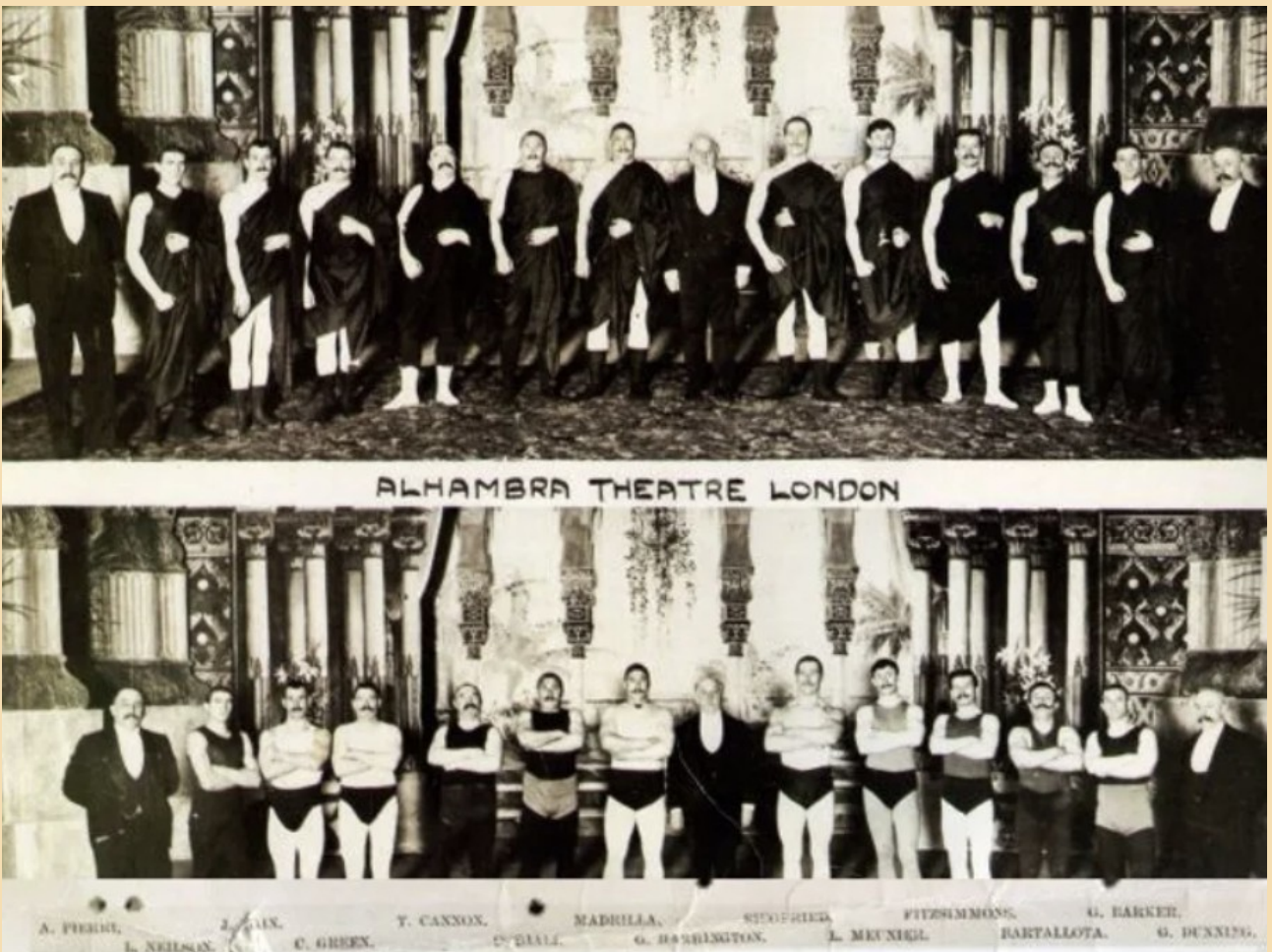


Ron Historyo's
Time Travel
to the

Wrestlers of the
Golden Age

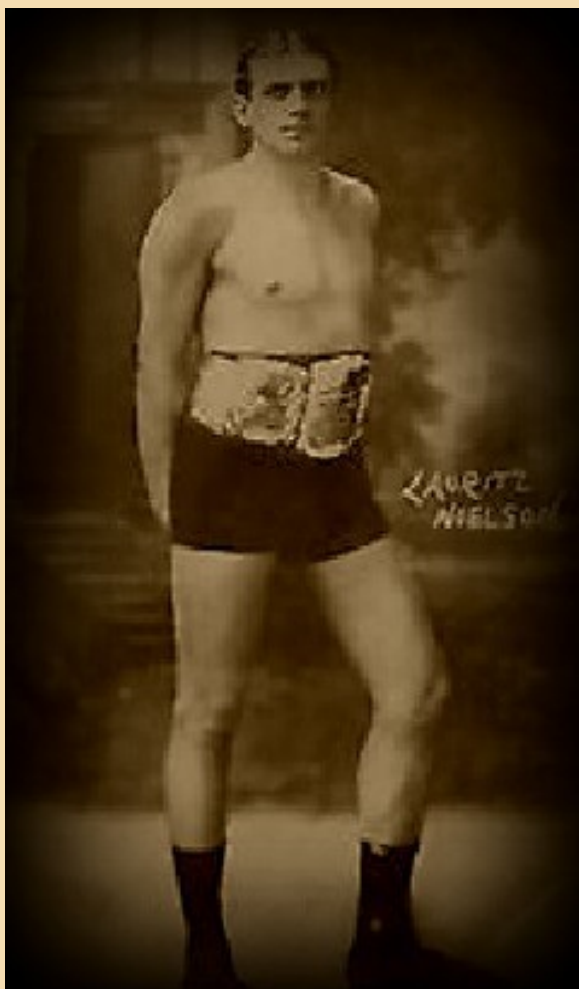
Lauritz Neilsen



You can almost smell history if you just let go and journey into that picture at the Alhambra. The picture has been preserved by the family of Charlie Green the old Wigan wrestler seen in the picture. Those wrestlers possibly represent half of the top wrestlers of that time. Fair comment to describe them as a legendary set.

What were the chances that more than one hundred years after this picture the member of

the family of another one of those wrestlers was to join Heritage in the hope we might have something on his grandfather. Because of my research into Lauritz Neilsen in the picture I have a fair idea now that the year was 1904. If I am wrong it will not be by a lot.



I hold my hands up and admit I had not heard of Lauritz Neilsen which made me question if he was in the right company with some of those names. I can assure you that Lauritz did enough to establish himself in their league and I managed to unfold a story of Lauritz's life both as a wrestler and a private individual. They had him billed as champion of Denmark.

The St James Hall Manchester stood on Oxford Street a public hall and concert Hall that could hold 10,000 people. The lesser hall above the main entrance could hold just 1000. On 4th April 1902 they put on a Health and Strength Physical Culture Tournament. During the evening they put on wrestling and Strength acts.

There was Catch and Greco. In Greco rules Neilsen wrestled Young Acton billed from America. The number of times over the next few years Neilsen fought Acton makes me suspect that even in those days once wrestling was put on with other entertainment one might question the validity of the results and the billing. Joe Acton was of Wigan and thus far I can find no relationship for him to an earlier

and more famous Joe Acton who went to America in the 1880's and made a name for himself.

