The following is not taken from the book

GEORGE "KID" LAVIGNE

Name: Kid Lavigne
Career Record: click
Alias: The Saginaw Kid
Birth Name: George Henry Lavigne
Nationality: US American
Birthplace: Bay City, MI
Born: 1869-12-06
Died: 1928-03-09
Age at Death: 58
Height: 5' 3 1/2
Reach: 67 ½
Manager: Sam Fitzpatrick

Lavigne turned pro in 1886 at the age of 16 in Saginaw, Michigan. Because of his age and that many of his early fights were in Saginaw, he earned the nickname, "The Saginaw Kid." And while he began boxing early, he went unbeaten in 46 fights and did not suffer his first loss until 1899. While there were quite a few draws on his record, many of those took place when boxing was illegal and were the result of police intervention. After McAuliffe retired, Lavigne claimed the American version of the lightweight title by virtue of wins over Andy Bowen, Joe Walcott and a 20-round draw with Young Griffo.

A match was set up in London for Lavigne to meet British champion Dick Burge in 1896. Burge was described as a "scientific boxer" while Lavigne was portrayed as an "aggressive, savage fighter." The action was constant as Burge managed to draw blood from Lavigne's nose and mouth. But the American never faltered and eventually scored a 17th-round knockout and claimed the world title.

A terrific puncher, Lavigne retained the title with knockouts against Jack Everhart, Eddie Connolly and Walcott. The title challengers who lasted the distance were Kid McPartland, Jack Daly, Frank Erne and Tom Tracy.

In 1899, Lavigne moved up in weight in a bid to capture the welterweight title and was knocked out by champion "Mysterious" Billy Smith. Later that year, he lost the lightweight crown as well when Erne decisioned him over 20 rounds in a rematch.

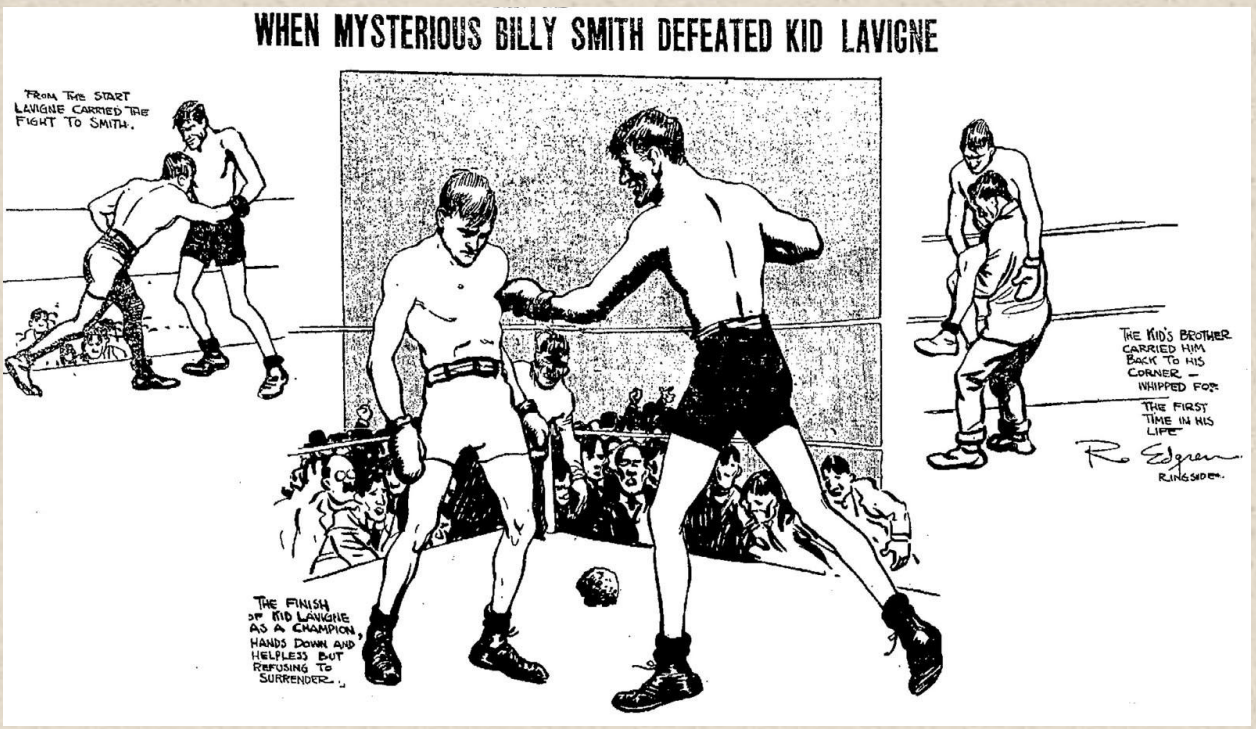
Lavigne fought just six times over the next 10 years and retired in 1909.

Fort Wayne Journal

In The Days Of Real Fighting

By Robert Edgren

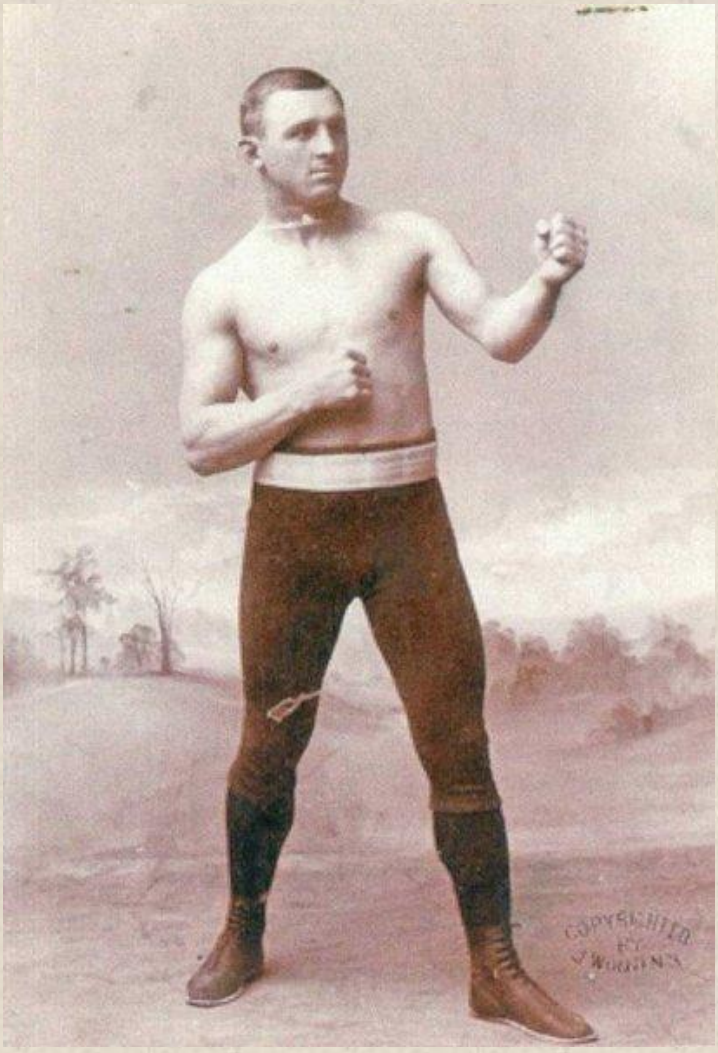
21 October 1915



They used to call Kid Lavigne "The Cherub". He was broad and stocky and strong, and he fought like a fury whenever he entered the ring. But he looked as mild and innocent as a choir boy. Lavigne was noted for his desperate fighting. His battle with Joe Walcott, afterward known as the "Giant Killer" is one of the heroic memories of the ring. He whipped the "Black Demon" by sheer courage that could not recognize the possibility of defeat.

I saw the same quality shown by Lavigne the first time he ever met a master in the ring. It was the battle with Mysterious Billy Smith, then welterweight champion of the world and one of the most vicious fighters that ever swung a fist.

