

## CARL TREMAINE

By Steven J. Canton January 21, 2007

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Carl Tremaine, a 5'3" bantamweight, dominated and terrorized other opponents from 1918-1929. His victory over Eddie "Cannonball" Martin by 12 round decision on February 24, 1925 is still considered to be the greatest fight ever fought in the city of Cleveland, Ohio. Though Martin was the world champion, this was a non-title fight and was fought over the weight limit since Martin did not want to jeopardize losing his title. Tremaine, who is listed as being born in Listowel, Ontario, Canada on August 26, 1899, died on July 15, 1936. But, did he really die then?



Carmelo Cantalupo (AKA Carl Tremaine) was the oldest son born to Ciro Cantalupo and Rosa Di Vita, in Palermo, Sicily on November 11, 1901. The Cantalupos (which translates into "song of the wolf") were said to have been from wealthy royalty. Rosario Di Vita, Rosa's brother, a successful author and poet, had already fled to New York to escape the "Black Hand's" ransom threats, when he received word that Carmelo and sister Concetta would be kidnapped if ransom wasn't paid by the Cantalupos. He bought tickets for his sister Rosa, Ciro, Carmelo and Concetta on the next boat out. Another child, Antoinette, was born on the ship, and they all arrived in New York on Nov. 27, 1908.



The Cantalupos had difficulty making ends meet in the new world. Ciro took a job as a bookbinder and Rosa as a seamstress. In 1918, Carmelo left home to become a "traveling salesman" to help the family. He lied about his age, saying he was born in 1899. He would be gone for



weeks at a time, and when he returned he always had money to bail the family out of their financial difficulties. He had become a professional prizefighter, a real taboo for a family with the background of the Cantalupos. To form his ring name, he used the maiden name of his great grandmother Tremaine and shortened Carmelo to Carl, thus Carl Tremaine was born. He was "born in

Listowel, Ontario," where they had relatives, and fought out of Cleveland, Ohio and sometimes Detroit, Michigan.



Jimmy Dunn

Jimmy Dunn, one of the better trainers of the day, who developed him into a great fighter, handled Tremaine. It is said that the only thing that prevented Tremaine from becoming the world champion is that he never got the opportunity to fight for the title. During his heyday he would electrify the fight crowds with his non-stop style. Two of his biggest fans were Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, who later became two of the leading sports writers of the



Joe Shuster



Jerry Siegel

day. They called him the fighter with "fists of steel," and marveled at his quiet mild manner out of the ring and his ferociousness inside the ring.

Tremaine was told that he would finally get his title fight. All he had to do was sign with the "mob." This terrified him as he recalled why his family had to leave Italy in the first place. He said he was going to retire and get out of the sport. Tremaine hung up his gloves and disappeared from the scene. There is talk that he may have "staged" his death so that he could leave the sport permanently. In any case, he changed his name to Carl Kent, moved back to New York City and bought his way into the electrician's union. He died on March 17, 1989, at the age of 87.



The first issue of Superman

The sportswriters, Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, created the Superman character, who was dubbed "The Man of Steel." He was Clark Kent, mild mannered reporter by day and Superman, a heroic crime-fighter by night. The physical resemblances of the early sketches of Superman to the pictures of Carl Tremaine are uncanny.



An early sketch of Superman from 1933

September 28, 1996 was the date of a boxing show in Ft. Myers, Florida where Hall of Fame boxing archivist Hank Kaplan, who was our guest, and my father met. My father was making his final trip to various members of our family, accompanied by my younger sister, Amy. He was put in a nursing home shortly thereafter and died of Alzheimer's. On the way back from the airport, my father casually mentioned to Hank that his brother had been a boxer and had fought under the name of Carl Tremaine. Hank was intrigued and questioned him further. My father said he had boxed under an alias because the family would have disapproved, and another brother Eddie, also boxed under the name of Eddie Tremaine.



