

Community Profile

MOUNT ANGEL

By K. Susan Appleby, SEDCOR



Entertainment abounds at Oktoberfest.

Mount Angel — a small, rural community (population 3,755) is situated in the beautiful Willamette Valley about 17 miles northeast of Salem, and 35 miles south of Portland. The Mt. Angel area is largely devoted to farming and nurseries. Vegetable row crops, many kinds of berries, and hops abound here. There are several small wineries nearby and many Christmas tree farms in the surrounding hills.

Mt. Angel has retained much of its German Catholic heritage and is best known for its annual Oktoberfest, a festive Old World-style celebration that attracts over 350,000 people each year. Many visitors also stop at St. Mary Church to admire its striking Gothic exterior and the beautiful murals inside. Just east of the town is Mt. Angel Abbey, home to the Benedictine Monks and Mt. Angel Seminary.

Mt. Angel was originally settled in 1850 by Benjamin Cleaver. In 1881, a railroad station was established and a group of Catholic families built a church. Rev. Fr. Adelheim Odermatt arrived in Oregon that year with a contingent of Benedictine monks from Engelberg, Switzerland. He found Graves Butte to be the ideal location for a new abbey, at which time the city, post office and the nearby elevation came to be known as Mt. Angel (an English translation of Engelberg). The city of Mt. Angel was incorporated April 3, 1893.



Mt. Angel's new library is a great resource for area residents.

Economic Development

If you haven't been in Mt. Angel for a while, there are some wonderful changes taking place. There has been a lot of effort in the last few years to revitalize the town. **Mary Grant**, president of the **Mt. Angel Chamber** and co-owner of the **Grant Company**, expressed views of the Chamber members by promoting Mt. Angel as "Open for Business."

The community realizes the importance of economic development for creation of more high-paying jobs in the city so that their young people and residents can work and continue to live in the area.

Agriculture plays a big part of the economy, with large nurseries such **Kraemers** and **Fesslers**. The three largest employers include **Gem Equipment of Oregon, Inc.**, **Pepsi Northwest Beverages**, and **Wilco Farmers** headquarters. Providence Benedictine Nursing Center another large employer provides traditional nursing and in-home care. Mt. Angel Telephone Company, incorporated in 1910, provides telephone and broadband internet service.

Paul Zollner, head of the **Mt. Angel Community Development Foundation** is also a member of one of the founding families. Zollner stated, "that there has been a positive interest in promoting the revitalization of the downtown area, to give the town a sense of identity. Public and private fund will continue

to make a difference, for projects such as the new public library, street and other improvements." Oktoberfest, along with possible future plans for walking tours, a farmers market and continued promotion of their Bavarian theme, will allow Mt. Angel to thrive as the small community it is. The new public Library built in 2007 is another vital part of downtown, offering a meeting place for many organizations and library service not found in many larger cities.

Oktoberfest

Mt. Angel is well-known for its annual **Oktoberfest**, which began in 1966, as a traditional harvest festival. It is one of the largest folk festival of its kind in the U. S. The festival includes beer and wine gardens, sporting events, carnival rides, crafts, a car show, and a wide assortment of German food. The event is made possible by a huge number of volunteers. **Jerry Lauzon**, director of public relations for Oktoberfest, is also one of the town and festivals biggest fans.



Dancer at Oktoberfest

In 2007, the festival was selected by the Mid-Willamette Valley Council of Governments, for the Regional Cooperative Project Award; the Oregon Festival and Event Associations Ovation Award 2006 as the Best Festival or Event in Oregon; and German World Magazine (published in Los Angeles) selected it as one of the 10 Best Oktoberfests in the World for 2007.

Many non-profits and schools operate food booths and other functions for the festival while earning funds for their goods. After bills are paid and money set aside for the following year's festival, profits from the event are given back to Mt. Angel and surrounding communities through the **Mt. Angel Oktoberfest Community Foundation**. This year over \$105K in excess revenue from the 2007 festival was distributed to 60 non-profit organizations. Since it began 43 years ago, Oktoberfest has donated well over two million dollars to worthwhile causes.

Glockenspiel

Seven years in the works, the Glockenspiel is the cornerstone of Mt. Angel's downtown core. It has transformed this farm town into a Munich of the Mid-Willamette Valley. The **Edelweiss Building** and tower were built to resemble a large chalet with numerous Alpine features. The building's upper floors house 28-units of affordable senior housing, with **West Coast Bank**, the **Glockenspiel Restaurant** (uses fresh local food and offers employment to many local people) and a German gift shop at street level. The four-story-tall glockenspiel is the largest in the United States.

