

EDUCATION IN LIMERICK 1800 - 1900.

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The information which helped me with research into the education era 1800 - 1900 was got from the following:-

History of Limerick (Begley) History of Limerick (Maurice Lenihan)

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This Report was written and orginally typed by Marie Sheridan.

The Religious Orders really turned the tide in the 19th Century regarding the education of the poor in Limerick. The Penal Laws which had put restraints on Catholics receiving education were now eased considerably but the poverty was atrocious. There were some hedge schools in existence but few children could avail of this type of education. An old lady in Athlunkard Street ran a school in her little hovel and charged 1d a week and the children sat on the bed and on the floor in order to learn the three Rs. It was not until Catholic Emancipation was procured by that great genius Daniel O'Connell in 1829 that the religious orders could advance with their efforts to educate the poor of Limerick.

In 1812 the Sisters of St. Clare opened a convent in St. Mary's Parish helped mainly by the Franciscan Order and The Bishop. Once established the convent prospered under the supervision of a Mrs. Naughton, first superioress. Some young ladies from the city and county entered including the Misses Shannon, ancestors of Fr. Walsh, P.P. St. Munchins. The poor Clares did not remain in existence due to lack of funds, also not enough teaching power. However, during their term of office the nuns had established a school-house and large numbers of children attended and learned Reading and Writing, also useful Needlework. On April 1st 1833 for want of funds the school was affiliated to the National Board of Education. In 1837, The Bishop of Limerick, Dr. Ryan invited Mother Catherine McAuley, Founderess of the Mercy Order, to come to Limerick. When Mother Catherine McAuley first saw the establishment in St. Mary's Parish she described it thus according to Begley -

"It is a nice old convent called St. Peters Cell, enclosed by walls of an Abbey, a beautiful ruin. We have a nice chapel, choir, good garden and extensive school rooms".

At the opening of St. Mary's School, Mother Catherine McAuley was accompanied by the intended superioress, Elizabeth Moore and three

other sisters. A Miss Heffernan from Ardagh, Co. Limerick who had been the prime mover in getting the Mercy Order to come to Limerick later bequeathed to the new convent the estate left her by her brother Patrick. Men came after their day's labour to work gratis for a few hours to help build the new school as they were so grateful to the sisters for the wonderful work they were doing in the parish. There was a Spinning and Knitting hall for older girls and the younger children learned reading and writing. In 1837 one teacher with the help of some assistants looked after 539 pupils. In 1838 Wm. Smith O'Brien paid tribute to the work of the nuns in their efforts to educate the lower orders in the City. Following the erection of the new school building in 1842 an infant school was connected to the National Board. This school had 196 pupils and two nuns.

Four years later, numbers were down because of the Famine. By being affiliated to the National Board the Schools received a yearly salary and cheap books. The poor were greatly helped by the nuns with food and clothing.

For the well to do there were exclusive schools in the City and from the Limerick Cronicle 1832 the following advertisements appeared:-

Young Ladies Select Boarding & Day School
1 Upper Glentworth Street under Mrs. O'Sullivan.

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Young Mens School - Day School
1 Upper Glentworth Street under Mr. O'Sullivan.

Limerick Select Seminary Henry Street,
Rev. James Elliott A.B. Principal.
All professionals catered for.

Circa 1853 another school was set up in close proximity to the Priest's House in St. Mary's Parish. This School was set up in an old auxiliary barracks and was for children who had been rescued from the Bowdy Lane School, got up by Protestants to entice Catholic children by providing food and clothing.

The School which had been set up by the Poor Clares in St. Mary's Parish and later run by the Mercy Order was but two years in existence when attempts were made to found another girls school in the newer part of the city. From this latter school there evolved the Convent of the Presentation Sisters. In 1822 Father Pat Hogan of St. Michael's Parish took a house, 2 Sexton Street and established a girls school, chiefly sponsored by himself. By 1825 it was supported by public subscription, was under the patronage of the Parish Priest and a Committee of Roman Catholic Ladies. The house was two stories high and Anastasia Greene received £12 p.a. for teaching 303 girls. Subjects included reading, writing and arithmetic, Religious Instruction and Needlework. Music was taught in the Infant Department. It was a Miss King who provided the link between the free school of Fr. Hogan and the Presentation Nuns later. Catherine King, born in Waterford, came to reside in Limerick with her Uncle, Capt. Moore R.N. and his Catholic wife. They had no children of their own. She became a convert to Catholicism and later joined the Visitation Convent at Shepperton Mallet, England. Ill Health forced her to return to her native city where she eventually taught at the Sexton Street School.

