



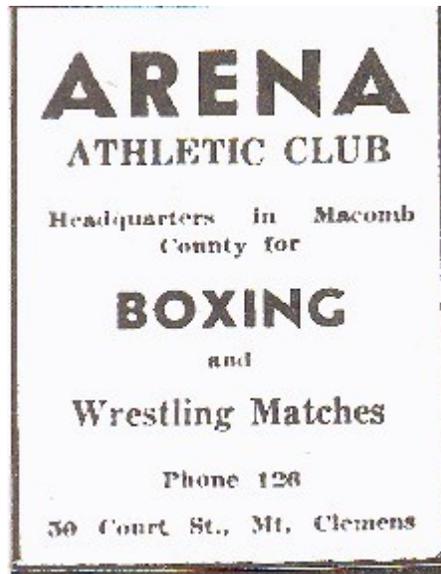
Mount Clemens Public Library

Local History Sketches

Boxing in Mount Clemens

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Mention of the sport of boxing in Mount Clemens can be found as early as the 1880s in local newspapers. In those days, the likes of **John L. Sullivan** and **Jim Corbett**, famous bare-fisted brawlers of their day, occasionally visited Mount Clemens to take the baths and train for upcoming contests. Sullivan is even said to have engaged in an impromptu fight with a Mount Clemens man, **George Roessel**, during one of his stays in town.



In early 1915, organized promotion of boxing events came onto the scene in Mount Clemens, when promoter **Tommy McGovern** and partners began offering fights at **Nelson's Opera House**. Out-of-town talent from Detroit, Ohio and Ontario met local boxers such as **Johnny Sierens**. In April, 1928, Sierens entered into the boxing promotion business himself when he and partner **Joe Dowling** opened the **Arena Athletic Club** at Market and Court streets. The announcement of the new forum in the Mount Clemens Monitor noted that a five-bout card would be presented, seats could be had at prices of \$1.10 or \$1.60, and ladies were welcome. A sell-out crowd on opening night saw local pugilist **Joe Gallagher** defeat **Marion Middaugh** of Toledo in six rounds.

Popular local fighters who regularly appeared on the Arena cards to the delight of fans included **Billy "Buzz Saw" Bulley**, **Ray Novak**, and **Kid Hans**. *The Monitor* reported during this era that front-row devotees of the sport who could be found weekly at the Arena included Mount Clemens mayor **William Streit**, chief of police **Arthur Rosso**, **Hank LaCroix**, **Herman Miller**, **Joe Matthews**, **Ernie Sierens**, **Clifford John**, **Mart Hall**, **Dad Trombley**, **George Rockensuess**, and **Adrian Lingemann**. Coach **Walter Olsen** of Mount Clemens High School officiated at the ticket booth.

The Arena Athletic Club flourished for several years, but by 1934, interest was waning. Sierens brought in the "Manassa Mauler," the great **Jack Dempsey**, to referee a fight on May 9, 1934. A large gate was expected, but only a small crowd turned out for the contest. Johnny Sierens retired from the management of the club in early 1935 and sold his interest to **Henry McIntosh**, who renewed efforts to broaden the audience base.

REGISTRATION CARD
Guests Without Baggage Please Pay in Advance

Money, jewels and valuables must be deposited in the hotel safe, otherwise the proprietor will not be responsible for any loss.

NAME *Jack Dempsey*

STREET _____

CITY AND STATE *Paris - Ind.*

ROOM <i>46</i>	RATE <i>CASH</i>	ARRIVE <i>7:00</i>	FOLIO <i>750</i>
DATE <i>5-9</i>	NO. IN PARTY <i>2</i>	CLERK <i>R.W.D.</i>	
REMARKS <i>T.H.L.</i>			

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Sierens moved on to manage promising young fighters, including **Gene Stanley**, a welterweight Golden Gloves champion with an impressive professional record. The Arena Athletic Club did not rebound, however, and its license was transferred to **St. Louis Parish**, which scheduled weekly boxing and wrestling contests for a time. By the end of the decade, boxing in Mount Clemens had passed into memory, and a more deadly fight, World War II, was on.

For more information on this topic we recommend:

- "Seek to Revive Fight Interest in Mt. Clemens : New Matchmaker Takes Control at Arena; Sierens Out," *Mount Clemens Monitor*, January 11, 1935, p.6, col.2.
- "Even Dempsey Fails to Draw," *Mount Clemens Monitor*, May 11, 1934, p.5, col. 5.
- "Dempsey to Referee at Arena Fight Card," *Mount Clemens Monitor*, May 4, 1934, p.7, col.1
- "Fight Notables Drawn to City in its Heyday," *Mount Clemens Monitor*, April 27, 1934, p.1, col.7.
- "Small Attendance Again Forces Sierens to Close Arena," *Mount Clemens Daily Leader*, February 28, 1933, p.5, col.8.
- "Arena Bouts Await Arrival of Regulars," *Mount Clemens Monitor*, April 25, 1929, p.5, col.2.
- "New Athletic Club Will Open Thursday Night : Arena Athletic Club Located at Market and Court," *Mount Clemens Monitor*, April 13, 1928, p.5, col.8.