

Galway

from

Atlas and cyclopedia of Ireland.

The general history.

(1905)

NAME.

The river flowing by the city of Galway (now the Corrib River) was anciently called Gailleamh (pron. Galliv) ; this gave name to the city, and the city to the county. Gailleamh probably means “ rocky river,” from gall, a rock.

SIZE AND POPULATION.

Greatest length, from the bend of the Shannon near Eyrecourt in the east, to Aughrus Point in the west, 94 miles; greatest breadth from the boundary south of Gort, to the boundary near Ballymoe in the north, 53 miles; area 2,452 square miles. Population 242,005.

SURFACE.

That part west of Lough Corrib, about one-third of the whole county, is nearly all mountains, lakes, and moorland. The southern border, including a good part of the baronies of Loughrea and Leitrim, is also mountainous ; and west of this, in the baronies of Kiltartan and Dunkellin, there is much rugged rocky surface, a continuation to the north of the Burren Hills in Clare. All the east of the county, namely, the whole of that part east of Lough Corrib, is level, occasionally interrupted with low hill-ridges ; containing a deal of beautiful fertile land, and also much dreary bog and morass.

MOUNTAINS AND HILLS.

The Twelve Pins in the barony of Ballynahinch form the finest mountain range in Galway, and one of the finest in Ireland, a succession of conical peaks overtopping numerous splendid valleys and lovely lakes. The highest summits are Benbaun (2,395), and Bencorr (2,336). East of the Twelve Pins is the Joyces' Country, a region of bare limestone mountains and deep ravines. The Partry Mountains run for some distance on the boundary between Galway and Mayo, east of Killary Harbor : of which Maumtrasna (2,207) and Devil's brother (2,131) — this latter towering over the head of Killary Harbor — belong to both counties. In the south the Slieve Aughty range stretches in a curve from northwest to southeast, for about 13 miles ; chief summits, Cashlaundrumlahan (1,207) and Scalp (1,074).

COAST LINE.

The coast from Killary Harbor, all the way round to Cashla Bay, is an interminable complication of bays, inlets, creeks, islands, peninsulas, and headlands ; from Cashla Bay to Galway is a stretch of shore almost straight and unbroken ; east of this, several small inlets indent the land from the head of Galway Bay. But though the Galway coast has a great deal of rock margin, it presents very little lofty or bold cliff scenery.

HEADLANDS.

Beginning at the northwest : Rinvyle Point stands on the north of the entrance of Ballynakill Harbor ; next is Aughrus Point, the most western point of all the mainland of Galway ; south of this is Slyne Head, from which the coast turns eastward. Mace Head is at the south of the entrance of Bertraghboy Bay ; next is Golam Head, formed by a little island.

ISLANDS.

The coast of the barony of Ballynahinch is skirted with innumerable islands and sea rocks. On the south are the Aran Islands, sheltering Galway Bay on the west, consisting of three chief islands, Inishmore on the west, Inishmaan in the middle, and Inisheer on the east ; and the little group of the Brannock Islands, at the western extremity of Inishmore.

North of Inishmore is Gorumna, which is 4½ miles long; near which on the west is Lettermullan, and on the north Lettermore, 3½ miles long. West of this is the little St. Macdara's Island, held in great veneration in honor of the old patron St. Macdara, and containing the ruins of his primitive church : near it is Croaghnaakeela. Omey Island lies at the south side of Aughrus Point ; and immediately west of the Point is the far more interesting High Island, or Ardoilen, which contains the ruins of a primitive monastery founded by St. Fechin in the 7th century. At the head of Galway Bay is Tawin Island.

The island in Lough Corrib belonging to Galway are : Inchagoill, which contains the headstone of Lugnat, St. Patrick's nephew, the oldest inscribed Christian monument in Ireland Inishmacatreer : Ardillaun ; and near the end of the long western arm of the lake, Castlekirk. a mere rock, almost, covered with the ruins of a castle, namely CastleVirk, or the Hen's Castle.

Iniscaltra or Holy Island, in Lough Dorg, belongs to this county. St. Camin founded a monastery on it in the 7th century, which became one of Ireland's great ecclesiastical centers ; and the island has now a most interesting group of ruins, namely, a round tower, several churches, some as old as the time of St. Camin, and one that was erected, or re-edified, by the great king Brian Boru.

BAYS AND HARBORS.

