

Painting In Northern California Church Was Hung 106 Years Ago

Father Florian's First Trip Into Area Was in 1853

By KATHERINE CHAPMAN
Mail Tribune Correspondent
Hornbrook — There was no church at all in the rough-and-tumble gold mining town of Sawyer's Bar in northern California in 1853 when Father Florian Schwenninger made his first trip into the Salmon river settlements. Soon, however, the "Little Padre of Paradise Flat" had won such affection in the hearts of the pioneers, Catholic and Protestant alike, that in 1855 they resolved to build a place of worship to encourage him to come often. Little further encouragement actually was needed, however, as the Salmon mountains reminded Father Florian (as he was always called) of the Tyrols of his native Austria and so endeared themselves to him that he visited the country as frequently as the size of his parish would allow.

He had arrived in San Francisco in August, 1852, having been encouraged to move to California by Bishop Alleyman of San Francisco whom he had met while serving churches in Utica and Syracuse, New York.

On Way to Mines
Less than a year later, in July, 1853, Father Florian was on his way to the mines of Shasta and Trinity counties, the first missionary priest to celebrate the mass within the boundaries of those counties.

Over the divide from Carville, down to Cecilville, thence to Sawyer's Bar, he made his first trip that year to the Salmon river settlements. Back and forth, on muleback and on foot he journeyed bringing the comforts and the sacraments of the church to his people.

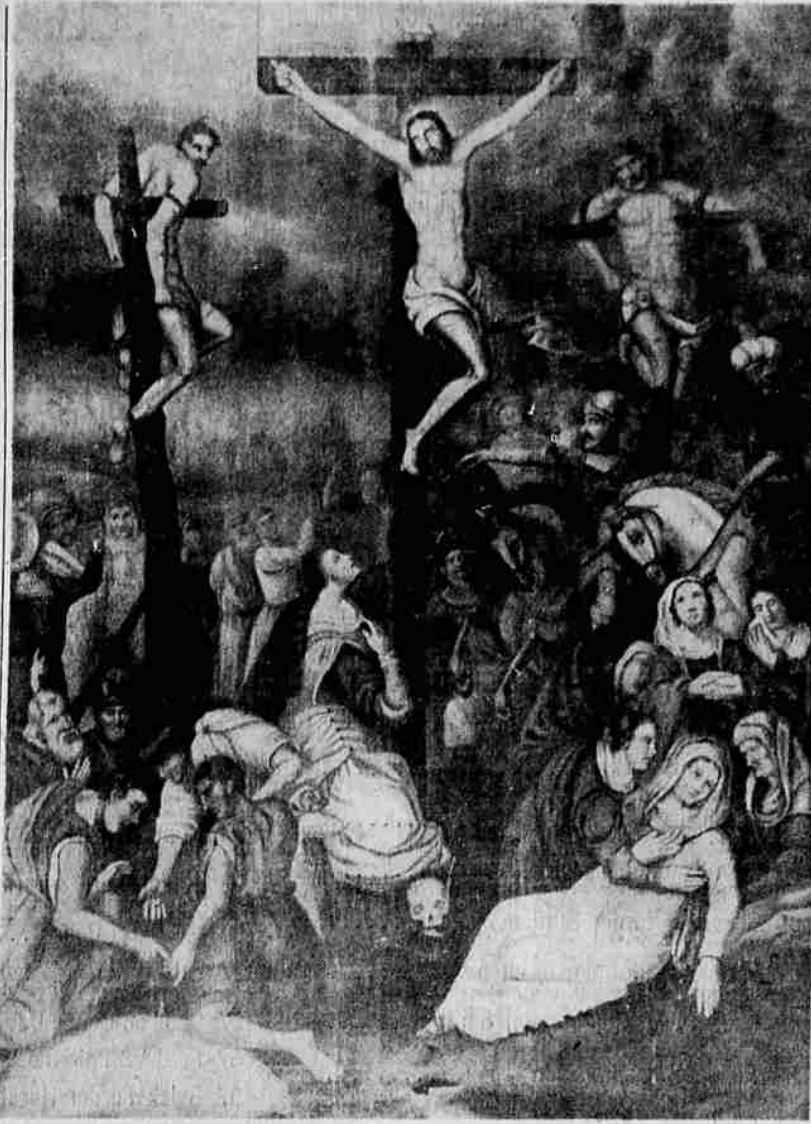
Having served as sole pastor of the vast wilderness that was Siskiyou county, in July, 1858, he was able to obtain an assignment as resident priest at Sawyer's Bar in his beloved Salmon mountain country.

Lives in Lean-to
Here in a lean-to at the rear of the church he lived with his cats and his chickens, ministering to the needs of the settlers, and conducting elementary school for the children of his congregation.

In his work with the ever-changing horde of gold-seekers, he made no distinction between Catholic and Protestant, Indian and white man.

If a need existed, he met it. His only reservation was that he accepted help for his church only from those of his faith.

And, here at last, with a church of his own, he could unroll the treasured parcel which he carried, wrapped in oiled silk, in his pack on his back. This was a painting of



'THE CRUCIFIXION' — This painting, which recently has been restored under the sponsorship of the Siskiyou County Historical Society, still hangs in the Sawyer's Bar church.

