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## Collegeville's St. John the Baptist Parish History

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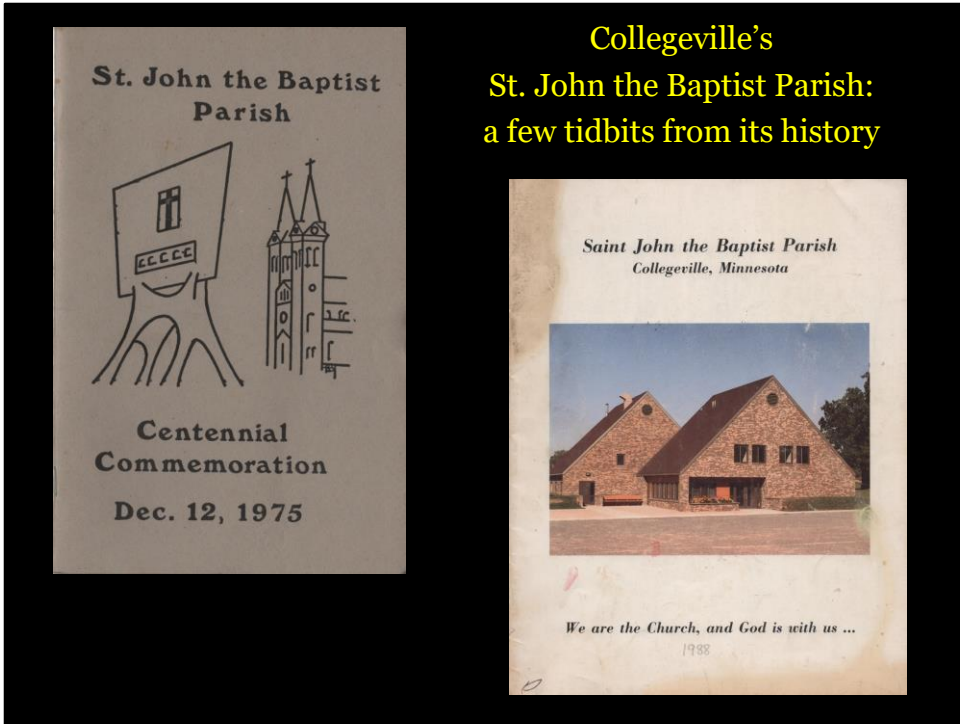
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Collegeville's

St. John the Baptist Parish:  
a few tidbits from its history



Covers of the Parish centennial commemoration liturgy program and the 1988 *Parish Directory*.

SEARCH INFO FOR NEWS & EVENTS GIVE TOOLS A-Z

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- > **Timeline**
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**Title: *Stones and hills = Steine und Huegel: reflections, St. John the Baptist Parish, 1875-1975.***  
**Publisher:** Collegeville, Minn.: St. John the Baptist Parish, c1975.  
**Description:** v, 179 p.: ill., ports.; 23 cm.  
Available online, in the SJU Archives, and in the SJU Library's General Collection: BX4603.C64 S85 1975

The screenshot shows the SJU Archives website. On the left is a large background image of a stone wall with the text 'Stones and Hills' overlaid. A navigation menu is visible, listing various archive categories. The main content area features a smaller version of the stone wall image with the title 'Stones and Hills' and the subtitle 'Reflexions: St. John the Baptist Parish, 1875-1975'. Below this, there is a note about the book's availability in the library collection and a quote from the forward.

**SJU Archives**

Home / Saint John's University Archives / SJU History / Books about St. John's / Stones and Hills

**Stones and Hills**

Stones and Hills / Steine und Hoegel

Reflexions: St. John the Baptist Parish, 1875-1975

NOTE: This book is available in the SJU Library's General Collection: BX 4603 .C64 S85 1975

*From the Forward:* "Many St. John the Baptist parishioners authored this book. In mid-1973, in its initial planning sessions for the centennial celebration, the parish council commissioned that a history of the parish be prepared. What resulted here two years later is not a detailed history of the parish from 1875 to 1975; rather it is an accounting of major events of that century's parish life and more importantly a reflection through anecdotes and photos of the flavor of that life."

