



his article is based on part of the diary of Patrick McMahon, a Sixmilebridge, Co. Clare man who returned to his native place on a holiday in

1888, after thirty-four successful years in Sydney. During his year long holiday he kept a daily diary, and his entries give us some interesting sidelights on life in Limerick city and county as it was just a century ago.

Patrick McMahon was born on 28th April, 1831, in Clounteen about one and a half miles outside Sixmilebridge on the Newmarket-on-Fergus road and about eight miles from the city of Limerick. He was baptised in the Roman Catholic Church at Sixmilebridge three days later on 1st May. ⁽¹⁾ He had one brother, Timothy, and seven sisters. His father, also named Patrick, had originally come from Ballyroe, a townland between Oatfield and Sixmilebridge.

Later Patrick McMahon was to recall the great storm which struck Ireland on 6th January, 1839, which was ever afterwards referred to as 'the night of the big wind.'

In 1840 he went to school; his first teacher was Pat Slattery, and he was also taught by James Quigley. He records that in 1843 he was attending Mr. Slattery's school which was then held in Kilmurry Church. ⁽²⁾ Two years later he was still being taught by the

The McMahon Diary

by Bill McInerney

same teacher at Rosroe, Kilmurry, and at Ballymulcashel, near the old Tuck Mill ⁽³⁾ at O'Garney Bridge. In fact, whenever Pat Slattery had his school in or around the locality, Patrick McMahon was sure to follow, and throughout his long life he looked back on Mr. Slattery with reverence and profound gratitude for the valuable education given by him in Sixmilebridge.

Patrick McMahon goes on to relate how the potato crop in the area failed in 1845 and states that '46 and '47 were years of great distress. In 1850 his sister Honora decided to emigrate to Sydney, and although her father and mother and the rest of the family tried to dissuade her, she sailed for Sydney on the *Ramelies* on 11th August, 1850.

In 1850 the first goldfields were discovered in Australia and thousands of people were heading there from all parts of the world. ⁽⁴⁾ The glowing accounts of the rich goldfields gave the young Patrick McMahon the first notion of trying to make his fortune in New South Wales.

He records that on 22nd July, 1852, a shocking affair took place at an election in Sixmilebridge, when the 31st regi-

ment fired on the people, killing five men and wounding eight others, two of whom later died of the wounds received. ⁽⁵⁾ In 1854 his sister Honora paid his passage under the assisted emigration scheme. On 8th July of that year he sailed from Plymouth on the ship *Caroline* ⁽⁶⁾ The master was Daniel Green and the ship's doctor was named Andrew Gray. Patrick McMahon was appointed teacher to the children on board. The ship arrived in Sydney on 13th October after a good passage of 96 days.

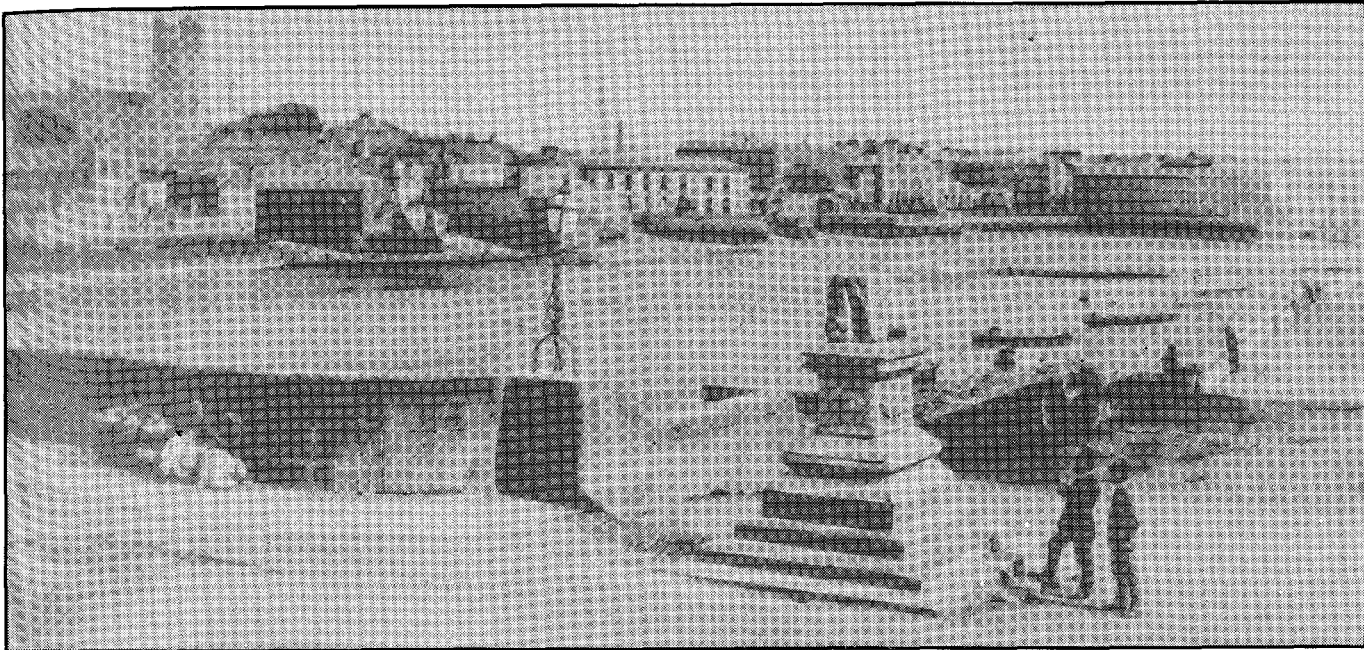
Patrick McMahon prospered in Sydney and on 26th September, 1857, he married Nora MacDonagh ⁽⁷⁾ from the city of Limerick, whose acquaintance he had made on the first day he left Sixmilebridge on the journey to Sydney. They had nine children whose many descendants now live all over Australia and other parts of the world.

