

struction on the Site. From an overgrown hillside they have made a Shrine and erected a Statue of St. Moling which was commissioned at their own expense. But these beneficial works have in no way interfered with the atmosphere of peace.

This is holy ground. Who can stand here and scoff? Spread before the eye lies a lonely valley, over which Molaing must have looked thousands of times, and praised God for its loveliness. And in the glorious harvest days of August, as the pilgrims look over the same valley, they will realise that God has not been outdone in generosity — that He has given them in the harvest His thanks for what they have done to honour His Saint. And as they look at the Altar Slab, where so often Mass was celebrated in the peace of the hills, let them pray for a very weary and storm-racked world, the age old prayer of the Church “Da pacem Domine in diebus nostris”.

The Parade

MARY KENEALY

Up to the 17th century the Parade was known as Castle Street. By the time of Rocque's Map, 1758, it was officially called the Parade but the old name was still used at least up to the end of the century. The locality was from an early time associated with the theatre and dramatic performances of all kinds. As a result many of the early Inns and Taverns were also situated here. Mr. J. G. A. Prim records “The Goat's Beard” where the players who performed in Owenson's Theatre used to stay and at an earlier date “The Smulkin Tavern” also in Castle Street. (1)

I would like to say a few words about the environs of the Castle before dealing with the individual houses. In 1766 Walter Butler of Garryricken, succeeded to the title of de jure 16th Earl of Ormond. He found the castle a ruin and immediately set about restoring it. In

addition he constructed at his own expense in 1769 a new public road leading from the old castle gate directly through the castle garden which is now the present road from the castle to Archer's Avenue. The Presentment authorizing the construction of the road is as follows: Whereas so much of the old High Road leading from the City of Kilkenny to Thomastown as extends from the old Castle Gate to the road leading to the present much out of repair an

Stone Mills now occupied by Kenny Scott Miller is at present much out of repair and whereas the said road may be considerably shortened by running the same through the castle garden and whereas Walter Butler the town wall adjoining the old castle gate of this city through the said Castle Garden to the old limekiln on the said road containing in length 60 perches of the width of 40 feet at his own proper costs and charges. We therefore present that the said Walter Butler be at liberty to make the said road at his own expense. (2)

In 1871 he erected a new chapel priests' house and outoffices for the parish of St. Patrick a short distance south west of the existing chapel which stood just outside the town wall at the present entrance to Butler House garden.

The old chapel was taken down and Walter Butler received the site to enlarge his garden. The new chapel was adjacent to the old graveyard at the end of Chapel avenue. It remained in use from 1782 until the present church was opened in 1899. These arrangements were interrupted by the death of Walter Butler, in 1783 but they were completed by his widow (3). We can see therefore his intention of improving and developing the garden as well as the castle itself. The garden at this time, that is the part where the Design Workshops now stand contained only a few buildings, a sketch plan of 1766 (4) shows the gardeners' house and yard, a hay yard and offices, "Counsellor Barnes, his garden" ,a kitchen garden a terrace, an old castle in the middle of the road and adjacent to it "Carty's Holding". On the opposite side of the road was a coal

yard and the bowling green. The beautiful building which now houses the Kilkenny Design Workshops and was formerly the castle stables was possibly commenced by Walter's son, John the 17th Earl, who had married an heiress Anne, daughter of Lord Wandesford or perhaps by their son, Walter, who succeeded before the end of the century. Architects place the date of the building about 1800 or later some as late as 1820.

In November, 1965, it was opened as the Kilkenny Design Workshops, a project sponsored by Coras Trachtála in which designers, craftsmen and technicians from seven countries work together to enhance the reputation of Irish goods in the markets of the world. The reconstruction of the building was carried out by the Kilkenny firm of Messrs W. K. Cleere and Son, the Architect being Mr. Nial Montgomery of Dublin.

No. 11 The longest inhabitant of this house was Mr Arthur Boyd, a solicitor (5). He lived here from before 1857 until 1894, when he was succeeded by Margaret Sullivan. He himself had succeeded a Mrs. Anne Humphreys. Margaret Sullivan was followed in 1901 by Mr. J. A. Davis. The Ormonde Estate Agent at this time was Mr. Seigne whom we will be meeting later and I understand Mr. Davis worked in the Estate Office. When Mr. Seigne died he was succeeded as agent by either this Mr. Davis or his son. It is now occupied by Mr. Haughton, also Estate Agent to Lord Ormonde.

No. 10 The Bank of Ireland opened its first branch here in 1835 in the house of William Leech, a barrister (6). Earlier in the century George Leech had a ladies boarding academy on the Parade most likely in the same house. (7) The Bank was here until 1871 when they moved to their present position on the corner. William Leech was still the landlord, he now let it to Laurence J. Power of the firm of Power and Son, Hardware Merchant's, High Street (later Delahanty's). He was succeeded by Nicholas Kenny, Draper of High Street, and it remained in the Kenny family until a few years ago when it was sold by Miss Maureen Kenny to Dr. Purcell.

