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Irish Arts' Centre
553 West 51st Street
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USA

Dear Sir/Madam

We are delighted to hear the news of the Fighting Irishmen's ('Celtic Warrior') Exhibition in New York. Over the last two years our local amateur Boxing Club in Loughrea, Co. Galway have been painstakingly recording the history of the club over the last hundred years.

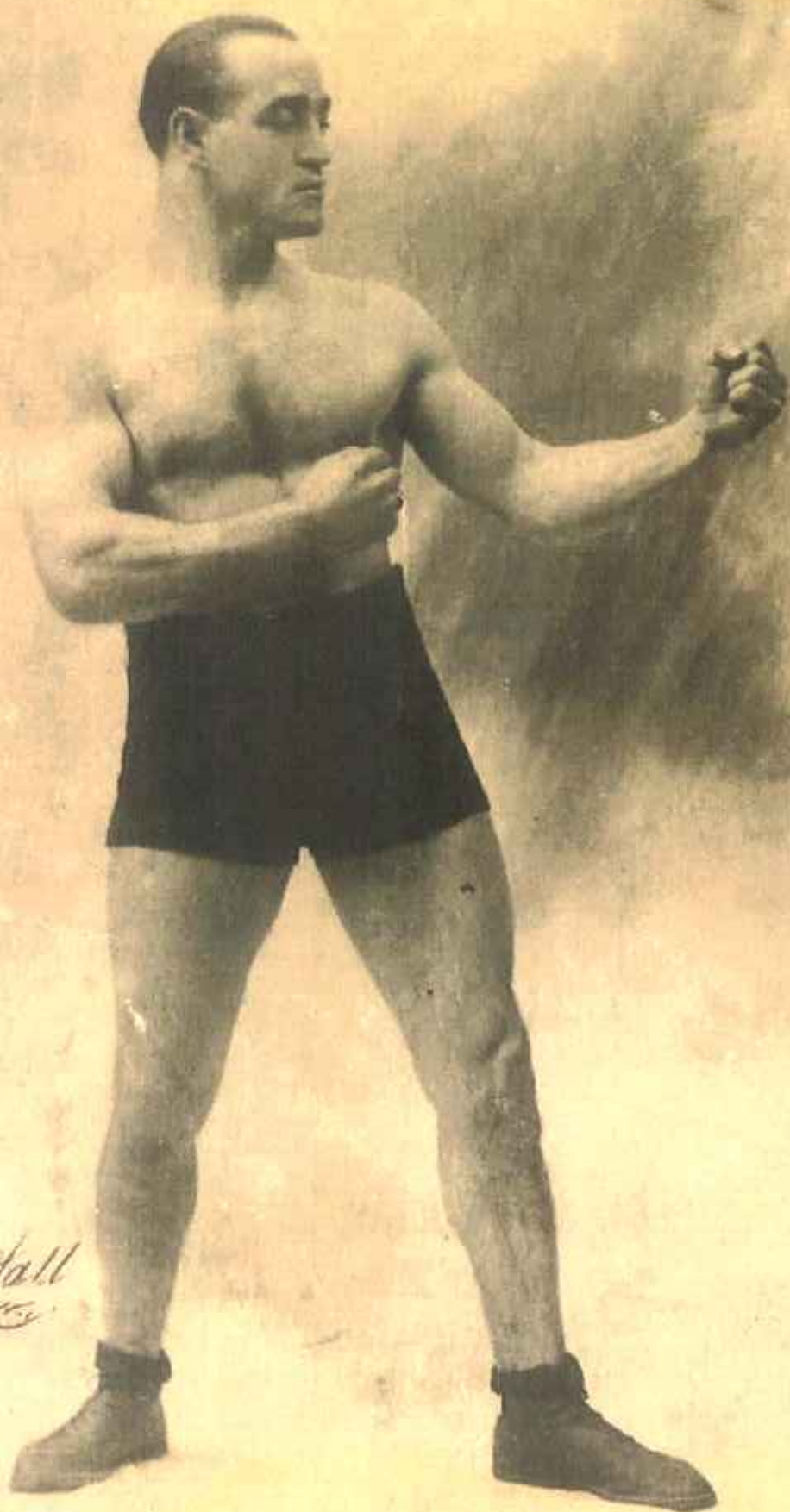
We have been researching the life and times of one of those great fighters who boxed in the USA (New York) at the turn of the century. His name was Mike Farrell born in Loughrea and his endeavours as a professional fighter in the USA gave encouragement to the locals in Loughrea to set up a club.

