

BISHOP JOHN JOSEPH HOGAN

By Olive Hogan O'Connor

I am a great grand-niece of Bishop John J Hogan, and I have resided all my life close to where he was born and reared. It has given me great pleasure and an enormous sense of family pride to assemble this article on the life of Bishop John Joseph Hogan, illustrious and distinguished son of Caherguillamore, Grange. I have drawn from his books *Fifty Years Ago* and *On the Mission in Missouri* in order to sketch his life and achievements. Such is the detail and eloquence of the article written by Albert de Zutter on John Hogan's clerical life, I have elected to reproduce it in full, rather than attempt a synopsis.

Not only does what follows provide a most illuminating account of the life of Bishop Hogan, his childhood years, education, life in the priesthood and his monumental achievements in the Catholic Church; it also touches on social history of the times on both sides of the Atlantic.

John J Hogan, who was later to become Bishop of Kansas City, was born in Caherguillamore, Grange in May 1829. Catholic Emancipation in the British Empire was passed in the British Parliament on 10th April 1829 – a month before he was born. His parents were James Hogan of Caherguillamore, born in 1785, and Ellen Connor of Uregare, Dromin, born in 1792. They married in 1812. He was the youngest, but one, in a family of seven sons and two daughters. His mother died in 1832 when he was just three years old. His father, who didn't remarry, died in 1856, in his 71st year.

In his memoir, *Fifty Years Ago*, published in 1907, Bishop Hogan stated: "My father was well educated in the Irish and English languages, in the mathematics and Latin and Greek classics. My mother knew Irish and English and was up to the advanced common-school grade for her time. My father, though educated for a profession, had the good sense to confine his ambition to the safer and less contentious way of living as a farmer of land and a dealer in cattle and crops; and besides, the penal laws, then in force in Ireland, debarred Catholics from the learned professions and from Government office, unless upon recusancy of their faith, which, in my father's case, was an insuperable objection".

It would appear that the Hogans of the time were relatively well off. Recalling the home of his boyhood in his memoir, Bishop Hogan speaks of the evergreen hedges, venerable shade trees, kitchen garden and orchard, farmyard and out offices.

At the age of five, John attended the ‘hedge school’ at Rahen [*Rahin*], half a mile distant from the family residence, which was run by Andrew Slattery, accompanied by his “brothers and sisters and several neighbouring children”. The description ‘hedge school’, a relic of penal times, was still applied to the private or ‘pay’ schools held in various kinds of buildings in the pre-national school days of the early 19th century. Patsy Scott, a little boy of his own age and size, sat beside John. One day, according to the Bishop:

“Patsy drew a pin from his plaid dress and stuck it at me, and I drew a pin from my plaid dress and stuck it at Patsy. He cried and bawled, and I cried and bawled. Then the master jumped up from his chair and made straight away for us, rod in hand. We thought we were to be killed on the spot, and we roared and bawled seven times louder than before. All the boys and girls in the school got into roars of laughter. How long it took to quell the riot, I do not remember. But Patsy and Johnny soon became friends again and were good boys after that.”

When Patsy Scott and Johnny Hogan were in the ABC class, there sat beside them “a tall, towering, red-faced, bulky, bushy-headed fellow, the happy, good-natured giant of the school, between whose father and Andy Slattery, the schoolmaster, an agreement had been in existence for years to the effect that when George would have learned his ABCs successfully, George’s father would pay to the said Andrew Slattery, schoolmaster, the sum of five guineas in gold and – the further emolument of a full suit of best broadcloth and a silk Caroline hat – a bargain under which, as a matter of notoriety, Andy Slattery, schoolmaster, was the loser to his dying day”.

Forty years later, Bishop Hogan met the lad from his school days, who lacked sufficient interest in the ABC to learn it off by heart. “I found him as a patriarch of old, surrounded by his happy wife and a houseful of blooming children. He was then the owner of his father’s family home and broad acres.”

Apparently, the alphabet was taught in Andrew Slattery’s academy by learning couplets like the following:

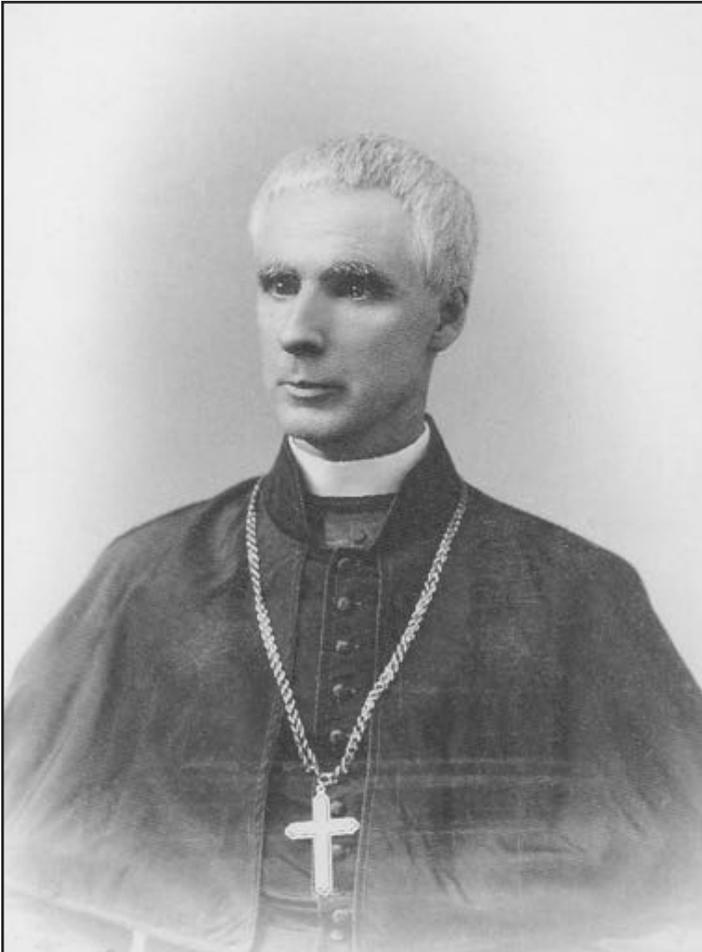
“A, a, was an ass hard laden with goods;
B, b, was a bear that lived in the woods.
C, c, was a cat that killed rats in the night;
D, d, was a dog that would snarl and bite.
E, e, was an elephant, and fifty years old;
F, f, was a fowler, both crafty and bold.”

