Magic Valley

The Story of St. Joseph Academy and the Blossoming of Yakima

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Cover photo: *The Ahtanum Mission, site of the Yakima Valley's first apple orchard established in 1872 by two Jesuit priests, Fathers Caruana and Grassi. Visitors may still see a dozen of the early apple trees blossoming and bearing fruit at the site of the restored mission.*

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Each spring the ancient tribal lands of the Yakima Indians along the eastern slopes of the mighty Cascade Mountains become a sight to behold as thousands of fruit trees burst into bloom.

The tangy air of this exceedingly rich valley, known as the nation's fruit basket, is heavy with the heady wine scent of the blossoms, blended with the hum of swarming bees providing orchestration for the many varieties of songbirds. People drive hundreds of miles to tour the acres upon acres of orchards in what is considered an unforgettable experience. And later in the year, when the leaves are taking color, the valley bustles with workers picking, sorting and boxing thousands of tons of apples for shipment around the world.

The growing of this pioneer fruit of the American frontier blazed trails for the once desolate Yakima Valley to a special kind of treasure, far greater and more durable than the precious metals miners sought to extract from the earth. The vision of a few and an unlikely set of circumstances, in the face of overwhelming odds, made this ignored valley bloom eventually as did no other place. Some Oblate missionaries from far-off France, a pair of very resolute Jesuit priests, a handful of devout nuns and their frontier-hardened Mother Superior from Fort Vancouver, an amazing Yakima Indian, a scattering of extremely loyal French Canadian Catholic families wise to the ways of farming, and a romantic young British woman determined her sweetheart wouldn't forget her—all played important roles in one of the West's great adventures which was unfolding a century ago...

The "parent apple tree," having come from England as seed around Cape Horn, still bears fruit near restored Fort Vancouver, Washington. From this patriarch, cuttings were taken for the Fort's own orchard and later, those in the Yakima Valley.

Indians guided the Sisters of Providence on rugged begging tou
to mining camps and diggings of eastern Oregon, Idaho and Montar
Although unidentified, that might be Mother Joseph on the rig

Daily the sternwheeler fleet of the Oregon Steam Navigation Company churned the broad waters of the Columbia River from Portland and Vancouver, ranging far inland, down to the sea, and up the many tributaries carrying passengers, freight, mail, livestock, produce and the world's goods to the back country towns, mines, ranches, stagecoach stops and little crossroads settlements. This was the way of life in the Oregon Country of the mid-nineteenth century. The steamboats and the rivers tied the Pacific Northwest into a single package, for their skippers boasted they could run "anywhere it's damp." But there were pockets beyond the reach of the traffic patterns; the thinly-populated Yakima Valley with its remote and scattered homesteads was one of them. The valley was difficult to reach; a trip to the "outside" was a major undertaking.

One particular week in 1872, Captain John Ainsworth's steamboats carried a different kind of cargo. Leaning against the rail was Father Joseph Caruana, bound upriver from the mission headquarters adjacent to Fort Vancouver where he'd been pleading with a stubborn Mother Joseph of the Sacred Heart to send some nuns to his outpost in the Yakima Valley to establish a school for the area's Catholic children. His timing was bad. Mother Joseph was hard-pressed keeping the Vancouver mission going through yearly begging tours to the gold camps, and now a proposal to construct and operate a sizable hospital in Portland. Therefore, she wasn't enthusiastic about Father Caruana's idea. Catholic families of the valley were few in number. How many other youngsters would attend? Moreover, from all she'd heard, the Yakima Valley was a wild, raw land, undeveloped and fraught with dangers from renegade Indians. She would need to give this much thought and prayer before reaching a decision—and then holding to it.

So Father Caruana was going back empty-handed to his rustic little mission to continue badgering the Western Mother House and its powerful Mother Superior for another year. The families around Ahtanum would be disappointed when he returned without even a single nun for the school. However, the priest was bringing something else which he considered important. In his luggage were some worthless appearing sticks that seemed passing strange for anyone to carry anywhere. Those sticks would prove as valuable as Mother Lode gold and Comstock silver, for they were cuttings from the well-established apple orchard at Fort Vancouver.

A short time later, Father Caruana and Father Urban Grassi, both Jesuit priests, set out the valley's first apple orchard. The

pair who had charge of this mission of logs and also St. Regis Mission at Kettle Falls had discovered what other early missionaries learned: that the deep, rich volcanic soil of the valley would grow most anything if life-giving water could reach the land. A trickle of water from a nearby creek produced wonders, as the priests found, for the growing of agricultural crops was a life-sustaining function of all the missions.

Therefore, the planting of these cuttings was an act of destiny, much in the same manner that the early fathers of the California missions helped pave the way for the Salinas Valley becoming the nation's "salad bowl" and also a center for apple and other fruit production, with one brand known as "mission apples." The trees near the Ahtanum Mission flourished; within a few years they began bearing fruit in abundance which impressed homesteaders of the valley. Some ranchers, probably obtaining cuttings from the mission, grew their own small family orchards near their homes. Yet the growing of a few apple trees held little significance of things to come, for rain was scarce and the matter of water remained a vital factor. Other events intervened to hold back valley growth for several decades, more than half a century beyond the time when the first apple trees began developing at the then-new Hudson's Bay Company post of Fort Vancouver. These trees became the pioneer ancestors for the eventually great apple industries of Washington and Oregon. That it was fortunately a hearty line is evidenced today, for the oldest apple tree in the West, or perhaps the nation, still bears fruit not far from where Mother Joseph established the region's first Catholic mission for the Sisters of Providence from Montreal.

How that tree got there is one of the charming legends of the West. The young fiancee of a British lieutenant, munching on an apple at a farewell banquet in London, placed its seeds in the pocket of her intended to put in the ground in the far-off Oregon Country.

"Plant these and remember me," she whispered. She doubted that she would ever see him again, for the trip seemed farther and more hazardous than going to the moon.

But Lieutenant Arthur Drake, upon reaching Fort Vancouver, placed the seeds in the rich river bottom land near the Hudson's Bay Company outpost. He staked and watered the tiny shoots which in a few years began bearing fruit, to the joy of other men at the fort who jeered when he first tended the little trees. And, in a happy ending, Drake's fiancee joined him seven years later to be married by Dr. John McLoughlin, the fort's Chief Factor.

Fort Vancouver, Washington Territory, in 1854.

Mother Joseph and four other Sisters of Providence arrived at Fort Vancouver, Territory of Washington on December 8, 1856. They had journeyed from the motherhouse of their community at Montreal, Quebec.

Certainly, acting on impulse, the young lady never envisioned the start of what became a multi-million dollar industry. Neither did Father Caruana and Father Grassi in the Yakima Valley. Theirs was a natural effort, something that made sense in working for the survival of their missions. And it was a struggle; few held out much hope for any sort of abundant future for the Yakima Valley. The Indians could keep this one!

The valley was "off the beaten track" for wagon trains bound for Puget Sound and the Willamette settlements, and also those using the great River of the West for their super highway. Backed by the mighty Cascades, the 812-square-mile valley with its crags, canyons, steep slopes, high bluffs and arid prairie made the waterless land uninviting except to men of the Hudson's Bay Company who ranged there in quest of pelts rather than any kind of permanent development. Hudson's Bay had outposts at Walla Walla, Kettle Falls and elsewhere, but largely left the land as it was, much to the approval of the tribes who felt that, unlike the freewheeling Americans, the men of the Company held a respect for the Earth Mother of the Indians' ancient beliefs. The tribes therefore favored the Hudson's Bay people and also the black-robed Catholic missionaries who seemed to have the approval of the Company.

Not that pioneers shopping for a place to settle down hadn't considered this area. Indeed, when the first large train of 36 wagons and 146 pioneers cut through the Yakima Valley in 1853, it kept right on going toward Puget Sound. Nothing was there to hold the settlers, even a promise. The valley lagged behind others in development, evolving through various stages of trapping, gold seeking, and cattle ranching, and set back by several serious skirmishes with the Indians. The establishing of crude log missions and the planting of crops and apple trees were of small significance, dimly viewed by many settlers who saw scant progress in any of it.

As with the mission's apple trees, the valley's cultural development had its roots in the soils of Europe. Similar to Oregon's French Prairie which became the first agricultural settlement of the Northwest, the valley behind the Cascades grew into a new home for another band of these gay, rollicking people whose ancestral roots were in France and French Canada. The Oblate missionaries of Mary Immaculate from France were the first to work with the Indians. Two years after the initial priests arrived in 1838 at Fort Vancouver, the Jesuits entered the missionary field with the northern tribes of the Pacific Northwest. The Indians, intrigued by the "black robes," sent emissaries to St. Louis where

the novitiate was located. Led by Father Pierre Jean De Smet, who had come from France first to Louisiana, the priests fanned out over the frontier to establish small missions among the tribes. De Smet became the peacemaker between the Indians and the whites, and his aides could get along with the natives, receiving protection from chiefs against other tribes on the warpath. Years later, when Mother Joseph was confronted by Indians in war paint, they saw her black robe and left her alone in what was a rather common occurrence in Indian territory. De Smet was able to deal even with the arrogant Blackfeet, whose menacing ways kept Methodist missionary Jason Lee from entering the northern field.

