

Coming to Scratch In Colliers, West Virginia

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In 1880 prize fighting was illegal in every state in the United States. Subsequently most fights were held in relatively isolated locations severed by railroad lines. The 1880 heavyweight championship fight between the 44 year old “recognized” champion Joe Goss and the untested 28 year old Paddy Ryan was a classic example of championship fights of that era. Originally scheduled for the Canadian shore of Lake Erie, the fight was finally held in Colliers, West Virginia on June 1, 1880.

Colliers was a village of 134 people located in the long slender northern panhandle of West Virginia, 36 miles by rail from Pittsburgh and seven miles by road from Steubenville, Ohio. The sheriff of Brooke County and his two deputies attempted to stop the fight but the crowd of 300 to 400 men (many with guns) intimidated him.

Ryan won the fight, fought under London Prize Ring Rules, in the 86th round. Within two hours of the end of the fight the fighters, seconds, and spectators were on an express train bound for Pittsburgh.

This fight was similar to many others of the era except that Richard K. Fox covered it extensively in his newly acquired **National Police Gazette**. It was a combination of the continued support of Fox and the **National Police gazette** and the emergence of John L. Sullivan who defeated Ryan for the championship in 1882, which created an increased interest in boxing in the United States in the late nineteenth century.



Joan Chandler did not have to travel quite so far as Tony Mangan for this years convention.