

BLACK SOX SCANDAL



Vol. 9, No. 1, June 2017

Research Committee Newsletter

Leading off ...

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Chairman's Corner

By Jacob Pomrenke
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After about two years of hesitation, I recently upgraded my Newspapers.com subscription to the premium tier, which they call "Publisher Extra." The difference in cost was a little steep (\$150 per year instead of \$90), but so was the difference in quality.

I originally had access to papers like the *Cincinnati Enquirer* and *Detroit Free Press* only through 1922, but now the search results take me into the 21st century. What made me finally pull the trigger this spring was the announcement that the *Greenville* (South Carolina) *News* had been added to the website. That's Shoeless Joe

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On April 22, 1938, the Detroit Tigers invited sixteen retired major-leaguers — including Bobby Lowe, Bobby Veach, and Davy Jones, seen here — to participate in Opening Day ceremonies at Briggs Stadium. Also invited was the exiled Black Sox pitcher Eddie Cicotte, who lived in Detroit and had pitched briefly for the Tigers. Cicotte and the other former stars rode in a pregame parade downtown and marched on the field to raise the American flag in center field. This is the only known instance of a Black Sox player standing on a major-league field during an official baseball function after Judge Landis banned them for life. (Photo: *Detroit Free Press* via Newspapers.com)

Opening Day ovation for an exile in Detroit

By Jacob Pomrenke
buckweaver@gmail.com

When commissioner Kenesaw Mountain Landis delivered his famous proclamation following the Black Sox criminal trial in 1921, he said, "Regardless of the verdict of juries, no player who throws a ballgame . . . will ever again play professional baseball."¹

What Landis left unspoken was a promise kept by nearly every one of his successors for a century afterward: Not only were those players forbidden from participating in Organized Baseball at any level, they weren't even welcome to enter the ballpark. They were *persona non grata* in every way.²

Fred McMullin had been the first player to indirectly test Landis's law

when he signed up to play for an independent winter league team in California while awaiting trial. Philadelphia Phillies outfielder Emil "Irish" Meusel, who was also in the league, was fined \$100 by his owner, William F. Baker, just for being on the same field with the disgraced Black Sox infielder.³

A few months later, McMullin paid for a ticket to a Pacific Coast League game in Los Angeles involving several of his old friends from the White Sox, Byrd Lynn, Ted Jourdan, and Joe Jenkins, now playing for the Salt Lake City Bees. As the *Los Angeles Times* reported, there developed "a situation so tense as to be almost painful," as manager Gavvy Cravath "turned his back" on McMullin and gave him

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► CHAIRMAN

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Jackson's hometown, and I knew that local columnists like Carter "Scoop" Latimer and Jim Anderson had regularly interviewed the former White Sox star in the 1930s and '40s during the last quarter-century of his life. These interviews were rarely reprinted in other newspapers, so the Greenville paper was the only place to find them.

My article in SABR's *Baseball Research Journal* last year covered that same subject: the dozens and dozens of interviews given by 1919 World Series participants about the Black Sox Scandal, dispelling the myth that the scandal was too shameful or too dangerous for anyone involved to talk about. When I wrote that story, I didn't have access to all of these other papers yet — and within a few weeks of upgrading at Newspapers.com, I found nearly twenty additional interviews to add to that list, which **now numbers more than 100**. The technology to search for these interviews online made my entire article possible, but improvements in that same technology made the story incomplete almost from the moment I finished writing it.

That's a frustrating feeling as a writer but a thrilling one as a researcher. Newspapers.com is, for my money, by far the most valuable archive currently available, even better than ProQuest — and it continues to be worth every penny in my research. New papers are added to the site every month and I find myself going back and running the same searches I tried a few years ago only to get vastly different results because so many more papers have been digitized in the meantime.

The lesson this also reinforces for me is just how much information is still out there waiting to be discovered in resources that aren't available online (yet).

In Chicago, we've long had easy access to the *Tribune* archives online but that's only one side, one perspective, of the story. Few of us have studied in-depth coverage of the Black Sox Scandal from the *American*, the *Daily News*, the *Evening Post*, the *Herald-Examiner*, or the *Journal*, all of which had their own talented baseball writers and reporters covering the White Sox and other news of the day. Let alone all the defunct newspapers and resources in other cities.

I think often of Bruce Allardice's observation in his terrific *Sport Sullivan biography* that first appeared in these pages: We have Abe Attell's version of the World Series fix, but we've never heard Sullivan's perspective. It's "the great missing link," he wrote.

It's easy to get excited about the sheer volume of what's available now at our fingertips. But it's important to remember just how much isn't easily accessible online, too. What else is out there waiting to be discovered? Only time, and maybe technology, will tell.

For more information about SABR's Black Sox Scandal Research Committee, e-mail buckweaver@gmail.com.

Download your free copy of *Scandal on the South Side*

Scandal on the South Side: The 1919 Chicago White Sox, edited by Jacob Pomrenke, with associate editors Rick Huhn, Bill Nowlin, and Len Levin, is **now available from the SABR Digital Library**.

Scandal on the South Side is the first comprehensive book focused on the star-studded, dissension-riddled team that won the 1919 American League pennant and then threw the World Series — with full-life biographies of every player and official involved with that fateful team.

This book isn't a rewriting of *Eight Men Out*, but it is the complete story of everyone associated with the 1919 Chicago White Sox.

Order the book:

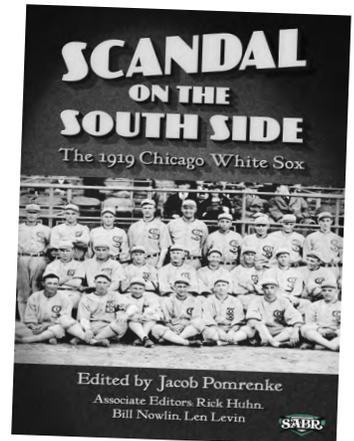
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Read the bios online: All biographies from the book can also be read online at the SABR BioProject.

Visit SABR.org/category/completed-book-projects/1919-chicago-white-sox to find them all.



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The 1919 Series And The Dog That Did Nothing

By Bruce Allardice
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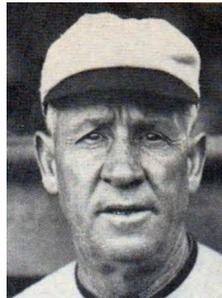
Scotland Yard detective: "Is there any other point to which you would wish to draw my attention?"

Sherlock Holmes: "To the curious incident of the dog in the night-time."

Detective: "The dog did nothing in the night-time."

Sherlock Holmes: "That was the curious incident."¹

After Game Five of the 1919 World Series, a 5-0 loss to the Cincinnati Reds, Chicago White Sox manager Kid Gleason unburdened himself to the *Chicago Tribune's* James Crusinberry about the team's poor play, and especially its lack of offense: "They aren't hitting. ... They couldn't make a place on a high school team."²



Kid Gleason

Gleason certainly had reason to grouse. In the 1919 Series, the White Sox scored 20 runs in eight games, or 2.5 runs per game, much lower than their season average of 4.8 rpg. They made 59 hits, or 7.4 hits per game, again much lower than their season average of 9.6 hpg.

Their lack of offense in the first five games — the ones we know now as the most likely to have been thrown, along with Game Eight — was particularly puzzling to observers. The Sox scored only six runs, with only one of those runs "earned," in those five games. The only reason the White Sox's eight-game totals look as good as they are is because their hitters, perhaps now playing honestly, scored 14 runs in the final three games.

So why wasn't there a bigger outcry at the time about this lack of hitting — outcry that might connect the cold bats with the rumors of fixed games?