On the 28th February, 1888, he left Sydney with his wife Nora (whom he refers to as 'Mother' in his diary) for Europe, Ireland and America. The first entry in the diary records that they boarded the Orient Line Steamer *Liguria* at Sydney on Thursday, 28th February, 1888.

Extract From Diary, Thursday, 28th



O'Connell Street, Limerick, at the turn of the century.



The Treaty Stone, Limerick, c. 1888.

February, 1888⁽⁸⁾

Got on board the Orient Line Steamer "Liguria" at 1 o'clock. After some delay cast off from the Wharf. Was accompanied down the harbour in a Steam Launch by the members of my family and many other friends; parted near the Heads. Kept steam launch in sight, now fast receding from view with many waving handkerchiefs. Cleared Sydney Heads at 2.30 o'clock. Went below and had some dinner. Made the acquaintance of Dr. McCambridge of the ship - an Irish gentleman and thorough Home Ruler, who is taking a sea voyage for the benefit of his health and left a good practice in England. At 3 o'clock Mother showed signs of illness. A messenger from Mr. Perry the Chief Officer, came seeking me on deck with an invitation to take my place at table next to him (the Chief Officer) during the voyage. Slept well the first night on board. Mother ill.

The ship called to Melbourne, Adelaide and Albany. Cape Lewin was their last view of Australia before heading into the Indian Ocean.

Friday, 9th March

A beautiful day. All on board well and happy. Passed one of the German steamers bound for Sydney. In the afternoon played cricket and passed off a pleasant evening. Sighted Cape Lewin at 6 o'clock p.m. and now steering into the Indian Ocean.

Sailing steadily through the Indian Ocean, they crossed the equator on Tuesday, March 20th, at 5 p.m. Patrick McMahon relates that his wife and himself were in excellent health. He also

records that all on board were well, with the exception of one third class passenger who was very ill with consumption.

On Saturday, March 24th; they sighted the African coast, and on Sunday morning the ship berthed at Aden, leaving again at 5 p.m. The next day they sailed into the Red Sea.

Wednesday, March 28th

A good stiff cool breeze this morning, the water in the bath getting cold. Will be soon out of the tropics, can put on heavy clothing again. David Scott, Engineer, aged 20 years, native of Scotland, died of consumption at 12.15 p.m. today. He has been ill all the way. The Doctor protested against his embarkation at Sydney. He begged and prayed to be allowed to come on board. He was anxious to get home to Scotland. Was buried at sea this evening at 8 o'clock p.m. - very little fuss was made about the affair. Mr. Yule, Presbyterian Minister from Melbourne who was going home with his little boy, read the service. The body was put on board on the fore deck. I was present. Oh! how sad and lonely, consigned to the mighty deep far away from home and kindred. No kind friend to shed a parting tear. How solemn and suggestive.