**"...not a detailed history of the parish from 1875 to 1975, but rather an accounting of major events of that century's parish life and a reflection through anecdotes and photos of the flavor of that life."**

<http://www.csbsju.edu/SJU-Archives/SJUHistory/BooksaboutStJohns/StonesandHills.htm>



The traditional love of a German-American for *lager* and *schnapps* was not suppressed at Collegeville during the "great experiment." When prohibition became law in the United States on January 17, 1920, the law was taken lightly in Collegeville.

During the prohibition era, Collegeville was an internal part of the Stearns County "heartland" that produced what many considered the best moonshine in the country called "Minnesota 13." Only after prohibition did it become known that one of the probable reasons for the excellence of the moonshine was that it was produced in good copper stills, made by Brother Justus of the abbey.

Weddings were usually small and celebrations took place in the home of one of the parents. Beer barrels were rolled out, the floor cleared, and the Meyer Band would frequently play its same selections over and over again – like: *Over the Waves, Our Director, The Village Tavern*, and the *Sharp Shooters March*. Sometimes a baseball game, to work up the men's thirst, preceded the dance. For a large wedding the crowd would be invited to the Granite City Coliseum.



Meyer Band: Gilbert, Ralph, Simon and Dalphine Meyer

Prohibition did not hurt the wedding celebrations or parties. "We ate, drank lots of moonshine at \$.10 a drink. There were stills all over the place."

this helped to better relations between the abbey and the neighborhood farmers.

*Stones & Hills*, p. 113 & 120



Logo of Minnesota 13 beer brewed in Cold Spring by Glauk Brewing Company

USA, coined the derogatory phrase "beer monks," despite Pope Pius IX's sympathetic agreement with future Abbot Boniface Wimmer that monks without beer was no cause for cheer.

In his centenary history of Saint John's, *Worship and Work*, Father Colman Barry quotes a conversation between Abbot Boniface and Bishop Mathias Loras of Dubuque, justifying the abbot's attempt to establish a

Franciscans where to set their own vineyard and their own

Indeed, the culture and and well in and beer w plentiful as celebration Mr. Schear "Anecdotal gested that held moder virtue" (6). ever, was o enjoyment in itself sin condoned l Church. In *Minnesota "Wet" Will Elaine Dav questionab tant priest at St. Mary Cloud in a had confessed that he was making moonshine. The young priest asked, "What should I give him?" Father Luke replied, "If it's good stuff, give him \$10" (27).*

The "nonsense" of Prohibition



one of the buildings on the Saint John's campus during the Prohibition years. But several confreres consider it unlikely that then-Abbot Alcuin Deutsch would have permitted this.

However, clerics apparently lent

potent potato. Father Barry claimed that "making illegal liquor did not collapse the moral order; very few of the Stearns producers drank much of the alcohol they made, and there was little drunkenness" (126).


Abbey Banner article "Minnesota 13" by Aaron Raverty p. 22-23  
<https://cdm.csbsju.edu/digital/collection/SJUArchives/id/49638>  
2019 Volume 19 Number 03 Abbey Banner Winter

The screenshot shows the SJU Archives website. On the left is a navigation menu with categories like 'About the Archives', 'SJU History', 'Administrative Histories', 'Athletics History', 'Awards - St. Johns', 'Books about St. Johns', 'Buildings & Places at SJU', 'Commencement Speakers', 'Convocation Speakers', 'Cooperation with CGB', 'SJU Publications', 'Students 1857-1915', 'Vignettes', 'Digital Archives', 'Finding Aids', 'Photos and Maps', 'Publications', and 'Student Newspapers'. The main content area is titled 'Stones and Hills' and features a book cover image. Below the cover, it says 'Stones and Hills / Steine und Hoegel' and 'Reflections: St. John the Baptist Parish, 1875-1975'. A note indicates the book is available in the SJU Library's General Collection. A 'From the Forward' quote is also present. At the bottom right, there is a list of appendices with a blue arrow pointing to 'Appendix 2: Pastors (pp. 160-163)'.