Etc.

There were times when Andrew Slattery’s school became literally a hedge school, just like those schools of Penal Ireland, which because of the law’s prohibition of

schools conducted by Catholics, were held in the open air, in the shelter of hedges, or in other secluded places. According to Bishop Hogan:

“This little school at Rahen had one great attraction for its pupils, which happily fell to my lot to enjoy, for at that time the famous hedge schools of old were by no means a relic of the past in Ireland. When the dark, chilly nights of the winter of 1834-35 had passed away and given place to the bright, warm spring and early summer, Andy Slattery’s scholars joyfully exchanged the dimly lighted little school house, which was Master Andy’s residence, for a vicinal [*local or nearby*] sunny glade, sheltered by a thicket of hawthorns, where, under the leafy branches of ash and elm trees, they spread themselves at full length on the grass or sat upon stone seats, arranged in rows before the master’s chair. It was easy and pleasant to learn amid such surroundings. Our good Master Andy, at other times rigid and exacting, was then indulgent, condescending, and pleasant.”



Bishop John Joseph Hogan.

“The older students, boys and girls, and those more adolescent, learned spelling, reading and catechism and had copy books, arithmetics, slates and pencils.”

Looking back across the gulf of half a century, Andy Slattery’s pupil, John Hogan, observed: “But Rahen is no more; or, rather, what is Rahen now is not the Rahen that was in the former years. The teacher of the village school is gone – has gone long since to his heavenly reward.”

The beautiful little boys and girls that played at Rahen under the hawthorns and the elms, and that learned their lessons at the Rahen School are there no longer. Of the fifteen or twenty homes, wherein as many families dwelt in peace and contentment, not one remains.”

At the age of seven, John was sent to a second school, located in Holycross, one mile distant from the family residence and run by Michael Kelly. Young Hogan, with his companions, travelled to this school through the fields. “The way led to school by no public road, but by a private path through fields, meadows, and groves and along hawthorn hedges, where there were, in the season, apple blossoms in profusion, and many birds’ nests in the sweet-scented bushes in spring.”

John learned quickly at that Holycross School: “...or I conjecture I did so, from the fact, which I remember well, that I was able to write and read writing between my seventh and eight years”. He went on to say: “I know I did learn fast there. But my growing diligence was mainly due to the magic of the badge of office in the master’s hand. That keen-sighted master soon saw very well that sweet smiles and honeyed words had as much weight as chaff with most of the youngsters he had to manage. There was one kind of persuasion that had full value with those lads, and that was the rattle on the jackets on their backs from a cat-o’-nine tails of regulation pattern, or the bumps on their heads from blows with the brass door knob that decorated the handle end of the said cat.”

He recalls a period in 1837 when “Day after day detachments of red-coated British soldiers carrying guns, bayonets and knapsacks, with flags flying, regimental bands playing, and big drums beating, passed by our school house on the way to Cork to embark for Canada, where a bloody war was going on, and where (as it was said), all British soldiers were killed as soon as they landed. The reports that reached Ireland of the great slaughter going on in Canada made the poor soldiers down-hearted and caused many of them to desert on the way to Cork. As the several detachments marched by, all the little ones of the school, boys and girls, usually rushed pell-mell out of doors; and many were the sighs and tears from aching hearts and weeping eyes in pity for the poor soldiers who were going across the sea to be killed and who were never more to see Ireland again.”

As will be gleaned later on, Fr John Hogan was an able horseman, as was a necessity when he ventured on his missionary work into remote, wild and sometimes unchartered Missouri terrain. It is more than interesting, therefore, to read about his childhood riding experiences.

“Riding was one of our favourite sports in those days. We usually indulged in it on school holidays and when the master was sick, which meant we were scot-free until he had got over the measles. Our riding course comprised two large adjoining fields, called Barnhill and Feahmoor, which were traversed by lines of hillocks with sharp ascents and declivities and by steep earthen dikes or ramparts curtained

by water. This was the topography of Feahmoor, where the riding exploits took place. The Barnhill was rather rockier and, therefore, more suggestive of cracked skulls and broken bones of inexpert young jockeys. These fields, to the great delight of us youngsters, had a never-failing supply of lively, well-fed donkeys, young and old. Old donkeys were not boys' first choice, on account of their vicious habits of biting their riders' legs and rushing the riders against thorny hedges and stone walls. Young donkeys were more choice, as more inexperienced in warfare with bad boys, who usually wished to enjoy a ride without being put *hors de combat* [out of action due to injury]. To ride a fast donkey and hold on his back trotting and galloping and in spite of hoisting, kicking, and rearing constituted a boy an undergraduate in assmanship."

"But the honour of a diploma was reserved for the final test, to be made with the rider's face towards the donkey's tail. At this tournament, it was against the rules and was inconvenient besides, to use a bridle; but the rider might hold onto the wool as best he could. Success achieved under these circumstances was proclaimed by the whole field with vociferous rejoicing. Discomfiture, on the other hand, never failed to be followed by roars of side-splitting laughter, especially if the young knight-errant should happen to land heels up in a mud puddle or a ditch of water. Not every boy, after a defeat or two of that kind, would be willing to try it again; and boys with soiled jackets and pants and muddied shirt-tuckers were usually not gallant enough to face their mammas at home, for full well they knew what strong faith these mammas had in the virtue of the tough birch twig that was kept ready for use and was well seasoned."

"Our less exciting exercises were fishing, swimming, hurling, running, leaping, vaulting, wrestling, throwing a cast, climbing trees, playing leap-frog, scaling old castles and old abbey walls. In all these accomplishments, I was post-graduate at the ripe age of ten."

After some time, James Hogan arranged a private tutor for his son, a retired college professor, named Patrick Ignatius Mulcaire. Under the direction of Mr Mulcaire, during 1839, 1840 and 1841, John studied English, French, Greek and Latin. He also had religious instruction and was prepared for First Holy Communion and Confirmation, which he duly received. Referring to Mr Mulcaire, Bishop Hogan wrote: "It is to him I owe the gradual bending of my mind to the love of study and my emancipation from inordinate love of play and playmates. His appointment as my teacher was by the advice of my oldest brother, then a professed member of the Franciscan Order, a student in the College of St Isidore at Rome, where he died on the eve of his advancement to holy orders. At this stage of studies, being in my twelfth year, it was decided that I should contend with my equals at the classical schools; especially those most frequented by students for the ecclesiastical state."

