

SABR Pictorial History Committee Newsletter

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Number 96:1-2 (Double issue)

May 1996

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THE SANBORN MAP AS RESEARCH TOOL

[Ed. note: On April 28, 1896, the Western League Detroit Tigers inaugurated the newly built Bennett Park by defeating the Columbus Senators 17-2. Just over one hundred years later, baseball is still being played at the same site, though these days the Tigers tend to be on the losing end of such scores. In this article, PHC member *Jefferey Samoray* enlightens us with a tour of the ballparks and neighborhood at Michigan and Trumbull.]

Researching the history of a nineteenth century baseball park can be frustrating at times. A park's location, if in doubt, can sometimes be confirmed through a search of city maps. Photographs and illustrations, if available, can help the researcher visualize portions of the stands or their exterior. Contemporary newspaper accounts can often reveal details not seen in photographs (the location of the press box, or the number of ticket booths, for example).

However, as indispensable as these sources are, they may not be able to provide answers to other questions: In what kind of neighborhood was the park placed? How was the park situated within that neighborhood? What businesses existed near the park? How much space did the park occupy on the property? Of what material was the park constructed? What changes were made to the structure of the park and when?

Fortunately, Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps can help by providing information unavailable from the usual sources. In the particular case of Detroit, Sanborn maps from various periods provide a fascinating visual documentation of not only the development of a ballpark site (Bennett Park to Tiger Stadium), but also the decline of the surrounding neighborhood.

The Sanborn Mapping and Geographic Information

continued on page 5

RESULTS OF THE PHC COMMITTEE PROJECT POLL

In the previous PHC Newsletter, I asked committee members to vote for a large-scale committee project of their choice. Votes were received from 16 members with the following results:

Collection of baseball cartoons	Collection of image of every major league ball player	Both	Other
4	7	3	2

Thus, it looks like the official committee-wide project of the PHC is that of collecting an image of every major league ball player. (Nevertheless, I encourage those interested in a cartoon collecting project to forge ahead). A number of important questions remain unanswered regarding this committee-wide project. Who should be in charge and how should the project be organized? Should we physically collect images or simply note the source, page number, and location of each ballplayer? For example, rather than making a photocopy of an image of Bill Hulen, we simply note that he can be found at the far left of the bottom row of the Philadelphia Club photo found in the plates following p. 32 of the 1897 *Spalding Guide*. What kind of monetary support will be needed (if any)? Should we limit the scope of the project by concentrating on pre-'50s ballplayers (the idea being that images of players from the 1950s to date are relatively easy to locate)? These and other questions should be addressed and answered at our committee meeting at the SABR National Convention in Kansas City this June. (At present, SABR has yet to set the date and time of our committee meeting). I urge all committee members to attend this meeting, and for those members not able to make it, please write in with your ideas and suggestions in regard to the project.

- Tom Shieber, Committee Chair.

RESEARCH NEEDS

Woody Wilson is looking for videos of all-star and postseason baseball games for a project he is working on. If you have or know where to get videos of entire games, please contact Woody at:

Woody Wilson
P.O. Box 160104
Sacramento, CA 95816

W.A. Schellhammer is collecting pictures of Brooklyn Dodger ballplayers. The following is a list of some that he still needs. (Years in parentheses are those in which the player played for Brooklyn):

John J. Brown (1897)
Grant Thatcher (1903-04)
Ed MacGamwell (1905)
Hub Knolls (1906)
Ed McLane (1907)
John Karst (1915)
John Russell (1917-18)
Lafayette Henion (1919)
Clarence "Clancy" Smyres (1944)
William Barney White (1945)

If you have or know the whereabouts of pictures of these players here's the address:

W.A. Schellhammer
4606 Station Road
Erie, PA 16510

Sig Menchel is also collecting pictures of Brooklyn Dodger ballplayers. The following is a list of two fellows that he needs. (Years in parentheses are those in which the player played for Brooklyn):

Clarence "Clancy" Smyres (1944)
Charlie Osgood (1944)

Contact Sig at:

Sig Menchel
P.O. Box 609
Manlius, NY 13104

Ray Billbrough is collecting pictures of Detroit Tiger ballplayers. He needs but three players to complete his collection for the years 1901-87. Here's a list of his missing Tigers (Years in parentheses are those in which the player played for Detroit):

