

# John Timothy Donohue

14 June 1879 to 21 July 1942



John T. Donohue was born in Fruitvale (Oakland) California. He was the son of Irish immigrants. His Father Martin immigrated to America in 1872 and worked his way westward as a hand for the Union Pacific Railway. He grew up the son of a North Pacific Coastal railroad man living in several Marin County railway communities. He attended country schools as a youth but would graduate in 1898 from the respected Polytechnic High School in San Francisco. This school had a reputation for a diverse and talented student body and inspirational teachers. John had a keen interest and talent for bookkeeping and finance.



While living in San Francisco with extended family he became associated with Company D "League of the Cross." This early fraternal organization was run like a military organization and John Timothy reached the rank of Captain by 1901. It was comprised of young men who voluntarily worked alongside clergy to help those in need. They focused on improving religious, social, and domestic conditions for the Catholic community. Intemperance and alcohol education were a big part of their focus.

In 1901 John Timothy married local San Francisco native Ana Stasia Corbett at the Sacred Heart Church in San Francisco. He associated with another ambitious Irishman named Thomas W. Kelly. Around 1902 in pursuit of lucrative and combined business interests John T. moved to the California north valley to open a store for Kelly. He settled in the growing agricultural community of Chico which was rich in history



from the early settlers and the pioneering Bidwell family.

John became a trustworthy businessman and Store manager involved in the downtown community. He did so well his boss Thomas W. Kelly moved north to join him. He soon had financial interests in Kelly Dry Goods (The Fair Store), Richardson Furniture Store, and several other business endeavors like the Chico Mausoleum.



In 1916, John sold his interest in the Fair Store to T.J. & Kelley Co. By 1917 he was a full partner with Mayor Clarence C. Richardson and would become the face of this well-regarded fine furniture business. John worked hard and kept long hours at night working on his books and accounting responsibilities. At night after dinner, he would often return to his store to work on Parish finances. He truly enjoyed his Catholic Church commitments and the fellowship of



his fellow parishioners and clergy. He served on the School board and worked with other groups such as the Volunteer Fire Fighters. He was considered exceptionally trustworthy and was the local court appointed receiver to oversee difficult liquidation and bankruptcies.

It was said he had no mechanical inclination and avoided any type of manual work unlike his father. He was focused and expected discipline and order in his life just like the accurate accounting numbers he so enjoyed. His five sons and one daughter were all self-starters and successful in their own right. Son Francis would be the proprietor of the well-known Donohue's Men Store in Chico for many years.

His greatest love beyond family was working with the Chico Knights of Columbus. He was proud of attaining the highest level in this noble society and lived the principals fully. He immersed himself helping people through the good works of charity and kindness they provided. In August of 1917 he traveled to the Knights Supreme Convention in Chicago just as WWI was breaking out. He participated in bringing the many splintered groups together patriotically to

support the war effort in Europe. In 1919 he was elected the district Deputy for Northern California and in 1932-33 the California State Deputy. These were appointments of distinction and great pride for him and the Chico Catholic Community.

In 1959 his name was ascribed to a local General Assembly of Knights of the 4<sup>th</sup> degree, The John T. Donohue Assembly #67.

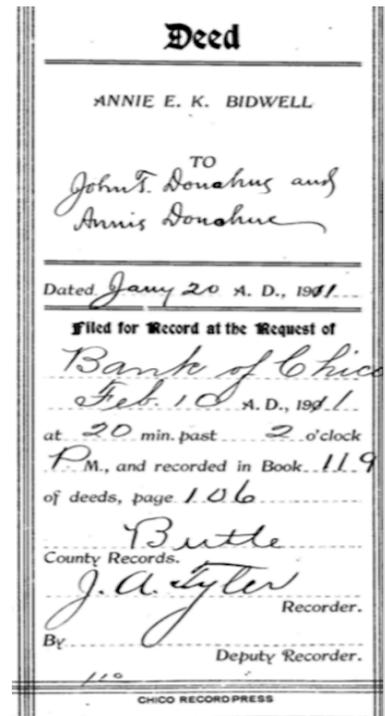


John Timothy died young at the age of 63 in 1942. At the time, he was living in his family home at 1024 Esplanade in Chico which he built in 1913 for \$3,000 including \$800 for the lot. The house is now known as the "Donohue House" and is a Chico historic property looking very much as it did when constructed from a Sears and Roebuck

plan. The lot deed to the property was dated January 20, 1901 and it is signed by the owner of the property Annie E.K. Bidwell. Annie was the wife of celebrated Chico founder John Bidwell. The names of his sons can still be seen at St. Johns In Chico on one of the stained-glass windows the Knights donated.

His obituary in Chico Enterprise Record archives states "Hundreds came to celebrate his life. His casket bearers were Ray Murphy, R.J. McDivitt, Millard Caywood, C.C. Richardson, Sam Decker and John Shuouten. John T. was loved and admired by many in his family, community and the Catholic church." John Timothy and his wife Anastasia are interned in a crypt at the Chico Cemetery Mausoleum.

Two of his Grandsons, John E. and Timothy M. reside in Chico. A third, Michael Donohue, lives in San Clemente, CA.





Newspaper clipping from about 1935