Lavigne wanted the welter title. He was repeat ably urged to take on a match with Smith. He believed he could whip any man from lightweight to middleweight. To date his own splendid strength and stamina had pulled him through many desperate mills. He had never felt defeat was possible.



Success Brought a Liking For The bright Lights

Lavigne made a mistake in going out of his class, for one reason. Dissipation had pulled him down and taken away some of the stamina that made him king of all the little men. Victories and money had come too easily. He was immensely popular, was always surrounded by friends anxious to entertain him. Even while he was training to fight he would slip away now and then at night and spend a few hours in that part of San Francisco where the rustling of silk and smell of stale liquors lingered until the dawn. He liked the lights, the music, the drinks, the flattery. And he didn't believe it possible that he could be whipped.

The great pavilion was packed to the sidewalls when the fight began. Lavigne , sitting in his corner, looked over at Smith with a cherubic smile. He was at home in the ring. He was pleasantly confident. He was ready. He had done a bit of boxing and running on the road and felt good enough to beat anybody.

Mysterious Billy Smith watched Lavigne with a sneering smile. There was nothing cherubic about Smith. He was as rough and tough as they make em. He was just as anxious to get at it as Lavigne , for he knew of the Kids little excursions into town when he should have been training, and he would have been quite confident of his ability to beat the little fellow anyway. He was much taller, longer in reach and heavier than Lavigne. Also he was a better and more skilful boxer. The odds were much in his favour.

When the fight began Lavigne whirled from his corner and sailed into Smith as if he wanted to solve the mystery in the first round. But Smith boxed carefully, blocked, side stepped, jabbed and stopped away. He watched Lavigne's swinging punches narrowly. Few of them reached him. And every know and then he shot a punch out to Lavigne's jaw, grinning wickedly as it landed. He could hit Lavigne, and the Kid was having a lot of trouble in hitting him.

Still round after round Lavigne pressed hard. He plunged into the fight like an agile bull rushing at the matador. Sneering, Smith landed heavily almost whenever he pleased, but there was no sign of a let up in Lavigne's attack. He stuck to it persistently and occasionally he ripped in a punch that made Smith stop grinning and hastily retire a yard or two.

Beginning Of The End In The Fourteenth Round

I remember when the tide of the battle began to turn. It looked as if Lavigne would surely wear Mysterious Billy down. Smith was retreating and Lavigne going after him with the tenacity of a bulldog.

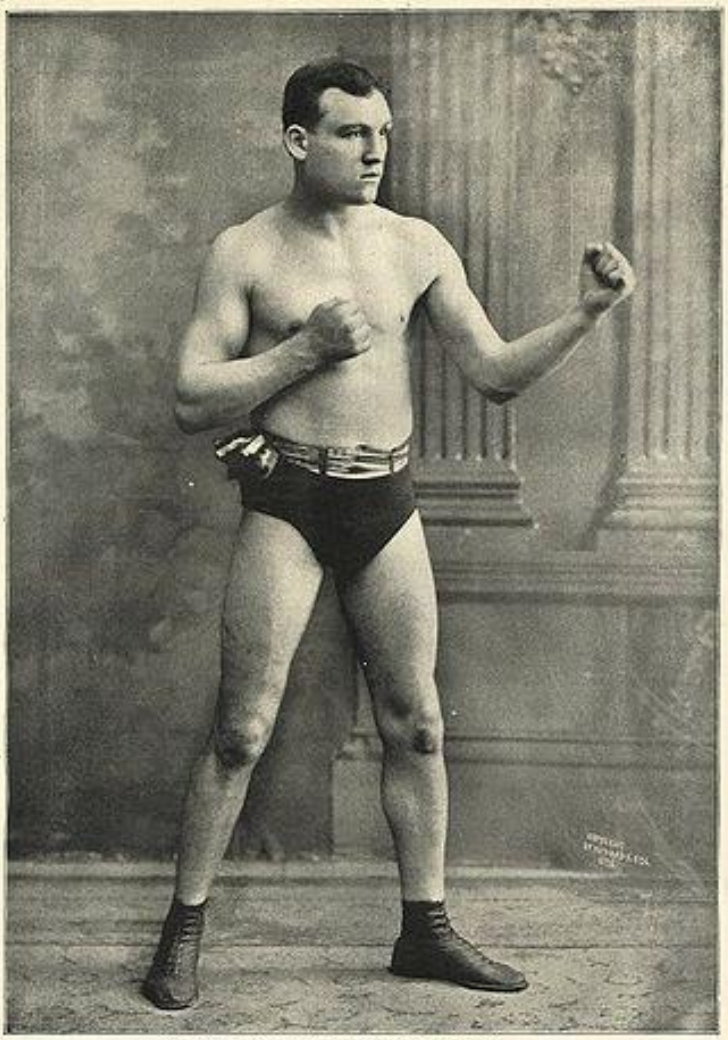
Lavigne rushed Smith stepped back. Suddenly Smith stopped. He swung a terrific uppercut which barely grazed Lavigne's jaw, and shot past so hard that Smith's arm was left momentarily sticking up in the air above his head. Ah ! exclaimed the crowd. Lavigne's rush stopped suddenly. Smith, sneering, pulled down his hand and moved in toward the lightweight champion. Lavigne, Smith and everyone else around the ring knew that if it had landed that blow would have lifted Lavigne from his feet and flipped him over in the air like an acrobat. It was a revelation of the power Smith held in reserve.

The beginning of the end didn't come until the fourteenth round. At that time Lavigne was still rushing doggedly, but was losing some of his speed. Smith, watchful, sneering, savage, was waiting his chance.It came. The Mysterious One suddenly drove a straight right hand smash over to Lavigne's jaw. Lavigne staggered stopped and went reeling back across the ring. Smith, following, turned his head to toss a few remarks to his friends at the ringside. He was sure of the fight.

But Lavigne wasn't whipped yet. He tottered about the ring. His legs were quivering under him. But he would not go down. Lavigne rallied again and swung and fought furiously. The courage of a man who had never known defeat kept him going. There wasn't much sting in his punches now. Smith, grinning, tossed them off and deliberately tried to beat the Kid to the floor.

Brother Wouldn't Allow Smith to Land Finishing Blow.

Near the end of the fourteenth round Lavigne was practically through. He couldn't see, for Smith's heavy smashes were fast closing his eyes. He was still plunging in, but he was swinging wildly at a man he couldn't see, sometimes missing by a yard. Billy, grinning an evil grin, was



"MYSTERIOUS" BILLY SMITH.
The Famous Welterweight Who is Always Ready to Fight For Honors.

enjoying his own sensations, the feeling of victory, the applause of the crowd.

Smith began planting blow after blow, deliberately. A dozen times Lavigne went down only to leap up without waiting for the count. It wasn't in him to believe he could be knocked down, much less kept down. At last Lavigne's endurance reached its limit, He stood with arms hanging at his sides, head down, knees bent. A push would have sent him down. Smith, grinning still, moved in close and deliberately set himself for the finishing blow. He drew his fist back slowly, he was enjoying every second of it. He was in no hurry.

