

City Hall paintings

Prior to 1673 the Limerick Corporation (or Town Council) held their meetings in the Tholsel, later known as the old City Gaol, up to the year 1811. Parts of the Tholsel are over 500 years old; some sources give the date as the middle of the ninth century.

Two fine pieces of carving which were in the Exchange at Nicholas Street, are still preserved, viz., the Royal Arms which was over the mayor's office, and the large carving in the former council chamber in Rutland Street.

The Royal Arms was also formerly over the Mayor's office of the Exchange. The Sword of State and the four maces are still preserved and can be seen at the City Museum. An illuminated Charter granted by Charles II is also on view at the Museum.

In January, 1847, the Corporation moved to the Commercial Buildings, the Limerick Chamber of Commerce premises at Rutland Street. The council chamber contained fine paintings of Daniel O'Connell (1849) and Mayor FitzGerald (1863). There were also paintings of Gerald Griffin, Mayor O'Callaghan, Mayor Clancy, Bard of

by William W.
Gleeson

Thomond, Robert Emmet, and the blowing-up of the siege train at Ballyneety.

It is to be regretted that some of the paintings are now no longer on public view. The siege painting was taken down from the chamber wall many years ago and placed in the basement of the City Hall. While in this location, the painting was damaged and some graffiti scrawled across its face. It is a shame that this historic painting has not been repaired and restored to its former civic glory in the council chamber or in the City Art Gallery.

Portraits of Bishop Ryan (1864), Bishop Butler (1885), and Maurice Lenihan, historian and printer, who was mayor in 1884, are also on display in various parts of the City Hall.

The "Parish" was well represented with paintings in the Town Hall of Fr. Michael FitzGerald, P.P., St. Mary's, up to 1871, and Fr. Laurence O'Keeffe,

C.C., St. Mary's, up to his death in 1887. (The writer has been informed that these paintings are now in Ozanam House, where they can be seen by appointment).

However, as far as I know, there is no painting in the city of Brother Walsh, an outstanding Limerickman who for 40 years was Superior of Sexton Street Christian Brothers Schools.

And finally, a question: Could any of our readers enlighten us on the whereabouts of that magnificent almost life-size portrait of Sir Peter Tait in his mayoral robes and chains which up to about a decade ago graced the walls of the social club at the front of the Limerick Clothing Factory premises at Edward Street? The painting was removed at the time of the closure of the factory and has disappeared from public view. It was hardly dumped with the factory waste. Could some civic-minded citizen help in its recovery? The portrait should not remain hidden away from public view but should be hung in a permanent and honoured place in the City Hall or Art Gallery.

How many more historic Limerick paintings have been spirited away, many to places far beyond the city's walls?



A drawing of the City Hall by Thomas Ryan.