

*A Shining From the Mountains*

*By*

*Sister Providencia Tolan, S. P.*





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## *The Shining Mountains*

This is an early-day photo of the Mission Mountains arising in glory above St. Ignatius, Montana. The mountains are a part of the Continental Divide, an eastern boundary of the Flathead Reservation.

The picture was taken by R. H. McKay of Missoula, Montana, between the years 1910 and 1920. It is copyrighted by McKay Art Company of Missoula.

## *Dedication*

To Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha, Lily of the Mohawks, and to all my Indian sisters and brothers who taught me down through the years, and to those especially who helped with this book.

## *Foreword*

The story of the mountain tribes' first encounter with the word of God is one of the great traditions of the Western Indians and of our nation. The heroic missionaries who traversed thousands of miles, braved dangers of nature and man, and undertook the task of building Christian communities in the West form part of the story. The other is the Indians themselves — the Flatheads, Kalispels, Kootenais, Pend d'Oreilles, Salish, Coeur d'Alenes, Blackfeet and others who were the good ground in which the seed of God was planted. As Sister Providencia so well illustrates, it was the Indian predisposition to embrace Christianity which produced a "shining from the mountains". Long before the appearance of white men, the tribes were paying homage to the Great Spirit. Then like prophets of the Old Testament came messengers from the distant Iroquois, telling of the coming of the "black robes" and their teaching. By the time the missionaries did arrive the Indians had been waiting in anticipation for more than 40 years, and received them with unbounded warmth and enthusiasm.

The author also relates in a vivid manner the many challenges brought by changing times, like when the hunting grounds no longer provided sufficient game and the missionaries went begging from the early miners of Montana, or when gold seekers moved in and through Indian territory and peace treaties were violated. Caught in the web of economic hardship, war with external enemies and potential conflict among diverse tribes restricted to reservations much smaller than that to which they were accustomed, the Indians sought and found guidance and help from missionaries like Father DeSmet and Sister Mary of the Infant Jesus. Learning new trades and farming techniques from mission example, educating their children at mission schools, and growing in their faith through mission life, these Indians successfully adapted to changing lifestyles while maintaining many aspects of traditional culture and values.

Chapters VII and VIII depict the key role of the Sisters of Providence in the overall mission effort. When the Sisters came things really started to happen. Schools, works of charity, care for the sick, orphanages, the learning of skills and trades, and above all the love of God and fellow man, are all part of their heritage.

Although the author addresses a time and place now long gone in the pages of history, the character and dedication of the people she depicts provide important lessons for us in the modern world. First they illustrate the underlying spiritual strength of our predecessors, and what good can be accomplished as a result of such strength. Second they show an example of understanding and respect for those of different cultural backgrounds, which is a precondition for unity in our democratic society. Third they show how determination and courage can overcome all manner of obstacles in pursuit of "the right as God has given us to see the right". Finally, they remind us once again of our great national motto, "In God We Trust".

Sister Providencia Tolán presents herein a well-researched and highly informative history of an important part of the American heritage. The

heroic spirit of early Christian missionaries in America and the great Indian people of the West is vividly portrayed in the scholarly and inspiring pages which follow.

The Hon. Michael Mansfield  
Ambassador of the United States of  
America to Japan



## *Introduction*

Once in the summer of 1970, while a guest of Mrs. Paul Stock in Cody, Wyoming, we were at the magnificent Cody Museum. I was browsing through the books in the book store when a sentence in a trapper's journal caught my attention. It was: "The Iroquois in Wyoming were called Caughnawagans."

Instantly the implications flashed through my mind. It could only mean that the original Iroquois fur trappers and explorers in the West came from the Mohawk village across the St. Lawrence River from Montreal, Quebec. Caughnawaga was familiar to me as the burial place of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha, Lily of the Mohawks. The Caughnawagans of the fur-trade days were most likely to be convinced Catholics, a religion which had been the families' tradition for two hundred years. They originated among the Iroquois tribes of New York State, chiefly from the Mohawk Tribe.

Here was a story of Western history which needed telling for reading enrichment in the Indian Studies programs of high schools, colleges and universities.

Consequently, a major theme of this book is the Iroquois sharing of the Good News about Jesus Christ with the native Americans of the mountain tribes. The facts of Indian initiative and openness to new ideas are continually evident when the story unfolds.

Another theme emphasizes Indian women and girls of the tepee days and later times. After 1840 they were given opportunities for adaptation to the new lifestyles that were inevitable with arrival, ever accelerating, of white settlers.

The book also gives reasons why Father Pierre Jean DeSmet, S. J., the provider of these opportunities, was a favorite of all the tribe. He was the first Catholic clergyman on the Plains and in the mountains. He is well-known in history for his peace-making efforts after the Civil War. He took on the role of peace-maker so that, as he saw it, his beloved Indians would not be annihilated by American soldiers and settlers. It is not so well-known that the Missions he established, principally in Western mountain areas, were a major influence for other benefits to the tribes. The missions were not only centers for protection but for development. They helped the Native Americans to preserve their groups, their identity, and their lands.

The cultural adaptation, peacefully and steadily promoted at the Mission had many facets. There was a smooth transition from traditional forms of honoring the Maker to Christian worship, because the Indians themselves had asked to learn the new teachings. Then there were the educative techniques and economic skills of the white man taught at the missions. These were products of a village-residence plan. Father DeSmet and his fellow Black Robes borrowed the ideas from a Jesuit system developed in Paraguay for the benefit of the South American wilderness tribes.

The book begins with the tribes of Western Montana, the Salish (Flatheads) of the Bitterroot Mountains. It also tells of the Kootenai at the northern end of the Mission Valley. The Kootenai first met the Iroquois as

they came trading and exploring for the Northwest Fur Company. They came in their canoes down the Columbia River from British Columbia. A leader among them was the Iroquois Ignace (Ignatius) Big Knife. Shining Shirt was another Caughnawagan who lived among the Pend d'Oreille. Then there was Ignace Shonowane, the famous La Mousse\*, who was adopted by the Flatheads. He was the person most responsible after 1820 for stimulating the Flatheads to seek the Christian "teachers".

Chapters follow the Salish and Kootenai stories which tell of the Black Robe contacts with the Coeur d'Alenes of Idaho, the Kalispels of Eastern Washington, the Pend d'Oreilles (Kalispels also) of the Mission Valley in Western Montana. This valley is overshadowed by the breath-taking, shining, snowy heights of the Rocky Mountain Divide.

The Mission of the lower valley, founded in 1854, was called St. Ignatius. It was the locale of the first school for Indian girls in the mountain regions. The school opened ten years later, with the Sisters of Providence in charge.

Old-timers among the far Western tribes taught me how to "think Indian". In 1936, I began learning from the Coeur d'Alenes while I was a teacher at the school for girls in DeSmet, Idaho, on the reservation. The school was established in 1878 by the Sisters of Providence, my religious community.

This book has been possible because of modern-day Indians who provided insights and interpretations of their tribal history. These valuable contributors mentioned herein include Clarence Campbell. His art works are part of the illustrations. He also provided riches from Kalispel traditions.

Others are as follows: Mr. and Mrs. Charles Beauvais, Iroquois of Caughnawaga; Noel Campbell, Coeur d'Alene; Mrs. Lucille Grenier, Flathead and Iroquois at Arlee; Francis Hairy Chin, Sioux; Fred Houle, Jr., Pend d'Oreille; Thomas Main, Gros Ventre; Walter McDonald, Flathead; Lawrence Nicodemus, Coeur d'Alene; Tom Pablo, Kootenai. To all I express my gratitude and ask God's blessing upon them and their families.

Sister Providencia, S. P.

\*La Mousse is given these names: "Old Ignace" and Ignace Shonowane in the *Indian Index*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, p. 586. See appendix for additional comment on "Shonowane".

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*Chapter 1*



*Teepees of the Mountain Tribes  
Sketch by Clarence Campbell*

## *Chapter 1*

### *Traditional Tribes Life Among the Mountain*

Change was on the way to the Northwest long before the white man appeared. It is certain that the elders and the holy men still instructed the people. They taught about the origins of the tribe, the myths and values they had inherited from their forefathers, the worship and magical ceremonies. But the horse and the gun were introduced before 1800, traded from tribe to tribe. The horses were stolen from the Spaniards in California, and the guns came down from Canada through the hands of the Crees, and the Mandans of North Dakota.

By 1810, other trade goods came in with David Thompson of the Northwest Fur Company. He established trading posts in Eastern Washington, Northern Idaho, and Western Montana. Lewis and Clark had reached the Pacific Ocean. More change was on the way.

However, Indian family life was regulated by the customs of the centuries. In addition to the responsibilities of the fathers and the uncles for the education of the boys, of the mothers and aunts for the girls, there was grandfather. He had a useful role of teaching in the early morning hours when children were ready for action, but the parents felt otherwise.

The children gathered around grandfather, sitting cross-legged on his fur robes in the tepee. He told them stories that were instructive parables of animals like Coyote, the mischief maker. His audience listened breathlessly no matter how often the moral or religious lessons were repeated.

The fathers of the families taught their sons the skills of hunter and warrior. As the boys grew into adolescence, these skills were called upon when tribes of the West went eastward across the mountain divide to the buffalo hunts on the Plains. It was exciting, but dangerous, because the tribes of the Plains, the Blackfeet and the Crows especially, were ready to attack the mountain people. Trained warriors were needed, even though the Plains were so vast and the buffalo herds beyond counting in number. The spring and fall hunts had become a necessity to the Flatheads, Spokanes, Pend d'Oreilles, the Nez Perce and others after the advent of the horses and the guns. Buffalo meat was the chief food supply for the winter months.

The mothers were responsible for the daughters' training. They taught them how to assist at the hunt, preparing hides and meat to carry back home in parfleche saddle bags. The girls learned how to prepare animal skins for the tepees or clothing, how to dry meat and how to prepare the meals. Sometimes the education of girls followed practices that were different from tribe to tribe.

We know a great deal about these practices among the Kootenai and the Flathead tribes from the exhaustive research of Professor Harry Holbert Turney-High when he taught at the University of Montana, Missoula, in the Anthropology Department. He traveled to the Flathead Reservation forty

miles north of Missoula and began his field work among the Kootenai. They lived on the west shore of Flathead Lake. He published his findings as "Ethnography of the Kutenai" in 1941.

The report states, "The training of little girls was milder than that of their brothers. The child was given a toy cradle-board and a doll as soon as she could walk. She was encouraged to play all day with the doll so that she would understand child care and be of assistance to her mother when the next child came, and be able to care for her own in proper time."<sup>1</sup>

According to his informants, the mothers of the Kootenai Tribe began very early to train their daughters to useful tasks and to make a game of education: "A girl was supposed to be able to cook a fair meal at the age of eight, receiving lavish praise from both her parents to encourage her in the learning process."<sup>2</sup>

It is unusual among Indian tribes, but very admirable, to find the girl's father taking an early interest in his daughter's preparation for life. The father entered into her education when she was five years old. He and her mother taught her ". . . how to treat a husband, what time to go to work, how to get meals promptly, how to pack (a horse), etc. From then on the chief water-fetching work fell on her, and she was supposed to be as helpful as possible in all ways."<sup>3</sup>

The Indian people of the mountain areas were fortunate to have a land which produced many edible roots and bulbs such as the bitterroot and the camas. These were valuable supplements to their supply of meat and berries. The Indians used other plants and roots for medicinal purposes. The Kootenai girl was trained to recognize these. "The various useful plants and roots were described to her and she was sent out alone to gather them. This taught her to be self-reliant and to learn from experience."<sup>4</sup>

Both parents constantly gave her moral teaching. She was warned against "mischief men" if she ran around at night. "The moral instructions so literally given the young generally included sanctions involving the after life."<sup>5</sup>

As was common among all tribes, the girls observed distinctive rituals at the time of their first menstruation. "During this time she was under the instruction of her mother but not under the guidance of any other mentor . . . A minority group of informants say that a girl could think of marrying after her first menstruation, but the majority (of informants) claim that Kootenai girls rarely married before sixteen, while some waited until they were eighteen."<sup>6</sup>

Another member of the Anthropology Department at the University of Montana, Carling Malouf, learned more about Kootenai customs in the old days from Lasso Stasso in 1951.

He was born at Arlee, Montana, January 6, 1871\*. In those days the Indian Agency was located near Arlee, and the Jocko Valley was inhabited by a considerable number of Kootenai and Kalispel Indians as well as a few Flathead immigrants from the Bitterroot Valley . . .

White men had already arrived in Montana when Lasso was a

small child . . . His grandmother, however, had lived the life of the Indians during prehistoric times in this area, and he delighted in hearing her tell stories of these more ancient days. "My grandmother used to tell me how the older people used bone and sharp stones for axes and knives. That is what my grandmother and her grandmother used. She also told me that still farther back in years, they had hard times. They were poor in tools . . . In my grandmother's day they used to make spoons from animal horns".<sup>7</sup>

Professor Turney-High wrote a field report of research among the Flatheads in 1937. His informants told him of old-time education for teenaged girls which differed from the Kootenai customs: instead of the mother instructing her daughter about womanly responsibilities at the time of maturation, ". . . she sought a wise old woman to become the daughter's guardian and instructor during a four-day period which was to follow. Great care was exercised in this choice as the young woman was thought to become like her elderly mentor in chastity, industry, skill, capacity, and even in ease of childbirth and fecundity. A bond was established between them for life so that the younger woman felt obliged to aid the elder until death."<sup>8</sup>

The girl lived in the old woman's tepee for four days. Each day the instructor painted her face and gave her moral advice. "Through the period she was given all kinds of tasks. Orders were peremptory and obedience immediate. The teacher saw to it that her waking day was full and industrious."<sup>9</sup>

Upon the girl's return to the family's lodge, the father and mother followed through: "From this time onward the parents exercised every precaution to see that their daughter remained chaste, while the young men used every means open to them to see that they failed."<sup>10</sup>

According to Ross Cox, a trader with the Northwest Fur Company, who was in Montana between 1813-1817, the parents and the elderly teachers of Flathead girls were successful.

With the exception of the cruel treatment of their prisoners (which, as it is general among all savages, must not be imputed to them as a peculiar vice), the Flatheads have fewer failings than any of the tribes I ever met with. They are honest in their dealings, brave in the field, quiet and amenable to their chiefs, fond of cleanliness, and decided enemies of falsehood of every description. The women are excellent wives and mothers, and their character for fidelity is so well established, that we never heard of an instance of one of them proving unfaithful to her husband . . . laziness is a stranger among them."<sup>11</sup>

It is indicated by Professor Turney-High's research that the Flathead people were serious about violations of their code. These violations could bring about a public accusation before the chief. Then followed the chief's punishment by way of a tongue-lashing, or even scourging with a whip. Before the white man's leather whip loaded with buckshot was introduced to



the mountain tribes, the Flathead chief made use of heavy switches. “. . . the Flatheads conceived of the tribe and band as large families, the chief the father of all. He had the power to whip because he was that father. Indeed, no son or daughter, no matter how old, ever escaped the scourging power of their blood parents or those kinsmen and kinswomen to whom parental terms applied.”<sup>12</sup>

Education of boys and girls may have been severe in the old days, but the Indians looked also to sources other than human for spiritual teaching. They understood prayers in praise of the Maker. They gave homage to the Great Spirit by ceremonies and sacrifices. They understood atonement for sin and prayers of petition by self-torture. The Plains Tribes witnessed to these in the Sun Dance. All of the men sought prayer places in solitude that they might commune with the Spirit.

Among the Plateau Tribes, every boy was sent out alone to the mountains to fast and pray. He remained there until he had obtained a guardian spirit in the appearance of some bird or animal who would protect and assist him all his lifetime.

It was the usual practice among the Flatheads that girls were obliged to make the same sort of spirit quest. “There was no feeling that it was not as necessary for a daughter to get sumesh (spirit power) as for a son.”<sup>13</sup>

It is the opinion of Noel Campbell, himself Salish-speaking as a Coeur d’Alene, that the Salish tribes in general had similar family customs and strict discipline on the part of tribal leaders. The Kootenai customs were different because their origins and language structure were different from those of their Salish neighbors in Western Montana.

However, parental and leadership demands were just as strict in the old days among all the mountain tribes.

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#### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Harry Holbert Turney-High, “Ethnography of the Kootenai,” Supplement to the *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 43, No. 2, Part 2, 1941, Memoirs, No. 56, P. 117.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.: p. 118.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 119.

\**The Flathead Courier*, Dec. 27, 1951, Polson, Montana.

<sup>7</sup>Carling Malouf and Thain White, “Recollections of Lasso Stasso,” 1870-1951. Anthropology and Sociology Papers, No. 12. Montana State University, Missoula, Montana, 1951.

<sup>8</sup>Harry Holbert Turney-High, “Flathead Indians of Montana,” American Anthropological Association, Memoirs, No. 48, 1937, p. 78.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 79.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 81.

<sup>11</sup>Ross Cox, *Adventures on the Columbia River*, two volumes. London: Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, 1831, Vol. I, pp. 239-240.

<sup>12</sup>Turney-High, H.H *op. cit.*, p. 47.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 81.

## Chapter 2



*A statue of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha stands before the Tekakwitha Public School at Caughnawaga, P.Q.*

*Sculptor — Mr. Emile Brunet*

*Model — An Iroquois girl, Mrs. Evelyn Montour*

## *Chapter 2*

### *A Chosen People Led by the Spirit*

The following accounts of the Great Spirit's communications with men of prayer in the old days are very much alive today among some members of the mountain tribes. Noel Campbell reports as follows:

Before the Iroquois came the medicine men had visions of the Black Robes. In the Indian language these last two words meant "men dressed in black squaw dresses."

This was a conflict for the Indians — to think that they were to listen to a white man dressed as a squaw! And in black? Colors mean things to Indians. But, nevertheless, they were true to the visions that the Spirit was giving them. They had faith. They were prepared and waiting for the new teaching. When the Iroquois came, our people were very much interested in what they had to say. The Iroquois spoke of the Black Robes who would teach us about Jesus the God-man and tell us how to serve him. The people saw that the words of the Iroquois were a confirmation of their visions. They were glad.<sup>1</sup>

When questioned about the names of the tribes he had visited where he found traditions about the "men-dressed-in-black-squaw dresses," Noel replied, "I heard it first from our old people, the Coeur d'Alenes, then from the Flatheads, the Colvilles and the Okanagans. All of them, a long time ago, knew about the Black Robes that were coming before they saw them."

Noel's account had its confirmation in the researches of Professor Turney-High, anthropologist. When he taught at the University of Montana, Missoula, he did field work among the Pend d'Oreilles, the Flatheads, and the Kootenai. He reported accounts of an early visionary in the Mission Valley whose name was Shining Shirt.

Both the Flathead and the Kalispel (Pend d'Oreilles) claim this hero. The writer entertains an opinion that he was a leader among the latter people. In the first place, there is no evidence that the Flathead pretended to follow his strictures against polygamy. Secondly, it is said that he was accustomed to refer to the Mission and other mountains hemming in the present reservation as 'my fence.'

Now these mountains are around the old home of the Pend d'Oreilles and are north of the old center of Flathead population. In any event, his influence was very great among the Flathead. This great leader lived long ago . . . All the elderly informants are sure that he died long before there were any horses in the country.

According to the legend, Shining Shirt was both a chief and a shaman . . . a Power made a great revelation . . . the time would come when men with fair skin, dressed in long black skirts, would come who would teach them the truth. The Indians had never heard of a white man at that early date. These Black Robes would teach the people religion, would give them new homes and would make laws for their behavior. When the time came, the Black Robes would change the lives of the people in ways which they but little dreamed . . .

The Power then gave Shining Shirt a talisman of terrific strength. This was a piece of metal inscribed with a cross. Shining Shirt forthwith assembled a council and preached and legislated.<sup>2</sup>

It is possible, according to this writer, that Shining Shirt attached the metal inscribed with a cross to a string of buckskin and wore it against his shirt. His name could have originated with the sunlight glinting off the iron.

Many more prophecies followed for the people's instruction: ". . . these strange white men would teach them many things about making a living of which they were ignorant, but which they must try to understand and perform as they ought. Other white men would come and simply overrun the country . . . but they should not be resisted. This would only bring needless bloodshed."<sup>3</sup>

Since Shining Shirt was reported to be influential with the Flathead Tribe, his teaching may have accounted in part for the peaceful reputation of this tribe among the early white people who came to Montana.

The story concludes as follows: "Now the people trusted Shining Shirt and received his teaching. Even today they are convinced that he was given his power to accomplish an inevitable divine purpose."<sup>4</sup>

Dr. Turney-High then makes some comments about the folk hero's identity:

The explanation of the Christian elements in this legend is left to the reader. While most obvious, one is the possibility of some wandering Iroquois arriving in Montana at some early date; this cannot be verified by ethnography . . . However, the Indians say they were already prepared to receive the teachings of LaMousse and to send for the Black Robes, for they had been warned of their approach long before.<sup>5</sup>

The first white men in western Montana were seen by the Flathead chief, Three Eagles, on September 4, 1805. They came into the Bitterroot Valley from Idaho.<sup>6</sup> These white men were Captains Meriwether Lewis and William Clark. They were leading the company of men sent by President Jefferson to explore the Louisiana Purchase. Their guide over the Rockies was the famous Shoshone Indian woman, Sacajawea. The *Lewis and Clark Journals* report the Flathead chief's surprise when at a distance he saw strange men coming down the hill from the pass between Idaho and Montana. To his astonishment, they wore no blankets. "Perhaps some

hostile warriors had robbed them.”<sup>7</sup>

The chief went off cautiously to warn his people to prepare for defense, but these new men were peaceful strangers. “When the two chiefs (Lewis and Clark) led the band openly into his camp, he could see they were white . . . ”<sup>8</sup>

The Americans found the Flatheads extremely friendly and willing to give them blankets to wear. The explorers camped with the chief’s people for three days. Then they moved on up the Valley on their way to the Coast.

North of the Flatheads, the first white men to meet the Indians of Mission Valley and beyond were the fur traders from Canada. David Thompson of the Northwest Company contacted the Kootenai in 1808<sup>9</sup> and set up traders for them and the Pend d’Oreilles. Much earlier, Iroquois fur trappers were already penetrating the Pacific Northwest on exploring trips down the Kootenay River from British Columbia. One of these by the name of Ignace had settled with the Kootenai of Northern Montana. Because of his exploits when leading the tribes against the Blackfeet, the enemy tribe from the Plains, the Pend d’Oreilles gave him the name “Big Knife.” He is known to history as Ignace Big Knife and his sons became famous chiefs of the Kootenai in Mission Valley: Eneas (Ignace) Paul Big Knife and Koostahtah.\*

A modern day Kootenai, Basil Left Hand, told the following story of Big Knife to the writer in 1974:

One time long ago a band of Kootenai went to hunt buffalo across the mountains. They had only flatbows at that time. They ran into Iroquois. The Iroquois defeated them and captured a Kootenai girl eighteen years old. They took her back with them. She married the Iroquois warrior, Ignace Big Knife. They had a daughter and a son. When her husband died, she brought her kids back to the Kootenai. She was baptised back east and so was her son Eneas. They were strong believers in the Catholic Church.

When the boy grew up, he became Eneas Paul Big Knife. He became chief of the Kootenai. He taught the people the Ten Commandments and to believe in the Catholic Church and the Kootenai were always strong believers — the Kootenai of Idaho, Montana and Canada. All strong believers. Big Knife (the son, Ignace Paul) learned the Catholic religion from the Iroquois, his father and their folks. Eneas Paul had a son. His name was Isaac Paul and Isaac’s younger brother was Koostahtah.<sup>10</sup>

Basil’s story tells us that the captured Kootenai girl was the first of the mountain tribes to see a Black Robe. The fact that the tribe was still armed with bows and arrows only, indicates that the battle probably took place before 1800 at a time when no priest or minister had entered the Pacific Northwest. “They took her home with them,” indicates a return of the Iroquois to their home at the Mission of Caughnawaga. At LaChine, across the river from this Mission, they had boarded the big freight canoes bound for the west. To LaChine they returned to get their pay.

The Iroquois from Caughnawaga were known to be expert voyageurs,

either at the paddles of the fourteen man-canoes, or at positions in the bow and stern. They were skilled on the “white water” of the rivers between Montreal and the fur posts to the far north and west. They had practiced for generations with canoes on the LaChine Rapids. These rapids flowed with fury past the western border of the Mohawk village.

The Indian men regularly hired on at the offices of the Northwest Company to be guides, standing with poles at the bow of the canoe, or standing in the stern as steersmen. At one time between 1783 and 1821, forty percent of the company’s voyageurs and fur trappers were Iroquois from the one village of Caughnawaga. After 1821, the men had to apply at the office of the Hudson’s Bay Company. It had amalgamated with the Nor’westers in order to exploit the fur-bearing animals of the Columbia River Basin, which was the last unharvested home of the beavers and other valuable fur-bearing animals on the continent.

The captured girl from beyond the Shining Mountains, among the Kootenai at Windermere, British Columbia, received the baptismal name of Mary. This fact is to be found in the genealogy of her grandson, Koostahtah.<sup>11</sup>

While at Caughnawaga, Mary attended church services with her husband, for Sunday worship was the high point of the week for a fervent Catholic people. The whole congregation sang hymns in the Iroquois language and listened to sermons in Iroquois given by the Jesuit priests of the Mission.

When Mary had learned the difficult language, she was ready for instructions necessary to complete her reception into the church through the sacraments. At Caughnawaga she felt the influence of a holy woman of the seventeenth century named Kateri Tekakwitha, Lily of the Mohawks. Kateri had migrated to Caughnawaga with other Christians from a Mohawk Village in New York State. Her grave was a place of pilgrimage and prayer for the French people of Quebec Province as well as the Indian people.

A recent story of her life attests to this:

The spot where she (Kateri) had been buried, near the high cross on the crest of the riverbank, has also remained a place of pilgrimage to this day . . . The present cross is twenty feet high . . . a monument there states: “Kateri Tekakwitha, the most beautiful flower that bloomed among the Indians.”<sup>12</sup>

Mary, the Kootenai captive, lived many years among the Mohawks of Caughnawaga, though her fur-trapping husband may have gone west and returned many times while she was there. She bore him three children, a boy and two girls. Information was not given about the fate of her husband in later years, but the following account of her return to the Kootenai people in Montana was given by a modern-day descendant of hers, Tom Pablo. He is presently\* a representative of his Kootenai people, the Chairman of the Tribal Council of the Confederated Tribes, Flathead Reservation:

“I am Kootenai myself and related to Big Knife through my mother. My great-great-grandmother’s name was Mary. Her father

was Iroquois. She was only fourteen years old when she and her sister came west. They traveled by night and slept by day. The family was hiding from enemies. They were being persecuted because they were Iroquois. The people back there said they killed the missionaries at one time. When they (the family) came to the Kootenai, they asked if the tribe would take them in and so they were adopted. They were safe then. Everybody thought they were Kootenai.”<sup>13</sup>

We know that the son was called Ignace Paul Big Knife. The baptismal name of the one daughter was Mary, as Tom reports, but she had an Iroquois name. The names of the two brave girls, daughters of Ignace Big Knife, the original Iroquois, are given in Koostahtah’s genealogy: “She-works-away-from-other-women” and “She-walks-straight-out-of-a-cave.”<sup>14</sup>

We do not have direct evidence of what Iroquois Ignace himself contributed to the spread of the Christian faith out west; however, from Basil’s account, we can be fairly certain that a woman, Mary, was the evangelist among her own people when she returned from Caughnawaga. In the Indian way, she taught by her example of a new peace and joy and confidence. Through her son, Eneas Paul, the second Big Knife, she helped the people. She taught and strengthened him to lead his people to the Great Spirit’s new revelation. Otherwise, the people would not have been ready for the Black Robes’ preaching when the priests did arrive thirty or forty years later. The firmness of faith that Basil Left Hand speaks about had to be a long time a-growing. It was the seed best planted, as we can see from the stories about the Chosen People, by a tribe’s own members. The sowing and the growing of such extraordinary fruit could only have come from the Maker’s enlightenment and power in their souls.

