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FATHER PATRICK MANOGUE The Gold Miner who Became a Priest

By Father John Dwyer, printed in the August 26, 1976 issue of the *Catholic Herald*

When tragedy struck the Manogue family at the death of the mother of the seven children, it was only the beginning. In a few short weeks the father was also laid to rest beside the mother, and Michael aged 15, and his sister Julia, aged 14, were left to care for their younger brothers and sisters, Mary, Patrick, James and the infant Catherine. Somehow they survived, supported and loved by their friends and neighbors all around Desart in County Killkenny.

When he was 19 or 20, Michael decided to go to America to see if he could provide a better living for his brothers and sisters. Then one by one he began to bring his family to Connecticut where he had settled. Then tragedy struck again, this time in Ireland with the potato blight which struck that country in 1845. Patrick was then only 14. He and his sisters and brother witnessed the starvation of the people, the spread of the fever, the deaths of hundreds, the evictions, and finally the start of the huge emigration to America to escape from despair.

While Patrick was not among the first wave of emigrants who left Ireland in 1847, he was aboard one of the ships when the shipping opened up in 1848. He headed for Connecticut where he stayed with Michael until 1851.

How this huge strapping lad of six foot three managed to do it must be left to the imagination, but in 1851 he was able to move to Illinois where he entered St Mary of the Lake College to begin his studies which would lead to the priesthood. But the situation in Ireland for his sisters and brother did not improve, and feeling an obligation to help Michael in bringing the rest of the family to America, Patrick decided to go to California to see if he could strike it rich in the mines. Together with one of his brothers he formed a partnership with the two Dooling brothers and with Caldwell and L.J. Hanchett. The six staked out a claim in Moores Flat in Nevada County in the Grass Valley parish.

Mr. Hanchett later had this to say of Patrick Manogue:

"I never saw a harder worker. He was a man of great frame and strength and worked tirelessly from morn till night. He occupied a cabin by himself and he put in every spare moment and every evening in study. Whenever a dispute arose, Manogue was always the arbitrator. Both sides knew he was perfectly fair minded and they were always willing to abide by his decision. He prevented many a fight among the miners who respected his powerful Celtic physique."



Photo from the Diocesan Archives

Father Patrick Manogue Pastor of Saint Mary's in the Mountains Church, Virginia City, Nevada

Patrick Manogue saved his money, sent some to help his family, now all in America, and was able after three years to leave the mines and enter the seminary. His destination was Paris and the seminary of San Sulpice. Four years later, Patrick Manogue was ready for ordination.

However a change had occurred in California. Moores Flat and Grass Valley were now under the jurisdiction of the Vicar Apostolic of Marysville, Bishop Eugene O'Connell. Therefore when he was ordained on December 21, 1861 by Cardinal Marlot his destination was Marysville where he arrived on Ascension Thursday in 1862.

At the time of his arrival, the bishop's preoccupation was that portion of his immense Vicariate which was east of the Sierras, in the Washoe territory where there was a rush to the newly discovered silver mines. So Father Manogue was assigned by the bishop to "Virginia, Carson and Genoa." First he spent a couple weeks in June with Father Dalton of Grass Valley and doubtlessly this visit included a journey to Moores Flat. By July 1862, Father Patrick Manogue was a resident of Virginia City, the place that was destined to be his home for 22 years.

There was no church in Virginia when he arrived. There had been a flimsy wooden church built in 1860 but one of the famous Washoe zephyrs had made match sticks out of it that same

winter. So Father Manogue undertook the building of a new one, also of wood, but of more substantial construction, which cost \$12,000. A man of great devotion to the Blessed Virgin, he named the new church on the day of dedication, July 19, 1864, "St Mary's in the Mountains." Likewise when he built the church in Carson City, he named it also St Mary's.



From the Archives of the Diocese of Reno

Saint Mary's in the Mountains Parish, Virginia City Built by Father Patrick Manogue

Father Manogue labored as tirelessly as a priest as he had as a miner. The missionary territory assigned to him extended to the east and the south for hundreds of miles and he visited every camp and settlement until the bishop had enough priests to form new parishes in those areas.

In the beginning he was alone; eventually he had an assistant, but even then he seems to have left the assistant at home while he himself continued to make the rounds of the vast parish. His mode of travel was on horseback. Several missionary ventures are recorded such as the time he traveled 180 miles in answer to a call to assist a condemned man. Father Manogue became convinced of the man's innocence and he rode back the 180 miles in the face of a blizzard to plead the man's case before the governor. Eventually he won a full pardon for the once condemned man. There are tales of his being lost in a winter storm, of his being rescued by Indians who gave him shelter in the Chief's tent, of his sleeping in abandoned cabins, or trying to sleep in an overcrowded hotel where the noise from a nearby saloon made sleeping impossible.