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LOS GATOS, CALIF.

July 28, 1964

Mr. Click Relander
3701 Commonwealth Road
Yakima, Washington

Dear Mr. Relander,

I had intended to give your request a little more prompt reply, but Fr. George St. Hilaire, S.J., dropped in unexpectedly on his way to UCLA for summer school and I have been delayed about 24 hours.

I have no access to records concerning the founding of St. Mary's Mission other than the little mentioned in the Yakima Valley Catholic Centennial (1949) and Fr. Schoenberg's Chronology of Catholic Northwest History (this is a cousin of Fr. Frank Schoenberg of St. Joseph's Parish), and the Chronology seems to draw from the Centennial. Also I have the catalogue of the Turin Province which supplied many of the priests of the Rocky Mountain and California Missions. This catalogue lists the priests and other Jesuits assigned to St. Joseph's Church, which cared for the White Swan Mission until it became a parish several years ago. Since, as you probably know, "Father" Wilbur (Rev. James H. Wilbur, Methodist Episcopal Missionary and Yakima Indian Agent from 1860-82), very effectively prohibited the establishment of any Catholic mission within the boundaries of the Yakima Reservation during his tenure of office, the mission could not have been established on any permanent basis until 1882. I am inclined to think that the Jesuit Fathers of St. Joseph Parish said Mass at White Swan at least occasionally between 1882 and the erection of the mission church in 1889, but I can offer no proof. If so, White Swan would have been a mission-station to some extent, though the term applies to it more specifically and accurately after the building of the church in 1889. What may be of use to you are the following facts: Father Victor Garrand was Superior of the Jesuits at St. Joseph's (he and Fr. John Baptist Raiberti) and he definitely founded the original mission-church at White Swan. Those who made the rounds of the mission-stations from St. Joseph's were: Frs. Urban Grassi and Aloysius Parodi, 1882-84; Fr. Parodi, 1884-85; Frs. Parodi and Garrand



2
ALMA COLLEGE
LOS GATOS, CALIF.

in 1885-86; Fr. Parodi, 1886-87; Fr. Grassi and Garrand, 1887-88; and Fr. Garrand, 1888-89. Since it is customary with the Jesuit Order to change the status on July 31, feast of the founder, each of these years begins and ends thereabouts.

You can find as much from the Yakima Catholic Centennial as I can give you after 1889, with the exception of a personal biography of himself written by Fr. Edward M. Griva, S.J., in which he recounts his experiences as a Jesuit missionary. I have a copy of that part which pertains to his work in Yakima and in a few days will have a copy ready to mail to you. He cared for St. Mary's for several years. I must warn you, though, that this autobiographical sketch does not warrant simple acceptance in all parts, but it doesn't take too much depth to get what is historical matter and what is romanticism, e.g., I think the episode concerning his problem in crossing the Satus Creek (or is it the Toppenish Creek) needs some pretty severe interpretation and a pretty big grain of salt.

My ramblings don't provide much for a written history, I know, as I've had enough experience in local history of the Pacific Northwest to appreciate the problems of researching it. My most valuable source and collection of material has always been the Jesuit Archives at Gonzaga University. Fr. Wilfred P. Schoenberg, S.J., author of the Chronicle of the Catholic History of the Pacific Northwest, is in charge there, but is far too busy to do your researching for you; if you are able to get to Spokane, I advise you to do so by all means. The simplest way to contact him is to write him (Archives, Gonzaga Univ., Spokane 2, Wash. will suffice) and ask him if you may avail yourself of whatever records he has. You might also call, as I see your time is short and he may be absent from the Univ. at present. He will also supply you with any photographs you might want; in this matter you would do well to take a camera along to take copies of pictures you want, as he can't let them out.

The best of luck to you in your endeavor. I'm sorry I



3
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LOS GATOS, CALIF.

can't supply a few more facts and a little less wordiness. I'm pleased that you enjoy the "Northwest Beginnings"; as a matter of fact, I've enjoyed writing them and learned a few things to boot, composition-wise as well as history-wise. I'm looking forward to seeing the fruits of yours and Fr. Simpson's work in the Our Times and, if possible, would appreciate having a copy of the issue of the Republic that carries the feature-article. If anything else comes up in which I might be of assistance, do not hesitate to ask, though California doesn't have much material on the missions of the Pacific Northwest that isn't found in published form. My regards to Mr. Ruppert and to Mrs. Siep, who, if I'm not mistaken, is working at the Republic-Herald building.

Sincerely,

Theodore J. St. Hilaire, S.J.
Theodore J. St. Hilaire, S.J.

History of the 50 Years of my Missionary Life among Indians and Whites: From July 1894 till the End of September, 1944.

by Father Edward M. Griva, S.J.

Chapter Third. From September 1898 till January 1902.