Steve Canton, Carl Kent (Tremaine), and Eddie Canton (Tremaine)

Hank said that my father knew things about Tremaine that only family would know. He knew his height, weight, that he had lied about his age by two years, and that he boxed out of Cleveland. After that

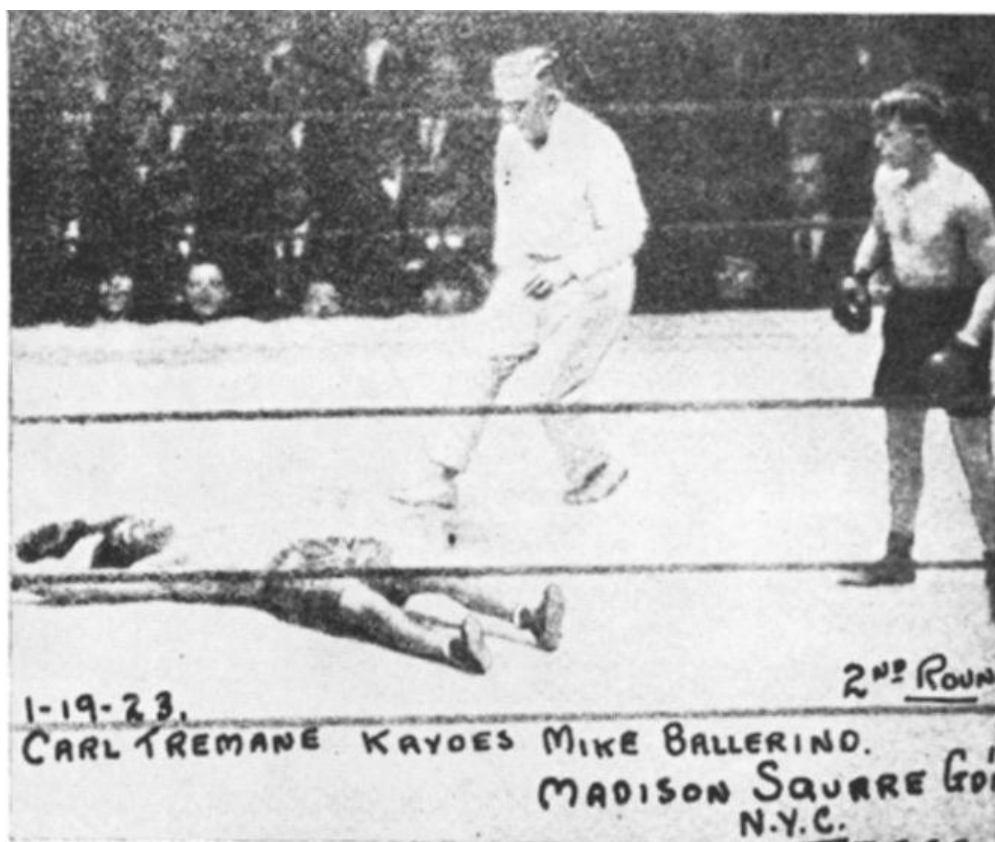
weekend, Hank scoured the archives and sent numerous photos and clippings to me. Dan Cuoco and other IBRO members have helped tremendously with their research. One of the e-mails I received said that Tremaine, who supposedly was of French-Canadian decent, was actually of Italian decent. As his boxing record and details of his life are rediscovered, perhaps Tremaine's impact on the sport will be fully appreciated. He has been on the ballot for induction in the International Boxing Hall of Fame the past two years, but although he hasn't been voted in yet, Hank Kaplan has said, "He gets my vote." The legacy of my uncle, Carmelo Cantalupo, Carl Tremaine, Carl Kent, and the perhaps the inspiration for Superman, lives on.



**(Left) CARL TREMAINE & TRIS SPEAKER**



**Carl Tremaine with Heavyweight champion Jess Willard**



**1-19-23.  
CARL TREMAINE KAYOES MIKE BALLERINO.  
MADISON SQUARE GOR  
N.Y.C. 2<sup>ND</sup> ROUND**