

SABR Pictorial History Committee Newsletter

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SLIDES AND PHOTOS

[*George Michael* is probably best known to sports enthusiasts as host of the nationwide Sunday sports television program *The George Michael Sports Machine*. But few know of George's lifelong passion for collecting photos of ballplayers sliding into 2nd, 3rd, and home. His search for these photos has out of necessity made him an excellent baseball picture researcher. Herewith, George shares the background of his love for these special photos and some of the interesting stories of his research.]

One Sunday morning in September of 1947 I was awoken by my Mom in order to show me a great picture in the *St. Louis Globe*. There was this beautiful picture from the previous day's game of the Cardinals' Marty Marion sliding into home with the ball bouncing to Dodger catcher Bruce Edwards. Now, more than 50 years later, I still consider it to be the perfect picture of a slide into home and I am still searching for a quality print of that picture.

I know I was clipping pictures from the papers before I ever started school. For the following fifteen years or so I cut out every sliding picture from the newspapers and put them in carefully protected scrapbooks. We couldn't afford the money to go to a Cardinals game, so we would listen to Harry Caray on the radio. Based on his descriptions we would guess as to what scenes might be captured in a picture in the next day's paper. To this day I am committed to finding all the sliding photos I can from 1940-1959 of National League games, especially those of the Cardinals, and of the Browns.

The photos I saved had to be clear pictures of a player sliding into second, third or home. The positions of the players and the quality of the actual photo would determine if it was good enough to be saved. Collisions, rough double plays, post homerun photos, posed shots—these were never acceptable. It had to be a clean photo of a player sliding.

Stan Musial was far and away the most photogenic slider ever to play ball (photo at top of p. 3). He has a full extension style that produced the perfect slide and thus the perfect picture. Jackie Robinson was photographed sliding almost as often as Musial (photo at bottom of p. 3), but Jackie often slid on his side or on one knee, ready to advance to the next base.

My Mom died when I was young and my father discarded all the scrapbooks as junk. I decided in 1968 that I would try to find every picture that I had clipped as a kid. I have now spent thirty years searching for photos of sliding action from 1940 to 1959. I focus on these years because I know my Mom collected in the early '40s and though I may have been too young to remember the games, I remember some of the photos. I stop at 1959 because I have saved all the original newspapers since that time and clipped the photos myself. I search every day for hundreds of photos. For example, Jackie Robinson stole home 19 times. I have photos of 12 of these steals and am still searching for the other 7. It's a search that never ends.

Over the past 30 years, I have searched the Hall of Fame, AP-Wide World, Bettman Archives, and every known source of photo archives. The

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PITCH IN!

Have an idea for an article? Want to review a book? Do you have any comments? Want to submit some newspaper clippings, photographs, or artwork? Do you have any research needs you'd like to post? The Pictorial History Committee and the PHC Newsletter need your participation. The sole requirement of the Newsletter is that it remains devoted to baseball pictorial history research. Please send submissions to:

