



John Kelly aka Jack Dempsey,  
*The Non-Pareil*

## Life Events of Jack Dempsey, The Non-Pareil

- December 15, 1862

Born John Kelly in County Kildare, Ireland.

- April 7, 1883

Kelly takes the ring name Jack Dempsey and wins his first bout in 21 rounds against Ed "Rug" McDonald. (Long Island, New York).

- July 30, 1884

Defeats Canadian George Fulljames and considered the welterweight & middleweight champion (Staten Island, NY).

- February 3, 1886

Successfully defends world middleweight title vs. Jack Fogarty (NYC).

- March 4, 1886

Retains world heavyweight title vs. George LaBlanche (Larchmont, NY).

- December 13, 1887

Successfully defends middleweight title vs. Johnny Reagan (Long Island, NY).

- February 18, 1890

Retains world middleweight title against Australian Billy McCarthy in San Francisco, CA.

- January 14, 1891

Loses middleweight title to Bob Fitzsimmons in New Orleans, LA.

- November 2, 1895

John Kelly aka "Jack Dempsey" dies in Portland, Oregon of tuberculosis.



Jack Dempsey, *The Non-Pareil*

# Jack Dempsey— Oregon Boxer

## Historic Fighter First With Name, Second In Fame

by Roy Widing, Contributing Writer

**B**oxing fans are familiar with Jack Dempsey. But few realize the *original* fighter with that name lived in Oregon's Willamette Valley. Dempsey's more famous heavyweight counterpart garnered most of the praise. Yet to those who know boxing, the middleweight champion now at rest in an Oregon cemetery was himself an especially gifted pugilist.

Born John Edward Kelly in 1862, he's now dubbed *The Non-Pareil* (without peer) to avoid confusion with the more famous fighter. "Peerless" is an apt description, because during much of his career, John Kelly was considered unbeatable. But while he was first on record to claim his fighting moniker, he was unable to parlay it into a household word.

That task was accomplished by *The Manassa Mauler*, the famed world heavyweight champion also known as Jack Dempsey. The more famous Dempsey was born William Harrison Dempsey on June 24, 1895 and was but 5 months old when the earlier fighter sharing his ring surname died.

For his first match, legend says Kelly the Irish immigrant barrel maker agreed to stand in for a missing fighter in Long Island, New York. Kelly won that match using the ring name *Jack Dempsey*.

Records vary, but according to the International Boxing Hall of Fame, Dempsey *The Non-Pareil* won 58 fights, 8 by knockout and lost only 3. He had 8 draws and 4 "no-

decisions." Sports historians have long ranked the original Jack Dempsey an outstanding fighter. In 1954, *The Non-Pareil* was elected to the Ring Boxing Hall of Fame.

## 45 Round Fight

Perhaps his most interesting bout was against Johnny Reagan on December 13, 1887. That fight began outdoors at Long Island, New York in torrential rain. By the fourth round, the ring was reportedly underwater. The event was relocated miles away as the rain turned to snow. Dempsey won by knockout in the 45th round.

Kelly eventually married and settled here in Oregon, where he spent his final years battling tuberculosis, his most formidable foe. Plenty of intriguing stories have been told about Jack Dempsey. 16 years after his death, Dempsey's friend and former pupil, Joseph Askey, sojourned all the way from Baltimore, Maryland to Portland, Oregon's Calvary Cemetery to leave flowers for his fallen friend. For a time, Dempsey's burial site was said to be unmarked. This inspired Dempsey's attorney, M. J. McMahon, to pen '**Jack Dempsey's Grave.**'

*Far out in the wilds of Oregon  
on a lonely mountainside,  
where Columbia's mighty waters  
roll down to the ocean side*

*Where the giant fir and cedar  
are imaged in the wave,  
overgrown with ferns and lichens  
I found Jack Dempsey's grave.*

*I found no marble monolith,  
no broken shaft or stone*

### Tale Of The Tape

Stats for Jack Dempsey  
*"The Non-Pareil"*

**Height: 5' 8"**

**Weight: 128-152 lbs.**

**Age at first bout: 20**

**Age at final bout: 32**

**Record: 58+/- Wins/3 Losses**

*recording sixty victories  
this vanquished victor won.*

*No rose, no shamrock, could I  
find, no mortal here to tell,  
where sleeps in this forsaken  
spot, immortal Nonpareil.*

*A winding wooded canyon  
road, that mortals seldom  
tread, leads up this lonely  
mountain, to the desert of the  
dead*

*And the Western sun was sink-  
ing in Pacific's golden wave,  
and three solemn pines kept  
watching,  
over poor Jack Dempsey's  
grave.*

*Forgotten by ten thousand  
throats*

*that thundered his acclaim,  
forgotten by his friends and  
foes*

*Who cheered his very name,*

*Oblivion wraps his faded form,  
but ages hence shall save,  
the memory of that Irish lad  
that fills poor Dempsey's  
grave.*

*Oh, Fame, why sleeps thy fa-  
vored son,*

*in wilds, in woods, in weeds,  
and shall he ever thus sleep on,  
Interred his valiant deeds?*

*'Tis strange New York should  
thus forget,*

*its "bravest of the brave"  
and in the fields of Oregon,  
unmarked, leave Dempsey's  
grave.*



Dempsey Family Gravesite