fully trained native Brothers are already collaborating with their former teachers. Vigorous men left the banks of the St. Lawrence in great numbers to bring about this great development.

Let us glance for a moment at the steps along the road to prosperity and at the eminent men who typify this growth while making it possible.

Montreal: Numerically speaking, the most important work of the Brothers is concentrated in some twenty parish schools where thousands of students are taught. But what attracts most attention is the famous secondary school called the Mont Saint Louis. In

this kind of school instruction covers what is taught in American schools from the beginning of Junior High School to the end of Junior College. Mont Saint Louis became famous for its courses in commercial and scientific subjects and has only very



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recently added the traditional classical offerings that bring it more closely into line with other Canadian Colleges and prepare its students for examinations leading up to the official "baccalauréat." Its reputation continues to be based on the hundreds of business men, scientists, civil servants and engineers who continue to take such an important part in the development and expansion of Canadian industry since World War II. The late Cardinal Villeneuve, an alumnus whose brilliant career is the pride of the institution, was the forerunner of those students enrolled in classical courses now reflecting credit on their Alma Mater in new spheres.

Quebec: The growth of the Institute in the city of Quebec parallels that of Montreal. Besides many parish schools the Brothers direct the Académie de Qué-

bec which corresponds to Mont Saint Louis. Among its most eminent alumni are the late Frère Marie-Victorin, famous as a botanist, founder of Montreal's Jardin Botanique, and Frère Clément Lockquell, novelist, critic, lecturer, and currently Dean of the Faculty of Commerce of Laval University. This Faculty which acknowledges as its founder the late Frère Palasis is an outgrowth of courses taught at the Académie. Both Brothers Clément and Victorin were received into the Royal Society of Canada in recognition of their academic work and because of the eminence attained by young men who deem one of these two great teachers an all-important influence in their lives.

Trois-Rivières, Ottawa, Hull: For more than a century the Brothers have been teaching in Trois-Rivières, a city situated mid-way between Montreal and Quebec. Students from l'Académie La Salle, the largest school in Trois-Rivières, have always distinguished themselves at the official examinations of the Province of Quebec. More than twenty schools are spotted on either bank of the St. Lawrence in or near this old town which differs from Montreal and Quebec in that it has practically no English-speaking citizens and

French speech is characterized by the way people roll their r's almost in the manner of Marseilles.

The schools of Ottawa and the nearby city of Hull represent an attempt on the part of French Canadian leaders to develop a knowledge of their language and culture in the surrounding world of British Canada. Sometimes this activity has been carried on peacefully while at others, as in the years 1912-15, real difficulties were created by fanatical British Canadians bent on destroying French culture. Reminiscent of these almost forgotten struggles are the present-day efforts of Brothers in the Far-West of Canada to maintain a center of French culture in the face of discouraging odds in a town with the improbable name of Willow Bunch.

So far we have only referred to establishments situated in the great centers of French Canada; but growth is evident in most of the newer foundations in the industrial centers of north-eastern Quebec, northern Ontario and in many of the newer dioceses of Quebec itself, as well as in the new important Archdiocese of Sherbrooke.

Toronto: Msgr. Charbonet, an early Bishop of Toronto, called the Brothers there in 1851. Since that time their work includes

more than a dozen houses and its quality and continuance are assured by the existence of a Novitiate and Scholasticate for the training of English-speaking Canadians. Besides their work at home the British Canadian Brothers are responsible for a Mission School in Nigeria. The largest High Schools of this group on their home soil are La Salle in Toronto and D'Arcy McGee in Montreal. There are also several very interesting institutions engaged in less known forms of apostolate; for example, the school at Yorkton for Ukrainian Catholics Boys where the Brothers and students follow the Byzantine rite; the Community of Brothers in Edmonton, Alberta, whose members teach languages and philosophy at the University of Alberta; and St. John's School for young delinquents from the region of Toronto which the Brothers have directed since 1895.

Compton: Since 1946 a very interesting type of Second Novitiate functions here. About 20 Brothers come in the fall and as many in the spring to reflect for a hundred days on the meaning of their life and work and to pray and study undisturbed by the cares that inevitably absorb men engaged in the active work of teaching the young. Since its foundation this ideal Retreat

House has witnessed 20 groups (i.e., about 400 Brothers) starting life afresh. From the outset, that famous connoisseur of human nature, Brother Olympius-Georges, Visitor General, has been the ideal Director and the soul of the Compton Second Novitiate. Those who have had the good fortune of benefiting by his wise spiritual direction can never forget his lectures on the religious life, psychology and the proper mentality on the part of those who exercise authority. His assistants have lectured on Scripture, Liturgy, History and the spirit of the Institute.

Status of Brothers' Schools in Canada: Private schools owned by the Brothers are the exception in Canada. Most Canadian schools, especially in the large Provinces of Quebec and Ontario, are Government schools. The Brothers are employed by local school boards and remuneration depends in some measure on the academic qualifications of teachers. Lasallian Scholasticates are recognized as regular Normal Schools by the State which encourages Brothers to acquire University degrees.

Formation of Separate Canadian Districts: In 1864, at the end of the American Civil War, the Lasallian provinces in the United States were separated from Can-

ada. No further sub-divisions of French-speaking Canadian Brothers took place until 1927 when Quebec was made independent of Montreal. In 1957, the District of Quebec was divided and a new independent unit was formed with headquarters at Trois-Rivières. The Mission of Douala in the French Cameroons in Africa became autonomous the preceding year though it still depends to a large extent on the generosity of the District of Quebec. In 1958, Montreal in its turn, took the long step of asking the Superiors in Rome to set up two new Districts, with centers respectively in Ottawa and Longueuil, but the Mission in Japan still depends on all three last mentioned Districts.

These divisions do not merely represent lines on paper; they were made necessary by the fact that the Canadian sons of St. La Salle have attained the impressive total of 1,456 without counting about a hundred in training. When one remembers that it is only 120 years since the first four Brothers came to Canada from France, one cannot but be grateful to the Almighty for the triumph of the Christian Brothers in this great nation.

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