

Arly Allen
1101 West 21st St.
Lawrence, Kansas 66046
husted@aol.com

The Early Boxing Record of Joe Cox, the Missouri White Hope (1911)

Introduction

Joe Cox was from Ebenezer, Mo. and a graduate of Drury College in Springfield, Mo. While in college, he played football, wrestled and ran track. He was noted as the best all-round athlete at the college and had a time in the 100-yard dash of 9.8 seconds. He stood 6 ft. 2 inches in his stocking feet and weighed 185 pounds. ("Joe Cox may be Champion of the World Some Day," **Joplin Daily Globe** [abbreviated as **Joplin Globe**], March 12, 1911, p. 6)

He first appeared in the crowd at ringside in Sapulpa, Oklahoma (home of Carl Morris) when Jess Willard met Louis Fink, one of Morris' sparring partners, in Willard's first fight on February 15, 1911. Cox was described there as "the most promising Missouri heavyweight." ("Launching a New Oklahoma Heavyweight," **Daily Oklahoman**, Feb 19, 1911, p.9)

Clarence C. "C.C." Warren of Monett, Mo. signed Joe Cox to his first professional contract on February 20, 1911. Warren claimed to have been an experienced manager who had handled Jack Everhard of New Orleans and Jack Dailey of Wilmington, Delaware. Warren planned to have Cox make his debut against Jess Willard at Monett on March 16. ("Cox to Fight in Ring; Goes into Training," **Springfield Missouri Republican** [abbreviated as **Springfield Republican**], Feb. 21, 1911, p. 10)

The Fights of 1911

February 28, 1911: Al Allegar, Joplin, Mo. Exhibition in 3 rounds.

Cox's first recorded fight was an exhibition of 3 rounds fought at the Business Men's Athletic Club in Joplin, Mo. against a middleweight wrestler named Al Allegar of Joplin. This bout was a preliminary to the main bout between Pete Shaughnessy of Oklahoma City and "Unk" Russell of Philadelphia. Cox is described here as "Canada's 'white hope' who is after a fight with Carl Morris." ("Shaughnessy and Russell Draw in Fifteen Rounds," **Joplin Globe**, Mar. 1, 1911, p. 2; "Joe Cox may be Champion of the World Some Day," Mar. 12, 1911, p.6)

March 16, 1911: Louis Fink, Monett, Mo. Won by Knockout in 14th round.

Cox began training in Monett, but he soon shifted to training under Jimmy "Bowtie" Bronson's direction at the Business Men's Athletic Club in Joplin. By March 15 he had acquired a second manager, Billie Fleming, who became a partner with C.C. Warren. According to the Monett paper Cox had the bout with Fink under control after the 6th round. Both men suffered from a head-butt in the 6th round with Fink receiving a black eye and Cox a cut on the forehead. Cox almost won the bout in the 9th but ended it in the 14th with a quick punch at the end of the round. The bout was held at the Monett Athletic Club. ("Young Collegian will enter Ring next Thursday," **Joplin Globe**, Mar. 15, 1911, p. 3; Cox Fights Tonight with Oklahoman," **Springfield Republican**, Mar. 16, 1911, p. 5; "Joe Cox Whips Willard [sic for Fink]; Fight for 14 Rounds," Mar. 17, 1911,p.3; "Joe Cox Won," **Monett Star**, Mar. 17, 1911, p.4; "Joe Cox Puts Finke to Sleep in 14th Round," **Joplin Globe**, Mar., 17, 1911, p.9)

April 18, 1911: Tim Hurley, Monett, Mo. Won by Knockout in 3rd Round.

Cox prepared for a series of boxers after his bout with Fink, including Ulric Morris, brother of Carl Morris. But these fell though. Finally he was signed to box Tim Hurley who had lost a bout with Carl Morris the previous fall. Cox briefly trained for the fight with "Fireman" Jim Flynn who came from Oklahoma City to fight Jeff Clarke "The Fighting Ghost," in Joplin. In the process of training, Flynn beat up on Cox and sent him to the floor. Fortunately, Flynn fled town rather than meet Jeff Clark and Cox survived the lesson. Cox's weight was down to 181 by the time of the fight. He knocked Hurley out with a right to the jaw in 1 minute, 45 seconds of the third round. ("Flynn Consents to take Cox as Boxing Partner," **Joplin Globe**, April 9, 1911, p. 4; "Kid Cotton or Twin Sullivan for Jeff

