

# William Carroll 1817-1889

## Merchant of Ennis

By Eric Shaw

William Carroll was born in 1817. His family had property in Bow Lane in Ennis and lands at Ballybeg. The Clare Journal of February 23, 1846 and the Limerick Chronicle of February 25, 1846 both give a brief reference under the heading "Marriages". Mr. William Carroll, Builder, to Kate, daughter of Mr. Wm. Ryan, both of Ennis. The entry from the Clare Journal gives Kate Ryan's address as the Mall, Ennis. At the time of his marriage in 1846, William Carroll was already a successful building contractor and timber merchant and the couple went to live in a house in Hunt's Lane. There is a family tradition that following an outbreak of cholera in Ennis, Carroll moved his family from Hunt's Lane to a small thatched farmhouse on his father's land at Ballybeg. The couple had seven children in total. William Carroll (Snr), works include: The Franciscan Church, Carroll's Bridge, Bindon Street; Metal Bridge at Doora, Ennis Library, Ballyea Church, O'Connell Monument, Ennis, Clooney



House, works in Haulbowline and Spike Island, Ennis Turkish Baths, the Spire of Ennis Cathedral, Sisters of Mercy Convent (now Clare Museum building), Ennis Orphanage for the Sisters of Mercy and Ennis Railway Station. William Carroll (Jnr.) was responsible for Franciscan Church, Ennis; Knockjames Church, and Abbeview house. William Carroll Snr died in 1889, and is buried in the family vault that he had built about 10 years previously. William Carroll Jnr died in Brussels in 1910 and is buried there.

The Carroll vault in Drumcliff is constructed of cut limestone and is a fine example of the good workmanship of the Carroll dynasty.

William Carroll's daughter, Mary, married George Perry of Tulla in 1884. Their daughter, Ethel, married Albert Shaw of Ballymahon, Co. Longford, in Clarecastle Church in 1906.





## The O'Connell Monument

In 1828, Daniel O'Connell was elected M. P. for Clare, a historical event that was later to result in the passing of the Catholic Emancipation Act. His election results were announced outside the Old Courthouse in the Square in Ennis. By 1862, the Square had been widened with the demolition of the Old Courthouse and a committee was formed with the objective of erecting a memorial on the spot of O'Connell's victory announcement. Revd Nicholas Power, Coadjutor Bishop of Killaloe (1865-1871), chaired the committee. The task of raising funds for the monument was largely undertaken by Michael G(riffey) Considine (c1812-1884), secretary of the Ennis Trade Guilds, both within Ireland and also in England. Other members of the committee were Dean Kenny, Sir Colman O'Loughlen and Rev. Andrew Newport.

Patrick Sexton, who designed the Manchester Martyrs Monument, may have designed the proposed monument. Although different in scale, there is a similarity in design and both have a shamrock pattern on the pedestals that the statues rest on. It was to be 74 feet in height, with a statue of O'Connell on top,

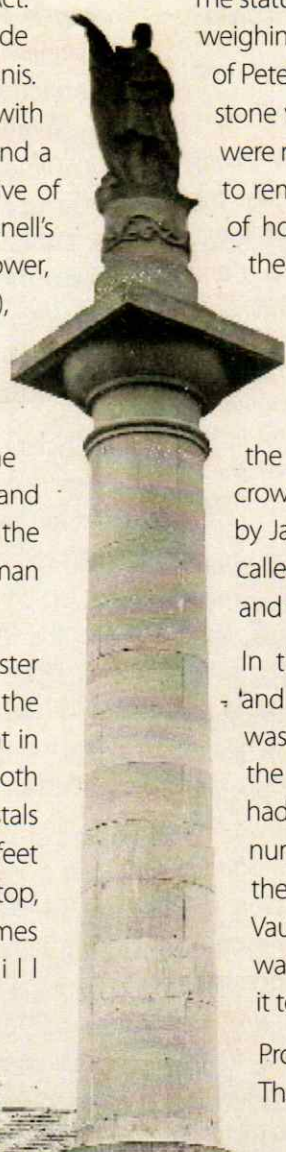
designed by James  
C a h i l l

of Dublin. The project went out to tender and the contract for the erection of the column was awarded to William Carroll at a price of £700.

The statue was to be cut from a block of limestone weighing eleven and a half tons from the quarry of Peter Rafferty, at Brackenagh, Co. Galway. The stone was to be sent by rail to Dublin but there were many attempts over a period of a fortnight to remove the stone from the quarry by teams of horses. The Earl of Clancarty, on hearing the difficulties, gave Rafferty the use of two bullocks. A large number of workmen assembled at the quarry and with the aid of ropes and the bullocks, succeeded in drawing the stone to the railway station, accompanied by a large crowd. On its arrival at the station, it was met by James Cahill who got up on the stone and called for three cheers for the Earl of Clancarty and three cheers for the great O'Connell.

