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Saint John's First Abbot, Rupert Seidenbusch

Peggy L. Roske

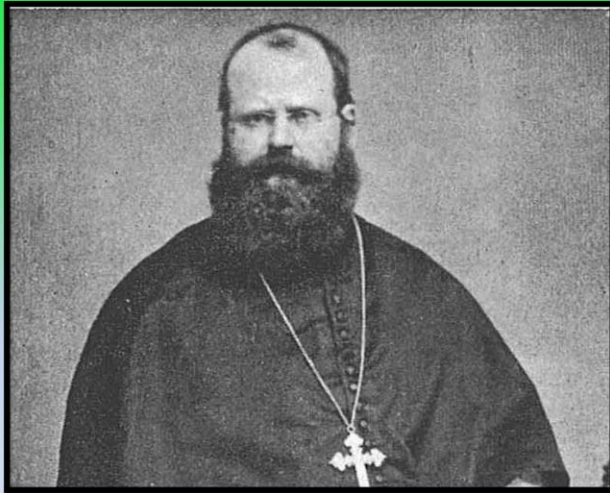
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Ruperto Seidenbusch

Worship & Work, p. 35 <http://cdm.csbsju.edu/u/?SJUArchives,10954>

From Munich...



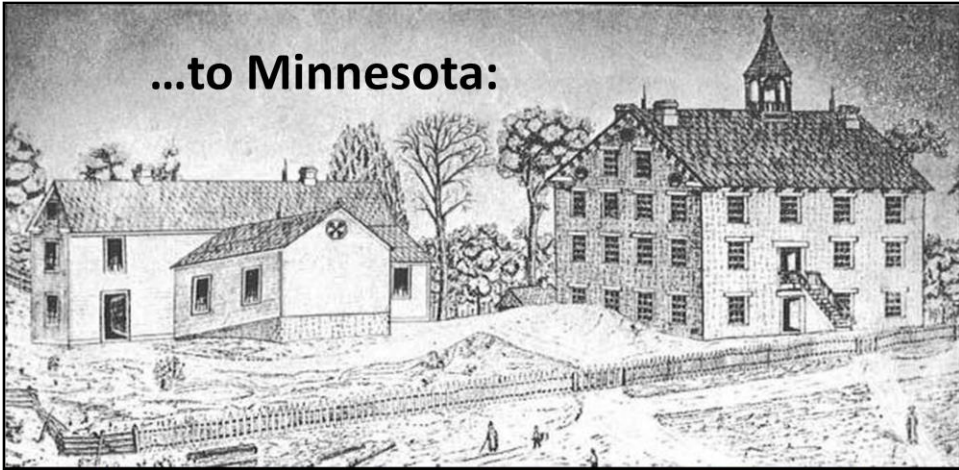
Image from Wikipedia

...to Pennsylvania...



Image from Worship & Work, p. 38b

...to Minnesota:



Ruperto Seidenbusch

**Rupert Seidenbusch,
Saint John's First Abbot**

Script from document of Rupert Seidenbusch's election as Abbot, Dec. 12, 1866

Image from *Worship & Work*

Both from the Abbey Archives

Abbot Rupert Seidenbusch

Seidenbusch, Abbot Rupert Albert, O.S.B.: B-12 Oct. 1830, in Munich, Bavaria Germany; Sprof-6 Jan. 1852; Ord-22 June 1853; director of SV College: Sept. 1852-June 1853; missionary to Ligonier, Greensburg, Heyman's Bottom, Meyer's Mills, and Saltsburg, Pa.: 1 May 1855; AP St. Mary's Church, St. Marystown, Pa.: 1856; P St. Mary's Church and prior St. Mary's Priory, St. Marystown, Pa.: 1857; P St. Mary's Church, Newark, N.J.: 1862; P at Butler, Pa.: 1863; prior SV: 12 Dec. 1866; elected abbot of SJ on 12 Dec. 1866; confirmed by the Holy See on 15 Mar. 1867; received the abbatial benediction on 30 May 1867; appointed Vicar Apostolic of the newly erected Vicariate of Northern Minnesota on 12 Feb. 1875; resigned as abbot of SJ: 4 May 1875; received episcopal consecration as Titular Bishop of Halia on 30 May 1875; resigned on 15 Nov. 1888; D-3 June 1895.

The basic facts of Abbot Seidenbusch's life and career, as detailed in
Scriptorium v. 15, 1956, p. 5

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/u/?SJUArchives,3808>

Facts about Rupert Seidenbusch

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/u/?SJUArchives,26120> image from *Scriptorium* v. 15, 1956, p. 5

ABBOT OF INDIAN BUSH

FR. COLMAN BARRY, OSB.



THOSE nine Benedictine pioneers who gathered at the old Collegeville farm December 12, 1866, were about to make their most signal decision since the beginnings of the Minnesota foundation ten long years before. For in June of that year Abbot Boniface Wimmer had written from Rome that the Congregation of Propaganda had acted on his request and agreed to raise their St. Cloud Priory to the status of an abbey, independent of the mother house, St. Vincent's in Pennsylvania.

