Provincial Files 1906-1926: Rev. Thomas O'Neil Finney, C.M.
Quantity: 8 inches (2 full size boxes)

History

Rev. Thomas O'Neil Finney's term as Provincial for the Western Province of the Congregation of the Mission began on March 3rd, 1906. Biographical information about Fr. Finney is located in his personnel file. "He remained in office for twenty years, and in general it was a trying period for the Western Province. The province lurched from one financial crisis to another until Finney left office on March 16th 1926. He was a reticent person who tended to give superiors a free hand. As a result DePaul University went heavily into debt. In Los Angeles the financial maneuvers of Fr. Joseph Glass not only created a large debt but ultimately led to the closing of St. Vincent's College. The province's worst entanglement was with the University of Dallas, where Fr. Finney's brother, Patrick, was both president and superior. In 1917 it was discovered that Dallas had a debt of over $700,000 and within a short time the province was on the verge of bankruptcy."[1]

Description

Rev. Thomas O'Neil Finney's provincial files are separated into four series: Superior General Correspondence, Houses and Apostolates, Foreign Missions, and Subject Files.

The **Superior General Correspondence** is arranged chronologically and includes the 1909 "Report of the Visitation of the Procurator General of the Houses of the Western Province of the United States in Relation to their Financial Situation."

Letters addressed to "My Dear Confrere" and "Local Superiors of the Province" have been gathered together in a file titled "Circular Letters" and placed in the beginning of the **Houses and Apostolates** series. These letters generally communicate rules and regulations sent to Fr. Finney from the Superior General. The remaining files in this series are arranged alphabetically by geographic location. The St. Vincent's College, Los Angeles, California files contain correspondence between Fr. Finney and Fr. Joseph Glass. Included is a copy of the May 17th, 1910 letter written by Fr. Glass to the Superior General, Fr. Fiat, outlining his reason why the Vincentians should not continue to support the college apostolate in Los Angeles. The St. Vincent's College/DePaul University folder has original letters from Archbishop Quigley to Fr. William Barnwell (Provincial of the Western Province until his death on 25 January 1906) and Fr. Finney to Fr. Byrne as well as photocopies of the correspondence between Fr. Finney and the Superior General. The original letters are located in the Superior General Correspondence, Box 1, Folders 1 through 6. The letters in the St. Mary's of the Barrens Seminary, Perryville, Missouri file are exclusively written by young men or their guardians requesting admission to the seminary. Of interest in the University of Dallas, Dallas, Texas files are the correspondence and reports written by Fr. Thomas Levan regarding the financial status of the institution and the possible sale or lease of the property to the federal government for use as a medical hospital. Fr. Finney's files include his documentation about Dallas University's treasurer, Fr. Hugh J. O'Connor, and a shady business scheme with a local oilman.

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[1] "A Survey of American Vincentian History: 1815-1987," chap. in *The American Vincentians: A Popular History of the Congregation of the Mission in the United States, 1818-1987* (Brooklyn, New York: New City Press, 1988), 61.

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During Fr. Finney's administration the province began sending priests to serve in the China Missions. There are only three letters are in the **Foreign Mission** series but included is Fr. Finney's October 9th, 1922 request for priests of the Western Province to contact him immediately if they wish to offer their services for the mission in China. The last series, **Subject Files**, contains correspondence about Vincentian residents in Catholic University's Caldwell Hall; the opinion of the Supreme Court of the State of Nebraska regarding the State vs. The First Catholic Church; and photocopies of Finney correspondence held in other archival repositories.

