Above the Fruited Plain

Baseball in the Rocky Mountain West

Edited by Thomas L. Altherr

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INTRODUCTION

by Thomas L. Altherr

IN 1893, WHILE VISITING PIKE'S PEAK near Colorado Springs, Katharine Lee Bates penned the lyrics for her famous anthem, "America the Beautiful," which included some of the most famous phrases of patriotic affection. But did Bates know that the previous year women in Denver had played a game of baseball before 6,000 fans? Was she aware that miners and farmers across the mountains and plains and intervales had been playing ball at least since the early 1860s? Or that four years earlier John Montgomery Ward of the New York Giants had toured through Denver? Had she noticed that Denver had a thriving amusement park that served as a stage for baseball matches? Could she foresee, in her visionary mode, the championship teams and major league caliber players, the region would produce? Probably like many Americans, she was unaware of the persistence of the National Pastime in the expansive region of the Rocky Mountain West.

Because major league baseball, except for exhibition games, came late to the Rocky Mountain West, arriving only ten years ago with the Colorado Rockies, many Americans who interpret baseball mainly through the focus of the major leagues have overlooked the vitality of baseball in this area. Even though baseball out here has been, until 1993, on the minor league, semi-professional, college, and amateur levels, Rocky Mountain Westerners have been no less enthusiastic for the game. Almost as soon as Easterners arrived, as civilians or as military, the game came along to the territories. Several players, such as Smoky Joe Wood in Ouray and a host of minor leaguers in the Western League, sharpened their baseball skills in the Rocky Mountains. Some players who made their mark elsewhere eventually moved to the area. Two Negro League standouts, Oliver Marcell and Byron Johnson, have chosen Denver as their home. Men and women, boys and girls, of all races and ethnic groups have participated in the longtime rituals of the sport.

The following articles and illustrations reinforce these points from multiple perspectives. We have obtained research and writing on most levels of baseball in the region. The essays range from the more nostalgic to the more analytical. Some gush with affection for the game; others take a harder look, for example, one takes Ken Burns to task for implying a baseball-type game existed in the Rockies as early as 1806. One article challenges the commonplace assumptions about the role baseball played for immigrants, particularly for Japanese internment camp players. Another essay delineates a Colorado resident's crucial contributions to the fanciful Abner Doubleday story about baseball's origins. Sure to stir up the debate again, two geographers and a physicist supply some provocative findings about the physics of Coors Field. If we accept Ron Briley's claim, the *best* baseball in America during the strike-afflicted season of 1981 was being played right down the interstate in Albuquerque. And, lest words fail to make our case, a generous sampling of photos and illustrations, many of them from Mark Rucker's seemingly endless trove, provides the visual evidence of the rich history of Rocky Mountain baseball.

Denver's Original River Front Park

Baseball On the Bank of the South Platte

by Tom Noel

ONE OF DENVER'S most energetic and flamboyant boosters brought baseball and an amusement park to the confluence of the South Platte River and Cherry Creek, the city's birthplace. Before turning his attention to creating a baseball park, John Brisben Walker made a fortune in real estate and started to build the Colorado Summer White House that is now in ruins atop Mt. Falcon west of Morrison, Colorado. At about the same time, Walker, working with his son John Brisben Walker, Jr., acquired Red Rocks Park on the west side of Morrison and converted it to an outdoor concert gardens and amusement park, complete with a funicular railway up Mt. Morrison. Subsequently Red Rocks has become a famous Denver Mountain Park and Outdoor Amphitheater. Walker also developed northwest Denver's fashionable Berkeley neighborhood and donated the land for Regis University.

Walker's pride and joy, however, was the grand amusement park he built at the confluence of Cherry Creek and the South Platte. He opened River Front Park on July 3, 1887 along the cityside bank of the Platte. The park of approximately fifty acres stretched from 15th to 20th Streets between the railroad tracks and the river. It included a half-mile race track with a grandstand and horse stables that formed a barrier against the railroad tracks to the east. Denverites used this area not only for horse racing, but also for bicycles, horseless carriages and the city's first rodeo.

Two decades before Denver's first National Western Stock Show opened in 1906, River Front Park hosted the October 13-15, 1887 "Grand Cowboy Tournament," which featured roping, riding, branding, bronco busting, and horsemanship. The 8,000 spectators, according to the October 14, 1887 *Denver Republican*, "were packed like sardines on the unroofed amphitheater and manned twenty deep around the big corral. Every now and then a board would become too heavily loaded with men and boys who persisted in climbing on it and down would come the whole row with a crash."

The 1887 Colorado rodeo champion, a cowhand from Meeker, Colorado, was described by the *Republican* as "all that the Eastern imagination of the typical cowboy could picture—new white sombrero, Mexican saddle, leather-fringed chaperejos, flaming red kerchief, belt and ivory handled revolver."

On the riverbank of his park, Walker harbored a side-wheel steamboat and advertised that, for mere fifty cents, travelers could board for daily three p.m. departures for Brighton. So said the *Rocky Mountain News*, but the first such excursion ended abruptly when the steamboat beached on a sand bar. Walker thereupon dammed the South Platte River at 19th Street, creating a lake on which the side-wheel paddler puffed peacefully. Families frolicked on the ship, savoring the band music which floated over the water and bathed the riverbanks. In 1891, Walker's steamboat became a showboat, the H.M.S. Pinafore, with performances of Gilbert and Sullivan's nautical opera about the exploits of the Queen's Navy.

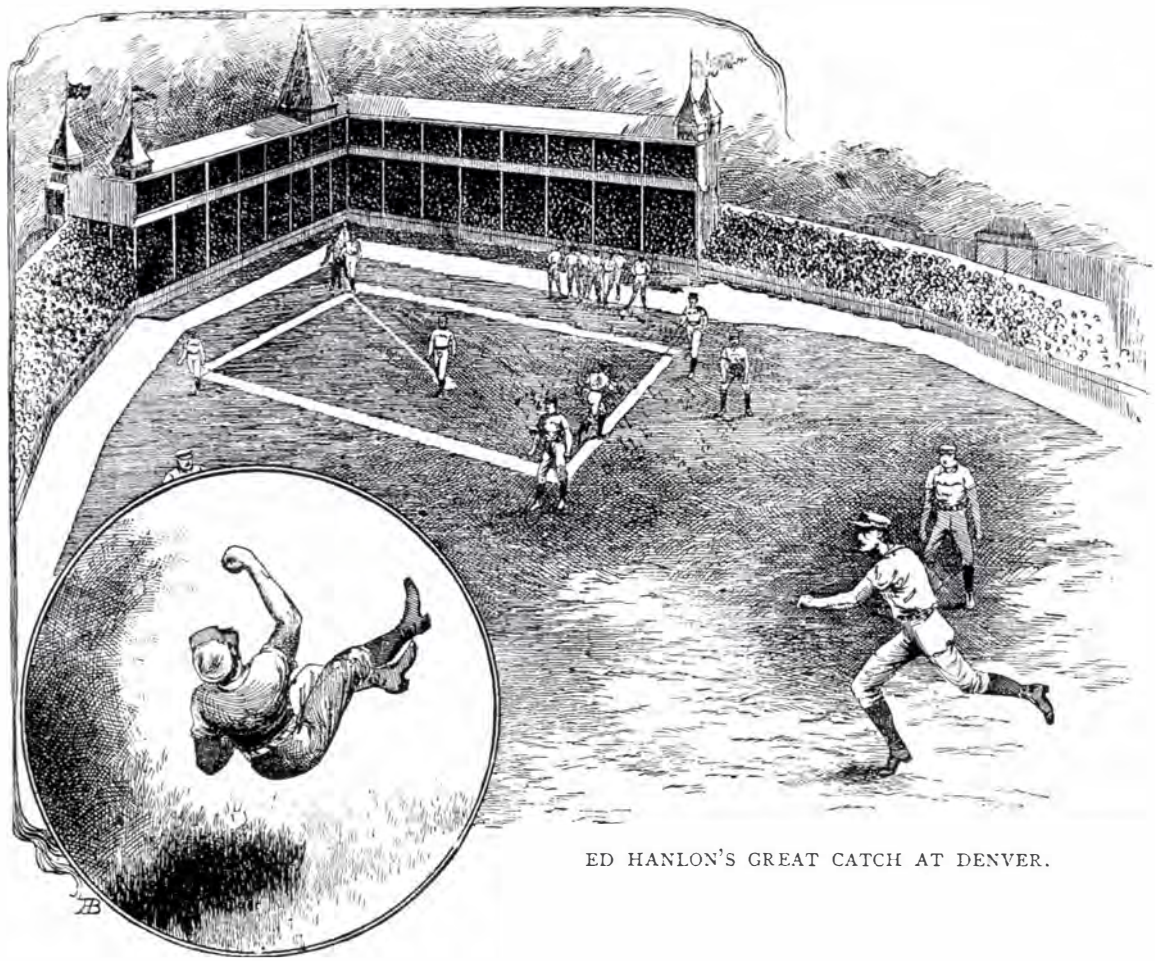
Band performances at River Front were heralded by the *Rocky Mountain News* as "the greatest musical event in the history of Colorado." They may have been among the loudest with some five hundred local singers, a brass band, cannon and—on July 4th—the town's biggest barrage of fireworks. On other summer afternoons and evenings, River Front's bandstand reverberated with the "William Tell Overture" and "Il Trovatore." The "Incomparable" Gilmore's fifty-five-piece band used real artillery to give audiences the biggest possible bang for their bucks.

The grassy center field of River Front Park's race track was converted to a baseball diamond which replaced the old Ford Ball Park at 32nd and Larimer as the home for the city's first professional team, the Denvers. Organized in 1885, the Denvers shared ticket sale profits with Walker, whose grandstand had first-row box seats that each held twelve people and wooden bleachers that held hundreds more. Twenty flagpoles rose about the stands as did cupolas decorated with flags and bunting.

By moving into the River Front Grandstand, professional baseball players could attract more paying fans. By 1890, these pioneer professional athletes made around $400 for a fifty-three-game season—a salary comparable to that of full-time miners and factory workers. River Front Park hosted pioneer baseball games between Denver's best teams and visitors such as the Chicago White Stockings. Walker encouraged Denver teams by putting a keg of beer at each base. Every base hit, advance, or steal earned that Denver player a drink. The beer kegs were rolled off the field, of course, when the opposing team lined up to bat.

During the winters, Walker ran a toboggan slide from atop the grandstand across the race track and baseball diamond down to the riverbanks. This ten-foot wide slide had three felt-covered toboggan tracks that were squirted on cold nights with water that froze into ice. Electric lights illuminated the toboggan run and bonfires around the park also hurtled down the thousand-foot course at speeds said to approach one hundred miles per hour. After the races, a well-heated retiring room awaited the ladies where hot chocolate and coffee were served. Males presumably retreated to the many nearby saloons, including the Highlands Bar. Now called My Brothers bar, this 1873 saloon at 15th and Platte Streets is Denver's oldest bar still operating on the original site and has long lubricated riverfront residents.

The centerpiece of River Front Park was the Castle of Culture and Commerce, better known as Walker's Castle. This two-story, stout rhyolite edifice sported round and square towers, slit windows, and a crenelated parapet. It stood just south of 16th Street near where the new Riverfront Park was established in 2001. The castle's cultural offerings included music, dance, theater, and literary performances. Commercially, the castle housed the Exposition of Products of Colorado, a display of locally made goods and services. This show opened with a parade featuring local military and fraternal units. Leading



ED HANLON'S GREAT CATCH AT DENVER.

An early newspaper engraving depicts a baseball game played on the racetrack infield at River Front Park.

the parade from downtown to River Front, the Colorado Pioneer's Association, included some members wearing the same hats they had used when crossing the Plains in 1858 and 1859. Among the local exhibitors were Arthur E. Pierce's Book Store, Hewitt Confectioners, Horne Electric Belt Company, and the *Rocky Mountain News*. Other participants displayed minerals from Colorado gold and silver mines, the biggest potatoes, the sweetest sugar beets, the shapeliest honeydew melons, and the tastiest pumpkin pies. Livestock exhibitions at River Front evolved into what is now the National Western Stock Show.

The castle's cultural attractions included an art gallery operated by John D. Howland, a Colorado artist best known for his bronze sculpture soldier who still guards the Colorado State Capitol Building. Along with works of the Denver Artists Club, the gallery had sculptures of Colorado animals: buffalo, burros, and mountain goats carved by the Denver Soap Company. Other artists made and exhibited embroidered cozies used to warm people, tea cups, eggs, and muffins.

Walker's River Front Park also hosted the Denver Ramblers, a bicycle club, who, according to the May 27, 1893 *Rocky Mountain News,* put on

"exceptionally fine exhibitions of trick and fancy wheeling." After these bicycle races and stunts, the club enjoyed music by the Zaccharina Mandolin Club, whistling by Scott Lawrence, tumbling and gymnastics," followed by a smoker where the Ramblers celebrated the day with cigars.

This Ramblers' smoker may have been the last River Front Park gala as the Silver Crash that year brought the penniless—not paying customers—to the riverfront. Walker let the city of Denver use his park as a camp for the unemployed thrown out of work by the close of silver mines and smelters. Denver welcomed these refugees from all over Colorado and tried to get them on their feet again. While two hundred men slept in the grandstand, another four hundred lived in the camps provided by the National Guard. By July of 1893, the city was feeding as many as one thousand people a day at River Front Park.

For the children of the homeless and the poor, the Women's Club of Denver converted the Castle of Culture and Commerce into a day camp, complete with a kindergarten, library, art gallery, and classes in sewing, music, gardening, cooking, and reading. The Women's Club also installed a playground with twelve teeter-totters, ten swings, and three croquet courts. The ladies gave the children coins and urged them to invest in the Penny Provident Fund to learn thrift. A spokeswoman for the Women's Club told the *Denver Times* on January 20, 1901, "To keep these poor and many times neglected children from the streets and the railroad tracks even for a few hours each day under refined and gentle influences might in time change lives."

The ladies were among those who complained about the damage done to River Front Park by the circus which camped and performed there. Ringling Brothers elephants trampled the grass and shrubs and left smelly mini-mountains. Complaints to the city did not, however, keep circuses from staying there in the following years. Ringling Brothers "Biggest Show on Earth" regularly performed at River Front Park through the early 1900s. By 1900, according to the August 5, 1900 *Denver Times*, Ringling Brothers arrived in sixty-five railroad cars carrying twenty-five elephants, one hundred dens and cages of other animals, twelve acres of tents, three hundred performers, and five hundred horses. The star attraction was a "20-ton Elephant Brass band" with six trumpeting elephants "louder than a thousand human band men."

Elephant dung and damage were not all that River Front Park suffered during the 1890s Depression. John and Mary Elitch in 1890 opened Elitch Gardens in North Denver, a far more extravagant amusement park that soon eclipsed River Front.

Walker moved on to New York City, where he bought a struggling little magazine called *Cosmopolitan*. He enriched its contents and reduced its price to ten cents a copy and sold it to William Randolph Hearst for $1.5 million. So John Brisben Walker made his first million with a New York magazine, not Denver's River Front Park.

By 1901, Walker offered to sell River Front to Denver as a city park for $1 million, with a $400,000 rebate if the city would name it "Cosmopolitan" Park to promote his magazine. The city declined. The Northwestern Terminal Company, a subsidiary of David Moffat's Denver, Salt Lake & Pacific Railroad, bought the park in 1903. Moffat used the land to build Moffat Station and other rail facilities. The railroad also leased the old stables and grandstand to traveling circuses, including not only Ringling Brothers, but also Barnum & Bailey, Denver's own Sells Floto Circus, and Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show.

Walker's once regal Castle of Culture and Commerce became a stable. Later the Northwestern Terminal converted it to a laundry for Pullman linen and a washroom for railroad workers, then hay storage. That once grand park, Denver's 1880s pride and joy, sunk into decay and became notorious as a wasteland that Coloradoans began to call "The Bottoms."

Mr. Abner Graves

Colorado's Connection to the Doubleday Myth

by David Block

NO ASSOCIATION BETWEEN DENVER and baseball could be more bizarre than the saga of Abner Graves. The celebrated "witness" to baseball's invention by Abner Doubleday, Graves emerged from anonymity to become a minor Denver celebrity in the first decade of the 20th century. But then his fortunes reversed. Long before the Doubleday story itself unraveled, Graves again became the focus of local attention, but this time the grounds were considerably grimmer. At age ninety, Abner Graves had an argument with his wife, pulled a gun, and shot her dead!

Graves' road to notoriety began when the seventy-one-year-old Denver resident made a business trip to Akron, Ohio, in the spring of 1905. On the morning of April 3rd, while reading in his room at the Thuma Hotel, he spied an article in the local newspaper, the *Beacon-Journal*. The story was entitled "The Origin of the Game of Base Ball" and carried the byline of the famous sporting goods magnate Albert G. Spalding. In the article, Spalding summarized the ongoing controversy between Henry Chadwick, who theorized that baseball evolved from the English game of rounders, and others, including Spalding himself, who believed the game originated in America. He announced the formation of a special commission to settle the question of baseball's ancestry "for all time." Spalding requested "that everyone interested in this subject transmit as soon as possible to Mr. Sullivan (secretary of the commission) any proof, data or informa-

tion he may possess or can secure bearing on this matter."

Graves responded immediately. Placing a sheet of paper in his typewriter, he pecked out a letter to the editor of the *Beacon-Journal*, with a second copy to Sullivan, that offered "data on the subject" of Spalding's article. Here he wrote his immortal words: "The American game of 'Base Ball' was invented by Abner Doubleday of Cooperstown, New York." Graves laid out the now-famous story of how Doubleday, then a student at Cooperstown, but "the same who as General Doubleday won honor at the Battle of Gettysburg," transformed and modernized the old game of town ball, and renamed it base ball. In his letter Graves never actually stated that he had witnessed the "invention" first hand. In fact, the only indication he gave of his own concurrent presence in Cooperstown was a brief mention that he could recollect some of the best players in town and the locations where they played. It is understandable that the old-timer's memories of that long-ago event might have been slightly fuzzy, being that he was only six or seven years old at the time it occurred.

The editor of the *Beacon-Journal* knew a good story when he saw one, and published Graves' letter the next day atop the sports page under the headline: "Abner Doubleday Invented Base Ball." Apparently the Ohio paper lacked national influence in those days, or suffered from limited distribution, for there is no evidence that its big scoop traveled anywhere outside the Akron city limits. The rest of the baseball world would not learn about Graves' amazing testimony until March 20, 1908, nearly three years following the *Beacon-Journal* story, when the Spalding commission finally released its findings.

Meanwhile, on November 17, 1905, in response to a communication from Spalding, Graves wrote a second letter to the commission in which he provided additional information about the Doubleday invention. This time, he placed himself more directly in the middle of the plot, describing how he and a group of friends in Cooperstown were playing marbles when Doubleday approached them and explained the new game of baseball by diagramming it in the dirt with a piece of stick. Graves' inclusion of new details may have been an innocent effort to round out his story, yet it also ushered in a curious tendency to embellish his original tale with each retelling.

By the time of his entry into the debate over baseball's origins, Graves had already lived a long, adventure-filled life. At fourteen he departed Cooperstown for the California gold fields, and then spent much of the next fifty years pursuing a variety of occupations and business schemes. He farmed in Iowa and prospected in Colorado, and by the time he took up permanent residence in Denver in 1894, he had apparently attained modest success as a mine owner and real estate investor. According to historian Phil Goodstein, Graves was twice hospitalized in asylums during his years in Iowa, which suggests that the demons that plagued his final days were already at work long before he wrote the Doubleday letters.

Whatever his mental state, Graves basked in the attention that came his way when Denver discovered his role in unveiling Abner Doubleday as baseball's inventor. Local journalists flocked to interview him, and found him to be a colorful and quotable subject who was not shy about regaling them with stories of Cooperstown, or any of his other past adventures. The news hounds readily accepted whatever Graves told them at face value, reporting even those tales that were of dubious accuracy. For example, the elderly businessman was quoted as saying that, following his travels to California as a forty-niner, he became a rider for the Pony Express in 1852. This was just the kind of Old West yarn that appealed to readers, and the fact that the Pony Express did not actually start up until 1860 was not the kind of detail that anyone would bother checking.

One noted interview with Graves appeared in the *Denver Post* on May 9, 1912. He again recounted his story about the invention of baseball, but the tale had matured in the seven years since he first related it in 1905. No longer was Graves a mere bystander to the event, but as the headline to the interview exclaimed, "Denver Man Played First Baseball Game in History of Sport." Whereas in his earlier accounts Graves had been a little boy at the time of Doubleday's invention, now he had grown to college age. "I was a student at Green College in Cooperstown, New York, at that time," he expounded, "Abner Doubleday, the man who invented the game, if you call it an invention, came to our school and interested us boys in his idea. We went out on the college campus and Doubleday drew out his diagram of his game in the sand." Graves went on to

provide a flood of new details that were not evident in his earlier accounts, and then concluded: "Yes sir, I played in the first baseball game ever played in the United States. I am proud of it."

Clearly Graves was getting so caught up in his baseball fable that he couldn't resist upgrading himself from bit player to leading man. Things had come a long way from the feelings of marginalization he expressed seven years earlier in his second letter to the commission. There he had complained that Doubleday's new game placed him at a disadvantage because it restricted the number of players on each side. He had written: "We smaller boys didn't like it because it shut us out from playing, while town-ball let in everyone who could run and catch flies." By 1912 he had forgotten that inequity, allowing him to proudly, if redundantly, crow: "You know, they don't play ball like they used to. Why, I played in the very first game of ball that was ever played. And that game—well, it was some baseball, young man."

The 1912 article included a photograph of Graves that pictured him looking as cocksure as he sounded. The bearded old-timer was shown with a jaunty homburg on his head, a smirky grin on his face, and a half-smoked cigar sticking out the corner of his mouth. He waved a Chamber of Commerce pennant promoting the state of Colorado. In his interview, Graves had made a point of saying that, even at his advanced age, he was still playing baseball, boasting "I expect, Saturday, to play in the game between the chamber of commerce and the real estate exchange. I guess I'll be shortstop or something like that."

Abner Graves seemed very pleased with the celebrity he gained from the Doubleday myth.

The article also mentioned that during the interview Graves was clutching a copy of the book *The American National Game*. Since Albert Spalding was the author of that famous baseball title, and 1912 was the year of its publication, it is entirely possible the book had been a gift from Spalding to Graves. Certainly Spalding must have felt deep gratitude towards Graves, as the latter's Doubleday story had provided Spalding an attractive figurehead for his crusade to prove baseball's American genesis. Graves' interviewer in 1912 described his subject as "one of the most enthusiastic followers of a baseball game in the country. There are mighty few of them that he misses in Denver, and he is usually seen in the front row of the grandstand, yelling with all of his might for the Grizzlies."

Four years later, when Graves was well into his eighties, he again announced his availability and fitness as a ball player. This came in a letter he wrote to the *Freeman's Journal* of Cooperstown on December 18, 1916. He was responding to an article that appeared in that newspaper a week earlier which proposed that a commemoration of Doubleday's one hundredth birthday be held in 1919. Graves reminded the newspaper's readership that he was one of the "boys that Doubleday showed his completed diagrams and plans of the new game and whom he instructed as helpers to play the first game and test out his plan, and I helped in those games as one of the players." He added: "I think that by all means the celebration be held at the place where the game was first played, and if so held, a game should be played just like those original games were, and if such is done I wish now to enter my name as one of the players." As to his advancing years, Graves acknowledged: "Of course, at that time I will have passed more than a fifth of a lifetime beyond the old time allotment of 'three score years and ten' as a man's life limit, but I expect to be able to run and dodge the balls the opposing players throw at me sufficiently

well so as to make a 'home run' under those old rules of the game."

As an octogenarian, Graves clearly relished playing the role of colorful eccentric, but as the years wore on he grew increasingly irascible and irrational. In 1924, he became embroiled in a bitter quarrel with his second wife, Minnie, who at forty-eight was barely half his age. They were arguing about whether to sell their home, and Graves, in the grips of paranoia, apparently convinced himself that Minnie was trying to poison him. Suddenly, in the midst of their argument, he pulled a gun and shot her four times. Still in a fury when arresting officers arrived on the scene, Graves slapped one of them before being restrained. When a prosecutor asked him why he shot his wife, he replied, "You never mind sir. It's no business of yours. I only protected myself." When the same prosecutor accused him of murder, Graves flew into a rage and tried to attack him, shouting "I'll get you!" For her part, as she lay on her deathbed, Minnie's final words were "tell Abner I forgive him."

In custody, Graves' mental condition continued to degenerate. This was evident at his trial where he emphatically denied that Minnie was dead. The jury found him mentally unbalanced and not responsible for the murder, and the judge committed him to the state asylum for the insane. Graves quickly slipped out of the public's view, and his death in the asylum two years later at the age of ninety-two went unreported in the newspapers until several months had passed. Graves' obituaries echoed the same familiar canards about his background which the newspapers saw no more need to confirm in death than when he was alive. For example, the editors of the *Denver Post* wrote: "He became a pony express rider in 1852, and for years was one of that daring crew that fought hostile Indians in pushing Uncle Sam's mail thru to the Pacific Coast."

The obituary also states "Graves played on the first baseball team ever to exhibit in this country. He was one of a team organized at Green College, Cooperstown, N.Y., in 1840." But ironically, the editors made no mention of Abner Doubleday's role in the story. What a shame that Abner Graves was not alive to see his twenty-year campaign finally come to fruition! Thanks to the *Denver Post,* he finally managed to supplant his namesake Abner as the story's hero. Another curious aspect to this obituary was that, just two paragraphs prior to mentioning Graves playing college baseball in 1840, the newspaper reported his birth date as February 27, 1834. Evidently, the *Post*'s editors assumed their readership was so conditioned to outlandish stories involving Graves, that none would blink at the implication he had advanced to college as a six year old.

The tragic events of Abner Graves' final years paint a somber tint on his otherwise eccentric image as the source for the Doubleday yarn. It is not possible to know whether his later insanity was incubating two decades earlier when he conveyed his memories of Cooperstown to the Spalding commission. In fact, the whole Doubleday affair as recounted by Graves remains something of an enigma. It is feasible that many of the particulars he recollected could have been known to a young boy living in 1840, except, of course, for the featured role of Abner Doubleday who had nothing whatsoever to do with baseball. So it is hard to know whether Graves was merely recalling his memories of sixty-five years earlier and simply confusing Doubleday with someone else, or whether he saw a chance to gain some recognition for himself by making up a whopper of a story from scratch.

When Graves sat down in 1905 to type his first letter about Abner Doubleday, Spalding's account of the debate over baseball's origins was fresh in his mind. Spalding portrayed it as a contest between Englishman Henry Chadwick's theory that baseball came from England, and the counter theory that the National Pastime was indigenous to American soil. Perhaps a clue about Graves' veracity can be gleaned from the final sentence of his second letter to the commission sent later that same year: "Just in my present mood I would rather have Uncle Sam declare war on England and clean her up rather than have one of her citizens beat us out of baseball."

Denver and Pueblo

Tales from the Wild, Wild Western League

by R. J. Lesch

In the so-called deadball era, the Western League supplied fans with some exciting pennant races. In 1902, Denver finished one and a half games behind pennant-winner Kansas City—but found themselves in *fourth* place in a six-team league! Both Colorado teams figured in the 1904 Western League race, with Denver half a game behind second-place finisher Colorado Springs and two games behind Omaha.[1]

The "Angel" of the League

Pueblo, Colorado had two entries in the Western League during the deadball era. The Colorado Springs franchise relocated to Pueblo in 1905 and played there for five years, with indifferent success on the field, before moving along. In 1911, however, Pueblo had a second chance.

In 1911, the Western League adopted a 168-game schedule. Playing ball from April 21st through October 8th, the league generally enjoyed pleasant weather and good attendance. The trouble with fitting a 168-game season into a 171-day time span, however, is that it is impossible to play such a schedule profitably without scheduling Sunday games.

That was a problem in Wichita, Kansas, which forbade Sunday ball. The club owner and manager was Frank Isbell, the former Chicago White Sox first baseman

and one of the 1906 "Hitless Wonders." Isbell had spent too much money and effort fighting the anti-Sunday-ball forces in Wichita, and he was tired and broke. Boosters of Pueblo, Colorado, eager to get back into the league, approached Isbell with a juicy offer. On May 22, 1911, the Wichita ball club moved to Pueblo, Colorado.

When they moved, the team's record was 15-9 and they were on top of the league. They played well in Pueblo, and the town was, at first, feverish over its new team, even on the Sabbath. The young Red Faber was on the mound for 29 of Pueblo's games, posting a 12-8 record. Pitcher W.E. Ellis went 22-11 (with four agonizing ties) and earned a look from the White Sox, who took him in the September draft that year. Pueblo had little pitching depth beyond this, however, and relied on their powerful hitting attack. They could not maintain their early pace, and finished the 1911 season in third place.

Still, even facing the loss of Ellis and shortstop Joe Berger in the draft, Pueblo fans could dream of a pennant in 1912. Those dreams ended when Isbell sold his franchise to a stock company of 300 business men in Wichita for $25,000.[2] Isbell and Sioux City business manager Tom Fairweather then purchased the Des Moines club from Isbell's old boss, Charles Comiskey, who had bought the failing club to keep it alive near the end of the 1911 season.[3]

Pueblo boosters threatened an injunction to prevent the move to Wichita. Isbell, it was claimed, had signed an agreement to keep the club in Pueblo for five years; for this he had been paid a $5,000 bonus. The Pueblo fans and press barbecued Isbell, and even the national press took notice.