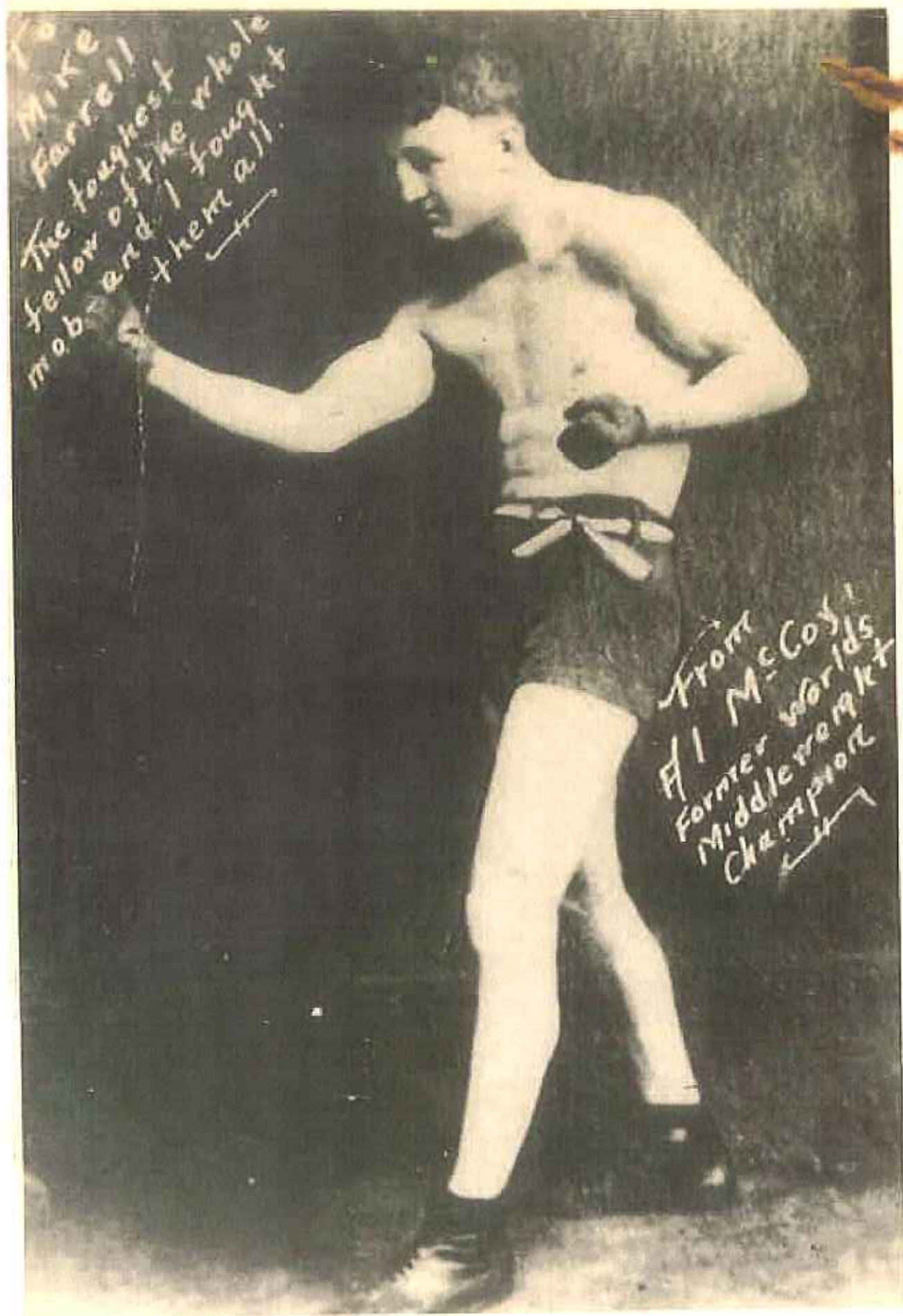
I enclose some articles on Mike written in the 1960s, with details of the columnists, which may be of use to you for the exhibition. Also enclosed is a brief summary, entitled "Finding Farrell", of the club's search for the story of our local legend. There is also a photograph of Mike in classic fighter's pose and a photograph of Al McCoy, world middleweight champion, inscribed "To Mike Farrell: the toughest fellow of the whole mob and I fought them all." We would appreciate if you would list Mike Farrell's name among the great fighting men. We are available to furnish any further information that we have to hand.