And now they were together to choose their first abbot; Abbot Boniface had come in person to preside over a chapter he had dreamed about and planned for since coming to America. The sown seed had taken root and persevered. His first mission had come of age.

Prior Benedict Haindl, administrator during the interim between priory and abbey status, had made the arrangements for this chapter, with the help of Father Joseph Vill, solemnly professed deacon, who was going to make his first capitular decision that day. Fathers Meinulph Stukenkemper and Anthony Capser came out from St. Cloud, picking up Father Wolfgang Northmann at St. Joseph; former Prior Cornelius Wittmann and Father Ansohar Frauendorfer drove over from Richmond, and another former prior, Father Othmar Wirz, assistant to Father Clement Staub at Assumption parish in St. Paul, was present with procuratorial delegation from Father Clement. They were twelve in all that day, counting Father Eberhard Gahr who had delegated his capitular vote, as had old Father Demetrius de Marogna, the former prior and original guardian of the infant mission during the first years of missionary labors and settlement, but who was now sick in Florida.

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/u/?SJUArchives,2112> Scriptorium 1944, v. 5 n. 1, p. 49-61

“Abbot of Indian Bush” by Colman Barry, OSB

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/u/?SJUArchives,2112> Scriptorium, Christmas 1944, v. 5 n. 1, p. 49-61. Chapter 4 of his later work, *Worship & Work*, also has this title.

Timeline of Abbot Rupert's term

1866 Dec. 12	Rupert Seidenbusch is elected Abbot at the Indianbush Farmhouse in an election overseen by St. Vincent's Abbot Boniface Wimmer
1867 March 15	Pope Pius IX confirms the election
March 17	Rome officially changes the "St. Cloud Priory" to "Abbey of St. Louis on the Lake", after Bavaria's King Ludwig I, benefactor and friend to Boniface Wimmer
May 14	document of approval arrives at St. Vincent's from Rome
May 30	ceremony at St. Vincent's to install the new abbot
June 10	Abbot Rupert arrives in St. Paul
June 13	Abbot Rupert arrives at St. John's
Fall	Saint John's has 28 students
1875 May 4	Rupert resigns as Abbot to accept the role of Bishop
Fall	Saint John's has 150 students

Timeline of Abbot Rupert's term

Dates from Worship & Work, p. 93, 97, & 126.



"Fr. Rupert...is young, energetic, pious, chaste, good-natured, conciliatory and honest."

--Boniface Wimmer, in *Worship & Work*, p. 97

Seidenbusch was a man of moderate stature and rather stout, a tendency which in later life became a serious physical handicap, as his obesity definitely limited his activity and harmed his health. He was good natured, popular, understanding of human nature and thoroughly *gemuetlich* in the best Bavarian tradition of that word.

W & W, p. 35

When his probable election as abbot had been rumored, his mother said that "she would buy him the finest ring she could find in Munich if he should be elected abbot."

W & W, p. 96

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/u/?SJUArchives,10954> W & W, p. 35

Comments about Rupert, with photo

Worship & Work, p. 35 <http://cdm.csbsju.edu/u/?SJUArchives,10954>

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Worship & Work, p. 96

Regarding
Rupert's ring...

Flash forward
100 years or so
for a close-up

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/u/?SJUArchives,6866>
Saint John's Magazine, Summer 1971, p. 10

