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# Some day a great harvest: A history of the foundation of St. Augustine's Indian Mission, Winnebago, Nebraska, 1888 to 1945

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**“SOME DAY A GREAT HARVEST”: A HISTORY  
OF THE FOUNDATION OF ST. AUGUSTINE’S  
INDIAN MISSION, WINNEBAGO, NEBRASKA,  
1888 to 1945**

**A Thesis**

**Presented to the**

**Department of History**

**and the Faculty of the Graduate College**

**University of Nebraska**

**In Partial Fulfillment**

**of the Requirements for the Degree**

**Master of Arts**

**University of Nebraska at Omaha**

**by**

**Patrick M. Kennedy**

**December 2004**

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THESIS ACCEPTANCE

Acceptance for the faculty of the Graduate College,  
University of Nebraska, in partial fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Master of Arts degree,  
University of Nebraska at Omaha

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“SOME DAY A GREAT HARVEST”: A HISTORY  
OF THE FOUNDATION OF ST. AUGUSTINE’S  
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Patrick M. Kennedy, M.A.  
University of Nebraska at Omaha, 2004

Advisor: Dr. Michael L. Tate

Controversy has shadowed Christian missionary activity among Native American peoples from its beginnings in the 1500’s to the present day. During the last two centuries, the churches have competed for the souls of Indians on reservations, in the press, in Congress and in the federal courts. At stake were access to the reservations and the use of federal funds in religious institutions. These jurisdictional conflicts reflected and reinforced the contentious relationships between Protestants and Catholics in the United States.

The history of St. Augustine’s Indian Mission was shaped by a combination of national and local events. The foundation of the mission was delayed for twenty years in part by the controversy over the use of federal funds by religious institutions. More importantly, the well-established Presbyterian missionaries opposed Catholic attempts to locate on the reservation. The mission was finally established with the help of Mother Katharine Drexel, but only after reservation lands had been opened to extensive white settlement. A series of land rushes soon resulted in the impoverishment of Indian families and further complicated relationships between whites and Indians. While Father Joseph Schell sought to help the Winnebagoes by exposing white corruption, Father John Griese

worked to develop employment opportunities and to establish an educational and spiritual ministry.

Sioux author Vine Deloria, Jr. has eloquently critiqued the negative impact of missions on Native American cultures. However, Deloria created a stereotype of the missionary and the impact of the missions, which failed to address the complexity of the subject. This study of St. Augustine's suggests that there was also a positive side to the work of Catholic missionaries, and that a generalized assessment of the missions cannot be written until more case studies have been completed.

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## INTRODUCTION

One of the major problems of the Indian people is the missionary. It has been said of missionaries that when they arrived they had only the Book and we had the land; now we have the Book and they have the land.<sup>1</sup>

With these biting, but humorous words, Standing Rock Sioux author Vine Deloria, Jr. addressed the devastating impact of the Christian missionary on the lives of Indian people in his 1969 best seller, Custer Died for Your Sins. Written in a robust satirical style, rich in hyperbole, the book provoked serious discussion, especially on college campuses and in the pages of widely-read opinion magazines about issues central to past and present Indian-Euro-American relations. A popular poster bearing the title of the book appeared in many college dormitory rooms in the years following publication, and Deloria remained a frequent speaker on campuses and in liberal circles. Written in the heady days of the “Red Power” movement, the work signaled the advent of an articulate Indian voice in the national discourse.

Deloria’s observation was more about the divisive impact of Christian theology on native cultures than it was about loss of tribal lands. Native religions, he argued, integrated all the functions of tribal society so that life was conceived in a unified manner. The Christian churches, on the other hand, made distinctions between the sacred and the secular realms and between matter and spirit, which clashed with the Indian sense of the unity and kinship of all things. According to Deloria, the Christian pursuit of individual salvation contributed to the fragmentation of Indian societies and made them more vulnerable to exploitation.<sup>2</sup>

In 1982, Sister Carol J. Berg, O.S.B., a member of the Benedictines of St. Joseph, Minnesota, published a study about the work of her religious order among the Ojibway people on the White Earth Reservation in northwestern Minnesota. Like Deloria, Berg felt that something important had been lost. She acknowledged that early Benedictine missionaries had employed the Ojibway language in the Mass and sacraments, but she doubted that they ever appreciated the cohesive social function of native spirituality. Drawing upon the work of anthropologist A. Irving Hallowell, she attempted to describe the Ojibway world-view as it had existed before the reservation experience began. The central religious institution was the Midewiwin, or Grand Medicine Lodge, which she described as an academy of shamans whose function was to move the society toward the goal of “pimadaziwin,” a life characterized by longevity, good health and freedom from misfortune. Although most outside observers had to admit that the Midewiwin had a positive impact on individuals and on the society as a whole, missionaries burned the medicine bags and refused the sacraments to those who had returned to the old ways. Agents, under pressure from the Indian Rights Association and these same missionaries, attempted to limit the influence of the medicine lodges.<sup>3</sup>

Carol Berg also examined the impact of the ethnic backgrounds of the early Benedictine missionaries at White Earth. The first Benedictine monks arrived at St. Cloud in 1856, and founded what would become St. John’s Abbey at Collegeville in 1864. The Benedictine sisters arrived at St. Cloud in 1857, and six years later, moved their convent to St. Joseph, near Collegeville. Such were the beginnings of two Catholic midwestern institutions – St. John’s University and the College of St. Benedict. In 1878,

the two organizations sent Benedictine missionaries Father Aloysius Hermanutz, Sister Philomene Ketten and Sister Lioba Braun to White Earth. They taught in the English language a curriculum that was comparable to that of white schools nationally. Berg's study of the demographics of the sisters who served at White Earth between 1878 and 1900, revealed that ten were of German parentage and two were Irish. She concluded that English was a second language for the German sisters, as well as for their pupils, which may account for the fact that during the 1880's and 1890's, no attempt was made to ban the use of native languages.<sup>5</sup>

Berg concluded that while the early Benedictine missionaries managed to understand some aspects of Ojibway culture, their main focus was on assimilation. She suggested that if they had been more receptive to understanding Ojibway culture, if they had possessed a sense of themselves as agents of cultural change, and if they had considered the merits of missionary adaptation to Ojibway culture, the cycle of change might have been more positive for both the Indians and the missionaries.<sup>6</sup>

Farther west in southwestern South Dakota, historian Robert W. Galler, Jr. noted in 1998 that each school day at Red Cloud Indian School on the Pine Ridge Reservation began with the raising of three flags by the middle school students. These were the American flag, the South Dakota state flag, and the flag of the Lakota nation. This symbolic act reflects the cooperation of three distinct stakeholders in the operation of the school. The initial stakeholders were the Oglala people under the leadership of Chief Red Cloud, the Jesuits and the federal government. Over the years, the triad of powers changed as the federal government reduced its role to that of providing a lunch program,

and the state of South Dakota increased its role, especially in the areas of teacher certification and curriculum. The Jesuits retained administrative control of the school, but under the direction of a Lakota parents' school board. The change in power relationships was also reflected in the changing names of the institution. Originally known as the Drexel Mission, it became Holy Rosary Mission, then Pine Ridge Educational Society, Inc., and finally, Red Cloud Indian School.<sup>7</sup>

Galler concluded that the founding of Holy Rosary was unique, due to the differing agendas of each of the stakeholders. The federal government desired the establishment of an additional boarding school to supplement the program of assimilation provided by the government boarding school. The Jesuits pursued the long time Catholic goal of evangelization of non-Christian peoples, and Red Cloud and other Oglala leaders sought the education of their children in the ways of the white world, while still retaining Lakota traditions. The Oglala found an ally in the Jesuit fathers who counterbalanced Protestant-influenced government policies. This trust had been established initially by Father Pierre-Jean DeSmet during the 1850s, and was reinforced by Martin Marty, Catholic Bishop of the Dakotas. The willingness of the Jesuits to adapt missionary practice to native cultural traditions cemented the relationship, even as a series of broken treaties and four relocations of the agency undermined the federal government's relationship with the Lakota. The maintenance of this balance was no easy task as Red Cloud also had to walk a line between the "progressive" and "traditional" factions of the Lakota nation.<sup>9</sup> While Galler was mistaken that Holy Rosary was unique, he pointed to a larger theme, that the foundation and operation of a mission had an inescapable political



dimension. The stakeholders and the issues varied with the times, the location of the mission, and the cultural values of the participants, but the political context was always present.

In his 1991 study, The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815, historian Richard White noted that a cultural middle ground existed between Europeans and Native Americans during a time when both sides needed each other and neither side was sufficiently strong to fully impose its beliefs, values and cultural practices on the other. He described this practice as one of accommodation rather than acculturation. People of different cultures attempted to achieve mutually beneficial relationships and resolve conflict by employing the values and practices of the other culture. From this give and take, and from the inevitable misunderstandings that arose, emerged new meanings and new practices which constituted the changed cultural context within the Great Lakes region between 1650-1815.<sup>10</sup>

Historian James T. Carroll adapted and applied White's concept of the middle ground to a very different geographical, temporal and cultural setting in his Seeds of Faith: Catholic Indian Boarding Schools, which was published in 2000. Carroll focused on four missions among the Sioux: Fort Totten and Fort Yates in North Dakota, and Holy Rosary and St. Francis in South Dakota. These schools were selected because of common characteristics. All were founded between 1874 and 1888. Although Forts Totten and Yates were established as government schools at which the nuns served as civil servants, and Holy Rosary and St. Francis were contract schools, they shared the common twin

goals of carrying-out the government policy of assimilation and the Church policy of evangelization. All four schools were staffed by nuns who were either first or second generation Americans and all were recognized as successful teachers by governmental evaluators.<sup>11</sup>

Carroll identified four constituencies which comprised the middle ground on the Fort Totten, Fort Yates, Pine Ridge (Holy Rosary Mission), and Rosebud (St. Francis Mission) reservations. These constituencies were the Indian students, the sisters, federal authorities and the Church hierarchy.<sup>12</sup> Curiously, he omitted the adult tribal leaders from his analysis, although they were certainly important to the missions' successes and failures. The author believed that the schools were successful because at the local level, the nuns and the Indian students adapted in ways which satisfied federal and Church authorities. Some examples of the middle ground in Carroll's study included: (1) frequent interaction between home and school; (2) the involvement of Indian adults in the activities of the school; (3) participation of the sisters and students in tribal events; (4) the practice of nuns' visiting the families; (5) the establishment of hospitals; and (6) adult evangelization.<sup>13</sup> Carroll argued that the sisters assisted the Sioux in the perpetuation of an Indian identity within a Catholic context. The missionaries studied Lakota culture and attempted to learn the Sioux language, which was used in the homily at Mass and in the administration of the sacraments. Indian cultural symbols were also included in the liturgy, such as the use of the Eagle feather and burning cedar in place of the traditional Church censer and incense. Carroll concluded that biculturalism and bilingualism were characteristic of the four reservations.<sup>14</sup>

Carroll attributed the cultural sensitivity he found at the four missions to the ethnic backgrounds of the priests and nuns who served them and the Catholic goal of evangelization. All of the nuns who served at the four missions were either first or second generation Americans. The Grey Nuns, who staffed Fort Totten, had their North American headquarters in Montreal, a bilingual city. The Sisters of St. Francis of Penance and Christian Charity and the Benedictines of Pontifical Jurisdiction were relatively new to the United States, having emigrated from Germany and Switzerland. Similarly, the Jesuits, who staffed St. Francis and Holy Rosary, had been expelled from Germany during the Kulturkampf, Chancellor Otto von Bismarck's attempt to limit the political power of the Catholic Church in the newly-established German Empire. The result, Carroll argued, was a more moderate and gradual approach to assimilation, which was characterized by accommodation on both sides.<sup>15</sup>

The willingness to accommodate was also motivated by the goal of achieving higher numbers of converts. Evangelization required an attraction to the specific qualities possessed by the evangelists, and the every-day actions of the nuns and priests were much more important to the Lakota people than the abstract Christian message. Their hard work, dedication to the children in the school, interest in the families, and the care of the sick in the hospitals were the motivators of conversion.<sup>16</sup>

“Some Day a Great Harvest” will trace the history of St. Augustine's Indian Mission from its origins as a dream in the minds of Mother Katharine Drexel, founder of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament for Indians and Colored People, and James O'Connor, Bishop of Omaha, to the death of Father John Griese, the mission's first

resident pastor, in 1945. The themes proposed by Carol Berg, Robert W. Galler, Jr. and James T. Carroll – (1) the ethnic backgrounds of the missionaries, (2) missionaries as agents of change, (3) the role of stakeholders in the mission’s operation, and (4) the concept of the middle ground – will be considered. Additionally, the concepts of time, place and culture will be examined, based upon the suggestions of historian Frederick Luebke in a 1988 award-winning essay.<sup>17</sup> The history of St. Augustine’s also requires consideration of the importance of the individual in history. The mission would not have been founded or survived without the vision, hard work and tenacity of Mother Katharine Drexel and Fr. John Griese, as well as the sustained efforts and financial commitment of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament.

The first chapter, “Patterns on the Landscape,” will examine the impact of the physical setting, human use and relative location on the history of St. Augustine’s. The rich agricultural soils of Thurston County, Nebraska, constituted the physical context of the county’s history. Originally set aside in 1854 as the Omaha Indian Reservation, the area was affected by the creation of the Winnebago Indian Reservation in 1865, the subsequent growth of trading towns on the reservations’ borders, the transition from tribal land holding to allotments, the leasing and sale of Indian allotments and heirship lands, the construction of two railroads through reservation lands, and the evolution of the village of Winnebago from an Indian agency to an elevator town. The railroads likewise connected the community to nearby Sioux City, Iowa, an urban center of nearly forty-eight thousand people. The result was speculation on Indian lands, alleged corruption and bootlegging, and strained relations between whites and Indians. At the

same time, the religious mosaic of Winnebago was becoming increasingly complex as a movement which would become the Native American Church, as well as the missionary efforts of Christian churches, challenged the traditional Medicine Lodge.

Mother Katharine Drexel considered founding a mission among the Winnebago as early as 1888, but her efforts were delayed for twenty years due to a combination of local and national issues which are discussed in the second chapter, "Catholics, Protestants, and Indian Educational Policy." During the last two decades of the nineteenth century, the foundation of new Catholic missions was impeded by changes in the educational philosophy of eastern Indian reformers such as the Indian Rights Association, and shifts in federal policy which centered on the appointment of Thomas Jefferson Morgan as Commissioner of Indian Affairs. Morgan hoped to create a federal system of public Indian schools which resembled the public school systems created by the states. This policy marginalized the efforts of the mission schools and threatened the federal contracts which financed these institutions. The fight for contracts, the right of Indian parents to school choice, and the use of treaty and trust fund money was fought in the newspapers, the halls of Congress, and eventually in the United States Supreme Court.

Chapter Three, "A Dream Deferred," briefly sketches the life of Catherine Drexel, heiress to a Philadelphia banking fortune, who became Mother Katharine Drexel, a Roman Catholic nun, who devoted her life to the education of America's most marginalized peoples, Indians and African Americans. Even as Katharine Drexel was founding a religious order in Pennsylvania, Presbyterian missionaries among the Omaha and Winnebago peoples opposed Catholic initiatives on the reservations.

Against the backdrop of the opening of the Winnebago Reservation, Richard Scannell, the Bishop of Omaha, assigned Father Joseph Schell to the reservation in the spring of 1904. During the following year the priest became involved in conflict with local businessmen, federal officials at Winnebago, and Commissioner of Indian Affairs William A. Jones. Father Schell's allegations of corruption on the reservation received intense coverage in the Sioux City, Iowa and Omaha, Nebraska newspapers. The charges were also reported in both the New York Times and the Washington Post and they reached the highest levels of both the federal government and the Catholic hierarchy. Chapter Four, "The Right Kind of Priest," relates these events, as well as the replacement of Schell with Father John Herman Griese, who would become the first resident pastor of St. Augustine's.

Chapter Five, "A Fountain of Life," describes the foundation of St. Augustine's. Twenty-one years had passed since the first attempt to establish a mission on the reservation. Presbyterian opposition had frustrated the first efforts. The tenure of Father Schell at Winnebago was consumed by a federal investigation into the priest's allegations of corruption and intense newspaper coverage of the sensational charges emanating from the reservation. In 1908, the efforts of Mother Katharine and the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions were successful because the reservation lands had been opened to white settlement, and because Catholic Winnebago elders had asked for a Catholic school. However, this was not accomplished without further sectarian strife and tensions with the federal government.

The last chapter, "Some Day a Great Harvest," recounts events at St. Augustine's during the pastorate of Father John Griese, from the opening of the school in 1909 to the priest's death in 1945. The opening of the mission school was successful by any measure. Capacity audiences, Indian and white, Protestant and Catholic, attended the annual Christmas programs and school plays. The students of St. Augustine distinguished themselves academically and in the arts. However, the future of the mission was clouded from the beginning by its absolute dependence upon the financial support of Mother Katharine Drexel and the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament.

Father Griese grasped the need to develop other means of financial support. At the same time, he realized that St. Augustine's must assist the Indians with their material needs if the mission was to draw converts. Thus, during the 1920s, the priest turned to the rich agricultural lands of Thurston County to sustain the mission, to give work to the Indians and to provide a means of contact which might lead to evangelization. His heroic labors were perhaps imprudent and doomed to failure, but his efforts helped many people through the Great Depression and cemented his positive legacy among the Winnebago – "He fed the People."

This study could not have been completed without the assistance of a number of people who were most generous with their time and talents. I would like to express my gratitude to Father Steve Boes and David Smith at Winnebago, Dr. Stephanie Morris and Sister Maria Espiritu McCall at the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament Archives, Mark Thiel at Marquette University, and Fathers Michael Gutgsell and Gregory Baxter of the Archdiocese of Omaha. Special thanks are due to Dr. Michael Tate and my wife, Judy.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Vine Deloria, Jr. Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto (New York: McMillan Co., 1969), 102.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 102-105.

<sup>3</sup> Carol J. Berg, "Agents of Cultural Change: The Benedictines at White Earth," Minnesota History 48 (Winter 1982): 159-161. This author's spelling, "Ojibway," rather than "Ojibwa" is used throughout this thesis in order to avoid confusion.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 163, 167-168.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 170.

<sup>7</sup> Robert W. Galler, Jr. "A Triad of Alliances: The Roots of Holy Rosary Indian Mission," South Dakota History 28 (Fall 1998): 144, 160.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 150-154.

<sup>10</sup> Richard White, The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), inclusive.

<sup>11</sup> James T. Carroll, Seeds of Faith: Catholic Indian Boarding Schools (New York: Garland Publishing Co., 2000), xvii-xix.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 169-170.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 172.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 171.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>17</sup> Frederick C. Luebke, "Time, Place, and Culture in Nebraska History," Nebraska History 69 (Winter 1988): 150-168. <sup>1</sup> Vine Deloria, Jr. Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto (New York: McMillan Co., 1969), 102.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 102-105.

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<sup>11</sup> James T. Carroll, Seeds of Faith: Catholic Indian Boarding Schools (New York: Garland Publishing Co., 2000), xvii-xix.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 169-170.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 172.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 171.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>17</sup> Frederick C. Luebke, "Time, Place, and Culture in Nebraska History," Nebraska History 69 (Winter 1988): 150-168.

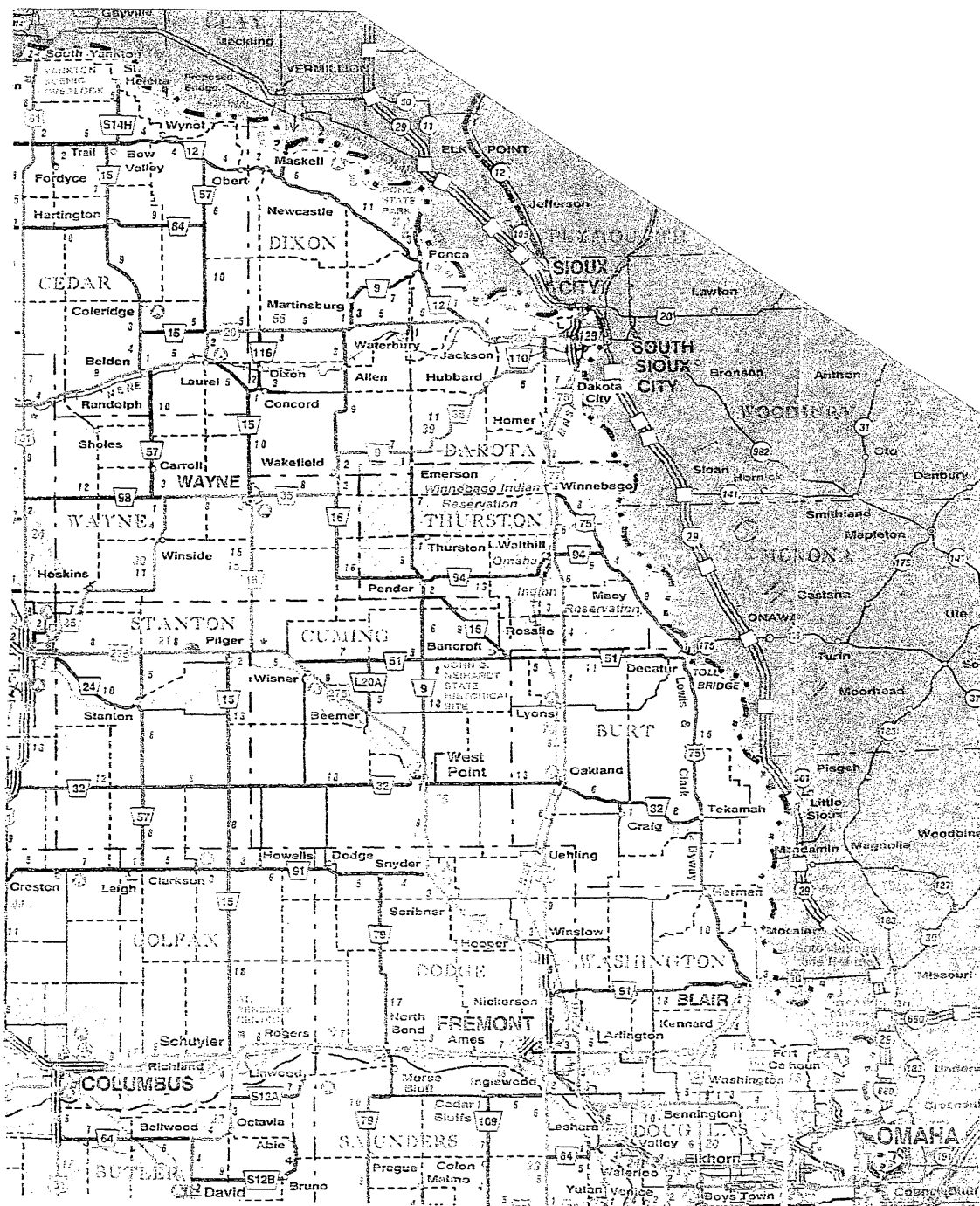
## CHAPTER ONE

### PATTERNS ON THE LAND

The Winnebago Town Company offers lots for sale in the new town of Winnebago. Easy Terms and Reasonable Prices. The United States Government here annually distributes more that \$250,000,000 which goes to the trade of the town. This in addition to the fine farming country surrounding the town gives Winnebago an assured future. We offer for sale choice deeded land where titles are guaranteed. We are in position to give investors desiring to purchase Indian land such information and assistance as they may need. Titles to Indian lands investigated and perfected.<sup>1</sup>

The Winnebago Chieftain, March 18, 1910

Today's Winnebago Indian Reservation is located among the scenic hills and valleys of northeastern Nebraska. The fertile agricultural prairie to the west gives way to the rolling hills and valleys atop the timbered river bluffs, which drop precipitously to the Missouri River flood plain. The river marks the eastern border of present-day Thurston County. The reservation is bordered on the north by Dakota County, on the south by the Omaha Indian Reservation, and on the west by the rich agricultural lands of Wayne County. Two-lane highways, U.S. Highway 75-77, which winds north and south along the contour of the hills, and Nebraska Highway 94, which crosses the county east to west, connect the reservation towns of Winnebago and Macy with the nearby rural communities of Homer, Rosalie, Decatur, and the county seat of Pender. Fewer than seven thousand people inhabit the county, and Sioux City, Iowa, twenty miles to the north, is the closest retail and entertainment center. The bridge across the Missouri River at nearby Decatur, connects the community with Interstate Highway 29 and the Omaha, Nebraska metropolitan area seventy miles to the south. The overall impression of the reservation is one of rustic beauty, serenity and isolation (see Map 1). This sense of



Map1. Northeastern Nebraska. Winnebago is linked by U.S. Highway 73-75 to Sioux City, Iowa, and by Interstate Highway 29 to the Omaha, Nebraska, metropolitan area. Source: "Nebraska State Highway Map." State of Nebraska. Nebraska Division of Travel and Tourism, 2001-2002.

isolation is misleading, however, and one must look at the pattern of settlement, the physical structures on the landscape and the historical record, to see how both the Omahas and the Winnebagoes have been profoundly affected by outside powers and personalities over the past century and a half.

The town of Winnebago, population 705, stretches along U.S. Highway 75-77. The settlement pattern and the architectural landscape suggest that, in fact, separate white and Indian communities have grown together over time. The community has evolved through three stages: from an isolated reservation headquarters in the mid- and later-nineteenth century; to an elevator town, with a white commercial middle class in an early twentieth century frontier environment; to a reservation community that demonstrates late twentieth century Native American efforts at economic self-sufficiency and self-determination. Throughout all three stages, the rich agricultural potential of the soil has strongly influenced the history of the Winnebago people in their namesake town and at the St. Augustine's Indian Mission. The productivity of the soil created a series of "land rushes" for Omaha and Winnebago allotments, which resulted in a loss of tribal property and a division within the tribes between those who favored sale of the land and those who opposed it. The rich soils also allowed the development of a newly-arrived, mostly white, merchant class, which profited from the marketing and transportation of agricultural produce, the sale of farm equipment and retail sales.

The frontier environment, which developed at Winnebago, also affected the foundation of St. Augustine's Indian Mission. Father Joseph Schell, the first Catholic priest assigned to the town, actively opposed the power and influence of the illegal

whiskey traders in Winnebago and at nearby Homer. In 1908, he was replaced by the more spiritually-oriented priest, Father John Herman Griese. The role of the Catholic Church on the reservation thus changed from direct legal and political advocacy for the Winnebago people to a spiritual and educational focus, directed through the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions in Washington, D.C.

The human landscape provides clues to the drama which has unfolded among the rolling hills of Thurston County. The agency headquarters complex is located near the intersection of Highways 75 and 77. In the early days of the reservation, this was the central place from which federal goods and services were dispensed. Today, the relative location of the facility reflects the declining role of the federal government on the reservation, as other stakeholders – white businessmen, the Catholic Church, and the Winnebago people themselves – asserted their own identities. Farther south lay the pow-wow grounds, which, at times of celebration, are surrounded by a ring of American flags, each of which must be raised and lowered by a veteran of the armed services. The flags honor the service of the Winnebagoes in each American conflict from the Spanish-American War to the post-Cold War era. The honored resting place of Little Priest and his fellow scouts, who rode with Major Frank North against the Sioux in the 1860s, is located nearby.<sup>2</sup>

The railroad depot sign and the grain elevator stand next to the railroad tracks, symbols of the technology and marketing strategies which transformed the reservation in the early twentieth century. To the east of the highway, early twentieth century middle class dwellings attest to an earlier prosperity. These were the homes of the merchant class

that built the elevator town of Winnebago. These homes are joined on the hills by at least two phases of government housing, which confirm an earlier role for the federal government in Winnebago life. Little Priest Community College, the site of a former government school, marks a high point on the eastern hills, a symbol of the Winnebago commitment to modern education and the maintenance of tradition. The Heritage Mall, a Ho-Chunk, Inc. enterprise, is located on the west side of the highway. The empty spaces along the highway mark the location of the early twentieth century business district that was built by the white merchants who constructed the homes on the hill. The 1952 massive flood of the Missouri River and its tributaries was the final blow for businesses that were already suffering from the nationwide economic decline of rural communities. Most of the whites departed the town, leaving it primarily to the Winnebago people.<sup>3</sup>

Winnebago Public School is located on the west side of the highway at the north end of town. St. Augustine's Indian Mission occupies the hill above it, although none of the original mission buildings remain. The mission, which includes a church, a kindergarten-through- eighth grade school building with an enrollment of about 100 students, and residences for the Benedictine sisters and the pastor, exhibits the qualities of a small but energetic faith community numbering 223 individuals in 100 households. Boarding school facilities, which were built in the early 1950s at the north end of the ridge, are presently owned by the Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska, which utilizes the buildings for offices and social services. The corporate headquarters of Ho-Chunk, Inc., the highly successful tribal development organization, makes a positive statement about

self-determination and the hopeful future; it also lies at the northern entrance to the town.<sup>4</sup>

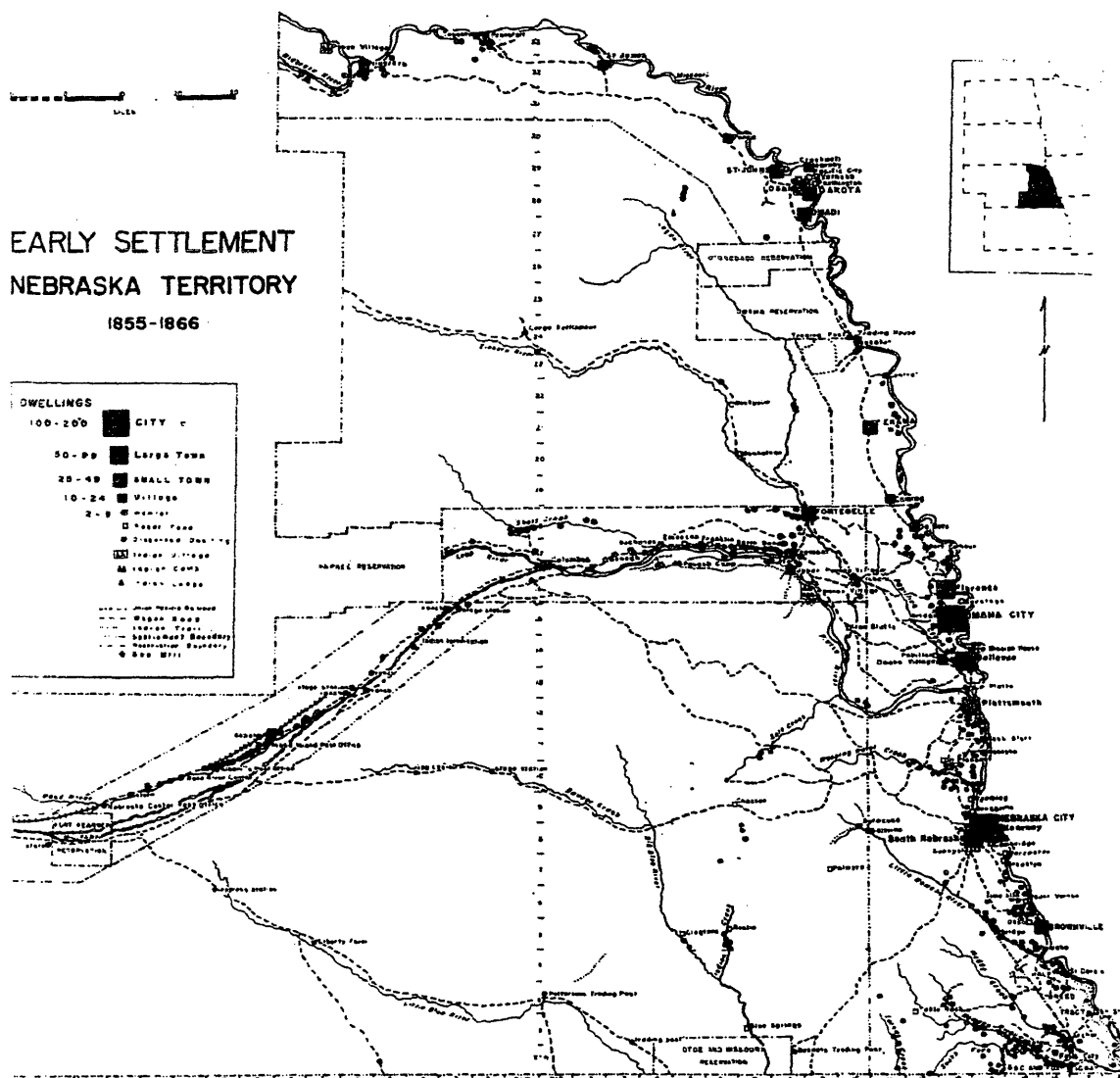
Today's Winnebago Reservation bears little resemblance to the reservation that was created as a government afterthought during the Civil War. In 1854, when Nebraska Territory was organized, an area which extended north of the forty-second parallel of latitude about eighteen miles, and west from the Missouri River about thirty miles, was set-aside as the Omaha Indian Reservation. The 310,000 acre tract was watered by three major creeks – Logan, Blackbird, and Omaha – and, the land was well suited for both agriculture and grazing. Abundant timber, including ash, basswood, cottonwood, elm, oak and walnut, was located along the waterways and on the Missouri River bluffs. The reservation was, for administrative purposes, legally identified as Blackbird County in honor of the early nineteenth century Omaha chief who was buried on the bluffs overlooking the Missouri River. In 1879, separate legislative actions partitioned the reservation among neighboring Dakota, Burt and Cuming counties for judicial and revenue purposes.<sup>5</sup>

The Treaty of 1854, which granted this reservation to the Omahas, foreshadowed in many ways the future of the lands, which, within a decade, were split into separate Omaha and Winnebago reservations. Two themes are discernible. The first was the impingement of outside forces first on the Omahas, and later, on both the Omahas and the Winnebagoes. The second theme was the loss of the tribal land base. The choice of the site for the reservation was granted to the Omaha by Article I of the Treaty. Initially, the government wished them to settle north of Ayoway Creek, partly in response to the

political pressure of developers from western Iowa who hoped to acquire richer Missouri River Valley land. However, the Omahas realized that the lands in the Blackbird Hills were superior, and they also feared locating farther north, closer to their traditional enemies, the Dakota. They prevailed on this issue. Article VI of the treaty provided for allotment of the land in severalty at a future date and under terms to be decided by the president. Surplus lands would be opened to white purchase at some future point, and roads and railroads could also be built across the reservation lands. Although the Winnebagoes would not be subject to the 1854 treaty, they would someday face the same ravages of the allotment process that faced the Omahas a few years earlier.<sup>6</sup>

The Omahas were relatively isolated from the influx of settlers who entered Nebraska during the territorial period, of 1854 to 1867. Settlement tended to follow the river valleys to the south, especially along the east – west axis of the Platte River. Data from early land surveys indicates that there were no ferries across the Missouri River from the Iowa side, and adjacent to the reservation. The closest public steamboat landings were at Dakota, about ten miles north of the reservation, and Decatur, immediately south of the reservation boundary. One wagon road, which ran north from Omaha City to Niobrara Landing in the northeast, traversed the reservation (see Map 2).<sup>7</sup> Despite these limited access points to the reservation, pressures on Indian lands were steadily building during the 1860s and 1870s. United States Senator Thomas Tipton, from Brownville, Nebraska, described the Omaha, Pawnee, Ponca and Otoe-Missouria reservations as, “cankers in the body politic of Nebraska,” in a speech delivered in the United States Senate in 1870. One year later, Nebraska Governor David Butler recommended that the

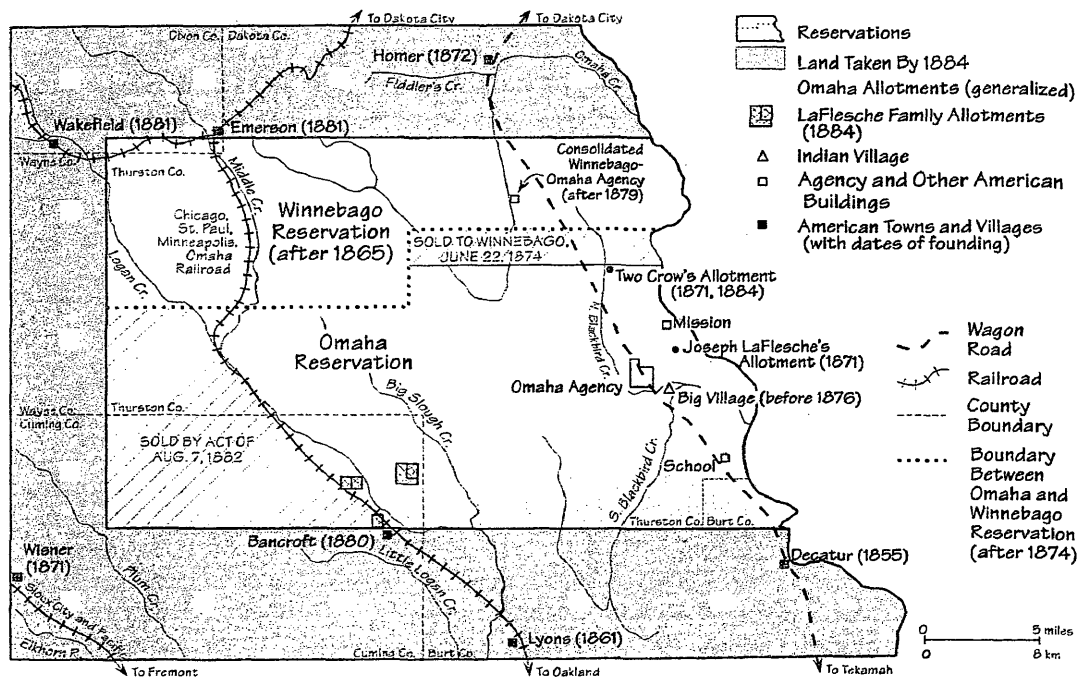




Map 2. "Early Settlement of Nebraska Territory, 1855-56," The Omahas and Winnebagoes were relatively isolated from white settlement during the territorial period of 1854 to 1867.

Source: Charles Howard Richardson, "Early Settlement of Eastern Nebraska Territory: A Geographical Study Based on the Original Land Survey." Ph.D. diss., University of Nebraska – Lincoln, 1968, 70.

Indians be removed to Indian Territory or to another location selected by the federal government. Historical geographer David Wishart concluded that “as the 1860s ended, a race had developed between allotments and removal; no one, it seems, believed that the reservations would survive intact.” Between 1874 and 1881, the Pawnee, Ponca and Otoe-Missouria were removed to present-day Oklahoma.<sup>8</sup> By the 1870s and 1880s, four new towns were established on the northern and western borders of the Omaha Reservation – Wisner (1871), Homer (1872), and Emerson and Wakefield (1881) – further threatening integrity of the Omaha and Winnebago reservations. (See Map 3).



Map 3. “Omaha Indian Reservation and Vicinity, circa 1880.” During the 1870’s and 1880’s, four new towns were established on the northern and western borders of the Omaha and Winnebago Reservations – Wisner (1871), Homer (1872), and Emerson and Wakefield (1881) – further threatening the integrity of the reservations and their economic assets.

Source: Reprinted from *An Unspeakable Sadness: The Dispossession of the Nebraska Indians* by David J. Wishart by permission of the University of Nebraska Press.

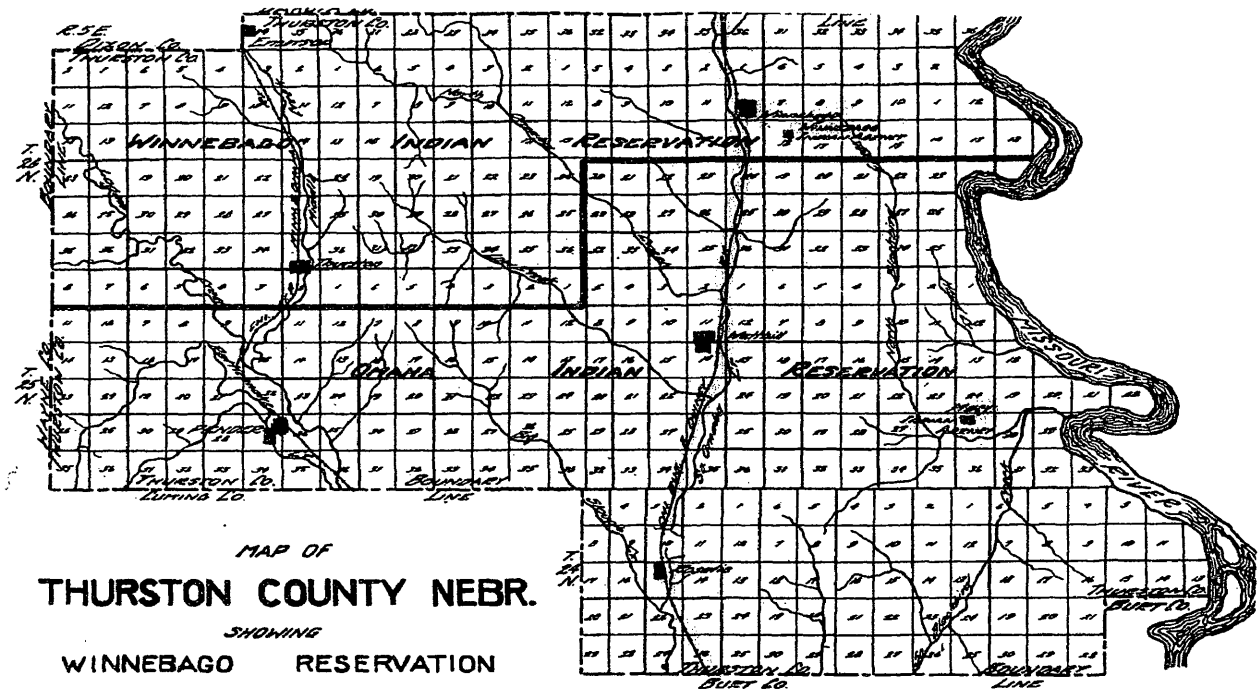
Copyright 1994 by the University of Nebraska Press.

The removal of the Nebraska Indians, and the nationally publicized trial of Ponca Chief Standing Bear in 1879, convinced many Omahas that the tribe needed proper legal titles to their lands. Professor Wishart suggests that the Omaha were successful in retaining their lands for the moment due to two factors. The federal government perceived the Omaha as successful farmers, with as many as one-third considered to be “progressive.” In addition, the Omahas were assisted by journalist Thomas Tibbles, anthropologist James Owen Dorsey, and, above all, Alice Fletcher. The latter, an ethnologist and friend of Frederic Ward Putnam of the Peabody Museum, visited Nebraska in 1881, with acquaintances Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Tibbles. Fletcher listened earnestly to the Omahas’ desire to secure legal titles for their lands. However, she misinterpreted their desires for security as a tribal call for allotment in severalty. When she returned to the East, she successfully lobbied for the Omaha Allotment Act of 1882, a process which was completed between May, 1883 and June, 1884. So began the long and tragic story of land alienation from the Omaha Reservation, a pattern which would soon target the Winnebago Reservation as well.<sup>9</sup>

The outside influence of the missionaries was present among the Omaha before the territory of Nebraska was formed. In 1846, a mission was constructed at Bellevue, Nebraska. In 1856, the Reverend William Hamilton, employed by the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions, established a mission and school which operated until the Quakers took over the operation of the reservation as part of President Grant’s Peace Policy in 1870. The focus on day schools by the Hicksite Friends was deemed a failure, and nine years later, the Presbyterians resumed residential educational endeavors. In keeping with

this shift in policy, the federal government established in February, 1881, the Omaha Industrial School, which included a thirty-acre farm.<sup>10</sup>

A major intrusion into Omaha life was the arrival of the Winnebagoes in 1863. The French first encountered them in the 1600s near the present day site of Green Bay, Wisconsin. During the mid-nineteenth century, they were moved to five different reservations located in four states within a thirty-year period. The tribe was moved from Wisconsin to near Decorah, Iowa (1837-1846), to Long Prairie, Minnesota (1846-1855), to Blue Earth, Minnesota (1855-1863), and finally, after the Santee Sioux uprising in 1862, to Crow Creek, South Dakota. Conditions were unbearable at Crow Creek: the water was bad; the river bottoms were malarial; and the land was so poor that the government farmers did not even attempt to plant a crop. Small bands began to escape from Crow Creek, by secretly building canoes to travel down the Missouri River to seek refuge among the Omahas. The migration began in the fall of 1863 when five men from Crow Creek requested permission for a group of about 150 to relocate on Omaha land. By the following spring, 1,200 were camped on the river bottoms where Blackbird Creek flows into the Missouri. On January 28, 1865, Agent Robert W. Furnas led a delegation to Washington, D.C., where, on March 7, the Omahas sold 100,000 acres to the Winnebagoes. The price was \$50,000, or fifty cents an acre, plus \$7,000 for rations which were provided during the initial settlement of the Winnebagoes. In 1874, the Winnebagoes purchased an additional 12,800 acres from the Omahas for \$30,000. Three years later, the government consolidated the management of the Omaha and Winnebago peoples by moving the agency headquarters to Winnebago (See Map 4).<sup>11</sup>



Map 4. "Map of Thurston County Nebraska Showing the Winnebago Reservation."

In 1865, the Omahas sold 100,000 acres for the creation of the Winnebago Reservation. In 1874, the Winnebagos purchased an additional 12,800 acres. Thurston County was formally organized in 1889.

Source: Reprinted from "Tuberculosis Among the Nebraska Winnebago: A Social Study of an Indian Reservation" by Margaret W. Koenig, M.D. by permission of the Nebraska State Historical Society. Copyright 1921 by the Nebraska State Historical Society.

The federal government determined the original settlement pattern on the Winnebago Reservation by designating the agency headquarters as the central place for important governmental services. The agency complex was comprised of the agent's home, dwellings for the agency farmer and medical doctor, a large warehouse for supplies, steam-powered flour and saw mills, carpenter and blacksmith shops, a store, a post office and a block house. The Industrial School building, which was built in 1873, could accommodate eighty day students and another eighty boarding students. Three small schools were dispersed across the two reservations to serve younger students. It was reported in 1881, that the Winnebago population was 1,422 persons or about 300 families, most of whom lived on small acreages. The government had constructed sixty-two frame, twenty-five half-brick and half-frame, and fifteen brick homes for the Winnebagoes. Forty of the last two categories were reported to be two-story structures. Apparently, a few of the Winnebagoes built houses of logs, and some tepees were also noted, although these may not have been year round shelters.<sup>12</sup>

The pressure of white settlement reached the Omahas and Winnebagoes in the 1880s. Land west of the Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis, and Omaha Railroad was first opened for settlement in 1884. The first white settlers quickly moved into the area of what would become Pender, the county seat of Thurston County. Although enabling legislation was vetoed by Governor Thayer in 1887, the county was formally organized in 1889, despite protests from members of the Omaha Tribe.<sup>13</sup> This resulted in the creation of a county with an untenable tax problem. On the one hand, the county was required to build roads, support court services and finance schools, but 91% of the county land base

consisted of non-taxable reservation land. Consequently, the history of the county from its organization well into the twentieth century was characterized by the distinct but related efforts to purchase Indian lands and efforts to tax Indian lands. Different individuals and groups had different goals, but the desired result was the same. Farmers wanted land, and speculators sought profit for providing that service. Taxpayers wanted tax relief through the increase of the property tax base. Some “progressive” members of the Omaha and Winnebago tribes also believed that the allotment system assured the best future for their peoples. Politicians needed to please their white constituents, most of whom shared the view that Indian lands were underutilized.

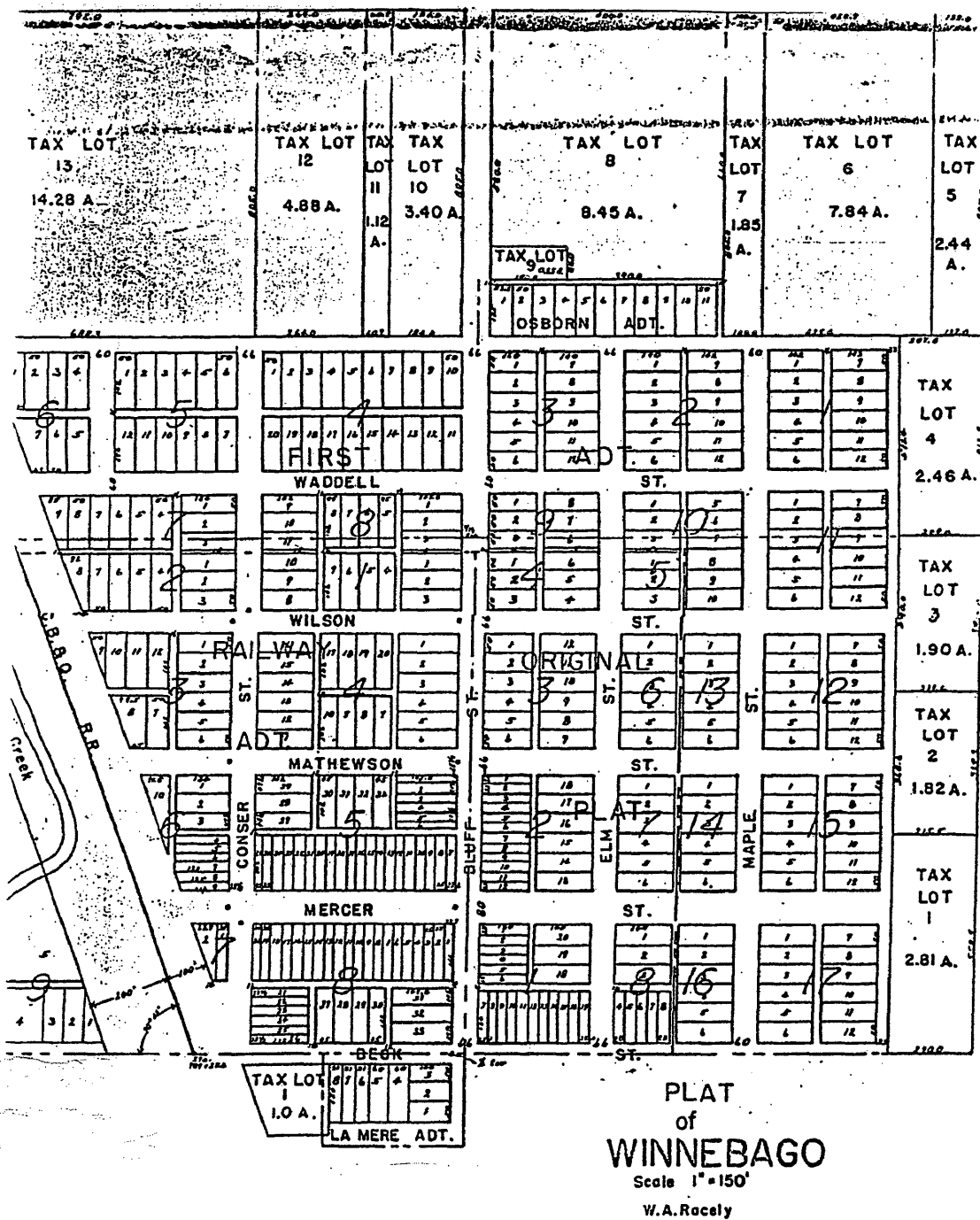
The non-Indian communities of Walthill and Winnebago were not incorporated until 1906-1907, when the construction of the Sioux City and Western Railroad was completed through reservation land. The building of these communities reflected the sale of allotted trust land, which began in the 1880s and continued until the passage of the Indian Reorganization Act in 1934. In the year 2000, about 20% of Thurston County remained as non-taxed Indian lands.<sup>14</sup>

The human landscape recorded the transition of the community of Winnebago from a government administrative center to an elevator town during the first decade of the twentieth century, and the physical changes signified the new power of local white farmers and businessmen. Winnebago Town Company incorporated the village of Winnebago in 1907. The townsite was platted about one and one-half miles north of the Winnebago Agency, which accounts for the present-day feeling that the village comprises two separate communities, which have grown together. Location was determined by

proximity to the two important means of transportation – the Sioux City and Western Railroad (now Burlington Northern-Santa Fe) tracks, and the old wagon road (now Highway 75-77). The town plat was a standard rectangular grid drawn on a north-south axis, with the railroad and Omaha Creek running to the northwest. Traffic associated with the railroad depot and the grain elevator was confined to the western part of town. The main street (Bluff Street) commercial area separated the railroad from the residential area. Bluff Street, which was also the highway, was constructed about one-third wider than the residential streets so as to accommodate highway flow, as well as local commercial and residential traffic. The residential area developed eastward from the main street and up the hills, thereby providing an elevated area which was above the dust and dirt generated on the road below (See Map 5).<sup>15</sup>

Early photographs of Winnebago, dating between 1906 and 1911, reveal surprising contrasts and remind today's observer that this area was still a frontier at the beginning of the century. Most of the buildings situated along the main street were single story clapboard rectangular boxes which lacked the type of ornamentation found in the earliest days of territorial period towns such as Brownville and Nebraska City. Some of these buildings had faux fronts, but many did not. Others had roofed entrances over the door, and a few had canvas awnings, but most owners did not go to the extra expense of customer convenience or attention-getting aesthetics. The main street was unpaved, but some areas had concrete sidewalks. Several of the buildings were constructed of rough-sided concrete block, again with no attempt at ornamentation. The overall impression is that the business district was built "cheap, quick, and easy," with little regard for





Map 5. "Plat [Map] of Winnebago." The Winnebago Town Company incorporated the village of Winnebago in 1907. The location was determined by proximity to the railroad tracks and the wagon road. Commercial development was along the road (Bluff Street) and along Mercer Street to the railroad station. The merchant class built homes on the hills east of Bluff Street.

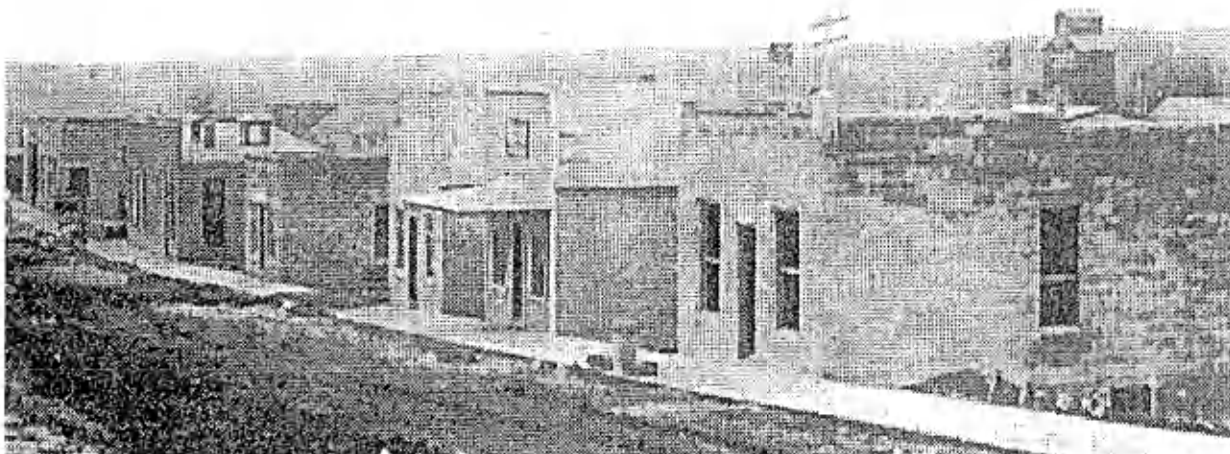
Source: Village Office, Winnebago, Nebraska.

impressing visitors with the prosperity of the new town. At the same time, it must be remembered that the village was at most only four years old when the photographs were taken, and they do not reflect any later elaboration.<sup>16</sup>



Street Scene, Winnebago, Nebraska. Bluff Street looking north. This postcard is undated, but was probably taken between 1907 and 1911. Winnebago boasted a Boyd's Opera House (second building on the left), a sure sign of culture in turn-of-the-century Nebraska.

Source: Norvin Hansen, Thurston County – A Picture History. Pender, Nebraska: The Pender Times Publishing Co., 1996.



Bluff Street is the main thoroughfare of Winnebago, Nebraska. This early postcard snapshot features the main street looking to the southwest. The grain elevator, which was located next to the railroad tracks, may be seen in the background. Note the unadorned concrete buildings and sidewalks. The street, which is also Highway 73-75, was unpaved in this undated photograph.

Source: Norvin Hansen, Thurston County – A Picture History. Pender, Nebraska: The Pender Times Publishing Co., 1996.



Bluff Street, Winnebago, Nebraska, sometime between 1906 and 1911. The star marks Link's General Store. The "X" indicates Alex LaMere's General Store, and the dot on the awning identifies Lampert's Pool Hall.

Source: Norvin Hansen, Thurston County – A Picture History. Pender, Nebraska: The Pender Times Publishing Co., 1996.

An analysis of the context in which St. Augustine's Mission was founded is possible for the year 1910. Although the railroad arrived at Winnebago in 1906, and the town was formally incorporated the following year, data from the federal census, the pages of the local newspaper, The Winnebago Chieftain, and the superintendent's report to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for the Omaha and Winnebago Agency for 1910 allow an analysis of the community three years after its foundation. The county was quite robust economically, and the white leadership was publicly optimistic about its future. Between 1900 and 1910, the white population of the county increased from 4,562 to 6,707, or 33.6%. The Indian population remained relatively stable, declining slightly from 1,955 to 1,915. The county seat at Pender decreased in population from 943 to 804, but three new villages were incorporated in the county: Thurston (1904) – 112 occupants; Walthill (1906) – 810 persons; and Winnebago (1907) – 399 residents.<sup>17</sup>

The agricultural economy of Thurston County was strong during the first decade of the twentieth century. The value of all farm property increased by 115.4% between 1900 and 1910, from \$6,828,263 to \$14,704,907. The number of farms had risen from 855 to 1,100, and the average price of land jumped from \$2.80 to \$5.21 per acre during the same period. Thurston County farmers had raised some 26,280 pigs, 10,033 cattle, and 3,683 dairy cows in 1910. Corn was the major crop at 4,102,462 bushels, and oats was a distant second at 525,771 bushels. The only weakness in the farm economy was evidenced in the owner/tenant ratio for the county when compared to the state average. Statewide, 61.1% of all farms were owner-operated. In Thurston County, that number

was 36.9%, which was an increase from 24.1% in 1900, and which probably reflects the significant white leasing of Omaha and Winnebago land.<sup>18</sup>

The 1910 Federal Census provided valuable data concerning the village and precinct of Winnebago. The village consisted of 105 households. White households made up 64.8% of those enumerated, and Indian households constituted 35.2% of the population. These ratios were nearly reversed in the precinct, where Indian households were 60.4% of the 305 households contacted.<sup>19</sup> The census likewise gave useful information concerning white and Indian occupations in both the village and precinct of Winnebago, as the following table indicates:

Table I. White and Indian Male Occupations – Winnebago Village and Precinct, 1910

**Male White Occupations – Village of Winnebago**

attorney	1	butcher	2	Farmer	10	merchant	6
baker	1	carpenter	13	foreman, rr	1	minister	2
barber	3	cashier	3	grain buyer	1	painter	1
blacksmith	3	clerk	6	Laborer	12	priest	1

**Indian Male Occupations - Village of Winnebago**

carpenter	2	farm laborer	1	printer	1
clerk	1	government laborer	1	shoemaker	1
farmer	3	harness maker	1	tailor	1

### White Male Occupations – Winnebago Precinct

Farmer	186	Tenant farmer/laborer	32
government employee	5	Farmer, Indian Service	2

### Indian Male Occupations - Winnebago Precinct

Blacksmith	5	Carpenter	2	government. worker	1
broom maker	1	Clerk	1	Painter	1
Butcher	1	Farmer	38	Police	1

Twelve of the thirty-seven, or 32.4% of Indian male heads of household in the village, reported employment during 1910; in the precinct, 49 of 184, or 26.6%, reported employment, with the majority involved in farming. White males residing in the village reported 100% employment, as did white males in the precinct. This disparity in employment between Indian and white males probably reflects the problems of cultural transition for Indian males, their lower educational levels (.027% of Indian respondents reported high school graduation), and possibly racial discrimination.<sup>20</sup>

None of the Indian women reported employment. In the village of Winnebago, white females reported the following occupations: clerk 1, nun 5, postmistress 2, printer 1, and teacher 6. Winnebago Precinct reported 4 female teachers and one female farmer, who was a widow who farmed with her adult sons. White females were involved in occupations which were considered acceptable for women of the time, especially

teaching. The Roman Catholic nuns, who staffed St. Augustine's Mission, were members of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament for Indians and Colored People.<sup>21</sup>

Historical geographer John C. Hudson has argued that three types of towns developed on the Great Plains: the cow town, the mining town, and the elevator town. While Winnebago lies well east of the 100<sup>th</sup> meridian, which is often considered the eastern edge of the Great Plains, it shared some of the characteristics of his model. He concluded that the elevator town produced an essential institution of any agrarian community – the bank – which was necessary because farmers and merchants functioned in an integrated national economy. Hotels, restaurants, dray lines and livery stables were likewise essential to feed, house and transport prospective settlers. Hardware stores, butcher shops, and mercantile establishments were needed to serve the daily needs of local residents. Finally, the railroad, the elevator, and the lumber yard, which were, in Hudson's North and South Dakota case studies, seldom locally-owned, established an economic base for the community.<sup>22</sup> Categorization of the businesses advertised in The Winnebago Chieftain in 1910 demonstrates similarity between Hudson's model and the community's economic enterprises.

Table II. Businesses Advertised in The Winnebago Chieftain in 1910

<u>Fundamental Economic Services</u>	
Burlington Railroad	(C.D. Cortland, ticket master)
South Elevator	(R.H.J. Osborn, prop.)
Winnebago State Bank	(national bank later in year)
Winnebago Town Company	(W.E. Whitcomb, Sec.-Treas.)
<u>Clothing</u>	
Mrs. Louis Armell Milinery	(Indian-owned)
Ashford Brothers Men's Clothing	
M.S. Mansfield Clothing	

Commodities

D.M. Day, Cattle and Hog Buyer (office in bank)  
 J.W. Gordon, Auctioneer

Construction Materials

Alam & Goergan Hardware (later, Alam)  
 Cherny & Watson Lumber Co.  
 Edwards & Bradford Lumber Yard  
 Sioux City Grain & Lumber Co. (Geo. W. Tapp, agent)

Contractors

C.F. Bates, Plaster/Masonry  
 J.F. Burkhead, Masonry/Plaster  
 A.W. Lynn, Contractor  
 Ray Mansfield, Builder

Entertainment

Chas. Lammert's Pool Hall  
 D. LaVille Confectionary

Food Services

City Meat Market (Louis Armell, Indian-owned)  
 L. Galland Butcher Shop (Indian-owned)  
 Joe LaMere's Bakery & Soda Fountain (Indian-owned)  
 Linkswiler's Grocery Store  
 Oscar Christiansen Pool Room and Restaurant  
 Homelike Restaurant (Mrs. S.F. Keho)  
 Frank T. Thunder Restaurant (Indian-owned)  
 Winnebago Café (Ben Lowry)

General Merchandise

J.W. Nunn General Merchandise  
 Smith & Goergan

Medical

H.H. Johnson, MD. (office in rear of drug store)  
 Winnebago Drug Co.

Personal Services

City Barber Shop (John Lowry)  
 Mrs. M.A. Bancroft Pyrography Art Parlor  
 E.A. McKee Jeweler  
 Watson's Barber Shop  
 Winnebago Hotel (W.S. Horning, prop.)



