

### Mt. Angel Parish Church Treasury of Fine Arts St. Mary's So Familiar That Few Realize Its Uniqueness on Coast

By Loretta E. Dehler  
Statesman Valley Correspondent

MT. ANGEL, Jan. 5. (Special) The Mt. Angel people are so used to the big, gray, Gothic church whose tower rises high above the city that they seldom, if ever, realize that they have a church the like of which is not surpassed on the Pacific coast.

They are familiar with the statement, "The finest church in the northwest" but it is said as glibly and with as little realization of its meaning as the assertion "New York is the largest city in the U. S."

St. Mary's church is beautiful and dear to them mainly because it belongs to them. It is the church they go to at least each Sunday, if not every day; the church in which they received their first communion; the church in which they pronounced their marriage vows; and for many of them the church in which they were baptized as infants, a place to bring their troubles to and to find peace.

#### Beauty Is Felt

They kneel at the hand carved communion rail in the dimmed light of the fine stained glass windows and they feel its beauty but are unaware of its uniqueness.

It is for the visitor to note the graceful lines of the arches that sweep upward to the high vaulted ceiling; to see the warmth of color and the beauty of line in the stained glass windows that are found on every side of the church; and to be cognizant of the symmetry and beauty of the entire building with its smaller towers balanced by the clock tower, substantial at the base but becoming gradually slender as it rises into a slim column that holds its gleaming golden cross high in the blue of the heavens.

The tower is high and slender and the cross it holds to the four winds is 13 feet high but the storms have never harmed it.

#### Gier Brothers Were Builders

The church was well built by two simple, unassuming brothers, Engelbert and Emil Gier in the first decade of this century. Engelbert, who died in Salem at the home of his son-in-law and daughter, Mr. and Mrs. Joe Prange a few years ago, was the architect and builder, trained in Germany. His younger brother, Emil, who helped him, still makes his home in Mt. Angel.

The brothers came from Aachen, Germany, and they were familiar with the fine workmanship that went into the old churches of that country.

#### Started Under Father Placidus

The church was begun under Father Placidus Fuerst, who came as a boy from Fulda, Germany. He was famous as a boy soprano and was one of the finest of musicians. When he was elected as abbot of the Benedictine monastery in 1910, he was replaced by Father Dominic Waedenschwyler, a Swiss, and likewise an outstanding musician and composer.

It was while Father Dominic was pastor that the church was completed and the elaborate dedication ceremonies held in 1912.

The building was constructed

of cement brick made on the site and all the work was supervised by the Gier Brothers.

It was financed by donations of the parishioners. Most of these people were simple farming folk without ready cash. They paid as they could accumulate the money and some among them "worked off" their donations by helping with the building.

#### Stained Glass Windows Imported

Thus the church is a truly local product, conceived, planned, financed and built by the people of Mt. Angel.

The stained glass windows were imported from Germany. It was Father Dominic who planned their selection. His thought was to depict the mysteries of the rosary and, beginning with the annunciation near the high altar one can follow each picturization of the joyful and glorious mysteries around the church.

The high altar and two of the side altars were built by Gustav Schnee and Pete Zollner, supervised by Father Placidus. However, having been made for the old church, they are of Roman style and do not strictly harmonize with the Gothic structure.

They show a great deal of intricate carving and are really beautiful. This and the sentiment attached to them has kept each succeeding pastor from disturbing the feelings of the parishioners by replacing them by others of less beauty but more matching Gothic lines.

#### Crib Came from Germany

Another outstanding feature is the crib, erected each Christmas and still to be seen at this time. It, too, came from Germany. Father Dominic, who was a great lover of the fitting and beautiful, had it imported soon after the completion of the church. With the exception of the cunning infant, all the figures are carved of wood. The painstaking workmanship of the old world can be seen in the individualistic carving of the figures, making them so many distinct characters, in sharp contrast of the modern method of denoting characters by simply changing position and colors.

