

History of Jordan - Scio detailed in two new books By ED O'MEARA
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Catholic Northwest history buffs will be intrigued by two just-out publications, both of them tied in with the backgrounds of the Jordan - Scio area of north Linn County, Ore.

Setting the scene is "Journey of Hope," by Bob Reipe, (Messenger Press, Carthagena, Ohio, 45822; 390 pages; \$7.95 paperbound), the detailed and engaging story of a pioneering group and its leader from the community of Neuhauser in the south-westernmost corner of Germany, its move to America and eventually to the Jordan area.

Key figure is Joseph Albrecht, born in 1801, married in 1826, father of a baby daughter in 1827, heir to his family's considerable estate, mayor of his town in 1835. He and his wife separated after nine years of marriage so she and her 8-year-old daughter could be admitted to a Church community of women, and Joseph began considering the priesthood. He was also one of the leaders of a group attracted to communal ways of living, "just as it was for the apostles."

Plagued by wars, strife and uncertainty in Europe, Joseph and his friends looked to America, and in 1845 he led a group of 250 from Germany to New York and then on to settle in Thompson, Ohio. After desultory training (he had great battles with Latin), Joseph was ordained for the priest-shy Ohio diocese in 1849.

As Father Joseph, he had trouble with bishops, and once said "I will never trust a bishop. The Pope should be the one to answer to."

The Ohio establishment grew and spread, under the general title of Precious Blood community, with the transplanted women's convent and its Sisters, several lay Brothers and priests. After surviving American Civil War times, Father Joseph became enmeshed in a dispute with the diocese's head, Bishop Purcell, "that Irishman in Cincinnati." Suspended from his church, Father Joseph offered Masses in a barn, then led a group of 60 to new lands in western Minnesota in 1866, after a detour through Wisconsin. He died there in the spring of 1884.

The next year the restless group, protesting "persecution" in Minnesota, discovered the Jordan area of Oregon's Willamette Valley, sent out a scouting term, bought land and moved there in the summer of 1884, bringing along the corpse of Father Joseph, their cattle, furnishings and the Sisters of the Precious Blood. Oregon was a new start for the hard working community, for the time priestless and led by a three-trustee committee. It took another year before the group was completely reconciled to the administration of Oregon's Archbishop William Gross.

The core group of Precious Blood Sisters, never canonically formed into a recognized order, shortly became the first members of the Sisters of St. Mary of Oregon. The immigrant group became members of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, Jordan. At this point, a bright, new account, "Centennial History, 1885-1985, Our Lady of Lourdes," (Published by the parish; 126 pages), takes over the story. This is one of the more impressive anniversary histories yet to be published in the Archdiocese of Portland, and was edited by Barbara Bentz, Linda Duman and Father Gregory Moys.

The group which had started from West Baden, Germany, half a century earlier, continued its involved history for several more decades. Their needs for a priest were filled for a time by Benedictines from Mt. Angel and by visits to Stayton, Mill City and Sublimity

parishes.

In the early 1900s a French Trappist abbey in Fontgambault and most of its monks sought a new home in America, paused for a while adjacent to the Gethsemani, Ky., Trappist abbey, looked for months in California and in 1904 came to Oregon and the parish at Jordan.

It was a most un-Trappist-like setting, with the eager parishioners looking forward to the big feasts, the monks looking for monastic serenity. "They were French-speaking, trying to learn English to survive in America, and sent to a German-speaking parish," notes this history. But the monks set to building, organizing and planting the farm, building a sawmill, trying to become self-supporting. A picture in the parish history shows a group of 17 Trappists, probably the peak population of the abbey.

But this lasted only until 1911, when the Trappists dispersed the monks, some to Kentucky, others to France, one to the Benedictines and several staying to become Oregon diocesan priests. The parish history is rich in details of buildings, the Benedictine and Salvatorian priests who have been pastors, the families old and new which have made up the Jordan and Our Lady of Lourdes community.

Jordan, as these two books disclose, has had some of the most interesting, unorthodox and unusual Catholic history of Northwest parishes. Bob Riepe, born and raised in the Minnesota area where Father Joseph operated, is an ardent genealogist, which led him into his research for "Journey of Hope." His goal was "to take a sad story and give it a happy ending . . ." The book is based on facts, but the imagined conversations and wealth of details provided along with them make it something of a historical novel. Together, Riepe and the writers of the anniversary history provide a continuing story that covers almost two centuries of development for today's Jordan.

Footnotes: There's still another book in the making which will continue the Precious Blood Society-Germany-Ohio-Minnesota-Jordan history, sort of forming a "trilogy." It is the forthcoming centennial history of the Sisters of St. Mary of Oregon, formally "reconstituted" as the Precious Blood Sisters in 1885, with the name change to the present title in 1892. Jesuit Father Wilfred Schoenberg, "writer in residence" at Gonzaga University, has been researching the Sisters' history hereabouts for the past three months and will write the 100th birthday account.

[unrelated] "Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker," by Nancy L. Roberts, (State University of New York Press, Albany, N.Y.; 226 pages; \$36.50 cloth, \$12.95 paper-bound) , is both a summary and a salute to the woman editor and the unusual newspaper she founded on May 1, 1933.