

Brother Stephen Babek

September 20th is the anniversary of the death of Brother Stephen Babek. Aloysius Babek was born on December 30, 1887, in Weatherford, Texas, where he received his early education in a small country school. At the age of 20 he entered Sacred Heart College in the Potawatomi Indian Nation of Oklahoma, with the intention of becoming a Benedictine priest. But illness caused him to give up his studies and return to Texas.

In 1913, he again tried seminary life, this time with the Basilian Fathers in Waco, Texas. Again illness interfered in the form of typhoid fever causing him to give up his studies.

Two years later, still determined to enter religious life, Aloysius Babek came to Subiaco, arriving on Thanksgiving Day, 1915. Although his lungs had been weakened by his two earlier illnesses, he was eager to serve God in monastic life. He professed his vows as a monk of our monastery on September 8, 1917, receiving the name Stephen.

Brother Stephen served our community for half a century as machinist, electrical engineer, apiarist, candle maker, and caretaker of the water and power plant. For years he slept in a small house near the beehives, rising during the night to check the dynamos in the powerhouse which provided electricity for the abbey. He kept the dynamos in top working order until the abbey switched to commercial power in the late 1950s.

As beekeeper, Brother Stephen had as many as 40 hives; he kept the church altars well supplied with candles and the refectory table with honey. He gathered over 700 pounds of honey a year and made as many as 1300 candles per year.

An annual liturgical service he performed for the community was the lighting of the fire for the Holy Saturday ceremonies. Following the Mass, he would take the fire from the Holy Saturday flames to rekindle the boilers with the sacred fire.

In 1967, Brother Stephen celebrated his golden jubilee of monastic profession. Until he was 80 years old, Brother Stephen was active in the care of his duties. During the latter years of his life, he was confined to a wheelchair due to failing health.

Brother Stephen died suddenly of a heart attack in his room in the monastery, Thursday morning, September 20, 1973.

At the time of his death, Brother Stephen was 85 years old and in the 56th year of his monastic profession. He is buried in our cemetery.

