

The Patrician Baltimore Venture 1846 - 1853



by
Pat De Mendoza
2014

Pat De Mendoza was a student at the Brother's school, St. Monica's High School, in Santa Monica, California, from 1955 to 1959. He entered the Patrician novitiate immediately after graduating from school and remained a Patrician until 1968.

Pat has remained a close associate of the Brothers and he and his wife Jean are Patrician Affiliates.

We thank Pat for his continued interest in the history of the Brothers in the United States and we acknowledge the effort, time, and talents, he has devoted to its research. What he has provided with us here is a very significant insight into the Brothers' years in Baltimore.

THE INVITATION AND THE VOYAGE

The invitation for the first venture of the Brothers from Ireland was in 1846 from Father James Dolan, pastor of St. Patrick's parish in Baltimore, Maryland. Brother Augustine Murphy, Brother Patrick Doyle, and Brother John Delaney set out from Liverpool on the newly built sailing ship SS City of Manchester of Cork on August 12, 1846. They arrived 45 days later at the Port of New York on September 25, 1846 along with 140 other passengers. Three weeks later on October 10, 1846 they were greeted by Father Dolan in Baltimore, himself an Irish Immigrant.

FATHER JAMES DOLAN

Father Dolan was born in Cashel, Tipperary on July 1, 1814. He immigrated to America in February of 1834. In December of that year he entered the seminary of the Society of the Sulpicians in Baltimore which was the first seminary established in America and staffed by the Sulpician Fathers. He was ordained in December of 1840 and assigned to St. Patrick's Parish in Fell's Point, Baltimore, as assistant to the pastor Father Nicholas Kerney, a Sulpician priest. Father Kerney was in extremely poor health and died two months later in February of 1841. Young Father Dolan at the age of 26 succeeded him to the pastorate of the parish he would shepherd for the next 30 years until his death in 1870. From the start he was concerned for the care and education of the youth.

ST. PATRICK'S SCHOOL

The parish school was founded in 1815 and conduct by lay teachers until the Brothers came in 1846. The school was located behind the church and set up as separate schools for the boys and girls with about 130 pupils in each school. The boys had been using a few small rooms in the back of the sacristy with lay teachers for schooling. It was for that reason Father Dolan obtained the Brothers to teach the boys. The May 1847 issue of the United States Catholic Magazine Monthly Review reported "through the active and strenuous exertion of Rev. Mr. Dolan, which are still continued for the support of the school, a large and commodious building has been erected, adjoining the church, for the accommodation of the school, on either side of which wings are now being erected, to be used as dormitories for the accommodations of the Brotherhood engaged in teaching." This structure would



St. Patrick's Church—Lithograph, printed in colors by E. Tappan & Co.—461 & 474 sts.—c. 1834.
Copyrighted by the Society of the Sulpicians
The Sulpicians' Welfare Foundation

also serve as a Novitiate which the Brothers also opened in 1847. The girls were taught by two female lay teachers. In a short time the school enrollment numbered nearly 300 students. Father Dolan's concern for youth also extended to the ongoing problem of the care of orphan boys who wandered the city with no home or institution to care for them. He wanted to establish a manual labor school for the orphans however this venture was repeatedly interrupted by other concerns and projects that delayed the opening of a manual labor school.

THE IRISH POTATIO FAMIME

In April and May of 1847 unexpected events occurred that caused Father Dolan to establish a manual labor school for orphan boys. It was the time of the Potato Famine in Ireland. In 1846 alone 92,484 Irish immigrated to America. Traveling across the Atlantic Ocean during those years for many was quite perilous. Many ships were poorly built, crowded, disease-ridden, and short of food, supplies and medical services. As a result, many contracted diseases such as typhus, and many others died before reaching land. These treacherous sailing vessels became known as “coffin ships” where the mortality rates of 30% were common.

THE ORPHANS ARRIVE IN BALTIMORE

Baltimore, Maryland, was the third largest port of entry for immigrants between 1821 and 1914. In April and May of 1847 three such “coffin ships” docked in the Port of Baltimore, namely the Hampden with 260 passengers, the Richard Anderson with 197 passengers, and the Rio Grande with 216 passengers, filled with disease and misery. Upon hearing of the wretchedness of the newly arrived immigrants Father Dolan and members of the Hibernian Society hastened to the ships. Boarding them, they beheld the appalling spectacle of the sick and hungry, dead and dying, and the anguish of the widows and orphans. Father Dolan, the Hibernians and others erected a temporary hospital on the beach, attended by the Sisters of Charity. Some passengers were taken to infirmaries in Baltimore and others to the alms house. The situation was so bad that two Sisters of Charity, a doctor and the treasurer of the Hibernian Society who attended to the sick and dying with fevers, died from contact with them. Providentially Hugh Jenkins, President of the Hibernians Society, who was not a Catholic, wanted to help these orphans, and Father Dolan shared with him his long-cherished project. He advanced Father Dolan the funds needed to fulfill his plan to establish a manual labor school for orphan boys. It appears this traumatic incident was the origin of the call to the Brothers to take charge of the manual labor school Father Dolan would soon establish.