"[Pueblo] has been the 'angel' of the league," wrote *The Sporting News* correspondent "Mile High" in the January 25, 1912 issue. "Twice it has stepped to the front and taken over a club which was not securing support elsewhere. It has loyally patronized base ball, whether its team be in first place or last, and a 'turn down' now would be poor return for such loyalty."[4]

Isbell produced the documents he had signed, however, which showed that he had not signed a five-year deal, and in fact he had reserved the right to remove the franchise after the 1911 season. The $5,000 bonus was for the first year in Pueblo only; the agreement included bonuses for each successive year, which Isbell agreed to forfeit if he moved the team. Isbell claimed that he had been open to offers from Pueblo interests for the Western League franchise, but received none that were on par with the Wichita offer. *The Sporting News* wrote, on February 1st, that "[Isbell's] books show that even with the sale of two players to the Chicago White Sox his stay at Pueblo would have netted a financial loss had it not been for the $5,000 bonus." League President Norris "Tip" O'Neill agreed, and the league approved the transfer of the franchise to Wichita.[5]

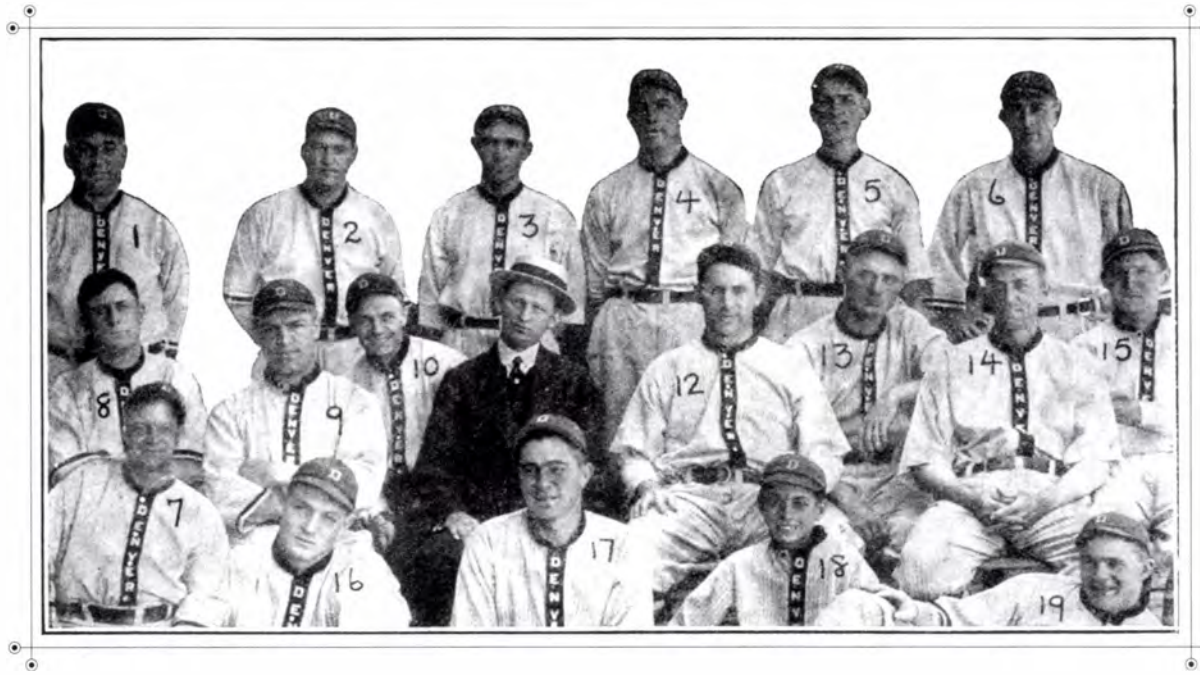
Isbell took Red Faber with him to Des Moines, and made plans with Fairweather to open the season. The Jobbers returned to Wichita to find that town suddenly willing to let them play a schedule full of Sunday home games.[6] Perhaps to the glee of the citizens of Pueblo, the Jobbers finished the 1912 season in seventh place.

Pueblo fans tried to work up enthusiasm for their entry in the new Rocky Mountain League. The league, alas, did not live to complete the season. Isbell had to stay out of Colorado during the summer of 1912 to avoid service of papers in a lawsuit for $20,000, but that threat subsided.

When the Western League approached Pueblo later in the year to take on the ailing Topeka franchise, the league received a sound rebuff. The "angel" of the Western League did not return to the fold until 1930.

"IT'S ANYBODY'S FLAG"

Few people expected the 1912 Western League pennant race to be close when the season began. By July, though, all eyes were on the Class A league and the fierce contest raging across the Great Plains. The previous year, under fiery manager Jack Hendricks, Denver had romped to the Western League pennant with a record of 111-54, an astonishing eighteen games over the St. Joseph (Missouri) Drummers. The 1911 Grizzlies featured outfielder Harry Cassidy, who batted .333, and pitcher Buck O'Brien, the league's best pitcher with a 26-7 record and 261 strikeouts. Most observers felt Denver would hoist the 1912 flag as well, assuming Denver remained in



The 1912 Denver Bears, as pictured in the 1913 Reach Baseball Guide.

the league. During the winter league meetings, rumors flew that Denver might find its franchise moved to another city.

The Western League, under President Norris L. O'Neill, was a progressive league in many respects. The eight-team circuit played a 168-game schedule and used two umpires for games. In 1912, they considered the startling idea of putting numbers on players' uniforms.[7] Perhaps most surprising, O'Neill proposed a revenue-sharing system. In this system, the league would have pooled a percentage of gate receipts to assist struggling teams. The Lincoln, Des Moines, Wichita, and Topeka clubs had each suffered financial difficulties in recent seasons. O'Neill wanted to make sure clubs in financial straits could at least complete their league schedule.

Denver owner James McGill opposed the scheme, because he felt Denver was already bearing too much of the league's financial burden. Denver was the most isolated city in the league. It was so far away from the other seven cities that under league rules Denver had to pay visiting teams fifteen cents per paid admission, two and a half cents more than the other seven teams paid their visitors, to cover the added travel expense for those teams.[8] McGill pointed out that Denver was the most populous city in the league (225,000), and generally had the best attendance, so the visitors' share would have been substantial even at the league standard.

O'Neill, from the league office in Chicago, dropped hints. "It is an actual fact," said McGill, "that we could make more money by putting in a club on the river, at say Burlington, Iowa, than we can under the present conditions by coming to Denver."[9] Other writers reported that the league would drop Denver in favor of a Chicago franchise that would play at Comiskey Park while the White Sox were on the road. Nothing came of these rumors, but McGill and other Western League owners became more wary of Chicago baseball interests.

Manager Hendricks, in Hot Springs, Arkansas, with his pitchers and catchers in late March, was more concerned about the team he could put on the field. He had lost two of his best pitchers, O'Brien and Casey Hagerman, to the Boston Red Sox. Hendricks asked Red Sox manager Jake Stahl, who was also in Hot Springs, to farm some of his prospects to Denver during the season. (St. Joseph and Des Moines both made similar arrangements with the Chicago White Sox.) Stahl loaned him Hubert "Dutch" Leonard, a promising pitcher who, Stahl felt, needed more seasoning.

Hendricks had other hopes for pitching. David "Barney" Schreiber, who had gotten into three games with the Cincinnati Reds in 1911, had not joined Denver until mid-season but posted a 15-7 record. Hendricks looked forward to a full season from Schreiber. Ed "Big Moose" Kinsella had shown potential. Denver fans hoped for a comeback from longtime Grizzly pitcher Henry Olmstead, who missed the bulk of 1911 due to his wife's illness and death. Olmstead, with Cassidy, had been with the club since the beginning of the 1907 season, and was a fan favorite.

Denver started well, but St. Joseph kept pace. The Drummers, sometimes called the Hollanders after owner-manager Jack Holland, featured several future major leaguers, including outfielders Edward "Dutch" Zwilling and Ray "Rabbit" Powell and first baseman William "Babe" Borton. The St. Joseph players had the batting and base running skills to go with the nicknames. Fans and press alike were amused to note that ten of the seventeen St. Joseph players were married, which was apparently unusual for Class A ball.[10]

Denver's pitching faltered early. Leonard was unhappy with Denver, and it showed in his work. Schreiber and Kinsella started slowly. Olmstead had control problems; in a May 14th game, he hit three Sioux City players in a row, all of whom scored.

The hitters picked up the slack for a while. During one seven-game stretch in Denver in May, fourteen home runs were hit, twelve of them by Denver players. "As a tobacco company gives five pounds of smoking for every home run knocked on Western League parks," noted *The Sporting News*, "this means that the tobacco company has been stuck for 70 pounds of tobacco in a week at Denver."[11] Hendricks knew he couldn't count on that forever.

St. Joseph swept Denver in a series in late May, and took over first place. Then Omaha, Sioux City and Des Moines slipped past the Grizzlies. Hendricks, in fifth place on June 2nd, decided that he had seen enough. Hendricks sold or released six players, including Olmstead.[12] He spent $750 to get catcher George Block from St. Paul, and another $300 to get a former Grizzly outfielder, Grover Gilmore, back from Buffalo.[13] Charlie French arrived from Montreal and took over second base. Later in the month Hendricks suspended the "sulking" Leonard and purchased Casey Hagerman back from Boston.[14] Even Harry Cassidy, who had not missed a game in five years, was rumored to be on his way out. The club got the message.

The rest of the league gave little ground. Wichita rode pitcher W.E. Ellis's thirteen-game winning streak. Sioux City picked up outfielder Josh Clarke (the brother of Pittsburgh's Fred) in mid-season, and watched him bat .323 the rest of the way. Omaha's Marc Hall, building a 25-9 record, led the Rourkes' pitching staff. St. Joseph's Borton led the league in batting average, hitting .400 for a while and finishing at .364, while Zwilling provided power (including a three-homer game versus Sioux City on Sunday, June 30th). The front-page of the July 18th *Sporting News* carried the headline "IT'S ANYBODY'S FLAG" and proclaimed the Western League race "one of the best races in the country."[15] The top five teams, St. Joseph, Omaha, Sioux City, Denver, and Wichita, were separated by only five games.

Two weeks later, Ellis's magic was gone and the rest of the Wichita club could not pick up the slack.[16] Des Moines replaced Wichita in the cluster near the top, though, and it was still a five-team race as August began.

Western League officials were elated. At a meeting of minor-league presidents that summer, Norris O'Neill was the only one to report his league's attendance was up.[17] "A mixture of bad weather and politics served to cut down the attendance all over the country," *The Sporting News* reported, "and the Western League has probably suffered less than any other from both causes.[18] Of course, the close race kept the turnstiles spinning, too.

In late July and early August, Denver reeled off a thirteen-game win streak of its own. Kinsella and Schreiber pitched like machines. Leonard, over his sulk, struck out seventeen batters in an August 5th two-hitter.[19] Even Denver outfielder Lester Channell's broken ankle didn't slow them down. Grover Gilmore stepped in. The streak put Denver back in first.

Pundits gave Denver the edge down the stretch, noting that the balance of schedule had Denver playing mostly at home.[20] They also took new notice of Jack Hendricks, after the manager's mid-season shakeup began to pay off. "Toss him in any league,

with any material," wrote one correspondent, "and up he comes from the ruck in speedy time. They are 'dippy' about him in Denver and pay him a lot of money to sojourn—otherwise he might be winning battles in big league company."[21]

Injuries hampered Des Moines, and Sioux City faded. Omaha moved into second place. St. Joseph lost Babe Borton and pitcher George "Chief" Johnson to the White Sox in September, but moved Zwilling to first base and kept close behind.

Denver clinched the pennant on Friday, September 27th, with two days left in the season, when St. Joseph defeated Omaha. The Drummers then swept Omaha in a doubleheader on the last day of the season to snatch second place from the Rourkes.

The league season was over, but Denver had one more challenge. The American Association champion Minneapolis Millers came to Denver for a best-of-seven series on October 5th. The Grizzlies surprised the heavily-favored Millers four games to one, largely behind the workhorse pitching of Barney Schreiber and Dutch Leonard. Minneapolis ballplayers had the financial edge, though. Denver hosted the whole series, and club management had struck a deal with the players to split the proceeds. They also split the expenses, and after the bills were paid Denver players found their share for the five-game series amounted to only $131.55 per player. The visiting Millers, who didn't have to share expenses, took home about $300 apiece.[22]

Harry Cassidy, who scored the game-winning run in the final Millers game, suffered less than his teammates. When he completed his sixth straight season without missing a game, Denver fans took up a collection to give him an automobile.[23]

The close race gave other Western League teams hope for 1913. Denver lost four stars, including Leonard, to major league clubs, and observers thought a dark horse could win the race. It wasn't close. Hendricks rebuilt the team and Denver won the 1913 flag by ten games over Des Moines.

After the 1913 season, James McGill purchased the Indianapolis American Association ball club, and then he moved Hendricks to Indianapolis to manage the Indians.[24] Otto Floto, the *Denver Post* sports editor, bet American Association president George Tebeau that Hendricks would win a pennant within three years in that league. "I never saw a manager like this guy," said Floto, "but he must get out of Denver. He has ruined the Western League."[25]

Floto lost his bet, but only by one year; Indianapolis won the American Association pennant in 1917.[26] The following season, Hendricks found himself in "big league company" at last, managing the St. Louis Cardinals.

Notes:

1. Lloyd Johnson and Miles Wolff, eds., *The Encyclopedia of Minor League Baseball*. Baseball America, Inc. (Durham, North Carolina, 1993): 104,107.
2. *The Sporting News*, January 18, 1912: 1.
3. Christian, Ralph. "Never on Sunday: The Controversy over Sunday Baseball in Des Moines, Iowa, 1887-1912," presentation at SABR 31, Milwaukee, July 12, 2001.
4. *The Sporting News*, January 25, 1912: 4.
5. *The Sporting News*, February 1, 1912: 3, 4.
6. *The Sporting News*, February 22, 1912: 1.
7. *The Sporting News*, February 1, 1912: 1.
8. *The Sporting News*, February 29, 1912: 5.
9. *The Sporting Life*, March 9, 1912: 13.
10. *The Sporting News*, May 5, 1912.
11. *The Sporting News*, May 30, 1912.
12. Olmstead signed with the pennant-winning Oakland club of the Pacific Coast League, appearing in 10 games and winning two (Richter, Francis C., ed. *The Reach 1913 Base Ball Guide*. A.J. Reach Company (Philadelphia, Penn., 1913): 263.) The year 1913 appears to have been his last season in professional baseball.
13. *The Sporting News*, August 22, 1912.
14. *The Sporting News*, June 27, 1912: 1.
15. *The Sporting News*, July 18, 1912: 1.
16. *The Sporting News*, August 1, 1912.
17. *The Sporting News*, July 25, 1912.
18. *The Sporting News*, October 3, 1912.
19. *The Sporting News*, October 3, 1912.
20. *The Sporting News*, August 8, 1912.
21. *The Sporting News*, August 15, 1912.
22. *The Sporting News*, October 24, 1912: 6.
23. *The Sporting News*, September 26, 1912.
24. David B. Reddick and Kim M. Rogers, *The Magic of Indians' Baseball: 1887-1997* (Indianapolis, Indiana: Indianapolis Indians Baseball Club, 1988): 23.
25. *The Sporting News*, October 23, 1913: 4.
26. <indyindians.com/archives/year_by_year.html>

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North American Indigenous People and Baseball

"The One Single Thing the White Man Has Done Right"

by Thomas L. Altherr

IN W. P. KINSELLA'S 1986 NOVEL of a protracted, Armageddon-like All-Star game in 1908, *The Iowa Baseball Confederacy*, the modern protagonist Gideon Clarke pondered why he was in the midst of this tour back in time. "Let me in on some of the secrets," he pleaded to Drifting Away, the ancient indigenous trickster. "Why me? Why my father? Why baseball?" After staring at the sky for a few seconds, Drifting Away declared, "Baseball is the one single thing the white man has done right." Then the shaman qualified his pronouncement: "But baseball has solid lines, like so much of what the white man makes, and diamonds are close to squares." The cultural opposition, however, seemed deceptive to Drifting Away and even partially resolvable: "Think of the circles instead of the lines—the ball, the circumference of the bat, the outfield running to the circle of the horizon, the batter running around the bases. Baseball is as close to the circle of perfection as white men are allowed to approach." Suitably chided, Gideon scolded Drifting Away for trying to take his revenge on the game of baseball. But the trickster countered that as a young man, even before whites had come to Iowa and brought baseball with them, he had had a power vision, a prophetic glimpse of the game.[1]

Although it was hardly the turning point of Kinsella's convoluted plot, the above exchange of views highlighted cultural differences in the perception of baseball's appeal. Moreover it raises an intriguing historical question about the connections of North American indigenous peoples and the American National Pastime. Because African-American and Latino players have been much more numerous and dominant in organized baseball since 1947 than the several "Chiefs" who donned the flannels and double-knits, baseball historians have paid most attention, rightly so, to those groups of people of color. Baseball in nations in east Asia, especially Japan and Taiwan, has drawn similar scrutiny, although one might interject that studies of baseball and Asians and Asian-Americans also are scarce. Recently women's baseball has received its due and has attracted fine scholarly work. But indigenous ballplayers have been stuck in some sort of latter-day "Vanishing Indian Syndrome." Aside from Kinsella's creation of Drifting Away, recent baseball fiction and poetry have forgotten the forgotten "Lo, the Poor Indian." Even in the crop of recent baseball movies such as *Bull Durham*, *Pastime*, and *Major League* and its sequels, *For Love of the Game*, and *The Rookie*, which have often included a multicultural cast, there has been no indigenous character. Yet the question remains and is doubly ironic: why in the long run have there been so few Native American players in a game that has long billed itself as the American game, the Abner Doubleday myth and Anglo-European roots aside?

Few baseball historians have yet addressed this subject in great detail, except to point out that a handful of players of indigenous heritage played the game. The two current one-volume histories of American baseball barely mentioned indigenous ballplayers. Benjamin Rader, in *Baseball: A History of America's Game*, referred to the Sac and Fox Jim Thorpe, an outfielder with the Giants, the Chippewa "Chief" Charles Bender, a pitcher with the Athletics, and "Chief" John Meyers, a Cahuilla catcher with the Giants, but Charles Alexander, in *Our Game*, neglected the topic entirely.

David Voigt, in *American Baseball: from the Commissioners to Continental Expansion*, discussed only Thorpe and his mediocre major league stint: "For the primitivists there was the highly touted Indian athlete, Jim Thorpe, who failed to land a regular berth with the Giants." Lawrence Ritter, in *The Glory of Their Times*, did interview John Meyers, and Steven Riess, in *Touching Base: Professional Baseball and American Culture in the Progressive Era*, devoted two paragraphs to indigenous peoples as a group subject to the Americanizing influences of baseball. Most mystifyingly, John Bloom in *To Show What An Indian Can Do*, featured a couple of photographs of indigenous people in baseball uniforms and equipment and then ignored the topic almost completely in his text. Stephen I. Thompson, in "The American Indian in the Major Leagues" in the less easily available *Baseball Research Journal*, did engage the topic more lengthily. Even so, Thompson's essay was a compendium of short descriptions of the careers of the better known indigenous players and lacking in much interpretation. The most detailed discussion to date came in Harold Seymour's massive *Baseball: The People's Game*. Seymour uncovered much new material and did attempt to place the players in the larger context of Euroamerican Indian policy, but again his approach was encyclopedic, and the absence of end notes causes the serious researcher much frustration following up on his more intriguing points.[2]

It would be tantalizing here to undo the work of Albert Spalding and the Mills Commission and the corrective work of Robert Henderson, David Block, and others on the origins of baseball and to report that the sport was indeed a creation of indigenous peoples, yet another "contribution" that Euroamericans appropriated along with corn, numerous other foodstuffs, medicines, hunting and fishing techniques, and words and names. Early European and Euroamerican travelers and settlers found indigenous people very active in sports and games. The accounts and narratives recounted that tribal peoples indeed played ball games, but the game in question was "bagattaway," or as the French rechristened it, lacrosse. Whether it was the French Jesuit Paul Le Jeune in Huronia in 1637 or French travelers such as J. C. B. in New France in the 1750s, Jean-Bernard Bossu in the Southeast in 1759, and Captain Bernard Romans in the same region in 1775, or Zebulon Pike on the prairie in 1806, all watched ball play in the form of lacrosse.[3] Occasionally the tribes played variations that more

so resembled badminton or field hockey, and other sports involved stones, hoops, spears, running, and archery. Sedentary gambling games such as dish or straws were also very popular.[4] Although tribal craftsmen regularly used white ash for baskets and other artifacts, no description of a brave whittling and wielding a white ash bat is extant. Baseball, despite Drifting Away's power vision, did not originate in the Americas. Indigenous peoples west of the Mississippi may not have seen the game until 1849 when Alexander Cartwright, near Independence, Missouri, noted baseball play in his April 23rd diary entry: "During the past week we have passed the time in fixing wagon covers . . . etc., varied by hunting and fishing and playing baseball. It is comical to see the mountain men and indians playing the new game. I have the ball with me that we used back home."[5]

Similarly, it would be erroneous to look too far for any evidence of a current craze for baseball among modern indigenous people, either on the reservations or in the cities where the majority of tribal peoples now dwell. Clearly the most popular sport on reservations these days is basketball. In his novel, *The Indian Lawyer*, the Blackfoot novelist James Welch fittingly cast his protagonist Sylvester Yellow Calf as a former basketball player; at the end of the book, Yellow Calf is alone, seeking solace by shooting hoops behind the school in Browning, Montana.[6] Tribal peoples certainly have not mastered the game as well as African-Americans have, but occasionally basketball teams of great skill have emerged. For example, in the 1940s, a Crow Agency team went far in the national Amateur Athletic Union tournament in Denver and a few years ago a Wind River Reservation Shoshone-Arapahoe team took the Wyoming championship.[7] Recently a female Navajo player starred for the University of Arizona women's team. In addition to basketball, tribal peoples retain a strong tradition of running long distances and track and field sports. Southern Colorado's Adams State College cross-country and track teams, which often feature indigenous runners and used to bear the nickname "the Indians," usually finish strongly in national collegiate meets. And although football has faded in popularity among tribal peoples since the days of Jim Thorpe and the famous Carlisle Indian School teams, that sport still seems more reflective of indigenous peoples than does baseball. Although Thorpe, the "Athlete of the Half-Century" in many historians' minds, played major league baseball, most Americans remember him as the stellar football player and Olympics decathlete.[8]

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, however, it appeared that baseball might make significant inroads in indigenous culture and more great players would emerge. Some familiarity with the white man's game may have resulted from watching Army officers and enlisted men playing baseball at western posts, itself a subject that warrants more study by baseball historians. Certainly the Seventh Cavalry reveled in something called The Benteen Baseball Club and troops probably had baseball equipment along on their ill-fated march into Montana in 1876.[9] But even as the Euroamerican military forces were subduing the recalcitrant tribes, another massive wave of cultural missionaries, a cohort of denominational personnel, teachers, and Bureau of Indian Affairs field matrons, was carrying out an all-out assault on tribal culture. Part of the propagandistic package, along with the instruction in language, farming, social customs, etiquette, and industrial skills, were programs to introduce Euroamerican sports to the pupils at day and boarding schools. Indian Service superintendents and instructors maintained that they could inculcate such esteemed values as teamwork, initiative, individualism, sportsmanship, competitiveness, and pride in their charges. Rectilinear games such as baseball and football (and later basketball) supposedly would break indigenous youth away from games of circularity associated with pagan cultures.[10]

Leading the charge at the turn of the century was Captain Richard Henry Pratt and his famous boarding school at Carlisle, Pennsylvania. At first, Pratt had been afraid that introducing competitive sports would elicit savage tendencies in his boys, but Dr. Charles Eastman, a prominent Sioux graduate, argued that the sports would cultivate the boys' better instincts. Pratt relented, and the program became nationally famous. In his memoirs, *Battlefield and Classroom*, Pratt recalled the sports campaign and its results:

The 1917 Lakota Reservation baseball team, Standing Rock, North Dakota.

Football and baseball early became a great motive force in the school life. A gymnasium established in one of the old cavalry stables enabled intensive indoor physical training for all pupils, both boys and girls. Grounds for football and baseball were graded, and students were encouraged to form class or shop teams where all had a chance and where the best personnel for the strong school teams was developed. The trips away from the school for the boys, and for all students attending the games at home or in the town, especially with Dickinson College, stimulated their efforts, and it soon developed that we had exceptional pitchers, catchers, basemen, and outfielders in baseball, and fullbacks, halfbacks, quarterbacks, endmen, and captains in football. Young Indians, seeing their chance for physical development, were quite as ambitious to seize their opportunities as our own youth.[11]

Although Pratt discussed the success of the football program mostly, he did state that "our baseball aggregation soon won its way to high results in contentions with the best of the nearby educational and YMCA teams. A number of its products after leaving school went into professional baseball and gained large pay and national reputation, [Charles "Chief"] Bender among the foremost."[12]

Carlisle athletic director Glenn "Pop" Warner noted similarly in March, 1909, "In baseball Carlisle has not done as well as in other sports, but a creditable record has been made upon the diamond."[13] What Warner called creditable may be debatable. In 1909, against teams from such colleges and universities as Albright, Franklin & Marshall, Bucknell, Dickinson, Seton Hall, Fordham, Cornell, Villanova, Syracuse, Pennsylvania, and the military academies at West Point and Annapolis, the Carlisle baseball team mustered out a mediocre 9 and 15 record. They did, however, open the season by smashing the team from Albright College, 11-4.[14] Even so, stressed

Warner, "while not at the top in everything, we have have good, clean teams, composed of representative Carlisle students." The school did not rely on ringers, Warner noted, and pounded home the theme that "[o]ur greatest asset as athletes is our gentlemanly and sportsmanlike conduct and our clean playing . . . ."[15]

Soon afterwards, however, baseball became an intramural sport, and then the school replaced it with lacrosse. The editor of *The Red Man*, a Carlisle publication, cited the following reasons in a May, 1910 editorial:

> *The Carlisle Indian School has taken an advance stand on the subject of summer baseball by eliminating baseball as a sport which was played in competition with other colleges and prominent teams. This was done for the reason that when the Indians had a large baseball schedule, some of the players came into prominence and overtures were made to them by the larger league teams with a view to having them engage during the summer in professional baseball.*

Warding off professionalism and emphasizing amateurism would reinforce the purity of the mission of the school, which maintained that its programs would prepare its charges for the white man's world: "It is very gratifying that Carlisle has been able to take this position with regard to professionalism."[16] Paradoxically, however, this policy would shield the indigenous athletes from capitalism. There is no record in *The Red Man* of letters protesting the decision, and shortly thereafter team photographs of the baseball nine, such as the one in the March, 1909 issue, disappeared. The phenomenal success of the football program and Hopi long-distance runner Louis Tewanima may have compensated for the loss. Yet in the February, 1911 number the editor felt compelled to justify the decision again:

> *Baseball was abolished because, after many of our students had played for a season or two on the base ball team, and were seen in competition with some of the big colleges, many of the smaller league managers offered them employment to play summer professional baseball. This resulted in a weaning many of the students away from their schooling and much injury was done others who returned. It was consequently decided for the best interests of the students and in the interest of clean sport at Carlisle, to abolish baseball and substitute la crosse.*[17]

Apparently then, Carlisle students could play baseball fairly competently, and a photograph in the November, 1913 issue of *The Red Man* attested, baseball stayed a popular recreational activity within the school. The photo pictured a team at the summer camp, Camp Sells (named after Commissioner of Indian Affairs Cato Sells). The caption read, "Baseball Was a Favorite Recreation at Camp Sells."[18]

And the threat of creeping professionalism did not stop the same editor from crowing about the success of Chief Bender: "Not very many Indians have qualified as professional baseball players, and yet one, Charles A. Bender, a Chippewa from Minnesota, who was graduated in 1902, is one of the most prominent professional players in the American League, at present being with the Athletics of Philadelphia. He is married and lives in a beautiful home in Tioga, one of Philadelphia's suburban towns. Besides his home, he possess[es] other property, and is a respected member of the community."[19] Bender was living proof that baseball, and other athletics at Carlisle, would not crimp the athlete's chances for prosperity and assimilation outside the boarding school.

To evaluate how extensively the "Friends of the Indian" sports campaign utilized baseball beyond the Carlisle School would require much more research than possible in preparation of this paper. Harold Seymour, in *Baseball: The People's Game*, suggested that the trend was widespread. The Chemawa Indian School in Oregon, the Haskell Institute and the Kickapoo School in Kansas, the Hampton Institute in Virginia, the Chilocco School in Oklahoma, and indigenous academies at Rapid City, South Dakota, Phoenix, Arizona, and Tomah, Wisconsin all fielded teams during this time period.[20] But more research is necessary to determine the full extent of this trend and whether indigenous athletes played the game voluntarily or simply obeyed their superintendents'

wishes.[21] Investigation into National Archives records at the branch in Denver, Colorado revealed that while Indian Service agents and superintendents were more interested in football and track at the turn of the century, occasionally they referred to baseball and left records of purchases of baseball equipment for their physical education programs. For example, at the Santa Fe Indian Industrial School, physical education was fairly minimal. Superintendent Samuel M. Cart wrote to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs that "light gymnastic exercises" pretty much consisted of military style drill. Eight months later, the program had diversified somewhat, but Cart still thought it was rudimentary:

> *Comparatively little has been done to provide instructive amusements and recreation to the children. No funds have been provided to purchase games, etc., except what has been contributed by the employe*[e]*s themselves. The chief games that were introduced are* ***base-ball****, croquet, dissected pictures, and spelling games. It is my purpose to increase the games both in number and interest as fast as possible. All the employe*[e]*s have aided in providing and promoting games, etc.*[22]

Five years later, the succeeding superintendent, Thomas M. Jones, was still trying to upgrade the recreational opportunities: "There is but little outside amusement for the Girls or boys of this School and to induce them to take the requisite amt. of exercise. Tennis for the one and *Base Ball* for the other, is found best suited to make them take the necessary exercise to insure health. I therefore ask authority to purchase in open market material, for *Base Ball* at not to exceed $25. and Tennis at not to exceed $20."[23] The next superintendent, Clinton J. Crandall, however, was much more interested in arranging football games during his twelve-year tenure. Baseball seems to have taken a back seat at the Santa Fe Indian School.

The experiences at other reservation schools may have matched those in Santa Fe, although the records are far too sketchy to make firm judgments. The Museum of New Mexico holds in its photograph collection one from the 1880s or 1890s of a Catholic priest surrounded by a team of nine boys, possibly of whom three were indigenous, three Euroamerican, and three Latino —an astounding multicultural team for the time! For another example, in 1916, for the boys baseball team at the Fort Washakie School on the Wind River Reservation in Wyoming, Frank Christy, the principal teacher, secured black cotton jerseys with orange stripes, white canvas trousers, black-and-orange striped stockings, and basketball shoes. The next year, an invoice reflected the purchase of a body protector, a dozen #1 baseballs, a dozen #2 baseballs, a dozen caps, six bats—Benny Kauff model, in tribute to the hitting star of that year's New York Giants—one mitt, four toe and heel plates (for the basketball shoes? or for conventional spiked shoes?), one youth bat, one mask, one scorebook, and one dozen scoring tablets from the Denver branch of A.G. Spalding Sporting Goods.[24] Apparently the goods didn't last all that long, because shortly thereafter, someone wrote out instructions on how to make baseballs for six cents each: "Use discarded rubber heels for the core. Wrap with strong string or warp bought by the pound. Use as a surface electric adhesive tape. A powder is put over the tape to prevent it from sticking. A wire loop with a handle is made to guage [sic] the exact size."[25] Similar purchase records for the United Pueblos Agencies in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s and a 1922 photograph of a Ute team from Ignacio, Colorado and a 1917 shot of a Standing Rock, North Dakota Lakota team reveal that baseball still held some appeal, but none of the records indicate whether or not the indigenous teams played enthusiastically, how often they played, and what sort of success they had on the diamond.[26]

Apparently indigenous players also performed for barnstorming teams, although here, too, the evidence is tantalizingly scarce and should spur some further research. Following the lead of "Buffalo Bill" Cody, impresario Guy Green organized a baseball "circus" that attracted Western audiences from 1897 to 1908. J.L. Wilkinson, later the owner of the Kansas City Monarchs, formed an All-Nations team that toured from 1912 to 1918 and featured indigenous ball players.[27] Chippewas from Wisconsin played across Iowa in that last year, and in the 1920s, Passamaquoddies hosted visiting teams at their field in Eastport, Maine.[28] In her book, *Women*

at Play, Barbara Gregorich included a photograph of Maud Nelson standing with the Cherokee Indian Base Ball Club in 1908.[29] Similarly two photographs of a barnstorming team called the Nebraska Indians, one from the 1890s and the other from after the turn of the century, imply that that team had a fairly good run of years as an organized venture.[30] What criteria qualified a player as an Indian must have been slippery, because some of the players, especially on the "Dead Ball" era Nebraska team, look suspiciously Euroamerican. But these few photographs only taunt the baseball historian and make him or her wish for more research on the topic.

