

**JOHN BAX S.J.
(1817-1852)
MISSIONARY
AMONG THE
INDIANS**

CONTENT

Foreword	5
Sources	7
Youth in Weelde and Turnhout	9
To America	10
Brief history of the Osage	11
Initiative for the catholic Osage mission	13
Start of the Osage mission	16
Sketch of the situation of the "Catholic Osage Mission"	19
Beginning of the education	19
Pastoral care	21
Indian language and fight against the medicine men	23
Missionary commitment	25
Commitment for other Indian nations	29
Ordeal by epidemics	30
Last months and death of John Bax S.J.	31
Appendices	39
1. Page from the register of baptisms from the parish of Saint Michael in Weelde 1817	40
2. Relationship between the priest brothers John and Jacob Bax and the priest brothers John and Peter Timmermans	42
3. Declaration of graduation from secondary school 1840	45
4. Informatio de Joanne Bax studioso 1840	46
5. Passport of J.J. Bax 1840	50
6. Passenger list, 1840	53
7. Letter of 9. February 1849 of John Bax	54
8. Letter of 14. June 1852 of John Bax	57

John Bax S.J., missionary among the Indians

FOREWORD

From my mother's side of my family I was always aware of the existence of monsignor Jacobus Bax, born in Weelde, Belgium, who died as missionary bishop in Mongolia (China). My grandmother¹ possessed a picture of him in the clothing of a Mandarin. When I got interested in my genealogy in the late 1980s, I discovered that this Bishop had an older brother, Joannes, who apparently was a Redemptorist, and emigrated to the United States of America. More was not known, and in those years could not be traced.

Last year, after a long interval, I again became involved with my family history. I went to Louvain, Belgium, to visit the archives of the Missionaries of Scheut to research information about the missionary Bishop. There I found, once again, a notation concerning an older brother who seemed to have gone to America as Redemptorist. That led to a search for him on internet. Eventually I found him by anglicizing his name from Joannes Bax to John Bax and by adding the title 'Father' used for priests in the English-speaking world. On the website of the "Osage Mission, Neosho County Museum" in St. Paul, Kansas, USA, I found him named as co-founder of the mission. I have corresponded with this museum, and then with the Midwest Jesuit Archives in America receiving a lot of information about "John Bax", who, incidentally, turns out not to have been a Redemptorist but a Jesuit.

From the museum and the archivist of the Midwest Jesuit Archives a lot of information was sent to me. I learned that three letters from John Bax had been published. These were written on the initiative of one of his colleagues in order to be sent around, probably to keep in touch with those interested in the mission, and possibly also for the purpose of fundraising. At least one more letter is preserved that is not published. There are also publications on the mission among the Osage Indians in which reference is made to John Bax. All this offered enough material to write an article about him.

The primary sources are Bax's letters, three of which are published in the book "Western Missions and Missionaries".² He sometimes writes very vividly about his life and work. He often gives a story or an anecdote to illustrate some experience or finding. Therefore in this article I quote frequently from his letters, precisely because in them it is Bax expressing himself and by doing this we can get a good picture of him, and of both the difficulties and of the beautiful moments he experienced in America. In

¹ Julia Dirkx (Turnhout 1903-Tilburg 1994), daughter of Joanna Cornelia Bax (Weelde 1864-Turnhout 1940) and granddaughter of Mateas Bax (Weelde 1826-Turnhout 1898). Mateas is a younger brother of the missionary Bishop.

² The literature used is found below under Sources.

John Bax S.J., missionary among the Indians

addition to these primary sources there are two publications of importance: "Beacon on the Plains", a copy of which was send to me by the aforementioned museum, and "The Jesuits of the Middle United States".

I would like to thank Margaret Diskin of the Osage Mission, Neosho County Museum, and David P. Miros of the Midwest Jesuit Archives. By sending all their information on Joannes Bax they gave me the taste to write this article. I hope this article provides as much enjoyment to family members and other interested parties, as the research and writing gave to me.

November 7, 2014

Dominique F.A. Donders pr.,
Helmond, Nederland.
E-mail: Info@alligatusspiritu.nl.

English translation
August 8, 2015
(Corrections and editorial
Sister Mother Bernard Marie,
Poor Clares Monastery,
Eindhoven, Netherlands.
Recently she and her sisters
moved back to the United States)



*Jacob Bax, Apostolic Vicar of
Mongolia (and bishop from
1871-1895), younger brother of
John Bax S.J.
(Picture: Archives KADOC,
Leuven, Belgium)*

SOURCES

AR 1848

Annual report of the commissioner of Indian affairs for 1848, online:
<http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/History/History-idx?type=turn&id=History.AnnRep4650&entity=History.AnnRep4650.p0555&q1=bax>.

AR 1852

United States. Office of Indian Affairs, *Annual report of the commissioner of Indian affairs for the year 1852*, Southern superintendency, nr. 38, page 108, online:
<http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/History/History-idx?type=turn&entity=History.AnnRep52.p0107&id=History.AnnRep52&isize=M>

BotP

Beacon on the Plains by Mary Paul Fitzgerald, Leavenworth, Kansas, The Saint Mary College 1939 (reprint Osage Mission Historical Society, St. Paul, Kansas).

Burns

A history of the Osage People, by Louis F. Burns, The University of Alabama Press, Tuscaloosa, Alabama, USA, 2004 (originally published by the author in 1989).

Jes.

The Jesuits of the Middle United States by Gilbert J. Garraghan S.J. in three volumes, Volume II, Chicago Loyola University Press 1984 (originally 1938). This book can be read online:
<https://archive.org/details/jesuitsofthemidd008652mbp>.

Kok

Scheiden doet lijden, Belgische Opstand en de Tiendaagse Veldtocht in Turnhout en Tilburg [Divorce makes suffer, the Belgian revolt and the Ten-days Campaign in Turnhout and Tilburg], article by H. de Kok, published in the first number of the Tilburgse Historische Reeks [Tilburg Historical Series] (1992), and published online by the Stichting tot Behoud van Tilburgs Cultuurgoed [Foundation to preserve the Cultural Inheritance of Tilburg]:
<http://www.historietilburg.nl/thr/thr1.De%20Kok.htm>.

John Bax S.J., missionary among the Indians

WL

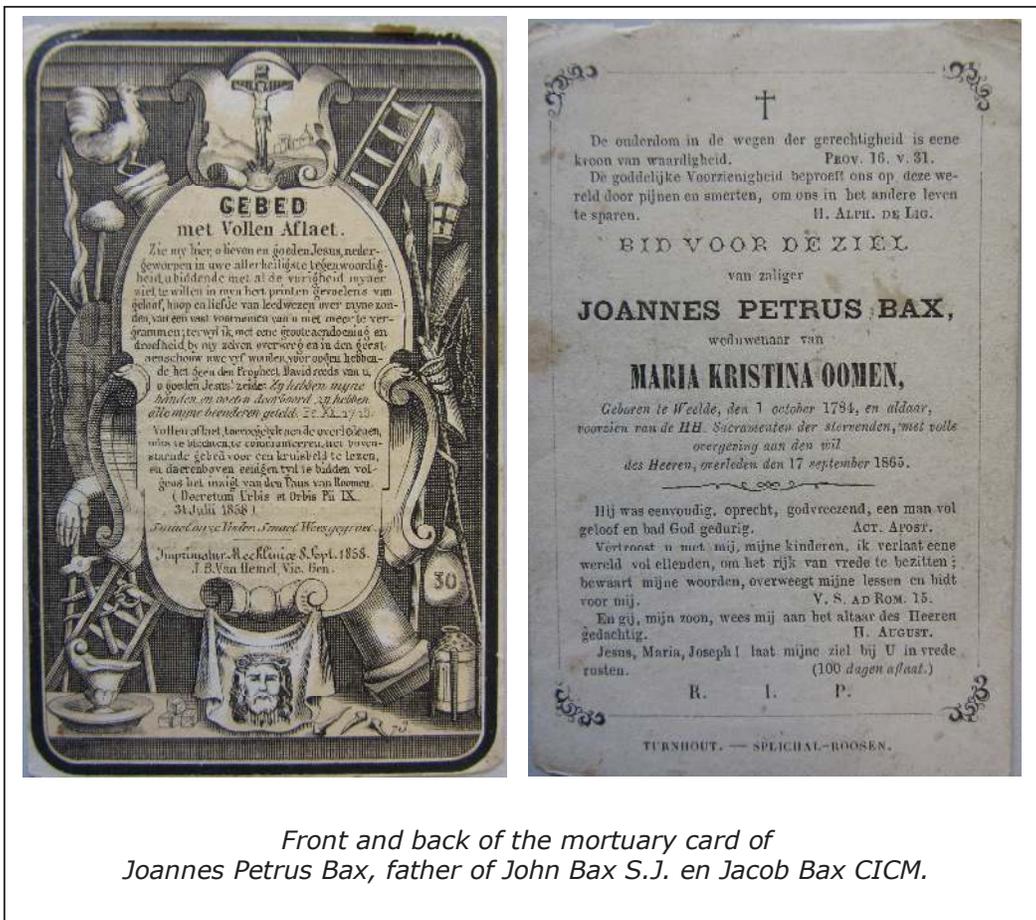
Woodstock Letters, a record of current events and historical notes connected with the colleges and missions of the Soc. of Jesus in North and South America, published by Woodstock College. Online: <http://cdm.slu.edu/cdm/landingpage/collection/woodstock>.

WMM

Western Missions and Missionaries, A series of Letters by Rev. P.J. de Smet of the Society of Jesus, New York, P.J. Kenedy, Excelsior Catholic Publishing House (1863). Online: <https://archive.org/details/westernmissionsa00smetric>.

Website of the Osage Mission, Neosho County Museum:

<http://www.osagemission.org>.



Front and back of the mortuary card of Joannes Petrus Bax, father of John Bax S.J. en Jacob Bax CICM.

Youth in Weelde and Turnhout

John Bax was born January 14, 1817 as the oldest child in the family of Joannes Petrus Bax and Maria Christina Oomen³ in the village of Weelde near Turnhout, in the Flemish (Dutch) speaking part of Belgium. Immediately after his birth he was baptized by the midwife, most probably because of the danger of death. The day after he was baptized "sub conditione" in the Saint Michael Church in Weelde.⁴ That day his father also reported the birth to the civil authority in the "Commune de Weelde, Province d'Anvers, Arrondissement de Turnhout", as it reads in the French-speaking birth-certificate⁵. Like his father and both grandfathers he received the first name *Joannes*. *Jacobus* became his second name. This could be after his uncle Jacobus Bax⁶, who died a year earlier. After him followed three brothers and one sister. These were: Adrianus (1820-1891), Joanna Maria (1821-1861), Jacobus (1824-1896)⁷ and Mateas (1826-1898). While the children were still relatively young their mother died on May 2, 1835 in the village Poppel, where she and her husband were living and farming at that time. Later on the widower returned to Weelde, where he died in 1865.

At the time of his mother's death John was eighteen years old. Most likely by this time he was no longer living at home, but following an education in the Society of Jesus (Jesuits)⁸. At any rate in August 1840 according to the information given for his entry into America, his professors from the Jesuit institute *P.J. de Nef* in Turnhout make the remark that he had already been feeling a vocation to the Jesuits for six years⁹. By then he was seen as a very suitable candidate to be sent to America. How he came to the decision to enter the Jesuits, or how his vocation developed

³ Their marriage ceremony was in Weelde on 5th April 1815, when they were 30 and 20 years old. He was born in Weelde, and she came from Baarle-Nassau, a Dutch village, which also includes Belgian enclaves that form the Belgian village Baarle-Hertog.

⁴ That means 'under the condition' that he was not already validly baptized. See appendix 1 for a reproduction of the page from the Register of Baptisms.

⁵ Probably this birth-certificate led to the misunderstanding in the Society of Jesus and in America that John Bax was born in Turnhout on 15th of January 1817 instead of in Weelde on 14th of January 1817. In addition Jes. page 513 mistakenly says that Bax was born in "Merxplas in Belgium". This misunderstanding can be explained by Bax calling himself in a letter of 14th of June 1852 (cited in the aforementioned book) a "Brother in Belgium & a Merxplas man" to the letter's recipient. Bax had lived in Merksplas, as we will see further on.

⁶ In the French speaking birthcertificate his Christian names appear as Jean Jacques.

⁷ Jacob is the well known later missionary of the Congregation of Scheut, who as bishop became apostolic vicar in Mongolia (China).

⁸ Strangely enough here and there is alleged that he had become Redemptorist. For example in the archives of the missionaries of Scheut and in publications about his brother Jacob Bax. See for his study also appendix 2.

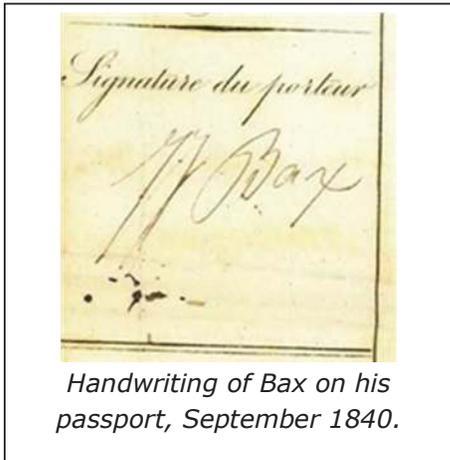
⁹ *Informatio de Joanne Bax studioso, Societatis nostrae candidato pro America*, d.d. 26 August 1840 (Midwest Jesuit Archives, USA). See appendix 4.

John Bax S.J., missionary among the Indians

to become a missionary in America, is unknown. For certain we know that he was admitted on the 12th of November 1840 to the Society of Jesus¹⁰. This was in the United States of America, for he had entered the country on October 19, 1840 in New York¹¹. It is possible that the example of his father's nephew, Peter J. Timmermans, S.J. played a roll¹².

Shortly before his departure, in the presence of the notary public, Hippolytus C. de Chaffoy in Merksplas, Bax gave total power of attorney¹³ to his grandnephew¹⁴ Father John H. Timmermans¹⁵ of that place. Thus during his absence from Europe juridical and financial matters could be handled in his name. This is especially important in view of the expected

share of the inheritance from his father and the division of that among the children. According the document, the student Bax lived at that time in Merksplas, but according his passport, in Weelde.



To America

A beautiful original document is preseved of Bax' departure as missionary across the Atlantic Ocean: his passport¹⁶. It also bears a description of the bearer, from which we learn that Bax had brown hair,

¹⁰ In publications two different dates are given. The website of the Osage Mission, Neosho County Museum in Kansas, USA (www.osagemission.org) states that he joined the Jesuits on the 12th of November. This is in line with the inscription on the tombstone of Father John Bax S.J., and with BotP, page 165. However, on page 407 of "Osage Mission Baptisms, Marriages, and Interments 1820-1886" by Louis F. Burns, the date of 19th of November is mentioned, of which the source is J.B. Miège S.J. After I noticed this difference I corresponded with David P. Miros, Ph.D., of the Midwest Jesuit Archives, as well as with Margaret Diskin of the Osage Mission, Neosho County Museum in St. Paul, Kansas (USA). The latter let me know that the information on their website and for the book of Mary Paul Fitzgerald both came from the archives of the Jesuits. Their source was a registration of the death of John Bax by J.B. Miège, S.J. By comparision it appeared to her that Louis F. Burns probably transcribed the date wrongly from the original handwriting of J.B. Miège. He should have read "on the 12th of november 1840".

¹¹ Passengerlist Barque Eliza Thornton. See appendix 6.

¹² See for the family-relationship and for more information appendix 2.

¹³ Notarial documents Antwerp, Merksplas (1833-1843) Notary De Chaffoy, Hyppoliet Charles. Public Record Office Antwerp, Document nr. 0044, dated 5 September 1840.

¹⁴ For the familyrelationship: see the scheme in appendix 2.

¹⁵ Born in Turnhout in 1783, he was ordained priest in 1814. In 1819 he came as chaplain to Merksplas, to become pastor there from 1820 until his death in 1862.

¹⁶ Source: the Midwest Jesuit Archives, 4511 West Pine Boulevard, Saint Louis, Missouri 63108, USA. Website: www.jesuitarchives.org. See the reproduction and the transcription in appendix 3.

John Bax S.J., missionary among the Indians

eyebrows, beard and eyes, as well as an oval face with a large forehead, an average nose, a large mouth and a round chin. His height was 1.74 metres (5 feet 8½ inches). From an inscription on the passport by the captain of the ship bringing him from Antwerp to New York, we know that he left in September 1840¹⁷.

