

## CHAPTER V

### ST REGIS SEMINARY

#### § I AN EDUCATIONAL VENTURE

The establishment of an Indian school at Florissant was to be the first step in the scheme of missionary enterprise which Bishop Du Bourg devised for his Jesuit recruits "Pending the ordination of our Jesuit novices and their going forth as apostles," he wrote from Georgetown to his brother Lous, March 17, 1823, two days before the signing of the Concordat, "I propose to receive into the Seminary a half dozen Indian children from different tribes, so as to begin to familiarize my young missionaries with their manners and languages and in turn to prepare the children to become guides, interpreters and helpers to the missionaries when the time comes to send the latter forth to the scattered tribes" <sup>1</sup> "The Father of our Indian Seminary" is the title which Van Quickenborne bestows on the energetic prelate, who after apparently conceiving the idea of the institution had also secured for it a measure of government support <sup>2</sup> The school that was thus to owe its origin to the eager zeal of the Bishop of Louisiana appears to have been the second of its kind conducted under Catholic auspices in the United States.<sup>3</sup>

Various attempts to open Catholic Indian schools in the Mississippi country in the early decades of the nineteenth century are on record. Father Urban Guillet, superior of the Trappist community settled at Florissant in 1809-1810, moved his establishment thence to the neighborhood of Cahokia in Illinois, where he hoped to find the boys he needed for a projected Indian school. Father Donatien Olivier, active for more than half a century in the mission stations along the Mississippi, obtained from the chief of the Kaskaskia, at that time still inhabiting their old lands in southwestern Illinois, a promise of some Indian youths for the Trappist school, but in the event that institution was

<sup>1</sup> *Ann Prop* (Louvain ed., 1825), I 465 This chapter appeared originally in *CHR*, 4 452 *et seq*

<sup>2</sup> *Ann Prop*, 4 583

<sup>3</sup> The earliest known Indian school under Catholic auspices in the United States seems to have been the one opened by Father Richard in 1808 on a site within the present city limits of Detroit. Cf. Sister Mary Rosalita, "The Spring Hill Indian School Correspondence," *Michigan History Magazine*, 14 94 *et seq*.

conducted as a school for white boys with only a few Indian pupils in attendance.<sup>4</sup> Some years later the Lazarists planned an Indian school in connection with their seminary at the Barrens in Perry County, Missouri. "The Jesuits have or will soon have a number of Indian children in their house," Father Odin wrote from the Barrens in August, 1823, "and in a few days our superior is going to meet the Indian agent to obtain some from him for our Seminary. We shall begin to study their language and instruct them so as to make catechists out of them or even priests."<sup>5</sup> It does not appear that the Lazarist plan for the education of Indian youths was ever realized, at least in the way of a regularly organized school. In the summer of 1824, a year later than the date of Odin's letter, Father Charles Nerinckx, the pioneer missionary of Kentucky, died at Ste Genevieve on his way from St. Louis to the Loretto convent of Bethlehem situated at the Barrens. He had just arranged with General Clark in St. Louis for the reception at the convent of a number of Indian girls, for whose education the government had engaged to pay.<sup>6</sup> The unexpected death of the missionary frustrated the plan and the Indian girls were not sent. A combination of circumstances made it possible for Father Van Quickenborne, carrying out Bishop Du Bourg's plan, to take up with more promise of success the experiment of Catholic Indian education in the United States.

Next to the problem of providing for the material wants of his community, the problem of setting on foot the Indian school was the one that most engaged Van Quickenborne's attention during his first years at St. Ferdinand's. Within ten days of his arrival in the West he had submitted a scheme of Indian education to General William Clark, associate of Meriwether Lewis in their memorable journey to the mouth of the Columbia and now superintendent of Indian affairs at St. Louis. "I went to visit Governor Clark in St. Louis. He gave me very special encouragement. He approves the plan cordially and will write to Government to have it on 'a larger scale.' He gave me directions that will prove very useful and thinks that in fall we shall have six Indian children. Apparently he is pleased to help us along and is interested in the success of our enterprise."<sup>7</sup>

Some two months later Van Quickenborne wrote to Father John McElroy of Frederick, Maryland. "We have not as yet any Indian

<sup>4</sup> *Ann Prop*, 1, 390, 392. *American State Papers, Public Lands*, 2, 106.

<sup>5</sup> *Ann Prop*, 1 (no. 5), 70.

<sup>6</sup> Maes, *The Life of Rev. Charles Nerinckx*, p. 528. "Mr. Nerinckx wished to settle down near us and start an Indian college." Van Assche à De Nef, Florissant, September 1, 1825 (A).

<sup>7</sup> Van Quickenborne à Du Bourg, *Jour de la fête du Sacré Coeur* [1823]. Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans.

children I have seen several Indian chiefs. They have all promised to give their children, but it is an object with which they hardly ever part." In the summer of 1823 a deputation of Indians passed through St. Louis on their way to Washington where they were to negotiate for the formation of a confederacy, under government auspices, of six Indian tribes who had planned to exchange their lands east of the Mississippi for reservations in the Indian Territory. At the head of the deputation was Colonel Lewis, a Shawnee chief and leading promoter of the proposed confederacy. On advice from Clark, Van Quickenborne visited Colonel Lewis in St. Louis and laid before him his plans for an Indian school. The chief expressed approval of them and promised to send three of his grandchildren to Florissant in the following spring. Clark urged upon Van Quickenborne the opening of the school at as early a date as possible. The latter reported all these circumstances to Father Charles Neale, requesting him as also Father Benedict Fenwick to call upon Lewis when the latter should have arrived in Washington.<sup>8</sup>

A letter from Benedict Fenwick to the Florissant superior, written in September, 1823, in the name of the newly appointed superior of the Maryland Mission, Francis Neale, deals among other matters with the question of the Indian school.

On the subject of the education of the young Indians of whom you speak, the Superior requires that you act with the utmost prudence and circumspection in that affair and that you keep yourself altogether within the Concordat. He wishes you to undertake no more than what is specified therein and what the Society has engaged itself to perform. He has no wish to enlarge the sphere of your operations until adequate means be procured either from Government favoring such a design or from the quarters of which he will give you due notice.

The Superior would have you cultivate in a particular manner the good esteem of the Governor and United States Agents as well civil as military, and whenever they speak to you of the education of the Indian youth to assure them of your willingness to undertake the same, but at the same time to let them know that such a thing will be quite impracticable without the aid of Government. If it should, however, regularly pay you the stipend agreed upon and moreover hold out greater prospects provided you will undertake the education of a larger number of young Indians, it rests with you to weigh the matter and immediately communicate with the Superior and expect his advice on the same. In the meantime let the engagement as far as it goes which the Society has entered into be fully and completely executed. No one can blame you for not doing what the Society has never

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<sup>8</sup> Van Quickenborne to McElroy, Florissant, September 21, 1823 (B). Van Quickenborne to Charles Neale, Florissant, September 23, 1823 (B).

engaged to do You have, I presume, a copy of that contract Let that be your Pole-star<sup>9</sup>

In accordance with a federal regulation the subsidy which the government had promised to the Indian school at Florissant was not to be paid until the school should have been in actual operation Van Quickenborne wrote on the subject to Father Francis Neale in December, 1823