After being ignored for years, the Yakima Valley found a tiny mission rising in that lonely land. In 1847 Father Louis D'Herbomez and Father Charles John Pandosy established the first Yakima mission at Ahtanum, near Wapato, known as Mission of the Holy Cross. (Other Oblate priests listed among the founders were Fathers Ricard, Chirouse and Blanchet.) Eventually this would become St. Joseph. And soon an auxiliary mission would be built at Moxee.

However, that first attempt was short-lived, for following the tragedy that same year at the Methodist-Whitman mission at Walla Walla, the Indians grew touchy about settlers and Chief Factor Peter Skene Ogden ordered all whites from the territory. Undeterred, Father Pandosy and Father Eugene Casimir were back in that desolate land by the end of the year. But because of threats by Indian braves, Father Pandosy, who decided to stick through the winter, found it necessary to stay at the camp of his friend, the powerful Yakima Chief Kamiakin, in the Moxee, the first visit for any length of time of a priest to that area.

The struggle for permanent missions in the valley was far from over. Missions had been spotted in the Kittitas, Yakima, and Selah areas, along with Ahtanum and Moxee. Chapels were established at Mabton Fort Simcoe, and another was built on Manastash Creek near Ellensburg. The one at Wapato served as a "winter chapel" and later was moved to the Ahtanum. Even in those years people of the Yakima area seemed to have a passion for moving buildings, forerunner of the day when they would move an entire town! Father Chirouse was one of the priests who worked long, and with difficulty, with the Indians, traveling from outpost to outpost, trying to bring peace and understanding to the peoples of the conflicting races, and teaching the natives the word of the Lord and the hope of Divine Providence. His mission was a "hut-like structure of adobe clay, plastered on a frame of sticks," as

Sister Blandine, one of the five original foundresses of the Sisters of Providence in the Washington Territory in 1856, was named as the first superior of St. Joseph Academy, Yakima.

Father Joseph Caruana, a Jesuit priest, invited the Sisters of Providence in 1872 to establish a school in Yakima. The priest is also credited with setting out the Yakima Valley's first apple orchard with cuttings he made at Fort Vancouver.

described by army officer Theodore Winthrop. Riding by this frontier oasis, he heard "a sound of reverent voices... vespers at this station in the wilderness. Three souls were worshipping in the crude chapel attached to the house. It was crude indeed—a cell of clay—but a sense of the Divine Providence was there, not less than in many dim old cathedrals, far away, where earlier sunsets had called to worshippers of other race and tongue to breathe the same thanksgiving and the same heartfelt prayer."

Wherever possible, when there was sufficient water, small garden plots were tilled near the tiny missions. But things were still in a state of flux; when the Indians went on the rampage in the mid-1850s, the goal of the tribes was to drive all the whites from this huge Northwest country. The Yakimas were heavily involved, under Chief Kamiakin, along with other leading tribes on both sides of the Cascade Mountains. Kamiakin dispatched his braves for an all-out attack on the Cascades settlement and blockhouse which scared the daylights out of Portlanders. The Indians were defeated, with many of them killed or captured as troops and volunteers rushed upriver on Captain Ainsworth's sternwheelers in what was a major engagement of the Indian wars of the 1850s.

That spring of 1856 troops under Colonel George Wright marched into the Yakima country, seeking Kamiakin and his warriors. The hostiles kept out of reach, and Father Pandosy was under their protection which supported suspicions among anti-Catholics that the priests were partly to blame for inciting the Indian uprising against the whites. Father Chirouse was forced to leave when army troopers plundered and ignited his mission buildings, destroying the priest's belongings and parading obscenely around in the vestments. When the soldiers found a keg of dynamite hidden from thievery, it seemed strong evidence that the priests were allied with the tribes, so they set the mission afire, burning it to the ground.

All the Oblate missions of the Yakima Valley were destroyed in similar manner, closing the first chapter of the church pioneering in the region. Father Pandosy remained another year, trying to bring his Christian Indians back together, but it was impossible, for many had fled and scattered from fear of the troopers. Finally he left, too, going to the mission at Colfax.

The mission site remained abandoned for a decade until 1867 when Father L. Napoleon St. Onge rebuilt it. But Father St. Onge didn't last, for his health broke, and then the Jesuit priests took charge, renaming the oasis Mission of St. Joseph, serving a broad area of the valley around Moxee, but again primarily the Indians.

Yet the mission remained small and struggling, for development of the valley was slow; a quarter century passed from founding of the first mission before Catholic settlers entered the district under a fortunate set of circumstances bringing a unique people possessing the Old World's respect for tilling the soil and a belief in the land which at the outset showed so little promise. They were French and French Canadian, who would eventually draw others of their race from the Midwest through the writing of letters to friends and relatives about this land and its potential. They fitted well into the pattern, for from the time of the French voyageurs with Lewis and Clark, and then the big fur companies, these hills and canyons had echoed the rollicking roundelays of these expert boatmen, singing and chattering in their musical language.

Father Caruana whose belief was strong in this land may have envisioned such an influx as he continued his relentless campaign with Mother Joseph to send even a single Sister to the Yakima Valley. A small town known as Yakima City was springing up, and as Father Caruana saw it, time was of the essence to establish a school which might serve both white and Indian children.

He pressed the plan with Sister Praxedes, the Mother Vicar, for he felt they were becoming unreasonably sticky about the matter.

"I had reasons to invite your society, in preference to others, to take the direction of the contemplated schools in town," the priest wrote. "But should it be impossible or should it even oblige your community to submit to any hard sacrifice, then we have nothing else to do but have patience and submit ourselves to the Holy Will of God, and invite some other society to the charitable business. Please then to let know your Reverend Mother General's answer as soon as you will have it, that we could act on immediately; because things are so advanced here that I foresee it will be impossible any longer delay without losing this favorable occasion with these whites."

Father Caruana, who because of his isolation was having difficulty with both his French and English, wasn't anxious to journey to Fort Vancouver to debate the matter face-to-face with Mother Joseph. But he was pressing as hard as he could, reminding Sister Praxedes that he'd arranged for purchase of a house to be rebuilt in the town and needed $350.50 which he could collect, but not until he was assured that the Sisters of Providence would be sending nuns to operate the school.

"This for evident reasons in regard to the public esteem," he added. "On the other hand I am bound to pay the said sum of money as soon as the time fixed by the

contract is at hand."

Reading over his letter, Father Caruana thought he might have pushed too hard and was adopting a high-handed attitude toward the Sisters. He added a postscript, along with an additional piece of bait:

"It would be a cause of extreme sorrow to me, should this letter, or any expression continued in it, offend you or your esteemed community in the least. Almighty God knows how far from my mind and will is such a thing. I only intended to give you a fair idea of the present state of things, and tell you the cause of my hurrying on a definite answer. I repeat that I would prefer your society, and one of the reasons is because maybe in the course of time they will have also a hospital, and your society could do both; but if you cannot accept the care of the wished-for schools, then I will be obliged to call on some other society. I hope to hear from you soon..."

Now Father Caruana could only wait for a reply from the Western Mother House, considered the "cradle of Catholicism in the Pacific Northwest," where the Sisters of Providence had established themselves in 1856 at the request of the famed brothers, Fathers Francis Norbert Blanchet and Father A. M. A. Blanchet. The Sisters' French background would blend into the Yakima scene. Beyond that, Father Caruana was well aware of the driving force of Mother Joseph who worked wonders in establishing the base mission and was now beginning to spread out into the challenging settlements of the Oregon Country. In time she would establish missions, schools, academies, hospitals and other care centers for the poor, the sick and the indigent. He also knew of her faith, bravado and touch of foolhardiness, in traveling the wilderness trails at great risk to the mines of eastern Oregon, Idaho and Montana seeking gold dust and nuggets to finance her projects. Father Caruana concluded that if anyone could establish a good mission school and perhaps a hospital in this lonesome valley, it would be Mother Joseph.

Mother Joseph was embroiled—and that is the word for it—in attempting to open that hospital at Portland. This particular project hadn't been free of frustrations, from dealing with the local citizenry to actual construction of the building, designed and bossed by Mother Joseph herself. And while this Grand Dame of Pacific Northwest builders held boundless drive within her huge six-foot frame, she possessed only so much time and energy to devote to the demands of the Lord in a single day, even with His full blessing. Now she was confronted by another of Father Caruana's many blunt and disturbing letters.

Charles S. Schanno, a devout Catholic of the Yakima Valley, donated a site for the school as further inducement. The land contained a flimsy three-room shack of rough lumber, hardly more than a temporary shelter from the weather. Better buildings would be needed. Gambling on the future, Father Caruana made the rounds of Yakima City and the ranches, collecting $700 to help finance the school. He won, for the promise came from Vancouver that Sisters would be provided, although it might be another year. Father Caruana moaned; his last trip downriver and his letters stressing the urgency had evidently been for naught, as now he was faced with long postponement. He doubted that he could hold things together with local families eager for a school. There was much talk of organizing a public school which, if successful, might fill the need and make the plans for his own school even more precarious.

