

Seneca Falls Surgeon, Hero of Antietam Battle

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discharged and sent home because of disability. Rochester had given him, as the first wounded soldier to return to the city, a hero's welcome.

Charles's wound mended rapidly, and in the fall of 1861 he reenlisted, joining one of the companies of the projected "Irish Brigade," of which he was made a second lieutenant. A young man of real worth, he won the respect and admiration of his associates, and in particular of his Colonel, Howard Carroll, the Albany soldier who had been commissioned to raise the "Irish Brigade" in Rochester and had been mustered in as lieutenant-colonel of the 105th.

At Antietam, the 105th, under General Hooker, advanced through the famous cornfield. The troops were told to lie low among the corn. A withering fire spewed out from the Confederate lines. When the Federal soldiers rose, the corn had been literally mowed down about them. Colonel Carroll was grievously wounded, although he was to survive the battle for twelve days. Charles Buckley was struck in the leg by a cannon ball, and carried off the field. The leg was amputated, but he had meanwhile lost much blood. Carroll learned of the lieutenant's plight only twenty minutes after it happened. Although suffering himself, he sent Buckley a word of affectionate encouragement. The twenty-four-year-old lieutenant survived only an hour. He died cheering his comrades on.

When Lieutenant John Buckley of the 140th, brother of the young hero, came over to make funeral arrangements, he had a chance to talk to Colonel Carroll about him. "Best man I ever saw," said Carroll sadly. "In or out of battle, Charles was always first."

John wrote his father about the details. "He had time to think of his soul, and I am sure he died happy." John brought the remains back to Rochester on September 29th. Although the Buckleys, who lived on Hand Street, were parishioners of St. Bridget's Church, Lieutenant Charles, on the eve of the battle, had told his Rochester friends that if anything should happen, he wanted to be buried in the cemetery of Our Mother of Sorrows on Mount Read.

You may still see his grave in the little Paddy Hill burying ground. The inscription under his name says: "Fell in the Battle of Antietam."

But we have wandered away from our subject. Who was the "surgeon at Antietam" to whom our headline refers?

The surgeon was not a Rochesterian but a resident of Seneca Falls when the war broke out. After the war, however, he did come to Rochester, where he achieved considerable prominence. His name was Dr. Richard Curran.

Richard Curran was born at Innis, County Clare, Ireland, on January 13, 1838. When he was twelve, in 1850, he came to this country, his family settling in Seneca Falls. Here he finished, at the public school, the elementary education which his transatlantic trip had interrupted. After attending Seneca Falls Academy, he decided on a medical career. First he "read medicine" with Dr. Smalley and Dr. Davis, local physicians. Then he went to Harvard University to finish his course, graduating in 1859. He followed this with postgraduate work at Harvard under that eminent poet-physician, Oliver Wendell Holmes.

When the Civil War first broke out in early 1861, Dr. Curran helped raise two local companies of volunteers in



Dr. Richard Curran, Seneca Falls physician and later mayor of Rochester, was assistant surgeon of the 33rd N.Y. State Volunteer Infantry. Picture shows him in his Civil War uniform. Photo courtesy of his granddaughter Miss Frances Hone.

Seneca Falls and the environs. These two companies, largely Irish in composition, became a part of the 33rd N.Y. State Volunteer Infantry. He was mustered in on May 22, 1861, and rose, during his two-year term of enlistment, first to the rank of hospital steward, and then to assistant surgeon.

After his term, he reenlisted as assistant surgeon, in July 1863, in the 6th New York Cavalry. In September 1864 he reenlisted a third time, now as full-fledged surgeon, in the 9th N.Y. Cavalry. When he was mustered out after the close of the war, he was given the brevet rank of major.

Dr. Curran was apparently an able surgeon. Before Antietam he had already been mentioned in dispatches for his skill at organizing field hospitals. In actual surgery he apparently had the knack of attempting the impossible and achieving it.

The Battle of Antietam tested not only the skill but the courage of the young physician from Seneca Falls.

Dr. Curran's regiment was with the third brigade (commanded by Col. W. H. Irwin) of General William F. Smith's second division, in General William B. Franklin's sixth corps. It was at mid-morning that the third brigade saw its heaviest action.

It so happened that Curran, though assistant surgeon in rank, was the only surgeon present in his regiment that day. With no medical superior to give him orders, he had to plan his own strategy. Normally the medics would stay to the rear, set up field hospitals, and wait in relative safety for the patients to be brought to them. Although he was warned more than once that he was risking his life to do so, Dr. Curran insisted on going right into the field of battle with his men.

