

Coeur d'Alene's Old Mission State Park

Introduction: The Coeur d'Alene's Old Mission State Park is Idaho's premier historical park. The park commemorates the early European contact and settlement in the territory that would someday become Idaho. But the park also commemorates the culture of the Salish Native America Tribes and specifically the Coeur d'Alene Tribe. This makes it Idaho's only "cultural" state park. Here the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation (IDPR) do their absolute best job of "living history" interpretation.

The center piece of the park is the "Old Mission" church building. The Old Mission had "rose like a miracle in an almost total wilderness where even log house were rare ..." It has occasionally been referred to as the "Wilderness Cathedral." It is known as the oldest still standing building in Idaho. It is the actual building and not a replica. It has stood upon this knoll above the Coeur d'Alene River since its construction was completed in 1850-53 by members of the Coeur d'Alene Tribe and Catholic missionaries. Standing next to it is another historic building, the Parish House, which has stood here since 1888. Both buildings are open to visitors. The Old Mission and the land on which it sits are a living site, and the Tribe's connection to it has continued through the generations. The area around the mission is revered as the ancestral homeland for many of today's tribal families. The Old Mission has been designated as a National Historical Landmark.

The destination visitor center at the park houses the *Sacred Encounters: Father De Smet and the Indians of the Rocky Mountain West* permanent exhibit. It tells the story of the "Black Robes" and the Coeur d'Alene Tribe. This Smithsonian quality display unfolds in nine dramatic scenes, augmented by video and music. This is probably the best example of a destination visitor center managed by the IDPR. It could be said that it is Idaho's best visitor center devoted to cultural interpretation

Visitors also come to the Old Mission to walk the paved paths, go boating, picnicking, and participate in guided walks, programs and audio tours. The natural beauty and historic significance combine to make it a perfect setting for day trips, weddings, celebrations, and special events. The park offers two annual events: (1) the Historic Skills Fair the second weekend of July, and (2) the annual Coeur d'Alene Tribe Pilgrimage and celebration of the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary on August 15.

Getting There: Coeur d'Alene's Old Mission State Park is located about 25 miles east of Coeur d'Alene on Interstate 90. Take the Old Mission off-ramp and follow the signs to the park.

Major Features:

The Landscape: The landscape today is one of a grassy knoll situated in an area surrounding by Douglas fir forest, wetlands and ponds. It is a very scenic location, but very little of the landscaped is actually included within the small park.

The River: The park at one time had a great deal of river frontage, but due to the expiration of two different leases, that river frontage has been reduced significantly. Yet the river played a major part in why the site was originally selected for the building the Sacred Heart Mission. It later played a part in providing a route for steamships to transport people and supplies to the Old

Mission area. The river today remains an integral part of the park's scenery. But unfortunately the river remains a polluted waterway. The Coeur d'Alene River flows for over 115 miles from its headwaters in the Shoshone Range of the Bitterroot Mountains near the Montana/Idaho border into the Silver Valley and then into Lake Coeur d'Alene. The pollution problem begins where the main fork of the river joins the South Fork at Enaville. The South Fork became polluted due to mine wastes and discharges from mining activities starting in the 1880s. Impacted for decades by mining waste, the basin's South Fork is one of the most polluted rivers in the state, and arguably the country. Most streams in the South Fork Coeur d'Alene River subbasin are listed as impaired by sediment, metals, or temperature. Silver was processed in Smeltonville, downstream of the massive Kellogg mine. There was so much lead in the river in the Kellogg area at one time that the locals called the stream "Lead Creek." The lower Coeur d'Alene River is a complicated hydrological system with deep depositional riverbeds, sandy river banks, wetlands, marshes and a series of unique chain lakes, all fed by the contaminated water from the South Fork. According to the EPA, toxins contaminate some 18,000 acres of wetlands along the river. But despite this, the river does sustain a fishery that includes brook trout, rainbow trout, cutthroat trout, west slope cutthroat trout, chinook salmon, kokanee salmon and bull trout.

The Park: The park is located at 2,200 feet in elevation. It receives about 87,000 visitors per year. An Economic Impact Study done by Boise State University estimates that the park has an economic impact of about \$771,000. This despite the fact that it is the smallest park in the state park system. The base property leased from the Coeur d'Alene Tribe is about 18 acres. The park has another 16 acres that they operate through an agreement with Shoshone County. So the current total is about 34 acres. At one time the park consisted of about 130 acres, but the IDPR has allowed two different leases for adjacent lands to expire. The park consists of four primary use areas: (1) the Old Mission Church and Parish House; (2) the visitor center; (3) the cemetery; and (4) the boat ramp.

Old Mission Church and Parish House – The Old Mission measures about 90 feet high and 40 feet wide. The six square upright timbers in front are 28 inches square and the two by the altar are 3 feet by 3 feet. All are more than 25 feet long, and were hewn and planed with a broad axe. About midway between floor and ceiling you can see where the horizontal timbers were morticed into the uprights. Here the wooden pegs are also visible. Wooden pegs were used throughout the building to secure all structural members together. Some of the wooden pegs remain in the floor in the vicinity of the altar.

The two paintings above the side altars depicting Heaven and Hell are Old World works of art, and were transported to the wilderness by the Black Robes. The paintings were restored through the efforts of the Idaho Bicentennial Commission.

Father Ravalli hand-carved the two white statues of the Blessed Virgin and St. John the Evangelist which stand on pedestals on either side of the altar. He also painted the picture of St. Simon Stock receiving the Scapular, which hangs above the organ in the rear of the church. The glass transom above the door displays Father Ravalli's depiction of the Sacred Heart.

The altar is also the work of Father Ravalli, carved by hand and painted to achieve the effect of marble.

If you enter the small room to the east of the altar, a bit of the wall construction is opened to view. The building is of earth and timber construction. Holes were drilled in the upright

timbers and small poles were placed in them. Straw or grass was woven on this framework and then daubed with mud. The 10 to 12 inches thick walls were then covered with boards inside and out by Father Joseph Caruana in 1865. The blue coloring of the interior wood is not paint but a stain created by pressing local huckleberries into the wood.

