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Housing the Grey Nuns:
Power, Religion and Women in fin-de-siècle Montréal

October 1995

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the

Degree of Master of Architecture

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Abbreviations used for sources

ANQ: Archives Nationale du Québec
ASGM: Archives des Soeurs Grises de Montréal
BNQ: Bibliothèque Nationale du Québec

Sources found in BIBLIOGRAPHY are abbreviated as in notes.

**"Housing the Grey Nuns:
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by

Tania Marie Martin

Abstract

Nineteenth-century Montréal convents are complex, multi-functional buildings. As a form of collective housing, convents provided an alternative urban "space" for women, one in which they were able to realize themselves individually and collectively. This thesis explores the Mother House of the Grey Nuns, typical of Montréal's convents, as a purpose-built environment for women.

The research involves the extensive use of a unique documentary legacy preserved in the archives of the Grey Nuns: the architectural drawings and written accounts of Soeur Saint-Jean-de-la-Croix (1854-1921), in addition to the religious community's annals and period photographs. These documents recorded how the nuns organized their own built environment and permit a reconstruction of the convent's spatial arrangements, one hundred years after the fact. Although this building is monumental and designed by prominent Montréal architect Victor Bourgeau, it is only from exploring the perspectives of the users that we can truly see how large institutions operated. The division of the plans, the massing of the convent and its siting, among other aspects, communicate the nuns' distinct way of life, one that questioned the traditional boundaries of public and private imposed by society in turn-of-the-century Montréal, albeit from a limited position.

The convent is situated within the larger context of nineteenth-century Montréal, especially its hospitals, schools, asylums, and homes. While it shared many of the distinctive architectural features that characterized these building types, the convent also differed from them significantly in its organization. This thesis is intended to enrich our understanding of convents, the place in history of religious communities and the development of women in Québec.

**"Housing the Grey Nuns:
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Résumé

Les couvents montréalais du dix-neuvième siècle sont des bâtiments multi-fonctionnels complexes. En tant qu'habitation collective, le couvent offrait aux femmes le choix d'un milieu de vie urbain non conventionnel dans lequel elles pouvaient s'épanouir individuellement et collectivement. Cette thèse de maîtrise se concentre sur la maison-mère des Soeurs Grises. En cela représentatif des autres couvents de Montréal, il s'agit d'un édifice où des femmes ont su créer leur propre environnement.

Cette recherche repose sur une analyse approfondie de la documentation conservée dans les archives des Soeurs Grises: les dessins d'architecture et les récits historiques rédigés par Soeur Saint Jean de la Croix (1854-1921), les annales de la communauté religieuse ainsi que des photographies de l'époque étudiée. Cette documentation, qui date de plus d'un siècle, reflète comment les religieuses aménageaient leur milieu de vie et a permis la reconstruction de leur environnement physique. Pour comprendre ce couvent et comment les religieuses l'habitaient, il faut dépasser la simple étude du monument conçu par l'architecte montréalais Victor Bourgeau et explorer la perspective des occupantes. L'allocation des espaces, le tracé du plan, et l'implantation du bâtiment dans la ville, entre autres, communiquent le train de vie particulier des religieuses. Quoique marginal, ce mode de vie remet en question les limites traditionnelles entre le public et le privé imposées par la société montréalaise au tournant du siècle.

La maison mère est étudiée en contexte des institutions qui prennent forme au dix-neuvième siècle, soit les hôpitaux, les écoles, les asiles et les résidences. Il apparaît que, même si le couvent avait en commun avec elles plusieurs caractéristiques architecturales, il en différait quant à l'organisation. Cette thèse a pour but l'approfondissement de la connaissance de ces édifices conventuels, des communautés religieuses féminines et des transformations de la condition féminine en contexte québécois.

aux Soeurs Grises, à mes parents et grandparents

INTRODUCTION

Montréal Nunneries: Gender and Architecture

> [Montréal] presents an imposing appearance at a distance, from the number of spires covered with tin which glitter in the sun, and the handsome and lofty cathedral which rises in the center of the city.
>
> C. Daubeny, *Journal of a Tour Through the United States and Canada, 1837-38.*[1]

> This is the first time I was ever in a city where you couldn't throw a brick without breaking a church window.
>
> Mark Twain, *Montreal Gazette*, December 10, 1881.

Among the most prominent religious structures in Montréal at the turn of the century, convents are a legacy of the power of the Roman Catholic Church in Québec. Broadly defined as a form of collective housing for a religious community of women, convents were not strictly residential in function, but accommodated hospitals, schools, orphanages, hospices, and workshops of various sorts, under the same roof. In Québec, female religious orders operated many important institutions in the fields of health, education and welfare, that is, until the wave of secularization in the 1960s. Because of the state takeover of these jurisdictions, in addition to the decline in the size of orders (partly due to the changes brought about with Vatican II in the structures and regulations of orders worldwide and diminishing recruitement) many religious communities vacated their convents. Unfortunately, they were unable to sustain their primary works or to manage such large structures with reduced personnel.

Today, these sophisticated buildings continue to dot Montréal's urban landscape; they form a part of our cultural and architectural heritage (Figure 1.1). Indeed, several conventual buildings have been designated historic monuments and historic sites, such as the Mother House of the Grey Nuns, the Ferme St-Gabriel and the Villa Maria.[2] Others,

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[1] C. Daubeny, *Journal of a tour through the United States and Canada, 1837-38* (1843), 27; quoted in W. H. Parker, "The Towns of Lower Canada in the 1830's," in *Urbanization and its Problems*, ed. R. P. Beckinsale and J. M. Houston (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1968), 397.

[2] The chapel of the Mother House of the Grey Nuns was declared an historic monument in 1974, and the property an historic site in 1976.

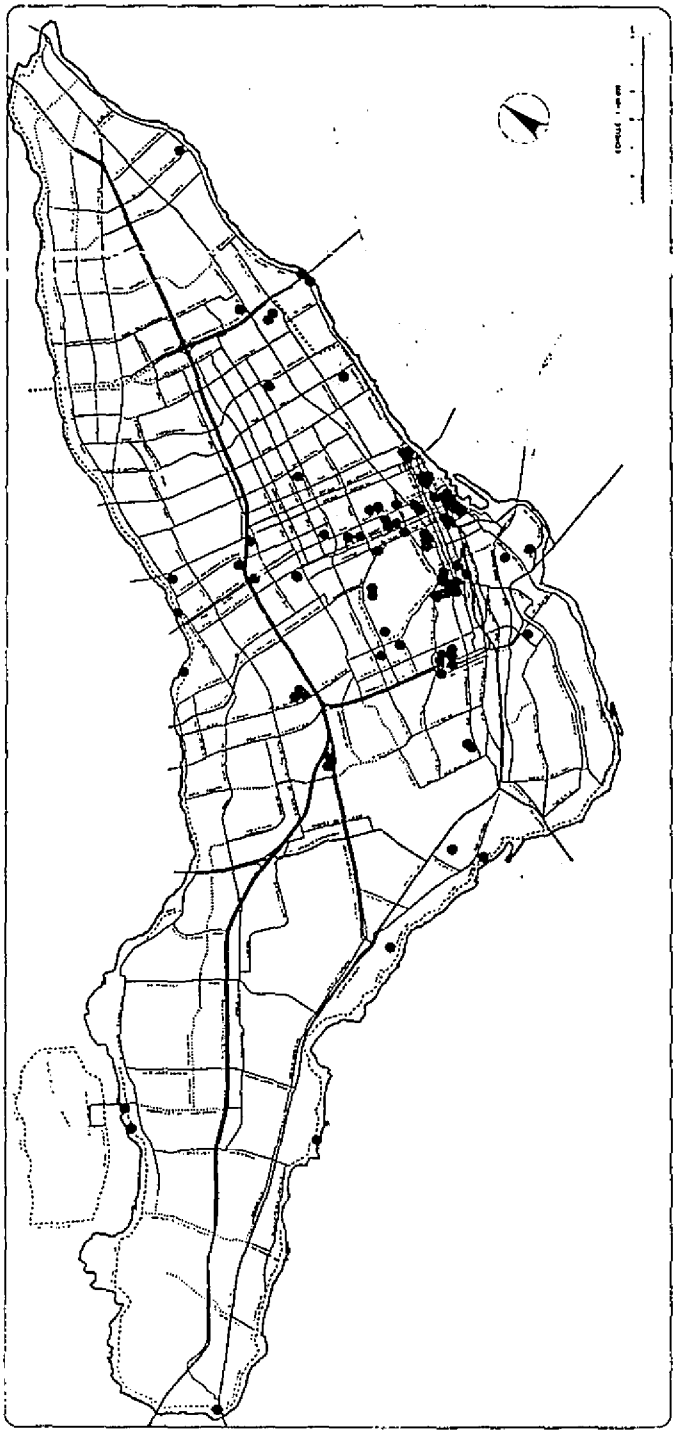

Figure 1.1. Map of conventual buildings on the island of Montréal inventoried in CUM *Architecture Religieuses II: les Couvents Montréal.* Source: Author, using CUM Service de la Planification du Territoire, "Principales voies de circulation" as a base map.

however, have disappeared outright. The Orphelinat Notre-Dame-de-Liesse of the Grey Nuns, for example, was completely demolished. This 1914 building shared the Côte-de-Liesse site with the Crèche d'Youville which was substantially modified by its subsequent owners for commercial office space in the 1980s. It is presently abandoned.[3]

Although as structures they still stand, numerous Montréal convents have been lost through their conversion into schools, government offices, and various forms of housing. The maison mère de la Congrégation Notre-Dame, for instance, now houses Dawson College, while the Conseil de la santé et des services sociaux du Montréal métropolitain currently occupies the former Institution des Sourdes-Muettes. Examples of convents recycled into condominiums include the Couvent des Petites Filles de Saint-Joseph, now Manoir de Belmont, and the renovated Mont-Saint-Louis. Others, such as the Pensionnat Saint Basile and the Monastère du Très-Saint-Sacrement, were converted to public housing. The 1987 transformation of the Monastère du Bon Pasteur into a mixed-use complex—a cultural centre, office space, a housing cooperative, a residence for the elderly, a daycare center and condominiums—was considered a particularly ambitious project.[4] Evidently, Montrealers have realized the potential for the adaptive reuse of conventual buildings.[5] Despite this realization, an important question remains: how did convents operate as a residential form in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Montréal?

Although they are all around us in Montréal, conventual buildings are poorly understood, historically, as domestic environments. Yet, many people of my parents' and grandparents' generations (and the generations that preceded them) experienced conventual life, either directly as boarders in convent schools and as patients nursed in hospitals administered by women religious, or indirectly through a family member who took the

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[3]The condition of the Côte-de-Liesse orphanage, in addition to other conventual buildings in Montréal, was determined by site visits conducted during the summer of 1994. Communauté Urbaine de Montréal, Service de la Planification du Territoire, *Architecture Religieuses II: les Couvents Montréal,* Répertoire d'Architecture Traditionelle sur le Territoire de la Communauté Urbaine de Montréal (Montréal: Communauté Urbaine de Montréal, 1984) documents a significant number of convents on the island of Montréal.

[4]The renovation of the Monastère du Bon Pasteur by the Société immobilière du patrimoine architectural de Montréal (SIMPA) has been well documented as a small publication. Gerda Wekerle, "Canadian Women's Housing Cooperatives: Case Studies in Physical and Social Innovation," in *Life Spaces: Gender, Household, Employment,* ed. Caroline Andrew and Beth Moore Milroy (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1988) examined a similar project in Québec City: the transformation of former Bon Pasteur convent into six non-profit housing cooperatives. Grandir en Ville, in particular, targetted women.

[5]Richard Duret, "Conservation as an Element of Change in Montreal: Housing in an Industrial, Religious, and Academic Legacy" (Master's Thesis, School of Urban Planning, McGill University, 1991) documented the conversions of convents into housing. Thanks to Peter King for the tour of the Triangle Rose student housing co-op before renovation. Further, a desk-top survey of recent architectural periodicals reveals that many articles have been written on the renovation of convents, a phenomenon that dates mainly from the 1980s.

habit. These experiences remain inconceivable to people of my generation. There are no definitive works that treat convents as housing. Instead, scholars have focused on the religious communities themselves, without any discussion of the buildings they inhabited; they consider convents in sociological or religio-historical contexts.

The oldest literature about nuns in Québec consists primarily of biographies of individual foundresses and community histories, typically written by a member of that particular order. For example, Albertine Ferland-Angers' *Mère d'Youville* focused on the charisma and saintliness of the foundress of the Grey Nuns, a widow and the first Canadian to establish a religious community.[6] Earlier foundations in Montréal comprised offshoots of French orders, sent over as missionaries to New France.

The inception of the Grey Nuns dates to the evening of December 31, 1737, when Marie-Marguerite Du Frost de Lajemmerais d'Youville and three other women—Catherine Demers, Catherine Cusson and Louise Thamur de la Source—consecrated their lives to the service of Montréal's destitute.[7] They formed, in effect, a secular association in which each individual maintained rights to their own property, while adopting a communal and religious lifestyle. Spiritual exercises punctuated the working day according to a *règlement* (daily regimen) outlined by Monsieur Normant, confessor to Mère d'Youville. The small community cared for the poor and ill, first in the foundress' own home and subsequently in a series of rented houses which they adapted to their needs.

In 1747, the French authorities asked Marguerite d'Youville and her associates to assume, provisionally, the administration of the Hôpital général de Montréal. The Frères Charon had established the Pointe-à-Callières hospice in 1694 to house elderly men and orphan boys. By bringing a poor blind woman, an elderly paralytic widow, and six other women ranging from 6 to 34 years of age already in her care (one of whom paid an annual pension) to the Hôpital général, Mère d'Youville expanded the mandate to be all inclusive, regardless of age, gender, or class. This changed life in the building, as gender complicated the already difficult task, financially and logistically, of feeding, cleaning, clothing, and caring for a diverse group of varied ages and abilities. The religious community's works expanded to meet the needs of the population as they arose: during

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[6]Albertine Ferland-Angers, *Mère d'Youville: Première Fondatrice Canadienne*, 2d ed. (Montréal: Centre Marguerite-d'Youville, 1977). Every religious community seems to have at least one of each type of book, one about their foundress, the other about the history of the community. See for example Denise Robillard, *Émilie Tavernier Gamelin* (Montréal: Éditions du Méridien, 1988).

[7] Details of the life of Mère d'Youville, the history of the Grey Nuns, and the foundation of the original Hôpital général by the Frères Hospitalières de la Croix et de Saint Joseph *dites* Frères Charon are drawn from: Ferland-Angers 86-88; [Soeur Albina Fauteux] *L'Hôpital Général des Soeurs de la Charité (Soeurs Grises) depuis sa fondation jusqu'à nos jours,* vol. 1 (Montréal: Imprimerie des Soeurs Grises de Montréal, 1915), 11-79, 93-104, 110-12; and Marguerite Jean, *Évolution des Communautés Religieuses de Femmes du Québec de 1639 à nos jours* (Montréal: Fides, 1977), 54, 55-58.

wars and epidemics, for example, they assisted all persons requiring medical attention regardless of their nationality; "fallen women" found asylum within the convent walls; and in 1754 the religious women initiated the first foundling hospital in North America. To survive, the women accepted whatever remunerative tasks they were offered to gain subsistence for their charges and themselves. The king of France confirmed Mère d'Youville's mandate in 1753. Monseigneur de Pontbriand, the local bishop, officially recognized the Soeurs de la Charité de l'Hôpital-Général de Montréal as a secular order only in June 1755.[8] More commonly known as les Soeurs Grises, or the Grey Nuns, the women finally obtained formal rules and constitutions for their community in 1781, though their vows were restricted to simple ones.[9]

This brief history of the Grey Nuns abstracts key events in order to highlight the initiatives of a group of independent women to live and work collectively in the name of charity. Their experience, however, was not unique, as Marguerite Jean's historical survey of Québec's religious communities of women attests.[10] Émilie Gamelin, also a widow with no initial intention of leading an overtly religious life, followed a similar path as Mère d'Youville in founding the Soeurs de la Providence in 1843.[11] At this time Québec experienced an explosion in the institution of women's religious communities, a trend that was encouraged by Monseigneur Ignace Bourget. Not only were new orders created between 1840 and 1860, but older, established ones proliferated. Each daughter institution came under the authority of its local Bishop. Consequently, the Mother House lost jurisdiction of its offspring. This happened with the 1840s expansion of the Grey Nuns into St-Hyacinthe, Ottawa and Québec City. Towards the 1870s, religious communities sought to centralize their own administrative powers and to gain autonomy from local bishops by seeking direct approbation from the Holy See. Roman constitutions, though they guaranteed a degree of independence, also conformed to a standard normalization of vows imposed on all religious orders, regardless of regional circumstances.

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[8]Ferland-Angers, 322-331. As a secular order, the women were not formally recognized as nuns per se. Though allowed to live like women religious, they also conserved all of their civic rights, to hold property for instance. Vows, if pronounced, remained simple and particular rather than solemn (whereby dispensation could only be granted by the Pope). For a more detailed explanation see: Jean, 197-199, 214-15.

[9]Residents of Montréal accused the women of perpetuating the alcohol trafficking of Madame d'Youville's deceased husband and of drunkenness, so they nicknamed the fledgling association "Soeurs Grises." The word 'grise' in French refers both to the colour grey, incidentally, the colour of their costume, and to drunkenness. Soeurs Réjeanne Grand'Maison and Marguerite Daoust, guides at the Mère d'Youville museum and the Maison Mère d'Youville, refer to this anecdote, adding that Mère d'Youville accepted this derogatory label and the scorn associated with it as a reminder of her humility. See also Ferland-Angers, 74.

[10]Jean examines their institutional organization -- canons, constitutions, vows, and internal government—in the context of the political, religious, and social development of Catholicism in Québec.

[11]The parallel example of Émilie Gamelin, foundress of the Soeurs de la Providence is discussed in Lapointe-Roy, 69-71.

Next in the chronology of the literature on convents are studies that examined the work of nuns in education, social work and health. The Grey Nuns, for example, offered innovative childcare services to mothers who worked outside the home or needed temporary assistance in the form of *salles d'asiles* (comparable to modern daycare centers). What began as a charitable institution evolved into a facility for preschool education, a kindergarten that combined instruction through play and rudimentary manual labour.[12] Their long-established foundling hospital attempted to succour abandoned infants, while the many orphanages operated by the Grey Nuns and other orders sheltered and apprenticed young boys and girls so that each child could eventually earn their own livelihood.[13] Religious teaching congregations of men and women also ran grade schools; the sons and daughters of the wealthier classes boarded in convents.[14] Still other religious communities nursed the sick, reformed the delinquent, aided the poor, and offered refuge to the unwanted.[15] Taken together, this body of research underscores the network of services that religious women provided Montréal citizens, often without remuneration.

While most scholars contributed to feminist research in portraying the nuns' invaluable societal efforts, historian Marta Danylewycz furthered this discussion most in her book *Taking the Veil.*[16] She asserted that convents became catalysts for the feminist movement in Québec. Nuns, she claimed, had attained positions of power and pursued meaningful careers, thereby, tacitly helping break down stereotypes of women so that laywomen could ease their way into similar employment opportunities. Sociologist Nicole Laurin, in contradistinction, attenuated the emancipatory allusions made by Danylewycz. Her broad survey of Québec's female religious orders, *À la recherche d'un monde oublié,* examined the composition of this reserve workforce.[17] Most nuns, according to her research, performed drudgery. Only a small proportion of women were able to fill

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[12]Micheline Dumont-Johnson, "Des garderies au XIXe siècle: Les salles d'asile des Soeurs Grises à Montréal" *Revue d'Histoire de l'Amérique Française* vol. 34 no.1 (juin 1980): 27-56.

[13]Peter Gossage, "Les enfants abandonés à Montréal au 19e siècle: la Crèche d'Youville des Soeurs Grises 1820-1871" *Revue d'histoire de l'amérique française* vol. 40 no.4 (printemps 1987): 537-559; see also his "Abandoned Children in Nineteenth Century Montréal" (Master thesis, McGill University, 1983).

[14]Micheline Dumont and Nadia Fahmy-Eid, *Les Couventines L'éducation des filles au Québec dans les congrégations religieuses enseignantes 1840-1960* (Montréal: Boréal, 1986). They briefly discuss the dormitories and classrooms, but these discussions are not based on architectural documents. Rather, they are based on the annals and rules. They state, however, that there is a rich source of photographic material which still needs to be studied, 55-6, 126.

[15]Huguette Lapointe-Roy, *Charité Bien Ordonné: Le Premier Réseau de Lutte Contre la Pauvreté à Montréal au 19e Siècle* (Montréal: Boréal Express, 1987); Andrée Lévesque, *La Norme et les déviantes: Des femmes au Québec pendant l'entre-deux-guerres* (Montréal: Les Éditions du remue-ménage, 1989).

[16]Marta Danylewycz, *Taking the Veil: An Alternative to Marriage, Motherhood and Spinsterhood in Québec, 1840-1920* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1987).

[17]Nicole Laurin, Danielle Juteau, and Lorraine Duchesne, *A la recherche d'un monde oublié: Les communautés religieuses de femmes au Québec de 1900 à 1970* (Montréal: Le Jour, Editeur, 1991).

considerable roles in administration or other coveted positions.[18] Moreover, the Church imposed certain regulations and codes of behaviour: vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, for example. These women gave up certain liberties in order to accomplish larger goals. Their sacrifice was also an outward symbol of their devotion and commitment to their work.

Evidently, women religious fulfilled important roles in society.[19] Little, however, is known about the environments that they occupied. Almost all of the studies of convents considered thus far relied on textual sources: the religious community's registers, financial records, journals, historiques, annals and constitutions, for instance. A few authors examined cursorily photographs, but none used architectural sources. Not one of the scholars discussed nor analysed the buildings in which nuns lived and worked to any great depth. A couple of works treat the architecture of convents, but only from the perspective of their design and construction.[20]

Convents in general have been ignored in Canadian residential and architectural history.[21] These sophisticated multi-functional buildings, however, can be read as containers of heritage; they should be mined as primary sources of historical documentation.[22] This thesis explores the Mother House of the Grey Nuns, typical of Montréal's nineteenth-century convents, as a purpose-built environment for women (Figure 1.2). In doing so the thesis draws on the vast field of gender and architecture/women and space. The literature within this field of study has sought to uncover women's place in the built environment.

Women belonged in the home. It was nineteenth-century woman's proper place: this recurrent notion pervaded the rhetoric of housing reformers, architects and other so-called experts. They promulgated a "cult of domesticity" that equated women with morality

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[18]From an interview with Nicole Laurin, Université de Montréal, February 7, 1994.

[19]Maryse Darsigny, Francine Descarries, Lyne Kurtzman and Évelyne Tardy, eds., *Ces femmes qui ont bâti Montréal* (Montréal: Les Éditions du remue-ménage, 1994) include women religious in their compilation.

[20]Robert Caron, *Un Couvent du XIXe siècle: La Maison des Soeurs de la Charité de Québec* (Montréal: Libre Expression, 1980); Robert Lahaise, *Les Édifices Conventuels du Vieux Montréal: Aspects Ethno-historiques*, Collection Ethnologie Cahiers du Québec (Québec: Hurtubise HMH, 1980). Luc Noppen, Claude Paulette, and Michel Tremblay, *Québec: trois siècles d'architecture* (Montréal: Libre Expression, 1979), Gérard Morisset, *L'architecture en Nouvelle-France* (Québec: n.p., 1949; reprint, Québec: Pelican, 1980), and Jean-Claude Marsan, *Montreal in Evolution* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1981) also touch on conventual architecture in their respective historical surveys.

[21]Harold Kalman, *A History of Canadian Architecture*, 2 vols., (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1994), 589-91, for example, only mentions Dawson College in relation to J. Omer Marchand's architectural career. None of the many convents in Montréal designed by Victor Bourgeau are discussed.

[22]Dell Upton, "The Power of Things: Recent Studies in American Vernacular Architecture" *American Quarterly* 35 3 (1983): 262-79, surveys various methodological approaches to the use of ordinary buildings as a source.

Figure 1.2. Photograph of the Mother House of the Grey Nuns. Source: Author.

and they espoused a belief in the behaviourally deterministic power of domestic architecture. The proper planning of rooms and choice of style for a house, it was presumed, were tools of social and religious reform. Those scholars who relied primarily on prescriptive sources, (builder's trade journals, pattern books, domestic guides, home magazines for women, domestic science texts, and other literature) portrayed women as passive recipients of the built-environment and reinforced the prescribed roles of women.[23] But women did not always obey the dictates of so-called experts, rather they modified their houses to fit their own needs and prerogatives. The use of photographs, diaries, and even interviews as analytical devices helped some researchers uncover the actual inhabitation of the home.[24] Many women simply adopted strategies that enlarged their roles within the domestic sphere: as managers and administrators of the home they wielded power in the daily decisions of family survival.[25]

Material feminists made significant efforts to reorganize their lives and work through design, actively seeking to better not only their own situation, but that of the larger community. Proposals for kitchenless houses and cooperative housekeeping questioned traditional gender constructions as they raised possibilities for different household organizations and a revised division of labour: domestic work was to be shared and even remunerated, if not taken on by male members of the household. Collectivized services included electricity, running hot water, sanitary plumbing, building maintenance, housekeeping, laundry, food preparation in central kitchens, and public dining rooms. Apartment living afforded women many advantages: access to the city with its distractions and work opportunities, an alleviation from domestic chores (except childrearing), and

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[23]Clifford Clark, "Domestic Architecture as an index to Social History: The Romantic Revival and the Cult of Domesticity in America, 1840-1890" *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 7 (Summer 1976): 33-56; Colleen McDannell, *The Christian Home in Victorian America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988); Gwendolyn Wright *Moralism and the Model Home: Domestic Architecture and Cultural Conflict in Chicago, 1873-1913* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980) and *Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America* (New York: Pantheon Books, a division of Random House, Inc., 1981; reprint, Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1992).

[24]Annmarie Adams, "The Eichler Home: Intention and Experience in Postwar Suburbia," in *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture V*, eds. Elizabeth Cromley and Carter L. Hudgins, 164-78 (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995).

[25]Annmarie Adams, "Architecture in the Family Way: Health Reform, Feminism, and the Middle-class House in England, 1870-1900" (Ph.D. Diss. University of California, Berkeley, 1992); Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English middle class, 1780-1850* (London: Hutchinson, 1987); Mary Poovey, *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England*, Women in Culture and Society Series, ed. Catherine R. Stimpson (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988); Bettina Bradbury, *Working Families: Age, Gender and Daily Survival in Industrializing Montreal*, The Canadian Social History Series (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Inc., 1993).

contact with a wider social community. Utopian communities offered similar conditions; women no longer needed to live in the isolation of the single family home.[26]

Powerful and yet marginal characterized "the emotional, spiritual and social significance of women's separate institutions" which afforded celibate women the possibility of living with other members of their own sex. These purpose-built physical spaces within the city, built and sustained by women, included residences, (such as Hull House in Chicago), apartments, colleges, and even sisterhoods.[27] From within gender exclusive institutions, women managed to exercise leadership, engage in professional activities, earn university degrees, or simply participate in the workforce. By uncovering these alternative housing forms, scholars demonstrated that women actively formed part of a larger social landscape.

Investigations into the nature of nineteenth-century city reveal that women also occupied the public realm in their own individual right, outside of specially designated institutions. They claimed the public space of streets and squares to organize protests, celebrate victories, or to earn a living through prostitution. Gender analyses of the built environment—through the careful examination of architectural documentation, actual buildings and their furnishings—have proven fruitful in exploring complex social relations and in reconstructing "the ways in which humans have created and experienced their built environments."[28] It is precisely this position that the thesis adopts in its examination of the Mother House of the Grey Nuns as a purpose-built structure for women in the Montréal.

The first chapter of this thesis looks at the convent: its origins as an institution and its architecture as a building type. Popular perceptions of the Mother House of the Grey

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[26]Dolores Hayden, "Two Utopian Feminists and Their Campaigns for Kitchenless Houses," in *Building for Women,* ed. Suzanne Keller (Lexington, Massachusetts: Lexington Books, 1981), 1, 3-19; *Seven American Utopias: the Architecture of Communitarian Socialism, 1790-1975* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1976);*Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminists Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods and Cities* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1981); Lynn Pearson, *The Architectural and Social History of Cooperative Living* (London: Macmillan, 1988); Elizabeth Cromley, *Alone Together: A History of New York Early Apartments* (Ithica and London: Cornell University Press, 1990). See also her article "Apartments and Collective Life in Nineteenth Century New York," in *New Households New Housing*, eds. Karen A. Franck and Sherry Ahrentzen (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1989), 20-45.

[27]Martha Vicinus, *Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women 1850-1920,* Women in Culture and Society Series, ed. Catharine R. Stimpson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985); Estelle Freedman, "Separation as Strategy: Female Institution Building, 1870-1930" *Feminist Studies* 5 (1979): 512-29.

[28]Angel Kwolek-Folland, "Gender as a Category of Analysis in Vernacular Architecture Studies," in *Gender, Class and Shelter: Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture, V,* eds. Elizabeth Collins Cromley and Carter L. Hudgins (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995); Mary P. Ryan, *Women in Public: Between Banners and Ballots, 1825-1880* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990); Abigail A. Van Slyck, "'The Utmost Amount of Effectiv[*sic*] Accommodation': Andrew Carnegie and the Reform of the American Library" *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* L:4 (December 1991): 359-83; Sally McMurry, *Families and Farmhouses in Nineteenth Century America: Vernacular Design and Social Change* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

Nuns are examined in the context of the historical development of the site and the design and construction of the convent. The creation of this building involved a complex process and a diversity of players, an as yet untold story. Chapter Two analyses the organization of spaces and the interiors of the convent at the turn of the century. Who had access to which spaces, how were the spaces located, and who planned them, are some of the important questions considered in terms of how women ordered and used their own environments. The third chapter examines change over time in relation to issues of modernity and technology in the convent. It also situates the Mother House within the context of cooperative housing. Comparisons to other major nineteenth-century institutions inform the analysis throughout all three sections.

As a single case study, the thesis gives a comprehensive history of one particular building. In doing so, the research touches on many interrelated fields: primarily the history of institutions, communities of women religious, and building technologies. While this broader context deepens our understanding of the Mother House of the Grey Nuns, it is the architecture of the convent itself that reveals how this building operated as a domestic environment for women.

CHAPTER 1

Constructs of the Mother House: Designed and Built

On December 4, 1875, *Canadian Illustrated News* ran an article entitled "Our Public Institutions" that featured a description of the General Hospital of the Grey Nuns in Montréal.

> In 1871, the old building on Foundling Street [now Place d'Youville] was abandoned for want of space, and the present magnificent edifices, shown in our sketch, were and are being constructed. From 1747 to the present day, the Hospital has cared for 1490 poor and infirm men, 3240 women, 1914 orphans and 19 472 foundlings. The new buildings as seen in our sketch, cover an immense area, and with the church, will form the largest establishment of the kind in America.[1]

The engraving of the building, signed by Eugène Haberer, circulated throughout the Dominion (Figure 2.1).

The General Hospital, today more commonly known as the Mother House of the Grey Nuns, appears monumental in the Haberer engraving, accentuated by the artist's use of a bird's eye perspective. Centered on its own block approximately 200' (61 m.) from Dorchester Boulevard, the convent commands prestige, like other important public buildings. The artist depicts a "French" garden complete with rigidly geometrical parterres, central fountains with right-angled axial pathways, manicured lawns, and carefully aligned rows of trees. The length of the principle facade balances the 241' (73.5 m.) high tower that springs from what architectural historians have described as a neo-roman church, because of its porch and Latin-cross plan. Apses, marked by semi-circular rotunda on the exterior of the church, terminate the nave and the end of each transept.[2]

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[1]"Our Public Institutions" *Canadian Illustrated News* vol. xii, no.23 (Dec. 4 1875): 355-56. Five days later, the engraving appeared in CIN's French counterpart, *L'Opinion Publique* vol. vi (Dec. 9 1875): 580, 582. It is also reproduced in Barbara Salomon de Friedberg, *Le Domaine des Soeurs Grises, Boulevard Dorchester* (Montréal: Ministère des Affaires Culturelles, Direction générale du Patrimoine, Service de l'Inventaire des Biens Culturels, Division Reconnaissance et Classement, 1975), 15.

[2]Guy Pinard, *Montréal: Son Histoire, Son Architecture* (Ottawa: Les Éditions La Presse, 1989), 288-90. Communauté Urbaine de Montréal [hereafter referred as CUM], Service de la Planification du Territoire, *Architecture Religieuses II: les Couvents Montréal,* Répertoire d'Architecture Traditionelle sur le Territoire de la Communauté Urbaine de Montréal (Montréal: Communauté Urbaine de Montréal, 1984), xx, suggest Ste. Madelaine de Vézelay as a model for the vault of the church.

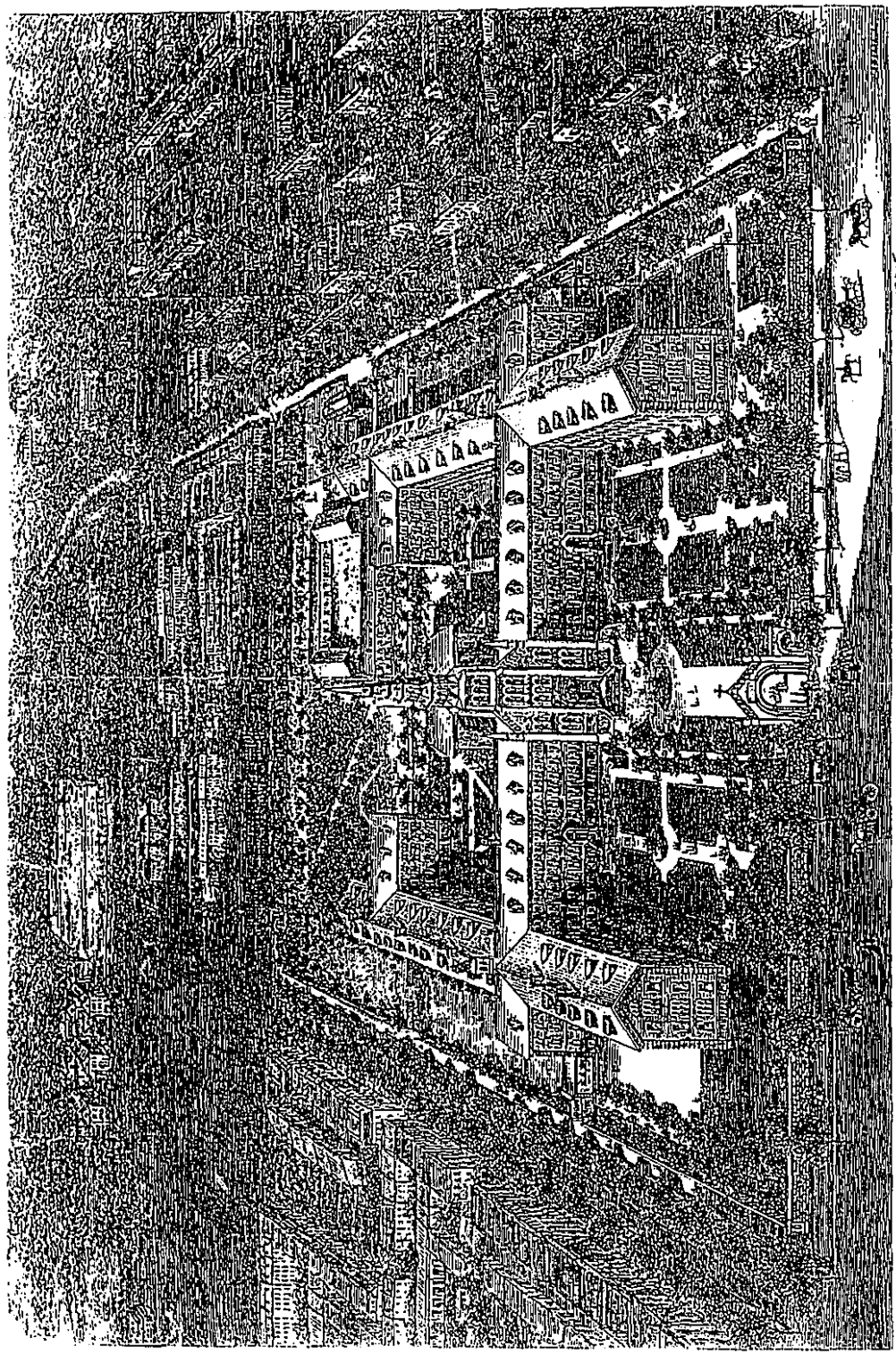

Figure 2.1. Engraving of the Mother House of the Grey Nuns by Eugène Haberer, *Canadian Illustrated News*, 04 12 1875. Source: clipping BNQ #6287, D.S.8, Collection Photothèque.

Centrally placed within the architectural composition, the church dominates the symmetrical, H-shaped, five-storey convent. Perpendicular wings, with their gabled ends facing south to Dorchester Boulevard, define a plaza in front of the church on the south side. On the rooftops, *clochetons* (miniature bell towers) echoing the steeple motif mark the intersections of the principal east-west block. *Portiques* facing St-Mathieu and Guy Streets terminate the ends of the facade. Two smaller blocks at the rear extremities of the side wings turn inward and enclose a courtyard behind the church. The convent's neoclassical elevations feature a vertical hierarchy of increasing simplification, from the heavily rusticated grey stone base with deeply-set windows to the smooth, linear uniformity of upper levels and the pitched slate roof.[3] The engraving reveals the building's repetitive, tiny projecting dormers: one row in the front and two in back. The architecture and surrounding landscape of the convent, formalized in Haberer's rendering, perhaps conveyed the architectural expectations of fin-de-siècle Montréal society.

Designed by prominent nineteenth-century Montréal architect Victor Bourgeau (1809-1888), the Mother House was considered the highest achievement in the contemporary conventual landscape. It belonged to a long established tradition: a survey of Montréal's convents reveals a cohesive typology. Generally made of local building materials, these four to five-storey greystone structures comprised an H or E-shaped (or variations thereof) plan bisected by a central chapel, recalling the institutional architecture of the French Régime. Their mansard or pitched roofs were pierced with dormer windows and tripartite windows animated gable ends facing the street. In addition, most convents featured stark, unornamented façades, symmetrically composed with aligned bays of uniformly-sized openings, much like the Old Seminary in Québec City designed by architect Charles Baillargé (1826-1906), a contemporary of Bourgeau.[4] This building, constructed in 1854-57, (which now houses the Université Laval School of Architecture) shows Baillargé's understanding of the French rationalist architects Étienne-Louis Boullée (1728-99) and Claude-Nicolas Ledoux (1736-1806) as "the single unit of the window has been multiplied almost endlessly resulting in a building that is monolithic and primitive in elementalism, but in a highly sophisticated manner."[5]

The use of neoclassicism within this building typology was crucial to the meaning of the convent in the province of Québec, especially since neoclassical architecture was

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[3] According to Soeur Blanche Morneau, the slate roof was replaced with asphalt shingles in the 1950s, and then with copper sheet metal (tôle) in 1978.

[4] CUM, xviii.

[5] Leslie Maitland, *Neoclassical Architecture in Canada*, Studies in Archeology, Architecture and History (Ottawa: National Historic Parks and Sites Branch, Parks Canada, 1984), 51-2. One might easily add Jacques-François Blondel (1705-74) to this list of French rationalist architects.

traditionally associated with didactic functions: it "was a speaking art, able to convey the moral of its programs and to stimulate sentiments."[6] Often this language, manifested in institutional buildings—prisons, hospitals, asylums and workhouses—was adopted to communicate the reform agenda of experts.[7] Indeed, conventual buildings may have been used as tools of the Roman Catholic Church to promote a "moralizing fervor" through their architectural language. During this period in Québec history, religious communities experienced great expansion, a trend that was especially encouraged by Montréal Bishop Ignace Bourget. Curiously, the real achievement celebrated by the 1875 publication of Haberer's engraving was the construction of the church, as a major portion of the Mother House had already been built.

This formal treatment of the Mother House of the Grey Nuns as an important architectural monument is also how most scholars view this historical building. Indeed, its design has been seen only in its relation to Bourgeau's career: its unique architectural qualities as worthy of preservation. But the Mother House is more than a monument to a particular architect; it is a testimonial that embodies a complex story of human power relationships. This chapter will examine the social history of this institution through its architecture and trace the process of its design and construction.

Traditionally, the General Hospital filled an important role as a charitable institution in the city, a succour for the poor and alienated in society. It has a long history and predates many other prominent institutional types. In fact, many other institutions such as asylums, prisons, workhouses, hospitals and hostels had their origins within its walls.[8] In Montréal, the first General Hospital was established at Pointe-à-Callière in 1694 by the Frères Charon.[9] The rubble stone, 90' long by 30' wide (27.4 x 9.1 m.) building originally comprised a T-shaped plan; two short square wings terminated the west end of the hôpital, one facing the mountain and the other the St-Lawrence River. It comprised

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[6]Spiro Kostof, *A History of Architecture: Settings and Rituals* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 563.

[7]For a more extensive discussion on architecture as a tool of reform see Anthony Vidler, *The Writing of the Walls: Architectural Theory in the Late Enlightenment* (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 1987); and David J. T. Vanderburgh, "Cultures of Public Architecture in Nineteenth-Century France: Re-forming the Provincial Prison" (Ph.D. Diss. University of California, Berkeley, 1993).

[8]The ties between convents, Hôpitaux généraux and modern hospitals are apparent in the archaic definition of the word hospital: "charitable home, hospice, or school." In French, the ancient definition is an "établissement charitable, hospitalier, où l'on recevait les gens sans ressources, pour les entretenir, les soigner." *Collins English Dictionary* s.v. "hospital;" *Le Petit Robert* s.v. "hôpital." The origins of the modern hospital are discussed in Michel Foucault, Blandine Barret Kriegel, Anne Thalamy, François Beguin, and Bruno Fortier, *Les machines à guérir: Aux origines de l'hôpital moderne* (Bruxelles: Pierre Mardaga, 1979).