The Flatheads of the Bitterroot Valley had their visionaries also. One of these has her story recorded today at the entrance of St. Mary’s church in the Valley, built in 1866, and still used for services.

Little Mary had a vision as she lay on her death bed in the family tepee. The “bed,” of course, was the customary skins laid on the earth. The vision is reported by Father Point who arrived at the Bitterroot camp of Mary’s people after she had died. It was 1841. Father Point had been met by Father DeSmet at Fort Hall who had with him a delegation of Flatheads. “There was mutual and profound joy at this encounter with one another . . . we were among them (the Indians) at last, to bring them the ‘prayer’ they had so ardently desired.”<sup>15</sup>

The leader of the delegation and the men who came to meet Father DeSmet on his second trip to the Rocky Mountains told the Black Robes: “Their brothers were still of the same mind, and most of them knew by heart all the prayers they had been taught. They said, further, that the tribe joined in common prayers twice on ordinary days and twice on Sundays. Five or six of the children who received baptism had departed for Heaven; and a girl of twelve years, seeing herself on the point of death, had asked to be baptised. Pierre, the Iroquois, had baptised her, giving her the name of Mary. At the moment she died, this girl said, ‘Oh, how beautiful! I see Mary, my mother.’”<sup>16</sup>



Some details of the vision were supplied for the Montana Study, 1948, by Eneas Granjo, himself part Flathead and part Iroquois. According to his account:

Mary said, 'It was a lady that came into our tepee and as soon as she stepped inside the tepee (it) was brightened up. The lady came and stood right by my bed. This lady had an infant in her arms . . . This infant in her arms was awfully bright and gave more brightness to the tepee . . . and then this lady told me her name, 'Mary'. She says, 'I am coming after you and I want you to be with me where I come from . . . This little child I am holding in my arms is my son which is called the Son of God.' And she mentioned that she was the mother of the child and the Blessed Virgin.'<sup>17</sup>

Mr. Granjo recalls that the vision prophesied to Little Mary that later on a house would be built where her tepee was and ". . . this house is called the House of God."

He concludes, "They didn't say how many years later it was that the church was built at Stevensville but we don't know whether it is just on the spot where Little Mary died or not. This was told me by the old folks and this is the end of the story."<sup>18</sup>

In Father Point's journal for the events of the Black Robes' arrival in the Bitterroot Valley, there is confirmation of Little Mary's prophecy. The date was September 24, 1841. They were discussing a name for the new mission after their first act had been to erect a large cross in the camp of Little Mary's people.

It was recalled that almost all the principal events of our long voyage had coincided with some feast of the Blessed Virgin. This was an inspiration to everyone and, in one voice, we said, 'It will be called St. Mary's.'

When the hunters returned from their summer hunt, the cross was already elevated, and their chapel was also rising. At the sight of the work going on . . . Everyone gave his warmest and heartiest approval, especially to the choice of the site. For it was then that they remembered a prophecy made some months before by the young child who died after having been baptized. It was Pierre, the Iroquois, who first remarked to those who, at that moment were gathered about him. 'Do you remember what Little Mary said just before her death?'

'Perfectly,' " they replied.<sup>19</sup>

The people then told the missionaries again about Pierre and Mary's baptism and added the following details of Mary's prophecy:

'I am returning to tell you that those for whom you wait are the true Black Robes. You must listen to what they say.' Indicating with her hand to the spot where the cross was later to be erected, she said

then on that site would be built the house of prayer. Then she expired.<sup>20</sup>

And so it was the first church in Montana. During the following days, preparations for the winter buffalo hunt began. Father Point continues about the impact of Little Mary's visions of the Mother of Jesus:

Thus from the first evening (of the priest's arrival) the Chiefs assembled for prayer and asked that the expedition be dedicated to Mary. It was accordingly agreed that twice a day all would assemble for prayers. After prayers there would be instruction, preceded and followed by hymns.<sup>21</sup>

It is presumed from the above that one of the priests accompanied the hunters and their families across the mountains to the Plains for the hunting expedition.

In 1974, more than a hundred years later, some modern-day Iroquois at Caughnawaga, Quebec Province, listened to stories of their voyageur ancestors who once lived among the Indians of the West, including those at St. Mary's Mission, Montana. The writer was visiting in the Indian homes on the Mohawk Reserve that is Caughnawaga today. The Reserve is an English island in a French sea, for all about them are their French-Canadian neighbors. The speaking of English by the Iroquois is a reminder of their New England origins of 300 years ago. It also speaks of their employment in New York and elsewhere during the week, and the week-ends spent on the Reserve.

One of these homes was that of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Beauvais. Mr. Beauvais is a retired iron-worker. They told me stories about the early days on the "high steel" . . . I went the following day to bid them farewell. Mrs. Beauvais said, "My husband had a dream last night about the Indians out West." It was only at the end of the visit that Mr. Beauvais gave details of his dream: "I was in Montana. There were Indians around. I dropped some coins on the ground. I reached down to pick them up and while doing so disturbed the dirt at my feet. In the dirt I saw a shining medal. It was a medal of the Blessed Mother. It was really shining."

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#### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Conversation with Noel Campbell, Coeur d'Alene Reservation, in 1978.

<sup>2</sup>H. H. Turney-High, "Flathead Indians of Montana," *op. cit.*, Second Printing, 1939, p. 41.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup>John Bakeless. *Lewis and Clark — Partners in Discovery*. New York: William Morrow and Co., 1947, p. 260.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 261.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup>Rowland Bond. *The Original Northwest: David Thompson and the Native Tribes of North America*. Spokane, Washington: Spokane House Enterprises; 1970, p. 71.

\*Today, the newspaper published by the Salish (Flathead), Pend d'Oreilles and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation is entitled, "Char-Koosta," a word shortened from the names of Chief Carlo and Chief Koostahtah. Their pictures are drawn on the masthead.

<sup>10</sup>Conversation with Basil Left Hand at St. Ignatius, Montana, 1974.

<sup>11</sup>H. H. Turney-High, "Ethnography of the Kutenai," *op. cit.*, p. 135.

<sup>12</sup>Francis X. Weiser, S. J., *Kateri Tekakwitha*, Caughnawaga, P. G., Canada: Kateri Center, 1971, pp. 164-165

\*1979.

<sup>13</sup>Conversation with Tom Pablo at the Tribal Office of the Confederated Tribes of the Flathead Reservation, 1976.

<sup>14</sup>H. H. Turney-High, "Ethnography of the Kutenai," *op. cit.*, p. 135.

<sup>15</sup>Nicolas Point, S. J., *Wilderness Kingdom — Indian Life in the Rocky Mountains: 1840-1847*. Trans. by Joseph P. Donnelly, S. J., New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1867, pp. 37-38.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>17</sup>"The Story of Little Mary's Vision," *Montana Study*, 1948. University of Montana at Missoula, 1948, p. 2.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup>Nicolas Point, *op. cit.*, p. 39-41.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*

## *Chapter 3*

*P. J. DeSmet, S.J.*



*The first Black Robe to meet the mountain tribes, Father Pierre Jean DeSmet, S.J., in 1840. Courtesy of Jesuit Archives, Gonzaga University, Spokane.*

## *Chapter 3*

### *Fulfillment of Prophecies*

The prediction of Shining Shirt about the coming of the Black Robes to the mountain country was realized in 1840 with the arrival of Father Pierre DeSmet, S.J. Many years before 1840, it was the Iroquois, Ignace LaMousse (Shonowane) who stimulated the Flathead Tribe to seek for the missionaries. The complicated story of the search began in the early 1800's when Ignace was a voyageur in the canoes of the fur companies. He hired on from his home in Caughnawaga where so many boatmen lived who were employees of the Northwest Company.

It is the opinion of the writer that during his trapper and trader career in the west, Ignace had visited the country of the Flatheads and liked it.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, after his period of service had ended and he was back home again in Quebec, he set his goal for settlement in the Bitterroot Valley. He knew exactly where he was going some time later when he persuaded his family members and friends in Caughnawaga to leave Canada for a new life in the American West.

There could be many reasons for this unusual decision. Ignace may have foreseen the end of the beaver in the Columbia River Valley and neighboring areas, as he had witnessed this in the streams of Central and Western Canada which were rapidly trapped out with the use of steel traps. The beaver gone, what was left for the voyageurs? Then, too, by 1812, the Caughnawagans were again embroiled in the wars between the English and the Americans. They had gone to help Canada in the Revolutionary War and to prevent American invasion of the country where they lived. They could well be tired of the white man's wars. Besides peace and security of the far-off Bitterroot Valley, there was an excellent future for farmers amid the pasture and farmland.

Ignace had a farmer's eye, you might say. The Iroquois of New York State and Caughnawaga had always grown corn and other crops to supplement the deer and elk meat in their diets. There is a traditional theory in anthropology that the Iroquois in ancient times migrated up the Ohio River to the northeast from the lower Mississippi Valley where other peoples cultivated maize.<sup>2</sup>

The farming possibility for the future could explain why Ignace had the courage to bring twenty-four people with him when he set out for the west. There was not only room for them in the primitive, unspoiled land, but there were abundant means of subsistence for Indians in the Bitterroot Valley.

Ignace was a leader as well as a man of vision and determination. An old-time missionary, Father Palladino, S.J., who knew his son Francis very well, once wrote: "Ignace LaMousse . . . was better known among the Indians and to history as Big Ignace or Old Ignace, because of his moral and physical superiority."<sup>3</sup>

Another piece of information handed down by the missionaries among the Flatheads tells that Ignace was a catechist in Caughnawaga. An Indian catechist is usually a member of the tribe who is trained to be a religion instructor competent to help the priests in their task of teaching the good news of Jesus Christ to the people.

The date of the Iroquois party's departure from Caughnawaga is uncertain. "Between the year 1812 and 1820, a band of these Iroquois, twenty-four in number, left the Mission of Caughnawaga . . . and crossing the Mississippi Valley, directed their course westward . . ."4

It is surprising that the Caughnawaga party crossed the Mississippi Valley instead of following the usual trade canoe passage of 3,000 miles across Canada from the St. Lawrence River. But there were Blackfeet and other enemies to contend with in western Canada and also an extremely difficult trip across the Canadian Rockies at Jasper and then down the Columbia River through British Columbia to Montana.

From St. Louis, however, passage could be secured with large American fur brigades which were ascending the Missouri River frequently. At some point in the Upper Missouri and its tributaries, a transfer had to be made from boat to horseback. The mountain barriers in western Montana could then be crossed for entry into the Bitterroot Valley.

Having reached the land of our Indians, these Iroquois were kindly and hospitably received . . . The ties of friendship soon ripened into stronger ones by intermarriage, and from this on, these Iroquois became members of the Salish or Flathead nation. Old Ignace soon acquired an ascendancy and great influence over the tribe, which he wielded for the temporal and spiritual welfare of his adopted brethren.<sup>5</sup>

The cultural exchange between the eastern Indians and the Montana tribesmen must have been rich indeed. The Iroquois discovered good and bad in the customs of their new friends. One of the bad ways of the Flatheads, from the humane point of view, concerned the cruel treatment of captives brought back to the Bitterroot Valley from intertribal wars on the Plains. This cruelty was all too familiar to the Iroquois from their own tribal history in the times before Christianity was introduced to them by the Black Robes from Canada. These Jesuits went to villages in the Iroquois Confederacy of New York State after 1666 and a treaty had been made between the Indians and the Canadian Government.<sup>6</sup> This event opened peaceful travel and residence of the priests in Iroquois country. However, in the years that followed, the anger of the Indians was aroused against the Black Robes and some of them were treated as enemies. They died under horrible tortures, all except Father Isaac Jogues, S.J., who was tomahawked.

The torture of prisoners by the Flatheads was described in detail by Ross Cox, employee of the Northwest Fur Company. When he came as a trader in 1813 to spend the winter among them, he brought eight men with him and twelve horses loaded with trade goods. His company had already established a fur post on the Flathead, or Bitterroot River.<sup>7</sup>

Cox and his men had a very difficult trip from his supply point on the Columbia River. However, he had been previously to the Bitterroot Valley. He writes as follows:

A large band of the Flathead warriors were encamped about the fort. They had recently returned from the buffalo country, and had revenged their defeat of the preceding year by a signal victory over their enemies the Blackfeet, several of whose warriors, with their women, they had taken prisoner.<sup>8</sup>

. . . We spent a comparatively happy Christmas, and by the side of a blazing fire in a warm room, forgot the sufferings we endured in our dreary progress through the woods. There was, however, in the midst of our festivities a great drawback . . . I allude to the unfortunate Blackfeet who had been captured by the Flatheads.<sup>9</sup>

Ross Cox then tells of his leaving the fort to go to the camp of the Flathead warriors who were preparing for the torture ceremonies.

I went to their camp to witness the spectacle. The man was tied to a tree, after which they heated an old barrel of a gun until it became red hot, with which they burned him on the legs, thighs, neck, cheeks and belly. They then commenced cutting the flesh from about the nails, which they pulled out, and next separated the fingers from the hand, joint by joint. During the performance of these cruelties, the wretched captive never winced.<sup>10</sup>

The fur trader next recounts that the Blackfeet's torture finally ended when the prisoner was shot through the heart.

Cox remonstrated with the Flatheads about the cruelties. "They replied by saying the Blackfeet treated their relations in the same manner; that it was the course adopted by all red warriors; and that they could not think of giving up the gratification of their revenge to the foolish and womanish feelings of white men."<sup>11</sup>

Cox records the Indian women's part in the torture ceremonies. Referring to the man who had been killed, he states: "Shocking, however, as this dreadful exhibition was, it was far exceeded by the atrocious cruelties practiced on the female prisoners, in which, I am sorry to say, the Flathead women assisted with more savage fury than the men."<sup>12</sup>

When a young girl was led out for the torture, the traders made a final appeal to save her by stating that they would leave the tribe forever unless the cruelties stopped. Since the traders were the first to come among the Flatheads with a substantial supply of guns and ammunition, the words had a good effect. The girl was led back to her friends unharmed. Ross and his men then complimented the Indians for their decision to spare her life and said ". . . they would secure our permanent residence among them (as traders), and in return for their furs be always furnished with guns and ammunition sufficient to repel the attacks of their old enemies, and preserve their relations from being made prisoners."<sup>13</sup>

The Indians were convinced, and the Chief promised, that no more torture would be inflicted on their prisoners. Ross was sure that the promise was kept, at least for that winter. It would seem that Ignace and his party did not arrive among the Flatheads during the winter of 1813-1814, or the fact would have been recorded by Ross Cox, a man who kept such details and careful observations in his journal. Moreover, the arrival of a large group of strange eastern Indians with their families must have aroused excitement among the mountain Indians and the news was sent out on the "Moccasin Grapevine."

The Northwest trader commented on the good traits of the Flatheads under his observation. These have already been noted in Chapter Two. The tribute he gave to the prevailing monogamy in the tribe agrees with the comment of the Black Robes after their arrival in the Bitterroot, 1841. It was written that ". . . no polygamy existed among them, the missionaries finding but one in the whole tribe who had two wives."<sup>14</sup>

The Catholic Iroquois with Ignace LaMousse admired this quality also, for their people at Caughnawaga were known for marital fidelity. After communication became easier with their new friends, they shared with the Flatheads their longing for the teachings and worship services conducted by their priests at home. Especially was Ignace LaMousse vocal in this regard:

Often would he speak to them of the Catholic religion, its teachings, the prayers and its rites; the conclusion of all his discourses being always the same, namely, the advantage and necessity of having the Black Robes or Catholic missionaries among them, by whom they could be instructed and taught the way to Heaven . . . These good people strove as best they could, not only to remember what they were taught by old Ignace, but also to put it into practice. Hence, they prayed in common morning and evening, observed Sunday, baptised their children and marked the graves of their dead with a cross, the symbol of Redemption.<sup>15</sup>

Not until Ignace explained it to them did the Western Indians learn the full religious meaning of the cross. They had seen it for the first time traced on the metal belonging to Shining Shirt. When Ignace explained that it was a torture symbol for the punishment of white people who nailed their prisoners, hands and feet, to cross-beams of wood, they understood what Christ had suffered for them.

Noel Campbell commented on the reactions of the mountain tribes to the Crucified:

When the Indians saw the crucifix with Jesus on the Cross, it said something to them. They saw what Jesus did for his people. Here was somebody who put his money where his mouth was. He was obedient to the Great Spirit. He would sacrifice for the Great Spirit and be obedient to death.

The Indians understood then and still understand an atonement sacrifice. One of our old medicine-men's ceremonies was to pierce



the flesh in an act of sacrifice.

Before you can win the Power, you have to be obedient to His way, to the tracks of His walk. You have to read the signs in the story of Christ's life, especially his atoning sacrifice on the Cross.<sup>16</sup>

The Flatheads noticed that the Iroquois gave daily witness to the nearness of the Cross in their lives by the Sign of the Cross — a movement of the right hand to their foreheads, the chest, the left and right shoulders — a symbol of loyalty and thankfulness to Jesus for his atoning sacrifice. When in the 1600's, their Christian ancestors migrated to Caughnawaga from the Mohawk Valley for peaceful practice of their new religious beliefs, those left behind in the longhouses of the Iroquois League called them: "They-who-make-the-Sign-of-the-Cross."<sup>17</sup>

Eventually, from example and the teaching of Ignace LaMousse, the Flatheads became evangelists themselves without knowing it when they went spring and fall on the buffalo hunts. Far out on the Plains where the buffalo ranged by the hundred thousands more than a hundred years ago, an Indian of the 1940's confirmed the Flathead "witness." He was Thomas Main, Gros Ventre Tribe, a leader on the Fort Belknap Reservation, Montana.

He said, "The people of my tribe first heard of the Christian religion from the Flatheads. They came on the buffalo grounds with crosses painted on their tepee doors. My ancestors used to like to stand around their tepees at night to hear them sing hymns, the first the Gros Ventre ever heard. This was long before my people had even seen a priest."<sup>18</sup>

It was an Iroquois custom to sing the rosary prayers as an evening devotion. The documents do not tell whether the Iroquois accompanied the mountain Indians on the exciting buffalo hunts. It is difficult to imagine that the young men from the East stayed in the Valley with the old people while hunters and families were on the Plains.

The influence of the Christianized Indians from the mountains extended as far as the Sioux of North Dakota. One of these, Francis Hairy Chin of the Fort Yates Reservation, where he once served as Tribal Chairman, said in modern times: "The Flathead people brought to the Sioux their first knowledge of Christianity."<sup>19</sup>

The year of decision in the Bitterroot Valley was 1831. Ignace LaMousse wanted a Catholic Church and a priest for the benefit of his growing family, the people from Caughnawaga, and his western brothers and sisters. He said to them all at a meeting, "The words I speak are nothing. They are like dry buffalo bones with no meat on them, compared to what the Black Robes know."

"Listening intently to the sincere words of Big Ignace as they sat around a campfire, Chief Big Face of the Flatheads arose, held up his hand for silence and said, 'It is decided. We must find the Black Robes who talk to the Great Spirit. Tomorrow we send warriors for them' "<sup>20</sup>

Four men volunteered to go to St. Louis, the place where Ignace said the Black Robes could be found. Two of them were Flathead and two were Nez Perces who lived among them. "St. Louis was approximately 1,600 miles

away. These four 'braves' were indeed very brave to undertake such a long and dangerous journey through the country of some of their deadly enemies, the Blackfoot, Crows, Sioux and Cheyenne tribes."<sup>21</sup>

There is confusion among the sources about the number of warriors in the first delegation, about tribal memberships, about events in St. Louis, but what is certain is that none of the four warriors lived to return to the Bitterroot, and no priests arrived. The Indians, when they were in St. Louis, could only communicate by sign language. Two of them fell sick there and died and the last two failed to survive the return trip. However, they did find General William Clark of Lewis and Clark fame. He was the Superintendent for Indian Affairs west of the Mississippi. They found their way to Catholic Bishop Joseph Rosati. Both of these interested men spread the word in publications about the far western Indians who sought Christian teachings.

The Bishop had neither men nor resources to go to Montana, but he was active at the Council of American Bishops, October 20, 1833. The Bishops recommended to Church authorities in Rome that the spiritual care of the Indians of the United States who requested it be given to the Society of Jesus, Jesuits. (The Jesuits were a world-wide mission society.) Pope Gregory XVI granted their petition in July 1834, and issued a decree to that effect.<sup>22</sup>

The first article published about the Flathead and Nez Perce delegation to St. Louis was published in *The Christian Advocate*, New York, March 1, 1833, and immediately aroused intense interest among the Protestant churches.<sup>23</sup> Missionaries from the Methodist Church, Rev. Samuel Parker and Rev. Marcus Whitman, M.D., set out for the west in 1835. They eventually located near Walla Walla, Washington among the Cayuse Indians. Rev. and Mrs. Harmon Spalding of the Presbyterian Church set out in 1836.<sup>24</sup> They settled among the Nez Perce in Idaho.

A recent publication by the Nez Perce Tribe gives their list of delegates to St. Louis and their views of the purpose for Indian interest in Christian ministers and priests as witnessed by the amazing appeal from the Rocky Mountains:

The names of the delegates are given with translations in English only: Of the Dawn, No Horns, Rabbit Skin Leggings, Black Eagle. These were all received by the Roman Catholic Bishop of St. Louis, the Rev. Joseph Rosati.

Within the tribe, those who were not directly involved with white Christianity, question the authenticity of the four delegates to St. Louis. Some felt that these four may have been influenced to go by promises of the many gifts that the Nez Percés would receive. They would receive these things if they would journey east and seek and accept the white man's teaching through the "Book of Heaven." Such gifts would be very rewarding to their people.

Many of us think that the real purpose of the missionaries was to pacify these Nez Perce and others who opposed the movement of settlers to the Northwest. There is little doubt that the missionaries helped to bring about that settlement, and that the missionary

activities supported the expansionist policies of the United States Government.<sup>25</sup>

It is a tradition on the Flathead Reservation that the Iroquois among the Flatheads were instrumental in discouraging the zealous Protestant missionaries from settling in the Bitterroot Valley. Ignace LaMousse and the other Caughnawagans wanted not only the Word of God in the *Bible*, they wanted the renewal of the sacrifice of the cross in the daily Sacrifice of the Mass celebrated by the priests. They preferred to wait for the Black Robes.

When first after 1833, a single Protestant missionary appeared among the Flatheads and asked the Indian people who received him if they wanted to learn from the Book of Heaven, “. . . a big Indian walked over to him without saying anything and emptied his pockets on the ground. The American missionary was astonished and frightened. He thought the Indian intended to rob him. But this was not so. The Iroquois was looking for rosary prayer beads in the man’s pockets.”<sup>26</sup> There were none, so he shook his head and the Flathead Chief courteously declined the services of the brave and dedicated white man.

By 1835, when no Black Robes had appeared in the Bitterroot, Ignace LaMousse himself volunteered to go to St. Louis with his two sons. If no priests were available there, he would go on to Canada where he thought the Jesuits would respond. They had been known to the Iroquois of the Iroquois Confederacy in New York State since 1642 when Father Isaac Jogues, S.J., was taken as a prisoner of war to the longhouses of the Mohawks.

Taking two boys, aged ten and fourteen, whom he intended to have baptised and schooled, Ignace reached St. Louis late in 1835. There, speaking in French, he told Father Helias d’Huggeghem, a Belgian Jesuit, that he had worked for the Jesuits at Caughnawaga before migrating westward between 1812 and 1820, and that he had come to St. Louis representing the Flatheads, Nez Perce, Spokanes, Kutenai, Cayuses, and two tribes the priest could not identify, to seek a Catholic missionary . . .<sup>27</sup>

The waiting tribes out west were due for another disappointment because “Ignace got the idea that the priests would come to the Flatheads immediately and returned to the Bitterroot to announce that the Black Robes were on their way.”<sup>28</sup>

Meanwhile, his sons remained at school with the Jesuits. They had been baptised Charles and Francis Xavier. (The last name eventually became “Saxa,” according to Indian pronunciation.) There is a tradition today among the descendants of Ignace LaMousse on the Flathead Reservation that when Ignace returned without the boys, “Their mother went to St. Louis by herself to bring them home.” This was told the writer by Mrs. Lucille Grenier of Arlee, Montana.

“Besides,” said Mrs. Grenier, “LaMousse was only a nickname given by the white men. Francis would never call himself that. He said that his name was Francis Saxa.”<sup>29</sup>

Another year and another attempt. This time it was 1837 and Ignace was to give his life in the effort. "Late summer, 1837. The third delegation of Indians to St. Louis for Black Robes consisted of Old Ignace, three Flatheads and one Nez Perce. Attacked by a band of hostile Sioux, they were killed at Ash Hollow on the North Platte in Nebraska."<sup>30</sup>

The grief of the mountain Indians over the loss of the delegation can be imagined, especially that of the self-sacrificing Ignace. Only a few Iroquois remained of the early band of twenty-four, but when the Flathead tribal council decided on a fourth delegation, two of these men offered to try in place of their fallen leader. They were Peter Gaucher (Left-Hand Peter) and Young Ignace. They joined some Hudson's Bay Company voyageurs for a trip down the Missouri in canoes. At St. Joseph Mission, Council Bluffs, Iowa, they stopped to talk to the priests and met Father Pierre DeSmet, S.J., the man destined to return with them.<sup>31</sup>

"The sole object of these good Iroquois," wrote Father DeSmet in a letter, "was to obtain a priest to come and finish what they had so happily commenced. We gave them letters for our Rev. Father Superior at St. Louis. They thought nothing of adding three hundred leagues to the thousand they had already accomplished in the hope that their request would be granted."<sup>32</sup>

While the two men continued on their way to see Bishop Rosati, Father DeSmet arranged to go to St. Louis in order to volunteer for the western mission. He was accepted and with joy Peter Gaucher set out alone during the last days of October to bring the news to the tribe. Young Ignace stayed in Missouri to wait for spring and be a guide.

About the time that Father DeSmet was leaving St. Louis. Peter Gaucher appeared most unexpectedly in the Flathead camp on Eight Mile Creek in the Bitterroot Valley, bringing the news that Black Robe was surely coming, led by young Ignace. Peter's journey home from St. Louis may be considered indeed a very remarkable feat . . . The announcement that the priest was coming brought joy to the whole tribe, and the chief at once detailed ten of his warriors to go ahead and meet the man of God and escort him into their camp, while he would follow on with the rest of his people.<sup>33</sup>

To Father DeSmet's delight, three months later, July 1840, he met the warriors at the Green River Rendezvous in Wyoming. Eight more days' travel across the mountains and he met the main body of Indians come to meet him, having traveled 800 miles from their homes. They were waiting at Pierre's Hole, an unpoetic name for the beautiful valley on the border of Wyoming and Idaho. It was named for another explorer — Iroquois, Pierre Tivantigan, according to the journals of Peter Skene Ogden, Hudson's Bay Company factor.

The Flatheads . . . "had been joined at the start and on the road

by detached bands of other tribes, Nez Perces, Pend d'Oreilles and Kalispels, numbering all told, some 1,600 souls, and had already set up in the midst a lodge for the missionary.”<sup>34</sup>

The greeting was tumultuous when Young Ignace brought Father DeSmet into the Indian camp and the Indians saw the Cross he was wearing. The chief received him royally. “Surrounded by the leading men and warriors of the nation, the great chief, whose name was ‘Big Face’ addressed Father DeSmet as follows:

This day the Great Spirit has accomplished our wishes and our hearts are swelled with joy. Our desire to be instructed was so great that three times we deputed our people to the great Black Robe in St. Louis to obtain priests. Now, Father, speak and we'll comply with all that you will tell us. Show us the way we have to go to the home of the Great Spirit.”<sup>35</sup>

Father DeSmet began daily religious instructions and traveled with the people as they camped on several succeeding days in Idaho and Montana. He discussed with the chiefs about his returning to St. Louis to arrange for a permanent mission among the Flatheads, and he promised to return in the spring with other priests and helpers. The tribe agreed to this. His guide for the return trip to St. Louis was another Belgian like himself, whom he had met at Green River.

#### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Between 1810-1820, dozens of Iroquois traders were on both sides of the Continental Divide. Forty percent of them were middlemen between Indian trappers of the mountain areas and the fur company.