The foundation of native stone is about four feet wide. Mud was used to hold the stones in place. Over the years, cement has been added in many places. The stone was brought to the site from a half-mile away, and some of the timbers from a mile or more, by trucks with block wheels “roughly made and for want of sufficient teams drawn mostly by hand.”

Next to the Old Mission is the Parish House. The Parish House was the center of the business and social life of Old Mission. Though the great church remained the central religious landmark for the mission, the Parish House was “home” to priests and brothers of the Society of Jesus, or Jesuits, who served the whites and Indians of the region.

The grounds adjacent to Old Mission and the Parish House are cultivated lawns where picnicking can occur. There are 10 picnic tables available for day use. A vault toilet is situated nearby. There is a small gravel parking lot here as well.

A ½ mile historic trail starts here with many wayside exhibits. They provide information about some of the original structures of a self-sufficient village that once stood here. The stops on the trail are supplemented with audio-stations intended to enhance your visit. Members of the Coeur d’Alene Tribe and Jesuit Fathers provide a personal touch through stories and music. There is also an overlook behind the Old Mission and a trail that offers views of the Coeur d’Alene River and the surrounding landscape. A second trail starts at the West Cemetery and will lead you over the mission flats where the Coeur d’Alenes once camped, fished and grew their crops. Here you will have an excellent opportunity to view some of the wildlife of the area as well as see native plant life.

Visitor Center – The Visitor/Interpretive Center has improved restroom facilities, tourist information, and a small gift shop. The 5,000 square foot, \$3.26 million visitor center was built to house a world-class exhibit called *Sacred Encounters: Father De Smet and the Indians of the Rocky Mountain West*. The exhibit includes artifacts from some of the most important museums in the world including the Smithsonian and Museum of Natural History. *Sacred Encounters* captures the emotional tension and drama of the story using the multiple voices of the exhibition. With collaboration of more than one hundred Native American, Jesuits, curatorial, and academic consultants, *Sacred Encounters* bridges the fine arts, history, and ethnography to evoke the ongoing dialogue between Christianity and traditional Indian belief that produced new ways of life and new ways of believing for natives and newcomer alike. Among the illustrations are photographs of newly discovered drawings and watercolors by Jesuit artist Nicolas Point; maps by De Smet and Indian mapmakers; rare battle drawings by the Salish warrior Five Crows; and mid nineteenth-century Plateau and Plains Indian artifacts associated with the travels of De Smet, the Audubon expedition, fur trader Robert Campbell, and Canadian artist Paul Kane.

Sacred Encounters tells the story of how Jesuit missionaries came to the interior Northwest at the invitation of the Coeur d’Alene and Salish tribes and the profound effects this sacred encounter had on both cultures. The exhibit is divided into 6 parts: (1) The Invasion of the Heart; (2) Two Sacred Worlds; (3) The Call of the Rockies; (4) Wilderness Kingdom; (5) the Dispossessed; and (6) Closing the Circle.

The Invasion of the Heart – This part tells how the encounter between Christian missionaries and Indian Tribes sparked a confrontation and dialogue between sacred worlds. It

tells about how Pierre Jean De Smet of Belgium came to meet the Salish tribes of the Inland Northwest in the 1840s and how the collision of European and indigenous beliefs brought about wrenching changes and started the dialogue between Indian and white in the Western Hemisphere nearly 350 years after the voyages of Columbus.

Two Sacred Worlds – In this part the European Catholic background of De Smet is contrasted with the power of the spiritual world of the Salish tribes, a world where everything is alive and capable of transformation.

The Call of the Rockies – This part illustrates the conditions of the land of the Salish Tribes at the time of arrival of the missionaries. Illustrations are provided that show the objects and images that graphically reflect the influences of intertribal exchange, the European fur trade, and devastating epidemic diseases.

Wilderness Kingdom – Here is illustrated the landscape where the Sacred Heart Mission would be established in 1842. There is a huge mural of the winter landscape along the Coeur d'Alene River and the sounds of wind and plaintive song. Here is where De Smet dreamed of establishing a vast "Empire of Christian Indians."

The Dispossessed – Here the story is told of how the Salish tribes were eventually forced upon reservations and "dispossessed" of their native homelands.

Closing the Circle – Here is where we can hear the voices of Coeur d'Alene and Bitterroot Salish elders and other cultural leaders express their opinions about the past, and their thoughts about the relationship between Christianity and Native spirituality.

The visitor center has two parking lots. The upper parking lot was primarily designed as ADA parking as the lower parking lot has an uphill climb to the visitor center. As designed, it is paved and has five wide parking spots with a turn around. The lower parking lot was apparently designed at a time before entrance fees were charged as its entrance comes right off of the "county road." This lot is paved and it appears to have been designed for about 25 cars. There was also a developed picnic area here. Unfortunately about ½ of the lower parking lot and its entrance road is on land that used to be leased for a nominal price from the Mine Owners Association, but is now owned by another party who demanded a much higher lease payment. The IDPR let the lease expire rather than make the higher payment. So the park has lost the ability to use this parking lot. This has led to a practice that once all the ADA parking places are taken, the over flow parking is now done on the grassy area between the visitor center and the Old Mission.

Cemetery – At least 300 people are buried here, according to the records of the mission, but only a few stones remain. This was the cemetery for the Mission of the Sacred Heart, which has two sections. The main one in front of the mission and the other down the hill west of the mission.

Boat Ramp – The boat ramp is owned by Shoshone County but is operated by IDPR. There is single lane boat ramp with courtesy docks. The paved parking lot can accommodate 12 vehicles with trailers. An additional gravel lot can accommodate additional vehicles without trailers. There is a vault toilet located nearby the parking lot.

Geology: Much of Kootenai County is mountainous and is contained in the Northern Rocky Mountain physiographic province. The mountains are the kind commonly characterized as dissected uplands and composed of two well defined groups, the Selkirks and the Coeur d'Alene, which are separated by a broad, intermountain depression, the Purcell Trench, which extends

southward from Canada.

