

ST. PETER'S ABBEY NEWSLETTER

Vol. 1, no. 1
March, 1976



A new venture

The St. Peter's Abbey Newsletter is a new venture for St. Peter's Abbey. Since our community is involved in a variety of apostolates, it is sometimes difficult to be aware of and appreciate the diverse concerns community members have. This newsletter will attempt to provide this kind of information to community members as well as to friends of the abbey who share an interest in our lives.

Any comments, positive or negative, about this newsletter are welcome. Some news items that should have been included in this issue may have been missed. We hope that community members will submit material about themselves and their concerns so that future issues will be more complete. Give suggestions or material to Father Peter Novacosky.

A time to tear down a time to build up

Building renovations are the order of the day at St. Peter's this winter. A number of projects have been initiated to make the facilities more adaptable to the changing times and new demands made of them.

The first project got underway in the latter part of October 1975 as Brother Francis Fortney added five feet (down) to the elevator shaft of Michael Building (the old College building, renamed last summer after Abbot Michael Ott, who was instrumental in founding the college).

On Nov. 15, Dennis Peterson from Brandon Elevator Company arrived to replace the original manually operated elevator that had transported many students' trunks and suitcases to the fourth-floor dormitory, with a push-button mechanical elevator. With the help of Brothers Francis, Wolfgang Thiem and Stanley Vindevoghel (and others), the elevator guiding rails were put up, old cement flew out and fresh cement was poured, and the new elevator steadily took shape so that it was useable by Christmas. After some further improvements, the inspector issued a licence for its use at the end of January.



Bro. Wolfgang Thiem adds the finishing touch to the new elevator in Michael Building.

"We hope that this elevator will make it easier for us to use Michael Building," Father Maurice Weber, college principal, commented. "It will enable us to use the third and fourth floors to greater advantage."

One of the confreres who is already appreciating it is Father Paul Kuehne, who, at 79, is the oldest member of St. Peter's Orchestra. He and many members of the orchestra use it to get to the rehearsal room on the fourth floor.

The locker room area above the dressing rooms in the arena is the scene of the second major renovation. Since the area was built in 1966, one-half of it was used for students' sports lockers and the other half was empty. In 1973 most of the beds from the student dormitories were moved there, and the area was used as a dormitory for the summer sports camps.

Through the industry of Brothers Wolfgang and Francis and Father Andrew Britz, head of the Space Committee, and Leo Torborg, the area has been partitioned into two equal rooms, each capable of holding 50 beds. Sinks, windows and a ventilation system have been installed and, with separate washroom and shower facilities, the area can now be used for adults as well as for students; mixed groups can be housed at the same time as well. Once the final touches of paint are put on the new

COVER:

Father Wilfred Hergott cleaning snow off the sidewalks

walls this spring, the rooms will be available year-round to groups that don't mind roughing it in a common dormitory.

Severin Hall is also undergoing a major face-lifting this spring. The top and bottom dormitories at the north end are being converted into private rooms for guests and retreatants. The bottom dormitory will be converted into seven rooms, a lounge area, kitchenette and a common washroom. The upper dorm will be made into eight rooms, each with a private shower and sink, a lounge area and a kitchenette. Sinks are being added to the rooms that already exist in the south end of Severin Hall. The lower floor of Severin Hall, south half, will remain the students' library. When the new facilities are completed this summer, there will be 26 private guest rooms plus two pastoral counselling rooms available in Severin Hall.

Tenders were put out for the renovations.

However, when the bids were double the amount estimated, the community decided at its Feb. 20 chapter meeting that community members could do most of the work, and some of the major work would be contracted out to local companies.

Visitors

Brother John Brodner, guest master, reports that there were 55 people at St. Peter's to make a retreat during 1975. There have been eight here to make a retreat during 1976. No count was kept of the number of guests that came to St. Peter's last year.

Father Maurice Weber reports that about 45 groups used the facilities of St. Peter's during 1975. Transcendental Meditators, St. Thomas More, Alcoholics Anonymous, and sports camps were among the diverse groups that were here.

Looking ahead

June 16: Father Werner Renneberg celebrates the 25th anniversary of his profession as a Benedictine monk.

June 28 - July 1: The annual community retreat will be preached by Father Alban Boulwood, OSB, resigned abbot of St. Anselm Abbey.

July 17: Fathers Gregory Gasser, Augustine Nenzel and Alphonse Ludwig celebrate the 50th anniversary of their profession as Benedictine monks.