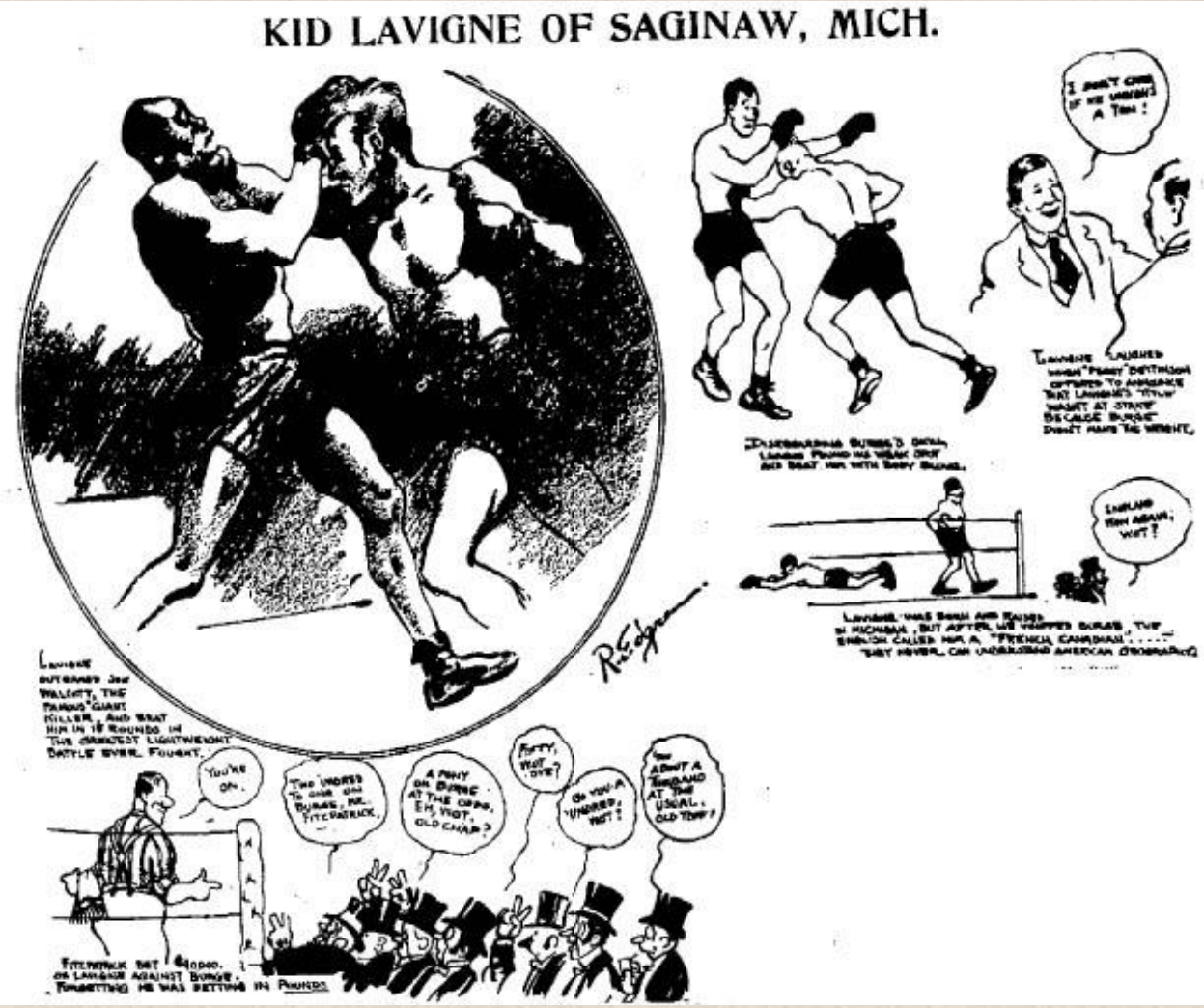
Right here the suspense overcame Kid Lavigne's brother, who was his chief second. He couldn't stand back and let the Kid be knocked out. Tossing the sponge in ahead of him he leaped into the ring and with a rush caught Mysterious Billy and shoved him away before he could deliver his finishing blow. Turning, he seized the tottering and all but senseless Kid and carried him to his corner, protesting and struggling.

Lavigne never believed that he was whipped in that fight He thought he could have come back. For years he didn't speak to the brother who had saved him from a knockout. But the fight was the beginning of the end for the great Lavigne. Once beaten, he began to fall rapidly. In his next fight he lost his lightweight title to Frank Erne.

Fort Wayne News and Sentinel

10 May 1919

by Robert Edgren



The last time I saw kid Lavigne was two or three years ago, on the Occasion of a "Benefit" arranged in New York for the once famous Champion and most popular of ring heroes. Lavigne had fallen upon Hard days a and of all the money won with his fists not a nickel remained. He came to my office to get a couple of hundred dollars that had been sent in as subscriptions, and asked me to express his gratitude to the few trends who had remembered him even .to that

extent. But I could see that the practical failure of the benefit— which hardly paid expenses— was a sad blow to the Kid. He couldn't realize that a new generation had grown up, and that an old one had forgotten him.

I'm glad to say, however, that Kid Lavigne didn't stay in a state of gloom long. I had-a letter from him shortly afterward. He was hard at work in a famous automobile plant, drawing his "five dollars a day or more." He had broken the last link that connected him with the ring, and was quite cheerful over it. Funny how soon the world forgets But there are certain old-timers who never get together and talk of old days in the ring without mentioning the great Kid Lavinge. I know of one New Yorker, A. Brand by name whose greatest pride is in the fact that he saw Kid Lavinge's first professional fight—and picked him for a coming champion right on the spot.

I don't know whether Lavigne should be most famous for the fight that made him world lightweight champion or for his battle with Joe Walcott the "**Giant Killer".** Both are classics in the ring.

Lavigne began fighting as a youngster in Saginaw Michigan, the called him the "Saginaw Kid" in surrounding towns, when he began fighting around the lumber camps and making something of a local reputation. Up in Michigan last summer I met a gentlemen who claimed to have been his first manager.

"Fight" was the "Kids" middle name" he said. "He'd fight anyone I matched him with and he never even asked me who he was going to fight next. I had to keep him busy fighting all the time to keep him contented. Fighting was his amusement. He loved any kind of a roughhouse. Why the only way I could get along with him was by being ready to scrap at any moment. If we were walking down the street in the winter he'd jump on me the instant he saw I wasn't watching and roll me in a snowdrift. If I got him down it tickled him just as long as there was scrap.

They Didn't Have To Make Him Like It

Lavigne loved fighting for the sake of fighting. He was one of the very few fighters I can name who really liked the game, all the way through, and who didn't care how tough he found it. He had the round. smooth, smiling face of a cherub—a perfect oval of a face with light yellow hair and. light blue eyes.

He looked like a choir singer, or model for one of Raphael's youthful angels, or a Sunday school book hero of the style of literature slipped over on Sunday school children twenty years ago. But from the ears down he was all fighter.- He had strong neck, very wide and powerful shoulders, thick arms and fists like a longshoreman's. He always smiled like an angel, and smiling like an angel he could fight as if he had horns, hoofs and a tail.

Lavigne was of French descent, born and brought up in the Michigan lumber districts where fighting is as natural as wearing a blue shirt. His first ring affair (not counting a certain number ,of rough and tumble engagements more or less unofficial in character) was a seventy-seven round battle with George Siddons, a top-notch lightweight in those days. Seventy-seven rounds

to a "draw," neither man being able to floor the other for a ten-second count, or at the finish to strike another blow. This was 1 march 1889. April 26 they fought a fifty five round draw. Lavigne learned how to fight in those two long battles for in 1891-82 he went to San Francisco and beat Joe Soto in thirty rounds and Charles Rochello in ten. His fight with Rochello was one of the first I ever saw in a ring, and I'll ever forget the impression of Kid Lavigne as he was in those days, cherubic oval face, cherubic smile and his wedge like body, smoothly muscled, gleaming; white under the glare of the single arc light. I saw It from the gallery. with another youngster I got into that gallery by shinning up—but that's another story. Enough that I saw Lavigne. Like my friend, Brand, boasted of it later, feeling quite sure that my youthful and inexperienced eye had detected signs, too, that Lavigne was a "coming champion!.

As for the "Saginaw Kid," he went right along toward the championship. He knocked out Eddie Myer in a classic twenty-two rounds fought a draw with the incomparable Griffo, beat Johnny Griffin and knocked out Andy Bowen (famous for having fought the longest fight on record—110 rounds with Jack Burke at New Orleans) in fourteen rounds. He beat Jack Everhardt and knocked out **Jimmy Handlier** and fought a twenty round draw with Grifto at Maspeth.