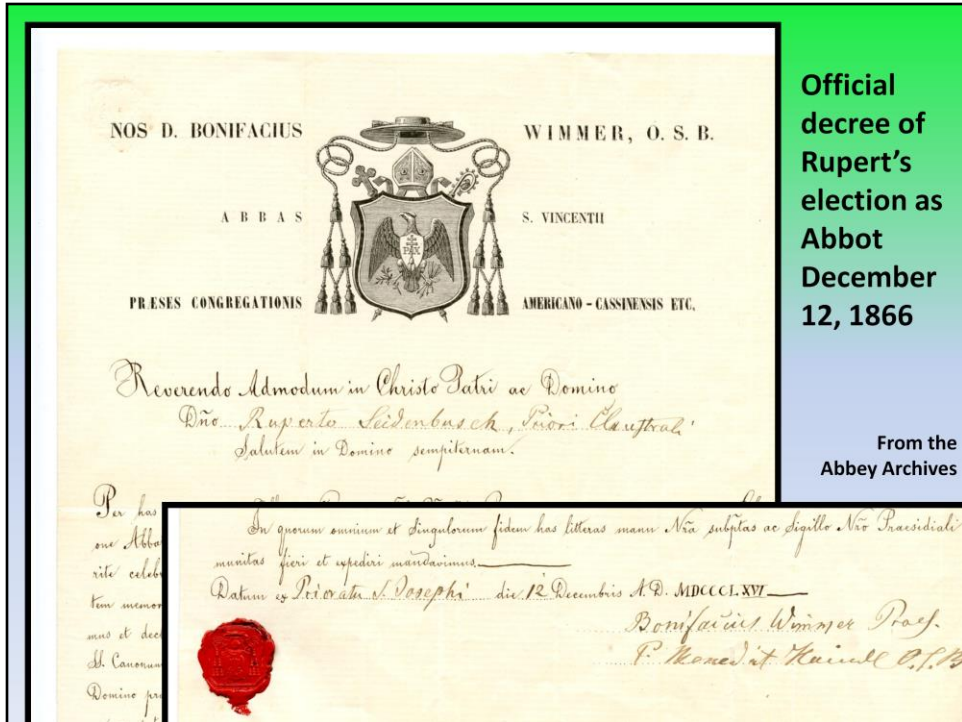


HISTORIC RING Abbot Alcuin Deutsch, OSB, presents a ring to his successor, Abbot Baldwin, on the occasion of his blessing. The ring (see inset) was given to Abbot Rupert Seidenbusch (St. John's first abbot) by the Most Rev. George A. Carrell, S.J., who officiated at his blessing. It has been passed on to each of St. John's abbots. Abbot Baldwin wore the ring only on ceremonial occasions.

Rupert's ring

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/u/?SJUArchives,6871> *Saint John's Magazine*, Summer 1971,

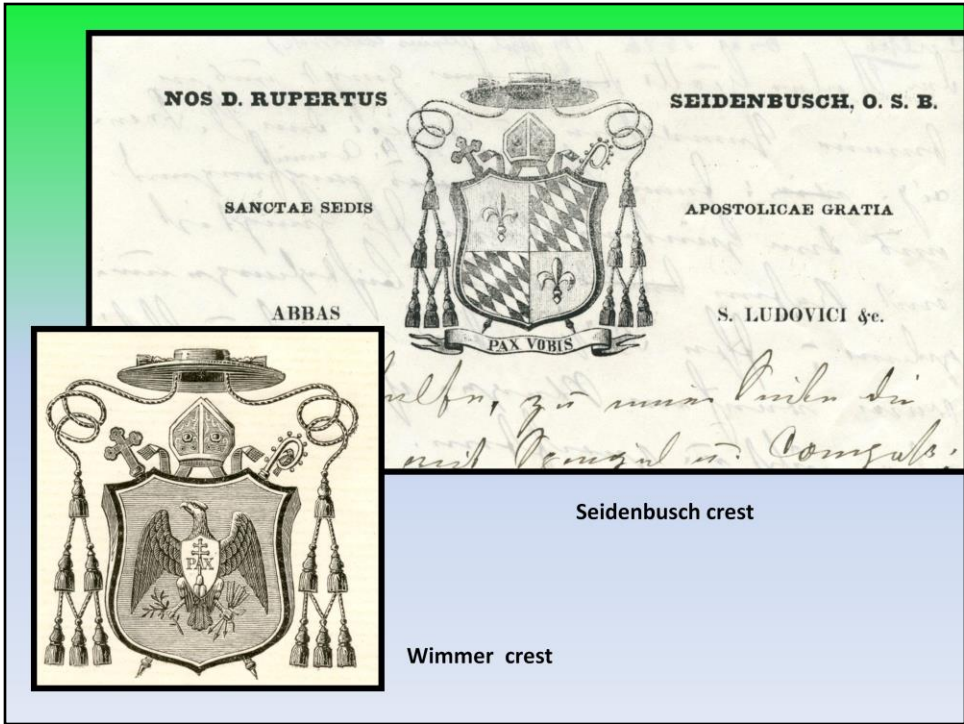
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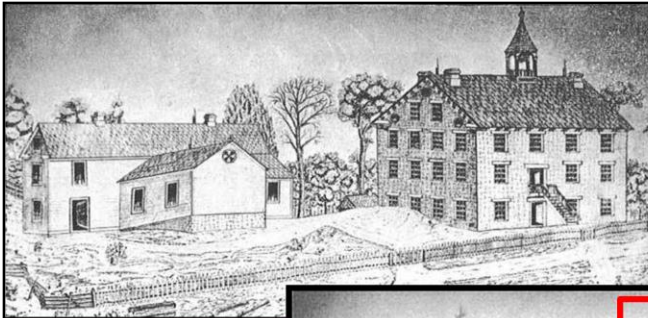
Official
 decree of
 Rupert's
 election as
 Abbot
 December
 12, 1866

From the
 Abbey Archives

Document of Rupert Seidenbusch's election as Abbot, Dec. 12, 1866
 From the Abbey Archives

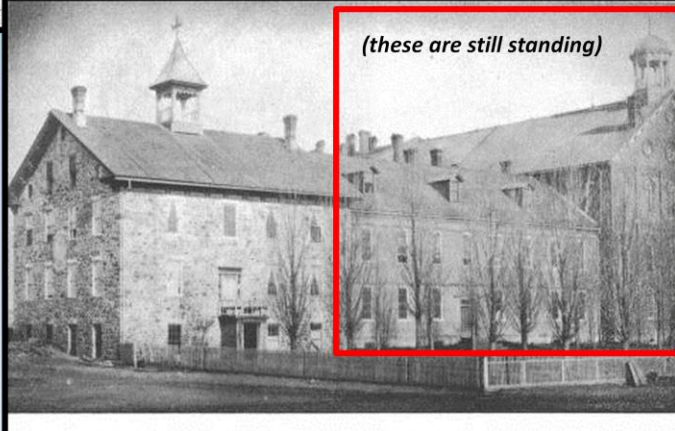


Crests: Seidenbusch & Wimmer



Images from the Abbey Archives,
in *Worship & Work*

In Abbot Rupert's time as Abbot (1866-1875), Saint John's grew from (just) the Old Stone House to include a saw mill, a flour mill, barns for cattle, horses and pigs, a woodworking shop, the southeast and east parts of the Quad, and the first Stella Maris Chapel.