[9]For a more complete architectural description of Maison Mère d'Youville see Robert Lahaise, *Les Edifices Conventuels du Vieux Montréal: Aspects Ethno-historiques,* Collection Ethnologie Cahiers du Québec (Québec: Hurtubise HMH, 1980), 387-422.

three storeys plus an attic. It achieved its final H-form through accretion over the period of some one hundred years. Now called Maison Mère d'Youville, this late seventeenth-century structure acted as a prototype for many of Montréal's convents (Figure 2.2). It also acted as Baillargé's model for the Grey Nuns' convent (now called Maison Mère Mallet) in Québec City.[10]

Architectural historian Raymonde Gauthier has posited that the Sulpicians, in bringing over institutional models with them from France, had given "un style à l'architecture religieuse et conventuelle de Montréal par la suggestion, sinon l'imposition de modèles dérivés du Séminaire où ils [Sulpicians] vivaient en communauté, puis de l'Hôpital Général qu'ils avaient construit à leurs frais, à la fin du XVIIe siècle."[11] But this interpretation overlooks the possibility that the Maison Mère d'Youville may have grown out of a local, vernacular French-Canadian domestic construction tradition.

Traditional Québec eighteenth-century construction was marked by thick load-bearing masonry walls that tapered as the wall rose up, spanned by deep wooden beams, and topped with a simple gabled roof with rafters joined by a collar beam and king post.[12] This system of construction effectively limited the maximum height and width of any section of the building. Expansion, however, was facilitated by the addition of an extra storey (anticipated in wall design) or by the extension of the length of a wing. Casement windows, characteristic of French Canadian domestic architecture, dated from the period of New France. Typically, household chimneys were located in end walls. These significantly thicker walls effectively divided larger buildings into zoned blocks and acted as fire breaks.[13] In Maison Mère d'Youville, each constitutive block bore a marked resemblance to the typical Montréal urban house of the era, though larger in scale.

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[10]Raymonde Gauthier, "Victor Bourgeau et l'Architecture Religieuse et conventuelle dans le Diocèse de Montréal, 1821-1892" (Thèse de doctorat, Université de Laval, 1983), 225. Robert Caron, *Un Couvent du XIXe siècle: La Maison des Soeurs de la Charité de Québec* (Montréal: Libre Expression, 1980), 29, suggests that Baillargé in effect introduced the Montréal style (characterized as outward facing buildings rather than those enclosed on themselves or built around a series of courtyards) to Québec City, 31. He also suggests, in contrast to Gauthier, that Gédéon de Catalogne's 1695 H-plan for the Hôtel-Dieu informed early Montréal convent typology, rather than that of the Hôpital Général, 36-7.

[11]Gauthier, "Victor Bourgeau," 45, 218-225. Though the Sulpicians had donated land for the Hospital, it was Jean François Charon who, with Pierre LeBer and other benefactors, financed construction. See Lahaise, 414; [Soeur Albina Fauteux] *L'Hôpital Général des Soeurs de la Charité (Soeurs Grises) depuis sa fondation jusqu'à nos jours*, vol. 1 (Montréal: Imprimerie des Soeurs Grises de Montréal, 1915), 12-4.

[12]Some of the beams in the Mother House basement are of rough-hewn logs which have been leveled only on one side to accommodate the floor boards above. Some of the cellars were also vaulted. The attic also features this roof construction system. This information is from a tour of the convent graciously given by Sr. Blanche Morneau on Nov. 8, 1994.

[13]Michel Lessard and Huguette Marquis, *Encyclopédie de la Maison Québecoise* (Montréal: Les Éditions de l'Homme, 1972).

Figure 2.2. Photograph of the Maison Mère d'Youville. Source: Author.

The houses of the Montréal region were characterized as "short, massive, as deep as they were wide, flanked by robust chimneys and built of dark, heavy stones in thick white mortar, pierced by narrow windows, and often with dormer windows 'the house seeming to rise from the ground like a domestic fortress.'"[14] Indeed, Québec architectural historian Gérard Morisset likened seventeenth-century convents to both "petits chateaux" and "grands manoirs" (Figure 2.3).[15]

> The code of 1727 stipulated that, without a cellar, urban houses would be two storeys high and that with a cellar, the main floor would have to be 12 *pieds* high [one *pied* = 1'$^{13}/_{16}$", or 0.55 m.]. Moreover, half of the cellar was to be below ground level...All openings were to be framed in stone...Roof trusses were to be an equilateral triangle based on the width of the house to allow sweeps and firefighters to mount the slope...cellars were to be vaulted and at least six *pieds* deep 'to prevent decay in the beams and floors placed above them...' an additional ordinance enacted by Intendant François Bigot that fixed the height of fire gables in that town [Montréal] at three *pieds* above the roof level with projecting stone corbels (accoyaux) where the eave extended beyond the wall face.[16]

The public almshouse, perhaps the American equivalent to the Hôpital général in so far that it housed the same type of inmate population, also started out in the New World as a big house. David Rothman suggests that whereas Europeans recycled buildings, most often monasteries, into new institutions, "Americans, in marked contrast, had to start from scratch."[17] As the almshouse evolved, it took on the same architectural characteristics as the Hôpital général, at least in its overall massing. The Pennsylvania Hospital for the Insane in the pre-Civil War period, for instance, consisted of a symmetrical, elaborated E-shaped plan.[18]

Although "want of space" was given as a reason in the newspaper article, other factors contributed to the abandonment of the old general hospital. Periodic spring

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[14]The Ferme St-Gabriel at the Pointe St-Charles, built 1668 (reconstructed in 1698), is exemplary. See for example Emilia Chicoine, *La Maison Saint-Gabriel: Un témoin des origines de Montréal,* 2d ed. (Montréal: Congrégation Notre Dame, 1983). Some scholars attribute the heaviness of the Montréal houses to the threat of Indian attack. Other scholars claim that their silhouette was based on urban models, rather than imported from Brittany. See Harold Kalman, *A History of Canadian Architecture* 2 vols. (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1994), 25-47; and Jean-Claude Marsan, *Montreal in Evolution* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1981), 110-20. Norbert Schoenauer gives a brief description of the "Norman house" in *History of Housing* (Montreal: McGill School of Architecture, 1992), 64.

[15]CUM, xiv.

[16]Peter Moogk, *Building a House in New France: An Account of the Perplexities of Client and Craftsmen in Early Canada* (Toronto: McClelland Stewart, 1977), 57-9. Note that S. I. unit conversions are not given for quoted material as it cannot be determined whether the authors were referring to British or French measures.

[17]David J.R. Rothman, *The Discovery of the Asylum: Social Order and Disorder in the New Republic* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1971), 135-6.

[18]Rothman, 140.

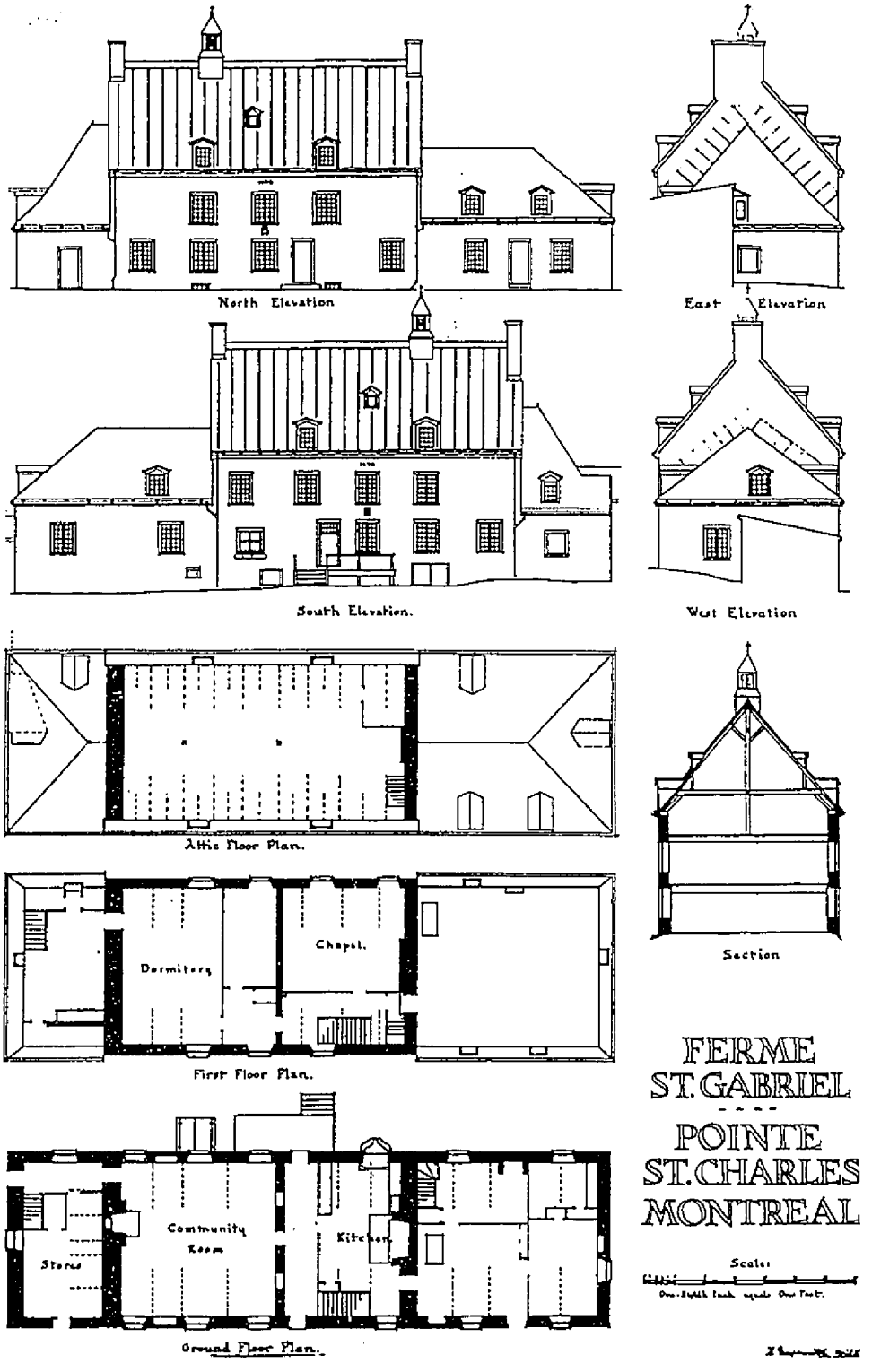

Figure 2.3. Plan and elevation of Ferme St-Gabriel by H. Mayerovitch, 1932. Source: Insert from *La Maison Saint-Gabriel*, 1977.

flooding plagued the low-lying Pointe-à-Callière site, causing insalubrious conditions.[19] The city's tenacious expropriation pressures also pushed the religious community to relocate (the city subsequently drove St-Pierre Street through the chapel, and St-Normand Street through the laundry annex).[20] So, the Grey Nuns' administrative council delegated three of their members to acquire a new site on the outskirts of Montréal at their February 3, 1861 meeting.[21]

On March 19, 1861, the three administrators—Soeurs Marie Julie Hainault *dits* Deschamps (Supérieure), Soeur Elizabeth Forbes *dite* McMullen (Assistante), and Soeur Mary Jane Slocombe (Maîtresse des Novices)—purchased from the Sulpician Order an irregular plot of land bounded by Guy, Ste-Catherine, St-Mathieu and Dorchester Streets. They negotiated a transaction at a rate of 1000 pounds per *arpent* which translated to a sum of 11166 pounds 15 shillings for an area of 11*arpents* 16 *perches* et 222 *pieds*. To complete the 750'x550'x800'x650' (228.6 x 167.6 x 243.8 x 198.1 m.) trapezoidal lot, the administrators bought Mr. J. Mullins' property on March 23, 1861. It measured 300'x143' (91.4 x 43.6 m.) and cost 2140 pounds.[22]

Known as Mont Sainte-Croix, this site formerly formed part of the Sulpician's Domain (Figure 2.4). Until the 1860s, it had comprised mostly farmland.[23] While portrayed as a broad boulevard in the *Canadian Illustrated News*, Dorchester's antecedent (St-Jean Baptiste Road) was once the "chemin du roi"—little more than a dirt path.[24] Farms, like those that appear in the background of the engraving towards the foot of the Mount-Royal, quickly disappeared with the exodus of the bourgeoisie from the city core.

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[19]"Déja en 1843, les Soeurs Grises songeaient à quitter la Pointe-à-Callières à cause de fréquentes inondations. Mère McMullen avait entamé des démarches à cette fin; certaines oppositions s'étant manifestées, on a dû surseoir au projet." Estelle Mitchell s.g.m., *L'essor apostolique: Soeurs de la Charité de Montréal, "Soeurs Grises," 1877-1910* (Montréal: n.p., 1981), 14.

[20]Lahaise, 517, 519.

[21]Archives des Soeurs Grises de Montréal (ASGM) MM hist. 472, *Vente par Messrs les Ecclésiastiques du Séminaire de St. Sulpice de Montréal à la Communauté des Soeurs de Charité de l'Hôpital Général de Montréal, dites Soeurs Grises,* 19 mars 1861. A copy of this notarial act is also conserved in the Archives Nationals du Québec (ANQ) under E. Lafleur, microfilm.

[22]ASGM MM hist. 472. Monsieur Mathurin Clair Bonnissant, Supérieur Ecclésiastique des Soeurs approved the purchase. ASGM *Détails Historiques concernant les plans de la maison mère primitive et de l'actuelle, cahier A*, also gives dollar amounts --$440 865 for 440 865 square feet (40 957 m^2.); $8560 for Mullins. Salomon de Friedberg gives 582' (177.4 m.) Dorchester, 777.5' (237 m.) St-Mathieu, 509.25' (155.3 m.) Ste-Catherine, 730.25' (222.6 m.) Guy, as dimensions, for a total of 441 735 square feet (41 038 m^2.). Today site area only covers 33 954 m^2 (CUM, 94) or 352 000 square feet (Pinard, 284). The northern portion, now Faubourg Ste-Catherine, was sold to developers in the 1980s, from meeting with Soeur Morneau, Nov. 8, 1994.

[23]Brian Young, *In Its Corporate Capacity: The Seminary of Montreal As a Business Institution 1816-1876* (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1986), 20. An 1801 map depicts the site that became their property as part of the surrounding farmland and Guy Street had been laid out by an 1815 map, Salomon de Friedberg, 22-3.

[24]Salomon de Friedberg, 19.

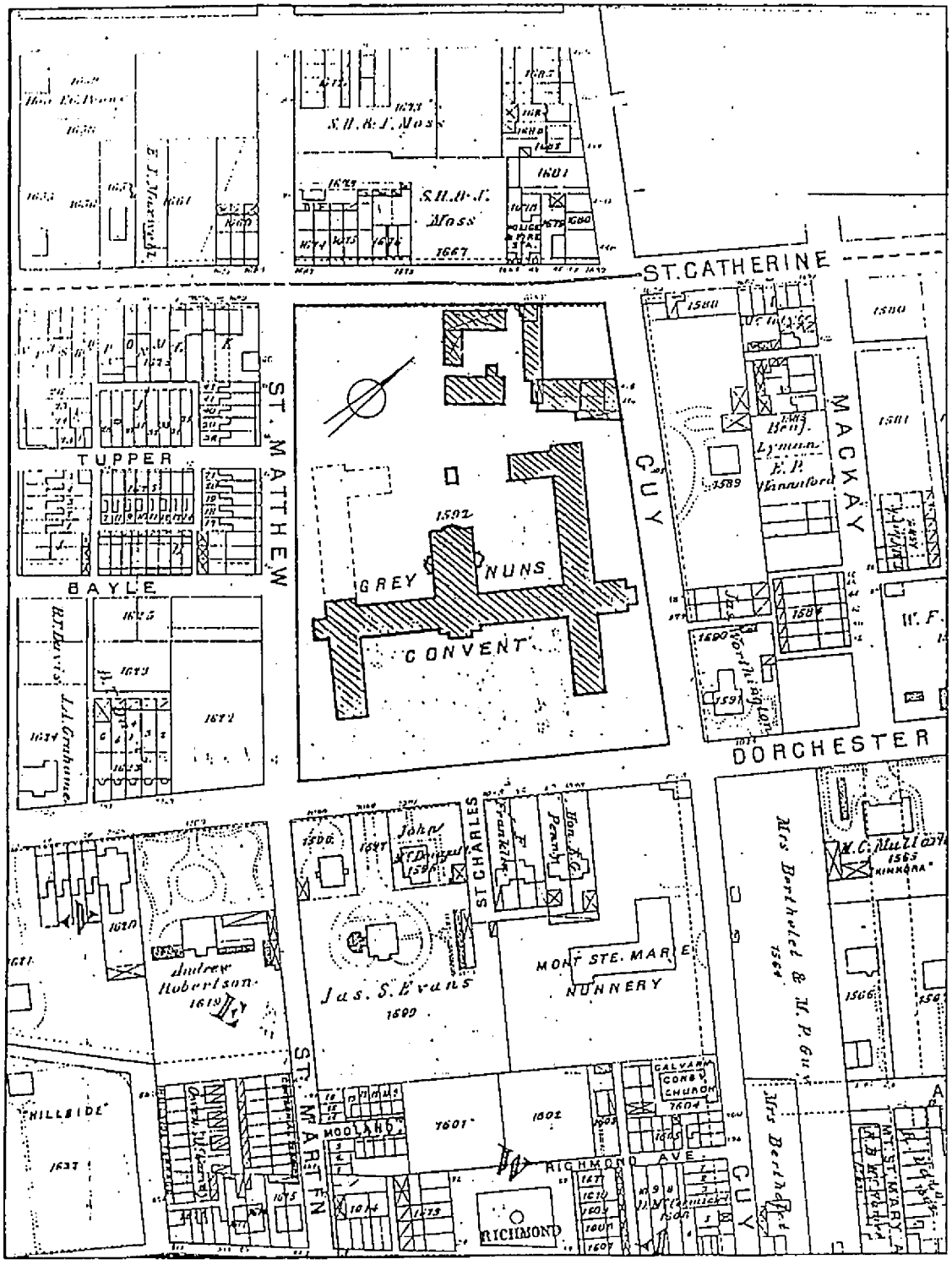

Figure 2.4. Map of Mont Sainte-Croix and surrounding area. Source: Reproduced from Salomon de Friedberg, 28-9.

This area of the city developed rapidly in the 1840s as an English middle-class residential neighbourhood; it was designated quartier St-Antoine in 1845.[25] Development continued through to the turn-of-the-century, with the Sulpicians playing an important role. The priests, for instance, undertook two residential rental projects on lots adjacent to Mont Sainte-Croix in the 1870s where they built, at a cost of $72 000, fourteen single-family row-houses on Baile, St-Marc and St-Mathieu Streets.[26] In overlooking the working-class suburbs, prominent families, the wealthiest of whom settled primarily in the famous north-west sector of St-Antoine known as the "Golden Square Mile," maintained a powerful geographical distinction between themselves and the poor.

In moving to this area, the Grey Nuns not only established themselves in a posh neighbourhood, but also gained proximity to their spiritual/religious fathers, the Sulpicians, who had relocated their Seminary in 1857. Indeed, the area became a kind of religious enclave since the two other religious communities served by the Sulpicians—the Hospitalières de St-Joseph and the Congrégation Notre-Dame—also installed themselves in roughly the same geographic area between in 1859 and 1908 respectively.[27] Were the so-called Sulpician communities attempting to stake out their territory, so to speak, in light of Bishop Bourget's expansionism?[28] At any rate, the location of the women's convents suggests that the nuns aligned themselves with the powerful, both secular and religious, which was perhaps appropriate given that each community, as a collective, acted in some respects like their real estate magnate and industrial baron neighbours.[29] But surely more practical considerations governed the Grey Nuns decision for a new site: more space at a

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[25]Jean-Claude Robert, *Atlas Historique de Montréal* (Montréal: Éditions Art Global - Éditions Libre Expression, 1994), 90.

[26]Young, 20, 119.

[27] The Sulpicians built their Seminary in 1854-57 and the adjacent College Montréal in 1868-71. The Congrégation Notre-Dame had purchased their Villa Maria site in 1854 and constructed a new Mother House in 1876 but it burned down the following year. It was only in 1906 that they began construction on Sherbrooke Street. Just next door they built the École Normale Jacques Cartier in 1913. The Petites Filles de St-Joseph, founded in 1857 to serve the Sulpicians, but only officially recognized as an order in 1899 (Marguerite Jean, *Évolution des Communautés Religieuses de Femmes du Québec de 1639 à nos jours* (Montréal: Fides, 1977), 104-5) also established themselves in 1910 on the corner of Sherbrooke and Atwater Streets. See CUM for comparative data on these convents. The Mont Ste-Marie nunnery, actually a boarding school operated by the CND also figured in the neighbourhood, to the south of the Grey Nuns Mother House. Originally a baptist college, this building became in 1852 St-Patrick's Hospital run by the Hospitalières de Saint-Joseph before the CND purchased it in 1860. See Lahaise, 97. It is referred to as a pensionnat (girls school) in Micheline Dumont and Nadia Fahmy-Eid, *Les Couventines : L'éducation des filles au Québec dans les congrégations religieuses enseignantes 1840-1960* (Montréal: Boréal, 1986).

[28]Although all three women's religious orders were under the bishop's jurisdiction, they also retained close links to the Sulpician priests who essentially served as confessors and advisors. Jean, 64; Gauthier, 65-6.

[29]Properties around the Mother House delineated on an 1879 map bear anglophone names: Worthington, Mullark, McDougall, Evans and Robertson, for example. Salomon de Friedberg, 28-9. Young, 143, notes that "in 1860 four large Guy Street lots were sold, all to merchants."

higher elevation. Their choice had the added advantage of proximity to the populations that they served, notably the working poor who lived below the hill in the southern section of the quarter, and in the adjacent ones—St-Henri and Ste-Cunégonde, for example—near the industrializing Lachine Canal and the railways.

The Grey Nuns did not, however, immediately erect their new headquarters. They experienced a significant delay in construction partly because the priests had leased part of the land to a John Nicholson for a five year term that began November 1, 1860, and partly because they lacked liquid capital.[30] This should not be too surprising because the religious community was engaged in many other projects during this period, such as the founding of new missions both within the greater Montréal vicinity and outside the province.[31] To obtain the required financing to buy the Mont Sainte-Croix property, the nuns relied to a great extent on their prior real estate investments. The community sold off part of their farm at Pointe-St-Charles to the Grand Trunk Railway in 1873-74, for example.[32]

Though their building would not be realized for another ten years, it appears the Grey Nuns had already begun to imagine the form of their convent. An 1859 site plan shows a pencilled diagram of a convent with overall dimensions indicated as follows:

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[30]ASGM MM hist. 472; Doc. 3, 21 fév. 1861, *Une Partie du Domaine de la Montagne ou Ferme des Prêtres, Quartier St-Antoine*--site plan on *toile*, 100': 1" scale signed by H. M. Perrault, *arpenteur provincial*--shows the farmhouse and barn on the property. The drawing delineated a wooden canal running mid site which according to the deed must be maintained until priests have built another one for their drainage purposes; the deed refers to this drawing but as dated 27 Feb. 1861. Pinard, 285, notes that nuns were in a precarious financial position in 1868.

[31]The following missions were "fondées au cours des années 1853-1863, Montréal et ses environs: Hosp. St-Joseph 1854; Maison Ste-Brigitte 1860; Asile St-Henri 1861; Asile St-Nazareth 1861; École Notre-Dame des Neiges 1863; Hospice St-Benoit 1854; Hospice LaJemmerais, Varennes 1859; Hospice St-Joseph, Beauharnois 1861. Ontario: Sandwich 1853; Amherstburg 1858; Windsor 1859. Manitoba: École St-Nobert 1858; École St-Vital 1860. Alberta: 1869 Mission du Lac Ste-Anne, transportée à St-Albert en 1863; Mission du Lac La Biche 1862. Saskatchewan: Ile-à-la-Crosse 1860." The Grey Nuns continued their foundations: "À Montréal: 1868 couvent de Bethléem; aux environs: 1868 Hospice St-Jean; 1869 Hospice S. Joseph de Chambly; au Manitoba 1869 Pensionnat Ste-Marie, Wpg: Académie Provencher, St-Boniface; 1871 Hôpital St-Boniface; aux États-Unis: 1866 Orphelinat de Salem; 1868 orphelinat de Lawrence Massachusetts." Mitchell, 14 [footnotes 4 and 6]. ASGM *Annales* 1919-20 also gives a synopsis of all the Grey Nuns' charitable works, 636-55.

[32]ASGM *Annales* 1877-80, 248; October 31, 1874 they also sold a terrain on Côte-St-Antoine, 252; and in 1890 the community profited from the sale of the last portion of the Terrain des Tanneries. Ownership of this land dated from les Frères Charon. ASGM *Annales* 1888-90, 472. Young notes in his examples of Sulpicians notarizing some of the Grey Nuns' transactions a 1850s Grand Trunk purchase, 24, 123. Pinard claims the nuns financed construction of the Mother House using profits from the sale of Îles de la Paix and the Vieux Moulin de Châteauguay built under Mère d'Youville, 285. A brief survey of notary Edouard Lafleur's actes at the ANQ between 1857 and 1863 only hints at the extent of the Grey Nuns' business transactions. Paul-André Linteau and Jean-Claude Robert discuss the power wielded by the land owning class in "Land Ownership and Society in Montreal: An Hypothesis," in *The Canadian City: Essays in Urban History*, eds. Gilbert A. Stelter and Alan F.J. Artibise (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1979), 17-36. For a discussion of the Roman Catholic Church as developer see Henry Aubin's *City for Sale* (Montréal: Éditions l'Étincelle, 1977).

length of principal facade 470', side wings 400', width of wings 45' (143.3, 121.9, and 13.7 m. respectively).[33] Its H-plan recalled the Hôtel Dieu (then under construction), though in the sketch, the chapel volume protruded from the front facade rather than towards the rear.

On March 31, 1869, the Grey Nuns' twelve administrators commissioned renowned architect Victor Bourgeau, under the condition that "pourvu toutefois que le prix fixé par le dit Architecte ne fut pas trop élevé."[34] It was not his first building on their account; the chapel for the Hospice St-Joseph in 1852, the Refuge Sainte-Brigide in 1860, the chapel and the renovation of the manoir at Chateauguay begun November 1, 1881, were also his responsibility.[35] In fact, Bourgeau became known as *the* architect of the Grey Nuns, though many women's religious communities hired the prolific architect: the Soeurs de la Miséricorde for the initial construction phases of their convent on St-Hubert (1853-84), the Congrégation Notre Dame for one wing of Villa Maria (ca. 1855), the Hospitalières de St-Joseph for the Hôtel Dieu located on Mont Sainte-Famille at avenue des Pins between du Parc and St-Urbain (1859-61), and the Soeurs de Notre-Dame du Bon Pasteur d'Angers for the addition of a public chapel to their Sherbrooke Street convent (1878). In similar fashion, contractors David and Joseph Perrault were consistently hired by religious communities for their construction projects.[36] As a phenomenon, this indicates either that the Order's patronage "made" these firms appear solid, or that the nuns consistently relied on reputable firms, often those who had had previous experience (true too of many powerful institutions). Consequently, Bourgeau, together with religious women's communities, became responsible in part for the establishment of a conventual typology in nineteenth-century Montréal, if not the province. The convent of the Soeurs de Sainte-Anne at Lachine (1871-73), for example, attributed to Théophile Paré, Maurice

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[33]ASGM Doc 2, 2 nov. 1859, *Ferme des Prêtres: Plan of Building lots for sale forming part of the property known as the priest's farm belonging to Seminary of Montreal* signed by H. M. Perrault.

[34] ASGM *Registre des affaires temporelles, Deuxième volume du 24 novembre 1853 au 23 octobre 1899, Hôpital général des Soeurs de la Charité 'Soeurs Grises' Montréal*, 37.

[35]The Grey Nuns record that Bourgeau died in their Mother House, ASGM *Annales* 1888-92, 65. But for a few scattered obituaries, such as Emile Venne's "Victor Bourgeault, architecte (1809-1888)" *L'Ordre*, 22 mars 1935, preserved in ASGM and minor entries in biographical dictionaries, precious little has been written on Bourgeau, Gauthier's dissertation excepted. Something of a monograph, hers attempts to situate the architect and his work within a socio-economic framework, although it also uses art-historical approaches. Gauthier posits that Bourgeau relied on pattern books, especially those of James Gibbs and Samuel Sloane, in conceptualizing his architectural details and designs. See her other works: "Une Pratique Architecturale au XIXe Siècle: Victor Bourgeau, 1809-1888" *ARQ - Architecture Québec*, 41 (février 1988); *Construire une Église au Québec: l'Architecture Religieuse avant 1939* (Montréal: Éditions Libre Expression, 1994). Partial lists of the architect's commissions can be found in Gauthier's "Victor Bourgeau," 337; *ARQ*, 16; and CUM.

[36]Contractors David and Joseph Perrault had worked with Bourgeau on the Hôtel Dieu, CUM, 188-195.

Perrault and Albert Mesnard, borrows the architectural language of the Grey Nuns' Mother House, the model *par excellence*.[37]

Nineteenth-century Québec architects commonly borrowed from already constructed buildings and drew inspiration from numerous pattern books and engravings that circulated throughout the province, often of American and British origin.[38] These practices seemed rooted in the eighteenth-century development of the profession.

> The new builder-contractors [of the 1700s] were not just distinguished by the size of their undertakings; they were skilled professionals with a knowledge of classical design and complex building transactions. An ability to draw measured plans on paper earned them the title of 'architecte'. For the traditional artisan builder and his clients, memory and the houses of the neighbourhood provided their architectural models. We have seen examples of contracts in which the builder was directed to reproduce a form or detail of an existing structure. For the large masonry contractors, guidance in design came from books and engravings.[39]

Victor Bourgeau himself and other contemporary Québec architects, Thomas Baillargé (1791-1859) and Charles Baillargé (1826-1906) for example, belonged to "the last Québécois generation trained in the old manner through apprenticeship to an older craftsmaster."[40] Bourgeau apprenticed with his uncle, a carpenter and a joiner, and later with the renowned Quévillon atelier; he learned stone construction only afterwards, in Montréal. Bourgeau lacked no models on which to base his design for the Mother House as "Nos édifices conventuels, ceux de la fin de siècle passé, peut-être parmi les plus riches de notre histoire montréalaise, conservent encore l'esprit et parfois la forme de nos premiers couvents, du temps de la nouvelle France."[41]

Haberer's engraving seems to have represented the climax of an involved design process as Bourgeau's original 1868 site plan of the Mother House of the Grey Nuns differed significantly.[42] His initial conception of the convent, tinted pink on this approximately 45"x 60" (114.3 x 152.4 cm.) drawing, incorporated two stair towers within the church structure. An exquisite ink and wash elevation also depicts the chapel

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[37]CUM, xx-xxi.

[38]Gauthier, "Victor Bourgeau" and *Construire*; Maitland, 32-4. See Dell Upton "Pattern Books and Professionalism: Aspects of the Transformation of Domestic Architecture in America, 1800-1860" *Winterthur Portfolio* vol. 19 no. 2-3 (summer-autumn 1984): 107-150, on the use of pattern books and the development of the American architectural profession.

[39]Moogk, 88-9.

[40]Alan Gowans, *Looking at Architecture in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1958), 93. For works on Charles Baillargé see Christina Cameron, *Charles Baillargé: Architect and Engineer* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989); and Caron.

[41]CUM, xix; Caron, 37, further suggests that the Grey Nuns adopted the general template of Maison Mère d'Youville for their new Mother House.

[42]ASGM MM 1190 rue Guy Doc. 4 *Plan Général de l'Hôpital Général des Soeurs Grises, Victor Bourgeau architecte 1868*. The outside of the roll is labelled "Plan Général du terrain de la Croix Rouge."

front with two spires (Figure 2.5), recalling John Ostell's facade for Notre Dame Basilica (1841-43), in addition to other Bourgeau twin steeple churches like Saint-Louis-de-Gonzague (1857) or Église de Lavaltrie (1869). But this elaborate vision of the convent, evidently, did not materialize.

In reworking his design (which closely corresponds to the actual building) Bourgeau streamlined the architectural features, especially those in the facade. He proposed a single steeple, as evidenced by a second, revised elevation signed by Bourgeau and Leprohon (Figure 2.6).[43] In addition, the architect simplified the ornate tripartite arched windows originally proposed for the chapel and gable ends. They had previously comprised a taller centre light sandwiched by two smaller ones according to his 1868 elevation. Instead, he changed them to a uniform height. Bourgeau also modified the overall fenestration: the arched window openings on the initial drawings were replaced by the plainer, rectangular frames that we see today. Perhaps these decisions were motivated by the religious community's financial constraints.[44] It appears, then, that the architect's original design was too ostentatious for the Grey Nuns.[45] However, when proposed two alternative designs for the single church spire, the nuns specified the more elaborate (Figure 2.7).

Bourgeau not only revised the elevations, but made important modifications in the plans. A mortuary chamber appended to the side of the chapel and water closets attached as pavilions to the rear interior faces of the *aile des pauvres*, for example, were crossed out in pencil on the architect's inked ground floor plan conserved in the Grey Nuns' archives (Figure 2.8). Though it is presently impossible to determine who actually made these pencil marks, the appendages to the convent were not built.[46] The architect also substituted the exterior stairs at either street entrance with enclosed *portiques*. These types of alterations could have resulted from negotiations between three different parties: architect,

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[43] The revised drawing is later in date because of Étienne-Alcibade Leprohon's signature. This architect twice worked in partnership with Bourgeau beginning 23 Jan. 1869-29 May 1877 and Aug. 8, 1880-Mar. 1, 1888 (end of Bourgeau's career and life). Only Bourgeau signed the earlier 1868 site plan. That Bourgeau, who normally worked alone, needed an assistant alludes to the enormity of the undertaking. Raymonde Gauthier reports that Bourgeau retained the prestigious Mother House project as his own commission, preferring that Leprohon assist in the firm's other accounts, especially during the second period of their association, when Bourgeau' s health began to fail. See her "Victor Bourgeau," 186; "Une Pratique Architecturale," 15; and *Construire*, 164-5, 166-7.

[44] Bourgeau himself contributed monies to realize certain details. His donation of 1000 *piastres* was slated to help defray the cost of church windows. See ASGM *Annales* 1887-80, 259.

[45] The Grey Nuns' habit, too, rejected monastic trappings--veil, guimpe, and coiffe. Instead, their costume consisted of a heavy grey dress with a black bonnet. Its pragmatism, like that of their building, was imbued with Mère d'Youville's charismatic humility. See Albertine Ferland-Angers, *Mère d'Youville: Première Fondatrice Canadienne*, 2d ed., (Montréal: Centre Marguerite-d'Youville, 1977), 138, for description of habit and other examples of the nuns' modesty.

[46] In 1910, however, a fumoir was added as an attached pavilion to the rear interior face of the *aile des pauvres*.

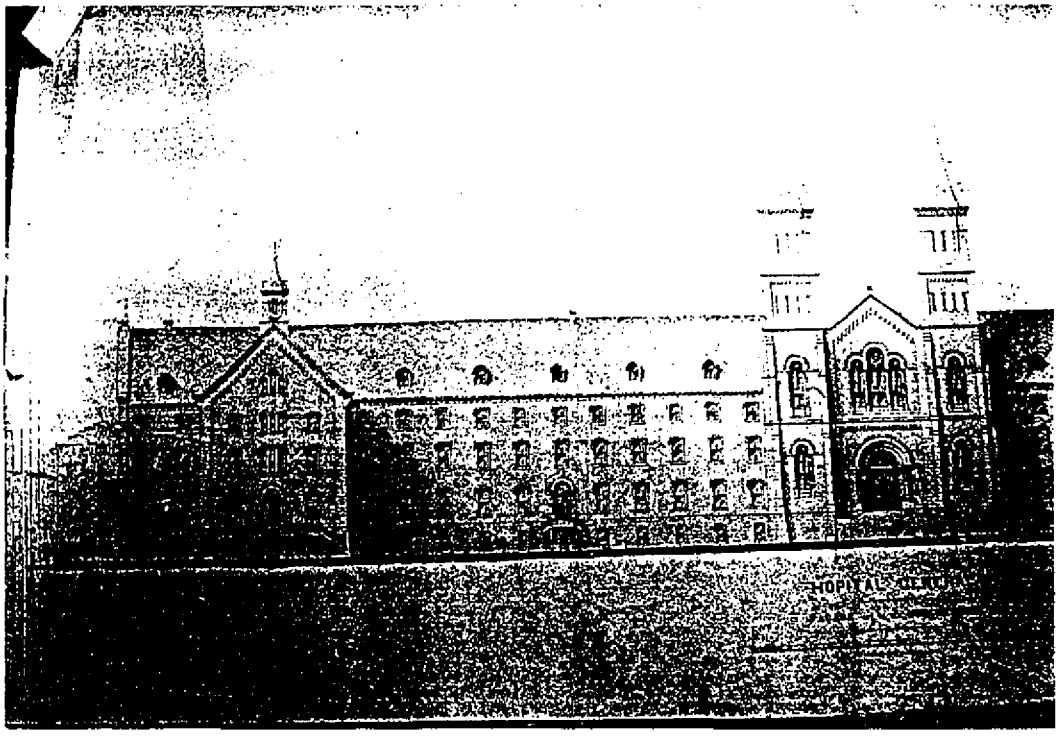

Figure 2.5. Victor Bourgeau's façade for the Mother House of the Grey Nuns, 1868. Source: ASGM MM 1190 rue Guy Doc. 5(d) "Hôpital Général façade sur la rue Dorchester."

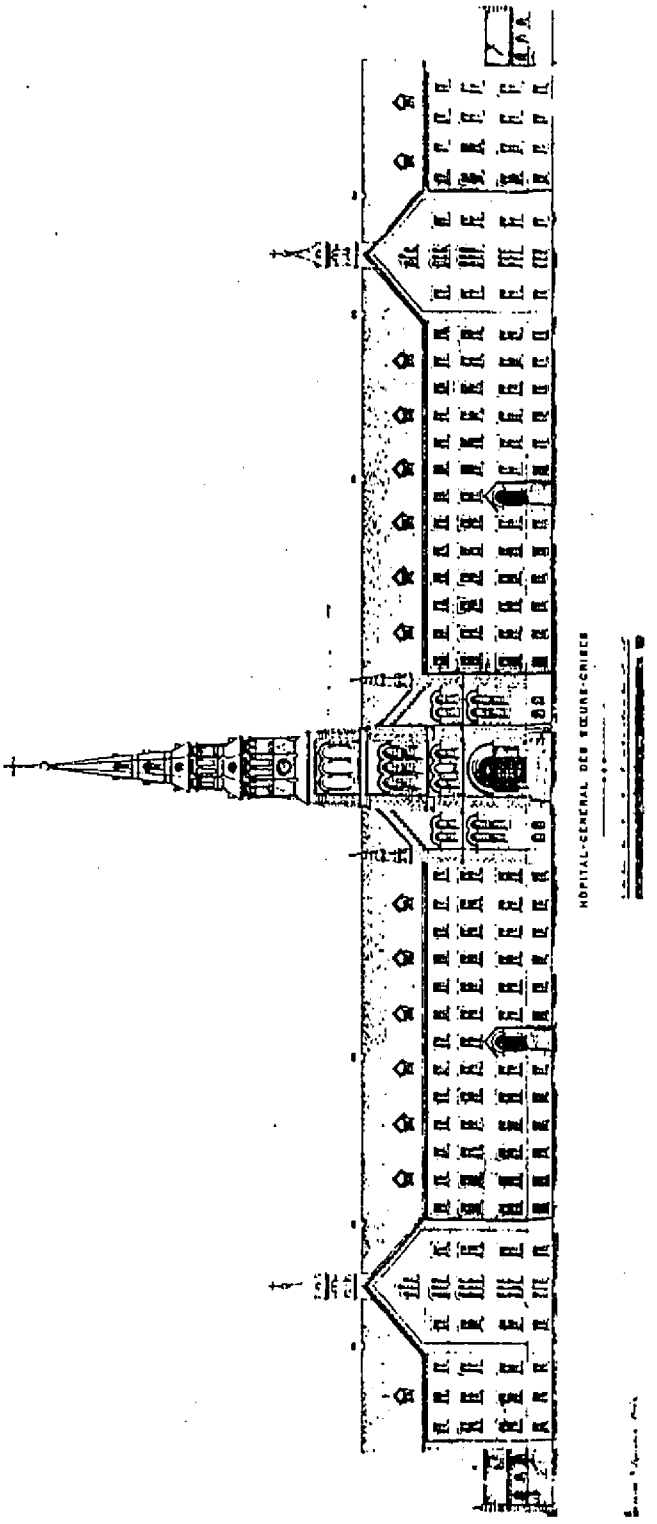

Figure 2.6. Revised façade of the Mother House of the Grey Nuns, 1869. Source: Reproduced from Salomon de Friedberg, 39. (original: ASGM MM 1190 rue Guy Doc. 1)

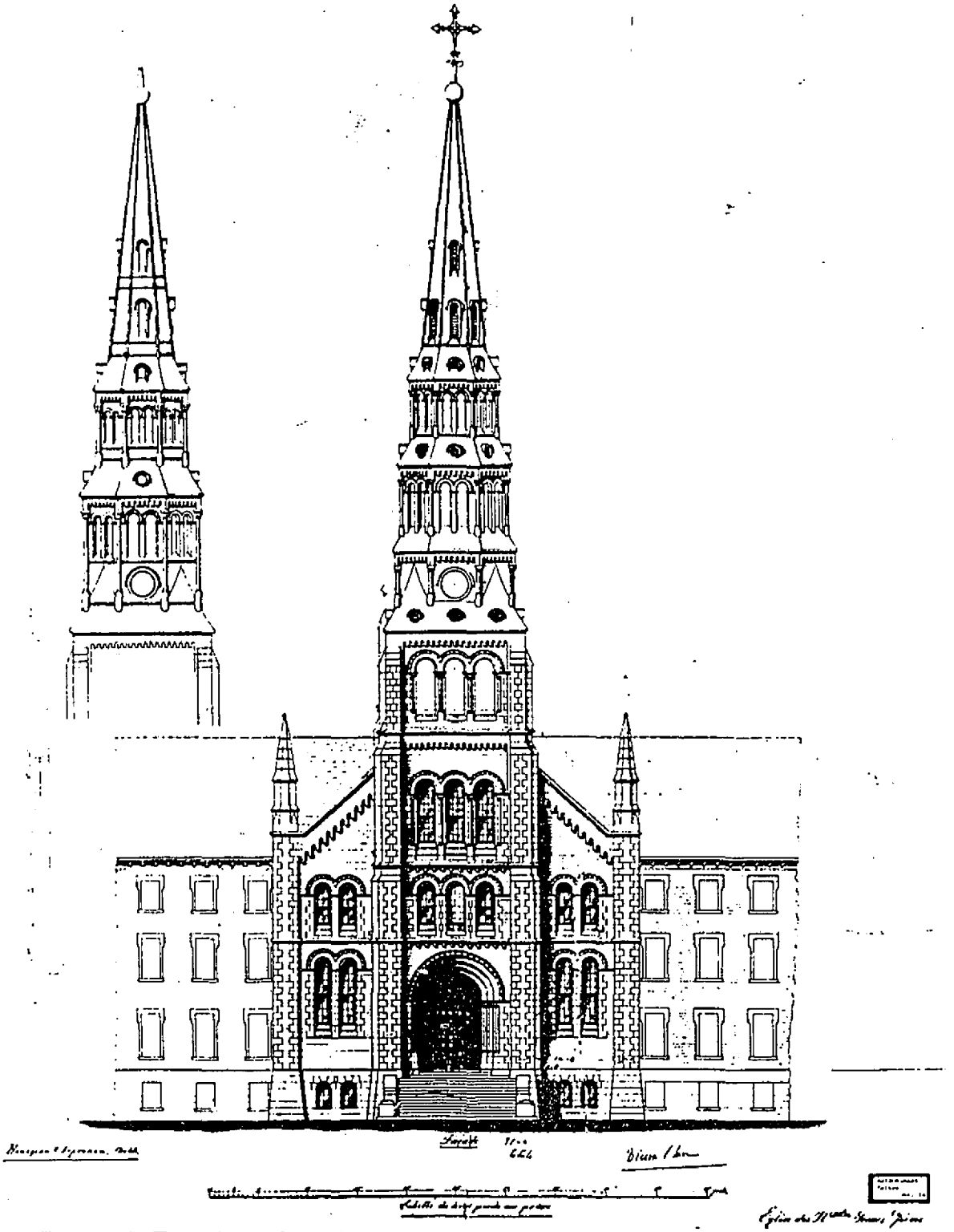

Figure 2.7. Two alternative spires proposed by Bourgeau. Source: Reproduced from Salomon de Friedberg, 41 (original: ASGM Maison-Mère Église Doc. 1b).

