



To Tell the Truth

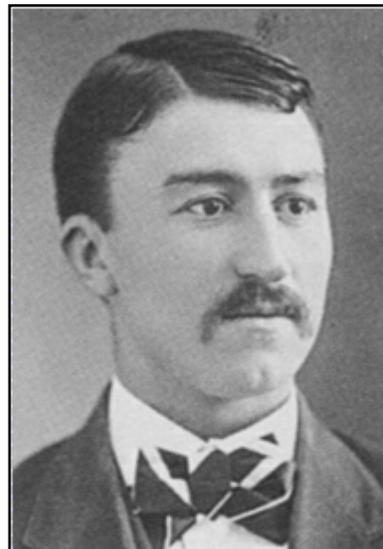
The three *different* individuals below have all been identified as pioneer curveballer and Hall of Famer Candy Cummings. Will the real Candy Cummings please stand up?



#1



#2



#3

The previous issue featured a lengthy discussion of mistakes made by some well known auctioneers in identifying the contents of early baseball photos. It would seem that enough was said on this subject, but another example was found that has importance beyond that of “consumer protection”. In this case it affects the accuracy of our baseball history literature .

The kid with the turned up nose in photo #1 is from an early tintype that was identified as Cummings in the spring 1984 *The National Pastime* (a SABR publication). He has also appeared with that identification in *150 Years of Baseball* (1989), *The Ballplayers* (1990), Ken Burns’ *Baseball* (1994), *Baseball’s First Stars* (1996), *The Great Encyclopedia of 19th-Century Major League Baseball* (1997), *Players of Cooperstown – Baseball’s Hall of Fame* (1997), *The Brooklyn Dodgers – Images of Sports* (2002), and likely in other publications. The tintype itself, identified as Cummings, was sold as part of a large collection in 1995. As late as 2003, it realized \$3579.95 in another auction.

Photo #3 was offered as Cummings in the well-known auction of the Barry Halper collection in 1999.

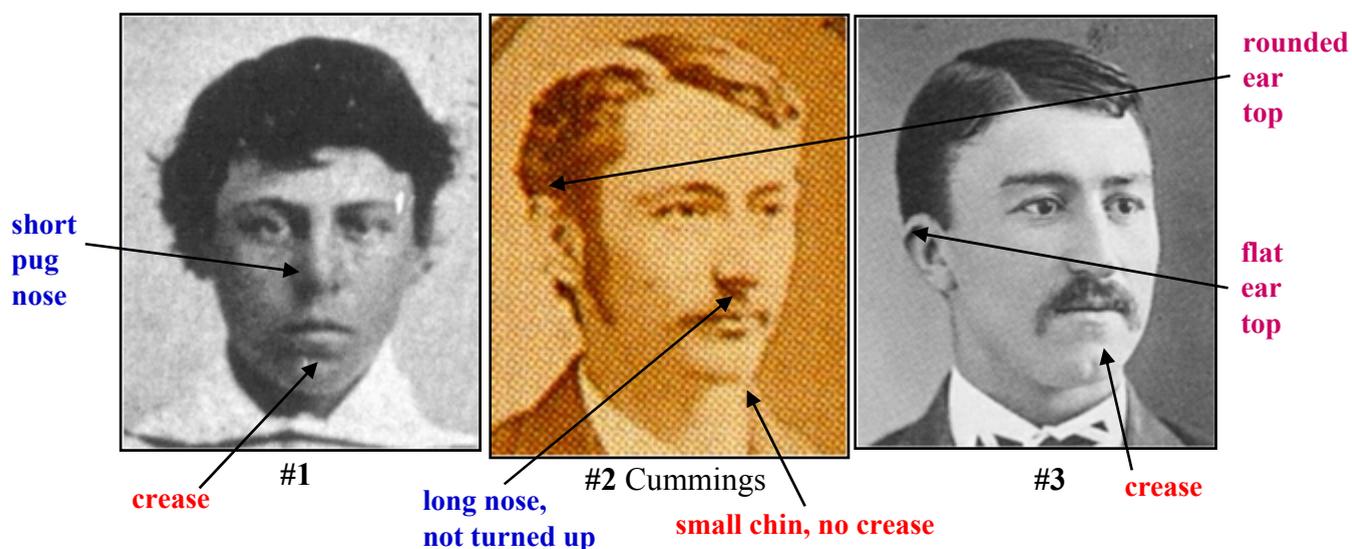
Photo #2 was identified as Cummings in an 1873 Baltimore NA team composite that includes correctly identified players such as Cal McVey, Davey Force, and Lipman Pike. (see *Smithsonian Baseball-Inside the World’s Finest Private Collections*, 2005)