On the beginning of September I was ready to begin my missionary work in the Yakima country. A very large territory was given me comprising several little towns that were in the beginning of their existence and then developed to be good sized towns. First of all I had to attend to the Yakima Indians in the Yakima reservation and then to the Whites in the towns of Moxee, old town Yakima, Cowitche, Natchis, Zillah, Toppenish, Satus, Mabton, Prosser, and Sunnyside. As there was no church at all in any of these towns for the white people except in North Yakima I used to go from one town to the next and say mass in private houses, hear confessions, preach, and give communion, teach catechism, visit the sick people, baptize babies, and do all the good that I could do. I was the first priest to do missionary work in that territory. [What territory he was the first priest to work in, I don't know; this may be a projection of Fr. Griva based on speculation and not on fact.^{TSH} ~~St~~] At first I used to travel on horseback, carrying the things necessary for saying mass in a double bag that was fastened to the saddle and some food for me. Then I got a little cart with two wheels only, and a little buggy with four wheels. I had a regular schedule beginning from the Indian church near old chief Ignace in what is now called White Swan, then going to Moxee, that is about 12 or 14 miles from the new town of North Yakima, that is not simply called Yakima, then to other towns so that I would visit them all once a month. I will say a few things about the principal missions. And first of all I will write about the Indian mission.

For many years no priest was allowed to do any missionary work among the Yakima Indians. In the year 1852 two Oblate Fathers, viz. Father Pandosy and another one had built a church near Ahtanum Creek and also a house for themselves, but they could

not be there for a long time. A war broke up between the Indians and the Whites about that time (1855). One day chief Ignace and I were travelling together and he showed me the place where he was fighting that was near what is called the Gap between the old town of Yakima and the Indian reservation. While the war was going on some soldiers of the white party made up their mind to go over the hill to Ahtanum and kill the Fathers and destroy the mission. An Indian heard of it and he went there as fast as he could with 2 horses to inform the Fathers of the dangers of their life. He told them to go on horseback and run away as fast as they could so as not to be killed, and he gave them the 2 horses that he had. Needless to say the 2 Fathers minded the good hearted Indian, thanked him, jumped on horseback and ran away over the mountain.

Their life was saved, but not the mission . . .

It has been a very great misfortune for the Yakima Indians that they had for 22 years as superintendent father Wilbur who was very bitter against the catholics. He was a very strong methodist minister and wanted all the Indians to become methodists. He would help them only on condition that they would join his church. Many Indians joined it just only to please him as an Indian of Toppenish told me. But due to the efforts of chief Ignace, most of the catholics remained faithful to the catholic Church. I have been informed that this chief would go to any place where he could find a priest, bring him to his place, invite the catholic Indians to attend to the services and receive the sacraments and then bring the priest back all at his own expense. He ran the risk to have serious troubles with the Agent, but he was a very strong Catholic and was not afraid of him. If the Catholic Indians of the Yakima reservation have kept their faith the credit of it is due to a very great extent to the chief Ignace. Before I went there Father Raiberti, whom later on I assisted at . . . death, was supposed to attend to those Indians but he was sickly and very weak and could do hardly anything. When I went to North Yakima, being appointed to attend to the Yakima Indians, he retired and I began my work. . . . Another Agent has been sent

there [to Fort Simcoe] to take his [Wilbur's] place. He had no religion at all, but he was not antagonistic against the catholics. Chief Ignace and some other catholic Indians went to him to ask for permission to build a church. The permission was granted at once and most willingly. Hence the Indians went soon to work. They divided themselves in 3 bands. One would go on the mountain and cut the timber and haul it to the saw mill. Another band would see that the logs be sawed properly and have the lumber that was needed for the church and haul the lumber to the place in which the church was to be built. The 3rd band had the task to build the church. A very smart Indian called Andrew^w had made the plans and acted as headman. The church was 66 ft. long, 24 ft. wide, and about 14 ft. high with a nice tower in front. When I went there, Andrew was dead already but most of the men who had worked with him were yet alive. At that time I was in the best of my life and very active. And I put myself at work with very good will. In the beginning of September, 1898, Father Diomede brought me to that church to make me acquainted with some Indians and with the place. On the same day he went back to Yakima and I stayed there at the church. There was a small house near by the church and near a creek. In that house there was nothing but a little bed, a table, a chair and a stove. There holy poverty surely reigned as queen. In the church for altar there was a very poor table covered with an old cloth, a crucifix hardly worth 10 cents, and a pair of candlesticks hardly worth 25 cents. There was no pew, nor any bench, nor any communion rail, hardly any thing. But things soon changed for the best. When the Indians saw me and learned that I was there for them they were glad. They had wished and asked so many times for a priest and at last they had one. On the following Sunday after mass we had a meeting and decided to get lumber to make the pews and the communion rail and a good confessional. Mr. Louis Man took upon himself the task to build a very beautiful altar. He worked, worked at it for 5 weeks. While I was there I began to learn the Yakima Indian language with the little book of Father Saint Onge and with the help of a young man. I soon learned how to hear confession in this language, and made a good