Processed
October - December 2002, Greg Beglau; February 2006, Morgen MacIntosh Hodgetts

Box	Folder	Title	Date
1		**CORRESPONDENCE, SUPERIOR GENERAL**	
	1	Antoine Fiat	1900-1909
	2	Report of Procurator General, Emile Villette, of the Finances of the Western Province of the United States	1909
	3	Antoine Fiat	1910-1911
	4	Antoine Fiat	1912-1914
	5	Emile Villette and Alfred Louwyck	1915-1917
	6	Francois Verdier	1918-1923
		HOUSES AND APOSTOLATES	
	7	Circular letters	1906-1926
	8	St. Vincent's College, Los Angeles, California	1906-1907
	9	St. Vincent's College, Los Angeles, California	1908
	10	St. Vincent's College, Los Angeles, California	1909
	11	St. Vincent's College, Los Angeles, California	1910
	12	St. Vincent's College, Los Angeles, California	1911
	13	St. Thomas Seminary, Denver, Colorado	1907, 1923
	14*	St. Vincent's College (DePaul University), Chicago, Illinois	1907
	15	St. Stephen's Parish, New Orleans, Louisiana	1907-1925
	16	St. Mary's of the Barrens Seminary, Perryville, Missouri	1906-1916
	17	Kenrick Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri	1914-1922
	18	St. Louis Preparatory Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri	1915-1925
	19	University of Dallas, Dallas, Texas: General Correspondence	1906-1925
	20	University of Dallas, Dallas, Texas: Deeds and Contracts	1905-1931
	21	University of Dallas, Dallas, Texas: Financial Records and Receipts	1909-1923
	22	University of Dallas, Dallas, Texas: Act of Incorporation	1910, 1916
	23	University of Dallas, Dallas, Texas: Correspondence with Fr. Thomas Levan, C.M. (financial status of U of D)	1918
	24	University of Dallas, Dallas, Texas: Purchase of farm by Daughters of Charity	1918
	25	University of Dallas, Dallas, Texas: Dallas-Mexia Oil Company/ Fr. Hugh J. O'Connor, C.M.	1920-1922

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Box	Folder	Title	Date
2		**FOREIGN MISSIONS**	
	1	China Missions Correspondence	1920-1928
		SUBJECT FILES	
	2	Catholic University, Washington, D.C. (Vincentian residents of Caldwell Hall)	1925
	3	Diocese of Lincoln Nebraska	1906, 1910
	4	Dispensations: Various Matters	1932-1938
	5	Dispensations: Vows	1931-1937
	6	Vincentian Seminary Auxiliary	1930
	7	Miscellaneous papers	ND
	8	Correspondence (photocopies from other repositories)	1911-1926
	9	Correspondence (photocopies from other repositories)	various dates

*** Letters about DePaul University (Box 1, Folder 14)**

The following letters were identified and photocopied by Greg Beglau, American Studies Intern, December 2002. Researchers are encouraged to review the original letters between Fr. Finney and the Superior Generals (Box 1, Folders 1 through 6) as this is not a comprehensive list.

1.	Finney to Fiat/Villette, Chicago debt (English, 3 pages)	September 16, 1908
2.	Finney to Fiat, Chicago mortgage (English, 4 pages)	September 22, 1910
3.	Fiat to Finney, Chicago/McCabe/theater (French, 1 page)	November 1, 1910
4.	Finney to Fiat, Chicago financial (English, 3 pages)	December 30, 1910
5.	Finney to Fiat/Villette, Chicago financial (English, 3 pages)	October 28, 1911
6.	Finney to Fiat, Peter Vincent Byrne (English, 1 page)	June 17, 1912
7.	Fiat to Finney, Kennedy/College de Chicago (French, 3 pages)	December 12, 1915
8.	Fiat to Finney, Chicago/finance (French, 5 pages)	February 19, 1918
9.	Fiat to Finney, Pierre Vincent Byrne (French, 1 page)	May 17, 1919
10.	Fiat to Finney (transcription unsigned) Chicago (French, 4 pages)	May 14, 1922
11.	Fiat to Finney, mentions Chicago house (French, 2 pages)	August 11, 1922
12.	Finney to Verdier, seminarians to attend college in Chicago (English, 2 pages)	October 2, 1922

Note: In Box 1, Folder 2 the 1909 Report of the Procurator General about the Houses of the Western Province includes information about the finances of the house in Chicago.

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