No. 9 I have one name associated with this house for most of its history. That is Mr. James Poe Solr. He was living here when the first records of house property were made in 1849 and he continued to live here until his death in 1918 at the age of 92. He was Probate Registrar and Clerk of the Crown for the Co. and City of Kilkenny and I understand worked until his death, attending his office in Patrick Street and the Probate Registry in a wheelchair at the end. He is buried in St. Canice's Cathedral. His son, Mr. James Poe, junior, solr., had as a partner, Mr. Frederick Lyons. Mr. Lyons and his family then occupied his house. The present occupiers the De La Salle Community succeeded the Lyons family.

During the time when Mr Poe lived here the judges stayed here when they came to Kilkenny on circuit.

This was an occasion of great pageantry and spectacle and provided entertainment for the crowds who came to watch. The Judge travelled in an open carriage dressed in full robes and wig and escorted by mounted police before and after the carriage. While he was in residence a sentry was on patrol outside with sentry boxes each end of the pathway. In 1824 a Mr. James Poe, Solicitor, practised in Coalmarket, showing that the family had a long connection with the city.

No. 8 The occupants here changed many times: Miss Anne Gorman (1849), John Kearns, John Hudson (1871-1891 approx.) This gentleman carried on a victualling business at the Parade end of Rose Inn Street. On his death he bequeathed a large amount of property to the Church (see "Rose Inn Street" by Mrs. Deloughry in Old Kilkenny Review, 1966). Next came M. Cussen, Dr. James White and Mr. R. H. Tomkins, who had a grocery in John Street, and was succeeded by his widow. It is now occupied by Mr. Delahunty.

No. 7. The first occupant I have was Francis Reynolds who at one time was the landlord of all these houses and most of the lower part of the street as well. He died in 1871. His daughter married John Watters in the Wesleyan Chapel in Kilkenny. (8)

Colonel Pack then became landlord and Rev. R. H. Rogers, tenant, I believe it was used for Y.M.C.A. In 1900 it was taken by John T. Seigne Agent for Marquis of Ormonde. Before coming to Kilkenny he resided in Thomastown and acted as agent for many of the big landlords. Now occupied by Foster Finance Company.

No. 6. This building was generally used as a stores and later as stables for the Imperial Hotel. Earlier occupants were Messrs Furniss & Son, Thomas Chaplin (Auctioneer), Bart Prentice (1861), Catherine Hanlon, she was proprietress of the Imperial Hotel which had been opened 1st January, 1860 by Walter Hanlon formerly of the Bush Inn, Rose Inn Street (9). These premises were acquired by the hotel about 1871. Mrs. Hanlon later married Michael O'Neill, who was registered as owner on her death. Later owners were Buckley's Garage and now Lahart's Garage.

No. 5 Francis Reynolds had an office and yard here. Later it became a store and was used in turn by Furniss and Co., William Wade, William Aikenhead Carroll, Arthur McMahon, Daniel Kerwick.

No. 4 The Inland Revenue Offices now stand on the site of the Kilkenny Private Theatre which brought fame to Kilkenny during the early years of the 19th century.

But even during the previous century the Parade had been the scene of considerable theatrical activity. Mrs. Clare Murphy has sent me the following piece of information from the Collis memoirs. (10) William Colles of Abbeyville, 1702 — 1770, Alderman and twice Mayor of Kilkenny, sold a plot of ground fronting the Parade suitable for building a theatre on to, Mr. Sheridan, Manager of the Theatre, Dublin, in May, 1751.

Obviously this theatre never materialised as all the theatrical companies who visited the town during the latter half of the 18th century staged their performances either in the Courthouse or in the Tholsel (11).

Thomas Sheridan, the father of Richard Brinsley Sheridan, was at this time at the height of his fame as manager of the Smock Alley Theatre in Dublin. With such celebrated artistes as David Garrick and Peg Wif-

fington he was drawing record audiences and enjoyed the patronage of the Lord Lieutenant Lord Dorset and Lady Dorset. In the 1751 season he is said to have made at least four thousand pounds. Unfortunately two years later he annoyed the populace by insisting on staging a play of which they disapproved. A mob wrecked his theatre and Sheridan left in disgust for London never to return. Perhaps this was the reason the Kilkenny venture was never completed. (12)

While Kilkenny is said to have had a theatre in the early years of the century and sophisticated audiences which delighted the travelling companies (13), this obviously had ceased to exist by the mid century.

