

Billy Petrolle

Contributed by Rob Snell
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Name: Billy Petrolle
Alias: The Fargo Express
Birth Name: William Michael Petrolle
Born: 1905-01-10
Birthplace: Berwick, Pennsylvania, USA
Died: 1983-05-14 (Age:78)
Nationality: US American
Hometown: Fargo, North Dakota, USA
Stance: Orthodox
Height: 5'7" / 170cm
Reach: 70" / 178cm
Boxing Record: [click](#)

Manager: Jack Hurley
Photo #2; Photo #3; Photo #4, Photo #5

Billy Petrolle (PET-troe-lee) was the brother of fellow boxers Pete Petrolle and Frank Petrolle. The family was from Schenectady, New York.

It had been reported that Petrolle had fought some 255 career bouts. (He had at least one early bout under the name of "Wolf Larson" (Aug. 4, 1923), according to the Spokane Spokesman-Review (Spokane, WA, USA) newspaper, Aug. 14, 1923, p. 15.)

Petrolle graced the covers of The Ring Magazine in May 1927, March 1931, and May 1932. An article on him appeared in the July 2008 issue.

Petrolle retired during the Great Depression after making some \$200,000 in ring earnings, and owning an iron foundry in Duluth, Minnesota. He later owned a religious goods and gift shop in Duluth, and was the chairman of the Board of Directors of the Pioneer National Bank.

The Helena Independent 22 November 1930 Petrolle defeats McLarnin In Mad Mill Furious Battle Is Victory For Fargo Express After He Batters Irishman Savagely York, Nov. 21.—Billy Petrolle, rugged, clouting veteran from the hills of North Dakota, turned in the ultimate in surprises for the fight faithful tonight by hammering Jimmy McLarnin, the Clouting Celt, into one of the worst defeats of the Irishman's spectacular career.

A crowd of 12,600, banner throng in these days of unemployment, bounced around in their seats in vociferous amazement as Petrolle, granite-chinned and relentless as a maddened bull pup, smashed the class- of the welterweights about the ring for 10 full rounds, dumped him in the resin twice for counts of nine in the fourth session, and ran away fresh and eager with the unanimous decision at the end of the battle.

Celt Savagely Chopped

It was one of the most exciting and bloody battles the Garden ever has seen and McLarnin at the close was a fearful sight. Blood streamed from cuts below his eyes, in his lips, alongside his nose and then were lumps along both cheek bones that threatened to cut off his sight in the closing rounds.

The crimson stream covered his face and chest and the sight of the gory figure of the deadly Irishman reeling through round after round and desperately fighting off the ever-threatening knockout, just about furnished the customers the millennium in fistic spectacles.

New York faithful have become so accustomed to seeing McLarnin clip his rivals on the chin and scarcely bother to see where they fell that they made him a three and four to one favorite to beat the hard-hitting westerner who long was believed to have seen the best of his fighting days. But Petrolle fooled McLarnin, and fooled the betting customers, too. He alternated with straight rights that made a mess of the other side of McLarnin's face and in the clinches he always seemed to hold the upper hand. Game Kid

McLarnin, in defeat, was a game and inspiring battler. In the very first round, Petrolle, fighting out of a crouch, plodding relentlessly forward with both fists flying, whipped a right to Jimmy's head that opened a cut under his left eye. In the second, McLarnin almost went down under a blistering barrage to the chin, but he managed to keep himself erect and even square the third round with a last minute rally that set Petrolle back on his heels.

Then, when he seemed at last to have found himself, McLarnin ran into that same left hook, a numbing, twisting wallop that caught him full on the chin and floored him for a count of nine less than a minute after the start of the fourth round. Jimmy reeled to his feet, took everything the furious punching Petrolle had in his arsenal, and then crumpled again for nine under the barrage. But he came up battered, absorbed one of the fiercest beatings he ever has been forced to take,

and was still on his feet, punching back sullenly but with gathering strength, as the round ended.

All Over

From that point on, though McLarnin rallied to carry the fifth and ninth rounds, it seemed only a question of how much punishment Jimmy could absorb and still keep on fighting. As the rounds wore on he took a terrible lacing, but at the end he was still popping with his left, wavering backward, waiting for the right hand shot that landed occasionally but never seemed to disturb Petrolle. In all Billy won seven rounds, McLarnin two and one was even.