<sup>2</sup>Frank Speck. *The Iroquois*. Cranbrook Institute of Science, Bulletin 23, 1945, pp. 23-25.

<sup>3</sup>Lawrence B. Palladino, S.J. *Indians and Whites in the Northwest*, Lancaster, Pa.: Wickersham Publishing Co., Second Edition, 1922, p. 8.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>6</sup>Henri Bechard, S.J., *The Original Caughnawaga Indians*. Montreal: International Publishers, 1976, p. 10.

<sup>7</sup>Ross Cox, *Adventures on the Columbia River*. London: Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, 1831, Vol. II, p. 232.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 234.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 235.

<sup>14</sup>Palladino, *op. cit.* p. 3.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>16</sup>A conversation with Noel Campbell, 1978, in Spokane, Washington.

<sup>17</sup>Henri Bechard, S.J., *op. cit.*, p. 205.

<sup>18</sup>Conversation with Thomas Main, 1944.

<sup>19</sup>Conversation with Francis Hairy Chin at Sioux Catholic Congress, Poplar, Montana, 1967.

<sup>20</sup>Rev. Martin Florian. *The Story of St. Mary's Mission*. Stevensville, Montana, 1959, p. 1.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup>Wilfred P. Schoenberg, S.J., *A Chronicle of Catholic History of the Far Northwest, 1743-1960*. Portland, Oregon. The Catholic Sentinel Printery, 1962, p. 4.

<sup>23</sup>William A. Mowry, *Marcus Whitman and the Early Days of Oregon*. New York: Silver and Burdette and Company, 1901, p. 80.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup>Slickpoo, Allen, Noon Nee-Me-Poo (We the Nez Percés), *Culture and History of the Nez Percés*, Vol. I. Lapwai: Nez Perce Tribe, Publishers, 1973, p. 71.

<sup>26</sup>A story heard at St. Ignatius in 1945.

<sup>27</sup>Ferdinand Helias, S.J. in G.J. Garraghan, S.J., *Jesuits of the Middle United States*, II, pp. 246-47, as quoted by John Fahey, *The Flathead Indians*. Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1974, p. 69.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup>Conversation with Mrs. Grenier at Arlee, 1974.

<sup>30</sup>Schoenberg, S.J., *op. cit.*, p. 5.

<sup>31</sup>Palladino, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 28, quoting from *Life, Letters and Travels of Pierre-Jean DeSmet*, S.J. by Hiram Chittenden and Alfred Richardson, New York: Francis P. Parker, 1905. Vol. III, p. 795.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*

## Chapter 4

### ST. MARY'S MISSION — 1841 — FLATHEAD INDIANS, MONTANA



ST. MARY'S MISSION-1841-FLATHEAD INDIANS, MONTANA

*St. Mary's Mission from Father Point's drawing, p. 311, II, Garraghan's Jesuits of the Middle United States, 1938. Sketch by Clarence Campbell.*

## *Chapter 4*

### *The Black Robes Have A Vision and A Plan*

Father DeSmet did not see the site of the future St. Mary's Mission in Montana on his first trip to the West. He saw it in September 1841, when he returned to the Flathead Tribe with two other priests — Father Gregory Mengarini, S.J., and Father Nicholas Point, S.J. He had also recruited three Jesuit Brothers — Brother Joseph Specht, S.J., Brother William Claussens, S.J., and Brother Charles Huet, S.J. These Brothers were craftsmen of European origin, from places where men were not limited to one specialty. With DeSmet's party were also a hunter and two Canadian assistants.

The trip was due to be a long one between St. Louis and the Rocky Mountains because, while the men were on horseback, they had with them three carts and a wagon filled with supplies and tools drawn by oxen.<sup>1</sup>

Why this big staff and heavy cargo with Father DeSmet for his return to the mountain tribes? The answer is to be found in a master plan for mission development which Father DeSmet borrowed from the Spanish Jesuits of the previous century in South America. They had founded mission villages called "Reductions," which proved most successful among the primitive Indian tribes of Paraguay.

Father DeSmet hoped to use the Paraguayan Plan to provide extra benefits from the presence of the Black Robes among the Flatheads and others who would be interested in these benefits. The future contacts of the priests with their new Christians would be daily ones in a mission settlement, if his plan proved feasible. The priests would truly make their homes among the people they served and not be content with an occasional visit to an Indian encampment. In this new way, the priests could provide daily worship ceremonies and teach the people not only about the one true God and his son, Jesus Christ, but teach them many other things for a richer, fuller life. These teachings in many areas would prepare the people for the coming of the white man settlers, and help them to keep their people together on their own lands.

Eventually, if the Paraguayan Plan could grow, there would be shops, sawmills, and at some future date, schools. There would be farms. The large staff he brought to the Flatheads would need a continuing source of food. The nearest store, when they had arrived at their destination, was hundreds of miles northward at Fort Colville on the Columbia River.

Father DeSmet had already lived some years among the tribes of the Mid-West. He understood what a settled life would mean in culture change to the hunting tribes. However, the Plan had worked with South American natives even more primitive. It was worth a try.

He was not aware that introducing a mission settlement or Reduction was to realize for the Indians one of the prophecies of Shining Shirt. The prophet had said to the Pend d'Oreilles in the 1700's: "When the time comes, the



Black Robes would change the lives of the people in ways which they but little dreamed.”<sup>2</sup>

In the Bitterroot Valley among the Flatheads, there was acceptance of DeSmet’s Plan by the independent hunters and warriors. However, as the years went by, resistance did develop, and this was true in Paraguay among the Guaycuru Indians:

In 1609-1613, two Jesuits were assigned to them for the establishment of a mission village among them . . . They got so far as to find a ‘reduction’ which they named ‘St. Mary of the Kings;’ but it developed no enduring vitality. The wild beings whom it harbored would not settle down to an ordered life . . . all efforts among the Guaycurus remained fruitless.<sup>3</sup>

This account is taken from the first book written about the Reductions, by the Spaniard, Luigi Muratori. When it was translated into French, according to Father Clifford Carroll, S.J., Archivist at the Crosby Library, “Father DeSmet carried Muratori with him.”<sup>4</sup>

On the way West in 1841 with his large party, DeSmet had many discussions about the Reduction programs with Father Point, an artist who drew a village plan for the Flatheads from Muratori’s descriptions.

At this point it might be useful to explain the meaning of the word “reduction” in a Spanish dictionary:

“Reduction 1, — (mach.) reducer (to join two pipes of different sizes); (Am.) settlement of converted Indians.”

The meaning of the verb, “reducer” could be applied to the wilderness tribes of the American mountain areas: a drawing together of clans or other varied tribal groups into a permanent settlement. The difficulties involved in applying this process to some of the Western tribes was illustrated later on among the Coeur d’Alene Indians of Idaho. Father Point, their first missionary priest, who came to them in 1843 at their request, found 27 scattered groups led by their own chiefs, over an immense area of northern Idaho and even into eastern Washington. He spent six months waiting for the chiefs to agree among themselves on a site for the “Reduction of the Sacred Heart.” The one they agreed upon was land along the St. Joe River where it empties into Lake Coeur d’Alene.

What was the plan for the Reductions? It is described in a recent publication of the well-known historian for Latin America, Hubert Herring. He makes the following observation:

. . . the Spanish Jesuits were Spain’s best gift to Paraguay . . . who did more to shape the colony than all the governors and Spanish settlers. The Jesuits made the Indian cause their own. They gathered their charges, perhaps 100,000 of them in reductions or mission villages.<sup>5</sup>

His account continues. The missionaries taught the natives . . . “better methods of farming and stock-raising and new skills of craftsmanship, while instructing them in the mysteries of the Christian faith. Obstinate and devoted, the Jesuits protected their wards against civil governors and Spanish landholders who sought the Indians’ enslavement.”<sup>6</sup>

Happily, after the Jesuits appealed to the King of Spain, he issued orders which guaranteed both legislative and monetary assistance for the missionaries’ work on behalf of the Indians.

The housing of the forest Indians when they came to the Reductions is described in an old publication, the 1911 *Catholic Encyclopedia*: “The dwellings of the Indians, small cabins at first, were later solid, one-story houses . . . about fifteen by eighteen feet in size . . . they formed comfortable quarters for families from four to six members.”<sup>7</sup>

Illustrations of the mission villages show the houses in rows, situated facing the plaza. At the other end of the plaza, Spanish-style, was the large church. To the left were the Father’s house, the schools, workshops, store, and the carefully kept gardens.

The Reductions of South America had no Sisters working for them because the Sisters of those days were not teachers or social workers as in modern times. However, there was an unusual social and rehabilitation center for the women of the forest tribes. It was a building for single women, isolated and surrounded by a wall, in the manner of the haciendas of Spain. Called “the big house,” it served as a home for widows. They lived together in a community. Part of the large building was reserved for a girls’ reformatory. Then there was a section for cripples. One of the rooms was equipped for spinning materials. It was open to the women of the village in addition to the resident. One can imagine that the widows taught spinning and sewing crafts to the girls, and the new arrivals from the forest world.

Then men’s work was carried on in tile — kilns, mills, stamping mills, tanneries, and other buildings devoted to industries. All this sophisticated work activity went on in seasons when farm work did not involve the men. Each family had its own little farm.

The land was apportioned among the caciques (Chiefs of the Tribes) who allotted it to the families under them. Agricultural instruments and draught-cattle (oxen) were loaned from the common supply. No one was permitted to sell his plot of land or his house . . . The yield of the private fields and private effort became the absolute property of the Indians, and was credited to them individually in the common barter transactions, so that each received in exchange the goods he desired . . . The herds of live stock were also common property.<sup>8</sup>

The religious life of the Reductions was highly developed, as might be expected, and the pattern of instruction and church liturgies were copied in the American West when Father DeSmet introduced them at the new mission villages:

The entire community attended Holy Mass and evening devotions daily. Prayer and religious songs accompanied work and recreation alike. Religious instruction was given daily for the children; on several days a week for catechumens (those adults preparing for baptism), and every Sunday for the entire parish . . . Public religious life held in splendid churches found its expression in an exceedingly brilliant manner, particularly on feast days. Church choirs were carefully cultivated.<sup>9</sup>

Religion lived out as Christians know it from Christ's teachings and example — the "Love thy neighbor as thyself" precept — was strong among the natives of the Paraguayan Reductions:

The care of the sick was well organized in all the Reductions. In each village there were four to eight nurses, well instructed in the use of medicines . . . They made a round of the village everyday, and were obliged to give the Fathers an exact report of the condition of the sick, so that as a consequence, scarcely any Indian died without the last sacraments.<sup>10</sup>

The "home-grown nurses" used natural medicines, the herbs of Paraguay. Each parish house had a pharmacy and some well-trained Fathers and Brothers from Spain who knew how to prepare other medicines.

In later years, each village developed . . . " . . . an elementary school with Indian teachers educated by the Fathers; there, at least the boys, above all the sons of Caciques (chiefs) and the more prominent Indians, from whose ranks the heads of the village and other villages were mostly taken, could learn reading, writing, and arithmetic. In this respect also, the Reductions were in advance of the Spanish colony . . ." <sup>11</sup>

With the success and the acceptance of the Indian people, the reduction ideas spread from Paraguay to Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay and Bolivia. They even reached the American southwest for the Indian Missions there. These were introduced by the Spanish Jesuits after the Spanish conquest of Mexico.<sup>12</sup>

Father Joseph P. Donnelly reports in his article that the Reduction Plan was tried among the tribes of the American Midwest in the 1800's. Finally, he states, it was brought to the Northwest by Father DeSmet and Father Point. The programs continued after the reservation period was opened for the Native Americans of the West.<sup>13</sup>

Moving forward to 1841 and the long trip from Missouri to the mountains, we find that an end was in sight when Father DeSmet's party reached Fort Hall. This was a famous trading post on the Snake River in what is now Eastern Idaho. The happy date was August 15th.

A vanguard of Flatheads had arrived late in July to await the

missionaries at Fort Hall . . . Hearing that the Black Robes were near, two or three braves went out to meet them. Young Ignace, DeSmet's guide the previous year, ran four days without food or drink in order to be the first to salute the missionary. A chief sent to Father DeSmet his finest white horse . . . Also there to greet him was Francis Xavier (Saxa), who had gone to St. Louis at the age of ten in the company of his courageous father, Big Ignace, leader of the second and third deputations.

Father DeSmet's heart rejoiced when he found the year's interval had in no way diminished the fervor of the Flatheads.<sup>14</sup>

Arriving in the Bitterroot Valley, the Flatheads and missionaries chose the site for the Reduction of St. Mary's on the banks of the Bitterroot River. "The Indians set to work with a will and helped to prepare the new mission center."<sup>15</sup>

October was soon upon the builders and the winter's approach was anything but encouraging, both for the scarcity of food and the ragged condition of the missionaries' clothing. Father DeSmet found a solution at considerable hardship for himself.

One month after his arrival at the site of the new mission, Father DeSmet was obliged to leave his fellow missionaries to make a trip to the Hudson's Bay Company post at Fort Colville, a short distance above the Kettle Falls on the Columbia River. The three hundred mile journey was planned with two objects in view. First, the needs of the colony, which was in dire poverty. Brother Specht was clothed in a garment made of animal skins, and one of the Fathers was obliged to make a cassock (the black robe) of an Indian blanket. Also, provisions for the winter, seeds for the spring crops, tools, agricultural implements, beeves, cows; in a word, all that was needed for the establishment of a *reduction* had to be purchased.<sup>16</sup>

This trip opens up a view of Father DeSmet as the evangelist, ever eager to meet the tribes on their own land thus coming to know them better.

His second object was to visit the Kalispels who camped in the autumn on the borders of the Clark River. These were also called the Lower Kalispels (altitude-wise) or the Pend d'Oreilles of the Bay, to distinguish them from the Upper Kalispels, or the Pend d'Oreilles of the mountains. (These latter were in the Mission Valley, below Flathead Lake.)<sup>17</sup>

Before Father DeSmet left St. Mary's for his long horseback trip to the Columbia River in Northeastern Washington, he asked the Flathead Chiefs for a guide and a "military" escort of warriors who would be on alert for any Blackfeet war parties they might meet. His mission was successful at the Fort. "He returned on December 8th with seed, lettuce, carrots, beans, onions, potatoes, wheat and oats for Montana's first farm at St. Mary's."<sup>18</sup>

The chief factor of the Hudson's Bay Post gave Father DeSmet a courteous and bountiful reception, for he added many articles to the order. Then, too, the missionary had the joy of an enthusiastic reception from the Kalispels. They were at their camp near today's Cusick, Washington. Father DeSmet was the first Black Robe they had seen but they knew about his coming west and much more. "Great was his surprise that evening to hear them recite night prayers, and to learn that this tribe was, in a way, converted before ever having seen a missionary." <sup>19</sup>

The mystery was soon solved. Having heard the previous year of the arrival of a Black Robe in the mountains, the Kalispels had sent an intelligent young Indian, possessing an excellent memory, to visit the Flatheads. In their camp he learned the prayers, hymns, and the great truths of the Catholic religion, and upon his return, was made the apostle of the tribe. His instructions were handed from one lodge to another, and before the winter was over, more than half the tribe were Christians. <sup>20</sup>

Back at St. Mary's Father DeSmet was joyfully received, as may be imagined. The winter could be faced with more assurance and the programs of a Reduction could move forward in the spring.

After the first three months had passed, Father DeSmet wrote a lengthy report to his Superior in St. Louis. It included this statement: "The best end which we can propose to ourselves is that which our Fathers of Paraguay had in view when they commenced their missionary labors." <sup>21</sup> The letter outlines the religious truths about God, one's neighbor, and oneself which Father DeSmet hoped to teach to the tribal people. He wrote that the development of solid Christians would call for ". . . flight from all contaminating influences . . . We shall confine them to the knowledge of their own language." <sup>22</sup>

He does not explain the reason for these restrictions, but Father Point in his journal has some words about the "contaminating influences" of the buffalo hunts on the Plains. At their request, he had accompanied the Flatheads who left St. Mary's in December for the winter hunt. He does not complain of the hardships for himself in Montana's blizzards, but his observations are informative about the Flatheads' movement eastward.

Since these hunts were long affairs, the hunters took with them everything they possessed. Each wigwam counted usually seven or eight persons, and these, together with their provisions, required the use of about twenty horses. Some fifteen parallel trails, formed by dragging wigwam poles, wound between two chains of mountains . . . This was what was called the great hunting trail.

The nomadic life of our neophytes was not without its attractions. But it was full of perils because it took them into enemy territory. It was also dangerous to the morals of the Flatheads since it brought them into contact with strangers unsympathetic to religion . . . Therefore, it was our first concern to introduce them, little by little,

to a much more sedentary existence. This could only be done by substituting the fruits of agriculture for those of the chase . . . Above all, religion had to assume an important position in their lives. Hence the construction of a chapel first; then the cultivation of the fields.<sup>23</sup>

In her book about St. Mary's Mission, Lucylle H. Evans has a quotation that further explains Father DeSmet's decision about the Flatheads' maintaining their own language. A quotation is given from Father Mengarini's writings about his experiences at St. Mary's: ". . . the natives learned to curse in French and English and to cheat in the other (languages)."<sup>24</sup>

Returning to Father DeSmet's letter to his Provincial about the Reduction principles and goals, he wrote that the missionaries intended to ". . . erect schools among them and teach them reading, writing, arithmetic and singing. We have chosen the place of the first missionaries station, formed the plan of the village, made a division of land, determined the form of the various buildings, etc."<sup>25</sup>

By springtime, in spite of the hardships of extreme cold and the hunger of winter, the plan was on schedule:

As soon as weather permitted, Brother Claessens plowed the enclosed piece of ground adjoining the mission and sowed the seeds and planted the potatoes. The Indians watched the proceedings with great curiosity and expressed the opinion that it was foolish to destroy the grass that fed their horses and to bury seeds that were good to eat. In vain did Claessens assure them that the seeds in the ground would soon reappear and produce a hundredfold, no one believed him.

The first harvest was more abundant than the missionaries had dared to even hope. When the Indians saw for the first time the advantages of tilling the soil, the missionaries took advantage of the occasion to explain to them the mystery of the resurrection of the body.<sup>26</sup>

While Brother Claessens was planting his first crop, Father DeSmet set off again for another shopping trip to Fort Colville. The month was April and it turned out to be the longest trip to a store in the history of the West. He was gone four months! The Hudson's Bay post, three hundred miles to the North, had not enough supplies to fill his shopping list.

Father DeSmet and his men, after some delay at Fort Colville, set off in barges down the Columbia for the perilous journey that took them the length and width of the State of Washington. Their goal was the "wholesale house" at Fort Vancouver, Washington. They were cordially received there by Governor McLoughlin, Chief Factor for the Hudson's Bay Company in the Oregon Territory.

Before leaving the area, Father DeSmet paid a visit to the priests of the Willamette Valley. They were Fathers Francis Blanchet and Modeste

Demers, Canadians, from the Diocese of Red River, Manitoba. They came at the request of a whole settlement of Catholic Canadians in the Willamette Valley below the present city of Portland, Oregon. Most of them were former employees of the Hudson's Bay Company and in the fur trade. They had married Indian women of the West, and they wanted priests to instruct their families.

The Canadians petitioned the Bishop of the Red River Diocese about the same time that the Flatheads were seeking the Black Robes in St. Louis. Finally, in 1838, the Canadian Bishop saw the departure of his two priests in the Hudson's Bay trade canoes. Eventually, Father Blanchet and Father Demers did extensive work among both the settlers and the Indian tribes of the Pacific Coast, among the Colvilles near Fort Colville, and into British Columbia, to visit the Okanagans.

Appointed Vicar General, representing the Bishop in the Northwest, Father Blanchet had the Catholic Church's authority over Father DeSmet and his fellow priests in the mountains. Father Blanchet encouraged Father DeSmet to go on a begging tour among Catholic people of the American cities and even to Europe, when he heard the account of their isolation and extreme poverty.<sup>27</sup>

Returning to the mountains, Father DeSmet visited the Coeur d'Alenes, who again displayed their eagerness to have a Black Robe stay with them. DeSmet told them to send some of their men to the Flathead Mission in the fall, when a Father would be available to come to stay with them.<sup>28</sup>

Father DeSmet had in mind for this post his first companion to accompany him for the opening of St. Mary's, Father Point. On the traveler's famous shopping trip to Vancouver, Father DeSmet also visited other tribes, such as the Spokanes at Spokane Falls and the Kootenai near what is today Thompson Falls, Montana. He was to receive a surprising welcome.

We arrived about three o'clock in sight of the Kootenai camp. When I was about twenty yards from them the warriors presented their arms, which they had hidden until then under their buffalo robes. They fired a great salute, which frightened my mule and made her rear and prance, to the great amusement of the savages. They unanimously declared themselves in favor of my religion, and had adopted the beautiful custom of their neighbors, the Flatheads, to meet night and morning for prayers in common.<sup>29</sup>

Father DeSmet could not know that the Christian faith and prayer practices were first taught by the Iroquois fur traders rather than the Flatheads. It was Ignace Big Knife, and then his son, half-Iroquois and half-Kootenai, Eneas Paul, both from Catholic Caughnawaga at the Mohawk Mission who taught them. As Chapter Two reported the story, David Thompson the explorer, found Big Knife among the Kootenai in

1811. Eneas Paul knew the Black Robes at Caughnawaga. He had described them to his people, so the gun salute was a greeting to the first Black Robe to arrive among them. Also, the Upper Pend d'Oreilles were neighbors to the Kootenai and may have passed on the prophecies of the other Iroquois, Shining Shirt.

When Father DeSmet finally reached the St. Mary's Reduction, after his amazing detour of a thousand miles from Fort Coville to Fort Vancouver, the Flatheads were already off to the summer hunt. Father Point was with them. Soon, Father DeSmet followed with Little Ignace and Prudhomme. He would stop for a visit with Father Point when his guides found the Flathead hunters, but he was on his way to St. Louis and the begging tour. His intent was to find missionary recruits, financial help, and a source of supplies.

While visiting with Father Point, Father DeSmet told him of his promise to the Coeur d'Alenes. Father Point could expect to find the delegation when he returned to St. Mary's. When the two missionaries separated on the Plains, Father DeSmet was off again down the Missouri River. His was an extensive and successful trip to Europe until the fall of 1844.

When in St. Louis, on his way eastward, he obtained one of the most promising new missionaries, Father Adrian Hoecken, S.J. In 1844, it was he who founded the third Reduction among the Kalispels of the Bay.<sup>29</sup> The next chapter will deal with this, the most successful and longlasting of the Reductions. It will also describe the development of the Reduction of the Sacred Heart by Father Point and members of the Coeur d'Alene tribe in Idaho. It too developed successful programs and a long life.

The present chapter will conclude with Father DeSmet's last few years of evangelization among the mountain tribes after his return from Europe. It will also discuss summarily the closing of St. Mary's Reduction in 1850 after its successful development of the first years. The story is a complicated one, addressed to at length by Mrs. Lucille H. Evans and Peter Ronan in their books about the history of the Flatheads.

Father DeSmet's return from Europe was made by sea to Fort Vancouver. Among the new Jesuit priests and Brothers with him was Father Anthony Ravalli, S.J., famous in the history of Montana and Idaho. Father DeSmet also had two Brothers destined for St. Mary's and a large cargo of supplies. The goods would go over the mountains to the Bitterroot Valley loaded on donkeys.

Arriving at the Reduction and resting a day or two, Father Ravalli was soon busy with plans for a flour mill. A friend in Europe had given him two millstones twelve inches in diameter. These the donkeys were able to transport without too much difficulty.

The erection of a flour mill, the first in the present State of Montana, was due to the mechanical skill of Father Ravalli . . . Through the persistent efforts of Ravalli, Brother Claessens and Brother Specht, and the French Canadian named Brother Billedot, a miniature milling plant was constructed. The small buhrstones made to run by water power, could daily grind a dozen bushels of



grain into excellent flour, though this amount was scarcely sufficient to supply the Indian village.<sup>30</sup>

Even if the home-made flour was in short supply, Father DeSmet was enthusiastic at his first sight of the mill. The next project was a saw mill. It was the first saw mill to be built in Montana.

It too was a primitive affair composed of a wagon tire flattened and hammered into a blade which was toothed by a cold chisel and long filing. Four other tires were welded together and formed into a crank to work the saw. The saw mill was operated by the same water power that worked the gristmill.<sup>31</sup>

The number of buildings had increased by 1845 and so had the supply of farm products.

Seven thousand bushels of wheat and between four and five thousand bushels of potatoes and vegetables of various kinds were produced on the farm. The stock of the establishment consisted of forty head of cattle, some horses and other animals, and poultry.

Even after the Easter celebrations, the granaries and cellars were still so well filled that the missionaries invited the Nez Perces, the Snakes (Shoshones), the Bannocks, and the Kalispels to a feast composed of dishes unknown to many of them.<sup>32</sup>

Progress and happiness could be noted in more important directions:

The spiritual and moral condition of the mission was as satisfactory as its material prosperity. With the abolition of polygamy, the population had sensibly increased. The abandonment of children, divorce, and the shedding of blood were now unknown among the Flatheads. Young girls were permitted to marry for choice (most Indian families of the day arranged the marriages); and the sick were cared for, and no longer allowed to die in misery. Education of the children was regarded as a religious duty, and gave promise to the missionaries of a Christian generation.<sup>33</sup>

The year was 1846. The peak had been reached at St. Mary's. At the summer hunt, the news of the Reduction's affluence spread on the buffalo plains and throughout the mountains. That winter white trappers and traders in great numbers came to winter at St. Mary's. Major Peter Ronan, who had a trading post in the Valley, wrote some harsh words for the uninvited guests:

These men — licentious, immoral and impure generally . . . lead wild and desolate lives, and in their career of debauchery among the simple natives, brooked no opposition, . . . and in the councils of the Indians began to sow the seeds of discontent against the

missionaries for the new order of things . . . The talk of the trappers against the missionaries began to give trouble and the Indians, when leaving the Bitterroot Valley on their annual buffalo hunt, left the Fathers without any protection against the incursions of hostile tribes . . .<sup>34</sup>

The danger from Blackfeet attacks was evident to Father DeSmet even before this time. He had set out for their territory north of the Bitterroot in August, 1845. He intended to make peace with the Blackfeet whose hostile raids could be accounted for by the scarcity of all game animals. They were trying to discourage the mountain tribes from coming on the buffalo plains to hunt. It is a fact of trapping history in both Canada and the United States that when the beaver were trapped out, this situation had mysterious consequences for the game animals of an area. It was a brave venture for Father DeSmet in 1845. "His undertaking was considered very perilous because the Blackfeet had sworn to kill the first priest they met."<sup>35</sup>

The fearless missionary was not successful in finding the Indians he sought although he penetrated the lands of Canadian Blackfeet in the Province of Alberta. He rode as far as Fort Augustus (Edmonton), seven hundred miles north of the Montana border, spent the winter with the Oblate Fathers at a mission near the fort, and then returned via the Columbia River through British Columbia.

However, the peace efforts were successful during August-September of 1846. Father DeSmet was accompanied by Father Point. They found the Blackfeet camped near Fort Lewis, a trading post on the Missouri River which has become Fort Benton, Montana. As usual, Father DeSmet set out to make friends with the famous enemies of the Flatheads, to negotiate a peace settlement with the Blackfeet, and to evangelize. Father Point did his part to interest the Indians with his colorful paintings.

They achieved their purpose (of peace-making) on September 14, the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. After the decision was made that Father Point should winter at Fort Lewis . . . among the Blackfeet, Father DeSmet left for St. Louis on September 28th.

Meanwhile, Father Point established himself in a good setting for contacts with his new friends, the Blackfeet. It was helpful for the production of the paintings for which he is renowned. He produced sixty-seven portraits of Indians and a large number of other drawings and paintings of frontier life.