Clarke,” April 15, 1911, p. 8; “Cox and Hurley ‘Go’ at Monett Tonight,” April 18, 1911, p.5; “Joe Cox Puts Tim Hurley Out in 3 Rounds,” **Springfield Republican**, April 19, 1911, p. 7; “Cox Wins in Third,” **Monett Star**, April 19, 1911, p. 3)

May 23, 1911: George Paylock, Joplin, Mo. Won by Technical Knockout in 4th Round

The victory over Hurley led to rumors once again of Cox being paired with Jess Willard of Oklahoma City. Supposedly the winner of this bout would fight Carl Morris. These fights did not come off. C.C. Warren became the sole manger of Cox at the beginning of May when he offered to bet \$2,000 on Cox against Morris and Billie Fleming dropped out. Instead of Morris, Cox was matched with another of Morris’ sparring partners, Harry Wuest of Cincinnati, for \$1,000. Cox was also signed to box Jack Tiernan on April 28 in Joplin, but broke a bone in his hand and had to cancel. He was next matched with George Paylock of Carthage in a 6 round bout in Joplin. Paylock was completely out manged and quit in the 5th round of a 6 round preliminary. (“Joe Cox may be given a chance at Carl Morris soon,” **Joplin Globe**, April 21, 1911, p. 6; “Cox after Morris,” **Monett Star**, May 2, 1911, p.1; “Morris Forced to Back Down,” May 4, 1911, p. 3; “Wuest and Cox may fight May 25,” **Tulsa Democrat**, May 9, 1911, p. 3; “Joe Cox Proved an Easy Victor,” May 26, 1911, p. 3; “Newspaper Decision,” **Daily Oklahoman**, May 24, 1911, p.8; “Clarke wins Decision over Mike Donovan,” **Springfield Republican**, May 24, 1911, p.1)

May 29, 1911: Harry Wuest, Sapulpa, Oklahoma. Lost by Knockout in 14th Round

Harry Wuest was the best of Carl Morris’ sparring partners and was undefeated in his own right. Although he was only in the second rank of the “white hopes,” he was far and away the best fighter Cox had met, with the exception of Jim Flynn. Flynn had flattened Cox in their sparring contests, thus showing what Cox was up against. Although the **Joplin Globe** assured Cox that “If the youngster goes good during the early rounds, he need not fear defeat” this proved not to be true. Cox held his own until the 8th round when he was knocked down for a count of seven. From then on the battle went to Wuest until the fourteenth round when he knocked Cox out. The papers declared, “This eliminates another scrapper from the race.” (“Cox Gets a Great Chance in his Go with Harry Wuest,” **Joplin Globe**, May 28, 1911, p. 10; “Joe Cox Loses Ring Battle in 14th Round,” **Springfield Republican**, May 30, 1911, p.1; “Joe Cox lasted Fourteen Rounds,” **Tulsa Democrat**, May 30, 1911, p. 3; “Wuest Puts Out Missouri Hope,” **Daily Oklahoman**, May 30, 1911, p. 8)

September 4, 1911: Mike Schreck, Springfield, Mo. Won in a decision, 10 rounds.

Following the Wuest fight, C.C. Warren pulled Cox from competition. He went to rest on a farm near Springfield. In the meantime, the Springfield Athletic club had been chartered (June 13, 1911) and Bronson’s club in Joplin had been shut down on orders of Governor Herbert S. Hadley. Cox therefore shifted his headquarters to Springfield from Joplin. A bout with Jim Harper, who had lost to Carl Morris, was scheduled for July, but again this does not seem to have come off. Cox spent the summer in retirement. (“ ‘White Hopes’ to Show Claims at Springfield,” **Joplin Globe**, July 11, 1911, p. 6)

The next fight for Cox was with Mike Schreck of Cincinnati on September 4, 1911. In a strange twist of fate, “Professor” Billy McCarney, Schreck’s manager, wrote a column for the **Springfield Leader**, praising Cox and quoting Harry Wuest’s manger as saying that Cox was better than any of the boys on the East Coast. Cox therefore counted on a victory over Schreck as putting him back on the road to contention. The bout was fast and Cox was the aggressor for most of the fight, but he was not able to put Schreck out. The **Springfield Leader** declared the fight a draw, but the **Joplin News Herald**, **Joplin Globe** and the **Springfield Republican** declared Cox the winner. (Billy McCarney, “Cox is Getting Known in East,” **Springfield Leader**, August 30, 1911, p. 2; “Cox looks Forward to Big Victory,” **Springfield Republican**, August 31, 1911, p. 4; “Cox and Schreck Battle to Draw,” **Springfield Leader**, Sept. 5, 1911, p.3; “ Joe Cox Proves he can Box Some with M. Schreck,” **Joplin News Herald**, Sept. 5, 1911, p.3; “Cox defeats Schreck,” **Joplin Globe**, Sept. 5, 1911, p.1; “Cox is Winner in Bout with Schreck,” **Springfield Republican**, Sept. 5, 1911, p. 4)

October 9, 1911: Jess Willard, Springfield, Mo. Won Technical Knockout in 5th Round.

