

COMING OF THE BLACK ROBES INTO MONTANA BEFORE GOLD WAS DISCOVERED; FATHER PALLADINO WRITES OF EARLY DAYS

Father Lawrence Palladino, one of the few remaining links binding to the present the pioneer days of western Montana, before the days of the discovery of placer gold in Grasshopper and Alder Gulches, has written a history which will attract wide attention in Montana.

Father Palladino begins his work with a compliment to the Flathead Indians—the Selish (pronounced Sale-ish) of whom he says no Indian tribe is more renowned in history. The name "Flathead" is, he says, a misnomer. "These Indians are shapely and the barbarous custom, head flattening, implied by the appellation, and practised by some of the Indians on the Sound and on the Pacific coast, was unknown among these people." To the Flatheads belongs the distinction of having brought the missionaries to Montana.

The country of the Flatheads, he says, was that part "lying west and at the base of the main range of the Rocky mountains." It was called in their language Spetleman, which means "place of the bitter root," whence the name, "Bitter Root valley."

When the Flatheads became known to the white man, he says, they numbered about 2,000 souls and probably were never much more numerous.

"But if inferior in numerical strength to many of the other tribes in the Rocky mountains, they seemed to surpass them all in prowess and daring; and as a warlike people they were considered even by their enemies as the bravest of the brave."

Their most deadly foes, from time immemorial, says the author, were the Blackfeet, living in what is now northern Montana. The Blackfeet claimed the range lying east of the Rockies as their hunting ground. This was the main range of the buffalo. They looked on Flathead buffalo hunters as intruders. In addition to a larger number of warriors, the Blackfeet, he says, had the advantage of fire-arms obtained from prairie trading posts. This was long before such posts were located within visiting distance of Flathead territory.

The first white men seen by any of the Flatheads were the members of the La Verendrye expedition and these were met only by those Flatheads who visited the east side to hunt buffalo. The first white men to pass through Flathead territory was the Lewis and Clark expedition, in 1805. At the time the first work was published by Father Palladino there was still living, at the St. Ignatius mission, an old Indian woman, Eugenie, who distinctly remembered the visit of Lewis and Clark when she was about 14 years of age.

The author quotes from the Journal of Sergeant Patrick Glass, of the Lewis and Clark expedition, who wrote that the Flatheads were the "only nation on the whole route where anything like chastity is regarded."

While they were honest, brave, obedient to authority, cleanly, and virtuous they were "barbarous, cruel and brutal as any savages could be" in their treatment of prisoners, "whether male or female."

Birthday Suits
The adults of the tribe dressed in skins but the children went absolutely naked, "even in winter, plodding through slush and snow."

Five of the consonants, b, d, f, r and v, are wanting in their language. The places are supplied by p, t, l and m.

In the Flathead tongue Mary becomes Malee, Rosalie becomes Usalee and Victor, Mitto. The same language is spoken by nine other tribes: the Upper and Lower Kallispells, the Spokanes, the Coeur d'Alenes and the families in the vicinity of Colville.

They believed in a good spirit, and a bad spirit, in a future reward, and a punishment. The good Indian went to a place of perpetual sun-

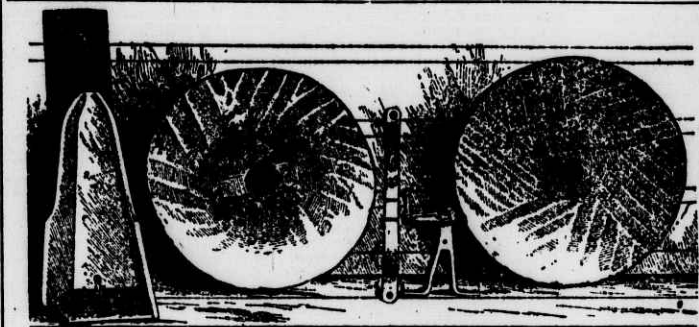


Father De Smet, Jesuit Missionary who figures in the Palladino history.

mer; the bad Indian to a land of perpetual snow.

Their code of morals was short yet comprehensive: Honesty, bravery, love of truth, love of wife and children, were the principal virtues which entitled them to future happiness.

The Flatheads believed that the



Millstones on which the first flour made in Montana was ground. These stones were brought to the state by the Jesuit missionaries, who built a small water wheel to turn them.

beaver was a fallen race of Indians punished for their wickedness, but in due time to be restored to human shape. Some declared that they had heard beavers talk together and saw them sit in council to pass judgment on an offending member.

