

Catholic roots deep in Stayton, Sublimity

Church and private Regis High School among towns' bonds

BY DAN DE CARBONEL
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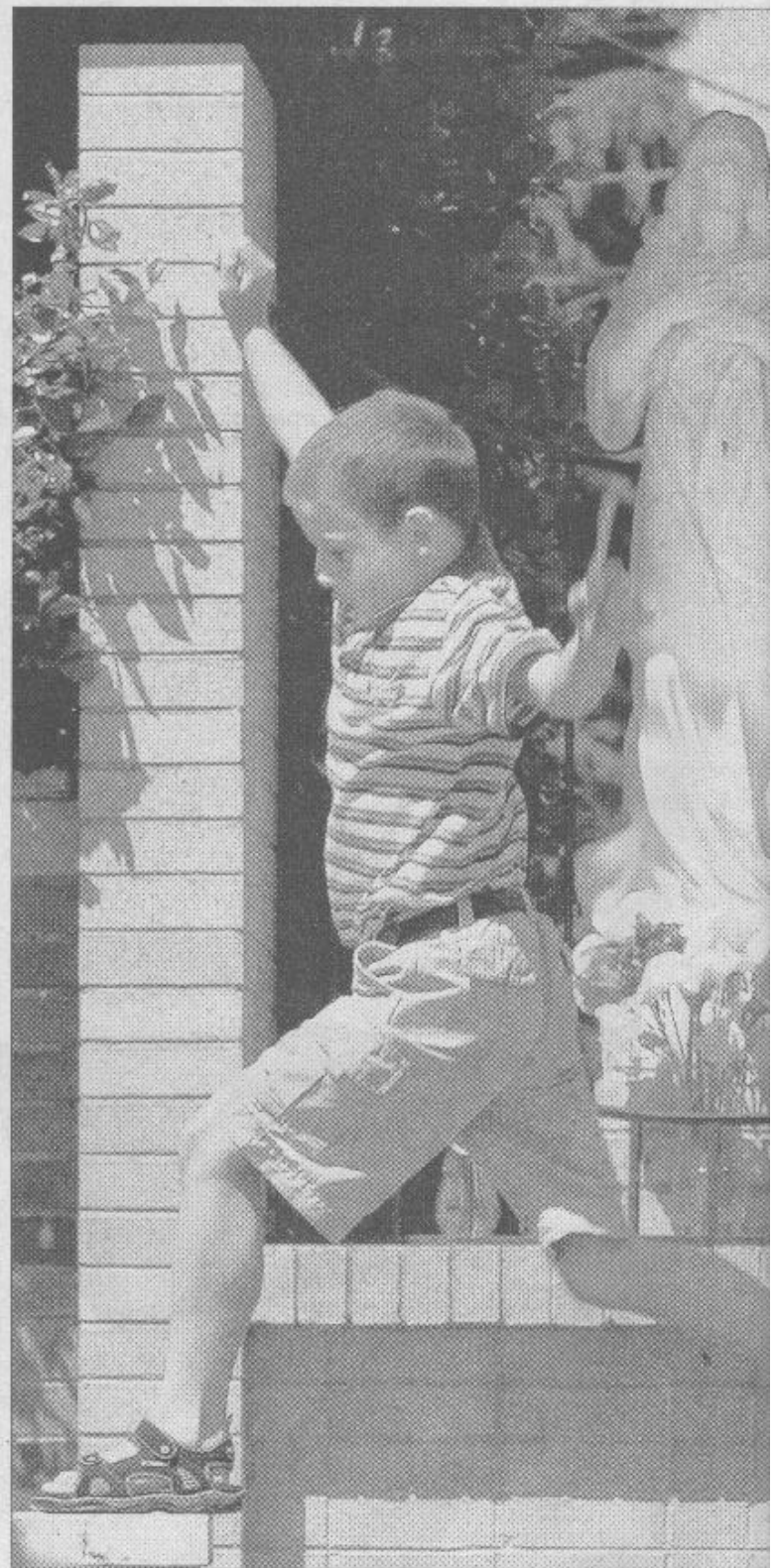
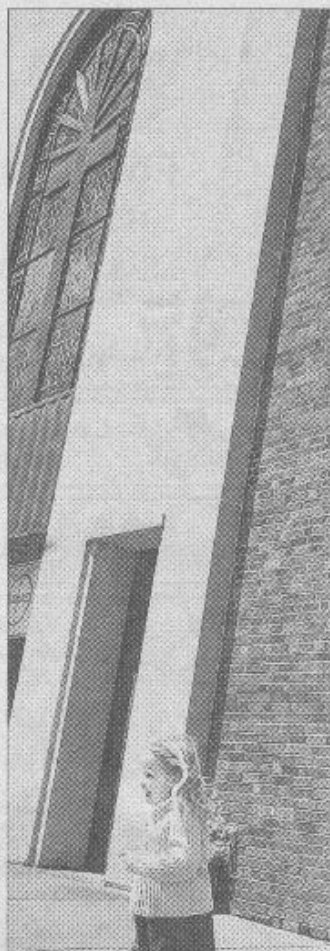
The descendants of the early settlers in the Stayton and Sublimity area continue to enjoy a strong sense of community through family ties and a shared faith.

Although other churches and faiths have arrived in the area in the past century, the Catholic church continues to have a strong presence in the area at Church of the Immaculate Conception in Stayton and at St. Boniface Catholic Church in Sublimity.

Henry Strobel of Aumsville chronicled the history of St. Boniface Catholic Church, of which he is a member. The history of the Catholic faith in the area mirrors that of the growing communities, Strobel said.

"The church ebbs and flows a little bit," he said. "But it is very much the dominant religion."

An effort by the Mennonite-affiliated United Brethren Church to establish Sublimity



Jacob Adams, 8, of Stayton plays in the courtyard after church service in early June. Catholicism remains the predominant faith in the

An effort by the Mennonite-affiliated United Brethren Church to establish Sublimity College failed after 12 years. Farmers from Minnesota and Wisconsin arrived in the 1870s and brought the Catholic faith of their German heritage.

Generations have passed, and many of the long-standing families in the area have intermarried, strengthening ties to the community and to the Catholic Church. The church plays a significant role in the community on days other than Sundays.

The strong Catholic presence in the community is evident in the continued support of Regis High School, a private Catholic school in Stayton.

Since opening in 1963, the school has attracted students from beyond the Stayton and Sublimity area, but the school has seen students coming from farther away in recent years, principal Tony Guevara said. The percentage of freshmen coming from the local Catholic elementary school has gone from 80 percent to about half, as more students travel from outside the area to attend Regis.

"Our radius has extended north to Woodburn and south to Albany and Tangent and up the canyon to Mill City and Gates," he said.

The predominantly Catholic student body of 188 has seen the number of non-Catholic students grow as parents seek the school's strong academic, arts and athletic programs. Each year, about 97 percent of the



Hailey Voltin, 4, of Sublimity runs around the church property after services in early June at the Church of the Immaculate Conception in Stayton.

graduates go on to college.

Guevara said the community's support for the school makes it able to provide an affordable education. Regis has the lowest tuition of any of the high schools in the Portland diocese, Guevara said. Tuition accounts for 55 percent of the school's budget. An annual fundraising auction helps make up much of the difference, raising about \$200,000 annually.

The school's enrollment has dipped by about 40 students since Blanchet Catholic School opened in Salem, but Guevara expects enrollment to increase as more people move to the area.

Strobel said Regis serves as a bridge between Stayton and Sublimity.

"A great many of the parents who went there as kids are now sending their own kids there," he said.

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