He lived in a room at Fort Lewis, a post of the American Fur Company which placed another room at his disposal for a school. Father Point taught the Indians in the first classroom in eastern Montana. When Father Point left for St. Louis on May 21, 1847, his baptismal record contained entries for 651 baptisms.<sup>37</sup>

When Father DeSmet arrived in St. Louis he learned of a decision made

by his Superiors. They were asking him to give up his evangelism among his beloved Indians and settle down in St. Louis to the task of financing his monumental work of the Reductions. Father Schoenberg summarizes what must have been a painful decision for Father DeSmet. The date line is December 10, 1846.

Father DeSmet, S.J., arrived in St. Louis, thus ending his active missionary work beyond the Rockies. Henceforth, he was procurator for the missions with residence at St. Louis. He made two subsequent visits to Oregon on United States' business.<sup>38</sup>

In 1858, he came on a peace mission after the Yakima Indian war. He had the happiness of spending the winter with the Jesuits and the Indians of the mountains. Again in 1859, "Father DeSmet left St. Ignatius Mission with seven Indian chiefs for a conference with General Harney at Fort Vancouver."<sup>39</sup> Later chapters will tell of further help from Father DeSmet for the missions.

However, the work was never the same again without his enthusiastic presence. The people missed him sorely, especially the Flatheads. Other causes explained their declining interest in St. Mary's. One of these was the scarcity of game after 1845. More and longer hunting trips were necessary so that the Flatheads were absent for months.

The priests deplored the disaffection of the tribal members. Observers report the effects of the gold discovery in California on the mission staff. The flood of easterners through the mountains, the new settlements on the Pacific Coast and cities, such as San Francisco, created a demand for priests and the building of churches. The Forty-Niners were insistent with church authorities.

Those responsible decided to send the much needed priests where the most apparent good could be done. It was one of those very difficult decisions that must be made by men opening up a new country without sufficient means for the task. Oregon was abandoned! Men and money from the Mountain Mission were diverted to the boom towns of the South . . .

So consistently was this policy pursued, that there were but two missions left in the mountains by the early 1860's. St. Ignatius Mission in Montana and Sacred Heart Mission among the Coeur d'Alenes were the only two to survive this mode of procedure, so ruinous to the northern missions. The decision was unfortunate, as viewed from our vantage point, ninety years removed.<sup>40</sup>

The closing of the St. Mary's Reduction in 1850 had a finality about it that left no one with hope that it would reopen. The mission land was sold to Major Owens who destroyed the church, as the Fathers had wished, for fear of desecration if it were left unattended. The Flatheads were remorseful about the misconduct of some of their young people after 1846, and they bemoaned the lack of strong tribal leadership. Regrets were in vain, but

happily, sixteen years later, the work was begun again.

Father Giorda, Father Ravalli and Brother Claessens took up their residence in an Indian's cabin and began to rebuild the mission near the ruins of the first St. Mary's. Brother Claessens built a new church which was dedicated to St. Mary by Father Giorda, S.J., on October 28, 1866.<sup>41</sup>

Meanwhile, the isolated Coeur d'Alenes and the Kalispels, untouched by the Gold Rush and the game shortages elsewhere, maintained their missionaries. They were flourishing as a result of the Reduction programs.

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#### Footnotes

- <sup>1</sup>Schoenberg, S.J., *op. cit.*, p. 11.
- <sup>2</sup>H. H. Turney-High, *op. cit.*, p. 41.
- <sup>3</sup>Muratori, Luigi Antonio (1672-1750), *A Relation of the Missions of Paraguay*, quoted in *Golden Years on the Paraguay*, courtesy of the Jesuit Archives, Crosby Library, Gonzaga University, Spokane, Washington.
- <sup>4</sup>Interviews, Spokane, Washington, 1978.
- <sup>5</sup>Hubert Herring, *A History of Latin America from the Beginnings to the Present*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1960, p. 329.
- <sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 672.
- <sup>7</sup>*The Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1911, Vol. 12, p. 690.
- <sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 691.
- <sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 694.
- <sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 696.
- <sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 695.
- <sup>12</sup>J. P. Donnelly, S.J., "19th Century Jesuit Reductions in the U.S." in *Mid-America*, Vol. 17, No. 2, April, 1935, pp. 69-83. (This document was from the Jesuit Archives at Crosby Library. The most recent work on the subject of Reductions is by Philip Caraman, S.J., *The Lost Paradise. An Account of the Jesuits in Paraguay — 1607-1768*. London: Sigwich and Jackson, 1975.)
- <sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>14</sup>Lucille H. Evans. *St. Mary's in the Rocky Mountains: A History of the Cradle of Montana's Culture*. Stevensville, Montana: Montana Creative Consultants, 1976, pp. 36-37.
- <sup>15</sup>Introduction by Joseph P. Donnelly, S.J., to the Journal of Father Nicholas Point, S.J., *Wilderness Kingdom*. San Francisco: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964, p. 7. Father Donnelly was the translator of the Journal from French to English. The big book is filled with colorful illustrations of the paintings made by Father Point while he was in the West.
- <sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*,
- <sup>17</sup>Evans, *op. cit.*, p. 47.
- <sup>18</sup>Schoenberg, *op. cit.*, p. 12.
- <sup>19</sup>Evans, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup>Donnelly, *op. cit.*, in *Mid-America*, P. 75, quoted from Chittenden and Richardson. *Life, Letters and Travels of Pierre Jean DeSmet*, S.J., Vol. I, 1905, pp. 326-328.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup>Father Point, *Wilderness Kingdom*, p. 43.

<sup>24</sup>Evans, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

<sup>25</sup>Donnelly, *op. cit.*, p. 328.

<sup>26</sup>Evans, *op. cit.*, pp. 68-69.

<sup>27</sup>Schoenberg, *op. cit.*, pp. 4-5.

<sup>28</sup>Evans, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

<sup>29</sup>Schoenberg, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

<sup>30</sup>Evans, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 94.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 94-96.

<sup>34</sup>Peter Ronan. *History of the Flathead Indians*. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Ross and Haines, Inc., 1890, p. 35.

<sup>35</sup>Schoenberg, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>40</sup>William N. Bischoff, S.J., *The Jesuits in Old Oregon — 1840-1940*. Caldwell, Idaho: The Caxton Printers, Ltd. 1945.

<sup>41</sup>Schoenberg, *op. cit.*, , p. 58.

## Chapter 5

### “BETHLEHEM”



*Indian Christmas  
Mary and Joseph on their way to Bethlehem  
Sketch by Clarence Campbell*

## *Chapter 5*

### *DeSmet's Plan Lives on in Idaho*

The second Reduction to be founded among the mountain tribes was for the Coeur d'Alenes, who were located west of St. Mary's. Father DeSmet had visited with these people on two occasions. The Coeur d'Alenes were an isolated tribe. They claimed a vast territory in central and northern Idaho. They had been blessed by their own prophet who had predicted the coming of the Black Robes long before DeSmet appeared.

The story of this prophet is told by Lawrence Nicodemus, a Coeur d'Alene of unmixed ancestry. He lives today on the reservation whose headquarters of the Coeur d'Alene Tribal Council is at Plummer, Idaho. He is considered the foremost authority on the Salish language, common to most of the mountain tribes. He studied anthropology under Dr. Franz Boaz and Dr. Gladys Reichard at Columbia University in 1934-35. Recently he taught a course in the Salish language at Eastern Washington University. Even more important, in 1975 he directed the writing of two Coeur d'Alene language textbooks: a dictionary and home study course. Sponsored by the Tribal Council, the books are used by Lavinia Joseph in teaching at the tribal school, DeSmet, Idaho. They have been used as a model by tribes in Oklahoma.

#### *CIRCLING RAVEN*

Lawrence Nicodemus shares from his tribal memory:

Maurice Antelope, my uncle, and Mary Teresa Joseph agreed on these details about Circling Raven. He lived in the Colonial Period. There was no U.S. then. Stanislaus Aripa said, "Circling Raven lived to be 130 years old. He was a medicine man. At the time, he lived at Hayden Lake. He was considered by the Coeur d'Alenes to be their greatest medicine man and he was a Chief. Everybody looked to him because of his wisdom."

Circling Raven had a story of the Son of Light. One night, he told the people, he had a dream and in the dream he saw the Black Robe and he was given to understand that this Black Robe was going to come to the tribe some day. He was going to teach them the important truths of life, and Circling Raven said that the tribe was to listen to this teacher because the Black Robe will be sent by the Great Chief who dwells in the sky.

So, he himself looked for the Black Robe day after day but he never saw him. When he was dying, he called his sons. He said, "I'm going to leave you all." He said to Twisted Earth, or Stellam, which means thunder, "When I am gone you take over as Chief and look for the Black Robe."

Apparently, Twisted Earth was the eldest son of Circling Raven. In the chronicle of Father Nicholas Point, S.J., the first resident Black Robe, the other name for Twisted Earth, “Stellam”, appears frequently on the first pages.<sup>1</sup> Father Point had his confrontations with Stellam.

Lawrence Nicodemus continues the story of Circling Raven’s commission of his son.

Twisted Earth himself spent many years looking for the Black Robe. All during this time he heard different rumors of teachers appearing among the tribes. There was a time that a teacher appeared among the Nez Perces, and Twisted Earth immediately left for the Clearwater country to what is now Spaulding, Idaho. The Nez Perce Indians told him, “There is the teacher and there are his children.”

When Twisted Earth heard this about the children, right away he told his Coeur d’Alenes, “That isn’t the teacher we are looking for. We’ll go home right now.” So they went home.

Lawrence described another trip in the opposite direction, to the Spokane Tribe. Twisted Earth went to hear the Evangelist Spokane Garry, who had been given a Christian education at Fort Garry, Manitoba, by the Hudson’s Bay Company. He was a Presbyterian and gathered his people to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ. Twisted Earth was disappointed because this Christian teacher did not have the appearance of a Black Robe, as Circling Raven had described his vision: “He wore a Black Robe with a cross at his waist, held there by a cincture (belt) with a rosary attached. He would be holding a little book.”

In his usual abrupt way, Twisted Earth disrupted the meeting and left for home. Continued Lawrence:

It was not until 1842 that the search began again. Twisted Earth was informed by the Tribe that there was a teacher at Post Falls (a place north of Coeur d’Alene Lake). So right away, Twisted Earth went over to see him. The man was the great Father Jean Pierre DeSmet. Twisted Earth shed tears of joy because he saw what his father had prophesied to him.

#### *FATHER DeSMET MEETS THE COEUR d’ALENES*

The great missionary’s arrival in the territory of Twisted Earth’s people was a stop-over. He was returning to St. Mary’s from Vancouver. Actually, it was his second encounter with this tribe.

He tells the story of the first visit with them during the previous year, 1841:

I met for the first time three families of Coeur d’Alenes returning from the bison hunt, on the plains of the Upper Missouri. They joined my little band and we traveled together. I found them mild, affable, polite in disposition, and above all, very eager for the word



of God. For several consecutive days I conversed with them on different points of faith and on the church. When these families parted with us, . . . they assured me that the whole tribe would willingly accept the beautiful word of the Great Spirit, which I had announced to them.<sup>2</sup>

Father DeSmet held a minority opinion about the personality of the early-day Coeur d'Alenes. Their very name, given them by the early French fur traders indicates a people far from "mild and affable." Coeur d'Alene means in French, "A people with hearts as small as the point of an awl." The awl to punch holes in leather was a familiar tool among the traders.

From his research into the writings of early Jesuits, Father William Bischoff, S.J., makes the following observations:

These Indians had not been the terror of neighboring tribes and of the Hudson's Bay traders without reason. When the missionaries first went among them, it was the boast of the tribe that there was no neighboring nation whom they had not fought and conquered; even the Hudson's Bay traders stayed away from them because they knew they would be worsted in any trading transaction and probably suffer physical violence besides.<sup>3</sup>

Lawrence Nicodemus gives his interpretations. "Our modern name of Coeur d'Alene should be translated 'Pointed Hearts,' to represent a forceful, strong, perceptive people."

It is notable that Father DeSmet used the translation given by Lawrence when he drew a map to indicate the location of the Reduction of the Coeur d'Alenes on the St. Joe River. The river empties into the great Coeur d'Alene Lake on its southern shore. Father DeSmet's caption reads: "The St. Joseph River flowing into Pointed Heart Lake."<sup>4</sup>

Lawrence offers views on the traders:

We have no tribal memories of the Iroquois, only the French fur traders. The other tribes have Salish forms for the same name we had for them: "Suya' pi." It seems to have come from the word "swap" or "trade," but it has a bad connotation in Coeur d'Alene. It means "traders who are cheaters, people who are not Indian, and they don't care." We would never use "Suya' pi" for the missionaries or white friends.

Yes, we were hard to deal with in a trade, very out-spoken and determined. Our name for ourselves before the white man came was "schitsu' umsh." It meant the Discovered Tribe. The Spokanes and the Nez Perce had this same name for us in their languages.

An explanation of this unusual name, "The Discovered Tribe," may be found in the geographic realities of isolation of the people in a very large domain amidst mountainous, rugged country. The following account illustrates the difficult terrain from an eastern approach. It is taken from

Father Point's account of his first penetration into Coeur d'Alene territory.

After his party had left St. Mary's and the present site of Missoula, Montana, north of the Bitterroot Valley . . . "The little expedition pushed their way into the sombre gorge which separated them from their destination."<sup>5</sup>

For ten days the group wound their way through dense forests, across the sides of mountains, and sometimes through the current of a river so tortuous that, in less than eight hours, they were obliged to cross it forty-four times.

For "ten days!" Today this is the route of the Old Mullan Road and the popular Highway 90. Automobiles travel with ease from Missoula to Lake Coeur d'Alene in less than one day's time.

The strong nature of the Coeur d'Alenes and the extent of their territory are both indicated by a story from Lawrence Nicodemus about his own ancestor:

In the old days, the Coeur d'Alenes could run long distances. My maternal grandfather was Antelope, so named because he was a very swift runner and a warrior. Before the Battle of Steptoe Butte<sup>7</sup>, when he was about sixteen years old, he and his friends would run from the camp to hunt squirrels on the Butte. It was thirty miles one way. My grandfather lived to be 98 years old.

After we got the horses, we went buffalo hunting with the Pend d'Oreilles across the Pass over the mountains above Arlee. These Pend d'Oreilles who lived below the lake by that name would be called Kalispels today. Their French name means "people who wear earrings." After we got the horses, we got lazy. Our tribe didn't depend on the buffalo hunts so much. We only went in the summer, mostly for the hides to cover our tepees. We had plenty of deer, bear and elk meat on our own lands.

#### *THE SECOND VISIT OF FATHER DeSMET*

Among the three families of Coeur d'Alenes Father DeSmet met on the buffalo plains was a remarkable girl named Louise. Her name still lives among her own people. A biography of fifty pages about Louise is the first of his *Sketches*. It is the only known biography of an Indian written by Father DeSmet. His introduction is as follows:

Louise Sighouin, of the tribe of Skizoumish, or Coeur d'Alenes, daughter of the Chief of the tribe, was endowed with the noblest qualities of mind and heart, which won her the esteem and respect, not only of all her nation, but also of the neighboring tribes and all whites who had an opportunity of knowing her.<sup>8</sup>

He met her family the second time. ". . . in 1842, I proceeded to their

quarters. My good Coeur d'Alenes, who had been my traveling companions, had admirably prepared the way for my visit . . .”<sup>9</sup>

Father DeSmet tells how the news of his coming spread and how Louise proved to be a leader.

Enlightened by a special grace and wishing to turn to the glory of God and the good of souls, the rank she occupied . . . she used all her influence to induce a great number of families to follow her to the rendezvous, which was the great Lake Coeur d'Alene, in order to hear there the good and consoling word of the Gospel.<sup>10</sup>

Eventually, Louise was among a great number of children and adults who received Baptism from Father DeSmet during his lengthy visit by the shore of the Lake. At this time, she received the name of Louise, and Father DeSmet reports that in the days that followed her Baptism, “she employed all her leisure moments in the conversion and instruction of numerous pagans in her village.”<sup>11</sup> She was of great assistance to Father Point when he arrived among the Coeur d'Alenes in November of the same year, 1842.

#### *FATHER POINT AND THE REDUCTION OF THE SACRED HEART*

When Father Point returned from the buffalo country where he had met Father DeSmet and received his assignment to open the Reduction of the Coeur d'Alenes, he found the tribal delegation awaiting him at St. Mary's. Their route home took them north to the area of today's Missoula, Montana. Father Point made preparations there for the needs of the Reduction. Brother Huet accompanied him.

Arriving at the plain called Hell Gate, he (Father Point) sent people to procure some domestic animals for the new mission. In the interval, he baptised a woman who had been instructed by Louis Brown. This young Canadian showed an inclination to accompany the missionary, under an arrangement which involved very little expense. He was, therefore, taken along because he combined religious zeal with some knowledge of agricultural matters.<sup>12</sup>

The difficulties of the trip between Missoula and the land of the Coeur d'Alenes has been described. Father Bischoff found the following about the arrival of the party from another source:

“. . . the little company reached the land of the Coeur d'Alenes on Friday, November the 4th. Since the first Friday of each month is set apart in a special manner to honor the Sacred Heart (of Jesus Christ), and since the mission we had come to found had already been placed under its powerful protection, it scarcely needs to be said, that our first duty upon dismounting was to kneel with all those who had come to meet us, in order to renew this consecration.<sup>13</sup>

The first problem to be faced was the choice of land for a permanent settlement . . . “we had to gather in one place the widely scattered families, that is, establish what our Fathers used to call, a Reduction.”<sup>14</sup>

There were twenty-seven different locations by lake and river shores and in the mountains, which as many chiefs and head men claimed for their own domain. Naturally, each wanted the honor of the church and building on his land. Father Point finally saw some light on a dispersal situation so different from the Bitterroot location of the first Reduction:

Nevertheless, because the chiefs could not overlook the fact that all their interest hinged on the plan (of the Reduction), they agreed on one point . . . it was necessary to select a site which would be most advantageous for everyone . . . only five locations were worthy of consideration.<sup>15</sup>

Father Point and his group had to wait five months for negotiations to be concluded. They spent the winter at the fishing camp on the shores of Lake Coeur d’Alene. Finally, Father Point wrote jubilantly of a decision:

On March 30, 1843, as the chosen people greeted the promised land, so did we greet the land of Gabriel, chosen to be the center of the Reduction of the Sacred Heart. Gabriel and Michael (Coeur d’Alene Chiefs) were already there, with the strongest and bravest of their men. They worked so strenuously that, on the Friday of Passiontide, the framework of the church was assembled. On the following Thursday, Holy Thursday, the missionary was able to offer the first Sacrifice of the Mass in the new chapel acknowledging all of the favors received by the entire tribe.<sup>16</sup>

These favors and blessings from God were material as well as religious. Brother Huet, with the Indians and the white men of the missionary crew, were erecting other buildings at Gabriel’s site on the St. Joe River.

Meanwhile, Father Point’s work was tending to his priestly business. He was instructing the people daily in spiritual and moral matters, according to the Law of God. He was also contending with spirit-power of the kind met by Jesus and his disciples on the roads of Galilee and Judea.

Stellam, or Twisted Earth, was a medicine man in the full meaning of the word. He rejoiced at the coming of the Black Robes and the realization of his father’s prophecy, but he did not find it easy to give up his own spirit-power for the new source of power in Jesus Christ, proclaimed by the Black Robes. Like countless others of intelligence and strong will, he understood only too well the cost of answering the call to repentance, to which his own family had already responded. He was not ready. Moreover, Stellam was angry because his land was not chosen for the site of the Reduction settlement.

To his vivid pictures, which portray the ceremonies of the medicine lodges, Father Point adds descriptions of some of the spirit-power manifestations among the Coeur d’Alenes:

Those ‘strong in medicine’ can hold red-hot stones in their hands or between their teeth and plunge their arms into boiling water without feeling pain.<sup>17</sup>

Father DeSmet had recognized the existence of “other energies” which were particularly strong among the Coeur d’Alenes. In his biography of Louise, he tells of her part in the spiritual warfare:

Among Louise’s chief conquest, they especially mention the conversion of Natatken, one of the principal leaders of the idolatrous sect . . . Louise devoted herself with the utmost care to the instruction of the new catechumen (a relative of hers), and formed him to a kind of apostolic work in his tribe . . . Till then a great master of Indian sorcery, Louise led him, humble and contrite, with his wife and children, to receive the sacrament of regeneration. Natatken received the name of Isadore. He soon became very zealous and very fervent. Endowed with native eloquence, he unceasingly exhorted his companions to convert and preserve the faith. He gave the example himself.<sup>18</sup>

Father DeSmet adds that this evangelical effort by Louise, together with another conversion she assisted . . . “will surprise all who know how reluctant the Indians, and especially their chiefs, are to receive correction, especially when it is administered by a woman.”<sup>19</sup>

The biographical sketch tells that Louise was a good wife and mother, in addition to her “outreach work.” She was married to a cripple. “Louise never neglected the care and ordering of her house.”<sup>20</sup>

Lawrence Nicodemus has views about the tribe’s acceptance of Louise:

We would pronounce her name Lui’-sa Sijukh’wim (si-wheem). We know of her as a woman of superior qualities. She was very kind, kindness personified, and spoke with great authority. She was a great peacemaker when the tribal members would be quarreling. She would say one word, “Peace!” Nobody would want to dispute her. She learned quickly from the missionaries and served as a catechist among her people.

Then Lawrence added, as if to balance social matters properly, “A Coeur d’Alene named Paul was quite an interpreter for the missionaries and became quite a preacher himself.” He continued as follows:

Louise is remembered to have been at Cataldo Mission from the earliest days there with her family. Her descendants of the Alexis family are still to be found in the Coeur d’Alene Reservation. Her grave is in the Indian graveyard below the Cataldo Church.

Returning to Father Point’s *Journal* and the days of 1842, the following tells about a defeat of spirit-powers:

One month after the missionary's arrival, he erected a large cross on the same shore where the fishing parties had assembled. Many of the Coeur d'Alenes came to stand before the cross, each saying, "Jesus, I give you my heart." At the same time, the priest chanted and the entire tribe repeated . . . "Hail, Oh Cross, Our Only Hope." And remarkable as it may sound, from this day on, there was no further question either of gambling, at which so much time had once been spent, or of the diabolical visions formerly so frequent, or of the medicine lodges . . ."<sup>21</sup>

There was still Stellam, or Twisted Earth, to contend with:

From the first day, Stellam had opposed the work of God by contradicting the missionary and recalling the happy times when, according to him, one could earn a living through gambling alone.

Gradually his opposition increased and he encouraged the young Indians to keep up their old-time honor of their manitous.<sup>22</sup>

Stellam's family did not approve of his conduct. Two of his sisters had been baptised by Father DeSmet on his second visit with members of the tribe.

The son of Martha, one of his sisters, was endowed with the qualities most honored among the Indians and was the first of the catechumens (candidates for baptism) to contribute his zeal to the instruction of the others. To reward him for this, the missionary, at his baptism, gave him the glorious name of Vincent.

Next to Vincent, those who distinguished themselves most by their zeal in instructing the other catechumens were the young men. With their help, those with the poorest memories learned all that was prescribed.<sup>23</sup>

On the first day of January, 1843, "Seventy-nine adults were admitted to baptism . . ."<sup>24</sup> Stellam was not among this number.

The celebration of Christmas, shortly before, had contributed to the preparation of these adults. All of Father Point's ingenuity for decoration was exercised in his prayer lodge to make Christmas and the coming of the Christ-child very meaningful to the Coeur d'Alenes. He had erected a shelter of sorts from the beginning of his work. There before the Christmas Day, he gave his catechumens a retreat of prayer and instruction: "And it was this shelter, so similar to the place which had sheltered the Infant Jesus, that light began to shine through the darkness."<sup>25</sup>

These last words bring to mind the vision of Circling Raven, so long before: "Circling Raven had a story of the Son of Light," according to Lawrence Nicodemus.

There was another prophet, some years before the birth of Christ in the stable, who spoke of the Son of Light and foretold the future of the Child to be born to Mary, the girl from Nazareth who had been forced to go to

Bethlehem for a census enrollment with her husband Joseph.

The prophet was Zechariah, father of John the Baptist, who predicted his son's part in preparing the people for the coming of the Messiah. The following is Zechariah's prophecy:

All this is the work of the kindness of our God;  
he, the Dayspring (sun) shall visit us in his mercy  
To shine on those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,  
to guide our feet into the way of peace.<sup>26</sup>

There is an ancient liturgical prayer to be said on December 21st in preparation for Christmas, which echoes the same theme:

Come, O Radiant Dawn,  
splendor of eternal light,  
sun of justice;  
shine on those lost in the  
darkness of death.<sup>27</sup>

### *STELLAM ACCEPTS THE LIGHT*

The light finally shone on Stellam. His wife and relatives kept praying for his conversion . . . "The mercy of God spoke to his heart so insistently that even he finally surrendered."<sup>28</sup>

When Stellam came to Father Point to ask for baptism, Father Point asked that he make public reparation for his scandalous conduct in order to test his sincerity. Stellam agreed: "He gave a speech which drew tears from his audience and then proceeding to the lodge of the missionary with his medicine sack, he threw it on the fire, saying in the presence of numerous witnesses, 'Now I reject you, to obey only the true God.' "

Stellam was baptised in February with fifty other adults . . . "An Indian woman named Louise . . . distinguished herself on the occasion by the help she gave to those most in need of assistance."<sup>30</sup> This comment refers to last-minute instructions for a worthy reception of the Sacrament.

### *THE REDUCTION PROSPERS*

Father Point summarized the progress of the Reduction by the spring of 1843: "The church had been finished; the seed had been sown; each had received his own parcel of land; and the public fields for the entire tribe had been set aside."<sup>31</sup>

His drawings of the Reduction of the Sacred Heart show the little cabins of the Coeur d'Alenes in rows in front of the church, much on the pattern of the Paraguayan Reduction.

At the end of October (1843), over a hundred families were gathered in the vicinity of the church to the construction of which almost all had contributed in one way or another.<sup>32</sup>

During the fall, Father Point traveled to St. Mary's Reduction for supplies and to consult with Father DeSmet. Evidently the Fathers noticed his fatigue and the physical price Father Point had paid for a most difficult year. The new Superior at St. Mary's, Father Peter deVos, S.J., ". . . left Father Point among the Flatheads and went himself to visit the Reduction of the Sacred Heart." Upon his return, he gave Father Point a year's rest and sent Father Adrian Hoecken, S.J., to replace him among the Coeur d'Alenes.<sup>33</sup>

At the end of September, 1844, Father Point returned to the Reduction of the Sacred Heart. A year later, November, 1845, he in turn was "replaced by Father Joseph Joset — the apostle of the Coeur d'Alenes. He had a special predilection for this tribe and they in turn loved him as a father and a friend."<sup>34</sup>

Father DeSmet had sent for Father Point to accompany him to the Blackfeet country on another peace mission. Father Point stayed a winter with the Blackfeet at Fort Lewis (today, Fort Benton, Montana) and then went to Canada to live.

A summary of this time in American history is part of the tribute given to Father Point in the Foreword to *Wilderness Kingdom*, written by John C. Ewers of the Smithsonian Institution. Mr. Ewers, himself, is an authority on the Mountain and Plains Tribes. His foreword is entitled, "An Appreciation of Father Nicholas Point, Pioneer Recorder of Indian Life in the Northwest."

