Michael Conway

and St. John's hospitals. It also bordered on a number of impoverished parts of the old city. Dr. Frith referred many of his patients to Barrington's but he was not attached to the hospital or to the Poor Law Unions, which were set up about that time.

While residing in Charlotte Quay, with his wife Catherine and daughter Margaret, Dr. Frith made the acquaintance of many local people. His best friend was Mortimer O'Brien, who had a drapery business at 14, 15 16 Charlotte Quay. He was frequently visited by Rev. Fitzgerald, the administrator of St. John's Cathedral. Dr. Frith made friends with the nuns of St. Mary's Convent, which was founded in 1830, and also with the nuns in the Good Shepherd, Mt. St. Vincent, and the Presentation Convents. His manservant was Patrick Breteron, who had many other people also stayed in the medical hall during that time. Accounts have been handed down about that time. This was particularly so for women whose husbands had died and left them unprovided for. To assist these widows, Dr. Frith had five small houses, similar to those which he owned in Nenagh, built in Garryowen, in the shadow of St. John's Cathedral. These houses were known as the Penny Alms Houses, and were inhabited up to the 1940s. They were demolished in the 1950s to make way for the boundary wall at the front of St. John's School.

About 1858, attempts were made to improve the organisation of education. Religious orders had taken the initiative in many areas and were concentrating their attention on young boys. In some places the monitory system of education, was in use, with the older children teaching the younger ones. Frith was directly exposed to the illiteracy and ignorance of his young patients and was particularly struck by the lack of facilities for female education. He therefore resolved to have a school built for young girls in the grounds of St. John's Cathedral. (He later left money for a boy's wing, which was added in 1893). This school was between the cathedral and the Widows' Alms houses and was administered by the Sisters of Mercy. It was known for years as Frith's School.

Another group of underprivileged children in whom Frith had a great in-
terest were the orphans of the city. A record of some of his work was given in the annals of St. Mary’s Convent. “The first event recorded in 1870 is the death of an old and generous benefactor, Dr. Frith, Charlotte Quay. For years, this good man was in the habit of sending a quantity of material for clothing to the orphans and a good supply of bread for the poor attending our schools. All of which for a long time he endeavoured to keep concealed as to who was the giver, forwarding them anonymously. His relief to the poor and indigent was both great and secret. He constantly retrenched from the quality of his own sustenance to have more to bestow on the poor of Christ. He would not buy salmon or expensive fish but only such as was cheap to spare money for them ...”

Robert Frith was involved with charitable work when he took ill with bronchitis on November 14, 1867. His condition gradually worsened over the next seven days. He was moved from his house (by this time the Friths had moved to 18 Charlotte Quay) to the Assembly Hall, Charlotte Quay and on Thursday night, after writing his will, his condition finally deteriorated and he died of pneumonia.

In his will, he provided for his family and requested that the rest of his money and the proceeds from the sale of his estates in Nenagh be divided among a number of charities. He was buried in a private ceremony, and his grave is situated close to the church in the graveyard of Mt. St. Laurence. On the headstone, subsequently erected to his memory, the following inscription can be read: Erected to the memory of Robert Frith, surgeon, who departed this life on the 21st day of November 1867. He was a just man. He served God. His hands through life were open to the poor and in death he did not forget them.

**THE FRITHS OF NENAGH**

**JAMES FRITH (Postmaster, 1778)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wm. Frith</th>
<th>&amp; Jane Frith</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1772 - 1820)</td>
<td>(1775 - 1837)</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>John Frith</th>
<th>Mary Ann Frith</th>
<th>Agnes Frith</th>
<th>Robert Frith</th>
<th>Jane Frith</th>
<th>George Frith</th>
<th>Wm. Frith</th>
<th>Thos. Frith</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1816-1866)</td>
<td>(1817-1892)</td>
<td>Ottawa (Magrath Frith)</td>
<td>(1795-1852)</td>
<td>(1805-1873)</td>
<td>(1804-1837)</td>
<td>Frith</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Harrington</th>
<th>Bourke</th>
<th>Cathrine Frith</th>
<th>Capt. Thos. Smith</th>
<th>Elizabeth Slattery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1799-1879)</td>
<td>(RIP 65 Yr)</td>
<td>Frith Corps of Infantry</td>
<td>(1825)</td>
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</table>

Margaret Frith

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<tr>
<th>Mgt. Harrington</th>
<th>Abraham Harrington</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1855-1905)</td>
<td>(1848-?)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* ... Relationship uncertain

**I ROBERT FRITH of Charlotte’s Quay do hereby make this my last Will and Testam**

* I Will and Bequeath to my Executors for the benefit of my Daughter...

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John Frith

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