What is indisputable, however, is that thirty or so players of full- or mixed-blood indigenous extraction played in the major leagues in the 1897-1920 period.[31] The first of these was a Penobscot named Louis Sockalexis, who, after a scintillating collegiate career at Holy Cross, played for the Cleveland Spiders from 1897 to 1899. Before alcohol destroyed his career, Sockalexis may have been the inspiration for Gilbert Patten's Frank Merriwell books, and Cleveland Indians' tradition holds that the club memorialized him by taking that nickname in 1915, although historian Ellen Staurowsky has effectively debunked that myth.[32] Sockalexis also was the subject of several legends, especially about his throwing abilities from the outfield, and the famous Baltimore Oriole and Detroit Tiger player and manager Hughie Jennings later claimed that Sockalexis would have been the best player in the game bar none. The historian Jay Feldman, however, unraveled fact from fancy about Sockalexis and judged that his stint with the Spiders was too brief to make such a long-term prediction.[33]

Sockalexis was hardly the sort of groundbreaker that Jackie Robinson would be for African-American players in 1947, but perhaps nearly thirty players of indigenous blood mix made it to the major leagues. Jim Thorpe, fresh from his astounding victories at the 1912 Stockholm Olympics, signed on, to his regret, with John McGraw's New York Giants in 1913. Despite his speed and overall athleticism, Thorpe never caught the hang of major league pitching and drifted for six years with the Giants, Cincinnati Reds, and Boston Braves before returning to football.[34] Two players of Chippewa heritage had greater success. Chief Bender won 212 games, mostly with the Philadelphia Athletics, and Zack Wheat patrolled the outfield for the Brooklyn Dodgers for nearly two decades. Both are in the Hall of Fame. The catchers John Meyers and the Wyandotte Nig Clarke represented a second tier of competent indigenous players. Lesser known Carlisle athletes, the Seneca Louis LeRoy, the Pawnee Moses Yellowhorse, and the Cheyenne Michael Balenti had briefer careers.[35] Later such fine players as Bob Johnson of the Athletics, John "Pepper" Martin of the Gashouse Gang, Bobby Doerr of the Red Sox, Rudy York of the Tigers, and Yankees pitcher Allie Reynolds kept an indigenous presence in the major leagues. But since the 1950s, indigenous players have been fairly rare, even during the New Noble Savage craze of the late 1960s and 1970s, when many a wannabe white was claiming to be part-this tribe and part-that tribe.[36]

What historical reasons would explain this absence? Racism undoubtedly unnerved many a player. Chief Bender claimed that race rarely entered into the picture in his career: "There has been scarcely a trace of sentiment against me on account of birth. I have been treated the same as the other men."[37] Such a statement warmed the hearts of the writers of the day who promoted baseball as an avenue of social mobility and a panorama of social democracy. But Chief Meyers was more blunt. "And I don't like to say this," he told Lawrence Ritter, "but in those days, when was young, I was considered a foreigner. I didn't belong. I was an Indian."[38] Racism, however, is but at best a partial reason, because certainly African-Americans and Latinos overcame similar, if not greater barrages of prejudice. Similarly one could bring up the demise of the boarding schools and barnstorming teams as a reason. Indigenous athletes no longer had these as springboards to the white teams. But again, African-American and Latino players have not depended on such platforms to push into the major leagues. Indeed indigenous players may have had an easier time entering the white leagues. It was no accident that John McGraw, no stranger to racism himself, tried to sneak Charles Grant, an African-American player onto the Giants in 1910 as a Native American!

Perhaps another, but more speculative explanation exists, taking into accounts Drifting Away's suggestions that opened this paper. It could be that

indigenous sports traditions and the very designs of the games differed too radically from those that Euroamericans introduced in the Americas. Long-distance running was a long established custom within many tribes and a variant of basketball in Mesoamerica preceded Dr. James Naismith's 1891 invention by centuries. But baseball, with its paradoxical geometry, its absence of conquest of territory (so germane to lacrosse and other indigenous ball games), and the growth of regimentation and standardization in rules and statistics, was alien to tribal cultures that played sports in more of folk setting.[39] Indigenous players did better and reached the major leagues in just that time period when the assimilationist assault had its most significant, if tentative, successes. Could a Chief Bender or Jim Thorpe or Chief Meyers have emerged in the 1860s, when the reservation system was just beginning to take hold, or after the 1930s, when tribal and personal self-identity movements intensified? Certainly each of these athletes was justifiably proud of his indigenous heritage, but each also lived in a blended world courtesy of the Carlisle School and other academies.

Moreover, indigenous sports were often much more connected to tribal religious and myth ritual (although anthropologists have rightly pointed out that it is too easy to declare all games rituals and miss that some took place for more whimsical reasons). Baseball, when it has appealed to indigenous peoples, may have signified something much deeper than the outward structure of the game. In a provocative article, "Pueblo baseball: a new use for old witchcraft," J. R. Fox suggested that baseball, which survived in lively fashion in an intertribal Pueblan league in the 1950s, owed its popularity not so much to the game, but to the opportunity it gave rival clan mothers to carry out longstanding rivalries on the sidelines, a tradition, with all apologies to the Pueblo peoples, replicated in the Little League parks! Clan mothers would try to control the outcome of the game with incantations and other rituals on the sidelines and in the stands, and often fights and shouting matches would erupt. "The women especially have married the old witch fears to the new sport and thus directed a whole body of deep-rooted motivations into new and pertinent channels," Fox noted. The game was at once disruptive and therapeutic in Pueblan culture: "Baseball in the Pueblos" was "a competitive intrusion into essentially non-competitive social systems." The teams allowed "for the acting out of aggressive and competitive tendencies."[40] Several other scholars have underscored Fox's interpretation of the social significance of the game and suggested that concepts of play vary deeply among cultures. At a conference of the American Ethnological Society in 1977, anthropologists, sociologists, and musicologists explored several ways in which, according to their findings, indigenous concepts of sport, play, and humor differed from those of the dominant culture.[41] Perhaps Francis E. Leupp, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs early last century, understood these distinctions when he wrote in 1910, " The influence of this peaceful environment is manifest when Indian children play together; their laughter will ring out as freely as the laughter of white children, but is almost never punctuated by angry cries or tears. The adults, indeed, carry much the same spirit into their games: the competition is not so fierce that winner and loser may not be equally good-natured over the result."[42] Leupp may have romanticized the situation somewhat, but he may also have pinpointed some crucial cultural differences that made the transfer of sport from Euroamerican culture to indigenous peoples a far trickier proposition than expected.

Notes:

1. W. P. Kinsella, *The Iowa Baseball Confederacy* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1986), 166-167.
2. Benjamin Rader, *Baseball: A History of America's Game* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2nd ed., 2002), 102; Charles C. Alexander, *Our Game: An American Baseball History* (New York: Henry Holt, 1989), David Q. Voigt, *American Baseball: From the Commissioners to Continental Expansion* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1983), 41, 57; Lawrence S. Ritter, *The Glory of Their Times: The Story of the Early Days of Baseball Told by the Men Who Played It* (New York: Vintage paperback, new enlarged ed., 1984), 170-184; Steven A. Riess, *Touching Base: Professional Baseball and American Culture in the Progressive Era* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1980), 192-193; John Bloom, *To Show What an Indian Can Do: Sports at Native American Boarding Schools* (Minneapolis, Minnesota, University of Minnesota Press, 2000); Stephen I. Thompson, "The American Indian in the Major Leagues," *Baseball Research Journal 1983*, 1-7; and Harold Seymour, *Baseball: The People's Game* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 379-395.
3. [Paul Le Jeune], "Le Jeune's Relation, 1637," in Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents: Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France 1610-1791* (New York: Pageant Book Company, 1959), v. 14, 47; [J. C. B.], *Travels in New France by J. C. B.*, Sylvester K. Stevens, Donald H. Kent, and Emma Edith Woods, eds., (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania Historical Commission, 1941), 148; Jean-Bernard Bossu], *Jean-Bernard Bossu's Travels in the Interior of North America 1751-1762*, Seymour Feiler, ed., (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962), 169-170; Captain Bernard Romans, *A*

Concise Natural History of East and West Florida (New York: pvt. ptg., 1775), 70 and 79; and [Zebulon Montgomery Pike], *The Expeditions of Zebulon Montgomery Pike, To Headwaters of the Mississippi River, Through Louisiana Territory, and in New Spain, During the Years 1805-6-7*, Elliott Coues, ed., 3 vols., (New York: Francis P. Harper, 1895), v. 1, 207-208. For a fuller discussion of indigenous ball games, see Joseph B. Oxendine, *American Indian Sports Heritage* (Champaign, Illinois: Human Kinetics Books, 1988), ch. 2.

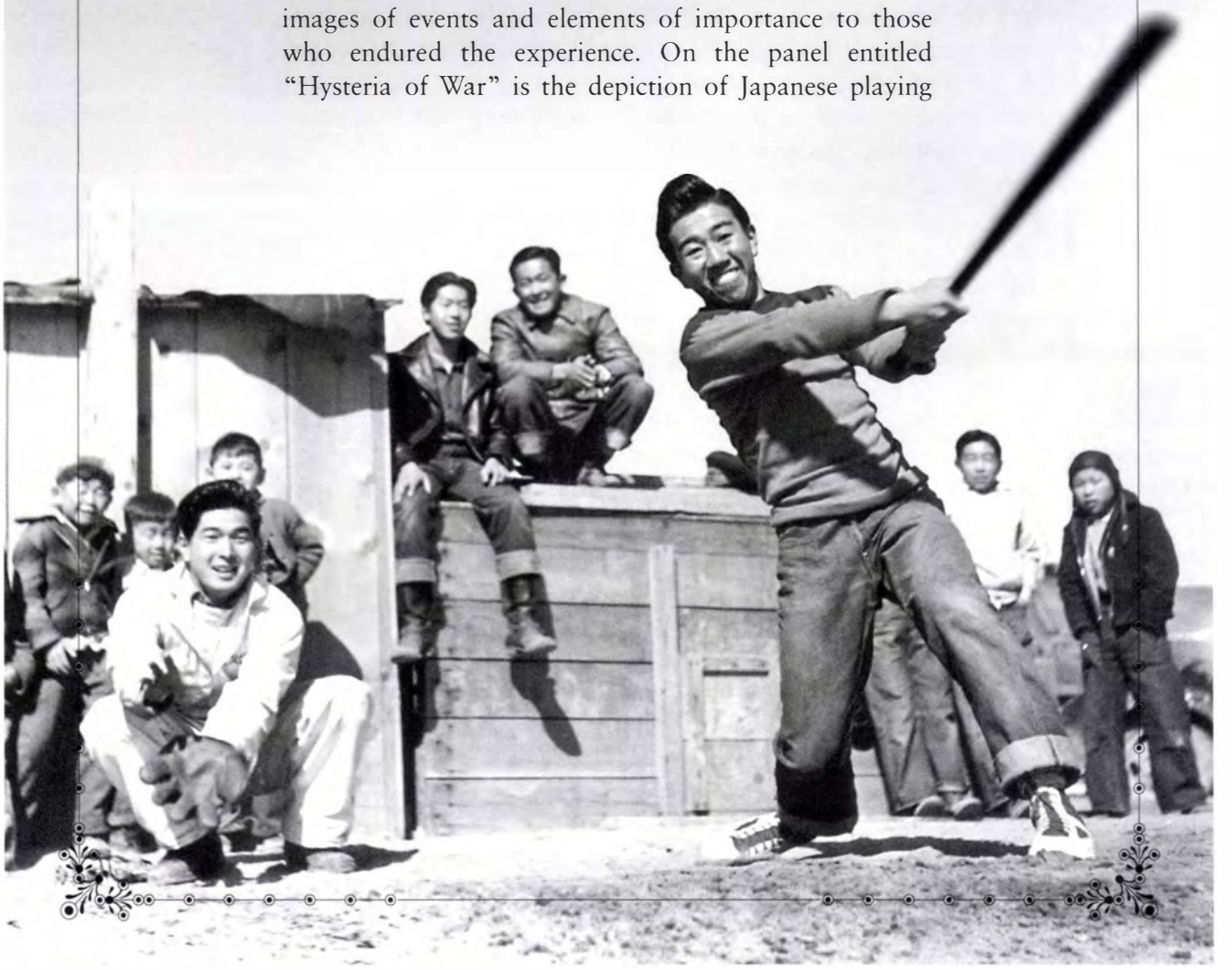
4. See Oxendine, *American Indian Sports Heritage*, ch. 4 and 6.
5. Alexander Cartwright, quoted in Jonathan Fraser Light, *The Cultural Encyclopedia of Baseball* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland Publishers, 1997), 137. Light also referred to an 1837 document, without attribution, that mentioned indigenous people playing the game, p. 486.
6. James Welch, *The Indian Lawyer* (New York: Penguin Books, 1990), *passim* and especially 349.
7. I am indebted to my colleague, Adolph Grundman, who, in his research on Amateur Athletic Union basketball tournaments in Denver, uncovered the information about the Crow Agency team.
8. One of my students, James McClain, tells of how his grandfather as a young football player in Canton, Ohio in the 1920s witnessed Jim Thorpe, past his prime, casually punt a football nearly the length of the football field.
9. Tim Wolter, Bats and Saddles: Base Ball with Custer's Seventh Cavalry," *The National Pastime Number 18 1998*, 25-28.
10. For detailed analyses of the "Friends of the Indian" movement, see Francis Paul Prucha, ed., *Americanizing the American Indian: Writings by the "Friends of the Indian" 1880-1900* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1973) and Frederick E. Hoxie, *A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880-1920* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984).
11. Richard Henry Pratt, *Battlefield and Classroom: Four Decades with the American Indians, 1867-1904*, Robert M. Utley, ed., (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1964), 317.
12. *Ibid.*, 320.
13. Glenn S. Warner, "Athletics at the Carlisle Indian School, "*The Indian Craftsman*, v. 1, n. 2 (March 1909), 10.
14. "Baseball Season," *The Indian Craftsman*, v. 1, n. 5 (June 1909), 40-41.
15. "Annual Athletic Celebration," *The Red Man*, v. 2, n. 7 (March 1910), 43.
16. "Athletic Schedules for Year 1910," *The Red Man*, v. 2, n. 9 (May 1910), 57.
17. "Athletic Record, 1910," *The Red Man*, v. 3, n. 6 (February 1911), 264.
18. *The Red Man*, v. 7, n. 3 (November 1913), 122.
19. Moses Friedman, "The Carlisle Indian Athlete as a Citizen," *The Red Man*, v. 3, n. 4 (December 1910), 142.
20. Seymour, *Baseball: The People's Game*, 382-389.
21. Some anthropologists found children listless about games in general, playing only at their teachers' command. See Seymour, *Baseball: The People's Game*, 390.
22. Samuel M. Cart to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, December 15, 1891, "Press Copies of Letters Sent —Miscellaneous Letters," Santa Fe Indian School, National Archives and Records Administration, Denver, Colorado, RG 75, Entry 32, Letter Book N. 3, 26; Cart to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, August 27, 1892, Press Copies of Letters Sent —Miscellaneous letters," Santa Fe Indian School, National Archives and Records Administration, Denver, Colorado, RG75, Entry 32, Letter Book N. 3, 449. Italics in the quotation are mine.
23. Thomas M. Jones to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, May 24, 1897, "Press Copies of Letters Sent —Miscellaneous Letters," Santa Fe Indian School, National Archives and Records Administration, Denver, Colorado, RG 75, Entry 32, Volume Book 7, 223. Italics in the quotation are mine.
24. R. J. Leacock to Frank Sorenson, February 24, 1916; Frank Christy to R. Haas, March 11, 1917; E. A. Hutchinson to A. G. Spalding & Bros., May 15, 1917, RG75, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Wind River Agency, Wyoming, General Correspondence Files, 1890-1960, File 301, Box 11, Entry 8, National Archives and Records Administration, Denver, Colorado.
25. "How to Make Baseballs for Six Cents Each," RG75 Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Wind River Agency, Wyoming, General Administrative Records, 1890-1960 (Subseries 2, 1926-1950), Box 234, File 750, "Amusements and Athletics," National Archives and Records Administration, Denver, Colorado.
26. RG75, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Southern Pueblos Agency, General Correspondence File, 1911-1935, Box 102, Folder 510-223, "Miscellaneous Articles —Playground Equipment (Southern) 1911-1923"; RG75, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Northern Pueblos Agency, General Correspondence File, Box 66; RG75, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, United Pueblos Agency, General Correspondence File, 1938-1943, Box 58, Folder 510.32, "Athletic Goods and Supplies"; and photograph captioned "Part of the Ute Ball Team," RG75, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Ute Agency, Files 930-991, FY90, Box 162, "Industrial Report Southern Ute Agency, Colorado, June 30, 1922," National Archives and Records Administration, Denver, Colorado.
27. Light, *The Cultural Encyclopedia of Baseball*, 15.
28. Seymour, *Baseball: The People's Game*, 392.
29. Barbara Gregorich, *Women at Play: The Story of Women in Baseball* (San Diego: Harcourt, Brace, and Jovanovich, 1993), 8.
30. *The National Pastime*, v. 3, n. 1 (Spring 1984), 63; *The National Pastime*, v. 5, n. 1 (Spring 1986), 19.
31. Seymour counted twenty-nine such players before World War II, but Steven Riess referred to that many in the twenty years after the turn of the century. Seymour, *Baseball: The People's Game*, 393 and Riess, *Touching Base*, 192.
32. Ellen J. Staurowsky, "Searching for Sockalexis: Exploring the Myth at the Core of Cleveland's 'Indian" Image," in Thomas L. Altherr, ed., *The Cooperstown Symposium on Baseball and American Culture 1998* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland Publishers, 2001), 138-53.
33. Jay Feldman, "The Rise and Fall of Louis Sockalexis," *Baseball Research Journal 15* (1986), 39-42.
34. Biographies of Thorpe usually concentrate on his football and track prowess and consign his baseball career as as unfortunate detour in his football career. The writers also tend to place blame on McGraw for not utilizing Thorpe's talents better, particularly giving him better instruction in hitting. See Robert W. Wheeler, *Jim Thorpe: World's Greatest Athlete* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1975), 153-164 and Jack Newcombe, *The Best of the Athletic Boys: The White Man's Impact on Jim Thorpe* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1975), 210-217.
35. Regarding Balenti, see a note in *The Red Man*, v. 6, n. 1 (September 1913).
36. For a fuller listing of indigenous ballplayers see Seymour, *Baseball: The People's Game*, 393-394 and Thompson, "The American Indian in the Major Leagues," 1-7. See also Light, *The Cultural Encyclopedia of Baseball*, 486-488.
37. Bender, quoted in Riess, *Touching Base*, 193. See also Robert Tholkes, "Chief Bender —The Early Years," *Baseball Research Journal 1983*, 8-13.
38. Meyers, quoted in Ritter, *The Glory of Their Times*, 172.
39. See Oxendine, *American Indian Sports Heritage*, 3, 15-16.
40. J. R. Fox, "Pueblo baseball: a new use for old witchcraft," in John W. Loy, Jr. and Gerald S. Kenyon, eds., *Sport, Culture, and Society: A Reader on the Sociology of Sport* (London: The Macmillan Company, 1969), 136-144.
41. Edward Norbeck and Claire R. Farrer, eds., *Forms of Play of Native North Americans* (St. Paul, Minnesota: West Publishing Company, 1979). See especially the essays by Erika Bourguignon, "Ritual, Play, and Psychic Transcendence in Native North America," 35-50 and Norbeck, "Rites of Reversal of North American Indians as Forms of Play," 51-66.
42. Francis E. Leupp, *The Indian and His Problem* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910), 18.

Baseball and Cultural Preservation

An Alternative View of the Meaning of Baseball in Japanese-American Community Formation

by Monys A. Hagen

IN SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA, a bronze mural stands as a memorial to the Japanese and Japanese-Americans relocated from their homes on the West Coast during World War II. The memorial, documenting the relocation and subsequent internment in concentration camps contains images of events and elements of importance to those who endured the experience. On the panel entitled "Hysteria of War" is the depiction of Japanese playing



baseball. The inclusion of baseball in the memorial is a testament to the importance that Japanese placed on the sport in their communities, and reflects the role that baseball played in recreating as normal a social, cultural environment as possible behind barbed wire with guards patrolling the perimeter of the camps. Japanese immigrants to America always embraced baseball. What distinguishes them from other ethnic groups arriving in the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was that they had made baseball their own prior to their arrival in the United States. In 1872, an American educator introduced the game to Japan and by the turn of the century, baseball had become Japan's most popular sport with teams vying in national championship competitions. The popularity of baseball in Japan has been attributed to its compatibility with Japanese cultural values of harmony and self-restraint.[1]

The period of Japanese immigration to the United States coincided with the development and booming popularity of baseball in Japan. Japanese arrival in the United States began around 1890 and continued until 1924 when the Johnson-Reed Act effectively curtailed Asian immigration. During these years approximately 260,000 Japanese came to United States, first establishing themselves on the Hawaiian Islands and later migrating to the West Coast of the United States mainland. Until 1910 the vast majority of the immigrants were males engaged in agricultural employment, and in their masculine communities they quickly instated the baseball leagues that were so popular in Japan.[2] In the process, they achieved what most ethnic groups seek to accomplish: replicating in their new homeland, the cultural elements they most value from their country of origin. Ironically, bringing baseball to the United States as something they had come to embrace was a Japanese, not an American, pastime.

By 1899 Japanese immigrants in Hawaii formed the Excelsiors baseball club. The pattern replicated itself on the West Coast with the arrival of the Issei. The Fuji Club became the first mainland baseball club founded in San Francisco in 1903. With continued immigration, baseball teams proliferated in the immigrant communities and the conclusion of the first decade of the 1910s cities with significant Japanese populations such as Los Angeles, Seattle, San Jose, and Honolulu had Japanese baseball leagues.[3] As communities formed in the Rocky Mountain region, the Issei began baseball programs there as well. In Colorado Japanese baseball had a firm hold by the 1920s in the communities of Denver and Las Animas where sizable Issei communities had developed.

Historians focusing on the role of baseball in immigrant communities adhere to the thesis that baseball was an entree into mainstream society, a means to achieve respect and recognition from the dominant white society. This model was developed in large part through studies of European immigrant groups and fits well for urban groups such as the Italians and Jews. When research into Japanese-American baseball began, the Americanization, mainstreaming thesis was adopted. In *They Came to Play: A Photographic History of Colorado Baseball*, Mark Foster and Duane A. Smith maintained that "Japanese Americans in Colorado adopted the national pastime with enthusiasm" and that "baseball offered them a door to mainstream society."[4] When assessing the specific functions fulfilled by Japanese-American baseball the major variation on the central thesis comes from Gary Otake who argued that in the face of racial discrimination and race based legislation, baseball united the Issei and Nisei community and "brought Japanese people into the mainstream, but ironically also built bridges back to Japan."[5]

Applying the interpretation that baseball provided Japanese an avenue to mainstream society, however, is not the only way to interpret the meaning of baseball to Japanese immigrants, and it may not provide the best understanding of how the sport functioned within the Japanese community. One initial fact that leads to questioning about the viability of the thesis is that during baseball's peak period of popularity among Japanese immigrants, 1920-1941, there was essentially no opportunity for the Japanese to utilize baseball to gain access to the dominant white society. The Japanese on the West Coast and in the Rocky Mountain region faced discrimination, both legal and social, and as a result participated only in segregated leagues competing against other Japanese teams. These teams and leagues flourished providing a focal point of community pride and cohesion. Significantly, baseball attained its greatest

Evacuees witness a baseball game Sunday, September 12, 1943, between the Prowers County all-star team and an Amache team. The Amache team won, 20-9.

following among the Issei and the older Nisei, the generations least inclined toward an assimilationist perspective. The experiences of the Japanese indicate that baseball may have been more a component of Japanese cultural preservation than assimilation. Having brought baseball from Japan the immigrants established the sport they thought of as the Japanese team sport.

During World War II, with the implementation of Executive Order 9066, the federal government removed all Japanese, citizen and alien alike, from the coastal regions of California, Washington, and Oregon. With little time to make arrangements, property and businesses were hastily sold for less than market value and in the rapid departure for the assembly centers the Japanese left behind many belongings.[6] The cultural shocks continued upon arrival at the internment camps. Camps such as Amache, Colorado, Heart Mountain, Wyoming, and Gila River, Arizona were located in isolated areas with climate and geography alien to what the Japanese had experienced on the West Coast. The government provided crude barracks for the internees with each family allocated a living space of approximately twenty by twenty-five feet.[7]

Under these circumstances the Japanese sought to re-establish their social, cultural order as quickly and to greatest degree possible. To the Japanese this meant schools, churches, and baseball. At the Gila River Internment Camp at Butte, Arizona, Kenichi Zenimura, an experienced baseball park designer from Fresno, with the help of volunteers built a ball field. The endeavor in the inhospitable Arizona desert required digging an irrigation ditch and laying a water line of nearly three hundred feet. The field served as home to thirty-two teams.[8] At Amache Internment Camp, Colorado, before the first winter ended plans for baseball and softball leagues had been made and were announced in the *Granada Pioneer*, the camp newspaper.[9] By the end of March, 1943, competition had already begun.

The standard interpretation offered is that under these extraordinary conditions the Japanese sought to attain a level of "normalcy" and baseball became a critical element in that endeavor. It is of primary importance, however, to determine whether "normalcy" meant seeking access to mainstream society and gaining approval from white America or did it mean preservation of Japanese culture. When faced with catastrophic events and uncertainties, people tend to hold onto the reassurance of traditional elements more dearly. Because of the United States government's official recognition, the Japanese American Citizen's League (JACL), noted for it adamant assimilationist stance, exerted tremendous influence in the internment camps. This would seemingly provide support for the mainstreaming/normalcy thesis, however, the JACL's influence was primarily politi-

cal, not social.[10] The meaning of baseball to the communities could not be dictated by one favored organization.

The idea that baseball provided cultural preservation rather than assimilation can be illustrated by the rivalries that developed within and between the camps. The possibilities of attaining admission into mainstream society, while minimal before the war, were further diminished with internment. The teams within the camps competed fiercely with each for camp honors at several age and skill levels. Within the Rocky Mountain region, the top teams from Amache, Heart Mountain, and Gila River competed with each other before crowds of between four to six thousand fans. Through organized baseball the Japanese maintained a sense of pride, community, and self-respect in the face of the fears and racism that had uprooted them from their homes and separated them from participation in the mainstream.

Additional support for the cultural preservation view is provided by the popularity of baseball not only among the more acculturated urban Japanese, but among the more traditional rural Japanese. Amache had two profoundly different cultural factions and the camp was marked by rural-urban tensions. One segment of the population had come from the Los Angeles area and to Amache via the Santa Anita Assembly Center. These Japanese had adopted many of the ways and mannerisms of white urban Los Angeles. Long exposed to and participating in Japanese baseball leagues in the Los Angeles area, the "Santa Anitans" seemingly supports the standard thesis. The other faction at Amache was rural agriculturists from central California. These Japanese lived in a more traditionalist culture with strong intergenerational ties.[11] Among this group, baseball proved equally popular. It had been a well-established feature in the agricultural communities and once at Amache teams like the Livingston Dodgers resumed competition.[12]

Baseball like other social cultural activities exists not only as a feature of "American culture" but it has occupied an important place within many American subcultures. It is the specific ethnic context that gives the sport meaning within immigrant and racial groups. In the case of the Japanese a unique meaning and functioning emerged born of Japan's early introduction to the sport and the extreme racism faced by Asians in the West. During World War II, when confronted by uprootedness and "otherness" the internees turned to the Japanese cultural elements they valued the most to unite and preserve what it meant to be Japanese. Baseball was central to this process.

Notes:

1. Charles Vascalleros, "Nisei: The Early Japanese-American Ballplayers," <thediamondangle.com/archive/aug01/nisei.htm>, and Gary T. Otake, "A Century of Japanese American Baseball," <www.nikkeiheritage.org/research/bbhist.htm>.
2. Vascalleros, "Nisei: The Early Japanese-American Ballplarers," 2-3, and Otake, "A Century of Japanese American Baseball," 2-3.
3. Ibid.
4. Duane A. Smith and Mark S. Foster, *They Came to Play: A Photographic History of Colorado Baseball* (Boulder, Colorado: University Press of Colorado, 1997), 52, 38. Also adhering to this perspective was Page Smith in his *Democracy on Trial: The Japanese American Evacuation and Relocation in World War II* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995): 80, 350.
5. Gary Otake, cited in Vascalleros, "Nisei: The Early Japanese-American Ballplayers," 3.
6. Executive Order 9066 was ostensibly a response to national security concerns. Approximately 120,000 Japanese, two-thirds of whom were American citizens, were removed from the West Coast.
7. Roger Daniels, *Concentration Camps USA: Japanese Americans and World War II* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1971), 42-73.
8. <niseibaseball.com/htl1%2Barbed%20Wire/Zemura%20Field.htm>.
9. *Granada Pioneer* vol. 1, nos. 13-50, Winter 1943.
10. For insight into the JACL, see Bill Hosokowa, *JACL: In Quest of Justice, History of the Japanese American Citizen's League* (New York: William Morrow, 1987). For a critical assessment of the role the JACL played in internment camp politics, see Emiko Omori's multiple-award-winning film, *Rabbit in the Moon* (Hohokus, New Jersey: New Day Films, 1999).
11. Valerie J. Matsumoto, *Farming the Home Place: A Japanese American Community in California, 1919-1982* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1983). Matsumoto did not discuss baseball, but her analysis taken in conjunction with other resources provided a useful theoretical framework for the examination of the game.
12. For a photograph of the Livingston Dodgers, see Vascalleros, "Nisei: The Early Japanese-American Ballplayers," 4.