Transportation/Agricultural Machinery

Chas. Ayers General Blacksmithing	
Boyd & Niebuhr	(wagons, buggies, farm machinery)
City Drey Line	
F.D. Lane Harness	
Winnebago Livery (Louis Herman)	23

An examination of the advertised businesses which served Winnebago permits some generalizations about village economics. Economic health appears to have been based on three different but related factors: the sale of agricultural commodities; revenue from the sale and leasing of Indian lands; and retail trade, which served both white and Indian communities. The most fundamental economic institutions of the community were based on the production of agricultural commodities. The Burlington Railroad, South Elevator, and the Winnebago State (later, National) Bank were the bedrock institutions without which Winnebago could not have developed as it did. It should also be noted that four Indian families owned businesses in 1910, the LaMeres, Gallands, Thunders and the Armells. All were involved with food service, a business which required a minimum of training and a minimal outlay of capital. Allotment records reveal that Louis Armell had received two allotments – one in Merry Precinct, and the other in Winnebago Precinct. Armell sold the property in Merry Precinct and settled on the property in Winnebago. It is quite possible that he used the money from the Merry Precinct property to capitalize his business in Winnebago. Certainly, the efforts of each of these Indian shopkeepers are examples of Winnebago attempts to engage in the new economic system.<sup>24</sup>

Newspaper advertising also revealed that some Winnebago merchants were in competition with larger regional companies for local trade dollars. The Sioux City Grain

and Lumber Co. competed with two local lumber yards. The Anderson Furniture Company of Sioux City advertised weekly in the paper and presumably must have offered a larger stock than local merchants at possibly lower prices due to sales volume. The St. Augustine's Indian Mission church, school and dormitory were completed in 1909 and 1910 by a Sioux City contractor, and the furniture for the new dormitory was purchased from Davidson's Department Store, another Sioux City business. Winnebago merchants found themselves in the ironic position that the same technology, which connected them to national markets for their produce also brought competition into the community.<sup>25</sup>

In 1910, two daily trains, one a passenger train, the other a "mixed" train, connected Winnebago with other rural communities along the Burlington line and with Sioux City, Iowa. It was possible to leave Winnebago early in the morning and arrive in the city within about one and one-half hours. After a full day of business or shopping, visitors could return home by nightfall. The local newspaper's social notes make it clear that outings to Sioux City were common among the men and women of the merchant class.<sup>26</sup>

The railroad also broadened the social horizons of the communities along the Burlington Line. The social notes indicated that people with adequate disposable income and leisure time were regularly visiting back and forth along the line. The inclusion of considerable gossip from Homer, Walthill and other communities indicated that people enjoyed keeping up with their neighbors, which included others outside the community. Throughout 1910, events in Sloan and Salix, Iowa were reported routinely. The Electric

Theater in Emerson brought the wonders of motion pictures to Thurston County. Homer and Walthill verbally jousting as to which had the superior horse track, but the Omahas at Macy dismissed both courses as being second to their own. Crystal Lake, south of South Sioux City, Nebraska, became a popular vacation spot, and plans for an interurban connecting Crystal Lake with Sioux City were discussed in 1910. During the same year, local baseball and basketball games gained regional popularity. At the end of January, the Winnebago "Indians" basketball team beat the Homer "Tigers" 19-14. The newspaper wondered whether the home town team would be the northeastern Nebraska high school champions, and, in April, the paper reported talk of organizing town teams along the Burlington line.<sup>27</sup>

Visiting speakers and entertainers, a part of the Winnebago Lecture and Entertainment Course, were heavily advertised and apparently well received. Robert R. Bowman gave costumed portrayals of stereotypical figures such as "Shylock, the Jew," and "The Indiana Hoosier." The Modern Musicians Mixed Quartet delighted audiences, and Robert L. Kemple's lectures presented "fresh ideas that will make the community better and inspire children to higher ideals." His topics included: "The American Boy," "Peculiar People," and "Push, Pull, and Pluck." A Silver Coronet band was also organized in 1910.<sup>28</sup>

The newspaper revealed that social life often centered around the churches. The Presbyterian Church claimed the lion's share of news space, and under the leadership of Reverend R.C. Schupe, the church's news coverage expanded from notifications to full length articles, usually on page one. On April 18 and 19, the congregation hosted the

Thurston County Sunday School Convention. Many of the town's leading citizens belonged to this church, including second-term mayor W.E. Whitcomb, and M.A. Bancroft, the newspaper editor. Superintendent Kneale noted that although the church did not specialize in working with the Indians, it was doing a good job and had several Indians among its active workers. The Reverend and Mrs. George Beath also helped minister to people on the Omaha Reservation.<sup>29</sup>

The Reformed Church in America (the Dutch Reformed Church) established the Winnebago Indian Church in 1908. The congregation numbered 169 members in 1910, and Superintendent Kneale believed that about 50% of church-affiliated Winnebagoes attended this organization. Services and activities filled the day on Sunday and on Wednesday evenings. In August, a week-long evangelical camp meeting was held, during which fifty-one adults joined the church, thirty infants were baptized, and four couples were married. One article encouraged Indian readers to abandon polygamy and marry legally, "for the good of all concerned. It is the proper thing to do."<sup>30</sup> The congregation experienced both joy and sorrow in 1910. Mrs. Fannie Verbeek-Watermulder, wife of Pastor G.A. Watermulder, passed away in February; and in June, Winnebago tribal member Henry Roe Cloud, who would become a high official in the Bureau of Indian Affairs during the 1920's, graduated from Yale University. Pastor Watermulder was later promoted to a superintendency within the Dutch Reformed Church, but he retained a residence in the town and was buried next to his wife in the cemetery.<sup>31</sup>

St. Augustine's Indian Mission was barely two years old in 1910. Father John Griese, who was completing the third year of his thirty-seven year tenure as pastor, also

served congregations at Walthill, Homer, and Rosalie. The mission was never self-supporting. The original church was built with funds from the Marquette League of New York City, and the school was founded and financed by Mother Katherine Drexel, a former Philadelphia socialite and heiress, who had founded the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament for Indians and Colored People. The Winnebago Chieftain announced on August 26 that the new dormitory would be open in the fall, which would transform the mission from a local day school to a boarding school, which could better serve the Omaha and Winnebago children who lived scattered across the county. Another article in the fall explained the new curriculum, which included an emphasis on the visual and performing arts. In May, an ice cream social was reported, and the annual Christmas program, at which the children performed, was covered in December.<sup>32</sup>

By the beginning of the twentieth century, the traditional Medicine Lodge of the Winnebago people was seriously challenged by the Mescal Society, which would eventually become incorporated as the much larger Native American Church. The society was well established at Winnebago by 1910, and Superintendent Kneale estimated that about 25% of the religiously active Winnebago belonged to this group.<sup>33</sup> John Rave had first introduced this religious innovation from Oklahoma twenty years earlier. Rave's "Big Moon" ceremony followers were required to give up alcohol and tobacco and burn their traditional medicine bundles, as well as discontinue sponsorship of the traditional feasts of the Medicine Lodge. Jesse Clay introduced a second variation, the Half Moon ceremony, to the Nebraska Winnebagoes in 1912.<sup>34</sup> Anthropologist Paul Radin, who did field work on the reservation from 1908 to 1910, has suggested that the greatest

opposition to the peyotists came from the shamans of the Medicine Lodge as the former abandoned the belief in reincarnation in favor of the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. Anthropologist Nancy Lurie also suggested that religious factionalism among the Winnebago was further complicated by the presence of the Christian churches on the reservation.<sup>35</sup>

On January 7, 1910, two lines above The Chieftain's announcement that the Ladies Aid Society had met the previous Wednesday, was the following: "There was a meeting of the Mescal Society at Late Rave's on Saturday." The newspaper noted in September that several of the church leaders and their wives had journeyed to Tama, Iowa, to introduce the religious practice to the Sac and Fox peoples. Obviously, religious meetings and activities were practiced openly even though a major controversy had been simmering with the Bureau of Indian Affairs since 1908 as to whether the mescal bean was indeed a positive, life-changing substance, or simply another intoxicant. Between January and March, 1909, Mescal Society members at Winnebago had received supplies of peyote by railway express or parcel post. In May of 1909, agents blocked the shipments, and later, Oliver LaMere was arrested in Sioux City for possession of the controlled substance.<sup>36</sup> The controversy was further complicated when ethnologist James Mooney stated in the Handbook of American Indians North of Mexico that peyote "possesses varied and valuable medicinal properties," and that it was used only as part of religious ceremonies which included prayer and contemplation. More importantly, Mooney defended peyote use as a proper religious ritual for easing the transition of Indian people into this new world which was so foreign to them.<sup>37</sup> No mention of the

national controversy was made in the newspaper until 1913 when The Chieftain reprinted “at the request of some members of the musicial [Mescal] society” an article from the Omaha World-Herald which included excerpts from a letter written by Hiram Chase, an Omaha Indian attorney, to Nebraska Senator Gilbert Hitchcock. Chase argued “from personal experience” that: “The peyote is used for medicinal and religious purposes and in connection with the religious movement of the younger generation based on the bible [sic] and the Christian doctrine resulting in the reformation and reclamation of many of our people from wickedness and debauchery.” Apparently tongue-in-cheek, he added that the organization was the Indian’s equivalent of the Keeley Institute, a well-known sanitarium of the day.<sup>38</sup>

Chase continued that the criticism of the relatively new religious movement came not from informed white people who had witnessed the positive impact of the faith, but from missionaries who dismissed peyotism as simply another pagan practice. Father John Griese’s private correspondence reveals that he viewed peyotism in precisely that way. However, he was publicly silent on the issue, which earned him praise from Father William Ketcham, Director of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions. Families of the St. Augustine’s Indian Community sometimes included members of the Mescal Society.<sup>39</sup> No one, it seems, could deny that some lives had been changed for the better when other remedies had failed.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs was a critical contributor to the economy of Winnebago. While not a major employer, the Bureau managed the sale and leasing of Indian lands and the distribution of annuity funds. The advertisement of the Winnebago

Town Company, which prefaced this chapter, illustrates the economic impact of the Bureau of Indian Affairs on the community. Although the figure of \$250,000,000 in annuities “which goes to the trade of the town” was greatly exaggerated since the newspaper reported annuities of only \$300.00 per person in 1910, it does emphasize the importance of the sale and leasing of Indian lands and the transfer of annuity money to community merchants.<sup>40</sup> The importance of the annuities is evident from the newspaper advertising of the day. The Boston Store advertised, “Mr. Indian: Why not make you next order payable to the Boston Store? The following prices on only on Indian Agency orders.” John Alam’s hardware store announced: “because of change of rulings made by the Indian department, it makes it difficult to do a credit business, but I have decided to cut prices on everything.” The negative impact of credit purchases was illustrated by The Chieftain when it announced that \$381,000 would soon be deposited in Indian accounts: “Now that the Indians are getting this money you can see merchants out on the reservation by the dozens chasing the Indians with old bills in their hands and trying to get them to turn over part of their money for the debts.”<sup>41</sup>

Indian lands and the vagaries of Bureau of Indian Affairs policy were a driving force in the economy of Thurston County. Illegal leasing schemes had been the subject of a congressional investigation in 1895 of the Flournoy Livestock and Real Estate Company in Pender. The operation involved the leasing of parcels of land from individual Indians at below-market prices. The company then subleased the lands to white farmers at a considerable profit. One contemporary source estimated that the real estate speculators’ net profits were between \$60,000 and \$70,000 per year, while the



Indian lessors received a mere ten to twenty-five cents per acre.<sup>42</sup> Again, in 1902, Agent Charles P. Mathewson and local speculators were the subjects of another congressional investigation for leasing irregularities.<sup>43</sup>

The pressures on Omaha and Winnebago lands were increased by Section Seven of the 1902 Indian Appropriation Act. The law permitted Indian heirs to sell land received as inheritance without the restriction of a trust period. In the words of historian Judith Boughter, “heirship sales devastated Indian futures. Combined with the later sales of surplus lands, the loss of inherited acreage left many allottees’ grandchildren nearly landless.”<sup>44</sup>

The Burke Act of 1906 accelerated the process of Indian land loss. The law allowed the president or the Secretary of the Interior to determine the competency of individual Indians, thereby removing the restrictions of the trust period. The result was a “land rush” in the months prior to the expiration of the original Omaha allotments’ trust period on July 10, 1909. However, President William Howard Taft extended the trust period by ten years due to the obvious irregularities which accompanied the process. Succumbing to political pressure in 1910, Fred H. Abbott, Acting Commissioner of Indian Affairs, authorized the creation of competency commissions to decide which Omaha and Winnebago individuals might receive title to their lands. The result, predictably, was another major loss to the tribal land base.<sup>45</sup>

The superintendent’s annual report to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for fiscal year 1910 provides a limited, anecdotal, and probably overly optimistic, impression of the condition of the Omaha and Winnebago peoples that year. While whites debated

whether the county seat should be moved to Walthill, the Omahas and Winnebagoes were concerned about the combination of the two reservations under one superintendent, who was based at Winnebago, and completion of the work of a competency commission which divided Omaha allottees into three categories: competent, partially competent, and wholly incompetent to handle their own affairs. Rumors had spread that the office at the Omaha Agency would be closed, but this was not the case as an office was retained at Macy.<sup>46</sup> However, resentments continued among the Omahas toward both the government and the neighboring Winnebagoes. The impact of the competency commission would be felt for years as land sales diminished Indian land holdings. Superintendent Albert Kneale was generally optimistic about both economic and moral conditions on the reservations. He reported that 75% of the able-bodied adult Winnebago males were attempting to support themselves by farming. About 50 Winnebago families were living on and farming their own allotments, and that three times that number were farming inherited lands. Thirty-six Winnebagoes were attempting to farm for the first time, on lands which ranged from small subdivided inheritances to one farm of 200 acres. Acreage under cultivation by Winnebago farmers increased from 3,000 to 8,000 acres during the fiscal year. Corn was grown on about one-half of all of the tillable soil, followed in descending order of production by hay, oats and wheat. The superintendent further reported that about one-third of the families had at least one milk cow, that most families raised chickens, ducks, geese or turkeys, and that a few Winnebago farmers possessed small herds of cattle. In sum, the Winnebago people held 1,250 horses, 800 cattle and 1,500 hogs. He applauded the efforts of the two government farmers for the

improvement in agricultural production. Kneale concluded that the Winnebago farmers' crops were "being fully as well cared for as the average white leasee cares for his crop."<sup>47</sup>

Kneale listed six major obstacles to government efforts to encourage the Omahas and Winnebagoes to farm. The first and last – "constitutional inertia" and "lack of persistence" – reflected his own ethnocentric bias. More to the point, and certainly more demonstrable, were the remaining obstacles. He identified the credit practices of the white merchants as an important problem. According to Kneale, the merchants realized that with the whites leasing Indian lands, the county had, in effect, a "double population, a laboring class and an idle class, both of which must be fed and clothed." The merchants, therefore, discouraged the Indians who wished to farm. Also, the extension of credit secured by the current crop resulted in a situation in which "Many of the crops are mortgaged almost as soon as they are out of the ground." Kneale urged his superiors to promote legislation which would make it unlawful to mortgage crops grown on restricted lands. Still another problem was the slowness and inefficiency of the government. An allottee who wished to sell a piece of inherited land in order to make improvements to his allotment might have to wait for two years or more before he received his money. Although he did not elaborate, Kneale also cited "loose marriage relations" as an impediment to successful farming. Elsewhere in the report it seems clear that he was referring to the necessity of family stability in order to accumulate capital and manage a farm on a long term basis.<sup>48</sup>

The Superintendent noted that the request for patents in fee had declined. He estimated that 96% of the Winnebago lands patented had been sold, and that 50% of the

money received had been spent foolishly. He remained, however, optimistic, as he believed that the example of Indians who had impoverished themselves served as an example to others to be more frugal. He placed himself on record as encouraging the sale of inherited lands in order to improve the allotments. He discouraged the sale of allotted lands.<sup>49</sup>

Albert Kneale also saw improvement in the moral climate among the Winnebago people. Incidents of public intoxication were reduced following a crackdown conducted by Kneale and Special Agent Ed Brents, except for “about twenty habitual drunkards.” Successful prosecutions in county court of cases involving statutory rape, fornication and adultery had improved conditions on the reservations. He believed that the fact that the charges had been largely filed by Indians was a sign of moral awakening. He credited County Attorney Howard Sexton and the Reverend G. A. Watermulder, pastor of the Winnebago Indian Church, with these successes.<sup>50</sup>

Newspaper coverage is one indicator of the influence of the agency on local affairs. Each issue of The Winnebago Chieftain included a column entitled, “Around the Agency,” which was penned by Superintendent Kneale. Throughout 1909, the sale of trust lands dominated the front pages of many issues of the newspaper. The impression given was that Winnebago was a boom town and that the sale of Indian lands might be the only reason for its existence. In 1910, land sales decreased and were usually advertised on the inside pages of the paper. Changes in federal policy caused the ebb and flow of land sales. Bootlegging, which had been a public scandal in 1904 and had resulted in a physical assault at Dakota City on Father Joseph Schell, an outspoken

missionary to the Winnebago, was also temporarily reduced.<sup>51</sup> That liquor sales continued more discretely is evidenced by the fact that Kneale published weekly an announcement of a twenty-five dollar reward for information leading to the arrest of bootleggers. However, the newspaper reported only two arrests during the year. The superintendent took great pains to explain government policies regarding the sale of Indian lands. He published the regulations and scheduled public meetings with prospective buyers. He also threatened immediate removal of white settlers who failed to follow the rules, and prosecution of anyone suspected of fraud. He appears to have been an honest broker in dealing with government policies and the needs and wishes of the Indians.<sup>52</sup>

By 1913, the superintendent was under heavy local pressure to apply government policies regarding Indian lands and monies in a manner more acceptable to the merchants, land leasees and real estate investors. A cartoon entitled “The Handwriting on the Wall,” which appeared in The Chieftain, caricatured him as “King Albert – the modern Belshazzar.” Cartoonist Howard M. Bancroft opined that the superintendent would soon be removed from office because he had been found wanting in the court of public opinion.<sup>53</sup> Whites in Thurston County wished to deal directly with the Omahas and Winnebagoes without the “interference” of the federal government which Albert Kneale represented. A letter to the editor which was critical of the agent’s management of the leasing of Indian lands stated, “The Lord rules in heaven and on earth, excepting in Thurston County, there rules the superintendent of Indian Affairs, by taking all the rights away from the people and calling it ‘improved methods.’”<sup>54</sup>

The state of Indian and white relations at Winnebago during the early twentieth century is difficult to determine with precision, but some impressions can be gleaned from the newspapers. Not once in the years consulted was there any example of disrespect, identification of suspects or culprits in criminal matters by race, or the use of stereotypical language. Only one time was an adult male paternalistically described as being “one of our Winnebago.” The language was invariably straightforward and exhibited no obvious racial bias or slant to the story. However, there may have been a more subtle bias expressed in the selection of people and events that were covered. Without exception, those Winnebagoes who were featured were the more acculturated or “progressive” members of the tribe. The negative consequences of the land sales for the Indians were not reported, nor were the individual Indian voices that opposed the land sales.<sup>55</sup> That there was another side to the life experienced by the Winnebago people in the town that bore their name is suggested by an observation made by Superintendent Kneale in his annual report, “There is no effort made on the part of the public schools to adapt itself to the immediate needs of the Indians. In fact it is somewhat doubtful if the Indian pupils are made to feel that they are even welcome to these schools.”<sup>56</sup>

M. A. Bancroft, the white newspaper owner, appears to have made a serious attempt to report events in the Indian communities. The annual powwows, both at Macy and Winnebago, rated full-page advertisements. Stories covered the planning of the events, and follow-up stories claimed great success. Obviously, white merchants had a financial stake in the success of the powwows, but the paper also included news items, which primarily would have been of interest to Indian members of the community. The

return home of Winnebago youth from boarding school, especially Genoa in Nebraska and Carlisle in Pennsylvania, received coverage. A lengthy front-page article complete with multiple pictures, featured school happenings at Genoa and contained information about Winnebago students who attended there. The social notes section included the comings and goings of Indian members of the community, such as Joe LaMere's family's vacation at Crystal Lake, Charles Prophet, Jr.'s success at an Indian dance contest, and the visits of friends and relatives from Wisconsin and Minnesota. On July 29, it was announced that David St. Cyr had patented a "sanitary cuspidor." In September, a reception was held at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Roy Stabler for Hampton Institute graduates, in honor of Miss C.W. Andrus, a Hampton staff member. The white editor romanticized the joys of the boarding school experience by stating: "The old Hampton Plantation songs rang out over the evening air after a manner that brought back to the ones present the happy times they had once enjoyed in that hospitable country."<sup>57</sup>

The human landscape of Thurston County was altered dramatically during the last half of the nineteenth and the first decade of the twentieth centuries. The Omaha and Winnebago Indian reservations were created. Federal action changed the pattern of landholding from tribal ownership to individual allotments, which were later opened to white ownership. Two railroads were built north through the county, thus allowing the development of commercial agriculture, and the foundation of a series of towns along the line. The village of Winnebago originated as a central place for the Winnebago Indian Agency, but the opening of Indian lands to white settlement and the arrival of the railroad resulted in the creation of an "elevator town," which was prosperous during the first part

of the twentieth century. The community in which St. Augustine's Indian Mission was established still had vestiges of an "open frontier community," where rampant speculation on Indian agricultural lands, alleged corruption, bootlegging and an ambiguous moral climate complicated relations between Indian and white residents. Winnebago religion also had undergone great change as the traditional Medicine Lodge practitioners, the mescal cult, and Protestant Christian missionaries competed for the souls of the Winnebagoes. It was in this environment that Mother Katharine Drexel established a mission and school for the Winnebago people.



## NOTES

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- <sup>1</sup> Advertisement, The Winnebago Chieftain, March 18, 1910.
- <sup>2</sup> David Lee Smith, Ho-Chunk of Nebraska (Winnebago, Nebraska: Ho-Chunk Historical Society, 1996), 3.
- <sup>3</sup> Father Steve Boes, Pastor of St. Augustine's Indian Mission, Winnebago. Interviews, by the author. Various dates, 2000-2002; David Lee Smith, Cultural Preservation Officer and Tribal Historian, Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska. Interviews by the author. Various dates, 2000-2002.
- <sup>4</sup> "Winnebago on a Roll to a Financial Empire," Indian Country Today, January 3, 2001, B 1.
- <sup>5</sup> Raymond E. Dale, comp., Index to the History of the State of Nebraska Vol. 1 (Chicago: Western Historical Company, 1882), 383.
- <sup>6</sup> Charles J. Kappler, comp. and ed., Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties, Vol. 2 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1904), 611-14.
- <sup>7</sup> Charles Howard Richardson, "Early Settlement of Eastern Nebraska Territory: A Geographical Study Based on the Original Land Survey" (PhD. diss., University of Nebraska, 1968), 50-51, 70.
- <sup>8</sup> David J. Wishart, An Unspeakable Sadness: The Dispossession of the Nebraska Indians (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 143-144, 187-188.
- <sup>9</sup> Wishart, An Unspeakable Sadness, 226-227.
- <sup>10</sup> Judith A. Boughter, Betraying the Omaha Nation: 1790-1916 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 83-86.
- <sup>11</sup> Robert C. Farb, "Robert W. Furnas as Omaha Indian Agent, 1864-1866," Nebraska History 32 (September, 1951): 188-189; 32 (December, 1951) 271-273; Kappler, Indian Affairs, 2: 872-73.
- <sup>12</sup> Dale, Nebraska, I, 385.
- <sup>13</sup> Boughter, Betraying the Omaha Nation, 136, 167, 195.
- <sup>14</sup> E. Vivian Hartwig, Thurston County Assessor. Interviews by the author. June, 2000, telephone, August, 2002, Thurston County Court House, Pender, Nebraska.
- <sup>15</sup> "Plat Map of Winnebago, Nebraska," Office of the County Assessor, Thurston County, Nebraska.
- <sup>16</sup> Norvin Hansen, comp., Thurston County – A Picture History (Pender, Nebraska: The Pender Times Publishing Company, 1996), 11, 33, 86, 89, 110.
- <sup>17</sup> Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Twentieth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1910, Vol. 3, Population. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1913), 37.
- <sup>18</sup> 1910 Census, Vol. 7, Agriculture, 30, 38, 39, 47, 48, 56.

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<sup>19</sup> Author's analysis, 1910 Census, Population, sheets 1 – 37.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> John C. Hudson, "The Plains Country Town," in The Great Plains: Environment and Culture, ed. by Brian K. Blouet and Frederick C. Luebke (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979), 99 – 118.

<sup>23</sup> Author's analysis, The Winnebago Chieftain, 1910 inclusive.

<sup>24</sup> Copy of allotment document 237 (Tag 4), Trackbook number 383 –49A, 128 in Richmond R. Clow Research File for the Study of Omaha and Winnebago Trust Lands; Thurston County, Nebraska Deed Record Book, 5:444, 5:62, 7:314.

<sup>25</sup> The Winnebago Chieftain, 1910 inclusive.

<sup>26</sup> The Winnebago Chieftain, 1910 inclusive.

<sup>27</sup> The Winnebago Chieftain, 1910 inclusive.

<sup>28</sup> The Winnebago Chieftain, January 28, February 25, March 18, 1910.

<sup>29</sup> The Winnebago Chieftain, April 1, April 8, 1910; Report of Superintendent Albert Kneale, July 1, 1910, in Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs [ARCIA], 1910, 18.

<sup>30</sup> The Winnebago Chieftain, June 24, 1910.

<sup>31</sup> Kneale, *Report 1910*, 18; The Winnebago Chieftain, June 24, August 20, 1910. The Reformed Church in America was popularly known as the Dutch Reformed Church, reflecting the European origins of the majority of its members.

<sup>32</sup> The Winnebago Chieftain, June 17, December 29, 1910.

<sup>33</sup> "Report of Superintendent Albert Kneale," July 1, 1911, Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs [ARCIA], 1911, 1.

<sup>34</sup> Omer C. Stewart, The Peyote Religion: A History (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 147; Robert L. Hall, "The Winnebago Medicine Rite," in An Archaeology of the Soul: North American Indian Belief and Ritual (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 68-69.

<sup>35</sup> Paul Radin, The Winnebago Tribe (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 377-378; Radin, The Road of Life and Death (New York: Pantheon Books, 1945), 38-39; Nancy Lurie, "Winnebago," in Handbook of North American Indians, Vol. 15 (Northeast), ed. by William Sturtevant (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1978), 701.

<sup>36</sup> Stewart, Peyote Religion, 147; The Winnebago Chieftain, September 2, 1910.

<sup>37</sup> James Mooney, "Peyote" in Handbook of American Indians North of Mexico, Frederick Webb Hodge, ed., (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1906), 2:237.

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<sup>38</sup> “Indian Use of Peyote Defended by Chase,” The Winnebago Chieftain, July 4, 1913, adapted from a report in the Omaha World-Herald, June 26, 1913.

<sup>39</sup> Father William Ketcham to Father John Griese, September 3, 1914. Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions Archives, Marquette University. In 1920, Father Ketcham encouraged Walthill, Nebraska attorney Harry Keefe to lobby the Nebraska State Constitutional Convention to prohibit the use of peyote. Keefe responded that the convention felt that the prohibition of “habit forming” drugs was already covered by state statute and need not be addressed in the state constitution. Keefe also noted that the question of specifically prohibiting peyote was “prejudiced materially by some feeling and bitterness arising and existing between some of the denominations doing missionary work.” Harry L. Keefe to Father Willam Ketcham, February 13, 1920. Archives of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Alumni Library, Special Collections, Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

<sup>40</sup> Advertisement, The Winnebago Chieftain, March 18, 1910.

<sup>41</sup> The Winnebago Chieftain, July 29, 1910, October 20, 1911, August 23, 1913, November 3, 1913.

<sup>42</sup> Matthew J. Krezenski, “Repercussions of the Dawes Act: Leasing, Citizenship and Jurisdiction on the Omaha and Winnebago Reservations, 1887 – 1896” (Master’s thesis, University of Nebraska at Omaha, 2001).

<sup>43</sup> Boughter, Betraying the Omaha Nation, 147, 163-165.

<sup>44</sup> Boughter, Betraying the Omaha Nation, 172 – 173.

<sup>45</sup> Boughter, Betraying the Omaha Nation, 178, 181-183.

<sup>46</sup> Kneale, Report 1910, 1-2, The Winnebago Chieftain, December 12, 1910.

<sup>47</sup> Kneale, Report 1910, 3, 5-7.

<sup>48</sup> Kneale, Report 1910, 6-7.

<sup>49</sup> Kneale, Report 1910, 3-4, 36-37.

<sup>50</sup> Kneale, Report 1910, 8; Albert Kneale, Indian Agent (Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Printers, Ltd., 1950), 205-209.

<sup>51</sup> The Winnebago Chieftain, August 20, 1909, March 18, 1910; See Chapter 4 for a discussion of the ministry of Father Joseph Schell.

<sup>52</sup> David Lee Smith. Interview by author. Winnebago, Nebraska, August 2002.

<sup>53</sup> The Winnebago Chieftain, January 17, 1913; See The Winnebago Chieftain, 1912-1913 inclusive to trace the conflict between the newspaper and the agent: See Kneale, Indian Agent, 227-229 for the agent’s recollections of the struggle.

<sup>54</sup> Carl Meehe, letter to the editor, The Winnebago Chieftain, December 13, 1912.

<sup>55</sup> The Winnebago Chieftain, 1910 inclusive.

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<sup>56</sup> Kneale, Report 1910, 18.

<sup>57</sup> The Winnebago Chieftain, September 3, 1909, July 1, July 29, 1910.

## CHAPTER TWO

## PROTESTANTS, CATHOLICS AND INDIAN EDUCATIONAL POLICY

The paramount duty of the day is to prepare the rising generation of Indians for the new order of things thus forced upon them. A comprehensive system of education, modeled after the public school system, embracing all persons of school age, compulsory in its demands and uniformly administered, should be developed as rapidly as possible.<sup>1</sup>

Thomas Jefferson Morgan, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Annual Report, 1889

It would seem as if the different Protestant bodies were about to unite in refusing any grants for Indians in order to make it impossible for Catholics to receive aid for the same purpose.<sup>2</sup>

Richard Scannell, Bishop of Omaha, to Mother Katharine Drexel, May 11, 1892

I am restrained to request that you keep this report from the eye of the public [so that it not become an election year issue]...it would cause every good citizen of whatever party or religion to marvel at the bigotry and intolerance which have crippled the hand of the Church in its work of educating and redeeming from Paganism the children of our Indian wards.... I am, and for many years have been a member of the party to which the bigoted Commissioner [Thomas Jefferson Morgan] and the not much less bigoted President [Benjamin Harrison], belong....<sup>3</sup>

Father Joseph Stephan, Director of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, to Bishop Martin Marty, President of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, July 27, 1892

“I understand from Rev’d Stephan [Director of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions] that he had secured some number of acres – I forget how many – for the Winnebago Reservation,”<sup>4</sup> noted thirty-year-old Philadelphia heiress Katharine Mary Drexel in a letter to her spiritual advisor James O’Connor, Bishop of Omaha, Nebraska. The letter was dated December 12, 1888, just eleven months before she entered the novitiate of the Sisters of Mercy of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. This was obviously a busy time for the young woman who was closing one chapter of her life in preparation for her

life's work as a Roman Catholic nun, founder of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament for Indians and Colored People, and founder of St. Augustine's Indian Mission at Winnebago, Nebraska. However, the land for a mission to serve the Winnebago people was not secured in 1888. The first priest was not assigned formally to the reservation until 1904. The mission's founding pastor, Fr. John Herman Griese, arrived in 1908; and, the school was opened in 1909. Thus, twenty long years passed between the first attempt to acquire land for the mission and the arrival of Fr. Griese.

A combination of national and local factors delayed the establishment of a Catholic mission among the Winnebago in Nebraska. One factor was the death in 1890 of Bishop O'Connor, who had been a zealous advocate of missionary work among the Indians. His successor, Bishop Richard Scannell, was more preoccupied with consolidating the operations of a church barely past its frontier beginnings, contending with the American Protective Association's nativist attacks on the church, and serving the needs of European Catholic immigrants who settled in Omaha and throughout Nebraska during the 1880s and 1890s.<sup>5</sup> On the national level, the establishment of new Roman Catholic missions in the last decade of the nineteenth century ran headlong into changes in the educational philosophy of eastern Indian reformers and governmental policy. These shifts threatened the use of federal funds for missionary contract schools, and resulted in conflicts on the national level. These tensions were, in turn, reflected on the local level in the competition between Catholic and Protestant missionary societies, and conflict between Catholic and non-Catholic members of the Winnebago Tribe. Each of these

factors – both national and local – played a role in delaying the foundation of St. Augustine's.

The foundation of an Indian mission was inspired by religious motivation, but its actualization required action from within a political context. Missionaries, and the organizations which they represented, were involved in a complex web of issues and relationships. Since the federal government controlled access to Indian lands and the financial resources set aside for Indian education, the Christian churches were required to compete for influence on the reservations and to lobby both Congress and the Executive Branch for the resources to support missionary activity. Conflict was nearly unavoidable between the Catholics, on the one hand, and eastern white organizations, such as the Indians Rights Association, who wished to see the Indians Americanized as white, Protestant, farmers or tradesmen, and who believed that only a federal Indian school system could achieve this goal. Tensions between the white missionaries were reflected within the tribes between the followers of the various Christian churches, and, at Winnebago, the followers of the Mescal Society, which would eventually evolve into the Native American Church. Finally, missionaries came into conflict with white bootleggers and land speculators who wished to see the Indians dispossessed of their funds and their lands. All of this played out against a backdrop of constitutional issues of separation of church and state and within a general climate of Protestant hostility and mistrust toward the Catholic Church.

Within this political context, important individuals and organizations played key roles in shaping policies and events. Among the many protagonists, four individuals may

be seen as important symbols of the conflict. On the Catholic side of the issue were Father Joseph Stephan, Director of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, and his successor at the Bureau, Father William Ketcham. On the reformers' side of the issue, Thomas Jefferson Morgan, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1889-1893, and Daniel Dorchester, Morgan's Superintendent of Indian Schools, were instrumental in implementing the reform agenda. In Catholic eyes, Morgan became a symbol of bigotry and injustice by marginalizing the Church's historic role in Indian education.

Three issues were sources of conflict between the Catholic hierarchy, represented by the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, on the one hand, and various Protestant reform groups, on the other hand, especially those led by the Indian Rights Association. The first issue was that of direct government appropriations for religious mission schools, that is, contracts between the government and the mission for the education of Indian youth on a per capita basis. Related to this issue was the question of the government's provision for rations to Indian children at mission boarding schools. A second issue was the right of Indian parents to choose which school system, the Catholic missions or the government schools, was best for their children. A third set of issues concerned the expenditure of tribal treaty and trust fund money to support the mission schools. All three issues indirectly affected the founding of St. Augustine's because they threw into question the financing of the existing mission schools, and, in some cases, they delayed the foundation of new institutions.

The cooperation of the federal government and various Protestant missionary societies was well established by the second half of the nineteenth century. Thomas L.



McKenney, Superintendent of Indian trade from 1816 to 1822, had hoped to attach a national system of schools to the government trading posts.<sup>6</sup> However, on March 3, 1819, Congress created an annual appropriation for Indian education, which became known as the “civilization fund.” The fund, initially \$10,000, which was appropriated annually and spent at the president’s discretion, was designed to teach Indians to make a living by agriculture and to teach them the basic skills in reading, writing and arithmetic.<sup>7</sup> President James Monroe and Secretary of War John C. Calhoun determined to spend the fund through “benevolent societies,” which were already involved in Indian education. It was hoped that the fund would encourage new groups to become involved in Indian education, as well.<sup>8</sup> The result was a continuous increase in the number of schools, student enrollment, and participation by religious organizations. By 1830, fifty-two schools served 1,512 Indian students.<sup>9</sup>

Subsequent treaties reinforced the policy of federal subsidies to private groups during the middle years of the nineteenth century in various parts of the country. For example, the treaty the Choctaws signed at Dancing Rabbit Creek on September 15, 1830, included a provision, which called for the erection of three churches, which could also be used as schoolhouses, as well as salaries for teachers and a commitment to educate forty students each year for twenty years.<sup>10</sup> Likewise, an 1854 treaty, which established the Omaha Reservation, authorized the president to issue fee-simple patents to four adjoining quarter sections on the reservation to the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church for the establishment of a manual labor boarding school.<sup>11</sup> Also, an 1866 treaty reestablishing federal relations with the Creek Indians after the Civil War,

called for the grant of land not to exceed 160 acres “to every religious society or denomination, which has erected, or which, with the consent of the Indians, may hereafter erect, buildings within the Creek country for missionary or educational purposes,…”<sup>12</sup> The assumption that education was a key to the inclusion of the Indian in American society, and that the Christian religion was an intimate part of that process, can be seen in the annual report of Commissioner of Indian Affairs T. Hartley Crawford in 1838. Crawford identified education as the “lever” by which the Indians could be lifted out of the “mire of folly and vice in which they are sunk.” He called for the creation of manual labor schools to teach reading, writing and arithmetic, but he also stressed the conversion of Indians to Christianity.<sup>13</sup> This insistence on the importance of Christianity to the Americanization of the Indian became more intense in the years after the Civil War.

The post-Civil War era was characterized by unprecedented national growth and development. In the East, great fortunes, including that of the Drexel family, were accrued by industrial expansion. The nation expanded westward in search of land and mineral resources; the cities swelled with immigrants; and a national economy was created by the transcontinental railroads. Expansion brought western tribes into closer contact with white communities, which rendered obsolete the older policy of placing the Indians west of the Mississippi River, and out of immediate contact with white settlements. New efforts regarding Indian reform began to stir, due in large part to the evangelical Protestant impulse even before the war ended. For the Catholic Church, it was a time of great expansion into missionary work among the Indians.

The growth of westward migration resulted in increased incidences of violent conflict on the frontier. The Sand Creek Massacre perpetrated by Colonel John M. Chivington and elements of the Colorado Volunteer Cavalry on the Southern Cheyenne village of Black Kettle and White Antelope on November 29, 1864, and other similar episodes, reinvigorated the efforts of eastern reformers to change government Indian policy. A Joint Special Congressional Committee was authorized on March 3, 1865, to investigate conditions among the western tribes and their treatment by both army and civilian authorities. Senator James R. Doolittle of Wisconsin served as chairman of the committee. Committee members toured the West and addressed questionnaires to knowledgeable civilian and military individuals. The "Doolittle Report," was submitted on June 26, 1867. The report suggested new approaches to Indian affairs on the part of the government and inspired a new thrust in Indian reform among eastern white humanitarians. The Doolittle Report contributed to the national dialogue on the "Indian Problem" in many ways. Most significantly, the report identified white aggressiveness on the frontier as a major cause of violent conflict, and recommended the creation of a national system of reservations. It also called for civilian control and reform of the Indian service. Specifically, the report called for the selection of competent and committed persons who would work in the bureau as a career. It was hoped that this would eliminate the parade of short-term political appointees who left the agencies as soon as better opportunities arose. Although the document made no recommendations regarding the missionaries, it assumed that they were a permanent part of the reservation landscape and important actors in the government's civilization efforts. The example of the long-term

commitment of the missionaries was the model which the committee hoped to see in other government employees.<sup>14</sup> Even as the report was being written, hostilities were renewed on the plains. On the northern plains, Red Cloud and the Lakota all but closed the Bozeman Trail between Fort Laramie and the Montana gold fields. The nation was shocked by the news that Captain William Fetterman and eighty troopers were slain on December 21, 1866, and hostilities intensified on the southern plains during the following year.

Congressional response to the renewal of conflict was the establishment of the United States Indian Peace Commission. Basically, the action removed negotiating power away from the chief executive and placed it in the hands of a select group of civilian and military leaders, who were presumed to be competent in Indian matters and subject to Congressional authority. Chaired by Commissioner of Indian Affairs Nathaniel Taylor, the work of the commission resulted in treaties at Medicine Lodge Creek in 1867 and at Fort Laramie in 1868. Although the Peace Commission had failed to secure an enduring peace, it submitted a report in January 1868. The commissioners renewed the call for the creation of reservations, but went beyond the earlier report when they called for the establishment of an independent federal Indian agency.<sup>15</sup> A new agency was not created, but the report added support to the reformers' calls for change.

President Ulysses S. Grant's "Peace Policy" was the response to the eastern humanitarian's quest for reform. Father Francis Paul Prucha, an eminent scholar of federal Indian policy, has described the peace policy as a "state of mind, a determination that since the old ways of dealing with the Indians had not worked, new ways which

emphasized kindness and justice must be tried.”<sup>16</sup> Citing an official description of the policy, that of Secretary of the Interior Columbus Delano in 1873, Prucha has detailed the following elements of that policy as of 1873. First, the Indians were to be confined on reservations where they could be relatively isolated from destructive contact with whites. There, they would be educated with the assistance of Christian missionary organizations. Second, the army would be used to discipline the Indians when necessary, especially among those “hostiles” who left the reservation without permission. Third, the government must assure the quality and fair price of supplies both to protect the Indians and the taxpayer. Fourth, the government should work with the various denominations to secure religious and moral employees for the Indian service. Fifth, the government would, in cooperation with the various Christian organizations, provide churches and schools, which would prepare the Indians for both a Christian life and American citizenship. Father Prucha characterized the intimate relationship between the government and the churches that was conceived by Delano as “The ‘peace policy’ might just as properly have been labeled the ‘religious policy.’”<sup>17</sup>

The manner in which the peace policy was implemented resulted in important feelings of resentment and victimization on the part of the leaders of the Catholic Church, especially those involved in missionary work. The two structural elements of Grant’s peace policy were the creation of a Board of Indian Commissioners and the policy of hiring nominees of the churches to fill positions in the Indian service. The Board of Indian Commissioners was established by Congress as part of the Indian Appropriations Act of April 10, 1869. The president was authorized to organize a board of up to ten

commissioners composed of men “eminent for their intelligence and philanthropy,” to serve without compensation, and “exercise joint control with the Secretary of the Interior over disbursement of the appropriations made by this act...” The sum of \$25,000 was appropriated to pay the expenses of the commission.<sup>18</sup> The model for the Board of Indian Commissioners was the highly successful United States Christian Commission, which had been funded by the government, but staffed by the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) during the Civil War.<sup>19</sup>

The first Board of Indian Commissioners was composed of three Presbyterians, two Episcopalians, two Methodists, one Baptist, and one Congregationalist. Vincent Colyer represented the Young Men’s Christian Association. Herbert Welsh, the first chairman, resigned after one month, and was replaced by John Lang, a Quaker. No Catholics were appointed to the board, although F.D. Dent, Grant’s brother-in-law, may have attempted to recruit Father George Deshon. The priest reportedly declined rather than be the token Catholic on the board. This failure to recognize the work of Catholic missionaries created an atmosphere of distrust among the Catholics, which fueled the later conflict over contracts.<sup>20</sup>

The policy of assigning the reservations to the jurisdictions of specific denominations was the second structural element of Grant’s peace policy. The motivation was, of course, to find competent and honest men who would faithfully execute their duties. In 1869, the Hicksite Friends were given responsibility for the Indian agencies in Nebraska; the Orthodox Friends received control of the agencies in Kansas and some tribes in the Indian Territory. The remainder of the agencies was placed under the

jurisdiction of furloughed army officers. This plan was quickly upset when Congress forbade the use of army officers as Indian agents in the Appropriation Bill of July 15, 1870.<sup>21</sup> The administration was then faced with the choice of either re-opening the Indian service to political patronage or finding additional religious groups to administer the reservations. The task of assigning the reservations to the churches fell to Vincent Colyer, Secretary to the Board of Indian Commissioners. President Grant's only formulation of criteria was in the State of the Union Address of 1870, in which he promised: "to give all the agencies to such religious denominations as had heretofore established missionaries among the Indians, and perhaps to some other denominations who would undertake the work on the same terms, i.e., as missionary work."<sup>22</sup> Changes were made in the assignments throughout the history of the policy, but in 1872, the division of the seventy-two agencies was as follows: Methodists – fourteen, Orthodox Friends – ten, Presbyterians – nine, Episcopalians – eight, Roman Catholics – seven, Hicksite Friends – six, Baptists – five, Reformed Dutch – five, Congregationalists – three, Christians – two, Unitarians – two, American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions – one, and Lutherans – one.<sup>23</sup>

Dissension over the division arose immediately as the various denominations registered feelings that their efforts had not been sufficiently recognized. The vagueness of the selection criteria was at the root of the problem. The Baptists felt that the division should have been based on the size of the church membership, which would have given them a more prominent position. The Catholics argued variously that the agencies should have been assigned to those churches who were active at them in 1870, or to those who

had the longest tenure in that location, or again, that the Indians should choose the denomination that they preferred. Some Catholics had expected to receive thirty-eight of the seventy-two agencies based on their past and current work. In fact, they were given governance only over Colville and Tulalip reservations in Washington Territory, Umatilla and Grand Ronde in Oregon, Flathead in Montana, Standing Rock and Devil's Lake in Dakota, and Papago in Arizona. By Catholic reckoning, eighty thousand Catholic Indians had been transferred from Catholic to Protestant governance.<sup>24</sup>

Father Prucha has pointed out that the reformers, both within and outside the government, hoped to free the agencies from the shackles of political patronage. In his words, the reformer desired "a total transformation of the agencies from political sinecures to missionary outposts."<sup>25</sup> Unfortunately, the policy instead changed the agencies from secular sinecures to religious ones, as each denomination staked out its share of turf. In any event, the whole system suffered from a systemic weakness. The churches simply were not able to provide the caliber of men and women, which the reformers desired to transform the agencies. Those who had the secular competencies sometimes did not exhibit Christian character, and those of high moral standards were sometimes not competent for the tasks assigned. A board of inquiry established by Secretary of the Interior Carl Schurz reflected a new practical approach when it criticized the appointment of Indian service employees on the basis of religious belief as an effort to "undertake through pigmies the solution of a problem that has engaged the best efforts of statesmen and philanthropists ever since the days of the republic."<sup>26</sup> Perhaps most scandalous was the conflict among the religious organizations, in their struggles over



control of the reservations. Finally in 1881, Secretary of the Interior Schurz, hoping to resolve a Catholic – Congregational turf struggle at Devil’s Lake, North Dakota, ruled that the reservations were open to all except where specific appointments might threaten the public peace or where treaties would be violated.<sup>27</sup> Both the lack of a Catholic appointment to the Board of Indian Commissioners, and more especially, in the assignment of reservations, pointed out to the Catholic leadership the need for a national agency to coordinate relations with the various federal offices which held power over Indian affairs.

The Catholic response to the implementation of Grant’s Peace Policy was the creation of an agency, which became the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions in Washington, D.C. At the request of western bishops, Archbishop James Roosevelt Bayley of Baltimore appointed General Charles Ewing to serve as Catholic commissioner for the Indian missions. This office was to act as an official voice for the Catholic hierarchy and the missionary organizations in relations with the federal government. It was also given the task of coordinating the solicitation and dispersal of funds for the missions. General Ewing, a brother-in-law of General William T. Sherman, oversaw approval of the office by Rome in 1879, and legal incorporation in 1881. Ewing worked without pay and even paid the rent for the office during his administration. He was the first American Catholic layman to be honored with a papal recognition as a Knight of the Order of St. Gregory the Great.<sup>28</sup> The young agency underwent important transitions in 1884. General Ewing and his director Father J. Brouillet both passed away; the Third

Plenary Council of Baltimore recognized officially the status of the agency within the Church; and Father Joseph Steffan was appointed the new director.<sup>29</sup>



Father Joseph A. Stephan, Director of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions,  
1884 to 1901

Source: Marquette University Library

Father Joseph Andrew Stephan was totally committed to the cause of religious education for the Indian. He was also capable of verbal intemperance and was a lightning rod for controversy. Joseph Stephan was born in Baden, Germany, on November 22, 1822, of a Greek father and an Irish mother. His parents determined that he should pursue a military career, but after a two-year episode of blindness afflicted him during his studies at Freiburg, he decided to study for the priesthood. He followed his parents to the United States and was ordained at Cincinnati on March 19, 1849. Young Father Stephan served in the Civil War as a chaplain under the command of General George H. Thomas. In 1879, he became the agent at Standing Rock Agency, Dakota Territory. Bishop Martin Marty of Sioux Falls nominated him for the directorship of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions.<sup>30</sup> Father Stephan began his tumultuous seventeen-year tenure as director of the bureau in May, 1884, at a time when the role of the contract schools was being phased out.

Formal education was seen as crucial to any attempts to assimilate the Indian by all of those interested in the "Indian problem." The great numbers of Indians who came under the control of the federal government after the Civil War led to calls for an expansion of the federal role in Indian education and an expansion of the federal school system. Federal involvement in Indian education steadily increased after the Civil War. In 1887, Secretary of the Interior Lucius Q.C. Lamar contrasted the state of Indian education in 1878 and in 1887. He noted that in 1878, there had been 137 Indian schools of all kinds provided by the government, average attendance was about 3,500 students, and about \$196,000 had been expended. In 1887, 231 schools served Indian students, with an

average attendance of 10,000 pupils, and \$1,200,000 had been expended.<sup>31</sup> Following the passage of the Dawes Act in 1887, the demand by the reformers to extend Indian education intensified because the goal of citizenship was not possible without education. The Lake Mohonk Conference of the Friends of the Indian of 1888 called for the establishment of a government school system for Indian children modeled after the public school system of the states.<sup>32</sup> The establishment of such a school system became the goal of Thomas Jefferson Morgan, who was Commissioner of Indian Affairs from 1889 through 1893.



Thomas Jefferson Morgan, Commissioner of Indian Affairs from 1889 to 1893, designed and promoted a federal Indian school system that was modeled on the public schools in the states.

Source: James M. King, Facing the Twentieth Century. New York: American Union League Society, 1899.

Thomas Jefferson Morgan, a son of pioneer Baptist preacher Lewis Morgan, was born in Franklin, Indiana, on August 17, 1839. He graduated from Franklin College during the opening days of the Civil War. After enlisting as a private soldier, he received a commission as a first lieutenant in the Seventieth Indiana Volunteer Infantry, serving under the command of future president, Benjamin Harrison. Morgan rapidly advanced in rank, despite a court martial for which he was later exonerated, but which would follow him later when he was nominated as Commissioner of Indian Affairs. In 1863, he organized the Fourteenth United States Colored Infantry. Having risen to the rank of colonel, he was brevetted as a brigadier general in 1865 during the Battle of Nashville for "gallant and meritorious service."

After the war, Morgan studied at Rochester Theological Seminary and was ordained a Baptist minister in 1869. He served briefly as corresponding secretary of the New York Union for Ministerial Education, and then traveled west to Nebraska. He was pastor of the Baptist church at Brownville, Nebraska from 1871 to 1873; and then, he served for two years as head of the Nebraska State Normal School at Peru. In 1884, Morgan was appointed a member of the Board of Visitors at West Point. Later, he taught homiletics and church history at Baptist Union Theological Seminary in Chicago. Moreover, Morgan distinguished himself as a proponent of public education. After Chicago, he served as principal of the state normal schools at Potsdam, New York, and at Providence, Rhode Island. While at Providence, he served as the secretary of the local chapter of the Indian Rights Association, an experience which would provide valuable contacts when he became Commissioner of Indian Affairs. He also served two terms as

vice-president of the National Education Association, and published two books on pedagogy and public education.

Morgan applied for the position of United States Commissioner of Education when Benjamin Harrison was elected president in 1888. However, the president offered him the position of Commissioner of Indian Affairs instead. He took office on June 10, 1889. Even though Congress was not in session when he took office in June of 1889, he set about to achieve his goals for Indian education well before his confirmation hearing began in December.<sup>33</sup>

The notion of a federal Indian school system modeled after the public school system of the states did not originate with Morgan. Secretary of the Interior Lucius Q. C. Lamar had expressed the desire to eliminate the contract schools in favor of a federal system,<sup>34</sup> and the Lake Mohonk Conference had expressed support of a federal Indian school system the year before Morgan took office. However, Thomas Jefferson Morgan became at once the symbol of this new model of Indian education and the architect of its creation. His goal was the transformation of the Indian from a tribal member to an individual American citizen. This focus on the individual citizen fit perfectly with all of the major reform themes of his day: land ownership in severalty, as well as the end of the reservations, annuities and treaties. Just as the public schools were absorbing the waves of immigrants into the fabric of American society, so Morgan saw the universal and compulsory system of Indian education as the means to “Americanize” the Indian. Eventually, he believed, even this system would pass away as Indians entered the national life and their children entered the regular public schools.<sup>35</sup>

Morgan shared his vision with the annual Lake Mohonk Conference of 1889. While he championed a governmental system, he believed that the traditional work of missionary groups was necessary for two reasons. American civilization, in Morgan's view, was a Christian civilization; and, the government could not possibly expand its system immediately. So, there was a role for the contract schools, at least in the short term.<sup>36</sup> Before he left the Lake Mohonk Conference, Morgan had gained the support of many key figures in the reform movement. His supporters included Lyman Abbott, liberal Protestant theologian and editor of the Christian Union, (later, the Outlook), and General Samuel A. Armstrong of Hampton Institute. Herbert Welsh, a Philadelphia philanthropist and co-founder of the Indian Rights Association, also added his support to Morgan's efforts.<sup>37</sup>

The cancellation of government contracts had been a potential threat to the Catholic hierarchy, but now it was real and immediate. The new nominee for Commissioner of Indian Affairs was in favor of cancellation, and he had powerful allies. The Catholic contract schools had expanded greatly during the 1880's. In 1883, there were eighteen Catholic contract schools which garnered \$39,175.00 in federal support. By 1890, there were forty-three boarding schools and seventeen day schools which received federal contracts. The high point in federal funding was \$397,756.00 in 1892.<sup>38</sup> But as the nomination of Morgan neared, it appeared that a major threat to the Catholic Indian schools could be summarized in the new commissioner. The Catholics felt that in light of their exclusion from the Board of Indian Commissioners, and given the perceived

injustice of the mission assignments under Grant's Peace Policy, the time had come for political action.

The ensuing controversy, which surrounded the nomination and administration of Thomas Jefferson Morgan, must be evaluated in the context of the 1880s. The character of American immigration was changing. The source of European immigration was shifting from northern and western Europe to southern and eastern Europe. Many of these immigrants were Catholic or Jewish rather than Protestant. Many did not speak English. At the same time, the Irish were exercising political muscle in major cities such as Boston and New York. In 1884, the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore, building on the recommendations of the plenary councils of 1852 and 1866, and on the instructions of the Congregation of the Propaganda in Rome in 1875, directed that every Catholic parish, except where financially impossible, was to erect a Catholic school of comparable educational value to neighboring public schools within two years. The council demonstrated the importance placed on Catholic education by calling for the removal of pastors who did not comply, and by binding the consciences of parents to send their children to Catholic schools. Tuition was to be "small," and enrollment was not to be denied to those who could not pay.<sup>39</sup> This promotion of a parochial school system was seen as a direct attack on the public school system, which was rapidly becoming an American icon.<sup>40</sup> From the Catholic point of view, as expressed by the council fathers, the public schools were Protestant in content and tone. At best, they expressed an attitude of indifference; at worst, they were anti-Catholic. Either way, the public schools were a potential threat to the faith of Catholic students.<sup>41</sup>



Title VIII of the council documents addressed the education of Catholic Indians and African Americans. The council urged that chapters of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith be established in every parish, and it directed that an annual collection be taken nationally on the first Sunday in Lent for the Indian and African American missions.<sup>42</sup> The Catholic approach to the missions was fueled by the same concerns that shaped the public school debate. It was not merely the loss of agencies when the reservations were assigned under Grant's peace policy. It was, by Catholic Bureau of Indian Missions reckoning, a loss of 80,000 Catholic souls to Protestant control, which meant the loss of the Catholic faith.<sup>43</sup>

Following the Council of Baltimore, the Catholics had rapidly increased their presence in the mission field. Bishop Martin Marty, President of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, reported to James Cardinal Gibbons in May of 1889, that while the Catholic missions had two boarding and five day schools, with contracts worth \$8,000, in 1874; by 1883 missionary organizations counted eighteen boarding schools and government allotments of \$54,000. By 1888, government contracts were valued at \$394,533. By the following year, Catholics accounted for \$347,672 out of \$530,905 in contract funds. The Presbyterians ranked second with contracts valued at \$41,825.<sup>44</sup> These discrepancies in funding may well explain the reaction of the Protestant churches and the Protestant-dominated reform organizations.

Spearheading the Protestant reaction to the Catholic advances was Herbert Welsh, a wealthy Philadelphian, and cofounder and officer of the Indian Rights Association from 1882 to 1927. Responding to complaints about Catholic encroachments on the

reservations, including that of Episcopal Bishop William Hare of South Dakota, Welsh spread the alarm among various missionary boards and finally wrote a formal protest to William P. Villas, Secretary of the Interior, on July 9, 1888. He complained about the high proportion of contracts obtained by the Catholic Church, which, he believed, was damaging the missionary efforts of the Protestant churches. He further voiced concern about the numbers of Catholics appointed to the Indian service during the Grover Cleveland administration. Villas denied the suggestions of favoritism. Commissioner of Indian Affairs John H. Oberly responded in the Commissioner's Report of 1888 that no organization with "adequate facilities" had been denied a contract. The Catholic missions had received the largest amount of contract money because they were educating the most Indians. The Catholics, he reported, had spent \$115,000 on facilities in 1887 alone. Their total investment was valued at about one million dollars.<sup>45</sup>

The hearings for Morgan's confirmation as Commissioner of Indian Affairs by the Senate began on December 4, 1889. The nomination of Daniel Dorchester, a Methodist minister, who had been appointed Superintendent of Indian Education, was considered at the same time. Father Stephan, with the aid of both the Catholic and Democratic press, began an attack on both men to prevent confirmation. The Catholics had a number of reasons to object to the appointments. Both were Protestant ministers. Both had made public remarks, which could reasonably be interpreted as bigoted. Perhaps most importantly, Morgan's plan for a universal, compulsory government system of Indian education would result in the eventual demise of most of the mission schools. Father Stephan viciously attacked Morgan as a liar, a bigot, and as unworthy of public

office due to his court martial during the Civil War. However, Morgan was confirmed on February 12, 1890 by a vote of 28 to 16.<sup>46</sup>

Conflict between Commissioner Morgan and Father Stephan intensified as the question of the funding of contract schools was debated in Congress and in the press. A letter from Stephan to Morgan was reprinted in the Congressional Record in which Stephan accused Morgan of withholding congressionally-approved funds, and also of bigotry in the conduct of his office.<sup>47</sup> In response, Morgan pointed out in his Annual Report of 1890, that during his first two years in office, contract money had increased from \$530,000 to \$570,000. He also restated his stand against contract schools in principle. However, he pledged that he did not intend to threaten the “good” schools in existence, but he refused to approve new ones.<sup>48</sup>

Morgan later accused the Catholic Bureau of Indian Missions of pursuing “a policy of personal assault, malice and untruthfulness.” Eventually, on July 2, 1891, he formally severed all relations with the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions. Commissioner Morgan did not cancel or reduce any existing contracts. However, he refused to deal with the bureau. Instead, he dealt with each of the missionary orders individually. To his credit, he likewise suspended relations with the Protestant missionary societies and dealt with the Protestant contract schools individually. Morgan explained his policy decision in a letter to Cardinal Gibbons of Baltimore, the ranking prelate in the American church. He explained that he could no longer endure the character assassination to which this allegedly Christian organization had placed upon him, “charging me with being a perjurer, a liar, a bigot, a pagan, a dishonored soldier, a

persecutor, a brute, a corruptor of morals, a destroyer of the faith....”<sup>49</sup> After 1891, the campaign against contract schools continued in Congress and in the court of public opinion. The Protestant missionary societies – Baptists, Episcopalians, Congregationalists, and Methodists – withdrew from the contract system in 1892.<sup>50</sup>

The Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions played a role in the presidential election of 1892. In July, Father Stephan sent his annual report for the preceding twelve months to Bishop Martin Marty. In the opening paragraph he requested that the report be kept secret for fear that his indictment of the Indian office for bigotry would be seen as a political tactic. He continued, “I am, and for many years have been, a member of the party to which the bigoted commissioner [Morgan] and the not much less bigoted president [Harrison], belong; and while I disparage their official conduct and actions in the matter of this report, I deprecate the idea that anything I may feel it to be my duty to say to you... should be used in a campaign of party politics.” Father Stephan’s wishes were not met. Within a month, the Democratic and Republican parties, the American Protective Association and the Catholic press had quoted out of context the snippets of the text, especially, the phrase, “the bigoted commissioner and the not much less bigoted president.” On August 29, Father Stephan wrote to Mother Katharine Drexel: “Many daily newspapers published that I had sent a secret circular to all priests in the U.S. against Morgan and Harrison. This is as silly as false.” He continued that he had sent a copy to Bishop Marty only. He blamed the printer for stealing and disseminating a copy. He concluded, “Of course I am outspoken against Morgan’s and Harrison’s bigotry and discrimination against Catholics. We are alone classed as sectarians, while the

Government pays for Bibles, hymn books, etc....” The New York Times pointed a finger at Commissioner Morgan. The paper reported that the Commissioner was circulating a pamphlet which purported to be a “secret circular,” but which was, in fact, excerpts from the report. The Times further accused Morgan of manipulating “religious passions for political ends. The article concluded that the Commissioner’s actions were unpatriotic, indecent and not even shrewd.<sup>51</sup>

The election of Grover Cleveland and the appointment of Daniel M. Browning as Commissioner of Indian Affairs did not change the direction of federal Indian education policy. The new Secretary of the Interior, Hoke Smith, was opposed to the contract schools in principle, although he was willing to continue the contracts until such time as the government could expand its system. Smith further proposed a reduction of 20% a year until the contracts were phased out. Smith believed that this would give the government time to expand the federal Indian school system, and the missionary societies time to find new sources of funding. President Grover Cleveland supported the concept of a gradual phase-out of contracts in his 1894 State of the Union Address.<sup>52</sup>

The 1890s witnessed the end of the contract system despite the best efforts of Father Stephan and his chief allies in Congress, Congressman John Sherman and Senator Richard Pettigrew. In fiscal year 1896, the Secretary of the Interior was not allowed to initiate any new contracts, and was limited to funding 80% of the contracts in effect in 1895. Funding was again cut to 50% of the 1895 figure for fiscal 1897. Contracts were cut to 30% of the 1895 figure for fiscal 1899, and 15% in 1900, which was the final appropriation for the contract schools.<sup>53</sup> Nearly a decade later, Father William Ketcham

noted that the Bureau had received through fiscal 1899, money, rations and clothing worth \$4,493,276. In 1900, the last year of the diminished contracts, the Bureau was educating 2,078 Indian children.<sup>54</sup> The new century would require new leadership and new sources of funding.

Father Joseph Stephan died on September 13, 1901, and was buried on the grounds of the Convent of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament for Indians and Colored People at Cornwell's Heights, Pennsylvania. His epitaph reads, "May the God he served with a warrior's spirit be his reward exceeding great." Father Stephan's successor would be a man no less ardent in his zeal for Catholic Indian education, but he would be a man of a more temperate disposition and keener diplomatic skills.

Father William H. Ketcham was born in Sumner, Iowa, in 1868. He was raised in Texas and attended St. Charles College, a Jesuit school in Louisiana, where he converted to Catholicism. He was ordained to the priesthood at Guthrie, Oklahoma on March 13, 1892, and he worked for the next eight years as a missionary at Muskogee and at Antlers. In the fall of 1900, Archbishop Patrick Ryan of Philadelphia, the president of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, called upon him to serve Indian Catholics in a new capacity. Father Ketcham was to assist Father Stephan and eventually was to succeed him as the director of the Bureau.<sup>55</sup>

The biggest question faced by Father Ketcham was how to raise \$140,000 annually for Catholic Indian education.<sup>56</sup> The priest met with President William McKinley in December, 1900. He followed up his meetings with the president with memoranda, which historian Francis Paul Prucha has called "the blueprint for reform in

federal relations with the Catholic Indians that would occupy Ketcham for more than a decade.”<sup>57</sup> Key points included: the use of Indian trust funds and treaty funds for the education of Catholic Indian children in mission schools; and an end to the “Browning Ruling” of 1896, which denied Indian parents the right to choose between the government and mission schools for their children. In addition to tribal money, Ketcham hoped to increase donations by white Catholics. To this end, he founded the Society for the Preservation of the Faith Among Indian Children. His goal was a national organization in which 400,000 Catholics would contribute twenty-five cents annually. In 1902, he began publication of the Indian Sentinel, an annual magazine intended to generate public interest in the missions. Also, in association with Father Henry Ganns, pastor of St. Patrick’s Church in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, he worked to found the Marquette League of New York City, which was aimed to recruit more affluent donors. Contributors were asked to donate \$70.00 a year to support a mission pupil, \$500.00 to support a missionary for one year, or \$1,000.00 to build a simple mission chapel. It was hoped that the more affluent members of the Marquette League would also constitute a lobbying force for the cause of the missions.<sup>58</sup> Father Ketcham noted in his 1903-1904 annual report, that the new century was a “turning point for the better in the tide of Catholic Indian affairs.”<sup>59</sup> Archbishop Patrick Ryan of Philadelphia and Catholic attorney Charles J. Bonaparte of Baltimore were appointed to the Board of Indian Commissioners. Ryan, Bonaparte and Father Ganns likewise attended the Lake Mohonk conference in 1902. Ketcham attributed the new political environment to the actions of President Theodore Roosevelt whom he described as the “first President to recognize the rights of

Catholic Indians to be represented by those of their own faith.”<sup>60</sup> However, many issues between the government and the missionary societies were still unresolved, and the Catholics remained steadfast in their determination to pursue the agenda articulated by Father Ketcham in his memorandum to President McKinley.



