

DUBLIN CITY ARCHIVES

**ARCHIVES OF THE
O'CONNELL MONUMENT
COMMITTEE**

**Dublin City Library & Archive
138-144 Pearse Street
Dublin 2**

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INTRODUCTION

The O'Connell Monument Committee was established following a public meeting held at the Prince of Wales Hotel in Sackville Street on 13 October 1862. A fund was opened to receive public subscriptions towards a national monument in Dublin to the Liberator Daniel O'Connell, who had won Catholic Emancipation for Ireland. The basis of the fund was the residue of money left over after completion of the O'Connell Monument in Ennis, Co. Clare. A large voluntary committee was established to raise money and arrange for the Monument to be built. There was a nucleus of trustees, including the Lord Mayor of Dublin (ex-officio); John B. Dillon; Charles Bianconi; and Sir John Gray, proprietor of the *Freeman's Journal*, whose newspaper was foremost in creating and maintaining interest in the project.

The foundation stone for the O'Connell Monument was laid in Sackville Street (now called O'Connell Street) on 8 August 1864 and shortly afterwards the sculptor John Henry Foley was the winner of a competition to design the Monument. Other statues by Foley in Dublin include Oliver Goldsmith and Edmund Burke outside Trinity College Dublin; Foley was also the sculptor of the Albert Memorial in London. After Foley's death in 1874, the Monument was completed by his pupil Thomas Brock. It was unveiled on 15 August 1882 and the four winged Victories were added in the following year.

The O'Connell Monument cost £10,170. Its overall height is 40 feet and it is dominated by a 12-foot high bronze statue of O'Connell, dramatically wrapped in his cloak, and placed on a plinth. Immediately underneath O'Connell is a female figure representing 'Erin' holding a copy of the Act of Catholic Emancipation in her left hand, and pointing upwards to the patriot with her right hand. On either side of 'Erin' and circling the plinth, is a frieze of figures, which represent the Catholic Church, the arts, trades and ordinary people. The figures of O'Connell and 'Erin' were all completed by Foley before his death. The four winged 'Victories' are by Brock and stand for virtues for which O'Connell was renowned. 'Victory by Patriotism' carries a sword and shield; 'Victory by Fidelity' has a dog at her feet, symbol of loyalty; 'Victory by Eloquence' holds a sheaf of papers, as if making a speech; 'Victory by Courage' is shown strangling a serpent, the symbol of evil. 'Courage' has a bullet-hole over her heart, a reminder of the fighting in O'Connell Street during the 1916 Rising. An explosion in the early hours of 26 December 1969 toppled 'Courage' from the Monument damaging the figure. The culprits were never found, but it was believed to have been a loyalist paramilitary group. The figure was successfully restored and replaced on the monument.

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The base of the O'Connell Monument has been reduced twice. As designed by Foley, it was originally 40 feet wide, but it was reduced to 32 feet wide in 1879, because it was causing an obstruction to traffic. In 1988, to mark the Dublin Millennium, the central mall in O'Connell Street was widened and improved. In a controversial move, the base of the O'Connell Monument was reduced in height and width at that time to facilitate the large crowds of people using this pedestrian area. In recent years,

The archives of the O'Connell Monument Committee consist of minute books; press-cuttings; correspondence; and printed reports. Unfortunately, the collection does not contain Foley's design for the Monument. The Committee was very conscious of the need to preserve its archives, and as early as 1863 it passed a resolution declaring 'that a permanent record of its proceedings be preserved and deposited among the Municipal Archives' [Ch 6/1, page 2]. The archives of the O'Connell Monument Committee were certified received by the Town Clerk's Department, City Hall, on 25 June 1896. The collection was transferred to the Dublin Civic Museum probably during the 1960s and was returned to Dublin City Archives in October 1988. It can now be viewed at Dublin City Library & Archive, 138-144 Pearse Street, Dublin 2.

Mary Clark
Dublin City Archivist

Further reading:

F.E. Dixon, 'Dublin Portrait Statues' in *Dublin Historical Record*, March 1978, pp 60-69

John T. Turpin, 'The Career and Achievement of John Henry Foley, Sculptor' in *Dublin Historical Record*, March 1979, pp 42-55

John T. Turpin, 'Catalogue of the Sculpture of J. H. Foley' in *Dublin Historical Record*, June 1979, pp 108-116.

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**Articles in *The Dublin Builder* re O'Connell Monument
[List compiled by Andrew O'Brien of Dublin City Archives]**

- Site and character of the O'Connell monument. *The Dublin Builder*, v, 92 (15 October, 1863), p.167.
- The O'Connell monument. *The Dublin Builder*, v, 94 (15 November, 1863), p.188.
- The O'Connell statue. *The Dublin Builder*, vi, 109 (1 July, 1864), p.125.
- The O'Connell national monument and art, resident and non-resident. *The Dublin Builder*, vi, 112 (15 August, 1864), p.156.
- The O'Connell monument. *The Dublin Builder*, vi, 115 (1 October, 1864), p.196.
- The O'Connell monument – the award of the committee. *The Dublin Builder*, vii, 130 (15 May, 1865), pp.121-22.
- The O'Connell monument. *The Dublin Builder*, vii, 131 (1 June, 1865), p.135.
- The O'Connell monument competition. *The Dublin Builder*, vii, 136 (15 August, 1865), p.195.
- The O'Connell monument. *The Dublin Builder*, vii, 138 (15 September, 1865), p.218.
- The O'Connell monument – the correspondence. *The Dublin Builder*, vii, 138 (15 September, 1865), p.227.
- The O'Connell monument. *The Dublin Builder*, vii, 139 (1 October, 1865), p.238.
- The O'Connell monument competition. *The Dublin Builder*, vii, 140 (15 October, 1865), p.241.
- Proceedings of the O'Connell Statue Committee. *The Dublin Builder*, vii, 140 (15 October, 1865), p.244.
- The O'Connell monument. *The Dublin Builder*, vii, 141 (1 November, 1865), p.254.