Regarding the education of the Indians, the Bishop has stirred a great sensation in St. Louis about this affair and said everywhere that Government had allowed \$800 as soon as we should have six of them General Clark told me that the Bishop had assured him Government had made such allowance but that, although he was the one who paid out such pensions, he was not authorized to pay anything to us Before I received your Reverence's letter I expressed to Gen or Gov Clark (he is ordinarily called Gen ) my great desire to have Indian youths, made known to him our circumstances and offered to take some (under these circumstances) if he thought proper to do so and he were sure the Government would pay for them He gave me to understand that it was absolutely necessary that we should begin with some before he could recommend our establishment, and that government would help us, if they thought proper, only after we had begun This was a condition *sine qua non* He (has) the week before last encouraged me to take next Spring two Indian boys of about nine years, which he had offered me five or six weeks ago To take any without being paid for it is a thing which forbids itself and except we have a number of Fathers that are prepared to go out with them after having given them their education the care of such boys would not be productive of much, perhaps of any good This is the opinion of General Clark Before I can do more I must hear what has been done at Washington by Col. Lewis<sup>10</sup>

Nothing having come of Colonel Lewis's projected Indian confederacy, Van Quickenborne petitioned his superior in a letter dated New Year's day, 1824, for authority to open the Indian school in the following spring, adding that Clark was urging that a start be made<sup>11</sup> At length, in May, 1824, the father was summoned to St. Louis by the

<sup>9</sup> Benedict Fenwick to Van Quickenborne, September 10, 1823 (A) The Concordat makes no mention of an Indian school

<sup>10</sup> Van Quickenborne to Francis Neale, Florissant, December 12, 1823 (B) Bishop Du Bourg appears to have stipulated with the government for the education of only six boys He wrote July 2, 1824, to Van Quickenborne "You do not tell me whether General Clark has paid the \$800 at last I entered into contract for only six Indian boys I am going to write to the Secretary of War to have you paid as soon as you shall have the six" No reference to such contract has been met with in the correspondence between the Bishop and Secretary Calhoun

<sup>11</sup> Van Quickenborne to Dzierzynski, Florissant, January 1, 1824 (B) Father Francis Dzierzynski was at this period superior of the Jesuit Mission of Maryland

General, who informed him that some Iowa Indians had just made an offer of boys and that he might have them if he wished. Van Quickenborne agreed to take them and word to this effect being sent at once to the Iowa chiefs, who were then visiting the city, they agreed to send four or six boys of their tribe to Florissant. Meanwhile two Sauk lads, one eight and the other six years of age, had been received by the superior and with these as the first students the Indian Seminary was formally opened on May 11, 1824, the feast day of the Jesuit saint, Francis de Hieronymo.

The next pupils to be entered at the Seminary were the Iowa youths who had been promised to Van Quickenborne at St. Louis. Under the protection of a party of chiefs they started, five in number, from their homes on the left bank of the Missouri River in what is now the northwest extremity of Missouri. The Sauk for some unknown reason dispatched a deputation from their tribe to dissuade the Iowa chiefs from sending their sons to the new institution. But the Iowa chiefs were not to be turned from their purpose. After some seventy miles of travel, two of the boys became ill and had to return to the Iowa camp while the three others with their parents continued on the way. On June 11, 1824, the candidates, in company with their parents, an interpreter, and Gabriel Vasquez, United States agent for the Iowa, appeared at the Seminary. The Indian youths did not submit without a protest to what must have seemed to them, accustomed as they were to the freedom of the forest, as nothing short of imprisonment. As their parents prepared to depart, they began to wail in true Indian fashion, whereupon one of the scholastics took up a flute and started to play. The music had the effect of quieting the lads and making them resigned, as far as outward indications went, to their new environment. But Vasquez, the agent, warned Van Quickenborne that a sharp eye would have to be kept on the boys, as flight was an easy trick for them. Accordingly, Mr. Smedts, the prefect, rose at intervals during the first night of the Iowa's stay at the Seminary to see that his young charges were all within bounds, while another scholastic was also assigned to sentry duty. But somehow or other the watchers were outwitted. About one o'clock in the morning the Iowa made a clever escape. Their flight was soon detected and immediately a party of two were on the track of the fugitives. These were nimbler runners, for they were five miles from the Seminary when their pursuers came up to them. They made no resistance to capture and returned, apparently quite content, though determined no doubt to repeat the adventure when opportunity offered, as Van Quickenborne intimates in his account

of the incident, which he concludes with the comment, "*et erit saepe talis repetitio*" ("this thing will happen many a time again")<sup>12</sup>

Bishop Rosati, the newly consecrated Coadjutor of New Orleans, took a keen interest in the plans and prospects of the Jesuit group settled at Florissant. Only a few weeks after the opening of the Indian school he appealed to the Jesuit General to send help from abroad and so enable Father Van Quickenborne to carry on the institution successfully and even open a college in St. Louis. Touching the Indian school he wrote

Providence wishes no doubt to make use of the Society of Jesus to revive the well-nigh vanished work of the Indian Missions in those very parts of North America where the sons of St. Ignatius began them with the zeal which has always been the characteristic of his worthy sons and with results corresponding to their apostolic labors. Their memory is still in benediction in various places of this very extensive diocese not only among civilized folk who profess the Catholic religion, but also among the natives who lead a wandering life in the woods. A land already bedewed with the sweat of the evangelical laborers of the Society, over which your Very Reverend Paternity presides, might well appear to have some manner of right to call for a fresh supply of laborers. By a truly admirable disposition of Providence, which seems to look upon this land with eyes of mercy, we find a little colony of Jesuits established for the past year here in this diocese in the parish of St. Ferdinand. I have had the pleasure of coming to know them while making the rounds of that locality after my consecration. Despite the small number of subjects, the two priests who are there work with admirable ardor and the Lord pours out upon them his heavenly benedictions. The principal object of this establishment would be the conversion of the Indians. The Government of the United States offers us its protection and even pecuniary assistance. General Clark, with whom I have spoken a good deal on this subject, has promised to cooperate in the designs of Government to the full extent of his power, a thing which will help us considerably, since he is the General Agent of the United States in anything which concerns the Indians and exercises a great influence over them. He would like to establish a house of education at St. Ferdinand so as to enter therein six youths from each of the very numerous tribes who inhabit these parts. The missionaries at the same time that they teach the Indians to read and write would have the advantage of learning their language and would subsequently go out with them to evangelize the region to which they belong. Father Van Q[uickenborne] has already begun to receive a few pupils and expects more, but what paralyzes in some way this very important work is the scarcity of subjects [i.e. Jesuits]<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Van Quickenborne ad Dzierzynski, June 12, 1824 (B)

<sup>13</sup> Rosati à Fortis, June 24, 1824 (AA). In Italian. Cf. also Rosati's Diary, May 21, 1824. "Celebrated Mass in St. Ferdinand's Church. After taking breakfast with Mr. Mullanphy we returned to St. Louis before noon. Then I visited

## § 2 CORRESPONDENCE WITH GOVERNMENT

The Indian school, which Father Van Quickenborne was to designate in his reports to Washington as St Regis Seminary, was now a reality, so that he felt justified in applying to the Indian Office for the financial aid it had pledged through Bishop Du Bourg. On November 21, 1824, he forwarded two reports on the condition of the school, one addressed to General Clark and the other to Secretary of War Calhoun. He wrote to Clark

The Seminary went into actual operation the eleventh of May ultimo with two boys of the Sac [Sauk] nation. On the eleventh of June three more were received of the Hyaway [Iowa] nation, thus since that time I have had five boys. The buildings are commodious and can contain from forty to sixty students. They are nearly complete and fifty-four ft long by seventeen wide one way and thirty-four feet by seventeen feet the other way, three stories high, the lowest of stone, the two others of logs, brick chimneys and galleries all around. They have cost \$1500 and when completed will cost \$2000.

