

SACRAMENTO DIOCESAN ARCHIVES

Vol 2

Fr John E Boll, Diocesan Archivist

No 30

FATHER PATRICK HENNEBERRY, CPPS Church in the Gold Mines

By Father John Dwyer, printed in the July 29, 1976 issue of the *Catholic Herald*



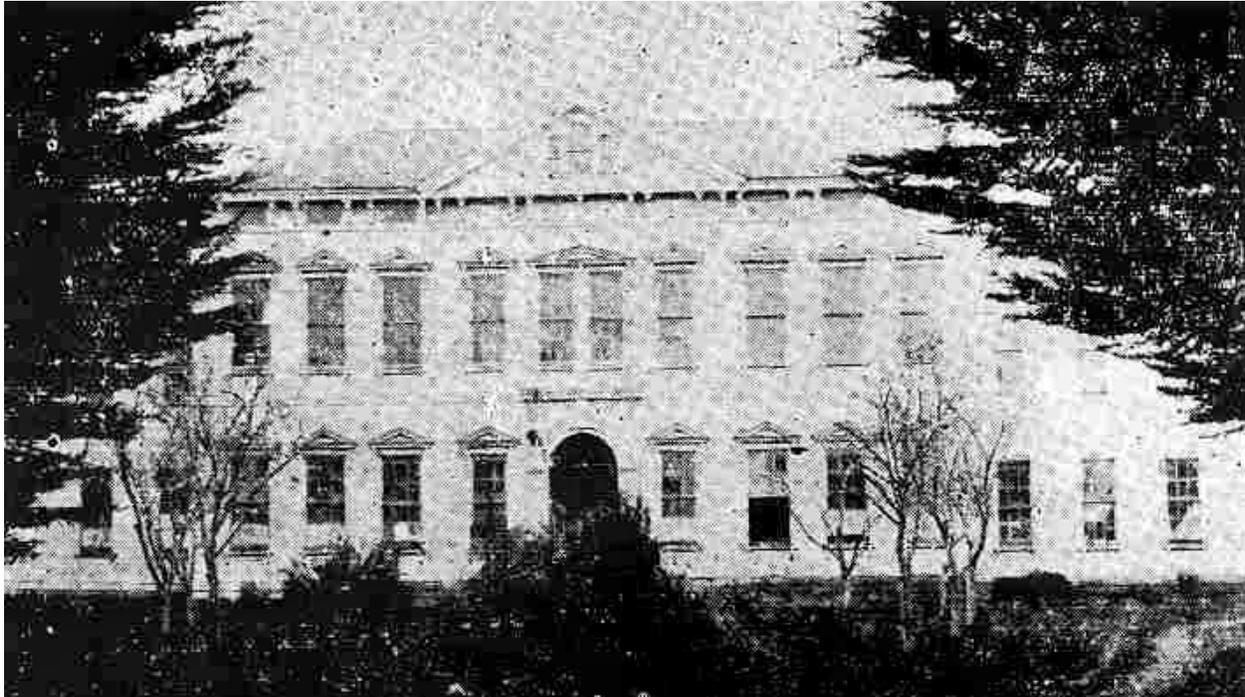
Father Patrick Henneberry, CPPS

When writing about the principal men who gave missions in the old Grass Valley Diocese, together with the name of Father James Bouchard, SJ goes that of Father Patrick Henneberry of the Precious Blood Fathers. Although the Jesuit served longer, the Irish missionary was equally popular in the matter of giving missions throughout the mining towns of the old diocese.

Born in County Kilkenny, Ireland in 1830, Patrick Henneberry migrated to the United States in 1847 when he was only seventeen years old. He entered the Precious Blood Fathers Seminary in Thompson, Ohio and was ordained at age 23 by the first Bishop of Cleveland, Amadeus Rappe, on November 21, 1853.

For the next two years he served in parishes and gave missions in Ohio. In 1855 he was sent to Europe where he studied the French and Roman languages for several months returning to Ohio in 1856. In June 1863 he was freed from parish duties to do exclusively mission work.

