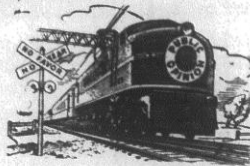


# SUNDAY

No Fear--No Favor



# HERALD

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## Capt. Bond's Shrine of Many Famous Fighters Stratford Training Plot Once Seethed with Action

### Magner Recalls Good Old Days Of Levinsky, Brown and Williams

By T. F. MAGNER

Former Sports Editor of the Sunday Herald

Fight managers, boxers and their trainers, with few exceptions are sentimentalists.

And Joe Smith of Bridgeport, who saw Battling Levinsky come all the way from an obscure third-rater to a world's light-heavyweight championship and watched many ambitious youngsters end their ring hopes, brief in many instances, with nothing left but a pair of curled ears and a battered beak, is no exception.

### DUMB DAN LEADS INVASION

It was sentiment that brought Trainer Smith back the other day to where Capt. John Bond's famous training quarters stood for many years on the Housatonic waterfront in Stratford.

For early in October, 1914, Smith and Dan Morgan, manager of many of the country's leaders boxers of that era, invaded Stratford and pulled in at Bond's with a small army of glove wielders to train for subsequent bouts.

Morgan, known as "Dumb Dan" because he got all the words in in one breath when it came to talking shop, took a lease on the quarters. For some years prior to this the place had not been used to any extent.

Smith and the fighters soon made friends with the neighbors around the training quarters and ring fans flocked over every after noon to watch the boys in action.

Heading the vanguard was Morgan's prize box office attraction - Battling Levinsky of Philly, one of the cleverest light-heavyweights of modern fistiana.

Levinsky, whose real name is Bernard Lebowitz, fought everybody in his class at least a half dozen times and made a lot of dough for "Dumb Dan."



CAPT. T. F. MAGNER

In the years of 1912 and 1913, Jack Dillon, the Hoosier Killer out of Indianapolis, claimed the light-heavyweight title after cleaning the list of boxers in the 160-175 pound class, but never really attempted to capitalize on it.

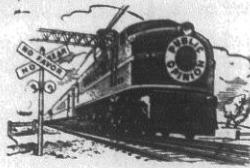
Dillon and Levinsky became "sweethearts" in the ring and fought several times. Morgan claimed the title when his man was given a decision over the Indiana boxer in a 12 round fight at Boston on Oct. 24, 1916.

Levinsky rode along with his title until Georges Carpentier came over from France and knocked him out in four rounds. This fight was held in the open air at Jersey City on Oct. 12, 1920. It wasn't long after that Morgan and Levinsky parted and Joe Smith took over as Barney's manager. At present Levinsky is selling real estate in Philly where he resides with his wife and two daughters.

### BIG ARRAY OF BOXERS

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Others who came to Stratford at the time were Otto Kohler of Cleveland, Johnny Howard, now a police lieutenant in Bayonne, Tom Kennedy, a big heavyweight now in the movies, Valentine Braun, known in the ring as Knockout Brown and another battler who brought in plenty of shekels for Morgan.

In two years Brown made \$26,000 in the ring, fought them all in the lightweight class, but never became a champion. At present he is working in a defense factory in New Jersey.

The remainder of the invasion consisted of Walter Mohr, Special Delivery Hirsch, Phil Bloom, Battling Hontz, Bobby Reynolds and Barry Williams, a burly light-heavyweight who resembled Levinsky in appearance and stature. Williams is seen occasionally in a movie scene.

"These were glorious times," Smith remarked as he stood at the end of the road leading to Bond's old place. "All the boys worked hard and enjoyed 'Cappy' Bond's genial hospitality. It's gone now and only the spirit of it remains."

Just then Shang Wheeler, now 72, but looking more like 27 in his summer tan, happened along. Shang was chasing a bivalve that roamed unceremoniously from the Wheeler Oyster farm across the river in Milford.

And Jack Hennessy, a Stratford gendarme, driving a police car and inspecting the shore front pulled up. Wheeler, a trainer of boxers in his early days, and Hennessy, remember the good times at Bond's.

"Only excitement around here now is the neighbors' kids out there swimming," piped Hennessy.

"How about the rise and fall of the tide?" asked Shang. "Isn't that excitement too?"

Joe Smith pointed across the river.

"Those salt marshes," he recalled, "are still waving like a field of ripe wheat in a Kansas wind. Many were the hours we spent watching the gray sails on the boats as they appeared and disappeared along the horizon."

## NOT SAME PLACE

But for all of that Bond's was not the same old place to Smitty. Only a few wood piles remain of the

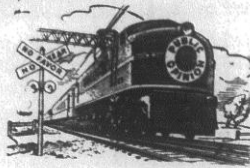
old dock and weeds grow in the sand where the training quarters once stood.



SELDOM WAS A PICTURE taken at Bond's unless John himself was declared in by the boys. Here's a group photo from Shang Wheeler's collection of famous sports personalities. Top row, left to right—Johnny Howard, Capt. Bond and Battling Levinsky. Middle row, left to right, Johnny Red Allen, Battling Hontz, Mohawk Jimmy Coffey and Fighting Mike Smolick. Front row, left to right, Knockout Brown, Bobby Reynolds, One-Punch Howard and Joe Smith.

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For more than a quarter of a century Bond's training quarters was the shrine of famous fighters, and those who aspired for such honors in the ring game.

Forty-eight years ago it had its rendezvous when Tommy Ryan, who had just won the welter-weight title by defeating Mysterious Billy Smith in 20 rounds at Minneapolis, came there. Ryan and a friend had been associated in the Michigan lumber camps and through this friendship he happened to come to Stratford.

