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**EISENMAN, FATHER SYLVESTER O.S.B. 1891-1948**

PAPERS, 1916-1962  
(bulk dates, 1920-1948 )  
Quantity.75 linear ft.

ACCESS: This collection is open for research without restrictions.

PHOTOGRAPHS: The Photographs are located in Box 2.

PRINTED MATERIAL: Printed Materials are located in Box 2.

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PROCESSED BY: Anne Hinseth December, 2000

## History

Fr. Sylvester Eisenman was born Norbert Eisenman to Edward Landelin Eisenman and Elizabeth Mary Hulsman on January 10, 1891 in New Albany, Indiana. Eisenman had five brothers, two who also became priests and one who died in infancy. In May of 1895, Edward Eisenman went Montana to work for the Kentucky-Montana Mining Company. He was killed in a freak accident in July of 1895.

Norbert Eisenman had a great desire to become a Jesuit and in 1906 he attended St. Meinard College. On Aug. 15, 1911 he took vows and received the name Sylvester. He was ordained as a priest on May 25, 1916 at St. Meinard Abbey, Indiana. Eisenman became a member of the Order of Saint Benedict.

Eisenman had contracted tuberculosis and his superiors felt that if he was sent as a missionary to North Dakota he could recover. He was sent to the Seven Dollors Mission at Forth Totten, ND in 1916. In the fall of 1918, he was transferred to Stephen, South Dakota and he spent the majority of his time on the road traveling to ten different missions. This constant travel earned him the name of Ti-kdi-sni or Never at Home. In 1921, three chiefs, Yellow Bird, Thunder Horse and Dave Zephier, personally petitioned Eisenman's abbot to have him permanently assigned to St. Paul's Mission in Marty, South Dakota. The petition was successful and Eisenman began his lifelong career at St. Paul's.

In 1920 Eisenman tried to establish a day school at Marty but it was unsuccessful. He realized that a boarding school would be a better option and in 1922 he opened the school with the help of from Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament in Philadelphia. For the next twenty years, Eisenman worked tirelessly for the Mission and the school by expanding the campus and raising funds. The publication *The Little Bronzed Angel* was created to help solicit funds for the school and inform the donors of the mission's activities. Eisenman received much assistance and support from Mother Katherine Drexel. With her help, Eisenman founded the Oblate Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, which began on October 6, 1935 with the admittance of its first postulants. The Order is located at St. Sylvester Convent in Marty, SD.

Eisenman died on September 14, 1948. The Marty Indian School is still in operation under the direction of the Yankton Sioux Tribe.

## Scope and Content Note

All of the materials in the Fr. Sylvester Eisenman Collection are photocopies of original documents. The source of the photocopies is unknown. The majority of materials in the collection concern the business of running the school and mission. There are few personal materials. The Eisenman Collection is divided into seven series:

### **Correspondence, Financial Documents, Legal Documents, Photographs, Printed Materials, Topical Files and Typescripts.**

The **Correspondence** series is divided into four sub-series: Incoming, Outgoing, Miscellaneous and Solicitations. The first two sub-series contain letters to and from Eisenman. These letters cover mission business and thank you letters for donations. Incoming and Outgoing sub-series are organized alphabetically. Inclusive dates were used when a recipient or author had more than one letter. A single date indicates only one letter. The Miscellaneous Correspondence is from Eisenman's peers, such as priests and other missionaries, but they were not addressed specifically to Eisenman. The majority of the letters concern Indian missions and their operation. Some of the miscellaneous correspondence, which covers St. Paul Mission business, was written after Eisenman's death. The Solicitation correspondence contains letters that were sent to donors requesting monetary contributions for the mission and school. Bookmarks and other ephemera that were enclosed with these letters were not removed and remain with

the letters. The Miscellaneous and Solicitation correspondence are organized chronologically.

The **Financial Documents** series concerns land holdings of the mission. The series contains receipts, property tax information and personal income materials and are arranged alphabetically by type of document.

The **Legal Documents** series contains legal papers concerning the land and taxability of the mission. These documents are arranged chronologically.

The **Photographs** series contains actual photographs (not photocopies of images) of an event that may be a pow wow or some other type of celebration at the mission. There is also a picture of small children, possibly Eisenman's nieces and nephew. Also included is a picture of "little Dan," which was used on solicitation letters and for *The Little Bronzed Angel* publication.