We should be careful about career records for Joe Actons there was even another one earlier than this in Hurst in Ashton-under-lyne.

Young Acton did make a name for himself though and was world ten stone champion at some point.

In June of that year Neilsen appeared for Arthur Bettinson at the National Sports Club Tournament.

A few months later in September 1902 Acton and Neilsen drew a crowd to Broughton Rangers Rugby ground. The betting was 5/4 on Neilsen so allegedly £25 and £20 were put up with Lauritz Neilsen running out winner this time at Catch wrestling. The newspapers claimed that Lauritz had learned his trade at the Salford School of Wrestling. For those that don't know Broughton was part of Salford and bordering the Cheetham district of

Manchester.

By 1904 Lauritz Neilsen was well established in the London scene. At this time there was that much work for Neilsen that he moved to London and lived in Smithfield. Here I can reveal that he worked as a meat salesman. I take that to mean he worked on a stall cutting the meat. I am guessing that Lauritz was in London only during that Hackenschmidt boom period where he had his two bouts with Madrali.

All the evidence shows him to be in the north again during 1906 and living in Cheetham Hill at 36 Marsland Street right next to Broughton where he had wrestled outdoors. He married, probably in 1906, and over the next few years had two boys, Peter Lauritz and George Christian. His daytime job was that of a Danish Butcher. I have a little proof to come later and as I could not find his marriage I am suggesting that his wife Annie was also from Denmark and in fact that was probably where they married.

1907 was a year that for me puts Lauritz Neilsen right at the top along with those other famous names of that age. At the Wallsingham Club in Bootle Lauritz won the catch-as-catch-can Middleweight championship of the world. His opponent was William Scholl. About 22 minutes two falls to one and £50 and a place in the record books along with previous champions Joe Carroll and Peter Bannon.

