

# PARK HOUSE, CORBALLY

Park House, recently demolished in the development on the handsome housing estate of College Park area, was a fine mansion standing in its own grounds when purchased by Dr. John Young in 1809 for use as the diocesan seminary which he had established at Palmerstown in 1796, and afterwards moved to Newgate Lane and Peter's Cell. Later the college was moved to Lord Limerick's house at 103 Henry Street. Park House then served as a bishop's residence until Dr. George Butler purchased the mansion that stood on the site of the present college. This was formerly the home of a prominent local merchant, Pierce Shannon, who had purchased the greater part of the townland of Corbally from Col. Mon-sell in 1833. Shannon was a man of outstanding drive and enterprise, for he built several of the fine houses in the district and laid out the grounds. He also laid out and developed the present Corbally road from the top of the Mill Road to the Athlunkard Bridge.

He became an Alderman of the Limerick Corporation and was elected Mayor in 1844. While in office he used his great influence to have the city boundry extended to Corbally and Park.

He died suddenly while conducting a meeting of the Corporation and is buried in St. Munchin's churchyard.

Some fine residences stood on the high ground at the right hand side of Corbally Road. "Janemount" was the home of bakery proprietor, Stephen Tubridy. Next was "Avondale", home of the famous hatter, Vanesbeck, whose premises were at William St./O'Connell St. corner. Next was "Ashton Cottage" which changed hands many times. Then we had "Roseville", the residence of William Holliday, was the showpiece of the district with its most beautiful garden. Trippers to

Corbally could not pass the gate without feasting their eyes on the exotic spring wonderland. St. Clare Hobson's residence, "Lanahrone House", stood well in from the road and commanded a splendid view of the river. The site, and much of the lands are now taken up by the Irish Estates housing development.

Hobson is reputed to have been the first man in Limerick to drive a motor car.

William McDonnell, of "India Ville", claims another 'first' — he introduced the

manufacture of margarine in Ireland. McDonnell, who died in 1921, had a long and honoured life in the public life of the city, and was prominently identified with its commercial and industrial interests. His name, as city treasurer, is to be seen on the entablature of Spillane's tower which was built on the Corkanree embankment in 1870.

The well known Dean Bunbury lived at "St. Anne's", next door. This was, at one time, the Church of Ireland Deanery. Next is

"Geraldine", once the home of the post master general.

"River View", next on the way out, was the home of John Able, a man who certainly lived up to his name. He erected an observatory on the roof of the house and spent much of his time looking away from the earth. With the co-operation of his next door neighbour, Ned Fitt, at "Mary Ville", he built a perfectly round gate lodge between the two properties, the building being divided in the centre, internally.

Other fine houses were "Woodlands", "Mary Ville", "Mary Villas", "Roseneath", "Lax Weir Cottage", "Myrtle Lodge", "Corbally House" and the most beautifully situated of all — "Corbally Cottage", the home of the Walcott family.

