Notes on High Street from The Tholsel to the Post Office
By MRS. W. J. PHELAN

THE House immediately North of the Tholsel, now 82 High Street, has an interesting history. In the 17th century, Edward Rothe, Alderman of the City and one of the Signatories of the Cromwellian surrender, lived here and was brother to David, Bishop of Ossory. In it the aged Bishop died and was buried in St. Mary's Church adjoining. Father John Francis Shearmar is my authority for this (page 330, C. P. Meehan's Confederation of Kilkenny).

The old house, as depicted in illustrations of the Market Cross, was occupied by descendants of Edward Rothe till the first decade of the 19th century, then was replaced by the brick house, depicted in our illustration and which adjoined Mr. Tom Wall's premises. The Market Cross stood in front of this house until 1771, when it was taken down in the mayoralty of Anthony Blunt.

Daniel O'Carroll's China Hall and Pawnbrokers' Shop is well remembered here and he was preceded by a merchant, called Dunne, who probably carried on the same business. Dan O'Carroll was one of Kilkenny's distinguished and energetic citizens. Besides being a keen business man he was a follower of the Kilkenny Hunt, and Hon. Sec. with Tom Murphy of the Club House, of the old Danesfort Races.

The life of the assistants in such a business as O'Carroll's in the last years of the 19th and early years of the 20th century, was no easy one. They were required to be at work at 8 o'clock in the morning, having had breakfast and Mass and to carry on until 7 in the evening. Mass could not be evaded even when wished, because Mrs. O'Carroll was stationed under the organ gallery to mark their presence or absence. All apprentices had to work in China Hall and Loan Office (which was situated at the rere of the premises in Mary's Lane) and one was as hard as the other. Large brown milk pails had to be carried on to the pavement outside the China Hall in the morning and brought in in the
evening. There were no holidays and no heating. Never­theless, the business was a good one, the owners were kind and just and the assistants considered themselves lucky to have such a sound position. All had to be in for the Rosary, recited by Mrs. O’Carroll. One night every week all had to stay in and clean the windows.

Daniel O’Carroll was a native of Limerick, and had other offices in Dublin. His private house was in Patrick Street, the large brick house facing the Ormonde Road, Dr. Holmes lived here and afterwards Stathams, No. 12. He had no children and he was followed in High Street by Mr. and Mrs. O’Gorman, about 1897. Mrs. O’Gorman, nee Mary Cody, had been an assistant with the O’Carroll’s, Mr. O’Gorman had been a lemonade traveller in Smithwicks. The O’Gormans had lovely china and were well patronised, and ran the Loan Office as well. They sold out to Peter Connolly about 1937, and had re-done the upper storey before then. The red brick and Georgian windows had given away to the present cement and French windows during O’Gorman’s time. With the advent of Peter Connolly, the type of business changed and his Furniture Shop now fills the old China Hall and the Loan Office is closed. The O’Carrolls are buried in Glasnevin and the O’Gormans in Foulkstown.

Tom Wall, draper, occupied the whole of the next house, which now comprises Lanigan’s Office and Cafe Maria, as well as Burke’s and Shearnam’s. He is still remembered in Kilkenny for his business ability, the large fortune that he made and his unique methods of making that fortune. Starting in a very small way at the Tholsel side of the Butter Slip, he soon occupied all the space from it to the house that is now Peter Connolly’s Furniture Warehouse, and the space on the left side of the Slip which is now James Bourke & Sons and Shearnam’s as well. Tom Wall, old Tom Wall, as he is well remembered, started business here about 1850, and was succeeded by his son, Pat, and Pat, in turn, by his son, “Young” Tommy Wall. In 1906 young Tommy Wall sold out to James Bourke the portion on the immediate left of the Slip and his residence at Seville Lodge.

Old Tom Wall’s method of business deserves the tribute
of a few words. No credit was given by him. He is remembered to have refused goods to Lady Ormonde because she did not lay her money on the counter. No assistant had a specialized place in the establishment. If a customer came to buy a reel of thread and remained to buy a blanket or an overcoat, the one person accompanied him from Department to Department, the bill alone being always made out by the master himself. Then the customer was asked about his family, if the children were thriving or the family increasing, and ties, socks and hankies were added as a free gift of old Tommy's. When every drapery shop in Kilkenny remained open till midnight, Tommy closed with the light. Candles were the only artificial light ever used. No men were employed, about 12 ladies. The last manageress here is remembered to have been Miss Bolger of Ballyhendricken.