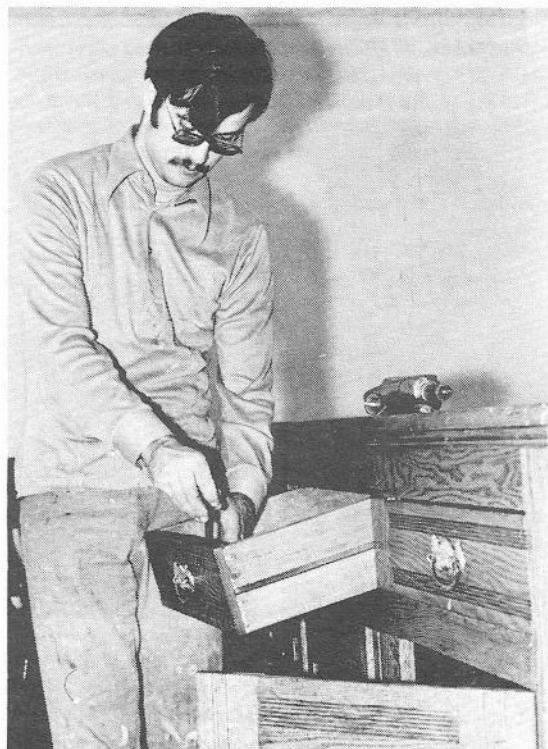
Studying at St. Anselm's

Bro. Douglas Schmidt returned home to St. Peter's Abbey on Dec. 19 to enjoy a three-week Christmas vacation during his first year of studies at St. Anselm's Abbey.

Bro. Douglas, the first junior monk to study away from the abbey for some years, reported that he is enjoying his stay at St. Anselm's and is learning from his experience. "It's helping me to get a broader understanding of the different types of monasticism," he said. "It also helps me to appreciate my home abbey better."

He has discovered a few differences between St. Peter's and St. Anselm's. "They pray faster than we do," he said. "But the daily schedule is basically the same as ours. They rise at 5:45 a.m. and have a 35-minute morning office, a combination of Lauds and the Office of Readings. Mass is celebrated at 5:15 p.m. every day, except for Saturday and Sunday when it's celebrated just before dinner.

"They also have total silence at all the meals



Bro. Douglas Schmidt repairs a cupboard for the museum during his Christmas holidays.

and table reading at two of them. The only informal meal is on Sunday evening, and it is not eaten in the refectory but in the chapter room around the fire place. That's when some beer and wine also flow." Bro. Douglas has also done a lot of walking. "That's all they do for recreation there," he said.

He has picked up some jobs at St. Anselm's. He is the abbey mail man as well as the Crypt Master (which involves setting up for the private Masses and helping to serve).

There are more than 50 monks living at St. Anselm's Abbey, and their main apostolate is teaching. Candidates for the abbey have to have at least two years of college education, and the community doesn't seem to accept older men into the community, Bro. Douglas reported. There are about 1,400 students attending St. Anselm's College. The college does not have a post graduate theology program.

Bro. Douglas is a sophomore in the philosophy program at St. Anselm's College. One subject he finds troublesome is Latin. Two years of Latin are required before receiving the philosophy degree. Bro. Douglas' classes end this spring on May 10. His address is: St. Anselm's Abbey, Manchester, New Hampshire, 03102.

ments made by Brothers Wolfgang Thiem and Jude Marco during a celebration of the Eucharist.

Brother Wolfgang, 51, made his profession of final (solemn) vows. He was born in Schwab-Gmund, West Germany. He came to Canada in 1953, joined the secular institute, Voluntas Dei in 1959 and worked in Quebec, New Brunswick, Haiti and the Yukon. After a six-month stay with the Trappist monks at St. Norbert's, Man., Brother Wolfgang came to St. Peter's in July, 1971.

Brother Jude Marco, 34, made triennial promises. He was born in Red Deer, Alta., where he worked at Deerhome, an institute for retarded adults, and as a taxi dispatcher as well as at a variety of other jobs. Brother Jude came to St. Peter's in September, 1974.

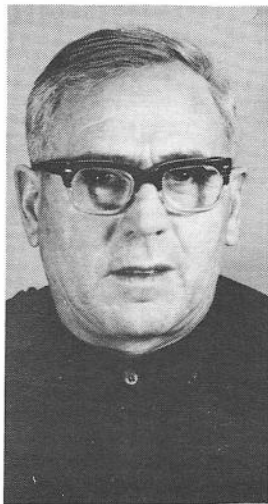
75th anniversary

1978 may seem far away yet, but plans are already being made to celebrate the 75th anniversary of St. Peter's Colony that year.