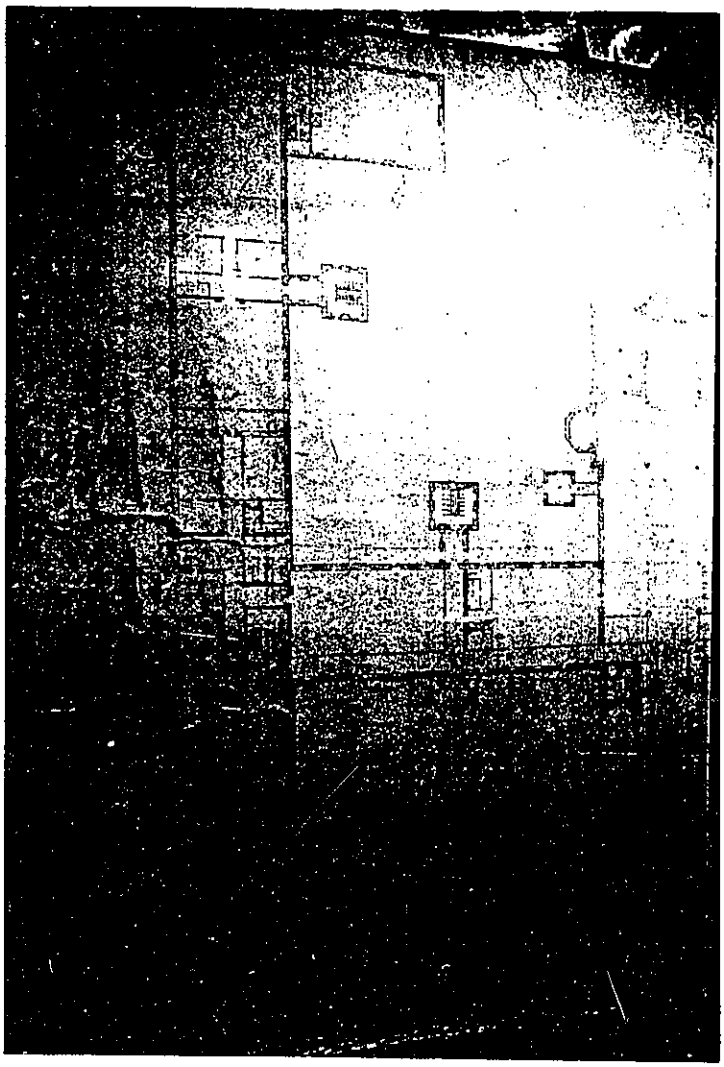

Figure 2.8. Victor Bourgeau's ground floor plan with pencil marks of unknown authorship. Source: ASGM MM 1190 rue Guy Doc. 5(a) "Plan Général 1er étage."

client and contractor. But careful comparisons between the architect's original drawings, as-built plans and the extant building reveal even more inconsistencies. The dimensions changed from the 48' (14.6 m.) width originally proposed to the 50' (15.2 m.) actually built, for instance. The number of windows (on each floor level, back and front) in the portions on either side of the chapel increased from eleven to thirteen. Windows were also added to other wings: two in the *aile de la communauté* and six in the *aile des ateliers.* Consequently, the latter was lengthened from 210' to 240' (from 64 to 73.2 m.). The *lavoir,* too, increased 10' (3 m.) in length.[47] Decisions of this kind must have reverted to the religious community. Their choice of a larger, plainer building might have reflected a different set of priorities (presumably governed by pragmatism) than the architect's own intentions.

Apparently architectural plans were to be submitted and ratified by the bishop. The Sulpicians, however, contested the bishop's authority over this customary stipulation in reserving for themselves the issuance of approvals for construction projects costing over 300 pounds undertaken by the Congrégation Notre-Dame. Their power presumably extended over the Grey Nuns and the Hospitalières de St-Joseph as well.[48] Neither the Bishop nor the Sulpicians subsidized construction. The Grey Nuns themselves, rather, fully underwrote their own projects. By limiting stylistic innovation to a few ornamental details the religious community ensured that costs came in within their budget. The nuns certainly could not afford to build cathedrals, and besides, their priorities lay with aiding the poor.

Nevertheless, as patrons of architecture, the nuns took initiative in shaping their environment. "Il faudrait aussi que la Supérieure de la Providence se trouvat sur les lieux avec quelque-unes de ses soeurs pour dire à l'architecte ce qui pourrait leur convenir pour mieux faire les oeuvres."[49] This excerpt of a letter dated 1862, addressed by Monseigneur Bourget to a parish priest, further substantiates that nuns themselves dictated their needs (on site no less!). Even the Grey Nuns note some of their own Soeurs supervising construction sites.[50] In fact, in 1868, Soeur Marie Julie Hainault *dits* Deschamps was "chargée, à titre d'assistante, de la construction de la Maison Mère, rue Guy" and during

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[47]ASGM MM 1190 rue Guy Doc. 5(a); Doc. 4.; Doc. 5(d); 76 (a-e); ASGM *Détails Historiques concernant les plans de la maison mère primitive et de l'actuelle, cahier A*; *Relève des plans 1ère maison mère (1765-1871) maison mère actuelle (1871-1909); Cahier B.* Because of limited access to meeting minutes etc. this analysis is somewhat reduced to speculation and deduction. Apparently some decisions were not recorded, but remained verbal.

[48]Gauthier "Victor Bourgeau," 64-5.

[49]Gauthier, "Victor Bourgeau," 93.

[50]Early examples of Grey Nuns as construction supervisors can be found in Fauteux, 200, 210, 310, 322.

her term as Mother Superior she followed "de près l'achèvement de la chapelle qu'érige l'architecte Victor Bourgeau et les maçons Perrault sur le terrain 'boueux' de la Maison Mère."[51]

Construction of the complex began with the first delivery of stone on December 16, 1868, and stretched over a period of some thirty years, each phase or wing of the Mother House initiated as funds became available, or the need for more space became too great. In pursuing large projects such as this one, the Grey Nuns regularly invoked their patron saint for support. On January 13, 1869, for instance, the community made a pact with St. Joseph for money for the new construction amounting to 50,000 dollars in exchange for 50,000 acts of virtue. The Deed for the Mont St-Croix site was also signed in the nuns' residence on the fête de St-Joseph. On February 1, 1873, in anticipation of the church construction, the nuns made another pact, promising to support (*nourrir*) three families in Saint-Joseph's honor and to give food to any destitute person that knocked on their door in exchange for the necessary funds. Such promises acted as an incentive, mobilizing the community to work as a collective.[52] Different phases of construction, however, were associated with different Mothers Superior (Figure 2.9).[53]

The first phase, under the supervision of Mère Slocombe, entailed the construction of the eastern wing along Guy Street. Comprised of several rectangular blocks—*portique* 22'x20' (6.7 x 6.1 m.); intersection 50'x50' (15.2 x 15.2 m.); facade Dorchester 140'x50' (42.7 x 15.2 m.); *aile de la communauté* 132'x50' (40.2 x 15.2 m.); *aile des ateliers* 240'x50' (73.2 x 15.2 m.); *aile du lavoir* 80'x50' (24.4 x 15.2 m.)—the plan resembles a reverse F. A number of ancillary structures had preceded construction of the convent itself. Located in the rear, towards the corner of Guy and Ste-Catherine Streets, these included a cowshed 92'x30' (28 x 9.1 m.), a stable 100'x20' (30.5 x 6.1 m.), a *remise* (shed) 175'x35' (53.3 x 10.7 m.), and a *hangar* 160'x18' (48.8 x 5.5 m.) (shed without walls akin to a lean to, which also sheltered a forge). A rubble stone, double-storey *maison des engagés* also housed a bakery. This building measured 104'x36' (31.7 x 11 m.), a typical size for city houses of the epoch.[54] The religious community took possession of their new Hôpital Général on October 7, 1871, the day following its benediction.

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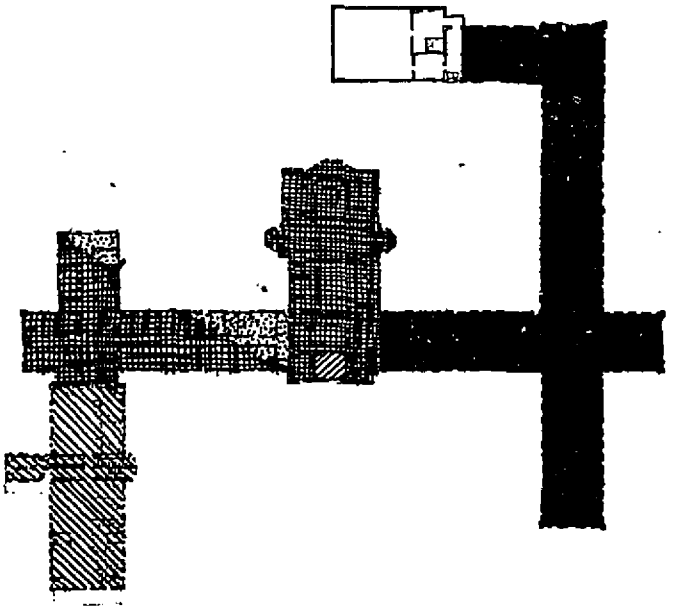
[51]Mère Deschamps also held other important administrative positions such as Supérieure Locale and Économe, Mitchell, 20, 23.

[52]It was signed by the Mother Superior, General Assistant, Assistant, and the Depositor on behalf of the community, and approved by the confessor of the community M.C. Bonnissant Superior, ASGM *Annales* 1877-80, 247; ASGM *Détails Historiques, 3e volume: maison mère rue Guy constructions etc. 1861-1909,* iv.

[53]Dates and dimensions are compiled from ASGM archival documents unless otherwise noted. CUM also documents construction phases, see 94-101.

[54]Pinard, 289-90, points out that the *maison des engagés* followed the city house template (*gabarit*) but gives 125'x30' as its dimensions.



terms of office	Mothers Superior	Construction Phase
1867-72	Mère Mary Jane Slocombe	1868-71
1872-77	Mère Elisabeth Dupuis	1874-78
1877-87	Mère Julie Hainault *dits* Deschamps	1887-88
1887-92	Mère Praxède Filiatrault	1890
1892-96	Mère Julie Hainault *dits* Deschamps	1898-1901
1897-1902	Mère Praxède Filiatrault	1901-1904
1902-07	Mère Mathilde Hamel	

Figure 2.9. General plan showing stages of construction. Source: Author, data compiled from ASGM *Détails Historiques concernant les plans de la maison mère primitive et de l'actuelle, cahier A*; *Relève des plans 1ère maison mère (1765-1871) maison mère actuelle (1871-1909) Cahier B.*

The building of the church began April 8, 1874; it was under construction at the time of the engraving's publication. One month later the nuns initiated the *aile des pauvres* to the west of the chapel. In 1879 they suspended work on this wing, though the ground and first floors were ready for occupation. Meanwhile, on December 1, 1878, the community celebrated their first mass in their newly consecrated chapelle de l'Invention de la Sainte-Croix.[55] Mère Elisabeth Dupuis oversaw this second building phase.

During the third phase, Mère Deschamps again supervised construction of the Mother House. In 1886, she had the *aile du cuisine des pauvres* built and the following March 17, 1887, she had construction resume on the three remaining storeys of the *aile des pauvres*. The nuns moved into this western portion of the building after its benediction on May 31, 1888. Ten years later, in 1898, work started on the final phase, supervised by Mère Praxène Filiatrault. By 1899, the first and ground floors of the orphanage were ready and the entire wing bordering St-Mathieu was completed October 1, 1901, an occasion marked by its benediction.[56]

As the *Canadian Illustrated News* article indicated, the Mother House of the Grey Nuns was projected to be the largest of its day; it covered an area of 84,380 square feet (7838.9 m.^{2}).[57] The overall dimensions of this monumental, five-storey building were impressive. Generous floor-to-floor heights were 14' and 15' (4.3 and 4.6 m.) in the first and second storeys. The convent's east-west facade parallel to Dorchester measured 573' (174.7 m.); the perpendicular wings along St-Mathieu and Guy Streets measured 308' and 436' (93.9 and 132.9 m.) respectively (including galleries); and the rear laundry (lavoir/chaufferie) block measured 182' (55.5 m.).[58] Other major, contemporary Montréal institutions, such as the Hôtel Dieu and the Royal Victoria Hospital, had yet to reach this scale. The Mother House was almost twice as large as the Hôtel Dieu which in 1886 covered an area of 46,850 square feet (4352.4 m.^{2}). By around 1902, the Hôtel Dieu had grown by approximately 8000 square feet (743.2 m.^{2}), thus totaling 54,850 square feet (5095.6 m.^{2}), or approximately two thirds the size of the Mother House at the turn of the century.[59]

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[55]The chapel and the site, Mont Ste-Croix, are named in remembrance of the legendary murders of 1752, commemorated by the red cross at the corner of Guy and René-Lévesque, Salomon de Friedberg, 19.

[56]The crèche, however, was completed only in 1902, ASGM *Annales* 1902-3, 103-4.

[57]Pinard, 284. CUM, however, gives the historic building area as 13 512 m^2.

[58]ASGM *Détails Historiques concernant les plans de la maison mère primitive et de l'actuelle, cahier A* and *Relève des plans 1ère maison mère (1765-1871) maison mère actuelle (1871-1909)*, both by Soeur St-Jean de la Croix. The laundry block was extended in 1888 and 1902. Pinard's dimensions on p.287-- 572' (174.3 m.) Dorchester, 312' (95.1 m.) Guy, 452' (137.8 m.) St-Mathieu, 180' (54.9 m.) lavoir--vary slightly.

[59]Calculations for the area of the Hôtel Dieu circa 1900 are extrapolated from a dimensioned plan of 1863 on display at the Musée des Hospitalières de St-Joseph in Montréal; CUM give the area of the historic buildings circa 1950) as 40 503 m^2, 188.

The Grey Nuns' simple, well-proportioned convent is bereft of ornamentation (Figure 2.10). Rough-faced Montréal grey stone (*pierre grise bouchardée*), a hard dark grey limestone and a popular, local building material, perhaps metaphorically alludes to the name of this important Order.[60] The stone's roughness contrasts with the ashlar reserved for window framing and corner detailing which relieves the austerity of the fortress-like facade. The military associations of the external appearance were probably not lost on the nuns. Maison Mère d'Youville, for instance, built in response to the pioneering conditions of habitant settlement was once mistaken for big fort by invading troops during the English-French-American-Indian wars of the eighteenth century.[61] Only the convent walls facing the public domain and the church (built in the round), however, are of dressed grey stone. The use of field stone in rear interior walls, allowed for economic savings. Front elevations were considered the most important because they were in public view, so cheaper finishes were limited to less exposed elevations.

Central tripartite arched windows (unique to the gable ends), in recalling the similarly grouped windows in the church facade, expressed a typically religious vocabulary in the Mother House elevations. These special windows generally denoted communal spaces—such as the refectory, the community room, and dormitories—or the termination of hallways. The remaining repetitive, uniformly spaced fenestration reflected roughly ten foot structural bays and otherwise revealed little of the rooms' internal functions. Unlike Victorian houses, where characteristic bay windows and decorative architectural elements in the facade distinguished and personalized one's individual identity to the outside world, the convent walls projected religious conformity and collective anonymity. This texturing echoed precisely the social configurations within the organization of the community. The massing of the convent clearly suggests a public, institutional building: static and secure.

The Mother House, then, as a physical intervention of monumental scale in the growing industrial city, represented a deliberate assertion of the nuns, a concrete manifestation of their individual and collective efforts. While Haberer's engraving reinforced this reading, it also leads to some misperceptions. The solid stone wall, broken only by an entry arch that frames the allée to the chapel, completely cloistered the community from the outside world. As depicted, however, it may have given an erroneous impression to nineteenth-century Canadians, as the Grey Nuns actively conducted their

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[60]Phyllis Lambert and Robert Lemire of the Groupe de Recherche sur la Pierre Grise à Montréal, in *Inventaire des bâtiments du Vieux Montréal, de Quartier At-Antoine et de la ville de Maisonneuve construits entre 1880-1915* (Québec: Direction général du patrimoine, Inventaire des biens culturels, Centre de documentation, 1977), inventoried such grey stone buildings, characteristic of Montréal architecture.

[61]Fauteux, 218-9; Ferland-Angers, 146.

Figure 2.10. Mother House circa 1898, note the orphan's wing under construction.
Source: ASGM Photos "Maison Mère - Guy 1F extérieure avant 1900."

business in Montréal, visiting needy people in their homes for instance.[62] In reality, the wooden fence built in March 1872, soon after the first stage of construction, though it may have represented symbolic enclosure, merely fulfilled conditions outlined in the purchase contract. The deed set out standard guidelines that restricted buildings to private residential use. It further mandated that properties be enclosed with a fence and planted with trees along Guy and Dorchester Streets.[63] Photos taken at the turn of the century portray the gardens of other estates as enclosed with fences and heavily treed (Figure 2.11).

The Haberer illustration is also particularly revealing because it not only lies in sharp contrast to the situation which really existed at the convent, but also illustrates contemporary perceptions of the Mother House (or even the aspirations of the nuns themselves). Although well-maintained and deliberately planned, the convent grounds were not constructed as an ornamental park as suggested by the 1875 engraving. Instead, the nuns converted their property into a productive agricultural landscape. Photographs taken circa 1910 reveal the rear of the Mont Sainte-Croix site as a farmstead (Figure 2.12). Fences divided the cultivated fields into different sections and wooden poles supported young trees in extensive orchards. Another photograph circa 1930 shows several nuns in vegetable gardens.[64] This land probably did not provide for the community throughout the year. It yielded, however, fresh produce during the summer months. The farms on their rural properties supplied the bulk of winter provisions.

Other religious communities also farmed in central Montréal. The Hospitalières de St-Joseph of the Hôtel Dieu, for example, kept a small vegetable plot and an herb garden from which they concocted pharmaceuticals and medicines.[65] The Sulpicians, established on the lower slopes of Mount Royal, also cultivated vast apple orchards and vegetable gardens whose production "was consumed in the Collège and the Grand Séminaire while excess potatoes were sold to the Grey Nuns."[66]

Farming comprised only one strategy that the nuns had at their disposal to supplement the community's earnings. Two houses on the corner of Guy and Ste-Catherine, acquired with the property, subsequently generated rental income. The religious community capitalized on commercial expansion on Ste-Catherine Street by building two

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[62]Charles Dickens *Notes on America* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1842), 77, in his travels to Montréal, noted that "There were...Sisters of Charity in the village streets."

[63]ASGM MM hist. 472. In 1880 a stone wall and iron grill replaced the wooden fence in Avenue de l'église, ASGM *Détails Historiques concernant les plans de la maison mère primitive et de l'actuelle, cahier A*, Sr. Saint Jean de la Croix.

[64] ASGM, *Album Souvenir*, 1930; photos "maison-mère--Guy extérieur avant 1900"; and additional photos of the convent conserved in the Notman Collection at the McCord Museum of Canadian History, Montréal.

[65]Display at the Musée des Hospitalières de St-Joseph.

[66]This was true even in the 1850s; Young, 64.

Figure 2.11. Grey Nuns' (community) garden looking out onto Dorchester Boulevard circa 1900. Notice neighbouring estates are also fenced and heavily treed. Source: ASGM Photos "Maison Mère - Guy 14D extérieure Dépendances."

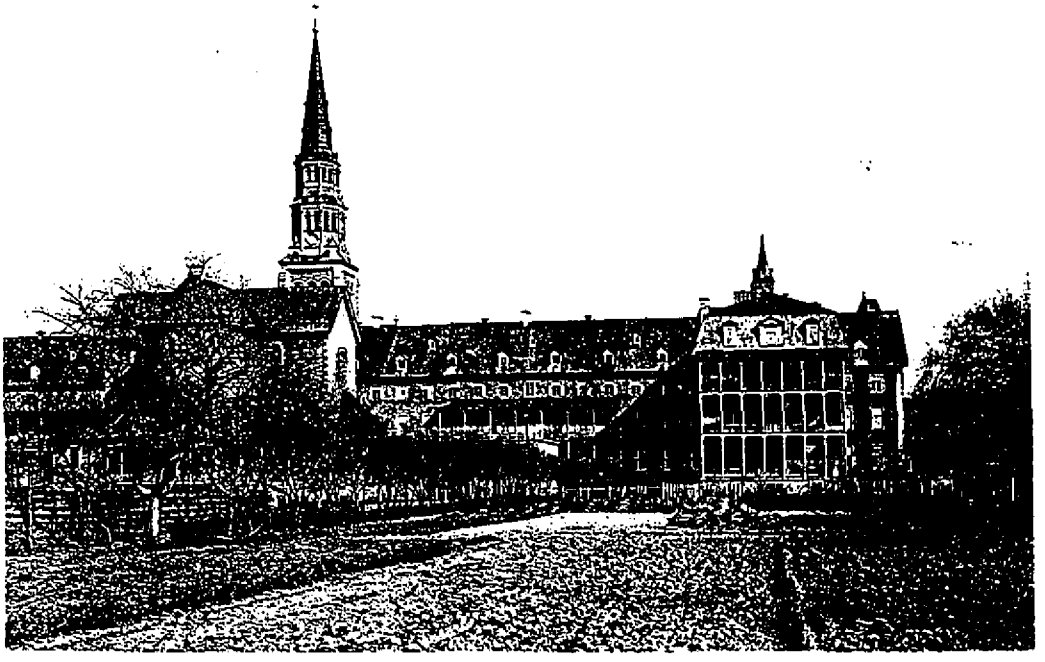

Figure 2.12. Productive gardens behind the Mother House. Source: ASGM (photo album) *Hôpital Général des Soeurs Grises, 390 Rue Guy, Montréal* (1910), published by Librairie Beauchemin Limitée.

stores in 1903, which they in turn leased for $50 and $40 per month.[67] A third store was erected three years later, perhaps because their first efforts proved so profitable. These numerous business transactions may seem contradictory to religious women's vow of poverty, yet they demonstrate the ingenious lengths the nuns went to assure their livelihood, in addition to that of their charges. If counted among the wealthiest in Montréal, it was thanks to their collective efforts and the use of survival strategies not dissimilar to those employed by working-class families: letting rooms to boarders, cultivating land, raising livestock, and taking in work such as sewing.[68]

These activities, however, did not always endear the Grey Nuns to their profit-oriented neighbours. In March of 1907, for example, the acting mayor of Montréal (Henry Archer Eckers (1855-1907) who had been elected mayor for the 1906-1908 term, died February 1, 1907)[69] ordered the Mother Superior to relocate their stables and cows. Apparently the storekeepers had insisted that the city was not the place to keep such large farm animals, complaining that the stables reeked and were otherwise unsanitary. Perturbed, the Mother Superior immediately invited a team of prominent doctors and other officials to tour the Mother House and to visit their *oeuvres,* to dispel the mayor's misperceptions and prejudice. Happily, the order was rescinded. The incident, recounted in their annals, provoked this response:

> Pourquoi ces voisins que nos animaux incommodent tant ne cherchent-ils pas un autre site, d'autres lieux pour y vivre et exercer leur commerce? Tout simplement parce que l'endroit leur convient, qu'ils trouvent leur profit. Eh bien, ces chers orphelins, ces bons pauvres que notre maison abrite, n'ont-ils pas le droit de répliquer à leur tour: vous pouvez gagner votre pain ailleurs; pour nous notre choix est très restreint, ce n'est pas en tous lieux que nous sommes admis. La douce Providence nous a ménagé ici un asile: ne le jalousez pas; ne nous y molestez pas.[70]

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[67]ASGM MM 1190 rue Guy Doc. 11, Sr. Saint Jean de la Croix. A horse-drawn tramway on Guy Street functioned from as early as 1862, and an 1872 map shows Ste-Catherine Street to be lined with buildings up to Drummond Street, west of which development is still spotty. By 1900 Ste-Catherine Street had transformed into a vibrant commercial strip. Paul-André Linteau, *Histoire de Montréal depuis la Confédération* (Montréal: Boréal, 1992), 131-3; Robert, 117.

[68]Bettina Bradbury *Working Families: Age, Gender and Daily Survival in Industrializing Montreal,* The Canadian Social History Series (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Inc., 1993) analyzes working-class family survival strategies in Montréal. Ellen Ross, *Love and Toil: Motherhood in Outcast London 1870-1918* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993) is a similar study of England.

[69]Claude V. Marsolais, Luc Desrochers, and Robert Cameau, *Histoire des Maires de Montréal* (Montréal: vlb Éditeur, 1993), 9.

[70]ASGM *Annales* 1906-08, 240-1. This site seems to have been envied for its location bordering the busy, commercial Ste-Catherine Street. Already in the 1920s the nuns offered the northern portion of their site for lease and sale, from meeting with Sr. Morneau. In the 1970s development proposals for the site abounded, for instance, see Valorinvest Inc. pictured in Pinard, 295. The nuns purchased Ferme St-Charles in Côte de Liesse (226 *arpents*) July 19, 1907, with the intent of moving orphans and enfants trouvées out into the countryside.

The Grey Nuns devised many fundraising strategies for the financing of building projects, such as lotteries and bazaars. The "Grand Lottery, To aid in the completion of the Hospital for the Aged and Infirm Poor, of The Grey Nuns of Montréal, under his Patronage of His Lordship, the R.C. Bishop of Montréal" was actually delayed until January 16, 1879, because several Orders were competing for the same resources. The "Committee of Direction" comprised of anglophones and francophones had already begun organizing the lottery January 25, 1876. The lottery announcement, printed in both English and French, attempted to interest Montréal society in $10,120.00 value in prizes. No less than 13 plots of land, specified on a site plan, were offered as major prizes. One "valuable lot of land 45'x120' (13.7 x 36.6 m.) with a handsome stone residence valued at 1200.00," whose front and side elevations adorned the inside faces of the leaflet, seemed particularly enticing.[71]

The Grey Nuns depended, too, on the generosity and good will of their donors. As a Catholic institution they catered primarily to French-speaking Canadians and English-speaking Irish-Canadians, although like other large institutions in Montréal, both religious and secular, the Grey Nuns generally cared for anyone in need, regardless of nationality or creed.[72] A significant number of women within religious communities were English speaking: at least two formed part of the Grey Nuns' administrative ranks during the period under study, Soeurs Mary Jane Slocombe and Elizabeth Forbes-McMullen.[73] The election of a bilingual administrative council indicates political shrewdness on the part of the community. The nuns garnered support from both the wealthy anglophone community and francophone Montrealers.[74]

Familial relations also played an important role in the religious community's support network. Of "Madame Anne-Marie Tiffin, soeur de Marguerite Devins, Soeur Grise, devenue veuve le 21 octobre 1881,...les soeurs annalistes insciront inlassablement

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[71]ASGM *Annales* 1877-1880, 254, 287-90. Other prizes included "a double action harp, handsomely gilt, valued at $400," "a beautiful gold bracelet, set in diamonds, valued at $100," and "a strong useful horse, valued at $100," among other lots that consisted of various articles, a bronze statue, a gold watch, or a lace shawl, for example. The "regular agents," many of whom listed prestigious Notre-Dame Street addresses, sold the tickets advertised in flyers at 50¢ each or 5 for $2.00. 100,000 tickets sold at 50¢ each translated to $50,000.

[72]Large wooden commemorative plaques recorded patients according to their ethnic origin, on display at the Musée des Hospitalières de St-Joseph, attest to this, as do the Grey Nuns' annals.

[73]Mitchell, *L'essor*, 13, states Mère Mary Jane Slocombe was born in England in 1819 and converted to Catholicism during the Oxford Movement before immigrating to Canada in 1836. She joined the Grey Nuns four years later. See also Estelle Mitchell, s.g.m. *Mère Jane Slocombe, 1819-72* (Montréal: Fides, 1964). For other English speaking members see the yearly "*Statistiques*" kept in the ASGM *Annales*.

[74]Linteau, chap. 9, suggests that Anglo-Montrealers gave to their own charitable institutions the lion's share of donations. Nevertheless, the Soeurs Grises listed prominent figures, such as James McGill, as generous benefactors, see ASGM *Annales* 1877-1880, 255.

les prodigalités de cette humble dame, voulant à tout prix conserver l'anonymat." This widow made innumerable gifts to the Grey Nuns during her lifetime as did her brother, Monsieur Richard Devins. His generous benevolence made possible the construction of the church tower, the tallest in Montréal when constructed in 1890.[75] Brother and sister both lived at the Mother House as pensioners and both insisted on anonymity with their donations. People who contributed moneys or goods in kind implicated themselves in a larger societal process as the religious women's collective efforts, teamed with private donations, ensured the maintenance of the city's less fortunate inhabitants. Not surprisingly, the nuns kept a running list of donors in acknowledgment.[76]

The *Hôpital Général* became a pilgrimage site for benefactors and turn of the century tourists alike. Postcards and "Stereoscopic and lantern slides of places of interest" as advertised by Parks' Photo Studio in Montréal evinced the Mother House's status as an historic landmark (Figure 2.13).[77] Descriptions of the "Grey Nunnery" promoted its inclusion as a contemporary tourist site of the city, as published in traveler's and hotel guides.[78] Dignitaries, such as Princess Louise (Duchess of Argyll) and the Governor General (Marquis de Lorne, John Douglas Sutherland Campbell), toured the Mother House on several occasions. On May 28, 1879, the royal guests obtained the rare privilege of visiting the nuns' dormitory, a part of the cloister normally inaccessible to the public. Possibly capitalizing on the publicity that such official visits generated, the nuns published 5000 copies of *Reminiscence of my Visit to the Grey Nunnery*. Written in English the same year as Princess Louise's second tour of October 16, 1883, the sale of these booklets formed part of Monsieur Richard Devins' fundraising campaign for the *autel Père Éternel,* one of the church altars.[79]

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[75]ASGM *Détails Historiques concernant les plans de la maison mère primitive et de l'actuelle, cahier A*; Mitchell, *L'essor*, 44, 48, 113; Penelope D. Johnson, *Equal in Monastic Profession: Religious Women in Medieval France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991) observed the importance of family networks in French medieval nunneries.

[76]ASGM *Annales* 1881-83, 587; 1919-20, 216.

[77]Some Parks' Studio "stereoscopic" photos are conserved in ASGM. Another engraving signed by Walker was also in circulation, perhaps it sold as small cards: ASGM "Maison Mère Guy 1G extérieur avant 1900."

[78]See for example *The Windsor Hotel Guide to the City of Montreal: with a shopping index and directory* (Montreal, n.p. [1898]), microfiche.

[79]ASGM *Annales* 1877-1880, 353; 1881-83, 571, 652. The nuns recounted major events such as the royal visits for the benefit of their members posted in missions outside of the Mother House. Called successively *Circulaire Mensuelle* (1877-1902), *Circulaire Bimestrielle* (1902-1917), then *Annales* (1917-), they acted as newsletters which circulated between the missions and the Mother House. Notice that *Reminiscence* targetted specifically anglophones readers, which suggests a distinct relationship between the two communities. A copy of this booklet can be found in McLennan library at McGill University.

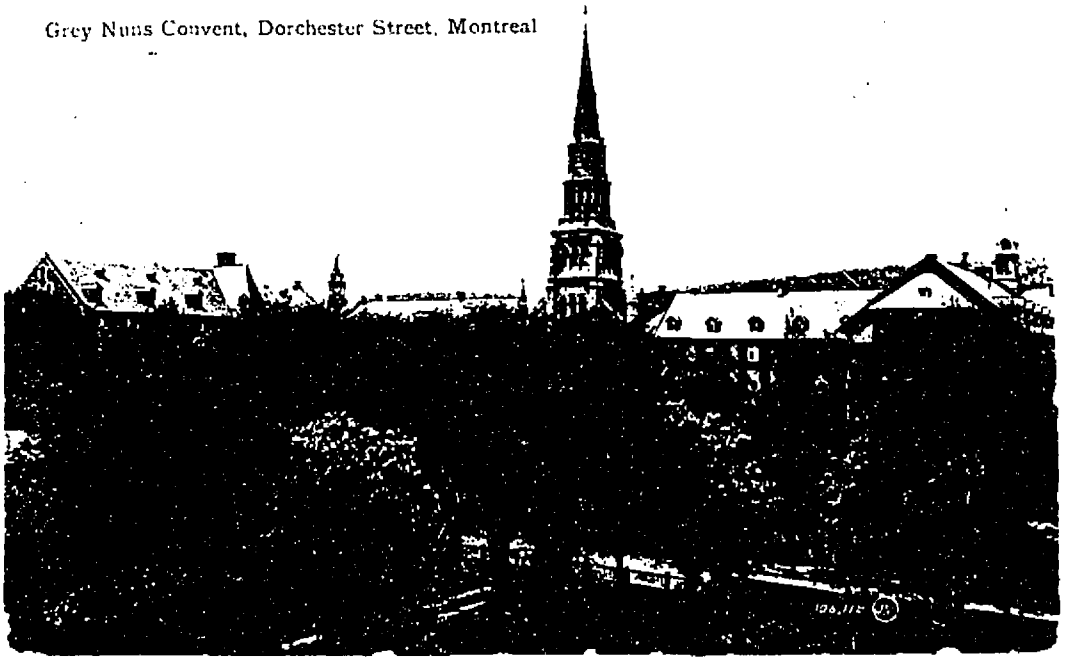

Figure 2.13. Postcard of the Mother House of the Grey Nuns. Source: ASGM Photos "Maison Mère Guy 6-1B extérieur après 1900."

Living inside a monument seems perhaps paradoxical for a religious community committed to charitable work in society. As the following passage indicates, people sometimes misread the Grey Nuns' mission.

> Il serait plus facile de trouver des étrangers, dès américains surtout qui connaissent notre maison que de nos concitoyens. Tous savent que cet immense bloc de bâtisse appartient aux Soeurs Grises; ils conjecturent qu'elles doivent être très riches pour le soutenir. Qui si trouve renfermé? Des soeurs sans doute? la maison y contient un grand nombre! Quelle vie douce et facile elles doivent mener...Que font-elles![80]

The Order had, incidentally, encountered resistance when they first proposed to locate their Hôpital Général in the St-Antoine quarter. The Anglophone residents had forwarded risk of contagion as an excuse even though they had just recently completed construction of the Montréal General Hospital at the corner of Dorchester and St-Laurent Streets, another bourgeois area of the city.[81] Although the source of their resistance seemed unclear, it perhaps hinged on issues of aesthetics and economics: the ascetic convent might have infringed on the development potential of the neighbourhood. The image that the building projected, however, became a source of great pride. "Plusieurs personnes qui connaissent l'architecture nous ont dit que cette façade est un des plus beaux monuments de la cité," the women religious proudly noted in their annals.[82]

External appearances hampered contemporary perceptions of the Mother House just as the portrayal of the convent as an architectural monument by architectural historians has captured only one side of the story: the architect and his mastery of styles. But the building, overwhelmed by an austere monumentality, embodied much more than what the Haberer engraving projected. As an artifact, it recorded a complex process that involved many interested parties—Church, priests, architects, contractors, tradesmen, citizens, the nuns and their inmates—parts of which this chapter has tried to uncover. The convent, in this context, partook of a larger, local construction tradition. It had origins common with other eighteenth and nineteenth-century institutional structures and shared in and made an impact on Montréal's conventual typology. As such, the Mother House of the Grey Nuns stands as a testimony to the women who created this institution.

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[80]ASGM *Annales* 1906-1908, 239-41.
[81]Pinard, 284-85.
[82]ASGM *Annales* 1877-1880, 269.

CHAPTER 2

In Habitation: The Structure of Community

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, rigid notions prevailed as to the proper role and place of middle-class women in society. The home offered a limited number of occupations that women could fulfill as wife, mother or maiden aunt, dependents of their fathers or husbands. With its highly specialized and clearly gendered spaces, the house acted as a container for middle-class women in which they dutifully performed repetitive rounds of domestic labour, reproducing the work of their neighbours. Women as servants and ministers of the home were responsible for its maintenance, both physical and moral. This so-called "private sphere" was separate from and in contrast to the active public realm of the city, supposedly inhabited and defined by men. Recently, some feminist historians have contested this theoretical construct of "separate spheres," having since located a female presence in the public realm. The relegation of women to family situations and to middle-class houses by earlier historians precluded women's autonomy in our perceptions of the nineteenth-century city.[1] As a result, single women who lived alone (outside of the family context) lost their place in the urban landscape.

Soeur Saint Jean de la Croix (1854-1921), like many women in turn-of-the-century Montréal, chose an option other than "marriage, motherhood and spinsterhood": the convent.[2]

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[1]Examples include: Clifford Clark, "Domestic Architecture as an index to Social History: The Romantic Revival and the Cult of Domesticity in America, 1840-1890" *Journal of Interdisciplinary History,* 7 (Summer 1976): 33-56; Colleen McDannell, *The Christian Home in Victorian America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988); Gwendolyn Wright, *Moralism and the Model Home: Domestic Architecture and Cultural Conflict in Chicago, 1873-1913* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980). Linda Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History" *The Journal of American History* 75 no.1 (June 1988): 9-39, is a succinct review of the literature on the theory of separate spheres. Some scholars have counter-argued this construct: Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English middle class, 1780-1850* (London: Hutchinson, 1987); Mary P. Ryan, *Women in Public: Between Banners and Ballots, 1825-1880* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990).

[2]Marta Danylewycz, *Taking the Veil: An Alternative to Marriage, Motherhood and Spinsterhood in Québec, 1840-1920* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1987) and Nicole Laurin, Danielle Juteau, and Lorraine Duchesne, *À la recherche d'un monde oublié: Les communautés religieuses de femmes au Québec de 1900 à 1970* (Montréal: Le Jour, Éditeur, 1991), chap. 8, observed that conventual life was a definite, first choice (over marriage and celibacy) for those who entered religious communities of women. Further,

> From a social perspective, women's religious communities provided a viable and esteemed alternative to motherhood in a society that seemed to value lay women solely as procreative beings. Under the aegis of a vocation, women could reject marriage, pursue lifelong careers, and be part of a community that enjoyed the ability to create its own sense of rank, status, and division of labour....Even those who had the double disadvantage of being women and members of the lower class could rise to power—a laborer's daughter, for example, became the mother superior of the Congregation of Notre Dame while a baker's daughter was part of its governing council.[3]

A member of the Grey Nuns, Soeur Saint Jean de la Croix came from a seemingly modest background. She was born in St-Henri parish, Montréal. But unlike the extraordinary career of the labourer's daughter, hers followed an average trajectory, perhaps more representative of nineteenth-century religious women. Nonetheless, Soeur Saint Jean de la Croix seems to have been particularly gifted in art and architecture.

> Toujours heureuse de rendre service, de se dépenser, elle se prête à toutes les bonnes oeuvres dont les circonstances lui permettent de s'occuper: c'est la peinture, la dorure, voire même l'architecture. Mère Deschamps n'a-t-elle pas honoré et cultivé ce talent en notre soeur! Avions-nous besoin d'un renseignement sur l'histoire de notre passé, d'une sentence, d'un cadre pour nos offices nous n'avions qu'a frapper à sa porte.[4]

It is because of Soeur Saint-Jean-de-la-Croix's meticulously recorded accounts of the changes in the physical fabric and the organization of the convent that we can reconstruct the workings of this collective dwelling arrangement, one hundred years after the fact. Remember that women were not accepted to schools of architecture in Québec until 1935, yet Soeur Saint Jean de la Croix produced a complete set of as-built plan drawings some thirty years earlier.[5] She is not unique among her Canadian contemporaries. A Soeur of St-Joseph (1856-1910) acted as architect for les Soeurs de la

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the authors calculated that 2 per cent of the female population over fifteen years of age in Québec in 1901 belonged to communities of women religious, 223-5.