Accordingly, John attended a school for the study of the classics at Meanus, where he was taught by Mr Thomas Heffernan. This school was taught in the Chapel of Meanus. Many years later, in 1869, on his way to attend the Vatican Council at Rome, he stopped for a moment at Meanus. "There, staring widely around, I looked for the old chapel; it was gone; no trace of it was to be found; the trees had disappeared; the walls had been levelled and scattered; the iron gate had been taken away; a new chapel of better construction had been erected nearby on another site. But the dear old chapel – the chapel of my childhood, with all its loving memories and tender associations – gone, gone, gone!"

John attended at Meanus for two years, and at the age of fourteen, on Thursday, 2nd March 1843, he entered one of the best schools for the study of the classics (only) in the Diocese of Limerick, at Croom, conducted by Mr Patrick Kenny, with



Mikey Hogan with his sister Mary in the kitchen of the old homestead of the Hogan family. It was here that the young John Joseph Hogan lived.

an attendance of fifty young men. He attended at Croom until he was transferred in January 1845 to another school teaching the classics, at Herbertstown in the Archdiocese of Cashel, intendedly for a higher grade of studies and a wider acquaintance with students. He recalled two other students at Herbertstown; Michael

Moriarty, of Grange, was ordained a priest in 1853, served in England and died in 1896; Jeremiah Moriarty, of Grange, who served in the Civil Service of the British Government in India.

For his last year of classics study (1846), it was thought that it would benefit him to be amongst students of the Diocese of Cloyne, who were always of fair reputation for diligence and attainments in study. "I was sent to Charleville, where there were two classical schools, the best in the south of Ireland. I was delighted with the young men, from whose ranks many of the priests of the diocese of Cloyne were to be chosen."

In the first days of the month of October 1848, John's father, who had directed his education, being then in his sixty-third year, met him and engaged him in a very serious conversation. It was pointed out to John by his father, that being in his nineteenth year and well educated, somewhat towards the ecclesiastical state,

it was time for him to choose a future, according to his own preference. John's decision was to become a priest. He also concluded that priests were not needed in Ireland, where for every vacancy, there were twenty or more applicants. Therefore, he was drawn towards missionary work, where "the harvest was great and the labourers few". He preferred "going where few had gone before me and where new paths had to be opened". "Of perils of rivers or of perils of the wilderness, I was not afraid." On Thursday, 9th October 1848, John informed his father of his decision and of the reasons for it. His father unhesitatingly gave him his necessary permission to depart and to begin at once to make preparations for the journey.

*Unabridged Article by Albert de Zutter, Catholic Key Editor, titled
"Founder of Kansas City, St Joseph Diocese honoured in his home parish"*

Bruff, County Limerick, Republic of Ireland – more than 150 years ago, a 19 year old Irishman left his home in the 'townland' of Caherguillamore in County Limerick to pursue his calling to the priesthood in the Archdiocese of St Louis, which then took in all of the state of Missouri. The year was 1848, and the young man was John J Hogan, who, in the course of his work in the New World, would found two dioceses in Western Missouri and build two cathedrals.

On August 15, 1999, another Irish-born prelate, Bishop Raymond J Boland of the Kansas City – St Joseph Diocese came to Bruff to pay tribute to that man and to the parish community that produced him and nurtured his vocation.

The young John Hogan was baptised on May 10, 1829, in the church in the townland (equivalent to an American township) of Grange, contiguous to Caherguillamore, and it was to the church in Grange that the people from the surrounding areas came on August 15, 1999, to celebrate the memory of one of their illustrious sons who gave formal birth to the Church in Missouri. The church in Grange is a mission of SS Peter and Paul Parish in Bruff, as is a church in Meanus, a few miles away. The same arrangement prevailed when John J Hogan was growing up in the area.

Bruff is a village with a population of about 500, about fifteen miles south of Limerick in the county of Limerick. The church at Grange is about three miles north of Bruff, and the church at Meanus, a small crossroads village, is about three miles west of the church at Grange.

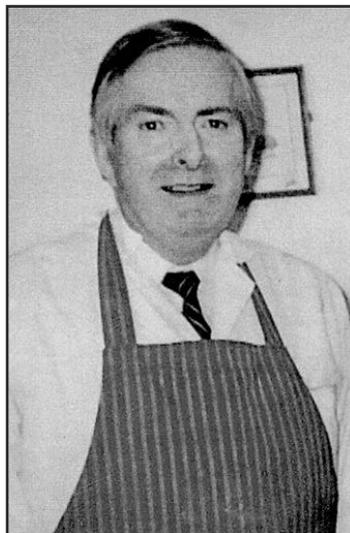
In 1848, Hogan was to follow his dream of becoming a priest in the New World; and set out from his family farm, first to Liverpool, and from there by American clipper ship to New Orleans, a journey of five weeks and 5,250

miles. From New Orleans, he took a riverboat, Big Missouri, the 1,250 miles up the Mississippi to St Louis. The boat brought with it a cholera epidemic, which was to ravage the population of St Louis in the ensuing year.

After four years in seminary, John Hogan was ordained and served in a parish in the Archdiocese of St Louis for five years. Then, in 1857, he received permission from his archbishop, Peter Richard Kenrick, to venture into the relatively untamed territory of north-western Missouri, to set up churches and serve whatever Catholics he found there.

Eleven years later, in 1868, he was to establish the Diocese of St Joseph in the northwest corner of the state, and twelve years after that, in 1880, he was to establish the Diocese of Kansas City from the Missouri River south to the Arkansas border. Both dioceses were carved out of the Archdiocese of St Louis, and that configuration would remain in effect until 1956 when the Dioceses of Jefferson City and Springfield-Cape Girardeau were instituted.

Thus, when he was made Bishop of Kansas City and continued to lead the Diocese of St Joseph as its administrator, Bishop Hogan, whose world as a boy extended but a few miles in any direction from his father's farm in Caherguillamore, had spiritual charge of about half the state of Missouri – an area larger than the entire island of Ireland (The state of Missouri covers 69,709 square miles, Ireland covers 32,509 square miles. The population of Missouri in 1997 was 5,358,692; that of Ireland 3,550,500).



Jimmy Hogan, great grand-nephew of the bishop.