Every observer of the World Series noticed the White

Sox weren't hitting up to form,³ but most observers (Tris Speaker⁴ and Hugh Fullerton being notable exceptions) ascribed it to a normal slump or cold streak. White Sox beat writer I.E. Sanborn thought the Sox were merely "continuing the slump with which they were infected in Boston [10 days earlier] ..."⁵ Others thought the Sox went stale after resting their regulars during the last four regular-season games, all losses.⁶

Still others thought the Sox were overconfident, or had partied too hard and were out of shape.⁷ Veteran sportswriter Thomas S. Rice of the *Brooklyn Eagle* found a "batting panic" in the first five games, where the Sox hitters swung at everything, even pitches two feet off the plate.⁸ Cincinnati Reds manager Pat Moran opined that his team's strong pitching was the cause behind the Sox's weak offense.⁹

With the benefit of hindsight, several modern historians wonder why so few at the time "connected the dots" between the fix rumors and the White Sox's performance. *Eight Men Out* author

Eliot Asinof blamed baseball's management, specifically Sox owner Charles Comiskey, for putting pressure on sportswriters and others: "The probing sportswriter would be warned, or paid off, to stop his digging."¹⁰

Historian Daniel A. Nathan quotes the acerbic columnist Westbrook Pegler as wondering "why all of us who were detailed to cover the show were not fired for missing the greatest sports story in twenty years ..."¹¹ Black Sox author Gene Carney lambasts a "cover-up" by Organized Baseball, aided by media lapdogs who (allegedly) were so loyal to baseball's powers-that-be that they ignored the available evidence.¹²

These scattershot allegations of pressure, incompetence,

➤ Continued on Page 4



"White Sox hitters on strike." *Cincinnati Enquirer*, October 7, 1919. (*Cincinnati Enquirer* via Newspapers.com)

► NOTHING

Continued from Page 3

and conspiracy deserve more serious analysis. My thesis is that the poor offensive performance wasn't out of line with what other teams had done in prior World Series, and what the Sox had done in the 1919 regular season. Thus, contemporary observers had a reasonable explanation for not connecting the poor offense with the fix rumors.

First off, it was (and is) not unusual for World Series teams to hit much worse than in the regular season. These teams are, after all, facing quality opponents with strong pitching and defense. The World Series is also played in October with colder weather less likely to help the offenses.

The 1914 Philadelphia Athletics, heavily favored to win the World Series, scored only six runs (1.5 per game) in a four-game sweep at the hands of the Boston Braves — a far cry from their 4.9 rpg season average. The 1905 Athletics averaged 4.2 runs per game in the regular season, but only 0.6 runs per game in the Series. There's no serious contention that either team “threw” the Series, although their drop-off in runs per game was much greater than the 1919 White Sox.

In the 1918 World Series, the Boston Red Sox and the Chicago Cubs both averaged 1.5 runs per game, a far cry from the 3.8 and 4.2 rpg these teams managed during the regular season. The run-scoring downturn in the 1918 Series was every bit as severe as that of the Sox in 1919. Sportswriters analyzing the 1919 Series, while cognizant of the Sox's offensive woes, could easily remember that both World Series teams in the previous year had similar problems scoring runs.¹³

The 1919 Reds were a step up in competition from the teams the White Sox generally faced during their regular season, a team with good pitching and good defense. Reds pitchers compiled the National League's second-lowest ERA (2.23). They were first in shutouts with 23 and had the best fielding percentage in the league. In this context, the Reds' World Series ERA of 1.68 didn't seem unusually low.

More importantly, during the regular season, the White Sox had already shown they could fall into a prolonged batting slump. From May 17 to 26, 1919, the Sox had an eight-game streak in which they scored just 19 runs on 54 total hits — a lower rate than they produced during the World Series. In these eight games they faced Philadelphia, New York and Washington, none of which were on the same level of quality as the Reds.

While the Yankees had a decent team with good pitching, Philadelphia finished last and Washington next-to-last in the American League standings. The game scores are

shown below. Despite the Sox's lack of offense, they won six of the eight games.

Date	Opponent	Result
May 17	vs. PHA	L, 1-0
May 18	vs. PHA	W, 1-0
May 20	vs. PHA	W, 2-1
May 22	vs. NYY	W, 1-0
May 23	vs. NYY	W, 5-0
May 24	vs. NYY	L, 2-1
May 25	vs. WAS	W, 6-5
May 26	vs. WAS	W, 3-2

The opposing starters that the Sox faced in these games were not especially good: a combined 16 games under .500.¹⁴ The runs-against average for these three teams also exceeded the league average.

The White Sox beat writers couldn't blame this early-season hitting slump on injuries, because the Sox hitters were all healthy during this period. And while the week featured cold temperatures and rainy weather, only two games were postponed.¹⁵ Rather, the baffled scribes attributed the hitting slump to astrological magic: “[The Sox] have not been hitting much on their home grounds. ... It may be an astral or psychological reason, or it may be purely a terrestrial or mechanical reason ...”¹⁶ The slump prompted one reporter to worry that the Sox were “striving to regain the [1906] title of ‘Hitless Wonders.’”¹⁷

Chicago's newspapermen followed the team the entire season, knew the team's highs and lows, and were therefore in the best position to pass judgment on the Series performance. The poor offense they saw in the World Series was something they had already seen firsthand at times during the regular season. They didn't immediately cry “foul!” because there was no substantial reason to do so. Hence these dogs did not bark in the night-time.

Notes

1. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, “Silver Blaze,” *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* (London, England: George Newnes, 1894). Text accessed online at <http://etc.usf.edu/lit2go/40/the-memoirs-of-sherlock-holmes/573/adventure-1-silver-blaze/> on May 21, 2017.

2. *Chicago Tribune*, October 7, 1919. This article examines only the reaction to the White Sox's offense, not their pitching or defense.

3. “I have heard much about the White Sox murderers row, but I haven't seen it on the ball field.”

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Writing opportunities for Black Sox committee members

If you're interested in writing an article for SABR, there are a number of good story ideas related to the Black Sox Scandal still waiting for authors.

While all player biographies for the 1919 Chicago White Sox have been completed — the bios that appeared in *Scandal on the South Side* are available to [read online at the SABR BioProject](#) — a handful of players from the 1919 Cincinnati Reds remain unassigned:

- ♦ **OF Manuel Cueto**, who hit over .300 eleven times in his native Cuba and was elected to the Cuban Baseball Hall of Fame

- ♦ **P Ed Gerner**, who won his only career start in the big leagues in 1919

- ♦ **P Roy Mitchell**, who won 209 games in a 19-year pro career

- ♦ **3B Hank Schreiber**, who had more than 2,000 hits in the minor leagues

- ♦ **P Mike Regan**, who as a Reds rookie in 1917 was approached by Hal Chase in a bribe attempt

- ♦ **OF Charlie See**, who hit .387 in the International League before his call-up to the Reds in August 1919

- ♦ **OF Billy Zitzmann**, who had one at-bat with the 1919 Reds before returning to the majors six years later

Biographies on [other figures related to the Black Sox Scandal](#) also make for interesting BioProject subjects. You could write about former White Sox manager Pants

Rowland, gamblers Arnold Rothstein or Abe Attell, journalists Bert Collyer or James Crusinberry, or *Eight Men Out* author Eliot Asinof. All of their SABR bios are unassigned.

If you'd like to write any of these biographies, please contact Lyle Spatz (lspatz@comcast.net) to request an assignment. Click here for [Author Guidelines](#) on researching and writing a SABR bio. It's a great exercise for first-time or experienced writers.

The [SABR Games Project](#) is another opportunity to write about the Black Sox Scandal, and this would be a much smaller time and energy commitment than the BioProject. Games Project stories run about 500 to 1,500 words.

You could write about any of the 1919 World Series games at Comiskey Park. The Crosley Field games have been written about and will be published in an upcoming SABR book. But Games Three, Four, Five, and Eight are all up for grabs. So are all six 1917 World Series games.

Significant games from the 1919 White Sox season are also available: for example, the Chick Gandil-Tris Speaker fight on May 31, Happy Felsch's major-league record 11 putouts in center field on June 23, the Wingfoot Air Express tragedy on July 21, or Shoeless Joe Jackson's walkoff single to clinch the American League pennant on September 24.

To request an assignment, please contact Bruce Slutsky (bruce@bruceslutsky.com). [Click here](#) to learn more about writing for the SABR Games Project.

