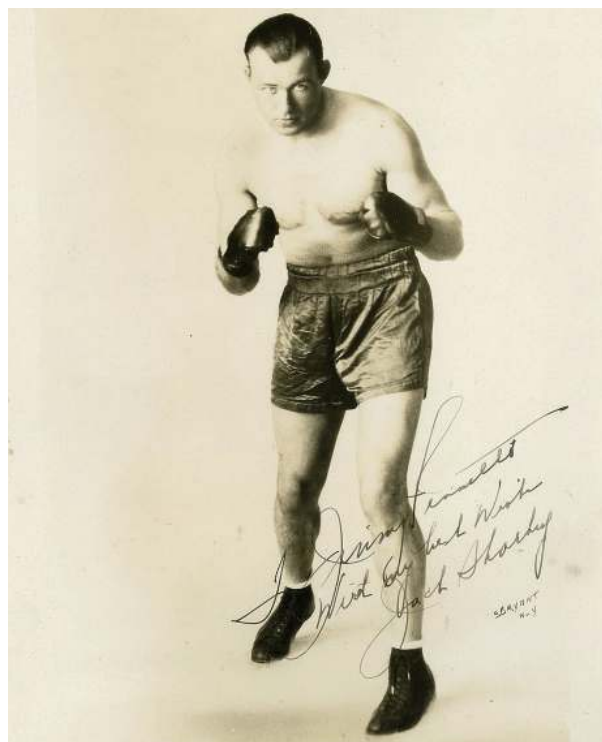


My take on this unusual label is that American Distilling was hoping to take advantage of the fame that Jack Sharkey enjoyed in the 1930s, but used only the Sharkey name and an image of the earlier Sailor Tom, who had been out of the public limelight for three decades. A demand for royalties by Tom Sharkey likely would have been more modest than Jack's. An obscure brand, this whiskey may never have found an audience. Although it cannot be compared to baseball's Honus Wagner cigarette card, the Sharkey label appears to be a rarity.



[Fig. 2] Jack Sharkey



[Fig. 3] "Sailor Tom" Sharkey

## A New Find:

by Jack Sullivan

# The "Sharkey" Label

While "new finds" usually are related to glass or ceramic containers, sometimes a bottle label comes along that has a story. So it is with the label for "Sharkey Straight Whiskey" [Fig. 1]. The image was sent to me by Karen Ehrman of Wapello, Iowa, as the result of an earlier article I had written on The American Distilling Co. of Pekin, Illinois. She found the label between the pages of an old book in her father's antique store.

I had never seen the label before, but recognized that it was issued after the repeal of National Prohibition when alcoholic content, expressed as "proof," was required on all whiskey. The illustration shows a boxer named "Sharkey" and I immediately identified the figure as Jack Sharkey, a former heavyweight champion, whose boxing career lasted into the late 1930s, when the label likely was issued. He was a Navy veteran so the tattoo seemed to fit. More research, however, disclosed that Sharkey's chest [Fig. 2] bore no tattoo.

The figure illustrated was an earlier boxer named Tom Sharkey whose American professional ring career spanned from 1893 to 1904. Listed by *Ring Magazine* as one of the 100 greatest punchers of all time, this Sharkey was born in Ireland and joined the U.S. Navy in 1892. Known as "Sailor Tom," he sported a ship's tattoo, but one quite different from the label [Fig. 3]. Jack Sharkey, it turns out, was Lithuanian, originally named Joseph Paul Zukauskas. He idolized Sailor Tom and appropriated his last name.

