

**HISTORY OF
PROVIDENCE MARY IMMACULATE
DE SMET, IDAHO
FOUNDATION #59:
"YOU WILE BE WITH US ALWAYS..."***

1996

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*** Bernard J. LaSarte, Tribal Chairman (1974)**



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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this history is to gather in one document, chiefly for the purpose of the religious community, a factual and **chronological** presentation of this mission and the lives of the sisters who served there.

While we are aware that many other events and situations had impact on this mission, I have not made an attempt to cite all of them, but to collect the information and date which our archives now hold, to substantiate what we can, and to present a history which is as complete, and yet as concise, as we can make it.

The founding of the Sisters of Providence, in 1843, by Mother (now Venerable) Emilie Gamelin (a widow, who after the death of her children and husband, devoted her life to the poor), and Bishop Ignace Bourget of Montreal, Canada, was only the bud on the rose called "Love"--a new "variety" in the Church. [The "Love" rose is a contrast of deep red petals with a white outer side to them. To me, it symbolizes the complexity of life--things are not always what they appear, and one always needs to look more deeply to avoid missing something important.]

Three sisters began this 59th. foundation of the congregation of the Sisters of Providence--at DeSmet, Idaho. One S.P. remains--Sr. Dolores Ellwart (Sr. Camilla). This history is a tribute to the dedicated sisters, people and priests with whom they ministered from 1878-1996.

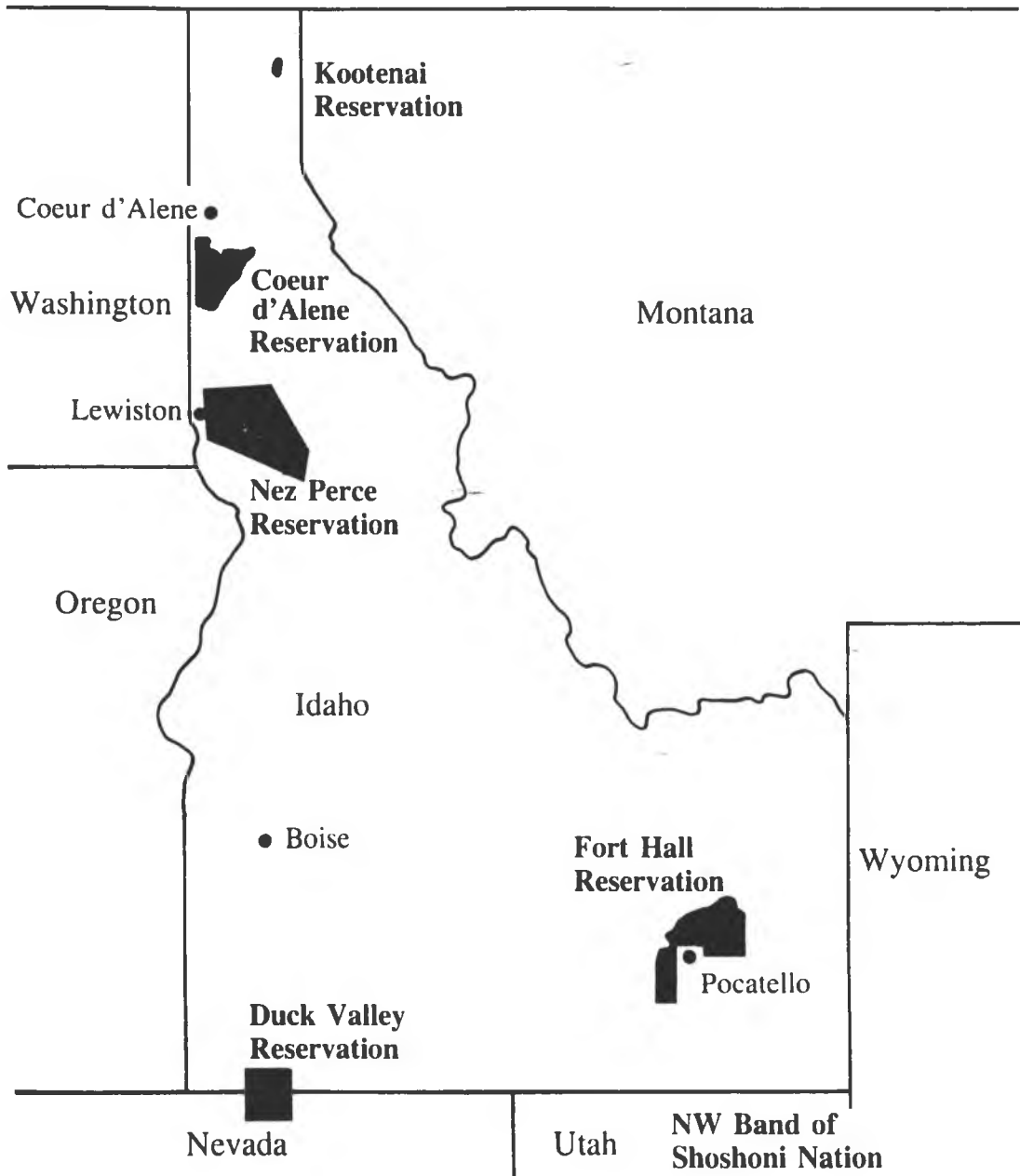
Excerpts from actual province and other documents are used throughout to give the reader more of the flavor of the thinking and manner of speaking of the times. This chronological expose helps to situate us as we discover the accomplishments of these sisters and see how they were assisted by so many people throughout the history of this mission.

133 Sisters of St. Ignatius Province served at this foundation. Some of the ministries they carried out, in addition to teaching, were: baking and cooking, taking care of the boarder children, church organist, laundry, sewing, care of the sick, gardening, poultry yard, dairy farm, library, social work, and most recently, parish ministry.

The sisters who have been singled out for interviews, or whose lives are chronicled herein, are representative of the sisters who worked and ministered at DeSmet. It is not possible to include the work of all of the sisters; this in no way denigrates the contribution of the rest.

No ministry was foreign to these sisters who served here. May they pray for us to be faithful in whatever we are called to do! --Sr. Helen Mason

MAP OF IDAHO RESERVATIONS



(Taken from a publication which was a project of the Native American Committee, Idaho Centennial Commission)

SISTERS OF PROVIDENCE WHO SERVED AT DE SMET, IDAHO

(Members of St. Ignatius Province)
as of 1996

<u>ID #</u>	<u>NAME</u>	<u>YEARS SERVED</u>
#2243-D	Aube, Sr. Albanus	1932-33
#5039	Bailey, Sr. Ann Ellen	1949; 1951-54
#1346-D	Baldus, Sr. Emmelia	1905-06; 1907-09
#3791-D	Beauchamp, Sr. Theresa of the Cross	1935
#2180-D	Beaudreau, Sr. Mary Dorilda	1914-15
#2171-D	Beaudreau, Sr. Mary Edna	1920-26; 1937-39; 1955-85
#4987	Beaulieu, Sr. Margaret	1947-48
#1361-D	Berard, Sr. Celse	1909-16
#3918	Bisson, Sr. Georgette	1967-72
#2809-D	Bisson, Sr. Laurette	1930; 1950-56; 1959- 65; 1967- 74
#2870-T	Boivin, Sr. Theodula	1936-38
#175-T	Boucher, Sr. Mary Hyacinthe	(foundress; dates not available)
#3515	Boukal, Sr. Marina	1944
#1210-D	Bouthillier, Sr. Joseph Mary	1909-10; 1917-20; 1924-25; 1931-36; 1941-42
#4810-T	Brillant, Sr. Marie Marthe	1954-59
#1159-D	Burgee, Sr. Mary Odile	1939-52
#1802-D	Chartrand, Sr. Mary Carmel	(dates not available)
#3217-T	Charlebois, Sr. Anthony August	1930-31; 1934-36
#1858-D	Chartrand, Sr. Mary Ubald	1932-34
#4992	Chesnut, Sr. Marita	1948-49
#447-C	Chiasson, Sr. Marguerite	1937-39; 1955-56
#1843-D	Christin, Sr. Victor of Alexandria	1922-23
#2444-D	Clement, Sr. Denis of the Sacred Heart	1917-29; 1940-49
#5838	Cleto, Sr. Maria Lourdes	1965-67
#3036-T	Comeau, Sr. John Napoleon	1935-36
#1656-D	Cote, Sr. Blesilla	1909-16; 1925-28; 1957-58
#5384	Cummings, Sr. Mary K.	1955-56
#3753-T	Cyr, Sr. Philippe of the Cross	1945-49
#3220-D	d'Amours, Sr. Emmanuel of Bethlehem	1936-37; 1949-50
#1464-D	Dallaire, Sr. Laurentia	1936
#277-D	Daoust, Sr. Jane de Chantal	1896-1907
#4451-D	Dequire, Sr. Louis Gaetan	1940-41; 1954
#3496-T	Desilets, Sr. Joseph Aime	1935-36; 1950-51; 1961-63
#3438	Dionne, Sr. Rosalie	1937-45
#442-C	Doiron, Sr. Elise	1929-30
#364-T	Dubrulle, Sr. Mary Constance	1878-1881 (foundress)
#109-C	Ducharme, Sr. Rose-Anna	1930-1934; 1937-42
#3107	Dufault, Sr. Jane	1937-39; 1950-51
#2784-D	Dufault, Sr. Mary Amadee	1924-27; 1938-39
#1678-D	Dufour, Sr. Berthold	1936-38
#4416-T	Duperron, Sr. Annie	1951-52
#1828-D	Dwyer, Sr. Julian	1910-11
#5262	Ellwart, Sr. Dolores	1965-85; 1986-95
#2276-D	Ewinski, Sr. Mary Irena	1917-18
#5108-T	Fink, Sr. Clarella Lois Mae	1949-50; 1969-73
#5179	Fitzgerald, Sr. Wilma	1950-51
#5113	Flynn, Sr. Imelda	1948-49
#669-D	Forget, Sr. Pacome	1916-22; 1934-45
#3927-D	Franetich, Mother Charlotte Marie	1938-39
#2526-D	Goudreault, Sr. Marcel de Cordoue	1925-37; 1939-40

#2385-T	Groleau, Sr. Georgius	1929-30; 1936-39
#36-C	Guyard, Sr. Josephine	1902-07
#2170-T	Hecox, Sr. Mary Raymond	1939-40
#3561-T	Heroux, Sr. Alphonse Gabriel	1958-63
#1915-D	Horan, Sr. Mathias	1919-22
#460-D	Houle, Sr. Polycarpe	1881-1885
#5294	Hull, Sr. Marleen	1950-51
#4549-D	Hull, Sr. Mary Louise	1939-42
#3895-D	Jump, Sr. Grace	1933-34
#4466	Kovis, Sr. Anne	1939-40
#2867-D	Labelle, Sr. Alice Marie	1925-36
#3101-D	Laforest, Sr. Mary Aurea	1954-55
#177-C	Landry, Sr. Sara	1927-50
#4260	LaPorte, Sr. Margaret	1940
#2308-T	Lavigne, Sr. Camille of Jesus	1916
#3578-D	Leclair, Sr. Louis Marcel	1952-54
#1465-D	Leclerc, Sr. Georgia	1910-14
#397-C	Legault, Sr. Marie-Rose	(dates not available)
#3271-D	Lord, Sr. Blanche Lea	1928-29
#1591-D	Lorrain, Sr. Evangelista	1923-24; 1940-41
#3141-D	Mannix, Sr. Anita Clare	1925-26; 1928-29
#3793	Marn, Sr. Pauline	1936-37
#4279	Marron, Sr. Kathleen	1959-64
#1510-T	Martin, Sr. John of God	1941-47
#857-D	Massicotte, Sr. Mary Engelbert	1895-1897
#1555-D	Massicotte, Sr. Bernard of Parma	1924-28; 1930-36; 1938-57
#1735-D	Mayer, Sr. Louise Elizabeth	1931-36; 1939-52
#2818-T	McGough, Sr. Mary Carmela	1946-48
#1625-T	Mondor, Sr. Mary Eugenie	1918-40
#1461-D	Morel, Sr. Mary Gabriel	1904-10
#5026	Morin, Sr. Carol Marie	1948-49; 1965-67
#2168-D	Morin, Sr. Germanus	1919-23
#1156-D	Murray, Sr. Mary Lawrence	1899-1903; 1906-07
#697-D	Nibler, Sr. Theresa of Cross	1898; 1906-07
#413-D	Nibler, Sr. Victor	(dates not available)
#2115-D	Noeth, Sr. Raphael	1914-15; 1924-25
#1644-D	Nolan, Sr. Mary Basilla	1936-37
#3662-D	O'Meara, Sr. Margaret Eleanor	1943-49; 1957-58
#3290-T	O'Neill, Sr. Ann	1957-58; 1967-68
#610-D	Ouellette, Mother Zenaide	1895-1898
#4144	Palmatier, Sr. Catherine	1935-36; 1958-59
#1650-T	Paquin, Sr. Ange du Carmel	1910-17
#4919	Parent, Sr. Annette	1944
#885-D	Parent, Sr. Fridolin	1921-22; 1928-29; 1936-38
#2088-D	Pariseau, Sr. Adrianus	1928-36; 1942-44
#3037-D	Perreault, Sr. Emilienne	1928-29; 1931-35
#640-D	Picard, Sr. Clotilde	1886-1888; 1900-13; 1922-28
#407-D	Pinto, Sr. Mary Francis	1878-1880 (foundress)
#3833-D	Price, Sr. Mary David	1936-38
#1797-D	Renaud, Sr. Servule of Rome	1947-51
#3072-D	Roberts, Sr. Mary Alodia	1928-30; 1931-33; 1939-47; 1949-54; 1965-67
#807-D	Robidoux, Alexis of Providence	1892-1893
#3904	Rochester, Sr. Mary Lois	1963-65; 1968-74
#4505-D	Roy, Sr. Joseph Cyril	1954-73
#2990-D	Ryan, Sr. Clement	1960-69
#796-D	Ryan, Sr. Dunstan	1927-32; 1935-38
#3284-D	Schumacker, Sr. Martina Mary	1928-29; 1946
#2412-D	Sevigny, Sr. Mary Gertrude	1941-43
#2366-D	Small, Sr. Mary Aloysius	1916-20
#1916-D	Small, Sr. Mary Evelyn	1911-12; 1916-20

