



1948  
G. Ivan Morris



1955  
Tom Morris



1968  
Tom & Bernie Morris



2005  
Ivan Morris (Retired)



2006  
Brien Morris (Retired)



2006  
Anne Morris (Retired)



Current Owner  
Christopher Flynn  
M.D.

### The Flynn Family

There is no good time to start running a business, but if you can survive a recession it makes you stronger for when the business climate picks up again and McKerns Printing has come through a few recessions in over 200 years. McKerns has given good employment to generations of families in Limerick. The Morris family ran McKerns for over 65 years, they ran a very tight ship and it is to their credit that McKerns is in good shape today. It was a smooth and friendly take over from Brien and Anne Morris, with the co-operation of their highly skilled staff, suppliers and very loyal customers.

Christopher Flynn's family also have a long history in McKerns, in the late 1800's his grand father Christopher (by coincidence was also born on Christmas Day, hence called Christopher after him) worked in McKerns, his sister Florence, his son's Danny, Albert and daughter Florence all worked in McKerns. In fact his mother Rita worked in McKerns in the early 50's and that was how she met his dad Albert. Who later went to work for the Limerick Leader until he retired and Chris had the pleasure of working with him in the Leader. Christopher's brother Anthony also worked in McKerns along with his cousins Robin, Danny's sons Aidan and Eamon. Clearly with this family background, it is with great pride that Christopher Flynn now owns McKerns Printing.

### Notes

As early as 1811 and up to 1817, McKerns printed such books as "Account of Sieges from landing of King William", a 64-page booklet, "Limerick and its Sieges", "A History of Limerick" and "Holiday Haunts on the West Coast of Clare". All were fine achievements at the time.

In 1897, McKerns was claiming in its advertisements to be the oldest printing company in Munster! Today, McKerns claims to be the oldest printing company in Ireland.

Around 1900 the community of Presbyterians that held their services and meetings in Glentworth Street, grew so large that they left Glentworth Street and moved to a brand new larger church in Henry Street, commonly known as the red brick 'sinking' church. For unknown reasons the move appears not to have been a success and the 'sinking' aspect may refer to the fact that soon after their move the Presbyterian community began to dwindle alarmingly. Eventually, they were forced to amalgamate with the Methodist Community that now worships at Christ Church in O'Connell Street.

### Today

While McKerns Printing can be proud of its longevity, it has survived over 200 years in business simply because it has always moved with the times and served its customers fairly and well.

Today McKerns have a Quality Management System with ISO 9001-2008 Certification and continues to embrace the latest technological changes by investing in digital printing presses. When added to a full design service and the versatile and conventional lithographic process with modern finishing equipment. McKerns highly skilled staff are fully-equipped to serve its customers in the Mid-West region with "professional printing at no extra cost" for a long time to come.

### Conclusion

Exhaustive efforts to be accurate with the above facts have been made with the much appreciated assistance of many friends and customers notably Denis Leonard of Civic Trust and Trevor Morrow who helped to audit the company's books as a trainee accountant back in the 1940s. Any further information is always welcome. For the moment this brief history carries the note E&OE.

The chronological list of families who owned and operated McKerns Printing over the years is:

- 1806 - 1902(circa) - McKerns
- 1902 (circa) - 1946 - Eakins
- 1948 - 2010 - Morris
- 2010 - present - Flynn



Est. 1806

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Est. 1806



# CELEBRATING

# OVER 200 YEARS IN PRINTING

*McKerns Printing Supplying the Mid West Region with professional printing, at no extra cost, for over two hundred years!!*

## Over Two Hundred Years Old! But thoroughly modern! McKerns Printing (Est'd 1806) – A Brief History

For McKerns Printing in Limerick to have reached its double century is a considerable achievement, especially when one considers the many technological changes that have occurred in the industrial world in general and the printing trade in particular since 1806.

Two of the more remarkable facts about the McKerns story is that since it was founded two hundred years ago, it has been owner-operated by only four separate Limerick families and as each family passed the business onto the next generation, the respect for the founders was maintained by retaining the McKerns name.