► NOTHING

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Christy Mathewson, in the *Detroit Free Press*, October 5, 1919. See also Burt Whitman in the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, October 10, 1919; James Crusinberry and I.E. Sanborn in the *Chicago Tribune*, October 5, 1919.

4. For more on Speaker's outspoken commentary during the 1919 World Series, see the author's article "Speaker: 'Something Phony About It All,'" [SABR Black Sox Scandal Research Committee newsletter](#), June 2015.

5. *Chicago Tribune*, October 5, 1919. See also Harvey Woodruff in the *Chicago Tribune*, October 3, 1919. Chicago had last played Boston on September 19-20, losing two of three games.

6. I.E. Sanborn, in the *Chicago Tribune*, December 15, 1919.

7. Joe Vila, in the *New York Sun*, October 16, 1919. *Chicago Tribune*, December 15, 1919.

8. *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, October 7, 1919.

9. *Chicago Tribune*, October 5, 1919.

10. Eliot Asinof, *1919: America's Loss of Innocence* (New York: Donald I. Fine, 1990), 301-302.

11. Daniel A. Nathan, *Saying It's So: A Cultural History of the Black Sox Scandal* (Champaign, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 57.

12. Gene Carney, *Burying the Black Sox: How Baseball's Cover-Up of the 1919 World Series Fix Almost Succeeded* (Potomac Books, Washington, D.C., 2006).

13. For purposes of this article, I'm ignoring the thinly sourced allegations that the Cubs threw the 1918 World Series.

14. Philadelphia A's (8th place): Tom Rogers (4-12), Scott Perry (4-17), Jing Johnson (9-15).

New York Yankees (3rd place): John Quinn (15-14), Bob Shawkey (20-11), Hank Thormahlen (12-8).

Washington Senators (7th place): Jim Shaw (17-17), Harry Thompson (0-3).

15. *Chicago Tribune*, May 20 and 23, 1919. *Chicago Daily News*, May 20-21, 1919.

16. *Chicago Tribune*, May 22, 1919.

17. *Chicago Herald and Examiner*, May 23, 1919.

Shoeless Joe: Toughest pitcher I ever faced

By Jacob Pomrenke
buckweaver@gmail.com

On “Joe Jackson Night” in 1948, during a pre-game ceremony in his hometown of Greenville, South Carolina, Shoeless Joe Jackson was asked to name the toughest pitcher he ever faced.

The crowd of 2,500 that gathered at Brandon Mills Park on the west side of town for this textile league game, listened attentively to his answer over the public-address microphone. The 60-year-old slugger, one of the greatest natural hitters in baseball history, could have rattled off the names of the many Hall of Famers he had seen on the mound during his major-league career: Walter Johnson, Eddie Plank, Stan Coveleski, or maybe even Babe Ruth.

Instead, Jackson gave a surprising response: Harry Harper, a mediocre left-hander with the Washington Senators who once led the American League in losses in 1919, when he finished 6-21.

“Anyone could hit him, but somehow I couldn’t,” Jackson told the fans in Greenville.¹

Jackson was no slouch against southpaws, but for what-



Joe Jackson



Harry Harper

ever reason, Harper had his number. In 53 at-bats between 1915 and 1920, Harper held Jackson to just 10 hits for a .189 average, a whopping 167 points below his career mark of .356.

Umpire Billy Evans later wrote, “I have seen all of the great left-handers of the last 20 years in action and will say that few of them had more stuff than Harry Harper. But Harper was wild ... when he pitched, I was sorry I didn’t have an inflated suit. Half of his heaves would strike the ground in front of the plate.”²

Pitcher-hitter splits are difficult to come by in the Deadball Era, so it’s unclear whether Jackson fared worse against any other pitcher than Harper during his 10 seasons in the big leagues. But consider this comparison: Against a young Babe Ruth, who emerged as the AL’s best left-hander with the Boston Red Sox between 1914 and 1919, Jackson hit .315 (17-for-54). Ruth held him to just two extra-base hits, a double and a triple, and struck him out four times.

Ruth, of course, had his own nemesis after he became a

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JOE JACKSON’S SPLITS VS. HALL OF FAME PITCHERS



Chief Bender
RHP



Stan Coveleski
RHP



Walter Johnson
RHP



Eddie Plank
LHP



Babe Ruth
LHP

	Chief Bender	Stan Coveleski	Walter Johnson	Eddie Plank	Babe Ruth
AVG	.396	.290	.286	.293	.315
H	19	18	42	17	17
AB	48	62	147	58	54
2B	5	5	6	1	1
3B	2	2	5	1	1
HR	0	0	1	1	0
RBI	4	6	15	5	4
K	2	1	10	2	4
BB	4	3	9	0	4

SABR 47 COMMITTEE MEETING

Our annual Black Sox Scandal committee meeting at the SABR 47 convention in New York City is scheduled for **5:15-6:15 p.m., Saturday, July 1, 2017** in Ballroom I at the Grand Hyatt New York (109 East 42nd Street in Midtown Manhattan.)

You must register for the convention in order to attend, but all are welcome. Visit SABR.org/convention. Day rates (\$149) are also available for purchase on-site.

A very limited number of *Scandal on the South Side* paperback editions will be available for purchase for \$20 (cash or check only) after the committee meeting. See Jacob Pomrenke for details.

► PITCHER

Continued from Page 6

full-time outfielder with the New York Yankees. He famously struggled against the St. Louis Browns' little lefty Hub Pruett, who struck him out in 15 of 30 career at-bats.

Pruett was celebrated for his success against Ruth and the resulting fame helped pay his way through medical school.³

Harry Harper also found good fortune off the field, after washing out of the major leagues at age 28 in 1923.

He launched a successful trucking business in his hometown of Hackensack, New Jersey, that made him a millionaire. He was elected as the sheriff of Bergen County and later served in statewide political posts for 16 years.⁴

Sources

Retrosheet's batter-pitcher splits are [incomplete for Shoeless Joe Jackson's career](#), so the splits in this article were compiled by the author manually. For example, Retrosheet shows Jackson hitting .282 (11-for-39) off Babe Ruth, but he actually hit .315 (17-for-54).

Retrosheet box scores were used to provide pitcher splits for all complete games. For non-CGs and relief appearances, play-by-play gaps were filled in using accounts from the *Boston Globe*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, *Washington Post*, and *Washington Times*. The results for a handful of Jackson at-bats were deduced using the best available evidence. The author claims full responsibility for any errors made in the calculations.

Notes

1. Scoop Latimer, "Scoopin' Em Up," *Greenville News*, August 3, 1948.

2. Billy Evans, "Southpaws Erratic," *Scranton Republican*, March 3, 1926.

3. Anna McDonald, "Pruett Heir Remembers Ruthian Legacy," ESPN.com, March 2, 2014.

4. Bill Nowlin, "Harry Harper," SABR BioProject.

★ ★ SAY IT'S SO ★ ★
NAME IT FOR JOE



- Joe Jackson was a Greenville native
- The man who might have been the greatest player in the game (*Baseball Magazine* 1916)
- 3rd highest lifetime batting average of .356
- Played for the Savannah Ballclub
- Minor League Board of Protest Official
- Hit .375, led all players in hits (a record 12), total bases
- Hit the only home run, played effortlessly, and threw out a record 5 runners during the 1919 World Series he is accused of throwing.

I believe our new stadium should be named after "Shoeless" Joe Jackson, Greenville's greatest athlete, and a man who never received the recognition he deserved. We can right this wrong.