At the time Father Point left this region, in the spring of 1847, none of the Indians he had known had yet seen a white prospector, an agricultural settler, or a white woman in their homeland. None of these tribes had sworn allegiance to a European power. And they were not to negotiate their first treaty with the United States for another eight years.<sup>35</sup>

#### *A NEW LOCATION FOR THE REDUCTION OF THE SACRED HEART*

Lawrence Nicodemus has mentioned the grave of Louise Sighouin at Cataldo. The following explains the move to this new site for the Reduction:

Father Joset had come with orders to move the mission (of the Coeur d'Alenes). Every year the spring flood covered the fields and made the mission very difficult of access, even on horseback. The mosquitoes were also a real problem.<sup>36</sup>

The place chosen was ten miles to the east in a fertile valley where a picturesque knoll became the site in later years for a famous mission church built by Father Ravalli and the Indians. Its nails are pegs of wood and its pillars are handhewn. It is known as the "Old Mission" in Idaho. The history of its beginnings and restoration in 1926 and again in 1973 is told by a souvenir newspaper, *Old Mission*, printed in 1977-1978 by the Idaho State Parks and Recreation Department.<sup>37</sup>

By 1973, the Old Mission again in dilapidated condition, had



received statewide attention as Idaho's oldest standing building. And it became the first major statewide bicentennial project for the Idaho Bicentennial Commission.<sup>38</sup>

The splendid monument today, which stands luminous in fresh white paint at a distance from Highway 90, was not even a dream in November of 1845 when Father Joset chose the site. By the spring of 1846, the Brothers and Indians had erected only a bark chapel at the new location. "They put up a provisional bark chapel, bark barn, surrounded a field and put in wheat, potatoes, oats and built three log houses."<sup>39</sup>

The Reduction of the Sacred Heart had a new beginning. The traditional buildings of a Reduction were eventually built: ". . . repair shops, parish house, grist mill, baker and carpenter shops . . . huts for the Indians, roofed over with 'shakes,' . . . and a stone fireplace . . ."<sup>40</sup>

According to the souvenir newspaper, the State of Idaho and the University of Idaho, Department of Sociology-Anthropology, are interested in restoring the outbuildings of Cataldo Mission, as it is commonly called. The name comes from the long association of Father Joseph Cataldo, S.J. He arrived in 1865 on the Coeur d'Alene scene twenty years after the move was made from St. Joe River. "In 1877, Cataldo became Father Superior of the Rocky Mountain Missions and the Old Mission became his headquarters."<sup>41</sup>

Among the Indians and the missionaries, the name most "alive" today from the founding days is that of Louise. In his short biography, Father DeSmet begins and ends with mention of her holiness. His subtitle at the opening is "An Indian Woman of the Coeur d'Alene Tribe Who Died in the Odor of Sanctity in 1853."

His closing words are as follows:

Since the Gospel has been announced to the tribes of the Rocky Mountains, the Lord has always had his chosen souls among them. In the different missions, many neophytes are distinguished by a zeal and piety truly worthy of the primitive Christians, by a rare assiduity of all religious exercises, by the faithful accomplishment of all the duties of a good Christian, in a word, by all the virtues which we have just seen in their highest form in Louise Sighouin.<sup>42</sup>

At the annual pilgrimage to Cataldo Mission, which the Coeur d'Alenes make on August 15, Feast of the Assumption of Mary, someone is sure to remark: "I wish we could find the grave of Louise."

There were no grave markers in 1853. Lawrence Nicodemus said once, "I knew where her grave was at the foot of the hill, but they cut down some trees and now I am not sure."

The preface to the first publication of Father DeSmet's "Sketches," 1843, compares Louise to the holy woman of the Iroquois, Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha. It is signed only by the letter "S".

The holy life of Catherine Tekakwitha, the saintly virgin of the

Mohawk is well known; and the odor of her virtues is still fresh on the banks of the St. Lawrence, where she edified all by her life, and aided so many after her death. Among the sketches of Father DeSmet, published recently in Belgium, is a short memoir of Louise Sighouin, a holy woman of the Tribe of the Coeur d'Alenes, which shows us another example of high sanctity . . . The illustrations in this work are from the drawings by Father Point whose pencil has preserved so many scenes and characters of the Rocky Mountains. They are the Baptism of Louise, and her venerated grave.<sup>43</sup>

The following is a revealing quotation from Father Point's introduction to the French edition of his Chronicle. It serves as a final tribute to the first Black Robe assigned to the Coeur d'Alenes, at their request:

Because of ill health, Father Point was replaced among the Coeur d'Alenes . . . 'To his dying day, Father Point never forgot his "dear neophytes" of the Rocky Mountains . . . In his own introduction to this *Souvenirs des Montagnes Rocheuses*, he says that his purpose in preparing the manuscript was the hope that readers might learn from it what sort of people the Indians were and how much they deserved every consideration.'<sup>44</sup>

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#### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Father Point, *Wilderness Kingdom*, pp. 47-75.

<sup>2</sup>Rev. P. J. DeSmet, S.J., "Louise Sighouin, An Indian Woman of the Coeur d'Alene Tribe," in *New Indian Sketches*. New York: D. & J. Sadlier & Co., 1855. Courtesy of the Jesuit Archives, Gonzaga University, Spokane, Washington.

<sup>3</sup>William N. Bischoff, S.J., *op. cit.*, p. 130.

<sup>4</sup>Father P. J. DeSmet of the Society of Jesus. *Oregon Missions and Travels Over the Rocky Mountains, in 1849-46*. New York: Edward Dunigan, 1847. Courtesy of Jesuit Archives, Gonzaga University, Spokane, Washington.

<sup>5</sup>Point, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup>Steptoe Butte in Eastern Washington is located south of Spokane near Colfax. It was part of Coeur d'Alene territory. Their land extended as far north as Spokane Falls and into Northern Idaho to Lake Pend d'Oreille.

<sup>8</sup>Father DeSmet *New Indian Sketches, op. cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup>Nicolas Point, S.J., *op. cit.*, p. 47.

<sup>13</sup>Bischoff, *op. cit.* quoting from "Recollections of the Rocky Mountains", *Woodstock Letters*, XII, p. 147.

<sup>14</sup>Point, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

- <sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 50.
- <sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 78.
- <sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 60.
- <sup>18</sup>DeSmet, *op. cit.*, p. 18.
- <sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 19.
- <sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 23.
- <sup>21</sup>Point, *op. cit.*, p. 62-67.
- <sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 70.
- <sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 71.
- <sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 70.
- <sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>26</sup>Luke 1: 78-79. The *American Bible* translation.
- <sup>27</sup>Used with permission of the International Committee on English in the Liturgy and the Liturgical Press of St. John's Abbey, Collegeville, Minn., Jan. 25, 1979.
- <sup>28</sup>Point, *op. cit.*, p. 75.
- <sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 79.
- <sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 94.
- <sup>33</sup>Bischoff, *op. cit.*, p. 43-44.
- <sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 44.
- <sup>35</sup>Point, *op. cit.*, p. VIII, Foreword.
- <sup>36</sup>Bischoff, *op. cit.*, p. 44.
- <sup>37</sup>Courtesy of Sister Mary Edna, Mount St. Joseph, Spokane, Washington, 1979.
- <sup>38</sup>*Old Mission — Souvenir Newspaper*, 1977-1978, Idaho State Parks and Recreation Department.
- <sup>39</sup>Bischoff, *op. cit.*, p. 44, quoting from Joset's MSS, "History of the Coeur d'Alenes," p. 4, Jesuit Archives, Gonzaga University, Spokane, Washington.
- <sup>40</sup>Old Mission, *op. cit.*
- <sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>42</sup>Father DeSmet, *op. cit.*, p. 59.
- <sup>43</sup>P. J. DeSmet, S.J. *Letters and Sketches*. Philadelphia: M. Fithian, 61 North Second Street, 1843. Courtesy of Jesuit Archives, Gonzaga University, Spokane, Washington.
- <sup>44</sup>Donnelly, *op. cit.*, Introduction, pp. 8-9.

*Chapter 6*

“CAMAS PRAYERS”



*Kalispel women offer harvest prayers  
Sketch by Clarence Campbell*

## Chapter 6

### *The Kalispels and the Reduction of St. Ignatius*

North of the Coeur d'Alenes, along the Pend Oreille River in Washington State, lived their friends the Kalispels. The story of their Reduction begins in Eastern Washington with environmental problems. It ends triumphantly with the transfer of people and projects to Western Montana in 1854. Here, the Mission of St. Ignatius, now in the central area of the Flathead Reservation, flourishes to this day. The famous historian, Father Garraghan, S.J., makes these comments:

The most important of the missions (and Reductions) opened by the Society of Jesus among the Rocky Mountain tribes was to be St. Ignatius of the Kalispel . . . In the range of activities carried on from it as a center and in the physical equipment of buildings, lands, and other facilities for prosecuting its work, St. Ignatius outdistanced its sister missions by a wide margin.<sup>1</sup>

The quality of the Kalispel people is responsible to a high degree for overcoming initial difficulties with Reduction programs. The missionaries were helped immensely by the response of the Kalispel faith, their energy, leadership and cooperative spirit.

This account needs first a discussion of names by which the Kalispels were known: The Lower Pend d'Oreilles and Kalispels of the Bay. The French fur traders gave them the name which means "Ear Pendants" or earrings. The French named them the Pend d'Oreilles tribe because they observed . . . "their practice of wearing shell earrings."<sup>2</sup>

Eventually the name was given to another group of Kalispels living in Western Montana. They were called the Upper Pend d'Oreilles. The confusion has been cleared herein by modern-day Indians. The linguist of the Coeur d'Alenes, Lawrence Nicodemus, made this contribution:

My people pronounced the original name of our friends, "que'lispel-em." That is where the name Kalispel comes from. It is a Salish word.

To explain the other names for the Tribes is Clarence Campbell, a resident of the present Kalispel Reservation. He explained the use of the French name as follows:

We are called the Lower Pend d'Oreilles because the tribes had to come *down* the river to visit us. The Pend Oreille River flows westward from Montana, through Pend Oreille Lake in Idaho, and northwest into Washington. In Montana, it is called the Clark's Fork River. It finally flows into the Columbia River.

In the old days, our people had to take their canoes *up* the river to get to Montana, and that's why the folks over there are called the Upper Pend d'Oreilles.

These Upper Pend d'Oreilles inhabited the beautiful valley below Flathead Lake. Today it is part of the Flathead Reservation. The "Montana Kalispels" used to come down the river occasionally to visit the Lower Pend d'Oreilles. Mr. Campbell describes some of the meetings at Lake Pend Oreille.

We had celebrations at Sandpoint in the 1930's with the Flatheads and Pend d'Oreilles who came over from Montana. They liked the sand. Sometimes we all stayed a month there in August. Other tribes would come too. Eneas Granjo from the Flatheads ran this pow-wow.

The historical sources for the Kalispels make use of the name, Kalispel of the Bay, but they do not explain how a "bay" was part of the terrain bordering the Pend Oreille River. Mr. Campbell has a poetic tradition to relate.

I think our name, Kalispels of the Bay, started with the Kootenai in Bonner's Ferry country. A long time ago in the summer, they came down from Bonner's Ferry across the mountains. They looked down at our camps. They thought the camas in bloom was blue water. So that was supposed to be the bay.

Another friendly tribe regularly came over the mountains from the west.

The Spokanes and the Chewelah Indians came over the mountains for the camas. "Chewelah" means "water-snake". My mother was Spokane. Her people came over what they called the Flowery Trail, from Chewelah to Usk. The town of Usk is now across the river from our Reservation.

My granddad on my father's side was a Hudson's Bay man. He was Scotch. That's where the name Campbell came from. On my mother's side, according to Evelyn Flett of the Spokanes who lived to be over a hundred, she told me that my grandfather was Iroquois.

### *CAMAS AND THE CLAY SOIL*

If the camas was decorative and its bulbs were important for a winter's food supply, it was an omen of failure for the Reduction's farm programs. Stated Mr. Campbell, "The camas was on the flats where the clay was, on both sides of the river."

He added that since the Kalispel Reservation was set aside in 1914, in this same non-productive area, the Kalispels today do not depend on farming.

The land is not good for grain except for a few little patches only. It is good for hay. We raise about thirty head of buffalo that we got from the Dakotas just for the cost of transportation. We have a factory to make aluminum boxes and gun cases.

Only eighteen families lived on the Reservation in 1979, which “. . . is approximately 4,400 acres on both sides of the river.” Professor Carriker comments on the estimated tribal population and the land claims before contact with the white men:

Perhaps as many as one thousand tribesmen formed three or four villages in the sheltered river valley known for its abundance of camp supplies.<sup>3</sup>

The Kalispels roamed a country of great diversity, spectacular beauty and almost unmatched bounty. The tribe ranged widely . . . east as far as Mount Spokane in Washington, south to Lake Pend Oreille in Idaho and west to the Clark's Fork River in Montana . . . It has been estimated the tribe roamed an area over four million acres in breadth.<sup>4</sup>

Clarence Campbell tells this story of the 1930 camas harvest, a joint effort of the Spokanes and Kalispels”

They had a celebration on the east side of the river when it was time to start digging the camas. On Sunday, the women would say the rosary together before picking the camas. On Monday, they would start digging with their sharp sticks.

The “camas celebration” was memorable to the Coeur d'Alene philosopher, Noel Campbell. (He is not related to Clarence). The illustration of the women in the field, their digging stick beside them, a rosary in their hands, prompted him to remark:

There are many other tribes who even today observe the “root feasts.” The words have a prayer meaning for us, and the Kalispels' rosary prayer was the Catholic adaptation of a very old custom.

The tribes have this ceremony *before* the digging of camas or bitterroot, even one for berry-picking. Every season, the people say a very long prayer the day before the work starts. It is really a thanksgiving prayer. It is giving gratitude to God for all His blessings and expressing blind faith in His Providence, that He will provide for them.

Just last week the Nez Perce people at Nespelem had a “root feast,” and during the month (May) it will be held also among the Yakimas, Umatillas and the Warm Springs Tribes.

Noel Campbell describes the camas bulb itself: “It is about the size of a

radish, but not red. It is white when air-dried. We have some at home drying on a string.”

On the prairies beside the Pend Oreille River, the women’s harvest work intensifies, when the camas are out of the ground. Clarence Campbell describes this toil:

They baked the camas in a pit on hot rocks. They put the camas in sacks and covered them with wet skunk-cabbage leaves and let them bake. They put fire on top of the leaves also and let the camas bake three or four days. Even in the fall we would eat the camas without baking. When it was baked, it was better. It was sweet. We kept it for winter food. Then we’d boil it, or the women would sometimes put



*Picking huckleberries in the mountains  
Sketch by Clarence Campbell*



the camas with wild onions and black moss and cook it into little patties.

Winter food also came from other resources. There was buffalo hunting on the Plains, together with the Upper Pend d'Oreilles and the Coeur d'Alenes. There was local deer hunting. According to the missionaries, the fall deer hunting brought down hundreds of deer just for the main camp of the Kalispels. Clarence added: "The women went to pick huckleberries in the mountains."

Father DeSmet in the day of the Black Robes, considered the Kalispels to be farmers even before the Reduction programs were introduced. "Even before the missionaries arrived they (the Kalispels) had learned the art of raising potatoes, which they did in common fields and not in plots individually owned . . . They offered me some, which were the first I had seen since I had left the United States.'"<sup>5</sup>

### *PROPHECIES OF THE BLACK ROBES REACH THE KALISPELS*

Generations before Father DeSmet arrived, the Kalispels had learned from the Upper Pend d'Oreilles that the Black Robes were coming to teach a New Way. Father Garraghan observes: "The remarkable thing about all the mountain tribes was their readiness from the beginning to accept the teaching of the missionaries."<sup>6</sup>

Noel Campbell has this explanation to offer about the readiness among the Kalispels:

They too had listened to Shining Shirt. They listened because they were men of prayer and praise, many of them contemplative. They were highly gifted by God who heard their prayers. They were led to keep growing in the Spirit and to listen to new teachings in this direction.

The Kalispels were isolated from the influence of careless white men and their liquor. The river separated them from the immigration traffic. The Kalispels have always been known for their Catholic faith.

The first Black Robe to meet the tribe was Father DeSmet on this initial trip to Fort Colville in 1841. Good fishing near Albeni Falls, east of present-day Newport, Washington, lured one of the bands to camp there.

Stopping to chat with the tribesmen, DeSmet found them friendly and inquisitive. The priest was himself curious about the band for they spoke a dialect of the Flathead language, were similar to that tribe in appearance and manner, yet had only a rudimentary knowledge of the white man. Before he departed that camp, DeSmet baptised twenty-four persons.<sup>7</sup>

A few days later, he encountered a number of camps as he and his

Flathead escort paddled their way toward Fort Colville.

At last the main camp came into view. Beaching his canoe, DeSmet was warmly received . . . DeSmet paused for a few days among the Kalispels, yet found many promising attributes among the people . . . One hundred and ninety tribesmen were converted to Christianity, including the chief, who took the name Loyola.<sup>8</sup>

In his first year among the mountain tribes, Father DeSmet could only plan to send resident missionaries to the Kalispels. By 1844, he had enough Jesuit recruits to do so. These were Father Adrian Hoecken, S.J., Father Peter deVos, S.J., and the Irishman, Brother Peter McGean, S.J. Their destination when leaving St. Mary's was the Kalispel camp at Albeni Falls.

Father Hoecken was favorably impressed with the people. From the beginning, and during the many years he stayed with them, he experienced the strength of leadership in the tribe. “. . . this band's chieftain, Loyola, . . . each evening gathered his headmen to teach them the lessons Father Hoecken taught during the day.”<sup>9</sup>

The chief had a difficult time with some of his tribesmen, a development to be expected by the law of averages.

Loyola knew that many of his people derided his conversion, but he declared, ‘The rascals may kill me, but as long as I am breathing, they must go straight.’ The chief held his band accountable for their behavior, and until his death in 1846, the Pend d'Oreilles (Kalispels) followed his example, like it or not. He urged the band to hold onto its land, telling them ‘God gave us this land. We must keep it.’<sup>10</sup>

Clarence Campbell tells more about a chief's authority in the old days:

Baptist Big Smoke was a chief and my father-in-law. I learned from him because he was the last of the Kalispel chiefs. When Congress passed the Indian Reorganization Act in 1934, the Tribal Councils came in.

The chiefs used to punish those who needed it by whipping them, or making them lay on something rough, tie them down for a few hours.

This authority of the chief was not absolute. There was a Council held from time to time as the following indicates. The episode also shows a degree of decisiveness in the majority of Kalispels which has been rarely duplicated in other tribes on the matter in question. The year was 1845.

Toward the end of July, the Indians held a Council and unanimously agreed on a course of action in case anyone would bring liquor into the village or sell it to others.<sup>11</sup>

Father Hoecken wrote to Father DeSmet shortly after his arrival, in

praise of his new friends. "They manifest great love, obedience and respect for their chiefs . . . complaints, murmurings and backbiting were here unknown; blasphemy has never been uttered by an Indian; there are not even words in their language to express it."<sup>12</sup>

The first missionaries also observed other practices common among the mountain tribes in pre-Christian days: idol-worship, gambling and polygamy.<sup>13</sup>

However, at Albeni Falls, the first mission site, the autumn months of 1844 saw enthusiastic response to the Fathers who came to live among them:

On the advice of their priests, the Indians have organized themselves into working bands for the purpose of helping one another in manual labor. This is the plan of organization. In each band, an overseer is appointed who arranges the work and gives directions to the rest — where, when and how they must work. The overseer also presides at prayers which are said in common.<sup>14</sup>

Two months went swiftly by at Albeni Falls with preparations for the winter. And what winters along the Pend Oreille River! Clarence Campbell remarked that the winter of 1978-'79 brought weather that was forty degrees below zero, even in this day.

November saw a joyous meeting for Kalispels and the missionaries. Father DeSmet made a detour to visit them on his way home to St. Mary's from Europe.

'On the 6th (of November, 1844), Reverend Father Hoecken came to meet me, accompanied by several of the Kalispels of the Bay among whom I had proposed two years before to establish a mission.' Very soon thereafter, 'amidst volleys of musketry and the sounding of trumpets' he was triumphantly received at the Kalispel camp.<sup>15</sup>

Father Garraghan's history tells that the visit was short because Father DeSmet was anxious to return to the Flatheads before winter was upon them. Too late! When he set out by canoe . . . "the ice soon began in the river, making further navigation impossible, and he was forced to return to the Kalispel, with whom he spent the winter of 1844-1845."<sup>16</sup>

Still quoting Chittenden, Father Davis tells of the missionaries' camp. They . . . "spent that winter in a hut made of fir posts fresh cut in the woods, covered over with mats and bark. Here they instructed and baptised and taught catechism and prayers . . . the Indians, who had come from all directions to be near the fathers, had that season renounced the buffalo-hunt, a pleasure to which they were inordinately attached."<sup>17</sup>

Thus, the Kalispels, coming from their winter camps along the river, made many sacrifices to be near the new mission. In recognition of this, the Black Robes made the feast of Christmas a great day of celebration at Albeni Falls. The birthday of Christ was renewed in special church services. A banquet followed for all. Then there was a baptism ceremony for one hundred and

twenty-four new Christians. Three priests officiated at the service. Those Kalispels who had been baptised two years before, served as godfathers and godmothers for the new converts.<sup>18</sup>

Christmas Day, 1844, was in fact a glorious one throughout the Rocky Mountain area; similar religious events took place at St. Mary's and Sacred Heart Missions. Great indeed were the consolations of the Fathers and Brothers whose devoted labors God blessed with such wonderful results.<sup>19</sup>

With the coming of spring, Father DeSmet set out for St. Mary's and had the joy of helping to make the celebration of Easter something special for his beloved Flatheads. Joining them were hundreds of Upper Pend d'Oreilles from the beautiful valley below Flathead Lake. Their mission was attached to the Reduction at St. Mary's and served from there. Three hundred of the Montana Kalispels (Pend d'Oreilles) were baptised by Father DeSmet and his fellow Black Robes at this Easter celebration in honor of the Risen Christ.

### *THE REDUCTION OF ST. IGNATIUS BEGINS*

The ever-traveling, tireless Father DeSmet returned to the Kalispels in order to found their Reduction, amidst many consultations with priests and people. The chiefs agreed to begin again with buildings and the programs on the camas flats across the river from Usk, Washington. It seemed to be a larger and more desirable location for farming purposes than the camp at Albeni Falls.

With his customary enthusiasm, Father DeSmet was soon off again to Vancouver, Washington to get supplies for the St. Ignatius Reduction programs. There the Hudson's Bay Company officials were very generous with him, as were the friends in the Willamete Valley. However, it was July, 1845, before he made his way back to the camas prairies, heavily laden:

With the help of Brother McGean and two Indians, eleven horses heavily laden with plows, pick-axes, spades, scythes and carpenter tools had been brought safely from the Willamette.<sup>20</sup>

The members of the shopping party were surprised at the progress they saw at the Reduction of St. Ignatius. Priests and people had really been busy:

They had already put up fourteen log houses, besides a large barn, had the timber prepared for a church and had upwards of 300 acres in grain enclosed by a substantial fence. The whole village, men, women and children had worked most cheerfully — the women had learned to milk the cows and to churn, they had a few hogs and some domestic fowl. The number of Christians had doubled since Christmas, 1844.<sup>21</sup>

In a short time, Father DeSmet again left the Kalispels and their devoted missionaries with high hopes for the success of the Reduction of St. Ignatius. He was on his way to the Blackfeet at Fort Benton, Montana, with Father Point.

## *ENVIRONMENTAL REALITIES AND REDUCTION SUCCESS*

The St. Ignatius village experiences on the Pend Oreille River were proof that skills, many resources, and good will were not enough. These could not sustain the Paraguayan ideal of a permanent settlement without an adequate land base.

The beautiful meadow which lay below the mission hill was clay beneath a few inches of loam. The seeds rotted quickly and the soil itself was rapidly exhausted. Spring floods ruined crops year after year. The first winter of 1845-46 was extremely severe . . . The snow stayed until April, but at last it melted and in the spring of 1846, the dauntless Indians set to work again.<sup>22</sup>

Obviously, the gathering of Kalispels from several camps along the river called for an adequate food supply. The next winter of 1846 produced even more hardships:

Suffering that winter was great among the 500 tribesmen . . . Hunger was another serious problem . . . For decades the tribes concentrated their fall deer hunt in the low-lying hills that flanked the main village. In time these herds were so decimated that several year-end drives were exceedingly small . . .<sup>23</sup>

The hard-working Kalispels did not give up under the pressure of these hardships, but the next summer was again a season of floods. The crops were ruined on more than a hundred acres planted in grain. Finally, in the spring of 1847, a change for the better was realized.

Priest's Lake did indeed begin to rise that year, and with it, its outlet, Priest's River. The Indians had recourse to pray. Every Saturday, Mass was said and the litanies were chanted to secure the Virgin Mother's protection. Prayer had its answer and the mission fields were left undamaged by water . . . the Indians broke ground for a new field on the hillside near the village.<sup>24</sup>

And they did indeed have a crop. Actually, it was so productive that a barn was needed to store the grain . . . "in fifteen days the Indians had raised a barn more than a hundred feet in length and after a like interval of time, the roof was on."<sup>25</sup>

Everybody in the village was rejoicing. The famine had ended. It came time for the harvest.

All sorts of cutting instruments were made use of. Some unable to procure themselves a knife or something of the sort, pulled the grain up with much effort and fatigue. The Brother made himself a sort of wagon, segments from a big tree serving as wheels. He had hard work carrying the grain as fast as they cut it.

. . . At the chief's suggestion, the grain was threshed by the young men and winnowed by the women. In addition to bread, meat would likewise be in abundance as fifteen hundred dead deer had been brought in by the Indians.<sup>26</sup>

From the first year of the Reduction's existence, when Father DeSmet had brought the farming implements and supplies from Vancouver . . . "the Kalispels quickly demonstrated a facility for Euro-American technology. From that day to this, the Kalispel would increase their knowledge of western society, make Catholicism an important part of their lives, and yet retain much of their old culture."<sup>27</sup>

The number of missionaries increased after 1847. Father Gregory Mengarini, S.J., and Brother Francis Huybrechts, S.J., were at the Reduction when visited by Dr. George Suckley. He was a member of Governor Isaac Steven's exploring expedition in 1853. He tells of progress in the number and kinds of buildings, chiefly under the remarkable talents of Brother Huybrechts. Brother McGean was the farmer. Dr. Suckley states in his report:

They both worked hard in bringing the mission to its present state of perfection, building successively a wind-mill, blacksmith and carpenter's shop, barns, cow-sheds, etc., besides an excellent chapel in addition to a large dwelling house of hewn timber for the missionaries.<sup>28</sup>

The tribal members were a part of these developments and learned the trades from the Brothers. However, the scarcity of food and the intense cold continued to plague the resident village. The only answer was a change of location.

Father Hoecken wrote several times to Father Joset, the Superior who replaced Father DeSmet. He even wrote to the Superior General of the Jesuits, Father Roothaan. It was March 1849, and he told of their hardships. "While Hoecken wrote these lines, there were ten feet of snow on the ground and the past winter had been unusually severe."<sup>29</sup>

Only in 1853 did the Indians themselves lose heart and join Father Giorda in asking that St. Ignatius Reduction be moved to a milder climate and a place of more productive soil. They had in mind the Montana lands of the Upper Pend d'Oreilles. Finally Father Joset responded, "go and look for a better situation."<sup>30</sup>

Sometime during the spring (1854) Victor joined Chief Alexander . . . and together they searched for a new location . . . At last the selection was made in a verdant Valley of the Upper Pend Oreille tribe called Sienielem, a rendezvous for many tribes in years gone by.<sup>31</sup>

Chief Alexander led Father Menetrey and Brother McGean to the beautiful Valley below Flathead Lake, and they gave . . . "a favorable

report of its fertility and suitability.”<sup>32</sup>

### *THE REMOVAL TO MONTANA*

The preparation to move was elaborate, for after the harvest, Brother Huysbrecht made five large barges to carry the produce. The Upper Pend d’Oreilles came from Montana to help with 100 pack horses. Father Joset sent \$2,000 for the new establishment.