Various attempts to establish a permanent theatre are recorded by Mr William Smith Clark in his book "The Irish Stage" in the County Towns" published in 1965. In the summer of 1784 a move was made to start a permanent playhouse.

On the 15th December 1784 the Leinster Journal announced "The most respectable inhabitants of this city being deservous of having a handsome theatre erected and a convenient lot of ground being offered at the Parade for the purpose at a very moderate rent the most favourable opportunity now presents itself to execute a design which will be as ornamental to the city as profitable to the subscribers."

Mr Clark considers the intended site was not the same as that on which the Gentlemen's Theatre was later built but was nearer to the Castle entrance as only here was a sufficiently large open space available — perhaps the same site which had been sold by Mr Colles for the purpose some thirty years earlier.

The building to be erected is described in the Journal announcement. It is proposed to build two substantial handsome houses as wings to the Theatre; the rent of which Houses will nearly repay, it is presumed the expense of the entire building and at all times ensure an annual income to the subscribers. And when it is considered that a Company of Players never performed here during the Lent and Summer Assizes, the Periods most

beneficial to them, it is likewise to be presumed that the profits arising to the subscribers from the rent of the Theatre with that of the two dwelling houses will produce an ample compensation for the money expended.

The gentlemen who patronize this new Theatre and who have become subscribers propose to apportion the profits into shares.

This rosy dream never materialised. The notices continued to appear in the Journal until 25th June, 1785 and then ceased and nothing further is heard of the project, apparently sufficient subscriptions were not forthcoming. Mr Smith has some rather scathing remarks to make about the parsimony of Kilkenny's genteel citizens who could not be persuaded to contribute to what he deserves as 'an attractive commercial as well as civic investment.' Kilkenny had to wait another ten years for its first permanent theatre. In 1794 Robert Owenson, manager of the Fishamble Theatre, Dublin and an actor of note, father of Lady Morgan the well known 18th century writer received a commission from a Committee of Kilkenny Gentlemen, headed by Lord Thurles to lead a project to build a playhouse of aristocratic respectability. John Butler, 17th Earl of Ormonde provided a site on the Parade and initiated the patron list with a subscription of £50. One half of the funds for construction was to come from subscribing citizens and an equal amount from Owenson. Again the money failed to come in, only the Ormond family and a few others subscribed. Construction was held up for that year.

Eventually with the aids of loans and mortgages Mr Owenson completed the theatre and the curtain went up on the first performance on Monday, 31st August, 1795. The Leinster Journal records "The beauty and neatness of the Theatre scenery etc far exceeded the most sanguine expectations of the public — nor shall we scruple to say that for its size it is not inferior to any theatre in this or the sister kingdoms."

Such was the theatre which was later to be used for the gentlemen's plays which brought international fame to Kilkenny.

For two seasons Owenson's Company entertained the beauty and fashion of the county. Its patron was John, 17th Earl of Ormond who was also the great patron of the well known tavern called the 'Hole in the Wall.' Then disaster struck, despite its popularity the theatre was not a financial success. A mortgage foreclosed and Owenson was obliged to close down and depart. The doors stayed shut for over two years. In the spring of 1799 William Smithson brought a company and played until August. Again lack of financial support forced the closing of the theatre. It remained closed until after the Act of Union, an event which was to bring to the Kilkenny Theatre the period of its greatest glory.

With the closing of the Irish Parliament the gentry were deprived of the social life which had formerly centred in Dublin. They returned to their country seats and proceeded to devise new recreational activities. The result here was the blossoming of "The Kilkenny Private Theatre" Operated exclusively by gifted amateurs it became famous throughout the two kingdoms.

It owed its existence to the inspiration and enthusiasm of Richard Power of Kilfane whose perseverance kept it alive for almost twenty years — the plays lasted with intervals from 1802 until 1819. They were financially most successful, contributing in one season over a thousand. An interesting article on the subject by Mr Hubert Butler may be read in the Old Kilkenny Review 1950 and the special display feature in Rothe House is worth visiting. Mr Butler suggests that when the plays came to an end a brilliant phase of social life was on the road to extinction.

