

Opening of the church – 1830 - 1901

Due mainly to the efforts of Father John Gordon, then in charge of Greenock, a church with presbytery attached was built and formally opened in November of the year 1830 near the spot where once stood the Collegiate Church of St. Mary.

The first church was dedicated to St. Patrick and it is described in contemporary notices as a "neat little chapel, Gothic in style, owing its erection to the indefatigable exertions of the Rev. John Gordon of Greenock".

The Catholic population in 1830 was in the region of 500 made up almost exclusively of Irish immigrants. Although Dumbarton was the centre, the greater portion of the Catholic population lived in the surrounding villages and it was not till 1850 that Catholics tended to settle in any significant numbers within the Burgh boundaries.

As a result of the revival of the shipbuilding industry the quarter known as Dennystown was built, giving housing accommodation to the poorer workers and this area was familiarly known as "Wee Dublin" for the same reason as College Street was referred to as "the Irish Channel".

The first priest in charge of the new parish was the Rev. John Gifford (1830 - 1839) and he was the proud possessor of a beautiful church with seating for three hundred people.

Father Gifford was succeeded by the Rev. Charles Mackenzie (1839 - 1847) who was later transferred to Paisley and was in turn followed by the Rev. Thomas Cody (1847 - 1852) about whom a little more is known.

He had come from Duntocher and it was due to his energy that the beginnings, of a parochial school were made.

Unfortunately, however, he was transferred to St. Alphonsus, Glasgow, in 1852 and although his educational project was continued by the Rev. William Allan the Rev. John Chisholm and the Rev, Richard A. Wilson D.D., there are no details available about the actual school.

In 1854 the Rev. John Macdonald (1854-1867) became the priest in charge and he completed Father Cody's project | by building and furnishing a more permanent school-house, which was formally opened on 1st July, 1856, by the Rt. Rev. Dr. Murdoch, Vicar Apostolic | of the Western District.

According to a report of His Majesty's Inspector of Schools who visited St. Patrick's School in 1854- before the new school was opened - the first school "consisted of one room, one master, 169 pupils | and four unpaid monitors".

The new school of 1856 was erected close to the church and later served as part of St. Patrick's High School in 1920.

The Mission which now had a population of 3,000 souls included Renton, Alexandria and Helensburgh.

Duntocher had for years been cut off as a separate Mission covering Clydebank and Dalmuir and in 1856 ground for a new church was bought in Alexandria which in 1860 also became a separate Mission under the Rev. James Canning, who had been assistant in Dumbarton.

In 1865 Helensburgh was also cut off and was served by Passionists from St. Mungo, Glasgow.

Father Macdonald moved to Barra and was succeeded in St. Patrick's by the Rev. (later Canon) John Dowd 1867-1874.

Father Dowd had an assistant priest the Rev. Samuel Bernard Rowson who had been received into the Church in 1862 at the age of 27, and was ordained priest by Archbishop Eyre in St. Andrew's, Glasgow, in November 1872.

Canon Dowd moved to Duntocher in 1874 and the Rev. William Carmichael, who had been a curate in the Cathedral, was appointed to Dumbarton as Parish Priest. (1874-1878).

During these years the school itself was enlarged and an Education Committee report 1877 states: "During the past year immense improvements were effected in the school. Additions were made equal in size to the original building, the interior has been remodelled and admirably fitted up - the school is now in excellent working order".

In spite of this report, plans were already afoot for the building of a new school and as the Mission also needed increased church accommodation plans were approved by Archbishop Eyre for the work of enlargement in 1878.

Father Charles Brown, who had previously been in Duntocher succeeded Father Carmichael (1878 -1889) and in 1884 bought Croftbank House for £2,500 with grounds extending to four acres, taking up residence there with his assistant priest the Rev. John Taylor.

The Rev. Michael Hughes (later Canon) was appointed as Parish Priest in Dumbarton (1889- 1893),

Father Hughes who had previously been Diocesan Secretary had at various times as assistant priests Fathers William McAvoy, James Carroll and Michael McNairney.

The idea of a new church to replace the 1830 building had been mooted for some time since the purchase of Croft-bank House in 1884 and it was left to Father Hughes' successors to begin the actual work.

Father John Dougan who succeeded Father Hughes in 1893 was however not spared long enough to accomplish this task.

Father John Linster (1894-1901) who succeeded Father Dougan was born in Eischen in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg in 1850.

He was ordained in March, 1877, and was assistant Priest in St. Patrick's Glasgow, and St. Mary's, Longriggend, before coming to Dumbarton.

He was a kenspeckle figure in the town wearing a skull cap and smoking a long clay pipe.