In the meantime, Carroll was busy cutting and shaping the stones in his quarry that was to form the base and the column of the monument. The foundation stone had been laid on St. Patrick's Day, 1858. A number of Town Commissioners attended the ceremony but a strong speech by Fr. Vaughan upset some of them. The project was to suffer badly from lack of funding and it took years to complete.

Problems had also arisen with the statue. The original block of limestone was proved to be faulty and it took two other blocks from the quarry before Cahill was satisfied enough to start work on carving the statue.





By 1 October 1862, the Dublin Builder was able to report that *"thanks to the energetic and impressive appeals repeated day after day by our excellent contemporary, the Freeman, the hitherto unfinished memorial to O'Connell, in Ennis, is now all but un fait accompli"*.

On 13 February 1863, the Clare Journal stated:

*We observe that this Monument is now nearly completed. The circular stone which will top the column and upon which the statue itself will stand, was carried from Mr. Carroll's quarry, on Saturday, and placed beside the Monument. After some additional dressing, it will be raised to its proper place.*

Finally, after all the trials and tribulations associated with the project, the unveiling was scheduled for Thursday, 3 October 1865. The events of the day were described as follows:

*"...an enormous concourse of people assembled, not only from Clare but from Limerick and Tipperary. The whole town was decorated, Mill Street presenting the appearance of a forest. A huge procession, which formed up in Jail Road, marched through Jail Street, Church St., Harmony Row, Bindon St., on by the Infirmary, Springfield College, and passing over the Mill Bridge came into High Street via Mill St. In the front walked a veteran, William Shank, who had seen some eighty summers. He wore the identical green scarf that decorated his person in 1829. The Newmarket band headed the procession. The various guilds walked in the order given - labourers, victuallers, brogue-makers, dyers, shoemakers, bakers, masons, coopers, harness-makers, nailors, stone-cutters, and cartwrights, with all their handsome banners. The rear was brought up by 100 boys from the Christian Brothers Schools, Ennis. The brogue-makers carried a flag which had fluttered in the breeze in many a procession since 1726.*

*The Most Rev. Dr. Power, Bishop of Killaloe, presided at the meeting and performed the unveiling ceremony. Sir Coleman O'Loughlen delivered the inaugural oration. Other speakers including Michael Kerin, J.P.; Marcus Talbot, and M. G. Considine, the last-named moving the vote of thanks to the Bishop." (6).*

On 15 May 1864, the Dublin Builder gives the following information:

*"We have received a photograph, by Simonton, of Grafton-Street, Dublin, of Cahill's statue of O'Connell, for the Ennis monument to the Liberator. The photograph is one of the largest we have*

*seen, and in itself a triumph of art, and one of the strongest evidence of the progress and perfection of photography. The likeness of the Liberator is most striking, so that the statue, which we have not seen, must be an admirable work of sculpture. O'Connell is represented standing on a pedestal, in an oratorical attitude, arm extended as if addressing an assembly. The statue is, we understand, chiselled out of limestone, and will last, without suffering from the ravages of time, for a thousand years. The artist, Mr. Cahill, of Mercer-Street, was, we understand, a pupil of the celebrated Hogan, and, judging from the photograph of what the original must be, we would say that Mr. Cahill has produced a work which entitles him to take high rank amongst his brother sculptors"*.

The head of O'Connell was copied from that of John Hogan's statue of the Liberator (now in the Rotunda of City Hall, in Dame Street, Dublin) but Cahill changed his statue in a number of respects. The left leg was not so far advanced as in Hogan's work and the left arm, instead of being extended, was held close to the breast. In the hand was a scroll, on which the words "Clare Election" and "Emancipation" were inscribed. The figure was enveloped in a cloak with a fur collar.

Directions were given by Clare County Council in April 1959 for work to be done on the O'Connell Street Monument at a cost of £135. It was expected the work would include the correction of an error in the wording recording that "on this spot in the year 1828 Daniel O'Connell was returned M.P. Proposed by the O'Gorman Mahon, seconded by Tom Steell." The error is in the spelling of "Steell", which should be "Steele." A sculptor was to add two strokes to the final "L" to convert it into an "E". This alteration never took place.

In 2020, €35,000 was allocated to carry out 'emergency and stabilisation' works on the O'Connell Monument under the Historic Structures Fund (HSF) and Built Heritage Investment Scheme (BHIS).