(these are still standing)

Buildings of Saint John's, 1866-1875

ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE.

FIRST ANNUAL EXAMINATION.

(*N. W. Chronicle, June 27, 1868.*)

We present to our readers this week a full report of the recent examination at St. John's College.*)

This institution is beautifully located on a knoll, bordering on one of those many lakes that diversify so charmingly our Minnesota landscape. Its proximity to the thriving, fast growing town of St. Cloud, yields it another and increasing advantage.

The College is under the charge of the Benedictines, the mention of which time-renowned order is sufficient to speak its praise. Rt. Rev. Rupert Seidenbusch, fourth of the mitred Abbots in our American hierarchy, is the zealous President of St. John's.

Too much credit to Abbot Seidenbusch and the learned faculty of St. John's cannot well be given — their efforts in the cause of Catholic education in our nascent State will one day be testified to in its records, — and St. John's, growing with their growth and strengthening with their strength, will one day treasure their memories as the "Mountaineers" guard zealously that of a "Dubois and Brute."

This is the only Catholic College in Minnesota. If it receives that encouragement, due to its merit, we will be satis-

**Abbot Ruprect
zealously
promoted Saint
John's and
Catholic
education...**

Reprinted in the 1967-68
Saint John's Catalogue, p. 2

1867-68 Catalogue p. 2

...and he set about fundraising, in the states and across Europe, appealing most especially to one of Saint John's earliest and most generous benefactors, King Ludwig I of Bavaria

Abbey St. Louis on the Lake,
Clinton P.O.
Stearns Co., Minn., Oct. 9, 1868

Your Excellency!

First of all I am most grateful to your Grace for the benevolent aid through you from the Mission society. I dare to come to you again as a beggar for the same cause. I was forced this year to enlarge our house. It was 46 x 50 ft. and had to serve for both seminary and monastery; we were really crowded. We simply had to separate the monastery from the seminary. As your Excellency well understands, it was impossible under the existing conditions to live quietly and to keep order.

At this time we have 52 boys in our school. Only 22 are paying fully for room and board. Out of these 22, only 14 pay all other expenses. The rest (that is 30) are not able to pay for anything, except a few have their clothing paid by their parents.

The objection could be brought against me taking in so many boys who cannot pay, that I should instead take only those who can take care of all expenses. My main answer is this. Where do we get candidates unless we ourselves give an education to poor boys, because it is mainly from the poor that candidates come; the rich care little for monastic life.

Translation from *Abbey Quarterly*, April 1987, p. 7

Rupert Seidenbusch's October 1868 letter to the Ludwig-Missionverein
From a series of letters between Abbot Rupert Seidenbusch and the officials of the Ludwig-Missionverein (Mission Society) in Munich, Bavaria. Translations in the *Abbey Quarterly* April 1987 p. 7

Minnesota is very young. The majority of new settlers are Irish and German who do not have the means to give their children a higher education. Should they not get more of it? Surely they should. And how? We must give it to them, in many cases even without financial return.

Without help I shall not be able to pay our debts nor do I see a way to continue the work. A barn I have to build next year, we have block-huts in a condition to be blown down in a strong wind. More farmland is needed because we have but 30 small pieces of land each of which one man can prepare for seeding in a day.

Placed as we are I dare beg your Excellency to grant us a substantial help from the Mission society so I can provide for at least the most necessary things and to pay some of my debts.

With the firm hope of a gracious hearing of my petition I am with deepest reverence and esteem
Your Excellency's
obedient and devoted servant

Rupert Seidenbusch O.S.B.
abbot

Translation from *Abbey Quarterly*, April 1987, p. 7

Rupert Seidenbusch's October 1868 letter to the Ludwig-Missionverein
From a series of letters between Abbot Rupert Seidenbusch and the officials of the Ludwig-Missionverein (Mission Society) in Munich, Bavaria. Translations in the *Abbey Quarterly* April 1987 p. 7


6

King Ludwig and the Ludwig-Missionverein: The F

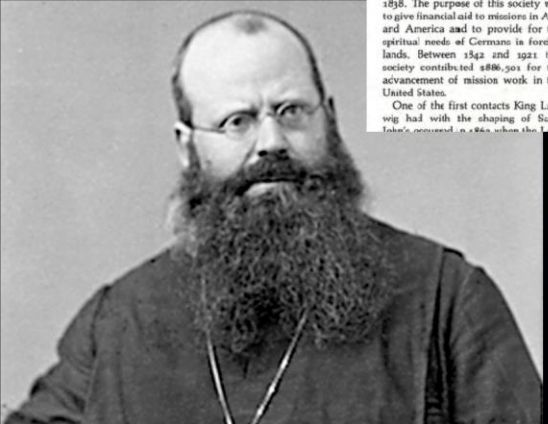
By Vincent C. Tegeder O.S.B.