Pastime Summer 1964

Baseball With a Black Team

by Jan Sumner

THIS WOULD BE THE LAST TRUE SUMMER of my baseball career, but it would be the most memorable.

Back in the 1960s, summer baseball for college students centered on what was then called "semi-pro" ball. It was a mixture of college ball players and an eclectic group of older guys, some of whom had played professional baseball at various levels. It was, for the most part, very competitive. For me, it was my first summer away from the high school legion baseball programs. To say it was an interesting transition would be putting it mildly. I would grow up a lot that summer, not the least of which was altruistically.

President John Kennedy had been assassinated seven months prior, and there was a sense of mourning still hanging over the country. I, like many other Americans, didn't believe it when first told. It was my freshman year at Colorado State College (now the University of Northern Colorado), and we were eating in the dorm cafeteria, when a student bolted in and yelled, "The President's been shot," then turned and ran out. I was sitting with a couple of buddies, one of whom turned to me and said, "Yeah, sure, and his wife ran off with an Arab prince." We made our way to the TV lounge. There he was . . . Walter Cronkite soulfully telling us the unthinkable. Where we were, what we were doing, and who we were with, things we would never forget.

That year in the majors the St. Louis Cardinals won

the World Series beating the Yankees in seven games. I'd grown up a Brooklyn Dodgers fan, so anyone who defeated the boys in pinstripes was a friend of mine. Plus the Cards had the great Bob Gibson, so that made it doubly delicious.

I was nineteen years old in 1964 and a pitcher. Or at least thought I was a pitcher. That same year Wally Bunker, age nineteen, won nineteen games for the Baltimore Orioles. I found it both depressing and inspiring at the same time. On the down side, here I was just trying to find myself as a hurler in the college ranks, and there he was, winning games in the big leagues. On the positive side, it gave me hope. I was still young, could throw hard, so maybe, just maybe, there was a chance. That chance and my dream would all come to an abrupt end the next summer.

They were called the Denver Merchants. Each semi-pro team had a team sponsor or sponsors. Ours was a group of downtown merchants, most of whom were black retailers. The team itself was made up almost exclusively with black ball players. During those years CSC (Colorado State College) was the dominant college baseball program in the region, due in large part to the pitching staff. The Merchants recruited three of us to pitch for them that summer, along with our backup shortstop. All our homes games were played at 23rd and Welton in what could best be described as a shoebox-shaped ball park. The right field fence was a mere 220 feet from home plate with an extended fence on top. Left field was about 350 feet and center, well, let's just say it would have been a challenge for Mickey Mantle.

Up until this point I'd only played with and against my peers. Now for the first time I was going against grown men, some of whom were in their thirties and forties. I felt young and inexperienced . . . and I was.

I'd gone to a high school that had only two black students among over two thousand. This was the first time I'd know the feeling of being in the minority. There was Vern, and Buck, Jim and Curt, along with a number of others I unfortunately can't remember. Our manager was a large black man named Gene. He was loud, intimidating and got things done. To a man, they couldn't have been nicer to me.

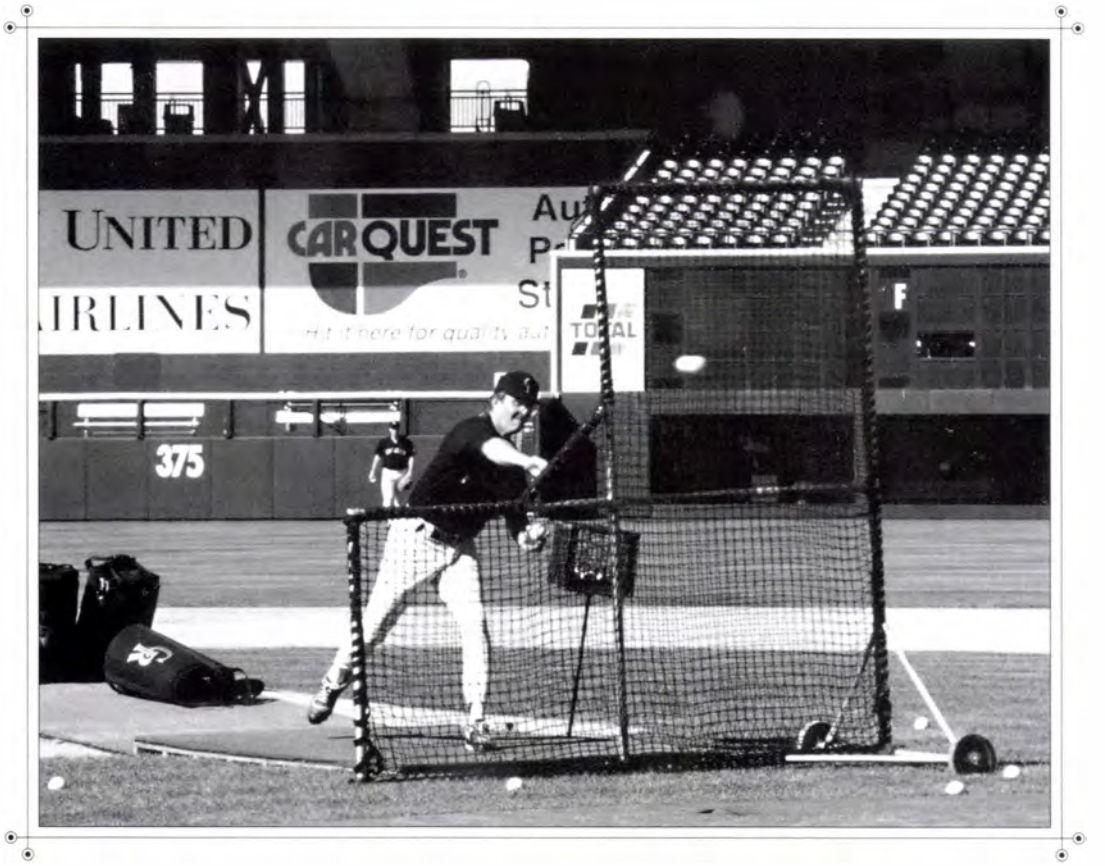
Vern and Jim had played with Satchel Paige, while several of the others had played various levels of professional baseball, albeit in the old Negro Leagues. It wouldn't take me long to realize these guys could play some ball.

I only had about a one-week break between the end of our spring season at CSC and the beginning of the summer season with the Merchants. Their first game was against Maddox Ice, one of the better teams in the league, whose first baseman used to coach me in high school and had actually become a good family friend. Mike had played some pro ball in the Yankee farm system, but never made it to the Show. He had a pretty good temper, showing it regularly the summer I played for him. But he'd made me grow as a pitcher, become more tenacious, aggressive. For that I will always owe him a debt of gratitude.

In the summer I'd played for him, he'd take batting practice off me at the end of the day. He'd look out at me and say, "Come on Jan, bring it. Try and get it by me." I could throw hard for high school, but here's a grown man, who'd played some pro ball. He teed off on me. He'd crack one over the fence or out into the parking lot, then look at me and grin. Hey, it was a man against a boy. That would change three years later.

There I was throwing the opener for the Merchants against Maddox Ice and my buddy Mike. He hit third for them. We were playing at our park with the short right field porch. Perfect for Mike, who hit left-handed.

I had grown a little, put on a few pounds, and was throwing over ninety mph. Mike always had some chew in his mouth, and during his first at-bat, dug in, looked out and . . . spit at me. This was the first time we'd faced each other in a serious situation. I stepped up on the rubber, stared in . . . and spit back, well, drooled down my chin, but he got the point. He'd taught me well.



Jan Sumner throwing batting practice for the Colorado Rockies.

He went one-for-three off of me that day, a single up the middle, but I struck him out twice, both times with heat. After the game he came up to me and said, "You throw a little harder than I remember." Sadly that was the last time I saw him. Our friendship seemed to fade away after that.

That game was the beginning of a summer baseball odyssey that still lingers more that any other. Besides our home park, we played all along the Front Range with a culminating state tournament in the small eastern Colorado town of Hugo. There was also a mid-season tournament in Greeley, where I went to school. All in all, we played around twenty to thirty games from June through August. Everyone had jobs and families, which meant games were played on weekends or at night during the week. I, too, had a summer job and a girlfriend, whom I would later marry, so fitting the games in was difficult at times.

We won that first game against Maddox Ice and continued to win until we met the Boulder Collegians in Boulder. It was a night game, and I wasn't throwing. The Collegians were not only a local powerhouse, but a national contender as well. Their squad was made up almost exclusively with star college players from various states. That night they threw a phenom from Arizona State University against us. He was throwing somewhere in the 95-97 mph range. I don't necessarily remember seeing the ball, but you could hear it . . . sort of.

Anyway, about the sixth inning he came up to hit, stroked one into left field and took off for first base. He'd taken about three steps up the line when I heard a loud pop, like a gunshot. He crumpled to the ground, letting out a scream, clutching his leg around the ankle. His Achilles tendon had snapped and rolled up the back of his leg. It was horrible to hear and see. I'll never forget them taking him away,

knowing that was the end of his career.

We played a number of games at night, and some of the ballparks had some pretty poor lighting. For hard throwers this was an advantage, and since I only knew how to throw hard in those days, throwing in the dark was great, and even better once I got the ball scuffed up.

Well, one night I was throwing against a future major league pitcher, Barry Lersch. He spent six years in the big leagues, mostly with the Phillies. I had thrown against him in high school, college, and now here in semi-pro. We were both having a pretty good night, Barry with his big curve ball and me with the heat. We finally took a 3-1 lead into the seventh. I was sitting on the bench waiting to go out for the eighth. The dugouts were made of chain link fencing, and ours faced onto a pathway behind. Suddenly I felt something poking me in the back through the fence. I turned to find an old black man in an overcoat, bent over sticking his finger through the fence, jabbing me in the ribs. It was a very warm night, so the overcoat should have been my first clue. I looked him in the face and could see he was feeling no pain. He pushed his finger back through the fence and said, "Touch my finger."

"What?" I said.

"Touch my finger," he said, getting louder.

By now all the guys on the bench have noticed and are starting to get amused. I stuck my finger out and touched the end of his finger. He turned his finger like it was caught in a flame, pulled it back through the fence, said, "You's cool on the mound, baby." Then turned and shuffled off up the street. The team broke out laughing, along with hooting and howling, about how "cool" I was on the mound. This endorsement, of course, had come from a man who had had a little too much liquid refreshment. I may have been a number of things on the mound . . . cool wasn't one of them.

Most of our games were played on Sunday afternoons. Our home park in downtown Denver offered no relief from the sun. It sat inside concrete sidewalks, which in turn were surrounded by blacktop streets. The entire field was dirt and gravel. This all equated to extremely *hot* conditions. There were metal bleachers on the first and third-base sides outside the chain link fencing. They were benches about four or five rows high. Virtually, every Sunday afternoon with the game in the third or fourth inning, an old man, wrapped in winter wear, complete with top hat and cane would show up and amble along in front of the stands. As he passed by the spectators, he'd stop, turn to the fans and reach out and lift one of the women's skirts with his cane. They'd slap the cane away, yell at him, "Harold, get out of here," and then burst out laughing. He'd pivot, replace the cane on the ground and without saying a word, saunter on up the street. It got to the point I started looking for him every game, and I was never disappointed.

That applied to the entire summer. I was never disappointed. We lost in the state tournament, which was at the time frustrating, but taken in context with the whole summer, seems insignificant now. What I gained far exceeded a few defeats.

Of all the summers I played baseball, it all still remains the most vivid in my mind. The bandbox ballpark, the hot days and hotter uniforms, Vern, the catcher, standing in the on deck circle smoking, then putting his cigarette out on a callous in his hand. Me hitting a home run and the entire team meeting me at home plate, as happy as I was for having hit it. Bill, our massive center fielder, hitting a home run at our home park that had to have gone well over 500 feet. It cleared the center field fence and landed on top of a small office building. The laughing and kidding, and the sadness when it was over. I left at the end of the season with every intention of playing for them the next summer. That summer never came.

I was almost killed in a car wreck coming back from school that spring. For all intents and purposes my baseball career was over. I never saw or heard from any of them again, but I'll never forget my last pastime summer of baseball.

Basin League Bliss, Alaskan League Anxiety

College League Baseball, 1971 and 1977-78

by Lew Lerner

THROUGHOUT MOST of my baseball career, I played in California and the South, as a college player and a high-level prospect in the Minnesota Twins organization. But I bookended my career with two very interesting stints in the West: pitching in Rapid City, South Dakota in the Basin League in 1971 and working as an assistant general manager in the Alaska college league in 1977-1978.

The year was 1971. I had just completed my junior year at San Fernando Valley State College, now known as Cal State Northridge. My team had won the NCAA Division II national championship in 1970. We're in the Hall of Fame in Cooperstown. You could look it up. I had a very good junior year, posting a 7-2 record. But as the college season ended, I wasn't sure what I would be doing that summer.

Until my coach, Bob Higert, got me into a summer college league situated in South Dakota. In order to maintain my amateur status (because at that moment I thought I'd be pitching a senior year at San Fernando Valley State), my coach recommended me to Gary Adams, then the head coach at one of our rivals, University of California at Irvine (now the head coach at UCLA). The Basin League was a college league, NCAA sanctioned College players could keep an amateur status and stay sharp or improve over the summer. I jumped at the opportunity, especially when the team secured me a job as promotion director. I was a journalism major in college, so

they must have figured I'd be a good fit in that position. And they paid for my plane ticket. Baseball in the Basin League became my number one priority that summer.

In addition to the Rapid City Chiefs I played for, there were four other teams in the circuit: the Sturgis Titans, the Pierre Cowboys, the Chamberlain Mallards, and the Mobridge Lakers. There had been a sixth team the previous year, in Valentine, Nebraska, but they had folded. By the way, there was no problem then with our team name, the Chiefs, as there may have been later or today. The season ran from, say, June 10th to say, August 8th. We had a 55-60 game schedule, much like other college leagues such as the Cape Cod League and others east of the Mississippi. Out in the Basin League, nearly all of our players were from the West, California guys like me.

The teams carried fifteen to eighteen players, including six or seven pitchers. On our Chiefs team we had Gary Wheelock, who later pitched some for the California Angels, and Bobby Sheldon, who later played some middle infield for the Brewers. We also had Jeff Malinoff, who has become a regional superscout for the Mariners organization. And although he wasn't there long, we also had Lyman Bostock, from my own college and later my teammate in the Twins organization. He came late and left early, because he was supposedly injury-prone. Dave Weaver, an Oklahoma player of the year was there, as was Charlie Crenshaw, whose brother Ben flourished as a pro golfer. Another Chief, Russ Bové, was the reason for my nickname, "L.A. Lew." We were joking that the name Bové was way too French, way too "effeminate." Russ responded by calling himself "Broadway Bo," a play on Broadway Joe Namath. I matched Bové by picking up the moniker "L.A. Lew" and even had that on my license plates later.

Other teams in the Basin League also had some excellent players. Chamberlain, for example, boasted of John Stearns, Bobby Cuellar, and Mike Proly who all went on to the major leagues. Terry Shiessler, who was their manager, was a major force in amateur ball in Aurora, Colorado. Sturgis had Willie Norwood, who went up to the Twins.

We had a good time that summer in Rapid City. We lived in a fraternity house at 115 East Kansas City Drive near South Dakota Tech. Mrs. Elma Potthoff cooked for us. It was a summer job for her, too. We used to hang out at the Imperial 400 Hotel bar. *Midnight Cowboy* was the big movie then, and I developed a Ratzo Rizzo impression which the guys kept making me do. This was basically my first trip out of California, except for college ball against Arizona teams and playing in the Division II College World Series in Springfield, Missouri. My first reaction to South Dakota was that it was insignificant compared to Los Angeles. I also noticed a lot of Native Americans wandering around sort of rootless and homeless. There was an amazing number of Indian curio and artifacts shops. I was excited to see nearby Mt. Rushmore. As promotion director, I had access to the one team car, a 1948 Plymouth, and could organize some sightseeing trips. I also noted that South Dakota radio stations promoted Denver as a regional capital of sorts, something that would not have happened back in Los Angeles.

I enjoyed my promotion director position. Other players worked other jobs, bagging groceries at the local Piggly Wiggly or handling landscape jobs or running Little League clinics. My hours were 9 A.M. till 2 P.M. I worked with the press, collecting all the stats for the league from the official scorers. I arranged for radio interviews, newspaper stories, and autograph sessions at local establishments, like at Gamble's Discount Store.

The Chiefs were a big deal in Rapid City. We were visitors from afar. Some of the board of directors would take players out fishing. Jim Quinn of the school board and Floyd Fitzgerald, who owned a paint company, were big boosters. Some previous players, including Del Unser and Frank Howard, had already established a good reputation for the team. We drew 3,500-4,000 fans per game, which was great compared to the small numbers who watched our college games in California. It was a big change having that number of fans, an audience that seemed to be half the city. We hit one rough stretch, in which we lost fifteen straight games. Gary Adams would run a lot in the outfield from foul line to foul line to work out his exasperation. We didn't shave until we won again. Ironically, however, we had some competition. We were "the second team in town." The Rapid City American Legion team, which included future big-leaguer Dave Collins, "The Rapid City Rabbit," among other high school players, commanded a strong local following.

After helping his San Fernando Valley State College Matadors win the Division II national championship in 1970, Lew Lerner pitches against Fresno State in 1971.

I had a good summer pitching. This was the time I emerged as a power pitcher. I had 103 strikeouts in 73 innings, second in the league only to Bobby Cuellar. I would get 12 or15 Ks per game against better competition than I had been used to. I had a 3.85 ERA as a starter My arm strength had come back from a previous bout with elbow tendonitis. The ball didn't seem to travel as well as in California. I also probably got a boost from night ball. We had played only day games in California. I had to get glasses because of night ball I continually crossed up my catcher, Gary Stewart. We went to a flap system of signals. One time he asked me what the score was, and I had to squint to see the scoreboard. After that I knew it was time to get glasses. One other thing about night ball sticks in my memory. Fans in Mobridge would park cars outside the fence and flash their lights on and off when a Mobridge player did something well. A home run rated bright lights.

Mostly my memories of that summer are positive, but there were some weather problems. I had never experienced such heat and humidity. Back in California our attitude was basically what humidity? And what mosquitoes! At Pierre, we used so much Off we thought the bugs were eating it for dessert. I kept a can of Off in my back pocket and had to spray my ankles, which would often be bloody from the bites. I suppose this was against the rules, but the umpire had a can, too. Another time the hail was so strong in Sturgis that it knocked out banks of lights before we could get off the field. We California players thought we were in World War III. The rivers

tended to run slow, but I was saddened to hear the next year that a flood killed over100 people in Rapid City. A cloud-seeding experiment went awry in 1972, and the normally sluggish Rapid Creek went out of control. I was pitching for the Twins organization in Charlotte, North Carolina by that time, but I read about the event in the Charlotte *Observer*.

Perhaps my most pleasant experience that summer, however, was a conversation I had with Gary Adams. He took me off to the side and said, "You probably have heard this, but you've got enough stuff to get you drafted. If you go eligible in the 1972 draft in January, the Reds will draft you #1 pick, no doubt." "But you didn't hear that from me," he cautioned. He was a coach for one of our rivals and didn't want to get accused of tampering. I was disarmed and surprised. I had *not* heard this from any player or coach. My college coach probably wanted to make sure I came back for my senior year. As a sophomore I had had a1.20 ERA and an 11-2 record, and had been a 1st team All-American, but no one had encouraged me to think about playing professionally. I told Adams that I was more worried about the military draft. I secured a position in the Air Force reserve, and entered the 1972 draft. The Twins, who had a pick right before Cincinnati, selected me as their first pick. My Basin League summer undoubtedly pushed my career up to this notch.

"I did everything for the sixty-game schedule. I sold the popcorn; heck, I bought the popcorn."

I went on to pitch in the Twins organization for the next five years. I made the 40-man Spring Training roster in 1976, but then a rotator cuff injury sent me to the disabled list. The next spring, I hadn't healed yet, so I asked the Twins for my release in April. In the intervening years, I had gone back to San Fernando Valley State and completed my B.A. degree in journalism during a couple of off-seasons. But I also started looking around for some career in the administration side of baseball. I started contacting organizations and heard about a possibility with the Denver Bears. I spoke with Jim Burris and told him I would work for free. He offered me a job over the phone, but when I went to Denver, he said that he thought I was kidding. Instead he had given the promotional package jobs to a couple of former Bears, Jim Dwyer and Steve Dunning. But there I was in Denver, in October, 1975, and I didn't want to leave. My season with Tacoma had concluded, and I wanted to live somewhere that had some seasonality. I also had a real estate license, so I started in on that business.

But I was miserable in real estate, whether it was in Denver or back out in Los Angeles. Baseball had been my life since I was eight years old, and I didn't want to give up on that. In the summer of 1977, I reactivated my search for a baseball position. I started writing to all the organizations again in September. By December, I decided I had better go to the baseball winter meetings, that year held in Honolulu. I was still in the Air Force reserve, so I got an Air National Guard C-130 flight to Hawaii. The meeting headquarters were at the Sheraton Waikiki hotel. For ten straight days, I flooded the baseball people with my resumé, each day changing the logo and delivering them to each room in the hotel. I even employed a couple of Hawaiian young women with leis to hand out my materials. But even though a couple of my old Twins organization friends, including Rod Carew, introduced me around, I didn't get any offers from any major league clubs.

Finally I heard from Max Swearingen, the general manager of the Kenai Peninsula Oilers of the Alaskan League, a college amateur league much like the Basin League. Max was also the editor and publisher of the *Peninsula Clarion* and the father of six kids. He felt with the responsibilities he couldn't do justice to the baseball club. He told me he needed a young guy to handle the full-time duties. He offered me the assistant general manager job at the "princely" salary of $20,000. I say "princely," because I found out that sum was barely above baseline poverty in Alaska. I quickly discovered that a Big Mac was $2.75, a loaf of bread cost $3.99, and a dozen eggs

set you back $2.50.

In any case, I accepted the offer, because I thought it could be a steppingstone to something higher up in organized baseball. I arrived in Kenai on December 21, 1977, the shortest day of the year. The crack of dawn was 11 A.M. There was a blizzard in progress, five feet of snow. I had my car shipped by Sea-Land barge to Alaska from Seattle, for a fee of $800, after a mechanic advised me that driving there would damage my vehicle. The area turned out to be pretty remote. "Downtown" Kenai consisted of about 4 stores and a mini-mall. Five thousand people inhabited the extended "metro area," with only about 20,000 on the whole peninsula. Indeed, Swearingen wanted me to understand what I was getting into both weatherwise and lifestyle-wise.

But I didn't care at first. I was going to be running a team and getting out of real estate. I plunged into my job with abandon. I lived, slept, and ate baseball, 8 A.M. to midnight, and I loved it.

I did *everything* for the sixty-game schedule. I sold the popcorn; heck, I bought the popcorn. I ran the club and arranged all the promotions. I wrote composite articles for the *Clarion*. I was basically in charge. Max Swearingen just signed the checks. Under Max, the club had usually made only about $20,000 in revenues, in other words broke even. My efforts generated over $100,000, my salary five times over. I made the Kenai Oilers profitable!

The Kenai Peninsula Oilers were a pretty fair team. They had won the National Baseball Congress championship in Wichita the previous year. Mark Newman, who is now with Yankees and then the assistant coach at Southern Illinois University, supplied us with players. We had Dave Stieb, who went on to star for the Blue Jays. Tim Laudner, our catcher, caught on with the Twins later. Billy Doran made it up to the Astros. Pete Teixiera, one of our pitchers, is the father of the current Texas Rangers prospect, Mark. On the downside, I never got to travel with the team in Alaska nor to Wichita, where they finished second nationally.

In addition to Kenai, there were three other clubs: the Fairbanks Goldpanners, the Anchorage Glacier Pilots, and the Palmer Valley Green Giants. Future big-leaguers Tim Wallach and Tim Leary played for Fairbanks. Last I knew Leary was the pitching coach at UCLA, where Gary Adams heads the program. Marcel Lachemann, René Lachemann's older brother, managed Anchorage. Indeed some fine players, such as Tom Seaver, Dave Kingman, Pete Redfern, and Jim Umbarger, had boosted the image of the Alaskan League in the past. A lot of players liked playing there. The clubs found them jobs, mainly in oil field service companies. They lived with sponsoring families, mostly board of director families. The players made the prevailing Alaska minimum wages, about $8 an hour. Good players wanted to play there because they could save up some money during the summer. They also liked the playing conditions. The teams flew everywhere. There were no lights, no night games because daylight lasted so late. Games started at 7:30 P.M.. The temperature never got above 65 degrees, unlike the sweltering conditions in the lower 48. I never took off my sweater or windbreaker all summer.

In some ways, I was a victim of my own success. My effectiveness as an assistant general manager "showed up" Max Swearingen. At the end of the season, he let me know they were "going to go in another direction." I was disappointed, but frankly the remoteness of the area had been getting to me. Max let me go rather abruptly. I had to work picking fish out of nets for three weeks to get enough money to get back to Los Angeles. This involved a lot of hard work scooping up the beached fish, shoveling them into a truck and then onto a scale, some days twenty-four hours a day. I also worked a day in a cannery processing the fish. Finally I got together enough money to buy a plane ticket and ship my car back to Seattle, this time for only $200. From there it was back to Los Angeles and eventually back to Denver. Thus ended my assistant general manager career in Kenai.

The Albuquerque Dukes and the Summer of 1981

The Best Baseball in America

by Ron Briley

WITH THE MAJOR LEAGUE GAME ABSENT much of the summer in 1981 and with the Albuquerque Dukes fielding what Peter Gammons of the *Boston Globe* called "the best team in baseball," the Dukes achieved a great deal of national attention, attracting sportswriters from around the nation and national television games on the fledgling ESPN network.[1] The attention was certainly warranted, as the Dukes dominated the Pacific Coast League (PCL), winning ninety-four games and dropping only thirty-eight, for a winning percentage of .712, the highest in the league since 1934. Although the word is often misused, Duke hitting was simply awesome, as the team batted .325, scored 875 runs, for an average of over six runs per game, and did not suffer a shutout all season.

The Albuquerque area was in need of the positive psychological strokes provided by a successful sports franchise. Albuquerque historian Marc Simmons noted that by the early 1980s, Albuquerque citizens, confronted by growing congestion, crime, drug traffic, and a 1979 scandal involving the highly esteemed men's basketball program at the University of New Mexico, were finding it more difficult to maintain their traditional optimism that "Albuquerque, as cities go, was an agreeable and, indeed, a preferable place in which to live."[2] Indeed, the Dukes seemed to provide a rallying point for the city which not even the trial and conviction of the former University of New Mexico basketball coach Norm Ellenberger could

negate. Albuquerque residents flocked through the turnstiles at the Sports Stadium, resulting in the Dukes leading the PCL in attendance by drawing 244,464 fans during the regular season, an increase of nearly 50,000 over the 1980 season.[3]

Having won the PCL pennant in 1980, many of the Dukes hoped to be promoted to the parent Los Angeles Dodgers, who had narrowly lost the 1980 Western Division of the National League to the Houston Astros. As Spring Training and the exhibition season unfolded, however, it became apparent that the Dodgers would prefer to stay with their established veteran players. Thus, former Dukes such as pitcher Ted Power, shortstop Gary Weiss, second baseman Jack Perconte, and outfielders Bobby Mitchell and Ron Roenicke were optioned back to Albuquerque. Meanwhile, Duke veterans signed to contracts included infielder Wayne Caughey, outfielder Tack Wilson, pitchers Kevin Keefe and Bill Swiacki, and first baseman Kelly Snider. New faces expected to contribute to the 1981 Dukes were outfielder Candy Maldonado and pitcher Alejandro Pena from class A Lodi, and pitchers Brian Holton and Ricky Wright and first baseman Mike Marshall up from class AA San Antonio.

The Dukes did not get off to a good start. The home opener set for April 14th was canceled due to gale force winds and a wind chill factor more appropriate for the Canadian Football League. Although a twenty-five cent beer promotion helped attract a crowd of over three thousand fans the next evening, the Dukes lost the opener to the Phoenix Giants, before taking two out of three from the Tucson Toros, leaving the Dukes with a mark of two wins and three losses for the initial home stand.