Send to:
Joe Jackson Stadium Drive
 c/o Lester Erwin
 114 Robin Hood Road
 Greenville, S.C. 29607

Name: _____
 Address: _____

P35324G

This promotional advertisement appeared in the *Greenville (S.C.) News* throughout the fall of 1983, when the city was making plans to build a new minor-league stadium for the Atlanta Braves' Southern League affiliate. Lester Erwin, a relative of Shoeless Joe Jackson, organized a campaign to have the ballpark named after Greenville's native son and *News* columnist Jim McAllister picked up the charge. Other efforts were made on behalf of former major-leaguer Champ Osteen and executive Verner Ross, who had single-handedly kept pro baseball in Greenville for years. Mayor Bill Workman and the city council instead chose to honor Jackson and the others with plaques by the entrance, while the park was named Greenville Municipal Stadium. The Greenville Braves called it home from 1984 to 2004. (*Greenville News* via Newspapers.com)



By the mid-1930s, Eddie Cicotte, far left, was an active and welcome member of a local baseball alumni group, the Old-Timers Association in Detroit. Here he gathers with a group of former major-leaguers on January 29, 1938, at the American Legion building. Pictured from left: Cicotte, Oscar Stanage, Lew “Sport” McAllister, Frank Scheibeck, Bobby Veach, Bernie Boland, and Davy Jones. (Detroit Public Library, Ernie Harwell Collection)

► EXILE

Continued from Page 1

“a stony stare” when he approached the bench to talk to his ex-teammates.⁴

This was the type of treatment the Black Sox players generally received from anyone associated with Organized Baseball during Judge Landis’s reign. But there was at least one notable exception to this rule.

On April 22, 1938, the Detroit Tigers planned an elaborate celebration for Opening Day as they began the season at the newly renovated Briggs Stadium against the Cleveland Indians. A pregame parade down Lafayette Blvd. and Trumbull Avenue was scheduled, with Mayor Richard Reading riding in a turn-of-the-century Cadillac along with “dozens of old-fashioned cars, buggies, hacks, and omnibuses.”⁵ The ceremony would conclude with a traditional march to the flagpole — which was on the playing surface in center field — by the Tigers and the Indians to raise “Old Glory” before the start of the game.

Parade organizer John Roesink⁶, a friend of team owner Walter Briggs, hatched the idea to invite former Tigers stars to participate in the festivities. The idea of “old-timers’ day” wasn’t yet an annual tradition for major-league teams, but it fit with the theme of the afternoon. So Roesink reached out to Davy Jones, Bobby Veach, Mike Menosky, Oscar Stanage, and other major-league alumni who lived in the area.⁷

A call also went out to a man who had appeared in just three games for the Tigers back in 1905: Eddie Cicotte. The 53-year-old exiled pitcher, now working for Ford Motor Company and living in Springwells Village a few miles west of the ballpark, accepted.

Surely, Roesink (and Briggs) must have known of Cicotte’s sordid past. Baseball’s doors were no longer open to him and Judge Landis had made it clear, again and again, that none of the Black Sox were to be allowed back in.

But either the Tigers didn’t care or they didn’t ask the commissioner for permission. When the mayor’s Cadillac revved its ancient engine to start the parade, Cicotte was sitting at the top of a bus waving to the fans lined up along Lafayette. And when the sixteen old-time players entered Briggs Stadium for the march to the flagpole alongside the active major-leaguers, Cicotte was in a single-file line with Jones, Veach, Menosky, Stanage, and his other contemporaries, cheered on by a crowd of 54,500 fans.⁸ Also present was Nemo Leibold, Cicotte’s teammate for six seasons with the White Sox, who had grown up in Detroit.

This is the only known instance of a Black Sox player standing on a major-league field during an official baseball function after Judge Landis banned them for life. That it happened while Landis was still alive is even more remarkable.

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► EXILE

Continued from Page 8

Was the commissioner even aware that Cicotte had been invited? Perhaps not. Landis had been a close friend of the Tigers' former owner, Frank Navin, who died in 1935. But Walter Briggs was a baseball outsider who built his fortune in the automotive industry. Cicotte, like many former athletes, also happened to work in the Ford service department under Henry Ford's right-hand man, Harry Bennett.⁹ Those connections certainly helped his standing in Detroit.

There is no record of Landis's reaction and no way to confirm whether he even knew about Cicotte's presence. The whole series of events was reported in an unremarkable fashion by the *Detroit Free Press*; Cicotte was just another old-timer invited to the parade, that's all.

Unbelievably, it wasn't the last time Cicotte was asked to participate in Old-Timers' Day. This time, it was the Chicago White Sox who came calling.

In 1967, White Sox business manager Rudie Schaffer¹⁰ decided to stage a promotion to honor all of the pitchers who had thrown no-hitters for the franchise. The six living pitchers¹¹ — including Eddie Cicotte — were invited to gather for a "homecoming" ceremony between games of a Sunday doubleheader against the Boston Red Sox on August 27 at Comiskey Park.¹²

Cicotte was 83 years old and in poor health, so he was unable to travel to Chicago to celebrate the golden anniversary of his no-hitter against the St. Louis Browns in 1917. But the invitation alone must have raised his spirits and made him feel vindicated.

When sports writer Joe Falls had visited his home a few years earlier, Cicotte expressed regrets about his role in the Black Sox Scandal but added, "I've tried to make up for it by living as clean a life as I could. I'm proud of the way I've lived and I think my family is, too."¹³

Once again, no baseball official raised a fuss about the banned Black Sox pitcher possibly making an appearance at the stadium. If Commissioner William "Spike" Eckert had any objections, he never voiced them publicly.

It's hard to imagine what kind of reception Cicotte might have received at Comiskey Park when his name was announced over the public-address system. Plenty of fans were old enough to remember his World Series sellout and the current generation had heard all about the infamous fix back in 1959, when the White Sox finally broke through to

win the American League pennant.

But sports fans are often quick to forgive and by 1967 it's likely that many of them had already read Eliot Asinof's best-selling book *Eight Men Out*, published four years earlier, which offered a sympathetic portrayal of the pitcher and his teammates. While Cicotte was neither a beloved figure like Shoeless Joe Jackson nor a tragic one like Buck Weaver, he had been a great pitcher for many years. That might have been enough for South Side fans to give him a warm welcome if he had been able to make it to the Old-Timers' Day ceremony. Still, we'll never know.¹⁴



In 1967, Eddie Cicotte was invited by the Chicago White Sox to a "homecoming" ceremony at Comiskey Park honoring the 12 pitchers who had thrown no-hitters for the franchise. He was too ill to attend. (Detroit Free Press via Newspapers.com.)

Postscript

In 1951, seven years after Judge Landis's death, the Cleveland Indians established the major leagues' first team Hall of Fame.¹⁵ Shoeless Joe Jackson was elected by fans as part of the inaugural class of honorees.

The Indians sent a telegram¹⁶ to Jackson's home in South Carolina inviting him to participate in a pregame ceremony on September 2 at Cleveland's Municipal Stadium. But Jackson, suffering from a weakened heart at age 64, was too ill to attend. He also was unable to travel to New York City for a scheduled appearance on Ed Sullivan's *Toast of the Town* TV program that winter.

Jackson died on December 5, denying him a chance to hear an ovation from baseball fans one final time.

Notes

1. Landis's full remarks can be found at the [Baseball Hall of Fame website](#).

2. This ban also extended to the underworld figures who helped fix the World Series. In 1926, Joseph "Sport" Sullivan, the notorious Boston-based gambler, was spotted in the box seats behind the St. Louis Cardinals' dugout at Yankee Stadium during Game Seven of the fall classic. American League president Ban Johnson ordered two security guards to quietly escort him out of the ballpark. See Bruce Allardice, "Sport Sullivan," SABR BioProject.

3. See the author's [SABR biography of Fred McMullin](#).

4. Ibid. See also: *Los Angeles Times*, May 9, 1921.

5. "Weatherman Promises Perfect Baseball Day," *Detroit Free Press*, April 22, 1938, p. 19.

6. Roesink operated a line of men's clothing stores in Detroit and he was a supporter of many amateur and semi-pro baseball clubs in the area. He also briefly owned the

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Ike learns his lesson from 1919 World Series

This excerpt appeared in SABR's *The National Pastime*, No. 7, Winter 1987:

By Dwight D. Eisenhower

That was the week of the World Series when Cincinnati of the National League met Chicago of the American League. As in my boyhood, news about the series came by telegrams. These were posted in the windows of drug stores and newspaper plants.

