

Welcome to 8th Edition of the Boxing Biographies Newsletter

Saturday, 8th September 2007

Each new edition we will feature one of the fighters from our new and fast growing web site which, unlike any other site, provides fistic fans with the actual fight reports as published in the press from 1850 to present day. Whenever possible they will be reproduced along with the photographs used in the original article so readers get a real taste of some of the rich history of the Noble Science across the years. In addition we also provide wide range of articles written especially for the site by our small team of in house staff. Please visit our site you will not be disappointed and we look forward to your comments and suggestions on how we may make improvements to the site.

Many thanks Rob Snell, Manos & Grim.X

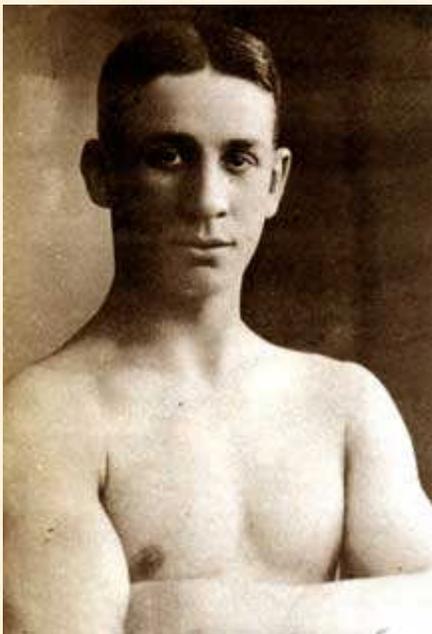
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Tommy Ryan 1911 articles

In 1911 Tommy Ryan wrote a series of articles for the Syracuse Herald entitled "Nineteen Years In The Ring", the story of the life and battles Of Tommy Ryan, retired middleweight champion of the world as written by himself.

It is I believe the custom to start a story of a persons life history with the facts of his birth. I shall doubtless surprise some of my readers by statements which I shall make in this as well as the other articles.



The general impression among ring followers all over the country is that I am of Jewish parentage. While I have nothing but the highest regard for that race , I am not a member of it.I was born in the little town of Redwood in Jefferson County, New York on March 31st 1870. My father was a Frenchman and my mother English I was christened Joseph Younges (note the spelling,) how I came to be known as Tommy Ryan will be made known in another article.

When I was a youngster my parents moved to Syracuse and I received my early Education in the public schools in Salt City. While I have been away from Syracuse at various times for considerable periods I still look upon that city as

my home and will always be viewed by me as such.

However, the boyhood Joys and troubles of a youngster will hardly be of Interest to the great majority of my readers so I will pass over fifteen years by simply, stating that I had as many troubles and scrapes as the average youngster and managed to live through them. My fifteenth birthday found me as a water boy with, one of the construction gangs on the Toledo & Ann Arbor railway in Michigan.

The line was being constructed at that time, and it was among the railway laborers that I got my first smack of fighting. Camps were erected along the line of the railway several miles apart. Part of the equipment of every camp seemed to be a few pairs of boxing gloves, for men living a clean, healthy life. in the open are always followers of any clean, healthful sport, such as boxing is.

Prior to going to Michigan I had never seer, any regular boxing bouts. While I was in Syracuse a man named Meyers who used to keep a saloon on Railroad street and every Saturday night there would be a couple of short bouts in the bar room. . As I was a small boy at that time I was frequently kicked out. In fact, I was never allowed In the room when any of the men knew I was there. They say that boys will be boys, and when a boy wants to see anything he will generally succeed. I was no exception, and I managed by devious ways to see a few of these bouts.

After I had been in the construction camp for a short time I was allowed to put on the gloves myself. Right here I want to tell my readers that the boxing glove of those days and the glove of to-day are entirely different things, though known, by the same name. The boxing glove of 1885 was a skin-tight leather glove that was devised more for the protection of the hand of the boxer wearing it than for the protection of the man upon whom it was to be used.

Boxing seemed to come quite natural to me I was quick on my feet and could use my hands rather well I have never had a boxing lesson In my life, but experience Is the best lesson that any one can have. I was simply put up against a man and he went after me. It was up to me to look out for myself, and It was in such bouts that I learned the first movements of side-stepping, feinting and parrying that afterwards gave me a reputation in the boxing world.

Before I had been boxing many weeks I was able to outbox any man in the camp My fellow workers took considerable pride in my ability and being but a youngster, I came to look upon myself as rather clever. It gave me confidence, something that is greatly needed to make a good boxer However, there is such a thing as being over-confident, but I am not going to take up that question here.