[3]Danylewycz, 106. She also notes, though, that "44% of the sisters who held the powerful offices of mother superior, councilor, trustee and directress of the novitiate came from a professional or entrepreneurial background", 98.

[4]ASGM *Notice Biographique, Soeur Saint Jean de la Croix.* All personal information on Soeur Saint Jean de la Croix are derived from her *Notice Biographique* or from mentions of her in ASGM *Annales*, unless otherwise noted. Quoted material has been transcribed exactly as it appeared in the original ASGM sources.

[5]Blanche Lemco van Ginkel, "Slowly and Surely (and Somewhat Painfully): More or Less the History of Women in Architecture in Canada" *Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada Bulletin* (March 1991): 5-11; Annmarie Adams, "Building Barriers: Images of Women in Canada's Architectural Press, 1924-73" *Resources for Feminist Research* vol. 23 no. 3 (Fall 1994): 11-23. According to the *Statistiques* in the *Annales 1919-1920*, 8, 367, Soeur Saint Jean de la Croix was given the title of "architect" as an obedience in 1919 and 1920.

Providence in British Columbia, designing and supervising the construction of several buildings.[6]

Whereas the previous chapter examined the design and construction of the Mother House of the Grey Nuns, this section considers how the religious community and their inmates occupied the building at the turn of the century. It investigates the relationships between the structure of this religious institution and the organization of the convent in the context of Soeur Saint Jean de la Croix's architectural drawings and period photographs.[7] For the purposes of this investigation, analysis will focus on the arrangement of spaces and the interiors of the convent circa 1900, because otherwise the convent was always changing; in reality it was a perpetual construction site. This particular moment in time corresponds both to the completion of the last major construction phase of the Mother House and the date of Soeur Saint Jean de la Croix's earliest set of as-built drawings of the completed structure.[8]

The Mother House of the Grey Nuns, which also functioned as a General Hospital, housed the religious community and many other types of people in different kinds of spaces. The Grey Nuns accommodated and cared for those that Montréal society could not: the alienated, the elderly, the blind, the orphaned, the mentally ill, the infirm, abandoned infants, and other persons in need. In 1905, for example, Soeur Saint Jean de la Croix recorded 324 women comprising the religious community. She also noted 185 elderly

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[6] The architecture of West Coast religious communities, and Sister Joseph in particular, form the subject of Deborah Rink's ongoing research, personal communication October 1994. See also her "Convents as Planned Communities" (Master thesis, University of Oregon, 1990) and the Women in Architecture exhibition, "Constructing Careers: A Contemporary View of Women Architects in British Columbia Since 1850," Vancouver, April 18-May 12 1995.

[7] For a discussion on the use of photographs in analysis and reconstruction of people's environments see James Borchert, *Alley Life in Washington: Family Community, Religion, and Folklife in the City, 1850-1970,* Blacks in the New World, ed. August Meier (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1980) especially Appendix B.

[8] The year 1902 corresponds to the completion of the St-Mathieu wing, though its upper floors were rebuilt in 1918, after a disastrous fire. Other smaller additions were constructed, but except for the *fumoir,* they fall outside my time period (roughly between 1868-1921 which coincides to the start of construction to the end of Soeur Saint Jean de la Croix's life). ASGM MM 1190 rue Guy Plans 1900 Doc. 76 A-E (Soeur Saint Jean de la Croix) *Relevé des Plans de l'Hôpital Général de Montréal* contains five plans, one of each storey of the Mother House drawn in gouache on *toile ciré* at a scale of 1" equals 8' (scale 1:96). The *soubassement* plan, the largest in the set, measures approximately 8'x12' (2.4 x 3.7 m.); it shows the whole site including ancillary buildings. The other plans are somewhat smaller, approximately 7'x8' (2.1 x 2.4 m.), and depict only the Mother House. One other set of sketches, perhaps her working copy, seems to have preceded this set (also dated *vers* 1900), as the St-Mathieu wing is shown as uncompleted. It is titled *Plan--à-terre et divisions de la Maison Mère.* ASGM *Détails Historiques concernant les plans de la maison mère primitive et de l'actuelle, cahier A*; *Relève des plans 1ère maison mère (1765-1871) maison mère actuelle (1871-1909); Cahier B*; *Maison Mère rue Guy constructions etc. 1861-1909 3e volume*; *Maison Mère rue Guy--eau, gaz etc. Volume iv; Maison Mère rue Guy--constructions et services 1871-1909, historique, vol. iii et iv, Mont Ste-Croix;* and ASGM MM 1190 rue Guy Plans Doc. 11 Sr. Saint Jean de la Croix *Diverses notes pour servir d'historique et de pièces justificatives au relevé des plans et des terrains 1900* comprise all of the documents produced by Sr. Saint Jean de la Croix that I consulted. Analysis of the Mother House is based on these unless otherwise noted.

persons, 60 girls, 340 orphans, 52 abandoned infants, 26 pay boarders and 33 male employees as residents of the convent.[9] In all, over 1000 people lived in the Mother House at the turn of the century. Such a large and diverse population required an effective form of organization, one that permitted a certain degree of conviviality.[10]

Appropriately located at the center of the complex, the *chapelle de l'Invention de la Sainte-Croix* functioned as the primary organizational device. It essentially divided the H-shape convent into two blocks. The religious community and their employees inhabited the eastern block along Guy Street, while the destitute inmates occupied the western one, along St-Mathieu Street (Figure 3.1).[11] The church also became the shared meeting ground between the two groups: servant and served. Further analysis of the plans of the Mother House reveals that each block was subdivided into wings.

A wing consisted of any rectangular component of the building plan, distinguished from any other component by the crossing of the main axes: three perpendiculars (the first along Guy Street, the second through the chapel, and the third along St-Mathieu Street) and a transversal (parallel to Dorchester Boulevard). The names of these ten different wings generally referred to the ground floor occupant group, determined by age or by primary function. The *aile de la communauté*, for example, designated the southern portion of the Guy Street perpendicular; the *aile des ateliers* referred to the northern portion, and the return at the north end of the Guy Street perpendicular was named the *lavoir. Portiques* terminated either extremity of the transversal, differentiated by the street they faced. The *aile de l'administration,* or alternatively the *aile de l'infirmerie,* referred to the transverse section immediately east of the chapel, while the *aile des vieillards* designated its reflection, immediately west of the chapel. The *aile des orphelins* (later called *aile St-Mathieu*) designated the southern part of the St-Mathieu perpendicular and the *cuisine des Pauvres,* designated the northern part (Figure 3.2).

Each wing of the Mother House was organized by storey into what the nuns termed apartments. The apartments housed occupant sets based on gender, class standing or vocational stage, or they catered to specific offices. Each residential apartment comprised dormitories, a communal recreation space, a small kitchen, a refectory, an infirmary, a parlour, an oratory, a *décharge* (storage room for clothes and linens), exterior galleries,

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[9]These numbers vary slightly from those of the annals, probably because Soeur Saint Jean de la Croix grouped people into different categories and possibly because she noted her statistics mid-year rather than at the end of the year.

[10]By conviviality I refer to its latin origins, "a living together," used in the same sense as Ivan Illich *Tools for Conviviality* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973).

[11]Inmate here is used according to its obsolete definition "a person who lives with others in a house", it renders the term in a positive light when compared to its more traditional coloring of confinement to an institution, usually penal.

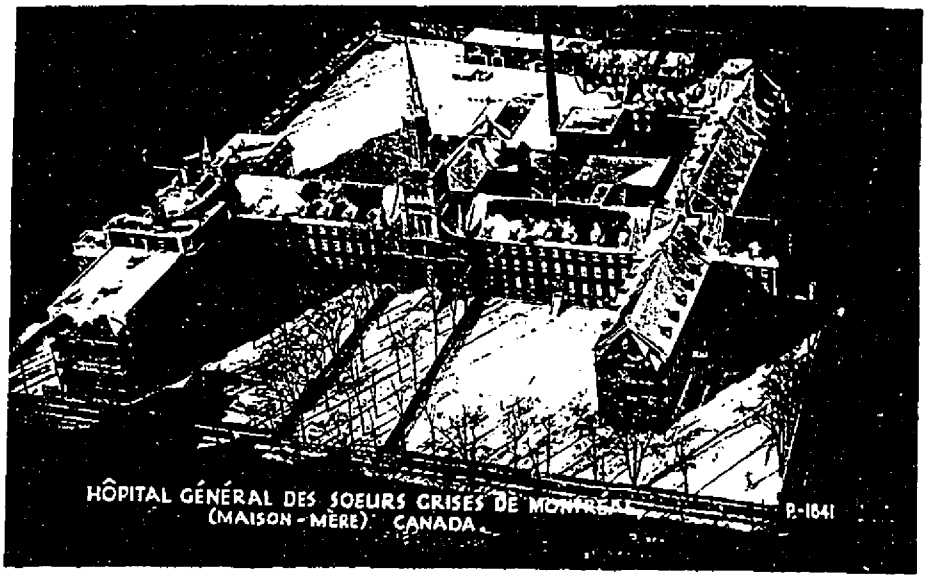
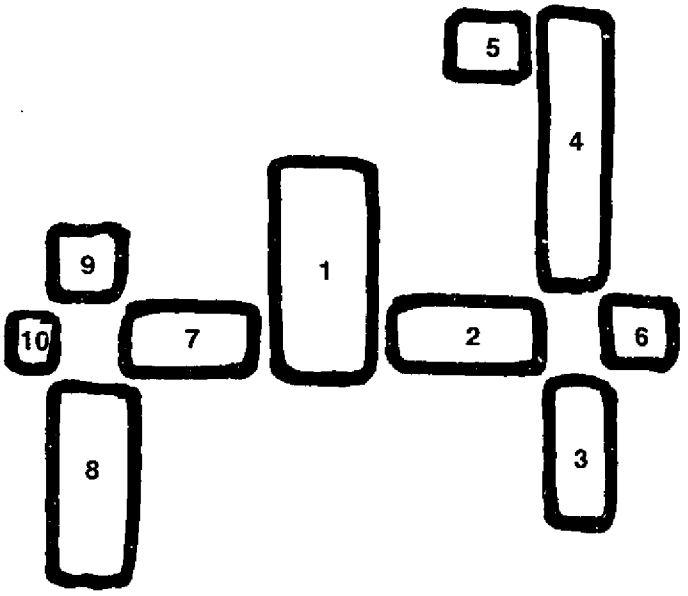


Figure 3.1. Aerial view of the Mother House of the Grey Nuns. Source: ASGM, postcard ca. 1946, published by Associated Screen News Limited, Montreal.



1	chapel / church	**6**	portique de la rue Guy
2	aile de l'administration / aile de infirmerie	**7**	aile des vieillards / aile des pauvres
3	aile de la communauté	**8**	aile St-Mathieu / aile des orphelins
4	aile des ateliers	**9**	aile de la cuisine des pauvres
5	lavoir	**10**	portique de la rue St-Mathieu

Figure 3.2. Diagram of the wings making up Mother House. Source: Author

toilets and baths (Figures 3.3 - 3.8). Finally, the various apartments contained individual offices where nuns and their employees performed particular tasks.

Had the Mother House of the Grey Nuns been a secular institution, the central position of the chapel would have been filled by an administration/reception block as in Montréal's Royal Victoria Hospital, for example.[12] Pavilions and wards of teaching hospitals and insane asylums, like the convent's apartments, facilitated the multi-tiered classification systems common to eighteenth and nineteenth-century institutions. In North American mental hospitals, for instance, wing design with its precise divisions and its uniformity permitted medical superintendents to group patients into particular (distinct) categories according to ailment, sex, etc. These qualities of regularity and regulation were, not surprisingly, in keeping with the urban industrial order. In its 1851 definition of "proper asylum architecture," the Association of Medical Superintendents declared: "every ward should have in it a parlor, a corridor...an associated dormitory...a clothes room, a bath room, a water closet...a dumb waiter, and a speaking tube."[13]

Obviously, the overall political structure of the religious community differed from traditional private and state administered institutions (many of which in earlier forms took on metaphors of family organization). Often in secular organizations, administrative bodies of generally male public officials governed a particular, local institution from the outside.[14] Women religious, in contrast, lived and managed their own institutions from the inside. In fact, it was more like our current idea of a multinational corporation: the Mother House acted as the headquarters of *l'Institut des Soeurs Grises*, while each of its missions, whether in Montréal, the Canadian/American north and west, or the north-eastern United States, acted as branch operations.

A council of twelve administrators (*conseillères*), elected for a five year term from within the pool of eligible candidates governed *l'Institut des Soeurs Grises*. This "Board of Directors," headed by the Mother Superior General, "administered their temporal affairs more or less independently of the male religious hierarchy."[15] Furthermore, every *soeur vocale* as a "shareholder" contributed an active voice towards the running of the institution, through open deliberative sessions, in addition to the elections of administrators, held as

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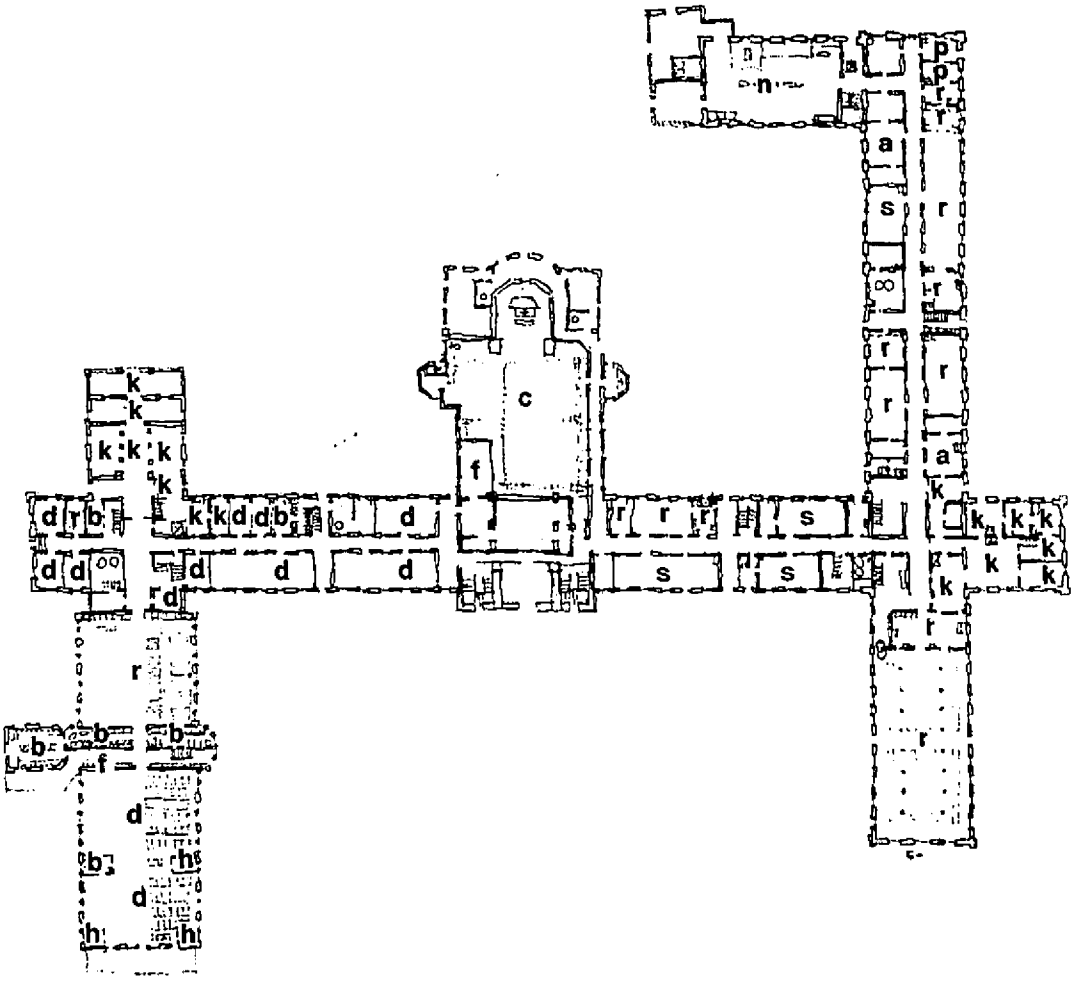
[12]David J.R Rothman, *The Discovery of the Asylum: Social Order and Disorder in the New Republic* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1971); Jeremy Taylor, *Hospital and Asylum Architecture in England 1840-1914: Building for Health Care* (London: Mansell Publishing Limited, 1991); Adrian Forty, "The modern hospital in England and France: the social and medical uses of architecture," in *Buildings and Society: Essays on the social development of the built environment,* ed. Anthony King, 61-93 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980); Annmarie Adams, "Rooms of Their Own: The Nurses' Residence at Montreal's Royal Victoria Hospital" *Material History Review* 40 (Fall 1994): 29-41.

[13]Rothman, 153-4, 135.

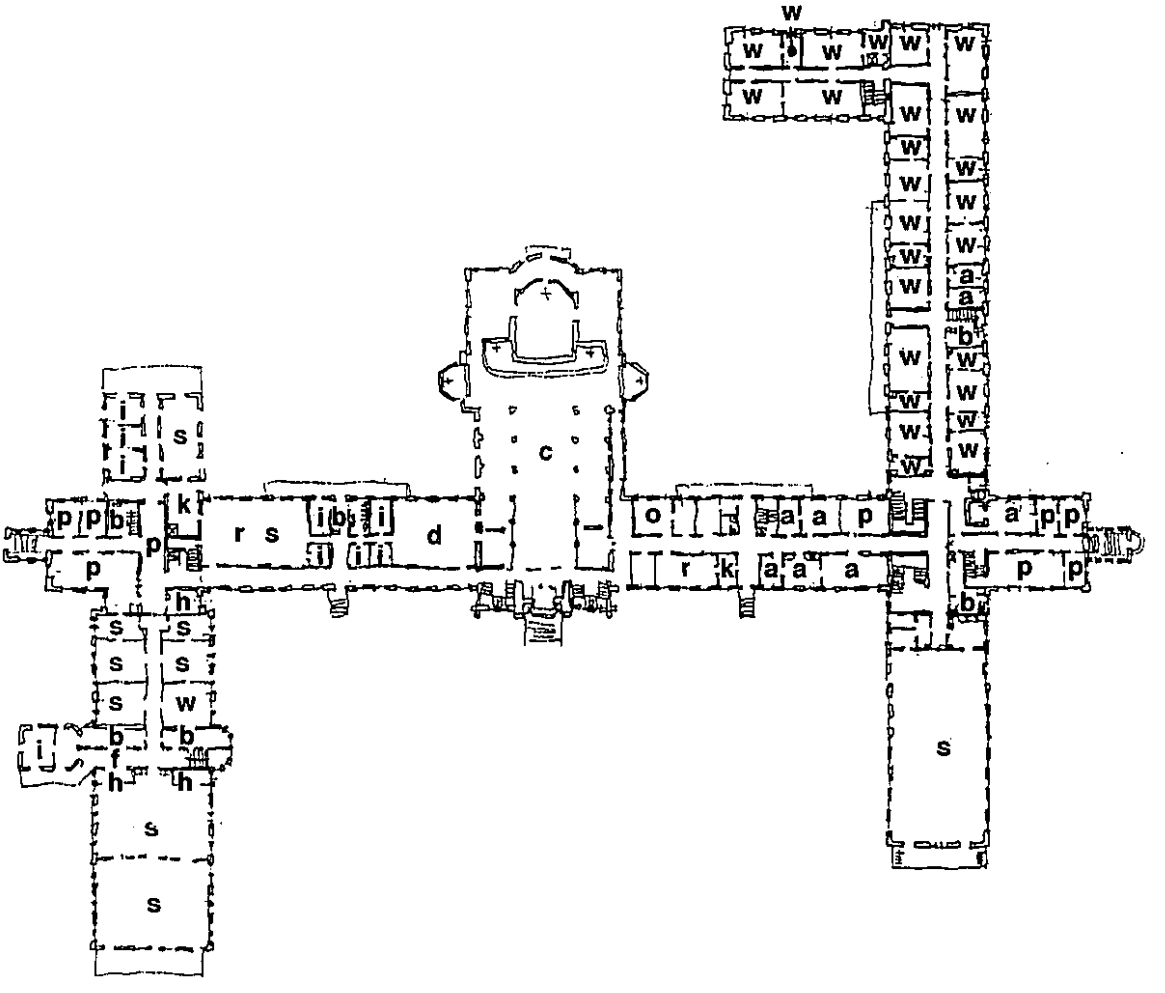
[14]Forty, 66.

[15]Danylewycz, 97.



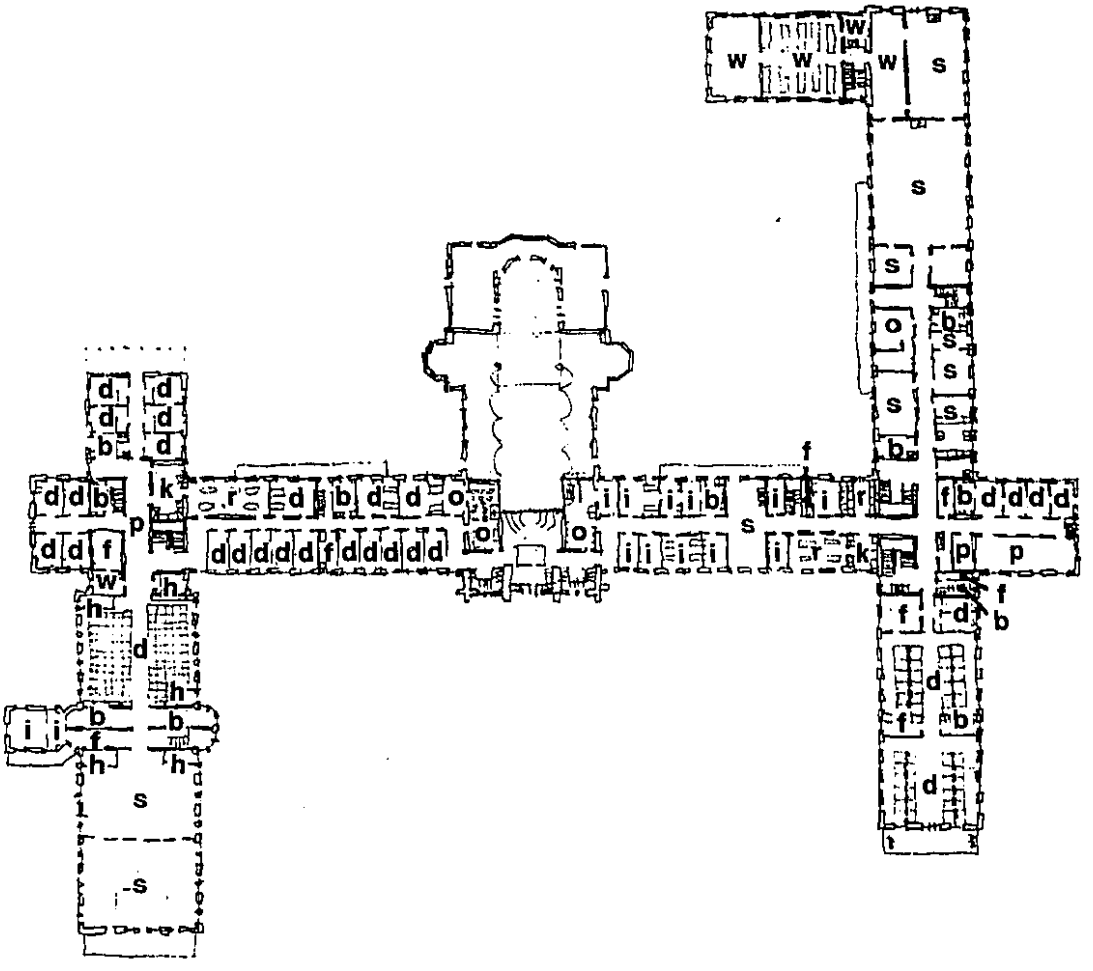
a	administration	**k**	kitchen
b	bathroom / toilet	**m**	laundry
c	chapel	**o**	oratory
d	dormitory	**p**	parlour
f	décharge (storage)	**r**	refectory
h	hospitalière	**s**	salle / classroom
i	infirmary	**w**	workspace

Figure 3.3. Diagram of the soubassement floor plan showing room types. Source: Author (drawing outlines based on 1970s plans reproduced in Salomon de Friedberg, interior divisions based on documents produced by Soeur Saint Jean de la Croix).



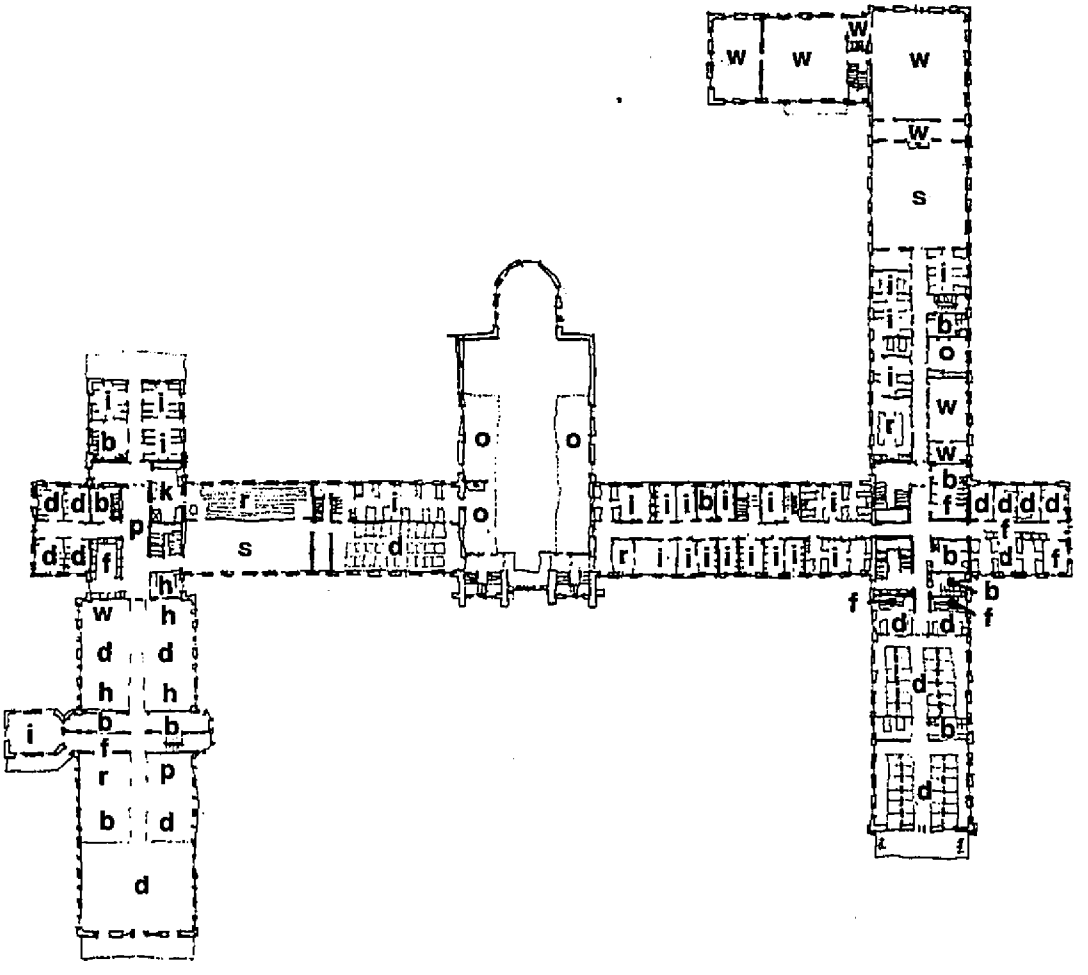
a	administration	**k**	kitchen
b	bathroom / toilet	**m**	laundry
c	chapel	**o**	oratory
d	dormitory	**p**	parlour
f	décharge (storage)	**r**	refectory
h	hospitalière	**s**	salle / classroom
i	infirmary	**w**	workspace

Figure 3.4. Diagram of the first floor plan showing room types. Source: Author.



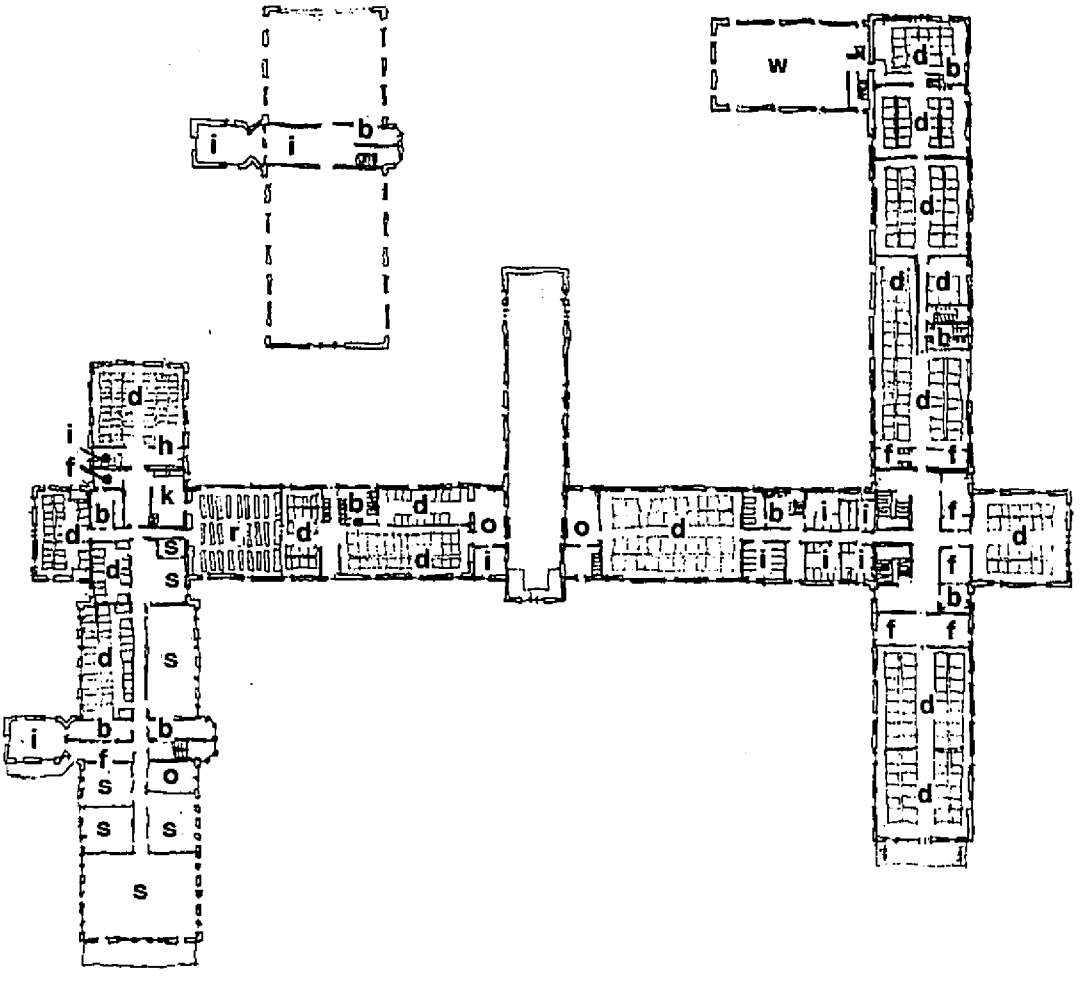
a	administration	**k**	kitchen
b	bathroom / toilet	**m**	laundry
c	chapel	**o**	oratory
d	dormitory	**p**	parlour
f	décharge (storage)	**r**	refectory
h	hospitalière	**s**	salle / classroom
i	infirmary	**w**	workspace

Figure 3.5. Diagram of the second floor plan showing room types. Source: Author.



a	administration	**k**	kitchen
b	bathroom / toilet	**m**	laundry
c	chapel	**o**	oratory
d	dormitory	**p**	parlour
f	décharge (storage)	**r**	refectory
h	hospitalière	**s**	salle / classroom
i	infirmary	**w**	workspace

Figure 3.6. Diagram of the third floor plan showing room types. Source: Author.



a	administration	**k**	kitchen
b	bathroom / toilet	**m**	laundry
c	chapel	**o**	oratory
d	dormitory	**p**	parlour
f	décharge (storage)	**r**	refectory
h	hospitalière	**s**	salle / classroom
i	infirmary	**w**	workspace

Figure 3.7. Diagram of the mansardes floor plan showing room types. Source: Author.

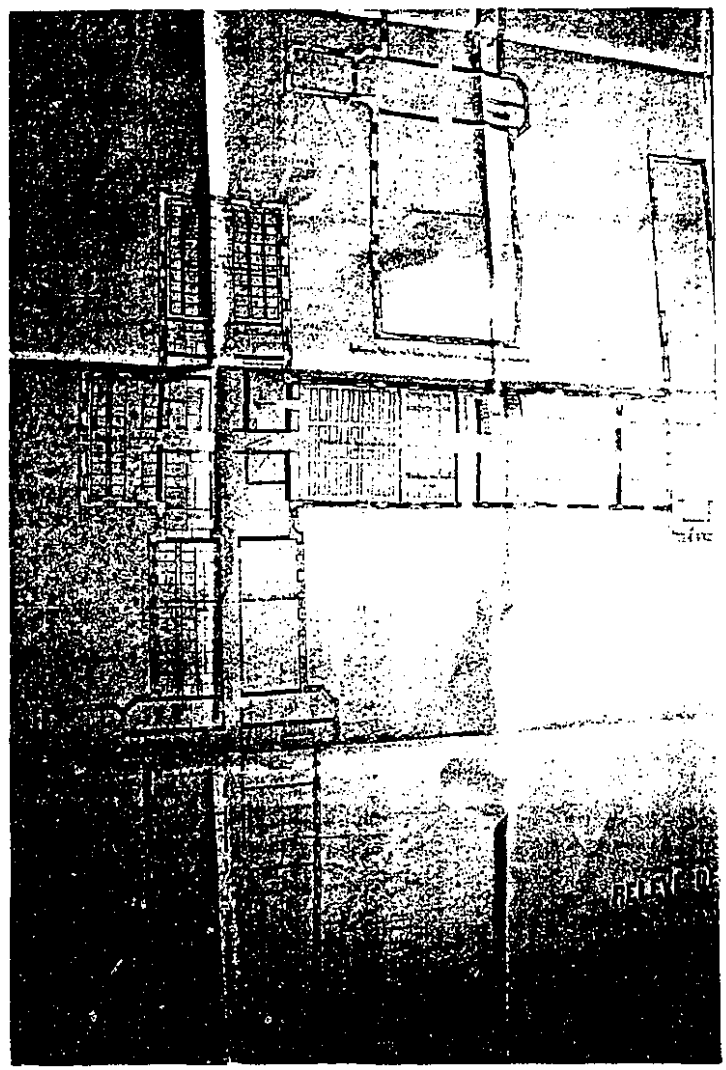


Figure 3.8. Detail of the orphan girls' apartment. Source: ASGM MM 1190 rue Guy Plans 1900 Doc. 76 E (Soeur Saint Jean de la Croix) *Relevé des Plans de l'Hôpital Général de Montréal, mansardes, divisions en 1900.*

part of the *Chapitre Général* convocations.[16] "Ce sont les membres des communautés, les supérieures avec leurs conseillères ou avec l'ensemble des *soeurs vocales*, qui revisent les lois fondamentales de l'Institut, sous la direction, et, *au besoin*, avec l'aide des évêques."[17] The religious community's self-government, however, was embedded in the larger Church hierarchy, as the plan of the administration wing attests (Figure 3.9).

This wing contained the Mother Superior's suite, the secretariat, as well as an apartment reserved for priests, where the confessor, the Sulpician Superior, and the Bishop each had their rooms, a shared parlour, refectory, and kitchen. The luxuriously outfitted priests' apartments were among the few spaces within the complex to which so much material attention was devoted, besides the chapel. A 1910 photo of the Archbishop's room, for example, shows an ornately patterned plush carpet covering most of the floor area, deep coloured, striped curtains hanging in front of shuttered windows, and a chandelier suspended from the ceiling.[18] A leather upholstered armchair, several ornately carved, wooden armchairs and straight back chairs with leather upholstered seats, and a solidly built wooden desk amply furnished the room (Figure 3.10).

The Mother Superior's suite, with its bare floors and open shutters, lay in stark contrast to the priests' chambers, marked by the evident absence of luxury. Simple, functional furniture such as the wooden filing cabinet placed in the corner by the window, a wooden writing table and a few wooden high back chairs equipped her room; a large solid wooden cabinet stood against the far wall in the adjoining parlour. This austerity, relieved only by a crucifix and a few religious prints and paintings hanging on the walls, characterized all of the nuns' offices (Figure 3.11).[19]

Out of this relatively nondescript suite of rooms, the Mother Superior administered the collective activities of the institution. Men allowed within the convent walls, whether clergy or doctors, were limited to clearly demarcated, self-contained spaces. Furthermore, as their lavishly furnished rooms indicate, they were treated as invited guests of the community.[20] Not only were their movements in the Mother House circumscribed, men

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[16]*Constitutions des Soeurs de la Charité, Administratrices de l'Hôpital-Général de Montréal dites vulgairement Soeurs Grises* (Montréal: Imprimerie de l'Hôpital Général) microfiche.

[17]Marguerite Jean, *Évolution des Communautés Religieuses de Femmes du Québec de 1639 à nos jours* (Montréal: Fides, 1977), 226-7. My emphasis.

[18]ASGM (photo album) *Hôpital Général des Soeurs Grises, 390 Rue Guy, Montréal* (1910); See also ASGM Photos Maison Mère - Guy Intérieur 14C "Chambre des Évêques"; 14A "Bureau de Père Aumonier."

[19] See also ASGM Photos Maison Mère - Guy Intérieur 10B "Photo de l'ancien grand parloir de notre Mère Générale."

[20]The lavish guest room/office arrangement suggests a second relationship, of employee-boss rather than host-guest. See Abigail A. Van Slyck, "'The Utmost Amount of Effectiv[*sic*] Accommodation': Andrew Carnegie and the Reform of the American Library" *Journal of the Society of Architectural*

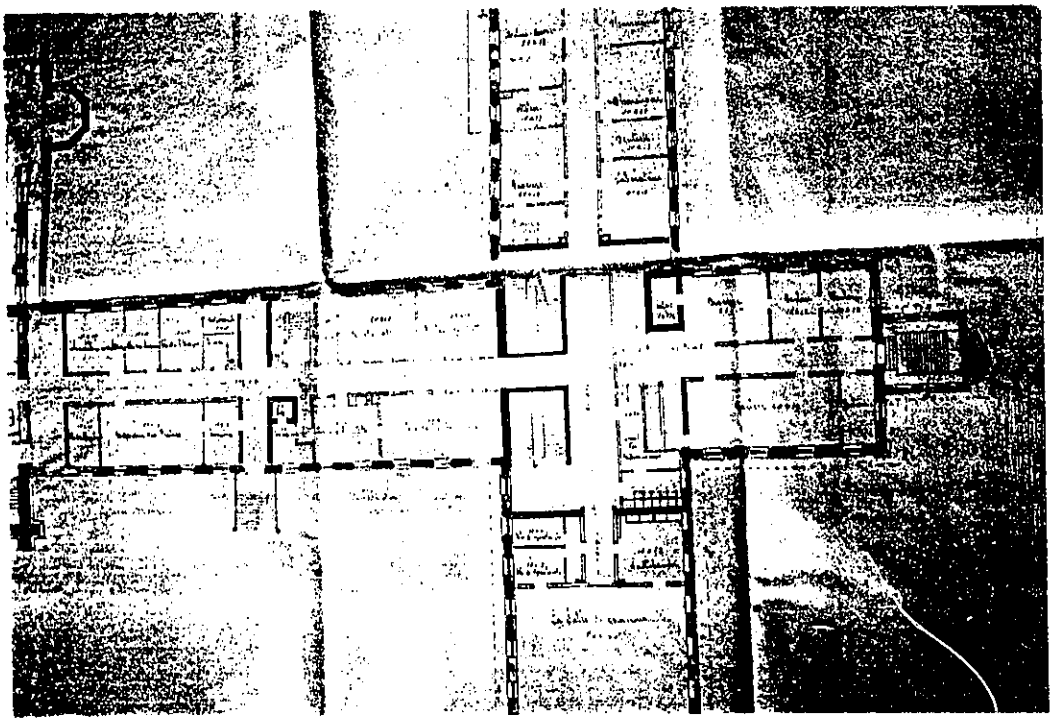


Figure 3.9. Detail of administration department. Source: ASGM MM 1190 rue Guy Plans 1900 Doc. 76 B (Soeur Saint Jean de la Croix) *Relevé des Plans de l'Hôpital Général de Montréal, 1e étage, divisions en 1900* .

Figure 3.10. "Chambre et Appartements du Père Supérieur" Source: ASGM "Photos Maison Mère - Guy 14B Intérieur."

Figure 3.11. "Chambre de la Supérieure Générale" Source: ASGM (photo album) *Hôpital Général des Soeurs Grises, 390 Rue Guy, Montréal* (1910), published by Librairie Beauchemin Limitée.

were required to be escorted by one or two nuns in all of their visits to any other apartment.[21] Clearly the convent was the domain of religious women as the Mother Superior and all other nuns circulated freely throughout the building.

Running a residential institution of this size and complexity called for a substantial workforce, skilled in many different areas. The community's *Statistiques,* published yearly, show the variety of jobs, ranging from the most menial (*couture, buanderie, Dépensaire)* through to the administrative (*Économe, Première Sous-Maîtresse, Supérieure Local*).[22] Some offices drew on the traditionally female professions of nursing and education, (*pharmacie, Hospitalière de la crèche*) as the elderly, the orphans, and the abandoned infants required different forms of assistance and entertainment. Housekeeping chores like cooking, cleaning, and ironing also occupied the women's attention, but the religious community also hired secular workers, both male and female, to help out with these (Figure 3.12).