Nevertheless, the Dukes' play improved considerably on a late April home stand, making it much easier to relax while watching the Albuquerque nine. The Dukes took two out of three from Salt Lake and then swept a four-game series with Tucson. During this home stand a new crowd favorite emerged in Candy Maldonado, who homered in four consecutive at-bats on April 30th and May 1st, tying a PCL record. The Spanish-speaking native of Puerto Rico was much admired by local Latinos. Proud of his Puerto Rican heritage and an admirer of Roberto Clemente, Maldonado had decided to try his baseball talents as a path for social mobility in America. Coming from a poor family, Maldonado said of his baseball career, "This is my future. I left school in junior high so this is my job. I had to make my own life."[4]

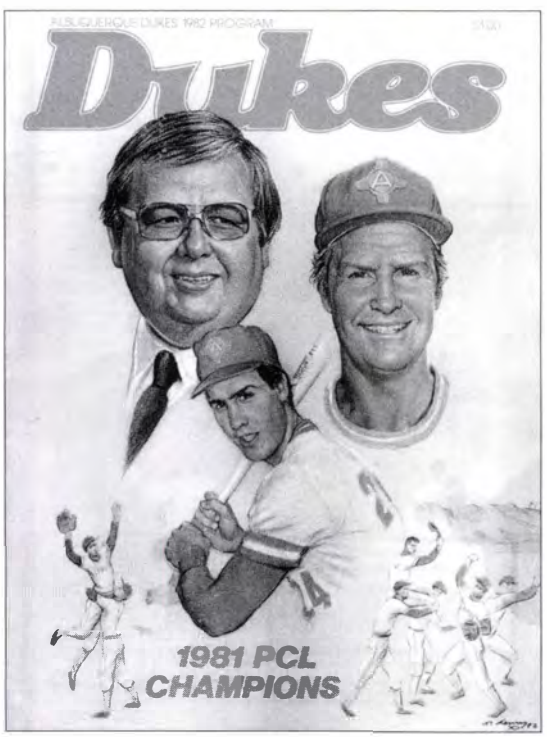
Making the most of his opportunity, the young outfielder slammed his ninth home run on May 8th and led the Dukes to their first winning streak of the year. After dropping the first road game to Salt Lake, the Dukes won the last three games of the series to return home for a five-game sweep of the Phoenix Giants. This left the Dukes on May 11th with a record of nineteen wins and seven losses, as well as a six-game lead in the Southern Division of the PCL. After a rocky start, the players were beginning to sense that there was something special about the 1981 Albuquerque team. The Dukes' left-handed relief pitcher Steve Shirley captured the team's confidence, asserting, "We're going on the field every day, knowing we're going to win."[5]

As the Dukes departed for a fourteen-day road trip to the Pacific Northwest and Hawaii, with a final stop at Tucson, the dark clouds of a baseball strike seemed ready to unleash a major storm for the National Pastime. On June 10th, the National Labor Relations Board refused to grant an injunction against the owners for unfair labor practices, and the Major League Baseball Players' Association issued a call for a strike on June 12th, which would prevent the owners from implementing their plan for free agent compensation. Preparing for what many predicted might be a protracted strike, George Foster, player representative of the Cincinnati Reds, echoed player solidarity, asserting, "As the Beatles say, there'll be a revolution. All the players, period, are behind the strike."[6]

But minor league players were not part of the union, and a long road trip for the Dukes continued. The Dukes won the first half Southern Division flag with a mark of forty-six wins and twenty-two losses, finishing with a ten and one-half game lead over second-place Salt Lake. The new cable all-sports station ESPN announced that it would carry nationally from Phoenix the June 22nd opening game of the second half of the PCL season between Albuquerque and the Giants. In addition, Los Angeles media focused on the Dodgers top farm team with some television stations doing daily segments on the Dukes. According the Dukes' General Manager Pat McKernan, the

increased publicity was the main impact of the strike on the players. They were not members of the Major League Baseball Players' Association and many years away from being concerned with their potential free agency, but the strike gave them an opportunity to demonstrate their skills to the baseball public. And the path to major league advancement was blocked by veterans in Los Angeles, perhaps other teams would notice and be prepared to deal after the strike.[7]

On June 22nd, the Dukes started right up where they had left off in the first half, defeating Phoenix, 7-4, before a national television ESPN audience. Mike Marshall knocked in three runs and was one of five Dukes who had two hits. Tom Lasorda, the Dodger manager, was the color commentator on the game for ESPN, and he observed that he was especially impressed with Marshall, Maldonado, and relief pitcher Alejandro Pena. On the hitting-rich Dukes, Pena had received little publicity, but had quietly amassed some impressive numbers, with nine saves and an earned run average below one run per game.



A 1982 Albuquerque Dukes program featuring the likenesses of GM Pat McKernan, manager Del Crandall, and Mike Marshall, Minor League Player of the Year.

The Dukes opened the second half of the season with thirteen consecutive wins. The streak was stopped in Tucson on July 9th when God intervened with rain, and the games was halted after six innings with the Toros ahead, 3-2. The highlight of this streak was a four-game sweep of the Salt Lake City Gulls at the Sports Stadium, which was broadcast on the Los Angeles radio station KCMP with former Dodger pitching ace Don Drysdale doing the play-by-play. The Fourth of July game was telecast by the Los Angeles cable station KTLA, which normally carried the games of the California Angels. For the fireworks display on the evening of July 3rd, a record crowd of 19,003 saw the Dukes keep their perfect second-half mark with a 2-1 victory over the Gulls. According to the *Albuquerque Journal,* "For the first time in the history of The Sports Stadium, the ballpark was completely sold out. The gates were closed and there wasn't even standing room left. Late in the game, several fights broke out, and extra police were called."[8]

While hopes were raised and dashed throughout the month of July regarding a settlement of the major league strike, the Dukes had no choice but to continue playing good baseball. And, indeed, they did, compiling a mark of twenty-two wins and eight losses for July, with a nine and one-half game lead in the PCL Southern Division. While the Dodger organization provided Albuquerque with a collection of fine players, much of the credit belonged to manager Del Crandall, who never allowed his players to let up or show their frustrations on the field. The former all-star catcher of the Milwaukee Braves and manager of the Milwaukee Brewers was a disciplinarian who stressed teamwork. Explaining his philosophy, Crandall told sportswriters, "If they put their statistics first, they don't know how to win. One of the things I talk about at the beginning of the season is not worrying about statistics. If you know how to win, the statistics will be there anyway." Crandall also enforced a dress code on Duke road trips. While some might consider dress codes in the 1980s old-fashioned, Crandall, as a traditionalist, exclaimed, "When we travel, we wear jackets. We represent one of the finest things in the country. Baseball."[9]

After August 1st, the Dukes would have plenty of competition in representing the sport as the owners and players union, with strike insurance nearly

exhausted and the entire season in jeopardy, settled their differences over compensation, and the season was set to resume on August 8th, with the All-Star Game in Cleveland. The Dodgers invited the Dukes to Los Angeles for an exhibition game on August 6th. To honor the Dodger request, the Dukes would have to reschedule as a doubleheader a game with the Edmonton Trappers. But as General Manager Pat McKernan explained, "They are paying our expenses. They'll give us some money to make up for the night we're going to be giving up at the gate." Crandall believed the players had earned the opportunity to display their abilities in Dodger Stadium, and the players appeared anxious to be near "the Show." As for the Dodgers, they needed the game to help get back into shape following the lengthy strike, and it might not be bad for business. Bill Schweppe, Dodger Vice President for Minor League Operations, stated, "With all the publicity Albuquerque has gotten here during the strike, we thought it might be a good idea. The Los Angeles press has really done a job to promote Albuquerque."

Indeed the game did draw a good crowd of over forty thousand, although it was evident that the Dodgers and their fans were not as serious about the game as were the Dukes. Fans yelled taunts such as "Do you use metal bats in the minors?" Dodgers second baseman Davey Lopes put the game in perspective for the established players. "If by some mere coincidence they should win the game, what the hell am I going to do? I'm not going to cut my throat. What are they going to do, ship us all down?" Lopes was right. The game was simply an exhibition, and the long layoff left Dodger batters only able to score two hits off Duke hurlers Holton, Ricky Wright, and Pena. The only run of the game was driven in by Maldonado, who was the only player to collect two hits in the game. While the Dodgers may have been going through the motions, the Dukes players were elated, as was the city of Albuquerque. While the rest of the nation focused on the confrontation between President Reagan and the air traffic controllers' union, the citizens of Albuquerque gathered around their television sets to watch a local broadcast of the game by an independent station. The only sour note for the Dukes in the game was that the Dodgers had brought up second baseman Steve Sax and pitcher Tom Niedenfuer from San Antonio for the game, indicating that the Dodger management might be more interested in these Double A prospects rather than top Duke candidates Jack Perconte and Ted Power.[10]

Even if there was little that the Dukes could do to change the minds of the Dodgers brass, Del Crandall would not let his team coast through the month of August, as Albuquerque completed the month with a record of twenty wins and eight losses, easily capturing the second half of the division race with a record of forty-eight and sixteen. This was achieved despite the call up of relief pitcher Pena on

August 13th, the first roster move of the season with the Dukes by the Dodgers. The Albuquerque club also received some consolation from the Dodgers when Ron Roenicke was recalled by the parent club on August 30th, so he would be eligible for the National League playoffs. Dodgers management also announced that Power, Maldonado, Mitchell, Marshall, Weiss, and Perconte would be joining the Los Angeles franchise following the PCL playoffs, while Holton and Law would be placed on the major league roster, but they would not report to Los Angeles.

After winning both halves of the Southern Division race, the Dukes had almost a week off waiting for the Tacoma Tigers to defeat the Hawaii Islanders in a preliminary round of playoffs to decide the Northern Division of the PCL. Accordingly, the Dukes opened the best three-of-five series for the PCL crown on September 4th in Tacoma. Just as Albuquerque dominated the regular PCL season, the Dukes defeated the Tigers twice in Tacoma before returning to Albuquerque on September 6th for what promised to be the last game of a memorable season. The Dukes were up to the occasion before a record Albuquerque playoff crowd of over five thousand fans who greeted their returning heroes with a standing ovation. Ted Power exclaimed, "These fans are great. I went out on the field before the game, and they were standing. I got goose bumps."[11] Behind the three-hitter pitched by Brian Holton and three-run home run by Weiss, the Dukes defeated Tacoma, 9-2. The incredible season of 1981 was history.

The year was a rough one for air traffic controllers and baseball fans. The mid-season strike resulted in cancellation of over seven hundred major league games, totaling more than a third of the scheduled contests. As major league baseball players vacationed and negotiated, a nation desperate for baseball news turned its attention to the city of Albuquerque where between June 12th and August 14th, the Dukes won fifty games while dropping only twelve matches, for an unbelievable winning percentage of .807. National columnists conceded that during much of the summer of 1981 the best baseball in America was to be found in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The final mark of ninety-four wins and only thirty-eight losses established a record for most wins by an Albuquerque club. Mike Marshall won the triple crown in the PCL, batting .373 with thirty-four home runs and one hundred thirty-seven RBI. Marshall's triple crown achievement had not been equaled in the PCL since 1956, four years before he was born.

The summer of 1981 was described by Del Crandall as "one of those seasons you dream about." In December, the baseball world officially recognized the fulfillment of this dream campaign when *The Sporting News* selected Crandall as Minor League Manager of the Year, Mike Marshall as Minor League Player of the Year, and Pat McKernan as Minor League Executive of the Year. The Dukes had filled an important void in the baseball world during the strike of 1981.[12] As McKernan remarked, in baseball "timing is everything."[13]

Notes:

1. Peter Gammons, "The Best Team in Baseball: Albuquerque's Dukes of Flatlands Are Tearing Up Triple A," *The Boston Globe*, July 25, 1981, copy in Albuquerque Dukes 1981 Scrapbook, Albuquerque Dukes, Sports Stadium, Albuquerque, New Mexico, hereafter cited as Dukes Scrapbook.
2. Marc Simmons, *Albuquerque: A History* (Albuquerque, New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press, 1982), 377.
3. *Albuquerque Dukes 1982 Program*. In assessing these attendance figures, Dukes General Manager Pat McKernan pointed out the strong team fielded by the Dukes and the fact that Dukes attendance had been on an increasing curve before the 1981 season, downplaying the impact of the big league strike. Pat McKernan, Albuquerque Dukes, interview with the author, February 19, 1993.
4. *Albuquerque Journal*, April 19, 1981
5. *Albuquerque Journal*, May 11, 1981. For a daily account of the Dukes in 1981, see "Day by Day with the Dukes: Pitcher of Record," Dukes Scrapbook.
6. *Albuquerque Journal*, May 21, 24, and 26 and June 1, 1981
7. Pat McKernan, interview with the author, February 19, 1993.
8. *Albuquerque Journal*, July 4, 1981
9. Mark Rupert, Administrative Assistant to General Manager Pat McKernan, interview with the author, February 19, 1993; and *Albuquerque Journal*, July 3 and 27, 1981
10. *Albuquerque Journal*, August 1, 6, and 7, 1981; *Los Angeles Times*, August 6 and 7, 1981; and "Dukes Blank Dodgers 1-0 in L.A.," *Albuquerque Dukes 1982 Program*, 10-15, Dukes Scrapbook
11. *Albuquerque Journal*, August 19, 1981
12. "Mike, Del, and Pat Lead Dukes Award Parade," *Albuquerque Dukes 1982 Program*, 28-30, Dukes Scrapbook
13. Pat McKernan, interview with the author, February 19, 1993

Baseball Nuggets

From the Western History Department
of the Denver Public Library

by Chip Atkison

OF THE MANY TOOLS AVAILABLE to baseball researchers, none is more important than archived newspapers and periodicals. Most of those "stacks" have been transferred onto microfilm and are constantly pored over by all manner of history buffs. The largest collection of Colorado papers resides in the Western History Department of the Denver Public Library. Rows upon rows of metal filing cabinets hold keys to the reported past as can be referenced in the *Denver Post* (1894-current), the *Rocky Mountain News* (1859-present), the *Denver Times*, the *Denver Republican* (late nineteenth century through 1926), the *Rocky Mountain Herald* (1890s through 1939), and many more.

A key to researching baseball history in the Rocky Mountain region can be found in the library's detailed card catalogue. There are well over 800 references to the game, ranging from the first meeting of "All interested in joining a baseball club . . ." in 1862 through the formation of the current Colorado Rockies.

We're including a variety of "snippets" in this article to show how wide and deep flow the National Pastime's tributaries from the purple mountains' majesty.

An early reference to baseball in Denver appeared in the March 12, 1862, *Rocky Mountain News*, page 3, column 1:

All interested in joining a baseball club meet at Whipple's cabinet shop.

This shop was located at 15th and Blake Streets in Denver, just five blocks from the future location of Coors Field. The *News* reported the turnout the following day:

> *Pursuant to the call published yesterday, a number of gentlemen assembled yesterday at Whipple's cabinet shop last evening and enrolled their names—twenty-eight in all—as members of the . . . Base Ball Club.*

Baseball, in that era, was more a recreational diversion for the more elite members of Colorado society. One of the more eloquent passages appeared in an early 1866 editorial by the *News'* owner William N. Byers:

> *The vernal season is approaching; and though "Winter still lingers in the lap of Spring," and the weather proper of the months of February and March, so far, seems by some hocus-pocus arrangement, to have been transposed, yet there can be no reasonable doubt that the demise* de facto *of Winter will shortly take place. Very soon will the farmer begin to till the soil, and the old mountains, which, for the last four months, have been comparatively deserted, again waken up to life and activity. Then adieu of amusements a winter season in Denver is capable of affording, and welcome the pleasant walks, rides, excursions, and moonlight* tete a tetes.
>
> *A miner's life during the summer season does not admit of much pleasure, except that of gain; he has no time for recreation save on the Sabbath day, which is too much disregarded. We Denverites, however, will have plenty of opportunities during the long days of the coming half year, to enjoy outdoor sports, and to this end we advocate the formation of clubs-crickets, wicket, base ball—anything combining pleasure with healthful, manly exercise. We are particularly favored, in many respects; one is, convenient and excellent grounds for such purposes, and that, too, within a few minutes' walk in any direction.*
>
> *Who will be the first, then, to inaugurate a move for forming a base ball club? It is a beautiful game as played according to modern rules, and many hold that it is infinitely superior to cricket. In fact, it is rapidly becoming the National game of America, as cricket is of the mother country. A few hours each week will make no perceptible difference to your business, and the benefits accruing, in a sanitary point of view, alone, will amply reward every one who participates.*
>
> *There is no reason why we, here cut in these "neck of woods," (barrin' the timber) should be behind our eastern brethren in anything; much less in athletic sports and games, considering the healthful and invigorating climate.*
>
> *Let us have a base ball club, by all means.*

Some interesting lines appeared in the July 5, 1866 *Rocky Mountain News* tying local baseball to an interest from the East Coast:

> *The undersigned members of the Empire Base Ball Club of New York, challenge any Club in the Territory of Colorado, to play a friendly game on Friday, July 6th at 4 p.m. Apply at D. Scott's store, Blake Street.*
>
> *J. Topp, Pres't.*
> *E. Murry, Sec'y.*
> *E. Van Loovan, Tr."*

Nicknames for athletic teams have proven interesting study for some historians. Our modern observance of political correctness has created divisions between ethnic groups in this regard. Some early Colorado ball clubs showed some originality beyond the obvious White Stocking, Red Legs, Blue Sox monikers. In the October 24, 1871, *Rocky Mountain News*, page 1, column 4, the paper noted that Trinidad (Colorado) named their club the Trinidad Vampires. On July 16, 1872, the Pueblo *Daily Chieftain*, page 4, column 2, listed "Soapweeds" as the name of the baseball club in Pueblo.

Statistical research for the mid-nineteenth century can be very difficult. The May 23, 1867, *Rocky*

Mountain News reported a match between the Colorado Base Ball Club and the Rocky Mountain Base Ball Club. The box score listed but eight players per team. Adjacent to each of those player's names were two columns of numbers. The first column appeared beneath a heading "H.L." or Hands Lost (outs). The second column was under "R" (runs).

Again, searching the numbers in antiquity can prove difficult for twenty-first-century number crunchers. The manner in which game performance was reported gradually evolved over the years. The box score that accompanied a report of the Kansas City Monarchs championship game versus The House of David in the summer or 1934 is an excellent example, as evidenced by the box score below.

Doesn't every baseball fan rhapsodize about the way the game was played in the past? Of course. This is one of the keys for endless fascination with baseball's past. Excerpts from the *Denver Post* article, "Professional and Amateur Baseball Was Popular Here in the Early Days," April 22, 1934, page 3, Sports Section made points long and many times repeated:

> *Both professional and semi-pro teams were blazing the trail then* [the early 1880s and '90s] *according to* [Burt] *Davis, and the brand of ball was fast, the players smart and the game was even more colorful than today.*

MONARCHS

Players	A.B.	H.	PO.	A.
Allen ss.	4	0	1	4
Giles 1b	4	1	10	0
Stearns cf	3	1	1	1
Rogan rf	4	2	1	0
Bankh'd lf	4	1	0	0
Duncan c	4	1	8	2
Mothell 2b	4	0	3	4
N.J'ph 3b	3	1	0	2
Brewer p	3	1	0	2
Totals	33	8	24	16

HOUSE OF DAVID

Players	A.B.	H.	PO.	A.
Ingram cf	4	1	3	0
Mullen 2b	3	0	1	2
Holland rf	4	1	2	0
Perkins c	4	1	8	1
Tolles lf	3	2	1	0
Murphy 3b	3	1	1	0
Cross 1b	2	1	9	0
Blaken'y ss	2	0	2	6
Hunter p.	3	0	0	0
Totals	28	7	27	9

Monarchs . . . . . 000 000 000 – 0
House of David . . . 010 100 00x – 2

Two-base hits: Cross, Duncan, Sacrifices: Mullen, Double play: Blakeney to Murphy. Left on bases: Monarchs 7, Davids 5. Struck out: By Hunter 8, by Brewer 6. Passed balls: Perkins. Umpires: Darnell and Hawthorne
Time of game: 1:30

In the old days it was nothing to play as many as four games a day, two before dinner and a like number after the meal had settled.

Indoor baseball was played a little by member of the Wheel Clubs and the Y.M.C.A., but didn't hold a candle to baseball.

Popular features in newspapers have always been sport columns by noted reporters. In the 1940s, one of Denver's favorites was Bill Ritt. His six-inch column, "Ritticisms" in a *Denver Post* sport section was a common staple. Here's one regarding facial hair:

College ball players with mustaches may cause a revolution in the diamond business. Their slogan is—why sacrifice a cookie duster for a baseball career? Razor circles will be agog if the movement spreads. It is the worst attack on the great industry of scraping chins since Charles E. Hughes ran for president.

The rise of the diamond sport saw the fall of soup strainers and zitses, hair by hair. However, pictures of early ball teams look like Santa Claus multiplied by nine.

So many balls were lost in the outfielders' hirsute appendage that beards were banished form baseball. It was a blow to base stealers. No longer could they dive into a bag, protected from injury by their heavily upholstered jaws.

The mustache may be manly and the beard a boon to an ambassador, but whiskers will never again be popular in the national pastime. It would be too much like bringing the bush back into the big leagues.

It was a great day when the last whisker fluttered into eternity at the snip of the shears. It was like the unveiling of a monument tho not so pretty.

Too bad neither "Goose" Gossage nor Bruce Sutter had been born yet.

Sometimes, flipping through the card catalogue, one turns over a curious item. Such was the case when the card for the *Denver Post*, June 3, 1935, page 19, revealed this: "Tokyo teams play exhibition baseball games in Denver, Sunday June 2, 1935" Upon further review, very little could be determined from the story. The headline was "Japanese Stars Win Doubleheader," and the short article read: "At Merchants park Sunday the touring Tokio [sic] nine, won a doubleheader by defeating the White Elephants, 4 to 3, and winning a 2-to-1 decision from a makeshift college lineup in the nightcap." Other than the two box scores that followed, nothing else was revealed about these games.

Many other nuggets await interested SABR baseball scholars in the Denver Public Library Western History Department. Check it out while you're in town for the convention. Their telephone number is 720-865-1821.

Managing a Mile High in the Rocky Mountain West

Baseball at a Higher Altitude

by Charlie Metro

WE MOVED TO DENVER in 1960, when I started to manage the Denver Bears, and we have lived here ever since. We call the Rocky Mountains our home. But my managerial contact with the Rocky Mountains goes back to 1947. I slept through my first train trip through the Rockies, when the Philadelphia A's sent me to Oakland in 1945. But in 1947, I saw how the ball can fly in the thinner air. When my Bisbee Yanks played at Globe-Miami, Arizona, the altitude played into the game. I let my guys take extra batting practice, extra swings, to juice them up, as they watched that ball fly. The combination of altitude and dryness sent the ball further.

My first sustained experience managing and playing in the Rocky Mountain region happened at Twin Falls, Idaho in 1948 and 1949. We played teams across the region, Salt Lake and Ogden, Utah, Great Falls and Billings, Montana, and Pocatello, Idaho Falls, and Boise, Idaho. Sure, we had some long-distance travel, some 500-mile drives, but we loved playing in those towns. But, boy, could the weather be unpredictable! We played the league all-star game one year in Great Falls in mid-summer in a flurry of snow. And a stretch of bad weather delayed the playoffs. The major leaguers were playing the third game of the World Series already.

My California city kids loved the Rockies. It was all new to them, all this expanse. This was the first time they saw cattle. I didn't notice any homesickness for the big cities. They fit right in. They liked to go fishing. Johnny Hack moved to the Rockies, and so did Jim Eskenberry, who lives in Thornton. One of my catchers, Hal Danielson's son lives in the Denver area and is trying to organize a reunion of the Twin Falls Cowboys. Many of the players liked playing in Denver and Colorado. Vern Rapp, from the later Denver Bears team, moved to the Denver area, and Steve Carlton from my 1966 Tulsa team eventually moved to Durango. My own enthusiasm for the West grew here, too. I went and saw the Custer battle field and saw Charlie Russell's cowboy art in a saloon in Great Falls. I have remained a devotee of Western art, quarter horses, the Denver Stock Show, cowboy boots, and Country and Western music ever since.

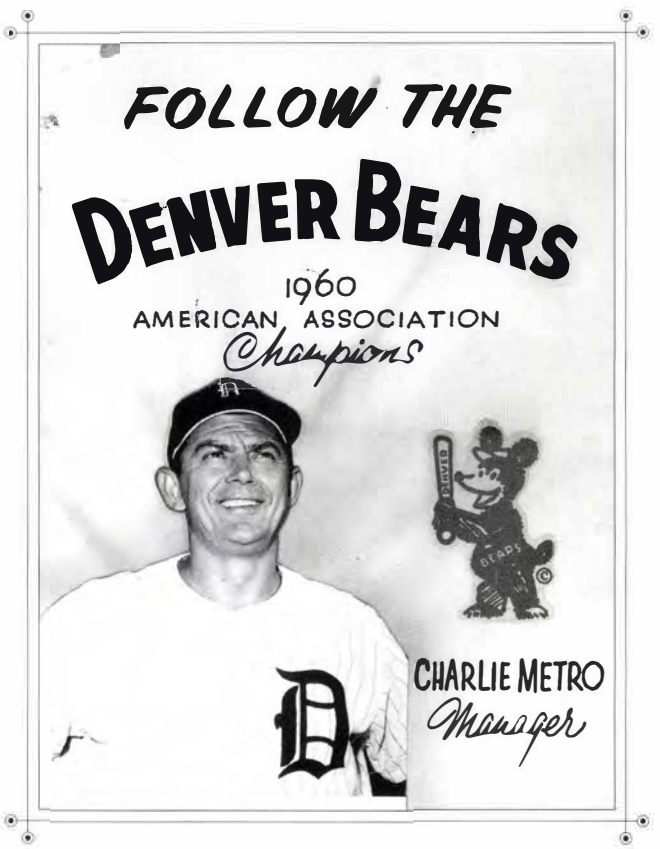
Perhaps my favorite story from those years involved Yellowstone National Park. My Twin Falls Cowboys and I were traveling across Wyoming north toward Montana, and we decided to go through the National Park. We stopped to look at Yellowstone Falls. The guys were in a cocky mood. They talked me into letting them take some"batting practice" into the canyon. Even though we didn't have that many practice balls, I let them go ahead. Soon it turned into a contest to see who could hit the ball the longest distance. They really got competitive, making jokes about hitting the ball out of the park. Amazing what watching a ball travel that far can do for your confidence. We had to settle the winner by declaring that Gus Triandos stepped in front of the line, but Gil McDougald didn't. So our second baseman took the honors. I kidded Gil about that for years.

At Idaho Falls and other mountain locations, I insisted on more conditioning for my players to ward off the effects of altitude. When I would run the pitchers, they would get winded more easily at first, but then they'd pick a second wind. The extra conditioning paid off. We were more prepared than the lower altitude clubs that came into town. We could run on them right away.

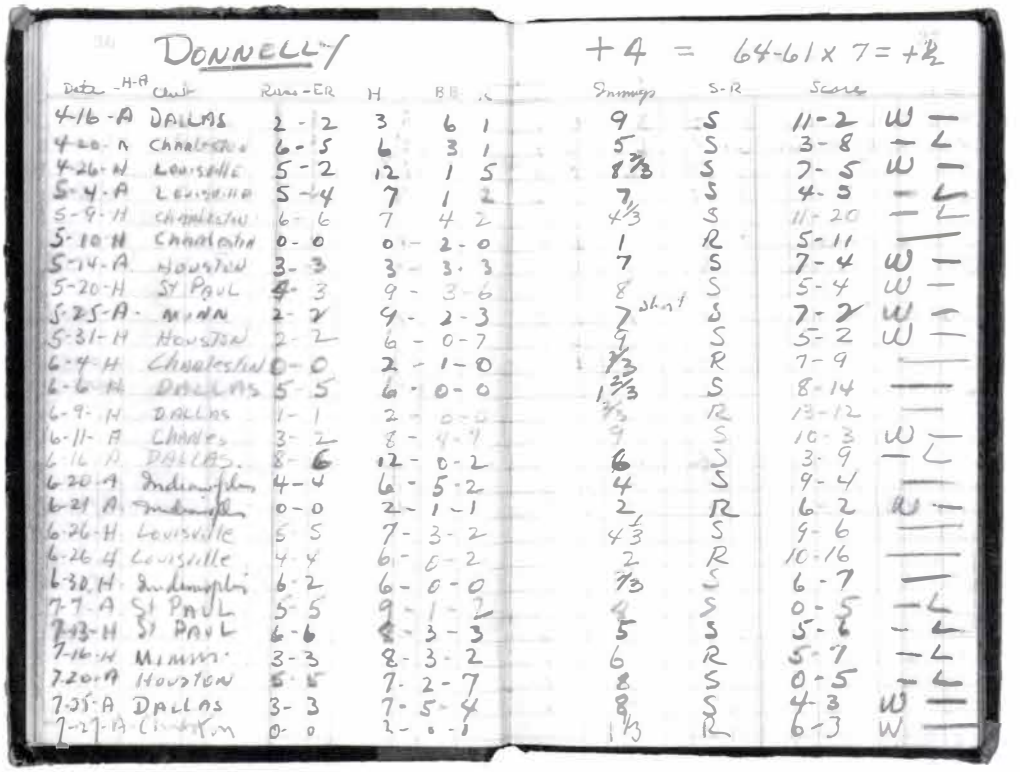
When I started managing at Denver in 1960, some of the pitchers were complaining. I inherited three pitchers, Ed Donnelly, Harry Perkowski, and Bob Walz, who had been pitched in Denver before. They might have griped from time to time, but they won a lot of games with that Denver Bears club. Donnelly won a bunch of games. Several of our pitchers developed well in Denver.

Phil"The Vulture" Regan turned into an outstanding reliever. Fred Gladding did well and went up to the Tigers. Gordy Seyfried went 13-11. He pitched the whole All-Star game in Denver, all nine innings. We were the home club, and we won. It was Gordy's turn. I didn't want to upset the rotation.

In Denver I told my players before the season started to do psychological stuff to the opposite team. I told that every time a different team came in to repeat, "Wait till you see the ball fly out of here. Wait till you try to throw a curve here." I wouldn't allow whining about altitude. I wouldn't let them talk about it negatively. I recalled what Ty Cobb had said to me: "Use a strong hand, no crying, no com-



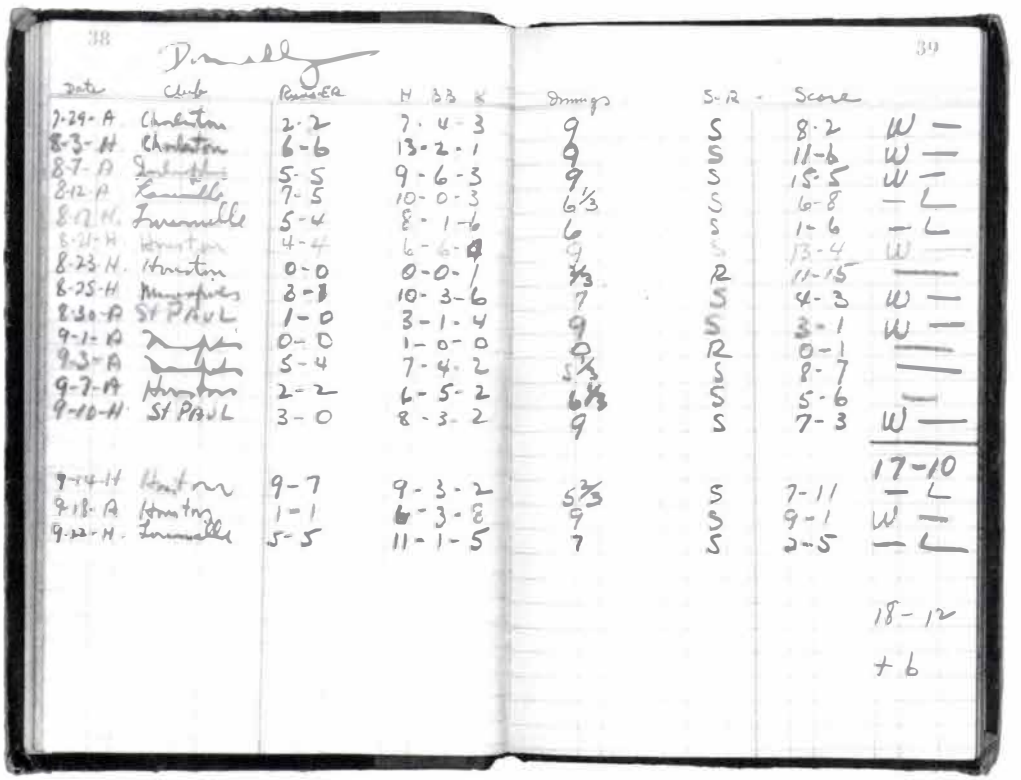
The club made up this poster for the 1961 season "to honor the manager who beat the altitude." It was on display in the club office for some time, and later presented to Metro as a gift.



