

## **Our Lady of Knock**

Contributed by Brian P. Hegarty Jr.

“I remember it as well as I do last night.” Those were the words of an aged Irish immigrant named John Curry, who had reaffirmed his testimony before a second Church inquiry held in New York in 1937. Curry said “It appeared to me that they were alive, but they didn’t speak. One of the women there, Bridget Trench, kissed the Blessed Virgin’s feet and tried to put her arms around the feet but there was nothing there but the picture. I saw her do that. The figures were life size and I will remember them till I go to my grave.”

John Curry’s remains were disinterred from Farmingdale, Long Island and re-interred in the small cemetery at Saint Patrick’s Old Cathedral on Mulberry Street in Little Italy, New York. At this special Requiem Mass in May 2017, Cardinal Timothy Dolan summed it up best “John Curry who would come here to New York as a young man, an immigrant, who only distinguished himself by his simplicity, humility, kindness and his piety. He spent his final seven years with our beloved Little Sisters of the Poor in the Sacred Heart Home on 70th Street where he repeated his simple testimony when asked officially in 1937 and where he quietly dies in 1943. Curry was then buried in a donated, unmarked grave until this day when his proud and grateful, spiritual and natural heirs gather to give him the prominence and esteem he deserves.”

The apparition took place on August 21, 1879 in the presence of 15 men, women and children, from the village of Knock in County Mayo, Ireland. The oldest witness was about 74; the youngest was 5-year-old John Curry, who witnessed, along with the other 14, the apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mary, St Joseph, and St John the Evangelist and the Lamb of God. The boy had been lifted by Patrick Hill, his 11-year-old cousin, so he could see over a wall and admire what he called the “grand babies” of an apparition that lasted two hours in the pouring rain.

When the Church launched an official inquiry in October 1879, the young Curry’s testimony was among the fifteen official witness testimonies documented at Knock. His first account was brief. “The child says he saw images, beautiful images, the Blessed Virgin, and St. Joseph. And fine images and the light, and heard the people talk of them, and went upon the wall to see the nice things and the lights.”

Curry emigrated to New York in 1897 at the age of 25, then was in London in 1900, before returning to the U.S. in 1911. He worked as a railway laborer near Milwaukee, then moved to New York in the 1920s and worked as an attendant at the City Hospital on New York’s Roosevelt Island.

His burial at St. Patrick’s Old Cathedral is “hugely significant” to the Irish community and the Ancient Order of Hibernians, which brought John Curry’s remains to their final resting place. A headstone was erected to give him full recognition as a native of Knock and a witness to the Apparition.



Mr. Curry, center, with Patrick Hill, his cousin and witness at Knock, right, and an unidentified friend in an undated photo from the Knock Museum.



Pilgrims praying at the Apparition Gable in Knock, Ireland, in 1880.





JOHN CURRY

(1874 – 1943)

LECARROW, KNOCK, CO. MAYO,  
IRELAND AND NEW YORK  
WITNESS TO THE APPARITION  
AT KNOCK 21<sup>ST</sup> AUGUST 1879  
BURIED IN CEMETERY OF  
THE RESURRECTION  
LONG ISLAND, NEW YORK, 1943  
REINTERRED HERE AT  
ST. PATRICK'S OLD CATHEDRAL  
13<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2017

A MHUIRE AN CHNOIC  
GO GCUIRE TÚ MĒ AR  
BHEALACH MO LEASA  
OUR LADY OF KNOCK  
KEEP ME ON THE RIGHT PATH  
REQUIESCAT IN PACE