Other jobs within the institution were less traditional, like the nuns' productive labour in the workshops, located on the first floor along Guy Street (Figure 3.13). The printing press and the bookbinding shop, for example, took in commissions for catechism and hymn books. In these ateliers women handled large mechanical equipment and supervised their employees, recreating a miniature factory of sorts within their own home. The manufacturing of religious relics, candles, and wax figurines also generated income for the community. As dentists and pharmacists, the Grey Nuns provided important professional services for the poor. In 1902, for instance, they filled 24,094 prescriptions, distributing this medicine to the homes of the needy, in addition to dispensing it in within their own infirmaries (Figures 3.14 - 3.17).[23]

Many of the occupations that these women pursued within their ateliers (and even in administration) were traditionally male-associated activities. Nor were they the only examples of gender reversals within the convent. Ironically, male employees helped out in food preparation in the Grey Nuns' kitchens, a task traditionally relegated to the private sphere (Figure 3.18). Thus, it seems that "[a]s self-managed institutions, convents were immune to the sexual division of labour that determined status and rank of secular society."[24]

Historians L:4 (December 1991): 359-83, for a comparable discussion on gendered spaces as applied to Carnegie libraries.

[21]*Constitutions.*

[22]A survey of the *Statistiques* in the annals evinces the range of offices and their periodic rotation between members of the community, both within the Mother House and throughout the different missions. These statistics also kept track of the number of inmates in each category housed in the Mother House.

[23]ASGM MM 1190 rue Guy Plans Doc. 11 Sr. Saint Jean de la Croix.

[24]Danylewycz, 95.

Figure 3.12. "Salle Sainte-Famille - Crèche." Notice the secular women employees. Source: ASGM (photo album) *Hôpital Général des Soeurs Grises, 390 Rue Guy, Montréal* (1910), published by Librairie Beauchemin Limitée.

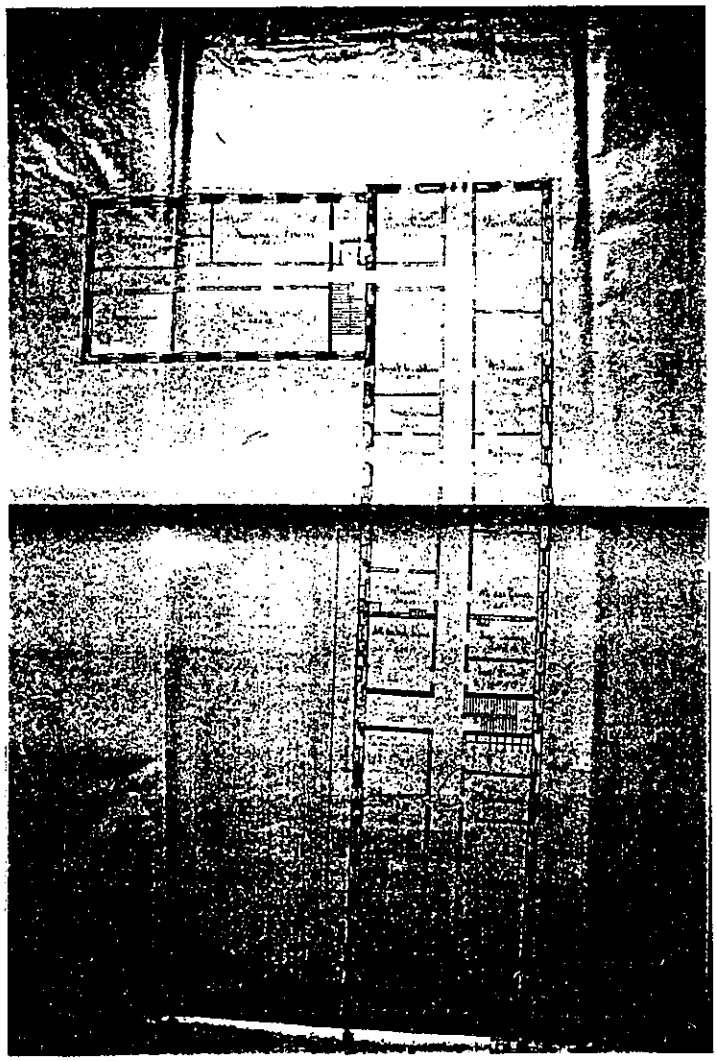


Figure 3.13. Detail of *atelier* wing. Source: ASGM MM 1190 rue Guy Plans 1900 Doc. 76 B (Soeur Saint Jean de la Croix) *Relevé des Plans de l'Hôpital Général de Montréal, 1e étage, divisions en 1900.*

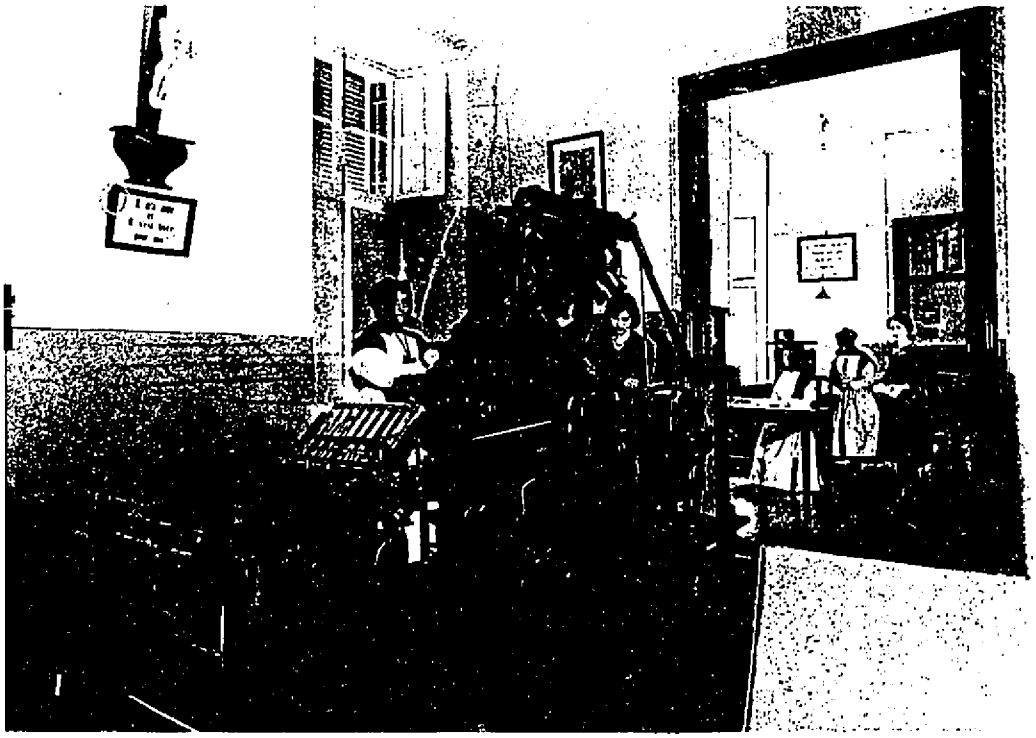


Figure 3.14. "Imprimerie." Source: ASGM "Photos Maison Mère - Guy 13D Intérieur."

Figure 3.15. "Ciergerie et atelier des hosties." Source: ASGM "Photos Maison Mère - Guy 11C Intérieur."

Figure 3.16. "Bureau Dentaire." Source: ASGM "Photos Maison Mère - Guy 12F Intérieur."

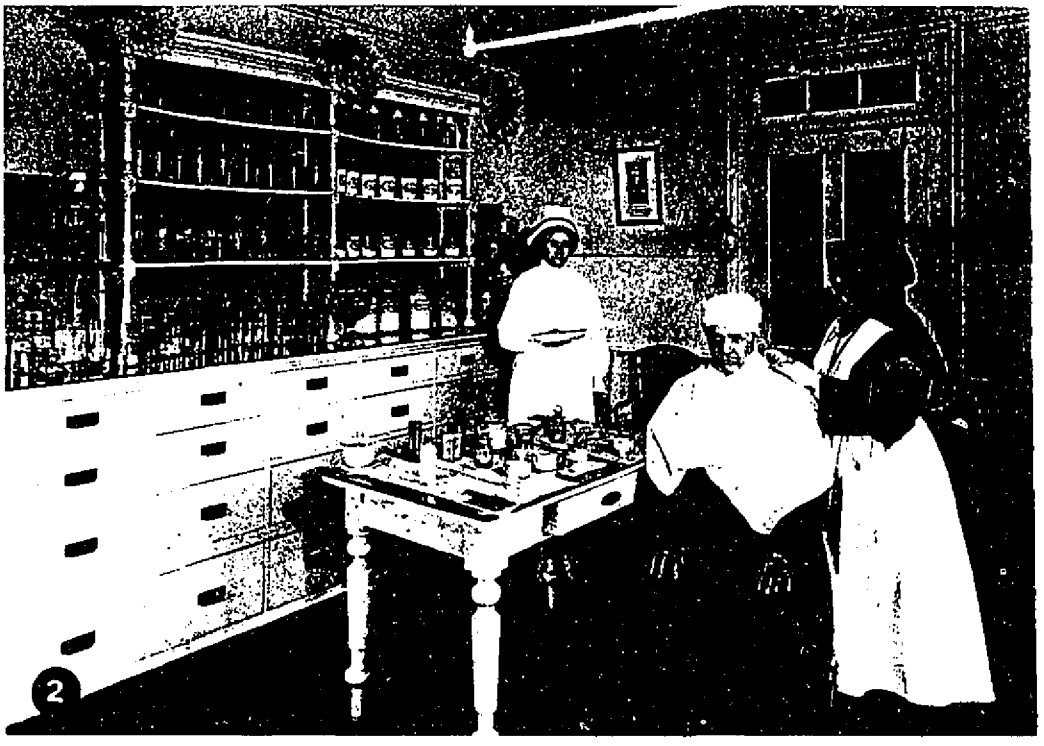
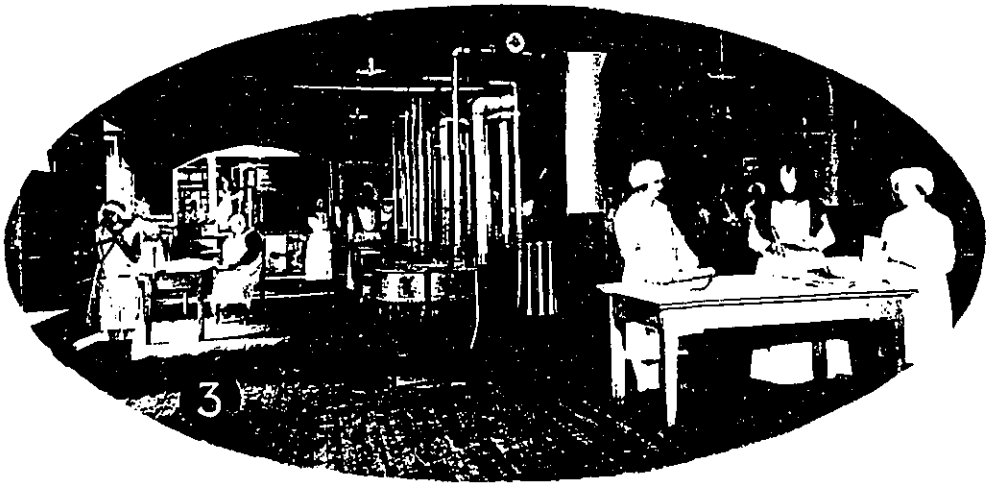


Figure 3.17. "Bureau d'Ophtamologie." Source: ASGM "Photos Maison Mère - Guy 12D Intérieur."



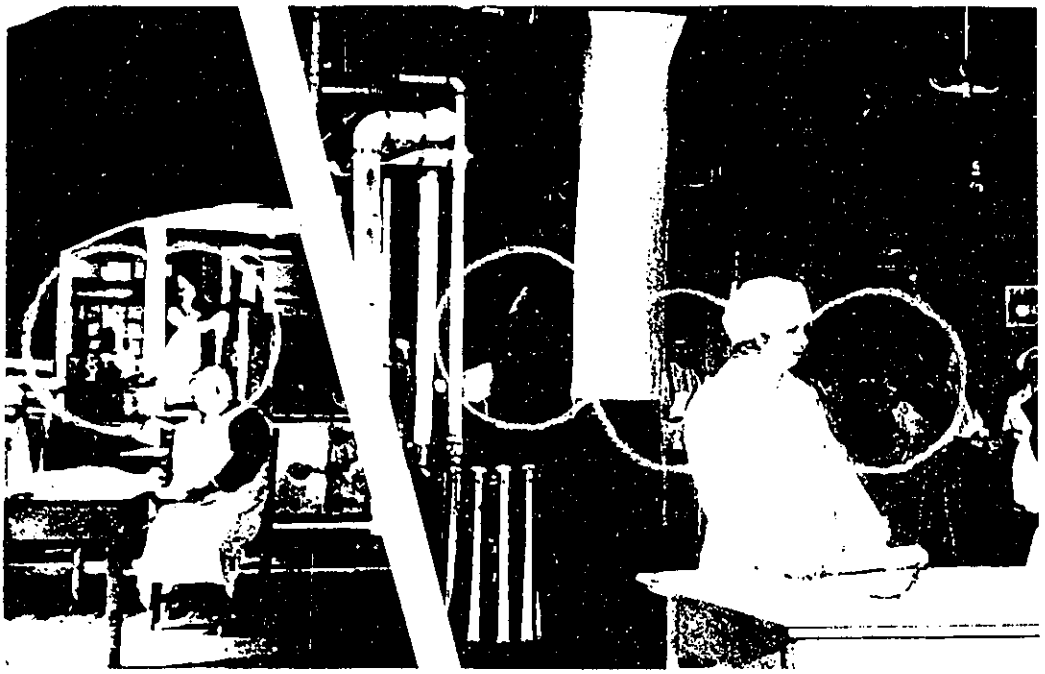


Figure 3.18. "Cuisine." Note the men in the background. Source: ASGM "Photos Maison Mère - Guy 11B Intérieur."

Although a distinct hierarchy did exist within the organization of the convent, the powers associated with different positions were limited spatially and temporally. Any authority a nun exercised over other people was limited to the confines of her own office; in all other circumstances, she was considered equal to her peers. The *Constitutions particulières* outlined the tasks and responsibilities of all office holders, the position of Mother Superior included. A Sister appointed in charge of an office had specific obligations: to supervise, train (if work was unfamiliar) and otherwise set an example for her fellow workers, novices and employees, assigned to work *with* her.[25] Because no work was considered extraneous or unnecessary, each individual contributed equally to the smooth operation of the institution.

In principal, work was delegated according to individual capabilities and periodically rotated so that individuals acquired a variety of experiences.[26] Even if the type of work assigned remained the same, the location and team of co-workers could change as offices not only rotated within the Mother House, but between missions throughout the *Institut.* For example, in the 51 years Soeur Saint-Jean-de-la-Croix lived as member of the community: "'J'ai été employée, écrit-elle, dans 44 offices, c'est dire qu'à l'exception de la crèche et du lavoir, j'ai passé un peu partout.'" She taught catechism at *l'Hospice Saint-Joseph*; comforted and cared for smallpox victims; acted as *Sacristine de l'infirmerie*, and later as *Réfectorière de l'infirmerie*; served as an *Hospitalière* at *l'Hôpital St-Camille, l'Asile Ste-Brigitte*, and *l'Asile St-Patrice*, on different occasions, for various lengths of time; worked in the *atelier des divers ouvrages*; and held several other positions throughout her career. Few middle-class housewives had opportunities to exercise professional skills or to work among their peers in supportive environments.[27]

The convent guaranteed a minimum standard of living: shelter, food, a bed, health and old age care to any woman who entered the religious community, in return for the

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[25]A clearly defined job, with specific tasks and responsibilities, has distinct parallels with factory production rather than domestic service.

[26]This is collaborated by Danylewycz, 100-108.

[27]Bettina Bradbury, *Working Families: Age, Gender and Daily Survival in Industrializing Montreal,* The Canadian Social History Series (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Inc., 1993), 137, notes that the "putting out" system was advantageous to employers precisely because women (in addition to providing their own machines and workspace) worked isolated in their own homes so posed no threat--"there was no danger in their organizing or knowing what other employees earned." For general sources on housekeeping see Denyse Baillargeon, *Ménagères au temps de la Crise* (Montréal: Les Éditions du remue-ménage, 1991); Meg Luxton, *More Than a Labour of Love: Three Generations of Women's Work in the Home* (Toronto: Women's Press, 1980); Ruth Schwartz Cowan, "The 'Industrial Revolution' in the Home: Household Technology and Social Change in the Twentieth Century" *Technology and Culture* vol. 17, no. 1 (Jan. 1976): 1-23.

products of her labour.[28] Because of the variety of religious communities in Montréal, each with their own specialties and target groups within society, women could choose between orders.[29] All sisters admitted to the Grey Nuns were considered as individuals on an egalitarian basis. They had access to the same resources and they were required to perform basic duties to religion and to community regardless of office, like serving tables in the refectory, for example.[30]

Admission to the order, as a professed nun, involved an initiatory process. Progress in one's vocation was not only marked by religious ceremonies and minor variants in religious costume, but also through the allocation of spaces to the different vocational stages in which the initiates were furthest removed from the public realm.[31] A greater degree of seclusion theoretically offered the initiate a quiet space to convert from a secular lifestyle to a religious one. As the candidate to religious life advanced spiritually and socially, she also changed the spaces she occupied over time (Figure 3.19, 3.20).

Soeur Saint Jean de la Croix, for example, entered the Grey Nuns' convent on August 15, 1870, at sixteen years of age. As a postulant, she would have slept in the fourth floor dormitory of the *aile de la communauté.* [32] The postulancy itself was located on the second floor of the *aile des ateliers.* Upon the successful completion of a probationary period of six months, the candidate to religious life graduated from the postulant to the novice stage. Novices learned catechism, the history of the order, and the regulations among the other subjects taught in the second floor novitiate, comprised of classrooms and recreation spaces, in the *aile des ateliers.* "'In those days at the novitiate, you learned all kinds of jobs [as their duties were rotated monthly] from the classroom [in a school] to the kitchen, from the sacristy to the laundry room...; every older sister had a postulant or a novice to help her in her duties and she in turn looked after her professional training.'"[33] Because apprenticeships were carried out in different areas of the convent

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[28]Laurin, 268-7. This minimum standard was extended to the inmates as well, see Huguette Lapointe-Roy, *Charité Bien Ordonné: Le Premier Réseau de Lutte Contre la Pauvreté à Montréal au 19e Siècle* (Montréal: Boréal Express, 1987), chap. 5.

[29]Danylewycz, 96; Laurin, chap. 5.

[30]*Constitutions.*

[31] The play of power as read in the plans has methodological precedent in Dell Upton, *Holy Things and Profane: Anglican parish Churches in Colonial Virginia* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1986). His book examined eighteenth-century churches—the process of their design and construction—as an index to social and religious life within Virginian parishes.

[32]Soeur Saint Jean de la Croix probably spent her first year at the Maison Mère d'Youville since the Mother House was still under construction at the time of her admission.

[33]Though the quote is according to a member of the Congregation of Notre Dame, the Grey Nuns too used the apprenticeship system. Even for the women who left the community, the novitiate imparted valuable and marketable skills, Danylewycz, 105-6.

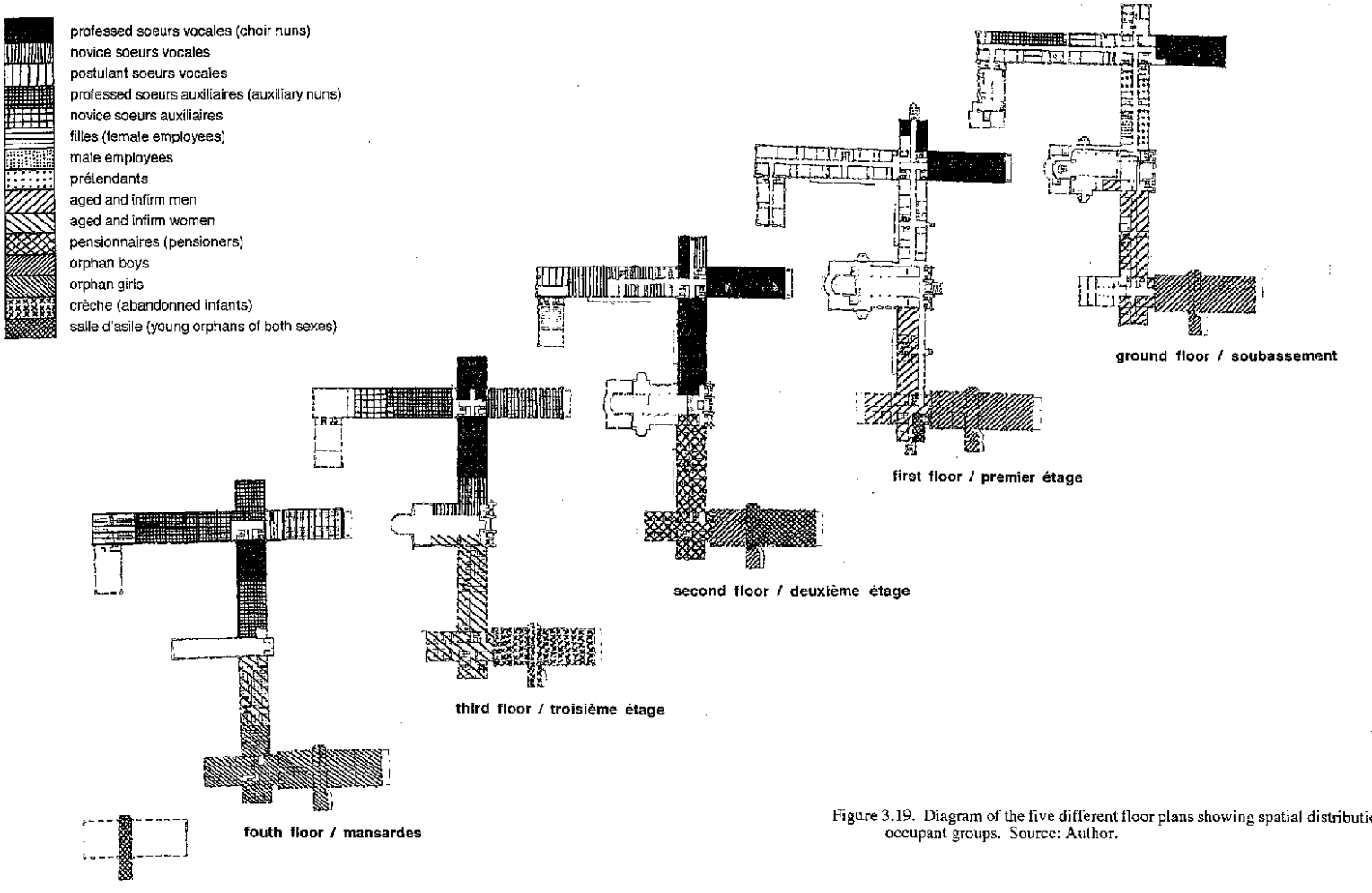

Figure 3.19. Diagram of the five different floor plans showing spatial distribution of occupant groups. Source: Author.

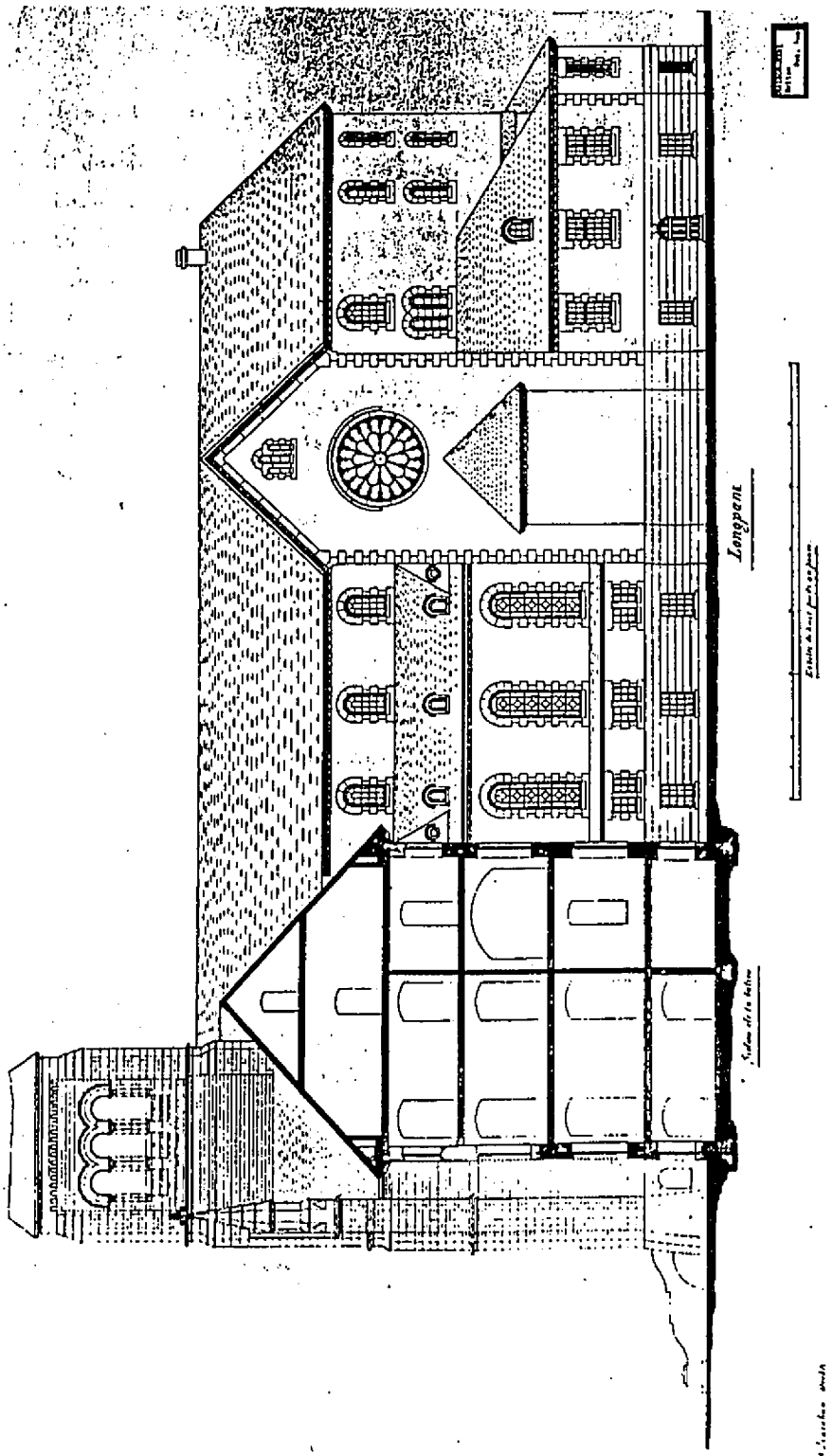

Figure 3.20. Section of the Mother House. Source: Reproduced from Salomon de Friedberg.

(sometimes even in the missions) the sequestering of novices, then, remained at a symbolic level with the Grey Nuns.[34]

The novices' dormitories located on the third floor of the *aile de la communauté* were vertically sandwiched between the postulants above and the professed nuns below. Soeur Saint Jean de la Croix completed her postulancy and novitiate within two years of her admission; she probably carried out half of her training in the Mother House. She received her profession on August 15, 1872. The *salle de la communauté* on the first floor was reserved for the professed nuns as a recreation space, whereas all nuns—postulants, novices and professed—dined in the ground floor refectory immediately below.

Despite the fact that 80% of the nuns in the social services sector (like the Grey Nuns) came from agricultural and working-class backgrounds, by the turn of the century there were two distinct ranks of nuns within the community.[35] This duality is clearly expressed in the buildings' plans. The *aile de la communauté* as its own independent wing, separated the *soeurs vocales* (of all vocational stages) from all other members of the working convent (symbolically at least) community. In effect, the wing defined an exclusive space for what was considered in 1871 as the religious community per se. Spaces allotted to the *soeurs auxiliaires*, by contrast, were dispersed throughout the Guy Street wing. Their dormitories occupied the uppermost floor of the *aile des ateliers* and the *aile de l'infirmerie*, their novitiate the third floor, and their refectory the basement of the *aile des ateliers*.

"[I]n making the distinction in rank and status between *les soeurs converses* and *les soeurs de choeurs* [called *soeurs vocales* and *soeurs auxiliaires* respectively by the Grey Nuns], the Congregation [de Notre Dame] assured middle-class lay women who took the veil after 1888 that in the convent they would live as middle-class nuns." In contrast, all sisters in the Soeurs de la Miséricorde, regardless of rank, engaged in physically strenuous work.[36] With the Grey Nuns, the distinction between vocational ranks occurred partly by historical accident. For approximately the first century of existence, their order was not permitted to expand beyond 12 professed nuns who acted as administrators of the General Hospital, as outlined in their original patent letters.[37]

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[34]Was the addition of classrooms in the novitiate a response to increased conformance with Roman models? During this period the Grey Nuns were seeking Roman approbation (official recognition by the Holy See) and may have had to show willingness to conform to a standard model. Marguerite Jean noted a trend of normalization in the constitutions of all congregations. No classrooms formed part of the novitiate in the Maison Mère d'Youville, though the increased number of candidates may have rendered such spaces necessary.

[35]Laurin, chap. 11.

[36]Danylewycz, 93.

[37]Jean, 65; Fauteux, 598-600.

In spite of this decree, the Grey Nuns attracted many women who attached themselves to the community and devoted their lives to the service of the poor. They lived like religious women without having taken formal vows.[38] Called *les filles données*, they were "excellentes personnes qui désirent servir Dieu et le prochain sans toutefois s'engager de façon irrévocable...Appliquées aux humbles tâches...servant sans autre rénumération que leur pain quotidien et l'assurance d'être assistées en leur vieillesse."[39] The *soeurs auxiliaires*, then, as entrusted helpmates in the daily routine, and in undertaking housekeeping chores—cooking, cleaning, ironing—liberated time for the *soeurs vocales* to engage in the more professional and administrative tasks. This division of labour contributed to making collective living possible; each worker had distinct responsibilities which ensured the smooth operation of the institution.

Prior to their canonical recognition, in 1899, the *soeurs auxiliaires* may have in fact shared dormitories with the *filles*. This allocation of the attic to subordinate ranks recalls the hierarchy of spaces in the bourgeois home; it was a space traditionally associated with the servant class, female domestics in particular. In the Maison Mère d'Youville, the dormitories of the *Soeurs Franciscaines* were located in the *aile des pauvres*, with the *filles*, rather than in the *aile de la Communauté*.[40] The 1894 creation of a new dormitory in the attic above the novices' infirmary, then, essentially reintroduced physical separation of this new class of nuns from the *filles*. They were also outfitted with their own novitiate at this time.[41] The plans of the Mother House retain remnants of the transformation of these loosely organized female workers into a subordinate, yet in many respects, parallel vocational rank, one that possibly represented a promotion for those *filles données* who may have yearned for a canonically recognized religious life.[42] Not all the indentured

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[38]Many foundresses of Montréal orders (like Mère d'Youville) began their missions this way, only after living fully secular lives as mothers and widows. Like the early founding members of the Grey Nuns, *les filles* simply worked without a canonically recognized rule. See Jean, 132-8 for the establishment of "third" orders.

[39]Estelle Mitchell s.g.m., *L'essor apostolique: Soeurs de la Charité de Montréal, "Soeurs Grises," 1877-1910* (Montréal, 1981),14, footnote 11: "Ces filles données seront appelées successivement les Maries, les Socurs franciscaines et les Soeurs de Ste-Marthe. En 1889, l'association des Petites Soeurs auxiliaires était crée; deux ans plus tard, en 1891, on optait pour le nom de Petites Soeurs auxiliaires. En 1905, l'association était établie canoniquement; les Soeurs auxiliaires étaient fusionnées aux Soeurs vocales le 3 décembre, 1946."

[40]See plans of Maison Mère d'Youville reproduced in Robert Lahaise, *Les Edifices Conventuels du Vieux Montréal: Aspects Ethno-historiques*, Collection Ethnologie Cahiers du Québec (Québec: Hurtubise HMH, 1980), 475-96.

[41]ASGM *Annales* 1892-95, 406. The 1894 annal entry makes reference to the provision of a larger space, a *salle de réunion*, for the *Petites Soeurs Auxiliaries* as their previous one became too small. It was turned into an oratory. On Soeur Saint Jean de la Croix's drawings, the *salle* is labelled novitiate.

[42]Even when they obtained canonical recognition, their religious responsibilities--*obédiances* -- differed from the *soeurs vocales*. The *soeurs auxiliaires* were exempt from certain religious functions and did not have an active nor passive role in governing. Despite this apparent subordination, they were entitled to the same care and subsistence. See *Constitutions*. The annual *statistiques* also retained these distinctions as

women, however, took the habit. Their dormitories, located at the far extremity of the Guy Street wing attic, are a holdover of a previous condition.

The distinctions between rank and status of women religious also extended to the location of infirmaries; they, too, respected the established floor hierarchy. Indeed, sick *soeurs vocales* had an isolated wing, diagonally across from their second floor dormitory; the novices' infirmary was also placed at right angles to the novices' dormitory. The *soeurs auxiliaires,* instead, had an infirmary outfitted beside their third floor novitiate and below their dormitory. This discrepancy indicates how though the quarters reserved for *soeurs vocales* were pre-planned, those for the *soeurs auxiliaires* consisted of post-occupancy adaptations. Some of their spaces had been inhabited by inmates before construction of the St-Mathieu Street block. In effect, the boundaries between the secular and the religious (public/private) shifted over time in the Guy Street block. A greater degree of separation between groups within the convent coincided with an increasingly classificatory system of organization and was made possible by the completion of the complex.

Soeur Saint Jean de la Croix' plans show that the Grey Nuns accommodated another group of aspirants to religious life called *prétendants* in the preparatory novitiate on the ground floor.[43] At this early stage one was perceived as pursuing an occupation rather than a vocation, so their quarters were placed closest to the secular world. While some secular women lived as part of the community, others came in daily as hired help. Male employees lodged in a separate building, the *maison des engagés,* located behind the Mother House.[44]

Within the Guy Street block, the divisions between religious members, clustered according to rank and stage, and the secular workers, segregated according to gender, reflected the hierarchical structure of the community. Women religious who were required to perform regular religious duties needed special training and careful initiation into the rites of collective living, a mode of life perhaps unfamiliar to young, lay women who chose to pursue a vocation. Secular workers, although they contributed immensely to the work of the religious community in accomplishing the more menial chores and as hired nurses in the crèche, did not observe the same rules and therefore lived somewhat separately from the

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only the professed *soeur vocales* were named with their office, but after 1907 the postings for the *soeurs auxiliaires* are given.

[43] This space was alternatively called *école ménagère.*

[44] According to 1880 constitutions male employees were to help out in the destitute men's sections, but photos circa 1930 show them in laundry and kitchen as well. The language of the 1880 constitutions, however, refer to workers in laundry and kitchen as female.

religious community. Together these two groups served the inmates housed in the St-Mathieu Street block.

Transience characterized the destitute population of the Mother House. Inmates generally stayed anywhere from a few months to a few years, although some may have resided at the convent for decades. For the elderly and the infirm, the convent acted as a hospice, a safe Christian place to live out their final days.[45] For the orphans, it served as a temporary home where the nuns schooled them until they reached 12-14 years of age, after which the nuns placed them in an apprenticeship, unless a family adopted them as a child.[46] In any case, there was a higher turnover within the inmate population than in the religious community. Even if some nuns rotated between missions, they remained lifelong members of the community. The tremendous, unpredictable fluctuation of the rather large destitute population impacted on the organization of the Mother House. Plans of the St-Mathieu block show the classification of the inmates according to age, gender and class, presumably because persons within each category required similar care.

Within the orphans' wing, boys occupied the lower floors and girls the uppermost. The nuns classed orphans of both sexes into similar age groups. Each cohort had its own dormitory and its own uniforms, probably for ease of discipline and supervision. In a sense, this paralleled the school system where each grade had its own classroom or even the military where people grouped into companies each had their own rank.[47] The crèche for the abandoned infants occupied the third floor, thus underlining this segregation along gender lines, although infants under two years of age shared apartments. Preschool boys and girls also shared a *salle d'asile* on the second floor, although they also had separate classrooms and other *salles*. Similarly, within the *aile des vieillards,* aged and infirm men and women inhabited different apartments, men in the ground floors, women in the garret. The more affluent pensioners could afford their own private bedsitting rooms in the *bel étage* (Figure 3.19, 3.20).

This efficient method of classification was comparable to that of hospitals, orphanages, and asylums, where patients were classified according to type of disease or illness, sex and ability to pay. Commissioners specified a minimum of seven classes for workhouse inmates: "aged and infirm men, able-bodied men over fifteen years of age, boys between seven and fifteen, aged and infirm women, able-bodied women over fifteen, girls

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[45]Bettina Bradbury, "Mourir Chrétiennement: La Vie et la Mort dans les Établissements Catholiques pour Personnes Âgées à Montréal au XIXe siècle" *Revue d'histoire de l'amérique française* vol.46 no.1 (été 1992): 143-175, underscores the importance the elderly and infirm women attached to the preparation for a Christian death.

[46]Due to lack of space in the Maison Mère d'Youville, the nuns rarely kept the children beyond the age of 10-11. See Lapointe-Roy, 156.

[47]Rothman, 235.

between seven and fifteen, and children under seven." Segregation of the sick and the insane was also encouraged. An 1868 official circular on workhouse construction "recommended that separate day- and night-time accommodation be provided. It also "contained specific guidance on a range of matters concerning workhouse design, including ventilation, sanitation, the thickness of walls and dimensions of beds, wards and corridors."[48]

Building guides, such as the workhouse circular, pervaded nineteenth-century institutional design. They supposedly outlined the best solutions to a variety of problems: those related to the organization of the building into discrete parts for the most efficient categorization of patients and inmates, those related to heating, ventilation, and sanitation to achieve the most salubrious conditions and to effect the desired cure, among many others. Though not as detailed as guidebooks for hospitals, asylums or workhouses, one chapter in the Grey Nuns' *coutumier* summarized general guidelines for the construction of their own conventual buildings. It stipulated conformity with the usages of the Mother House, which acted implicitly as a model for subsequent building construction. Otherwise the stipulations were quite general. For example, structures were to be erected on salubrious sites, apartments were to be spacious, easily aired and well-planned to facilitate service to the destitute; apartments reserved for the use of sisters were to include a common room for spiritual exercises and work, a refectory and a dormitory.[49] In secular institutions, male experts—architects and doctors—usually developed institutional guidelines, but communities of women religious drew up their own, albeit in consultation with their spiritual advisor.[50]

Divisions in the convent were probably introduced for social-cultural reasons rather than medical ones. The nuns' classification system reproduced divisions prevalent within middle-class turn-of-the-century urban society; the nuns placed the men closer to the public outdoor realm while removing women from it, especially girls. This arrangement of spaces was also found in English townhouses (and presumably Montréal mansions). Ladies' drawing rooms were typically located in the rear, the private side of the building, whereas the men's faced the street. The study and library, arguably male domain, shared the ground floor with other public spaces as the dining room, parlour and hall. Female

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[48]Lindsay Prior, "The Architecture of the Hospital: A Study of Spatial Organization and Medical Knowledge" *British Journal of Sociology* vol. 39 no 1 (1988): 103; Felix Driver, *Power and Pauperism: The Workhouse System, 1834--1884*, Cambridge Studies in Historical Geography 19 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 64-5, 70. For a similar discussion on hospital standards see Forty, and Taylor.

[49]ASGM *Coutumier* (1907). A survey of *coutumiers* from three different periods (1875, 1907 and 1930) reveal changes over time suggesting that the nuns adapted their guides to fit new requirements and changes in customs.

[50]In hospital planning Florence Nightingale was an exception to the male expert.

domestic servants slept in the garret, while male employees found accommodation above the stables overlooking the back lane.[51]

In other respects, the Mother House reflected the layering of the Parisian apartment building in that all socio-economic groups resided under same roof. Cellars were used for storage and ground floors for commercial purposes in the Parisian apartment house. These floor levels mostly housed kitchens, pantries and other storage rooms, laundry and workshops in the convent. In both buildings, the main entrances were supervised by the concierge in the former, the *soeur portière* in the latter. Though the convent lacked the *entresol* of the Parisian apartment building, it did have the *bel étage*, a floor reserved for the landlord or wealthy tenant. The professed *soeurs vocales* and pensioners shared this privilege in the Mother House. Higher floors garnered less rent (therefore less status) and servants of tenants were allotted the bedrooms in the attic space of the apartment house. All residents in Parisian apartment houses shared the grand central stairs, thus people of all socio-economic classes had contact with each other within their residential buildings, as they did in the larger city.[52]

Soeur Saint Jean de la Croix' drawings also show central grand staircases in the Mother House, notably at the intersections of the main axes of the structure. They became important circulation and transportation nodes as two sets of grand stairs and two minor sets of stairs occupied the large room-like spaces (Figure 3.21). The dumbwaiters (and later elevators) were also installed in this area of the building. Located at the juncture or outside of the apartments, these stairs acted as collectors for different population groups within a given wing. The one nearest the *aile de la communauté*, however, was probably used exclusively by the *soeurs vocales*. In some areas the large stair landings acted as social spaces, as a parlour for the elderly people, for instance. Another landing outside the *soeurs vocales* dormitory served as an oratory; it was fitted with an altar.

In addition, secondary sets of stairs, located at the mid-way point of each wing, connected different floors within a wing, especially related apartments: the orphan boys' sleeping and eating areas on the ground floor to their classrooms and salles above, for instance. This stair continued upwards into the younger orphan boys' apartment and the *salle d'asile*, further up into the crèche and then up into the orphan girls' wing. Another set

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[51]For a discussion of British townhouses see Norbert Schoenauer, *History of Housing* (Montreal: McGill School of Architecture, 1992), 237-56; Stefan Muthesius, *The English Terrace House* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982); and Donald J. Olsen, *The City as a Work of Art: London, Paris, Vienna* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), chap. 7 and 8. Claudette Lacelle, *Urban Domestic Servants in 19th-century Canada*, National Historic Parks and Sites Branch, 1987, notes that servants rooms were located in the basement near the kitchen, ground floor, or bedroom floor of Canadian mansions, 106-7.