The various camps soon began to arrange bouts between their respective boxing champions – the best man In the camp meeting the best of an other. When such a

bout was arranged The men from our camp would get out the hand cars and make the trip To the camp where the bout would be held.

I was taken the round of all the camps and was returned a winner In every bout. The bouts were all with the skin-tight gloves and such things as rounds were unknown. There would be a signal to start, and it was a case of keep fighting until one man was knocked out or until one gave up. Some of those camp fights of mine lasted only a few minutes while others required a full hour. The bouts usually took place in a big mess house or in the open air. There were no padded canvas floors to fall upon, no skilled seconds to take care of you every three minutes . the floors were uneven, rough and hard. Stimulants during the bouts were entirely out of the question.

Part 2

Some early fights

When I joined the Michigan railways construction camps I was a bit backward in giving my name. I had run away from home and for want of something better I was known as the Syracuse Kid. After I had become champion of all the construction camps my friends began to look around for other men for me to conquer. The fact that I was the champion did not meet with unanimous approval In some of the rival camps and they began to offer inducements to get good boxers to take up residence with them.



It was in this way that one of the camps got a new cook. He was a fine built man and it turned out he had gained a little reputation as a prize fighter. His camp mates were just spoiling to see me beaten, while my own mates were not at all backward in putting me against the new man, who gave the name of English. Considerable money changed hands on the various bouts and my camp mates saw a chance to gather in some more of the surplus coin. The match was soon made.

Forty five minutes after English and I started our affair his seconds threw In the towel to signal that their man had taken enough punishment. I had not escaped myself but being quicker on my feet and as capable as my opponent with my hands I came out as victor.

With my reputation as a boxer spreading outside the camp it became necessary that I take some name or give my own .I was afraid I would be in for a good “**Tanning** “ if I gave my own name and my father heard about it so I took a name

that seemed easy to remember. Tommy Ryan, the brewer, was mayor of Syracuse , my home town ,at that time. The name was easy to remember so I promptly christened myself "**Tommy Ryan**" and to this day I am known by in connection with ring affairs. There are few fans who would recognize my ring career under the name of Joseph Youngs.

Our camp was located outside of the little town of Marion, Michigan and the fight fans were very proud of a fellow named Joe Johnson. It was under the name of Tommy Ryan that I fought him and it was my first battle under anything like recognized rules. There were rounds and the old London Prize rules were to govern. All my other fights had taken place in a ring formed of the spectators.

Johnson was clever and a bit heavier than I. He also had a bit more ring experience and I found it a bit hard to get used to the rules. However, my foot work again came to my aid for I danced around Johnson after three rounds and knocked him out in the fifth.

This bout added to my reputation I became known outside of the construction camps and nearby towns and a few of the fans in the cities began to hear of "**a clever and hard hitting kid in the railway camps**"

Some sporting men in Cadillac, Michigan , heard of me and came to the camp to see me. They were satisfied with my showing and offered me a bout In Lake city , Michigan, with a fellow named Dick England. Dick worked in a lumber camp and was a great favorite. He had beaten a man backed by the Cadillac men and they were out for revenge.

For the first time in my life I was given some actual training to be in fit physical condition for the bout. I quit my job in the railway camp And set out to be a real pugilist. The training I had was, in comparison with modern training, crude but I was in great condition for the bout. Wagering on the bout was heavy. England was a real favorite and my Cadillac backers covered all the bets they could.

When the bout started I soon realized that I was up against the best man who had ever faced me. England was taking no chances and we both boxed wearily for a few rounds. It was by pecking Jabbing and getting clear that I gradually wore him down and I ended the bout in the thirty third round with a knockout. My weight at that time was around 128-130 pounds, but I was growing .My matches were mostly with light weights though in some of the Construction camp bouts I had to give away as much as thirty pounds.

Going to Detroit a group of sporting men their arranged to give me *a try out* with Ed Austin, a middleweight who was very popular there at that time. That my showing was satisfactory may be judged by the fact that I was immediately matched with the best lightweight of whom Detroit could boast at that time — Martin Shaughnessy.

Shaughnessy was a figure in the Boxing world; I was almost an absolute unknown. Few persons thought that I stood even a chance with the experienced man, I was a stranger in a strange city. Still in my teens, I had a lot to learn about the ring game. I had no trainer, no place to train and no one to advise me.