"The Crucifixion,"

Received by him as a gift when he left his homeland, it had been carefully preserved and guarded on all his travels through the mountains.

Hung Over Altar
The picture was hung on the wall over the altar, which itself, had been beautifully and intricately made by the little priest.

One hundred and six years have passed since Father Florian hung the picture in his beloved church, but the colors are still in fair condition, and when the light is right, all 32 faces in the painting may be clearly seen.

Time and the elements have ravaged the building, and dampness has begun to rot the canvas in the picture, but the fact that the building remains at all is a monument to the care and devotion given it by several generations of Sawyer's Bar families.

Two Small Rooms
On each side of the dais on which the altar stands is a small room about four by

nine feet, one used as the sacristy, the other as a confessional.

In one of these rooms may be seen a few of the headboards which Father Florian carved for the graves in the cemetery beside the church. These have been brought inside to be preserved from the weather, but unfortunately they were taken in too late. The inscriptions themselves are undecipherable, but the beautifully carved edgings remain as evidence of his artistry.

Carving on the headboards was always free. The whipsawed boards were brought to him and the engraving was done in loving remembrance of the faithful.

Failing Health
Father Florian remained at Sawyer's Bar until 1866 when failing health forced him to retire to Marysville, Calif., at the age of 57. There has never been a resident priest at Sawyer's Bar since that time.

Occasional visits were made by different priests for many years, but these visits have become more and more infrequent. Perhaps Sawyer's Bar is a little too distant, or modern conveniences do not take to the difficult road over the mountains as did the hardy mules of the pioneers. It is an historical shrine now dear to all who revere the memory of those early-day settlers. In 1928 a plaque was placed on the corner of the church which reads:

"Erected 1855. Dedicated to the memory of Father Florian and the pioneers of Sawyer's Bar on Oct. 7, 1928 by Mountain Dawn Parlor No. 120 of the Native Daughters of the Golden West and by Liberty Parlor No. 193 of the Native Sons of the Golden West."

In 1953 a group of people interested in the preservation of the old church organized a "Committee for Restoration of Sawyer's Bar church." One of its first acts was to request the sponsorship of the Siskiyou County Historical Society.

Scholarship List Distributed by AL

Local high school seniors who are interested in obtaining financial assistance for higher education have been reminded of a publication, "Need a Lift?" distributed by the American Legion, Medford.

The educational handbook contains hundreds of college and vocational school scholarship listings for qualified high school students. This publication, revised annually, is recognized as one of the most complete sources of career and scholarship information in the United States, according to Legion Commander Granville Brittan.

Brittan pointed out that the publication doesn't limit its listings to children of veterans, but also contains scholarships and educational aids available to all students.

"Every year," Brittan continued, "there are thousands of scholarships and grants for higher education which go unused. This is due in part to the fact that too many needy, qualified high school students are unaware of these offers of financial assistance."

The handbook, prepared by the education and scholarship committee of the Legion's National Child Welfare Commission, is now in its revised edition. Distribution of more than a quarter of a million copies since 1931 includes those sent to Medford High school for student use.

John Norris Pledged In U of O Fraternity

Eugene — John C. Norris has been pledged to Phi Kappa Sigma fraternity at the University of Oregon during the winter term, according to the office of student affairs.

Norris, son of Mr. and Mrs. Vellan A. Norris, 831 Minnesota ave., Medford, was one of 63 men pledged to local fraternities during the term.

Los Angeles Pastor to Speak at Discussion

The third of a series of discussion meetings by the Church and the Peace panel has been scheduled April 4 at 8 p.m. in the St. Mark's Episcopal parish hall.

Guest speaker will be the Rev. Stephen H. Fritchman of the First Unitarian church, Los Angeles, Calif.

In its second discussion meeting last Sunday, the panel presented a general view of world disarmament and development, with special emphasis on the "Great Decision" topic

RIVER VOLUME

Portland — The Columbia river, the boundary between Washington and Oregon, carries more water than all the other American streams located in the Pacific coast region combined.

proposed for consideration by religious groups.

Under discussion was the subject, "What does the Christian say about the fact that the major factor in our prosperity is the arms race?"

Participating were Dr. George Roseberry, Methodist church, moderator; the Rev. Escl Hiser, Church of the Brethren; the Rev. Theodore J. Ehrlich, St. Mark's Episcopal church; Richard Ketchum, Presbyterian church; Arnold Jenny, Methodist church; Robert Grant, Catholic church; and Mrs. Harlan Bosworth Jr., Episcopal church.

During the meeting, the group and audience voted to continue the discussion each month to determine the churches' position on peace programs, and to allow members of the various churches to meet.

MHS Junior Receives Mention in 'Tech Show'

James Johnston, a junior at Medford High school, has received honorable mention ribbons on a set of architectural drawings exhibited in the state drawing exhibit at the Benson Polytechnic "tech show" in Portland.

He is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Jim Johnston, 914 South Newtown ave., Medford.

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