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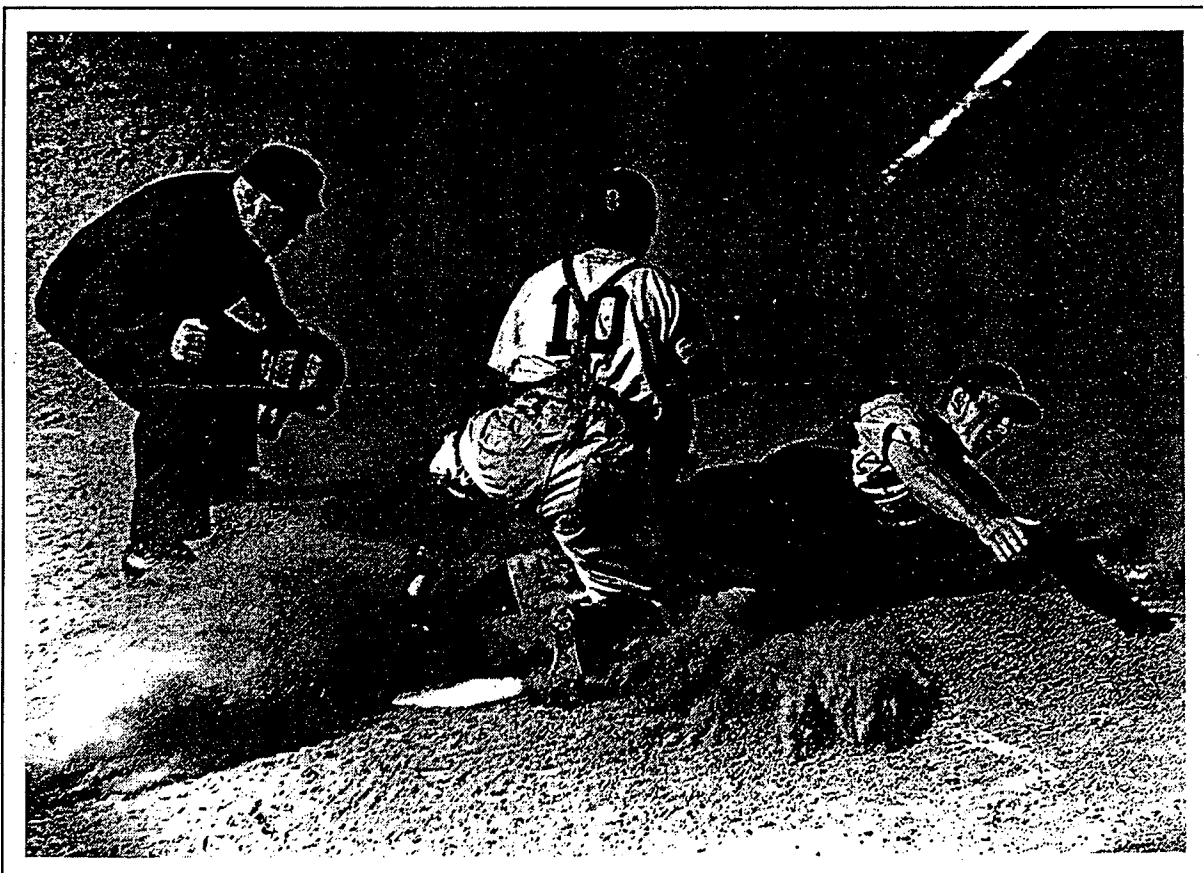
Slides and Photos *cont. from page 1*

surest way to know what photos were taken is to go to the library and look up the papers on microfilm to see the original photo as it appeared in the paper. Unfortunately, most photos no longer exist in newspaper files—they have been thrown out or taken away. At AP-Wide World most photos of the day-to-day games have simply been discarded. Some wonderfully helpful people at AP have personally searched their files for me, but the search came up empty and thus I know these photos have been discarded. Today I totally rely on individuals who may have these photos in their personal files and collections.