The astonishing conquest, third in succession in which a highly rated favorite has gone down to defeat in the Garden ring, jumps Petrolle, the Fargo Express, now steaming out of Duluth, into the commanding position among the lightweights. He whipped Tony Canzoneri decisively a few weeks before the Italian won the 135 pound title from Al Singer in a surprising knockout here last week. Earlier he dropped a hair-line decision to Jackie (Kid) Berg, British whirlwind, in another spectacular duel. Petrolle's victory rounds out the trio of underdogs in the betting who have finished out in front in the last three Garden fights. Kid Chocolate was a four to one favorite when he lost to Fidel la Barba, Singer was a four to one choice over Canzoneri, and McLarnin was about anything one wanted to ask from, three to one up. McLarnin had a slight weight advantage, scaling 141 pounds to Petrolle's 138.

Round One: Petrolle jumped into the Irishman with two left hooks to the body. Jimmy laid back, took two more lefts to the side waiting a spot for his right hand. He found it and ripped two right hand blasts to Petrolle's chin. Billy wavered, flung out his left and then whaled McLarnin on the chin with a right that set Jimmy's eye to blinking. Another right split the skin under McLarnin's left eye and blood streamed down his cheek. They swapped furiously in mid-ring, Petrolle absolutely unafraid of McLarnin's famous punches. He shook off Jimmy's best punches, left hook to the head an body, rights to the chin and drove the Irishman around the ring with a two-fisted fusillade to the head. Two rights shook McLarnin again as they bounced off his chin at the bell. Round Two: Billy stabbed straight for Jimmy's head with his left, then looped a right to the damaged eye. McLarnin was short with both hands and wild and Petrolle game, dogged, fighting the fight of his life, belted furiously at him with both hands pumping to the head. He caught Jimmy a dozen times before the Irish belter stopped the rush for a moment with a right to the chin. Petrolle turned McLarnin's eyes glassy with a right to the jaw. McLarnin wobbled, kept his feet and strove to fight his way out of danger. Billy ripped after him smashed three left hooks to McLarnin's chin but could not bring him down. In the midst of the fierce rally McLarnin smashed a right to the chin that sent Petrolle back on his heels for a moment The crowd was mad with excitement as they slashed at each other at the bell.

Round Three: Petrolle crouched and ripped into the Irish belter swinging both hands from the side Jimmy tried to hold him off with a straight left but Petrolle nailed him high on the head with a hard left hook. Jimmy danced backward feinting for a right-hand opening but Petrolle swept after him with another hard right hook to the head. McLarnin steadied and hurt Petrolle with two hard left hooks to the chin. They belted each other into a corner, both fists whipping out into a steady stream, and McLarnin opened the way for his famous right hand. He nailed Petrolle fully on the chin. Whipped over his left hook for the first time gained the upper hand as Billy slow drived. Petrolle shook off the wallops and came back fighting mad with both hands in a slugging duel that set the crowd to roaring as the bell rang. Round Four: They swapped left jabs in the center of the ring until Petrolle jumped in with a left hook that floored McLarnin for a count of nine. Jimmy came up badly hurt and reeled under Petrolle's furious attack. He went down again for nine under a head barrage. He was helpless as Petrolle smashed him about the ring and the crowd went mad. Cross-legged and stumbling, McLarnin tried to fight his way clear. He threw one right into Petrolle's head but Billy was all over the reeling Irishman with a furious head and body attack. Petrolle punched himself weary and still McLarnin would not go down again. As Petrolle tired Jimmy gained strength, his eyes cleared and he began to dance around. He had the situation well in hand at the bell. Round Five: McLarnin came up apparently fresh and soaked with reviving water. He whipped a left look and short right into Petrolle's head. The free swinging veteran poked Jimmy's head with a left and then ducked inside to fire a left hook to the body. McLarnin shot Petrolle's head back with a sharp left hook and clipped the veteran's chin three times as he slid away from right hand punches. McLarnin seemed to have struck his fight stride as he leaned back, slipped away from Petrolle's punches and countered with both hands. He fired rights and lefts into Petrolle's head and took a harsh right to the chin in return and then nailed Petrolle again with a stiff left hook to the body. They smashed away in close and Petrolle just missed a sweeping left hook to the chin as he bell rang. Round Six—Petrolle dashed in with a left hook high on McLarnin's head and fired a right to the chin that sent Jimmy bouncing to the ropes. McLarnin fought back cautiously, depending on a left hand to keep Petrolle away, but Billy slipped inside with a right and left to the head and the body. They pummeled each other around the ring, swapping lefts and rights but the fire seemed to have died from their heaviest weapons. A terrific left hook to the head sent McLarnin back on his heels again. Two more sent him backward across the ring with a dazed look back in his eyes again as Petrolle lashed him mercifully about the head. Blood streamed from a cut alongside McLarnin's nose but he shook his head, stopped Petrolle's rush with a right and battled his way dizzily around the ring, until the bell came to his aid.