The Selkirks are the more imposing of the two mountain groups and lie along the middle western and northwestern border of the county and spread over a much larger area in Washington. Near the mid-point of the county, the group is crossed by the Purcell Trench. The south end of the range (which extends to within a few miles of the south border of the county) is separated and, therefore, more or less isolated from the main mass. The detached group is not as high as the remainder and its culminating point, Mica Peak, only rises to 5,250 feet, or about 2,600 feet above the plateau surface. The south end of this detached group is partly encircled by the Columbia Plateau and its border is determined by irregularities of the plateau margin versus borders that are steeper and more regular in which the lower slopes show the effect of glacial scour (this occurs where the mountains lie along the Purcell Trench).

The Coeur d'Alene Mountains form an intricately dissected mass east of the Purcell Trench and Coeur d'Alene Lake. These mountains cover more than half the county, and spread eastward and southward into and across Shoshone County. They appear as a submaturely dissected upland with ridges rising to different levels. These ridge levels indicate several epochs of accelerated erosion corresponding with as many uplifts. The lowest level outlines a broad, old valley surface, in part gravel-capped. The ridge slopes are generally steep, and the crests are sharp without remnant flats. Only where the mountains border the Purcell Trench do they show evidence of glacial erosion.

As noted above, the Columbia Plateau forms a deep embayment in the southwestern part of the county. It extends around the south end of the Selkirk Mountains and spreads eastward and southward against the Coeur d'Alene Mountains and its outlines. Its surface is coextensive with the flows of Columbia River Basalt. East of Coeur d'Alene Lake and along the Coeur d'Alene River, the surface of the plateau had been largely destroyed by erosion, or is retained as broad, basaltic terraces on the lower flank of the mountains. West of the lake to the state line, the surface has been dissected little so that it preserves the plateau character. Most of the plateau surface has an altitude of about 2,500 feet, but in places it appears to be carried to some levels of 2,700 feet.

Coeur d'Alene Lake extends southward between the two mountain groups and along the edge of the Coeur d'Alene Mountains and the Columbia Plateau. It is dammed by the glacial outwash which has built up the floor of the Purcell Trench to its present level. Only Coeur d'Alene and Fernan Lakes in Kootenai County have surface outlets, the others drain through the gravels of the trench.

The Columbia Plateau is underlain by Columbia River basalt. This is the only extrusive rock in Kootenai County and also forms the terraces on both sides of Coeur d'Alene Lake and the Coeur d'Alene River. These flows formerly extended far up the Coeur d'Alene River and the Purcell Trench, but erosion has removed them. The number of flows is not known, but flow followed flow until the lower foothills were covered and the lava had flooded far back into the mountains to the present 2,500 - 2,700 ft. contour.

The basalt has a very uniform composition and differences between flows are no more than differences within individual flows. The tops and bottoms of the flows are generally more vesicular than the middles, and the vesicles are usually larger. About the only difference is that the rock near the top and bottom generally has more glass than the rock farther within. The glass apparently consists of uncrystallized Augite, Magnetite, and Limenite. The augite has the brownish color generally accorded to the presence of titanium. Glass occurs through the rock of each of the flows, but is most abundant near the top where it may form from 25 to 50 percent of the rock.

The topography of Mowry State Park is a result of sequential lava flows of the Columbia Plateau and the erosion process which follows. The terrain rises abruptly on most of the shoreline with benches of various elevations and sizes.

Ecosystems and Plant Communities: Coeur d'Alenes Old Mission State Park encompasses three habitats: Douglas fir forest, river, meadow/prairie, riparian, and wetlands.

Douglas Fir Forest: This the forest that once covered most of the park area prior to the building of the mission. Today, this habitat still exists fairly intact on the adjacent BLM public land that was once leased by the park. The climax Douglas fir occurs both in the overstory and usually in the understory. Mature trees of ponderosa pine, Douglas fir, and western larch may occur with grand fir in the overstory. Grand fir usually predominates in the understory. The mixture of plants found in this forest include: ponderosa pine, Douglas fir, western larch, grand fir, lodgepole pine, western hemlock, western white pine, Engelmann spruce, common snowberry, Idaho fescue, kinnikinnick, mallow leaf ninebark, and huckleberry. The keynote species is huckleberry. The huckleberry is chosen because not only was its juice used to color the interior of the Old Mission, it is also the Idaho State fruit. Several species of huckleberry are native to Idaho (all belonging to genus *Vaccinium*). The most common and popular is the black or thin-leaved huckleberry (*Vaccinium membranaceum*). Black huckleberries grow in various habitats, such as mid-alpine regions at elevations between 2,000 and 11,000 feet on mountain slopes, forests, or lake basins. The plant grows best in damp, acidic soil having volcanic origin. They usually grow from 1 to 6 feet tall (taking up to 15 years to reach full maturity) with berries up to ½ inch in diameter. Black huckleberries produce single plump, dark purple berries in the axils of leaves on new shoots. Huckleberries were traditionally collected by Native American tribes for use as food or traditional medicine. The fruit is versatile in various foods or beverages, including jam, pudding, candy, pie, ice cream, muffins, pancakes, salad dressings, juice, tea, soup, and syrup. Traditional medical applications included treating pain, heart ailments, and infections. They are a favorite food of bears but are also eaten by birds, coyotes, and deer.

The River: The Coeur d'Alene River sort of runs through the park. However, only the portion that is adjacent to the Shoshone County lease property is actually part of the park. Despite the fact that this is a polluted waterway, it actually supports a rather healthy fishery. Brook trout, rainbow trout, cutthroat trout, west slope cutthroat trout, chinook salmon, kokanee salmon and bull trout are known to inhabit the river.

Meadow/prairie: The meadow/prairie occurs in the clearings that were created by settlement for use as cultivated hay fields. If left to revert to nature, the mixture of plants found in this ecosystem could include: bluebunch wheatgrass, Idaho fescue, common snowberry, rough fescue, arrow-leaf balsamroot, Indian paintbrush, sunflower, lupine, yarrow, Columbia brome, wild rose, and other grasses.

Riparian: The riparian ecosystem is along the edges of the river. The riparian vegetation here includes: elk sedge, willow, black cottonwood, alders, and a lush undergrowth.

