

Gorbals, Glasgow

I believe from the evidence we have, that the O'Haras migrating from County Mayo in the late 1840's early 1850's would have landed in the Gorbals, then Glasgow's main port on the Clyde.

A very early reference to Gorbals is contained in a charter dated 1285 referring to a wooden bridge opposite Stockwell Street, then known as Fishergate. The original small settlement in the lands of Gorbals was named "Bridgend", derived from its proximity to the bridge. The bridge fell into decay around 1340 and was pulled down a decade later to be replaced by the first stone bridge.

The 'lands of St Ninian's Croft' in Gorbals had a leper hospital dedicated to the saint of that name dating back to 1350.

At the division of the jointly owned lands of Gorbals in 1790, the Gorbals village became the property of Glasgow Town Council and the immediately surrounding areas became the property of Hutcheson's Hospital. The new suburb of Hutchesontown was developed to the east of the old village, being laid out from 1794 with regular streets "with good houses from two to four storeys in height".

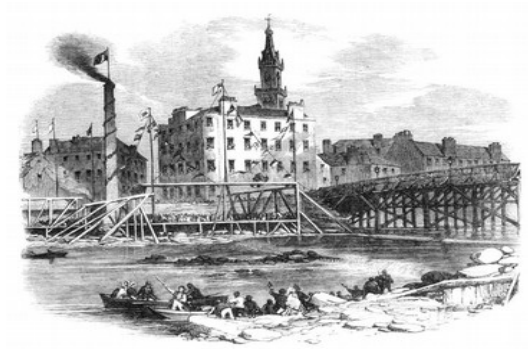
The land to the west of the old village was sold by the Hutcheson trustees to Mr James Laurie and developed as Laurieston from 1802.

The land acquired by the Trades' House of Glasgow, to the west of Bridge Street / Eglinton Street, was developed as the manufacturing district of Tradeston.

Gorbals was acquired by the Elphinstone family in 1571, and the district was made into a "Burgh of Barony and Regality" in 1607. The dynasty was led by various George Elphinstones until the final George, who built the Baronial Hall on Main Street. On his death, the lands passed into the hands of Lord Belhaven. In 1648 the lands were acquired by Glasgow Town Council, the Trades House and Hutcheson's Hospital.

In 1661 an Act of Parliament was passed, annexing the lands of Gorbals and town of Bridgend to the city for ecclesiastical purposes. In the antiquated language of the age, the measure was described as the "disolution frae the shire of Clidsdaile, regalitie of Glasgow and parochin of Govean"

The old "Burgh of Barony and Regality" was raised to the status of a Police Burgh in 1808, before its inevitable disappearance.



The Victorian built Stockwell Bridge in construction and as it is now.

The following images give a good idea of what it would have been like at the time of the O'Hara arrival.



Main Street 1868



Bedford Street showing the Rob Roy Bar and Gorbals Public Washing House 1890



Ballater Street 1910

Among the many famous people with Gorbals roots was Allan Pinkerton, who emigrated to the United States and later founded Pinkerton National Detective Agency. The agency's well known motto was "We never sleep"



Home of Allan Pinkerton

Of the 5 children of Michael O'Hara and Mary Cairns that we know came to Scotland, John and Margaret stayed in the Gorbals / Glasgow area whilst Peter Patrick and Michael moved on to Carlisle.

In the 1851 Census John was living at 118 Main Street Gorbals with his wife Rose Ann Dunn. John was at some point a Fish Dealer but times grew harder and after Rose Ann died in 1862 it would appear that he moved out of the above address and stayed in Wishaw for 11 years before moving back to Govan and taking a number of lodging houses as per the Poor Relief applications in 1876 and 1877

Poor relief notes

Volume C01/26/56 Entry 55 19 April 1876
John O'Harra residing at Mrs Wilsons, Cockhill.
Born Parish of Kilmore,
Ballynaw, Co Mayo or Sligo.

Widower, age 76, RC, hawker, disabled by age.

Parents Michael O'Harra, weaver and Mary Cairns, both dead.

Children

Michael, labourer, married, 3 children, living Police Office Lane, Glasgow
John, hawker, widower, 4 children, living Police Office Lane, Glasgow
Patrick, labourer, married, no children, living Paisley Toll.

Residences - present house, 3 months

Prior residences

Mrs McFadyens, Kirk Road, 3 yrs

Mrs Meechans, Thomson Square, 3 mths

13 Lynchs Main Street, 2 mths

Mrs McKenna, Marshall Street, 6 mths

Wishaw in lodgings for 11 years ago since his wife died.

19 April 1876. Relieved 1/-

20 April 1876. Relieved 2/-

24 April 1876. Relieved 2/6

1 May 1876. Relieved 2/6

John died of bronchitis in March 1877