

# The Plattsmouth Journal

## CELEBRATING 80 YEARS OF CATHOLICITY IN PLATTSMOUTH



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### HISTORY OF ST. JOHN'S PARISH, PLATTSMOUTH

By Right Rev. George Agius,  
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The first mention of missionaries ever being in the Plattsmouth vicinity is that of Fathers John Minguéz and John de Dios as early as in the year 1720.

When war broke out between France and Spain in 1719, the conflict spread to the colonies in North America. During the following year the Spaniards decided to strengthen and extend their dominions, and as part of this plan, an expeditionary party was sent from Santa Fe, New Mexico, with the ultimate purpose of establishing a presidio on the Platte, known to the Spaniards as Rio de Jesus-Maria. Padres Juan Minguéz and Juan de Dios—to call them more correctly—crossed the Platte river and entered the Pawnee county. After an advance of several days it was decided to retreat on Aug-

ust 11th. The men marched back some 29 miles and pitched camp for the night. Early the next morning the Indians attacked, opening fire with guns and bows. Only two of the soldiers escaped alive with Father Juan de Dios, who was captured by another band of Indians and was finally ransomed. Father Juan Minguéz lay dead when



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the carnage was over. (See "Heroes of the Cross," a book written by Rev. M. A. Habig and published by Fortuny's, New York).

Bandalier, the historian, places the occurrence at the junction of the Platte and Missouri rivers. It seems, therefore, fairly established that the first blood for the Faith of Christ in the Middle West

was shed right here in the very spot from which our little city of Plattsmouth derives its name.

The Missouri river in that time was known to the white people as St. Philip river. In 1804 Lewis and Clark on their westward voyage passed the present site of Plattsmouth, and about the middle of the eighteenth century, Father De Smet, S. J., passed these regions, because in one of his letters he speaks of the mouth of the Platte river.

In 1854, a treaty was made with the Otoe Indians near the mouth of the Platte river (Nebraska Historical Society, Vol. I). Beyond this, all one knows of Plattsmouth and vicinity is very little and doubtful. Indians and buffaloes inhabited the region.

#### First Inhabitant a Catholic

The first white inhabitant of Plattsmouth was Samuel Martin, a Catholic, who moved in 1854 from Iowa and built a trading post and organized the "PLATTSMOUTH" (Continued on Page 2)



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