

The O'Brien Institution

Michael O'Brien, wholesale wollen draper of 5, Ushers Quay, Dublin died in 1829. His estate which was to the value of £115,000 was left to his four daughters. The younger two daughters, May and Bridget were twins and when Mary died in 1847 she left most of her property to Bridget who, on her death in 1876, was found 'possessed of £80,000'.

Bridget's Will ran into ninety folios (90 words in a folio). After some minor bequests she directed that the remainder of her property be left to the most Rev. Daniel Murray, Archbishop of Dublin. Rev. Walter Meyler V.G. and their successors for the purpose of "founding forming and endowing a respectable and becoming dwelling house establishment school or seminary near the City of Dublin for the support lodging and educating from time to time a certain number of Catholic Children. Her will also provided for the erection of a chapel adjoining the school where the holy sacrifice of the mass should be offered daily for the repose of the souls of herself and her family".

The Trustees were to select a piece of land in or near Dublin and the building erected was to be handsome, durable, permanent, and completely furnished in every respect. The children were to be "lodged, dieted and clothed in a respectable and comfortable manner, and to receive a good, sound, and useful education". The Trustees were to also have management of the school and would be responsible to select staff and have full control. The will also recommended that children who were entirely orphaned should have preference of admission and retention in the school. It also stated that if any child had a particular talent for music, painting or sculpture or any other useful trade or profession the trustees were to take the proper steps provided funds were available to forward the child's education in such "art, branch, trade or calling".

Two years after Bridget O'Briens death Cardinal Cullen being trustee of the Will purchased the Marino Estate once the seat of Lord Charlemont at a cost of £8,260. The property contained over

300 acres and thirty of these were reserved for the Institution mentioned in the Will. The remainder of the estates was sold to the Irish Christian Brothers for £6,000. Leaving as £2,000 the purchase price of the thirty acres. The brothers took possession of their portion in 1878.

The erection of the Institute commenced in 1880 and finished in 1882 at a cost of £25,000. It was named the "School Of The Twin Sisters" and this name still remains on a plaque over the main door at the present time.

In May 1886 the Archbishop asked the Irish Christian Brothers to manage the school and towards the end of the year the three Brothers came to the Institution to take charge. The Freeman Journal of Nov. 11th 1886 had the following notice:

**"THE TWIN SISTERS' SCHOOL
(FOUNDED BY MISSES O'BRIEN),
MARINO, CLONTARF,
CO. DUBLIN."**

"The Trustees of the above-named Institution hereby give public notice that certain difficulties, hitherto delaying the opening of the Institution, now being removed, they will proceed at an early date to consider the claims of various applicants for admission.

"The Trustees wish to make known by public advertisement the conditions of the Trust which it is their duty to administer. All applications made previous to the date of this notice will be regarded by the Trustees as having been withdrawn unless now renewed in the form prescribed below. (Here follows what we have already stated of the founder's intentions with supplementary details).

"The Trustees being charged in the Will with the duty of determining whether boys only, or girls, or both, should be received into the Institution, have decided on opening it for boys only.

"The trustees reserve to themselves the unrestricted right of removing from the Institution, at any time, any boy, or boys, whom, in the exercise of their discretion, they may consider it not desirable to retain among its inmates. Applications for admission to the Institution are to be made in writing,

and addressed to 'The Trustees, O'Brien Institute, Clontart, Dublin'. No application can be received after the 11th day of December, 1886.

'BY ORDER OF THE TRUSTEES'

On October 13th 1887 The Papal Nuncio Monsignor Perscio accompanied the Archbishop of Dublin to the O'Briens Institute and the Dublin newspapers reported, "His Eminence had not, since his arrival in Ireland, assisted at a more important or a more interesting event. It marked another and a special epoch in the history of the Christian Brothers a history so fraught with influences for good, and so distinguished by the marvellous teaching triumphs and spiritual benefits of that great Community. The O'Brien Institution is established in connection with the adjoining Christian Brothers' Schools, and both are situated in the demesne formerly the property of the Earl of Charlemont. A more magnificent site could not be imagined. The splendidly wooded grounds rise from the seaside to the place where the new building stands, and the latter enjoys a position which for healthfulness and picturesque beauty is simply perfect. (The sea at that time, and for many years after, covered the present site of the expansive Fairview Park, and flowed up to the tram lines). The design of the building is French Gothic. It will accommodate a hundred boarders and the Community. The Chapel, detached from the main building by a corridor, adds much to the general architectural effect. Within is a finely-lighted corridor running the entire length of the building and giving ingress to study halls, laboratory and library, and further on, to corridors leading to Community rooms, refectories, store-rooms, etc. Kitchen, dairy, dormitories, and lavatories are models of convenience. The Chapel has an apsidal end nave, and contains a handsomely-designed organ gallery and Communion rails, seats of pitch pine, and an extremely effective Portland stone altar. The large wheel window in the east gable adding much to the appearance of the elevation. A belfry of brick, with stone dressing, completes the design of the S.E. angle."

However, from various causes The Institution was not opened for the admission of boys until January, 9th

1888 when Forty Nine Boys were registered. The staff consisted of Four Brothers assisted by a few paid employees.

Although built to accommodate one hundred boys the Institution had so many initial expenses that the available income in its first year could provide for only 50 boys. The rebuilding and repairing of the Boundary wall on the Malahide Road although commenced in 1888 could not be completed until 1893 for want of funds but finances improved as time went on.

During the summer period boys who did not go home to friends for summer vacation went to a house on Sutton Strand with the Brothers. The register increased regularly every year until 1893 when the roll exceeded one hundred. In 1892 a swimming baths was constructed to hold 44,000 gallons of water and was supplied from an overflow of the lake in Marino Garden. It was later fed from the vartry water supply. Heating and

electric light was installed in 1911 at a cost of £1,770. New lavatories were installed in 1915 and with painting and restored ceilings cost £2,229. The thirty acres of garden and grazing gave a full supply of vegetables and fodder. The large field on the right of the entrance (now site of Nazareth House Old Peoples Home) had been sub let to a grazier for twenty five years when the trustees found that letting any of the land was a bar to the remission of certain taxes. Two lodges on the Malahide Road completed the property and were tenanted to employees. The last of these was demolished in 1984 to make way for widening of the Malahide Road.

In 1972 The Christian Brothers opened a new secondary school "Ard Scoil Ris" at Griffith Avenue, Marino. The O'Briens Institute was then closed. Dublin Corporation purchased the O'Briens Insitute and it's lands on 17th February, 1982 and provided Dublin Fire Brigade with it's first ever Training Centre. Extensive redesigning

and renovations were carried out by the Corporation and in June, 1984 Dublin Fire Brigade held it's first courses for operational personnel.

Since that time the Centre has been used for numerous courses for the Brigade besides providing courses for Dun Laoghaire Fire Brigade and other Corporation workers. During Fire Prevention Week Fire Prevention Seminars were organised for youth leaders.

The centre has been used to host various Fire Brigade Functions. The Dublin Fire Brigade Pipe Band train at the centre each Monday evening and the facilities at the centre have also been used by the Dublin Fire Brigade Sports and Athletic Clubs.

The Newly Formed "Dublin Fire Brigade Historical Society" holds its monthly meetings at the centre.

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