questionary for confession. With regard to preaching at first I used an interpreter. Then when I knew the language enough I preached by myself. There is something peculiar in this language and it is that there are declensions in the nouns as there are in the latin language. There is no similarity at all between this language and the latin but there are the 6 cases with a different ending in each case. It was not very easy to learn this language but with time, study, and patience I learned it enough to be able to hear confession, preach, and teach catechism. Then I began to travel and visit all the Indian families in that part of the country and I soon got acquainted with them all. At the distance of about 8 miles there is the Government Agency with a boarding school for Indian children. Though the principal of the school and the teachers were all protestants, yet they were very kind to me. I asked the principal of the school to allow me to teach catechism to the catholic children. I kept up this work for 3 years and a half until I have been sent to another mission. As there were many children to be confirmed on the 2nd year that I was there, I invited Bishop O'Dea to come to that mission and confirm the children. He came on the 8th of May, 1900, and the principal of the school very kindly allowed the children to go to the church with one of the teachers. I must say that there was a very good harmony between the officials of the Government at that agency and me. This helped me very much to do good to the children. In the beginning I stayed at St. Mary's mission for such was the name of the mission. At that time there was no town there. There were no white people in that locality, but only Indians who were living at some distance from one another. During that time I had the altar built and the pews made, communion rail and confessional made also. Everything that was needed in the church was made before the feast of Christmas. Moreover, I got 3 beautiful statues, viz. the Sacred Heart, Blessed Virgin, and St. Joseph. Then having received the proper faculty, I erected the stations of the cross. The Church looked beautiful and the Indians were glad and came most willingly to church, assisted at Mass, and received the sacraments. But the devil did not fail to cause troubles. A couple of Indians

were living together unlawfully and one of them had been married already before. The Indian chief (who was not Ignace) called the people to a council and after he had made a long talk to the people decided that I should marry that couple. I told him that I could not do it. He got mad and spoke to the Indians dissuading them to come to church on Sunday, because I would not do what he had decided. After that for a few Sundays more and more Indians came to church as before, and no more trouble happened any more. For several months I stayed most of the time at the mission of St. Mary, and doing all I could for those Indians. But the superior did not want me to attend only them but he wanted me to attend also to the white people who were living out of the reservation, and first of all to the people who were living at Moxee. (Fr. Griva then recounts for three pages his experiences at Moxee).

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To give an example of my visiting the different missions under my charge at that time I will relate my travelling during April, 1899.

In the beginning of the month I had service at the mission of St. Mary in what is called now White Swan. On Saturday, I went to the Government school to teach catechism to the children. On the following day, I had service in the church, heard confessions, said mass, preached in Indian or in English, gave holy communion, and then attended to the Indians who wanted to see me for one or another (reason). ~~On the following day I had service in the church, heard confessions, said Mass, preached in Indian or~~ On the following day, the 5th of April, I went to North Yakima to buy some food, and remained there for a few days. On the 10th I went back to the mission of St. Mary. From there I went to the agency at Fort Simcoe. On the 13th I went to Toppenish and stayed in the house of Mr. Shuster. On the 14th I said Mass there and baptized a child. On the same day I went to Prosser. I reached there in the evening and stayed in the house of Mrs. Finn or in that of Mr. Carey. In the morning I said Mass in this last house and baptized a baby of Mr. Ponti. During the day I visited the Catholic families and in that district. On the 17th I went to Winter

set, then to Zilla, and then to Toppenish. I visited the Indians near Satus, that is close to Toppenish and stayed in the home of Mr. Shuster, a good old Indian. On the 29th I baptized 5 persons, performed 3 marriages, heard quite a few confessions, received the ^(ab)adju^{ra}tion of a man who had been Catholic, then had become Protestant Methodist, then came back to the Catholic Church. I said Mass there and gave Communion to all those people. Then I went to give the Last Sacraments to an old woman called Susanne. And then finally I went back to the mission of St. Mary. . . .

Something happened to me on the 20th of April. I had gone to ~~be~~ the house of Mr. Shuster in Satus and having heard that an Indian woman was very sick across the Toppenish river, I tried to go to see her. As my small horse was very tired, I left him in the stable and took another horse much bigger of that Indian family and I tried to cross the river on horseback in a place where the water was not very deep. But I fell in a deep hole so much that I was almost entirely in the water. I tried to make the horse get out of the hole but could not. Then I shouted as loud as I could. An Indian across the river heard me and came to the bank of the river. Having seen in what danger I was he shouted very loud! chemuktatpas atnakra chispa, winem k.t.to (the blackgown is dying in the water, come quick). A young Indian heard him, ran to the river, threw himself in the water, and by swimming he reached the opposite side where I was. He got hold of the rope that was around the neck of the horse and gave a big jerk and pulled the horse out of the hole; then holding the rope he led the horse and me to the other side of the river. Thus I was saved from death. If I would not have had that help I would surely have drowned and died in that river. As my clothes were not ~~not~~ only wet but entirely soaked I went to the house of Shuster, took them all off and I laid down between some blankets and ^{an} Indian woman had my clothes ~~the~~ dried. That was one of the great dangers of death in which I have been. However this was not the only one in which I have been for I have had some other. . . .