

Beating the Bushes



*A publication of the Society for American Baseball Research
Minor League Committee*

Spring 2021

April 15, 2021

1921 Beating the Bushes Intro

by George Pawlush

The 1920s were big growth years for minor league baseball, finally on an upswing after suffering the negative effects of lost leagues and teams during World War One.

The newly-formed SABR Century Research Committee will concentrate this year and following years to pull together ideas for ways to feature the 1921 season and other seasons, 100 years later. Ultimately, the committee will also work on other anniversaries (for instance, 75 years, 50 years, 25 years) but they don't want to take on too much in the first year of the committee's work.

Chair Sharon Hamilton and Bill Nowlin reached out to our Minor League Research Committee for ideas. I'm happy to report that three of our members have responded with articles commemorating the 1921 minor league season. Their articles appear following this introduction, and will be used in other SABR communications. Thank you, Alan Cohen, Dr. Bill Anderson, and Michael Rhinehart for your great contributions.

A Fortnight in Hartford, Connecticut in June 1921

by Alan Cohen

In 1921, Arthur Irwin, at age 63, was in the twilight of a long career in baseball when he was named manager of the Hartford Senators of the Eastern League. He was also a scout for the New York Giants. On April 6, his Senators had played an exhibition against Columbia University and Irwin was favorably impressed by Columbia's first baseman – so impressed that he arranged for a tryout for Lou Gehrig with John McGraw's Giants. McGraw was not interested in pursuing Gehrig,

but Irwin suggested that Gehrig join the Hartford Club, and play under an assumed name, before returning to Columbia in the fall.

Gehrig, in his first semester at Columbia (he had graduated from high school in January 1921) was ineligible to play in games against other colleges but was eligible to play in exhibitions. In Hartford's game at Columbia, the Senators defeated Columbia, 4-3 despite a pair of homers by Gehrig in only two at-bats, as ably described by A. B. M'Ginley in the *Hartford Times*.

"The first time up he picked a high one and slammed it to the center field stands and leisurely made his way around the bases. When he came up again, (Doc) Durgin, the Maine boy who was pitching for Hartford, was all set for revenge. He got a strike on Gehrig but the next one he sent through, Gehrig leaned on and it went sailing out of the enclosure, past a big sundial and almost into the school of Mines. It was a mighty clout, worthy of the Babe's handiwork.

On June 3, the following headline appeared in the *Hartford Times*: "Lefty Gahrig (sic), New Clouter, To Be in Local Lineup To-Day Against Pittsfield." The article beneath recounted Lou's two-homer performance in April and mentioned a home run that he had hit at Cubs Park (now known as Wrigley Field) as a high school player in 1920. That home run, a grand slam had cemented the win as his Commerce High School defeated Chicago's Lane High School, 12-6, for the National Schoolboy Championship.

Arthur Irwin was quick to inform the local media that his new first baseman would be playing under an assumed name.

"Lou Lewis, Arthur Irwin's latest discovery, was planted on the initial sack. The youngster, who is only eighteen years old, appeared to be a bit nervous. After he gets accustomed to surroundings, he may develop. They seldom fail to make the grade with Irwin teaching the ways of baseball." – *Hartford Courant*, June 4, 1921

And so, Henry Louis Gehrig was introduced to Connecticut. Hartford had a new ballpark in 1921, Clarkin Field (renamed Bulkeley Stadium in 1928), and, for a fortnight in June, a new first baseman.

In Gehrig's first game on June 3, in a matter of seconds, he went from goat to hero. In the seventh inning, his inability to make a play on a slow roller by Pittsfield pitcher Al Pierotti wound up giving the visitors runners at first and second with one out. On the next play, Lou redeemed himself, digging a throw out of the dirt to complete an inning-ending 1-5-3 double-play. In Hartford's half of the inning, he sacrificed the tying run, Heinie Scheer, to second base. The Senators took a 2-1 lead in the stanza, and they held on to win by that score.

In Gehrig's second game with Hartford on Saturday, June 4, the Senators were matched up against Waterbury. Batting fifth in the order, his first at-bat of the game came when he led off the second inning. He tripled on the first ball that he saw and came around to score his team's second run of the game on a single by Phil Neher. Hartford went on to win, 5-3.

Gehrig's first RBI came a day later as the Senators traveled to Albany for a 10-2 win. Gehrig's second inning single scored Fred Bailey with the first run of the game and the Senators piled it on from thereon. In a sidebar in the following day's *Hartford Courant* it referred to him as "Lewis, the 18-years old youngster who is being touted as a 'Babe' Ruth."

On June 8, in a 10-6 win over Pittsfield, Gehrig had his third multiple-hit game with Harford and had his first double of the season. He was going for his third hit of the game when, as described in the *Hartford Courant*, "he slammed a terrific drive that traveled at a mile-a-minute clip into (right fielder Bill) McCorry's gloved hand. It was the hardest hit ball of the game." With five wins in Gehrig's first six games with the Senators, Hartford had climbed into first place in the Eastern League. Bill [McCorry](#) was the definition of a career minor leaguer. He first played in 1906 at the age of 18. He played in five decades, finishing his career at age 54 in 1942. He appeared in just one two big league games with the 1909 St. Louis Browns and went 0-for-5.

The double in the third inning that day slammed up against the "B" in the "Buick" sign. Apparently, had Gehrig hit the "U" in the sign, he would have gotten a car. An affidavit signed by a youngster with a good view of the fence (from a tree just outside the fence), verified that Gehrig's shot slammed into the B.

On June 10, Hartford lost in 13 innings to Bridgeport, 4-2. Gehrig, in the ninth inning, had hit a ball that bounced off the pitcher, putting runners on first and second with

one out in the tie game. Shortly thereafter, Gehrig was picked off first base and the rally went for naught.

The following day was another disappointing game as Hartford lost to New Haven, 8-3. Gehrig's muff of a throw in the sixth inning allowed New Haven to score the first of three runs in that inning.

On June 14, the team picture was published in the *Hartford Times* and front and center, seated in front of manager Irwin, was young Lou Gehrig.

A fifth-inning RBI triple on June 14 brought his average to .262, as the Senators defeated Springfield, 9-1, to secure their hold on first place. He had not started the game, but came in as a replacement in the fourth inning when outfielder Brick Kane was injured and first baseman Harry Hesse was moved to left field.

In his final game with Hartford, on June 15, Gehrig went 1-for-4 in a 9-2 loss at Springfield. His only hit was a first-inning liner off the first baseman's shin that rolled across the infield allowing Hesse to score from third base. His final average with the Senators was .261 (12-for-46), with a double, two triples, and four RBIs.

On June 16, the scheduled game with Waterbury was called off. A fire had consumed the Waterbury ballpark and, with it, all the team's equipment. By the time the Senators took the field against New Haven on June 17, Lou Lewis was no longer with the team. Columbia coach Andy Coakley had discovered that his player was in Hartford and spirited him back to New York.

The departure of "Lou Lewis" was not mentioned in either the *Hartford Courant* or the *Hartford Times*.

Not long after Gehrig left the Senators, manager Arthur Irwin was hospitalized. A month later, he was said to have committed suicide jumping from a ship in the Atlantic Ocean. The Senators fell from contention and finished the season in fifth place with a 73-78 record.

Gehrig was suspended for one year of athletic activity by Columbia. He took to the gridiron in the autumn of 1922 and played for Columbia in the spring of 1923 before signing with the New York Yankees. After riding the bench for a month (only seven game appearances with five at-bats) with the Yankees in 1923, he was sent to Hartford where he had 24 homers in 59 games to lead the team to the Eastern League championship.

Sources:

In addition to the sources shown in the Notes, the author used Baseball-Reference.com., the *Encyclopedia of Minor League Baseball*, and:

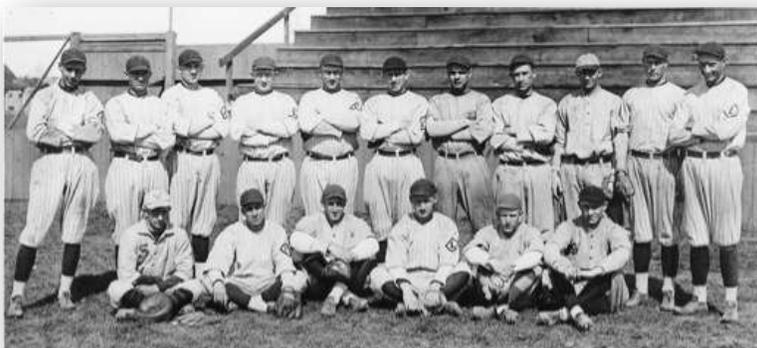
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The Central League Champion Ludington Mariners

by Dr. William M. Anderson

Seemingly forever, minor league baseball organizations have adopted unique monikers for their teams, driven by perceived marketing appeal or identity associated by location. Ludington, Michigan has a long continuing history as a maritime community and the city's board of trade held a contest in which a young girl submitting the winning suggestion of Mariners, received a season pass for the team's inaugural year in 1912.

Some of the D level teams in small midwestern towns developed ball fields on their fairgrounds, taking advantage of the existing grandstands. Ludington benefited from lumber baron manufacturers of means who led the investment and construction of a ballpark with palisade fences, dugouts, a grandstand and bleachers down both foul lines. It was named Culver Park after a supporting lumber executive who provided key leadership. In the early pre-World War I years, having three other teams in the league, located along the Lake Michigan shoreline, the Mariners and others traveled to away games by boat.



Many minor leagues folded during World War I including the Michigan State Class D League. Professional baseball returned to Ludington in 1920 when its franchise was admitted to the Class B Central League. They finished third in a four-team circuit with a 62-62 record. The organization retained just four players for 1921. They included outfielder Bill Burns and starting pitchers Clarence Brown, Oscar Johnson and Bill Shoup, who had topped the league in 1920 with 20 wins.

J. B. Smith, a former minor league pitcher, owned a billiard parlor located on Ludington Avenue, where tickets for Mariners games were sold. He was the godfather of local baseball and became the president of the franchise. The Central League added teams from Lansing and Jackson, making it a six-team circuit, with Emerson Dickson serving as president. The Mariners spring training tune-up at Culver Park began in mid-April with 28 invitees. It was a large group which was quickly weeded out to reach the league limit of 15 players. The Claire brothers, Danny

and Dave, natives of Ludington, were regulars on the 1920 squad. Dave, the younger, was sold to the Detroit Tigers in July and received a brief debut in September.

The Mariners' had a contractual hold on Danny, and new manager Jim Sharp had him penciled in as his starting second baseman. But Claire had ambitions to be a player/manager and received permission to negotiate with the Muskegon team. The Muskie's ownership hired Danny Claire and the Mariners' received second baseman Dee McMennamin as compensation. That exchange worked out well for Ludington as its new second sacker had a solid season in 1921.

The Central League opened its season in May, and the Ludington squad experienced great success on a consistent basis. The team excelled in all dimensions of the game, especially with a very strong starting pitching rotation and a lineup of high percentage hitters. Centerfielder "Gaty" Hamil was a slugger who led the league in home runs, hitting two in a game several times. During an August contest he hit a grand-slam and a two-run shot to drive in six runs. In another highlight performance he parked two and added a triple.

Hilding Nelson was recognized as one of the circuit's best fielding shortstops. The team ran the bases well, once stealing four bases in an inning. Yet, even more remarkable

were the feats of its two starting pitchers. On August 22, Bill Shoup went the distance and won both games in a doubleheader, yielding eight hits in the opener and six in the second game. Three days later, Clarence Brown duplicated Shoup's iron man performance by pitching a two-hit shutout in the first contest, winning 1-0, and then allowing just six hits in the twilight game as his teammates belted four home runs to help produce a 11-2 victory. Obviously, professional baseball was unaware of pitch counts in this era.