Yours faithfully

Eamonn McNally
Secretary

Hall
55





Irish Independent, Friday, March 24, 1961

“...Nine, Ten, Out! – By M. V. Caprani

Mike Farrell – Unhurt By Tunney’s Punches

The stories of Mike Farrell’s feats in the American ring are too numerous to mention here. One of them was subject of a magazine article by no less a personage than Gene Tunney. Tunney tells of how he once witnessed Mike outbox and outpunch a huge performing grizzly bear in a Broadway Theatre.

Despite the fact that the beast stood head and shoulders over Mike and was considerably heavier, it was no match for the tough Galwayman.

Mike gave a good exhibition of his talents and roughed the bear up quite a bit during the process. But his deeply ingrained kindness towards animals prohibited him from using his skill to hurt the bear. Having manoeuvred the beast towards the edge of the stage, and with its back to the spectators, Mike caused a stampede in the orchestra pit, where they fully expected the bear to be sent toppling. It would have been a dramatic, if cruel, ending to the performance, but Mike just gave the bear a farewell tap on the head and then left the stage to a chorus of cheers.

THE YOUNG TUNNEY

Mike fought Tunney in 1916 when he was approaching the end of his career. Even then, with the youthful Tunney only starting out on the climb to the top, he showed that he possessed the qualities of determination and coolness which were the keynotes of his character. Mike had more than ten years of hard campaigning behind him but apart from the wealth of experience, Gene possessed all the advantages.

He had the height, the reach, the weight (although not as yet a full-grown light-heavy), the speed, his youth and two eyes. The last-mentioned was his greatest asset over an ageing veteran, blind in one eye and with the sight of the other greatly impaired.

It was by no means of the most outstanding of Mike’s three hundred and eight-six fights, and I mention it here mainly because of the calibre of his opponent. Tunney displayed many of the tactics which were to capture for him the coveted Heavyweight Crown from the immortal Jack Dempsey ten years later.

He used his reach to great advantage and his superior boxing from long range was extremely effective against a stocky, aggressive battler, who came into him anxious to connect with heavy punching.

For ten rounds the Fighting Marine did the old bicycle act and back-pedalled out of danger. In the closing stages he was only an indistinct blur to the game, but half-blind Farrell, yet the Irishman never let up in his attacking for an instant. He kept after the elusive Tunney and often got in close enough to do considerable damage, but the defect in his visibility robbed many of his punches of their accuracy.

NEVER REALLY HURT

It was a "no-decision" bout but Mike frankly admits that Tunney had the edge on him. I have asked Mike what he thought of Tunney as a heavy puncher and this is his comment:

"He never hurt me once. He hit me often and hard and at the end of the contest, I certainly knew I had been in a fight – but Tunney never really hurt me."

I doubt if Tunney had at that early age, mastered the art of powerful hitting which was later to earn him victories over Battling Levinsky, Harry Greb, Georges Carpentier, Tommy Gibbons and our own Bartley Madden. Certainly, he had not developed that unorthodox short right hand punch delivered from the hip and aimed for the jaw, which Dempsey later said was the hardest punch he had ever received.

The year previous to his fight with Tunney, Mike had fought another man who was destined to win a world crown – his fellow countryman Mike McTigue. Again, his battle followed very much the same lines as the Tunney bout, as McTigue was cast in the same boxing mould as the Fighting Marine. He was primarily a boxer and as such he also had the edge on Farrell.

"DAMNED CLEVER"

McTigue boxed Farrell off in the same manner as Tunney. He maintained the fight at long range as much as possible and just about shaded a close verdict after ten tough rounds. Once again it must be remembered that Farrell's vision was hampered, and had he been able to gauge range and distance accurately, there is no telling what damage he might have caused to Tunney and McTigue. Of the latter, Farrell says: "McTigue was damned clever."

He also adds that though McTigue was never a particularly terrific or dangerous puncher, he was a hard hitter and a fast one. Again, his summing up of his encounter with Mike McTigue is similar to that of Tunney's. Farrell claims that the Clareman never really hurt, but he gives credit to McTigue's fast and clever hitting when he says that at

the end of the contest he knew he had been through a tough fight, and he certainly bore the marks of it.

FRIENDS AND RIVAL

Mike Farrell only fought one reigning world champion and that was the famous Al McCoy , a Jew, whose real name was Rudolph. Outside the ring Farrell and McCoy were close friends but once inside the territory of the roped square they were two of the toughest specimens of ring slaughtermen. They were two of the most rugged representatives of the world's toughest fighting races – the Hebrew and the Gael. In all, they fought four times and each of their encounters was action packed.

Both were born fighters in the old do-or-die tradition. Their four battles were almost identical in fierceness and the ruthless quality of their hitting, and it would be impossible to do justice to them in a brief description here.

