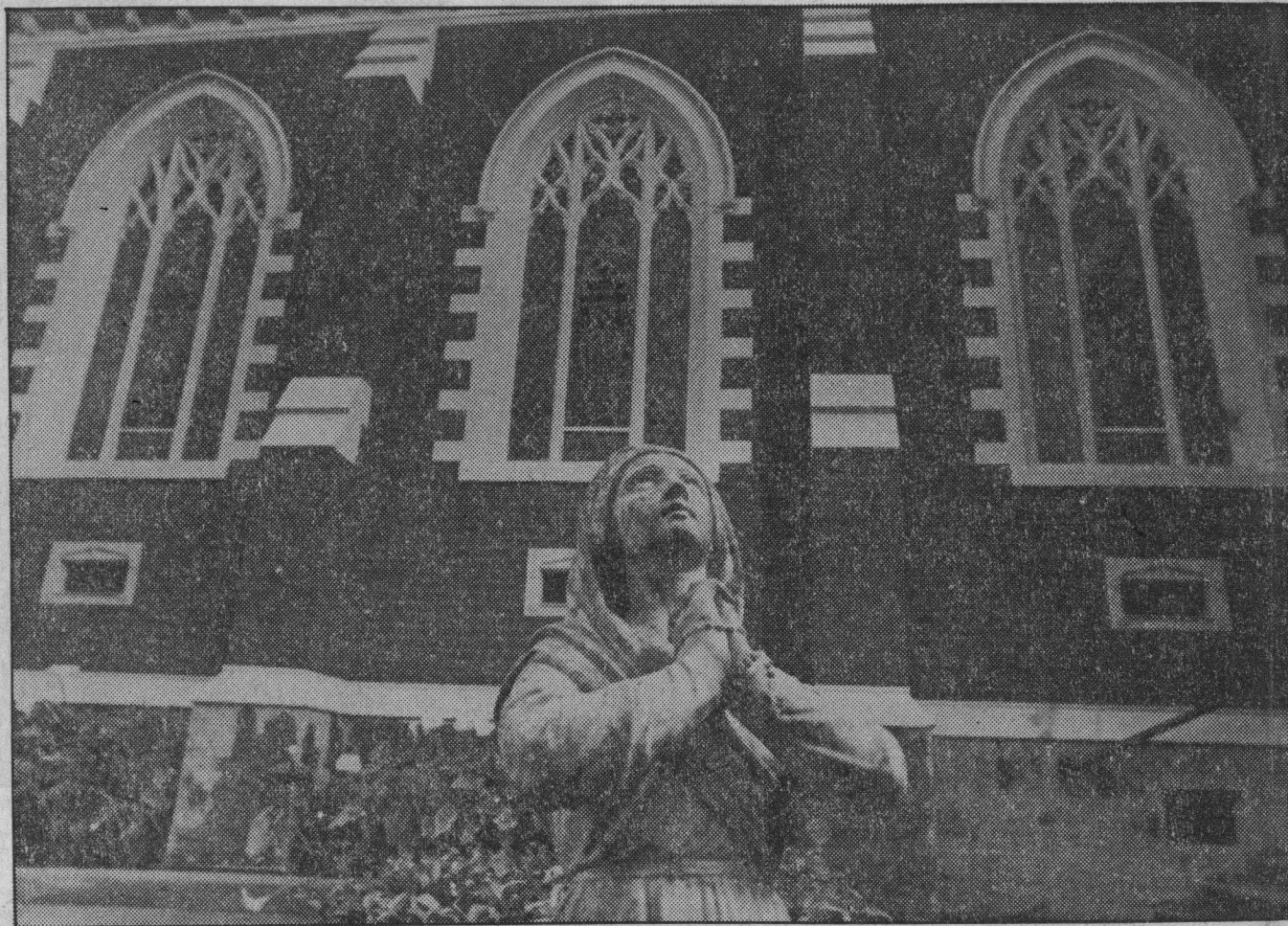


People and places

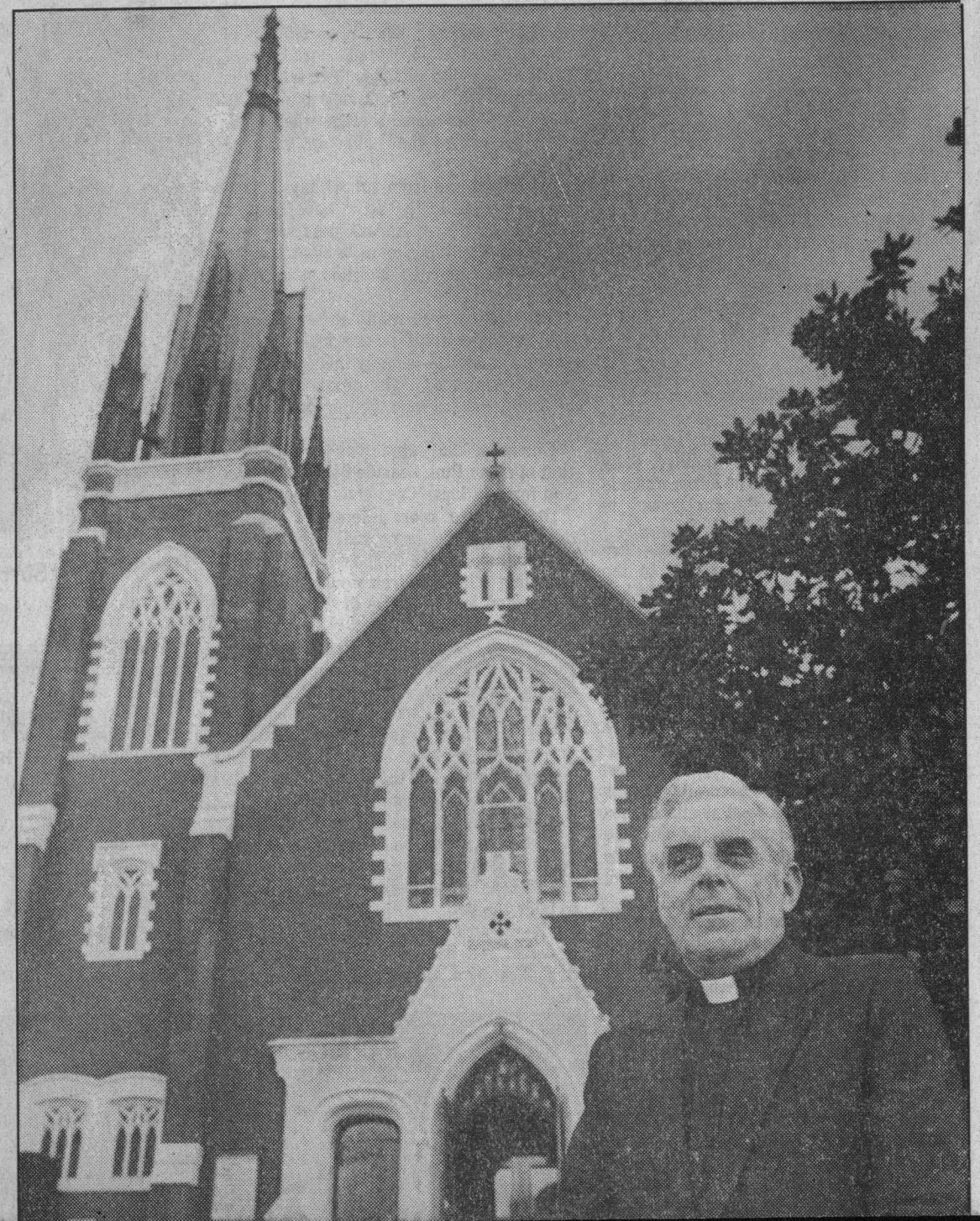
CHURCHES

# St. Patrick's Church: A Watsonville landmark



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

**Example of English Gothic architecture**



By **KATHY WATSON**  
Sentinel Staff Writer

**WATSONVILLE** — St. Patrick's Church is probably one of the finest examples of English Gothic architecture on the West Coast, or so says its pastor, the Rev. Msgr. D. Declan Murphy.

