

"MYSTERIOUS" BILLY SMITH

(A Selection of Quaint and Curious Facts Not to be Found in Any Record Book)

A short article on Billy Smith which recently appeared in the IBRO newsletter aroused my interest in this old time fighter and sent me scurrying to my filing cabinets. My object was to renew my acquaintance with the "mysterious" boxer whom I have long believed to be one of the most interesting men ever to have donned the gloves. The following data, (with a special emphasis on his "rough-and-tumble" style of fighting both in and out of the ring) will help to "flesh out" the bare bones skeleton which can be found in most any record book, and perhaps provide some insights to the nature of the man known as "Mysterious" Billy Smith.

He was born Amos Smith but disliked his first name even when still a small boy. He adopted the name "Billy" when he was still a young boy and it is said that he never forgave his parents for giving him the handle Amos.

Regarding his place of birth, at various times during his life he gave the following locations: In Maine; Portland, Rockland, Machias, Eastport, Lubec and Bath. In New Hampshire; Portsmouth and Hampton Beach. In Massachusetts; Newburyport, Lynn, Salem, Revere, Boston, Hull, Quincy and Fall River. He must have liked to keep people guessing in regards to his birthplace. In actuality, Billy was born in Sandy Cove, Nova Scotia, on the Bay of Fundy.

At the age of 10 months, he moved with his family to Grand Manan Island in the mouth of the Bay of Fundy off the coast of Maine. After one year on Manan, they moved to Eastport, Maine. The family moved several times during Billy's youth, moving up the coast of the Bay of Fundy until they settled in St. John, New Brunswick. Bill's father was a fisherman and evidently a bit of a rover.

Billy was said to have been a skinny kid. He fought in the streets quite often as a boy (including the time his sister knocked him out with the swing of a frying pan) and eventually he found his way into a gymnasium in St. John where he received his first lessons in the art of boxing.

Finding that St. John was no place for an aspiring young boxer, Billy shipped out as a seaman on a schooner bound for Boston. Unable to break into the boxing game in that city, Billy worked his way across the country via railroad boxcars and in San Francisco began to make a name for himself as a fighter.

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June 30, 1891. Record book says Smith fought Jack Slavin. Wrong Smith!

Smith was managed by several different men during his ring career including Joe Lewis, Alf Kennedy, James W. Westcott, Rob Roy Ben Benton, Jack Fahie, Billy Roche and others.

April 14, 1893. Smith was rescued from drowning by his trainer and was unconscious for two hours. In spite of this, only three days later, Billy mowed down Tom Williams in two rounds to win the championship.

May 11, 1893. Billy's proposed fight with Nonpareil Jack Dempsey was cancelled due to the death of Bill's wife.

Aug. 29, 1893. In a fight with Tommy Ryan, Smith for the first time repeatedly used foul tactics in a ring fight. Although he was warned several times by the referee, he was not disqualified and came away with a six round draw.

May 15, 1894. In his fight with Eddie Butler, "Mysterious" Billy threw his opponent to the floor then punched him before he could rise again. Butler quit when the referee did not allow the claim of foul.

Mar. 1, 1895. Fight with Joe Walcott. In the fourth round, Smith got a headlock on Walcott and began punching him severely in the face completely ignoring referee Barney Aaron's command to break. In the seventh round, Billy bit Joe on the forehead and on Walcott's return to his corner he remarked to his manager Tom O'Rourke that "they ought to keep that person (Smith) in a cage." The bout ended up a draw.

Mar. 5, 1896. Smith beat three men in one night in a ring in London.

May 18, 1896. In the early rounds of his fight with Kid McCoy, Smith was repeatedly warned for holding and hitting, and for hitting on the break. In the sixth round, the fight was stopped and given to McCoy when Billy was resorting to using his knee, head and teeth.

July 2, 1896. Billy Gallagher and "Mysterious" Billy both roughed it up in this fight in San Francisco. Gallagher bit Smith's shoulder. Smith back-heeled Gallagher throwing him head-first to the floor. A minute later Smith threw him again to the floor and stepped on him. When Gallagher got up again, they went into a clinch with both men fighting foul. The referee couldn't separate the men and the police jumped into the ring to pry them apart. All of this occurred in just one round! The fight was declared a draw.