DONNELLY

+4 = 64-61 x 7 = +½

Date	H-A	Club	Runs-ER	H	BB	K	Innings	S-R	Score	
4-16	A	DALLAS	2-2	3	6	1	9	S	11-2	W
4-20	A	CHARLESTON	6-5	6	3	1	5	S	3-8	L
4-26	H	LOUISVILLE	5-2	12	1	5	8⅔	S	7-5	W
5-4	A	LOUISVILLE	5-4	7	1	2	7	S	4-5	L
5-9	H	CHARLESTON	6-6	7	4	2	4⅓	S	11-20	L
5-10	H	CHARLESTON	0-0	0	2	0	1	R	5-11	
5-14	A	HOUSTON	3-3	3	3	3	7	S	7-4	W
5-20	H	ST PAUL	4-3	9	3	6	8	S	5-4	W
5-25	A	MINN	2-2	4	2	3	7 short	S	7-2	W
5-31	H	HOUSTON	2-2	6	0	7	9	S	5-2	W
6-4	H	CHARLESTON	0-0	2	1	0	⅓	R	7-9	
6-6	H	DALLAS	5-5	6	0	0	1⅔	S	8-14	
6-9	H	DALLAS	1-1	2	0	0	⅓	R	13-12	
6-11	A	CHARLES	3-2	8	4	7	9	S	10-3	W
6-16	A	DALLAS	8-6	12	0	2	6	S	3-9	L
6-20	A	Indianapolis	4-4	6	5	2	4	S	9-4	
6-21	A	Indianapolis	0-0	2	1	1	2	R	6-2	W
6-26	H	Louisville	5-5	7	3	2	4⅓	S	9-6	
6-26	H	Louisville	4-4	6	6	2	2	R	10-16	
6-30	H	Indianapolis	6-2	6	0	0	⅔	S	6-7	
7-7	A	St Paul	5-5	9	1	2	4	S	0-5	L
7-13	H	St Paul	6-6	8	3	3	5	S	5-6	L
7-16	H	Minn	3-3	8	3	2	6	R	5-7	L
7-20	A	Houston	5-5	7	2	7	8	S	0-5	L
7-25	A	DALLAS	3-3	7	5	4	8	S	4-3	W
7-27	A	Charleston	0-0	2	0	1	⅓	R	6-3	W



Donnelly

Date	Club	Runs-ER	H	BB	K	Innings	S-R	Score	
7-29	A	Charleston	2-2	7	4	3	9	S	8-2	W
8-3	H	Charleston	6-6	13	2	1	9	S	11-6	W
8-7	A	[illegible]	5-5	9	6	3	9	S	15-5	W
8-12	A	Louisville	7-5	10	0	3	6⅓	S	6-8	L
8-17	H	Louisville	5-4	8	1	6	6	S	1-6	L
8-21	H	Houston	4-4	6	6	4	9	S	13-4	W
8-23	H	Houston	0-0	0	0	1	⅓	R	11-15	
8-25	H	Minneapolis	8-8	10	3	6	7	S	4-3	W
8-30	A	St Paul	1-0	3	1	4	9	S	3-1	W
9-1	A	[illegible]	0-0	1	0	0	1	R	0-1	
9-3	A	[illegible]	5-4	7	4	2	9	S	8-7	
9-7	A	Houston	2-2	6	5	2	5⅓	S	5-6	L
9-10	H	St Paul	3-0	8	3	2	6⅔	S	7-3	W
							9			
										17-10
9-14	H	Houston	9-7	9	3	2	5⅔	S	7-11	L
9-18	A	Houston	1-1	6	3	8	9	S	9-1	W
9-22	H	Louisville	5-5	11	1	5	7	S	2-5	L
										18-12
										+6

Ed Donnelly's pitching record in Charlie Metro's 1960 Denver Bears pitching notebook.

plaints, It's your job, your neck. You do it your way, not theirs." I told them both sides had twenty-seven outs. I told them not to quit. I would pump up the hitters.

Here in Denver, we never felt we were out of a game. We always felt we could score lots of runs. I told our pitchers not to worry about their ERAs, that wins and saves were more important. When I managed in Denver, or when came in with the Tulsa club in 1966, I would give the pitcher extra innings before pushing the panic button or using the hook, because I knew we were going to get runs here. On the road I was quicker with the hook, because we were usually playing for one run.

One game in particular demonstrated this. My friend Eddie Newman, from Great Falls, was coming to see a game at Bears Stadium. I got him tickets. I promised him he would see something special. He arrived late in the first inning, and, as luck would have it, we were already down 3-0 to the visitors, the Louisville club. I went out to my coaching position at third base, and I spotted Eddie when he came to his seat. He had already seen the scoreboard and gave me one of those what's-going-on? looks. I just waved at him. Then my Bears hitters proceeded to hit four solo home runs in a row *with two outs*, and the fifth hitter, Coot Veal, almost hit a fifth, driving their left fielder to the wall. Homers by Steve Boros, Jim McDaniel, Bo Osborne, and Ozzie Virgil gave us the 4-3 lead. After that, I turned to Eddie and smirked like I had it planned all along, like I was a genius. We won the game 11-10 in the bottom of the ninth. Baseball in Denver was usually this exciting.

In Denver and elsewhere in the mountains, I used a five-man rotation. I gave my pitchers four full days of rest. Nobody tried to skip out of a turn to avoid pitching at Bears Stadium. I kept a notebook, a pitching record, so I could keep things orderly and straight. I started this back in Bisbee in 1947, keeping a record with the date, the name of the opposing clubs, runs given up, earned runs, hits against, strikeouts and walks, the number of innings pitched, whether the guy started or relieved, what the score was, who won or lost. (See the accompanying illustration of Ed Donnelly's pitching record notes for the 1960 season.)

As a manager, you had to use your intuition, too, One game Donnelly got shelled. We lost 20-11. He went four and a third innings. I had to find a way to restore his confidence. As a manager, I didn't want my guys to become discouraged, especially up here in Denver at this altitude. In the next day's game, I put him in to relieve for one inning. Then he was back in rotation with three days rest. Ed went seven innings and won. From there he went on a winning streak, four in a row.

Sometimes I grow impatient with the current Colorado Rockies when they lean on the altitude as an excuse for their poor performances. Sometimes I think they're leading the league in alibis. The other team has to play under same conditions. The Rockies should be in better condition and, as we did, learn to use the thinner air to their advantage. My Twin Falls and Denver teams won championships in the mountains. It's not impossible.

Into Thin Air

What's All the Fuss About Coors Field?[1]

by Brian Page, Frederick Chambers, and Clyde Zaidins

SINCE OPENING IN APRIL OF 1995, Denver's Coors Field has received accolades for its architectural design and downtown location. The ball park echoes the scale and materials of adjacent brick warehouses and replicates the urban accessibility found in early 20th century ball-parks like Wrigley Field and Ebbets Field. Yet, Coors Field, home of the Colorado Rockies, has acquired a much less favorable reputation as a place to play baseball. In fact, it has gained national notoriety as the ultimate home run hitter's park—a launching pad of historic proportions. Coors Field led all major league ball parks in both total home runs and home runs per at-bat during seven of its first eight seasons (James 1995-2001; STATS Inc. 2001; Carter et al. 2002). Nearly all observers, from noted physicists to veteran players to casual fans, attribute the dramatic home run output at Coors Field to the effect of thin air on the flight of a baseball. In theory, the ball should travel about 10 percent farther in Denver (elevation 5,280 feet) than it would in a ball park at sea level, an elevation-enhancement that prompted prominent sports columnist Thomas Boswell to call Coors Field "a beautiful joke" that "turns the sport into a third-rate freak show" (Boswell 1998). These comments are hardly atypical. Nationally syndicated radio talk show host Jim Rome routinely refers to the ball park as "Coors Canaveral." Former Philadelphia manager Jim Fregosi calls baseball at altitude "arenaball" (Armstrong 2003).

Throughout the nation, Coors Field is viewed as a curious anomaly that distorts our cherished national pastime and transforms mediocre hitters into stars.

But does the ball really fly that much farther in Denver? And, is thin air really to blame for the large number of home runs hit at Coors Field? We decided to put these assumptions to the test and came up with some surprising results: fly balls simply don't travel as far as they should in Denver. In fact, the effect of thin air on the flight of the baseball at Coors Field is overestimated owing to the influence of prevailing weather patterns in and around Coors Field. Altitude clearly plays a role in Coors Field's home run rate, but it is not the only factor and it is perhaps not even the most important factor. Based on our research, a re-evaluation of the ball park's reputation is in order.

Table 1. Average Fly Ball Distance in NL Ballparks.

Stadium	4-yr. avg. distance	d Coors (%)
Coors Field	302.8	—
Atlanta†	290.8	4.0
Chicago	283.8	6.3
Cincinnati	284.9	5.9
Florida	282.2	6.8
Houston	286.7	5.3
Los Angeles	291.6	3.7
Montreal	281.3	7.1
New York	282.5	6.7
Philadelphia	290.8	4.0
Pittsburgh	282.2	6.8
San Diego	277.6	8.3
San Francisco	271.1	10.5
St. Louis	293.1	3.2
NL Avg w/out Coors Field	**284.5**	**6.0**

†Composite of Fulton County and Turner stadiums.

HOW FAR DO BALLS FLY IN NATIONAL LEAGUE BALL PARKS?

According to scientists Robert Adair and Peter Brancazio, a baseball hit 400 feet at sea level should travel 440 feet in Denver—10 percent farther.[2] Of course, not all National League ball parks are situated at sea level, so comparing Coors Field to the rest of the league requires an adjustment to reflect actual elevations around the league. Compared to the elevation-adjusted average of the other National League ball parks, the ball should fly 9.3 percent farther in Denver. In order to determine if these theoretical relationship hold true on the field, we analyzed fly ball distance data for 14 National League ball parks for the years 1995-1998.[3] These data provide an estimate of the distance traveled by every fly ball hit in fair territory for every game played in those ball parks over those four seasons. This is a total of nearly 8,000 fly balls per ball park and over 100,000 fly balls overall, more than enough to detect any systematic enhancement of fly ball distance due to altitude.

The fly ball distance data was obtained from STATS Inc. STATS records a wide range of information for each baseball game played in the major leagues, including the distance traveled by every ball put into play. Our analysis focuses only on fly balls as these are the type of batted ball most affected by atmosphere and weather. In every major league ball park, STATS estimates the distance that each fly ball travels by locating the final position of the ball on a chart of the field. This method yields estimated distance, not precise distance. However, we believe that this data is reliable because a consistent method is used at each ball park, and because the sample size is more than large enough to account for any individual errors in fly ball measurement (that is, cases of over-estimation or under-estimation will cancel each other out).

While this reduction is significant, keep in mind that the boosting effect of altitude in Denver is further minimized by the generous outfield dimensions at Coors Field, the league's most spacious ball park. Indeed, in order to come up with a measure of just how much more likely it is for home runs to occur at Coors Field due to low air density, one must take into consideration actual field dimensions around the league. We made this adjustment by calculating average fly ball distance as a percentage of average outfield dimension for 14 National League ball parks (Table 2).[4] This calculation yields a measure of how far the average fly ball travels relative to the average position of the outfield fence in each ball park. As the table shows, when field dimensions are taken into account, the effective difference between Coors Field and the other National League stadiums is not even 6 percent—it is just 3 percent. Moreover, the

Table 2. Average Fly Ball Distance vs. Stadium Dimension in NL Ballparks

Stadium	Avg. Outfield Dimension (ft)	d Coors (%)	Avg. Flyball Dist. *(100) Outfield Dimension	d Coors (%)
Coors Field	375.4	—	80.7	—
Atlanta†	366.7	2.3	79.3	1.7
Chicago	368.8	1.8	77.0	4.6
Cincinnati	362.8	3.4	78.5	2.6
Florida	369.8	1.5	76.3	5.4
Houston	360.0	4.1	79.6	1.3
Los Angeles	365.0	2.8	79.9	1.0
Montreal	360.8	3.9	78.0	3.3
New York	368.4	1.9	76.7	4.9
Philadelphia	362.0	3.6	80.3	0.4
Pittsburgh	364.0	3.0	77.5	3.9
San Diego	360.2	4.0	77.1	4.5
San Francisco	358.6	4.5	75.6	6.3
St. Louis	362.0	3.6	81.0	-0.4
NL Avg. w/out Coors Field	**363.8**	**3.1**	**78.2**	**3.1**

†Composite of Atlanta Fulton County and Turner stadiums.

difference between Coors Field and the stadiums in Philadelphia, Los Angeles and Atlanta is minimal, while the average fly ball actually carries closer to the outfield wall at St. Louis' Busch Stadium than it does at Coors Field.[5] Faced with these numbers, the facile assumption that elevation enhancement of fly ball distance alone is responsible for the large number of home runs in Denver vanishes into so much thin air.

This raises two important questions. First, why do baseballs not fly 9.3 percent farther in Denver as the laws of physics would predict? And, second, if altitude enhancement of fly ball distance is not the only factor, what else explains the impressive home run statistics at Coors Field?

COORS FIELD METEOROLOGY: SOMETHING IN THE WIND

To answer the first question, we explored the possibility that shorter than expected fly ball distances at Coors Field could be explained by baseball factors alone. After all, no two at-bats are alike, and the distance that any batted ball travels is the result of a complicated and unique set of circumstances having to do with the particular pitcher and batter involved. It depends, for instance, on the pitcher's skill level and orientation (left or right handed), the type and speed of pitch thrown, the batter's orientation, the batter's hand-eye coordination, and so forth. For these reasons, we would expect fly ball distances to vary somewhat from ball park to ball park over the course of several seasons. To determine the influence of this routine, baseball-driven variation in fly ball distance, we analyzed average fly ball distances for just those National League stadiums located at sea level, thus eliminating the elevation factor. We found a standard deviation of plus or minus 6 feet in fly ball distance for this set of ball parks over the four year study period, which is far short of the 18.3 foot difference between average fly ball distance Coors Field and average fly ball distance at the other National League parks. According to our statistical analysis (a single tailed student's t-test) this means that the lower than expected difference between Coors Field and the other National League ball parks does not derive from baseball variables alone (at the 90 percent confidence level).

Next, we turned to an explanation based in the ball park's geographic situation, particularly its weather. We set up two meteorological stations inside Coors Field for the duration of the 1997 baseball season.[6] These stations were constructed atop concession stands along the rear concourse of the

ballpark. One station was located down the left field line, while the other was in straight away center field just beyond and above the bullpens (Figure 1). Measurements taken included temperature, relative humidity, barometric pressure, and wind as recorded by equipment that provides three-dimensional modeling of air flow. Measurements were taken continuously during game time and averaged every 15 minutes. For each game for which weather data was collected, averages of temperature, relative humidity, barometric pressure and wind were determined. This weather data was then related to average fly ball distance data for the same game.

There have been several previous attempts to link weather and baseball (Kingsley 1980; Skeeter 1988; Kraft and Skeeter 1995). These studies did not show any significant relationship between weather variables and fly ball distance. The results of our meteor-

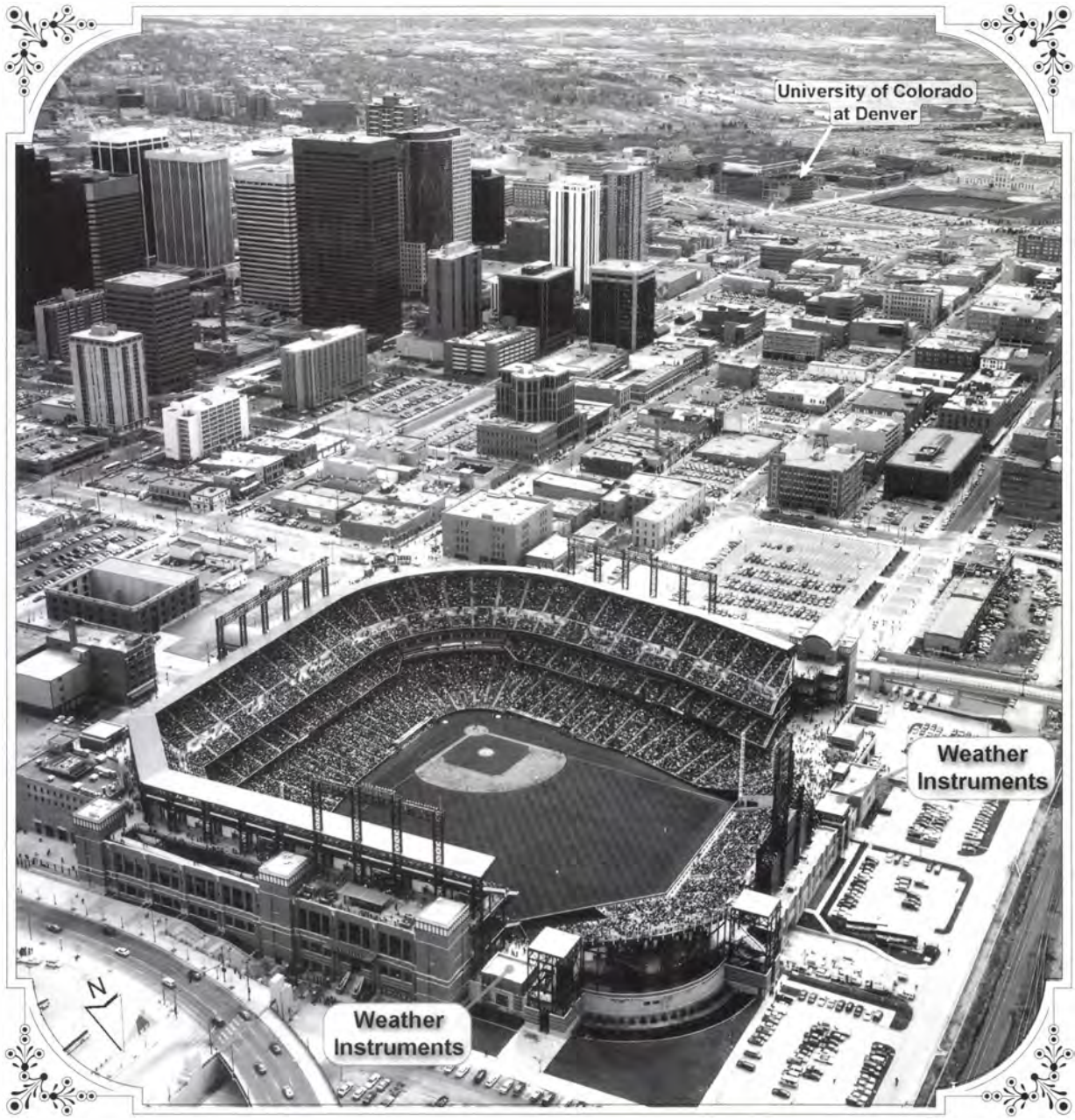


Figure 1. Location of weather instruments within Coors Field.

ological analysis indicate that of the measured variables, wind—especially the east-west vector—is the only statistically significant weather variable that is correlated with fly ball distance in Coors Field. In fact, almost twenty percent of the variation in fly ball distance at Coors Field can be attributed to differences in winds along the east-west vector.[7] Average fly ball distances decreased with easterly winds (approximately 290 feet with easterly winds versus over 303 feet with a western component).[8] Not surprisingly, easterly winds inside Coors Field were twice as strong as westerly winds—blowing at 12 versus 6 miles per hour.

A look at the regional wind pattern shows that easterly winds do indeed predominate in the vicinity of Coors Field daily from 12:00 PM to 10:00 PM (the time period in which almost all Rockies games are played) throughout the baseball season (April through September). These seasonal winds result from the daily upslope and downslope flow of air along the Colorado Front Range (Toth and Johnson 1985). The heating of the east facing foothills in the morning hours causes air to flow up the South Platte River valley in the late morning through the evening hours. This flow reaches a peak in downtown Denver at around 4:00 PM. Thereafter, winds weaken and eventually shift direction down the valley, becoming westerly around Coors Field between 10:00 PM and midnight. This downslope pattern persists until the process reverses itself the following morning (Figure 2).[9] Certainly, westerly winds do occur, as we found during our data collection inside Coors Field. But these westerly winds are the exception to the rule, occurring due to local thunderstorms or the passage of frontal systems. Thus, westerly winds seem to be relatively brief events followed by a return to the "normal" upslope-downslope pattern.

Our assessment is that these daily easterly winds suppress fly ball distances at Coors Field.[10] Easterly winds flow up the South Platte River valley and enter the vicinity of the ball park from the northeast. Within Coors Field, northeasterly winds blow from center field toward home plate into the face of the batter and into the path of batted balls hit to all parts of the outfield (Figures 3 and 4). The expected advantage of playing at mile-high elevation (as far as home runs are concerned) is decreased substantially under such conditions. However, when the winds are out of the west, the full advantage of altitude is realized, and then some. Thus, the effect of the wind is variable; during some games, the enhancement of altitude on fly ball distance will be realized and in other games it will be suppressed. However, it is our conclusion that over the course of a season—or several seasons—easterly winds act to minimize the effects of low air density and thus account for the shorter than expected fly ball distances at Coors Field.

Figure 2. Diurnal Wind Patterns in Northeastern Colorado

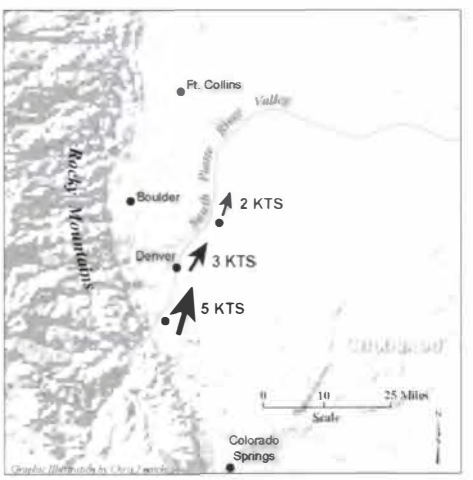


Figure 2a. 6:00 A.M.: Peak downvalley winds.

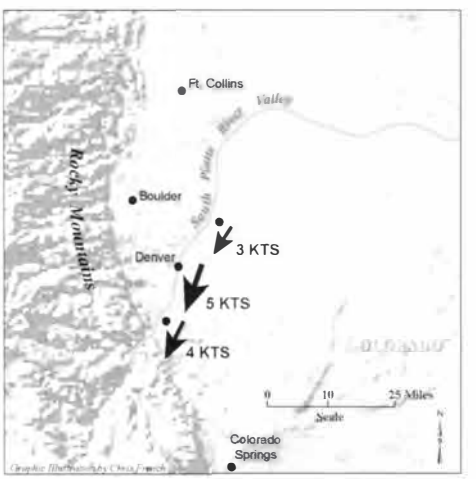


Figure 2b. 4:00 P.M.: Peak upvalley winds.

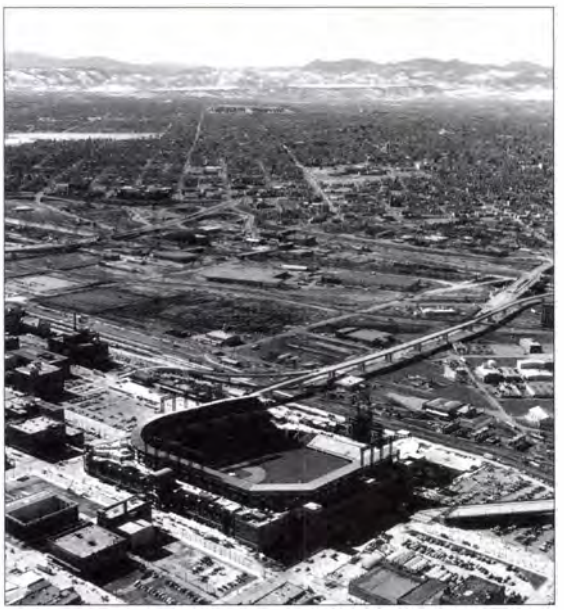


Figure 3. Proximity of Coors field to Platte River Valley and the Rocky Mountains.

THE COORS FIELD "EFFECT"

Now let's turn to the second question: if not just thin air, then what else explains the impressive home run statistics at Coors Field? After all, during the 1995 through 2002 seasons, Coors Field witnessed a rate of .044 home runs per at bat, while the combined average of the other National League parks was just .029 home runs per at bat. In other words, home runs occur at Coors Field at a rate that is 52 percent greater than at the other ball parks—far more than would be expected even if the mile high atmospheric enhancement was realized to its fullest (James 1995-2000, STATS Inc. 2001, Carter et al. 2002). We believe that the answer to the question has to do with two factors: first, the personnel make-up of the Colorado Rockies ball club in terms of both hitters and pitchers; and, second, the general problems of pitching at altitude.

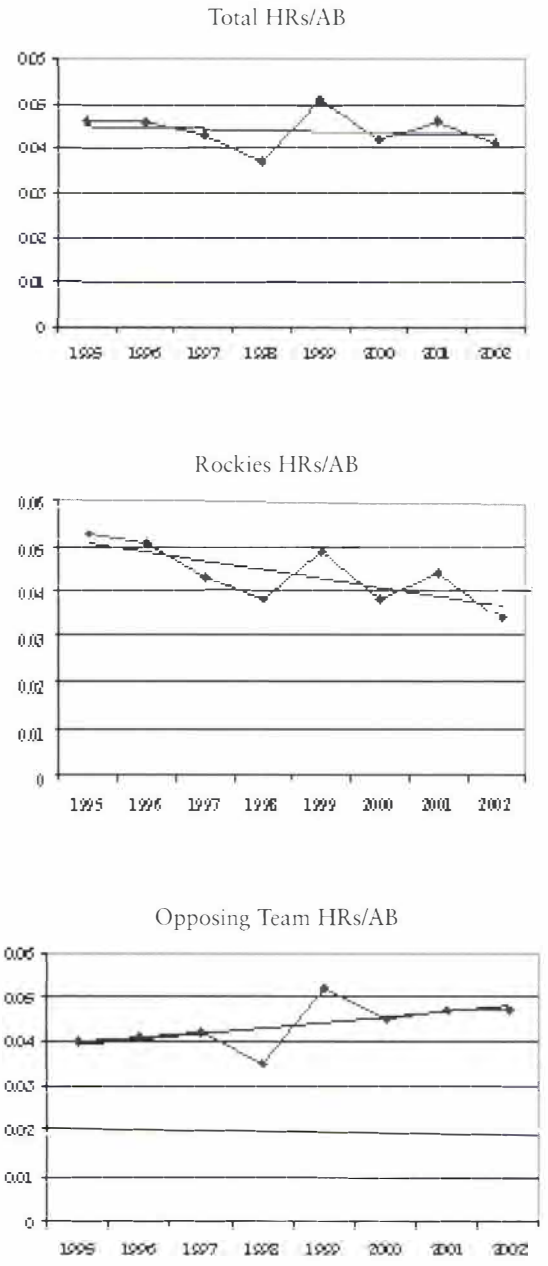
During the first several seasons played at Coors Field, the Rockies team was stacked with notable power hitters. Simply put, they were a team designed to produce large numbers of home runs. However, over the past several years, these "Blake Street Bombers" were traded or allowed to leave via free agency as team management shifted focus from home run hitters to high-average hitters with less power. This personnel shift is verified in the record of Coors Field hitting statistics. Since 1995, there is an overall downward trend in the number of home runs per at bat—a trend that is accounted for by a reduction in the number of home runs hit by the Rockies (the trend in home runs per at-bat for the opposition at Coors Field has risen) (Figure 5). In fact, during the 2000 season, Coors Field was surpassed in home runs per at-bat by both Busch Stadium in St. Louis and Enron Field in Houston. Thus, the large number of home runs hit at Coors Field can be attributed, in part, to the specific group of hitters assembled early on by the Rockies. Once the franchise changed the character of the team, the pre-eminence of Coors Field as the league's ultimate home run ball park was somewhat diminished.

The Rockies have also lacked successful pitching for most of their history. Colorado pitchers have had more than their share of problems over the past eight years, both at home and on the road. Between 1995 and 2002, the team was either last or next to last in most pitching categories, leading the league in home runs allowed seven times. Had the Los Angeles or New York staffs pitched at Coors Field for 81 games per year, the ball park's home run totals would most likely have been significantly less. Put Atlanta's pitching staff in Denver for half of their games and this reduction is a virtual certainty. Remember that Atlanta's Fulton County Stadium was known as the "launching pad" until the Braves put together the league's premier group of pitchers in the early 1990s.

But perhaps the most important factor in explaining the home run numbers in Denver is the "Coors Field Effect"—the not so subtle influence of the ball park on pitchers from both the home and visiting teams. Most of these professional athletes are clearly intimidated by Coors Field. As one player recently observed, the ball park causes "an identity crisis" for pitchers, leading them to change their approach to the game, move away from their strengths, and ultimately lose confidence in their abilities.[11] Even the league's best pitchers often come unglued in Denver. Pitching is undeniably more difficult in Coors Field than in other National League ball parks because of the very limited foul ground

Figure 4. Relative location of Coors Field to South Platte River.

Figure 5. Coors Field home runs per at-bat, 1995-2002



and the cavernous outfield spaces. This field configuration gives hitters more chances, allows more balls to drop in front of outfielders, and permits more balls to find the gaps for extra-base hits. Yet, beyond this, most pitchers are beset with a range of other problems once they take the mound. Chief among these are a sudden lack of control, breaking balls that don't break, and sinker balls that don't sink. The result is more pitches thrown straight and over the heart of the plate, and more balls hit high, deep, and out the park. Thus, what we suggest is that more home runs are hit at Coors Field not because routine fly balls carry farther, but because a higher percentage of pitched balls are hit harder than in other ball parks.

