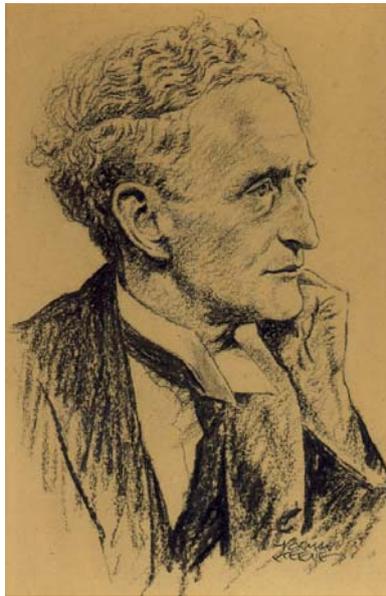


Patrick Devlin



PADRAIG GREGORY (1886-1962) Architect and Poet

Born in Belfast in 1886, as a young boy Patrick Bernard Gregory left with his parents for America, but after time in New York and Colorado, he returned to Belfast to be raised by his aunts. On leaving school in 1901, he was apprenticed to various firms of architects and surveyors, and around this time he developed a lifelong interest in drama and literature. By 1906, aged 20, he was in joint practise as Gregory and Hall, Architects, and those twin spires of writing and architecture were to entwine throughout his life.

Strong also was Gregory's attachment to the Catholic Church, and his celebrated architectural achievements in Belfast include the improvements to St Columcille's Church on the Upper Newtownards Road, and two new chapels in St Mary's Dominican Convent on the Falls Road. Overseas, along with his son Brian, a partner in his architectural practise, he notably designed the Cathedral Church of Christ the King in Johannesburg, South Africa, which was dedicated in 1960.

However, writing filled a great part of his life, and, inspired by the Irish Literary Revival, he determined to record some of the stories, ballads and songs he had heard told and sung in country areas of the north of Ireland. He sought to capture these and keep them alive by committing them to print, writing as his ear heard, reproducing the way the tales and songs were rendered by the country people. Gregory's first collection of poetry was *The Ulster Folk* in 1912, and this was followed by six more volumes during and after the Great War, leading up to the publication in 1920 of the major work of his early career, *Ulster Songs and Ballads*. One aspect of his writing, reflecting the times he was living in, was his interest in the insurrectionist poets of 1916 and after. He wrote one volume of criticism on their work, and edited another, *The Poems of Seán MacEntee*, written by his former school fellow and later Deputy Prime Minister of Ireland, and indeed there was a distinct nationalist flavour to a number of his own subsequent poems.

HIDDEN GEMS AND FORGOTTEN PEOPLE

He devoted much time to his architectural work in the twenties, until a play *The Coming of the Magi*, in 1932. This and poems with a similar Nativity theme led to the *Irish Monthly* calling him “the poet of Christmas”. In the 1930s Gregory published *Anglo Irish Folk Songs*, Volumes I & II, and one of his songs, *Padraic the Fidler*, was recorded by John McCormack and violinist Fritz Kreisler.

Collected Ballads appeared in 1935, and other writing includes his 1941 study of Italian Renaissance art, *When Painting Was In Glory*. His final collection of poetry, *Complete Ulster Ballads*, appeared in 1959.

Padraic Gregory died in Belfast in 1962.

Acknowledgement to <http://www.padraicgregory.com/>