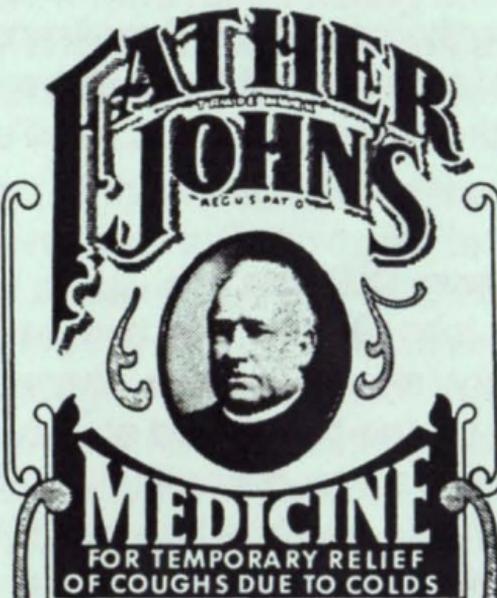


History

Made in Lowell

"The True Story of
Father John's Medicine"



FATHER JOHN'S
REG. U.S. PAT. OFF.

MEDICINE
FOR TEMPORARY RELIEF
OF COUGHS DUE TO COLDS

Active Ingredients: Cod liver oil, pure gum emulsifier, and glycerin. These active ingredients are scientifically compounded with sugar, licorice and flavoring oils.

Recommended for relief of coughs due to colds and throat irritation resulting from colds by its effect on the throat. Recommended dosage for adults and children, one teaspoonful four times a day.

Persistent coughs of ten days duration, or high fever, may indicate conditions which require competent medical attention.

Father John's Medicine contains **no alcohol nor drugs.**

SHAKE WELL BEFORE USING

Prepared only by
FATHER JOHN'S MEDICINE CO., Inc.
LOWELL, MASS., 01853

AVG. NET CONTENTS 5 FL. OZ.

Compliments of
THE LOWELL GALLERY

14 Jackson St.
Lowell, Ma 01852
(508) 458-3137

Little did Father John O'Brien realize when he arrived in Lowell in 1848, the impact that he and those that would follow him would have on the mill city of Lowell, Massachusetts. Father John was a man of vision. It was the time of massive Irish immigration with each newcomer seeking employment and a new life. The good pastor understood the balance that was needed for these people who were caught between two worlds, the need to retain their own identity as Irish men and women, and that of identifying themselves as Americans. It was during his pastorship that the Irish became an active and prominent factor in Lowell's population.

The Fathers O'Brien

Father John O'Brien was born in Ballina, Co. Tipperary, along the River Shannon. He was trained for the priesthood at Maynooth and came to America after his ordination. He served in Virginia and Newburyport, Mass. before coming to Lowell.

His assignment to Lowell was a rather strategic move on the part of Archbishop Fitzpatrick. Lowell had already proven itself a dilemma for the Archbishop. There had been outbursts of anti-Catholic and anti-Irish demonstrations in the past. The Irish themselves within the city had not helped the matter. A few years previous the united Irish population splintered into a second group that founded St. Peter's Church. To make matters worse the group which remained at St. Patrick's split again over the leadership of the current pastor, Father McDermott.

When Father John O'Brien arrived, he found Father McDermott, now the pastor of St. Mary's just two blocks away. As well as a broken, physically and spiritually, St. Patrick's. Another pastor, Fr. Hilary Tucker, had even gone so far as to request a leave of absence from the Bishop. Rather than counting on the

negatives, Father John focused on the positive factors he had going for him. Now that many of the dissenters were either at St. Peter's or St. Mary's, the Irish who were coming to St. Patrick's were looking for leadership. They found that in Father John O'Brien and his older brother who was to join him in 1851, Fr. Timothy O'Brien. Though older than his brother, Father Timothy was the more personable and the more vocal of the two. It was through their combined talents that the growing Irish numbers would find identity in an increasingly anti-Irish Lowell.

Since they were not part of the earlier struggles between the two factions they could move easily between the circles. The O'Briens immediately made their presence known by attending functions at St. Peter's and St. Mary's, thus ensuring the dominance of St. Patrick's as maintaining the title of "Mother Church" of the Lowell area.

The pair realized that if their people were to become a vocal presence within the community, and not just members of the work force, education was needed. By 1852 five Sisters of Notre Dame were brought from Cincinnati to open a school for girls. Though no building was ready for them, the next day classes started with over 100 girls attending. Within a few days over 300 were attending. Quite soon thereafter the Sisters, encouraged by Father O'Brien, started visiting the sick of the area. A small apartment was rented and a doctor started visiting the sick. The only other place in the area for the ill was the Corporation Hospital operated by the mills. The O'Briens' attempt at caring for the ill soon outgrew its site and plans were made for a hospital. In 1867 the doors of St. John's Hospital operated by the Daughters of Charity opened. Here medical care could be given to those who previously had to do without.