Father William A. Ketcham, Director of the  
Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, 1901 to 1921  
Source: Marquette University Library



Competition between the government and mission schools for students had produced the Browning Ruling of 1896. The issue was long-standing, when in 1896, Commissioner of Indian Affairs Daniel M. Browning ruled, at the request of the agent at Pine Ridge, that, "It is your duty to first to build up and maintain the Government Day Schools . . . , and the Indian parents have no right to designate which school their children shall attend."<sup>61</sup> In other words, Indian students must attend the government school on the reservation unless it was at capacity enrollment. Father Stephan had opposed the ruling and had succeeded in preventing it from being included in the Indian Allotment Act of 1897, but the issue dragged on into the administrations of Father Ketcham and the new Commissioner of Indian Affairs William A. Jones, who argued that the Indians were wards of the federal government.<sup>62</sup> As such, it was the duty of the commissioner, not the parents, to be responsible for their education. He continued that a change in the ruling would cause ongoing friction between the government and mission schools, which would ultimately be to the detriment of the Indian children.<sup>63</sup> Father Ketcham countered that the Browning Ruling violated the natural right of the Indian parents to choose the best type of education for their child. He further argued that it was a violation of the civil rights of those Indians who held patents to allotted lands and were thus citizens. He continued that Indian parents were as capable of making decisions for their children as were white parents. On a more practical level, the Browning Ruling would eventually result in the closing of the mission schools if it were strictly enforced.<sup>64</sup> After a brief period of experimental non-enforcement, Education Circular # 62, on January 17, 1902, repealed the Browning Ruling.<sup>65</sup>

The next controversy between the federal government and the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions concerned the issuance of rations to students who were enrolled in the mission schools. Rations had long been supplied as the result of treaties or other agreements, and sometimes in recognition of need. Indian pupils, whether in the government or mission schools, were usually granted the share that they would have received at home. However, in 1901, Commissioner William A. Jones ruled that students attending religious or private schools were ineligible for the rations, as were their parents.<sup>66</sup> Clues to Jones's thinking may be found in the commissioner's "Survey of the Field" speech to the Board of Indian Commissioners on October 18, 1900. He stated, "The ration system is the corollary of the reservation system." In other words, the rations system encouraged dependency, and was contrary to the government's goal of Indian individualization and self-sufficiency.<sup>67</sup> In the 1890s, rations represented about \$25,000 annually in indirect governmental support to the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions.<sup>68</sup>

The decision affected other missions as well as the Catholics. Episcopal Bishop William H. Hare was forced to close two of his four missions in South Dakota.<sup>69</sup> Father Ketcham saw the question as a part of the right of Indian parents to choose schools for their children. He argued that since most rations were the result of treaties they did not fall under the Congressional ban on such aid.<sup>70</sup> Eventually, President Theodore Roosevelt signed the Indian Appropriation Act of 1904, which restored the rations.<sup>71</sup>

In his annual report of 1904, Father Ketcham lionized Theodore Roosevelt as a man who had "risen above unchristian racial and partisan prejudices, and has manifested a determination to mete out equal justice to all men."<sup>72</sup> This appreciation rubbed-off on

William A. Jones, whom Ketcham came to see as a fair man who had started his tenure with no apparent sympathy for Catholic Indian education issues, but who had come to appreciate the work of the missionaries.<sup>73</sup>

Failure of the Preservation Society to raise the money necessary to maintain the missions led the Bureau to seek tribal trust funds to replace the contracts.<sup>74</sup> Initially, Roosevelt, with a favorable opinion from his attorney general and with the advice of his cabinet, approved the issuance of these contracts based on treaty or trust funds, provided that there was a petition requesting the release of the funds from the Indians.<sup>75</sup> In July 1904, contracts valued at nearly \$100,000 were issued to the Bureau for eight missions.<sup>76</sup>

The reaction came swiftly. In Nebraska, the Word Carrier, published by the Santee Normal School, and in South Dakota, Episcopal Bishop William Hare voiced concerns to the Indian Rights Association, which quickly went into action. In December 1904, a letter, which had been solicited from Reuben Quick Bear and other Rosebud Sioux asked the Indian Rights Association to assist them in stopping the use of treaty and trust funds, or the interest there from, for the support of Roman Catholic mission schools on the reservation.<sup>77</sup>

The Indian Rights Association argued that the use of these funds was prohibited by the 1897 ban on direct aid to sectarian schools. Roosevelt referred the matter to Commissioner of Indian Affairs Francis E. Leupp. He further supported Leupp's suggestion that tribal money, like the land, should be allotted to individuals who could then spend their money as they pleased. The struggle first played out in the halls of Congress where the Indian Rights Association hoped to include a ban in the appropriation

bill of 1906. A propaganda war was soon initiated among newspapers supported by the Indian Rights Association on the one hand, and the Marquette League on the other. This effort also failed to generate a public outcry against the use of the funds. The last recourse was in the courts.<sup>78</sup>

The case of Quick Bear v. Leupp was filed in the Supreme Court of the District of Columbia on May 11, 1906. The plaintiffs had made or intended to make a contract with the St. Francis Mission Boarding School for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1906. They charged that the contracted funds were to be paid out of tribal money, which was prohibited by Congress, and which was financially injurious to the other members of the tribe. They further charged that the petitions for the contracts had been signed by about one-fourth of the tribe, and that the majority of the tribe opposed the contracts. They asked for a permanent injunction to prohibit the use of the fund.<sup>79</sup> On April 15, 1907, Justice Ashley M. Gould ruled that the trust funds might be used, but that the treaty funds could not be used.<sup>80</sup> The government and the Indian Rights Association filed appeals on May 9, 1907. On November 29, Justice Daniel Thew Wright of the Supreme Court of the District of Columbia, after a lengthy analysis of the funding sources, concluded that both the treaty funds, which had included education provisions, and the trust funds, which were granted in lieu of land ceded to the government, belonged to the Indians. The Congressional prohibition referred to such "gratuitous" education funds as Congress had granted from year to year. Therefore, it ruled that the tribes might use both treaty and trust funds to support religious schools.<sup>81</sup> The case was then appealed to the United States Supreme Court, and on May 18, 1908, Chief Justice Melville Weston Fuller ruled in

support of the appeals court decision. Treaty and trust funds might be legally used to support the mission schools.<sup>82</sup> Father Ketcham's "blueprint" for the financing of the mission schools had been realized, at least for the moment.

Twenty years earlier, young Kate Drexel of Philadelphia had expected that a mission to the Winnebago of Nebraska would be established during the upcoming year of 1889. She apparently was unaware that the events then unfolding – the nomination of Thomas Jefferson Morgan; the resolutions of the Friends of the Indians at the Lake Mohonk conferences; and the imminent death of her spiritual advisor, Bishop O'Connor – would combine to delay the wish to fulfill her confessor's dream. The issues of contracts, the right of Indian parents to school choice, and the use of treaty and trust fund money to support the missions would all have to be successfully resolved before the mission could be established. Local issues likewise had to be resolved. These matters included the competition of the Presbyterians, who were already established at Winnebago, the opposition of local white land speculators, and the opposition of the some of the Winnebago people themselves. Bishop O'Connor had his dream of evangelization of the Winnebago, and Katharine Drexel had the means to make this dream a reality, but the mission was established only after the Winnebago people asked for it.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Report of Commissioner Thomas Jefferson Morgan, Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs [ARCIA], 1889, 4.

<sup>2</sup> Richard Scannell, Bishop of Omaha, Nebraska to Katharine Drexel, May 11, 1892. Archives of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament [ASBS]. Bensalem, Pennsylvania.

<sup>3</sup> Father Joseph Stephan, Director of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, to Bishop Martin Marty, President of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, July 27, 1892, 1. Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions Archives [ABCIM], Alumni Library, Special Collections, Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

<sup>4</sup> Katharine Drexel to James O'Connor, Bishop of Omaha, December 12, 1888, ASBS.

<sup>5</sup> Stephen Szmrecsanyi, History of the Catholic Church in Northeast Nebraska, vol. 4 (Omaha: The Catholic Voice Publishing Co., 1983), 2-17.

<sup>6</sup> Francis Paul Prucha, The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians, vol. 1 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 129, 148-151. See also, Herman J. Viola, Thomas L. McKenney: Architect of America's Early Indian Policy: 1816-1830 (Chicago: The Swallow Press, 1974), chapter 3 for a discussion of McKenney's personal motivation in advancing this policy.

<sup>7</sup> 3 Statutes at Large 516-17.

<sup>8</sup> Report of Secretary John C. Calhoun, Annual Report of the Secretary of War, 1820 in American State Papers [ASP], 2:201.

<sup>9</sup> Report of Secretary John H. Eaton, Annual Report of the Secretary of War, 1830, ASP, 4158.

<sup>10</sup> "Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek with the Choctaws," Article XX, Charles J. Kappler, comp. and ed., Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties, vol. 2 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1904), 315.

<sup>11</sup> "Treaty with the Omaha Indians Signed at Washington, D.C. 1854," Article 13, Kappler, Indian Affairs, 2: 613-14.

<sup>12</sup> "Treaty with the Creek Indians Signed at Washington, D.C. June 14, 1866," Article 13, Kappler, Indian Affairs, 2: 936.

<sup>13</sup> Report of Commissioner T. Hartley Crawford, Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1838, ASP, 4458.

<sup>14</sup> Joint Special Committee of the United States Congress, "Condition of the Indian Tribes," January 26, 1867, ASP, 1279. For evaluations of the "Doolittle Report" see Donald Chaput, "Generals, Indian Agents, Politicians: The Doolittle Survey of 1865," Western Historical Quarterly 3 (July 1972): 269-282, and Harry Kelsey, "The Doolittle Report of 1867: Its Preparation and Shortcomings," Arizona and the West 17 (Summer 1975): 107-120.

<sup>15</sup> "Message from the President of the United States Transmitting Report of the Indian Peace Commissioners," January 14, 1868, ASP, 1337.

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- <sup>16</sup> Prucha, The Great Father, I: 481.
- <sup>17</sup> Report of Secretary Columbus Delano, Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior, 1873, ASP, 1601; Prucha, The Great Father, I: 481-82.
- <sup>18</sup> 16 Statutes at Large, 40.
- <sup>19</sup> Prucha, The Great Father, I: 506-07.
- <sup>20</sup> Annual Report of the Board of Indian Commissioners, 1869, ASP, 1835; Prucha, The Great Father, I: 507, n. 19.
- <sup>21</sup> Report of Secretary T.D. Cox, Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior, 1869, ASP, 1414; 16 Statutes at Large 319.
- <sup>22</sup> "President Ulysses S. Grant's Second Annual Message to Congress," December 5, 1870, Fred L. Israel, ed., The State of the Union Messages from the Presidents, 1790-1966 (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1967), 1216-1217.
- <sup>23</sup> Report of Commissioner Francis A. Walker, Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1872, ASP, 1560.
- <sup>24</sup> William H. Ketcham, "Annual Report of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, 1909," 5, ABCIM.
- <sup>25</sup> Prucha, The Great Father, I: 519.
- <sup>26</sup> "Report of Board of Inquiry Convened by Authority of Letter of the Secretary of the Interior of June 7, 1877, to Investigate Certain Charges Against S.A. Galpin, Chief Clerk of the Indian Bureau, and Concerning Irregularities in Said Bureau" (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1878), 63, cited in Prucha, The Great Father, I: 526.
- <sup>27</sup> James T. Carroll, Seeds of Faith: Catholic Indian Boarding Schools (New York: Garland Publishing Co., 2000), 5; William Ketcham, "Annual Report of the Bureau Catholic Indian Missions, 1909," 10-11, ABCIM.
- <sup>28</sup> William H. Ketcham, "The Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions," (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic Bureau of Indian Missions, 1896), 3, ABCIM.
- <sup>29</sup> William H. Ketcham, "Annual Report of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, 1909," 1-5, ABCIM.
- <sup>30</sup> Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Indian Sentinel, 1902-1903, 2-5, ABCIM.
- <sup>31</sup> Report of Secretary L.Q.C. Lamar, Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior, 1887, ASP, 2542.
- <sup>32</sup> Proceedings of the Lake Mohonk Conference of the Friends of the Indians, address by Reverend Lyman Abbott, 11-16, discussion 16-26, resolutions 31-42.

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<sup>33</sup> Biographical data supplied by the American Baptist Historical Society, Valley Forge, Pennsylvania.

<sup>34</sup> Report of Secretary John Oberly, Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior, 1885, ASP 2378.

<sup>35</sup> Thomas Jefferson Morgan, "The New Indian School Policy," address delivered at the Annual Meeting of the Indian Rights Association at Philadelphia December 17, 1889, Indian Rights Association Papers, reel 102, A113.

<sup>36</sup> Thomas Jefferson Morgan, "The Education of American Indians," October 2, 1889, Proceedings of the Lake Mohonk Conference of Friends of the Indian, 1889 in Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior, 1889, 2: 856-867.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 867-872.

<sup>38</sup> Bishop Martin Marty to James Cardinal Gibbons, May 31, 1889, printed flyer, Archives of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, 86-K-10, cited in Francis Paul Prucha, The Churches and the Indian Schools, 1888 - 1912 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979), 219, n 9; Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1893, 19; Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1890, xvii.

<sup>39</sup> Concillii Plenarii Baltimorensis III, Acta et Decreta, (Baltimore: Archdiocese of Baltimore, 1886), Title IV, articles 1, 3; For a Catholic interpretation of the historical context and importance of the Council see Peter Guilday, A History of the Councils of Baltimore, 1791-1884 (New York: McMillan Co., 1932), especially, 238-239; John Daniel Barrett, A Comparative Study of the Councils of Baltimore and the Code of Canon Law, Canon Law Studies 83 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1932) discusses the development of American Catholic Church law and the legal status of the Councils' decisions within the context of the universal Code of Canon Law promulgated in 1917.

<sup>40</sup> A succinct contemporary statement of the issues involved in the public versus parochial school debate can be found in "The Archbishops and the Schools," New York Times, November 19, 1892, 4:4. See also "The Archbishops' Conference," Ibid., November 17, 1892, 4:3. The central issue was the use of public money to support parochial schools. Support of the use of public money for parochial education was portrayed as "foreign and medieval" thinking; while undiluted support of the public schools was "American and modern"; "Pastoral Letter of the Archbishops and Bishops Assembled in the Third Council of Baltimore to the Clergy and Laity in their Charge," A History of the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore: A Memorial Volume, (Baltimore: The Baltimore Publishing Co., 1884), provides the public statement of the bishops on Catholic education, 16-17, and home and foreign missions, 30-31.

<sup>41</sup> See Francis P. Cassidy, "Catholic Education in the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore," Catholic Historical Review, 34 (October 1948): 257-305; (January 1949): 414-436.

<sup>42</sup> Acta et Decreta, Title VII, Article II, section 243.

<sup>43</sup> William Ketcham, "Catholic Bureau of Indian Missions Annual Report, 1909," 5, ABCIM.

<sup>44</sup> See note 38 above.

<sup>45</sup> F.T. Ellenwood, Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church to Herbert Welsh, February 8, 1888, Indian Rights Association Papers [IRAP], reel 3; Welsh to Villas, July 9, 1888, IRAP, reel 69; Villas to Welsh, July 20, 1888, IRAP, reel 3; Report of Commissioner John Oberly, Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1888, xv.



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<sup>46</sup> “Memorials of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions and Others Protesting Against the Confirmation of Thomas J. Morgan and Daniel Dorchester and Their Reply to the Same Together with Sundry Documents and Exhibits,” United States Senate Executive Documents and Reports, 1817-1969, 51<sup>st</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> session, microfiche card 3.

<sup>47</sup> Congressional Record – House, 22: 2706-2709.

<sup>48</sup> Report of Commissioner Thomas J. Morgan, Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1890, XVII.

<sup>49</sup> “Correspondence with the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions,” Commissioner Thomas J. Morgan, Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1891, 161-170.

<sup>50</sup> “Action of Religious Denominations Against Receiving Government Aid for Sectarian Schools,” Report of Commissioner Thomas J. Morgan, Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1892, 177-183.

<sup>51</sup> Stephan to Drexel, August 29, 1892, ASBS; Editorial, New York Times, October 15, 1892, 4:2. For a broader interpretation of the Catholic Indian school issue in the election of 1892, see Harry J. Sievers, “The Catholic Indian School Issue and the Presidential Election of 1892,” Catholic Historical Review 38 (July 1952): 129-155.

<sup>52</sup> Report of Secretary Hoke Smith, Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior, 1894, ASP, 3305; President Grover Cleveland, “Second Annual Message,” Fred L. Israel, ed., The State of the Union Messages of the Presidents, 1790-1966, 3 vols. (New York: Chelsea House, 1966), 2:1783.

<sup>53</sup> The decline in funding of the contract schools can be traced in the annual reports of the Commissioners of Indian Affairs: RCIA, 1894, 16-18; RCIA, 1895, 10-11; RCIA, 1896, 14 -18; RCIA, 1897, 12-15; RCIA, 1898, 15-17; RCIA, 1899, 16-20, RCIA, 1900, 23-29.

<sup>54</sup> William Ketcham, “Annual Report of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, 1909,” 15.

<sup>55</sup> Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Indian Sentinel (January 1922), 402-440; J.B. Tennely, “William Henry Ketcham,” New Catholic Encyclopedia (New York: McGraw Hill, 1967), VIII: 169-170.

<sup>56</sup> William Ketcham, “Annual Report of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, 1900-1901 and 1901-1902,” 5, ABCIM.

<sup>57</sup> Francis Paul Prucha, The Churches and the Indian Schools, 45.

<sup>58</sup> William Ketcham, “Annual Report of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, 1900-1901 and 1901-1902,” 2, 4-7, 13, ABCIM.

<sup>59</sup> William Ketcham, “Annual Report of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, 1903-1904,” 35, ABCIM.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Quoted in Commissioner William A. Jones, “Education Circular #62,” reprinted in William Ketcham, “Annual Report of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, 1900-1901 and 1901-1902,” 9, ABCIM.

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<sup>62</sup> Congressional Record, 31:1056.

<sup>63</sup> William A. Jones to Ethan A. Hitchcock, Secretary of the Interior, February 12, 1901, Bureau of Indian Affairs, LS, Education, cited in Prucha, The Churches and the Indian Schools, 60-61.

<sup>64</sup> William Ketcham, "Annual Report of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, 1900-1901 and 1901-1902," 2; William Ketcham, "Memorandum - 1901," ABCIM.

<sup>65</sup> Reprinted in William Ketcham, "The Annual Report of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, 1900-1901, and 1901-1902," 9, ABCIM.

<sup>66</sup> Report of Commissioner William D. Jones, Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1901, I: 6.

<sup>67</sup> "Report of the Board of Indian Commissioners," Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior, 1900, 2: 687.

<sup>68</sup> William Ketcham, "Annual Report of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, 1900-01 and 1901-1902," 19, ABCIM.

<sup>69</sup> ASP, 4766; William Ketcham, "Annual Report of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, 1900-1901 and 1901-1902," 17, ABCIM.

<sup>70</sup> ASP, 4766; See also William Ketcham, "Annual Report of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, 1900-1901 and 1901-1902," 13-19, ABCIM.

<sup>71</sup> 34 Statutes at Large, 326; Father Ketcham gave credit for this victory to Bishop Hare. He stated, "He succeeded, where the Bureau had failed, in inducing the president to refer the matter at issue to the Attorney General [Philander Knox] for an interpretation of the law governing the case." Annual Report 1900-1901 and 1901-1902, 17, ABCIM.

<sup>72</sup> William Ketcham, "Annual Report of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, 1903-1904," 36, ABCIM.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 36-37.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 15-16. Father Ketcham reported that the approximately \$108,000 budget shortfall had been made up by the national Lenten collections, but "chiefly by Mother M. Katharine [Drexel]."

<sup>75</sup> Prucha, The Churches and the Indian Schools, chapter 11 provides the definitive account of the case of Quick Bear v. Leupp.

<sup>76</sup> William Ketcham, "Annual Report of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, 1909," 17, ABCIM.

<sup>77</sup> Word Carrier, 33:5 (September – October, 1904), 1:1; "Care and Education of Indians in Sectarian Schools," ASP, 4766, contains Bishop Hare's letter.

<sup>78</sup> Prucha, The Churches and the Indian Schools, chapter 11.

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<sup>79</sup> “Bill in Equity, in the Supreme Court of the District of Columbia, May 11, 1906, no. 26271, Indian Rights Association Papers, reel 119, # 80.

<sup>80</sup> Ashley M. Gould, “Decree,” Equity no. 26271, ibid. # 81.

<sup>81</sup> Daniel Thew Wight, “Answer,” no. 26271, ibid. # 81.

<sup>82</sup> Supreme Court of the United States, October Term, 1907, no. 569, Reuben Quick Bear, et. al. vs. Frances E. Leupp, et. al., ibid., reel 118, #47.

## CHAPTER THREE

## A DREAM DEFERRED

It occurs to my mind that if these people did not succeed better in caring for their bodies than the churches are doing for their souls, they would long since have been leaner than Mrs. Potiphar's three lean kine.... Why is it that these people, in the midst of civilization and almost under the sound of church bells on all sides, for all these years are without even a place of worship. Their medicine lodge is the only place of religious pretense or worship. This I would break up if we had anything better to offer them. It is true that one church occupies the ground by a resident minister without a place of worship. On this account the minister can accomplish almost nothing. We have not even [a] church organization.<sup>1</sup>

Jesse F. Warner, Agent, Omaha and Winnebago Agency, 1888

On April 6, 1889, one month before Catherine Drexel entered the novitiate of the Sisters of Mercy, she informed James O'Connor, Bishop of Omaha, that Father Joseph Stephan had reported that the acquisition of land for a mission at Winnebago would have to wait until the next session of Congress. She felt confident, however, that land might be found in the immediate neighborhood of the reservation, if not on the reservation itself. She further hoped that a temporary building could be erected soon and a school opened by June. Her desire for immediate action was fueled by the desire to acquire a government contract by July. She related that Father Stephan had headed west to establish five new schools before July because he feared that contracts would be eliminated during the following fiscal year. She described Stephan's plan to build a cheap, temporary structure of his own design, or to rent or buy a house at each of the undisclosed locations. She noted that she had read the report of Omaha and Winnebago Agent Jesse F. Warner to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs regarding the lack of effort

by the churches on the Winnebago Reservation.<sup>2</sup> At this point, she was under the impression that Bishop O'Connor would assign a priest to Winnebago in June.

Despite governmental and ecclesiastical recognition of the need for missionary work, a Catholic mission among the Winnebago of Nebraska was not established for another twenty years due to a combination of events. At Winnebago, the conflict between the established Presbyterian missionaries and local Catholics reflected the national struggle for control of the reservations and the souls of the Indians. The establishment of St. Augustine's was also delayed by the untimely death of Bishop James O'Connor, who strongly supported the foundation of a mission school in his diocese. Richard Scannell, O'Connor's successor, was confronted with a different set of problems than his predecessor. These problems included the institutional consolidation of a relatively new diocese, the nativist attacks of the American Protective Association, and coping with the Depression of 1893. In Pennsylvania, Katharine Drexel, the future founder of St. Augustine's, was learning to live the life of a nun, and building a new religious order.

Katharine Drexel was born in Philadelphia on November 26, 1858, the second of two daughters born to Francis Anthony and Hannah Langstroth Drexel.<sup>3</sup> That the Drexels were one of the nation's most prominent families is demonstrated by a witticism of the time, "Philadelphia is a surprisingly large town at the confluence of the Biddle and Drexel families."<sup>4</sup>



Catherine Mary Drexel – Age 18  
Source: Archives of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament

The American branch of the Drexel family was founded by Francis Martin Drexel, whose father was a merchant in the town of Dirnborn in the Austrian Tyrol. Young Francis Martin's education was interrupted by the Napoleonic Wars, which also disrupted the family's finances. He immigrated to Philadelphia in 1817, where he married Catherine Hookey in 1821. The neophyte artist traveled extensively in Europe, the United States and South America in an attempt to make his fortune as a portrait artist; however, despite some lucrative commissions, he was unable to make a steady living. Drawing upon knowledge acquired in his travels, he opened a currency brokering office in Louisville, Kentucky. During the Panic of 1837, he moved to Philadelphia, the banking center of the country. His new firm was not successful overnight. Katharine Drexel's father worked for his father in the bank by day and sometimes served as the night watchman, sleeping under the same counter at which he had worked during the day. He also supplemented his salary by playing the organ on Sundays at St. John's Church at Manayunk. Each Sunday, he walked six miles out and six miles back to Philadelphia for an annual salary of \$150.00 per year.<sup>5</sup>

In 1847, Francis Martin Drexel went into partnership with his two sons, Francis Anthony, aged 21, and Anthony J., age 19, to form Drexel and Company. The elder Drexel departed for the California Gold Rush in 1849, where he formed the banking house of Drexel, Sather, and Church. He returned to Philadelphia during the Panic of 1857, and died on June 6, 1863, as the result of a train accident. Youngest son, Joseph W., joined the firm, and traveled to Paris where he formed the firm of Drexel, Harjes & Co.; four years later he became the senior partner in Drexel, Morgan & Company.<sup>6</sup>

Although the Drexels withdrew from the banking world in 1908, the company continued under the direction of J.P. Morgan. The company, under the name of Drexel, Burnam, Lambert, was dissolved as a result of the junk bond scandal of 1990.<sup>7</sup>

On September 28, 1858, Katharine's father, Francis Anthony, married Hannah Langstroth, a German Baptist Quaker, who never formally converted to Catholicism although she may have expressed an interest in doing so. Hannah Langstroth Drexel passed away five weeks after Katharine's birth. Katharine and her sister Elizabeth were sent to live with their aunt and uncle, Mr. and Mrs. Anthony J. Drexel, for the next two years. On April 10, 1860, sixteen months after the death of Hannah Langstroth Drexel, Francis A. Drexel married Emma Bouvier of Philadelphia, a great aunt of Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onasis. Following a nearly seven month tour of Europe, which included a private audience with Pope Pius IX, the Drexel family took up residence at 1503 Walnut Street, just ten blocks west of Independence/Constitution Hall. In October 1863, a third Drexel daughter, Louise, was born.<sup>8</sup>

The Drexel family's life style was reflective of their class, and yet significantly different in important ways. They maintained both a primary residence in the city and a summer home in the country, each of which was staffed by servants. The Drexel girls were educated at home by a governess/tutor, Miss Mary Bernadette Cassidy, and by outside tutors in specialized subjects. The daughters were also expected to master the management of the household servants. In the tradition of the time, the family traveled extensively throughout the United States and Europe.



The Drexels enjoyed a close-knit family life. Emma Bouvier Drexel created a warm emotional environment for her two step-daughters, as well as her biological daughter, Louise. Katharine Drexel did not learn that Emma was not her birth mother until she was thirteen. Winters were spent at 1503 Walnut Street, and from 1871, when Kate was thirteen, summers were spent at a ninety-acre farm outside Philadelphia near the village of Torresdale. The new country home was formally named “St. Michel,” but was informally called “the nest” by the family. In the summers, the girls played on the farm. They especially enjoyed taking the donkey cart into the village for kerosene and other commodities.<sup>9</sup>

Religion was a central focus of the Drexel family. Francis Anthony Drexel and Emma Bouvier Drexel were deeply religious, and they actively sought to strengthen the Catholic faith and a strong sense of social justice in their daughters. At St. Michel, the parents dedicated one room to an oratory for both personal and family prayer. Visiting priests were allowed by the Archbishop of Philadelphia to offer Mass in the Drexel home, which was a rarely granted privilege in that time. Mr. Drexel routinely concluded his workdays with personal prayer, followed by time spent playing his beloved pipe organ before joining the family for the evening. Weekly Mass and family prayer were staples of daily life in the Drexel household. Mrs. Drexel likewise set an example of both personal piety and a commitment to social justice. Three days each week, when the family was in residence in the city, Mrs. Drexel opened the house to the poor of the city. She received requests for assistance and distributed money and clothing to the poor. She also employed

an investigator to verify the legitimacy of the requests. The Drexel daughters participated in their mother's charitable activities, and learned a sense of prudent philanthropy.<sup>10</sup>

The Drexel family experienced fundamental changes in the 1880s, even as Katharine attempted to discover her role in life. Emma Bouvier Drexel passed away after a battle with cancer on January 29, 1883.<sup>11</sup> Two years later, on February 15, 1885, Mr. Drexel died suddenly, leaving an estate which the Philadelphia Inquirer estimated at \$15,560,000. Under the terms of the will, one-tenth of the estate was immediately distributed to twenty-nine Philadelphia charities in prescribed shares. The remaining \$14,000,000 was placed in a trust for the three daughters, Elizabeth, Louise, and Katharine, and managed by uncle Anthony Drexel and trusted family lawyer George Childs. Francis Anthony Drexel's will further provided that if all three daughters died without children, the principal would be divided among the original twenty-nine charities.<sup>12</sup> The last two years of the decade brought additional separations due to marriage and death. Uncle Joseph Drexel died in New York on March 24, 1888.<sup>13</sup> In 1889, Louise Drexel married Colonel Edward Morrell.<sup>14</sup> Elizabeth married Walter George Smith on January 7, 1890, and died in childbirth on September 26, 1890.<sup>15</sup> Bishop James O'Connor, Katharine's spiritual advisor, passed away in May 1890.<sup>16</sup>

One of the most significant relationships in the life of Katharine Drexel was with the priest who was destined to become the first bishop of Omaha, Nebraska. James O'Connor was born in Queenstown, Ireland on September 10, 1823. At age fourteen, shortly after the death of his mother, he followed his brother Michael to America and later, into the priesthood. Michael became the first Catholic bishop of Pittsburgh, and

James was appointed the pastor of the Catholic parish at Holmesburg, Pennsylvania, where he became the spiritual director to fourteen-year-old Katharine Drexel. In 1876, James O'Connor was appointed by Pope Pius IX as Vicar Apostolic of the Nebraska Territory, and in 1885, he became the first Catholic bishop of Omaha, Nebraska.<sup>17</sup>



James O'Connor, second vicar apostolic of Nebraska (1876-1885), first bishop of Omaha (1885-1890), and co-founder of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament  
Source: Archives of the Archdiocese of Omaha, Nebraska

During the 1880s, Katharine Drexel began to assess her future and her place in life. Her search was intensified as she assisted in the care of her dying mother, Emma. During the next six years, Bishop O'Connor gently guided Katharine's search, the conclusion of which was not foreseen by either one of them. The young eastern woman's awareness of the needs of Native Americans, especially Catholic Indians, grew in small measures. James O'Connor's first letter to Kate Drexel from his new home in Omaha included his concerns about Catholic Indians, especially those living off the reservations.<sup>18</sup> During the fall of 1884, Katharine, Louise and Elizabeth traveled with their father on a vacation to the Pacific Northwest, where they visited the Catholic mission among the Puyallup Indians. The gift of a statue to the mission was perhaps the first Drexel benefaction to the missions.<sup>19</sup>

Shortly after the death of their father in 1885, the Drexel sisters were visited by Father Joseph Stephan, who was then in his second year as Director of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, and Bishop Martin Marty, who was then Vicar Apostolic of Northern Minnesota and later Bishop of Sioux Falls, South Dakota. They sought financial assistance from the Philadelphia heiresses for the Catholic Indian missions, especially in the erection of reservation boarding schools. This meeting resulted in the commitment to establish Indian schools and was the beginning of a lifelong friendship between Katharine and Father Stephan.<sup>20</sup>

Katharine began to seriously consider a vocation to the religious life while nursing her dying mother. In May 1883, she confided to Bishop O'Connor that she desired to enter the religious life.<sup>21</sup> This was the beginning of a six-year correspondence

in which the bishop attempted to guide Katharine Drexel in the discernment of her vocation. O'Connor's responses expressed a number of concerns. He was concerned about her ability to adapt from a life of privilege to that of the simplicity of the convent. He discouraged her from indulging herself in "spiritual sprees," that is, to avoid excessive prayer and penances, and to seek balance in her life. Perhaps most importantly, he doubted whether her health would enable her to sustain the austere life of the convent. Far from completely discouraging her, however, he stated that he believed her special circumstances – the trust fund and the willingness to spend it in service to the Indians and African Americans – was a sign that she was called to a special purpose by God. At this point, O'Connor was convinced that her calling was to remain a prominent member of society, who could devote her time and her fortune to the twin causes of Indian and African American Catholic education. Her example could be a powerful motivation to other members of her social class. Time, he advised, would enable her to discern God's will.<sup>22</sup>

From July 1886 to April 1887, the Drexel sisters toured Europe. Catherine, Louise, and Elizabeth had a private audience with Pope Leo XIII on January 27, 1887. During the meeting, Katharine asked the pope to send missionaries to the American Indian missions. The pontiff replied, "Why not become a missionary yourself, my child." Katharine was confused and shaken by the pope's response. She reportedly left the Vatican in tears.<sup>23</sup> Katharine had thought that her calling was to the contemplative religious life, but the enigmatic response of the pope called her attention to an active apostolate in service to America's most marginalized peoples. Following their return to

Philadelphia, the three heiresses made two tours of Indian reservations with Bishop O'Connor and Father Joseph Stephan. During the autumn of 1887, the Drexel sisters, along with Bishop O'Connor and Father Stephan, visited St. Francis Mission at Rosebud and Holy Rosary at Pine Ridge, South Dakota. Bishop O'Connor returned to Omaha, but the Drexel sisters accompanied Stephan to Immaculate Conception Mission, South Dakota, and to Devil's Lake, Turtle Mountain, and Belcourt in North Dakota. A second fall tour in 1888, included the Chippewa Indians at Odanah, as well as the White Earth and Red Lake Reservations in Minnesota and Wisconsin. The immediate result of the tours was the "Drexel Indian Schools" which were established before Katharine entered the religious life. These included mission schools among the Puyallups in Washington, the Cheyennes and Arapahos in Wyoming, the Sioux in Dakota Territory, the Coeur d'Alenes and the Nez Perce in Idaho, the California Mission Indians, the Chippewas in Wisconsin, the Crows and Blackfeet in Montana, the Cherokees, Comanches, and Osages in Indian Territory, and the Pueblo in New Mexico.<sup>24</sup>

During this period of family transitions and introduction to the needs of Catholic Indians in the West, Katharine was striving to find her own place in life. In May of 1888, she wrote to Bishop O'Connor following a week-long visit to Washington, D.C. She reported that she and her sisters had been lavishly entertained, but she feared that it was only because of their wealth or in memory of their parents. Katharine was bored with the small talk which characterized most social gatherings, and felt the desire to do something "large" and meaningful with her life. She also looked forward to visiting the Indian

missions in the fall. Most importantly, she responded that she still wanted to enter the convent.<sup>25</sup>

In November 1888, Katharine wrote two letters to Bishop O'Connor in which she begged him to reconsider his decision regarding her vocation.<sup>26</sup> On November 30, the bishop capitulated. After six years of correspondence, he became convinced that she did indeed have a vocation to the religious life. The only question remaining was should she enter one of the traditional orders, or found a new order dedicated to the education of Indians and African Americans. Katharine believed the best course was to give control of her trust fund income to the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions. She would then be free to join one of the established religious orders. Bishop O'Connor, on the other hand, urged her to found a new order dedicated exclusively to service to Indians and African Americans. He argued that the traditional orders might see work among these groups as peripheral to their other responsibilities. He continued that Archbishop Patrick Ryan, Father Stephan, Archbishop John Ireland, and her confessor supported the idea of a new religious order.<sup>27</sup> On March 19, 1889, she consented to become the founder of the order that would eventually be called the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament for Indians and Colored People.<sup>28</sup> On May 6, 1889, she entered the novitiate of the Sisters of Mercy at Pittsburgh, and was professed as the first sister of the new order on February 12, 1891. By May, the community – consisting of Sister Katharine, thirteen novices, three postulants and Mother Inez Casey, a Mercy nun who served as novice mistress – settled into the old Drexel family “nest” at St. Michel near Torresdale. Finally on December 2,

1892, despite the lack of heat, lights and running water, the sisters moved into St. Elizabeth's Convent at Cornwell's Heights (now Bensalem), north of Philadelphia.<sup>29</sup>



Mother Katharine Drexel, Founder of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament for Indians and Colored People

Source: Archives of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament



The first ten years of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament were busy ones. Mother Katharine was occupied with the formulation of the order's rule and by-laws that had to be approved by Rome, the religious formation of the new sisters, and the establishment of the order's procedures and practices. In addition, a steady stream of bishops and the heads of missionary orders came to secure the benefactions of Mother Drexel. While she continued her financial support of the missions, Archbishop Ryan had prudently prohibited the sisters from undertaking missionary efforts until they were properly prepared for the work. That the adaptation to the religious life was difficult can be seen in the fact that nineteen, or 46.3%, of the forty-one women who had entered the novitiate either at Pittsburgh or at Torresdale eventually left the order.<sup>30</sup> Especially difficult was the death of Sister Patrick, the third young woman who had entered the order. She had contracted tuberculosis while nursing at the Mercy Hospital in Pittsburgh. In 1892, the sisters opened Holy Providence School on the motherhouse grounds, which served approximately 150 African American boarding students, many of them orphans.<sup>31</sup> The first missions undertaken by the sisters were St. Catherine's at Santa Fe, New Mexico (1894), serving the Navajo, and St. Francis de Sales, serving young African American women, at Rock Castle, Virginia (1899).<sup>32</sup> The establishment of a mission at Winnebago, was delayed by events which were unfolding in Nebraska. The conflict between the Christian churches for the souls of the Indians at Winnebago was a microcosm of the sectarian feuding that infected the larger national political life.

By the 1880s, the Presbyterian Church had a long-established relationship with the Omaha people. Presbyterian efforts among the Omahas began with the establishment

of a mission in 1846 at Bellevue, Nebraska. After the tribe moved north in accordance with the Omaha Treaty of 1854, the Reverend William Hamilton opened a mission and school near Blackbird Bend. This effort was ended by the assignment of the reservation to the Hicksite Friends (Quakers), under Grant's Peace Policy, in 1869. However, the Presbyterians returned to the reservation nine years later, when the Quaker day schools were evaluated as a failure.<sup>33</sup> In 1881, the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions established a mission among the Winnebago people. The mission consisted of "one dwelling house – worth, with other improvements – one thousand dollars." The Reverend S.N.D. Martin and his wife were in charge of the spiritual welfare of the nineteen-member congregation. The following year, the Winnebago tribal council granted permission for the church to build on the reservation. Government Clerk W.C.M. Beath recommended that the Presbyterians do so promptly.<sup>34</sup>

In contrast to the optimistic reports of progress on the neighboring Omaha Reservation, Pastor Martin complained in 1886 to John Lowrie, Secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church of New York City, of the "perfect indifference" of the Winnebagoes to his efforts.<sup>35</sup> Church attendance among the baptized was poor. He also concluded that the influence of neighboring communities was mostly bad. "These are largely Papist and wholly disregard the Sabbath, drinking, horseracing, gaming, so that our Indians think Sunday specially made for these purposes," he noted. The result was that on Sundays, Indian families could be found at the ball grounds, the men playing ball and the women playing cards. The Medicine Lodge, he conceded, taught some maxims of morality, but he dismissed it as "wretched, degrading

superstition.” His interpreter assured him that no active member of the Medicine Lodge would ever convert to Christianity.<sup>36</sup>

In the fall and winter of 1886, Pastor Martin’s concerns about Catholic interference began to grow. In September, he reported that the Catholics had begun active operations on the reservation with the inevitable result that Presbyterian work would suffer serious interruption. He referenced the fact that although the Catholics had largely ignored the Winnebagoes on their Nebraska reservation, they had worked among them and baptized a considerable number at earlier times. Some Indian families still considered themselves Catholic, even though they had had little opportunity to practice the faith. That he seriously, albeit in an exaggerated fashion, felt his work to be threatened is reflected in the statement, “Just now they are about to capture the whole tribe by a well concerted plan.” He cited the work of the Catholic trader and the government farmer, and their wives, whom he labeled as “zealous propagandists” against the Presbyterian faith. He reported that the priest from a neighboring town made regular visits every two weeks, offering Mass in the farmer’s house. He had heard that the Catholics planned to build a church soon.<sup>37</sup>

On Christmas Day, Martin shared his frustrations with his superior, Secretary Lowrie. The Winnebagoes had largely moved to dispersed settlements on the river bottoms for the winter months, which made his missionary efforts largely impossible due to the weather and road conditions. The threat from the Papists continued. The priest visited once a month during the winter. Several of his converts were members of Papist families, so he was not certain that they would remain steadfast Presbyterians. He

reported that his interpreter was a Papist, and that the man had been forbidden by the priest to assist him. He reported that he could not advise that a church be built, even if there were funds to do so. He was equally pessimistic about the success of a mission boarding school. The threat was not only from the Catholics, but also from the educational practices of the federal government. He felt that the eastern government schools would enroll the more talented, and in his mind, the most likely candidates for conversion. If and when they returned to the reservation, the students would be tainted by worldliness, if not wickedness.<sup>38</sup>

In February 1887, Pastor Martin continued his tale of woe to his superior. He complained that the dispersed winter settlement pattern of the Winnebagoes inhibited his efforts because few attended worship services or the school. He complained about the influence of the Papist trader and farmer and their wives who allegedly attempted to prejudice the Indians against him. He further characterized Agent Jesse F. Warner as “an infidel, who quietly favors them by an implied if not explicit deal” for Catholic political support. He dismissed all government agents as self-seeking political opportunists. On a more positive note, he reported that talk about the erection of a Catholic church had subsided and he speculated that perhaps the talk was a political ploy to convince the Winnebagoes that the Papists were about to “sweep the field and so induce them to join the winning side.”<sup>39</sup>

In April, Pastor Martin reported that the Indians had returned to the Winnebago Agency from their winter quarters and were preparing for the coming growing season. He reported that the government boarding school continued to be ineffective due to

incompetent and unprincipled managers and teachers. He added that both teachers and several other employees were Papists. He stated that while they did nothing to openly antagonize him, they used every opportunity to influence the pupils into Popery. Although he continued to offer the Sabbath preaching service, he found it impossible to impress the children due to the indifference and ignorance of the interpreter. He stated that most, if not all, of the mixed bloods were Catholic. Again, he reported that local talk was that the Catholics had obtained permission and would soon build a church on the reservation. The pastor charged that the Catholics had it in their power to control almost every member of the tribe by favoritism and indirect bribes.

Martin reported that he had unspecified reasons to believe that they had bribed several of his converts to join the Catholic church by securing new wagons and quality horses when these were distributed by the government. He cited tribal member John Fisher as an example of Catholic influence. After several years of instruction and association with the pastor, Martin asked him, which he liked best, "popery or the true religion?" Fisher replied that he did not know. The pastor recommended that the Presbyterian Board ought to build a boarding industrial school supported by federal contracts. However, he could not recommend the formal organization of a church as yet, due to the lack of solid membership. During the year, he had baptized only three men, one woman, and six children, and he appeared to have been doubtful of the firmness of commitment among his congregation. The pastor's concern about his lack of success was reflected in the conclusion of the letter. He suggested that like the fishermen-disciples of Jesus in the Gospels, he had labored all night and caught nothing. Perhaps, he ventured to

his superior, it was time to cast the net elsewhere. Perhaps the Lord wished him to work in a more promising missionary field.<sup>40</sup>

On June 1, 1887, Pastor Martin continued his theme that the government boarding school had “been delivered into the hands of the Papists,” as six of the eight employees were Catholics. He listed as Catholics: the superintendent, the matron, two teachers, the industrial caretaker, and the cook. He reported that the priest held service in the school each month and that the Catholics had organized their own Sabbath school on Sunday afternoons. The pastor conducted his own Sabbath school on Sunday mornings, but he doubted that it would be worthwhile to continue it when the fall term commenced. He had come to the conclusion that control of the school was vital to control of the Indians’ souls. Otherwise, “through the school, whatever we do, they [the Catholics] will reap the fruits.” Martin commented that the Winnebagoes were reluctant to commit the care of their children to the government boarding school due to the regular turnover in personnel. He recommended the establishment of a Presbyterian boarding school at Winnebago. If the Board could not see its way clear to do this, he recommended that the money would be better spent working among the freedmen or in foreign lands.<sup>41</sup>

During the summer of 1887, the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions informed Pastor Martin that his resignation had been accepted. He replied that he had not resigned, but that he was ready to leave his post. The missionary requested that he be allowed to stay at Winnebago until his successor arrived, as he feared what would happen to his tiny flock without a resident pastor. He further observed that the priest had stated that a Catholic church would be built in early September, and that a convent school was

planned for the reservation. Reverend Martin believed that a Catholic plot had been launched to gain control of the government schools and manage them in accordance with Catholic interests. He called upon the Board to join with other Protestant denominations in a concerted effort to make the Indian Office aware of Catholic aggression on the reservations. The pastor reported that the local Catholic school superintendent had resigned, and the new superintendent and his wife had arrived. Pastor Martin was not certain, but he believed them not to be Papists. If they were Protestants, the Sabbath service at the school could be continued in the fall, he noted.<sup>42</sup>

Although the Presbyterians claimed success on the neighboring Omaha Reservation, the fear of the arrival of the Catholics was felt there also. The missionaries began to urge the Board of Foreign Missions to fund a day school in the vicinity of Omaha Creek. Margaret C. Wade, Superintendent of the Presbyterian school, reported that the Catholics were working among the “half-breeds” in that part of the reservation, and expressed the fear that unless the Presbyterians established a presence there, the Catholics might soon gain a footing. She continued that Amelia S. Quinton of the Women’s Indian Rights Association had suggested that the Presbyterian Board and the Association jointly establish a day school and mission center in the area. She further stated that although the Presbyterian missionaries among the Omaha had long wished that the government would establish a day school, it would now be disastrous because the Catholics would probably control it.<sup>43</sup>

Commissioner of Indian Affairs John D.C. Atkins answered the question about religious control of the government schools on the Omaha and Winnebago reservations in

October 1887. In response to the request of Bishop Lowrie that the Omaha school be placed under the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions, he answered in the negative. He responded that under his administration the policy had been, and would continue to be, one of avoiding entangling alliances with any religious organizations in the management of the schools. The use of government-owned buildings for the purpose of contract schools was prohibited. Contracts for the education of Indian children would continue to be granted, but only in buildings which were owned by the religious organizations. The commissioner concluded that he was unaware of any efforts to transfer the Omaha government school to the Roman Catholics. He further denied that the Winnebago school had been transferred to the Catholics, as Bishop Lowrie had reported. He stated that the only request received from any religious group of which he was aware, was that of the Presbyterian Board to which he was responding.<sup>44</sup> The belief that there was a Catholic conspiracy to obtain control of the government schools, however, was not easily laid to rest in Nebraska. Superintendent Wade expressed her disappointment to Bishop Lowrie at not receiving the Omaha school, but she wrote that the Presbyterian request had not been in vain. She believed that the bishop's letter to the Commissioner had been instrumental in confirming complaints from other religious societies about Catholic aggression. Mrs. Wade happily concluded that the bishop's letter had succeeded in frustrating the "well laid schemes [of the Catholics] for their schools."<sup>45</sup>

At the same time that Pastor Martin was urging that the Board attempt to take control of the Omaha school, he was also requested that it to secure land from the government for the expansion of the mission. He urged this course for several reasons.



The present ten-acre tract was insufficient for expansion, and it was poorly located. As the Winnebago people took up their allotments, population would shift to the west, which would leave the Presbyterian mission somewhat isolated at the eastern end of the reservation. He reported that Catholics were attempting to secure a grant of 160 acres from the government. The missionary worried that the government might not be willing to grant lands to two religious societies on the same reservation. He argued, "If we secure the land, it may not only be useful to us, but perhaps forestall the papists." Pastor Martin added that their church had a recent history with the Winnebago people, while the Catholics had made only sporadic efforts among them and then only at the request of white government employees, rather than the Indians themselves. He reported that Special Agent Alice Fletcher, who was in charge of the allotment process, was anxious that the Board submit the formal application. Reverend Martin noted that "she will do what she can to forward it, and so if possible exclude the other parties, but her name must not appear in connection with it." He urged that action be taken immediately as the Catholic application had been submitted, and might have been conditionally granted.<sup>46</sup>

On November 15, Bishop Lowrie received word from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs that the request had been sent to Special Agent Alice Fletcher with instructions to consider the request in connection with similar applications under the Allotment Act.<sup>47</sup> After consultation with Pastor Martin, she wrote to Bishop Lowrie that application had been made for eighty acres. She and the pastor recommended the relinquishment of the ten acres originally occupied in 1881, and the submission of a request for two tracts of forty acres each, one near the agency site, and the other to the west where many of the

tribe had opened allotments. The advantage would be in having two mission centers which would be accessible to a larger number of Omaha people.<sup>48</sup>

At the end of November, Pastor Martin reported to Bishop Lowrie that the trader and his family had left the reservation, which would help to check the “onslaught of the priests.” He reported that the efforts to build a Catholic Church were temporarily halted, and that the priest had discontinued services in the school. The pastor observed that the new superintendent was a Methodist and his wife was a Presbyterian, and that they both were in “full harmony with our work.” However, he further reported that the matron and some of the teachers were Catholic and that they were, in collusion with the priest, attempting to oust the superintendent and replace him with a Catholic. The pastor viewed the conflicts at Winnebago as part of a national conspiracy by Catholics to use their voting power to gain control of the Indian schools. He was outraged that a Catholic superintendent of Indian education had been appointed, and he characterized Riley as “a virulent propagandist, or a subservient tool of the priests.” Martin further remarked that he was conducting a preaching service at the weekly Sabbath school. Attendance consisted of the pupils and non-Catholic employees. Although outsiders were invited, he did not indicate that any attended. He also complained that he was unable to secure regular attendance by his converts. Small, private worship groups were all that seemed practical, he reported. The pastor sadly observed that he did not announce the Sabbath Day service as a Presbyterian service lest the priest demand a comparable Catholic service.<sup>49</sup>

On April 9, 1888, Doctor Lawrence M. Hensel, medical missionary to the Omaha, sent a petition signed by thirteen Omaha leaders, including Marguerite LaFlesche, to the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions. The petition requested the Board to use whatever influence they had with the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to exclude Roman Catholics from positions in the agency school and to prevent any mission work by them on the reservation. The accompanying letter by Doctor Hensel attributed this effort to the power of the Holy Spirit and to the sacrifices of the veteran missionary to the Omaha, Reverend William Hamilton, and more recently Reverend John T. Copley and Mrs. Wade. He did, however, take personal credit for the aggressive spirit shown by the thirteen Omaha who met at his house and signed the petition. The intensity of his feelings, and perhaps those of the thirteen Omaha, is clearly revealed in the text of the letter to his superiors.

The thought that the Papists might get hold upon this ground and tell those who have professed Christ in the Presbyterian Church that they are all wrong – that they do not belong to the true Apostolic Church – that they ought to humanize Christ and deify Mary etc. etc. has been galling to me in the extreme – when so much precious seed has been sewed in season and out of season and watered with tears of anguish and sorrows and prayers to God...can we permit Idolatrous Roman Catholics to reap the fruit of the toils and sufferings of the missionaries of our church for more than a quarter of a century among the Omahas.<sup>50</sup>

He concluded that a similar petition was being circulated among the whole tribe and would be forwarded to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs. Mrs. M.C. Wade, in the same enclosure, wrote that the petition reflected the feelings of the entire Omaha people without regard to church or faction. She also requested that the house in which she lived

might be expanded so that more boys could be educated by means of government contract. The government school, she reported, was full.<sup>51</sup>

The Presbyterian efforts apparently worked. On April 24, 1888, Commissioner Atkins wrote to Bishop Lowrie that a change of superintendents for the government school was contemplated. He proposed that since the missionaries operated the other boarding school on the reservation, it might be in the interest of “harmony and efficiency” if the Presbyterian Board nominated the new superintendent. He further requested that the Board consider taking over management of the government school for the coming year. He concluded that this was a suggestion, not an offer.<sup>52</sup> However, questions remained to be settled, including that of control of agency appointments. Reverend William Hamilton wrote to Bishop Lowrie to remind him of the “workings of Satan.” He specifically referred to personnel changes on the reservations. Mr. Fitzpatrick, the Catholic farmer at the Omaha Reservation, had been reassigned to the Winnebago Reservation as school superintendent and an unnamed Catholic, who allegedly had a drug problem, had been appointed a farmer on the Omaha Agency.<sup>53</sup> The position had been offered to Reverend H.R. Schermerhorn. However, the veteran missionary questioned whether the school superintendent or the agent would have control of school appointments.<sup>54</sup> Evidently, the answer was unsatisfactory because he did not accept the appointment. The Presbyterian Board instead nominated H.L. Scribner for the superintendency on the Omaha reservation, but the Department of the Interior deemed him unsuitable for the position. Scribner had previously been dismissed from the Winnebago school due to lack of executive ability. The task of filling the school

superintendency was given to the Indian agent at the reservation.<sup>55</sup> One year later, Commissioner Thomas Jefferson Morgan dismissed Fitzpatrick, the Catholic superintendent at Winnebago. The Fitzpatrick case was subsequently cited by Father Stephan in his attempt to prevent the confirmation of Morgan as Commissioner of Indian Affairs, and of Daniel Dorchester as Superintendent of Indian Education by the United States Senate. Stephan argued in confidential written testimony that Superintendent Fitzpatrick was dismissed because of his religion, and despite good reports by the school inspector. Daniel Dorchester countered that Fitzpatrick was fired because he had been found by School Inspector Mallet, a Roman Catholic, unfit for the job by both temperament and training.<sup>56</sup>

Throughout the spring of 1888, interdenominational tensions continued at Winnebago. In March, Pastor Martin reported that the priest had applied to the school superintendent for permission to hold services at the government school. He was refused, so he offered Mass at the home of the agency farmer. The missionary wrote to Bishop Lowrie that he had asked the superintendent to inform the agent that the Presbyterians might someday ask to hold a denominational service, if the privilege was granted to the Catholics. Furthermore, he believed that this would exclude the Catholics from weekday services. Martin concluded with a complaint about the “popish matron” who had many opportunities to “pervert” the children, even those who were baptized Presbyterians.<sup>57</sup>

In June 1888, Reverend William T. Findley, who had joined Reverend Martin at Winnebago, wrote to Bishop Lowrie in a mood of high dudgeon. He reported that the Protestant superintendent had been replaced by an “Irish Paddy with all the

accompanying qualifications for Jesuitic rule.” He had also heard that four to six of the Protestant employees at Winnebago were not recommended for reappointment, while all four of the Catholics were to be retained. In addition, the superintendent at the Omaha school was to be replaced. The source of the problem was, in Findley’s mind, the Catholic Commissioner of Indian Affairs. He asked, “Why does the Beast hold the scepter in the land of Puritan birth?” He added that the most just and faithful employees had been fired simply because they “balked [at] papal rule.” The issues which had led to the dismissals were the use of the schoolhouse for mid-week Mass and the refusal to allow the Catholic children to attend Mass in a nearby house during school hours. He continued that the fired employees had removed religious books from the classrooms, such as the catechisms, and other “Maryolitries.” It seemed clear in the pastor’s mind that the Presbyterians “owned” the reservation. He asked, who had done the work on the reservation, the resident missionaries, or the priests who visited periodically? He continued that the Catholic trader kept his trading post open on the Sabbath. Further, there was not a Catholic on the reservation who could sing a doxology or chant a prayer. He urged the Board to reassert Presbyterian rights, and concluded that the “Presbyterian Church has the right to be respected by the government and to make a business of giving the Catholics the Indians is an insult.”<sup>58</sup>

On July 25, 1888, Reverend Martin wrote to Bishop Lowrie that while the small number of converts might not seem to justify the building of a church, and despite the fact that at least half of the Winnebago were expected to move to the west onto allotted lands, he urged that a church be built near the agency at Winnebago. The chief reason to

act promptly was that the Catholics were about to build a church, possibly in the spring. He reasoned that the first group to have a church would draw the largest following. He also argued that the site for a future railroad had been determined about one mile west of the present mission. A settlement of whites and Indians would certainly develop around the station. The proposed forty-acre tract would give the church a good location on the main road. A small house would further aid in the mission work and maintain the Presbyterian Church's visibility on the reservation. He reported, "Miss Fletcher and the agent are very desirous that our Board proceed at once to build, in order as far as may be to forestall the papists."<sup>59</sup>

Reverend Findley reported to Bishop Lowrie that Miss Fletcher had suggested that the Presbyterian Board submit its request for the land. She had stated that, should she be asked, she would support their request. He observed that not much could be counted on from the agent for he was more of a Catholic in actions than a Protestant, meaning that he was a schemer. He stated that the agent had told him that he had never seen anything accomplished on the reservation by the Presbyterian Church. The agent had also stated that the church had injured the whole tribe by preventing other churches from working among the Omahas and Winnebagoes. Reverend Findley reported that the agent had attended church only three times in the past ten months, and that he often had appointments for business and pleasure on the Sabbath day. Miss Fletcher urged them to build at once on the proposed location, and that they select the other section to the west on the reservation. Interestingly, the missionary related that Miss Fletcher also believed that the Presbyterian Church had been negligent in not building a church a long time ago.

He recounted that she threatened to denounce them at Washington, rather than support their effort if they did not proceed to build a church.<sup>60</sup>

Both Agent Jesse Warner and Special Agent Alice Fletcher were critical of Presbyterian efforts on the reservation, but probably based upon different perspectives. Warner was critical of the limited investment of the Presbyterian Board and of the Presbyterian missionaries' efforts to exclude other denominations from contact with the Winnebago. Fletcher may have been an accomplice in their exclusionary efforts. However, it may be that Reverend Findley interpreted her remarks to fit his own desires to forestall the Catholic arrival on the reservation. Her threat to denounce them if they did not build soon seems to indicate that her primary commitment was to the welfare of the Indians, as she perceived it. She may well have been supportive of other denominations if they showed the determination to make a major commitment of money and personnel to the Winnebagoes.<sup>61</sup> The petition by the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions for additional land on the reservation was provisionally granted on April 17, 1889.<sup>62</sup> However, a church building was not completed until 1909 when a white community was established at Winnebago.<sup>63</sup> The delay was caused by a number of factors that included the lack of funds, the small number of converts, and probably the lack of competition from the Catholics who were unsuccessful in their efforts to establish a mission. The Presbyterian missionaries perceived a highly organized Catholic threat to their work among the Winnebagoes, but an examination of the annual reports filed by priests of the Diocese of Omaha reveals a different picture.



Between 1887 and 1900, the Omaha and Winnebago reservations were served by priests from the newly-established St. Mary's Catholic Church at Hubbard, Nebraska. The pastor's duties varied over the years, but typically included offering Mass, administering the sacraments and teaching catechism at Hubbard three times each month and once each month at Homer. The Omaha Reservation was evidently visited only once between 1887 and 1908, and visits to Winnebago were described either as "occasionally," or three to four times per year. Father P.A. Spaight submitted a census of Catholics at Winnebago in 1887. He reported twelve Catholic families, twelve practicing adult Catholics, nineteen non-practicing adult Catholics, and thirty-one Catholics under the age of twenty-one. The priest also stated that he had performed fourteen baptisms at Winnebago. Although he had found no Catholics among the Omahas, he had performed five baptisms.<sup>64</sup> Unfortunately, the annual reports do not indicate whether the Catholics enumerated were Indians or white residents of the reservations.<sup>65</sup>

During 1888, Father John T. Smith enumerated nine practicing adult Catholics and nine Catholics under the age of twenty-one on the Winnebago Reservation. He reported that he had performed two baptisms and eight Easter communions. The priest acknowledged the unreliability of his census, stating, "I gave it as I got it, from the white men living on the reserve that are Catholics." Father Smith stated that he had visited the reservation "occasionally."<sup>66</sup> In 1889, he enumerated thirty Catholic families, but reported that there were only three practicing adult Catholics, and twelve Catholics under the age of twenty-one. He listed seven Easter communions and two baptisms. Again, he reported that he visited Winnebago "occasionally."<sup>67</sup>

In 1890, Father Julius Cornelius Delhove, who was an active participant in the early efforts to establish a Catholic mission, stated that he had visited the reservation occasionally, but he could not provide an accurate census of Winnebago Catholics, “as we have no fair chance to know them.” He estimated that there were three practicing adult Catholics, possibly based on the fact that three Winnebagoes had received communion at Easter.<sup>68</sup> In 1891, he related the same statistics and reported visiting the reservation only three or four times during the year.<sup>69</sup> The following year, he stated to the bishop that “The Winnebago Indians are practically lost to me, there is neither a church, nor a school, nor a suitable meeting house for them on the agency.”<sup>70</sup> In 1893, for the second year in a row, Father Delhove did not complete the statistical section of the annual report. He remarked, “I cannot send in anything serious about the Winnebagos. I count the deaths as registered on my cemetery book. Catechism is on weekdays, because Sunday school here has proven to be a failure.”<sup>71</sup>

Father Bernard Fitzpatrick, Father Delhove’s successor, reported in 1895 that there were about thirty Catholic families at Winnebago, but he cautioned that accurate statistics could not be obtained until there was a resident pastor. He further reported that an effort was underway to establish a church and school, but he gave no indication that he was a participant in the process.<sup>72</sup> In 1896 and 1897, Fitzpatrick stated only that Mass was occasionally celebrated on the reservation.<sup>73</sup>

Father Timothy O’Callaghan reported that he had performed four baptisms, and that it was impossible to undertake a census because most of the Winnebagoes were in the city of Omaha attending the Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition of 1898.<sup>74</sup>

This “world’s fair” event, which was partially inspired by the Columbian Exposition in Chicago, celebrated the region’s survival of the Depression of 1893 and gave a much-needed boost to the economy of Omaha. Among the featured attractions was the Indian Congress that featured encampments, crafts and the performance of sham battles. Captain W.A. Mercer, acting agent of the Omaha and Winnebago Agency, was in charge of the Indian gathering, and a large contingent from both tribes apparently participated in the events.<sup>75</sup> In 1899, Father O’Callaghan stated that he had visited the reservation four times that year, and he offered the opinion that, “Salvation will come to the Indian only by erecting a school on the reservation and placing it in charge of the sisters.”<sup>76</sup>

The foundation of St. Augustine’s Mission at Winnebago was also delayed by the death of Bishop James O’Connor, who was a strong local advocate of Catholic education for the Indians. The prelate’s health began to deteriorate during the summer of 1889, and he was unable to leave Omaha to attend the Pittsburgh ceremony at which Catherine Drexel received the religious habit of the Sisters of Mercy and took the religious name of Sister Mary Katharine on November 7. The diagnosis was dyspepsia. On his doctor’s advice, he traveled to the South, but the change in climate did not aid his recovery. In February, Sister Katharine Drexel brought the bishop to the hospital of the Sisters of Mercy in Pittsburgh where she personally assisted in his nursing care, but O’Connor continued to weaken. Determined to die in his own diocese, he departed Pittsburgh for Omaha on April 16, in the company of his personal doctor, a nurse and Father Augustine Colaneri. He passed away on May 27, 1890; and so apparently, for the moment, did the dream of a Catholic mission among the Winnebago people.<sup>77</sup>

Richard Scannell was formally installed as the second Bishop of Omaha on April 12, 1891. The new bishop, like his predecessor, was born in Ireland, and he attended All Hallows Seminary in Dublin, where he excelled in Canon Law. After ordination, he worked as a priest in the Diocese of Nashville, Tennessee, and later served as Bishop of Concordia, Kansas. Scannell was a private man, who lived a scholarly and ascetic life. His public persona was often formal, and his treatment of both clergy and laity was sometimes heavy-handed, which resulted in a negative legacy for him.<sup>78</sup> The official history of the Archdiocese of Omaha characterized him as “the Tyrannical Recluse,” and the official history of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament described his apparent lack of interest in missionary work among the Winnebago people except when prodded by others.<sup>79</sup> However, Bishop Scannell’s seemingly reluctant actions must be viewed within the context of his time and place. The annual reports that he received from his priests in the field revealed no great desire for a priest by the Winnebago people. In addition, active Protestant opposition to Catholic missionary efforts at Winnebago made the success of a mission there uncertain. Finally, the settlement of increasing numbers of Catholic immigrants, amidst a rising tide of public intolerance of foreigners and Catholics was a major and more immediate concern for the bishop.