Photo #2 (reproduced below left) also exists in contemporary woodcut form (second from left), as it appeared in the 5-5-1873 *The Daily Graphic* where it was identified as Cummings. This is the model for Cummings' HoF plaque. A very similar looking player (third from left) has been identified as Cummings in an 1875 Hartford NA team photo. Another Cummings woodcut from the 7-8-1871 *New York Clipper* (sans mustache) is shown far right.



Based on the contemporary ID's in the Baltimore team composite, *The Daily Graphic*, and the *New York Clipper*, it is virtually certain that the above quartet of images are all Cummings. (though the *New York Clipper* woodcut far right may be left-right reversed).

The player in photo #1 (repeated below left) has a distinct horizontal crease across the middle of his chin and a very short turned up nose, both clearly not the case in the actual Cummings photo #2. The face in photo #3 also has a mid-chin crease and an overall much larger chin than does the weak-chinned Cummings, and he also has an unusual very flat shape at the top of his ear while Cummings is rounded.



Despite the claims of repeated publications, photo #1 cannot possibly be Cummings. The same can be said for photo #3. In fact, one of the listed experts in Ken Burns' *Baseball* tried in vain to dissuade Burns from using photo #1 as Cummings, and another well-known expert vainly advised the auction house not to list photo #3 as Cummings.

As is often the case with these mis-identifications, the posers look *absolutely nothing* like the real guy. Comparing the tintype to the real Cummings, it's hard to imagine two male Caucasians that look less alike – but that doesn't seem to matter. A supposed “authority” says “It's him”, and then critical thinking and common sense seem to fade away. Thus the wrong information infects a series of books and articles over a period of years.

While Cummings' contribution to the “invention” of the curveball may remain controversial, his facial appearance should not be. Hopefully, the career of the mis-identified tintype as “stock footage” for Candy Cummings is over. 

Game of Inches

Sometimes a player's listed height does not measure up to obvious contrary photographic evidence. Two cases are presented in which the height as currently given in the SABR Encyclopedia and historical fact differ considerably.

Coming Up Short

Sandy Burk pitched for three different major league teams in the NL and FL from 1910 – 1915. No controversy there. The SABR encyclopedia lists his height as 5'8". Now, there we have some disagreement. Regardless of where that height information came from, it is easy to show from photo evidence, with certainty, that his listed height is far from reality.

Let's start by getting a handle on what Burk looked like. This is not a problem as there are quite a few reliably identified images of him:



The 1913 StL NL Fatima T200 team photo, right, yields some clues as to Burk's height. One can see Steve Evans (5'10"), Sandy Burk, Ed Konetchy (6'2") and Pol Perritt (6'2") seated next to each other. While you can't get a very precise height estimate when players are seated, it stretches credulity to assert that Burk is anywhere close to 5'8".



Then there is the 1911 Reach Guide photo, right, which shows:

- (6) Schardt – 6’4”
- (7) Hummell – 5’11”
- (8) **Burk**
- (9) Bergen 6’0”

While we can’t see their feet – the heads of players 6, 7 and 9 seem to line up in congruence with their listed heights. Only player 8 (Burk) is far from his listed height of 5’8”.



A small section of a 1911 Brooklyn spring training photo, shown below, helps to more accurately narrow the range of Burk’s height.



Bergen 6’0” Miller 6’0” ? **Burk** Dahlen 5’9” Schardt 6’4” Bell 6’0”

Due to the scanning process used in creating large panoramic photos such as this one, you cannot always accurately compare the relative heights of people that are far apart in the line. But, a little trigonometry can show that there is no problem comparing players that are near each other. Since Dahlen is reliably known to be 5’9”, Burk cannot possibly be close to 5’8”. He also appears to be an inch or two taller than 6’ Otto Miller and a couple of inches shorter than 6’4” Bill Schardt.

This Library of Congress photo, right, shows Burk, far right, standing next to 6'2" Pol Perritt. They are without doubt of very similar height.

