

Historic shop signs that put Limerick on the map

From the Limerick Leader: Monday, 20, 1950

Letter to the Editor submitted by
John Reddan
O'Curry Place, Limerick

THE plaque of the Brazen Head was removed from 23 John Street in August, 1947, and re-fitted into the lounge at the premises of 103 O'Connell Street on the same month and year. It reads thus: "The old Brazen Head, re-built by Simon Kent, 1794." In olden times signs were hung outside taverns as a simple means of identification, when streets were neither named nor numbered. The merchant who sold his wine at the Brazen Head, at the end of John Street, was within a stone's throw of the citadel which bore the brunt of the Siege of Limerick. As the sign at the Brazen Head was undoubtedly in existence during the Siege of Limerick, over 250 years ago, and although no record exists, it was probably in existence for many years before this.

Tradition has it that the Inn derived its name from the fact that during the Siege a red-headed woman had her head knocked off by a cannon ball whilst gazing out of one of its windows. However, the sign is a well-known one and consisted of a bronze lion's head with whatever other decorations the fancifulness of the artist suggested.

Limerick was then famous for its wines. Each inn-keeper imported his own supplies and Limerick claret was so famous that the Dublin merchants sent here for it. Earlier still an English traveller described the Limerick claret as of a better draught, but not so great as in most London taverns. Simon Kent re-built this Inn 153 years ago, and now in 1950 this famous stone carries on its ancient tradition in its new surroundings at 102 O'Connell Street, Limerick.

Somewhere about 70 years ago, I saw a skating rink where the office of Mr. D. McCaffrey, builder, is now. On

SHOP SIGNS

Limerick Had Many CITY WAS FAMOUS FOR WINES

THE plaque of the Brazen Head was removed from 23 John's Street in August, 1947, and re-fitted into the lounge at the premises of 103 O'Connell Street on the same month and year. It reads thus: "The old Brazen Head, re-built by Simon Kent, 1794." In olden times signs were hung outside taverns

the top of the wall the word Rink can be seen still to-day. Number 103 O'Connell Street, O'Grady's (originally Kidd's), shows John Chinaman. This figure was first standing on the floor of No. 4 George St, now O'Connell Street, and Messrs Kidd afterwards removed to 103, where the figure is to be seen.

P. Corbett, who dealt in musical instruments, 108 O'Connell Street (now P. Liston, chemist) shows two figures overhead the entablature - one holding a musical lyre, the other holding a harp. 126 O'Connell Street (O'Keefe's, bacconists) had a black

figure of a man with a pipe in his mouth painted on the door post of the shop (now R. J. McKechnie's). Smyth's, 29 Patrick Street, boot shop, had a large hunting boot fixed on the wall outside their shop (now a Fashion Shop). Talbot, 11 Bedford Row, afterwards Thomas Street, a cycle dealer, had a penny farthing bicycle fixed to a wall over the shop. Opposite the Castle Barracks was a Mr. McDonnell, a publican (now M. Halpin's) who had painted on the front wall over the shop a detachment of soldiers in full marching order. Mr. Hardaker, clog-maker, 17 Broad Street (now J. Earlie) had a large clog swinging from a bracket over his shop.

Peacocke, 12 Patrick Street, displayed a large key painted yellow over their shop (now Madame Dillon's). Raleigh's, 13 Patrick Street, stands on the floor of the shop a black man holding a pipe in his mouth. W. O'Brien, tobacconist, 21 O'Connell Street (now Dartry Dye Works) also had a black figure painted on to shop door-post with a pipe in his mouth.

POETIC SIGN

At 20 Patrick Street was John Kelly's boot shop with a very large shoe hanging from a bracket overhead the shop. Jordan's, 2 and 3 William Street, boot maker (now Yarmouth fish store and Miss Locke's), had the following sign:



John Street where the original Brazen Head plaque was situated

"Here lives a man who won't refuse
To make and mend both boots and shoes

His leather is good and his work is just,

His profit is small and he cannot trust."

J. P. Newsom had a large kettle hanging over the entablature of 20-21 William Street. P. Flordan had a golden key hanging over the entablature of 27 William Street. J. O'Malley had a lock and pair of keys hanging over the entablature of 28 William Street. Michael Cahill, tobacconist, 47 Wickham Street had on display the Black King of Morocco. Messrs Spillane, tobacco manufacturers, at present show two splendid dogs high

up on the cornice of the front at Sarsfield Street. Messrs. Shaw's bacon factory, Mulgrave Street shows on the weather vane a man behind a pig.

The premises of Morgan McMahon, timber merchant and saw mills, Mulgrave Street, were once the artillery barracks, and the weather vane showed a man behind a cannon. There were two clay-pipe makers in Limerick - Merritt's, 17 Broad St. (when Hardaker left it), and the brothers Whelan, 29 Wickham St. The sign of both was a pair of long stem pipes crossed, painted on to a swinging plate high over the doorway. Patrick Carey, boot and shoe maker and repairer, 30 Parnell Street had a shoe over the doorway.