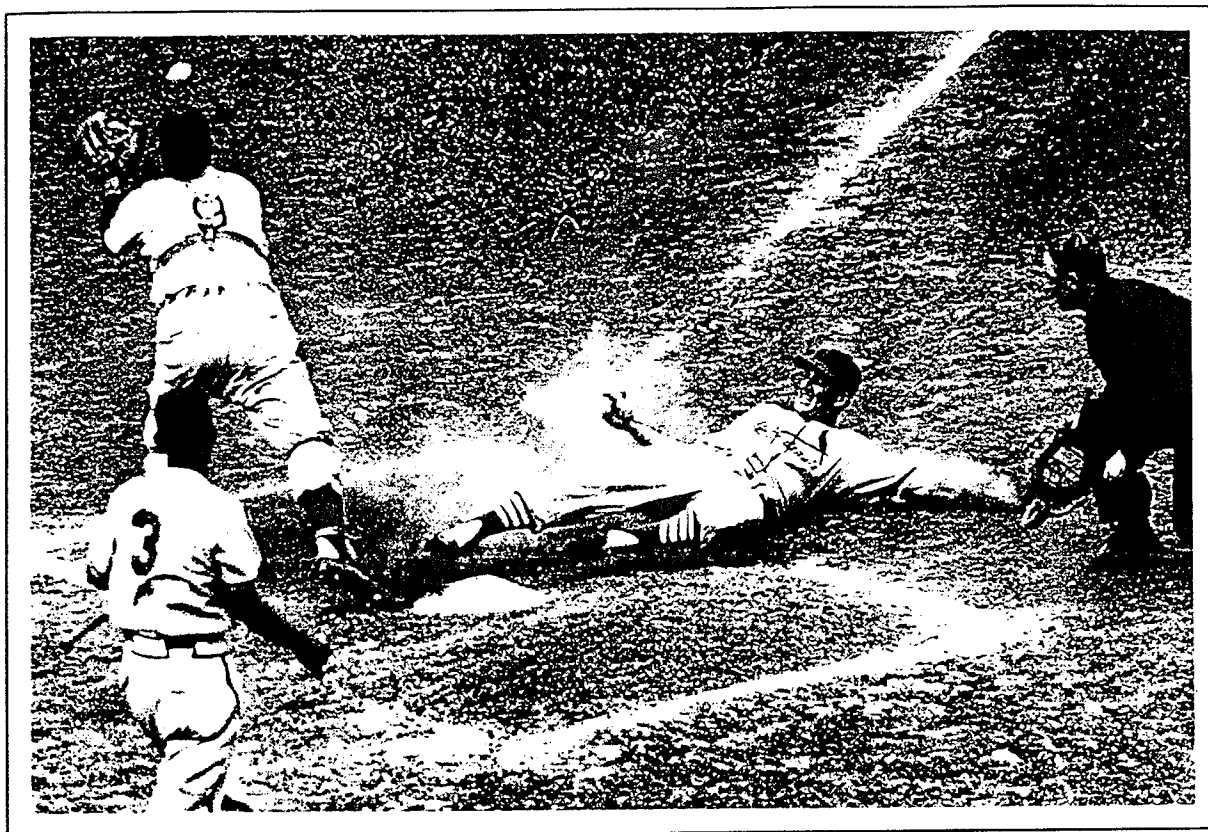
During the course of my search, I sometimes find photos that no longer have the identification caption tags attached to them. That's when the work begins. To write an absolutely correct caption tag it is often necessary to go to the library to look for microfilm of the newspaper from that day's game. Even with the boxscore it may not be possible to identify a photo with absolute certainty. It will take the game story from the paper and the ability to identify the players involved to fully identify the photo.

Each photo presents its own challenge. In the case of the photo below, the only thing I knew for

sure was that the photo had been published in the *New York Daily News*. Using Mark Stang and Linda Harkness' *Baseball by the Numbers*, I found that uniform #10 for the Dodgers was worn by Bruce Edwards who played for Brooklyn from 1946 to 1951. The red bill on the Reds cap told me the picture had to be 1946 because, as found in *Mark Okkonen's Baseball Uniforms of the 20th Century*, that was the last year their hats had that two-toned color scheme. The umpire looked like either George Barr, Scotty Robb or possibly Bill Stewart. I went through every Reds photo I had, but couldn't determine the identity of the runner. Judging by the dirt around the batter's box I felt the play had occurred during the middle innings. The Dodgers uniform looked lighter than that of the Reds, so I assumed the picture was taken at Ebbets Field. I researched every box score of Reds-Dodgers day games of 1946 and found the few games that Barr, Stewart and Robb had worked as home plate umpires. I found two pictures of George Barr and was convinced Barr was the home plate umpire. From the box scores I narrowed it down to two games. At the Library of Congress I looked up the date of September 11, 1946, and found the picture. It was Eddie Lukon trying for an inside the park home run in the 5th inning of what proved to be



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the longest scoreless game in history! I now had recreated an accurate caption for the photo.

