

The People's Park Commemorates One of These Prominent Limerick Merchants

THE RUSSELLS OF LIMERICK

Last week's "Chronicle" recalled the opening of the People's Park, and the elaborate ceremony on that August day of 1877 showed in no uncertain way the high regard in which one of Limerick's oldest merchant families, the Russells, were held in the city.

Apart from the park itself, one of the most striking memorials to Richard Russell is the beautiful drinking fountain in the centre of the grounds which was erected by the employees of Messrs. John Norris Russell and Sons, and completed in the early summer of 1877.

The canopied and ornamental structure, which is about 25 feet high, carries on one of its shields the inscription: "To the memory of Richard Russell, who died August 29, 1871," and on the opposite side, it is stated that the fountain was "Erected by the employees of J. N. Russell & Sons, 1877." The contractor for the cut stone base was Patrick McMahon, and the stone was given without charge from the Harbour Commissioners' quarry. The fountain was manufactured by Messrs. George Smith & Co., Sun Foundry, Glasgow, and the owners of the ss "Earnholm." Messrs. Hugh McPhail and Company brought it from Glasgow free of charge. The three people who devised the project and guided it to completion were Messrs. F. Finch, J. K. Browne and T. Fitzgerald.

Mr. Michael English is now M.C.C.

THE election of a new Council member to fill the vacancy caused by the death of the late Paddy Clohessy was but one of several major decisions made by Limerick County Council at its monthly meeting.

He is Councillor Michael English, of Hospital, who was also elected to three other committees of which Mr. Clohessy was a member.

The Council had earlier adjourned for an hour as a mark of respect to a former County Manager, P. J. Meghen, who had died.

In the vote for election, Councillor English beat his rival, Mr. Peadar Clohessy, a nephew of the late Councillor Clohessy, by 13 votes to 12. Councillor English was proposed by Senator William O'Brien and Councillor Denis Murphy; Mr. Clohessy was proposed by Senator Pat Ryan and Councillor Tom Ryan.

Councillor Jim O'Donnell fills the vacancy on the County Committee of Agriculture, and Councillor John O'Dwyer has been elected to the Limerick Market Trustees Committee.

The eleven-man delegation to the Minister's regional meeting on local government reorganisation includes the five representatives required by the Minister, but also includes three representatives each from Newcastle West and Rathkeale to balance the county's representation against that of other counties.

The eleven are: Councillors Tom Ryan, Liam Hickey, Con O'Neill, Sean Hayes and Paddy Maguire (for the County); Mrs. Nora Wrenn, William Cahill and Ned Dwyer (for Newcastle West) and William Madden, Pat Sheehy and J. C. Barrett (for Rathkeale).

The Russells

The following details of the Russell family are taken from the files of the Limerick Chronicle:

The Russells were an old Limerick family that for centuries helped in guiding the destinies of the city. The 9th and 56th Mayors of Limerick were Russells, and several of the name filled the offices of bailiff and sheriff.

According to an inscription in front of the old Exchange, it appears it was rebuilt in the year 1777, Walter Widenham being mayor, and Francis Russell and Charles Sargent, sheriffs. Since then to the year in which the Russell Memorial Park was opened, 1877—just a century—nine members of the family had filled the office of sheriff of the city, namely, Francis Russell, William Russell, Philip Russell, Abraham Russell, Francis Philip Russell, Hughes Russell, John Norris Russell, Richard Russell and Thompson Russell.

Parliament

For 19 years the city was represented in Parliament by Francis William Russell, who was returned one of the members at the contested elections of 1852, 1857, 1859, 1865 and 1868. In 1871 his sudden death occurred at his residence in London, the day after the death of his brother, Richard.

In former days there was a branch of the Russells in Limerick, who were of this family, but the connection was remote, having descended from the brother of one of the progenitors of the 19th century merchant family (Philip Russell, born in 1650 being the year that Cromwell's troops laid siege to Limerick). They had long since left the city but were represented up to the 1870's by the Venerable John Russell, Archdeacon of Clagher, whose sister was married to the Right Rev. Charles Dickenson, Lord Bishop of Meath.

Building

The first extension of the city outside the walls, when it was a fortress, was in the year 1766, West Water Gate having been taken down, and Charlotte's Quay formed, on which, a range of houses was built by George, Francis John and William Russell.

The Russells have added more to the city than any other family that ever resided in it. A great part of O'Connell Street, as also parts of Mallow Street, Glentworth Street, Henry Street, Catherine Street, Thomas Street, Shannon Street, Broad Street, Mungret Street, Lock Quay, Sir Harry's Mall, and Charlotte Quay having been built by them; and prior to the siege, Nicholas Street, Mary Street, Old Francis Street, and the place known as the Abbey.

The name of Russell appears identified with the ancient Cathedral of Limerick, so far back as the year 1272, Henry Russell being one of the canons of the Cathedral at that period.