Galway Bay lies between Galway and Clare, off which to the east are Oranmore Bay and Anghinish Bay. West of Galway Bay, opposite Aran, are Cashla Bay, Greatman's Bay, and Kilkieran Bay. Next in the west is the beautiful bay of Bertraghboy, 6 miles deep. Ballyconneely Bay lies south of the peninsula of Slyne Head ; and north of it, Mannin Bay. Near this is Ardbear Bay, at the head of which is Clifden ; Ballynakill Harbor lies south of Rinvyle Point. The long winding inlet of Killary Harbor (which separates Galway from Mayo), and the smaller Salrock Harbor near it, are both celebrated for their splendid mountain scenery.

RIVERS.

The Shannon, with Lough Corrib, bounds this county on the east and southeast for about 40 miles. The Suck (for which see Roscommon) joins the Shannon near Shannon bridge. The Bunowen, called in the higher part of its course the Clonbrock River, flows southeast by Ahascragh into the Suck, near Ballinasloe ; higher up, the Suck is joined by the Shiven River.

The Corrib River, flowing by Galway town, pours the superfluous waters of Lough Corrib and Lough Mask into Galway Bay, running a short course of 5 miles from Lough Corrib to the sea. On the east side, the Clare, or Claregalway River, a considerable stream coming southward from Mayo, the Cregg River, and the Black River (between Galway and Mayo) flow into Lough Corrib ; and into the same lake on the west side run the Owenriff and the Bealanabrack, both noted for beautiful scenery.

In the western part of the county the Dawros River runs into Ballinakill Harbor, and the Owenglin by Clifden into Ardbear Bay.

LAKES.

The great lake feature of Galway is Lough Corrib, the largest lake in Ireland except Lough Neagh, and far finer than Lough Neagh in the scenery of its shores. Lough Mask and Lough Derg both lie on, and form part of, the boundary.

That part of the county west of Lough Corrib is studded with innumerable lakes. Lough Inagh, Derryclare Lake, Lough Garroman, Ballynahinch Lake, and Kylemore Lake, all lie at the base of the Twelve Pins, and are all celebrated for their beautiful scenery. Lough Shindilla. Lough Ardderry, Lough Anillaun, and Lough Bofin, are on the road from Galway to Clifden. In the south of the county. Lough Cooter lies near Gort, and Loughrea beside the town of Loughrea.

TOWNS.

Galway (15,471), the assize town, on the river Corrib. Two miles above Galway, on an expansion of the Corrib, is Menlough (427) ; and south of Galway, at the head of Kinvarra Bay, is Kinvarra (498). On the eastern border are Portumna (1,252), on Lough Derg, with castle and abbey ruins ; Eyrecourt (668) ; and Ballinasloe (4,772, of whom 947 are in Roscommon), on the Suck, noted for its great horse, sheep, and cattle fairs. Inland in this eastern part of the county are the following : Gort (1,719), in the southwest corner; northeast of this is Loughrea (3,159), a prosperous town in the midst of a fertile district ; further north, on the road from Dublin to Galway, is the ancient town of Athenry (1,030), with its fine castle and abbey ruins ; still more ancient is Tuam (3,567), toward the northern border, now a well-to-do, prosperous town, which dates its origin from a monastery founded there in the 6th century by St. Jarlath. North of Tuam is Dunmore (608); and to the west, near the boundary of Mayo, is Headford (779).

In the western division of the county, the only towns of consequence are Oughterard (834), in a lovely situation on the Owenriff ; and Clifden (1,287), the capital of all this western district, quite a modern town, built at the head of Ardbear Bay.

ANCIENT DIVISIONS AND DESIGNATIONS.

There were several districts in Connaught called Conmacne, one of which, Conmacne-mara, is now called Connemara. All that part of Galway west of Lough Corrib and Lough Mask was anciently called Iar Connaught, or West Connaught ; but the name is now usually applied to the barony of Moycullen. The old territory of Hy Many, the country of the O'Kellys, extended from the Shannon to Galway Bay : the eastern part of it, now occupied by the barony of Longford, was the O'Madden's country, called Sil Anmcada ; and the southwestern part, now occupied by the baronies of Kiltartan and Dunkellin, was called Aidne or Hy Fiachrach

Aidne. A part of the barony of Ross lying between Killary Harbor and the western arm of Lough Corrib, is called the Joyces' country : the Joyces, a family of Welsh extraction, settled there in the thirteenth century ; and to this day the inhabitants are almost all Joyces.

LYNCH'S CASTLE.