In response to an invitation from Archbishop Alemany he came west to give missions, his first being in Old St Mary Cathedral on September 24, 1865. This led to a series of missions in the mining counties of the original Archdiocese of San Francisco, El Dorado, Calaveras and Placer. Bishop O'Connell heard of his eloquence and was the next to invite him to give missions in his diocese.



From the Diocesan Archives

St Joseph College in Rohnerville, Humboldt County, Founded by Father Patrick Henneberry, CPPS in 1872

In 1867, while giving a mission in Eureka, Father Henneberry proposed the idea of making a foundation of his order in that area. The hard pressed bishop was delighted at the prospect of being able to populate this corner of his vast diocese with priests and consent was quickly given. Thus Bishop O'Connell appointed Father Henneberry pastor of Eureka in November 1868.

Father Henneberry left for Ohio in the spring of 1869 and returned on June 21, 1869 accompanied by two more priests, Fathers Bernard Dickman and Anthony Guggenberger and a seminarian, Godfrey Schlachter. Father Henneberry proceeded to purchase a whole block of property bounded by 7th and 8th streets on one side and by F and G on the other, the site of the present Eureka Inn. The whole block was purchased for \$1,750. On it Father Henneberry built a substantial wooden building, large enough to house the three priests, three brothers and seven

seminarians who took up residence in it when it was completed. This foundation served the nearby communities of Rohnerville, Ferndale, Table Bluff and Arcata.

But this was not enough for the zeal of Father Henneberry. He conceived the idea of building a college for the education of boys, a project dear to the heart of Bishop O'Connell. When the college opened in 1872, Father Henneberry and most of the community moved from the Eureka building to the new college in Rohnerville.

Father Bernard Dickman now became the pastor of Eureka and Father Henneberry the rector of the college. When in the next few years the college project showed signs of failing, Father Henneberry never lost confidence. But when the creditors pressed so hard that the Ohio headquarters had to come to Father Henneberry's rescue, this zealous missionary felt that the huge debt was his own and he set about endeavoring to repay the Ohio community.

Therefore, on August 15, 1877 he sailed for Australia to begin a successful series of missions there which caused him to travel 42,728 miles in the next five years. He gave 129 missions in Australia, made 166 converts and administered the pledge to 102,730 persons. Meanwhile every cent he made, after deducting his own expenses, went to the Ohio community to pay off the Rohnerville debt.

From Australia he went to New Zealand and Tasmania. In 1883 he was in South Africa where he gave twenty one missions and made fifty-six converts. His final tour was in India at the end of 1883, after which he headed for Rome.

Meanwhile the Rohnerville College had closed down for lack of students. Yet Father Henneberry never gave up on its potential. His heart remained in Rohnerville even while he traveled through England and Ireland giving missions and administering pledges. When this tour of duty ended he returned to America where the Provincial informed him to his delight that if he would turn over the deeds to the Rohnerville property to the community he could return to California and reestablish the school.

In the meantime there was a new bishop. However, when Father Henneberry approached Bishop Manogue with the idea of reopening the college, the bishop consented. The school was reopened in 1886, but by 1889 had again failed and had to be closed and the property repossessed.

Father Henneberry continued to give missions and while giving one in Virginia City in 1897, he was laid low by a stroke. He lingered for one month and then on September 19, 1897, he gave up his valiant soul to his God. He was one of the last patients in the Sisters' Hospital in Virginia City, as it closed after his death.

For three quarters of a century he was the only priest buried in the Catholic cemetery in Virginia City. Like so many of the old pioneers the occasional visitor to his grave has no idea that beneath the monument lies the remains of a great priest whose name was once known on

almost all of the continents of the world, who established the only school for boys in the old Grass Valley Diocese, and who alone carried an enormous financial debt which he paid back by his immense labors over fifteen years.



Photo by John E Boll 2013

Saint Bernard Church, Eureka