

## PAPER VI

### OLD ST PATRICK'S - FORTITUDE VALLEY

Early maps of Brisbane support descriptions that St Stephen's in the 1850s was almost inaccessible during wet weather, particularly to people coming from the Valley side of the town. A tidal creek flowed across from the Roma Street area to join the river near Eagle Street. It was a large enough stream to drown two members of the Petrie family - in 1848 and 1857 - who fell from rough log bridges. A little further on a chain of water holes from Astor Terrace down into the Valley developed into a rushing torrent at times. The safest access from the Valley to the town was via Ann Street, but that meant quite a climb up and over Duncan's Hill. Down the years council work formed Wickham Street from a track and improved the whole Valley area. In Isaiah's words, it was a case of every valley being filled, every hill brought low, the crooked made straight and the rough way smooth.

As the Catholic population in that area grew, a second church in the town became necessary. At some time in 1858 an area fronting Wickham Street of 1 rood 28 perches (253' x 73 1/2'), originally the property of John Gibbon since 1850, was purchased from Patrick Erwin for £200. The Indenture and Conveyance is dated 29th May 1859. The Trustees were Rev. John Rigney, Joseph Darragh and Thomas Kinsella. Archbishop Polding who was in Brisbane for c. three months at the end of 1858, must have approved the proposal and encouraged Dean Rigney to build a chapel/schoolroom.

Records show that as early as 1st September 1858 a salary of £52/10/0 p.a. was set aside for Richard Cahill appointed teacher to the Fortitude Valley school. Dublin-born and thirty years of age, his preparation before coming up to Brisbane was one month's training at St Benedict's in Sydney.

Then the *Freeman's Journal* of 16th March 1859 gives an account of the new school: while there were about 100 in attendance, there was room with a floor area of 836 sq.ft, for 150. The N.S.W. Government records for schools for 1860 give a roll call of 105 but an average daily attendance of between 80 and 90. Dean Rigney frequently visited the school; the Catechisms used being Butler's and Fleary's. Other

books however were in short supply.

Mr John Aloysius Hayes, from a pioneering Catholic family in Brisbane, committed to paper a few memories when near the end of his life about 1931. He wrote:

Old St Patrick's allotment was opposite Duncan Street, had a fairly wide frontage and sloped down to a creek at the back - now the bed of the railway track. The church was along narrow wooden building and abutted on the footpath. The entrance was from the open ground in Wickham Street through a small wooden porch. The school which was built after was of brick of a light nature, and dovetailed into the wooden building to form a T. At the opening to the church there were large red-coloured curtains which were drawn closed during school hours but opened on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation so as to allow extra room for those hearing Mass. It was served from priests either from old "Dara" or "Castleracket" in Boundary Street, whilst the mercy Sisters came from All Hallows to teach there.

Mr Hayes then refers to a Mr Joe Kelly who "some few months back" prepared some reminiscences for the *Catholic Leader*. Fortunately the Archdiocesan Archives has his fifteen pages too - a wonderful first hand record of events of the 1860s and 70s. Joe Kelly writes:

My family arrived in Moreton Bay in the three-masted ship "Chatsworth" - Captain Tucker, commander; Mr Balt, chief officer; Doctor Moran, medical officer; Rev. Father C. Murlay, chaplain. We sailed from Queenstown Harbour, Cork, Ireland, in the month of April, arriving in Moreton Bay in the month of August, 1862. We passengers were a quota of the 6,000 immigrants under the agreement between the Queensland Government and the Rt Rev. James Quinn, first Bishop of Brisbane.

My early reminiscences will consist of matters concerning the old St Patrick's Church which was situated in Wickham Street, Fortitude Valley immediately opposite Duncan Street, including the names of priests who administered to the spiritual wants of the congregation; names of members of the first choir, the altar boys and some pioneers of the faith.

As I was associated with the musical history of Brisbane during the years under review I think I may be able to make interesting reading on that subject. There may be some still living who remember me as Joe Kelly, a member of St Stephen's choir in its heyday. I will spare no effort to make the reminiscences interesting.

