

**Harold Stansell, S.J.**

**ST. STEPHEN'S INDIAN MISSION**

**1884**

In 1884, Bishop O'Connor, who was aware of his responsibility to provide spiritual and educational facilities for the Indians who lived on the Wind River Reservations, sent Daniel W. Moriarity, recently ordained for service in the vicariate, to minister to the Catholics in Lander and to contact the proper authorities of the Indian Bureau to ascertain what could be done to help the Indians on the reservation. Father Moriarity succeeded in building a stone church in Lander and initiated conversations with the authorities responsible for the conduct of affairs pertaining to the reservation. The bishop needed financial help and he turned to Catholics in eastern dioceses and appealed for funds to make it possible to build a school on the reservation. An early response was made by Edward McGlynn, pastor of St. Stephen's parish in New York City. Father McGlynn promised an annual gift of at least \$200.00 plus sufficient Mass intentions for one and possibly two priests for each day of the year. Bishop O'Connor showed his appreciation for this contribution by designating St. Stephen patron of the proposed mission. (Casper, II, 286)

The Church's ministry among the Indians was limited by the policy of the United States officials in charge of Indian affairs. The government officials allowed one church organization to a tribe. Since the Episcopalians had established a school at Fort Washakie for the Shoshoni Indians the Catholic Church had to limit its missionary activity to evangelizing the Northern Arapaho tribe. In 1868 the United States government established the Wind River Reservation when it concluded a treaty with the Shoshone Indians. Ten years later the government officials violated the terms of the treaty when they forced the Shoshone

to share the reservation with the Northern Arapaho tribe.>StSteph1884>1

While Father Moriarity worked in the Lander area the bishop, who was aware of the activity of Jesuit priests and lay brothers in the Rocky Mountain Mission in the Northwest, endeavored to obtain men from the Society of Jesus who would establish a mission for the Northern Arapaho. He wrote to the vicar general of the Society and asked for men to come and work among the Indians on the Wind River Reservation. It seemed providential that at the time of the bishop's request there were German Jesuits who had recently established a mission in Buffalo, New York. These men had left their native land because the anti-Catholic policy of the government of the recently unified German Empire made it very difficult for them to carry on their ministry in that country. The Vicar General of the Society urged the superior of the Buffalo Mission, John B. Lessman, to send some men to the Wind River Reservation. The superior responded by sending, in the spring of 1884, Reverend John Jutz, S.J., and a lay Brother, Ursus Nunlist, S.J., to Wyoming. A little later Father John Aschenbrenner, S.J., took over in Lander, relieving Father Moriarity for another assignment.>StSteph1884>2 This promising beginning proved to be a disappointment and after a year and a half the Jesuits were recalled to Buffalo. The mission was eventually established at the time when the apostolic vicariate became part of the diocese of Omaha in 1885.

## Notes

StSteph1884>1 Mae Urbanek, *Wyoming Place Names* (Boulder, Colorado: Johnson Publishing, 1974), 228.>

StSteph1884>2 Gilbert J. Garraghan, S.J., *The Jesuits of the Middle United States* (NY: America Press, 1938), vol. 3, 513.