

CONGREGATION'S CENTENNIAL by Lewis H. Arends of the Statesman-Journal, Salem, Oregon, 1985

- At 91, August Bender is actually older than the current Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church in Jordan. The present building used by the 100-year-old congregation was opened in 1921. Bender is a part of one of the families which helped start the church and has been a member of the congregation all his life.

100 years in the 'promised land'

By LEWIS H. ARENDS JR

JORDAN — A group of independent thinking Roman Catholic travelers saw this Linn County farming crossroads as the "promised land" 100 years ago.

They purchased property from the earlier settlers and set about practicing their own brand of priestless-Catholicism.

Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church, which their community founded, is celebrating its 100th anniversary this month. It is located 8 miles east of Scio. Further east is Lyons, and northwest is Stayton.

The centennial has prompted publication of a history which traces the church from its controversial beginning to its service to about 45 families today.

The history book tells not only about the parish through the years, but a third of it is about many of the big time families which have participated in the church. It is available for \$12 from Ron Bentz & Associates Realtors, Stayton. ;

Besides the book, the focus of the anniversary is a July 28 dinner which follows the 1 p.m. Mass. The \$5 tickets for the dinner are available through Monday at Regis High School in Stayton or by calling 769-2159, 394-2454 or 394-2488.

At its start, the travelers from Minnesota who founded the community were not exactly priestless: They had the dead body of the Rev. Joseph Albrecht hidden in a vegetable crate, according to the history.

Albrecht had died the year before and community members apparently felt they would be forbidden to haul the body of their revered spiritual leader to Oregon.

He had been excommunicated from the Roman Catholic church in the 1870s because of his refusal to submit to the authority of the area bishop.

His distrust of bishops apparently sprung from his native Germany where the prelates were seen as compromising with the government attacks against the power and wealth of the church. Many Germans immigrated to the United States in the 1840s, like Albrecht, to retain more control of their schools and churches.

Albrecht had been an estate owner and influential town mayor in Germany, but he turned his back on that to pursue a religious vocation. He attended seminary in Ohio and was ordained a priest in 1849.

A community of strict adherents around Albrecht's version of Catholic life developed in the years that followed in Saint Joseph, Ohio.

When the strict-living Albrecht got into a dispute with the bishop over Albrecht's ban of hoop skirts and

bonnets with colorful ribbon, he was suspended from priestly duties and the Saint Joseph Church was closed.

The community moved to Minnesota shortly after that in the 1860s. It wasn't long before Albrecht was in trouble with the bishop of Minnesota and he was eventually excommunicated.

It was that independent spirit and the distrust of those outside their close-knit German-speaking community that was passed on to the lay leaders after Albrecht died in 1884. As some community members "defected" to join nearby Catholic churches, the leaders decided to move west.

They were acquainted with families which had earlier moved to the Scio area and they heard land there was cheap and easy to purchase. They arrived in Portland by train on July 31, 1884.

They settled on property purchased in this area and built a convent and church building which included a shrine for the body of Albrecht. The first Mass was said there in June 1885 by a visiting Benedictine priest.

Archbishop William Gross came to the community on July 31, 1885 for a confirmation service. While there, he laid down the law to the three lay leaders telling them they had to remove Albrecht's shrine from the church building, deed the church property to the archdiocese and submit to his authority.

Those conditions were not to be met immediately, as the last trustee was reconciled to the Catholic Church leadership in 1917 and the property was given to the archdiocese in 1926. A priest assigned to the parish in 1899 is accused of burning down the chapel which then contained Albrecht's shrine.

A new church was completed in 1903 at a more accessible location for the many Catholic families which were moving to the area. It was about a mile from the Pioneer Church, which was torn down in 1914.

A foundation of Trappist priests was established in the area and oversaw the parish from 1904 to 1910. A number of Benedictines were assigned in early years and, in 1924, the first Salvatorian priest of the Society of the Divine Savior arrived in Jordan.



The current priest, the Rev. Bernard Neumann, S.D.S., first arrived here as assistant priest in 1947. After two years of teaching, he returned as pastor in 1956. He is now 73.

The church is noted for its 50 years of public fried chicken dinners, drawing up to 1,500 people to the small parish on the last Sunday of September.