Culver Park was situated down at the city's waterfront. The car ferry docks were fairly close to the centerfield fence and a vessel was most always in port during a ball game. The railroad tracks to this shipping complex were very close to the fence circling the southern portion of the field.

Ludington's roster included eight regular position players, two utility players, four starting pitchers and a reliever. Despite a very small number of players, Manager Sharp only kept those players who made a serious com-

mitment to playing and contributing.

The Ludington Daily News provided extensive coverage on the city's ballclub and reported on a player who fell out of favor with team leadership. "Pitcher Daugherty was released last night. The big hurler refused to take baseball seriously and though only back on probation failed to keep in condition. There is no room on the Ludington club for dead timber."

In early August, President Smith announced that Clarence Brown was sold to the Brooklyn Robins and that Dee McMenamin, outfielder Dan Beal and two other unnamed players had been sold to the Boston Red Sox. They all would stay with the Mariners until the season and after any post season games had been played.

On August 28, pitcher Brown threw a no-hitter against Grand Rapids; only one batter reached first base on an error and he was quickly erased by double play, thus the Mariner hurler faced only 28 hitters. Ludington clinched the pennant that day.

Baseball fever was raging in this small Michigan city. The local newspaper published a poem heralding the town and its ball team. The piece began with the following introduction:

*"What if we don't have palaces
Like towers in the story?
We have the Ludington Mariners
Who bring us fame and glory.
And better yet, we have a town,
Where people take great pride
In winning praise for other things,
Beside the old horse-hide."*

The final individual season statistics demonstrated the dominance of Ludington's team. There were four 20-game winners in the league, three were by Mariner pitchers - Clarence Brown, Oscar Johnson and Bill Shoup. The Mariners compiled a team batting average of .303 with six position players hitting above that mark, led by Cecil Hammond's .353 average. "Gaty" Hamil slugged 21 home runs, most in the league, and together with his formidable teammates, hit 73 homers while the next closest team produced just 24 round-trippers. The team also compiled the league's best fielding percentage. Following an August game with Grand Rapids, its manager Josh DeVore, a former major league player, was so impressed by Mariners' shortstop Nelson's fielding wizardry, that he remarked "I would trade my whole team for two or three on the Ludington club." These players were a menace on the

bases too. Five players stole 24 or more bases. Outfielder Dan Beal led the circuit with 57 stolen bases. Other league leaders included outfielder Joe Napier with 112 runs scored; Shoup, with 25 wins and a league leading 2.71 ERA, and Brown with a 22-7 record and his .759 winning percentage, was tops in the circuit.

Following the completion of the Central League's season, the Ontario Tecumseh's, winners of the Michigan-Ontario League pennant, invited the Mariners to play a post-season champion series. Before play began, the two leagues and their respective teams agreed to a number of basic operating provisions. The teams needed to include only players who were with the teams during their regular seasons. No ringers could be added to their rosters. A \$500 forfeit bond had to be reserved. Ticket prices were set at \$1.00 for general admission and \$1.50 for grandstand seating. Teams would divide the proceeds 60/40 based on the outcome of the series. A team needed to win five games to claim the championship. The three opening games would be played in London, Ontario; the next three in Ludington and, if needed, the final games at a neutral site.

Ludington's team received a send-off banquet at Stearns Hotel, the night before its departure to London. The team departed by train on Monday, September 18, accompanied by a couple dozen of avid supporters. The front page of the *Ludington Daily News* announced: "Mariners Leaving with Hope and Pep." Its publisher, G. H. D. Southerland, traveled with the team and would write the game reports, making very clear that this was no ordinary contest.

With much excitement, the series opened on September 20 at Tecumseh Park. London prevailed in the opening game, 3-2, that went 11 innings with both pitchers going the distance. Shoup gave up only four hits while his rival allowed six safeties. Southerland's story provided an inning-by-inning account and it was reported on page one of his newspaper. The headline expressed his bias as he wrote: "Umpire Sleeping on the Job Errs, Giving London the Game." Southerland was influenced by an apparent questionable call when a runner on third attempted to steal home as Shoup delivered strike three for the third out of the inning.

London made it two straight victories, 5-1, when its starting pitcher shut down the Mariners' highly touted offense, limiting it to one run and six hits. Ludington's starter, Clarence Brown was hit hard, giving up 10 safeties that produced five runs. The Tecumseh's put the final nails in the coffin in the eighth inning, scoring two runs off four hits.

Game three on September 22 proved to be a first-rate

pitcher's duel through five innings, with neither team able to score. Ludington's slick fielding shortstop, Hilding Nelson, put on a clinic with nine assists, three putouts, and was perfect in the field. Ludington iced the game in the eighth by scoring three runs for a 4-0 victory. Oscar Johnson had hurled a gem.

The Mariners needed a victory and publisher Southerland put extra Ludington hype in his story when he proclaimed: "With a Tecumseh scalp, dangling at the belt, [the team] will arrive home at 6:30 this evening." When the train reached the depot in Ludington, the team was greeted by adoring fans and a local band to celebrate the homecoming.

Play resumed on September 24 at Culver Park, but prior to the game, a deluge of rain poured in the morning, requiring a herculean effort by a large crew to improve the playing surface. The rain left standing water in the base paths that could only be made playable by igniting gasoline on the field.

Although the rain stopped, dark threatening clouds were visible overhead throughout the game. Shoup pitched his second strong game, allowing six hits en route to a 2-0 shut-out victory. The wet day did not deter the Ludington faithful as attendance was strong. Perhaps, it did dampen the ardor of the hitters for the teams combined for 12 hits, with only one going for extra bases. Now the series was tied at two games apiece.

Action resumed the following day with 3041 spectators jamming Culver Park, which only had a capacity of 2000. This was the team's largest attendance ever. London struck first, scoring two in the opening frame. Ludington countered big in the second inning when Bill Burns doubled and rode home on a two-run blast off the bat of Dee McMenamin. The Tecumseh's then played giveaway, committing two errors coupled with a free pass and then topped it off by Gus Smith's single to score the third run. But, London responded with a home run in the seventh inning to knot the score at three.

The Mariners regained the lead in the eighth inning, again blessed with another London error, allowing a lone hit to score the winning run in a 4-3 victory. Brown was a different pitcher this time, limiting the opposition to six hits, scattered over six innings while striking out eight.

This would prove to be the high-water mark for the Ludington Mariners, now leading the series, three-to-two, after three consecutive wins.

Solid pitching and sloppy fielding characterized game six. The Tecumseh scored single runs in the first and sixth innings for all they needed to post a 2-1 victory. The Mariners struggled offensively, garnering its lone run in the third when two hits and a London error produced a tally. There were some disadvantages by having its ballpark located near the car ferries. This was evidenced when a Tecumseh player was awarded a double after Mariner outfielder Napier lost his flyball in the smoke, which had been emitted by a nearby boat. Johnson took the loss. In winning game six, the team from Canada tied the series again at three.

The series now moved to Ramona Athletic Park in Grand Rapids, Michigan which had been selected as the neutral site. London won game seven, 4-0, as the Canadian club took advantage of a less than stellar performance by Shoup, scoring runs in three innings. London banged out 10 hits, and was aided by three doubles, and three Mariner errors. While pitching shutout baseball, the Tecumseh hurler limited Ludington to just five hits.

On the next day, September 28, London won its fifth game, 10-7, to seal the championship. President Dickerson summed up the difference in

this game when he wrote: "[Clarence Brown] threw the game away for Ludington after what looked like a bad decision on third base." The Mariners' catcher threw to third to cut down the advancing runner, and according to Dickerson, he was out by several feet. "The crowd went wild when the runner was called safe," reported the Central League president. Now with two runners aboard and only one out, Brown lost his composure and London proceeded to score four runs. In this slugfest, Ludington was beaten despite collecting 17 hits, one more than London.

Based on Dickerson's reporting, the *Detroit News* carried short accounts of the final four games of this series. In his appraisal, Dickerson wrote: "The Ludington team played splendid ball in the first six games of the series and really outplayed the Mint League champions in the three games played at London." He also felt the Mariners "were out [managed] in at least two games."



(Continued from page 5)

Although several of the stars on this team were sold to big league clubs, none advanced to that level. During the 1921 season, Muskegon pitcher Freddie Fitzsimmons logged a 14-13 record yet went on to enjoy a distinguished career, pitching for the New York Giants and Brooklyn Dodgers, winning 217 games during his major league career.

End Notes

The Ludington Daily News, 1921

William M. Anderson, *The Ludington Mariners: Minor League Baseball in a Maritime Community* (Ludington: Ludington Daily News, 1992)

Team Names That Stood The Test Of Time 100 Years Later

by Michael Rinehart

One of the most unique aspects of minor league baseball is the wacky, creative, and unusual team names. Today you see teams called the RubberDucks, Rumble Ponies, Trash Pandas, and Biscuits, but the bizarre team name trend isn't just a recent fad. One hundred years ago, in 1921, there were a number of eye-catching team names such as the Hijackers, Goobers, Furniture Makers, Celery Pickers, and Shipbuilders. Hundreds of teams across the nation brought small towns and communities together to enjoy the great American pastime. Minor league team names often promote and celebrate their town's history and heritage. Many teams have come and gone over the last century, but there are still traces of 1921 Minor League team names that can be found throughout sports today.

This research project takes a look at all the minor league baseball team names from 1921 to present that are still found in professional sports a century later. Some of the team names remain in minor league baseball while others found their way to the majors, and a few that can be found in completely different sports. Only teams that have the exact same team name and continue to play in the same city or region are included.

First, let's look at the most obvious examples with some of the oldest continuously used minor league team names. The Buffalo Bisons (1877), Chattanooga Lookouts (1885), and Toledo Mud Hens (1896) can all trace their team names back to the 1800s. 1901 saw the beginning of the Little Rock Travelers (now the Arkansas Travelers) and the Birmingham Barons. One year later, in 1902, the

Indianapolis Indians were established, predating the use of the 'Indians' name in Cleveland by 13 years.

Durham took the field as the 'Bulls' for the first time in 1913. Besides a few brief hiatuses and temporary name changes, these teams have been a staple in minor league baseball history. Each of these teams got their nickname from local ties and became a constant in their communities for more than a century. The Bisons and the Indians are direct references to the cities they play in, while the Lookouts are named after the nearby Lookout Mountain in Chattanooga. The city of Birmingham was a major coal mining community and originally named their local ball club the 'Coal Barons', which means wealthy and influential mine owners. Over time the team dropped the word 'Coal' and the Birmingham Barons has stuck ever since.

The Toledo 'Mud Hens' moniker was used informally referring to the birds at nearby Bay View Park and became the team's official name in 1896. The Little Rock/Arkansas Travelers were named after an 1800s folk song. In 1963, they changed their name from the Little Rock Travelers to the Arkansas Travelers, becoming the first minor league team to name themselves after an entire state. The Durham Bulls became a household name in 1988 when the iconic movie, 'Bull Durham' was released, but the team name comes from the City of Durham's nickname, 'Bull City'. To take it a step further, the city's nickname dates back to the late 1800s when the Blackwell Tobacco Company named their product 'Bull Durham Tobacco'.

While those teams, for the most part, have been around consistently year after year with the same team name, there are a couple Minor League teams that were around a century ago for a time and recently reappeared. The Salt Lake City Bees took the field for the first time in 1915, appropriately named since Utah is known as the 'Beehive State'. The Salt Lake City franchise used the same moniker through the 1965 season, and after two years as the Salt Lake City Giants returned to the 'Bees' for two more years in 1969 and 1970. Salt Lake City went through several name changes, including the Angels, Gulls, Trappers, Buzz, and Stingers, but in 2006 they returned to their roots and adopted the 'Bees' nickname once again. The only change was the word 'City' was dropped and shortened to the Salt Lake Bees.

Another example of a team name that reappeared years later is the St. Paul Saints. Until 2021, the St. Paul Saints were a member of the American Association, an independent professional league not affiliated with major league baseball, but the team name was first used in 1887 when they were members of the Northwestern League.