**Appendix 1: Parish Founding Charter (pp. 157-159)**  
**Appendix 2: Pastors (pp. 160-163)** ←  
**Appendix 3:**  
 part 1: Cemetery photos (pp. 164-165) --  
 part 2: Faithful Departed A-Ph (pp. 166-174)  
 part 3: Faithful Departed P-Z (pp. 175-180 and back cover)

<http://www.csbsju.edu/SJU-Archives/SJUHistory/BooksaboutStJohns/StonesandHills.htm>





**Pastors 1944-1978**

Pastors of St. John the Baptist Parish.

Fr. Clement Staub, OSB	Jan. 1876–Nov. 1876
Fr. Bernard Loenkar, OSB	Dec. 1876–Feb. 1878
Fr. Gregory Steil, OSB	Feb. 1878–Sept. 1882
Fr. Alfred Mayer, OSB	Sept. 1882–Feb. 1886
Fr. Ulric Northmann, OSB	Mar. 1886–Mar. 1887
Fr. Isidore Siegler, OSB	Apr. 1887–Sept. 1890
Fr. Severin Cross, OSB	Sept. 1890–Sept. 1893
Fr. Pancratius Maghren, OSB	Sept. 1893–Feb. 1895
Fr. Abbot Peter Engel, OSB	Feb. 1895–Aug. 1895
Fr. Alphonse Kusile, OSB	Aug. 1895–Sept. 1894
Fr. Gregory Steil, OSB	Sept. 1905–Sept. 1909
Fr. Conrad Glatzmeier, OSB	Sept. 1909–Aug. 1910
Fr. Abbot Peter Engel, OSB	Aug. 1910–Sept. 1917
Fr. Joseph Kreuter, OSB	Sept. 1917–June 1922
Fr. Alfred Mayer, OSB	June 1922–June 1929
Rev. Joseph Kreuter, OSB	June 1929–June 1930
Fr. Valerian Thelen, OSB	June 1930–Sept. 1932
Fr. Magnus Hermanutz, OSB	Sept. 1932–Sept. 1933
Fr. Jerome Simmer, OSB	Sept. 1933–Sept. 1935
Fr. George Scheffold, OSB	Sept. 1935–June 1937
Fr. Timothy Majerus, OSB	June 1937–Sept. 1939
Fr. Christopher Bayer, OSB	Sept. 1939–Sept. 1944
Fr. Cyril Ortman, OSB	Sept. 1944–Feb. 1947
Fr. Rember Bularzik, OSB	Feb. 1947–Aug. 1956
Fr. Lancelot Atsch, OSB	Aug. 1956–Aug. 1965
Fr. Harold Fuchs, OSB	Aug. 1965–June 1966
Fr. Jordan Stovik, OSB	July 1966–July 1967
Fr. Benjamin Stein, OSB, assistant pastor	— 1966 – 1967
Fr. Wendelin Luchtmr, OSB	Aug. 1967–Feb. 1972
Fr. Alexander Andrews, OSB	Feb. 1972–June 1972
Fr. Simeon Thole, OSB	June 1972–Aug. 1972
Fr. Kieran Nolan, OSB	Aug. 1972 –

Kieran Nolan, OSB: Aug. 1972 - July 1978  
 Roger Klassen, OSB: July 20, 1978 - June 1990  
 Robert Pierson, OSB: July 1990 - June 1991  
 Simeon Thole, OSB: July 1991 - June 1996  
 Jonathan Licari, OSB: July 1996 - May 2001  
 Blane Wasnie, OSB: August 2001 - June 2003  
 Eugene McGlothlin, OSB: July 2003 - August 2010  
 Jerome Tupa, OSB: August 2010 - June 2012  
 Wilfred Theisen, OSB, interim pastor: June - August 2012  
 Nathanael Hauser, OSB: September 2012 - August 2014  
 Gregory Miller, OSB: August 2014 - June 2019  
 Jerome Tupa, OSB: July 2019 -