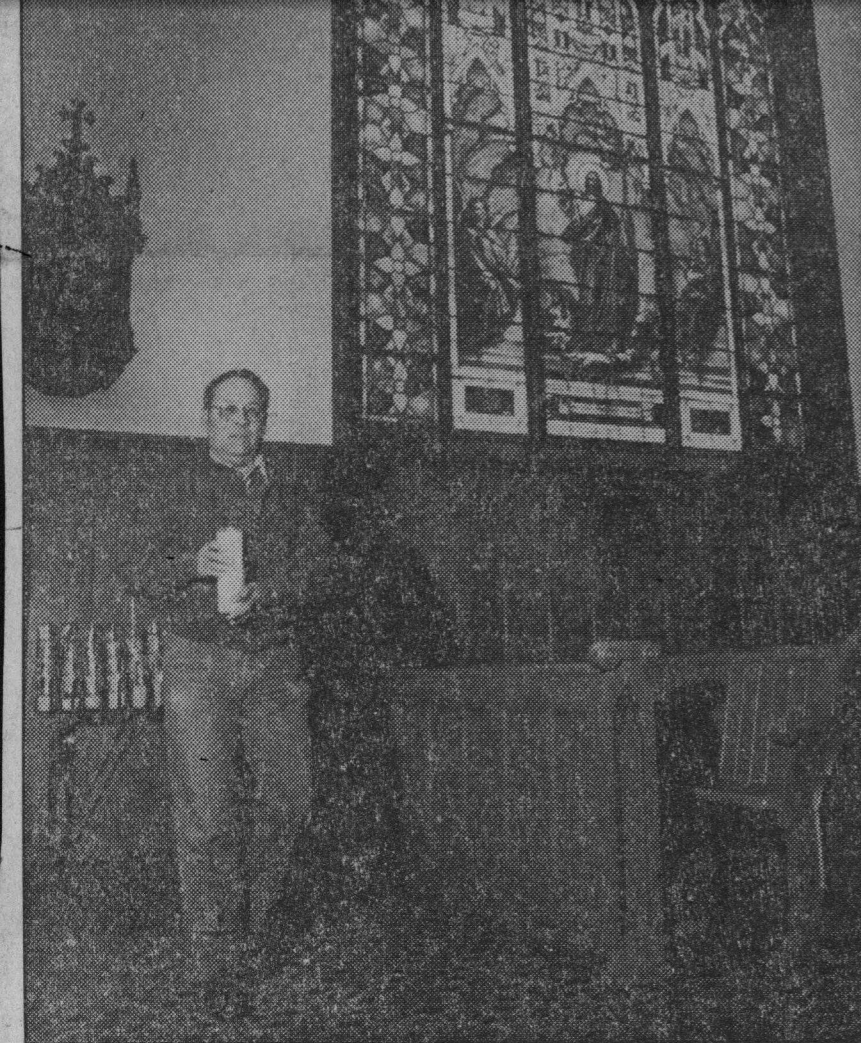
The sweeping red-brick church and rectory have been a landmark in the the community here since the structure was completed in 1903. Today, about 3,200 people visit the church each week and thousands more see it as they drive by.

"There's a beauty to the symmetrical lines of the church," Murphy said.

The building's highest point is the steeple, which reaches 132 feet. At its greatest length it is 130 feet and 68 feet at its greatest width.

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Parishoner Tom Rodriguez inside church.

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"It cost about \$35,000 to build the church," Murphy said. "That wouldn't paint it now."

A parish in Watsonville began in 1860, and the first St. Patrick's Church was built in 1864 in Romanesque style. Murphy said at that time most of the community was Irish.

The first church was deemed too small and a contract was signed in September 1901 to build the present St. Patrick's. While officials celebrated the new church on opening day, they also reminisced about the old one.

"I might say that this building, which had for nearly 40 years subserved the requirements of the congregation of St. Patrick's Parish, has given way to a more modern and elegant structure," wrote James Waters in the opening day pamphlet.

The "more modern and elegant structure" reportedly was modeled after a chapel in a college in Ireland, from where the rector at the time had graduated.

Our Lady of Lords grotto in the church courtyard was built in the '30s by Pastor J.D. Dumas, a French priest who was cured of cancer. In his home country, the Lady of Lords is associated with cures.

Although the new St. Patrick's Church was built sturdily, it has been damaged at times through the years.

The 1906 earthquake, which leveled San Francisco, caused the tower to lean. "It went out of line and had to be braced inside," Murphy said. "There are a few



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

Rev. Msgr. D. Declan Murphy stands in front of St. Patrick's Church.

braces inside still from that time."

About five years ago, the church sustained \$20,000 in fire damages and has since been restored.

Murphy said he has tried to keep the church as close to the original as possible. "Basically the church is the same church and we're trying to keep it the same always," he said. "I look at pictures to keep it as close as possible."

In commenting on a few of his favorite features in the building, Murphy said the architect "was way ahead of his time" in building a sloped floor so parishioners at the rear may see.

He said he also enjoys the appearance of St. Patrick's. "I admire the spire and the symmetry in the church," he said. "In some places you see a tower too big or too small. It's just right."