

YAKIMA DAYS

A narrative of the events which led to the abandonment of the Oblate Missions among the Yakima Indians and the subsequent opening for settlement of the Okanogan Valley in British Columbia in the year 1859.

The old Mission of the Immaculate Conception on the shores of Lake Okanogan has passed away. Its buildings have with few exceptions been taken down. Its farms and orchards are incorporated in other holdings. The fertile valley which the first missionary fathers found deserted, save for the native Indians and one white family, is now the great apple country of the Canadian Northwest; the center of which is Kelowna, some six miles from the original Mission site. The story of how the Oblate Fathers came to take up their residence there, and to encourage others to do the same, is of interest, and may be recorded before the generation that knew them has entirely passed on.

As briefly as possible let us sketch the events which brought the "Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate," to give them their full title, to the north west coast of America at all.

Founded by Charles Joseph Eugene de Mazenod in 1816, they were first known as "Missionaries of Provence," for it was in the south of France that they were called into being to repair the ravages done to religious education by the revolutionary period. Their founder became in later days (in 1837) Bishop of Marseilles, and died at an advanced aged in 1861. In February 1826, his band of brothers had received approbation as a congregation by Pope Leo XII.

While these men were hard at work in the south of France, two movements were being made to introduce the Catholic region into the north-west regions of America. The Spanish regime on Vancouver Island had passed away finally in 1795 and the Franciscans had withdrawn to their establishments in California leaving no direct traces of their work behind them. Nevertheless it had influenced the natives to some extent and legends among the Indians of the islands of the northern Pacific Ocean lingered long. (For a note on this see the book of Reminiscences by Father Brabant, recently republished by Father Charles Moser, O.S.B.)

The introduction of teachers of Christianity was destined to come from two distinct sources. The various fur trading companies throughout North America had in their employ many Indians as well as French Canadians. Many of the Iroquois of Eastern Canada became devout Catholics and it was a band of these Indians from Caughnawaga near Montreal, who at some ill defined time wandered as far as the Rocky Mountains and gave what they knew of religion to the Flathead Indians in what is now known as the State of Montana. "Big Ignace" or "Ignace la Mousse," the leader of the band, aroused so strong a desire for a visit from the "black-gowns," that between the spring of 1831 and the fall of 1839 no less than three deputations from the Flathead and Nez Perces Indians travelled to St. Louis to obtain the services of the priests. It was to St. Louis, rather than Montreal, that they went, since General Clark, of the Lewis and Clark expedition, was still a resident in that city, to whom in the first place they went for information. Space will not permit details of these expeditions and the matter will be found fully discussed in Marshall's "Acquisition of Oregon," and more briefly in a paper by "C. T. Johnson" in the *W.H.Q.* vol. 2, no. 2. pp. 195 et seq. The result of the first expedition was to arouse great interest and sympathy in St. Louis and while no "black-gown" was forthcoming at that time, it produced a number of Protestant missions who quickly responded to the appeal. The pioneer Methodist missions were commenced in 1834 by the Board of Foreign Missions under Jason and Daniel Lee who settled on the banks of the Willamette river. The Presbyterians settled Dr. Marcus Whitman at Waiilatpu among the Cayuses near Walla Walla and H. H. Spaulding with W. H. Gray among the Nez Perces on the Clearwater by the end of 1836. They were followed by Cushing Eells and Walker in 1838 among the Flatheads on the Chemakane branch of the Spokane river. (Bancroft. 2. 525.).

Amongst the Catholics the first expedition only produced a letter from the Rev. Joseph Rosati, Bishop of St. Louis, which he sent to the editor of the "*Annales de L'Association de la Propagation de la Foi*" of Lyons in France which was published in 1832; and read by a small boy near that city named Eugene Casimir Chirouse, who was in the fulness of time to make up for the Bishop's tardy responses to the Flathead's appeal. In 1834 the Holy See confided the care of the Catholic Indian Missions to the Jesuits, and it was therefore to that body that Bishop Rosati applied in a letter dated October 20 1839, after the third

application from the Rocky Mountains. In that letter he relates the various journeys of the Iroquois, Flatheads, and Nez Perces, and asks that they may be attended to. It so happened that on the day to St. Louis, this third deputation, headed by "Young Ignace," son of "Big Ignace" paused at Council Bluffs and there met a young priest whose name was De Smet, a member of the society of the Jesuits at St. Joseph's Mission. His interest was aroused, and he at once responded to the call sent out by his Superior on receiving the appeal of Bishop Rosati, and in March 1840 he set forth for the Oregon Territory. His activities for the next seven years had far reaching results.