The warehouses in London and Manchester where Tommy Wall bought his goods reserved for him what was called “Wall's Corner.” Here merchandise was held for him from one visit to another and bought boldly by him if it were suitable and cheap enough. He is remembered to have brought ship wrecked goods to Kilkenny and to have

HIGH STREET, KILKENNY

OKR 1960
Margaret Phelan: Notes on High Street from the Tholsel to the Post Office
sold them for a song to the people. The day of the Choral Festival was a red letter day in the establishment, the customers would arrive by long car before 9 o'clock and spend the morning purchasing goods, enough for a whole year. These customers from 20-30 miles distance always went away satisfied.

Tommy’s sons were not nearly as good business men as their father. Pat, who inherited the business and, like his father, married to a Macroom lady, lived in Seville Lodge, and took matters much less seriously than his father. Pat’s son, “Young” Tommy Wall, was even less interested and moved away from Kilkenny on the death of his father, Pat, in 1905. So ended after about 60 years this firm’s connection with the business life of the town. A large fortune had been made by old Tommy Wall on very original lines. He copied no one and no one copied him. His children had not the desires or ambitions he had and, though very able, their lives ran on other lines.

The family is represented to-day by the children and grand-children of “Young” Tom, of whom the most distinguished is Mervyn Wall, Secretary of the Arts Council, author and playwright, son of “Young” Tommy and great grandson of that well remembered genius of the High St., “Old” Tom Wall.

The family burial ground is in old St. John’s, and the four graves in the plot commemorate Ellen, died 1857; “Old” Tom Wall died 1902, aged 80; Kate Wall, wife of Pat Wall, died 1896, and Pat Wall died 1905. In this plot, too, are the tombs of the Rafters, Lanigans & Dunnes, evidently relations of the Walls.

Long before Thomas Wall, senr., built up his business in Kilkenny, these houses on each side of the Butter Slip, and through it down to Kieran Street, comprised the old Langton Home. Built in 1609, according to the plaque charged with the Langton Arms, it was their residence for about 200 years. Nicholas Langton, who built the house, was one of the first Aldermen of the City mentioned in the 1609 chapter. He had 25 children by two marriages and kept a record of his family which has already been published in 1864 in the Journal of R.S.A., and in 1904 in Canon
Carrigan’s Ossory, page 83, vol. III, and in our own Journal, by Mrs. C. J. Murphy, in 1954. Sufficient to say here that the Coat of Arms that Carrigan sketched is now missing, but details of windows and doors in magnificent cut stone and the extent of the whole holding, testify to the importance of this ancient mansion house and to the importance of its owners, the Langton family.

81 High Street, now office of Lanigan & Nolan, Solicitors, and still part of the Wall property, was opened here by John Lanigan, the founder of the firm in 1907. He had had a former office two doors on the south side of the Tholsel, where Messrs. Murphy, Jewellers, are now. His residence was originally 9 Patrick Street, and later Newtown House. The business is carried on by John Lanigan’s eldest son, Thomas, and Reginald Nolan, since the founder’s death in 1926. This premises was used before that by Messrs. Murphy (of the Club House family), of New Street, to sell bread and biscuits baked by them in the New St. Bakery. Miss Travers was their manageress. Later she retained part of the shop in her own right, and ran a Guest House there. After Miss Travers came Walshe’s and Coogan’s, and now 80 High Street, the Cafe “Maria,” is owned and managed by the Brannigan family of Talbot’s Inch.

79 High Street, the premises immediately north of the Butter Slip, became the business of James Bourke about 1907. As stated above, this is part of the old Langton house and part of the Wall shop. Mr. Bourke also bought Seville Lodge, Callan Road, which had been the residence of Pat Wall. The Bourke family has given many distinguished sons to religion and the professions, among whom may be mentioned Dr. Frank Bourke of Fitzwilliam Square, the well-known bibliophile, whose recent death we regret sincerely.