[My father-in-law John] Mr. Doud and I watched every bulletin, wondering why the great Chicago White Sox could not get going. Each of us considered himself a baseball expert. We spent hours debating what was wrong with Chicago and we not only plotted up every mistake of the Sox manager and coaches, we knew exactly how Cincinnati could be trimmed. We little dreamed that we were second-guessing an event that was to stand in athletics as an all-time low for disloyalty and sellout of integrity.

Out of the 'Black Sox' scandal, I learned a lesson and began to form a caution that, at least subconsciously, stayed



Dwight D. Eisenhower, circa 1919. (Eisenhower Presidential Library)

with me. It must be remembered that in the fall of 1919, the war over and the country back to business as usual, the World Series was a national preoccupation.

Millions waited for each telegraph bulletin, scrutinized it word by word. Newspaper reporting was factual. The stories after each game, narrating the play, were strictly objective. But stark facts and objective reports could not give the whole story.

In the passage of years, whether because of the Black Sox scandal or not, I grew increasingly cautious about making judgments based solely on reports. Behind every human action, the truth may be hidden. But the truth may also lie behind some other action or arrangement, far off in time and place. Unless circumstances and responsibility demanded an instant judgment I learned to reserve mine until the last proper moment. This

was not always popular.

— from *At Ease: Stories I Tell to Friends* (New York: Doubleday, 1967)

► EXILE

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Detroit Stars of the Negro National League.

7. "Just All Alone, Roesink Waits at a Telephone," *Detroit Free Press*, March 24, 1938, p. 16.

8. "Bows in Order as Old-Timers Stage Parade," *Detroit Free Press*, April 23, 1938, p. 13. Gordon Cobbledick, "Harder Hurls Tribe to 3d Straight, 4-3," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, April 23, 1938, p. 1.

9. In the 1940 US Census and on his World War II draft registration card in 1942, Cicotte's occupation was listed as "chief of factory service," a high-ranking executive in the company, at the Ford Motor Company's Highland Park plant.

10. Schaffer was a longtime associate of Bill Veeck and the source behind some of Veeck's most celebrated promotional innovations, including "Bat Day" and the

exploding scoreboard at Comiskey Park.

11. In addition to Cicotte, Charlie Robertson, Ted Lyons, Vern Kennedy, Bill Dietrich, and Bob Keegan were invited.

12. Edward Prell, "Sox Don't Get Another Shot at the Twins Until Sept. 15," *Chicago Tribune*, August 18, 1967, p. 53.

13. Joe Falls, "Nobody Can Hurt Me Anymore ...," *Detroit Free Press*, November 17, 1965, p. 41.

14. We do know how Pete Rose was treated when he finally stepped onto the field for the first time after his lifetime ban in 1989. It was big news when Rose was granted special approval by MLB to participate in on-field activities for the All-Century Team promotion during the 1999 World Series. He got a standing ovation from the fans at Turner Field in Atlanta.

15. For more on the Cleveland Indians Hall of Fame, see the author's story in [the December 2016 edition](#) of the SABR Black Sox Scandal Committee Newsletter.

16. A copy of the Indians' telegram inviting Jackson to Cleveland can be found at BlackBetsy.com.

By any other name: Black Sox in baseball history

By Jacob Pomrenke
buckweaver@gmail.com

In the summer of 1922, one year after his banishment from professional baseball, Swede Risberg organized a barnstorming tour of the Midwest with his exiled teammates Eddie Cicotte, Buck Weaver, Happy Felsch, and Lefty Williams. They wore jerseys that read “Ex-Major League Stars,” but everyone else called them the Black Sox.

The tour was a promotional and financial disaster — when Cicotte demanded his share of the money up-front, Risberg was said to have punched him in the mouth¹ — and after the players went their separate ways, none of them ever played under the Black Sox name again.

Before and after the fixing of the 1919 World Series, many other amateur, semipro, and professional teams would choose the same moniker. None of those teams had any connection with the Chicago scandal, let alone the disgraced players who were banned from the game. Most chose the Black Sox name simply for sartorial reasons, because that was the color of their stockings.

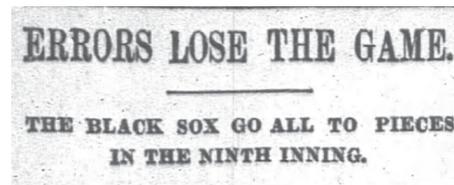
But some Black Sox teams were famous in their own right, with no hint of shame or scandal. Here are some of their stories.

The earliest known reference to teams called the Black Stockings was in 1869: an amateur white team in Louisville and an all-black team in Cleveland both used the name.²

A few years later, in 1876, as the Chicago White Stockings with Cap Anson and Al Spalding were on their way to winning the National League’s first pennant, an amateur team called the Black Sox in Bloomington, Illinois, was taking on all comers downstate. The Black Sox were not Bloomington’s top nine, the town team called the Reds. They were a company team comprised of Illinois Central Railroad employees.³

Some of the Black Sox players may have been in attendance on September 1 to cheer on 21-year-old Charles Radbourn (the future Hall of Fame pitcher known as “Old Hoss”) and the Bloomington Reds against nearby Springfield. Radbourn committed five errors in left field and, afterward, rumors swirled that the Reds had been bribed to throw the game. Radbourn was exonerated, but two other Reds players were expelled from the team.⁴

A decade later, the Black Sox name came to prominence in the national sporting press for the first time when Anson’s Chicago White Stockings unveiled a snazzy set of tight-fitting, all-white uniforms with black belts and black stockings before a road game against the New York Giants



In 1888, Cap Anson’s Chicago White Stockings of the National League unveiled snazzy new all-white uniforms with black stockings and belts, earning themselves a new nickname: the Black Sox. This *Chicago Tribune* headline from September 26, 1888, was a common reference in game stories about the team. A generation later, the Black Sox name came to mean something entirely different. (Photo by Craig Brown/Threads of Our Game, headline by *Chicago Tribune* via Newspapers.com)

in June 1888. The *New York Evening World* described the commotion at the Polo Grounds:

“At exactly 3:30 by the gong Anson’s finest twelve jumped from out of their carriages, formed a line, and, bearing broadside on and preceded by their dusky mascot, dallying with his baton, marched across the field. The applause began with their appearance ... and as they neared the grand stand, doffed their hats and removed those famous dress coats, one couldn’t have heard a steam calli-ope for the tumult.”⁵

For the rest of the season and several years thereafter, newspapers referred to Chicago’s National League club as the Black Stockings — or Black Sox — before Anson overhauled the roster with young players, inspiring the nickname “Colts.”

In 1890, the city’s new major-league team, managed by Charles Comiskey, in the upstart Players League laid claim to

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THE ‘DIRTY LAUNDRY’ THEORY

By Jacob Pomrenke

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One of the lingering questions about the 1919 World Series scandal is how exactly the name “Black Sox” came to be associated with the Chicago White Sox.

The most common, and straightforward, explanation is that the shameful name became prominent only after the scandal was publicized in the fall of 1920. The *Chicago Tribune*’s first reference to the phrase “Black Sox” in connection to the team came on October 4, less than a week after Eddie Cicotte, Shoeless Joe Jackson, and Lefty Williams testified about the fix to a Cook County grand jury.¹

But rumors persist that the Black Sox name was bestowed a few years earlier, because of the team’s reputation

for wearing dirty uniforms on the field.

