

## **Hôtel-Dieu**

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Hôtel-Dieu de Montreal was established by Jeanne Mance, a French-born nurse and missionary from a small village, near Langres, France (fig 1).<sup>1</sup> Mance treated patients using a small dispensary after she arrived in Ville Marie in 1642, which would later expand to become Montreal.<sup>2</sup> The hospital building was sponsored by Madame Angélique Faure de Bullion, the widow of one of Louis XIII's superintendents of finance.<sup>3</sup> In 1644, land was granted outside the fort palisade for the hospital and construction was completed in 1645.<sup>4</sup> In June 1659, the order of the Hospitallers of St. Joseph gained control of the hospital with letters patent of Louis XIV, assisting Jeanne Mance until she died in 1673.<sup>5</sup> The original structure of Hôtel-Dieu was prone to fires, having been burnt down and rebuilt three times before moving to its present site on Mont Sainte-Famille, Montreal in 1861.<sup>6</sup> It now functions as a teaching hospital affiliated with Université de Montréal.<sup>7</sup>

When enslaved people could no longer be cared for by their households in Montreal, they were sent to the hospital for treatment.<sup>8</sup> The body of an enslaved person underwent constant duress at the hands of slaveowners such as material deprivation, malnutrition (e.g. lack of protein), harsh and dangerous labour, corporal punishment, and sexual violence and exploitation. If an enslaved person was considered "worn out" by their slaveowner, they were sent to Hôtel-Dieu until they died.<sup>9</sup> Enslaved persons were often identified in the hospital by their slaveholder or by their relationship to an enslaved relative.<sup>10</sup> The Hôtel-Dieu's standard of admitting enslaved persons was unusual when compared to other slaveholding regions in the transatlantic world. In many regions, the enslaved person's right to see a Western doctor was dictated by the slaveholder.<sup>11</sup> If slaveholders refused to allow their bondpeople to receive Western medicine or be seen by a white doctor, the enslaved would have to rely on "slave doctors" that practiced a mixture of African, Indigenous, and enslaved healthcare methods to cure patients.<sup>12</sup>

One enslaved patient at Hôtel-Dieu was fifteen-year-old Marie Émilie Smith, treated in February 1813.<sup>13</sup> In December of 1797, Émilie was born to Julia Jackson, a black enslaved woman owned by Elias Smith and received her mother's status of bondage due to the matrilineal structure of slavery.<sup>14</sup> Two months after Émilie was born, her mother ran away from her slaveholder, leaving her newborn behind. It is suspected that Émilie was the resulting child of rape or sexual coercion by Elias Smith.<sup>15</sup> Another enslaved person admitted to at the Hôtel-Dieu was François, an enslaved black man owned by the largest slaveholding couple in British Montreal, Scottish-born Colonel John Campbell and his French Canadian wife Marie-Anne de Lacorne St-Luc.<sup>16</sup> François could have worked on any of his owners' four properties in Montreal and greater Quebec.<sup>17</sup> He was married to Geneviève, a *panise* (enslaved Indigenous woman) also owned by the Campbells with whom he had seven children.<sup>18</sup> François died in Hôtel-Dieu on 4 May 1795, at forty-three years of age.<sup>19</sup>

The hospital also owned several enslaved people. At least four people were owned by Hôtel-Dieu between 1720 to 1798: three Indigenous enslaved *panise* and one enslaved black woman.<sup>20</sup> Hôtel-Dieu also owned a thirty year-old enslaved woman called Dianne, who was given to the Hospitallers of St. Joseph by James Singer, a commissary general at Sorel because he was leaving the country in April 1784.<sup>21</sup> The nursing sisters

of the hospital thanked Singer for his “generosity and pious charity toward them” and promised to keep him in their prayers.<sup>22</sup> Dianne had been enslaved by Singer for six years and remained at the Hôtel-Dieu until her death on 24 April 1798.<sup>23</sup>

Enslaved persons were admitted to Hôtel-Dieu not necessarily as a sign of benevolence, but as an investment and maintenance in slaveholders’ “human property.” Poor health in an enslaved person would result in the loss of wealth or labour and was thus avoided. Due to the status of enslavement, enslaved persons life, health, and death were controlled by their enslavers.