Van Quickenborne's report to Secretary Calhoun said in part

The Seminary is built on a spot of land remarkable for its healthiness and which on account of its being somewhat distant from the Indian tribes and its being sufficiently removed from town is possessed of many advantages. I have persons belonging to the Seminary well calculated to teach the boys the mechanical arts such as are suitable for their condition, as a carpenter, a blacksmith, etc., whose names I do not place on the report, because the boys are not thought fit as yet to begin to learn a trade. I have the comfort to be able to give my entire approbation to their correct comportment and from the sentiments they utter I have strong hopes that they will become virtuous and industrious citizens warmly attached to the Government that has over them such beneficent designs. I have been prepared these six months past to receive a considerable number more than what I have at present. The number of boys would have amounted to a few more had not some on account of sickness returned to their village, after having done a part of the way.

The report concludes by asking for the payment of the eight hundred dollars promised to Bishop Du Bourg "in your letter of March 21, 1822 [1823]"<sup>14</sup>

General Clark, gave him the letters I had received from Bishop Du Bourg and talked over many things with him regarding the mission among the natives. Having been received by him with the utmost courtesy, I am hoping the missionaries will not be without favor and aid from this man, whose influence with the natives is very great." Kenrick Seminary Archives

<sup>14</sup> (H) At Van Quickenborne's request, General Clark certified to the accuracy of the superior's report, which according to usage he transmitted to Washington

Early in January, 1825, Van Quickenborne was still waiting for a response to his petition. "It is now two months," he informed Bishop Rosati, "since I wrote to the Secretary of War and since General Clark sent him the certificate asked for. I am waiting every day for a favorable answer and I think it better to defer writing to Mr. Richard for a few days more. I fear there is something against us in St. Louis" <sup>15</sup>

Meanwhile a bureau of Indian Affairs had been established in Washington in 1824 as an appanage of the War Department with Thomas Lorraine McKenney as its first commissioner. McKenney's administration of Indian affairs was able and honest. He had long been interested in the native tribes of the country and it was chiefly due to agitation of his, as he declares in his *Memours*, that Congress was led to make an annual appropriation of ten thousand dollars for the civilization of the Indians. This was the origin of the so-called Civilization Fund, out of which the appropriation for St. Regis Seminary was to come. McKenney held the post of Indian commissioner until he was removed in 1830 by President Jackson, being the first government official, so it has been said, to fall a victim to the spoils-system inaugurated by that strenuous executive <sup>16</sup> It was from McKenney that Father Van Quickenborne received an answer in January, 1825, to the letter he had addressed to Calhoun in November of the preceding year

Your letter to the Secretary of War of the 21st Nov last in the form of a report of the condition of the Indian Seminary at Florissant has been received. I am directed by the Secretary to state that the number of children in the Seminary being only five, he cannot advance the sum of \$800 as promised in his letter to Bishop Du Bourg of 21st March, 1822 [1823], that letter having stipulated to pay \$800 on the following conditions: 1st after the establishment should be in operation and 2nd with a suitable number of Indian youths. The Secretary however directs that the most that has ever been allowed for the purpose be allowed to you, which is one hundred dollars for each youth, which will be increased at that rate 'till you shall have eight, when the increase of appropriation will have reached its limits. A remittance of five hundred dollars has been made to Genl Clark to be paid to you in conformity with the above decision, and all future remittances, on account of the allowance made to the school of which you have charge,

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"This is to certify that the Catholic Missionary Society at Florissant in the State of Missouri have established a school at that place for the education of Indian children and deserve the cooperation of the Government. The progress of the boys has been very rapid and satisfactory. Wm Clark"

<sup>15</sup> Van Quickenborne à Rosati, Florissant, January, 1825 (C). The Mr Richard mentioned in Van Quickenborne's letter was the Rev Gabriel Richard of Detroit, at this period delegate to Congress from the Territory of Michigan. Cf *supra*, note 3

<sup>16</sup> McKenney, *Memours Official and Personal* (New York, 1846), p. 35



will be made through Gen Clark, unless you should wish them to be made differently.<sup>17</sup>

The government had thus discharged in all essential respects the obligations it had assumed towards the Indian school in the negotiations between Bishop Du Bourg and Secretary of War Calhoun. The fears entertained both by Van Quickenborne and Du Bourg that the government was not disposed to stand by its engagement were apparently groundless, being due to a misconception of the terms under which the federal authorities were then lending financial support to Indian schools. The apprehensive temperament of the Bishop comes to the surface in a letter addressed by him to Van Quickenborne in January, 1825, while the expected appropriation seemed to be hanging in the balance.

I am astonished at what you told me of the Government's breach of promise. Why do you not protest at Washington through one of your Fathers? I wrote lately to Col Benton, Senator of Missouri, requesting him to see the Secretary of War and remind him of his obligations. It would be well for you to forward to Father Dzierozynski copies of the Secretary's letters which I sent you, with the request that he show them to the Secretary, together with the certificate from the Governor of your state to the effect that you have complied with the conditions of the contract. I cannot believe that the Government is aware of the violation of its pledge. The matter should be attended to as soon as possible. If, which is an impossibility, the Government should turn a deaf ear to your demands, the whole affair should be brought to the notice of the public. Such a breach of faith would compromise any government. I will myself write to Mr Calhoun in the plainest terms.<sup>18</sup>

Bishop Du Bourg's letter to Calhoun ran as follows

Nve [Nouvelle] Orleans, Feb<sup>y</sup> 12<sup>th</sup> 1825

To the Hon<sup>ble</sup>

John Calhoun

Secretary of War.

Honoured Sir,

Permit me to trouble you on the subject of the Indian Seminary, which I was induced to establish at Florissant near the junction of the Missouri and Mississippi rivers, by the written engagement on the part of Government to contribute for its maintenance the sum of eight hundred Dollars per annum, beginning from the day of its installation.

On the face of this sacred obligation, I encouraged eight or ten valuable missionaries to depart from the District of Columbia for the banks of Mis-

<sup>17</sup> McKenney to Van Quickenborne, Washington, January 28, 1835 (A)

<sup>18</sup> Du Bourg à Van Quickenborne, January 18, 1825 (A)

souri, and to encounter, besides the expence incident on such an immense journey, the incredible fatigue of wading, knee and often waist deep thro' an inundated country for the space of three hundred miles, without any help from Government I settled them upon a plantation which cost me four thousand Dollars, the title of which I surrendered to them for the benefit of the establishment, independently of the stock and farm utensils with which I abundantly furnished it They erected a building which cost them 7 or 800\$ and would require 500\$ more to complete it They began receiving Indian boys, whose docility promises to them the most satisfactory success, and yet after better than two years since their arrival in Missouri, they have not yet been able to obtain a single Dollar from Government, tho' letters to that effect were said to have been sent to the Superintendant of Indian Affairs, in consequence of which failure the Missionaries are exposed to the danger of leaving the Establishment in a state of bankruptcy, and myself of forfeiting, to no purpose, a valuable property which may be sold to pay this debt

I have no doubt, Sir, that the fault of this breach of contract lies somewhere else than in yourself I thought it therefore highly proper and conversant to your own idea of justice to call on you for redress Even in the supposition that this reclamation should reach your hand only after your promotion to a higher office, I trust that the Hon<sup>ble</sup> J Calhoun, Vice Presid of the U S will consider it a duty to redeem a solemn pledge given, with the sanction of the President, by the Hon<sup>ble</sup> J Calhoun, Secretary of War And in that firm expectation I beg leave to renew the assurance of the high esteem and of the respectful regard with which