The Saints played in affiliated Minor Leagues until 1960 and then the City of St. Paul went without professional baseball for 33 years. When the independent Northern League was formed in 1993, the St. Paul team revived the 'Saints' name. The restructuring of the Minor League brought the St. Paul Saints back into affiliated baseball as the Triple A affiliate of the Minnesota Twins.

The Baltimore Orioles, Los Angeles Angels, and Milwaukee Brewers played as Double-A teams, the highest classification in the minors in 1921, and would have their team names make their way to the major leagues. Baltimore has a long and deep history of professional baseball and the use of the 'Orioles' name, which is the state bird of Maryland, dates back to 1882 when the Baltimore Orioles took the field in the American Association, which was then classified as a Major League.

The Baltimore Orioles spent 20 seasons as a Major League team before moving to New York for the 1903 season, becoming what is now the New York Yankees. In 1904 a new team in the Eastern League moved to Baltimore and assumed the 'Orioles' name. That iteration of the Eastern League eventually turned into the International League where the Baltimore Orioles played until the franchise was relocated to Richmond after the 1953 season. The St. Louis Browns relocated to Baltimore for the 1954 season and took on the 'Orioles' name, making Baltimore a Major League city once again.

The Los Angeles Angels name was first used in 1893 in an early iteration of the California League, but most commonly in the Pacific Coast League (PCL). Chicago Cubs Owner, William Wrigley, Jr., purchased the Los Angeles Angels in 1921 and they went on to claim their sixth PCL championship that year. Phillip Wrigley, who inherited the team from his father, sold the Los Angeles Angels in 1957 to Walter O'Malley, owner of the Brooklyn Dodgers who kept the PCL team for only one season before using his territory rights to move his Brooklyn Dodgers to the City of Los Angeles. After 55 years in the PCL, the Los Angeles Angels were forced to relocate to Spokane. However, the Los Angeles Angels moniker was revived in 1961 when MLB expanded by adding an American League franchise to the 'City of Angels'.

The team shared brand new Dodger Stadium with the Los Angeles Dodgers from 1962 to 1965 before moving to Anaheim and changing their name to the California Angels. Remarkably, that wasn't the end of the Los Angeles Angels. New ownership prompted another name change in 2005 where the team was officially renamed the Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim hoping to appeal to a wider audience. In 2016 the team dropped the "of Anaheim" portion of their name, which they had been bound to, and have

been the Los Angeles Angels ever since.

The Milwaukee Brewers' team name can be traced back to 1884 in the Northwestern League for a partial season before switching to the Union Association, which was classified as a major league, to finish the year. Milwaukee is best known for its prominent brewing industry, so the 'Brewers' name is a no-brainer for professional baseball in the city. Before the Milwaukee Brewers became a permanent team in the major leagues, the team name was a mainstay in the American Association, from 1902 to 1952. In 1953 the team was forced to switch to Toledo when the Major League Boston Braves moved into town and became the Milwaukee Braves, playing in the brand new Milwaukee County Stadium. After the 1965 season the Braves moved to Atlanta and it would be another five years before Milwaukee saw professional baseball again. The 1970 season marked the revival of the Milwaukee Brewers moniker when Bud Selig acquired the bankrupt Seattle Pilots expansion team, and moved them to Milwaukee where they have played ever since.

While many of the 1921 Minor League teams that survived the test of time, stayed in the baseball circles, there are a few that found their way to other professional sports leagues. Today the Toronto Maple Leafs are known best as a hockey team in the NHL, but in 1899, 28 years before the hockey franchise took on the name, the Toronto Maple Leafs were born as a minor league baseball team in the Eastern League. The team switched to the International League in 1912 and played every season until 1967 before they were sold and moved to Louisville. The team was nearly bought by the NHL Toronto Maple Leafs, but plans fell through with stadium concerns.

Today the New Orleans Pelicans and the Charlotte Hornets are basketball teams in the NBA, but the team names were actually first used in minor league baseball. The baseball Charlotte Hornets played in a variety of leagues until 1972, but can be found first in 1892 in the South Atlantic League. In 1988 the Charlotte Hornets team name was revived with a 'Name the Team Contest' for the new basketball expansion franchise in the NBA. In 2002 the team moved to New Orleans and later became the Pelicans, which coincidentally, revived another past minor league team name. The New Orleans Pelicans' baseball roots began in 1887 in the Southern League. The team name was used continuously in the Southern Association from 1901 to 1959 and was revived again for one year in the American Association in 1977. The rebirth of the New Orleans Pelicans team name came in the NBA in 2013 when the New Orleans Hornets renamed their team after the Louisiana state bird.

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The 1921 season may have been a century ago, but the roots of minor league baseball run deep in so many cities across North America and can still be seen throughout the sports landscape today. Baseball is often the heart and pride of the city they play in, so it is easy to see why so many teams have stood the test of time one hundred years later. Passed down from generation to generation, the passion for America's Pastime is alive and well.

HONORABLE MENTION: The Pittsburg Pirates (No, that's not a typo) played in the Class D Southwestern League in 1921. Although this was in Pittsburg, Kansas not Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. However, the Major League Pittsburgh Pirates outdates this team, having begun their franchise in 1882.

Other Pacific Coast League Ballparks of Los Angeles (Excludes Wrigley Field)

by Ron Selter

After the Pacific Coast League (PCL) began operations in 1903, it would operate as a virtually independent entity for most of its first 55 years of existence (1903-1957). After the 1957 season when the Dodgers moved to Los Angeles, there were no PCL teams in the city. During the 1903-57 era, the league had one, and, in most seasons, two franchises in the Los Angeles area that occupied eight different ballparks, whose names and years of use are listed in the accompanying chart.

Chutes Park (Washington Gardens)

Chutes Park was located in the city of Los Angeles on Washington Boulevard between Grand Avenue and Main Street. The rather simple wooden ballpark was in a neighborhood that was largely residential and was only two miles south of downtown Los Angeles. The site of Chutes Park (also called Washington Gardens in the 19th Century) was convenient to several electric trolley lines, as the park hosted various amusements-including a beer garden, a theater, a zoo and traveling circuses since 1876. The ballpark derived its name from the previous tenant's Chute-the-Chutes thrill ride, though it was also known as Washington Gardens, and the two names were used interchangeably. A sports facility was built in December 1900 and used for both baseball and football games. The first use for professional baseball was a California winter league in December 1900. In the following spring, the ballpark became the home of the Los Angeles franchise of the California League (a predecessor of the PCL) and was used for the 1901 and 1902 seasons. Starting in 1903

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Chutes Park served as the home park of the PCL's Los Angeles Angels for eight seasons.

The ballpark consisted of a wooden grandstand, located diagonally behind home plate, with extensions down both foul lines to just beyond first and third base. This ballpark had a few unique characteristics. Only the diagonal and third base sections of the grandstand had roofs - the first base section was uncovered. Another unique feature of the ballpark was the standing-room-only catwalk behind the left field fence. One improvement over prior Los Angeles ballparks - Chutes Park had the first grass infield. In 1905 bleachers were added down both foul lines that raised the seating capacity to about 6,000. In 1909, the PCL expanded from four to six teams. One of the two new clubs was the Vernon Tigers. The Vernon club built a new ballpark (Vernon Park I) in the nearby city of Vernon, an industrial suburb of Los Angeles located four miles southeast of downtown Los Angeles. The Angels and Tigers merged their home/road schedules and each team used both Chutes Park and Vernon Park I. During the 1909 and 1910 seasons, whichever club was at home played split-site Sunday and holiday doubleheaders. The morning game was played at the Vernon ballpark and the afternoon game was played at Chutes Park. In addition, the home team played one weekday game per week at Vernon Park I. After the 1910 season, Chutes Park was dismantled to make way for the larger Washington Park built at the same location.

Washington Park

After Washington Park opened on March 28, 1911, it would become the best-known and longest used ballpark in Los Angeles for the next 15 years. Located at Hill Street and Washington Boulevard, Washington Park occupied most of the site of the previously mentioned Chutes Park. This new ballpark was jointly owned by the

Los Angeles Angels and the Vernon Tigers, both clubs using it as their primary home park.

The ballpark, when opened seated about 8,000, and consisted of (1) a single-deck roofed grandstand that extended beyond both first and third bases, and (2) wooden bleachers adjacent to the grandstand down both the first and third base lines. The grandstand and home plate were located in the northwest corner of the park, making left field the sun field for afternoon games. After the 1911 season, capacity was increased to about 12,000 by extending both foul line bleachers and adding a new section of wooden bleachers beyond right field that connected to the first base bleachers.



Washington Park's dimensions were mostly generous (left field was 350' from home plate and centerfield was 460', although the right field line was 335'. To make the pitchers even happier, the left field and center field fences were 20 feet high. Sometime between 1911 and 1920, however, the left field distance was increased to 375'. The first home run over the left-field fence was hit by Pete Schneider (October 12, 1920). No one ever hit a ball over the distant centerfield fence.

As one would suspect, Washington Park's dimensions made it a poor hitter's park. The available data (for the 1918 and 1921-25 seasons) show that Washington Park was last in the PCL in home runs and batting average. The home run park factor was 45, which meant that home runs at Washington Park were less than half of the average PCL ballpark.

In late September 1925, Wrigley Field in Los Angeles opened. This new ballpark was (for its time) a modern marvel; far larger and more fan friendly than Washington Park. Shortly after the last game was played here on September 27, 1925, Washington Park was demolished. The

Vernon Tigers did not move to Wrigley Field as their 1925 home season had ended. The possibility of the Vernon club using Wrigley Field in the 1926 season was eliminated when the franchise moved to San Francisco and became the Mission Reds. Wrigley Field was the newest and probably largest capacity ballpark in the Minors. Use of site after demolition is not known.

Vernon Park I

As mentioned above, when the Vernon Tigers joined the PCL in 1909, they built a wooden ballpark at East 38th Street and Santa Fe Avenue. With a capacity of only about 4,000, the park was not the regular home park of any team. It was used in 1909 and 1910 for one weekday home game by either the Angels or the Vernon Tigers and also for the morning game of Sunday/holiday doubleheaders. For 1911-12, the weekday games were eliminated. The reason for both the Angels and Tigers using the Vernon and later the Venice ballparks is hard to understand.

The exact dimensions of Vernon Park I are not known, however, home run data provides insight into the park's approximate dimensions. With home runs averaging 1.03 per game in the 192 games played at the park over five plus seasons, Vernon Park I was the Coors Field of its time. By contrast, at the other seven PCL ballparks home runs averaged much less: 0.34 per game. Based on the home run data, ballpark researcher Larry Zuckerman has estimated the left-field dimension as 290 feet - perhaps less, center field as 440, and right field as 330.

After the 1912 season, the Tigers relocated to Venice, and Vernon Park I sat idle throughout the next two seasons. On July 9, 1915, the Tigers decided to return to Vernon, where they and the Angels again shared Vernon Park I for the remainder of the season, after which the Venice ballpark was dismantled.

Venice Park

After the close of the 1912 season, the Vernon Tigers moved 20 miles west to the seaside community of Venice (California not Italy) and became the Venice Tigers. The Tigers played in a new ballpark (Venice Park) built especially for them and shared the Venice ballpark with the Angels as they had Vernon Park I. The new wooden ballpark was built in Venice at Washington Boulevard (now Abbot Kinney) and Virginia Avenue (now Venice Boulevard). The ballpark consisted of a grandstand, seating 3,000, and bleachers, seating 4,000. As was the case with the two Vernon ballparks after 1910, Venice Park was used only for the morning game of split-site Sunday/holiday doubleheaders.

The ballpark's configuration would be familiar to those who have attended Little League games. All of the curved outfield fences were the same distant from home plate—reported to be 325 feet (*Los Angeles Times* March 27, 1913). The outfield fences were three feet high, topped by a six-foot high wire screen. This screen permitted the fans that were driving to ballparks to view the game from the comfort of their automobiles parked just outside the left field and right field fences.

