

Alhambra Monument in Memory of Marguerite Bourgeoys

In the front of the Congrégation de Notre-Dame mother house stands a grey stone stele memorializing Marguerite Bourgeoys. It was erected by the leaders of the Order of the Alhambra during a convention in Montreal. The Order of the Alhambra is a Catholic men and women's fraternal organization founded on February 29, 1904, in Brooklyn, New York by William Harper Bennett. Its members engage in a variety of charitable works. Ever since its founding, one of the Order's main interests has been finding, documenting and memorializing persons, places and events of significant historical value to North American Catholicism. Over 160 bronze plaques have been placed throughout the United States and Canada.

The stele was first installed at the 6th mother house, now Dawson College. Through the years, however, it was moved to the sites where the different mother houses were situated. Thus, from 1985 the monument was at the former Institut pédagogique, now Marianopolis College, until 2005 when it was moved to its current location, the 8th mother house, 2330 Sherbrooke Street West.

The memorial stele was unveiled on August 23, 1951 by Commander Norman O'Brien and was blessed by His Excellency H.S. Carriga, Bishop of Corpus Christi, Texas, and Supreme Chaplain of the Order of the Alhambra.



On the day of the inauguration, the Reverend Mother placed a magnificent garland of daisies and lilies at the foot of the monument after Commander O'Brien presented a wreath adorned with innumerable flowers.

Still today, flowers are planted at the base of the memorial.



Overview

Monument Description

At the top of the commemorative stone is the coat-of-arms of the Congrégation de Notre-Dame which can be described as follows:

A circular azure shield, within an azure border containing the name of the Institute "Congrégation de Notre-Dame" and a monogram of the Blessed Virgin Mary, along with, in Chief, an antique gold arc/crown and, at the base, the Heart of Jesus in gold.

The circular form, the round border, the title "Maria" and the parts that make up the shield illustrate an older style that was used by the first superior general. The crescent and the star which are usually an element of the Congregation coat-of-arms do not appear.

The monogram AM means Auspice Maria or "Under the Protection of Mary." The daisies (marguerites) finely engraved in the stone surround the shield and recall the name of Marguerite Bourgeoys. Finally we read the motto, Magnificat anima mea dominum, the first words of the Magnificat, the canticle of praise and thanksgiving which the Virgin Mary pronounced at the moment of the Visitation. It means "My soul glorifies the Lord."

We then find the following inscription in French:
In memory of Marguerite Bourgeoys
1620-1700
Foundress of the Congrégation de Notre-Dame.
First teacher of Ville-Marie.
Pioneer of social works.
Mother of the colony.

At the bottom is the name of the donor of the monument, the Order of the Alhambra, its logo (a tower which symbolizes the fortress of Alhambra) and the date on which the memorial was erected.

Creation of the Monument

The sculpture was created in the workshop of Joseph Brunet, a facility that specialized in funerary monuments. It was located across from the main entrance of Notre-Dame-des-Neiges Cemetery in Montreal. A key figure in building the funerary heritage of Notre-Dame-des-Neiges Cemetery, Joseph Brunet was contracted for various public monuments: those of de Maisonneuve, Chénier, Macdonald, George-Étienne-Cartier and The Woman Farmer at the de Maisonneuve Market. Rémi Brunet, brother of Joseph, and his son, Joseph-Émile, also worked in this prosperous family enterprise. In 1916, Joseph-Émile created a large part of the sculpted animals on the Parliament building in Ottawa. He also created the four bronze statues that were installed between 1965 and 1969 on the façade of the Parliament building in Quebec City. Two of them represent Marie Guyart, known as Marie de l'Incarnation, and Marguerite Bourgeoys.

Bibliography
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