

# Irish Migration Studies in Latin America

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Paddy McCarthy (1871-1963).  
Professional footballer and boxer in Argentina  
(*El Gráfico, Buenos Aires, 27 June 1952*)

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**How British Sports Became Argentine Passions**  
**Paddy McCarthy, Irish Footballer and Boxer in Argentina**

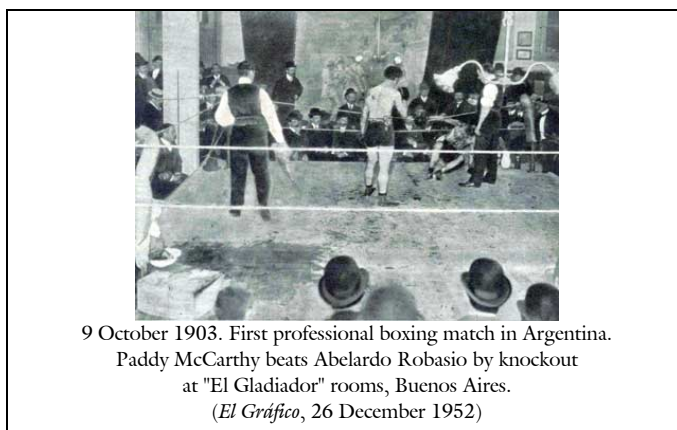
By Edmundo Murray



Paddy McCarthy in 1920.  
 (*El Gráfico*, 28 March 1952)

In the second half of the 19th century, football and boxing in Argentina were activities limited to the English-speaking circle. Players were young British and Irish merchants, professionals, landlords and their sons. The local elite followed when the Argentine pupils of British schools and Anglophile bourgeois began learning the rules of fair-play. However, in a few decades the exclusive circle playing British sports in the country was overwhelmed by the massive presence of immigrants and their children. Cashel-born Paddy McCarthy (1871-1963) went to Argentina in 1900 and worked as a teacher, coach, referee, professional player and boxer in public and private schools. He was appointed to the sports municipal committee in Buenos Aires and helped to teach football to immigrant children as their most important entertainment.

During a football game at the Buenos Aires Cricket Club on 20 June 1867, a little Argentine boy asked his father who "those funny people" chasing a ball around a field were. *Ingleses*, his father replied. *Ingleses locos*. In 1893 in Lobos, a rural area densely populated by Irish sheep-farmers and their families, a *gaucho* was hit by a ball during a game at the Lobos Athletic Club, and he began shouting *estos ingleses están locos*. Up to the turn of the century football, boxing, and other sports were typical of *ingleses* (i.e., English-speaking settlers) and their friends. Thirty years later almost everybody in Argentina, regardless the origin and the social class, was playing or learning to play the sports of *ingleses locos*.



9 October 1903. First professional boxing match in Argentina.  
 Paddy McCarthy beats Abelardo Robasio by knockout  
 at "El Gladiador" rooms, Buenos Aires.  
 (*El Gráfico*, 26 December 1952)

One of the persons responsible for making football and boxing popular was Paddy McCarthy. Paddy was born on 17 March 1871 in Cashel, Co. Tipperary, where he studied with the Christian Brothers and obtained sound marks in swimming and other sports. He arrived in Buenos Aires in 1900 to teach English and athletic activities in the Escuela Superior de Comercio, headed by Co. Clare-born James FitzSimons (1849-1944).

McCarthy coached professional and amateur boxers at the Boxing Club of Buenos Aires (Florida 525). The activity was still unlawful, but he managed to train and hire several professionals. Other trainers were the US American Donnally, Alfred Culpin of Belfast, Willie Williams, and Dublin-born McNamara. Sparring amateur boxers were recruited among sailors on call in Buenos Aires, who were invited to boxing festivals by Rev. Henry Brady, assistant chaplain in St. John the Baptist Anglican church, and responsible of the "Missions to Seamen" in the port of Buenos Aires.

The first professional boxing match in Argentina was fought on 9 October 1903 by Paddy McCarthy and the Italian Abelardo Robassio. The "match-to-finish" – with no preset number of rounds – was organized by "El Gladiador" magazine in their rooms. Carlos Delcasse was the referee and the chief of police Francisco Beazley acted as time-keeper (though boxing was still banned!). Paddy won the match by knockout in the fourth round, reaching the gate money a record \$500. McCarthy abandoned boxing attending to family reasons, but he was appointed member of the sports municipal committee in Buenos Aires together with James Fitzsimons' son Juan and others.