From the passenger list delivered by Captain Leander Fross on October 19, 1840 at the New York harbor, we know that "*Joannes ja Cobus* (sic !) *Bax*", arrived as a student at the age of 23. Aboard the *Barque Eliza Thornton* were 22 persons, among whom two Clergyman from the United States and France, eight female teachers from Belgium, two students from the Netherlands and three from Belgium. The remaining seven passengers also came from Belgium¹⁸.

We may assume that in America Bax was immediately called John, the English equivalent of the Dutch Jan, the French Jean and the Latin Joannes. It is by this name that he is further known in the publications and in the archives of the Jesuits and in the Osage Mission. In America Joannes Jacobus Bax continued his theological studies. His "*humaniora*" he had finished "*cum laude*" in Turnhout.¹⁹ Eventually "*John B.* (sic!) *Bax*" was ordained priest in Saint Louis, Missouri (USA) August 19, 1846.²⁰ Before his departure to the Osage he was shortly active in the pastorate in Richfountain, Osage County, Missouri.²¹ However, by April 7, 1847 we find him in St. Louis as companion and co-worker of Father Schoenmakers. They then depart together, with three brothers, for what will become their lifework: the mission work among the Indians of the Osage Nation.²²

Brief history of the Osage

The Osage form one of the original Indian nations of the present United States of America. They belong to the Sioux-languagefamily. In their own language they are called Ni-u-kon-ska.²³ Originally they lived in the Ohio

¹⁷ "Vu a la sortie de ce port pour Newyork par le navire Americaine Eliza Thornton capitaine L. Fross, Anvers le 8 Septembre 1840" with two signatures.

¹⁸ See appendix 6.

¹⁹ See appendix 4.

²⁰ Friendly information by e-mail d.d. 30 October 2014 of David P. Miros, Ph.D., Jesuit Archives Central United States, Saint Louis, Missouri (USA). Curious is the second letter "B" in the name of Bax, which would refer to "Baptist", but as we saw, both Bax' civil and baptismal second name was Jacobus [Jacob or James].

²¹ Jes. page 537.

²² P.M. Ponziglione SJ says that they left Saint Louis University for "The Far West" (WL Vol. VIII (1884), page 142). Elsewhere is spoken about the great knowledge about medicine which Bax had (WMM page 308). He acted also as a doctor. Did he perhaps also study medicine at the medical department of the new university in St. Louis?

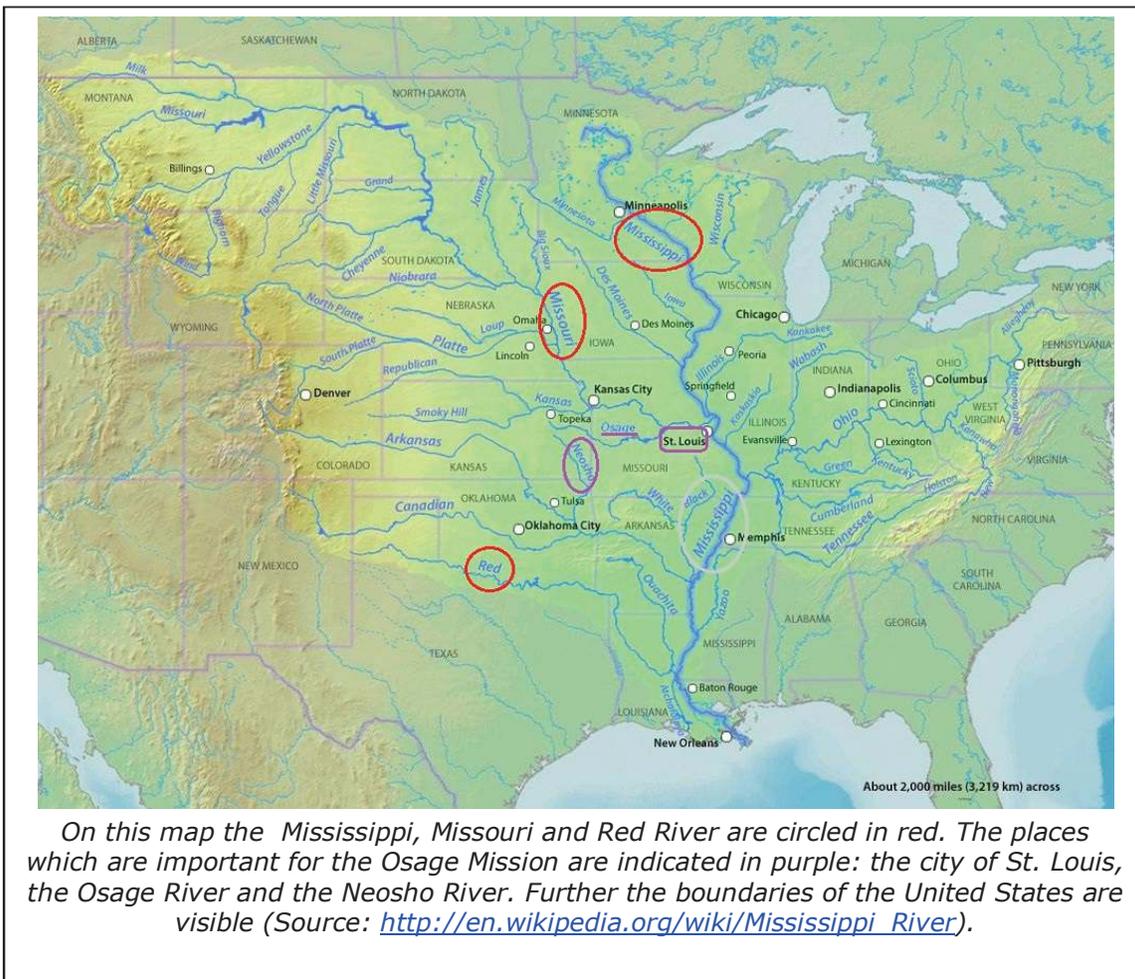
²³ The name roughly translates as "mid-waters". This and much of the following information is taken from the website http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Osage_Nation.

John Bax S.J., missionary among the Indians

River valley area. From there they migrated west, where in the middle of the 17th century they were found to the west of the Mississippi River, in the present states of Arkansas, Missouri, Kansas and Oklahoma. In 1673 French explorers were the first Europeans to make contact with the Osage.

In the beginning of the 18th century the Osage dominate the great area between the Missouri and the Red River. After the end of the Seven Years War in 1763, the large territory of Louisiana west of the Mississippi was ceded by France to Spain, while the territory east of the Mississippi went to England. In October 1800 France gets Louisiana back from Spain, to sell it in 1803 to the United States (US), the so called Louisiana Purchase²⁴.

In 1808 the first treaty was signed between the Osage and the



government of the US. It would be the first of a long series, by which the Osage ceded territory to the US, which in this way became available to

²⁴ See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louisiana_Purchase.

John Bax S.J., missionary among the Indians

white settlers. It lead many times to condemnable events, like breach of contract on the side of the US. The Osage moved from their homelands on the Osage River to western Missouri. After 1825 they came to live in a reservation in the present state of Kansas. In 1854 the US erected Kansas Territory, which in 1861 – after seceding the western part to Colorado – was admitted as a state in the US.

After the American Civil War (1861-1865) the Osage saw themselves forced to secede more territory to the US. Eventually in 1870 they sold their remaining territory in Kansas to move to a new reservation to the south, in the present state of Oklahoma. Moreover they bought land in what now is called Osage County, and so retained more rights and sovereignty to their reservation compared to other Indian Nations.

Initiative for the catholic Osage mission

In 1843 because of certain grievances, a number of chiefs of the Osage traveled to Washington to see president John Tyler²⁵ of the United States. When they reached the city of St. Louis²⁶ at the Mississippi, the American authorities persuaded them to send a written petition with their grievances instead of going further. They agreed with, but with the threat that if their grievances weren't redressed, they would go to Washington to make a personal call on the president. In the written request the Osage, for the first time, ask for Catholic missionaries.

The reason they asked for them from the government is clearest from an excerpt from the petition²⁷:

"By the treaty of 1825, fifty-four sections of land were reserved which were to be sold by the government and the proceeds applied for schools in this nation. This land has, since the treaty, been sold by the government for two dollars an acre²⁸ - the interest of this sum is contemplated to apply to schools for the Osages. & [!] for this purpose the government is requested to provide missionaries, to send among us - We prefer the Catholic missionaries, & would not wish to have any other - and untill [!] we have them to educate our young men, and teach them how to use the implements of husbandry, it is not worth while to provide us with ploughs and such articles, not knowing how to use them, they are of no value to us and the cause given is this the same articles are sold to the whites for

²⁵ He lived from 1790-1862 and was the tenth president of the USA (1841-1845).

²⁶ City in Missouri. Founded by the French in 1764, it was important as a settlement for the trade between the Osage and the white colonists. Colonists from the east arrived frequently here, to move further westwards in caravans.

²⁷ BotP, page 66. Petition of Osage Chiefs to president Tyler 14 june 1843.

²⁸ An acre is a measure of surface of almost 4047 m² or almost 40.5 hectare.

John Bax S.J., missionary among the Indians

mere trifles - as the game is becoming scarce²⁹ & the living dependent upon it more and more precarious every year, we see the necessity of turning our attention to agriculture, and for this purpose the missionaries are much needed, & from the little acquaintance we have with the missionaries heretofore sent among us as well as among other Indians, we think the Catholic would send us the best."

The main reason for the request for missionaries lay first of all, thus, in the need of education, and then especially education in husbandry. After this first petition an answer came that the government didn't want to have any "sectarian control" over an Osageschool.³⁰ In the next years the Osage continued to insist on Catholic missionaries for a school.

A new American superintendent for the Indian tribes, Major Thomas H. Harvey, supported the idea. He is named in the oldest letter of John Bax of which we know. It is nice to give his, naturally coloured, conception of the origins of the Osage Mission. On June 1, 1850 Bax writes to his fellow-Jesuit, Pieter-Jan de Smet,³¹ about, among other things, the start of the Catholic Osage mission.³²

"You are aware, that this mission was, during several years, in the hands of the Presbyterians. They were obliged to abandon it in 1845.³³ Those gentlemen were forced to come to this resolution by the Indians themselves, who were fully determined never to adopt the doctrine of Calvin. In the course of the same year, Major Harvey, superintendent of the Indian tribes, having assembled in Council the different tribes of the Osage nation, exposed to them, in the liveliest colors, the advantages of a good education; he added, that if such should prove their will, their Great Father (the President) would send them missionaries to instruct their children. At this proposition, the Great Chief replied, in the name of the Council:

"Our Great Father is very kind; he loves his red-skinned children. Hear what we have to say on this subject. We do not wish any more such missionaries as we have had during several years; for they never did us any good. Send them to the whites; perhaps they may succeed better with them. If our Great Father desires that we have missionaries, you will tell him to send us Blaek-gowns, who will teach us to pray to the Great Spirit in the French³⁴ manner. Although several years have elapsed since

²⁹ This must refer to the buffalo hunt, which was held twice a year.

³⁰ BotP page 68.

³¹ He was born in Dendermonde, Belgium, in 1801 and died in Saint Louis, Missouri (USA) in 1873.

³² WMM page 351-352.

³³ Bax makes a mistake in the year. The Protestant mission stopped earlier.

³⁴ In contrast with the "English" manner, which means Catholic in contrast with Anglican-protestant or Presbyterian.

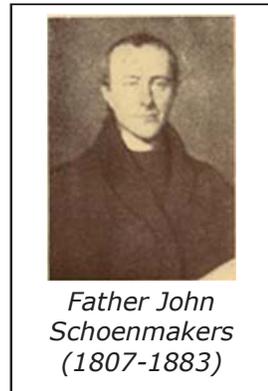
John Bax S.J., missionary among the Indians

they have visited us, we always remember this visit with gratitude; and we shall be ever ready to receive them among us, and to listen to their preaching."

The superintendent, a just and liberal man, wished only the welfare of the Indians. Although a Protestant, he communicated this reply to the Government, and supported and confirmed it with his own remarks and observations. In pursuance with his advice, the President had recourse to the Superiors of our Society, requesting them, to assume the charge of this mission.

At first, the Father Provincial offered some objections, knowing that no one had yet been able to succeed in ameliorating the condition of this people, under the double relation of spiritual and temporal. In the interval, the Indians were in the most painful uncertainty, not knowing whether the "Great Father" would grant or refuse them their petition. But they were soon satisfied; our Society accepted the mission."

In the request of the Osage "Great Chief" to send "Black-gowns" as missionaries, John Bax refers to an earlier visit made by them to the Osage. In a footnote De Smet states that in 1820 M. de la Croix (in 1863 canon in Ghent, Belgian) was the first to visit the Osage. The Jesuit Charles Felix van Quickenborne³⁵ visited them a few years later, as did reverend Lutz. The term "Black-gowns" specifically indicated members of the Society of Jesus. The next Jesuit to visit them was John Schoenmakers.



*Father John
Schoenmakers
(1807-1883)*

Concerning this Bax writes:

"In the autumn of 1846, the Reverend F.³⁶ Schoenmakers quitted St. Louis to go to the Osages, with the intention of returning, after having examined the state of affairs, the houses, etc. He came back to St. Louis in midwinter, and his second departure was retarded until the following spring.

After Father Schoenmakers had left them, the poor Indians counted the days and the hours until spring, at which time he promised to return to them; but they waited in vain ! The year glided past; they lost all hope of seeing him again. Nevertheless, they were resolved to accept none but Catholic missionaries."

³⁵ Born in Deinze, Belgium in 1788 and died in Florissant, Missouri (USA) in 1837.

³⁶ The F. (also "Fr.") stands for "Father", by which a priest is referred to in the Anglosaxon world.

Start of the Osage mission

John Bax was the younger of the two Jesuit Fathers who got the leading of the new mission post. He was the assistant of John Schoenmakers, who was born as Joannes Schoenmakers in 1807 in the hamlet Waspik near Waalwijk in Northern-Brabant, Netherlands.³⁷ Schoenmakers went in his youth to the De Nef-school in Turnhout, as did his ten years younger colleague from Weelde later. This school is named after Peter J. de Nef³⁸, a manufacturer of mattress ticking. He founded a Latin school, and played a part in the War of Belgian Independence of 1830 against "Holland" (the Netherlands). His free and independent school flourished opposite to the state school of the Dutch King William I.³⁹ After Belgium independence he continued his school until his death. At the request of his daughter the Society of Jesus took over the school on October 7, 1845. Even before this Jesuits were acting as teachers, as appears from Joannes Bax' study-testimony of 1840 (see footnote 9 and appendix 4)⁴⁰.

In 1833 Schoenmakers left as a young priest for the United States, where he entered the Society in January 1834. Between 1835 and 1847 he was active in Missouri. After inspecting the location of the future Osage Mission he later returned as superior. He stayed in the Osage Mission for the rest of his life. When he died in 1883, the Osage Nation had already left, thirteen years earlier, for a reservation in the present state of Oklahoma, where he visited them at least twice. White settlers came in their place, to whom Schoenmakers gave pastoral care. Thanks to him the education, originally started for the children of the Osage Indians was continued by the missionaries. In this way he played an important role in the development of the area, where the Osage Mission in 1895 officially became the city of St. Paul.⁴¹

With the two priests, Bax and Schoenmakers, three lay Jesuit brothers also went to the Osage Mission as co-workers: Thomas Coghlan (died 1853), John de Bruyn (1814-1865) and John Sheehan (died 1880).⁴² A fourth brother, Thomas O'Donnell (1820-1877), came a year later from St. Louis.⁴³ Five missionaries from the Society of Jesus left in the spring of 1847 from St. Louis westwards over the Kansas prairies with an ox-drawn

³⁷ Sources from <http://www.osagemission.org/schoenmakers.html>. Unlike John Bax there do exist photographs of him. The one on page 15 comes from the website of the Osage Mission, Neosho County Museum.

³⁸ Born in Gierle, Belgium, in 1774 and died in Turnhout, Belgium, in 1844.

³⁹ See Kok.

⁴⁰ According to BotP page 152 the Belgian missionaries and Jesuits Van Quickenborne and De Smet also received their first education at the Institute of De Nef.