In his homily, in the packed church in Grange, August 15, Bishop Boland, who was born in Tipperary and grew up in the city of Cork, in County Cork, just south of County Limerick, paid tribute to the exceptional contribution made by the people of the small area in County Limerick to the Church in Missouri, and also to the outstanding contribution of the entire Irish people to the Church in the English-speaking countries of the world. He noted that Ireland contributed more than one hundred bishops to that world since 1808, one of whom was Bishop Hogan. "I am grateful, and the people of our diocese are grateful to you for the contribution made by this son of your parish who was given the privilege of founding the two united dioceses, now known as the Diocese of Kansas City and St Joseph."

Because the first cathedral Bishop Hogan built was to be in the city of St Joseph, Bishop Boland said it followed naturally that it would be named after St Joseph. But the second, in Kansas City, Bishop Hogan named after the Immaculate Conception, a doctrine declared in 1854 stating that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was conceived without original sin. Bishop Boland noted that subsequently, the bishops of the United States dedicated the entire country to the Immaculate Conception.

A plaque mounted at the back of the Church of SS Patrick and Brigid in Grange expresses the gratitude of the people of the Dioceses of Kansas City – St Joseph. The plaque was unveiled by Bishop Boland and the Parish Priest of Bruff, Father James Costello, after the noon Mass. Bishop Boland said the plaque honoured Bishop Hogan and the people of his home territory, and added: “But, we are also honouring all those thousands of Irish people who were forced to flee the country in the wake of the Famine of 1845 to 1849. Without them, we would not have many English-speaking Catholics in the world.”

He said the Catholic population of the United States now numbers 62.5 million, 40 percent of them having Irish roots, and that the Diocese of Kansas City – St Joseph has had eleven churches named for St Patrick, four for St Brigid and two for St Columba. “We are honouring all of the priests and people who provided the English-speaking Catholic population in the United States”, Bishop Boland said.

Bishop Hogan wrote in *Fifty Years Ago*, his memoir of his youth in Ireland, that he was aware of a calling to become a priest, but not in Ireland, where “They were not needed as there were twenty or more applicants for each vacancy”. “How times have changed”, Bishop Boland remarked in his homily. “We are also marking the end of an era”, he said, as the supply of young men for the priesthood has dried up in Ireland, as it has elsewhere in the English-speaking world.

Among those Father Hogan wanted to serve when he ventured into north-western Missouri were the Irish workers who were extending the railroads westward from St Louis. “Although he provided spiritual leadership for emigrants from many nations streaming west in search of cheap land, gold and adventure, he had a special spot in his heart for his beloved Irish, and he also brought many of his Hogan relatives to Western Missouri”, Bishop Boland said. He said there were as many Hogans in Western Missouri as there are in County Limerick.

Bishop Hogan set up a mission circuit which he traversed by horseback, carriage and rail, in all sorts of weather, Bishop Boland said, including “brutally hot summers and frigid winters”. As he was advancing in years, Bishop Hogan visited Rome for the last time. Upon his return, he was taken off the train in Cameron, MO, by Irish railroad workers from County Limerick, whose parish

church was named after St Munchin, the patron saint of Limerick, Bishop Boland said. The people of St Munchin's Church, in a display of devotion, carried him in a triumphal procession from Cameron to Kansas City, a distance of about fifty miles.

Following the Mass and unveiling of the plaque to Bishop Hogan, the congregation was invited to an outdoor reception under a large tent, just outside the churchyard. Among those attending were relatives of Bishop Hogan, including Michael "Mikey" Hogan, 91 year old grand-nephew of Bishop Hogan who lived in the original Hogan homestead in Caherguillamore; Brigid (Hogan) O'Connor, third cousin; Sisters, Annie Kennedy and Mary Minahan, grand-nieces of Bishop Hogan; and Minahan's daughter, Sister of Mercy, Frances Minahan. [*Also in attendance were Olive Hogan O'Connor, Rahin, great grand-niece of Bishop Hogan and her husband, Martin*]

Sister Minahan said her mother's and aunt's uncle, Monsignor John J Hogan, the bishop's nephew, was at Bishop Hogan's bedside when the bishop died in Kansas City in 1913.

"On the Mission in Missouri 1857-1868"

The book titled *On the Mission in Missouri 1857-1868* was written in 1892 by Rt Rev John Joseph Hogan, Bishop of Kansas City. He dedicated the book as follows: "To the Catholics of the Interior of North Missouri in appreciation of their fervent faith and Christian virtues. This little volume is respectfully and affectionately dedicated by their sincere friend and humble servant, The Bishop of Kansas City and Administrator of St Joseph."

Bishop Hogan's writings are clear and succinct, without unnecessary embellishments. They provide a clear sense of the priest and the man and of his principles, values and beliefs; and overall, of his deep concern and affection for people. The accounts of events in Missouri during the years 1857-1868 are fascinating and revealing. It is clear that apart from his piety and goodness, he was physically and mentally tough and resolute, endowed with courage, and not fearful of placing himself in harm's way for the sake of others. His capacity for detailed observation and recall were remarkable. His sense of humour also shone through.

I have extracted the following passages from the said book. In their aggregate, they do not convey the whole story of the book, but they do demonstrate a tremendous strength of character. The reader is encouraged to read the said book in its entirety.

Slavery in Missouri

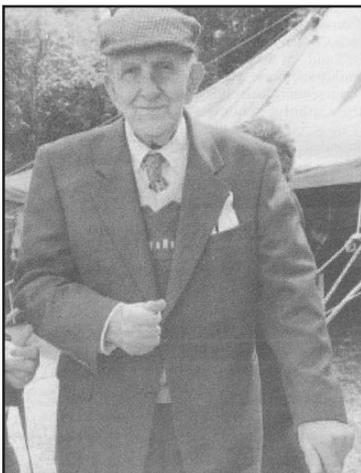
"The black people of whom there were about fifty onboard, all athletic men, suffered many cruel hardships. Their keepers, a few armed men, held them

chained together in squads, so as to hinder them from getting away at landing places. At night, formed into line, shoulder to shoulder, their faces turned one way, manacled with iron handcuffs man-to-man, they were made to lie down on their backs, on the boiler deck of the boat, without pillows, mattresses, or covering – a position they could not change for one instant during the whole night, not even so much as to lie on one side. The groans of the poor fellows, as they clanked their manacled hands against the deck or dragged and slashed in pain their booted heels on the rough boards on which they lay, were truly heart-rending. They were accused of no crime, were torn away without a minute's notice from their homes, husbands separated from wives and children, sons separated from parents, brothers and sisters. All were forced to leave dear friends and loved scenes behind them. Love of money caused it all. Traders had bought them and were taking them to trade them again, and for a much higher price, in the slave markets of Saint Louis and New Orleans.