The **Printed Materials** series contains newspaper clippings concerning activities at the mission and several articles on Mother Katherine Drexel, including several of her obituaries. The materials are undated, and are arranged alphabetically by title of the article.

The **Typescript** series contains a diary whose author is unidentified, but is likely Eisenman. The diary contains records of day-to-day life at the mission that Eisenman directed. Also in this series are historical accounts on several topics about the Marty Indian School such as the nuns who served at Marty, the history of the school, and the Government Hospital for Indians. There are also several essays that cover Catholic and Native American topics.

The **Topical files** contain information on the construction of several buildings at the mission and the surrounding areas, real estate documents and school records from the Greenwood school and St. Paul's. In the St. Katherine's Chapel file are handwritten notes describing the painting *Heaven and the Roads to Heaven*.

### Additional Resources

Sylvester Eisenman Papers, Indianapolis Archdiocese Archives, Indianapolis, Indiana

*Little Bronzed Angel*, Chilson Periodicals, Special Collections, University of South Dakota, Vermillion, South Dakota

Carson, Mary Eisenman

Blackrobe for the Yankton Sioux: Fr. Sylvester Eisenman, O.S. B. (1891-1948). Chamberlain, S.D.: Tipi Press, c1989.

Cranford, J. Clyde

Priest, missionary, saint? Tigard, Ore.: J.C. Cranford, 1983.

Hessey, Theresa L.

The Native American Hand of God: the Oblate Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament. Thesis (M.A., History)--University of South Dakota, 1998.

Suttmiller, Father Francis

A history of St. Paul's Indian School at Marty, South Dakota. Thesis (M.A., School Administration)--University of South Dakota, 1963.

Wolff, Gerald W.

Father Sylvester Eisenman and Marty Mission. *South Dakota History* v. 5 no.  
4 1975 fall, Pierre: South Dakota State Historical Society, p.360-389

**Subject Headings:**

Eisenman, Sylvester, 1891-1948  
Benedictines -- South Dakota  
Catholic Church in South Dakota -- History  
Indians of North America -- South Dakota -- Missions  
Missionaries -- South Dakota  
St. Paul's Mission (Marty, S.D.)  
Yankton Indians -- Missions

Box No. Description

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**Box 1**

## CORRESPONDENCE (5 folders)

## Incoming

Ambrose

1934, Jan. 29

Backus, John J.

1940-1948

Brady, William O.

1942-1948

[Bruno, Fr. ?]

1934, Feb. 5

Cullen, Bernard A.

1939-1940

Drexel, Katherine

1935

Elliott, Hildebrand

1934

Esser, Ignatius

1944-1948

Evans, G.O.

1947, Aug. 11

Eyre, Edith

n.d.

FitzGibbon, Maurice

1929, Apr. 17

Greany, William C.

1933, Feb. 21

Gunderman, W.A.

1934

Hettich, S.L.

1932, Jan. 13

Hock, Lambern A.

1939-1940

Kern, Paul A.

1938, Jan. 22

La Pointe, Jacob

1936, Jan. 16

Lenore, Sister M.

1943, Mar. 26

Luddy, Michael G.

1926, Apr. 10

Maas, Melvin J.

1935, July 27

McMahon, Mary

1935, n.d.

Nash, Frank

1939, n.d.

Nedved, Emil B.

1947, June 2

Newkirk, Norris W.

1947, Feb. 17

Parrott, D. H.

1933, Sept. 27

Box No. Description

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**Box 1, cont.**

## CORRESPONDENCE, cont.

## Incoming, cont.

Patrik, Adolph  
1938, Aug. 2  
Patrik, V.J.  
1933  
Reilman, Charles  
1934, Feb. 1  
Roberts, W.O.  
1933-1936  
Rossiter, E.W.  
1935, Sept. 15  
Ryan, Helen Patricia  
n.d.  
Ryan, Mae Patricia  
1940  
Sagmoe, E.P.  
1938  
Schiltz, Martin A.  
1934, Feb. 14  
Speyer, Joseph  
1934, Feb. 5  
Stenson, James  
1934, July 6  
Strassmater, Bernard  
1934, Mar. 8  
Tennelly, J.B.  
1935-1947  
Tipton, J.E.  
1927, Sept. 14  
Vaeth, L.C.  
1943, May 7  
Walsh, G.J.  
1921, Sept. 27  
Wegner, Nicholas H.  
1941  
Whitlock, C.R.  
1941, Jan. 20