⁴¹ A short biography of Schoenmakers is found in BotP page 151-164.

⁴² BotP page 17. Here and in the following the journey to, and reception in the Osage Mission is told.

⁴³ BotP page 208-209.

John Bax S.J., missionary among the Indians

wagon and a few lumbering carts with their baggage. We let Bax speak for himself about the journey from St. Louis to the new mission post and the first encounter with the Indians.⁴⁴

"When all our preparations were completed, Father Schoenmakers, myself, and three coadjutor brothers, quitted St. Louis on the 7th of April 1847⁴⁵, and we arrived on the bank of the Neosho, a tributary of the Arkansas, situated about 130 miles from Westport⁴⁶, frontier town of the State of Missouri.

To you, my dear Father⁴⁷, who have many times traversed the great wilderness of the West⁴⁸, in its whole extent, from the States to the Pacific, who have travelled over the Rocky Mountains and their valleys, our pains, troubles, and fatigues must appear truly insignificant. But this trial was very severe to us, who where entering, for the first time, into the immense prairies of the Indians, which we had only measured according to the deceptive images of our imagination. Truly, the reality appeared to us very different. We endured hunger, thirst, and cold. For a fortnight we were obliged to pass our nights in the open air, in the dampest season of the year, each having naught for a bed but a buffalo-hide and a single blanket.



American School - War Dance of the Sauks and Foxes, illustration from "The Indian Tribes of North America, Vol.1", b (Source: <http://www.myartprints.co.uk/a/american-school/wardanceofthesauksandfoxe.html>).

⁴⁴ WMM page 353-355, letter of 1 June 1850.

⁴⁵ In WMM is printed 1849, but this is apparently a typographical error or a slip of the pen.

⁴⁶ Westport was founded in 1831, forming a part of present day Kansas City.

⁴⁷ The letter is adressed to P.J. de Smet S.J.

⁴⁸ "The West": the "wild west", was colonized from the east, where the United States established itself. Ultimately it would reach from the Atlantic east coast to the Pacific Ocean in the west.

John Bax S.J., missionary among the Indians

About 100 miles from Westport we had a panic. Arrived at a place named "Walnut Grove", we perceived, in the distance, a large troop of mounted Indians, who turned directly towards us. Unaccustomed to such sights, we were seized with great anxiety, which soon changed to genuine fright; for we saw those savages, on approaching us, alight from their horses with extraordinary agility. At once they took possession of our carts and wagons, which we fancied destined to pillage. They examined our chests and our baggage as minutely and coolly as old custom-house officers. Happily we recovered from our fright. We presented them some rolls of tobacco. They shook hands with us in token of friendship. Soon after we lost sight of them, congratulating ourselves at having escaped at so trifling an expense.

An idea, however, occupied us: they might repent of their benevolence towards us, and attack us and steal our horses during the night. We consequently left the ordinary route, and went and camped far in the plain. These Indians, as we learned later, belonged to the nation of Sauks, and had been paying a visit to their allies, the Osages."

On April 28, 1847, the travelers stopped on a slight rise east of the Neosho river, near what is now the city of St. Paul in Neosho County, Kansas. On climbing down from the wagon and the carts, the men were quickly surrounded by a group of Osage Indians, who came to greet the "Tapuska-Watanka" ("priest-lords").⁴⁹ Bax described his first impressions three years later as follows.⁵⁰

"On the 28th of April we reached our destination, to the great surprise and delight of the Indians (...). It would be impossible to paint to you the enthusiasm with which we were received. They considered us as men whom the Great Spirit had sent to teach them the good news of salvation; the race put to them the path to heaven and to procure them, also, earthly peace and plenty.

At the first sight of these savages, and finding myself surrounded by these children of the desert, I could not suppress the pain I felt. I saw their sad condition. The adults had only a slight covering over the middle of the body; the little children, even as old as six or seven years, were wholly destitute of clothing. Half serious, half jesting, I thought that a truly savage portion of the Lord's vineyard had been given me to cultivate; but I did not lose courage. The object of my desires, and the subject of my prayers, during many long years, had been to become a missionary to the Indians. That grace was obtained; I felt contented and happy."

⁴⁹ BotP page 17.

⁵⁰ WMM page 354.

From these notes we come to learn John Bax a little more personally. His desire to become missionary among the Indians had a strong foundation, and was already long present before he came to the Osage in 1847. Furthermore we see his compassion born of his faith, but, at the same time, the somewhat superior attitude of the white man, who saw in the Indian truly a child of God, but also a savage, who still had to learn the ways of civilization.

Sketch of the situation of the "Catholic Osage Mission"

At their arrival the missionaries discovered that the wooden buildings meant for the mission had not been finished.⁵¹ According to Bax they were inconvenient and much too small for the education to a large group of children as well as for their own residence there. Nor were the buildings well situated, being located quite away from the center of the Osage villages and the land which the mission had to cover. On the other hand the mission was situated on the right bank of the Flat Rock Creek, at a point about two miles above its junction with the Neosho river. At close range were the shops of merchants and the stores of the merchant-traders for the merchandise from St. Louis to the Osage. In this regard the location of the mission buildings was good.⁵²

The tribes of the Osage were comprised under the name of Great Osages and Little Osages. They counted according to Bax almost 5000 souls, of which 3.500 resided on the banks of the Neosho and the others on the little and small river Verdigris. When John Bax describes the distances to the different Indian villages, he speaks of distances from three to sixty miles. *"There are, besides, other small villages, dispersed at a great distance from us."* The two rivers of the region where the Osage were settled empty in the river Arkansas. The lowlands were in general swampy, but the plain of the Neosho is sandy.

Beginning of the education

The first goal of the missionaries was to open up a school, as was desired by the chiefs of the Osage in their petition of 1843 of the government. Two weeks after their arrival, on 10. May 1847, the school was already opened.⁵³ Bax writes about this:

"The scholars were not very numerous at the commencement; some half-bloods and three Indians were the only ones that presented themselves. The parents, full of prejudices against a "school", gave for excuse, that

⁵¹ The following still comes from the letter of Bax from June, 1 1850, WMM page 354 and further.

⁵² Jes. page 500-502 and for the next alinea WMM page 355.

⁵³ WMM page 358.

John Bax S.J., missionary among the Indians

the children who had been confided to the former missionaries (the Presbyterians), had learned nothing, had been whipped every day, made to work continually, and at last ran away. These reports spread far and wide. The most efficacious correction that a father could employ against a child, was to threaten it with being sent to school.

I had proofs of this a short time after our arrival. In one of my visits to a village of Little Osages, called Huzegta, having an interpreter with me, I entered into the lodge of the first chief. On presenting myself, I offered my hand in token of friendship. "Who are you?" said he to me. "A tapouska, or missionary", was the reply. During some moments, he hung his head without uttering a word. Then raising his eyes, he said in a bad humor: "The missionaries never did any good to our nation." The interpreter answered that I did not belong to the class of missionaries that he had seen; that I was a French⁵⁴ tapouska, a Black-gown, who had come at their request, and at that of their "Great Father". Then serenity reappeared on the visage of the chief, and he cried out "This is good news". He immediately offered me his hand, called his wife, and ordered buffalo-soup, wishing to feast my arrival.

He proposed several questions relative to the manner in which I would educate the children, if they were sent to me. He declared to me that he did not approve of whipping the children. He asked me, in fine, if we would instruct aged persons. When I told him that we came to instruct everybody, to announce the word of God to the whole nation, he expressed much delight and gratitude. As soon as he knew us and learned the object of our visit, his prejudices and his apprehensions vanished."

When John Bax started to visit the Osage villages the children didn't dare approach him. But by distributing cookies and marbles he won their trust. As soon as some went to school, they started enthusiastically telling about it, and how the Black-gowns taught them everything, and also fed them. When this news spread, more children came, so that before the end of the year the number of children became too large for the small school-building, which could house twenty students. Since at that time there were around fifty boys, it was necessary to ask for more funds from the government in order to enlarge the building.

Meanwhile, in October 1847, at the request of Fathers Schoenmakers and Bax, four sisters of the Congregation of Loreto came to educate the Osage girls.⁵⁵ Bax praised the chiefs of the Osage for their desire to also allow their daughters to be educated. In fact Bax felt embarrassed when the

⁵⁴ The Catholic missionaries were associated with France, because the first Catholic missionaries among the Indians came from there. The protestant missions were initiated from the English colonies.

⁵⁵ BotP page 79 and further.

John Bax S.J., missionary among the Indians

request was first made of him, because of the lack of means.⁵⁶ Indeed Schoenmakers had to search and visit many cloisters before he could persuade sisters to come to the mission to educate the daughters of the Osage. In addition to reading, writing and counting, the boys also learned agricultural skills, like plowing, sowing and planting.

Pastoral care

Bax saw from the very first how miserable the Indians lived. He saw at his first meeting with them that they wore little more than a loincloth, and that the youngest children, up to seven years, were destitute of clothing altogether. According to Bax the Osage were at heart a kindly and peace-loving people, making every effort to live on terms of amity with other Indian tribes and with the whites.⁵⁷ He was at pains to refute the opinion present among the whites which made the tribe out to be little better than thieves, murderers and drunkards. In his eyes, this last accusation, however, was, at the time of the mission's foundation justified.⁵⁸

"To this last reproach, I am grieved to say they have given occasion; they are passionately fond of intoxicating liquors. The effects of this vice had become so terrible that, on our arrival, entire tribes were nearly destroyed. In the spring of 1847, in one village alone, thirty young men, in the prime of life, were victims to strong drink. I have met men, women, and children, in a complete state of intoxication, dragging themselves to their wigwams like so many brutes. (...) It was extremely painful to look at those sons of the wilderness, delivered to the enemy of God and man. Thanks to our Lord, the evil was extirpated at its root (...)."

Three years after the beginning of the Osage mission Bax states that the vice was largely rooted out, thanks to the urgent advices of the civil government, the work of the missionaries and their prayers.

"Daily prayers are offered that this crime, and all the miseries which arise in its train, may not appear among us. At present, the Indians themselves comprehend the necessity of temperance. Several among them come frequently to tell me, with great simplicity, that they do not fall into this vice any more."

He ends his report with praise for them:

"These savages exhibit in their stoical resolutions, a degree of courage that should excite a blush on the cheek of many a white man."

⁵⁶ WMM page 360.

⁵⁷ Jes. page 503 and further

⁵⁸ WMM page 355 and further.

John Bax S.J., missionary among the Indians

Regarding the accusation that the Osage are murderers and robbers, Bax writes that this is slanderous talk. Several raids which were accompanied with theft and murder, especially along the Santa Fe Trail⁵⁹, were at first attributed to the Osage. After thorough investigation it was shown that they were committed by other Indian tribes, notably the Pawnee, standing enemies of the Osage. According to Bax the Osage lived peacefully with all neighbouring tribes, except the Pawnee, though many times peace was made. But, as soon there was a new peace treaty, the Pawnee renewed their attacks on the Osage villages, especially in the hunting season when the villages were undefended.⁶⁰

Notwithstanding his, in general positive, impression of the character of the Osage nation, the missionary does indicate that he not always succeeded in his goal.

"I have long but vainly endeavored to put an end to the cruel mania of taking off the scalps of the dead and wounded. In this project, as in many others, I have been checked by the bad counsels and bad examples of the whites. I should be pleased to be able to tell the savages, with whom I am charged, to imitate the whites, and it would be most agreeable to me to propose them as models of imitation; but my words would be very ineffectual. Here, as formerly in Paraguay⁶¹, the Indian derives no advantage from the vicinity of the whites; on the contrary, he becomes more artful, more deeply plunged in vice, and finding no blasphemous words in his own tongue, curses his God in a foreign language.

To demonstrate the evil effects of the proximity of the whites on the Indians, Bax cites an anecdote about something which occurred a year earlier. He was giving an instruction in the village Woichaka-Ongrin or Cackle-Bird about the vice of intemperance. He told of the effects on the health of drinking too much, and of the rapidity with which it conducts men to the tomb, or separates them from their wives and children. He told them that *"the pleasure attending drinking was extremely short, while the punishment would be eternal."* Then arose Shape-shon-kaouk or Little Bever, one of the principal men of the tribe, to confirm that Bax had told the truth: *"Father, what thou sayest is true. We believe thy words. We have seen many buried because they loved and drank fire-water. One thing astonishes us. We are ignorant; we are not acquainted with books; we never heard the words of the Great Spirit: but the whites, who know*

⁵⁹ The Santa Fe Trail is an historical route of between 800 to 900 miles long. The route connected American Missouri, through the prairies and deserts of the Great Plains, to Santa Fe, at that time Mexican, but now a part of the United States (in the state of New Mexico) Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Santa_Fe_Trail.

⁶⁰ WMM page 356-357.

⁶¹ The Society of Jesus were missionaries among the Indians in Paraguay in the seventeenth century.

John Bax S.J., missionary among the Indians

books, who have understanding, and who have heard the commandments of the Great Spirit, why do they drink this fire-water? Why do they sell it to us? Or why do they bring it to us, while they know that God sees them?"

Another burden to Bax and his fellow missionaries was the half nomadic life the Osage still lead.⁶² In order to provide for their most urgent necessities they departed for six months every spring to hunt buffalo, deserting their villages and the Osage Mission. It was extremely difficult to convince them of the possibility of living as farmers. Not only were contact and teaching interrupted during the long hunting season, but, Bax also feared for the moral and spiritual well-being *"of those who would wish to live as exemplary Christians"*.

Indian language and fight against the medicine men

Remarkably enough John Bax after a very short time no longer needed an interpreter when he went to the Indian villages. Within a few months he thoroughly learned the Osage tongue. He was known as an eloquent speaker and he is praised for his extraordinary facility in acquiring languages. His good knowledge of the Osage tongue made them say that he knew their language better than they themselves did.⁶³ Because of this Bax gained the hearts of the Osage and why they called him the *"Father Who is All Heart"*.⁶⁴

Father Schoenmakers writes in August 1847 about his colleague-Jesuit⁶⁵: *"Father Bax in his zeal for the salvation of souls seeks every occasion and strains every nerve to learn the Osage language, a few months ago he was preaching to the Indians without an interpreter."* This is quite noteworthy since the Osage Mission was only founded at the end of April.

But in his letter of 10. June 1850 to De Smet Bax does mention a problem with the Osage language:⁶⁶

"When the Indians are well taught, we have not much to fear in regard to their exemplary conduct. The greatest obstacle for us is in the difficulty that we experience in acquiring their tongue. It contains very few words, and those quite inconvenient for expressing abstract ideas."

They didn't have words to express the "mysteries" of the Catholic faith. This was a great difficulty for proper evangelization. Bax felt that because

⁶² WMM page 370.

⁶³ BotP page 165.

⁶⁴ Burns, page 235.

⁶⁵ Jes. page 504.

⁶⁶ WMM page 367-368.

John Bax S.J., missionary among the Indians

of this the Osage had confused understanding of the Supreme Being, of the immortality of the soul, and of the bliss or chastisements of the future life. As an example he says that they believed that the Great Spirit gives those who are admitted into his happy abode an abundance of buffaloes, elk, deer and corn. It is very material and tangible. Thereby they believed, according to Bax, that after death a person's soul continued to inhabit the place where he died. This soul would sometimes return from the other world in order to take other souls and bring them back with him. In this setting Bax speaks about the trouble the missionaries received from the traditional Indian "Vig-kontah", magicians or medicine men. They pretended to have the power to chase away the spirits of the dead, especially when a spirit had endangered the health of somebody and threatened his earthly life. In this last case the ailing Indian had to pay a large amount.

"When there is danger of death, the most superstitious have frequent recourse to these "medicine men"; a horse, a mule,- even several-, must reward these services. I knew one of those impostors who by this trade had gained, in one spring only, thirty-two horses. Their efforts tend principally to persuading the poor Indians not to call upon us in their maladies. They declare, with the greatest assurance, that they will annul the efficaciousness of our power."

