

St. Anne History, Part 1, 1908 – 1939. Founding the Parish: Building a Church, a School, and a Community!

“A Light on the Hill” for More Than 100 Years.

In the early 1900s the light on the hill was just a glowing ember, waiting to be fanned into life. At the time, Queen Anne Hill Catholics were members of Sacred Heart Parish at the foot of The Hill. But it wasn't enough. They wanted a parish of their own and when 40 families petitioned Bishop O'Dea, he named Redemptorist Fr. Patrick Byrne to found St. Anne parish. Fr. Byrne bought the property, but became too sick to start the church. That task fell to another Redemptorist, Fr. Joseph Chapotan, who became the first pastor of St. Anne Parish. The light was growing stronger.

As a pastor, Fr. Chapotan trusted in God for direction and strength. Slowly the wood frame and stucco church rose toward the sky. By the time it was finished, it cost \$25,000. On December 20, 1908, Bishop O'Dea dedicated the church and Fr. Chapotan said the first Mass. The church could seat 400 people and the rectory was a room at the back of the church.

Meanwhile, Seattle continued to grow and Queen Anne Hill grew right along with it. The private economy roared during the 1920s with expanding Pacific trade and St. Anne became a mainstream parish – a Light on the Hill. Optimism was sky high. Women voted for the first time, Lindberg conquered the Atlantic and with Boeing cranking out new airplanes, the sky no longer seemed the limit. But the 20s were full of challenges for St. Anne's. It was off the ground but just barely. It had a church that was falling apart, and to be a viable parish it needed a school. And that meant it needed a convent for the Holy Names sisters, the teachers.

It was a daunting task, requiring a pastor with vision and the grit and determination to keep the parish moving through the Great Depression. St. Anne's got its man with the legendary Fr. Thomas P. Quain who built, re-built or planned to build every existing structure except Banchemo Hall. Under his guidance the school was completed on time and under budget for \$25,000. Finally, it all came together. Five Holy Names Sisters arrived in August, 1923 and the doors of the school were thrown open. The school was an instant success. When it opened on Sept. 3 1923 with 150 children the sisters had to order more books.

Next, the parish needed a convent. It would be unthinkable for nuns to live anywhere except in a convent and construction began in June, 1930. When completed it was described in newspapers as “a miniature monastic church of jewel-like artistry.” Fr. Quain said the first Mass in the chapel the day before Christmas. By then some 30,000 people called Queen Anne home and The Hill was becoming a great place to live and raise a family.

But there were storm clouds on the horizon. The Great Depression triggered by the stock market crash of October 29, 1929 hit the nation – and Queen Anne – hard. But Fr. Quain kept St. Anne's going – probably by the sheer force of his will and the prayers and generosity of

parishioners. And as the 30s wore on, it began to look like prayers were being answered. FDR was the president and the New Deal put people back to work. Good times were coming again.

They were not to last long, however, as the rumble of war became louder and louder, soon engulfing the nation in a devastating world-wide conflict.