The most difficult pictures are the ones with no date, no names and no easily identifiable faces. I knew that the photo below featured the Braves and I can tell from other photos it was from the Milwaukee era. By the position of the runner wearing #2 I know it's Red Schoendienst of the Cardinals. The Braves went to Milwaukee in 1953 and Red left the Cardinals during the season of 1956, so the photo is from 1953 through mid-season 1956. Based on the build of the umpire I figured it was probably Dusty Boggess or Bill Jackowski. Based on other photos, I believed it was Johnny Logan taking the throw and Danny O'Connell backing up the play. I looked at the base paths and, with so few spike marks on the infield, knew it had to be in the first inning. Clearly, Red was stealing 2nd base.

I went to all the box scores with the Braves and Cardinals for day games from 1953 to 1956 in which Red Schoendienst stole a base. There were three dates where he stole a base. One of those dates is April 15, 1954, Opening Day for the Braves. But the umpire is Bill Jackowski, not Dusty Boggess. I have several pictures and determine that indeed the ump could be Jackowski. The other notable feature about the picture is the outfield grass. I can still see football lines on the grass, and it appears that the grass had recently been mowed while it was wet. That indicates the date of the photo was April or September, because the Packers

played at County Stadium and the yard-lines were still on the field in the spring and in the fall. I called Milwaukee County Stadium and got an old groundskeeper who remembered the Opening Day of '54 when the grass was wet and had to be mowed because it was so tall, and the yardlines from Packers football were still visible on the field.

With this information I went to the Library of Congress where the story of the game for April 15, 1954, told me it was a dreary overcast day. In the first inning, Schoendienst stole 2nd and later scored. The umpire was Bill Jackowski. This one picture took a couple of days of research before I could write an accurate caption, but I now know the story behind the picture. The photo never made the papers, but it now has a complete description.

My search for these perfect sliding photos from the '40s and '50s of the Cardinals and other National Leaguers is a never ending passion. Identifying each of these photos is like discovering a hidden treasure. It's a labor of love: a never ending quest that began more years ago than I can remember.

If you have any photos of great sliding action, I have an interest. Please contact me at:

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— George Michael



Collection of George Michael

WALTER CAMP'S BOOK OF COLLEGE SPORTS

Earlier this year a friend and I drove to the Los Angeles Convention Center to take in the California International Antiquarian Book Fair. As one might expect, I scoured the booths for books on baseball. Happily I stumbled across a title of interest and was glad to make the purchase. The book was *Walter Camp's Book of College Sports* by none other than the famed Yale football coach. As noted in the *Spalding Base Ball Guide* of 1909:

Mr. Camp has probably written more on college athletics than any other writer and the leading papers and magazines of America are always anxious to secure his expert opinion on foot ball, track and field athletics, base ball and rowing. Mr. Camp has grown up with Yale athletics and is a part of Yale's remarkable athletic system. While he has been designated as the "Father of Foot Ball," it is a well known fact that during his college career Mr. Camp was regarded as one of the best players that ever represented Yale on the base ball field, so when we hear of Walter Camp as a football expert we must also remember his remarkable knowledge of the game of base ball, of which he is a great admirer.

My copy of the book was published in 1901, but earlier editions had been published with the first edition dating from 1889. Though the book has sections on track, rowing, boating, and football, I was most interested in the sections devoted to baseball. And I was especially taken by the wonderful drawings, some 40 in number, that accompanied the well over 100 pages of baseball text.

