

LISBURN HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Thomas Prichard Rossiter 1818 – 1871
Copy in Irish Linen Centre & Lisburn Museum

ALEXANDER TURNEY STEWART

Alexander was born on a farm in the Magherall area of Lisburn in 1801 shortly after the death of his father. On remarrying, his mother and her new husband emigrated to New York, leaving him to be brought up by his maternal grandmother. After receiving a good education and a spell in the grocery trade, he followed his mother to New York where he set up business in a small rented building on lower Broadway in 1823. A very astute entrepreneur, he invested heavily in real estate, building up a large portfolio of hotels, theatres and residential property. His own residence, the Marble Palace, was said to be the most luxurious home on the continent. In 1862 his Great Iron Store was the largest department store in the world with 18 acres of sales space and some 2,000 staff. By now the 3rd richest man in the U.S., he purchased 7,000 acres on Long Island and set about building a Garden City. He died in 1869 but his wife – they were childless – continued with his plans, and today his Long Island Garden City is a thriving metropolis with a population of some thirty thousand. As the Cathedral, which he planned as his final resting-place was not completed at the time of his death, he was buried in St Marks-on-the-Bowery. However he was not allowed to rest in peace. Grave robbers stole his body, and it was rumoured demanded a large ransom. Eventually his body was recovered and was finally laid to rest in the crypt of his Cathedral.