

Codex historicus of the St-Bernard Mission
1939-1944
Grouard, Alberta

PAA, PR1997.0109/2070

[This volume contains the years 1939 to 1944: 111 numbered pages].

Page 1

According to the Holy Rules (paragraph of the Local Superiors, no. 602, art. 7) there must be in each house, the historical journal of the house. Did it exist at St. Bernard? Probably, but there is no trace of it, except for a few notes at the beginning of the old baptismal registers.

December 5-8, 1939 - page 9

The children's retreat in preparation for the feast of the Immaculate Conception is preached from December 5 to 8 by Father Kinderwater of Slave Lake.

August 13, 1940 - page 12

On August 13, Father Quémeneur arrived with 4 girls and 1 boy. Two of the girls will be part of the housekeeping school.

December 3, 1940 - page 15

On December 4, Father Schwebius arrived to preach the children's retreat from December 5 to 8. During the retreat, a few children came down with measles and the disease spread rapidly after the feast of the Immaculate Conception.

Early 1941 - page 15

A small printing press was purchased and a 236-page Cree hymnal was compiled with 193 old and new hymns.

September 30, 1941 - page 18

On September 30, Father Habay left on a train trip to recruit Indian children beyond Grande Prairie and returned on October 3.

January 7-11, 1942 - page 19

From January 7 to 11, children's retreat preached by Fr. L. Nadeau of the Girouxville parish.

June 12, 1942 - page 26

On June 12, the feast of the Sacred Heart, thirteen children made their First Communion and, in the evening, Bishop Langlois administered the sacrament of confirmation to sixteen of them.

June 26, 1942 - page 27

On June 26, Father Habay, accompanied by Brother Gaucher, left in a car to bring back six children to their families, three to Brownvale and three to Euraka River. Return on the 27th at 9:00 p.m.

June 30, 1942 - page 27

On June 30, while Father Kinderwater took charge of bringing back five children by train to Spirit River, Father Habay once again with Brother Gaucher, drove eleven children to Horse Lake via Sturgeon Lake.

August 8, 1942 - page 34

Gérard Forcade returned from Calgary where he had been taking physical training courses in order to complete the organization of the C.Y.O. for children. He returned today, August 8.

Also today, return of Sister Louis-Omer who went to Edmonton for summer courses. She received her obedience for Vermillion.

August 17, 1942 - page 36

On August 17, the children who had remained at the Mission during the summer left for a week's rest at Shaw's Point; they were under the direction of Father Gérard Forcade and three Sisters.

August 22, 1942 - page 37

Also today, return of the Mission children who spent the week at Shaw's Point.

End of August 1942 - page 39

Joseph Habay, who is the Superior of the Mission and the principal of the school, is thinking about the children who must return to school and who, for the most part, will not return themselves if they are not picked up. The disadvantage of this school is that it is not located on the reserve and that it is necessary to travel great distances to bring the children back.

Consequently, on August 28, a car left Grouard for Le Poisson Blanc where Father Roué took charge of gathering the Indian children who were to come to the school in Grouard. Indeed, on September 1, Father Roué himself arrived with a group of 16 children.

Father Habay took the train on the evening of August 31 to Slave Lake to gather the children for our school and returned the next day with 11 children from Slave Lake and 4 from Faust, all of whom were on the freight. When the weather is good, we use the truck to transport the children.

September 4, 1942 - page 40

On September 4, Father Roué returned to Poisson Blanc and continued with two cars to Lake of the Prairies, 45 miles from Poisson Blanc, to pick up the children of this district. He returned to Grouard on September 14 late in the evening with a group of children, 14 in all.

September 5, 1942 - page 40

On September 5, at 6 o'clock in the morning, Father Habay left by car with Brother Gaucher, still to look for the children who were on the other side of Grande Prairie. The trip to Horse Lake was unsuccessful; the parents refused to let their children leave. They had to retrace their steps in the evening after covering a distance of 173 miles.

That evening, Father Habay and Brother Gaucher came to camp on the banks of the Wapiti, 10 miles from Wembley, in the lodge of old Stoney, in the hope of being able to take the four girls the next morning. As September 6 was a Sunday, Father Habay celebrated mass in the open air on an improvised altar near the lodge. There was a family there who had arrived late the day

before and who attended the Mass. Father Habay distributed four Communion. When it was time to leave, the four girls did not want to come, so we had to go back alone as we had come.