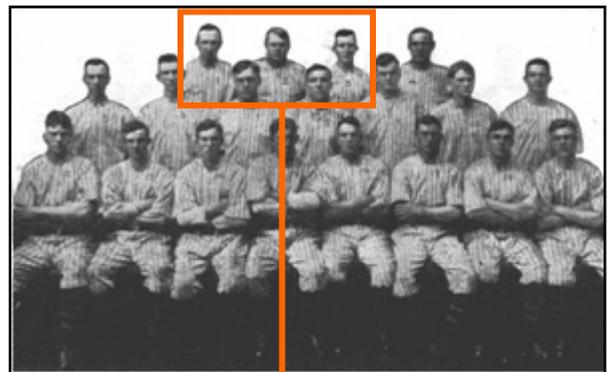
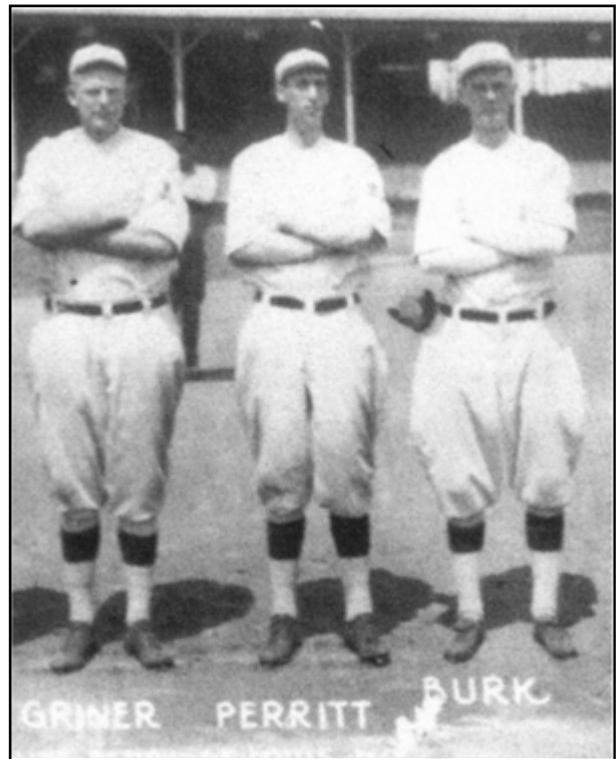
The current listed height of 5'8" is clearly off the mark. Researchers may be better served with an encyclopedia entry of "6'2 estimated from photos."

Missing High

Having discussed a player whose listed height is way too short, let's follow up with one who was well below his listed height. Catcher Syd Smith played in 146 major league games over 5 seasons between 1908 and 1915, and had a long minor league career. His height is given as 5'10".

Evidence that supports the 5'10" height for Smith may be seen in the 1913 Spalding Guide photo of the 1912 Columbus AA club, right. Smith is in the back row between 5'11" Skeeter Shelton and 5'10" Wally Gerber. The magnified section, below right, shows that Smith appears to be of a similar height.

The problem is that some of these Spalding Guide team images actually had only two rows of players in the actual photo, and players from the right and left sides of the original image were cut out and pasted behind players in what then became the middle row to create a darkroom manufactured back row. The players actual relative heights may well have been ignored. So, in this case, this photo can be misleading.

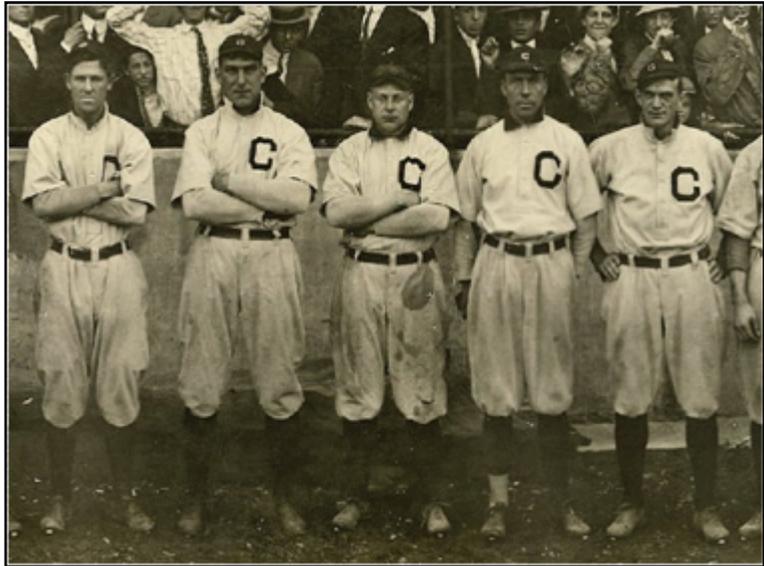


Syd Smith

The Cleveland Public Library's photo of the 1911 Naps, right, shows Smith, standing far right, next to 5'11" Earl Yingling, with 5'10" Gus Fisher far left. Though we can't see their feet, the indication here is that Smith may be several inches shorter than 5'10".