At the last moment, the Kalispels did not want to go, but the missionaries encouraged them to move. All but two or three families finally loaded their possessions on horses. “By land and water then, in August and September 1854, came the Lower Kalispels to the Mission Valley.”<sup>33</sup>

Painful as it was to leave their beloved Father Hoecken, the Kalispels felt uncomfortable with the multiplicity of tribes that swelled to over one thousand the population of the new mission. Chief Victor declared, “we found that we could not keep our autonomy.” Not all the Kalispel returned to the ancient holdings . . . Yet those Lower Kalispel who did once more cross the Rockies held forever more the sovereignty of the Kalispel name and lands.<sup>34</sup>

Father Hoecken reported to Father DeSmet in St. Louis:

In a few weeks we had erected several frame buildings, a chapel, two houses, carpenter’s and blacksmith’s shops; wigwams had sprung up at the same time all in considerable numbers, and morning and evening you might still have heard the sound of the axe and the hammer, and have seen newcomers rudely putting together lodges.<sup>35</sup>

The Indians who were erecting their tepees were . . . “Kootenais, Pend d’Oreilles, Flatheads and Mountain Kalispels who had arrived in succession . . . when they heard of the arrival of the long-desired Black-gown, made this place their permanent residence. All these Indians have manifested the best disposition . . . I have had the happiness to baptize, before Christmas and Easter, upwards of 150 adults of the Kootenai tribe . . . who told me that ever since you had been among them . . . they had abandoned the practice of gambling and other vices, and cherished the hope of being instructed one day in the religion of the Great Spirit.”<sup>36</sup>

So it was that the spirit and programs of the Reduction lived on, even though the new settlement came to be known as St. Ignatius Mission. Father Davis describes the valley in which it is located, called Mission Valley today. The main range of the Rocky Mountains towers above the mission to the east. To the north, about forty miles away, is the famous Flathead Lake, some forty miles in length and ten in width.

Indeed, this charming valley promised to the Fathers an opportunity to mold a Reduction in the North American Rockies,

far from the corrupting and degenerating influence of the whites on Indian physical and moral wellbeing. The joy and anticipation of the Fathers and Brothers in their new home in Mission Valley is quite understandable.<sup>37</sup>

Some of this joy and anticipation is reflected in Father Hoecken's letter to Father DeSmet.

Having set out from the Kalispel Mission on 28th August 1854, I arrived at the place designated on the 24th of September and found it such as it has been represented . . . I shall never forget the emotions of hope and fear that filled my heart, when, for the first time, I celebrated Mass in this lonely spot, in the open air, in the presence of a numerous band of Kalispels, who looked up to me, under God for their temporal and spiritual needs in this new home. The place was utterly uninhabited . . . ”<sup>38</sup>

As we have seen, this isolation was not for long when the tribes of the surrounding areas heard on “the Moccasin Grapevine” that the Black Robes had come to the Valley to stay.

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#### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Gilbert J. Garraghan, S.J., Ph.D., Research Professor of History. Loyola University, Chicago. *The Jesuits of the Middle United States* in 3 volumes. New York: America Press, 1938, Vol. II, p. 304.

<sup>2</sup>Robert C. Carriker. *The Kalispel People*. Phoenix: Indian Tribal Series, 1973, p. 35. This history, sponsored by the Kalispel Tribe when Louis Andrews was Chairman of the Tribe, was contributed by Clarence Campbell. It was a limited edition.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>5</sup>Garraghan, *op. cit.*, pp. 306-307, and quoting from Chittenden, *DeSmet*, Vol. I, p. 347.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 304.

<sup>7</sup>Carriker, *op. cit.*, pp. 21-22.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>9</sup>Fahey, *op. cit.*, p. 81, quoting from manuscripts written by Father Hoecken and Father Joset, in the Jesuit Archives, Gonzaga University, Spokane, Washington.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup>Donnelly, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

<sup>12</sup>Bischoff, *op. cit.*, p. 51, quoting from DeSmet's report to Father Verhaegen, July 26, 1846, printed in DeSmet, *Oregon Missions*, p. 248.

<sup>13</sup>Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

<sup>14</sup>Donnelly, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 10, quoting from Chittenden, *DeSmet*, Vol. II, pp. 456-7.



- <sup>16</sup>Garraghan, *op. cit.*, p. 305, quoting from Chittenden, *Ibid.*, p. 468.
- <sup>17</sup>Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 11, quoting Chittenden, p. 468.
- <sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.
- <sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 13.
- <sup>21</sup>Davis, *Ibid.*, p. 13, quoting Chittenden, *DeSmet*, Vol. II, p. 471.
- <sup>22</sup>Bischoff, *op. cit.*, pp. 54-55.
- <sup>23</sup>Carriker, *op. cit.*, pp. 25-26.
- <sup>24</sup>Garraghan, *op. cit.*, p. 307.
- <sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 308.
- <sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>27</sup>Carriker, *op. cit.*, pp. 28-29.
- <sup>28</sup>Garraghan, p. 310, quoting from Dr. Suckley's Government Report presented by Governor Stevens, U.S. 33 Cong. 1st Sess. House Executive Document, No. 129, p. 278.
- <sup>29</sup>Rev. William I. Davis, S.J., *A History of St. Ignatius Mission*. Spokane: C. W. Hill Printing Co., 1954, p. 19.
- <sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, quoting from Father Joset's manuscripts in the Jesuit Archives, Gonzaga University, Spokane.
- <sup>31</sup>Carriker, *op. cit.*, pp. 37-38.
- <sup>32</sup>Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 19.
- <sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 20.
- <sup>34</sup>Carriker, *op. cit.*, pp. 39-40.
- <sup>35</sup>Garraghan, *op. cit.*, p. 312, quoting from Chittenden and Richardson, *DeSmet*, Vol. 4, p. 1233.
- <sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>37</sup>Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 21.
- <sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 721, quoting Chittenden and Richardson, *DeSmet*, Vol. 4, p. 1232.

## Chapter 7

### SECOND SITE, ST. IGNATIUS MISSION 1854 AMONG THE KALISPEL W. MONTANA



*St. Ignatius Mission  
1854*

*from Father Point's drawing, p. 312, II, Garraghan's Jesuits of the Middle United States, 1938.*

*Sketch by Clarence Campbell.*

## *Chapter 7*

### *The Rock That is St. Ignatius Mission*

The move of the Kalispels and their Black Robes in 1854 to the Valley of the Upper Pend d'Oreilles in Western Montana had unexpected results. Within a year, the mission settlement had proven to be an anchor for many tribes. They had come eagerly to St. Ignatius. Most of them remained permanent residents in order to be near the Black Robes, to worship with them, and to listen to their teachings. They also became interested in the projects of a Reduction.

The evidence of Indian unity, progress and peace in the Mission under the shadow of the Continental Divide, impressed an important government representative. Washington's Governor Isaac Stevens came to visit them during the first year of the Reduction's establishment. He was making a survey for a transcontinental railroad.

After the gold rush to California (1849), prospects for a transcontinental railroad resulted in the Stevens' survey of 1855. The railroad was not then, but Lieutenant John Mullen constructed a wagon road from Ft. Benton, head of the steamboat traffic on the Upper Missouri, to Walla Walla, and over this road came pack trains of mules and camels, as well as pony express riders, stage coaches and freighters.<sup>1</sup>

#### *THE TREATY AND A RESERVATION*

The establishment of the St. Ignatius Reduction in the mountain wilderness influenced Governor Stevens in setting aside what was to become the Flathead Reservation.

In July of 1855, Governor Stevens, in his capacity as ex officio Federal Superintendent of Indian Affairs, called the Flatheads, the Pend d'Oreilles, and the Kootenai to meet in Council six miles below Hellgate (near Missoula, Montana).<sup>2</sup>

Many hundreds of men and chiefs responded to the call. "Victor and the other headmen believed that the purpose of the Council was to assist the Flatheads in their troubles with the Blackfeet." However, the Governor's actual plan was to place all three tribes on one reservation.

The Indians were to transfer to the Great Father in Washington all their lands, 23,000 square miles . . . In return, the whites offered a single reservation of only 2,000 square miles which would accommodate not only these tribes, but eventually, such peoples as

the Kalispels and the Coeur d'Alenes.<sup>3</sup>

In return, there were many promises made to the assembled chiefs by the Government officials.

By way of compensation, the Indians were guaranteed in perpetuity the Jocko Reserve lands (eventually the Flathead Reservation) for the exclusive use and benefit of said confederated tribes . . . nor shall any white man, excepting those in the employment of the Indian Department, be permitted to reside upon the said reservation without the permission of the confederated tribes, and the superintendent and agent.<sup>4</sup>

Subsistence benefits, such as food and clothing, were to be supplied by the Government . . . “plus the sum of one hundred and twenty thousand dollars” for the people’s benefit. An annual salary, house and lands were promised to the chiefs of the Tribes. The treaty provided that a hospital be built with a resident physician.<sup>5</sup>

Schools were also mentioned in Article 5 of the Hell Gate Treaty. . . . “an agricultural and industrial school . . . necessary buildings will be erected with furniture, books and stationery . . . and to employ a suitable instructor, or instructors.”<sup>6</sup>

None of these benefits were forthcoming until many years later. The Congress and the President had to endorse the Treaty conditions, and in that epoch, the gathering storm of the Civil War preoccupied the officials in Washington, D.C.

At the Council with Governor Stevens, a source of misunderstanding and future trouble involved the Flatheads:

The Reservation was to center upon one of two valleys; the Bitterroot (home of the Flatheads) . . . or the Mission Valley (home of the Pend d'Oreilles and Kootenai).<sup>7</sup>

Eventually, the area north of Missoula, rather than the Bitterroot Valley was designated for the new Reservation, to be called the Jocko Reservation. The confederated tribes . . . “were directed to move there ‘within one year.’ ”<sup>8</sup>

According to Father Bischoff’s interpretation . . . “this clause was certainly conditional, a fact the Indians did not seem to understand. Years later, Charlot, the great chief of the Flatheads, was to stand firmly on what he thought had been agreed by the ‘Great White Father’ in Washington.”<sup>9</sup>

The misunderstanding with the Flatheads was recently reviewed by the present Secretary of the Affiliated Tribes, Fred Houle, Jr. The tribal name recently adopted is “The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation.”

The tribes to eventually become members of the Confederacy made by the Government Treaty of 1855 were four. The Lower Pend

d'Oreilles and the Kalispels, who made their homelands in Camas Prairie and St. Ignatius, were the first two. They shared hunting grounds to the north with the Kootenai who were the third tribe involved. The Salish, the fourth major tribe to become Treaty participants, were removed from their homelands after a long and bitter struggle.

Mr. Houle added some further information about the meaning of "Salish." He stated that the tribe's Cultural Committee, led by Clarence Woodcock, had been interviewing the tribal elders on this matter:

Peter Beaverhead told us that at one time, the Flatheads, Salish, Kalispel, Spokane, Coeur d'Alene, Sushawap, and Colville Indians were all one tribe speaking the same language. The tribes split up several hundred years ago because food was becoming hard to gather as one big tribe. They then became several different tribes, each with a little different language. In the immediate vicinity of today's Flathead Reservation lived three main tribes, according to Moses Chouteau . . . The Pend d'Oreilles, the Kootenai, and a band of Tunaxen.<sup>10</sup>

Returning to the Hell Gate Treaty subject: For the time being, the tribes seemed agreeable, and the chiefs signed the document.

### *THE FIFTIES AND THE INVASION OF GOLD SEEKERS*

Trouble was not long in coming. The Indians did not violate the Treaty provisions. The gold seekers were the guilty ones, pouring into Montana after 1855.

Discoveries of gold between 1857 and 1863 produced a gold rush to this region. Bannack . . . Virginia City, Helena soon became populous communities. Missoula, Deer Lodge, Bozeman . . . became supply depots for mining communities.<sup>11</sup>

The sheltered tribes of Mission Valley felt the impact more directly, especially the Kootenai who were closest to the Canadian border. There was a gold strike made in British Columbia.

An article in the Encyclopedia about Washington State history develops the consequences:

With the discovery of gold in Eastern Washington, a great increase in population followed, and the Indians, becoming alarmed for their hunting grounds, resolved to exterminate the whites. This led to the Indian Wars of 1855-1856, followed by still further troubles with the Indians in 1857, at the time of the rush to the gold fields of British Columbia.<sup>12</sup>



*Encampment at St. Ignatius for  
church holy days — 1910*

Father DeSmet in St. Louis was called on by the Government to act as peacemaker among the tribes. Between 1850 and 1860, he traveled from the east to the west coast, a chaplain to General William Harney. He interviewed top government officials in Washington, D.C., including President Lincoln who listened sympathetically to the problems of the Indians. However, the Civil War was the center of government attention at this time.

The dilemma of the Indian tribes across the country was appalling to Father DeSmet. He saw that the game was disappearing with the westward movement of settlers, for it is said that the buffalo were disturbed by cowbells and swam across the Mississippi to escape the sound. He argued in Washington for more Federal reservations of Indian lands to insure the survival of his friends. He knew that the plan of the Reductions had succeeded in the mountains with the hunting tribes.

Before him, in the 1830's, another scientific observer, Alexis De Toqueville from France, feared for the survival of Native Americans. He had come to the United States to observe the successful outcome of the American Revolution. He traveled through many states in his research.

Late in 1831, he tells in his famous book, *Democracy in America*, that he stood upon the eastern bank of the Mississippi River. He watched a band of Choctaw Indians in their canoes cross the great river.

They had left their country, and were endeavoring to gain the right bank of the Mississippi, where they hope to find an asylum which had been promised them by the American government. It was then the middle of winter. . .<sup>13</sup>

He wrote Chapter XVIII on “The Present and Probable Future Condition of the Three Races Which Inhabit the Territory of the United States.” In this chapter the white man, the black man, and the Native Americans are discussed. The following is a summary of his conversations about the Indian race:

I believe that the Indian nations of North America are doomed to perish; and that whenever the Europeans shall be established on the shores of the Pacific Ocean, that race of men will be no more.<sup>14</sup>

This prediction of the Indians’ disappearance was accepted in his day. His translator, Henry Reeve, has a note in this regard. “In 1870 there remained but 25,731 Indians in the whole territory of the Union.”<sup>15</sup> Most authorities agree that the continent once supported about 1,000,000 native people.

In view of the Reduction principles and the success of the Mountain Indians as farmers, Father DeSmet would have agreed with DeToqueville’s conviction about the necessity of agricultural development for the remaining tribes if they were to survive at all. The French social scientist speaks of the survival of South American Indians in their encounter with the Spaniards nearly two centuries before the gold rush in the West.

If the Indian Tribes had not been tillers of the ground at the time of the arrival of the Europeans, they would unquestionably have been destroyed in South, as well as in North America.<sup>16</sup>

#### *FATHER DeSMET SAVES THE PEACE FOR ALL*

In 1858, DeSmet tried to resign as chaplain to General Harney, but he wrote in September, “The Secretary of War did not see fit to accept my resignation.”<sup>17</sup> He read reports which stated that a general uprising was taking place involving — “the Palooses, Yakimas, Skoyyelpes, Okanagans, Spokanes, Coeur d’Alenes, Kalispels, Kootenai and Flatheads.”<sup>18</sup>

Father DeSmet was angry. He knew causes of the uprising were justified by Indian desperation and by the white men’s violation of treaties. He wrote to his superiors:

The Federal government failed to enforce the law or to abide by its treaties, and when the Indians objected, the Army was sent. No thought was given to punishing the offending whites who were responsible for starting the revolt. The Indians were to be punished for defending their own homes, for attempting to preserve the resources that were legally theirs and which they must have to survive.<sup>19</sup>

He traveled to the West soon after he read the report. General Harney requested that he travel with his party by steamer to the West Coast. In this way, Father DeSmet had an opportunity to observe the increase in white population.

Settlers were still pouring into the Oregon country. The juggernaut of civilization could not be stopped, nor could it be made to change course. As Father DeSmet understood his role, he had only a single mission to perform, and that was to convince the Indians of the futility of fighting.<sup>20</sup>

He left the Coast then on his peace mission to the tribes, traveling toward the mountains on horseback, visiting the camps of many tribes.

In camp after camp, DeSmet expounded his theme: Violence would only make the situation worse. Violence would only bring death and destruction, suffering and hunger.<sup>21</sup>

It was winter when he arrived among the Coeur d'Alenes so he made his headquarters at Sacred Heart Mission with his old friends. He sent out word to the Indian tribes of his presence in Idaho.

Leaders of the revolt soon came in to talk with him and often the fire in his hearth burned through the night while a smoke was in session. The masses he celebrated were crowded . . . the Black Robes had followed well the spiritual trails he had broken.<sup>22</sup>

His reasoning with the chiefs had its effect after many of these meetings. Father DeSmet told General Harney in a letter that he believed the revolt had been broken, not so much by the military forces as by the good sense of the Indian leaders.<sup>23</sup>

Father DeSmet suggested to the General that he bring the chiefs to Vancouver to pay their respects to him. The General replied cordially. He would be glad to see them early in the spring and explain the intentions of the Government as far as they were concerned. Their expenses would be paid. The chiefs agreed that it be arranged that they meet Father DeSmet at St. Ignatius Reduction and start for Vancouver from there.

The chiefs included Alexander of the Pend d'Oreilles, Victor of the Kalispels, Adolphus and Francis Saxa (Iroquois son of Old Ignace), chiefs of the Flatheads; Chiefs Denis of the Colvilles, Andrew and Bonaventure of the Coeur d'Alenes, Kamiakin of the Yakimas, and Garry of the Spokanes.<sup>24</sup>

A month was required by Father DeSmet and his party of leaders to follow the river "road" down the Columbia to Vancouver. It was dangerous. All the rivers were at flood stage because of the spring time's heavy snows.

On May 18, the group assembled with General Harney and representatives of the Indian Department . . . The entire conference,



Father DeSmet thought, 'produced most happy results on both sides.'

This was a gross understatement. The Conference brought peace to the northwest and to him must be given the credit.<sup>25</sup>

Father DeSmet arranged that the Indians have an opportunity to visit the cities of Oregon and Washington and understand, for the first time, the meaning of the white man's industrial civilization. In time, Father DeSmet returned with them to the mountains after resigning from his Army position. The resignation was accepted. He then traveled on to St. Louis once more. Later, in the 1860's, he would be peacemaker for the Government on the Plains, among the Sioux who were on the warpath.

A modern-day Sioux, Francis Hairy Chin, had a comment to make about Father DeSmet at an Indian meeting in South Dakota. He attended from his reservation at Fort Yates in North Dakota. Francis is a leader of his tribe and a strong Catholic believer. He said in the speech he made, "Father DeSmet, by his words and actions among the Indians, told them: 'We came not to destroy but to fulfill' "<sup>26</sup>

#### *AFTER THE TREATY OF 1855*

Three years after the foundation of St. Ignatius Reduction, within the boundaries of the New Flathead Reservation, all was progressing well. Wrote Father Hoecken to Father DeSmet, whose headquarters were in St. Louis:

Our Indians here are doing well. Last spring we sowed about fifty bushels of wheat, and planted a quantity of potatoes, cabbages and turnips. God has graciously blessed our labors and our fields. Here, all generally like agriculture.

We give the seed gratis to everybody. Our plows and our tools are also free to be used by them. We even lend our horses and our oxen to the poorest among the Indians, and we grind all their grain gratuitously . . . Twelve very poor habitations are the beginning of our town called St. Ignatius.<sup>27</sup>

The "habitations" were the first attempts of the Valley Indians to build cabins, under the instruction of the Jesuit Brothers. Most of the Indian residents had their own comfortable teepees. Father Hoecken lists the tribes represented at St. Ignatius in 1857: Flatheads, Kalispels, Pend d'Oreilles, Spokane, Nez Perces, Kootenai, Coeur d'Alenes, Kettle Falls Indians (Colvilles), some Blackfeet. He added,

There are some Iroquois: Old Ignatius, (who was once the young Ignace who guided Father DeSmet) is settled here, as well as the family of Iroquois Peter . . . All, though of different nations, live together like brethren and in perfect harmony. They have, like the primitive Christians, but one heart and mind."<sup>28</sup>

It is an interesting question: Could Iroquois Peter have been Peter Gaucher, the partner of young Ignace when the Flatheads sent their fourth delegation to St. Louis for Black Robes? When the two men met with Bishop Rosati, they received a promise . . . “that a priest, possibly two, would be sent to their tribe in the spring of 1840 . . . Although it was midwinter, Peter Gaucher left at once, alone, on the long journey home to give his people the good news.”<sup>29</sup>

Mr. Terrell states in a footnote:

Pierre Gaucher’s journey from St. Louis to the Flathead country was one of the most remarkable in western history. Traveling alone on foot he crossed the plains and mountains during the winter, reaching the Bitterroot Valley, his home, in April 1840. His word that a Black Robe was, at last, without doubt, coming out was received by the Flatheads with great excitement and joy.<sup>30</sup>

Father Hoecken’s letter mentions that a few Americans were settled near St. Ignatius in 1857. Also, although American officials protested the British presence in the Territories, a Hudson’s Bay Company Trading Post still operated a few miles north of the Mission. It was built in 1846 and was called Fort Connah. Angus McDonald was Chief Factor. The Post closed in 1871.<sup>31</sup>

There were six Jesuits on the staff at St. Ignatius Mission in 1857. They received word that a cargo of boxes for the Mission had been delivered up the Missouri River from St. Louis and was at Fort Benton. One of the Jesuits, Father Joseph Menetry, S.J., volunteered to go for the unexpected shipment: “Father Menetry, of his own free will, went to Fort Benton with a pair of horses (and a wagon!) . . . The distance by the great road (Mullan Road) is 294 miles.”<sup>32</sup>

Upon his return with the cargo sent by Father DeSmet, the joy at St. Ignatius was great indeed.

Brother Joseph was beside himself with gladness when his eyes fell on the little packages of seeds, the files, scissors and other similar objects . . . accept our thanks for the piece of broadcloth you sent us; by this favor we continue to be *Black Robes* . . . It is the first donation sent into these mountains, at least since I have been here.<sup>33</sup>

The objects shipped in April did not arrive until the month of October.

By 1857, there was a Government Agent on the new Reservation, but he was without funds to fulfill the Treaty promises to the Tribes, or compensate the missionaries for *their* fulfillment of many agreements: teaching the crafts, giving medicine to the sick, even attempting to open a school. Lack of teachers closed the school in a short time. Father Hoecken wrote in his report: “Mr. R. H. Lansdale, agent of the Government, a very just and upright man, has assumed his functions . . . a few miles from here. We gave him all the assistance of which we were capable.”<sup>34</sup>

When Father DeSmet in 1863 came to Montana to see things for himself,

he was encouraged.

On the 5th of September, I reached the Mission of St. Ignatius among the Flatheads and Pend d'Oreilles. A fine frame church, ninety by forty feet, had been erected here. I found the Mission



*Johnny Couture, Kootenai Tribe, comes for the holy day from the Flathead Lake's western shore. He was Mary Left Hand's grandfather.*

prosperous and flourishing.

The worthy and zealous Father Grassi, Superior of this Mission, has had all the materials prepared for the construction of a hospital and school buildings. He was, however, at a loss where to find nuns to conduct these new establishments — still he continued his work, trusting to the good providence of the Lord.<sup>35</sup>

### *SECURING TEACHERS FOR ST. IGNATIUS*

Father DeSmet encouraged Father Grassi in his rather unrealistic ambitions. Where were the religious Sisters prepared for the mountain wilderness, its isolation and poverty, the cold winter of Montana? The much-traveled missionary Father DeSmet, thought he had met some in Vancouver, Washington, during 1858.

The Sisters he had in mind had arrived there in 1856 at the call of Bishop Augustin-Magloire Blanchet, of the Diocese of Nisqually. The Bishop's headquarters were near Fort Vancouver. He had wanted the Sisters of Charity of Providence from Montreal for the variety of good works that they were performing in Quebec.

After talking to Father Grassi, Father DeSmet interviewed the Sisters in Vancouver before returning home. He discussed with them the need for teachers at the school of St. Ignatius Mission. Unfortunately, their Superior, Mother Joseph of the Sacred Heart, was in Montreal.

It was Father DeSmet's suggestion that the Vancouver Sisters write to her and say, "The Superior of the Mountain Missions wishes to entrust the Sisters of Providence with a school for little Indian girls"<sup>36</sup>

The Sister who responded with a letter to her Superior was Sister Blandine. She had been waiting eight years to teach the little Indians.

My very dear Mother, we have just been honored by a visit from Father DeSmet. He told us that the Sisters were needed for the Flatheads. He intends to write to our Superior General so that his good Indians, as he calls them, may have the same privileges as the whites. He told the most touching and beautiful anecdotes about the people . . .<sup>37</sup>

Sometime later, Father Grassi received the following letter from Father DeSmet:

On my return to St. Louis, I approached by letter, the worthy Sisters of Charity of the Maison de la Providence at Montreal, Canada. Their Superior-General has generously granted my request; she answers me 'that she grants most willingly this first colony of Sisters for the Mission of St. Ignatius, and she will do as much for other missions where there may be the need for sisters.'<sup>38</sup>

Actually, the Providence Institute was only twenty years old, having been

officially recognized in 1843 by Monsignor Ignace Bourget, Bishop of Montreal, who gave the Sisters their spiritual formation. The Sisters of Vancouver had been taught by their foundress, Mother Emilie Gamelin, how to care for the sick and the elderly, teach the orphan girls of Montreal and perform other good works.

Out West, the pace was set by Mother Joseph of the Sacred Heart (Joseph du Sacré Coeur). She opened Providence Academy at Vancouver in 1856 and St. Joseph Hospital, with only four beds, in 1858.

For 46 years from 1856 when she landed in Vancouver, Washington, to 1902 — Mother Joseph responded to the pleas of both Catholic, and non-Catholics to establish schools and health-care facilities throughout the Northwest. And Mother Joseph was architect, construction supervisor and chief fund raiser for many of the projects she instigated.<sup>39</sup>

Of Mother Joseph's accomplishments in building eight schools and fourteen hospitals in the Pacific Northwest, there were in addition to these, two schools staffed by her Sisters on Indian Reservations: St. Ignatius, Montana and Tulalip, Washington.<sup>40</sup>

Bishop Blanchet, since it was his church territory, willingly encouraged a Sisters' school at St. Ignatius. When Father DeSmet consulted with him at Vancouver, Bishop Blanchet corresponded with the Office of Bishop Bourget, in a letter dated March, 1864. He expressed joy ". . . when I heard that the Community of Sisters of Providence . . . would prepare, for the spring, a group of Sisters as numerous as possible."<sup>41</sup>

Mother Joseph returned from her visit to Montreal in July, 1864. She brought with her to Vancouver . . . "eleven daughters of Mother Gamelin . . . a part of this contingent . . . was destined to teach the Indian children."<sup>42</sup>

The Sisters of Vancouver welcomed the new recruits joyfully. They were particularly interested in the first Indian missionaries of the Institute. They neglected but important part of the original Reduction Plan. At last the Mountain Indians were to have a program of development for their women and girls.

The Sisters of Vancouver welcomed the new recruits joyfully. They were particularly interested in the first Indian missionaries of the Institute. They heard in excited French about their tumbles from the mules who carried them across the Isthmus of Panama. They met the leader of the group destined for Montana, Sister Mary of the Infant Jesus (Marie de l'Enfant Jésus), 37 years of age. She had spent a week in prayer at Montreal to help her decide about volunteering for the Mission. The two others, Sister Mary Edward (Marie Edouard), 32 years old, and Sister Remi, 18 years, were looking forward to the adventure for God and his people.

Mother Joseph reported to Monsignor Bourget, Bishop of Montreal, as follows:

Father Giorda, Jesuit Superior of the Jesuit Missions in the

Rocky Mountains of Montana, came to see us on August 30th. His visit meant the departure of our Sisters. In fact, they left us on September 12th. They spent two days in Walla Walla where they met Father Giorda who had gone ahead to complete his preparations for the overland journey. Our dear Sister Paul Miki joined the caravan there . . . as those poor nuns had several hundreds of miles to travel on horseback, they wanted to practice that new method of travel altogether strange to them. It was amusing to see them rigged out in garments we had made to protect them from the cold and the rain. They had their blankets for beds and their carpet bags for pillows.<sup>43</sup>

### *A MONTH ON HORSEBACK TO MISSION VALLEY*

Sister Paul Miki, who had been stationed at the new school in Walla Walla, was 21 years of age.<sup>44</sup> She left with the other Sisters and the large party on September 17th for the mountains: Father Giorda, Rev. Gregory Gazzoli, S.J., and Rev. Francis Kuppens, S.J.; plus . . . “two able Irishmen to drive the baggage wagon containing tents, portable chapel, trunks, provisions . . . A man for emergencies, seen or unforeseen. Nine horses carried the party.”<sup>45</sup>

The “portable altar” meant the necessary articles so that the Fathers could say Mass every day for the Sisters. Pitching the tent and other elements of “making camp” were new to them. Happily, French gaiety and laughter rescued the ladies from too much culture shock.<sup>46</sup>

The party traveled twenty miles the second day, but then the troubles began. The horses wandered away during the night. When they were recovered, and it was time to start the ride, Sister Paul Miki was kicked in the ribs by one of the horses as she tried to mount another one. She rode twenty miles that day. It was Sister Mary Edward’s turn to be hurt next, so she elected to ride in the wagon.

