

BLACK SOX SCANDAL



Vol. 6, No. 2, December 2014

Research Committee Newsletter

Leading off ...

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Chairman's Corner

By Jacob Pomrenke
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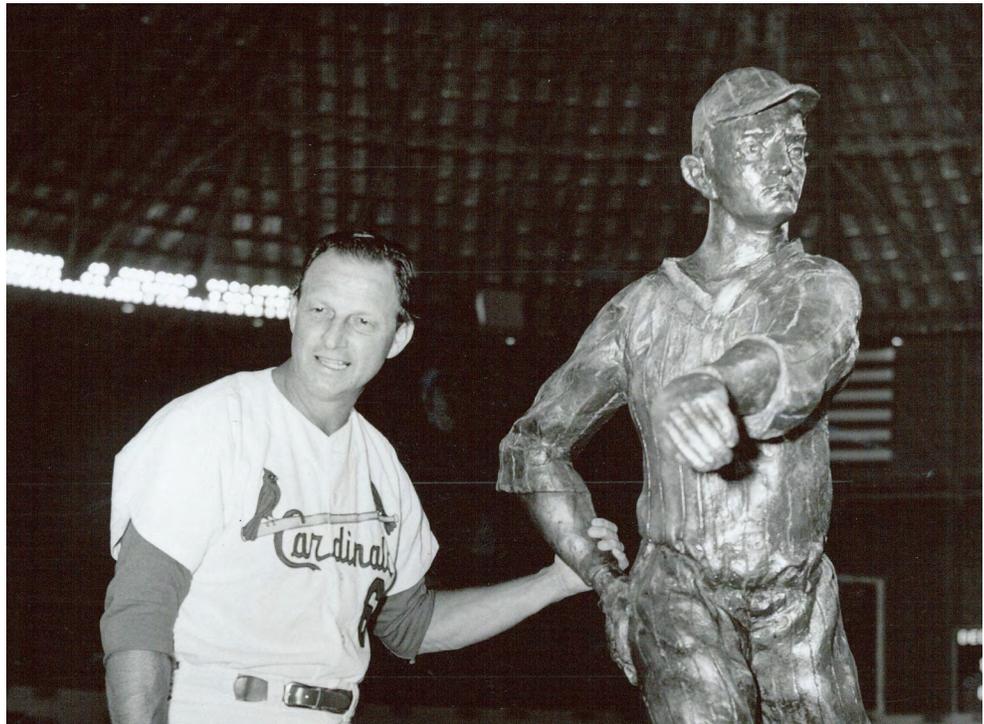
A committee project that's been in the works for almost four years now has a bright light at the end of its tunnel.

Our SABR BioProject book on the 1919 Chicago White Sox has been approved for publication as part of SABR's Digital Library e-book program in Spring 2015, to coincide with the SABR 45 national convention taking place in Chicago next year.

The book — still untitled pending design and production in the coming months — will feature peer-reviewed biographies of every figure associated with the 1919 White Sox, including all 31 players who made an appearance during the regular season or World Series, owner Charles Comiskey, manager Kid Gleason, executives Harry Grabiner and Tip O'Neill, and even the batboy, Eddie Bennett.

It will also include a month-by-month recap of the White Sox's pennant-winning season, and original essays on the team,

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Retired St. Louis Cardinals star Stan Musial unveils a statue of his friend and former manager Dickey Kerr on August 20, 1966, at the Houston Astrodome. Kerr, who won two games for the White Sox in the 1919 World Series, was a Houston resident until his death in 1963. The statue was on display this summer at Constellation Field in Sugar Land, Texas. (Courtesy of Bill McCurdy via Mike Acosta/Houston Astros)

Fate of Dickey Kerr statue unclear

Tribute to 'Clean Sox' hero might be sold at auction

By Jacob Pomrenke
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When Dickey Kerr died in Houston in 1963, his baseball friends wanted to honor the legacy of the "honest" White Sox pitcher who had famously won two games in the 1919 World Series while some of his teammates were throwing games to the Cincinnati Reds.

Houston sports editors Bob Ruhle and Clark Nealon led a fundraising campaign that brought in more than \$3,000 from fans, and the Houston Astros took care of the rest.

A statue of Kerr's likeness was unveiled at the Houston Astrodome on August 20, 1966, with Stan Musial,

Dizzy Dean, Howie Pollet, and other St. Louis Cardinals stars on hand for the dedication ceremony.

Over the last five decades, the statue — whose sculptor remains unidentified — has relocated from the Astrodome to the now-closed Houston Sports Museum at the Finger Furniture store on the site of old Buff Stadium. Recently, the statue has been on display at Constellation Field, home of the Sugar Land Skeeters of the independent Atlantic League.

Members of the Black Sox Scandal committee visited the ballpark during SABR 44 this summer.

Today, the future of the Dickey Kerr statue is uncertain.

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Dickey Kerr

► CHAIRMAN

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the World Series against the Cincinnati Reds, and the subsequent Black Sox Scandal.

Contributing authors and editors include: Bruce Allardice, Russell Arent, Steve Cardullo, Brian Cooper, James E. Elfers, David Fleitz, David Fletcher, Daniel Ginsburg, Irv Goldfarb, John Heeg, Rick Huhn, Bill Lamb, Len Levin, Dan Lindner, Adrian Marcewicz, Brian McKenna, Steven G. McPherson, Paul Mittermeyer, Jack Morris, Peter Morris, Rod Nelson, James R. Nitz, Bill Nowlin, Jacob Pomrenke, Kelly Boyer Sagert, Jim Sandoval, Richard Smiley, Lyle Spatz, Steve Steinberg, Brian Stevens, Andy Sturgill, and Gregory H. Wolf.

It's the first comprehensive book that focuses on the star-studded, dissension-riddled team that won the 1919 American League pennant — a thrilling season for South Side fans which saw the White Sox clinch the flag on a dramatic walkoff single by Shoeless Joe Jackson in late September.

As members of this committee well know, so much new information has been uncovered in recent years about the Black Sox Scandal, and this book will incorporate up-to-date research to tell the full stories of the “Eight Men Out” and their teammates, including Hall of Famers Eddie Collins, Ray Schalk, and Red Faber.

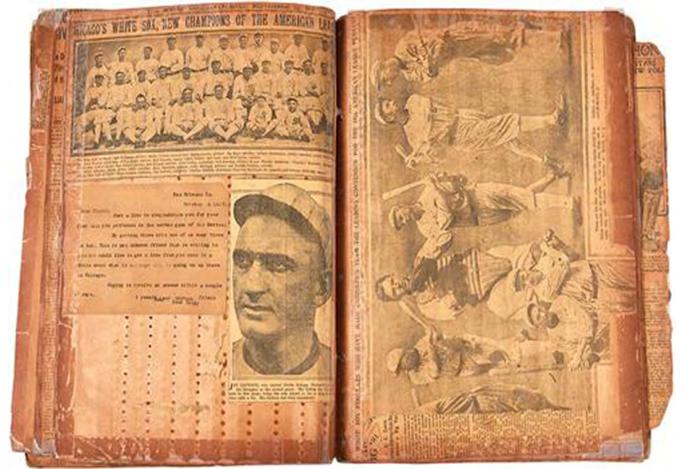
Like all SABR Digital Library publications (SABR.org/ebooks), the 1919 White Sox book will be available as a free e-book download to all SABR members in PDF, EPUB, or Kindle formats. SABR members also get a 50% discount to purchase the paperback edition.

Plans are being made for a special “book launch party” during the SABR 45 convention, which is scheduled for June 24-28, 2015, at the Palmer House Hilton in Chicago. Details and registration for the convention will be available beginning in mid-January at SABR.org/convention. (You won't have to register for the convention to attend the launch party, but you will for any “official” convention events.)

Speaking of SABR 45, you can expect several Black Sox-related sessions during convention week, including a visit to the Chicago History Museum and a special look at their Black Sox collection, plus a baseball walking tour of downtown Chicago that will include such sights as the old Criminal Courts Building (where the 1921 Black Sox trial was held) and Judge Landis's old office on Michigan Avenue.

SABR's first convention in Chicago in nearly 30 years is a fitting time for our book to be published. On behalf of the rest of the contributors, we hope you find it's worth the wait.

For more information about SABR's Black Sox Scandal Research Committee, contact chairman Jacob Pomrenke at buckweaver@gmail.com.



Lelands.com

Joe Jackson scrapbooks now on the auction block

Calling its collection the “Dead Sea Scrolls of baseball memorabilia,” the Lelands.com auction house recently posted [three personal scrapbooks from Shoeless Joe Jackson's estate](#) that were compiled by his wife, Katie, and held for many years by his younger sister, Gertrude, in Greenville, South Carolina.

The scrapbooks detail Jackson's entire career from his earliest days with the Philadelphia A's and Cleveland Indians, through two pennants with the Chicago White Sox, the Black Sox Scandal, and his post-banishment playing career in semipro and independent leagues.

Highlights include rare photographs of Jackson, a “longest throw” award presented to him in 1917, and promotional posters from his outlaw days in the 1920s,

As of this writing, bidding has reached nearly \$10,000 for the scrapbooks. The auction is open until January 16, 2015, at Lelands.com.

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Sport Sullivan, Carl Mays, and the 1915 Red Sox

By Bruce Allardice

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In the course of researching the life of Boston gambler and 1919 World Series fixer Joseph “Sport” Sullivan, I ran across mention of an earlier lawsuit, involving a debt owed him by Red Sox pitcher Carl Mays. This set off alarm bells: Did Sullivan, as early as 1915, have his hooks into Mays? Did Sullivan fix — or at least attempt to fix — Red Sox games? To what extent, if any, did Mays cooperate with the gambler?