Round Seven: Jimmy's face was lumpy and bloodstained from the beating he was taking, as he came out to try and hold Petrolle away with left jabs. They swapped lefts to the head, then rights, but Petrolle seemed to be immune to punishment. He took the huskiest socks McLarnin had, and stormed into a left-handed hook attack to the head and body. They held their rights in check, jabbing and hooking with left hands, until Petrolle lifted his head. McLarnin flashed both hands to the chin but Billy never wavered and hammered back at McLarnin's head with a two-fisted attack that drove Jimmy across the ring, blood streaming from his nose and welts under both eyes. The bell broke them apart from another punching wild melee. Round Eight: The left hook that McLarnin seemed unable to solve landed on McLarnin's mouth and drew blood from another source. Petrolle smashed his left to Jimmy's mouth and scarlet streamed down the Irishman's breast. Petrolle, unmarked, tore through McLarnin's best punches, shook them off, and hammered Jimmy around the ring. A right to the neck almost put McLarnin to the floor. He was taking a fierce licking and the crowd yelled

to the referee stop the fight, as blood covered McLarnin's head and chest. Jimmy never quit, however, taking his punishment and lashing both hands into Petrolle's granite head. Both had lost most of their punching strength as the gong chased them back to their corners. Round Nine: So wild was the excitement that fights broke out all over the Garden as the battlers tried to settle the issue in the ring. Punch worn and weary, blood still trickling from his wounds and eyes, gradually closing, McLarnin still plodded back from Petrolle's swinging attack, laying in wait for an opening for a finishing shot. Billy was wild and tied as he swung both fists to the head and McLarnin stepped in with two left hooks that staggered the Fargo Express. The crowd bellowed frantically as McLarnin rallied and drove Petrolle before him but they soon fell into a clinch from, sheer exhaustion.

They stood toe-to-toe and rapped each other on the chin with swings that came all the way up from the hips and though both wavered, neither would go down. The crowd yelled frantically at the spectacular milling, but the battlers were hanging on wearily as the bell rang. Round Ten: McLarnin hooked Petrolle's head steadily with a left hand in an effort to open a way for his right. Billy crouched low, stabbed with his left and let McLarnin force the milling. Jimmy pecked half-heartedly at Petrolle's face with his left glove until Billy snapped his head back with a left hook to the chin. McLarnin's knees sagged as Petrolle cracked a right to the chin and belabored him about the ring with left hooks to the head. A hard right to the head made McLarnin hold and they both hung on exhausted. Another left hook bent McLarnin's knees and he was a gory and badly beaten sight. He waded into Petrolle firing both hands recklessly in an effort to get over a finishing wallop, but Billy held the upper hand until the final bell. The Helena Daily Independent 5 November 1932

Canzoneri Gains Decision On Petrolle In 15 Rounds Tony Canzoneri, a masterful little champion with the grinning face and wide nose of a miniature Babe Ruth, finally met the challenge craggy faced Billy Petrolle has been flinging to the lightweight division for years, and all but demolished the veteran tonight before a roaring crowd of 20,000 that jammed the big battle pit to the eaves. Brilliant as any of the light weights of legend, Tony battered the old-timer from Fargo, N. D., so badly there was no question as to the victor at the end of their 15 round battle. Canzoneri failed to floor the challenger, but he did everything else the ring laws permit to win a unanimous decision.

Veteran Just a Target

From the first round through the last, with just a breather at the start, a temporary stay in the eighth and 10th rounds, Tony made a target of the courageous warrior who has been whipping all comers in a thrilling comeback campaign, even to the extent of tipping slugging Jimmy McLarnin over twice one night in this same ring. For a few moments in the eighth round. Petrolle, a 3 to 1 underdog going into the ring, seemed to have a real chance to win. Billy flung a thudding left hook to the pit of Tony's stomach early in the round and that blow doubled the champion up. Petrolle kept on top of him, hammering for the body with both hands, and for a moment Canzoneri took a solid trouncing. But the champion came back, just as he did in the 10th under a similar, but less effective body onslaught. Petrolle weighed 134 ½ pounds, Canzoneri 132. The fight by rounds: Round One

