



Foundations

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The Chinese Hospitals Montreal Chinese Hospital, Montreal St. Joseph Oriental Hospital, Vancouver Mount St. Joseph Hospital, Vancouver

by Huguette Turcotte

This paper presents a brief history of the foundation and of the development over the years of two hospitals dedicated to the care of Chinese immigrants in Canada, one in Montreal (founded in 1918) and the other in Vancouver (founded in 1921). Both establishments were established and operated by the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception (M.I.C.).*

This religious congregation of women missionaries – the first in North America – was founded in Montreal in 1902 by the Venerable Délia Tétréault (Mother Mary of the Holy Spirit), a native of Marieville, in the province of Quebec. It counted only fifteen members when the bishop of Canton, China, Most Rev. Jean-Marie Mérel, of the Société des Missions Etrangères de Paris, came to the Mother House in Montreal and asked for Sisters for his Apostolic Vicariate. Six young Sisters arrived at Canton in October 1909. From that time, the Foundress focused her attention, not only on the China missions, but also on Chinese immigrants in Canada, by providing services for them in Montreal, first in her own convents and in parishes, and then in Chinatown.

The Montreal Chinese Hospital traces its beginnings to 1918 when the influenza epidemic appeared in Montreal, and Délia Tétréault obtained permission from the civil and religious authorities to organize a small emergency shelter for the Chinese. A hospital for Chinese in Vancouver dates from 1921, when Mother

Tétréault responded to a request for the bishop of Vancouver by sending four of her sisters to care for immigrant Chinese in that city. This article will trace the stories of these two institutions in the order of their founding.¹

THE MONTREAL CHINESE HOSPITAL

The small seven-bed infirmary opened for Chinese men at 66 Clark Street in Montreal during the 1918 influenza crisis cared for fifty-five Chinese men before it closed its doors on 26 June 1919, and the four nursing sisters went back to their convent. The charitable gesture on the part of the Church and of the Christians of Montreal was rewarded with two gold medals from the Government of China: one was offered to Mother Délia Tétréault and to her community, and the other to Fr. Roméo Caillé, Director of the Chinese Mission.²

In 1920, the Benevolent Chinese Association of Montreal began planning and organizing their own health services by opening a permanent Chinese Hospital in more spacious premises. The Association bought an old synagogue at 112, La Gauchetière Street, in the heart of Chinatown. The Administration Board asked the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception to take charge and four Sisters went to live there. One of them, Sr. Marie de St-Georges, had spent some years in China and could speak the language. A young Chinese lady, A Fa Tche, called from Canton by Mother Délia to serve the Cantonese patients, arrived the same year. The ten-bed hospital was intended for chronically-ill aged men who could not return to China and who had no families in Canada to care for them. The two doctors and the four Sisters were all volunteers and received

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only a nominal honorarium. An out-patient clinic and a dispensary were opened shortly after the inauguration and they were quite well attended.

Dr. Louis E. Fortier was the first regular physician on the records of the budding hospital in 1922. He and the Sisters decided to add one storey to the building and to open an X-Ray room in the basement in that year. Dr. William Derome joined Dr. Fortier at the Chinese Hospital in 1925. Both were critical of the premises and they asked to have an office and an operating room to improve the situation. Their request was granted by the Chinese Board members and funds were obtained through the initiatives of Mr. Wong Quouil, who went to Ottawa, Quebec City, and even New Brunswick to solicit financial help from Chinese communities in these cities. Plans were drawn, approved, a building contractor was hired, and the repairs were completed in December 1925. The same year, a grant of \$1,000.00 yearly was allotted to the seven M.I.C. Sisters and remained unchanged for more than forty years. In the forty-two year long history of the old hospital, there were five major initiatives designed to provide better service: 1) the purchase of X-Ray equipment in 1930; 2) the expansion by five more beds in 1935; 3) the installation of a minor surgery table; 4) the construction in 1947 of an extra floor to the Hospital, providing ten more beds; and 5) the opening of an “under-five” baby clinic in 1960.³

Between 1922-45, the Hospital was entirely financed by voluntary donations from the Chinese community. For the first twenty years, the president and the treasurer traveled all over Canada soliciting funds from Chinese communities. They met with various degrees of support. But beginning in 1945, the Hospital was forced to turn to public sources for help. It obtained \$2.00 per patient-day from the City Welfare Department for welfare recipients and from 1948, another \$4.50 per patient-day from the Quebec Public Charities.⁴