September 8, 1942 - page 42

The next day, September 8, feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, after having celebrated Holy Mass in the small church of Fairview, I set out again with Brother Gaucher for Eureka River where we visited the few Indians who were on the reserve. We return with four children for school.

In Eureka River, I baptize two children. In the evening, after having taken our supper at Fairview at Father Herter's, we continued our journey to Griffin Creek and I camped in an Indian house with the children, while Bro. Gaucher went five miles farther to Berwyn, to Father Schwebius.

The next day, after hearing confessions, I celebrate Mass in the house. Then, after lunch, Brother Gaucher arrived, and almost immediately we left for Grouard, accompanied by seven children for school.

September 14, 1942 - page 44

On the evening of September 14, Father Nicolas Roué, resident missionary at Poisson Blanc, arrived with 14 children, including 11 girls and 3 boys whom he had sought out at Prairie Lake. Father Roué left for his mission on the morning of the 19th.

September 19, 1942 - page 44

Gérard Forcade, who left on the 14th of the same month for Edmonton; he is accompanied by three little boys (called neglected children) entrusted to the school of Grouard by the Department of Indian Schools.

October 17, 1942 - page 48

On Saturday, October 17, Father Habay left by car with Brother Paquet to pick up Indian children for the school beyond Grande Prairie. The children's father, Edward Stony, whose camp was now 25 miles beyond Grande Prairie, on the banks of the Wapiti, had written to pick up his four daughters. As the weather was fine, there was no time to waste. The two travelers left the mission about eleven o'clock in the morning, and after a short stop at the Sturgeon Lake mission, about two o'clock in the afternoon, just enough time for dinner, they started back for Grande Prairie, and from there continuing their journey, they arrived at Ed. Stony's camp about five o'clock. Stony was there, but the children were in another camp 35 miles away. There was no way to get there in the car.

The return home had been set for the next evening, but man proposes and God disposes. The weather was threatening and we feared rain. It was decided to camp in Ed Stony's old father's lodge. Brother Paquet had never seen the inside of a lodge; he could contemplate it at his leisure.

The next day, Sunday, after a good night's sleep, Father Habay celebrated Holy Mass, which was attended by several Indians who were camped there; they sang hymns and some took Holy Communion.

As for Ed Stony, he left almost immediately after Mass to pick up his children and entrust them to us two days later to take them to the mission. Obviously, we could not stay two days at the camp to wait for them, as there was no food available. In turn, we left to go to the Horse Lake Reserve where there was hope of bringing back some more children for school. There was

a group of Cree and Beaver Indians who went to a cabin at our invitation for the recitation of the rosary and the singing of a hymn.

On the way, we had formed the plan of continuing our journey to Dawson Creek, 50 miles further on. The Indians were informed that I would be back the next day to pick up the children that the parents wanted to send to school. It was therefore about evening that we entered Dawson Creek, the present terminus of the railroad.

[Description of his adventure at Fort St. John and Grande Prairie where he arrived with the children].

As for me, I arrived in Grande Prairie in this second-hand truck, provided by Providence. In spite of the late hour, the good Redemptorist Fathers provided us with lodging; they were already sheltering under their roof Father Alac, director of the Sturgeon Lake residence, as well as Father Beaucage, who had come to Grande Prairie on business.

The dear Holy Cross Sisters offered lunch to the children the next day and around noon on Wednesday, October 21, we took the train that would take us to Grouard station in the evening. All's well that ends well! [Written by Father Habay].

October 6-7, 1942 - pages 54-55

On October 6 and 7, the annual convention of the teachers of the region took place at High Prairie. As usual, our Sisters were present.

Inspector W. S. Cornelius, of Westlock, well regarded by the Department of Education as a competent inspector, was invited to attend. He gave the opening lecture and was highly appreciated by all concerned. In the afternoon, Sr. Jean, principal of Grouard School, also gave a talk. Her topic was "Extra Curriculum Activities at the Grouard School". Inspector Cornelius remarked to Inspector Stehelin that Sr. Jean was certainly the most prominent person at the convention.

Interested in the activities of the Grouard School, Inspector Cornelius asked to visit Grouard to see for himself the implementation of the province's program, of which he was proud, as he was partly responsible for it and took great pride in calling it "Our New Education". He spent the night at Grouard and returned the next day delighted with his trip. His final remark was this, "With our New Education Program, we thought we had something, but the Grouard School has left us far behind." For more information, please read his letter published in "The Grouard Echo", November 1942.

