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SAINT MARY MISSION CHURCH, ETNA, CALIFORNIA

Information for this article comes in part from ESCHSCHOLTZIA PARLOR No. 112, NATIVE DAUGHTERS OF THE GOLDEN WEST, Etna, California and from material in the Fort Jones parish archives.

The early history of Saint Mary's Catholic Church in Etna has been very difficult to



ascertain. Most of the older Catholic families have passed away or have moved from the locality. As a result, the material presented here is incomplete, but this church and its members played an important part in days gone by.

Etna, formally known as "Rough and Ready," is nestled at the base of the towering Scott Bar Mountains. During the early period of Scott Valley history, priests came from Yreka to celebrate Mass, often in private homes or public halls when they were available. The Callahan Ranch Hotel served as a meeting place before the church was built. Likewise, services were conducted in early Rough and Ready in Catholic homes such as the Charles Kappler home.

The church may have been constructed in 1867 when Father Stephen Kearney was attending the missions of Scott Valley and Sawyer's Bar or it may have been

built during the time of Father Florian Schwinninger, OSB who served the area from 1857 to 1866. Historical records are lacking to prove positively the year the church was erected. It was built

when the north state area was part of the Vicariate Apostolic of Marysville which was established in 1860.

In 1881 a church was built in Fort Jones by a Mr. Campbell and the same year he built the Catholic Church in Etna on land which was donated by Mr. A. M. Johnson. It is said that two immense pine trees grew in the church yard.

The first priest to hold services was Father O'Meara who came from Yreka for this purpose. The priest would often spend several days visiting among the members of the parish.

In the early part of the 20th century, Etna and Fort Jones were still missions of Saint Joseph Parish, Yreka. In 1919, Monsignor Patrick O'Sullivan was named pastor of Yreka by Bishop Thomas Grace. In June 1921, when Fort Jones was raised to parish status by Bishop Grace, Father O'Sullivan became its founding pastor. At the same time, the communities of Etna, Callaghan and Sawyer's Bar were transferred from Yreka's jurisdiction and became missions of Fort Jones.

The material for this brief history of Saint Mary Church, Etna, was taken from papers of the late Mrs. Margaret Weston and from conversations with Mrs. Grace Balfrey of Yreka.

Centenary of Saint Mary Church

The centenary of Saint Mary Church in Etna was celebrated in June 1967. Bishop Alden J Bell was the celebrant at the Centennial Mass and the homily was given by Fr John B McGloin, S.J., Professor of California History at Santa Clara University. Father McGloin's homily at the Centennial Mass follows.

FAITH OF OUR FATHERS

**The homily given at the concelebrated Centennial Mass
of Saint Mary Church, Etna, Siskiyou County, on Sunday, June 11, 1967**

**By Father John B. McGloin, S.J.
Professor of California History,
University of Santa Clara**

Your Excellency, Bishop Bell, Reverend Fathers, Dear Sisters and Friends:

It is indeed a long way from this pioneer settlement in Scott Valley, Siskiyou County – from this old mining town first known as Rough and Ready and now called Etna – to the chapel of All Hallows Missionary College in Dublin, Ireland. However, as I stand here to speak the words which must and should be uttered today at this Centennial Mass of Thanksgiving, I am thinking of what I consider as a very real connection between the two places – a connection which was brought

home to me almost 10 years ago to the very day. For, a decade ago, on June 16, 1957, it was my appreciated privilege to be present at the impressive Mass of priestly ordination at this same missionary college of All Hallows which, more even than the other seminaries of Ireland, has sent forth hundreds of priestly sons since it was founded in 1842 with the motto: "Go forth and teach all nations."

The Catholic Church here in California has been immeasurably enriched by the services of the priests of All Hallows who have come to it now for well over a century – and this diocese of Sacramento has always freely acknowledged its debt to this and to the other Irish seminaries which have sent their priestly sons to spread the Faith of Our Fathers. In this connection, I recall the hymn sung by the entire group of All Hallows seminarians at the end of the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament on the evening of the ordination day: they sang beautifully and with splendid spirit that night and it was the stirring old hymn:

***Faith of our Fathers, Living Still
In spite of dungeon, fire and sword
Faith of our Fathers, Living Faith,
We will be true to Thee till death.***

No group had a better right to sing those words – for these seminarians were destined to leave Ireland in their own time to go to various lands as had their predecessors to spread that same Faith of Their Fathers. And, since the first priests to come to this Siskiyou country were Irish – although they joined forces with an Austrian Benedictine monk, Father Florian Schwenniger, the famed "Padre of Paradise Flat" – it would seem that there is a connection between a chapel in old Ireland and its pioneer settlement here in Siskiyou County.