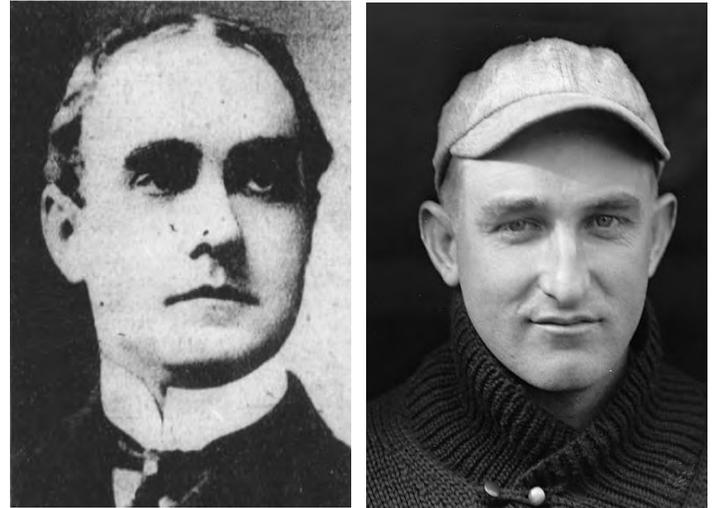
The Principals

In the early days of baseball, gambling was as common at a ballpark as hot dogs — in Boston, particularly. In 1918, *The Sporting News*, reporting on AL President Ban Johnson’s efforts to drive gamblers out of the ballparks, claimed “Boston has been particularly infested with baseball gamblers.” Johnson’s efforts had been thwarted due to “the backwardness of certain club magnates in assisting in the campaign against the gamblers,” in particular an incident where “a certain player of the Boston Red Sox who got involved in a lawsuit over placing a bet.” The player referred to was star pitcher Carl Mays. After his investigation, Johnson “discovered that the player had done nothing crooked, but had got into this mess because he had been associating with persons who evidently wanted to use him.”¹

Sport Sullivan was one of those gamblers.² His brokerage business was merely a front for bookmaking and betting. He was well-known to Boston gamblers, the Boston police, and the New England betting fraternity as a math whiz, an expert on the players and the teams. One admiring reporter wrote of Sullivan: “He had a remarkable mind for figures and percentages. That brain of his was just as neat and precise as his clothes and general appearance.”³

But careful research and math wizardry could only take a gambler so far. For a further “edge,” Sullivan preferred getting “inside” information from ballplayers — in particular, information from and about pitchers, the ballplayers who (more than anyone else on a team) could affect the results of a game. Sullivan knew that fixing a game was expensive and complicated. So many things could go wrong with a fix. As the Black Sox Scandal later proved, players could and would double-cross the gamblers. Word could leak out and destroy the betting odds. And no matter how many players on a team had been paid, the team might still win.

It was far better to get a betting edge from insider information. The gambler dealt with fewer people (thus minimizing the chance of a leak); the player giving the information



Left: Joseph “Sport” Sullivan, pictured in the *Boston Journal*, July 9, 1907. Right: Red Sox rookie pitcher Carl Mays, circa 1915. (Library of Congress, Harris & Ewing Collection)

did not have to perform badly on the field; and it cost the gambler less. Armed with a hot tip, a smart gambler like Sullivan could make a tidy profit.

Red Sox hurler Carl Mays was one of the premier pitchers of his era. Utilizing a unique submarine-style delivery, Mays won 207 games in a 15-year career while pitching for four different teams. His 27 wins in 1921 led the American League.

With his great talent came a talent for making enemies. In the words of one teammate, the sullen, moody Mays was “a man who always looked as if he had a toothache.”⁴ Sports-writer F. C. Lane found Mays “a strange, cynical figure” who “aroused more ill will, more positive resentment, than any other ballplayer on record.”⁵ He regularly berated his fielders when they made errors behind him. In 1919 he quit the Red Sox, soon after his catcher beamed him in a throw to second base, causing a controversy that almost wrecked the American League.⁶

Many years later Hall of Fame sportswriter Fred Lieb, in his oft-cited memoirs, charged that Mays was crooked⁷ as well, alleging that Mays had thrown Game Four of the 1921 World Series. According to Lieb, the night after the game, a well-known but unidentified Broadway actor (who from the description sounds very much like George M. Cohan) told both Lieb and the Yankees that in the eighth inning, Mays’ wife had signaled to him that she had been paid a promised bribe, whereupon Mays, who had been pitching a shutout, suddenly gave up four runs.

Commissioner Kenesaw Mountain Landis investigated,

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but couldn't find concrete evidence of wrongdoing. According to Lieb, the Yankees were convinced Mays did something crooked. Manager Miller Huggins vowed that he would help any ballplayer in need, with "only two exceptions: Carl Mays and Joe Bush. If they were in the gutter I'd kick them." Years later Lieb claimed Yankee owners told him they were convinced Mays threw games.

Lieb's accusation goes against one characteristic that newspapers credited Mays with — wanting to win. As one newspaper observed, the "irascible" May "greatly admires to win ball games, but cares not at all to lose any of them."⁸ Berating his fielders was merely an outgrowth of this competitive nature. Mays may not have cared much about his team's success (except as it affected his World Series share), but on game day the beanball-throwing Mays seemingly pitched to win.

1915 was Mays' first year in the majors. That year Boston used him mostly in relief.⁹ As such, he couldn't be counted on to appear in, let alone fix, any particular game. But that's not to say that Mays wouldn't possess insider dope that he could feed to a gambler.

The Go-Between

Louis A. "Poco" Bennett (1889-1954) was the son of German-Jewish immigrant Barnard "Poco" Bennett (1862-1913), who ran a pawn shop in Boston that catered to Harvard University students. Often written of as a "rag collector," the elder Bennett made most of his money loansharking to wealthy young collegians. As such, Boston newspapers often featured the elder Poco, especially when he had to sue some rich young scion.¹⁰ Upon his death, he left an estate of more than \$100,000.¹¹

His son Louis, also nicknamed Poco, was (like Sport Sullivan) a leader of the Red Sox's fanatic fan club, the Royal Rooters.¹² He held himself out as a "broker," managing his father's extensive real estate holdings. But young Poco had other, less admirable, interests. Like Sport Sullivan, he bet heavily on baseball games, reportedly winning \$100,000 betting on the Boston Braves during their 1914 pennant run.¹³ He admitted (in his sister's 1915 divorce case) that he was a "gambler" who bet on "anything" for "large stakes, into the thousands," including horses and "crap games."¹⁴ In 1916, he was arrested for bookmaking.¹⁵

In 1915 his mother and two sisters were arrested for running a "disorderly house" at all hours of the night, on property he managed.¹⁶ According to a Boston newspaper,



Left: Louis A. "Poco" Bennett, a Red Sox Royal Rooters and prominent gambler who sued pitcher Carl Mays in 1917 for an alleged \$750 debt. (Boston Globe, July 21, 1921). Right: Attorney Thomas Barry, the Red Sox team counsel who represented Mays at the trial against Poco Bennett. (Gillespie, *Illustrated History of South Boston*, p. 231)

the younger Poco "has the reputation of being ready to put up money on anything, and he has never been known to lose a big bet. He drives a big six-cylinder car which he won on a world series game."¹⁷

In 1919 Poco and three confederates robbed a company payroll, in cahoots with an employee who owed Bennett money. A company employee was shot during the \$12,000 heist. Caught and convicted, Bennett spent the next three years in a state penitentiary. He made nationwide headlines while in jail, charging that he had bribed the District Attorney \$1,000 to obtain a parole, but that the DA reneged on the deal.¹⁸

The Lawsuit and Trial

In 1917 Poco Bennett sued Carl Mays for \$750 that he alleged Mays owed him. To the casual observer, it seems odd that Bennett, who'd had plenty of brushes with the law, voluntarily chose to appear in court and testify under oath, thereby opening his background to cross-examination. The sum involved, while sizable, was not something that would break Bennett's bank account. The context indicates that Bennett took the debt seriously enough to pursue recovery, hiring prominent lawyer Jacob Tushins to handle the case.

The trial transcript¹⁹ contains several interesting features. Perhaps the most interesting was that Mays was represented by attorney Thomas Jackson Barry, not only a leader of the local bar, but also the longtime attorney for the Boston Red Sox. Red Sox owner Harry Frazee obviously authorized the team attorney to protect Mays, by then Frazee's star pitcher.

Bennett testified that he first met Mays at his (Bennett's)

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sister's house, sometime in 1914. It appears Mays dated the sister throughout the next two years, with Bennett seeing the pair several times a week. In October 1915 Mays and a teammate, catcher Chet Thomas, were on a double-date with Bennett's two sisters (presumably the two party girls who were arrested the year earlier), having dinner at Boston's Trafalger Hotel with Poco, when Mays asked Bennett for a favor: Would Bennett "pay J.J. Sullivan \$750 for him till he came back after the World's Series, when he could get his money and he would pay me"?

Most people in Bennett's position, confronted with this proposition, would at least ask why Mays owed Sullivan. But Poco said nothing. The next day Poco met Sullivan, paid Sullivan the \$750 in cash, and didn't even ask for a receipt — which suggests that Bennett and Sullivan did cash transfers on a regular basis.

Bennett pressed Mays for the money throughout 1916 and '17, but the pitcher always put him off with promises that Mays would take care of the debt when he got his World Series money. However, Mays never paid up.

On cross-examination, Mays' attorney delved into Poco's background, eliciting a series of evasions and half-truths. Bennett denied being a gambler (in the face of newspaper reports and prior arrests), though finally admitting he sometimes wagered a "cigar" on baseball games.