### *The Valley*

Fortitude Valley was named after the ship "Fortitude" which arrived in Moreton Bay Saturday, 21st January 1849. One of the early pioneers, Mr Benjamin Bulcock,

who carried on successfully a butcher shop at the corner of Ann and Brunswick Streets and who reared a family of three sons and five daughters all of whom passed away with the exception of two daughters, Mrs Sarah Williams of Leichhardt Street and Mrs Ellen Murphy, relict of the late Mr Peter Murphy of Hamilton, also arrived by the same ship "Fortitude".

Old St Patrick's Church, Wickham Street, was situated immediately opposite Duncan Street, Fortitude Valley. It had a frontage of 60 ft and a depth of fully 150 ft. There was a big slope in the ground from Wickham Street to the back fence which enclosed a waterhole; in fact there was a chain of waterholes and gullies commencing near Bartley Street, Wickham Terrace crossing Upper Edward Street, Wharf Street, Bowen Street, Raff Street, Boundary Street, also Warren, Gotha, Gipps and Brunswick Streets. All these streets were bridged. After heavy rain there used to be a great flow of water rushing along the route just mentioned and after passing through the lower end of Wickham Street it took a course through to the lower end of Ann and James Streets, spreading along the James Street's flats, and eventually finding an exit into the Brisbane River through a small creek between the property of Mr Childs, who had a fruit garden where the Brisbane Gas Works now stand, and the property of the late George Harris, Newstead. Much credit is due to past Shire Councils and other bodies who wrought such a wonderful transformation as we now see. Few will remember that a brick works occupied a portion of the ground where Messrs Foy and Gibson premises are now situated in Wickham Street. The works were carried on by a Mr Maskall who owned the property from the church block to that of Mr Price, who owned the corner allotment as well as a terrace of stone houses still standing in Gipps Street.

### *Old St Patrick's*

St Patrick's church was a weatherboard building with a shingled roof. It was a very simple structure - no lining or ceiling - just plain studs and rafters. Originally the building which was about 55 ft by 25 ft stood in from the street about 25 ft. The altar space was raised about 1 1/2 ft from floor level and towards the end of the church on the epistle side was a raised platform for the choir. The church stood close to the northern extremity of the property. There was on the southern side of the building a brick four-roomed cottage in which the family of the late Donald McPherson resided prior to removing to premises situated in Warner Street, the Valley. When the McPhersons vacated the cottage a Miss Weir established a children's school in it and looked after the dressing of the altar, etc.

The first priest I remember seeing in old St Patrick's was a Father Quinn (no relation to, Bishop Quinn). Afterwards came Father Charles Murlay who was chaplain on the "Chatsworth", the ship that conveyed my people and myself to Brisbane. Subsequently Father Murlay, who was a very saintly man, was for many years stationed at Rockhampton. When he left St Patrick's, the Rev. Father M. Devitt, the first priest to be ordained in Brisbane, was placed in charge. Through

his splendid disposition with all the qualifications that go to make the perfect pastor, he endeared himself to the flock which was now so largely increasing through many immigrants arriving from the old land that it became necessary to enlarge the church by carrying it out flush with the street which meant an extension of 25 ft. A gallery 14 ft by 25 ft was provided for the choir. Father Devitt certainly made the best use of all available means to supply the spiritual requirements of his flock and had a class for altar boys with himself as tutor. There were fully 20 of us in the class. Three of that 20 are still living. They are John Deroy, James Farrell and the writer.

I will endeavour to give the names of the first roll call. John and James Farrell, Dan O'Rourke, J. Wall, J. McIntyre, J. Ferguson, W. Coughlan, Jas. Webb, J. Moylan, Matt Donovan, P. Warren, O. Flanagan, Joseph Kelly, John Gurin and others whose names I have forgotten. The members of the choir in the first church consisted of females Misses M. O'Brien (afterwards Mrs W. Apjohn), Kate Shannessy (Mrs Foley), Ester Eaton (Mrs Murphy), Polly Quinn (Mrs Peter Bolton), Kate Gurin (Mrs Shycosky), Kitty Connor, etc.

The choir, after the new additions which included a gallery as previously, became a choir of some distinction and was a mixed choir (male and female singers). Mr Maconomy was organist and choir master for some years. He was occupied during the week as a schoolmaster and was transferred to North Queensland and with his second wife, formerly Kitty Connor, and his daughter by his first wife, he proceeded north. The steamer called at Gladstone and he disappeared and was never traced afterwards. Whether he was lost overboard or strayed into the bush no one could tell, so his widow with her stepdaughter returned to her parents' home and remained a widow and lived until a few years ago and was most kind to the stepdaughter who I understand still lives.

