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TILLAMOOK COUNTY

CLOVERDALE'S ST. JOSEPH CELEBRATES 100 YEARS

*Submitted by
St. Joseph Parish*

The Catholic coastal communities of Northwest Oregon from 1860 to 1891 were served by the Diocesan priests of Grand Ronde. In 1891, the Catholic community of Tillamook built and established their first church on land donated for one dollar. The assigned pastors to Sacred Heart Church also became responsible for serving the people of Wheeler, Rockaway, Garibaldi, Bay City and Cloverdale. It was 1917 before the Benedictine Fathers of Mt. Angel guided us in our religious life.



Archdiocese of Portland Archives

St. Joseph Catholic Church, Cloverdale, Oregon.

When Father Hildebrand Melchior, OSB, became an

assistant pastor at Sacred Heart, he helped fulfill "Grandma Jenck's" dream of having our own church in Cloverdale. Funds were raised and the church was designed by Father Melchior and his architect father, Michael.

Using local men from both parishes and seminarians from Mount Angel, St. Joseph Church was finished in 1921. On

Christmas Eve of that year they celebrated the first Mass, but the church wasn't dedicated until August 1922 after Father Hildebrand finished building the steeple "high enough for all to see."

The newly built church had only the sacristy attached. A small portion of the downstairs had wood flooring—from the doorway over

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and two lumber mills which cut 1,500,000 feet of lumber daily. It has a beautiful, first class hotel and many stores which would be the pride of a much larger city. It has all modern conveniences, and the population is steadily growing. It was our largest attended mission in the diocese, and the good Capuchin Fathers did all in their power to make our stay with them an event not soon, if ever, to be forgotten.

The closing mission in the diocese was preached at Redmond, a mission under the care of the Capuchin Fathers of Bend, twenty miles away. Twenty-five Catholics and about the same number of non-Catholics attended the mission. The delight manifested by these people, and their generosity, made this final mission the fitting climax of our five months' labors in the mountains and valleys of Eastern Oregon.

We returned from Bend to The Dalles by train, a shorter trip than by automobile owing to the fact that the return trip is down grade, and the train is not hampered by freight. The railroad follows the course of the Deschutes River, a most turbulent body of water, from Bend to the Columbia river [sic] into which it rushes with a constant roar. From Bend to the Columbia river it has a fall of 5,000 feet, and is a roaring cataract the entire distance. We bade it a fond good-bye, and we prayed that God would be as good to the next missionaries who travel along its banks as He has been to us... □

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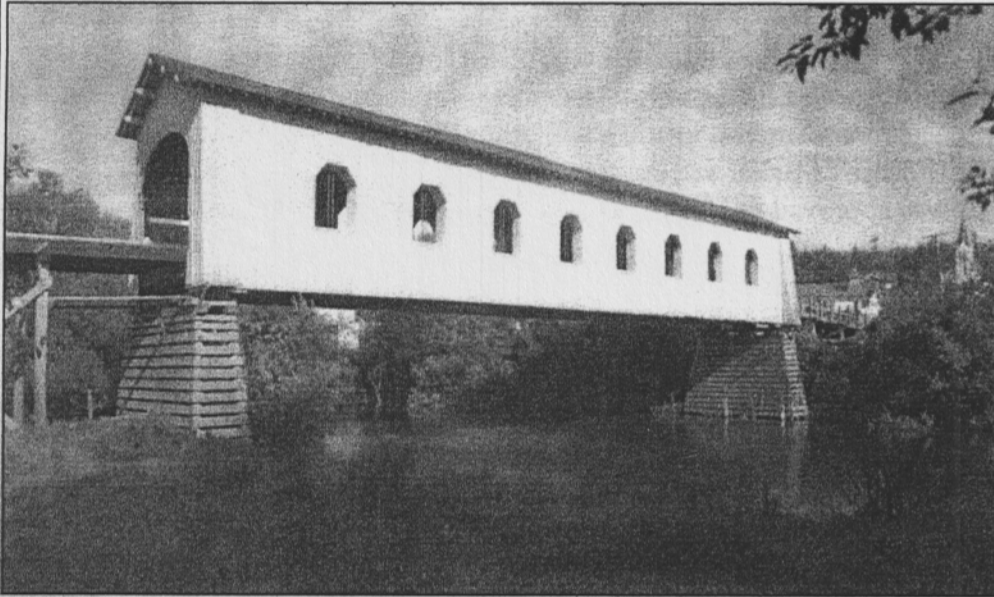
to the small bathroom area. On the dirt floor was a large wood-burning furnace which vented up through the grate in the middle aisle of the church. This "apartment" later served as a residence for a caretaker. The furnace was changed over to oil sometime in the 1950's. The inside of the church had wood flooring and there were two additional steps leading up to the existing altar. The communion railing matched the wooden seats. The light globes were made of white glass but were much smaller than the current ones.

St. Joseph's Altar Society held an organizational meeting on January 1, 1925 with most of the ladies and girls of the parish present. The main function of the Society was the care of the altar and linens and then charitable works toward others. Mary Jenck was elected President and Mrs. Martin Jenck the Secretary/Treasurer. An entrance fee of one dollar and monthly dues of 25 cents for the ladies and 10 cents for the girls was voted on and approved. The first meeting was held on January 11th with Father Hildebrand Melchior attending. The ladies planned to attend Mass and receive communion as a body four times a year. Meetings were held in the homes approximately every two months, with the hostess and a volunteer preparing a lunch served after the meeting.

In 2022, 100 years after the dedication, many members of the Parish are descendants of the pioneering families who established St. Joseph Church. We are planning a celebration later in the year and welcome Catholics all throughout the area to attend.

Please contact the event coordinator, Karen Petersen at (503) 801-4427 or fritzimax7@gmail.com if you have photos or memories to share as we are putting together a historical booklet to be given out at the celebration. The date will be announced in March in the Catholic Sentinel. □





The Cloverdale Covered Bridge was built in 1925 and replaced in 1948. At 138 feet long, it spanned the Big Nestucca River. The St. Joseph Church steeple is at the far right. July 21, 1946.

Salem Public Library Historic Photograph Collections, Salem Public Library, Salem, Oregon. Ben Maxwell Collection.

FATHER HILDEBRAND MELCHIOR, OSB

Father Hildebrand Melchior, OSB, was born in 1886 in St. Paul, Minnesota, and came to Oregon as a child. He began attending Mt. Angel Seminary in 1905, took first vows in 1910, and was ordained in 1915. He taught at Mt. Angel College until 1920, served as a missionary on Vancouver Island, then worked in Tillamook County from 1920 to 1936. During that time, he built chapels or churches in Cloverdale, Rock-

away, and Wheeler, and a school at Sacred Heart Parish in Tillamook. He continued missionary work for three years, then returned to the Mt. Angel area. His accomplishments there include organizing the annual Marian pilgrimage at Crooked Finger's Holy Rosary Chapel, still held annually on August 15th. He died at the Benedictine Nursing Home in Mt. Angel on January 12, 1977.

Left and right: Postcards show the new St. Joseph Church. The first Mass was the 1921 Christmas Midnight Mass. The church was dedicated August 13, 1922 by Archbishop Christie. A 1,000-pound bell was added in 1923 and consecrated by Abbot Bernard of St. Benedict Abbey.



Archdiocese of Portland Archives