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PETER J. VERHAEGAN PAPERS
1826-1868 [Bulk 1830-1867]

MIS.5.004

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Collection Summary

Collection number: MIS.5.004

Repository Code: MoSIJA

Repository: Jesuit Archives & Research Center

Title: Peter J. Verhaegen papers

Date [bulk]: 1830-1867

Date [inclusive]: 1826-1868

Extent: .5 linear feet (1 accordion folder)

Creator: Verhaegen, Peter Joseph, 1800-1868

Language of material: English, Latin, and French

Abstract: Father Peter Joseph Verhaegen S.J. one of the seven Belgian novices recruited by Charles Nerinckx to work among Native Americans in Missouri. He was one of the founding members of the Missouri Mission established in 1823. The papers include correspondence, photographs, writings, and Verhaegen's last will and testament.

Processing history: Processed by Midwest Jesuit Archives Associate Archivist, Nancy Mertz. Additional processing and description by Alexandra M. Bisio in 2017.

Conditions governing access: This collection is open for research.

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Historical note

Father Peter Joseph Verhaegen S.J. one of the seven Belgian novices recruited by Charles Nerinckx to work among Native Americans in Missouri. He was one of the founding members of the Missouri Mission established in 1823. Verhaegen was born in Haeght, Belgium on June 21, 1800. Along with six other young men, Verhaegen left Belgium on August 15, 1821 and traveled to the Jesuit novitiate at White Marsh, Prince George's County, Maryland. He entered the Society of Jesus on October 6, 1821. Shortly after Verhaegen's arrival in White Marsh, he, and the other Belgian novices, were assigned to establish a mission on the banks of the Mississippi river in Florissant, Missouri.

After his ordination, Verhaegen was stationed in St. Charles, Missouri, and provided services to many of the Catholic communities around St. Louis. In 1829, the Jesuits officially took possession of Saint Louis University, a school originally opened by the Archdiocese as Saint Louis College, with Verhaegen as its first president. Verhaegen remained president of Saint Louis University until 1836 when he returned to Florissant to become superior of the Missouri Mission, which became a Vice-Province in 1840. Under Verhaegen's administration the Mission expanded to minister to several Native American tribes, including the Kickapoo, Pottawattamie, and Flathead. As Vice-Provincial, Verhaegen also took charge of St. Charles College in Grand Coteau, Louisiana and St. Xavier College, Cincinnati, Ohio. Verhaegen also administrated the Diocese of St. Louis during Bishop Joseph Rosati's absence between 1840-1841.

In 1843, Verhaegen stepped down as Vice-Provincial of the Missouri Vice-Province. He briefly became superior of St. Charles before becoming Provincial of the Maryland Province in 1845. Between 1851 and 1858, Verhaegen filled several academic roles, including president of St. Joseph's College, Bardstown, Kentucky and the Chair of the Theology Department at St. Louis University. He eventually retired to St. Charles where he remained for the rest of his life. Peter Verhaegen died in St. Charles on July 21, 1868 at the age of 69.

Scope and content note

The papers of Father Peter Joseph Verhaegen include correspondence, photographs, writings, and Verhaegen's last will and testament. All materials in this collection were created between 1826 and Verhaegen's death in 1868. Correspondence includes letters written by Verhaegen to other Jesuits, particularly those stationed at Georgetown and St. Joseph's College in Bardstown, Kentucky. Some poetry written by Verhaegen is included in correspondence. Photographs include one oval portrait and one Carte-de-Visite taken of Verhaegen, as well as several copy-prints of both images. Writings include sermons and notes on moral theology.

Arrangement note

This collection is arranged in chronologically by date of creation.

Collection Contents

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| <i>Moral Theology Notes</i> , bound volume, 1826 | Drawer 5.0149: Vol. 1 |
| Oval portrait and copy-prints, circa 1830-1836 | Drawer 5.0149: Folder 1 |
| Will, copies, 1833 | Drawer 5.0149: Folder 2 |
| Correspondence, 1837-1867 | Drawer 5.0149: Folders 3, 5 |
| <i>Infidelity Refuted: Christianity Proved to be Divine</i> , bound volume, circa 1850s | Drawer 5.0149: Vol. 2 |
| Carte-de visite and copy-prints, circa 1856-1868 | Drawer 5.0149: Folder 4 |
| <i>The True Church of Christ</i> , bound volume, 1856 | Drawer 4.0149: Vol. 3 |