I have the honor to be

Hon<sup>d</sup> Sir,

Your most humble servant,

L Wm DuBourg, R C

Bishop of New Orleans<sup>19</sup>

I solicit the favor of an  
answer directed to New Orleans,  
my actual residence

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<sup>19</sup> Du Bourg to Calhoun, February 12, 1825 (H) As appears from McKenney's letter of January 28, 1825, the first remittance for Van Quickenborne's Indian school had already been forwarded before Du Bourg's letter of protest was written The appeal made by the Bishop to Senator Benton of Missouri elicited the following note addressed by the senator to the secretary of war "Mr Benton is requested by the Right Reverend William Du Bourg, Bishop of Louisiana, to call the attention of the Sec of War to the Indian Seminary at Florissant, Mo He says that, upon an application to the Hon Sec the sum of \$800 in annum, out of the sum originally appropriated for the civilization of the Indians, was promised to that object, that the \$800 first accruing (which was for the last year) had not been paid at the date of his letter, (9th December last) and Mr Benton begs leave to call the attention of the Secretary to the circumstance Senate Chamber, Feb 23 [?] 1825" (H)

The five hundred dollars which Calhoun had directed to be paid to Van Quickenborne at St Louis was the first money appropriated by the United States government to a Catholic Indian school west of the Mississippi. As the number of boys at St Regis had increased beyond eight, the appropriation in its favor for the years 1825 and 1826 was eight hundred dollars. In 1827, however, the appropriation was cut down to four hundred dollars, extra demands on the funds of the Indian Office, so it was explained, making a larger allowance impossible, and it remained at this figure until 1830 when the payments ceased altogether.<sup>20</sup> The total amount of money paid by the government to the Florissant school during its brief career of six or seven years was approximately thirty-one hundred dollars. The cost of maintenance had been a little in excess of ten thousand dollars<sup>21</sup>

Now that Father Van Quickenborne had obtained from government the proposed subsidy for his educational venture, he was anxious to obtain aid from the same quarter towards defraying the expenses of the school-house he had erected on the seminary grounds. The cost of this building, as noted in his report to General Clark of November 21, 1824, would be about fifteen hundred or two thousand dollars when completed. Van Quickenborne's application for aid in this connection was refused on the grounds set forth in a communication from Col. McKenney.

Your letter of the 23 ult to the Secretary of War, requesting to have the plan of the buildings at Florissant approved and payment to be made according to the regulations of the 20th Feb 1820 have been received. I have the honor by direction of the Secretary to state, in reply, that the allowance from the Civilization fund, towards the erection of buildings for Indian schools is considered applicable (as stated in the regulations of the 30th Sept 1819, of which those of the 20th Feb 1820 are additional) to such establishments only as may be affixed within the limits of those Indian nations that border our settlements. The buildings at Florissant not being

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<sup>20</sup> "You tell me that the number of your Indian boys is increasing. If this be so, the government allowance ought to increase in proportion up to \$800. Do not fail to protest in this matter." Du Bourg à Van Quickenborne, May 25, 1825 (A). McKenney to Van Quickenborne, Washington, February 9, 1827 (A). "Expenses of school for past year [1828], \$1600. Government pays only \$400." *Ann Prop*, 4 584.

<sup>21</sup> Van Quickenborne account book (A). A statement made by Van Quickenborne to the government under date of August 20, 1829, places the total disbursements for both boys' and girls' schools at \$9,990.28. This figure includes expenses for tutoring, boarding, lodging of pupils and for "the visits and presents to the Indians and travelling to their villages."

within such limits, but upon your own land, are not provided for in the regulations aforesaid<sup>22</sup>

It was clear to Father Van Quickenborne that his efforts on behalf of the Indian boys would be largely wasted unless on growing up they could secure Catholic wives with whom to persevere in the practice of religion. A school for girls was therefore an essential factor in his scheme of Indian education and in his efforts to establish one he took counsel with Mother Duchesne. That truly apostolic woman, it is unnecessary to say, was watching with the liveliest interest the educational experiment to which her spiritual director had put his hand. She took a maternal interest in the Indian boys, washing their linen and lending her personal services to keep them neat and tidy. The idea of a school for Indian girls to be conducted by her community appealed to her strongly and in June, 1824, a month after the opening of the boys' school, she wrote to the Mother General, St. Madeleine Sophie Barat, asking permission to open a similar institution for girls. "They live on very little," she explained to her, "and we shall beg clothes for them. We must neglect nothing for so interesting a work, so long desired and the special object we had in coming here"<sup>23</sup>. Five weeks later she wrote again "I sometimes think that God has ruined our first establishment and our first work, the boarding-school, in order to promote the more interesting work of the instruction of the poor savages"<sup>24</sup>.

In the beginning of April, 1825, the ambition of Mother Duchesne was finally realized. "One evening whilst we were saying Office," Mother Mathevon recorded in her journal, "the Father Rector arrived and asked to see the Superior. To Madame Duchesne's great surprise he produced two little frightened Indian girls who were hiding themselves under his cloak. He had sent a cart to fetch them and he left them with us. So now we have begun our class for the natives"<sup>25</sup>.

On all things in and about the convent of the Sacred Heart at Florissant poverty was writ large. It had now to carry an additional

<sup>22</sup> McKenney to Van Quickenborne, Washington, April 28, 1825. (A) Van Quickenborne's letter of March 23, 1825, to Secretary of War Barbour requesting that the government defray the cost of the school building he had erected at Florissant describes the latter in terms identical with those contained in his letter of Nov. 21, 1824, to General Clark. "I submitted to your Excellency the following plan or rather a statement of buildings begun and nearly completed for the Indian School at this place. I beg your kind indulgence for not having pursued the proper course and at the proper time. I hope that my untimely acquaintance with the mode of observing the regulations at your Department will not be an obstacle to my being put on an equal footing with other establishments of the same kind."

<sup>23</sup> Baunard, *Life of Mother Duchesne*, p. 264.

<sup>24</sup> *Idem*, p. 264.

<sup>25</sup> *Idem*, p. 264.

burden of expense in the Indian school, a burden heavier than Mother Duchesne had anticipated. The cost of maintenance for the first year amounted to five hundred and ninety dollars, doubtless a heavy drain on the slender resources of the nuns. "For the expenses incurred by them," Van Quickenborne wrote in December, 1825, "I have offered and given them 1 Corn for the whole year, 2 Potatoes for the whole year, 3 Firewood for the whole year. I doubt whether they will receive these things gratis. They help us much in making and repairing clothes for us and the Indians."<sup>26</sup> There was no reason, however, why aid should not be lent to the female Indian school by the government, which was subsidizing similar institutions in charge of non-Catholic denominations and was a real if indirect beneficiary in the devoted labors of the nuns. Accordingly, Van Quickenborne, with the approval of General Clark, though the latter expressed a desire that his name be not mentioned in connection with the affair, determined to apply to Washington for an appropriation for the girls' school. His petition to Secretary of War Barbour, dispatched on June 15, 1825, under the auspices of St. Francis Regis, as he informed his superior, represented that an annual subsidy of eight hundred dollars would enable the directors of the female Indian school at Florissant to continue the praiseworthy enterprise on which they had embarked.

