Guide to Catholic-Related Records in the Midwest about Native Americans

Diocese of Fargo
NORTH DAKOTA, FARGO

Diocese of Fargo Archives
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Open: By appointment only
Access Some restrictions apply
Copying facilities: No

History: The Diocese of Jamestown was erected in 1889 from part of the Vicariate Apostolate of Dakota and in 1897 it was renamed the Diocese of Fargo. Statewide for North Dakota, the Fargo Diocese reported 4,000 baptized Native American Catholics in 1900 and Bismarck and Fargo reported 1,800 and 1,000 respectively in 1999. Fargo and its predecessors have administered the following Indian missions and parishes in North Dakota:

1818-1823 (closed) (Fargo 1889)
St. Francis Xavier School (Métis and Ojibwa), Pembina

1821-1823 (closed) (Fargo 1889)
St. Francis Xavier Church (Métis and Ojibwa), Pembina

1834-ca. 1870s (no longer Indian) (Fargo, 1889)
Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Church (Métis and Ojibwa), Pembina

1874-present (Fargo, 1889-present)
St. Michael Church (Sisseton and Wahpeton), St. Michael

1876-present (Fargo, 1889-1909)
St. Peter Church (Hunkpapa), Fort Yates

1882-present (Fargo, 1889-present)
St. John Church (Métis and Ojibwa), St. John

1883-1894 (no longer Indian) (Fargo, 1889-1894)
St. Paul Mission (Ojibwa), Tarsus

1885-present (Fargo, 1889-present)
Our Lady of Seven Dolors Church (Sisseton and Wahpeton), Fort Totten

1887-present (Fargo, 1889-present)
St. Ann Church (Métis and Ojibwa), Belcourt

1887-present (Fargo, 1889-present)
St. Anthony Mission (Métis and Ojibwa), Alcide/Laureat

1889-1963 (closed) (Fargo, 1889-1909)
Immaculate Conception/ Sacred Heart Mission (Arikara, Hidatsa, and Mandan), Packinæau Dam Site/Elbowoods
1890-present (Fargo, 1890-1909)  St. Elizabeth Mission (Hunkpapa), Cannonball
1892-present St. Jerome Mission (Sisseton and Wahpeton), Crow Hill
1894-present St. Joachim Church (Métis and Ojibwa), Rolla
1896-present (Fargo, 1896-1909) St. James Mission (Sisseton and Wahpeton), Porcupine
1897-1959 (closed) St. Mary Mission (Métis and Ojibwa), Maryville
1906-1969 (closed) (Fargo, 1906-1909) St. Andrew Mission (Arickara, Hidatsa, and Mandan), Nishu/Armstrong
1906-1909 (closed) (Fargo, 1906-1909) Holy Family/ St. Michael Mission (Arickara, Hidatsa, and Mandan), Shell Creek/Shell Village
1907-1921 (closed) (Fargo, 1907-1909) St. John Mission (Arickara, Hidatsa, and Mandan), Crow Heart's Landing
1916-1950 (no longer Indian) St. James Mission (Sisseton and Wahpeton), Warwick
ca. 1920s-present Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Church (Métis and Ojibwa), Olga
ca. 1920s-present St. Boniface Church (Métis and Ojibwa), Walhalla
1929-present Christ the King Mission (Sisseton and Wahpeton), Tokio
1940-present St. Benedict Mission (Métis and Ojibwa), Turtle Mountain Reservation
1948-present Immaculate Heart of Mary Mission (Métis and Ojibwa), Dunseith

Holdings of Catholic-related records about Native Americans:

Inclusive dates: 1818-1979, n.d.
Volume: Approximately 4 cubic feet
Description: 9 series include Native Catholic records:

/1 Parishes and Indian Missions
Volume: 1.5 cubic feet
Description: Arranged alphabetically by parish location, except for 5 folders of general Indian-related correspondence, which are filed under "Indian Missions-Miscellaneous" and "Indian Affairs."

A. Belcourt, St. Ann Church, 1891-1968, n.d., .15 cubic foot:
B. Dunseith, St. Louis Church and St. Paul and Immaculate Heart of Mary Indian Missions, 1892, 1908, 1923, 1937-1967, .1 cubic foot: major correspondents include Reverends Lucien Burque, Francis J. Lorscheid, and John E. Wolf and Bishops Aloisius Muench and Leo Dworschak
C. Fort Totten, Our Lady of Seven Dolors Church, 1913-1962, n.d., 2 folders:

2. Historical notes, n.d., 1 folder

D. Fort Yates, St. Peter Church, 1898, 2 letters from Reverend Bernard Strassmaier, O.S.B.

E. Pembina, Assumption Church, 1818-1880, n.d., .35 cubic foot:
   1. Correspondence, 1818-1880, .3 cubic foot:
      a. Letters of Reverend George Anthony Belcourt, 1848-1857, 2 folders
      b. Letters (copies) from the St. Boniface Archdiocesan Archives, Manitoba, Canada, 1818-1880, 3 folders


