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Bro. PETER JACKSON - PUGILIST 1861 - 1901

Peter Jackson was born on 3 July 1861 at Christiansted, St. Croix, Virgin Island, West Indies, the son of Peter Jackson, warehouseman, and his wife, and grandson of Jackson's freed slave, Peter. He was well educated to primary level before going to sea. He arrived in Sydney about 1880 where he worked on the waterfront and in hotels before drifting into boxing in 1882 under the tuition of Bro. Lawrence (Larry) Foley. Foley had been made a Mason in 1885 in Sydney in Lodge Rose of Sharon then No. 2055, English Constitution, later No. 116 United Grand Lodge of NSW. He did not complete his degrees.

Between 1883 and 1886 Jackson fought seven times, once with bare knuckles, only losing to the Australian Champion, Bill Farnham in 1884. After two years as an instructor, at Foley's, he easily won the Australian Heavyweight Championship from Tom Lees in thirty rounds on 25 September 1886. Jackson's magnificently trained and proportioned physique, 6ft. 1½ ins. (187cm.) tall and weighing 190 lbs. (86kg.) gave him a rare combination of speed and strength. An intelligent boxer rather than a slugger, he possessed a marvellous feint, strong jabs and a masterly left-right combination. On 18 April 1888 he left for the United States of America and Britain.

Jackson fought twenty-eight of the best men of England and America between 1888 and 1892, losing to none. The nearest he came to defeat was an eight-round draw in Melbourne on 21 October 1890 against Joe Goddard. He was undertrained and on a lightning visit to his adopted country, where he was feted and accepted as an Australian. His most memorable fights were the 61-round, four-hour draw with James J. Corbett on 21 May 1891 at San Francisco and the hectic ten-round victory over fellow Australian Frank Slavin on 30 May 1892 in London. Jackson was one of the finest boxers never to fight for a world championship. John Sullivan refused to defend his title against a black man and Corbett avoided Jackson once he gained the heavyweight crown in 1892.

Termed the 'darkey,' or worse early on, Jackson became known as 'Peter the Great' or 'The Black Prince' in the acceptable jargon of the time. He was always deemed a 'gentleman' and a 'real white man.' His great sportsmanship and modesty reflected his nature, and also was a role forced on him by the exigencies of a black fighter in a white world. His deference, good looks, fine speaking manner and skill made him universally popular. He was one of the few boxers, black or white, allowed to move freely in the National Sporting Club rooms in London.

