



After a long day, Orleanski soaks his feet and enjoys the view from his window.



Orleanski strolls past the once-grand Glen Springs Hotel at St. Anthony's.

## Friar's prayers may not preserve land

(Continued from page 1A)

Francis in the 13th century. The average age today of a friar in the United States is 52, but their numbers — after years of steady decline — now are increasing, the friars say.

Budnick, Orleanski and 72-year-old Rev. Martyn Bak O.F.M. lead a comfortable, quiet life together at St. Anthony's. They spend some moments of the day — at breakfast, for instance — together. But, following — at morning meal, they depart the kitchen to spend the bulk of the day alone.

"We're here to live by the Gospel," explains Budnick, whose silver-streaked hair and demeanor radiate calm and warmth.

Budnick came to teach at St. Anthony's in 1979, after finishing seminary school. He earned a doctoral degree in philosophy from Cornell University in 1979. His duties at the friary include overseeing the day-to-day operations, even more important to him in the past.

But his campaign to revive his Franciscan order has been located in Wisconsin, not to sell the entire wooded parcel, as he had hoped, but to revitalize his dream, which is to water on the property, and sell the sparkling mineral water to a plush spa during the flapper era and Depression would go to live here. The profits from the bottling of the find worldwide programs for the poor, as Franciscans' mission, the friars say, actively in.

While Budnick has been active in molding St. Anthony's fate, his two colleagues maintain a low profile in the affair, content instead with the prayer-oriented life of a friar.

Orleanski spends his days in his simply furnished room equipped with a chair, dresser, bed, trunk and a primitive desk. There, he writes letters to numerous correspondents.

Bak, a frail-looking friar who returned to St. Anthony's in 1981 after living there previously from 1962 to 1970, oversees most of the mechanical repairs on the property, including running the large boilers that heat the old buildings.

His chores at St. Anthony's also include picking up the mail and doing the grocery shopping. And he also spends part of his day in personal study or walking the surrounding hillsides.

Recently, two of the friars moved out of a building adjacent to the hotel that they had lived in for many years, into a smaller structure on the property. And the third friar is getting ready for the taxing relocation.

Yet the short moves — a brief moment in the lives of men devoted to God, prayer and study — are a foreboding reminder of what easily could happen in the near future.

Budnick's dream is to have a private developer, Southern Tier Services, ship the water out in large tank trucks and have local wineries bottle it.

"This being wine country, I thought it would be the perfect match," says Southern Tier Services President James Curatolo. "I think there's a lot of potential for the whole place."

But the friars in Wisconsin have been reluctant to buy into Budnick's visions.

"In the back of their mind, they are waiting for Mr. Big Bucks to buy the place in one big chunk," Curatolo suggests. "It seems to me they can hold on to part of it, develop part of it, and sell the rest."

And although they may take exception to Curatolo's wording, the concept of selling St. Anthony's as one large parcel is one that the Franciscan order would accept.

"The Franciscans are concerned about the environment there. They could have fragmented it off in little bits a long time ago," Pins says.

Budnick believes the plan he has to fragment the property, profiting from its separate virtues rather than from one sale, increases its worth.

"Estimates I have say the place is worth close to \$10 million," he says. "The person who wants to buy really should figure a good asking price. It shouldn't just be unloaded for a million. The gravel alone is worth much more."

The Rev. Francis Affelt O.F.M., the order's Wisconsin-based business manager, says that if it is worth more than a \$1 million he'd welcome any developer who can pay that.

Development of the site would cost too much to make it worthwhile, unless the site is sold at a lower price, he says.

Tax records in Schuyler County show the parcel currently is assessed at \$117,150. Using the state-set 29 percent valuation of a property to compute taxes, the actual value could be estimated at roughly three times that — or about \$359,900.

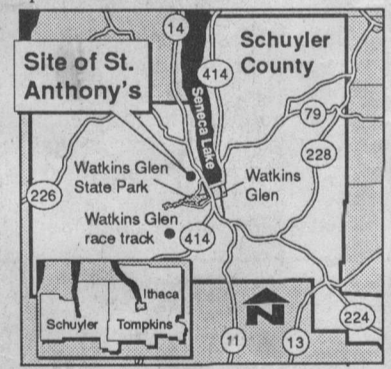
"Oh sure, if you look at it as some farm lands and a few old buildings, a million dollars is a good deal. But when you look at the resources, look at the data, the thing changes a little," Budnick says.