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<sup>1</sup> Hôtel-Dieu is a term used to describe hospitals established by nursing orders of nuns. J.K. Foran, Jeanne Mance or “the Angel of the colony,” foundress of the Hotel-Dieu Hospital, Montreal, pioneer nurse of North America, 1642-1673 (Montreal: Herald Press Limited), p.9; “Hôtel-Dieu,” The Canadian Encyclopedia <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/hotel-dieu> (date of last access 27 March 2020).

<sup>2</sup> “Hôtel-Dieu,” (date of last access 27 March 2020); “Ouverture de l’Hôtel-Dieu de Montréal,” BAnQ Numérique <http://numerique.banq.qc.ca/patrimoine/evenements/ldt-895> (date of last access 2 April 2020).

<sup>3</sup> “Hôtel-Dieu,” (date of last access 27 March 2020); “Ouverture de l’Hôtel-Dieu de Montréal” (date of last access 2 April 2020).

<sup>4</sup> “Hôtel-Dieu,” (date of last access 27 March 2020); “Ouverture de l’Hôtel-Dieu de Montréal” (date of last access 2 April 2020).

<sup>5</sup> “Hôtel-Dieu” (date of last access 27 March 2020).

<sup>6</sup> “Hôtel-Dieu” (date of last access 27 March 2020).

<sup>7</sup> “Hôtel-Dieu” (date of last access 27 March 2020).

<sup>8</sup> Marcel Trudel, Canada’s Forgotten Slaves: Two Hundred Years of Bondage, translated by George Tombs (Montreal, Quebec: Véhicule Press, 2013).

<sup>9</sup> Trudel, “Conclusion,” Canada’s Forgotten Slaves, p. 262.

<sup>10</sup> Frank Mackey, Done with Slavery: The Black Fact in Montreal, 1760-1840 (Montreal & Kingston; London; Ithaca: McGill-Queen’s University Press).

<sup>11</sup> Londa L. Schiebinger, “Introduction,” Secret Cures of Slaves : People, Plants, and Medicine in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2017), pp. 1-18.

<sup>12</sup> Schiebinger, “Introduction,” Secret Cures of Slaves, pp. 1-18.

<sup>13</sup> Émilie, like other enslaved persons in Montreal, used multiple first and last names that varied according to English and French translation including the name Amelia Fleming. Frank Mackey, “Still Counting,” Done with Slavery: The Black Fact in Montreal, 1760-1840 (Montreal & Kingston; London; Ithaca: McGill-Queen’s University Press), p. 82.

<sup>14</sup> Mackey, “Still Counting,” p. 82.

<sup>15</sup> Frank Mackey explores this in depth in “Still Counting”. He also discusses the forced coupling of Julia Jackson with an enslaved black man called John Gray. Mackey, “Still Counting,” p. 82.

<sup>16</sup> Mackey, “Still Counting,” pp. 86-89.

<sup>17</sup> The Campbells owned a residence on St-Paul Street at the corner of Bonsecours in Montreal, a farm at Lachine, another farm at Les Cèdres, and co-owned the seigneurie of Noyan on the upper Richelieu River with Colonel Gabriel Christie, another slaveowner. Mackey, “Still Counting,” pp. 86-89.

<sup>18</sup> Mackey, “Still Counting,” pp. 86-89.

<sup>19</sup> Mackey, “Still Counting,” pp. 86-89.

<sup>20</sup> This is according to Montreal civil registries from the listed years. Trudel, “Owners at All Levels of Society,” Canada’s Forgotten Slaves, p. 114.

<sup>21</sup> It is unclear if Dianne was one of the aforementioned women Trudel lists during that period. Frank Mackey, “Things As They Were,” Done with Slavery: The Black Fact in Montreal, 1760-1840 (Montreal & Kingston; London; Ithaca: McGill-Queen’s University Press), p. 110.

<sup>22</sup> Mackey, “Things As They Were,” p. 110.

<sup>23</sup> Frank Mackey, “Notes,” Done with Slavery: The Black Fact in Montreal, 1760-1840 (Montreal & Kingston; London; Ithaca: McGill-Queen’s University Press), p. 456.