In 1947, we note the death of old Dr. Fortier after about 25 years of continuous services to the Chinese. He was replaced by his son, Dr. Henri Fortier, who stayed with the Hospital until May 1965. It was in 1958 that the provincial Ministry of Health announced a change of category for the patients received at the Chinese Hospital, thus providing an allowance of \$4.00 per patient-day. This development increased hope of

receiving a subsidy for the Chinese Hospital in the future, and in 1959 steps were taken to approach the Director of the Sanitary Units of Montreal to request a branch for children’s care.

However, the old building was reaching the end of its useful life. It was bursting to overflowing, and the members of the Chinese Association started to consider the project of relocating the Hospital. In 1962, the Public Health authorities declared the century-old building unfit as a hospital and ordered its closing. It was at this critical moment that Sr. Pauline Longtin, M.I.C., who had worked as a nurse in Africa, returned to Canada, and was called to take charge of the condemned hospital.

There was only two choices: to move or to perish. In close collaboration with the Chinese members of the Board, and Dr. Gélinas, assistant-minister of Health, steps were taken to find a site for a new hospital and possibilities for obtaining building subsidies explored. Through well-orchestrated promotion campaigns during the following years, diverse associations and personalities involved in the field were interested in the venture and hopes for success raised. At the end of 1962, the Chinese population of Montreal was about 8,000 to 10,000 persons.

The Health Minister visited the Hospital in February 1963. A capital grant of \$350,000.00 was given, that amount to be matched by the contribution from the Chinese community. It was also stipulated that a new site be found, and that the new hospital must admit patients of other ethnic origins. “It is generally believed by all informants that without the strong influence and support of the M.I.C. Sisters, the request would not have been met.”⁵

On 16 July 1963, a contract was signed to buy a site at 7500 St. Denis Street, in the north end of Montreal. The plans and the building permit were approved by the federal and provincial governments. In September, a subscription campaign was decided and permission from the city authorities was granted. In October, a contract was signed with the “Society of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception” for their services, renewable every five years.

It was at this time that Mrs. Martha Lau of Hong Kong arrived as interpreter and social worker, to replace

Hospitals for Chinese in Canada: Montreal (1918) and Vancouver (1921)

All photos courtesy of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception General Archives, Montreal.



Montreal Chinese Hospital, 1921



Montreal Chinese Hospital, 1920



Montreal Chinese Hospital, 1949

Sr. Marie-de-St-Georges who was almost 80-years old. Fr. Thomas Tou, pastor of the Catholic Parish of the Holy Spirit, also became involved in the Montreal Chinese Hospital in 1963, being elected as vice-president of the administration board.

The project received the collaboration of B'nai Brith, with fund raising activities through parties, conferences, benefit dinners, etc. The Auxiliary Association of Volunteers was born in 1964. An administration board of fifteen officers was put in charge of the Montreal Chinese Hospital and a fund-raising campaign was launched with an objective of one million dollars. The Chinese population became involved and the building of a new hospital became a community project. A great Dragon Parade was organized in Chinatown. Newspaper articles appeared, donations poured in, and the federal government granted a subsidy of \$117,256.00. The building went up.⁶

The first patients were admitted to the new hospital on 16 June 1965. They were moved from the old Chinatown building by numerous volunteers. All the departments were opened by June 21st, when outpatients were admitted to the clinic. The official opening, which took place on 22 September, was chaired by the Minister of Health, Dr. Alphonse Couturier, in the presence of the Ambassador of China, a delegate of the Federal Ministry of Health, representatives of the Presbyterian and Catholic Churches, and other dignitaries. Sr. Pauline Longtin, M.I.C., who had been the soul of the crisis years and who had led the project to completion, remained as Director.