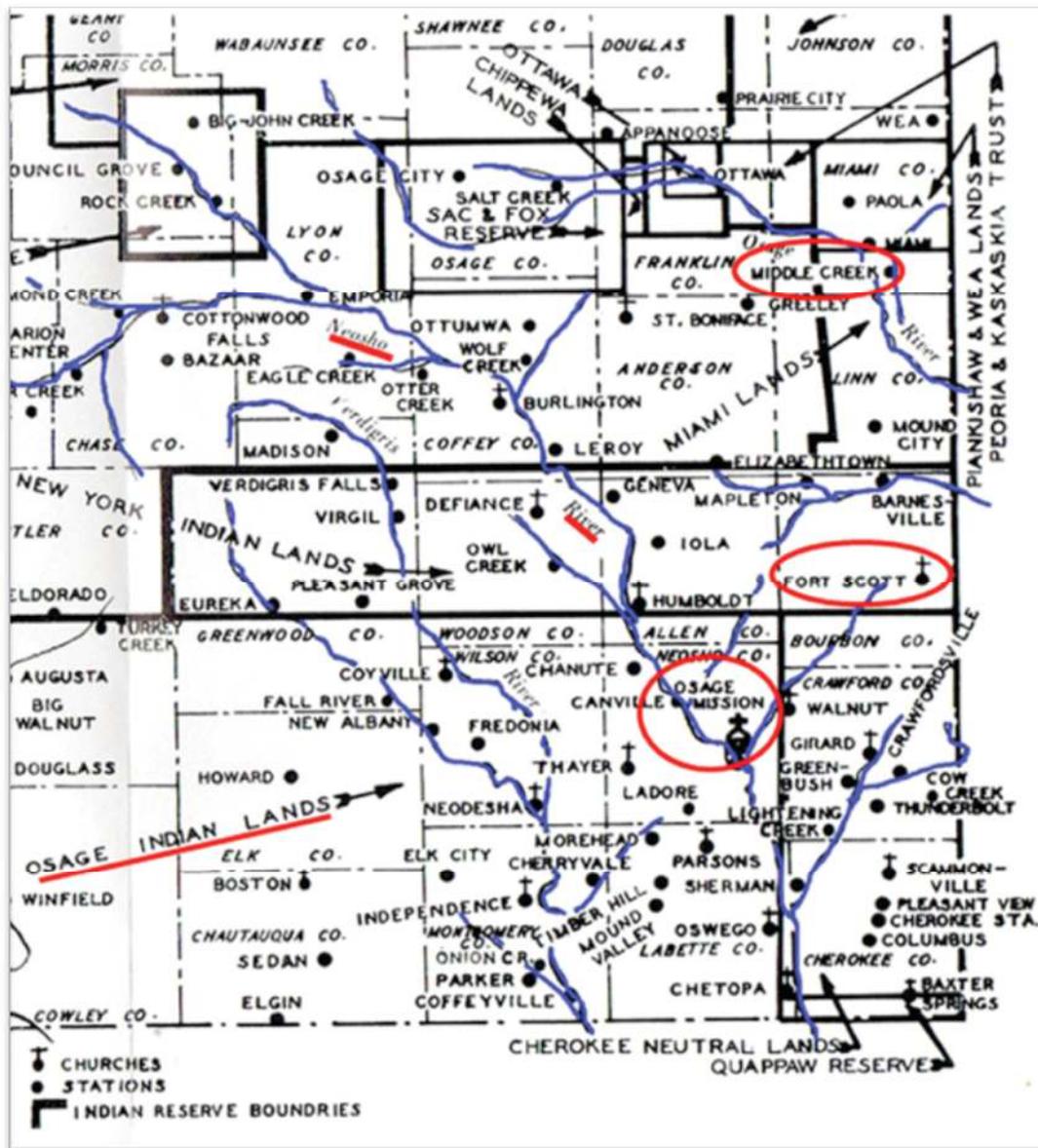
As a true Catholic missionary Bax found it difficult to deal with this. Nevertheless he saw progress in the Christian faith, and a decrease of the influence of the ancient religion and the power of the medicine men of the Indians: "(...) *their power, which was formerly very great, is beginning to decline. The esteem which the savages had for them is daily diminishing.*"

On the other hand he saw great respect among the Osage for the Catholic missionaries.

"The Indians are attached to us, principally, say they, because we have no wives and children. "If you had", they say, "you would do like the missionaries (the Presbyterians) who preceded you. You would think too much of your families, and you would neglect the red-man and his children."

Next page:

*Missionstations established in Southeast-Kansas. Osage Mission is the lowest red circle. Also circled in red are Fort Scott and Middle Creek, Mission stations founded by John Bax SJ.
(Taken and adapted from BotP pages 62/63)*



Missionary commitment

As Catholic missionaries Schoenmakers and Bax did their utmost to convert the Osage to the Catholic faith.⁶⁷ They had the benefit that the Osage nation as a whole were sympathetic towards the Black-gowns and the Church. In the Catholic conviction of those days, and Fathers Bax and Schoenmakers were no exceptions, the sacrament of baptism was seen as necessity for salvation. With other words: without baptism there is for the soul no everlasting life with God.

⁶⁷ Jes. page 504.

John Bax S.J., missionary among the Indians

In the "Osage Baptismal and Wedding Register (*Liber Baptismalis necnon Matrimoniales Nationis Osagae*)" the baptisms and marriages are inscribed.⁶⁸ The first inscription is from the hand of John Bax and was made on May, 2 1847, scarcely four days after the arrival of the missionaries in Osage Mission. At that time he baptized a four year old girl by the name of Sarah Shoenka. Godfather of the child was a certain Auguste Captin or Capitaine. The very last inscription of a baptism of Bax dates from June, 23 1852, six weeks before Bax died. John Woipanangpash in "below Little Town" is the last known person baptized by John Bax. Alexius Biet was his godfather. Biet accompanied Bax on several tours along the Indian villages where Bax administered the sacrament of baptism. All who were baptized, and the places where they were baptized, were inscribed. Biet, or whomever else accompanied the Jesuit, often acted as godfather. In this way Bax undertook tours lasting as much as two weeks, where he administered as many as a total of 74 baptisms in eight or more villages.

According the later testimony of Paul M. Ponziglione S.J., who was active in the mission in Southeast-Kansas since 1851, Bax began to visit the Osage villages regularly just after the school for girls was erected. He founded several missionary stations in the settlements of the Osage on the Verdigris, Neosho and Labette rivers, and on the numerous tributaries of these rivers.⁶⁹ A missionary station could be established at somebody's house.⁷⁰ Real wooden chapels or churches were mostly build when there were more white settlers living in the area. Bax erected, for example, in Balls Mill, Bourbon County, in 1849 a missionary station "*for whites and half breeds living near the mill.*" In the same county he erected a missionary station for the Catholic soldiers residing in the garrison of Fort Scott in 1850. In 1854 the garrison evacuated Fort Scott, which had developed into a town. In the same year as Fort Scott, Bax also erected in Fort Gibson in the Indian Territory a missionary station.⁷¹ From Osage Mission more then hundred missionary stations were established in an area that today covers four states: Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma, and Wyoming.⁷² In Osage Mission itself, in the present Neosho County, the Jesuits erected as soon as possible a little log church dedicated to saint Franciscus Hieronymus. When John Bax wrote a letter from the Osage Mission, he headed his letter with the patron saint of the church, which

⁶⁸ According P.J. de Smet S.J., Bax baptized almost 2000 Indians in total. Certain is that most victims of the epidemic of 1852 were baptized by Bax (WMM page 384 and BotP page 166).

⁶⁹ WL Vol. VIII (1884) page 26.

⁷⁰ BotP page 255 and further gives a list of "Missionary stations and churches in Kansas established by the Jesuit Fathers from the Osage Mission". This list repetedly states that a missionary station was settled "at the home" or "in the house" of somebody. Usually the names indicate that it would have been homes of white people.

⁷¹ WL, Vol. VIII (1884) page 29.

⁷² See <http://www.osagemission.org>.

John Bax S.J., missionary among the Indians



The oldest church in Osage Mission, in which also John Bax S.J. celebrated holy Mass. The picture dates from after the enlargements of 1858 and 1861, so after his death.

(Source: the website of Osage Mission, Neosho County Museum)

was also the patron saint of the mission: "*Mission of St. Francis Hieronymo among the Osages*", "*Village of St. Francis Hieronymo*" or "*Mission among the Osages, St. Francis Hieronymo*".⁷³

The first log church in Osage Mission, built in 1848, measured 30 by 30 feet and was 12 feet high.⁷⁴ It has been called the cradle of Catholicism in southeastern Kansas, for it was the very first church dedicated to Catholic worship in that part of the West. At the beginning the parish community was very small, consisting of the missionaries and a few Indians and half breeds. It grew through conversions among the Indians and the continued settling around the mission of Catholic traders and government officials. In 1858 and 1861 the church building was enlarged to 30 by 90 feet. It was in use until it was replaced by a stone building in 1882.

According Bax, Gods grace worked providentially.⁷⁵ He found great comfort in the thought that – after two or three years – the children at school made great progress in catechism, and that many of them received their first Communion. These also regularly visited the Blessed Sacrament with great devotion. And that, while shortly before they "*were running naked in the woods and on the plains, addicted to every kind of vice, and having no knowledge of their Creator, nor of the end of their creation. Never has the goodness of God been more manifest to me. (...) Never, before this day, have I been so intimately convinced that the Lord offers*

⁷³ The quotations are from the three letters, published in WMM. For the letter of June, 14 1852 see appendix 8.

⁷⁴ Jes. page 508. At the beginning the church measured approximately 9 x 9 meters and was 3,65 meters high. After the expansions the surface measured 9 x 27,65 meters.

⁷⁵ WMM page 362 and further.

John Bax S.J., missionary among the Indians

to all nations, to every family, and to each individual, the means of being saved, and of being united to the Holy Church."

As a powerful confirmation of this truth, he then describes how, on the very day of the arrival of the Jesuits in Osage Mission, it was reported to him that an Indian was at the point of death in a village about four miles distance. Bax immediately set out on horse *"in the hope of arriving in time to baptize him"*. But the waters of the Neosho had swollen, so that it was impossible to pass the river. Bax waited there until the river would allow him to continue on his road. On the fourth day, a Sunday he remembers, a half-blood passed the river on the trunk of a tree, to come and hear Holy Mass. He informed Bax that the dying man still lived, in a very critical state, but still hoped *"and had manifested an earnest desire to see the Black-gown, who had come to announce the word of God to his nation"*. Immediately the priest mounted his horse waiting no longer. He took a great risk crossing the river. His guide and interpreter must have done this as well, because in those days Bax needed to communicate via an interpreter since he didn't speak the Osage language yet.⁷⁶ The missionary arrived in time at the lodge where the Indian was dying. He saluted Bax with joy and affection. We leave Bax to the word.

"I found my Indian extremely ill. Evidently he was hastening rapidly to eternity. (...) I made him comprehend, by means of an interpreter, that I came to speak with him of the Great Spirit, and instruct him in the truths necessary to salvation. "I thank thee, Father, thy words are kind and consoling. My heart is overjoyed that thou hast come." Such were the words he addressed to me with a dying voice. I spoke to him of the dispositions requisite for receiving baptism, and told him among other things, that he must renounce all the bad actions that he might have committed, be contrite of them, and never again do evil, though he might be restored to health. That if he was sincerely disposed to act thus, the Great Spirit would forget all the sins of his past life."

"Father", he replied, "I always wished to be good; I never stole, I never became drunk, I have never killed. However, if I have offended the Great Spirit, I repent. I desire to please Him, so that, if I die, He may have mercy on me, and grant me the grace of being admitted into his presence. (...) Father, if thou believest me worthy of receiving baptism, thou wilt grant me a great favor and many blessings." Fully satisfied with the lively desire that he manifested, I administered that sacrament to him. Scarcely was he regenerated in the healing waters of baptism, than he expired, and went to enjoy the happiness reserved to the children of the Church."

⁷⁶ Jes. page 505.

John Bax S.J., missionary among the Indians

Bax continues with a description of the cacophonous scene that followed on the man's death, with all utterances of the Indians' grief. The next day Bax buried the man according the rites of the Church, in presence of the whole village.⁷⁷ After this account he continues:

"From that time forth, we have always assisted the sick in their agony. The time for instructing them is very short, and their ideas concerning religion are more than imperfect; but on the other side, they have all the simplicity and good will of children, and their dispositions are most consoling. (...) Baptism is one of the sacraments of our holy religion that the Indians understand the best, and it is the one they are most desirous of receiving."

Some remarkable recoveries, after Bax administered baptism to a dying person, contributed to the spreading of the desire to be baptized among the Osage.⁷⁸

Commitment for other Indian nations

Bax was first of all active among the Osage. Besides them he also visited neighboring Indian nations. Among the tribes of the Miami, Wea, Peoria and the Piankeshaws, at that time still living in their old reservation at the Marais des Cygnes, he established in 1849/1850 in Middle Creek, Miami County, and elsewhere missionary stations.⁷⁹

Inscriptions of baptisms by the hand of Bax are preserved in Miami County, Missouri, named after the tribe of the Miami.⁸⁰ In a letter dated *"The Miami Nation, November, 2 1851"* Father Bax, then on a visit to the tribe, wrote to Major Coffey. In this letter he states that a great desire lived in a large majority of this nation to have a Catholic mission. Bax made himself strong for this purpose. In an earlier stage Bax communicated with the "General Superintendent" of the Indian missions. Now he wanted Major Coffey to do everything to achieve that purpose. It didn't matter to Bax where these Catholic missionaries came from, as long as the Miami nation would get the missionaries they asked for. *"If the majority of the nation be found in favor of any other Society⁸¹, they have likewise the right to have it, and as for my part, I will be perfectly satisfied when it will be given them."* On March 14, 1852 Bax wrote to Father de

⁷⁷ The first recorded burial after the coming of the missionaries is that of Whepsinka, about forty-five years of age, baptized by Father Bax May, 4 1847 in White Hair's Village, and buried by him on the same day. Probably this Indian is the same man as the person in the above mentioned anecdote, although there it states that the burial was a day later (Jes. page 505).

⁷⁸ WMM page 364-366.

⁷⁹ BotP page 262.

⁸⁰ Jes. page 232.

⁸¹ Jes. page 234: "any other society", so another society or congregation than that of the Jesuits.

John Bax S.J., missionary among the Indians

Smet that he had a great desire to reopen the abandoned mission station among the Miami with the approval of bishop J.B. Miège.⁸² The bishop had declared to him "that he would take that Mission if offered him by Government". Because of the illness and death of John Bax these ideas never became reality.



John Baptist Miège S.J. (1815-1884) was appointed by pope Pius IX in 1851 as apostolic vicar for the territory east of the Rocky Mountains. He was ordained bishop in Saint Louis for the Indian Territory, and thus became bishop for John Bax S.J.. In 1857 Nebraska was ceded from the vicariate. The Kansas Territory remained under Miège (Source of the picture and information: <http://en.wikipedia.org>).

Ordeal by epidemics

The spring of 1852 became a disastrous period for the Osage and the mission.⁸³ The Indian villages were ravaged by one epidemic after another. Measles, typhoid fever, whooping cough and finally scurvy claimed a high number of victims. Hundreds of people died within a few weeks. Spring had come early, at the beginning of February, and then followed quickly the first outbreak of deadly disease. At the end of the month the Osage mission was also hit. In a few days all the school-children were stricken by the measles. When the parents learned that this deadly disease had broken out in the schools, they came to take their children away with them. In many times they carried their children immediately to a creek for immersion, the Indian's ancient remedy for all illnesses, but in this case it often hastened the death of the children.

Presently the story circulated that the missionaries were to blame for the presence of the pest. Were all these children not baptized? Wasn't the baptism the cause of their death? And didn't the letters the Fathers had received carry germs to spread the disease? As a matter of fact bishop Miège had sent some vaccine by letter to Father Schoenmakers. All this turmoil lead to such fear and anger among the Indians, that an attempt was made to burn down the mission. Only the vigilance of the fathers and

⁸² WL, Vol. VIII (1884) page 26.

⁸³ Jes. page 511.

John Bax S.J., missionary among the Indians

brothers, who stood guard for three or four days, and their uninterrupted prayers to Saint Joseph, protector of the mission, prevented the catastrophe. Gradually the measles loosened its grip on the mission and by May the schools were again in operation. In his last published letter John Bax recalls vividly this terrible crisis. I insert this short letter in its entirety.

"About three weeks before the grand solemnity of Easter, forty-five children of our boarding-school fell sick, in an interval of three days and a half. At first, we could not discern the nature of the malady. It commenced by a heavy cold, attended with a burning fever. After four or five days the measles broke out. At first the alarm was not very great, but the measles disappeared and was replaced by a putrid fever. On Passion Sunday, the saddest of my life, we had two corpses laid out, and about twelve of our children in danger of death. Eleven of our scholars fell victims in a short time, and two will perhaps speedily follow them. We are obliged to interrupt the school for some time, until this terrible visitation be passed.