McCarthy began teaching football techniques at Lobos Athletic Club. Lobos was the first football club in the rural area of Buenos Aires, and was founded on 3 July 1892 by a group of Irish Argentines, including Tomás McKeon, Tomás P. Moore, Tomás Garrahan, Edmundo and Patricio Kirk, Santiago F. MacKeon, Eduardo Burbridge, Eugenio Seery, Juan Geoghegan, José Garrahan, Lorenzo Owens, Felix Dolan, Hugo Lawlor, Eduardo Walsh, William Weir, José Joyce, Eduardo Slamon, and Eduardo Burbridge (*jun.*). Some players joined those of Lanús Athletic Club to form the team of the English High School. Ex-pupils of this school later formed the famous Alumni, winner of nine league championships from 1900 to 1911. Then McCarthy joined Club Atlético Estudiantes as coach and player. He also played in Central Athletic Club, a small institution in the port of Buenos Aires. In 1904 he was hired by Club Atlético Gimnasia y Esgrima of Buenos Aires to train its players. He also taught football to children at Boca Juniors, and was a referee of the Argentine Association Football League during eighteen years.

Football and boxing were some of the athletic activities of the upper-classes of Buenos Aires and other Argentine cities. They were restricted to men and perceived as manly activities. Although in the beginning these activities were limited to the English-speaking community, by the time McCarthy and other professional players and trainers were active in Argentina, members of the local elite were actively involved. Paddy McCarthy not only taught to hundreds of Argentines the techniques and rules of these and other athletic activities, but also helped to popularize them among humbler children in the first decades of the twentieth century through his job in the Dirección de Deportes of Buenos Aires municipality. Since the late 1920s, football and other athletic activities became part of the regular curriculum in public primary and secondary schools in the city.

Paddy McCarthy retired in 1943 and died on 10 August 1963 at the British Hospital of Buenos Aires, being buried in Chacarita cemetery.

Edmundo Murray

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The Irish Argentine Historical Society is now  
the Society for Irish Latin American Studies

There is a growing number of studies about the Irish in Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean, Venezuela, Brazil, and other Latin American countries and territories. There is also interest in the Atlantic relations of the region with North America, Africa and Europe, and in present-day Latin American emigrants to Ireland.

During the Annual General Meeting held in Maynooth on 24 June 2005, Members adopted the decision to change the Society's name. The need to adapt our foundational documents and scope of study was evaluated in order to reflect the broader interests of our Members.



Annual General Meeting, 24 July 2005  
(left to right) David Barnwell, Nancy Connolly, Ruth Illingworth, Claire Healy, Graham Davis and Sharon Newman.



National University of Ireland at Maynooth

Consequently, a new name was selected: **Society for Irish Latin American Studies**, and the following sections of the Constitution were changed accordingly.

CONSTITUTION  
of the  
**SOCIETY FOR IRISH LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES**

1 July 2003

Amended on 24 June 2005

Article 1. Name, Authority, and Conditions of Operation

The Society shall be called **THE SOCIETY FOR IRISH LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES**.

Article 2. Aims

(a) The Society's Scope of Study is the migration of people from Ireland to Latin America, their settlement, lives, and achievements, as well as those of their descendants, together with contemporary presence of Ireland and people of Irish ancestry in the life and culture of Latin America, and the presence of Latin Americans in Ireland.

(b) The Society is organised exclusively for research, scientific and educational purposes within the Scope of Study, more specifically to collect, preserve and make public of the scattered, decaying and hidden treasure of Irish Latin American historical material that lies about in old family archives, and half forgotten official records, as well as in old pamphlets and periodicals which have not found their way into the public libraries, but still exist in out-of-the-way places.

Article 11. Definitions

[...]

"Scope of Study" – The migration of people from Ireland to Latin America, their settlement, lives, and achievements, as well as those of their descendants, together with contemporary presence of Ireland and people of Irish ancestry in the life and culture of Latin America, and the presence of Latin Americans in Ireland.