The state of Nebraska had been settled less than forty years when Scannell took office. The Church itself was still in many respects a frontier institution. The bishop undertook the task of institutional consolidation amid the social impact of foreign immigration and the economic impact of the Depression of 1893, which was worsened by drought in Nebraska. One particular episode faced by Scannell was the establishment of a

Polish national church in Omaha. A lay group, acting in the name of the yet-to-be-officially-recognized parish, claimed title to the land and the church building. They hired a priest of their own who turned out to be, not a priest, but a lay organist and teacher. The episode caused great scandal for the Diocese of Omaha as three improbable events unfolded. These included a civil suit to recover the property, the wounding of two parishioners when the congregation attempted to evict the fraudulent priest who had barricaded himself in the sanctuary, and the destruction of the church building by arson.<sup>80</sup>



Richard Scannell, Bishop of Omaha  
(1891-1916)  
Source: Archives of the Archdiocese of  
Omaha, Nebraska

The greatest challenge to the Catholic Church in Omaha came from the American Protective Association, which published a nativist newspaper, The American, in the city during the 1890s. The American Protective Association questioned the patriotism of American Catholics, charged scandalous relationships between nuns and priests, attacked parochial schools as un-American, and railed against Catholic involvement in politics as an attempt to establish papal power in America.<sup>81</sup> Bishop Scannell successfully navigated the Church through this episode by a policy of “turning the other cheek.” Eventually, this policy led community leaders to speak out against the excesses of the American Protective Association, which effectively disarmed their criticisms of the Catholic Church in Omaha.<sup>82</sup> Richard Scannell was formally installed as the second bishop of Omaha on April 12, 1891. Exactly two months earlier, Katharine Drexel had professed her vows as the first Sister of the Blessed Sacrament for Indians and Colored People, and in July the first group of her sisters would take their vows, and the cornerstone for the motherhouse would be laid at Bensalem, Pennsylvania. Despite her busy schedule, Katharine Drexel must have written to the new Bishop of Omaha regarding Winnebago, for he responded on July 2 that he had corresponded with Father Delhove, the pastor of nearby Hubbard, to see if land could be procured on the reservation.<sup>83</sup> Father Delhove advised the bishop against purchasing land near the reservation since the proposed mission needed to be located at the center of the Indian population. He further reported that the Winnebagoes could not sell the land because they did not hold title to it. The only way to acquire land on the reservation was through the federal government, which might provide land that had been previously reserved for churches and schools.<sup>84</sup> Bishop

Scannell wrote to John A. O’Gorman of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions that he trusted that the latter would succeed in acquiring a site, “for without a school we can do nothing for these poor Indians.”<sup>85</sup>

The attempt to gain land in 1891 continued into 1892, when Father Delhove reported to Bishop Scannell in April his conversations with C. J. O’Connor, a wealthy Catholic banker and landholder from Homer. O’Connor related that the government school at Winnebago had burned down and that it was a good time to establish a Catholic school in the area. Local white Catholics would support the day school and government contracts could be used to pay for the Winnebago children. O’Connor offered 22.5 acres at \$50.00 per acre, plus 4 acres free and a donation of from \$500 to \$2,000 depending on what was needed.<sup>86</sup> Bishop Scannell wrote to Katharine Drexel that he considered the offer a fair one, but admitted that he did not know enough about Indian education to offer an opinion on the location.<sup>87</sup>

On May 5, 1892, Bishop Scannell wrote to Mother Katharine Drexel that he had just returned from the Winnebago area, although heavy rain and bad roads had prevented him visiting the reservation. He informed her that he had visited with Mr. O’Connor, who reported that the superintendent of the government school at Winnebago had told him – “not knowing he was Catholic” – that the Presbyterians were thinking about moving to some point outside the borders of the reservation. Two reasons for the move were given. The first was that “it was easier to manage the children away from their parents,” and the second, that they did not wish to compete with the Catholics who were receiving over one-half of all government educational appropriations. The bishop thought that the

second reason was probably the real reason for the potential move. He further reported to Drexel the results of the Methodist General Conference in Omaha which was convening that month, "It would seem as if the different Protestant bodies were about to unite in refusing any grants for Indians in order to make it impossible for Catholics to receive aid for the same purpose." He observed that O'Connor was well acquainted with the Winnebagoes, and had obtained, in fact, promises from Winnebago parents that 45 to 60 children would be enrolled in a mission school, if one were established. He advised that Father Stephan should personally investigate the situation.<sup>88</sup>

There is no record as to whether Father Stephan himself visited Winnebago during the following months, but on February 18, 1893, he wrote to Mother Drexel that a school ought to be built at Winnebago. However, he cautioned that it should not be an expensive facility, which would seem to indicate that he had questions about its success. He recommended that at least 80 acres be acquired, and advised, "Let the Indians ask for sisters, but every Indian should sign the petition in order so as to make it of greater weight before the government." He offered to draw up the petition for Father Delhove, who was evidently charged with securing the signatures.<sup>89</sup>

In the meantime, Father Delhove had written directly to Mother Drexel. He introduced himself as a priest from Belgium who served the town of Hubbard. He had visited the reservation whenever his pastoral duties permitted, and he emphasized that he was acting on his own in these educational efforts. Three years earlier, he had heard from the bishop that Mother Drexel would build a school at Winnebago. He wrote to press the case. He stated that during the past year he had called a meeting with some of the



“principal Indians” at Homer, which was his mission parish, to determine directly from them whether they desired a priest and sisters. He reported that their earnest desires brought tears to his eyes. He continued that, despite possible reprisals from the “ultra-bigoted agent and his wife,” these Indians were willing to draw up and sign a petition for the mission. He reported that the petition plunged “the whole Winnebago Agency into a war, and in a short time the lists were filled with the names of the heads of the Indian families, almost up to a man.” He concluded that the loss of the government school was an opportunity for the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions and “besides, the Indians have been fearfully treated by the Republican Presbyterian agent.” He hoped that a Catholic agent would soon be appointed.<sup>90</sup> In May, Father Delhove wrote to Father Stephan that he had sent the authenticated petition on April 1, to the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions. Written across the top of the letter, which is filed in the Archives of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions are the words, “Petition cannot be found.”<sup>91</sup> It appears that the petition never reached the bureau offices in Washington, D.C.

Father Stephan wrote to Mother Katharine on August 24, from Sioux Falls, South Dakota, reporting that he had visited Winnebago and talked with Father Delhove whom he described as a “good, zealous priest, but not well versed in business.” He continued that he found the situation better than he had anticipated, especially since an Army officer, whom the priest knew and whose wife was Catholic, was there. He was sure that Major Baker would help them get 160 acres, “but we have to work quietly, as the Protestants are also at work to get some land.” The major promised to supply a map with suitable locations marked on it. He concluded that Father Delhove had promised him

silence on the whole matter.<sup>92</sup> On September 9, 1893, Father Stephan reported that he would soon apply for 160 acres at Winnebago, but nothing came of the effort.<sup>93</sup> Two letters written by Father Stephan to Mother Drexel during 1894 indicate that the effort continued during that year. On March 20, Stephan wrote that, “I shall start for Winnebago Reservation to obtain the land in order that you can fulfill dear Bishop O’Connor’s last wish.”<sup>94</sup> This is the only documented evidence that explains Katharine Drexel’s dogged determination to start a mission at Winnebago. Again, on October 10, he wrote that they were offered 80 acres, but that he insisted on getting 160 acres.<sup>95</sup> Perhaps his own insistence on 160 acres was all that prevented the immediate foundation of the mission, but the agency report for the year sheds no light on the subject. Possibly, he felt that 160 acres was necessary for the mission to raise some of its own food, and thereby, be more self-supporting. Whatever the reasons, the dream of a mission at Winnebago – “Bishop O’Connor’s last wish” – was not realized until July, 1903, when the decision was made to send a priest to the Winnebago people.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Report of Agent Jesse F. Warner, Report of the Omaha and Winnebago Agency, in Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs [ARCIA], 1888, 169.

<sup>2</sup> Miss Catherine Mary Drexel took the religious name of Sister Mary Katharine. Hereafter, her name in religion will be used to avoid confusion. Katharine Drexel to James O'Connor, Bishop of Omaha, April 6, 1889, Archives of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament [ASBS], Bensalem, Pennsylvania. On December 15, 1888, Katharine Drexel had reported that Father Stephan had secured land at Winnebago. She did not mention opposition on the reservation. Drexel to O'Connor, December 1, 1888. ASBS.

<sup>3</sup> Consuela Marie Duffy, Katharine Drexel: A Biography (Bensalem, Pennsylvania: Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, 1966), 16.

<sup>4</sup> contemporary witticism

<sup>5</sup> Duffy, Katharine Drexel, 17-21.

<sup>6</sup> Duffy, Ibid., 21-23.

<sup>7</sup> Dan Rottenberg, "Family Tithes," The American Benefactor (Winter 1998), 4.

<sup>8</sup> Duffy, Katharine Drexel, 23, 25-26.

<sup>9</sup> Duffy, Ibid., 41-46.

<sup>10</sup> Duffy, Ibid., 26-27, 31-32.

<sup>11</sup> Duffy, Ibid., 68-70.

<sup>12</sup> "14 Million Drexel Trust Shared by 29 Charities," The Philadelphia Inquirer, March 5, 1955, clippings file, ASBS. Archivist Stephanie Morris cited the article as an accurate statement of the Drexel will.

<sup>13</sup> Patricia Lynch, Sharing the Bread in Service Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, 1891-1991, vol. 1 (Bensalem, Pennsylvania: Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, 1998), 26.

<sup>14</sup> Duffy, Katharine Drexel, 403.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 159.

<sup>17</sup> Lynch, Sharing the Bread in Service, I, 13-15.

<sup>18</sup> Drexel to O'Connor, October 10, 1876, ASBS.

<sup>19</sup> Lynch, Sharing the Bread in Service, I, 20.

<sup>20</sup> Duffy, Katharine Drexel, 79-80.

<sup>21</sup> Drexel to O'Connor, May 23, 1883, ASBS.

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<sup>22</sup> O'Connor to Drexel, May 26, August 5, October 25, 1883, August 29, 1885, March 5, 1887, May 16, 1888. Shortly before his death, Bishop O'Connor reported to Katharine Drexel that he had destroyed her letters which contained matters of conscience. The remainder of her letters to the bishop were returned to Mother Katharine by the Archdiocese of Omaha after the death of Bishop O'Connor. The correspondence is archived at the ASBS. For the sake of brevity, only Bishop O'Connor's correspondence has been cited above.

<sup>23</sup> Duffy, Katharine Drexel, 100-104; Lynch, Sharing the Bread in Service, I, 24.

<sup>24</sup> Duffy, Katharine Drexel, 104-108, Lynch, Sharing the Bread in Service, I, 25-26, for a list of missions supported and amounts spent see "Expenditures Report, 1893-1928," unpublished document, ASBS.

<sup>25</sup> Drexel to O'Connor, May 31, 1888, ASBS.

<sup>26</sup> Drexel to O'Connor, November 11, 26, 1888, ASBS.

<sup>27</sup> O'Connor to Drexel, November 30, 1888, ASBS.

<sup>28</sup> Drexel to O'Connor, March 19, 1889, ASBS.

<sup>29</sup> Lynch, Sharing the Bread in Service, I, 35-36, 50, 67.

<sup>30</sup> Lynch, Ibid., I, 60.

<sup>31</sup> Lynch, Ibid., I, chapter one contains an excellent overview of the first years of the order.

<sup>32</sup> Lynch, Ibid., Appendix B. "SBS Missions and Convents, 1891-1895," I, 395.

<sup>33</sup> Judith A. Boughter, Betraying the Omaha Nation: 1790-1916 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 83-86.

<sup>34</sup> "Summary Report of Winnebago Nebraska Mission Station, 1882," in American Indian Correspondence: The Presbyterian Historical Society Collection of Missionary Letters, 1833-1893, [AIC], reel 26, 209; United States Indian Service memorandum, W.C.M. Beath, clerk, to Reverend S.N.D. Martin, August 28, 1882, AIC, reel 26, 246.

<sup>35</sup> A.S. Quinton, "Report on Missionary Work, 1888," (Philadelphia: Women's National Indian Association, 1889), 5-8, in Native American Reference Collection, [NARC] Part I: reel 10, 0253; Lawrence M. Hensel, M.D., "Report of Our Omaha Mission, 1888" (Philadelphia: Women's National Indian Association, 1888) in NARC Part I: reel 10, 266. This report provides a description of the programs offered by the mission. Dr. Hensel stated that "The priest has stopped visiting this field and we are united, all of one mind to go forward." P.2.

<sup>36</sup> Pastor S.N.D. Martin to Bishop John Lowrie, Secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church of New York City, July 27, 1886, 2-4. AIC, reel 26, 18.

<sup>37</sup> Martin to Lowrie, September 27, 1886, AIC, reel 26, 23.

<sup>38</sup> Martin to Lowrie, December 25, 1886, AIC, reel 26, 24.

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- <sup>39</sup> Martin to Lowrie, February 21, 1887, AIC, reel 26, 27.
- <sup>40</sup> Martin to Lowrie, April 21, 1887, AIC, reel 26, 62.
- <sup>41</sup> Martin to Lowrie, June 1, 1887, AIC, reel 26, 69.
- <sup>42</sup> Martin to Lowrie, August 30, 1887, AIC, reel 26, 99.
- <sup>43</sup> Mrs. Margaret C. Wade, Presbyterian School Superintendent, to Lowrie, July 5, 1887, AIC, reel 26, 78.
- <sup>44</sup> Commissioner of Indian Affairs John D.C. Atkins to Lowrie, October 1, 1887, AIC, reel 26, 114.
- <sup>45</sup> Wade to Lowrie, November 7, 1887, AIC, reel 26, 123.
- <sup>46</sup> Martin to Lowrie, September 15, 1887, AIC, reel 26, 107. The underlined phrase appears in the original letter.
- <sup>47</sup> Acting Commissioner of Indian Affairs A.B. Upshan to Lowrie, November 14, 1887, AIC, reel 26, 124.
- <sup>48</sup> Special Indian Agent Alice C. Fletcher to Lowrie, March 7, 1888, AIC, reel 26, 135.
- <sup>49</sup> Martin to Lowrie, November 22, 1888, AIC, reel 26, 125.
- <sup>50</sup> Lawrence M. Hensel, M.D., to the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church, April 8, 1888, AIC, reel 26, 138.
- <sup>51</sup> M.C. Wade to Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church, April 17, 1888, AIC, reel 26, 139.
- <sup>52</sup> Commissioner of Indian Affairs John D.C. Atkins to Lowrie, April 24, 1888, AIC, reel 26, 147.
- <sup>53</sup> Reverend William Hamilton to Lowrie, July 17, 1888, AIC, reel 26, 164.
- <sup>54</sup> Reverend H. R. Schermerhorn to Lowrie, May 22, 1888, AIC, reel 26, 151.
- <sup>55</sup> Name unreadable, First Assistant Secretary, Department of the Interior to Lowrie, July 30, 1888, AIC, reel 26, 167. The nomination of Scribner was apparently made by Reverend William T. Findley to Bishop Lowrie in a letter dated July 17, 1888, AIC, reel 26, 187.
- <sup>56</sup> "Memorials of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions and Others Protesting Against the Confirmation of Thomas J. Morgan and Daniel Dorchester and Their Reply to the Same Together with Sundry Documents and Exhibits," United States Senate Executive Documents and Reports, 1817 to 1969, 51-1-3.
- <sup>57</sup> Martin to Lowrie, March 13, 1888, AIC, reel 26, 179.
- <sup>58</sup> Findley to Bishop Lowrie, June 15, 1888, AIC, reel 26, 183.
- <sup>59</sup> Martin to Bishop Lowrie, July 25, 1888, AIC, reel 26, 189.

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<sup>60</sup> Findley to Lowrie, November 8, 1888, AIC, reel 26, 198.

<sup>61</sup> On April 20, 1892, F.F. Ellinwood, Secretary to the Prebyterian Board of Foreign Missions, wrote to a Mr. Dunlap at Fort Lapwai, "We are under great indebtedness to her [Alice Fletcher] for the successful efforts she has made in securing allotments of land to the Indians and to us. She is worth cultivating, as her friendship is helpful and her ideas, for the most part, are judicious." This suggests that the relationship between the Presbyterian Church and Miss Fletcher was entirely professional and appropriate. Ellinwood to Dunlap, AIC, reel 26, vol. 2, 27.

<sup>62</sup> Acting Commissioner R.V. Biet, Department of the Interior, to Findley, May 9, 1889, AIC, reel 26, vol. 2, 210. The title was withheld until a title search could be completed.

<sup>63</sup> "History of the First Presbyterian Church of Winnebago," Winnebago Chieftain, February 3, 1911, 1:2-4.

<sup>64</sup> "Annual Report for St. Mary's Church, Hubbard and the Missions of Homer, Winnebago Reservation, and Omaha Reservation 1886-1887," Archives of the Archdiocese of Omaha [AAO], Omaha, Nebraska, Box 2200.

<sup>65</sup> Author's analysis of the annual reports for St. Mary's, Hubbard, 1887-1891, AAO, Box 2200.

<sup>66</sup> "Annual Report for St. Mary's Church, Hubbard and the Missions of Homer and Winnebago Reservation 1887-1888," AAO, Box 2200.

<sup>67</sup> "Annual Report for St. Mary's Church, Hubbard and the Missions of Homer and Winnebago Reservation 1888-1889," AAO, Box 2200.

<sup>68</sup> "Annual Report for St. Mary's Church, Hubbard and the Missions of Homer and Winnebago Reservation 1889-1890," AAO, Box 2200.

<sup>69</sup> "Annual Report for St. Mary's Church, Hubbard and the Missions of Homer and Winnebago Reservation 1890-1891," AAO, Box 2200.

<sup>70</sup> "Annual Report for St. Mary's Church, Hubbard and the Missions of Homer and Winnebago Reservation 1891-1892," AAO, Box 2200.

<sup>71</sup> "Annual Report for St. Mary's Church, Hubbard and the Missions of Homer and Winnebago Reservation 1892-1893," AAO, Box 2200.

<sup>72</sup> "Annual Report for St. Mary's Church, Hubbard and the Missions of Homer and Winnebago Reservation 1894-1895," AAO, Box 2200.

<sup>73</sup> "Annual Report for St. Mary's Church, Hubbard and the Missions of Homer and Winnebago Reservation 1895-1896 and 1896-1897," AAO, Box 2200.

<sup>74</sup> "Annual Report for St. Mary's Church, Hubbard and the Missions of Homer and Winnebago Reservation 1897-1898, AAO, Box 2200.

<sup>75</sup> Arthur C. Wakeley, ed., Omaha: the Gate City and Douglas County Nebraska: A Record of Settlement, Organization, Progress, and Achievement, vol. 1 (Chicago: S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1917), 278.

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<sup>76</sup> “Annual Report for St. Mary’s Church, Hubbard and the Missions of Homer and Winnebago Reservation 1898-1899,” AAO, Box 2200.

<sup>77</sup> Henry W. Casper, The Church on the Fading Frontier, 1864 – 1910 vol. 2 of History of the Catholic Church in Nebraska (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Co., 1966), 359-361.

<sup>78</sup> Stephen Szmresanyi. The History of the Catholic Church in Northeast Nebraska: Phenomenal Growth from Scannell to Bergan, 1891-1969 (Omaha: The Catholic Voice Publishing Co., 1983), 7-9.

<sup>79</sup> Szmrecsanyi, Ibid., chapter one is entitled “The Tyrannical Recluse.” Lynch, Sharing the Bread in Service, I: 130.

<sup>80</sup> Henry J. Casper, Catholic Chapters in Nebraska Immigration, 1870 – 1900 vol. 3 of History of the Catholic Church in Nebraska (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Co., 1966), 184-187. Omaha Morning Bee, April 4, 1895, 5:3-4.

<sup>81</sup> Donald L. Kinzer. An Episode in Anti-Catholicism: The American Protective Association (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1964), inclusive. The American, 1891-1899, inclusive. The American was especially critical of the Jesuits. This may have been because the Jesuits operated Creighton University which was a highly visible symbol of the Catholic presence in Omaha.

<sup>82</sup> Szmrecanyi, History of the Catholic Church in Northeast Nebraska, 16-17.

<sup>83</sup> Scannell to Drexel, July 2, 1891, ASBS.

<sup>84</sup> Delhove to Scannell, July 7, 1891, ASBS. The allotment of land on the Winnebago Reservation was governed by “An Act to Provide for the Allotment of Lands in Severalty to Indians on the Various Reservations” (General Allotment Act or Dawes Act), 24 Statutes at Large, 388-91.

<sup>85</sup> Scannell to O’Gorman, October 3, 1891, ASBS.

<sup>86</sup> Delhove to Scannell, April 11, April 25, 1892.

<sup>87</sup> Scannell to Drexel, April 28, 1892, ASBS.

<sup>88</sup> Scannell to Drexel, May 11, 1892, ASBS.

<sup>89</sup> Stephan to Drexel, February 18, 1893, ASBS.

<sup>90</sup> Delhove to Drexel, January 30, 1893, ASBS.

<sup>91</sup> Delhove to Stephan, May 20, 1893, Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions Archives [ABCIM], Alumni Library, Special Collections, Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, roll 24, 682-684.

<sup>92</sup> Stephan to Drexel, August 24, 1893, ASBS.

<sup>93</sup> Stephan to Drexel, September 9, 1893, ASBS.

<sup>94</sup> Stephan to Drexel, March 20, 1894, ASBS.

<sup>95</sup> Stephan to Drexel, October 10, 1894, ASBS.

## CHAPTER FOUR

## THE RIGHT KIND OF PRIEST

I feel compelled to make a change at the Winnebago Reservation and to send another priest to take the place of Father Schell. The latter has made himself quite obnoxious to the traders and to others... Father Colaneri believes the traders will build a residence for a priest if the right kind of man be sent to them.<sup>1</sup>

Richard Scannell, Bishop of Omaha, to Mother Katharine Drexel  
September 7, 1904

In the summer of 1903, Bishop Richard Scannell reminded Mother Katharine Drexel of her long-standing interest in the spiritual welfare of the Omaha and Winnebago peoples, and he suggested that this might be the appropriate time to send a priest among them.<sup>2</sup> The timing of the bishop's suggestion may well have been influenced by the impending construction of the Sioux City and Western Railroad through the Omaha and Winnebago reservations. Townsite companies had begun selling lands near the agency for the future town of Winnebago. Later in the year, the bishop thanked Mother Katharine for her financial commitment of \$600, which was the salary of a priest for one year. He hoped that once the missionary had given them a clearer picture of the religious condition of the Winnebago people, it would be possible to plan for the future.<sup>3</sup>

In January 1904, Bishop Scannell suggested that direct payment of the clergyman's salary would place Mother Katharine in direct communication with the latter. He also suggested that, given her status in the American Church, a more direct relationship might encourage the missionary in his efforts by giving the connection a "special character."<sup>4</sup> This was a sound suggestion, but one which would have unforeseen consequences. Bishop Scannell and Mother Drexel optimistically looked forward to



gaining first-hand information that would allow them to plan their missionary efforts at Winnebago. Neither one foresaw that complications that would arise during the coming year as the young priest became involved in conflict with local businessmen, federal officials at Winnebago, and Commissioner of Indian Affairs William A. Jones. Before the year was over, the priest's allegations of corruption at Winnebago would receive intense coverage in Sioux City, Iowa, and Omaha, Nebraska, newspapers. The charges would even reach the pages of the Washington Post and the New York Times, threaten relations between the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions and the Department of the Interior, and involve President Theodore Roosevelt, Cardinal James Gibbons of Baltimore, the highest-ranking prelate in the Catholic hierarchy of the United States, and Mother Katharine Drexel, perhaps the most prominent woman in the Roman Catholic Church.

The priest selected for the Winnebago mission was Father Joseph Schell who had been born in France on May 1, 1868. He studied philosophy and theology at Chalons sur Marne, immigrated to the United States, and completed his studies for the priesthood at Cleveland and Cincinnati, Ohio. The young cleric was ordained to the priesthood at Mount Angel, Oregon, began his priestly duties in the Archdiocese of Portland in May, 1894, and subsequently was assigned to parish work in Tillamook County. While recruiting Catholic settlers and organizing a frontier parish, he claimed to have discovered a plot by unnamed timber companies and railroads to enter fraudulent land claims. According to Father Schell, the railroads transported workers, posing as potential settlers, into the county to file fraudulent land claims. The workers then signed over the

deeds to the lumber companies in return for jobs. The priest brought the matter to the attention of local officials who dismissed his claims. In 1902, he traveled to Washington, D.C., where, he secured meetings with Secretary of the Interior Ethan Allen Hitchcock and President Theodore Roosevelt. Subsequent investigations led to the indictments of United States Senator J. H. Mitchell and Congressman Binger Herman, both of Oregon, and the removal from office of John H. Hall, United States District Attorney for Oregon.<sup>5</sup>

During the following year, Father Schell accepted a transfer to the Diocese of Omaha because his presence in the newly-established Diocese of Baker City, Oregon, was a political embarrassment to Bishop Charles J. O'Reilly.<sup>6</sup> The priest was first assigned to Constance, a small parish in Cedar County. Controversy followed him there when he entered into a lawsuit against a neighboring parish for \$300.00, which was found by the court to rightfully belong to the parish of Constance.<sup>7</sup> Shortly thereafter, he was transferred to Winnebago. He arrived in March or April of 1904.<sup>8</sup>

Father Schell apparently wasted little time in establishing his presence at Homer and on the nearby reservation. On May 10, he wrote to Katharine Drexel enclosing a copy of a report he had submitted to Bishop Scannell. In the report, he stated that he had found nine older Indians who related that their families had once been Catholic, and he continued that the Winnebagoes, individually and in council, were opposed to "any and all kinds of missionary work" on the reservation. The missionary described the destructive effects of the sale of heirship lands, and the corruptive influence of the nearby town of Homer. He related that ninety-five percent of all the Indian money went to Homer, a "town of 300 people [that] sells more whisky than any town with a population

of 6,000.” He further believed that it would be physically and morally impossible for a priest to live on the reservation.<sup>9</sup> In his letter, he recommended that a 30’x60’ church be built at Winnebago, and repeated his belief that the priest must stay at Homer. He concluded that many white people robbed and degraded the Indians, and he predicted “I will meet bitter opposition before I have changed many conditions and circumstances. I know Secretary Hitchcock and I have no doubt he will help me...”<sup>10</sup>

During the 1890s, the pastor of St. Mary’s Church in nearby Hubbard had served the mission parishes of Homer and Winnebago Reservation. Since there were no appropriate accommodations for a priest on the reservation, and in the absence of any specific instructions from the bishop,<sup>11</sup> Father Schell apparently assumed that he would make the Homer parish his headquarters from which to serve the Winnebago people. The priest arrived in Homer and promptly informed the parishioners that they must repair the church, build a rectory for him, and provide a buggy and team of horses for his transportation needs. He requested or demanded – depending upon whose testimony is accepted – the sum of \$4,000, eighty percent of which was to be provided by two prominent families, the Ashfords and O’Connors. The parishioners of St. Cornelius rejected his plan. They did not believe that there were enough Catholics in the area to support an independent parish, and many felt that Father Schell was usurping the rights of Father English, their pastor who lived in Hubbard.<sup>12</sup> This personal conflict with two of the leading Catholic families of Homer colored the subsequent federal investigation and had serious repercussions for Father Schell.



Father Joseph Schell, "The Fighting Priest"  
Source: The Omaha Illustrated Bee, March 5, 1905

News of the controversy had certainly reached Bishop Scannell by early June, but was not as yet a cause of serious concern. On June 6, he wrote Mother Katharine acknowledging the missionary's recommendation that a church must be built on the reservation. He related that he had not given Father Schell any specific instructions about his duties on the reservation, and that he looked forward to meeting with the priest at the annual clergy retreat later in the month to discuss the needs on the reservation. The prelate also asked Mother Drexel to continue paying the salary in installments "because of a possibility of my having to put another priest in charge after a while."<sup>13</sup>

The conflict continued to simmer into the month of July. Homer banker C. J. O'Connor responded to an inquiry from the bishop in early July "relative to the controversy that exists here." The Homer banker and businessman affirmed that he was generally supportive of the priest's efforts. He stated that the priest had good relations with the Winnebagoes, with the exception of one "quarter breed" who had evidently made critical comments publicly about the priest. He further praised Father Schell's efforts to settle four German Catholic families on the reservation. O'Connor believed that they would provide a good moral example to the Indians. The banker also reported that he himself had opposed Father Schell's plan to build a rectory at Homer for two reasons. First, there were only five or six families in the community who could be counted on for financial support. Second, Father English was his pastor and friend, and O'Connor was unwilling to do anything that might injure or offend him.<sup>14</sup>

As the Nebraska summer heated-up during July and August, so did the aura of controversy over the conduct of Father Schell. On July 11, 1904, the Winnebago Tribal

Council sent a series of resolutions in support of Agent Horace Wilson and Father Joseph Schell to Secretary of the Interior Hitchcock, Bishop Scannell, Mother Katharine Drexel, and the Sioux City Tribune. The resolutions condemned unnamed “soulless speculators and grafters who have ruined our tribe.” The resolution further stated that these speculators were attempting, “in person and through other churchmen of influence,” to spread false rumors about Father Schell and seek his removal.<sup>15</sup>

On August 8, Bishop Scannell responded to Katharine Drexel regarding a newspaper clipping she had sent to him. The clipping was from the Tillamook Headlight, dated July 21, 1904. The headline read “A Dangerous Man – Father Schell Maligns Archbishop Christie in a Scandalous Lying Manner.” Written across the top in what appears to be Mother Katharine’s handwriting were the words: “Is it true that this infamous man Schell is deceiving you also?”<sup>16</sup> The bishop replied that indeed it was the same man who was serving the Winnebagoes, but he urged her to pay no attention to the article, as it was “anonymous, vituperative, and vindictive.” The article had been published in Oregon some months after Father Schell had arrived in Nebraska, so the bishop was not convinced that the verbal attack on the Archbishop of Portland was the work of the priest. He noted that he had received Father Schell into the Diocese of Omaha at the special request of Bishop Charles J. O’Reilly because it would have been “unpleasant for the bishop to have official relation with Father Schell.” He observed that neither Archbishop Alexander Christie nor Bishop O’Reilly had ever said a word against the moral character of Father Schell, and that indeed, both had recommended him. Bishop Scannell remarked that when Father Schell took charge, the Winnebagoes were being

systematically robbed and morally corrupted. The priest was working cooperatively with federal officials to destroy the power of the bootleggers and traders who were exploiting the Indians. The bishop further believed that the priest had incurred the enmity of those who were exploiting the Indians and he confided that pressure had been exerted upon him to remove Father Schell. However, the prelate was convinced that "it was high time that some one should do what he was doing for those poor people. He is an active young man, is full of resources and I am anxious to give him a fair trial." Scannell promised that should any reliable information regarding Father Schell's unfitness for the position reach him, he would notify her immediately.<sup>17</sup>

Four days later, Father Schell wrote to the bishop to remind him that he had not received any income since Mother Drexel had sent him a check for \$100 in March. He was still living at the "Indian hotel," a boarding house, and had to rely on Catholic settlers or pay out of his own pocket for transportation. The priest badly needed a house and a buggy and team of horses for himself, and he had his eye on a plot of land one mile east of the agency for a possible church site. He optimistically reported that he had been successful in gaining the confidence of the Indians "beyond expectation." Recently, the reluctant missionary had been obliged to participate in Winnebago celebration. He reported that dog meat was the principal dish served: "Each one helped himself with his fingers out of three iron pots, three feet in diameter and two feet deep. I did not feel hungry all day, do not feel so now, but sacrifices of taste and feelings and of comfort are necessary to reach the souls of these 1,200 Indians."<sup>18</sup>

The priest observed that his effort to obtain Catholic settlers was promising. He believed that their practical daily example to their Indian neighbors would be a much more effective means of converting them than any sermons that might be preached, and that good example would help to undo the damages caused by graft and corruption. Ever a font of energy and large ideas, the missionary reported that he was working out a plan to reduce all Indian titles into one form, thus reducing the paper work, eliminating the need for lawyers, and removing the difficulties and delays of land sales.

Schell related that the people of Homer were superficially friendly to him even though he was a threat to the thriving whisky business which some of them conducted with the Indians. He felt that they realized that he, as a priest, could not “allow the Indians to lose their morals and their souls with their money.” He reported that Secretary of the Interior Hitchcock had promised him help with the situation at Homer, and the priest hoped to hear from him soon.<sup>19</sup>

On August 27, Bishop Scannell wrote to Katharine Drexel that he was satisfied with the work done by Father Schell. He appeared to have the confidence of both the Winnebago people and the government officials. The bishop enclosed newspaper clippings that illustrated the difficulties faced by the priest. He hoped that a church structure and dwelling might be provided for the priest before winter set in.<sup>20</sup>

Mother Drexel’s concerns were evidently not allayed. Two days later, on August 29, she appealed in confidence to the Director of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Father William Ketcham, for information concerning events at Winnebago. She enclosed letters from Bishop Scannell and Father Schell and newspaper clippings relative to



matters both in Oregon and at Winnebago, and asked that Ketcham consider the matter confidential since “unpleasant results might ensue from the fact that I have sent you these letters.” She requested that Father Ketcham reroute his return trip from Indian Territory so as to include a visitation to Winnebago. She felt that in his capacity as Director of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, he might investigate the situation without drawing attention to the fact that she had shared private correspondence of the bishop with him. She stated, “I am dubious about that ‘settler scheme’- whites I presume. What do you think of it?” She was also much bothered by the newspaper coverage of events at Winnebago. Again, she did not understand why Father Schell had attempted to renovate the church and build a rectory at Homer. This seemed to create a cloud of controversy that had nothing to do with his mission. Although troubled about Father Schell, because of the reports from Oregon and from Nebraska, she had not concluded that he must be replaced. She wrote, “Apparently this priest is proving himself an active friend of the Indians – whether wisely, or unwisely, I cannot say.”<sup>21</sup>

Then, on September 7, Bishop Scannell informed Mother Katharine that he felt compelled to replace Father Schell at Winnebago because “The latter has made himself quite obnoxious to the traders and to others that I am satisfied that a change is advisable.” Scannell added that he had sent Father Augustine Colaneri, Vicar General of the Diocese of Omaha, to investigate matters. Colaneri reported that a church on the reservation was an absolute necessity. He observed that the Protestants had made little impact on the Winnebago people, and that it was the general opinion among both Indians and whites, including government officials, that only a priest could be successful. The bishop noted

that Father Schell was in Washington, D.C., but that he would not permit the latter to return to the reservation. He would instead appoint another priest as soon as she responded.<sup>22</sup>

On September 16, Bishop Scannell reported to Mother Katharine that Father Schell had returned to Omaha two days earlier and had proceeded to Winnebago to settle his affairs. He had forwarded her check to Father Schell and would send a priest to Winnebago as soon as Schell departed, “which must be in two weeks.” Scannell continued to press for construction of a church on the reservation as soon as possible. He stated that Father Colaneri informed him that “two wealthy Catholic business men” who lived near the reservation would be glad to extend hospitality to a priest, and that they said they would build a house for him.<sup>23</sup>

Ten days later, Father Schell, seemingly unconcerned about his removal, wrote to Bishop Scannell from a hospital in Sioux City, Iowa. He stated that he had settled his affairs in Homer: “The six months continual strain of mind and body was telling on me. I could not eat or sleep. In a few days I’ll be up again. I have at least the consolation of having accomplished what everybody said to be impossible, that is, to deliver the Indians from the grafters and whiskey dealers. Now any priest has a clear road to teach them religion because all the demoralizing features are removed.” The priest continued that the Department of the Interior was finally acting to clean up the whiskey trade and to prevent the collection of over \$120,000 in fraudulent notes held against individual Winnebagoes. Soon, about twenty persons would be banned from future business on the reservation. He concluded that he would be in Omaha as soon as he was dismissed from the hospital.<sup>24</sup>

However, contrary to Father Schell's assessment, the most dramatic part of the story lay ahead, not behind.

Father Schell wrote to Mother Katharine from Homer on October 4, 1904, informing her that Bishop Scannell had told him that he was not going to send another priest to Winnebago. Schell was saddened that the mission was to be given up. He reiterated that he had removed all of the evil influences that had threatened the morals of the Indians and that now "almost any priest can do the work and instruct them." He optimistically believed that all of the Winnebagoes could be baptized within one year, and added that "they all say that they are Catholic the same as their parents were who told them about the Church. Yet they are not baptized." He requested that Mother Katharine do something to get a priest for Winnebago immediately since the Indian people seemed to have so much confidence in Catholic priests.

Father Schell then launched an attack on the Ashford Brothers and the O'Connor family of Homer as the chief culprits in the exploitation and demoralization of the Indians. He stated, "after having refused their bribes to overlook their methods, they became my bitterest enemies and did all they could to discourage the Right Reverend Bishop." He blamed the Ashford Brothers for the publication of misinformation that Mother Drexel was about to spend \$100,000 on the reservation. The priest claimed that they did so to ridicule religious work among the Indians, but this was certainly false because the Ashfords were well-known active Catholics.<sup>25</sup> If, indeed, they were the source of the stories in the Sioux City newspapers, it more likely represented an attempt

to raise the values of their numerous real estate holdings in Homer, and in Thurston and Dakota counties.

Although he had been relieved of his post at Winnebago, Father Schell carried his crusade to government officials in Washington, D.C. While there, he gave an interview to the Washington Post in which he made a series of accusations regarding the situation at Winnebago. He charged that the town of Homer was the center of activities that both defrauded and demoralized the Winnebago people. Specifically, he described the illegal sale of liquor to the Indians, the granting of excessive lines of credit which resulted in the forced sale of Indian lands, price gauging on merchandise, and money lending at usurious rates.<sup>26</sup> In Washington, Father Schell was referred to Commissioner of Indian Affairs William A. Jones. According to the Schell interview, Jones stated that he was well aware of the situation at Winnebago, but was unable to do anything about it because Congress had not appropriated any funds for enforcement. The priest was quoted as replying, "this is astonishing. Who is supposed to protect the Indians if you cannot do it?" Commissioner Jones, according to the newspaper account, then said that he would do whatever possible about the situation, but he expressed doubt concerning his department's ability to do anything significant until Congress appropriated the money.<sup>27</sup>

The Washington Post interview resulted in a federal investigation of conditions at Winnebago and escalated a local conflict between the missionary and some Homer businessmen into a national conflict involving officials at the highest levels of the United States government and the American Catholic Church. Commissioner W. A. Jones ordered W. O. Wright, Supervisor of Indian Schools, to conduct an investigation of

Father Schell's allegations. Jones included a transcription of the newspaper interview and directed him to "visit Father Schell and take his testimony, in writing, on each of the matters set out in the article referred to." He further ordered that sworn testimony was to be taken from any and all persons who might have knowledge of conditions at Winnebago and that "no effort should be spared by you to put the office in possession of facts upon which some prompt and definite action can be taken to remedy the conditions said to exist." The commissioner concluded that special efforts must be made to allow Father Schell to prove his allegations.<sup>28</sup>

Inspector Wright arrived in Sioux City, Iowa, on October 5. His first duty was to interview Father Schell. The Omaha Daily Bee reported that the inspector and Winnebago Agent H. G. Wilson held two meetings with Father Schell. The first was at St. Joseph's hospital where the paper reported that Father Schell was recuperating from exhaustion.<sup>29</sup> However, in his report, Inspector Wright claimed that he had found the priest at St. Joseph Hospital in Sioux City "recovering from a drunken debauch."<sup>30</sup> The ground rules for the investigation were worked out at a second meeting at the Mondamin Hotel in Sioux City. At his request, Father Schell was granted permission to be present during the testimony of Winnebago witnesses. The priest feared that they might not have the courage to testify without his presence.<sup>31</sup> The investigation then moved to the agency.

Inspector Wright decided to hold the hearings in the cramped office at the agency, rather than in Homer, in an effort to avoid sensationalized publicity of the events in the local newspapers.<sup>32</sup> However, this was not to be the case, as two regional newspapers had already inserted themselves into the fray. Father Schell's trip to Washington had been

covered by Republican Edward Rosewater's Omaha Daily Bee, which associated itself with the missionary's efforts to uncover fraud on the reservation.<sup>33</sup> In Sioux City, Iowa, the independent Sioux City Tribune, "the Indians' friend," also championed the priest's cause. The latter requested that it be named the official organ for the investigation, but Inspector Wright demurred. Father Schell promised the inspector that he would not speak to the reporters, but Wright later claimed that the priest himself had reported for both papers.<sup>34</sup>

The Sioux City Tribune's initial report of the investigation was headlined "Hope to Whitewash." According to anonymous sources, unnamed Homer businessmen had circulated the rumor that Father Schell had offered to withdraw his charges in return for a bribe of \$4,000.<sup>35</sup> Father Schell, of course, denied the charge. The Tribune also published a list of sixteen reform measures suggested by their champion. The Omaha Daily Bee indirectly questioned the sincerity of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs by noting that he had given Inspector Wright neither the authority to compel testimony, nor the budget to cover the expenses of a lengthy investigation.<sup>36</sup>

Testimony began on October 12, when Father Schell repeated his public charges that an organized effort to defraud the Indians of both their land and money existed in Homer, Nebraska. However, in his testimony, he specifically named the O'Connors and the Ashfords as the ringleaders. Father Schell then proceeded to question the sincerity of Commissioner Jones. He stated that the Commissioner already had all of the facts from previous inspectors and from Agent Wilson. He further argued that the sole purpose of

the present investigation was to whitewash Jones who had forewarned the Homer merchants of the impending investigation.<sup>37</sup>

During the preliminary newspaper skirmishes, prior to the opening of the investigation, Father Schell had claimed to be employed by Mother Drexel. The claim was reported in the Sioux City and Omaha papers and repeated in the Washington Post.<sup>38</sup> In Pennsylvania, Mother Mercedes, who was acting as mother superior in Mother Katharine's absence, received a telegram on October 9, from the Sioux City Journal which stated that Father Schell had made some rather serious charges against Commissioner Jones, and had claimed that he was acting as Mother Drexel's representative. The newspaper requested confirmation of the relationship.<sup>39</sup> Mother Mercedes, acting in Mother Katharine's name, immediately responded, "statements made by Schell entirely without foundation, is not acting as my representative, know nothing of his actions."<sup>40</sup> She then telegraphed Father William Ketcham at the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions in Washington, D.C., concerning the situation, and requested, "please deny strenuously."<sup>41</sup> The next day, Mother Mercedes wrote to Father Ketcham that she believed Father Schell's claim was probably based on the fact that Mother Katharine had agreed to pay Bishop Scannell for the salary of a priest at Winnebago, but that it was Bishop Scannell who had hired him. She continued that the priest had been removed from the position, and that she believed, albeit erroneously, that Mother Drexel had had no communication with Father Schell.<sup>42</sup> Two days later, Pennsylvania Congressman Edward Morrell, husband of Louise Drexel Morrell, wrote to Commissioner Jones. He repeated the denial that Father Schell represented his sister-in-law, and reported that he was certain

that she would grieve when she heard that she had been quoted “as adversely criticizing the present very excellent management of Indian Affairs.”<sup>43</sup>

The Sioux City Journal, the chief competitor of the Sioux City Tribune, obviously unaware that Bishop Scannell had already removed the priest, reported that Father Schell’s accusations against Commissioner Jones would undoubtedly result in his removal. The paper observed that Father Ketcham had called on Commissioner Jones to assure him that Catholics did not support Father Schell, whom the bureau director characterized as “crazy.” Father Ketcham was reported to have claimed that Father Schell, when in Oregon, had plotted to embarrass Bishop Christie, and that he expected that some sort of ecclesiastical action would soon be taken against the priest.<sup>44</sup> In response, the Sioux City Tribune reported that the repudiation of Father Schell was a false report on the part of the Sioux City Journal, “a newspaper evidently in sympathy with the Winnebago corruptionists.”<sup>45</sup> In defense of their hero, the Sioux City Tribune cited correspondence from Katharine Drexel in support of the priest’s claim that she had employed him. As to Father Ketcham’s statement that he was crazy, Schell stated that he was aware that pressures had been brought on the Catholic hierarchy to secure his removal.<sup>46</sup> On October 15, the Sioux City Journal reported that Father Ketcham had traveled to Baltimore to discuss the matter with Cardinal James Gibbons. The Cardinal was reported to be “very indignant” and “much annoyed” by Father Schell’s public attacks on the integrity of the Commissioner. At the same time, the prelate recognized the right of the priest to pursue his concerns within governmental channels. Father Ketcham again stated that while Mother Drexel did support the Winnebago mission, she did not



support Father Schell personally.<sup>47</sup> Adding to the confusion, Bishop Scannell was reported to have denied that Father Schell had been removed, but stated that he soon would be. Having just returned from St. Louis, and perhaps surprised by a reporter's question, the bishop said that he was not sufficiently aware of the facts at Winnebago to comment upon them.<sup>48</sup>

The newspaper controversy heated-up on October 16, when the Sioux City Journal headlined "Father Schell is Disowned," and provided evidence to support its assertion. The paper reprinted the texts of Mother Mercedes' denial that the priest acted in Katharine Drexel's name, Father Ketcham's telegram in which he stated Catholic support for Commissioner Jones, and it cited Bishop Scannell's statement that the priest was to be removed. Another article reported that Cardinal Gibbons regretted the attacks on Father Schell and had written to him advising that he confine himself to missionary work.<sup>49</sup>

The Sioux City Tribune responded the next day with the headline "That Mother Drexel 'telegram' Exposed." The paper accused its rival of a "ruthless personal attack upon Father Schell" because of his investigation of corruption at Winnebago. The Tribune accused the Journal of dragging the name of Mother Drexel into the controversy by publishing the text of the telegram in which she allegedly denied that the priest was acting as her representative. The Tribune cited a Washington dispatch to the Omaha Daily Bee that stated, "Mother Katharine is now visiting the Catholic Indian Missions in the interior of Arizona, at a point 150 miles from a railroad station or post office." The article continued that Father Schell's remarks had been misrepresented from the start. It

was true that he had questioned the sincerity of the investigation, given the fact that previous investigations had resulted in no significant actions being taken. However, the Tribune continued, he had never mentioned the name of Commissioner Jones in connection with the grafters. The mother superior in Pennsylvania, who had issued the telegram in Mother Katharine's name, was misinformed about Father Schell's comments, both about Commissioner Jones and about the priest's connections with Mother Katharine. The paper stated that at no time had Father Schell implicated Mother Katharine in his comments regarding the commissioner. He had only stated that Mother Katharine had sent him to the reservation. The article continued that Father Ketcham had likewise been deceived regarding Father Schell's statements. The paper quoted from a letter of Mother Drexel to Father Schell dated April 27, in which she had promised to supply the salary for a priest at Winnebago, and that Bishop Scannell had notified her of his appointment. She wrote, "I am glad to learn the Indians will have the privilege of a priest residing amongst them. The need seemed imperative if the faith was to be kept alive amongst the Indians."<sup>50</sup>

In the same edition, the Sioux City Tribune published an editorial in which it attacked its competitor and strongly defended Father Schell. The Tribune asked why an honest attempt to eliminate corruption, graft, and vice would be opposed by any newspaper, that supposedly was devoted to the good of society? The Tribune faulted the Journal for criticizing the methods of Father Schell and for calling for his removal. The paper also accused the Journal of distorting the relationship between Father Schell and Mother Drexel. Quoting from the telegram, the paper pointed out that her simple

statement, "In Father Schell's attack on the commissioner he does not represent her," became the headline "Disowns Father Schell." The Tribune then questioned whether it made any difference whom he represented, considering the justice of his cause. Further, it accused unnamed correspondents of "eastern newspapers" of gross and willful exaggeration in the claim that Father Schell had called Commissioner Jones a grafter. The editor conceded that while the priest's criticism of the commissioner's very public announcement of the investigation was severe, at no time did he accuse the high ranking public official of illegal behavior. Yet, the strategy resulted in the forewarning of the subjects of the investigation and on those grounds was open to criticism.<sup>51</sup>

The Sioux City Journal responded to the Sioux City Tribune the following day. One article reported that Inspector A.O. Wright and Agent Horace G. Wilson had visited Sioux City on their way to Omaha. While not directly responding to Father Schell or the Tribune, Agent Wilson stated that the work of the federal government on the reservation had been grossly misrepresented. He reported that he had visited with Commissioner Jones in February regarding the sale of liquor and its effects on the Indians. Furthermore, he had spoken with Judge Munger of the federal court in Omaha regarding stiffer sentences in order to stem the tide of bootlegging. He lamented that attempts to secure additional funds to prosecute the illegal liquor trade had been denied by Congress, and that Thurston County, because of its small property tax base, was unable to finance additional investigations and prosecutions.<sup>52</sup> An accompanying article cited Earl Meredith, the Sioux City manager of the Postal Telegraph-Cable Company, who verified the authenticity of the telegram in which Mother Mercedes had denied that Father Schell

represented Mother Katharine in his statements about Commissioner Jones.<sup>53</sup> The following day, the Tribune responded that Mother Drexel was indeed in the West and that the denial was issued in her name. However, it continued, Father Schell had never claimed that he was speaking in her name when he made critical remarks about Commissioner Jones.<sup>54</sup>

Meanwhile, in Omaha, the Daily Bee continued the attack on Commissioner Jones. “Unofficial sources” reported that Jones had met with unidentified Homer businessmen in Chicago during the previous spring. The Commissioner was reported to have assured the merchants that they would be assisted in their efforts to collect outstanding debts contracted by individual members of the tribe.<sup>55</sup> Jones was reported to have acknowledged that a meeting did take place, but he insisted “nothing but what was best for the Indian was discussed.”<sup>56</sup>

As the newspaper controversy unfolded in Sioux City and Omaha, the investigation continued at Winnebago. Up to this point, Inspector A.O. Wright had barred the newspapers from attending the sessions, but had allowed all of the principals to be in attendance. On October 22, he ruled that only the witness, the stenographer, and himself would be allowed in the room during testimony. According to the paper, the reason for the change was that Father Schell had granted an interview to the Sioux City Tribune on the previous day, and, according to that paper, John Ashford had likewise furnished reports to the Sioux City Journal. Perhaps equally important in the inspector’s decision were the repeated interruptions of the testimony by Father Schell and the other parties who were involved in attempts to lead the witnesses.<sup>57</sup>

Father Schell responded to his exclusion in the newspapers. He turned Inspector Wright's reasons for excluding the contending parties around, charging that the Inspector wished to shape the testimony of the Indians to fit his own preconceptions. The priest claimed that the Indian witnesses would not testify truthfully unless he personally was in the room to encourage them to do so. He announced that he was not finished with the matter. Resorting to a racial epithet, that "there was a nigger in the woodpile," he threatened to carry on his crusade in the courts and at the highest levels of government in order that he might "justify himself in the eyes of the world."<sup>58</sup> Inspector Wright replied the next day in both the Journal and the Tribune. He conceded Father Schell's description of conditions at Winnebago stating, "No reservation in the United States presents such a deplorable state of affairs as exists here regarding drunkenness and licentiousness." However, he dismissed the priest's characterizations of the investigation: "The statements of Father Schell are such a mixture of truth and falsehood that it is useless to attempt to reply to them. The only way I can account for much of what he says is that he is partially insane and nor responsible for many of the things he says."<sup>59</sup>

The voice of the Winnebago and Omaha peoples only occasionally emerged in the newspaper coverage of the day, despite the fact that the controversy and investigation were ostensibly about their welfare; and, that voice was filtered through interpreters, stenographers, spokespersons, reporters and editors. The Sioux City Tribune reported that Jim Smith No.2, a member of the Winnebago Tribal Council, confronted Inspector Wright, accusing him of siding with the Homer merchants during the investigation.<sup>60</sup> Smith apparently stated that he had seen investigators come and go, but there were never

any results that improved the conditions of the Winnebagoes. He stated that the Indians would not appear unless Father Schell was present to assist them. Many believed in the priest and that he wanted nothing from them. He continued that the Indians were ashamed at the inspector's description of conditions at Winnebago that appeared in the newspapers. Through an interpreter, he stated, "You have said we are the worst and most immoral tribe in the country. There are bad Indians, but not as bad as the white men are and in no line as bad as the Homer merchants.... They teach us dishonesty and immorality and all under your protection."<sup>61</sup> Eleven days later, the Tribune reported that Father Schell had been invited to attend a meeting of the Omaha Tribal Council where the Omahas, speaking through attorney and tribal member Hiram Chase, applauded Father Schell's work at Winnebago. They articulated their concerns about liquor, prices of merchandise, the interest rates charged by white traders, the condition of their school, and the loss of the tribal land base. These Omaha representatives further extended an invitation to Omaha Daily Bee owner Edward Rosewater to visit the Omaha Reservation before he traveled to Washington, D.C.<sup>62</sup>

The investigation briefly became a minor issue in the congressional election of 1904. Patrick McKillip, the Fusionist Democrat challenger, and J. J. McCarthy, the Republican incumbent visited the agency. Contacted later by long distance telephone, they split on the issue. Challenger Patrick McKillip expressed his support for Father Schell's efforts. Incumbent, J.J. McCarthy, while taking a stand against corruption, felt that Father Schell's charges were unwarranted, and he supported the present investigation of Inspector Wright.<sup>63</sup>

During the first two weeks of November, Agent Wright completed a preliminary report that was sent to Commissioner Jones. On the thirteenth, he was taken sick while visiting in Sioux City, was diagnosed with uremic fever, and confined to bed in the home of a close friend.<sup>64</sup> Four days later, he was sufficiently recovered to travel to his home in Madison, Wisconsin.<sup>65</sup> The following June, Nebraskans received word that he had passed away. Although the final report on conditions at Winnebago was never completed, the preliminary report provided an ample statement of the conclusions reached by the inspector.<sup>66</sup>

Inspector Wright had submitted a twenty-one page report with accompanying testimony to Commissioner Jones on November 16, 1904. The Inspector reminded the Commissioner that the investigation had been undertaken because of allegations made by Father Joseph Schell in an interview published in the Washington Post. He characterized the priest as “an ecclesiastical tramp who has no standing in the Catholic Church and who since this investigation began has been repudiated by its authorities in the worst public manner.”<sup>67</sup> He further remarked that the obstructionist tactics of the priest had forced him to take testimony in private, and that the affidavits produced by Father Schell were countered by those who claimed under oath that he had dictated the statements to them while the affiants were drunk.<sup>68</sup> The statements of the alleged victims were therefore worthless as testimony; and, the testimony of Father Schell, “the product of an insane fantasy,” was valuable only when collaborated by other witnesses. He further claimed that Father Schell had usurped the pastoral prerogatives of Father J. F. English, the pastor at Hubbard, who served Homer as a mission parish. The Inspector traced the root cause

of the call for an investigation to the April conflict between Father Schell and the O'Connor and Ashford families. Wright apparently accepted the unverified statements of Ashford and O'Connor family members that Father Schell had threatened that he would ruin both families financially if they did not accede to his demands.<sup>69</sup> Inspector Wright recommended that Father Schell be banned from any further work on reservations.<sup>70</sup>

The statement of Inspector Wright that he had first met Father Schell while the latter was drying out at St. Joseph Hospital in Sioux City, was especially damaging to the priest's credibility.<sup>71</sup> More than one witness alluded to the fact that Father Schell drank and smoked cigars in public, but only one minor witness suggested that his personal use of alcohol was in any way excessive.<sup>72</sup> The larger issue was his reported statements to groups of Indians that it was acceptable to take a drink.<sup>73</sup> His critics construed the priest's remarks as encouraging public drunkenness, and Winnebago Precinct Justice of the Peace Mark T. Hunter specifically testified that, "the drunkenness of the Indians is very much increased by his influence."<sup>74</sup> This particular aspect of the controversy reflected the ambiguity of Native American citizenship in the legal environment of the day. Many of the Winnebago were allotted, and therefore, were citizens of the United States. This ambiguity was reflected in the correspondence of United States Court Commissioner Thomas L. Sloan, an attorney and Omaha tribal member, with Commissioner Jones. In July, 1904, he wrote to the commissioner, "These Indians are citizens of the United States and have been allotted lands and I do not know whether I have the authority to arrest them for drunkenness and confine them in the guardhouse at the agency or not...."<sup>75</sup> Three months later, Sloan informed Jones that the United States "owes to the Indians to



control the liquor traffic among them.” He based his opinion firmly in recent history. He argued that the United States had destroyed traditional Indian means of social control and had left an empty legal shell in the wake. He felt that this resulted in a loss to Indian communities and the country as a whole. Sloan further observed that “The Indian instead of being as good as he was in his original state becomes a degenerate and with no opportunity of developing in open competition with other citizens of the country.” The United States, in turn, was losing good citizens.<sup>76</sup>

While Inspector Wright had exposed what he believed Father Schell’s motives to have been, conditions at Homer were a matter of public knowledge. Indeed the Inspector stated of Father Schell’s allegations, “they are mostly founded on fact, but are grossly exaggerated....”<sup>77</sup> Again, Thomas L. Sloan wrote to Commissioner Jones, “I would respectfully report that much of what Mr. Schell says is true, but some of his statements are rather magnified.”<sup>78</sup> Sloan identified three areas of government concern among the Winnebagoes: drunkenness, illegal marriage relations, and the medicine dances. He corrected some errors of fact in the statements of Father Schell, and related that the troublesome priest had not once filed a complaint with him about public drunkenness. The men who had furnished the most information upon which arrests were made were C. J. O’Connor and John Ashford.<sup>79</sup> In Father Schell’s defense, it must be noted that he had repeatedly stated that he was more concerned with the apprehension of the leaders of the ring, rather than with the prosecution of the individual bootlegger or public drunk.<sup>80</sup> In Inspector Wright’s view, the sale of liquor was, in the long run, harmful to the gross receipts of Homer merchants, despite the large amount of Indian trade which it may have

brought to town. The excessive debt, which was a curse to the Indians, was also a curse in the long run to the white merchants who carried it.<sup>81</sup>

Inspector Wright found that there was adequate competition in Homer to insure fair prices. He did discover, as charged by Father Schell, that the merchants gathered at the reservation on "pay day" in order to collect their debts, but he found no evidence of "check snapping" or coercion. Local lawyers and even the Justice of the Peace went to the agency on "pay day" to collect their fees and fines.<sup>82</sup> The Inspector found that the merchants charged a "premium" on most Indian charge accounts. He concluded that although this was a violation of the law, it was a practical necessity of doing business on or near the reservation due to the difficulty of collection.<sup>83</sup>

Inspector Wright's report noted "In my opinion there is no place in the United States where the defiance of the law has been so public and the sale of liquor to the Indians has been so thoroughly organized as in Homer, Nebraska."<sup>84</sup> Yet, no effort was made to either identify or apprehend the organizers. He noted that liquor sales in Homer had virtually ceased since the arrest of a number of bootleggers earlier in the summer, but he refused to believe that the "sudden virtue" of Homer was permanent, despite the protests of the town's leading citizens.<sup>85</sup> Inspector Wright made a number of recommendations beyond banning Father Schell from future reservation work. He recommended that Indian heirship lands be paid for in installments so that actual farmers, rather than land speculators, could purchase the lands, that leasing be limited to resident farmers who had purchased heirship lands, and that no leases be made to speculators or persons living on lands owned by speculators. Finally, he recommended that the Omaha

and Winnebago Reservations be combined so that consistent standards for leasing and sales might be maintained.<sup>86</sup> Fittingly, the next acts of the drama would be played out in the federal court at Omaha and in Washington, D.C.<sup>87</sup>

Prior to the opening session of the grand jury in Omaha, Father Schell took the offensive against his detractors. In an interview with the Sioux City Journal, he claimed that his relationship with Mother Katharine Drexel had been misrepresented, and offered a new version of that relationship. He stated that seven months earlier he had been called from Oregon to investigate the grafters on the Winnebago Reservation. The priest claimed that this was done at the request of Mother Katharine. He remarked that the Catholic Church wished to avoid controversy, but that he could not walk away from the battle for fear of controversy. His only motive, he related, was the personal satisfaction of a “duty faithfully and fearlessly performed.” He went on to describe Agent Wright’s investigation as a “farce,” and stated that he felt justified in attacking Commissioner Jones. He further remarked that “I had similar experience in the timber frauds in Oregon and this investigation at Winnebago is simply child’s play as compared with the Oregon investigations.” He concluded that he had asked Commissioner Jones to ban from the reservation several of the Homer businessmen, including C. J., Cornelius and Harold O’Connor, and brothers John, Thomas and George Ashford.<sup>88</sup>

The Omaha World-Herald reported on November 17 the opening of federal grand jury hearings in Omaha. The paper stated that all of the participants were in town to appear as witnesses, and that they talked freely and bitterly against each other. Father Schell repeated his charge that the bankers and moneylenders of Homer were profiting

from the free flow of whiskey in Homer. John Ashford, speaking on behalf of Ashford Brothers and the O'Connors, repeated their charge that Father Schell had threatened to ruin them if they did not contribute financially to his work. Father Schell denied that he had been removed as missionary to the Winnebagoes, stating, "I am still there, and shall remain as long as the battle is on." Bishop Scannell was quoted as saying, "He is not in charge as far as I am concerned, and I have nothing whatever to do with him." The priest was already dissatisfied with the grand jury proceedings. He wished to explain the "theories and causes" of conditions at Winnebago. The federal prosecutor insisted that he confine his testimony to verifiable facts. Father Schell reported that he planned to go to Washington later in the week to lay his case before President Roosevelt and Secretary of the Interior Hitchcock.<sup>89</sup> However, a new unexpected twist appeared in the plot.