THE ORPHANS' HOME

On July 16, 1847, Father Dolan purchased a farm comprised of 71½ acres in the community of Govans five and a half miles north of the church. In August 1847 the Brothers took charge of the Orphans' Home which was set in a wooded area and consisted of a large farm house that accommodated the orphans in a pleasant part of the community of Govans. The number of orphans cared for by the Brothers varied from 12 to 14 in 1847, 15 in 1848 and 16 in 1849. In subsequent years the number of orphans increased to at least 30 in 1855. Besides instructing the boys in religious and secular knowledge, the Brothers taught gardening and the cultivation of crops, carpentry and a variety of mechanical, industrial and trade pursuits. One Brother and four American Novices comprised the faculty as well as a chaplain in residence. The Novices, Brother James McCarthy, Brother Joseph McLaughlin, Brother Anthony Doyle, and Brother Nicholas Byrne, were received by Father Dolan on behalf of the Brothers on January 16, 1848. It is assumed the Brothers remained teaching at the school at St. Patrick's.

The Brothers remained at the Orphans' Home until August of 1850. The Orphans' Home itself remained at the Govans farm until 1858, at which time Father Dolan moved the orphans to a house across the street from the church. Over the years Brother Linus Walker has collected and compiled a definitive early history of this American foundation. His research established that the Brothers remained in Baltimore after they left St. Patrick's and later taught in a literary school where they were soon approached by young men seeking to join the Congregation. Brother Patrick Doyle seemed to have remained in charge in Baltimore. In October of 1847 Bishop Richard Pius Miles, O.P., sought help for his Diocese in Nashville, Tennessee. Brother Augustine Murphy and one

novice went to Nashville. Unfortunately, by 1850 it was obvious that the venture was not going to succeed. Baltimore then remained the only venture in America, but only for a few more years despite extra Brothers being sent from Ireland.

Brother John Delaney returned to Ireland and died on December 30, 1875 at Mountrath. Brother Patrick Doyle, on the advice of Archbishop Samuel Eccleston of Boston, joined the De La Salle Christian Brothers and took the name of Brother Swidbert. He was eventually stationed in Singapore. He was in poor health when he arrived in 1852 and died there in November 1855. In October 1848 at the invitation of Bishop Richard Pius Miles, O.P., Brother Augustine Murphy and a Novice went to Nashville, Tennessee regarding the possibility of another new venture that unfortunately did not succeed. It is unclear what became of Brother Augustine Murphy. There is an entry in account books of St. Patrick's Monastery, Tullow, that reads "Oct. 19th 1850 Rec'd from Mr. Murphy, America...£25"

Various reasons have been advanced as to why these first ventures of the Brothers did not succeed. Brother Linus Walker has done extensive research in this matter. In 1965 he met with two older Brothers, Brother Leonard McCabe and Brother Leroy O'Sullivan to inquire as to any oral tradition of the matter. They provided two possible theories, namely that the Archbishop wanted to ordain the Brothers or that Father Dolan required of the Brothers manual work more than what was originally intended such as grooming horses. Brother Linus surmised back then that perhaps overstretched resources and the unavailability of help from Ireland would seem to have been the chief cause of dissolution of these ventures. Most recently he surmised perhaps the Brothers found their literary training did not prepare them for the industrial/agricultural demands of the educational system within the orphanage. The true answer I am sure is a mixture of both theories. It would be another 100 years before the Brothers would return to America in 1948 when Brother Raphael Phelan, Brother Hilary Deering, Brother Ignatius Mulkeen, Brother Livinus Bellew, and Brother Romanus Jacob came to St. Monica's Boy's High School in Santa Monica, California to start the new venture.

In 1851 the Augustinians took charge of the Orphans' Home and the orphans were moved to a large house behind St. Patrick's Church. In 1859 the Brothers of the Holy Cross took charge of the school and Orphans' Home where they remained until 1864 with the Sisters of the Holy Cross caring for the smaller boys and laymen apparently supervised the older boys. In 1872 the Xaverian Brothers took charge of teaching the boys at the school. Father Dolan died on January 12, 1870. The Orphans' Home remained until 1874 when in accordance with the wishes set down in his will the Young Catholic's Friends Society supervised the establishment of another orphanage, the Dolan Children's Aid Society which the Sister of the Holy Cross cared for. Today Loyola University's Fitness and Aquatic Center and Notre Dame of Maryland University occupy parts of the former site of the Orphans' Home in Govans.