The members, besides the choir master just mentioned, consisted of Mr J.A. Clarke, drawing master Normal School, Harry Desmond, teacher under Board of Public Instruction, and John Sullivan. The lady vocalists comprised Misses Quinn, Gurin, Shannessy, Sullivan, E. Eaton and M. Dignan.

Herr F.N. Rosenstengle became choir master and organist and as he was a most advanced musician, he with two other fellow Germans, Otto Linden and Herr Seal, were three of the most talented musicians in those days. The Valley choir advanced in membership and efficiency rendering most of the big Masses in use at that period besides some of Herr Rosenstengle's own compositions. I might just mention here that he composed a most beautiful march for the opening of St Stephen's Cathedral. I wonder what became of it? The late Mother Claver of happy memory frequently played it with the orchestra assisting.

The names of the choir members under Herr F.M. Rosenstengle's leadership consisted of Sopranos: Misses Polly Quinn, Kate Shannessy, Mary Dignan, Nellie

Sullivan. Contraltos: Misses M.E. Gurin, V. Howard, S. Bulcock, Kate O'Brien. Tenors: Jas. Coughlan, William Coughlan, P. Dempsey, the writer J.J. Kelly and when the times required a F.F. effect Rosey ( an abbreviation of Rosenstengle) came along. Basses: S. Pole, E. Stone, W. Crofton (the founder of *The Age*.) There were frequent visitors of the musical profession, both vocalists and instrumentalists favoured the St Patrick's choir with their services. Madame Osbourne, who was residing at Gipps Street, Valley, gave great assistance with her splendid soprano voice.

Now to revert back to the pastors in charge of St Patrick's. Father Devitt was removed to Dalby. Father Denis Fouhy replaced him and remained there until he was transferred to the charge of Charters Towers. Then we had Father James Horan and sometimes his brother, Father Matt would minister to our wants. Afterwards Father James Horan was sent to Maryborough and his leaving the Valley was the most touching scene I witnessed before or since. The crowd that followed him down to the wharf surpassed any demonstration witnessed before. Some of his flock held him on the wharf with the intention of not allowing him to depart, however others assisted him on board the steamer. The coat he was wearing was torn in the struggle. He left an old horse with Joe Blacker of Constance Street (who did not know honest Joe Blacker the baker?) The animal was disposed of by raffle by Joe and realised £60.

After Father Horan's departure there seems to have been no one priest in particular appointed. There were a number of Italian priests come to the diocese and they, as well as the late Father John O'Reilly, ministered at St Patrick's. For a number of years Brisbane was visited by some of the southern priests. These names stand out in bold relief in my memory: A Marist priest named Father Moonia, also the Rev. Father Tennison Woods, who left his footprints on the sands of the Australasian Catholic Church by the founding of the Sisters of St Joseph and the Sisters of Perpetual Adoration. The former are spread throughout the whole of Australia, the latter is so far a local foundation.

The two priests mentioned visited here about every twelve months or two years. It was certainly a blessing when these two excellent men gave us a short mission on each of their visits. It was my privilege in after years to become a friend of Father Julian Tennison Woods when he arrived with the foundation members of the Sisters of St Joseph which included the foundress, Mother Mary of the Cross. During their stay here they were located at South Brisbane where they conducted a day school.

Father J.E.T. Woods compiled a reader which was being printed by S. Pole of Wickham Street, Fortitude Valley, where I was employed and it fell to my lot to convey the proofs to him to revise. Thus was a friendship formed. One ejaculation he taught me to be said after morning and night prayers I have never forgotten: "Lord, never permit that my poor soul should be lost". There were a considerable

number of Catholics residing in and around the Valley. I think New Farm mustered the strongest. Certainly Ireland was well represented in that locality with its Byrnes, Browns, Dearings, Donovans, Egans, Fergusons, Fogartys, Flanagans, Hayes, Keefes, Keoghs, Lamps, Mooneys, Murphys, Nolans, O'Rourke, O'Sullivan, Traceys, etc. The present Harcourt Street in early times was known as Tipperary Street - 95% of residents there were from "Erin's Isle".