Since 1916 marked the two-hundredth anniversary of the birth of King Ludwig the First of the royal Wittelsbach Family of Bavaria, it might be timely to recall the role which this monarch played in the early development of Saint John's Abbey. King Ludwig's life spanned the years 1817 to 1886. He and Joseph von Görres, a German Catholic lay theologian, and Bishop Frederic Rese of Detroit, Michigan, a German missionary in the United States, founded the Ludwig-Missionverein, at Munich, Bavaria, in 1838. The purpose of this society was to give financial aid to missions in Asia and America and to provide for the spiritual needs of Germans in foreign lands. Between 1842 and 1921 this society contributed \$886,503 for the advancement of mission work in the United States.

One of the first contacts King Ludwig had with the shaping of Saint John's occurred in 1868 when the Land Government Land Warrants with the money, that is government patents, which were given to soldiers who served in the war. I bought them in New York for .36 an acre. Therefore one warrant for \$137.60 and the eight of them for \$1,100.80. I sent these eight land warrants directly to Fr. Benedict Hauff, the first independent prior of St. Cloud, with the instruction that the land occupied by the Brothers, but not yet paid for, should be bought immediately, so that a solid basis for St. Louis Monastery might be assured. The prior received 1,280 acres of land for these warrants or .70 square miles [English] in one place, a magnificent possession. . . . While both as priest and as a monk, I am by no means so inconsiderate of the other sex that I would enrich men to the detriment of women; and under ordinary circumstances I would sooner have laid sacrifices upon my Brethren in order to have given relief to our Sisters. Never- theless, in this instance, . . .



King Ludwig.
"the landscape paradise" (Worship



Abby Quarterly April 1987 p. 6

Even though Ludwig's name did not remain permanently as part of our history, benefactions of the Ludwig-Missionverein were significant and timely in our development after the death of King Ludwig in 1868.

Photo in the Ascheman collection, LP174

Ludwig-Missionverein (Mission Society) & Abbot Rupert
 Abby Quarterly April 1987 p. 6; Photo in the Ascheman collection, LP174.



King Ludwig I (right) and Ludwig II's Neuschwanstein Castle (left)

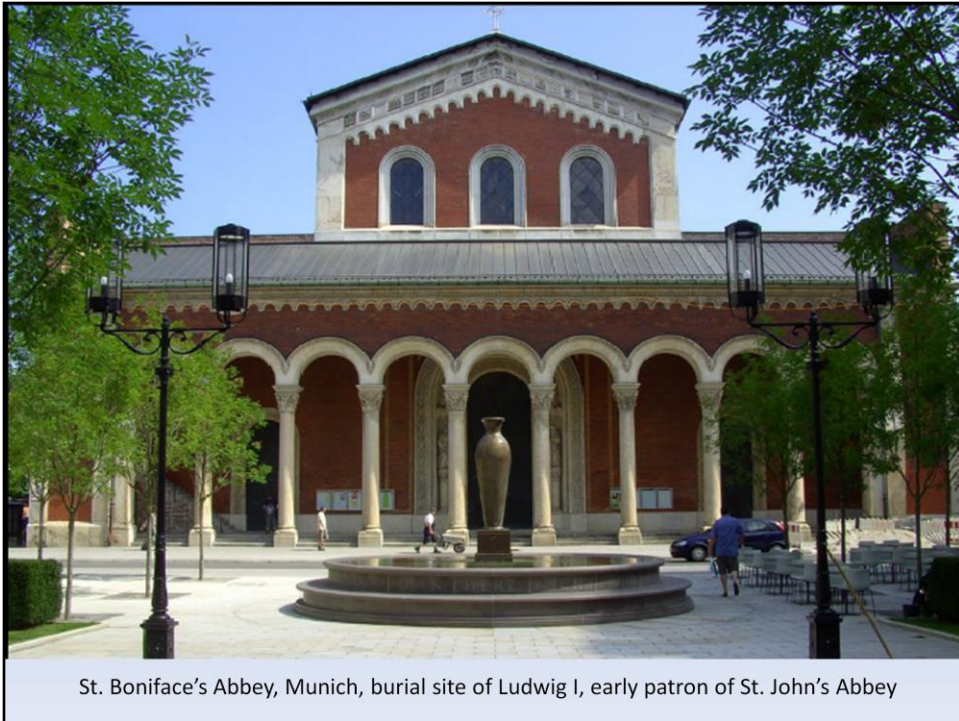
On right: King Louis I of Bavaria by Joseph Karl Stieler, 1826.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:LouisI.jpg>

On left: Neuschwanstein Castle built by Ludwig II, grandson to the Ludwig who was the namesake of St. John's patron, after whom St. Louis on the Lake was named.