Wetlands: A low trough feature runs through part of the park. This feature used to be the main channel of the Coeur d'Alene River. But now it is dotted with three significant ponds and a few

minor ones with areas where the soil remains quite moist. In this area elk sedge, bull rush, cattails, water potato, willow, black cottonwood, and alders can be found.

Wildlife:

Mammals: The mammals present in the park include: moose, bobcat, mink, otter, beaver, muskrat, raccoon, weasel, striped skunk, whitetail deer, coyote, western red squirrel, and chipmunk.

The keynote species is the Moose. They are occasionally seen during spring and summer in the ponds, marshy areas and meadows that are adjacent to the Old Mission area.. “Moos” is an Algonquian word that means “twig-eater.” The moose residing in this park are Shiras moose (*Alces alces shirasi*), which are the smallest of the five subspecies native to North America. Shiras moose are found in western Wyoming, western Montana, northern and central Idaho, southwestern Alberta, southeastern British Columbia, and in extreme northwestern Washington. A Shiras bull moose can weigh up to 1,000 pounds, but average 507 to 758 pounds. They are about 5 ½ feet tall at the shoulder. Moose of both sexes have a “bell” which is a flap of skin and long hair that hangs down from the throat. No one knows why. The bulls can grow majestic antlers up to 50 inches wide that weigh 60 pounds. They lose their antlers each year. Moose require habitat with adequate edible plants (e.g., pond grasses, young trees and shrubs), cover from predators, and protection from extremely hot or cold weather. Moose typically inhabit boreal forests and temperate broadleaf and mixed forests of the Northern Hemisphere in temperate to subarctic climates. Their diet consists of both terrestrial and aquatic vegetation. Much of a moose's energy is derived from terrestrial vegetation, mainly consisting of forbs and other non-grasses, and fresh shoots from trees such as willow and birch. But they also eat aquatic plants such as lilies and pondweed. Moose are excellent swimmers and are known to wade into water to eat aquatic plants. Moose will eat about 40 to 60 pounds of food per day. Rutting and mating occurs in September and October. Their mating season features energetic fights between males competing for a female. Female moose have an eight-month gestation period, usually bearing one calf, or twins if food is plentiful. Unlike most other deer species, moose do not form herds and are solitary animals. They generally are slow-moving and sedentary. Moose can be irritable, and have been known to charge people, horses, cars, snowmobiles, road maintenance machines and locomotives.

Birds: The birds present in the park include: ruffed grouse, osprey, turkey, American coot, Canada geese, mallard, great blue heron, American kestrel, red-tailed hawk, belted kingfisher bald eagle, pied-billed grebe, wood duck, American wigeon, ruddy duck, tundra swan and Canada goose.

Fish: The fish present in the park include: brook trout, rainbow trout, cutthroat trout, west slope cutthroat trout, chinook salmon, kokanee salmon and bull trout.

Cultural History: Before the arrival of the Euro-Americans in the area, the Schitsu’umsh (Coeur d’Alene) Tribe traditionally inhabited a landscape comprising about 5 million acres of land centered around Lake Coeur d’Alene, Idaho, including much of the Panhandle and stretching into parts of Montana and Washington. The tribe had many permanent settlements around the lake and also in the surrounding areas. They hunted in the mountains filled with elk, deer, black bear,

and fished in the lakes and streams which were filled with various species of fish. Before the arrival of Europeans, it is estimated that there were about 2,500 to 4,000 people in the tribe.

One of their best food sources were water potatoes. Water potatoes, *sqigwts*, grow in the marshy edges of the lake. They were regularly harvested by women in the late fall using digging sticks, or, when the water levels rose, by loosening the tubers and letting their single leaves and long stalks float the potatoes to the surface. Prepared, stored, or cooked in the manner of other such tubers and root crops, they provided a staple food for the winter. It was only in desperate times, when hunger demanded it, that winter campers might raid the water potatoes stored by other lake inhabitants, the muskrats, or *chch'likhw*. The availability of this food source influenced their choice of the area around the Lake Coeur d'Alene as their homeland.

Modern Coeur d'Alenes still refer to the those places as their homelands. Large tribal families near here until the 1900s, hunted, fished, and gathered food in the nearby mountains and on the western plains. Their lives were centered on the lake and its tributaries. They practiced gardening skills on the grounds above the Trail of the Coeur d'Alenes. Those large gardens and hay fields were the beginning of the tribal farms later established on the Palouse.

In the early 1800s. The Schitsu'umsh came into contact with French-Canadian trappers and traders. It has been said that these traders were very skillful in manipulating the Indians. But it seems that the Schitsu'umsh were not that easy to warm up to and hence the traders never dared to settle among them. This lead to the traders giving them the nickname Coeur d'Alene (heart of awl) meaning they were hard or small or sharp hearted.

The natural wealth of the forests, rivers, and lakes sustained their existence for countless generations on five million acres of ancestral land. The Coeur d'Alene had abundant living. Their lifestyle was forever altered with the discovery of gold in the Idaho panhandle in 1860.

Tribal families moved within reservation boundaries after 1870, before large-scale farming, mining, and timber development of their homelands. The Coeur d'Alene were forced onto a reservation in 1873.

Starting in 1907, a series of actions would take place that each downsized the Coeur d'Alene reservation. After 1909 the reservation was opened to homesteading. Nevertheless, the Coeur d'Alene people continued to sustain themselves spiritually by visiting and staying in the distant mountains and along the near lake shores.

History: The story of the Coeur d'Alene's Old Mission State Park starts with the birth of the mission founder. Peter De Smet was born on January 31, 1801 in Yermonde, Begium. He enrolled at the Seminary at Mechlin, Belgium where he came to meet a missionary named Father Charles Nerinckx who had lived in Kentucky. He was inspired by Father Neriinckx to become a missionary to North America. De Smet and several companions traveled to America where he joined the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits, "Black Robes") and he was ordained a priest on September 23, 1827.

The coming of the "Black Robes" to minister to the Coeur d'Alene Tribe would start with the effort of the Flathead Tribe to bring them to Montana. A party of Flatheads went to St. Louis in 1835, to make a request to Bishop Rosati to send some missionary Black Robes to live among them in Montana. Another party that went to St. Louis in 1839 was able to meet with Father Peter De Smet to make their request.