Ryan was so impressed with the place that he decided to train there. As champion, Ryan was, of course, the cynosure of all eyes and the center of an admiring throng. It was Ryan's coming that made Bond's Dock one of the important places in town.

## CENTURY-OLD STRUCTURE

After Tommy had been there for a year or more, Capt. Bond removed the old structure which had stood for more than 100 years. He engaged the assistance of the "shore lilies" and it was all they could do to pull down the building which had been trunneled and doweled, and was of old fashioned substantial construction.

The new building was erected in 1896 and torn down in 1930. When razed it was found that in this case the old building was in better state of preservation than the new one.

Old John Bond was one of the most beloved characters known to the boxing world. He was a member of a family of well known boatmen from Long Island and came to Stratford in 1889, after having lived for several years in California where he was sheriff of Solano county and had charge of a huge wheat ranch.

He purchased the property on the dock from Jerome May and opened a saloon there. If one wished to locate any of the shore lilies all one had to do was remain long enough around Bond's Dock.

The Bond home stood on a curved portion of Stratford av., at that street's very end. More champions of the prize ring have sat on its veranda and dreamed future or lost laurels than any other place in the world.

It was a spot to dream, too, and the best part about dreaming there is that many of them came true. To the left of the home was the training quarters and in front the Housatonic passed lazily on its way to and from the Sound.

As this writer remembers him, Capt. Bond was very original in dress. He had a consuming fondness for white waistcoats. One wouldn't call such lustrous magnificence vests.

And his watch was heavy and of gleaming gold. His face was almost a solid freckle. He was always fond of sports. In the flower of his existence he thought nothing of drifting across the continent to witness a horse race, or a boxing bout which he thought might be interesting.

But he never set himself out to defend a practice which needs no advocate. Indeed, he used to point out that prize fighting had the stamp of approval of thousands of years.

## BOND EXTOLLED BOXING

Chloe Arnold, feature writer on the staff of The Sunday Herald about 25 years ago, asked Capt. Bond one day what he thought of the so-called "brutality of the boxing" game.

"The general idea most people have about the manly art of self-defense is that it is brutal and that many are killed in the ring." Capt. Bond told Miss Arnold, "This is a wrong impression. Few may be killed in the ring but many go to their graves on account of the purses they get - not the punches."

Miss Arnold is now a resident of the Lordship section of Stratford where she is working on a biography of General Tom Thumb, famous Barnum midget.

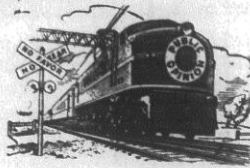
Terry McGovern and Young Corbett used to have a whole company of friends, family and admirers about when they trained at Bond's. Newspaper writers, and other followers of the ring, came out and spent weeks to see first hand what was going on.

## CORBETT TRAINED THERE

It was at Bond's that Young Corbett trained for his memorable fight against McGovern at Hartford in 1901. Corbett the underdog, electrified the boxing

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world at that time when he slipped a sleeper to McGovern's jaw that kayoed Terry in two stanzas. Thousands of dollars changed hands on this fight.

There was always a happy time when Will Cobb, the song writer, who wrote School Days, came over from New York to pass the weekend. When the gin and pitfalls of which old Omar so understandingly complained got too thick in the big city, Cobb came to Bond's to get safely out of the way of such traps.

All the fighters would gather around the piano like a New England family on a Saturday evening, and sing hymns or popular songs. Cobb was fond of drinks other than the mineral water served at the dining table by Mrs. Bond - she was "Aunt Jule" to the gang. It was Cobb who said on one occasion that "a bright thought never came out of a water pitcher."

In the among-those-present at the old Bond quarters one remembers Tommy Ryan, Mysterious Billy Smith, Terry McGovern, Johnny Frayne, Young Corbett, Larry Temple, Harry Baker of San Francisco, Young Goldman, Boyo Driscoll of England, Kid Broad, John L. Sullivan, Packey McFarland, Hughie McGovern (Terry's brother), Willie Lewis, George Siddons, Joe Thomas, Sammy Smith, Soldier Kearns, Harry Lewis, Jack Britton, Wild Bill Hanrahan Joe Humphries, the announcer, and Sam Harris.

Harris was the partner of the famous George M. Cohan and got his start from managing Terry McGovern. Well known boxing writers from the big time who "covered" training periods there were Sam Austin, editor of the Police Gazette, Bat Masterson of The Morning Telegraph, John Pollock and Vince Treanor from the Old Evening World and Otto Floto of the Denver Post.

Then there was Fighting Dick Hyland from the west coast, Tommy Murphy, Harry Mansfield, Bert Keyes, Harry Stone, Bill Lang, Matt Wells, Australian Charley Griffin, Artie Sims, Willie Fitzgerald, Johnny Red Allen, now a Herald columnist, Bud Palmer, Harry Pierce, Al Ketchel, Young McAuliffe, Mohawk Jimmy Coffey, One Punch Howard, Fighting Mike Smolick, Al McCoy, Hugh Ross, Young McMahan, Johnny Sharpe and Mike Farrell.

Of the gong that came to Bond's in 1914, Joe Smith is the only one left in these parts. He kept his residence in Bridgeport down through the years and is now helping out in the greatest fight of all - working on the 7 to 3 shift at the South av. plant of the U. S. Aluminum Co. to aid Uncle Sam beat the Axis.

I asked Joe the other day who was the greatest fighter he ever saw.

"I'll stick my chin out on that one," he said. "For speed, accuracy in punching and brains, the greatest fighter in my book was Johnny Kilbane of Cleveland."