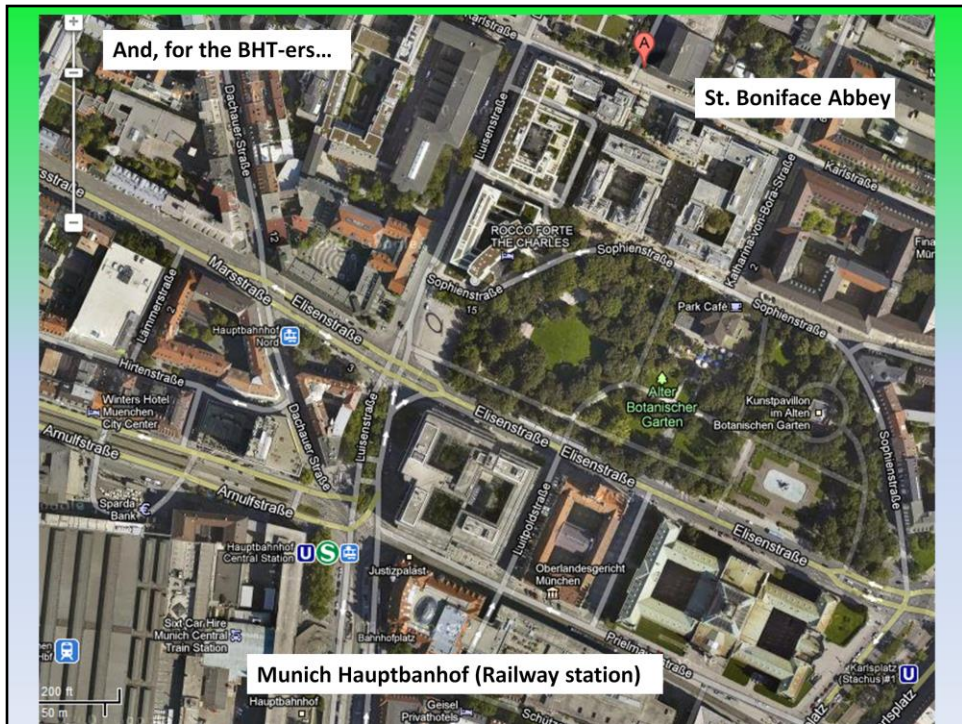
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Neuschwanstein_Castle_LOC_print.jpg

Reproduction number: **LC-DIG-ppmsca-00179** from [Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Photochrom Prints Collection](#)

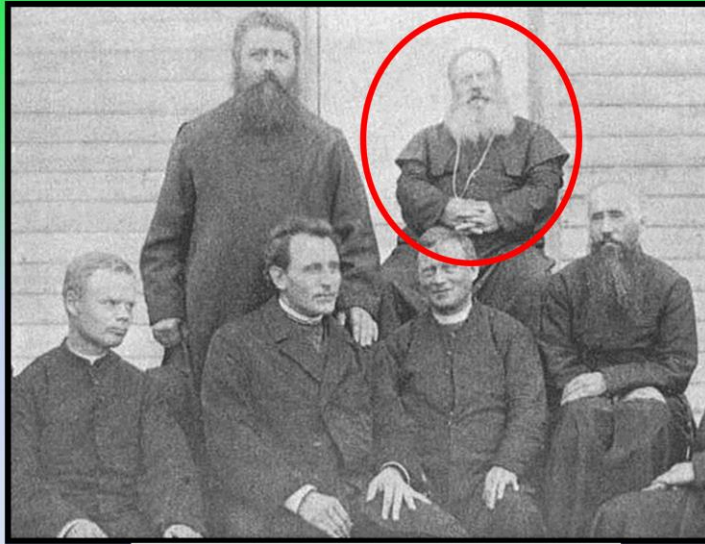


St. Boniface's Abbey, Munich, burial site of Ludwig I, early patron of St. John's Abbey

Ludwig (I)'s place of burial, St. Boniface's Abbey, Munich.
From Google Maps.



Ludwig I's burial site in Munich
From Google Maps



31 Bishop Rupert Seidenbusch, vicar apostolic of Northern Minnesota, with some of his diocesan priests.

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/u/?SJUArchives,10991> *Worship & Work*, p. 67

Bishop Rupert and some of his priests

Worship & Work, p. 67 <http://cdm.csbsju.edu/u/?SJUArchives,10991>



Bishop Seidenbusch with ordained priests, 1892



Bishop's Residence, St. Cloud

from the Abbey Archives

Bishop Seidenbusch and his residence in St. Cloud


Bishop's Residence, St. Cloud, from the Abbey Archives

From the Abbey Archives: 1892 Bishop Seidenbusch with ordained Frs. Athanasius Meyer and Maurus Ferdinand, OSB


The presidents of Saint John's University

From the time Saint John's University was chartered in 1866, the position of the presidency has been evolving. Until 1957, abbots served as presidents, putting deans in charge of the Preparatory School, the School of Theology, and the College of Arts and Sciences. The college dean took on many of the duties of a president as Saint John's grew.