Moreover, on the way home, traveling across the vacant land by wagon from the steamboat landing, he had been injured when the driver failed to lock the wheels on a steep hill where he'd halted the team. The runaway wagon crashed into rocks and logs, breaking both the driver's legs, and crushing the priest, although he emerged without sustaining any fractures.

"At this critical moment Providence stopped the team and all was saved," he wrote Sister Praxades, "and with God's help we arrived here safe."

He added that the people, however, were disappointed not to see nuns returning with him.

"Therefore, I will be bound to make a sacrifice to have one father teaching in town till the Sister will come," he commented ruefully, "which will upset my plan of having one father wintering at the Indian camp. I know that you are ready to help as much as you can and I suggest to you that you (clear) the way of doing it by accelerating the coming of the Sisters next fall."

Father Caruana could be just as persistent as Mother Joseph was obstinate. He wasn't about to let the matter drift until he had exhausted all resources. Late in August, again demonstrating a complete lack of understanding of the situation, he prevailed upon Charles Schanno, the land giver, to sign a letter in Father Caruana's handwriting, to Mother Mary Theresa who had only a few weeks earlier opened the Sisters of Providence second Northwest hospital, St. Vincent, in Portland. The letter urged that she "hurry up sending the promised Sisters over here this fall, as almost all were expecting and some show themselves quite disappointed..."

And Father Caruana added his own postscript: "You see here another great

reason for pushing on our business—Please then go over to Vancouver and do your best, and let me know the result of everything..."

In October he still hadn't heard of a decision and was embarrassed trying to explain to the local families. But at long last the word came; yes, three Sisters would be sent to begin his long-desired school. The priest was overjoyed.

"I formed the idea for this new verified St. Joseph's Academy," he reminded Sister Praxades. "Everything makes me confident of its success; I see the hand of Providence visibly at every step, which assures me that it will be for the greater glory of God..."

Happily, the priest headed for Vancouver to escort the Sisters upriver and across the prairie to his mission territory. It was a raw time of the year, with snow flying in the high places and a frigid wind and storms lashing the great gorge. On November 6, 1875, the party started inland by sternwheeler, under escort of not only Father Caruana, but Mother Joseph who desired to see personally that her Sisters were well settled, with winter coming on. Sister Blandine of the Angels, one of the original five foundresses of 1856, was selected Mother Superior over Sisters Mary Dorothy and Mary Melanie. The perilous trip consumed almost a week, traveling part of the way on the Oregon Steam Navigation Company's fine **Daisy Ainsworth** through the middle river, almost a year to the day before her demise when she piled into a rock and broke her back above the Cascade rapids.

From The Dalles, the party crossed by ferryboat to the north shore, then went by stagecoach for thirty-five miles to Goldendale. John Kenny, a loyal Catholic pioneer of the area, would take them with his team and wagon the rest of the way, considering this his contribution to the new school. The road was rugged and the weather foul, and Kenny lashed logs to the wagon on the steep slopes to prevent a runaway similar to that experienced by the priest. The little band stopped at the Kenny farm to rest, a place known as Centerville. Their home "took travel," meaning it was a rest stop for people moving to and from the river, especially missionaries. The Kennys had even furnished a small room as a chapel. Then it required four days through wild and mountainous country where roving Indian parties were a constant threat to the whites. This was a danger the Sisters hadn't considered, although Father Caruana reassured them that most of the natives held the priests in high esteem.

Six days after leaving Vancouver, they reached Yakima City, a frontier village along a single dusty street. After spending the night in the town's only boarding house,

the nuns saw the "poor little convent" for the first time. Indeed, had the Sisters been in any other kind of endeavor than service to the Lord, they probably would have packed their bags to catch the first steamer back to Vancouver, after telling Father Caruana what they thought of him. No doubt Mother Joseph had her day in court anyway. But these frontier nuns learned to make-do; hardships and suffering were part of the challenge, so long as it was within reason and there was need and a purpose. Mother Joseph must have had her doubts about the need at this particular time. But it was done, and next day, November 13, which was the Feast of Saint Stanislaus, they had Mass in "a most unworthy habitation," as the Sisters described the crude altar placed in one of the rooms. For Sister Blandine it was the early days at Vancouver all over again, a "humble dwelling unworthy of the Divine Host Who honored our home with His presence" and "not worthy to receive the King of Kings." Significantly, too, the Chronicles are strangely silent about those first days spent by the Sisters in Yakima.

A week later, on November 22, the feast of Saint Cecilia, a better chapel had been prepared so that the public could be invited for Mass and the youngsters taught Catechism. Nine children were on hand in what became the opening day for St. Joseph Academy. And within a short time, attendance at this first school in the valley reached forty, the majority of the pupils not Catholic, and both girls and boys admitted, the latter up to age 12. Perhaps Father Caruana had been right after all...

Mr. and Mrs. Charles S. Schanno of the Yakima Valley donated land in 1875 so the Sisters of Providence could establish St. Joseph Academy.

It was from this structure, Providence Academy, Vancouver, that three Sisters of Providence left on November 6, 1875 to establish St. Joseph Academy, Yakima. Providence Academy was designed by Mother Joseph, and constructed in 1873. The building is now owned and being restored by the Hidden family of Vancouver.

A few months before St. Joseph Academy, Yakima, was established in November, 1875, the Sisters of Providence had opened Oregon's first hospital, St. Vincent, on May 10, 1875 in Portland. The Providence Sisters had established Washington's first hospital at Fort Vancouver in 1858.

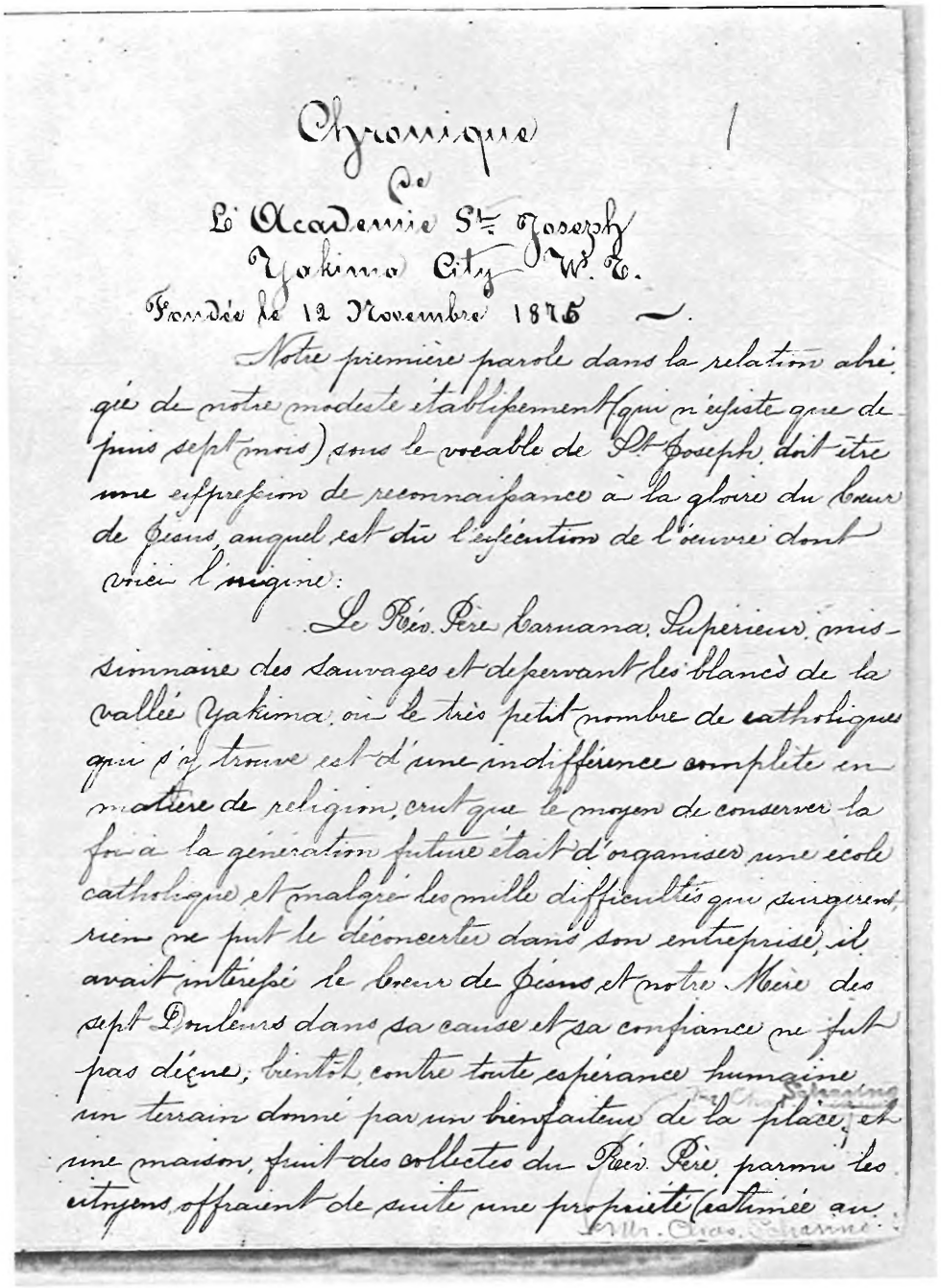
Mother Joseph had long since headed downriver, braving the storms and muttering to herself, concerned already about the future of the Yakima academy. Had she been completely in error in approving this project in such a thinly settled, undeveloped frontier? Supplies would be meager, as were the facilities and furnishings, with the Sisters facing a long, cold winter against those mountains. She could only pray that local families would take good care of them, for obviously she couldn't depend on Father Caruana. Next spring they must have seed and cuttings so they could begin raising their own produce. Something else worried her: she'd heard the Indians were becoming restless again. This mission would bear close watching in the months ahead.