Data for Venice Park showed the park to be far below average as a hitter's park. The batting park factors for 1913-15 were:

- ◆ Batting Average 87
- ◆ Slugging 89
- ◆ Doubles/AB 107
- ◆ Triples/AB 81
- ◆ Home Runs/AB 64

If the outfield fences at Venice Park all were actually 325 feet from home plate, these batting park factors are unbelievable. How could the smallest park in the PCL be far below average in both batting average and home runs? If there was no point in the ballpark greater than 325, how could the triples park factor be as high as 81? Could the actual dimensions have been greater than the 325 from the pre-season newspaper story? A study was made of the park and its site. The diagram (by Larry Zuckerman) of the ballpark (that used 325 as the outfield distance) showed 25-30 feet available between the center field fence and the southern limit of the property (the tracks of the Pacific Electric Railway). Note that center field was the limiting condition for the size of the ballpark. Based on the batting data for the park and by moving home plate five feet closer to the backstop, the estimated outfield dimensions become 355 to all fields. Such possible dimensions are far more compatible with the batting park factors than the reported 325 to all fields.

Attendance at the games played in Venice was poor, and the Tigers and Angels returned to Vernon on July 9, 1915. After the end of the 1915 season, the Venice grandstand was dismantled.

Vernon Park II

In July 1915, the Tigers returned to Vernon. They used Vernon Park I for the rest of the 1915 season. Before the 1916 season, a new wooden ballpark (Vernon Park II) was built on the site of Vernon Park I using the wooden grandstand that had been removed from the Venice ballpark. Vernon Park II was used by the Tigers and the Angels for five seasons (1916-20). As at Venice Park, the use

of the ballpark was only for the morning games of Sunday and holiday double headers. Vernon Park II, with a seating capacity of about 10,000, was also known as Maier Park, for Eddie Maier, the owner of the Vernon club. The estimated dimensions were left field 372, center field 395, and right field 315. The right field dimension seemed reachable until one considers that the 10 foot wooden fence was topped with a 20 foot wire screen. Whereas Vernon Park I was the Coors Field of its time, Vernon Park II was a pitcher's paradise. In the 110 games played at the park (1916-20), only six home runs were ever hit. By comparison, over the 1916-19 seasons—an average of 0.05 home runs per game were hit compared to the rest of the PCL ballparks that had an average of 0.39 per game.

Midway through the 1920 season, with attendance poor at Vernon Park II, the Angels and Tigers decided to discontinue using any secondary ballpark and thereafter played all of their home games at Washington Park. The Tigers continued to use the Vernon ballpark for spring training through 1925. The ballpark was torn down sometime in the 1930s and the site of the Vernon ballparks is now occupied by Hannibal Industries Inc.

Gilmore Stadium

In 1938, the PCL's San Francisco Mission Reds franchise was purchased by Hollywood interests headed by Bob Cobb, and the team, to be called the Hollywood Stars, moved to Los Angeles. For the 1938 season, they arranged to share the Angels' iconic ballpark, Wrigley Field, for one year, anticipating that their new ballpark in Hollywood, Gilmore Field, (named for Earl B. Gilmore, the owner of Gilmore Oil, Gilmore Stadium, and the site of Gilmore Field) would be ready in time for the following season. By April 1939, however, construction was not quite finished. Fortunately, very close by was Gilmore Stadium, a football and midget auto racing venue. Gilmore Stadium was a steel-and-concrete oval structure with a capacity of 18,500. It was quickly modified for baseball in time for the Stars' first home games. A wire screen was erected behind home plate to serve as the backstop. There were no dugouts. The playing field was laid out with the left field foul line roughly parallel with the western sideline of the gridiron and this produced a LF dimension of 350. The RF dimension was a rather short 270, and the RF power alley (22.5 degrees) 300. To prevent cheap home runs, a pole was placed behind the fence in right center (325 from home plate). Any ball hit into the stands to the right of that pole was a ground rule double. Because of the oval shape of the stadium, the LF distances increased rapidly away from the foul line. All in

(Continued on page 11)

all, it was an oddly shaped playing field for baseball-LF (average distance 393) was deeper than CF (380) and the RF average distance was quite short (291).

The Stars played only seven games at Gilmore Stadium, with interesting results. Hollywood hosted the Portland Beavers for a seven game series (winning four of the seven games). These were the only games played at Gilmore Stadium in its brief lifespan as a ballpark. When briefly used as a ballpark, Gilmore Stadium was quite

◆ Triples	119
◆ Home Runs	211

Gilmore Field

The majority owner of the Stars was Bob Cobb, owner of the Brown Derby restaurant in Hollywood and namesake of the Cobb salad. In addition, several movie stars were shareholders including Bob Hope, Bing Crosby, Gene Autry, and Gary Cooper. Opening Day at Gilmore Field was



popular with the hitters. The Stars posted a team batting average of .333 while Portland hit .317. There were 15 home runs in seven games, a high level for the 1939 PCL. Overall the batting park factors at Gilmore Stadium were impressive:

◆ Batting Average	112
◆ On-Base	112
◆ Slugging	131
◆ Doubles	174

on May 2, 1939 some four weeks into the season. There was lots of fanfare as many movie stars attended the game. To get the ceremonies underway, the owner Bob Cobb had his wife, actress Gail Patrick, throw out the first pitch.

The ballpark was located on Fairfax Avenue on the west (500 feet west of Gilmore's Farmers Market) and between Beverly Boulevard on the north, and Third Street on the south. Gilmore Field was an intimate ballpark. Its backstop was only 34 feet behind home plate and the distance from first/third base to the grandstand was 24 feet. No

surprise, the foul area was very small. Gilmore Field was one of the first ballparks to be built with lights. The ballpark consisted of a roofed steel frame and wood single-deck grandstand, open bleachers down both foul lines that reached nearly to the LF and RF corners. The playing field was almost exactly symmetrical with the LF/RF dimensions being 335, left-center/right-center 387, and the CF dimension 407. The LF and RF fences were wooden, 10 feet high, and aligned at 90 degrees to the foul lines. There was a 10 foot high CF diagonal fence with an 18 foot scoreboard. The total seating capacity of the ballpark was about 12,000. The average size of LF/RF was 352 and CF was 403. The overall park size of Gilmore Field was 369-by-comparison Wrigley Field, the top PCL ballpark for home runs, was 358, and the league average was 362.

Gilmore Field in 1939 was not a good ballpark for hitters. The Stars and their opponents combined for 8.8 runs per game at home, vs.10.8 runs/game on the road. The batting park factors for 1939 were:

◆ Runs/G	84
◆ Batting Average	92
◆ On-Base	89
◆ Slugging	101
◆ Doubles*	101
◆ Triples*	180
◆ Home Runs*	124
◆ BB/Game	71

*Per AB; Bating data compiled from box scores in the *Los Angeles Times*

This is a curious result: the park factors for all categories of extra base hits and slugging were above 100, yet runs, batting average, and on-base were markedly below average. All this for a ballpark that had very little foul area, and had the same park size as today's major league ballparks. Two factors contributed to this outcome; first, in 1939 Gilmore Field was the second largest ballpark in the PCL -- only Seals Stadium in San Francisco was larger, and second, the billboards mounted on the LF and CF fences were very light colored (they read nearly white in black and white photos). The billboards extended from the LF line to nearly dead CF, and provided a very poor background against right-handed pitchers. This is likely the reason that walks per game were 40 % higher in road games than in games at Gilmore Field.

The PCL had at least one and typically two franchises in the Los Angeles area for better than 50 years. When the

Brooklyn Dodgers moved to Los Angeles and the New York Giants moved to San Francisco, the PCL presence in Los Angeles came to an end after the 1957 season. Here is the list of the PCL Los Angeles ballparks and their final status:

- ◆ Chutes Park-demolished after the 1910 season and replaced on the same site by Washington Park; whose last use was September 1925; later demolished.
- ◆ Vernon Park I-replaced by Vernon Park II whose last use was the 1920 season; ballpark later demolished.
- ◆ Venice Park-used for only one game per week for two and a half seasons (1913-15); stands dismantled and move to Vernon Park II after the 1915 season.
- ◆ Wrigley Field-the last PCL season was 1957; later used for the 1961 season by the American League Los Angeles Angels, ballpark demolished in 1966 and the site is now a city park and community center.
- ◆ Gilmore Stadium-only use for baseball was one week in of the 1939 PCL season: used until 1951 for auto races, and then demolished.
- ◆ Gilmore Field-the last use was the 1957 season and the ballpark was demolished in 1958. The site is now part of CBS's Television City.

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Asheville Citizen-Times Apr 22, 1926

Who Did What: Untangling The Minor League Pitching Careers Of Joe Benz, Howard Benz, Henry Benz, And Emil Bentz, 1909-1915.

by Bill Lamb

At various times during the 1909-1915 period, there were four pitchers playing for Midwestern minor league clubs who had the same or a similar surname. They were Joe Benz (sometimes misspelled Bentz), Howard Benz (also sometimes misspelled Bentz), Henry Benz (occasionally misspelled Bentz), and Emil Bentz (sometimes called Benz). Newspapers of the day and modern baseball reference works have had trouble distinguishing pitchers Benz/Bentz, and at times misattribute the record of one to another. What follows is an attempt to set their records straight, year-by-year. In the end, the professional fate of these men varied. Joe Benz would go on to achieve a respectable nine-season major league career. The others would never rise higher than the mid-level minors and soon abandon the game for other pursuits.

As far as has been discovered, none of the four pitched professionally in 1908. Thereafter, the whereabouts and activities of Joe, Howard, Henry, and Emil are as follows:

1909

1. Joe Benz: Began the 1909 season pitching for the Clarksburg (West Virginia) Bees of the Class D Pennsylvania League. Joe was sent home to Batesville, Indiana after developing a sore arm. Thereafter, he played semipro ball for a Batesville club, demonstrating his arm's recovery. Joe pitched the second half of 1909 season for the Newark (Ohio) Newks of Class D Ohio League, the same club that Howard Benz had pitched for earlier in the 1909 season. Joe went 10-7 with the Newks. He was given a late-August promotion to the Des Moines Boosters of Class A Western League and pitched in a handful of games there.

2. Howard Benz: Was signed from the Cleveland semipro ranks by the Toledo Mud Hens of the Class A American Association in early 1909. In early May, *Sporting Life* reported that "Howard Benz, the Cleveland semi-pro was shunted off to Newark, where he will probably play in the outfield." Howard spent the first half of the 1909 season pitching for Newark, with the Cleveland papers periodically keeping hometown fans informed of his exploits. Later, he graduated to the Decatur (Illinois) Commodores of the Class B Three-I League. He beat Springfield 4-2 for Decatur in his debut, and finished the season at 6-5 in 12 games for the Commodores. Howard Benz was reserved

by Decatur for the 1910 season.

3. Henry Benz: A 16-year-old living in his hometown of Wausau, Wisconsin. No professional record discovered (or likely).

4. Emil Bentz: Pitched late in the 1909 season for the Racine (Wisconsin) Malted Milks of the Class D Wisconsin-Illinois League, but without much success. Bentz was the losing pitcher for Racine in a 9-3 defeat by Green Bay; failed as a pinch-hitter during a loss to Rockford; was the losing pitcher in 4-0 setback in Madison; and was touched for 15 hits in a 9-3 loss to Freeport. The *1910 Reach Guide* provides no pitching record for Emil Bentz with Racine, but he appears in the Guide photo of the 1909 Racine team (and looks nothing like Joe Benz or Howard Benz, by the way).

1910

1. Joe Benz: Began the 1910 season with Des Moines, but was optioned to the Green Bay Bays of the [now] Class C Wisconsin-Illinois League in early May. Record for Green Bay: 12-10. The *1911 Reach Guide* listed Benz's Green Bay stats under the name "Bentz," but his surname on the photo of the 1910 Bays is correctly rendered as "Benz."