It proved to be a hazardous but wise choice. The third brigade was ordered to move across a hollow towards the West Woods and capture the Dunker church at the edge of the forest. This corner had been bitterly contested. To reach it the

brigade had to by-pass its own artillery on the northeast and move forward in the face of the Confederate battery to the southwest. Canopied with live cannon shot, and sprayed with severe rifle fire from the woods itself, Irwin's men advanced through the shadow of death. And Curran moved in after them.

Many were wounded, but it was quite impossible, because of the torrent of lead, to evacuate them to the rear. Some of the stricken, however, had dragged themselves to some stacks of straw near the edge of the meadow. In the almost non-existent shelter of this open-air "field hospital," the surgeon, disregarding the flying shot and shrapnel, administered first aid to the wounded. The battle gradually moved south after the third brigade had won its objective, and with the dusk the combat of Antietam passed into history. But Curran remained on the spot until late that night taking care of the casualties.

Richard Curran was mentioned in the official report. "Asst. Surg. Richard Curran, Thirty-Third New York Volunteers was in charge of our temporary hospital; which unavoidably was under fire; but he attended faithfully to his severe duties, and I beg to mention this officer with particular commendation. His example is but too rare, most unfortunately."

After the close of the Civil War, Dr. Curran came to Rochester, and formed a drug firm with another former soldier, Major George W. Goler. They opened the Curran and Goler drugstore on the corner of Main and Fitzhugh Streets. Curran soon became a well-known and admired Rochesterian. An active citizen in peace as in war, he was a leading member of the Republican party. In 1876 he was named to the Rochester school commission, in 1888 to the Rochester Park Commission, and in 1895 to the Rochester Executive Board. In 1891 he was elected to the New York State Assembly. In 1892 he was nominated to run for mayor of Rochester.

Actually, Dr. Curran did not know of his nomination to the mayoralty race until he read it in the paper. He did not campaign for the job in any formal sense. But he was so popular a figure that he won the election without much difficulty.

Six years after his election as mayor, Curran received a new honor which was none the less great for its long delay. On March 30, 1898, by a special act of Congress, he was awarded the Medal of Honor of the United States Army, for his bravery in action at Antietam, thirty-six years before. The citation which accompanied this Congressional Medal described how he "voluntarily exposed himself to great danger by going to the fighting line, there rescuing the wounded and helpless and conducting them to the field hospital in action at Antietam, Md., September 17, 1862." Apparently he was the only veteran living in Rochester to receive such an honor.

Dr. Curran died on June 1, 1915. When he was laid to rest in Holy Sepulchre Cemetery, the bearers were eight fellow members of the E. G. Marshall Post of the G. A. R.

A historian has recently raised the question, "Who won the Civil War?" It is a thought-provoking query. But it might also be asked of any war.

Whatever may be said for or against the positive values of war itself, the charity and self-sacrifice it often evokes are on the positive side.

It was not only the Charles Buckleys but the Richard Currans who, in our American Civil War, exemplified these virtues.



VP Johnson Visits Pope

Vatican City — (RNS) — Pope John XXIII and Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson of the U.S. are shown together as they posed for photographers following Mr. Johnson's visit to Vatican City. Pope John and the Vice President conferred for 41 minutes in a private audience. In what was described as an "inspiring" interview, the American official and the pontiff discussed "the need for zealous efforts to rid the world of the scourge of hunger, illness and illiteracy and for research into the peaceful uses of outer space."

Teenagers Retreat House Notes 10th Anniversary

Minneapolis — (RNS) — Ten years ago, Father Joseph Baglio saw a need for a deeper spiritual training of Catholic youth.

The retreat house is located on the upper floors of a former mansion purchased in 1941 for use as the Catholic Youth Center. But when he suggested a weekend retreat for teenagers, friends told him "they'll never come." But experience has indicated they were wrong and Father Baglio was right.

When the books were closed on the first decade of operation, it was found that 10,241 youth had given up weekends of usual work and entertainment to spend two days at Minneapolis' Fiat House, first Catholic young people's retreat house in the United States.

The 10th anniversary was observed with a Mass celebrated by Auxiliary Bishop Leonard P. Crowley, followed by a dinner honoring persons

active in development of Fiat House. The retreat house is directed by Mrs. Laura Reddin, house mother, who has had responsibility for supervising the household and keeping 40 guests well fed each weekend.

New Patriarch

Belmont — (RNS) — Archbishop Louis Batanian, auxiliary of the Patriarch of Cilicia of the Armenians, has been elected here as the new spiritual leader of the world's Armenian Catholics.

