In the last century, two rows of mud-walled, thatched cabins formed the main housing in Park, with clusters of similar dwellings dotting the various boreens. The thatch was often a do-it-yourself job and had to be tied down with ropes on stormy nights to prevent the roof from being blown away. Since the beginning of the present century, new houses have gradually replaced the old mud cabins. Many of these dwellings are long, one-storey buildings of a pleasing, functional design, with a door off centre and three windows, one at the right and two at the left. This basic design is still used even in the modern houses now being built in Park.

Inside the houses the flagged kitchen was heated by an open hearth fire. This form of heating was later replaced by grates with hobs and by the great cast-iron ranges made at the Limerick Foundry. The furniture consisted of a deal table and sugan chairs as in the usual rural dwelling of the time. One different feature of the Park kitchen was the absence of regular gates to the gardens and fields. The entrances were closed off with old iron bedsteads, which were held in an upright position by an intricate system of wires and ropes. Thus the thrifty, resourceful Parkmen prolonged and transformed the lives of the rusty frames. But the sight of the old irons at the close of a summer’s day could be a melancholy one, conjuring up pictures of the same bedsteads supporting long departed toilers in the small bedrooms of the thatched cabins.

The topography of the district had many other unusual features. Two interesting relics of the Williamite Siege, King William’s Well and the Pillar Standard, were to be found in Singland. It was through the old road of Park that King William is said to have passed to the Shannon on his way to Limerick in 1690. He was seeking the best route to the river and, having gained this knowledge, passed it on to General Ginkel who made his successful journey the following year.

Maurice Lenihan visited Singland and in his History describes the stone column erected by William where he pitched his tent:

"In this parish of Singland, or St. Patrick’s, there are some remarkable relics of the siege; one is this ‘standard pillar’ of King William (so called) and is pointed out by the inhabitants as the pillar on which the Royal Ensign of William was raised during the siege of 1690. It is on the high road which leads to Singland House and is sometimes called ‘the pillar’ simply... It is built of ashlar masonry; thirteen feet high and about three feet in diameter; the stones are rather large and in most cases they are roughly chiselled... a short wall or buttress is built up against it to the N.W., and appears to be contemporaneous with the pillar itself... About a thousand yards distance to the North, in a direct line, is New Castle House, in which it is asserted King William spent his time during the siege.

Lenihan also recorded his impressions of King William’s Well:

"The other object here of interest connected with the siege is King William’s Well, which is about 100 hundred yards from the pillar and in a
A 15th century stone from the old St. Patrick's Church.

field about about 50 yards from the high
road and nearly opposite Singland
House on the other side of the road.
“A stream of pure water runs to the
road from the well, and joins
another stream from the well of
Shesaree, which is some distance
off on another road. King William's
Well is deep but covered with a
thick coating of leaves and greenish,
weedy deposit which conceal its
waters from view - at least so it
was on the beautiful evening I
visited the locality. Tradition says
that a large flag or standard lies
buried in a field near the well. There
are other evidences about that it
was the site of a camp; and the well
is said to have supplied William’s
troops with water during the
sieges”.

Maurice Lenihan liked the people of
Singland so much that he wrote: “I
have never in any place met people
more ready than they are in this
locality, at telling the traditions con-
ected with the siege, and showing
where the well, the standard pillar, etc.,
are placed”.

The historian’s words of praise were
to remain valid for more than a century.
The stone column and King William’s
Well were located on land owned by
the Cunneen family. The well has sur-
vived and can still be seen today. But
the column, which had stood up to the
1960s, has perished. A member of the
Cunneen clan, in a burst of misguided
energy, demolished “King Billy’s Pillar”
and removed it from his land.

But other Park landmarks have
proved more durable in withstanding
the ravages of time and the changes in
political and religious thought. One
such spot is Paddy’s Hedge. Before the
cutting of the Canal in 1757, a boreen
connected Pennywell Lane with the
Abbey Ferry, which operated between
King’s Island and Lower Park. The
boreen became known as Paddy’s
Hedge and was in disuse for forty years
before the building of Park Bridge in
1798. In due course, Paddy’s Hedge
became a haven for countless genera-
tions of young Limerick lovers, who
were naturally attracted by the double
row of luxuriant hawthorns and who
courted in the many cozy nooks amid
the greenery. But this romantic bower
also attracted the attention of a few
over-zealous priests, who frequently
disrupted the courtship of the young
couples by threats of the certainty of
hell-fire and the more immediate cer-
tainty of the vigorous application of a
blackthorn stick.

The spot also featured in the words
of the old Limerick song, the first line of
which runs, “As I passed Lock Mills to
Paddy’s Hedge”. A shebeen was once
located there among the hawthorns.

On the city side of Park, near the
Cobally Road jetty, is a piece of land
known as the Goose’s Corner. A fowl
market was held at this spot. Local
people and farmers from the sur-
rounding countryside sold their geese
and chickens to Limerick shoppers.

trade being traditionally brisk at
Michaelmas and Christmas. Eggs were
also sold there and were particularly
popular at Easter, following the long,
rigorous Lenten fast. It is reputed that
when a fowl epidemic wiped out flocks
of the geese, they were buried on this
site. In the summer evenings the Cor-
ner was used as a meeting-place and
open-air dance arena. The old people
leisurely passed their time away sitting
on the low boundary wall, chatting and
watching the younger dancers.

