

# SABR Pictorial History Committee Newsletter

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## WE'RE IN BUSINESS!

At the SABR Executive Board meeting held in Kansas City last fall, the board voted unanimously in favor of forming the Pictorial History Committee (or, as I like to call it, the PHC). Thanks goes to all who expressed their interest and enthusiasm. Of the original thirty-five questionnaires that were sent out, here were the results that I sent to the board members:

Number of returned questionnaires	Number interested in becoming a member of the proposed PHC	Number not interested in becoming a member of the proposed PHC, but in favor of the formation of the PHC	Number not in favor of the formation of the PHC
24	20	4	0

No doubt the SABR board was impressed with this overwhelming, positive response. With the announcement of the official establishment of the committee (SABR Bulletin Volume 24, Number 9), I have received a large number of requests from other SABR members asking to join the PHC. With regard to this "blurb" in the SABR Bulletin, I would like to point out that the PHC was erroneously referred to as the "committee on baseball photographs." This is a misleading statement. As I noted in the original proposal for the committee, "the primary objective of the Pictorial History Committee [is] to promote research into baseball's rich history as reflected

through drawings, illustrations, photographs, artwork, motion pictures, video, and, in general, any form of visual representation." No doubt photographs will play a major roll in the committee's work, but the committee is not exclusively devoted to photos. It was for this reason that I purposely chose the rather broad title of "Pictorial History Committee." Fortunately, words to this effect were included in the latest SABR Bulletin (Volume 25, Number 1)

A current roster of members of the PHC can be found on the final page of this newsletter.

The primary purpose of this newsletter is to act as a catalyst for baseball pictorial history research. The idea is that the newsletter will, in some way (hopefully many ways), aid the researcher in his/her work. How can this be done? Here are some ideas for the newsletter:

- ◆ A research needs/exchange column similar to that found in the SABR Bulletin. Members who can offer help to other researchers with their particular expertise are urged to write to the chairman with an explanation of how they can help. Members who would like help with a particular project or have a research question are also urged to write in with these needs.

- ◆ A review column covering all fields of pictorial history research: books, videos, motion pictures, artwork, etc. There have been a number of books published in 1994 that are primarily picture-oriented: *Ty Cobb: His Tumultuous Life and Times* by R. Bak (reviewed in this newsletter); *Baseball: An Illustrated History* by G. Ward and K. Burns; *Baseball*

*Memories: 1930-39* by **Marc Okkonen**. Baseball videos have become increasingly popular with *When It Was a Game I* and *II*, and, of course, the Ken Burns' *Baseball* documentary. If you'd like to write a review, I'd be happy to put it in the newsletter.

- ◆ A short article written by a PHC member involving pictorial history research and perhaps including a feature picture.

- ◆ Comments, newspaper clippings, original pictures, artwork, you name it. The sole restriction that I think necessary is that the newsletter remain devoted to baseball pictorial history research. Of course, the only way to implement these or any other ideas you might have is for you to pitch in. Please send (or call in) any and all information to me at:

**Tom Shieber**  
P.O. Box 203  
Mt. Wilson Observatory  
Mt. Wilson, CA 91023  
818 584-9811

## RESEARCH NEEDS

**Lefty Blasco** is collecting pictures of every man who has ever played with Chicago (NL) from 1876 to date. The following is a list of his top 5 most wanted players. Can anyone help out?

- ◆ Fred Demarais — 1890 Chicago NL (1 game);
- ◆ Bob Gibson — 1890 Chicago NL (1 game) and Pittsburgh NL (3 games);
- ◆ Abe Johnson — 1893 Chicago NL (1 game);
- ◆ Pop Lytle — 1890 Chicago NL (1 game) and Pittsburgh NL (15 games);

- ◆ Gus Yost — 1893 Chicago NL (1 game);

**Jefferey Samoray** is currently researching 19th and early 20th century baseball in Detroit. He asks for help in finding obscure and out of the ordinary photos of players, parks, fans, teams, etc. Committee members are urged to lend a hand:

28478 Ridgebrook Rd.  
Farmington Hills, MI  
48334-3465  
(810) 489-1767

## THE NATIONAL PASTIME 1994

The 1994 edition of *The National Pastime* is out and includes a nice photo quiz by **Bob Carr** on page 47. The answer to the quiz failed to include the names of all the ballplayers pictured, but, of course, the PHC has the answers. The photo identifications are on p. 4 of this newsletter.