After a ferry ride across the river in the Spokane country, their next method of transportation was a canoe for sixty miles on the Coeur d’Alene Lake. It was dangerous when a wind arose, for the canoe was overloaded with eight people and all the baggage, but the hand of the Lord was with them. Finally, the majestic buildings of the famous Cataldo Mission were sighted when they paddled up a river. The Coeur d’Alene Indians were lined along the bank to shake hands with the Lady Black Robes. Among the greeters was a family from St. Ignatius Mission: Joseph and Adelaide, and their two sons, Romaine and Baptiste. Adelaide proved to be a blessing for the Sisters, teaching them many things about wilderness travel and preventing mishaps. Not so the youngest boy. He had a way of getting behind the Sisters’ horses to give them a whack if he thought they were too slow. The Chronicles give praise to Adelaide and her family, their first Indian friends: “They were brave, gentle people and gave us the best care. Even after we reached the Mission, Adelaide never missed coming each morning to ask if we needed water or other supplies.”

The really frightening part of the trip out of Washington and into Idaho began after the Sisters and their guides left Sacred Heart Mission at Cataldo.

The mountain climbing really began up the steep trail to a point known today by the name, Lookout Pass. The descent then was not difficult as the ascent until it came time to travel through Fourth of July Canyon. Perhaps even worse than the steep trails for the Canadians who had known only the flatlands of Quebec Province were the streams to be forded on their reluctant horses. They had to cross a stream 26 times in one day. The party was now in Montana, descending the eastern side of the Bitterroot Mountains.

Every evening Father Giorda sought to strengthen the Sisters' courage with prayer and Biblical meditations on the sorrows of Mary when she endured the early travels with her son Jesus. He reminded them of how she shared his Way of the Cross.

At long last they came to the level places of the Frenchtown Valley where they had the joy of encountering French farmers. One of these, Louis Brown, welcomed the whole party to his home for food and rest. The Sisters met his two daughters, Liza who was 14 and Emily, 12. Within a month or two, they were to become the first boarder pupils at the Sisters' school in St. Ignatius. It was their father who had been of great assistance to Father Point when he first opened the Reduction of the Sacred Heart on the St. Joe River. Father Point baptised their mother, but research has not revealed the name of her tribe.

Leaving Frenchtown and Missoula, the travelers had turned north to the Flathead Reservation. On October 17th, they arrived at the Jocko Agency near what is today called the town of Arlee. They were not warmly received by the Indian agent at the agency. In fact, Father Giorda had to ask if they might have some food for lunch.

Then they pushed on to St. Ignatius Mission and arrived there in the evening. Somehow, the "moccasin telegraph" had alerted the people of the Mission. The Indians were all gathered at the little cabin which had been prepared for the Sisters. When the weary travelers dismounted, the people crowded around them to shake hands, and, as the Chronicles expressed it, ". . . wish us well in our new work."<sup>47</sup>

The people then escorted the Sisters to the big wooden church not far from the little cabin. The priests were assembled to offer prayers of Thanksgiving for a safe arrival. The party had traveled 700 miles from Vancouver, 400 miles of the journey on horseback. In all, the trip required five weeks. By October 17th, many nights must have been cold in the mountains. However, the Sisters forgot the hardships and the fear in the warmth of their welcome to the beautiful Mission Valley, their new home.

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#### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>"Montana," *The Encyclopedia Americana*, Vol. XIX, New York: Americana Corporation, 1957, p. 394.

<sup>2</sup>Evans, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 136.

<sup>4</sup>Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 24-25.

<sup>7</sup>Evans, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

<sup>8</sup>Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

<sup>9</sup>Bischoff, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

<sup>10</sup>Letter of June 20, 1979, addressed to the writer by Fred Houle, Jr. from the new Tribal Headquarters on the Flathead Reservation at Pablo, Montana.

<sup>11</sup>The Encyclopedia Americana, *op. cit.*, p. 394.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, article on Washington State, Vol. XXVII, p. 761 b.

<sup>13</sup>Alexis DeTocqueville (1805-1859), *Democracy in America*, Vol. I, Revised Edition. Translated by Henry Reeve. New York: The Cooperative Publication Society, 1900., p. 317.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 347.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 360.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, footnote on p. 359.

<sup>17</sup>John Upton Terrell, *Black Robe: The Life of Pierre-Jean DeSmet, Missionary, Explorer and Pioneer*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1964, p. 295.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 298.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 300.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 301.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 302-303.

<sup>25</sup>Terrell, *op. cit.*, p. 304.

<sup>26</sup>Conversation with Noel Campbell, Coeur d'Alene, a participant at the meeting. His visit to Spokane was in March, 1978.

<sup>27</sup>Chittenden and Richardson, *op. cit.*, Vol. 4, p. 1241.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 1246-1247.

<sup>29</sup>Terrell, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup>This information is from a bulletin recently released by a newly organized Fort Connah Restoration Society, St. Ignatius, Montana. A modern descendant of Angus, Walter McDonald, is Chairman of the Board of Directors.

<sup>32</sup>Chittenden, *op. cit.*, p. 1242.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 1243-1244.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 1241.

<sup>35</sup>Chittenden, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 796.

<sup>36</sup>Mother Marie Antoinette, *The Institute of Providence: History of the Daughters of Charity, Servants of the Poor; Known as Sisters of Providence*. Montreal: Providence Mother House, 1949, Vol. V., pp. 185-186.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 186.



<sup>38</sup>Chittenden, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 796.

<sup>39</sup>From a recent publication by the Sisters of Providence in Seattle, *The Good Work — Mother Joseph*. It tells about Washington State Legislature's Senate Bill, 2431, April 1977, which nominated Mother Joseph for Statuary Hall in the Capitol, Washington, D.C. The bill was passed and signed by Governor Dixie Lee Ray.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup>A copy of Bishop Blanchet's letter was graciously sent to the writer by Miss Monique Montbrand, Archivist for the Archdiocese of Montreal.

<sup>42</sup>Mother Marie Antoinette, *op. cit.*, pp. 186-187.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 197. The Sisters had to learn how to ride sidesaddle, the customary fashion for women of the times.

<sup>44</sup>The ages of the Sisters destined for Montana were furnished by the Archivist Sister Jeannette Frenette, S.P. at the Providence Archives, Grenet St., Montreal.

<sup>45</sup>Mother Marie Antoinette, *op. cit.*, pp. 187-188.

<sup>46</sup>The remainder of this Chapter has been taken from "The Chronicles of Holy Family School, St. Ignatius, Montana — 1864 to 1920" written by the Sisters as a yearly report to Superiors, courtesy of the Provincial Archives, Sisters of Providence, Spokane, Washington.

<sup>47</sup>*Chronicles of Holy Family School, St. Ignatius, Montana — 1864 to 1920*. Courtesy of Provincial Archives, Sisters of Providence, Spokane, Washington.

## Chapter 8



*Indian Girls' School and Parterre in front of Boys' School., St. Ignatius Mission.*

## *Chapter 8*

### *The Completed Plan at St. Ignatius*

*1864-1870*

Unknown to the Sisters, who arrived at St. Ignatius Mission to open a school, they were a symbol of fulfillment. They had never heard of the Paraguayan Reductions. They did not know that a major part of this plan for wilderness tribes was the development of native women and girls, their training in crafts and home nursing.

The Sisters only knew of Father DeSmet by name. They were not aware that he had chosen the Charity Sisters of Montreal instead of others because he knew the type of work they did. It had prepared them for education of native girls in many directions. He was also aware that the Canadian Sisters were conditioned to very cold weather. They were equipped physically and emotionally for the hardships of wilderness-living in the mountains.

The new teachers brought west with them their original name, Sisters of Charity, for they followed the principles of service to the needy bequeathed to them by St. Vincent de Paul of France. Only in later years did the name, Sisters of Providence, become widely used. It is noteworthy that in only one American location today can a visitor, talking to old-timers, hear it proudly said, "I went to the Sisters of Charity school." That one place is the Flathead Reservation, Montana. The tradition is of long standing.

In 1864, the year of the Sisters' arrival, was a very early date for the opening of a girls' school among Indian tribes. The Civil War was in progress. Montana was still called Idaho Territory. The Plains had not yet caught fire with the Indian wars against the trespass of white men on Indian land, a violation of treaties.

Time-wise, there was a precedent for private Indian schools in the Pacific Northwest. Rev. and Mrs. Harmon Spalding, among the Nez Perce people at Lapwai, Idaho, set the precedent. These missionaries of the Presbyterian Church arrived in 1836. They answered what was widely publicized at the time as the "Macedonian Cry" for Christian teaching. The appeal was brought to St. Louis by the first delegation of Flatheads and Nez Perce.

Eleven years later — "Mrs. Spaulding's school numbered five hundred Indian pupils, and a church of a hundred members had gathered."<sup>1</sup>

The mission schools at Lapwai and St. Ignatius preceded by many decades both Government Indian Bureau schools and public schools in the reservations. The Government was exceedingly slow to implement many treaty agreements in favor of Indian education on the new reservation. An illustration of the good intentions can be found in treaty negotiations with the Blackfoot Tribe, shortly after the Mountain tribes had signed their Treaty of 1855. Governor Stevens spoke to the Blackfoot and assembled representatives from the Flathead and Pend d'Oreilles Tribes. He said the

following:

The Great White Father thinks much of farms, schools, mills and shops . . . The Great Father does not want you to starve when the buffalo passes away. Therefore, he will do all he can to get for you farms, cattle, etc., and teach your children trades.”<sup>2</sup>

The Blackfeet *did* starve before the promises were kept, and some of the children had to go to St. Ignatius schools for subsistence and learning. Thanks to the Black Robes, and the Kalispels who remained in Montana to pass on their Reduction skills, St. Ignatius Mission had “farms, . . . mills and shops.”<sup>3</sup> These developments occurred within a few years after the signing of the treaties. The Mission schools came later.

Eventually, girls from seventeen tribes registered at what was named Holy Family School, taught by the Sisters of Charity. Their registration is kept today in a precious enrollment book dating from 1864 until 1919, a tragic date when the entire school burned to the ground. It is possible to list the tribes and the names of many non-Indians who attended (Irish, American, German) because the enrollment book shows, in fine French script, the girls’ names, names of their parents, tribal affiliation, date of arrival, date of departure. There was a final column for comment, such as, “Left to get married,” or “died at the school”. There is a chilling list of deaths among the girls in some years, years when the smallpox was raging among the tribes.

*A TABLE OF REGISTRATION BY TRIBES AT HOLY FAMILY SCHOOL<sup>4</sup>*

<i>Tribal Affiliation</i>	<i>Date of Pupil's First Entry</i>
Pend d'Oreille	October, 1864
Coeur d'Alene	November 8, 1865
Flathead of the Bitterroot	June 8, 1866
Shoshone or “Snake”	July 12, 1866
Canadian Cree	July 12, 1866
Iroquois among Kootenai or Flatheads	April 12, 1868
Colvilles of Kettle Falls	April, 1875
Spokanes	July 11, 1882
Kalispels of Washington	July 11, 1883
Kootenai	January 23, 1883
Nez Perce	May 8, 1884
Blackfeet	September 19, 1884
Cree	October 18, 1884
Piegans Blackfeet (Canada)	July 9, 1890
Nez Perce	November 15, 1890
Chippewa	August 24, 1908
Umatilla	October 16, 1910

The first school building for the girls when the Sisters arrived on October 17, after the long ride from Walla Walla, was a house. They found that . . . “Father Urban Grassi, Superior of the Mission had prepared a small

house while awaiting the building of a new convent which he had planned.”<sup>5</sup>

The missionary had also planned a school building for the future. The Sisters quickly realized that the small cabin, fourteen feet square, was to be their home and the school building. It had recently been built from products of the new sawmill. It was in the style of the Indians' houses which were beginning to replace the tepees in the Reduction village of St. Ignatius. The family had one big room and a loft above.

It was in this attic, ten feet square, boasting of two small windows, that the four Sisters had to make living quarters for themselves. They slept on the floor with straw mattresses and carried water up a ladder. There was no plumbing or heating facilities in the attic. Actually, only a fireplace “downstairs” had to supply all their needs for heating and for cooking.

Happily, the walls of the cabin were rough slabs, 14 inches wide and three inches thick, placed upright. They provided some insulation for the winter time.

Tourists today who stop to see the famous St. Ignatius Church, a national monument, with its magnificent paintings on ceiling and walls, can visit the little cabin in the church yard. Father Joseph Obersinner, S.J., present-day Superior of the Mission, made the little first school a museum dedicated to the educational efforts of the Jesuits, Sisters of Charity of Providence, and Ursuline Sisters.

On the committee for removal of the cabin to the church yard and its restoration, in addition to Father Obersinner, there was a Flathead Indian, Walter McDonald, a local resident; Melvin Udall, and Sister Providencia, S.P. Said Walter in 1976, the date of the restoration, “I am always interested in Indian education and want to see this relic preserved.” The cabin is still sturdy in spite of 115 years of usage.

Two years after their arrival at St. Ignatius the Sisters joyfully moved into a new convent. The cabin still served as the school. Later, when a bigger school was built, the cabin became a “bunkhouse” for the workmen. One of these men had one job, winter and summer: chopping wood for the numerous stoves of the school buildings.

## THE PROVIDENCE TEAM

The youngest of the four Sisters, Sister Remi, quickly showed a facility for the Salish language. A week after the Sisters were settled in the cabin, Sister Remi, Sister Paul Miki and Sister Mary Edward began daily the Salish Indian language lessons from Father Grassi. He called it not Salish but “Kalispel”. All the church prayers and ceremonies of the mountain missions were conducted in this common language.

Within a month, Sister Remi could begin teaching religion classes to the local Indian girls, chiefly Pend d'Oreilles. The girls came every morning to the convent-school at the ringing of a bell. School was an entirely new experience for the girls. At first, they were very shy and seemingly unresponsive. No doubt, since the girls knew no French and the Sisters had to stumble along with the Salish tongue, the teaching was a slow business for everybody. It did help, however, that the church vocabulary for prayers,

etc., was familiar to a degree from the Sunday ceremonies.

Meanwhile, the boys went to the Fathers' residence for the same lessons. After three years, Father Grassi called both boys and girls for a daily religion class. The Sisters concentrated on "readin', writin' and 'rithmetic" and lessons in home-making. These included sewing as well as cooking and other home arts. The girls showed real talent for sewing and art work.

According to records in the Providence Archives, Sister Remi . . ." was loved for the goodness of her heart, esteemed for the strength of her character and her virtue . . . her desire to do good for people was immense."

She had many tasks other than teaching. She was the seamstress and the "boarder mistress" when boarders began to apply at the school. She was also sacristan at the big church nearby, preparing the altar for daily ceremonies. The sewing and mending of clothes were important, because there was no store within hundreds of miles where material to make the black robes could be bought.

#### Sister Paul Miki

This other young Sister had joined the St. Ignatius caravan at Walla Walla. Although she too was from Montreal, she knew some English and had experience in the Sisters' School at Walla Walla.

In Montana, Sister Paul Miki seemed to suffer more than the other Sisters from the isolation and the bitterness of exile from her own country. But she never faltered. The strength of her religious commitment and her prayer life supported her.

At first she did not understand Indian psychology. However, when the time came for the girls to receive the Sacraments, to make their First Holy Communion, and they had begun to love their classes so much that they hurried to school in the morning, she better understood their diligence to achieve their goals.

After sixteen years at Holy Family School, this devoted teacher suffered ". . . a long and sad sickness . . . Sister Paul Miki made her apprenticeship in the religious life among the Indian people. It was among them that she died (1880) and among them that she is buried;" she was only thirty-eight years old.

#### Sister Mary Edward

Sister Mary Edward came from Montreal with Sister Remi, but she was Irish, not French Canadian. She was experienced at social work and nursing among the poor people of Montreal before her departure for the West. The Providence records report that she was ". . . gifted with an amiable disposition and the most exquisite politeness. She was loved and esteemed by all."

When, within four years, neither the missionaries, nor the Government Agent had money to help support the girls' school, Sister Mary Edward was chosen to beg assistance from the Montana miners. They had but recently struck gold at Cedar Creek near Missoula, at Helena and elsewhere in

Montana. The Sisters were accustomed to begging for the needy from the prosperous folk of Montreal, but to go on horseback to these locations many miles from Mission Valley was tiresome and dangerous. Sister Mary Edward was asked to go with a younger Sister, sometimes for more than a month, because she spoke English. "She had courage and determination, straightforwardness and frankness." According to the Chronicles, ". . . They had great success and made a good collection wherever they went."

After spending nine years at St. Ignatius Mission, she was transferred to Missoula. There, with two other Sisters, in 1873, she opened a school. It came to be called, "The Academy of the Sacred Heart." Eventually she returned to Canada where she spent the remainder of her life.

### Sister Mary of the Infant Jesus

The leader of the Providence Team had a long name, but it was a happy one at the Mission. The school's name honored Jesus, Mary and Joseph, the Holy Family of Nazareth. The Indian people shortened her name to Mother Infant Jesus, for she soon became a mother to them all. She always received the adults and the parents of the pupils with genial hospitality. She nursed the sick people in their homes. "Neither the inclemency of the season, nor rough roads, nor long distances could keep her away from anyone in need of comfort."

Once an Indian was reported to be seriously ill at home. The distance from the Mission was thirty-six miles over very bad roads. When she and her guide reached the place, Sister Mary's nursing skill and the medicine she brought restored the patient to health.

However, the return trip required that they travel with their horses and buggy through a forest fire! "By the merciful protection of Providence, they arrived at last at the Mission, and not a moment too soon, for the best horse of the team dropped dead in its tracks."

Since Sister Mary of the Infant Jesus spent fifty-two years at Holy Family School and is buried in the Mission Cemetery, her other adventures will be recorded on further pages.<sup>6</sup>

When soon after their arrival, the other Sisters began language lessons, Sister Mary told them that she would do the chores. These included baking, not only for the Sisters and pupils but for the priests and Brothers. The new flour mill was a blessing. She could make plenty of bread for them all. She also said she would keep things clean in the milk house. The leader of the "team" was indeed a dedicated Sister Servant.

### TEACHER AIDES AND BOARDERS ARRIVE AT HOLY FAMILY SCHOOL

The first teacher-aide in Montana was a Pend d'Oreille woman named Sabine. She was a widow with two little girls, aged 4 and 5 years. The Chronicles state: "Of all the Indians she had rejoiced more than anyone when the Sisters arrived at the Mission."

Sabine was happy when the Missionaries first suggested that she live with



1910 — *Some pupils of Holy Family School*

the Sisters. The old-time Sisters used to say, “The Fathers sent Sabine to hunt for us.” No doubt, she not only brought deer meat to the cabin, but berries and other native foods as well.

The Sisters called her, “Our best Christmas present,” for she arrived with her girls on December 28. She spoke French, learned from the fur traders, and was invaluable as an interpreter among the students and Indian visitors. Sabine could also serve as boarder mistress on the first floor of the cabin, because three boarders had arrived in November and early December. Happily, all understood tepee-living, and the crowded quarters with Sabine’s little girls among the number was not too difficult for them.

The boarders, Liza and Emily Brown, arrived with their parents on November 15, 1864. They came on horseback from the Missoula area. Louis Brown, a Frenchman, and Emmelie, his Indian wife, had been married formally by Father Point in earlier years. Emmelie’s tribal connection is not known.

The Sisters owed the Browns a debt of gratitude for giving them shelter overnight while the Sisters were on their way to St. Ignatius Mission. Therefore, Mother Infant Jesus and the others welcomed the two girls joyfully, happy to see them again and chatter in French with the family. The girls were bi-lingual, speaking both French and English, but they had never gone to school, although they were teen-agers. The parents wanted their girls instructed in the Catholic faith. The Brown girls stayed at the little cabin school until April, 1865. Then their father came for them. It may be that he needed their help on the farm.

The third boarder to register on December 8, 1864, was listed as M. Grant, wife of Mr. McLearen. Mrs. McLearen stayed at the school only until February 23, 1865. She was fifteen years old. Together with the two Brown girls, she was registered in the “Tribal Column” as Metisse. This popular



French term indicated a person who was of mixed racial parentage.

The spring 1865 brought another teacher-aide and helper for the Sisters. She was Sophie Finley, a Pend d'Oreille Indian woman, the widow of Batisse. She had a little girl, aged three years. The enrollment for this year showed the names of nine new boarders.

Two of the girls, Marie and Sarah Ogden, had an intriguing surname. It brings to mind Peter Skene Ogden, one of the most famous factors of the Hudson's Bay Company in the American West. He led the Snake River Brigade of voyageurs and fur traders through southern and eastern Washington. The Snake River brought their canoes through extensive territory of Idaho. He had orders from the Company to clean out the fur-bearing animals of the region.

In 1824 Ogden was stationed at the Flathead Fur Post on the Clark's Fork River, Montana. He married an Indian woman while in the Northwest, and they had a son, Michel. Marie and Sarah, new pupils at Holy Family School, came with their mother, Angelique Bonaparte Ogden, so it is only speculation whether or not the two girls were granddaughters of Peter Skene Ogden.

The year 1865 produced a census of the Confederated Tribes. It named 239 Flatheads (only 55 men among this number); 273 Kootenai and 751 Pend d'Oreilles. The agency was so lacking in Federal support that it could not afford to send a wagon for the annuity goods promised annually by the treaty. These were lying unclaimed in a warehouse at Fort Benton.<sup>7</sup>

Times were still very hard for the Indians even in 1869: "To sustain the reservation Indians, the agent issued each head of a family two pecks of potatoes a week."<sup>8</sup> To add to the troubles, for three years the crops had been ruined because of a grasshopper "invasion". In his book, Mr. Fahey calls them crickets, but it is more likely, from common usage in Montana and the Dakotas, that these crickets were swarms of grasshoppers who ate their way through the wheat fields and any greenery in their paths. Meanwhile, the buffalo hunts on the Plains were less and less successful. The reckless slaughter of the buffalo by Indians and white men had begun to take its toll.

The Providence Chronicle reporting conditions at St. Ignatius during 1865 tells of the Sisters' privations:

We were far from having material things not only helpful but necessary. All supplies had to come from St. Louis, Missouri, which supplies arrived one year from the request . . . Thus for nearly a year we were without a frying pan. We had to cook in the open fireplace with great difficulty. We also suffered greatly from the cold . . . During an entire year we had only one table which served for the needs of all: Sisters, girls, lady patients.

Each group had to wait its turn at the table. "The dishes consisted of none other than the dozen or so goblets which we had used on our journey from Walla Walla . . . These were the only utensils we had for a long, long time after our arrival."

One of our older Sisters who knew Mother Infant Jesus used to tell a story

illustrating that the founding Sisters had an even greater privation. They said that this was the lack of salt, for the first six years. At the end of that time, they received a valuable gift from a miner. He had carried some salt to them in a small sack in his pocket as he rode horseback from Fort Benton.

The winter of 1865 was cold everywhere in Montana: "A gold stampede into the Sun River area coincided with one of the severest winters in Montana history. Many miners had ears, noses, hands and feet frozen."<sup>9</sup>

Help was nearby at St. Peter's Mission. The well-known Father Anthony Ravalli, S.J., was stationed there. Under his ". . . skillful care they were brought back to health."<sup>10</sup>

It is understandable that at St. Ignatius Mission, the school's privations brought complaints from the parents. Some of them withdrew their daughters from school. The Sisters suffered from the criticism, but they still tried to help everyone at the mission. They knew the missionaries shared in every way they could with the personnel and pupils of Holy Family School.

The climax of all these complaints came in 1866, from the Indian Chief himself. The following story was told by a pioneer Sister to the Sisters at Coeur d'Alene Mission in recent times:

When the first Sisters had been at St. Ignatius for two years, they still could not speak the Salish language very successfully. The old Chief came to the school to throw them out.

He said, 'If you can't learn the Indian language, go back to Montreal. You are no good to us here.'

Mother Infant Jesus was in great distress, but she asked for more time, and she prayed about it. She offered a huge sacrifice to Our Lord to add weight to her prayers. She made a promise not to read any of her mail from her family in Montreal. Since mail came about once a year from Fort Benton, it was a great sacrifice.

That year the Sisters learned the Salish language. Moreover, the young Sisters managed to rescue Mother's unopened mail from the waste basket, read it, and drop the news for her to hear from time to time. She did not suspect their loving device.

### *THE CLOUDS BEGIN TO CLEAR AWAY*

On June 7, 1866, the Sisters moved into the new convent. The number of enrollees increased to nineteen girls. Then, too, good news came from the Bitterroot Valley in September.

Sixteen years after its suppression, St. Mary's Mission among the Flatheads was restored. Father Giorda, Father Ravalli and Brother Claessens took up their residence in an Indian cabin and began to rebuild the mission near the ruin of the first St. Mary's.<sup>11</sup>

Financial encouragement for the Holy Family School came from an unexpected source — the U.S. Government. According to the Chronicles, the Indian Agent, a Mr. McCauley, visited the school and showed some

interest. He promised payment for the pupils' care from the Government. "This promise he kept, but only for the first quarter of the year." More payments for two other quarters arrived by 1870.

Other Government officials arrived from the Bureau of Indian Affairs:

They made a considerable donation for our orphan girls, and showed us great interest. They had seen and examined our little Indian pupils who had answered all questions in a manner truly satisfactory for children of their age. These gentlemen were as surprised as satisfied, not believing it was possible to succeed so well with these people.

Apparently, Father DeSmet had a hand in stimulating the official visitation. The *Chronicles* for 1868 state formally: "Rev. Pierre Jean DeSmet, first Missionary of the Rocky Mountains, was the first to show interest and generosity toward our girls. It was he who had spoken about us so favorably to the men of the Government."

Father DeSmet sent the Sisters ". . . magnificent gifts ever since he had heard of our arrival at St. Ignatius." There was great enthusiasm at the Convent when the best gift of all arrived from St. Louis.

One of the presents received was a most beautiful sewing machine which had cost \$110.00 at St. Louis. He also sent cotton prints and other materials needed for sewing . . . wadded cotton linings; hoods for the children made of wool and many other useful articles.

The new materials were eagerly cut out and sewn on the new machine for the six little girls who made their First Holy Communion that year on the Feast of Christmas.

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#### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>William A. Mowry, Ph.D. *Marcus Whitman and the Early Days of Oregon*. New York: Silver, Burdett and Co., 1901 p. 80.

<sup>2</sup>Charles J. Kappler, "Treaty with Blackfeet, 1855," *Indian Affairs Laws and Statutes*, Vol. 2, "Treaties." Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1904.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup>The Enrollment Book of Holy Family School at St. Ignatius, the Archives of the Sisters of Providence, Spokane, Washington.

<sup>5</sup>*St. Ignatius Chronicles*, of the Sisters of Providence, op. cit. All the subsequent quotations unless otherwise noted, are from this volume reporting on Holy Family School.

<sup>6</sup>The biographical information of the founders at St. Ignatius Mission School was provided by courtesy of Sister Frenette, Archivist at Providence Mother House, Montreal.

<sup>7</sup>Fahey, *op. cit.* p. 122.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 155.

<sup>9</sup>Fr. Schoenberg, S.J., *op. cit.*, pp. 56-57.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup>Fr. Schoenberg, S.J., *op. cit.*, p. 58.

## *Chapter 9*

### ST. IGNATIUS



*After Sunday Mass in 1917  
at St. Ignatius Mission*

## *Chapter 9*

### *Better Times for the People and St. Ignatius Mission — 1870 to 1919*

Environmental conditions improved for the mountain tribes in the decade of the 1870's, especially as regards the weather, the crops, and living situations. Increased production indicated the welcome changes. "Near St. Ignatius eight hundred Pend d'Oreilles lived in log houses."<sup>1</sup>

The Confederated Tribes were still divided in location: the Pend d'Oreilles and the Kootenai in the Mission Valley, the Salish (Flatheads) still at the Bitterroot Valley, although all three groups were under one Government Agent who lived south of St. Ignatius Mission in the Jocko Valley. Technically, all three tribes were part of the Flathead Reservation.