Sterilization Program Said 'Absolutely Immoral'

Washington — (RNS) — A program in nearby Fauquier County, Virginia, for the voluntary sterilization of indigent mothers who have had three or more children was denounced here by Archbishop Patrick A. O'Boyle of Washington.

The archbishop, chairman of the Administrative Board of the National Catholic Welfare Conference, said in a sermon preached at St. Mathew's Cathedral that direct eugenic or contraceptive sterilization, for whatever reason undertaken, is never permissible and is under all circumstances "absolutely immoral."

Citing statements by George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and other great Virginians on the fundamental rights of man, the prelate said that Virginia, by permitting such a practice, is making "second class citizens" out of its underprivileged poor.

Archbishop O'Boyle spoke out after reading reports of a tour of the Fauquier County Hospital, Warrenton, Va., by prominent sociologists attending meetings here of the American Sociological Association. They inspected the eugenics program instituted by the public hospital which is situated in a predominantly rural area 50 miles south of Washington.

Under the program, approximately 50 mothers — two-thirds of them Negro — have undergone voluntary sterilization in the last two years. All had more than three children and all were classified as "medically indigent" — that is unable to pay their bills for maternity care.

The hospital offered free sterilization to any of these mothers who wanted to take advantage of it.

Archbishop O'Boyle praised Bishop John J. Russell of Richmond and the clergy and laity of Virginia for speaking out against legislation in the last session of the Virginia State Legislature which would have made sterilization compulsory for certain groups of persons.

He said, however, that because of the attention being given the new voluntary program "I deem it appropriate, as Archbishop of Washington, to speak out as forcefully as possible against the terrible evil of sterilization, not only in Virginia, but wherever else it is practiced."

He noted that doctors at the Fauquier Hospital had told the visiting sociologists that there were few Roman Catholics in

the county and that the program had encountered, therefore, relatively little opposition.

"They were absolutely correct in saying that Catholics are opposed — unalterably opposed — to the sterilization of the medically indigent, whether voluntary or compulsory," said Archbishop O'Boyle.

"I would like to think, however, that we cannot eliminate abuses in the field of public assistance without resorting to the immoral means of sterilization, the complete and logical conclusion that one can logically come to is that our unprecedented prosperity has sapped our moral fiber, made us soft and flabby, and God forbid, incapable of defending the rights of the human person who ought to be able to agree."

"Sterilization of innocent individuals, whether voluntary or compulsory, is fundamentally wrong not simply because the Catholic Church says it is wrong but because it directly violates a natural right which is so profoundly sacred it may stigmatize as 'undesirable.'"

French Jesuit's Theory Studied

Maryknoll — (RNS) — A critique on the controversial evolutionary theories of Father Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, French Jesuit and paleontologist who died

in New York in 1955, highlighted the final session here of the three-day 25th annual meeting of the Catholic Biblical Association of America.

The critique, entitled "Teilhard and Genesis," was presented by Father Robert North, S.J., former director of the Pontifical Biblical Institute, in Jerusalem and now a Scriptures professor at St. Mary's (Kan.) College.

It was recalled that recently the Supreme Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office issued a monition, or warning, urging all bishops, religious superiors and heads of seminaries and universities to protect the minds of the faithful, particularly the young, against the writings of Father Teilhard de Chardin. Observers were quoted as attributing the Holy Office's action to over-enthusiasm and uncritical endorsements of the Jesuit's theories.

However, Father North warned the more than 150 Catholic Biblical scholars not to condemn certain of Father Teilhard's theories.

He cited the famous example of Galileo's condemnation by theologians an unfortunate incident which should be avoided today.

Another leading speaker at the final sessions was Father Barnabas M. Ahern, C.P., of Louisville, Ky., who discussed Christ's intention to found a Church. He cited Scriptural texts and themes which, he said, showed that Jesus made provision for the emergence of the Church after His death and resurrection.

Father Ahern said the human intentions of Christ were focused on the fulfillment of His redemptive act in the passion, death and resurrection. He said the modern Scriptural understanding of the early Church contains powerful arguments for demonstrating the claims of the modern Catholic Church to unbelievers.



Widow Receives Award

Pittsburgh — (RNS) — Bishop John J. Wright of Pittsburgh presents the diocese's annual Labor Day Award to Mrs. Elizabeth Lavery Murray, wife of the late Philip Murray, former president of the CIO and the United Steelworkers of America. Mrs. Murray is assisted by Mrs. Sophie DeMino, at left, and Mrs. Nicholas Mammula. The presentation was designed as a salute to Mr. Murray, who died 10 years ago, and to the wives of all workers.

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