During their fist battle – a no-decision affair in 1913 before McCoy won the title – Mike had one of his ribs broken from one of Al's ripping hooks. This occurred early in the fight, but it did not force Farrell to capitulate. On his return to his corner he told his second not to bother with the damaged rib but to patch up his good ribs on the other side of his body.

FELL FOR RUSE

McCoy fell for Mike's ruse, which had the effect of drawing the Jew's fire from the damaged area, and Al concentrated his hitting on Mike's good side. The Irishman stopped his southpaw opponent in his tracks with a vicious left hook which broke the thumb of the hand that dealt it. That was in the fifth round.

Mike carried on for another five rounds, with one eye, a broken thumb, and a broken rib against one of the hardest hitters in the game. He soaked up punishment like a sponge and still refused to take a backward step. Nor was it all one-sided.

Their three subsequent mills equalled the first in fierceness. Each was a clash between two ruthless punchers in whose vocabulary the word "quit" was unknown. Farrell was never able to knock the champion's crown from his head nor was McCoy ever able to floor his challenger, while their keen rivalry in the ring was only surpassed by their respect and friendship for each other outside the ropes.

"TOUGHEST FELLOW"

I think, perhaps, Mike Farrell's career in the American ring can best be summed up by an inscription which appears on an autographed photo of Al McCoy's which is in my possession. It reads as follows:

"To Mike Farrell, the toughest fellow of the whole mob – and I fought them all.

Al McCoy

Former World's Middleweight Champion."

Well, McCoy is one person who can speak with authority and when we consider the names of some of the middleweights knocking around in those days – Billy Papke, Frank Klaus, Jack Dillon, George Chip (whom McCoy knocked out in one round to win the title) and Mike O'Dowd (to whom McCoy lost the championship in 1917) – we get some idea of just how tough Mike Farrell was.

To-day at seventy-three, the "toughest fellow of the whole mob" is still hale and hearty. On his face, which carries the marks of his former ring days, there are many lines of merriment and his mouth breaks into an easy grin at the least provocation. His handshake is firm, friendly, warm and very strong, and one cannot help but think that these same hands, when once laced in leather, were lethal weapons which could punch holes in some of the world's toughest scrappers.

For a man who battled with the best, Mike is modest about his achievements. He will talk for hours about the fight game which he loves, of the tough period when he boxed, of the famous fighters and ring personalities whom he knew. He has a wonderful memory and a legion of interesting and amusing stories about the men he fought and knew. But he always tells them in the same frank and modest tone.

I have asked Mike what he thinks of the fight game to-day and he comments that it is not as tough as it was in his days.

MV Caprani, or Vinny, is a Dublin printer and columnist. An aficionado of the fight game in his own country, he took an avid interest in the exploits of Irish boxers in America, and did a series on some of the most colourful Celts, who graced the boxing arenas of the States. He was a close friend of Mike Farrell, who adopted him as a confidant after they met in the 1950s.

Irish Independent, Friday, March 23, 1961

“...Nine, Ten, Out! – By M. V. Caprani

Irish Middleweight Fought The Best

Living in Dublin to-day is a great fighter who is a link with that great period of ring history – the first quarter of the twentieth century. He is Mike Farrell, a tough little battler from Loughrea, Co. Galway, and one of the greatest Irishmen ever to grace the American fistic scene.

In his hey-day when Farrell was fighting two, three and even four times a week, he traded punches with the best, including three world champions – Al McCoy, Mike McTigue and Gene Tunney. The newspapers record the number of Mike's contest as over 380 and this figure includes amateur, professional and private fights.

It speaks volumes for Mike's all-round ring ability that he was never once counted out. His success at the game is all the more surprising when we consider that for the last six years of his career he took on all comers, although severely handicapped by the loss of sight in one eye.

Furthermore, the majority of Farrell's opponents were men who were not only fully-fledged middleweights, but many of them were bordering on the light-heavy poundage. Mike himself never weighed more than 10st. 11 lbs. during his career and as his height was only 5ft. 4½ ins., it is easy to imagine the disadvantages which were his when fighting men heavier and taller.

CURRAGH APPRENTICE

Mike's earliest introduction to the sporting world was as an apprentice jockey at Parkinson's stable, the Curragh, but many factors contributed to his quitting this branch of sport. Increasing weight, wanderlust, and a passionate love of the fight game forced Mike to pull up his stakes, leave the race world behind and hit out for the U.S.A.

But he carried one souvenir of those early days as a horseman with him: it was an injury received from a stallion which later resulted in the loss of one eye, and eventually in total blindness.