The Flatheads in the Bitterroot showed the benefits of their Reduction education and the presence of the Black Robes at a restored St. Mary's Mission. The Indian Agent, Mr. Jones, made a report about Flathead progress to Washington, D.C.: ". . . of ninety heads of families, forty-four were now prosperous farmers, some raising six hundred bushels of wheat annually."<sup>2</sup>

Fulfillment of treaty agreements by the Federal Government was an additional incentive:

Under the provisions of the agreements of 1855, 1872 and 1890, in payment for ceding their lands to the Federal Government, the Montana Salish received annual payments in the form of farm equipment, seed grain, house construction, cattle, a variety of household goods, and technical assistance for a specified number of years. These Treaty provisions were typical of land treaties negotiated with Indian tribes at that time, and were designed to turn the nomadic warrior into a land-holding, self-sufficient farmer. Although this policy failed among most Plains tribes it succeeded fairly well among the Montana Salish, largely through the influence of the missions.<sup>3</sup>

By 1870, six girls had come to Holy Family School from the Bitterroot Valley. A favorable reputation had penetrated westward to the Coeur d'Alenes. The first Coeur d'Alene girl was brought to the school in 1865. Then, a surprising development came about in 1870 when Chief Seltis of the Coeur d'Alenes went to Walla Walla to find Lady Black Robes who would open a school among his people. He had met the Superior of the Walla Walla school, Sister Catherine, when she was begging in the mines:

The chief . . . "was accompanied by seven or eight Indians decked out like him in their very best with feathered headdress, etc.

The Indian cavalcade, riding the finest ponies, stopped opposite the Convent and asked permission to enter the house of ‘the chief of the women blackrobes’<sup>4</sup> The men were received with due courtesy and the sisters served their visitors a fine dinner. They left joyfully.

A letter of appreciation from Chief Seltis arrived some time later. The Sisters give the translation as follows:

Our heart was full of joy when you passed through our country. Now I want you to come and live with us and teach our girls . . . They are ignorant, and they always will be that way unless you come and take care of them . . . I want you to ask the Chief of the women blackrobes to give us some Sisters. We will build a house for them . . . I beg the Great Spirit to fill your heart with mercy for the poor Coeur d’Alene girls.<sup>5</sup>

His prayer was answered in 1878, for negotiations and travel arrangements took years in those times. Three Sisters left Vancouver: Sister Mary Hyacinthe (Marie-Hyacinthe), Superior; Sister Mary Constance (Marie-Constance) and Sister Mary Francis. They had an easier trip to the mountains than did the Sisters of St. Ignatius. They traveled from Walla Walla with Father Pascal Tosi, S.J., in a carriage. The Coeur d’Alene Mission had been moved from Cataldo to DeSmet, Idaho. The Sisters opened the school there in December, 1878, to thirty boys and girls. All the people were very glad to see the Lady Black Robes.<sup>6</sup>

The school may be considered a product of St. Ignatius Mission. If the trip was less difficult for the Sisters of DeSmet Mission of the Sacred Heart, the problems of subsistence were as great as those in Montana.

There was no help from the Government, but the Indians responded to our daily needs for food . . . bringing flour, meat and vegetables. We lived from day to day, but we never lacked the necessities . . . Sometimes when they came to the door with some food, we asked them why they were bringing the meat or flour. The Indians replied that their hearts told them that the Sisters had nothing to eat.<sup>7</sup>

If the Walla Walla Sisters had unexpected visitors, so too did the Sisters of St. Ignatius, on October 10, 1872. The visitors were Mother Caron, Superior General from Montreal, with Sister Victor. The surprise and joy are easy to imagine, for these were the first Sister visitors to come to Holy Family School in eight years.

Mother Caron had her surprise also. The Sisters of Montana were no longer Lady *Black Robes*, for they were wearing moccasins and denim dresses. Their religious costumes had worn out. The Superior General of the whole Community and Sister Victor decided to stay the winter instead of proceeding to Walla Walla and Vancouver. Mother Caron wished to study the situation fully. She had a concerned and loving heart for her exiles.

One result of her stay was the establishment of the Sacred Heart Academy in Missoula the very next year so that other Sisters would be nearby.

Another was full approval from her for the school's program and the care of sick people in their homes. The nursing, both of these patients and sick pupils of the school, had become major projects.

The Chronicles reported 312 visits to the homes by the Sisters and the girls they were training during 1873-1874. Prescriptions were given to 109 patients. A terrible epidemic of smallpox struck the Mission during 1874.

Mother Caron made other decisions:

On January 1, 1873, our school became autonomous according to arrangements between Mother Caron, Superior General, and the Jesuit priests of the Mission. We then began to finance our own Convent and school. The Jesuits agreed to give us the Government funds for Indian Schools, but with that went the transfer of the boys' classes to our girls' classes. Thus, in January we began teaching the boys.

When the Superior General left St. Ignatius, April 18, 1874, states the Chronicles, "she carried with her our eternal gratitude and our wishes for a happy and speedy voyage." She was on her way to Vancouver, but she took with her Sister Mary Edward who, with Sister Victor, were to open the mission in Missoula. Three new Sisters arrived May 16 at St. Ignatius to replace Sister Mary Edward and help with ever-enlarging duties of teaching and nursing. Thirty pupils had attended the school during 1873-'74. The collection in the mines that year came to \$950.00, a fortune in those days. The Sisters of St. Ignatius gave half of it to the founding Sister Missionaries in Missoula.

Serious problems came to Holy Family School in 1875, for sickness caused the death of five girls within a month. Say the Chronicles, "There were no Doctors at the Agency!"

"One thing remarkable was visible. Neither sickness nor death prevented the parents from bringing their children to us. They are so definitely persuaded by now that we give the children good care."<sup>8</sup>

The favorable opinions of the parents deepened in 1876. The parents were invited to the school for a program: "The pupils read, demonstrated several lessons, displayed their copy books, sang songs and recited poems. This was an occasion of great joy for parents and pupils alike."<sup>9</sup>

A Catholic school is more than lessons successfully taught, trades or skills developed. It is a culture, a way of thinking and doing in the presence of God. It is a learning from the example of Jesus in the Scriptures, and the manner that his ways are lived out by dedicated teachers. Learning and growing continue from day to day in a spirit of peace and joy.

This atmosphere was carried by the girls when they left the school, married, and made homes of their own. An employee of the Bureau of Indian Affairs said once after talking of his years of experience on the Reservations: "I always know when I have stepped into an Indian home where the mother was educated by the Sisters."<sup>10</sup>



The first marriage of a girl from Holy Family School occurred in 1876. It was solemnized in the Mission Church. The girls' choir sang for the occasion and all were impressed.

By 1881, the number of students had increased to 32, and a new building was in the planning. The saw mill at the Mission furnished the logs to build the new school: "July 11, 1882 was the day that the first logs were hauled for us. The Indians whom we had requested to help came willingly and in a short time they had transported the logs to the site . . . by February the square sides were up and well advanced.<sup>11</sup> There was more than one building in process. The plans called for a chapel, a convent, and children's department, 65 by 25 feet, three stories high. On August 20, 1884, occurred the church's blessing of the new house. Father Cataldo presided and dedicated the new chapel to the Mother of Sorrows, Mary the Mother of Jesus, standing at the foot of the Cross."

All of these surprising building projects came about through the interest and efficiency of a new Government Agent for the Reservation, Peter Ronan. He came to the Jocko Valley with his family on May 31, 1877. We are grateful to his daughter, Margaret Ronan, for an illuminating biography of her mother, Mary Ronan, just as it was dictated by her mother. She tells how the Indians received their new Agent:

The confederated tribes of the Flatheads, the Salish, Pend d'Oreilles and Kootenais at once bestowed upon my husband the title . . . White Chief. That he was indeed . . . he became their advisor, mediator, patriarch, champion . . . he spent the remaining sixteen years of his life among them in reappointments through Republican and Democratic administrations.<sup>12</sup>

Soon after the installation of the new agent, the Government in 1878 made a contract with the mission priests at St. Ignatius for the support of the schools, ". . . with an allowance of the princely sum from the Federal Indian Department of eight dollars and a few cents for each pupil, boy or girl."<sup>13</sup> These were monthly payments.

The mission personnel expected no part of these payments for their salaries, but ". . . by prudent economy . . . they were able to carry out a more extensive and successful program of education. New buildings were erected: Classrooms, dormitories, refectories (dining rooms), as well as a number of shops where trades were taught to the boys."<sup>14</sup>

The contract with the Government ceased six years later, in 1885. Happily, the loss was made up in 1887 by a church organization, the Catholic Indian Bureau, according to Father Davis.

The year 1894 showed the peak enrollment of 144 students. In all of the fifty-five years of registration, 10,137 girls attended Holy Family school for a few months or for many years. The year's enrollment, 1919, shows 43 new registrations. An analysis by tribal affiliation of these students is interesting:

<i>Number of New Enrollments, 1919</i>	<i>Tribal Designation</i>
2 girls	Coeur d'Alenes
2 girls	Crees
16 girls	Flatheads
11 girls	Metisse
1 girl	Pend d'Oreille
11 girls	non-Indians
Total 43 girls	

### GROWTH FOR ST. IGNATIUS MISSION AFTER 1890

The Jesuits had expanded their personnel to include some of their young men in training to be priests. They themselves were in studies with some competent priests at the Mission, but they also helped to teach the Indian boys. The Jesuit designation for these young men “in philosophy” (studies) was “scholastics.” Said one of these about his experiences, (in later years Father Ambrose Sullivan, S.J.):

I was in philosophy at St. Ignatius in the '90's. I remember that there were 4,000 Indians around here then. The Fathers used to go horseback as far as Camas Prairies on sick calls. We averaged eighty or ninety boys in the school at that time.<sup>15</sup>

The Mission also grew with the arrival of another group of Sisters from Eastern Montana. They were Ursuline Sisters who had some experience with the Indian school in the Fort Belknap Reservation. States Father Schoenberg in his *Chronicle of Catholic History*, for April 2, 1890:

At the request of the Jesuit Superior General of the Rocky Mountains, Father Joseph Cataldo, the Ursuline Nuns arrived at St. Ignatius Mission, Montana, to open a kindergarten and nursery for small Indian children.<sup>16</sup>

The Sisters of Providence welcomed the new Sisters and did all they could to help them settle in their new work. The contract money was shared with them, and eventually, the needs of their little pupils were also met by grants of land from the Tribal Council of the Confederated Tribes. The rich farm lands were a considerable asset for each of the religious groups on the Reservation, land that was administered separately. The farms were an asset from another point of view, especially for the boys of the Jesuit School. They became a training ground for future farmers.

Vocational training for the girls was described by Sister Mary Eugenie who was part of the program at Holy Family School during this era:

“The girls were in the classroom every day except for one day a week which they spent either in the kitchen, the bakery or the cannery. They were at school to learn their religion, the classroom basics, and the domestic arts.

In the kitchen during the first year, the younger girls learned how to wash dishes correctly; in the second year, how to prepare vegetables, in the third year, how to cook them; in the fourth year, how to bake; lastly, how to cook all kinds of meat.

The girls had an hour of sewing in the morning and another in the evening. They learned how to hem cloth, how to sew on buttons and to make buttonholes, how to darn stockings and patch clothing. They learned how to make their uniforms and other kinds of clothing. Every girl who graduated was a first-class seamstress. A goodly number of the girls were married from the school.” Continued Sister Eugenie:

“When the girls were old enough to get married, the boys were allowed to visit them in the parlor. When it was time for the marriage, the Sisters gave the bride her whole trousseau as a gift. She also received a cow and a few chickens from the school. The Fathers gave the bridegroom a horse. Then the Government Agent topped it off with a present of fifteen dollars from the Agency funds! When the husband had built their new home and they were settled, the Sisters would go to visit them and help the wife with her household problems. The girls made excellent wives and knew how to take care of their children.”

#### INDIAN WOMEN TELL OF THEIR SCHOOL DAYS

The following stories were collected from “pupils of the Sisters of Charity school,” as they called themselves, during the summers of 1946 and 1949.

1st) “We girls were working with the Sisters after we finished the eighth grade, working on looms to make carpets, in the bakery and everywhere. We had so much fun at school. The girls learned how to do many things. Some even made shoes for their children after they left here.”

2nd) “We used to take turns doing the chores, like milking the cows. There were about five of us named to help milk the cows, and the girls used to break their own cows to milk. Each girl had to tie the calf belonging to her cow to a fence. This was before the milking started. We sure used to get pulled around by those strong calves! It was fun. We sure had a good time and laughed so much. Sometimes the calves pulled us near a wild cow and were we scared! We had to tie the cow’s hind legs so she wouldn’t kick.”

3rd) “We used to have fun each fall when we went to the fields for three days to pick potatoes. Sister gathered up a lot of old clothes for us to wear because we would get all dirty and tired. But then Sister always had a big supper brought to us and we used to have a picnic in the fields before coming back to school.”

4th) “Poor old Mother Infant Jesus. She was one the Indians always asked for when they wanted to see somebody. They thought everything went through her. They couldn’t understand when she



*Good Friends*  
L. to R. — Sabine, Mother Infant Jesus, Sophie  
at the Foundation Cabin in 1914

wasn't Superior any more. It is a good fault to be too kind. I hope she prays for me."

A group of women were visiting at the Hospital one day. It seems that a river of mirth is always bubbling near the surface when Indian people are at ease.

5th) "Remember when we used to go camping in the summer time? We'd stay out in the mountains in a big tent for a couple of months. The Sisters rode horseback up there. The men folks came out with a wagonful of provisions and helped set up everything. We would sleep on the ground. We spread boughs and spread canvas and blankets on top of them. On Sundays we prepared for Mass in the big tent, and a Father came out from the Mission to say Mass for us. We used to roll up the blankets to the edge of the tent, and fix up an altar. We would decorate everything with boughs and wild flowers. Everything went so fine. We never had any trouble."

One of the women interrupted her to say, "But do you remember the strange coyote calls at night? There were some of the boys out there trying to

get us to come out. Old Chief Joseph was our guard. Bill Beaulieu was the boss to watch us . . . occasionally there was a run-away. Then they didn't take the girl back at the school!"

Another woman said reflectively, "They had big boys at the Fathers' school, from Browning and every place. They used to have an awful good band. They used to play in church for the big feasts like Easter."

### *THE GOLDEN JUBILEE AND THE LAST YEARS*

The fiftieth anniversary of the school's founding, celebrated in 1914, brought many visitors. There was a special church ceremony and a big banquet for everybody. Mother Infant Jesus was the center of attention because she was the only one of the first four Sisters to remain at the mission. The Sisters from Missoula and other places crowded around her to hear her stories of the first days.

The Superior of Holy Family School was Sister Pachomius, who had been the boarder mistress of the girls in the 1890's. She invited her guests to visit the new building that was meant to be the showpiece of the celebration. It was St. Julian Hospital, across from the school on some land donated by the Jesuit Fathers. The priests had also given the first big church to be transformed into a two-story hospital by Sister Pachomius and her workmen. A doctor had come to St. Ignatius in 1910 for private practice. Then the Reclamation Service asked the Sisters for a hospital to care for any of the workers who might have need of medical care. These factors contributed to the building project.

One of Sister Pachomius' foremen, Mr. Van, talked about the beginnings:

When they were talking up the hospital about 1912, after the doctor came, Sister Ernest and I went all over the country with a horse and buggy to see how many white settlers there were. We'd drive right across the open prairie and stop at each house to count noses and pass the time of day. It didn't make any difference how many of them were Catholics. We went every day so that the Sisters could report to headquarters in Montreal about the number of people to be helped by a hospital at St. Ignatius.

The project required planning because Sister-nurses would have to administer it when the hospital opened. This opening was achieved by 1914, to the satisfaction of the local doctor, especially, and all the people of Mission Valley.

Mother Infant Jesus died in 1917 at her school one evening, April eleventh. The Sisters were saying their night prayers together when she died peacefully in her sleep. She was 91 years of age and the oldest member of the Providence Community at the time of her death. The Chronicles state, "she was one of the greatest missionaries of the West and within the Community of Providence the most sympathetic. Those who shared her friendship and rich personality have lost a treasure."

The Chronicle tells of the funeral: "The Chief walked at the head of the

7 JUILLET 1914



*Celebrating the 50th Jubilee of Holy Family School  
Sophie Finley with Sabine and Sophie's family*

funeral cortege which was followed by Indians and whites, singing, praying and weeping.”

Two years later, there was grateful response to the terrible fire which burned the entire school, “Mother Infant Jesus was not here to see it!”

One of the Sisters at the hospital gives an eye-witness account:

We had ten or twelve patients that day, December 9, 1919. It was thirty degrees below zero. The fire was caused by a careless workman who left a blowtorch thawing out a pipe in the laundry while he went to lunch. I gave the alarm at the school, down town, and to the Fathers to ring the church bell.

There was trouble with the fire hose of the school and the water froze. Most of the three buildings were connected, so the fire spread quickly. Connected to the Little Girls' building was a large series of rooms which contained the bakery, men's dining room, laundry, etc.

In spite of the great danger, no lives were lost. The Sister continued her account:

Before the fire had spread to the third house, the Sisters had time to rescue the children, 101 girls, and send them to the Fathers' school down the road. They were able to rescue many things: bedding, clothing, furniture . . . all thrown in to the street and carried by the

men to the basement of the Church. By evening, the big room was full to the ceiling.

The Sisters thought the hospital would catch fire, “It was so hot the windows were cracking. The roof was smoking. We soaked blankets with water to put on the roof. By five o’clock the whole school plant was in ashes.”

The school Sisters stayed at the hospital. Later, some of them went to Missoula. The Fathers sent for the parents so that the girls could go to their homes. The Ursuline Sisters received many of the girls when eventually they broadened the scope of their class offerings. The name of the hospital was changed from St. Julian’s to Holy Family Hospital to keep alive the memory of the first work of the Sisters, now dead in ashes.

It is small wonder that the Sisters of Providence are grateful that the very first building of Holy Family School is now safely in the St. Ignatius Church yard, its broad planks still sturdy and the interior well preserved.

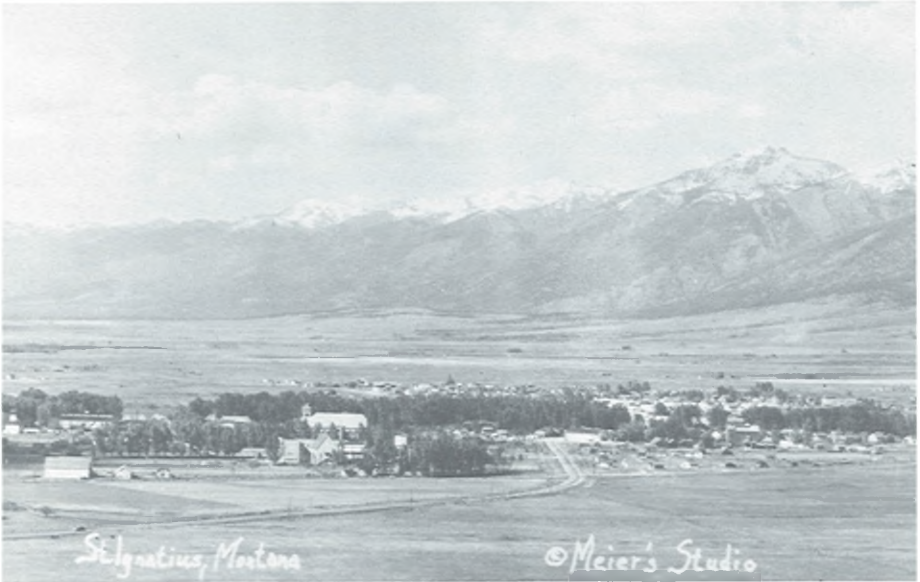
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#### Footnotes

- <sup>1</sup>Fahey, *op. cit.*, p. 157.
- <sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 158.
- <sup>3</sup>A bulletin issued by the U.S. Department of the Interior and Indian Arts and Crafts Board, U.S. Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 1972.
- <sup>4</sup>Mother Marie Antoinette, *op. cit.*, p. 217-218.
- <sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>6</sup>Chronicles of Providence Mary Immaculate School, DeSmet, Idaho. Archives of the Sisters of Providence, Spokane, Washington.
- <sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>8</sup>Chronicles of Holy Family School, St. Ignatius, *op. cit.*
- <sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>10</sup>Conversation with a BIA employee in 1940.
- <sup>11</sup>Chronicles, *op. cit.*
- <sup>12</sup>Margaret Ronan. *Frontier Woman* — the story of Mary Ronan as told to Margaret Ronan. Edited by H. G. Merriam, Missoula, Montana: University of Montana Publications in History, 1973, p. 88.
- <sup>13</sup>Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 40.
- <sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 40-41.
- <sup>15</sup>Interview at St. Ignatius in 1945. The large Indian population was reduced by a smallpox epidemic which struck the Mission in 1894. There was no doctor at the Government Agency to assist the people.
- <sup>16</sup>Father Schoenberg, *op. cit.*, p. 146.

## *Appendices*

### *ST. IGNATIUS, MONTANA*



*St. Ignatius Town as it was in 1954. The mission buildings are in the left foreground. The hundredth anniversary of the Mission's foundation was celebrated with much ceremony. Copyright by Meier's Studio, Missoula, Montana.*



## Appendix A

Excerpt from a letter about Ignace Shonowane (LaMousse), written by Rev. Henri Bechard, S.J., from Caughnawaga, P.Q., Canada, in 1979.

Kateri Center  
Box 70  
Caughnawaga, Quebec  
J0L 1B0  
February 28, 1979

Dear Sister Providencia,

As you requested, I had a close examination of the Caughnawaga records from 1800 to 1820 done by Father Leo Zipfel at Caughnawaga. The records do not mention the departure of Ignace and his friends for the far West. I asked him to continue his examination of the records, but this time of those prior to 1800. He is doing so now.

I also asked Father Joseph Cossette, Provincial Archivist of the French Canadian Jesuits, to do some research . . . He has closely gone through a 1,000-page manuscript history of Caughnawaga in French, but so far has found nothing. He has not yet given up. Should he find anything, I will notify you immediately.

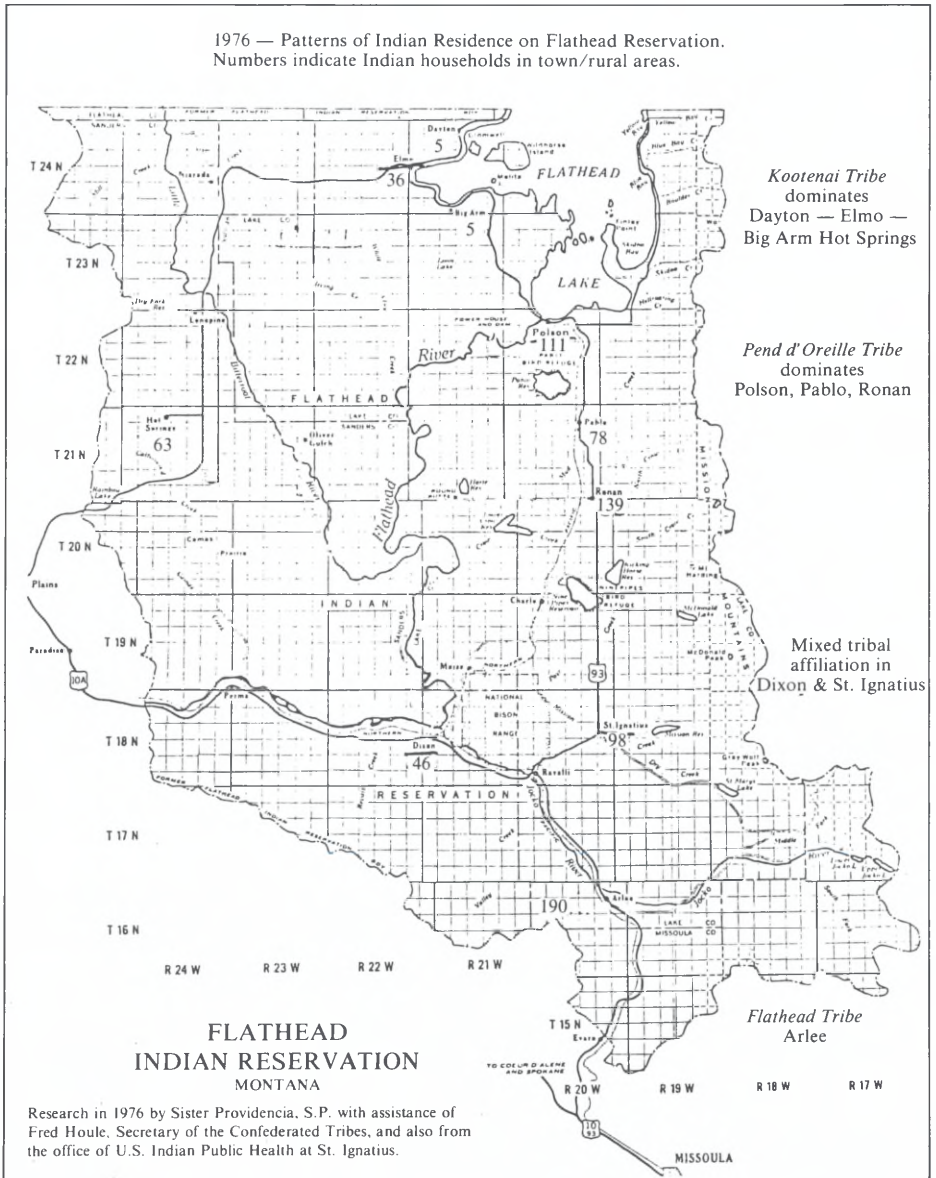
You told me that Shonowane was Ignace LaMousse's Iroquois name. I inquired from an Indian friend who knows her tongue very well. The name is certainly Iroquois. It would be *Sawennowane*, with the accent on the "o". What does it mean? Big-Voice, Powerful-Voice or Voice-With-Authority.

I am sending you the Winter 1973 issue of *Kateri* in which you may find material relating to your subject.

Signed: Father Henri Bechard, S.J.  
Vice-Postulator  
Cause of Venerable Kateri  
Tekakwitha

## Appendix B

A research map showing the location of Indian households on the Flathead Reservation in 1976. The residence patterns by tribal groups were much the same as they had been in 1900. Study by Sister Providencia, S.P., with the assistance of officials at the Flathead Reservation's Tribal Office and at the offices of the U.S. Indian Public Health Service.



## Appendix C

A 1980 report from the Flathead Reservation by Father Joseph L. Obersinner, S.J., stationed at St. Ignatius Mission, Montana.

### Father Obersinner's 1980 Report on Ministry for the Indian People of the Flathead Reservation

Although the thrust of the ministry of the early missionaries has changed in our modern day, the work of the church among the Indian people continues. At a time when they are experiencing a resurgence of their culture and traditions, and recognizing the greatness of their past, we as missionaries are doing all we can to support them in every way possible. There is a genuine effort being made to integrate more of their culture into the liturgy of the church, and an honest recognition of the deep spirituality of the Salish people and their religious traditions of the past.

The beautiful mission church, together with the original log cabin residence of the Jesuit Fathers, and the first home of the Providence Sisters, stands as an inspiring monument to the generosity and sacrifice of many people in their efforts to be of service to the Indian people of this area. It is also a sign of the devotion and dedication of the Indian people and their acceptance of the Christian message.

The Salish and Kootenai people of this reservation still look to the Mission church as their church. It is there that they wish to receive the sacraments of the church, and ultimately from this church to be buried. On the big feast days large numbers still continue to come from the whole reservation to participate in the Good Friday services, Easter Sunday, Christmas, etc. The Jesuit Fathers also continue to serve the Indian people at Arlee and Jocko, and for special occasions at Elmo and throughout the reservation. Our desire and prayer is that we will continue to be a source of hope and strength for these truly beautiful people.

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