[52]For a discussion on the Parisian apartment house see Schoenauer 278-88; and Olsen, chaps. 7 and 8. Comparable studies on the room uses in nineteenth-century Montréal triplexes have not yet been done, hence the reliance on foreign examples.

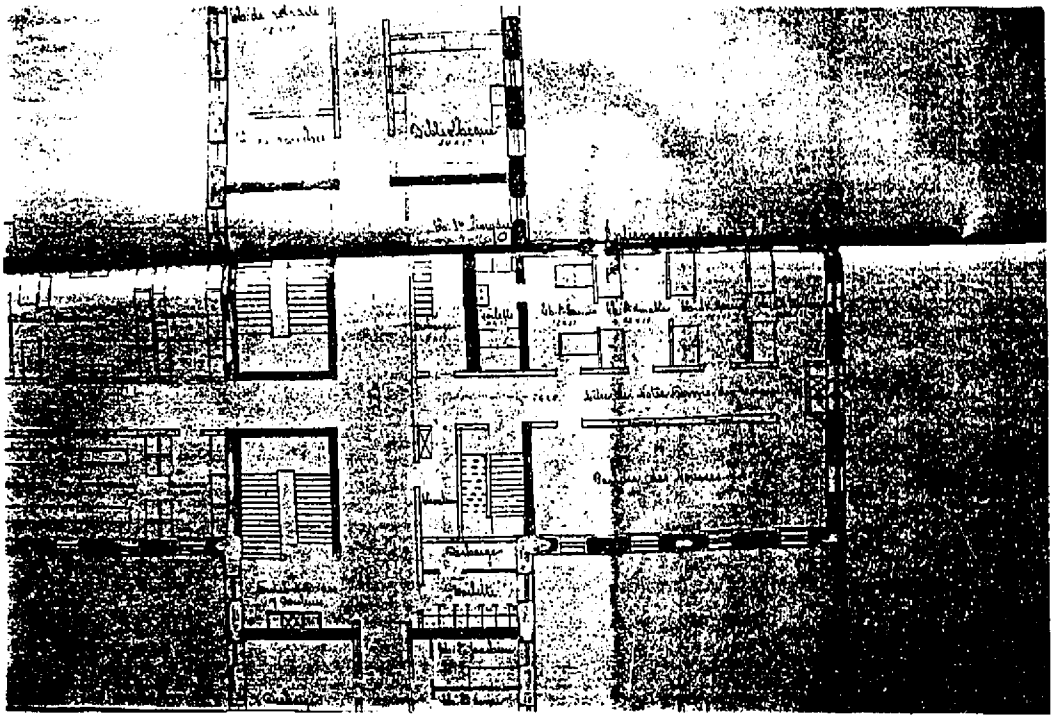

Figure 3.21. Large open staircases at the intersection of two wings. Source: ASGM MM 1190 rue Guy Plans 1900 Doc. 76 C (Soeur Saint Jean de la Croix) *Relevé des Plans de l'Hôpital Général de Montréal, 2e étage, divisions en 1900.*

of stairs in the *lavoir* linked washing and drying facilities to the ironing department. Some of these stairs the nuns installed for convenience only, such as the mid-wing one which effectively shortened the distance between the novice and professed *soeurs vocales* infirmaries.[53] Smaller, "hidden," narrow stairs led up into the upper attic proper (vs. *mansardes*) used for storage. They recalled servant stairs in middle-class houses.

In pavilion-plan hospitals and workhouses comprised of detached blocks strict segregation was observed; each category of patient or inmate was to be without communication with any other.[54] Part of the rationale behind this practice was to reduce contagion. Another part involved the exercise of supervisory control. In the "Nightingale ward" for example, access to the long rectangular room was gained by a single entry at one end (oftentimes linked to a stairwell). This arrangement not only diminished the spread of polluted air to other parts of the hospital, but also enabled nurses to survey both the patients and visitors.[55] The Mother House, instead, has a system of vertically interconnected apartments; groups overlapped and possibilities existed for encounters between them.

As part of its horizontal circulation system, the convent featured unusual double-loaded corridors with interior windows into most spaces (Figure 3.22). This suggests that the convent embodied an architectural language of discipline and surveillance. Internal windows, however, allowed for cross-ventilation and the borrowing of daylight in an era that preceded the widespread use of artificial light and air conditioning systems. Furthermore, the lower halves of these windows contained translucent glass panes which obscured views into workspaces from the corridors.[56] This situation undermined the building's panoptic qualities. Moreover, many rooms not only opened into the corridor, but were interconnected (Figure 3.23). Perhaps visual contact through different spaces permitted the nuns to be aware of what each was doing, reinforcing the cooperative and communal aspects of their work, largely conducted in silence. This particular reading of the plan attempts to attenuate popular assumptions that place so much emphasis on architecture as an apparatus of power.[57]

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[53]ASGM *Annales* 1877-80, 260-1.

[54]Driver, 64-72.

[55]Forty, 78-9.

[56]Other photographs also show that some rooms were equipped with curtains, thus ensuring privacy when desired. See for example ASGM "Photos Maison Mère - Guy 16D Intérieur."

[57]The ultimate model for an architecture of discipline and surveillance is Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon. It featured, in its purest form, a circular plan. Cells lined the exterior perimeter and opened onto a gallery. Inspectors could thus see into every cell, monitoring the inmates activities. For a more detailed discussion see Paul Rabinow, ed., *The Foucault Reader* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984); Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan M. Sheridan (London: Penguin, 1977) discusses the uses of architecture as an apparatus of power.

Figure 3.22. "Corridor Saint-Joseph." Source: ASGM (photo album) *Hôpital Général des Soeurs Grises, 390 Rue Guy, Montréal* (1910), published by Librairie Beauchemin Limitée.

Figure 3.23. "Imprimerie." Source: ASGM "Photos Maison Mère - Guy 19B Intérieur."

One particular 9' (2.7 m.) corridor, offset to the south side of the *aile des vieillards*, acted like an enclosed gallery. It effectively kept all other destitute inmates from travelling directly through the elderly men's apartments on their way to church, provided a processional space, and ensured that the *vieillards* got a view to the south, in addition to light and air into their *salles*. Together, the different stair types and corridors created multiple paths, both horizontally and vertically, through the building and gave the occupants a choice of routes. Indeed, on special feast days, all the inhabitants of the Mother House participated in commemorative processions that wound their way through one end of the building to another, through various corridors and up and down stairs.[58] If fully mobile, the inmates were expected to attend mass in the Church;[59] they also descended into their gardens and yards that the nuns put at their disposal. Thus, contact between resident groups of different classes, ages and gender must have occurred regularly in the Mother House, lending a degree of liveliness to its halls. The convent lacked the isolation between categories of inmates to which other nineteenth century institutions strictly adhered.

Functionally, room uses within residential areas of the Mother House mirrored the domesticity of the home. Few spaces in the convent, however, resembled those found in traditional middle-class houses or even working-class houses, neither in scale nor in furnishing, save for a few notable exceptions: the priests' and *pensionnaires'* apartments (many of whom were benefactors/tresses). Rather, austere spaces associated with large, public institutions, such as hospitals, dominated both Guy and St-Mathieu Street blocks, although minor variations distinguished the different categories of residents. The nuns, for instance, designated infirmary rooms and dormitories within their own apartments by religious names such as *dortoir Ste-Marthe* or *chambre St-Charles*.[60] A marked increase of religious statuary, paintings, and proverbs, relative to the number placed in the inmates' areas differentiated the nuns' quarters from those of their charges, perhaps underlining the distinction between the two groups. Also, the religious community treated their residential apartments as a cloister in restricting access to specific rooms to secular people.[61] In fact, the coutumier stipulated that the nuns' dormitory be removed as far as possible from the apartments of destitute persons or employees. Otherwise, physically and materially, sleeping, eating, and socializing spaces in the convent upheld the institution's distinct way

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[58]See ASGM *Annales* 1902-3, 109, for example.

[59]Bradbury, "Mourir Chrétiennement," 161-2.

[60]The only exception seemed to be the *salle de l'Enfant Jésus* in the crêche. Apparently orphans' rooms in Maison Mère d'Youville were given religious names. Lapointe-Roy, 162.

[61]This area of the Mother House was conspicuously missing from the fictional tour related in *Reminiscence of my visit to the Grey Nunnery.*

of life. The Grey Nuns made a commitment to live like their poorer inmates; the absence of luxury was a form of renunciation.

All nuns slept in large open dormitories, with the exception of the Mother Superior, the *Maîtresse des novices*, and nuns appointed as *Soeurs Hospitalières* in other parts of the building. The first two had their own individual rooms, while the latter had a space partitioned off within the orphan apartment to which they were assigned or their own room within the elderly people's apartment, much like a warden in a hospital ward (before the advent of separate nurses' residences) or women's college.[62] Typically, within the Grey Nuns' large open dormitories, two double rows of beds were arranged along the length of the room, but set apart from the white plastered exterior walls. A carpet runner lay down the centre of the bare wood floor, defining a corridor-like space. Each pair of iron frame beds, placed back to back, was spaced three feet (0.9 m.) apart. One or two chairs and a small simple commode equipped each bedside. The use of full height (8 feet, or 2.4 m.) white cotton curtains, which when pulled around at nighttime, transformed this very communal space into individual sleeping quarters (Figure 3.24).[63] Although this system afforded some visual privacy, it did not provide an auditory barrier. The nuns, however, observed a rule of silence within the dormitories. The nuns stored their habits and other garments in a large communal walk-in closet called a roberie. Washrooms and a *décharge* served each dormitory.

While the location of dormitories, like minor variants in religious costume, reinforced differences in status, the rooms given over to the different ranks of nuns themselves differed little. (The *soeurs vocales* wore a completely black veil, whereas a white coiffe surrounded the edge of the *soeurs auxiliaires*' modified black veil. White headdresses distinguished the novices.) Generally speaking, "the purpose [of] these habits was to...diminish perceptions of individuality among community members, and it was part of the standardization necessary for collective life."[64] The Grey Nuns' large open dormitories also fulfilled this function: they underscored the egalitarianism that characterized this mode of religious and communal life. Each small cubicle or cell within the larger rooms perhaps represented a psychological space that individuals could call their own.

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[62]For hospitals see Taylor; and Adams, "Rooms of Their Own."

[63]ASGM *Annales* 1877-80, 353.

[64]Elizabeth McGahan, "Inside the Hallowed Walls: Convent Life through Material History" *Material History Bulletin* [now known as *Material History Review*] 25 (spring 1987): 6. The importance of costume as a device used to differentiate status between groups in other institutions like the army, hospitals, prisons was acknowledged by Rothman; and Michael Ignatieff, *A Just Measure of Pain: The Penitentiary in the Industrial Revolution, 1750-1850* (London: Penguin, 1978). Moreover, the nuns' habit acted like a metaphorical armour, enabling women to circulate throughout the city though they always went in pairs. The uniforms created a space for the women because they symbolized vows, service, affiliation.

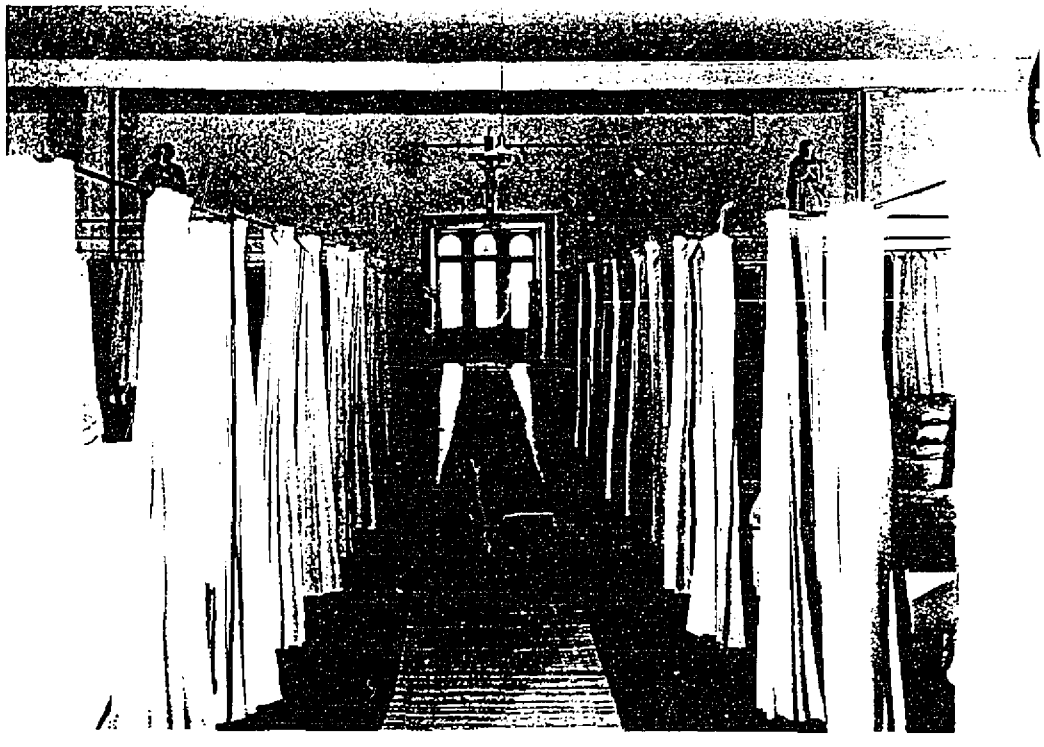

Figure 3.24. "Dortoir Ste-Marguerite." Source: ASGM "Photos Maison Mère - Guy 16C Intérieur."

The inmates, too, were provided with communal sleeping quarters. In the orphans' dormitories, beds were spaced three feet (0.9 m.) apart on a grid, neatly aligned in rows across the room, except for a six foot (1.8 m.) center aisle (Figure 3.25). The bare wooden floors had no rugs and large armoires stood at the end walls, for the storage of children's clothes and linen. Lighting fixtures either hung from the ceiling or were fixed to columns. The bed sizes varied for each age group of orphan; normal sized iron frame beds for the older ones; smaller cots surrounded with metal railings and wire netting or wire rods used as slats, or enlarged cribs the younger ones; and metal framed cribs with wire netting for the infants in the crèche. Miniature rocking chairs, placed at the ends of the interior rows of beds, provided evening amusement for the younger orphans.

Nineteenth-century orphanages and children's asylums in the United States generally adopted large central dormitories, called a congregate system. In both the Pennsylvania orphanage and the Charleston asylum, each dormitory had twenty "neat and evenly spaced little beds."[65] Soeur Saint Jean de la Croix recorded a range of room sizes in the orphans' wing: from one 30' x 16' (9.1 x 4.9 m.) room in the *mansardes* that contained 11 beds to another, measuring 86' x 60' (26.2 x 18.3 m.), located on the ground floor with 152 beds. No dimensions were given for the American examples so it is difficult to compare relative densities. In convent schools, boarders were, in principal, to be divided into as many dormitories as there were classes, one bed per child.[66]

The elderly slept in dormitories of similar density to the orphans, though no room (*vieillards* 52' x 17' (15.9 x 5.2 m.), *vieilles* 66' x 26' (20.1 x 7.9 m.)) exceeded a capacity of 40 beds. Their beds and bedsides, however, were equipped just like the nuns, with curtains that afforded a bit of nighttime privacy.[67] The infirmaries in the *aile des vieillards,* of comparable area to their dormitories, generally contained fewer beds (Figure 3.26). Some of the elderly men had sick rooms, just off their dormitories.[68] In contrast, most rooms in the nuns' infirmaries contained only two beds, the largest wards accommodated up to eight beds.

Typically the infirmaries within the Mother House, essentially modified dormitories, overlooked the nave of the church. The *vieilles'* infirmary, for example, had direct access to the *jubé Sacré Coeur* (Figure 3.6). With this arrangement, the sick and dying (both religious and secular people) could hear and see the mass without descending

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[65]Rothman, 228.

[66]Micheline Dumont and Nadia Fahmy-Eid, *Les Couventines: L'éducation des filles au Québec dans les congrégations religieuses enseignantes 1840-1960* (Montréal: Boréal, 1986), 56.

[67]Lapointe-Roy, 191.

[68]Though annals suggest that the dormitory beside the church on the ground floor was the men's infirmary, which would be in keeping with the overall pattern. ASGM *Annales* 1877-80, 439-40.

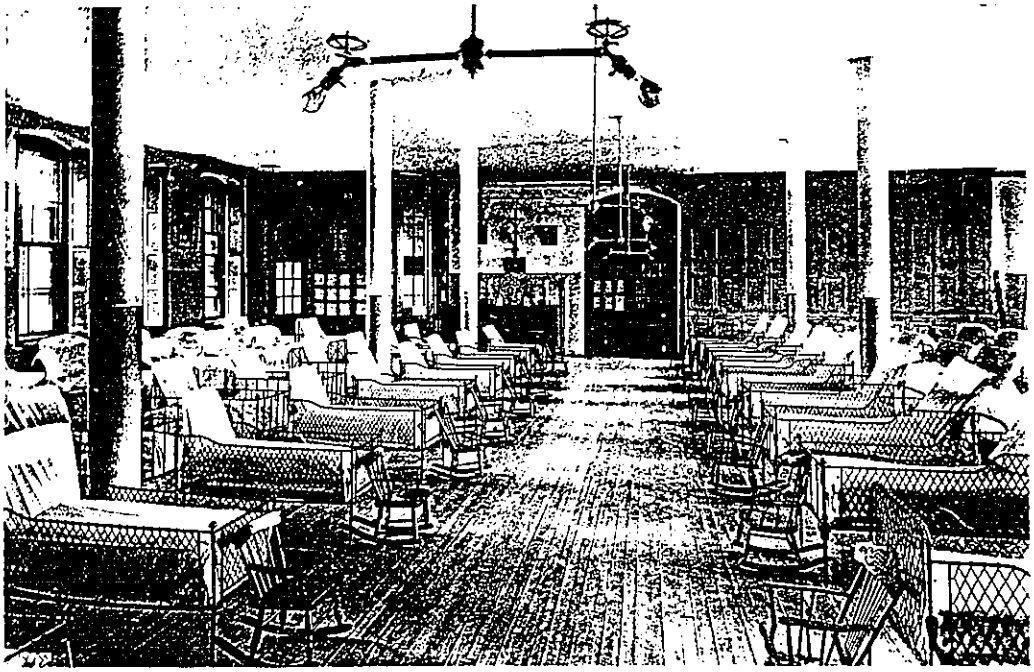

Figure 3.25. "Dortoir des Orphelins." Source: ASGM (photo album) *Hôpital Général des Soeurs Grises, 390 Rue Guy, Montréal* (1910), published by Librairie Beauchemin Limitée.

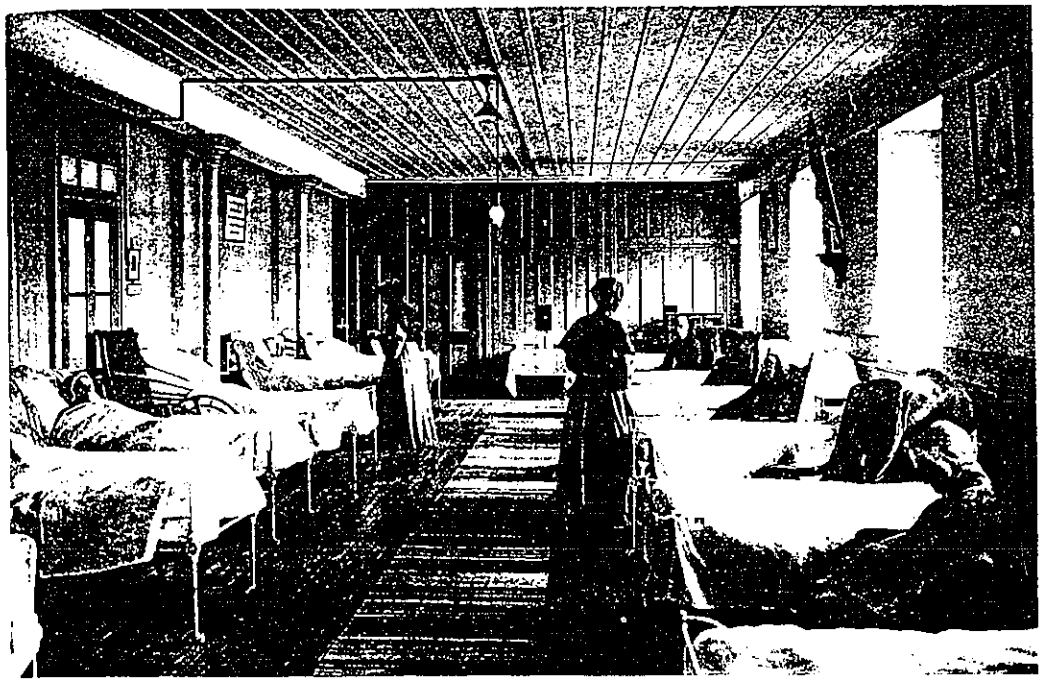

Figure 3.26. "Infirmerie des Vieilles." Source: ASGM (photo album) *Hôpital Général des Soeurs Grises, 390 Rue Guy, Montréal* (1910), published by Librairie Beauchemin Limitée.

to the church, thereby participating in the mass. This spatial arrangement indicates that, like the medieval hospital, much importance was attached to spiritual comfort: the "sick should be able to see and hear religious ceremonies from their beds." Apparently this approach to healing was characteristic of French hospitals in Montréal (including the *Hôpital général*). They emphasized care giving and the preparation of individuals for inevitable death, while for the English establishments, generally labelled as teaching hospitals, health care involved curing the patient, making him or her the object of medical attention.[69] But the expansive verandahs and balconies, the wider spacing of beds, and the higher bed to window ratio within the infirmary rooms in the Mother House also indicated preoccupations with the physical comfort of patients and of airborne modes of disease transmission. These strategies, in addition to careful attention to hygiene and the administering of medicines prescribed by visiting doctors on the part of nuns, helped to effect cures.[70] All infirmaries including those in the *aile de la cuisine des pauvres*, or in the tower-like projection from the orphans' wing had access to a gallery and a view to Mount Royal or the St-Lawrence River, where patients could obtain lots of fresh air and bathe in sunshine. The uppermost floor of the "tower" served to isolate the contagious diseases. The building, then, displayed a hybridized solution to health care; it responded to both miasmic and germ theories of disease and it treated mind, body and spirit of ill persons. But the convent was also unusual in its close proximity of the sick to healthy populations.[71]

Unlike the rest of the convent community, the pensioners' apartments could be compared to retirement homes today, as each had their own furnished bed-sitting room.[72] The nuns also offered semi-private rooms, containing two beds each to those who could afford to pay. These were located on the floors devoted to the destitute population. In charging for lodging and services rendered, the nuns adopted one of working-class women's survival strategies: the taking in of boarders. These payments helped to subsidize free services given to the poor. Part of the attraction for the pensioners perhaps lay in the guaranteed care in illness or simply old age that the nuns provided in a city where adult children were increasingly unable to support parents at home. The convent also offered

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[69] Forty, 63; Shelley Hornstein, "The Architecture of the Montreal Teaching Hospitals of the Nineteenth Century" *Journal of Canadian Art History* vol.14 no.1 (1991): 12-24.

[70] Prior, 94-6, outlines the correlation between pavilion type hospitals and the miasmic theory of disease (where polluted, stagnant air is the source of illness). The use of isolation cubicles pointed to the acceptance of the germ theory of disease. Isolation of patients in single rooms in hospitals also permitted privacy for those able to pay for this service.

[71] Bradbury, "Mourir Chrétiennement," 160, notes that exceptional levels of hygiene maintained within the convent avoided the spread of contagion, especially during times of epidemics.

[72] The pensioners may have brought their own personal furnishings, hence the distinct secular luxury.

these privileged persons an environment conducive to the preparation for a proper Christian death, a important value held in turn-of-the-century society.[73] When the religious community's own population of elderly nuns became unmanageable, they suspended taking in boarders and instead converted the wing's 25 individual rooms into a *sénoriat* for retirees.[74] Prior to July 1908, special rooms within the *soeurs vocales* apartments or infirmary were reserved for elderly nuns. The retired "*filles*" also had their own dormitory in the *aile des ateliers* attic.

Though the convent's densely packed dormitory arrangements maximized a limited area by allocating a minimum amount of space to each individual, the nuns ensured that "tout y est distribué de manière à mettre tout le monde, sinon à l'aise au moins convenablement autant que possible."[75] Even having one's own bed may have, in fact, been for most destitute persons a luxury. The children of many nineteenth-century working-class Montrealers slept several to a bed, a situation that housing reformers and sanitation inspectors decried as a moral danger.[76] In St-Henri, four to eight person families commonly shared 3 room apartments; five to nine related persons lodged in 4 room units of typical duplex housing.[77] In the convent, dormitories served strictly as sleeping areas. The highly regimented schedule and the provision of other types of spaces allowed daytime activities to be pursued elsewhere.

Like their dormitory, the nuns' ground floor refectory constituted a large open space spanned by wood encased beams, with two rows of supporting columns running down the interior of the room. Four long rows of tables were placed lengthwise one after the other down the room, with a break at mid point, making a perpendicular axis for a large throne like chair and a lectern placed along the exterior wall. At mealtimes, two nuns took turns reading scripture and other appropriate readings; this duty rotated weekly.[78] A door opposite the lectern led to the nuns' garden/courtyard. The simple yet solidly built wooden tables had drawers at each setting so that the nuns could put away their individual plates,

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[73]Bradbury, "Mourir Chrétiennement," 164, contests the use of the convent as a refuge of last resort, suggesting instead that industrialization and salaried work permitted families to care for aging members of society themselves. Could the establishment of "old-age homes" possibly reflect the nuns anticipation and participation in a proto-service-sector economy? Their creation of *garderies* for young children seemed to indicate that they were responding to a societal need, see Micheline Dumont-Johnson "Des garderies au XIXe siècle: Les salles d'asile des Soeurs Grises à Montréal," *Revue d'histoire de l'amérique française* vol. 34 no.1 (juin 1980): 27-56.

[74]ASGM *Annales* 1906-08, 609, 657-58.

[75]ASGM *Annales* 1888-92, 172-75.

[76]Baillargeon, 249-50.

[77]Gilles Lauzon, "Habiter un Nouveau Quartier Ouvrier de la Banlieue de Montréal: Village St-Augustin (Municipalité de Saint-Henri) 1855-1881" (Thèse de doctorat, Université de Québec à Montréal, 1986), 94, 179; and Herbert Ames, *The City Below the Hill: a sociological study of a portions of the city of Montreal* (Montreal: Bishop Engraving and Printing Co., 1897), microfiche.

[78]*Constitutions.*

cups, and utensils.[79] Benches served as seating except for a few chairs placed at the table ends. Sugar bowls, salt shakers, and pot holders sat on the tables, ready for use. At the far end of the dining hall stood a crucifix and two religious statues and calligraphic prayers in picture frames hung between windows. Later, the nuns installed built-in cabinets on walls between windows for the storage of dishes (Figure 3.27). Evidently, every object had its place; the meal itself was ritualized.

The elderly women's refectory, though smaller in scale, imitated the nuns' dining hall. It contained only two rows of tables and benches. The *vieillards* ate in a room which doubled as a *salle*. A 1910 photograph shows two rows of tables placed lengthwise in the room, but instead of benches they sat on individual straight back chairs (Figure 3.28). A single row of columns divides the room into two unequal spaces. On the narrower side, near the gallery corridor, rocking chairs were lined up interspersed with some plain wooden chairs with small card tables. A couple of book shelves were fixed to the wall in one corner, the opposite corner was partitioned off for the *Hospitalière* in charge of this office.

For the orphans' refectories, the nuns arranged picnic tables, each spread with table cloths, in a grid formation. The picnic tables had been sawed in half as they only accommodated three place settings. All the orphans, then, faced the same direction. This arrangement must have effectively reduced mealtime conversations as the orphans sat side by side, one in front of each other, as if they were in a classroom facing the teacher and blackboard. This seating arrangement could also be found in the poorhouses of London, England, where hundreds of people were fed in a single sitting.[80] Built-in cupboards for storage lined the end walls, and a sink stood in the corner for the washing of hands and plates. Two long tables across the end of the room perhaps served as buffet type set up, so that the children could help themselves to food, presumably supervised by the nuns (Figure 3.29).[81]

The pensioners' refectory, in contrast, perhaps most closely resembled the dining room of the middle-class home, or even a fine restaurant, especially in its attention to window dressings and choice and placement of furniture. Small tables covered with white table clothes, each with four straight back chairs, dotted the room, not unlike Alexander

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[79]Like their own sleeping cubicles, the individual place settings underscored the recognition of the individual within the collective. *Coutumier*, chap. 8, outlined some specifications for refectory location, use, and furniture.

[80]Peter Wood, *Poverty and the Workhouse in Victorian Britain* (Wolfeboro Falls, NH: Alan Sutton Publishing, 1991).

[81]Compare to Rothman, 228; Driver, 97.

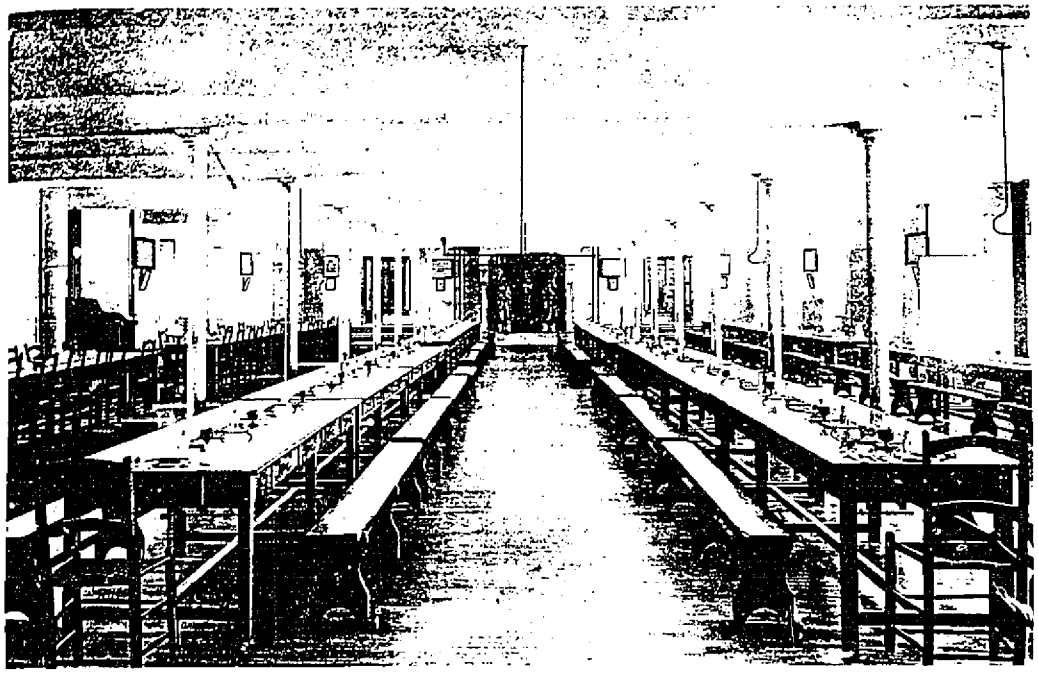

Figure 3.27. "Réfectoire des Soeurs." Source: ASGM (photo album) *Hôpital Général des Soeurs Grises, 390 Rue Guy, Montréal* (1910), published by Librairie Beauchemin Limitée.

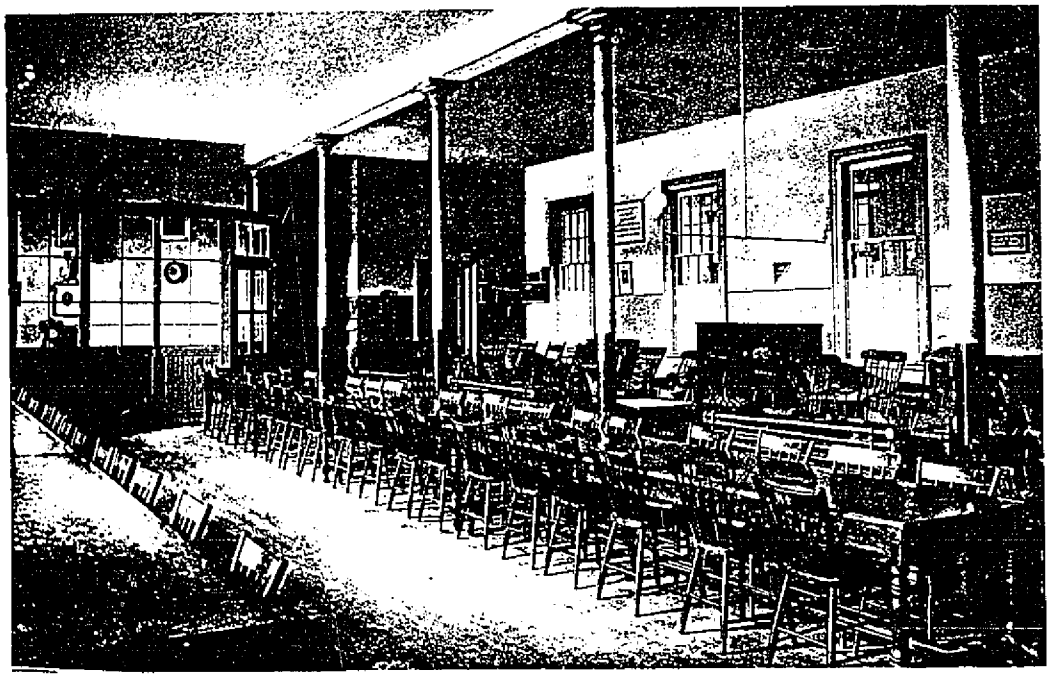

Figure 3.28. "Salle des Vieillards." Source: ASGM (photo album) *Hôpital Général des Soeurs Grises, 390 Rue Guy, Montréal* (1910), published by Librairie Beauchemin Limitée.

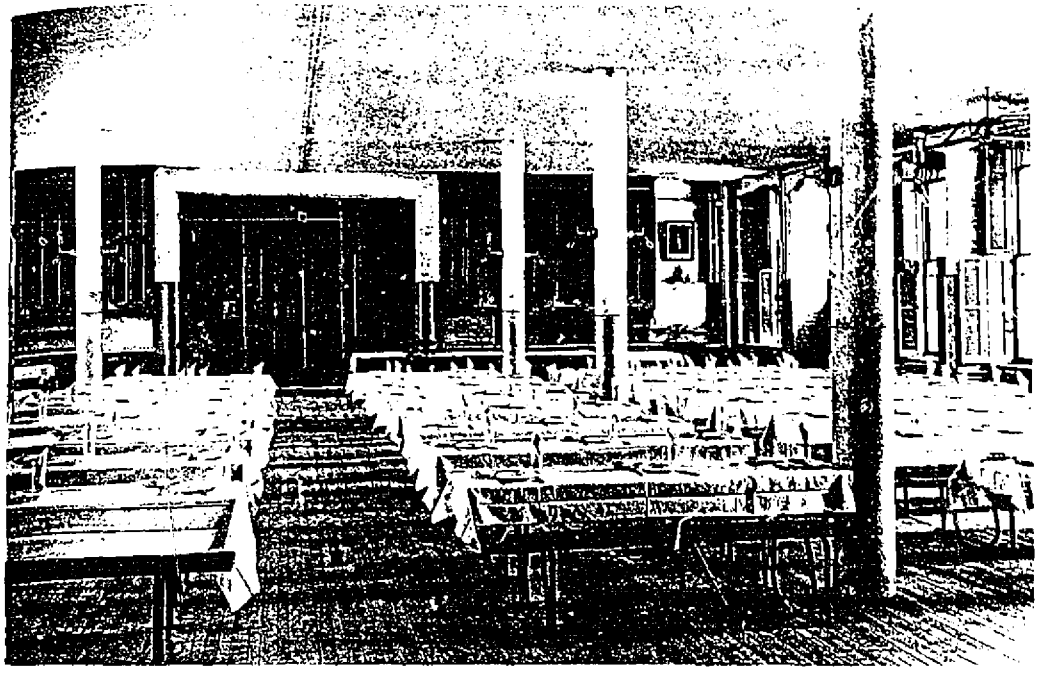

Figure 3.29. "Réfectoire des Orphelins." Source: ASGM (photo album) *Hôpital Général des Soeurs Grises, 390 Rue Guy, Montréal* (1910), published by Librairie Beauchemin Limitée.

Figure 3.30. "Réfectoire des Dames Pensionnaires." Source: ASGM "Photos Maison Mère - St-Mathieu 3B."

and Sons Dining Rooms, a small café/confectionery that fronted Ste-Catherine Street.[82] Curtains framed door and window openings (into the corridor) and potted plants placed on stands softened the room (Figure 3.30). Though these finishing touches nowhere resembled the carved wood panelling, the rich tapestries and chandeliers that ornamented the dining rooms of the upper classes, they nonetheless lent a degree of hominess. Boarders at the convent dined and conversed together in small groups, whereas the rest of the population ate in rather large, mess-hall like spaces. Not only did allusions to military organization pervade the refectories of the Mother House, but also that of other nineteenth-century institutions, asylums for example. Inmates ate in silence at long tables in large communal halls, raising their hands to request an extra serving.[83]

Two industrial sized kitchens, on the ground floor of each block, provided the prepared food for all the convent residents. Each group of workers had their refectory on the ground floor, in the Guy Street block, located for convenience as near as possible to the kitchen. Smaller kitchenettes adjacent to the refectory of each apartment warmed and served the prepared food, brought up on dumb waiters. They acted as local distribution centers. This situation echoed New York apartment hotels, some of which offered residents a choice between eat-in meal service in their own private dining rooms (the food was sent up via the dumbwaiter) or table-served grand public dining rooms (residents descended from their apartment to dine).

The convent offered two types of socializing spaces for each resident group: formal parlours which acted as a bridge with the outside world and *salles* for recreating with other members of the same group. The community parlour, like all other parlours in the Mother House, were located in the *portiques*, as near to the street entrances as possible (Figure 3.9). The porter's office, screened off with a wooden and glass partition, controlled entry and exiting into the building as it overlooked the entrance. From behind the transparent screen, the *portière* also observed the parlour room's activities. Two double rows of straight back, wooden chairs, paired to face one another, lined the length of the room. The bare wooden floor and white painted, plaster finished, walls lent an air of austerity to the space, relieved only by a few religious paintings and prints that hung on the walls. The nuns received guests rarely, usually close friends and immediate family, and only on given days.[84] Because it was the only space the nuns could normally allow secular people to

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[82]*The Windsor Hotel Guide to the City of Montreal: with a shopping index and directory* (Montreal, n.p. [1898]), microfiche.

[83]Rothman, 235.

[84]Micheline Dumont and Nadia Fahmy-Eid, 54, 61 note that the parlours were used by *couventines* to maintain contact with friends and family, though this was allowed only on Sundays and holidays.

access, the novices' parlour was accommodated to receive Bourgeau's family who helped care for the architect on his deathbed.[85]

This room did not resemble a typical middle-class domestic parlour in scale, arrangements or finishes. Also located near the entrance, this reception room in traditional homes intercepted visitors, restricting them to a relatively public part of the house. In these houses, windows onto the street were dressed with velvet curtains, chandeliers were suspended from a high ceiling, mantle pieces were richly ornamented, walls were wallpapered with patterns of small colourful bouquets, floors were covered with carpets, and furniture—upholstered and padded chairs, console tables, settees, and cabinets—haphazardly placed, welcomed the visitor.[86] It was made to feel cozy and comfortable if not feminine, whereas the nun's community parlour bespoke of institutional anonymity. Its austerity and lack of intimacy made the space appear cold. Similar formal parlours were provided for the novices and the orphans. Another smaller one, located on the ground floor at the northern end of the *aile des ateliers*, near the lavoir, was presumably put at the secular workers' disposal and acted as a control desk for hired outside help or as a kind of employees' entrance. The stair hallways in the St-Mathieu block doubled as parlours for the elderly residents, with chairs placed along the walls. It acted as a sort of informal lounge where the *vieillards* could receive their guests comfortably.

The second type of social space for the religious community consisted of the *salle de la communauté*. The same size as the nuns' dormitory and refectory, this large open space focused on an altar outfitted at the far end. When the nuns received official guests, such as distinguished ecclesiastical figures, a place of honour was reserved near the altar. Generally, two rows of chairs were placed lengthwise, just behind each row of columns, and faced into the interior of the room (though surely during less formal occasions the nuns sat in small groups, pulling their chairs into circles). Between windows stood commodes with drawers, presumably where each nun stored her needlework or other quiet recreation equipment. The ornate iron columns, (that is defined with base, flutes and capital) together with a grandfather clock, statuary, busts, and paintings (sometimes the nuns' own work, executed in the convent art studio) decorated the room and lent a degree of stateliness (Figure 3.31).[87] Each rank and stage, including *filles*, had their own recreation space, based on that of the *soeurs vocales*, although often simpler, plainer and smaller.

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[85]ASGM *Annales* 1888-92, 65

[86]François Rémillard and Brian Merritt, *Mansions of the Golden Square Mile, 1850-1930* (Montreal: Meridian Press, 1987).

[87] See *Annales* 1877-80, 302-305 for a description of furniture, most of which was brought over from the Maison Mère d'Youville.

