

The Moores and Moore Hall



The fascinating story of

MOORE HALL

Image: Moore Hall today (castlebar.ie)


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The Moores and Moore Hall

Moore Hall is a magnificent ruin, hidden away on the shores of Lough Carra. It was designed by the architect John Roberts, between 1792 and 1800. It was built for George Moore, a wine merchant, who had made a vast fortune in Spain.

George was a Catholic who had gone to Spain to escape the Penal Laws in Ireland at that time. However, George wanted to retire to Mayo and he sold his Spanish properties, and bought over 12,000 acres of land on the shores of Lough Carra.

He took an oath of allegiance to the Crown, so that he could have tenants on his land to generate an income. George Moore had a certain design in mind when building his mansion. He decided on a location which according to locals was unlucky, because of events which involved the killing of a Druid around 400AD.

Moore Hall was designed in a neo-Classical style. The interior had 35 rooms over three storeys. No expense was spared in the building of it. It featured a fine oak-panelled dining room, an elegant drawing room decorated to neo-classical taste with delicate Italian plasterwork. There was a summer drawing room with large windows overlooking Lough Carra. The house also had a nursery and private chapel, wine cellars, servant's quarters, and a tunnel going from the kitchen to the gardens and farmyard. The Moores had invested in a large library full of rare books, including a manuscript copy of the Annals of the Four Masters.

In their time in Moore Hall the Moore family went on to produce some eminent members who would go on to shape history.



Moore Hall as it originally looked (buildingsofireland.ie)

The house provided employment for many locals, and the family were well liked in the area. However ill-luck seemed to follow them as, after the house was built, George Moore the founder died in 1779 at the age of 70 having suffered a stroke. His son John was to die a year later.

Many will associate Moore Hall with **John Moore**, the first President of Connacht. He had joined General Humbert's troops who came ashore in Killala in 1798, a rebellion later crushed by the British.

John was sentenced to death, which was later reduced to deportation. While awaiting deportation he died due to having been maltreated. His burial place in Waterford was only discovered in 1960, and he was reinterred in the Mall in Castlebar with a state military funeral.

Right: An aerial view of Moore Hall (suzannewinterly.com)

Other Moore family members were **George Henry Moore** who had used his winnings from horses to feed his tenants with corn and supply cows during the Famine.

Maurice George Moore was a statesman and humanitarian, who went on to become the first envoy to South Africa. **George Augustus Moore** was a well-known novelist and writer who mixed with Yeats, Wilde, and Lady Gregory.

On the evening of the 1st February 1923, during the Irish Civil War, George Augustus was in the house when armed men burst in and demanded the keys. He later wrote of staying up all night hoping to save some of the library. At 4 o'clock he heard four loud explosions and by five the whole house was in flames. The intense heat of the fire destroyed Moore Hall and left it in the roofless ruin we see today. The Moores received £7000 compensation from the Free State government, and later went on to sell a large part of the estate to the Irish Land Commission.

Moore Hall is now a ruin sitting in the middle of a conifer forest planted after the house was abandoned. The area is now a protected habitat for a rare species of bat, the Lesser Horseshoe Bat. For visitors there are lovely walks in the woods, or by the shores of Lough Carra. The classical beauty of the ruin can still be enjoyed from the clearing that surrounds the building.

Sources

www.tuatha.ie/moore-hall
www.enjoy-irish-culture.com/big-houses-moore-hall
www.ouririshheritage.org/