84 High Street, the Shearmans fish and poultry shop, follows 79, Messrs. Bourke’s premises, on some old scheme of enumeration. It is really to-day No. 78 on the Corporation books. This premises, again part of the Wall warehouse, became the property of the Shearmans in 1905. Till then they had been in 69 High Street, where Bowdens and the Gem followed them. The grandfather of Edward

OKR 1960
Margaret Phelan: Notes on High Street from the Tholsel to the Post Office
Shearm an, John, built the house at North corner of Irish-town and Dean Street, now occupied by Mr. Monahan, fruit importer.

The Hennessy's (of the Grovine family) had a drapery in the now Shearm an shop, at which a big fire broke out in 1882, and Captain Purcell was awarded a medal for saving a life.

Before Hennessy’s, W. J. Douglas occupied these premises, and then it was known as the Crystal Palace. W. Jackson Douglas occupied many positions in Kilkenny, and was Auctioneer, Estate Agent, Bookseller, Stationer, etc. He was in 11 High Street, Rose-Inn Street, here and finally in 17 Parliament Street, where Mr. Murtagh's chemist shop now is. John Stephens, father of James, the Fenian, was clerk for him. When Shearmans took over here it had had been a store of Wall's, and rebuilt for him some time previously by Connell & Sons, Upper John Street, a firm still represented among us.

The property of Miss Aggie Hackett, No. 77 High St., shows one of the most unique shop fronts in Kilkenny or any other town. Double Georgian window of the first floor, with 24 panes, has a classic surround and pretty wrought iron balcony. The shop, a grocer’s and a pork butcher’s, has a bow window with a delicious curve and a very pretty fan light. The Hacketts here are the same family as occupied 6 High Street, later occupied by J. P. Sherin, now by Mr. Godwin. Martin Walsh, a chandler, who preceded Hacketts here, was one of the corporators who agitated against the holding of fairs in the streets of Kilkenny. His residence was the house at the top of William Street, which faces High Street, and is now the residence of Joseph Hehir. Martin Walsh’s son, a doctor, owned Graham’s Medical Hall, in Westmoreland Street, Dublin. Mrs. Hackett was a Staunton, a connection of the present Bishop of Ferns.

No. 76, Gregg’s Fruit Shop, has been closed some years, but still is the residence of Miss Rose Gregg. Her late brother, Sir Cornelius Gregg, was one of Kilkenny’s most distinguished citizens and a patron and benefactor of the Kilkenny Archaeological Society. Their mother was a Miss
Gleeson of Rose-Inn Street, whose family occupied position there of Lowry's Hardware Stores. The Greggs were preceded here by a draper, Walter Lanigan, whose ancestor had been Mayor of Kilkenny in 1856.

**No. 75.** Egan's Shoe Shop, followed Miss O'Keeffe's Confectionery here. Shirley is another name connected here. Mr. Pat Egan, the present proprietor, is of the Grovine family, and his wife is Miss Clohosey of John St. The Dreas, who afterwards moved to shop immediately south of the Tholsel, originally lived there. Canon Martin Drea of Thomastown, was born here.

**No. 74 High Street,** now Crottys Bread Shop, has only been modernised in the last two years. For 150 years it was Rafter's leather shop, and the property of a family long resident in Kilkenny and a connection of old Tom Wall, whose family burial ground is shared by the Rafters. Miss Lanigan, the last owner, was a sister of Mr. Byran of Dunbell. Messrs. Crottys of Parliament Street, took over in 1957, and remodelled the building. A photograph of the old shop is in the Society's possession, part of the Crawford (1947) survey, and shows the Georgian windows of the dwelling part with 24 panes each and the 15 pane window of the business part. No. 74 and No. 75, Crotty's and Egan's, appear to have formed one house about 200 years ago.

The Post Office, now No. 73 High Street, which comprised two holdings, was the property of Daniel Cullen (and numbered then 75 and 76 High Street), from 1834 till his death in 1874, and after his time was occupied by his daughter, Mrs. David Bolger, and her husband till 1886. Since then it has been occupied by the Post Office and belonged to the Healy Estate.