Clearly, the friar is tied to the land.

"My whole priestly life has been here," he says.

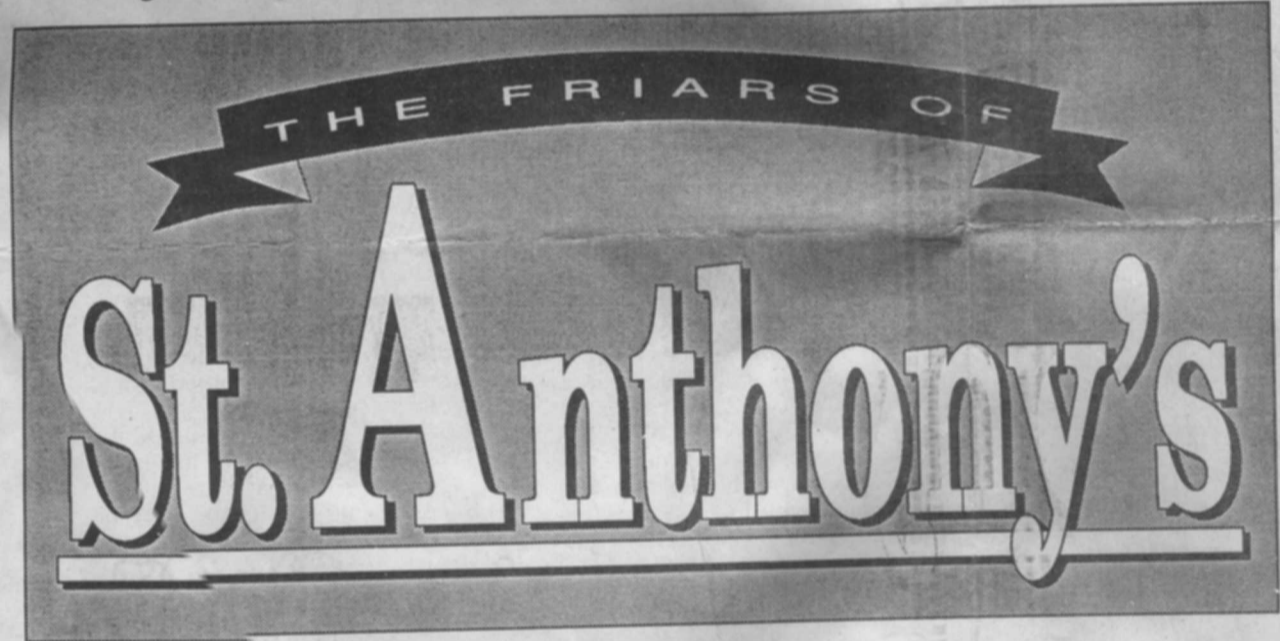
Budnick's voice gets quiet when he speaks of what would happen to himself and the two other Order of Friars Minor brothers he leads in daily worship, 89-year-old Rev. Casimir Orleanski O.F.M. and 72-year-old Rev. Martyn Bak O.F.M.

"They don't want to go to the mother house. They say the next site is the grave," Budnick says.



CHRIS FISHER/JOURNAL STAFF

While sitting in the chapel after evening Rosary, the Revs. Austin Budnick, 65, and Marty Bak O.F.M., 89, read quotations from the Bible to each other.



## Where 100 Franciscan friars once were peacefully ensconced, only three remain

By ANNIE-LAURIE BLAIR and DAVID GREWE  
Journal Staff

Before the sun streaks the sky over Seneca Lake each weekday, the murmuring voices of three aging Franciscan friars echo prayers through the hallways of St. Anthony's of Padua Friary.

Offering their blessings to the Lord, the three prepare Communion and one, 65-year-old Austin Budnick O.F.M., administers the Holy Eucharist to the others.

The three call this the most important part of their day. After the sacrament has ended, the Rev. Casimir Orleanski O.F.M., a stocky, vibrant 89-year-old in a long, hooded brown robe, returns to his bedroom in a long, hooded brown robe, returns to his bedroom in one of several crumbling buildings — including the once-glamorous Glen Springs Hotel — on the hilltop overlooking the lake and Watkins Glen.

He changes into work clothes and prepares a simple breakfast for himself and, sometimes, for the others.