*Stones & Hills*, p. 33 & Appendix 2 & *Stones & Hills* website,

[http://www.csbsju.edu/SJU-](http://www.csbsju.edu/SJU-Archives/SJUHistory/BooksaboutStJohns/StonesandHills.htm)

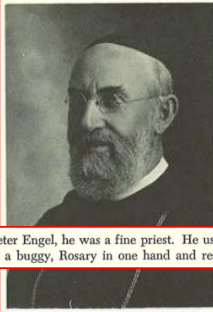
[Archives/SJUHistory/BooksaboutStJohns/StonesandHills.htm](http://www.csbsju.edu/SJU-Archives/SJUHistory/BooksaboutStJohns/StonesandHills.htm)

Photos from *Stones & Hills* p. 163 – pastors from 1944 – 1978

Peter Engel was the abbot from November 28, 1894 - November 27, 1921



Abbot Peter Engel, OSB



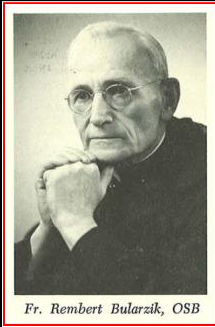
Peter Engel, he was a fine priest. He used to go around in a buggy, Rosary in one hand and reins in the other.

Above all, there was the gentle and deeply loved Abbot Peter Engel. For seven years he managed to find time, as Abbot of a large community, to be pastor of the parish as well. He knew every man, woman and child by name: knew them, loved them -- and they loved him. He was their abbot, their father, too. Even after the press of monastic responsibilities forced him to give up the pastorate, every morning until his death he spent a half-hour before the parish weekday Mass sitting quietly in the confessional in the back of the church, though only one or two or perhaps no one came to confess.



Jubilee of Fr. Abbot Peter Engel, OSB

Jubilee photo from *Stones & Hills* p. 94; "buggy" quote from p. 100, longer text from Godfrey Diekmann's sermon for the Parish Centennial Dec. 12, 1975, p. 4



Pastor 1947-1956

Date: Dec. 20, 1953

Of parishioners owing pew-rent payments, over one-fourth are still in arrears for this year. The parish account books should properly be closed at the end of the year. Payments may be left with the trustee, Mr. Schreiner, at the Porter's office or deposited in the collection basket. Receipts will then be mailed. Better still, call at the parish office.

**Pew renters were “in arrears”!**

*Photo: Stones & Hills p. 105*

Clippings are from the parish bulletins, in the St. John's Abbey Archives.



Fr. Lancelot Atsch

Some of the bulletin notes dealt with doctrine & church rules:

Date: Christmas 1961

CHURCH OF SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST  
 Christmas 1961

CONFESSION: this afternoon 3 to 4. (Sunday)

THE COMMUNION FAST for the Midnight Mass begins at 9:40. (3 hours from solid food and alcoholic drink. One hour from non-alcoholic drinks.)

THE MIDNIGHT CHRISTMAS MASS for all of us who choose to come. It will start exactly at 12 because of the radio broadcast by WCCO.

Some were witty and reminiscent of the SJU Chaplain's Letters:

Date: October 28, 1962

THERE are missals and missles. Both can send you heevenwards. One sure, if slower help, is for sale at parish office.

A common theme was harping about attendance at mass:

Date: February 19, 1961

Not today a group at the 8:30 Saturday Mass. Half a chapel still empty. Let's hope a few dozen more of you hit your lenten stride. Don't baby yourself. A Mass - one weekday Mass is not asking your martyrdom.

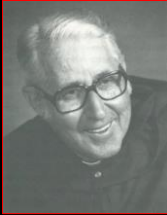
...and occasionally about attendance at other things:

Date: October 9, 1960

NO ATTENDANCE RECORDS were broken at the Christian Women's meeting Monday. We hope the Douvier's wedding anniversary dance wasn't that strenuous to keep our people out of shape till Monday. Or should we ask: are the women getting old and tired?

Fr. Lancelot Atsch, pastor from 1956-1965

Clippings are from the parish bulletins, in the St. John's Abbey Archives.