Encouraged by the paternal exertions of our most benevolent Government for the amelioration of the degraded state of the Aborigines, I take the liberty to report to your department as follows:

In our village there is a religious Society of nuns, members of the Catholic Church and known by the name of the Ladies of the Sacred Heart. They direct in this place a very respectable Academy, where many young ladies of the first families of St. Louis and the adjacent parts of the country are educated. Notwithstanding their being engaged in this laudable work, as they have many members, they would most willingly devote some of them to the exclusive education of Indian girls, as being very congenial with the spirit of their Society. They have made already some steps towards this godly undertaking, having at present six Indian girls who have been placed under their care with great satisfaction of the parents. Application has been made by several more to have their children also admitted, but their means not

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<sup>26</sup> Van Quickenborne to Dzierzynski, December 19, 1825 (B). "As the school for girls has been opened only this year, the beginning of it has necessarily been attended with greater expenses than will be required next year for an equal number. Both boys and girls behave with great propriety. The strict morality which they observe in their conduct, their submission and obedience to the orders of their Superiors, their entire satisfaction and contentedness in their new state of life and finally their gratitude to their benefactors give the strongest hope that they will be useful citizens and be sincerely attached to the government that has in their regard such benevolent views." Van Quickenborne to Barbour, 1825 (H).

being adequate to further expenses, they find it impossible to comply with the desire of all, a desire however which the Government likes to foster I therefore in their name most respectfully beg the assistance of Government in behalf of the Indians to be placed there The above mentioned ladies would wish to take from 40 to 60 pupils, a number which I have purposed to take in at our Seminary, and which will soon, I hope, be completed Their own funds and those coming to them from pious associations and a yearly allowance of Government of \$800 would enable them to prosecute the work The advantages arising from their establishment would, in my opinion, be very important to the views of Government The education of Indian boys and girls in the same establishment is apt to be subject to very heavy inconveniences as regards morality This contemplated establishment is about two miles from our Seminary The Indians of the Mississippi have more or less a confused knowledge of what has been done for them by religious Societies of the Catholic Church, and as far as I have been able to observe, when they hear of a convent, their difficulty in parting with their children in great measure disappears Nearly all of the metifs [mixed-bloods] have Canadian Frenchmen and of course Catholics for their parents, who will always prefer to place their children under the care of the members of their own Church And should Congress adopt the plan suggested by the late President of the United States and adhered to by the present President in his inaugural speech, the two establishments in this place would be able in a very short time to give a solid beginning to the adopted plan, by placing with the consent of Parents, those of the boys who would wish to marry girls educated in the female establishment, in a given district with some assistance for husbandry, in which case I would offer to send two of our Rev gentlemen to reside among them These giving to their already known flock filled with confidence in their fathers the aid which the Catholic religion affords would be well calculated to maintain in them the spirit which they would have imbibed in the Seminaries, a spirit of the fear of the Lord, a spirit of regularity, industry and subordination, a sincere attachment from principle and Religion to our most beneficent Government in their behalf, and in case several districts should be formed, from each of them a small and selected number might be sent to the establishment here, to be instructed more fully and fitted out for the important stations they might be called by the nation to fill <sup>27</sup>

Father Van Quickenborne's petition to Secretary of War Barbour was denied on the ground of lack of funds to cover the appropriation

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<sup>27</sup> Van Quickenborne to Barbour, June 15, 1825 (H) "I have the honor to receive your letter of 15th ult in which you represent the kind dispositions of the religious Society of nuns, members of the Catholic Church, near Florissant, towards the aborigines of our country, and their willingness to receive and educate from forty to sixty Indian children provided a yearly allowance would be made them by the Government of \$800 Those dispositions of kindness towards these destitute children of the forest are appreciated, and I regret that the exacting demands upon the fund for civilization will not authorize at the present any further extension of it, not doubting but the means when applied to this charitable object of the Society,

asked for. As a consequence, Mother Duchesne's Indian school was destined to run its brief career without government support of any kind. It closed its doors at about the same time that the neighboring school for boys came to an end

As the only Catholic Indian school in the United States at the period, St. Regis Seminary and its pioneer labors were brought by Van Quickenborne to the attention of the Catholic public of France in the pages of the *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*. Mention of the school also occurs in an appeal made in 1826 to the generosity of European Catholics by Father Gabriel Richard of Detroit

At Mackinac last summer the Presbyterians put up a school-house about a hundred feet in length. In this school they have received a large number of Indian children, whom they feed, clothe and instruct gratis. The Catholics of America are in general poor and unable to build churches for their own needs.

It is then to the generosity of the Catholics of Europe that we must look for effective aid. The ministers of error are quick to profit by the ample means placed at their disposal by their rich merchants who subscribe liberally for all their institutions. Moreover, as they were on the ground before us, they make off annually with nearly all of the ten thousand dollars which the President of the United States is authorized to spend on the civilization of the Indians. There is so far only one Catholic school for the instruction of Indian children, that namely at Florissant, near St. Louis, this establishment receives a subsidy from the Government and this owing to the clever tact and engaging address of the Bishop of New Orleans, Mgr Du Bourg. The Jesuits of France, England and Italy should come here and take possession of their old missions, the ruins of which cry out for them on all sides. What would I not do to make my voice heard over all Europe! I would speak to it of the poor Indian in these terms "*Parvuli petierunt panem et non erat qui frangeret eis*"<sup>28</sup>

### § 3 THE SCHOOL IN OPERATION

Letters of the period afford occasional glimpses of what went on within the humble enclosure of the Indian school at Florissant. A year and a half after the institution had opened its doors Van Quickenborne, always an optimist over its affairs, wrote with obvious satisfaction to his superior in Maryland

Plays are preparing for the Indian boys. These go on to the astonishment of us all. In the beginning we had to watch them like wild hares, they were weeping the whole day. The Ladies of the Sacred Heart have a forty

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would produce lasting benefit to the children, whose good fortune it might be to partake of the instruction of its benevolent members." Barbour to Van Quickenborne, July 11, 1825 (H)

<sup>28</sup> *Ann Prop*, 3 333.

days devotion to St John Francis Regis I have made a vow, if they [the boys] changed, to do what I could to have that Saint for the patron of our mission. The boys are entirely changed. They observe order like a well-regulated college boy or like a novice. Mr Smedts, their prefect, understands them. We have had an interpreter for fourteen days. They make regularly their visits to the Blessed Sacrament and behave to the great edification of us all. They work two hours before dinner and two after dinner with the greatest satisfaction. They all wept when the hoe was put into their hands for the first time.<sup>29</sup>

This report of Van Quickenborne to his superior ends with the request that he be allowed to make choice of St John Francis Regis as patron of the Missouri Mission. There is no record of any action having been taken on the request.

Van Quickenborne's satisfaction with his Indian pupils was further increased by an incident that took place during the first year of the school's career. "We received a visit here from chiefs and twelve warriors of the Hyaway [Iowa] nation . . . The boys appeared at St Louis before these visitors while they had their talk with General Clark. They were well dressed and behaved extremely well. On entering the city one of them drove the cart in which the others were, which amazed the Indian fathers exceedingly. They were highly satisfied and General Clark, I have been told, said after the talk was over, to the Agent 'I wish all the Indian boys were with Catholics.'" <sup>30</sup>

To spend the greater part of the day with a batch of Indian boys and at the same time contrive to snatch a few moments of time for the theological studies preparatory to ordination was not a comfortable manner of existence. Mr Smedts, the first of the scholastics to be appointed prefect of the Indian boys, had been succeeded in that capacity by Mr Verreydt, who thus laid open to Father Dzierzynski the difficulty of his position.