Whoops! On page 82 of this same edition of *The National Pastime* the caption states that the photo is of George Stovey. Actually it's Fleet Walker. Has anyone actually ever come across a photo of George Stovey?

## REVIEWS

***Ty Cobb: His Tumultuous Life and Times* by Richard Bak, foreword by Ernie Harwell (1994: Taylor Publishing Company, Dallas) \$29.95**

This masterful illustrated biography deserves to be ranked with *The Babe: A Life in Pictures* by **Lawrence S. Ritter** and **Mark Rucker**. Easily the largest collection of Cobb images published at one time, the book is beautifully designed and printed, with a surprisingly varied mix of nearly 300 photographs, cartoons, and full-color advertisements. All of the famous images are here, but there are also dozens of rare and unfamiliar pictures, including a bizarre shot of Germany Schaefer simultaneously wearing left and right-handed fielder's gloves.

The text is informative and well-written, filled with fascinating mini-essays discussing Cobb's relationship with Coca-Cola, Hillerich & Bradsby, and Detroit's auto industry, with asides on subjects as diverse as Cobb's high-collared uniform and his strategy when stealing home plate. Bak has skillfully integrated several lists into the book: Cobb's yearly salary, his every steal of home, every player who pinch-hit for Cobb (all four of them), his lifetime batting average against every American League pitcher (20 or more at-bats), all of the American League batting champions and runners-up during his

24-year career. Bak's insightful treatment of his subject's off-the-field career as a racist psychopath might have been illuminated by a similar list of Cobb's violent assaults and arrests, but the length of such a list would no doubt have made the book uneconomical to produce.

I was troubled by only two passages in this otherwise extraordinarily well-researched book. Reproduced on p. 56 is the famous photograph of Honus Wagner crouching in front of the dugout with a bat in his hands. In the caption Bak writes: "[Wagner] hated being photographed with his favorite bats, believing the camera drained them of base-hit potential. In fact, moments after hearing the shutter close on this particular picture, the startled Wagner flew into a rage and flung his now useless bat at the photographer." This story is difficult to believe for a number of reasons. First of all, such violent behavior is uncharacteristic of the gentle, good-natured Wagner. Secondly, this is clearly a posed shot; Wagner is wearing a warm-up sweater, and it is highly unlikely that he was actually preparing to bat. Baseball photographers routinely instructed their subjects to pretend to select a bat (on p. 97 there is a photograph of Ty Cobb doing exactly that) and it appears that Wagner is halfheartedly going through the motions. Furthermore, if Wagner truly believed that the camera

drained his bats of hits, why do so many famous photographs show him with a bat in his hands? If this story has any basis in fact, it is probably because Wagner (a great lover of practical jokes) pretended to attack the photographer, who wasn't in on the joke.

Speaking of violence, on pp. 79-82, Bak gives a vivid account of Cobb's infamous attack on a handicapped heckler at New York's Hilltop Park on May 15, 1912. In all of the standard accounts of this incident, including the contemporary reports I have seen, the name of the obnoxious fan is Claude Lueker. Throughout Bak's text however, his last name is spelled "Lucker"—quite an interesting find if Bak is correct. But, puzzlingly, Bak also includes a newspaper photograph of a man clearly identified as "Chas. Lucker" who is identified by Bak as "Claude Lucker." Is this the same person? How did the heckler spell his name? The reader remains hopelessly confused. And, finally: I know this is the 1990s and all, but couldn't Mr. Bak find a better synonym for Mr. Lueker/Lucker than, uh ... "butt-head?"