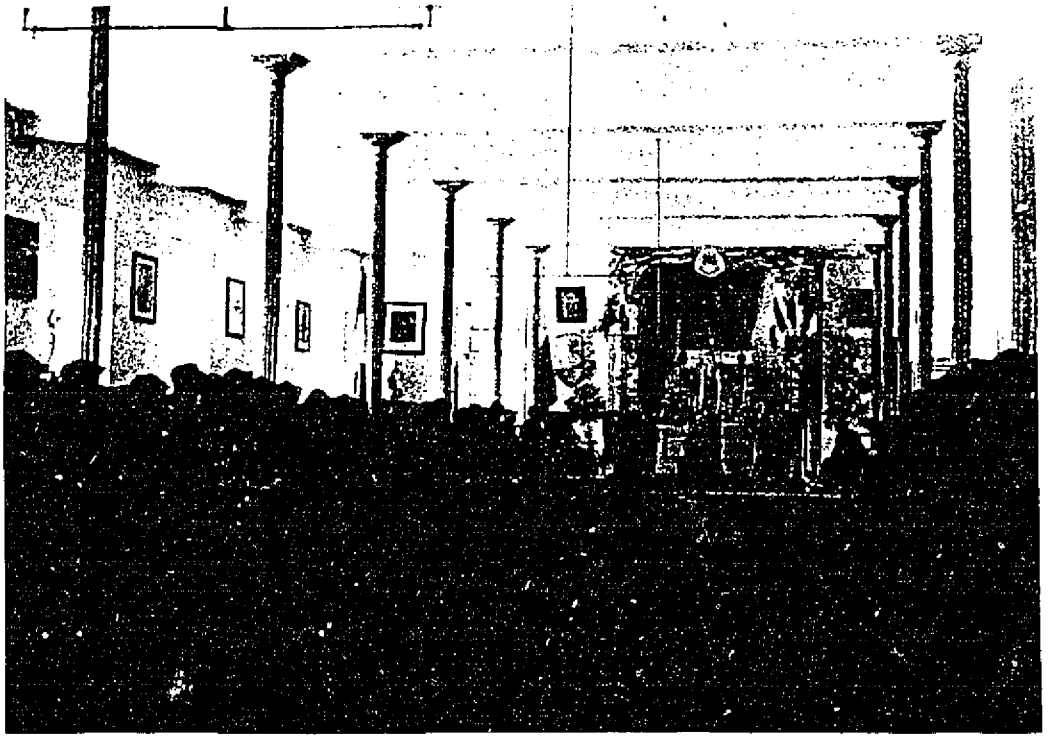

Figure 3.31. "Visite du Père Captier -- Supérieur Général de St-Sulpice à la salle de communauté, rue Guy." Source: ASGM "Photos Maison Mère - Guy 3E Intérieur."

Salles for the aged and infirm women also bore certain similarities to the nuns' recreation rooms, though smaller in scale and less formal. A large wooden table, rocking chairs, smaller tables and small commodes with drawers, to store needlework such as knitting, embroidery or other quiet activities, furnished the elderly women's recreation room. Like the orphan girls' room, its walls featured built-in cupboards. The elderly men's salle doubled as a refectory, as previously mentioned. The nuns, however, also provided them with a separate smoking room.[88] Incidentally, the nuns indulged elderly women who used snuff; they received weekly refills for their snuffboxes. This was liberal practice for women, especially within the confines of the convent.[89]

The large open *salles* for the orphans acted as indoor play and teaching areas. A *gradin* (or stepped stage almost like a bleacher) dominated the *salle d'asile*.[90] Used as a tool to "secure attention and obedience," it was from the gallery (or *gradin)* that the youngest children, seated, learned their lessons. This method of teaching was also employed in British Board Schools.[91] In another orphan's *salle*, a couple of pianos stood in opposite corners; they provided musical accompaniment at displays, receptions and more formal functions, in addition to use in choral and music instruction. A 1910 photograph of this room shows a group of orphan boys standing in formation holding toy guns, horns and drums, ready to impress a visiting dignitary (Figure 3.32). Indeed, military overtones appeared even in their outdoor play equipment. Their climbers, swings and rings recalled obstacle courses used for military training.[92]

This attitude towards schooling pervaded both American and English nineteenth-century institutions. After visiting an American asylum, Lydia Child remarked "I saw a stack of wooden guns, and was informed that the boys were daily drilled to military exercises, as a useful means of forming habits of order."[93] "Fixed timetables, regimented drills, out-door labour, gymnastics and musical instruction" comprised the system of

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[88]It was moved out of the building into a new addition built off the north side of their wing into the yard beside the church, in 1910.

[89]Lapointe-Roy, 191.

[90]See also *Annales* 1898-1901, 436, 528.

[91]Deborah E. B. Weiner, *Architecture and Social Reform in Late-Victorian London* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), chap 4.

[92]Jean de Laplante, *Les Parcs de Montréal des origines à nos jours* (Montréal: Méridien, 1990), notes that public (municipal) playgrounds with such equipment—swings, teeter-totters, sandboxes and slides—were introduced to the city by Émile-P. Bernadet in 1913, though they became popular only in the mid-1920s. E. Laird Wilson, "The Montreal Parks and Playgrounds Association Inc.: A Historical Study of the above Association from the Year of its Founding in 1896-1949" (Master Thesis, McGill University, 1953), however, indicates the use of play equipment in privately operated playgrounds dates from 1904; sandboxes appeared as early as 1901.

[93]Rothman, 229. Weiner, 145-6, notes that in Edwardian Britain, "concern for the physical well-being of the nation merged with patriotic fervor and defense of empire." Both boys and girls participated in the twenty-minute lessons in drill and physical exercise, three times a week.

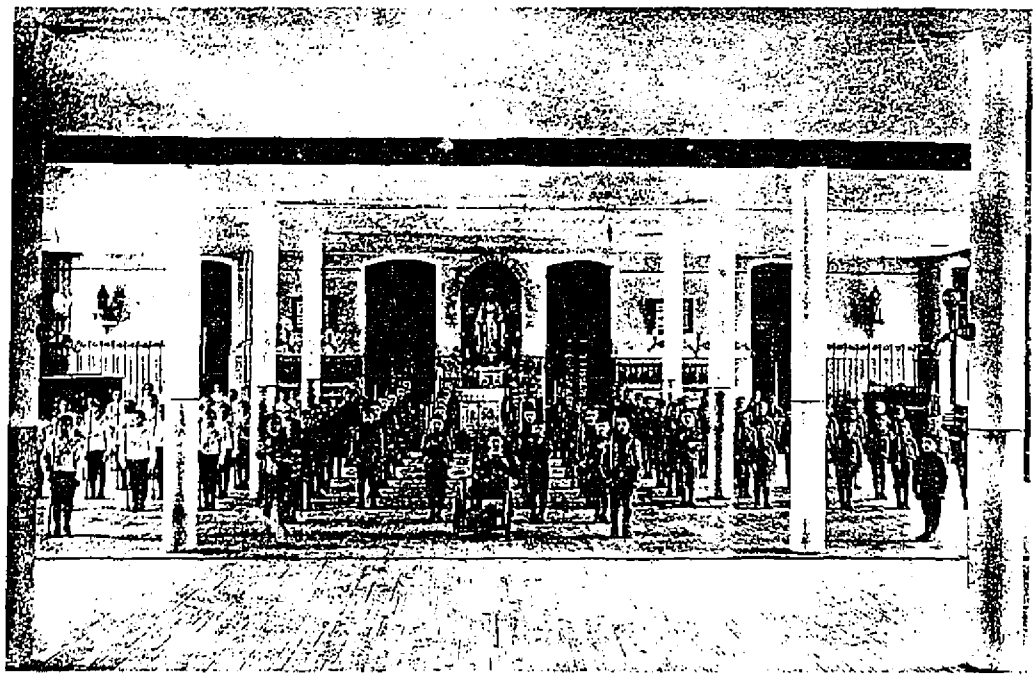

Figure 3.32. "Salle des Orphelins." Source: ASGM (photo album) *Hôpital Général des Soeurs Grises, 390 Rue Guy, Montréal* (1910), published by Librairie Beauchemin Limitée.

Figure 3.33. "Salle des Orphelines." Source: ASGM (photo album) *Hôpital Général des Soeurs Grises, 390 Rue Guy, Montréal* (1910), published by Librairie Beauchemin Limitée.

education used in the district schools of England whose goals aimed at inculcating pauper children with a moral discipline through work and play.[94] Lessons by rote, manual labour, indoor and outdoor play, resting and eating periods, all punctuated the children's typical day in Montréal's *salles d'asile*.[95] In addition to the *salles*, the orphans at the Mother House spent their days in classrooms. School benches, that seated two per desk with a fold up seat equipped the girl's classroom, for example.

Though their routine would have been equally regimented, the girls, when photographed, sat either on the floor or on chairs or stood in small groups in the background, not in military corps formation (Figure 3.33). Some held books and dolls. Built-in cupboards and a few tables perhaps suggested a more serious work environment. Once again, it seems that the treatment of males and females differed. This was in keeping with the institutional trends of the 1880s and 1890s. British Board schools, for instance, taught girls in cookery, laundry and housewifery, but instructed boys in woodworking and metalcraft.[96] Contemporary gender roles were reinforced in the convent as well with the training of girls in domestic skills and home economics. As role models, the nuns presented a contradictory message as they themselves acted in ways most turn-of-the-century women could not.[97] Women religious consciously undermined the sexual division of labour. Nevertheless, their differential treatment along class and gender lines underscored tacit assumptions of Victorian society in terms of defining what were appropriate activities for young girls and boys, aged and infirm men and women.

Despite the fact that different categories of nuns and inmates were clustered separately within the building, the sleeping, eating, and recreation spaces generally shared a similar air of austerity, except, of course, the pensioners' and priests' apartments. Individual identities were subsumed within the collective. Materially, all women religious and inmates obtained equal treatment and access to resources. The strong communal nature of most spaces underscored egalitarianism; the furnishings and their arrangement evince the communalism and pragmatism that informed conventual life. Uses of spaces were divided

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[94]Driver, 96.

[95]Dumont-Johnson, 33-9.

[96]Weiner, chap. 5. George W. Parmelee, *Education in the Province of Québec* (Québec: Department of Public Instruction, 1914), observed the same distinctions in the schools of this province.

[97]Micheline Dumont and Nadia Fahmy-Eid, 273, observed three important contradictions in the education of girls by teaching orders of women religious. First, a double standard existed along class lines: a higher quality education was offered to the paying elite while the masses obtained general instruction in overcrowded settings. Secondly, the promotion of "official discourse" through the training of girls to become better wives and mothers collided with the tacit affirmation that celibate religious women pursued professional careers. Third, even though women students were theoretically prepared for gainful occupations, most of these opportunities were controlled by religious congregations.

according to function and time of day, regulated by the ringing of the bell.[98] These rhythms informed and affected everyone's experience of convent life.

The Mother House of the Grey Nuns recreated a small city unto itself, replicating a microcosm of Montréal within its walls, inherently full of contradictions. The convent exuded the values of religious and public institutions—anonymity and collective identity—while its spaces also retained domestic functions. While the fortress-like exterior walls of the Mother House projected a conservative image of the community, the interior reflected a collective dwelling arrangement, organized and operated by the nuns, which blurred the contemporary notions of public and private spheres. The convent sharply demarcated a physical space within the larger city for this group of women living outside the confines of the paternal family home.

[98]Bells helped to regiment the working/learning day in refuges, workhouses etc. too, Rothman, 225. For the significance of the bell to structuring religious life, see McGahan, 6.

CHAPTER 3

Conventual Transformations: "les améliorations modernes"

> Ce soir, comme dernier article du programme [Triduum pour la Vierge Marie], a lieu l'illumination. Chaque officière avait, au cours de la journée, appliqué dans les fenêtres, les papiers déposés par les organisatrices; et à huit heures, six cent soixante-huit fenêtres s'illuminent à la fois. Chaque fenêtre contient de deux à huit chandelles, selon les besoins. Permissions nous est donné de parcourir l'intérieur de notre enclos, afin de jouir du spectacle que cette vue présente. Les couleurs variées, leur heureuse combinaison, la grandeur de l'édifice, le tout, en un mot, présentait un ensemble éblouissant. Et comme l'écrit un des spectateurs: "Avec ses nombreuses fenêtres, ornées de transparents lumineux et donnant ainsi les nuances variées de l'arc-en-ciel, le vaste hôpital des Soeurs Grises apparaissait dans la nuit comme une immense palais de cristal illuminé."[1]

As this excerpt from the religious community's annals describes, the Mother House of the Grey Nuns periodically experienced temporary transformations. On special occasions, the nuns decorated the corridors throughout the whole building with banners and statuary for religious processions in which all the occupants of the convent participated. Although it is unclear whether the writer quoted in the above passage is a nun or another Montrealer looking in from outside, the reference to the Crystal Palace reveals an interesting architectural simile. Its inclusion by the annalist is significant because it may suggest how the nuns' themselves conceptualized their building. Clearly, the skeletal iron and glass transparency of the 1851 Crystal Palace in London, as an image, lay in sharp contrast to the heavy, static masonry of the actual Mother House. This comparison, however, evokes the modernity that each structure projected.[2]

The preceding chapter examined the disposition of rooms and resident groups within the Mother House at a particular moment in time, about 1900, to argue that the religious community effectively blurred the traditional divisions between the public and private spheres. This section considers change over time in order to discuss the nuns' modern attitude towards space and technological developments. It asserts that the Grey

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[1]ASGM *Annales* 1904-6, 294-5.

[2]Montréal had its own Crystal Palace on Ste-Catherine Street, east of Peel Street. Built in 1860, it stood three storeys tall and was constructed of wood and glass. Donald McKay, *The Square Mile: Merchant Princes of Montréal* (Vancouver/Toronto: Douglas and McIntyre, 1987), 42-3.

Nuns' convent displayed a degree of progressiveness in its flexible plan and advanced technological systems.

As in the previous chapter, Soeur Saint Jean de la Croix's graphic reconstruction of the Mother House, the Grey Nuns' annals, and photographs serve as the primary sources. Her immense (approximately 7' x 8' (2.1 x 2.4 m.)) ink and gouache drawings conveyed not only the plan, circa 1900, but also represented the technology, and indicated demolition and renovation work with impressive technical clarity. Water, steam, and sewage systems were carefully indicated and colour coded. Note, for example, the "*privées disparues*" coloured yellow; these toilets served the dormitories of the orphan boys when the community first occupied the building in 1871 (Figure 4.1). The existence of these drawings belies the conventional notion of women as passive recipients of built form and, in fact, exemplifies that some engaged in activities traditionally associated with male domains of expertise.[3]

Subsequent to the plans, Soeur Saint Jean de la Croix produced documents as separate homemade books that were bound using recycled cardboard.[4] Beyond demonstrating the nuns' sensitivity to making the most of available resources, these books contained diagrams which, with their emphasis on room designations, charted the changing organization of the convent, and documented the technological service infrastructure. One diagram, for example, indicated the location of gas and water mains on the site, their entry points and where the pipes traversed through the building. Written texts accompanied the sketches in which Soeur St Jean de la Croix defined technical terms, explained how new technologies functioned and recounted the adaptations that their introduction necessitated in the Mother House. Soeur Saint Jean de la Croix even noted the substantial savings that the community's *économe* achieved with the 1903-4 construction of an underground coal storage structure. The contractor's quote to build the concrete floor came in at $3000.

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[3]Victorian middle-class women, through campaigns for housing education were taught to draw plans of their homes, judge the plumbing and sanitation fixtures, evaluate building technology, ventilation and lighting. These responsibilities of safeguarding health within the home pertained to their prescribed roles as ministers and managers of home. See Annmarie Adams "Architecture in the Family Way: Health Reform, Feminism, and the Middle-class House in England, 1870-1900" (Ph.D. Diss. University of California, Berkeley, 1992).

[4]It is difficult to ascertain in what order Soeur Saint Jean de la Croix produced her chronicles of the Mother House. Draft prints in Doc. 5, which seem to document the location of canaux and other pipes, are dated 1906. They were annotated with a message that reads "à vérifier et à corriger avant tirer au propre". The homemade "blue" and "red" books, conserved in the archive are dated 1907. Since the information contained in the books overlap, together they may have consisted of working editions. Perhaps Soeur Saint Jean de la Croix worked backwards in time in order to reconstitute drawings of the Mother House based on the memories of other older nuns (since she compiled similar information on the Maison Mère d'Youville) and other miscellaneous sources. Or, perhaps these documents did indeed chart changes in the convent since her first set of drawings. She was listed in the 1906 and 1907 *statistiques* as *Sacristine de l'infirmerie*.

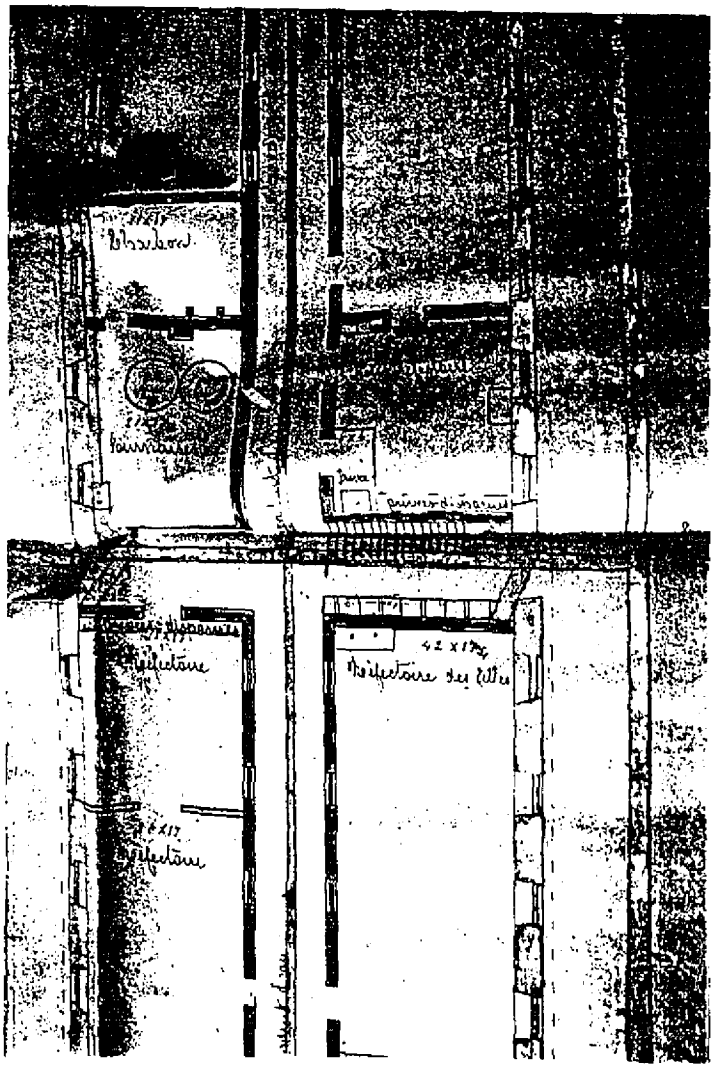

Figure 4.1. Detail of Soeur Saint Jean de la Croix' drawings. Source: ASGM MM 1190 rue Guy Plans 1900 Doc. 76 A (Soeur Saint Jean de la Croix) *Relevé des Plans de l'Hôpital Général de Montréal, soubassement, divisions en 1900.*

Instead, the *économe* instructed the *engagés* to complete the work; it cost $1909.[5] Soeur Saint Jean de la Croix's short lesson on electricity captured the elementary principles for the uninitiated, while yet another text gave explicit instructions on fire-fighting. It specified valves that were to be shut in the case of a fire so that sufficient water pressure could be diverted and consolidated in pipes and hoses reserved for fire fighting. As a set, these documents provide a social and technological history of the convent.

The history of the building as recorded by Soeur Saint Jean de la Croix reflected the history of the institution through the presence or absence of particular rooms over time. In 1903, for instance, the nuns outfitted special apartments, on the first floor of the St-Mathieu wing, for a chaplain assigned by the Sulpician Order to serve the destitute population which had grown too numerous for a single clergyman.[6] The presence of "guest rooms" reserved for missionary sisters, located above the community parlour, pointed to the dispersal of missions across the continent. Previous to the establishment of the St-Boniface convent as an administrative outpost, the *Superieure Vicaire* had had a double room in the *aile des ateliers.* The transformation of *avant dortoir* and the *garde-robes* adjacent to the professed nuns' dormitory into sleeping quarters for the *soeurs anciennes* accommodated an aging religious community. How did the architecture of the convent adapt to this constant change?

The Mother House featured load-bearing exterior walls set 50' (15.2 m.) apart, spanned by regularly spaced wooden beams, initially without any other internal support. The repetitive fenestration, a defining feature of the building, reflected roughly 10' (3 m.) structural bays. The nuns even measured rooms by the number of windows they contained: "L'oratoire cède une de ces deux fenêtres et les 'souvenirs de famille' leur département, pour l'agrandissement du postulat transféré dans une des classes (l'ancien bibliothèque)."[7] Indeed, the large, numerous windows combined with the high ceilings, which ranged from 14' (4.3 m.) in the first floor to 9' (2.7 m.) in the mansards, and the narrow width of the building, ensured adequate cross-ventilation and natural daylighting. These were some of the advantages derived from this construction system.[8]

In 1874, however, one of the nuns noticed a disturbing curvature in the overhead beams of the community room and the refectory. To remedy the situation, these spaces were refitted with two interior rows of iron columns: "Dès 1874 on constate qu'en la salle communautaire ainsi qu'au réfectoire les poutres accusent une courbe menaçante; on obvie

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[5]ASGM *Maison Mère rue Guy--eau, gaz etc. Volume iv,* 28.
[6]ASGM *Annales* 1902-3, 627.
[7]ASGM *Annales* 1904-6, 204-6.
[8]ASGM *Maison mère rue Guy constructions 1861-1909 3e vol.*, ix.

au danger au moyen de colonnes de soutènement."[9] The annals recorded similar architectural improvements that were carried out in other rooms that contained both clear spans between exterior walls and experienced large live loads: in the novitiate's *salle* and the professed nuns' dormitory, for example.[10] Presumably partitions, constructed of wooden uprights, plaster and lath, provided additional support to the beams in subdivided areas of the Guy Street wing.[11] Subsequent wings seem to have incorporated columns from their initial construction, where needed.

Within this structural grid, the building displayed a certain degree of flexibility since rooms could be made as long or wide as needed—from exterior wall to exterior wall, or from the exterior wall to the windowed, interior corridor—and modified when required. In 1899, for example, apartments in the Guy Street wing underwent renovations:

> Du côté de la communauté, certains appartements ont aussi reçu quelques modifications, soit dans leur forme, soit dans leur destination. Ainsi la "chambre des souvenirs" contigüe à la chambre mortuaire a été démolie pour être transférée à une autre chambre plus petite prise sur l'oratoire du noviciat. Grâce à ce changement en rétrécissant la chambre mortuaire, on a pu obtenir sur le reste de l'appartement, deux autres chambres de dimensions convenables dont une est destinée pour l'archevêque, l'autre pour le supérieur.
>
> L'ancienne chambre de l'archevêque a été transformée en bibliothèque, et de cette dernière, on a fait une classe pour les novices, laquelle leur servira au besoin, de lieux de retraite.
>
> Du côté du dortoir Ste-Anne, la chambre qui servait d'avant-dortoir et de garde-robes a été divisée en deux pièces pour l'usage de nos plus anciennes soeurs, et les garde-robes ont été transportées dans le corridor d'entrée, qui sera fermé désormais par une porte vitrée.[12]

Evidently, internal walls simply acted as partitions between rooms. The adaptability of spaces in the convent's planning, then, reflected surprisingly modern principles; the internal structure of the building provided a flexible framework that responded to organizational changes within the community and to the introduction of new technologies. "'Flexible' planning is of fairly recent origin, since it only assumed importance after 1890 when steel and reinforced concrete frame construction made it unnecessary for dividing walls to be also load bearing partitions."[13] Though the construction of the Mother House

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[9]Estelle Mitchell s.g.m., *L'essor apostolique: Soeurs de la Charité de Montréal, "Soeurs Grises," 1877-1910* (Montréal, 1981), 16. Soeur Deschamps, in her term as depositor, discovered the splaying columns in the chapel (1890). It was subsequently repaired with the installation of ornamental steel trusses, 112-3.

[10]The work in the novitiate occurred only in 1894. ASGM *Annales* 1892-95, 406-407.

[11]The tradesmen usually mentioned in the annals are *menuisier, plâtrier and peintre*--carpenter, plasterer and painter. See for example ASGM *Annales* 1902-3, 627.

[12]ASGM *Annales* 1898-1901, 136-8.

[13]Peter Collins, *Changing Ideals in Modern Architecture, 1750-1950* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1965; Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1984), 234.

relied on traditional construction techniques, probably due to the lack of tradesmen who were neither competent in the new building techniques nor familiar with new materials, it acted like a modern building.[14]

Overall, the Mother House of the Grey Nuns followed a trend of increasing complexity, characterized by the addition of new wings and the subdivision of older ones as construction phases proceeded. Large, relatively undifferentiated spaces functioned as dormitories and assembly halls when the community first occupied the Mother House, notably the Guy Street wing (the first part of the building to be erected). When the elderly men moved into the *aile des vieillards* in 1879, other inmates gained space in the Guy Street wing, since these groups also shifted around. Similarly, when the *vieilles* and orphan girls vacated their quarters to take up their new apartments, renovations took place in their older dormitories. For example, after the *aile des vieillards* was completed in October 1888, "L'ancienne salle des orphelines est divisée en deux par un corridor. La roberie en occupe un côté et l'autre côté sert de salle de réunion à nos dévouées franciscaines." Elsewhere in the building, "l'ancien séchoir...est divisé en deux par un corridor." These two halves were further subdivided into offices for candle-making, shoe-making and knitting.[15] Each room was allotted specific functions, which probably helped to isolate noise since steam powered machines had been introduced into these workspaces at the same time.

There were times, however, when the opposite occurred. For example, with the 1908 installation of an elevator in the Guy street wing, "toutes les divisions de la cuisine furent ensuite abattues pour n'en faire plus qu'un vaste appartement bien éclairé et bien aéré. Pour remplacer les murs disparus, des solives en fer furent posées."[16] The opening of the kitchen into one great room from a series of little rooms contrasted with the general trend of increased subdivision of relatively undifferentiated spaces over time. Post occupancy adaptations of this kind indicate the building's progressiveness vis-à-vis contemporary developments.

This constant upkeep with modern progress was already evident in the Maison Mère d'Youville, (predecessor to the Mother House), where the nuns "améliorèrent l'organisation matérielle de l'hôpital." The November 3, 1843 installation of a "poêle à steam" eased the labour intensive task of ironing for the ever-growing number of inhabitants. Ten years later, still at the Pointe-à-Caillières site, water closets (apparently

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[14]The term "modern" is not to be confused with "Modernism." While the latter refers to a distinct twentieth-century stylistic movement in Architecture, the former simply refers to contemporary, progressive building practice. In addition, Modernism has been defined in numerous ways. See for example Kenneth Frampton, *Modern Architecture: A Critical History* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1985).

[15]ASGM *Annales* 1888-92, 172-75.

[16]ASGM *Annales* 1906-8, 695-7.

labeled "communs" on an 1871 plan, probably drawn by Soeur St-Jean de la Croix) were retrofitted in the convent: two in the infirmaries and one in the dormitory.[17]

In general, each construction phase of the Mother House of the Grey Nuns comprised two parts, an addition to the existing building and the renovation of older wings. The cycle continued with the same identifiable steps, even after the completion of the whole complex. The changing location, size, shape and specialization of spaces presumably led to a more efficient, overall organization of work, the consolidation of activity zones, in addition to the attainment of an ideal segregation between various groups of inhabitants as the nuns succoured a growing population.[18]

The architecture of the St-Mathieu orphans' wing epitomized a more pronounced modernity (Figure 4.2). The orphans' wing was a later addition (1898-1901) relative to the earlier consecutive construction phases largely completed in Victor Bourgeau's lifetime. The nuns commissioned Joseph Venne to design it and he did not respect Bourgeau's earlier plans. This wing stands out architecturally from the otherwise integrated complex. First, the dimensions of the orphans' wing differ from its symmetrical counterpart. It is wider (60', or 18.3 m.), longer (172', or 52.4 m.), and projects much farther (40', or 1.2 m.) than the *aile de la communauté.* Because the site sloped considerably from Guy Street towards St-Mathieu Street, an extra, fifth storey was added under a pitched roof.[19]

Secondly, the articulation of the facade, especially noticeable in the doubled windows, deviated from the regular rhythm of simple fenestration that characterized of the rest of the building. The "stone skeleton" elevation with masonry infill recalled local contemporary warehousing, those constructed by the Hospitalières de St-Joseph on St-Paul Street and those erected by the Grey Nuns at Pointe-à-Callières for instance. Considered proto-rationalist, these buildings "already contained the main architectonic principles which would be at the origin of the success of the Chicago School at the turn of the century."[20] The Chicago School's defining features included an independent internal structure of columns and beams that carried floor and ceiling loads. It also permitted a relatively open, flexible plan on every floor, especially important in commercial buildings that needed to

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[17]Lapointe-Roy, 186.

[18]Note that during the first eight years or more, divisions between occupant groups (as discussed in the previous chapter) overlapped to an even greater degree, due to limited space.

[19]The pitched roof was modified to a flat one in 1918 after a 1915 fire destroyed the upper storeys of this wing. Despite its references as a mansard roof, early photos show it as a pitched roof with dormers.

[20]Communauté Urbaine de Montréal, Service de la Planification du Territoire. *Architecture Commerciale III: les magasins, les cinémas,* Répertoire d'Architecture Traditionelle sur le Territoire de la Communauté Urbaine de Montréal (Montréal: Communauté Urbaine de Montréal, 1935), 198; François Rémillard and Brian Merritt, *Montreal Architecture: a guide to styles and buildings* (Montreal: Meridian Press, 1990), 66-9, 148-51; Jean-Claude Marsan, *Montreal in Evolution* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1981), 228-245.

Figure 4.2. Aerial of Mother House of the Grey Nuns circa 1949. Source: ANQ Fonds: Armour Landry. Cote: F97, P9691.

adapt to the changes in tenants and their particular requirements. Exterior walls, usually a gridiron system of masonry piers and spandrels infilled with glazing, generally carried their own weight.[21] In 1895, the *Canadian Architect and Builder* reported on a contemporary conventual building, the Convent of the Sisters of St-Croix on Mount Royal Avenue, whose "beams and columns supporting the interior structure are of steel throughout."[22]

In the *aile St-Mathieu*, only the columns were of iron, encased in either lath and plaster, or in cement (as a fire retardant); the beams were still of wood (perhaps because it was less costly than steel).[23] But, unlike the Guy Street wing, none of the wooden beams were exposed. Rather, an evenly smooth plaster (or cement) ceiling was applied, hiding all evidence of supporting members (Figure 3.25). These practices were developed as a method of fireproofing in multi-storey commercial buildings of Chicago, circa 1870.[24] Though the St-Mathieu wing appeared in photographs as if constructed in reinforced concrete, this building material only began to be widely used in Montréal in the early 1900s.[25]

Nonetheless, the nuns seemed aware of the modern attributes of their Mother House; they even prided themselves on the fact that light and air came into the convent from all sides. In an annal entry of 1900, for example, which heralded the inauguration of the young orphan boys' apartments, the annalist noted that "les améliorations modernes s'accordent parfaitement avec les exigences de l'hygiène. Les appartements sont spacieux, clairs et bien aérés."[26] These types of comments, characteristic attributes of modern conceptions of space, health and hygiene, recurred throughout the annals.[27]

The distinct zoning of sanitary services and circulation spaces within a separate transversal section of the orphan's wing, in addition to the isolation of the infirmary within a tower like appendage, again pointed towards a concurrence with modern architectural

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[21]Carl W. Condit, *The Chicago School of Architecture: A History of Commercial and Public Building in the Chicago Area, 1875-1925* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964) traces the full development of this school. The construction of St-Mathieu wing most closely resembles the earliest examples that he describes.

[22]*Canadian Architect and Builder* (Sept 1895): 108.

[23]Steel beams were used, however, in the 1918 reconstruction of this wing, Soeur Blanche Morneau. William le Baron Jenney's famous Leiter Building of 1879 also featured cast iron columns supporting timber joists and girders; it was heralded as an early example of the Chicago School. Condit, 79-80.

[24]Condit, 23.

[25]Phyllis Lambert and Robert Lemire, *Inventaire des Bâtiments du Vieux Montréal, de Quartier St-Antoine et de la ville de Maisonneuve construits entre 1880-1915,* Groupe de Recherche sur la Pierre Grise à Montréal (Québec: Direction général du patrimoine, Inventaire des biens culturels, Centre de documentation, 1977), note several early reinforced concrete buildings in the St-Antoine quarter dating 1905.

[26]ASGM *Annales* 1898-1901, 436.

[27]ASGM *Annales* 1888-92, 172-75; *Annales* 1915-16, 303; *Annales* 1919-20, 213-18.

practice and contemporary medical discourse. A very narrow room with window on three sides, the infirmary obtained lots of air and was constantly bathed in light. South facing balconies at every floor level responded to the latest treatments as doctors prescribed plenty of fresh air and sunlight to cure such illnesses as tuberculosis. Indeed, such distinctive galleries distinguished the architecture of health care, nineteenth-century hospitals and sanatoriums for example. In a sense, through their architecture, the women practiced a manner of preventative medicine; long, narrow galleries graced the walls facing the rear gardens, allowing all inhabitants to benefit from the fresh air.[28]

Galleries were not strictly used as curative devices, but as places for physical exercise. They were not only attached to the infirmaries but to recreation and working spaces within the convent. Physical exercise was closely linked to contemporary notions of health and hygiene. The Parks and Playground Movement in Montréal, formally launched in 1902, and its precursor, the Parks Protective Association founded in 1895-96, for example, sought to protect existing open spaces and to foster the development of parks and playgrounds that would be accessible to all citizens. The movement was "prompted by concerns about urban crowding, sanitation and hygiene, and juvenile delinquency."[29]

While the St-Mathieu orphanage wing was under construction (1899), every storey on the south end of the community wing saw the installation of large balconies. (Balconies were also added to the orphans' wing upon completion of construction). Each balcony consisted of:

> une plate-forme de douze pieds et huit pouces de large sur cinquante pieds de longs. En faisant construire ces galeries, nos supérieures ont eu en vue autant une raison de régularité, qu'une raison d'hygiène, pour la galerie de la communauté du moins. Car grâce à ses dimensions les soeurs pourront y prendre les récréations en commun, durant la belle saison ce qui ne pouvait s'observer autrefois, vu que les galeries déja existantes sont trop étroites et trop éloignés de la salle de communauté. Ces galeries auront de plus l'avantage de servir d'appui aux escaliers de sauvetage que nous devrons faire élever de ce côté.[30]

The balconies served a double duty, as both outdoor recreation spaces and as fire escapes, a "modern" fire safety requirement (Figure 4.3).

In general, the nuns treated the St-Mathieu wing as a separate building. It had its own entry and, in fact, became like any other mission within the city, with its own Mother

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[28]Adams, "Architecture in the Family Way," discusses the application of architecture as preventative medicine, especially in the home.

[29]Jeanne M. Wolfe and Grace Strachan, "Practical Idealism: Women in Urban Reform, Julia Drummond and the Montreal Parks and Playground Association" in *Life Spaces: Gender, Household, Employment*, ed. Caroline Andrew and Beth Moore Milroy, 65-80 (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1988).

[30]ASGM *Annales*, 1898-1901, 136-8.

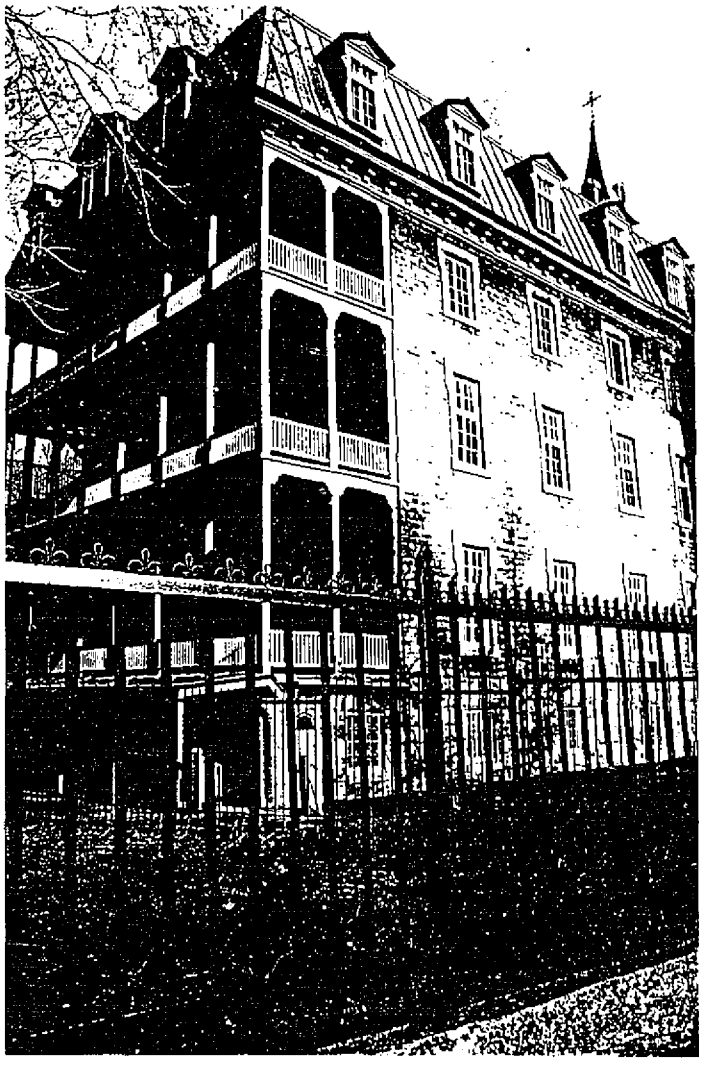

Figure 4.3. Balconies at rear of the *aile de la cuisine des pauvres*. Source: Author.

Superior. In 1915, the nuns transformed this wing into a military hospital and after a 1918 fire devastated the uppermost stories, they reconstructed it to house an industrial school.[31] Like the Guy Street wing, it originally featured large, multipurpose spaces that could be manipulated as needed. Indeed, the orphans' *salle* had *arcades*, movable panels which rolled along a floor track, that partitioned the large open space into two smaller rooms (Figure 4.4). A similar device divided in half classrooms of eighty children in British Board Schools.[32] Catherine Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe also used movable screens in their 1869 plan of the American woman's home to attain maximum flexibility.[33] This feature of sliding partitions coincided with the Grey Nuns' introduction of the kindergarten system in their *asiles*:

> Outre la méthode de la salle d'asile, on ajoute celle du Kindergarten. Au Moyen de petits blocs les enfants apprennent les lettres de l'alphabet et forment des mots. Puis avec des morceaux de papier préparés à l'avance, ils dessinent de jolies figures, comme chaînes, chaises, échelle, évantails, etc.
> L'asile est ouvert depuis le premier septembre.[34]

The Grey Nuns' *salles d'asiles* operated as child care centers for nineteenth-century Montrealers. Various nineteenth-century material feminists sought to include this provision within their utopian plans of ideal communities. In her recreation of the Familistère, in Guise, France, (a cooperative industrial community) Marie Howland recounted in detail the special spaces and programs designed for child care.[35] Soeur Saint Jean de la Croix's successive drawings, then, show the Mother House as not only a perpetual construction site but as a responsive structure that enabled the religious community to take up different oeuvres that best answered the needs of society. The expression of modernity was not limited to the convent's plan or structure, but was also evident in the technology with which it was outfitted.

From its initial construction the Mother House featured another modern attribute: indoor plumbing. According to section details drawn by Soeur Saint Jean de la Croix, water-serviced rooms were stacked one on top of the other and grouped around plumbing chases. Residents shared communal sinks, toilets, baths and showers, although each

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[31] ASGM *Annales*, 1915-6, 292, 303, 491, 657, for military hospital; *Annales*, 1919-20, 213-18, for *école industrielle*.

[32] Deborah E. B. Weiner, *Architecture and Social Reform in Late-Victorian London* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 94-5.

[33] Dolores Hayden, *Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminists Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods and Cities* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1981), 58-9. "Most important for the history of interior architecture [was] the development of the movable partition to vary the size and number of rooms in a suite" of hotels and apartments, Condit, 149.

[34] ASGM *Annales* 1898-1901, 528.

[35] Hayden, 96-101.

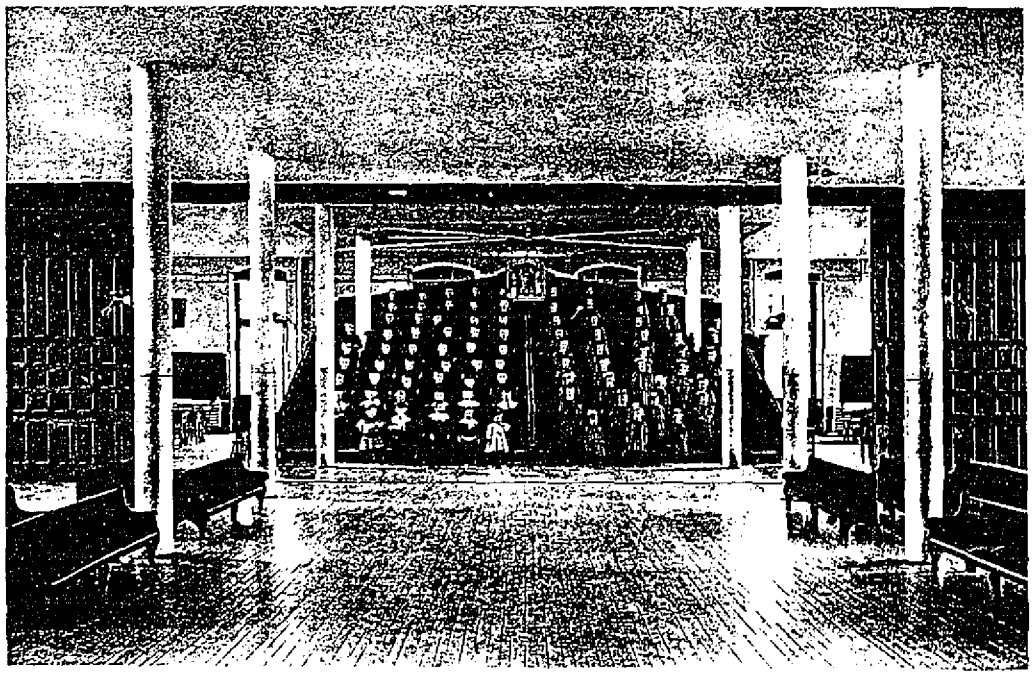

Figure 4.4. "Jardin de l'Enfance." Source: ASGM (photo album) *Hôpital Général des Soeurs Grises, 390 Rue Guy, Montréal* (1910), published by Librairie Beauchemin Limitée.

fixture (sinks excepted) was partitioned into private stalls like in public washrooms today.[36] Even urinals were provided for elderly men and orphan boys. Additional sinks were located in many of the *ateliers* and the refectories. Again, once all of the destitute population had been transferred into the St-Mathieu wing, water closets were updated in the Guy Street wing.

