

## **Feeney a Boxer from Skaneateles**

Beth Battie, Town Historian

Calling upon his Irish love of a good fight, Jack Feeney became the famous professional boxer from Skaneateles. He was born to James E. Feeney and Mary Stinson Feeney on April 14, 1886 on the hillside farm on Old Seneca Turnpike, where he lived throughout his entire life. He was one of ten children whose grandparents had immigrated from Ireland in the 1840's.

As a kid, he and his brothers, as well as other boys from the neighborhood, worked out in the yards and barns of Skaneateles. He then trained under boxer Billy Ryan, one of the best featherweight and lightweight boxers from Syracuse. Jack was 22 when he fought his first professional fight in Utica in 1908 against "Kid" Mathews.

Jack knocked out his opponent in the second round. The excited public wanted to see more of this new aggressive fighter. Subsequently, in 1909 he fought in nine matches, winning seven while the other two were declared draws.

Jack was to fight in 42 matches, from 1908 to 1915, many of these in the arena at the Alhambra in Syracuse. In all those fights, he was knocked out only twice. He fought men with names such as "Cyclone" Galvin, "Dodo" Maher, and "Kid" Kansas. However, he was always known as "Jack Feeney of Skaneateles."

His fight with "Kid" Kansas, occurred in August of 1914, in the Syracuse arena on South Salina Street. Not only was this the first boxing match to be held there, but it was also historic because this was the first boxing event that women of this area were allowed to attend. The cost of admission was the low price of fifty cents.

In 1915, the boxer took time out to marry Lorena Cronin. Then, fighting a bout with pleurisy, he went on to box with Johnny Riley of Rochester, which proved to be a disaster. His last fight was in October of 1915 when he fought "Battling" Jack Kelly. The boxers were too evenly matched: and the fight was finally called by the referee.

Tired, and now 28-years old, Jack returned to the farm and worked as a paper maker in the Skaneateles mills. He and Lorena raised their ten children on the very farm where he was born. Then, in 1957, Jack, retired.

However, he always kept his interest in boxing. He coached and refereed matches in Auburn, and at the Skaneateles High School where a boxing program had been organized by Coach Arthur Hyatt.

Jack's final battle was a bout with cancer. This was to be his last fight. The welterweight champion of Central New York died December 1, 1967 at the age of 81, in Auburn Memorial Hospital.