It was in 1855 that two young Irish priests were assigned to this vast area by the Vicar Apostolic of Northern California, Bishop Eugene O'Connell. Father James Cassin was named pastor of all the Siskiyou country and Father Thomas Cody was designated as his assistant. They made their way from Gold Rush San Francisco to this country, then and now an area of spectacular beauty; travelling by bumpy stage coach from Marysville to Shasta, a tiring 120 miles, they then changed to mule back for another tiring trek of about the same distance until they arrived at Callaghan's Ranch at the southern end of this valley.

After offering Mass and otherwise serving the spiritual needs of those they found there, the two pioneer missionary priests of Siskiyou continued to Rough and Ready and then on to Fort Jones and finally Yreka. It was not very long before their zeal, which was matched by that of the Catholics of the area, resulted in the building of a church here where the holy offices of religion were performed regularly.

We know that Father Cassin made his rounds regularly as he visited – over a rather primitive trail at first – Fort Jones and Etna, whose inhabitants were mostly interested in the milling of the grain that grew abundantly in the valley lands in the vicinity of Scott River.

We know too, that this pioneer pastor of Siskiyou visited the remaining mining camps of the area as well as the ranches of the valley always and everywhere he was in search of souls, always anxiously intent on the preserving and spreading of the Faith of our Fathers.

It was difficult work and it was pioneering work; it was done without the comforts which we take so much for granted now – but it was a good and a blessed work and we thank God today in this Centennial Mass that it was not without fruit.

In this valley, then, was developed one of those pioneer frontiers of the faith which are the glory of the church in Northern California and the nurturing of which by pioneer priests and laity have given us the obligation of gratitude which we discharge here this afternoon with the offering of the same Holy Sacrifice of the Mass by the Shepherd of the Flock, Bishop Bell, joined in concelebration by the priests who are at the altar with him.

It would seem – at least from what I have been able to learn – that the exact details of the foundation years of Saint Mary's church in Etna are wrapped in obscurity and this student of history learned a long time ago – at least, as he hopes – not to invent or embroider facts when these are almost entirely lacking. All we can say, then, with confidence and, in essence, it is enough in that, by the late 1860's, the Catholics of this area were sufficiently concerned about their faith to manifest that solid interest which eventually resulted in the building of this pioneer structure. Of Saint Mary's we know, then, that it represents an outpost of spiritual empire in that early frontier of faith which developed in the Scott Valley.

As such, it symbolizes today for us – as it has for so long now – that the Faith of our Fathers has not vanished but yet lives among the encircling mountains in this very same attractive and fertile valley. One may suspect that it has not always been easy to keep the Faith here – that it has meant devoted effort to hold fast to its moorings: it is not wrong, then, to suspect that the real heroes and heroines of the story we tell are – and this almost certainly – the pioneer parents who insisted that their children be raised according to the tenants of their Catholic faith.

What could pioneer priests, however devoted, have done without their help and co-operation? And that is why we thank Our Lord and Our Lady for them all – that is where we call their memory blessed and that is why we bring them all to mind in the Holy Sacrifice we offer for them today.

Most are unsung and many are unknown to us – but all are in our Mass as we thank God who has brought them now to that place of refreshment, of life, light and of peace which He grants to those who truly love Him.

If these pioneers of Catholicism who lived in this valley and the spacious environs of Siskiyou County could speak to us today, what would their message be? First and foremost, I think that they would want you to keep the faith – to cherish, preserve and extend it as best you may. They would tell you, for it is true, that the Faith of Your Fathers is more precious than the material possessions which are part of life –for faith provides the necessary bridge between this life and that life which is to be eternal.

Whatever you do, then, to cherish, to preserve and to extend this heritage in this land is supremely worthwhile. Whatever help you are able to pay to your present pastor and to his successors in the up-building of the church and of the people of God here will be greatly appreciated by the present Shepherd of the diocese, Bishop Bell, as well as by his successors in the See of Sacramento.