## Outgoing

Backus, John J.  
1940-1941  
Brady, William O..  
1939-1948  
Chancery Office  
1933, Feb. 27  
Cihak, Mr.  
1937, Dec. 1  
Collier, John  
1936, Jan. 22  
Cullen, Bernard  
1939-1941

Box No. Description

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**Box 1, cont.**

## CORRESPONDENCE, cont.

## Outgoing, cont.

Daniel, Fr.

n.d.

Drexel, Katherine

1935-1942

Esser, Ignatius

1921-1948

Estes, Annie J.

1938, Aug. 1

Flanagan, E.J.

1932, July 12

Greany, William C.

1933, Feb. 27

Jerabek, Esther

1934, Aug. 2

La Point, Jacob

1936, Jan. 20

Lenore, Sister M.

1943

McMahon, Mary

1935-1936

Muehl, Cecilia

1923, Mar. 21

Nash, Frank

1939

Newkirk, Norris W.

1947, Mar. 4

O'Hara, John F.

1952, Jan. 16

O'Niell, Arthur J.

1932

Parrott, D.H.

1933

Petrik, Adoph

1938, Aug. 1

Petrik, V.J.

1933-1937

Pohlen, John

1934, Feb. 28

Roberts, W. O.

1933-1936

Rossiter, E. W.

1935

Ryan, James H.

1939, July 21

Ryan, Miss Mae Patricia

1940

Sagmoe, E. P.

1938

Sheehan, Mrs. J.J.

1938, Nov. 16

Box No. Description

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**Box 1, cont.**

## CORRESPONDENCE, cont.

## Outgoing, cont.

Lambert G. Stendebach

1932, Aug. 3

Stone, Cora

1939, June 5

Tennely, J. B.

1935-1947

United States Land Office

1933, Sept. 16

Wade, Frank J.

1936, Oct. 20

Wegner, Nicholas H.

1933, Mar. 7

Whitlock, C.R.

1941

## Miscellaneous

1916-1962, n.d.

## Solicitations

1920-1929, n.d.

## FINANCIAL DOCUMENTS (6 folders)

Exempt Property Laws 1919, 1927

List of Taxable Property 1940-1957

Miscellaneous

Motion Picture Receipts 1932

Notice to Exempt Crop Acreage from Insurance 1925-1926

Permanent Exemptions 1926

Treasurer's Office Receipts 1922-1956

## LEGAL DOCUMENTS (1 folder)

Affidavit 1925, May 28

Plaintiffs' Brief 1939, July

Quit Claim Deed 1955-1956

Warranty Deed – State Form 1955, Nov.

## PHOTOGRAPHS (1 folder)

Event (22 photographs)

Little Dan (1 photograph)

## PRINTED MATERIALS (2 folders)

In Memory of Father Sylvester O.S.B. Marty South Dakota

News Clippings, n.d.



Box No. Description

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**Box 2**

## TYPESCRIPTS (3 folders)

Diary 1918-1929

History of Marty Indian School 1913-1947

*Government Hospital for Indians**History of the Mission**Marty**Notes on History of St. Paul's at Marty**The Sisters At Marty*

Untitled Year by year history

## Miscellaneous Writings

Address to Graduates, 1937, May 25

Benefactor's reactions to LBA [Little Bronzed Angel] and to

Appeals

*The Catholic Indian Mission of Saint Paul the Apostle* by Henry

Westrapp

*Concerning the Log House* information from Paul Picotte, 1944,

June

*Historical-Re Mission Lands and Taxes**Kate Drexel's New Year* (2 copies)*Memo Brief Marty Mission Matter**Omaha and Winnebago Indian Tribes in Nebraska Territory –**Location – Population* (2 copies)*Potawatomi Missions of Southeastern Kansas*

Untitled work, 1938, May 16

Untitled work, n.d.

## TOPICAL FILES (7 folders)

Buildings, Construction

Sacred Heart Chapel

St. Gregory's Chapel

St. Katherine's chapel

Real Estate

Greenwood, SD

Miscellaneous

School Records

Greenwood, South Dakota

St. Paul's School