The author devotes several passages to the habits of the beaver. "Should any of the band prove incorrigible and refuse to do their share, the lazy fellows are unanimously driven off by the whole community and forced to secure shelter and provisions elsewhere," he says.

The Flatheads had their medicine men, incantations, charms and the like. Polygamy was the rare exception among them. The chieftainship was hereditary, but the war chief was elected each year; his authority ceased on his return from the hunt or battlefield.

They were warm friends of the Nez Perces tribe and intermarried with them. Nez Perces Indians made their homes among the Flatheads.

"The fact that there were one or two Nez Perces Indians with the Flatheads who went to St. Louis to obtain Black Robes," the Indian name for missionaries, "has caused some writers to be misled into stating, contrary to historical evidence, that the claim on the first missionary efforts made in the country on the part of the Flatheads was unfounded," the author states.

The Flatheads first heard of the missionaries from Ignace la Mousse, the chief of a band of wandering Iroquois, who came from the St. Law-

rence river and settled among the Flatheads.

Ignace was a giant physically and won the respect of his hosts. He talked much of the missionaries and of the religion taught by them. He taught them many of the forms and some of the prayers, induced them to observe the Sabbath, and to baptize their young. It was he who suggested that they send to St. Louis for missionaries.

Although none of them had ever seen a white man's house and but few had ever seen a white man's face, and despite the fact that they must traverse nearly 3,000 miles of mountains, desert, and sage brush, and cross the country of deadly enemies, they undertook the journey.

In the spring of 1831 four braves set out and reached St. Louis in the fall of the same year. Two of them fell ill and died and are buried in the Catholic cemetery at the Cathedral of St. Louis. The remaining two set out on the return journey, but never reached home. The purpose of their visit was but imperfectly understood. No one knew their language in St. Louis.

In 1834 the Rev. Jason Lee and his nephew, the Rev. Daniel Lee of Stansford, Canada, were sent to found a mission among the Flatheads, under the auspices of the American Methodist Episcopal church. They did not remain, but continued to Oregon, where they established a mission among the Canadian colony on the Willamette.

A number of other missionaries

came in contact with the Flatheads, among them Marcus Whitman and the Rev. Dr. Parker, but the Flatheads would have none, apparently, but the Black Robes that Ignace, the Iroquois, had so eloquently described to them.

Finally Ignace himself volunteered to go for the missionaries. He started for Canada, but changed his mind and went to St. Louis. He was accompanied by his two sons. He made the trip successfully. This was in 1835.

Ignace was promised that missionaries would be sent. He returned to the Flatheads. Eighteen months passed. No missionaries came, so Ignace, the Iroquois, three Flatheads and two Nez Perces Indians set out for St. Louis for a third appeal.

While traveling with white people they were attacked at Ash Hollow, on the South Platte, and killed.

The whites were told by their Indian captors to stand apart while the Indians were being butchered. Ignace, being dressed like a white man and being an Iroquois, was also told to stand apart, but he elected to die by the side of his fellow warriors.

"Thus perished he who might justly be called the apostle of the Flatheads," says the author.

News of the deaths reached the Flatheads. A fourth expedition was at once decided on. In council two Iroquois warriors at once volunteered. They were Left Handed Peter and young Ignace. They left the summer of 1839, met some Hudson

Bay trappers, and made the trip down the river in canoes. This time their efforts met with success.

Father De Smet was sent as the missionary. He was a Belgian from Termonde, East Flanders. Young Ignace acted as his guide. Peter had advised of the missionary's coming and a band of Flatheads were at Green River to meet him. They had been joined by Nez Perces, Pend d'Oreilles and Kallispells and numbered 1,600.

Chief The Big Face

When Father De Smet arrived at the home of the Flathead nation he was received by Chief The Big Face, who delivered an address of welcome.

"He resigned his authority to me," Father De Smet wrote. Father De Smet returned to St. Louis to procure assistance in 1841. He brought back with him Father Gregory Mengarini, a Roman; Father Nicholas Point, a Vendean; and three lay brothers, Joseph Specht, an Alsatian, and two Belgians, Charles Huet and William Claessens.

In addition to teaching religion, Father De Smet taught them to cultivate the soil. Seed and agricultural implements were brought by him from Colville. This was in 1842.

Father Zerbiniati, Brother Vincent Magri and Father Joset came as missionaries in 1845. While bathing in the river Father Zerbiniati was drowned. Upon news of his death reaching the Superior, Father Ravalli, then stationed at Colville, was sent to replace him. This priest was an all-around man. He was "an excellent missionary, an able physician, a good artist, an expert mechanic, and could handle with considerable skill the tools and implements of almost every trade." Father De Smet had shown the Indians how to grow wheat, but there was no mill to grind flour. A hand coffee mill or pounding the grain with a stone were the only flour making methods.