#906-D	Sylvestre, Sr. Hermine	1893-1896; 1923-50
#2249-T	Sylvestre, Sr. Odilard	1916-18
#2886-T	Sylvestre, Sr. Paul Ernest	1929-31
#3637-D	Tolan, Sr. Providencia	1937-41
#1130-T	Trudeau, Sr. Michel Ange	1913-16
#3336-T	Viel, Sr. Henry Napoleon	1949-50
#4281-D	Vosen, Sr. Esther Mary	1958-63; 1966-74
#4058	Vosen, Sr. Margaret Anne	1934-35; 1942-43
#1199-D	Walsh, Sr. Columban	1930-32
#4467	Ybarrola, Sr. Ann Dolores	1941-43

Note: An additional thirteen former S.P.'s served here. We respect their privacy and choose not to include their names, since some continue to live in the area.

BACKGROUND HISTORY OF THE FOUNDATION

The original mission of the Coeur d'Alene Indians was established in 1842 on the St. Joe River in Northern Idaho. The words of Bernard LaSarte, "**You will be with us always...**" endure as a reminder to all Sisters of Providence of the legacy of sacrifice and good will of the sisters who served at DeSmet. Some of its colorful history is recorded here:

Fr. Wilfred P. Schoenberg, S.J., in his book, Paths to the Northwest. A Jesuit History of the Oregon Province. tells the importance of the building of the church at Cataldo, Idaho:

"At least seven years of intermittent work was required to complete the structure, which became one of Idaho's landmarks,'The Old Mission Church.'"¹

"Peace treaties were signed nearby. This was headquarters for the survey and construction of the Mullan Road...For the Indians it was a rallying place, a convenient rendezvous after weeks of wandering in the eternal quest for food. Gradually the Coeur d'Alenes came to regard the mission as their tribal home. First a few, then greater numbers built log huts near the church and began to cultivate plots of ground."²

"The new vicariate of Idaho Territory was finally erected on March 3, 1868. This included all of Idaho and Montana west of the Rockies."³

THE PROPHECY

Sr. Providencia Tolan, S.P., tells, in her book, A Shining from the Mountains. the prophecy of Circling Raven:

"Lawrence Nicodemus shares from his tribal memory: 'Maurice Antelope, my uncle, and Mary Teresa Joseph agreed on these details about Circling Raven. He lived in the Colonial Period. There was no U.S. then. Stanislaus Aripa said, "Circling Raven lived to be 130 years old. He was a medicine man. At the time, he lived at Hayden Lake. He was

considered by the Coeur d'Alenes to be their greatest medicine man and he was a Chief. Everybody looked to him because of his wisdom."

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

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

Twisted Earth himself spent many years looking for the Black Robe. All during this time he heard different rumors of teachers appearing among the Nez Perces, and Twisted Earth immediately left for the Clearwater country to what is now Spaulding, Idaho...Circling Raven had described his vision: "He wore a Black Robe with a cross at his waist, held there by a cincture (belt) with a rosary attached. He would be holding a little book."...

It was not until 1842 that the search began again. Twisted Earth was informed by the Tribe that there was a teacher at Post Falls (a place north of Coeur d'Alene Lake). So right away, Twisted Earth went over to see him. The man was the great Father Jean Pierre DeSmet. Twisted Earth shed tears of joy because he saw what his father had prophesied to him."⁴



Lawrence Nicodemus

FR. PETER JOHN DE SMET, SJ



"To the extent that he is known, Peter John De Smet is associated with the Catholic Indian missions in the Rocky Mountains and the Pacific Northwest. He founded the first Jesuit missions there, and during his career in the West developed a rapport with the native Americans that few other whites ever matched." ⁵

"A closer examination of his life, however, reveals a different picture of the man. His entire missionary career was contained within a ten-year period (1838-1848). From 1848 until his death in 1873 he resided in St. Louis (Missouri), serving as financial administrator for his Jesuit province. De Smet was also a prolific writer who contributed hundreds of letters to journals in Europe and America...Yet he was not just an interesting storyteller; he became a leading advocate of justice for the Native Americans and an extremely successful fundraiser for the missions...he returned to his native Europe nine times, and besides raising money, he recruited more than eighty men to serve in his Jesuit province and in the Indian missions." ⁶

Fr. DeSmet spent only four years in the Pacific Northwest, never learned an Indian language, but moved about the West to as far as present day Edmonton, Alberta.

"In the early fall of 1839 De Smet had a fateful meeting with two Northwest Indians, Young Ignace and Pierre le Gaucher, who had stopped at the mission. This duo was on its way to St. Louis, seeking missionaries to evangelize the Indians who lived in the Rocky Mountains. De Smet was deeply impressed with the delegates, saying that he never met two more devout Indians, and he gave them a letter of introduction to the Jesuit vice-provincial in St. Louis."

"Although the vice-provincial at St. Louis, Peter Verhaegen, was willing to respond to the urging of Bishop Rosati to send missionaries to the Northwest, a lack of money forced him to scale down his plans. Instead of dispatching two Jesuits to investigate the prospects for a new mission (which would have been the usual custom in the Society), he entrusted the task to De Smet alone." ⁸

Fr. DeSmet baptized Louise Sighouin--one of the first fruits of this Mission, a daughter of the Chief of the Coeur d'Alenes, in 1842. She left behind all tribal honors and spent her life in service of the Mission, as catechist of both children and aged. She also visited the sick and nursed the sick.

"At the Fifth Provincial Council of Baltimore the American bishops recommended that the pope create a new diocese in Oregon, and De Smet's name was at the top of their list of the episcopal candidates. De Smet did not want this honor...Norbert Blanchet, who had been nominated by the Canadian bishops, was appointed vicar apostolic of the Oregon Country on Dec. 11, 1843...in 1846 he persuaded the pope to create an archdiocese at Oregon City. At the same time his brother, Augustine, became bishop of Walla Walla, and Modeste Demers became bishop of Vancouver Island." ⁹

In an article Fr. William N. Bischoff, S.J., wrote, we find this interesting piece about Fr. DeSmet's abilities as a peacemaker.

"Father DeSmet's spirits were lifted, even before the council, by Sitting Bull's volunteered avowal that 'I rose tomahawk in hand, and I have done all the hurt to the white that I could. Today thou art amongst us, and in thy presence my arms stretch to the ground as if dead. I will listen to thy good words, and as bad as I have been to the whites, just so good am I ready to become toward them...The 400 braves stolidly recounted their grievances, but before the meeting ended, they concurred with Black Moon's hope 'that these things past will be forgotten from this day.'"

1842-70

Fr. Nicholas Point, S.J., along with Brother Huet, S.J., reached the camp of the Coeur d'Alenes on Friday, Nov. 4, 1842, First Friday--a day on which Catholics at that time gave special devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Father dismounted, fell on his knees, and dedicated his mission to the Sacred Heart.

Father Point noted that "Some of these Indians had a bad reputation among the fur traders, who refused to settle near them...the same Coeur d'Alenes had little respect for the fur traders, whom they regarded as being

uncommonly stingy. Point found it impossible to find an interpreter, for no whites had bothered to learn the language. The tribe, numbering about 500 at this time, lived along several rivers and a large lake, which bore the tribal name." ¹⁰

REQUEST FOR SISTERS OF PROVIDENCE

"Bishop Augustine Blanchet, lacking nearly everything a diocese required, had returned to Canada to appeal for help. On April 2, 1852, at the request of Bishop Bourget of Montreal, he presided over the profession of vows of two Sisters of Providence, and taking this opportunity to expose the poverty of his diocese, requested the assembled sisters to share the work of the Northwest church. Five sisters of the many who volunteered, were assigned to the new mission...When they finally arrived at Oregon City on Dec. 1, they found a ghost town...The sisters panicked. They decided to return to California to await orders. Departing in lamentable haste on Feb. 1, 1853, they arrived in San Francisco...then departed again for Chile, where they founded a House of Providence and remained...It was now clear to them that the financial difficulties of the archdiocese were the least of all...the missions that were once flourishing were now unattended; work among the Indians was paralyzed..." ¹¹

As early as 1856, Mother Joseph of the Sacred Heart (Pariseau) had the courage to send "missionaries" to the West, responding to a request for sisters by Bishop Augustine A. Blanchet. Five sisters, headed by Mother Joseph, made the journey to Fort Vancouver, Wash. Territory. They arrived there on Dec. 8, 1856.

"She was present at the Asile when Bishop Augustine Blanchet made his first appeal for sisters in 1852, and she had been one of the first to volunteer to go to Oregon. But the Council had decided against her, saying she was too much needed as bursar in Montreal...In the autumn of 1856 he was knocking once again on the doors of the convent and asking for another group of sisters for the Northwest. Mother Gamelin had died prematurely and the new superior, Mother Caron, who had succeeded her, understandably received the bishop warily, putting him off at least for the present...Determined to avoid the loss of his sisters a second time, His Lordship himself, with Fr. [Louis] Rossi [an Italian Jew] as his cherished assistant, escorted them to Vancouver." ¹²

1870-73

Chief Seltice first went to Walla Walla, Wash., in 1870, along with eight of his men in tribal dress, and then wrote a few days later to Sr. Catherine (Eunic) [whom he had met when she was on a begging tour in his area in 1866] in Walla Walla, asking for "women blackrobes." The chief promised to build a house for the sisters and help them. He kept his promise. His letter pierces the heart, as it must have when Sr. Catherine read it. Indeed, who could have refused this, and following, persistent requests!

"Rev. Sister, Since the time you passed by this place all my people have been greatly wishing to have here amongst us some of your Sisters for the education of our girls. The fathers here are doing their best to teach our boys, and we are very glad of it, but our girls are orphans, and if you or some other sisters do not come, they will always be so, because nobody will take care of them.

I know, from the time I was so kindly received in your house at Walla Walla, that you like our Indians; now will you use your influence with your Chief to obtain for us some sisters? Here we will do our best to help them, we will build a house for them, and do anything they wish from us. I pray our God to move your heart to come to the help of the poor Coeur d'Alene girls. The fathers (Black-gown-male) teach us that our God will greatly reward any little act of charity towards our fellow-men, how great then must be the reward of those good Sisters (Black-gown-female) who will outpour the greatest of all charity, the mental and spiritual education of the most poor girls? Yes: I hope God will move your heart and you will hear our earnest entreaty. Pray for me and for all my children. (signed) Seltice¹, Chief of the Coeur d'Alenes" Dec. 25, 1870

1873-76

Three more times, Chief Seltice wrote his request for women black-gowns. His persistence must have "won the day."

1) "Great Holy Mother of the female Black-gown, I, and all my fellow chiefs of the Coeur d'Alene Indians wrote some time ago to the good Black-gown Catherine of Wallawalla to have mercy upon our girls and come to stay amongst us to teach them: we promised to do our best to help them by building their house, making a field and cultivating it for them, etc. We received an answer, that this our wish and request would be communicated to the Great Mother.

Now we hear that you, the Great Mother, are coming yourself from very far, and visit all your children, and therefor it seems to me that this is the best opportunity to renew our earlier request.