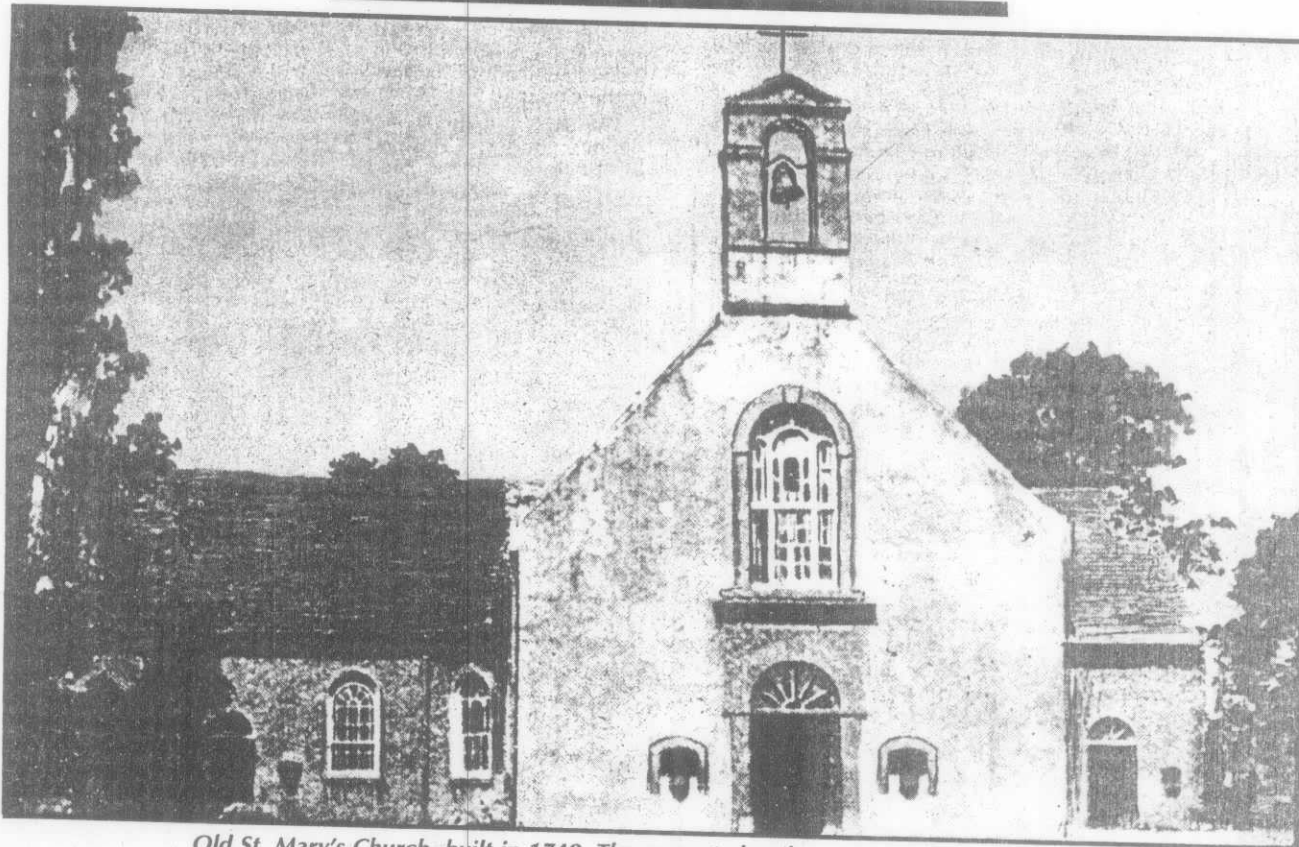
Some of these houses still stand, others have lost their values and identities through the encroachment of modern housing. Many of the buildings reflected the judgement and good taste of their owners and of those who selected and laid out

the sites. We should be grateful to those early proprietors for their foresight in planting the beautiful trees which are now in their full maturity. The great Californian redwood in the garden of Mr. John Dundon's beautiful home was one of those planted in 1815 to celebrate the victory of Waterloo. These splendid specimens, planted at that time, were known as "Wellingtonias".

Not far from the old gate to the Bishop's Palace was situated the Killeen graveyard, where, for many years, the remains of unbaptised infants and 'suicides' were buried. The practice of prohibiting the interment of these classes in consecrated ground prevailed into the present century. Nowadays many are ashamed to admit that such practices ever existed. In recent years many of these places were consecrated and used as general cemeteries.

O'Driscoll's well known property was in the possession of a rope maker during the building of the Limerick/Ennis railway in 1859. Since the railway line could not be diverted from intersecting the rope-walk a small bridge was erected over the permanent way so that the craftsman could continue with his industry. This bridge can be seen at the end of Mr. O'Driscoll's car park.

The Bard of Thomond lived for a while in a small cottage near Park House during the episcopate of Dr. George Butler, who was believed to be a very rich man. The Bard once remarked afterwards that he "lived on the estate of the mitred millionaire". No doubt this uncharitable remark was a result of the bishop's refusal to give his imprimatur to the Bard's voluminous "Anthems to Mary" — poems in praise of the Blessed Virgin which the Bard had sent to him for his approval and which were returned without comment.



Old St. Mary's Church, built in 1748. The present church was opened in 1930.