Recently, in looking over these very drawings, I was once again reminded how much one can learn about the history of our celebrated game by taking a critical and careful view of baseball images and applying some good, old-fashioned baseball research. Indeed, this very thought had occurred to me over four years ago, inspiring me as I set out to form SABR's Pictorial History Committee.

An example of the kind of research to which I am referring may help to illustrate (pun very much intended) how fruitful and informational baseball pictorial research can be.

The picture at right is entitled 'Catcher Running for a "Foul Fly."' At first glance the image appears to be a rather simple drawing, but upon further review a number of interesting details come to light.

You may notice that home plate is represented by a square. It should be recalled that it was not until the season of 1900 that the familiar five-sided polygon was introduced into the rules, and thus we may deduce that the picture depicts a scene from the 1800s.

Note also that while the catcher wears both a chest protector and a (discarded) mask, he does not wear shin guards. It is fairly well-accepted that in 1927 the New York Giants' Roger Bresnahan was the first catcher to wear shin guards. However, sources often mistakenly credit Bresnahan as having invented these handy protective pads. Nothing could be further from the truth. Protective leg pads had been *de rigueur* in cricket since the middle of the nineteenth century. However, they were introduced in that sport not as protective gear for the wicket-keeper, but for the batsman. According to Michael Rundell in *The Dictionary of Cricket*:

Various forms of protection for the legs were experimented with in the early 19th century, the most primitive being a single wooden board tied to the batsman's front leg. One writer describes a system involving 'longitudinal sockets' sewn into trouser legs at half-inch intervals, into which 'long strips of Indian rubber' could be inserted.

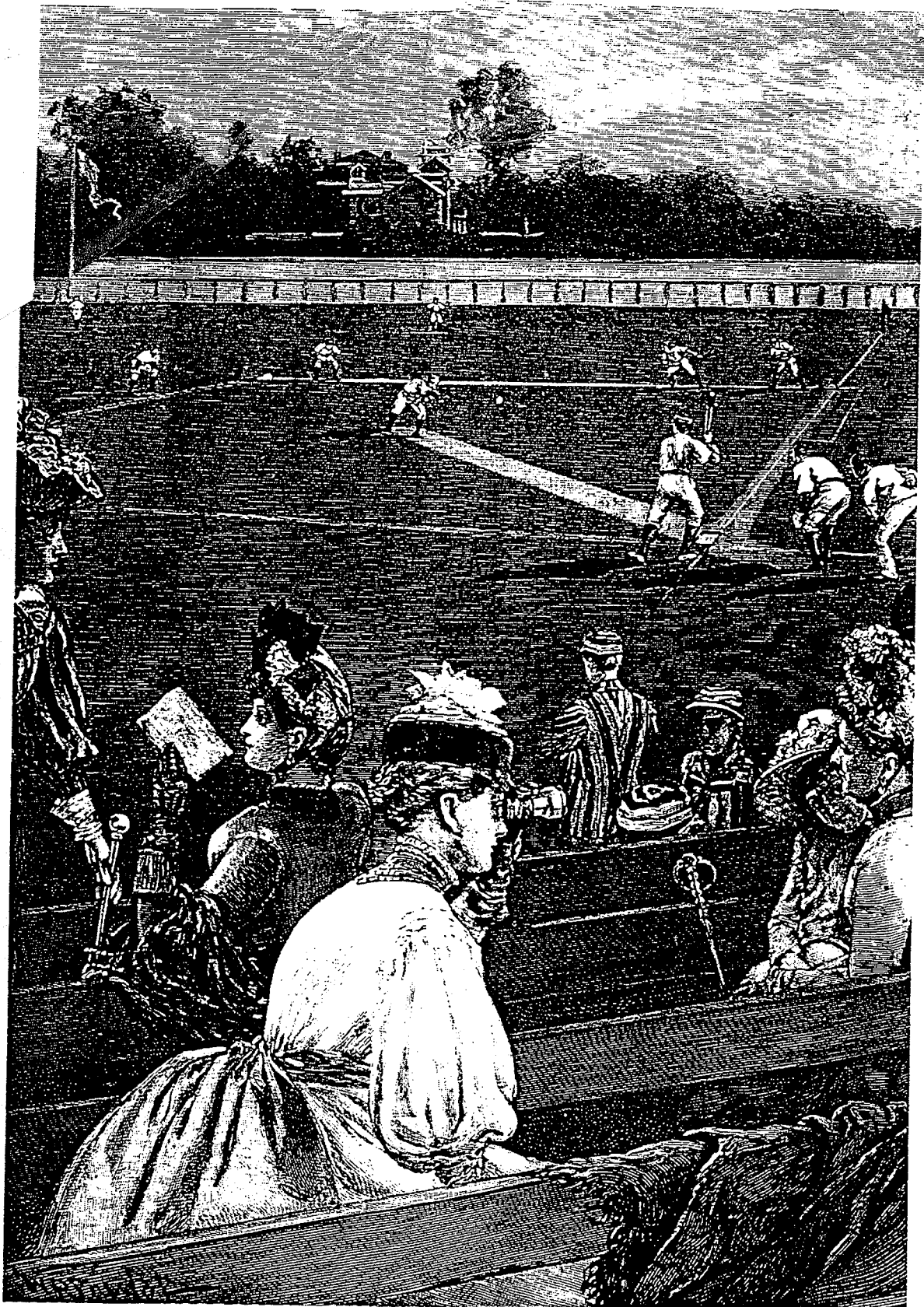
The earliest *Spalding Base Ball Guide* in which I can find "leg guards" advertised for sale is the 1909 edition. The following year, the *Reach Base Ball Guide* offered their own version, referring to them as "shin guards."

