

Gold Ink, Blue Paper and a Printing Press

Artifacts from the Sister's first school in Victoria, BC

On December 2, 1858, the first Sisters of St. Ann handed out a school prospectus. The delicate, blue-coloured paper explained what students would learn at the school, what they should wear and how much school fees were. It was a costly brochure printed in gold ink. There are only two copies in existence. One of them remains in the Sisters of St. Ann Archives.

Bishop Modest Demers, who brought the first Sisters to Fort Victoria, purchased a hand-cranked printing press from the Society for the Propagation of the Faith in Paris, between 1848 and 1850. Demers intended to use the press to print religious and educational materials, but, because it was the first printing press in British Columbia, its role expanded well beyond its original purpose.

The printing press was used by Count Paul de Garro, a political refugee from Paris, to produce the first French language newspaper in BC, *Le Courier de la Nouvelle Calédonie*. The press printed the first book in BC, as well as the first issue of the *British Colonist* newspaper. It was later used to print other newspapers including the *Caribou Sentinel* and the *Inland Sentinel* in the interior of the province.

Charles Larilleux & Co. of Paris manufactured the press. It was likely over 100 years old at the time Bishop Demers purchased it. Totally obsolete by 1908, it was placed in the Sisters of St. Ann museum where it stayed until 1971. The press is now on permanent display in the Old Town print shop at the Royal BC Museum.



The first printing press in BC (SSA Archives P1281). See the Learning Portal to view the Prospectus.