Saint John's saw its first president who was not an abbot in 1958, when Abbot Baldwin Dworschak, OSB, bestowed the title on the Rev. Arno Gustin, OSB, who had served as dean for six years.



President Rupert Seidenbusch, OSB
(photo courtesy of Abbey Archives)



President Dietrich Reinhart, OSB
(photo courtesy of PIO)

Saint John's 11 presidents and the years they served:

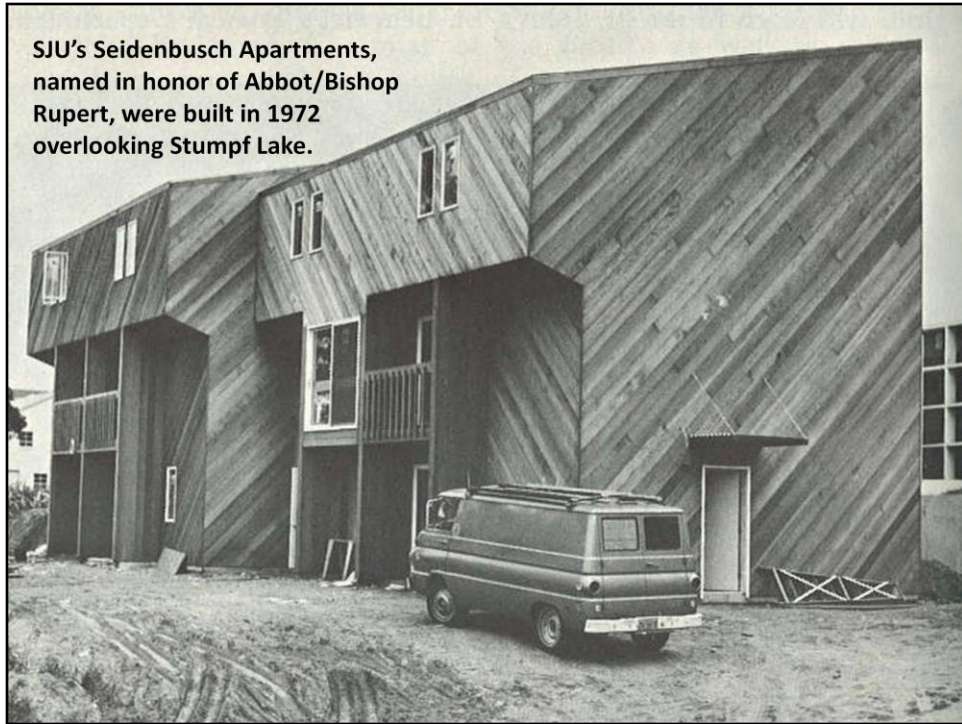
- Abbot Rupert Seidenbusch, OSB 1866-1875
- Abbot Alexius Edelbrock, OSB 1875-89
- Abbot Bernard Loeckner, OSB 1890-94
- Abbot Peter Engel, OSB 1894-1921
- Abbot Alcuin Deutsch, OSB 1921-50
- Abbot Baldwin Dworschak, OSB 1950-58
- The Rev. Arno Gustin, OSB 1958-64
- The Rev. Colman Barry, OSB 1964-71
- The Rev. Michael Blecker, OSB 1971-82
- The Rev. Hilary Thimmesch, OSB 1982-91 (current)

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/u/?/CSBArchNews,37986>
The Record, Feb. 3 1991, p. 3

Abbot Rupert & Br. Dietrich, 1st & 11th SJU Presidents

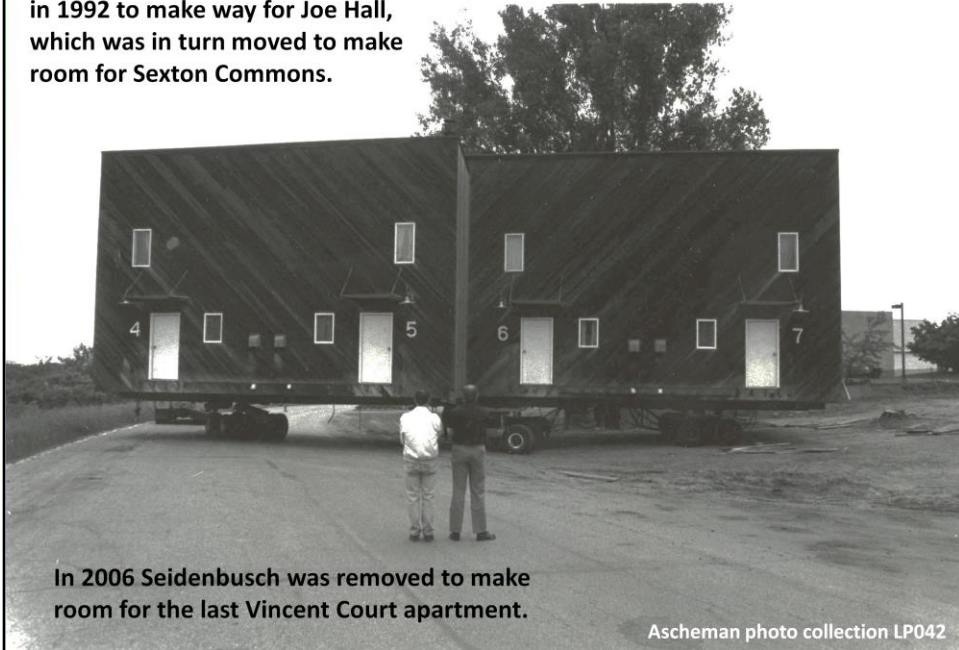
<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/u/?/CSBArchNews,37986>

