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JAMES O. VAN DE VELDE PAPERS  
1819-1855

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MIS.5.003

JESUIT ARCHIVES & RESEARCH CENTER  
3920 West Pine Boulevard, Saint Louis, Missouri, 63108  
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## Collection Summary

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*Collection number:* MIS.5.003

*Repository Code:* MoSIJA

*Repository:* Jesuit Archives & Research Center

*Title:* James O. Van de Velde papers

*Date [inclusive]:* 1819-1855

*Extent:* 0.5 linear foot (1 file drawer)

*Creator:* Van de Velde, James O., 1795-1855

*Language of material:* English, Latin, French, and Greek

*Abstract:* James O. Van de Velde (1795-1855) was a Jesuit priest; a professor at, and later president of, Saint Louis University; Superior of the Missouri Vice-Province; Bishop of Chicago; and Bishop of Natchez. His papers consist of biographical information, correspondence, photographs, and bound volumes containing sermons, instructions, and poetry.

*Processing history:* Processed by Midwest Jesuit Archives staff. Additional description completed by Ann N. Rosentreter in 2016.

*Conditions governing access:* This collection is open for research.

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*Preferred citation:* [Identification of item], [Box number], [Folder number]. James O. Van de Velde papers, MIS.5.003. Jesuit Archives & Research Center, St. Louis, Missouri. [Date accessed].

## Biographical note

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James Oliver Van de Velde was born in Belgium in 1795. While in seminary in Belgium, Van de Velde became acquainted with Father Charles Nerinckx, and decided that he would accompany Nerinckx when he returned to America in order to complete seminary and work in the missions in Kentucky. Nerinckx encouraged Van de Velde to join the Society of Jesus, and over the course of the voyage to America, Van de Velde resolved to become a Jesuit. He stayed in Baltimore upon arriving in America to recover from an illness, and entered the Jesuit novitiate at Georgetown College in 1817.

Van de Velde remained at Georgetown College for fourteen years, being ordained a priest in 1827, and working as both a professor and librarian. In 1831, he was attached to the teaching staff of the Jesuit college in St. Louis. Van de Velde served as president of Saint Louis University from 1840 to 1843, during which time he managed the completion of St. Francis Xavier Church, also known as “College Church.” He was appointed Superior of the Missouri vice-province in 1843, and served in this role until 1848. As vice-provincial, Van de Velde oversaw many construction projects, including continued work on the “Rock Building” at Florissant.

In 1848, Van de Velde was nominated by the Holy Father to become the Bishop of Chicago. Van de Velde was reluctant to accept this position which would sever his connection with the Society of Jesus. He did accept the position after consulting with theologians, was consecrated in February 1849, and was installed as Bishop of Chicago in April 1849. Van de Velde accomplished a great deal in this role, but found the harsher climate of Chicago problematic for his health. He asked to be relieved of the see of Chicago, and in 1853 he was transferred to the see of Natchez. Van de Velde passed died in his role as Bishop of Natchez in November 1855.

## Sources

Garraghan, Gilbert J. *The Jesuits of the Middle United States*. 3 vols. New York: America Press, 1938.

## Scope and content note

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The James O. Van de Velde papers consists of biographical material, correspondence, photographs, and bound volumes. Many of the letters and other documents shed light on the situation at Saint Louis University and in the Missouri Vice Province more broadly. The bound volumes in the collection contain a variety of works by Van De Velde, including sermons, instructions, discourses on controversial topics, and poetry.

## Arrangement note

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This collection is arranged in four series:

- Series 1. Biographical Material and Correspondence, 1825-1855
- Series 2. Bound Volumes, 1819-1852
- Series 3. Photographs, undated

### Series 1. Biographical Material and Correspondence, 1825-1855

*Scope and content note:*

Biographical material and correspondence series consists of biographical sketches, including an obituary, as well as Van de Velde's last will and testament, written while he was the bishop of Chicago, other property and loan documents, and Van de Velde's profession of vows. This series also contains letters written to and from Van de Velde sent between 1825 and 1854. Among other items, this correspondence includes letters from Father General Jan Roothaan on matters pertaining to Saint Louis University, and a letter written to Peter De Smet in 1852.

*Arrangement note:*

This series is in its original order.

File Drawer 5.0147: Folder 2

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### Series 2. Bound Volumes, 1819-1852

*Scope and content note:*

The Bound Volumes series contains poetry, sermons, and other works written by Van de Velde that were compiled into bound volumes. Most of the writings contained in these volumes are handwritten by Van de Velde, but some of the works are typed. The volumes containing sermons are arranged according to the liturgical calendar, and lists in the volumes seem to indicate in which years and in which cities Van de Velde gave these sermons. The volume of poetry contains verses written as early as 1819.

*Arrangement note:*

This series is intellectually arranged in chronological order.

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*Verses of J.O. van de Velde, S.J.*

File Drawer 5.0147: Volume 4

*Sermons & Instructions for every Sunday & Festival of the year; together with a Collection of Panegyrics, Orations, Explorations & Controversial Discourses, Vol. 1. Sundays & moveable Feasts – from New Years day to Trinity Sunday, 1844*

File Drawer 5.0147: Volume 6

*Sermons & Instructions for every Sunday & Festival of the year; together with a Collection of Panegyrics, Orations, & Controversial Discourses, Vol. II. Sundays & moveable Feasts – from Trinity Sunday to the end of the year, 1844*

File Drawer 5.0147: Volume 5

*Sermons & Instructions for every Sunday & Festival of the year; together with a Collection of Panegyrics, Orations, & Controversial Discourses, Vol. III. Feasts, Panegyrics, & Orations, 1844*

File Drawer 5.0147: Volume 3

*Sermons & Instructions for every Sunday & Festival of the year; together with a Collection of Panegyrics, Orations, & Controversial Discourses, Vol. IV. Controversial Discourses, 1852*

File Drawer 5.0147: Volume 2

*Sermons & Instructions for every Sunday & Festival of the year; together with a Collection of Panegyrics, Orations, & Controversial Discourses, Vol. V. Controversial Discourses, &c. 1852*

File Drawer 5.0147: Volume 1

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### Series 3. Photographs, undated

*Scope and content note:*

The photograph series consists of prints and negatives of Bishop Van de Velde.

*Arrangement note:*

This series is in its original order.

Files Drawer 5.0147: Folder 1