On November 17, after his first day of testimony before the grand jury, Thurston County sheriff's deputies arrested Father Schell at the Merchant's Hotel. Later that evening, he was returned to Pender to face a charge of forgery. The charges stemmed from an attempt by Father Schell to convince Mary Little Walker and her husband to remove \$2,000 from C. J. O'Connor's Bank of Homer and deposit it in a bank in Sloan, Iowa. The warrant charged that the priest had forged Mrs. Little Walker's mark on the certificate of deposit.<sup>90</sup> The incident was one more episode in the on-going conflict with the leading businessmen of Homer, and it became another media event in the newspapers. The arrest was reported without elaboration in the Sioux City Journal and the Omaha World-Herald, but was presented as an elaborate plot to discredit the priest by the Sioux

City Tribune and the Omaha Daily Bee.<sup>91</sup> The priest promptly posted bond and returned to Omaha for a second day of testimony before the grand jury.<sup>92</sup>

Later, the same day, Schell boarded a train for Washington, D.C. where he hoped to meet with President Roosevelt. He was armed with a petition from the federal grand jury in Omaha requesting that the authorities in Washington listen to the priest.<sup>93</sup> The priest took a parting swipe at officials of the Roman Catholic Church: "It is an outrage and a scandal to see and to hear Catholic priests, bishops and archbishops who are entirely ignorant of the conditions at the Winnebago agency come out...to denounce my efforts to raise the moral standard of 1,100 degraded and much abused Indians." He condemned the clergy for standing by when they were aware of the deplorable conditions at Winnebago. Schell added that it was only through the efforts of Mother Katharine that a priest had been finally sent to the Winnebagoes, that his relationship with her had been misrepresented, and that the pressure brought to bear on Secretary Hitchcock by the clergy was due to the fact that he had exposed Catholic grafters. He went on to accuse Archbishop Alexander Christie of Portland of misappropriating money intended for the Indians and orphans. The cleric asked rhetorically, was he troublesome? "Yes, I admit it, but only for the wicked and unjust."<sup>94</sup> Immediately below the article was the announcement that William A. Jones would resign as Commissioner of Indian Affairs at the first of the year. The reasons cited were personal business and long-standing friction between Jones and the Secretary of the Interior.<sup>95</sup> Two days later, the appointment of Francis E. Leupp as the new Commissioner of Indian Affairs was announced.<sup>96</sup>

The Washington meetings were not, however, a foregone conclusion despite the fact that Edward Rosewater, owner of the Omaha Daily Bee, and a nationally prominent member of the Republican Party, had gone on ahead to arrange the meeting. Other personalities were at work to prevent the meeting and the conflict surfaced once again in the national press. Even as Father Schell was traveling east, the New York Times reported on November 19, that Patrick John Ryan, Archbishop of Philadelphia, advisor to Katharine Drexel, and member of the board of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, had visited the White House the previous day. Ryan assured President Roosevelt that Father Schell's accusations against Commissioner Jones in no way reflected the feelings of the American Catholic Church, and that the priest was acting on his own responsibility. The newspaper continued that Archbishop Ryan had encountered Secretary of the Interior Hitchcock, and the prelate repeated his position to the Secretary who assured him that the priest would not be received.<sup>97</sup> Sioux City and Omaha newspapers reported the story on the same day, but with elaborations. The Sioux City Journal stated that Father Ketcham had also been present, and that Archbishop Ryan had assured the president not only had the priest been removed, but also that he was no longer a priest or even a Catholic.<sup>98</sup> Perhaps caught off guard, the Omaha Daily Bee waited five days to report that Father Schell was in good standing with his church, even though he had been relieved of his position at Winnebago.<sup>99</sup>

In Washington, Secretary Hitchcock visited with Edward Rosewater on November 21, but refused to see Father Schell. He gave the reason that Schell did not represent Mother Drexel or the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, and that he had been

a persistent troublemaker in both Oregon and Nebraska.<sup>100</sup> Edward Rosewater visited with the president and was invited to lunch along with other prominent state-level Republican politicians and Alice Roosevelt. Father Schell was granted a brief time with the president. Both the president and Father Schell declined to speak about the matters discussed, but the latter announced that he was satisfied with the meeting. Schell also met with Bishop John Ireland of St. Paul, Minnesota, a member of the Board of Directors of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions. The subject of the meeting was confidential.<sup>101</sup>

In Nebraska, the federal grand jury indicted five lower level “bootleggers” for furnishing liquor to the Indians on November 18,<sup>102</sup> and two weeks later, issued a report regarding its investigation. The grand jury reported that it had listened to Father Schell’s testimony and had called the witnesses named by him, but they could not make any findings regarding the administration of the reservation over which the grand jury had jurisdiction. The report continued that the sale of liquor to the Indians and promiscuous sexual relations, which resulted in soaring rates of venereal disease, were major problems with which both state and federal authorities must deal.<sup>103</sup> In the pages of the Omaha Daily Bee, the grand jury confirmed the rectitude of their champion, Father Joseph Schell.

The Sioux City Tribune was even more effusive about the results of Schell’s trip to Washington, and was a bit pugnacious towards its rival, the Sioux City Journal. “Schell has won a Big Victory” a headline in the Tribune proclaimed. It reported that the trip’s success had exceeded the priest’s expectations, and that he claimed to have received justice. The Tribune recounted that other papers had reported that the president

had not received the priest, and that the actual interview lasted about one minute. The Tribune described in detail, presumably supplied by Father Schell, how Roosevelt had received him warmly, and had asked that he write a report for the new commissioner. Turning Secretary Hitchcock's public rebuke around, Schell stated that he could think of no reason why he would visit the outgoing Secretary of the Interior. The Tribune continued that Edward Rosewater had gone personally to visit Father Ketcham, Cardinal Gibbons and Archbishop Ryan to set the record straight. Archbishop John Ireland was reported to have received the priest warmly, but had called him to task for his public denunciation of the Church hierarchy. Rather arrogantly, Father Schell assured the Archbishop that he was merely "warning" his superiors. The priest announced that he was returning to the Winnebago Reservation, but not as a missionary. He hinted that the Indian office had some unspecified work that they wished for him to do. The reporter concluded that Father Schell had determined to devote the remainder of his life to work among the Indians, either as a priest or as a teacher for the federal government.<sup>104</sup>

In February 1905, the priest renewed his charges against the Homer merchants in the pages of the Omaha Daily Bee.<sup>105</sup> On April 14, the newspaper reported that Father Schell was lying in St. Joseph Hospital in Sioux City with a broken jaw, the victim of a severe beating by two Homer saloonkeepers against whom he had been gathering evidence. The paper continued that the two, Logan Lambert and Harry Rasdall, were under indictment in Omaha for selling liquor to the Indians.<sup>106</sup> A follow-up article in the Omaha Daily Bee reported that "the dastardly act which might have killed the victim but for his iron make-up" had served to stir up a demand for a clean-up at Homer.<sup>107</sup>



In June 1905, Francis E. Leupp made a surprise visit to the Winnebago Reservation. He announced that a Miss Scovel, an agent of the department disguised as a school teacher, had conducted a secret investigation of conditions at Winnebago. He stated that some leases would be revoked due to irregularities. Further, he informed reporters that he was appalled by the moral degradation of the tribe due to liquor sales. Enunciating a philosophy of self-help, he told the Winnebagoes in council that they were responsible for their own misery, and it was their love of liquor that had made them easy prey for the grafters. He added that the medicine dances, once important religiously, had degenerated into drunken revels. He threatened that if the whiskey were not kept away from the dances, he would outlaw them and withhold the income from the allotments. He stated that since the Supreme Court's In Re Heff decision of April 10, 1905, which overturned the conviction of a man who had sold liquor to an allotted Indian, it was increasingly imperative that the Indians control their own behavior. He happily reported that the offending saloons in Pender now refused to sell to Indians, and that the saloons in Homer were shut down. He promised vigorous enforcement of the law by the federal government on the reservation.<sup>108</sup>

It is unclear how long Father Schell remained in the vicinity of the Winnebago Reservation. His letter to Bishop Scannell, dated February 16, 1906, contained a scathing indictment of the bishop and a threat to expose alleged wrong doings. The return address was the home of William Sweeny in Emerson, Nebraska. Evidently, the bishop had attempted to force the priest to leave the area and the priest had threatened to take the bishop to court. Father Schell wrote, "Since you are so anxious that I should go and that

you have exhausted your last unjust means to make me go, I wish to say that I cannot go until justice is done as per contract.” The priest concluded with the warning that he had informed the Apostolic Delegate, Cardinal Gibbons, and Archbishop Ireland of conditions at Winnebago. He hoped to avoid the scandal of open court proceedings, but was prepared to go public. He warned that he had written four articles regarding the Church’s role in the timber swindles in Oregon and that another ten on the situation at Winnebago had been sent to the press. He warned, “the Indian question will be a national scandal and those in the Church who helped the corruptionists will get their just returns.” He concluded that he had completed a 200-page book entitled The Misdeeds of High Officers of the Catholic Church in America, that he had dedicated to the Pope.<sup>109</sup>

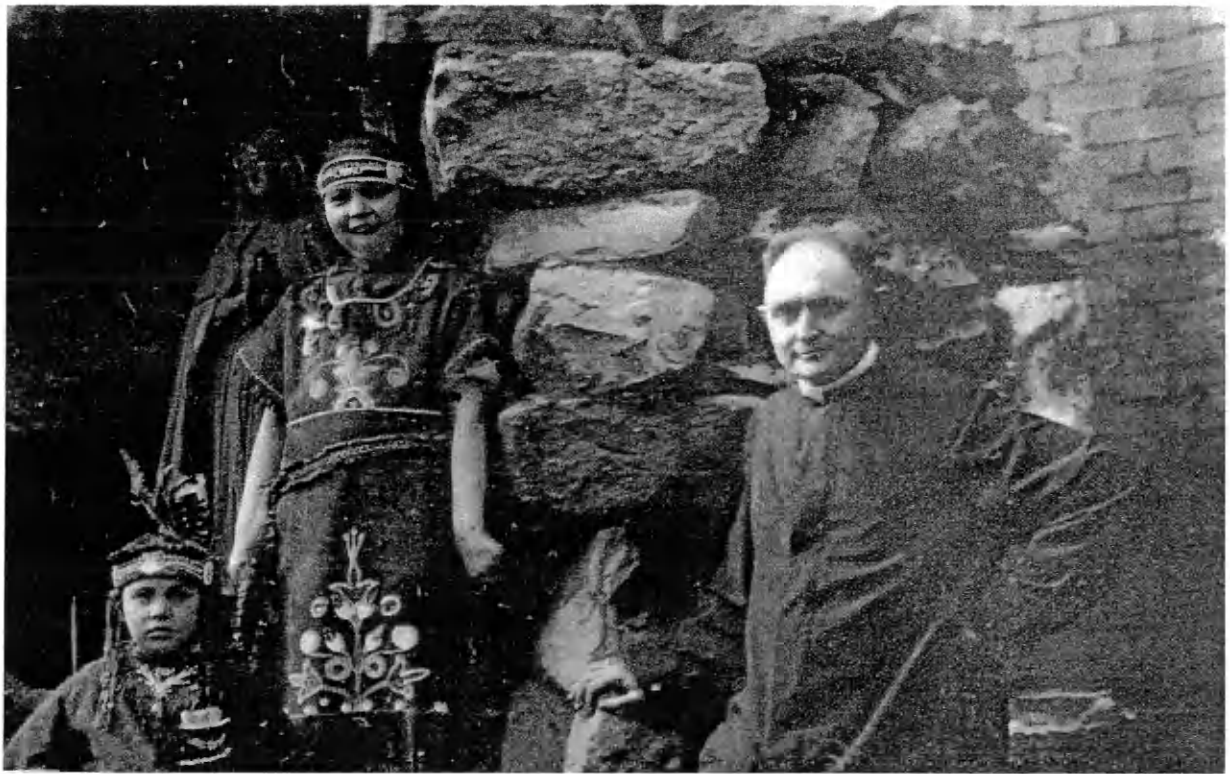
The controversy continued into 1908. On January 8, Father Schell responded to a request for paperwork from Monsignor A.M. Colaneri, Chancellor of the Diocese of Omaha. Writing from St. Ann’s Catholic Congregation in Saxon, Wisconsin, he stated, “I was never a tramp priest, I was never suspended and all my works, conduct and behavior can stand the light of day.... I remained on the reservation until I had all the proofs of the complicity of the Church of Omaha with the corrupt interests....” With his grandiosity in full bloom, he told the Chancellor, “The hardest man to be downed is the man who is right and fearless.” Perhaps, with an intended humorous twist, he closed, “With all the compliments of the season, I remain....”<sup>110</sup>

Father Schell made at least one more trip to Nebraska. The Winnebago Chieftain reprinted an item from the Walthill Times on Friday, November 16, 1909, that the priest had boarded a train en route to Rome to present his case before his religious superiors.

M. A. Bancroft, the Presbyterian editor and publisher, opined that though Father Schell had caused much conflict, he was a good man.<sup>111</sup> Yet, the conflicts caused at least in part by Father Schell continued to reverberate through community memory. In 1911, a newspaper advertising war between Winnebago merchants M. S. Mansfield and rival John Alam, a former friend and supporter of Father Schell, included a reference to the priest. Mansfield accused Alam of “playing a traitor’s part” under Father Schell. Whether the disloyalty was to his race, his class, or both is unknown.<sup>112</sup>

In September, 1904, Bishop Scannell had informed Mother Katharine that he would replace Father Schell as soon as the latter left the reservation.<sup>113</sup> There seems little chance that he could have foreseen that it would take over three years to secure the priest’s departure. As the time approached to select a new priest for the Winnebago people, Father Ketcham gently reminded the bishop that there were certain special traits necessary for an Indian missionary. These included “an understanding of the Indian disposition and character, patience, perseverance, solid character [and] temperate habits....”<sup>114</sup> Bishop Scannell believed that he had that man working in Cedar County, Nebraska. John Herman Griese was born in Germany on April 2, 1864. He entered the German Province in America of the Society of Jesus, completed his studies in Europe, and was assigned to the St. Francis Mission on the Rosebud Reservation of South Dakota. In 1899, after eleven years as a Jesuit, he requested and was granted release from his vows. His stated reasons were the rather enigmatic “an evil which I contracted in the novitiate made it necessary to change my manner of life.”<sup>115</sup> Presumably, he was writing of a nervous condition, which caused him to stutter. The second reason was perhaps the

most important, his elderly father required financial support. As a Jesuit, he was required to live by the vow of poverty; as a diocesan priest, he would receive a salary. His religious superior, Father James A. Rockliff, S.J., wrote to Bishop Scannell that Father Griese felt that “the routine of religious life was injurious to his health and because he wants to support his old and infirm father who is in poor circumstances...I regret that he leaves the society.”<sup>116</sup>



Father John Griese in a promotional photograph, about 1912  
Source: Archives of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions,  
Special Collections, Alumni Library, Marquette University

On July 20, 1900, Father Griese petitioned Bishop Scannell to join the Diocese of Omaha. He stated in part, "I would like to have more work and especially missionary work which is better adapted to my constitution. If Your Lordship could therefore make use of me for any work, I should gladly accept it. I am used to hard work and do not care for anything else, if only I can do some good for the salvation of souls"<sup>117</sup> Father Griese's petition was accepted.

Father Griese was at first assigned to Snyder and later to Constance, Nebraska, where he followed Father Schell as pastor. It appears that he was happy at Constance, despite some concerns that surfaced in his letters to the bishop. The growth of the nearby town of Crofton concerned him because it might result in the reduction of Constance to mission status. Another concern was a neighboring priest. Although he did not give any particulars about this matter, he may have been referring to Father Schell's attempts to resettle Cedar County Catholics in Thurston County. Finally, he continued to wrestle with his vocation.<sup>118</sup> On July 18, 1906, he asked the bishop to allow him to go to the Philippine Islands. He wrote, "It is not on account of any dissatisfaction or a desire for change, as I am perfectly satisfied here. But my motive for asking this is the great need for priests, and especially American priests, in these islands and consequently the great loss of souls for the church." He continued that he knew the sacrifices involved, but he felt that it might be God's will. He placed the matter in the bishop's hands as he felt that God's will was better known through the wishes of the bishop, rather than his own personal concerns.<sup>119</sup>

Throughout the fall and winter of 1906-1907, Father Griese took the steps necessary to transfer to the Philippines, and Bishop Scannell consented to the transfer.<sup>120</sup> Father Griese contacted Archbishop Jeremiah Harty of Manila. However, on March 22, 1907, he wrote to Bishop Scannell that it would be impossible for him to leave the Omaha Diocese. His aging parents, in Germany, were living on a rented farm, which they wished to leave. Their efforts to secure a new home were thwarted by the loss of a substantial part of their savings due to a bank failure.<sup>120</sup> Then, on August 5, he wrote to Bishop Scannell that his parents' difficulties were resolved and that he wished to depart for the Philippines in the fall. Father Griese reported that he planned to leave on September 15. He also asked if it would be possible for him to return to the Omaha Diocese if after some years he was afflicted with bad health or other concerns. The bishop responded that he might do so for up to two or three years as it would be unjust to ask the Omaha Diocese to support him in his declining years after he had spent his active years in Manila.<sup>121</sup>

A short five months later, on January 9, 1908, Father Griese requested that Bishop Scannell allow him to return to Nebraska. He complained that he suffered from fatigue, even though the weather had not yet gotten hot. He was also worried about his ability to master the languages necessary for effective missionary work. His knowledge of English and German was of little use to him in the Philippines. He was studying Spanish and would soon have to study Tagalog. He continued that he would like to have a parish, no matter how small, "where I could have a home."<sup>122</sup> Before the year was over, he would

be in Winnebago, Nebraska, which would be his home for the remaining thirty-seven years of his life.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Scannell, Bishop of Omaha, to Katharine Drexel, September 7, 1904. Archives of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament [ASBS], Bensalem, Pennsylvania.

<sup>2</sup> Scannell to Drexel, July 25, 1903, ASBS.

<sup>3</sup> Scannell to Drexel, December 22, 1903, ASBS.

<sup>4</sup> Scannell to Drexel, January 30, 1904, ASBS.

<sup>5</sup> "Father Schell Wins Fame as Fighting Priest," Omaha Illustrated Bee, March 5, 1905, 1:1-5. The article was also reprinted separately as a handout. Archives of the Archdiocese of Omaha [AAO], Omaha, Nebraska, Box 2275.

<sup>6</sup> Scannell to Drexel, August 8, 1904, AAO, Box 2275.

<sup>7</sup> "Father Schell Wins Fame as Fighting Priest," 1:3, AAO, Box 2275.

<sup>8</sup> In the Bee, Father Schell stated that he arrived at Homer in March. Ibid. However, in his testimony before Supervisor A.O. Wright, he stated that he had arrived at Homer in "in the middle of April." "Testimony of Rev. Joseph Schell," p. 1., nd, but sometime in mid-October, 1904, Winnebago Agency Subject Files [WASF], 1900-1929, legal, National Archives and Records Administration – Kansas City [NARA-KC], A-104.

<sup>9</sup> Transcription of an undated report, Schell to Drexel, ASBS.

<sup>10</sup> Schell to Drexel, May 10, 1904, ASBS.

<sup>11</sup> Scannell to Drexel, June 6, 1904, ASBS.

<sup>12</sup> "Testimony of Harold O'Connor," 1. "Father Schell's Reply," 1-2, WASF, 1900-1929, legal, NARA-KC, A-104.

<sup>13</sup> Scannell to Drexel, June 6, 1904, ASBS.

<sup>14</sup> C.J. O'Connor to Scannell, July 7, 1904, AAO, Box 2275.

<sup>15</sup> "Resolution Passed by the Winnebago Tribal Council," July 11, 1904, ASBS. The following tribal members signed or marked the petition: Alex St. Cyr, James Smith No.2, Young Roge, Thomas Big Bear, Robert Lincoln, James Bird, Walking Priest, Zev St. Cyr, and Oliver Lamere.

<sup>16</sup> "A Dangerous Man – Father Schell Maligns Bishop Christie in a Scandalous Lying Manner," Tillamook Headlight (Oregon), July 21, 1904, clipping in AAO, Box 2275.

<sup>17</sup> Scannell to Drexel, August 8, 1904, AAO, Box 2275.

<sup>18</sup> Schell to Drexel, August 12, 1904, ASBS.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.



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<sup>20</sup> Scannell to Drexel, August 27, 1904, ASBS.

<sup>21</sup> Drexel to Ketcham, August 29, 1904, Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Series 1. correspondence, roll 33: 1323, Archives of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions [ABCIM], Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

<sup>22</sup> Scannell to Drexel, September 7, 1904, ASBS.

<sup>23</sup> Scannell to Drexel, September 16, 1904, ASBS.

<sup>24</sup> Schell to Scannell, September 26, 1904, AAO, 2275.

<sup>25</sup> Schell to Drexel, October 4, 1904, ASBS.

<sup>26</sup> "Father Schell's Statement in Washington Post," Transcription of the Washington Post article, September 11, 1904, WASF, legal, 1900-1929, NARA-KC, A-104.

<sup>27</sup> "Father Schell at Capital," Omaha Daily Bee, September 12, 1904, 1:5.

<sup>28</sup> Commissioner of Indian Affairs William A. Jones to School Supervisor A.O. Wright, "Order for This Investigation," September 26, 1904, WASF, legal, 1900-1929, NARA-KC, A-104.

<sup>29</sup> Omaha Daily Bee, October 7, 1904, 3:1-2.

<sup>30</sup> Supervisor of Indian Schools A.O. Wright, "Special Report to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs: Conditions Among the Winnabagoes," November 16, 1904, 2, WASF, legal, 1900-1929, NARA – KC, A-104.

<sup>31</sup> "Inspector to Probe the Indian Grafting," Sioux City Tribune, October 6, 1904, 5:3; Omaha Daily Bee, October 7, 1904, 3:1-2. The articles are virtually identical. The information first appeared in the Sioux City Tribune and was reprinted the next day in the Omaha Daily Bee.

<sup>32</sup> A.O. Wright, "Special Report to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs: Conditions Among the Winnebagoes," November 16, 1904, 3, WASF, legal, 1900-1929, NARA – KC, A-104.

<sup>33</sup> "Father Schell at Capital," Omaha Daily Bee, September 12, 1904, 1:5.

<sup>34</sup> A.O. Wright, "Special Report to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs: Conditions Among the Winnebagoes," November 16, 1904, 3, WASF, legal, 1900-1929, NARA – KC, A-104.

<sup>35</sup> "Hope to Whitewash," Sioux City Tribune, October 4, 1904, 2:3.

<sup>36</sup> "Inspector at Winnebago," Omaha Daily Bee, October 7, 1904, 3:1-2.

<sup>37</sup> "Schell as Witness in Indian Inquiry," Sioux City Tribune, October 12, 1904, 3:3; "Tells of Fleeced Indians," Omaha Daily Bee, October 13, 1904, 2:3.

<sup>38</sup> "Has Overreached Himself," Sioux City Journal, October 13, 1904, 1:2-3; "Schell Sent Here by Mother Drexel," Sioux City Tribune, October 13, 1904, 1:2.

<sup>39</sup> The Sioux City Journal printed the following text. "Father Joseph Schell, a Catholic priest at the Winnebago Indian Agency in Nebraska, who has made serious charges against Indian Commissioner Jones,

claims that he represents you in investigation of affairs at the Indian agency. Can you tell us whether he is your representative or not? A reply at our expense would be greatly appreciated." The authenticity was certified by Earl Meredith, manager, Postal Telegraph Company. "Mother Drexel's Message," Sioux City Journal, October 18, 1904, 10:5.

<sup>40</sup> Text in "Mother Drexel's Message," Sioux City Journal, October 18, 1904, 10:5. The text was certified by Earl Meredith, Postal Telegraph Company.

<sup>41</sup> Mother Mercedes to Father William H. Ketcham, telegram, October 15, 1904, ABCIM, roll 33.

<sup>42</sup> Mother Mercedes to Father Ketcham, October 15, 1904, ABCIM, roll 33.

<sup>43</sup> Congressman Edward Morrell to Commissioner William A. Jones, October 17, 1904, ABCIM, roll 33.

<sup>44</sup> "Has Overreached Himself," Sioux City Journal, October 13, 1904, 1:2-3.

<sup>45</sup> "Schell Sent Here by Mother Drexel," Sioux City Tribune, October 13, 1904, 1:3.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> "Gibbons is Very Indignant," Sioux City Journal, October 15, 1904, 1:3-4. A typed letter on Cardinal Gibbons's stationary was filed in the Archives of the Archdiocese of Omaha. The copy is unsigned, but clearly it was written by, or written at the behest of, the Cardinal. The letter, addressed to Bishop Scannell, was dated October 14, 1904. The author recognized that Father Schell might be working to correct real abuses, but stated that his criticisms of Commissioner Jones would result in more harm than good since the commissioner had been most open to the needs of the Catholic Indian missions. The author also insisted that the name of Mother Katharine Drexel not be dragged into the controversy, whatever its merits. Francis Cardinal Gibbons to Bishop Scannell, October 14, 1904, AAO, Box 2275.

<sup>48</sup> "Indians are on Stand," Omaha Daily Bee, October 16, 1904, 3:3-4.

<sup>49</sup> "Father Schell Disowned," "Schell to be Removed," "Ketcham on Schell," "Cardinal Takes a Hand," Sioux City Journal, October 16, 1904, 12:1-2. The Omaha Daily Bee reported Mother Drexel's statement denying that Father Schell represented her without comment. "Mother Drexel's Denial," Omaha Daily Bee, October 16, 1904, 3:3-4. Another piece quoted Bishop Scannell as stating, "The rumor that Father Schell has been removed is incorrect." He informed a reporter that the priest would be removed, but declined further comment, pleading that he had just returned from St. Louis and was not current on events at Winnebago. "Father Schell Must Move On," Omaha Daily Bee, October 16, 1904, 3:3-4.

<sup>50</sup> "That Mother Drexel 'Telegram' Exposed," Sioux City Tribune, October 17, 1904, 1:7, 3:6.

<sup>51</sup> "Father Schell is Hurting," Sioux City Tribune, October 17, 1904, 4:2.

<sup>52</sup> "Indian Officials in Town," Sioux City Journal, October 18, 1904, 10:5.

<sup>53</sup> "Mother Drexel's Message," Sioux City Journal, October 18, 1904, 10:5.

<sup>54</sup> "Mother Drexel in the West," Sioux City Tribune, October 18, 1904, 10:5.

<sup>55</sup> "A Sensational Report Denied," Omaha Daily Bee, 1:5.

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<sup>56</sup> “Keeps Eye on Winnebago,” Omaha Daily Bee, 1:3. “Jones on Indian Question,” Sioux City Journal, October 20, 1904, 6:3-4.

<sup>57</sup> “Indian Inquiry is Strictly Private,” Sioux City Tribune, 3:4; “Wright Bars Outsiders,” Sioux City Journal, October 23, 1904, 10:3-5; A.O. Wright, “Special Report to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs: Conditions Among the Winnebagoes,” November 16, 1904, 4. Inspector Wright documented the events in the testimony of Green Rainbow which led to his decision to close the hearing. The document is titled “October 21, 1904.” WASF, legal 1900-1929, NARA-KC, A-104.

<sup>58</sup> “To Take It to Washington,” Sioux City Journal, October 23, 1904, 10:4; “Graft Will Go to Roosevelt,” Sioux City Tribune, October 24, 1904, 1:4.

<sup>59</sup> “Calls Schell Crazy,” Sioux City Tribune, October 25, 1904, 8:6; “Winnebago is the Worst,” Sioux City Journal, October 25, 1904, 3:7.

<sup>60</sup> “Indian Rebukes Inspector Wright,” Sioux City Tribune, October 31, 1904, 3:5.

<sup>61</sup> “Indians Stand Pat with Father Schell,” Sioux City Tribune, November 1, 1904, 10:6.

<sup>62</sup> “Omaha Indians Applaud Schell,” Sioux City Tribune, November 12, 1904, 5:2.

<sup>63</sup> “Candidates Talk on Indian Inquiry,” Sioux City Tribune, 9:5.

<sup>64</sup> “Inspector is a Sick Man,” Sioux City Journal, November 13, 1904, 10:6.

<sup>65</sup> “Inspector Wright Goes,” Sioux City Tribune, November 17, 1904, 3:5.

<sup>66</sup> “Report Never Completed,” Omaha Daily Bee, June 21, 1905, 1:3.

<sup>67</sup> A.O. Wright, “Special Report to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs: Conditions Among the Winnebagoes,” November 16, 1904, 5, WASF, legal, 1900-1929, NARA – KC, A-104.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid. 2, 4-5.

<sup>69</sup> “Testimony of Harold W. O’Connor,” October 13, 1904; “Father Schell’s Reply to Harold W. O’Connor’s Statement,” October 13, 1904; “Testimony of C.J. O’Connor Regarding Monopolization of Trade,” “John Ashford’s Statement,” WASF, legal, 1900-1929, NARA – KC, A-104.

<sup>70</sup> A.O. Wright, “Special Report to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs: Conditions Among the Winnebagoes,” November 16, 1904, 21. WASF, legal, 1900-1929, NARA

<sup>71</sup> A.O. Wright, “Special Report to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs: Conditions Among the Winnebagoes,” November 16, 1904, 2, WASF, legal, 1900-1929, NARA – KC, A-104.

<sup>72</sup> ‘S.A. Brown’s Testimony,” October 27, 1904, WASF, legal, 1900-1929, NARA – KC, A-104. S.A. Brown, Homer blacksmith and wagon maker, related verbal conflict with the priest concerning a repair bill submitted to William Hensley, a Winnebago. Brown stated that Schell represented himself as business agent for the Winnebago with the self-proclaimed right as final arbiter of fair billing practices. The Homer blacksmith inferred, “According to the actions of Father Schell and the way he talked, I thought he was drunk.”

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<sup>73</sup> “Mark T. Hunter’s Testimony,” October 24, 1904, WASF, legal, 1900-1929, NARA – KC, A-104. Mark T. Hunter, Justice of the Peace for Winnebago Precinct, Thurston County, testified: “When Father Schell came back from Washington, he told a number of the Indians that they had a right to drink; that the money was theirs and they could spend it as they pleased. I heard this myself and I think several agency clerks heard it.”

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>75</sup> Thomas L. Sloan, United States Court Commissioner, to William A. Jones, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, July 21, 1904, WASF, legal, 1900-1929, NARA – KC, A-105.

<sup>76</sup> Sloan to Jones, October 20, 1904, WASF, legal, 1900-1929, NARA-KC, A-105.

<sup>77</sup> A.O. Wright, “Special Report to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs: Conditions Among the Winnebagoes,” November 16, 1904, 1, WASF, legal, NARA – KC, A-104.

<sup>78</sup> Sloan to Jones, 7-21-04, WASF, legal, 1900-1929, NARA – KC, A-105.

<sup>79</sup> Sloan to Jones, July 21, 1904, WASF, legal, 1900-1929, NARA – KC, A-105.

<sup>80</sup> “Father Schell and His Enemies Make Charges,” Omaha World Herald, November 17, 1904, 6:1.

<sup>81</sup> A.O. Wright, “Special Report to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs: Conditions Among the Winnebagoes,” November 16, 1904, 11, WASF, legal, 1900-1929, NARA – KC, A-104.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 14-15.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>87</sup> “Grafters Will Be Prosecuted,” Omaha Daily Bee, November 16, 1904, 1:4.

<sup>88</sup> “Father Schell is Arrested,” Sioux City Journal, November 18, 1904, 5:4.

<sup>89</sup> “Father Schell and His Enemies Make Charges,” Omaha World Herald, November 17, 1904, 6:1; “Father Schell is Still Pushing His Accusations,” Omaha World Herald, November 19, 1904, 3:5.

<sup>90</sup> “Father Schell is Arrested,” Sioux City Journal, November 18, 1904, 5:4.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.; “Father Schell Arrest,” Omaha World Herald, November 18, 1904, 1:3; “Enemies Arrest Father Schell,” Sioux City Tribune, November 18, 1904, 7:4-5; “Father Schell Arrested,” Omaha Daily Bee, November 18, 1904, 2:3.

<sup>92</sup> “Father Schell is Still Pushing His Accusations,” Omaha World Herald, November 19, 1904, 3:5. Bond was furnished by John Alam, at whose home the priest was reported to be living.

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<sup>93</sup> “Schell is Endorsed,” Omaha Daily Bee, November 20, 1904, 1:5. The text of the petition is included in the article.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> “Commissioner Jones to Quit,” Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> “Made Successor to Jones,” Omaha Daily Bee, November 22, 1904, 2:1.

<sup>97</sup> “Father Schell to be Tried,” New York Times, 11-19-1904, 1:5.

<sup>98</sup> “Will Not See Schell,” Sioux City Journal, November 19, 1904, 1:7.

<sup>99</sup> “Schell States Case,” Omaha Daily Bee, November 24, 1904, 1:1.

<sup>100</sup> “Hearing for Schell,” Omaha Daily Bee, November 22, 1904, 2:1.

<sup>101</sup> “Schell at White House,” New York Times, November 24, 1904, 5:4; “Hearing for Schell,” Omaha Daily Bee, November 22, 1904, 2:1; “Schell States Case,” Omaha Daily Bee, November 24, 1904; “President Roosevelt Hears Father Schell,” Sioux City Tribune, 1:6-7.

<sup>102</sup> “Seven New Indictments,” Omaha Daily Bee, November 19, 1904, 2:5; “Five Indicted on Schell’s Evidence,” Sioux City Tribune, November 19, 1904, 1:7.

<sup>103</sup> “Grand Jury With Schell,” Omaha Daily Bee, December 3, 1904, 1:5. The article includes the text of the grand jury report.

<sup>104</sup> “Schell Has Won Big Victory,” Sioux City Tribune, December 6, 1904, 1:5.

<sup>105</sup> “Extent of Indian Scandal,” Omaha Daily Bee, February 27, 1905, 1:5.

<sup>106</sup> “Father Schell Assaulted,” Omaha Daily Bee, April 14, 1905, 1:5; “Father Schell Assaulted,” Sioux City Journal, April 14, 1905, 8:1-2.

<sup>107</sup> “Father Schell is Hopeful,” Omaha Daily Bee, April 24, 1905, 2:2.

<sup>108</sup> “Leupp Sees Winnebagoes,” Omaha Daily Bee, June 9, 1905, 1:3. The United States Supreme Court, *In Re Heff*, stated that the grant of citizenship placed the Indian beyond the reach of special police regulations on the part of Congress. The Burke Act of 1906 lessened the impact of the ruling by postponing the grant of citizenship until the end of the twenty-five year trust period. The Heff decision was overturned by the Supreme Court in *United States v. Nice* (1916). Francis Paul Prucha, The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians, vol. 2 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 783-785. Thus, in 1905, an Indian would theoretically have the same rights and privileges as other citizens, including the right to purchase liquor. This was a major cause of concern for those who witnessed the ravages of alcohol on and around the reservations. For contemporary, local reactions to *In Re Heff*, see: “Indians Buy Like Whites,” Sioux City Journal, April 15, 1905, 6:1-2; “Whiskey and Civilization,” editorial, Sioux City Journal, April 16, 1905, 4:2.

<sup>109</sup> Schell to Scannell, February 16, 1906, AAO, SG 10, Box 52, File 204.

<sup>110</sup> Schell to Colaneri, January 8, 1908, AAO, SG 10m Box 52, File 204.

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- <sup>111</sup> Social Notes, The Winnebago Chieftain, November 26, 1909, 1:5.
- <sup>112</sup> M.S. Mansfield Advertisement, The Winnebago Chieftain, April 14, 1911, 1:1-6.
- <sup>113</sup> Scannell to Drexel, September 7, 1904, ASBS.
- <sup>114</sup> Ketcham to Scannell, May 14, 1908, AAO, SG 10, Box 52, Folder 89.
- <sup>115</sup> Father John H. Griese to Bishop Scannell, July 20, 1900, AAO, SG 10, Box 52, Folder 89.
- <sup>116</sup> Father James A. Rockliff, SJ, Superior, German Province in America, Society of Jesus, to Bishop Scannell, December 12, 1899, AAO, SG10, Box 52, Folder 89. Father Rockliff alluded to Father Griese's nervous temperament, which caused him to hesitate in his speech. This may be the malady to which Father Griese referred.
- <sup>117</sup> Griese to Scannell, July 20, 1900, AAO, SG 10, Box 52, Folder 89.
- <sup>118</sup> Griese to Scannell, August 12, 1906, AAO, SG 10, Box 52, Folder 89.
- <sup>119</sup> Griese to Scannell, July 18, 1906, AAO, SG 10, Box 52, Folder 89.
- <sup>120</sup> Griese to Scannell, August 12, October 4, 1906, March 22, August 5, August 9, 1907, AAO, SG 10, Box 52, Folder 89.
- <sup>120</sup> Griese to Scannell, March 22, 1907, AAO, SG 10, Box 52, Folder 89.
- <sup>121</sup> Griese to Scannell, August 9, 1907, Scannell to Griese, August 12, 1907, Griese to Scannell, August 13, 1907, AAO, SG 10, Box 52, Folder 89.
- <sup>122</sup> Griese to Scannell, January 9, 1908, AAO, SG 10, Box 52, Folder 89.

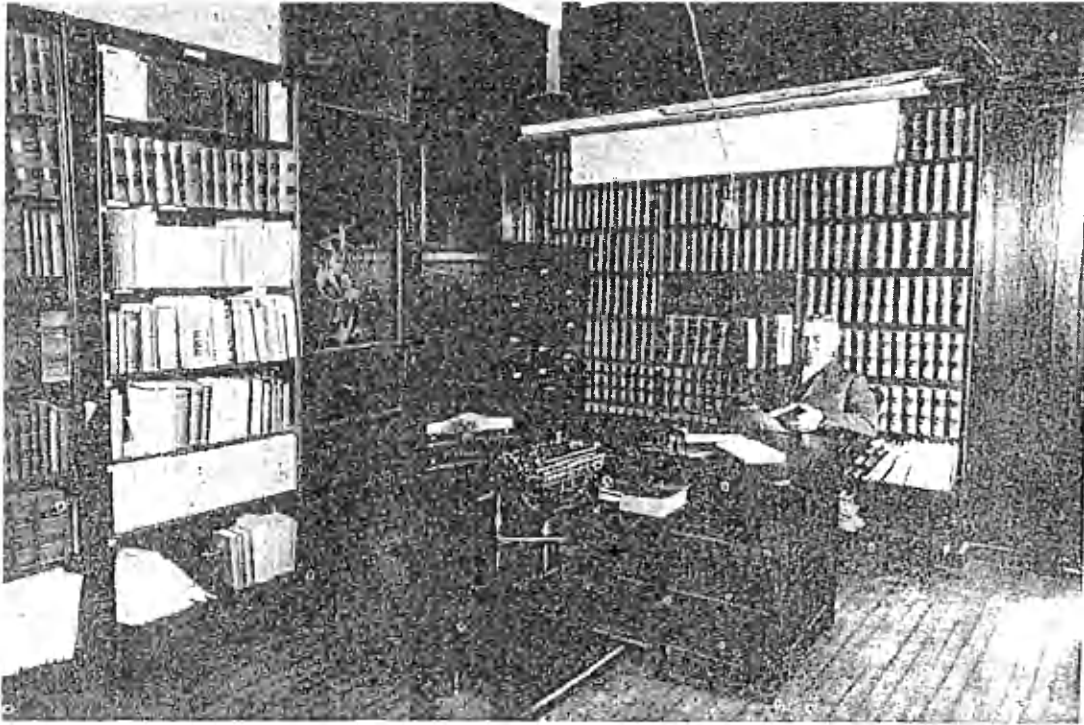
## CHAPTER FIVE

## A FOUNTAIN OF LIFE

If I should venture to look into the future, it seems to me that God's merciful plan is to establish here a fountain of life, for the Winnebagoes, but also for the Omahas and the whole surrounding [area]. And the center of this would be a Catholic school.<sup>1</sup>

Father John Griese to Mother Katharine Drexel  
February 24, 1909

Efforts to establish a Catholic mission at Winnebago were revived two years after the departure of Father Joseph Schell. This time, however, the impetus came from the Winnebago people. In April 1908, Harry Keefe, a Catholic attorney from neighboring Walthill, Nebraska, requested information from the Catholic Extension Society of Chicago, Illinois, because a delegation of tribal elders had requested his help in securing a Catholic school at Winnebago. The elders had informed him that the government school was about to be closed, and that the property might be acquired by a missionary organization. Keefe reported inaccurately to the society that the Winnebagoes had at one time been nearly all Catholic, and that there was a great interest in the Catholic faith currently among the tribe.<sup>2</sup> In a separate letter to Bishop Richard Scannell, he related that the elders had asked for sisters to operate a Catholic school. Perhaps remembering the controversy surrounding Schell, or reflecting the religious divisions within the tribe, the Winnebagoes informed the attorney that they wanted sisters only, not a priest. However, Keefe convinced the elders that nuns would not be sent without a priest to minister to the sisters' spiritual needs.<sup>3</sup>



Harry L. Keefe, a Catholic attorney from Walthill, Nebraska, photographed in his office about 1908  
Source: Norvin Hansen. Thurston County: A Picture History. Pender, Nebraska: The Pender Times Publishing Co., 1996.

The Catholic Extension Society referred the matter to Father William Ketcham, Director of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, who promptly answered Keefe's request. Ketcham reported that he had already received Bishop Scannell's permission to proceed.<sup>4</sup> In response, the Walthill lawyer thanked the director for his immediate attention to the matter. He suggested that Father Ketcham might wish to correspond directly with Joseph LaMere, whom the attorney identified as a leader in the local movement. The attorney cautioned that public discussion of the matter should be avoided as there might be opposition in the Winnebago Agency office before the matter was settled.<sup>5</sup>



Indeed, the matter was far from settled, as a number of issues emerged during the coming year. A priest had to be found who could function successfully amid the political complexities of Winnebago. A more difficult question was defining the scope of missionary work to be undertaken at Winnebago, and the related problem of finding an order of nuns to staff the mission. The scope of missionary work determined the amount of capital investment in buildings, the operating costs of the mission, and the number of staff required to successfully operate the facility. Preaching, administration of the sacraments, and religious education required the construction of a church and separate accommodations for the priest and nuns. A day school necessitated the construction of a school building, and a boarding school demanded a more extensive investment in both buildings and staff.

Each of these visions of Catholic missionary work at Winnebago had its proponents and opponents. The Winnebago people wished to have a school, preferably a boarding school, so that the children who lived in the surrounding countryside might attend. Father John Griese was their ally because he realized that a school, taught by the nuns, was the primary concern of the Winnebagoes. Father Ketcham and Mother Katharine Drexel had to deal more with the personnel and financial realities of missionary work. Early attempts to find a religious order to operate the proposed mission failed. So, the task fell to Mother Katharine and the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament. She initially wished to do family visitations and religious education, gradually expand into a day school, and eventually, if the day school was successful, build a boarding school; but,

she acquiesced to the wishes of the Winnebago people and started a day school the first year.

The long-standing problem of Christian competition on the reservation also surfaced during the establishment of St. Augustine's. In 1908, the Dutch Reformed Church had replaced the Presbyterians as missionaries at Winnebago. The arrival of Father Griese and the attempt to secure the government school buildings in 1908 had resulted in increased Protestant-Catholic tensions among the missionaries on the reservation. The Catholic request for the vacant government school buildings was further complicated by the presidential election of 1908. The question did not become a public issue in the campaign, but the government's decision was postponed in order to avoid controversy prior to the election.

Catholic efforts to establish a mission at Winnebago proceeded at a lively pace, however, despite this backdrop of financial concerns, potential Protestant opposition, and the ambiguities of election year politics. On May 6, Father Ketcham informed Katharine Drexel that Commissioner of Indian Affairs Francis Leupp was away from Washington, and that he did not wish to approach the delicate matter of turning over government property to a religious denomination with any lesser official. He also reported that he had spoken with Bishop Scannell about Winnebago. Perhaps still recovering from events surrounding Father Schell, the bishop "said to me that he would turn over all the Indians [in the Diocese of Omaha] to me directly and give me carte blanche, evidently he does not care to be bothered with them." The bishop, however, allowed that Father John Griese had recently returned from the Philippines, and that he would be willing to place

the priest at Winnebago, if the Bureau could pay the \$50 per month salary.<sup>6</sup> Eight days later, Father Ketcham informed the bishop that the Bureau would support the missionary's salary, and Father Griese began his duties on the reservation on July 1, 1908.<sup>7</sup>

Writing from Omaha on May 26, Father Ketcham informed Mother Katharine of his opinion that the school buildings belonged to the Winnebago tribe, rather than the government, and that he felt "a good rousing petition from the Indians would turn it over to us."<sup>8</sup> Falsely assured that the question of the buildings was settled, the priest turned his attention to finding an order of nuns to staff the mission. Earlier attempts had been made to secure the services of the Madams of the Sacred Heart and the Sisters of Mercy, both of Omaha, the Sisters of Providence of San Antonio, Texas, and the Sisters of St. Francis of Buffalo, New York, who staffed the Rosebud and Pine Ridge missions in South Dakota. The director concluded that he could see no hope unless the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament should undertake the new mission, despite Katharine Drexel's reservations about having enough sisters to undertake a new mission.<sup>9</sup>

After a brief visit to Winnebago in May 1908, Father Ketcham's duties carried him to Omaha and Genoa in Nebraska, and then on to Idaho. In his absence, he requested that Harry Keefe and Charles Lusk, Secretary to the Board of Catholic Indian Missions in Washington, D.C., manage the attempt to secure the school buildings at Winnebago. The director reported the status of affairs at the reservation and outlined his plan in letters written to Mother Katharine and to Charles Lusk from the Stillman Hotel in Genoa and on board the "Overland Limited" en route to Idaho. He related that he had visited with

Harry Keefe, other “Catholic friends of the Indians,” and one of the most influential of the Winnebago councilmen. Although not identified by name, this was probably Joseph LaMere. Ketcham concluded that the situation was favorable, and he summarized his plans for Winnebago in eight points. First, Bishop Scannell had promised him that he would find some sisters of the Diocese of Omaha to “hold the fort” until a religious community could be found to permanently staff the mission. Second, the land and buildings could be secured either by a vote of the tribal council or by a general council of the tribe. Ketcham had been assured that if the question were placed before the tribal council, there would be no difficulties. However, if a general council of the tribe were called, he feared that Protestants and members of the Native American Church would stir up opposition. He felt assured that a majority of the tribe would support the Catholic effort, but much ill feeling would surface, so placing the question before the council was the preferred method. Third, they must act quickly, and Secretary Lusk should attempt to deal directly with Commissioner Francis Leupp. Fourth, Father Ketcham advised both Keefe and Lusk to “act as if we have no suspicion that the council cannot act.” If it should be determined that it could not, he advised, they would trim their sails accordingly. Fifth, the position of the new agent Albert Kneale was unknown. The director asked Lusk to make sure that the commissioner advised the agent to remain officially neutral, whatever his personal feelings. Sixth, the contract should be limited to forty or fifty pupils with a time limit of three to five years, and an option to renew. Seventh, the goal was to secure the facility, so he advised that they accept such modifications to the agreement as might be requested by the government. Finally,

Ketcham recommended that they offer to provide a common school and industrial education. The parents out of tribal funds might pay for music and other “extras”. However, he suggested that they not raise the question of tribal funds until the mission was established, perhaps in six months to a year.<sup>10</sup> Secretary Lusk informed Keefe on June 13 that he had filed an application for the property.<sup>11</sup>

Charles Lusk formally submitted the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions proposal to Charles F. Larrabee, Acting Commissioner of Indian Affairs, on June 13, 1908.<sup>12</sup> Ketcham’s understanding of the law was proven correct. Larrabee responded that the school plant did indeed belong to the Winnebago people, rather than the government. He suggested that there were two methods by which the matter might be approached, by a petition to the tribal council, or by petition to a general council of the whole tribe. The Acting Commissioner thought that Inspector Z. L. Dalby, then visiting at Winnebago, might be in the best position to recommend whether the tribal council or a general council would be the most appropriate body to make the decision.<sup>13</sup>

In the meantime, at Winnebago, Harry Keefe pressed on with the plan of presenting the matter to the tribal council. On June 22, he reported to Lusk that he had visited the tribal council meeting the previous afternoon, and had arrived immediately after the school buildings question had been discussed. Inspector Dalby, who had explained the matter fully through an interpreter, and who had recommended acceptance of the proposal as advantageous to the tribe, had presented the request for the school buildings. Ten of the twelve councilmen were present, and they approved the matter unanimously. Three or four tribal members attending the meeting had expressed mild

objections that some Winnebagoes would not benefit as they did not have school-age children, or that they lived at too great a distance to patronize the school.<sup>14</sup> However, the matter was not settled. The transfer of tribal buildings to a religious denomination was a politically sensitive matter, and Lusk correctly doubted that the Acting Commissioner Larrabee would accept the decision of the tribal council without the approval of his superior, Commissioner Leupp.<sup>15</sup>

At about the same time, the lines of political battle were being formed at Winnebago. On July 9, Father John Griese informed Lusk that organized opposition to the transfer of the school buildings to the Catholics might be forming. He stated that while most Winnebago people and the agent indicated support for the sisters, he suspected that trouble might come from some women missionaries of the Dutch Reformed Church.<sup>16</sup> One week later, Joseph LaMere informed Harry Keefe that Dutch Reformed missionaries were threatening to undo any arrangement that might be made with the Catholics. The lawyer worried that Father Griese's lack of an aggressive spirit might be impeding the Catholic cause, and he requested that Father Ketcham come to the reservation to assist in the process.<sup>17</sup>

The situation became more complicated when the Dutch Reformed missionaries moved into the school buildings in mid-July.<sup>18</sup> On July 27, Keefe wrote Lusk to tell him of efforts being made to exclude Catholics from control of the school. He complained that, "Nothing is being done in our behalf, as we have no active missionary on the grounds."<sup>19</sup> Keefe enclosed an affidavit signed by tribal council member Robert Lincoln, in which the affiant swore that Henry Cloud, son of White Ox, had regaled him with a

mythological story, the point of which was that the Catholics were evil and the Dutch Reformed were good; the Catholics were weak, and the Dutch Reformed were strong and able to care for the needs of the Winnebagoes. According to the affidavit, Henry Cloud then asked for and received the mark of Robert Lincoln on a petition which requested that the government school buildings be handed over to the Dutch Reformed Church rather than the Catholic Church.<sup>20</sup>

On August 3, Keefe wrote a memorandum to Lusk in which he described the visit of Father Ketcham to Winnebago during the first week of August 1908. The purpose of the memorandum was to assist Lusk in presenting the Catholic case to Commissioner Leupp, who was expected to return soon to Washington. Father Ketcham arrived at Walthill on July 31, and the following day went to Winnebago with Keefe and Father Griese. They visited with Albert Kneale, the newly-arrived superintendent of the agency. Keefe reported that Kneale was personally and professionally favorable to the Catholics taking possession of the school.

In the afternoon, Keefe and Fathers Ketcham and Griese called upon Reverend Walter C. Roe of the Dutch Reformed Church. Roe admitted that he had submitted a protest against the Catholic occupation of the school, and that he had attempted to get a number of the Winnebago councilmen to sign it. He stated that the Reformed Church did not wish to start a school because of the expense involved. He opposed the Catholics from the perspective that it was detrimental to have two missionary groups working on the same reservation. He further denied using any unfair means to influence the councilmen as was indicated in the affidavit of Robert Lincoln. He affirmed his faith in

the integrity of Henry Cloud, his young Winnebago assistant and adopted son; however, he knew nothing about what his interpreter had actually said to the councilmen. He defended his church's temporary occupation of the school buildings as a mutually beneficial arrangement which provided quarters for the missionaries and upkeep for the government property.

According to the memorandum, Father Ketcham stated firmly that the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions would be working on the reservation because the Winnebago people had requested it. The director added that a resident priest was assigned to Winnebago, and that a day school might be established, whether or not the Bureau secured the government school. Reverend Roe countered that the Dutch Reformed Church had purchased the "missionary field," including the church property, from the Presbyterians with the understanding that it was unencumbered by competition with other denominations. The minister felt that Catholic efforts would represent a loss to his church. Keefe reported that Father Ketcham offered to take over their property at a reasonable price and to relieve the Reformed Church of any loss. Reverend Roe apparently ignored the offer.

Lawyer Keefe related that the protest of the Dutch Reformed Church was on file with the Commissioner of Indian Affairs. The protest alleged that the Winnebago council did not understand the purpose of the meeting with Special Agent Dalby and that the council was not representative as all members were not present. Keefe went on to refute the charges: that eleven of the twelve councilmen were present; that the objections expressed were not substantive; that the special agent questioned each council member to



be certain that they understood the issue; and that there were no representatives of the Catholic Church present to influence the vote.<sup>21</sup>

In an effort to counter the petition circulated by Henry Cloud, Keefe produced affidavits by several Winnebago council members, one each by James Bird and John Harrison, and a group affidavit signed or marked by James Bird, Joseph LaMere, Charles Frenchman and David St. Cyr. The content of the affidavits was virtually identical. The affiants identified themselves as tribal councilmen, and they stated that they had fully understood the Catholic request for the government school buildings and had voted for it. Finally, they acknowledged that they had signed a protest against the grant of the school to the Catholics, but it was because “false statements and representations” had misled them.<sup>22</sup> In a follow-up letter to Lusk, Father Ketcham reinforced some “talking points” for emphasis with Commissioner Leupp. In response to the Dutch Reformed claim that the council had been “imperfectly attended,” he stated that eleven of the twelve councilmen had been present, and that they had all voted to give the property to the sisters. This council included members of nearly all the more prominent families. Second, the Dutch Reformed missionaries had gained possession of the school in the last days of Agent Oscar M. Waddell’s term, without any apparent legal authorization to do so. Third, if Commissioner Leupp should decide that a general council of the tribe was necessary, he should wait until the Nebraska Winnebagoes, who were visiting in Wisconsin, had returned home. Fourth, the matter should be settled at the earliest possible date. Finally, sisters would be available when they were needed.<sup>23</sup>

A “private and confidential” letter from F.G. Ellis, M.D., written on Indian Service stationary, to Father Ketcham reflected the sectarian tensions on the reservation. The medical doctor, who was assigned to the Winnebago Agency, enclosed a poster which he felt “indicates the underhanded methods pursued by these people.” The Dutch Reformed Church had renamed itself the “Reformed Church for Indians.” The doctor, quite probably a Catholic, huffed, “Reformed Church for Indians, indeed.”<sup>24</sup> Likewise, Father Griese wrote to Father Ketcham about the increased activities of the Reformed Church at Winnebago, especially their camp meetings which included substantial feasts of beef. Perhaps more importantly, the one assertive Catholic personality, Harry Keefe, had been ill for some weeks, and was then hospitalized in Sioux City.<sup>25</sup>

On September 3, 1908, Lusk informed Father Ketcham that Commissioner Leupp had stated that a decision on the buildings would have to await the November election, “that there were too much politics in the matter to think of taking any definite action before that event.”<sup>26</sup> Ketcham informed Harry Keefe and Father Griese of the delay six days later. The director believed that when the time for the decision came, it would probably require a vote of the whole tribe, and he feared that the Dutch Reformed, with a strategy combining preaching with beef issues, would carry the day.<sup>27</sup> In the midst of this setback, Father Griese, who still did not have a residence on the reservation, provided the hopeful news that he had attended a “great meeting of the mescal people and gave a talk. It will take work to make these Indians come to church, but I hope to get many of them back.”<sup>28</sup>

On October 5, Keefe informed Father Ketcham that a tribal vote had approved the grant of about 160 acres, formerly held by the Presbyterians, to the Dutch Reformed Church. He also reported that sentiment was strong among the Winnebagoes that the school buildings should then, as a matter of justice, be given to the Catholics. The attorney recommended that any decision to build a church and rectory at Winnebago be postponed until the school question was decided, because the location of the school would determine the location of the other mission buildings.<sup>29</sup>

Commissioner Leupp conveyed his decision regarding the school buildings to Father Ketcham on November 5, 1908. At the request of Superintendent Albert Kneale, and with the concurrence of Inspector Z. L. Dalby, the property was to be converted into office and workspace for the agency staff. The letter detailed the inadequacies of the current agency buildings – lack of clerical work space, the necessity of hauling drinking water, lack of adequate warehouse space – and made a strong case for retention of the buildings.<sup>30</sup> Father Ketcham advised Mother Drexel of the decision on November 12. He was undecided about an appeal by the bureau, and he felt that an appeal by the Winnebagoes might be more efficacious. The director was also angry because he believed that the Dutch Reformed missionaries had influenced the decision.<sup>31</sup> The same day he informed Father Griese about the government's decision. The director expressed that he felt somewhat betrayed by the commissioner in that he did not do as he said he would, that is, put the matter to a vote of the Winnebago tribe. On a more positive note, he was pleased that Father Griese had found a rental house on the reservation, and

concluded, "Come what may, we have begun our work on the Winnebago Reservation and must do our best to make it a success."<sup>32</sup>

Father William Ketcham's surprise at the commissioner's decision was reflected in a letter to Harry Keefe in which he characterized himself as "quite at sea." He described the intransigence of Commissioner Leupp who told the director that he would welcome an appeal to the president on the matter. The commissioner did concede that he was willing to give the tribe the "privilege" of voting some land for the Catholics, just as he had done for the Dutch Reformed. However, the priest was uncertain if any suitably located tribal lands remained, or if indeed, the bureau had the money to erect a school. Ketcham reported that he might pay Keefe a "flying visit" on his return from the Catholic Missionary Congress in Chicago. In any event, he would have no dealings with officials of either the government or the Dutch Reformed Church at Winnebago. "I cannot feel that we have been treated even half-way right in this matter." He concluded that, based on Father Griese's reports, there appeared to be a "chance of doing quite a bit of good among the Winnebago people."<sup>33</sup>

In January 1909, the thrust to build a Catholic school on the reservation shifted once again to the Winnebago people themselves. Joseph LaMere had negotiated with the Winnebago Town Company to secure fifteen acres on a hill at the north end of the new town.<sup>34</sup> According to the plan, local subscribers would raise about \$1,500 for the property, which was valued at \$2,500. The town company absorbed the remaining \$1,000. However, the plan was a long way from realization. The subscription list filled quickly, but the collection of the money took several months. Likewise, other major

questions remained unresolved. Money had to be raised to build the physical facilities, and the degree of commitment had to be determined – would it be a simple mission church, a church and school, a day school or a boarding school? Which order of sisters would staff the school? All of this was unclear in the winter of 1909. However, Father Ketcham, who was working behind the scenes to secure the money for a church and a commitment from Mother Katharine for both a school and the sisters to staff it, was optimistic that the pieces would fall together during the coming year. In fact, he hoped that construction would begin as soon as the weather permitted.<sup>35</sup>

On February 11, Father Ketcham wrote to Keefe that sometime within the next two months two sisters would visit Winnebago to assess conditions there. The director suggested that they might best come directly to Walthill and that the lawyer guide their tour of the reservation. Particularly interesting was his statement that “I am very anxious for them to see as many full-bloods as possible.” Mother Katharine was apparently concerned that her father’s inheritance would be used to educate those most in need. Ketcham advised the attorney that he must tell no one of the visit except Father Griese.<sup>36</sup>

Nine days later, the director wrote to Mother Katharine that arrangements were made for her stay at Walthill. Apparently, Mother Katharine planned to travel incognito, as Father Ketcham related that he had not revealed to anyone at Winnebago that she was coming. He suggested that as the time approached for the visit, she might wish to have her sister companion write a letter announcing their arrival time to the Walthill lawyer.<sup>37</sup>

On February 20, Keefe sent an unofficial copy of the deed to Father Ketcham. The lawyer informed the priest that the purchase price of the fifteen acres, about \$1,500,

was being raised by subscription among the Winnebago Indians. In addition, the Winnebago Town Company had made a very “liberal” contribution. He reported that the deed was in his possession and would be held by him until the money was raised. Keefe added that he realized that it was necessary to be discreet, but it would be helpful in fundraising if he could relate whether there would be a church only, or a church and school, and what kind of the school it would be.<sup>38</sup> Two days later, Keefe wrote that he wished to impress upon the director the sincerity of the Winnebago people, who had very hard feelings toward the Dutch Reformed missionaries and toward the government because of the loss of the school buildings. The lawyer, who had earlier criticized Father Griese for his lack of assertiveness, now complimented the priest for the reserved and dignified stance he had taken during the controversy. The Catholic missionary had shown no resentment toward either the government or the rival missionaries. Keefe further reported that Joseph LaMere wished to circulate a paper among the Winnebagoes by which they would agree to support and patronize the school. He concluded that although the Mescal Society might not be very enthusiastic about attending church, they “are as anxious as anyone to send their children to a school you will establish.”<sup>39</sup>

Continuing to lobby for a school, Father Griese wrote to Mother Katharine on February 24: “If I should venture to look into the future, it seems to me that God’s merciful plan is to establish here a fountain of life, not only for the Winnebagoes, but also for the Omahas and the whole surrounding [area].” The priest observed that the agent and his staff had moved into the school buildings, and that the government seemingly planned to send the Indian children to the public school. He noted that the Winnebagoes did not

much love the government or public schools, and he was optimistic that most of the Indian families would choose the Catholic school, “and this will draw all the Indians into the Catholic Church.” He concluded that the town company and the Winnebagoes were very anxious to see some tangible progress because they feared that this effort might end without result, as it had with Father Schell.<sup>40</sup>

Apparently, in an effort to reassure the subscribers at Winnebago that this attempt to found a mission would not be a dead end, Father Ketcham informed Harry Keefe that he might tell the Winnebagoes that it was the bureau’s intention to build a church and school. He hoped to provide a day school for as many children as might wish to attend, and a boarding school for twenty-five to thirty girls. Ketcham heartily endorsed the efforts of Joseph LaMere to have the Winnebagoes committed to supporting and patronizing the proposed school. He further reported that two sisters would arrive at Walthill sometime about March 10, and that they would notify him of their exact arrival time. He did not reveal that one of the sisters would be Katharine Drexel.<sup>41</sup> The director wrote to Father Griese on a less certain, and probably more honest note, on March 8. He reported that the sisters were coming to “look into conditions, but with a view if possible, of establishing a school.” He repeated his earlier insistence that the sisters “see as many full blood Indians as possible. That is what they are looking for – full bloods.”<sup>42</sup>

Mother Katharine Drexel arrived at Winnebago on March 13, 1909. It must have been a great surprise to those who met her, but the response is rather muted in the historical record. On March 16, Keefe reported to Ketcham, “I received a telegram from Mother Katharine Drexel a few days ago and met her at Winnebago.”<sup>43</sup> Father Griese

wrote to Mother Katharine that her coming was somewhat of a surprise to him. He continued, “only gradually, when you were in my house did I find out that you yourself had come.” He reported that Joseph LaMere realized that he had spoken with the famous nun only after he had left the house. Later, he confided to Father Griese that he had “suspected something.”<sup>44</sup>

Father Griese wrote to Director Ketcham shortly thereafter, apparently in an attempt to emphasize the importance of expediting the process. He reported that the Presbyterian church would soon be completed, and that a resident pastor had been hired. Further, the local newspaper editor, who was also the organist, was attempting to recruit Indians for the choir. Griese continued that only a few Indians had attended Mass during the winter, possibly because it was held in the school building, which they disliked. He asked if a tent might be purchased in which Mass and meetings might be held.<sup>45</sup>

On April 1, 1909, Father Ketcham informed Harry Keefe that he and Mother Katharine had reached the following decisions. First, no steps toward construction would be taken until the subscribed money had been raised and the deed recorded and filed with Mother Katharine. Second, the sequence of construction would be the church and priest’s house, and then, a convent for the sisters. During the first year, the sisters would teach a day school in the church, and then, after three years, if there was significant demand, provision would be made to accept a limited number of female boarders, and to upgrade the facility. The director reported that he would not be able to spend more than \$1,500 on the church building, but he left the details of construction to Keefe and Father Griese. He reminded the lawyer that since the interior of the church was to be temporarily used as a



school, it would be necessary to have some sort of folding doors separating the sanctuary from the nave of the church. He also advised that the expense of pews or the school furnishings did not need to be considered as part of the cost of the building.<sup>46</sup> Writing to Father Griese on the same day, Ketcham summarized the status of the project saying, “the whole thing now is up to the Winnebagoes.”<sup>47</sup>

Despite this clear statement of intentions, Father Griese seemed a bit confused about arrangements during the spring of 1909, and he continued to advance the idea of a boarding school. He seemed to believe that the building to be constructed was a school, which would be used as a church, rather than a church that would be used as a school. The missionary continued to press for the construction of a boarding school. He also expressed the desire for a larger church, as he feared that otherwise, it would soon be too small for the congregation that he envisioned. Moreover, he wished to fence and landscape the projected site, even though the sale was not completed. Father Griese also reported that there were rumors that the school buildings might once again be available.<sup>48</sup> Father Ketcham replied, “The Winnebago situation seems to develop new phases every day.” He summarized the situation probably in an attempt to clarify it for Father Griese. He planned to build a church building, not a school building, for about \$1,500. A donor had promised a donation of \$1,000 for a church, not for a school. The director reminded Father Griese that they were totally dependent upon Mother Katharine regarding school funding. It would be her decision as to whether it was a day school or a boarding school.<sup>49</sup>

The question of the government school buildings was once again the subject of rumor at Winnebago during late March and early April, 1909. In response to a query by Keefe, Ketcham stated that he had heard nothing new about the government property at Winnebago,<sup>50</sup> but a memorandum dated March 30 indicated that someone at the bureau, presumably either Father Ketcham or Secretary Lusk, had spoken of the matter with Secretary of the Interior Richard A. Ballinger on that date.<sup>51</sup> On April 19, Ketcham wrote to Mother Katharine regarding the matter. He reported that since Ballinger had come into office there seemed to be a disposition to reopen the case and give the bureau an opportunity to acquire the government buildings. However, Ketcham doubted that this was a wise course for a number of reasons. If they were to get the buildings, then they would have to open a boarding school. He also noted that reopening the question would result in a great deal of sectarian bitterness on the reservation and incur the ill will of the agency officials who would have to find new quarters. He was convinced that since they were about to close the deal on the land north of town, they should proceed with that plan.<sup>52</sup> In a letter to Keefe, Ketcham gave additional reasons for seeking the land on the north edge of town – the church would be better located in the town, and the day school would be better attended. He also noted that they would not be under the same obligations to the Winnebagoes as they would if they accepted the tribal buildings.<sup>53</sup>

On April 23, the director acknowledged Mother Katharine's agreement with this decision to forgo the government buildings at Winnebago. He also mentioned that the subscribed money for the land at Winnebago had not been received, and that another problem loomed on the horizon. The cost of a building at Winnebago would exceed the

amount of \$1,000, which was the standard sum provided by the Marquette League, a Catholic benevolent society. This sum had proven to be adequate in Oklahoma, but was inadequate both for the size of the congregations and the weatherization required in Nebraska. The situation was complicated by the fact that a Mr. Tack, the treasurer of the organization, wished to donate the money in installments as a memorial to his family. The officers of the Marquette League feared embarrassing the donor by asking for more money.<sup>54</sup>

Father Griese continued his lobbying efforts for a boarding school into May. He reported to Mother Katharine that only about \$300 remained to be collected. He hoped that the deed would be mailed to her in a few days, and he requested that she reconsider making arrangements for perhaps fifteen to twenty boarders. He felt that the enrollment in a day school was still uncertain, but that a boarding school would surely succeed, “as the better class of Indians live away from the town.”<sup>55</sup> The priest continued this theme in a letter to Father Ketcham. He reported the news that Mother Katharine had decided to build a school building, as well as a church. He expressed the hope that it would be a boarding school, using the argument that: “country children are better for our school.” He reported that a number of the Indian children attended the public school in Winnebago, and that some of them might attend the mission day school. However, he observed: “The home life of Indians here [the town of Winnebago] is not such as to give hope that much good may be done by a day school.” He recognized that Mother Katharine’s objection was based on the scarcity of sisters to operate a boarding school. However, he reasoned

that twenty boarding students would not require many more sisters than the operation of a day school. He concluded: "I hope that God will inspire her with a better thought."<sup>56</sup>

God may well have provided Mother Katharine with that "better thought," but it would have to wait for another year. On May 4, she wrote to Bishop Scannell to request permission to open a mission in the Omaha Diocese. She stated that: "after considering the request of the Indians," the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament had decided to open a mission among the Winnebagoes. She informed the bishop that although they were unable to staff a boarding school, the order felt that they could spare four sisters for a day school. If at the end of at least three years, the day school were sufficiently attended, they would consider opening a boarding school for a limited number of female boarders. She expected to have the deed for the land in a matter of days.<sup>57</sup>

However, Father Griese reported ten days later that collection of the subscribed money lagged. He related that two subscribers, who had each subscribed \$100, now seemed unwilling to pay. He speculated that there might be Protestant agitation behind it, but he was not aware of any specific opposition. Indeed, he found it remarkable that Protestants would help a Catholic institution when they were having difficulty in raising money for their own churches. The priest reported that there were few white Catholics in Winnebago who had the means to contribute in any significant way. He also stated that the Indians always seemed to have spending money, but that it generally disappeared into the pockets of the white merchants. He speculated that Superintendent Albert Kneale might be a source of opposition, but had no meaningful criticisms to make. Kneale was rumored to have said that the Catholics would not get the government school buildings,

but this was hearsay. The priest offered to take on the balance himself, in the belief that the town company would allow him additional time to pay it off. He reported that he had already planted a garden and a number of trees on the property because he believed that the garden would help to support the school.<sup>58</sup>

Mother Drexel came to Winnebago for a second time at the end of May, dividing her time between the reservation and the architect, Wilfred Beech, in nearby Sioux City, Iowa. She attended Father Griese's Mass on Sunday, and afterwards met with a number of local people, including Harry Keefe, who at last gave her the deed for the property. It was apparently on this occasion that she told the Winnebagoes that she would not be able to build a boarding school at this time unless they would be willing to pay from tribal funds.<sup>59</sup> Apparently, Father Griese continued to press the idea of a boarding school to Father Ketcham, for on June 7, the director informed Griese that the Winnebagoes had tribal funds, and that if any of the Winnebago were willing to have payment made from these funds, he would ask the Bureau of Indian Affairs to provide the petitions to those parents who wished to request that the funds be used for their daughters' education. He cautioned the missionary that there was no point in raising the issue until Mother Katharine was in a position to build a larger building and provide sufficient nuns to staff a boarding school.<sup>60</sup>

Immediately after her second visit, Harry Keefe wrote circuitously to Mother Katharine about a matter which he described as urgent, but difficult to write about, and apparently impossible to discuss with her during her visit when so many people were demanding her time. He requested that if his meanings and motives were unclear, that she

reserve judgment of him until such time as he could more fully explain. He requested that she consider using the influence of her order to protect some of the Winnebago women who might be considered too old for school attendance. The facts, as he understood them, were that many of the young women “have been ruined and subjected to insult and abuse by the rough element both in the tribe and among the white people on the reservation.” He named two young women specifically, and requested that she meet with them when next she came to Winnebago. He continued, “The influence of your order among these people may do a great work along this line. A few words of encouragement and hope and promise to these women from you will do good....”<sup>61</sup>

The summer of 1909 witnessed numerous religious and cultural events at Winnebago. On July 26, Father Griese reported to Father Ketcham that work had begun on all of the buildings. He reported that the Dutch Reformed preachers, Reverend Frank Wright and Reverend Henry Roe Cloud had returned to the reservation. They had planned a series of events to bring home the civic virtues to both whites and Indians. More importantly, they had invited the Catholic priest to participate, but he had declined. He also reported that the Winnebago powwow had taken place the previous week, and that the Omaha powwow would be held later in the month. He enclosed a number of handbills and newspaper clippings to illustrate the events on the reservation. The agency superintendent, the Winnebago Commercial Club, the county attorney, and the Presbyterian and Reformed Church pastors jointly sponsored a public meeting on August 5. The event was entitled “Winnebago and the Winnebagoes: How Shall We Treat the Indian?” All men and women in the county were invited to attend. On August 12 and 15,

the Winnebago Reformed Church and the Presbyterian Church jointly sponsored a “Gospel Meeting in the Open Air for the White People”. A special program, organized by the First Baptist Church of Sioux City and cosponsored by the Presbyterian and Reformed churches, and by Superintendent Kneale, was presented in both Winnebago and Sioux City. Entitled “Religion vs. the Saloon,” the program planned to contrast the debilitating effects of alcohol in contrast to “successful” Indians such as Winnebago Henry Roe Cloud, who was scheduled to graduate from Yale University the following year, and Choctaw minister Frank Wright. In contrast to these two “manly sons of the church, some of the worst Indian characters that can be found in Sioux City that evening will be brought in and placed in a conspicuous place on the platform.”<sup>62</sup> Father Griese remarked, “The Indians must get confused from all the preaching.”<sup>63</sup>

On August 29, 1909, Griese reported that construction was progressing and that he looked forward to completion by the end of September. He continued to bemoan the fact that Mother Katharine had not built a boarding facility. The priest reported that the Dutch Reformed Church was planning to open a boarding school. He further reported that they had held a number of camp meetings with beef issues and were claiming large numbers of Indian converts. To this point, he had been preoccupied with construction, the planting of 350 trees, and the garden. During the month of September, he planned to begin a course of preaching on Catholic doctrine, which would be held in the open air in front of the new church. He added that Father Henry Westropp of St. Francis Mission at Pine Ridge, South Dakota, would send some Catholic Indian men and women to assist in

the program. He concluded the letter by asking for money to defray the expenses of the mission.<sup>64</sup>

Nearly a month later, Griese continued his complaints about the Reformed Church. He stated that its advocates worked with all their might to outdo the Catholics, and that so far, “they have the better of it.” Father Griese complained that the Winnebagoes now expected that the Catholics would prepare a feast for them, as did the Protestants. He seemed unaware that the feasting fit into a traditional cultural pattern of the Winnebagoes, and that the Reformed Church was doing an excellent job of tapping into it. Ever looking to the future while he busied himself with agricultural pursuits, the priest reported that he would “do something as soon as the church was finished. I hope with the coming of the sisters better times will come.”<sup>65</sup>

Father Griese also felt that Superintendent Albert Kneale sided with the Protestants and had reportedly joined the Reformed Church.<sup>66</sup> Whether he actually joined the church is unknown, but the superintendent certainly held its clergy in high respect. Kneale devoted two pages of his autobiography to praising the missionaries of the Dutch Reformed Church at Winnebago. He described them as a “staff whose support and cooperation any Indian agent might well be proud and happy to possess.”<sup>67</sup> Again, upon the death of Fannie Verbeck Watermulder, wife of Dutch Reformed pastor Reverend G.A. Watermulder, Superintendent Kneale eulogized that she “set forth the ideal relationship which should exist between governmental and mission work.”<sup>68</sup> The superintendent made no mention of the Catholic presence at Winnebago in his book, not even the visits of the nationally prominent Katharine Drexel.