The contagion is spreading among the Indians, and the mortality is very great. It will be difficult to collect again the scattered flock. However, I may say that never hitherto, either among people of color or whites, either among persons of the world or religious, have I been witness to so much piety and fervor on the bed of death, as were exhibited by our young neophytes.⁸⁴ They may serve as models. Some, prompted by their own piety, asked to hold the crucifix in their hands, and pressed it fervently to them, without being willing to yield it, during more than two hours. They wished the statue of the Blessed Virgin to be placed near the pillows of their beds. They implored the assistance of their holy Mother, and fixed their dying eyes on her image. I firmly hope and believe that they already enjoy the presence of God.

The Lord seems to be willing to gather into his garner the little that we have sowed here below. What may be the designs of Providence for the future, we cannot and dare not conjecture. We have lost several of our best scholars, and of those on whom we had founded our greatest expectations."

Last months and death of John Bax S.J.

At the time Bax wrote this letter the first trial was not yet over. After a relatively quiet May, scurvy broke out.⁸⁵ For three months at a stretch John Bax was indefatigable in treating the sick Indians in the mission

⁸⁴ Neophyte comes from the Greek "neophutos", which means "newly-born". In the Church it is the name for a recently baptized, usually adult person.

⁸⁵ Jes. Vol. II page 513 and BotP page 88.

John Bax S.J., missionary among the Indians

station, and in visiting the sick and dying in the surrounding villages. He took medicine with him, but in most cases physical recovery wasn't possible. Only spiritual assistance remained. He administered the Sacrament of Baptism, or to an already baptized person the Sacrament of the Sick. He also administered Holy Communion by way of viaticum (for the transition from earthly to heavenly life). In this way he cared for the salvation of the soul. Father de Smet remarks that Bax performed at the same time the office of physician, catechist and priest.⁸⁶

Finally the Indians, though the epidemic had not abated, deserted their villages for the annual summer hunt for buffaloes. There was the prospect of a certain period of rest for John Bax, but he himself was worn down physically. He no longer had any resistance and fell critically ill. He would die in August.

Indication of the place and date of the last known letter of John Bax, June 14, 1852, to Father Druyts (Source: copy of microfilm, delivered to me by Margaret Diskin of the Osage Mission, Neosho County Museum, St. Pauls, Kansas, USA).

In a letter of June 14, 1852 from Fort Scott to his colleague Father Druyts⁸⁷ he writes in a somewhat veiled way that he is ill.⁸⁸ For the sake of appearances he writes that the reason for his staying in Fort Scott is pastoral care for the Catholic soldiers, while the main reason would have been his illness.

"I am here at the Fort to give the Catholic soldiers an opportunity to make their Easter⁸⁹ as also to see the Doctor about the swelling at my neck het scheint ik gaen in meine oude daegen het danig zeer krijgen⁹⁰ [In translation: it appears that in my old days I am going to have pretty much pain] Great! no peace for the wicked!"

Furthermore Bax tells that *"the measles, typhus fever and scurvy have made a dreadful havoc among our Indians"*, and that *"everybody thinks*

⁸⁶ WMM page 382, letter of April, 16 1855 to P.J. de Smet S.J.

⁸⁷ At that time president of the University of St. Louis. Jes. page 513.

⁸⁸ For a large part published in Jes. page 513. A copy of a microfilm of the original letter I received from the Osage Mission, Neosho County Museum. See appendix 8.

⁸⁹ The expression refers to the ecclesiastical obligation for Catholics to receive at least once a year, preferably at Eastern, Holy Communion.

⁹⁰ This principal sentence is written in Dutch, notably in old Flemish.

John Bax S.J., missionary among the Indians

that at least one thousand have died since last January, and there is not yet an end." About his beloved Osage he writes:

"They went all at once, in a kind of despair on their summer hunt without planting any corn, pumpkins, etc. & news has returned that every town loses 7 & 8 [persons] every day. Besides the buffalo have all been dispersed on the plains & can find no food. This will cause awful hard times among them. Their Waykontaki or witches have pretty well established the notion that Baptism kills children. They can point out hundreds that have died. It is true some few others not baptized died but the fact is the generality of children were baptized. The Devil is a cunning rascal."

It appears that the strong emotions reacting to the epidemics detracted considerable from the reputation of the missionary among the Osage. This is witnessed to by a remark of bishop Miège that dates from the end of 1853.⁹¹

"The Bishop told us that on his going one day to visit the Osage in one of their villages, when he spoke in eulogistic terms of Father Bax, the chief replied in a very serious tone: "Yes, Father Bax was a good Father. He came to visit us, he brought us medicines, but he rendered us a very bad service this year. He killed all our children. After pouring water on their heads, while muttering some words, he wrote their names down in a book. All who were inscribed in it died." The one who tells this anecdote, ends with: *"Father Bax was a strange sort of murderer..."*

From the point of view of the missionaries it is not at all surprising that critically sick and dying children and adults were baptized, as long as they had the right attitude towards the Catholic faith. As noted before, the missionaries were, according to the theology of that time, primarily focused on the salvation of souls and the eternal life of man after his earthly death. To that end – so they thought – baptism was most essential. There was talk of⁹² about 1500 "savages" who ultimately died, and *"all, with a few exceptions, had the happiness of being fortified by the last sacraments of the Church."*

Back to Father Bax. After Eastern he must have returned to the Osage Mission.⁹³ In July he contracted scurvy.⁹⁴ His zeal would not allow him to attend to himself. He continued his ordinary pastoral labors until he could no longer do so. His colleague De Smet writes somewhat poignantly: *"He was dying while still laboring!"* Finally he had to allow himself to be taken

⁹¹ Jes. page 512 footnote 28.

⁹² WMM page 383, letter of April, 16 1855 of P.J. de Smet S.J.

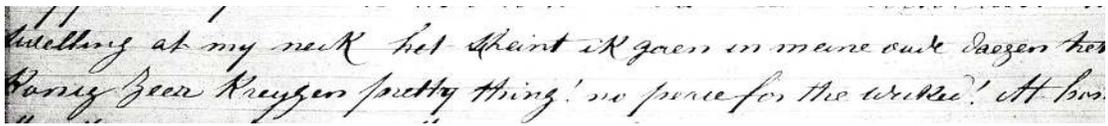
⁹³ Jes. page 514.

⁹⁴ BotP page 88.

John Bax S.J., missionary among the Indians

from Osage Mission to Fort Scott, a military post of about forty miles (\pm 64 kms) distance. At that time one of the most skilful physicians of the United States Army resided there. But Bax was brought too late for a treatment that could cure him. Despite all the cares of the doctor, John Bax died in Fort Scott on August 5, 1852, thirty-five years old, twelve of which he had passed in the Society of Jesus in the United States of America.⁹⁵

There is some confusion about who administered the Sacrament of the Sick to him: P.M. Ponziglione, S.J.⁹⁶ or bishop John B. Miège S.J.⁹⁷ In fact both priests played a roll in the last phase of Bax's life. Gilbert J. Garraghan S.J. relates the story of his last days as follows.⁹⁸



Sentence in his mother language in the letter of John Bax of June 14, 1852 to Father Druys (Source: copy of microfilm, delivered to me by Margaret Diskin of the Osage Mission, Neosho County Museum, St. Pauls, Kansas, USA).

"Father Bax returned from Fort Scott to the mission, but as the disease gained on him, he was again under the necessity of seeking the services of Dr. Barnes, the physician of the fort, who some months before had brought [Father] Schoenmakers through a critical illness. The Father had on this occasion lodged for a spell at the fort, where an orderly was assigned him by the commandant and every service made available to enable him to recover his health. But Bax's malady resisted all medical treatment and he was soon brought to the last extremity. [Father] Schoenmakers was constantly at his side. Realizing that the end was near, the patient made an offering to God of his life for the Osage.

On St. Ignatius day, July 31, Father Ponziglione administered the viaticum, which the dying priest received with remarkable devotion. His last words to Ponziglione, who had to return to the mission, were "Father, take care of my children."

The following day Bishop Miège arrived at Fort Scott on his way to the mission and, on learning of Bax's condition, determined to remain with him to the end. On August 3 he anointed the dying priest, who, with the

⁹⁵ In WL Vol. VIII (1884), page 144, P.M. Ponziglione S.J. mistakenly writes that Bax was ten years in the Society.

⁹⁶ WL Vol. VIII (1884), page 142-143. According to his own account he administered Bax "the last sacraments". Does he mean both the Sacrament of the Sick and Viaticum?

⁹⁷ BotP page 88. Also according to his own account, he anointed him, which only can refer to the Sacrament of the Sick.

⁹⁸ Jes. page 514.

John Bax S.J., missionary among the Indians

Bishop, Father Schoenmakers and Father Theodore Heimann, a secular priest, at his bedside, passed away two days later, August 5, 1852."

John Bax died at night around half past one. Word of his death was spread rapidly among the villages by Indian runners.⁹⁹ Already during the night of August 5, the remains of Bax were brought from Fort Scott to the Osage Mission. The funeral Mass most probably took place a day later.¹⁰⁰ The little log church was crowded to overflowing, with many Indians standing outside. Mass over, the Osage began their traditional mourning rite. Crying, lamenting, clapping their hands they called the deceased priest to come back to take care of their children and their sick. Not until two in the afternoon was the coffin closed. Then followed a long procession to the cemetery where the last absolution¹⁰¹ was given by bishop Miège. Finally the body of John Bax was buried.¹⁰²

The death of the young Jesuit greatly effected the Osage and did much to reconcile them with the missionaries. For the newly founded mission the death of Bax seemed nothing less than a disaster. He was a very talented and gifted missionary, who one presumed was still at the beginning of his missionary work. No one labored harder or nursed the stricken more tenderly with love during the epidemic of 1852 than Father Bax.¹⁰³ It is significant that the bishop, John Baptist Miège S.J., himself lead the funeral, and inscribed the death and burial of the missionary in the Register of Osage Mission. This inscription runs¹⁰⁴:

"On the 5th of August 1852 died at Fort Scott 1 1/2 AM¹⁰⁵ Rev¹⁰⁶. J.J. Bax SJ, on the 6th of the same month he was buried in the graveyard of St. Francis Mission on the Neosho. He was borne the 15¹⁰⁷ of jan. 1817, received in the Society on the 12th¹⁰⁸ of November 1840,
J.B. Miège, S.J."

⁹⁹ BotP page 89.

¹⁰⁰ According Jes. page 514 the funeral was the day after Bax died, conforming the inscription in the register of deaths by J.B. Miège. According to BotP page 89 the funeral was two days later.

¹⁰¹ Today this is called the rite of committal with final commendation. It is the prayer with the sprinkling and incensing the body of the deceased as Temple of the Holy Spirit. The prayer commends the deceased to God.

¹⁰² The grave of John Bax was relocated from the Osage Mission cemetery to the present day Saint Francis Cemetery (Saint Paul, Neosho County, Kansas) on April, 9 1871. See <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=qr&GRid=50918067>.

¹⁰³ Burns page 235.

¹⁰⁴ See note 10.

¹⁰⁵ AM means Ante Meridiem, that is before noon. So the point of time is half past one at night.

¹⁰⁶ Rev. stands for Reverend.

¹⁰⁷ In fact Bax was born a day earlier. See note 5.

¹⁰⁸ Corrected. See note 10.

John Bax S.J., missionary among the Indians



The present grave of "Father John B. [sic !] Bax S.J.". Notice the wrong birth date. (Picture of the Midwest Jesuit Archives)

The death of Bax was naturally communicated to the Father General of the Society of Jesus in Rome, the Dutchman John Ph. Roothaan (1785-1853).¹⁰⁹ Bishop Miège wrote Roothaan about the loss and the last assistance he gave to Bax.¹¹⁰

"Our good and zealous Father Bax has just left us to receive in Paradise the recompense of the troubles and toils which filled up to the brim the 5 years of his apostolate among the Indians. On August 5, an hour and a half after midnight, Father Schoenmakers and myself received his last sigh at Fort Scott, 40 miles from our house, where we had brought him to put him under care of the Fort physician. It was exhaustion following upon hardships and privations, together with an inflammation of the intestines, that carried off from our poor Mission one of its founders and its firmest support.

The only words I could hear him speak was the full and entire sacrifice of his life, which he offered to God for the conversion and salvation of his dear Osage. I hope that this good and generous prayer will be heard and that the Lord by His grace will extricate us from the fix into which we have just been thrown by this very unexpected loss. If it had only pleased God to be satisfied with a dead member like myself. I begged Him very sincerely to take me in place of the best of our missionaries, but the

¹⁰⁹ He was General of the S.J. from 1829 until he died.

¹¹⁰ Jes. page 514-515.

John Bax S.J., missionary among the Indians

prayer was not heard and so here are our poor Osage Indians, of whom we were beginning to hope something, again without a missionary who speaks their language and can as a result obtain their complete confidence.

(...) All that remains to us, Very Reverend Father, is the courage of Father Schoenmakers, the good will of Father Ponzilione, and above all things else, the firm hope that God, for whom, so it seems to me, we are working here, will aid his toilers and have pity on our poor Indians."

It is remarkable that the bishop offered his own life to God in place of Bax's life. Above all he saw that he would lose in Bax his finest missionary, in the sense that Bax, by his knowledge of the Osage tongue, had won their trust. And winning trust is the very first step to a fruitful preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

In the annual report of 1852 of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to the President of the United States of America,¹¹¹ the death of Bax is mentioned. Both the Agent for the Osage, W.J. Morrow, and Father John Schoenmakers refer in their report to the great loss.

The report of the Neosho Agency, dated October 1, 1852 ends with some remarks about the "Osage manual-labor school" under supervision of Schoenmakers. After praising those who take care of the education of the Osage, Morrow continues,¹¹²:

"This school, as well as the whole Osage people, have sustained an irreparable loss by the death of the Rev. Father Bax, which took place in August last. The weather was never too inclement for him to visit the most remote part of the nation to administer medicine to a sick Osage, or to officiate in his priestly office."

¹¹¹ This annual report is built of several accounts of agents of the different Indian nations, but also of accounts of, for example, the heads of Indian schools. At the opening of the session of the Congress, this report was offered with the Message of the President.

¹¹² AR 1852, page 108-110. After this, the report of September, 15 1852 of J. Schoenmakers, S.J., as head of school, is printed, which also includes the mention of the death of Bax. In AR 1848, page 546-547, Bax and Schoenmakers were also already mentioned in the report of April, 14 1848 of the Osage Sub-Agent, John M. Richardson, as he writes about the Osage school.