2. Howard Benz: Listed among the pitchers for the 1910 Danville (Illinois) Speakers of the Three-I League in an early February local news report. In mid-season, his hometown paper proudly noted that outfielder-turned pitcher Howard Benz of the Newark and now Danville clubs formerly starred for Cleveland's Central High School. A published game account of a late-season 7-2 Benz win over

Springfield stated that "the big fellow joined Decatur in mid-season 1909," and went on to commend Benz's "work for Danville this spring." The Benz final record for last-place Danville in 1910: 9-18 in 27 games. Howard also played a handful of games in the Danville outfield, and was reserved by the club for the 1911 season. A Danville team photo shows that Howard looked nothing like namesakes Joe Benz and Emil Bentz.

3. Henry Benz: Nothing discovered and likely still not yet a professional.

4. Emil Bentz: "Emil Bentz, a pitcher, signed with Racine," reported the *Rockford (Illinois) Register-Gazette*, February 27, 1910. Thereafter, Emil Bentz was listed as a member of the Racine club in pre-season rosters published by the *Register-Gazette* on March 23 and April 11, 1910. But the *1911 Reach Guide* did not include Bentz in its stats for 1910 Racine pitchers, and his actual wherea-



Joe Benz

bouts during the season are unknown. After the 1910 season was concluded, however, the notation “Emil Bentz, suspended” by Racine of the Wisconsin-Illinois League appeared in the official NAPBBL (Minor Leagues) notice published in the *Register-Gazette*, October 6, 1910, and *Sporting Life*, October 15, 1910.

5. Miscellany: Baseball-Reference has no 1910 listing for Joe Benz, and erroneously assigns Joe’s 12-10 record with Green Bay to Emil Bentz. As noted above, Joe Benz pitched for Green Bay in 1910, while the whereabouts of the suspended Bentz during that season are unknown. *The Encyclopedia of Minor League Baseball* states that Henry Benz pitched twin shutouts for Green Bay in a July 17, 1910 doubleheader against Racine. This is also wrong. The doubleheader shutouts were pitched by Joe Benz, not Henry.

1911

1. Joe Benz: Began the 1911 season with Des Moines of the Western League. Joe went a respectable 10-10 in 33 games for a woeful Boosters club headed for a last-place finish. In mid-season, his contract was purchased by the Chicago White Sox. Joe Benz made major league debut on August 11, 1911, entering in relief of George Mogridge during an 8-1 loss to Detroit. He remained with the Sox for the rest of the 1911 season, posting a 3-2 record, with a 2.32 ERA record in 12 games. After 1911, Joe Benz did not pitch in the minor leagues again.

2. Howard Benz: Signed for 1911 season with Danville, and a mid-season 5-3 loss by “Bentz” of Danville to Quincy was noted in the *Illinois State Register*, July 2, 1911. Howard appears to have drawn his release shortly thereafter, but authorities conflict regarding his final season record. According to the *1912 Reach Guide*, Howard Benz posted a 3-7 record in 16 games for Danville. According to Baseball-Reference, he went 16-16 in 42 games for the club. Whichever the case, Howard Benz, clad in jacket, tie, and working man’s cap, remained with Danville long enough to be included in a photo of 1911 club members.

3. Henry Benz: Uncertain, but research by Dennis Pajot has uncovered a July 11 local newspaper report of an otherwise-unidentified Benz pitching for an independent club in Henry Benz’s hometown of Wausau, Wisconsin. But two weeks later, this pitcher was described as “Benz, once of Racine in the state league” by the *Racine (Wisconsin) Journal*, July 31, 1911. That description makes it seem more likely this Wausau pitcher was Emil Bentz, then on the Racine suspended list, rather than Henry Benz.

4. Emil Bentz: The suspension of Emil Bentz by the Ra-

cine club of the Wisconsin-Illinois League continued into 1911, as reported by local news outlets early in the year. But the Wisconsin-Illinois League folded before the season began. Thus, the “Benz, once with Racine in the state league” reportedly pitching for Wausau that summer was probably Emil Bentz. At 1911 season’s end, however, the annual NAPBBL notice continued to list “Emil Bentz (suspended)” by the Racine club of the [soon to be revived] Wisconsin-Illinois League.

1912

1. Joe Benz: In 1912 Joe went 13-17 with a 2.91 ERA in 42 games for the Chicago White Sox.

2. Howard Benz: Probably not in Organized Baseball, as no stats were discovered for Howard Benz in 1912. In July, it was reported that the Tellings club of the fast Cleveland municipal league had signed “Howard Benz, a former minor leaguer.” Thereafter, Howard pitched for the Tellings for the remainder of the summer, as per various *Cleveland Plain Dealer/Cleveland Leader* game accounts. Still, the name Howard Benz appeared on the Danville reserve list for 1913. Thereafter, he was identified as “pitcher Howard Benz of the Danville Three-I League club” in news articles about his engagement and marriage to Virginia Williamson of Danville. After the ceremony, the couple was to reside in Cleveland where Benz’s father was “a prosperous contractor.”

3. Henry Benz: Listed as a laborer in the 1912 Wausau City Directory.

4. Emil Bentz: Nothing concrete, but he may well have been the semipro pitcher named “Bantz” who worked “in a number of games in the [Wisconsin] Lake Shore league” during the 1912 season. Dennis Pajot found mention of “Benz” playing right field for the Weinbrenners of the Sundays-only Lake Shore League in the *Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 20 and 27, and June 3, 1912, and as pitcher “Blitzen Benz” in the *Milwaukee Sentinel*, June 17, 1912.

1913

1. Joe Benz: In 1913 Joe went 7-10, with a 2.74 ERA in 33 games for the Chicago White Sox.

2. Howard Benz: Does not appear in Organized Baseball stats for 1913, but Howard Benz was still reserved for 1914 season by Danville.

3. Henry Benz: In March 1913, it was reported that Henry Benz had signed with the Wausau Lumberjacks of the newly-reconstituted Class C Wisconsin-Illinois League. How long Benz stayed with Wausau is unknown, but research by Dennis Pajot has revealed that Henry Benz was pitching for a semipro club in Tigerton, Wisconsin early

in the 1913 season. On July 11, the *Rockford Register-Gazette* informed readers that “Henry Benz has signed with Green Bay” of the Wisconsin-Illinois League. This corroborated a report to the same effect published a day earlier in the *Racine Journal*. The paper added that Benz “has been playing good ball in semi-professional circles this summer and there is no doubt that he can make good with the Bays if he wants to.” The *Fond du Lac* (Wisconsin) *Commonwealth*, July 11, 1913, added this revelatory coda to its account of the signing of Benz by Green Bay: “Henry Benz, who was been seen in this league before ...,” thereby implying that Benz had seen at least some action with Wausau earlier in the season. The name Henry Benz does not appear in 1913 Wisconsin-Illinois League statistics published in the *1914 Reach Guide*, and Dennis could not find his name mentioned in local reportage. Nor does Henry Benz appear in the 1913 Green Bay team photo published in the following year’s guide. Nevertheless, the name Henry Benz appeared on the 1914 Green Bay reserve list published in the *Rockford Register-Gazette*, October 17, 1913, and *Sporting Life*, October 18, 1913.

4. Emil Bentz: In March 1913, various Midwestern newspapers reported that “Fred Bentz” had been signed by the Milwaukee Creams of the Wisconsin-Illinois League. It seems highly like that this “Fred Bentz” was actually Emil Wilhelm Friedrich Bentz of Milwaukee, the long-suspended Racine pitcher. But the name Fred Bentz does not appear in the 1913 W-I League stats published in the *1914 Reach Guide*.

1914

1. Joe Benz: In 1914, Joe went 15-19 with a 2.26 ERA in 48 games for the Chicago White Sox. On May 31, he threw a no-hitter against the Cleveland Naps, winning 6-1.

2. Howard Benz: Nothing discovered and apparently no longer active in the professional game.

3. Henry Benz: Now 21, Henry’s occupation was listed as “ball player” in the 1914 Wausau City Directory, and he was listed as a Green Bay team member in the NAPBBL bulletin published in *Sporting Life*, January 23, 1914. Dennis discovered an item in the *Racine News Journal*, May 4, 1914, that described Benz as Green Bay’s “big southpaw recruit.” But months later, Benz was named as “one of the right-handers” that Green Bay would pitch against Rockford in an upcoming series. See the *Rockford Register-Gazette*, July 25, 1914.

On May 31, 1914 – the same day that Joe Benz threw his no-hitter for Chicago – Green Bay’s Henry Benz no-hit Appleton, 4-1. Henry struck out 12 and walked only two

in a dominant performance before the hometown fans. But for the 1914 season overall, he went 7-15 (.318) in 27 games, a poor showing for a second-place Green Bay team that otherwise posted a 66-36 (.649) record. Henry was not included in the photo of the 1914 Green Bay team published in the ensuing Reach Guide. This suggests that Henry Benz may not have lasted with Green Bay for the entire 1914 season, and thus he could be the unidentified “Benz, the touted pitcher of Nekoosa” [a Wisconsin semi-pro club] mentioned in a *La Crosse* (Wisconsin) *Tribune*, August 31, 1914 game note. Whatever the case, Henry Benz was placed on the Green Bay reserve list for 1915, per *Sporting Life*, October 14, 1914, and re-signed by Green Bay for 1915 some weeks later, as per *Sporting Life*, December 5, 1914.

4. Emil Bentz: Nothing discovered.

1915

1. Joe Benz: In 1915, Joe posted a 15-11 log, with a 2.11 ERA in 39 games for the Chicago White Sox.

2. Howard Benz: Nothing discovered.

3. Henry Benz: Henry Benz was signed by the 1915 Green Bay team, but the Wisconsin-Illinois League did not play that season. Later in April, it was reported that Henry had signed with the Wausau club of the unrecognized Wisconsin Valley League, as per the *Grand Forks* (North Dakota) *Leader*, April 19, 1915, which added that “Benz pitched for Green Bay of the Wisconsin-Illinois League last year.” Thereafter, a Benz pitching for Wausau was mentioned in Wisconsin newspapers throughout the summer.

4. Emil Bentz: Nothing discovered.

EPILOG

Born January 21, 1886 in New Alsace, Indiana, Joe Benz pitched for the Chicago White Sox until his release early in the 1919 season. His major league career record was 77-75, with a 2.42 ERA in 251 games, all with the White Sox. After he left the game, Joe worked various jobs in Chicago before opening up a tavern near Comiskey Park. Joseph Louis Benz died in Chicago on April 22, 1957, age 71. He was survived by his wife Alice Leddy Benz and two children.

After he left the game, Sutorious Howard Benz (born September 2, 1885 in Cleveland) followed his father into the construction business. Later, he was an executive with a Cleveland building supply company. Howard Benz died in Cleveland at age 65 in early 1951, and was survived by his wife Virginia Williamson Benz and their four children.

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Born Heinrich Albert August Benz (March 24, 1893 in Wausau, Wisconsin), Henry continued pitching for Wausau into the 1916 season. By 1917, however, he had left the pro ranks and was working as a local fireman, eventually rising to the rank of junior captain for Wausau Fire Company No. 2. Henry Benz died on June 13, 1930 at age 46, survived by his wife Emma Gahrz Benz and two children.

Emil Wilhelm Friedrich Bentz was born on May 1, 1884 in Milwaukee and lived there his entire life. After baseball, he worked as a carpenter, thereafter as an inspector

in a railroad carriage shop. Emil Bentz died in Milwaukee on January 4, 1934, age 49, survived by his wife Ida and two children.

SOURCES

The primary sources of the biographical information contained herein are US Census data, various city directories, and Benz/Bentz family posts accessed via Ancestry.com, and certain of the newspaper articles cited below. Statistics have been taken from Baseball-Reference, *Reach Guides*, and *The Official Encyclopedia of Minor League Baseball*, Lloyd Johnson and Miles Wolff, eds. (Durham, North Carolina: Baseball America, Inc., 2d ed., 1997).