Note also that the catcher wears both a mitt on his left hand and a fingerless glove on his right hand. The combination offered protection for the catcher as he used both hands in catching a ball, and yet still allowed the catcher to adeptly handle the ball in throwing. The first baseball guide in which it is suggested that the catcher wear gloves is



CATCHER RUNNING FOR A "FOUL FLY."

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the *DeWitt's Guide* of 1872. However, it is not until the *Spalding Base Ball Guide* of 1890 that I can find an advertisement for the combination of catcher's mitt for the left hand and fingerless glove for the right hand as seen in the picture.

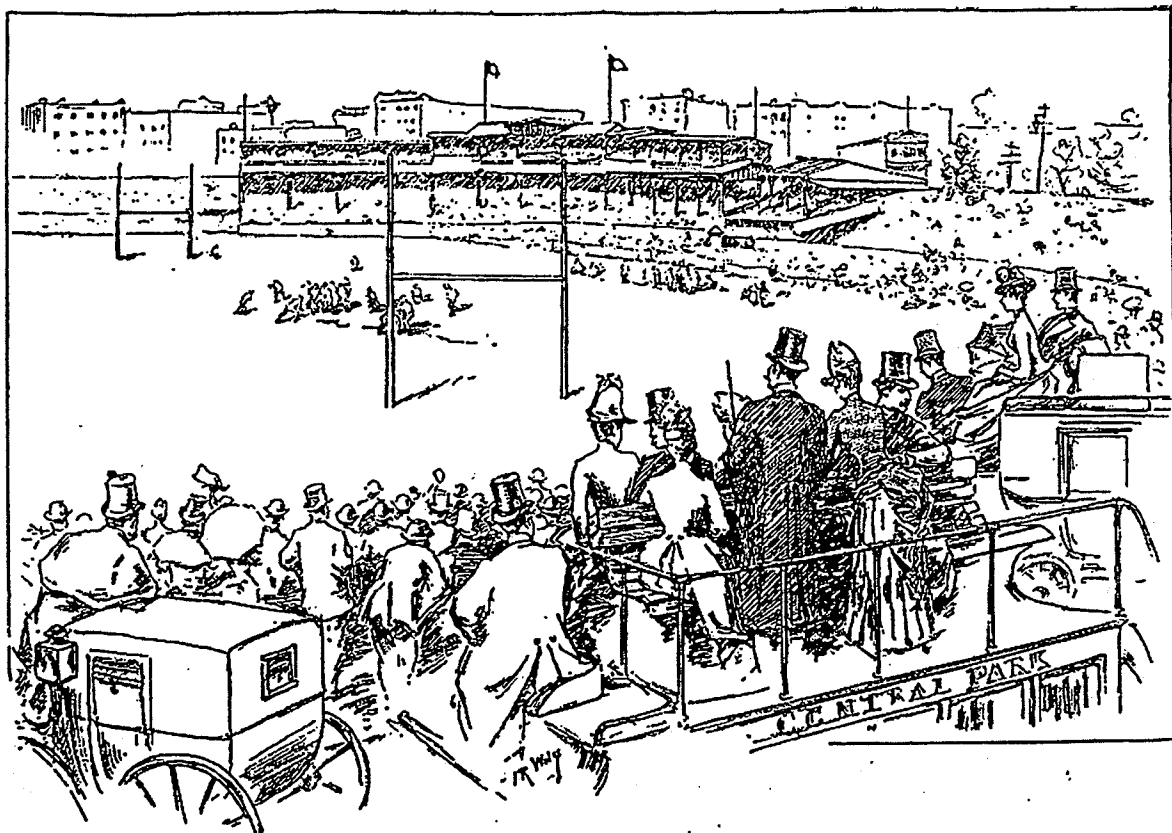
In the background of the picture, beyond the third base bag, notice the flag posted in the ground. Though never required under the rules of the game, such flags were often used to mark the foul line beyond the first and third base bags. Unlike modern-day foul poles, these flags were placed within the playing field, with plenty of fielding territory beyond their position. It is rare to find pictures that show such flags, but careful examination of the photographs of Opening Day at the Polo Grounds, April 29, 1886, as reproduced in SABR's *The National Pastime — Special Pictorial Issue: The Nineteenth Century* (pp. 50-51) do indeed reveal these foul-line markers. Reproduced on the preceding page is another image in which one of these flags can be seen: detail from a *Harper's Weekly* print published August 31, 1889.