Bennett also pretended to be confused as to which of the many Boston-area Sullivans the attorney referred to; claimed he only knew him as "J.J.," not "Sport" (though Sport's nickname was known all over the East Coast); then claimed he never heard of "Sport" as a gambler! When confronted with evidence that he had sold Sport Sullivan a Packard car, Bennett finally admitted that he had known Sullivan since 1910, and that he saw Sullivan two or three times a week.

The incredulous attorney asked Bennett: If Sullivan was just a casual acquaintance, then why did Bennett pay over the \$750 (at the time, almost a full year's wages for a working man), no questions asked, and with no receipt? Did Bennett always do business in such a casual, non-businesslike manner? Barry got Bennett to admit that \$750 was chicken feed to him, that he (Bennett) usually carried a thick wad of \$4-5,000 in cash.

When he went to testify, Mays was no more truthful than Bennett. Never asked Bennett to pay anyone anything. Never knew Bennett was a gambler. Sullivan? Didn't know him. Didn't know he was a gambler. Never had any dealings with him.



Carl Mays won 207 games from 1915-29 and helped his teams win six American League pennants. But the submarine pitcher is best known for throwing the pitch that killed the Indians' Ray Chapman in 1920. (National Baseball Hall of Fame Library, Cooperstown, New York)

Mays countered Bennett's testimony by saying in fact Bennett had proposed a wager with him — on whether or not the Red Sox would lose the pennant. That way if Boston won, Mays would have the World Series money to pay off the bet, and if Boston lost, the wager winnings would make up for Mays' lost World Series share. Mays admitted he contacted several teammates about this proposition, but they turned Mays down, and Mays claimed he never agreed to any wager.

Mays tried to tell the court how the Red Sox owner, "Mr. Lannin,"²⁰ told Mays to sever his connection with gamblers, but the attorneys objected (neither side wished the gambling connection publicized) and the details of that conversation were never entered into the record.

On cross-examination, Mays admitted that after 1915 he met Sullivan casually, but once he found out Sullivan was a gambler, had no further contact with him.

Confronted with a common he-said, she-said scenario, and in the absence of any documentary evidence of the debt, the Court had no choice but to rule that Bennett hadn't proven his claim.

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Conclusion

Sifting the truth from all this is difficult at best. In the absence of definitive evidence, we can only rely on what British military historian Alfred Burne labeled “inherent (military) probability” — recreating motives and actions based on what a reasonable man would have done when confronted with similar facts.

First: Bennett had no motive to unnecessarily appear in court. It seems probable the debt was real — that Mays owed Sullivan, or owed some other gambler for whom Sullivan was collecting. The debt may have been a result of a wager, or a loan.

Second: For an ill-paid rookie Mays seems to have had an expensive lifestyle in 1915, with numerous dates and expensive dinners at hotels. It’s easy to see how he’d be in debt.

Third: \$750 made up a big chunk (one-third) of Mays’ 1915 salary of \$2,100.²¹ A gambler such as Sullivan, who specialized in getting players to give him inside information, was capable of leveraging that debt for his own benefit. Since Mays didn’t pitch often enough, or consistently enough, his rookie year, to make it worthwhile for Sullivan to bribe him to throw games, the only edge Sullivan could ask for would be exactly that kind of inside dope.

Fourth: Why would Mays assume Bennett knew Sullivan well enough to pay the debt, unless Mays already knew that both were gamblers and did business together?

Fifth: It appears neither party was anxious to have the full truth come out. Sullivan, Thomas, and Bennett’s sisters, material witnesses, were not called to testify. The Red Sox owners were kept out of the proceedings, although they had vital information.

Both parties avoided an obvious topic: whether gamblers had their hooks into the players.

Is there a smoking gun in all this? No.

Does it show that gamblers such as Bennett and Sullivan were far too intimate with Red Sox players? Clearly.

Could Sport Sullivan conclude from this trial that Organized Baseball would cover up its connections to gamblers, and embolden him to attempt further fixes? Yes.

Notes

1. *The Sporting News*, February 28, 1918. For more on this case and Johnson’s actions, see *The Sporting News*, November 22, 1917. Jacob Pomrenke, “Call the Game! The 1917 Fenway Park Gamblers Riot,” *Base Ball: A Journal of the Early Game* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Co., Spring 2012) has a good overview of the gambling problem in Boston.

2. See Bruce Allardice, “Out of the Shadows: Sport Sullivan,” SABR Black Sox Scandal Research Committee Newsletter, June 2014.

3. Quoted in Allardice, op cit.

4. Michael T. Lynch, *Harry Frazee, Ban Johnson, and the Feud That Nearly Destroyed the American League* (Jefferson, North Carolina; McFarland & Co., 2008), 104.

5. Allan Wood, “Carl Mays,” SABR Baseball Biography Project, <http://sabr.org/bioproj/person/99ca7c89>.

6. See Lynch, *Harry Frazee*, op cit., for more on this.

7. Fred Lieb, *Baseball as I Have Known It* (New York, Coward, 1977), 129-134.

8. *Boston Post*, October 10, 1921.

9. In 1915, Mays had six starts and 32 relief appearances, going 6-5 with a sparkling 2.60 ERA. If the “saves” statistic had been kept in 1915, Mays would have led the league in saves. In 1916 he was used half-and-half starter and reliever, becoming a full-time starter in 1917.

10. Cf. *Boston Herald*, April 1, 1906, which has a photo of the elder Poco,

and the *Cambridge* (Massachusetts) *Tribune*, May 14, 1901, reporting on an attempt by Harvard to revoke Poco’s clothing license. The *New York Times* of January 17, 1912, reports on a suit by Poco to recover \$14,000 from a colleague.

11. *Boston Transcript*, May 21, 1914; *Boston Journal*, January 6, 1915.

12. *Boston Globe*, October 8, 1912; *Boston Herald*, April 9, 1951.

13. *Boston Journal*, January 6, 1915. He won \$40,000 on the season, \$60,000 on the World Series. The article notes Bennett also won \$20,000 at the Juarez race track.

14. *Boston Journal*, May 26, 1915.

15. *Boston Journal*, September 7, 1916.

16. *Boston Journal*, June 3, 1915.

Mrs. Bennett was later indicted for perjury herself in testifying in this case. See *Boston Herald*, July 11, 1915.

17. *Boston Journal*, January 6, 1915.

18. *Boston Globe*, May 6, 1919. *St. Albans* (Vermont) *Daily Messenger*, April 17, 1919. *Cambridge* (Massachusetts) *Chronicle*, March 12, 1921.

New York Times, July 21, 1921. *Boston Globe*, July 20 and 21, 1921. Although the name “Bennett” was used by a gambler in the White Sox “fix,” that gambler was David Zelcer, not Poco Bennett. Poco had the perfect alibi for the Black Sox case — he was serving a 2½-year jail sentence at the time. After his release from jail, Poco ran another brokerage business, moving to Brighton, Massachusetts, late in life. He had at least one more brush with the law, being indicted in 1945 for World War II ration stamp fraud. See the *Boston Globe*, March 4, 1945.

19. Transcript courtesy of the Giamatti Research Center, National Baseball Hall of Fame Library, Cooperstown, New York.

20. Joseph Lannin, who owned the Red Sox in 1915 and 1916, before selling the team to Harry Frazee.

21. Boston paid Mays \$2,100 in 1915, \$3,500 in 1916, and \$4,000 in 1917. Source: Mays transaction card, Giamatti Research Center, National Baseball Hall of Fame Library, Cooperstown, New York.



A statue of former White Sox pitcher Dickey Kerr was unveiled in a ceremony at the Houston Astrodome on August 20, 1966. Dizzy Dean, top right, signing an autograph for Houston Astros star Jimmy Wynn, was one of many former St. Louis Cardinals players on hand to dedicate the statue. At bottom right, Stan Musial, *Houston Post* sports editor Clark Nealon, and Kerr share a laugh at the 1963 Houston Sports Association baseball dinner. The statue has moved from the Astrodome to the now-closed Houston Sports Museum on the site of old Buff Stadium. It was on display in 2014 at Constellation Field in Sugar Land, Texas. (Statue photo by Jacob Pomrenke; historical photos courtesy of Bill McCurdy and Jimmy Wynn)

► KERR

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SABR member Bill McCurdy, who has written about the Kerr statue's nomadic history at his Pecan Park Eagle blog, explains that Finger Furniture [filed for bankruptcy in January 2014](#), and its assets — including its large collection of Houston sports memorabilia — “likely will end up in some kind of future auction to the general public as part of that process.”

McCurdy notes that members of the Houston/Larry Dierker SABR Chapter, led by Skeeters executive Tal Smith, have been in talks with Finger Furniture to display certain items, including the Kerr statue, at their ballpark in Sugar Land. But it is not a permanent arrangement.

As for the statue's lack of a permanent home over the years, McCurdy suggests “it simply may have been one of those high-spirited matters of agreement that fails to spell out the item's future once the glow of the moment fades and other priorities arise and people who had been in charge as givers and receivers either die or move away.”

Any update on the fate of the Dickey Kerr statue will be posted to the [SABR Black Sox discussion group on Yahoo!](#)

as soon as it becomes known.

The August 20, 1966, dedication ceremony was a star-studded affair at the Astrodome. According to an article from the Houston Baseball Association newsletter ([posted online by McCurdy here](#)), more than 40,000 fans showed up for the Kerr statue dedication and an Old-Timers' Game headlined by Stan Musial, Dizzy Dean, Carl Hubbell, Bob Feller, Johnny Mize, Allie Reynolds, Ernie Lombardi, and many other stars. The Astros then defeated the Cincinnati Reds, 5-2, behind a complete game by Mike Cuellar.

