

Crescent City Sports: The Olympic Club

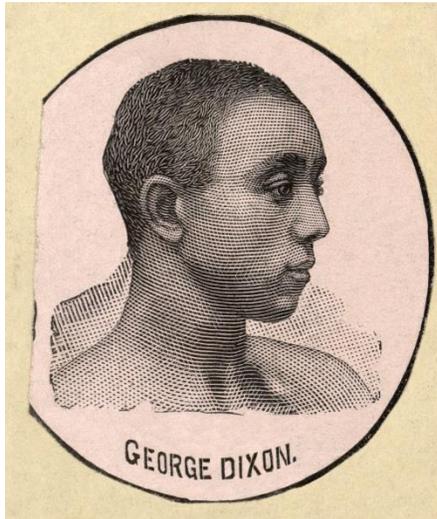


THNOC 1974.25.3.278_o3

In the late 19th century, large numbers of people would flood the Bywater neighborhood to witness various sporting events at the popular Olympic Club. Chartered in 1883, the Olympic Club hosted a number of competitions in its grand building on the corner of Royal and Montegut Streets. Locally, one of New Orleans's favorite pastimes was watching boxing prizefights, but because of political opposition, an 1882 ordinance prohibited "personal combat with fists." This law prevented some of the most famous boxing competitions from taking place at the Olympic Club. However, promoters soon found a way to get around this obstacle. Under the Marquess of Queensbury Rules, boxers were required to cover their fists with padded gloves. In 1890, the New Orleans City Council changed the city ordinance to list prizefights sponsored under the Queensbury Rules by chartered athletic clubs as "permissible activities." This opened the door to many epic battles within the Olympic Club.

The most famous boxing matches held at the Olympic Club were the Fistic Carnival, which featured a series of world championship matches held on consecutive days in September 1892, including a match with George Dixon, the only black fighter to compete at the Olympic Club of

New Orleans, defending his World Featherweight title against Jack Skelly. Dixon was widely credited for developing “shadow boxing” as a training technique.



THNOC: 98-38-L_016

The Fistic Carnival ended with a battle in which James J. Corbett defeated John L. Sullivan for the World Heavyweight Championship.

On April 6, 1893, a fight between local favorite Andy Bowen and Jimmy Burke of Galveston would become part of boxing history when the two lightweights battled for 110 rounds over 7 hours and 19 minutes at the Olympic Club. Burke broke both wrists and nearly every bone in his hands, but the bout ended in a draw, becoming the longest prizefight in United States history. Bowen would fight again in a boxing match over a year later that would end with terrible consequences. In this match, Bowen would lose his life to boxer Kid Lavigne, after suffering serious injuries. Afterwards, New Orleans again outlawed prizefighting within its limits, and the city ceased being recognized as a leading location for boxing title matches. A few years after this new law banning boxing, the Olympic Club burned down.

Assignment: Economic Historian Activity

Students must use the [Measuring Worth](#) website to determine the equivalent value of an item in the late 19th century (1865-1899) in today's money.

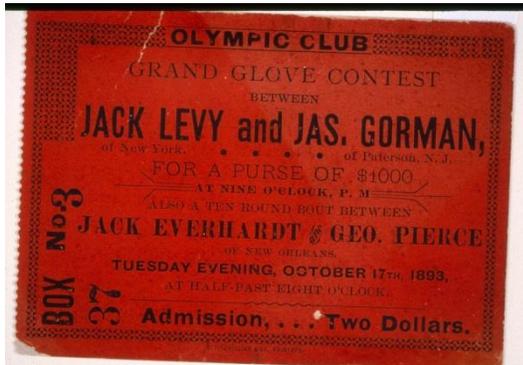
Item 1:



THNOC 1986.195.1.1

- 1) What year was the Sullivan vs. Corbett fight at the Olympic club?
- 2) How much were the purse and ticket for the Sullivan vs, Corbett fight that year?
- 3) How much would both of those items be worth in today's money (use Measuring Worth website)?

Item 2:



THNOC: 1974.25.2.216

- 1) What year was the Levy vs. Gorman fight at the Olympic club?
- 2) How much were the purse and ticket price for the Levy vs. Gorman fight that year?
- 3) How much would both of those items be worth in today's money (use Measuring Worth website)?