Orleanski, who was born in Poland and still has a thick Polish accent, spent 10 years working in China before coming to St. Anthony's in 1949. That was the year the Franciscans purchased the place, deciding it was ideal for the seminary and preparatory school they wanted to operate somewhere in the Central New York region.

During the 1950s and '60s, Orleanski was one of more than 100 friars who lived at St. Anthony's and taught the Catholic school children who boarded there. Such religious boarding schools lost popularity as the Woodstock generation grew up in its tie-dyed clothing, and the school was closed in 1970 for lack of pupils and funding.

Today, Orleanski's work includes doing the tailoring for the remaining Order of Friars Minor brothers at St. Anthony's. He prepares their meals and, occasionally, helps mow the grass or do other household chores.

The trio of Franciscan friars has spent a combined total of 90 years living at their hilltop haven and assisting at the St. Francis of the Lake parish in Watkins Glen.

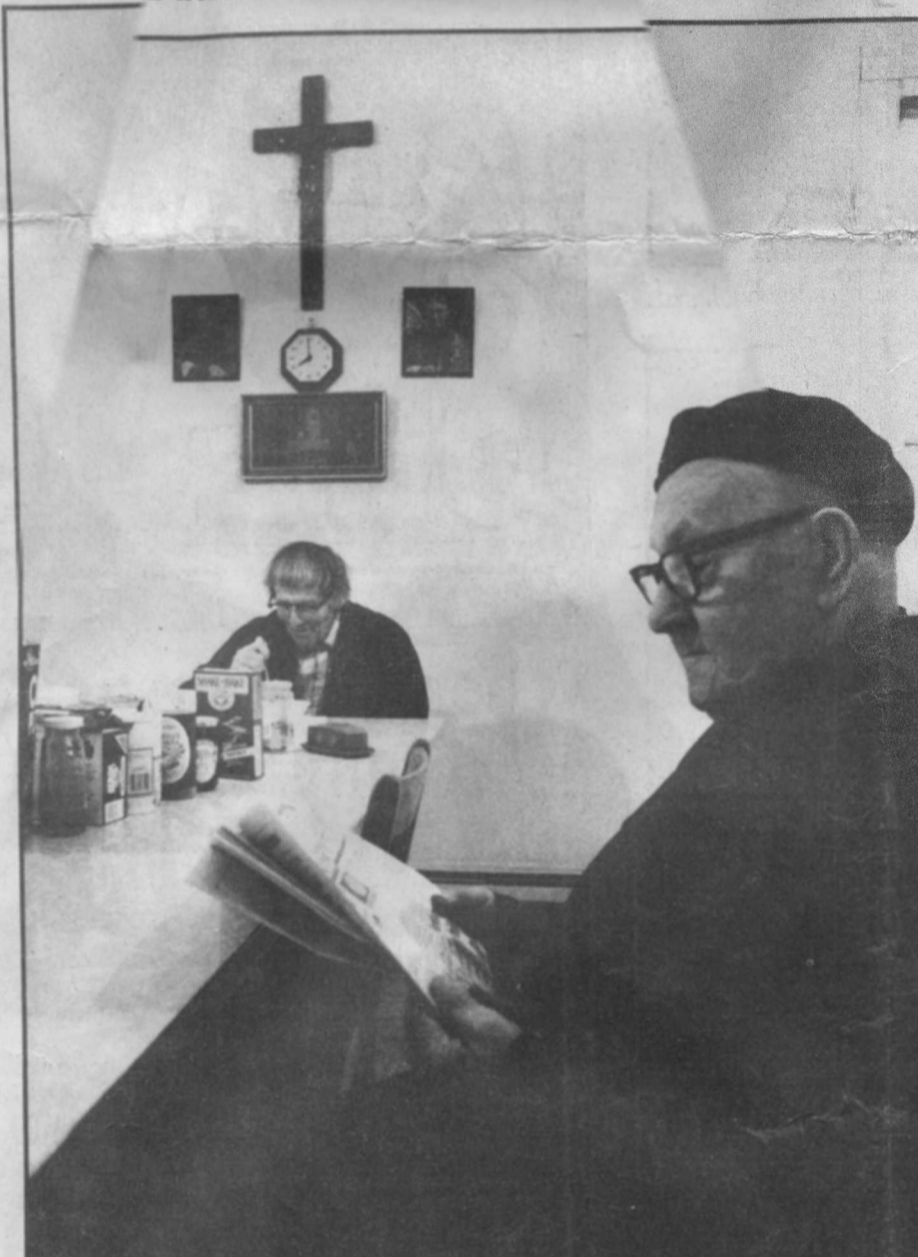
Their future on the hilltop, however, has been tenuous for nearly 20 years — the length of time their regional Franciscan directors have been searching for a buyer for the 250-acre property.