The next day they entered the Gulf of Suez, and went through the Suez Canal, stopping at Port Said for coaling. From there they steamed into the Mediterranean Sea and on to Naples, where they arrived on Tuesday, 3rd April, at 5 p.m. They then proceeded at a leisurely pace visiting Rome, Florence, Venice, Milan, Turin, and thence

to Paris. While in Paris, they called on and were received by Marshall McMahon, the retired President of France. Patrick availed of the opportunity in Paris to visit Hennessy's and order a hundred cases of brandy.

On 21st May they arrived in London where he transacted a considerable amount of business, and stayed until 2nd July, when they travelled up to Edinburgh, Inverness, Oban and Glasgow before making the crossing to Belfast.

Tuesday, July 17th

Started from Glasgow per train from St. Enoch's station at 10 o'clock p.m. last evening; arrived at Ardrossan at 11.30; took the "Seal" steamer, had a very fine passage; arrived at Belfast at 6 o'clock this morning. Neither of us were ill on the passage. Took a car with Mr. McPhail, went to Eglantine Hill, Malone Road; saw Mr. James Gordon's brother. After this, had a long drive round the town. At 2 o'clock called to Mr. Boyd of the Old Bush Mills Distillery to inspect some concentrated soup. After this, visited the Ulster Co. Linen Manufactory; was shown through the whole of the works in all its operations from the hackling of the flax to the weaving of the finest linen. Noticed many of the females in extremely heated rooms at work, their appearance was haggard and worn-out for the small wage of 7 or 8 shillings per week. I could not help contrasting their position with our female workers in Australia.

They left Belfast on Wednesday morning for Coleraine and then went to Londonderry, Dublin, Athlone and arrived



in Galway on 31st July. After 3 days in the Galway area, they took the train for Limerick.

Friday, August 3rd

Left Galway at 10.25 o'clock this morning. Passed through Oranmore, changed cars at Athenry, stopping at Craughwell, Ardahan, Gort, Tubber, Crusheen, Ennis, Clare Castle, Ardsollas, Ballycar, Six Mile Bridge, Cratloe, Long Pavement. Arrived at Limerick at 3 o'clock p.m. Went to Cruises Hotel. Had a good walk through the town. Went to place where Mother was born. Went to Treaty Stone and many other places. I copied the following inscription on the pedestal supporting the Treaty Stone:-

"Urbs antiqua fuit studiisque asperima bellei".

This pedestal was erected May 1865 John Richard Tinsley, Mayor".

Called on Mrs. John Enright, William Street, whom we found to be a nice sensible intelligent woman, carrying on a good business in the grocery and wine and spirit trade.⁽¹⁰⁾

Saturday, August 4th

Had a walk this morning with Mother to the Chapel belonging to the Holy Fathers. Passed O'Connells monument. The church is beautiful and well furnished and nicely decorated. When we came back to the Hotel we found Mrs. Hartigan and Miss Katie Hartigan, her sister-in-law waiting for us. They were delighted to see us, with every mark of friendship. These are two very superior ladies indeed, intelligent and well educated and very well dressed. Called in the evening to see Mrs. McSweeney, Mr. Carrick's sister. She is doing a thriving business. She is full of life and intelligence like her brother Tom in Sydney.

Sunday, August 5th

Went with Mother to Mass at St. Michael's Church this morning. Soon after coming back to the Hotel and before breakfast was over, Mrs. Michael Hogan of Kilkishin called with her son, also Mrs. John Hogan and her son, and Pat MacMahon of Clounteen.⁽¹¹⁾ In the evening went to the residence of Mrs. Hartigan who kindly sent her car to the Hotel for us. We spent a happy evening with her. We met Father Kennedy, brother to Father Kennedy of Waverly, Sydney. Had a nice walk through the fields.

On Monday 6th August, the McMahons took the 11.05 train from Limerick to Sixmilebridge where they visited his

old home. On Tuesday they left for Liscannor where his wife's mother then lived. They stayed there until Friday, 10th August, when they went to Kilkee, going by train to Miltown.⁽¹²⁾ and then by coach to the seaside resort. The fares came to two shillings and sixpence each. After eight days in Kilkee, they left by coach for Kilrush, staying one night there.



Patrick McMahon (right), with Councillor Stephen McSweeney, 5th September, 1888.

