



Biographical Research Committee Monthly Report
June 1996

Bert Miller Found

Bert Miller, pitcher for Louisville in 1897, has been found by Pete Morris. For this, Pete wins the coveted *Find of the Month* award. Pete has been researching Miller for quite some time and has managed to learn practically his entire life story. Pete's biography of Miller and the story of his search appears later in this newsletter.

Co-Chair

At the meeting of committee chairmen at the SABR convention, I was asked to find a co-chair. This is in case I get named to be Commissioner of Baseball, our committee can continue with a minimum of interruption. So I am looking for volunteers.

If you volunteer, you will need a computer so you can store the biographical database and keep it updated. Unfortunately, my database is in DBASE III+. What I would like to do is convert it to Microsoft Access, which is a much more "state of the art" database. If you would like to take this on please let me know.

The KOM League

The KOM League was a minor league which operated from 1946-52. The league fielded teams in Kansas, Oklahoma, and Missouri. I recently came across a gentleman who is completing a book on the KOM league. He also publishes a monthly newsletter on the league. He sent me a complimentary copy of his newsletter. It was 28 pages long! And I was amazed to find a full-page article on the batboy for the Iola team from 1946-48 who happened to be my uncle. His next newsletter is supposed to feature my mother, who was Iola baseball queen in 1947. (Don't tell

anybody, but she became baseball queen by selling the most tickets.) Anyway the newsletter contains a wealth of biographical information about former KOM league players. If interested, write to John Hall, 1709 Rainwood Place, Columbia, Missouri 65203.

Birthday List

There are four nonagenarians celebrating birthdays in July. Be sure to send a card.

July 7	Art Merewether	94
July 9	Louis Polli	95
July 10	Ad Liska	90
July 24	Robert Adams	95

More of the Adams Family

Last month our *Mystery of the Month* was George Adams. This month we feature James J. Adams, one-game catcher for St. Louis in 1890. Little is known about Adams other than he was supposedly born in 1868 in East St. Louis, Illinois. However, Rich Bozzone sends along the following article from the 09/22/1923 Omaha Bee as a possible clue:

"James Adams, former Coast league baseball player, is charged by the verdict of a coroner's jury here with firing the shot that killed Edward (Babe) Hall at a roadhouse in South Pasadena. A complaint had been issued charging Adams, Charles E. Wiley, and James Crotty with murder. Witnesses said the shooting occurred after Hall discovered the three men searching automobiles parked near Hall's roadhouse."

The article was datelined September 21, Los Angeles.

Note the short newsletter this month. Please help me with ideas for articles. I'm not clever enough to keep thinking them up myself.

The Scoreboard

	IN	OUT	PCT
Total Complete Names	14450	71	99.511
Total Complete Births	13771	750	94.835
Total Complete Deaths	7212	468	49.666
Total Assumed Alive	6841		47.111
Total Bats	13166	1250	91.329
Total Throws	13412	1004	93.036
Total Heights	13409	1007	93.015
Total Weights	13347	1069	92.585
Total Debut Dates	14521	0	100.000
Total Questionnaires	9977	4544	68.707
Total Completion			92.1985

Herbert A. "Bert" Miller

By Peter Morris

B: October 26, 1875 Riley, Michigan
D: June 14, 1937 Flint, Michigan

In mid-July of 1897, a Louisville team headed for an eleventh place finish in the twelve team National League brought up two youngsters to play their first major league games. The first, a 21-year-old pitcher, made his major league debut on July 15th; the second, a 23-year-old outfielder, first appeared four days later. Though it is only speculation, one can imagine the two rookies being drawn together in the three weeks they were teammates. If so, it would only accentuate the divergence of their lives which would follow. The outfielder would soon be converted to shortstop, where he would earn election to the Hall of Fame in its inaugural year - he is Honus Wagner. While Wagner was earning immortality, his erstwhile teammate faded into such obscurity that only now are the most rudimentary details about Bert Miller's life coming to light.