In July 1840, De Smet journeyed west with a Flathead named Ignace to guide him. He found his way to the Bitterroot Valley and established a camp among the Flatheads. De Smet began to plan for a permanent mission there. He returned to St. Louis on August 27, 1840 to

begin the process.

On April 24, 1841, Father De Smet, Father Nicholas Point, Father Mengarini and three lay brothers left St. Louis to return to the Flatheads. Brother Huet was one of the three lay brothers. On September 24, 1841, a huge cross was erected and the mission to the Flatheads was named St. Mary's. Building operations were begun in October, and before the winter set in, a chapel was erected.

Three Coeur d'Alene families visited the St. Mary's Mission to meet with Father De Smet. De Smet baptized three of their children on October 31, 1841. Some months later, just after April 16, 1842, De Smet met the Coeur d'Alene Tribe in their own land while journeying to Fort Colville. This visit lasted just two days, but De Smet promised the Tribe that he would send them a priest. De Smet would comment on the meeting:

Never has a visit to the Indians given me such consolation, and nowhere have I seen such unmistakable proof of true conversion, not even excepting the Flatheads in 1840.

By that time of this meeting, the Tribe had 27 settlements, but sickness and epidemics had significantly reduced the numbers of the Tribe and by 1850 the Schitsu'umsh there were only about 500.

It would be Father Point that De Smet sent to the Coeur d'Alenes. On the first Friday of December of 1842, Point planted the cross on a spot along the banks of the St. Joe River south of Lake Coeur d'Alene. Point was a skillful architect who designed and drew the first building for the mission. In the Spring of 1843, a new village was laid out, trees were felled, roads opened and a church was built. Brother Huet was a "jack-of-all-trades" and worked on the construction of the Mission on the St. Joe River. By October 1844, the little village contained about 100 Christian families.

The location of the new St. Joe River Mission proved to be unsatisfactory, since, each year in the spring, the fields were submerged. They struggled to hold this together, but in 1846, it was decided to abandon the site on the St. Joe River.

Father Joseph Joset had assisted Father Point at the St. Joe Mission. Father De Smet took Father Point with him where Point was to establish a mission to the Blackfeet. Father Joset was appointed Vice-Provincial of the Missions of the Northwest and he decided to make his headquarters at a new location for the Mission to the Coeur d'Alenes. This mission would be called the Sacred Heart Mission. This time a site that was somewhat northeast of Lake Coeur d'Alene was selected. This site was still within the homelands used by the Coeur d'Alene Tribe. A temporary chapel made of bark, was erected. Meanwhile plans for a new Mission Church were being drawn by Father Anthony Ravalli who was then stationed at the St. Mary's Mission in Montana.

Father Anthony Ravalli was born in Ferrara, Italy on May 16, 1812. At the age of fifteen he entered the Jesuit Novitiate. He studied medicine, philosophy, theology, mathematics, and the natural sciences. He also apprenticed in an artist studio and a mechanics shop. He came to what was then Oregon in 1844 with Father De Smet. He eventually was assigned to the St. Mary's Mission.

The Oregon Territory was formed through a treaty with the British in 1846. Congress officially established the Oregon Territory on August 14, 1848. The land that the new mission would be built upon was in this new United States Territory.

Father Ravalli designed the new Mission of the Sacred Heart. In 1848, Father Peter De

Smet began the building of the Old Mission. The building would be in use by 1853.

The design included plans for a church some ninety feet long, forty feet wide, and thirty feet high. Uprights about eighteen inches square and rafters about ten inches square were cut from pines that grew nearby. The sawing was done in an improvised saw-pit with an improvised whipsaw, and the planing and shaping were done by hand with a broad axe. Nails were not available, so holes were bored in the uprights and rafters and they were then joined with wooden pegs.

The roof and walls were made by boring holes in the uprights and rafters and interlacing willow saplings between them. Around the saplings wild grass was closely woven and over the whole was spread adobe mud from the river bank.

Huge timbers were cut for the floor and carefully placed to procure a smooth surface. Six large columns to support the roof of the porch were placed on pedestals of remarkable texture and thickness. These columns were chosen from perfect specimens of pine and were laboriously planed by hand to present a remarkable smooth surface. The steps leading to the porch were split logs hewed from enormous trees.

Three altars were constructed and all of the decorations on them were carved with patient hands. The walls of the sanctuary were covered with a flowered cloth of strong durable texture. On the wall behind the main altar a large picture of the Sacred Heart was hung. Above the side altars, pictures depicting "Heaven" and "Hell" were placed.

Father Ravalli fashioned chandeliers from tin cans and carved beautiful statues of St. Mary and St. John the Evangelist to flank the main altar. The wooden main altar and two side altars were painted to mimic marble. Oil paintings above them added piercing splashes of color.

The Mission of the Sacred Heart was completed in 1853. It soon became a "station of hospitality and supplies" for those passing through the area. Parallel to the Mission Church, a Parsonage House or Superior's Place was built with an adjoining building that served as living quarters for the brothers and a place for the lodging of travelers. The Parsonage House was the permanent house for the superior of the Mission. In a sketch done by Father Gilmore in 1860, it was shown with a stone foundation. The west extension was depicted with a board floor, possibly a porch-like structure. The building was constructed with hewn logs using the post-in-sill technique. The brother's quarters and travelers lodging building shows a long multiple-unit structure parallel to the church. It housed the Mission brothers and travelers, a kitchen, and a repair shop. Some of the prominent travelers who visited the Mission and possibly stayed in this building were: Issac I. Stevens, Governor of the Washington Territory; Captain John Mullan, builder of the famous Mullan Road; and General William Tecumseh Sherman.

The Washington Territory was formed out of a portion of the Oregon Territory on March 2, 1852. It was in October 1853, that Territorial Governor Isaac Stevens made his visit to the Mission. He was on his way to Olympia to assume his duties as governor. He spent three days at the Mission. He returned in 1855 and stopped at the Mission and while there received the oath of allegiance to the United States of the Jesuit Fathers and Brothers, all of whom were Europeans.