There were some who came from long distances to attend not only Mass but even the week day evening devotions. I will enumerate a few cases as an illustration: Mostly everyone in and around Brisbane and as far as where Newstead Park, Breakfast Creek is situated in the years I am dealing with. Newstead which consisted of an area from Breakfast Creek to a creek where the Gas Company property is situated at Bulimba, and from the Breakfast Creek Road to the river was owned and occupied by Mr George Harris of J. & G. Harris, merchants and shippers, whose business premises were in Short Street, off William Street, now occupied by Messrs Thomas Brown and Sons Limited. Mr George Harris was considered one of the wealthiest men of his time, kept a very large establishment and entertained lavishly at Newstead. He kept a large number of servants, male and female. There were four Catholic serving maids employed there and I think I am justified in giving their names for they were a credit to their fathers and mothers that reared them. They are Bridget and Mary Considine, sisters. The former was housemaid, the sister Mary was one of the nurses. Eliza and Teresa Gregory, also sisters. The former was cook, her sister laundress. These four young women walked in from Newstead every Sunday morning, wet or dry, to attend Holy Mass at St Patrick's, Wickham Street. The hour of first Mass was 8 a.m. so it would be fully 9.30 at least before they reached home. Remember, kind readers, there were no trams or buses in those days, tracks ankle deep in dust in dry weather and ankle deep with mud in wet weather. These faithful daughters of Holy Church travelled on Shank's pony every time. Oh, the faith that was theirs in the early days of those Irishmen and Irish women. I have more to quote in this connection. Hennessey's Breakfast Creek Hotel was situated on the northern side of the creek opposite Newstead. A sister of the licensee, Bridget Hennessey, not only attended Sunday Mass but also tramped in each evening to attend the evening devotions consisting of Rosary and the reading of a chapter of Challoner's "Meditations for Every Day in the Year", on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday; and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament on Thursday and Friday. A Catholic family lived on the far side of the Hamilton Hotel. The father, aged between 60 and 70, used to "pad the hoof" each Sunday and Holiday with his 5 ft long staff along the middle of the road until he reached opposite St Patrick's, then he would left wheel and enter the church. His was a large family consisting of grown up boys and girls. They, as might be expected, were regular attendants at the church.

I will now endeavour to give a more minute description of St Patrick's church as it appeared in the early seventies when Father William Walsh was in charge. Father Walsh was afterwards transferred to Townsville where he remained for many years.

Failing in health he visited Sydney and stayed at the home of his sister, Mrs Thomas Walton, where he died. I renewed old acquaintances with him during his early visit to his sister, and to me he looked real well; however he passed away and his remains were forwarded on to Townsville for burial. Father Walsh was a favourite everywhere. He certainly was splendid type of priest.

The front of St Patrick's was enclosed with a fence of sawn timber rails, painted, with two gates, one for entrance to the church which was entered by a porch situated on the left hand end of the building. Inside said porch was a table resting against the end wall. On said table was a glass case which acted as a book case for a receptacle for "lost property", prayer books, etc. On the wall of the porch was an oil painting of the Madonna and Child. Nearly midway up the church was a raised barrier with a gate in the centre. The space between the altar rails and this barrier contained seats, some of them might have been termed "stools of repentance". The seats were about 7" wide and the backs consisted of one piece on top of end piece of seat - no support for the middle of the back so that if there was a lengthy sermon the body would gradually assume a boomerang shape with the back resting against the top rail. Outside this barrier to the end of the church with the exception of four forms under the gallery, there was no seating provided. To secure a seat among the pews a ticket was necessary. Standing at the table in the porch previously mentioned stood the church warden. The first to my knowledge to fill that position was Mr P.T. O'Shaughnessy, or as he was familiarly known, "Paddy O'Shaughnessy". He acted in that capacity for a number of years. He was a stickler for the "no ticket" system so that no "dead heads" ever passed the barrier; and pity the dog that attempted to enter the church. It was always sure of a "leather rejection" from a No.9 blucher that never missed its mark.