By 1966, the Hospital was filled to capacity with fifty-five patients. Dr. David Lin, who had been elected president of the Administration Board in February, kept this position for the next twenty years. His dedication and innumerable services were recognized when he was received as a member of the Order of Canada by the Governor-General in July 1986.⁷

The following years saw changes in the direction of the hospital – Sr. Pauline was replaced in 1968 by Sr. Françoise Derome, Sr. Marguerite Roy became Director of Nursing, and Sr. Jacqueline Villemure, who was to be the last M.I.C. Director, took over in 1970. The capacity of the Hospital was increased to sixty-five beds in that year. A newspaper article published at the time marveled at



Montreal Chinese Hospital, 1965
(corner of St-Denis and Faillon Streets)

the fact that the Montreal Chinese Hospital was a *Society of Nations* in miniature. The non-sectarian character of the hospital was stressed and actually practiced. Patients from all countries were received, without any restrictions regarding religions, nationalities or political allegiance, with a great variety of languages.⁸

The Foundation of the Montreal Chinese Hospital was created in 1972. Two years later, a new project – that of the Montreal Chinese Hospital adding to its mission the long-term care of older Chinese citizens – came to light. This was an acute need because nothing of the sort existed at that time for the Chinese community. However, the project took almost ten years to become a reality. It was in 1983 that the Pavillion Sung Pai, built on the site of the Sisters' Residence, welcomed its first residents and was officially inaugurated in February. It brought to forty-four the number of beds available for long term residents.⁹

A delegation of members of the Lions International Club from Taiwan came to Montreal in 1984. To commemorate their visit to the Hospital, they offered a bronze statue of Confucius that became a landmark since it was installed right in front of the Hospital on St. Denis Street, a long and busy artery. This gift was received with much gratitude as a token of the cultural patrimony of Montreal. It symbolizes the presence of Chinese civilization and culture in the Quebec Province. Confucius moved along with the Hospital in 1999, and can now be admired in front of the new building on Viger Street in Chinatown.

Dr. Lin, who had spent twenty years as president of the Board of Administration, was replaced by Lewis Chow in 1985. It was soon after that members of the Chinese community suggested that the Montreal Chinese Hospital should be relocated again, this time back to Chinatown and the idea gathered the support of a certain number of people.

The M.I.C. Sisters left the administration of the Hospital in 1985. The lack of personnel was the main reason for the decision taken by the M.I.C. General Council. To that time, more than 140 Sisters had worked in the different health services of the Hospital since its foundation.¹⁰ During that period, 90% of the patients and 40% of the employees had been from various Chinese origins.

In the fall of 1987, Mr. Lewis Chow assumed the leadership of a fund-raising campaign. Its purpose was to raise funds for the building and the return to Chinatown of the Montreal Chinese Hospital. The campaign, which was extended well into 1988, gathered the amount of \$2.2 million.¹¹

The project of repatriating the Chinese Hospital in Chinatown generated a great amount of interest in the Chinese community, due mostly to the fact that this area of the city had been greatly improved under the care of Mayor Pierre Bourque. The provincial government, impressed by the successful fund-raising campaign of the Chinese Community the previous year, approved the idea, but warned the administration board that the new hospital would be a public hospital since 90% of the capital cost would be financed by the government. This was unless the Chinese community could prove that it was the owner of the first Chinese Hospital no later than 1921, the date of the voting of the law on Public Welfare.

The M.I.C. Sisters came to the rescue and delved into their archives for a long search. At last, they were able to find in their daily chronicles the name of the Chinese official who had signed the contract when the old synagogue was bought on La Gauchetière Street in 1919. The City Hall records were in accordance and the objections on the part of the provincial government fell.¹² Several years passed in discussing and planning the new building until the final approval of subsidies by the provincial government.

The dream of returning the Montreal Chinese Hospital to Chinatown finally came true in 1999. Situated at

189 Viger Street East, the new modern hospital was inaugurated on 20 April. It is open to all ethnic groups, governed by a corporation, and has a capacity of 128 beds. It also offers a Day Center for senior citizens. The operational budget is financed by the provincial government at a cost of some sixty millions a year, not taking into account the subsidies for building, renovating, and buying of equipment.

Sr. Pauline Longtin, Sr. Françoise Derome, and Sr. Jacqueline Villemure, all members of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, who had spent many years of service at the former hospital, were present to receive a commemorative plaque offered by the Administration Board; it reads:

In gratitude for the exceptional dedication of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception on behalf of the Chinese Hospital of Montreal since 1918.