Captain John Mullan and his crew camped at the Mission while building the "Mullan Road" in 1858.

The parsonage and quarters for the brothers buildings was completely destroyed by a fire in 1864, but fortunately, the Mission church was spared.

In 1865, Father Caruana lined the walls of the Mission church with clapboards.

Father Joseph Cataldo arrived at the Mission in 1865 and would be a dominant force in Idaho Catholicism. He was born on March 17, 1837 in Terrasini ,Sicily. Cataldo was admitted to

the Jesuit novitiate in Palermo, Sicily on December 22, 1852. After ordination, he was sent to the foreign mission in the Rocky Mountains in the United States. Due to ill health, Cataldo was then sent to Panama and later to Santa Clara College in Santa Clara, California. After his recovery, he was then sent north to minister to the Spokane Indians. From the Sacred Heart Mission, Cataldo went to the Yakima reservation in 1870 to re-establish the mission there. When he became the Superior of all the Rocky Mountain Missions in 1877, he made his headquarters at the Sacred Heart Mission. Father Cataldo also served as a peacemaker during the Nez Perce War of 1877. He also built St. Michaels Mission at Spokane in 1866, St. Stanislaus Church at Lewiston in 1867, and was the founder of Gonzaga College, now Gonzaga University.

Concern about the ownership of the mission lands in 1867, caused the Society of Jesus to make a formal claim for the lands. But as the lands were not yet surveyed by the U.S. government, confirming the claim was not possible at that time.

The Coeur d'Alene Indian Reservation was established by Executive Order on November 8, 1873 and modified by subsequent congressionally ratified agreements. The reservation comprised approximately 590,000 acres in Idaho. But the Executive Order clearly excluded the Mission from the new reservation. Many of the Tribe began moving south of Lake Coeur d'Alene in preparation for the new reservation. The Jesuits began discussing whether the Mission needed to also be moved south. In June 1874, Father Joset could not clearly decide what was best. He found 12 reasons for moving and only 3 for remaining. So they decided to move south.

In 1876 the Sacred Heart mission was moved to its present location on reservation lands at the Camas Prairie, a place called lil' whee loos – spring on a hillside – now known as DeSmet. The DeSmet Mission Church was established in 1877, and a mission school for Native American children was constructed at DeSmet in 1878 when the sisters of Providence arrived from Vancouver.

The Mission of the Sacred Heart lived on, however. The Jesuits maintained the Mission and the village that had grown up around it to train brothers of the order. The village included a parsonage, lodge, barn, grist mill and landing for steamboats.

The Coeur d'Alene River aided in popularizing the Sacred Heart Mission by creating a water route and steamboat access for outlying communities. For one dollar, passengers could enjoy the 27 mile river excursion from Coeur d'Alene Lake and upon arriving at their destination, experience the beauty of the Mission in the wilderness. In 1877, a village called "Mission Landing" became the transfer point for freight and passengers that were destined for locations in the Silver Valley.

With the influx of miners and settlers into the area, the Jesuits realized the necessity of finishing the legal process to obtain title of ownership for the mission property. They had originally claimed 640 acres in 1867. Father Gazzoli gave testimony before the judge of Nez Perce County on November 6, 1871 that the Sacred Heart Mission was founded in June 1846. That happened to be in the same month that the Oregon Treaty was signed in which the area of the mission had become territory of the United States. On September 3, 1872, Father Cataldo prepared a statement of notification, claiming right and title to the Sacred Heart Mission property for the Jesuits. Father Cataldo filed the official land claim with the U.S. General Land Office at the Colfax Land Office on October 23, 1880. The claim was complicated by the fact that the Jesuits had begun occupancy decades before and that even in 1880, the survey of the lands by the Federal government had not yet been completed. So in 1884, the Jesuits retained Captain John Mullan (of Mullan Road fame) to provide them legal assistance as their lawyer in Washington,

DC. The final survey of the land was completed on March 24, 1886. In the meantime they had been bothered by squatters and claim jumpers trying to get a foothold on their property. To further protect their interest, one of the Jesuit Brothers John Dunningan filed a claim for an additional 15 acres. Finally, after the General Land Office completed their adjudication of the Jesuits claim, a patent was issued to Joseph M. Cataldo for 640 on May 17, 1889. Brother John Dunningan's patent for 15 acres was issued on August 4, 1891.

In 1885 a strike was made which established the Coeur d'Alene Mountains as one of the wealthiest mining regions in the world. Steamships such as the *Coeur d'Alene*, the *General Sherman* and the *Kootenai* would leave the docks at Coeur d'Alene laden to the gunnels with passengers and freight (food, supplies, machinery, and horses) to the mines in the Silver Valley. They would bring back tons and tons of rich ore, which was then sent to Spokane. A small community know as "Old Mission" was established in the area during the height of this activity.

In 1886 D.C. Corbin built a narrow gauge (known locally as the "chippy railroad") from this Old Mission east to the mines. The first year it reached Wardner and a year later tracks were laid into Wallace. It was actually called the Coeur d'Alene Railroad and Navigation Company (CR&N) that ran from the Old Mission landing through the Silver Valley. It was eventually absorbed into the Northern Pacific Railway. Old Mission became the transfer point from the steamers to the rail cars serving the silver mining district towns of Kellogg and Wallace.

By the mid 1880s, a flood of miners, farmers and military personnel were pouring into North Idaho, stimulating a revitalization at the Old Mission. The Jesuits decided to construct a new Parish House, choosing a Neo-Gothic design that was popular at that time, even on the frontier. In the spring of 1887, carpenters set framework for the building. They ordered several hundred board feet of planks from mills in Spokane Falls, and purchased hardware supplies locally. Brother Achilles Carfagno, a veteran carpenter from St. Joseph's Mission among the Nez Perce, assumed on-site responsibilities. He hired at least two local craftsmen to assist him, and they completed the house exterior by October. The installation of hardwood floors, a chimney, and other finishing touches had to wait until spring of 1888. The final coat of lath and plaster was applied in September. The Parish House was a frequent way station for priests ministering to the spiritual needs of the miners of the Silver Valley. Ten years after the Parish House construction began, the mission gained residential status when a priest was stationed there permanently. The change prompted it to be renamed the Station of the Blessed Jesuit Martyres. But it seems the title "Old Mission" stuck.