The acclaim Cox had sought as a result of a victory over Mike Schreck did not develop. The fans turned against him and considered the victory a defeat. **The Daily Oklahoman** was surprised that Schreck had lasted 10 rounds, “for had he been in that form [which he displayed with Carl Morris] he could not have lasted ten rounds with a bantam.” Nonetheless, Cox was next paired with Jess Willard whom he had been seeking since his first professional fight.

(“All Sport,” **Daily Oklahoman**, Sept. 6, 1911, p. 8; “Cox Matched with Willard for Next Bout,” **Springfield Republican**, Oct. 1, 1911, p. 6; “Cox to Galena to Resume his Training Work,” Oct. 3, 1911, p.4)

Willard’s situation was complicated. He had been convicted of “prizefighting” in Oklahoma in June and had fled the state to avoid paying a fine of \$100. His manager, A.W. Phillips, upon learning that Cox was in disrepute with his own fans, wanted Willard to throw the fight. Willard refused. Phillips then left Willard without any money and turned him in to the Springfield police for fleeing the warrant in Oklahoma. Willard was sent to jail. He was only let out on the assurance that he would let Cox win the fight. (“Jess Willard Confesses Fake,” **Los Angeles Times**, Feb. 17, 1913, pt. III, p. 1; “Jess Willard is in Town,” Mar. 29, 1913, pt. III, p.3)

At the same time, Governor Hadley visited Springfield and proposed to stop the fight and close down the athletic club. In order to avoid this, the local prosecutor promised to fill the hall with policemen who would arrest the fighters if things got rough. Faced with this situation, Willard gave up. The fight lasted 5 rounds and at the end, Willard threw up his hands and told Jimmy Bronson, the referee, he was in no condition to fight. Then he walked out of the ring. Billy McCarney, who had become Willard’s manager for this fight, yelled at him “ What are you quitting for? You’re not hurt, you big oaf!” “ I know that, Mr. McCarney,” Jess is supposed to have said, “but it’s a wise man who quits before he gets hurt.” Cox won the decision. (“Hadley asks for Report on Boxing Mills,” **Springfield Republican**, Oct. 10, 1911, p. 1; “Willard Quits End of Fifth with Joe Cox,” Oct. 10, 1911, p.3; John D. McCallum, **The World Heavyweight Boxing Championship. A History** (Radnor, PA: Chilton Books, 1974), pp. 81-83)

November 1, 1911: Kid Edenfeld, Ft. Smith, Arkansas Won on Foul in 2nd Round.

Despite the strange developments of the Willard fight, Cox finally regained favor with the local fans. However, he appears to have lost the services of his remaining manager, C. C. Warren. He now came under the management of “Dump” Lippman. Lippman accepted a bid to fight in Ft. Smith while efforts were being made to pair him with another fighter who would allow him to shine. Kid Edenfeld was an unknown from San Antonio, Texas. Cox outfought Edenfeld through the first round, knocking him down four times. In the second round, Edenfeld lost his temper and hit Cox a smashing blow below the belt. The referee stopped the fight, giving the bout to Cox. Cox was then taken to a local physician and was considered in serious condition. (“Cox is again in Esteem by Winning Mill,” **Springfield Republican**, Oct. 11, 1911, p. 4; Cox to fight Friday Night in Ft. Smith,” Nov. 1, 1911, p. 4; “Cox injured by Opponent Hitting Foul,” Nov. 2, 1911, p. 4)

December 5, 1911: “Walter Monahan” [Luther McCarty], Springfield, Mo. Lost by Knockout in 6th Round.

