



**Br John Haupt, S.J.**  
**(1858-1921. In Zambia 1910-1912)**  
**6 July 1921**

‘Some people are made to talk, others to write; neither is in my line. My business has always been to work’. So Br John Haupt was heard to say one day. This was no rebuff or criticism of others but rather a direct way of expressing his own simple character.

John Haupt was an American, born in 1858 in De Pere, Wisconsin, USA. When he was four years of age, his family moved to Minnesota where they settled permanently. As John grew up, he trained as a carpenter/builder and worked with the Jesuits who were building Gonzaga College in Spokane. Later at St Francis Regis Mission, north of Spokane, he put up some buildings. It seems that he applied to join the Jesuits as a brother and the Mission diary in 1888 noted: ‘This evening Brs O’Brien and Haupt began their retreat under Fr Mackin’. By 1889, although still working for the Mission, the record calls him John Haupt without the title of “brother”. From 1891 to 1894 he was still working for the Jesuits in Montana.

In 1901 at the age of 51, he turns up at Port Elisabeth in South Africa helping with the repairs of St Augustine Church. In 1902, he moved north and gave himself to the Zambesi Mission and from that year onward, he was identified with the building of nearly every church, convent, presbytery and also some schools. It is impossible to exaggerate what the Catholic Church and Mission owe to him in Rhodesia. His full, massive figure was familiar in every part of Rhodesia and wherever he had been, he left his mark behind him – Bulawayo, Chishawasha, Gwelo, Salisbury, Gokomere, Kutama, Dunbrody, Grahamstown and Kielands in Cape Colony, all these places have buildings put up by Br John and his Croatian masons.

He came north to Chikuni in 1906 to build a temporary school/chapel and a house for the missionaries. When he returned to Rhodesia, ‘a religious in all but name’ he asked again to be admitted to the Society as a brother. He was accepted in 1909 as a novice at Empandeni at the age of 51 and actually took his first vows at Chikuni, as much of his ‘novitiate’ was spent building there.

In 1911 he returned to build the church to replace the chapel. One story from the time of the building of that church gives an indication of the size and strength of the man. A young Tonga man, who was helping in the building of the church, lost his footing and began to fall from the scaffolding. Br John grabbed hold of him as he was falling and pulled him back onto the platform. Another Tonga man later said about the accident, ‘Ah, that one was a strong Brother; he could eat a whole chicken by himself!’ When Fr Moreau saw what Br Haupt had done he told the boys to kill two chickens for him instead of one! Later in 1915/1916, he returned to Chikuni to build a convent for the Notre Dame Sisters.

In 1906 he left for a break, but in reality to visit the Holy Land, a thing he had always wanted to do. He returned to the United States via Constantinople, the Balkans and England. By his work, he had helped his younger brother to pursue his studies for the priesthood and had the joy of seeing him ordained.

Here and there his Jesuit religious spirit appeared as well as the supernatural principles which supplied his motive power and without which he would have been nothing more than a skilled workman of the first rank. He seldom spoke of his own

labors and when induced to do so, unaffected modesty and good humor seasoned his speech. Finally blood poisoning and diabetes laid him low when he was working at Umvuma building a church. His condition became hopeless and at 4 o'clock on Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> July 1921 he died at the age of 63, 'on the job'.

He was a combination of strength and gentleness, of enterprising energy and self-effacement, of power to command and of humble obedience.