#### Bethlehem Depicted

And most interesting is the relief carving in the perspective that depicts the surrounding town of Bethlehem. Roads lead into the distance in the most realistic manner and houses and trees become smaller and less distinct as they fade into the background.

The figures are not large, none of them much more than a foot in height but their interest lies in their realistic and appropriate execution.

All the characters of the Christmas story are supplied, and as the season advances, the wondering shepherds and their lambs are replaced with the elaborately dressed kings and their retainers. The entire scene makes a charming picture even for those not interested in the religious import.

## Valley Briefs

**MONMOUTH** — The PTA will meet Monday at 3 p. m. in the grade school building. Helen Taylor, Polk county home demonstration agent, will speak on "Lunches for Children." Mothers of sixth grade pupils will be tea hostesses.

**MT. ANGEL** — George Emigh, business manager of the Salem Senators, will speak Wednesday at the Mt. Angel Business Men's club.

**STAYTON** — The Sunday school club will be held at the Stayton Methodist church today starting at 10 o'clock. A basket dinner will be served at noon.

**Union Hill** — The Home Economics club of Union Hill grange will meet Wednesday January 9, at the grange hall. The hostess committee includes Mrs. J. C. Krenz and Laurel Krenz.

**Monmouth** — The Civic club will meet Thursday January 10 at the city hall. Mrs. Harvey Coates of Dallas will speak on "Missionary Work in Guatemala." Mrs. J. H. Cady, Mrs. Clyde Dickson, Mrs. J. W. Gentle and Mrs. J. E. Winegar will be the hostess committee.

**Swegle** — The Woman's club will meet Tuesday January 8; at the home of Mrs. William Hensell in Cloverdale district. A covered dish dinner will be served at noon.

**Hayesville** — The Farmers union will meet Thursday, January 10, at 8 p. m. in the school house.

**Salem** — The Salem grange will hold a social meeting at the H. D. Smithson place, 235 N. 15th. The Home Ec club will meet Jan. 15.

**Salem Heights** — The Little Garden club will meet Thursday, Jan. 10, with Mrs. V. D. Bain at 1 p. m.

**Silver Cliff** — The county home extension committee will meet on Monday with Mrs. Floyd Fox.

Plans for the spring festival to be held April 4 will be made at this meeting.

**West Salem** — The Home Ec club extension unit of the West Salem grange will meet Tuesday at 10:30 with Mrs. Sarah Chamberlain. Quick breads will be demonstrated by Helen Taylor, Polk county home demonstration agent.

#### Oregon Motorists' Gas Consumption Increased

Oregon motorists used 246,345,545 gallons of gasoline during the first 11 months of 1945, an increase of 13 per cent over the consumption for the same period of 1944, Secretary of State Robert S. Farrell reported here Saturday. Consumption for November totaled 23,067,198 gallons, a 17 per cent increase over November a year ago.

#### Dallas Choir Will Sing In Keizer Hall Tonight

KEIZER, Jan. 5. (Special) — The choir of the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren church of Dallas, directed by Sol Warkentine, will present a musical program in story form, Sunday, January 6, at 7:30 p. m. in the grange hall.

#### GRANGE TO MEET

Red Hill grange will meet Tuesday January 8 for a covered dish dinner.

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## Valley Obituaries

### ROBERT CHAMBERS

LEBANON, Jan. 5. (Special) — Robert Chambers born in Oregon in 1854 died December 31. Funeral services were held in the IOOF cemetery. He had been blind and nearly helpless for several years and had been cared for at the A. H. Frank home. He has no known relatives.

### WILLIAM ALBERT SLAPE

LEBANON, Jan. 5. (Special) — William Albert Slape, 48, telegrapher for the Southern Pacific died of a heart attack, December 27. Funeral services were held December 29. The widow survives.

### ALICE MAY GROVE

LEBANON, Jan. 5. (Special) — Alice May Grove died at the Harris nursing home Dec. 28th, and was buried in the Ames cemetery, December 31st. She was 70 years old and leaves three sons and one daughter.

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