Mother Joseph's fears were unfortunately all too valid. Encouraged by the growing attendance at their little school, the Sisters of Providence put all their energies into their teaching program. But they were living in poverty, near starvation, and many people didn't seem too concerned about them, while Father Caruana and the other priests visited only occasionally from the mission at Ahtanum. Opposition was growing among the settlers against development of a Catholic community and the fear that other youngsters attending the school would receive more than a general education—that they would be converted. Much of the anti-Catholic feeling was an extension of the old stories accusing the priests of stirring up the tribes against the settlers.

Undaunted, the Sisters took time from the school to visit the families, try to make friends, and give care to the sick and dying. It was a pioneer brand of what today is called public relations, and it worked. By the next year, the anti-Catholic feeling appeared to be subsiding and the Sisters were being accepted into the valley community.

But all wasn't well with them. Loneliness for the other Sisters and the closely knit life at Fort Vancouver—and now the opening of that exciting new hospital in growing Portland—added to their struggle to exist through that first brutal winter. Christmas and Easter vacation recesses were therefore welcome changes of pace and scene for the Sisters who also felt, because of their faith, the lack of regular services of a priest, since the St. Joseph Mission was over fifteen miles away. During the vacations there wasn't time to go to Vancouver, but the nuns could walk to Ahtanum.

"Here resided the Jesuits who gave us a hearty welcome," the Sisters noted in their Chronicles for the Mother House. "These excursions made us forget the privation we



Chronique
de
L'Académie Ste Joseph
Yakima City W. T.
Fondée le 12 Novembre 1875 —.

Notre première parole dans la relation abrégée de notre modeste établissement (qui n'existe que depuis sept mois) sera le vocable de St Joseph, doit être une expression de reconnaissance à la gloire du Cœur de Jésus, auquel est dû l'exécution de l'œuvre dont voici l'origine:

Le Rév. Père Caruana, Supérieur missionnaire des Sauvages et desservant les blancs de la vallée Yakima, où le très petit nombre de catholiques qui s'y trouve est d'une indifférence complète en matière de religion, crut que le moyen de conserver la foi à la génération future était d'organiser une école catholique et malgré les mille difficultés qui surgirent rien ne put le déconcerter dans son entreprise; il avait intéressé le Cœur de Jésus et notre Mère des sept Douleurs dans sa cause et sa confiance ne fut pas déçue; bientôt, contre toute espérance humaine un terrain donné par un bienfaiteur de la place, et une maison, fruit des collectes du Rév. Père parmi les citoyens, offraient de suite une propriété (estimée au

The official foundation date of St. Joseph Academy was November 6, 1875. This first entry in the chronicles of the sisters of Providence is dated six days later, November 12. Since pioneering sisters were French-speaking from Montreal, their early chronicles are in French.

In 1847, Father Louis D'Herbomez and Father Charles John Pandosy established the first Yakima mission at Ahtanum, near Wapato, known as Mission of the Holy Cross.

When the Northern Pacific Railroad established its own city of North Yakima in 1887, the Sisters of Providence joined the rest of Yakima City and moved St. Joseph Academy to a free lot provided by the railroad. This structure was completed in 1888.

felt in not being with our religious family on such feasts."

Local Indians flocked to the mission to meet the nuns, about whom they'd heard.

"The Indians, curious to see the Sisters, awaited us and welcomed us with handshakes, a form of politeness taught all the children," the Chronicler recorded. "The fervor and piety these people of the woods showed in their preparation for the celebration of these great feasts of our holy religion greatly edified us."

The Sisters needed to have a broader understanding of the valley's Indians, and this was all to the good. As at Vancouver, and wherever the Sisters of Providence became involved locally, nobody in need of a meal or other care would be turned away. Youngsters came to board at the Yakima school on Second Street between Rose and Emma. In the spring, d'Agapite, "one of the best Catholic Indians," pitched his tent near the convent. He was in the advanced stages of consumption (tuberculosis) and wished to have the Sisters' care during the last weeks of his life. The eager Sisters vied with each other to nurse the suffering native. More ill people sought such help and "we are happy to serve them, among them giving remedies for their ailments." These early acts of charity became the forerunners for establishment by the Sisters of Providence of the Saint Elizabeth Hospital in 1891, a project urged by officials of the railroad and the government reclamation service which saw the need for a local care center for workers.

Ever so slowly, at times with major setbacks, the Sisters were becoming better established in the community. They were reminded of Mother Joseph's early observation about the frontier Northwest when founding her mission at Vancouver:

"Beginnings are always trying, and here the devil is so enraged he frightens me."

Nevertheless, the people of Yakima recognized the value of having the Sisters in the valley by more frequent donations of goods and labor to their comforts and the betterment of the little school.

"Providence has protected us," the Sisters wrote in the Chronicles. "Because of the generosity of some of our friends, we have been able to improve the house and make it more comfortable. Although living in the midst of an unbelieving people, we enjoy the esteem and confidence of all. Prejudice against Catholicity is gradually disappearing... We owe a debt of gratitude to the Jesuits who have taken care of our spiritual and temporal needs since our arrival here. The few services that we can give them cannot compensate for the countless favors they do for us."

Despite poverty in material goods,

In 1876, a year after St. Joseph Academ Yakima was founded, the Sisters Providence opened another school Cowlitz, Washington. They directed t school, Providence of Our Lady of t Sacred Heart, until 189

where there was much cause for complaint, the area of most dissatisfaction concerned the Sisters' religion; i.e., the lack of daily Mass offered by a priest for which the nuns felt a strong need in order to carry forward their work. Mass and sacraments were given, at best, once or twice weekly and at times only fortnightly, since it meant a trip by horseback from the mission at Ahtanum. The Sisters, very upset by this lack of a regular schedule, considered it their greatest privation. Therefore, it was a thrill to learn that in June, Bishop A.M.A. Blanchet and Rev. Father Jean Baptiste Boulet would come for the school's first confirmation, indication that the convent would be receiving encouragement and recognition of its great spiritual needs. Also, for this isolated trio, the visit meant news and letters from home—both Fort Vancouver and Montreal—telling of new arrivals, illnesses, deaths and other day-by-day happenings of nuns who were in a family bond by their lives together.

Making the arduous journey from Fort Vancouver for the ceremonies were Mother Joseph and the aging Mother Vicar, Mother Praxedes of Providence. The pair hoped to give encouragement by considering an addition to the school. However, both were shocked by the little progress that had been made, the meager facilities, and the neglect of the Sisters' needs. Small wonder, they observed, that the Sisters had difficulty attracting pupils, especially with so many others in the valley's growing community which, although no full-time public school existed, was moving in that direction.

Mother Joseph visited the Sisters' garden plots where they were trying to produce some of their own fresh vegetables, and to teach the children, especially the Indian youngsters, about tilling the soil. The headway that the Sisters had made with some people of the community, through acts of kindness and charity, including feeding the poor, also gave Mother Joseph hope for the future. So she put her hammer and saw, which she seldom was without, to work making repairs and preparations for possibly expanding the building, since it was quite obvious that, like other nuns, these three were helpless when it came to construction or repair work.

Yet another winter would pass before rooms could be added to the school. By then, too, Sister Mary Eugene replaced Sister Blandine who simply wasn't functioning adequately. Sister Blandine had never held much confidence in the project of the Yakima Valley. Despondently she wrote Mother Joseph:

"As things are now, I do not see how it will be possible to continue the mission for the whites in Yakima. There are no resources to maintain a school where all

Dg. Mary of the C. Sr. M. E. Bales, Dr. Florence, Dr. Hennenegilde Dr. Meinrad

the people are about to depart to make a fortune elsewhere. There is no money in circulation and it is too great a risk to make a loan of several dollars with no guarantees. It is my impression that the time has not come for these people to have Sisters here. But I leave this question to others with greater foresight . . . Apart from many physical inconveniences here, the deprivation of the Blessed Sacrament, of a resident priest, and of daily Mass are the real trials we endure . . . I am like a fish out of water, and I sigh for the day when an Indian mission will open to take me out of this place."

