

Evidence of possible Civil War shootout unearthed in 200-year-old building

by Mary Earls

THE owners of one of Limerick's oldest family-run businesses, which has traded un-

interrupted in the city centre since around 1800, are packing their

bags for the suburbs this week.

P. McCarthy & Sons, Furniture and Bedding, are re-locating from their historic premises on Thomas Street to their new show rooms in the Eastway Business Park, opposite the NCT centre.

During the recent restoration and cleaning of the stone facade, a large number of bullet holes were discovered in the upper part of the building, believed to date back to the Civil War.

Explained owner Joe McCarthy: "The stone facade was dirty from the carbonation from traffic and the ongoing work. But during the cleaning, we noticed pockmarks on the wall and realised they were from shotgun blasts. It is riddled with bullet holes on the top of the building and we even noticed some upstairs in the inside beams."

"The Republican forces took control of central Limerick for a while during the Civil

War and the bullet marks could have been from an exchange with the Free State soldiers. It is also across from where the old garda station used to be on William Street, so a shootout could have erupted along Little William Street (Todds Lane)," he surmised.

Mr McCarthy said that it will be strange to move out of the city centre after all these years.

"My great-great grandfather, Peter, started trading around 1800, but the furniture store was incorporated as a company in 1830 as P. McCarthy & Sons. We traded from a number of locations around the city centre and we moved to Upper William Street around the early 1900's. We used to manufacture furniture in those days, as well as sell it. We had cabinet makers working overhead and everything was practically made to order. But we stopped making it in the 1950's, when the

big factories took over making furniture and beds," he said.

Mr McCarthy also said that they won a craftsmanship award for their furniture at the Munster & Connaught Great Exhibition in 1906.

"This 100-year-old gold medal was passed down through the family and I still have it myself in the shop. Historian Denis O'Shaughnessy even writes about this great exhibition where my family won the medal in his new book, *Stories of Limerick*," he said.

McCarthy's Furniture has been based at their premises in Thomas Street since 1968. But the building has been there since 1790, and there is still an old lift

structure at the side of the granary building where the grain used to be brought in.

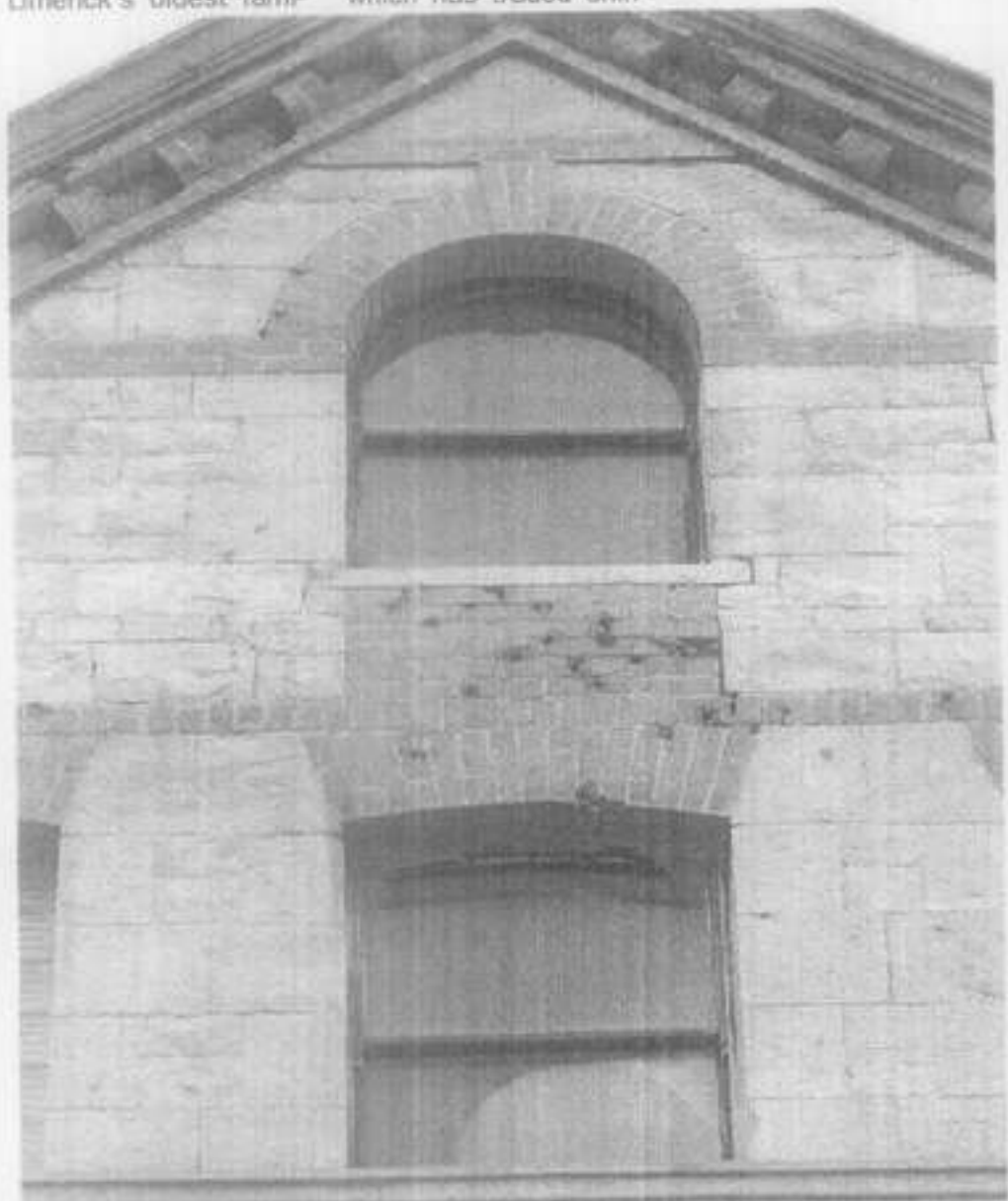
Joe McCarthy is now running the family business along with his two sisters, Laura and Jane.

He agreed that family owned businesses are dying out in the city centre.

But said that they are moving to the Eastway Business Park because it's very difficult with bulky goods to retain the premises as a distribution centre. "It's a pity to leave but the pedestrianisation of Thomas Street has also made it more difficult to get goods in here. The Eastway Business Park on the outskirts of town, just makes more sense as

regards the delivery of furniture," he concluded.

JR Fashions, currently located at the Crescent Shopping Centre, has now leased the Thomas Street premises.



Picture shows bullet marks on outside of McCarthy's building

Book signing by local author

DENIS O'Shaughnessy will be signing copies of his latest book *'Stories of Limerick'* at Eason's Bookshop this coming Saturday, 16 December, at 1 pm.

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