The boys rise in the morning during meditation and I am with them till half-past eight o'clock when they go to the field and return a quarter before twelve, at which time I am with them till two o'clock (after dinner), when they go again to the field till a quarter before five. At this time I used to teach some to spell till half-past six, but since eight boys have left us so that we have at present but seven Indian boys and three French boys, our Reverend Superior has allowed me to employ this time in the study of moral divinity, the study of which I resumed since last Easter. On Sundays and Holydays I have to be with them the whole day, when it rains I have to be with them. They must be watched at night. I often sleep in the day in order to watch at night.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Van Quickenborne to Dzierzynski, Florissant, April 29, 1825 (B)

<sup>30</sup> Same to same, Florissant, January 10, 1825 (B)

<sup>31</sup> Verreydt to Dzierzynski, Florissant, 1826 (A)



It had constantly to be impressed upon the boys that manual labor was not a thing to be ashamed of. On an occasion when a band of some thirty Indians paid a visit to Florissant, one of their number was amazed to see his son, a pupil of the Seminary, carrying a bucket of water. All the pride of race rose within him and he asked the lad indignantly, "are you a slave?" To overcome the prejudice of the youthful Indians against work it became necessary for the directors of the school to set an example in their own persons of manual labor. With this end in view, as for other reasons also, one of the community, either a lay-brother or a scholastic, worked longside the boys in the fields. At intervals, as in the potato and corn-planting season, the entire scholastic body joined them in their work. Moreover, the scholastics spent nearly the whole of the vacation period in labor of various kinds, as felling trees or making cider. "All this is necessary," Mr Van Assche observes to a correspondent in Europe, "to encourage the Indians." Efforts were made to teach the youths to sing and even to play on musical instruments, not without some success. But on the whole their voices were found to lack singing quality though an Indian boy would occasionally please the worshippers at St Ferdinand's Church with a voice of unusual sweetness<sup>32</sup>

To provide adequate and proper clothing for the children was sometimes a serious problem Van Assche wrote in 1825 to Pierre De Nef of Turnhout

To increase the number of Indians and Jesuits as well, it is highly important for us to try to improve our farm We have written to our parents and friends for clothing, as without such assistance, it is quite impossible for us to receive many pupils To feed sixteen or twenty is not such a great matter, but to clothe them is out of the question, for shoes, hats and linen are very expensive Those who are coming to join us will perform a great act of charity by bringing along with them as large a supply as possible of linen and other kinds of cloth, no matter of what color, provided of course it is worth the cost of transportation If they bring pantaloons, cloaks, or other articles of wear ready made, they must know that the youngest of the twelve is only five and the oldest fourteen years old Most of the clothes on them now were brought by us from Europe.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Van Assche à De Nef, Florissant, May, 1827 (A) "F Vanquickenborn[e]'s [motive] in keeping these boys, though paid for, was no doubt to stimulate some of us to learn the language of the few Indian boys that were with us We learned a few Indian words and that was all Nobody had any inclination to go to the Indian country except F Vanquickenborn[e] who had no other thought than one day to establish himself among the Indians Napoleon like, he wanted to conquer all, white and red people" Verreydt, *Memoirs* (A)

<sup>33</sup> Van Assche à De Nef, Florissant, 1825 (A) The generosity of benefactors helped to solve later on the problem of clothing the Indian boys "For their sup-

What occurred on a certain occasion when a group of Indian parents visited their sons at the Seminary is told by the coadjutor-brother, Peter De Meyer

We opened a school for Indian and half Indian boys They were taught to wear clothes, to eat with knives and forks, to say their prayers in English and to work in the fields I worked several summers with them in the corn-fields and chopped fire-wood with them during winter in the woods Once their fathers and their attendants, for they were chiefs of different tribes, came to see them on their way to Washington to transact business with the President of the United States for their nation On their arrival towards night we made great preparations to receive them well We killed a large ox by candle-light in the orchard and were going to lay a table with knives, forks etc But their interpreter, who was a Frenchman and knew their language well, said, "not so, give them a large pot and meat and let them cook for themselves in the woods" So a large kettle was taken out of the wash-house and a quarter of an ox was given to them and then they retired into the woods about thirty yards from the house They made a big fire, cooked and ate their bellyful They also took some snaps which they carried with them in long canes Then they began to dance around the fire, singing their war-songs These lasted till a very late hour Some of Ours feared they were about to do some mischief, but it was all fun They at last lay down and slept till morning When they got up, they began to eat again, for their kettle was not yet empty Shortly after, they started off."<sup>34</sup>

For a while Van Quickenborne's Indian school seemed destined to a prolonged and useful career. From the Indian Office came approval and appreciation of its work<sup>35</sup> Also, there was commendation from Father Dzierzynski on the occasion of his visit to Florissant in the summer of 1827

The Indian school has one teacher, a lay-brother. Thanks be to God, it makes excellent progress alike in morals, letters and manual labor in the fields, where every day, both morning and afternoon, the boys spend some

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port (40 Indian boys) we have and will receive from the charity of the faithful whatever is necessary Last week we received from Europe 95 shirts, 135 handkerchiefs, 2 soutanes, 1 cloak, 2 surtouts, 35 pair boots and a number of stockings and flannel jackets, all in good order" Van Quickenborne to Dzierzynski, Florissant, September 1, 1828 (B)

<sup>34</sup> *Reminiscences of Peter De Meyer, S J*, 1867 (A)

<sup>35</sup> "Your letter to the Secretary of War of the 4th ultimo inclosing your report of the state of the Indian school under your superintendency is received I am directed to acknowledge it, and to convey to you the Secretary's approval, and the expression of his hopes that your benevolent labors for the enlightening of a portion of our Indians may be more and more prosperous" McKenney to Van Quickenborne, November 3, 1826 (A)

hours with their instructors. The boys number only thirteen, but the house cannot accommodate any more. There is a similar school for Indian girls in the village of St. Ferdinand, a famous old Spanish settlement. This is in charge of the Ladies of the Sacred Heart. The pupils number as many as in the boys' school, their education being looked to by the Ladies, their support by the Rector of the Florissant establishment, who by dint of alms and the produce of his farm, endeavors to the best of his ability to supply them with food and clothing, however poor these may be. I was highly pleased to hear the Indian girls recite their catechism. Who made you? Who redeemed you? Who sanctified you? To all such questions they replied with childlike simplicity. A more elaborate exhibition was given by Ours at Florissant. St. Ignatius day was celebrated with a solemn high mass and panegyric in St. Ferdinand's church, some of the Indian boys singing with Ours in the choir. After dinner in a sort of rustic amphitheatre festooned with flowers and greenery the Indian boys underwent an examination in their studies, the best of them being awarded prizes. After the specimen, one of their number of more than usual capacity and diligence came to my room very quietly so as not to be seen by the others and asked me to take him along with me to Georgetown College. "If I remain here, I shall go to the bad." I encouraged him with the assurance that grace to preserve his innocence would not fail him in Missouri. He took me at my word and went away satisfied.<sup>36</sup>

#### § 4 PASSING OF THE SCHOOL

In the event St. Regis Seminary failed to realize its early promise. Father Van Quickenborne's management of the school had not commended itself at all times to his associates in the educational venture, but there was never reason to doubt that he was guided at any time by other motive than zeal for the best interests of the institution. "It is clear to me now," wrote in later years one who had not seen eye to eye with him in the affairs of the school, "that he always acted as he thought best under the circumstances and always had before his eyes *Ad maiorem Dei gloriam.*"<sup>37</sup> As to Van Quickenborne's conduct of the school, it was alleged that he was unnecessarily severe in his treatment of the boys, that he worked them too strenuously in the fields, that, while reluctant to believe evil of them, he was unwarrantably Spartanlike in the punishment he inflicted on convicted offenders. Young De Smet, as he looked on in amazement at the whipping administered by his superior to an Osage pupil guilty of a serious breach of the moral law, felt in his heart, though the event did not justify his fears, that the managers of the school had compromised themselves with the Osage tribe for a generation to come. Yet the fact is that a genuine tenderness of heart underlay whatever severity showed itself in the outward

