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WEGMAN DAIRY

PIIONEER MISSIONARIES In The St. Lawrence Valley

By the Rev. Francis Borgia Steck, O. F. M., Ph. D., Department of History in The Catholic University of America, Washington, D. C.

The following is the text of an address given by Father Steck at the unveiling ceremonies on Mercy High School grounds, Sunday, October 13, of a monument to commemorate erection of "The First Building for Christian Worship in the Rochester and Irondequoit Valley Area."

Although as a colonizing nation in what might well be termed our French borderlands, compare with Spain either in extent of territory or in permanence of achievement, there can be no doubt that in the matter of heroic zeal, dauntless courage, and patient endurance the French and Belgian missionaries, like their Spanish counterparts, will forever command the respect and esteem of those who today are enjoying the benefits of Christian civilization. In French as well as in Spanish America it was the Catholic missionary who more than the Catholic settler taught the natives the ideals and principles of Christianity and set them the example of Christian living. It is well, therefore, that on occasions like the present we pause to honor the memory of those heroes who left their native land and ministered to the needs of a strange and barbarous people.

As Spanish missionaries penetrated from Mexico northward into the territories of present-day Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California, so French and Belgian missionaries came from Canada into the states along the St. Lawrence and the Great Lakes. Whereas in colonial times our so-called Spanish borderlands were almost exclusively the field of Franciscan missionaries, it was the Jesuits who eventually figured most prominently in what might well be termed our French borderlands.

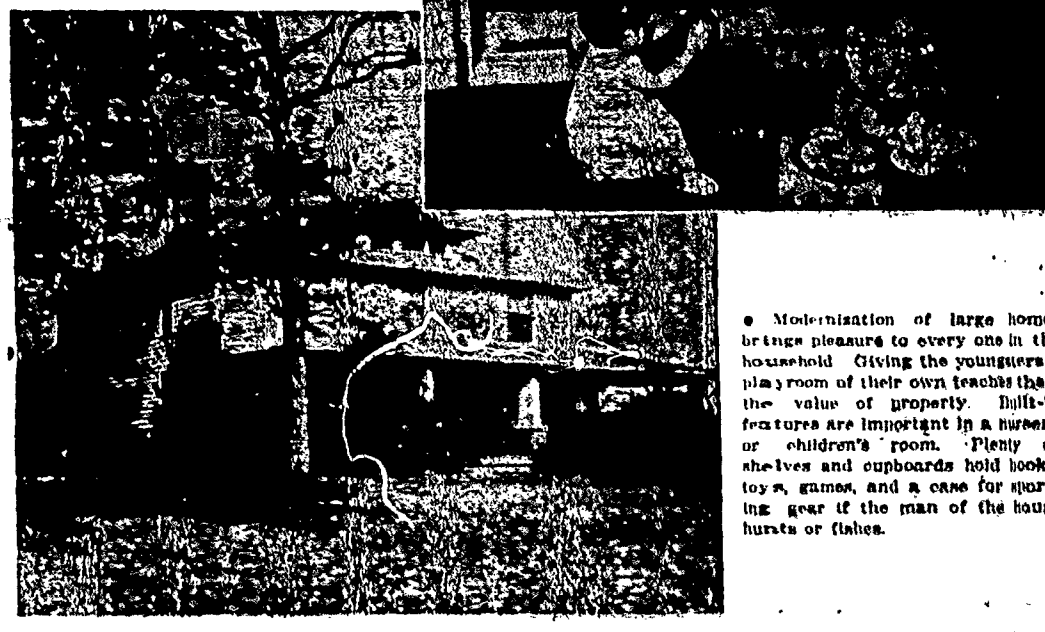
I. The Coming of the First Franciscans
The Jesuits were not, however, the pioneer missionaries in Canada. As far as Mexico and many other regions of Spanish America, so also in Canada, this distinction belongs to the Franciscans who came to Canada in 1615 and were there alone for ten years, traversing the lands along the St. Lawrence from Tadoussac near the mouth of the great river to the shores of Georgian Bay, the home of the Hurons. Among these pioneers of Christianity in Canada, four names stand out prominently, namely: Father Joseph Le Caron, the Apostle of the Hurons, Father Nicholas Viel, the proto-martyr of Canada, Brother Charles Langlois, the first to receive the Franciscan habit in Canada, and Brother Gabriel Sagard, the historian of these pioneer Canadian enterprises.