Here Was a Battle.

Then came the great fight with Walcott, a fight that always will be one of the most famous in the annals of the roped ring. Walcott was considered peer of a welterweights, although at that time able to fight several pounds under the 142-pound limit of his class. Lavigne was recognized as light weight champion of America, succeeding Jack McAuliffe, who had retired.

Tom O'Rourke, Walcott's manager, was ambitious to have his "Demon" annex the lightweight title. He made a match for Walcott with Lavigne, Walcott to weigh in at 133 pounds and to lose the decision if he failed to stop Lavigne in fifteen rounds.

Walcott was a terrific hitter, only feet 1 Inch tall (while Lavigne was 5 feet 3 ½). He had the arms and chest of a. heavyweight. Blows bounced from his rounded turret of a head as if he were armor-clad. O'Rourke was willing to match him against Tom Sharkey—that's what he thought of Walcott! In the first round the "Black Demon" tried to knock white skinned Lavigne out with a terrific flurry of blows. But Lavigne hurled himself in against them. Lavigne wasn't there to "stay fifteen rounds." He was there to whip the negro. Nothing could stop him. Rush after rush, wild mix up after mix up, crashing, thudding fists, reeling impact of steaming bodies, the fight went on round after round. Lavigne's white skin was soon criss crossed with streaming rivulets of red. His face was a blotch. One ear was torn. His eyes were closed. To some extent Walcott was damaged too, but on the coal-black background of his skin the punishment hardly showed.

No Sponge for Lavigne

The spectators began to call for the sponge. They wanted to see Lavigne give in. Many left the arena but Lavigne fought on with growing fury. And Wolcott, having delivered every fighting ounce that was in him. lost heart at last and covered Is bent head with crossed arms and backed away. Going to his corner with five rounds still to fight, he cried to O'Rourke: "I kain't whip that

white boy,-I kain't whip him." O'Rourke., furious over the prospect of losing fight and side bet, bent over Walcott and threatened him—told him what would happen if he quit. With fear behind and lavigne raging in front, a crimson fury who never stopped, fighting for a second and who would'nt be driven back or held in Walcott's desperate grip. The "Black Demon" stalled through to the finish taking a bad beating before the fifteen rounds were over and losing a decision on the merits of the fight.

That battle made Lavigne famous the world over. He boxed no-decision bouts with Jack McAuliffe and Tommy Ryan in New York, and then sailed for England to fight Dick Burge for the world's lightweight title, Burge being champion of England.

Excusing the result of that fight the English chronicler of events for the National Sporting club wrote: "Lavigne stripped for the ring a perfect pocket Hercules. Though his height was only 5 feet 3 1/2, inches his neck was only half an inch smaller than Bob Fitzsimmons.

Burge, in truth, was a much larger man. The English writers made small mention of that fact. But the fight was to have been at 135 pounds on the ,afternoon of the fight. Lavigne weighed no more than 130. Burge, shortly before the date, refused to make the weight, and insisted upon being allowed to weigh in at 145 pound:. And when weighing in time came he wouldn't weigh at all. He undoubtedly scaled 150 pounds or more according to Sam Fitzpatrick who managed the American.

Mr. Bettinson of the National Sporting Club offered to call the fight off if Lavigne wished because Burge wouldn't make weight or at least to advertise that the American's championship title was not at stake.But Lavigne laughing told him he didn't care what Burge weighed, and the title could go with the fight if Burge weighed a ton. Burge was a very clever boxer and a tremendous favorite in the betting. England considered him invincible Especially when the two men came together.

Backed Himself To The limit Against Burge

Between them Fitzpatrick and Lavigne had $7000 and they decided to bet it all on Lavigne's chances and the losers end of the purse with it.In the National Sporting Club it is customary to make bets around the ring by holding up fingers to indicate the amount and noting the wagers in a small book, settling the bets afterwards. Fitzpatrick had come from Australia, but had lived in America for some time, and in the excitement of the moment when in Lavigne's corner just before the fight he forgot the Englishmen didn't bet in dollars. He accepted a score or so of wagers made his notes and stopped taking bets offered when he figured that he had placed all the money he and Lavigne could raise if lavigne lost the fight.

Lavigne fought Burge just as he had fought Wolcott, tearing in and fighting at top speed without paying any attention at all to his opponents blows or being worried by his skill. He knocked Burge out in seventeen rounds. As Fitzpatrick, was leaving the ring with Lavigne after the fight a

gentleman at the ringside who had "bet him a hundred," reached up and passed him a banknote. Fitzpatrick glanced at it and saw that it was for £100 or $500. He was just about to turn the note back and explain that there was a mistake of some sort when it suddenly struck him that he had been **BETTING IN POUNDS'** instead of dollars all through the evening.

If Lavigne had lost he and his manager would have been liable for about $40,000 in wagers! Fitzpatrick, telling the story, declared that he went up to the dressing room with Lavigne without saying a. word and sat down and wiped the cold sweat from his brow for fifteen minutes while he thought over all the horrible things that might have happened to him if Lavigne had lost. After which, of course, he went down andlet everybody pay him of in pounds as if it were all a matter of course.

The English in the printed record of the NSC took to themselves a slight consolation for the defeat of their champion, Lavigne was born and bred in Michigan, but after he whipped Burge the French writers called him "The French Canadian".

THE NATIONAL POLICE GAZETTE
4 MARCH 1922

CHAPTER LXXXII.
YOUNG GRIFFO

One the freaks of the prize ring, a scientific marvel, whose personal habits brought merited reproach, but whose skill with the gloves was amazing.

IN these days of nation-wide prohibition it is seldom one hears of a man going on a three-day jag. Few are wealthy enough to pay bootlegger's toll for such a spree; certainly aspiring boxers are not prone to such habits. Nevertheless, a jamboree of seventy two hours' duration was one of the favorite stunts of Young Griffo (right name, Albert Griffiths) in the course of his training (?) for important bouts.

The archives of fistiana record that Young Griffo mixed strong drink with his strong-arm work when he was preparing to fight Jack Everhardt, Horace Leeds, Jimmy Dime and even the one-time featherweight champion, George Dixon, among others. And, astonishing as it may seem, Griffo, who was his best at the lightweight poundage, held all of them to draws.

This phenomenal pugilist's birth is registered at Sydney; N. S. W., in the year 1871. He passed his boyhood around the Australian docks and eventually drifted into the prizering. He came to America in 1893, after having decisively beaten all the Antipodean aspirants of his weight. Upon his arrival here, he astounded our world of ring followers with his cleverness.

His Education Neglected

It was said that he could neither read or write, having had absolutely no scholastic education. It was said also that he had never taken a boxing lesson in his life and was never known to train seriously for a fight. Such statements sound incredible, but the truth of them was generally accepted. What Griffo could have done and might have been will never be determined, but it is safe to say that if he had applied even a moderate amount of interest to his decidedly superior ability, he would probably have been the greatest little lightweight of all time.

His first big match here was with a fellow countryman,"Australian Billy"" Murphy. and was one of his best performances in the ring. The fight was held at Boston. May 7, 1894. Murphy was noted in this country as one of the hardest-hitting lightweights that ever lived. His clean-cut victory over Ike Weir and Johnny Griffin had proved that the ex tailor was there with the wallop good and hard.

After Griffo's victory over Murphy, the former, although a lightweight tipping the beam at 138, was matched to box George Dixon, the featherweight champion, twenty rounds.

The Griffo-Dixon fight took place at the Casino at Boston, June 29, 1894. The building was crowded to the doors and hundreds were turned away. It had been a long time since the historic city had been so worked up over a boxing match.

Dixon was in the best of condition, while Griffo had been roaming about town on a spree. His manager rather doubted if he would be able to find him, much less that he would be in a condition to fight. A search was made and he was found at noon in a saloon very much under the weather. He was hustled into a hack and hurried to a Turkish bath, where he was boiled out. At eight that evening 'he was almost normal mentally, but physically he was far from being perfect.

