

# Dream of Bishop Comes True With New Catholic Church in Town of Mt. Shasta



**VESTIBULE** — The vestibule of St. Anthony's Catholic church in Mt. Shasta, Calif., is shown in this picture. The church boasts beautiful mosaic windows.

By AILEEN SIMMERS  
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Mt. Shasta, Calif.—On foot, on mule and by stage coach they came.

One hundred and ten years ago, the roads were trails and the trails were often un-mapped, sometimes obscure and always tough going. In spite of the hardships, however, the Catholic priests got to northern California to establish missions, and into southern Oregon on missionary visits in 1853.

The Bishop of San Francisco Diocese knew the Catholics in this rugged mining country needed the comforts the practice of their faith would give them, not to mention their spiritual salvation.

He envisioned churches which eventually came to be, but it was a long hard road to travel. In the meantime the hardy missionaries said Mass in farm houses, hotels, in mining huts or wherever they were needed, for the hard working, hard drinking miners in the busy diggings where not only the men but the priests as well had to be tough to survive.

**Begin to Function**

The Church began to function in the summer of 1853. Father James Croke, working on the Oregon mission, coming as far south as Yreka to hold services in the camps and surrounding diggings.

Father Croke was a man to whom great distances made little difference. In a letter to Archbishop Blanchet of Oregon City, in 1853, he says he was at Jesse Applegate's ranch in the Umpqua valley. In a letter from Jacksonville he speaks again of his missionary work in that region, and throughout southern Oregon.

Father Croke, who at that time was the missionary to southern Oregon, visited on his missionary rounds up near Patrick Creek and around Myrtle Creek, northeast of Crescent City.

Mines had developed in 1854, Redwood Diggings, Big Flat, Rowlet Gulch, Hurdy Gurdy Creek, Black's Ferry, Altaville and Low Divide to name but a few. It is assumed the priest included these diggings on his tours. Father Croke worked five years in Oregon mission and was named Pastor of Portland before his return to San Francisco. There was a Father Plerens who was pastor at

valley, and held services in the ranch house.

Leaving Callaghan, they passed through Rough and Ready, now known as Etna, and through Ft. Jones, where the military was stationed because of the Indian uprising going on at that time.

Yreka had 6,000 inhabitants in 1855 and had a proportionate complement of saloons and gambling houses as well as a few lynchings.

**Frame Church Erected**

A frame church was immediately erected in Yreka. In 1866 a new brick church took its place and was burned in 1871. In the rugged town of Humboldt, two miles from Eureka, of 2,000 miners, many were Catholic French Canadians, who had come down from the trading posts of Oregon.

South of Yreka the priests visited Greenhorn, Deadwood, Ft. Jones, Greenview, Etna Mills and Callaghan. Other places included on their tours were Scott Bar, Sommes Bar, Forks of the Salmon River, Sawyers Bar, Orleans, and Happy Camp. All these communities were reached on foot or by mule.

In 1857, Father Florian was appointed pastor at Yreka. According to burial records of the priest's pastorate in Paradise Flat one young miner met his death from a pistol ball. Another was the victim of a savage brawl, having been fatally stabbed by his antagonist. Still others lost their lives in cave-ins and drownings and burning. Even some of the tough ones could not survive the harrowing existence.

**Without Resident Priest**

In 1858, the parish of Yreka was without a resident priest. In 1859 a Father L. Snyder took over and held regular services at Hawkinsville, French Bar and Scott Bar. In 1860 arrangements were concluded to transfer Siskiyou county into the newly formed Vicariate of Marysville. By 1863, after a succession of priests, Yreka was again without a pastor. In 1864 a new priest arrived and over a period of years many advances were made in the building of mission churches in Siskiyou county.

In 1903, the town of McCloud was added to the list of missions and an independent parish was created at Dunsmuir. The parish of Dunsmuir then took on the missions of Edgewood, Mott, Sisson, (now Mt. Shasta), Squaw Valley and Upton. In 1912 McCloud and Sisson remained as Dunsmuir missions, but Edgewood, Mott and Upton became attached once more to Yreka.

Until 1919 Father Carr was pastor of Dunsmuir, succeeded by Father Patrick Cronan, who stayed until 1922. In July of that year, a young priest fresh from the sheep camp missions of Nevada, named Father Michael Myles, assumed the duties of the parish for a few months. In those days the priest walked the eight miles between Dunsmuir and Mt. Shasta as they had no roads, nor a car if there had been a road. One could take the train occasionally. Weed is mentioned as a mission of Dunsmuir during this period, and was made a separate parish in 1937.

**No Longer in Parish**

Many years passed until 1947 when Mt. Shasta was

no longer a part of Dunsmuir parish. The Rev. Edward Christen of Sacramento was named pastor of the newly formed St. Anthony's parish, saying his first Mass in Mt. Shasta Nov. 9, 1947. He remained until 1955 when the Rev. Michael Myles, who had been here many years ago, was sent from Yreka to take his place and who has remained in Mt. Shasta since. Father Christen is now in Sacramento.

Grateful hearts and willing hands pitched in to build a small hall, rectory and a new church. The old church was then turned into a hall. The new church was dedicated in 1954 by Bishop Robert Armstrong of the Sacramento Diocese, of which St. Anthony's has long been a part.

The dream of the Bishop of San Francisco Diocese 110 years ago has now come true. Mt. Shasta has a beautiful

modern brick church, all through the efforts of dedicated missionary labors, the hard work of ranchers and mines, the rugged living and preaching conditions and the faith that someday the church would be constructed in Mt. Shasta.

Today it boasts beautiful mosaic windows, with a large mosaic in the vestibule, installed in 1962. It has a "quiet" room, and an air of peaceful dignity.

St. Anthony's Altar Society can not be overlooked in the chain of events which make St. Anthony's church the up to date joy to the parishioners. It has turned out to be. Many thousands of dollars were raised by the society over the years to attain the goal now reached.

Parishioners have furnished the interior with beautiful statues and other necessities.

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