Mr P. O'Shaughnessy was succeeded in that position by Mr William Coughlan of Constance Street, Valley. He and the late William Smith (also of Constance Street) must long be remembered as two of the most faithful church workers in the history of St Patrick's. Mr Coughlan was the first to establish the Purgatorian Society in Brisbane with recitation of the Office of the Dead every first Monday in the month as well as the Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary during each week. When one of the parishioners died the Office of the Dead was recited at the residence of friends of the deceased person. Mr William Smith was associated with Mr Coughlan in all church matters. The Office of the Dead was quite up to standard as the Benedictus and the De Profundus were sung and harmonised. Among those who assisted as these functions were Mr William Coughlan, William Smith, John Campbell, James Byrnes, James Hayes, John Hayes, Edward Stone, Phillip Brown, Pat Dempsey, John Mitchell, Chas. Mitchell, James and William Coughlan Jn. and Joseph Kelly.

Mr William Coughlan was a strict disciplinarian in all things, especially church matters, and no dead heads passed the pew barrier with any better result than during his predecessor's reign and no dog had any better chance of running the gauntlet past the No.2 church warden than before, although the weapon of rejection

was changed from No.9 blucher to a good stout blackthorn - "the gun that never missed fire".

One Sunday during Mr Coughlan's reign someone did try to run the gauntlet into a seat without parting with the shilling and by no less a person than a towner of his own from dear old dirty Dublin, and this towner was a "she". Yes, she flounced past the sentinel at the table, rushed up the seatless space and right past the sentinel at the barrier, Mr William Smith, and flopped into a seat. Ah! just wait! He of the eagle eye at the table had her ladyship under observation and she had scarce commenced her preliminary prayers than there was a gentle tap on her shoulder and a gentle request to vacate her seat, which she refused. During the following week, the new church warden, Mr William Coughlan, surprised himself by the purchase of a new outfit and appeared in the new garb on Sunday. The lady transgressor of the previous Sunday came as usual to St Patrick's to Mass and as she entered the porch she took stock and immediately became aware that the old chap had arrayed himself in a fresh outfit - frock coat (black cloth), vest and trousers of grey material with stripes down outer side of trousers, white starched shirt with stand up collar and large black silk tie, tied in bow fashion, new white "bell topper" hat resting close to the plate which contained the coins that purchased the cards for admission to the pews. It did not take Miss Byrne (for such was the lady's name) long to seize the opportunity of "letting off" at him who had hurt her feelings the previous Sunday and here was "old Father Coughlan"\* all dressed in his "new Sunday clothes". Here was a chance to get even. As she got in line with Mr Coughlan she halted, placing her hands upon her hips, she exclaimed, "Ah, my old chap, I thought you wouldn't be long before you had a new suit, and don't he look beautiful too? Why your Ma wouldn't know you now!" and let me state there was no one enjoyed the retort more heartily than did Mr Coughlan himself and he frequently recalled the event.

(\* Mr William Coughlan for his close association with church matters received that title from the young fry of the day).

Some of those who were among the congregation in the days under review were: Mr William Sheehan Sn. and Jn. Mr Sheehan was the father of Mrs Randall McDonnell, wife of the first inspector of National Schools; also Mrs Hay and Mrs Finucan. In private life Mr Sheehan resided in Wickham Street on the opposite side of the church and nearer to Brunswick Street. It was a large brick cottage, the best of its kind then in the locality.

Then next comes in memory Mrs Michael Quinlan and Mrs M. Quinlan, John Quinlan his brother, Miss Keen, sister to Mrs Quinlan, Miss Maria Bolston (niece to Mrs Quinlan, afterwards Mrs G.W. Gray), and Mr E.O. McDevitt, His Hon. Judge Blake, F.F. Keogh, Mr and Mrs Timothy Howard and family, Mr & Mrs Donald McPherson and family, Mr and Mrs Michael Ryan and family, Boundary Street, Mr and Mrs W. Ryan, Gipps Street, Mr and Mrs George O'Brien and family,



Mr Thomas Faulkner and family, Mrs Bakey and family, Mr and Mrs Ballinger, Mrs Mott and family, Mrs Maher and family, Mr William Tracey and Miss Tracey (brother and sister), Gipps Street, Mr and Mrs P. O'Shaughnessy and family, Mrs Keating and family, Mrs Malcom and family, Mrs O'Shannessy and family, Gipps Street, Mr and Mrs James Dignam and family, Mr William Thornhill and family.