In *Eight Men Out*, Eliot Asinof blamed owner Charles Comiskey for his cheap ways: “His great ball club might run out on the field in the filthiest uniforms the fans had ever seen: Comiskey had given orders to cut down on the cleaning bills.”²

Nelson Algren, who had followed the 1919 White Sox as a boy in Chicago, later wrote in *The Last Carousel*: “Eastern fans, indeed, began jeering Mr. Comiskey’s players as ‘Black Sox’ before that appellation signified anything more scandalous than neglecting to launder their uniforms.”³

In 2005, the authors of the best-selling book *Freakonomics*, Stephen J. Dubner and Steven D. Levitt,

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had gallivanted with such joy before the scandal on their 1913-14 world tour.¹⁵

In 1958, the Black Sox of tiny Drain, Oregon, led by future major-leaguers Jim O’Rourke and Wes Stock, were the surprise winners of the National Baseball Congress amateur tournament. When asked about the team’s nickname, Drain’s former manager Roy Helser, a one-time star in the Pacific Coast League, said, “They haven’t changed the name yet and never are going to now!”¹⁶

Another sign that baseball had moved on came in 1961, during the Detroit Tigers’ spring training camp in Lakeland, Florida. In an intrasquad game at Henley Field, former Cubs All-Star outfielder Phil Cavarretta managed a rookie team that included infielders Dick McAuliffe and Jake Wood: it was the Black Sox against the Striped Sox. Joe Falls of the *Detroit Free Press* quipped afterward, “The Black Sox won a ballgame Friday — but it wasn’t scandalous.”¹⁷

Notes

1. *Chicago Tribune*, June 25, 1922.
2. Bruce Allardice e-mail to author, June 11, 2017. See *Louisville Courier-Journal*, August 30, 1869, and *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 13, 1869.
3. *Bloomington Pantagraph*, September 4 and 7, 1876.
4. Brian McKenna, “Old Hoss Radbourn,” SABR BioProject.
5. *New York Evening World*, June 8, 1888. For more

background detail on their uniforms, see Craig Brown’s “Threads of Our Game” entry at www.threadsofourgame.com/1888-chicago-nl/.

6. James Brunson III, “Henry Bridgewater’s Black Stockings of St. Louis, 1881-1889,” *Base Ball: A Journal of the Early Game*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Co., Fall 2007).

7. Brian McKenna, “Bud Fowler,” SABR BioProject.

8. “1915 Chicago Black Sox,” Seamheads Negro Leagues Database. Johnny Taylor’s brothers were Indianapolis ABCs owner C.I. Taylor and longtime manager “Candy Jim” Taylor.

9. Brian McKenna, “Charlie Grant,” SABR BioProject.

10. Leslie A. Heaphy, *The Negro Leagues, 1869-1960* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Co., 2004).

11. Joseph Gerard, “Jud Wilson,” SABR BioProject.

12. The Grand Rapids Black Sox included a young Pat Duncan, who went on to start for the Cincinnati Reds in the 1919 World Series.

13. Some sources claim the Evansville, Indiana, team of the Three-I League was known as the Black Sox in the early 1920s, but Baseball-Reference.com uses the Evas for those years and a search of the *Evansville Courier* confirms the regular use of the Evas nickname.

14. The under-17 Black Sox and Blue Sox teams in Australia’s National Baseball League played games at a rugby stadium called the Leichhardt Canal Ground. See *Sydney Morning Herald*, October 27, 1919.

15. For more stories from the White Sox-Giants world tour, see Jim Maragalus’s 100th anniversary coverage at SouthSideSox.com.

16. *Eugene (Oregon) Register-Guard*, September 5, 1958.

17. *Detroit Free Press*, February 18, 1961.

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offered a reward to anyone who could come up with hard evidence to support the “dirty laundry” theory.⁴ No one could.

According to Bill Lamb in his book *Black Sox in the Courtroom*, the real genesis of the “dirty laundry” theory came from the Black Sox’s defense lawyers during their criminal trial in 1921.⁵ It was one of many tactics used to discredit Charles Comiskey and evoke sympathy for the players with potential jurors. (Another defense strategy — which Asinof highlighted in *Eight Men Out* — was to accuse Comiskey of under-paying his players and renegeing on promised bonuses, a theory that also falls apart under closer scrutiny.)

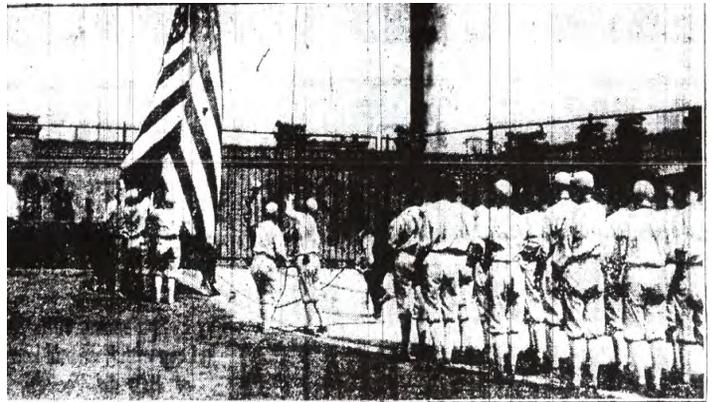
Historian Bob Hoie says the only contemporary reference anyone has found to the White Sox’s unclean uniforms prior to the scandal came in 1918 — when the team celebrated its World Series championship with a pennant-raising ceremony on June 11 at Comiskey Park.⁶

It was a hot and windy⁷ day, and by the time the White Sox completed their 4-1 win over the Boston Red Sox, their white home uniforms were likely drenched with sweat and dust. When the players showed up to the ballpark the next morning, they learned “their domestic toggerly was delayed at the laundry ... [so] the champions performed in their gray road uniforms.”⁸ They also wore the grays for the series finale on the following day.

There are no known photos of the White Sox’s June 12-13 games against Boston, and only one grainy photo (which appeared in the *Chicago Daily News*) from the June 11 celebration.⁹ But wearing the gray uniforms was clearly a one-time episode, well documented by all of the Chicago newspapers, and the team went back to their normal home whites when the Washington Senators came to town on June 14. The phrase “Black Sox” was never mentioned in any of the Chicago papers at the time and it seems extremely unlikely this could have been the origin of the nickname.

However, the Black Sox name did come up at least one other time before the scandal.

During spring training in 1920, as the White Sox were making their way north, they stopped in Little Rock for an exhibition game on April 6 against the minor-league Arkansas Travelers, led by future Philadelphia A’s star Bing Miller and Native American pitcher Moses “Chief” Yellow Horse. A reporter for the *Arkansas Gazette* noticed the White Sox’s dirt-stained uniforms and remarked: “Unless the Chicagoans send their hose to a laundry pretty soon, some joker is going to suggest a change in name from



In this photo published in the *Chicago Daily News*, Chicago White Sox players raise the American flag and a pennant celebrating their 1917 World Series championship during a pregame ceremony on June 11, 1918, at Comiskey Park. Their uniforms were delayed at the laundry overnight, so they wore their road gray uniforms at home for the next two games. Some writers have speculated that the Black Sox nickname originated because of their ‘dirty laundry’. (Author’s collection)

White Sox to Black Sox or Dirty Sox.”¹⁰

This, too, was an innocent wisecrack. But unbeknownst to anyone watching the game, by the time the season was over, the White Sox would be associated with the Black Sox name forever.

Notes

1. “Sox Player Charges Three Games Thrown in Boston,” *Chicago Tribune*, October 4, 1920.
2. Eliot Asinof, *Eight Men Out* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1963), 21.
3. Nelson Algren, *The Last Carousel* (New York: C.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1973), 268.
4. Stephen J. Dubner, “Why the Black Sox?” Freakonomics.com, May 20, 2005.
5. William F. Lamb, *Black Sox in the Courtroom: The Grand Jury, Criminal Trial, and Civil Litigation* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Co., 2013), 106.
6. Author’s phone interview with Bob Hoie, August 21, 2013.
7. The game-time temperature was 92 degrees with wind gusts of up to 31 mph, according to the weather report in the *Chicago Tribune* the next day.
8. *Chicago Herald-Examiner*, June 13, 1918.
9. The *Chicago Tribune*, *Chicago Daily News*, *Chicago Herald-Examiner*, *Chicago Evening American*, and *Chicago Daily Journal* all reported on the White Sox wearing their road gray uniforms for the June 12-13 games against Boston, but no photos were published in any of those papers, nor in the *Boston Globe* or *Boston Herald*. A search for a higher-quality reproduction of the *Daily News* photo at the Chicago History Museum also turned up empty.
10. *Arkansas Gazette*, April 7, 1920.