Note the dark flag down the right-field line. Foul line flags like this one disappeared from use sometime during the 1890s.

A number of other pictures in *Walter Camp's Book of College Sports* reveal similarly interesting tidbits about the game and how it was played. Surprisingly, one of the most interesting images in the book is not located in the baseball section, but in the pages devoted to football. The image below is a drawing of a football game titled "The Polo Grounds During a Match." Yes ... *that* Polo Grounds. Compare this drawing with the pair of Polo Grounds images found on p. 41 of Michael Gershman's *Diamonds*. (Also see pp. 54-55 of *Baseball: An Illustrated History* by Geoffrey Ward and Ken Burns or p. 61 of SABR's *The National Pastime — Special Pictorial Issue: The Nineteenth Century*).

Keep your eyes and your mind wide open and you can find some wonderful baseball images ... sometimes where you least expect them.

— Tom Shieber



THE POLO GROUNDS DURING A MATCH.

NEW MEMBERS AND MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

The SABR Pictorial History Committee welcomes the following new members:

Jerry Casway	9252 Broken Timber Way Columbia, MD 21045
George Michael	1201 Sugarloaf Mountain Road Comus, MD 20842
Chris Rudd	3749 Farm Hill Blvd. Redwood City, CA 94061
Bob Schaefer	526 N. Lake Circle Crystal River, FL 34429

Please note the following email and address changes:

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Jeff Obermeyer	14127 125 th Ave. NE Kirkland, WA 98034
Al Parnis, Jr.	P.O. Box 3371 Crestline, CA 92325-3371
Richard Puff	email: puff@global2000.net