Sunday, August 19th

Left Kilrush this morning at 9 o'clock and sailed up the Shannon for Limerick in a nice steamer - fare 4/- each; arrived at Limerick at 1 o'clock, took car for Mrs. Bowlers Hotel.⁽¹³⁾ Brunswick Street.⁽¹⁴⁾ The day was very wet, constant heavy rain since this morning - a most disagreeable day. We called at "Glin" and at "Kiladysart" then Cahircon on the way. In the evening went with Mother to Benediction to St. John's Cathedral.

Monday, August 20th

Visited St. Mary's old Cathedral, Limerick this morning with Mother; we ascended to the top pinnacle of the steeple, had a fine view of the city and surrounding country for miles - noticed the three old chained cannon balls inside the church hanging on the railings of the Perry Chapel - these reliques formerly hung on the outside wall facing the street. I also noticed a piece of shell hanging on the wall in another place. There are here many monuments, very ancient - same as I have seen at St. Paul's and Westminster Abbey, London. I copied the following inscription, viz:

"In affectionate remembrance of Lieutenant W.W. Ievers, late of 2nd. battalion, 13th. Prince Alberts Light Infantry, who died 11th. November 1869. This tablet erected by his brother officers."

St. Mary's is a grand old pile in a state of good preservation, full of interest, well worthy of a visit. I was much pleased with all I saw there.

Tuesday, August 21st

Went to Mr. Fitt's office this morning (brother to Mr. Fitt, Town Hall). He and his brothers and Mr. Hartigan of the Horse Repository were very kind to us; young Mr. Fitt who is in partnership with Mr. Hartigan in the auctioneer business drove us out to our friend Mr. Thos. Hartigan of the Long Pavement. We had dinner and Mr. Hartigan took us for a long drive to Castleconnell and O'Brien's Bridge and home by "Clonlara", showed us Doonass in the distance, passed through "Parteen". This was a very beautiful drive - we enjoyed it much, this evening was fine. I thought of my old friend "Matt Moloney" when going through "O'Brien's Bridge", home by Clonlara, this is a fine country.

On Wednesday, 22nd August, Patrick McMahon and his wife left Limerick by the 11.05 a.m. train for Sixmilebridge, where they stayed until 31st August before returning to Limerick. Again he spent a few days walking about the city and had been so impressed by St. Mary's Cathedral, Limerick's most historic building, which was built in 1116, that he returned to make a further study of its monuments. However, the highlight of their visit was the prominent place accorded to Patrick at the official 'turning of the sod' ceremony to mark the start of the building of Limerick's new waterworks at Clareville, just outside the city.

Friday, August 31st

Left Sixmilebridge station this day at 2 o'clock p.m. for Limerick. Came to Mrs. Bowlers Hotel. Mrs. Lynch, Michael Moloney's sister, called to see us in the evening. Mother and self visited the New Cemetery at Limerick which is beautiful. We came back by the site of the Munster Fair and new wheat market⁽¹⁵⁾ through "Garryowen". We noticed Garryowen old Brewery, (Johnny Connells) in a state of ruin.

Saturday, September 1st

Visited St. Mary's Cathedral this morning. The place is nice and clean and well kept. Mr. Miller who is in charge, is a civil, agreeable gentleman. I noticed the following inscription on one of the pillars of the Church -

"Dan Hayes, an honest man And a lover of his country".



the people who exhibited a desire of showing me much friendship. I was further invited by the Mayor to have tea with him. Came back with Mr. and Mrs. McSweeney. Went to the Long Pavement with Mr. Hartigan. It was near 12 o'clock when I got back to the Hotel. This was a day never to be forgotten.