Canzoneri stabbed carefully at Petrolle's head, lifted a short left hook to the chin and then ran into a bruising body barrage, as Petrolle opened up suddenly on the champion's body with both hands. Tony hooked his left fiercely to the challenger's head but again Petrolle whaled his body with both hands, forcing him to cover. Battling back viciously, Canzoneri blasted Petrolle's head with a volley of lefts and right that rocked the challenger and set the crowd roaring. A right uppercut smashed on Petrolle's head and Tony missed a right hand haymaker by a shade. Petrolle fought back gallantly, threading lefts and rights into the champion's body and they were pounding each other in a hurricane exchange at the bell. Round Two Tony speared Billy's head neatly with a half dozen lefts, and then dropped a booming left hook on the challenger's head. Petrolle waded through the punches to sink in his right deep in Canzoneri's side and bang his left to the body. Shooting entirely for the head, while Petrolle played only for the champion's ribs, Canzoneri dug three left hooks into the challenger's neck and crossed his right neatly to the jaw. Petrolle hammered back with both hands to the body. Canzoneri shook up the westerner with another right and left to the head. Canzoneri flicked his left carefully into Petrolle's dotted features and when Petrolle slugged back the champion rifled his head with a volley of crackling lefts and rights that had the crowd howling and Billy a bit dizzy as the gong sounded.

Round Three Petrolle changed his style a bit, matching Tony's left jab with his own and the champion promptly shifted his attack and smashed both hands into Billy's body. Canzoneri chased Petrolle to the ropes and shook him up with a half dozen left and rights to the jaw. Billy put his head down and fought back doggedly bouncing one hard right off Canzoneri's ear. But Tony rapped the challenger's head again with both lefts and rights. Billy opened up with a vicious body attack but three times Canzoneri smashed him full on the chin with curling left hooks. He was belting Petrolle's body at the bell. Round Four Both were cautious as they danced about the center of the ring jabbing each other's features neatly with long lefts. Tony lashed a left and right so fast into Billy's head that the challenger merely blinked without attempting to lift his guard. Making every punch count, Canzoneri harassed the challenger, looping left hooks to the head, jabbing to the face, slipping Petrolle's punches, nailing Billy tellingly with every shot. A half dozen right uppercuts in close staggered Petrolle, but he charged back gamely into a straight right that glanced off his cheek bone. Toying with his challenger, Canzoneri flashed two thudding left hooks to the chin as the bell sounded. Round Five Brilliant In his defense and fast as a little cat Canzoneri stepped around Petrolle and nailed him with left hooks and rights to the chin. He banged a straight left a half dozen times into Petrolle's features and the challenger's gnarled nose started to swell and change shape again. Tony danced away from Petrolle's charge, pulling back from punches to counter beautifully with left hooks to the head, right upper cuts and smashes with both hands to the body. As Canzoneri danced away he smacked one left on Petrolle's head that made the challenger draw back and shake his head, rubbing one ear as though a bee were buzzing in it. He came back to drive both hands into Tony's body, fighting back furiously up to the bell. Round Six Canzoneri's left darted a dozen times into Petrolle's face, before Billy stung a left hook to the jaw and drove both hands into the champion's body Canzoneri retreated and Petrolle reached him with a long right to the head. Thoroughly aroused Canzoneri stood in mid ring and shot blow for blow with the heavy hitting challenger, belting one left

hook after another into Petrolle's head. Billy hammered back with both hands, but Tony would not budge. As Petrolle hammered both hands to Canzoneri's body, he rocked and staggered back under Tony's thudding drives to the head. Both shaken, they were matching long lefts as the gong sounded. Round Seven Dogged as a bull pup, Petrolle marched through Canzoneri's biting left to rip two left hooks into the champion's body. Tony nicked the challenger's features with his left, then belted him a solid left hook to the head. Both drove rights to the jaw. They stood toe-to-toe again, swinging so heavily, dodging so prettily that half of the punches missed. Canzoneri drove a hard left hook to the body and stabbed Billy off with his left to the face. Petrolle looped a right to the head but Canzoneri was on him again, clouting his head with both hands, taking a couple of belts to the body when the gong rang.

Round Eight

Canzoneri belted Petrolle's head with both hands, shifting so fast from left hooks to right crosses that Billy's head bobbed like a cork in a sea and the crowd howled at the wild milling. Billy had to come to close quarters for the first clinch of the fight but as soon as he stepped back, Canzoneri was on him again driving both hands to the head. A terrific left hook caught Canzoneri in the pit of the stomach and he doubled up.

