

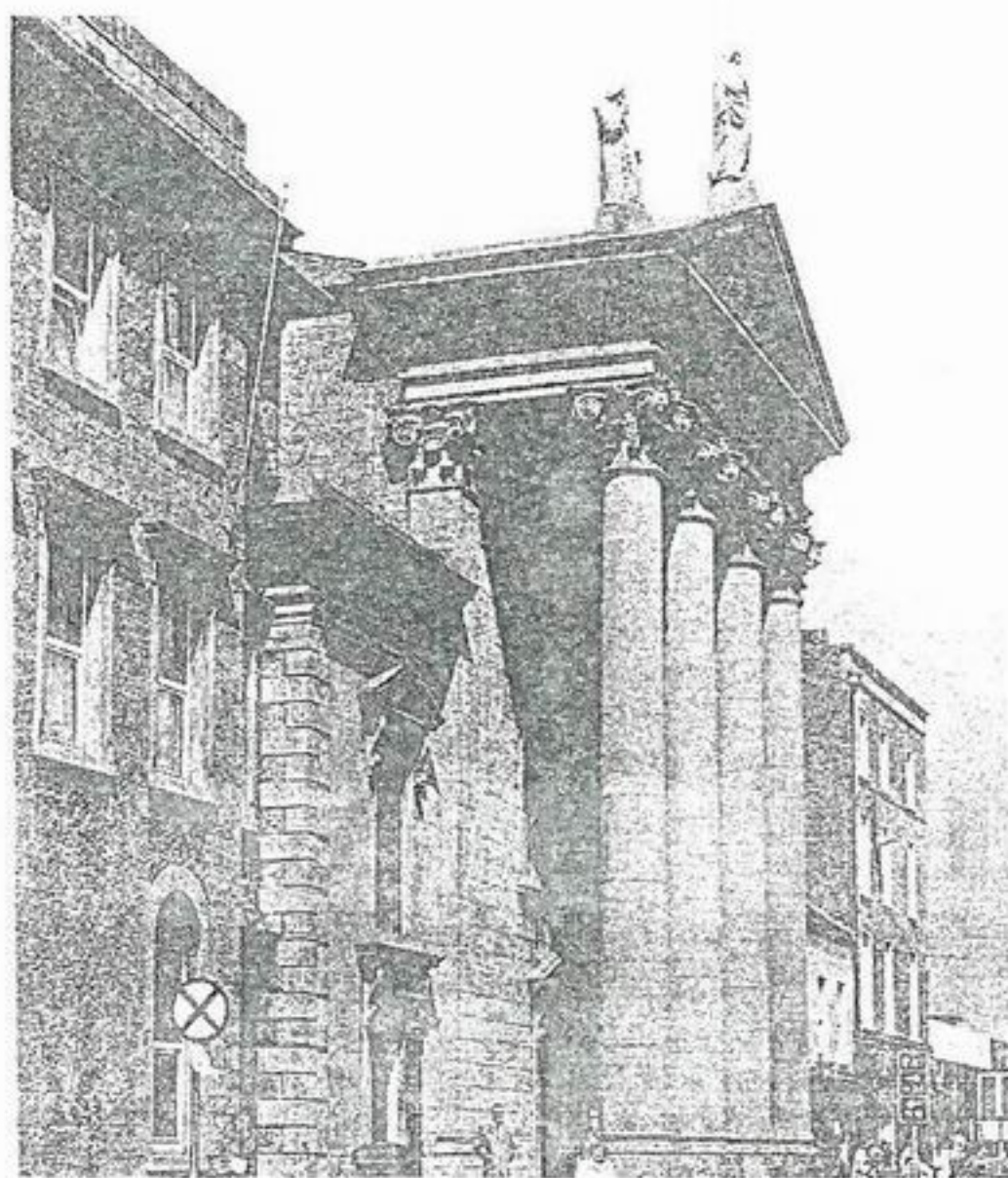
2. Presbyterian Church, Henry St.

THE BUILDING OF LIMERICK

by a spire. The failure of financial support which prevented the realisation of this structure was a likely result of the fall in the protestant population in the city and symptomatic of their loss of position. Further decline has left St Munchin's and St John's derelict only 170 years after they were built.

An interesting phenomenon in the history of the city's ecclesiastical architecture is the relative prominence of presbyterian churches. Non-conformists, who had suffered under the penal laws, had established a presence in Newtown Pery by the early nineteenth century. By 1870 many of the chapels had moved to larger sites at the top of the new town.

The presbyterians moved to Glentworth Street in 1817 building the stone chapel behind the main buildings of the street (now used as a printing works) in 1846. The foundation stone of a new brick building with stone decoration in the Gothic style was laid in 1899. This late flowering of protestantism was supported by a thousand Scottish soldiers who were posted to Limerick in the 1880s and 1890s. The church still stands, empty, on Henry Street. This road is animated by its churches; the classical portico of the Franciscans stands like an entrance at the foot of the street, the brick tower of the presbyterian church punctuates the mid-point and the spire of St Alphonsus soars above at the top.



Henry Street. The Franciscan portico stands at the foot of the street (Judith Hill).

Style and appearance

The catholic and protestant churches were built in three main styles; Gothic Revival, Classical and Hiberno-Romanesque. The styles have a general chronology; the churches designed in the 1850s were built in the Gothic style, those of the 1860s and 1870s tended to be Classical and the later churches had Hiberno-Romanesque features.

In a period which dipped freely into the past historic styles came to be associated with contemporary concerns and values. Gothic (after Pugin) was chosen because it was associated with a period perceived to be of exemplary spirituality in the church. Pugin had described the English parish church as 'one of the most beautiful and appropriate that the mind of man could conceive: every portion ... answered both a useful and mystical purpose'.²⁴ In his hands architecture acquired a morality. There should be no elements superfluous to 'convenience, construction or propriety', and 'ornament should consist of enrichment of the essential construction'. When Philip Charles Hardwick came