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July 6, 1896. Smith and Gallagher continued their fight, this time participating in a brawl in Young Mitchell's saloon in San Francisco.

Nov. 25, 1896. Billy hugged, tripped, and elbowed Tommy Ryan so flagrantly that the referee had no choice but to disqualify him.

Jan. 9, 1897. In his fight with Con Doyle, Smith fought the last six rounds using but one hand as his left arm had been broken. Draw 20.

Feb. 18, 1897. In a drunken brawl in a Broadway saloon, Smith fought one James McCauley. McCauley declined to press further charges and Billy was only fined \$3 for drunkenness.

Mar. 17, 1897. After losing to George Green, Smith claimed that he had once again broken his arm. Billy Gallagher accused Smith of quitting when he ran into him later in Carson City after the fight. Smith, in a rage, rushed Gallagher, knocked him down and jumped on him. Gallagher was so badly injured that two weeks later he was still in a sick bed.

Mar. 21, 1897. Smith attacked Young Mitchell in Mitchell's San Francisco saloon. Mitchell gave Billy a terrible beating. Smith retaliated by catching one of Mitchell's fingers in his mouth and chewing it to the bone. Smith then retreated into the night.

Dec. 13, 1897. In his fight with Johnny Gorman, Smith got a taste of his own medicine. Gorman was disqualified for throwing Billy down on two occasions and for trying to hit him when he was down. The crowd rushed the ring and a full scale riot was barely avoided. Billy won on a foul in five rounds.

Jan. 28, 1898. Billy threw Charley Johnson to the mat, hit him while he was on his back, then kicked him in the side. Smith was declared the loser, was ejected from the ring and the building. (According to one report he was also run out of town.)

June 3, 1898. Billy Stiff slipped to the canvas and Smith hit him while he was still down. LF 3.

Apr. 7, 1899. Smith refused to fight for less than his guarantee and thus disappointed the fight crowd who had come to see him fight George Green. (I include this to dispel the legend that "Smith would rather fight than eat". He wanted to get paid and eat just like any other boxer. But once paid or fed or given drink (alcoholic in content) he would

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probably rather fight than do anything else.)

Sept. 26, 1899. Smith was beaten up in a restaurant by a big waiter and then thrown into the street. Denver, Colorado.

Oct. 20, 1899. Bill's fight with Charley McKeever turned into a regular "rough-and-tumble" match. Smith was said to have gotten the worst of it in this foul-filled match. Philadelphia, ND 6.

Jan. 15, 1900. Billy lost the welterweight title to Rube Ferns when he was disqualified for dirty fighting in the clinches.

March 12, 1900. "Mysterious" Billy was warned several times for hitting below the belt of his opponent Young Mahoney but still came away with a 25 round draw.

March, 1900. Smith was forced to call off his proposed match with Joe Walcott due to an attack of malaria.

Apr. 17, 1900. Billy was guilty of continuously fouling Matty Matthews. Smith was knocked out in 19 rounds.

June 29, 1900. Billy used elbows and back-heeling in the 14th round against Jimmy Handler. In the 15th round, Smith twice smashed his elbow into Handler's face and was then disqualified.

Sept. 24, 1900. Billy lost on a foul to Joe Walcott after receiving a real beating.

Nov. 14, 1900. Smith threw Jim Judge to the floor and lost on a foul.

Oct. 28, 1902. Smith tried to "do up" a crowd of sailors on board a British ship at Portland, Oregon. He was beaten up by a Negro sailor and ended up by jumping overboard to escape.

1904. Billy ran a boarding house and a gym in Portland and worked on the side "Shanghaiing" sailors.

1905. Smith ran a saloon in Portland.

1906. Billy ran up against a man with a knife. Though cut on the stomach and leg, Billy knocked the guy out and personally dragged him to the police station.

Dec. 18, 1911. Billy was shot by a steamboat captain named Albert Loomis who was the present husband of Billy's

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ex-wife. Jealousy? Billy was walking with his ex-wife when the shooting occurred. Smith was shot four times.

Oct. 15, 1937. Billy died of uremia after a long illness. He passed away in Emanuel Hospital, Portland, Oregon. Buried in Multomah Cemetery there.

Bill Schutte