It was **Henri Dill**, a life-long resident of Mt. Angel, and owner of **Engelberg Antiks**, whose vision was to help revitalize the downtown. Her determination was instrumental in the project being completed. **Mike and Mary Grant**, from the **Grant Company**, who have built

wineries and churches throughout Oregon became involved. They introduced her to **Mark Wieprecht**, the architect on the project. After a couple grants requests were denied, Henri teamed up with the **Marion County Housing Authority** to turn the situation around. The \$3.5 million project went forward with the top three floors owned by the housing authority, and the bottom floor owned by Henri and her husband Ernie.



The Glockenspiel

The Glockenspiel belongs to the community and was the result of a huge volunteer effort. From **Gem Equipment**, who developed the clock mechanism, carvers working on the 5-foot figures, to builders, and musicians. The glockenspiel was a reinvestment in the community. Wherever Glockenspiels are located they become tourist destinations and this one is no exception, with crowds gathering at the appointed hour to watch the figures. What's unique about the Mt. Angel Glockenspiel is that it chronicles the history of the Willamette Valley and of Mt. Angel specifically.

Henri Dill stated, "When the idea of building a Glockenspiel for our Bavarian town was first conceived the true spirit of individuals not only from Mt. Angel the surrounding communities made it happen. What a pleasure it is to see visitors to our town watch the six minute performance of our "clock tower" or as someone called it "A giant music box."

Mt. Angel Abbey

Mt. Angel Abbey is located on Graves Butte, now known as Saint Benedict, Oregon. It was founded in 1882, by Benedictine monks from the twelfth-century Abbey of Engelberg in Switzerland. The monks quickly became involved in pastoral work and in education, and in 1889 opened the Mt. Angel Abbey Seminary. The original wooden buildings at the foot of the butte were destroyed in a fire in the 1890's, and another disastrous fire in 1926 consumed the second monastery. The current monastery building was completed in 1928, and subsequent structures followed, including a renowned library built by Finnish architect Alvar Aalto in 1970, and a new bell tower and other additions in 2007.

The library, the largest theological library in the northwest, is one of Mt. Angel Abbey's principal works of Christian service. It has been made possible by the gifts of many people; its mission is to serve all who wish to use its resources. The library, is awash in natural light, and seats 200 patrons in 30 closed and 40 open carrels. The new bell tower has the largest swinging bell in the Pacific Northwest. It replaced

four bells that have run since 1928. The tower's eight newly cast Verdin bells from Holland signal times for daily prayer.

Self-guided walking tours are available at the Abbey. The Church, museum, library and other structures are open to the public. There is also the sweeping view of the surrounding countryside, from Mt. Hood to as far away as Mt. Ranier visible in the distance.

St. Mary's Parish

In 1910, the cornerstone was laid for this magnificent structure. It replaced three other churches that the city had outgrown. The church was built in the Revival Gothic style with locally produced pressed cement bricks and local parishioners doing much of the construction. The 200 foot bell tower dominates the town and can be seen for miles throughout the surrounding countryside.

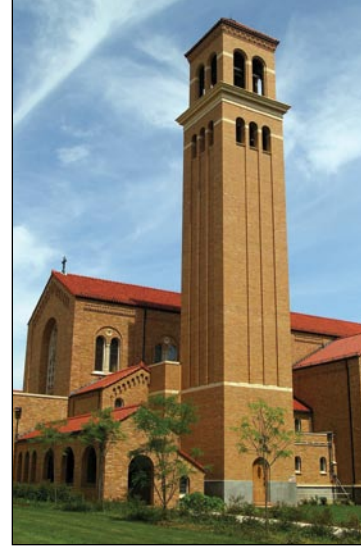
In 1912, the finished church, with 26 magnificent stained glass windows was blessed by **Archbishop Alexander Christie**. In 1976, it was made a **U.S. National Historic Place**. After the 1993 earthquake, restoration planning began and the restored church was solemnly dedicated on December 2, 1995. It was a festive celebration for the more than 850 parish families of St. Mary's.

Queen of Angels Monastery

Queen of Angels Monastery was founded in 1882, by **Mother Bernardine Wachter, OSB**, who led a group of Sisters from Switzerland to Oregon. In 1887 the community acquired land in Mt. Angel and with help of local folks, began building their permanent home. The Sisters' commitment to the poor became a formal program in 1988, when the community established **St. Joseph Shelter**, which serves the homeless. **Mission Benedict**, operated in collaboration with Mt. Angel Abbey and St. Mary Parish, also serves those in need in the local area with food boxes, clothing, and other emergency assistance. A 1993 earthquake centered just a few miles east of Mt. Angel caused extensive damage at the church, and a new Chapel and hospitality center were built and dedicated in 1998.

Don't miss this year's Oktoberfest and also be sure to enjoy a lovely drive through the country for lunch at the Glockenspiel Restaurant and visits to the Mt. Angel Abbey and local shops. 🍷

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