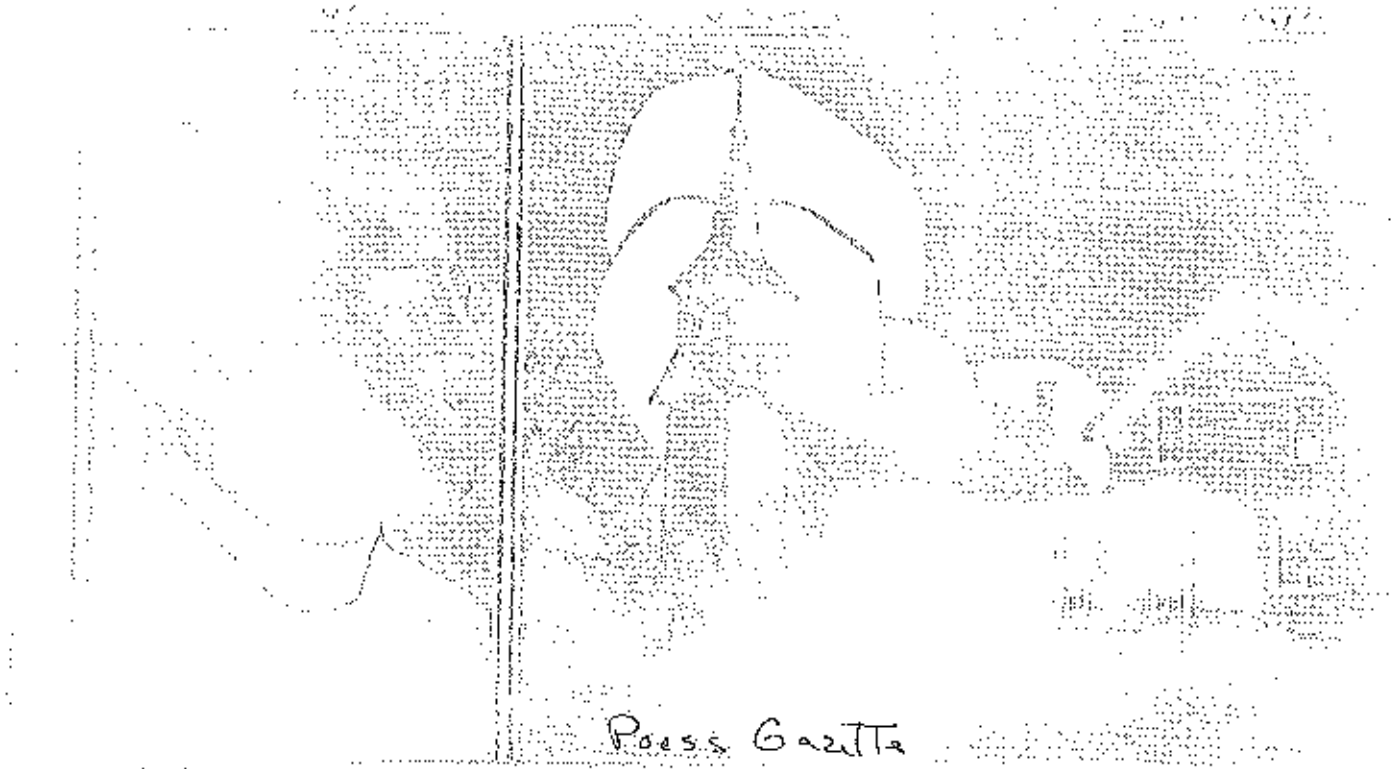

Press Gazette

1950

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[illegible]

[illegible] Duck creek.

[illegible] Duck [illegible] But the [illegible] the [illegible] into a racing for- [illegible] and boils [illegible]

[illegible] A. A. Vis- [illegible] the churches, [illegible] congregations. [illegible] Duck [illegible] Church of [illegible] in the [illegible] Oneida. There [illegible] to St.