As Petrolle unleashed a withering two-fisted body attack, badly hurt, Canzoneri fought back with both hands to the head but Petrolle, rallying furiously, smashed his head with both hands and was driving the champion before him at the bell.

Round Nine

Tony rushed the challenger to the ropes as Petrolle, carrying his fight to the body, slugged Tony's ribs with both hands. Tony shot Petrolle's head back with two thumping rights as he kept the hand. Hooking and stabbing like a swordsman with his left hand, Canzoneri banged a dozen punches into Petrolle's features and drove him around the ring under a furious two-fisted head attack. Apparently capable of surviving any kind of punishment, Petrolle charged back bravely, taking another left hand pasting to work both hands into Tony's body at the bell.

Round Ten

Canzoneri left Petrolle out of a clinch with a right uppercut to the jaw but Billy tore back with an attack that all but smothered Canzoneri, chasing him across the ring as the challenger's hands drummed like pistons to the head and body. Tony danced away and got control of the situation again for a moment with his knifing left hand but again Petrolle rallied, banging the champion vigorously with both hands. They stood in mid ring as the crowd roared in a frenzy and riddled each other's heads with lefts and rights that came all the way from their heels. Tony banged Petrolle's head with a half dozen left hooks but there was a splash of blood on his left cheek and Billy's face was lumped and swollen as the bell chased them to their corners. Round Eleven

Tony ripped two straight rights into Petrolle's head, to spoil the challenger's opening onslaught. Two more rights wobbled Billy's legs and Tony, on top of him like a clawing cat, ripped unmercifully at the challenger's head as he drove him across the ring and into the ropes. Hitting with terrific power, and deadly aim, Canzoneri smashed Petrolle's head with both hands, paying no attention as Petrolle flung back occasional lefts and rights to the head as he was driven about the ring. Petrolle's mouth was bleeding badly as Canzoneri smashed him into the ropes with a right to the head. Dizzy but terrifically game Petrolle kept firing at Canzoneri and belted him viciously up to the bell. Round Twelve Petrolle drove a hard right to the champion's body but Tony danced away, bringing his glittering left back into play, using it as though it were a rapier to knife Petrolle's face. Both threw right hands so hard to the head they leaned on each other for support. Canzoneri danced away, content to stab, but Petrolle, trotting doggedly after him, exploded a thudding left hook on his jaw. Billy charged forward at top speed again but Canzoneri lanced at his features, pecking, hammering his face with lefts. Petrolle pinned Canzoneri against the ropes and whaled his body with both hands, but Tony trotted away grinning, at the gong. Round Thirteen Petrolle charged into a volley of left hooks to the head that set his black thatch back half a dozen times. Canzoneri opened up and drilled Petrolle's battered head with both hands, driving him around the ring, handling the challenger with ridiculous ease. Petrolle floundered under the incessant punishment and there was little steam in his left hook when he did reach Canzoneri's body, with four punches.

Canzoneri took two rights to the head and smashed back a Petrolle's face with his left. Groggy but still full of fight, Petrolle bobbed his head and swung his hands automatically as Canzoneri banged him around at will until the bell rang.

Round Fourteen

Taking no chances, Canzoneri poked his left with monotonous regularity into Petrolle's face. Billy pulled himself together and ripped into Canzoneri with both hands, belting the champion lustily about the body. Canzoneri seemed to like it, and again they stood toe to toe and cut loose full blast with both hands. Incensed as Petrolle stung a hard right to the head. Canzoneri ripped a flood of lefts and rights to the jaw that sent Billy wobbling into the ropes, the flesh so swollen about both eyes that the challenger could scarcely see. Tony slowed down as Petrolle weakened and was thumping the challenger lackadaisically about the head as the gong rang. Round Fifteen As they shook hands, Petrolle drove back to the attack but slipped to the floor without being hit as a sweeping left hook missed Canzoneri entirely. He bounced to his feet immediately. Tony flashed back with a withering fire that sent Billy staggering into a corner. Under a barrage of lefts and rights that flooded off his head. Petrolle was weak and staggering slightly as Canzoneri shifted suddenly to the body, hammering the challenger's ribs. Petrolle slashed back and scarcely able to see, but loosing a dying sortie that sent a half dozen lefts and rights bouncing into Canzoneri's head. Tony was belting the challenger lustily again at the bell.