From what I can see up to 1910 Lauritz wrestled often at The Palace Theatre Manchester and even the Free Trade Hall where one day Atholl Oakeley would promote wrestling.

In 1908/1909 Ogdens ran a series of pugilists and wrestlers Cigarette Cards. 1908 was a set of 50 and the following year 51-75 were added and Lauritz Neilsen was number 70.

WRESTLING.
February 1909

ALHAMBRA THEATRE, LONDON.
NATIONAL SPORTING WRESTLING CHAMPIONSHIPS,
OPEN TO THE WORLD
(Catch-as-catch-can Style).

Under the Direction of Mr A. F. BETTINSON, National Sporting Club, Covent Garden, W.C.

TO-DAY, FROM 3 TO 5.

HEAVY-WEIGHTS.—SECOND SERIES.	
JOHN LEMM	v. ABDULLAH
GABRIEL LASSARTESSE	v. LAURITZ NIELSEN
PAT CONNOLLY	v. FRANK OROZIER
JOE CARROLL	v. ERNEST DELALOYE
WM MACKENZIE	v. JAMES FOSTER
JACK HOLLAND	v. A HAMBURGER
MIDDLE-WEIGHTS.—FOURTH SERIES.	
HENRY IESLINGER	v. "WHISTLER" CARROLL
BOB BERRY	v. J J MILLS
JAMES FOSTER	v. FRANK OROZIER
JOE CARROLL	v. LAURITZ NIELSEN
LIGHT-WEIGHTS.—FOURTH SERIES.	
HARRY JONGE	v. JACK LAWTON
TOM ROSE	v. P O OLSEN
JACK BROADBENT	v. J W PHICE
ALF HARDY	v. WM OHAENOOK

Seats can now be booked for the semi-final and the final bouts.
Box office open from 10 to 10.

If the photo at the Alhambra was not enough then here is some more evidence of how well known he was.. At this stage he was still also attending the yearly Alhambra Tournament each spring certainly in 1909 and 1910.

Wrestling itself was now losing popularity and the first world war probably stopped most of it.

In 1915 though I did find Lauritz Neilsen at Ardwick Barracks the home of the 8th battalion of the Manchester regiment. It was an exhibition really to help with recruitment for the territorial campaign. A crowd of 1000 yielded 150 recruits, a great success. Neilsen tried to defeat a heavyweight

Jim Essen who had allegedly fought Hackenschmidt. It was a quick one fall with Essen the easy winner.

In his private life strange things were afoot as Neilsen married a second wife Ellen Burke in Liverpool in 1916 and had children Lauritz Dennis in 1918 and another infant who died in 1920. Son Lauritz Dennis died in 2011 and I am told only met his father twice.

The two wives may have known of each other's existence, but whatever they knew seems to have been kept secret. Heritage member Hirsty is the son of Lauritz Dennis and of the Liverpool branch. Lauritz the wrestler went back to Salford where he died in 1938.

Did he go back to the other wife? I have no idea. In 1939 the second wife in Liverpool was quite aware she was a widow and living with her own mother.

First wife Annie was listed as "married according to Danish Law" in some sort of care institution in Manley Park in an infirm condition and died just over a year later. The Institute was run by the Salvation Army. Annie had never accepted the second marriage and maybe it is a sad tale. I guess not for me to judge.

It does not get much bigger than appearing on bills that Hackenschmidt was on those big venues in London like The Battersea Empire The Royal Music Hall Holborn and the Metropole in Camberwell.

To be born in Denmark but adopted by Salford is also of note. Could Lauritz Neilsen be Salford's first great wrestler?

Opponents of note were Peter Bannon George Barker Bob Fitzsimmons John Bain Tom Jenkins Joe Acton Vince Ajax H Kong Buzovac Mourzouck Jim Joyce Peter Gotz Joe Carroll Jack Carroll Jack Davison Jim Evans Jerry Lawrence C Relf J.W.Price F Crozier Jim Stockley Klein B Berry J Ferguson Tom Connors Job Shambley Nicholas Fitzpatrick Jack Bentley Jack Winrow Moffat Ray Smith., Tom Pierce.

Some were international stars and some were local men. Lauritz even fought at Bury in the Co-operative Hall and the Olympic Circus.

My Guess is that he came to England in late 1901 as I was unable to find him on the Census in that year.

Title Lineages are a bit patchy to say the least. In the build up to the 1909 tournament Lauritz Neilsen was described as a three times world champion.

He won the International Middle Weight title at Royal Holborn and Heavyweight championship at the Metropolis.

Pioneer Lauritz Neilsen belongs on Heritage.

Ron Historyo