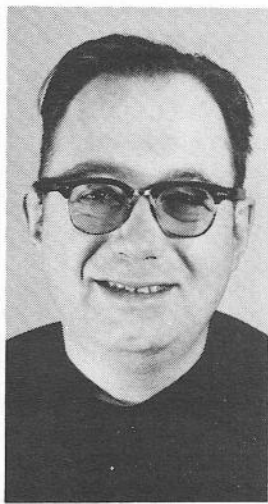
Interest in commemorating the jubilee was stirred up over the Christmas holidays when Brother Thomas Gerwing settled down at the main entrance desk with a tape recorder and copies of the summer issues of the 1926 St. Peter's Bote. He translated Prior Peter Windschiegl's account of the monastic community's 10-year sojourn in southern Illinois under the name of Cluny prior to coming to Saskatchewan. Brother Thomas' translation is being readied for publication by Brother Bede Hubbard. Brother Bede is also planning to republish the diary of Father Bruno Doerfler, who travelled across western Canada in 1902 searching for a suitable site for the new colony.

In February, 1976 Abbot Jerome Weber appointed a Jubilee Committee: Mrs. Mary Wassermann, George Hofmann, and Brothers Bede and Thomas. The committee has announced plans for jubilee celebrations in the colony in the summer of 1978. July 9 will be devoted to local parish celebrations; July 16 will be Mount Carmel Sunday; and on July 23 the public will be invited to St. Peter's Abbey for a concluding celebration.

Local committees are being set up in each parish. The central committee hopes they will prepare mailing lists of former parishioners, preserve and repair pioneer buildings, collect local archival and historical material and initiate farm and village beautification projects. The central committee also plans to prepare a history of St. Peter's Colony for use in local schools and to publish a colony calendar for 1978.



Bro. Wolfgang



Bro. Jude

Community grows

Abbot Jerome Weber and most of the members of the community were present March 20, St. Benedict's day, to witness the monastic commit-

Personnel notes

Abbot Jerome Weber attended a meeting of the bishops of western Canada, March 16-18 in Saskatoon. Topics discussed included: new ministries, women's role in the church, vocations, missions, Western Conference of Priests, and priests' senates. He will also attend a meeting of the CCC in Ottawa, April 5-9. The Canadian Catechism will be discussed at this meeting.

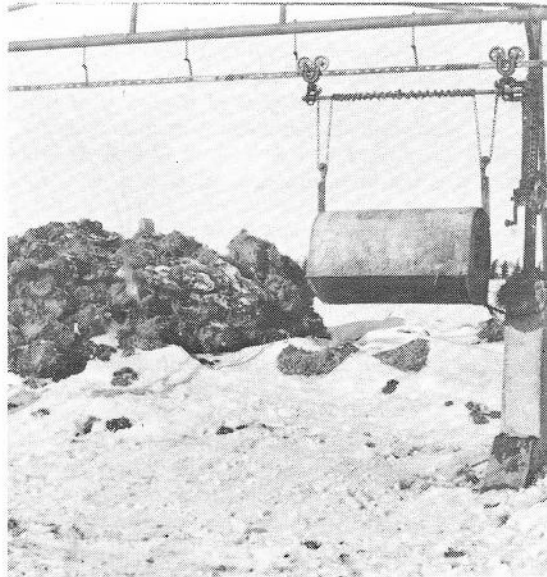
Father Wilfred Hergott entered St. Elizabeth Hospital Feb. 24, and his condition is gradually improving.

Father Gregory Gasser underwent a series of 25 cobalt treatments between Jan. 20 and Feb. 19 at the University Hospital, Saskatoon for a cancerous tumor in his right jaw. He reports that it is "still aching". He returns to the hospital April 2 for an examination to see how successful the treatment was. Brother Peter Dougan also had a one-week stay in the hospital. He entered St. Paul's Hospital, Saskatoon, Jan. 17 for an operation to remove a cataract which had made him blind in his right eye. On Feb. 29 Abbot Jerome and the community celebrated the sacrament of the anointing of the sick with Brother Justus Trettel and Father Gregory before Sunday Vespers.

Fathers Edward Benning and Leo Hinz left for a pilgrimage-retreat in the Holy Land March 21. After 30 days in the Holy Land they will also get a taste of Paris, Lourdes, Rome and West Germany before returning home on May 5. Father Leo was also a member on the first-place team in the Regina clergy curling bonspiel Feb. 4. At the request of Archbishop Charles Halpin, Father Leo will remain another year as Officialis of the Regional Marriage Tribunal for Manitoba and Saskatchewan until July, 1977.