Lew Post (1902)
John Skopec (1903)
John Terry (1902)

If you have or know the whereabouts of pictures of these players here's Ray's address:

Ray Billbrough
740 Lambkins
Saline, MI 48176

John McMurray is trying to track down a photo of Art Merewether (1 game with 1922 Pirates). Also John is looking for any photo (or photos) as described by Ty Cobb in Chapter 13 of his autobiography *Ty Cobb: My Life in Baseball*. Apparently, some time during spring training of

1927, Cobb visited inventor Thomas Edison's laboratory. As a publicity stunt, Cobb pitched to batter Edison with Connie Mack playing catcher. Cobb states that cameramen recorded the event. If you have any clues, send them along to:

John McMurray
P.O. Box 1434
Mentor, OH 44061

Claudia Goodridge is looking for a high-quality photo of Willie May's great 1954 World Series catch of Vic Wertz' fly ball. She is also looking for pictures of the interior of the rotunda at Ebbets Field and the exterior of Ebbets Field from the outfield side of the park. Can anybody help?

Claudia Goodridge
47 Richards Ave.
Norwalk, CT 06857

Howard Pollack is trying to identify the two players depicted in Thomas Eakins' painting "Ball Players Practicing." (See pp. 24-25 of *The Art of Baseball* by Shelly Dinhofer, p. 21 of *Baseball: A Treasury of Art and Literature* edited by Michael Ruscoe, or the cover of the premiere issue of SABR's *The National Pastime* edited by **John Thorn**). Information should be forwarded to:

Howard Pollack
531 Ashmead Road
Cheltenham, PA 19012

• From the SABR listserver on December 15th: **Mark Conner** writes: "I propose to assemble a compendium of architectural drawings for Baker Bowl (rebuilt 1895) and the other 14 classic concrete and steel ballparks built from 1909 through 1923. The intent is to start with what the ballparks looked like when they opened and then follow them through all there permutations to demolition or what they have become today." He asks that anyone interested in the project contact him at:

Mark Conner
P.O. Box 1755
650 Mullis Suite 203
Friday Harbor, WA 98250
(360) 378-4168
(360) 378-4169 (FAX)
eMail: tcnwest@pacificrim.net

• From the SABR listserver on February 23rd: **Steve Gietschier** notes that Susan Fitzgerald, curator of an exhibit featuring material on the 1934 All-Star game, is looking for still photos of any of Carl Hubbell's strikeouts. The exhibit will be at Freedom Forum, in Washington, D.C. You can contact her at the following eMail address:
fitzgers@tffwc.mhs.compuserve.com

FRANK LESLIE'S OUR BASE BALL ILLUSTRATIONS OF 1866

In late July of 1866, *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* began a run of woodcuts featuring prominent base ball players of the time. The series was entitled "Our Base Ball Illustrations," and over the next six months, twenty-three individuals were pictured accompanied by short biographical sketches.

The first illustration in the series is found in the July 21st issue of *Leslie's*. The woodcut is a montage of five portraits, each one depicting an officer of the National Association of Base Ball Players. Probably the best known of the group was NABBP Vice-President Mort Rogers. In the 1860s, Mort, along with his brother Albert (also pictured in this *Frank Leslie's* issue, as he was secretary of the NABBP), started for the Resolute B.B.C. of Brooklyn. Later, Mort joined the Lowell B.B.C. of Boston, Massachusetts. During the summer of 1868, Mort founded the *New England Base Ballist* (later known as the *National Chronicle*). The weekly newspaper lasted for just under two years, almost twice as long as Henry Chadwick's similar venture entitled *The Ball Players' Chronicle* (later known as *The American Chronicle of Sports and Pastimes*). Perhaps inspired by the *Frank Leslie's* series of woodcuts, Rogers' *New England Base Ballist* also featured portraits of "prominent member[s] of the baseball fraternity."