A lifetime of 200 years is not easy to condense but with the much-appreciated help of former employees and company associates, we have managed to piece together what we think is a fair and reasonable outline of the firm's long history without going into too much of the minute detail. If you care to read on, we are sure that you will find some aspects of the McKerns story interesting and entertaining.

### The Founding Fathers

George McKern was born in 1783. He was a son of Hector McKern, an esteemed woollen merchant, who lived at Roselawn House overlooking the River Shannon on the present day University Campus, at Plassey.

Hector was made a Freeman of Limerick in 1784. The extended McKern family were pillars of the Church of Ireland community in Limerick. The burial ground attached to St. Mary's Cathedral contains many McKerns graves.

Late in 1805, George secured a position as a type compositor with the "Limerick General Advertiser" newspaper. Very quickly he realised that 19th century Limerick was on the cusp of an industrial boom and saw an opening for a modern commercial printing house.

With the help of his father, George started his new printing company at 16, Rutland Street (a corner building next to Francis Street). He worked wisely and diligently and soon gained a laudable reputation for fair-dealing, skilled workmanship and innovation. His younger brother William, who died in 1821, at an early age, leaving four young children, joined George in the business soon after the initial start-up was achieved. In 1821, George, just like his father was made a Freeman of Limerick.

George and his first wife (name unknown who died 1830), lived at Catherine Place, and they had eight children. John (the eldest child) joined his father in his thriving printing business as soon as he was old enough to do so. John's brothers, George Jnr, Hector Jnr. and William Jnr. all emigrated to Buenos Aires, Argentina in 1849. Another brother, Thomas, went to London. The three daughters were Mary (Kidd), Margaret (Byfield) and Sophia (Kidd).

A few years later, date unknown, George remarried (Isabella Walter) and they had three children Isabella, Ellen and Walter. George McKern died in 1857 and bequeathed the company to his son John.

John was also highly successful. When he died in 1883, he left a thriving business to his wife Mary Jane (nee Greaves), who continued on with the running of the business herself until her demise in 1887. John and Mary Jane had three children, Charles, John Henry and Elizabeth. Charles emigrated to Australia and was forgiven 'his debts' in his mother's will. Charles had settled in Sydney where his descendants continue to live to this day.

Charles's grandson, Leo McKern, was the well-known actor, who played the role of the eccentric and colourful barrister in the popular television series "Rumpole of the Bailey". While making the Oscar-winning film "Ryan's Daughter" in Co. Kerry in 1970, Leo visited the old family firm in Glentworth Street and surprised the then owners by how aware he was of his family connections with Limerick.

Mary Jane's second son, John Henry was also mentioned in his mother's will. He received a trust fund and 'forgiveness for the shame' he had brought on his family when as a teenager under the influence alcohol had ridden a horse up the aisle of St. Mary's Cathedral shouting blasphemies at the preaching minister! There was a condition in the will that John should remain in Argentina which hardly sounds like 'forgiveness' in modern terms but that's the story!

Elizabeth, known as Bessie, was bequeathed by her mother, both the family home at Orlando, South Circular Road and the printing business at 113 George's Street on condition that she employ a manager and keep the business in a profitable state. Bessie at this time was married to Rev. William J. Meredith.

Another point of interest is that for most of his life, John Snr. was a noted musician and resident organist in St. Mary's Cathedral. He was held in such high esteem that soon after his death in 1886, his friends and family erected a stained glass window in his memory at the Cathedral. The window is prominently positioned immediately above the side door entrance. With this information in mind it is, perhaps, easier to understand why John Henry's indiscretion was treated so severely.

There are several McKerns families still known to live in Buenos Aires. The original emigrants are credited with helping to introduce rugby union football to South America and were instrumental in the formation of the Argentinean Rugby Football Union.

### Locations

The first premises used by McKerns Printing was located on the corner of Rutland Street and Francis Street, opposite the former Town Hall, before it was demolished for the construction of the present day Sarsfield House. On expiry of a short lease, the business moved across the road to the premises beside the old Town Hall and Watch House Lane.

In 1812 the business moved to 23 George Street (O'Connell St.).