<sup>36</sup> *Historia Missionis Missourianae* (Ms) (A)

<sup>37</sup> Elet ad Dziurozynski, Florissant, May 20, 1835 (B)

manner of the sturdy Fleming who against heavy odds was going doggedly ahead with his experiment of an Indian school. With the superior in Maryland he pleaded thus on an occasion when, contrary to his own wishes in the matter, he was required to expel some of their number from the institution

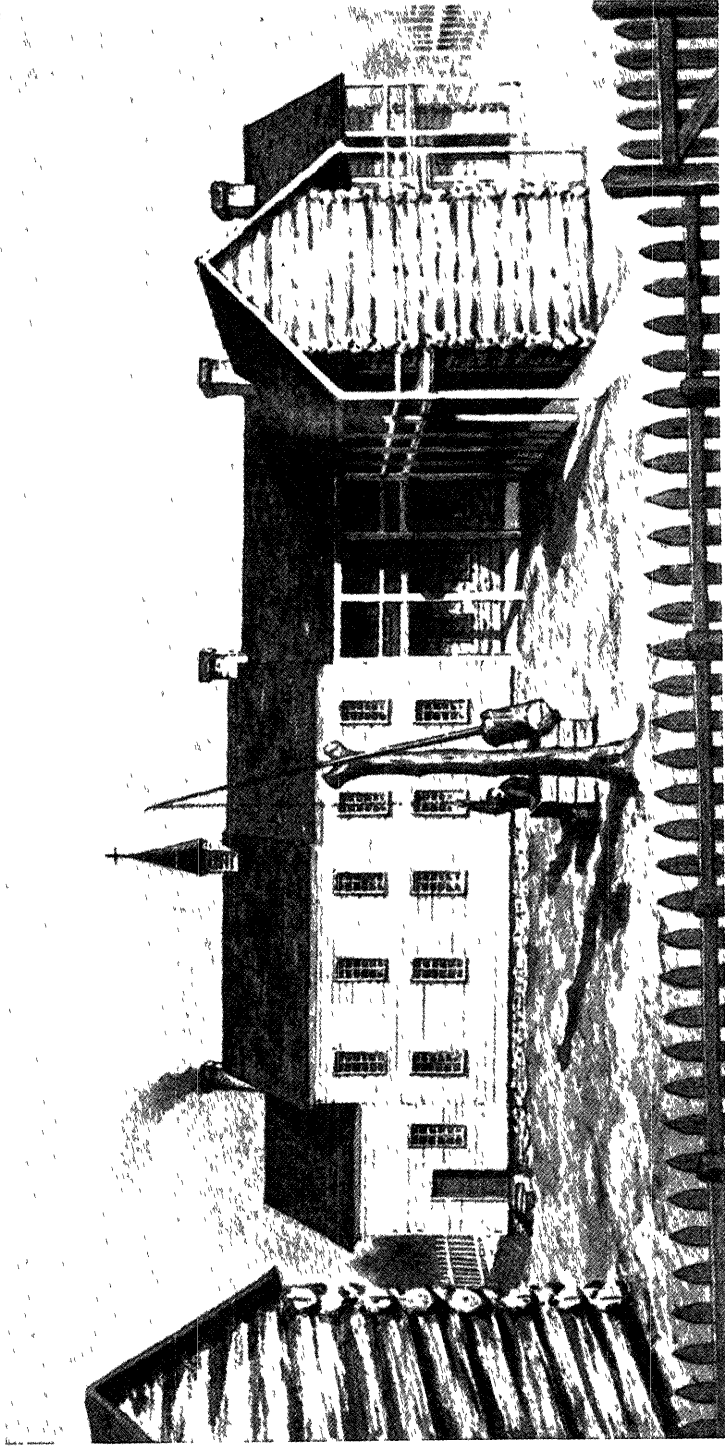
The boys expelled by me are not discouraged All are highly praised I say only what was said to me One made his first Communion under Father De Theux and goes to the Sacraments every month and was first in catechism Maximus, son of the Ioway chief, is in St Charles and is spoken of highly by Father Smedts The third is in Portage and works hard and behaves himself The other two are so small that they can scarcely do anything When I met one of them scarcely six years old and saw him whom I had received as a son now being treated as a little slave by his new master, my feelings got the better of me and I almost fainted I think that your Reverence with a knowledge of the circumstances would not have given the orders you did and I ask you that we may be permitted to act more gently with these little creatures whom we have only yesterday rescued from the wild beasts of the forest However, I am prepared to obey the orders of Reverend Father Superior.<sup>38</sup>

The last report forwarded to Washington by Van Quickenborne was for the year ending September 30, 1830 At the end of that year there were only two pupils in attendance A letter written by him at this period to Secretary of War Eaton discloses his intention to discontinue the school

With a view of locating an establishment nigher to the Indian villages, I have ceased to admit pupils in the Indian school of this place I am convinced that the youth of the aborigines stand in need of as much perhaps more assistance after they have left the school than when they actually enjoy its advantages I hope to be able perhaps in the course of another year to afford that assistance according to the plan I have had the honor to lay before your excellence and of which I have obtained the verbal approbation of our venerable President [Jackson] a few months ago I conducted home 4 sons of the principal chief of the Osages, who had received their education at our establishment Whilst in their village I proposed the subject of the plan in full council with the approbation of the Agent and the previous leave of the President They have unanimously expressed a most ardent wish to see it put into execution I will deem it a great favor if the allowance hitherto given to the school of this place could be applied to the new establishment as soon as it will go into operation<sup>39</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Van Quickenborne ad Dzierzynski, Florissant, 1830 (?) (B)

<sup>39</sup> Van Quickenborne to Eaton, Florissant, December 30, 1830 (H) Van Quickenborne's plans for resident missionary work among the Indians are outlined in the following chapter



St Regis Seminary, Florissant, Missouri, 1830 At right, original log structure, as remodeled and enlarged in 1823 The two-story building of frame in the center is the Indian school erected in 1828 Sketch by John B. Louis, S. J., after data furnished by the Jesuit fathers, Walter Hill and Francis Stuntebeck, novices at Florissant before the log buildings were razed

**An Exhibit of the state of the Indian School at *Florissant, Mo***

| Institutions   | By whom established            | When  | Name of Superintendent      | No. of pupils   | No. of teachers | No. of acres    |
|--|--------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| <p><i>St Agnes's primary<br/>Florissant, St Louis County<br/>State of Missouri</i></p> | <p><i>Society of Jesus</i></p> | <p><i>1824</i></p>  | <p><i>Van der Burgh</i></p> | <p><i>9</i></p> | <p><i>2</i></p> | <p><i>8</i></p> |
|  |                                | <p><i>I do hereby certify that the contents of the above copy of the report of the Indian school at Florissant are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.</i></p> | <p><i>Van der Burgh</i></p> |                 |                 |                 |

Father Van Quickenborne's report on the Indian school, Florissant, Mo, 1825-1826

*Louis County* *Report* for the year ending 30th September, 1826

| No. | Amount of receipts including the amount of the Government |       | Amount of disbursements |       | Surplus |       | REMARKS.   |
|-----|---|-------|-------------------------|-------|---------|-------|--|
|     | Dollar  | Cents | Dollar                  | Cents | Dollar  | Cents |  |
| 14  | —   | —     | \$1834                  | 127   | 1034    | 127   | <p>1 of the eight projects were left the publication it can be readily said only of one that the Com-<br/>-missioner has taken, the others having completed it nearly</p> <p>2 In the number of projects are not counted those who stay only a short time</p> <p>3 The contracts fall with the expiration of only one, had during the next year included the publication of the<br/>-document stated</p> |