The woodcut portrait presented in the August 18th issue of *Frank Leslie's* is of George Flagg of



William Bell

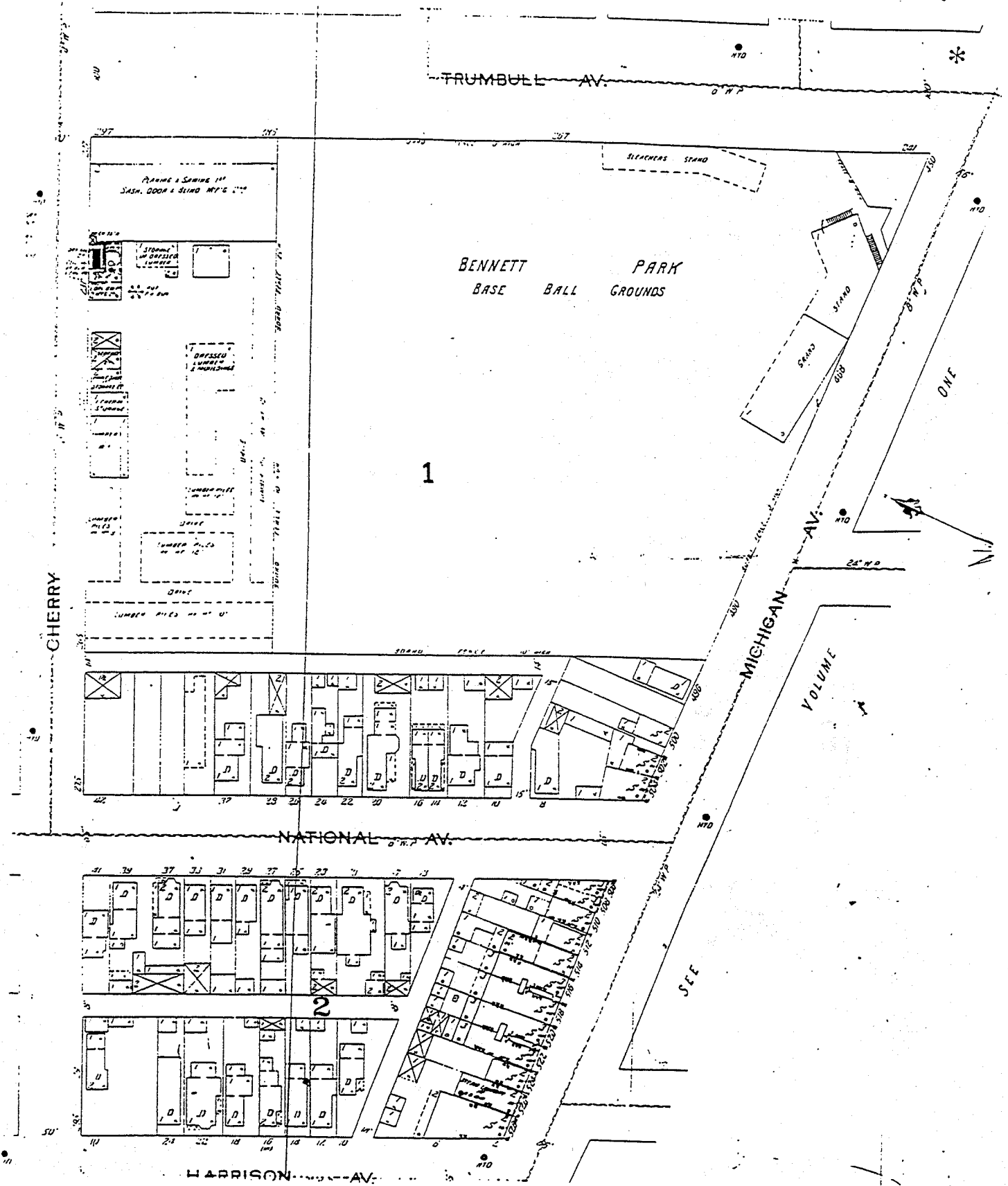
the Harvard University Base Ball Club. In December of 1862, Flagg, along with fellow freshman Frank Wright, organized the '66 Base Ball Club, made up of members of the class of '66. By the fall of 1864, the best players of this and other class clubs were combined to form the Harvard University Base Ball Club. The Harvard B.B.C. met with immediate success, defeating well-established New England clubs such as the Tri-Mountains and Lowells. Flagg was catcher for and captain of the Harvard nine. During the spring of 1866, the Harvard Club played a series of matches in the New York area. They faced the Atlantic and Excelsior of Brooklyn, Eureka of Newark, and Active of Hoboken. Though they lost each match, they impressed these veteran clubs. Regarding Flagg, a New York paper stated: "We cannot close our remarks without commending in the highest terms the ability, spirit, and endurance of Flagg. With both hands used up, a battered face, and a half blinded eye, he stood up to his post as unflinchingly as if he had been Casabianca on the traditional burning deck."