The new Mother Superior set about at once trying to decrease the hardships, and also succeeded in convincing the Mother House at Montreal (no doubt with Mother Joseph's influence) to grant permission to build the first full-fledged convent in the Yakima Valley.

Largely through Mother Joseph's determination, the Yakima school was kept operating, for the opening of this mission along with one at Cowlitz brought much satisfaction to the Sisters of Providence in the expansion of their efforts in the Pacific Northwest. When summer vacation came, the workmen moved in to build the extra rooms for classes, the chapel, and living quarters. This virtually wiped out any hopes of a vacation for the Sisters.

"Because of our great poverty," it was noted, "we sacrificed part of our vacation to teach some classes. We thus helped to defray some of the numerous debts that we had to incur in the construction of a new school building that we needed for our increased enrollment."

New construction and repairs boosted the debt to $362. Trouble continued with the surrounding community, as Protestants and those of no particular faith were reluctant to back the academy. Only three Catholic families lived in town, plus perhaps four others in the surrounding countryside, so Catholic support was also very limited. Yet the hammering, sawing and sanding went on all summer, right to the deadline of beginning school in September. The classrooms and chapel were finished within a week of each other; and when the chapel was done, Father Caruana decided it would now be possible to hold regular public Mass there, a piece of news that bolstered the Sisters' hopes that the wobbly mission school might survive after all.

Then the struggling academy was dealt another blow when the public school, which had been operating only on a three month's schedule, announced its teaching year would be expanded to nine months. Parents began pulling their children out of St. Joseph's, thus seriously cutting into the

enrollment. The Sisters in part blamed local anti-Catholic feeling, and redoubled their efforts to convince parents that they were doing a topnotch job of instruction, far better than that of the public institution.

"We are not losing courage," the Chronicler reported. "On the contrary we are increasing our efforts to satisfy and hold our pupils. In many ways, we have always gone beyond our duty in serving them."

Yet the impact was ominous, for families were leaving for the mining camps, or other places where the prospects were brighter. Once again the Sisters wondered if the Lord really wanted a mission here, or if it could survive...

On the same property as St. Joseph Academy, the Sisters of Providence also established an Indian School. When opened in April 1880, nineteen members of the Yakima, Kittitas and Simcoe tribes were enrolled.

'he founders of the Catholic church in the 'acific Northwest in the 1840's were '. to r.) Bishop A.M.A. Blanchet of lisqually, Washington; his brother F. N. lanchet, Archbishop of Oregon; and ishop Modeste Demers, Bishop of 'ancouver Island, Canada.

All the while, the Yakima Valley and the entire inland region had been living under a dark cloud of renewed Indian attacks. This had its effect, too, on the people's attitude toward establishing permanent roots. For several years, the tribes had been on the rampage on both banks of the Columbia River, and especially on the eastern Oregon-Idaho side. A stunning victory in 1876 over General George Custer and the Seventh Cavalry at the Little Bighorn encouraged the chiefs and the young warriors throughout the West. There was also a significant stand of many months by Captain Jack and his Modoc warriors against the Army in the lava beds of northern California. Now in 1877 Chief Joseph and his Nez Perce had outwitted, out-fought and out-maneuvered the troops almost to safety of the Canadian border before giving up. The tribes, and especially the hot-blooded young men, realized that victory was possible over the white invaders.

In the Yakima Valley, fears were widespread that Chief Moses' band of non-treaty Indians might go on the warpath. Unfortunately, the rumors about the Catholic ties with the tribes were revived. But the crux of the restlessness lay in the Indians' Dreamer religion which had some of its ceremonial beginnings in the Yakima Valley where its founder was raised. The Dreamer cult, spreading through many tribes of the West, encouraged the natives to return to the ancient ways; that the Great Spirit was angry with them for having abandoned their old beliefs and allowing the whites to take over and desecrate the land of their Earth Mother.

Smohalla, described by General O. O. Howard as "an odd little wizard of an Indian," had founded the cult on Indian mythology and ceremonies drawn from those he'd witnessed as a boy at the Ahtanum Mission, plus others taken from the Mormons. His preachings made deep inroads among the unhappy tribes, weary of the white man's lies and his forked tongue. But when Smohalla threatened Sinkiuse Chief Moses' status, the chief drew him into a fight and left him for dead. Smohalla revived, crawled into a small boat on the Columbia, and drifted a long distance downriver before being rescued by some whites. He dropped from sight, wandering over the West and especially the Southwest and Rocky Mountain country. Wherever he went, Smohalla picked up ideas for his religion, and it may well have been in Utah that he observed Mormon ceremonies which were added to his own rites. Finally, he went back to the Yakima Valley where his Indian followers were overjoyed, believing he'd returned from the dead.

Chief Moses

Now in the fading days of the Bannock War, south of the Columbia, renegade warriors headed for the big river, hotly pursued by the troops. The warriors hoped to find safety north of the river. Chief Moses was being asked to take his people onto a reservation, but he told General Howard at Fort Simcoe that he was unwilling, as some northern tribes wanted him as their chief. Then a white man killed an Indian in the Yakima region, rekindling fires of hatred. The murder was ill-timed, playing into the hands of the Bannock braves. Seven or eight crossed the Columbia to kill and plunder. They ran onto a defenseless young couple named Perkins, she pregnant with their first child, as they traveled toward Yakima so she could be with her mother.

The double murder hit the St. Joseph nuns hard. They knew the family well as the young wife had attended the Sisters of Providence school at Steilacoom. Stories spread that the couple died cruelly, scalped and buried while still alive. Shudders of fear went through the Yakima community, for they were only a handful with little ammunition.

"From the human point of view, there was no means of saving our city from being completely pillaged, as we did not have sufficient ammunition or a large enough force of white people to resist the Indians," the Chronicles related. "You perhaps know of our well founded fears of the Indian wars that have been going on for two years now. The intention of the large number of Indians coming our way puzzled us. Was it to avenge the death of one of their people killed three years ago by the white people? We did not know. But God who had pity on all his poor children did not permit these fierce men to get across the Columbia. At the river they met a company of soldiers in a warship. The soldiers drove them back repeatedly. Some Indians drowned as they tried to swim across the river. All night the soldiers fought to prevent their crossing. Without the soldier help, we would surely have been massacred."

The situation remained tense throughout the summer and fall. In July several killings, described in the Chronicles as massacres, "took place near us, and we are in imminent danger ourselves." Remembering the raids of the 1850s when soldiers burned the missions, the Sisters feared that the new school might likewise be destroyed, if not by the natives, by the troopers. Misunderstandings developed — the roles of the priests were again held in doubt—as General Howard tried dealing with Chief Moses to deliver the Bannocks responsible for killing the Perkins couple, who had become something of a **cause celebre.** The renegades were hiding in the Sinkiuse

country and white settlers were certain Moses was protecting them. Chief Moses launched a lengthy harangue to disclaim his warlike intentions, but he failed to deliver the wanted warriors to white justice.

However, Moses agreed to a rendezvous with volunteers for a joint force or posse to "flush out" the Bannocks. But once more, Moses changed his mind from fear of being double-crossed by the whites when they got his warriors in their gunsights. Instead, Moses gave a show of force, staying out of range, and again reiterated his intentions to remain peaceful.

This latest action shot a bolt of terror through the town, for surely Moses was maneuvering to attack the village. The situation was intolerable; the whites wanted to move on the Moses force at once and also capture the Perkins killers. Until they did, Yakima would know no peace.

Recognizing this as the low period of the year for the tribes, when food was scarce, the whites knew it was the best time to strike. Fifty volunteers organized in early December. The force was joined by twenty-five friendly Yakimas under Chief Ignace, a devout Catholic. They suspected Moses was indeed hiding the killers and therefore, they must run him down. But before heading out, Chief Ignace led his warriors to the convent chapel at St. Joseph's Academy for confession, heard Mass, and received Holy Communion. Chief Ignace remarked solemnly that he wanted his warriors to be ready to meet the "Big Chief." But for the general community, this particular preparation for battle was found beyond belief, especially from Indians.

Near Priest's Rapids the Yakimas and white volunteers spotted Chief Moses and about one hundred well-armed warriors across the river. The Yakimas and volunteers refused to cross, knowing it would put them at a disadvantage against a large, well-knit force of braves. Finally Moses made his move; in the first attack and repeated skirmishes his men were captured and disarmed. Chief Moses escaped, but only temporarily as Ignace led the volunteers to the hiding place of the killers.

"Ignace saw to it not to expose the lives of the volunteers," the St. Joseph Chronicles recorded. "It was while trying to seize some of the murderers that they succeeded in taking Chief Moses prisoner also. What more could they have hoped for? Why are you surprised at so unexpected a victory without a drop of blood being spilled? Why surprised? With a certain pride I tell you that on the morning of their leaving Yakima for this expedition, Ignace with his best warriors came to Mass in our chapel and were fortified with the Bread of Life, that they called their viaticum,

thinking that they would never return alive. This sublime act of faith on the part of the Indians attracted not only our admiration but that of the Protestants of the city who voiced their astonishment. Ignace now has the confidence and esteem of all the white people who consider him their savior."