Seven years before, when a student of the Theological Seminary of St Louis, the task was given me to write an essay on liberty, which, like all such essays, was to be read and criticised before the rhetoric class. My subject led me to make some comments on Negro slavery, and somewhat in the strain of Thomas Moore and Daniel O'Connell on the same subject. 'Young man,' said the Professor to me, 'I have nothing to say to you on the merit of your essay, but this: when you go on the mission, if you give expression to sentiments such as these, you will be driven from home decorated with a coat of tar and feathers, and fortunate you will be, if nothing worse befall you.'

John the Baptist

"I asked and got the loan of a horse, from Mr Patrick Tooey, a good hearted Irishman, a Catholic, a contractor on the railroad. 'The horse I give you,' he



Mikey Hogan, grand-nephew of the bishop.

said, 'seems to have been intended for you. Your name is John as I know. Your patron saint is very likely St John the Baptist. This horse is John the Baptist. He was so-called by his late owner from whom I bought him – a Baptist preacher in these backwoods here.' I felt a shudder at the irreverence of calling an animal by so sacred a name. And yet that name gave me fresh courage. I felt that my heavenly patron St John the Baptist, whom I had followed in measure into the wilderness, would lead me to some place where I could do some good. At the end of the day's journey devoid of definite purpose, I found myself entering a

delightful little town, charmingly situated in an open prairie surrounded by woods. It was Chillicothe, a place of about 1,000 inhabitants.”

Milan

“Approaching Milan, with its few and primitive dwellings in sight, I was suddenly and without previous notice, brought to a stop, by the wild behaviour of a disorderly crowd of young men and boys, dressed in ragged jeans and coon-skin caps, seemingly under the influence of liquor, who with boisterous language were firing volleys of rifle shots across my way, from the woods on one side of the road where they were standing, against a target fastened to a tree on the other side. The crashing and whizzing of the bullets so terrified my horses that I could not proceed. Crouching in the buggy and reining my horses around, I was soon in full retreat and at a faster gait than I advanced on Milan, having supposed from what I saw and as I afterwards learned, there were no Catholics in the place.”

John the Baptist Again

“From Linn and Livingston I went westward through Grundy and Daviess counties but found no Catholics except one family, temporarily residing at Gallatin. From Gallatin, I went southwest into DeKalb country, and thence south and south-east into Clinton and Caldwell counties. On this journey, I proceeded by easy stages on horseback, as John the Baptist was weighed down, less by the rider than the large satchel and saddlebags, containing vestments, chalice, missal, altar-stone, and other necessities for the mission. Crossing Grind Stone Creek, a tributary of Grand River, flowing in a northerly direction, in the south-east part of the DeKalb County, at about midday, the weather being warm, I permitted John, my namesake, to wade in past knee deep, and dropping the bridle loose on his neck, I let him stoop down to drink. Having drunk to his content, delighted with the clear, cold water, he sat down leisurely, leaning over on one side and keeping his head above water. I went over too, endeavouring all the while, to keep my head, as the horse did, above water. We were both in the Jordan. I hastened to get out of it. He seemed in no hurry to finish the ceremony. The whole occurrence was so ludicrous, and the Baptist evidently so well up to it, that my sides shook with laughter. As the weather was dry and the sun bright and warm, the books and vestments, spread out on the grassy prairie, soon regained their former good condition. The poor missionary, however, very meekly submitted to the drying process, his raiment remaining on his back. Soon, all put to rights again, I was once more on the move, endeavouring to reach the hamlet of Mirabile before nightfall, the place being then fully fifteen miles distant.”

Discouragement

“Discouragement and disappointment heavier than before fell on me and brooded over my mind. Throughout all North Missouri, so far as I had travelled, there was not one Catholic Church or hope of one. True, indeed, a lot of ground had been offered for a church in Chillicothe. But whence wherewith to build? The poor railroad labourers, good Catholics, were very generous, and could be depended upon to give of their slender means, for this purpose. But they, too, were now, alas, at great disadvantage. Distress and disappointment had come to stare them in the face. The banks throughout the United States had just failed. Credit was everywhere broken. Public works everywhere suspended. The disastrous financial crash of 1857 was on the face of the country – a dark overhanging cloud that took many a day to dispel.”

The Remedy

“It seemed to me to be my duty to do whatever might be in my power, to aid these people to rise from the condition of servitude, to ownership and cultivation of land, so as to secure for them, beyond doubt, a settled and permanent mode of existence that would accord better with their higher social aspirations and religious principles. This, however, could not be done in North Missouri, where land was held at too high a price.

I had heard that there were still remaining unsold large tracts of government land in Southern Missouri, that could be bought for one dollar an acre, and some of it for a less price; and that it was of a moderate fertility, though much inferior to the land in North Missouri. One dollar an acre seemed to me, to be within the possible reach of comparatively poor people. Having procured from the district land office at Jackson, Cape Girardeau County, Missouri, plots and surveys of wide tracts of vacant government lands in the said region of the country, I lost no time setting out and journeying to see these lands.”

The Shanty in the Rosinweeds

“Travelling across the tributaries of Van Dusen Creek in the south-east part of Linn County, I noticed smoke rising from a little cabin, not much higher than the brambles and rosinweeds by which it was surrounded. Approaching, I knocked slightly on the board roof of the little house. A lady’s voice spoke ‘Come in.’ Entering, I found two little children and their mother. After a word or two of salutation and inquiry, she said her husband had gone away some distance looking for employment. I could suspect from the manner and conversation that she was a Catholic. I told her I was a priest, and I gave her my name. The news gave her great joy. She said that she and her husband were Catholics, that their children were as yet unbaptised, that they came to Missouri,

having lately left a remote district in Illinois, where there was no Catholic Church. As she expressed a wish to have her children baptised, I immediately began getting my ritual, stole and surplus ready, to administer the Sacrament. Soon there was a halt. 'Where are the sponsors,' said I. She replied there were none near, and that if it would not be too long to wait, she would send her husband, upon his return home, to look for sponsors, although she did not know that he could find any.