Farrell's family tried to dissuade him from going abroad, but the young man was adamant. In 1907, while still in his early twenties, he arrived in New York and was met by a chap from Ballinasloe named Micky Harris, who was making his presence felt

amongst the lightweights in and around New York about that time. The very next day Harris brought Mike down to the New Westside Club and there introduced him to a group of Irish fighters named Jerry Casey, Tommy Lavery, Billy Lecch and Tommy Hamilton.

A warm friendship quickly developed between these battlers and the newcomer, and for the majority of his subsequent bouts Mike usually had one or more of these experienced ringsters in his corner. As he says himself: "With such men in your corner, constantly urging you on and encouraging you, you just had to fight."

Mike's close friends in the U.S.A include Bartley Madden (Co. Galway Heavyweight), Pat McKenna (Irish Middleweight, and Champion of the Pacific Coast). Pat McKenna was a bouncer in a Chinatown nightclub and was later stabbed or shot? Mike was also friendly with Marty McCue (Middleweight from Co. Cavan), who died after collapsing from a blow received in a sparring session with Roscommon Heavyweight Jim Coffey, circa 1919.

Soon there was little they could teach the lad, and he began making a name for himself in the amateur ranks. When ran up a string of 50 wins, most of them inside the distance, and all the time he was perfecting his skill and punching power. Farrell now felt ready to make his professional debut by invading the monied ranks, and invade them he did. He scored a few impressive wins, and then the matchmakers at the New Westside Club engaged him to meet the ring-wise coloured man, the late "Cyclone" Billy Warren.

"CYCLONE" MEETS TORNADO

This was Mike's biggest test to date; Warren was a cagey battler, who had come up the hard way, having served his ring apprenticeship in what was then known as the "battle-royals." These events were an unusual feature of the American ring at that time. The idea of the "battle-royal" was to put four coloured fighters in the ring at the same time blindfolded and at the sound of the bell all four would leave their corners and start whaling into each other. This went on round after round, until only one remained on his feet, and he collected the purse.

It was a rugged practice, and a fighter required speed, skill and toughness if he hoped to emerge as victor. Warren was a consistent winner of these battles, and as he was accustomed to fighting three opponents blindfolded. He was not particularly concerned about meeting a single scrapper who would be conceding height, as well as weight. That's where he was wrong.

"YOU AM MAD"

He might as well have been confronted by three men for the fury of Mike's opening attack took him completely by surprise. The Irishman came in, letting punches

go from all angles. It was fortunate for the Negro that he was fast on his feet. He moved back poking out his long left while Mike kept stalking him. Farrell never let up in his attack for an instant and in the third round he succeeded in ripping home with some hooks to the body which slowed Warren down considerably. By the end of the session he had "Cyclone" worried.

He knew this was the signal to speed up his attack. At the sound of the bell for the fourth round he shot from his stool and went right, for his opponent. Quickly he manoeuvred Warren on to the ropes. He kept up a powerful barrage of short-range hits and battered through the negro's guard. Then he belted a sickening right hook into the black-man's midriff and as Warren slumped forward Mike crashed a right cross to the jaw. That right did the trick. It put the big Negro through the ropes and he ended up sprawling in the front row.

Commenting on his defeat later, Warren said of Mike: "That man am mad." He never changed his opinion either. He later boxed with great success in Britain and Ireland and he was held in high regard by the Dublin fightgoers. Warren settled down in the Irish capital and Mike tells me that years later, after his return to Ireland, he frequently met Warren. Over a pint the two veterans would often discuss their various contests in the rough old days and Warren often reiterated his remark about Farrell's sanity. He would say "You am mad. Mike, you am mad."

NO DECISIONS

Although only a welter, Mike was soon engaging in battles with some of the finest middles in the Eastern American States. He had two meetings with "K.O." Sweeney, but the famous "K.O." expert was unable to drop the tough Irishman and both fights went the distance. The honours were about even and neither gained a verdict as the "no decision" rule was then in force.

As many of Mike's bouts were "no decision" affairs it would be no harm to explain the idea behind them for the benefit of any reader who may not be acquainted with this unusual feature of the U.S. in the old days.

In an effort to ban gambling, and particularly crooked gambling, on the result of fights, many State boxing authorities prohibited a referee from rendering a decision at the close of a contest. While well-intentioned, this action did not always have the desired effect. Bets were still made and settled on the following morning's newspaper reporter's verdict.

This led to frequent bribing of fight reporters to favour a particular fighter and often to back-handers to boxers for taking a dive. The "no decision" law was in force during the first quarter of the present century and it eventually fell into disuse.