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| <u>Doc. No.</u> | <u>Description</u> |
|-----------------|---|
| Ch 6/1 | Minute Book of 'The O'Connell Testimonial General Committee' 18 Oct 1862- 1 bound vol. 14 Aug 1882 507 pp [Note: volume includes press-cuttings relating to the Committee's work, 20 Sept 1862-22 Oct 1863] |
| Ch 6/2 | Press-Cuttings Book Press-cuttings and printed ephemera relating to the work of the O'Connell Monument Committee 8 Oct 1863- 1 bound vol. 23 July 1880 507 pp |
| Ch 6/3 | Press-Cuttings Book Press-cuttings and printed ephemera relating to the work of the O'Connell Monument Committee 26 July 1880- 1 bound vol. 21 Apr 1896 fol. 121 |
| Ch 6/4 | Letterpress Book Copies of outgoing correspondence from O'Connell Monument Committee Indexed 3 Jan 1873- 1 bound vol. 6 July 1883 191 pp |
| Ch 6/5 | Minute book of Sub-Committee established by resolution of the General Committee of the O'Connell Monument, passed on 17 Feb 1864. Sub- Committee's function was to organize a simultaneous collection of money for the Monument throughout Ireland on St. Patrick's Day, 1864 18 Feb 1864- 1 bound vol. 24 June 1864 19 pp + appendix ii |
| Ch 6/6 | Draft Minute Book, O'Connell Monument Committee 19 June 1880- 1 bound vol. 3 Oct 1883 24 pp |

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| Ch 6/7 | Prospectus of the O'Connell Centenary Record, to be published under the direction of the O'Connell Centenary Committee in August 1875; volume to be printed by Joseph Dollard, 13-14 Dame Street, Dublin. Includes: advance order form. 1875 1 item: 6 pp |
| Ch 6/8 | Trustees' Correspondence Correspondence generated by Trustees of O'Connell Monument Committee. Mainly relating to arrangement for transfer of funds. Includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cyclostyled circular letter soliciting subscriptions for Monument (Nov 1862)• Printed description of public meeting at which O'Connell Monument Committee was set up (13 Oct 1862)• Printed 'Report on Finance of O'Connell National Monument' 16 Dec 1875 1862-1883 19 items |
| Ch 6/9 | Cash-book and set of accounts of The O'Connell Monument Committee 1862-1882 2 items |
| Ch 6/10 | O'Connell Monument Committee General Correspondence 7 Oct 1862- 76 items 16 Jan 1889 |
| Ch 6/11 | Receipts and related correspondence 4 Aug 1863- 74 items 19 Dec 1888 |
| Ch 6/12 | Correspondence received by Edmund Dwyer Gray, trustee of the O'Connell Monument Committee. [Dwyer Gray was also proprietor of the <i>Freeman's Journal</i> and was Lord Mayor of Dublin in 1880] 25 Mar 1875- 143 items 3 Jan 1893 |

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| <u>Doc. No.</u> | <u>Description</u> |
|-----------------|---|
| Ch 6/13 | Letters from George F. Tenniswod, 10 Osnaburgh Street, Regent's Park, London: to Rev. John O'Hanlon, Hon. Sec. O'Connell Monument Committee. Tenniswood was executor to J.H. Foley, sculptor of the O'Connell Monument, who died in 1874. The letters relate to arrangements for completion of the Monument. 25 Mar 1875- 7 items 7 Dec 1875 |
| Ch 6/14 | Miscellaneous correspondence, mostly notes and jottings Undated 17 items |
| Ch 6/15 | List of trade, tontine, loan fund and burial societies to which copies of the O'Connell Monument Committee's Appeal has been sent, with bill of costs 4 May 1864 3 pp |
| Ch 6/16 | The O'Connell Monument Committee: case submitted to the Right Hon. Hugh Law, Q.C. and others: contains legal opinion re question of liabilities contracted by the Committee to the late J.H. Foley or his representatives Printed matter 52 pp Dublin: 1877 |
| Ch 6/17 | Report of the O'Connell Monument Committee: presented on the occasion of the unveiling ceremony performed on 15 August 1882 by Charles Dawson, Lord Mayor of Dublin. Printed matter 32 pp Dublin: 1882 |
| Ch 6/18 | <i>United Ireland: Exhibition Double-Number</i> Vol. 11, no. 50 19 August 1882 [The O'Connell Monument was unveiled on 15 August 1882, the same day as Irish Industrial and Agricultural Exhibition opened in the Rotunda Gardens. Description of unveiling ceremony is contained in this issue of the newspaper <i>United Ireland</i>] |

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| <u>Doc. No.</u> | <u>Description</u> |
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| Ch 6/19 | List of persons and institutions to whom the report of the O'Connell Monument Committee was sent by Very Rev. Canon John O'Hanlon, Hon. Secretary to the Committee. List maintained in alphabetical order. 1 bound vol. Undated |
| Ch 6/20 | <i>The Irish Times</i> : issue for 25-27 December 1969 [Extract including headlined report by Renagh Holohan on the explosion at the O'Connell Monument on 26 December 1969, which topped the 'Victory by Courage' figure from the Monument] |