

CHAPTER XIV

THE SEISMOLOGICAL OBSERVATORY OF SAINT BONIFACE COLLEGE

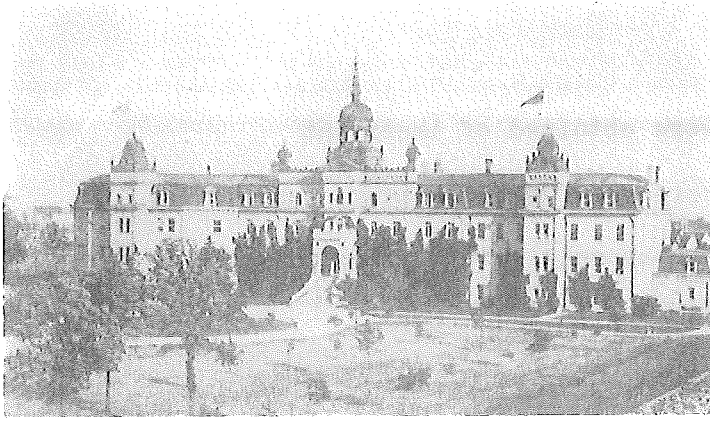
SAINT BONIFACE, MANITOBA, CANADA

By James B. Macelwane, S. J.

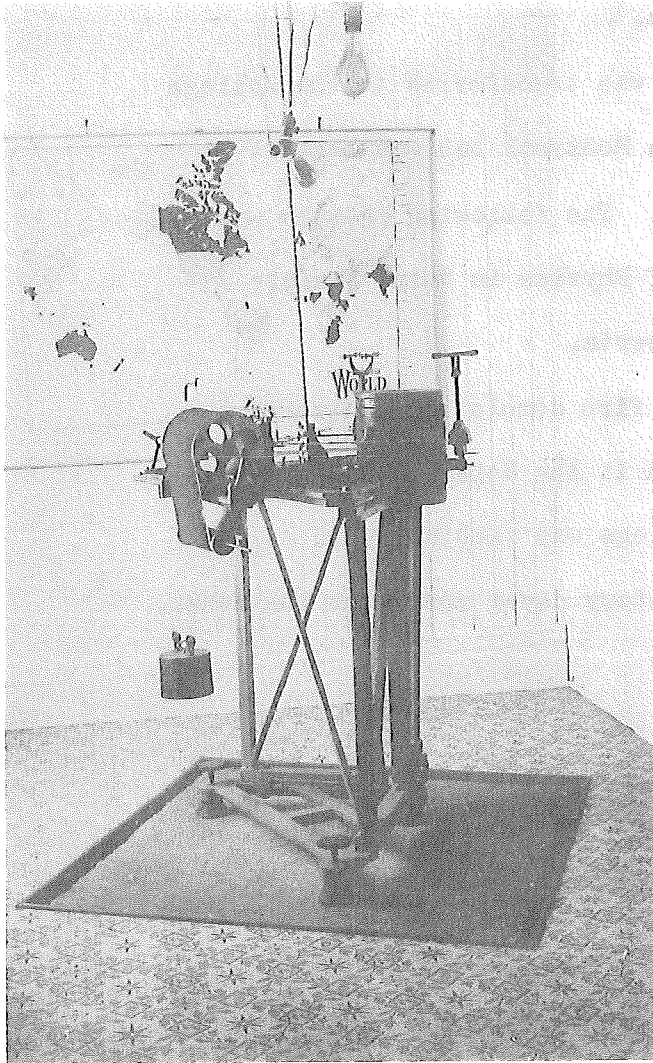
It was through the personal interest and endeavor of Father Joseph Blain, S. J., that the College of Saint Boniface responded to the appeal of Father Frederick Odenbach in 1909 by purchasing from the firm of Spindler and Hoyer in Göttingen, Germany, an 80 kilogram horizontal component seismograph. The seismograph was set up and the new Seismological Observatory was inaugurated in 1910.

In addition to his heavy instructional duties in the college and his administrative functions as a member of the University Senate and of the Examining Board of the University of Manitoba of which the college was the senior constituent, Father Blain assumed the direction of the new Seismological Observatory and began to familiarize himself with the science of seismology. When reading and correspondence failed to solve his problems he went to Saint Louis and spent some time with the personnel of the Saint Louis University Geophysical Observatory.

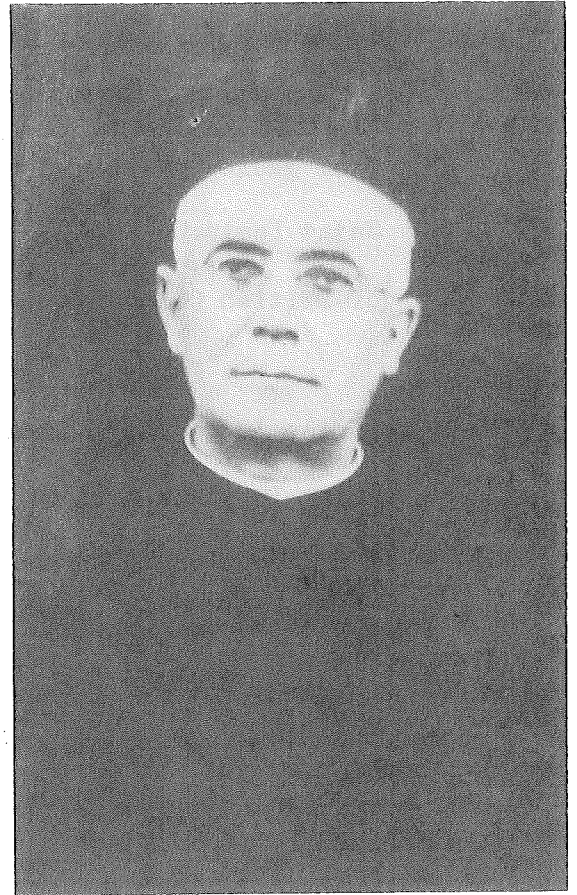
In the autumn of 1910 a Jesuit scholastic, Mr. Achille Rousseau, took over the routine care of the station.



St. Boniface College in which the seismograph station was located and which was destroyed by fire in 1922



The Wiechert 80 Kg. Seismograph at the St. Boniface College Station



Reverend Joseph Blain, S. J.
Founder and Director of the Seismograph Station, 1910 - 1919

Excellent records were obtained of important earthquakes and the reports were very useful because the Saint Boniface Observatory was the only seismological station in all that part of North America.

In August, 1915, the Observatory was visited by a party of Jesuit Fathers and Scholastics who were returning from geological field work conducted under the auspices of Saint Louis University in the Selkirks and Rocky Mountains of British Columbia and Alberta.

In 1919 Father Blain was transferred to the College of the Immaculate Conception in Montreal but was back at Saint Boniface College in 1920. The following year he was appointed to a Professorship of Physics in Saint Francis Xavier College in Edmonton, Alberta.

In 1922 a disastrous fire completely destroyed Saint Boniface College and with it the Seismological Observatory and its records. The College was reestablished at the Petit Seminaire but the Observatory never rose from its ashes.