



150 Years 1859-2009 Historical Article

HOLY CROSS ~ IMMACULATA
HONOR ~ CHERISH ~ INSPIRE

Date ~ Feb 14

Edition VII

St. Patrick's Journey

Every year since 1971, the local St. Patrick's Division of the Ancient Order of Hibernians parade a statue of St. Patrick around Mt Adams in a pick up truck followed by pipers, drummers and lads and lasses of the old sod. It's become a tradition. The story of its beginnings is a legend that few remember. Fortunately, there are a couple of old timers who have the details. Here's the story.

In 1873, Holy Cross Church was built on Mitchel Street (now known as St. Paul). It was a small, wooden frame building built to accommodate the English speaking Catholics on the Hill. They were attending Immaculata Church, two blocks away, where only German was spoken. Holy Cross became the Irish church and also the church attended by the Hill's small Italian community. A new church was built in 1895 to accommodate the growing Irish population.

Sometime in the 1920s, Holy Cross Parishioner James Patrick Healy (what else) purchased a larger than life statue of St. Patrick and donated it to Holy Cross Church. Mr. Healy was a true Irishman and every time he passed St. Patrick, he genuflected. When World War II ended, people began to move from Mt. Adams. They could afford cars, had good roads and wanted to live in areas where they could have a yard for their children. That was the beginning of a slow exodus from Mt. Adams to the suburbs. The decrease in people began to affect both Holy Cross Parish and Immaculata Parish. In 1967, their administrative processes were combined. The hand writing was on the wall. One of the churches would close, but which one?

A real estate appraiser and structural engineers carefully examined both churches. They estimated it would cost between \$150,000 to \$200,000 to bring Holy Cross up to standard and between \$45,000 and \$60,000 to do the same for Immaculata. The conclusion was obvious: close Holy Cross. The faithful were told at the 11:00 a.m. mass on March 15, 1970 that the church was now closed. All Holy Cross Parishioners were to attend mass at Immaculata the following weekend. The new parish would be known as Holy Cross-Immaculata.

There was anger, disbelief and disappointment. The Irish had been baptized, did their first communion, got married and had their funerals at Holy Cross. It was a sad, emotional time for them.

Two women parishioners, Kathleen Scully Hueneman and Daryl Schroder got their heads together and came up with a

way to soften the transition. They asked Jim Crowley, a Holy Cross parishioner who was tight with Holy Cross Pastor Fr. Wilfrid Flannery (Fr. Flannery was also pastor at Immaculata), to see if it would be possible to move St. Patrick to Immaculata. Fr. Flannery said he wasn't authorized to give the statue to Immaculata, but agreed to leave the front door ajar so a group of men could "steal" the statue (two of the men that helped Jim Crowley were Mike Crowley and Tyler Dunn). They slipped in, put Paddy in a pickup truck and whisked him under cover of darkness to Immaculata. That was early in the morning of March 16, 1970.

Enter the Hibernians. They played off the original theft and began the annual tradition of "stealing" the statue. Every February, about a month before the St. Patrick's Day Parade, they pull off the heist. There is a Mass said to honor deceased men and women Hibernians, a blessing of St. Patrick who is then carried to a pickup truck and slowly paraded around the Hill accompanied by pipes and drums. The Hibernians follow along.

St. Patrick returns to the church after the parade. In the 1980s, before the Hibernians bought their own statue, they would take the statue with them, store him at St. Xavier Church downtown and in March, put him at the front of the St. Paddy's Day Parade. In those days, it took him a while to return to Mt Adams. One year he came back with pink shoes, much to the chagrin of the pastor. Another year he returned with a broken hand sustained in a bar fight. After those transgressions, the Hibernians agreed to purchase their own Paddy. But they still "steal" the original every February.

So there you have it. A simple act to ease the closing of Holy Cross Church has become an annual tradition. If you saw St. Paddy on his latest outing and wondered what was going on you now know why he was riding the streets in a pick up truck followed by pipes and drums.

Thanks to Kathleen Scully Hueneman, a lifetime Mt Adams resident and former Holy Cross parishioner and Brian Sweeney of the ancient Order of Hibernians for providing background information for this article. The Jim and Mike Crowley mentioned above were members of the Mt. Adams Crowley clan. Jim was married to HCI parishioner Norma Crowley and both Crowley boys were brothers of Chick Crowley Riesenbeck, a lifer at Immaculata.

~Jim Steiner



The Real St. Patrick

Who was St. Patrick and how well do we know him? Was he Irish? Did he drive the snakes out of Ireland? And why do we celebrate March 17?

We are fortunate to have two surviving writings of St. Patrick, said to be the oldest documents produced in Ireland and our only contemporary sources about him. The writings are the *Confessio* (the Confession) and the *Epistola Militibus Corotici* (the Letter to the Soldiers of Coroticus). Written in Latin, they provide us with the outline of his life.

St. Patrick was British, from the village of Bannavem Taburniae, which may have been near the west coast of Britain. He was born in the 5th century and was named Patricius. He was the son of Calpornius, a decurion, a minor local Roman official. His grandfather was the priest Potitus (priests could marry in those days).

By St. Patrick's time, the Roman legions had withdrawn from Britain to defend less distant possessions. From 410 on, Britain was under siege from the pagan Irish to the west, the Picts from today's Scotland, and Germanic tribes---the Angles, Saxons, Jutes and Frisians---from the European continent. The local Roman officials were left to fend for themselves, a situation that led directly to St. Patrick's removal to Ireland.

St. Patrick, by his own admission, was not a religious youth. At age 16 he was taken captive near his home by an Irish raiding party. For what may have been six years he tended flocks of sheep in Ireland at a place he called Foclut, believed by some to be at Killala Bay, in the north of County Mayo. There he had a religious transformation, praying up to a hundred times per day and almost as much at night.

One night he heard a voice tell him that a ship some 200 miles away was prepared to take him home to Britain. He eventually returned to his parents, who gave him a warm welcome and begged him to stay. But one night he saw a vision of one Victorinus who gave him a letter, "The Voice of the Irish," and he heard the Irish shouting for him to return. That call led to St. Patrick's training, ordination and return to Ireland, where he served as its Bishop. He actually was the second Bishop in Ireland, Palladius had been sent there first by Pope Celestine I in 431 but he stayed only a short time.

St. Patrick traveled far and wide over Ireland for the rest of his life, apparently remaining unmarried. In his words, he "begot" innocent Christians in Ireland "in countless numbers." He did not literally drive snakes out of Ireland but rather the Devil or "serpents" of the Devil who had tempted the Irish to violate the laws of God, like the one who had tempted Adam and Eve. Perhaps the most upsetting event of St. Patrick's episcopate was the raid by Coroticus, a warlord probably from Britain. It was the Easter season and the aged Patrick had just baptized another group of Irish converts when Coroticus and his soldiers slew the men and captured the women and children for slave markets. An incensed St. Patrick railed in his letter to the perpetrators against their attack on the "anointed neophytes---still in their white baptismal garb and with the fragrance of the chrism on their foreheads."

St. Patrick died in Ireland, perhaps in the year 493. He died on March 17, the day we now celebrate as St. Patrick's Day. The graveyard of Downpatrick Cathedral on a hill in County Down claims without certainty his final resting place under a large stone inscribed simply "Patric."

~Ed Adams
Historian, Friendly Sons of St Patrick



HCI Pastor Father Martin O. Moran with our Statue of St. Patrick