In 1815 a short step to No. 25 George's Street was taken.

From 1830 the company traded at 106 George's Street.

Then in 1867 the business moved again to 113 George Street, where Leavy's Shoe Shop is now located (next to Shannon Street).

### The Eakins Era

Andrew Eakins bought McKerns around 1902 and managed both the retail and print manufacture operations until his death in 1945. For a short period afterwards his daughter Lil ran the business, until she decided to sell to G. Ivan Morris in 1946. During the Eakins era the profile of the company grew steadily. A variety of ancillary, and retail activities were successfully undertaken. The Eakins family resided over the shop at "113". Andrew's wife continued to live there until her demise in 1955.

To create space, the book making and printing production machinery was moved by Andrew Eakins, in 1902, to an additional premises, the vacant former Presbyterian Church building at Glentworth Street. This has been McKerns location ever since. Andrew Eakins invested heavily in the business and at one point had additional investors on board, namely Hugh Lilburn and James Hassett.

Lil and her sister Ethel (who worked all her life with Guinness, in the Limerick depot) were single women who left Limerick in 1955 following the death of their mother. Thereby ending the Andrew Eakins connection with Limerick.

Lil and Ethel went to live with their married sister Ina, in Bangor, Co. Down. A fourth sister Olive (O'Neill), married, had two children and lived in Dublin. There were no other Eakins siblings.

### The Morris Connection

In the early 1940's, G. Ivan Morris, a self-educated Limerick man, the eldest child in a family who had lost its bread-winning father at a young age was working in Dublin as a qualified chartered accountant. G. Ivan was also an ambitious and prolific author who once he had decided to leave accountancy and go into business for himself purchased the Fodhla Printing Company in Dublin, to print his own books as well as undertaking mainly Government printing contracts. His wish to be of financial assistance to his widowed mother eventually brought him back to Limerick and he purchased McKerns Printing, in his native city in 1946.

In a move parallel to the company's founders, G. Ivan invited his brother Tom, 14 years his junior, to manage the business for him while he returned to Dublin. The 26-years old Tom's business expertise stemmed from ascending through the office ranks to the responsible position of chief clerk at Shaw's Bacon factory in Mulgrave Street.

In 1950 G. Ivan purchased the title of the then defunct Parnellite Limerick Weekly Echo newspaper. Until the newspaper was sold in 1971, it is fair to say, the Limerick Weekly Echo received the brothers first priority and was a serious rival to the Limerick Leader.

In 1969, G. Ivan agreed to sell the two Limerick businesses to Tom and his eldest son, (also Ivan, who had entered McKerns in 1964), at a very generous price to be paid, let's say over a 'patient' period.

While Tom continued to devote most of his energy to editing and running the newspaper, Ivan Jnr., embarked on the task of rekindling the development of the commercial printing activities of McKerns by embracing previously unimagined technological change. McKerns Printing was one of the first to embrace the challenges of the offset/lithographic age in provincial Ireland.

As Limerick, and the businesses continued to grow, Tom invited another son, Brien, to join the company in 1977. Brien attended to personnel, production and technical matters while Ivan strove to attract new customers.

Tom retired from the business in 1985 and died in 1994. His wife Bernie, who also worked in the business for a lengthy period, died in 2005.

In 2005, after 41 years with the company, Ivan sold his controlling interest to Brien and retired to follow the example of his uncle and pursue a late-vocation career as a golf and travel writer.

In order to meet the continual and never-ending demands of emerging technology, Brien took the company into the new digital age and ran the business with the valued assistance of his wife Anne, Christopher Flynn (technical/production director), and their loyal staff.

### The Flynn Family

Christopher Flynn current owner of McKerns, started in McKerns as Production Manager in 1997, got promoted to Works Manager, Production Director when Ivan retired in 2005. He has recently taken over McKerns from Brien who retired in March 2010. Chris is now Managing Director, with his wife Bernadette who is Financial Director run McKerns, with the help of their highly skilled and loyal staff.



113 O'Connell Street in the early 1960's



Glentworth Street in the 1950's



Stained Glass Window in St. Mary's Cathedral