Files of the Indian Office, Department of the Interior, Washington, D C

St Louis County, 10<sup>th</sup> July 1832

Sir

Your favour of 28 May, owing to my absence on a missionary visit, was handed to me only a few days since. I duly appreciate the kindness on your part in extending your care & solicitude for an establishment, of which for more than a year no official information had been given. The other favours received from your Department will always be gratefully remembered. Since the 30<sup>th</sup> Dec 1830 only one female pupil has been received into the school the number of the pupils last year was only three & at present there is only one. I have not given the annual report at the required time, because I hoped that I would have it in my power to give information to your Department of the opening of the new school according to the plan alluded to in my last. The firm belief that this will be the case before long, makes me crave your indulgence, & would assure you that it is my sincere desire to become useful to the Indians in widening them according to the views of Government, & making them good Christians in a solid manner & on a more extensive plan. Any allowance for the past year & the current one will be most gratefully received by

Your humblest obliged Servant

C. Van Quickenborne

Superintendent of Ford on Lake Superior

Sir

To the hon<sup>ble</sup> Lewis Cass  
Secretary of War  
Washington City

Letter of Van Quickenborne to Secretary of War Cass, July 10, 1832 Files of the Indian Office, Department of the Interior, Washington, D C



Two years were now to pass without further school-report from St Regis Seminary or even application for the usual annual allowance. Finally, in May, 1832, Elbert Herring, who had succeeded McKenney as commissioner of Indian affairs, wrote to Van Quickenborne inquiring "Is the department to infer from your having ceased to draw from the sum allowed or to transmit the required report, that you no longer claim any aid from the Government?" The superior's reply, dated July 10, brought a second letter from Herring

The Department cannot with any propriety continue to bestow a part of the Public Funds entrusted to it in aid of an Institution which the Principal himself represents to have had hardly an existence for more than two years. It cannot therefore permit you to expect, as you request, that your allowance for the past year and the current year will be paid. If you should succeed in reestablishing the school, your communication of the fact will meet with prompt attention and you will receive such assistance as the circumstances seem to demand.<sup>40</sup>

With this communication from the commissioner of Indian affairs business relations between St. Regis Seminary and the Indian Office came to an end. The last Indian boy had left June 30, 1831, and with him the institution passed into history.<sup>41</sup> That it was a successful Indian

<sup>40</sup> Herring to Van Quickenborne, Washington, July 24, 1832 (A)

<sup>41</sup> "1 The establishment was at too great a distance from the Indian villages  
2 The punishments inflicted on some of the Indian boys were too severe 3 The hours of school were too few and those of work too many 4 Their dress was often ragged and uncomfortable" (Contemporary ms memorandum) (B) The boys in attendance were not for the most part of pure Indian stock. Their number, which during the entire life of the school did not go beyond thirty in all, included ten full-blooded Indians of five different tribes, Osage chiefly, and twenty metifs or half-breeds. Almost one-half of the half-breeds were illegitimate. All the full-blooded Indians, with the exception of two who were dismissed for breaches of morality, were taken away by their parents. Van Quickenborne was disappointed both in the number and quality of Indian boys furnished him by the Indian agents and with a view largely to obtain suitable pupils for the school made personal visits to the Osage in their villages along the Neosho River. An account of his conducting two little Indian "princes" from the Osage country to Florissant in 1828 is in the *Ann Prop*, 4 578 "We have all the sons of the Osage chiefs of competent age to be placed in school" Report of St Regis Seminary for year ending September 30, 1829 (H) "Four Indian boys have been lately received. Two of these are boys about eight years old, sons of the chief of the Osage. Twelve of this kind, as Father De Theux has often observed, not mixed with those miserable metifs and properly taken care of, would be calculated to do something one day towards the conversion of the Indians" Elet ad Dzierozynski, December, 1828 (B)

Fathers Elet, De Smet and Verhaegen were decidedly of the opinion that the school had been a failure as far as the conversion of the Indians was concerned. Thus Verhaegen, writing to the superior, Dzierozynski, August 20, 1830 "I sup-

school no one conversant with the facts will venture to maintain. Too remote a location from the Indian villages, apparently certain mistakes in the management of the school, lack of proper financial support, but especially the poor quality of the students supplied to it were among the reasons for the failure of the institution to realize its purpose in any serious way. Yet one may not conclude that the labors of the men who through seven years maintained the school under depressing handicaps had gone for nothing. The author of the *Annual Letters* of the Missouri Mission for 1830 notes that many of the former pupils of the Seminary were living among the white and continued to receive the sacraments monthly. About one of them in particular there was something of personal sanctity and the holy end he made as a mere boy was the admiration of all who witnessed it.<sup>42</sup> On occasion, too, Jesuit missionaries of later years were to find a foothold for some missionary enterprise in the sympathy and good will of one-time pupils of the Florissant Indian school. Thus, when Fathers De Smet and Verreydt ascended the Missouri in 1838 to open a Potawatomi mission at Council Bluffs, they were welcomed at a stopping-place by Francis, the Iowa chief, whom De Smet had instructed at St. Regis Seminary and who would gladly have kept his former teacher to minister to his people.<sup>43</sup>

As to Father Van Quickenborne, he did not live to see the day when

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pose your Rev. knows that our Indian College has definitely ceased to be. I am surprised, not that it ended, but that it continued as long as it did. Didn't I predict that it would avail nothing towards the conversion of the Indians?" Cf. also the statement of the Father Visitor: "*Schola Indianorum, misere ordinata, duobus abhinc annis misere perit*" Kenney ad Roothaan, February 22, 1832 (AA).

<sup>42</sup> *Litterae Annuae Missionis Missourianae, 1823-1834* (A) The names of five Indian children attending the schools, four boys and one girl, are entered in the *Baptismal Register* of St. Ferdinand's church, Florissant. Mother Duchesne was godmother to Elizabeth *dite* Lisette Barielle, baptized April 2, 1825. The child's parents, Barielle and Shannoquoi, were Menominee (*Folles Avomes*) Indians. Stanislaus, aged 10, and Peter, aged 13 (the latter a son of a principal chief of the Iowa known as *Le Grand Marcheur*), were baptized June 5, 1825. Joseph and Louis, Sauk, were baptized October 3, 1824, by Bishop Rosati, John Mullanphy and his daughter, Mrs. Chambers, being sponsors. Other Indian pupils were possibly baptized by Van Quickenborne at the Seminary. This would account for their names not appearing in the church register.

<sup>43</sup> Hiram Martin Chittenden and Albert Talbot Richardson, *Life, Letters and Travels of Father Pierre-Jean De Smet, S.J., 1801-1872* (New York, 1905), I, 152. Cited subsequently as CR, *De Smet*. Two sons of Pahuska or White Hair, head Osage chief, their names Cleremont (or Clairmont) and Gretomonsé, the latter head chief of the tribe in 1852, were pupils at St. Regis where they were baptized. So, according to the *Osage Mission Register* (Archives of Passionist Monastery, St. Paul, Kansas). However, the names of Cleremont and Gretomonsé do not occur in the *Baptismal Register* of St. Ferdinand's Church, Florissant, Mo., where some of the Indian pupils were baptized. Cf. note 42.

his fellow-workers in the West were enabled to set on foot the two highly successful Indian schools which they maintained through many years on behalf of the Potawatomi and Osage tribes, but he had helped to blaze the way in the field of Catholic Indian education in the United States and the praise of the pioneer and pathfinder is his