Musial's [close relationship with Dickey Kerr](#) deserves special mention. Kerr was the manager for Class D Daytona Beach (Florida) in 1940 when he invited the 19-year-old pitcher and his pregnant wife, Lillian, to move in to his home to help save money before the birth of the Musial's son. Stan and Lil named their child Richard, in Kerr's honor. A week later, Stan suffered a serious injury to his throwing shoulder and thought he would never pitch again. He was ready to quit baseball until Kerr convinced him he had a better future as a hitter. Musial never forgot Kerr's compassion and generosity, calling him “the best friend I've ever had.”

Years later, when he heard Dickey and his wife Cora were in financial straits, Musial quietly bought them a house in Houston. Dickey Kerr lived there until he died in 1963.

The Levi brothers: Kokomo's Black Sox gamblers

By Bruce Allardice

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While volumes have been written on Arnold Rothstein — who was NOT indicted — and on the Eastern-based gamblers of the 1919 World Series, historians have largely ignored the Midwestern-based fixers who WERE indicted by the Cook County, Illinois, grand jury.

Early reports on the Black Sox grand jury findings included the names of brothers Ben and Lou Levi, who bet heavily on the Cincinnati Reds. Although not charged in the original indictments, the duo were included in the second indictment (March 1921). American League President Ban Johnson targeted the Levis, but in the end, the case against them failed, and the charges were dropped.

Benjamin Levi was born in Indianapolis on January 21, 1882, and Louis Levi was born in Peru, Indiana, on September 14, 1886. The sons of a scrap iron/junk/hides dealer, Russian-born Samuel Levi and his wife, Sara Ringolski, they grew up in Peru and Kokomo, with their seven brothers and sisters.¹ The local newspaper found the father “a gentleman highly esteemed by all who know him as an honorable, upright private citizen and merchant.”² The two sons, Ben in particular, would not follow in their father’s footsteps.

In 1905, 1908, and 1910, Ben and Lou worked for their father in the family junk business.³

In the years 1912-14, Ben appeared often in the newspapers. In 1911 Ben and some associates stole about \$600 worth of clover seed from a nearby railroad. The next year he and the others stood trial for the theft, the first trial ending in a hung jury, the second with a conviction. The conviction was appealed to the Indiana Supreme Court, where Ben got off on a technicality. Tired of spending money on the case, the local authorities declined to re-prosecute.⁴

By 1916 Ben and older brother Abe had taken over their late father’s scrap business.⁵ Ben soon moved to Chicago, where he lived with his mother and sisters.⁶ Later in 1920 Ben and Louis moved to Los Angeles, along with an Iowa-based gambler, David Zelcer.⁷ Allegedly, around this time they briefly lived in Des Moines, and became “prominent members of the local sporting fraternity,” although the evidence for this is mostly hearsay.⁸ While some contemporary accounts say that David Zelcer was the Levis’ brother-in-law, no evidence of that relationship exists.⁹

Author Susan Dellinger states that in the summer of 1919, the Midwestern group assigned Ben Levi to scout the Reds, to see if any players could be bribed. Evidence for



Ben Levi, left, and Lou Levi, right (pictured here flanking their sister), were indicted by a Chicago grand jury in March 1921, two of the five gamblers charged with conspiring to fix the 1919 World Series. The charges were later dropped. (Photo courtesy of Carol and Ken Gould)

this Zelcer-Levi plot is thin at best.

What IS certain is that the Levis’ childhood friend, wealthy Cincinnati lumber baron and Reds Booster Club stalwart Fred Mowbray, knew all the players and loved to bet. That summer Ben Levi traveled to Cincinnati to visit his old friend, and used the well-liked, well-known Mowbray as his “in” to meet the players. A well-known private detective viewed Ben talking with several of the players, actions which in retrospect seem suspicious, but at the time seemed like just another routine instance of betters talking to ballplayers.

In the days before the series, Ben Levi tipped Mowbray off about the fix. It seems likely that the Levis heard about the fix from Abe Attell, Zelcer, or some other gambling acquaintance — as Abe Attell later claimed, the players “peddled it [the fix] around like a sack of popcorn.”¹⁰ Reds loyalist Mowbray thereupon wagered heavily on the Reds and won.

No stranger to large-scale wagers, Mowbray’s name also came up in the investigation of an August 31, 1920 Cubs-Phillies game, with Mowbray allegedly financing Cincinnati-New Orleans gambler Remy Dorr’s bets against the Cubs. This 1920 fix allegation sparked the grand jury investigation that finally broke the 1919 scandal.

Dorr, who knew Arnold Rothstein well, is known to have bet heavily on the Reds in the 1919 Series, and may

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► KOKOMO

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have been the “big gambler ... known at New Orleans tracks” who handled the betting end of Hal Chase’s part of the fix.¹¹

Perhaps another angle to the Cincinnati connection can be found in the grand jury testimony of pitcher Rube Benton, who testified that after the Series, a close friend, Phil Hahn of Cincinnati, told him about the fix, and named five of the players. Former ballplayer Hahn, a nationally known “betting commissioner,” denied telling Benton this. However, Hahn knew the gamblers involved in the fix, especially Mowbray, a fellow “Loyal Red Rooter.” And Benton had no reason to lie about what Hahn told him.¹²

Attell and the Midwesterners, Zelcer, Zork, Franklin, and the Levis, allegedly “met in a Chicago hotel where they made a final distribution of the ‘jack pot.’ Zork and Franklin were said to have ‘cleaned up’ between \$70,000 and \$80,000 by the manipulations” and “the two Levis and Zelcer ... making almost as much.” A *Kokomo Tribune* article suggests the Levi brothers had made \$60,000. Ben Levi won at least \$15,000 on the first two World Series games. Afraid to carry that much cash around, he traded his winnings to Fred Mowbray in exchange for Mowbray’s check.¹³

Chicago Cubs secretary John O. Seys testified that Lou Levi was seen in Abe Attell’s company during the World Series, wagering heavily on the Reds, and that Seys held several of these bets as stakeholder. “First one would make bets [on the Reds], and then the other.” Seys had known Levi for about 10 years, and could make a positive identification of him.¹⁴

There’s some indication that Levi thought Attell had double-crossed him. Kansas City gambler Jake Feinberg told sportswriter Otto Floto that “Levy [sic] is awfully sore on Attell,” calling Abe “everything he could lay his tongue to” because Levi thought Attell’s reckless betting had “spoiled the betting for him.” According to this source, Levi told Attell about the fix only so Attell could “win a couple thousand dollars for himself.”¹⁵

The Levis could hardly have denied knowledge of what was going on. The Hotel Sinton, Cincinnati register shows that during the Series “Ben and Lou Levi, Chicago” stayed in Room 660 along with Abe Attell and Dave Zelcer, with the room being one floor below where most of the White Sox players were rooming.

For whatever reason, American League President Ban Johnson targeted the Levi brothers in his investigations of the fix, telling one of his private detectives, “We want



Clockwise from top left: Fred Mowbray, a Cincinnati lumber baron and Reds fan who introduced Ben Levi to the players; Phil Hahn, a nationally known betting commissioner who told Giants pitcher Rube Benton about the 1919 World Series fix; Remy Dorr, a New Orleans-based gambler who was implicated in the alleged Cubs-Phillies fixed game on August 31, 1920; John O. Seys, a Cubs executive who served as a stakeholder for bets placed on the 1919 World Series by Abe Attell and others. (Photo credits: Edd J. Roush estate, courtesy of Susan Dellinger; *Cincinnati Enquirer*, March 23, 1902; *New Orleans Item*, February 16, 1919; courtesy of Bill Burgess.)

to convict the Levi brothers.” He urged his detectives to “rough up” Fred Mowbray, to get Mowbray to implicate Ben Levi.¹⁶ Johnson’s focus on the St. Louis/Midwestern end of the fix seems based on the fact that the no hard evidence was forthcoming on the wilier New York/Boston gamblers, whereas gamblers who believed they were double-crossed by Zork and the Levis were happy to implicate them. In addition, the Eastern gamblers had indictment-avoiding assets Zork and the Levis didn’t — Rothstein’s ability to bribe witnesses, or if necessary steal confessions. As Rothstein associate “Curley” Bennett once bragged, “Rothstein ... can get me out of anything.”¹⁷

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Former prosecutor Bill Lamb, author of *Black Sox in the Courtroom: The Grand Jury, Criminal Trial, and Civil Litigation*, infers that the prosecution in the 1921 Black Sox criminal trial made a tactical decision to speed up the proceedings by not calling witnesses such as St. Louis Browns infielder Joe Gedeon — a friend of Swede Risberg and Fred McMullin with knowledge of the fix — who might have implicated the Levis. Since no direct evidence was presented at trial to implicate Ben Levi, and little against Lou apart from his being seen betting alongside Abe Attell (Lamb terms the evidence “embarrassingly meager”¹⁸), the prosecution made no objection to defense counsel’s motion to dismiss the charges against them.

After the trial, Ben split his time between Los Angeles, Kokomo, and Peru, with Ben and his brother Abe managing the family scrap iron business.¹⁹ Ben died on July 19, 1953, in Los Angeles.²⁰ Lou became a real estate broker in Los Angeles, marrying in 1921.²¹ A cousin remembers Lou sitting in his kitchen in Los Angeles, three phones surrounding him, switching between them making bets. The cousin said “he was always broke from betting.” He died at his Beverly Hills home on May 7, 1961, of a heart attack, and was buried in the family mausoleum, Home of Peace Memorial Park.²²

Notes

1. “Miami County, Indiana’s Jewish Population,” online article at www.in.gov/dnr/historical/files.

2. *Peru Republican*, December 21, 1894.