“Dump” Lippman and Joe Cox returned to Springfield on November 5 and began looking for a new match. They obtained one with “Fighting Garry” Goetz of Chicago. Billy McCarney, who now worked as the matchmaker at the Springfield Athletic Club, went to Chicago to get Goetz. But at the last minute, Goetz backed out. Looking around for a substitute, McCarney contacted Sig Hart, Jack Johnson’s trainer at Reno. Hart loaned McCarney a new man he had, Luther McCarty. Since Cox was considered the more experienced fighter, McCarney chose to give McCarty the pseudonym of Walter Monahan, Johnson’s sparring partner. In this way, should he lose, McCarty’s name would not be tarnished. But McCarty did not lose. He destroyed Cox in six rounds and ended Cox’s hope for ring honors. McCarty’s showing so impressed McCarney that he stole him from Hart and brought him to Springfield on a permanent basis. **The Springfield Republican** was so displeased with Cox’s showing that it did not carry the results of the fight. Cox disappeared from the paper until January, when it was announced that he had quit the ring and was now selling real estate. Although he attempted a comeback in 1915, he never amounted to anything. (“Cox and Manager Return to City,” **Springfield Republican**, Nov. 5, 1911, p. 4; “Cox to meet Goetz before Club here,” Nov. 26, 1911, p.8; “Cox to meet Worthy Foe in Gamy Goetz,” Dec. 3, 1911, p. 6. This is the last article in the Springfield paper on Joe Cox until 1912. There is no report of the substitution of Monahan for Goetz, or of the outcome of the fight itself. The next article on Cox is this: “ Cox, Once Slated for Championship, Gives up Boxing,” **Springfield Leader**, Jan. 14, 1912, p. 10)

Conclusion

Joe Cox was just one of the many who answered the call to become “The Great White Hope.” It is difficult to tell why Cox failed, for he seemed to have the strength and the talent to go further than he did. It is just possible that he suffered his defeats in part because of poor managers. C.C. Warren and Billie Fleming were constantly trying to pair Cox with Carl Morris and Jess Willard before he had been properly trained. Fortunately, they failed. The decision to

have Cox fight Harry Wuest when he did was a particularly poor one. Wuest was older and much wiser in the ring than Cox. It was not want of strength that led to Cox's defeat, but lack of ring knowledge. As Jeff Clarke, the "Joplin Ghost" who trained with Cox said, "He worked well for five rounds and really hurt Wuest time and again, but he wore himself out with useless fighting. He did not seem to know how to keep away from the other fellow and rest when he got the chance." Had Cox been given another few months of training he might well have been able to defeat Wuest, and his career might have been different. ("Sportographs," **Joplin Globe**, May 31, 1911, p.6).

Still, one cannot blame his managers too much as both Cox and the local fans thought he was capable of beating Wuest. Had Jimmy "Bowtie" Bronson or "Professor" Billy McCarney taken Cox in hand, he may have fared better. But they were there, they knew him, and they chose not to accept the challenge Cox presented. We must accept their judgment.

Joe Cox represents a fighter who came close to being a contender, but not close enough.

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HAPPY 90th BIRTHDAY, GEORGE LATKA

"Boxing Professor" Celebrating 90th Today

By Charlie Ross

The boxing professor from San Jose, **George Latka**, joined Planet Earth back in 1914, out in Kalamazoo, MI but has been a Caliprunan since the mid-30s. Until recent years, he and his wife, **Trudie**, owned and operated the Golden Glove Tavern at Huntington Beach.

He began his boxing career in Gary, Indiana (151-8), as an Amateur, and went on to a professional boxing career (California), finishing with a 49-6 record. He was rated in the top 10 lightweights of the world in 1940, 1941 and 1942, and his career boasts a Draw versus lightweight champ **Sammy Angott** (1940), a Decision win over **Baby Arizmendi** (1940), and wins over former featherweight champs **Richie Lemos** and **Petey Scalzo** (both in 1942).

Retiring in 1942, George has kept his glove in by involvements in a litany of boxing matters, including 28 years as both a referee and judge. Perhaps you saw him in his movie role as the referee in **Jake La Motta's** "Raging Bull?"

Graduating from UCLA with a B.S. in Education made him the first professional boxer to graduate from a University; hence the sobriquet "Boxing Professor."

Among his personal honors and achievements, George is the only recipient Inducted into the W.B.H.O.F. in 2 categories (boxer and referee), and is an Inducted member of the Orange County Sports Hall of Fame as well, and holds the **Joe Louis** Humanitarian Award.

They don't come any nicer than George Latka. Join "Punchlines" and many others across the country in sending along greetings to this living legend and West Coast boxing icon at 8232 Manderville Drive, Huntington Beach, CA 92646.



The loving, loveable Latkas, Trudie and George, photoed at 4-hr. autographing session in connection with the 2002



Former World-Class lightweight George "The Boxing Professor" Latka and his Manager, Actor George Raft (Circa 1940) ...