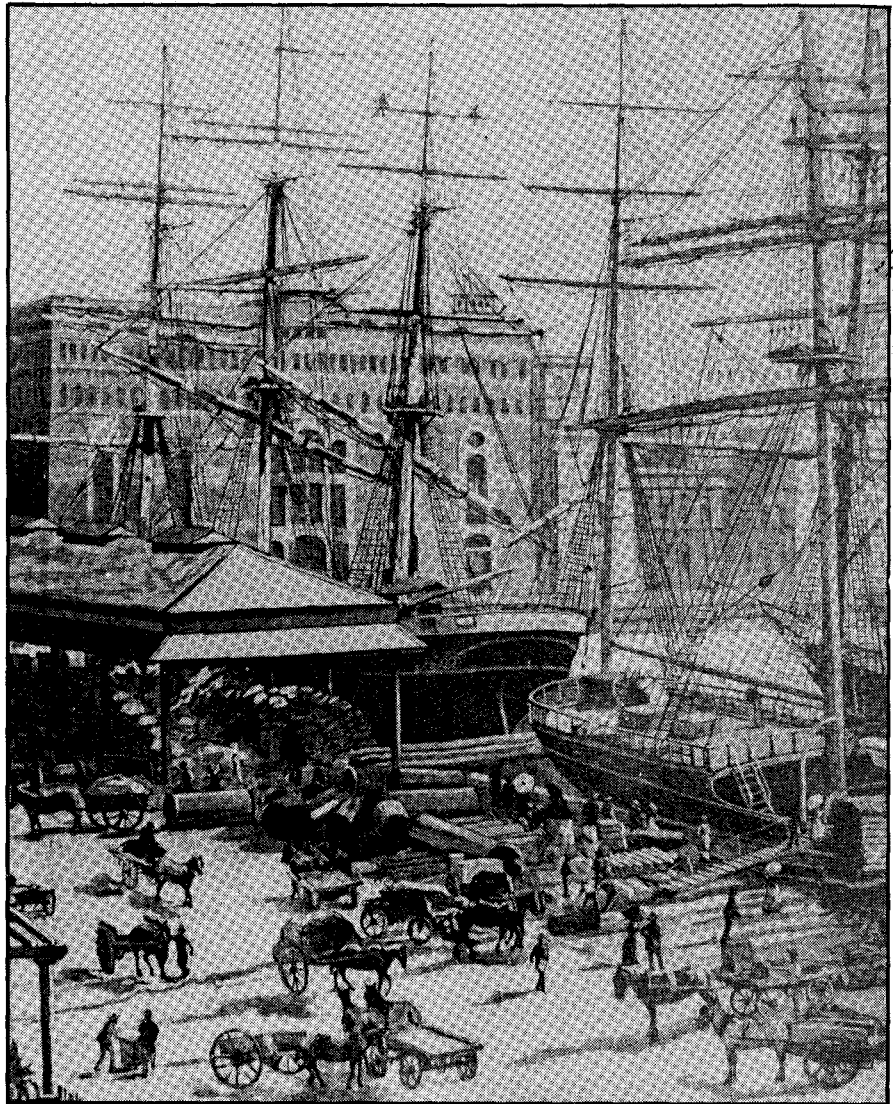
On Thursday, 6th September, Patrick McMahon and his wife left Limerick on the 11.10 a.m. train for Killarney. After 4 days there, they moved on to Glengariff for three days and then moved on to Cork city. On the 17th September they travelled to Mount Melleray, and on 20th September Patrick and his wife left for Waterford. On the 21st September they went to Tipperary and visited the Rock of Cashel. They left Tipperary by the 5 p.m. train, passing through Oola, Pallas, Boher and arriving in Limerick at 7 p.m. where they went to Mrs. Bowler's Hotel.

Sunday, September 23rd.

Went with Mother this morning to St. Michael's Church. Met Mr. Herbert, Town Councillor; went to see the old walls of Limerick, the sally port and Black Battery. Got to the top of a portion of the old wall which is nearly 30 feet wide. Went under the wall through the sally port. On the wall are several fine apple trees. I got some of the apples. I noticed the remains of a few old cannons on the walls of a very inferior kind. I was shown one of the large bombs thrown into the city. After this, we visited the Little Sisters of Mary or Nursing Sisters. Called to the Presentation Convent in the afternoon. Went to Mr. Hartigan's this evening. He took me to see a fine hurling match. We then went all over the workhouse. We stayed the night with Mr. Hartigan.

September 24th

Rose at 7 a.m., driven to Coonagh by Mr. Hartigan. This is a very fine farm of about 37 acres, on the banks of the Shannon. After breakfast, Mr. and Mrs. Hartigan and Miss Kate Hartigan, self and Mother drove to "Killaloe" a distance of about 10 miles, passed through Parteen, Clonlara, O'Brien's Bridge. Killaloe is on a steep incline, an ancient looking place, narrow rugged streets. The place looks like Tulla, Co. Clare. We stopped and had dinner at the house of Mr. James Carr a friend of Mr. Hartigan. We then walked to "Kinkora" said to be the ancient dwelling place of the great "Brian Boromhe". We were shown a moat or fort of circular



Circular Quay, Sydney.