Pictured in the October 6th issue of *Leslie's* is Dr. William Bell. Bell was an original member of the famous Eckford Club of Brooklyn, organized in 1855. In the fall of 1858, Bell headed a number of Eckford club members who, after a disagreement with other "Eckfordites," chose to split from that club and form

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George Flagg



Sanborn Maps — Figure 1

Sanborn Maps *continued from page 1*

Service began publishing large scale atlases of urban areas beginning in 1866. The maps were initially used by the fire insurance industry to provide information on the fire risks of various structures. Today they are useful for locating and documenting potential environmental hazards.

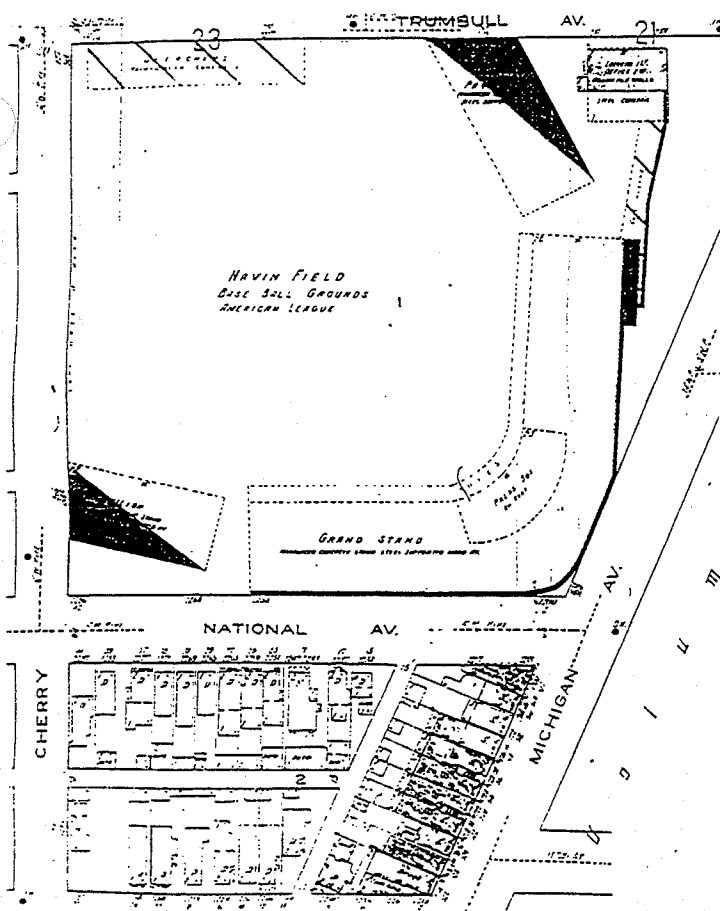
Details depicted on the maps include: type of exterior building construction, the number of floors, street addresses, occupant identification, width of streets, location of pipelines, fire hydrants, gas tanks, etc. Since the maps were updated annually, they provide an excellent source for documenting land and structural use over time.

Figure 1 is from map 28 in the second volume of the 1897 *Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps of Detroit*. Located at the intersection of Michigan and Trumbull Avenues is Bennett Park (named after former Detroit Wolverine catcher Charlie Bennett), then in its second year of existence. A small wooden grandstand and bleacher are shown, with a set of stairs leading to the grandstand seats. Though not depicted, we know home plate was located to the right of the "K" in "PARK" based on photographic evidence.