Abe Attell's Cincinnati World Series roommates

By Bruce Allardice

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To borrow a line from the musical *Hamilton*, Room 660 of the Hotel Sinton in Cincinnati was “the room where it happened.” It was the base of operations during the 1919 World Series for gamblers Abe Attell, David Zelcer, the Levi brothers, and their entourage.¹

As the Black Sox prosecuting attorneys pointed out in their summation during the 1921 criminal trial, “This ... room [Zelcer] registered for is the one where Attell kept his money in cases and hidden under the mattresses of the bed. It is the same place where the gamblers hatched their conspiracies and to which [Arnold] Rothstein had a private wire to New York.”²



Sam Landswick



Abe Attell

The prosecution's star witness, Sleepy Bill Burns, testified that Attell ran the fix from this room, furnished with two beds and a cot, crowded with six people, with Attell's wads of cash visible in a suitcase and in rolls of money hidden under the beds.³

Gambler Billy Maharg recalled that after the first game, “We went to Attell's headquarters in the Sinton and I never saw so much money. Stacks of bills were being counted on dressers and tables.”⁴

It seems clear that people sharing a small room with the noisy and indiscreet Abe Attell would, at a minimum, have had knowledge of the fix and likely have been active participants in the fix.

Two of these men were named by David Zelcer in his testimony: Jack Davis and Sam Landswick.⁵ Of the two, Davis played a lengthier role in events, being named by Zelcer as one of his companions at a ballgame in Chicago on September 28 (prior to the Series), and having traveled with Zelcer and Ben Levi to Cincinnati.⁶

Yet, as far as we know, neither the prosecution nor the defense called on Davis or Landswick to testify at the trial ... curiously, since Davis could have bolstered Zelcer's alibi that he was in Chicago on the 28th and thus not able to meet with the Black Sox in New York that day or the next, as Bill Burns testified.⁷

However, accurate accounts of the trial testimony are



The Hotel Sinton in Cincinnati played host to the Chicago White Sox traveling party during the 1919 World Series — and it was also the base of operations for Abe Attell and other gamblers who were trying to fix the fall classic. (Public domain)

lacking. It is possible that Davis was the “witness who went to a ball game here with him [Zelcer] Sept 28th” and confirmed Zelcer's alibi for that day.⁸

◆ ◆ ◆

Although named in trial accounts as “Lauswick,” the man sharing Attell's room was a well-known stock broker and Des Moines acquaintance of Zelcer's named Samuel Landswick. He was born Sam Oscar Landsverk to Norwegian immigrants Thor Christian and Thurine (Grasdalen) Landsverk on October 15, 1886, in Canby, Minnesota.

Sam — who Americanized his surname to Landswick — grew up in Superior, Wisconsin, and Great Falls, Montana, before the family finally settled in Portland, Oregon.⁹ Sam moved to San Diego and got a job as Secretary of the Central Mortgage and Investment Company. He soon branched off into real estate, forming the Rice-Landswick Real Estate Company. There he had his first brush with the law, being sued for attempting to evade his creditors.¹⁰ By 1917 he had relocated to Des Moines, Iowa, becoming Vice President of the Bankers

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Mortgage Company there.¹¹ Undoubtedly, he met and befriended the Zelcer brothers there.

In May 1920, Sam Landswick and several others were indicted in Des Moines for conspiracy and stock fraud. From reports of the trial, Landswick and others formed a corporation called the American Packing Company, ostensibly to build a meat-packing plant in Iowa, and sold several million dollars in stock. The indictment charged that the organizers had no intention of building the plant, that they looted investors' money and then declared bankruptcy.

The whole, sordid affair garnered nationwide publicity. The trial jury eventually acquitted Landswick of the conspiracy charges — an ironic echo of the Black Sox jury acquitting the conspirators of similar charges.¹²

Landswick seems to have evaded attention for his role in the Black Sox Scandal, not being mentioned in any of the newspaper accounts of the trial. It is likely he used his ill-gotten (if not illegally gotten) stock profits to wager on the Reds.

He is a likely candidate for the “prominent Des Moines realtor” who, according to author Ralph Christian, largely financed David Zelcer’s end of the World Series fix.¹³ Along with Zelcer, Landswick is a likely candidate for the (unnamed) gambler who, prior to the Series, passed along a tip about the fix to Tom Fairweather, the mayor of Des Moines.

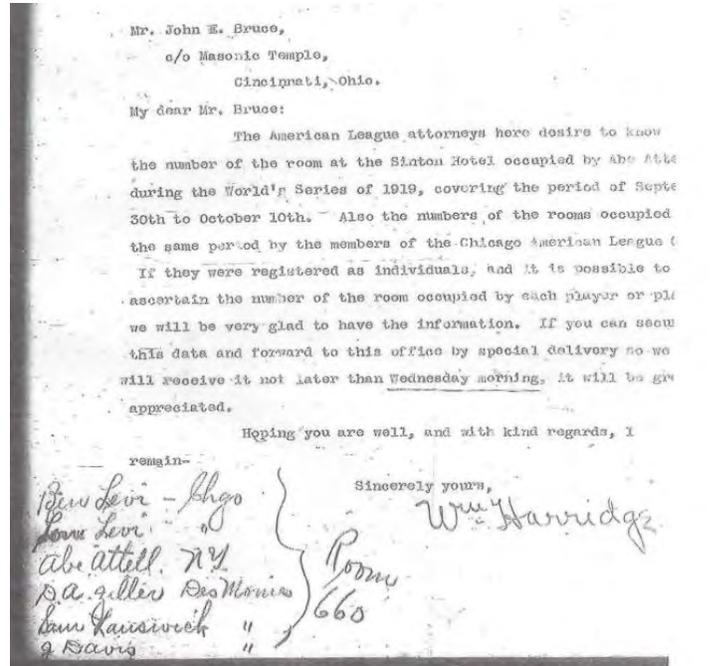
Fairweather, a longtime minor-league baseball owner and one of those involved in Landswick’s American Packing Company scandal, promptly passed this information to his old friend, White Sox owner Charles Comiskey.¹⁴

Landswick spent the remainder of his life as a broker and dog racing magnate, living in Chicago, Detroit, San Francisco, Kansas City, Great Falls, and South Bend, Indiana. He died in Eloise Hospital, Michigan, near Detroit, Feb. 2, 1941, and is probably buried in an unmarked grave in the hospital’s cemetery.¹⁵



“Jack Davis” is a more elusive figure. No one of that exact name appears in the Des Moines City Directories for the decade before and after 1919. In this author’s opinion, the likely candidate is John Henry Davis, in turns cigar maker, junk dealer; pawnbroker, and furniture store owner.¹⁶

Born Yechiel Shanin in Dudino, Russia in 1864, he changed his name when he immigrated to the U.S. in 1892. Family lore has it that John Henry first was living in



According to a transcript of the Hotel Sinton’s guest register, Room 660 was shared by gamblers Abe Attell, David Zelcer, the Levi brothers, and others during the 1919 World Series. This letter was sent by the hotel to American League president Ban Johnson. The second page of this document includes room assignments for the White Sox traveling party at the same hotel. (Baseball Hall of Fame/American League Records collection, San Diego Public Library)

Canada, with the name “Davis” acquired there when an employer could not understand his name and assigned the more common American surname to him.¹⁷

He worked in St. Cloud, Minnesota for the Marx Cigar Company. A couple years later he moved, with Marx, to Des Moines and became, like the Zelcers, active in the small Jewish community of that city.