On October 2, 1909, Father Griese acknowledged that he was expecting Mother Katharine's arrival at Winnebago on October 8 aboard the 12:20 train from Sioux City. The priest reported that Mrs. Herman would provide lodging for the sisters, as the convent would not be even partially habitable until the 15<sup>th</sup>. He continued that construction was not progressing well due to a shortage of materials and manpower. The priest hoped that the work would be completed by the middle of the month.<sup>69</sup>

Letters written by Mother Katharine and Sister Agatha, and the later recollections of Sister Angela Campbell, provide a mixed bag of insights into the perceptions of the first Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament at Winnebago. The correspondence is rich in the details of daily experience, but, at the same time, the letters are selective and decidedly romanticized in the description of the Winnebago people. Katharine Drexel wrote home to the sisters at St. Elizabeth's Convent shortly after her arrival. She reported that it was raining hard, as it had been on her first two visits to the reservation, "I forgot to mention that as usual I brought bad weather." She continued that things were turning out quite contrary to what she had expected, and she rejoiced that "God is having His Way," contrary to all her plans. She then listed the unexpected events which she and her traveling companion, Sister Angela Campbell, were confronting. The convent was uninhabitable, and Mrs. Herman, from whom the sisters had expected room and board, could only provide room and board for about three days until her daughter returned home, but she could provide the nuns with lunch and supper. Mother Katharine and Sister Angela took their problem to Father Griese, who directed them to his landlady, Mrs. Stabler, who agreed to provide lodging, but not breakfast. However, she did consent to let

the nuns store their own rolls, butter and coffee in her pantry, and she allowed them to fix their own breakfast in the mornings after her family was done. However, Mrs. Stabler was won over by the undemanding and grateful behavior of the nuns and soon offered to cook for them.<sup>70</sup>

Home visitations were an important first step in becoming part of the Winnebago community, and these visits also helped recruitment for the new school. Mother Katharine's efforts in this regard were frustrated by the rain and the mud. She descriptively wrote home, "after wading across the road we reached the pretty little dove colored house, our overshoes encased in mud."<sup>71</sup> However, during that first week, she and Sister Angela did manage to visit the two Winnebago women about whom Harry Keefe had written, and who had begged her to establish the mission during her first visit. On their way to Joseph LaMere's house, they had accidentally gone to the home of his son, Oliver, a founding member of the Mescal Society. She was much impressed by his intelligence, warmth and 6'2" physical stature, which she contrasted with that of his diminutive wife who was about her own size. During the first week, she attempted to visit every Indian family in town, and although she did not say so, she certainly must have met many whites as well. Given her national prominence, and given Winnebago's population of 405, she must have had contact with virtually everyone in town. She reported that, "I try wherever I go to bring in a little religion. I fear to bring in too much."<sup>72</sup>

Formally switching from daily events to business, Mother Katharine reported that she felt "crestfallen" that it would be necessary to start a school immediately, and the sooner the better. She conceded that Father Griese had been correct when he told her that

the Winnebagoes would not understand the need to send children to the nuns for formal religious instruction. She quoted the priest as saying, “The only way you can hope to bring the children to you is by bringing them to school work. They do understand the necessity of secular education; but they have no idea of the spiritual and its necessity.”<sup>73</sup> Father Griese’s mistake was a classic example of cross-cultural misunderstanding. Certainly, the Winnebagoes understood the importance of spirituality; hence the attraction of the Mescal Society, but the need to send the children to full-time religious specialists was contrary to Winnebago traditions. Drexel concluded that they would need a school for about 23 children, ranging from non-English speakers through the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Fortunately, the superintendent of the public school also lunched daily with Mrs. Herman, and this gave Mother Katharine the opportunity to learn how the local public school structured itself to meet this diverse student population. She informed the sisters at the mother house that the public school was able to make do with only four teachers – one for the second through fourth grades, one for the fifth through seventh grades, and one for the eighth grade and two “Academic” courses, who also served as the superintendent.<sup>74</sup> The role of the fourth teacher was not stated in the letter, but may have been that of instructing the primary classes.

Mother Drexel shared her situation with her brother-in-law, Congressman Edward Morrell, on the occasion of his birthday. She described the state of construction, and stated that she would not have come so soon had she realized how far from completion the project was. None of the doors for the convent and school had arrived. This shipment, which included the window frames, millwork, wash boards and inside moldings, was lost

somewhere between Chicago and Winnebago. Most of the plumbing materials and none of the stained glass had arrived. The plaster in the convent had also failed leaving the walls covered with streaks and blotches in various shades of yellow. She had refused to accept the plaster, and after two days of negotiation, the contractor had agreed to repaint the walls. The intense cold – “the coldest weather the old timers can remember to have had in the beginning of October” – caused the discontinuation of the exterior painting of the buildings.<sup>75</sup>

She described attending Mass with Sister Angela in Father Griese’s rented two-room house on a morning when “the ice in the water bucket was three inches thick.” The priest opened the door for them at 6:45 AM. She described Griese’s small, one-story wooden house in detail for her brother-in-law. The floor was bare boards somewhat blackened with age. The furniture consisted of one wooden rocking chair, two kitchen chairs, and a small 18” square table in the corner, which served as the altar. Books were piled neatly on newspapers in another corner of the room. She spied a large rusty stove in the room, which she, clutching a shawl about her, anxiously awaited the priest to stock with coal and light. He, however, seemed oblivious to the cold. Father Griese “walked with the greatest deliberation and placid countenance,” out of the adjoining room with a missal in his hands rather than a coal scuttle as she had hoped. He lit a match, but it was to light the candles for Mass, rather than the stove. She reported that she heard the priest’s teeth chatter a few times as he read the prayers, but she said she had rarely heard Mass with such devotion, and that it brought the simplicity of Bethlehem to her mind, and the vanity of all earthly possessions.<sup>76</sup>

Evidently, her advisors at St. Elizabeth's must have taken exception to Mother Katharine's decision to live at Winnebago rather than staying in a convent in Sioux City and travelling to the reservation each day. On October 18, she responded to their concerns that she and Sister Angela were "exposing ourselves more than we should." She described in detail the day-long prayerful process she went through to discern God's will in the matter, and then responded point-by-point to what must have been their objections. She reported that she and Sister Angela were "snug and comfortable" in a "very respectable house." She was not concerned about cleanliness or disease. Second, they were a respectable distance, at least 50 feet, from Father Griese's house, and were living with a married couple. She further related that they did not go near him after dark, and had very little contact with him during the day. So, no one should be concerned about scandal. She reported that they would soon take possession of the convent kitchen, refectory, and storeroom, and that they would live in these rooms until the rest of the convent was completed.

She further informed the sisters at the motherhouse that the people of Winnebago had received them warmly and were anxious to know when school would begin. Mother Drexel stated, "We are trying to win them and they certainly have won us. They are a gentle, lovely people, and their home life seems redolent of affection to fathers, mothers, and relations. I have not met one drunken man since I have been here. I suppose they do – know they do drink – but last week saw none under the influence. We visited every Indian family in the town, about 15 families in all, and see the country relatives who live miles away."<sup>77</sup>

She continued, “I can see the Finger (no, the whole hand) of Divine Providence” in the construction delays at Winnebago. Furthermore, “I think I know more of Winnebago now, than if I had lived six months at the convent.” Boarding with Mrs. Herman and living with the Stablers had given her insights otherwise unobtainable. She described in detail the Stabler home – a one-story concrete block home on a fifty-foot lot located with other homes on an unpaved street. The windows were large, glazed with one piece of glass, and the wooden awnings were a dark green. Inside, the parlor floor was carpeted with a blue-green Persian rug, “in excellent taste,” and the surrounding floor was of dark stained wood. Furnishings included a piano, five or six Mission style rockers and arm chairs, a library table and “best of all” a stove, which she reported kept the room comfortable when the October weather dipped to an unusually cold seventeen degrees.<sup>78</sup>

She was equally impressed with the Stabler family. She described Mr. Stabler as a tall Omaha Indian, who wore spectacles, spoke excellent English, and did so well that he hired a man to do his stable work. She was impressed with his “level business head,” although she was uncertain exactly what he did, though she thought it was land speculation. She described Mrs. Stabler, who was of Winnebago and French descent, as young, tall and “as sweet in her ways as any one could desire.” Both had attended Hampton Institute. She characterized the three- and six-year-old boys as “Indian looking with cute bright eyes,” and she detailed the gentleness of the younger boy as he played with a Maltese kitten, and the artistic efforts of the older boy. She went on to relate the visit of Mrs. LaMere, Mrs. Stabler’s aunt, whom she described as having white hair and a sun-tanned, kind face. After the nuns had gone to bed in the next room, she related how

pleasant it was to hear their hosts talk and laugh quietly in the Winnebago language.<sup>79</sup> Indeed, Mother Katharine must have written other positive letters for Father Ketcham wrote humorously to Mother James, “I think everything will be all right at Winnebago. It is just possible that your Mother may be improved in health by her stay among the Mescal eaters.” He continued that it must be a great relief to get out among the Indians after living as head of a convent for so long. As a postscript, he wrote, “I’d rather live with the Indians than with sisters any day.”<sup>80</sup>

Mother Katharine provided her personal day-by-day projection for the completion of the buildings to the sisters at St. Elizabeth’s, and asked that the founding group of sisters plan their trip so as to arrive on Saturday, October 30. She planned to enroll students on November 1 and begin classes the following day. Even though this would leave little time for the sisters to settle in, her haste was determined by the belief that once cold weather set in, few would enroll.<sup>81</sup>

The train arrived promptly at 1:15 P.M. on October 30 bringing Sisters Scholastica, Philomena, Immaculate, Helen and Agatha to Winnebago. Father Griese met them at the station with an open carriage with fringe on the top. Sister Agatha reported that it was evidently designed for four, but there were five nuns and the driver in the carriage. She reported that they laughed all the way from the station to the hill just north of town where the mission was under construction. She challenged the sisters back at the convent to imagine, if they could, Sister Philomena sitting on Sister Helen’s lap for the trip. Upon arrival, they promptly stopped in the chapel “to say ‘How do you do’ to our Lord,” and then found Mother Katharine, who was suffering from a boil on her knee that

was more of a concern to the other sisters than to herself. The nun's were favorably impressed with the exterior of the buildings, the green roof, wide casement windows and the white cross on the steeple of the church, which was reportedly visible for five miles in the surrounding countryside.<sup>82</sup>

The newly-arrived sisters were apprehensive about how they would be received by the Winnebago people. Sister Agatha reported that they seemed "very nice," and "'up to date,' if you'll pardon the phrase." Obviously not wasting any time, Sister Scholastica was expecting the first members of the choir to come that afternoon. Sister Agatha reported that she did not expect many students on Monday, but would have two for the eighth grade. She requested the sisters at the motherhouse, "Won't you pray that we will impress them? First impressions you know are lasting, and I think they will stand off as it were and sample us before they decide to come to us." In a bit of "insider humor," she apologized for her scratchy penmanship. It seems as if Mother Katharine had temporarily misplaced the good fountain pen, but she speculated that she had probably found it again.<sup>83</sup>

Katharine Drexel was forced by other commitments to leave Winnebago before the construction was completed. Writing in pencil from the ladies waiting room in the train station at Omaha, she reported to the sisters at St. Elizabeth's convent her feelings of regret at leaving St. Augustine's. The construction was incomplete and procedures were not in smooth running order. The millwork had finally arrived on the Thursday following the sisters' arrival. Seven of them had been forced to share a dormitory designed for five, and the kitchen and refectory were not completed until that same



Saturday. Carpenters had pounded all day until 9 P.M. – setting door frames, flooring, wainscoting, and window sashes. Drexel detailed the nightly ritual when she and Sister Angela had gone down to Mr. Small, the contractor. She took out her watch, and said, “Mr. Small, it is time for your men to go.” She found it amusing to stand and watch as the five carpenters and two painters put on their coats and were escorted out the door by the two sisters. One night, she related, a surly carpenter had refused to give her the key to the outside door, arguing that the nuns would not be up in time to let the workmen in. She replied, “You will find it open at 5:30 A.M.” The carpenter surrendered the key, acknowledging that they would not be starting work at that hour. Another evening, after they had secured the doors, Sister Angela noticed a shadow on the wall of a workman shaking out his coat. Evidently, she reported, he had not realized that his fellow workmen had left. As soon as he realized what had happened, he left promptly. On All Saints’ Day, November 1, a grass fire threatened the still incomplete St. Augustine’s Mission. Luckily, the workmen were still there. The dozen or so laborers, with the help of Sister Helen, put out the fire, using bags to beat out the flames.<sup>84</sup>

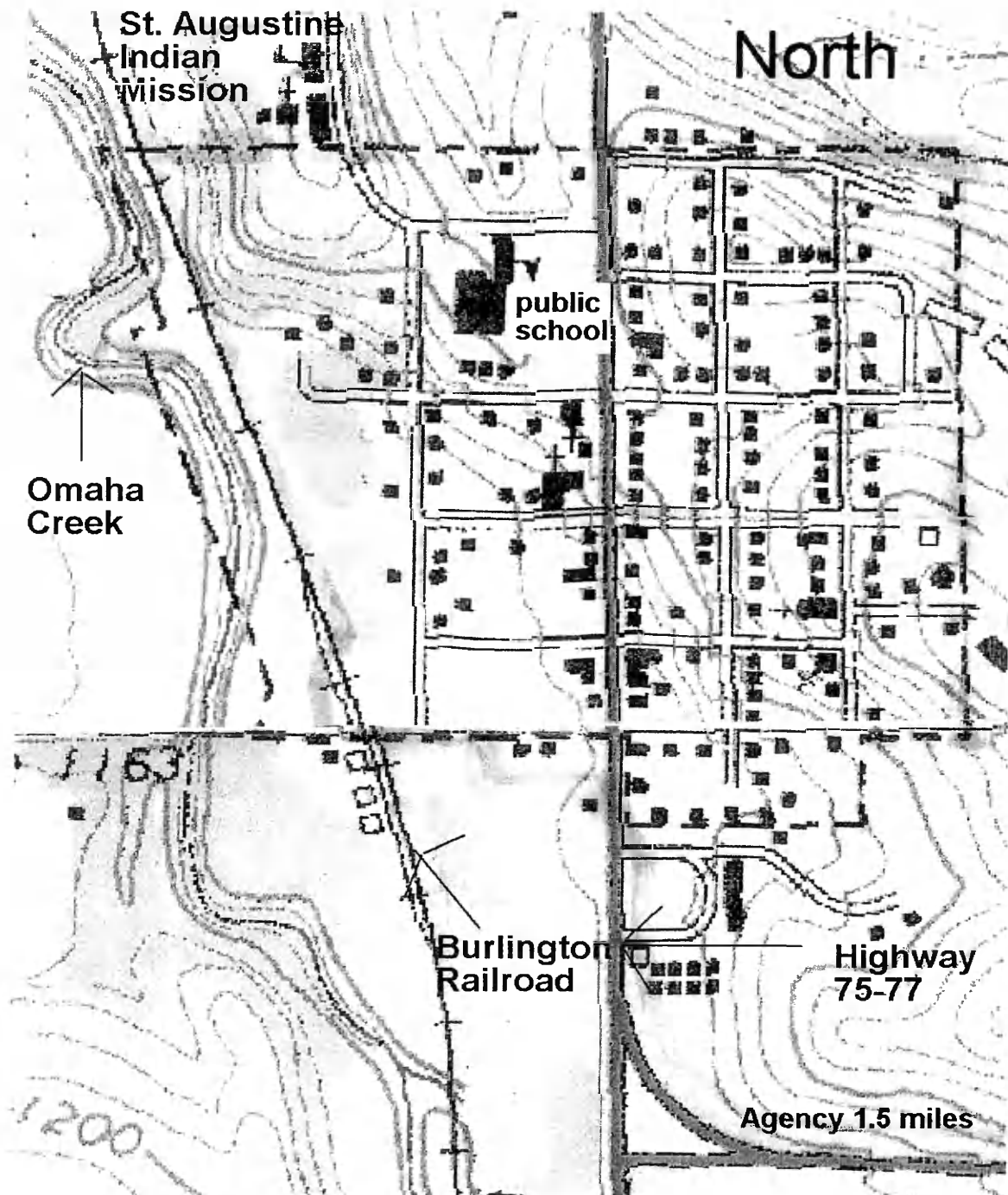
The blessing of the church bell was the first public activity at the new St. Augustine’s Indian Mission. On Sunday afternoon, October 31, 1909, Father John Griese presented a “panorama” of scenes from the life of Christ as depicted by famous artists. A blessing ritual for the new church bell, upon which was inscribed, “I praise the Lord. I call to God the living and the dead,” followed the presentation. The Winnebago Chieftain reported that even though the new school building was still not completed, the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament would begin classes on Monday, November 8, 1909. Although the

new school was primarily intended for the education of Indian children, all students were welcome. The article informed the public that all of the grammar grades would be taught, and that no tuition would be charged. M. A. Whitcomb, the Presbyterian editor, applauded the Catholic contribution to the community, “The Catholic improvements on the hill are surely a marked improvement to Winnebago, and are pointed to with much pride by the citizens, who take so much interest in the rapid growth the town is making.”<sup>85</sup>



St. Augustine's Indian Mission, about 1912  
Source: Archives of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions,  
Special Collections, Alumni Library, Marquette University

St. Augustine's church and school were formally dedicated at a high Mass at 10 A.M. on Thanksgiving Day, November 25, 1909. The mission was named after St. Augustine of Hippo, at the request of Mr. Tack, who was a major contributor to the church building through the Marquette League of New York City. The Winnebago Chieftain described the school as beautiful in design and well constructed to serve the needs of the pupils. The paper reported, with great exaggeration, that \$25,000 had been invested on the hill.<sup>86</sup> In fact, the cost of the land was \$2,500, but the Winnebago Town Company donated \$1,000 of that amount. Father Griese noted that the remaining \$1,500 was paid "by the people of Winnebago, Catholics (a few) and Protestants (merchants)."<sup>87</sup> The Marquette League of New York City contributed \$1,800 toward the construction of the church.<sup>88</sup> The Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament also spent \$7,433 on the construction and furnishing of the church, convent/school building and priest's rectory.<sup>89</sup> However, the costs were not purely financial. Twenty-one years had passed since the first attempt to realize Bishop O'Connor's dream of a mission to the Winnebagoes. Presbyterian opposition and church-state conflict had ended the first attempts to establish a mission. The Father Schell affair had centered on social and political issues, with genuine missionary work seemingly lost in the scuffle. In 1908, the attempt to found St. Augustine's was successful because reservation lands had been opened to white settlement, and because the Winnebagoes had asked for the mission. The only question remaining then was: would the mission become the "fountain of light" envisioned by Father Griese?



St. Augustine's Indian Mission is located at the north end of the village of Winnebago, Nebraska.

Source: Adapted from a United States Geographic Survey topographical map, Village of Winnebago's Clerk's Office

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Father John Griese to Katharine Drexel, February 24, 1909, Archives of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament [ASBS], Bensalem, Pennsylvania.

<sup>2</sup> Harry L. Keefe to The Catholic Extension Society of Chicago, Illinois, April (date illegible), 1908, Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, reel 43, Archives of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions [ABCIM], Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

<sup>3</sup> Harry L. Keefe to Richard Scannell, Bishop of Omaha, June 1, 1908, Archives of the Archdiocese of Omaha [AAO], Omaha, Nebraska, Box 2275.

<sup>4</sup> Father William Ketcham, Director of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, to Harry L. Keefe, April 28, 1908, ABCIM, reel 43.

<sup>5</sup> Keefe to Ketcham, May 1, 1908, ABCIM, reel 43.

<sup>6</sup> Ketcham to Drexel, May 6, 1908, Archives of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament [ASBS], Bensalem, Pennsylvania.

<sup>7</sup> Ketcham to Scannell, May 14, 1908, ABCIM, reel 43.

<sup>8</sup> Ketcham to Drexel, May 26, 1908, ASBS.

<sup>9</sup> Ketcham to Drexel, May 26, 1908, ASBS.

<sup>10</sup> William Ketcham to Charles S. Lusk, Secretary of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, May 29, 1908, ABCIM, Ketcham to Drexel, May 29, 1908, ASBS.

<sup>11</sup> Lusk to Ketcham, June 13, 1908, ABCIM, reel 43.

<sup>12</sup> Charles S. Lusk to Charles F. Larrabee, Acting Commissioner of Indian Affairs, June 13, 1908, ABCIM reel 43.

<sup>13</sup> Larrabee to Lusk, June 18, 1908, ABCIM, reel 43. Larrabee based his decision on stipulations contained in the Treaty of November 1, 1837 (7 Statutes at Large, 544) and the Treaty of March 8, 1865 (14 Statutes at Large, 671). The Indian Appropriation Act of June 22, 1874 (18 Statutes at Large, 170) contained an appropriation for the purchase of the Nebraska reservation from the Omaha Indians and for improvements on the reservation to be paid from the funds remaining of the \$1,100,000 stipulated in the Treaty of 1837. The Indian Appropriation Act of 1901 provided \$38,500 for the erection of the school, which consisted of one brick dormitory, a brick addition to the school building, one brick laundry building, and a water and sewer system.

<sup>14</sup> Keefe to Lusk, June 22, 1908, ABCIM, reel 43. Keefe reported that ten of the twelve councilmen were present, and all favored the Catholic proposal. Later, the Dutch Reformed missionaries challenged the legitimacy of the vote based on the number of councilmen present.

<sup>15</sup> Lusk to Ketcham, June 22, 1908, ABCIM, reel 43. Lusk reported to Ketcham that according to Special Agent Dalby, nine of the twelve Winnebago councilmen had favored the Catholic request for the school buildings.

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<sup>16</sup> Griese to Lusk, July 9, 1908, ABCIM, reel 43.

<sup>17</sup> Keefe to Lusk, July 16, 1908, ABCIM, reel 43.

<sup>18</sup> Griese to Ketcham, July 20, 1908, ABCIM, reel 43.

<sup>19</sup> Keefe to Lusk, July 27, 1908, ABCIM, reel 43. Father Griese arrived in the area in late June, and began his official duties on July 1, 1908. (Ketcham to Drexel, August 3, 1908, ABCIM, roll 43.) His first attempts at missionary work were inhibited by the lack of a stable residence. The new town of Winnebago was experiencing a housing shortage as construction workers, businessmen and land seekers competed for accommodations. The priest initially stayed at the home of Harry Keefe in nearby Walthill, Nebraska. (Griese to Scannell, June 25, 1908, AAO, Box 2275, Griese to Ketcham, June 25, 1908, ABCIM, roll 43.) In September, 1908, Griese apparently lived in Fremont, Nebraska. (Griese to Ketcham, September 2, 1908, ABCIM, roll 43, Ketcham to Griese, September 9, 1908, ABCIM, roll 43, Griese to Ketcham, September 22, 1908, ABCIM, roll 43, Griese to Scannell, September 24, 1908, AAO, SG 10, Box 52, F 89) In November, 1908, he finally found a rental house in Winnebago. (Griese to Ketcham, November 13, 1908, ABCIM, roll 43, Griese to Scannell, November 18, 1908, AAO, Box 2275.)

<sup>20</sup> "Affidavit of Robert Lincoln," July 23, 1908, William Harrison, witness to mark, ABCIM, reel 43. Henry Cloud is better known to history as Henry Roe Cloud, a Yale graduate and president of the Indian Institute of Wichita, Kansas, who served as Indian advisor on the commission which published The Problem of Indian Administration, better known as the "Merriam Report," in 1928.

<sup>21</sup> Keefe to Lusk, August 3, 1908, ABCIM, reel 43.

<sup>22</sup> "Affidavit of James Bird, Joseph A. Lamere, Charles Frenchman, David Cyr," no date, but presumably the first week of August, 1908, witness to mark of James Bird and Charles Frenchman, W.E. Whitcomb; "Affidavit of James Bird," August 1, 1908, witness to mark, Joseph A. Lamere; "Affidavit of John Harrison," August 3, 1908, ABCIM, reel 43.

<sup>23</sup> Ketcham to Lusk, August 3, 1908, ABCIM, reel 43.

<sup>24</sup> F.G. Ellis, MD, government physician at Winnebago Agency, to William Ketcham, August 27, 1908, ABCIM, reel 43.

<sup>25</sup> Griese to Ketcham, September 2, 1908, ABCIM, reel 43.

<sup>26</sup> Lusk to Ketcham, September 3, 1908, ABCIM, reel 43. The Winnebago school buildings question must be seen in the larger context of issues between the churches and the Bureau of Indian Affairs during 1908. The Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions was concerned with both the sectarian content of common religious services in the government schools and the necessity of Catholic employees and students participating in these exercises. William Ketcham, "Annual Report of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, 1910," 48-51, 94-100, Native American Reference Collection, II, reel 11. At the same time, the Indian Rights Association had issues with Commissioner Leupp regarding incidents on the Crow and Navajo reservations. In the organization's annual report, Secretary Matthew K. Sniffen observed, "It is not too much to say that the Commissioner's attitude of pronounced hostility to any suggestion or criticism is one of the great difficulties in the way of this Association." "26<sup>th</sup> Annual Report of the Indian Rights Association," April 15, 1909, Indian Rights Association Papers, reel 102. Given that the Commissioner faced criticism from both Catholic and non-Catholic missionaries and reformers, and given the formal protest lodged by Reverend Walter C. Roe against Catholic use of the school buildings at Winnebago, the postponement of the decision appears to have been an attempt to avoid controversy prior to the election. Father Ketcham determined not to press the issue. In September, 1908, Ketcham thanked the Reverend

John F. McQuade of Philadelphia for his offer of assistance in lobbying President Theodore Roosevelt, but “after very serious consideration, I have come to the conclusion that might not be wise to approach the president on the Winnebago matter, either through Senator Penrose or, in fact, any politician.” William Ketcham to Reverend John F. McQuade, September 25, 1908, ABCIM, reel 43. Harry Keefe, an active Republican, stated confidently, “Whenever the time comes for the submission of the question, an active and effective campaign can be made by a few of us who are interested in the matter and insure the settlement of the same favorably.” Harry Keefe to William Ketcham, October 5, 1908, ABCIM, reel 43. On November 2, Ketcham reported to Bishop Scannell, “Recently, I have had opportunity to get in pretty close touch with our strenuous president, and I believe he will give us a square deal, but he wishes to wait until after the election.” William Ketcham to Richard Scannell, Bishop of Omaha, November 2, 1908, ABCIM, reel 43. The disenchantment of William Ketcham with Commissioner Leupp was reflected in a letter to Bishop Scannell. “Although Nebraska turned the cold shoulder, we Indians are very much elated, of course, over the election of Taft and Sherman.” William Ketcham to Richard Scannell, November 5, 1908, ABCIM, reel 43. For a summary of Ketcham’s relationship with Leupp see Francis Paul Prucha, The Churches and the Indian Schools, 1888-1912 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979), 111, 133, 182.

<sup>27</sup> Ketcham to Keefe, September 9, 1908, ABCIM, reel 43, Ketcham to Griese, September 9, 1908, ABCIM, reel 43.

<sup>28</sup> Griese to Ketcham, September 13, 1908, ABCIM, reel 43.

<sup>29</sup> Keefe to Ketcham, October 5, 1908, ABCIM, reel 43, Keefe to Ketcham, November 7, 1908, ABCIM, reel 43.

<sup>30</sup> Francis Leupp, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, to William Ketcham, Director, Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, November 5, 1908, ABCIM, reel 43.

<sup>31</sup> Ketcham to Drexel, November 12, 1908, ASBS.

<sup>32</sup> Ketcham to Griese, November 12, 1908, ABCIM, reel 43.

<sup>33</sup> Ketcham to Keefe, November 12, 1908, ABCIM, reel 43, Father Ketcham’s public statement regarding the disposition of the school buildings at Winnebago may be found in William Ketcham, “Annual Report of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, 1908,” 71-83, Native American Reference Collection, II, reel 11. The priest questioned both the timing and the wisdom of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs’ decision. A small investment in the old agency buildings would have upgraded them for government use. Further, the Commissioner’s decision appeared to consider the comfort of eleven federal employees more important than educational opportunities for 90 to 100 Winnebago students. Finally, Ketcham related that Leupp had told him that President Roosevelt concurred with the decision, but when the priest visited later with the president, Roosevelt “assured me that he had no recollection of ever having heard anything about the matter.” Ibid. 82-83.

<sup>34</sup> Keefe to Ketcham, January 30, 1909, ABCIM, reel 46, Keefe to Ketcham, February 1, 1909, ABCIM, reel 46, Griese to Ketcham, February 2, 1909, ABCIM, reel 46, Griese to Drexel, February 3, 1909, ABCIM, reel 46.

<sup>35</sup> Ketcham to Griese, February 5, 1909, ABCIM, reel 46.

<sup>36</sup> Ketcham to Keefe, February 11, 1909, ABCIM, reel 46.

<sup>37</sup> Keefe to Drexel, February 20, 1909, ASBS.

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<sup>38</sup> Keefe cited the price of the land as \$1,000 in Keefe to Ketcham, February 20, 1909, ABCIM, reel 46, and corrected the figure to \$1,500 in Keefe to Ketcham, February 22, 1909, ABCIM, reel 46.

<sup>39</sup> Keefe to Ketcham, February 22, 1909, ABCIM, reel 46.

<sup>40</sup> Griese to Drexel, February 24, 1909, ASBS.

<sup>41</sup> Ketcham to Keefe, February 26, 1909, ASBS.

<sup>42</sup> Ketcham to Griese, March 8, 1909, ABCIM, reel 46.

<sup>43</sup> Keefe to Ketcham, March 16, 1909, ABCIM, reel 46.

<sup>44</sup> Griese to Drexel, March 17, 1909, ABCIM, reel 46.

<sup>45</sup> Griese to Ketcham, March 23, 1909, ABCIM, reel 46.

<sup>46</sup> Ketcham implied that a boarding school would be built in one year in Ketcham to Keefe, April 1, 1909, ASBS. The director corrected this in a follow-up letter five days later. The Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament could not undertake a boarding school for at least three years. Ketcham to Keefe, April 6, 1909, ABCIM, reel 46.

<sup>47</sup> Ketcham to Griese, April 1, 1909, ABCIM, reel 46.

<sup>48</sup> Griese to Ketcham, April 10, 1909, ABCIM, reel 46.

<sup>49</sup> Ketcham to Griese, April 10, 1909, ABCIM, reel 46.

<sup>50</sup> Ketcham to Keefe, April 10, 1909, ABCIM, reel 46.

<sup>51</sup> Ketcham to Keefe, April 10, 1909, ABCIM, reel 46; "Memorandum Concerning the Disposal of the Winnebago School Plant to One or Another of the Religious Applicants for It," March 30, 1909, ABCIM, reel 46.

<sup>52</sup> Ketcham to Keefe, April 19, 1909, ASBS.

<sup>53</sup> Ketcham to Keefe, April 19, 1909, ABCIM, roll 46.

<sup>54</sup> Ketcham to Drexel, April 23, 1909, ASBS.

<sup>55</sup> Griese to Drexel, May 3, 1909, ASBS.

<sup>56</sup> Griese to Ketcham, May 3, 1909, ABCIM, reel 46.

<sup>57</sup> Drexel to Scannell, May 4, 1909, AAO, 5G7, 59, f.7.

<sup>58</sup> Griese to Ketcham, May 14, 1909, ABCIM, reel 46; See also, Griese to Drexel, May 22, 1909, ASBS.

<sup>59</sup> Griese to Ketcham, May 31, 1909, ABCIM, reel 46; Griese to Scannell, June 7, 1909, AAO, Box 2275.

<sup>60</sup> Ketcham to Griese, June 7, 1909, ABCIM, reel 46.



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<sup>61</sup> Keefe to Ketcham, May 31, 1909, ASBS. Father Ketcham addressed this point in discussions with the Bureau of Indian Affairs. "It was pointed out [by Ketcham] that the only way to elevate the morals of the Winnebagoes was carefully to protect and educate the girls, and in this way to inspire the tribe with respect for women and plant in their minds new ideals and principles; that this could be accomplished in no way so effectively as by a Sisters' school." William Ketcham, "Annual Report of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, 1908," 73, Native American Reference Collection, II, reel 11.

<sup>62</sup> clippings file, ABCIM, reel 46.

<sup>63</sup> Griese to Ketcham, July 26, 1909, ABCIM, reel 46.

<sup>64</sup> Griese to Ketcham, August 29, 1909, ABCIM, reel 46.

<sup>65</sup> Griese to Drexel, September 21, 1909, ASBS.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Albert Kneale, Indian Agent (Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Printers, Ltd., 1950), 214-215.

<sup>68</sup> "A Missionary Dead," The Winnebago Chieftain, February 18, 1910, 8: 1-3.

<sup>69</sup> Griese to Drexel, October 2, 1909, ASBS. Wilfred Beach, the Sioux City architect who designed the mission buildings, indicated that high demand had resulted in a tight labor market. He advised the sisters that the only way to avoid delays was to pay premium wages. Evidently, Mother Katharine declined to do so. Wilfred Beach to Mother James, October 18, 1910, ASBS.

<sup>70</sup> "Memoir of Sister Angela Campbell," unpublished manuscript, October 19, 1925, ASBS.

<sup>71</sup> Drexel to sisters at St. Elizabeth's Convent, undated, but October, 1909, "Writings of Mother Katharine Drexel," #1386, unpublished transcription of selected correspondence of Mother Katharine Drexel, ASBS.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid. Mother Katharine stated that four teachers were required, but listed the duties of only three.

<sup>75</sup> Katharine Drexel to Edward Morrell, October 12, 1909, "Writings of Mother Katharine Drexel," #2115, unpublished transcription of selected correspondence of Mother Katharine Drexel, ASBS.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Drexel to the sisters at St. Elizabeth's Convent, October 18, 1909, "Writings of Mother Katharine Drexel," # 277, unpublished transcription of selected correspondence of Mother Katharine Drexel, ASBS.

<sup>78</sup> Drexel to the sisters at St. Elizabeth's Convent, undated, but October, 1909, "Writings of Mother Katharine Drexel," #267, unpublished transcription of selected correspondence of Mother Katharine Drexel, ASBS.

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> William Ketcham to Mother James, October 25, 1909, ASBS.

<sup>81</sup> Drexel to the sisters at St. Elizabeth's Convent, October 18, 1909, "Writings of Mother Katharine Drexel," #267, unpublished transcription of selected correspondence of Mother Katharine Drexel, ASBS.

<sup>82</sup> Sister Agatha to the sisters at St. Elizabeth's Convent, October 31 and November 3, 1909, "Annals of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament - Winnebago," unpublished, edited transcription of letters from the various convents to the motherhouse, ASBS, 53-55.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Drexel to the sisters at St. Elizabeth's Convent, undated, but between November 2-5, 1909, "Writings of Mother Katharine Drexel," #300, unpublished transcription of selected correspondence of Mother Katharine Drexel, ASBS.

<sup>85</sup> "Catholic Church and School Notes," The Winnebago Chieftain, November 5, 1909, 5:4. The inscription on the bell was reported earlier when it arrived at the mission site, "Church Notes," The Winnebago Chieftain, October 8, 1909, 5:4.

<sup>86</sup> "St. Augustine's Church and School Dedicated," The Winnebago Chieftain, December 3, 1909, 5:4.

<sup>87</sup> Father John H. Griese, "Baptisms, Marriages, and Deaths" Book, St. Augustine's Indian Mission, Winnebago, Nebraska.

<sup>88</sup> "Financial Statement - St. Augustine's, Winnebago," 1909, unpublished document, AAO, Box 2.

<sup>89</sup> "Financial Statement - Winnebago," unpublished document, ASBS.

## CHAPTER SIX

## SOME DAY A GREAT HARVEST

The Indians have [had] three pow-wows this year and then many come to me for work. 'We have nothing to eat,' some will say. But I cannot help them this year, but hope that in the future I can give work to many. And then the spiritual harvest will begin.<sup>1</sup>

Father John Griese to Mother Katharine Drexel  
September 2, 1928

The Winnebago Chieftain chronicled important events at the new St. Augustine's Indian Mission no less than seven times during the fall of 1909. In October, the paper announced the arrival of the church bell. During the following month, the citizens of Winnebago were informed of the progress in construction, the opening, and the upcoming dedication of the new school.<sup>2</sup> In December, the paper reported the dedication ceremonies, the departure of Mother Katharine, and that there were currently twenty-four "scholars" enrolled, but that number was expected to increase significantly at the new semester's beginning.<sup>3</sup> During the holidays, the Chieftain enthusiastically informed its readers about the Christmas program held at the new school. The editor lauded the performances of the girls' marching drill team and the boys' chorus. The highlight of the evening was the arrival of Santa Claus, played by tribal member Dan LaMere, who distributed presents to each of the children. The paper reported that the schoolroom was filled to capacity, and that many people had been turned away due to the lack even of standing room. Finally, the Chieftain praised the sisters for the preparation of the program in such a short period of time, and cited this as evidence that St. Augustine's was a valuable asset to the community.<sup>4</sup>



St. Augustine's Indian Mission, Winnebago, Nebraska, circa 1912  
Source: St. Augustine's Indian Mission, Winnebago, Nebraska

The winter of 1909-1910 was certainly filled with the hard work of teaching in a new mission, but it was not without its lighter moments. The Nebraska winds soon found a niche in the community memory of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, right next to Mother Katharine's recollections of the muddy roads in the frontier community. On New Year's Day, Sister Agatha shared a humorous look at the weather with the sisters at St. Elizabeth's Convent. She related that the winter wind had howled across the hill for two days and nights and, at times, she had feared that the roof would blow off. Yet, the nuns found humor in the minor calamities that the wind inflicted. She explained that Sister Helen had opened the kitchen window only to have the wind suck the curtain outside and down the hill. When the nun attempted to grab the curtain, her veil followed the curtain

out the window and across the landscape. Despite Sister Helen's best efforts, the curtain and the veil were never found. Another day, the wind blew the front door shut on one of the LaMere men, and shattered the glass. Sister Agatha reported that this was the fourth pane of glass which had been installed in the door.<sup>5</sup>

The weather extremes of Nebraska resulted in more serious discussions during the late winter and early spring, when rain, snow and ice made travel difficult on the dirt roads of Thurston County. Father John Griese and leading Winnebago Catholics had consistently requested the construction of a dormitory in order to serve more of the children who lived in outlying areas of the county. Mother Drexel had cautiously avoided this extensive commitment of resources. Apparently having been finally persuaded of the need, she and Mother James arrived at Winnebago on April 1, and announced her decision to open the school to boarders.<sup>6</sup> During the following month, The Winnebago Chieftain affirmed that plans for a new dormitory had been drawn by Wilfred Beach, the Sioux City architect who had designed the church and school buildings.<sup>7</sup>

Father Griese reported the expansion to Bishop Scannell on April 12, but he also stated that steady attendance at both Mass and school was a problem. The priest related that a good number of Indian adults had expressed their wish to be baptized, but he hesitated to proceed because he feared that they might not maintain the religious obligations that resulted from Baptism. The missionary summed up the results of his own efforts: "Till now was the work hard and with no great success, but I expect a change to come after some time."<sup>8</sup>

Father Griese and the sisters were indeed working hard. The mission served thirty-four students during the 1909-1910 school year. The student body consisted of 19 boys and 15 girls, and included 10 Catholics, 5 Protestants, and 19 “pagans.” Racially, the students included 9 “fullbloods,” 20 “mixed bloods,” and 5 whites, three of whom were Catholic.<sup>9</sup>

In addition, the priest also served mission parishes at Walthill, Homer and Rosalie. Every Sunday, he offered Mass at Winnebago, and then every second Sunday, he traveled by horse and buggy to one of the other communities. He reported that he traveled to Rosalie, which had six Catholic families, “sometimes.” At Winnebago, he enumerated 14 Catholic families, including 38 children. Among the adults, he listed 29 as practicing Catholics, 35 as non-practicing, and he reported 24 baptisms and 4 conversions during the year.<sup>10</sup>

Missionary work continued even after the school year ended. The sister-annalist described the summer of 1910 as a “happy summer.” Sisters Aloysius and Philip Neri from Nashville, Tennessee, spent extensive time at Winnebago. The nuns enjoyed the luxury of rising an hour later each morning, at 6 A.M. Days were spent studying, visiting Indian families, receiving Indian visitors, and giving religious instructions. Construction of the new boarding school dormitory began on June 13, and completion was scheduled for September 13. Father William Ketcham, Director of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, visited in July on his return to the east from the Catholic Sioux Congress in South Dakota, where he had been christened “Great Watching Owl.” Father Griese, with the help of Henry Westropp, S.J., conducted a mission on the hill in the evenings at the

end of July. The mission featured preaching, along with singing, musical recordings, fireworks, and servings of muskmelon and watermelon.<sup>11</sup>

The Winnebago Chieftain announced on August 26 that the new St. Augustine's boarding school, which would emphasize training of the "mind, heart, and hand," would open in September. The article explained that the purpose of the school was "to form men and women, who, by their virtue and noble aspirations as well as by their thrifty and industrious habits, will exert a wide spreading influence for good upon their race in this country."<sup>12</sup> The editor continued that while the new school was unquestionably Catholic, it was open to all, and that no undue influence would be exercised on non-Catholic students. The curriculum was designed to provide a good "practical" education, which presumably meant reading, writing and arithmetic. Courses in domestic science and domestic arts were also advertised. Piano and vocal music were offered to all students, which reflected Mother Drexel's belief in the importance of the arts. The article continued that a basketball court and "other athletic games suitable for girls" had been provided. Finally, it assured parents that while close supervision of the students would be exercised, discipline would "exclude every harsh feature, so that the discipline is mild and considerate, but unflinchingly firm."<sup>13</sup>

The organization of the school day during the early years has not been preserved. However, an existing schedule from St. Francis Mission, South Dakota in the 1880s and the testimony of a former student who attended St. Augustine's in the 1930s, suggest a somewhat standardized boarding school schedule. The students rose early, washed and dressed in time for Mass at 6:45 A.M. Breakfast followed Mass, and class work filled the

morning hours. After lunch, students returned to the classrooms. After classes, house cleaning, yard work, laundry and ironing were performed, and there was “free time” for recreation until supper. A study hall completed the student’s day. On Sundays, the students were allowed to sleep a bit later. Mass was at 7:30 A.M., and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament was at 5:00 P.M. Sundays were devoted to recreation and family visits. The Stations of the Cross at 4:00 were held on Fridays during Lent. The respondent described the discipline as “strict but loving” under the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament. She recalled having her hands slapped for an infraction that she could no longer remember.

The children at St. Augustine’s did not wear uniforms. The parents dressed the children, and the sisters or charitable organizations found clothing for those in need. The former student further remembered that the meals, which were shared by both the sisters and the students, were adequate, but featured little meat. However, there were plenty of potatoes and fresh fruit in season, thanks to Father Griese’s efforts.<sup>14</sup> In 1911, Sister Agatha apologized to Mother Katharine that the food budget of \$17.15 per day seemed high, but she related that “the children have very good appetites.” She stated that they consumed thirty loaves of bread each day at five cents a loaf and that meat was expensive at twelve to fifteen cents per pound. The mother superior reported that she had attempted to purchase meat more cheaply from the wholesalers in Sioux City, but that they were reluctant to undercut the local retailers whom they supplied. The sisters attempted to save money by mending the children’s shoes, but prescription drugs proved costly, and the children constantly needed nightgowns and work aprons.<sup>15</sup>



The second annual Christmas program was a great success. Agency superintendent Albert Kneale attended, as did many white citizens from the surrounding area. Most of the boarding students stayed at St. Augustine's over the holiday recess, and some of the older girls were received as aspirants into the Society of the Children of Mary. After the break, six additional boarders brought the total number to thirty-six. The sister annalist reported that so many of the students had accepted Catholic baptism that some of the Native American Church families had withdrawn their children from the school. However, these vacancies were quickly filled. By the end of the year, only four students had not been baptized.<sup>16</sup> This would seem to indicate that, despite earlier assurances in the local newspaper that "no undue pressures" for conversion would be exerted on non-Catholic students, there must have been at least indirect pressures to join the church.<sup>17</sup>

Academic success was recognized at the first annual commencement on June 8, 1911. County Superintendent E.W. Tarrant announced that the state high school examination scores of Grace LaMere, Marie Linkswiler and John Goergon were the highest in Thurston County. One year later, an entry from the St. Augustine's sewing class earned a second place ribbon at the Nebraska State Fair in Lincoln, \$24.50 in prize money, and a letter of commendation from Anna V. Day of the Nebraska State Department of Public Instruction. She wrote, "I want you to know how much admiring comment the work which you sent received. The sewing particularly was beautiful. I wish our public schools and their pupils could do as well."<sup>18</sup>

The sisters' relationships with the families that they served reflected the complexity of Indian-white relationships in the rapidly changing frontier environment that was Winnebago in the first quarter of the twentieth century. Loss of the tribal land base, leasing, the transition from agency headquarters to grain elevator town, and the impact of illegal liquor sales combined to create economic and emotional instability for some Indian families. The sisters, who were eastern women pledged to the life of the convent, perceived some family situations as especially destructive to the children. In February 1911, Sister Agatha described the day school situation as "an absolute failure." Many parents did not enforce regular school attendance, and she described the home life of some of the children as dangerous and "simply abominable." She told Mother Katharine that she wished that some of the children might never need to return to their homes.<sup>24</sup> Unfortunately, sister-principal did not elaborate on the conditions which she found so destructive.<sup>19</sup>

On the other hand, some Winnebago and Omaha families were quite involved in their children's lives and supportive of the efforts of the sisters. At the end of the 1910-1911 school year, a picnic was held at Joseph LaMere's farm, about five miles from the mission. Parents arrived to transport the nuns and students to the ranch. The sister annalist described the departure of students, parents and sisters in twenty two-seated buggies, two lumber wagons, and two automobiles. Everyone worked cooperatively and the event was so successful that the annalist wished, "If only we had a larger school, what great good could be done."<sup>20</sup>

Parents and public alike were supportive of the annual school plays held at the time of commencement. In 1911, the school presented "Diana or Christ," and, in 1912, "Coania, the Indian Rose." Although the settings were quite different, the themes of both plays were identical. "Diana or Christ" was set in Roman times, and "Coania, the Indian Rose" was set in the Canadian forests of New France. The heroic virtue of Christian women in the face of pagan hostility, even unto the threat of death, was the theme of both plays.<sup>21</sup> The themes of these plays reflected the thoughts of Father Griese as found in a 1913 article which stated: "Education in a Catholic school does not consist in imparting only secular knowledge, but of far greater importance is the development of the mind and heart of the child to the higher and nobler view of life."<sup>22</sup>

Parents and community members were participants in the dramas. In 1911, attorney Harry L. Keefe of Walthill served as the narrator and Joseph LaMere as interpreter. During the following year, the sisters reported that there was great enthusiasm about the selection of a play featuring Indian characters. Indeed, the choice was determined by the sisters at Winnebago, who requested a copy of the play from St. Elizabeth's Convent with precisely that in mind. The depth of this interest may be seen in a poignant behind-the-scenes story. The mother of Alma and Grace LaMere passed away shortly before the play was to be presented. The sisters suggested that the play be cancelled, but the LaMere sisters insisted that the play must be performed lest it disappoint the Indian audience which eagerly anticipated the production. That support was further shown when the families provided costumes for the play from their own traditional attire, which included war bonnets, beaded vests and pouches, buckskin

leggings, dresses made of embroidered silk and silver jewelry. The sisters estimated that they were responsible for between \$3,000 and \$4,000 worth of clothing and jewelry, and reported to the motherhouse that they were greatly relieved when the items were returned to the families.

The play was a great success on many levels. The sister annalist reported, "One of the Indian women told me that the 'old Indians' thought it marvelous that the sisters could make Indian girls get up and talk like that on stage, 'for,' said this woman, 'Indian girls don't like to do that.' I thought to myself, 'Well do I know it.'"<sup>23</sup> The plays may have resonated with both the students and the adult audience because the dramas reflected the religious divisions within their own families, many of whom had members who were Catholic, Dutch Reformed, Presbyterian, Medicine Lodge or Native American Church.

The religious mosaic of Winnebago became increasingly complex during the first quarter of the twentieth century. The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints and the Episcopal Church were briefly active at Winnebago, but the primary Christian competitor of St. Augustine's Mission was the Winnebago Indian Church, sponsored by the Dutch Reformed Church. The Reformed Church had entered the Winnebago mission field in 1908, apparently a few months before the arrival of Father Griese. The Reverend Walter C. Roe, Missionary at Large, had helped to establish the mission, but the growth and success of the organization here was largely the work of Pastor G.A. Watermulder, whose first wife, Fannie, was buried at Winnebago. The missionary maintained a home in

the town after he became a traveling supervisor for the Reformed Church, and he served as pastor at Winnebago off and on until well into the 1930s.<sup>24</sup>

Sister Agatha, the first principal at St. Augustine's, had offered the opinion that the Dutch Reformed mission was the most successful at Winnebago.<sup>25</sup> One reason for this success was certainly the employment of Indian missionaries. Henry Roe Cloud and Frank Wright were especially active in the formative years of the mission. In the 1920s, efforts were made to employ Indian youth catechists, and this emphasis on developing Indian leadership was strengthened in the 1930s. In 1936, the annual report of the Women's Domestic Mission Board of the Reformed Church of America claimed that the Winnebago tribal council "is controlled by members of our mission," including the first woman tribal council member.<sup>26</sup>

Another reason for the success of the Winnebago Indian Church was its close cooperation with the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Earlier, Superintendent Albert Kneale had described the relationship between the Winnebago Indian Mission and the agency as ideal.<sup>27</sup> This relationship was enhanced throughout the 1920s and 1930s, especially by the work of Anna G. Berkenpas, who served as the "field worker" or "social worker" for the church during that period.<sup>28</sup> This identification of the mission with the agency was reflected in the pages of the Chieftain during the early 1920s, in which mission news appeared under the headings "Agency Mission" or "Agency and Mission."<sup>29</sup>

In 1908, the Reverend Walter C. Roe had assured Father William Ketcham that the Dutch Reformed Church had no intention of establishing a school. However, by 1913 plans were discussed to establish a school as a memorial to Reverend Roe. The plans had

to be abandoned because of difficulties in securing land in the town of Winnebago. The memorial school was instead built at Dulce, New Mexico, and the Winnebago Indian Mission School did not open until 1917.<sup>30</sup> In November 1924, government school supervisor R.L. Spalsbury visited the school and provided a glimpse into life there. He was most complimentary of the physical condition of the frame buildings, which sat on 80 acres of land. The inspector found 90 students, 40 boys and 50 girls, enrolled at the mission. In 1924, the school offered kindergarten and the first through sixth grades. He remarked that the students attended classes all day, rather than half days of class work combined with a half day of domestic or agricultural work. Spalsbury was impressed that all of the teachers held Nebraska teaching certificates, followed state curriculum, and that promotion was based on the scores from state examinations. The inspector went on to note that tuition was charged those who could afford to pay. A tuition system maintained scholarships of \$75 per year for those who could not. Reformed Church congregations and organizations across the nation provided the scholarships which were based on need. Interestingly, staff salaries were also paid by the subscriptions of the same organizations. Surprisingly, only three of the eleven staff members were teachers, which must have resulted in large class sizes.<sup>31</sup> By 1932, the Dutch Reformed mission had closed its school and sent its student body to the Winnebago Public School. The mission continued to provide lodging, subsistence, and care in its dormitories.<sup>32</sup>

Over the years, a number of flash points of controversy punctuated the competition between the Reformed Church and St. Augustine's. In 1908, Father Ketcham had clashed with Reverend Roe over the right to occupy the abandoned government

school building. That initial conflict was resolved by Superintendent Albert Kneale's decision to retain the buildings for the agency.<sup>33</sup> In 1911, Father Griese reported to Father Ketcham that two male members of the Native American Church, who were married to Catholics, had approached him about their marital problems. Griese alleged that unnamed Dutch Reformed ministers had attempted to convince the Catholic wives to join the Winnebago Indian Church in the hope of getting the men to join that church. The priest charged that they were, in effect, breaking up families. He further claimed that the Reformed Church had taken elderly women with money into the mission and kept them against their wills.<sup>34</sup> Father Ketcham responded that these were indeed serious charges, but he reminded the missionary that he could act only on specific, provable charges. He offered that he would take the cases all the way to the president if necessary, but only if the cases were clear violations of the law and not matters of misunderstanding.<sup>35</sup> Again, in 1914, Father Griese complained to Ketcham that members of the Dutch Reformed Church were passing around a polemical book entitled Secret Confessions of a Roman Catholic Priest, by L.J. King, who purported to be a former priest. Griese wondered whether the book could be excluded from the reservation.<sup>36</sup> There is no record of the director's response, and presumably this episode in anti-Catholicism passed with minimal impact.