Griffo "kidded" the ringsiders while the gloves were being adjusted and was as unconcerned as though he were in a barber shop waiting for a shave. Nearly everyone had heard of the erratic actions of this fighter and most of those present knew he had paid little attention to preparations for the encounter, so they rather expected Dixon to tear him to pieces. They got the surprise of their lives.

Fights in One Position

The young Australian entered the ring and took a bracing position from which he did not move more than two feet all during the battle. He evidently held the champion at a cheap figure, for he sneered at him when Dixon rushed in and missed a left lead for the face. A right drive for a spot below the heart was neatly stopped. Dixon led off in the second with a stiff left on the ribs and an attempt with a right for heart. Both blows were misdirected. He tried again for the stomach, but was stopped by a stiff bracer. Infighting ended the round. The third and fourth were nip and tuck affairs.

In the fifth Griffo went at Dixon with cyclonic fury, which held full way till the sound of the gong. The negro worked hard and took a terrible beating. He showed the effects of it. The seventh was ruled pretty well by George, but at the end of the round the Australian came back with a hard smash on the neck and another on the mouth. From then on until the twelfth, the honors were even, and the fighting hard and fast. If one broke ground the other was right after him, feinting and keeping him at work. The twelfth was marked by a hard left swing on the jaw from Griffo. Dixon's attempts at countering passed over the shoulder, but he had buried his left in the Australian's ribs so often that they were a bright crimson.

In the thirteenth Dixon caught Griffo with a left on the face. The round was then fought in a go as you please style. Dixon made three dangerous jabs for the jaw, but all three missed and went around Griffo's neck. In spite of this Dixon had the better of the round. In the fourteenth the able little champion got in a left uppercut again, and from that time on seemed to be fairly able to cope with the peculiar side-ducking of Griffo. A story of the remaining cantos would merely be a repetition of the previous ones; all fast and furious.

Referee Calls It a Draw

At the end of the twentieth Referee Eckhardt announced the decision as a draw. Griffo was the more clever of the two, but in his condition at that time he could not be called the superior. But his performance marked the Australian as probably the shiftiest man in the ring. Griffo was matched with Dixon twice during 1895. Both matches ended in draws, one after twenty-five and the other after ten rounds.

At Coney Island, N. Y., on March 4, 1895, Griffo won a very lively match from Horace Leeds in twelve ronnds. It was his eighteenth fight in America and he had lost only to Jack McAuliffe. Griffo's next big bout was staged at the old Music Hall in Boston with Jimmy Dime. The date was March 8, 1895. At that time Jimmy was regarded as one of the best lightweights in the country. Many were of the belief that in the man from Amsterdam the Australian had met his equal The bout created no end of mirth among the crowd that gathered in the old amusement place that night, as Griffo was quite a bit better than the ordinary circus.

Dime was in perfect condition for the fight, while Griffo, at ten that morning, was so inebriated that a single tree looked to him like an impenetrable forest. Once again he was hustled to a Turkish bath and steamed out. Dime had plenty of good cash to back him, and when his friends learned that Griffo was "at it again" they unloosened their money belts and put up more. In spite of this every cent was being covered by the wise men from Borneo as fast as they saw its color.

When the fight started Griffo had a head on him as big as a wash-tub, but that made no difference to him. He was anxious to get in action. The first round opened with Griffo as the aggressor. He looked rather worried in spite of the fact that he kept up a continual chatter with his promoter, Hughey Behan, regarding a good stiff bracer, which was to be ready for him at the close of the round.

Griffo's Cleverness Counts.

As to the contest, Dime did the best that he could, but it wasn't enough. and after eight rounds the bout was decided a draw. Griffo would jab, duck side-step and double-punch Jimmy at every stage of the game, He made him look like the rankest amateur. He had Jimmy cutting side-swaths out of the atmosphere and hardly ever scoring. Once during the battle, when Dime landed a hard right on the Australian's ear, it angered him.

“Blime you, ol' chap," he said, "fer that I'll smash you on the bloomin' nose." Then bang! went his left hand as true as a die. He kept peppering Dime so fast that he was bewildered. He was pretty well beaten up by a marvel of cleverness.

Griffo's last performance of any merit was with Jack Everhardt at Buffalo, July 10, 1896. It was a twenty-round battle to a draw. The first five rounds were more or less of an exhibition, both men trying to feel out each other's methods. From the sixth to the sixteenth, the bout was one which showed off all kinds of sparring, and proved the Australian to be a master of his vocation. Everhardt tried his best, time and again, to land an effective punch and end the bout. But he was fighting with Griffo, the cleverest little fighter in the ring. The men began to mix up as the bout drew near to a close. Everhardt chased his man around the ring at the beginning of the nineteenth, with swings and an occasional cross, but Griffo was not in the way.

"Now For a Drink," Says Griffo

In round twenty Everhardt got a blow in the eye that swelled that already injured member. Griffo had the better of a warm exchange, but there was a rattling flurry towards the close that left the Australian rather weak. The gong sounded and Griffo stopped dead short in the middle of a punch that promised to be a mean one, and extending his hand for the farewell shake, smiled and said, "Now for a drink."

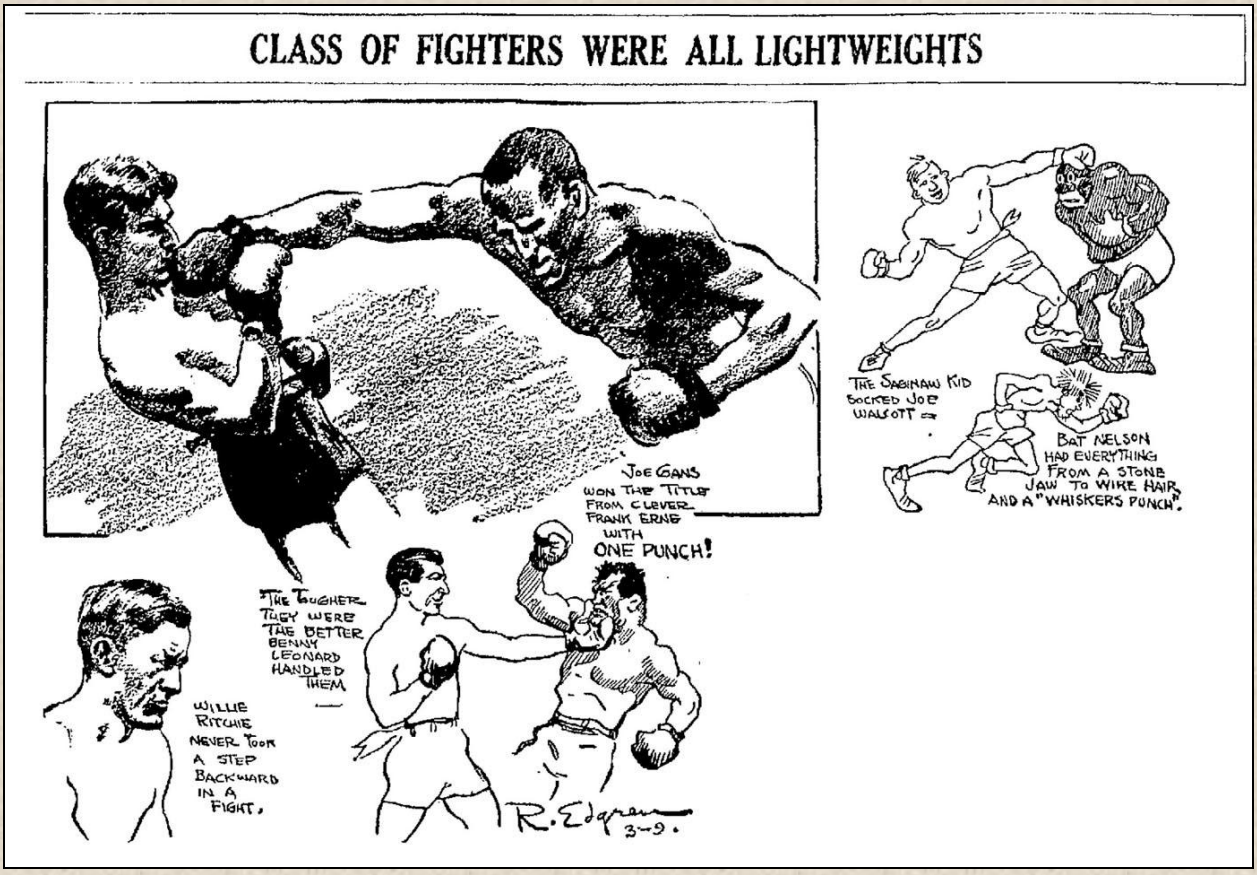
He got his drink-and many more. But before he sobered up he was jailed and given an eight months sentence for disturbing the peace. From June until December of 97 he fought seven times, None of the encounters registered a credit for Griffo. He was scheduled to fight Tom Tracy on Nov. 18 of that year. Three thousand fans were gathered at the St. Louis A. C., anticipating the return of Griffo to his able form.