Since 1822 Fr. Hogan was anxious to introduce an Order of nuns into his school. In 1823 two young ladies from Kerry joined the south Presentation Convent in Cork with the intention of founding a Convent in Limerick. With the permission of Fr. Hogan and Dr. Ryan (Bishop) Miss King corresponded with the superior, Sister Honoria (Jane died in 1833). Miss King and Fr. Hogan

bought Newtown Vile, the home of the Sexton-Perys and were already building new school rooms nearby. On May 8th 1837 the first party of nuns arrived. Sr. M. Joseph Harnett, Superioress, with Sr. M. Stanislaus Drinan and Sr. M. Francis Cantillon. They were accompanied by Bishop Murphy, Cork. No time was lost in opening the school and on May 29th 300 girls enrolled, 150 from the school formerly run by Miss King on the other side of the road. Very poor children were given breakfast each morning. In 1846 Lady Gullamore and the Hon. Miss Paget, a maid of honour to Queen Victoria visited the school and were very pleased with the nuns and children. Extensions to the school were carried out in 1879 and in 1894.

Most Rev. Dr. Young who had a very short episcopate 1796-1813 was responsible for introducing the benefit of sound Catholic education for boys into his native city. In 1812 he contacted Edmund Rice (Waterford), founder of the Christian Brothers, eleven years in existence. Br. Rice came to Limerick but some difficulties existed which precluded the immediate opening of a school. In 1816 the newly consecrated Bishop Charles Tuohey, made an application for a Community of Brothers. As Br. Rice was inundated with similar requests it became customary for the requesting ecclesiastic to send suitable subjects to Mount St. Edmund Waterford for training and they returned to their own diocese for teaching. Bishop Tuohey was unfortunate in not having neither subjects for training or school premises. Nonetheless his request was answered and in June 1816, three brothers, Austin Dunne, of the first founders, Aloys. Kelly and Francis Grace arrived in Limerick. They took up residence in a house in Hills Lane (no longer existing) situated at the back of Irish Town. As it proved to be insanitary, in bad repair and of a high rent, the brothers moved to Denmark Street and eventually in 1818 to a rented house, 44 Clare Street.

On their first coming to Limerick the brothers were given charge of the separate parochial schools of St. Johns and St. Marys. These they formed into one under the title United Schools. For class halls the brothers rented the Assembly rooms in Charlotte Quay. This building erected as a social hall was used before the coming of the brothers as a secular educational establishment. From the census of Limerick 1821 for every five children between the ages of 5 and 15 school-going - 8 remained at home, the poverty caused a huge low attendance.

In 1824 the proprietors of the Assembly rooms in Clare Street withdrew their consent to the brothers for use of the rooms. Bishop Tucky then put the Old College at Park, vacant at their disposal. In 1825, the brothers who for some time had been looking for a suitable site for a Monastery secured a plot of ground on Sexton Street from a Samuel Dickson under the auspices of the Bishop. It was part of South Priors Land and to the west of the Artillery Barracks. On September 21st 1825 the foundation stone was laid. Work was completed in 1827.

In 1832 a dreadful cholera raged in Limerick and the brothers placed their Monastery and school at the disposal of the authorities for the Health whilst they themselves helped to nurse the sick.

The Education question which has been at all times of great interest to the citizens of Limerick with and unfailing interest at all times before the public in reference to the Model Schools of the National Board of Education. All of which had been an expensive plan and had been in existence since 1827. Those schools had been attended by large numbers of children. A speech made by one of the Inspectors in 1863 gave rise to the action being taken by Rt. Rev. Dr. Butler and the establishment of the Model School System. On the first day of the

from the altar of every Catholic Church parents were cautioned about sending their children to the Model Schools. Result - Many children withdrawn from the Model Schools and the Jesuits set up an intermediate school to cater for the needs of the children, also the Christian Brothers were brought into more vigorous operation for the requirements of the poor. The F.C.J. Nuns established a Boarding School in 1854 at Laurel Hill to supply first class education for girls. They set up an Intermediate school to which large numbers of Catholic children who had frequented the Model Schools were now sent.

In 1868 the Government first recognised and assisted agricultural and industrial schools under the terms of the Industrial Act of that year. Mount St. Vincent was recognised as an Industrial School and was connected with the National Board in 1857 but this ceased after a short time owing to a misunderstanding over the undenomination character of the school. This was resolved in 1872.