

**Father Flanagan's Boys Town** in Omaha, Nebraska. \*W A Ø O G I\* Had been a subject I've wanted to develop for a good period of time. Especially so, when we learned one of our favorite military figures, CO of the ELINT Ship USS Pueblo, Capt Lloyd Bucher was an alumni. Remember the Pueblo! I must admit Father Ed Flanagan was someone who I wanted to study and if ham radio had ever been used at this 90 year old fabled institution. Here is my effort.

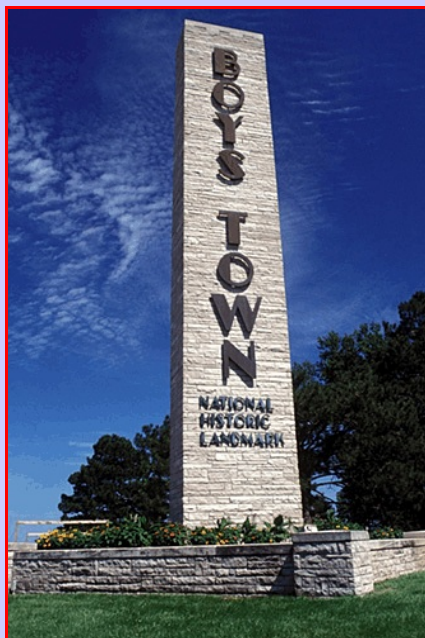
In 2000 the institution had a name change to "Girls and Boys Town" to reflect that fact. This location receives over 100,000 visitors per year. Over 500 residents are children, age 18 and younger, who have come to Nebraska from troubled homes and difficult situations nationwide.

When arriving at Boys Town (a town of kids) ones first impression is of the 76 homes and neatly manicured lawns and gardens. Children ride bicycles. The mail carrier delivers to curbside boxes and on Sundays, two churches-one Catholic and the other Protestant—draw the faithful in cars and on foot. The community has its own police department, post office. VFD, farming operation and schools.



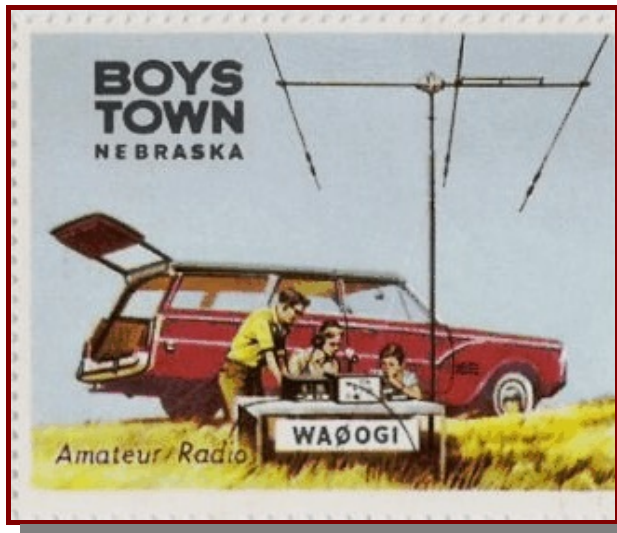
Father Edward J. Flanagan, founder, was born July 13<sup>th</sup> 1886, in Leabeg, County Roscommon, Ireland. He was the eighth in a family of 11 children, to John and Honora Flanagan. Edward was intelligent but somewhat sickly boy who loved to read and his parents sacrificed to make sure he received the best education within their means. They were hard working farmers and very devoted to their religion.

As mentioned Edward was very frail at birth; his grandfather often held him, keeping him warm by the fire. Many years later, Father Flanagan wrote of his home; My father would tell me many stories that were interesting to a child— stories of adventure, or the struggle of the Irish people for independence. It was from him I learned the great science of life, of examples from the lives of saints, scholars and patriots. It was from his life I first learned the fundamental rule of life of the great **Saint Benedict, "Pray and work."**



As Edward grew older, his father commissioned him to take complete care of the sheep and cattle. Edward's duty was to keep the animals from wandering into the dangerous peat bogs that bordered their property on two sides. This pastoral work gave him much time to think, to study, to read and to pray. He noticed his father saying the rosary as he worked and he too, began to pray the rosary.

Father Ed attended his local elementary school in Drimatemple and entered Summerhill College, Sligo, Ireland in the fall of 1900 then in 1904 Flanagan graduated from Summerhill with honors and sailed for the United States. He wanted to become a priest. Continued on page two.



Later in answer to the question as to why Flanagan wanted to become a priest, our subject responded. "I presume that what caused me to become a Priest was because I wanted to help people - spiritually - I wanted to teach people and it was that desire that took hold of me and I never had any other desire at any time in my life." Our subject as a consummate student, he had marvelous credentials from over seas, then arriving in the U.S.A. started all over again with his studies, enrolling at Mount St. Mary's College in Maryland and graduated in 1906.

Then St. Joseph's Seminary, New York in September 1906 and had a period of bad health. Recuperating in Omaha as an accountant. In the

fall of 1909 Flanagan was accepted by the Royal Imperial Leopold Frances University in Austria, being ordained with the Jesuits at Innsbruck in 1912.

Father Flanagan returned to Omaha Nebr., in 1912 and was assigned to the Diocese of Omaha administered by Bishop Harty who had also graduated from Sligo in Ireland. Seeing the Omaha streets filled with unemployed migrant farm workers because of a great drought in the summer of 1913, Flanagan responded to assist the homeless workers. This was the purpose of his whole life, assisting those who could not help themselves. From the Workingmen's Hotel he opened in 1913 and finally Boy's Town borrowing ninety dollars to pay the first month's rent in 1917 on a building in which to house homeless and abandoned boys and give them the care, training and education which he felt that they needed to accept and bear responsibilities of citizenship.

The Oscar, Best Actor award, Spencer Tracy won depicting "Boy's Town" in 1938....Tracy had presented the award to Father Flanagan! It read "To Father Flanagan, whose great human qualities, kindly simplicity and inspiring courage were strong enough to shine through my humble efforts."



Today, Boys Town now 900 acres surrounded by the burgeoning city of Omaha, has been a hometown and a fresh start for more than 18,500 children.

It is unknown about ham activity prior to the 60s. However Boy's Town had been active in amateur radio WAØOGI, they used a Galaxy 5 transceiver and a TH-3 Beam at the facility. Even though Father Ed expired in 1948, he was the administrator of this fine institution and we credit him with the radio station facility and custodian of WAØOGI. Just this month (December) 2009 I asked Mr. T.J. Lynch, Director, Hall of History, about ham radio at the Institution and he advised; "Currently we do not have a ham radio club." Excerpts

Btnea-SoCal - Father Flanagan League - Suite 101.Com. Picture (Stone Memorial) from Andre Jenny Flickr collection. Promotional seal. Via KE4PJW Terry. 2009 Boy's Town was in the C1 State Championship High School football finals the past two years.