The Next Pick in the Draft Goes to... the Miami Miracle?

Independent Minor League Teams Taking Part in the Amateur Baseball Draft

by Chris Betsch

When major league baseball announced it had formed agreements with the Atlantic League, the Frontier League, and the American Association in 2020, it was introduced as a new partnership with independent minor league baseball, the next step towards MLB's plan of "One Baseball". But independent teams have had a long history of working alongside organized baseball. Up until 1991 teams not affiliated with major league clubs played in established minor leagues, and they worked with affiliated teams to borrow, loan, and trade players as needed. And for a stretch of time, independent teams even took part in the First-year player draft.

When the Rule 4 (a.k.a first year player) draft began in 1965, it was originally set up as a way for both major and minor league teams to restock their rosters with the top available amateur talent, while moving away from the high-priced "bonus baby" system that was in place. The original draft process was set so that major league teams would add players in the first round, then minor league teams would add players in the following rounds. The rules were tweaked from year to year, but by 1970 the draft was arranged so that after the major league team round was complete, the Triple A teams chose players in the second round, Double A teams made choices in round three, then Single A teams made picks for the remaining rounds. Included in this procedure in the Professional Baseball Rulebook was a rule 15, where in section 16 it was stipulated that "Class A clubs without Major League

affiliations shall have priority in order of each draft selection over Class A clubs with Major League affiliations". This rule meant that the independent teams in Class A could join in the draft starting in the fourth round and would get priority over the affiliated Class A teams. The rules of the draft continued to evolve, but this section that allowed independent teams to take part quietly stayed in place for twenty-five years. Several independent minor league teams came and went during this time, but in that period the rule was taken advantage of by only four of them.

Bend Rainbows (1970-71)

Hawaii first fielded a team in Organized Baseball in 1961, so they weren't really in consideration when the major leagues looked to expand during the 1960s. In 1969 they were members of the AAA Pacific Coast League as the top affiliate for the California Angels. But Hawaii Islanders general manager Jack Quinn had a vision for the team, a dream that someday in the not-too-distant future the Hawaii Islanders would be ready to move up and become a major league club. The Islanders had set a team attendance record of 280,477 in 1969, the most in the league overall since 1957. When the short-season Class-A Northwest League was looking at their own expansion plans late in 1969, they couldn't drum up enough interest in affiliation from major league teams, so the Islanders stepped in and took the unusual step of adding their own affiliate. From the beginning, Quinn planned to use the draft rule. "My primary reason, originally, for owning our own farm club was to be able to participate in the free agent draft". Quinn figured that by the time the Islanders moved up to the majors, he would already have a group of near major-league ready players set to go. Plus, with the military draft still in place, the team could have additional players on standby in case they ran into issues with players being called to service, as they had during the pre-

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vious season. Two Oregon cities had already been selected for expansion of the Northwest League, Bend and Coos Bay-North Bend. Hawaii partnered with Bend, and in February the team was named the Rainbows, a tribute to the abundant trout fishing of the area, and also a nod to their partner team in Hawaii.

The Islanders were technically an affiliated team, but because they were not affiliated with a *major league* team, they qualified for the draft. Bend got started right away, taking part in the January 1970 draft and selecting native Hawaiian pitcher Kenneth Suzawa out of Fresno City College in the fourth round (the January portion of the draft was discontinued after the 1986 session). Suzawa had at one time been considered a legitimate prospect, he was drafted twice before but had promised his parents he would work towards earning a college degree. Before he joined Bend he was drafted a fourth time, this time by the military, and never played professional baseball. The Rainbows made two more selections in the January Secondary round, then in the June draft they participated in rounds 4 through 10. Only four of the draftees suited up with the Rainbows. Bend took part in both the January and June drafts again in 1971 and signed five of their picks. In two years of taking part in the draft the Bend Rainbows had little success with the twenty selections they made. None of the picks ever progressed to Hawaii, let alone to the majors. The most notable of Bend's draftees was Portland State catcher Tom Trebelhorn, who was selected in the sixth round of the June 1970 draft. After five years of playing in the minors he started a managerial career that eventually led to stints managing the Brewers and the Cubs. He was nowhere near being the most famous player to put on a Rainbows uniform, though. That honor goes to actor Kurt Russell, who signed on with Bend in 1971 to start off a brief professional baseball career.

After two seasons of financial losses (even with a movie star on the roster) the Bend Rainbows were sold and moved to Seattle. The Hawaii Islanders continued with their affiliation strategy and partnered with the Walla Walla club for 1972, but scrapped the plan following the season. Other Independent teams came and went over the coming years, but it would be almost two decades before another one participated in the amateur draft.

Boise Hawks (1989)

The city of Boise, Idaho, had been the home to minor league teams on and off again going back to the beginning of the 1900s, but never was able to keep a team for an extended time (1946 to 1963 being the longest stretch).

In late 1986 the Northwest League's Tri-City Triplets were purchased from George Brett and his two brothers by a group headed by Mal Fichman. Fichman was a jack-of-all-trades in independent minor league baseball, having spent time as a manager, general manager, part-owner, and scout with a number of different unaffiliated teams. At the time Fichman was in the middle of what would become an almost legendary career in independent minor league baseball. Much of his renown comes from his work as a manager, and later as a talent evaluator, helping major league teams scout the independent leagues. But his most well-known achievement might be when he managed a team incognito in a mascot outfit after being ejected from a game in 1989. The new ownership group moved the team from Richland, Washington, to Idaho, where they were rebranded as the Boise Hawks. The Triplets had been a shared co-op club, receiving players from more than one major-league organization, but the Hawks would be unaffiliated.

In 1989, with additional owners in place, the team built a \$1.7 million dollar stadium in hopes of someday moving up to AA or even AAA classification, and they were looking to put together a winning team to help bring in fans to the new location. Over his years in the minors Fichman had become familiar with baseball draft rule 15.16 and knew it could be a quick way to add talent to the team. The team surprised major league clubs by announcing they would take part in the 1989 draft, as many major league officials had completely forgotten that was even an option. In an effort to not rock the boat and ruin a chance of a future affiliation, Hawks majority owner Bill Pereira put some guidelines in place. Although the team would start drafting at the top of the fourth round, they would not compete with the major league teams for what would be considered fourth-round talent. "We'll take what's probably the equivalent of a 20th round pick. But it will still be someone that can help us immensely." Fichman stated. Pereira also had the team contact possible draft choices ahead of time and explain the offer being made, and the Hawks would not draft any player who would refuse to play for them. With these stipulations in place Boise ended up making selections in only the fourth and fifth rounds of the draft. Paul Cluff, a second baseman from Brigham Young University, and Darrell Mac-Millan, a catcher from Kennesaw State University in Georgia, each played only one season in Boise, and both were out of organized baseball within two years.

The draft plans for the Hawks may not have worked out, but the new stadium still paid off as hoped. The Hawks drew over 127,000 fans that year, and next season became a Class-A affiliate for the California Angels, eliminating the need to join in any future drafts.

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Miami Miracle (1990)

Mike Veeck joined the Miami Miracle of the Class-A Florida State League as their president in 1990, working with an ownership group that was headed by Marv Goldklang, and also included celebrities Bill Murray and Jimmy Buffet. Like his father, famed major league owner Bill Veeck, Mike had a knack for coming up with new and innovative ways to keep crowds coming to games. Promotions for Miracle games included Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle night, in-game haircuts, and Jericho the Wonder Dog, one of the earliest “ball dogs” (though Veeck swore off any more Disco Demolition Nights like the infamous one he came up with in 1979 for the Chicago White Sox). Also like his father, Mike Veeck wasn’t afraid to ruffle some feathers with other owners if it meant bringing a better product to the fans. Whereas the Boise Hawks stated their intentions to find lower-level minor leaguers that they could use to improve their club, Goldklang and Veeck intended to go all out for the best talent that was available, and they had set aside \$250,000 to do so.

Goldklang was an attorney by trade and had spotted the verbiage in the current Major League/Minor League agreement that would allow the Miracle to take part in the draft. After much discussion with the major league offices, it was agreed that the team would be allowed to join in the draft that June. The Miracle were looking to use the draft to improve upon their 17-61 record, but they also knew that a team filled with prospects would draw interest from major league teams who could either purchase players for their organizations, or possibly even partner up with the Miracle as a minor league affiliate. Without a scouting department in place to rely on like the major league teams had, Goldklang enlisted the help of his son, Jeff, in tirelessly tracking down video footage of players, talking to college coaches, and traveling to college tournaments around the country in order to evaluate possible draft targets and create a player board to use in the draft.

The Miracle owned the first pick in the fourth round of the draft and made some waves by selecting Stanford University star outfielder Paul Carey. The Most Outstanding Player of the 1987 College World Series, and Stanford’s all-time home run leader, Carey had been drafted twice before and was on the radar of several teams to be drafted again in the June 1990 draft. Stanford was in the midst of the College World Series when Carey learned he had been drafted – not by a major league club but by the independent Miracle. After Carey

found out who the Miracle even were, he then had trouble contacting anyone in the team’s office to verify his selection. But after the uneven introduction to the Miami team Carey came around to the idea of starting his pro career with the unaffiliated Single-A level club. The team could offer him a signing bonus that was competitive with what major league teams were offering for fourth-round picks, but the Miracle also offered him a chance to start right away at a higher level of pro ball, versus taking part in a rookie league. And as Carey stated, “Fort Lauderdale isn’t such a bad place to be. I could be stuck in the Midwest or someplace”.

Many of the Miracle’s other draftees must have felt the same way, as 13 of Miami’s 16 draft picks signed (though a few of them were sent on option to play with another independent team, the Salt Lake City Trappers in the Pioneer League). Also joining the Miracle that season were 1st team All-American third baseman Greg D’Alexander from Arkansas, and West Coast Conference player of the year Miah Bradbury, a catcher from Loyola Marymount. Miracle owner Goldklang later relayed a story to baseball researcher Stew Thornely regarding their picks from that draft day:

*The draft was completed by conference call, and apparently one team forgot to place their phone on mute. After the Miracle made another attention-grabbing pick an executive from another team was heard to mutter “The Miracle is having a better f***ing draft than the Mets!”*

Veeck seemed very pleased with the roster additions as well when speaking to reporters after the draft. “I can talk about the ball club now,” Veeck said. “I’ve got a big mouth and now I have something to flap about.” Carey was considered to be the prize catch of Miami’s draft at the time, but the real jewel ended up being their selection in the sixth round, shortstop Mike Lansing, a four-year starter from Wichita State. After two seasons playing for the Miracle, Lansing was sold to the Montreal Expos and was on his way to a nine-year major league career, playing with Montreal, Colorado, and Boston. Top pick Paul Carey ended up being the only other player from Miami’s draft haul to appear in the majors, eventually playing in 18 games for the Baltimore Orioles in 1993.

Erie Sailors (1990)

While the Miami Miracle drew quite a bit of attention at the 1990 draft, the news that the New York-Penn League’s Erie Sailors also took part in the draft flew in under the radar. Erie had been a Class-A affiliate for Baltimore in 1989, but the Orioles declined to keep a team in the short-season league the following season. Erie continued on as an independent team and brought on none

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other than Mal Fichman to be their manager, the same man who spearheaded Boise's involvement in the draft just the year before. Fichman had moved on after Boise became affiliated with the Angels, and he brought his interest in rule 15.16 with him to Erie. The Sailors didn't make nearly the same splash in the draft as the Miracle had, they made only one selection compared to Miami's sixteen picks. After the Miracle picked Carey, the Sailors chose next and selected Brigham Young outfielder Gary Daniels. Daniels had just completed an outstanding season for the Cougars which included winning the WAC conference triple crown, setting a team record for hits, being named WAC player of the year, and being named Third Team All American by Baseball America. But after playing one season for the Sailors, Daniels was out of pro-

fessional baseball.