3. 1905, 1908 Peru City Directories; 1910 Census, Miami County, Indiana.

4. The court ruled that evidence was improperly introduced. See the *Kokomo Tribune*, March 28, 1921; *Logansport Journal*, June 12, 1912; June 19, 1912; June 28, 1912; *Logansport Pharos Tribune*, January 15, 1913. *Levi v. State*, 182 IN 188, 104 NE 765 (1914).

5. *The Waste Trade Journal*, vol. 21 (1916), p. 14.

6. Ben Levi, World War I draft registration card and 1920 Census. He lived at 4731 Ingleside Ave., Chicago in 1918.

7. “Former Kokomo Man Caught in White Sox Case,” *Kokomo Tribune*, March 28, 1921. This article makes clear that the Levis on trial were originally from Kokomo.

8. *Waterloo Evening Courier*, March 26, 1921. *Iowa City Press Citizen*, March 26, 1921. There was a “Levey” family in the scrap business in Des Moines in 1917, but this was headed by a much older Louis Levy.

9. Cf. David Pietrusza, *Rothstein: The Life, Times and Murder of the Criminal Genius Who Fixed the 1919 World Series* (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 2003). These seem to be based on Gene Carney’s “Notes in the Shadow of Cooperstown,” February 8, 2003, which may in turn be based on a report in the *Chicago Tribune*, May 27, 1921. I’ve traced the Levi family and found no family connection — which knocks out a main prop in a theory advanced by some historians that Zelcer conspired with the Levis.

10. Gene Carney, *Burying the Black Sox: How Baseball’s Cover-Up of the 1919 World Series Fix Almost Succeeded* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2003), 238.

11. Susan Dellinger, *Red Legs and Black Sox: Edd Roush and the Untold Story of the 1919 World Series* (Cincinnati: Emmis Books, 2006), lays out the Levi-Mowbray tale, utilizing the records of Ban Johnson’s investigators. Johnson urged the investigators to pressure Mowbray to incriminate the Levis, ordering them to “treat [Mowbray] rough.”

For the Mowbray-Dorr connection,

see Frank Navin to Ban Johnson, September 7, September 20, 1920, Black Sox Scandal papers, Giamatti Library, National Baseball Hall of Fame.

The (unnamed) New Orleans track gambler who allegedly conspired with Chase is mentioned in the *Chicago Tribune*, Sept. 25, 1920. Dorr’s presence at Game 1 of the 1919 Series, and his betting on the Reds, is reported in the *Daily Illinois State Register*, Oct. 14, 1919. Dorr had family in Cincinnati, and the Cincinnati newspapers often mentioned him.

12. Benton’s testimony is in *Chicago Tribune*, September 25, 1920. For more on Hahn, see the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, April 26, 1919, September 26, 1920; June 23, 1923; March 17, 1902.

13. Ralph Christian, “The Des Moines Connection to the Black Sox Scandal,” SABR Black Sox Scandal Research Committee Newsletter, June 2013. *Kokomo Tribune*, March 28, 1921. Dellinger, *Red Legs and Black Sox*, 316.

14. *Chicago Herald Examiner*, July 23, 1921. Nobody at the trial seemed surprised that the Chicago Cubs’ secretary involved himself in high-stakes wagering.

15. Otto Floto to Ban Johnson, September 24, 1920, Black Sox Scandal papers, Giamatti Library, National Baseball Hall of Fame. Floto was sports editor of the *Kansas City Post*.

16. William F. Lamb, *Black Sox in the Courtroom: The Grand Jury, Criminal Trial, and Civil Litigation* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Co., 2013), 130.

17. *Boston Post*, October 12, 1920.

18. Lamb, *Black Sox in the Courtroom*, 130.

19. 1930 and 1940 US Census; 1942 World War II draft registration card, Peru, Indiana.

20. *Kokomo Tribune*, July 21, 1953.

21. To Anne McDonald (1884-1944), of a family that formerly lived in Des Moines.

22. *Kokomo Tribune*, May 9, 1961; *Los Angeles Times*, May 9, 1961; e-mail from Douglas Brazy to author, September 6, 2014.

The St. Louis connection: Carl Zork & Ben Franklin

By Bruce Allardice

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In announcing the March 1921 indictments of the Black Sox players and gamblers, Cook County State's Attorney Robert Crowe announced that the World Series fix originated in St. Louis, specifically with Carl Zork and Ben Franklin, rather than in Boston and New York by the Eastern clique.

The early investigations of American League president Ban Johnson centered on St. Louis, as disappointed gamblers there fingered the Midwesterners.¹ Yet despite this focus on the St. Louis connection, relatively little has been written on the lives of the gamblers involved.

It is impossible to properly assess the validity of the "Midwestern" thesis unless we know more about the principals. Des Moines gambler David Zelcer has already been covered in an excellent 2003 paper by Ralph Christian (reprinted in the [June 2013 edition](#) of this newsletter) on the Des Moines connection.² This article will try to flesh out the lives of Zork and Franklin.

Carl Zork

Carl T. Zork was born June 9, 1878, at the family home, 1153 N. 6th Street in St. Louis, the son of German immigrants Simon and Clara (Gogel) Zork.³ Simon Zork, a respected clothing merchant, served as Secretary of St. Louis's United Hebrew Congregation. Carl married Sadie Twomey in Chicago in 1907.

Prior to 1920, Zork worked in various branches of the garment industry. In 1910 Zork was manager of the A.S. Rosenthal Company's St. Louis branch, specializing in silk clothing.⁴ At the time of the 1919 World Series, Zork was (ostensibly) president of the Supreme Waist Company, a St. Louis-based shirtwaist firm. One Joseph Evans was vice president of the firm, who may have been a relative of New York fixer, the St. Louis-born Nat Evans.⁵ Black Sox witness Harry Redmon testified that Zork "is in the silk business, supposed to be, but he does more gambling, I guess, than anything else ..."

Carl Zork had a long and close relationship with boxer/gambler Abe Attell.



Carl Zork, with fellow St. Louis gambler Ben Franklin, helped raise money after the White Sox won Game Three to persuade the players to return to the fix.
(John Thorn Collection)

In 1904 Zork and Abe's brother Monte attended one of Abe's fights. In 1907 Zork tried to arrange a fight between Attell and Jack Sullivan.⁶ Zork promoted Attell's 1912 fight with little-known St. Louis boxer Oliver Kirk, a fight the sporting press accused Attell of "tanking." In the sixth round, "Attell, who had been stalling all along, threw up his hands" and told the crowd he was "all in." A week later, Attell had "his St. Louis friend, Carl Zork" retract the retirement statement. *Collyer's Eye* later accused Zork of betting heavily on Kirk, then setting up a rematch in which Attell easily won, Zork making money both times. *Collyer's* called the match "one of the rawest deals ever pulled in a prize ring."⁷

Zork loved to bet on baseball, too, and on at least one occasion delved into game-fixing.

In early 1919, St. Louis Cardinals first baseman Gene Paulette met with Zork and fellow St. Louis gambler Elmer Farrar. The wily duo supplied Paulette with cash and asked whether the player was willing to fix ballgames. Later that year Paulette, now with the Phillies, wrote a letter to Farrar asking for \$400, and hoping "Carl will let me have it. ... I am in position to help him clean up in our next series with the Cardinals," promising that he could get two other players to cooperate in game-fixing with him.⁸

According to several gamblers contacted during the Black Sox investigation, Zork ("a double-crosser, a fixing gambler") and Farrar (a champion billiard player) "have been forming up different schemes to cheat people for several years," with Farrar throwing matches and Zork cleaning up on betting against him.⁹

Later, new baseball Commissioner Kenesaw Mountain Landis came into possession of the Paulette-Farrar letter. Landis didn't believe Paulette's denial of wrongdoing, especially since Paulette admitted that he had accepted "loans" from Farrar that he never repaid. On March 24, 1921, Judge Landis banned Paulette from baseball, an action that would set a precedent for the subsequent bans of the Black Sox.¹⁰ Unfortunately for Black Sox history, the judge at their criminal trial prevented testimony about Zork's fixing these earlier games.

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Just prior to the 1919 Series, former St. Louis Browns player Joe Gedeon got word from his old teammate, Swede Risberg, that the Series fix was on. Gedeon promptly notified Carl Zork, which implies that Gedeon and Zork had had “dealings” prior to this. Zork later admitted that Joe Gedeon had approached him to wager \$1,000 on the Reds.

Zork denied knowing of the fix prior to Gedeon’s tip.¹¹ That denial was corroborated by Sam Leavitt, Zork’s one-time friend and former attorney, who stated “he didn’t think Zork had any knowledge of the frame up” prior to Gedeon’s tip. Leavitt’s exculpatory words have added significance, as he was furious with Zork getting him (Leavitt) to wager \$2,000 on the Reds! According to Leavitt, Zork should be sent to prison “for all his crooked deeds.”¹²

Rebutting Zork’s assertions of innocence, Harry Redmon testified that he ran into Zork at the Morrison Hotel and that Zork “took all the credit for framing it [the series] up, that he was the cause of it all.” Zork told Redmon, “I’m the little red-haired fellow from St. Louis that was responsible for it all — and it didn’t cost me a cent.” Zork talked so loudly that Redmon cautioned him against being overheard, to which Zork replied “I don’t care, I got an alibi.” Redmon didn’t know if Zork was bragging or telling the truth.