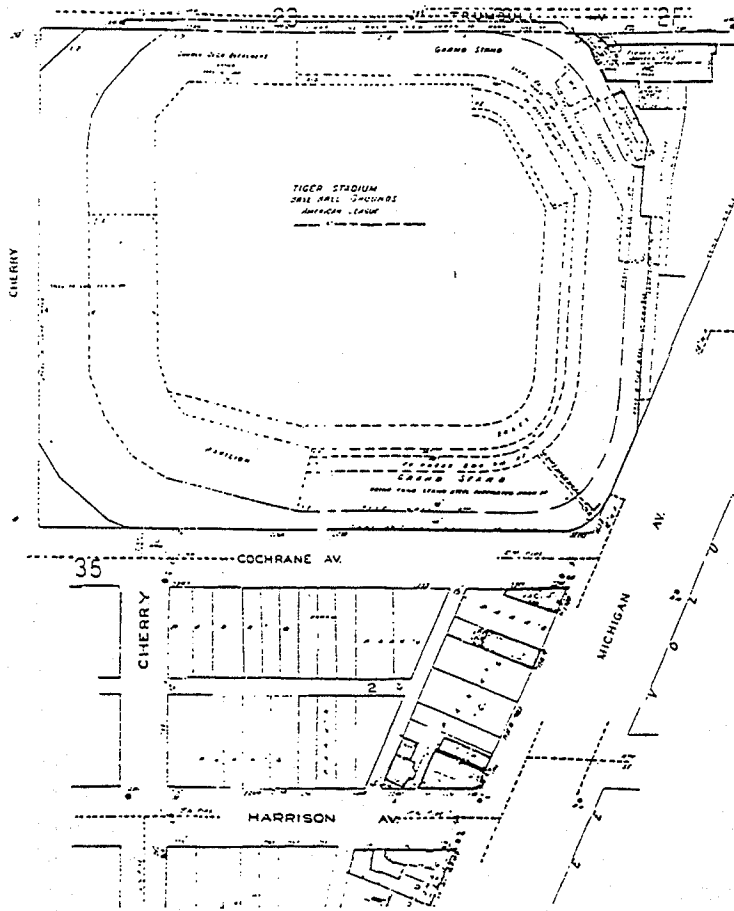
The grounds are surrounded by a ten foot high board fence. Behind right field, at the intersection of Trumbull and Cherry Streets, is a two story structure with planing and sawing on the first floor, and sash, door and blind manufacturing on the second. Running along Cherry behind center field are storage sheds for lumber, lumber piles of various heights and a paint shop.

Behind center field, running toward left along National Avenue, are a number of tightly spaced private residences of modest size (indicated by a "D" for "dwelling"). Behind these homes are stables (indicated by an "X"). These residents constructed the infamous ramshackle "wildcat bleachers" on the stable roofs to cash in on the popularity of home games (see p. 45 of Richard Bak's *Ty Cobb: His Tumultuous Life and Times*).

Many more homes are shown between National and Harrison Avenues, with a number of stores (indicated by an "S"), including a steam laundry facility, running along Michigan toward Harrison. Figure 1 represents only a small portion of Sanborn map 28. A study of the entire map and others of adjoining areas reveals a lively neighborhood—lumber yards, planing mills, and small storefronts are



Sanborn Maps — Figure 2



Sanborn Maps — Figure 3

mixed among tightly spaced private residences.

Figure 2 is a portion of map 36 from the second volume of the 1921 *Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps of Detroit*. Now occupying the site of Bennett Park is Navin Field, which opened in 1912.

A number of changes in the area can be seen, not the least of which is the newer, larger ballpark corresponding with Detroit's increased population and public interest in baseball.

The homes formerly along National (and the wildcat bleachers) are gone, displaced by the reinforced concrete, single deck grandstand with a small rooftop press box. The diamond was reoriented, with home plate occupying what was left field. Also gone is the lumber area that ran along Cherry. In its place is a concrete bleacher in center field, open outfield, and a reinforced concrete pavilion along the left field line.

Although ballpark expansion displaced some residents and businesses, the homes between National and Harrison and the storefronts along Michigan survive, indicating an area still vibrant and economically viable. However, an examination of a contemporary Sanborn map of the same area tells a different story.

Figure 3 is a portion of map 36 from the Sanborn Map Company's second volume of Detroit, revised in October, 1991. What we see is essentially today's Tiger Stadium. By this time the ballpark had expanded considerably, necessitating the rerouting of Cherry (actually renamed Kaline Drive) around the left field stands. The field is now completely enclosed by double decked steel and reinforced concrete stands with attached pavilions.