On more than one occasion the parish was threatened with violence. Twice the convent and school were visited by political committees who took it upon themselves to investigate supposed atrocities. Both times the O'Briens were summoned. Fr. Timothy once threatened the visitors not to harm the Sisters. Throughout the visits the work of building the community continued.

Barely a St. Patrick's Day went by when toasts were not given to the Fathers O'Brien and all the work with which they were credited. Their job of instilling religious zeal to a group who faced the task of providing for their own immediate needs was not easy. Their own example served as the best teacher. Together the O'Briens formed St. Patrick's in the image they had envisioned. In 1855 Timothy O'Brien suffered from a bout of pneumonia and died. The local paper wrote of his passing and of the work he did, something not done for many Irish at this time. His funeral took place at the large granite structure which had replaced the crumbling wooden church built in 1831. The church had been dedicated just the year before and he was interred in the churchyard.

Father John's work had to continue and he would have a number of years remaining at St. Patrick's before his death in 1879. Father Michael O'Brien, a nephew of John and Timothy, came to assist his uncle. It was during this time that many properties were built and support societies were formed. The number of Irish grew as well. The Girls' School had added an academy for boarders. Its reputation spread far obtaining students from many areas. The Xaverian Brothers were brought in to teach the boys. The Working Girls Home was added for those young women who wanted a secure place to room while working at the mills. The crowning glory to father Michael's pastorship was the consecration of the church in 1874, a title not given to many churches.

The idea of service was still foremost at St. Patrick's. There was a temperance society, an aid society for the poor, and social groups for women, men, and families. Upon the death of Michael O'Brien in 1900, a cousin, Father William O'Brien, carried on the O'Brien Dynasty. It was under his pastorship in which the church suffered severe fire damage and its subsequent rise from the ashes to its rededication in 1906. Father William was also responsible for the restructuring of St. Patrick Cemetery and the building of St. Bridget Chapel where he was laid to rest in 1921.

In front of the church under the granite slab engraved with a Celtic cross lie the remains of three of the Fathers O'Brien. The parish still lives in their shadow of service and loyalty. Though the numbers of the community are smaller than they once were, and the buildings do not stretch as far as they once did, St. Patrick's is as much a community devoted to loyalty and service to God and man as it ever was.

Father John's Medicine

Legend has it that Father John O'Brien was taken ill in 1855. He made his way to the pharmacy of Carleton and Hovey on Merrimack Street to get something for relief. He was given a tonic that was composed of cod liver oil and had a licorice taste. Unlike many other medicines of its time, the prescription contained no alcohol. It worked so well for the priest that he began recommending folks to visit the apothecary and ask for "Father John's Medicine" - a legend was born.

Soon the shop was packaging the medicine for sale. Father John was given a small stipend for using his name and picture. It was agreed that anyone Father John sent to the shop personally would not have to pay for the medicine. The pastor was always looking after his flock.

Within 50 years the medicine was known far and wide. Early literature claimed it worked on "consumption, grip, croup, whooping cough, and other diseases of the throat." Pamphlets given to customers stated, "All disease is due to a run-down condition of the body, unhealthy tissue, blood poisoned with impurities, and general weakness." Guarantees were made by the manufacturer of its restorative powers. The potion was peddled in numerous countries. Pharmacies built huge displays in their windows advertising the product.

The factory building, which still stands on Market Street, was a model of production. Every process from manufacturing, to bottling, to packaging, to advertising was done in that one spot. Freight cars pulled in back of the building to ship cartons to parts unknown. A second factory was built in Montreal, Canada.

For many years the company was overseen by the Donehue family. The generosity of the management was well known to its employees even as far as keeping on jobs long past their need, just so an employee could have a job. By the 1970s the company was sold. The building was made into an elderly housing unit, and the product no longer made its home in Lowell. This was not the end of the medicine company. It is still produced today by the Oakhurst Company in New York, and can be found on drugstore shelves in the local area. The recipe remains the same except for one ingredient the government said must be included. The brown bottle in the orange box with the trusting face of Father John O'Brien has been a sign of assurance to people for 140 years.

*Reprinted with permission of David McKean
Archives of St. Patrick's Parish

THE LOWELL GALLERY

14 Jackson St.
Lowell, Ma 01852
(508) 458-3137

The Lowell Gallery, owned and operated by Guy LeFebvre has been at this location for five years.

Specializing in all types of custom framing, we are also a retail outlet for Lowell related art, originals and prints. We have in stock paintings and prints by Janet Lambert - Moore, Adnan Charara, Jeanine Tardiff, Tom Gill and other local artists. Photographs by Kevin Harkins, Jocelyn Molleur, James Cryan, Rachel Woo and others. Lowell antiques, documents, historical items, books, maps, souvenir and gift items. Original and reproductions.

Also available are the limited edition full color print of the "Dedication of the Ladd - Whitney Monument 1865" from an original painting by Janet Lambert - Moore and the limited edition "Boott Mill Yesterday - Today" by Adnan Charara.

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