ST. PATRICK'S CHURCH AND SCHOOL YESTERDAY AND TODAY

St. Patrick's parish is the oldest Catholic parish in the city of Baltimore. The parish was established in 1792 to serve the needs of a predominantly Irish congregation. The church was located at four different locations in 1792, 1793, 1797, and 1806. The school was established in 1815. An early lithograph and photograph of the school and residence shows how they looked when the Brothers were there. After the departure of the Brothers the church was enlarged in 1851 and the exterior improved in 1855. In 1897 the church was demolished and replaced with the present larger Gothic edifice. The three story school and residence shown on both a lithograph and photograph appear to have a wooden exterior. The present three story structure appears to be taller and with a masonry exterior. In 2011 the school and parish rectory were put up for sale. The rectory next to the church was never part of the school and had a bridge that connected it to the school. That building was last

used as a residence for retired priests. The rectory was sold in 2013 and the buyers will be renovating it as their private residence. The school buildings are presently in escrow and will be used for commercial use.



1856 LITHOGRAPH OF ST. PATRICK'S CHURCH & SCHOOL

PHOTOGRAPH OF ST. PATRICK'S CHURCH & SCHOOL, CIRCA 1860



The original parishioners were mostly Irish and English immigrants and numbered about one thousand. The Sulpicians were the first priests to serve at the church. St. Patrick's is presently staffed by the Redemptorist as a mission of a larger parish community and almost all the parishioners are Hispanic. There are only two Masses celebrated at St. Patrick's on Sunday morning and Wednesday evening and both are in Spanish. On August 23, 2011 the area experienced a 5.8 magnitude earthquake and the church was closed for six months until it was reopened on February 22, 2012.

In recent times due to heavy expenses associated with maintaining the parish St. Patrick became part of the "Catholic Community of St. Michael and St. Patrick." In July 2011 it became a mission of the new Sacred Heart of Jesus parish with a Redemptorist serving as pastor who also oversaw the transition of Spanish-speaking and English-speaking parishioners of St. Michael and Spanish-speaking parishioners of Our Lady of Pompei parishes to Sacred Heart. The new faith community is a multicultural parish serving the spiritual and cultural needs of the diverse and vibrant Catholic community in Southeast Baltimore.

Bibliography

“The History of Baltimore, Maryland, from Its Founding as a Town to the Current Year, 1729-1898,” Henry Elliot Shepard

Ancestry.com website/ RootsWeb.com - SS City of Manchester

Catholic Magazine - August 1847

Fire-Tried Gold, Brother Linus Walker, F.S.P.

History of Baltimore City and County, James Thomas Scharf

National Archives and Records Administration - Ship arrival information

The Rev. James Dolan, Pioneer Social Worker in Catholic Orphan Care, Martin Oldham Mattingly (Dissertation - St. Mary’s University, Baltimore Maryland)

The United States Catholic Magazine Monthly Review 1847 - 1848

Maryland Historical Society, Library of Maryland website

ADDENDUM PHOTOGRAPHS



REALTOR’S PHOTOGRAPH OF ST. PATRICK’S SCHOOL



St. Patrick's Church in Fells Point, Baltimore, shorn of damaged Gothic stone gingerbread ornamentation on the steeple and facade in repairs following last summer's earthquake, has now been re-opened.

The Gothic decorative spire details visible in photo below taken after the summer 2011 earthquake have been removed from the bell tower.



ST PATRICK'S CHURCH TODAY

Notes

The following are comments and concerns that might be delved into at a later date:

1. At first I believed the lithograph showed a two story school. Upon much closer examination I do see it was a three story structure.
2. How to refer to the farm Fr Dolan established? In some articles it is referred to as "The Orphans' Home" and in others as the "The Manual Labor School." I prefer "The Orphans' Home" as I noted in the various articles in The United States Catholic Magazine Monthly Review in 1847 and 1848 that is how it is identified. Perhaps best said that The Orphans' Home was a manual labor school?
3. Six different accounts describe the acreage of the Orphan Home as 71 ½ acres, 40 acres, 100 acres, 116 acres, 118 acres, and 130 acres. I chose to use the 71 ½ acres figure because it is the one noted in the dissertation compiled by Martin Oldham Mattingly

“The Rev. James Dolan, Pioneer Social Worker in Catholic Orphan Care” which I found exceptionally documented. Perhaps at a later date more property was purchased or donated. At this point I don’t think it necessary to fine tune the dilemma of the differences in acreage but maybe another day it could be looked into.

Questions:

4. How did Father Dolan come to know the Brothers? He came to America in 1834 from Cashel. Did he know them there? Did he go to a school the Brothers taught or was there Brothers near where he lived?
5. What happened to the American Novices Brother James McCarthy, Brother Joseph McLaughlin, Brother Anthony Doyle, and Brother Nicholas Byrne? Did they return with the Brother[s] to Ireland? Is there any record of them in the archives back in Ireland? Did any of them join the Christian Brothers after Brother James Doyle became a Christian Brother in 1851?
6. What is known of the Nashville venture? What is it a school or orphanage? From the dates of correspondence from account book & memorandum of Galway Monastery Brother Augustine was in Nashville for at least four months between October 1848 and January 1849. What were he and the Novice doing there?