Fr. Lancelot Atsch

Parish financial matters were frequently mentioned:

Date: October 30, 1960

FINANCIAL ACCOUNTS OF THE PARISH  
will close for the year on November 30. Because we need it, we are hopeful that all unpaid PEN REST (Church Support or whatever name you give it doesn't matter) will be in by then.

A question: Has a sudden wave of unemployment or some financial tragedy hit the parish during October??

This is why we ask: Oct 9 the entire parish envelope collection got to the low of 65.19. Oct 16 was 75.14.

With our 126 wage earners, this means an average contribution of 51 and 59 cents per wage earner for these Sundays.

The backbone of parish support is the regular minimum of an hour's wage per week -- 1/40 of what you make in a 40 hour week. Our "backbone" seems to need a chiropractor!

Date: February 26, 1961

WITH THE HELP  
of "Church Support" that came in during the week, we managed to pay two months teacher salary. We rushed it to the bank and then wrote out the check.

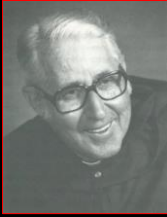
...apparently for good reason!

Date: November 4, 1962

On the assumption that the average gross hour's wage in parish is more than 1.48 --(twice 74)  
On the assumption that you work a 40 hour week  
we arrive at this frightful fraction: 1/80 . The average Collegevillian spends 80 times more on stocks and bonds, beer and babies than he contributes to his parish. An economical parish to live in, nicht wahr? If St. Cloud finds this out, watch for the real estate boom.

Fr. Lancelot Atsch, pastor from 1956-1965

Clippings are from the parish bulletins, in the St. John's Abbey Archives.



Fr. Lancelot Atsch

And speaking of finances:

Collection baskets will be in the last pew. If anyone sits on them they may get silver—but certainly no sympathy.

Date: April 2, 1961

A GOOD MAN

but weak speller handed in his "Phew Rent." The dictionary says "phew" is an exclamation of disgust or relief. In this case both meanings are valid, depending on which end of the transaction you are at.

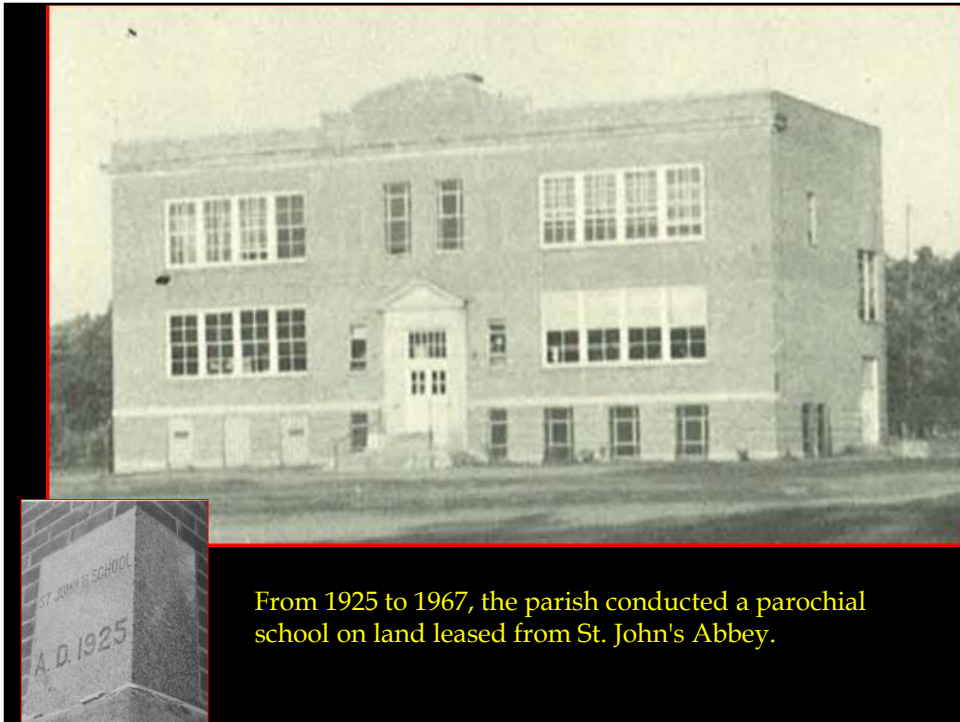
Fr. Lancelot Atsch, pastor from 1956-1965

Clippings are from the parish bulletins, in the St. John's Abbey Archives.