The city of Galway at one time carried on a large commerce with Spain, an intercourse that has shown its effects to the present in the appearance and character of the people, and the buildings and streets of the town. Among the buildings the only perfectly preserved example of Spanish architecture is Lynch's Castle, a large, stately edifice, at the corner of Shop and Abbeygate Streets. Its decorations, ornamental mouldings and picturesque cornices denote its Spanish character, which less than a century ago was noticeable in most of the chief buildings of the city. The Lynchs were one of the thirteen so-called Tribes of Galway, all of whom were of Anglo-Norman descent ; their prominence may be measured by the fact that during a period of 169 years, 84 members of the family were mayors of the city. Lynch's Castle was the home of the family for several generations. The tragic story of James Lynch, Warden of Galway, who hanged his son for murder, 1493, is famous in history and romance.

WEST BRIDGE AND FATHER DALY'S CHAPEL.

Of the three bridges connecting the old and the new portions of the city of Galway, on each side of the river that drains Lough Corrib, that known as the West Bridge is the most striking, and is among the finest bridge structures in Ireland. It is of modern construction, and occupies the site of another built in 1442, by Edmond Lynch, at his own expense. Over-looking this bridge is the handsome edifice called Father Daly's chapel, which is an object of interest from the priest whose name it bears. Father Peter Daly devoted his talent and energies to advance the material as well as the spiritual interests of the people of Galway, notably in 1850, on the occasion of the government inquiry to ascertain the best harbor in Ireland for a trans-Atlantic packet station.

FISH MARKET.

A singular community called the Claddagh, numbering about 5,000 souls, forms a suburb of the city of Galway. They are all fishermen, possess their peculiar customs, intermarry only with each other, and have always kept aloof from the surrounding inhabitants whom they regard as " transplanted." They have a primitive code of laws by which they are governed, and never appeal to any outside courts of justice. They annually elect a " king" or head man on St. John's eve, and he exercises almost absolute power in some respects. The Claddaghites are peaceable, industrious and sober, and notably hospitable to strangers. Though differing from the other inhabitants of Galway, in dress, habits, customs, and their Irish dialect, there is no marked difference in their personal appearance.

EYRE SQUARE.

Eyre Square, a principal part of the city of Galway...contains many of the chief buildings, residences, hotels, railway station, and statues of eminent citizens. Galway Bay is acknowledged to be the finest in Ireland, and being 500 miles nearer to America than Liverpool, would, were it not for British commercial selfishness, be a flourishing center of trade and commerce. From the earliest times, the town was a famous trading port with Spain, and its merchants were celebrated for their commercial enterprise and wealth. The older parts of the

city retain to the present day melancholy vestiges of its departed prosperity and greatness. These, says a modern writer, exhibit generally tokens of the commercial habits of the people rather than of their military character. The people of Galway, however, experienced their full share of the wars and misfortunes of the invader, and always maintained their high character for courage and patriotism.

CLIFDEN CASCADE.

Clifden, in Connemara, is a modern town, there being only one house on its site as late as 1815. It is situated in the midst of some of the wildest and most imposing scenery in Ireland, and excites the admiration of every traveler. It is more Swiss-like than any other portion of the island. It owes its origin to Mr. John D'Arcy, a landed proprietor, who recognized the advantage of having a sea-port town in this remote locality, but though the town flourished its founder did not, for through his expenditures and liberality he lost his property under the Encumbered Estates Act. The Owenglen River rushes past the town, forming a picturesque and attractive waterfall, breaking through the rocks in a series of fascinating cascades. The castle, a modern castellated mansion, is a short distance to the east of the town and is surrounded by beautiful and magnificent scenery. In loveliness and grandeur the locality surpasses many of the most celebrated continental scenes.

KYLEMORE CASTLE.

This picturesque and beautiful castellated residence was erected by the late Mr. Mitchell Henry some years ago and is one of the most handsome and romantically situated mansions in Ireland. The Pass of Kylemore — meaning great wood — has been always considered equal in grandeur to the famed gap of Dunloe in Kerry, or Barnesmore in Donegal, while the Lough of Kylemore is scarce unsurpassed by the Lakes of Killarney. The pass is 3 miles long, and the lough 2, and ½ mile wide. Doaghruie to the north of the pass rises to a height of more than 1,700 feet, its huge, rugged crags jutting out of the dense wood that gives the pass its name. On the north side of this height and on the border of the lough stands the magnificent castle...its turrets half-hidden behind the dense foliage.

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