The Australian entered the ring intoxicated. The fight started but before the end of the first round, Griffo rolled under the ropes and made for the dressing room. Before the spectators could realize exactly what had happened he had made his get-a-way. Such a man was Griffo.

His last fight was with Battling Nelson at Chicago on March 4, 1901, when he was knocked out in two rounds. It was an inglorious end for a boxer of unparalleled promise.

The Montana Standard - 10 March 1929

Champions I Have Known.



We've had the world's best fighters in the lightweight class. It's only since Benny Leonard retired that a lightweight "champion" has been known to make an opponent fatten up over the class weight limit so that his title "will not be at stake." Men like Jack McAuliffe, Kid Lavigne, Frank Erne, Joe Gans, Battling Nelson, Ad Wolgast, Willie Ritchie and Benny Leonard had no commercial yellow streak. And there were many others just as much fighting class who never quite reached championship and who were as reckless and determined fighting men as the champions.

Joe Gans is generally spoken of as the greatest lightweight. Joe was a wonder, but any of the men named above, taken at top form, would have given him a whale of a fight.

Jack McAullffe flourished and retired before I began to look 'em over, but knowing Jack, with his fighting build even today and his lightning quick Irish wit, it's easy to picture him the champion he was. McAuliffe, born in Cork, Ireland, but "raised" in this country, was

developed in the same cooper shop in Brooklyn that produced Dempsey the Nonpareil. In the old days most of the fighters were coopers, calkers, and working with mallet or sledge gives a man blacksmiths or Ironworkers a punch, and they used to win fights with punches. Jack began fighting as an amateur. That is, he worked at a trade and fought for the fun of it, with a side-stake thrown in. Later he gave all his time to fighting.

All London prize ring, bare knuckles or skin tight gloves in those days. In 12 years of constant action Jack didn't lose a fight. He retired literally "undefeated champion." The only time he came near losing was in his fight with Jim Carney of England, when the crowd tore the ring down in the seventy-fourth round, when Carney was having a bit the best of it. The referee decided "draw." Jack knocked out plenty of men in a round or two, but in his greatest fights he licked Billy Myer in 64 rounds, Jimmy Carroll in 47 and Harry Gilmore in 20. Under the old rules the men fought until one man was down, which ended the round.

"Saginaw Kid" licked 'Em All.

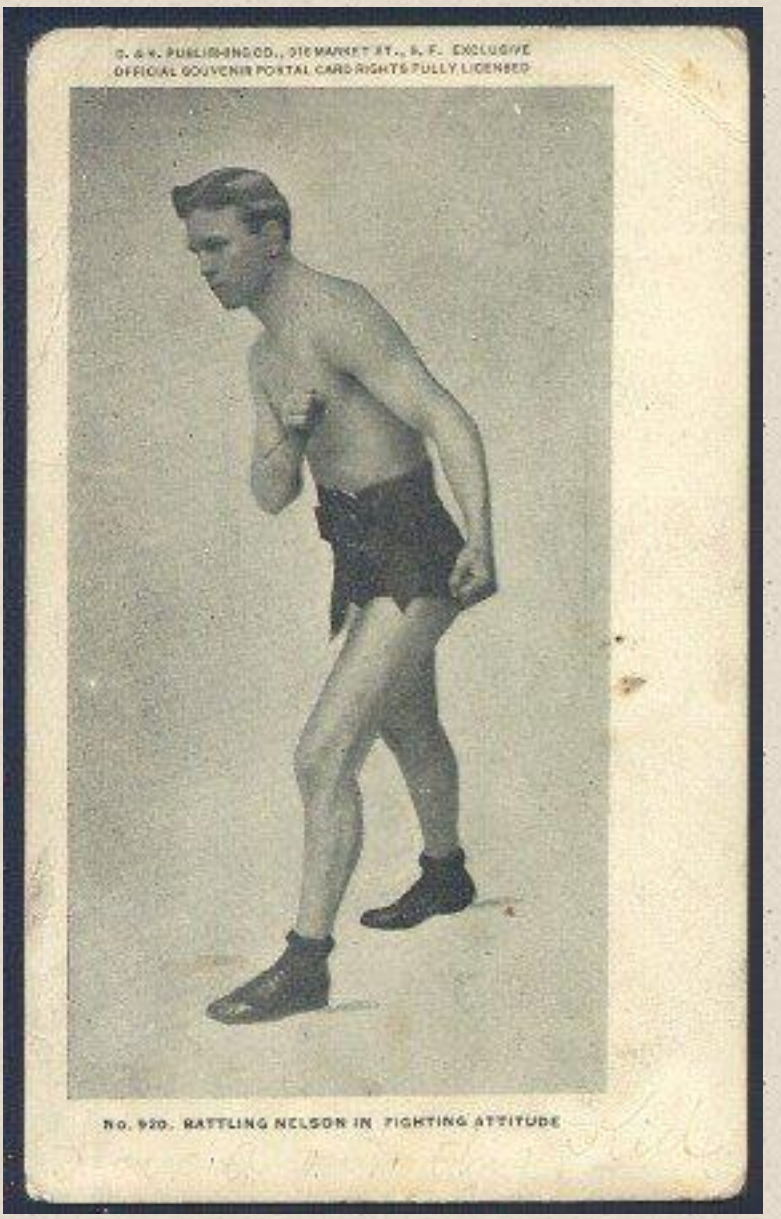
Kid Lavigne claimed the title after McAuliffe's time, when he had whipped all American rivals and Dick Burge, the English champion. The Kid looked like a curly-haired blond and smiling cherub, but how he could fight! Brought up in the Michigan lumber camps and fighting every day. He was a world beater when he went outside and began as a professional. Rushing constantly, hitting hard and fast, able to take any punch and sock back a harder one, he was a terror. Starting with a long string of quick knockouts. Lavigne became a clever boxer with a punch. He fought bare knucks for a long time, his longest fight being a 77-round draw with George Siddons early in his career.

Gans Caught Frank Erne.

Frank Erne, who won the title from Lavigne, was one of the cleverest of all the champions, and astonishingly strong. First time I saw Frank fight was with Dal Hawkins,. Dal had a mysterious knack of landing a clean knockout with a sharp twist of his left wrist. Erne knew all about that blow, which had nearly knocked out Joe Gans in a round in two fights. He watched for it as they met after the first bell, saw Dal reach over slowly and lazily with his open hand as if to pull down Frank's high guard - and then Frank hoard the referee shout "seven" and found himself sitting on the floor. Hawkins had dropped that reaching hand over a few inches with his "twist punch." Erne got up and knocked Dal cold in the seventh. Erne beat many of the best fighters of his day, and then made the mistake of fooling with weights. He made 126 pounds for Terry McGovern, took of weight too fast in a burning new York July and couldn’t stop until he reached 122.

Battling Nelson, the Durable Dane .