Zork’s “alibi,” as it turned out, was a very public wager ON the White Sox, for \$2,000, with Sport Sullivan, using the very respectable Al Herr of *The Sporting News* as stakeholder. Zork also boasted of fixing other games in 1919, “but the testimony in this regard was ordered stricken out.”¹³ One article says Zork bet \$50,000 on the Series, and another article says Zork “cleaned up” tens of thousands of dollars.¹⁴

Zork’s attorney’s tried to get him excused from the trial, alleging that Zork was suffering from “melancholia” bordering on insanity. The trial judge, unimpressed, ordered that Zork be included. They needn’t have bothered. At the end of the trial, the only evidence implicating Zork was Harry Redmon’s, telling of Zork’s bragging. And to counter that, the defense had produced several character witnesses from St. Louis who testified as to his good character, as

well as witnesses who refuted details of Redmon’s testimony.¹⁵

Trial judge Hugo Friend denied the defense’s motion to dismiss the charges against Zork, but warned: “There is so little evidence against these men [Zork, along with Black Sox Buck Weaver and Happy Felsch] that I doubt I would allow a guilty verdict to stand if it were brought in.” The jury acquitted Zork, so the judge never had to set aside any verdict.

Zork’s reaction to the verdict reflected his amazement that he’d even been indicted: “I don’t know why they brought me up here. ... I never knew any of the other defendants until I met them in court.” Technically, this statement may have been true.¹⁶

In his later years Zork worked as a salesman for the Meletio Sea Food Company in St. Louis. Zork died of heart disease on January 17, 1947, in St. Louis. He is buried in that city’s Mt. Olive Cemetery.¹⁷

Ben Franklin

Benjamin Franklin was born on May 10, 1876, in St. Louis. His father, Andrew Franklin, a Civil War veteran, was a prosperous horse dealer, and later deputy sheriff, in that town. Andrew and his wife, Minnie Hertz, raised 11 children, all prominent members of St. Louis’ Jewish community. Ben helped his father in the horse trading business. He married twice: to Jetta Obst (1878-1905) and then to Iva Beulah Evans (1885-1976). Ben lived in East St. Louis (1905, 1910) and St. Louis (1908, 1914, 1917, 1920).¹⁸

Franklin bought horses for the army during World War I. In this job he traveled to Iowa, where his daughter, Vivian, was born in 1918. He would have traveled throughout the Midwest, including Des Moines and Omaha. He may have met Des Moines gambler David Zelcer in these travels, though there is no evidence that he did.

Alternatively, Zelcer may have met Franklin (and Zork) during one of his stays in St. Louis. One article calls Franklin a “well-known gambler in Omaha ... masquerading as a ‘mule buyer.’”¹⁹ However, Franklin shows only in the St. Louis city directories (not the Des Moines or Omaha directories) throughout the 1910s.



Ben Franklin, pictured circa 1938, asked St. Louis theater owner Harry Redmon for \$5,000 during the 1919 World Series to pay off the White Sox players.
(Courtesy of Ron Rosen)

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In March 1921, the (alleged) Midwestern ring — Zelcer, the Levi brothers, Zork, and Franklin — mentioned in grand jury testimony were indicted for fixing the Series. Franklin heatedly denied the charges in the indictment. “I want to say that everything charged in Chicago is positively incorrect,” though he admitted having attended the Series with his “very close friend,” Carl Zork.²⁰

Franklin tried to avoid appearing at trial, pleading “inflammatory rheumatism.” Franklin’s attorney offered a physician’s affidavit claiming Franklin needed three weeks to recover from an “arthritic attack.”²¹ After some legal wrangling, the trial judge granted Franklin a separate trial.

At the main Black Sox trial, St. Louis theater owner Harry Redmon testified that Ben Franklin had asked him for money after Game Three in order to keep the ballplayers happy, but that he (Redmon) and the other gamblers didn’t pony up.

Redmon and Franklin were close — in fact, Franklin’s brother-in-law was Redmon’s business partner.²² According to Redmon, Franklin told him that eight players were in on the plot, and asked Redmon for \$5,000 as part of a \$20,000 pot to bribe the Black Sox for the next two games.²³ Joe Gedeon testified that after Game Three, Attell, Burns, Franklin, Zork, and Redmon (among others) met at the Sherman Hotel in Chicago, trying to pool money together to pay the increasingly rebellious Sox players and reinstate the fix.

From the testimony, it seems clear that Franklin and Zork knew of the fix and conspired to keep it going. But their involvement seems to have been that of gamblers jumping on an existing fix, not gamblers initiating the fix. As with Carl Zork, Redmon’s testimony only tied Franklin to a post-Game Two fix attempt, not the pre-Series conspiracy charged in the indictments.

Following the acquittal of the Black Sox, the pending charges against Franklin were dropped.

By 1930 Ben Franklin lived in Fort Worth, Texas, carrying on as a “live stock buyer.” He died in Fort Worth on January 5, 1940, and is buried in that city’s Greenwood Memorial Park.²⁴

Final thoughts

The trouble with the notion of a St. Louis-origin conspiracy to the Black Sox Scandal is that the key to the whole fix was player participation — more specifically, Cicotte’s participation. As Black Soxer Fred McMullin observed, “The catcher and the pitcher: they can absolutely control the situation.”²⁵ And among the gamblers, it was Sport Sullivan and Bill Burns who had the “ins” to Cicotte and Gandil. The St. Louis gamblers at best had a second-hand “in” to Risberg via Joe Gedeon.

There was no testimony at trial, nor to the grand jury, that any of the Midwestern crowd had any direct pre-Series contact with any of the Black Sox. Instead, later articles by Gandil and Attell, the trial testimony, and the grand jury confessions all pointed to the players contacting the Eastern or Burns/Maharg groups.

In addition to the lack of contacts, the Midwestern group lacked the other essential to the fix: money. Zork and Zelcer operated out of a pool hall and a neighborhood cigar store, respectively — a far cry from the lavish casinos that Rothstein and Evans ran.

According to the reports of Charles Comiskey’s detectives, the bets at the pool hall appear to have ranged from \$20 to \$2,000. Police raided Zelcer’s Des Moines cigar store to halt bets that the local newspaper reported as \$100-\$200.

In contrast, Rothstein, Evans, and Sullivan routinely handled wagers in the tens of thousands of dollars. The Eastern gamblers simply operated at a higher level than the Midwesterners, the level in which a World Series fix could be pulled off.



St. Louis gambler Elmer Farrar was involved in the Gene Paulette game-fixing scandal in 1919 that got the St. Louis Cardinals first baseman banned from baseball by Judge Landis. (New York Evening Telegraph, February 18, 1912)

Notes

1. See the Crowe announcement, reported by the *Rockford Republic*, March 26, 1921. The Midwestern origin thesis is followed by several historians. See David Pietrusza, *Rothstein: The Life, Times and Murder of the Criminal Genius Who Fixed the 1919 World Series* (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 2003); Ralph Christian, “The Des Moines Connection to the Black Sox Scandal,” SABR Black Sox Scandal Research Committee Newsletter, June 2013; and Gene Carney, *Burying the Black Sox: How*

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Baseball's Cover-Up of the 1919 World Series Fix Almost Succeeded (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2003). Susan Dellinger, *Red Legs and Black Sox: Edd Roush and the Untold Story of the 1919 World Series* (Cincinnati: Emmis Books, 2006) adds a new layer of involvement by the Levi brothers.

2. Christian, op cit. These charges were aired early on. See "New Indictments Mean Fresh Drive on Conspirators Against Baseball," *The Sporting News*, March 31, 1921.

3. Born within a block of Nat Evans's home. As per my article on Nat Evans (see [SABR Black Sox Scandal Research Committee newsletter](#), June 2014), it seems quite likely that Evans and Zork grew up together and knew each other well.

4. 1910 St. Louis Directory. Zork lived at the Washington Hotel.

5. This Evans was the son of Russian-Jewish immigrant Moritz (Joseph) Evans of St. Louis. Moritz was the right age and background to be the brother of Julius Evans (Evenski), Nat Evans' father.

6. *St. Louis Republic*, December 26, 1904. *Los Angeles Herald*, September 15, 1907. See the *St. Louis Republic* March 27, 1904, and January 3, 1904, for more mentions of Zork and Attell.

7. "Attell Foxiest of all the Ring Champions," *Texas Railway Journal*, vol. 7, No. 4 (April 1913), p. 16; *New Orleans Times Picayune*, December 8, 1912; *Collyer's Eye*, October 9, 1920. However, veteran writer Sid Keener of the *St. Louis Times* thought the tanking charges were absurd. See the *Ogden Evening Standard*, December 5, 1912.

8. Gene Paulette to "Friend Elmer," August 7, 1919, "Black Sox Scandal (American League records)," National Baseball Hall of Fame Library, Cooperstown, New York.

9. Harry Redmon to Ban Johnson, March 25, 1921, "Black Sox Scandal (American League records)," National Baseball Hall of Fame Library, Cooperstown, New York.

10. Timothy Newman and Bruce Stuckman, "They Were Black Sox Long Before the 1919 World Series", *Base Ball: A Journal of the Early Game* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Co., Spring 2012), 75-85; Daniel E. Ginsburg, *The Fix is In: A History of Baseball Gambling and Game Fixing Scandals* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Co., 2004), 164; Bill Lamb, "Gene Paulette," SABR Baseball Biography Project, <http://sabr.org/bioproj/person/147b2f14>; *The Sporting News*, March 31, 1921. Pietrusza's *Rothstein* (p. 159) and Gene Carney's *Burying the Black Sox* (p. 44) explore allegations that Zork had tried to fix earlier games, including the 1918 World Series, in conjunction with St. Louis mobster "Kid" Becker.

11. Carl Zork's October 27, 1920 reply, 1919 World

Series Baseball Scandal Collection, Chicago History Museum.

12. Al Herr to Ban Johnson, "Black Sox Scandal (American League records)," National Baseball Hall of Fame Library, Cooperstown, New York.