By 1920, Father Griese reported to Father Ketcham that an amicable relationship existed among the Christian churches of Winnebago. Father Ketcham wrote that Harry Keefe had informed him that efforts to pass a state law against peyote had failed in the state legislature due to bickering among the Protestant clergy. Father Griese responded

that some of the missionaries from Winnebago had traveled to Lincoln to testify before the state legislature, but that he had declined to participate. It was news to him that such bickering was going on. He continued that the denominations were living in “perfect peace” with one another. Indeed, the priest reported that he had joined the Protestant ministers, the Bureau of Indian Affairs superintendent, the public school principal and other civic leaders in an attempt to “clean up the town” by ridding it of gambling and “immorality.” He had little hope that reform efforts would be effective because the root of the problem was the “bad lot of white people” and the young Indians who were willing to follow them. He also noted that missionary work was very difficult due to the immoral climate, and he offered the opinion that if it were not for the schools, all of the churches might be closed. On a positive note, he concluded that the future belonged to the Catholic Church. He hinted that he had a “strong card” to play which would improve the moral climate at Winnebago.<sup>37</sup>

Father Griese and the sisters demonstrated a surprising degree of tolerance toward the Medicine Lodge, the traditional religious organization of the Winnebago, and the Native American Church, even as the various religious organizations contended for the allegiance of the Winnebago and Omaha peoples. Indeed, the missionaries seem to have been aware that given the religious divisions among the Indian families, and given the religious tolerance which characterized native cultures, any sort of disrespect would only have hindered the work of the mission. The cultivation of personal relationships was the only road to conversions. As early as 1909, Sister Agatha had written to St. Elizabeth’s about a young Omaha couple who had visited the convent unexpectedly that



day. The couple had traveled from the Omaha reservation to examine the school for their seven-year-old daughter. The husband had been educated at the abandoned Presbyterian mission on the Omaha Reservation, but was now a member of the Native American Church. The wife had been educated at a Quaker school in Iowa. After a tour of the school and a long conversation with the sister principal that was at times apparently quite personal, the couple decided to enroll their daughter. Mother Agatha wrote home about the woman's belief in the effectiveness of the peyote ritual without the least bit of personal judgment.<sup>38</sup> Oliver LaMere, a member of the Native American Church, requested membership in the St. Augustine's choir, but Sister Scholastica declined because he was male. Father Griese intervened on LaMere's behalf. He confided to the nun that LaMere had been baptized a Catholic. Perhaps, he argued, choir membership would bring him back to the Catholic Church. Sister countered that the priest should teach him the music and he could sing apart from the sisters. The resolution of the dispute was not reported in the letters, but it was clear that the sisters hoped to enroll Lamere's daughter Laura as a student.<sup>39</sup>

In 1925, Mother Philip Neri attended a Medicine Lodge initiation ceremony and shared her experience with the readers of The Indian Sentinel, a publication of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions. Mother Philip also explained the reason for her presence in a letter to St. Elizabeth's Convent. A mother, whose children attended the mission, had requested that the children be allowed to attend the ceremony so that they might spend time with their relatives. Apparently, the nun felt that she also must accompany the students. She humorously related to the sisters at the motherhouse that, "we wended our

muddy way a long two miles to the scene of the festivities. If anyone should ever tell you that Nebraska mud is as heavy as lead and sticks like glue, be not incredulous, but admire his reticence.”<sup>40</sup> At the end of the journey, they came upon the campsite which bordered both sides of a small creek, “a setting that in fancy carried us back two or more centuries.” She described the Indian women clad in “gorgeous” brightly colored shawls which contrasted vividly with the woodland greenery. The women moved soundlessly from caldron to caldron of steaming, savory meats in preparation for the feast. The nun described the rhythmic dancing of the men and women to the beat of the drums, which emphasized the masculine tones of the singers, the symbolic “deaths” of the dancers as they were touched by the sacred otter pelt, and marveled at the decorum of the participants. She remarked, “ The downcast eyes and reverent deportment might be an interesting and instructive object lesson to Christians in their devotions.” At the end of the ceremony, the participants settled in to a feast to “which we aliens were not invited.”<sup>41</sup>

Again in 1925, Father Griese wrote to Monsignor William Hughes, Director of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, regarding efforts by the government to suppress the Native American Church. The missionary reminded the director that the Indians faced much graver evils than the mere ritual consumption of peyote. He wrote, “The lax marriage relations, a thriftless, shifting existence, do more harm than the mescal.” He wished that the government would focus more on the economic needs of the Indians, and he reported that he was about to undertake an agricultural experiment to assist the Winnebago and Omaha Indians.<sup>42</sup>

Financial matters were an abiding concern at St. Augustine's. Initially, Mother Katharine had hoped to conduct a simple mission presence at Winnebago which would gradually expand into a day school, and then a boarding school, depending on available staff, money and demand. However, at the urging of Father Griese and Winnebago leaders, she had moved ahead with the day school and then with the dormitory expansion.<sup>43</sup> The uncertain finances of the new mission were apparent as early as February 1910, even as construction of the dormitory was under consideration. Father Ketcham informed Mother Katharine that he had been summoned by the Assistant Commissioner of Indian Affairs to meet with a delegation of Nebraska Winnebagoes, who had requested a meeting regarding the possibility of enrolling an unspecified number of boarders at St. Augustine's. Ketcham continued that while the Winnebagoes did have tribal funds for education, he hesitated to apply because "I fear that on account of the Dutch Reformed influence on the Reservation a regular war would be started up should we make an attempt to use these funds for the education of the children." He offered that there was a slight possibility that another solution might be found. He considered turning over the school to the government as a day school. The sisters might then work as government employees at a salary of \$600 per year, and the government might also pay for the school lunch. Boys from the surrounding area could walk or ride their ponies to school, and girls could be taken as boarders.<sup>44</sup>

On August 17, 1911, Ketcham wrote to Mother Katharine from Anadarko, Oklahoma that the Commissioner of Indian Affairs did not seem inclined to take over the school at Winnebago. However, he felt that if he went to President William Howard Taft,

he might be successful. On the other hand, he reasoned, that it might be better to withdraw the bureau's request for Winnebago indefinitely, and ask that the government take over St. Isidore's in Oklahoma. He argued that this would relieve the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament of their expenditures at St. Isidore's, which would compensate for the expenses at Winnebago. He believed that the government would be more favorable to taking over the Oklahoma mission school because it was more spacious and the need for a school was greater. Ketcham concluded by informing Mother Katharine that he had instructed Secretary Charles S. Lusk to withdraw the Winnebago request indefinitely. He asked that if she did not agree with this decision, that she should write Lusk directly and countermand his decision.<sup>45</sup>

The financial uncertainty of St. Augustine's was also reflected in correspondence between Mother Agatha, Superior at Winnebago, and Richard Scannell, the Bishop of Omaha. Responding to a query by the bishop, the nun informed him that the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament hoped to continue the annual appropriation for St. Augustine's, but could guarantee it only on an annual basis. The sisters were using funds intended for the establishment of new missions to meet the operating expenses of St. Augustine's. She suggested that if the Society for the Propagation of the Faith among Indian Children were established in the diocese, Father Ketcham might be willing to dedicate the funds collected in the Omaha Diocese to work among the Indians of that diocese. Sister Agatha further noted that in the Diocese of Cleveland, the annual collection had been made obligatory, and she included a newspaper clipping which related the fund-raising efforts of the archbishops of New York, Philadelphia and Chicago. She reminded the bishop that

by written agreement the sisters were allowed to raise funds in the Diocese of Omaha by any means compatible with the religious life and the rules of the diocese. She concluded that tomorrow on the feast of St. Francis Xavier, she would ask the saint to “entreat our Lord with me, to show your Lordship just what he wants us to do.”<sup>46</sup>

Bishop Scannell forwarded Mother Agatha’s letter to Father Ketcham. Despite her rather direct suggestions as to fund raising, the bishop told the director that “I should like to see the school enlarged, but I do not see, just now, how the additional cost of maintenance can be provided for.” He also alluded to the need for missionary efforts among the Santee Sioux of northeast Nebraska.<sup>47</sup>

Father Ketcham responded to Bishop Scannell that he really did not know what to say, but he did make the following suggestions. He thought Sister Agatha’s suggestion to establish the Preservation Society throughout the Omaha Diocese was a good plan, and that he would be willing urge the Board to turn over the entire proceeds from the Omaha Diocese to the support of the Winnebago mission. However, he cautioned that he did not expect that the collection would amount to more than \$1,000, which was a fraction of the amount required. The director continued that the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions was heavily in debt and could not assume any additional responsibilities. Furthermore, he urged caution on expansion at Winnebago. He suggested that nothing more be done until the Santee Reservation was provided with a church and pastor.<sup>48</sup>

Father Ketcham expressed his dilemma to Mother Katharine in a letter on January 4, 1912. Bishop Scannell was at the center of this dilemma. On the one hand, the Director could not understand why the bishop would not simply establish the Preservation Society

in the Omaha Diocese by a pastoral letter to the pastors and faithful. However, even if the bishop were willing to do this, a priest would have to be found to preach in virtually every parish in the diocese. Again, Bishop Scannell was at the center of the problem. Father Ketcham confided to Mother Katharine, "I feel something of a delicacy in my trying to suggest a priest for Bishop Scannell. You know how particular he is." He considered Father Griese as a choice, but he was uncertain whether the man was up to the task, and this choice would have the additional drawback of keeping the priest away from his duties at Winnebago for extended periods of time. Scannell also considered Father Phillip Gordon, the Mohawk priest, but this alternative had the drawback of withdrawing him from his successful efforts in the east and confining his efforts to supporting one mission in Nebraska rather than raising money for the Catholic mission system. In addition, despite strenuous attempts to increase national membership in the Society, it had increased only slightly.<sup>49</sup> As the spring of 1912 became the summer, the dilemma remained unresolved. By June, the director was making efforts to save the Catholic points in the upcoming Indian Appropriation Bill, a fact which he encouraged Mother Katharine to keep a "dead secret" lest the American Protective Association make a scandal of his lobbying efforts.<sup>50</sup>

To increase public support for the mission, Father Griese published the Winnebago Herald, a mission newspaper, from April 1912 until some time in the 1920's. The four-page, 11"x7" publication declared itself to be "A Friend of All Good; A Foe to All Wickedness." The paper was edited by the priest and printed on the press in the priest's home by tribal member Levi St. Cyr., who had learned the trade at Carlisle Indian

School. The priest apparently carried on alone when St. Cyr took a government job in 1913. The first issue of the paper ambitiously announced that special issues would be published in the Winnebago language because “It is necessary that all young people should [not only] know, but they should also love their mother tongue.”<sup>51</sup> This sentiment may have reflected the fact that English was a second language for the German-born priest. However, there is no evidence that an Indian language issue was ever published. Perhaps with the departure of St. Cyr, this was not possible, for even though Griese often expressed an awareness of the importance of the native languages, there is no evidence that he ever attempted to learn them.

“Events from the School” was a key feature of surviving copies, certain to raise local interest as well as give potential donors a sense of the activities at the mission. Items included: celebrations of the joyous milestones of Christian life such as baptisms, first communions and confirmations. The annual school plays, graduations and school picnics were also reported, as were the illnesses and deaths of members of mission families. Father Griese wrote an editorial on both secular and ecclesiastical issues which revealed a mind that was politically aware though somewhat moralizing.<sup>52</sup> In 1912, he predicted Woodrow Wilson’s victory over Theodore Roosevelt. He held both men in high esteem, but felt that Roosevelt could not win without the support of the Republican Party.<sup>53</sup> Father Griese’s informal style of bookkeeping makes it impossible to determine whether the newspaper ever garnered much financial support for the mission. The annual financial statements of Saint Augustine’s Mission, which were submitted to the Archbishop of Omaha, record only three entries of revenue from the paper. In 1918, the

priest reported \$70.00 in receipts. In 1923, \$98.70 was recorded. In 1924, \$612.82 was reported, but income from the Herald was included with the entry for “Mass Stipends” [offerings]. Also, Father Griese never reported production costs of the newspaper.<sup>54</sup>

The mission’s virtually complete dependence on Mother Katharine Drexel’s financial support was an abiding concern for Father Griese over the years. In time, the focus of a traditional mission strategy – agriculture – would shift from a peripheral activity to the center of the cleric’s time and energies. As early as 1914, he wrote to Monsignor Augustine Coloneri, Chancellor of the Omaha Diocese, “My aim is to make this school gradually self-supporting for if Mother Katharine should die, I would be without any resources.”<sup>55</sup> In 1923, Father Griese wrote to Archbishop Jeremiah Harty, who had been his bishop in the Philippines and was now Archbishop of Omaha, “My aim is to establish a beautiful Catholic mission and make it self-supporting. Agriculture – especially fruit and vegetable raising is the means to this end.”<sup>56</sup> Again, in 1927, he informed Bishop Francis Beckman of Omaha that: “My aim is to make this mission a power for the spiritual uplift of the Winnebago and also the Omaha tribe. I want to gather these Indians and preach to them the Gospel. I have been trying this on a small scale, but I am going on more quickly. In a few years I believe there will be a stir here that will bring a spiritual awakening. There is now already much life here around the mission as the Indians come to pick berries.” He noted that he had a good local market for his produce as the demand exceeded supply. He reported that in addition to the raspberries and grapes, he had planted about two thousand fruit trees, some of which would be bearing fruit during the following year.<sup>57</sup>



Gradually, the agricultural project began to consume more of the cleric's time and created the need for more workers. In 1917, he wrote to Mother Katharine that he hoped to bring over some workers from Germany after the war.<sup>58</sup> Two years later, he related that he was attempting to get some Germans to do the farm work so that he could focus on the spiritual needs of the people. By 1922, he had recruited an unknown number of workers from Germany to do the agricultural work at Winnebago.<sup>59</sup> Father Griese planned to take over a nearby farm which would allow him to raise beef cattle and provide milk for the school children. He happily reported that he now had reliable workers, and that he planned to recruit more during the coming year.<sup>60</sup> However, a year later he reported to Archbishop Harty that the German laborers had arrived too late in the year to be of much help. And while they may have been good general farmers, they may not have been trained for specialized horticultural activities. He explained to the archbishop that horticultural work required skill, time and consistent labor. Cultivation had to go on continuously or the investment in time and labor would be lost. Furthermore, the young workers were good helpers, but required his close personal instruction to do the job properly. There never seemed to be enough help.<sup>61</sup>

During the 1920s, Father Griese determined to secure more agricultural land in his twin quest for greater contact with the Indians and for the financial security of the mission. In 1924, he purchased forty acres adjoining the mission for \$3,881 from John Ashford. The priest planted fruit trees, vines and bushes in this field primarily as a cash crop. One year later, he purchased an additional 120 acres about one-half mile east of the mission from Emmet Rossiter for \$24,000 or \$200 an acre.<sup>62</sup> Both plots of land were

secured by mortgages for the full purchase price in the priest's name. In addition, Father Griese borrowed an additional \$1,700 from the Decatur State Bank to plant the latter farm with trees, bushes and vines. In December of 1924, he had written to Mother Katharine about E.W. Rossiter's offer and expressed his motives for the purchase. The priest hoped to acquire the land so that he might establish a "great fruit station" at Winnebago where the Indians might find work. He regretted that several young Indian families had come to him in the fall looking for work and lodging and that he was unable to serve them. He expressed the hope that the time would come when a settlement of young Catholic Indian families might develop around the mission.<sup>63</sup>

The following fall, Father Griese wrote to Mother Mercedes that the boarding school was full with forty-seven pupils. He related that he had a "few thousand" fruit trees and bushes, and that he planned to plant more in the spring because the Indians liked to work at the mission and that gave him an opportunity for informal religious instruction. However, he also reported that the weather had been bad for fruit during the past season, but he expressed hope for the coming year.<sup>64</sup> Foreshadowing future financial problems, Griese had written to Mother Katharine a few months earlier asking for an advance in his salary so that he might pay the salaries of three workers.<sup>65</sup> Again, the following year, the priest requested the sum of \$169.20 to pay for the insurance on the church and priest's house, and, although he continued to sound optimistic about the future, he noted that the fall was bringing too much rain after a hot and dry summer.<sup>66</sup>

In September 1928, Father Griese expressed his astonishment to Mother Katharine that she had apparently denied his latest request for additional funds. He was

quick to point out that she had been more than generous over the years, and he did not wish to imply that she could do more. Nor was it his intention to ask for “special assistance.” He continued that the late spring frost killed the greater part of his plants, and that the hot dry summer had diminished the fall crop. He had the market for his produce, but the weather was uncooperative. He also remarked that he had many Indian families come to him for employment, but he was unable to help many.<sup>67</sup>

In his financial statement for 1928 to the Archbishop of Omaha, Father Griese reported a very disturbing financial situation. Although receipts amounted to \$3,323.83 and expenditures totaled \$3,261.86, the devil was in the details. Income included \$640 from Mother Katharine Drexel, which was actually Father Griese’s salary. Income also included a \$500 contribution from the Archbishop, and another entry for \$896.88 was from “private funds,” and was quite possibly money obtained by cashing-in the priest’s personal life insurance policy. Included under expenditures were: \$716.10 for farm labor; \$764.19 in interest on the farm debt; \$950 toward the principal on the farm loans; and \$682.82 for miscellaneous expenses on the farm. In contrast, profit from the sale of farm produce was \$393.53. Perhaps the most alarming entry in the financial statement was the \$28,255 owed in the form of two mortgages and a personal note.<sup>68</sup>

Joseph F. Rummel, Archbishop of Omaha, responded to Father Griese’s financial report in early 1929. He complimented the priest’s work at Winnebago and praised the priest’s efforts to raise money. However, he observed that Father Griese was employing the mission’s general funds to pay off the principal and interest on the farmland. The Archbishop continued that he was concerned that the farm was listed in the priest’s name

and not in that of the parish. He requested that the missionary provide additional information concerning the structure of the debt including the amount paid to date, interest rates, and the balance of the loans. The prelate noted that he realized that Griese's intentions were excellent, but he questioned the wisdom of the venture.<sup>69</sup>

At about the same time, the Archbishop sent a letter of inquiry regarding the venture to Mother Mary Pauline, the superior of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament at Winnebago. He expressed his concern regarding the size of the debt and stated that he could approve the venture only if it was financially sound and of benefit to the Indians.<sup>70</sup> Mother Pauline responded that the mission expenditures of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament were \$7,597 for the year 1928, which included the tuition of the children since this was a free boarding school. As to the value of the agricultural enterprise, she reported that the farm supplied about one-half of the amount of potatoes consumed, twelve quarts of milk daily, a few dozen eggs weekly, some fresh vegetables in season, and fruit which the sisters preserved for winter use. She noted that the sisters had no idea of the revenue produced by the farm. The Indians came to pick the berries and received either one-half of the berries or five cents a quart for their labor. Mother Pauline stated that Father Griese's idea was to provide employment for the Indians in the hope that some would join the church. However, the Dutch Reformed Church, which had a community house and trained Indian catechists as well as operating a school, seemed to be much more successful than St. Augustine's. She concluded that the school was the only real point of contact between the Catholic Church and the Omaha and Winnebago peoples.<sup>71</sup>



Joseph F. Rummel, Bishop of Omaha (1928-1935)  
Source: Archives of the Archdiocese of Omaha, Nebraska

On the same day, Archbishop Rummel also wrote to E.W. Rossiter, owner of the Rossiter Land Office of Walthill, trustee of St. Augustine's Mission, and the seller of the 120-acre farm to Father Griese. The Archbishop asked the banker's candid opinion regarding the potential for the farm's financial success and its benefits to the Indians.<sup>72</sup> Rossiter responded that he had lived in Winnebago from 1913 to 1927, and that he had observed the priest's success with the 40 acre plot. He stated that Griese had approached him regarding the purchase of a larger holding which would enable the priest to employ more Indians in the hope of aiding them financially and extending his personal contacts with them. The banker considered the project a very worthy one, and he was very much interested in its success. He failed, however, to mention that he himself, as the holder of the mortgage, had a financial stake in the success or failure of the venture. Rossiter argued that the economic problems of the reservations were not a local problem and that Father Griese deserved outside financial help with his agricultural experiment. He noted that the weather during the previous two years had been difficult for agriculture, and especially for fruit. Yet, Rossiter was convinced that the plan could be successful both financially and for the Indians, but he concluded that the priest needed outside working capital in order to succeed.<sup>73</sup>

Archbishop Rummel wrote a third letter on April 12, 1929. He asked the same questions that he had asked Mother Pauline and E.W. Rossiter: was the agricultural venture economically viable and was it of any benefit for the Indians?<sup>74</sup> W.H. Ryan, Cashier of the Security State Bank of Homer, Nebraska, responded that the priest's original investment in the forty-acre tract next to the mission was entirely sound.

However, he had been convinced by an “unscrupulous land dealer” to purchase the 120 acre tract at a price of \$200 per acre, which was nearly double the value of the land. Ryan went on to describe Fr. Griese as a “saintly man,” who was beloved by all, both Indian and white. He lamented that the priest had not sought the advice of other bankers, and he advised that the priest should ask for cancellation of the contract.<sup>75</sup>

W. H. Ryan evidently had the ear of the Archbishop. Six days later, Rummel informed Ryan that he had traveled to Walthill and had personally spoken with E.W. Rossiter. The latter had assured the prelate of his willingness to cancel the transaction on the 120-acre farm.<sup>76</sup> On the same day, the Archbishop directed Father Griese to secure release from the debt of \$24,000. He listed four reasons for his decision. First, the forty-acre tract ought to be sufficient for the needs of the mission. Second, the cost of \$200 per acre was nearly twice that of land values in Thurston County. Third, the venture was too great a burden for the priest at his age, and it would be impossible to find a successor willing to undertake the task. Finally, neither the Archdiocese of Omaha nor the Catholic Bureau of Indian Missions was willing to support the undertaking morally or financially.<sup>77</sup>

Father Griese responded five days later that he had written E.W. Rossiter and hoped to meet with him soon so that the purchase of the 120-acre farm might be cancelled. He also hoped to meet with W.H. Ryan about the \$3,000 principal plus interest owed on the 40-acre tract. The priest hoped to get an extension on the note, if he could pay something toward the principal. He explained that the original fifteen acres of mission property was occupied by the mission buildings or was too hilly for agriculture,

so he had purchased the adjoining forty acres from John Ashford, about half of which was suitable for agriculture. He planted fruit trees, vegetables and potatoes on this property. Since the school children needed milk, he bought a number of purebred Holsteins. The cows, of course, needed fodder, so he leased Indian land on which to grow hay.

When E.W. Rossiter offered the 120-acre tract, he gladly accepted it since he much preferred to pay interest on land, which would increase in value than to pay rent for land, which he would never own. Although he admitted that the \$200 per acre price was "rather high," he defended the price because the farm was situated close to town on a gravel road and included a barn with a cement floor and electricity, which was an excellent site for his dairy operation. He reported that he had planted 1,500 apple and cherry trees, 3,000 grape vines, a "great amount" of raspberry bushes, and forty acres of alfalfa. He likewise had harvested about eighty-eight tons of hay, which sold at \$88.00 a ton. However, his horses and cows had consumed much of the crop. He was happy to report that he had at last found a reliable white farmer who received one-half of the proceeds from the crops. However, he lost many of the trees due to the hot, dry summers and improper cultivation. About 800 of the trees survived, but they would not begin to bear fruit within the next three or four years. About half of the grape vines had survived and these would begin to produce in another two years. The raspberries had mostly fallen victim to the previous two harsh winters. He concluded that had he at first concentrated on grapes, he would have been able to meet his obligations.



Father Griese argued that the purpose of the farming operation was both to support the school and to convert the Indians. The way to reach them was to offer some material benefit, which would provide an opportunity for personal contact with them. He maintained that while the work was taxing on him, he needed to work in the fresh air in order to counter his "ailment." Furthermore, God would provide a successor willing to take up the work, or the improved land might be sold to the benefit of the mission. His goal continued to be the self-sufficiency of the mission. He wrote, "Our missions are too much given to begging, so that people look upon the work as a money affair."<sup>78</sup>

On June 7, Griese reported that he had visited with E.W. Rossiter, but that there were some issues still to be resolved, and the priest seemed to be attempting to gain a reprieve from selling the land. The agricultural loan for \$1,700 to the Decatur State Bank would have to be paid. In addition, as long as the land remained in Father Griese's name, it would be exempt from taxation. Rossiter had offered to donate the \$5,000 investment he had in the land, and the white farmer who worked the land leased the acres dedicated to fruit growing for 99 years. The cherries would surely begin to bear fruit within two years and the apple trees soon thereafter. There was great demand for these products, and he had renewed hopes of recruiting some Catholic families, including his niece from Germany to work on the farm.

Father Griese defended E.W. Rossiter, currently a trustee of the mission, as a friend who had always been helpful to the priest. He related that Rossiter had rivals in the land business, who were more than willing to discredit a competitor. In a vague and rambling portion of the letter, he reminded the Archbishop that there was fierce

competition in the sale of Indian lands, and that one in particular, a Catholic who had an office in Winnebago, had been especially successful. He then cryptically stated that “the Indians tell strange stories about these people they call grafters. My predecessor, Father Schell, tried to stop their work, but was knocked down on the street and left.” Griese continued that some of the Catholic Indians refused to come to church so long as these particular white people supported it. He then argued, “what is a few thousand dollars of paltry money in comparison to bringing the straying sheep to the fold of Christ?”<sup>79</sup>

Father Griese, in a further attempt to save his agricultural venture, wrote once again to Archbishop Rummel on June 12, 1929. He apologized for importuning the archbishop, but he felt that the situation at Winnebago was hard to explain in a few words. The missionary briefly described the history of the Omaha Reservation, the arrival of the Winnebago, and the opening of the rich agricultural lands to white settlement. Many whites, including both the Ashford Brothers and E.W. Rossiter, had profited immensely from the trade in Indian lands and had acquired great land holdings. Some of these speculators and other white businessmen were quite unscrupulous in their dealings with the Indians, and some of them were Catholics. He offered an example of a young Indian man who had owned 100 acres, which he leased to white farmers. He borrowed from one of the local banks, bought a new automobile and other luxuries, and eventually lost title to the land. He enlisted in the army to make a living, but many other Indians were reduced to the condition of paupers. The priest further criticized the government for its poor management of the temporal affairs of the Indians.

Father Griese recognized that his primary responsibility was to serve the spiritual needs of the Indians, but he argued that the greed and corruption had so demoralized the Indians that they refused to attend the same church as the white people. It was necessary to carry the Gospel outside of the church and school buildings. The Protestants had preached the Word, but had failed to convert significant numbers of the Winnebagoes. The Indians still held the Catholic Church in high esteem, and in Father Griese's paternalistic view, the Church would be the salvation of the Indians. However, it was essential that the material needs of the Indians be addressed before they could be expected to join the church. He wrote, "Our mission could make many converts if only we had the means to help them in their temporal existence. My only aim in my land work has been to give these poor Indians an opportunity to earn something, but I have undertaken too much for my means and I must retrench to a smaller scale."<sup>80</sup>

Resolution of the matter was postponed by Archbishop Rummel's ad limina trip to Rome during the summer of 1929. Before he departed, the Archbishop sent rather tart letters to both Father Griese and to E.W. Rossiter. Rossiter had informed the prelate that there was an outstanding debt of \$1,700 to the Security Bank of Decatur, Nebraska, which must be met before the matter of the 120 acres could be settled.<sup>81</sup> Rummel replied that he was "amazed" to discover that this debt existed. He reminded the real estate man that the debt was a personal debt of Father Griese, and that no help would be coming from the Archdiocese of Omaha or the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions. He concluded, "I have advised him [Griese] to take up with you the easiest and best way out

of the difficulty. I hope that you will have devised some plan before my return from Europe after the middle of September.”<sup>82</sup>

Rossiter responded two days later that the Archbishop would find the debt included in Griese’s 1928 financial report.<sup>83</sup> The matter festered through the fall and winter until the spring of 1930 when W. H. Ryan, Cashier of the Security State Bank of Homer, Nebraska, informed the prelate that the balance of the loan, \$3050, on the 40-acre tract purchased from John Ashford would be due on May 12, 1930. Ryan reported that he was under the impression that the 120-acre farm would be given up and that some payments would be made on the 40-acre farm. However, Father Griese had paid only nine dollars of the five hundred dollars that had been due on May 12 of the previous year. The cashier reported that the bank examiners were demanding that the note be collected, and so the bank decided to bring the matter to the Archbishop’s attention.<sup>84</sup>

Archbishop Rummel responded to W.H. Ryan about ten days later. The prelate described the agricultural scheme as “visionary,” but he felt that the venture was an “uncertain and unwise undertaking.” The problem was compounded by Father Griese’s age and inexperience in business matters, and by the fact that the Archbishop could not imagine who would take over the project upon the priest’s retirement. However, Father Griese had assured the prelate that he would have the money by the due date, and so Rummel offered him the opportunity to do so.<sup>85</sup>

In the meantime, Archbishop Rummel wrote pointedly to Father Griese directing him to answer numerous questions. By whose authority had he purchased the two farms? What sums of money had been invested in the land? How many Indians had been

employed? What compensation and material benefits had the Indians obtained? What proceeds had been achieved? What was the spiritual benefit of this venture to the Indians? How much additional cash would need to be invested in the enterprise before it could be considered successful? Could the priest continue the venture at his age? Rummel concluded that he had no intention in investing more money into the enterprise. He acknowledged that he had withheld some subsidies because he was afraid that the money would be used for the farms rather than the mission. He concluded, "I wish to help you but I can not do this to further business schemes, for which I can get no encouragement and see no positive results."<sup>86</sup>

Father John Griese replied on April 25, 1930. He asserted that Indian missions always needed land. The original fifteen acres on which the mission was located was hilly and was sandwiched between the railroad and the highway. Since mission schools always needed milk, fruit and vegetables, he had originally rented 80 acres of Indian land, which had eventually been sold to the government. So, he purchased the 40 acres from John Ashford and later the 120 acres from E.W. Rossiter. Although neither purchase had been formally approved by them, he was certain that Bishop Scannell and Archbishop Harty had been aware of the purchases and both had visited the mission without mentioning the matter. He had acted in his own name as manager of the mission.<sup>87</sup>

Despite his personal concerns on the matter, the Archbishop of Omaha decided to seek the opinion of a priest with the broader view of Indian mission schools. On April 28, 1930, he sought the opinion of Monsignor William Hughes, Director of the Bureau of

Catholic Indian Missions. He related the situation to the director – the two land purchases, the use of mission funds to support the agricultural venture, and the contradictory opinions of the two local bankers, Rossiter and Ryan. He described Father Griese as “on in years and somewhat odd in his views and habits of life,” and related that the priest was convinced that the success of his missionary work, as well as the economic survival of the mission depended upon his agricultural work. He asked the director for his view of the matter before making a final decision, and made the rather alarming statement that “the future of this school is very doubtful, since it depends on Mother Katharine Drexel.”<sup>88</sup> Monsignor Hughes responded that Father Griese “is in his own way devoted to the Indians. But from the little which I know of him by casual meeting and by report, I doubt that he is capable of carrying out an agricultural program for the benefit of the Indians and the mission. His heart is set on the project.” He reported that it was the almost unanimous opinion of Indian missionaries that a priest should not engage in farming for a profit beyond a small surplus which might accrue from farming to supply the food needs of the mission. He concurred with the archbishop that the future of the mission was indeed uncertain.<sup>89</sup>

In an effort to reduce his overhead, Father Griese requested that the archdiocese reduce St. Augustine’s parish assessment. He wrote to Monsignor Augustine Colaneri, Chancellor of the archdiocese, that there were only fourteen white Catholic families at Winnebago, but that not all of them attended Sunday Mass regularly. As the Depression deepened, financial giving also dropped. In 1928, total receipts from St. Augustine were something less than \$400, whereas, in 1930, they totaled \$173.88. The Indians, he

reported, were so impoverished that they came to him seeking food and money. He reported that he gave them work and paid them for it. Father Griese concluded that “A priest could not live here if he had to depend on the parish.”<sup>90</sup> Archbishop Rummel promptly reduced the diocesan assessment to the minimum, \$35 per year, and forgave the past indebtedness.<sup>91</sup>

In August, W. H. Ryan again reported to the archbishop that it appeared that Father Griese must be turning over all of his income in an effort to pay off the Rossiter note for \$24,000. Ryan related that he had understood that this note was to have been cancelled. He further stated that the note was now more than four years overdue and that the state banking regulators would not permit the matter to continue. The bank had informed Father Griese that the note must be paid no later than September 16, 1930. Ryan concluded that, “It would be displeasing to us to appear as plaintiff in a court action wherein the principal defendant would be St. Augustine Mission of Winnebago.”<sup>92</sup>

Edward F. Leary, Attorney for the Archdiocese of Omaha, drove to Winnebago on August 30, to speak with Father Griese. He reported to the archbishop that, “[Father Griese] is a very saintly man, and is overworking and starving himself to keep his fruit trees and berries going. I believe he is putting practically every cent of his income in his real estate ventures.” He observed that the priest had no money and no prospects of raising any, and that whatever revenue was accrued from the venture was procured at the cost of tremendous physical effort. The lawyer noted that the priest felt that farming gave him a contact with the Indians. However, Leary felt that the value of this contact must be small, as Father Griese appeared to do most of the work himself and had no money to pay

for Indian help. He concluded that the loss of both tracts of land would be no financial loss at all.<sup>93</sup>

Archbishop Rummel was engaged with preparations for the National Eucharistic Congress which was held in Omaha from September 23-25, 1930. On October 4, he wrote to Father Griese that he was not convinced that the spiritual welfare of the Indians was being enhanced by the farming venture, and that “it seems we have come to the point where it becomes necessary for me to direct you to confine yourself entirely to spiritual efforts in behalf of the Indians.” He concluded that this was his “definite and final instruction” to relinquish title to the land.<sup>94</sup>

However, Father Griese’s adventures in real estate were not quite over. A little over a month after the archbishop’s admonition to surrender title to the land, the priest wrote to Mother Katharine Drexel about a new opportunity. He reported that a late frost and the great heat of the summer had virtually destroyed the past year’s fruit crop, but there was an opportunity to buy or rent a piece of property situated immediately east of the convent and next to the highway. A cement-block house, containing two rooms of 20’x30’ each, was located on the property. The house would provide an excellent place to get the Indians together for meetings because they would not come to the church with the white parishioners. Griese described the white people as “more of a hindrance than a help” to his mission work, and apparently feelings were running high because he recommended that a separate chapel be built for either the Indians or the whites. As an incentive to purchase the land, he mentioned that a potential buyer planned to locate a



hog feed lot on the property, and he related that, "I would not like, nor would the sisters, to have hogs so close to the convent."<sup>95</sup>

The financial situation continued to worsen in 1931. In August, Griese wrote to Monsignor Nicholas Wegner, Chancellor of the Archdiocese of Omaha, that he could not attend the annual clergy retreat. He did not feel that he could leave the mission unattended while the sisters were away for the summer and he could not afford the trip. The priest reported that the convent had been vandalized by people who had keys to the doors, an outhouse had been burned by boys who were smoking in it, and he feared that a grass fire might be started by sparks from the nearby railroad tracks. Father Griese continued that he had received no pew rent for the year and little in the collection plates. One farmer had told him that he could not spare even a nickel for church support.<sup>96</sup>

Archbishop Rummel forwarded a \$600 grant from the Board of Indian and Negro Missions to the priest in the fall. He reminded the priest that he was looking forward to receiving his annual report in January, including the disposition of the Ashford and Rossiter farms, a situation which "worries and annoys me very much."<sup>97</sup>

A few days later, Father Griese thanked the archbishop for the grant and informed him that he had surrendered both deeds. He related that John Ashford had allowed him to continue farming on the forty-acre tract, but that E. W. Rossiter had been forced to relinquish his own claim on the 120-acre farm. The priest sadly reported that the orchard that he had planted on the farm went with the land.<sup>98</sup> During January, the missionary related to the bishop that he still owed \$1,130 to the bank, which was money he had borrowed in order to plant the land. He happily reported that he could easily meet this

obligation by selling one of the houses that he had purchased earlier to quarter the workers from Germany.<sup>99</sup> Archbishop Rummel replied two days later that he was delighted to hear that the priest had disposed of the two farms. The archbishop continued that he knew nothing about the houses that the priest had referred to in his letter. He assumed that they were the personal property of the priest. Rummel complimented the missionary on his great efforts and requested that he contact him should he ever need immediate assistance.<sup>100</sup>

Throughout the 1930s and into the early days of World War II the Winnebago, and indeed the entire nation, struggled through the Great Depression. Father Griese's letters to the motherhouse of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament and to the Chancery Office of the Archdiocese of Omaha were characterized by two themes: the temporal and spiritual problems of the Indians, and the state of his fruit and vegetable crops, which were his means of caring for the Indians when they seemed indifferent to his spiritual ministrations. Indeed, the sister annalist at St. Elizabeth's Convent referred to his difficulties in "spiritual and likewise in earthly gardening."<sup>101</sup> Father Griese wrote to Mother Mercedes in April 1932 that many Indians and whites were coming to him for assistance. He was currently employing four men to assist him with the planting of potatoes, beans, strawberries and raspberries.<sup>102</sup> In the fall, the priest reported to Mother Philip Neri that, "The children [in the school] do not know anything of the hard times that the old folks are having." He continued that the sisters had canned plenty of fruit for the winter. On the other hand, he worried about the expected hard winter.<sup>103</sup>

The following spring, he wrote to Mother Katharine, "I am so much pressed for help that it is hard to refuse and I am hard up. Everyone seems to forget our missions except you, dear Mother."<sup>104</sup> Again, on July 18, 1940, he related that every day he had new requests for assistance. One man asked for an empty room in the priest's house for his family. Many of the mission's former pupils came to have their marriages blessed in the eyes of the Church. He also reported that the mission congregation was offering every Friday the Peace Novena to Our Sorrowful Mother as the conflicts in Europe and Asia developed in to world war. Letters were also filled with reports on the weather and the success of his crops: "As we had so much moisture this spring I planted a great amount of vegetables and fruit and all did well, but now it is very dry and hot and rain is much needed. I have a great many cabbages set out and if they succeed I can give to every Indian a cabbage head."<sup>105</sup>

In early August of the same year, the priest wrote to Mother Mary of the Visitation at the motherhouse. The sisters were away from the mission for the summer taking classes or helping out at other missions so that other sisters might attend summer school. He wrote, "Oh, yes, Holy Mass is for me the happiest hour of the day. It is, of course, a sad thing that the sisters are not present. Now and then a visitor attends. But then Our Lord is there and the Poor Souls [in Purgatory] and the Saints make up the congregation. So it is never lonesome. And in spirit I see my friends and benefactors present, and that gives always new joy." The sister annalist commented this characteristic statement of the priest's simple and sincere faith was "testimony to the verity of Reverend Mother's [Katharine Drexel] impression of the old priest's holiness."<sup>106</sup>

Mother Mary of the Visitation made the annual visitation in the fall of 1939, and commented to Mother Katharine about Father Griese's holiness. She noted his detachment by recounting humorously how distracting it was for her when he offered Mass while wearing shoes that obviously did not match, as one had a tip on it, and the other did not. The sister related that the priest prayed the Rosary at the outdoor shrine to Mary every morning of the year before Mass, regardless of the weather. She described his four-room house in some detail – a kitchen, parlor-office, bedroom and print shop – and offered the opinion that “there is only one of its kind in the country.” Father Griese's kitchen contained a wood table in one corner, a wood-burning stove in the opposite corner, and a bookcase which served as a china closet, which reflected the simplicity of his life. He lived alone, occasionally cooked an egg or some coffee for himself. He ate breakfast and supper at the convent with the sisters and was always pleased by whatever was served.<sup>107</sup>

Mother Mary of the Visitation also saw the humorous side of Father Griese as well. She reported that he loved to spend time with the children, who held him in deep reverence. The priest especially enjoyed singing with the children, although she also reported that he “succeeds in striking a note that only he can, I don't know what it is but if you ever heard it you would never forget it.” His latest means of entertaining the children was a movie camera and projector. After shooting footage and editing it, he invited the sisters and the children to view the production in his home. She asked the sister at the motherhouse to imagine fifty-four children and seven sisters crowded into the priest's kitchen to screen the film. Among the reels was an “Indian dance” performed by

the children dressed in “all their gorgeous apparel.” However, since there was no drum readily available, the priest played the music he had to accompany the silent films. Mother Mary recounted the humor of watching the children dance on screen to the accompaniment of “Yankee Doodle” and “Marching Through Georgia.” She recounted that the evening was highly successful. The children were delighted to watch themselves perform and Father Griese was happy because he had made others happy.<sup>108</sup>



Father John Griese and students, May procession, 1918  
 Source: Archives of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions,  
 Special Collections, Alumni Library, Marquette University

Father John Griese continued the basic pattern of his adult life, by performing formal missionary work and growing food for the mission and for the needy in the area, throughout the 1930s and early 1940s. He had turned 66 in 1930. The toll of normal aging, an abstemious diet, and a life of arduous physical labor became increasingly evident. In 1934, Father Felin McCarthy of Jackson, Nebraska, informed Archbishop Rummel that he had stopped to visit Griese on July 3<sup>rd</sup> and had found that the priest complained of weakness, the inability to eat, and that he had a lump in his stomach.

Parishoners reported to the visiting priest that Father Griese had barely been able to complete the Mass on the previous Sunday, and that he was unable to go to Macy. Father McCarthy reported that the priest refused to go to the hospital, and he urged the Archbishop to visit the missionary.<sup>109</sup>

Again, in 1940, Mother Mary of the Visitation wrote to the sisters at St. Elizabeth's Convent concerning Father Griese's health. She related that he had been suffering from a cold for nearly two weeks. He had spent New Year's Eve showing movies to the children and the nuns in his home. Before the children and sisters left, he remarked to Sister Hilda that he felt very tired. Sister Damian felt that he was seriously ill, but he turned down the sisters' efforts to care for him. The next morning, the priest was nearly late for Mass, and seemed to walk with a stagger. He went into the sacristy to vest for Mass, and when he did not come out in a timely manner, the sisters found him bent over the vestment case, his head in his hands. They wrapped a shawl around the priest, who habitually went out without hat or coat, and half-carried him to his house, where they placed him in bed. A doctor from the Winnebago Government Hospital and Father Charles Trummer from Walthill were called to the missionary's bedside. Father Griese was diagnosed with pneumonia and immediately placed, with the agent's permission, in the agency hospital.<sup>110</sup> Father Lawrence O'Sullivan reported to Monsignor Nicholas Wegner, Chancellor of the Archdiocese, that Father Griese required long-term care in a regular hospital. He added that there was no one to care for him in his home even in the unlikely event that the priest would allow it.<sup>111</sup> Monsignor Wegner wrote across the bottom of the letter that Father Griese should be told to come to St. Joseph's

Hospital in Omaha. However, either the suggestion was not relayed to the missionary, or more likely; he refused to leave his home. On the 23<sup>rd</sup>, Father Griese wrote to Archbishop James Ryan that although he had been hospitalized, “it was not a real sickness.” Rather, he had injured his chest muscles while moving his printing press. He continued, “ I am now home again and happy in my old work.” He reported that he had a new recorder, and that some of the children had already made records. He said that he had big plans for missionary work during the upcoming summer.<sup>112</sup>

However, the priest’s health continued to decline, and Archbishop James Ryan appointed Father Frank Hulsman to succeed Father Griese as director of St. Augustine’s Mission. Father Griese continued to live at the mission and served as chaplain to the nuns. His final illness came in early February 1945, and he was hospitalized for ten weeks at St. Vincent’s Hospital in Sioux City, Iowa. After 37 years at Winnebago, he passed away at age 81 at St. Vincent’s on April 14, 1945. His body lay in state for three days and nights at St. Augustine’s where a steady flow of people came to pay their respects. Father Hulsman conducted the funeral Mass and preached the sermon. In order to accommodate the large number of people who wished to say farewell, a second requiem Mass was held at Jackson, Nebraska, at which Monsignor Jerome Buckley, Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Omaha, officiated. Father Griese was buried in the Catholic cemetery at Winnebago among the Indian families whom he had served.<sup>113</sup> Fittingly, his grave lies about ten feet from the cemetery fence next to a plowed field. A simple stone marker notes that this is the final resting place of “Reverend John Herman Griese, Born in Germany, First Resident Pastor.”

Thirty-seven years earlier, Father John Griese had written to Bishop Richard Scannell that he would like to have a parish, no matter how small, where he could have a home.<sup>114</sup> Within the year, the missionary was working in Winnebago. Thirty-seven years later, The Winnebago Recorder devoted four of five full-page columns on page one to the priest's death and funeral, and the loving eulogies of local parishioners. Through the years, he had become a fixture of the Winnebago landscape, who could usually be seen dressed in work clothes tending his plants, trees and crops. One parishioner opined that Father Griese still lived in the beautiful flowers and shrubs that he had planted and in the many good works that he had done for so many. The Protestant newspaper editor noted that the sanctity of his life attracted the attention of all who came in contact with him.<sup>115</sup>

Father Griese's dream had been to create a community of young Indian families around the mission. He realized that government policies had failed the Indian, and he desired to alleviate their economic needs by offering them employment. He further hoped to save them from what he perceived to be the dangers of city life by living a simple agrarian lifestyle on the reservation. By anchoring their lives in the church, he hoped to gradually achieve a great spiritual harvest.<sup>116</sup>

Obviously, Father Griese was unsuccessful in this venture. Yet, his agricultural work did have a salutary effect. Always, he shared what he had with people living through the Great Depression. Today, he is remembered by some Winnebago elders in the simple statement, "He fed the people."<sup>117</sup>



## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Father John Griese to Mother Katharine Drexel, September 2, 1928, Archives of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament [ASBS], Bensalem, Pennsylvania.

<sup>2</sup> “Local Happenings,” The Winnebago Chieftain, October 8, 1909, 5:4; “Local Happenings,” Ibid., November 5, 1909, 5:4; “Local Happenings,” Ibid., November 12, 1909; “Local Happenings,” Ibid., November 19, 1909, 5:4.

<sup>3</sup> “St. Augustine Catholic Church Dedicated,” The Winnebago Chieftain, December 3, 1909, 5:4; “Local Happenings,” Ibid., December 17, 1909, 5:4.

<sup>4</sup> “Christmas at the Catholic School,” Ibid., December 31, 1909, 5:4.

<sup>6</sup> Drexel to Ryan, February 13, 1910, ASBS; “Annals,” ASBS, I, 12.

<sup>7</sup> “Indian School to Have Addition,” The Winnebago Chieftain, May 20, 1910, 4:4; “Social Notes,” Ibid., June 3, 1910, 5:3.

<sup>8</sup> Father John Griese to Richard Scannell, Bishop of Omaha, April 12, 1910, Archives of the Archdiocese of Omaha [AAO], Omaha, Nebraska, SG 10, Box 52, Folder 89.

<sup>9</sup> “St. Augustine’s Indian Mission School Report – 1909,” Series 2/2. School Reports, box 5, folder 12, Archives of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions [ABCIM], Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

<sup>10</sup> “Annual Report for St. Augustine’s Indian Mission – 1910,” AAO, Box 2275.

<sup>11</sup> “Annals,” I, 12-15; “The Church News,” The Winnebago Chieftain, August 5, 1910, 1:8.

<sup>12</sup> “St. Augustine’s Soon to Open,” The Winnebago Chieftain, August 26, 1910, 4:4.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> James T. Carroll, Seeds of Faith: Catholic Indian Boarding Schools (New York: Garland Publishing Co., 2000), 74; Confidential interview by the author, St. Augustine’s Church, Winnebago, Nebraska, February 15, 2000.

<sup>15</sup> Ryan to Drexel, February 10, 1911, ASBS.

<sup>16</sup> “Annals,” I, 20.

<sup>17</sup> “St. Augustine’s Soon to Open,” The Winnebago Chieftain, August 26, 1910, 4:3.

<sup>18</sup> Anna V. Day, Assistant Superintendent, Nebraska State Department of Public Instruction, to St. Augustine’s Indian Mission, in “Annals,” I, 28, ASBS.

<sup>24</sup> Ryan to Drexel, February 11, 1911, ASBS.

<sup>19</sup> Ryan to Drexel, February 11, 1911, ASBS.

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- <sup>20</sup> “Annals,” I, 29; The Winnebago Chieftain, June 9, 1911, 1:1-3.
- <sup>21</sup> The Winnebago Chieftain, June 9, 1911, 1:1-3; “St. Augustine’s Commencement Program – 1911,” inserted in “Annals,” I, ASBS; “St. Augustine’s Commencement Program – 1912,” inserted in “Annals,” I, ASBS.
- <sup>22</sup> Father John Griese, The Winnebago Herald, undated clipping (probably, summer, 1913), ASBS.
- <sup>23</sup> “Annals,” I, 25-27, ASBS.
- <sup>24</sup> See chapter 5; Author’s analysis of “Women’s Domestic Mission Board” [WDMB] reports in Annual Reports of Domestic Missions to the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America, [ARDMRCA], 1908-1936, Northwestern College Library, Orange City, Iowa.
- <sup>25</sup> Ryan to Scannell, February 15, 1911, ASBS.
- <sup>26</sup> “Report of Mrs. William C. Hogg,” in “Annual Report of the Women’s Domestic Mission Board,” in ARDMRCA, 1936, 31.
- <sup>27</sup> “A Missionary Dead,” The Winnebago Chieftain, February 18, 1910, 8:1-3.
- <sup>28</sup> Author’s analysis of Winnebago Agency Subject Files [WASF], General Correspondence, 1922-1940, National Archives and Records Administration - Kansas City [NARA-KC], A-135, Winnebago School, A-136; Author’s analysis of WDMB reports in ARDMRCA, 1908-1936, Northwestern College Library.
- <sup>29</sup> Author’s analysis of The Winnebago Chieftain, 1921 inclusive.
- <sup>30</sup> Author’s analysis WDMB reports in ARDMRCA, 1908-1936, Northwestern College Library.
- <sup>31</sup> R. L. Spalsbury, Education Supervisor, Bureau of Indian Affairs, to Charles H. Burke, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, “Report on the Educational Situation at Winnebago, Nebraska,” November 11, 1924, WASF - Education, NARA-KC, A-135.
- <sup>32</sup> “Board of Domestic Missions to the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America - 1932,” 53, Northwestern College Library.
- <sup>33</sup> See Chapter 5.
- <sup>34</sup> Father John Griese to Father William Ketcham, Director of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, January 19, 1911, ABCIM, 56:606-607.
- <sup>35</sup> Ketcham to Griese, January 28, 1911, ABCIM, 56:609.
- <sup>36</sup> Griese to Ketcham, March 14, 1914, ABCIM, 71:658.
- <sup>37</sup> Griese to Ketcham, March 14, 1914, ABCIM, 71:658.
- <sup>38</sup> “Annals,” I, 70-71.
- <sup>39</sup> Ibid.

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- <sup>40</sup> “Annals,” II, 142-144.
- <sup>41</sup> The Indian Sentinel, V (Fall, 1925) 257-258. ASBS.
- <sup>42</sup> Father John Griese to Monsignor William Hughes, Director of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, January 27, 1925, ABCIM, 124:190.
- <sup>43</sup> See chapter 5.
- <sup>44</sup> Ketcham to Drexel, February 11, 1910, ASBS.
- <sup>45</sup> Ketcham to Drexel, August 11, 1911, ASBS.
- <sup>46</sup> Ketcham to Drexel, August 11, 1911, ASBS.
- <sup>47</sup> Scannell to Ketcham, December 6, 1911, AAO, SG10, Box 52, Folder 89.
- <sup>48</sup> Ketcham to Scannell, December 20, 1911, ABCIM, 56:638-639.
- <sup>49</sup> Ketcham to Drexel, January 4, 1912, ASBS.
- <sup>50</sup> Ketcham to Drexel, June 2, 1912, ASBS.
- <sup>51</sup> The Winnebago Herald, April, 1912, 4:1, ASBS.
- <sup>52</sup> The Winnebago Herald, April, 1912, 4:1, ASBS.
- <sup>53</sup> The Winnebago Herald, April, 1912, 3:1, ASBS.
- <sup>54</sup> The Winnebago Herald, April, 1912, 3:1, ASBS.
- <sup>55</sup> Father John Griese to Monsignor Augustine Coloneri, Chancellor of the Archdiocese of Omaha, January 14, 1914, AAO, SG10, Box 52, Folder 89.
- <sup>56</sup> Father John Griese to Jeremiah Harty, Archbishop of Omaha, June 3, 1923, AAO, SG10, Box 52, Folder 89.
- <sup>57</sup> Father John Griese to Francis Beckman, Bishop of Omaha, July 7, 1927, AAO, SG 10, Box 52, Folder 89.
- <sup>58</sup> Griese to Drexel, December 20, 1917, ASBS.
- <sup>59</sup> Griese to Drexel, December 21, 1919, ASBS.
- <sup>60</sup> Griese to Drexel, July 6, 1922, ASBS.
- <sup>61</sup> Griese to Harty, June 23, 1923, AAO, SG 10, Box 52, Folder 89.
- <sup>62</sup> Edward F. Leary, attorney for the Archdiocese of Omaha, to Joseph F. Rummel, Archbishop of Omaha, September 3, 1930, AAO, SG 10, Box 52, Folder 89.
- <sup>63</sup> Griese to Drexel, December 21, 1924, ASBS.

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- <sup>64</sup> Griese to Mother Mercedes, October 15, 1925, ASBS.
- <sup>65</sup> Griese to Drexel, June 25, 1925, ASBS.
- <sup>66</sup> Griese to Drexel, April 21, 1926; Griese to Drexel, September 23, 1926, ASBS.
- <sup>67</sup> Griese to Drexel, September 2, 1928, ASBS.
- <sup>68</sup> "Financial Report for St. Augustine's Indian Mission – 1928," AAO, Box 2275.
- <sup>69</sup> The Archives of the Archdiocese of Omaha contains a photocopy of the original. The precise date was obscured in the copying process. However, the year 1929 is clearly discernible. AAO, SG 10, Box 52, Folder 89.
- <sup>70</sup> Joseph F. Rummel, Archbishop of Omaha, to Mother Mary Pauline, Sister Superior at St. Augustine's Mission, April 12, 1929, AAO, SG 10, Box 52, Folder 89.
- <sup>71</sup> Mother Mary Pauline to Archbishop Rummel, April 14, 1929, AAO, SG 10, Box 52, Folder 89.
- <sup>72</sup> Joseph F. Rummel, Archbishop of Omaha, to Emmet W. Rossiter, Rossiter Land Office, Walthill, Nebraska, April 12, 1929, AAO, SG 10, Box 52, Folder 89.
- <sup>73</sup> Rossiter to Rummel, April 26, 1929, AAO, SG 10, Box 52, Folder 89.
- <sup>74</sup> Joseph F. Rummel, Archbishop of Omaha, to Emmet W. Rossiter, Rossiter Land Office, Walthill, Nebraska, April 12, 1929, AAO, SG 10, Box 52, Folder 89.
- <sup>75</sup> Ryan to Rummel, May 24, 1929, AAO, Box 2275.
- <sup>76</sup> Rummel to Ryan, May 24, 1929, AAO, SG 10, Box 52, Folder 89.
- <sup>77</sup> Rummel to Griese, May 24, 1929, AAO, SG 10, Box 52, Folder 89.
- <sup>78</sup> Griese to Rummel, May 29, 1929, AAO, SG 10, Box 52, Folder 89.
- <sup>79</sup> Griese to Rummel, June 7, 1929, AAO, SG 10, Box 52, Folder 89.
- <sup>80</sup> Griese to Rummel, June 12, 1929, AAO, SG 10, Box 52, Folder 89.
- <sup>81</sup> Roman Catholic bishops are required to travel to the Vatican every seven years to discuss the spiritual and temporal conditions of their dioceses. Rossiter to Rummel, June 10, 1929, AAO, SG 10, Box 52, Folder 89.
- <sup>82</sup> Rummel to Rossiter, June 17, 1929; Rummel to Griese, June 17, 1929, AAO, SG 10, Box 52, Folder 89.
- <sup>83</sup> Rossiter to Rummel, June 19, 1929, AAO, SG 10, Box 52, Folder 89.
- <sup>84</sup> Ryan to Rummel, April 16, 1930, AAO, SG 10, Box 52, Folder 89.
- <sup>85</sup> Rummel to Ryan, April 28, 1930, AAO, SG 10, Box 52, Folder 89.

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- <sup>86</sup> Rummel to Griese, April 18, 1930, AAO, SG 10, Box 52, Folder 89.
- <sup>87</sup> Griese to Rummel, April 25, 1930, AAO, SG 10, Box 52, Folder 89.
- <sup>88</sup> Joseph F. Rummel, Archbishop of Omaha, to Monsignor William Hughes, Director of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, April 23, 1930, ABCIM, 162:580-581.
- <sup>89</sup> Hughes to Rummel, July 17, 1930, ABCIM, 162:583.
- <sup>90</sup> Griese to Colaneri, July 4, 1930, AAO, SG 10, Box 52, Folder 89.
- <sup>91</sup> Rummel to Griese, July 11, 1930, AAO, SG 10, Box 52, Folder 89.
- <sup>92</sup> Ryan to Rummel, August 23, 1930, AAO, SG 10, Box 52, Folder 89.
- <sup>93</sup> Leary to Rummel, September 3, 1930, AAO, SG 10, Box 52, Folder 89.
- <sup>94</sup> Rummel to Griese, October 4, 1930, AAO, SG 10, Box 52, Folder 89.
- <sup>95</sup> Griese to Drexel, November 31, 1930, ASBS.
- <sup>96</sup> Father John Griese to Monsignor Nicholas Wegner, Chancellor of the Archdiocese of Omaha, August 5, 1931, AAO, SG 10, Box 52, Folder 89.
- <sup>97</sup> Rummel to Griese, November 25, 1931, AAO, SG 10, Box 52, Folder 89.
- <sup>98</sup> Griese to Rummel, December 1, 1931, AAO, SG 10, Box 52, Folder 89.
- <sup>99</sup> Griese to Rummel, January 13, 1932, AAO, SG 10, Box 52, Folder 89.
- <sup>100</sup> Rummel to Griese, January 15, 1932, AAO, SG 10, Box 52, Folder 89.
- <sup>101</sup> "Annals," 217, ASBS.
- <sup>102</sup> Father Griese to Mother Mercedes, April 28, 1932, ASBS.
- <sup>103</sup> Father Griese to Mother Philip Neri, October 10, 1932, ASBS.
- <sup>104</sup> Griese to Drexel, March 28, 1933, ASBS.
- <sup>105</sup> "Annals," II, 217.
- <sup>106</sup> "Annals," II, 234
- <sup>107</sup> "Annals," II, 102-103.
- <sup>108</sup> Mother Mary of the Visitation to Mother Katharine October 29, 1939, "Annals," 102-103.
- <sup>109</sup> Father Felin McCarthy to Archbishop Joseph F. Rummel, July 4, 1934, AAO, SG 10, Box 52, Folder 89.

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<sup>110</sup> "Annals," II, 102-103.

<sup>111</sup> Father Lawrence O'Sullivan to Monsignor Nicholas Wegner, January 8, 1940, AAO, SG10, Box 52, Folder 89.

<sup>112</sup> Father John Griese to James Ryan, Archbishop of Omaha, January 23, 1940, AAO, SG 10, Box 52, Folder 89.

<sup>113</sup> The Winnebago Recorder, April 20, 1945, 1:1-4; Father Frank Hulsman, ed., The Trumpet Call, December, 1945, 1:4.

<sup>114</sup> Griese to Scannell, January 9, 1908, AAO, SG10, Box 52, Folder 89.

<sup>115</sup> The Winnebago Recorder, April 20, 1945, 1: 1-4.

<sup>116</sup> Griese to Rummel, April 25, 1930, AAO, SG10, Box 52, Folder 89.

<sup>117</sup> Confidential interviews by the author, St. Augustine's Church, Winnebago, Nebraska, February 15, 2000.

## CONCLUSION: ST. AUGUSTINE'S INDIAN MISSION IN NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Pope John Paul II declared Katharine Drexel a saint of the Roman Catholic Church during a solemn ceremony in St. Peter's Basilica on October 1, 2000. Catholic Winnebago representatives from St. Augustine's Indian Mission in northeast Nebraska attended, and the next day, the Kateri Warriors drummed and danced as part of a Mass of thanksgiving celebrated at the church of St. Paul Outside the Walls. The canonization of Mother Katharine was a time of great celebration for the parishioners of St. Augustine's as they proudly recalled that she had walked among them.<sup>1</sup>

The reactions of the St. Augustine parishioners contrasted sharply with the critical evaluation of noted Sioux author Vine Deloria, Jr. and others who have denounced the destructive impact of Christian missions on the lives of Native Americans and their cultures.<sup>2</sup> As St. Augustine's approaches the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its foundation, Winnebago Catholics certainly express a more forgiving attitude regarding their religious past. Their oral traditions do recall excessive disciplinary practices and indifference toward their culture. However, the Winnebago parishioners also recall that their "traditional" culture had been largely shattered by the time that Mother Katharine came to the community, and that they acquired from the sisters the educational tools with to confront the challenges of a changing world. They likewise remember the self-sacrifice of Father John Griese who literally fed the people during the Great Depression.<sup>3</sup>

Obviously, not all Nebraska Winnebagoes agree with this evaluation today. Others express harsher judgments of St. Augustine's Indian Mission. This diversity of opinion illustrates that individuals experienced the mission differently, and that

individual experiences depended upon many variables, including family background, the quality of the program at different times, relationships with staff and fellow students, and successes or failures that were experienced after schooling was ended. The history of the Catholic missions was likewise diverse. An examination of some of the variables that influenced St. Augustine's formation and growth enables us to assess both the mission's unique history and its relevance to the broader patterns of American Catholic mission history.

The Catholic mission experience in North America began in the 1500s and extends to the present day. Mission activity occurred in a variety of geographic settings from the forests of New France to the temperate Pacific coastal regions. Native Americans had formed a variety of cultures, which changed over time by invention, by cultural diffusion, and in response to changes in the environment. The Catholic missionaries who came among the Indians likewise were from a variety of cultural backgrounds and many were either first or second generation Americans. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, missionaries also arrived on the reservations as members of Christian churches which differed widely in belief and practice, and whose interdenominational relationships were often characterized by mistrust, competition and open conflict. Conflict also sometimes characterized church-state relationships. Although the United States government and the Christian churches agreed that assimilation was in the best interests of Indian peoples, the churches' primary goal was evangelization.

The interplay of time, place and culture is inseparable in life, but the three concepts are distinguishable and may illuminate variations in the history of the Catholic



missions. The time at which a mission was established and operated was an important variable in a mission's history. Local and national events and changes in philosophy and policy impacted each mission. Place was likewise important. The physical environment, relative location, and human characteristics of a particular mission affected the history of that mission, as did the unique cultural framework that developed there.

The history of St. Augustine's Indian Mission was shaped in part by the times in which it was created. In December 1888, Katharine Drexel had anticipated that a mission would be established among the Winnebago during the following year.<sup>4</sup> However, twenty years passed before Father John Griese arrived as the first resident pastor. The delay was due in part to national events that included changes in the demographic makeup of the United States, a wave of anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic feeling, competition and conflict among the Christian churches, and modifications in the philosophy and government funding of Indian education. The issues of contracts, government rations to students, the right of Indian parents to choose a school, and the use of treaty and trust fund money to support the missions had to be resolved before the Winnebago mission could be established.

