

Father Edward J. Flanagan 1917-1948

Father Edward J. Flanagan is the founder and visionary for what's known today as Girls and Boys Town. He had a dream, that every child could be a productive citizen if given love, a home,



an education and a trade. He accepted boys of every race, color and creed. Father Flanagan firmly believed, "There are no bad boys. There is only bad environment, bad training, bad example, bad thinking."

Father Flanagan was born on July 13, 1886 in County Roscommon, Ireland. In 1904, he set sail for the United States. Following his ordination in 1912, Father Flanagan was assigned to the Diocese of Omaha. His first parish assignment was Saint Patrick's, O'Neill, Nebraska, after which he was appointed Assistant Pastor to Saint Patrick Catholic Church, Omaha, in March 1913.

On December 12, 1917, Father Flanagan opened his first Boys' Home in a run-down Victorian mansion in Omaha, in 1921, the Boys' Home moved to Overlook Farm, its present location near 139th and West Dodge Road. Father Flanagan and his Boys Town became internationally known with the help of the 1938 movie "[Boys Town](#)." He became an acknowledged expert in the field of childcare and toured the United States discussing his views on juvenile delinquency.

The federal government called on Father Flanagan to help children both nationally and internationally. In 1948, President Truman asked him to travel to Europe to attend discussions about children left orphaned and displaced by World War II. During this tour, he fell ill and died of a heart attack in Berlin, Germany on May 15, 1948. Funeral services for Father Flanagan were held in the Dowd Memorial Catholic Chapel, located at the heart of his beloved Boys Town, which is also the site of his final resting place.

"...The work will continue, you see, whether I am there or not, because it is God's work, not mine." -Father Flanagan