— Neal McCabe

*Shadows of Summer: Classic Baseball Photographs, 1869-1947* by Donald Honig, foreword by Robert Creamer (1994: Viking Studio Books, New York) \$60.00

Donald Honig has come out with yet another baseball book sparse with words and rich with photos. *Shadows of Summer: Classic Baseball Photographs, 1869-1947* features over 150 baseball photos, with the emphasis firmly on "classic." That is, the majority of the photographs included have been seen time and time again. Lanky Satchel Paige with the Monarchs, Babe Ruth hugging Lou Gehrig on Gehrig Day at Yankee Stadium in 1939, Ruth surrounded by hundreds of idolizing youths, Honus Wagner looking over his lumber, Ty Cobb sliding in to third base at Highland Park (see article on following page). Of course, there is a reason these photographs have been reproduced in countless baseball books: they're great pictures.

Unfortunately, Honig also includes a number of less-than-classic photographs, with choices that often left me puzzled. A photo of the great trio of outfielders for the 1929-31 Philadelphia Athletics (p. x) shows Al Simmons with his eyes half-closed. And a shot of Herbie Moran and Wally Schang at Shibe Park during the 1914 World Series (front dust jacket and p. 51) is unclear, and, frankly, uninteresting.

While Robert Creamer's introduction describes the book as an "archaeological dig," Honig apparently chose to excavate in only three locations. The vast majority of photographs reproduced in the book are

from the collection of Photo File, Inc. (Elmsford, New York). Six photos are from the National Baseball Hall of Fame and three others from the archives of the Pittsburgh Courier. Many of the photos are found in some of Honig's earlier pictorial histories, with a number of captions lifted almost word-for-word from these other works.

Don't be misled by the title of the book. I was very disappointed to discover that there is but one photograph from the nineteenth century. And, alas, this photo is misidentified as the 1869 Cincinnati Red Stockings, when in fact it is the 1868 club. Certainly there are many photos from the nineteenth century that fit the mold of "classic." How about the cocky team photo of the 1896 Baltimore Orioles (see p. 34 of Daniel Okrent and Harry Lewine's *The Ultimate Baseball Book*), the members of the 1888-89 World Tour posing in front of the Sphinx (see p. 30 of Geoffrey Ward and Ken Burns' *Baseball: An Illustrated History*), and take your pick of photos reproduced in SABR's *The National Pastime Special Pictorial Issue: The Nineteenth Century*.

I was also disappointed with the quality of some of the reproductions, most notably the grossly out of focus photo of the Addie Joss benefit All-Star team (pp. 68-69). While errors in the captions and text are minimal, some are a bit annoying. The beautiful photos of Jack Coombs (pp. 72 and 73) are from 1917, not 1916 (the year that the Dodgers wore a checkered uniform). Umpires Cy Rigler and Billy Evans are left unidentified in the caption for the photo on p. 74. The myth regarding the misplacement of the pitcher's rubber at 60'6" instead of 60 feet even is once again recounted (p. 7). And Honig states that "home run leaders seldom reached double digits in the years from 1901-1919" (p. 22). Seldom? I count 27 out of the 40 major league home run leaders (including the Federal league) from 1901-19 as having ten or more homers.

Most disturbing of all, however, is the book's hefty price tag. \$60 is a large sum to pay for what is essentially a compilation of photos, the great number of which you probably already have in your own baseball library. If you don't already own Honig's *The American League: An Illustrated History* and *The National League: An Illustrated History*, you might be better off spending your \$60 purchasing both of these more substantial, and useful, works.

— Tom Shieber

## A NOTE ON THE TYPE

The following conventions have been adopted for this newsletter: names in **bold type** are SABR members; names in *italic bold type* are PHC members.