Another greater fighter who provided Mike with many a good pasting and the fans with many thrills was "Bull" Anderson. In their ten hectic battles Mike reckons he just about got the better of the "Beautiful Bull" in seven mills, while Anderson proved stronger in the remaining three.

Anyway, there was very little to choose between the pair. Whenever Farrell and Anderson were billed to fight, the promoter who was fortunate to have secured them was assured of a packed house and the fans were guaranteed first-rate fighting fare.

That Mike's punching power was held in great respect by the American fistic fraternity is obvious from the following incident during his fight with the famous Billy Glover of Boston. Glover, a professor of boxing who is credited with having taught the immortal Sam Langford many tricks of the trade, relied entirely on science in the ring.

For the first three rounds of their bout it was touch and go. Mike carried the fight to his man, always, trying to find an opening for one of his dynamite-laden punches. But Glover was fast, smart, and able to avoid the possibility of having to mix-it.

"NOT TO-NIGHT, MIKE"

In the fourth session, Farrell managed to get in close, only to be tied up skilfully by Glover. While in the clinch, the Boston boxer said:

"You'd like to fight, Mike, wouldn't you?"

"Yes," answered Mike. "Let's fight."

"Not to-night, Mike," said Billy.

Not even a ring maestro like Glover was anxious to attempt out-punching the fighting Irishman. Glover kept out of trouble for the remainder of the contest, and in so doing earned a very close decision. The onlookers had been treated to the spectacle of a first-rate fighting man engaged in a skilfully and closely-contested battle with a first-class boxer.

Mike ran up an impressive string of successes scoring as many as a half dozen wins in a week in 1910. His biggest pay packet came when he fought Jules Leunard for Middleweight Championship of Canada in Toronto and earned a draw. Relating to his experience there, Mike said as the doctor examined him before the fight with a shining torch in his sightless eye he (the Doctor) exclaimed "Ah zee eye". Mike retorted "I didn't come here for a beauty contest, let's get on with the fight". In the return contest the same year Mike won the title by a K.O in the thirteenth round. Mike's manager was Charlie Dessrick.

Death of The "Fighting Irishman"

Mike Farrell was born on 23 August 1884 and died 11 July 1966

Unknown to the Sporting World which once lauded him as "The Fighting Irishman." Mr. Michael (Mike) Farrell, hero of 386 ring battles, passed away quietly in St. Joseph's Home for the Blind, Drumcondra, Dublin, 'unwept, unhonoured and unsung'.

Mike, who was in his eighties, was son of the late Mr. Johnny Farrell, of Loughrea, who died some years ago at the age of 107. His mother was Mary Connelly from Cartron.

The Farrells were carters who transported goods from the canal depot in Ballinasloe to Loughrea by horse and cart. They lived where Mike was born at the Westbridge, Loughrea, where Raftery's shop now stands.

From his boyhood days Mike Farrell was a 'gay spark'. He stood only 5 ft. 5 ins. And soon made a name for himself as a teak-tough 'scrapper' and a top-class 'Flapper' race jockey scoring numerous successes for his father and many other owners in the locality who kept 'racers' around the turn of the century.

Mike's great love of horses finally led to his apprenticeship as a professional jockey and he was showing great promise in the saddle when a kick from a horse damaged the sight of one eye so severely, that it put an end to his career as a rider.

Despite this handicap, Mike retained an active interest in boxing and shortly after emigrating to the U.S. so impressed the ring-wise that he 'turned pro.'

In U.S.A

Fighting as a lightweight he ran up an impressive string of successes scoring as many as a half dozen wins in a week and all his biggest pay packet when he fought for the middleweight championship of Canada in Toronto, and earned a draw.

Relating his experience there, Mike said as the doctor examined him before the fight and on shining torch on his sightless eye exclaimed: "Ah zee eye," Mike retorted: "I didn't come here for a beauty contest. Let's get on with the fight." In a return contest Mike won the title to become champion of Canada.

Eventually the sight in Mike's 'bad eye' began to deteriorate rapidly and finally failed completely. Mike was now concealing the fact that he was almost totally blind in one eye.

As increasing weight forced him up through welterweight to middleweight, Mike had to 'tangle' with men towering over him by as much as 7 inches in height,

but the tremendously powerful little Loughrea man was always content to take ten digs on his way in to land one of his celebrated K.O. punches on an opponent.

As one of the busiest boxers in the business he quickly ran out of opponents in the prelims and so graduated to championship class opposition.