APPENDICES

**APPENDIX 1:
Page from the register of baptisms from the parish of
Saint Michael in Weelde, January 1817**

About in the middle of the reproduced page stands:

*"1817 Nati et Baptizati in ecclesia Sancti
Michaelis in Weelde Anno Domini 1817"*

(1817 Born and baptized in the church of the Holy Michael in Weelde in the year of our Lord 1817)

As first inscription in the year 1817 follows:

"Joannes Jacobus, filius Joannis Bax et Maria Christina Oomen ex Baerle natus decima quarta januarii vespere et postera die sub conditione baptizatus est / domi ab obstetrice suerat baptizatus / susceperunt Joannes Baptista Oomen ex Baerle cujus loco stetit Franciscus Goessens et Adriana Antonissen"

(Joannes Jacobus, son of Joannes Bax and Maria Christina Oomen from Baarle, born on January 14 in the evening, and conditionally baptized the next day / he was baptized at home by the midwife / godparents are Joannes Baptista Oomen from Baarle in the place of Franciscus Goessens and Adriana Antonissen)

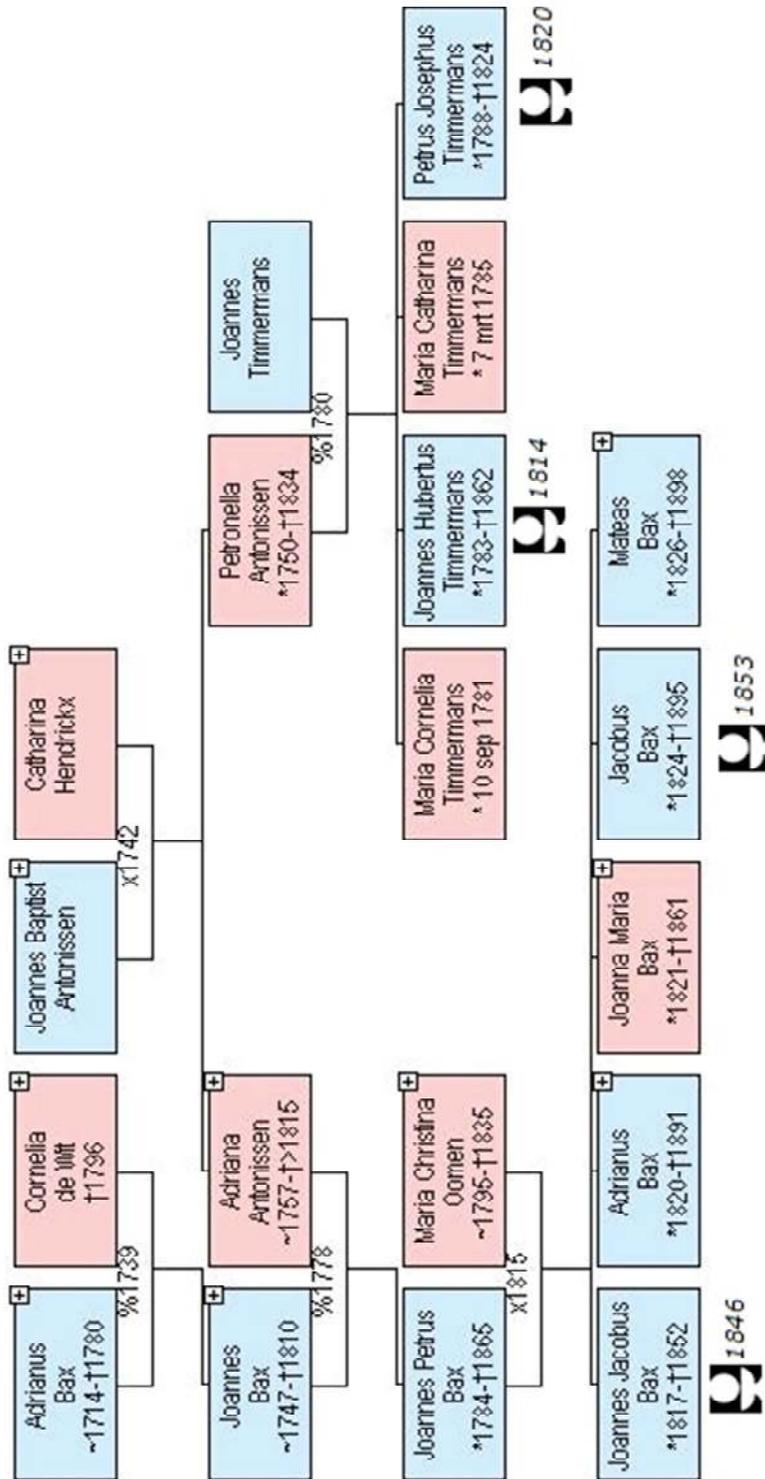
Joannes Baptista Oomen is most probably the grandfather from mother's side and Adriana Antonissen is most probably the grandmother from father's side.

John Bax S.J., missionary among the Indians

1816
joanna Maria filia legitima Adriani pelchmans ex Merselas et Anne
Maria Diekens nata vigesima nona octobris et eodem die baptizata est: Susceperunt
j. B. Vanree ludi magister nomine joannis Marcus ex et joanna Huybs,
Adrianus filius legitimus joannis baptiste Vanduyck et joanna Maria
peeters natus vigesima prima octobris et postea die baptizatus est: Susceperunt joannes baptista
peeters et Anna Elizabeth oppens.
josephus filius legitimus joannis baptista peeters et catharina Bailemans natus vigesima
secunda novembrii et postea die baptizatus est: Susceperunt joannes jacobus peeters et Adriana
Bluckens.
Cornelius filius legitimus Adriani Schoenmackers et maria catharina Dockx natus
vigesima nona novembrii vespere et postea die baptizatus est: Susceperunt cornelis Dockx
et maria catharina dockx omnes ex Merselas.
Anna cornelia filia legitima Henrici Van roij ex d. audenroo et Maria Henrica
de donckier ex poppel, nata decima nona decembrii et postea die baptizata est: Susceperunt
joannes baptista Vanree nomine josephi Vanroij ex d. audenroo et Anna cornelia
biemans ex poppel.
joannes cornelius filius legitimus josephi peeters et cornelia Hendricke ex Lagemiede
natus vigesima tertia decembrii et eodem die baptizatus est: Susceperunt cornelius Vandokkel
ex hilverenbeek habitans in Alphen et maria Elizabeth peeters.
1817. Nati et Baptizati in ecclesia Sancti Michaelis in wiceloe Anno Domini 1817.
Quo Attestat judocus Annaets Pastor

joannes jacobus filius joannis Base et Mariae christinae Domes ex Baerle natus
decima quarta januarii vespere et postea die sub conditione baptizatus est: Domi ab oiste
trice fuerat baptizatus: Susceperunt joannes baptista Domes ex Baerle cujus loco stetit
franciscus goellens et adriana Antonissen.
Laurentius franciscus filius legitimus cornelii Van derackerche ex Merselas et cornelia Bols,
natus vigesima quarta januarii vespere et postea die baptizatus est: Susceperunt j. B. Vanree ludi-
magister nomine joannis petri Van derackerche ex Merselas et Maria catharina Bols vlooemans.
jacobus filia legitima Henrici Van loon et joanne Scapendonck ex deniederode
nata vigesima octava januarii et eodem die baptizata est: Susceperunt guilielmus
Van loon et Maria Helena stalpaerts.
Anna catharina filia legitima petri Adriaenssen et catharina wijgerde ex latheye nata
tertia februarii post meridie et eodem die baptizata est: Susceperunt joannes baptista Vanree
nomine Antonii wijgerde ex latheye et Anna cornelia Deboer.
paulina filia legitima Adriani Van derheuvel et catharina pluijm ex Baerle nata nona
februarii vespere et postea die baptizata est: Susceperunt j. B. Vanree nomine wilhelmi
pluijm ex Baerle et maria catharina Van derheuvel.
Anna catharina filia legitima jacobus Michielssen et Wilhelmina Amiens ex raveli nata
decima octava februarii mane et eodem die baptizata est: Susceperunt j. B. Vanree ludi-magister
nomine volbert: Michielssen et Anna catharina Amiens ex raveli.
joannes baptista filius Arzoldi Franciscus Vandermoeren ex raveli et petronella Beyens ex
raveli natus vigesima tertia februarii et eodem die baptizatus est: Susceperunt
franciscus schuesmans et maria Elizabeth Miermans
Quo Attestat j. Annaets pastor

**APPENDIX 2:
Relationship between the priest brothers Joannes and Jacobus Bax
and the priest brothers Joannes and Petrus Timmermans**



John Bax S.J., missionary among the Indians

In the diagram on page 42 the family relationship of the four priests can be found. John (Joannes Jacobus) Bax S.J. was via his grandmother Adriana Antonissen related to Peter (Petrus Josephus) Timmermans S.J. (*Turnhout, Belgium July, 20 1788, † Florissant, Missouri, USA May, 31 1824). Peter belonged to the first four pupils of P.J. de Nef, together with his elderly brother – and very first pupil – **Joannes Hubertus Timmermans** (* Turnhout, Belgium February, 1 1783, † Merksplas, Belgium November, 22 1862). The latter had already worked as a baker in the bakery of his parents, when in 1807 he went to follow “*latijnsche onderrigtingen*” (latin instructions) with P.J. De Nef¹¹³. In September 1811 he went to the seminary in Mechelen, Belgium¹¹⁴. In **1814** he was ordained a priest. In 1819 he became chaplain in Merksplas, Belgium, afterwards holding there the position of parish pastor from 1820 until his death in 1862. He is the one to whom John Bax in 1840 handed over total power of attorney.

The younger brother of this Father, **Peter (Petrus Josephus) Timmermans**, left May 16, 1817 by ship from the isle of Texel in the northern part of the Netherlands, to the United States of America, to enter there the Society of Jesus. He got his further education at the seminary of the S.J., and celebrated his first Holy Mass as a priest on July, 31 **1820**¹¹⁵. He died near Saint Louis in Florissant, Missouri, USA. It is not inadmissible to assume that by way of contacts between **John Bax** and his father’s nephew, the pastor of Merksplas, he got the idea to go likewise to P.J. de Nef in Turnhout to study. Maybe he got the inspiration to become Jesuit and missionary there. In the books of the institute he is mentioned from 1835 until his graduation in 1840¹¹⁶. In 1840 De Nef makes the note: “*Aangenomen voor de Jesuïeten van St. Ferdinand in Amerika*” (Admitted to the Jesuits of Saint Ferdinand in America). That was also the seminary in Florissant, where Peter Timmermans in 1824 had died¹¹⁷. In **1846** Bax was ordained priest in Saint Louis, Missouri, USA.

Shortly after the death of John Bax his younger brother **Jacob Bax** (*Weelde, Belgium June, 26 1824, † Hsi-Ying-Tzu, Mongolia, China

¹¹³ Students at the time of Mr. de Nef 1823-1848, Archives of the S.J., KADOC, Leuven, Belgium CD 72/3 nr. 1, page 01.

¹¹⁴ Hand written “Histoire de Collège de Turnhout 1817-1895” by Karel Droeshout S.J., Archives of the S.J., KADOC, Leuven, Belgium, nummer CD 72/1B. Page 10.

¹¹⁵ Students at the time of Mr. de Nef 1823-1848, Archives of the S.J., KADOC, Leuven, Belgium CD 72/3 nr. 1, page 01. More information about him can be found in Jes., with on pages 114-116 a description of his death.

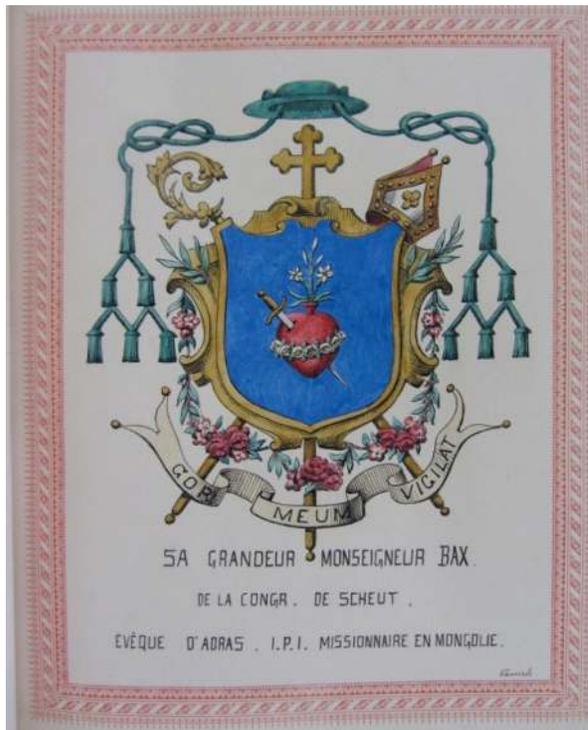
¹¹⁶ Hand written “Distributio Praemiorum sub P.J. de Nef 1822-1845”, Archives of the S.J., KADOC, Leuven, Belgium, nummer CD 72/3 nr. 3. The first mention is at Eastern 1835: “In Figura Minori (...) 4 Bax”. See further the lists in printed form in the same archives under number CD 72/3 nr. 11, “Prijsuitdelingen” (Distribution of prizes).

¹¹⁷ Students at the time of Mr. de Nef 1823-1848, Archives of the S.J., KADOC, Leuven, Belgium CD 72/3 nr. 1, page 18.

John Bax S.J., missionary among the Indians

January, 4 1895) was ordained priest. This happened on December 17, **1853** in Mechelen, Belgium. He also had been, at least from 1846-1848 a student of P.J. de Nef. It is said about him that at that time he lived with the pastor of Merksplas, the above mentioned Joannes H. Timmermans. Twice a day he walked the distance from Merksplas to the institute in Turnhout¹¹⁸. Therefore it can be possible that also John Bax in his years as pupil on this institute of P.J. de Nef in Turnhout lived with the nephew of his father in Merksplas. After a period as chaplain in Scherpenheuvel (1854-1863) Jacob entered the new "Congregatio Immaculati Cordis Mariae" (Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary), better known in Belgium by the name of Congregation of the Missionaries of Scheut. Scheut is a village near Brussels, where the missionaries have their motherhouse. Ultimately he was send as Apostolic Vicar to Mongolia in China. He was bishop (as Apostolic Vicar) there from 1875 until he died.

Below: the coat of arms of Jacob Bax, as inserted in "Histoire de Collège de Turnhout 1817-1895" by Karel Droeshout SJ, Archives of the S.J., KADOC, Leuven, Belgium, number CD 72/1B. Page 168. At the right in Dutch his death remembrance card (Communal archives Turnhout, Belgium).



¹¹⁸ Hand written "Histoire de Collège de Turnhout 1817-1895" by Karel Droeshout S.J., Archives of the S.J., KADOC, Leuven, Belgium, nummer CD 72/1B. Page 167.

**APPENDIX 3:
Declaration of graduation from secondary school 1840**

Joannes Jacobus Bax ex Weelde, sub disciplina nostra humaniora cum laude absolvit, & vitam constanta duxit veri exemplarum, ita ut meruerit quam plurimum commendari.

Turnholti 13^a Aug^{ti} 1840

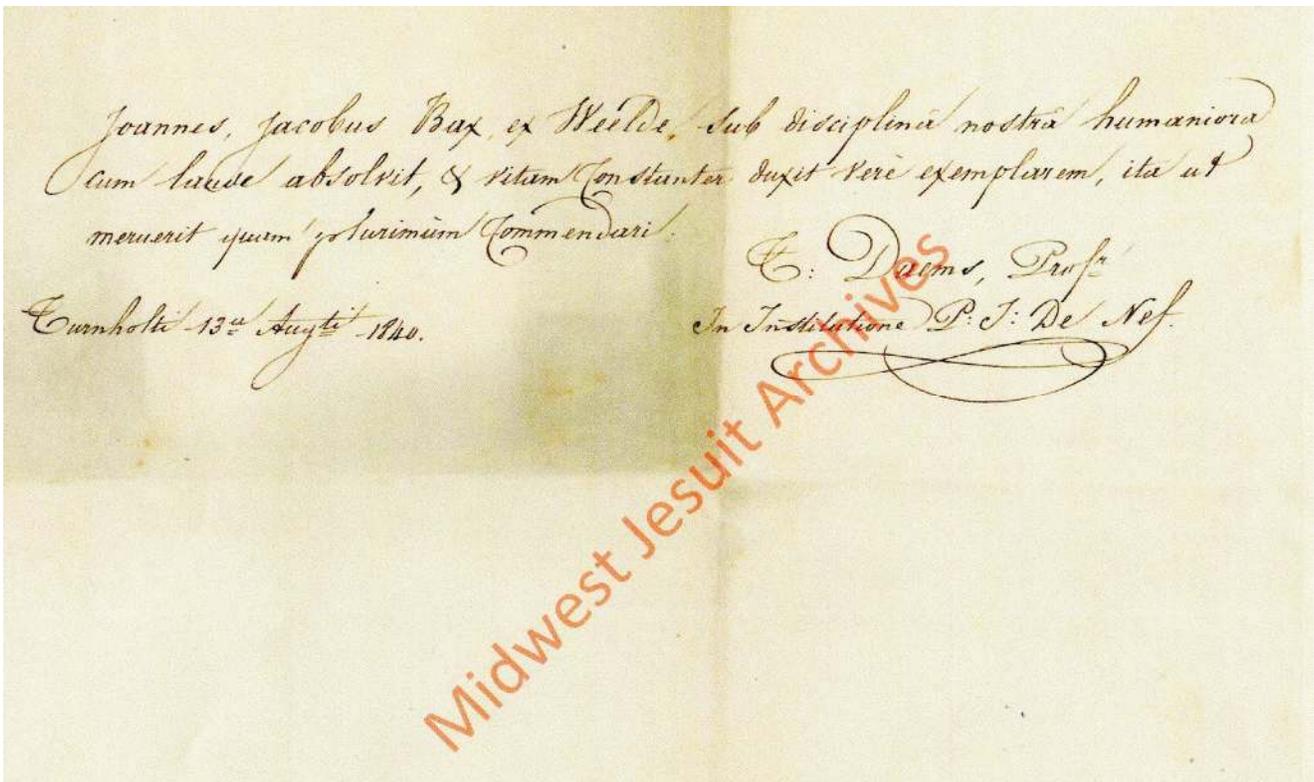
G. Daems Prof[esso]r
In Institutione P.J. De Nef

[Free translation:]

Joannes Jacobus Bax from Weelde, has completed the disciplines of our humanistic studies cum laude, and he leads a steadfast life as a true example, so that he deserves to be praised as much as possible.