Miss Lucy Bridgeman, daughter of Henry St John Bridgeman and family, Bowen Hills, was one of the first candidates to join the order of Our Lady of Mercy, Brisbane. Her name in religion was Sister Mary Bega; Mr and Mrs Patrick Coffee and family, Alfred Street, Valley - "Pat Coffee" as he was universally known was a great favourite. He was the personification of Irish wit and many were the attempts to take a rise out of Pat but the tryer always came off second best. It was a pleasure to meet him as he was always happy and ready with a joke.

Mr and Mrs William Coughlan and family, Mr and Mrs William Smith and family, Mr and Mrs Thomas Dunn and family, Mrs A. Kelly and family, Mr Joseph Blacker and family, Mr and Mrs Stone and family, Mr and Mrs L. Rohan and family, Mr and Mrs Chas. O'Brien and family, Mr and Mrs Connor and family, Mr and Mrs O'Leary and family, Mrs McHugh and family, Mr and Mrs W. Green and family, Mr and Mrs Fogarty and family, Mr and Mrs James Donovan and family, Shamrock Hotel, Mr P. Henry and family, Mrs Rich, Mrs Andrews, Mr Doyle, Mr Sheehan and family, Boundary Street, Mr and Mrs Thomas Lawless and family, Mr and Mrs Quinn and family, John Street, Mr and Mrs O'Reilly and family, Mr and Mrs John O'Brien and family, Mr Kenny and family, Mr James McDermott and family, Mrs Roy (formerly Mrs Guerin) and family, Supt. Slattery and Family, Mr and Mrs McReynolds and family, Mr and Mrs John Donovan and family, Mrs Mitchell and family, Dr John and Mrs Mullins and family, Miss Mullins (sister to John), Mrs Kate Braggs and family, Mrs S. Knapp and family, Mrs O'Leary and family, Mr and Mrs James Fallon and family, Mr and Mrs Timmons and family, Mr and Mrs Butler and family, Mr and Mrs Flannagan and family, Mr and Mrs Dan Keogh and family, Mrs Raffe and family, Mr Daniel McSweeney, Duncan Street, (Mrs McSweeney donated the land where the Christian Brothers' College is now situated in Gregory Terrace), Mr and Mrs John Sullivan and family, Queens Arms Hotel, Wickham Street, Mr and Mrs James Hanly and family, Gipps Street and the Misses O'Keefe, the Misses Keen. Also the following names: Mr Kelson Wright and his two sisters, Mr and Mrs James Fitzgibbon and daughter, Miss Berry, Mr and Mrs Samson Hickey, Mr Fagan, Mrs Boyle and family, Mr and Mrs Con Reardon and family, Mr M. Mulligan and family, Mr and Mrs John Evens, Mr and Mrs Edward Lonergan and family, Mr and Mrs John Langtry, Mrs and Mrs Pat Comerford and family, Mr and Mrs Fitzgerald and family, Miss Hennessy, Police Sergeant and Mrs Blake, Constable Thos. Walsh, The Misses Godwin, Mr and Mrs Patrick Coffey and family, Mr and Mrs Quinn and family, Mr and Mrs Beetham and family, Mr and Mrs Carmody and family. Others were in the congregation but I fail to recollect their names.

One Sunday morning the priest, after Mass, read out the list of the quarterly collections and at the bottom of the church there was one man who seemed to be an interested listener and so it proved he was, for as the priest closed up the list and was evidently finished, the intent one yelled out, "Michael O'Mara £1", followed by confusion.

I mentioned previously about a four-roomed cottage that was being used as a children's school conducted by a Miss Weir. Things have changed in the interval. The cottage has been transformed into a girls' school under the care of the Sisters of Mercy and became well patronised. Small boys were admitted up to a certain age. The first Sister in charge was a Sister Mary Gongaza. She was of English birth and when Bishop Matthew Quinn, the first Bishop of Bathurst and a brother of the Bishop of Brisbane, was over here on a visit and in search of Sisters, he asked if six from All Hallows would volunteer for a foundation in Bathurst. Six volunteered and Sister M. Gongaza was one of the six.