On Tuesday, a Watkins Glen real estate agent said another in a string of recent offers for the land has been submitted. Other development or sale proposals to date have either fallen through or been rejected by the superiors.

Obviously, they are still looking.

The three St. Anthony's friars are among 25,000 Franciscan brothers worldwide whose main objective is to live and preach the glory of Jesus Christ and teach the Gospel, Budnick emphasizes.

The Franciscan Brotherhood was founded by St.



During the morning meal in the friars' kitchen at St. Anthony's, Orleanski is engrossed in the morning newspaper while Bak eats.



Orleanski, left, Budnick and Bak stand in front of the Glen Springs Hotel, one of several crumbling buildings on the St. Anthony's Padua Friary property.

PHOTOS BY DAVID GREWE • JOURNAL STAFF



Budnick vacuums a rug in the front hallway of the friary. Each of the friars is responsible for different daily chores that help keep their home running smoothly.

## Hotel evokes shards of glittering memories

By BARBARA BRUHIN KENNEY  
Journal Staff

Back when people used fountain pens to sign hotel registers, the signatures at the Glen Springs Hotel were artful, bold expressions of wealth and good taste.

"Wed., August, 13, 1929. 2 For Dinner. Franklin D. Roosevelt."

The guest registers for the once grand hilltop resort in Watkins Glen — which turned 100 years old this year — are a little yellowed, but still hint of the splendor that was once commonplace here.

Ithaca banker Charles Treman and his wife, Mary, signed in Thursday afternoons in the 1930s. Chauffeurs signed on the second line down and slept out in a guest house at the back.

"When they were making movies in Ithaca, many of stars and major staff people went over there and stayed," Schuyler County historian Barbara Bell says.

The signatures — nicely preserved in Cornell University archives — read as a who's who of the elite from Central New York and beyond.

But you can't put buildings in a box and seal them up on library shelves.

High above Seneca Lake, on the property now known as St. Anthony's of Padua Friary, the Glen Springs Hotel is a crumbling cluster of broken windows, charred timbers and leaky roofs.

But there are those who remember the nimbus of the resort.

"You have no idea how nice it was," says 89-year-old Ethel Bassett of Ithaca, who filled in for the pianist at the resort in the early 1920s during her Christmas break from Ithaca College.

Bassett, who later became the full-time pianist, lived at the resort while she was employed there. She remembers meeting the likes of John D. Rockefeller and his entourage.

"They used to travel with their maids and valets," she recalls.

Bassett joined a violinist three times a day to play in the resort's music room. The music filtered out into a spacious Corinthian lounge, where guests gathered after meals.

"When Bassett wasn't entertaining guests, she was enjoying the splendor of life in a resort hotel where she eventually met her husband, Henry Bassett, who also was a musician.

"I had all the freedom of the hotel, and I could do anything I wanted to," she remembers.

Bassett's room was on the top floor of the hotel annex, which was connected to the main building by a glass-enclosed walkway. She remembers dancing to Victrola music in the parlor while hotel guests gathered to watch. She learned to play golf in the summer, skied in the winter and took rides in the still-novel automobile with hotel guests.

But at age 19, Bassett didn't need to take advantage of the famous "water cure," which brought time to the resort.

She remembers three resident doctors who lived in houses near the hotel and two nurses who lived on the premises.

"People were there to reduce. They were there for nerves. They were there for a nice place to stay," she says.

"There was a time in the last century," says Bell, "when people thought that mineral water was a cure for anything in the world."

Brochures at the Schuyler County Historical Museum in Montour Falls advertise the resort's hydro-therapeutic baths as being similar to European spas. Resort owner William Leffingwell called the springs "An American Nauheim" after a similar treatment developed in Bad Nauheim, Germany.

But long before the splendor noted a century ago, the mineral springs that still gush from the property's underground gorge drew the Seneca Indians to the area to drink the water, say one brochure.

The plan to open a health spa on the property was the brainchild of George Freer, who inherited the property in 1853 from his wife, Cynthia Watkins. Watkins formerly was the wife of village founder Dr. Samuel Watkins.

In 1870, Freer built the original hotel. See MEMORIES, A