## THE NATIONAL PASTIME PHOTO QUIZ ANSWERS

Here are the identifications of the 17 players pictured on p. 47 of *The National Pastime* (1994 edition) along with their uniform numbers:

Dale Mitchell #34			
Whitey Ford #16	Earl Averill #3	Charlie Gehringer #2	Ralph Branca #13
Hank Greenberg #5	Phil Rizzuto #10	Lefty Gomez #11	Bill Dickey #8
Ted Williams #9	Stan Musial #6	Joe Medwick #7	Willis Hudlin #12
Lou Gehrig #4	Red Ruffing #15	Ernie Banks #14	Bobby Avila #1

## PICTURE INDEXES AVAILABLE

*Lefty Blasco, Ed Koller, and Tom Shieber* have recently completed an index of every baseball picture published in *The New York Clipper* newspaper. Over 800 separate pictures were catalogued and indexed. Pictures are from issues published as early as 1856 and as late as 1905. Two indexes were made: one is sorted chronologically by date of issue, the other is sorted alphabetically by player name or picture description. Besides player pictures, there are a number of team pictures, some diagrams, and a few cartoons. There are close to 1000 entries. Almost 200 entries are photographs, while the rest are woodcuts, engravings, or similar types of line drawings. To obtain a copy of this 7 page (double-sided) index, please send a self-addressed 55¢

stamped envelope and 85¢ to cover copying costs to *Tom Shieber*.

*A.D. Suehsdorf* has made available his detailed list of all pictures in the Putnam series of team histories. Approximately 200 photos are covered. He is missing a few of the books (Yankees, Giants, Cubs, and Browns/Orioles), though these will hopefully be completed soon. To obtain a copy of this 9 page (double-sided) list, please send a self-addressed 55¢ stamped envelope and 98¢ to cover copying costs to *Tom Shieber*.

Note: Please do not send cash. Make checks payable to *Tom Shieber*.

## MYSTERY SURROUNDING CONLON'S COBB-AUSTIN PHOTO

One of the most famous photos in the history of baseball is Charles Conlon's beauty showing a fiercely determined Ty Cobb sliding through the leg of the opposing third baseman and hitting the bag with a spray of dirt. Perhaps baseball's greatest game action photo, it is almost certainly the game's most reproduced photo. In a quick perusal of my own baseball library, I found the photo in some twenty separate books. It can be seen in both of the books reviewed in this newsletter, but the best reproduction of this classic photograph is found in Constance and Neal McCabe's *Baseball's Golden Age: The Photographs of Charles M. Conlon*. In fact, in this latter reproduction, it's even possible to see the arm of the third base coach (undoubtedly Hughie Jennings) at the extreme right of the photo.

Though the photo is quite well known, the exact date and circumstances of the action remain a mystery. Nevertheless, the picture (with the aid of Marc Okkonen's *Baseball Uniforms of the 20th Century*) offers many clues. Certainly that's Cobb

sliding into third, so we know that the game had to have taken place sometime during his long career. But the only years that the Tigers wore a dark cap with light stripes were 1907-12, and that was with their road uniforms. Careful examination of high quality reproductions of the photo shows two dark stripes on the third baseman's slightly lighter colored stockings. The sole American League team to wear such stockings during the period from 1907-12 were the New York Highlanders of 1909 and '10. (In the 1909 World Series vs. Detroit, the Pirates wore stockings similar to those of the Highlanders, but with only a single dark stripe). Indeed, the billboards and stands in the photo's background corroborate well with other photos of New York's Hilltop Park from the era.

Conlon himself claims to have taken the photograph near the end of the 1909 season. In an article in *The Sporting News* of May 27, 1937, the great photographer recalled the events surrounding the Georgia Peach's dash to third: "Cobb was on second, with one out, and the hitter was trying to bunt him to

third. [Highlander third baseman Jimmy] Austin moved in for the sacrifice. As Jimmy stood there, Cobb started. The fans shouted. Jimmy turned, backed into the base, and was greeted by a storm of dirt, spikes, shoes, uniforms—and Ty Cobb. My first thought was that my friend, Austin, had been injured. When Cobb stole, he *stole*.... The catcher's peg went right by Jimmy, as he was thrown on his face."

When the Tigers visited Hilltop Park late in the 1909 season, they were in the thick of the pennant race, just 2 1/2 games ahead of Connie Mack's Athletics. New York was riding an eight game winning streak and had won three out of four when the Tigers had last visited Hilltop Park back in July. But this time the Tigers took three out of four. Surprisingly, Cobb stole no bases in the late-September series. In fact, while Cobb set an American League single season record by stealing 76 bases that year, he had but one stolen base at Hilltop Park that entire season. That stolen base occurred not late in the season, but on June 10th, during Detroit's first visit to New York. Could that be the actual date of the photo? Well, if so, the third baseman pictured is not Jimmy Austin, but Kid Elberfeld. Austin played shortstop during that series against the Tigers.