I am your child, Andrew Seltice, Chief of the Coeur d'Alene Indian" April 13, 1873 ¹⁴

1876-77

**2) "Coeur d'Alene Mission, Spokane Bridge, Washington Territory
To Great Mother Caron, Superior General of the Sisters of Charity,
Montreal, Canada**

¹ Chief Seltis died in 1902. The descendants spell their names "Seltice." The second Chief Seltice is buried in the DeSmet Cemetery.

Rev. Mother, We Coeur d'Alene, being very poor, have recourse to your charity in behalf of our little girls and little boys, who are indeed orphan like. Seeing several other tribes where the little ones are well instructed by your Daughters, we greatly covet such a blessing.

We have recourse to you determined on our part to do our best. As well as our hearts our hands too will be active to cooperate with you. Our hearts will rise and exert themselves. Though willing to help according to our means, still you know we are but Indians.

We chiefs do promise you, in the name of all our people, to help to the work, because we feel too much the deficient condition of our children.

Please answer us: tell us what we are to do, and we will write again. We are entirely left to our own resources. As soon we shall hear that you do not despise our petition, we will set ourselves to work, to build you a house: ...we think the fit place would be at Latah, where we have put apart a square mile of the best land for the Sisters as well as another mile for the Fathers. The board and clothing of the children shall be at our expenses.

As soon as we hear that the Sisters are ready at Walla Walla our wagons will go to bring them up.

Please answer us, and pray for us.

(signed) Andrew Seltice (and two other chiefs, [signatures not readable]) Coeur d'Alene Mission," Oct. 3, 1876¹⁵

3) "Reverend Mother! Though we have received no answer to our first letter, we hope you have received it and we come again to call upon your charity: though poor Indians indeed the poorest of our neighborhood, still we are Catholic and hope our needs shall not be disregarded, our promises doubted. It is now over three years that I implore pity in behalf of our children: a smile was all the answer. Poor as we are, and left to our own means, we promise you that you will get help.

Looking at ourselves, we are people we find ourselves very deficient: looking at the children we say, 'truly orphanlike they are.' We wish they should not remain. We hope you will pity them meanwhile we have put apart for the future teacher and given to (not readable) in your hands 13 milk cows, one steer and one bull: all our young men, without exception have agreed to spend the best to put up a house for you: half our tribe are absent now: when they come they will do their part too.

A favorable answer will be a new stimulant to our hearts, and still more, the presence of your children, the ardently wished for teacher.

We hope some of our children will show good disposition to learn, and that they will be taught so that they will be able to help themselves well, having received further instruction.

(signed) Seltice, Head Chief; Kunmosi, Chief; Tentenmelishchen, Chief; Kumpaskat, Chief; Shilchoso, Head Man"

Dec. 25, 1876 ¹⁶

Finally, a letter was also sent to Mother Caron by Jesuit Father Alexander Diomedi:

"Coeur d'Alene Mission, Spokane Bridge, Washington Territory, the 25 of December 1876

To Revd. Mother Caron, Superior General of the Sisters of Providence, Montreal, Canada

From this letter of these my poor children you will easily understand how sincere are the promises they made in the former letter addressed you. I for my part will do the best I can, and since this time, two good milk cows, and two good work horses will be chosen from my small band, to ensure the offering made you by the Indians. So that as you will reach here, you will have a very good beginning; that is 15 cows, one steer and one bull, and two horses besides; and the calfs of the 15 cows. I do not know whether this poor Indian could have done more than that in the circumstances they are at present. They are not quite one half of the tribe, and to come here they had to overcome great difficulties. Being the road was very bad some ought to come from distance cutting the roads with the axe to allow the horses to get through the ice, and after several days of work they were bound to leave the horses on the road, and come afoot carrying their children on their shoulders; and they did so only because they were told to come to decide something about the important matter they treated in this letter. No doubt if you come you shall have help from them and I do not think they will let you suffer, or need in anything they will be able to help you. They are very anxious about an answer, and I hope you will give it to them as soon as you can.

Respectfully yours, (signed) Alexander Diomedi, S.J." ¹⁷

1877-78

The Jesuit fathers established their mission at DeSmet in 1877. Various problems arose which made the Jesuits decided to ask the tribe to relocate to the DeSmet area from Cataldo. It was necessary for the Old Mission to be abandoned because in 1877 the U.S. Government set the boundaries of Indian Reservations--the Old Mission was off the reservation! Also, there was not adequate tillable farmland to sustain the Tribe.

The Indians were reluctant to help the Jesuits move--hoping they could forestall the decision. But by November 1877 the whole tribe had moved to "Nilgo-alko." The first building was 21' x 96'--made of logs and mud (Andrews Springs). The Jesuits who resided in part of it were Fathers Gazzoli, Tosi, and Joset and Brothers Cunningham, Maloney, Praxedes and McKenzie. Supplies were basically obtained from as far away as Colfax and

Walla Walla, Wash.!

The Jesuits were teaching the boys only, so Mother Joseph of the Sacred Heart (Pariseau), of Vancouver, Wash., was informed that the Indians wanted sisters. She in turn informed the Motherhouse in Montreal, and three sisters were sent from Vancouver.

Sr. Mary Hyacinthe (Boucher), superior, {actual dates of service unknown}, Sr. Mary Constance (Dubrule--a professed sister of two years) {serving from 1878-1881}, and Sr. Mary Francis (Pinto), newly professed, {serving from 1878-1880} left Vancouver, Wash. on Nov. 6, 1878, traveled up the Columbia River by steamboat to Walla Walla, Wash. [where the sisters became established in 1864]. They were met there by Fr. Pascal Tosi, S.J., and Bro. Cunningham, S.J., with horse and buggy. Their first meal was potatoes to mix with bacon!



3 foundresses: Sr. M. Constance Sr. M. Francis Sr. M. Hyacinthe

They passed through Colfax, Wash., and arrived at Sacred Heart Mission at the present DeSmet, Idaho, to open their first foundation in Idaho on Nov. 22, 1878--a journey of eight days. They began living in their convent of Mary Immaculate on Dec. 1 [the Jesuit fathers gave them hospitality until then] and began teaching the 30 girls and boys of the mission on Dec. 2, 1878, even though only the first floor was finished. On Jan. 9, 1879 the first mass was celebrated in the building.

photo of the first SJ church, 1878. (photo taken in 1928) On left, Sr. Mary Francis; Sr. Dunstan



According to the DeSmet 1878 chronicle, it was the Jesuit Fathers who were "Providence" to the sisters:

"How many times when we thought ourselves in dire need these good priests sent us the provisions just then needed. Also...the task of supplying us with firewood (each room had its stove.) Fr. Gregoire Gazzoli, S.J., had studied the use of medicine. During the illness of Sr. Mary Constance he did not spare such. He overwhelmed us with a gentle and delicate nursing attention to her." ²

Here, taken from her necrology, we share a portion of the life of Sr. Mary Hyacinthe (Marie Cordelia Boucher) [foundress]:

"...her notes of retreat in April 1863...1) Should I go to Oregon? I am free to accept or refuse. 2) My object in life is to glorify God by following my vocation and to save my soul. Whether it is the will of God that I should go or remain, I am perfectly indifferent."

"My God, here I am. Yes, I accept the mission of Oregon..." "Below this act of acceptance, we read the following approbation written by the hand of our venerated founder, Mgr. Ignace Bourget: 'We, the undersigned, bishop of Montreal, bless and approve the act of election above made by Sister Mary Hyacinthe...because we recognize therein the inspiration of the Holy Spirit who calls this sister to the far away missions, for the greater glory of His Divine Majesty and the salvation of

² All chronicle references are from various volumes of the DeSmet Chronicle, property of Sisters of Providence, Provincial Administration, Spokane, Wash.

souls."³

The Little Journal of Providence highlights the life of another of the three foundresses, Sr. Mary Francis (Rachel Pinto) [1878-80] this way:

"Just at the time of her profession, negotiations were under way for the opening of the Indian School at DeSmet, Idaho. Sister Francis deemed herself privileged to be chosen as one of the foundresses of the new mission. No easy modes of travel existed in those days. Rough roads led our nuns across the mountains in jolting lumber wagon, and several nights saw them camping out under the canopy of the skies...The Indians, young and old, loved her kindness to them."

The third foundress, Sr. Mary Constance (Mary Rose Omeline Dubrule) [1878-81] is spoken of in these words in the Little Journal of Providence:

"Sept. 27, 1878, saw her leaving her beloved Canada...Upon arriving in the West, Sister Mary Constance was first named for the mission of the Coeur d'Alene Indians which is now DeSmet, Idaho. In 1881 she was transferred to Cowlitz Prairie where she spent seven years."

1879-80

Our chronicles for DeSmet for 1879 record:

"Not having received funds from the Government other than a few loans we had to make for furniture, clothing and groceries we have had to rely on the Indians for supplies. They assist us but they have not, as yet, made any arrangement for room and board. They have given us flour, meat and vegetables quite regularly."

When the Indians were asked why they did so, they would often reply, "My heart told me that the sisters needed food." The Coeur d'Alene Indians were quick to have their children attend the school. Later the Indians gave the sisters 800 acres of land for educating their girls. The timberland helped to heat the school, and many acres were used as pasture. Later, the land was cleared and produced good crops.

The chronicle for 1879 mentions the first retreat there that the sisters

³ All references to the Little Journal of Providence, published by the Sisters of Providence, Motherhouse, Montreal, Quebec, are from various volumes, usually the year the deceased sister died. Complete information available (French and English versions) at Provincial Administration, Spokane, Wash.

participated in:

"Rev. Joseph Cataldo, S.J., Superior of the Mission, preached a fifteen-day retreat for the Indians and the Whites..."

The chronicle entry goes on to say:

"During their free time all were invited to help in the construction of the school. The women cut firewood, some fenced the grounds. Others helped with generous hands on the School building. Our two-story convent is now very comfortable."

"On the feast of the Sacred Heart, the final day of the retreat, a solemn procession of the Blessed Sacrament took place. Many whites joined in...sixteen pupils in Indian costumes and wearing white veils, all specially made for the occasion, carried the Banners of the Fifteen Mysteries of the Rosary. (The Indians established this Rosary Confraternity among themselves.) Leading the procession was one with the Sacred Heart Banner."

In 1879 Sr. Raphael of Jesus (Desjardins) was also assigned to the convent. She died Feb. 27, 1880. Severe weather prohibited other local communities of sisters from attending the funeral. She was buried at the Mission, but her body was later transferred on June 14 to the community cemetery at Vancouver, Wash., which was then the Providence community headquarters in the West.

Sr. Mary Hyacinthe, superior, characterized the "works" of the mission at that time as: "to teach the children, to visit the sick at home, to care for the Church linens, and to sew for and care of the resident Priests' clothing."

1880

The "Personnel and Works" annual report for July 1, 1880 for DeSmet lists: "sisters 3, Indian girls 16, Indian boys 14, boarders 3."

The children showed a great devotion to Mary. Devotion to our Lady of Seven Dolors (now entitled Our Lady of Compassion) helped in a remarkable way.

"One day two of our horses, along with the wagon, all of great value, had fallen from a bridge into a deep gorge below. At once we asked the dear children to pray to this good Mother. No sooner had they finished the seven Our Fathers in her honor when the [Jesuit] Brother, who had gone to the rescue, returned with the horses saying: 'Someone must have been praying, for it was impossible without Providential help to have saved ourselves from danger for the ice and snow were dangerous!'"

1881-82

The first visit by a Superior General from Montreal occurred in May 1881, by Mother Amable.

Some of the other early sisters who ministered at this mission were: Emmelia (Baldus) 1905-06 and 1907-09; Celse (Berard) 1909-16; Joseph Mary (Bouthillier) 1909-10 [an enrolled Coeur d'Alene Tribal Member] (and many later assignments); Blesilla (Cote) 1909-16 (and later assignments); Jane de Chantal (Daoust) 1896-1907; Julian (Dwyer) 1910-11; Josephine (Guyard) 1902-07; Polycarpe (Houle) 1881-1885; Georgia (Leclerc) 1910-14; Marie-Rose (Legault) [dates not available]; Mary Gabriel (Morel) 1904-10; Mary Lawrence (Murray) 1899-1903 and 1906-07; Theresa of the Cross (Nibler) 1898 and 1906-07; Victor (Nibler) [dates not available]; Mother Zenaide (Ouellette) 1895-1898; Clotilde (Picard) 1886-1888 (and many later assignments); Alexis of Providence (Robidoux) 1892-93; Dunstan (Ryan) (not all dates available); and Hermine (Sylvestre) 1893-96 and 1923-50.