Battling Nelson— well, Bat thought he "wasn't human." He had a slow heart beat and he never felt tired and he didn't feel punches. He started against such walloping experts as Martin Canole, Eddie Hanlon, Young Corbett, Jimmy Britt, Aurello Herrera — and he knocked them endwise.



Only Britt gave him trouble, and their score in several fights was fairly even. Nelson was the most unconsciously conceited fighter I ever met. He didn't dream that he was conceited. He just figured that Bat Nelson could lick any lightweight in the world by fighting more persistently and tirelessly than any other —and he did until he met Ad Wolgast, the "Little Fighting Fool." In the fortieth round at Point Richmond, California, Nelson was staggering, blinded, arms dangling at his sides— and he hadn't been dropped even once. Wolgast, who had been nearly finished in the thirty-second round, was back strong and hammering the helpless champion mercilessly.

Referee Eddie Smith used to say he stopped the fight and give it to Wolgast on a K. O. because Nelson was out on his feet, and he felt sure if Bat dropped after being held up so long by his indomitable heart, he'd die when he struck the floor.

Wolgast was a savage fighter and he won many fights. He had no intelligence for anything but fighting, but that one thing he could do. He had an operation for appendicitis and a few months later was whipped by Willie Ritchie. Wolgast was a fighter who couldn't "fight fair" when he was in danger of losing, and he lost this one on a foul.

Ritchie made a great champion while he lasted. His mistake was going to England to fight Freddy Welsh, the English lightweight champion. Twenty rounds, 10 possible points for each man. Welsh was given the decision and world's championship by half a point marked on the referee's card.

Leonard Last of the Giants.

As a champion Freddy invented all the tricks of evasion. He handled Benny Leonard rather easily a couple of times in no-decision bouts and thought he could pick up easy money with a third fight. He ran and dodged and blocked with his usual speed and skill, but Benny had improved enough to out-box him and get blows through, and it was over in nine rounds, with Welsh hung unconscious over the top rope and Benny cannily punching away at his head with the right hand to keep him from sliding to the floor until Benny felt absolutely sure he couldn't wake up again. Referee Kid McPartland, a great lightweight in the time of Joe Gans, pulled Benny away and let Welsh drop and gave Benny the fight and title on a knockout, which was entirely proper.

Benny Leonard was a great champion.He had a fine knockout punch, plenty of confidence and aggressiveness, willingness to fight at any time, was very fast and clever, and might have compared well with any of the old timers like Lavigne and Gans. Benny had more intelligence than most fighters. He was a student. When he was knocked down in an early round he invariably got up and knocked his man out later, and nobody had any chance with him in a second fight. Benny at last retired, wealthy and healthy, and stayed retired. Which proves what I said about his intelligence.

As for the commission made "champions" who have followed, one is worth brief mention in this story. Sammy Mandell, while purely a business man and much more inclined to "play safe" than to fight, is a fine boxer. Under earlier conditions he might have been a real fighter. As it is he'll probably hold the title for some time yet without "risking" it,

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OREGON Life

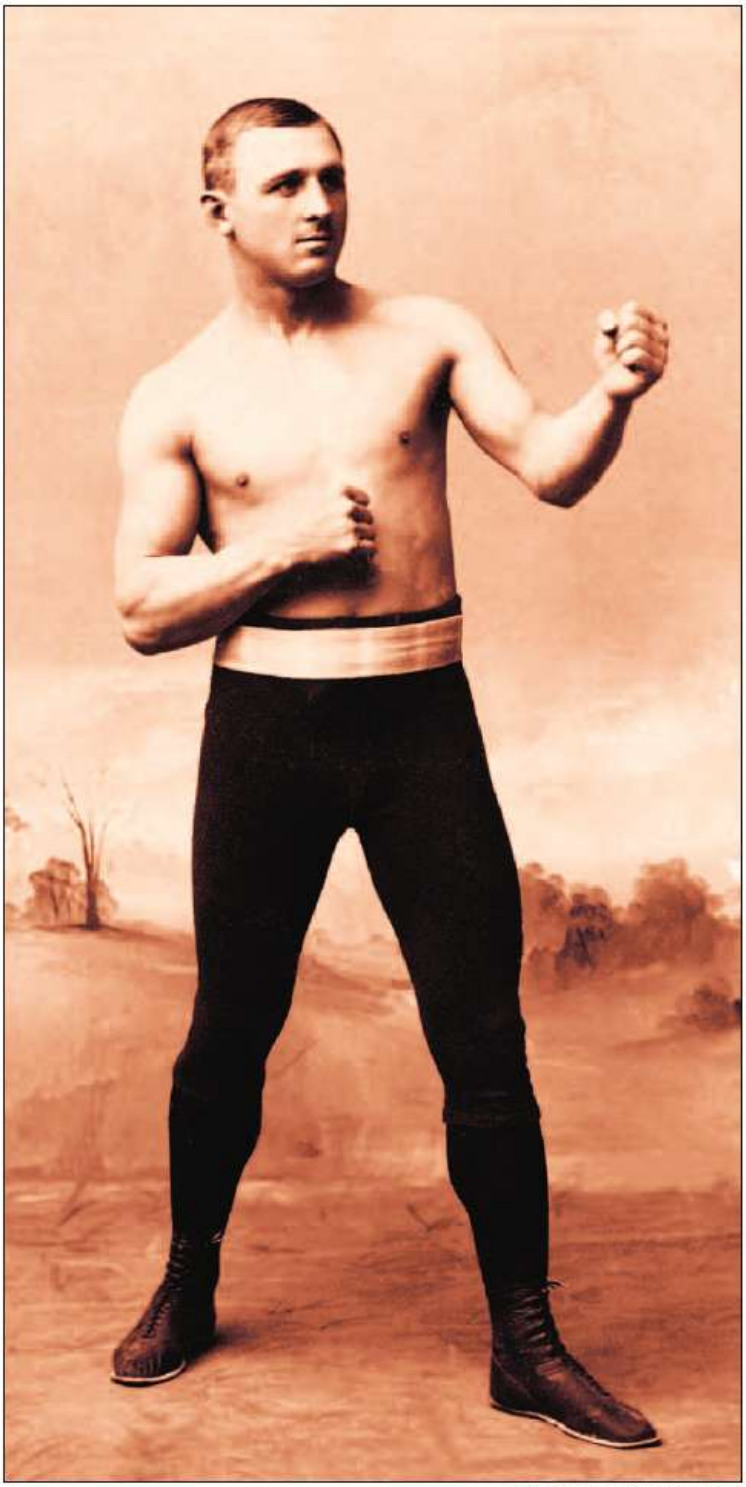
LIFESTYLE • BOOKS • TRAVEL

Making us laugh

Billy Crystal seems to have lived out every childhood fantasy/E3

Buzzworthy

LOCAL AUTHORS



Courtesy of Lauren Chouinard

"Kid" *Lavigne was lightweight champion of the world in the late 1890s.*

"He was a front door pressure pugilist like Joe Frazier. He would come at you bent on destroying you." — **LAUREN CHOUINARD,** AUTHOR

TALE OF THE 'KID'

A Eugene writer takes readers beyond the simple story of a boxer in the 1890s

By Randi Bjornstad
The Register-Guard

If you like boxing — especially its early rough-and-tumble days — you'll relish Eugene author Lauren Chouinard's just-released book, "Muscle and Mayhem: The Saginaw Kid and the Fistic World of the 1890s."

If you can't stand boxing, you can still like the book, because it's much more than a boxing story. It's a classic American tale of success from humble beginnings, triumph and tribulation, downfall and redemption.

It probably never would have been written if Chouinard hadn't become overwhelmingly curious about his sports fanatic mother's frequent assertion during his childhood that she, Eleanor Lavigne, was a distant cousin of boxer George "Kid" Lavigne, the lightweight champion of the world from 1896 to 1899.