This plaque can now be seen in the inter-denominational chapel of the new Montreal Chinese Hospital, with a portrait of Délia Tétreault, “Foundress of the first health center for the Chinese in Montreal,” both brought from the former Hospital on St. Denis Street to its present site.¹³

ST. JOSEPH ORIENTAL HOSPITAL, VANCOUVER

The history of the Montreal hospital repeated itself in 1921 when Most Rev. Timothy Casey, bishop of Vancouver, “warmly invited the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception to go work for the salvation of Oriental immigrants who were very numerous in that City.”¹⁴ Délia Tétreault was unable to close her ears to the bishop’s pleas. The project was to provide classes for Chinese children, regular visits to a miserable refuge for old abandoned Orientals, and many material and spiritual services to them. The four Sisters arrived on 5 May 1921, rented a house on Keefer Street, and set to work. At first, much of their time was spent in visits to the sick in the homes and in hospitals. Gradually, however, it became apparent to them that they would have “to dedicate themselves to the care of those forsaken, sick and homeless old people.”¹⁵

In 1922, an Oriental Home was opened for lone sick Chinese men on Pender Street, in Chinatown. Needs increasing tremendously, in 1924 the Sisters bought a



1928 – St Joseph Oriental Hospital (Campbell St. – Vancouver)

house at 236 Campbell Street and opened a dispensary there. They also bought the old Woodward House, close by, to be used as a convent and as a small makeshift hospital where they admitted eighteen patients. Within four years, these pioneers had succeeded in organizing a small hospital for Chinese and it was not long before it was filled to capacity. Two years later, another dispensary was opened on the ground floor of an Albert Street building.

However, a still larger facility was urgently required. The cornerstone of a three storey building alongside the Sisters' residence was blessed and St. Joseph Oriental Hospital opened in 1927. TB patients were admitted in a special wing of the hospital in 1932. They were all men. The needs of the quickly growing Oriental population were met in 1936 by opening another dispensary at 795 Pender Street. This dispensary remained in operation until 1951.¹⁶

Always anxious to serve the Chinese with a respectful cultural approach, Mother Mary of the Holy Spirit conceived the idea of bringing to Vancouver a female catechist from Canton. This was at the time when the 1923 Chinese Immigration Act issued by the Canadian government excluded all Chinese immigrants in Canada. No doubt that it was a difficult project but the M.I.C. Foundress was tenacious. She presented a formal request and an entry visa for Teresa Fung was granted. She arrived in 1936. After serving the Chinese population of Vancouver for thirteen years, she entered the M.I.C. Novitiate in Montreal in 1949, becoming the second member of Chinese origin. Assigned back



1946 – St Joseph Oriental Hospital (Campbell St. – Vancouver)

to Vancouver after her formation period, she acted as coordinator of the Chinese Associations for many years and served until her retirement in 1987 at the Complexe M.I.C. de Pont-Viau where she was still living in 2001.¹⁷

MOUNT ST. JOSEPH HOSPITAL, VANCOUVER

In 1941, the Campbell Street Hospital was no longer suitable for the increasing demand. With the assistance of Fr. Forget from Saint Patrick's Parish and the Alderman, Mr. Halford Wilson, the Sisters purchased a property at 3080 Prince Edward Street. The foundations of the future Mount Saint Joseph Hospital were laid in 1944, and the formal opening of the hospital took place on 2 October 1946. Much credit should be given to the Chinese Association and to the co-ordinator Sr. Teresa Fung, M.I.C., whose joint efforts contributed to the growth of the hospital by generating necessary funds.¹⁸ It was then an eighty-seven bed private hospital for Oriental patients with medicine, surgery, maternity, pediatric units, and Chinese cuisine services. Eighteen Sisters worked alongside six doctors and a small staff.¹⁹

With the inception of the British Columbia Hospital Services in 1949, Mount Saint Joseph became a public general hospital, no longer restricted to Oriental patients but serving the population at large. As a result, the hospital became overly crowded and more doctors, nurses, and staff had to be recruited, increasing operational costs tremendously. At that period in its history, the Association of the Ladies' Auxiliary managed fund-raising activities generating funds that were contributed for equipment and patient services.



1949 or 1950 – Mount St Joseph Hospital, Vancouver



1950 – Mount St Joseph Hospital, Vancouver

There were twenty-three M.I.C. Sisters serving in the Vancouver Hospital in 1950.