Not only did Chief Ignace become the valley's hero; the little academy gained stature in the mixed community as the Indian wars subsided and the settlers could turn with new hope to other matters in developing their beloved valley.

Yakimas

First Street, Yakima, late 188(

Despite their impressive inroad with the Indians, the Sisters at St. Joseph realized the academy wasn't secure. Valley growth was unhappily slow, with still less than a thousand in the area. Even Catholics continued to show small concern for the difficulties of the nuns or for educating their children at St. Joseph. There were exceptions, of course, like the Kenny family who remained kind, loyal and thoughtful, and could always be called upon whenever there was a need.

But the academy lacked many things. Desks were a crucial matter until a Christmas party raised $70—"a great deal of money for a poor mission like ours." A fence was needed to keep people from stealing the Sisters' wood supply. And sometimes their diet, in winter especially, left much to be desired; the Sisters found it difficult to follow the advice of their Mother Superiors that they eat to keep up their strength. How could you do so when the cupboards were virtually bare?

Once the Mother Superior found an academy Sister seated on the porch in tears.

"I just can't eat another mouthful of that salty meat," she said. "It's making me ill."

Money was scarce, there was no local store, and nobody thought to bring the academy any supplies. Mother Mary Eugene put on her cape right then, hiking three miles to a farmhouse where she begged for fresh meat.

The Sisters also had no cow and no funds to purchase such an animal. At last Kenny heard of their plight, cut a cow from his own herd, and took it to them.

But the general continued lack of interest and support made Mother Joseph and the other leaders of Sisters of Providence wonder again if it were worthwhile to keep up the struggle, that these Sisters might be used to greater advantage in more promising fields. Mother John of the Cross, the Sister Vicar, made several trips to the valley, trying to decide what should be done and if she were justified in maintaining the nuns there. Mother Amable, Superior General from the Mother House at Montreal, was escorted to Yakima by Mother Joseph during a visit to this western foundation. Mother Amable didn't like what she saw. Although Mother Joseph clung stubbornly to the hope that the valley would develop, and with it the academy would grow, she couldn't help agreeing that the Sisters were being subjected to miserable conditions and that even the end of the Indian skirmishes appeared not to reveal a very bright future.

The leaders decided to abandon the school at once, and Mother Amable felt so concerned for the Sisters' welfare that she would do so overnight, by any manner

The Sisters of Providence established St. Elizabeth Hospital, Yakima in 1891, in a seven room house for which they paid $12 a month rent. In 1892, this structure was constructed at 4th and E Streets with accommodations for 25 patients.

In 1914, the third St. Elizabeth Hospital was opened at Ninth Avenue and Walnut Street, Yakima.

or means, and moving the Sisters out with stealth if necessary. But Mrs. Mary Bartholet, one of the area's leading Catholics, got wind of the plan. Rushing to the academy, she threw herself to her knees, pleading with the Mother General that the school remain open. Mrs. Charles Schanno backed her up, and on the emotional requests of these two women, Mother Amable retreated from her decision. "The school will not close," she promised.

However, another crisis quickly followed. Enrollment was gradually increasing, but determined people in town still fought for a permanent, full-time public school. Once more the promoters tried, opening the public school just a block from the academy. These were unpleasant days for the Sisters, as youngsters left for the public classrooms and, reflecting the attitudes of their parents, shouted obscenities and insults as they passed by St. Joseph's. It was heartbreaking for the nuns who had treated the children kindly, with love and patient understanding, and struggled to give them a basic education.

Within a month, complaints arose over the new school. Parents who favored public education were now withdrawing their children, sending them back to the academy where they received better instruction and care. Within four months, the public school closed from a lack of funds. And the following fall of 1882, the Jesuit fathers began building a college in Yakima, just a short distance from the academy. The establishment of a second Catholic educational institution in the town gave the academy additional significance and the Sisters a new sense of purpose.

Yet the entire project seemed like a leaky bucket, where no sooner would one hole be plugged than another would break loose. The many uncertainties of this valley rubbed off on St. Joseph's. Talk was heard everywhere of the Northern Pacific building a railroad into the valley, but location of the right-of-way remained a hotly debated issue. Surveys only added to confusion and speculation, with land grabbers trying to turn the iron horse to their own advantage and profit.

Yakima citizens, numbering some four hundred, were excited over the prospects which would end their isolation and risks of travel to the "outside." It would surely help the town to grow, making its future brighter than ever before. The Sisters of St. Joseph looked forward to more frequent trips to Vancouver and more contact by mail and visitors.

Then landowners jacked up their prices for right-of-way beyond reason, viewing a bonanza of wealth coming from this rich railroad. Northern Pacific officials weren't surprised; they'd been confronted by this

kind of maneuvering before, throughout the West. A sure-cure would be to bypass the town. Civic leaders scoffed at the suggestion; no self-respecting railroad would ignore Yakima City. But the greedy opportunists wouldn't listen, nor come down in their land prices, so the Northern Pacific decided to build around the bandit community.

Still, the town wouldn't accept it. Three concerned citizens—J. B. Reavis, A. B. Weed, and J. M. Adams—were appointed to confer with NP directors in New York. What was learned shook them to their boots, as it would their home community. The Northern Pacific would develop its own town three miles away, to be called North Yakima. Yakima City was doomed to become a village of ghosts.

However, the NP officials were more kindly than in other instances, where steamcar operators like Ben Holladay crushed uncooperative communities without concern. Desiring to establish a going town as quickly as possible, the railroad offered any building owner of Yakima City a free lot and the moving of his structure without cost to the new site. The offer was more than fair, but Yakimans were reluctant to leave a going trade center and familiar surroundings, suddenly developing a love for the old town. So far as North Yakima was concerned, what was there after you got there?

The angry debate only added to the heat of summer. The village was split into two camps, with the opposition to a new town willing to let the iron horse run where it wished; eventually the railroad would need Yakima City and come to its doorsteps. Much of the pro and con discussion went on in the town's many saloons; wiser heads believed that sooner or later, the new town would win all the chips. And the editor of **The Oregonian** caustically observed: "If the Yakima saloons can only be persuaded to move, the remainder of the town will rise up as one man and gird its loins and get itself hence."

Not entirely, for the Sisters of St. Joseph's wouldn't be influenced by the whereabouts of the saloons. Their regret was that once again, circumstances seemed to doom their academy and this time, not only the buildings but the property and all else that they had managed to develop and acquire. A new church building was nearing completion, making additional ties to old Yakima, which would become known as Union Gap.

In that turbulent, uncertain summer of 1884, the nuns adopted a wait-and-see attitude as to whether the new town would be realized. Mother Joseph, in her wisdom, felt that it would and that unfortunately, the academy would have to move eventu-

The sisters of Providence closed St. Joseph Academy in 1969.

ally in order to survive. She was therefore already drafting plans for a new school.

Meanwhile, the strangest street parade ever staged in the West was getting under way. To break the log jam of reluctance, determined Northern Pacific representatives went to David Guilland, proprietor of a large hotel, offering a costless move for his whopping building. Seeing possibilities for his enterprise in being close to the railroad, Guilland agreed, then bought a revolver, for angry citizens threatened to blow up his place and him with it for capitulating to the Northern Pacific. But Guilland bulled ahead, refusing to yield to threats and intimidation. Workers jacked up the hotel and it rolled on its way. Soon a furniture dealer, A. J. Pratt, was hitting the road to North Yakima, and now the flood gates were opening wide in the rush to evacuate the old town, as stores, service buildings, homes and—yes—the saloons crawled the three miles over dusty road and through the grass and sagebrush to their new free lots.

Business went ahead as usual, steps and ladders hung from the doors for customer convenience. The Portland newspaper was on target about the saloons, for booze and cigars flowed as freely as ever. The Indians came to watch, day and night, considering this the oddest show ever produced by the strange and unpredictable white man. And guards were needed to keep men wanting an afternoon siesta in the shade from being crushed beneath the buildings by the rollers, which may still be found under some of the old Yakima buildings. By the time the first train rolled just before Christmas 1884, North Yakima was ready to hail a new era for the valley.

Others clung to the old town, among them the Sisters because this was where they'd put down their roots and invested years of sacrifice, hardship and heartbreak. Ironically, St. Joseph Academy was now beginning to show strong signs of permanence. But this would be a year of doubt; when school took up in September only seven pupils enrolled, although the total grew to twenty in about a week. Then Father Caruana left for Coeur d'Alene, to be replaced by Father Victor Gerrand, and the staunch old founder of the mission was gone from the scene. In the spring Mother Joseph and Sister Arimathea, another nun from the Vancouver mission, arrived in Yakima to decide once more about the future of the floundering academy. There was also the matter of establishing a hospital—the Sisters of Providence by now had a sound reputation for constructing and operating bonafide hospitals and care centers—for the railroad was anxious to have such a facility and approached the Sisters about such a possibility.

