

1769

Rose Philippine Duchesne is born in the city of Grenoble, south-eastern France. She is one of eight children in a family of privilege. Her father, Pierre-François Duchesne, is a prominent lawyer.



1781

Philippine and her cousin are sent to boarding school at the Convent of Sainte-Marie in Grenoble. In May 1782, Philippine's father learns that she wants to become a nun and abruptly withdraws her from the school.



VISITATION CONVENT AT SAINTE-MARIE D'EN HAUT

1788

At the age of eighteen, Philippine reiterates her intention to become a nun. When her parents refuse permission, she asks her aunt to visit the convent with her. She refuses to leave and her aunt returns home to inform the family that Philippine has joined the Sisters at Sainte-Marie.

1789

The French Revolution begins and the Sisters are forced to leave the convent in 1792. Philippine returns to her family. During the next eleven years, she risks her life by nursing prisoners, helping priests, and caring for poor children.



STORMING OF THE BASTILLE BY JEAN-PIERRE HOUËL

1799

The French Revolution ends and Napoleon Bonaparte comes to power. Following the Concordat of 1801, the Catholic Church is now free to operate openly again. During the revolutionary period, the Convent of Sainte-Marie had been used as a prison for priests and others who refused to cooperate with the anti-clerical revolutionaries.

1800

Madeleine Sophie Barat founds the Society of the Sacred Heart in Paris.



STATUE OF ST. MADELEINE SOPHIE BARAT. (ST. PETERS BASILICA ROME)

1801

The Convent of Sainte-Marie is now in very poor condition. Philippine acquires the convent from the French government and begins to rebuild. She is now Mother Superior and opens a boarding school with the returned Sisters. Some of the nuns do not stay long, but the school attracts more students and becomes self-supporting.



Philippine

200 Years Crossing Frontiers



In 1802, Spain returned the colonial territory of Louisiana to France. However, in 1803, France sells the territory to the United States. This event is known as the 'Louisiana Purchase'.

On 13 December, 1804 Sophie Barat visits the convent at Sainte-Marie with two companions. She is ten years younger than Philippine. Nonetheless, Philippine accepts her as Superior and guide. In 1805, she enters the Society of the Sacred Heart and turns the Convent of Sainte-Marie over to the Society.

Bishop William Dubourg visits France to recruit nuns to establish schools for Native American and French children in Louisiana. Philippine sails to America with four companions. The Sisters arrive at New Orleans and travel by steamboat up the Mississippi River to St. Louis, Missouri. Philippine opens a school in a log cabin in St. Charles, Missouri, it is the first free school west of the Mississippi.

Philippine is forced to close the school in St. Charles after one year and opens a new school in the nearby town of Florissant. She goes on to establish three more schools in Louisiana and Missouri. She accompanies a Jesuit mission to Sugar Creek, Kansas to establish a school for native Potawatomi girls. She spends long periods in prayer. The children call her Quahkahanumad, which means 'Woman Who Prays Always'.



PHILIPPINE'S BURIAL PLACE ST CHARLES MISSOURI

In 1842, her health has deteriorated and she returns to the reopened school at St. Charles. Philippine leaves a deep impression on the Potawatomi. She spends the last decade of her life in St. Charles, nursing children in the infirmary and praying. Towards the end of her life, she is very lonely and feeble, and yearning for letters from Mother Barat. She dies on 18 November 1852. Philippine is canonised by Pope John Paul II on 3 July 1988.

1803

1805

1819

1841

1852