The well known 1911 Addie Joss day panoramic photo from The Library of Congress shows Smith, middle, just to the left of 5'10" Bill Lindsay. Now we can see their feet and Smith is clearly several inches shorter than Lindsay. Note that 5'7" Neal Ball appears far right, and Smith appears to be a bit shorter than Ball.



Fisher Lajoie **Smith** Lindsay-5'10" Ball-5'7"

The card below is a height ordered arrangement with Smith shown as one of the shorter players on the 1907 Atlanta Crackers. A number of other Atlanta Constitution photos exist that are consistent with Smith being in the vicinity of 5'6".



Note that Luis Castro, 2nd to the right of Smith in the above team photo, is listed at 5'7".

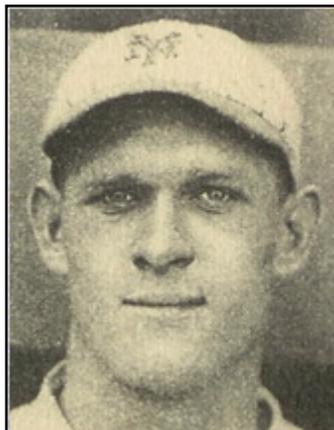
Interestingly, Dutch Jordan, just right of Smith, appears to be about the same height as Smith and Castro. But, Jordan's height is listed as 5'10" in the SABR Encyclopedia. The admittedly not very clear photo, right, from the 4-14-1907 Atlanta Constitution, shows Jordan and the 5'7" Neal Ball next to each other, with Jordan certainly not taller than Ball. Assuming that he is correctly identified in these photos, Jordan's listed height may be another item in need of more research.

In both cases presented here, listing an estimated height based on clear photo evidence would bring the record much closer to reality. 🏠



Two Nice Catches

Reader **Matt Fulling** noticed photo #1, right, labeled as Walt Holke, on page 85 of Donald Honig's classic *The National League*. This 1917 NY Giant is clearly not Walt Holke when compared to the images of Holke just below.



|----- Walt Holke -----|

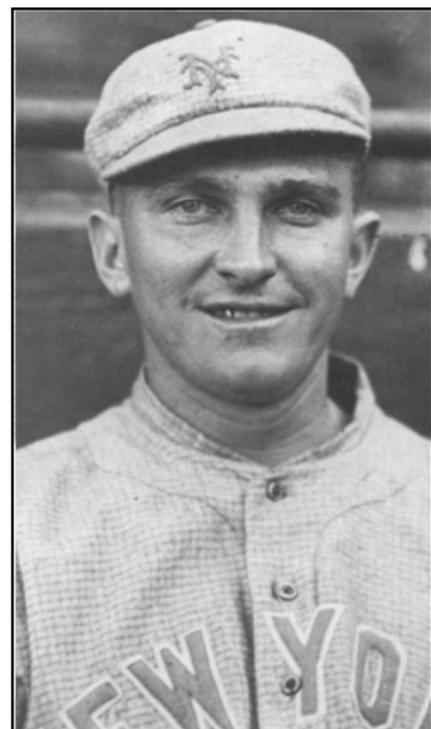


Photo #1 from *The National League* captioned as Walt Holke

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Matt then searched for a face match and found photo #2, below left, in the Library of Congress George Bain Collection (<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/ggbain.22446>). “Smith” is scratched on the print, and the identification given was Sherry Smith. It is definitely the same guy as the player in photo #1, but here he is wearing a 1916 Brooklyn uniform.

