

# CENTENNIAL GAZETTE

St. James Cathedral, Seattle

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## O'DEA THE DAUNTLESS

Bishop Junger died December 26, 1895, in St. Joseph Hospital in Vancouver. He was laid to rest in the crypt of St. James Cathedral in Vancouver. "It is no unjust praise of the dead prelate to say that his death is a personal grief to each inhabitant of the little city in which he lived in the blaze of public light for more than thirty years," wrote the Sisters of the Holy Names in their chronicle. "His Lordship had not a single enemy among either Catholics or Protestants."

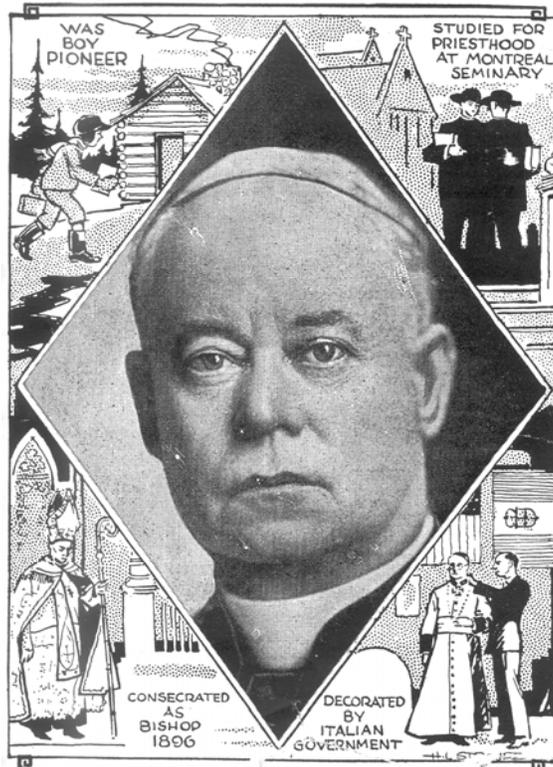
The see was vacant once again, and rumors were rampant about who would become the third Bishop of Nesqually. Few thought the Holy Father would choose Edward O'Dea, a young priest of the Archdiocese of Portland.

Edward O'Dea was born in Dorchester, Massachusetts in 1856. He was still a young boy when his family joined the long procession of people moving west in search of opportunity. They spent some time in San Francisco before settling in Portland, where the Boston boy soon got used to life on the frontier. He became an expert horseman, and he and his mare Deerfoot won so many races in the Oregon county fairs that they were finally forbidden to compete!

O'Dea's devout Catholic family encouraged his vocation to the priesthood, as did the priests and religious of Portland—especially Mother Joseph, and Father Fierens, pastor of Portland's cathedral. Archbishop Blanchet (brother of Nesqually's Bishop Blanchet) sent the twenty-year-old O'Dea to the Grand Seminary in Montreal, where he studied for six years under the Sulpician fathers. He was ordained December 23, 1882, with forty-four others. Seven in his class later became bishops.

Back in Portland, O'Dea was kept very busy as teacher, as pastor, and as secretary to Archbishop Gross. The busy young priest was quite startled when a newspaper reporter came pounding on the front door of the rectory late one evening in 1896. Father O'Dea looked out his bedroom window and was immediately barraged with questions: "We have a dispatch from Rome saying you have been appointed Bishop of Nesqually; have you anything to say?" He circumspectly replied, "I haven't a thing to say, and this is the first I have heard of it." Then he sent a telegram to Archbishop Gross to find out if it could be true. It was. And that was how O'Dea learned of his new assignment!

Communication with Rome was slow in those days, and it was not until September 8, 1896, many months



The Most Reverend Edward J. O'Dea, D.D., Bishop of Seattle, from a photograph taken at the time of the Silver Jubilee of his consecration.

after the death of Bishop Junger, that Father O'Dea was consecrated bishop in St. James Cathedral, Vancouver. It was one of the largest gatherings of the church hierarchy in Washington history, with five bishops and 85 priests in attendance.

Bishop O'Dea promptly got to work. The cathedral was deeply in debt, mortgaged to the amount of \$25,000, and the bank was threatening to foreclose. The diocese was enormous, covering the entire state of Washington, 70,000 square miles. There were no railroads yet, and stagecoach or horseback were the primary means of transportation.

On his first trip to Seattle, back in 1883, Bishop O'Dea had nearly been killed by a runaway team of horses; he got out of the way just in time, and the horses plowed into a drug store window at the corner of Second and Yesler. But the dauntless O'Dea saw a future in this pioneer town. Within a few years of his appointment he had paid off the debt on St. James in Vancouver, and had purchased a

plot of land at the corner of Ninth and Marion in the ever-expanding city of Seattle.

—Corinna Laughlin

*This is the fifth in the series. Read the whole series online at [www.stjames-cathedral.org](http://www.stjames-cathedral.org)*

## MY CATHEDRAL

Ten years ago, I moved to Seattle to attend the University of Washington and was in search of a parish. Walking into St. James Cathedral, I knew I was in a very different place. During my very first visit, I was awed by the heavenly music, insightful homily, and was asked to bring up the gifts during the offertory. After Mass, I first met Father Ryan. I found a home.

Since then, I've been involved in a variety of ministries and councils. Currently, I volunteer as sacristan. Through it all, I have met some of the kindest and most spiritual people in the entire world. I found friends.

Above all, St. James Cathedral is a place of connections—connections with God. Every time I pray—whether I'm attending a packed Sunday Mass or completely alone after locking up the cathedral on Saturday nights. I found God.

I know that thousands before me have too.

—Bryan Long

*You're part of Cathedral history, too! Do you have a favorite Cathedral story to share?*

*E-mail [mLaughlin@stjames-cathedral.org](mailto:mLaughlin@stjames-cathedral.org).*