> Les cabinets de toilettes ont également subi une agréable transformation. En ont bénéficié les premières nos soeurs de l'infirmerie; en second lieu, les habitants des ateliers...tout dernièrement les dits cabinets du corridor Ste-Croix, du dortoir Ste-Anne, avec les chambrettes contigües ont été renouvelés à fond. Ils sont les plus jolis, les plus propets de la catégorie.[37]

Evidently, the nuns placed special emphasis on general sanitation and personal hygiene which contrasted with the conditions prevalent in 1891, for example, "'St-Ann's had the nauseating record of the largest number of pit privies per inhabitant' in Montreal—15.8 persons per pit—pits were thought to be 'a barbarous and anachronistic reality' in St-Antoine."[38] Other large institutions, too, like hospitals and hotels, were linked to Montréal's sewage and aqueduct systems. The Windsor Hotel advertised in 1898 that each room was supplied with hot and cold water, the front rooms were additionally outfitted with modern sanitary plumbing.[39] These amenities became such a luxury, some establishments such as the Ottawa Hotel had to enact rules of conduct against guests using water facilities to do laundry.[40]

The Mother House also showcased a sophisticated heating system, the first in Montréal that used water as a circulator rather than forced air: "Au Mont Ste-Croix furent apposés, en premier essaie par toute la ville dit-on, les calorifères à eau chaude."[41] From 1871 to 1903, seventeen coal-fired "daisy furnaces," located at the four extremities of the building, heated the convent by circulating heated water through a system of pipes. Each

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[36]*Maison Mère rue Guy--eau, gaz etc. Volume iv,* 16-21.

[37]ASGM *Annales* 1904-6, 781-2.

[38]Michèle Martin, "Hello, *Central?": Gender, Technology, and Culture in the Formation of Telephone System* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991), 114. See also Herbert Ames, *The City Below the Hill: a sociological study of a portions of the city of Montreal* (Montreal: Bishop Engraving and Printing Co., 1897) microfiche. Bettina Bradbury, "Mourir Chrétiennement: La Vie et la Mort dans les Établissements Catholiques pour Personnes Âgées à Montréal au XIXe siècle," *Revue d'histoire de l'amérique française* vol. 46 no. 1 (été 1992): 160, observes that contagion was practically non-existent within the convent, even during epidemics, which attests to the high quality of hygiene maintained.

[39]*The Windsor Hotel Guide to the City of Montreal: with a shopping index and directory* (Montreal, n.p. [1898]) microfiche.

[40]*The Ottawa Hotel Traveller's Guide for Lewiston, Niagara River, Toronto, Lake Ontario, River St-Lawrence* (Montreal, n.p. [1871]) microfiche. Travel guides provided the only information on this building type, as comprehensive studies on Montréal hotels are currently non-existent.

[41]ASGM MM 1190 rue Guy Plans Doc. 11 Sr. Saint Jean de la Croix. *Diverses notes pour servir d'historique et de pièces justificatives au relevé des plans et des terrains 1900.*

furnace room required an adjacent storage room for coal. Employees supervised the furnaces 24 hours a day and fueled them at appropriate intervals.[42] Soeur Saint Jean de la Croix pointed out that, for a time, the daisy furnaces also ingeniously doubled as domestic hot water heaters. According to her description, water pipes descended from large reservoirs located on the roof carrying the water alongside the daisy furnaces and thereby heated it before reaching the sinks, baths and showers.[43] This system of multiple coal fired furnaces, however, proved insufficient once the whole complex attained its full size. In a 1903 evaluation, experts calculated that Mother House contained 5,000,000 cubic feet (141 583.8 m.^{3}) of space to heat.[44] A more powerful central steam heating system replaced the daisy furnaces in 1904 (Figure 4.5).[45]

The newly built Convent of the Sisters of St-Croix on Mount Royal Avenue also featured the installation of a hot water heating system with centralized boilers, according to an 1895 *Canadian Architect and Builder* article. The journalist added that "All the most improved plumbing and other appliances have been devised to insure the comfort of the inmates." [46] Montréal hotels, too, featured sophisticated heating systems. Before its conversion into the Hôpital Notre-Dame, a steam heating system equipped the Donega Hotel. Considered too noisy, it was replaced in the 1880s with a furnace system that circulated water instead.[47] Steam and water heating systems were apparently popular by the 1860s in industrialized cities in Britain and the United States, although they remained extremely expensive undertakings. Costs entailed labour for the installation of pipes, radiators and vents in addition to the furnace, itself a major investment.[48] Central heating systems appeared widely in large buildings of the 1880s, New York apartment houses for instance.[49]

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[42]The locations of the old system of "daisy furnaces" are given in ASGM *Maison Mère rue Guy--eau, gaz etc. Volume iv*, 28.

[43]For a detailed description of the hot water heaters see *Maison Mère rue Guy constructions etc. 1861-1909 3e volume*. Soeur Saint Jean de la Croix also mentions that this system was replaced in 1903 by four conventional hot water heaters.

[44]ASGM *Maison mère rue Guy constructions et services 1871-1909*, 20. See also ASGM *Annales* 1904-6, 264-5.

[45]This construction project began in May 1902.

[46]*Canadian Architect and Builder* (Sept 1895): 108. The newspaper article also mentioned that the building had elevators and improved fire escapes in order to accommodate two hundred pupils, chiefly boarders.

[47]Denis Goulet, François Hudon, and Othmar Keel, *Histoire de l'Hôpital Notre-Dame de Montréal 1880-1980* (Montréal: vlb éditeur, 1993), 49-50.

[48]Reyner Banham, *The Architecture of the Well-Tempered Environment* (London: Architectural Press, 1969), 46; Ruth Schwartz Cowan, *More Work For Mother: The Ironies of Household Technologies From the Hearth to the Microwave* (New York: Basic, 1983), 96.

[49]Elizabeth Cromley, *Alone Together: A History of New York Early Apartments* (Ithica and London: Cornell University Press, 1990), 157.

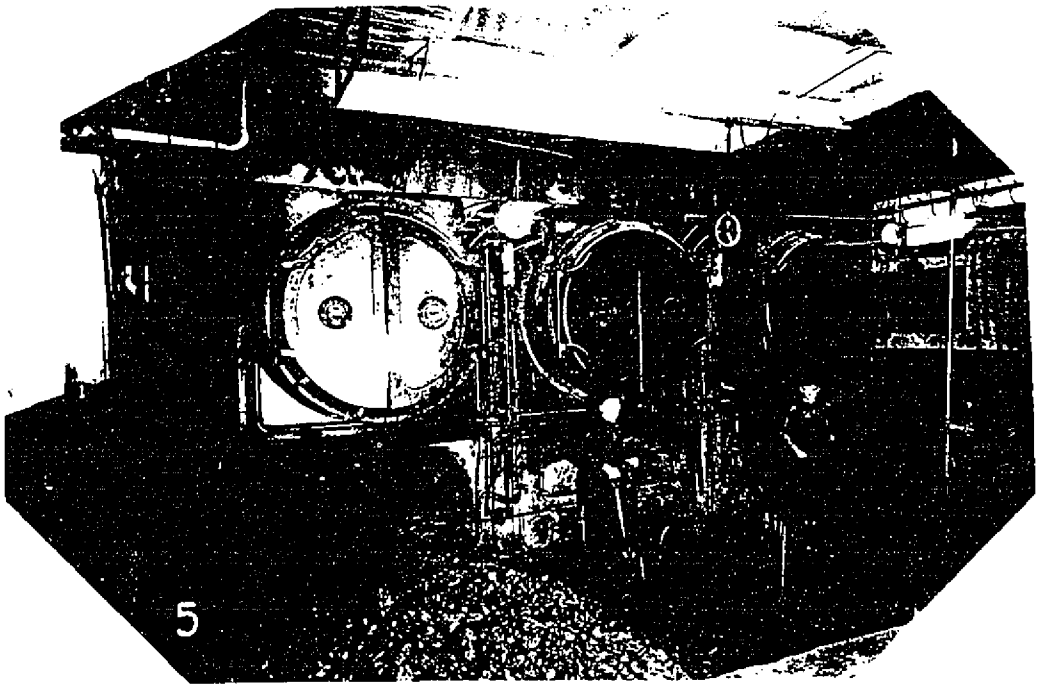

Figure 4.5. "Chaufferie." Source: ASGM "Photos Maison Mère - Guy 11F Intérieur."

Contemporary working-class households, in contrast, made do without the modern conveniences that benefited religious communities of women.

> 'A water connection, a cast-iron cooking stove, and, for the best-paid workers' families, an indoor toilet, constituted the major advances for wives in working-class households during the second half of the century.' By 1897 nearly all Montreal dwellings had a water connection in house or yard, but half were still served by a single tap for two or three families, and one household in six was still relying on the outdoor pit privy.[50]

The cast-iron stove in the working-class home served multiple purposes: heating the home, cooking meals, boiling water for washing clothes, dishes and people. The nuns, too, initially cooked on coal-fired ranges and wood fired stoves in their kitchens, that is, until the 1888 installation of steam-heated cauldrons and gas stoves into the *cuisine des pauvres* and the community kitchen.[51] "Entrons à la cuisine," the annalist invited her readers, "c'est ici que l'on apprête les aliments des pensionnaires et des pauvres; le tout s'y fait à la vapeur; rien n'a l'air plus commode que le réchaud et le poële à gaz, ainsi que tous ces tiroirs, qui sont disposés tout autour de l'appartement à la portée de la main de la cuisinière et qui renferme tout ce qui est nécessaire à l'art culinaire."[52] Gas stoves also equipped the kitchenettes in the various apartments, *ateliers* and ironing rooms (to heat the irons) as well as the *crèche* (for the provision of additional heat and to warm bottles etc.).[53] The 1888 introduction of steam power and gas utilities revolutionized the convent. The new domestic/industrial technologies were first introduced to the workspaces traditionally associated with women's domestic work: the kitchens and the laundry.

Steam powered rotating tumbling vats, wringers and mangles equipped the convent laundry (Figure 4.6). It compared with concurrent "laundries run by Chinese immigrants (which were beginning to flourish in Montreal during this period), and...capitalists, whose steam laundries utilized the latest machinery for washing and who employed up to one hundred women to wash, iron and fold."[54] Further, the 1902 relocation of the drying room to another space in the Guy Street wing effectively increased the size of the convent laundry. This enlargement of the facility responded to larger, more numerous loads of

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[50]Jason Gilliland and Sherry Olson. "Claims on Housing Space in Nineteenth-Century Montréal." *Shared Spaces* No. 14, Working Paper Series (Department of Geography, McGill University Dec. 1993); see also Bettina Bradbury, *Working Families: Age, Gender and Daily Survival in Industrializing Montreal,* The Canadian Social History Series (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Inc., 1993), 156.

[51]ASGM *Maison Mère rue Guy--eau, gaz etc. Volume iv;* 51.

[52]ASGM *Annales* 1888-92, 172-75.

[53]ASGM *Maison Mère rue Guy--constructions et services 1871-1909, historique, vol. iii et iv, Mont Ste-Croix,* 25.

[54]Bradbury, "Women's Workplaces: The Impact of Technological Change on Working-class Women in the Home and in the Workplace in Nineteenth-Century Montreal" in *Women, Work, and Place,* Audrey Kobayashi, ed. (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), 41.

Figure 4.6. "Buanderie." Source: ASGM "Photos Maison Mère - Guy 11D Intérieur."

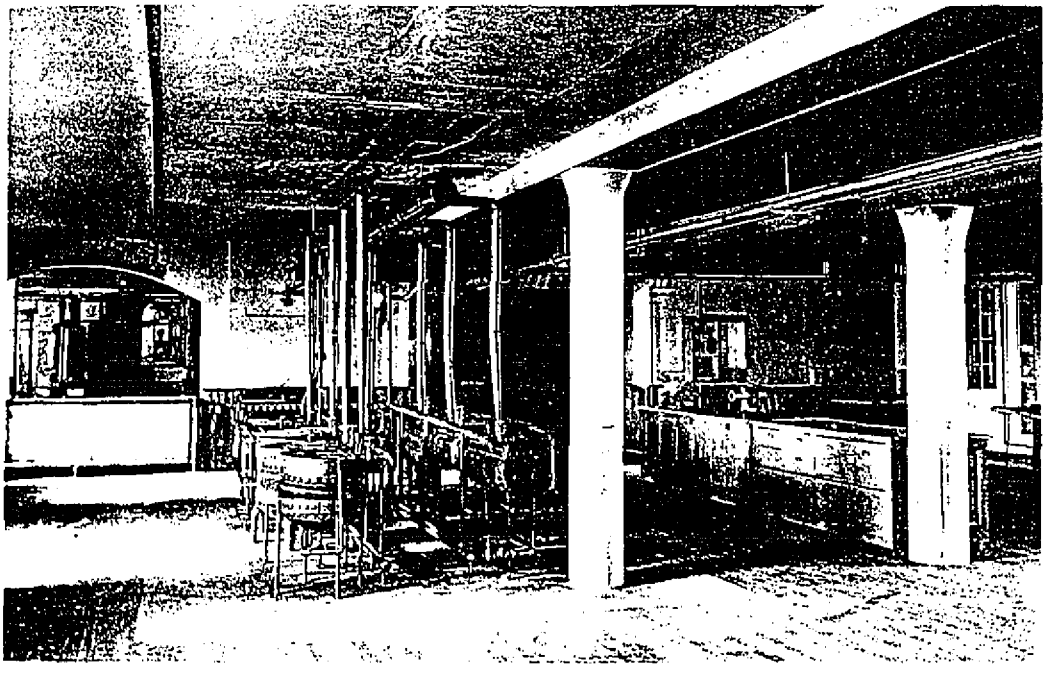

Figure 4.7. "Cuisine." Source: ASGM "Photos Maison Mère - Guy 16A Intérieur."

washing, as this date corresponded to the final expansion of the building. In addition to the huge, industrial laundry appliances the nuns outfitted *ateliers* and other workspaces with steam powered sewing and knitting machines. The workspaces in the laundry wing became vertically interconnected with the installation of a steam powered elevator in 1888. An addition just off of the laundry wing housed the steam engines.[55] These industrialized and modernized facilities efficiently served the large population in this building and permitted the religious community to take on extra paid work.

Steam powered machinery was found in Montréal capitalist-owned workshops and factories as early as the 1860s.[56] Mechanization offered modern housekeeping innovations: centralized food preparation and laundry services. Only collectivization strategies, however, enabled groups to benefit from these mechanical inventions. Cooperative laundries and community kitchens flourished in late-nineteenth century America. People voluntarily pooled together their resources to acquire the necessary equipment and either hired workers or took turns preparing food and operating machines. More formal organizations also existed: apartment houses and cooperative housekeeping collectives.[57] A certain Roswell Fisher even proposed the development of a cooperative mansion or "Residential Club" to Montrealers at the turn of the century. Like its American and British counterparts, it was promoted as an alternative to the detached middle-class home, comparable to an apartment hotel.[58]

Just as each construction phase incorporated spatial improvements, it also offered opportunities to outfit the Mother House with new technological devices and utility systems. But the introduction of new technologies often necessitated the renovation of existing spaces. The 1908 installation of an electric powered elevator in the community wing, for example, required extensive demolition, especially on the ground floor level. The nuns profited from this occasion to convert their kitchen into a single open space from the many small rooms that it originally comprised.

> Au mois de décembre dernier, en commençant les travaux d'un ascenseur du côté de la communauté, on projetait aussi de grandes réparations à la cuisine. Comme le nouveau véhicule devait passé dans cet office, en vue des futures réparations, sans scrupule, aucun, on ouvrit les planchers, on abattit les murs, enfin, on mit la cuisine littéralement à l'état de chantier.[59]

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[55]ASGM *Détails Historiques concernant les plans de la maison mère primitive et de l'actuelle, cahier A*; *Relève des plans 1ère maison mère (1765-1871) maison mère actuelle (1871-1909)*; *Annales* 1902-3, 161-2.

[56]Bradbury, "Women's Workplaces," 26.

[57]See the works of Hayden; Cromley; Cowan; and Lynn Pearson, *The Architectural and Social History of Cooperative Living* (London: Macmillan, 1988).

[58]Roswell Fisher, *Cooperative Housekeeping* (1900) n.p.

[59]ASGM *Annales* 1906-8, 695-7.

In its openness and arrangement of modern conveniences, the nuns' renovated kitchens bore a remarkable resemblance, at least in spirit, to the laboratory-like kitchen plans advocated by nineteenth-century housing reformers (Figure 3.14, 4.7). Counters, sinks and stoves were placed within easy reach and in logical order so that the manager of the home proceeded quickly and easily from task to task in meal preparation. Catherine Beecher had already proposed a unified central service core of water, heating and ventilation systems in her 1869 ideal kitchen plan.[60]

> Si vous entrez à la cuisine par le corridor du réfectoire, vous vous trouvez en face de belles armoires qui garnissent le fond de l'appartement. Au beau milieu sont rangés neuf chaudrons à vapeur. Les éviers émaillés sont nombreux et placés selon la destination de chacun. Un poële à gaz de 6x3 pieds a remplacé le range à charbon.
>
> Sur l'un des deux réchauds sont installées trois urnes en nickel à l'extérieur et faiencées à l'intérieur. Deux d'entre elles peuvent contenir vingt gallons [90.9 litres] de thé ou de café; la troisième fournit l'eau bouillante filtrée pour les précédantes.[61]

Labour-saving devices reduced the work load for the cooks, reduced the time required to complete a task, and allowed vast quantities of food or drink to be prepared at one time. A *char réfectoire*, or a triple-decker wooden trolley with rubber wheels, carried meals from the kitchen to the refectories.[62]

> Dans la cave, on a installé une machine à peler les patates, en deux minutes, un demi-minot de ces précieux tubercules sont dépouillés de leur enveloppe. Quitte à enlever avec le couteau, ce qui est resté dans les pronfondeurs des yeux. Cet inconvénient est considéré comme léger comparativement au temps que sauve la première partie de l'opération. On a aussi fait placer un hachoir pour la viande et un moulin pour battre la pâte. Ces trois inventions sont mises en mouvement par un pouvoir électrique.[63]

Most of these appliances were either unavailable to the individual household, save perhaps the bourgeois home. Moreover, these modern appliances were often manufactured at an industrial scale, so only large institutions and hotels could afford the associated costs. They also required vast amounts of space, in addition to appropriate energy sources and service infrastructure that most average Montréal households lacked, for example, a gas connection or electric wiring. Manufacturers did not adapt commercial appliances for household consumption until the early twentieth century. Only by the 1920s, for example, did large department stores widely advertise electric appliances such as clothes irons,

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[60]Hayden, 58-9.
[61]ASGM *Annales* 1906-8, 695-7.
[62]Its introduction was described in *Annales* 1877-80, 442.
[63]ASGM *Annales* 1906-8, 695-7.

washing machines, stoves and refrigerators. The exorbitant prices listed in store catalogues denied acquisition to common householders, despite the proclaimed efficiency and economy in time.[64] A sewing machine cost between $50 and $80 dollars in 1889, an investment families engaged in piecework paid for in $3 to $5 monthly installments.[65] In Montréal it wasn't before the 1950s, in fact, that these appliances became common.

> Ainsi, selon l'enquête menée par la Commission métropolitaine dans certains quartiers ouvriers de la ville en 1937, la plupart des ménagères qui habitaient ces secteurs ne possédaient qu'un poêle à bois ou au charbon, qui servait en même temps au chauffage, et 67% seulement d'entre elles avaient une glacière.[66]

The convent's acquisition of an "artificial" freezer, which cooled special rooms to a specified temperature caused some excitement:

> [N]ous avons à le remercier (S-Joseph) aujourd'hui, pour l'installation d'une glacière artificielle. Depuis longtemps, ce besoin s'imposait...Puisque nous écrivons pour l'histoire, nous jetterons, ici, quelques notes sur cette appareil frigorifique et les chambres qu'il fait fonctionner.
>
> Cet appareil de "6x6" (1.8 x 1.8 m.) a double cylindre, modèle renfermé courroie actionnant le compresseur à ammoniaque, se huilant par lui-même, complet avec les raccordements de passages; les valves; les conduits; les jauges à haute et basse pression; soupape de succion graduée, le tout comme ordinairement fourni pour une machine de ce genre par "Canadian Ice Machine Co. Limited..."
>
> L'appareil sert à faire 600 livres [271.8 kg.] de glace par jour. C'est dire de quelle ressource il est pour nos cuisines, nos réfectoires et surtout pour la crèche. De plus, tout en étant pour nos soeurs cuisinères un grand soulagement il nous permet de conserver les viandes et le beurre dont nous pouvons faire provision sur les meilleurs marchés et au meilleurs temps de l'année. Une économie en ce genre est très appréciable, vu l'énorme quantité que nous en consommons, chaque semaine.[67]

Mechanical refrigeration had been around since the turn of the century; it was used by meat packers and cold storage warehouses. Domestic versions, however, were marketed only after World War I.[68] Before 1919, the convent's basement cellars served as cold storage, though the nuns also resorted to iceboxes, preserved and canned fruits and vegetables, and otherwise acquired goods on a regular basis.

The factory-like production of the convent's kitchens resembled model cooperative kitchens designed to facilitate collectivized work and popularized in the nineteenth-century. These vast central kitchens also found their way into apartment hotels. With their

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[64]Denyse Baillargeon, *Ménagères au temps de la Crise* (Montréal: Les Éditions du remue-ménage, 1991), chap. 6.

[65]Bradbury, "Working Families," 34.

[66]Baillargeon, 28, and appendix F which charts the percentage of Montréal households who possessed domestic appliances between 1931 and 1958.

[67]ASGM *Annales*1919-20, 470-2.

[68]Cowan, 130.

individual bed-sitting rooms, a common lounge, and a dining hall provided via the dumbwaiter by the modern basement kitchen, the *pensionnaires* indeed, may have felt as if they lived in an apartment hotel. In fact, the first hydraulic elevator in the convent was installed in 1887 as part of the completed *aile des vieillards*: a convenience which also characterized early, multi-storied cooperative living establishments. Hydraulic elevators were common enough in the 1880s, the time when electric elevators first appeared in New York City.[69] In Montréal during this period, the Hôpital Notre-Dame, other hospitals, and the Windsor Hotel, all featured passenger elevators.

Though the nuns may have viewed the acquisition of modern mechanical systems as labour saving, permitting them to take on more charitable works and care for larger numbers of destitute persons, at times, they displayed a degree of mistrust towards new technologies. The nuns took certain precautions to protect themselves against danger and possible tragedies.

> Pour obtenir d'être préservé de tout accident, on a déposé dans les fondations du mécanisme et dans les murs, trois boîtes contenant des images bénites, des paroles de la sainte Écriture et des reliques....Enfin ces mots: Ascenseur, bénissez le Seigneur, que chaque montée et chaque descente bénissent son saint nom. (signé) Soeur Filiatrault, Supérieure Générale, le 10 décembre, 1907.
>
> Soeur Saint-Jean-de-la-Croix est l'auteur de cette pieuse idée. Si sa mise à execution nous préserve des accidents, nous lui devrons bien quelque chose.[70]

Asking for protection perhaps derived less from a mistrust in technology than from an intent to tie together potentially conflicting systems. Relics and religious symbols, juxtaposed with the latest technology, combined to create a form of religious expression, of thanksgiving and of faith in Providence, Mère d'Youville, and other saints. Technology was employed to further their religious work. Every ascent and descent of the elevator, for instance, was the enactment of a small prayer. The nuns also ensured that most major new oeuvres or construction began on a Wednesday, a day associated with their patron Saint Joseph. Neither the 1907 acquisition of fifty portable fire extinguishers, nor the prominently displayed no-smoking sign could shake the Grey Nuns' faith in Mère d'Youville's ultimate protection as the placement of her blessed images throughout the Mother House evidence.[71]

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[69]Cromley, 154-56; Condit, chap. 10, notes that hotels and apartment buildings were contemporaneous with the development of Chicago's new commercial and office architecture, especially in their technological innovations. "The first hotel to be equipped with electric lights, telephones and elevators was...opened in 1875," 149.

[70]ASGM *Annales* 1906-8, 437-8.

[71]ASGM *Maison Mère rue Guy--constructions et services 1871-1909, historique, vol. iii et iv, Mont Ste-Croix*, 82, also outlines operation instructions for the fire extinguishers. Many miraculous

The autumn of 1888 saw the religious community adopt the telephone. In Montréal, doctors had hooked up to Bell Telephone Company networks by 1880, also the year the first exchange opened.[72] It seems that the nuns waited for more firmly established networks (since privacy was a concern in the early development of telephone technology) and for the 1887 opening of the Uptown office, situated in northern St-Antoine. This exchange served the ruling classes in the northern part of the ward, and the big industries in the south.[73] By 1880, some of the Grey Nuns' missions in the United States had already equipped themselves with the telephone:

> Au cours de cette visite, Soeur Roy, secrétaire de la supérieure générale s'est extasiée devant l'invention du siècle: le téléphone installé à l'hôpital. Au moyen de cette invention, dit-elle, nos Soeurs appellent les médecins de l'établissement qui demeurent à de grandes distances! [74]

Soeur Saint Jean de la Croix warned her readers that "on doit éviter de placer les appareils de téléphone à proximité des appareils de chauffage ou dans les pièces humides."[75] External lines, initially acquired from two different companies, were installed in four locations within the Mother House: the first three from Bell in the entrance of the corridor St-Joseph, in the bureau de la procure, and in the parloir St-Mathieu; the fourth from Marchands was placed in the entrance of the *dépot de la Procure*. The annalist considered the installation to be "Encore une amélioration que l'on trouve indispensable, surtout depuis que l'on est à même de l'apprécier."[76] In fact, a few months later, additional internal telephone lines linked various offices in disparate parts of the building, in the sacristie, Guy Street parlour, crèche, pensionnaires, *maison des engagés*, orphans apartments, to name a few of the locations. As in contemporary hotel bedrooms and offices, telephones were used for internal (interdepartmental) as well as external communication.[77] Both the Albion Hotel and the Windsor Hotel offered their guests only a telegraph office and the services of an operator, as advertised in their respective 1876 and 1898 hotel guides.[78]

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accounts of fires putting themselves out before reaching spaces protected by Mère d'Youville's blessed image are related in the annals.

[72]Martin, 124, describes Bell's monopoly: by offering doctors subscriptions at reduced rates, the telephone company secured the patronage of all parties wanting to communicate with their family physician.

[73]Martin, 115.

[74]Mitchell, 25. [footnote 15]

[75]ASGM *Maison Mère rue Guy -eau, gaz etc. vol. iv,* 58.

[76]ASGM *Annales*, 1888-92, 183, list the fourth location as *la salle des femmes,* which means it may have been available to pensioners.

[77]Martin, 125.

[78]*Albion Hotel: Visitor's Guide to Montreal and River St-Lawrence.* Decker, Stearns and Murray proprietors, [1876] microfiche.

Prior to the telephone, the telegraph (and the wireless for urgent, long distance communication) was available place orders with grocers, butchers and merchants, to call doctors.[79] Indeed, "these practices were very common in cities before telephone service started to expand. In fact, many of the first telephone subscribers already had a telegraph box." Very few residences, approximately four percent, in Montréal, owned a telephone in 1915; telephone companies had initially targetted commercial and business enterprises.[80] The convent's early acquisition of this modern communications technology demonstrated their progressiveness.

The convent could have been perceived by local businessmen as a potential market for a variety of commercial goods. The nuns' école *ménagère*, for example, apprenticed young girls effectively exposing them to new technology. First opened in March, 1905, the school initially operated out of a makeshift space in cuisine des pauvres and adjacent rooms, but it transferred shortly thereafter into "l'ancien réfectoire des hommes et des écoliers, à côté des appartements réservée aux prétendantes."[81] As mentioned previously, transformation of the St-Mathieu wing into an industrial school, successor of the *école ménagère,* occurred in 1919. Upon its inauguration, the annalist wrote:

> "nous voici en face d'un autre groupe d'ouvrières que cousent au moulin, au moulin mû par l'électricité, s'il vous plaît! [the nuns had apparently prayed St-Joseph for them]...un monsieur se présente et s'offre à installer gratuitement ces machines à l'électricité et de plus à leur procurer de l'ouvrage. Ce qui fut vite accepté. Au lendemain de cette aubaine Mme L. J. Forget, cette bienfaitrice si connue de oeuvres de la charité, faisait une visite à notre école quand une de nos soeurs eut l'inspiration de lui faire connaître ce fait, ajoutant "Mme, il ne nous manque plus que des lumières." Continuez de prier St-Joseph, répondit cette généreuse dame et le lendemain, un chèque de $100 dollars était addressé "aux religieuses et aux élèves qui priaient le bon père St-Joseph de leur procurer des lumières."[82]

Manufacturers may have sought to reap indirect benefits by donating certain conveniences, like electric sewing machines. These machines first appeared in Eaton's and Simpson's catalogues in 1917.[83] Paradoxically, few working-class households could afford the new gadgets offered by major department stores. The *école ménagère,* as a training ground, exposed young women to the latest equipment and taught them new professional housekeeping methods. Upon graduation, they probably sought work as

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[79] The annals make numerous references to the telegraph and wireless apparatuses, especially used for urgent communication with the missions outside of Montréal.

[80]Martin, 129, 120.

[81]ASGM *Annales* 1904-06, 450-1; *Annales* 1915-16, 73-4.

[82]ASGM *Annales*, 1919-1920, 340-41.

[83]Denise Lemieux and Lucie Mercier, *Les Femmes au Tournant du Siècle, 1880-1940: Âges de la Vie, Maternité et Quotidien* (Québec: Institut québecois de recherche sur la culture, 1989), 280.

domestics in bourgeois homes and later, themselves, became skilled wives and mothers. Because the gentleman who offered the sewing machines remained anonymous, it is unclear whether he represented a manufacturer. Certainly the convent presented a lucrative market to salesmen able to access its channels. On the other hand, the donor may have simply been exercising philanthropy rather than indirectly marketing his product. Philanthropic and charitable gestures towards the Grey Nuns and their inmates occurred fairly frequently. As a nineteenth-century phenomenon, it permitted secular persons to work towards their spiritual salvation while it also benefited the convent economically.[84]

The religious community obtained many gifts from benefactors. The 1898 introduction of electric incandescent light into the chapel also comprised a gift to the community by a Monsieur Aubertin who wanted to commemorate his daughter's profession as Grey Nun. The Mother Superior's wish for the electrification of the chapel was thus realized (Figure 4.8).[85] Otherwise, gas lighting illuminated various rooms in the Mother House.

> As late as 1932 only 13 of 100 possible consumers in Quebec had residential electricity, and they used only 3.5 per cent of total consumption. Not until well into the twentieth century were gas and electricity installed in most working-class homes, where eventually they lightened the necessary daily tasks of cooking and washing and eliminated much of the dirt associated with coal, wood, oil, and other older fuels, while creating new dependencies on the companies supplying the energy.[86]

Adopting mechanical labour-saving devices and converting to electric sources of lighting were not the only strategies employed to reduce the load of housecleaning chores. The 1907 replacement of the convent's pine floors by maple hardwood floors surely contributed to the subsequent ease of maintenance, though their refurbishment was necessitated after some 35 years of wear.[87] Apparently, softwood floors common to working-class housing required particular cleaning methods, the bane of turn-of-the-century housekeepers.[88]

> [L]a plupart des vieux logements avaient des planchers de bois mou qu'il fallait frotter à la brosse et au "lessis" (résidu de savon), tâche particulièrement pénible.... À défaut, et si on en avait les moyens, l'achat d'un recouvrement de linoléum permettait également d'alléger cette tâche d'entretien.[89]

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[84]Bradbury, "Mourir Chrétiennement," 167-74.

[85] *Annales* 1898-1901, 200.

[86]Bradbury, "Women's Workplaces," 37.

[87]ASGM *Annales* 1906-8, 244.

[88]"Les enquêteurs [of a 1937 Montreal commission] notaient que dans 91% de ces logements, les planchers était fait de bois mou, difficiles d'entretien," Baillargeon, 28.

[89]Baillargeon, 166.

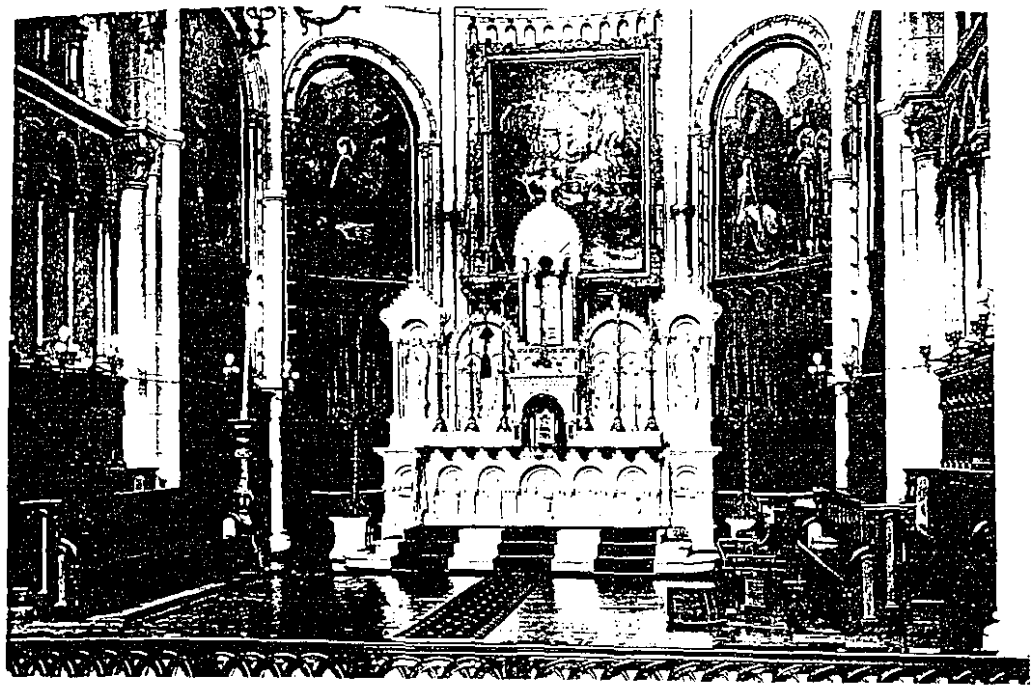

Figure 4.8. "Sanctuaire." Note the light bulbs surrounding the arches in the sanctuary. Source: ASGM (photo album) *Hôpital Général des Soeurs Grises, 390 Rue Guy, Montréal* (1910), published by Librairie Beauchemin Limitée.

Indeed, 1930 photos of the ophthalmology and dental offices show what seems to be linoleum covering the central part of the room (Figures 3.16, 3.17). Popularized in the 1870s and 1880s as a "modern and democratic material" because of its affordability and durability, linoleum was inextricably linked to modern notions of antiseptic cleanliness. It was also easier to clean than wood. In Canada, however, production of linoleum by the Dominion Company only began in the 1910s.[90]

> Nous venons de parler de bruits insolites dans notre grande maison, d'ordinaire si silencieux: c'est que les ouvriers sont à renouveler les planchers des corridors Ste-Croix et Saint-Joseph ils continueront ensuite dans les autres étages, selon le besoin. Le pin, qui était la matière première de ces planchers, achève de s'user. Les nouveaux planchers sont en érable tiré des bois de St-Benoit. 102 arbres donneront près de [deux] mille pieds de plancher. On a choisi à cette fin les arbres qui commençaient à sécher et qui conséquemment seraient tombés de vétusté avant longtemps. Leur disparition du terrain donnera aux jeunes pousses l'avantage de se développer plus favorablement, et outre le prix de vente dont jouira la mission, dans quelques années, la jeunesse de sa forêt sera renouvelée.[91]

The pine flooring in the Mother House, probably a relatively cheaper softwood that reduced initial construction costs, also wore out quickly. In obtaining a more durable hardwood, maple, the nuns probably sought to increase their long-term cost effectiveness. Instead of purchasing wood from a mill, the nuns preferred to select aging trees from their own wood lot, thus already practicing a form of forest management heralded by ecologists and environmentalists today. In doing so, the nuns saved money, used a renewable, recyclable resource and also retained a degree of self-sufficiency. The preceding account not only documented the work carried out by hired tradesmen, but also shows how the nuns minimized disruption of their routine by scheduling work one storey at a time, on a prioritized basis. The invasion of workmen understandably upset the nuns' daily routine, one that maintained a degree of cloistering, unlike traditional households. Typically, the nuns managed by converting spaces to alternative uses.

> Notre réfectoire a besoin d'être remis à neuf; pour le moment il s'agit de faire boiser les poutres et réparer les murs. Ce travail durera une quinzaine de jours, il nous faut par conséquence déménager et nous installer à la salle de communauté, dont la moitié a été transformée en réfectoire. Le service des tables se fait avec le même ordre que d'habitude.
>
> Aussitôt le réfectoire terminé on fera faire des améliorations à l'infirmerie.[92]

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[90]Pamela H. Simpson, "Linoleum and Linerusta: The Democratic Coverings for Floors and Walls," paper presented at Vernacular Architecture Forum annual meeting. Ottawa, May 20, 1995.

[91]ASGM *Annales* 1906-8, 244.

[92]ASGM *Annales* 1892-95, 133.

In this instance, the *salle de communauté* temporarily acted as the community refectory. On numerous occasions, the *salle de communauté* functioned as a chapel: before the church was built, during the 1890 installation of steel trusses in the transept, and most recently for the 1994 restoration work. One year, the nuns transformed this multi-purpose space into a parlour to mark a special celebration: twelve novices made their profession in a single year.

While general maintenance sometimes consisted of renewing elements of the building that had become worn over time, such as the wooden floors for example, at other times it involved spring cleaning on an immense scale.

> Il est bon de noter dans ce journal, le grand ménage qui vient de se terminer au dortoir Sainte-Anne, à la communauté et au corridor Sainte-Croix. Partout, il a eu lavage des murs, suivi du blanchissage. Le corridor des Sept-Douleurs aura son tour dans quelques semaines.[93]

> Tous les murs de l'orphelinat viennent d'être blanchis pour la première fois. Ce manoeuvre qui doit être exécuté quelques années après la construction d'un édifice, était impatiemment attendu depuis 1898.[94]

The maintenance of the convent followed, in part, seasonal rhythms. Heavy construction labour was completed by hired tradesmen or the male employees, while the actual cleaning and general maintenance was performed by members of the religious community. The attention that the Mother House received indicated an awareness of the longer life term cycles of the building, though it was treated with a utilitarian attitude and pursued with an economy of means.

The impressive static monumentality conveyed by the convent's elevations really contradicted everything the plans tells us about the flexibility of the building. Its heavy, rusticated masonry, and repetitive, uniform fenestration made the convent appear immutable. But, the continual conversion of rooms combined with an accretive building process characterized the Mother House as a perpetual construction site. Functions of particular rooms changed, constantly adjusting to fit the immediate needs of the household. The installation of new appliances, elevators, heating systems, electricity, and other building services, though often incorporated as part of larger construction or renovation projects, pointed to the convent's position near the cutting edge of technology.

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[93]ASGM *Annales* 1904-6, 302.
[94]ASGM *Annales* 1904-6, 781-2.

CONCLUSION

The Mother House of the Grey Nuns in the nineteenth century presented many inherent contradictions. It was egalitarian yet hierarchical, conservative yet progressive, autonomous yet dependent. Its repetitive fenestration expressed collective anonymity, while its chapel symbolized the apex of religious life; its traditional construction system functioned in surprisingly modern ways; its adoption of advanced technology permitted the community self-sufficiency, even though many of these new conveniences were gifts from benefactors. These dichotomies underscore the complexity of the convent. They are compromises that women's religious communities made in creating an alternative urban space for themselves. The Grey Nuns questioned boundaries imposed on them, but worked within given limitations.

The use of architecture—buildings, furnishings, drawings, and photographs—as a source uncovers many previously hidden stories about people and their environments. Relating this physical evidence to social and cultural sources (or written sources) differs significantly from stylistic analyses of architecture, which, with their focus on aesthetics, monuments, and famous architects, completely ignore women's experiences. A focus on gender in the built environment proves particularly useful in recovering "lost" lifestyles; it is perhaps analogous to a living archeology.

The extent of convents' involvement within nineteenth-century Montréal, as exemplified by this reconstruction of the Mother House of the Grey Nuns, disproves popular stereotypes of the type that paint religious communities of women as sequestered and out of touch with the world. Women religious interacted with the secular community on many levels: they negotiated with architects, church officials, contractors, and tradesmen in the design, construction, and renovations of the Mother House; they engaged in real estate transactions and fundraising activities to finance their building projects; they formed part of a support network of friends and family relations; they participated in the marketplace as consumers; and they provided essential social services to the populace. The building itself is evidence that the nuns kept up with modern conveniences and innovations. It also responded to changes in the organization of the institution and its growing population. While the internal allocation of spaces within the Mother House recalled the

planning of traditional nineteenth-century hospitals, asylums, and schools, it also resembled newer building types, such as apartment hotels.

Although the convent is an institution as old and patriarchal as the home, perhaps more than any other structure in women's urban landscape at the turn of the century, it blurred the distinctions between the private and public realms of the nineteenth-century city. Nuns lived and worked under the same roof. People of all classes could be found within its walls. The convent gathered individual women's efforts, integrating their social work, religious rituals, and domestic and industrial activities into a cooperative enterprise. Access to modern technologies at an industrial scale liberated time and energy to pursue productive, professional and religious work. Clearly, the nuns do not fit into the neat construction of the "separate spheres" theory, as their own work and physical environment breached the clear divisions of male and female, public and private, active and passive. The convent, then, offered women like Soeur Saint Jean de la Croix an alternative urban "space," one in which they were able to realize themselves individually and collectively.

The Mother House of the Grey Nuns cannot represent all of Montréal's convents. Too many important differences exist between religious orders. An in-depth, comparative examination of conventual architecture in Montréal remains to be done. This case study, nonetheless, has served to question any single view of a building. The convent's architectural presence forces us to reconsider not only the historic monument in light of its users, but also to re-evaluate the users in light of their environment.

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