On Dec. 11, 1881, fire destroyed part of this original convent school.

"He (Fr. Pascal Tosi, S.J.) noticed it was impossible to save the Convent, because of the terrible wind that day. He helped remove the furniture by doors and windows. In less than two hours, the dormitory wing and the small storage house nearby were ruined. The flames endangered the Convent residence. One of the sisters, strengthened by her faith in prayer, braved the flames, already spreading to the Convent. She attached to the flaming wall a small image of St. Joseph (one of the community patrons of the Sisters of Providence). At that instant, a fact witnessed by several, the wind changed, the flames died down and were extinguished by themselves. Thus the building was saved. Wet blankets were used to stop the progress of the fire." (chronicle)

"We were tightly quartered in the house of one of the Indian chiefs. The Fathers could not offer us shelter as their house was not built. All we had was a small men's house." (chronicle)

1882-1900

The 1882 chronicle account displays the courage and the hope of the sisters:

"...our benefactors in the village, touched by our misfortune, offered to make an addition to the men's house which they did so quickly, one could hardly follow the progress. At the end of fifteen days we were "at home" in the enlarged building and surrounded by pupils. Classes were resumed! This was to us a visible proof the Heart of Jesus wanted us to continue giving the benefits of an education to the Indians. The number of pupils increased even with the humble facilities we offered!"

The cornerstone of the new convent was laid on July 2, 1882 and blessed by Archbishop Charles Seghers. On Nov. 1, 1883, the new academy at Sacred Heart Mission, a frame building like the first, was occupied and dedicated. The first mass in this building was celebrated on Nov. 11. [On Feb. 10, 1908, fire began during mass time and destroyed the 1882 building.]



Second building: 1882-1907 school

In September of 1882, the sisters were consoled by the visit of the Assistant Superior General, Mother John of the Cross. The sisters made use of this visit to make their annual retreat. The sister annalist recorded that: "Besides the great spiritual uplifting she gave us, she attended to many temporal affairs of the school and farm. She found it wise to make necessary changes in our way of living."

It was after this visit that two sisters left to do "collecting" for the mission school in order to defray the construction costs.

Diseases plagued the mission children. The sisters often had no room in which to isolate patients. "Several of the worse cases we isolate in our parlor, community room, refectory and dormitory...we counted as many as 23 ill at the same time."

On Nov. 1, 1882 the new convent was blessed. On Nov. 21, feast of the Presentation, the first mass was said in their chapel. In March of that year the Jesuits opened their own dormitory and school.

The second visitation by the General Administration occurred that winter when Mother Praxedes of Providence (Lamothe) made her visit during the winter. The sisters appeared very encouraged by her coming.

The sisters at DeSmet met their new Provincial Superior, Mother Mary of the Resurrection, the first provincial in the newly erected St. Ignatius Province, in Oct. of 1891.

The first retreat by the sisters in Missoula, Mont., the initial provincial

headquarters, was in March of 1892, at Sacred Heart Academy. Fr. Meyer, S.J., gave it.

[From the province archives] The Quarterly Report of Indian Schools, made for the DeSmet Mission Industrial Boarding School for the quarter ending Sept. 30, 1893, by Fr. Charles Mackin, states "by contract with Government" and lists the following personnel:

Rev. Charles Mackin, superintendent; Thomas Ward, George Weibel, Sr. Natalia, teachers; Louis Veraldi, industrial teacher; George Schaefer, farmer; Sr. Hilarion, matron; Sr. Victor, assistant matron; Sr. Clotilde, seamstress; Sr. Alexius, assistant seamstress; Thomas Campbell, cook; Sr. Mary, assistant cook; Sr. Odulphe, laundress; Mrs. J. Busus, assistant laundress; Mr. J. Busus, blacksmith; N. Fouchs, dairyman; P. Janssen, shoemaker; and D. Duross, printer.

It also reports that "number of pupils school can accommodate" as 300. 76 student names follow on the report. ¹⁶

On August 15, 1896, Mary Murray, the first religious vocation from DeSmet, entered the Sisters of Providence novitiate in Missoula, Mont. Two years later she returned to DeSmet to teach, with the name of Sr. Mary Lawrence.

The 1898 chronicle contains an entry of the next religious vocations from DeSmet: those of Pauline Bouthillier (Sr. Joseph Mary), Rebecca Labri (Sr. Remi), and Emma Bean (who became a tertiary sister). They left for the novitiate in Missoula, Mont.

1899 saw yet a new trial for the sisters: the cessation of government funds.

"We must redouble our Confidence in Divine Providence in order to maintain our establishment. We count on the aid of the parents to furnish clothing for their children. We have our farm and our timber land. We can add: and good horses. These resources are small when we consider all the expenses we must meet! However we encourage ourselves with the thought that if we, on our part, do all we can do--as if all depends on us,' Our Good Lord will do the rest!" (chronicles)

New acreage was obtained in this way:

(due to cessation of government funds) "We then asked for an additional piece of land from the Chief. This we need for pasturing of our stock. Every year we have had cattle stolen from our land...we needed the consent of the Chief and his counselors to obtain more land. All answered our demands: 'We grant you this with pleasure. Take as much as you want of our land. We are glad to render this service!' Our men began at once to fence a piece of land (one square mile). This will permit us to raise more stock. The sale of animals can help toward the care of our Mission. The Chief asked us for the sum of \$40 for the land." (chronicle)

1899 brought Sr. Mary Lawrence (Mary Murray) [1899-1903 and 1906-07] to

DeSmet. The children in her family were trained from babyhood with their mother's constant "May the Holy Will of God be done! Praise be God's holy Name!"

"The family moved about until they settled at last in Northern Idaho. All this while the children had no other school to attend except public schools wherever they happened to be. But when Sister was fourteen, she had the privilege of attending our Sisters' school in De Smet, Idaho...The family life at Priest River, Idaho, was ideal in every respect...At eighteen Sister Mary Lawrence joined our community." (her necrology)

1900-14



1929. Back row, left to right: Sisters Hermine, Dunstan, Joseph of the Sacred Heart, Blesilla, Alice Marie; front: Marcel de Cordoue, Denis of the Sacred Heart, Mary Eugenie, Bernard of Parma.

At the beginning of September 1900, Martha Baldus (who would become Sr. Emmelia and serve many years in the community) [1905-06 and 1907-09] left for the novitiate in Missoula.

"Martha's five and one-half years of formal schooling was obtained by alternating attendance at the DeSmet's Sisters' school with her sisters." (Little Journal of Providence)

To the surprise and consolation of the sisters, the members of the Catholic Indian Bureau in Washington, D.C., decided to grant the same amount which had just been withdrawn by the Federal Government. This was to be a trimester allotment.

A 1901 entry reminds us of the faith the sisters had in St. Joseph: "Our

recognition of the favors of St. Joseph is a duty. We wish to mention here the great help we have received from him since we have placed him in charge of the 'farm.'"

Fire once again struck the Mission! (1908)

"On the morning of Feb. 10, Rev. Father Superior (Fr. Caruana, S.J.) came fifteen minutes late for his mass in our chapel. We had just begun breakfast when Sr. Miriam of Magdala, who had been serving the children's breakfast, rushed into the Sisters' Dining Room and announced Father had told her the house was on fire! The alarm bell was immediately rung. The workmen and a few Indians came on the scene to fight the fire. Desperate attempts were made to save the buildings, but all to no effect. Father had been making his thanksgiving when he heard a crackling noise, and thinking there was too much draft in the stove, went to shut it off. Not finding any trouble there, he looked around to discover the wall on fire!...in less than ten minutes from the discovery of the fire half of the convent was in ruins...the wind changed, fortunately for us, the laundry was saved, but the new girls' building erected five years previously caught fire and was also destroyed--leaving the white girls homeless. Most of the contents of this building, except the cellar, were saved. At 9:00 a.m. both buildings were a heap of ashes!...after the excitement of the fire was over, the Indians were anxious to have their children back in school. So three tents were put up for dormitories, a room was fixed in the wagonshed to serve as a classroom, refectory and recreation hall." (chronicles)

On June 26, 1908, the feast of the Sacred Heart. Bishop Alphonse J. Glorieux officiated at the ceremony of the laying and the blessing of the cornerstone of the new convent. On June 17, 1909, he returned for the blessing of this house. Mass was said on the 18th., the feast of the Sacred Heart that year.

March 26, 1909, brought new "light" to DeSmet: electric lights for the new convent.

The U.S. government changed its position regarding the school:

"It is well to remark here that the day of the fire (Feb. 10, 1908) the Reservation Agent was in Washington, D.C., for the purpose of negotiating

building a Public School for the Indians. Several Indians had gone there to protest against this measure! Just as they were discussing the issue, news arrived of the burning of the convent. The Indians, with great energy, made the agents understand they wanted no other school than that of the sisters, and added, 'We wish to stay with them!--and we want them to remain with us!'

The question of a Public School remained there!

At last the General Council deliberated and gave permission to rebuild 'a spacious and convenient house'." The agents then let fall their project and besides that they came forward with a very generous 'gift.' The granting of land 'for the duration of and support of the school': to the amount of 800 acres of 'tillable land' and 460 acres of 'timber land.' All this from Reservation lands.

The agent remarked that since the U.S. government no longer granted funds it wished to compensate in giving us enough land to maintain our Mission school." (chronicles)

The life of Sr. Blesilla (Emma Anna Cote), [1909-16; 1925-28; and 1957-58], began her life in Canada, but in her early years moved to the West. The Little Journal of Providence recounts:

"...her father, William Cote, a native of Maine, who had moved to Canada, started out for the West. He first worked in logging camps in the Blackfoot area of western Montana...and then joined Mr. A.B. Hammond, of Missoula, Montana, in operating a freight line with teams of oxen to bring supplies to a village on Valley Creek...where gold had been discovered...

In 1904, Miss Emma Cote was a member of the graduating class of Sacred Heart Academy, Missoula...

She continued to teach in Missoula until a new assignment took her to Providence Mary Immaculate, DeSmet, Idaho...her duties included teaching, taking care of the Indian and white girls who boarded at the school, serving as econome (treasurer), and caring for the mission church...Signatures found on the formula of her vows included those of the missionary among the Indians, the Rev. Joseph M. Caruana, S.J.

'Here in DeSmet in this secluded spot--twelve miles from the nearest railroad station and the noise of the city--I spent more than a decade teaching Indian girls and--longing. Yes, longing to disregard the State Laws of Education; longing to rearrange the curriculum; longing to extend the time schedules for the grade work from eight years to sixteen years; longing to teach, besides reading, writing and arithmetic, such subjects as would tend to develop the characteristic traits of the Indian's peculiar nature. I would have loved to spend more time in the study of nature, where the element of mystery abounds and strongly appeals...I would have loved to stress the love of the beautiful through basketry and bead work, music and singing; household duties.'

March 1914 brought the beginning work on county roads and a map of the area. The sisters credited this to the carpenter, St. Joseph.

Fire once again was a "plague" in 1914.

"This is a time of great dryness and there are many forest fires. Not far from our house we have cords of wood for our heating plant, two hundred cords, not far from a woods now in flames. The wind blows the flames toward the wood. The fire is raging!...From the 5th. to 8th. of August, our employees, along with those of the Jesuit Fathers and Brothers fought the fires day and night. They were not able to control the elements, only to reroute away from our combustible property. The men, in spite of their devotedness, felt a need of rest. Two accidents have already happened...Seeing all this, Sister Superior (Michel Ange) renewed her moments near the Sacred Heart! She promised to purchase a large picture of the Sacred Heart (4 1/2 x 3 ft.) and to place it in the place of honor in our modest parlor. [It remained there until 1967 after remodeling]. This was promised if they could hold the fire! At that moment the fire diminished, the wind changed! Our wood was saved! You can see, as we do, and recognize the protection of the Sacred Heart of Jesus!" (chronicles)

Sr. Mary Dorilda (Josephine Melanie Beaudreau), [1914-15], came to DeSmet before her blood sister, Sr. Mary Edna. Both were accomplished musicians. Her necrology states:

"Sr. Mary Dorilda came West in the summer of 1910, the year of the great forest fire in Wallace, Idaho. She attended school there one year and then attended on year at Sacred Heart Academy, Missoula, Mont., where she received piano lessons gratis and her special aptitude in music was discovered...

Both girls entered the Sisters of Providence Novitiate together on May 20, 1913, in Vancouver, Wash., the same year their brother was ordained in Rome...It is to be noted that our sisters, like Sr. Mary Dorilda, who taught piano lessons, were responsible for supplementing the income to the convents where they lived, since the pay was small in past times. Sr. Mary Dorilda, even at an older age when patience wears thin, continued in this ministry when others her age probably would not have, because she felt responsible to the community...