I could not wait, not knowing how long it might be before sponsors could be got. Neither could I go away, leaving the children unbaptised. I proceeded with the ceremony, and when the moment came for the baptism, taking the children one after another from the hands of the mother, I put them in turn on my knee and baptised them. Then I continued the journey.'

Dying in a Cold Cabin

"Travelling along the railroad line, at a point where work was seemingly suspended, I was passing by an apparently deserted shanty, into which, however, I happened to look, not supposing anyone to be in such a place. To my surprise, I saw several little children, poorly clad, crawling on the bare earthen floor, and near them, on a sort of bed made of sticks and twigs covered with hay, a woman lying speechless and in the agony of death. There was no fire in the little cabin which seemed like a deserted stable. Through the open door and the wide-open chinks between the logs, the cold, damp wind was blowing.

Each minute seemed likely to be the last for the poor mother. And the perishing little ones on the floor, too young to know anything of their sad condition, gave symptoms by their cries that death would soon end their miseries likewise. Convinced from all the circumstances that she belonged to one of the railroad camps, I tried to arouse her to consciousness, but my effort was in vain. Kneeling by her bedside, I gave her Absolution, Extreme Unction, and the Plenary Indulgence.

Then, going as fast as I could to the railroad camp about two miles distant, I informed the people there of the deplorable condition of the poor family in the open stable, on the river bank, near the hillside. They had known of such a family but had thought that the husband was in care of them. Hastening to the place, they arrived in time to see the poor woman die. The children were saved, however. The husband had gone forty miles away looking for work. When he returned, his little children were cared for by strangers, and his beloved wife was lying nearby in the woods in her grave."

Born in a Stable

"About sixty miles west of where this good lady died and lies buried, another such sad event occurred, revealing the hardships and woes to which poor



Tony Hogan, great grand-nephew of the bishop.

emigrants were exposed in those early days, on their long journeys in search of homes. A very decent and pious Catholic family that had been settled for years on a farm in Wisconsin sold their lands and homestead there to better their condition. In a tent-covered wagon drawn by a pair of good horses, the father and mother and young children, accompanied by an elderly lady, a relative of the family, travelled day after day on their long journey of four hundred miles, towards their place of destination, the neighbourhood of which they reached as the last piercing winds of March were passing away, with a light covering of snow on the ground.

In a deep and sheltered hollow at a place called McDonald's Branch, in the north-west corner of Caldwell County, the good father of the family finding a log house or stable unoccupied which seemed to have no owner, availed himself of the opportunity presented, to make use of it as a temporary residence or resting place for his family, during a hasty journey he intended to make to his late home, to make final disposal of some business there.

He had not gone far when a great trouble befell his little family. The dear mother of his children gave birth to twins, far away from human habitation, and without the necessary care that such occasion required. Death seized the mother. I was happily there in time to administer the last Sacraments to her. Next, I baptised two little babies. The stable scene reminded me of Bethlehem; I called them Joseph and Mary. So sweet and helpless seemed the little angels to me, that I felt strongly moved to fold them in my cloak within my arms and take them away, but God, who loved them much more than I could, had a place in Heaven waiting for them. They too soon passed away to the fond embraces of their loving mother in a better world. Mother and children lie buried in one grave. God and His Angels are looking down forever on their sacred resting place."

Church Building at Chillicothe

"I now turned my attention to the erection of the church at Chillicothe, for which I had got a site sometime previous. The building was to be a frame, seventy feet long, twenty-five feet wide and eighteen feet storey, with bell tower, sacristies, altar, communion rail, pews, confessional, choir gallery, and stained-glass windows. I let the contract for the foundation to a man who made strong preferential claim for the job because he was a Catholic, as he said. He said, moreover, he was from Chicago, where, as he stated, he was well known and had built much elegant masonry. The foundation wall, which was to have the

usual depth in the ground, was to be twenty inches above ground. It was to be built of good rubble masonry, with dressed stone along the front of the building and hammered stone along the sides and end.

Soon the stone was on the ground, of good quality, prepared according to contract, and the work was to be commenced at once. It was well known, as a matter spoken of, that I intended to be absent for some time on a missionary tour through the neighbouring counties. The contractor, aware of my intention, requested me to pay him in advance for the work. He said he was out of money, that the stone was on the ground ready, that it would be laid in the wall in a few days, and that upon my return I would find the work done and to my entire satisfaction. I paid him in full and set out forthwith on my journey. When I had left, he sold the cut and hammered stone to be used in another building, and then built the foundation of the church of the cheapest stone he could find. Afterwards skipping from town, he sought pastures new, hoping no doubt, in a world full of fools, soon to find another verdant young clergyman.

Arriving home, I went to inspect the work and found that I could kick it to pieces with the heel of my boot. I soon, however, had the rotten stone and crumbling wall rebuilt with better material, and by an honest mechanic. The superstructure was of green oak framing timbers, joists, studding, rafters, and sheathing, cut to order at a neighbouring saw-mill. The weather-boarding, shingles, flooring, doors, frames, altar and pew boards, and boards for finishing, also nails and hardware, were bought in St Louis, shipped by boat to Brunswick, and thence by a smaller boat that plied on the Grand River, to Chillicothe landing.”

Chillicothe and the Fine Arts

“The stained-glass windows were made in Saint Louis at Miller’s Stained Glass factory, thence were shipped by boat to Hannibal, thence by rail to Shelbina, the western terminus at the time of the Hannibal and St Joseph Railroad, and thence by wagon to Chillicothe, where they arrived safe, not a square inch of glass broken. Alas, the windows which were really beautiful were not suffered to shower their rainbow tints very long over the secluded little sanctuary. A rather too warm sermon from the fervid young missionary, against forbidden secret societies, brought the gentlemen of grips and signs to visit the chapel at the midnight hour, and to belabour with barbarous sticks and guns the artistic little gems, brought like pearls from afar, that were willing to live on and shine for God, even in the depths of the wilderness. Henceforward its windows were to be of vulgar glass.”

