

CITY OF COMMERCE

There is a great deal of venerable tradition which Limerick does not flaunt before the eyes of the casual observer.

The city makes a pretty picture when seen from the Clare bank of the Shannon: clustering houses, spires, and castellated walls stretching in panorama along the opposite shore. To see this, and to have received this impression, is to have seen and perceived much - and nothing.

Limerick does not yield up her charms so easily as all that. There is something of aloofness in the dignity of a city which was a place of importance as long ago as the fourth century, and which has experienced so many vicissitudes as to have earned the sobriquet of "The Nation's Meeting Place".

Danes, Normans, English, French, the original Celts and in more modern times, Germans, have all left their marks here in diverse ways.

As far back as 155 A.D., the city, eligibly situated on the eastern bank of the Shannon, is supposed to have been founded by Yuorus, while it is also said to be the Regia of Ptolemy. It was called Rosse-de-Nailleagh in the Annals of Multifernan, and is believed to have been the place described under the name of Luimneach (Anno Mundi

by Willie W.
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2870 and 3970). (In Danish and Anglo-Saxon languages Limerick is described as meaning rich soil or land).

Limerick had a mayor and corporation (1197) 10 years before London, which metropolitan city boasted a similar honour before Edinburgh, Cardiff, Dublin, Belfast and Cork.

In the nineteenth century Limerick was noted for a great number of industries but at the dawn of the present century, many had ceased to exist.

Hereunder is a selected list that gave regular employment to its men and women folk which in those far-off days, was known as "home industries".

7 lace factories, 6 brush factories, 14 breweries, 4 malt houses, 3 foundries, ship building and repairing yards, 22 soap and brush factories, 1 glove factory, 1 cotton factory, 1 linen factory, 2 glass houses, 1 starch and blue factory, 1 oil mill, 3 paper mills, 1 muslin factory, 3 bleach greens, 1 woollen mill, 1 cotton mill, 1 marble works, 4 woollen mills, 1 tuckina mills, 2 tanneries, 1 lead mine, 1 silver mine, 7 pipe factories, 2 slate quarries, 2 salt works.

(The total employed was 13,926).

Industrial progress was slow in the first three decades of this century. With the advent of the Shannon Scheme, there followed the Foynes seaplane base and the establishment of Shannon Airport, all in the Mid West. The renovation of numerous castles, of which Bunratty is the most famous, greatly enlarged the tourist attractiveness of the region.

That Limerick, despite its many old-fashioned ways, is a fast-growing city, is borne out clearly by population trends. In 1914 it had 32,000 people; today the figure exceeds 73,000.

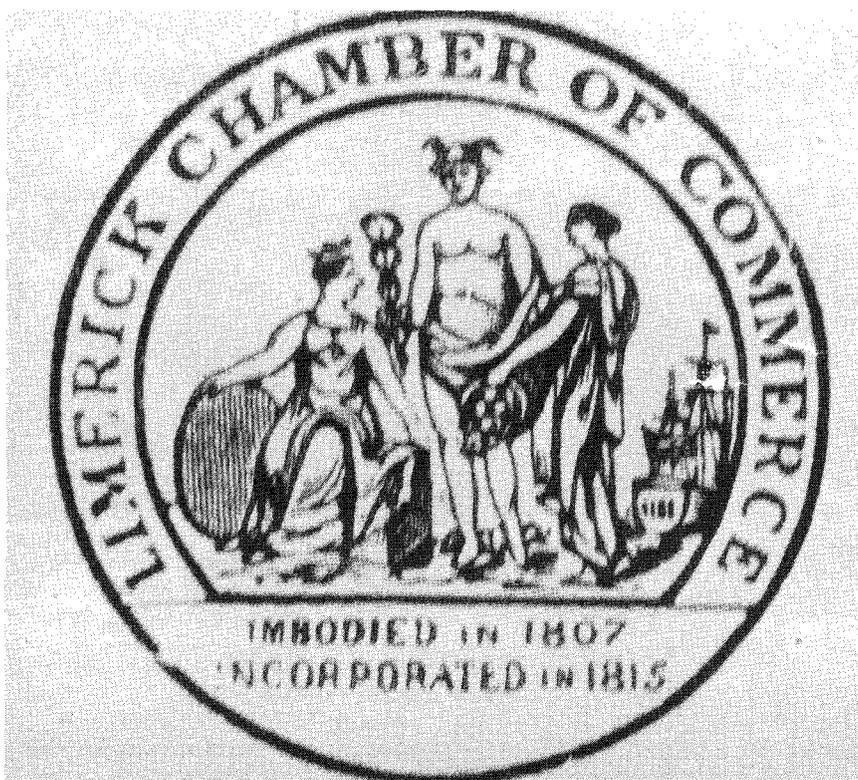
Whilst it is true to say that, in the interim, many businesses have folded up, e.g. Spillane's Tobacco Factory, Cleve's Milk Co., Shaw's, Dennys, Mattersons and Clover Meats bacon factories, Geary's Sweet Co., Ferenka, Limerick, Danus and O'Donovan's clothing factories, N.B.C., Dinneen's and Tubridy's bakeries, Curragour Mills Co., J.J. Byrne's and Toomey's, mineral water firms, L.S.S.C., Cannock's and McBirney's drapery establishments, Daly's and Troy's confectioners and bakers, etc., etc., it is equally true to note that through the aegis of the Shannon Industrial Development Co., the attraction of overseas industry, investment and know-how, began at Shannon Airport in the early 1960s and has continued up to the present day. This new industrial revolution has more than made up for past losses.

Among the list of firms which established in the region in the early 1960s and have been since expanded and developed, are De Beers Industrial Diamond Division; E.I. Company, a subsidiary of General Electric; Jonathan Logan subsidiary Butte Knit of Ireland; S.P.S. International; Draper Erin, Howmedica International; Pfizer Corporation; Wyeth Limited; Syntex Corporation; Burlington Industries; Analog Devices, Newpower Aluminium, etc.

It is most gratifying to record the emergence of the Shannon Estuary in maritime development and this is of tremendous significance for the future industrial progress of the region.

The Estuary has already seen the establishment of Alcan's £400,000,000 alumina plant at Aughinish near Foynes. And there are many more plans in train to broaden this industrial base along the Shannon.

So the city and its people have seen much change in industrial and commercial life since the Vikings first forded the Shannon at Limerick long long ago on one of their marauding missions.



The symbol of the Limerick Chamber of Commerce.