Turnhout, August, 13 1840

Professor G. Daems,
of the Institute P.J. de Nef



**APPENDIX 4:
Informatio de Joanne Bax studioso 1840**

**Informatio de Joanne Bax studioso,
Societ^s nostrae candidato pro America**

- 1^o Joannes Bax, in Weelde (distr. Turnhout) natus anno 1817 die 15 jan. bene moratus & devotus, indole bona & ingenua.
- 2^o Nullum habet impedimentum essentielle.
- 3^o Parentes habet (patre superstote) honesta conditionis et fortunae vale mediocris (agric.[*ola*]).
- 4^o Natus est legitimo toro, et parentibus semper catholicis nec ulla in se vel in parentibus infamia notatus.
- 5^o A multis annis (6 an.[*nus*]) vocationem habuit ad societatem, quod in ea se credat Deo, sibi et proximo commodius servire posse. *Salur proximi eum jam a sep & amplius annis impellit in Americam tendat.*
- 6^o A nullo se inductum dicit ad petendum.
- 7^o AEs alienum aliumne obligationem non habet.
- 8^o Nec voto, nec sponsione matrimonii ligatus est.
- 9^o Morbum non habet, nec ipse, nec parentes ejus: *eius robustus est.*
- 10^o Specie externa est honesta et liberali *nonet subrusticum quid, speciatim in ore aperiendo, dum declamat.*
- 11^o Profecit in studiis humanioribus *satis bene, in Turnhout peregit studia & fuit inter 19 rhetorica 7^{us}, ad pascha autem 4^{us}, Latine satis bene scit, graeci et gallici vix quidquam, mathesis parum, propter nullam collegii methodum, non est valde excultus. Indeclamatione non exercitatus, potest fieri sat bonus.*

- Ingenii est & iudicii boni, ordinarii, *elocutionem habet bonam flandrice, spectator circumstantis salutem bonam gallice habet characterem intelligibilem potest acquirere*
- 12^o Sunt ei explicatae uterumque difficultat^{es}; est indifferens ad loca & officia.
 - 13^o Explicatae uterumque sunt, quae observantiam votorum spectant.

Ego J. Broeckaert S.J. iudico cum posse admitti imo pro America debere admitti.

Judico admittendum pro America tantum A. Spillebouck.

Admitti potest pro America Truncinii 26 aug. 1840

*C. Franckeville S.J.
Prov.*

Ego Petrus Corstiens S.J. iudico admittendum pro America tantum.

Judico certo admitti posse pro America, quam unice desiderat A. van Naele S.J.

[Free translation:]

Information concerning the student Joannes Bax, candidate of our Society for America

- 1 Joannes Bax, born in the year 1817, on the day of January 15 in Weelde (district Turnhout), well mannered and dedicated, with a good and noble character.
- 2 He has no essential impediments.
- 3 He has parents (his father is still alive) with an honourable position in society and an average fortune (agrarian).
- 4 He was born from a legal alliance, and his parents were always Catholic. Neither he, nor his parents are marked by any disgrace.
- 5 For several years (6 years) he has had the vocation to enter the Society, thus to serve God, himself and his fellowmen in an easier manner. For seven or more years he has been desirous to go to America for the salvation of his neighbor.
- 6 He declares that nobody has compelled him to request this.
- 7 He has no debt or any other obligation.
- 8 He is not bound by an oath or promise to marry.
- 9 He has no illness, neither he himself, nor his parents. He is strong.
- 10 His external appearance is honest and open. This shows itself [?] especially when he opens his mouth to speak.
- 11 He has done very well in his humanities studies. In Turnhout he was 7th of the 19 orators; until Easter he was the 4th. He is well informed in Latin; knows scarcely anything of Greek and French; knows little mathematics because there was no method for the lectures it isn't very developed. He hasn't studied declamations, but in practice he can do this good enough.

He has character and a healthy judgment. In Flemish he expresses himself good, and also good in French, considering the circumstances. Given his character he has the ability to acquire this skill.
- 12 Which difficulties there are isn't clear to him. He is indifferent to place and the kind of work.
- 13 It is clear to him what it means to fulfill the vows.

I, J. Broeckaert S.J., judge that he can be admitted to go to America.

I judge that he only can be admitted to go to America. A. Spillebouck.

John Bax S.J., missionary among the Indians

I, Petrus Corstiens S.J., judge that he only can be admitted to go to America.

I judge with certainty that he can be admitted to go to America, which he exclusively desires, A. van Naele S.J.

He will be admitted to America,
Drongen [East-Flanders] August, 26 1840
C[harles] Franckeville S.J., Prov[incial Superior]

**APPENDIX 5:
Transcript and reproduction of the passport of
Joannes J. Bax, 1840**

"AU NOM DU ROI des Belges.

*Nous, Ministre des Affaires Etrangères
Prions tous les Magistrats ou Officiers tant Civils
que Militaires, quels qu'ils puissent être, des Princes et
Etats Etrangers, de laisser passer librement Mons. Jean Jacques
Bax, étudiant, né & domicilié à
Weelde*

*aves ses hardes bagags allant en Amérique sans
permettre qu'il lui soit opposé aucune entrave ou empêchement,
et de lui donner ou faire donner tout aide et secours ainsi que
nous le ferions Nous menes en etant requis.*

Donné à Bruxelles le Sept Septembre 1800quarante

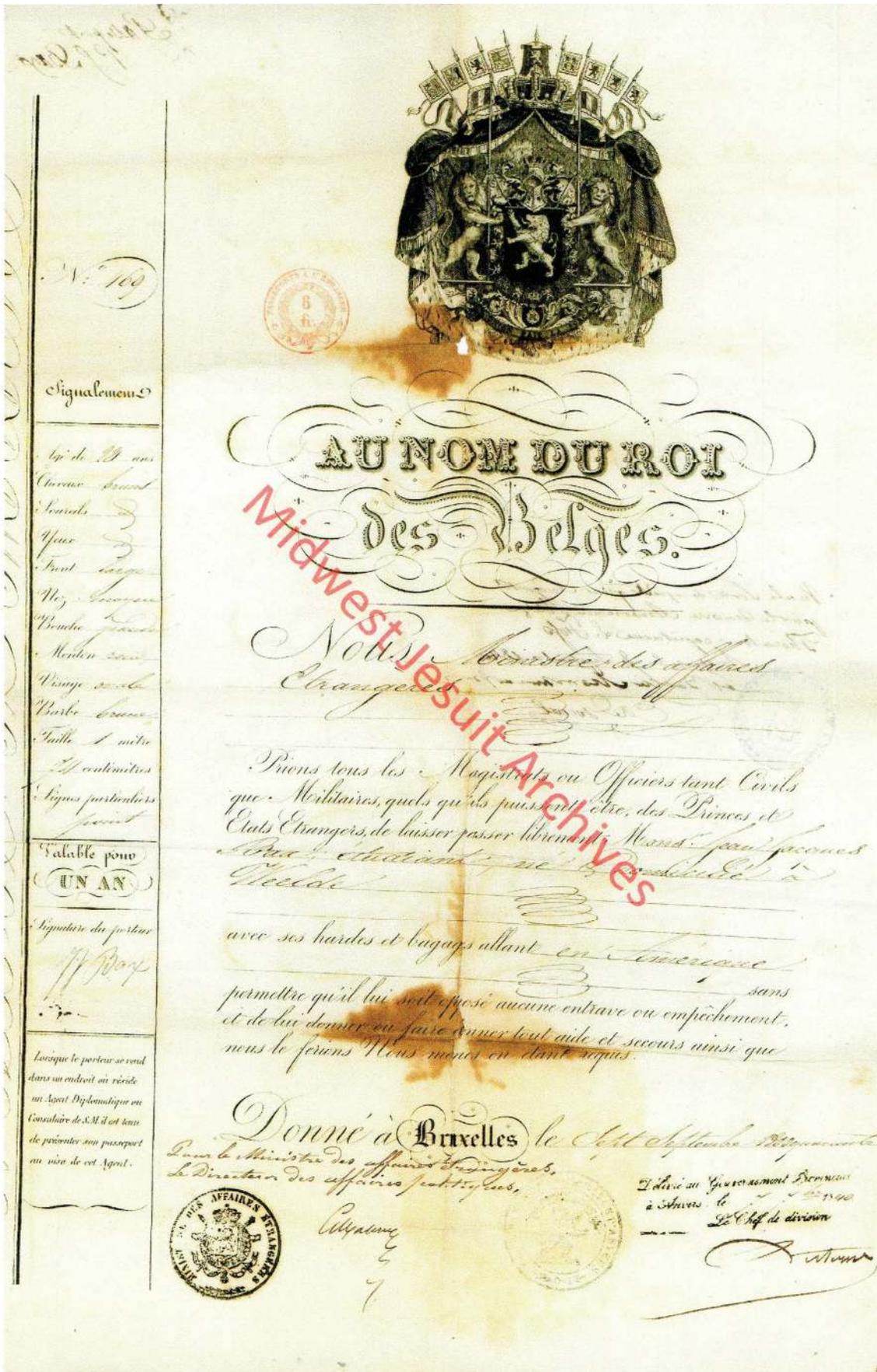
*Pour le Ministre des affaires étrangères,
(Gestempeld:)*

*Délivré au Gouvernement Provincial
à Anvers le 7 7^{bre} 1840,
Le Chef de division"*

In the margin left stands the next "Signalement" (description) of Bax:

*"Agé de 23 Ans
Cheveux bruns
Sourcils idem
Yeux idem
Front large
Nez moyeu
Bouche grande
Menton rond
Visage ovale
Barbe brune
Taille 1 mètre
74 centimètres
Signes particuliers
... (unreadable)"*

Below the description, the period of validity and the signature is printed:
*"Lorsque le porteur se rend dans un endroit où réside un Agent
Diplomatique ou Consulaire de S.M. il est tenu de présenter son passeport
au visa de cet Agent."*



21: 100

Signalement

Age de 25 ans
 Couleur brune
 Cheveux bruns
 Yeux
 Taille 1 mètre
 Contenance
 Signes particuliers

Valable pour UN AN

Signature du porteur

Lorsque le porteur se rend dans un endroit où réside un Agent Diplomatique ou Consulaire de S.M il est tenu de présenter son passeport au visa de cet Agent.

AU NOM DU ROI
 des Belges.

Notre Ministre des affaires
 Etrangères

Prions tous les Magistrats ou Officiers tant Civils que Militaires, quels qu'ils puissent être, des Princes et Etats Etrangers, de laisser passer librement *Monsieur Jean-Baptiste* avec ses hardes et bagages allant en *Americaine* sans permettre qu'il lui soit opposé aucune entrave ou empêchement, et de lui donner ou faire donner tout aide et secours ainsi que nous le ferions Nous-mêmes en droit acquis.

Donné à Bruxelles le 11 Octobre 1840

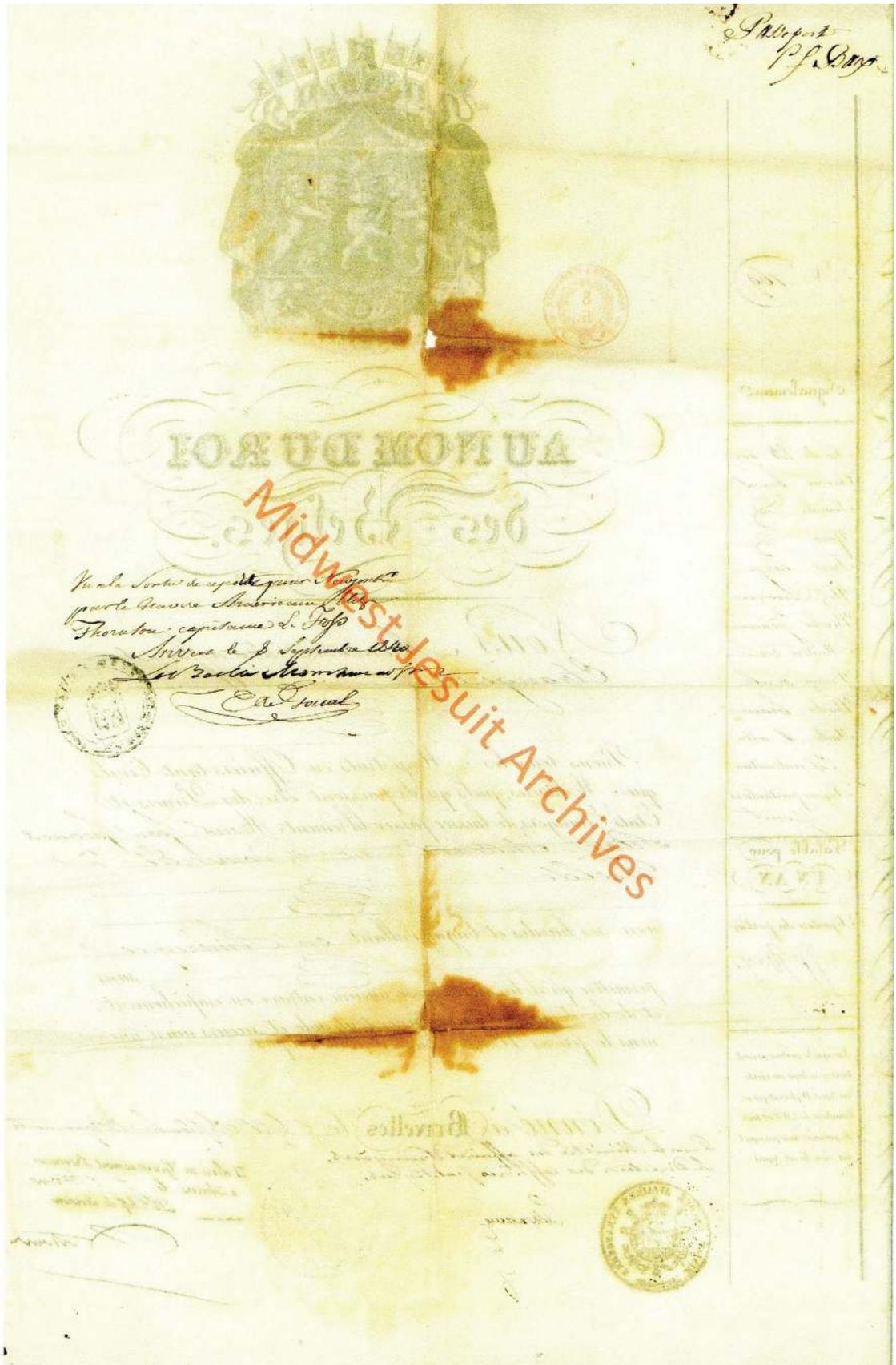
Le Directeur des affaires politiques,

Delivé au Gouvernement Belge à Anvers le 11 Octobre 1840
 Le Chef de division



Alphonse

J. Bax



John Bax S.J., missionary among the Indians

APPENDIX 6: Passenger list 1840

Alexander S. Gould, Printer, No. 144 Nassau Street.

DISTRICT OF NEW-YORK—PORT OF NEW-YORK.