She celebrated many jubilees, including her 80th. in 1993."



Sr. Mary Dorilda Beaudreau

1915-19



Children greeting Sr. Pacome, 1915

Despite many trials and hardships, the sisters managed to have some relaxing times. One note by the annalist in 1915 states this well, as well as referencing one of the many occasions for relating with other religious women in the area:

"In recognition of the always generous hospitality of the Franciscan Sisters when we stay at their house in Tekoa, (Wash.) while we await the train from Boise, Idaho, Sister Superior invited them to a picnic in our woods. Five of them arrived August 19. We had a great time. All day taking our ease and enjoying amiable company. We figured the noise we made was not heard for we were alone, alone in the woods.

The sisters envy us, to a degree, our liberty and freedom during the vacation. As for them, though they are not in a large city, the population of Tekoa is numerous for its size. They cannot go out in the garden, (yard) without being watched by the public! We appreciate to a greater degree the solitude of DeSmet.

[The Tekoa Academy closed in the 1950's--it was situated on a hill--a house somewhat like the one at DeSmet. They had at times 100 white girls.]

Few people think of DeSmet and recall a hospital, but that is indeed what was opened there in 1915:

"The state of finances is very shaky in every way! The Provincial Council, after a study of our situation, wanted to work out something to remedy the situation, and our miserable financial state. The request was presented to the General Council. It was as follows: to unite the White girls with the Indian girls to the right of the house; to use the left side for the opening of a hospital. They hoped by this to better our state bordering on financial crisis! This local hospital would do much good to the souls of this locality. The permission was granted and the work of subdividing the recreation room into wards was begun in the month of September." (chronicles)

The first hospital patient was one of the Mission girls, Florence Stout. Sr. Seraphie arrived in DeSmet just prior to this to take over the hospital nursing. The hospital opened in 1915. Generous gifts to the new "facility" included: \$500 from St. Julien Hospital [name changed in 1917 to Holy Family Hospital] St. Ignatius, Mont. (one of our hospitals); a sterilizer, valued at \$300, from Columbus Hospital, Great Falls, Mont.; and numerous gifts from other houses of the province, including a steam-driven and heated mangle from St. Patrick Hospital, Missoula, Mont., in 1916.

"On the 7th. [March 1915], we have our first surgery, for Hilda Nixon, one of our pupils! [the mother of Sr. Dolores Ellwart] It was successful and after a few weeks she is ready to resume her studies." (chronicles)

In 1916 we find the first reference to holding bazaars as a means of raising funds. Begging in the mining camps, opening a hospital, and a small bazaar proved to be very helpful. The bazaar netted \$200.

Sr. Pacome (Marie Anne Latour Forget), [1916-22 and 1934-35], died at DeSmet and is buried there.

"Evidently Kateri Tekakwitha had claims upon the future Indian missionary...three years after profession, Sister Pachomias (Pacome) left for St. Ignatius Mission...Thirty seven years were divided between the Flatheads and the Coeur d'Alenes..."

"She served as superior...and then as economer (treasurer), assistant to the superior and to every sister and office in the house...She had an eye for work and she expressed or unexpressed needs and wishes of everybody, just as other people have an ear for news."

"Said one of the Indian women, 'She was my mother. None of us old pupils of hers ever forget her. What she tells us is planted right in our minds and hearts...The chief of the Coeur d'Alenes made a special trip from Spokane for the funeral and was a pallbearer with three other leading Indians and two white neighbors. Chief Seltice came to the Convent to make sure that Sister Pachomias would be buried no place else than De Smet. An unusual number of Indians came from far and near to make the congregational singing of the Requiem High Mass a truly touching tribute." (Little Journal of Providence)



Sr. Denis of the Sacred Heart Clement

Sr. Denis of the Sacred Heart (Marie Rose Alice Clement), [1917-29 and 1940-49], was a happy, bubbly person, well suited to the ministry she undertook at DeSmet.

"Sister Denis often remarked that she never had a position in the Community that she did not like..."

Sister Denis had a lovely singing voice which contributed much to the many choirs of which she was a member. She was especially loved by the Indians. In August of 1967, the members of the Coeur d'Alene Indian

Tribe celebrated a 'Sister Denis Day' when she was celebrating her 50th. anniversary...A delegation from this tribe also did a war dance in her honor on the grounds of Mt. St. Joseph. The Sisters and employees were amazed and entranced at this display of appreciation." (her necrology)

The Spanish Influenza struck all over the country in 1918. DeSmet was not spared:

"Although we do not have any cases in our school, the authorities, through a motive of prudence, gave us an order 'to close our school.' With great regret we send the children home--they had just arrived (October). The Church is also closed. This brings regrets among the Indians...Nov. 25, since the Flu did not appear the authorities permitted the opening of Public Places. Also the Indians may go to Church. We then recall the children to the school. However, no sooner had we resumed our ordinary program, 'the terrible flu' hit the Camp. We are asked at Tekoa, Wash., a small village--twelve miles away for assistance." (chronicles)



Sr. Mary Eugenie Mondor

In 1918, Sr. Mary Eugenie (Marie Antoinette Mondor), [1918-40] came to begin a long tenure at DeSmet.

"She had volunteered for the far-away missions during her novitiate days." So says her necrology in the Little Journal of Providence. "...she served twice as superior, assuming, with this appointment, duties such as

treasurer, laundress, gardener, farmyard helper, and supervisor of employees. During the dark days of the great depression, she was often embarrassed by the lack of funds with which to pay the employees."

A touching account later tells of the second death of a sister at DeSmet, on Dec. 10, 1918: Sr. Jeanne Cecile, a victim of the flu. Sister nursed back to health a pregnant woman, but at the cost of her own life. Sr. Jeanne Cecile was the first Sister of Providence (indeed, the first religious) to be buried in the Mission cemetery. Sorrow continued throughout the month, resulting in no religious services at Christmas time, due to the contagion. Nearly all of the sisters were affected by the flu, while at the hospital there were no more free beds. The sisters had to work day and night during this trial. This situation continued for three months.

The annals for 1919 show 100 persons sick at the hospital during the year. There were 1,308 visits to the poor, four deaths, and one aged person cared for.

1920-39



Sr. Mary Dorilda Beaudreau and Sr. Mary Edna Beaudreau (sisters)

1920 brought Sr. Mary Edna (Angeline Beaudreau) [1920-26; 1937-39; and 1955-85] to DeSmet for a long career at this mission. Her blood sister, Sr. Mary Dorilda, preceded her here in 1914.

Her necrology tells it this way:

"Angeline felt privileged to accompany the sisters on their begging tours, and she nourished a desire to enter the Providence Order, as she had an aunt, Sister Edgar, who was at that time Superior of Lourdes Academy, Wallace, Idaho. Her entrance was arranged by her aunt and she left for Montreal in 1909 to join a group of sisters who were on their way to the West..."

The greater part of her life was spent among the Indian tribes. She dearly loved these people who showed great affection for her. She also taught her pupils a great devotion to Kateri Tekakwitha, a saintly Indian maiden, whose cause for beatification was promoted with great zeal. Sister was privileged to visit the tomb of Kateri and was given a relic by the Canadian postulator for the Cause..."

Sister's request to be buried in DeSmet, among her beloved Indians, was granted by the Community. After the rosary, the people were invited to share their thoughts about Sister. Among those who spoke were Ernest Stensgar, Chairman of the Coeur d'Alene Tribe, and Lawrence Nicodemus, who shared his common musical background with Sister. People stayed and shared recollections for many hours. The coffin was covered with a Pendleton Eagle blanket, a gift of Sacred Heart Mission."

***Venerable Kateri Tekakwitha League
Office of the Vice-Postulator
Clarence Center, New York
Feb. 28, 1975***

"Dear Sr. Mary Edna:

It is with great pleasure that I announce to you that you have been selected as the recipient of the Kateri Tekakwitha Award for 1975...

***Cordially yours,
(signed) Joseph S. McBride, S.J."***

(Sister was able to travel to New York for the award!)

Sister wrote of herself:

"I have spent 33 years of my religious life among the Coeur d'Alenes, and in the summer time I would often teach religion to Indians of other tribes for vacation school..."



Pendleton blanket draped the casket (this is a custom of the tribe). It was buried with Sr. Mary Edna. Ernest Stensgar, Chairman, in front of casket.



Sr. Dolores blessing casket. L-R, back: Sr. Kathryn Rutan, Provincial; Lucy Finley; Maggie Mullen; Sr. Mary K. Cummings; Sr. Loretta Marie Marceau; Sr. Clarella Fink. Front: Alfred Nomee with Sr. Dolores.



Tribal members carried the casket to church. Front,L-R: Alfred Nomee, Charles Mullen, Ernest Stensgar. Back: Vern Larson, local farmer, Christopher Moclteme, Robert LaSarte.



Altar at Sacred Heart Mission

On Nov. 10, 1922, the third death of a sister took place: Sr. Marie Euphemie. She became injured in a horse and buggy accident in Great Falls, Mont., and returned to DeSmet to "suffer and pray."

Bishop Daniel M. Gorman, the second bishop of Boise, Idaho, on his visit to the Mission in 1923, gave the sisters permission to collect for funds throughout the Boise Diocese. The collection proved to be very fruitful.

On May 20, 1924, Sr. Emma Bean died of pneumonia. On May 24, 1902 she had made her first vows as a Coadjutrix Sister (auxiliary) in Missoula, Mont. DeSmet was her only Providence home. She was 47 years old. July 23 found Sr. Mary Celine dead--a lifelong asthma sufferer.

On June 1924, a report was made by Sr. Clotilde, superior and principal, to the National Catholic Welfare Conference, Bureau of Education, Wash., D.C., stating that 72 students total were in the eight grades. Sister stated that there were 11 sister teachers and three lay teachers.



Sr. Marcel de Cordoue Goudreault

1925 saw Sr. Marcel de Cordoue (Goudreault), [1925-37 and 1939-40], join the sisters at DeSmet. The Little Journal of Providence describes her this way:

"...she spent 13 years taking care of the chapel and the church, and taught singing and piano to the Indians. She also taught sewing to the children in grades 1-8 and cooking to 4-H Club members.

...Sr. Marcel de Cordoue felt that it was a mission of great peace...It was a mission with an aura of God's presence."

"When we heard about her death at the Tribal office, we were all talking about her choir. Baz Peone and Chief Joe Seltice were in it, and Louis Joseph played the violin. All through the Northwest Tribes, in those days, our little school was recognized as having a choir. (Henry Aripa, Tribal Financial Manager)"

Fire, by now, was a "visitor" that the sisters at the Mission were beginning to get used to!:

"On Sunday, the 3rd. (January 1926)...a sister writing in the sisters' dormitory on the second floor heard a very strange noise on the floor above. She hastened upstairs to see what it was. She discovered a fire which had already burnt a hole in the floor and the flames covered a radiator under the slanting roof. She gave the alarm at once...

After four hours of this ferocious work they were masters of the flames and the convent was out of danger. The fire had destroyed a part of the roof, a few walls and a piece of the floor. All the house was damaged by water and moreover by the rain which fell as if the sky was falling--continued all of the next day...They covered the hole in the roof with canvas while awaiting the insurance agent. They evaluated the damage at \$4,275." (chronicles)

1927 brought the death of yet another Sister of Providence, Sr. Mary Carmel (Chartrand) on January 9. She was 39 years of age. She had T.B. since childhood.

Sr. Mary Alodia (Marie Alice Stephanie Roberts), [1928-30; 1931-33; 1939-47; 1949-54; and 1965-67], lived in Grass Valley, ten miles from Missoula, Mont., and eight miles from Frenchtown. She was the twelfth child in her family. She graduated from Sacred Heart Academy in Missoula in 1922. She writes of herself:

"It was in St. Ignatius (Montana) that my vocation was born. Such good sisters as Sister Pachomias, Superior, Sr. M. Eugenie and Ananias, boarding mistresses, Sister Dunstan, Sister Mary Lawrence and others were there on mission and I shall never forget those good days."

The Little Journal of Providence continues:

"Sister Mary Alodia is remembered as a teacher and a seamstress, but above all as an Indian missionary. She had worked among the Coeur d'Alene Indians at DeSmet for a total of 18 years...When the girls left Mary Immaculate School, Sister Mary Alodia followed them, as it were, in their successes and difficulties. She had the ability to relate to all members of a family. Even the men remembered her when she met them in later years. One of her girls continued her schooling and became a teacher...

The Indian presence was marked at Sister's funeral services.

...she did a masterful job of translating the first chronicles of Providence work on the Flathead Reservation, Montana, and on the Coeur d'Alene Reservation, Idaho, from the French into the English."