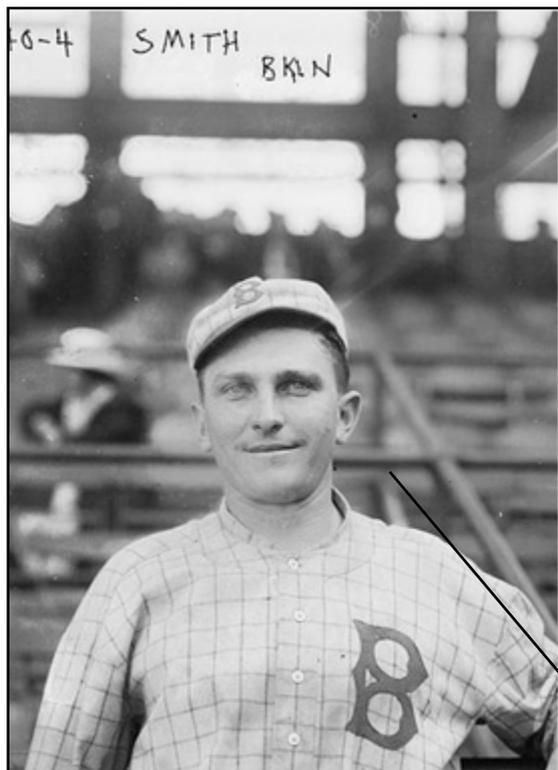


Photo #2 -- LoC caption: Sherry Smith

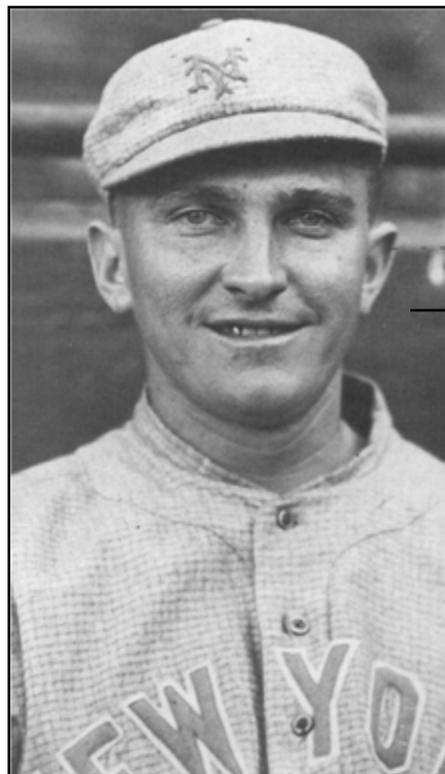
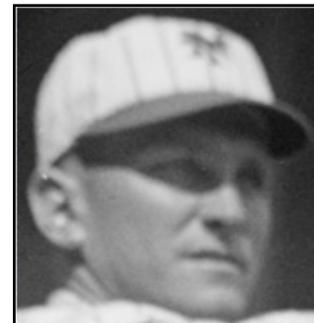
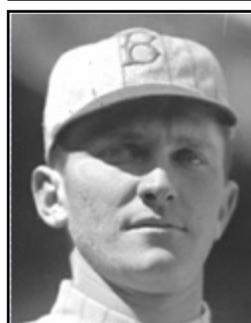
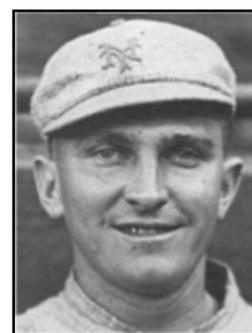
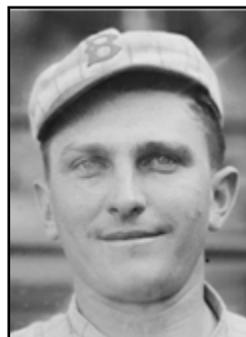


photo #1 from Honig

Smith played for Brooklyn from 1915 into the 1922 season, but was never on the Giants. Thus the LoC caption for photo #2 also had to be wrong. So, while looking for a player that was on both the 1916 Brooklyn roster and the 1917 Giants roster, Matt turned up candidate Lew McCarty.

The LoC Bain collection includes the two photos, below right, captioned as Lew McCarty, and they are clearly the same player as in the above photos. Comparing these to other identified photos of McCarty in Brooklyn and NY team photos confirms that Lew McCarty is the correct ID for photos #1 and #2.