13. Redmon affidavit, 1919 World Series Baseball Scandal Collection, Chicago History Museum; *Chicago Herald Examiner*, July 23, 1921.

14. Newman and Stuckman, op cit. Christian, op cit, 9.

15. *Chicago Herald Examiner*, July 29, 1921. William F. Lamb, *Black Sox in the Courtroom: The Grand Jury, Criminal Trial, and Civil Litigation* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Co., 2013), 132.

16. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, August 3, 1921.

17. "Necrology," *The Sporting News*, January 29, 1947; Missouri death certificate #3327, 1947. Surviving Carl was his second wife, Beatrice (Mathews), b. 1897, and their son Earl, b. 1936.

18. St. Louis and East St. Louis City Directories, 1905, 1908, 1910, 1914, 1917, 1920. 1920 census of St. Louis. Other authors have confused this Ben Franklin with a St. Louis clothing merchant of a similar name and age, Ben A. Frankel, perhaps based on St. Louis Browns owner Phil Ball's April 7, 1921 letter in the "Black Sox Scandal (American League records)," National Baseball Hall of Fame Library, Cooperstown, New York. Sharp-eyed readers will note Iva's maiden name of Evans. She was NOT a sister, or close relative, of known fixer Nat Evans (also of St. Louis) or of Joseph Evans, Harry Redmon's partner.

19. Christian, op cit. Zelcer lived in the Statler Hotel, St. Louis, in 1918, per his World War I draft registration.

20. Associated Press article in the *Albuquerque Journal*, March 28, 1921.

21. *Chicago Tribune*, June 28, 1921. June 28, 1921 affidavit, "Black Sox Scandal (American League records)," National Baseball Hall of Fame Library, Cooperstown, New York.

22. Ben's sister Sadie married Joseph Erber, who co-owned St. Louis' Majestic Theater with Redmon. One source accused Joe Erber of being in on the fix. See *Collyer's Eye*, October 9, 1920.

23. Redmon testimony, in the *Chicago Herald Examiner*, July 23, 1921. Bill Burns testified that Attell had tried to raise \$40,000 sometime after Game Two to keep the fix going, telling Burns that half (\$20,000) had been "put up by a man from St. Louis, whose name was not brought out." Burns testimony may refer to Franklin's \$20,000.

24. 1930, 1940 Census of Fort Worth; Texas death certificate.

25. 1919 World Series Baseball Scandal Collection, Chicago History Museum, report of December 4, 1919 quoting Fred McMullin. A January 22, 1920 report quotes Buck Weaver agreeing with McMullin: "... anyone who was crooked enough to approach a player knows that it would be necessary to bribe only about two or three players, who held important stations ..."

A POTPOURRI OF BLACK SOX BETTORS AND WITNESSES

COMPILED BY BRUCE ALLARDICE



*Chicago Tribune
January 25, 1953*

MONT TENNES | THE RACKETEER

Born January 16, 1874, in Chicago, Jacob “Mont” Tennes was, in sportswriter Hugh Fullerton’s words, “chief of the gambling fraternity of Chicago.” He controlled the horse racing wire service in Chicago and, through that, had a hand in sports wagering throughout the nation. Tennes heard from St. Louis gambler Joe Pesch (and others) that the Series was fixed, and Tennes phoned White Sox secretary Harry Grabiner with this information on the morning after Game One. Grabiner and Comiskey dispatched “Tip” O’Neill to Tennes, and Tennes told O’Neill that from his observations of how the betting odds had shifted to the Reds, he believed the “White Sox had been reached.” Former Chicago Cubs owner Charlie Weeghman testified in 1920 that Tennes told him, in August 1919, that the games were fixed, and that Tennes named seven White Sox players as being involved. For his part, Tennes denied ever telling Weeghman this. Tennes also claimed that he bet heavily on the White Sox, as proof that he either didn’t know about the fix, or didn’t believe the rumors. As head of a nationwide gambling ring and as a boss of the Chicago underworld, Tennes was uniquely situated to have found out about the fix. He retired from bookmaking around 1929, settling into a more peaceful life as a real estate broker. Tennes died August 6, 1941, in Chicago, leaving an estate valued at \$5 million.



*Chicago Tribune
July 23, 1921*

HARRY REDMON | THE THEATER OWNER

Other than fixers Bill Burns and Billy Maharg, St. Louis theater owner Harry Redmon was the prosecution’s key witness at the Black Sox criminal trial. Redmon told both the grand jury and the court that during the World Series he ran into Carl Zork at the Morrison Hotel and that Zork “took all the credit for framing it [the Series] up, that he was the cause of it all.” Zork told Redmon, “I’m the little red-haired fellow from St. Louis that was responsible for it all — and it didn’t cost me a cent.” Zork talked so loudly that Redmon cautioned him against being overheard, to which Zork replied “I don’t care, I got an alibi.” Redmon didn’t know if Zork was bragging or telling the truth. Redmon lost heavily betting on the Series and, upon hearing Charles Comiskey was investigating the fix rumors, informed Comiskey’s investigators of what he knew. White Sox manager “Kid” Gleason and “Tip” O’Neill interviewed Redmon on October 12, only three days after the Series ended. Harry George Redmon was born September 28, 1875, in Millersburg, Kentucky. He settled in East St. Louis and became, with Ben Franklin’s brother-in-law, co-owner of St. Louis’s Majestic Theater. He died August 19, 1945, in St. Louis.



*From Pesch’s 1923
passport application,
Ancestry.com.*

JOE PESCH | THE POOLHALL OWNER

St. Louis poolhall owner and part time-gambler Joe Pesch was one of the key witnesses who testified to the Black Sox grand jury. Pesch and his friend Harry Redmon attended the 1919 Series. After Game Three, they were approached about contributing to a fund to re-institute the fix, but declined. Pesch was scheduled to testify at the trial, but the prosecution, wishing to wrap up an already too-long case, decided not to call him. If he had testified, he probably would have told the story he told *Collyer’s Eye* in 1920 — that Carl Zork, Ben Franklin, Abe Attell, Nick the Greek, the Levi Brothers and others were “in” on the fix, if not the actual fixers. For his part, Redmon testified that he learned of the fix from Pesch! After the Series, Charles Comiskey’s private detectives targeted Pesch, and the gamblers who hung out at Pesch’s poolhall. They obtained a lot of unsubstantiated opinion that the Series was fixed, but concluded that Pesch had nothing to do with the fix. Joseph Pesch was born February 9, 1873, in St. Louis, the son of Joseph M. Pesch, who had been awarded the Medal of Honor for bravery during the Civil War. Like many of the Black Sox figures, he ran a poolhall but primarily worked as a bookie. Reportedly, Pesch told Mont Tennes about the fix, information Tennes undoubtedly already possessed from his own sources. On April 3, 1923, Pesch committed suicide. Family sources suggest that he was despondent over the illness of a longtime servant, and battling severe depression.



Leavenworth Penitentiary mugshot, 1929

CURLEY BENNETT | THE BODYGUARD

Joseph L. "Curley" Bennett's name came up twice in the Black Sox investigations. First, Bill Burns testified that a "Bennett" accompanied Arnold Rothstein, Abe Attell, and others in the initial "fix" meeting. Second, it was widely reported that the "AR" [Arnold Rothstein] telegram flourished by Abe Attell to convince skeptics that Rothstein backed Attell's play was actually sent by Curley Bennett, Attell's close friend and business associate. Curley Bennett was never called to testify. Joseph Louis Bennett was born November 6, 1883, in New York City. Orphaned at the age of 6, he was raised by a maternal aunt. A foot soldier in the Tammany Hall political machine, he operated a billiard parlor and sold jewelry, but his main source of income was gambling. He was arrested in 1902, 1910, and 1912 for operating a gambling house. In 1915 he was arrested for drug dealing, and in 1919 for pimping. Each time he beat the rap, the last time after the star witness was both bribed and threatened. Arnold Rothstein employed Bennett as a bodyguard, and Rothstein's money kept Bennett out of jail. Around 1923 he moved to Miami and ran a cigar store, but his main business was helping mobster "One-eyed Maxie" Gordon smuggle and distribute opium. In 1929 Bennett was convicted of possessing morphine and opium, and was sent to the Federal Penitentiary in Leavenworth. He was paroled in 1932 and returned to New York City. A Saratoga Springs newspaper of 1937 reported that Curley Bennett was currently resting at the Springs and visiting old friends. No later mention of him has been found. The best evidence is that he died in New York City in November 1939.



New York Evening Telegram, February 18, 1912

ELMER FARRAR | THE POOL HUSTLER

The name of St. Louis billiards champion Elmer Farrar was often paired with that of Carl Zork during the Black Sox investigations. Newspaperman Hugh Fullerton, for one, suggested that Major League Baseball question both Farrar and Zork about the scandal. Girard Elmer Farrar was born September 28, 1886, in St. Louis, and died there October 26, 1961. Throughout the 1910s, Farrar toured the country competing in billiard tournaments. However, he made his money less honestly, partnering with Zork. According to several gamblers contacted during the Black Sox investigation, Zork ("a double-crosser, a fixing gambler") and Farrar "have been forming up different schemes to cheat people for several years," with Farrar throwing matches and Zork cleaning up by betting against him. In early 1919, St. Louis Cardinals first baseman Gene Paulette met with Zork and Farrar. The wily duo supplied Paulette with cash and asked whether the player was willing to fix ballgames. Later that year Paulette, now with the Phillies, wrote a letter to Farrar asking for \$400, and hoping "Carl will let me have it ... I am in position to help him clean up in our next series with the Cardinals," promising he could get two other players to cooperate in game-fixing with him. This resulted in Commissioner Landis banning Paulette from baseball. However, other than the general (and plausible) notion that Farrar HAD to be mixed up in any shady business that Zork was, and that Farrar had tried before to fix baseball games, there was no evidence that Farrar was involved in the 1919 Series fix.



