

LA FOLLE ENTREPRISE (A MAD VENTURE) IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF JEANNE MANCE

Note from Jean-Paul Pizelle
President of the Association Langres-Montréal-Québec,
Centre Culturel Jeanne-Mance, Langres

JEANNE MANCE, A WOMAN OF EXCEPTION **Langres 1606 - Montreal 1673**

This film by Annabel Loyola is the first film ever produced about Jeanne Mance, an exceptional French woman born in Langres (in France's southern Champagne region) in 1606 who died in Montreal in 1673.

Jeanne Mance was in fact co-founder of Montreal and the first lay nurse to practice in North America. During the years she spent in Langres, Jeanne devoted herself to helping her family and friends face the war, misery and the plague (which claimed 5,500 victims in Langres and the surrounding area). She left the town of her youth in 1640 to answer the call of the North American mission. In Paris, she made several decisive encounters including one with a wealthy widow who provided her with the funds necessary to found a hospital on the deserted island of Montreal. In La Rochelle, she met the head of the Société de Notre-Dame de Montréal, Jérôme Le Royer, and the settlement's future governor, Champagne native Paul de Chomedey. An expedition crossed the Atlantic and overwintered in Quebec City before reaching Montreal on May 17th, 1642.

Thus Jeanne Mance and her companions founded the settlement that would become the second-largest French-speaking city in the world. Nurse, intendant and deputy to the governor, Jeanne Mance put her talents to great use serving both the French and the indigenous people without distinction. With the establishment of the Hôtel-Dieu Hospital and her three trips to France, she was an active contributor to the success of this "mad venture". A "free" spirit, Jeanne Mance always rejected the idea of joining a religious order. She died in 1673 in Montreal with her friend and fellow Champagne native Marguerite Bourgeoys by her side. Assuming the role of leader during the long absences of the governor, she remains a role model for nurses and contemporary feminists across North America.

Born in Langres and now living in Montréal, Annabel Loyola was the right person to make this remarkable film, a "cinematographic quest" documentary studded with numerous source documents. The film is an original way to discover or rediscover Jeanne Mance and her work. I would like to extend warm thanks to the author!

Jean-Paul PIZELLE