Conlon also recalled that the first appearance of the photo was in the following year's *Spalding Guide*. Actually, its first appearance was in the 1912, not 1910, *Spalding Guide*. The accompanying caption in the latter guide stated that the action took place on June 14, 1911! Perhaps Conlon was mistaken about the year he shot the photo, but correct about it not being published until the following spring. Once again, however, this would mean that the third baseman is not Jimmy Austin, but Roy Hartzell. Also, the Highlanders wore new, blue and white stockings in 1911.

Austin himself claimed to be the third baseman pictured, as he recalled in Lawrence Ritter's *The Glory of Their Times*: "See that picture? It's a famous picture. It's Cobb sliding into third, and the other guy is me, being knocked sprawling. He took my left foot with his shoulder as he came in, and down I went. See the ball near my right knee?" The ball to which Jimmy referred was actually a splotch not found on the original negative, but quite often seen in reproductions of the photograph.

Perhaps the action did occur sometime during that late September series in 1909, but Cobb didn't steal his way to third. Perhaps he tripled? Alas, Cobb didn't have any triples that series. Besides, as umpire

guru **Dennis Bingham** points out, if it were a triple, the umpire seen in the background did a poor job of covering the play. He's far out of position.

Note that the stands in right foul territory are packed ... it must have been a capacity crowd. And what about the comment that Conlon makes regarding the catcher's "peg" going past Austin? Did the catcher for the Highlanders have any errors in that late-September series?

These last few clues are promising. The first game of the series was rained out. So the following day, a Saturday, the Tigers and Highlanders played a doubleheader. The attendance that day was 16,000—a thousand over Hilltop Park's official capacity. In the first game, New York's Ed Sweeney was flawless behind the plate. But he committed two errors in the second game. While Tiger second baseman Charlie O'Leary was credited with a sacrifice hit in that game, it is doubtful the play involved Cobb, as they were far apart in the batting order. Cobb went 2-for-3 with a double. Isn't it possible that he somehow slid his way into third base?

So far, this second game of the September 25th doubleheader looks like the most likely candidate, but it is by no means a certainty. It contradicts Conlon's statement that Cobb stole third. But, then again, Conlon was almost seventy years old and was looking back at an event that took place almost thirty years previous when he recounted the story behind his marvelous photo. And what is to be made of the second baseman (or is that Hal Chase playing well off first) in the background, just to the right of the umpire? If a batter was supposedly attempting to bunt, would he be standing as he is? And who is that umpire? Billy Evans and Fred Perrine were the men in blue for the series in September of 1909.

Such is the mystery surrounding this wonderful photograph. Perhaps an ambitious PHC member can shed more light on the riddle of Conlon's masterpiece.

— Tom Shieber

I am surprised at how often I come across sources that state that this photo is of Cobb sliding into third baseman Jimmy Austin of the St. Louis Browns. The latest pair of books to make this error are Al Stump's *Cobb: A Biography* and Geoffrey Ward and Ken Burns' *Baseball: An Illustrated History*.

A short list of recently published books that reproduce the Conlon Cobb-Austin photo:

- ◆ *Ty Cobb: His Tumultuous Life and Times* by Richard Bak, p. 50
- ◆ *Shadows of Summer* by Donald Honig, pp. 64-65