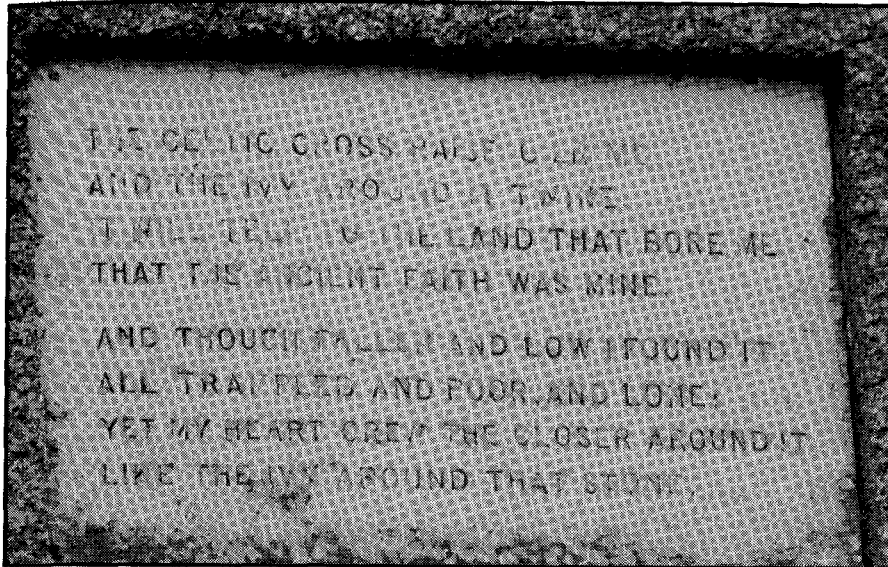
entrenchment with a ditch round it. The Moat or Fort is hollow in the centre as if an embankment was thrown all round. This is on the outlet of the River Shannon at Lough Derg. A more lovely view could not be found than here - the land is beautiful and fertile, full of aged trees, Beech, Elm, Limes, Sycamore, etc. The views of the lake, river and mountains is truly magnificent. I was really charmed with the scenery. A more lovely spot old Brian Boromhe could not select for himself and his brave Dalcassian followers. In coming back from Killaloe we crossed the Bridge at Killaloe, 11 arches. Came home through Bird Hill on the opposite side of the Shannon. On the way we came through Annacotty. We arrived in Limerick at 9 o'clock well pleased with our visit to "Kinkora". On this trip we went to "Killaloe" through the County Clare side of the Shannon and back by the County Limerick side.

Tuesday, September 25th

After breakfast this morning had a long walk with Mother out the Corbally road. After dinner, called to Michael Egans wine and spirit stores. This is an extensive establishment and a large trade carried on. I noticed a large stock of port, sherry, claret and even ale and porter bottled on the premises. No capsules on the ale and porter. I met Mr. Michael S. Moylett a very nice young man and friend of Mrs. Pat Coyle of Sydney. In the evening Mr. Fitt and Mr. Hartigan called on us at the Hotel.

Wednesday, September 26th

Mr. Fitt called on me this morning at 10.45 a.m. We took the train from Limerick at 11.20 for Pallas, a distance of 12 miles. We got a car from Mr. Michael Ryan, brother to James Ryan, Oxford Street, and drove a distance of about 4 miles to Ballineety



The inscription on the memorial stone to Ambrose Hall, at St. Laurence Cemetery, Limerick, which Patrick McMahon copied for his own memorial at Rookwood Cemetery, Sydney.

on what is now called "Sarsfield Rock". There is a beautiful new Chapel built here quite near and in historical grounds where Sarsfield blew up King William's cannon. We met a gentleman named Michael O'Brien, a fine old man born at Longstone near the place. He showed a great desire to give us all the information concerning Sarsfield's great enterprise. He said that Williams forces were bringing up in particular a great cannon to batter the walls of Limerick (named Sheelah Buigh) and so on. After having a good look at the great historic spot we came back by another route through Old Pallas and so to the train where we were kindly treated by Mr. Ryan. We arrived at Limerick at 4.30. The day was fine and I enjoyed the trip. I brought with me a piece of the rock.