The second movement referred to as introducing the Catholic religion into the north-west came from the early settlers themselves. These were mainly French Canadians who had served with the fur companies at Astoria and later with the Hudson's Bay Co at Fort Vancouver. Dr. John McLoughlin encouraged these men with their families to settle on farms and being Catholics they soon sought the presence of their priests. In 1834 and again in 1835 the settlers of the Willamette Valley made application to Monseigneur Provencher, Bishop of Juliopoolis at Red River, but they too met with unexpected difficulties. It was not until November 24, 1838 that two secular priests, Rev. Francis Norbert Blanchet, vicar-general, and Rev. Modeste Demers, arrived at Fort Vancouver in the company of Mr. John Tod of the Hudson's Bay Co. (See Hist Sketches. pp. 18 & 23). [Bancroft 2, 538.]

They were received with gladness, James Douglas acting governor in place of Dr. McLoughlin who was absent in Europe greeting the party, and personally conducting the priests to apartments prepared for them.

For some years the secular and Jesuit priests worked side by side, confining their activities mainly to the district now covered by the State of Washington, although the Jesuits carried their work far into the Rocky Mountains as well.

Mr. Demers, however, visited Puget Sound and Fort Langley in 1841 and also accompanied the Hudson's Bay annual Brigade to New Caledonia, visiting Fort St. James in September 1842. This visit was repeated by Fr. Nobili S.J. in 1845 and again in 1846. Much information must thus have been gained at an early period, of the country to the north of them, and the Okanogan Valley in particular, traversed by the Brigade for so many years, all of which would be of great value in the years to come.

Their work was appreciated in Europe and on December 1. 1843 a Brief was issued by the Holy See erecting the Oregon Territory into a Vicariate-Apostolic, with Fr F. N. Blanchet as the head, having for his title that of Bishop of "Philadelphia in partibus," subsequently changed to "Bishop of Drasa." (O'Hara. p. 98).

On November 25, 1844 the Bishop Elect left for Montreal where his consecration took place on July 25. 1845. He then left for Europe to procure workers and in July 1846, at his request, Pope Pius IX erected the Vicariate-Apostolic into an Ecclesiastical Province with three Sees.

(1). Oregon City, with Bishop F. N. Blanchet as Archbishop.

(2). Walla Walla, with Rev A. M. A. Blanchet, Canon of Montreal as Bishop.

(3). Vancouver Island, with Rev. Modeste Demers as Bishop.

The Rev. A. M. A. Blanchet, Canon of Montreal was brother to the new Archbishop and was consecrated Bishop of Walla Walla at Montreal on September 27, 1846.

We can now connect up our links. Archbishop Blanchet and his brother the Bishop of Walla Walla, who must not be confused with one another, made such pitiful appeals to Bishop de Mazenod at Marseilles for helpers in their new dioceses that he was constrained to consent to send some of his Oblates to the North-West coast. On January 8. 1847 he selected five persons whose names were as follows: Rev. Father Pascal Ricard. Superior of the House of Notre Dame de Lumieres, the training school for the Oblate missionaries. Through hard work his health had broken down, and threatened with consumption he was about to apply to the Bishop to be relieved of his duties, when the call came to him to go to the far off mission field. He was accompanied by: Eugene Casimir Chirouse, the lad who had read the appeal of the Flathead Indians in the Lyons paper years before.

Charles John Felix Pandosy, known in religion as Charles Marie Pandosy, the subject of this narrative to a large extent, who will be noticed further in greater detail.

Georges Blanchet, who must not, be confused with the two Bishops of the same name who were already working on the coast whither Georges was bound.

All the last three were aspirants to the priesthood but not yet even sub-deacons.

Lastly Celestin Verney, a lay brother.

The little party embarked at La Havre for New York on board the "Zuric" on February 4. 1847. At St. Louis they met the Bishop of Walla in whose diocese they were about to work, and henceforth they travelled together. The Bishop was accompanied by his vicar-general Rev. J. A. B. Brouillet and two clerics, Messrs P. L. Rousseau and G. Leclaire. At Kansas City, then a mere outpost of civilization, they joined a caravan. During the long and tedious months that followed Father Ricard records that "Father Pandosy has not lost his voice. The echoes of the forest and the silence of the prairies retain the canticles and songs from his powerful lungs. As for the others, above all Chirouse, they preserve the good humour which distinguishes them." (Ortolan. p. 277).