There is indirect evidence that connects him to “Jack” or “J.” Davis:

- 1) He was the only “J. Davis” living in Des Moines in 1919 who was, like the Zelcers and Levis, Jewish.
- 2) His given name, Yechiel, often spawned the euphonic nickname “Jack.”
- 3) He and Dave Zelcer’s brother Abe were both in the cigar business.
- 4) His in-law, Sol Chapman, was a frequent gambler at the Zelcer cigar store/pool hall used by the Zelcers as a front for their gambling operations.¹⁸
- 5) His in-laws had baseball connections, with son-in-law and theater owner Nate Chapman being a noted baseball “bug.”¹⁹
- 6) When Lou Zelcer was arrested for gambling in 1922,

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he gave the alias “Lou Davis” (the name of John Henry’s son) to the police.²⁰

7) Davis had enough money to afford heavy gambling on the World Series.²¹

After the death of his wife in 1921, Davis moved to Iowa City to live with his daughter Dora (Chapman). By 1926 he relocated to Houston, Texas, where he married Fanny Perst (1868-1938) and managed a dry goods store.²² After Fanny’s death, he moved back to Iowa City, to again live with his daughter.

He died on June 4, 1958 in Iowa City, and is buried in Jewish Glendale Cemetery, Des Moines.²³

Notes

1. William F. Lamb, *Black Sox in the Courtroom: The Grand Jury, Criminal Trial, and Civil Litigation* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Co., 2013), 131.

2. *New York Times*, July 28, 1921.

3. *Chicago Tribune*, July 21, 1921. On a side note, an overcrowded hotel room like this was the norm for this World Series, as eager fans overwhelmed Cincinnati’s few available hotels. “Beds or cots have been placed in every conceivable place. ... The Hotel Sinton has one room containing 25 cots.” *Cincinnati Enquirer*, September 30, 1919.

4. Quoted in the *Pittsburgh Daily Post*, July 25, 1921.

5. Called “Lauswick” in accounts of the trial, due to a faulty transcription of a hotel register. The transcript of the Sinton hotel register, sent to the American League and used at trial, had the Levi brothers, Attell, Zelcer, “Sam Lauswick” and “J. Davis” registered in room 660. Both “Lauswick” and Davis said they were from Des Moines. Most of the White Sox players roomed on the seventh floor of the Sinton, just one floor above the fixers.

6. Lamb, 131.

7. Lamb, 113.

8. The unnamed witness’ testimony is mentioned in both the *Des Moines Register*, July 28, 1921, and the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, July 28, 1921.

9. See 1900 and 1910 US Census of Superior and Portland; 1897, 1907 Superior City Directories; 1903 Great Falls Directory; 1905, 1911 Portland City Directories. 1912 San Diego City Directory.

10. *San Diego Union*, July 7, 1912; August 12, 1912; March 25, 1914; March 26, 1914.

11. World War I Draft Registration, Polk County, Iowa. He also registered for the draft in Minneapolis, Minnesota, while on a business trip. See also 1920 U.S. Census, Des Moines. 1920 Des Moines City Directory.

12. For more on this case, see the *Des Moines Iowa*

Homestead, April 29, 1920; August 6, 1920; September 16, 1920; December 23, 1920; January 6, 1921; January 27, 1921. *Des Moines News*, September 30, 1920. *Muscatine Journal and News Tribune*, October 5, 1923. “Thirteenth Biennial Report of the Attorney General,” State of Iowa, Des Moines, 1921.

13. Ralph Christian, “Des Moines’ Connection to the Black Sox,” [SABR Black Sox Research Committee Newsletter](#), June 2013.

14. Christian, op cit. *Marshalltown Evening Times*, September 18, 1920. *Keokuk Daily Gate City*, September 28, 1920. *Des Moines Iowa Homestead*, September 23, 1920. Tom Fairweather (1879-1951), who served as titular president of the American Packing Company, appears to have been duped by the conspirators, and resigned as soon as he became aware of their shady dealings.

15. 1940 U.S. Census, South Bend. Michigan Death records. October 31, 1921 U.S. Passport Application. *San Diego Union*, October 1, 1922. 1925 Passenger List, Key West, Florida. *Anaconda Standard*, April 14, 1927. See also *Le Mars Globe Post*, August 7, 1924, for a hint he did some shady deals after moving to Michigan.

16. 1895 Minnesota State Census, St. Cloud. 1900 U.S. census, Des Moines. 1910 U.S. Census, Creston, Iowa. 1905 and 1915 Iowa state census, Des Moines. 1920 U.S. census, Des Moines. 1925 Iowa state census, Iowa City. 1930 U.S. Census, Houston. 1940 U.S. Census, Iowa City. 1932 and 1937 Houston City Directories.

17. Courtesy of Elaine Bush.

See elainebush.tribalpages.com.

18. See the *Des Moines Capital*, March 19, 1915.

19. *Iowa City Press-Citizen*, September 2, 1920.

20. *Des Moines Capital*, October 8, 1922.

21. *Des Moines Register*, March 16, 1921.

22. *Iowa City Press-Citizen*, August 17, 1926. *Houston Jewish Herald*, August 5, 1926.

23. *Iowa City Press-Citizen*, June 4, 1958.

RING LARDNER TO LITERARY HALL

On May 4, Ring Lardner was inducted into the [Chicago Literary Hall of Fame](#) in a ceremony at the Newberry Library co-sponsored by SABR’s Emil Rothe Chapter.

Lardner was one of America’s greatest humorists, a master of vernacular language known for short stories like *You Know Me Al* and *Alibi Ike*. He covered baseball for nearly a quarter-century; in 1963 he became the first writer to be honored with the J.G. Taylor Spink Award after Spink himself.



Redd Foxx’s Chicago White Sox hand-me-downs

By Jacob Pomrenke

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The comedian Redd Foxx became a household name in the 1970s for his iconic portrayal of Fred Sanford in the TV series *Sanford and Son*. He affectionately based the cantankerous character on his own mother, whose life in Chicago gave the family a connection to longtime White Sox executive Harry Grabiner.

Foxx was born John Elroy Sanford in 1922 in St. Louis. Soon afterward, his father deserted the family and his mother, Mary Sanford, moved her children to Chicago’s South Side. They lived in the Washington Park neighborhood, where the young Foxx learned to tell jokes and he began playing in a washtub band on street corners.¹ These

were the humble beginnings of a life spent entertaining people.

In the mid-1920s, Mary was hired as a domestic worker by Grabiner, who was Charles Comiskey’s right-hand man with the White Sox. Grabiner had spent more than two decades in the team’s front office and was busy over-seeing plans for the expansion of Comiskey Park around this time.²

Mary became a valued member of the household and her sons grew to know Harry, his wife Dorothy, and their daughter June.

Harry took a liking to the red-headed John — whose hair color was “a gift from an Irish great-great-grandmother,” he later said³ — and passed down some of his hand-me-down clothes. As a teenager, John, known then as Smiley Sanford, “walked around in expensive suits and



Harry Grabiner



June Travis

the finest shoes.”⁴

When John was 13, Grabiner’s daughter, June, traveled to Pasadena, California, where the White Sox held spring training, and filmed a screen test for Paramount Pictures. She eventually signed a contract and made her Hollywood debut in 1935 — under the stage name June Travis. The following year, she was cast in *Ceiling Zero*, starring James Cagney. Back home in Chicago, John Sanford went to the theater to watch the film a dozen times. No one he knew had ever been in show business and he decided that’s what he wanted to do, too.⁵



Redd Foxx as Fred Sanford in the 1970s. (FindAGrave.com)

Nearly forty years later, after a lifetime spent in underground comedy clubs and the lounge circuit, the man known as Redd Foxx found himself the unlikely star of a hit NBC show in 1971. *Sanford and Son* drew more than 20 million viewers weekly at its peak; it has been hailed as a groundbreaking and influential show for African American entertainers. And as one contemporary writer quipped about Foxx’s newfound fame, “Now he can afford those \$250 suits he wore when he was a kid.”⁶

Acknowledgments

Thanks to committee member Tim Newman for the tip and for supplying the *Mobile Register and Press* article that led to this story.

Notes

1. Nick Ravo, “Redd Foxx, Cantankerous Master of Bawdy Humor, Is Dead at 68,” *New York Times*, October 13, 1991.
2. Steve Cardullo, “Harry Grabiner,” SABR Biography Project.
3. Dick Kleiner, “Showboat,” *Mobile Register and Press*, March 4, 1972.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.