A new wing was added in 1956, bringing the capacity of Mount Saint Joseph to 154 beds. The Department of Chronic Care was converted into Extended Care Unit in 1965. The next year, an activity program was implemented for residents and later increased with Physiotherapy Services. An Intensive Care Unit and a Daycare Surgery were started the following year.

The Sisters' quarters were so cramped that offices by day became their bedrooms by night. In 1971, a residence for them was built at 2950 Prince Edward St, next to Mount Saint Joseph, so the rooms they occupied in the hospital could be used for expanded administrative and admitting facilities.²⁰

The Oriental Home established by the Sisters in 1922 was closed in 1972, fifty years after its opening. Six years later, the Villa Cathay Care Home, a residence for Chinese senior citizens, was built on the site that had long been a landmark for the residents of Chinatown. A plaque in the entrance hall recalls the origin and the years of work of the M.I.C. Sisters; it reads:

Formerly the Oriental Home founded by the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of Montreal, established August 18, 1922. This Villa opened March 1, 1978.

In 1977, when Sr. Germaine Roy, M.I.C. was Executive Director, a major expansion and renovation program increased the number of acute care beds to 150, and provided new facilities for emergency, operating rooms, and day care services. A new wing provided quarters for 150 extended care residents.

The Pastoral Care Department, initiated several years earlier under the direction of Sr Olga Antosz, M.I.C., was formally established in 1978. Several M.I.C. Sisters worked in this department until their final departure in 2000, trying to provide spiritual support to the patients and residents and to respond to their emotional crises.²¹ Through their animation and activities, they invited the hospital staff to share in the healing ministry handed down by Christ as well as in the mission and charisma of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception. Since then, the department has been giving services to the Catholic population as well as to the multi-faith

population of Vancouver. An award of Excellence was offered to the Pastoral Care Team in 1991. The Short Stay Assessment and Treatment Center, the first specialized geriatric service of its kind in British Columbia, opened in 1979.

In 1984, the Mount Saint Joseph Hospital Foundation was established to support the caring tradition of the Hospital. Since then, many private, corporate, and media sponsors have contributed tremendously to the development of the hospital. The Foundation publishes a quarterly newsletter, *Accent*, with information for the Foundation's friends, supporters, and donors. The idea of a "Tree of Life" in the hospital lobby in recognition of community giving became a reality in 1980, acknowledging those who have made significant contributions.²²

In August 1987, the General Council of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception decided to entrust the general administration of the Hospital to lay people. A Mission Effectiveness Program, to involve the personnel in its Christian mission, was initiated through the efforts of Sr. Louise Denis, M.I.C. Through education, this program ensures a consistent and on-going living of the mission and philosophy of the hospital. Everyone concerned was made aware that service in this Catholic milieu is not only an employment but an engagement, a vocation, a ministry.²³ In 1991, donations supported an addition to the fourth floor, to be used as a Pediatric unit, and the Surgical Day care unit was expanded to twenty beds.

By the 1990s, a good number of religious communities who had owned hospitals withdrew from the institutions they had founded and directed for many years. In other instances, radical changes in health services and the lessening of religious personnel brought about a renewal. For Mount Saint Joseph Hospital, 1 October 1994 marked the day of its official integration to the Chara Health Care Society, along with St. Vincent's Hospital and the Youville Residence, a partnership amalgamating three Catholic Health Care Organizations in Vancouver, all founded by Canadian Catholic Congregations of women. This union has now evolved into the formation of Providence Healthcare, which includes the Chara group with Holy Family and St. Paul's Hospitals.²⁴

The year 1996 was one of anniversaries in Vancouver. It was the 75th Anniversary of the arrival of the M.I.C.

Hospitals for Chinese in Canada: Montreal (1918) and Vancouver (1921)

Sisters, of the opening of the first Chinese Hospital, and of the 50th anniversary of Mount Saint Joseph. Celebrations were prepared with utmost care by the local Organizing Committee as these events were the most important and memorable in the history of the Hospital. A whole week of festivities was scheduled in April.