Abbey photo in *The Record* of Seidenbusch and president-elect Dietrich, 1991 Feb. 3 p. 3



Seidenbusch Apartments are built at St. John's
<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/u?/SJUArchives,6971> Saint John's Magazine, Summer 1972,
p. 24

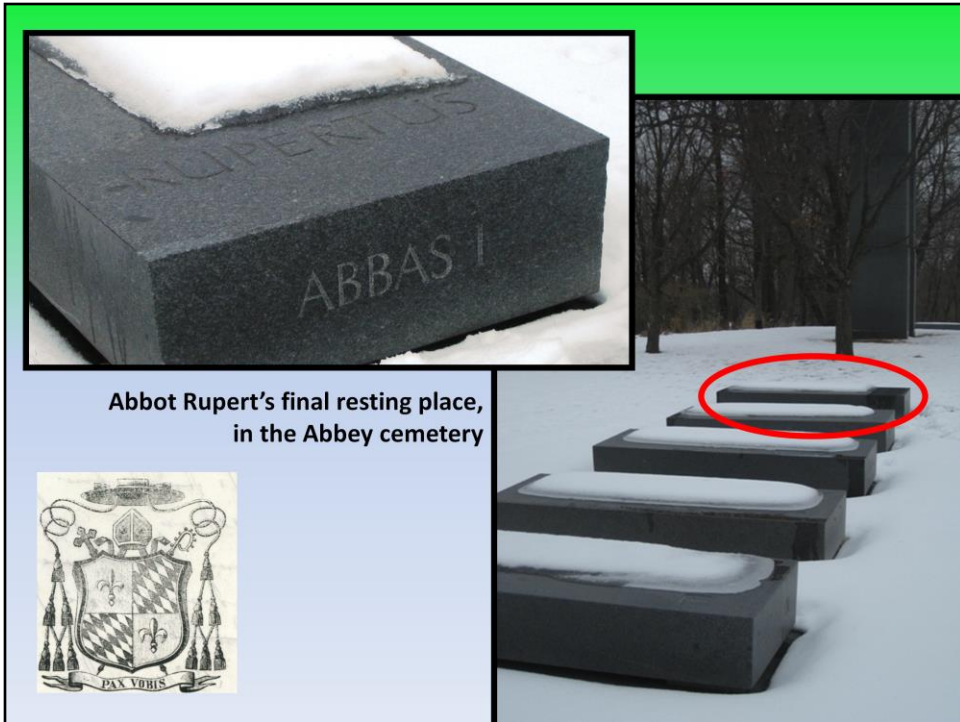
Seidenbusch was moved to Flynttown in 1992 to make way for Joe Hall, which was in turn moved to make room for Sexton Commons.



In 2006 Seidenbusch was removed to make room for the last Vincent Court apartment.

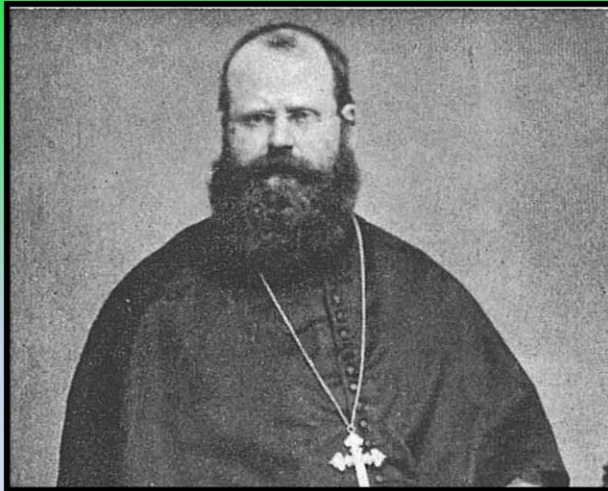
Ascherman photo collection LP042

Seidenbusch Apartments move to Flynttown
Ascherman collection LP042, 1992.



Abbot Rupert's final resting place,
in the Abbey cemetery

Abbot Rupert's final resting place
Photos by the archivist, February 2012.



Compiled in February 2012
from resources in the
SJU and Abbey Archives
by Peggy Landwehr Roske, CSB/SJU Archivist.
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Worship & Work, p. 35 <http://cdm.csbsju.edu/u/?SJUArchives,10954>