"It is difficult to make a decision," wrote the Chronicler. "Mother Joseph did decide not to repair the old building, although it badly needed repair. We were to wait patiently to see which city would prosper, and then we could make our choice."

In any case, St. Joseph's had taken option on a site given by the railroad on block 87 in the new town, if the move were deemed necessary. For the Sisters, it was a frustrating time.

"We keep hoping that our Yakima mission, which has progressed little amidst real privations and sacrifices, will someday bear fruit," the Chronicler commented.

The mission would bear fruit, from yet-unforeseen ways and after additional years of hardship and upheaval. Another expedition was made upriver by Mother Joseph and Mother John of the Cross to inspect land in North Yakima, go over the titles, and begin construction of the new academy as soon as possible, for it now seemed certain the old town with its vacant lots, declining population and inactivity was in a definite downward spin. If the academy were to have any future, it must be where the action was. The decision to move proved a right one, for North Yakima which later dropped the "North" developed into one of the largest cities on any tributary of the mighty Columbia, a crossroads of rail, water and road transportation for central Washington. And St. Joseph Academy and later a flourishing hospital grew right along with the city, contributing to its cultural development, and its health.

The convent construction was hardly under way when the Sisters, looking ahead to reopening of classes in a few weeks, were forced to move, in the summer of 1887, to the property along North Fourth Street, bounded by Naches Avenue, C and D streets. Since the main structure wasn't far enough along for occupancy, the Sisters rented a house, and a supporter, T. J. V. Clarke, allowed them free use of a small residence as a dormitory for boarding pupils. Both buildings were on stilts, perhaps moved from the old town, and were impossible to heat, the wind whistling through the walls and the floors from lack of insulation.

"Because of the cold we had to move out of this house that could not be adequately heated," the Sisters reported. "It really was a very poorly built house. We had to use the upstairs of the laundry in our convent, still under construction. Mr. Blanchet hastened to have it finished for our use. We were very crowded, the children having to climb into their beds from the foot. Beside the bed, each child had a bench. But the room was warm and all right until

Grammar Grade at St. Joseph Academ
1904 (standing, l. to r.) Inez Flynn, Jam
McCafferty, Willie Cleaver, Alice May
(seated) Lillie Castle, Louise Brainar
Myrtle Hecc

we could get a better place. The house we were living in was four or five acres from the convent, thus giving us a morning and and evening walk in the fresh air...From September 5 to March 5, the Jesuit fathers let us use three of their residence rooms for classes. Not having a single quiet corner in our house for our meditations, we went to the Jesuit chapel for our prayers. We thus used three houses in the middle of winter and had plenty of exercise."

Fuel was expensive; the Sisters and Mother Joseph were grateful for every cent donated to their support and completion of the three-story brick and veneer academy building which would be a staunch local landmark for many years. The contractor, J. B. Blanchet, tried to push the work to give the nuns additional space for operating the school throughout the lean, frigid winter. What would eventually be the dining room for boarding pupils was utilized temporarily as a kitchen for students, the Sisters and the workers. The community room became a combined parlor and recreation room. The occupants seemed constantly to be reshuffling things to accommodate the workers. At times they occupied rooms with the plaster still moist on the walls.

"From January until March," the Chronicler wrote, "it would be difficult to say where we slept, as we were constantly moving our beds from one place to another."

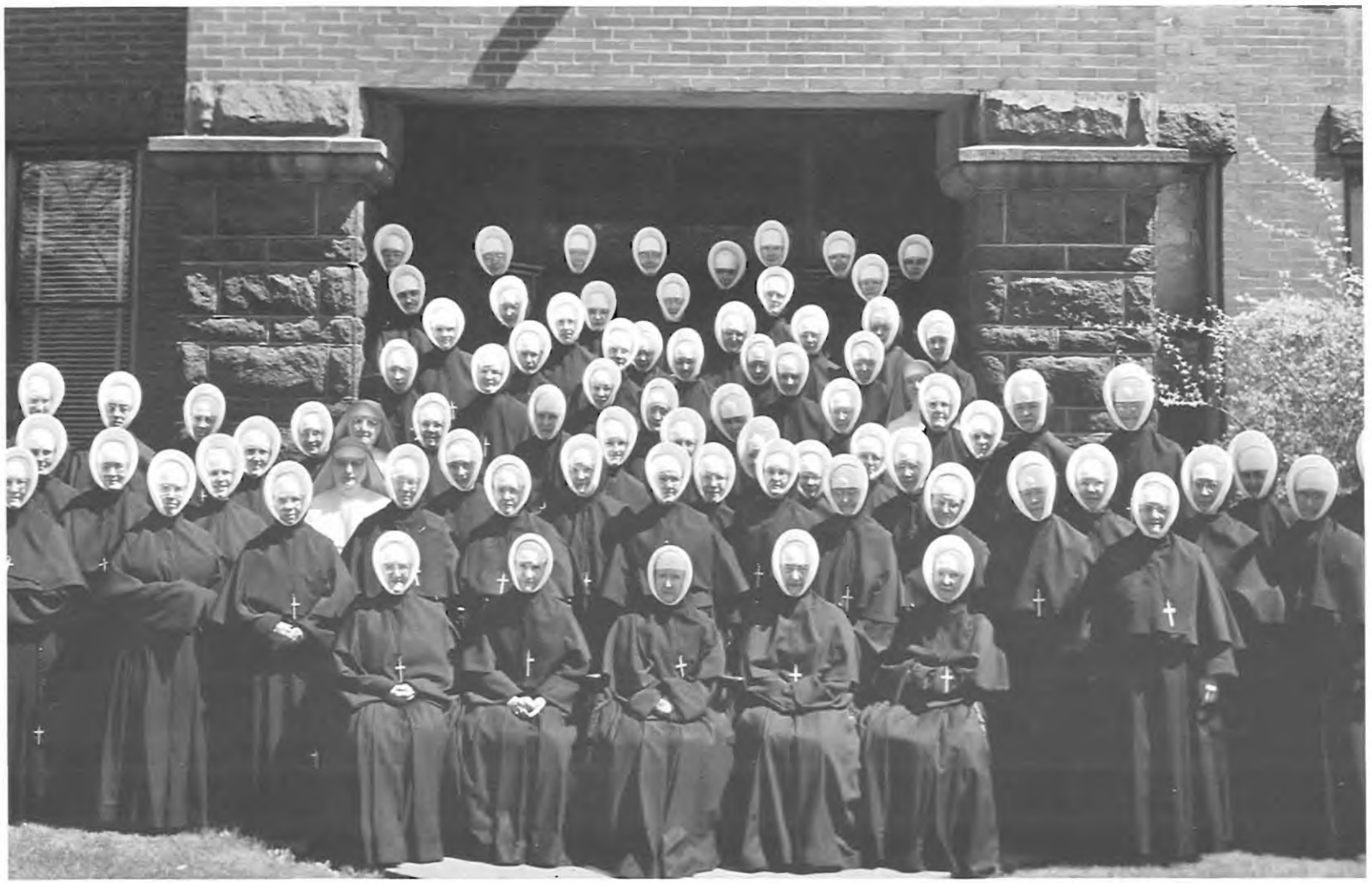
Throughout this crucial period, the untiring Mother Joseph shuttled from Vancouver, enduring the rigors and risk of winter travel by steamboat and railroad—the latter making the journey somewhat easier than by wagon—for she must be on the scene to supervise her latest construction project. The need for the academy was certainly apparent now, as the valley was booming, spurred by the railroad, with a population of some three thousand. This meant mounting attendance for the academy. In this year of construction, the Sisters were caring for two orphan children, 18 other boarding pupils, 48 day students, and 20 in music. They also were making 500 home visits, 65 calls on sick persons, 20 night watches, and serving 1,150 charity meals to the poor and indigent, as a part of the creed of the Sisters of Providence whose original name when the order was founded in Montreal contained the word "charity."

"They (the poor) should be your prime concern," reminded a visiting Mother Superior from Montreal, "since it is for them that we give ourselves to Christ..."

In the spring the sixty-foot square academy was completed, crowned by a belfry of familiar design which was Mother Joseph's common trademark for her buildings. The occasion was a joyous one; now

1 James Mc. Cafferty. 4 Louise Brainard. 5 Myrtle Hecox.
2 Inez Flynn. 6 Alice Mayer.
3 Willie Castle. 7. Willie Cleaver.

Sisters of Providence gathered at St. Joseph Acade
Yakima in 1950, celebrating the school's 75th anniversa



the Sisters had a permanent "center" on sufficient land which could expand and develop, and near a site where a future hospital could be raised. Soon the Sisters went to work on another long-nurtured plan to educate many of the Indian children of the area. A smaller building to accommodate about forty pupils was erected across the property along Naches Avenue for the Indian boarding school. The project wasn't a popular one, as many people didn't like the idea of white and Indian youngsters mixing together on the same grounds. Despite the criticism, the nuns moved ahead with what they considered a critical need if the Indian youngsters were ever to survive in the white world. When the school first opened in April 1888, nineteen members of the Yakima, Kittitas and Simcoe tribes signed up in addition to the regular academy enrollment. The event was a colorful affair, the youngsters dressed in the regalia of their tribes and staging a procession which attracted much attention of the local citizenry. But four Indians had to be turned away, "as we did many more, for lack of a place for them to live. If this class prospers, as it promises to do, we have high hopes..."