Sisters who had spent years at Mount Saint Joseph Hospital came from Montreal and former hospital staff arrived from all over the country and even from abroad. Archbishop Adam Exner, O.M.I, presided the solemn thanksgiving mass; a multi-cultural dinner was held in a Chinatown restaurant, and the “Stars of the Pacific Gala Show” with Chinese star performers like Jackie Chan of Hong Kong, attracted thousands of persons to the Queen Elizabeth theatre.²⁵

Very special and enduring gifts marked these anniversaries. For example, a huge symbolic fresco was painted on the wall near the hospital entrance by a grateful artist, Joey Mallette. A Donor Wall, fifteen feet wide and six feet high, integrating the list of donors who contributed to the Hospital’s original building in 1946, 1956 and 1996, was commissioned by the Vancouver branch of the Hong Kong Bank of Canada.²⁶

Even though the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception are no longer in charge of Mount Saint Joseph Hospital, their memory remains present in the hearts and minds of their numerous friends. Opportunities are seized to keep it alive. In 2001, for example, new medical equipment purchased by the Mount Saint Joseph Hospital Foundation was named in honor of members of the M.I.C. Congregation. a scanner was inscribed “Délia” after the Foundress Délia Tétreault. and an Ultrasound machine was named “TERESA” after Sr Teresa Fung.

The year 2002 marked the Centennial of the Foundation of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception. Celebrations were held in the fourteen countries where the Sisters are present. Some who had served at Vancouver were able to attend the 7 December event and to witness another blessing in true MSJH tradition: a new integrated urology table and X-Ray imaging machine named “JULIETTE.” Receiving the honor was Sr. Juliette Ouellet, the last Sister to work on the staff.²⁷



Mount St Joseph Hospital, Vancouver – 2000

Today, Mount Saint Joseph is a 275-bed acute and extended care hospital with an outstanding reputation for quality patient care. Its motto, “People Caring for People,” expresses the spirit that has characterized the institution since its foundation and still is the source of its activities today. In 2003, Mount Saint Joseph Hospital is very much alive in spite of the drastic changes and the great hurdles it had to overcome during its eighty-two years of existence.

About 175 M.I.C. Sisters served in Vancouver. A smaller M.I.C. team is still there today with commitments in a great variety of ministries: health care, education, pastoral ministry, mission awareness, family counseling, services for immigrants, etc.

As a conclusion to these historical notes that I have shared on the two hospitals founded for Chinese in Canada by the Venerable Délia Tétreault, I am inclined to borrow her own words when she wrote: “God does great things while we do little ones (...) Everything must have a little beginning.”²⁸ Let us recognize “the little beginnings” of the Montreal Chinese Hospital and of the Mount Saint Joseph Hospital in Vancouver told in the preceding pages. We have seen how, by the grace of God, the tiny seedlings have grown into great trees, thanks also to the love and the courage that led Mother Délia and her daughters to undertake such works for Chinese immigrants in our country.

ENDNOTES

1. The primary resource for the history of the Montreal and Vancouver hospitals is the M.I.C. Archives at 100 Place Juge-Desnoyen, Laval, Quebec, H7G 1A4 (phone: 450 663-6460).
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16. "All About the MSJ Hospital's 75th/50th Anniversary," *ACCENT*(bulletin of the Mount Saint Joseph Hospital Foundation, Vancouver), Spring 1996, 2.
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22. "New Tree of Life Dedicated," *ACCENT*, Summer 2001, 1.
23. Louise Denis, M.I.C., "People Caring for People," *MIC Mission News*, November 1991, 6.
24. Sylvia Dupuis, M.I.C., "The Power of One: Mother Délia Tétreault and the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception," *CARAIM Retreat*, 1996.
25. "All About the Mount Saint Joseph Hospital's 75th/50th Anniversary," *ACCENT*, Spring 1996, 1.
26. "The: Msm 75th/50th Anniversary Wall," *ACCENT*, Spring 1996, 5.
27. "Preparation for the Celebration of the 75th/50th Anniversary," *ACCENT*, Spring 1996, 6.
28. M.I.C. General Archives, Délia Tétreault to the Sisters of Vancouver, 26 September 1923.