By the year 1625, 17 Franciscan friars saw service among the natives and settlers of Canada. Missions had been founded and schools opened for the Indians. Brother Pacificus Duplessis, for instance, conducted an Indian school at Three Rivers, in addition to the one founded by Father LeCaron at Quebec. One of the friars, Father William Poullain, became the victim of Iroquois cruelty. While accompanying a trading expedition to Saint Louis, he landed on the south shore of the St. Lawrence and was captured by the Iroquois. At their hands he suffered the usual indignity and torture, but returned good for evil, preaching Christianity among his captors and succeeding in baptizing thirty dying infants and adults. It was only through an exchange of prisoners that his life was spared, though he died the next year (1622) of the hardships and sufferings he had endured.

In 1623, the Franciscans finding the harvest white and the laborers few, asked the Jesuits to come and take over a portion of the field. Needless to say, they responded and five reached Canada in 1625. Father Charles Lallement, who in

HOME IMPROVEMENTS - - Play Room

Stucco houses such as the one pictured below offer many opportunities for home for the children. A nursery decorated in typical nursery style adds to the home. John Brown with his own ideas in contrasting colors is just a suggestion. A play room for the basement can be used in any up-to-the-minute American home. It is a recreation room for the whole family. A 10th plaster, wallboard paint, old pieces of furniture are all that are necessary.



IMPOSING STONE TABLET MARKING SITE OF FIRST CHRISTIAN CHAPEL UNVEILED AT IMPRESSIVE RITES

(Continued from Page 1)

Gabriel de la Ribourde, and Father Zenobe Membre arrived.

Father Steck then traced the lives of these three missionaries, recently reared in France, who came to the New World on the same mission and died widely separated: Father Hennepin obscurely in Spain; Father de la Ribourde slain on the banks of the Illinois, becoming thus the proto-martyr of what was to be the State of Illinois; Father Membre slain by savage Indians of Texas.

Drawing a vivid picture of the arrival in Irondequoit Bay of the Franciscans in the party of the explorer LaSalle, on their way to Port Niagara, the speaker described the building of the cabin of bark, and the celebration by Father de la Ribourde of the First Mass in it. "How he and the others must have prayed on that memorable morning," he said, "and how they began for the conversion of the Indians here and in the distant West might bear rich fruits for time and eternity. What did not occur to them, however, was the day we are witnessing today, 255 years later. American citizens assembled in the spirit of Christian toleration and fair-mindedness to commemorate in a fitting and enduring manner the arrival of the first missionaries to the land of the Hurons."

Senator John Talon provided for the return of the Franciscans to the land where they had sowed the seeds of Christianity a half-century before. In the summer of 1670 the French Franciscan Province of Saint Denis sent five of its members to Canada. The Minister Provincial himself, Father Constant Allart, accompanying them on the voyage. One of the group was Father Gabriel de la Ribourde who on the return of the Minister Provincial to France, assumed the duties of superior of the Franciscans in Canada. Five years later in 1675, came the first group that belonged to the Franciscan far west side of the Atlantic. These were again five in number and among them were Father Louis Hennepin and Father Zenobe Membre.

In the beginning, owing largely to the fact that the care of the Indians had been entrusted to the Jesuits by the Bishop of Quebec, the Franciscans labored principally among the French settlers, while others, eager to labor among the Indians, accompanied LaSalle on his expeditions to the Illinois country, down the Mississippi, and to far-away Texas.

(To Be Continued)

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Fourth Degree Master Speaks at Syracuse
City Judge Frederick J. Mix, Master of 15th District, Fourth Degree, Knights of Columbus, was a guest speaker at a dinner meeting of the Faithful Navigators of the Fourth District held at Schraft's in Syracuse, Monday evening.

The meeting was presided over by John F. Barrett of Syracuse, Master of the Fourth District. The address was also given by Dr. Crawford of Syracuse University on "Social Security." The Rev. Daniel E. Corron, Faithful Friar of the Syracuse Assembly was also a speaker.

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