On reaching Fort Hall at the end of the first week in August, it was evident that the season would be far advanced before the party would arrive at its destination. Consequently the Bishop, with Mr. Rousseau and Fr Ricard, who was accompanied by Brother Georges Blanchet, went on ahead on horseback, to prepare lodgings and provisions for the winter. They reached Fort Walla Walla on September 5th 1847. Fr Ricard selected the country of the Yakima Indians as his sphere of labour.

Almost at the same time, in the month of August, the Archbishop of Oregon City, with a large party, arrived from Europe, travelling by sea, and resumed work at his headquarters at St. Paul.

During the period that the two missionary parties had been converging by land and sea upon the Oregon Territory, Paul Kane, the artist, had been making his tour, a description of which he gives in his book, "The Wanderings of an Artist Among the Indians of North America" (Paul Kane. London. 1859). He spent four days at the Mission of Dr. Marcus Whitman at Waiilatpu. The day after his return to Fort Walla Walla, Indians who had been down in California arrived back with a tale of death and disaster. They had to report the murder of Elijah Hedding, son of a Cayuse Chief, and their excited state of mind caused Paul Kane to fear for the safety of Dr Whitman. He therefore made a hurried trip back to the mission and warned the doctor, who felt no fear, declaring that he had been too long in the country to be in any danger. This record of Kane's is of importance in view of the murder of the doctor and his party which took place only a few months later, as showing the state of mind of the Indians before the arrival of the Bishop and his

priests, and also that the doctor had been warned of his danger shortly before the tragedy took place.

On October 4. the remainder of the party arrived at Fort Walla Walla. As the object of the Oblates was to work among the Indians, they left the fort early in the month and established themselves among the Yakima Indians. This mission was situated about a league above the junction of the Yakima and Columbia rivers, and was selected for them by Peo-peo-mox-mox, chief of the Walla Wallas. The first mission opened in the fall of 1847, was St. Rose of Chemna, also known as St. Rose of Simcoe. The site was in the lower valley of the Yakima river, between what now are the township of Toppenish and the township of Mabton, where, or near where the present Indian "Shaker" church edifice stands. This site is on the south side, not the immediate bank, of the Yakima river. The choice was a suitable one for the Indians but hardly so for the missionaries, since wood had to be procured from a distance of about 4 to 5 kilometers, made into rafts and dropped into the Yakima river. The Indians watched the fathers toiling without offering the slightest assistance, save that of eating their provisions, writes Father Ortolan, in his centennial history of the O.M.I.

The Bishop established another mission for the secular clergy among the Cayuses on the Umatilla which was given to the Rev. J. B. A. Brouillet. Here they accepted the offer of an old house from an Indian named Tautowé, which Brouillet and Rousseau put into a state of repair, and which was dedicated to St. Anne on November 27. 1847. Alas for human enterprise! Two days later, November 29. the tragedy known as the "Whitman Massacre" was enacted wherein Dr. Marcus Whitman with his wife and 12 other persons were murdered, and many others, mostly women and children made prisoners. In this terrible affair, the Oblates were not directly concerned. The massacre occurred among the Presbyterian missions and the only Catholics brought into the matter were the Bishop and the Rev. J. B. A. Brouillet, whose mission was so closely placed to Waiilatpu. Mr. Brouillet, on learning of the murders, went to the scene and buried the dead, the watchfulness of the Indians preventing his doing anything further. Then he saved the life of Mr. Spalding, whom he met on his way, and who had no knowledge of what had occurred. By his timely information Spalding was enabled to make his escape into the bush and safety. But the effects produced by the tragedy affected the Oblates as well as every other religious mis-

sion for many years. The causes of the murder were varied, but without doubt the murder of Elijah Hedding, the son of the Cayuse chief already referred to, was one factor, while the words and acts of Tom Hill, belonging to Whitman's mission, a disaffected Indian, who embittered the natives against Whitman was another. The attacks of measles and dysentery which were so rife among the immigrants of 1847, together with the unusual severity of the winter of the previous year, which rendered the Indians more than usually susceptible to the white man's diseases had their place in bringing about the affair. Dr. Whitman had done his best for the people as a medical man, but it was the custom among them to slay a doctor whose patients failed to recover, a fact which was well known to the doctor himself. (See O'Hara or Marshall for details.) As for the attacks upon the priests made by Mr. Spalding in after days reference may be made to "The Evolution of a Lament" in the *Washington Historical Quarterly* already referred to for a good summing up of the matter.

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(To be continued.)