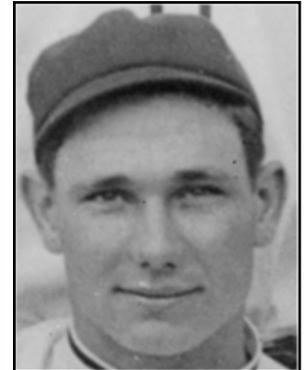
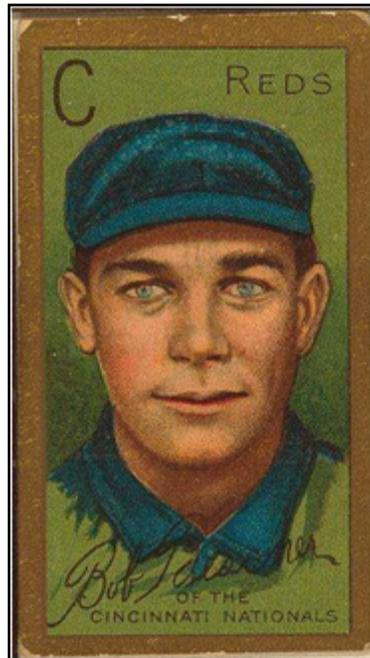
-----Lew McCarty -----

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After creating many hundreds of Deadball Era colorized baseball cards (see *The Inside Game*, 2/2009), the faces of many early players are firmly in-grained in Matt's mind. A misidentified player image has only a very small chance of getting past him. The 1911 T205 card, near right, has been identified as Bob Bescher for 98 years, and no one was the wiser (at least no one currently alive).

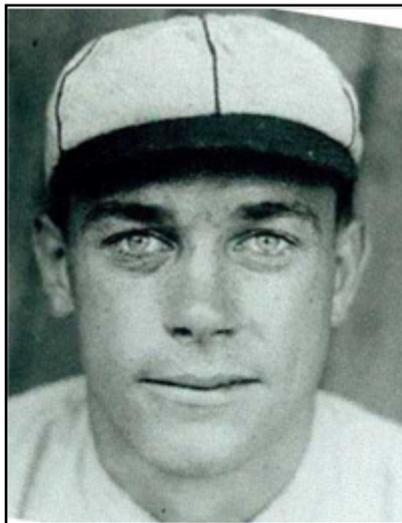
It does look somewhat like the real Bob Bescher, far right. Even the ears appear very similar.

Matt was familiar with the photo, below left, of Frank Betcher. He realized that the T205 card artwork was derived from that photo. Thus the player on the card is Frank Betcher, not Bob Bescher. 🏆

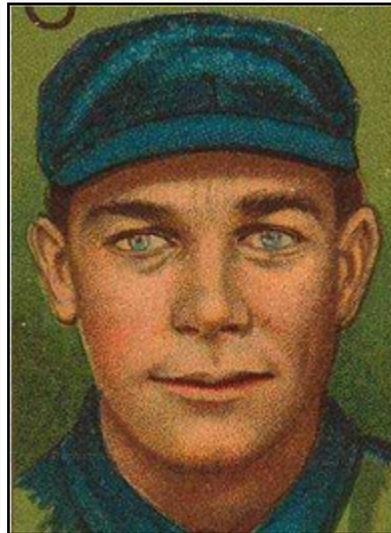


Bob Bescher

Bob Bescher 1911 T205 card



Frank Betcher

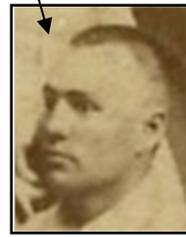
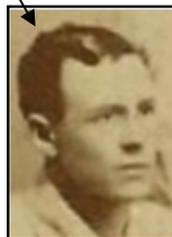


Blues Mystery Photo

The team photo below has been claimed to be the 1884 Indianapolis Blues of the American Association. However, the faces don't match up well with the members of that club. **Nigel Ayres** has been doing research on this, and speculates that it may be an earlier Indy Blues team, perhaps 1877 Alliance League club based on several likely and some tentative face matches.



Nigel points out the good face matches for Charlie Eden and Fred Warner. Research on this image continues. If anyone has more information, please let us know. 🏠



Fred Warner

Charlie Eden

Special thanks to Bill Nowlin, Bill Hickman, Matt Fulling., and Nigel Ayres for their assistance with and/or contributions to this issue. If you have a comment on this issue, or a photo or a relevant article that you would like to submit for a future issue, please send it to Mark Fimoff, bmarlowe@comcast.net.