Chief Chariot, last of the Flatheads to leave the Bitter Root country.

Father Ravalli remedied the deficiency. With the help of the two brothers, Claessens and Specht, he

built a miniature water mill. The mill stones, which were brought from Europe, were 16 inches in diameter and can still be seen at the St. Ignatius Mission. There, too, may be seen a sledge hammer made by Brother Specht out of tin cans.

The next enterprise undertaken by Father Ravalli was the erection of a sawmill. Four wagon tires were welded together for the crank. A fifth was first flattened out, and hardened into a steel blade, by dint of hammering, and then filed into a saw.

White trappers came to the mission and corrupted the simple morals of the Indians. The missionaries were no longer obeyed. They thereupon closed the mission, and leased the buildings to Major Owen. The mission remained closed for 16 years.

In 1859 efforts of the missionaries were again directed to the Flatheads. Father C. Imoda was sent. Father Giorda followed in 1860. Then Father Ravalli returned. A number of new missionaries came also.

Father Palladino describes the departure of the Flatheads, crowded out by the whites from their Bitter Root home to the reservation provided by the government. The last to leave was Chief Chariot and about 200 others, Oct. 17, 1891. This event concludes the narrative of St. Mary's as an Indian mission.

The noted men of the Flatheads are given a chapter by the writer. The town of Arlee takes its name from a chief who was known in English as "Henry," and in Flathead as "Arlee," this being their translation of the name "Henry." He was the last war chief of the tribe. He was also known as Red Night.

The betrayal of the Indians through the Garfield treaty of 1872 is referred to. The trial of Pierre-Paul, Lalassi Pascal and another, for murder, is mentioned in detail, as is an Indian's complaint against his wife, whom he had deserted.

"Listen, Black Robe," he said, "and then decide." He went on to say that he had been married by Father Menetry, that the Father had given them a wedding feast, a head of cabbage as big as their two heads together, and had cooked it for them himself, and set it before the bride. "She took a little bite, one, two, three times, and each time spit it out grinning," said the Indian. "I looked at her and asked why she was doing that; she made faces at me and said 'Shut up. If I had not married thee no woman in the camp would have had thee for a husband.' I got angry, Black Robe, and stood up, and without a word I left her and the big cabbage and went straight to my people and got me another wife to prove to the first one that she had lied."

Father Palladino was born at Dilecto, Italy, about 30 miles from Genoa, on August 15, 1837. He received his education at the Petit Seminaire in Genoa and then to Stazulus. Early in life he decided to take holy orders and at the age of 18 entered the Society of Jesus as a novice. He continued his studies for the priesthood in German Tyrol and in France, completing his course at Monaco. His ordination came in 1863, at Nice, and in the fall of that year was sent to California to be professor of Latin and Greek at St. Ignatius college in San Francisco. From there he went to a college at Santa Clara, where he remained until 1867, coming thence to Montana.

For four years he was in charge of the St. Ignatius mission on the Flathead reservation and in 1871 was transferred to Helena, continuing his work there for 16 years. In 1887 he was recalled to St. Ignatius and assigned a larger territory, which included the Missoula valley. Thence again he went to Helena and after six years more in that parish he went to Spokane as president of Gonzaga university, going from there at the close of one year to Seattle and the next year returning to Missoula, where he labored for eight years. Changes of pastorate took him to Idaho and North Yakima, Wash., but in 1910 he was returned to Missoula as assistant pastor. He has continued to make that city his home since his retirement.

When his work during the territorial days is recalled, he is modest in the extreme. He considers he was the mouthpiece of his Master, doing to others as he would be done by, and disclaims the credit so justly his of having helped and often taking the lead in hewing for the present out of the wilds of the primitive. Commenting upon his labors among the Indians, he said:

"I knew all the chiefs with the exception of those at the head of the Flathead tribe before I came to the mountains, and of these I liked Chief Victor best. He was a man of distinguished parts and a very estimable man. Then there was Chief Chariot. People today always spell that wrong. They spell it Chariot, which gives it a Spanish meaning, but it is Chariot, a French name.

"I started my writing on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of St. Mary's mission. I was asked by Bishop Brondell to put together some items for the golden jubilee and I did so. After I had finished he told me my work would not do, suggesting that I had better write a history of the church in Montana. That took a considerable time and from it came the book which I have now completed in more detail."

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