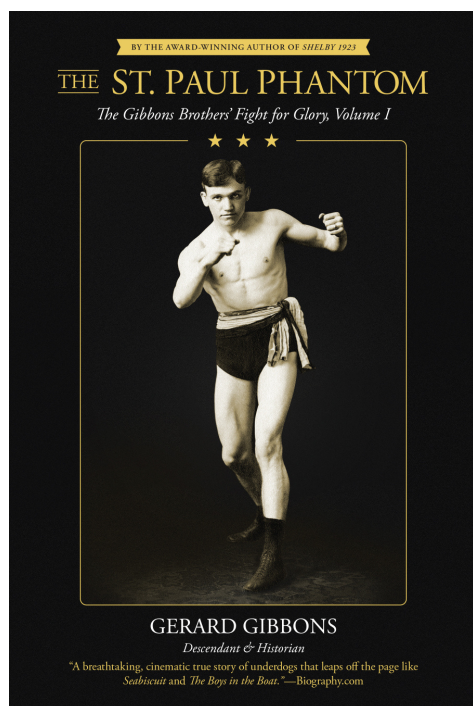




The St. Paul Phantom: The Gibbons Brothers' Fight for Glory, Volume 1

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The St. Paul Phantom: The Gibbons Brothers' Fight for Glory, Volume 1

Gerard Gibbons | Fight for Glory, LLC
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The grandson of the heavyweight boxer Tommy Gibbons and great-nephew of the storied Mike "The St. Paul Phantom" Gibbons, author Gerard Gibbons brings spirited novelistic life to an intensely personal and highly entertaining family story that captures the epic sweep of immigration and the golden age of boxing in early 20th century America, dramatizing how these lives intersected with so many other larger historical currents.

Mike's father Thomas flees Ireland as British authorities crack down on his antigovernment activities. Later, in St. Paul, Minnesota, his American-born sons Mike and Tommy become obsessed with boxing, partly as a way to strike back against bullies.

The older Mike is trained by a fireman and engages in illegal "sneak fights," since boxing is technically banned in Minnesota. He and Tommy, the "cleverest boys," are training methods that are cerebral as they are physical, scribbling notes in their "Dope Book" that form the basis of their reliance on speed, strategy, and footwork instead of raw power. Mike gets guidance from the first Black champion in America, Joe Gans, as well as his careerlong friend and rival, Packey McFarland, before he makes his name in New York City.

Because these fights aren't allowed to have decisions other than knockouts, Mike has to impress sportswriter Robert Edgren to get action. In short order, he's regarded as the uncrowned greatest middleweight boxer in the world. Circumstances prevent him from ever becoming official, but his influence goes far beyond the ring. In World War I, Gibbons is called upon to teach soldiers, while the brothers' school and books influence approaches to the "sweet science" for decades afterward. Gibbons contextualizes all of this with personal details, like Mike's marriage to suffragette Mahe, his difficult relationship with his now-pacifist father, and deep friendship with Black boxers like Jack Johnson. Gibbons tells the story with dramatic, fluid, and exciting writing that boasts a distinctly cinematic feel.

An epic, intimate story of Irish boxing heroes in early 20th century America.