

LIMERICK. Thomond Bridge.

The most interesting aspect of this picture is the Castle and its original British Army Barracks. Note also the cone-shaped tower.

# The History of Summerville House

IN the early part of the last century the long narrow lane that ran from the South Circular Road to the Shannon was a quiet cul-de-sac that probably gave access to farmlands. It came into its own as an important avenue, in the last decade of the seventeenth century after Joseph Massey Harvey built his beautiful house mid-way down the lane, and just above high water mark-at that time the Dock Road did not exist and the high tides of the Shannon were not contained by an embankment.

Harvey was a young Corkman who had come to Limerick in 1786 as an assistant in the firm of Fisher, Mark and Fisher, at Francis Street. This was a thriving mills and granary complex at that time.

Shortly afterwards Harvey married Miss Fisher and in due course took over the business. Sarsfield House now occupies this site.

He named his grand new house "Summerville House" but for a century afterwards the laneway was known as "Harvey's Avenue" and his house was better known as "Harvey's." Today the avenue is officially known as "Summerville Avenue" where local junior soccer club, Summerville Rovers originated.

A smaller house at the opposite side of the lane, and nearer the river, shown in the 1841 ordnance sheet as "Little Summerville House," is said to have been built by Reuben Harvey as a dower house for his mother.

The Fishers lived at "Richmond," a short distance from "Summerville" in Ashbourne Avenue. It is of interest to note that Gerald Griffin usually submitted his writings to Mrs. Fisher for her revision and approval.

Joseph Harvey's eldest son, Reuben, succeeded to the business and leased the great mills at Plassey from the Maunsell family. After a short time a dispute arose at the mill. Some workers demanded payment for the time they spent travelling the two miles from the city to Plassy in one of the company's lighters. To back up their demands they refused to work, but Harvey was inflexible, thus we had the first case of strike in the vicinity of Limerick. Harvey closed the mill rather than yield to the workers' demands.

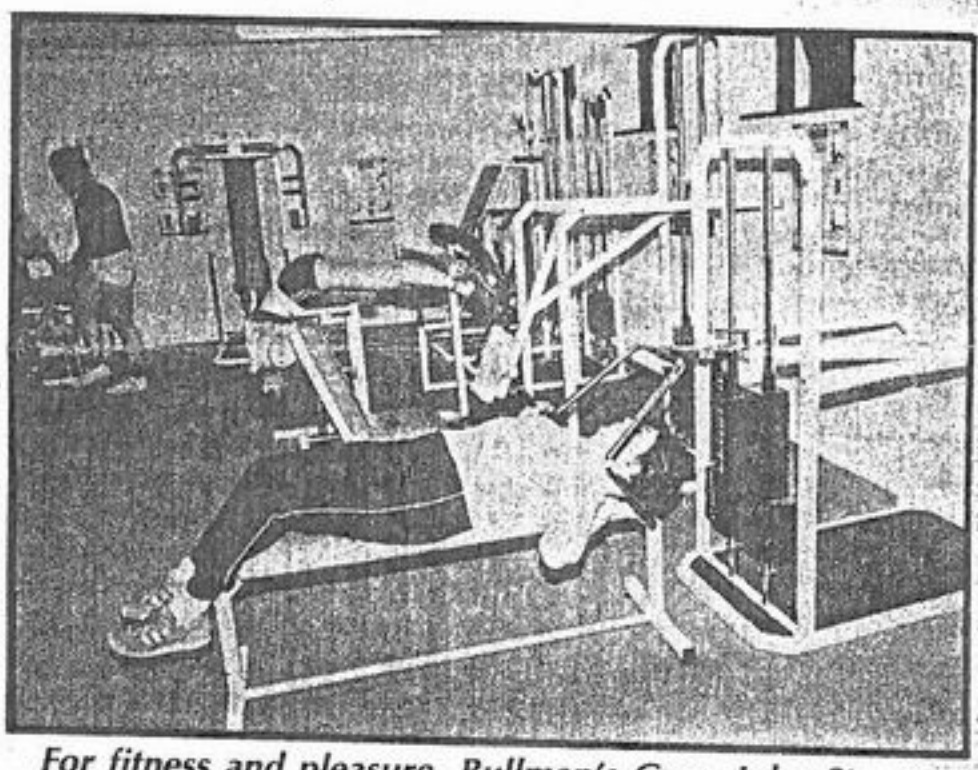
The Harveys, who were Quakers, are interred in the little graveyard at Ballinacurra, a place endowed by the family. Joseph Massey Harvey died, at the age of 70, on the 22nd of October, 1834. His wife, Rebecca, predeceased him by exactly one year, and was buried at Summerville. It was said that

Harvey, who was very devoted to his wife, could not suffer himself to be separated from her even in death. In the official inventory of burials at Ballinacurra, the following note appears:

The remains of this friend, Rebecca Harvey, underwent temporary interment in the garden house in Summerville, the residence of her husband. She was aged 70.

The last member of the family, of which we have a record, was Hannah Christy Harvey, who died in 1874, aged 76. Reuben died in 1866 at the age of 77.

The beautiful trees planted by Joseph Massey Harvey were well on their way to maturity when "Summerville" was purchased by another milling family, the Goodbodys.



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