Perhaps even more graphic are the changes shown outside the ballpark. The homes from Cochrane (formerly National) to the area below Harrison are completely gone, leaving only gravel parking lots. Only a fraction of the storefronts along the widened Michigan Avenue remain—one at the corner of Cochrane and Michigan stands vacant. More gravel parking lots occupy these empty spaces. Contemporary maps of adjoining areas show more vacant lots where homes and businesses once existed.

The Fisher and Lodge freeways run only blocks from the park, further reducing the number of businesses and residents by the hundreds.

Sociologists and students of urban areas can explain the reasons for the decline of the neighborhood around Tiger Stadium. Sanborn maps only make this decline evident. What the baseball researcher can learn from a study of these maps is how a ballpark was placed within the context of a neighborhood. This can help in making illustrations of the park, its surroundings, and the changes both undergo through time (see *Marc Okkonen's* drawings of the Tiger Stadium site in *Michael Gershman's Diamonds*, pp. 230-231). They can also help a researcher visualize how an area looked in the past, and what it was like to see a game at a particular nineteenth century park.

Copies of the Sanborn maps used for this article were obtained from the Map Room and Burton Historical Collection at the Detroit Public Library. Other examples of Sanborn maps of ballparks can be found in *Diamonds*:

- ◆ An undated view of Pittsburgh's Exposition Park, p. 33;
- ◆ A 1904 view of Cincinnati's Palace of the Fans, p. 170;
- ◆ A 1950 view of Cincinnati's Crosley Field, p. 171.

Sanborn maintains an archive of over one million maps of 12,000 U.S. communities from 1867 to present. Reproductions of maps are available. For more information, contact the Sanborn Mapping and Geographic Information Service at:
629 Fifth Avenue
Pelham, NY 10803
or phone them at 914 738-1649.

- Jefferey M. Samoray

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Regarding the article in the last PHC Newsletter (95:4) entitled "The Play at the Plate," *Larry Gerlach*, Chairman of the Umpires and Rules Committee, writes with the correct, full story on umpire John Quinn:

"Quinn, who had umpired amateur ball in hometown Philadelphia since 1919, caught the eye of one Connie Mack. Impressed with Quinn, Mack suggested he try Organized Baseball and helped him

get a job with the Southern Association in 1930. From 1931 through 1934 Quinn accompanied the Athletics to Florida to work their spring training games; Mack also chose him to umpire the annual city series during those years, and in October 1934 was the umpire during the American League all-star team's tour of Japan. The next spring Harridge promoted him to the majors."

Base Ball Illustrations *continued from page 3*

George Flanley

a rival organization with a frustratingly similar name: the *Henry Eckford Base Ball Club*. According to the biographical article accompanying his portrait, it was Dr. Bell who first suggested the rule calling for a base on balls when a pitcher repeatedly failed to deliver hittable pitches.

The featured ball player of the November 24th issue of *Leslie's* is George Flanley. Flanley first began playing ball with the *Niagaras of Brooklyn*, a junior club that also featured an, as yet, unknown Jim Creighton. In late 1859, when John Whiting and Asa Brainard of the *Stars of Brooklyn* left that club for the *Excelsiors* of the same locale, the *Stars* found themselves in need of two top-flight ball players. Flanley and Creighton fit the bill and played out the rest of the season with the *Stars*. In 1860, the Flanley-Creighton duo joined their first senior organization, the *Excelsior B.B.C. of Brooklyn*. Five

years later, with Flanley still playing for the *Excelsiors*, the article accompanying his picture in *Leslie's* lauded him as "the most popular ball-player in Brooklyn, and the pet of the *Excelsior Club*."

Other noted players pictured in the series include:

- ◆ C.C. Commerford, an original member of the *Gotham Club of New York City*;
- ◆ Charles Smith, long-time member of the *Atlantic Club of Brooklyn*;
- ◆ James DeWolf Lovett (featured in an article by Phil Bergen in the recently published 1996 issue of *The National Pastime*).

A complete list of the 23 individuals pictured in the *Frank Leslie's* series follows. Note that names as given in this table are spelled as found in the original captions. However, I have included more common spellings of names in parentheses.