Immediately the plays ceased this beautiful theatre which had been greeted with such enthusiasm a few years previously was allowed to fall into disrepair. As early as 1824 it was used as a hay store and described as totally neglected (14). By 1849 it was gone. The site appeared in the first valuation list as building ground, the landlord being Francis Reynolds. Some time during the 1850's another building was erected on the site which was opened in 1860 as the Athenaeum Assembly Rooms under

the Proprietorship of John P. Hyland. (An inscription formerly on the outside wall of the present building gives the date 1853 and the initials J. P.H. On an inside wall was a representation of a crowned harp with the words "Quis Separabit" (15). This now became the great entertainment centre for the town during the remainder of the century. Here visiting operatic companies played; concerts for charity and entertainments of all kinds were held. In 1869 a big social function focussed the attention of the town. This was a bazaar in aid of the Sisters of Charity. This Order had been in Kilkenny since 1861 but were inadequately housed in James's Street. It was universally conceded that their work among the poor was invaluable and many social functions had been held in the Athenaeum to raise funds for them but the bazaar was the most ambitious. The ladies of the town were recruited and divided into groups to supervise the seven or eight stalls, each of which ran a number of raffles for such diverse objects as a parrot in a gilt cage, a splendid epergne mounted in silver with cut glass vases, an opera cloak of crimson, richly embroidered with Indian work, a valuable meerscham pipe, a handsome smoking cap and a gold inkstand.

The total proceeds of the bazaar came to £1,062. Despite this magnificent windfall the Sisters of Charity did not succeed in obtaining their new Convent until 1872 when the foundation stone was laid in a colourful ceremony by Most Rev. Dr. Moran, Co-adjutor Bishop of Ossory

Another entertainment held in the Athenaeum was called a Diorama or Grand Illuminated Day Entertainment (16). It consisted of views of the war between France and Germany then in progress (1871) projected on a screen. The views were sketches contributed by artists attached to both armies and brought direct from the battlefield and contributed by artists attached to both armies. The passage of the paintings was accompanied by "descriptive musical melange vocal and instrumental"

On another occasion General Tom Thumb and his wife were the attraction.

In 1894 The Commissioners of Public Works took over

the building for the use of the Inland Revenue and what had been the centre of gaiety and entertainment for the citizens became a much less popular venue.

THE BANK OF IRELAND

The Bank now occupies the site of three former houses. There had been buildings here from a very early date. The Corporation Rent Roll of 1628 shows that Pierce Archer held a house on the corner of Castle Street at 4/- a year and the neighbouring house at 22/- a year (19). The first was the Smulkin Tavern and the larger house obviously his private dwelling. Mr. Prim thinks the name 'Smulkin Tavern' may have been a corruption of Smoking Tavern. It is the only explanation he has to offer for this unusual name (20). A Charter of Charles II to the Duke of Ormonde records the Smulkin Tavern as formerly in the possession of John Archer Fitzwilliam.

These buildings had obviously been taken down before the date of Rocque's Map (1758). Of the three houses which later filled the site, the first two facing on to the Parade appear similar to the terrace houses higher up, at least they have steps and railings in front. The three houses were leased by Nicholas Loughman from the Marquis of Ormonde. The first was occupied by a family called Kilrey, Linen and Woolen Drapers. James Kilrey had been an agent to the National Assurance Co in 1824, Mrs Catherine Kilrey occupied the house in 1849 and later Barnaby Scott, Solicitor, occupied part, probably as an office. Nicholas Loughman lived in number two. The third house was a small house set back from the street in front of it was a weighing table. The occupier Mr Richard Aylward was no doubt the Weighmaster. When the Bank took over these houses the weighing table was moved to the opposite side of the street. The last weighmaster was a well known local character called Pontius Pilate, his real name was Comerford.

About 1868 the Bank of Ireland took over the whole block and the present magnificent building was completed in 1871. The architect was Mr. Sandham Symes of Dublin. The original drawings are in the Bank of Ireland,

Dublin, and Mr. William Cleere who saw them says: They are wonderful — such detail. Photographs of some of them if they could be had could be used in any exhibition, the men who did such fine work knew their job and took great care to attain perfection.

(1) "Kilkenny Inns and Taverns," Kilkenny Archaeological Society Journal 1862.

(2) Journal of Kilkenny Archaeological Society, 1872/3 p57.

(3) Carrigan's History and Antiquities of the Diocese of Ossory Vol III p232.

(4) In possession of the writer.

(5) Names of occupants of houses taken from the Valuation Lists of the Commissioners of Valuation for Ireland by kind permission.

(6) Kilkenny Journal, September 9th, 1871.

(7) Pigott and Company's Directory 1824.

(8) Kilkenny Journal, 1871, September.

(9) Kilkenny Journal, October 7, November 1859.

Advertisements.

(10) See Prims Papers in Public Record Office.

(11) Advertisements in Kilkenny Journal.

(12) Peg Woffington and her World by Janet Dunbar p 184 et seq.

(13) Ibid.

(14) Pigott's Directory.

(15) Information supplied by Mr J. Dollard, Kilkenny.

(16) Kilkenny Journal, 1869.

(17) Kilkenny Journal, 22nd May, 1872.

(18) Kilkenny Journal, September 1871.

(19) Ledwich — History and Antiquities of Irishtown and Kilkenny. 2nd Ed. p 455.

(20) Prim, Kilkenny Inns and Taverns.