There, too, his growing reputation as “The Fighting Irishman” earned him such respect that he was compelled to take on many heavyweights in order to ‘get work.’

Of his most famous opponents, the best known were Mike McTigue, whom his father, Johnny Farrell, and several more of ‘the Fancy’ from Loughrea afterwards saw take on Battling Siki in Dublin; Al McCoy, Soldier Barfield, ‘Bull’ Anderson, Italian Joe Gans and Ted ‘Kid’ Lewis.

The greatest fight of his career was against Al McCoy, then in world championship class, and the gruelling contest was judged a draw. Against such polished practitioners in the roped square, Mike Farrell took such punishment that he finally went totally blind in one eye.

Keeping that fact to himself, Mike battled on and finally won plenty. And so Mike Farrell had come to the end of the ‘glory road.’ Always a free spender and a ‘soft touch’ he returned to Ireland and spent the last 40 years of his life in the Blind Institute in O’Connell street and later in Clonturk House, Drumcondra, whose cemetery in his last resting place.

Despite his cruel handicap, Mike never lost his spirit or gay ‘outlook.’ Possessed of a very nice speaking and singing voice, he took elocution lessons from Ria Mooney of The Abbey Theatre and his perfectly delivered recitations of some of the great and humorous narrative poems, became features of many of Dublin’s private and club functions. Down through the years the stocky little man with the still powerfully – muscular figure, was known to thousands as he tapped his way along with cane throughout the city he came to know like the back of his hand.

Mike never lost his love of boxing and although blind it was he who first took Dubliner, “Spike” McCormack in ‘hand.’ “Spike” went on to win the Irish Professional title and is father of the Young McCormack, now in line for a shot at the British title.

Well might we adopt the jingler’s lines as his epitaph:

Made of the same unyielding stuff,
Ready at all times for the scratch and rough,
Delighting in the Ring at contest tough,
And proudly scorning to say enough.

-J.B.D.

Published in The Connacht Tribune on the death of Mike Farrell.

JBD, JB Donohue was a well known Columnist with the Connacht Tribune for whom he wrote Europe’s longest running sports column under the deadline “JBD”.

FINDING FARRELL: KEYSTONE TO A TOWN'S LOVE AFFAIR.

The Boxing Club in Loughrea, County Galway has a long and colourful history. Over the past fifty years, the club has been affiliated to the Irish Amateur Boxing Association. It has achieved the highest possible honours, with title holders in every division from County to National championships. Ciaran FitzGerald, the renowned Triple Crown winning captain, had his first taste of front rank sporting achievement when he captured two national titles with the club in the mid-60s.

Yet a number of basic questions perplexed club officials Eamon McNally and Stephen Shields, when they began to consider the club's history, as it approached its Golden Jubilee in 2006. What was the club's genesis? What inspired its foundation? How had a quiet country town developed such a tradition, even an obsession, with the sport, which by popular account stretched back almost a century. For while the sport only gets fitful mention in the annals of early twentieth century sport in rural County Galway, there is a strong thread in Loughrea lore of boxing through successive generations.

Of the club itself, records, up to date photographs and newspaper articles had been safely hoarded: they helped to preserve the day to day workings of the club and honours achieved, and there were still sufficient

people around to give an account of the club's early years, even its inaugural meeting in the Temperance Hall in 1956.

True to Loughrea's love affair with the ring, tales of earlier legends and heroes surfaced. There were stories of the nights "the sweet science" took over Joe Gilchreest's Hall back to the 1920s, adapted from its normal use as a cinema and theatre, at the ominously named "Mob Hill". Names were recalled such as George Trapp, an itinerant steamroller driver, and his legendary confrontation with local hero, Vincent Finlay, from which Finlay emerged triumphant to the prolonged celebration of the townspeople. Many other locals were mentioned in dispatches: Rouser, Dan Murray, Tommy Holland, and, maybe most revered of all, the bout between Loughrea lightweight, Fardy Whelan, and future Golden Gloves winner in the USA, Sean Hynes, which was declared a draw, but many, including renowned sports pundit of the Connacht Tribune, J B Donohue, felt was shaded by the Loughrea man.

No wonder that Martin Thornton, the "Connemara Crusher", chose Loughrea for a public outing before his much-hyped challenge to Bruce Woodcock, the British Heavyweight champion, in the early summer of 1944. The championship fight was for a £1,000 winner take all purse at Dublin's Theatre Royal in August of that year, and such was the national anticipation that there was even talk of the winner travelling to America for an elimination bout giving the chance to face the great Joe Louis for the blue riband of sport, the Heavyweight Championship of the World.

