

Pieces of history taken from the SNJM Archives - École du St-Nom-de Marie

To look at this superb building on the corner of Hochelaga (formerly Girard) and Pie IX, a stranger would have no idea about the surprising beginnings of the establishment of this house. However, it has its own story and to learn about it, it suffices to leaf through a few of the pages from the past, stopping at the year 1910.

During the month of July that year, due to the fact that École du St-Nom-de-Jésus was no longer able to meet the needs of the growing number of students, the Commission Scolaire De Maisonneuve decided to build a new school on Letourneux Street. It would bear the name Académie de la Salle and be entrusted to the direction of the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary.

On September 11, 1911, the work was advanced enough to allow for classes to begin, but the rooms intended for the Sisters were not yet finished, making it necessary for them to return every night, on foot, to École du Saint-Nom-de-Jésus. A month later, when it was suggested that they live in a few rooms in the school, the Sisters gladly agreed.

December 1912 – a fire in our academy – A great misfortune has befallen us. Our dear school, regarded as the most beautiful in the city, is nothing but a pile of rubble. During the night of the 12th to the 13th, we were suddenly awakened by the alarm bell and by shouting coming from outside. Without really knowing why the alarm was ringing, we dressed quickly and very bravely, and almost silently, went downstairs. The school, only a few steps away, was already engulfed in flames. It was time to leave.

Two hours later, we could no longer see this former beautiful institution which had become nothing but smoking ruins. Only the two residences, the Brothers on one side and the Sisters on the other, were saved thanks to the firedoors.

December 13, 1912 – Early in the morning, we are in the "Foyer". It is dirty and bleak, with water everywhere. Somehow we settle in. In spite of everything, we are happy to be "at home".

1913 – Bishop Paul Bruchési, archbishop of Montreal, appoints Father Rémy Contant, then pastor of St-Elzéar, as the first pastor of St-Jean-Baptiste de la Salle. There was no church or presbytery. The foundation was being built. The pastor temporarily lived in one of the rooms in the school. He ate his meals at the convent. At night, he went to stay with his brother, Father Edouard Contant, pastor of Très Saint Nom de Jésus in the area of Maisonneuve.

September 3, 1918 – The new school opens wide its doors and welcomes more than five hundred children who are amazed by its beauty, size and attractive location.