It was springtime, a season of hope and beauty, and the academy was blossoming along with the growing numbers of fruit trees in the valley. So many applications were made for the Indian school that wings were planned immediately to house the boys and girls. The academy had to share its classroom space temporarily with the Indian youngsters who now totaled sixty. And more Sisters were required to handle this sudden interest.

However, a frustrating condition faced the Sisters in the Indian school, which was getting some government financing for a maximum of fifty pupils. The Indian children, especially the boys, found classroom life sheer torture, and too confining. Time and again children would disappear for days at a time, leaving the Sisters who were responsible for their welfare worried over the runaways. Then the "lost" would return without explanation, for it was simply a longing for the outdoors, the wildlife, and the freedom of the hinterlands that called the child into the open.

Hoping to keep the youngsters busy at school, and also for the academy's welfare, the Sisters turned to farming small plots, and teaching the youngsters, both Indian and white, some of the fundamentals of growing things. For the Indian children, this new vocation would likely be of great value to them in the future of this changing valley. The Sisters had long planted their own vegetables, when they could obtain water. Now other newcomers were unlocking the hidden treasure of this Land of

Promise. In the Moxee area where French farmers were settling along with friends and relatives from the Midwest—most of them wise to good agricultural practices—artesian wells brought water to the parched acres where vegetable gardens flourished and apple trees blossomed profusely.

Irrigation canals seemed the answer. The friendly Yakima chief, Kamiakin, had found this to be true in 1853 when he dug an irrigation ditch to his place at Tampico, a short distance from the Ahtanum Mission. Whites took the cue, for water was the prime key to survival, and while it was abundant in the many streams and rivers, the land itself was dry and hopeless, with only scattered rainfall. The ditches of Thomas and Benton Goodwin made their five-acre wheat field produce forty bushels to the acre. The Nelson Ditch, also among the firsts of the 1860s, drew water from the Naches River, leading to a cooperative project called the Union Canal.

The area of the historic Ahtanum River became a focal point for this kind of development. In 1872 Charles Carpenter raised the valley's first hops from irrigation. That same year Charles Schanno, the land-giver, who so strongly supported the Sisters of Providence in their first efforts to establish St. Joseph Academy, and his brother, Joseph, teamed with Sebastian Lauber to dig a canal from the Ahtanum to their places near the site of Yakima City. Later, in 1874, the amazing Schanno brothers undertook a more ambitious project, a ditch to their farm eight miles in length, eighteen feet wide and eighteen inches deep. The water was used primarily for garden crops and small acreages of wheat; not until 1884 was the valley's first great crop, alfalfa, raised on land watered by the Schanno ditch.

Gradually, through the vision of forward-looking men like Charles and Joseph Schanno, the network of canals fanned out across the valley. A miracle was in the making as the valley began to flourish and bloom not only with crops but with people who realized its tremendous potential. Certainly if anyone needed convincing, the magic happened upon arrival of the railroad. Miscellaneous seeds such as those of an apple or other fruit tossed in the vicinity of the dripping water towers by passengers sprouted and reached for the clouds like Jack's beanstalk, growing with unbelievable rapidity, healthy and tall.

More and more large canals were dug by private companies, among them the Selah Valley Ditch Company and the Moxee Company, from the Naches River rather than the Yakima. Other canal construction began near Prosser and Kiona. Some companies folded in the hard times of the 1890s, but the Northern Pacific ac-

quired the interests and continued the canal building. Finally, after the turn of the century, the federal government entered the picture with major projects, until hundreds of miles of canals and sub-canals brought life-giving water to the dry volcanic acres, and promise of a kind of prosperity and garden beauty that valley residents never dreamed possible, yet in the future would mean over half a million productively rich agricultural acres rated as some of the finest in the nation.

The magical transformation came to the city, too, as ditches of water flowed along the streets and people were able to grow their gardens and shade trees which added beauty to the town that moved. Vegetables . . . hops . . . alfalfa . . . melons . . . peaches . . . prunes . . . grapes . . . apples . . . Those seeking crop diversification turned to the fruit trees and quite obviously, the apple, often taking cuttings from the pioneer trees that had been planted decades before. Thus, the legend grew, and with sound foundation, that the apple industry descended from the trees at Fort Vancouver. And writers and reporters traveled from all over the country to see this transformation from sagebrush and dust into the Promised Land.

"Birds sang and flowers bloomed on all sides," wrote a doubting Kirk Monroe in 1894 for Harper's Weekly. Monroe who hated heat and dust was amazed at the alteration of the once-desolate land. "Everywhere were the ripple and glimmer of water. The roadside canals and lateral ditches were brimming full, and it gurgled merrily through the little floodgates, giving access to the green fields where it found them open. Save for occasional intrusion of narrow belts of unwatered and melancholy sage, it would have been beyond belief that this smiling landscape could have ever formed part of the Great American Desert. These evidences were, however, irrefutable, and in contrasting them with their environment, one could not but marvel at the miracle."

As this garden prospered, thousands of people were drawn to the enriched region. By the turn of the century the population had reached 15,000. This meant a burgeoning city of Yakima, and likewise, an expanding St. Joseph Academy to educate the many children. The Indian school was finally closed when the U. S. Department of Interior decided it could no longer give financial support to private or sectarian schools. While this eliminated the criticism of mixing Indian and white children, it was a staggering blow to the academy, leaving it again over-staffed with a heavy debt and sharply reduced enrollment. Once more it appeared the academy might be forced to close, until a local citizen,

St. Elizabeth Hospital, 19

James Cunningham, wrote a check for $3,000 to help meet its many bills.

"This mission has always had its share of trials," related the Chronicler. "But this year the weight of the cross we had to offer Jesus was the heaviest ever. In spite of the little hope we had that the government would renew our contract for the Indian school, we kept trying. But in July they wrote us that the allocation for us was discontinued. What to do? Our poverty did not permit us to keep the children, but we dreaded sending them away. The Indians are weak and easily influenced. But there was nothing else to do but send them home. We entrusted them to the care of Divine Providence and Our Lady as they left us in tears. Many of them preferred to stay home rather than attend the Protestant schools... We began our school September 1 with two or three boarders and a few day pupils..."

Yet this became, nevertheless, the turning point, leading to an upturn of enrollment and steady growth in the coming decades. In 1903 St. Joseph held its first high school graduating exercises, and six years later (1909) a new wing was opened because the classrooms were so crowded than "many Catholic children were turned away and were obliged to attend the public schools." In another few years, the academy was granted full accreditation in Washington State.

The magic of the Yakima Valley and the strong faith of the Sisters of Providence in the valley, despite all its rawness and the need to do the work of the Lord, were reflected in St. Joseph's. The years of struggle, of doubt, and great risk were behind them now. By the year of the school's Golden Jubilee in 1925, enrollment totaled 449 pupils and the academy could boast of thousands having received their basic education there, then becoming part of the permanent population of the Yakima Valley. In this manner, the sisters made a continuing contribution to the cultural and spiritual life of the valley. And, likewise, the formidable six story St. Elizabeth Hospital known as "the big red house on the hill" cared for and sheltered thousands of patients, including innumerable charity cases.

Mother Joseph and Father Caruana, who had clung tenaciously, against overwhelming odds, to the idea that such a school was needed in the valley had been far reaching in their vision. And as the founding sisters tilled the rich magical soil of their garden plots and the good priest set out the first apple trees which now bloom in such profusion, both were certain that someday the valley would bear the fruits of their labors in countless ways.

Author's Note: The old Ahtanum Mission today has been restored, but St. Joseph Academy was closed in 1969 when it consolidated with Marquette and Yakima Central Catholic High School to form Carroll High School. St. Elizabeth Hospital, however, remains a leading health care institution in the Yakima Valley. Near the Ahtanum Mission, visitors may still see a dozen of the early apple trees blossoming and bearing fruit. These trees are the beginnings of Yakima's and Washington State's mighty industry which yearly harvests on 65,000 acres some two billion apples alone. And the "parent tree," having come from England as seed around Cape Horn, still yields apples near restored Fort Vancouver. Mother Joseph and the other Sisters must have walked and sat often beneath this patriarch, from which cuttings were taken for the fort's own orchard and later, those east of the Cascade Mountains.

"Parent" tree near Fort Vancouver, Washington.

Apple trees at Ahtanum Mission in the Yakima Valley.

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Materials from the archives of the Sisters of Providence, Seattle, were used. Also, early records of St. Joseph Academy, Yakima, were consulted. For the story of the Northwest's first apple tree, at Fort Vancouver, the author consulted his own files and his published writings on the subject.

Photos: Archives of Sisters of Providence, Seattle.