G. St. Michael, St. Michael Mission, 1893-1970, n.d., .4 cubic foot:

H. "Indian Affairs," 1890-1895, 1906, 1919-1965, .3 cubic foot:
   Correspondence;
   major concerns are the annual financial and statistical reports to the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions
   I. "Indian Missions-Miscellaneous Correspondence," 1890-1893, 1895, 1939, 15 letters: Most pertain to the Fort Totten Reservation

/2 Bishops' Papers
Inclusive dates: 1889-1926
Volume: 1 folder
Description: Arranged chronologically by administration. Most of the records in this series do not relate to Indian affairs. Most correspondence between the bishops and Indian missionaries is in the series, "Parishes and Indian Missions." Indian mission records are found in the correspondence of Bishop John Shanley, 1889-1909, 1 folder. Major correspondents include Bishop Martin Marty, O.S.B. and Bishop Vincent Wehrle, O.S.B.

/3 Priests' Files
Inclusive dates: 1889-1970s
Volume: Approximately .2 cubic foot
Description: The files of most Indian missionaries contain no records pertaining to American Indians. Most notable is the file of Reverend John F. Malo, which contains 50 letters, 1890-1898, 1904, primarily from St. Ann Mission, Belcourt.

/4 Annals, Diaries, and Histories
Volume: 1.1 cubic feet
Description: A. "Chronicles" (copies) of the Soeurs grises, Fort Totten Reservation Schools, 1874-1960, 1 cubic foot: in French and English; originals at the Soeurs grises Motherhouse (Montreal, Quebec, Canada)
C. Brother Giles Laugel's [O.S.B.] "Diary" (copy), 1883-1929, 1 folder

/5 Financial Reports
Inclusive dates: 1890-1967
Volume: .5 cubic foot and 1 reel of microfilm
Description: Arranged alphabetically by parish location with records for 1923-1957 on microfilm.

/6 Statistical Reports
Inclusive dates: 1916-1967
Volume: .2 cubic foot
Description: Arranged alphabetically by parish location.
A. Belcourt, St. Ann Church, 1916-1921, 1925-1936, 1938-1967, 1 folder
B. Dunseith, St. Louis Church and Immaculate Heart of Mary Mission, 1943-1967, 1 folder
C. Fort Totten, Our Lady of Seven Dolors Church, 1916-1921, 1924-1931, 1940-1967, 1 folder
D. St. John, St. John the Baptist Church, 1916-1921, 1924-1932, 1934-1967, 1 folder
E. St. Michael, St. Michael Church, 1916-1921, 1932, 1938-1967, 1 folder

/7 "Religious Sisters"
Inclusive dates: 1936-1979
Volume: .1 cubic foot
Description: Arranged alphabetically by community name.
A. Sisters of Charity [Soeurs grises], Montreal, Canada, 1936, 1938, 1960-1961, 1978-1979, 1 folder: correspondence regarding St. Michael's Mission and the Little Flower Indian School; major correspondents include Mother E. Gallant,
B. Sisters of St. Joseph, Crookston, Minnesota, 1943-1974, 1 folder: regarding Immaculate Heart of Mary Mission, Dunseith; correspondents include the mother superiors and the bishops

/8 Photographs
Inclusive dates: 1890s-1970s
Volume: Approximately 100 prints
Description: Arranged in a file entitled "Indian Missions and Missionaries" with the majority from St. Michael Mission.

/9 Sacramental Records
Inclusive dates: 1848-1969
Volume: 16 reels of microfilm
Description: Arranged alphabetically by parish location; locations of records for closed parishes and procedures for requesting sacramental records available online: 

A. Belcourt, St. Ann Church, St. Anthony Mission, and surrounding missions and stations, 1887-1969, 2 reels
B. Dunseith, St. Louis Church, 1883-ca. 1890s, 1943-1969, 1 reel: for St. Paul Mission, Tarsus, and Immaculate Heart of Mary Mission
C. Fort Totten, Our Lady of the Seven Dolors Church, 1918-1969, 1 reel
D. Leroy, St. Joseph Church, 1848-ca. 1870s (Indian-related), 1 reel
E. Neche, Ss. Nereus and Achilleus Church, 1848-ca. 1870s; 1 reel: for Assumption Church, Pembina
F. Olga, Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, ca. 1920s-1969 (Indian related), 1 reel
G. Pembina, Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, 1848-ca. 1870s, 1 reel
H. Rolla, St. Joachim Church, 1939-1969, 1 reel
I. Rolette, Sacred Heart Church, 1908-1959 (Indian-related), 1 reel
J. St. John, St. John Church, 1882-1969, 2 reels
K. St. Michael, St. Michael Church, 1874-1969, 2 reels
L. Wahpeton, St. John Church, 1883-1886, 1908-1969, 1 reel: for the Sisseton Reservation and the Wahpeton Government Indian School
M. Walhalla, St. Boniface Church, ca. 1920s-1969 (Indian-related) 1 reel

/10 Diocesan Newspaper
Inclusive dates: 1941-present
Volume: Few articles
Description: Dakota Catholic Action includes occasional articles on American Indians and Catholic evangelization within the diocese.