APPENDIX ONE

The Montreal Chinese Hospital Chronological Data*

- 1918 Influenza epidemic in Montreal. Mother Mary of the Holy Spirit goes to the religious and civil authorities to obtain permission for opening an emergency shelter for sick Chinese. It opened on October 18th in a small house at 66 Clark Street.
- 1919 The small refuge closed its doors in December, at the end of the epidemic.
- 1920 The Board Members of the Chinese Association decided to reorganize services for the sick in more spacious premises and to call on the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception to take charge. The Association bought an old synagogue at 112, de Lagachetière, in the heart of Chinatown, and four M.I.C. Sisters went to reside there.
- 1922 The doctors and the Sisters decide to add one story to the building and to open an X-Ray room in the basement. Dr. Louis E. Fortier was the first regular physician on the records of the Hospital Dispensary in 1922.
- 1925 Dr. Fortier and Dr. William Derome are not satisfied with the premises and they request to have an office and an operating room. Their request is granted by the Chinese Board members and funds are obtained through the initiatives of Mr. Wong Quouil who went to Ottawa, Quebec and even to New Brunswick to solicit the help of the Chinese communities in these cities. Plans are drawn, approved, and a building contractor hired. The repairs started on August 2nd are completed by December 26.
- The same year, a grant of \$1,000.00 a year is allotted to the seven Sisters and remained unchanged for more than 40 years.
- 1947 Death of Dr. Fortier after about 25 years of continuous services to the Chinese. He was replaced by his son, Dr. Henri Fortier, who stayed with the Hospital until May 1965.
- 1958 The provincial Ministry of Health announced a change of category for the patients received at the Chinese Hospital, thus providing an allowance of \$4.00 a day per patient. Hope increased of receiving a subsidy for the Chinese Hospital in the future.
- 1959 Steps are taken to approach the Director of the Sanitary Units of Montreal to request a branch for children's care.
- 1962 More steps are taken with Dr. Gélinas, assistant-minister of Health, concerning the site of a future hospital.
- 1963 On April 29, arrival of Mrs. Martha Lau of Hong Kong as interpreter and social worker, to replace Sr. Marie-de-St-Georges who was almost 80 years old. July 16th: Signature of a contract for buying a site called "Holy Family" at 7500 St. Denis Street, corner of Faillon, in the north of Montreal. The plans and the building permit are approved by the federal and provincial governments. In September, a subscription campaign was decided and permission from the city authorities was granted. In October, a contract was signed with the "Society of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception" to whom is confided the administration of the new Montreal Hospital to be built. Fr. Thomas Tou, pastor of the Catholic Parish of the Holy Spirit, became involved in the MCH during that year.

* This information was not included in the original article. It was a separate document provided by the M.I.C. General Archives, compiled by Sr. Huguette Turcotte, M.I.C. and appeared *Canadian Catholic Historical Association Historical Studies*, (2003)

- 1964 The project received the collaboration of the B'nai Brith with fund raising activities through parties, conferences, benefit dinners, etc. The Auxiliary Association of Volunteers was born at this time. An administration board of fifteen officers was put in charge of the Montreal Chinese Hospital. A fund-raising campaign was launched with an objective of \$1,000,000. The Chinese population became involved and organized a Dragon Parade in Chinatown. Newspaper articles appeared. Donations poured. The federal government granted a subsidy of \$117,256.00. The Minister of Northern Affairs, the Hon. John Turner, also helped and supported the project. The building went up.
- 1965 May 15 marked the entrance of the first patients in the new hospital. They were moved from the old Chinatown building by numerous volunteers. All the departments were opened by June 21st, when out-patients were admitted to the clinic. The official opening of the new Montreal Chinese Hospital took place on September 22, 1965, in the presence of the Ambassador of China, a delegate of the federal Ministry of Health, the provincial Minister of Health, representatives of the Presbyterian and Catholic churches, and other dignitaries. A message of Governor-General Georges Vanier was read. Sr. Pauline Longtin, M.I.C., who had been the soul of the crisis years and who had led the project to completion, remained as Director. Dr. David Lin, who was elected president of the Administration Board in February, remained in that position for the next twenty years. His dedication and innumerable services were recognized when he was received a member of the Order of Canada by the Governor-General in July 1986.
- 1966 The Hospital was filled to capacity: 55 patients. Arrival of Dr. Pablo Tchang who was the first permanent physician in the Montreal Chinese Hospital.
- 1968 Sr. Pauline Longtin, M.I.C., is replaced by Sr. Françoise Derome as Director and Sr. Marguerite Roy, M.I.C., became Director of Nursing.
- 1970 A new Director is appointed: Sr. Jacqueline Villemure, M.I.C. The capacity of the Hospital was increased to 65 beds in that year. A newspaper article published in that year marvelled at the fact that the MCH was a Society of Nations in miniature. Patients from all countries were received, without any restrictions regarding religions, nationalities or political allegiance, with a great variety of languages. In February, the Sisters' Residence next door was converted into "La Résidence du Centre Hospitalier Chinois" for Chinese residents.
- 1971 The provincial government took charge of the administration of Health Services. The voting of Law.65 rendered all hospitals public hospitals, subsidized by the government.
- 1972 The "Foundation of the Montreal Chinese Hospital" was created.
- 1974 A new project came to light: that of the MCH adding to its mission the long-term care of older Chinese citizens. This was an acute need as nothing of the sort existed at that time for the Chinese community.
- 1983 A new residence was built on the site of the Sisters' Residence, called "Pavillion Sung Pai". The first residents entered in December 1982 and it was inaugurated officially on February 14. It brought to 44 the number of beds available for long term residents.
- 1985 Lewis Chow became president of the Board of Administration in May, replacing Dr. Lin who occupied that position for twenty years. Soon after, members of the Chinese community suggested that the Montreal Chinese Hospital should be relocated in Chinatown and the idea gathered the support of a certain number of people.
- 1987 In the Fall, Mr Chow assumed the leadership of a fund-raising campaign. Its purpose was to raise funds for the building and the