Sr. Georgius Groleau and pupils

Sr. Laurette Bisson (Sr. Marguerite Alacoque) [1930; 1950-56; 1959-65; 1967-74] ministered at DeSmet, sharing the years of 1967-72 with her blood sister, Sr. Georgette. Sr. Laurette was superior of the convent 1950-56 and 1959-65. Sr. Georgette recalls of her sister that she also loved nature and the beauties around DeSmet. Sr. Laurette had many friends among the Indians. She loved flowers and beautifying the convent grounds.



Sr. Providencia Tolan

Sr. Providencia (Denise Tolan), [1937-41] was perhaps the greatest Sisters of Providence outspoken advocate for Native Americans in the West. She spent four years at the DeSmet mission. Born in Anaconda, Mont., she was the daughter of Congressman John Tolan of California--having been raised in Oakland. She was especially devoted to the social needs of the poor, especially those of Native Americans living on reservations. She was actively involved as

a guest speaker and writer for numerous journals and periodicals.

She was adopted into both the Black Feet and Gros Ventre Tribes. In 1955 she received the National Merit Award of the National Congress of American Indians.

She wrote of her early ideals and desire to serve the Church in Montana:

"After my first retreat at Holy Names High School (Oakland, Calif.), I told Grandma Deschamps that I was going to be a Sister, and work with Indians...Grandma took us to St. Ignatius Church on the Flathead Reservation (Montana). The great Mission Church with its elaborate paintings is inspiring. Praying there were three Sisters of Providence who were nurses at Holy Family Hospital nearby. I told Grandma I would be kneeling there with them someday." (archives file)

Many of her lectures at the College (now University) of Great Falls (Montana) focused on the racism she saw directed at Indians. She was also a critic of U.S. domestic policies regarding Indians.



May crowning at De Smet. Margaret Matt speaking.



Sr. Rosalie Dionne

Sr. Rosalie Dionne [1937-45] says that DeSmet was her favorite mission. Here she was cook, seamstress, made costumes for Christmas pageants and saw to it that the actors were well dressed, cooked for the men employees, and dressed dolls for the annual December bazaars using the convent sewing machine.

During the Second World War years, she recalls melting Christmas ornaments which were made of sugar, so the sugar could be better utilized!

On Dec. 7, 1941, when Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, the annual bazaar was to take place and went ahead as scheduled. The people heard the news during the bazaar. Several toys were marked "made in Japan," which caused many of the children to not want them.

She fondly remembers that in one day 16 big bags of green beans were picked. She experimented with "salting" them, using huge barrels which she sawed in half. She said they were the rave of all who ate them. Sister also enjoyed canning the fruits and vegetables there. The sisters had to beg for peas and fruit for canning during the war years.

Sister said that when Sr. John of God was assigned there as superior, it was brought to her attention that the farm was being neglected. Sr. Denis of the Sacred Heart told her to lease the land. When Fr. Byrne, S.J., was consulted on the matter, he said, "I have just the man for you: Vernon Larsen." It was early spring, so when Vern agreed to the task, he had to work the land. He gave the sisters one third of the \$4,000 a year that he earned from the farm.

It was a sad day when some officials came and closed the dairy! This was around 1943. The sisters sold the cream at Tekoa, Wash., until they could sell the cows. An auction was held; many people came, and all 60 cows were sold. When all the equipment, etc., had been sold, it netted enough to pay off the \$45,000 debt due to the Motherhouse!

One activity during the last two years of the Second World War was to have

people gather at 3:00 p.m. daily to pray the rosary for peace.

Sister's musical talents were well used as well. She would play the accordion outdoors while the other sisters were picking vegetables! She was often asked to play the organ at weddings and funerals, sometimes literally being made to "drop her apron" and go play it!

Sr. Jane Dufault [1937-39; 1950-51] is another sister who loved her days at DeSmet. She remembers how the Jesuits obtained movies for Sundays. The children were charged ten cents.

She especially recalled when Sr. Blasius bought bedspreads for the boarder girls' beds, since they had none, and a set of beautiful blue dishes (to use on special occasions).

Poverty is what she remembers most about DeSmet. During the time she was there, there were no chickens or garden. They did have meat, she said, because they had cattle. Also, there was no government help while she was there. At one time, there was \$2.00 in the convent purse.



Sr. Jane Dufault

"Fire at De Smet." So reads the title of an entry in the 1939 volume of the Little Journal of Providence. (pp. 452-454) "A few details taken from a letter written by Sr. Providencia will invite our readers to fervent thanksgiving for that signal favor."

"Seventy persons, who were following the exercises of the retreat, had gone out of the church for about a half hour, when toward 10:20 a.m., the boiler exploded. Heavy clouds of smoke went up instantly, while the flames burst through the cracking window panes. A high wind was blowing. The church was ablaze very rapidly. The children had no

sooner recited an Our Father than the flames issuing from the edifice were being blown across the road and were swirling above the apple trees of the orchard...The children filed out of their classroom, and guided by a sister took refuge in the field...Then at the height of the conflagration the wind changed."

"Not even a pin was saved from the church...there was no possibility of saving the Blessed Sacrament. All the historical treasures were also burned...Just the day before there had been the funeral of Agathe, who was a hundred years old. She was the last of the Coeur d'Alene Indians who had been baptized by Father De Smet...Another strange coincidence...It looked as if the old mission relics--Agathe, the church and its bell--were making their exit together...no lives were lost...A half hour later the retreat-master and his retreatants would have been assembled in the church and caught as in a trap."



church bell at De Smet--a gift of Archbishop Seghers

Sr. Ann Dolores Ybarrola [1941-42] shares this reflection:

"My two years at the Convent of Mary Immaculate in DeSmet, Idaho, were happy and very busy years. In addition to teaching full time, the teachers had other assignments. I assisted in the boarding department where one of my duties was the supervision of the cleaning of the children's dining room. One evening as we were finishing up after supper, I noticed that Inez SiJohn was missing from the clean-up crew. I asked where she was. Edna Lasarte told me that Inez had gone to empty the slop. I said, 'Oh, honey, don't say slop; it's vulgar.' Edna replied, 'I'm sorry, Sister, Inez went out to empty the vulgar.'

Not only did we work with the children in the classroom and in the boarding department, but we also took at least one day each Fall when we and all of the children, first through eighth grade, went out to the garden to dig and sack potatoes. Times were hard, and we depended on garden produce for much of our food.

In addition to the garden, there was a large dairy. Besides providing milk for the Mary Immaculate personnel--children, employees, and Sisters--the dairy trucked large quantities of milk to sell in Spokane. If a sister had to go to Spokane for a doctor's appointment or other need, she would get up very early in the morning and ride to Spokane in the milk truck. The sisters at DeSmet had no car in those days.

All of the sisters missioned in DeSmet were very hard working, but they were happy there providing service to the Indian people who showed much appreciation for the kindness of the sisters.

De Smet is in a rural area without many of the services provided in cities.

For example, at the time of a funeral, there was no hearse. After Mass for the Dead, the casket would be hoisted onto the back of a pickup and taken to the cemetery for interment.

Despite the hardships, my days in DeSmet were happy days when life was much simpler than it is today."



Sr. Ann Dolores Ybarrola



Sr. John of God Martin

1942-49

CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

The 1942 Little Journal of Providence also records the Centennial celebration at DeSmet. (LJP 1942, p. 1228-31)

"The First Friday of December, 1942, proved a memorable day for the members of the Coeur d'Alenes...Through the thoughtfulness of Rev. Cornelius Byrne, S.J., Father Superior, the Indians were invited to a sumptuous dinner. This noon meal left nothing to be desired as even turkey graced the well-laden tables. With Chief Seltice as toast master, the meal progressed satisfactorily, and the Indians were profuse in expressing their gratitude to the priests, to the sisters and to the humble Jesuit lay brothers."

"No sooner was the repast over, than all were invited to attend a little pageant. Rev. Father Wm. Ryan was the narrator and the Indians, men and women and children, acted out the history of Catholicity among the Coeur d'Alenes. This ended with the singing of 'Twilight and Sunset,' composed expressly for this 100th. anniversary."

"The entertainment over, all went to the House of God for Solemn Benediction during which Father Superior with Chief Seltice and Paschal George--councilman, renewed the act of Consecration of the entire tribe to the Sacred Heart...Leaving the Church all followed the Black Robes to the little cemetery where lie buried the old Missionaries who labored and toiled and prayed that the tribe might know and love and serve the good God."

"Mother Paschal, Provincial Superior, Sister Clotilda, Provincial Assistant; Sister Evangelista and Sister Eugenia came for the little celebration, the last three having spent years here as devoted Superiors. Sister Bridget, our directress of studies, was also with us..."

Revenue from the wheat lands and a yearly bazaar helped provide their needs for many years.

1949-53

Because of telephone problems, as Sr. Carol Marie recalls, the convent was never notified of her being assigned there! When she arrived by bus, no one was there to meet her.

She worked in the kitchen and laundry and later taught art. She liked working with Sr. Philip of the Cross, the cook, and also liked her superior, Sr. Servule of Rome.

One of her memories is of her rescuing a small boy who had climbed up the convent fire escape and then was too scared to come down! She climbed up and carried him down.

Her art students entered some of their work [mosaics] in a local fair and won blue ribbons. The children also made necklaces and sold them for art money. They also enjoyed making gifts for Mother's Day. Candy apple sales were also a big hit with the children.



Sr. Carol Marie Morin

Sr. Ann Ellen Bailey [1949; 1951-54] shared her reflections on this mission by opening with how much she enjoyed Fr. Michael Shannon, S.J., who was the pastor there at that time. She said he really cooperated with the sisters.

Sr. Ann Ellen enjoyed sleighriding and going fishing with Lucy George. Lucy's husband, Don, was the sheriff at the time.

Sister enjoyed her days at DeSmet. She also recalls the nice strawberries they had, her wonderful superior, Sr. Marguerite Alacoque (Sr. Laurette Bisson), and Mrs. Maggie Mullan, who was very nice to her.



Sr. Ann Ellen Bailey

Corpus Christi procession





Sisters (left to right) Ann Ellen, Seraphina, Margaret Alacoque, Mary Alodia, Bernard of Parma, Mary Edna, and Louis Marcel. Fr. John J. Brown, S.J. (Native American), in center.

1953

January 1 started the new year out on a positive note. That evening, the pastor, Fr. John J. Brown, S.J., [himself an Indian] gave an interesting talk to the sisters. He spoke of the aim of the Mission School, the problems confronting the Indians, and the relationship of this to the sisters, since the Tribe won its "Claims Case" against the U.S. Government, with a settlement to the amount of 3 million dollars. While this was not the original 10 million dollars which was claimed as of last year, it brought the case to a close. The bulk of the amount was put into a "sinking fund," with the interest used for benefits to the members of the Tribe. These will include sums for higher education for the children, medical care and social work. So many have hopes that a high school for the boys and girls will be established at DeSmet.

April 3 was the occasion of the first mass to be held in the new church. This was celebrated on the 14th. anniversary that the old church burned to the ground. The new one is a short distance from the old site, but closer to the convent. Several pupils made their First Communion at this mass, which was Holy Saturday Midnight Mass. Jesuit Scholastics from Mt. St. Michael's in Spokane assisted at the altar with Jesuit Fathers John J. Brown and Michael Shannon. Most significant at the time was the life-size crucifix above the main altar.



Natl. Congress of American Indian missionaries: (left to right) [unknown]; Fr. Tom Connolly, SJ; Sr. Providencia; Joseph Garry, pres. of NCAI; Sr. John of God; [unknown]; Fr. John Brown, SJ; Fr. Al Johnson, S.J.

Over the years, many Sisters of Providence from St. Ignatius Province taught in Religious Vacation Schools in the Northwest in the summers, after teaching all year or even before going to summer school themselves! Note is made in the June 1953 chronicle that some sisters taught a second two-week session! As an example of sisters going from DeSmet, we find Sisters Mary Edna and Mary Alodia going to Wellpinit, Wash., with Sr. Anthony August of Ft. Benton, Mont. Sister Ann Ellen and a companion went to Moses Lake, Quincy, and Ephrata, Wash., where "a large number of children yearly report to classes." This demonstrates the education commitment of the Providence Sisters and a willingness to serve way beyond their classroom assignments.