In the 1880s and 1890s, the demographic composition of the United States changed as the pattern of immigration shifted from northern and western Europe to eastern and southern Europe. Many of the newcomers were non-English speakers and were Catholic, Eastern Orthodox or Jewish, rather than Protestant. At the same time, the Irish began to manifest the political power of the new immigrants in cities such as New York and Boston. Many Americans believed that the public schools were the best means

for assimilating the new immigrants. However, Roman Catholic leaders viewed the public schools as heavily Protestant in tone and dangerous to the faith of Catholics. In 1884, the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore ordered the bishops of the United States to create a system of parochial (parish) schools as an alternative to the public schools.<sup>5</sup> In turn, many Protestant Americans viewed the parochial schools as a threat to tax-supported public education. Also, Catholic parishes were frequently organized by and for specific ethnic groups. The Mass was offered in Latin, sermons were preached in the language of the old country, and the parish school might also teach an American curriculum in the mother tongue of the parishioners. This seemed “un-American” to mainstream white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant Americans, and it posed a potential obstacle to the assimilation of the new immigrants.<sup>6</sup> The result was a flood of nativist sentiment that inundated the country during the 1880s and 1890s. Groups such as the American Protective Association sought to discredit the heavily-immigrant Catholic Church with its “foreign ruler,” the Pope.<sup>7</sup>

The Third Plenary Council of Baltimore had also addressed the education of African American and Native American Catholics. The council urged the establishment of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith in every parish, and it directed that an annual collection be taken on the first Sunday in Lent for Indian and African American missions. The council also granted official status to the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions in 1884.<sup>8</sup> That same year the aggressive and mercurial Father Joseph Stephan was named the director of the bureau. As a result of the Council’s support of the Indian missions and under the guidance of Father Stephan, the 1880s witnessed a tremendous

growth of Catholic Indian missions. In 1883, Catholic missionary organizations sponsored eighteen schools nationwide that received contracts worth \$39,176; six years later, forty-three boarding schools and seventeen day schools received \$347,672 or 65% of all federal contract funds.<sup>9</sup> This lack of parity in the allotment of federal contracts produced resentment among the eastern Protestant reformers. Herbert Welsh, a founder of the Indian Rights Association of Philadelphia, formally complained to the Secretary of the Interior in 1888 about the disproportionate number of contracts awarded to Catholic missionary organizations, as well as about the number of Catholics appointed to the Indian service during the administration of Grover Cleveland.<sup>10</sup>

At the same time, a shift in the organizational philosophy of Indian education presented an even greater threat to the missions. The federal government had since 1819 appropriated money to “benevolent societies” which were willing to undertake the education of Indian peoples.<sup>11</sup> These annual contracts provided a per capita sum in payment for educational services provided at privately-owned boarding schools. The churches depended upon these federal funds to carry out their work. In the mid-1880’s, the idea of a universal, compulsory system of federal Indian schools, modeled after the public school systems in the states, gained support among federal officials and eastern reformers. The issue came to a head with the nomination of Baptist minister Thomas Jefferson Morgan as Commissioner of Indian Affairs, and Methodist minister Daniel Dorchester as Superintendent of Indian Education. Catholic leaders remembered the loss of nearly 80,000 souls to Protestant churches when the reservations were assigned to religious groups under President Grant’s Peace Policy in 1869. Certainly, they reasoned,

the Catholic missions would suffer under a regime led by Protestant ministers, each of whom had made public remarks that could be construed as anti-Catholic bigotry.<sup>12</sup>

Morgan became the standard bearer for the concept of a universal Indian education program. Father Stephan and the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions publicly opposed the nominations of Morgan and Dorchester, who were confirmed by the United States Senate on February 12, 1890. Morgan pledged that he had no intention of terminating the contract system, but he was determined to cut funding to “inadequate” mission schools and not approve new contracts. The public dispute became so bitter that Morgan severed relations with the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, as well as the various Protestant mission organizations.<sup>13</sup> The conflict also figured in the election of 1892, when a confidential letter from Father Stephan to Bishop Martin Marty was leaked to the press. The letter accused both Commissioner Morgan and President Benjamin Harrison of bigotry, and was misrepresented and much quoted to partisan advantage by the Democratic and Republican parties, the American Protective Association and the Catholic press.<sup>14</sup>

The issue of contracts was resolved in the 1890s, but not to the advantage of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions. In 1892, the Protestant missionary organizations formally withdrew from the contract system.<sup>15</sup> In 1894, President Grover Cleveland supported the gradual phase-out of contracts, thus giving the federal government time to organize a new system of Indian education and the missionary organizations time to find new sources of revenue.<sup>16</sup> Between 1896 and 1900, the value of the contracts was reduced by 20% per year until they were entirely phased-out in the fiscal 1901 budget.<sup>17</sup>

Other changes in federal policy challenged the Catholic missions in the 1890s and early 1900s. In a case involving Holy Rosary Mission at Pine Ridge, South Dakota, Commissioner of Indian Affairs Daniel M. Browning ruled in 1896 that it was the duty of the Indian agent to strengthen the government day schools, and that since Indians were wards of the government, Indian parents had no right to choose which schools their children would attend.<sup>18</sup> For the Catholic Bureau this was a violation of the natural right of choice. Father William Ketcham, who succeeded Father Stephan as director of the bureau, further argued that it was a violation of the civil rights of those allotted Indian parents who were citizens.<sup>19</sup> After ongoing conflict in Congress, and a brief period of experimental non-enforcement, the Browning Ruling was formally ended by the Roosevelt administration on January 17, 1902.<sup>20</sup>

Another controversy concerned the issuance of rations to students who were enrolled in mission schools. In October 1901, Commissioner William A. Jones eliminated the rations on the grounds that they encouraged dependency and opposed the government goals of individualization and self-sufficiency.<sup>21</sup> The rations were valued at \$25,000 per year to the Catholic Bureau. Three years later, the rations were restored when President Theodore Roosevelt signed the Indian Appropriation Act of 1904.<sup>22</sup>

A further controversy concerned the use of treaty and trust funds for the education of Indian children in the mission schools. The Roosevelt administration issued contracts valued at nearly \$100,000 in July, 1904. The following December a letter which had been solicited from Reuben Quick Bear and other Rosebud Sioux requested that the Indian Rights Association prevent the use of treaty and trust funds for the support of the Roman

Catholic mission schools on the Rosebud Reservation. The Roosevelt administration argued that these tribal funds, like the land, should be allotted to individuals. The Indian Rights Association countered that Congress had specifically banned direct aid to religious schools in 1897. It further argued that the use of tribal money for sectarian schools was injurious to other members of the tribe. The arguments were presented in the press, Congress and the courts. The matter was resolved on May 18, 1908, when the Supreme Court ruled in the case of Quick Bear v. Leupp that treaty and trust funds might be used to support the mission schools.<sup>23</sup>

The national conflict between the Catholic and Protestant churches affected the Omaha and Winnebago reservations. The Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church had been active among the Omahas since the establishment of a mission at Bellevue, Nebraska, in 1846. Two years later, a boarding school was opened at that location. When the Omahas moved to their new reservation in northeast Nebraska, a new mission and school was constructed near Blackbird Bend in 1857. The Omaha Reservation was assigned to the Hicksite Friends under Grant's Peace Policy in 1869, but the Presbyterians returned nine years later when the Quakers gave up the mission.<sup>24</sup> The Presbyterian Church had also established a relationship with the Winnebago people in Wisconsin when the Reverend David Lowry had opened the Yellow River Winnebago Indian School in 1834. The missionary followed the Winnebagoes on their forced migrations from Wisconsin to Iowa and to Long Prairie, Minnesota. After a lapse of nearly twenty-five years, the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions renewed the church's missionary relationship with the Winnebago people in 1881.<sup>25</sup>

The Catholic Church likewise had a history with the Winnebago people. The first documented contact of the Winnebagoes with Europeans was with Jean Nicollet, the Jesuit priest and explorer, in 1634, near Green Bay, Wisconsin. Thirty-five years later, Father Claude Allouez, S.J. established the Mission of St. Francis Xavier near Green Bay. The faith of the Catholic Winnebagoes was nourished off and on during the next 200 years by a succession of missionaries in Wisconsin. These included fathers Theodor Vanderbrook and Samuel Mazuchelli, O.P., and the Jesuit Fathers Isaac Jogues, Jacques Marquette and Pierre Radison. As the Winnebagoes were moved from Wisconsin to Iowa to Minnesota, Catholic contacts were maintained. In Iowa, a Father Petiet labored from 1833-1844, and Father Joseph Cretin was their pastor from 1844-1846. At Long Prairie, Minnesota, Fathers Cretin and Francis de Veraldi worked in the 1840s and 1850s. The Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondillet briefly conducted a school for about ninety children during the 1850s at Long Prairie.<sup>26</sup>

Conflict between Catholics and Presbyterians on Nebraska's Winnebago Reservation was conditioned by earlier missionary competition among the Winnebago people and the disruptive impact of Grant's Peace Policy on missionary activity on the Omaha Reservation. The Presbyterians felt a sense of "ownership" of the missionary field because of their ongoing work among the Omahas and their renewal of efforts among the Winnebagoes. The Catholics felt that they had a right to serve the Catholic Winnebago families, some of whom traced their Catholicism back to the seventh century. Conflict at Winnebago was inevitable since each wished to be the dominant Christian group on that

reservation. The Catholics showed little interest in work among the Omahas, probably because they had no missionary history among them.

The issues between the Catholics and the Presbyterians at once mirrored and fed the Catholic-Protestant conflict on the national level. Presbyterian Pastor S.N.D. Martin's letters to the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions of New York City expressed two themes: his personal frustrations at the lack of conversions, and the fear of competition from the Catholics. The pastor complained in 1886 that there were too many Catholics employed at the school and that they unduly influenced the children toward Catholicism.<sup>27</sup> He charged the following year that Catholic agency employees exercised influence over the tribe through favoritism and indirect bribes.<sup>28</sup> In 1888, Reverend Martin forestalled a request to hold a Catholic service at the school by informing the agent that if he allowed the priest to offer a sectarian service at the school, the Presbyterians would request the same. The Catholic request was denied, so Catholics offered Mass at the farmer's house.<sup>29</sup>

Control of the government schools was seen as the most critical issue because the schools provided access to the children. In 1887, Bishop John Lowrie, Secretary of the Presbyterian Board of Home Missions of New York City, requested that the Bureau of Indian Affairs allow the Presbyterian Board to operate the Omaha school. He was convinced that the Winnebago school had been unofficially given to the Catholics. Commissioner of Indian Affairs John D.C. Atkins responded that the Winnebago school had not been given to the Catholics and that the Omaha school would not be given to the Presbyterian Church.<sup>30</sup> Again, in 1888, Doctor Lawrence Hensel, medical missionary to



the Omaha, sent a petition signed by thirteen Omaha leaders including Marguerite LaFlesche, to Bishop Lowrie to be presented to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs. The petition requested that Catholics be barred from employment and missionary work on the reservation.<sup>31</sup> On the Catholic side, Father Stephan had submitted the case of a Mr. Fitzpatrick, a Catholic who had been fired as superintendent of the Winnebago school, as evidence of bigotry during the Senate confirmation hearings on the appointments of Thomas Jefferson Morgan and Daniel Dorchester.<sup>32</sup>

The Presbyterian Board of Home Missions refused to build a church or a day school at Winnebago despite the earnest protests of their missionaries. The rumor of a possible Catholic church, convent and school surfaced periodically from 1886 through the 1890's, but the plans never materialized. The local Presbyterian missionaries were convinced that whoever built the first church would carry the day at Winnebago. The lack of a real Catholic threat seems to have allowed the Presbyterian Board to delay its decision to build despite the criticisms of land-allotting agent Alice Fletcher and Indian Agent Jesse F. Warner.<sup>33</sup> The Presbyterian Church did not build at Winnebago until a predominately white congregation did so in 1909. In the meantime, the Presbyterian Board sold its interest in the mission field to the Reformed Church in America.<sup>34</sup>

The pastor of St. Mary's Church in Hubbard, Nebraska, who was nominally in charge of missionary work to the Winnebagoes, seems to have made the only serious effort toward building a Catholic mission during the 1890s. Father Julius Cornelius Delhove corresponded with Bishop Scannell and Mother Katharine Drexel between 1891 and 1893. The acquisition of reservation lands required approval of both the Winnebago

tribal council and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Father Stephan entrusted the task of getting tribal approval to Father Delhove. The latter reported that a petition had been easily completed among the Winnebagoes, but that it had plunged the reservation into conflict.<sup>35</sup> The petition was apparently lost in the mails and thus ended the efforts of the 1890's.

The mystery of the petition that disappeared in the mail is intriguing, but perhaps the most revealing aspect of the episode is the light it sheds on the political situation at Winnebago. Certainly, the Presbyterians opposed the establishment of the mission. Father Delhove characterized Agent Robert H. Ashley as "Presbyterian, Republican and bigoted," so presumably he opposed the Catholic initiative. A majority of tribal members were said to have supported the petition. Yet, others must not have done so because Father Delhove reported great conflict on the reservation, for which Catholics and Presbyterians working on the reservation may well have been mutually responsible.<sup>36</sup> The missionaries and the Indians were not the only potential stakeholders in the mission. Homer, Nebraska banker C.J. O'Connor had informed Father Delhove in 1892 that a Catholic school could easily be supported. He and other local white Catholics would send their children to the day school, and apparently unaware of the national controversy, he assumed that contracts would pay for the Indian children. The banker also offered to sell some land outside reservation boundaries for the mission. The offer was turned down because Father Delhove advised that the mission must be located on the reservation.<sup>37</sup>

Mother Katharine's determination to found a mission at Winnebago was apparently based on the wishes of her spiritual director, Bishop James O'Connor.<sup>38</sup> The

bishop's untimely death on May 27, 1890, unquestionably slowed the momentum for the mission. Richard Scannell, O'Connor's successor, has been criticized for a lack of concern regarding the spiritual well being of the Indians of northeast Nebraska. However, the annual reports from his priests in the field showed no great desire for a priest on the part of the Winnebago people. The conflict between Catholic employees of the agency and the Presbyterian missionaries made success uncertain. Other issues were probably of more immediate concern to Bishop Scannell. The need to provide buildings and services for increasing numbers of Catholic immigrants against the backdrop of both the Depression of 1893 and attacks by the American Protective Association on immigrants and Catholics was more pressing. It should also be noted that it was he who monitored the situation and called attention to the fact that land was available on the reservation in 1903. Perhaps a fairer criticism would concern the bishop's half-hearted efforts to support the new mission after its foundation.

The matter of timing was also important in the eventual establishment of the mission. Prior to the opening of the reservation to white settlement, approval by the tribal council and Bureau of Indian Affairs was necessary to obtain land for church purposes. The process was intensely political. When the railroad was completed through the reservation and the town of Winnebago was platted in 1907, restrictions were lifted. The acquisition of land was open to free market purchase through organizations such as the Winnebago Town Company. In fact, the town company became a contributor to the project because its Protestant leaders believed that the mission and the school were capital improvements that bolstered the success of their new community.

The location of St. Augustine's amidst the rich agricultural lands of Thurston County also affected the history of the mission. The human landscape of the county was transformed during the last quarter of the nineteenth century as a result of federal policy. The Omaha and Winnebago reservations were allotted during the 1880s, and the pattern of landholding changed from tribal ownership to individual ownership. Surplus lands, as well as allotments and heirship lands, were opened to white leasing and ownership. The process of change from white to Indian ownership was further accelerated by federal action. Section Seven of the 1902 Indian Appropriation Act permitted Indian heirs to sell inherited lands without the restriction of a trust period. Again, the Burke Act of 1906 provided for competency commissions to determine the ability of individual Indians to manage their own affairs. Indians deemed "competent" were allowed to sell their lands without the restriction of a trust period. Indeed, so many irregularities resulted from the expiration of the original Omaha allotments' trust period of July 10, 1909, that President William Howard Taft ordered a ten-year extension of the trust period. The following year, however, Acting Commissioner of Indian Affairs Fred H. Abbott bowed to political pressures and authorized the creation of competency commissions to determine which Omaha and Winnebago allottees were eligible to receive title to their lands. The result was a continuous loss of the tribal land base, and while some Indian families prospered under the new economic order, many ended up landless, unskilled and penniless.<sup>39</sup>

The construction of the Sioux City and Western Railroad through both reservations made commercial agriculture possible in Thurston County and led to the creation of the grain elevator towns of Walthill and Winnebago. The human

characteristics of the Winnebago Reservation affected St. Augustine's both directly and indirectly. In 1910, nearly two-thirds of the residents of the town were whites who operated the majority of businesses, built the substantial homes on the hills above the business district, and established the churches and the public school. Adult white males in both the town and precinct of Winnebago reported 100% employment in 1910. In contrast, only one-third of adult Indian males living in the town reported employment, and barely more than one-fourth of adult Indian males who lived in the precinct were employed.<sup>40</sup> This disparity in employment figures probably reflects the problems of cultural transition for Indian males, lower educational levels and possibly racial discrimination. In his 1910 report to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Superintendent Albert Kneale noted that white leasing of Indian lands in Thurston County had created a "double population, a laboring class and an idle class, both of which must be fed and clothed." According to the Superintendent, white merchants discouraged the Indians from farming in order to increase the size of their market. He was also critical of government policies, and he wished to stop the practice of mortgaging crops on restricted lands. Kneale further criticized the slowness and inefficiency of the government. He noted that an allottee who wished to sell a piece of inherited land might have to wait two years or more for payment. In general, Kneale supported the sale of inherited land in order to improve allotments, and he opposed the sale of allotments.<sup>41</sup> Superintendent Albert Kneale faced white opposition in the newspaper for his interpretation of land sale policy. Whites in the county wanted to deal directly with the Indians, and they resented the "interference" of the agent. While Winnebago Chieftain editor A.M. Bancroft attempted

to include coverage of the Winnebagoes in the pages of his newspaper, Superintendent Albert Kneale implied a much different situation in his 1910 report when he suggested that the Indian children might not even be welcome in the public school.<sup>42</sup>

The availability of Indian lands led to opportunities for fraud and corruption. In the 1890's, a congressional committee had investigated the Fluornoy Livestock and Real Estate Company of Pender regarding illegal leasing of Indian lands.<sup>43</sup> Leasing irregularities were again the subject of a congressional investigation of Agent Charles P. Mathewson and local speculators in 1902.<sup>44</sup> In 1904, Father Joseph Schell, missionary to the Winnebago, charged merchants in nearby Homer with illegal sale of liquor to the Indians, the granting of excessive lines of credit which resulted in the forced sale of Indian lands, price gauging on merchandise, and money lending at usurious rates of interest. These charges, reported in the Sioux City and Omaha newspapers, and reprinted in the Washington Post and the New York Times, involved officials at the highest levels of the Roman Catholic Church and the federal government.<sup>45</sup> Although Agent A. O. Wright, who was assigned to investigate the priest's allegations, was highly critical of Father Schell's motives, he allowed that the priest's charges were mostly based on fact, although highly exaggerated. He also defended illegal business practices such as usurious interest rates as necessary on the reservation.<sup>46</sup> Omaha tribal member and United States Court Commissioner Thomas L. Sloan likewise reported that Schell's accusations were substantively correct. He discussed the complexity of the legal situation in two letters to Commissioner of Indian Affairs William A. Jones in 1904. In the first letter, he questioned whether law enforcement had the authority to arrest Indians for drunkenness

since they were allotted and therefore citizens of the United States. Three months later he argued that the United States government had the responsibility to control liquor among the Indians since government policy had removed traditional Indian means of social control and had left an empty legal shell in its place.<sup>47</sup>

The cultural malaise, which characterized the Winnebago Reservation, affected the ministries of both Father Schell and Father Griese. The former focused on the removal of the social evils that beset the Winnebago people by challenging the white merchants, bankers and land speculators who thrived from the Indian trade. Some of these men were Catholic, and the personal conflict with two prominent Homer families served to obscure the issues. It is also quite possible, that given his record in Oregon, Father Schell was by temperament more concerned with social and political activism and the notoriety than he was with a spiritual ministry. However, his argument that a more spiritual ministry could not succeed unless the social evils were addressed was not without merit and it fit within the Catholic missionary tradition of social reform.

The culture of the town of Winnebago likewise affected the ministry of Father John Griese. Even though St. Augustine's was technically an Indian mission, the church and school served local white Catholics, as well as native students. This created a problem with church attendance. Father Griese reported on more than one occasion that Catholic Indians would not attend church with whites that they regarded as their exploiters.<sup>48</sup> He frequently held services out-of-doors, and he requested the money for a meeting hall to which some of the adult Indians might come.<sup>49</sup>

The impoverishment of the Indians, and later, the declining incomes of white farmers during the Great Depression, also impacted St. Augustine's Mission. Mother Katharine Drexel typically financed the construction of mission buildings with the understanding that the operators of the mission would support the institution. New government contracts were unobtainable during the 1890s, and after the Supreme Court's decision in Quick Bear v. Leupp that treaty and trust fund moneys might be used to pay student tuition at mission schools, Father Ketcham determined that it would be imprudent to ask for a contract at Winnebago. The Dutch Reformed Church had received a contract, so it was unlikely that the federal government would award contracts to two missionary organizations on the same reservation. Furthermore, Ketcham reasoned, the contention that a Catholic application for a contract would engender was not worth the financial benefits that a contract would bring.<sup>50</sup> In 1911, Father Ketcham explored the possibility that the government might assume ownership of the school, with the sisters becoming salaried government employees as had been done at other missions. However, the Bureau of Indian Affairs apparently was not interested in doing so at Winnebago, and the matter was dropped.<sup>51</sup>

In 1908, Joseph LaMere and other Winnebago elders requested that Harry Keefe, a Catholic lawyer from Walthill, contact Catholic Church officials about establishing a sisters' school among the Winnebago people. For reasons that remain unclear, the elders did not wish that a priest be sent, but they acquiesced when the lawyer assured them that sisters would not be sent without a priest.<sup>52</sup> Possibly, they hoped to avoid the contention that had characterized Father Schell's tenure at Winnebago, or perhaps, they were asking



for the educational benefits that a school could bring, without the religious influences. Mother Drexel approached the project cautiously due to financial and staffing considerations. The Winnebagoes desired a boarding school because a day school could not serve the needs of Catholic children who lived in the rural areas of the county. There was furthermore an obscure subtext in the correspondence of Harry Keefe to Mother Katharine and in the Winnebago oral tradition that the desire for a boarding school was partly an effort to remove young Winnebago women from unhealthy living conditions that resulted in tuberculosis, or to protect them from exploitation.<sup>53</sup> Father John Griese likewise supported the notion of a boarding school. Mother Drexel compromised on her plans and built a day school the first year. A year later, she consented to build a boarding facility, probably because Mother Pauline, the principal at St. Augustine's, became convinced that this was a necessity due to poor school attendance. The Winnebago Chieftain, which presumably reflected the opinions of the Winnebago Town Company and the business community, strongly supported the capital improvements at Winnebago.<sup>54</sup>

Mother Drexel's reservations about the financial future of the mission were well placed. The sisters had never planned to charge tuition to Indian students, and most of the white parishioners were farmers or laborers who were scratching out a living in an agricultural economy that grew during World War I and shrank during the 1920s. Drought and the Great Depression further diminished farm income, and the support of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions and the Archdiocese of Omaha was also insufficient to make ends meet. So, the burden fell upon Mother Katharine and the Sisters of the

Blessed Sacrament, and the fate of the mission upon the death of its founder became a major preoccupation of Father Griese from 1914 through the early 1930s.<sup>55</sup> The priest turned to the rich soils of Thurston County in an effort to make the mission self-supporting.

Agriculture had traditionally been a supplemental source of mission support, but at St. Augustine's it became the main focus of Father Griese's time and energy. In 1924, he purchased forty acres adjoining the mission; and one year later, he purchased an additional 120 acres, including an electrified barn for dairy cattle. The following year, he also borrowed \$1,700 to purchase seeds and implements.<sup>56</sup> Despite the priest's unremitting labor, the mission's 1928 financial report to the Archbishop of Omaha clearly showed that his venture was in deep financial trouble as production costs exceeded profits and were draining both the priest's personal finances and mission donations.<sup>57</sup>

Archbishop Joseph Rummel addressed the situation in early 1929. He was concerned about the economic soundness of the venture, the fact that the debt was in Father Griese's name, the toll of the labor on the 65-year-old priest's health, and the value of the enterprise to the Omaha and Winnebago peoples.<sup>58</sup> No one questioned the sincerity of the missionary's grand vision. By the 1920s, Father Griese had earned the respect of both whites and Indians in the Winnebago area and was considered a virtual saint by many. The archbishop sent inquiries to local individuals who had knowledge of the situation. Mother Pauline, superior at Winnebago, had no information on the finances of the farms, but she was certain that the Dutch Reformed were more effective in

reaching the Winnebagoes by the use of trained Indian catechists. She believed that the school was the only point of contact between the Church and the Indians.<sup>59</sup> W. H. Ryan, Cashier of the Security State Bank of Homer, believed that the investment in the forty acre tract had been sound, but that the priest had been overcharged for the 120-acre farm by an unscrupulous land dealer, who, interestingly enough, was the only defender of the venture.<sup>60</sup> Edward F. Leary, attorney for the Archdiocese of Omaha, visited Winnebago in August 1930, and reported to the archbishop that the missionary was over-working and starving himself in order to keep the farms going. Even though Father Griese felt that the work gave him contact with the Indians, the lawyer concluded that the priest did most of the work himself.<sup>61</sup> After nearly two years of correspondence, the archbishop ordered the priest to relinquish title to the land.<sup>62</sup>

Father Griese had originally undertaken farming in an effort to make the mission self-supporting, but early in the effort he had realized that this work could have a spiritual dimension as well. The priest had witnessed the pauperization of the Omaha and Winnebago peoples and was privately critical of government policy and practice. By the 1920s, he clearly had no expectation that the government would do anything to ameliorate conditions on the reservation. He also realized that the Indians would not attend church with the white Catholics whom they called "grafters."<sup>63</sup> Indeed, in 1930, he had requested that Katharine Drexel purchase a cement-block house adjoining the mission property as a separate meeting place for the Indians. He reported that the whites were more of a hindrance than a help to his missionary efforts and he recommended that

a separate chapel be built for either the whites or the Indians.<sup>64</sup> A bicultural parish was quite simply unworkable given the history of the county.

Griese believed that the Catholic mission might be able to address the economic needs of the Indians and gain converts in the process. His dream was that the Indians would come to the mission for work. If the mission met their economic needs, he would have the opportunity to teach by word and example the value of labor and the beauty of God's creation. He reasoned that merely preaching the Word had not really worked either for the Protestant ministers or for himself. He was convinced that the Indians could be reached by an appeal to the order and design in nature. This naturalistic approach might then lead to a consideration of the supernatural truths of the Catholic faith, and then the mission would experience the spiritual harvest for which he hoped. At its grandest, his vision included a community of young Indian families gathered around the mission, which would be the center of their economic and spiritual lives, and an agrarian shelter from the evils of the nearby city of Sioux City.<sup>65</sup>

Even though Father Griese's grand vision was not realized, landowner John Ashford allowed him to continue farming on the forty-acre tract next to the mission. The priest was able to supply food for the mission and to feed the hungry during the Great Depression. Although Father Griese's venture seemed a failure, it ended in significant service to the community and secured his legacy among the people of Winnebago. In the oral traditions, he is remembered because, "He fed the people."<sup>66</sup>

Historian Robert W. Galler, Jr. has called attention to the importance of the political dimension in the establishment and operation of the missions. He described a

triad of alliances that helped establish and maintain Holy Rosary Indian Mission on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. The original stakeholders at Pine Ridge were the federal government, the Jesuit fathers and the Lakota Nation. The shifting role of the stakeholders over time was reflected in the changing name of the institution – the Drexel Mission, Holy Rosary Indian Mission, Pine Ridge Educational Society, Inc., and today, Red Cloud Indian School. Gradually, the role of the federal government has decreased, while the state of South Dakota has exercised increased influence in the areas of teacher certification and curriculum. The Jesuits have maintained operation of the school under a Lakota parents' school board.<sup>67</sup>

Galler has pointed out that each of the original stakeholders had a different goal, but the institution prospered due to the willingness of the stakeholders to compromise. The federal government sought the building of an additional boarding school on the reservation in pursuit of the federal goal of assimilation, and contracts were available to pay for instruction. The Jesuits' primary goal was evangelization. Red Cloud and the Lakota people desired instruction in the tools of white civilization while maintaining their traditions. Red Cloud also wanted the Jesuits as allies against federal officials who were typically Protestant.<sup>68</sup>

The author further asserted that the Jesuits resonated with the Lakota in a number of ways. The liturgical ceremonies, which included the use of Lakota symbols and language, appealed to the Sioux. They likewise admired the dedication, or “undivided hearts,” of the celibate Catholic missionaries. Galler also found that the Jesuits attempted in unspecified ways to soften the transition of the Lakota people into American society.<sup>69</sup>

Furthermore, the strategy of segregating the students at the mission in the pursuit of assimilation had an unintended effect of reinforcing Lakota identity.<sup>70</sup>

The political dimension was quite different at Winnebago. Catholic efforts to gain access to the reservation had been blocked for nearly twenty years before the reservation was opened to white settlement and before Catholic Winnebago elders asked for a sisters' school. Catholic efforts to obtain the vacated government school buildings were at first thwarted when Dutch Reformed Church missionaries occupied the buildings and later Agent Albert Kneale decided that the agency would retain the structures for its own use. The close working relationship between the Dutch Reformed Church and the agency placed the Catholics in the position of outsiders. Father Ketcham determined not to ask for a contract for the education of Omaha and Winnebago children, and no record has been found that the mission subsequently applied for or received one.<sup>71</sup>

At Winnebago, the political situation was more complex because the social context was much more complicated than the relatively isolated Pine Ridge Reservation. The Winnebago Catholics, Father Griese, the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, local white Catholics, and the largely Protestant Winnebago business community comprised the original stakeholders at Winnebago. However, their goals were not identical. The primary goal of the Catholic churchmen and women was unquestionably evangelization. Local white Catholics desired a Catholic church and school for their own families. The Winnebago Town Company and community leaders were concerned with community development. The goals of the Catholic Winnebago elders are not entirely clear. They requested that sisters establish a

boarding school, but they did not wish that a priest be sent among them. Certainly, the elders desired the academic tools that would enable their youth to adapt to the new world about them. Possibly, they hoped that the sisters would shelter the young women from exploitation. Apparently, they desired an education within a religious context, but perhaps they also wished to avoid the contention that had characterized Father Schell's tenure at Winnebago.

Sioux author Vine Deloria, Jr. criticized the impact of the Christian missionaries on native societies in his 1969 bestseller Custer Died for Your Sins. He argued that the Christian pursuit of individual salvation had contributed to the fragmentation of "traditional" cultures and had made Indian peoples more vulnerable to exploitation.<sup>72</sup> Carol Berg, O.S.B., discussed the work of her own religious order, the Benedictines, among the Ojibway people at White Earth, Minnesota. She acknowledged that the attempts of the missionaries and government agents under pressure from the Indian Rights Association to destroy the influence of the Midewiwin or medicine lodges had weakened the social cohesiveness of the Ojibway at White Earth.<sup>73</sup> At Winnebago, the religious landscape was more complex than that of White Earth at the time in which St. Augustine's Mission was established, and consequently, the history is quite different.

In 1888, Winnebago Agent Jesse F. Warner had been highly critical of the lack of a Christian church on the reservation. He stated that he would break up the "traditional" medicine lodge if there were anything better to offer the Winnebago people.<sup>74</sup> By 1910, the town of Winnebago was three years old and exhibited a diverse religious landscape. Agent Albert Kneale estimated that about 50% of all church-

affiliated Winnebago's attended the Winnebago Indian Church that had been established by the Reformed Church in American in 1908. The Presbyterian Church was predominately white but it had some Indian members. The traditional Medicine Lodge was being challenged by the Mescal Society, which would evolve into the Native American Church. Agent Kneale estimated that 25% of the religiously active Winnebagoes belonged to this group.<sup>75</sup>

St. Augustine's counted 14 Catholic families, 29 practicing Catholics and 35 non-practicing Catholics, in the annual report for 1910.<sup>76</sup> The parish was always a racially mixed congregation, and the statistics did not distinguish between white and Indian Catholics until 1930, so it is impossible to accurately characterize the ethnicity of the congregation.<sup>77</sup> In 1908, Father Griese had estimated that there were about 50 Catholic Winnebagoes. He did not count older adults who had been baptized at some point in their lives, but had never really practiced the faith.<sup>78</sup> Five years later, he reported a congregation of about 50 whites and 100 Indians.<sup>79</sup> In 1930, the first year in which parish families were broken down ethnically, 13 white and 15 Indian families were reported. Ten years later, 7 white and 16 Indian families were recorded.<sup>80</sup> The number of white families gradually declined probably due to migration out of the town or off the farm during the Great Depression.

Catholics had always been and continue to be a minority among the Winnebago people. In 1913, Father Griese reported that there were 100 Catholics out of a tribal population of 3,000.<sup>81</sup> In 1929, he enumerated 300 Catholics out of 2,700 Winnebagoes.<sup>82</sup> Consequently, Father Griese and the sisters worked to evangelize the Winnebago people



and yet avoided open religious conflict. Indeed, Father Griese addressed the Native American Church on at least one occasion, and members sometimes came to him for advice about personal problems.<sup>83</sup> He also refused to participate in a movement by Christian clergy to have peyote listed specifically as an illegal drug in the Nebraska state constitution. Although he never came to have an appreciation for the Native American Church, he privately regarded peyote as an insignificant social evil compared to the problems faced by the Winnebagoes.<sup>84</sup> Publicly, he avoided religious and political conflict, for which he is honored in the Winnebago oral tradition.<sup>85</sup> In 1925, Mother Philip Neri had attended a gathering of the Medicine Lodge along with a school parent and her children, and had reported respectfully about her experience in The Indian Sentinel.<sup>86</sup> Children of Native American Church members attended the mission over the years, but the issue of baptism was certainly a delicate one. In 1911, the sister annalist reported that some of the Native American Church parents had withdrawn their children over the issue.<sup>87</sup>

Catholic missionaries had two goals – evangelization and assimilation. The latter goal was shared with the federal government, but historians James T. Carroll and Carol Berg have argued that practices were ameliorated by the ethnic backgrounds of the priests and nuns who served on the reservations. Carroll pointed out that the priests and nuns who staffed Holy Rosary, St. Francis, Fort Totten and Fort Yates all had recent connections with their motherhouses in Germany, Switzerland, and French-speaking Montreal, Canada. He concluded that the four missions in the Dakotas were bicultural and bilingual.<sup>88</sup> Carol Berg noted that the Benedictine sisters' correspondence during the

1880's and 1890's made no reference to any attempt to suppress the usage of the Ojibway tongue. Berg suggested that this may have been influenced by the fact that of the dozen sisters who served at White Earth from at 1878, 10 were of German parentage and 2 were Irish. She concluded that English was a second language for the German sisters as well as for their pupils.<sup>89</sup>

Father Griese had been born and educated in Germany. The challenge of learning Tagalog and Spanish had played a part in his decision to return to Nebraska after only five months in the Philippines. Perhaps languages were not his strength.<sup>90</sup> The Winnebago oral tradition reports that he had a speech impediment, a fact that whites seem not to remember. Possibly it was his German accent that caused difficulty for the Winnebagoes and for some white listeners.<sup>91</sup>

Four of the five Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament assigned to Winnebago in 1909 had been born in Pennsylvania. Sister Helen had been born in Germany. Mother Agatha's father had been born in Pennsylvania, but her mother was Irish. The parents of Sister Scholastica had been born in Germany, and the parents of Sisters Imaculata and Angela had been born in Ireland.<sup>92</sup> The fact that St. Augustine's was founded thirty-one years after St. Benedict's at White Earth partially accounts for this difference in ethnic origins. In addition, the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament were an American order founded in response to specifically American needs, while, the Benedictines traced their roots directly to European motherhouses.

Mother Katharine and the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament undoubtedly shared the view of their times that assimilation was a necessity for the American Indian.

However, Mother Katharine and the sisters perceived their primary work as “saving souls.” The same was true of Father Griese. The correspondence of the priest and the sisters between 1908 and 1940 never referred to assimilation directly or indirectly.<sup>93</sup> While the Benedictines at White Earth and the Jesuits in North and South Dakota did attempt to make use of the Indian languages in the sermon at Mass and in the administration of the sacraments, Father Griese apparently did not do so. Parishioners remembered that Mass was offered in Latin and that the priest’s sermons tended to be long and difficult to understand, possibly because of the priest’s accent or a speech impediment. In the early days, the sermon was sometimes interpreted for older members of the Winnebago congregation.<sup>94</sup> Father Griese had planned to publish at least one issue of The Winnebago Herald in the Winnebago language, but apparently he never did so.

The play “Coania, the Indian Rose” was offered in 1912. This did not represent an attempt to adapt to the Winnebago culture. Rather, it was a “pan Indian” drama, that did establish a Catholic Indian identity within the Church, but which did not attempt to create a Winnebago Catholic identity. The sisters also attended the pow wows, that reinforced the validity of these cultural events, but there was no deliberate attempt to forge a new cultural identity through the use of Indian symbols in the liturgy and administration of the sacraments. Father Richard Whiteing finally incorporated Native American symbolism and cultural practices in the Mass and school curriculum during the 1980s.<sup>95</sup>

Historian Richard White developed the concept of a middle ground between the cultures of Native American and Europeans who lived in the Great Lakes Region between 1650 and 1815. In that time and place, Native American peoples and Europeans

established mutually beneficial relationships that were characterized by accommodation rather than acculturation. The development of new cultural practices that comprised the middle ground presupposed a balance of power among the groups and geographic isolation from European power centers.<sup>96</sup>

James T. Carroll adapted and applied the concept of the middle ground to four missions, Fort Totten and Fort Yates in North Dakota, and Holy Rosary and St. Francis in South Dakota. All were established between 1874 and 1888, and they shared the twin goals of implementing the government policy of assimilation and the Catholic Church policy of evangelization. Carroll identified four constituencies which comprised the middle ground on the Fort Totten, Fort Yates, Pine Ridge and Rosebud reservations: the Indian students, the sisters, federal officials, and the Church hierarchy. He concluded that the schools had been considered as successful by Church and federal officials because the Sioux students and the missionary nuns and priests had made successful accommodations in implementation of the goals of assimilation and evangelization.<sup>97</sup>

Carroll offered several examples of the middle ground at the four missions. These included: (1) frequent interaction between home and school; (2) the involvement of Indian adults in the activities of the school; (3) participation of the sisters and students in tribal events; (4) visitation of Indian families by the nuns; (5) the establishment of hospitals; and (6) adult evangelization. Furthermore, the missionaries studied Lakota language and culture and used it in the homily at Mass and in the administration of the sacraments. Carroll concluded that bilingualism and biculturalism were characteristic of

the four reservations, and that the missionaries fostered an identity that was at once Sioux and Catholic.<sup>98</sup>

Many of these same characteristics of the middle ground were found at Winnebago. Katharine Drexel established the pattern for home visitation during the construction of the mission in 1909. She reported to the motherhouse that she and Sister Angela Campbell had visited virtually every Indian family in town during the autumn of 1909.<sup>99</sup> Frequent Indian visitors were mentioned in numerous letters from the nuns to St. Elizabeth's Convent. Sometimes, the visitors came at inconvenient times, but apparently were welcomed courteously. Parents and community members were likewise involved in the activities of the school.<sup>100</sup> Examples included parents transporting the students to the school picnic in 1911, lawyer Harry Keefe's narration of the play "Diana or Christ," and Dan LaMere's appearance as Santa Clause.<sup>101</sup> Curiously all of the examples are from the first decade of the mission's operation. However, correspondence with the motherhouse nearly always included references to Winnebago and Omaha families who were remembered by the nuns who had served at St. Augustine's. The sisters also attended the powwows and family events.<sup>102</sup> Mother Philip Neri's attendance at a Medicine Lodge celebration was published in The Indian Sentinel,<sup>103</sup> and Father Griese addressed the Native American Church on one occasion.<sup>104</sup> Finally, both Father Griese and the sisters carried out adult evangelization formally and informally over the years.

Although the same behavioral characteristics of the middle ground cited by Carroll are found at Winnebago, the substance of the middle ground seems to have been

lacking. The parish was never really bicultural, nor was it bilingual. English was the formal language of the mission.

Although a middle ground never existed at St. Augustine's, a Catholic Winnebago identity did and does exist. In 2004, the mission continues the work of secular education combined with religious formation started in 1909 by Mother Katharine Drexel and Father John Griese on the hill at the north end of Winnebago. The old mission buildings are gone: they were replaced by newer structures that were built under the direction of Monsignor Frank Hulsman in the 1950s and 1960s. However, more than the buildings has changed. Today, Winnebago values and traditions are taught in the school. In 2003, Jeff Pope became the first lay principal of the school. The new principal's ancestry includes French, German, English, Santee and Winnebago.<sup>105</sup> About 230 parishioners attend a Mass on Sundays that utilizes Winnebago symbolism including the eagle feather and burning cedar in the liturgy.

Winnebago leaders have acknowledged that Catholicism has achieved a niche in the fabric of the life of the Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska. In the summer of 1987, a tribal conference was held at the Marina Inn in South Sioux City, Nebraska. The role of outside agencies on the reservation was one of the issues discussed. Some participants stated that the impact of these non-tribal organizations was mostly negative. Rather Richard Whiteing, pastor of the mission, asked the group if St. Augustine's should be closed. Reuben Snake, Native American Church roadman and nationally-known tribal leader, responded that the church and school were an important part of the lives of Catholic members of the tribe.<sup>106</sup> David Smith, Tribal Historian and Cultural Preservation Officer

and parishioner of St. Augustine's attributes his own personal academic success to the education and self-discipline that he learned in the mission school. He also recalls that the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Winnebago people dates to the 17<sup>th</sup> century in Wisconsin, and was continued by missionaries in Iowa and Minnesota during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>107</sup>

This Winnebago Catholic identity was not solely the result of missionary efforts in Nebraska in the twentieth century. Rather it was forged in other places and in earlier times, and was reinforced and nourished by the foundation of St. Augustine's Indian Mission. Further research is necessary to establish the continuity of the Catholic faith among Winnebago families. However, preliminary evidence suggests that Catholicism was maintained by family traditions. The Archives of the Archdiocese of Dubuque, Iowa contain the baptismal records of Winnebago families dating to 1839 when they were living in eastern Iowa.<sup>108</sup> Again, baptismal records from St. Mary's in Hubbard and St. Patrick's in Jackson, Nebraska reveal that some Winnebago Catholic families were accepting Baptism from visiting priests as early as 1886, twenty years prior to the establishment of St. Augustine's.<sup>109</sup> An undated recollection written by Julia DeCora Lucart, a niece of Joseph LaMere and housekeeper to Father Griese, attests that the Catholic faith was deeply rooted in the life of her family. She wrote, "We had no priest or religious instruction for over one hundred years but Uncle Joe and my mother kept the faith. [They] had all of us baptized by a layman or a priest who happened on a brief visit – we never had any religious instruction. I learned my prayers in a peculiar way with the help of a blind man and a Protestant at that."<sup>110</sup>

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**NOTES**

<sup>1</sup> “St. Augustine’s Foundress to be Canonized a Saint,” The Trumpet Call, March 2000, 1; “To Honor A Saint,” The Trumpet Call, December 2000, 4.

<sup>2</sup> Vine Deloria, Jr. Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto (New York: McMillan Co., 1969), 102.

<sup>3</sup> Confidential interview by the author, St. Augustine’s Church, Winnebago, Nebraska, February 15, 2000.

<sup>4</sup> Katharine Drexel to James O’Connor, Bishop of Omaha, December 12, 1888, Archives of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament [ASBS], Bensalem, Pennsylvania.

<sup>5</sup> Concillii Plenarii Baltimorensis III, Acta et Decreta, (Baltimore: Archdiocese of Baltimore, 1886), Title IV, articles 1,3.

<sup>6</sup> A brief contemporary statement of the issues involved in the public versus parochial school debate can be found in “The Archbishops and the Schools,” New York Times, November 19, 1892, 4:4, and “The Archbishop’s Conference,” Ibid., November 17, 1892, 4:3.

<sup>7</sup> Donald L. Kinzer. An Episode in Anti-Catholicism: The American Protective Association (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1964), inclusive.

<sup>8</sup> Concillii Plenarii Baltimorensis III, Acta et Decreta, (Baltimore: Archdiocese of Baltimore, 1886), Title VII, Article II, section 243.

<sup>9</sup> Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1890, xvii.

<sup>10</sup> Herbert Welsh, Secretary, Indian Rights Association, to Secretary of the Interior William P. Villas, July 9, 1888, Indian Rights Association Papers [IRAP], reel 69.

<sup>11</sup> Report of Secretary John C. Calhoun, Annual Report of the Secretary of War, 1820 in American State Papers [ASP], 2:201.

<sup>12</sup> See Francis Paul Prucha, The Churches and the Indian Schools, 1888-1912 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979), chapter 2, for an excellent discussion of the controversy.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., See also, “Correspondence with the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions,” Commissioner Thomas J. Morgan, Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1891, 161-170; and “Action of Religious Denominations Receiving Government Aid for Sectarian Schools,” Report of Commissioner Thomas J. Morgan, Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1892, 177-183.

<sup>14</sup> See Harry J. Sievers, “The Catholic Indian School Issue and the Presidential Election of 1892,” Catholic Historical Review 38 (July 1952): 129-155 for a general discussion of the question.

<sup>15</sup> “Action of Religious Denominations Receiving Government Aid for Sectarian Schools,” Report of Commissioner Thomas J. Morgan, Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1892, 177-183.

<sup>16</sup> President Grover Cleveland, “Second Annual Message,” Fred L. Israel, ed., The State of the Union Messages of the Presidents, 1790-1966, 3vols. (New York: Chelsea House, 1966), 2: 1783.



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<sup>17</sup> The decline in funding of the contract schools can be traced in the annual reports of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs. See chapter 2, note 53.

<sup>18</sup> Quoted in Commissioner William A. Jones, "Education Circular #62," reprinted in William Ketcham, "Annual Report of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, 1900-1901 and 1901-1902," 9. See also, William A. Jones to Ethan Allan Hitchcock, Secretary of the Interior, February 12, 1901, Bureau of Indian Affairs, LS, Education, cited in Prucha, The Churches and the Indian Schools, 60-61.

<sup>19</sup> William Ketcham, "Annual Report of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, 1900-1901 and 1901-1902," 2.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Report of Commissioner William D. Jones, Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1901, I:6; "Report of the Board of Indian Commissioners," Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior, 1900, 2:687.

<sup>22</sup> 34 Statutes at Large, 326.

<sup>23</sup> Supreme Court of the United States, October Term, 1907, no. 569, Reuben Quick Bear et. al. vs. Frances E. Leupp, in Indian Rights Association Papers, reel 119, #80. See Prucha, The Churches and the Indian Schools, chapter 11, for a full discussion of the case.

<sup>24</sup> Judith A. Boughter, Betraying the Omaha Nation, 1790-1916 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 83-86.

<sup>25</sup> Hyman Lubman, "A History of the Nebraska Winnebago Indians With Special Emphasis on Education" (Masters thesis, University of Nebraska at Omaha, 1962), 59, 65, 73-75, 77-78, 81-83.

<sup>26</sup> Father F.J. Helzknecht, O.S.F., "History of the Winnebago Indians," unpublished manuscript, ASBS.

<sup>27</sup> Pastor S.N.D. Martin to Bishop John Lowrie, Secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church of New York City, September 26, 1886, American Indian Correspondence: The Presbyterian Historical Society Collection of Missionary Letters, 1833-1893, [AIC], reel 26, 18.

<sup>28</sup> Martin to Lowrie, April 21, 1887, AIC, reel 26, 62.

<sup>29</sup> Martin to Lowrie, March 13, 1888, AIC, reel 26, 179.

<sup>30</sup> Commissioner of Indian Affairs John D.C. Atkins to Bishop Lowrie, October 1, 1887, AIC, reel 26, 114.

<sup>31</sup> Lawrence M. Hensel, MD., to the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church, April 8, 1888, AIC, reel 26, 138. See also, M.C. Wade to Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church, April 17, 1888, Ibid., reel 26, 139.

<sup>32</sup> "Memorials of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions and Others Protesting Against the Confirmation of Thomas J. Morgan and Daniel Dorchester and Their Reply to the Same Together with Sundry Documents and Exhibits," United States Executive Documents and Reports, 1817-1969, 51<sup>st</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> session, microfiche card 3.

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- <sup>33</sup> William T. Findley to Bishop Lowrie, November 8, 1888, AIC, reel 26, 189.
- <sup>34</sup> Harry Keefe to Charles Lusk, Secretary of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, July 16, 1908, Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions Archives, [ABCIM], Alumni Library, Special Collections, Marquette University Library, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, roll 43.
- <sup>35</sup> Father Cornelius Delhove to Drexel, January 30, 1893, ASBS; Father Joseph Stephan, May 20, 1893, ABCIM, roll 24, 682-684.
- <sup>36</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>37</sup> Richard Scannell, Bishop of Omaha, to Drexel, May 11, 1892, ASBS.
- <sup>38</sup> Stephan to Drexel, March 20, 1894, ASBS.
- <sup>39</sup> Boughter, Betraying the Omaha Nation, 178, 181-183.
- <sup>40</sup> Author's analysis, Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Twentieth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1910, Vol. 3, Population. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1913), 1-37.
- <sup>41</sup> Report of Superintendent Albert Kneale, July 1, 1910, in Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1910 [ARCIA], 6-7, 18.
- <sup>42</sup> Carl Meeche, letter to the editor, The Winnebago Chieftain, December 13, 1912.
- <sup>43</sup> Matthew J. Krezenski, "Repercussions of the Dawes Act: Leasing, Citizenship and Jurisdiction on the Omaha and Winnebago Reservations, 1887-1896" (Masters thesis, University of Nebraska at Omaha, 2001).
- <sup>44</sup> Boughter, Betraying the Omaha Nation, 147, 163-165.
- <sup>45</sup> See chapter 4.
- <sup>46</sup> A.O Wright, "Special Report to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs: Conditions Among the Winnebagoes," November 16, 1904, 1, Winnebago Agency Subject Files [WASF], legal, 1900-1929, National Archives and Records Administration – Kansas City, Missouri [NARA-KC], A-104.
- <sup>47</sup> Thomas L. Sloan, United States Court Commissioner to William A. Jones, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, July 21, 1904, WASF, legal, 1900-1929, NARA-KC, A-105; Sloan to Jones, October 20, 1904, Ibid.
- <sup>48</sup> Father John Griese to Archbishop Joseph Rummel, June 7, 1929, Archives of the Archdiocese of Omaha [AAO], Omaha, Nebraska, Box 2275.
- <sup>49</sup> Griese to Ketcham, July 26, 1909, ABCIM, reel 46; "The Church News," The Winnebago Chieftain, August 5, 1910, 1:8; Griese to Drexel, November 31, 1930, ASBS.
- <sup>50</sup> Ketcham to Drexel, February 11, 1910, ASBS.

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<sup>51</sup> Ketcham to Drexel, August 11, 1911, ASBS.

<sup>52</sup> Harry L. Keefe to the Catholic Extension Society of Chicago, Illinois, April (date illegible), 1908, ABCIM, roll 43; Keefe to Scannell, June 1, 1908, AAO, Box 2275.

<sup>53</sup> Keefe to Ketcham, May 31, 1909, ASBS; Confidential interviews by the author, St. Augustine's Church, Winnebago, Nebraska, February 15, 2000; See also, William Ketcham, "Annual Report of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, 1908" 73, Native American Reference Collection, II, roll 11.

<sup>54</sup> See chapter 5.

<sup>55</sup> Griese to Monsignor Augustine Coloneri, Chancellor of the Archdiocese of Omaha, January 14, 1914, AAO, Box 2275; Griese to Jeremiah Harty, Archbishop of Omaha, June 3, 1923, AAO, Box 2275; Griese to Francis Beckman, Bishop of Omaha, July 7, 1927, AAO, Box 2275; Griese to Monsignor Nicholas Wegner, Chancellor of the Archdiocese of Omaha, August 5, 1931, AAO, Box 2275.

<sup>56</sup> Edward F. Leary, attorney for the Archdiocese of Omaha, to Joseph F. Rummel, Archbishop of Omaha, September 3, 1930, AAO, Box 2275.

<sup>57</sup> "Financial Report for St. Augustine's Indian Mission – 1928," AAO, Box 2275.

<sup>58</sup> Rummel to Griese, (date obscured), 1929, AAO, Box 2275.

<sup>59</sup> Mother Mary Pauline, Superior at St. Augustine's to Archbishop Rummel, April 14, 1929.

<sup>60</sup> W.H. Ryan, Cashier, Security Bank of Homer, Nebraska, to Archbishop Rummel, April 12, 1929, AAO, Box 2275.

<sup>61</sup> Leary to Rummel, September 3, 1930, AAO Box 2275.

<sup>62</sup> Rummel to Griese, October 4, 1930, AAO, Box 2275.

<sup>63</sup> Griese to Rummel, May 29, 1929, and Griese to Rummel, June 7, 1929, AAO, Box 2275.

<sup>64</sup> Griese to Drexel, November 31, 1930, ASBS.

<sup>65</sup> Griese to Rummel, May 29, 1929, and Griese to Rummel, June 7, 1929, AAO, Box 2275.

<sup>66</sup> Confidential interviews by the author, St. Augustine's Church, Winnebago, Nebraska, February 15, 2000.

<sup>67</sup> Robert W. Galler, Jr., "A Triad of Alliances: The Roots of Holy Rosary Indian Mission," South Dakota History 28 (Fall 1998): 144-145, 160.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 145.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 150-151.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 160.

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<sup>71</sup> The author searched the archives of the Archdiocese of Omaha, the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions and the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament. St. Augustine's Indian Mission appears never to have received a government contract for the education of Indian students.

<sup>72</sup> Vine Deloria, Jr., Custer Died for Your Sins, 102-105.

<sup>73</sup> Carol J. Berg, "Agents of Cultural Change: The Benedictines at White Earth," Minnesota History 48 (Winter 1982): 159-161.

<sup>74</sup> Report of Agent Jesse F. Warner, Report of the Omaha and Winnebago Agency, in ARCIA, 1888, 169.

<sup>75</sup> Report of Superintendent Albert Kneale, 1911, in ARCIA - 1911, 1.

<sup>76</sup> "Annual Report for St. Augustine's Indian Mission, 1910," AAO, Box 2275.

<sup>77</sup> "Annual Report for St. Augustine's Indian Mission, 1930," AAO, Box 2275.

<sup>78</sup> "Annual Report for Winnebago and Walthill, 1908," AAO, Box 2275.

<sup>79</sup> "Annual Report for St. Augustine Indian Mission, 1913," AAO, Box 2275.

<sup>80</sup> "Annual Report for St. Augustine Indian Mission, 1930," AAO, Box 2275.

<sup>81</sup> "Annual Report for St. Augustine's Indian Mission, 1913," AAO, Box 2275.

<sup>82</sup> "Annual Report for St. Augustine's Indian Mission, 1929," AAO, Box 2275.

<sup>83</sup> Griese to Ketcham, September 13, 1908, ABCIM, roll 43; Griese to Ketcham, January 19, 1911, ABCIM, roll 56: 606-607.

<sup>84</sup> Griese to Ketcham, February 28, 1920, ABCIM, roll 97: 1087.

<sup>85</sup> Confidential interviews by the author, St. Augustine's Church, Winnebago, Nebraska, February 15, 2000.

<sup>86</sup> Sister Philip Neri, S.B.S., The Indian Sentinel V (Fall 1925), 257-258, ASBS.

<sup>87</sup> "Annals of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament – Winnebago," unpublished, edited transcription of letters from the various convents to the motherhouse, ASBS, 72.

<sup>88</sup> James T. Carroll, Seeds of Faith: Catholic Indian Boarding Schools (New York: Garland Publishing Co., 2000), 172.

<sup>89</sup> Berg, "Agents of Cultural Change," 163, 167-168.

<sup>90</sup> Griese to Scannell, January 9, 1908, AAO, SG 10, Box 52, Folder 89.

<sup>91</sup> Confidential interviews by the author, St. Augustine's Church, Winnebago, Nebraska, February 15, 2000.

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<sup>92</sup> Author's analysis, Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Twentieth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1910, Vol. 3, Population. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1913), sheet 30.

<sup>93</sup> Author's analysis of correspondence found in the Archives of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, Archives of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, and the Archives of the Archdiocese of Omaha.

<sup>94</sup> Confidential interviews by the author, St. Augustine's Church, Winnebago, Nebraska, February 15, 2000.

<sup>95</sup> Author's interview with Father Richard Whiteing, St. Patrick's Church, Jackson, Nebraska, August 2, 2004.

<sup>96</sup> Richard White, The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), inclusive.

<sup>97</sup> Carroll, Seeds of Faith, xvii-xix.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 172

<sup>99</sup> Drexel to sisters at St. Elizabeth's Convent, undated, but October, 1909, "Writings of Mother Katharine Drexel," #2115, unpublished transcription of selected correspondence of Mother Katharine Drexel, ASBS.

<sup>100</sup> Author's analysis of sisters' correspondence, ASBS.

<sup>101</sup> "Annals," I, 25-27, ASBS.

<sup>102</sup> Author's analysis of sisters' correspondence, ASBS; "Christmas at the Catholic School," The Winnebago Chieftain, December 31, 1909, 4:5-6.

<sup>103</sup> The Indian Sentinel, V (Fall 1925) 257-258, ASBS.

<sup>104</sup> Griese to Ketcham, September 13, 1908, ABCIM, roll 43.

<sup>105</sup> "Jeff Pope is Named St. Augustine Principal," The Trumpet Call, September 2003, 2.

<sup>106</sup> Interview with Father Richard Whiteing by the author, St. Patrick's Church, Jackson, Nebraska, August 2, 2004.

<sup>107</sup> Interview with David Smith, Winnebago Tribal Historian and Cultural Preservation Officer, Little Priest Indian College, Winnebago, Nebraska, August 2, 2004.

<sup>108</sup> Father Loras Otting, Archivist of the Archdiocese of Dubuque, Dubuque, Iowa, to the author, September 14, 2004.

<sup>109</sup> "Baptisms, Marriages and Deaths Book, St. Mary's Catholic Church, Hubbard, Nebraska, 1886-1906;" "Baptisms, Marriages and Deaths Book, St. Patrick's Catholic Church, Jackson, Nebraska, 1887-1906." Both records are located at St. Patrick's Catholic Church, Jackson, Nebraska.

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<sup>110</sup> "Notes about Father Giese, first parish priest of St. Augustine's, written by his housekeeper, Mrs. Julia DeCora Lucart," unpublished transcription, ASBS.

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## Appendix

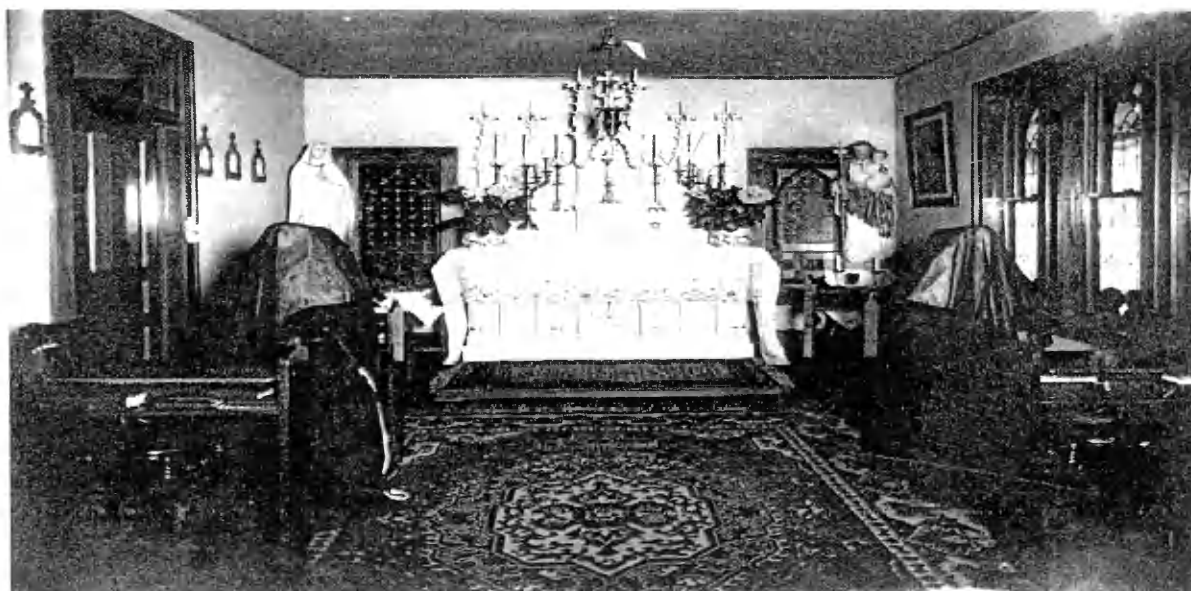
Photographs of St. Augustine's Indian Mission, Winnebago, Nebraska from the collections of the Archives of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, Special Collections, Alumni Library, Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

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Interior of St. Augustine's Church



Convent chapel





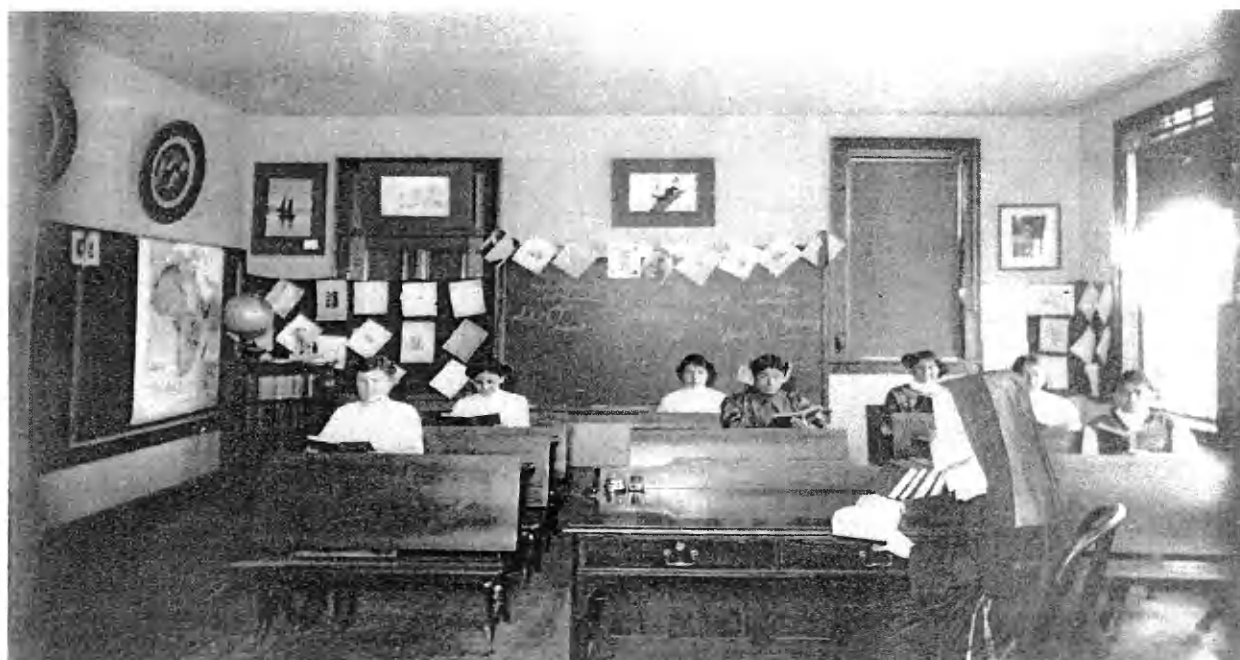
Combination first and second grade classroom



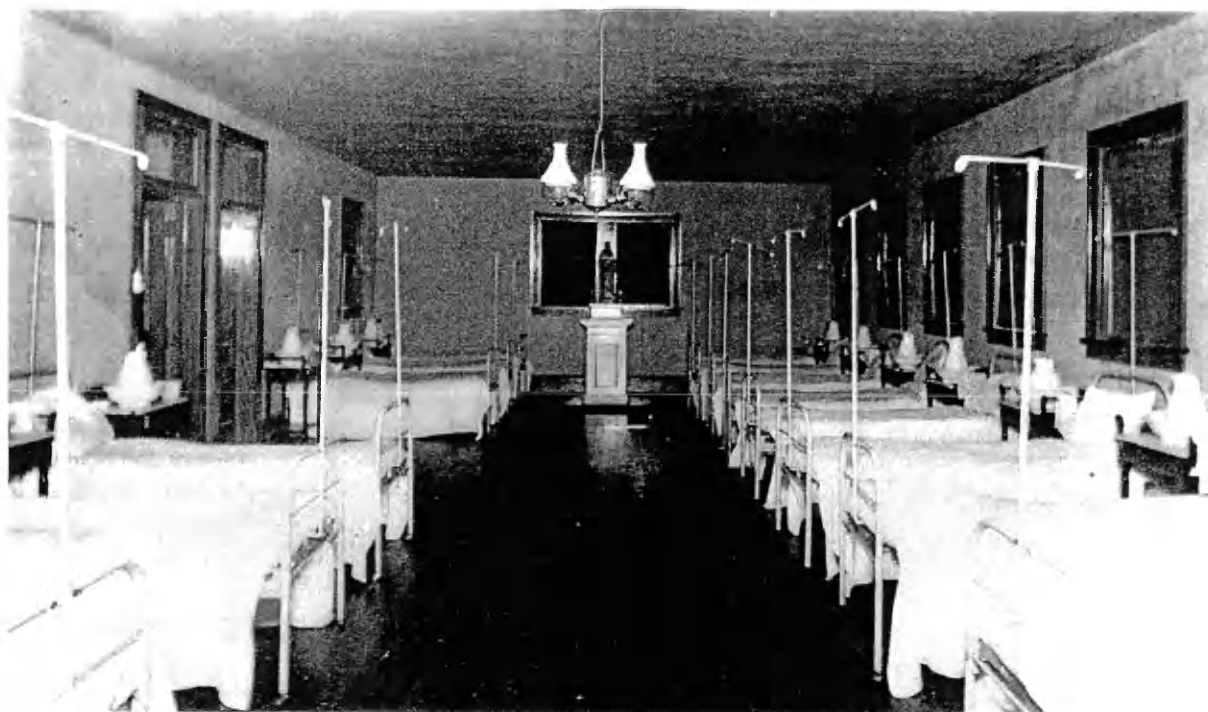
Combination third and fourth grade classroom



Combination fifth and sixth grade classroom



Combination seventh and eighth grade classroom



Girls' dormitory



Dining room



Ironing room



Sewing room



Children of Mary sodality, 1912



First Communion class, 1912





Confirmation class, 1912



Japanese drill team, 1911



Tambourine drill team, 1912



Rose drill team, 1911



Students dressed in “traditional” clothing, possibly for the play  
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St. Augustine students on a mission fundraising tour with Father  
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