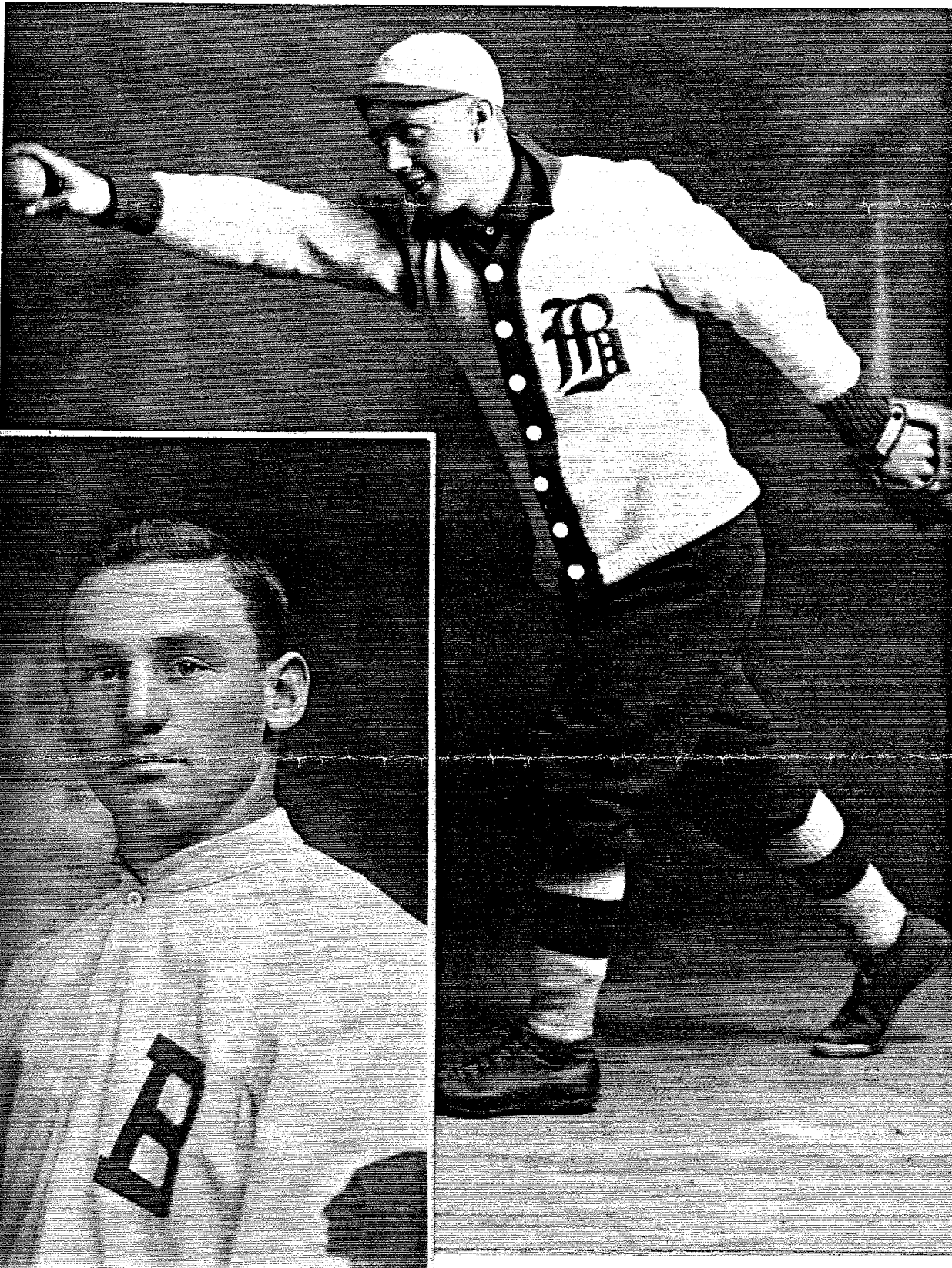
◆ *Baseball's Golden Age* by Constance and Neal McCabe, p. 26

◆ *Lost Ballparks* by Lawrence Ritter, pp. 96-97

◆ *Baseball: An Illustrated History* by Geoffrey Ward and Ken Burns, p. 85

## PICTURE IDENTIFICATIONS

The Paul Ziffren Sports Resource Center at the Amateur Athletic Foundation of Los Angeles has a number of photos for which they have little or no information (player name, date, location, team, etc.) Hopefully, the PHC can help. Can any members shed light on either of these two photos?



## PICTORIAL HISTORY COMMITTEE ROSTER

(Please send corrections or change of address to Tom Shieber, PHC Chairman)

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