Thursday, September 27th

Rose at 7 a.m. this morning. Went to the Limerick markets. They are well situated not far from St. John's Cathedral. I noticed a few sheep and cattle. It was not the usual Market day. After breakfast, called to Mrs. Lynch, Michael Moloney's sister. We also called to Mrs. Sweeney and Mrs. Enright. In the afternoon, called to the Limerick Town Hall and had a good look through some old documents. The Town Hall is not as nicely furnished as the Town Hall, Sydney. I then called to No. 3 Upper Mallow Street to see Mrs. Healy and her sister, Miss Eileen Walton. I found Miss Walton a very friendly lady. In the afternoon, Mr. Hartigan took me to the Limerick Distillery (Thomond Gate) passed the Treaty Stone - got a

piece broken off for me. Mr. Hartigan and self visited Mrs. McNamara near the Circular Road; noticed a very fine comfortable homestead. Miss McNamara sang and played for us. Mrs. McNamara is mother to Fr. McNamara of Bathurst, N.S.W. under Dr. Byrne, also brother to Dr. McNamara.

Friday, September 28th

On Friday, 28th. September, Patrick McMahon and his wife left for their final visit to the Sixmilebridge area.

Wednesday, October 10th

Left Sixmilebridge by the 9 a.m. train was conveyed to the station by Major Walton, Pat Slattery and other friends. We changed at Limerick into 10.35 train for Queenstown; passed through Patrickswell, Croom, Charleville. Changed at Cork for Queenstown where we arrived at 3 p.m. Went to the "Queens Hotel".

They sailed from Queenstown (Cobh) for America on Thursday, October 18th, on board the *City of Rome*. The ship had a crew of 26 persons, with 791 passengers. They arrived in New York on October 25th. After travelling extensively all over America, they embarked on the *Zeakondia* on the final leg of their journey from San Francisco on January 14th, 1889, and arrived in Sydney on February 10th.

Sunday, February 10th, 1889

Rough with squalls, the ship rolling, rain and mist. Sighted Sydney Heads at 1 o'clock. Came alongside the Wharf at Circular Quay at 3 p.m. It

was pleasant to go from home to revisit the land of my birth and to take a well earned holiday after many years. But how much more pleasant to return home to children, friends, books and own fireside.

Patrick McMahon's diary covered every day he spent away from home but for the purpose of this article I have confined myself almost entirely to entries dealing with the Limerick area.

His wife predeceased him on February 24th, 1908, aged 75 years, and he died on 7th March, 1910, aged 79 years. Both are buried in the family grave at Rookwood Cemetery, Sydney. On the gravestone is the following inscription which he copied from a monument in St. Laurence Cemetery in Limerick, 22 years before:

*The Celtic Cross raise o'er me
and the ivy around it twine,
It will tell to the land that bore me
that the ancient faith was mine,
And though fallen and low I found it,
all trampled and poor and lone,
Yet my heart grew the closer around it,
like the ivy around that stone.*

Notes

1. Sixmilebridge Catholic Church parish records.
2. Kilmurry Catholic Church, built in the 1830's.
3. Annagore Woollen Mill, now a ruin, was closed down at the turn of the century.
4. Another East Clare man's story, 'Paddy Hannon from Quin'. Pioneer of the Golden Mile', by Michael McMahon, *The Other Clare*, Vol. 5.
5. 'A Tragedy of Public Voting, Sixmilebridge 1852', by Keith Scally, *The Other Clare*, Vol. 1.
6. Co. Clare Emigrants to Australia, Reid Shipping Lists 1830 - 1880.
7. Marriage Register, St. Mary's Cathedral, Sydney.
8. Extracts from diary by kind permission of Dr. E.B. McMahon, Washington, D.C., great grandson of Patrick McMahon.
9. Patrick McMahon was a successful wine and Spirits importer in Sydney.
10. Mrs. Enright of William Street was the wife of Patrick McMahon's uncle, (his mother's brother).
11. The son of Timothy McMahon, only brother of Patrick McMahon.
12. The Railway line to Killee was not completed in 1888.
13. The Limerick Hotel at 2 & 3 Brunswick Street which was owned by Ellen Bowler, was formerly 'Tiger' O'Brien's licensed premises and is now Roche's Stores toy shop.
14. Brunswick Street is now Sarsfield Street.
15. In Cathedral Place, near St. John's Cathedral.
16. Off Ellen Street, now the premises of O'Donnell Engineering Ltd.
17. George's Street is now O'Connell Street.
18. S. McSwéaney, 53, 54, and 55 William Street, Grocer, Chandler, Soap Manufacturer, Provision and Spirit Dealer, (Guy's Directory 1886).
19. A Mr. Stephen McSweeney, resident of 53 William Street, was a Town Councillor for the Castle Ward in 1886.