

WON MANY FOOT RACES.

Death in Montville of Gilbert McLaughlin, a Famous Athlete Years Ago.

The death of Gilbert Knowlton McLaughlin of Montville revives some memories of the great strength and fleetness of foot of this wonderful athlete, says "One Who Knew Him," in the Rockland Courier-Gazette. He was born about 75 years ago in the interior of Maine and from his Scotch-Irish and American parentage inherited the rugged physique of two races. He was about 5½ feet in height, and his weight was 196 pounds in early and middle life. He had double teeth, his joints and muscles were of ponderous proportions, and he was as flat-footed as an Indian. His feats of strength and his ability in winning foot races caused much excitement about 40 years ago in the New England and Southern States.

At one time he took hold of a set of wheels by the middle of the axel and lifted 980 pounds with apparent ease. About 20 years ago he and C. Wesley Taylor of Winslow lugged a back-log about four rods out of the woods through three feet of snow and without resting. An able 1200-pound horse could not start the log, which weighed, as near as could be told, about 2200 pounds. He was very strong with his teeth, at one time lifting a load with them that 20 different men failed to lift with their hands. He was also able to throw a pork barrel, soaked through with pickle, over his head by means of his teeth.

It was another marvel to find a man of such size and strength so fleet of foot. I will undertake to give an account of some of his performances on various race-tracks.

On the Belfast track in 1860 he won a race against two fleet Indians and a horse. During the first half mile and up to the third quarter McLaughlin was behind all his competitors. An old friend from California made his way into the judges' stand, and with a roar like a lion shouted words of encouragement. This acted like magic. The man in the rear was seen to gather himself, and closing up the intervening gap, go by his rivals and come home a good winner. Every spectator said the speed of that last quarter was phenomenal. Next year on the same track he witnessed a foot race between two men, one of whom had but one arm. The two armed man won and it was loudly asserted that he was without a rival. McLaughlin tried to arrange a match with them then and there, but when the stranger heard of McLaughlin's feat the previous year he backed down. McLaughlin then pinned a ten-dollar bill onto his clothes and offered it to any man on the grounds who could take it from him in any distance from 100 yards to five miles. No one accepted the challenge.

In 1864 McLaughlin enlisted in the army and won foot races with every soldier who would compete with him, being adjudged the fastest runner in the northern army. He also ran with a man who claimed to be champion of England, winning a 100-yard dash by one yard, and a purse of \$100. Mr. McLaughlin in 1864 also made an exhibition mile in 4 minutes, 18 seconds, which is only 5½ seconds behind the world's record, made by G. W. George of England 20 years later. McLaughlin's speed seemed to increase with every yard he ran. He never used tobacco in any form, was strictly temperate, and never played a game of cards in his life.