2012

Saint John's First Abbot's 1866 Election

Peggy L. Roske

College of Saint Benedict/Saint John's University, proske@csbsju.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.csbsju.edu/archives_history_lessons

Recommended Citation

https://digitalcommons.csbsju.edu/archives_history_lessons/74

This Presentation is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@CSB/SJU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Archives History Lessons by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@CSB/SJU. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@csbsju.edu.
The Election of Rupert Seidenbusch, St. John’s First Abbot

aka the

Abbot of Indian Bush

Fr. Colman Barry, OSB.

Photo from Worship & Work, p. 35 http://cdm.csbsju.edu/u/?SJUArchives,10954
“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.
Monks’ Migration

170 years ago:
1846: Monks leave Metten, Germany and go to Latrobe, to St. Vincent’s

160 years ago:
1856: Monks arrive in St. Cloud
1864: Monks move to “Indianbush”

150 years ago:
1866: Monks move to “Lake St. Louis” and elect their first Abbot

Image 1: Saint Cloud Priory, 1856, drawn by one of the first students, Henry Emmel - SJU & SJA Archives, Ascheman Sesquicentennial photos LP096.1857 Sketch
Image 2: 1896 Plat Book of Stearns County, Collegeville Township, p. 7
http://reflections.mndigital.org/cdm/compoundobject/collection/stearns/id/389/rec/1
(sharper image on p. 43
http://reflections.mndigital.org/cdm/compoundobject/collection/stearns/id/389/rec/1)
Bishop Grace laid the cornerstone of the priory’s Stone House on 19 July 1866, and by the end of the year it was ready for occupancy.

Drawing from the Abbey Archives
Text from Worship & Work, p. 83
http://cdm.csbsju.edu/cdm/ref/collection/SJUArchives/id/11009
Boniface Wimmer was in Europe, lobbying to have the St. Cloud Priory upgraded to be an Abbey.

The main objection was that the buildings were not adequate.

Wimmer maintained that:

*this deficiency would soon be supplied, since the foundations had been laid and there were no debts. The cardinals decided that the St. Cloud Priory should be advanced to abbey status, and that the abbot of the new abbey should be elected for life. This was a major accomplishment in Wimmer’s life*

**June 4, 1866:**
The cardinals of the Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith approved Wimmer’s petitions.

Portrait at left from a painting in the collection of St. Vincent’s Archabbey, Pennsylvania.
Text from Worship & Work, p. 83-84
http://cdm.csbsju.edu/cdm/ref/collection/SJUArchives/id/11010
August 3, 1866:

An Apostolic Brief was issued by Pope Pius IX:

"Finding that this priory, both by reason of the number of religious belonging to it...and by reason of the adequacy of its resources ...we raise the Priory to the rank of an Abbey."

An 1870 German drawing shows Pius IX as "Papst und König" -- "Pope and King"

Image from
Text from Worship & Work, p. 84
http://cdm.csbsju.edu/cdm/ref/collection/SJUArchives/id/11010
Wimmer rushed the good news to Bishop Grace and informed him that he was leaving Rome immediately. After short stops in France and Bavaria he planned to return to the United States as soon as possible and come west to preside over the election of Minnesota’s first abbot.

Worship & Work, p. 84

Portrait at left from a painting in the collection of St. Vincent’s Archabbey, Pennsylvania.
Text from Worship & Work, p. 83-84
http://cdm.csbsju.edu/cdm/ref/collection/SJUArchives/id/11010
December 12, 1866
The monks elected the “Abbot of “Indianbush”

Saint John’s in the Indian Bush, 1864-1867 – drawing by Alexius Hoffmann in the SJAA
Text from Scriptorium v. 13 n.1 April 1953 “The Brothers of Saint John’s Abbey, Formative Years: 1856-1866” article by Br. Thomas Whitaker, p. 55
http://cdm.csbsju.edu/cdm/ref/collection/SJUArchives/id/4036/show/4009
The first election of a Benedictine abbot in the United States was held on a cold winter day of 12 December 1866 at the Indianbush farmhouse.

