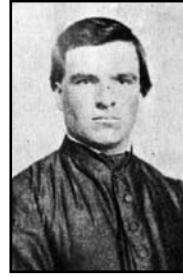


**January 25, 1897**

**Father Valentine Sommereisen**



Father Sommereisen was born May 28, 1829, at Rufach in Southern Alsace. He was recruited for the Diocese of St. Paul while studying in Paris. He completed his studies in Minnesota and was ordained March 8, 1851.

He was appointed first resident pastor at St. Philip's, Mankato, Minn. He was a missionary laboring "among the Indians and French Canadians in the Province of Manitoba, Canada, and the states of North Dakota and Montana." (*Hays City Republican*, Jan. 30, 1897)

After 20 years at Mankato he went to Yankton, S. Dak. During this pastorate, Father Sommereisen, who spoke Sioux, accompanied the Yellowstone Expedition in 1873. General George Custer's 7<sup>th</sup> Calvary was charged with providing security for the Northern Pacific Railroad survey team throughout the three month expedition.

In the fall of 1876, Father Sommereisen left Yankton for Ellis County, Kansas. He took up residence in Hays and from there ministered to a flock scattered 170 miles along the Union Pacific Railroad. He organized parishes at Hays, Victoria, Munjor, Catharine, Pfeifer, Schoenchen, Lieben-thal, Rush Center, and started some church building. When the Capuchins came in 1878, he was assigned to St. Francis Borgia, Cottonwood Falls.

Father Sommereisen retired to a farm northwest of Hays in 1879. The priest-farmer proved a great attraction for the settlers. Many visitors came to view his vineyards, orchards and gardens. He sold his produce on the spot.

He died Jan. 25, 1897, at the age of 67. Father John Chrysostomus Jacobs celebrated the funeral Mass at St. Joseph Church. Burial was in the parish cemetery at Hays.