

Brother Benedict Bulle

August 4th is the anniversary of the death of Brother Benedict Bulle. Julius Bulle was born on April 7, 1855, in Ringsheim, in the county of Freiburg, Germany. While enrolled at the Abbey School of Einsiedeln in Switzerland, he learned of the new foundation in Arkansas from the student Chaplain, Father Bonaventure Binzegger, who influenced five young men to seek a missionary vocation abroad – two at St. Meinrad, Indiana, and three at the newly founded community in Arkansas. On the date of their departure from Switzerland – October 2, 1880 – Julius Bulle and four fellow students attended Mass celebrated by Father Bonaventure at the renowned shrine of the Blessed Virgin at Einsiedeln.

In the history of Subiaco Abbey, this venture is known as the "First Expedition" from Einsiedeln to the fledgling community in Arkansas.

Although the new foundation in Arkansas did not have a novitiate or a training program, the three young men who arrived in the "First Expedition," namely – Meinrad Bisig, Julius Bulle, Alois Steiner – became the first candidates to join our community.

Of them, Meinrad Bisig died during his novitiate, the first death in the community, and Alois Steiner left the community on his own accord. Only Julius Bulle persevered through a lengthy training program. He had a difficult time as a candidate and novice due to the uncertain situation of the priory which resulted in his novitiate being prolonged for almost three years. On April 15, 1883, Julius Bulle professed his vows as a monk of our monastery, receiving the name Benedict.

In spite of such a precarious beginning in religious life, Brother Ben, as he was known far and wide, became an institution at the monastery. He lived to be an elderly and well-beloved monk, surrounded by stories both humorous and serious.

In fact, Brother Ben lived so long as a monk that near the end of his life he frequently remarked: "I am the longest brother at Subiaco." Because he was short in stature the double meaning of this statement, in Brother Ben's broken English, was always an amusing pun.

For half a century Brother Ben served our community in various capacities as sacristan, head cook, guest-master, porter, and swineherd.

His labors here at the abbey in the service of the Lord came to an end on Saturday, August 4, 1934, where he died peacefully in his monastic cell.

At the time of his death, Brother Benedict was 79 years old and in the 51st year of his monastic profession. He is buried in our cemetery.