In 1888, with the Secretary of the Interior having obtained the prior consent of the Tribe, Congress granted a railroad right-of-way to the Union Pacific Railroad within the boundaries of the Coeur d'Alene Indian Reservation. It was the Wallace-Mullan Branch right-of-way between Plummer and Cataldo, Idaho. It was a standard gauge line. It would be built alongside and parallel to the Chippy Railroad. It was said the two lines were laid so close together that engineers could shake hands without leaving their locomotives.

In 1895, Jesuit Brother Henry Adams took over managing the farming on the Old Mission property. In 1900 he reported that the mission owned 800 acres and 300 of those acres were under cultivation. He stated that they owned four hogs, eight grade horses, and two stock horses. The cultivated land at that time included two large meadows, which were split into four parts by the Chippy Railroad leases running through the property.

The Parish House, which had its own chapel, was used for religious services, lodging and as a base to conduct both secular and ecclesiastic business. From 1899 to 1901, the Parish House was the sole training center for novices to become Jesuit brothers.

On August 4, 1904, an article was published in the Coeur d'Alene newspaper that said: "The Coeur d'Alene Mission is now advertised for sale." The article speculated that the ranch would probably be subdivided into several farms. But that "The Old Mission building and the grounds surrounding it will be reserved . . . to preserve this monument to the pioneer times of Northern Idaho." The author wrote that the Old Mission Church "should belong to the state, it being an object in which all the people of the State are interested, irrespective of creed or political belief."

The Washington Water Power Company built a dam on the Spokane River at Post Falls in 1906. This caused the lake level to rise considerably. The rising waters created a chain of lakes and marshes along the Coeur d'Alene River and in doing so slowed the flow of the river. This made the river overflow just enough to cover the Old Mission's only fresh water supply. This led to a legal struggle with the Power Company to provide restitution for these damages.

The Dawes Act was passed in 1887 which authorized the allotment of 160 acres of reservation land to each member of the Tribe and opened up the un-allotted lands to homestead entry. In the case of the Coeur d'Alene Reservation, the year 1908 was set for completion of the necessary surveys and the beginning of allotment of claims. This influenced a further movement south of tribal members to the allotments within their reservation.

The Coeur d'Alene River had been significantly contaminated with upstream mine wastes. Periodic flooding of the Old Mission ranch lands was spreading this contamination over the lands. Crop yields were being seriously affected and animals began dying from apparent lead poisoning. After much negotiation and feeble attempts at mitigating the floods and contamination, the solution that was agreed upon was for the Mining Corporations to buy the damaged lands. On April 15, 1921, the Mining Corporations purchased the Old Mission Ranch, but the Jesuits kept the 23 acres where the Old Mission stood and George Ryan retained the one acre where the store once stood. The Mining Corporations were to make installment payments with interest that would total \$54,000.

The Jesuit Order deeded an 18.4 acre property over to the Diocese of Boise in 1924. A "committee of two" was put together to consider the future use of the Old Mission site. One of the first steps taken by the committee was placing a caretaker in charge to prevent further destruction by vandals. Soon interest in the site brought together a movement that involved the Coeur d'Alene Tribe, the Diocese of Boise, the Knights of Columbus, the Kiwanis Club of Kellogg, the Board of Trade of Wallace, and the Chambers of Commerce of Coeur d'Alene and Spokane. Plans were being made for initiating the restoration of the Old Mission Church. Many of the repairs would begin in about 1928. The foundation of the old church was strengthened, the floor made firm and true, the walls covered with new sheathing, the pillars of the portico properly aligned, the facade repaired, and the whole exterior was painted white. New steps hewn from immense logs were used to replace the old steps. Details in the interior were renewed.

The Cataldo Mission was designated as a registered National Historic Landmark on July 4, 1961. The formal dedication as a National Historic Landmark took place at the annual pilgrimage on August 15, 1963. About 700 people attended the dedication ceremony.

In 1973 - 1976, as an Idaho project on our nation's 200th birthday, a major restoration costing \$310,000 took place at the Mission. This project was spearheaded by a group of concerned individuals known as the Association for the Preservation and Commemoration of the Old Cataldo Mission. The church was restored to its 1860's appearance.

Park History: In the fall of 1975, the Diocese of Boise made a decision to pass ownership of the Old Mission site to the Tribe, while the State of Idaho would hold the property in trust. For the Coeur d'Alene Tribe, gaining possession of the Old Sacred Heart Mission, even held in trust, was the fulfillment of generations of attachment to the place. On November 7, 1975, Bishop Sylvester Teinan, representing the Diocese of Boise, signed a lease agreement with Steven Bly, Director of the IDPR, formally establishing Old Mission State Park. A month later, on December 8, the Diocese deeded the property to the United States as "Donee in Trust for the Coeur d'Alene Tribe." The lease issued to IDPR would last 40 years, until 2015, and only after it expired would the Tribe have the chance of owning the Old Mission State Park.

The formal dedication for the Old Mission State Park was on June 13, 1976. Bill Scudder was introduced as the first manager of Old Mission State Park.

The 1975 lease agreement with the Diocese of Boise only included about 18.4 acres. With an eye on the future the IDPR obtained a Recreation and Public Purposes Act (RPP) lease from the BLM for about 49.5 acres which brought the new park total to 67.9 acres. Then in 1976, the IDPR obtained a lease for about 46.6 acres that surround and are adjacent to the primary site for \$125 per year from the Seattle First National Bank on behalf of the Mine Owners Association. That would bring the park total to 114.5 acres. The IDPR would come to rely on the low lease rate of \$125 for the next 28 years.

In the 1980s, the IDPR installed a lower parking lot with an adjacent picnic area, developed an interpretive trail to historic markers and wetlands features, and a cemetery site on the property leased from the Mine Owners Association.

In 1986 the old Parish House, adjacent to the church, which was built in 1887, was restored. Once again, this was a project of the Association for the Preservation and Commemoration of the Old Cataldo Mission. The cost of the project was \$75,000 and returned the house to its original appearance.