DIAMOND JUBILEE CELEBRATION

On Oct. 7, 1953, the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary, a celebration of the mission's Diamond Jubilee was held with a Pontifical mass at 10:00 a.m. in the newly erected Sacred Heart Church, opened with a procession which formed at the convent. The procession included Indians of all ages in tribal

dress, white children from the school, fifty Sisters of Providence, thirty priests, and assistants at the mass Msgr. Francis Bonora, and Fathers Michael Shannon, S.J. (former assistant pastor at the Mission), Fr. Harold O. Small, S.J., (Provincial Superior of the Oregon Province and master of ceremonies), Fr. Albert A. Dulberg (pastor of St. George Church, Post Falls, Idaho), and Bishop Edward J. Kelly, Bishop of Boise, Idaho, was the celebrant. Gregorian chant was sung by the sisters' choir of the Mission, assisted by that of the sisters of Sacred Heart Hospital, Spokane. Sr. Mary Edna and Sr. Xavier (Ethel Richardson) directed the choir. Fr. John J. Brown, S.J., Superior at DeSmet, gave the sermon. He pointed out that, "Too often we take the sisters for granted just like the air we breathe, little stopping to think of the virtues practiced in being always at their post of duty; there, when needed; undertaking, when fire four times destroyed their convent, to rebuild; tried by many trials, yet continuing on with renewed courage."

The altar of the church was beautifully decorated with red roses, as were the convent chapel and banquet tables. 800 roses were donated by Smith Brothers Green Houses, Spokane.

400 Indians and friends were served a delicious buffet lunch prepared on the front lawn of the convent. The beautiful sunshine, combined with the brilliant colors of the regalia of the Indians, was very special. 54 sisters partook of the delicious banquet prepared for them, and 36 priests enjoyed a similar one. Sr. Providencia Tolan, on faculty at the College (now University of) Great Falls, wrote a play, "The Angel of Sacred Heart Mission," for the event. A beautiful altar cover of cloth of gold, handwoven by Sr. Mary Odile of Mt. St. Joseph, was one of the special gifts received.

1954-58

On July 7, a telephone call confirmed that the request for tax exemption of the land that had been submitted to the Benewah County Commissioners on June 28 had been granted. Grateful thanks was offered Providence for this favor.

1958-62

For the first time in DeSmet, mass was celebrated on May 30 (Memorial Day) at the cemetery where the graves had been decorated. Fr. Ferretti, S.J., pastor, was celebrant. The organ was transported there by truck. Sr. Mary Edna accompanied the adult choir of 25 members. After mass, Joe Garry, Acting Chief of the Tribe, spoke to all present words of sympathy over the loss of the men who fought and died for their country. Those buried there were sisters, soldiers and the faithful.

1962

Bishop Sylvester W. Treinen was installed on August 8, 1962, as the fifth bishop of the Boise Diocese. [He died of pneumonia on Sept. 30, 1996.]

The Sept. 4 chronicle entry points out the decline in numbers at the school:

"Today's enrollment totaled 58 pupils. However, we feel that the total will be somewhat larger in another month's time. Each year we seem to have fewer pupils due to lack of transportation. Most of the families now residing in the village are the older Indians whose families are grown and living elsewhere."



Panorama photo of DeSmet, left to right: the barn, bunkhouse, school, laundry, boiler

Sisters canning. Left to right: Sisters Esther Mary Vosen, Joseph Aimee, Alphonse Gabriel, Margaret Alacoque, Joseph Cyril.





Sr. Mary Lois Rochester

Sr. Mary Lois Rochester [1963-65; 1968-74] ministered at DeSmet in the critical period before the sisters withdrew from the school. Her memories of her time at DeSmet are these:

When she was newly professed, she went to DeSmet for an overnight stay, in order to be able to attend Sunday mass the next day. Little did she know that two of her brothers, aged 22 and 25, would drown that very weekend near DeSmet--so she was really coming for a double funeral!

She recalls that the Indians were very good at playing and winning at bingo. One woman told her the secret: it's all in how one selects the card. Sr. Mary Lois followed her advice and won three games in a row!

Sr. Mary Lois recalls being in the convent when an earthquake struck. The other teachers outside didn't even know it had happened! Inside, dishes, etc., rattled quite a bit.

It was the peace and quiet of the DeSmet area that made it so appealing to Sister. She also said, "And there were few quarrels!"

Sr. Mary Lois enjoyed working in the vegetable gardens and even had indoor gardens, "...which were great on a rainy day."

She recalls her move to Mt. St. Joseph in 1974 when the school closed. She would like to have stayed longer at DeSmet.

1964

Sr. Mary Edna was invited to be a guest speaker at the eighth grade banquet in Plummer, Idaho.

Three eighth graders received their diplomas on May 29: Sharon Hamilton, Linda Rose Pluff, and Janet Margaret SiJohn. Fr. Michael Shannon, S.J., announced that beginning in September, the boarding school would be discontinued. This is due to the fact that the housing project will enable many families to live nearer to the school. This announcement brought to a close 86 years of ministry by the Sisters at the boarding school.



1965 convent

1966

The sisters found it necessary to change the name of the school to "Mary Immaculate School," after dealing with such titles as Providence Mary Immaculate, Convent of Mary Immaculate, School of the Mary Immaculate, and others that at times were given the school. The sisters voted on this change, feeling it was more fitting to the work they were doing, and submitted the request to the Superior General. The change took place on Sept. 15.

Besides a new name, another change that 1966 brought was a change of habit for the sisters! On Sept. 18, the parishioners were given a surprise: four sisters who looked like "visiting sisters" as they sat in their pew. Those who were pioneers in the adventure included Sisters Camilla (Dolores Ellwart), Jude of the Sacred Heart, and Maria Lourdes (Cleto). There was a gathering after mass and many pleasant exclamations from the people. The pastor, Fr. Michael Shannon, S.J., was very supportive.

Sisters in new habit: (left to right) Sisters Mary Ann Martello, Dolores Ellwart, Esther Mary Vosen, Maria Lourdes Cleto.



1967

Diocesan and deanery involvement was important to the sisters of DeSmet, particularly Sr. Dolores Ellwart. In October 1967, the religious sisters of Northern Idaho were asked to select a representative for the newly organized Diocesan Pastoral Council. The role of this council was to advise the bishop on diocesan wide policies. Sr. Camilla (Dolores Ellwart), superior, was chosen to represent the sisters of this deanery for the first two years.

Sr. Georgette Bisson (Sr. George Ernest) [1967-72] describes DeSmet as "...one of the most beautiful corners of God's creation--summer and all year." She fondly remembers the meadowlarks in the early morning in spring. Christmas there was special for her. There was an outdoor crib that the Indians put up. The Indians brought candles in procession before Midnight Mass and placed them at the foot of the crib in the church. Sister recalls that one Christmas she was the only S.P. who was singing Christmas carols with the Indians. She says she enjoyed teaching the little children at DeSmet, especially their bright eyes full of curiosity and interest. She is especially grateful for the years when she and her sister, Sr. Laurette, were there together.



Sr. Georgette Bisson

1968-72

In April 1968, when the Sisters' Senate was formed, it was decided at the Diocesan Pastoral Council that the sisters who belonged to that group could fulfill two roles and also be members of the Sisters' Senate, which could then meet at a later time, but in conjunction with the Pastoral Council, which met in Boise, Idaho.

Even though the main ministry of the DeSmet sisters was education, over the years various sisters there had individual apostolates, because there were always numerous needs. Sr. Mary Edna is an example. The 1968 chronicle notes that she visited the homes of the parishioners to ask whether they wished to have their homes blessed during the month of June. Each family was given a picture of the Sacred Heart. Bishop Treinen donated the pictures. Even though she had a few ailments, Sister visited many homes, taking time to say a decade of the rosary with them.



**Sr. Clarella Lois Mae Fink
(now in the Philippine Sector)**

"It was dark when I arrived in DeSmet...early in September of 1949, so I really couldn't see any of the landscape. The next morning was Sunday. We sisters walked two by two down the boardwalk between the convent and the church. When I entered the church, I was surprised to see all the men sitting on one side and the women on the other side. The small children and babies were with the women. Sr. Mary Edna sat at the organ to play, and the choir members were ready to sing. The church was small and had a musty smell from leakage of the rain."

"After mass I could see the small unpainted houses in clusters at the foot of the hill. Later, when we sisters did some home visiting, I found that the houses had dirt floors and were very poorly furnished."

"The next day was school. I had grades one to four and Sr. Mary Alodia Roberts taught grades five through eight."

"The girls boarded at the convent school, so they arrived in the classroom on time. But where were the boys? When I asked Sr. Mary Alodia the question, she just said, 'Ring the bell at the open window and they will come.' This I did. Then my heart sank. The boys came running through the trees and bushes carrying sticks and whatever else they were playing with and ran up the fire escape. Then came the surprise! The boys came into the classroom shy, meek and mosey and took their seats. They had deposited their playthings at the top of the fire escape."

"This turned out to be my best year of teaching [1950]. The children had

excellent behavior and were eager to learn."

"All was not rosy in DeSmet at that time. One by one our cows were mysteriously dying. The vet found nails in the cows' stomachs. How did the nails get there? Later it was discovered that one of the hired men planted the nails in the hay which he fed to the cows."

"Christmas eve was very special. From my bedroom window I could see the Indians wrapped in their blankets around a campfire in front of the church. It would have been fun to join them."

"...After my final vow retreat [made final vows July 19, 1950], I was changed to Great Falls. Twenty years later I was back in DeSmet. I couldn't believe the changes...there were nice government houses for most of the families. Some houses were in the process of being built..."

"This time I was blessed with just grades one and two. We had two Jesuit volunteers who taught grades three and four and grades five and six. Sr. Dolores Ellwart taught grades seven and eight. It was a real joy teaching only two grades. The children were still eager to learn and easy to teach."

"One year I taught special education in the afternoon under the public school system in our...school. Sr. Jude of the Sacred Heart (Vosen) taught my classes at that time...I had to take down the crucifix and all religious pictures. It was during this period that I discovered that I prefer teaching a classroom of alive children rather than one on one teaching."

"Wakes held a special meaning for me at this time. It felt good to go to the parish hall to recite the rosary and to listen to the stories the people told about the one who had died."

"Pow-wows were always fun to attend. As the people became more acquainted with me, I would be invited to dance more of their dances with them."

"The year I was named superior was a hard year for me...It was during this time that local houses [of sisters] were beginning to have local house meetings."

"The Indians, too, were beginning to rethink educational policies. If Mary Immaculate School would become a public school, they could receive O'Malley funds to help with the cost of education. They would build their own hall and their own school. They would form an Indian Board of Education."

"Hence, 1972-73 was my last year in DeSmet. From here I was changed to Missoula. I will always cherish working with the children and their parents in DeSmet."

Sr. Dolores Ellwart participated as a team member on several weekends, over the years, for youth and adults that were held in North Idaho. On July 26, Fr. Philip Canavan, pastor of the St. Maries, Idaho, parish, organized an Interfaith Encounter for teenagers. He was assisted by Protestants and Catholics alike. It was held at Camp N-Sid-Sen, north of Harrison, Idaho.

Sr. Dolores attended the planning meetings and spent the weekend at the camp.

On April 5-7, 1974, she also was part of a twenty person team giving an adult SEARCH weekend at Camp N-Sid-Sen. This program was directed by Fr. David Riffle, St. Pius X Church, and Sr. Helen Mason of Coeur d'Alene.

1972-74

The province sub-committee to study the possibility of having Lay Associates (now called Providence Associates) in our community met for the first time at the apartment of Sisters Karen Marie (Nancy MacLean) and Helen Mason in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. Sr. Clarella Fink, of DeSmet, was chosen chairperson. Sr. Joseph Cyril of DeSmet also attended the meeting. This meeting was on Jan. 29.

The Provincial Council in Spokane was the Board of Trustees for Mary Immaculate School. Tri-annual meetings were inaugurated this year. Sr. Clarella, superior, represented the sisters of DeSmet at the first meeting. [Governing boards of all of the province institutions began around 1970.]

CLOSING OF THE SCHOOL BY THE SISTERS

In 1970 the mission school was in need of repair if it was to continue being used as a school. A proposal was made to the Coeur d'Alene Tribal Council to continue operating the school, and the proposal was accepted. In 1974, electrical and plumbing problems forced the sisters to close the school and turn the land back to the Indian tribe.

The Provincial Council of the sisters met with the Tribal Council and told them that the sisters could no longer supply sisters for Mary Immaculate School. The Tribal Council accepted this fact and proceeded with an investigation into possible ways to keep the school open under Tribal sponsorship. A survey was conducted among tribal members, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, and educational consultants at the University of Idaho (Moscow) were communicated with.

The Coeur d'Alene Tribe opened their Tribal School in September, 1974, utilizing the Community Center at De Smet. It was governed by the Tribe through a school board and financed by the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Tribe.

Fr. Michael Shannon, S.J., pastor, said that he agreed with the bishop's wish that if the school closed, some SP's would at least stay in parish work at DeSmet, doing religious education, family visiting, etc.

