

This Day in History... July 13, 1886

Father Flanagan

Monsignor Edward Joseph Flanagan was born on July 13, 1886, in Leabeg, Ireland.

After attending Summerhill College in Ireland, Flanagan moved to the United States in 1904. He then attended Mount St. Mary's University in Maryland, where he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts and a Master of Arts degree in 1908.

From there, Flanagan studied at St. Joseph's Seminary in Dunwoodie, New York, and the University of Innsbruck in Austria.

He was ordained as a priest there in 1912. Flanagan then returned to the US where he led his first parish – St. Patrick's Catholic Church in O'Neill, Nebraska.

Through his work as a priest, Flanagan became concerned for orphaned boys and boys who had broken the law. In 1917, he took in eight neglected and orphaned boys, creating his first home for homeless boys in Omaha. However, those facilities were soon considered inadequate and he opened Boys Town ten miles west of Omaha in 1921. Over the coming years, Boys Town developed into a large community with its own boy-mayor, schools, chapel, post office, homes, gymnasium, and other facilities. The town was open to boys between the ages of 10 and 16 and gave them the chance to receive an education and learn a job skill.

In 1938, Flanagan's Boys Town inspired a movie starring Spencer Tracy and Mickey Rooney, *The City of Little Men*. Some of the film's scenes were filmed in Boys Town, and Flanagan was invited to review the script before filming began. Tracy won an Academy Award for Best Actor for his performance, and the Academy then gave Boys Town its own award, which read, "To Father Flanagan, whose great humanity, kindly simplicity, and inspiring courage were strong enough to shine through my humble effort." There was also a sequel in 1941, *Men of Boys Town*.

Father Flanagan received national attention for his work at Boys Town. The pope named him a domestic prelate with the title right reverend monsignor. He was also invited to participate in several committees that dealt with child welfare. In the 1940s, he traveled to other countries to inspect their child welfare problems. Flanagan was forced to leave his homeland of Ireland though, after calling the children's institutions there a "national disgrace."

Father Flanagan died from a heart attack while in Germany on May 15, 1948. He was later buried at the Boys Town in Nebraska. Boys Town continued on after his passing and spread to five other states plus Washington, DC.



Stamp issued for Flanagan's 100th birthday in 1986.

This Day in History... July 13, 1886

Father Flanagan

Monsignor Edward Joseph Flanagan was born on July 13, 1886, in Leabeg, Ireland.

After attending Summerhill College in Ireland, Flanagan moved to the United States in 1904. He then attended Mount St. Mary's University in Maryland, where he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts and a Master of Arts degree in 1908.

From there, Flanagan studied at St. Joseph's Seminary in Dunwoodie, New York, and the University of Innsbruck in Austria.

He was ordained as a priest there in 1912. Flanagan then returned to the US where he led his first parish – St. Patrick's Catholic Church in O'Neill, Nebraska.

Through his work as a priest, Flanagan became concerned for orphaned boys and boys who had broken the law. In 1917, he took in eight neglected and orphaned boys, creating his first home for homeless boys in Omaha. However, those facilities were soon considered inadequate and he opened Boys Town ten miles west of Omaha in 1921. Over the coming years, Boys Town developed into a large community with its own boy-mayor, schools, chapel, post office, homes, gymnasium, and other facilities. The town was open to boys between the ages of 10 and 16 and gave them the chance to receive an education and learn a job skill.

In 1938, Flanagan's Boys Town inspired a movie starring Spencer Tracy and Mickey Rooney, *The City of Little Men*. Some of the film's scenes were filmed in Boys Town, and Flanagan was invited to review the script before filming began. Tracy won an Academy Award for Best Actor for his performance, and the Academy then gave Boys Town its own award, which read, "To Father Flanagan, whose great humanity, kindly simplicity, and inspiring courage were strong enough to shine through my humble effort." There was also a sequel in 1941, *Men of Boys Town*.

Father Flanagan received national attention for his work at Boys Town. The pope named him a domestic prelate with the title right reverend monsignor. He was also invited to participate in several committees that dealt with child welfare. In the 1940s, he traveled to other countries to inspect their child welfare problems. Flanagan was forced to leave his homeland of Ireland though, after calling the children's institutions there a "national disgrace."

Father Flanagan died from a heart attack while in Germany on May 15, 1948. He was later buried at the Boys Town in Nebraska. Boys Town continued on after his passing and spread to five other states plus Washington, DC.



Stamp issued for Flanagan's 100th birthday in 1986.