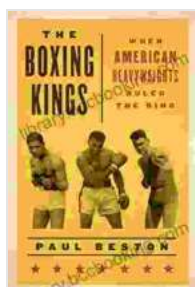


# When American Heavyweights Ruled the Ring

In the early 20th century, American heavyweights dominated the boxing world. They were larger-than-life figures who captivated the public and left a lasting legacy on the sport.

The first great American heavyweight was Jack Johnson. Born in Galveston, Texas, in 1878, Johnson was a natural athlete with a powerful physique and a devastating left hook. He turned professional in 1897 and quickly rose through the ranks, winning the world heavyweight championship in 1908.



## The Boxing Kings: When American Heavyweights Ruled the Ring by Paul Beston

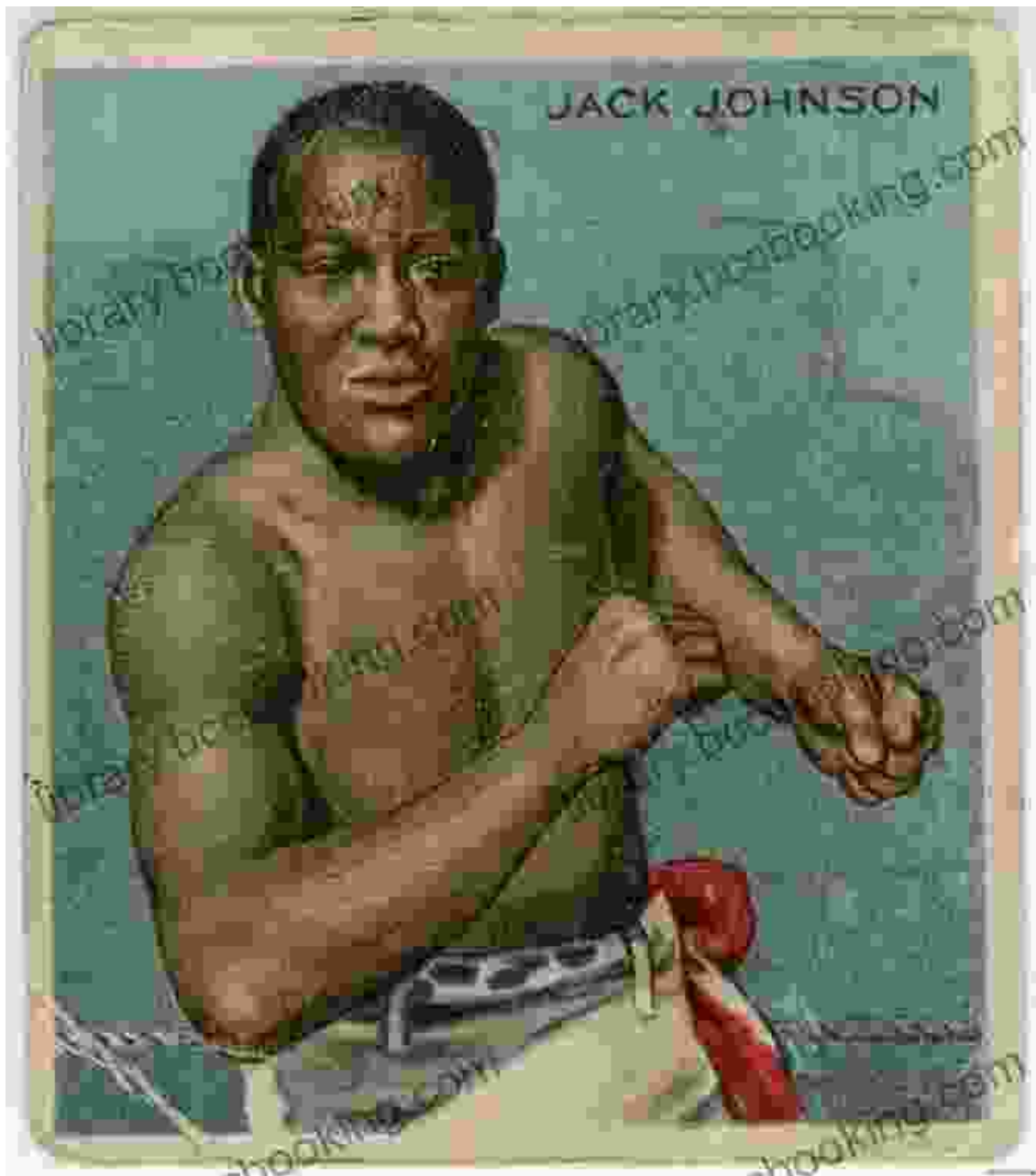
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Johnson's reign as champion was controversial. He was an outspoken critic of racism and segregation, and his personal life was often in the news. In 1910, he was arrested and convicted of violating the Mann Act, which prohibited the transportation of women across state lines for immoral purposes. Johnson was sentenced to one year in prison, but he appealed the conviction and fled the country.

Johnson spent the next seven years in exile, fighting in Europe and South America. He returned to the United States in 1915 and was eventually pardoned by President Warren G. Harding. Johnson continued to fight until 1928, when he retired with a record of 78-13-10.

The next great American heavyweight was Joe Louis. Born in LaFayette, Alabama, in 1914, Louis was a gifted athlete who began boxing as a teenager. He turned professional in 1934 and quickly rose through the ranks, winning the world heavyweight championship in 1937.



Joe Louis

Louis's reign as champion was one of the most dominant in boxing history. He defended his title 25 times and retired undefeated in 1948 with a record of 68-3.