Following the 1990 season the major and minor leagues settled on a working agreement that considerably altered the relationship between the two sides. The agreement changed the number of minor league teams that would be affiliated, how players would be paid, requirements for minor league facilities, and other facets of player-development contracts. Barely noticed among the sweeping changes of the new agreement was the removal of baseball draft rule 15, section 16, from the baseball rule-book. Independent minor league teams would no longer be able to take part in the amateur draft, a decision undoubtedly influenced by the Miami Miracle's participation in the 1990 edition. Thus, a relatively trivial, but interesting, chapter in the draft's history was closed.

Surprisingly, Indy Vets in MLB Camps Top One Year Ago

by Bob Wirz

Since the 2020 minor league season was a near total loss because of the pandemic and Independent Baseball players were not being purchased by major league organizations during that period one might have expected a sizable drop in the number former unaffiliated players invited to major league spring training camps this time around.

It is not so. The annual research by *IndyBaseballChatter.com* reveals a slight increase from 51 players one year ago to 53 in '21. Twenty-three of the players, including 19 of the 45 pitchers on the entire list, started spring training on major league 40-man rosters while the other 30 were non-roster invitees.

Two of the more interesting invitees were left-handed hurlers Andrew Albers and Scott Kazmir, both hoping to get back to the majors after time away.

Albers, now 35, has spent the last three seasons with the Orix Buffaloes organization in Japan. Albers, who got his original major league opportunity after a stunning 3-0, 17-save, 1.40 ERA for Quebec in the Can-Am League more than a decade ago (2010), is back with Minnesota. He broke into the majors with the Twins in 2013 and now is in his third stint with the team. He also has pitched for Toronto and Seattle, compiling a 7-6, 4.10 record with 18 of his 26 appearances in starting roles.

Kazmir's invitation from San Francisco was somewhat of a surprise in that he is now 37 and has not pitched in the

majors since 2016 (Dodgers). He dazzled with all-star talent during his career before injuries got in the way. Although always highly regarded, he spent time with Sugar Land, TX of the Atlantic League back in 2012.

Typically, up to two dozen of the onetime Independent players will be on opening day major league rosters and another 10 or so will be called up at some time during the season.

The entire lineup of former Independent players in major league camps this spring, including both their current major league and onetime unaffiliated clubs:

Pitchers (45)--#Fernando Abad, Baltimore (Long Island, Atlantic League); #Andrew Albers, Minnesota (Quebec, Can-Am League, and Lancaster, Atlantic); *Nick Anderson, Tampa Bay (Rockford and Frontier Greys, Frontier League); #Anthony Bender, Miami (Sioux City, American Association); #*Ben Bracewell, Oakland (River City, Frontier); +John Brebbia, San Francisco (Sioux Falls and Laredo, American Association); #*Jacob Condra-Bogan, Washington (Washington, Frontier); #Jake Cousins, Milwaukee (Schaumburg, Frontier); #Chase DeJong, Pittsburgh (Sugar Land, Atlantic, and Team Skeeters, Constellation Energy League); Ross Detwiler, Miami (York, Atlantic); *Randy Dobnak, Minnesota (Utica, United Shore League); #Nick Duron, Seattle (Southern Illinois, Frontier); #Dietrich Enns, Tampa Bay (Joliet, City of Champions Cup); #Luis Garcia, New York-AL (Newark, Can-Am); #Zac Grotz, Boston (York and Bridgeport, Atlantic, and Washington); #Junior Guerra, Los Angeles-AL (Wichita, American Association); Rich Hill, Tampa Bay,

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(Long Island); *James Hoyt, Miami (Wichita, American Association, and Yuma and Edinburg, North American League); #D. J. Johnson, Cleveland (Traverse City, Frontier); #Scott Kazmir, San Francisco (Sugar Land); #Mike Kickham, Los Angeles-NL (Kansas City, American Association); #Brandon Kintzler, Philadelphia (St. Paul, American Association, and Winnipeg, when it was in the Northern League); #Ian Krol, Tampa Bay (Joliet, COCC); #Parker Markel, San Diego (Sioux City); *Chris Martin, Atlanta (Grand Prairie, American Association); Tyler Matzek, Atlanta (Texas, American Association); Chris Mazza, Tampa Bay (Southern Maryland, Atlantic, and San Rafael, Pacific Association); #Ian McKinney, Seattle (Sioux City); #Brian Moran, Tampa Bay (Bridgeport); *#Kaleb Ort, Boston (Joliet, Frontier); *James Paxton, Seattle (Grand Prairie); *Trevor Richards, Tampa Bay (Gateway, Frontier); *Tanner Roark, Toronto (Southern Illinois, Frontier); Chaz Roe, Tampa Bay (Laredo); #Zac Rosscup, Colorado (Lightning, CEL); *Max Scherzer, Washington (Fort Worth, American Association); #D. J. Snelten, Chicago-NL (Chicago, American Association); Robert Stock, Chicago-NL (New Jersey, Can-Am, and Normal, Frontier); Caleb Thielbar, Minnesota (St. Paul); #Matt Tomshaw, Chicago-AL (Fargo-Moorhead, American Association); Justin Topa, Milwaukee (Rockland, Can-Am); Nik Turley, Oakland (Somerset, Atlantic); Marcus Walden, Boston (Lancaster); #Austin Warner, St. Louis (River City); *Eric Yardley, Milwaukee (Trinidad and Taos, Pecos).

Catcher (1)--Yermin Mercedes, Chicago-AL (Douglas and White Sands, Pecos League, and San Angelo, United League).

Infielders (5)--#Kody Clemens, Detroit (Texas, CEL); Jose Martinez, New York-NL (Rockford); John Nogowski, St. Louis (Sioux City); #Brandon Snyder, Washington (Southern Maryland); Ildemaro Vargas, Chicago-NL (Bridgeport).

Outfielders (2)--David Peralta, Arizona (Amarillo and Wichita, American Association, and Rio Grande Valley, North American); #Dillon Thomas, Seattle (Texas).

*Started career in an Independent league;

+Is on 60-day injured list.

Submitted by Bob Brady

Several years ago, a member of the Boston Braves Historical Association set out to reproduce Boston Braves minor league affiliate baseball caps. The focus was on the classic color and design adopted by the parent in 1946. The venture did not reach fruition but the samples that were produced were donated to the BBHA and reside in its archives. Pictured below from top to bottom (left) are the ball caps of the Boston Braves (National League), Hartford Chiefs (Eastern League), Pawtucket Slaters (New England League), (right) Eau Claire Bears (Northern League), Ft. Lauderdale Braves (Florida International League) and Quebec Braves (Provincial League).



NOTICE
Knot-Hole Gang
Until new Grandstand is completed, and until further notice, your admission tickets will not be good for any ball games at Katy Park.
WACO BASEBALL ASSOCIATION

The Waco News-Tribune Jun 30, 1926

Just Another Game At Altitude

September 18, 1886: Leadville Blues 20, Topeka Capitals 7 at Leadville Colorado

by Jim Wohlenhaus

The 1886 Western League was a non-classified minor league which included teams in Denver (Mountain Lions), Leadville (Blues), Leavenworth (Soldiers), Lincoln (Tree Planters), St. Joseph (Reds) and Topeka (Capitals). On September 18, 1886, in the penultimate game of the season, the Topeka club played the Leadville club in Leadville Colorado. Leadville is officially listed at 10,152 above sea level, almost twice as high as Denver with no humidior. However, in this game the ball was definitely dead.

This is one of a very few games found with full play-by-play printed in the newspaper, the Leadville Herald Democrat of September 19, 1866. This game had no bearing on the Western League final standings, it was just the penultimate game of the season for Leadville. At the beginning of play Leadville had a record of 38 win and 40 losses, while Topeka was five games behind at 34 wins and 44 losses. The Western League in 1886 played an 80-game schedule.

The story of the game will come from the description provided by the Herald Democrat, with some of the phrases used by the newspaper quoted, but without endnotes

Leadville, the home team, won the coin toss and elected to bat first. Arthur Hull, third baseman, led off and the newspaper said, "Hull waited patiently and was given first on balls". In 1886, it required six called balls to receive a walk. The next batter, right fielder Lou Meyers, hit into a 6-4-3 double play and Alex Voss, playing center field, struck out.

Topeka scored twice, both unearned, in the bottom of the first. The leadoff batter, Moore (no first name given), playing center field, walked. Moore immediately tried to steal second base and was safe on a throwing error by the catcher, Duke Jantzen. When James Flynn, the third baseman and second batter singled, Moore scored. Leach Maskrey, the second baseman then hit into a force play to shortstop, eliminating Flynn. The left fielder, John Fogarty, then flied to left, Maskrey holding first. Ren Deagle playing first base, walked, forcing Maskrey to second. While the pitcher, Pettiford (no first name given) was batting, Maskrey attempted to steal third base and again, Jantzen made a wild throw and Maskrey scored.

Pettiford fouled out to the catcher.

First baseman Cooney Bowers led off the second inning by grounding out to second base. The pitcher, Ed Macon, followed with the same results. "Jantzen lifted the sphere over the fence for two bases". This happened often in this era, if the grounds were of a size which only allowed a short distance to one or all the outfield fences. A special grounds rule could be declared by the home team indicating the portion of the fence that was only two bases if the ball was hit over it. Briggs (no first name given) playing second base and George Bright, his keystone partner, both singled and Jantzen scored. Billy Klusman, the left fielder, struck out.

The Capitals in the second sent up Farmer Weaver, playing short stop and he flied to right field. Jack Kenyon the catcher then hit a double. Kenyon tried to steal third and left second a little too early as Macon threw him out at third. Blanchard (no first name given) the right fielder struck out.

Hull, first up in the third, reached on an error by Weaver at short. However, Hull was caught napping and was picked off first by Pettiford. Meyers then walked and Voss hit a single sending him to second. Bowers, Macon and Jantzen all hit doubles in succession scoring Meyers, Voss, and Bowers. Briggs and Bright grounded out to third and second, respectively. The score after two and one-half innings was **Leadville five, Topeka two.**

Topeka couldn't do much in their half of the third and went out quietly. However, Leadville made two more runs in the fourth. Klusman walked but was forced out at second by Hull. Meyers singled, and Voss reached first on six balls, loading the bases. "Bowers sent in Hull and Meyers by a fine sacrifice hit." In the notes of the game the Herald Democrat stated, "The spectators in the grandstand were wild over Meyer's steal (of) home from second base." Another note stated that "Meyers ... succeeded yesterday in making a play that is often attempted, but has not, up to this time been accomplished this season. It was scoring a run without going to third base, that is, when the umpire's attention was directed to a play at first base he ran from second in a straight line for home." It appears from the two notes that the official scorer gave Meyers a stolen base for this, maybe two as the box score is silent on stolen bases. Macon next singled and stole second while Jantzen struck out. **Leadville seven, Topeka two.**

Topeka's fourth started with a homerun by Deagle. Evidently not all hits over the fence were doubles, or this one was inside the park, the paper is silent on that. The following batters grounded to short, singled and popped into a double play, 6-3. Leadville's fifth inning was what

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losing teams do often, a single, pickoff at first and two strikeouts.

The fifth for the Capitals started inauspiciously as Blanchard struck out. Moore reached on an error by Briggs and immediately stole second. Flynn walked, Maskrey hit to Bright who threw to Hull to get Moore, but Hull dropped the ball, loading the basis. Fogarty scored Moore on a squeeze play and Flynn scored on a subsequent wild pitch. Deagle struck out. Two runs scored without a hit, score now **Leadville seven, Topeka five.**

Errors continued to plague the infielders in the top of the sixth when Weaver made errors on ground balls by Hull and Meyers. Voss then hit to Flynn who forced Hull. Bowers followed with a three-run home run over the fence to clear the bases. Macon struck out and Weaver made another error on Jantzen's grounder and Briggs forced him at second. Three runs on one hit, score now **Leadville 10, Topeka five.**

Topeka's sixth consisted of a single by Pettiford, a short to second to first double play by Weaver, a walk to Kenyon, and Blanchard finally got wood on the ball, but it was a grounder to the pitcher.