Issue date	Exact name as given in caption
7/21/1866	Mortimer Rogers A.H. Rogers John Wildey H.C. Sexton P.J. Cozans
7/28/1866	David Sanford
8/4/1866	Adam North
8/11/1866	Archibald M'Clure Bush
8/18/1866	G.A. Flagg
8/25/1866	C.C. Cummerford (Commerford)
9/1/1866	James Maxwell
9/8/1866	Chas. Smith
9/15/1866	E.G. Selden
9/22/1866	W.F. Williams
9/29/1866	Edward Beadle
10/6/1866	Wm. H. Bell
10/13/1866	Jas. D.W. Lovett
10/27/1866	Chas. D. Walker
11/3/1866	C.E. Thomas
11/17/1866	Frank Pigeon (Pidgion)
11/24/1866	Geo. H. Flanley
12/1/1866	Bernard J. Hanigan (Hannegan)
12/8/1866	C.H. Thorne

- Tom Shieber

MYSTERY PHOTOS

The following pages include two wonderful, but as yet unidentified baseball photos. The photo of the foursome on the bench comes from the collection of *Mark Rucker*, while that of the Brooklyn ballplayer comes from *Sig Menchel* (by way of *George Brace*). Who are these players? When and where were the photos taken? And what are the circumstances of the photos?





ARTICLES AND RESEARCH AVAILABLE

Bill Weiss sent in a *Films in Review* article (April 1968) entitled "Baseball on the Screen." The ten page article by Jack Spears details baseball films from as early as 1898. Fifteen stills from movies are interspersed within the article. For a copy, send a self-addressed 55¢ stamped envelope to **Tom Shieber**.

Jim Kreuz has sent along nine more photos:

1) Frank Frisch, Doc Walsh (trainer), Tim McNamara with the '26 Giants;

2) Three unidentified individuals pictured with Hod Ford;

3) Newspaper photo of Gabby Hartnett, Charlie Hartnett (Gabby's sister), Tim McNamara, and McNamara's fiancée, Helen, in 1925;

4) Another newspaper picture of the above foursome in 1925;

5) Van Meter High (Iowa) baseball team with Bob Feller in 1936;

6) Photo of a signed baseball of the 1938 Donora (Pennsylvania) High baseball team including autographs of Stan "Stash" Musial and Buddy Griffey (father of Ken Griffey and grandfather of Ken Griffey, Jr.);

7) 1938 Donora High basketball team with Stan Musial;

8) 1949 Commerce High (Okla.) yearbook with a picture of Mickey Mantle;

9) Another photo from Mantle's '49 yearbook, this time showing him as a football player.

Jim Kreuz also sent along an article from the February 2, 1996 issue of *Sports Collector's Digest*. The article, "The Big Picture on Sport Images" by Tom Mortenson, is about Photo File, "the oldest and largest manufacturer of licensed sports photography in the country." For a copy of the two page article, send a self-addressed 32¢ stamped envelope to **Tom Shieber**.

Joe Dittmar sent along an article from *The Wall Street Journal* of January 17th, 1996, entitled "Bill Gates Owns Otto Bettmann's Lifework." Many of the most familiar baseball images are from the Bettmann Archive, and now Mr. Gates owns them all. For a copy of the interesting two page article, send a self-addressed 32¢ stamped envelope to **Tom Shieber**.

NEW MEMBERS

The SABR Pictorial History Committee welcomes the following new members:

Ray Billbrough 740 Lambkins
Saline, MI 48176
Ira Drucker 401 Broadway Room 601
New York, NY 10013
Dennis Goldstein 516 Manford Road SW
Atlanta, GA 30310
Jerry Gregory 3409 Reedy Drive
Annandale, VA 22003-1137
Walter Handelman 5 Ascot Ridge
Great Neck, NY 11021
Michael Holthaus 711 Holly Md.
Pasadena, MD 21122-4008
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Elmhurst, IL 60126

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Howard Pollack 531 Ashmead Road
Cheltenham, PA 19012
Tony Szabelski 333 N. Princeton #4
Villa Park, IL 60181
Bill Weiss P.O. Box 5061
San Mateo, CA 94402
Woody Wilson P.O. Box 160104
Sacramento, CA 95816