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Historical Painting 1653-1893

An Illustrated Rendering of the Significant Events in the Life of Marguerite Bourgeoys and of the Congrégation de Notre-Dame

Impressive in scale, this painting entitled *Tableau historique 1653-1893* is a rare example of 19th century works of art still included in the collection of the Congregation. The painting, a watercolour with illustrations in black, red, blue and gold ink, was presented at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair. Its presence at this event saved it from certain destruction during the mother house fire on June 8, 1893. The artist who created this original work, Sister Sainte-Marie-du-Précieux-Sang (Alphonsine Hébert, 1844-1912), was equally gifted in both art and music.

The Chicago World's Fair was dedicated to business, culture and the development of American technology of that time. Like the two previous world's fairs in Paris and London, it also included an area reserved for public instruction. This exhibit on education featured about two-hundred schools from the Province of Quebec. Each school was invited to present a historical account of its institution as well as students' projects. It is in this context that this work, intended to be a synthesis of the history of the Congregation, was born.

Using small illustrations and short texts, this five-part painting retraces the important episodes in the development of the institution. From Marguerite Bourgeoys's departure for New France on July 20, 1653 to the establishment of more recent schools in the 19th century, this historical painting tells the story of this religious and unclioistered community whose mission was to teach young women. At the same time, it highlights the important figures who marked the history of the Congregation, for example, Paul de Chomedey de Maisonneuve, Jeanne Mance, Jeanne Le Ber and Monseigneur de Laval.

At the World's Fair, the painting received a bronze medal, which is still visible at the bottom of the painting.