return to Chinatown of the Montreal Chinese Hospital. The campaign which was extended well into 1988, gathered the amount of \$2,200,000.00. The M.I.C. Sisters left the administration of the Hospital in that year, with the withdrawal of the last Director, Sr Jacqueline Villemure. The lack of personnel was the main reason for the decision taken by the M.I.C. General Council. To date, more than 140 Sisters worked in the different health services of the Hospital.

1990 The provincial Ministry of Health gave its approval in principle to the project of building a new Hospital in Chinatown, on condition that the ownership of the Chinese Community could be traced back to 1919, and on account of the successful fund-raising campaign of the Chinese Community the previous year.

It was in the nineties that the project of repatriating the Chinese Hospital in Chinatown started to circulate in the Chinese community, due mostly to the fact that this city area had been greatly improved through the care of Mayor Pierre Bourque. The provincial government approved the idea in principle but it warned the administration board that the new hospital would be a public hospital as it would be financed at 90% by the government. This was unless the Chinese community could prove that it was the owner of the first Chinese Hospital before 1921, date of the voting of the law on Public Welfare.

The M.I.C. Sisters came to the rescue by a long search in their own archives. They were able to find in their daily chronicles the name of the Chinese official who had signed the contract when the old synagogue was bought on Lagachetière Street in 1919. The City Hall records were in accordance and the objections on the part of the provincial government fell. Several years passed in discussing and planning on the building project until the final approval of subsidies by the provincial government.

1999 The dream came true! The inauguration of the new Montreal Chinese Hospital at 189 Viger Street East, was held on April 20, 1999. Sr. Pauline Longtin, Sr. Françoise Derome and Sr Jacqueline Villemure, who had spent many years of service at the hospital, were present to receive a commemorative plaque offered by the Administration Board "in gratitude for the exceptional dedication of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception on behalf of the Chinese Hospital of Montreal since 1918". This plaque can now be seen in the inter-denominational chapel, with a portrait of Délia Tétreault, "foundress of the first health center for the Chinese in Montreal". This portrait was brought from the former Hospital on St. Denis Street to its present site.

Situated at the heart of Chinatown, the new Hospital is public with a capacity of 128 beds. It also offers a Day Center for senior citizens.



Foundations is a publication of the *The Great Canadian Catholic Hospital History Project* and the *Catholic Hospitals Digital History Books Collection* project which have as their mission the "Documenting the legacy and contribution of the Congregations of Religious Women in Canada, their mission in health care, and the founding and operation of Catholic hospitals." When books or booklets of a Catholic hospital or nursing school are not available for digitizing, *Foundations* provides basic historical information and dates of the organization and the ministry of the Sisters.

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