In the seventh inning, Leadville pretty much put the game away. Bright walked and stole second, Klusman drove him in with a single and Hull singled as well. Meyers hit a double scoring both runners. Voss made an out which allowed Meyers to score. The out may have been what would be called today a long sacrifice fly, which was not recognized in 1886. That was four runs and all the scoring for the inning as Bowers struck out and although Macon was safe on an error to second, "Maskrey made a splendid catch of Jantzen's seemingly safe hit".

For the visitors in the seventh, Moore started if off with a walk and Flynn struck out. Maskrey was safe on what turned out to be a three-base muff to second which scored Moore and put Maskrey on third. When Fogarty made an out, Maskrey scored, then Deagle grounded to third. Score: **Leadville 14, Topeka seven.**

The Blues eighth inning was relatively mild as Briggs led off with a single and Bright flied out. But Pettiford threw a wild pitch, allowing Briggs to go to third, where he scored on a single by Klusman. Hull singled sending Klusman to second, where both died as the next two batters grounded to Flynn at third and were forced out there.

The eighth inning for the Kansans started with Pettiford making it to second on a throwing error and advanced to third on Weaver's groundout to short, but went no further as Kenyon flied out and Blanchard struck out for the

third time in the game. Score: **Leadville 15, Topeka seven.**

Under today's rules, Leadville would have never batted in the ninth. But they did and extended their lead by another five runs as nine batters went to the plate. Bowers grounded out but Macon tripled. Jantzen was out on a tipped third strike. Briggs then hit a grounder to Weaver at short and thinking Macon was going home, threw to the catcher, but Macon scrambled back to third and Briggs was safe at first. Bright then doubled in Macon and put Briggs on third. It seems Leadville thought their lead was safe and were practicing station to station running. However, Pettiford balked, and Briggs scored while Bright had to take third during Klusman's plate appearance, which ended with a single, batting in Bright. Hull then hit a home run, scoring himself and Klusman. Meyers singled but Voss flied out. Five unnecessary runs by Leadville.

Topeka in the ninth went very quietly with two pop ups to the catcher and a fly to left field. Final score, **Leadville 20, Topeka seven.** Following is the box score as printed in the Herald Democrat.

LEADVILLES.									
	A.	B.	R.	I.	B.	P.	O.	A.	B.
Hull, 3 b.....	0	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	2
Meyers, r. f.....	0	4	3	2	0	0	0	0	0
Voss, c. f.....	5	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bowers, 1 b.....	0	2	2	8	0	0	0	0	0
Macon, p.....	0	2	3	1	8	0	0	0	0
Jantzen, c.....	6	1	2	8	1	2	0	0	0
Briggs, 2 b.....	8	2	2	8	2	2	0	0	0
Bright, s. f.....	0	2	2	1	7	0	0	0	0
Klusman, l. f.....	5	2	3	2	0	0	0	0	0
Totals.....	52	20	21	27	20	6			

TOPEKA.									
	A.	B.	R.	I.	B.	P.	O.	A.	B.
Moore, c. f.....	4	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Flynn, 3 b.....	3	2	1	3	2	1	0	0	0
Maskrey 2 b.....	5	2	1	5	0	1	0	0	0
Fogarty, 1. f.....	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Deagle, 1 b.....	3	1	1	9	1	0	0	0	0
Pettiford, p.....	4	0	1	1	11	0	0	0	0
Kenyon, c.....	4	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Blanchard, r. f.....	3	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0
Totals.....	34	7	6	27	24	7			

SCORE BY INNINGS.									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Leadville.....	0	1	4	2	0	3	4	1	5-20
Topeka.....	2	0	0	1	2	0	2	0	0-7

SUMMARY.

Runs earned—Leadville 10, Topeka, 1.
Two base hits—Macon, Kenyon, Jantzen 2,
Bower, Bright.
Three base hit—Macon.
Home runs—Hull, Bowers, Dragle.
Total bases on hits—Leadville 31, Topeka, 10.
First base on called balls—By Macon, 6; by Pettiford, 4.
Left on bases—Leadville, 7; Topeka, 4.
Struck out—By Macon, 6; by Pettiford, 6.
Double plays—Bright to Bowers, 1; Hull to
Bright to Bowers, 1; Weaver to Hankroy to Dou-
gle, 1.
Wild pitches—Macon, 1.
Time of game—1:35.
Umpire—M. Hurley.

SOURCES

Leadville Herald Democrat, September 19, 1886, "Still They Win".

Baseball-Reference.org

My own score card-initiated post game

Minor League Contraction: A Former Clubbie's View

By Greg Larson

Between the 2020 and 2021 baseball seasons, about 40 minor league teams have lost their affiliation status with Major League Baseball. That brings the total number of minor league teams to 120.

Baseball fans across America have hailed MiLB contraction as another [soulless, money-centric move](#) in a long-running destruction of baseball in small-town America. That perspective is a selfish, fan-only view of minor league contraction.

As a former clubhouse attendant for a minor league baseball team, I saw the struggles in the minors. The decrepit stadiums. Long bus rides. Players not having money for rent. Based on that experience, I can see that fewer minor league teams means fewer players and fewer stadiums. Fewer players means MLB can pay its minor leaguers better salaries. Fewer stadiums means MLB can maintain quality control over the facilities where their employees train, work, eat, and, yes, sometimes sleep.

Perfect example: the Frederick Keys used to be a high-A affiliate for the Baltimore Orioles. They played at Harry Grove Stadium, a 5,400-seater near I-70 in Maryland. Their stadium front office was a portable trailer they

put behind the clubhouse. The players were fed leftover concession food after games. All in all, it was an embarrassing facility that no self-respecting \$10 billion company would want associated with its brand. With the sweeping changes to MiLB, affiliated teams must maintain certain facility standards in order to keep their minor league status. That means no parking lot front offices. As such, the Orioles cut ties with the Frederick Keys and they're no longer an affiliated minor league baseball team. Rightfully so. There are stories like that all over the country.

"But that's bad for fans in Frederick and other small towns who miss out on minor league ball!"

BS. Here's some context:

In 1950, there were 214 affiliated minor league baseball teams. The Brooklyn Dodgers alone had 24 affiliates. Did it ruin baseball when we went from 214 minor league teams in 1950 to the 160 we had in 2020, before the most recent contraction? Did it ruin small town baseball when the Cotton States League folded in 1955? Did the death of the Rock Hill Chiefs in 1968 signal the death of baseball's soul? No. I lived in Rock Hill for 4 years and I never knew there was ever a minor league team there.

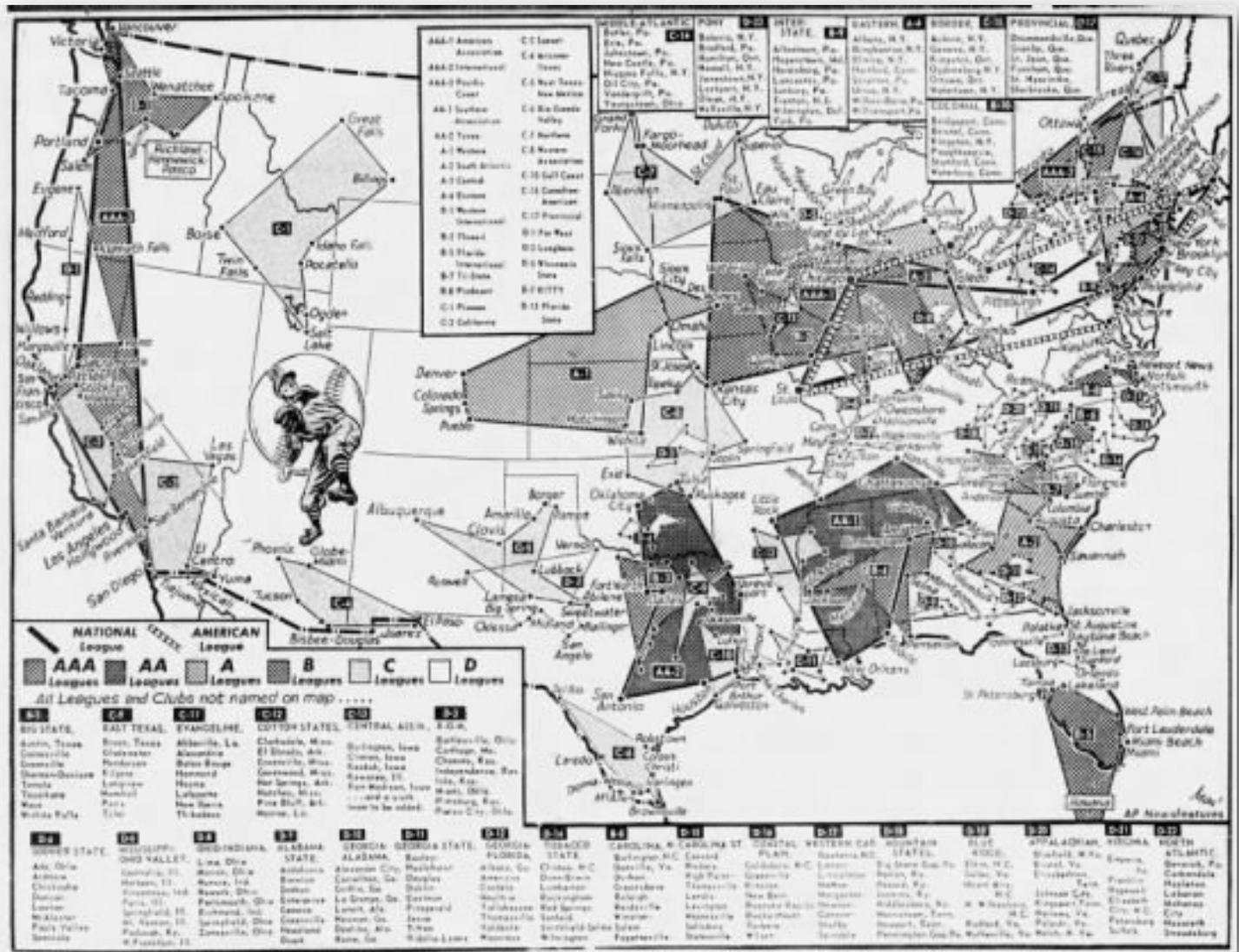
The game transforms, and the old guard screams against it every time. Then, a few years later, we all forget.

What's more, minor league player salaries have gone up with the 2021 contraction. For High/Low-A players, the weekly minimum pay rose from \$290 to \$500. For Double-A, the minimum rose from \$350 to \$600. For Triple-A, the minimum rose from \$502 to \$700. Now, let's be clear: those are still disrespectfully low wages for professional baseball players, and Rob Manfred and the MLB owners like to throw out fancy percentages to cover that fact. "We've increased minor league salaries between 38-72%!" It sounds good, and it's technically true, but that's like saying "We're increasing the federal minimum wage by 50%!" but you're just going from \$7.25 an hour to \$11 an hour. It's still not enough, but it's a step in the right direction that MLB owners wouldn't have made without contraction.

Could owners have increased salaries without contraction? Sure. Would they have? We have decades of stagnant minor leaguer salaries to suggest the answer: *no*. MLB getting rid of 40 minor league teams is like a rich parent who gives its youngest child up for adoption. We keep screaming, "You have enough money to take care of *all* of your children!" And MLB is saying, "Yes, but we don't want to."

Who are we to suggest a negligent parent keep a child it doesn't want?

1950 Map of Minor League Teams



For a better resolution image, download the clipping:
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Beating the Bushes

*A publication of the Society for American Baseball Research
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