Society in Southern Missouri

“The maidens and swains married young, usually before twenty, often at sixteen, and their married life was remarkably virtuous and happy. The marriage

dowry was usually a one-room log house. The young man was fortunated by his father with a yoke of oxen and a plough. The bride was dowered by her mother with wealth of homespun dresses and household fabrics of like manufacture. Timber from a near neighbouring saw-mill was easily framed into a variety of articles of household furniture, and the eyes of the young couple were nonetheless delighted with it, for being pure of veneer or varnish, of which their rural surroundings gave them no knowledge whatever. Uncle Sam had given them a homestead of three hundred and twenty acres, at twelve and a half cents per acre. There was no reason in the world why they should not be happy. Moreover, the young wife had been taught by her mother to knit, spin, weave and sew. The young husband had been taught by his father to tend sheep and cattle, and to cultivate cotton and corn. The education of husband and wife could be depended upon to procure them a living. The plough cultivated plots and furrows in the field. The wheel and loom wrought fabrics at home. There was no need of the merchant's ship, bringing goods from afar. No need of town fashions, or of store clothes. Willing hands and humble hearts made the one-room log cabin a sacred place and a happy home."

Waterlogged

"On a summer's night in 1858, travelling westward through Linn and Livingston counties in a four horse mail stage crowded with passengers, and in care of a driver unacquainted with, and then on his first trip over the road, the horses rushed over a bridge spanning Medicine River, and thence onward unchecked to the low land on the west side, which for miles across and up and downstream, was covered like the sea with water from a recent cloud burst. The horses at once got terrified and unmanageable and floundered about in the water, kicking and pulling and jerking against each other. Soon the horses and stage came to a standstill, the water being up to the horses' sides, and rising.

The passengers became greatly alarmed, and that more so as being strangers and unacquainted with the place, they thought every moment they were about to sink to rise no more. The driver, the most terrified of all, was literally at sea, having lost his presence of mind as well as his reckoning. Dark night brooded over the scene which was but sky and water everywhere around; nor was there a friendly lighthouse on the distant shore to cheer with its silvery rays the trackless water's wide expanse.

Fortunately, there was one aboard the stage, but though not to the manner born in North Missouri, had been there for some time of late, and had taken observations in passing through the country. Electing himself captain of the drowning stage, he gave his orders as follows. 'Driver, down with you from that seat, into the water. Unhitch your wheel horses and halter them to the



Mikey Hogan and dog with James Canon Costello.

body of the stage. Next, unhitch your leaders. Mount one of them while I mount the other. Passengers, be not afraid, I know your danger and shall soon get help to rescue you. Driver, follow me I know the way.' [Father Hogan obtained assistance from a farmer and his sons, some two miles away, who provided oxen to haul the stage from the rising water to dry land.]

On calling the roll of passengers it was found that, although none of them had drowned or died of fright, most of them were more injured by bites of mosquitoes; the ladies, as usual in such cases, having suffered most. In a few minutes, a liberal purse was made up for the daring ox drivers. The horses, once more in harness and on solid ground, were bounding forward to make up lost time."

The Deathly Chasm

"It will always remain fresh in my grateful memory, that I am indebted to Almighty God's Infinite Mercy for my safety in twenty-one railroad wrecks of more or less destructiveness, through which I passed in those times [American Civil War] so wasteful of human life. Indeed, it used to seem to me that death was very near me, ever hovering at my back and shoulders. Such feelings, however, did not give me much concern, as I had learned through sense of duty to disregard danger.

The many railroad wrecks that occurred were not all the direct result of battle. They were oftener its indirect results. The railroads as property were worth nothing to their owners. Nor was the future all that bright, that they ever would be of any value to anyone, so probable did it seem that the war would destroy everything. Hence, the valueless railroads were suffered to go out of repair, and to lapse into a most unserviceable condition. And if any repairs at all were made, it was usually under military protection for military purposes, and the repairs made were very temporary."

A Perilous Night

"Saturday, September 24, 1864, I set out from Chillicothe by train to Macon City, where I was to change cars for Mexico, in Audrain County, the point of my destination; intending to celebrate Mass there next day, Sunday, the third Sunday of the month, which I usually gave to Mexico.

At Macon City where it was well known I would be on the train that day, as I was changing cars, I was met by a messenger sent to intercept me for a sick call some miles distant in the country. I could not refuse attending the sick call, though attending it would necessarily cause me to lose the train then under full steam to set out for Mexico – and the only train going there before Monday. The great disappointment of the Catholics gathering from far and near at Mexico on the third Sunday of the month, which was the Sunday set apart for them, disconcerted me in my willing efforts for their sake, for they were pious good Christians. Yet to abandon them was a duty in order not to deprive the dying Christian of the last helps of religion.

The sick call attended; I returned to Macon City about sunset, with the grim determination on my features to make a night journey by handcar to Mexico, sixty miles distant. I knew that I could depend on the railroad section men to carry me, by successive relays from place to place, over the distance. The Macon City section men, informed of my purpose, although tired after the day's work, hastily partook of supper, and well oiling the heavy machinery of their handcar, put it on the track and put me on it with them, and then we were away, speeding southward on our journey. In an hour, we had passed over their section of the road, ten miles to Jacksonville. The Jacksonville men soon had their handcar on the track, and we rode on it, in an hour, ten miles to Allen, which place is now called Moberly. The Allen men made their run of ten miles in an hour to Renick. The Renick men, asleep when we called on them, were soon up and out on the track, and away on the course.

Instantly, in the flash of our headlight lantern, we saw armed men ahead of us, with levelled revolvers calling us to halt. We halted. A number of them mounted our handcar, and with a harsh command to us from the captain to go on, on we went. They stayed on our handcar for several miles, not saying a word the while. Again the captain cried, halt. We halted. They alighted, and ordered us to go on. We went on, glad to be free, not knowing whether they were friends or foes who had pressed us into their service. As they wore no uniforms we conjectured they were guerrillas, probably belonging to the band that had robbed Huntsville in that neighbourhood the day previous, and now very likely reconnoitring the federal force encamped at Sturgeon, some miles before us.

We went on to the Sturgeon outposts, where we were halted by the pickets, and by them taken to camp headquarters, where, having given satisfactory account of ourselves, we got a written order to pass through the federal lines and beyond the camp. It was now midnight, and there yet remained twenty-two miles journey before us. The next relay of men took me eight miles, to

Centralia. The Centralia men, aroused from their slumbers, soon had their handcar on the track, and with them I proceeded over the intervening distance, twelve miles, to Mexico; where I arrived at half past two o'clock Sunday morning. I was once again, as at Sturgeon, halted by the federal pickets, and by them taken to camp headquarters, where having satisfactorily accounted for myself, I was again furnished with a military pass to go through the lines." [Fr Hogan celebrated Sunday Mass as he had planned].

