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Photos by Chris Moorhead/Staff Photographer

Sisters sing during morning prayers at the Bristow Monastery, mother house for Benedictine nuns in Virginia. It was founded in May 1894.

Century of prayer, teaching, service

Benedictine sisters to mark anniversary at Bristow

By CHRIS LASONDE
Staff Writer

mid a tangle of blackberry brambles near a ...
proposal: she would turn over 1,000 acres to the Benedictine monks for a school for needy boys and 500 acres to the Benedictine sisters for a school for needy girls.



A small band of Benedictine sisters began erecting a crude mission almost 100 years ago.

Today the stately grounds of Bristolow Monastery and Linton Hall School bear testimony to success of their labors.

The Benedictines date their line of religious devotion and service back to the 6th century works of St. Benedict of Nursia, author of the rule that, still today, governs monastic life. The rule requires vows of obedience, stability and conversion of life by all who would follow in Benedict's footsteps.

The first Benedictines came to the United States in 1852, traveling from their home abbey of St. Walburg's in Bavaria, Germany. The three nuns faced established a mission near the town of Latrobe in western Pennsylvania.

In 1868, responding to a plea from a priest in Richmond, the sisters sent two of their number to Virginia. Over the next 25 years, under the guidance of their prioress, Mother Edith Vogel, the Benedictine nuns taught at St. Mary's Academy for Girls in Richmond.

The call for the sisters' help went out again in 1893, the result of another long history drawing to a close. Sister Baptista Linton, a member of the Georgetown Visitation order, offered her extensive family holdings to the Benedictines.

She descended from a line of Lintons, who fled first to Scotland to avoid persecution in England by the Roundheads of Oliver Cromwell, and then came to America in 1760, establishing a home in Prince William County.

Settling first in Dumfries, the Linton family eventually built Linton's Ford, a 1,740-acre plantation near the present-day Va. 619, 2 miles north of Bristolow and 5 miles southwest of Manassas.

After poor health took Sister Baptista Linton's father and then her stepfather, her uncle sent her to the Georgetown Visitation Boarding School, where she took her vows at the age of 22, over the protests of her remaining family.

In 1893, Linton contacted the Benedictines with a

After hearing the priest, Vogel and Dominican priest the Rev. Julius Pohle, visited the site.

"She came here with a dual purpose," said Sister Damien Tambola, archivist for Bristolow Monastery. "She thought the site might provide more fresh air, and she wanted to evaluate the possibilities of fulfilling the trust requirements laid out by Sister Baptista."

Vogel recognized immediately that the beautiful country setting might put an end to the illness and

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Mother house resident Sister Rosalia Chorna has been a Benedictine for 55 years.



A coil machine, which pleated headdresses for the sisters, was part of a recent historical display.

Exhibits lead to centennial

By CHRIS LASONDE
Staff Writer

For a religious order begun more than a 1,000 years ago, a mere century may not bring anyone to her knees. But for the Benedictine Sisters of Bristolow, it is a cause for celebration.

In May 1994 will mark 100 years of community service, teaching and worship on their 122-acre plot in western Prince William County.

Each month, leading up to their centennial, the sisters plan to display a historical exhibit centered on Benedictine religious life.

Many of the items in the exhibit were recently on display in Richmond as the nuns marked the 125th anniversary of their arrival in Virginia from their first mission in Pennsylvania.

While most of the items relate to the experiences of the order since it arrived in Bristolow, several trace the sisters' roots back through Richmond to Pennsylvania and across the seas to Bavaria.

The displays include a chronological display of religious clothing, including photos of several young women taking their first vows in traditional bridal gowns and veils.



Mother Vogel