He began to believe her after another of her fabulous boxing stories — that she had been patted on the head and given a penny by then-world heavyweight champion Jack Dempsey in Benton Harbor, Mich., when she was 7 years old — turned out to be true.

"I sort of brushed it off as the fantasy of a young girl and didn't think much about it until one day in 1999," Chouinard writes in Chapter One, "Mom's Story," of his book.

That was when he read

Turn to **BOXING,** *Page E2*

"MUSCLE AND MAYHEM" BY LAUREN CHOUINARD

Reading and signing event: Florence Festival of Books, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, Florence Events Center, 715 Quince St.

Buy locally: Black Sun, Tsunami and J Michaels bookstores in Eugene

Buy online: amazon.com

Boxing: Side stories weaved into book

Continued from Page E1

a new book about Dempsey that described a fight he had in September 1920, in which he defeated heavyweight Billy Miske in Benton Harbor.

He called his mother excitedly to tell her it all "added up."

"It was 1920," he said. "You were born in 1913 and you told me you were 7 at the time ... It really happened, didn't it?"

His mother, who died a few months later, "finally succumbing to the estimated 750,000 cigarettes smoked in her lifetime," he writes, was a bit indignant.

"Well, of course it did," she said. "I'm your mother. I wouldn't make that up."

In his turn, Chouinard hasn't made up anything either about George "Kid" Lavigne.

He has compiled 400 pages of information not only about this plucky pugilist, but also about dozens of his peers, including descriptions — sometimes round by round — of many of the most amazing fights of the day as Kid Lavigne fought his way to the top, defended his title and eventually fell into obscurity.

Along the way, Chouinard weaves side stories into the book, such as one about the logging industry, which gave both him and Kid Lavigne their first jobs and another family tie.

A difficult life

Chouinard grew up on the south side of Chicago and after high school attended Illinois State University. Having trouble lining up a summer job after his freshman year, he contacted his older brother, Gene Chouinard, a forester with the Bureau of Land Management in Roseburg, and asked if he could help.

"He said, 'Sure, I can get you a job working in the woods,'" Lauren Chouinard writes. "Great. What kind of job?"

To his brother's answer, "Settin' chokers," he asked, "What's a choker?" Never mind, his brother said, just get on out here.

After 2,000 miles on the road, Chouinard stopped near Crater Lake for gas, and the elderly gas station attendant, noticing the Illinois license plate, asked him what brought him west. Working in the words, he said. Doing what, the attendant asked. "Settin' chokers," Chouinard said. "My brother works for the BLM, and he got (the job) for me."

The old man, he writes, "got just a bit closer and in a very respectful but concerned tone he said, 'Son, does your brother like you?'"

Back in Michigan, Kid Lavigne's experience was different but also difficult. In search of a better life, his parents, Jean Baptiste and Agnes Lavigne, left Quebec in 1868 and moved to Bay City, Mich., formerly known as Lower Saginaw, where George Lavigne was born the following year.

Jean Baptiste Lavigne took a job in a sawmill. In 1880, when George was almost 11, the family moved to Melbourne, Mich., where the father started a better job as a machinist. But he died two years later, and George went to work in the mill to help his mother support the family.

His older brother, Billy, had moved to East Saginaw to work as a bellhop in a swanky hotel. He began learning to box at a nearby ring run by a local barber and eventually became a successful heavyweight boxer.

Billy got George — who was only 5-foot-4-inches tall but tremendously strong because of his work at the mill — involved in boxing and was his manager to the end of Kid Lavigne's career.

A death in the ring

Boxing in the 1890s was a savage business even as the sport made its transition between bare-knuckle fighting and use of gloves, as well as limiting the length and number of rounds in a match.

The Marquess of Queensberry rules, first published in England in 1867, required the use of gloves, limited rounds to three minutes with one minute's rest between and instituted the count-of-10 to determine whether a boxer could continue after a knockdown.

There still was no set number of rounds. The longest fight under Queensberry Rules was an incredible 110 rounds, fought between Andy Bowen and "Texas Jack" Burke in 1893, which lasted seven hours 19 minutes, Chouinard reports. By the 1890s, however, most fights were limited to 20 to 25 rounds.

The longest bout of Lavigne's career was 77 rounds, lasting five hours and eight minutes, he says.

The lack of limits on rounds favored people like Lavigne, whom Chouinard characterizes as "a fighter more than a boxer."

"Kid Lavigne was not so skilled as a boxer — what he had was talent and will," Chouinard says. "Somebody back then said about him that he could just suck the will out of his opponents.

"He was a front door pressure pugilist like Joe Frazier — he would come at you bent on destroying you."

The low point of Lavigne's career was the death of an adversary, New Orleans native Andy Bowen, during a fight in 1892.

The fight took place on Bowen's home turf, where some say he demanded that the padding between the canvas and the boards under the ring should be removed because of Lavigne's fabled quickness.

Sometime during the fight the canvas came loose in one of the corners, leaving the cypress boards underneath bare, but neither the fighters nor the officials delayed the fight to fix it.

During the 18th round, Lavigne landed a terrific blow to Bowen's jaw; he fell back and struck his head hard on the bare wood. He never regained consciousness and died early the next morning.

Lavigne was charged with murder, but the jury at the coroner's inquest agreed that he died from hitting the bare wood floor rather than from a punch from Lavigne.

Kid Lavigne attended the funeral, and according to a report in the Times-Picayune newspaper at the time, Mathilde Bowen, the boxer's widow, shook his hand.

"Mr. Lavigne, I do not blame you for this unfortunate ending of the contest, but it has broken my heart," she sobbed. "I feel that none regret it more than you."

Lavigne reportedly "wept bitterly" during the service.

Chouinard questions the rendition, which he writes really was "not consistent with the medical science of the day."

"While they clearly did not know what we know today of concussive head trauma, the symptoms of brain hemorrhage were well known at the time," he writes.

"They had to assume that repeated blows to the head and hitting one's head once on an unpadded wooden surface could be of equal gravity in causing the brain to swell."

Given that the newspaper had noted a "wild, frightened look" in Bowen's eyes before the final round, "It's quite possible that he was beginning to exhibit signs of brain trauma before he was knocked out," Chouinard says.

More stories to tell

Kid Lavigne had many of his own problems, including uncontrolled use of alcohol, domestic violence against his first wife, Julia, and frequent encounters with police.

He was arrested a dozen times, mostly for fighting while drunk. He was committed to sanatoriums four times to rid his system of alcohol or drugs used to control pain from boxing injuries or for erratic behavior possibly related to his own concussive episodes as a fighter.

In his final years, George "Kid" Lavigne quit the ring, went to work as a night watchman at the Ford Motor Company factory and lived quietly until dying of a heart attack in 1928, at age 58.

After more than three years of research and writing, helped immensely by materials collected by members of the International Boxing Research Organization, Chouinard says he finds much to like in his illustrious, if troubled, relative.

"Having played 12 years of rugby myself, knowing the importance of endurance in sport, I like him for that," he says. "I like his humility — he was never a boaster. People said he never swore."

On the other hand, he doesn't admire Lavigne's Jekyll-and-Hyde personality, Chouinard acknowledges.

"From what I learned, when he was drinking, he was a jerk. He was abusive to his wife and nasty to people in hotels, yelling and throwing things. I don't admire that.

"His wife once said, 'When he's sober, he's a perfect husband. When he's drunk, he's not, and these days more often it's not.'"

Lavigne had no children.

Writing and self-publishing his book has left 60-year-old Chouinard, who retired as the city of Eugene's risk manager and human resources director in 2008, eager for more.

"While I was doing this book, I found I had another relative, George La Blanche — the name originally was Blais — who also boxed about the same time," he says. "Maybe I could write about him."

Or, maybe it's the turn of his peg leg grandfather, who lost a leg crashing a 1917 Harley Davidson motorcycle.

"He worked on a lot of the buildings for the Chicago (Columbian) Exposition (of 1893) — some of them are still there, in the same area where I grew up," Chouinard muses. "Maybe there's a book there."