

Brothers Visit Early US Mission Sites

On January 31, 1903 seven Brothers of Christian Instruction from France landed at the Port of New York in the United States aboard the Steamship "La Lorraine" after an eight-day voyage from Le Havre, France. Five of these were destined to be the first of 18 Brothers under the direction of the Mission Superior, 37 year-old Brother Bruno [Joseph Marie LeCloarec] who would spend 7 years and 4 months in the Rocky Mountains of the United States Northwest in the newly-formed Holy Angels' District of the Brothers of Christian Instruction. The cross-continental journey by train went by way of Montreal and LaPrairie, Quebec, Canada where they were joined by a 6th French companion: 22 year-old Brother Salvius Gru who had been teaching in Canada for five years. On February 14, 1903 the six FIC's arrived at Sacred Heart Indian Mission on the Coeur d'Alene Indian Reservation, a mission founded in 1842 by the Jesuits in Desmet in northwestern Idaho. The 6 brothers spent 6 months learning the English language.

The invitation to come to the USA was formally introduced at a whole community gathering of Brothers at our Motherhouse at Ploërmel in northwest France in August, 1902. Jesuit Provincial of the Red Indian missions in the far west of the United States, Father George De La Motte SJ asked for Brothers to come and teach in these missions. The FIC Superior General, Brother Abel Gaudichon, and his council readily agreed. The timing of the request was providential because in 1903 Brother Abel received official notice that the Brothers of Christian Instruction were officially forbidden to teach, forbidden to wear the cassock, and disbanded in France, and the property and buildings of the Ploërmel Motherhouse seized by the government. Soon 7 additional FIC's arrived in New York on an 8-day voyage on the Steamship "La Gascogne" on Sunday July 19, 1903. They also travelled cross-continent by train via Montreal and LaPrairie and were joined by 3 brothers who had already been teaching in Canada including Br. Hervé Gru who was the twin-brother to Br. Salvius. These 10 brothers, including 3 scholastics, arrived at St. Ignatius Mission in western Montana on the Flathead Indian Reservation to join with Bros. Bruno and Salvius.



Other missions where the Brothers taught: St. Francis Regis near Colville, WA (est. 1869); St. Paul in Hays, MT (est. 1887) on the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation; Holy Family (est. 1890) located 15 miles east of Browning, MT on the Blackfeet Reservation; St. Mary (est. 1886) located 5 miles east of Omak, WA on the Colville Indian Reservation; and St. Andrew (est. 1847) located 8 miles east of Pendleton, OR on the Umatilla Indian Reservation.



Brothers Albert Heinrich and Charles Thomas visited the region on their August jubilee trip. An account of this pilgrimage can be found on the province's website: FICbrothers.org

St. Ignatius mission founded by Fr. Pierre-Jean De Smet SJ in 1854, is a favorite destination of tourists today for the current 1893 church contains

58 fresco religious paintings on the walls and ceilings painted by an untrained Jesuit Brother Joseph Carignano who had been a cook at the Mission. In July, 1904 the 16 brothers in the Rockies missions gathered at St. Ignatius for relaxation, for sharing, and for the annual retreat. This year they were visited by Superior General Reverend Brother Abel Gaudichon. Two additional brothers would arrive in September, 1904 making a total of 18 missionaries. The brothers would gather at one of the missions each July for similar meetings at which time they would receive their yearly assignments. They would be at least 2 FIC's per mission who would teach and supervise Indian boys for the 10 month school year beginning in early September. Of interesting note, only two of the Brothers - Br. Bruno and 29-year old Br. Constantin Marie Roulin - had perpetual religious vows. Much to the disappointment of the missionary brothers, the Jesuit Superiors, and the western Indians, the Brothers of Christian Instruction were asked to leave the Northwest by the General Chapter of 1909. In June, 1910, the brothers were reassigned to Plattsburgh, NY, to Canada, and to other FIC missions in various countries. *Br. Albert Heinrich*

There will always be one Brother of Christian Instruction who stayed behind in the Rockies 24-year old Br. Alarius Nédélec - who died on September 10, 1904 and was buried in the cemetery at St. Ignatius Mission, MT.



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