October 15, 1942 - page 55

On October 15, Mr. C. B. Hill, Deputy Superintendent of Child Welfare, Mr. F. Drayton, in charge of the city's neglected and delinquent children, and Father Foran, Judge of the Juvenile Court of Alberta, came to the Grouard Mission to spend three days. Since the Department of Indian Affairs this year had rejected from the Treaty several families whose children were regulars at this (Grouard) school, it was feared that the number of Indian children in the Treaty would not fill the school. Therefore, approaches were made to Mr. Hill to receive neglected children to fill the ranks.

Mr. Hill took the first opportunity to bring a neglected child here and the other two persons mentioned above were pleased to accompany him. They said they were delighted with their stay at the mission. They made several complimentary remarks about our school activities and education program. They did not hesitate to communicate them to the higher authorities of the Government, in particular to Dr. Cross, Minister of Health and head of the Government of Child

Welfare. All three remarked that this was a model boarding house in our province and that it had no equal until now.

These two reports (convention and Mr. Hill's visit) were made by Father Gerard Forcade, of St. Bernard Mission. Father Forcade himself took part in the convention and was invited to speak. He also received Mr. Cornelius at the mission as well as Mr. Hill and his distinguished friends.

It is known that Father Forcade, who is especially responsible for our children, is the initiator and director of this beautiful and practical program of education which, as Inspector Cornelius said, has the upper hand over all others.

November 1, 1942 - page 57

On November 1, the doctor from the High Prairie hospital went to St. Bernard's mission. The result of his visit: two children (girls from the housekeeping school) as well as Father Potvin and Brother Tremblay will have to be operated on.

November 3, 1942 - page 58

During the day, at the St-Bernard mission, visit of an Indian Chief, Mr Twin [?], of Slave Lake. He has three of his children in school. In the evening, the Chief spoke to the boys at the request of Father Forcade; he spoke to them in Cree. He said he was very happy with his visit. He left on the evening of November 4, accompanied by Father Kinderwater.

November 30, 1942 - pages 61-62

On the night of the 30th, those who had gone to the convention in St. Boniface returned. The convention took place on November 24, 15, 26, 1942, and was attended by the principals of the Indian schools and religious teachers of the provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and the Apostolic Vicariates of James Bay, Keewatin and Grouard. Father Plourde, the Catholic school official with the Indian Department in Ottawa, called the meeting and conducted its proceedings.

The purpose was primarily to discuss the manual labor program which Inspector Doucet wished to introduce into the Indian schools. The discussion extended far beyond the handicraft course. There was talk of after-school work for the Indians, Catholic Action, the teaching of the catechism, agriculture, the usefulness of parents placing their children in the school of their choice, school activities for the interest and formation of the children, formation of Indian character, etc., etc.

No definite program was given, but the account of everyone's experiences enlightened all who wish to work for the welfare of the Indians.

December 1-3, 1942 - page 63

December 1-3, Inspector Stehelin visited.

February 1943 - page 69

February 11, 12, 13, annual retreat for children. It was preached by Father Anton Herter of Fairview.

August 28, 1943 - page 81

On August 28, two religious, Sisters Denise-Lucille and Ambroise, left for Le Poisson Blanc to bring the children back to the school in Grouard. At the same time, they cleaned Father Roué's house, saw to the sacristy and did all they could to help Father Roué. Father Roué and the Sisters returned to Grouard on September 1, accompanied by a few Indian children, much less this year than usual.

September 1, 1943 - page 81

The students return to Grouard. Thanks to Father Kinderwater's dedication in gathering the children of Slave Lake, a fairly good contingent arrived this evening by truck: Brother Léon Gaucher had gone to get them accompanied by Father Lachance.

[In the following year, these are only notes on the ministry of the Oblate fathers].

July 28, 1944 - page 101

Fr. Habay, sup. returned from Shaw Point with the boys who had been vacationing there for almost a month.

November 20, 1944 - page 108

Fr. Roué arrives this evening, with Mr. Demers and the nurse. Tuesday, the 21st, Mr. Demers visited the school.

December 27, 1944 - page 110

This evening, the children of the school gave a nice little performance, songs, music and plays, all very well done and followed by the distribution of Christmas gifts. Unfortunately, only the staff of the house and a few parents were present, although some Sisters came from Joussard.

- ♦ Translated by Eloi DeGrâce with www.DeepL.com/Translator (free version)
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