

THE CROMWELLIAN AND JACOBITE WARS



Assault upon the 'Green Fort', Sligo, by the Forces of James II in the year 1689.
(From a contemporaneous etching by A. Schoonebeck)

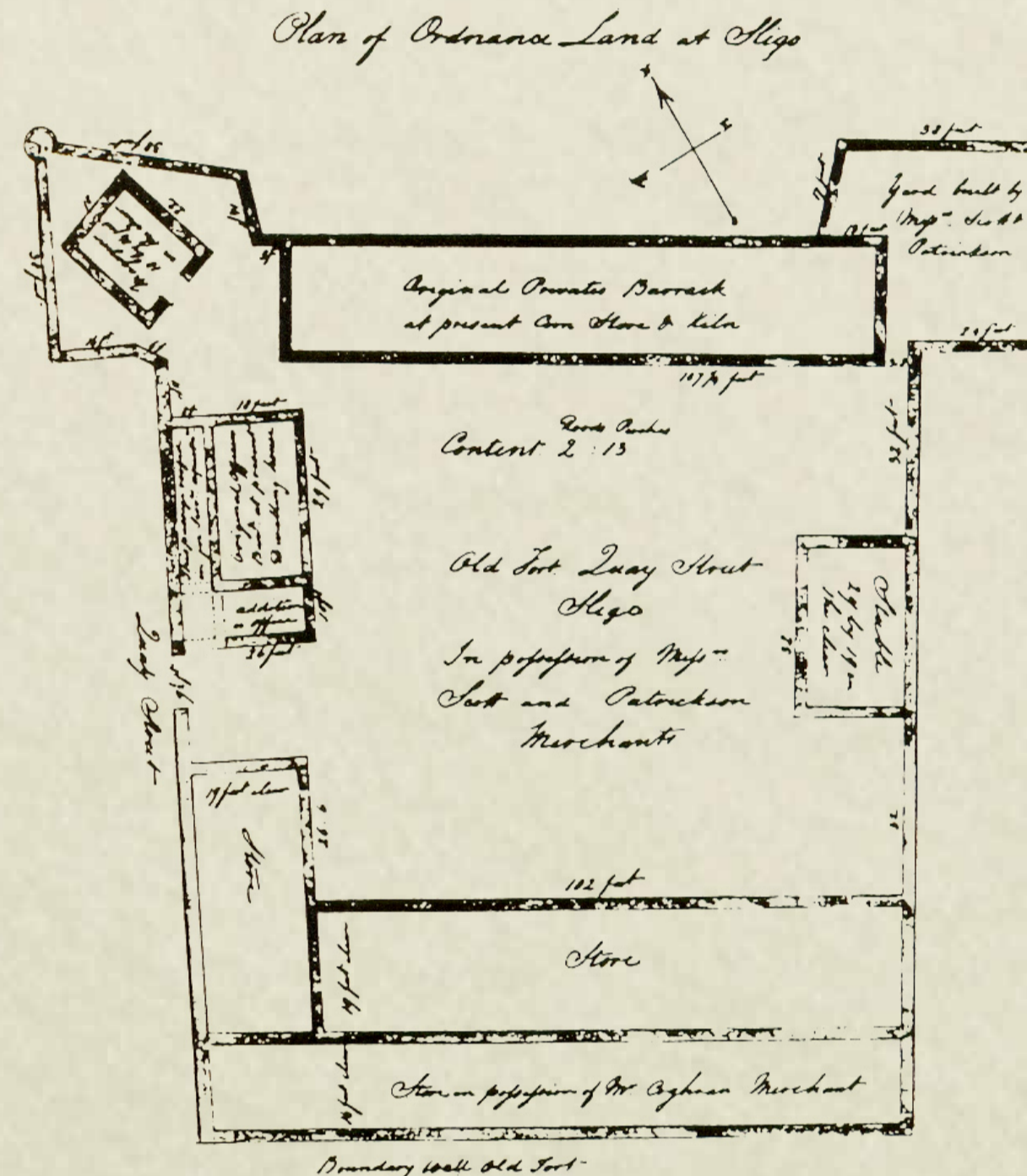
Cromwellian War

At the outbreak of the Cromwellian War in 1641 Colonel Teige O'Connor held Sligo town and governed with only a small unit of troops in the interests of the Confederation of Kilkenny, which was a Catholic alliance between the Gaelic Irish and the Old English Catholics.

Sir Charles Coote, President of Connaught supported the English Parliament and Cromwell. In 1645 he sent a large force of English and Scottish Protestants under the command of Robert Stewart to Sligo, which after a spirited defence fell to the attackers.

The Catholic Archbishop of Tuam assembled a force to retake Sligo town. They managed to get their forces into Sligo town however, fearing the approach of Parliamentary forces they abandoned their attack and fled in disarray, they were pursued and attacked by Charles Coote; the Archbishop was killed in the engagement. The Parliamentary forces later left the town as their troops were needed elsewhere, the Catholic forces retook the town and although threatened by Charles Coote during his advance on Limerick; Sligo was held by the Catholic forces until the end of the war.

The Cromwellian Plantation of Ireland followed and although Cromwell had declared that the Catholic lords can go 'To Hell or to Connaught', Sligo, being of vital strategic significance was granted to the officers of his army and became an important area for Cromwellian settlement resulting in a significant Protestant population.



PLAN OF THE ORDNANCE LAND AT SLIGO.
Traced from an original drawing of 1825.
This area was formerly known as the 'Stone Fort', or the Old Barrack Fort'. The Town Hall now stands on the site

Jacobite/Williamite War

In 1685 James II, a Catholic succeeded to the throne and he began to support the Catholics of Ireland. The Protestant Parliament of England offered the crown to Prince William of Orange and James fearing that he could not maintain his power fled the country. The Jacobite Rebellion in Ireland from 1688-91 was part of James II's struggle to regain the British throne. The Catholics of Ireland supported James while the Protestants supported William. Sligo was the most Protestant part of Connaught and it occupied an important communications point being the gateway to the north. Sligo was not a walled town like Derry but it had two important forts. One was the Stone Fort at the site of the present Town Hall, the other was known as the Green Fort or the 'Sodd Fort'. Sligo town changed hands numerous times during the conflict. On one occasion the Williamite forces, consisting of 400 French Protestant Huguenots based in the Stone Fort held off the attacks of the Jacobite commander Patrick Sarsfield who was based in the Green Fort. By the end of three days of siege and spirited defensive actions, the French troops were exhausted and surrendered.

For 15 months Teige O'Regan held Sligo against the Williamite troops. He believed the defence of Sligo centred on the Green Fort as it dominated the Stone Fort and the entire town. After the defeat of the Jacobite forces at the battle of the Boyne William left Ireland leaving General Ginkel in charge. In the summer of 1691 Michelburne, the Williamite commander was tasked with the mission of subduing Sligo. He began a close blockade of the town and asked for the surrender of the town. Sarsfield allowed his troops to capitulate. Negotiations took place over the next few weeks and in the end O'Regan agreed to terms of surrender. The Sligo garrison was given permission to march out with full honours bearing their weapons and colours.



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