Saint John’s in the Indian Bush, 1864-1867 – drawing by Alexius Hoffmann in the SJAA
Text from Worship & Work, p. 93
http://cdm.csbsju.edu/cdm/ref/collection/SJUArchives/id/11019
Saint John’s in the Indian Bush, 1864-1867 – drawing by Alexius Hoffmann in the SJAA Inset drawing from the Abbey Archives Photo 19 from Worship & Work, where it is mis-identified as the present Collegeville station. http://cdm.csbsju.edu/cdm/ref/collection/SJUArchives/id/10956
“Minnesota’s Benedictines had been notified of the election and nine capitulars were there in person, while three were represented by proxy vote.

They were about to exercise an ancient right, handed down for centuries in the Benedictine family, of electing a spiritual father to govern their religious community.”

_Worship & Work_, p. 93

Portrait at left from a painting in the collection of St. Vincent’s Archabbey, Pennsylvania.
Text from Worship & Work, p. 93-94
http://cdm.csbsju.edu/cdm/ref/collection/SJUArchives/id/11019
The electors:

1. Prior Benedict Haindl, administrator during the interim
2. Frater Joseph Vill, solemnly professed deacon
3. Fathers Meinulph Stucken kemper and
4. Anthony Capser came out from St. Cloud, picking up
5. Father Wolfgang Northman at St. Joseph.
6. Fathers Cornelius Wittmann, a former prior, and
7. Anschar Frauendorfer drove over from Richmond and St. Augusta.
8. Another former prior, Othmar Wirtz, assistant at Assumption Church in St. Paul, carried delegation to act as proxy for
9. The pastor, Clement Staub. With Father Othmar came
10. Father George Scherer of Waconia.
11. Father Eberhard Gahr at Shakopee had appointed a proxy, as had
12. Demetrius di Marogna, the community’s first prior, who had gone to Florida for the winter because of rapidly failing health.

Worship & Work, p. 93-94

Portrait at left from a painting in the collection of St. Vincent’s Archabbey, Pennsylvania.
Text from Worship & Work, p. 93-94
http://cdm.csbsju.edu/cdm/ref/collection/SJUArchives/id/11019
“Abbot Boniface then led his nine monks into the main room of the frame farm house and opened the chapter meeting according to the ancient forms of the Bavarian Benedictine Ritual.

Abbot Wimmer gave an opening address on the importance of the occasion and the achievements of the last ten years which they had accomplished in spite of trials and hardships.

He admonished his assembled sons to choose as abbot one who was outstanding in wisdom and virtue as well as zeal for the advancement of the kingdom of God and the good traditions of the Benedictine Order.”

Worship & Work, p. 94

Text from Worship & Work, p. 94
http://cdm.csbsju.edu/cdm/ref/collection/SJUArchives/id/11020
“Then he stated that if Minnesota's Benedictines could not arrive at a choice of one of their own members, they were free to elect any monk of the American Cassinese Congregation, and in particular any member of the motherhouse at St. Vincent.”

Text from Worship & Work, p. 94
http://cdm.csbsju.edu/cdm/ref/collection/SJUArchives/id/11020
St. Vincent’s Archabbey, LaTrobe, PA; Conrad Glatzmaier’s depiction of Saint Vincent’s Abbey in 1878
From Matt Heintzelman’s blog, “Books from the HMML Basement”
“Abbot Boniface solemnly proclaimed him to be canonically elected.

The acts of the chapter were subscribed and prepared to be sent to Rome for approval.”
“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.
The Te Deum is an early Christian hymn of praise. The title is taken from its opening Latin words, *Te Deum laudamus*, rendered as "Thee, O God, we praise". 
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Te_Deum

Abbot Boniface informed the abbot of Metten, Utto Lang, of these events:

"I presided over the election. Fr. Rupert was elected unanimously by the twelve capitulars in a large house in the midst of a forest of 2,600 acres which belong to the monastery. This was on December 12. The weather was very cold, but we sang the Te Deum very enthusiastically in the neat chapel."

_Worship & Work_ p. 396, footnote
Official decree of Rupert’s election as Abbot December 12, 1866

From the Abbey Archives