He was born Herbert A. Miller in rural Riley (near DeWitt), Michigan in 1875, the second son of Alexander Herbert and Susan Brudell (Coheon) Miller. Alexander Miller was a farmer but he moved the family to Woodland, Michigan and became a minister when Bert was an infant. Rev. Miller died in 1893, and with Bert's older brother William being married, Bert found work as a typesetter to support his mother. He was already playing for the town's baseball team, and the following year he emerged as a star pitcher. In spring and summer, he led Woodland to a succession of victories against bigger towns without a loss and developed some signature habits. After letting several runners get on base, "Kid" Miller would smirk and either strike out the side or use a devastating and controversial pickoff move to eliminate the runner on third. And, when his pitching exploits did not win single-handedly, he would deliver a game-winning hit. At first annoyed, the bigger towns were soon clamoring for his services and in August he began to pitch for Nashville, Michigan. He began the 1895 season with Nashville, but it was soon clear that he was again too good for his competition, and he was loaned to Hastings and Kalamazoo for important games, including two memorable duels with the Page Fence Giants, the black touring team. (Future teammate Wagner meanwhile was essaying his hand unsuccessfully in nearby Adrian, where the Page Fence Giants were headquartered.) Bert went to Hastings to stay in June of 1895, where he spent the rest of that season and part of 1896 before abruptly leaving the team in July for reasons unknown; a note in the Hastings paper indicated that several of his friends were concerned about him. (The local team didn't suffer too much, however, as Lady Baldwin came out of retirement to replace Miller.)

In 1897, Miller signed to play for New Castle, Pennsylvania, but that deal fell through and he pitched for Kalamazoo in the Michigan State League instead. The local papers marvelled at the ability of "Little Miller" to strike out opposing batters. Kalamazoo folded in late June, and it was announced that Miller would be heading to Louisville, but this changed when Kalamazoo started playing again in expectation of new ownership. When the new ownership turned out to mean the team moving to Flint, however, Bert jumped ship. Arriving in Louisville, his major league debut saw him paired up against Hall of Famer Amos Rusie who, although only 26, was already the winner of over 200 games despite having sat out the previous season. Any chance Miller had was ruined by six Louisville errors behind him, but he did pitch a complete game and got a single off the great Rusie. In three subsequent relief appearances Miller was hit hard and he was released to New Castle. In 1898 he pitched for New Castle and Youngstown, Ohio. By now his career was on the decline, and after stints with Stratford (Ont.) in 1899 and Clarksville (Mi.) in 1900 he seems to have retired.

Bert married Alice Cattell in 1900 in Lake Odessa, with his occupation listed as baseball player. Shortly after their marriage, the couple moved to Grand Ledge, and I lost track of them. In 1917, Bert was remarried in Lansing to a widow named Rose Neuffer who had four children. Bert and Rose moved to St. John's where Bert worked as an interior decorator for a time. After that I lost the trail until I contacted one of Rose's grandsons, who informed me that in 1931 Bert had lived with him on Shepard Street in Lansing, the same street I live on. Shortly after that Bert's marriage broke up, and Rose's family never saw Bert again. Returning to scratch, I traced the four children of Bert's brother William (who died in 1912) and spoke with the surviving children of three of the four. One of them recalled Bert living with her parents in Grand Ledge in the summer of 1932, and told me that Bert had talked her father into trying to sell fish door to door. This business proved short-lived, as the two men soon lost the car which had been their only capital, and Bert left for parts unknown, never again to contact the family. Finally, apparently reduced to transient status by the depression, in 1936 Bert arrived in Flint, the town he had shunned so many years ago for his shot at the big leagues. He died there, at the Hurley Hospital, on June 14, 1937.

New Monthly Data

Questionnaires Received:

None

New Information Received:

1942 Blair, Louis Nathan	D: <u>Jun 7 1996</u>	(C2)
	<u>Monroe, Louisiana</u>	
1950 Bollweg, Donald Raymond	D: <u>May 26 1996</u>	(T1)
	<u>Wheaton, Illinois</u>	
1958 Coles, Charles Edward	D: <u>Jan 25 1996</u>	(C1)
	<u>Myrtle Beach, South Carolina</u>	
1948 Cress, Walker James	B: Mar 6 1917	(C1)
	D: <u>Apr 21 1996</u>	
	<u>Baton Rouge, Louisiana</u>	
1987 Harvey, Bryan Stanley	B: <u>Soddy-Daisy, Tennessee</u>	(C1)
1964 May, Jerry Lee	D: <u>Jun 30 1996</u>	(O2)
	<u>Swoope, Virginia</u>	
1918 McHenry, Austin Bush	D: <u>Mount Oreb, Ohio</u>	(L5)
1897 Miller, Herbert A.	B: Oct 26 1875	(M4)
	D: <u>Jun 14 1937</u>	
	<u>Flint, Michigan</u>	
1934 Moss, Charles Crosby	D: <u>Oct 9 1991</u>	(C1)
	<u>Meridian, Mississippi</u>	
1913 Orr, William John	D: <u>St. Helena, California</u>	(C1)
1940 Piechota, Aloysius Edward	D: <u>Jun 13 1996</u>	(S7)
	<u>Chicago, Illinois</u>	