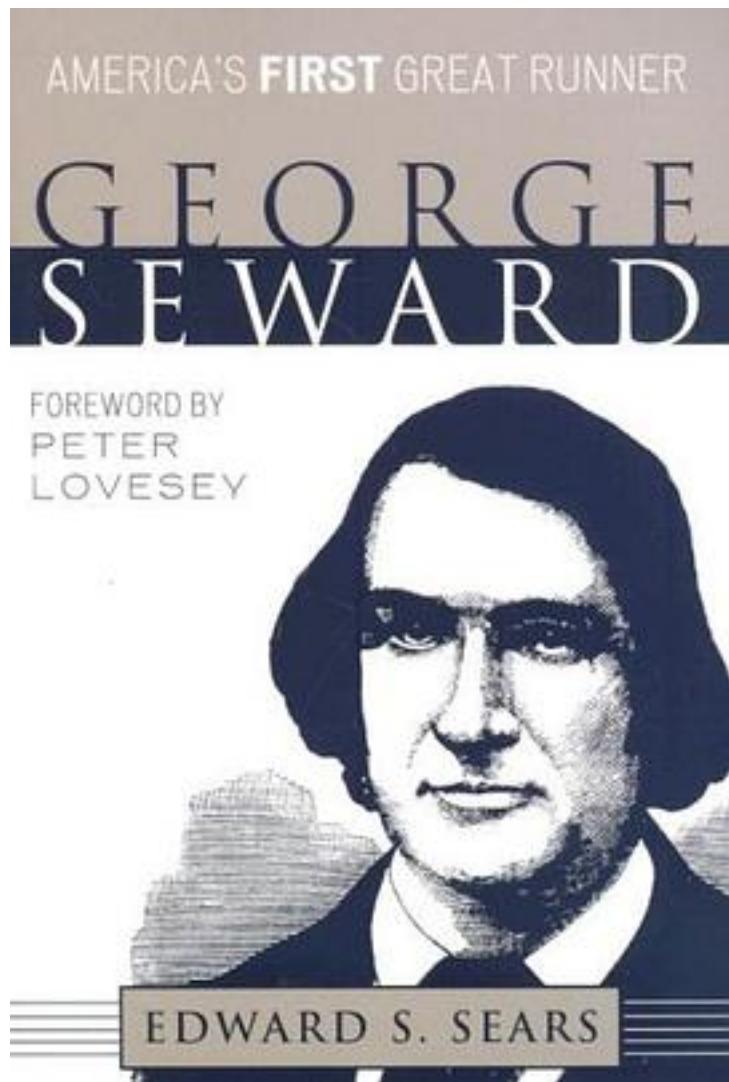


George Seward



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On September 30, 1844 in Hammersmith, England, Connecticut-born George Seward ran 100 yards in nine and a quarter seconds, setting a record. This performance helped establish Seward as the most famous athlete in the world, and his feat remained unsurpassed for almost ninety years. However, in 1889, six years after Seward's death and 45 years after the run, his achievement was declared invalid based on a doubtful "eyewitness" account of the race. Though this dubious version may have been fabricated to discredit Seward's record-because no runners of the time could approach it-the damage was done. After his record was invalidated, Seward fell into obscurity and within a few years, he became nearly forgotten. In *George Seward: America's First Great Runner*, Edward S. Sears seeks to restore Seward's standing among the greats of track and field. In the early 1840s, when Seward was in the prime of his career, there were no amateur sports in America and just a few professional footraces, so Seward engaged in wagers to display his skills. Within a few years, he established himself as a runner to beat, both in the states and across the Atlantic. Sears recreates many of the races Seward undertook, in which he offered starts against the best runners of his day, started on his knees or racing up to ten men separately in an hour. He even ran against horses. While this book concentrates on Seward, it also covers the history of professional sprinting from the early 1800s to the present. Sears illuminates the formative years of track and field, both in America and England, and much about the Victorian era of sports is covered here, including an emphasis on gambling. About more than the triumphs and misfortunes of a great American athlete, this book examines the adoration of sports celebrities and the struggle between amateur and professional athletics. *George Seward* is a fascinating profile of an American sports original and should be of interest to not only runners but fans of all sports, as well as general

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