

Pilgrimage Churches — St. Patrick's, Owego

By Father Robert F. McNamara

It was the construction of the "New York and Erie Railroad" that brought the first Irish settlers to Owego. Begun around 1836 at Piermont, in Rockland County, construction of the Erie moved gradually westward, reaching Owego June 1, 1859, and the western terminus, Dunkirk, on May 14, 1861. But there were already Catholics in Owego by 1839, and at least from 1842 on, they were visited occasionally by Father John Vincent O'Reilly, pastor of Friendsville, in Susquehanna, Pa. — some 15 miles away.

David Connelly, an Owego tailor, built a small addition to his house on Paige Street, which he made available to visiting priests as a chapel. Between 1842 and 1843, Father Andrew Doyle of St. John's (now St. Patrick's) in Binghamton, served this Owego mission station.

Owego was given a pastor of its own in 1844: Father John Sheridan. When Bishop Timon was made bishop of Buffalo in 1847, he continued Father Sheridan (hitherto a priest of the Diocese of New York) at his Owego post.

Sheridan bought the site of the present St. Patrick's Church in 1848, and set up a church. It was a frame church of Neo-Classical style, but with Neo-Gothic windows; it measured 60 by 30 feet, and cost \$1,300 to construct. Sheridan's successor, Father Francis Clark, remodeled and enlarged it in 1863.

The present St. Patrick's dates from the late 1880's. A neo-Gothic structure in red brick, it cost \$30,000. Bishop Stephen V. Ryan, CM, of Buffalo, dedicated it on Dec. 7, 1890. Church measurements were 129 by 58 feet, and the steeple was 131 feet high. Apparently there were no substantial changes later effected in this structure until 1957, when Father William J. O'Brien remodeled and redecorated the interior.

After the Vatican Council, the sanctuary was adapted temporarily to the revised liturgy. Plans are being laid at present for a more permanent accommodation of the altar area.

Pilgrimage Slated

Owego — St. Patrick's of Owego, which has been designated by Bishop Hogan as one of the Holy Year Pilgrimage churches of the diocese, has extended to all the congregations of the Tompkins-Tioga Region an invitation to come together in a spirit of love at its Summer Pilgrimage Celebration at 5 p.m. Sunday, June 30.

The suggestion has been made that pilgrims meet at their own churches for a Holy Year prayer service before starting on their pilgrimage to St. Patrick's. Each congregation has been assigned a parking area within walking distance of St. Patrick's, where they will be greeted by members of the Parish Council, and escorted to the church. As they

progress, they will engage in prayer and each group will carry a banner proclaiming their spiritual mission. At the church they will be greeted by the co-pastors, Father Thomas H. Watts and Albert L. Cason, and by Bill Fahl and Ed Colotka, president and vice president of the Parish Council.

The priests accompanying the pilgrim groups will join in celebration of the Holy Year Mass. A special liturgy has been planned, developing the twin themes of reconciliation and renewal. Visitors will assist in the readings and intercessions. The entire congregation will be asked to take part in the offertory procession, presenting small gifts of food or money to show their unity with God's poor and needy. Young people from the various churches will present the gifts of bread and wine.

The pilgrims are all asked to be in their seats by 4:45 to take part in rehearsing the hymns to be sung during the celebration, in order to intensify the spiritual harmony of the celebration.



Pilgrims to St. Patrick's should recall that they are visiting the mother church of their county, and, in a sense, of Tompkins County as well. For when Father Sheridan became pastor, his "Owego Mission" included Waverly (Tioga County) and Ithaca, Trumansburg and McLean, in Tompkins.

After 1848, St. Patrick's continued to supervise St. James Church in Waverly, until 1881. Later foundations out of Owego were the congregations of St. John the Evangelist at Newark Valley (1881), St. Francis at Catonk (1931), and St. Margaret Mary at Apalachin (1955).

Over a decade ago, St. Patrick's also set up the present mission at Nichols, some ten miles to the southeast. Here weekly Mass was at first celebrated in the abandoned Erie Railroad station. Around 1967, an agreement was worked out with the local Methodist church to share its facilities for services. A nice gesture of reconciliation!

Benefit Features Films of Ireland

Two 40-minute films made in troubled Northern Ireland will be shown Sunday afternoon, June 30, in Xerox Auditorium in downtown Rochester as a fund-raiser for the Rovers Junior Soccer team.

The 3 p.m. program includes a brief travelogue prepared in the Irish Republic and a performance by The Immigrants folk singers. The feature films are Suffer the Little Children and A Place Called Ardoyne. Brian Clancey will be host.

The soccer team consists of youngsters of Irish background. Tickets, \$1 for adults and 50 cents for children, may be purchased at the door or by calling 621-1307, 352-6819 or 334-4481.

SUMMER AIDES

The Red Cross needs volunteers 14 years of age and older to serve as aides during the summer in the blood program and food service departments at headquarters, 50 Prince. Registrations are being taken now at 275-9800. Training dates will be Monday, June 24 and Wednesday, June 25, 9:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m.

Deaths

G. F. McGrath

George F. McGrath, a member of St. Andrew's parish since its beginning, died at St. Ann's Home June 9, 1974, at the age of 87. The funeral took place June 12.

Mr. McGrath, an insurance agent for many years with the Dakin Agency, lived at 34 Grafton. He was an amateur actor, appearing in parish theatrical performances from 1925-1940. He was a member of the Holy Name Society and a charter member of the St. George Benevolent Society of St. Andrew's.

Surviving are his widow, Mabel, and daughter, Leone Branch, three grandchildren and five grandchildren.

GOLDEN WEDDING

Mr. and Mrs. Edward Wurtz of Glenwood Avenue celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary June 18 at an evening Mass in Holy Rosary Church and a reception given by their children at the Red Men's Club.

Mr. Wurtz is a retired fireman. Mrs. Wurtz is a member of the Rosary Guild and the Catholic Mission Guild, and both are active in Holy Rosary's Golden Circle. They have three daughters and a son and 20 grandchildren, all living in this area.

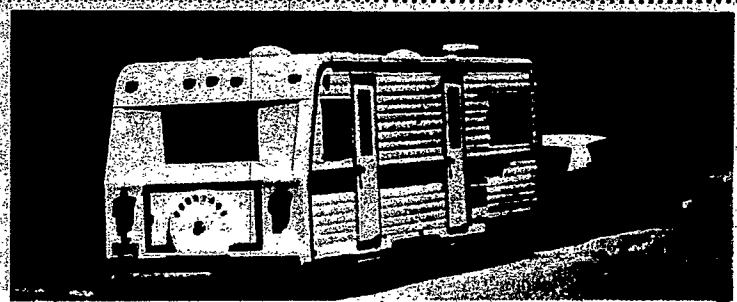
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