May I, in closing, propose a motto and a watchword which you might well keep in mind after this Mass is over and the events of this memorable day of the centennial have been concluded: In the best traditions of those who first brought the faith here – it is this: ***FAITH OF OUR FATHERS, LIVING FAITH, WE WILL BE TRUE TO THEE TILL DEATH.***

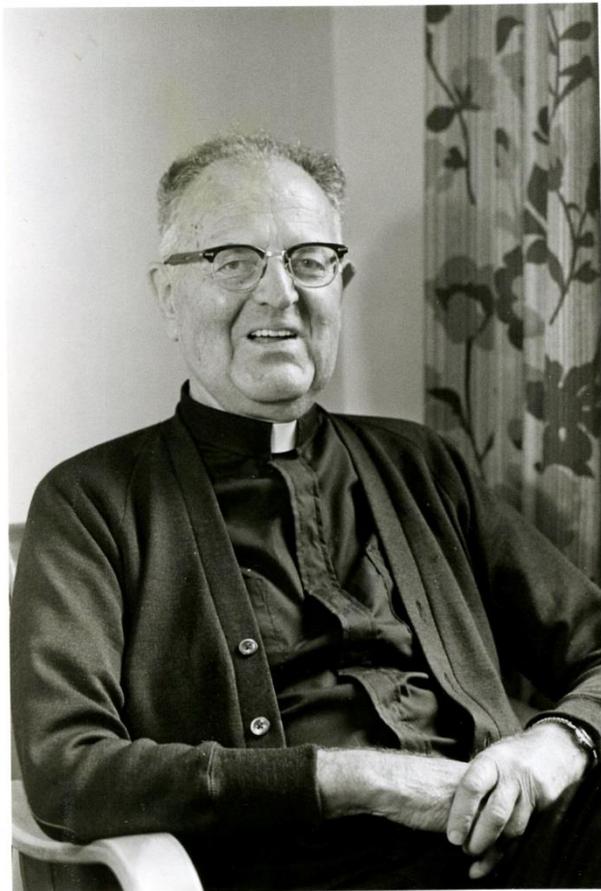


Photo Courtesy of the Jesuit Provincial Archives, Los Gatos, CA

Father John B McGloin, SJ
California Church Historian



Photos by John E Boll 2015

Saint Mary Church, Etna



SUCCESSION OF PASTORS

Sacred Heart Parish, Fort Jones

Parish Established 1921

Before Fort Jones became a parish in 1921, all of Siskiyou County was part of Saint Joseph Parish in Yreka since 1855. The following were pastors of Yreka:

Father Florian Schwenninger, OSB	1854-1855
Father James Cassin	1855
Father Thomas Cody	1855-1856
Father James Croke	1856-1857
Father L Snyder	1857-1859
Father John Handy	1859-1860
Father Hugh Gallagher	1860
Father Thomas Crinnian	1860-1864
Father Guido Malassi	1864-1865
Father Patrick Farrelly	1865-1872
Father Stephen Kearney	1872
Father Patrick O’Kane	1872-1874
Father James J Callan	1874-1875
Father J J Claire	1875-1879
Father W J Walsh	1879
Father Leon Haupt	1879-1887
Father Cornelius McGrath	1887-1889
Father Patrick Guerin	1889-1891
Father P Fernandez	1891-1894
Father John F Quinn	1884-1897
Father Seraphin Soares	1897-1899
Father James O’Meara	1899-1902
Father Jerome J Enright	1902-1905
Father John Azevedo	1905-1908
Father James O’Flanagan	1908-1910
Father Michael Cahir	1910-1914
Father J P McCarthy	1914-1919
Father P J O’Sullivan	1919
Father Martin Sears	1919-1921
Father James Grealy	1921

Fort Jones becomes a parish in 1921

Following are the Pastors of Sacred Heart Parish, Fort Jones

Father Patrick J Sullivan	1921-1927
Father Francis J McEnaney	1927-1931
Father James O'Flanagan	1931-1932
Father Stephen Stack	1932-1942
Father Jeremiah Boland	1942-1946
Father James Kenny	1946-1949
Father John J Healy	1949-1953
Father J.P. Farrell	1953-1957
Father Francis Sullivan	1957-1959
Father William Broderick	1959-1964
Father John T McDonnell	1964-1966
Father Leo Scheibel, C.P., Administrator	1966
Father Vincent O'Shaughnessy	1966-1969
Father Hugh J Bannon	1969-1971
Father Anthony Gurnell	1971-1974
Father John P Sullivan	1974-1986
Father Roy R Doner	1986-1996
Father John Lawrence, Administrator	1996-2004
Sister Anne Chester, RSM, Parish Steward	2002-2004
Father Aiden O'Reilly, Supervising Priest	2002-2004
Father John Lawrence, Administrator	2004-2007
Father Felipe H Paraguya, Parochial Vicar	2007-2009
Father Bernard Tape, Pastor	2007-2009
Father Aldrin G Basarte, Administrator	2009-2012
Father Glenn Jaron, MSP, Parochial Vicar	2010-2012
Father Julito R Orpilla, PA and Pastor	2013-



Fall colors in Etna, October 2015