Daniel Cullen, a native of Woollengrange, and a representative of Marleyfield Distillery, was one of the most important, wealthy and civic minded of the Kilkenny citizens of the 19th century. He carried on a large grocery, chandlery, wine and tobacco business here and in St. Kieran Street. He was married to a Miss Cullen of the Bridge in Thomastown, in 1840, and bore his bride pillion fashion before him on their honeymoon, a cold ride on a St. Valentine's day! Mayor of Kilkenny in 1852, and High
Sheriff in 1867, he was a founder member of the old K.A.S. of 1849, and took the chair at numerous and important occasions. He was the first High Sheriff to wear his robes in a R.C. Church from the days of the Reformation. This event occurred in 1867, John Buggy (grandfather of the Kenealy and Buggy family) then being Mayor.

Daniel Cullen had his two houses rebuilt into one in 1854, and Mr. Walker of Castlecomer was the architect. An Italian artist, living then in Dublin, did the painted ceilings of dining and drawing rooms. The family was evacuated temporarily to one of the houses on Parade facing the Castle, and there they had a great view of the funeral of the 2nd Marquis of Ormonde, who had died while bathing in Fethard-on-Sea. Lord Ormonde, only 46 years of age, had been a great favourite in Kilkenny, a founder member and patron of the old K.A.S., a literary man of distinction, his death was a great shock to the town. The Parade was lined with the tenants and employees of Dunmore, Garryricken and Kilkenny Estates, all draped in mourning with long hat bands of crepe, who waited about six hours before the cortege appeared. The oil in the wheels of the hearse had gone on fire and delayed the whole proceedings. This 2nd Marquis of Ormonde has a magnificent tomb of Caen stone in the south transept of St. Canice's Cathedral.

No Butler had been buried there for more than 200 years, and no Butler has been buried there since. The family burial ground is now in Kilkenny Castle.

The Cullen house in High Street entertained all the prominent men of the time, Daniel O'Connell, Sir John Grey, etc. Once while holidaying in Paris the Cullens met James Stephens in the vestry of St. Suplice, and all lunched together afterwards. Later (in 1883) Miss Cullen was married in her own drawingroom by a Father Phelan, friend of James Stephens. The bridegroom was David Bolger of Ballyhendricken, and the family moved to the Bridge House in Thomastown in 1886, since when these premises have been used by the Post Office.

Daniel Cullen was buried in the family vault in South transept of St. Mary's Cathedral, where some of his children
had preceded him. The vault is overlooked by a fine window of the Assumption, which had been the gift of his wife and himself to the Cathedral, and bears witness of their munificence and generosity. The family is represented to-day by, among others, Mrs. Cantwell of Mill Street, Thomastown, and by James Delany, active member of K.A.S., her grandson and great-great-grandson of Daniel Cullen.

Under the Tholsel, in the memory of many Kilkenny folk still living, were two large standings or tables of sugar sticks, ginger bread, Chester cakes, etc. Always there too were pails of fresh new milk, morning and evening, for sale—women sat around knitting sox and stockings. A night watchman lived in the Tholsel and rang a bell at 9 o’clock. This was known as the Blackguard’s Bell.

(The writer of these notes would welcome additions and corrections).

MADDOXTOWN FONT

The Maddoxtown font was re-erected in the Summer of 1959 by the Kilkenny Archaeological Society. Its existence had been noted by William Canon Carrigan in his History of Ossory, 1904. He describes it thus:—“The ancient baptismal font, broken in two, lies in the graveyard. It is fluted on the sides and decorated with Early English foliage.”

For many years the font lay hidden in the old church, covered with stones, nettles, etc. About 1950 the graveyard and church were cleaned and tidied. At that time Miss Springfield gathered the pieces of the font and placed them on the Colles grave. She found the entire bowl, though broken in many pieces, but only half of the base and none of the supporting pillars. It was re-erected for the Society by Mr. Tom MacDonald, an employee of the old Colles mill.

The font, in a general way, follows the pattern of the 13th century fonts of St. Canice’s, St. Mary’s, St. Francis, Gowran, etc. It differs from them all in having each of its edges decorated with human heads or birds—only three corners are decorated with Early English foliage—its fourth has the Irish triquetra knot.