These pitching problems in Denver have also been attributed to low air density. Theoretically, thin air reduces ball-to-air friction, cutting down on ball movement between the mound and home plate and thus decreasing the overall control of the pitcher and the effectiveness of the pitches thrown. In addition, the low relative humidity at altitude promotes evaporation from the baseball itself, making the ball lighter, drier and more slick in Denver than in other parks around the league. Because of this, pitchers at Coors Field have a very difficult time getting a proper grip on the ball, which, in all likelihood, further reduces their control as well as the movement on their pitches.[12] During the 2002 season, in an effort to counteract the presumed effects of thin air on pitching, the Colorado Rockies began using a "humidor" to store baseballs at Coors Field; this device maintains the balls in a controlled environment of 90 degrees and 40 percent humidity. According to the Rockies organization, the intent of the humidor is to ensure that the baseballs do not shrink to a weight less than the 5.0 to 5.25 ounce range specified by the league. The Rockies ball club also believes that these baseballs—having not yet lost water content to evaporation when they enter play—are easier to grip, and thus will 'level the playing field' for pitchers in Denver. But this might be just wishful thinking: a comparison of the statistics for the 2002 season versus the previous seven seasons indicates that the humidor had little if any effect upon games played at Coors Field.[13]

Ultimately, these altitude-related issues may prove to be important contributors to the poor pitch-

ing in Denver, but, for now, difficulties on the mound would seem to be more the result of the fragile psychology of pitchers faced with the imagined specter of baseballs floating out of Coors Field like weather balloons. Based upon the analysis presented above, we believe that the answer to why so many home runs are hit at Coors Field lies as much on the field as it does in the air.

COORS FIELD: KEEPER OF THE FLAME?

In 1998, the Colorado Rockies hosted the Major League All-Star Game. It was a very high scoring affair won by the American League team. Upon departing Coors Field, the national sports media complained vociferously about the style of baseball played at the ball park. Baseball reporters and commentators focused on the large number of "cheap" home runs, and on the ways in which the ball park's spaciousness allowed too many runners to circle the base paths.

Chief among these critics was Boswell of the *Washington Post*. He stated: "when baseball is played a mile in the air, all the game's distances are suddenly off. Instead of being a thing of beauty, baseball suddenly becomes not only distorted, but actually defaced and displeasing. The activity conducted in Coors Field is simply not baseball any more. And, worse, it's not some kind of new, novel, fun variant on baseball, either. What the All-Star Game put on display for tens of millions to see was a 20th century commerce-driven practical joke played on a 19th century American heirloom" (Boswell 1998: 6D). Thus, for Boswell—and for the many others that share these views—baseball played in Denver is "a confused, capricious mess" because it violates the game's perfect dimensions.

There is no denying that the game played at Coors Field is a high scoring, offensive brand of baseball. As we have shown, this is not the simple and direct result of Denver's rare atmosphere allowing routine fly balls to become home runs, but has as much or more to do with the personnel of the home team, the size of the outfield, limited foul territory, and assorted pitching problems. Yet, to dismiss Coors Field as an affront to baseball tradition is ludicrous and more than a little hypocritical. After all, what is Fenway Park's beloved "Green Monster" if not a complete aberration of baseball's perfect dimensions? Why is a short fly ball that ricochets off Fenway's left field wall for a double thought to be charming while a bloop single in front of an outfielder at Coors Field is considered to be "an abomination?" To take this further, what was perfect about routine fly balls dropping for home runs over a short, waist-high right field wall at Yankee Stadium in its original configuration? And, could Willie Mays have made the most famous catch in baseball history anywhere but in the horribly distorted center field of the Polo Grounds?

In our view, the self-appointed guardians of baseball tradition like Boswell miss the point entirely. The very heart and soul of the game's tradition lies not in some homogenous set of outfield dimensions, but in the individuality and distinctiveness of major league ball parks. This point was made forcefully when much of the game's appeal was destroyed by the proliferation of multi-purpose stadiums in the 1960s and 1970s. Most of these "cookie-cutter" venues had perfect dimensions but had absolutely no character or soul, and are now being replaced by ball parks explicitly designed to recall the variation and peculiarity of turn-of-the-century fields.

Sure, baseball played at the Denver ball park is a little different by virtue of its location. But, in this sense, Coors Field is anything but an aberration; it represents a continuation of a long-standing and cherished tradition of quirk-filled ball parks, which gives baseball a unique charm in every city where the game is played.

Notes:

1. This paper is based on a lengthier research article forthcoming in *The Professional Geographer*, a publication of the Association of American Geographers (AAG). See Chambers, Page, and Zaidins (2003). Permission to reuse the research material presented herein was granted by the AAG (http://www.aag.org).
2. See Adair (1990, 1994) and Brancazio (1984). Ten percent is the standard estimate of elevation enhancement for Denver versus sea level. We constructed a mathematical model for the fly ball based upon Adair and Brancazio. The key variable in this model is the drag coefficient, a measure of air resistance. We used various values for the drag coefficient and came up with predicted enhancements ranging from 7 percent to over 13 percent. Given this, the standard 10 percent prediction seems reasonably accurate. For further discussion see Chambers, Page, and Zaidins (2003).
3. Because the time frame of our analysis is 1995-1998, we used only those cities with ball parks that were used for National League games during each of these four years. County Stadium in Milwaukee and Bank One Ball Park in Phoenix were excluded from the analysis because National League games were played in these cities only in 1998.

4. Average outfield dimension was obtained by averaging the distances at five points along the outfield wall for each ball park: the left field line, left center field, center field, right center field, and the right field line. In a few cases, the dimensions of the outfield were changed in an existing ball park during our four year study, or a team changed ball parks altogether. In these cases, we used an average of the old and new dimensions. The source used for establishing average outfield dimension was James (1995-1998).
5. If Mark McGwire had played for the Colorado Rockies during 1998, his pursuit of the single season home run record would have been hounded by the asterisk of elevation-enhanced play. Instead, McGwire conducted his quest in St. Louis, protected by a hallowed baseball tradition and unfettered by any lingering doubts, while nevertheless enjoying the advantages of a ball park that is every bit as conducive to home run production as Coors Field in terms of how far the average fly ball carries relative to the average position of the outfield fence.
6. The Colorado Rockies Baseball Club allowed us access to Coors Field in order to set up our weather stations and to periodically check on the equipment and download data. We would like to emphasize that the Rockies organization did not solicit this study nor did they offer or provide any support or remuneration for the research.
7. First, a correlation matrix was developed on the data, showing that temperature and relative humidity had little if any correlative value with fly ball distance. Only wind—specifically the "U" (east-west) vector—correlative. Stepwise multiple regression analysis was then employed to determine the explanatory value (if any) that could be attributed to meteorological variables with respect to the fluctuation in fly ball distance at Coors Field. Only one variable, again the "U" (east-west) vector, was statistically significant (at a 95% confidence level) enough to enter the model in this test. This resulted in an r2 value of 0.223, or an r2 value of 0.192 when adjusted for degrees of freedom.
8. Correlation analysis of wind direction and fly ball distances verified these results. Average fly ball distances displayed a negative correlation with east winds (r-value = -0.45); while a positive correlation was yielded with west winds (r-value = 0.49).
9. These conclusions are drawn from our examination of data provided by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, Air Pollution Control Division (APCD) for the years 1995-1998. The APCD has several air quality monitoring stations in and around the Denver metropolitan area. These stations measure pollution as well as wind direction and velocity. Wind data was analyzed from the two stations closest to the ballpark; one of these stations is within two city blocks of Coors Field. Data on wind direction and velocity from these stations were averaged hourly for each month of the baseball season, April through September, for the years in question. Easterly winds dominated the afternoon and evening hours of this four-year long period. In fact, our results showed that during this time, there *never* was a westerly component to the average wind vector between the hours of noon and 10:00 PM.
10. For a more detailed discussion of our meteorological analysis of Coors Field, see Chambers, Page and Zaidins (2003).
11. This quote is from pitcher Denny Neagle of the Colorado Rockies (Renck 2003).
12. For years, manager Bobby Cox of the Atlanta Braves has blamed Denver's aridity for the pitching problems at Coors Field. He has claimed that the dryness of the ball causes pitchers to have problems with their grip (Moss 1999).
13. The statistics of the 2002 season do not provide much evidence that the humidified baseballs helped pitchers at Coors Field. On the one hand, supporting the idea that the humidor had an effect, runs per at-bat and hits per at-bat were down from 2001. However, there was no dramatic change, and these numbers were very similar to those for past seasons. On the other hand, home runs per at-bat were actually higher than some previous years, strike outs per at-bat were significantly lower than the pervious season, and base-on-balls per at-bat did not register historic lows as might have been expected (James 1995-2000; STATS, Inc. 2002; Carter et al. 2002).

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Steeped in Baseball History ...with Sugar

The Rocky Mountain League of Northern Colorado, 1947-1969

by Anna Maria Basquez

Baseball was the only rest the immigrant farm workers of northern Colorado knew. They worked the sugar beet fields six days a week and played ball on the seventh day. But from the memories the remaining alumni share of their baseball days, they likely wouldn't have had it any other way.

The Rocky Mountain League, commonly referred to as the Hispanic League, operated from the 1940s to the 1960s. It consisted of teams from towns and cities along the Front Range, from Longmont, Colorado to Laramie, Wyoming. It included the Fort Collins American Legionnaires, the Greeley Grays, the Gilcrest Aztecs, the Ault Tigers, and the Laramie Crown Liquor Team. Many of the towns are so small today that many might be surprised to know that they had a team at one time.

Baseball was a game that served to unite immigrant workers from Mexico at a time when racial tensions were high on the Front Range. It also helped steep northern Colorado in baseball history and make leaders of those who played.

The sugar beet industry was booming in northern Colorado in the 1940s through the 1960s. The migrant sugar beet field workers from Mexico helped drive that industry. Before the migrant farm workers came from Mexico, northern Colorado saw an influx of Russian and German immigrants. At least one alumnus of the Hispanic League said he remembered the signs of the times often reading "White Trade Only." It was a time when the newest of restaurants would shun people of certain races.

But it was also a time when the farm workers brought baseball into northern Colorado in a major way. They carved fields out of cherry orchards, sugar beet dump sites, and railroad yards. Baseball was holy. Leagues expanded at the same time ten Catholic churches were founded in Fort Collins, several of which still stand today. Despite racial tension, baseball players told the *Fort Collins Coloradoan* that the game helped people of different races understand each other better, as the league teams started to play against teams of different races.

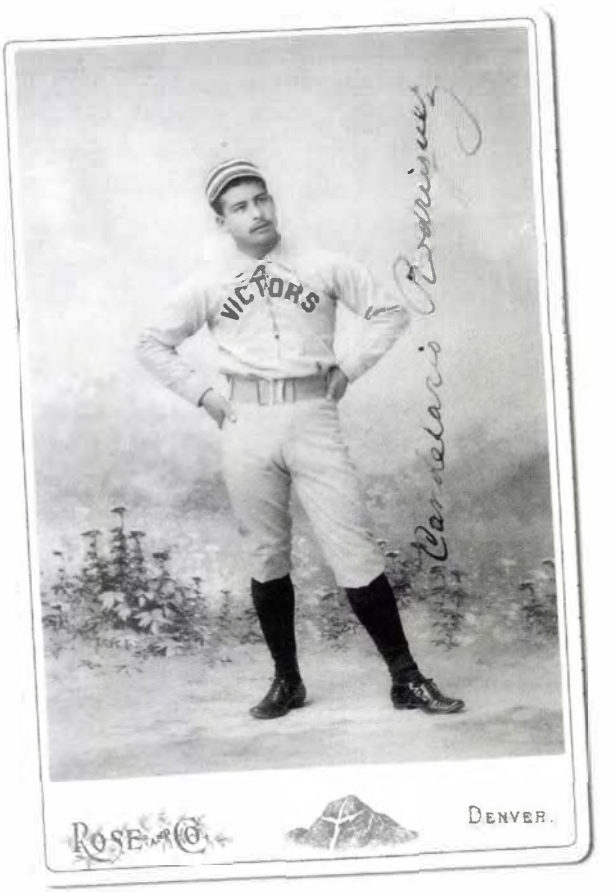
In northern Colorado, many Hispanic sandlot teams formed as early as the 1920s. Beet workers who worked the fields gathered for games on Sundays. The groups consolidated into a formal league that was recognized by the National Baseball Congress. The Rocky Mountain League was founded in 1947 out of teams of the former Pan American League, including eight teams from Kersey, Milliken, Gill, Gilcrest, Wattenburg, Greeley, and Fort Collins. In the later 1940s, more teams formed and better caliber players participated. By 1962, the league consisted of fourteen teams divided into two divisions, seven in the Northern Division and seven in the Southern one. All-Star games were played each year. In 1964, the league tournaments attracted an estimated 3,000 fans. Pitcher Mike Blyzka, who later played for the major league St. Louis Browns and Baltimore Orioles, honed his talents in the Rocky Mountain League, and several other league players went on to play professionally.

Several of players picked up leadership skills that served them well in the rest of their lives. Bud Anderson, a supervisor at Forney Industries, Bob Ferguson, a school teacher, and "Tuffy" Mullison, who played professional football and coached at Colorado State University, are among the alumni of the league. The offspring of some of the former players have carried on their fathers' successes. Shawn Chacon, currently pitching for the Colorado Rockies, is the son of Ray Chacon, who played for the Gilcrest Aztecs. Fort Collins mayor Ray Martinez is the son of a late Fort Collins American Legionnaire.

Martinez attended the open house reunion for the "Stealing Home: Playing Ball in the Rocky Mountain League" exhibit that ran through the summer of 2002 at the Fort Collins Museum. Martinez pointed out his father in the black and white team photograph and said his father would have wanted to see that day when the museum exhibit opened. The museum hosted the exhibition and featured a room-wide mural painted as though visitors were at a baseball field.

Hundreds of league alumni and descendants attended the reunion where curators had set up the exhibit room with old uniforms and a mini-locker room where they could watch videotapes on the history of the league. Museum officials also threw a reception offering among other foods, hot dogs and popcorn to reinforce the baseball flavor. The museum hopes to install a permanent exhibit once expansion of the facility is completed.

Sources:
The *Fort Collins Coloradoan*
Fort Collins Mayor Ray Martinez
The Fort Collins Museum



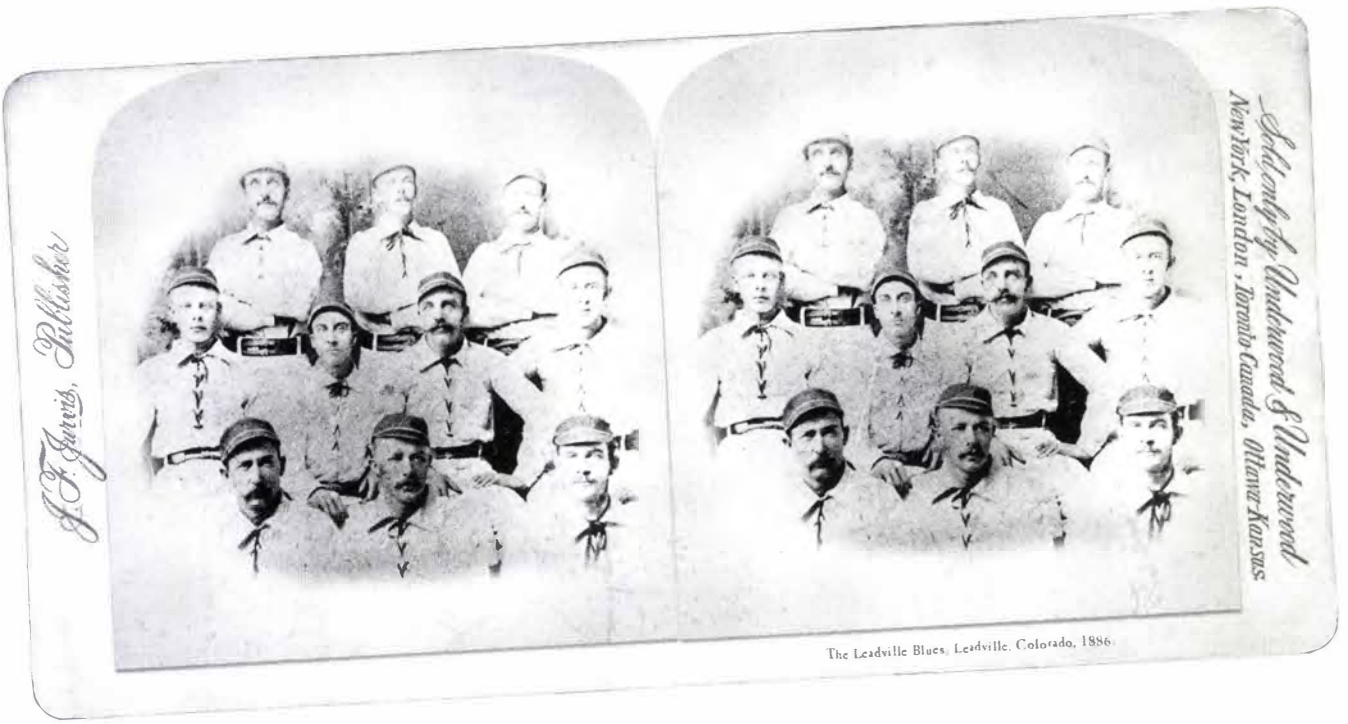
As this 1892 Denver studio card indicates, Latino ball players were present in Colorado in the 19th century as forerunners to the Hispanic league of the mid-20th century.

Ghost Town Nines

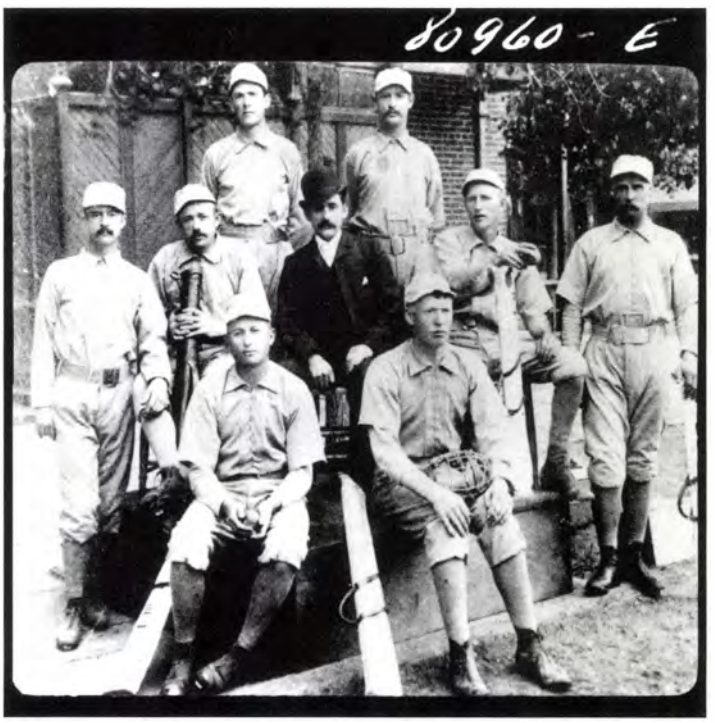
A Pictorial of Frontier and Mining Town Teams

by Mark Rucker

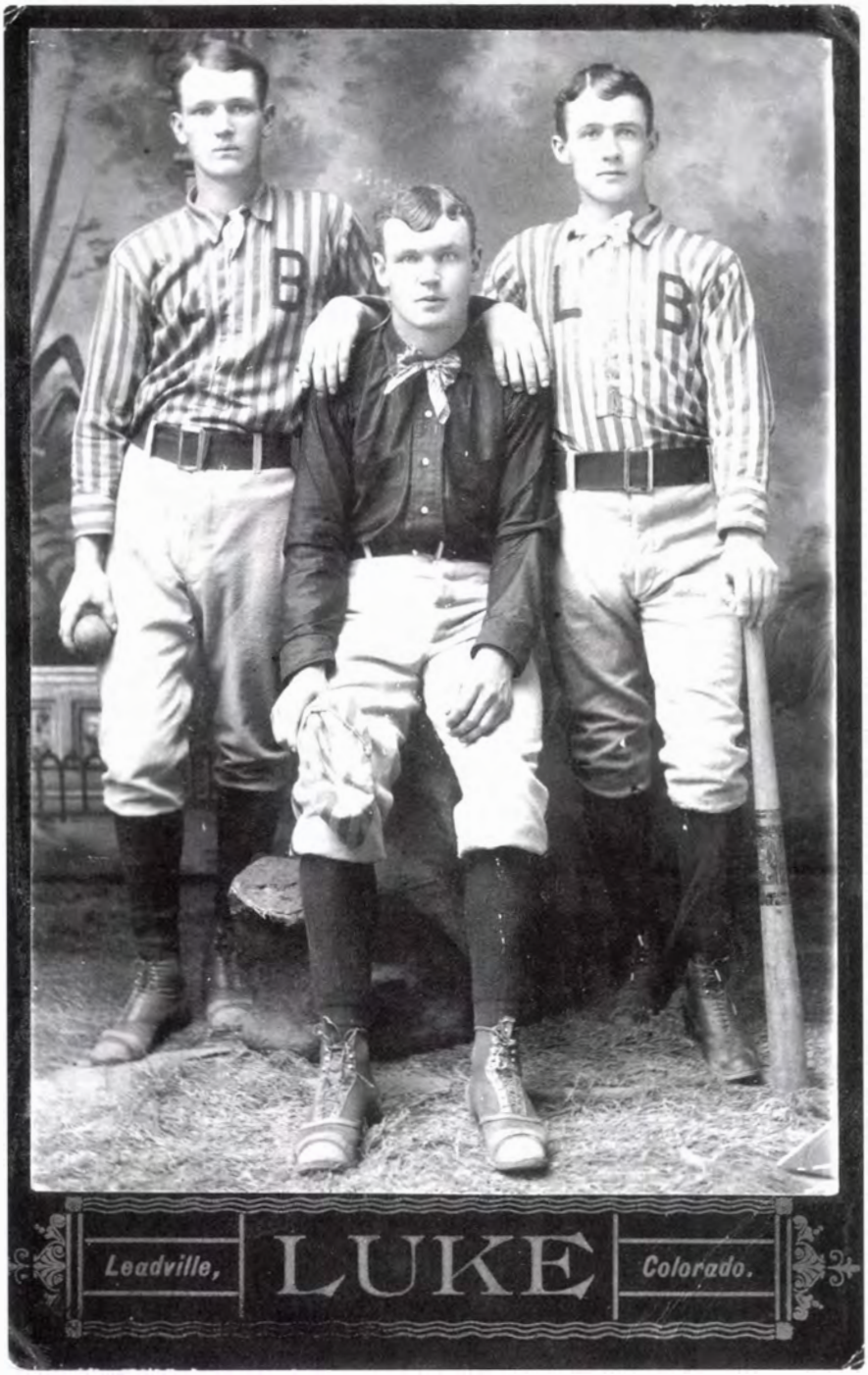
Previous: Bonanza, CO 1882. Bonanza, Colorado was a bustling mining community of 5,000 souls in the early 1880s, with thirty-six saloons, seven dance halls, and a rowdy reputation. All that's left of this little town west of present-day Villa Grove are a few dilapidated log buildings. But in this lively 1882 photo, quite a variety of townsfolk wanted to pose for the camera, including a young ballplayer in full uniform.



1886 Leadville Blues. From the highest city in the United States, populated originally by miners drawn to the booming silver mine industry, came this baseball team, known as the Blues. This 1886 squad had four players who made it to the major leagues. Alex Voss and Warren Fitzgerald, pitchers; Lou Meyers, catcher; and Edward Flynn, third basemen; all had big league experience.



1888 Leadville Blues. In two years the Blues lost a few of their top players. Only Warren "Lefty" Fitzgerald was left with any major league prospects. He is seated in the front row on the left. Fitzgerald pitched two years in the bigs, both for Louisville, though not in the same league. In 1891 his 14-18 record was for the American Association's Louisville entry. And the following year he pitched for their N.L. franchise, with a 1-3 result.



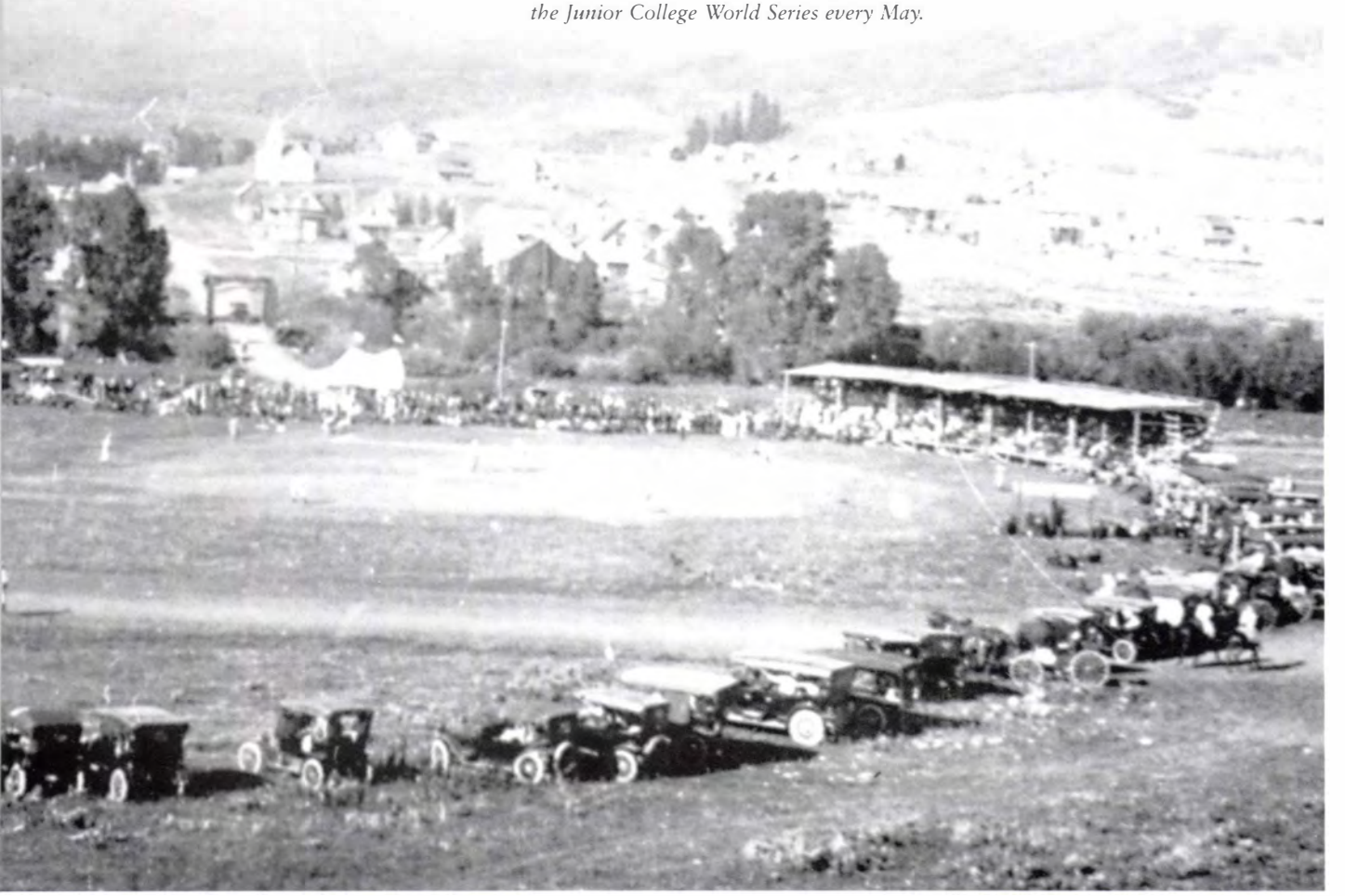
Fitzgerald, Warren & Leadville Blues players. It must have been one or two years later when the Blues adopted these striped shirts and hats, as Leadville grew in population and wealth. Our friend Warren Fitzgerald is in the middle of this cabinet card photograph.

Alma & Fairplay CO Teams. Alma, almost a ghost town today, was a bustling mining community in the 1870s and '80s. Just up the hill from Fairplay, the two towns competed in many things, including baseball. This mid-1880s photo depicts the Almas in natty uniforms, and the Fairplay team in casual everyday wear.

Empire CO Canoles BBC, c.1910. Empire, Colorado is at the base of Berthoud Pass. Known now as a speed trap on the way to Winter Park ski area, the little mountain town was founded in 1860, and named after the Empire State, New York. Mining lasted sporadically through the 1870s, but they maintained a population up to the present day. This circa 1910 group represented the town, and was known as the Canoles.

Durango BBC. In 1900 Durango Colorado was an outpost of civilization in the four corners area of Colorado, near the Utah, New Mexico, and Arizona borders. A favorite stop over of cowboys and other Western travelers, Durango boasted a ball club to entertain both visitors and locals alike.

1910 Game at Grand Junction. Horse-drawn carriages and automobiles share the perimeter of a ball field on the outskirts of Grand Junction, Colorado in 1910. Near the western border of the state, the city is now the annual home of the Junior College World Series every May.



Turkey / Brush Creek BBCs 1902. Turkey Creek still runs just west of Golden, Colorado. Brush Creek has either dried up, or had its name changed. Probably little more than encampments after the turn of the 20th Century, Turkey Creek and Brush Creek were at least capable of fielding competing teams, who posed for this 1902 photograph.

Peralta BBC, c.1910. From the Northeastern plains of Colorado, the town of Greeley sported the Peralta BBC in parts of the first and second decades of the 20th Century. A. "Rudy" Peralta, in the middle of the group in street clothes, was the Superintendent of the Great Western Sugar Company of Greeley, and had enough extra money on hand to outfit and fund this team, supporting both recreation and sportsmanship in Greeley.

Baseball in Colorado Territory

A Young Game Finds A New Home on the Frontier

by Brian Werner

BASEBALL'S ORIGINS IN COLORADO can be traced to the early 1860s. The first organized games took place in 1862, and the following years saw a variety of teams organized throughout the territory. Denver was the center of this activity, but most towns had their own "nines" by the time statehood was granted. Match games were common during the summer months with town challenging town for town pride and bragging rights.

The game, as it was played then, differed largely from baseball today. Basic similarities existed. Colorado teams played by the rules of the New York game which resembled those of today because there were four bases and nine players per side. But the sport was much more primitive in the 1860s. Gloves were uncommon, and catchers wore no masks or pads. Foul balls caught on one bounce were counted as outs, but runs were scored in bunches during this era. Offense definitely took precedence over defense as indicated by the following football-scale scores: 79-43, 44-27, 58-20, 72-25, 66-31, 55-30, and 65-36.

