



ARCHBISHOP THOMAS W. CROKE

In 1913 the GAA paid Frank B Dineen €3,500 for the sports field at Jones's Road and renamed it Croke Park in honour of their first patron. Croke was born in May 1823 near Kanturk in Co. Cork. Born to a Catholic father and Protestant mother, his mother's family disapproved of the marriage and when his father William died suddenly, he was taken in by his uncle, Fr Thomas Croke, a parish priest in Charleville. The young Thomas was educated in Paris and later Rome where he was ordained in 1847. He spent 20 years in Cloyne and was Archbishop of Auckland, New Zealand from 1870-1874, returning to Ireland as Archbishop of Cashel. Croke was one of the most influential figures in the Irish Catholic church in the latter half of the nineteenth century, a crucial phase in the church's history as it emerged in the post-Emancipation period as one of the most influential institutions in Irish society and further afield. He was an important figure in many of the key social and political movements of the post-Famine period, including the expansion of educational opportunities for Irish Catholics and the inter-linked campaigns for tenant right and home rule. He was supportive of the idea of a GAA from its outset and enthusiastically accepted the invitation to be among its first patrons. His support allowed the GAA to designate Sundays for matches, and he was an influential figure in the Association's turbulent early years, helping to heal divisions.



MAURICE DAVIN

Elected as the first President of the GAA in 1884, Davin was from Carrick-on-Suir in Co Tipperary and was born in 1842. A farmer with a successful river haulage business, he was known internationally for his athletic prowess. He competed in the first ever international athletics event, between Ireland and England, which was held at Lansdowne Road in 1876, and over his long career he set hammer throwing and shot putt records, as well as being an accomplished rower and boxer. Sharing Cusack's passion for the promotion of Irish athletic disciplines, Davin championed the promotion of Gaelic football, and he made an essential contribution with the drawing up of standardised official rules for hurling, football and GAA athletics events in 1885 which allowed new clubs to be formed and games to flourish. His international profile and natural leadership qualities made him a vital asset as the GAA sought to establish itself as being central to Irish life. Croke Park's Canal End was renamed the Davin Stand in his honour.



MICHAEL CUSACK

Born in Carron in Co Clare in 1847, Cusack was a passionate sports enthusiast. A schoolteacher who had several posts around Ireland, he later set-up the successful Cusack's Academy in Dublin which prepared students for civil service exams. The provision of sporting opportunities for the ordinary citizen and Irish control of Irish athletics were inspirations which later centred on the revival of hurling which Cusack had known in his youth and was determined to save from extinction. The formation of several hurling clubs across 1883 and early 1884, a forceful promotional campaign in the media, and the garnering of widespread support for the idea of a Gaelic sports revival led to the calling of a meeting in Hayes's Hotel in Thurles in Tipperary on November 1, 1884, where the Gaelic Athletic Association was officially formed with Cusack appointed one of its three secretaries along with John McKay and John Wyse-Power. Croke Park's Cusack Stand is named in his honour.

**Gaelic Athletic Association
(Established 1884)**