The Disappointed Wedding

"On Tuesday morning, January 22nd, 1861, after a weary night of travel on a slow train, from Mexico, by way of Macon City, to Chillicothe, I set out in a two-horse sleigh, on a journey that was to take the whole day, to go to the neighbourhood of Carrollton in Carroll County, to marry a couple there that evening. The friends of the parties to be married, who had called on me some time previous, to make arrangements with me for the solemn occasion appointed by them for that day, besought me to make the journey to Carroll County on the day previous to that set for the marriage, so as to prevent disappointment that might otherwise possibly occur.

I could not accede to their wishes, as I had to keep my regular appointments for Mass at Mexico on the third Sunday of the month, after which I would necessarily have to wait for the first northbound train, which, according to its schedule time, was not to pass Mexico until Monday noon, and by connection with another train at Macon City, was not to reach Chillicothe until fifteen minutes before two o'clock on Tuesday morning. The journey by train was made throughout on schedule time. After my arrival at Chillicothe, I took a short rest. Soon after daylight, I set out in a two-horse sleigh with driver for Carroll County.

The weather was intensely cold. Deep snow had covered the ground, and it was freezing hard through an azure blue atmosphere, with scarcely perceptible sunshine. We crossed Grand River on the ice, and without risk, as heavily loaded teams had made the frozen river a travelled roadway. Afterwards, driving over the level alluvial lands along the west bank of Shoal Creek, between it and Utica, in going over the slippery surface of a frozen lake, from which the wind had blown away the snow, we noticed that one of the horses was not properly shod for the journey, as he was constantly slipping on the glassy surface. Soon, in spite of all we could do to prevent the accident, that poor horse fell down heavily and was with great difficulty got to stand up and trust to his feet again. That was the first accident and delay in 'the haste to the wedding' which had now or never to be played to time.

After a little, the horses were on the move once more, slowly at first, then gradually limbering to the task, a high and steady rate of speed was gained. Having passed Shoal Creek and the frozen lagoons along its banks, the rolling

prairies through the Blue Mound country and over the borders into Carroll County were passed in speed and safety, and there seemed no doubt whatever that the marriage rendezvous would be reached in good time.

But disappointment will come anon to mar the fullest hopes and cloud the brightest scenes. Some miles further on, and within one hour's drive of the end of the journey, when near Bogard's Mound, in crossing a wooden bridge without parapets, that spanned a frozen stream, one of the horses affrighted by the loose shaky planks under his feet, shied badly, and shoved the other horse sidelong over the bridge, with the result that one horse and the sleigh were on the bridge, and the other horse was on his back on the ice below. Having scanned the situation, we hastily unhitched the horse on the bridge from the sleigh, and tied him by the halter to a tree nearby; then going to the relief of the horse that was down, we found him on his back, trembling and stunned, his four legs standing out from his body, straight upright. Nothing could induce him to rise, or to make an effort to do so. He suffered himself to be shoved and turned around and around on his back on the ice, his limbs seeming to grow stiffer all the while.

At length, when he had rested himself well, and when the fright had left him, he seemed inclined to make efforts to rise. Then, some brambles placed along his sides and around him, he succeeded in raising, and getting on his feet again. Upon examination, we found he was uninjured, though somewhat bruised and greatly frightened and stunned. It required considerable time to limber him, and get him ready for work, by rubbing his limbs, and relaxing them by exercise. Then the harness had to be re-adjusted and tied and knotted together. Afterwards, the horses were brought together and hitched to their traces. The whole loss of time by the accident was fully three hours. Already night had set in. Six miles remained to be travelled, necessarily at a slow gait.

The wedding had come and gone. And there was no courier near, to be sent forward in speed, to announce the completion of the journey with its reverses. At length we arrived, tired, weary and disheartened. The marriage feast had been partaken of. 'The lights were fled, the garlands dead, the banquet hall deserted.' The marriage party with the bride and bridegroom had set out in sleighs towards Lexington to have the marriage duly solemnised there.

I did my best. It was a great disappointment. But the causes were beyond my control. And now, though more than thirty years have elapsed, my heart still beats with pity for them, for having had to go so far through the cold winter's night, for the performance of a sacred duty, the appointed minister of which was near at hand, even at their very doors, if they but knew of his approach."

“Mystery of the Irish Wilderness”

At this point, I quote from the introduction to the book *Mystery of the Irish Wilderness*, written by Leland & Crystal Payton, published by Lens & Pen Press in 2008. The book dwells on the ‘mystery’ surrounding the fate of Irish immigrants, whom Father Hogan helped to settle just before the American Civil War. By the end of the war, the Irish colony had vanished, without explanation.

“Natives refer to a vast, thinly populated region, between the Current and Eleven Point rivers, as the Irish Wilderness. Hikers know it as a 16,500-acre parcel of the federal wilderness system. Historians can document it was once the site of a bold experiment by Father John Joseph Hogan to transport a group of Famine Irish into a virgin forested tract of government land, just before the Civil War. By war’s end, the colony had vanished.”

“Many themes come together in this story”, explains Crystal. “Immigration, war, and the challenge of being Catholic in a fundamentally Protestant culture. Going from Ireland in economic collapse to the wilds of the Missouri Ozark frontier, required extraordinary courage and faith.”

Legends grew about the fate of the Irish colony, and these are explored in the book, which is informative and well worth reading.



James Canon Costello, Donal Madden and Bishop Boland after the Mass concelebrated in Grange before the unveiling of the commemorative plaque to Bishop Hogan, August 1999. *Limerick Leader* pic by Declan Hehir

The area in question will continue to be known as “The Irish Wilderness”, as laid down in the laws of the USA; a fitting monument to the Irish souls who settled there for a time, and to the wonderful Rahin man, who came to their aid, Bishop John J Hogan.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That this Act may be cited as the “Irish Wilderness Act of 1984”. Sec, 2, (a) In furtherance of the purposes of the Wilderness Act (16 USC 1131-1136), certain lands in the Mark Twain National Forest, Missouri, which comprise approximately sixteen thousand five hundred acres, as generally depicted on a map entitled “Irish Wilderness”, dated March 27, 1984, are hereby designated as wilderness and shall be known as The Irish Wilderness.