Sister Mary Malachy Tracey was placed in charge of St Patrick's. Besides the building mentioned the space under the church was utilized as there was fully 12 ft distant from the floor of the church to the ground. I will try to recall some of the pupil teachers: Minie Manough, Mary Ann Keating from Creek Street, City, Alice Hayes also City, Mary Pole, Valley.

A few additions are now warranted to complete these recollections.

First of all Father Matthew Devitt, ordained in Brisbane, went from the Valley to Dalby. In 1867 he, with several other priests, reacted against Bishop Quinn, left the diocese for the United States and were taken on for the diocese of New York where all were to remain with the exception of Father William Mason Walsh. He petitioned Bishop Quinn to return and subsequently left his mark in Townsville.

In the Archives too is a census book for "The Parish of Fortitude Valley" and signed "August 1st 1865, Fr M. Devitt". In summary: "General population: Married 753, Single 650, Servants 125, Total 1528". In flawless handwriting and well set out it stands as testimony to the conscientiousness of Fr Devitt. Coupled with Mr Kelly's tribute, his departure would seem to have been a great loss to the struggling diocese.

When Father Walsh left for Townsville in mid 1878, contemporary reports regretted the transfer of this "popular and devoted pastor". During his three years at St Patrick's, with his American experience behind him, he had established a successful Catholic Temperance Society, a related Benefit Society, initiated an adult self improvement course, and formed a boys' band.

The next pastor was the young, energetic and equally popular John Joseph Ahern. The Directory for 1880 details the spiritual activities of the week: Mass on

Sundays and Holy Days at 8 and 11 am; Catechism 3 pm; Vespers and Benediction at 7 pm; Mass on weekdays 7 am; Rosary and Night Prayers at 7 pm, and on Thursday evenings Benediction; Confessions on Saturdays 4-6 pm and 7-9 pm.

But by then it had become obvious that the church building was quite inadequate; in the words of the time, “the present church is altogether too small to accommodate the large congregation with anything like comfort, and besides like good Catholics as they are, they will rejoice to see an edifice raised up by their own piety and sacrifices which will be worthy to be called a house of God.”

In the first half of 1880, McGill Brothers Paragon Nursery property off Ann Street was acquired. With considerable money in hand the foundation stone of the new St Patrick’s was laid on 26th September, 1880, by Bishop Quinn. Four months later in the midst of diocesan problems, Father Ahern, ordained only five years, died suddenly and unexpectedly of sun stroke on 1st February 1881. He seems to be the first priest to be buried in Nudgee Cemetery.

When the new St Patrick’s church was opened on 3rd December, 1882, it was not the end of the Wickham Street church for it continued to be used as the school for several more years. The number attending the school in 1871 was 136. Ten years later there were “472 girls and infants”. Academically standards were high - for example in 1886 the Education Office Report on both State and R. C. schools shows that the Wickham Street Infants School attained the highest results with 72.9% while the Girls School was only 2% behind. Compare this with the last two on the list - Leichhardt Street Boys (State) 59.4%, and St Kilian’s Boys (Catholic) 55%.

While St Patrick’s, a non-vested school, was conducted by the Sisters of Mercy, the Department of Public Instruction listed the Head Teachers between 1866 and 1880 as Thomas Johnson, Mary White, Anne Fitzpatrick, Lucy Bridgeman, M. O’Connor, Margaret Conan, Mary Gracey and Mary Clarkin.

But the school was now inadequate. In April of 1887, the following resolutions were carried at a meeting:

1. A new school is absolutely and urgently needed.
2. That the present site in Wickham Street is too low down too crowded in with large buildings and situated in too great a thoroughfare to be available for a new school.
3. That land fronting Ivory Street is an excellent position for the contemplated new school. Among other considerations, “freedom from traffic” would reduce the risk young children are exposed to, while vicinity to the

tram would give easy access for children coming from a distance.

Cardinal Moran laid the foundation stone of the Ivory Street school on Sunday 4th December, 1887, so that it was completed for the school year of 1889. The old Wickham Street site was sold to John Watson at the end of 1888 and the buildings soon demolished. So ends the first thirty years of St Patrick's, Fortitude Valley.

Fr D. W. Martin

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