

ST PATRICK'S PARISH

A brisk pedal down Kaharoa Road, across the paddocks from the cross-roads to the top of Chinaman's Hill, where speed increased, and then the slog up Bedford Street to St Patrick's Church for Mass at 11 a.m. — following Mass there were hot pies and other "goodies" to be had in the tea-rooms at the bakehouse at the top of Bedford Street.

These are some memories the writer has, of St Patrick's Parish 50 years go when Father Hegarty, followed by Father Broughton were in charge.

The beginnings of the parish are to be found much further back in time than the writer's hazy memories.

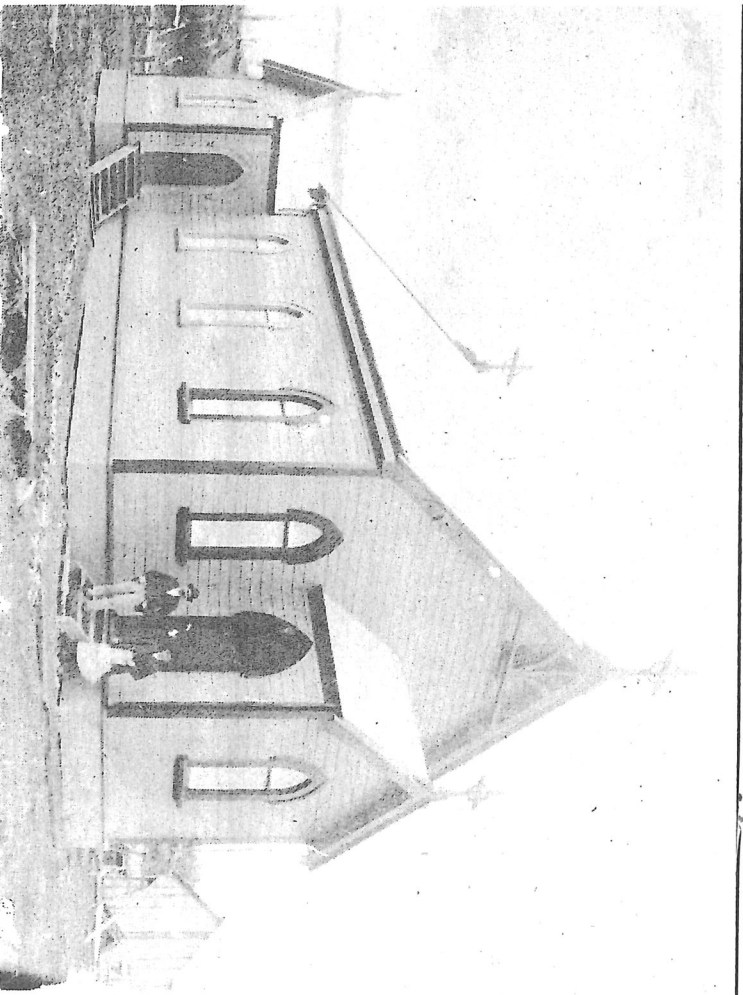
No doubt the first Catholic priest to visit Patea, would have been Father Pezant, who arrived in New Plymouth in 1852 and journeyed throughout Taranaki on foot. In 1865 Father Rolland took charge of the parish from White Cliffs to Kai Iwi. He was military chaplain as well as parish priest, and ministered at the military encampment at Patea.

Dean Grogan, in 1879 was appointed in charge of the Hawera Parish, which included Patea. He was responsible for the building of the church of St Patrick, which was opened by Bishop Redwood on December 18, 1881. This church was replaced by the present St Patrick's in 1958.

Dean Thomas McKenna was the first parish priest appointed to Patea, and arrived here in 1891. Eight years later Father McGrath arrived, and he was responsible for the establishment of the Sisters of St Joseph in the parish. The Sisters commenced teaching in the school in 1904. Many will remember the old convent next to the school and which was replaced in 1970 by the present convent beside the church. The school grew and was enlarged just prior to World War I, and as the years passed, it underwent further "face-lifts". A new floor was laid during the time of Father McNeill and the ceiling lowered while Father McLaughlin was parish priest. When Father McLaughlin left the parish, the school had a new classroom, sick-bay and library, and a staffroom for the teachers, which overlooks the playing area.



Father Rohan



Above: The original St Patrick's Church. Below: The second church and the original Presbytery.

Since the 50th jubilee of the Borough, undoubtedly the best known Parish Priest, would have been Father Rohan, who arrived in 1937 and served Patea and Waverley till 1955. When Waverley was made a separate parish then, Father Rohan continued to serve the parish of Patea until 1971, when he retired to Taupo where he died in 1972.

Following Father Rohan's retirement, the parish priests have been Fathers McNeill and McLaughlin, and at the time of writing, a new parish priest, Father John Dykes, has arrived.

Under the guidance of Father Dykes, may the parish continue to grow with the Borough, and advance into the 21st century with the faith, strength and determination which brought it into the 20th century.

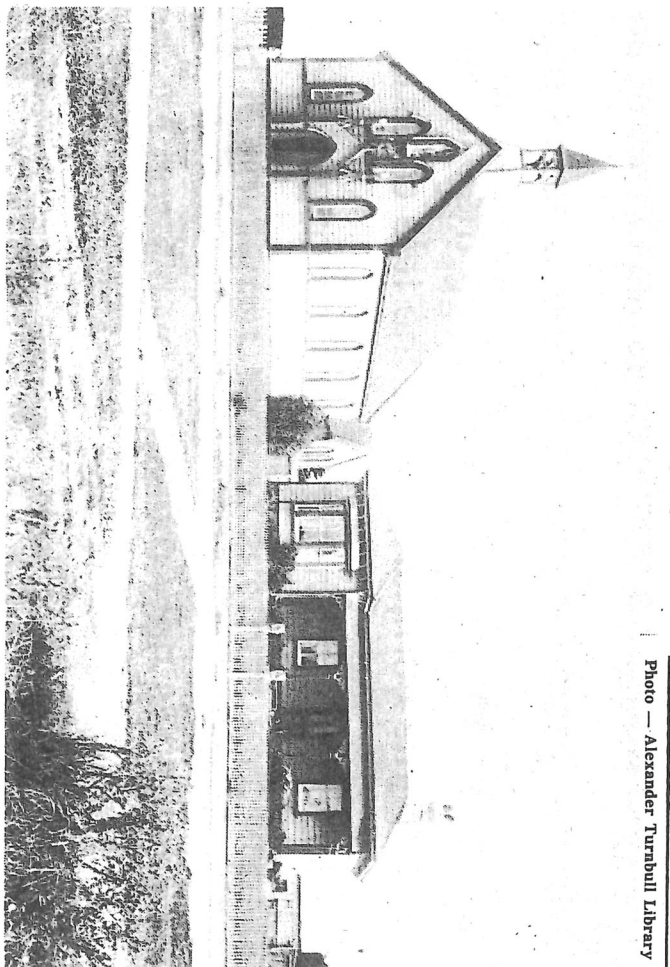


Photo — Alexander Turnbull Library