1974-78

The mission officially closed as a school under the S.P.'s on June 30, 1974. The following is a Statement of Appreciation to the Sisters of Providence by the Coeur d'Alene Indian Tribe:

"Our sadness at the Sisters leaving the Mary Immaculate School at DeSmet cannot be expressed in words. Our sense of loss can be expressed only by looking into the mirror of the past.

Before there were railroads or highways, these dedicated Sisters came across the continent to our Reservation. In the school, they built, their first students were our parents and grandparents. Since then, for 98 years, their outpouring of love and Christian service has touched and changed the lives of all our members.

It was like yesterday when at the Parlay in 1887 Commissioner John Wright told our assembled chiefs and members: 'You should be thankful to the Great Creator, the Father of us all, that he has sent you in this wilderness, the Holy Fathers, Mothers and Sisters to lead you in the paths of virtue and happiness.' This the Sisters did all the time and we are thankful.

Chief Seltice spoke of the love of the Tribe for the Sisters and told the Commission: 'You have seen our schools and you speak words of kindness and encouragement...the Sisters will be with us always. This is the great desire of our hearts.' It was and is.

When the Parlay Commission spoke of farms, houses, food and clothing, Chief Vincent answered: 'I think there are two things. One is from the Sisters and one is from you...the Sisters care for my soul and you my body.' Can we say it any better.

How have the Sisters cared for our souls for 98 years. Not by prayer alone, or learning prayer. Not by bells or ringing them. Not by the soft light of the Chapel or the lighting of candles. The true meaning of religion was expressed in lives and deeds. In your lives and ours.

Our minds go back to First Communion veils, ribbons and prayer books, the soft smile of a loving nun, a reassuring touch, the songs, the recitals, algebra, the 'times tables,' the fun, the play, the work...-always with Them and They with us. We cannot think of even one sister or them ALL without the living memories of good things tumbling through our minds. Because of them we could say 'Mother, Father, Sister, Son, Daughter, Brother, Friend' and feel, with the Sisters, the embrace of a tender, loving God.

With bells and words and hands you have called us a million times to pray, to love and learn. We call to you now to tell you in the words of Seltice - 'YOU WILL BE WITH US ALWAYS.'

Adopted by the Coeur d'Alene Tribal Council in official meeting at DeSmet, Idaho, by a vote of 7 to 0 on May 23, 1974.

(signed) Bernard J. LaSarte, Tribal Chairman" (chronicles)

On May 24, 1974, a farewell mass and dinner were held in appreciation of the many years the sisters had given the Coeur d'Alene people. [Mary Immaculate School and all land held by the sisters to support education were later returned to the Tribe.]



SR. DOLORES ELLWART (SR. CAMILLA)

Sr. Dolores Ellwart (Sr. Camilla), who was born in DeSmet, was the school's principal at the time of its closing, and had taught at the school since 1965, responded to Bishop Sylvester Treinen's request that a S.P. remain to help in parish work. The provincial council gave its approval of this.

The month of June was spent getting the building ready for a transfer to the Tribe. Most of the school equipment and materials were left for the Tribal School. Sr. Imelda Flynn, who was a teacher at Blanchet High School in Seattle, Wash., came to assist Sr. Dolores with this transition.

Sr. Dolores moved into a mobile home on July 12, 1974, which was placed between the rectory and the social hall, adjacent to the Jesuit Volunteer trailer. Sister was affiliated with the SP's at 1002 E. Boone Ave., Spokane, since she would now be living alone.

Sr. Dolores found herself elected Chair of the newly elected Tribal School Board. This took place while she was away at the Provincial Chapter in Spokane!

1978

The centenary of the mission was celebrated on Oct. 29, 1978, at 11:00 a.m. with a special liturgy, followed by dinner in the community building.

1979-87

Sr. Dolores found herself having more time this year to give to the senior citizens. She not only did a lot of visiting with them but was named by the Tribal Council to continue to be the Tribal representative at the meetings of the northern senior citizen groups. She remained on the Diocesan Catholic School Board, now serving in her second term (until May 1983). She was

still the chair of the Coeur d'Alene Tribal School Board. Her involvement with the Providence community was evidenced by her membership on the Apostolic Funds Committee for the province. She served as chairperson for the year.



"The Coeur d'Alene Tribe is now fixing up the main floor of the Sisters' Building at De Smet for use as offices of the Tribe's education programs. From the stained glass window in the chapel there, the Sacred Heart of Jesus continues to shine into the building and out upon the people of De Smet. In gratitude for your years of service at De Smet we send you this picture of Jesus in the chapel window surrounded by the trees of the Mission. May His Heart be a blessing for you always.

--Sacred Heart Mission, First Friday of February, 1984"

Fr. Tom Connolly, S.J. (current pastor) gave this picture to the "DeSmet Sisters" living at Mt. St. Joseph, Spokane, Wash.



1987-90

The annual pilgrimage, August 15, to the Old Mission at Cataldo, Idaho, held a big surprise for Sr. Dolores this year. Bishop Treinen and pastor, Fr. Thomas Connolly, S. J., awarded the Cataldo Medal to Bernard J. LaSarte and Sr. Dolores. This medal is bestowed annually to one or two people who have been selected for their contribution to the spiritual and/or temporal welfare of the people of the Tribe.

After a discernment process, Sr. Dolores returned to DeSmet in September, following a year's sabbatical at the Shalom Prayer Center, Mt. Angel, Ore. Sister began affiliating with the sisters at 227 E. Ninth Ave., Spokane.

1990

1990 was the Centennial year for Idaho. Fr. Thomas Connolly, S.J., pastor, continued to meet with the Indian tribes in preparation for the Indian Expo held in Boise, Idaho, in July.

1991-94

Sr. Dolores participated in the April 27 province centenary mass at Sacred Heart Church, Spokane. She carried a picture of Indian children in the entrance procession. A reception and presentation of a historical and spiritual journey were held, following the mass, at Providence Auditorium. Sr. Dolores was part of the presentation depicting an Indian woman. She borrowed the 100 year old ancestral rawhide dress from Rose Goddard to wear.

"Sr. Dolores Ellwart and Sacred Heart Mission parish staff member, Rose Goddard, attended the U.S. Catholic Mission Conference at St. Louis, Missouri, to represent the St. Ignatius Province membership in the conference. The conference was entitled, 'Cultures Challenge Mission: the Sin and the Grace.' It explored ways of commemorating the 500th. anniversary of the arrival of Europeans to the Americas." (chronicles)

Sr. Dolores was active in province activities and committees, as evidenced by her becoming a member of a newly formed committee to study cultures. The provincial chapter of August 1991 commissioned this group. The first meeting was Feb. 21, 1992.

She also attended meetings that concerned diocesan affairs in her region. Sr. Dolores was a member of the Northern Deanery Consultative Group. Quarterly

meetings were held at St. Thomas Center in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. Jan. 24, 1993, Sr. Dolores represented the sisters at the Northern Deanery Pastoral Council meeting.

As sometimes happens, other pressing matters prevent Sr. Dolores from attending community functions in Spokane or elsewhere. March 20, 1993, the celebration of the 150th. anniversary of the founding of the S.P.'s, is one such example. Sr. Dolores had to attend two funerals instead! She was able to attend a dinner and program presented at the Spokane Agricultural Trade Center on May 27 in honor of the S.P.'s. Bishop William S. Skylstad and the Diocese of Spokane sponsored it. Rose Goddard, Sacred Heart Mission secretary, also attended.

Sr. Dolores attended the Idaho State Council of Catholic Women annual conference in Coeur d'Alene on May 1, 1993.

"About 1,500 Native American Catholics representing tribes from across the nation gathered at the University of Washington, Seattle, Wash., to put aside differences and reconcile as one people. The 54th. Conference ended three years of dissension. Disagreements over inculturation--the manner, nature and extent of bringing together Native American traditions and Catholic worship practices--erupted at last year's conference in Orono, Maine. The Seattle conference included tours to the Swinomish and Lummi Reservations. Masses were said at St. James Cathedral, [Seattle] and St. Joseph Church. Those attending from DeSmet were Fr. Thomas Connolly, S.J., Sr. Dolores Ellwart, S.P., Evan Abraham, Rose Goddard, Shawn and Calvin Nomee." [August 4-7, 1993 Tekakwitha Conference] (chronicles)

On Aug. 15, 1993, the Coeur d'Alene Tribe celebrated their 150th. year at the Cataldo Mission. The Diocese began its 100th. anniversary at this time because Cataldo is the oldest church in the area.

With traditional Coeur d'Alene Tribal and Catholic rites, the grounds for a new \$3.2 million tribal school in DeSmet, Idaho, were blessed and ground was broken. The school will be situated below the former Mary Immaculate School.

In order to preserve their native language, the Coeur d'Alene Tribe School, using a \$38,000 education enrichment grant from the U.S. Department of Education, purchased twelve MacIntosh computers and the consulting services to implement programs to teach the Indian language. Lawrence Nicodemus helped build a database for the language. The program also included pictures and historical information about Indian nations across the country.

Sr. Dolores kept current in her ministry by exchange with others doing similar work. The annual meeting of Missionary Jesuits and their co-workers was held Oct. 25-27, 1993 at Immaculate Heart Retreat Center, Spokane. Fr. Tom Connolly, S.J., Sr. Dolores and Rose Goddard, Sacred Heart Mission secretary, attended.

Sr. Dolores took time to attend a conference in Coeur d'Alene Oct. 29-31, entitled, "Empowering Women: Achieving Human Rights in the 21st. Century."

1994

On April 13, 1994, Sr. Dolores was selected as one of the members to expand the Board for Benewah Medical Center. This appointment was a challenge since Sr. Dolores has always worked in the educational field.

Fr. Tom Connolly, S.J., gifted Rose Goddard and Sr. Dolores with a trip to Mexico City for the Dec. 12th. feast of our Lady of Guadalupe, Dec. 6-13, 1994. They joined a tour pilgrimage group of 34 Indians and non-Indians.

1995

Sr. Dolores and several other Sisters of Providence availed themselves of the opportunity to visit institutions and historical sites of Sacred Heart Province, beginning May 14, 1995. Sr. Dolores was two days late joining the group due to First Communion at the parishes of DeSmet and Plummer, Idaho. A few sisters of the other province (Seattle based) joined the group on its tour, so it was truly a "Crossing the Mountains" experience. With this experience behind her, Sr. Dolores organized a tour of St. Ignatius Province for the sisters from the Seattle Province. Sr. Marleen Hull, her cousin, assisted her. This trip began July 10. The tour ended with a closing mass and blessing at DeSmet.

1996

Sr. Dolores continues in her parish ministry and is affiliated with the sisters at a residence in Spokane.



CONVENT SUPERIORS

<u>ID #</u>	<u>NAME</u>	<u>YEARS SERVED</u>
# 175-T	Sr. Mary Hyacinthe (Boucher)	1878-82
# 251-T	Sr. Mary Amedee (Provost)	1882-93
# 581-D	Sr. Hilarion (Morin)	1893-96
# 281-D	Sr. Jane de Chantal (Daoust)	1896-1907
# 640-D	Sr. Clotilde (Picard)	1907-13
# 1130-T	Sr. Michel Ange (Trudeau)	1913-16
# 669-D	Sr. Pacome (Latour-Forget)	1916-22
# 640-D	Sr. Clotilde (Picard)	1922-28
# 1625-T	Sr. Mary Eugenie (Mondor)	1928-34
# 669-D	Sr. Pacome (Latour-Forget)	1934-37
# 1625-T	Sr. Mary Eugenie (Mondor)	1937-40
# 1591-D	Sr. Evangelista (Lorrain)	1940-41
# 1510-T	Sr. John of God (Martin)	1941-47
# 1797-D	Sr. Servule of Rome (Renaud)	1947-50
# 2809-D	Sr. Marguerite Alacoque (Bisson)	1950-56
# 4810-T	Sr. Lawrence Bernard (Brillant)	1956-59
# 2809-D	Sr. Marguerite Alacoque (Bisson)	1959-65
# 5262	Sr. Camilla (Ellwart)	1965-69
# 5108-T	Sr. Clarella (Fink)	1969-73
# 5262	Sr. Dolores Ellwart	1973-74

[T = transferred in or out of the province; D = deceased]

SISTERS BURIED AT DE SMET

The following sisters are buried in the community plot in the cemetery there (alphabetic order): Emma (Bean) [coadjutrix], Mary Edna (Beaudreau), Mary Carmel (Chartrand), Marie Euphemie (Danis), Mary Celine (Domingue), Pacome (Forget), Jeanne Cecile (Massicotte), Jeanne Mance (Monfils), and Martina Mary (Schumacker).



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