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## Plate List

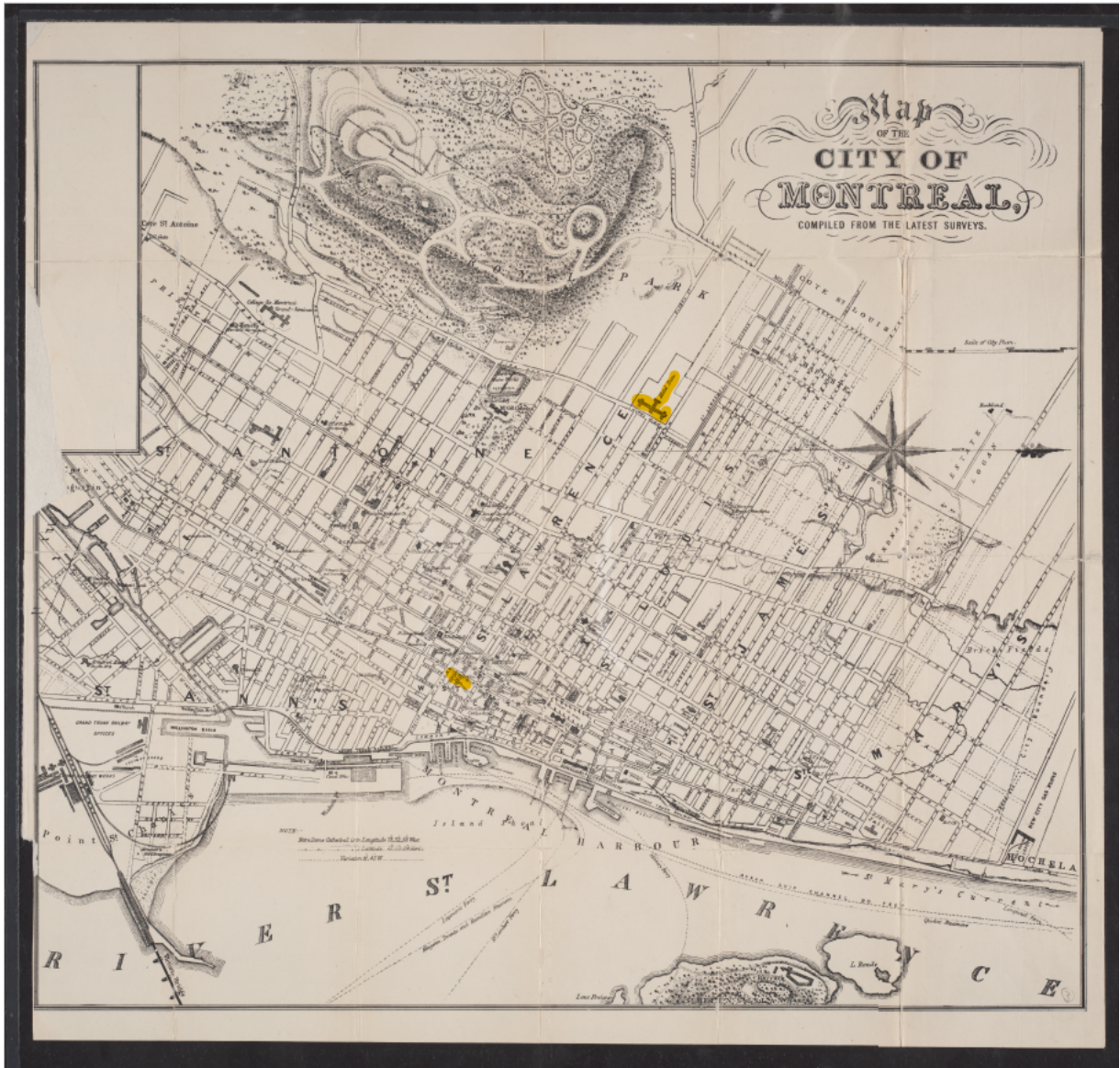


Fig. 1: Samuel Edward Dawson, Map of the city of Montreal: compiled from the surveys (1888), print, McGill University Library, Rare Books Collection, Montreal, Canada