Cardplayer.com

NICK THE GREEK | THE PLUNGER

Harry Redmon's grand jury testimony fingered Joe Pesch, Abe Attell, the Levi brothers, and "Nick the Greek" as the gamblers who knew of and profited from the fix. One newspaper article claimed that "the Greek" borrowed \$25,000 before the start of the Series, and with that stake won \$125,000. Abe Attell claimed that just before Game One he learned that "the Greek" had wagered \$30,000 on the Sox, and thereupon told him of the Fix. Nicholas Andreas Dandolo was born April 27, 1883 (some sources say 1884) in Crete, an island soon to become part of Greece, of wealthy parents. When he was 18, his grandparents sent the college educated Dandolo to the U.S. He eventually settled in Chicago. "Nick the Greek" became nationally known for winning — and losing — huge amounts on horse races, card games, on anything he could place a wager on. By one estimate, he won and lost over \$500 million during his lifetime. He often gambled with, and against, Arnold Rothstein, and on at least one occasion is said to have "busted" Rothstein at a poker game. When the 1925 season began, "the Greek" was again the target of baseball betting investigations. On April 11, *Collyer's Eye* reported that Arnold Rothstein had staked Nick the Greek for betting on the Pacific Coast League season ahead. American League President Ban Johnson stated that "the Greek's" chief lieutenant in the betting was none other than Black Soxer Chick Gandil! PCL president Harry Williams banned "the Greek" from PCL parks. Dandolo died December 25, 1966, in Las Vegas.



*New Orleans
Times-Picayune,
September 5, 1954*

REMY DORR | THE GAMBLER

In 1920, reports surfaced that New Orleans-based gambler Remy Dorr tried to fix a Cubs-Phillies game played that August, in conjunction with Cincinnati lumberman Fred Mowbray. The investigation of this game soon morphed into the grand jury investigation of the 1919 World Series. Evidence quickly surfaced that the notorious Hal Chase had notified a well-known New Orleans gambler (undoubtedly Dorr) that the Series was fixed. What is beyond question is that Dorr attended the Series, and won heavily betting on the Reds. Remy Lewis Dorr was born April 14, 1886, in New Orleans, the son of local politician Adam Dorr. Dorr's mother was of a prominent Cincinnati family, and Dorr possessed many friends and family connections in that city, too. Remy worked as a clerk for the city government, but his main love was gambling. In 1917 he "plunged" his life savings (\$400) on some longshot horses, won big, and gained a nationwide reputation. He loved to wager on baseball games, particularly games played by his beloved Cincinnati Reds. In 1919 he wagered Arnold Rothstein that the Reds would win the pennant, and won thousands of dollars. Attending Game One of the Series, he was seen betting thousands of dollars that the Reds would win that game. Dorr's close association with Rothstein suggests that Dorr may have heard about the fix from Rothstein as well as Chase. Cincinnati, New Orleans, and New York newspapers are filled with columns about Dorr, mainly on his long career as a boxing manager, promoter and referee. He died September 4, 1954, in New Orleans.



*Edd J. Roush estate
collection, courtesy
of Susan Dellinger*

FRED MOWBRAY | THE LUMBERMAN

Ban Johnson's investigation of the fix centered early on wealthy Cincinnati lumberman Fred Mowbray. Johnson believed the Levi brothers had a big role in the fix and urged his operatives to pressure Mowbray to implicate the Levis. Frederick William Mowbray was born October 17, 1871, in Peru, Indiana, and died December 17, 1926, in Arizona. The son of a Peru attorney, Mowbray grew up with the Levi brothers. Settling in Cincinnati, Mowbray made a fortune in the lumber business. He was a member of the "Royal Reds Rooters" and a close friend of Reds owner Garry Herrmann. In the summer of 1919, Ben Levi traveled to Cincinnati to visit his old friend, and used the well-liked, well-known Mowbray as his "in" to meet the players. A well-known private detective viewed Ben talking with several of the players, actions which in retrospect seem suspicious, but at the time seemed just another routine instance of bettors talking to ballplayers. In the days before the Series, Ben Levi tipped Mowbray off about the fix. Reds loyalist Mowbray thereupon wagered heavily on the Reds and won. No stranger to large-scale wagers, Mowbray's name also came up in the investigation of a fix of an August 31, 1920 Cubs-Phillies game, with Mowbray allegedly financing Cincinnati-New Orleans gambler Remy Dorr's bets against the Cubs. This 1920 fix allegation sparked the grand jury investigation that finally broke the 1919 scandal.



*St. Louis
Post-Dispatch,
February 24, 1936*

TOM KEARNEY | THE BETTING COMMISSIONER

One of the first, if not THE first, people to inform Major League Baseball about the fix was St. Louis betting commissioner Tom Kearney. According to *Collyer's Eye*, Kearney monitored the betting on the Series and smelled a rat. The tipoff may have been when Ben Franklin, a horse trader from East St. Louis and a minor gambler, wagered \$4,000 against \$5,000 with Kearney. The *Eye* correspondent was shown the \$9,000 payoff check. Kearney notified Otto Stifel, part-owner of the St. Louis Browns. Stifel was supposed to notify Ban Johnson, but Stifel didn't pass the tip along, believing it to be unreliable. In a 1929 newspaper story, Ban Johnson claimed he heard a tip about Kearney and traveled to St. Louis after the Series. "From [Kearney]," Johnson said, "I learned how Abe Attell had induced Western gamblers to get in on the sure thing." The White Sox grand jury subpoenaed Kearney, but he failed to appear. Thomas Michael Kearney was born December 14, 1870, in Carondelet, near St. Louis. Headquartered in his St. Louis cigar store, he made book for over 30 years, and earned a nationwide reputation as an "honest" bookie — one who would never welsh on a bet, no matter how much it cost him. He specialized in wagers on horse racing, baseball, and politics, but shunned betting on football, believing the game too unpredictable. His generous and gregarious nature helped him evade prison, even though he was arrested numerous times for bookmaking. Kearney died February 23, 1936, in St. Louis.



*Chicago Tribune,
September 24, 1920*

SAMMY PASS | THE WITNESS

Described by one newspaper as “closer to the White Sox players than any person aside from Manager Gleason” — so close that he was godfather to Ray Schalk’s baby — Sam Pass complained loudly and often about losing the money he wagered on the White Sox. He even started his own, private, investigation of what happened. When the grand jury investigation started, *Chicago Tribune* sportswriter James Crusinberry recommended that probers question Pass. Per his testimony, so confident was Pass in the Sox’s winning, that he “took all bets offered by persons he came in contact with.” After the losses in Games One and Two, he asked his friends Eddie Cicotte and Lefty Williams what had happened, only to be told that they were “off form” that day. To the September 1920 grand jury he gave no facts, but to the March 1921 grand jury he “revealed the whole world’s series plot. He declared it was unfolded to him at the Gibson House in Cincinnati by Abe Attell.” However, when sent to New York to identify Abe Attell at Attell’s extradition hearing, Pass refused to identify Attell, and Abe avoided trial. Reportedly, Attell’s attorney, the “Great Mouthpiece” William J. Fallon, bribed Pass to so testify. Samuel Wood Pass was born July 7, 1893, in Chicago, the son of Russian-Jewish immigrants. In 1919 he worked as a manufacturer’s agent for the Great Western Smelting and Refining Company. After the trial he moved to New York to work for Lewin Mathes, a firm that manufactured copper tubing. Sam Pass died February 13, 1966, in Miami.



*Courtesy of
Bill Burgess*

SID KEENER | THE COLUMNIST

The young Keener, sports editor for the *St. Louis Times*, heard rumors of the Joe Gedeon/Carl Zork end of the scandal, and conducted his own investigation of the St. Louis connections to the fix. He shared his findings with Major League Baseball and with the Cook County State’s Attorney. However, during the trial, he provided alibi testimony for accused fixer Carl Zork. Keener noted that at the time Zork was allegedly boasting about fixing the Series, Zork was playing billiards with him. Sidney Clarence Keener was born August 15, 1888, near St. Louis, Missouri. He started his long newspaper career as office boy at the *St. Louis Star*. He reported sports for the *Star*, the *St. Louis Times*, and the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* during a 50-year career. At the time of the fix, he was sports editor for the *St. Louis Times*, and knew all the St. Louis figures involved in the fix. He in fact traveled to the Series with Joe Pesch and Harry Redmon, and socialized with Carl Zork. After retirement from journalism, the much-respected Keener became director of the National Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown. He died January 30, 1981, in Palm Beach County, Florida.



*New York Times,
November 2, 1947*

CLYDE ELLIOTT | THE MOVIE PRODUCER

Motion picture distributor Clyde Elliott aided Charles Comiskey in the initial investigations of the Black Sox scandal. He was an avid baseball fan, a friend of several Sox players, and an “intimate” of Sammy Pass. Through his theatrical connections, Elliott learned that East St. Louis theater owner Harry Redmon knew of the St. Louis end of the fix. Elliott traveled with Kid Gleason and Sox business manager Tip O’Neill to St. Louis to interview Redmon, and later testified to the grand jury about that interview. Clyde Ernest Elliott was born July 23, 1885, in Ord, Nebraska, and died June 12, 1959, in Los Angeles. A University of Nebraska graduate, he worked as a newspaper reporter and advertising manager before founding (in 1919) a company to distribute motion pictures. Elliott soon started making pictures, as well, producing and directing “shorts” for RKO and several feature films, most notably the Frank Buck classic “Bring ‘Em Back Alive.”