

IRISH OCCUPATION OF LANCASTER LAND.

"Why did so many prominent Irish railroad contractors settle in Lancaster?" is a question frequently asked. A generation ago this would have been a more pertinent inquiry. Thirty years ago Lancaster contained many of the most noted railroad contractors of the country, and all were sons of Erin who came to this land with no fortune **save** with stout hearts and willing hands, with no advantages save those which they carved out for themselves from adverse circumstances. The fine old stock is fast passing away, and while yet their memory remains it may not be amiss to consider the causes which operated to bring them to a city which contained few, if any, Celtic traditions.

"These men first became noticeable in Lancaster's citizenship at the time of the building of the old 'State Road' from Philadelphia to Columbia, which was begun in 1831. All along the line of this pioneer railroad Irishmen held important construction contracts for grading and bridge building. When the time came for them to enjoy the fruits of their toil it was but natural that they should be attracted to this goodly city as permanent residents. Rev. Bernard Keenan, the kindly old pastor of St. Mary's Church, who rounded out fifty years of spiritual service in Lancaster, and whose death twenty years ago was mourned as a public loss, was also an important factor in drawing hither these Irish pioneers. His missionary labor at that time extended as far east as Downingtown, and we may

eel assured that he was not blind to the advantages, spiritual and temporal, which would accrue to his needy flock by the accession of these intrepid railroad builders.

"And when they set foot on Lancaster soil they attested the permanence of their stay by **at** once becoming large purchasers of farm properties lying in or near the city limits. It is a noteworthy fact, remembered by many yet living, that Lancaster was at one time nearly encircled by farms owned by these pioneer Irishmen and their descendants. This will be evident when mention is made of the following group of farm owners : Richard McGrann, Michael Malone, Hugh Fitzpatrick, Patrick Kelly, Bernard Flynn, Patrick Brady, Bernard McGrann, John Kelly, John Dougherty, Patrick McEvoy, Phares Cassidy, Andrew Reilly, John McGrann, John R. McGovern, Michael Kelly and Michael Barry.

"The ownership of land has always been the laudable ambition of the best Irish immigrants, The impossibility of possession in fee simple of their native acres induced these Lancaster Irishmen to look with special favor upon the possessions of the fair lands that surrounded Lancaster city. They formed an important and substantial element in the citizenship of the county, and their influence was felt in all that concerned the moral and material interests of the home of their adoption."

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