In 1996, the IDPR entered into an MOU with Shoshone County to operate the boat ramp property of about 16 acres which brought the park total to 130.5 acres. This would end up being the peak size of the park.

In 1998, a unique opportunity arose for the Old Mission State Park to become the permanent home of the exhibition, *Sacred Encounters: Father De Smet and the Indians of the Rocky Mountain West*. The exhibition had just completed a seven-city tour and it had an uncertain future until the proposal of permanently displaying it at Old Mission State Park. Planning began for a new 5,000 square-foot visitor center with proper facilities to hold the \$10 million dollar collection.

Bishop Michael Discroll, acting for the Diocese of Boise, completely conveyed the Old Mission property (the original 18.4 acres) over to the Coeur d'Alene Tribe on August 15, 2001. The Tribe then decided to lease the property to the State of Idaho for a period of 25 years. As part of the new lease agreement completed in 2002 with the Tribe, the IDPR changed the name from "Old Mission State Park" to "Coeur d'Alene's Old Mission State Park" and the IDPR would continue to operate and maintain the site in collaboration with the Tribe.

The Trail of the Coeur d'Alenes State Park was established in 2004. The trail is located less than ½ mile south of the Old Mission site across the Coeur d'Alene River.

Ed Short of the North Idaho Land Company purchases the 47 acres that surround the primary Old Mission site from Asarco, Inc.(Mine Owners Association). This is the same property that IDPR had been leasing for only \$125 per year for the last 28 years..

The \$3.26 million *Sacred Encounters* Visitor Center opened on October 15, 2011. This increased the demand for parking at the park.

Ed Short initiated a renegotiation of the IDPR lease on his property in 2012 and asked for \$8,400 per year for IDPR to keep the lease. IDPR turned down the \$8,400 per year offer claiming lack of funding. With expiration of the lease, the IDPR then lost access to ½ of the lower parking lot rendering it useless for park purposes, the adjacent picnic area was abandoned, and the public further lost legal access to the interpretive trails and several historic sites. This reduced the size of the park to 83.9 acres. It has been said that the Coeur d’Alene Tribe has initiated negotiations with Ed Short to purchase the land that surrounds the primary site, but no progress has been made.

In 2017, The previous RPP lease with BLM was allowed to expire which reduced the park size to 34.4 acres.

Recreation Activities:

Boating: The park operates and maintains a boat ramp through an agreement with Shoshone County. There is single lane boat ramp with courtesy docks. The paved parking lot can accommodate 12 vehicles with trailers. An additional gravel lot can accommodate additional vehicles without trailers. There is a vault toilet located nearby the parking lot. Both motorized and non-motorized water craft can be launched here.

Picnicking: There are landscaped lawns with ornamental trees in and around the Old Mission and the Parish House. This area is available for picnicking. There are 10 picnic tables available for day use. A vault toilet is situated nearby.

History Study: This is the primary activity available at the park. Visitors may explore the Old Mission Church and Parish House. The extra \$5.00 per person fee for going through the *Sacred Encounters* exhibit is more than worth it. In fact a visit to the park isn’t hardly compete without it. The visitor center gift shop has a number of books and publications available for further study of the history of the area.

Hiking: The park has about 1 mile of trails that access various parts of the park and have exhibits and interpretive panels along the way. However, some of these trails cross through and over properties not currently under lease by the park for public access.

Please Remember

- Open fires are not allowed.
- Park where directed by park personnel.
- Motor vehicles are to stay on established roadways unless directed otherwise.
- Personal floatation devices are required for any water craft on the river.
- Dogs must be on a leash at all times, and are not permitted in the buildings.
- All vehicles must pay the \$5.00 per day entry fee when using the areas in the park even if the entrance station is closed.
- All watercraft must display a current invasive species decal.
- All archeological and historic artifacts are protected by law. Collection of such items is prohibited.

Nature Study: Two parts of the park trail extend into “natural areas” such as the Wetlands Trail and a short trail to a pond.

Fishing: Fishing can be done either through use of a boat or other water craft or from the banks of the river at the boat launch property. The fish that can be caught include: brook trout, rainbow trout, cutthroat trout, west slope cutthroat trout, chinook salmon, and kokanee salmon. But because of the contamination in the river anglers should consult the Idaho Fish Consumption Advisory for Lake Coeur d’Alene.

Resource Management Issues:

Land tenure and access issues. The lack of a lease or purchase of the Ed Short property has created some degree of dysfunction at the park. The most critical problem is the lack of adequate parking. But further, public access to wetlands, historical sites and an appropriate “viewshed” buffer around the historic site have also been lost. Further, giving up the BLM RPP lease abandons an opportunity for access to river front property and wetlands habitat and a possible future connection to the Trail of the Coeur d’Alenes State Park.

Future Improvements Planned: There appears to be no master plan or general development plan available for this park.

Suggestions for the Future: The following are suggested improvements to the park:

- Since the lack of a lease for the Ed Short property appears to be a long term problem, consider constructing a road from the upper parking lot to the lower parking lot. Then redesign the lower parking lot to accommodate about 25 cars all on property under existing lease from the Tribe. In this manner, trespass on the Ed Short property will be curtailed and all cars entering the park must pass through the entrance station.
- Use whatever methods are available for acquisition or a new lease to obtain access to the Ed Short property for park purposes. This is important for prevention of development of this property which will destroy the historic viewshed of the park. .
- Consider renewing the RPP lease with the BLM. This property is a natural enhancement for the park and provides a place for the routing of a connecting trail to the Trail of the Coeur d’Alenes State Park.
- Plan for an eventually connection of the park by a paved trail with the Trail of the Coeur d’Alenes State Park. This would require acquiring a right-of-way and building a trail bridge over the Couer d’Alene River for connection to the trail at the Latour Creek Wayside. Make the trail wide enough to accommodate UTV vehicles so that park staff can access the Trail of the Coeur d’Alenes directly from the park.
- Find a site, possibly on the BLM RPP leased property, to construct a “trail camp” where long distance bicycle riders on the Trail of the Coeur d’Alenes can camp for the night. Consider placing a vault toilet at this trail camp.