St. John's

The burial place of the Russells is St. John's in Limerick, where for many years they used to inter in the interior of the old church, until such interments were prohibited by Act of Parliament. The last person whose remains were interred in the old church, was a widow of a Philip Russell, who was Miss Fosbery, niece to George Fosbery, of Cloran, High Sheriff of the County Limerick, in the year 1744. Consequent on her decease having taken place,

shortly after the passing of this Act, her remains were interred outside the church in the morning, and at night, with the sanction of the vicar of the parish (who was a particular friend of the family) they were secretly removed and placed in the tomb near the remains of her late husband. This tomb was situated near the passage leading from the Communion table to the vestry room in the old church, on the site of which the new one has been raised.

Over the organ loft in the new church (the first stone of which was laid by John Norris Russell the year that he was Sheriff), is a handsome wheel window, with richly stained glass, in the centre of which are the arms of the family.

Merchants

As merchants, the firm of John Norris Russell & Sons was one of the oldest and most respectable in Ireland. The public benefit to the city derived at all times from their enterprise, and the large employment which they gave, was great. During the disastrous years of the Famine their various extensive and powerful mills were valuable to the community as they were able to provide breadstuffs to an enormous and unprecedented extent for the consumption of the neighbouring Unions, then dependent on almost instant supplies to prevent famine taking possession inside the workhouse.

The contributions of the Russells to the local charities (with-

out distinction of creed) were always in keeping with their other liberal acts.

Houses

Finally, the property built by the Russells in Limerick is listed in the old files of the Limerick Chronicle as follows:

In George (O'Connell) Street, the range of houses from Glentworth Street to the Limerick Chronicle office (59 O'Connell Street); the range of houses from Messrs. Corbett and Sons music warehouse to Shannon Street; the two houses in the Crescent (later the Jesuit College and Church).

In Mallow Street a range of seven houses next Pery Square. In Glentworth Street four houses. In Henry Street Newtown Pery Mills and the large store in connection with same. In Catherine Street four houses. In Thomas Street two houses.

In Shannon Street, from Sykes's house to Henry Street, including the large corn store. In Broad Street, three houses. In Mungret Street, two houses. On Lock Quay three houses. On Sir Harry's Mall one house. On Charlotte Quay six houses.

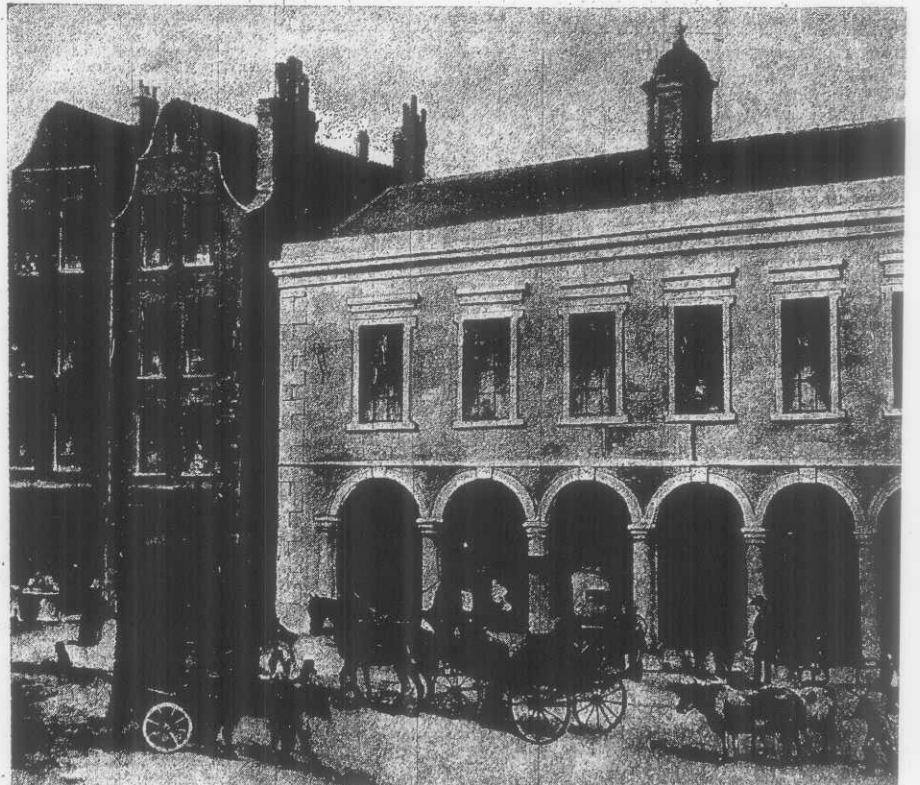
At the North Strand, the Lansdowne Flax Factory.

Also several houses in Nicholas Street, Mary Street, Old Francis Street and the Abbey.

Richard Russell, whose name the People's Park commemorates, was a magistrate of the city and president of the Chamber of Commerce. He was also a member of the various local public bodies.



These historic stones showing the and the Arms of Limerick were Newtownperry 1



The old Exchange in Nicholas Street was rebuilt in 1777 when Francis Russell was a

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