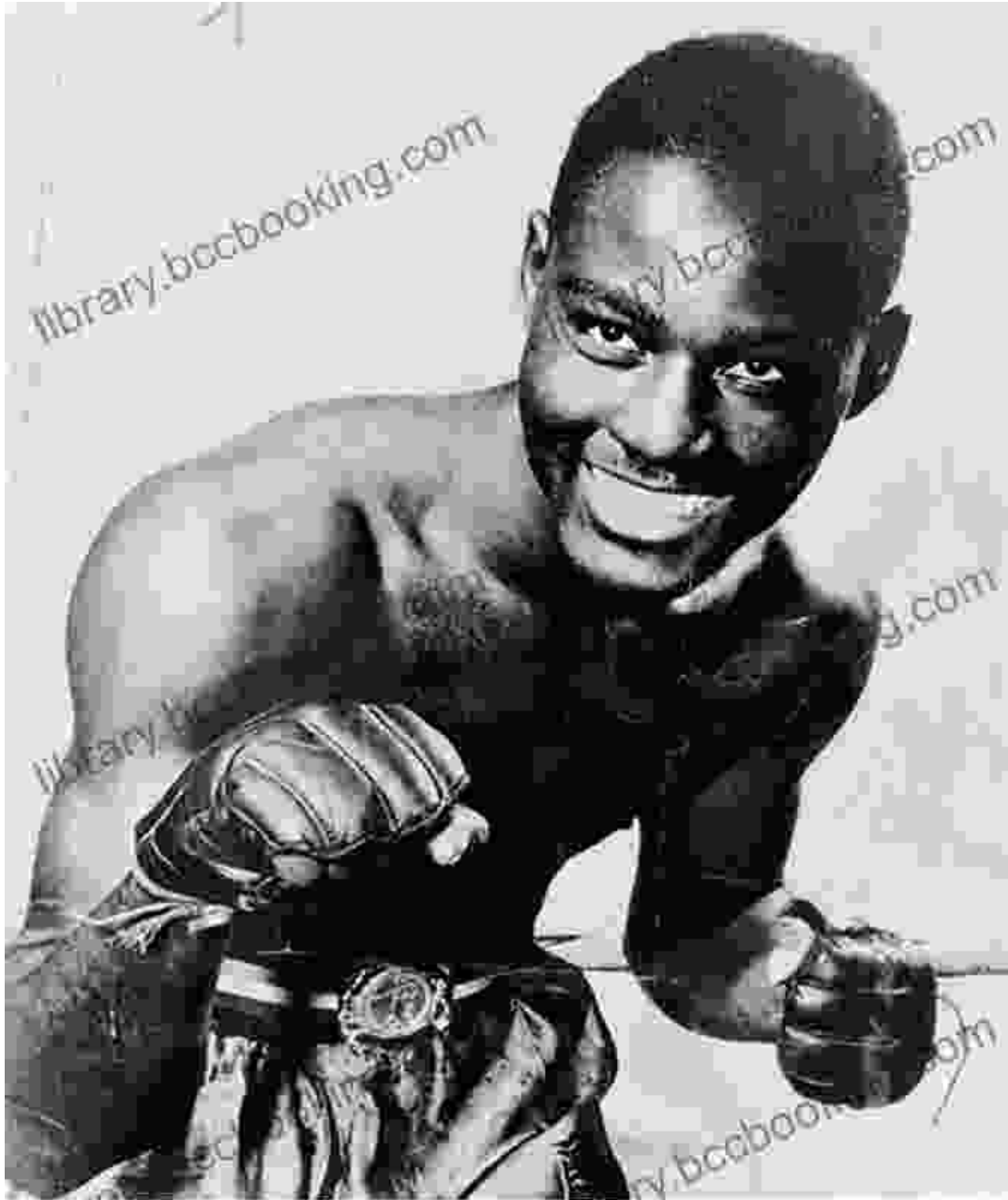
Louis was more than just a great boxer. He was also a symbol of hope and inspiration for African Americans during a time of great racial tension. He was a role model for young people and a source of pride for the entire country.

After Louis retired, there was a brief period of decline in American heavyweight boxing. However, in the 1950s, a new generation of fighters emerged, including Rocky Marciano, Ezzard Charles, and Floyd Patterson.

Marciano was a hard-hitting brawler who won the world heavyweight championship in 1952. He defended his title six times before retiring undefeated in 1956 with a record of 49-0.



Charles was a skilled boxer who won the world heavyweight championship twice, in 1950 and 1954. He was known for his quick hands and footwork.



Ezzard Charles

Patterson was a power puncher who won the world heavyweight championship in 1956. He defended his title five times before losing to Ingemar Johansson in 1959.



The era of American heavyweight dominance ended in the 1960s, when Muhammad Ali emerged as the new heavyweight champion. However, the fighters of the early 20th century left a lasting legacy on the sport. They were larger-than-life figures who captivated the public and helped to make boxing one of the most popular sports in the world.

The American heavyweights of the early 20th century were some of the greatest fighters in boxing history. They were larger-than-life figures who captivated the public and left a lasting legacy on the sport. They were pioneers who helped to break down racial barriers and inspire generations of athletes.

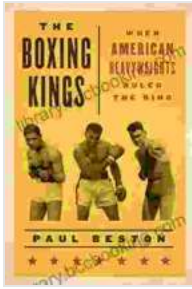
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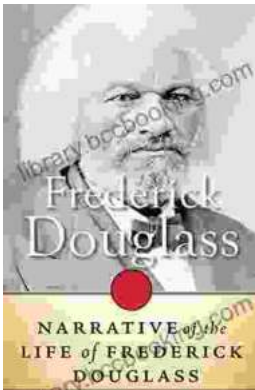
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