I, *Leander Jop* do solemnly, sincerely, and truly *swear* that the following List or Manifest of Passengers, subscribed with my name, and now delivered by me to the Collector of the Customs for the Duties of New-York, contains, to the best of my knowledge and belief, a just and true account of all the Passengers received on board the *Barque Nova Florida* of 1 am Master, from *Antwerp*

Sworn to the *19th October* 18 *40*

before me, *[Signature]* *Leander Jop*

List or Manifest of all the Passengers taken on board the *Barque Nova Florida* whereof *Leander Jop* is Master, from *Antwerp* burthen *449 33* tons. *95*

NAMES.	AGE.		SEX.	OCCUPATION.	The country to which they severally belong.	The country in which they intend to become inhabitants.	Died on the voyage.
	Years.	Months.					
<i>Charles F. French</i>	<i>65</i>		<i>male</i>	<i>Clergy man</i>	<i>United States</i>		
<i>Amadee Kappel</i>	<i>40</i>		<i>to</i>	<i>to</i>	<i>France</i>	<i>United States</i>	
<i>Hortense Monue</i>	<i>30</i>		<i>Female</i>	<i>Teacher</i>	<i>Belgium</i>		
<i>Fryneoise Houba</i>	<i>49</i>		<i>to</i>	<i>to</i>	<i>to</i>		
<i>Charlotte Hamois</i>	<i>43</i>		<i>to</i>	<i>to</i>	<i>to</i>		
<i>Julie Walle</i>	<i>30</i>		<i>to</i>	<i>to</i>	<i>to</i>		
<i>Heloise Molagne</i>	<i>27</i>		<i>to</i>	<i>to</i>	<i>to</i>		
<i>Humbelime de Montel</i>	<i>28</i>		<i>to</i>	<i>to</i>	<i>to</i>		
<i>Josephine Sanderschrick</i>	<i>25</i>		<i>to</i>	<i>to</i>	<i>to</i>		
<i>Sauvine Herreboudt</i>	<i>24</i>		<i>to</i>	<i>to</i>	<i>to</i>		
<i>Abraham Burkess</i>	<i>24</i>		<i>Male</i>	<i>Student</i>	<i>Holland</i>		
<i>Theodore de Wilbois</i>	<i>27</i>		<i>to</i>	<i>to</i>	<i>to</i>		
<i>Joannes Ja Cobus Bax</i>	<i>23</i>		<i>to</i>	<i>to</i>	<i>Belgium</i>		
<i>Jean Francois Geurts</i>	<i>22</i>		<i>to</i>	<i>to</i>	<i>to</i>		
<i>Ignace Maes</i>	<i>23</i>		<i>to</i>	<i>to</i>	<i>to</i>		
<i>Louis Sireenelt</i>	<i>20</i>		<i>to</i>	<i>Taylor</i>	<i>to</i>		
<i>Pierre Nils</i>	<i>44</i>		<i>Male</i>	<i>None</i>	<i>to</i>		
<i>Antoinette Nils</i>	<i>44</i>		<i>Female</i>	<i>to</i>	<i>to</i>		
<i>Justin Nils</i>	<i>19</i>		<i>Male</i>	<i>to</i>	<i>to</i>		
<i>Paul Nils</i>	<i>14</i>		<i>to</i>	<i>to</i>	<i>to</i>		
<i>Marie Nils</i>	<i>8</i>		<i>Female</i>	<i>to</i>	<i>to</i>		
<i>Adèle du Cobus</i>	<i>21</i>		<i>to</i>	<i>to</i>	<i>to</i>		

The thirteenth person on the list is "Joannes Ja Cobus Bax". The fourteenth, "Jean François Geurts", is a colleague of John Bax, from Turnhout, Belgium. He was also student of the Institute P.J. de Nef there. He finished studies in 1840 – as the best – and was destined with Bax for the mission of the Jesuits in America¹¹⁹.

¹¹⁹ Students in the time of Mr. de Nef 1823-1848, Archives of the S.J., KADOC, Leuven, Belgium, CD 72/3 nr. 1, page 18.

APPENDIX 7: Letter of 9. February 1849 of John Bax

52 Page Missions 9 of Feb. 1849

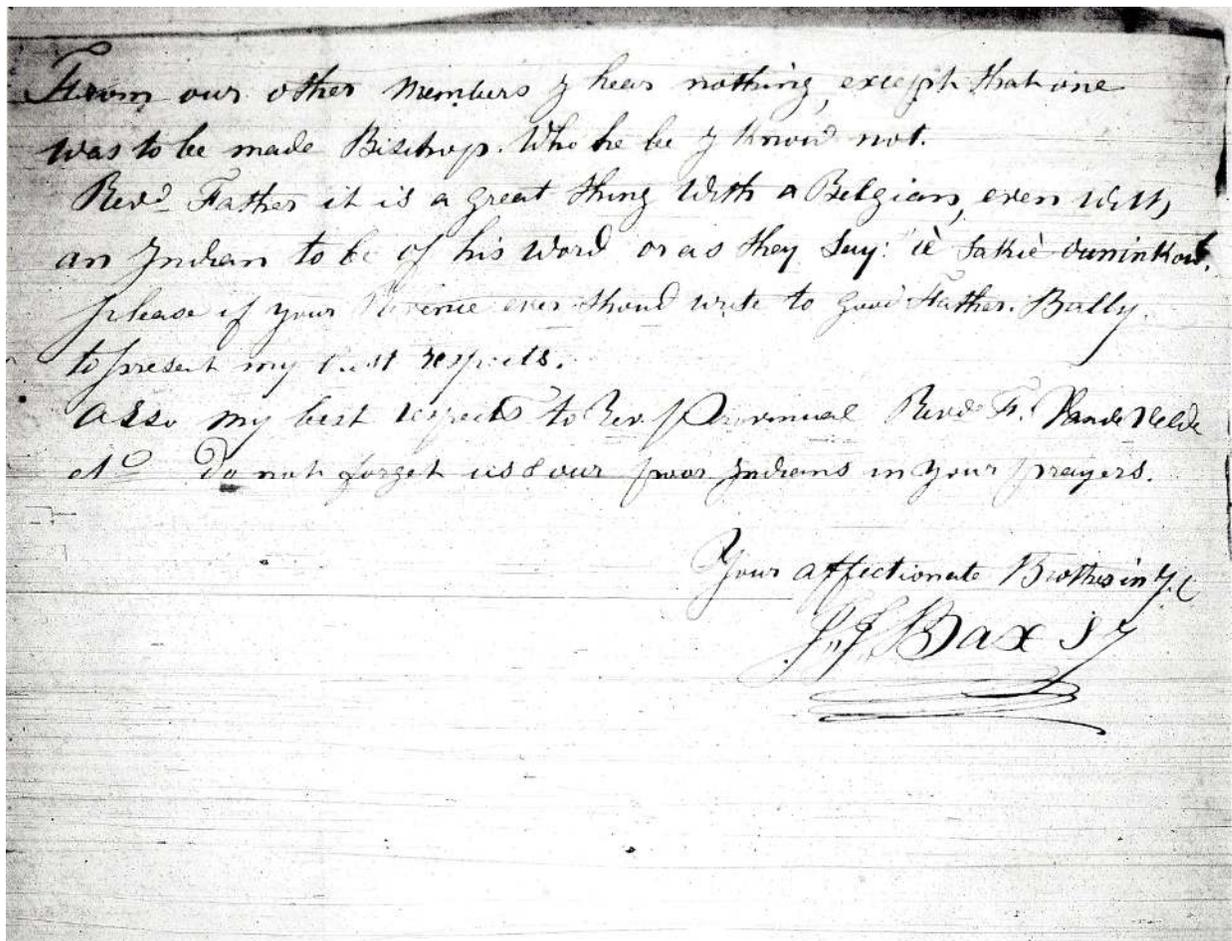
My dear Father,

Although I did not receive an answer to my last letter written about a year ago, I am far from stifling the good feelings of gratitude & love which I have always entertained towards your Reverence, if I knew from your part "Sicut ad omnium studiorum" is something.

In the letters which I received from Kaxeples some months ago it was stated that your Father Relations^{et} were all doing well so with Belo Gueyons et^{et} M^r J. Gueyons Underpastor in Fourshout. My Cousin complains of getting very weak. My Brother who finished his studies had a mind of going to America et^{et} great poverty prevailed all over the Country of Indian Country - the winter has been very long & severe, riding to the road having been covered with ice for 2 months, many of the Indians have not as yet returned from their hunt, consequently Missionary duties have been general have had but out of our reach. Children being every where the same have been on occasions troublesome the improvements which the Government^{will make} through the great energy of Sr J^r Vandelside are highly necessary being so much cramped up. P^r J^r B^r P^r B^r B^r send us as often as they can I hope I will be able to attend better to the spiritual wants both of Indians & Whites, in the absence of the former.

I heard that Sr J^r B^r had started his mission with 14 children. Sr J^r B^r told me he made for straight work. I heard also that many of the Patrimones being disappointed with their new Country came back to Sugar Creek. I know of no other news.

John Bax S.J., missionary among the Indians



Among our other members I hear nothing, except that one
was to be made Bishop. Who he be I know not.
Dear Father it is a great thing with a Belgians, even with
an Indian to be of his word or as they say: 'à l'athie d'ominkou.
Please if your Reverence ever should write to your Father, Bally,
to present my best respects.
Also my best respects to Rev. Provincial Rev. Fr. Van de Velde
et c. Do not forget us & our poor Indians in your prayers.

Your affectionate Brother in Chr.
J. Bax S.J.

Osage Mission, 9 of Feb. 1849

Rev(eren)d and Dear Father,

Although I did not receive answer to my last letter, wrtten about a year ago, I am far from stifling the good feelings of gratitude & love which I have always entertained towards your Reverence. I know from your part "Sollicitudo omnium studiosorum", is something.

In the letters which I received from Merxplas some months ago it was stated that your Father, relations etc, were all doing well so with Rev(eren)d's Goossens etc, Mr. J. Goossens underpastors in Thurnhout. My cousin complains of getting very week [ed.: weak]. My brother who

John Bax S.J., missionary among the Indians

finished his studies had a mind of coming to America etc.¹²⁰ Great poverty prevailed all over the country. Indian Country – The winter has been very long and severe. Owing to the roads having been covered with ice for two months, many of the Indians have not as yet returned from their hunt, consequently missionary duties have been low. Several have died but out of reach. Children being everywhere the same have been on occasions troublesome. The improvements which the government will make through the great energy of Rev. Fr. Van de Velde are highly necessary, being so much cramped up. And if Rev. Fr. Provincial send us another Father I hope I will be able to attend better to the spiritual wants both of Indians and Whites, in the absence of the former.

I heard that Rev. Fr. Truyens has stated his mission with the children. Father Van Merlo told me he made for straight (ed.: maybe he means: *forthright?*) cook. I heard also that many of the Potowatomies being dissatisfied with their new country came back to Sugar Creek. I know of no other news.

From our other members I hear nothing, except that one was to be made Bishop.¹²¹ Who he be I know not.

Rev. Father it is a great thing with a Belgian, even with an Indian to be of his word or as they say "iè sathiè ouninkow".

Please if your Reverence ever should write to good Father Bally, to present my best respects.

Also my best respect to Rev. Provincial, Rev. Van de Velde, etc.

Do not forget us and our poor Indians in your prayers,

Your affectionate brother in J.C.,

Jn.J. Bax, S. J.

¹²⁰ This must concern Jacob Bax, see appendix 2.

¹²¹ Ultimately J.B. Miège S.J. was appointed bishop.

APPENDIX 8: Letter of 14. June 1852 of John Bax

41
Dear Father
I promised in my last letter
to write to you again as soon the storm which was then agitating us
would be a little subsided. I have since received a kind favour from you
through Mr. Weinman which together with the little scraps I received from
the old country gives all the particulars I am interested to know my feelings
& wishes for them coincide with yours, whether the old folks dead or alive
if my prayers are any thing worth, I am willing to help them: their salvation
is all about what I am uneasy. I am here at the Fort to give the Catholic Society
an opportunity to make their Easter as also to see the Doctor about the
scurvy at my neck but the spirit it goes in more our faces but
Russey Zeer Kreuzer pretty thing! no peace for the wretched! At home
the storm has blown over, the unhappy death of one of our Brothers seems
to have been the tail of it. Father Theumaers has been enveloped almost
all the spring with a sore foot. as for the rest health is tolerably good at present.
The measles, typhus fever & Scourge have made a dreadful havoc among
our Indians. Every one thought that there were at least 1000 since last January
& there is not yet a stop they went all at once in a kind of despair on their
summer hunt without planting any corn pumpkins etc & news has returned
that every town loses 4 or 5 every day. besides the buffalo has all been dispersed
on the plains & can find no food: this will cause awful hard times among
them. Their way Kuntaki or witches have pretty well established the notion
that Baptism kills children - they can point out hundreds that have died.
it is true some few others not baptized died but the fact is the generality
of children were baptised. The Devil is a cunning rascal!

Half breeds & full blood Indians are not in good terms, the latter
destroy very rapidly their stock & will be worse when returning from
the hunt. The Agent is residing among them. All this is very dark.
We hope the government ^{will} take some measures in their regard.
We commenced gathering our scattered flock of 56 we have with great
trouble been able to gather 22. Some have gone on the summer hunt
with their parents & relations & it is hard saying whether they will return.
We hear the K'a Indians are labouring under the same disease & requested
their Agent to send ^{the} immediately their missionaries (methodists) many
of the Indians imagine the white people cause these diseases.
A letter from P. Durinck states that all is going well there. We expect
the Right Rev^d Bishop daily at our Missions. The only means we
have left to keep up courage is full confidence in Divine Providence.
Under trying circumstances missions & colleges have been abandoned & when
prospects brightened up they were out of our reach. He who perseveres
till the end shall be saved. Pray hard for us & if convenient let some
others help you.

Many thanks for your two kind letters & other favors which I have
received from you both the feelings of esteem for you as a Brother
in Religion & a Aborigine man make any communication
highly agreeable to me & hope it may be often favored with them.
Some good news from other quarters this up courage in one that
is under trials & miseries.

My best respects to Rev^d Murphy & good G. Desmet.

Yours truly
Father Bax

Yours affectionate Bro^r J. C.
J. J. Bax S.J.

John Bax S.J., missionary among the Indians

Fort Scott [Kansas] June 14th, 1852

Rev. Father Druyts

Rev. & Dear Father,

I promised in my last letter to write to you again as soon the storm which was then agitating us would be a little subsided. I have since received a kind favour from you through Rev. Mr. Heiman which together with the little scraps I received from the old country gives all the particulars. I am interested to know my feelings & wishes for them coincide with yours, whether the old folks dead or alive if my prayers are anything worth, I am willing to help them; their salvation is all about what I am uneasy. I am here at the Fort to give the Catholic soldiers an opportunity to make their Easter as also to see the Doctor about the swelling at my neck *het scheint ik gaen in meine oude daegen het danig zeer krijgen*¹²² pretty thing ! no peace for the wicked! At home the storm has blown over, the unhappy death of one of our Brothers seems to have been the tail of it. Father Schoenmakers has been crippling about all the Spring with a sore foot. As for the rest, health is tolerably good at present. The measles, typhus fever & scurvy have made a dreadful havoc among our Indians. Everyone thinks that there were at least 1,000 since last January & there is not yet a stop. They went all at once in a kind of despair on their summer hunt without planting any corn, pumpkins, etc. & news has returned that every town loses 7 & 8 every day. Besides the buffalo has all been dispersed on the plains & can find no food. This will cause awful hard times among them. Their Waykontaki or witches have pretty well established the notion that Baptism kills children. They can point out hundreds that have died. It is true some few others not baptized died but the fact is the generality of children were baptized. The Devil is a cunning rascal. Half-breeds & full

¹²² In translation: *it appears that in my old days I am going to have pretty much pain.*

John Bax S.J., missionary among the Indians

blood Indians are not on good terms; the latter destroy very rapidly their stock & will be worse when returning from the hunt. No Agent is residing among them. All this looks very dark. We hope the government will take some measures in their regard.

We commenced gathering our scattered flock of 56 we have with great trouble been able to gather 22. Some have gone on the summer hunt with their parents & relations but is hard saying whether they will return. We hear the Ka [Kaw] Indians are laboring under the same diseases & requested their Agent to send off immediately their Missionaries (Methodists). Many of the Indians imagine the white people cause these diseases. A letter from Fr. Durink stated that all is going well there. We expect the Right Rev. Bishop daily at our mission. The only means we have left to keep up courage is full confidence in Divine providence. Under trying circumstances missions & colleges have been abandoned & when prospects brightened up they were out of our reach. We who persevered till the end shall be saved. Pray more for us & if convenient let some others help you. Many thanks for your two kind letters & other favors which I have received from you both the feelings I entertain for you as a Brother in Belgium & a Merxplas man make any communication highly agreeable to me & hope I may be often favored with them. Some good news from other quarters stirs up courage in one that is under trials & miseries.

My best respects to Rev. Murphy & good Fr. DeSmet.
Father Druyts

Yours affectionate Bro. in J.C.
Jn.J.Bax