Park, like most country districts, had
its Big House, Park House, a mansion
standing on its own grounds, was
purchased in 1809 by Dr. Young, the
Roman Catholic Bishop of Limerick, for
use as a diocesan seminary. After the
college was moved to Henry Street, the
house served as the Bishop’s Palace for
Dr. George Butler, until he purchased
another mansion on the site of the pre-
sent diocesan college in Corbally. Park
House was demolished in the mid-
sixties to make way for the College
Park housing development. Another
spacious residence, Pennywell House,
owned by Richard Harold, was situated
at the corner of Pennywell Lane and
the canal. The ruins of this stone house
remained standing until the 1920s.

Beside the road known as the
Funeral Road is Lucas’ Lough, a
boomerang-shaped pond which always
holds a plentiful supply of water, even
during the longest drought. The Lough
is a favourite haunt of children fishing
for coarse fish. The name of the pond is
a corruption of the original Irish words.
Poul na Luichre (The Pool of the Rushes). A little hall near the Lough is named Ard na Luichre.

Before the main Dublin Road was built a thoroughfare called Hymie's Boreen linked the present St. Patrick's Road with Corbally. The thoroughfare went through Singland and Rhebogue and carried on into the heart of Park to the Shannon. The Boreen was the main artery in and out of the district before the building of Park Bridge. When the canal cut through the road in 1757, an alternative link-up was made between Pennywell Lane and the rest of the road on the north side of the canal. After this change, Hymie's Boreen was cut off and fell into disuse. However, new houses have been built in the area in recent years, and the widening and resurfacing of the Boreen should lead to new life along the ancient thoroughfare.

When Park Bridge was built in 1798, an unusual clause, inserted in all the old leases in the district, stipulated that the tenants were entitled to an abatement of £2 per acre in the rental of their lands should the bridge at any time fall into disrepair. The landlord was thus obliged to keep the bridge in good repair. The rents on the land were raised when the bridge was built and in 1865 the rental of Corbally was £6.16.6 an acre. Before the building of this bridge a ferry service across the Abbey river linked Park and the city.

One feature of agriculture in Park in the seventeenth century has long since disappeared. The following entry in the Civil Survey of 1654/56 shows that fruit growing was an important part of the activities of the people there at that time:

"Parke: halfe a plowland with many orchards upon it, measing the north with the lands of Corbally, on the easte with the lands of Rebooghe and a branch of the river of Shannon, on the south with the highway leading from Limerick to Rebooghe, on the west with a branch of the river of Shannon called Gowiebegge. Owing thereout to the Corporation of Lymicke."

Nor is there now any traces of the spa which was operated in the eighteenth century. Maurice Lenihan, in his History, published in 1866, wrote: "At Park there was a chalybeate spa, which about sixty years ago was much frequented, but which has not only fallen into disuse but has been completely forgotten in latter years. This most likely is the spa which is commemorated in the song of Garroyen."

Before 1825, the people of Limerick, like rural dwellers, got their household water in containers from the nearest well or pump. In that year, the Limerick Waterworks Company constructed two large tanks at Galway Green, capable of holding 600,000 gallons, pumped from the Shannon by a 40-horsepower steam engine. This was the first attempt by the Limerick Corporation to install a controlled water system in the city.

The new engine was set up at Rhebogue, close to the Shannon, and was known as the Rhebogue Waterworks, and, more familiarly, as the "Engine House". This well built stone building, with its chugging pumps and belching smoke stack, was a well known landmark and served as a half-way house for the many generations who enjoyed the delights of walks along the towpath from the canal harbour to Plassey Bridge.

For nearly sixty years the Engine House provided Limerick with a limited water supply. If the distribution system was not ideal, it at least gave a constant source to the many public pumps and fountains in the city.

In 1880, the Corporation, in reply to advertisements, received proposals from a number of contractors for the construction of a waterworks capable of supplying the full needs of the people. Eventually, a scheme submitted by a firm named Paskin was accepted and the Clareville Waterworks was established.

The old Engine House at Rhebogue continued to operate as an auxiliary station for fifty years. After the building fell into disuse it served as a welcome resting place for fishermen and strollers before it was summarily demolished.

In his History Lenihan gave further details about the district. He wrote: "In 1750, chiefly through the piety and munificence of Richard Harold Esq. of Pennywell, a chapel was built in St. Patrick's Parish on Park Hill, above Pennywell. In the hill the Williamites had a battery during the last sieges. The chapel having become ruinous, a site on his property was offered free, by Mr. Harold's son (Richard Harold also), on which to raise another by a more convenient place on the lands of Monamuckey, nearer to the city, and on a line with the new road to Dublin, was chosen in preference, where it was built ... The new church was built in 1816. It is in the form of the letter T, and is small but neatly fitted, having the entrance surrounded by trees. The building was much improved in 1835."

Some stonework from the ruined chapel has survived by the Rhebogue hillside to the present day. Another Roman Catholic Church, St. Bridget's, was built on Singland Hill in the past decade. This building is a timber structure with a concrete brick cladding.