Attending the Western Conference of Priests' meeting in Banff Feb. 16-19 were Fathers Daniel Muyres, Roman Schneider, Werner Renneberg, Joseph Ackerman and Peter Novocosky. Father Werner led a workshop on Canadian Justice and the Penal System and delivered a paper on the topic. Father Daniel also attended a procurator's meeting at St. Bede Abbey, Peru, Ill., March 3-7.

Father Martin Brodner gave a retreat to the seminarians at St. Pius X Seminary, Saskatoon,



The empty bucket in the foreground has been made unnecessary by the automated method of cleaning the barn, evident in the growing manure pile in the background.

Farm improvements

A new way of cleaning the dairy barn was put into operation this year in early January.

The Mole Hill Disposal System has replaced what farm manager Brother Bernard Lange called the "armstrong" way of handling manure. The fork and manpower method of cleaning the barn has been made obsolete by a chain cleaner which makes a complete circuit through the gutters. The manure is brought to a pit where a hydraulically-driven plunger pushes the manure through a 10-inch underground pipe to a steadily-building pile 90 feet behind the barn.

One man used to spend about an hour and a quarter each day cleaning the barn manually. Now with the push of a button, the barn is automatically cleaned in 15 minutes, twice a day.

"It's a real good investment," Brother Bernard commented. "The men are really happy with it."

The Mole Hill Disposal System was designed in Sweden and was introduced into Canada only a couple of years ago. A lot of dairy barns are getting it, Brother Bernard said.

Feb. 18-21. He also has given a number of talks on the revised rite of the sacrament of reconciliation: at the Saskatoon Penance Institute Feb. 25, to the CWL provincial executive March 8, to the parishioners in Cudworth, to the parishioners in Humboldt, and on May 8 he will explain the new rite to the clergy of the Hudson Bay diocese at their meeting at the Saskatoon retreat house. *Father Florian Renneberg* attended a multicultural conference in Ottawa, Feb. 13-15. The conference was hosted by the Canadian Consultative Commission on Multiculturalism, of which *Father Florian* is a member.

On Jan. 18 *Father Albert Ruetz* and *Brother Bede Hubbard* were elected to a two-year term on the Abbey Liturgy Committee. Others on the committee are *Fathers Rudolph Novecosky* (chairman) and *Andrew Britz* and *Brother Thomas Gerwing*. *Father Peter Novecosky* was appointed in early March as vocation director and *Brother Thomas* was appointed guest master.

On Jan. 26 the Monastic Frontiers Committee was established by Abbot Jerome Weber. Members of the committee, *Fathers Philip Loehr*, *Lawrence DeMong*, *Michael Pomedli*, *Andrew Britz* and *Brother Wolfgang Thiem*, will meet regularly with a group from the University of Regina, headed by *Louis Xhignesse*. The monastic group, drawing

from the monastic heritage and spiritual life of St. Peter's, will engage in a dialogue about the problems facing today's society, which has over-extended itself and has ignored the spirit of man and the limitations of technical progress. The first meeting was held at St. Peter's March 5. The second was held in Regina March 23.

Father Philip Loehr has been busy in national and provincial affairs. Last fall he presented a brief to the Canadian national committee for HABITAT at a Regina meeting and represented Saskatchewan at a Canadian Non Government Organization participation program for HABITAT in Ottawa, Feb. 5. He attended a meeting on the same topic in Toronto, March 18. As rural life director for the abbacy, he presented a brief to the Hall Commission on Grain Handling and Transportation on Nov. 19. He has spoken on the same topic at meetings in Govan and Carrot River this year. He also spoke on rural communities at the Anglican Provincial Synod March 16.

A second novitiate

(*Fr. Leander Dosch left St. Peter's Abbey Aug. 5, 1975 to begin his novitiate at the Trappist Abbey of the Holy Trinity. Below he shares his reactions to his new life. His address is: Huntsville, Utah 84317.*)

Going through a second novitiate at the age of 50 is a rather unusual experience. One realizes how age creates a certain set or lack of pliability that must be overcome by effort and the grace of God. It is quite a shift to be suddenly relieved of all responsibility for others and all administrative duties and to have to devote oneself exclusively to the *unum necessarium*.

This community, like all religious communities, is still in the process of *aggiornamento*. Quite naturally one quickly learns that the stereotyped image of the Trappist is a thing of the past, and one is not too certain of the direction things will take in the future.

