

Shop fronts 100 ago

LOOKING at a photograph of George Street, as it was then called, taken between 1880 and 1890, it looked entirely different to the O'Connell Street we know today. The first things that strike you are: where is Cannock's clock?

Where are the buses, motor cars, lorries, vans and bicycles? Jarvey cars are only to be seen. There are no electric street lamps but gas lamps.

You will notice the ladies wearing long dresses almost touching the ground. Ladies' cycles were unheard of in those days, and very few men had them. The men of those days wore frock coats and silk hats, as can be seen in the photograph. This was the outdoor dress of all clergymen, doctors, merchants and commercial travellers. Those of lesser standing wore bowler hats.

Examining it more closely, you will notice the appalling surface of the street, being made with broken limestone spread several inches deep and ground fine by the iron shod wheels of all vehicles. Steam rollers were not in use in Limerick then. On windy days there were clouds of dust constantly blowing, and when it rained you had a sea of limestone mud.

Street tour

Starting from Denmark

Street, No. 1 George Street was John Neiland, spirit merchant; next was Connolly's cloth merchant, followed by James Kidd and Singer Sewing Machines, at No. 4, Cruise's Hotel and Bakers seed merchants came next, while Spongs (then Messrs. Hassetts) light hardware and seeds, and Alexander Bros finished the block. Crossing William Street we come to Frank Van Eesbeck's hatters.

The next shop had many tenants including variety shows, waxwork exhibitions and 6½d bazaars, until Messrs. Liptons established themselves there in 1892. After that The Limerick Warehouse, now Messrs. Todds, then Carrick, tobacconist; Cromers watchmakers and Rowands grocers and spirit merchants, bring us to Thomas street corner.

On the next corner we find O'Connor's photographic studio, O'Brien's tobacconist, Blundell's jewellers, John Clune's saddlery, Warehouse, the County Club, L. E. Ryan's jewellers, in later years the Dainty Dairy, the Augustinian Church and Priory, Z. M. Ledger's (founded 1821), Kerse and Switzer's drapers (now Messrs. Nestor's), the City Bakery, Messrs. Bennis and Son (founded 1844), while D. J. Hannan's, Sextons, plumbers and Nestor's corner shop bring us to Roche's Street.

The next corner

Synans, spirit merchants, were on the next corner, followed by Woodhouses grocers, Herbert's boot house, the "Bodega" (Spanish for wine shop), owned by Michael Reardon, and McCarthy and Sons furni-

ture warehouse (then Messrs. Woolworths) was the centre piece of the block.

The premises which was then occupied by the E.S.B. were Corbett's piano forte and music shop and Joshua Jacobs grocery, while Thomas Ray, grocer and spirit merchant was on the corner (now Louis Fine jeweller). Trousedell's coffee importers, Messrs. Stewart's chemists, and Henry Kellers, musical instrument showrooms, complete the shopping centre on the south-east side.

Crossing the roadway, we come to Peacock's grocery (now the Brazenhead). James Kidd, general grocer, occupied No. 103 and next door the offices of the "Limerick Reporter and Tipperary Vindicator," owned by Maurice Lenihan, which afterwards became Messrs. Stewarts jewellers and watchmakers. On the corner was John Wallis and Sons, carriers, later on being John Egan's, spirit merchant. Wm. Lloyd established a grocery and spirit business in 1862, in the corner house opposite. Next door was the Munster Bank (then Munster and Leinster Bank) and then Corbett's music shop.

We have the Royal George Hotel, followed by Wallace, wine merchants, afterwards Cope's, and later on Pigott's, both piano forte warehousemen, which shows that we had plenty of music and pianoforte shops before the introduction of canned music. Messrs. Leverette & Frye and Messrs. McKern occupy both corners of Shannon Street. Incidentally, Messrs McKern are the oldest printers, bookbinders and stationers in Munster, being established in 1807.



A rare picture of O'Connell Street. Note the beautiful Todds building on the right while Roche's Stores is on the left. Certainly plenty of changes since that picture was taken.

Guy and McQuaide printers, stationers and photographic studios, were at 114; while Sterling's jewellers, afterwards Summerfield's tailors were next. Passing Gordon O'Neill's stationers and Littleton's china warehouse, we come to Laird's. This shop was founded in 1830 by a Mr. Macadam and Mr. John Laird, L.P.S.I., became owner about 1860.

Fire Tragedy

Joseph Sace, French hairdresser, transferred his business from Cecil Street to No. 119 in 1887. This house was gutted by fire in 1893, and the then captain of the Fire Brigade, Thomas Jones, lost his life when he fell from a ladder into the inferno. When this house was rebuilt, it was not intended for a shop, as the windows show. It became the Augustinian Priory. No. 120 was T. M. Bourke's booksellers, stationers, sportmen's warehouse, tennis and cricket

outfitters. Robert Hanna, family grocer and confectioner, established in 1868 at No. 121. The XL Cafe (Prossers), O'Connor, printers, and the Provision Warehouse bring us to Bedford Row corner. Looking at the photo again, we see Delaney's merchant tailors (now the Bank of Ireland), O'Keefe, tobacconist, King's boot shop at 127. Henry O'Shea, artist, had his studio over this shop. Hutchinson's hardware and seed merchants came next, followed by Wallace's jewellers and watchmakers. There was an observatory on the roof of Wallace's (which has since been taken away. The clock between the first floor windows had a scroll over it with the words: "Tempus Fugit" (time flies)!

No. 130 was Copeman's booksellers, and next J. P. Evans & Co., oil and colour merchants, druggists and seedmen (now Messrs. Burtons). The "Freeman's Journal" office and Flavin's (then

Messrs. Fitts) complete this block. We now pass the yawning gap where John McBirney & Co. stood, the successors to Slattery & O'Neills, and come to McMahan Day chemists, and then Godley & Co., also chemists, successors to Dr. Bourke & Co., with Messrs. Cannock & Co., Ltd., and James Hogg hardware house (now Messrs Tylers). We finish George Street shopping centre.

Augustinian Church

The Augustinian Church was opened in 1823. A painting by Timothy Collopy, which is kept in the priory, was originally in the Creagh Lane Chapel, and dates from 1782, when Creagh Lane was opened for divine service.