A Venerable Missionary

[illegible] priest [illegible] Duck [illegible] the mission [illegible] the Oneida people [illegible] the [illegible] the [illegible] the churches, which [illegible] religious in spirit of [illegible]

[illegible] Sunday morning some years [illegible] Father Vissers mounted his little [illegible] pony, comes to Duck creek at the place where he was accustomed to [illegible] it. In a day it had become a [illegible] pastors. Books were flooded, [illegible] barred by with a foaming [illegible]. The river secured all of 14 feet [illegible]

[illegible] all a brave man," the [illegible] says in telling of the incident. "He was back and forth by way of the [illegible] world made a 12-mile [illegible] I would arrive too late to [illegible] Are we plunging into [illegible] risking my life. I [illegible] and drove my pony into [illegible]

[illegible] on to the house I swam [illegible] have made it [illegible] Duck I was safe [illegible]

[illegible] Indian [illegible] I [illegible] the [illegible] Indian [illegible] I [illegible] the [illegible] the [illegible] way of the [illegible]

"I know that you have no boat did you build a raft?"

"No, Father."

"My curiosity was aroused. I asked [illegible] 'How did you cross, [illegible]?'

"The boy replied, 'We took off our clothes, tied them on our shoulders, and swam across,' was the boy's answer."

Indian Devoted Attendance

"The Indian loves to come to church. To do so he is willing to undergo hardships," says Father Vissers. He described a driving blizzard which set in one Saturday in January a number of years ago. Realizing the condition of the roads, the pastor started early in the afternoon to walk to the mission chapel. When he arrived at St. Joseph's all of his face not covered by his whiskers was frost bitten and his beard a solid cake of ice.

The blizzard continued all night. In the morning, even the pastor who appreciated the Oneida's devotion to religious duties scarcely expected to have any congregation. But before 8 o'clock, plodding over the drifts and bending their head, before the sharp rain of icy particles, came the faithful worshipers, breaking through groups.

The priest omitted his sermon in order to be on the way to get his other churches, earlier. He found trouble through the snow drifts [illegible] Great. He recalled [illegible] and [illegible] of the journey was made in this manner. It was almost noon when he reached home.

"Nearing the rectory," he says, "I was surprised to hear voices. I pushed open the door. 'I did four,' came in a hearty tone. The men of the parish were gathered in my dining room and kitchen, playing cards and waiting for their pastor."

At Christmas time the Oneidas are accustomed to take up a collection for their pastor. Last year the collection of $40—a vast amount for the little congregation—was given to a visiting missionary who had kept a mission among them. But they could not forget their own priest. On Christmas morning they came to the parish house, every one laden with some canned goods, vegetables, meats—"everything," says Father Vissers, "from a pork roast to a loaf of bread."

"I so much incidents as these," he says. "That endear these people to the heart of the missionary."

First School Burned

The pastor says that SS[illegible] [illegible] decided to erect the first school [illegible] years ago. Every blow of the [illegible] the placing of every [illegible] watched with intense int[illegible]

[illegible] and flock went to the town of [illegible] to give a concert. Coming [illegible] the [illegible] they noticed a [illegible] in the sky.

"[illegible] a brush fire," said the [illegible] to allay his [illegible]

[illegible] the top of the ridge to [illegible] the [illegible] school a pile of [illegible] ruins.

"The little children, ignorant of our calamity, came as usual to school the next morning. At sight of the ruins they raised as church their hands were broken. Like so many hungry chicks they crowded about me, begging, crying until I promised to build a school, better school, provided they prayed for help.

"The next Sunday I called the people in consultation. A white-haired old man arose. 'Father,' he said, 'I cannot read or write and I am too old to learn. But I see many children—

"'I have nothing to give but my two hands. Tell me what I must do.'"

In less than three months the construction of a new building was laid by Mr. Lockman.

[illegible] Mgr. Lockman who, while a young priest at Freedom, Wis., near [illegible] in 1888 conceived the [illegible] a church for the [illegible] Every Sunday afternoon he [illegible] and said very [illegible] words standing [illegible] the house of Eli Skenandore. [illegible] from his [illegible] Eli Skenandore [illegible]

Above—The Rev. A. A. Vissers, O. Praem. and the [illegible] church and parish house at Oneida, Wis. Below—A [illegible] students at the mission school.

Bridge, children? I asked.

"No, Father