One thing the order, and this monastery, are determined to retain is our contemplative orientation. This determination is bolstered in this country by the wide interest shown in Eastern mysticism and such things as Transcendental Meditation. Universities are showing a great deal of interest. Their libraries are well supplied with books on Eastern mysticism but little on Western mysticism. Now they are turning to contemplative communi-



Bro. Bernard Lange stands beside the farm's new 125 hp John Deere 4430 tractor he drove home in mid-January.

ties for speakers and teachers of courses on Christian mysticism.

The order here has inherited two traditions: that of the original Cistercians and the modification of La Trappe. The latter predominated until recently, but with the renewal an attempt is being made to recapture the spirit of St. Bernard and the founders of Cîteaux.

Rather interestingly, the first Cistercians shortened the Office in reaction to the Cluniacs, who had overloaded the monks with choral duties. The Trappists reversed the trend by adding offices of the B.V.M. and the dead. These latter have now disappeared. The Trappist theory seemed to be that the more vocal prayers one said and the more one suffered, the holier he became. To attain this they regimented every free moment of the day and left little to the initiative of the individual, as Thomas Merton pointed out in *Waters of Siloe*, which I've just reread after more than 20 years.

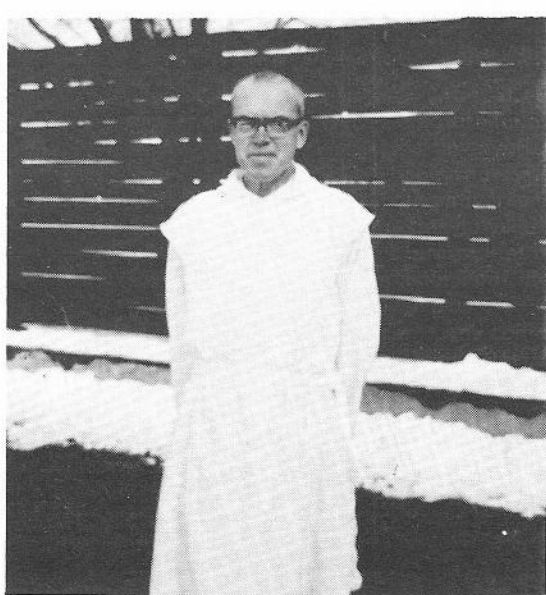
As part of the *aggiornamento* and the return to the spirit of the founders the hours have been shortened, and the moderation of St. Benedict has prevailed in the penitential practices. In the Trappist tradition the monks were considered hermits living in the same edifice, but now the community is being stressed, as people like St. Stephen Harding, St. Bernard, and St. Aelred wrote and spoke about it. Regimentation has given way to a more relaxed atmosphere and the individual now has to stand on his own feet more than in the past.

Here at Holy Trinity the Abbot is little in evidence. In fact, he spends three days of every week in his hermitage, unless he has some travelling or other urgent work to do here in the monastery. Our abbots have given up using pontificals, so they look like the rest of the boys.

This community was founded in 1947 from Gethsemani Abbey. You can find a brief account of the foundation in Thomas Merton's *Waters of Siloe*, which also has a picture of the monastery. It is still the same "temporary" quonset building.

The foundation coincided with the end of the war, and it was not long before they were flooded with novices. There were as many as 30 at a time, but as Dom Emmanuel said, they were never the same 30 from one day to the next. In those days all applicants were accepted, and they passed through here in great numbers; few remained.

Presently I am the only novice. There is one young postulant, and rumors that reach me say there are several applicants who will come in



Fr. Leander as a Trappist monk.

summer. Right now we have one observer. The community numbers 30 now.

We have 1,800 acres in this valley of the Wasatch Range of mountains. Of this we farm 800 acres, the rest being on mountainsides and fit only for grazing. There are beef and dairy herds and 8,000 laying hens. The community has had to cut back on some aspects of farming, such as hogs and sheep, which were raised when the community was larger. Because the men are getting fewer and older, they have mechanized the farming more and more until it is automated about as much as it can be.

Deceased brethren and relatives

Brother Vincent Erlacher, St. Bede Abbey, died Jan. 17.

Father Ulrich Beste, St. John's Abbey, died Jan. 28.

Father Elmer Eisenschenk, St. John's Abbey, died Feb. 22.

Abbot Lambert Dunne, who represented American Benedictine monks in Rome since 1950, died March 8.

Henry DeMong, father of Father Lawrence, died at his home in Saskatoon, Jan. 17.

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Muenster, Saskatchewan
SOK 2YO