Martin had to make do with the contents of the hat, which was passed around after seven rounds of a fine exhibition against his cousin, Sean, in Loughrea. Unfortunately the Woodcock fight turned sour early on, and Thornton's seconds threw in the towel after three punishing rounds. Thus ended Ireland's, Galway's-and even Loughrea's-emergence onto the global stage of gloved combat.

Even after the club was formed outsiders of note made their mark. John Huston, the Oscar winning film director, attended tournaments, bringing with him a large entourage. He even presented prizes after some bouts to the young, star struck boxers. Yet through the highlights of the club itself and all the memories of the fading generations, it seemed to our investigators that the story of boxing in Loughrea had not yielded up its vital ingredient, the yeast that made the whole dough rise.

There was a figure, remembered in the town in the 1930s and 40s, blinded, and guiding himself with the characteristic white stick around the town, a curiosity on the streets, where he had been born but left a generation before. He proudly carried with him a tattered, faded photograph of himself as a young boxer in his prime with the words,"Mike Farrell....born Loughrea.... Middleweight Champion of Canada."

The clues were cryptic. "What could we find out about him?" wondered our two club detectives, "Whom had he fought? When?" He was related to Vincent Finlay, of the legendary Trapp fight fame. He was an obvious inspiration for an era of boxers, who had introduced the sport to the

town, a worthy adornment to the club crest. The time had come to reclaim his story. But how?

Inquiries through the normal channels proved fruitless. Some newspaper reports on fights in New York turned up, but nothing like the full story. An article by Gene Tunney, the World Heavyweight champion, recalled seeing Mike take on a grizzly bear as a prank in a fairground, (a confrontation which he incidentally won by use of his ringcraft). The Woodford Historical Research Group confirmed his date of birth as 1884 at the Westbridge, Loughrea, his parents' home. Further research yielded the information that he had died at Clontarf Institute for the Blind in Drumcondra, Dublin. Alas, over the coming months, little further light was cast on this fighter's career. The trail was cold. The "Find Farrell" project was petering out.

Then in May 2005, with one of those curious coincidences that might never recur in a hundred years, a retired Dublin writer and lifelong aficionado of the fight game was clearing out some old papers and newscuttings, before consigning the bulk to his green bin. Amongst them were some photos of Mike Farrell and the published accounts of Caprani's interviews with Farrell, while he was compiling a series of articles on famous Irish boxers, which subsequently appeared in *The Irish Independent* in 1961.

Caprani had sought Farrell out in the 1950s, and established such a strong friendship with him that they met up on almost a weekly basis, Caprani providing a link for the boxer to his old haunts around O'Connell and Parnell

Streets, after the Richmond Institute had moved from the city centre. They talked boxing. Farrell reminisced about his career in the USA. The younger man warmed to the ex-fighter's lack of vanity, his dignity. Mike, it turned out, had been involved in 386 bouts in a career that stretched from 1907 to 1918. He had traded thumps with four world title holders-Gibbons, McCoy, McTigue and Tunney-and had never been knocked out. Though only a natural (10st 7lb) welterweight, he had taken on taller and heavier opponents from the more senior, middle and light heavyweight divisions, and all of this while blind in one eye. He was probably the most important native-born Irish boxer of his era. Only McTigue, the World Light Heavyweight champion, who won his title in Dublin, could possibly overshadow him.

Loyalty to a friend, a desire to see him duly recognised made Caprani hesitate before tossing such memorabilia into a mere rubbish bin. Yet there had been no recognition of his friend in the intervening forty years. Where could his own research and memorabilia find a fruitful home? Who nowadays recalled such feats? On an impulse, he gathered all together and forwarded the lot to "The Librarian/ Local Historical Society, Loughrea", with a letter, which included the following:

"On the offchance that some local historian, or sports club, may not have details about the career of one Loughrea's great sporting heroes of the past, Mike Farrell, I thought I should send the enclosed to you in case they might be of interest...."

He was to be pleasantly surprised but not as much as the team at Loughrea Boxing Club. The “Find Farrell” project, so recently “out on its feet” had got its second wind, was up off its stool, bouncing out of the corner and skipping confidently into the centre of the ring.

Loughrea’s proud boxing tradition and the recorded feats of its greatest practitioner, the redoubtable Mike Farrell, were now on hand to celebrate the club’s golden jubilee. And Vincent Caprani! he became a Loughrea man by adoption and an honorary Doctor of the Pugilistic Arts conferred by Loughrea Boxing Club.

Loughrea Boxing Club Historical Research Team