

The first convent built by the Recollets in Canada was situated near the River St. Charles; and there they continued to reside for over seventy years, until, in 1692, they removed to a building erected for them on the ground now occupied by the English Cathedral of Quebec. In both convents they opened schools. Filled with the idea that the success of their mission would be the more readily secured if they only had native teachers to assist them, they collected around them a few of the more intelligent of their savage neighbours, thinking to introduce them to the mysteries of theology, reading and writing. The chief instructor in this, the first theological hall opened in Canada, was one Pierre Languisseau, who had already had three years' experience among the Indians at the mouth of the St. Maurice. But the success of the movement was not enduring. Some of these swarthy students, after remaining for a year or two with their benefactors, found themselves unable to resist the hereditary longing for the life of the nomad which burned within them. Throwing aside their newly-acquired habits of restraint, they would, in face of every civilized hindrance thrown in their way, escape from the routine of convent life, and take to roaming once more with their kindred amid the thickets of the great forest land.

Nothing daunted at these and sundry other discouragements of even a more trying character, these intrepid brethren of the order of poverty at last proposed to erect a Seminary at Quebec, and sent home to France one of their number, the faithful Jamay, to raise money in behalf of the project. Prince de Condé is said to have given fifteen thousand francs towards the subscriptions for the new school building—a liberality which was followed by Vicar-General Charles de Bouës and many others of the notables of the time; while the king himself, no doubt influenced by the reports carried home by Jamay, bestowed upon the mission two hundred arpents of land near their convent at Little River. Nothing very definite is known of this seminary or the character of its work, and the same may be said of the other schools which these Recollets had charge of from time to time in other parts of the country. There is no doubt that primary schools were established by them in some of the rural parishes, such as St. Thomas and Vercheres, but beyond the mere names of the places, nothing of any moment has been placed on record.