Many boxing historians consider Joe Louis, aka The Brown Bomber, to be the greatest heavyweight of all time. Louis' record was 69-3 with 55 of the wins coming by way of knockout. Joe Louis held the heavyweight title for eleven straight years. He defended the title a record twenty-five times until announcing his retirement on March 1, 1949.

When Louis announced his retirement he requested that Ezzard Charles and Jersey Joe Walcott fight for the right to succeed him. Louis considered them two of the most outstanding heavyweight fighters of the era.

In Chicago on June 22, 1949 the first of four title fights took place between the two contenders. Ezzard Charles won the vacated NBA Heavyweight Title in a unanimous decision over Jersey Joe Walcott in fifteen rounds.

The first of the fights was only recognized by the NBA (National Boxing Association). The other governing bodies, the New York State Athletic Commission and the European Federation didn't consider the fight a sanctioned title bout.

In order to show his right to the title, Charles fought and stopped former light heavyweight Gus Lesnevich in seven rounds and Pat Valentino in eight rounds. Both fights were in defense of the NBA heavyweight title. Ezzard Charles also defended the title against Freddie Beshore in Buffalo, NY by stopping him in fourteen rounds.

Because the fight was in New York State, Charles became recognized by the NYSAC as the titleholder.

That was in August of 1950. One month later, on September 27, 1950, Joe Louis came out of retirement to fight Ezzard Charles for the heavyweight title. The fight was fought at Yankee Stadium in New York City and was sanctioned by both the NBA and NYSAC. Ezzard Charles won a 15 round unanimous decision leaving no doubt that he was the undisputed heavyweight champion of the world.

Following that fight, Ezzard Charles won an eleventh round knockout over Nick Barrone on December 5, 1950. A month later, in early January of 1951, Charles beat Lee Oma with a TKO in ten rounds.

Those two fights led to the second title defense between Ezzard Charles and Jersey Joe Walcott. The fight was held March 7, 1951 in Detroit. Walcott fought six fights before the rematch with Ezzard Charles for the heavyweight title. One of the fights Walcott fought was a third round knockout against light heavyweight Hall of Fame great Harold Johnson. In the title fight Ezzard Charles again outpointed Jersey Joe in a fifteen round decision to defend the heavyweight championship.

On July 8, 1951 the city of Pittsburgh played host to the first heavyweight title fight ever fought in the Steel City. It was four months after the second title fight. Held in Forbes Field in Pittsburgh, boxing fans saw a complete turnaround of events. Jersey Joe Walcott kayoed Ezzard Charles with a left hook in the seventh round to become the new Heavyweight Champion of the World. Joe Walcott was 37 years old when he won the title.

The following summer Philadelphia was the scene for the fourth and final title fight between Ezzard Charles and Jersey Joe Walcott. It was June 5, 1952. At the age of 38 Walcott once again out-pointed Ezzard Charles over 15 rounds to retain the heavyweight championship.

Having turned pro in 1930 and fighting a pro career that spanned over two decades, it was well noted that “Walcott literally outlived the color bar that keep many black boxers of the 1930s and ‘40s from meeting their full potential.”

Walcott’s title defense against Ezzard Charles in Philadelphia would be his last fight as a heavyweight champion. Three months later on September 23 in Philadelphia, Jersey Joe would be stopped in thirteen rounds by the next great Heavyweight Champion of the World, Rocky Marciano.

On May 15, 1953 in a fifteen round rematch for the Heavyweight Championship of the World, Rocky Marciano kayoed Jersey Joe Walcott in the first round.

This was the start of a new heavyweight era with a new style of heavyweight fighter. Rocky Marciano fought both Jersey Joe Walcott and Ezzard Charles twice each. Marciano won all four fights; three of the fights were by way of knockout.