I knew, of course, that I would have to be In fine condition to beat Shaughnessy, for such a thing as him defeating me never entered my head. Every morning I used to go out to the race track and have a long run. For a few cents I would get a boy to rub me down after my exertions and that was the sum total of my training.

If you were to mention the name T.A.Dorgan with regard to boxing I think few people would have any clue as to who he was. However , the mention of the name TAD would elicit a very different response. As a collector of old newspaper articles and cartoons I have long admired his work but not till very recently knew much about the man behind some of the best fight reports, and artwork, produced over some twenty or more years.

This lovely tribute to TAD was published on 23rd June 1929

Dry or Hilarious Wit, Near the End.



No man ever loved life more tumultuous, zestful, jovial life. No man ever had a harder fight to live at all. And **"Tad" is dead. His "dime-a-dozen ticker."** as he called his ailing heart, has ticked out., But

T. A. Dorgan, the cartoonist whose sense of humor raised him into a class by himself in the affections of young and old everywhere, wouldn't want any "tear squeezing" now. He hated "sob" stories about him when he was alive, and his astounding courage, his uproarious vitality in the face of extraordinary odds, tempted many a writer to play up the jinxes that Tad conquered.

Tad had only one obsession—to keep as many people laughing, or at worst

smiling, as he could. Almost from the beginning of his career his cartoons took on. They made people laugh at themselves and at their idols of Ring, Diamond and Turf.

When he was a small baseball playing Mischievous kid on the side street sand Lots of San Francisco, Tad wanted to become a great pugilist. He followed John L. Sullivan and Jim Corbett along the streets, appropriately worshipful. Then he had an accident while playing around a house moving job that crushed off four fingers of his right hand. That ended his pugilistic aspirations- but it gave America a great cartoonist.

He became a “**Southpaw**” – his own Coinage –and began a steady rise. Arthur Brisbane saw Tad’s talent and Tad became the great editors Favorite protégé. Tad made millions laugh For twenty five years. He created his famous Animal characters, “Judge Rummy”, “Fedink”, “Reno Ruth” And “Bunk”, and he probably created more vigorous American Slang than any other man has – or ever will.

Eight years ago the doctors told Tad that he’d have to withdraw completely from the life along Broadway, at the ringside and in the stands that he had taken part in so long and joyously. He shrugged and kept on Drawing his cartoons: for eight years of seclusion. During which he couldn’t even walk upstairs in his Great Neck, Long Island home he continued To keep his pen attuned to the pulse of life. few of his vast Audience knew that he was less active than in the past.

Tad who’s phrases like “**The cat’s pajamas**”, “**Yes, we have no bananas**”, “**cheaters**”, “**skimmers**” and “**as busy as a one armed paper hanger with the hives**” ran from coast to coast and became virtually a part of the language was always fond of practical jokes. He could perpetrate them with an originality peculiarly his own.

For instance, Tad once gave Harry Hershfield, the cartoonist, Two tickets to a boxing bout in the old Madison Square Garden. Harry and another friend of Tad’s went to the match, passing Tad in the lobby. They had excellent box seats and after the fight tad came up to Harry and said “You’re the luckiest guy I ever hope to see. I gave you two tickets dated a year ago just to see the commotion At the box office when you presented them. But they let you in ! the jokes on me”

Again, Tad and Tom Powers, another famous cartoonist, once attended A six day bike race. On the way out early in the morning Tad got Into an altercation with a member of the crowd who was trying to Shove his way out too fast. Tad “socked” him and the man called the police. At the station house Tad gave his name as “**Thomas Jones**”. Later, when The jailer came round to let the cartoonist out – his adversary had not pressed charges – Tad had forgotten his alias and didn’t respond When the name “Thomas Jones” was called. He merely thought What a lucky fellow that man Jones was for being released.



To the last Tad kept an atmosphere of laughter around him – as well as in the Myriad homes where his drawings and sharp running comment were enjoyed. Death may hover always at the door, and that was the case throughout those Sequestered long years, but Tad could laugh and think up collapsing glasses and dancing plates with which to surprise his wife and mother. He Out gamed death. and his created and popularised have gone into the language of the English speaking world.

He had the American gift of skinning down to the point in the “balloons” (the hand lettered words in cartoons and comic strips) as well as in his drawn characters. He has joined the ranks of great native humorists and satirists like Nye and Twain and Riley and future generations will absorb much of the spirit of his lifetime through his quarter of a century of contributions.

Strangely his last “**Indoor Sports**” published posthumously had in black Letters in one of the “balloons” “**This will be the death of me**”