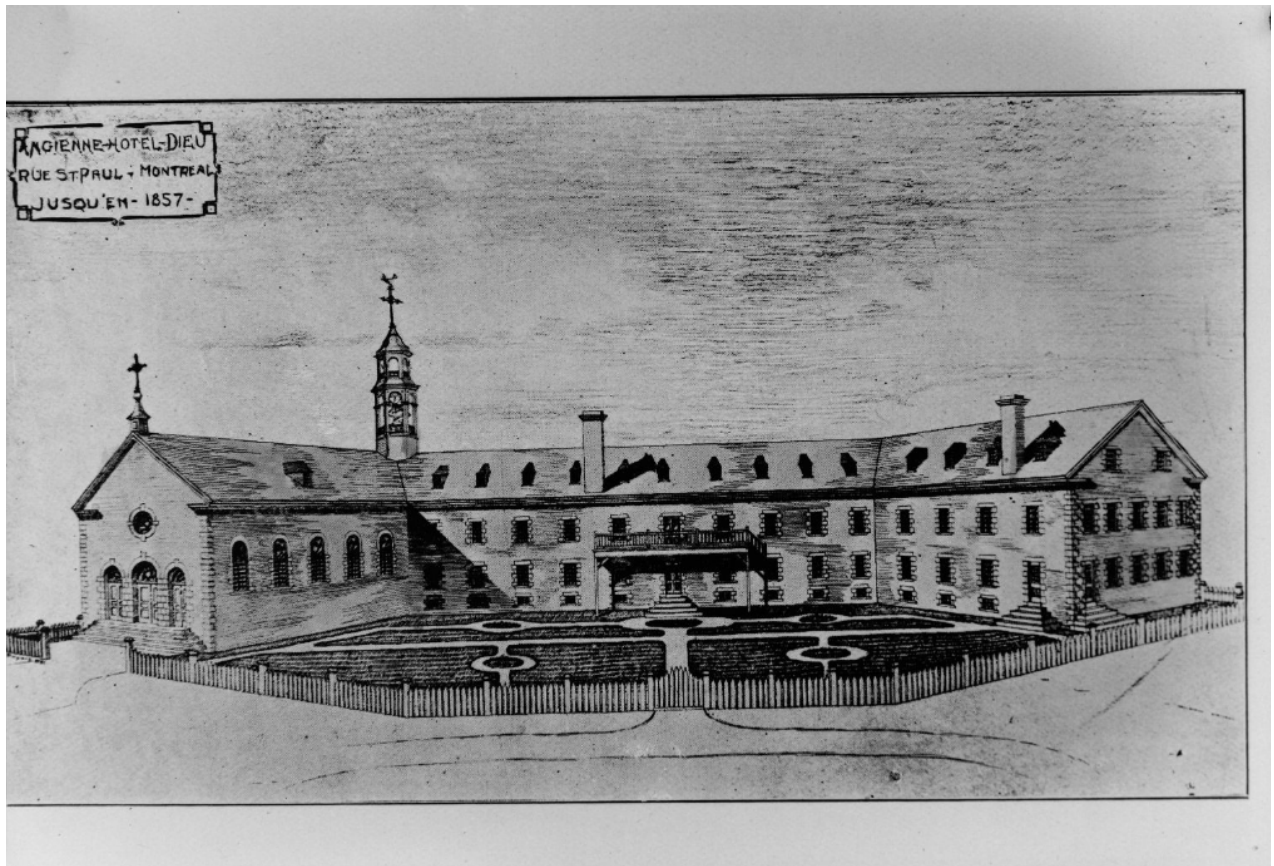


Fig. 2: Edgar Gariépy, Montréal, île de Montréal - Hôpital Hôtel-Dieu - Ancien Hôtel-Dieu rue Saint-Paul jusqu'en 1857 (circa 1950), print, Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, Montreal, Canada  
(Source: <http://numerique.banq.qc.ca/patrimoine/details/52327/3066511> date of last access 2 April 2020)



Fig. 3: James Pattison Cockburn, Hôtel-Dieu, Montreal (1829), sketch, c-150712, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, Canada

Source: Frank Mackey, Done with Slavery: The Black Fact in Montreal, 1760-1840 (Montreal & Kingston; London; Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press)







Fig. 5: François Goneau, The convent of the Religious Hospitallers of St. Joseph at the base of Mount Royal (2016), City of Montreal, Montreal, Canada  
(Source: <https://montreal.ctvnews.ca/city-finalizes-deal-to-buy-land-around-hotel-dieu-hospital-for-14-5m-1.3203831> date of last access 2 April 2020)