1924 aerial view of St. John's

...just before the Parish built its school past the cemetery



From 1925 to 1967, the parish conducted a parochial school on land leased from St. John's Abbey.

Cornerstone photo from 1975 Parish Directory p. 17

School photo from *Stones & Hills* p. 125

Text:

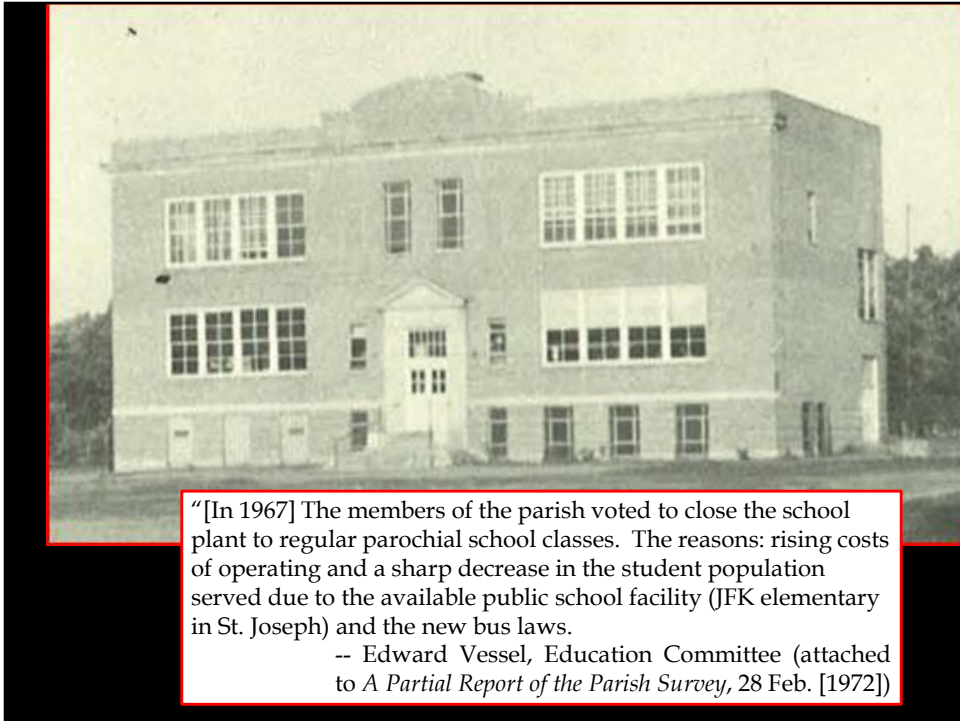


Besides the Sunday contributions, parish organizations regularly raised money for the school. From 1928-1929, during the depression, the parish paid \$630 on the school debt. Payment in full was made in 1935. The school continued for forty-two years, closing in 1967. Every morning began with Mass, followed by religion classes.



Photos from *Stones & Hills* p. 125

Text from Parish school history.pdf



"[In 1967] The members of the parish voted to close the school plant to regular parochial school classes. The reasons: rising costs of operating and a sharp decrease in the student population served due to the available public school facility (JFK elementary in St. Joseph) and the new bus laws.  
-- Edward Vessel, Education Committee (attached to *A Partial Report of the Parish Survey*, 28 Feb. [1972])

Photo from *Stones & Hills* p. 125



More vandalism and a fire continued to raise havoc with the empty building. Thus in the fall 1974 the structure was razed and the debris hauled away, almost overnight.

*Stones & Hills*, p. 141; text from *Stones & Hills*, p. 143

The parish school site today



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*Stones & Hills*, p. 141; text from *Stones & Hills*, p. 143