The first baseball games in Colorado Territory occurred in March 1862, when the Base Ball (two words back then) Club was formed.[1] The first recorded contest happened on April 26, 1862. In a great show of enthusiasm for the sport, the two sides played a doubleheader and then followed with a five-inning third game. While the scores were modest, in contrast to those mentioned

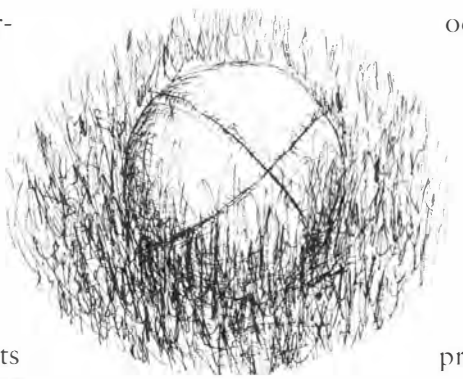
earlier, 20-7 and 9-8, it is doubtful that the club was ready to compete with the Chicago and New York clubs, as the *Rocky Mountain News* so gleefully reported.[2]

Baseball fever waned somewhat after this encouraging beginning, and it was not until 1864 that calls for a revival of the sport sounded.[3] The Base Ball Club apparently only played games occasionally throughout the early 1860s. Not until 1866 did a new excitement emerge with the organization of two clubs in Denver.

The Young Bachelor's Base Ball Club began in February with twenty-five members. They played quite regularly until the end of March when they disbanded.[4] This void was filled by the Colorado base ball club which was composed of what the *Rocky Mountain News* termed the "very best men of the city."[5] Also at this time the first intercity challenge was issued when the Valmont team challenged the newly organized Denver club. While the newspapers of each town took great pleasure in deriding each other, the game apparently never was played.[6]

The Colorado Base Ball Club did, however, play a challenge game for the championship of the territory in 1866. This match, against an unnamed territorial team, occurred in late June, and the Colorado Base Ball Club won, 27-22. Subsequently, a silver ball was made to be awarded to the champion ball club of Colorado.[7] This trophy served as the "World Series Ring" of baseball in the territory for the next dozen years.

The year 1867 saw an outpouring of baseball spirit in Denver with the organization of a rival group, the Rocky Mountain Base Ball Club. Great preparations were made for a game between the two for the silver ball trophy. The match took place June 1st on the grounds between Curtis and Arapahoe Streets on L Street. The *Rocky Mountain News* carried an appeal to convince the elite of the city to go out and watch. Ladies were encouraged to attend by offers of free admission and seats.[8] This game, considered to be the first public one between rival clubs, went to the Rocky Mountain Club, 44-27. They were aided by a sixteen-run second inning, a fifteen-run eighth, and some bad fielding by their opponents.[9] Two weeks later the Rocky Mountain Club laid claim to the silver ball trophy by overwhelming the Colorado Base Ball Club, 79-43.[10]



The Colorado Club disbanded after that debacle, but a new club, the Occidentals, emerged to challenge the champions. The Rocky Mountain Club never met the challenge, apparently giving the championship to the Occidentals by default. Throughout the rest of 1867, and for the next several years, the Occidentals reigned supreme in Colorado baseball circles.

Also at this time there was agitation for a game to be played between the Occidentals and a team from Omaha, Nebraska for the outright championship of the Far West. Attempts were made to raise $500 to bring the Omaha club to Julesburg, Colorado for the game. The site would have been in Julesburg because that was the western terminus of the railroad in 1867. The game unfortunately never took place, because of what was described as a paltry excuse on the Omaha team's part. The Occidentals therefore claimed the championship of the Far West, which included Colorado Territory, Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, and western Missouri.[11] Word reached Santa Fe of this championship club to the north, and they challenged the Occidentals in the late summer of 1867.[12]

Nothing came of this offer due to the advent of colder weather and the distance involved. One final attempt to play baseball in 1867 occurred when the Colorado Agricultural Society offered $50 to the winner of a tournament held in conjunction with its fair in Denver.[13] As was so often the case concerning baseball in the 1860s, nothing ever proceeded beyond the initial stages.

Baseball games were not as prevalent in Denver over the next few years, although the Occidentals were still the recognized champions. Then, in 1870, the White Stocking Base Ball Club was established to compete with the Occidentals. Two other teams of note came into existence at that time also as challengers for baseball supremacy in the region. These were the Stars of Central City, Colorado and the

Eclipse Club of Cheyenne, Wyoming Territory.

The first game between any of these teams was played July 6, 1870, when the Stars of Central City blasted the White Stockings, 52-28.[14] But games were rarely played, perhaps surprisingly considering the numerous boasts and challenges that flew among these clubs. Plans for a $500 match game, with each side putting up $250 between the Occidentals and the Eclipse Club never proved fruitful.

The early years of the 1870s were times when most cities or towns in the territory organized their own nines. These included Kit Carson, Greeley, Pueblo, Black Hawk, Georgetown, and Trinidad, to name only a few. Competition among cities and towns for baseball superiority heated up. This was especially evident in the rivalry between Central City and Denver.

The McCook Base Ball Club of Denver claimed the championship of the territory after defeating Kit Carson, 66-31, in May, 1871.[15] This touched off a lively verbal battle between Denver's *Rocky Mountain News* and the Central City *Register*. Not to be outdone, the Pueblo team also got into the act by challenging the McCook team to a game. To confuse the picture further, the Blue Stockings Base Ball Club was organized in Denver in August, 1871. That group wanted a shot at the championship as well.

The result of all this activity was the formation of a grand baseball tournament, the first of its kind in the West, to run from September 5th through the 7th in 1871. The McCook team disbanded before that date, while Pueblo lessened its demands for a game. Thus, the tourney wound up with only four teams: Kit Carson, Greeley, Central City's Stars, and Denver's Blue Stockings. The tourney began on a sour note with the Kit Carson representatives failing to appear and those from Greeley sadly lacking in skills. The championship was played between the Stars and the Blue Stockings for the $150 prize and the bragging rights as champions of Colorado.[16] The match was played at Ford Park with an admission of fifty cents being charged for the first time. A large crowd, including many from the mountains, was in attendance. It was a disaster for the Stars, as they went down to defeat, 55-30, and then 65-36, after they put up $200 for a rematch.[17]

The silver ball trophy, still symbolic of the best baseball team in Colorado Territory, rested securely with the Blue Stockings.

This tournament was one of the highlights of baseball during the territorial years. After the end of the 1871 season, baseball was still played sporadically, but certainly not with the former fervor. The *Rocky Mountain News*, which had supported the sport so wholeheartedly before, was sounding death knells for baseball as early as 1872.[18] This predicted abandonment of the game never happened, however, and by 1876, with the arrival of statehood, the game picked up enough interest to warrant another attempt at a tournament. Baseball had indeed run a curious course throughout Colorado's territorial period, one with numerous ups and downs that culminated in the 1871 tournament. But the seeds had been planted for the National Pastime to take root and flower in Colorado, a flourishing still evident more than a century later.

Notes:

1. *Rocky Mountain News*, March 13, 1862.
2. *Rocky Mountain News*, April 29, 1862.
3. *Rocky Mountain News*, April 8, 1864.
4. *Rocky Mountain News*, February 1, 1866.
5. *Rocky Mountain News*, March 21, 1866.
6. *Rocky Mountain News*, April 11, 1866.
7. *Rocky Mountain News*, June 28 and September 3, 1866.
8. *Rocky Mountain News*, May 31, 1867.
9. *Rocky Mountain News*, June 3, 1867.
10. *Rocky Mountain News*, June 13, 1867.
11. *Rocky Mountain News*, August 13 and July 30, 1867.
12. *Rocky Mountain News*, August 29, 1867.
13. *Rocky Mountain News*, September 13, 1867.
14. *Rocky Mountain News*, July 6, 1870.
15. *Rocky Mountain News*, May 27, 1871.
16. *Rocky Mountain News*, August 30, 1871.
17. *Rocky Mountain News*, September 6-8, 1871.
18. *Rocky Mountain News*, May 22, 1872.

"With Short Skirts"

Denver Women Played Baseball in 1892

by Wendy J. Wham

ON A BEAUTIFUL spring afternoon in Denver, a delightful, perhaps shocking, event occurred. As the sun shone high overhead, and a band played to a "grandstand crowded with gentlemen and ladies, the windows of the county hospital lined with patients, the trees filled with boys" all who eagerly awaited the hour of 3 P.M. The day was Sunday, May 22nd, the year was 1892, when six thousand people gathered at Broadway and Sixth Avenue in Denver's Broadway Athletic Park, to view a ball game—and a rare game it was, for the crowds turned out in force to view and cheer on the Denver Blues, nine young ladies attired in short blue skirts and black stockings, who were about to battle the Chicago Colts, nine young ladies clad in red, in the first baseball game ever played by women in the city.

The crowd was composed mainly of men "some respectable and some not so respectable"—including many Denver officials, judges, law enforcement, as well as the Typographical Union, and the Gambler's Protective Association, "the regular baseball crowd," those who were there for prurient interest, and the curious. The throng loved it; they packed the grandstand, and it was observed that 1,000 people stood to watch the game. The reviews by the press, however, were mixed. The Denver *Times* gave the event three paragraphs, and referred to the event as "the opening game of the female base ball aggregation," reporting that both teams were "severely rattled" for about five innings, but then "recovered their

self-possession or something else in the latter half and made some good plays." the *Times* concluded that "the aggregation shows some good timber and after a month or two of playing a fairly presentable game of ball should result." Nothing was mentioned of the game being held on a Sunday, the short, knee-length skirts of the women, or dismay, or chiding that women were playing ball, but there were references to the orderliness of the crowd (perhaps belaying initial fears of a riot, or such a shocking event possibly inciting inappropriate behavior?), and to its grand enjoyment of the day.

The game was a graceful affair, as reported in a column and a half of the *Daily News (Rocky Mountain News)*, who covered the event, complete with illustrations. Once again it was observed that the spectators exhibited none of the rowdiness that was the usual accompaniment of a ballgame of the time, but rather, the paper described almost a dainty affair, as reporters sipped lemonade and chronicled the players as "Miss Duval" and "Miss Florence Frances De Brun," "southpaw twirler" for the Blues (perhaps "hurler" was too inelegant for the ladies), describing how De Brun "floated gracefully into the pitcher's box and squared her graceful form for the first onslaught," or how an apparent crowd favorite, Miss Gertie Gillespie "guarding the rubbery bivalve" for the Blues, "scampered around the bases," tallying the first run for Denver. Although the game was seen as a lark by some of the men in the crowd, the women ignored their flirtations, and it was reported that the team "tended to the business of baseball."

Both the *Times* and the *Daily News* commented that the team had lack of practice time before the game, only mustering three weeks prior to the event, The *Times* reporting, "one (practice) outdoors," and both papers seemed to cheer the teams and the event, and the orderly delight of the crowd. The Denver *Republican*, however, had a different spin on the game, although they gave its coverage more print. The conservative paper ran a story on the morning of the event, headlining:

NO MORAL BACKBONE
Female "Baseballists" will hold
high carnival to-day.

The cutting story went on acerbically to explain that the game was financially driven by out-of-town promoters, "to be played between the hours for holding church service to-day." The Police and Fire Board decided that "it would be cruel to rob these men of the dollars they hope to take in at the gate" and permitted the game to go on, so that "the rag-tag of the town will, therefore, hie themselves to the park to yell and howl and make things hideous for a time to their hearts' content." The story went on to warn that "if anything should occur during the exhibition that appears to be indecent, immoral or disorderly, the chief of police will at once stop the exhibitions and no such show of a similar kind (if of an objectionable character) will hereafter be permitted in the city upon Sunday or on any other day."

Monday, following the game, the *Republican* led a news page with the following headline,"WITH SHORT SKIRTS—Thousands of Curious Eyes Watch The Female Ball Game." The story called the event a "clap-trap game" in which the players "rattled around the diamond." It had been a game, the *Republican* stated, in which the teams could just play a little ball, and "eight year old boys could beat them."

For a moment, forgiving its acidic tone, the *Republican*'s story did contain a full list of the players, inferring assumed names on both teams, along with detailed descriptions of the female players' attire: "red or blue skirts reaching to the knee, black stockings, sporting shoes and caps in stripes to correspond in color with the skirts. There was a fringe of white lace at the neck and a fringe of white lace at the waist." And they described the entrance of the players thus: "marching out into the field in a double row, nine blue skirts in front and nine red skirts behind" to a wild burst of applause. The paper called the game throughout a series of "miraculous muffs" and "fumbles, flukes and wild throws." When plays were made correctly, or when pitcher Alice Wentworth of the Reds threw the ball "squarely over home plate... a man's throw," it was reported that "the crowd howled with laughter, probably for no other reason than that they expected a woman's over-handed bowl, had the laugh stored up for it and didn't have time to switch off to the other muscles." When Pearl Reardon of the Blues made the first of her seven home runs, reportedly due to errors, it was described as "not a home run, or an earned run, nor any other kind of a run except a female baseball club run made for the delectation of people with more money than brains, at 50 cents per brains." The Blues won the game 44-28.

Catcher the Reds.

Home Run with Lots of Time.

"Oh! George."

Given the game's high score, and the players comprised of "hard-working girls paid $13 dollars a week and expenses to make an exhibition of themselves," it seems that, even though the execution of some plays may not have been as tight as some would have wished, the women could have been paid a little more respect for their effort. The *Daily News* stated that "the brilliant plays were not so scarce as one might think,"calling it "fairly good ball, considering the amount of practice they have had." Even if the score was on the high side, they declared, "The game was exciting from start to finish."

An interesting coda to this story is that the true identities of the players remains a mystery. After a search through the Denver city directory for 1892, I found none of the names of the Blues team were listed. This points one's thoughts to the explanation that possibly the names were faux —maybe just for fun, or perhaps the women's true names were concealed to preserve a bit of their social propriety after such a "shocking" display of sport!. It is equally conceivable that women were from out of town.

For those keeping a box score, this is the best that can be done:

Chicago (Red)	Position	Denver (Blue)
Alice Wentworth	Pitcher	Frances De Brun
Eva Afton	Catcher	Pearl Reardon
Belle Adair	First Base	May Duval
Nellie Fillmore	Second Base	Minnie Sheldon
Dora Carlton	Third Base	Leo Clinton
Hazel Burns	Short stop [sic]	Gertie Gillespie
Emma Verne	Center Field	Mamie Moore
Della Rowland	Left Field	Blanche Ledell
Kitty Dean	Right Field	Effle Ray

"Nothing But Baseball On His Mind"

Smoky Joe Wood Plays for Ouray

by Duane Smith

"SUNDAY BASEBALL IS PREFERABLE for the average Sunday sermon," solemnly intoned David Day, Durango's outspoken newspaper editor, on June 8, 1906.[1] No doubt some churchgoers took mighty offense at Day's "sinful"observation. Nonetheless, Day hit the mark. Southwestern Colorado fans took their baseball seriously.

Baseball had arrived almost on the heels of the first prospectors who ventured into the towering, craggy San Juan Mountains back in the 1870s. The little mining camps, nestled in canyons and valleys, wished to give visitors the impression of being settled communities with many of the refinements and entertainments they had known at home. They also wanted to build community pride for all. Baseball hit the mark in this urban mining world.

By this time, baseball had crossed the continent and the National League had formed. Newspapers carried scores, if not articles about games, and star players were admired and became fan favorites

All that, however, happened far from these communities that sometimes had a hard time finding enough level ground to lay out a diamond. Lake City's *Silver World*, in October, 1875, noted that "baseball mania" had a few victims in that town.[2] By April, 1878, the editor observed, now that the spring season had opened that "the boys feel the need for more exercise in order that digestive organs may not be impaired."[3] Apparently, the "boys" turned

out in the "neighborhood of the beer garden where refreshments were handy." Good for those "digestive organs." After picking two nines from the crowd, they went at it, with the result being a 42-9 score.

From beginnings such as these, baseball enthusiasts would organize town teams. These teams carried, with their bats, the town's honor. A lot of local money was bet on them, too. By the 1890s, all of the major communities—Ouray, Telluride, Silverton, Durango, Creede (and even a host of smaller camps)—fielded nines.

How seriously did they take baseball? Telluride's *San Miguel Examiner*, on April 28, 1878, complained, "Where are our local baseball enthusiasts?" The season had now opened and "not a word of the national game is heard in Telluride."[4] Or note this comment from the *San Juan Silverite* in 1892: "If Irontons want to squander their money on the basis of 5-1 against the Ouray nine next Sunday," they could find Ouray folks with "wads sufficient to satisfy all comers."[5] Montrose was so upset about losing to Ouray that they accused them of bringing players from "Denver, Golden and Boulder," which they emphatically denied.

Some years the towns actually created leagues and tried to play a regular, if brief schedule, Mostly though, they played when and where they could. Holidays, such as the Fourth of July, usually featured a game, along with a parade, orations, other sporting contests, and a grand evening hall. Baseball, even occasionally, inspired a local poet:

In the spring the young girl's fancy
lightly turns to thoughts of hat,
In the spring the thrifty housewife
washes windows and all that,
In the spring the clothing drummer
lays in new supplies of gall,
In the spring the young man's fancy
lightly turns to thoughts of ball.[6]

Such doggerel aside, some intense rivalries grew and great games were played on those long ago diamonds. Out of this era, after the turn of the century, emerged one of the great players in baseball, soon to be known to fans throughout the country as Smoky Joe Wood. As a teenager, he took the field for the Ouray squad.

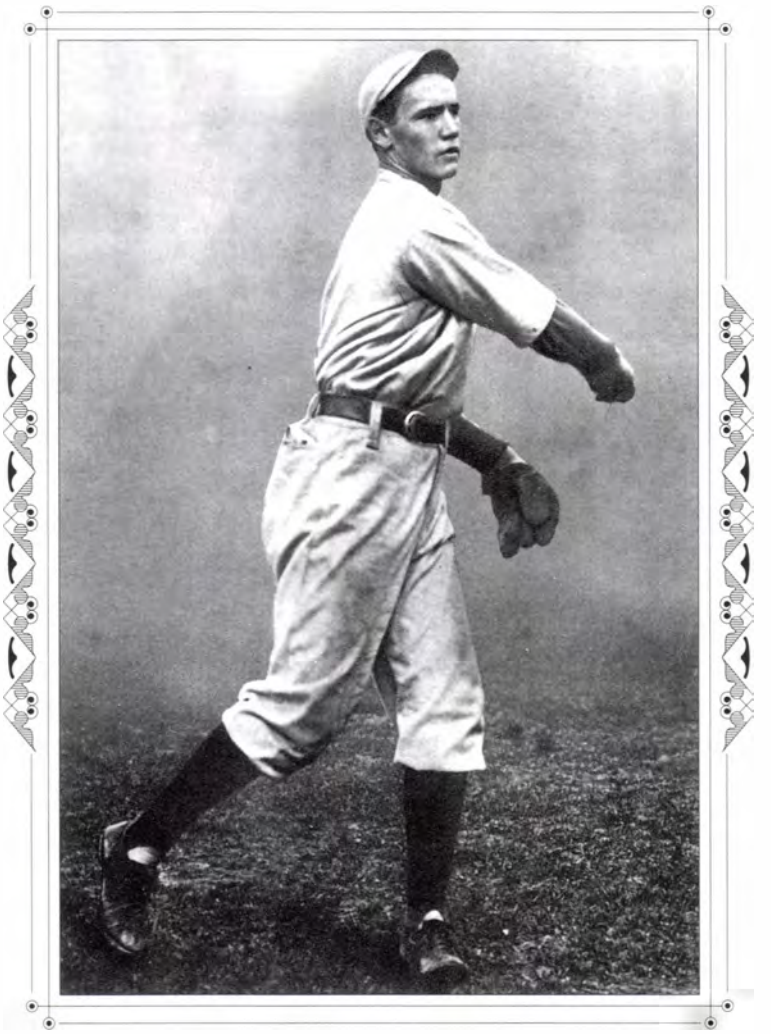
Ouray sits on the northern edge of the San Juans in a beautiful mountain bowl, surrounded by majestic peaks. The nearby 12-13,000-foot mountains dwarfed its 7,811 elevation as the Uncompaghre Rivers cuts its way through the canyon and out to the valley beyond. Although the ball obviously carried well at that elevation, it was interesting to note that no one seemed to have been concerned! They played their games on the northern edge of town, one of the few level spots available.

Joe Wood was born on October 25, 1889, in Kansas City, Missouri. His family, somewhat typical of westerners of that era, moved readily, arriving in Ouray in 1900. With a population of 2,196, their new home was one of the largest of the San Juan towns, and, with the nearby, famous Camp Bird Mine moving into its most productive decade, Ouray prospered.

Baseball faced a relatively short season, from late spring until after Labor Day (or the brisk early fall days), before winter took its long hold. Short as the summer might be, the passion for the national game and a defense of Ouray's reputation did not fade away.

Commenting on those years of his youth, Wood later remarked in a letter, "As a boy I had nothing on my mind but baseball."[7] Continuing in an interview, he said much about small-town America at the turn of the last century: "I was just a little snot-nosed kid who was running around and knew who all the people were, but they didn't know who I was. Every so often the Walshes [who made millions with the Camp Bird Mine] used to come back and along with their daughter Evalyn would throw out nickels and dimes to the kids who would follow them down the street."

When he first hung around the team, the players made him the "mascot," which pleased the youngster with "nothing but baseball on his mind." As he grew, the players began to appreciate that they had a talented kid with them. Joe became a utility infielder and part-time pitcher, although so wild that the captain was hesitant. Even then, he was definitely fast, and no batter liked to face that combination —wildness and a fast ball. He vividly recalled the first time he was sent up to bat: "I was shaking like a leaf playing with these men, and I struck out on three pitches that were over my head."



Smoky Joe Wood was something of a sensation for the local Ouray team. As a young man Wood showed promise as a position player long before his major league career began.

During the 1905 season, the *Ouray Herald* chronicled the highs and lows of its team and, showing their importance, always on the front page. The Ouray boys had the easiest times with those "cornhusker" nines from the farm country north of them—Olathe, Montrose, and Grand Junction. They had the most trouble, losing four out of five games, with Silverton, a team sponsored by the noted politician and saloonkeeper, Jack Slattery. These games were not just for fun and the town's reputation. Large amounts, $250-$300 in side bets, often went to the winning team. Fans turned out for away games, for example, 228 bought tickets on a special train to Montrose for the season opener.[8] One thousand fans crowded Ouray's field for a doubleheader with Silverton and, illustrative of the difference in that era, the time to play both games totaled three hours and forty-five minutes, a time fairly usual at Coors Field today for one game,

Joe Wood gathered his initial praise, when "our 15 years old shortstop" hit a home run in a 16-5 rout of Montrose in late June.[9] Unfortunately the paper did not print box scores for every game, so it is impossible to know how often Joe played. A month later, he had a great day when "our little man Woods came to the front and made the hit" that drove in Ouray's first run in a two-out, ninth-inning rally against Silverton. He scored the second run, but the rally fell short and Ouray lost 3-2.[10] The August 4th report praised him for "catching a long fly."[11]

Wood, usually listed as "Woods" in the reports, played third base, shortstop, and outfield, but there

was nary a mention of pitcher. That he appeared to be well-liked was shown by this kidding comment in the story of a victory over Grand Junction: "He made the popcorn and soda pop scarce after the game. Must have saved your nickels, Joe."[12] During Ouray's three-day Labor Day celebration, Joe Wood made his last appearance and "made an error while thinking of the new home in Kansas and the girl he left behind."[13] Nor did he hit well in his last two games taking the "collar," going 0 for 7.

Wood later remembered that, after a winning game, fans would push money through the backstop for the players, and they would get free drinks at the saloons. Being too young to drink, Joe would get a meal at one of the restaurants. Reflecting on his later career, Smoky Joe said, "I never drank whiskey in my life—just a beer after pitching a game." In his younger years, he would, however, go up and down Ouray alleys collecting bottles that he then sold to the saloonkeepers.

The swimming pool, with "natural hot water," stands out in his memory, as does his learning to play pool. Hiram Herr "started up a pool and beer room. I learned to play pool in that place and I played so well Hi let me play for the house." Another memory was seeing snow on July 4th at the Camp Bird Mine.

The Wood family left Ouray in 1906, and the next season, at age seventeen, Joe Wood became a professional baseball player. The following year, at the end of the season, the Boston Red Sox called him up to the major leagues. Soon after Joe came up, a Boston sportswriter observed, "Gee, that fellow really throws smoke." It was "Smoky Joe" ever after. He pitched a season to remember in 1912. His record of 34-5, which led the American League, included sixteen wins in a row. Wood's thirty-five complete games and ten shutouts were also the best. Always a good hitter., Joe batted .290. Boston won the league championship that year and went on to win the World Series. Their star pitcher won three games in the series.

After retiring from baseball after the 1922 season, Joe Wood coached at Yale for twenty years. How good was Smoky Joe? His contemporaries offered decisive opinions. Walter Johnson in a 1912 interview declared, "Can I throw harder than Joe Wood? Listen, my friend, there's no man alive that throws harder than Smoky Joe Wood." Nap Lajoie concurred, also in a 1912 interview: "It is not exaggerating it a bit when I say that at times I have been unable to see Wood's fastball as it sped over the plate. He perfected his curve ball so that it's about the quickest breaking ball I've tried to hit." Finally, Ty Cobb left this impression: "Without a doubt, Joe Wood was one of the best pitchers I ever faced throughout my entire career."

Notes:

1. *Durango Democrat*, June 8, 1906.
2. Lake City *Silver World*, October 16, 1875.
3. Lake City *Silver World*, April 13, 1878.
4. Telluride *San Miguel Examiner*, April 28, 1878.
5. *San Juan Silverite*, June 4, 1892.
6. *Durango Democrat*, June 5, 1908.
7. Many of the quotations in this article were contained in letters to the author from Bob Wood, Smoky Joe's son, without attribution.
8. *Ouray Herald*, May 19, 1905.
9. *Ouray Herald*, June 30, 1905.
10. *Ouray Herald*, July 28, 1905.
11. *Ouray Herald*, August 4, 1905.
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Ouray Herald*, September 8, 1905.

Denver's Phantom of the Ole Game

Oliver Hazzard "The Ghost" Marcell

by Larry Lester

A BASIC CAREER STAT SHEET for Oliver Marcell would probably read something like this:

Bat/Throw: Right/Right
Height/Weight: 5' 9", 160 lbs.
Born: June 24, 1890, Thibodeaux, Louisiana
Died: Sunday, 12 June 1949, Denver, Colorado
Buried: Riverside Cemetery, Denver, Colorado

1918-1919, Brooklyn Royal Giants
1919, Detroit Stars and New York Lincoln Giants
1920 -1923, Bacharach Giants
1923-1925 25, New York Lincoln Giants
1925-1928, Bacharach Giants
1929, Baltimore Black Sox
1930, Brooklyn Royal Giants
1932, Bacharach Giants
1934, Miami Giants
1935, Denver White Elephants

But the silhouette splendor is best remembered as the Cajun from the Big Easy. Oliver Marcell was no easy out. Consistent and persistent with the bat, the marvelous Marcell marveled in the field. The New Orleans ghost was a fielding gem who could go to his right or left with equal facility, coming up with breath-taking plays on bunts. The fearless fielder became known for charging in

on batters when the ball was pitched. With his rapid reflexes, he could snag line drives before they hit the un-manicured infield turf.

Fans called him "The Ghost" because his speed was *je ne sais quoi*. Now he's here, now he's gone. His talent, however, was no mystery, for his play was spooktacular. For a decade and a half in the early twentieth century, Marcell haunted pitchers and base runners alike.

Born in the French quarter of Thibodeaux (pronounced "tib-eh-doe"), Marcell was baseball's "*Par lez-vous gumbo*." In time, the student from Tomey Lafon Elementary and the lab school at New Orleans University would become one of the game's finest third basemen.

The greatest team in Latin American history was perhaps the 1923-1924 Santa Clara Leopardos. Not only was Marcell a star on this talented team, but he led the Cuban Winter League with a .393 batting average, besting Oscar Charleston, Cristobal Torriente, and "Pop" Lloyd for the title. Their 11½ game margin of victory is the largest in league history. Over the course of the season, there were nineteen players on the roster; eighteen blacks and one white (Pedro Dibut), eleven Americans, and eight Cubans. Eight Leopardos would later join manager Agustin "Tinti" Molina in the Cuban Hall of Fame.

With Oscar "Heavy" Johnson at first base (and later defensive whiz Eddie Douglas), Frank Warfield at second, Dobie Moore at short, and Marcell at third, there was never a more efficient offensive-defensive alignment in the baseball memoirs. The pitching staff wasn't too shabby either, with Rube Currie, Dave Brown, and *El Diamante Negro* (the black diamond) himself, Jose Mendez. And the outfield was tight with Oscar Charleston, Pablo "Champion" Mesa, and Alejandro Oms, the league's "Player Most Useful to his Club" or MVP. Fielding-wise, this outfield ranks equally with the Boston Red Sox's pre-World War I trio of Duffy Lewis, Tris Speaker, and Harry Hooper.

Playing as if his pre-game meal had been sprinkled with gunpowder, Marcell enjoyed engaging mid-fielders in demolition derby. As Jay Sanford, a Denver baseball historian, said, "He was truly a Jekyll and Hyde personality. But I also truly believe that he was one of the best third basemen to ever play the game." Regardless, Dr. Shuck or Mr. Jive was a dynamite of a player. A powder keg in any lineup, the pugnacious and pugilistic Poltergeist's temperament was the ammunition that triggered his drive to excel.

"He had a lot of guts. Just pure nerve. I've seen Marcell be in, looking for a bunt. The guy would hit it down the line, and he'd dive and catch the ball, get up and throw the man out. That takes heart," remembered pitcher Bill Holland. He played the game with the frenzy of a kicked beehive. You would never catch Marcell with a milk moustache.

In May of 1925, James J. Keenan, owner of the Lincoln Giants, traded Marcell to the Bacharach Giants for three hurlers, Roy Roberts, John Harper, and an unknown southpaw rookie named Savage. Manager Pop Lloyd of the Bacharach club had voiced his need for a quality third baseman. Meanwhile, Keenan countered that Marcell was a "stormy petrel" while in New York. [Petrels are small sea birds of the North Atlantic and the Mediterranean, having sooty plumage and a white rump. The birds fly so close to the water as to appear to be walking on it]. He added that Marcell was unusually quick tempered and that he often stirred the fans at Protectory Oval with his willingness to argue and sometimes fight with umpires. Perhaps Marcell thought he walked on water.

Whatever the case, with the Bacharach club, the Thibodeaux Thumper proved to be the greatest acquisition since the Louisiana Purchase, as he hit roughly .340 the rest of the season, with a slugging percentage near .500. Marcell stayed with the Bacharach club the next two seasons, leading them to a World Series against the Chicago American Giants. In the 1926 series, he got twelve hits in forty-one at-bats for a .293 average, knocking in six runs, in a losing cause. The following year in the series battling the American Giants again, the Ghost disappeared, hitting only .235, going eight for thirty-four with two RBI in nine games.

When the Eastern Colored League (ECL) folded in 1928, Marcell said au revoir and joined the Baltimore Black Sox, in 1929, in the newly organized American Negro League (ANL), where he batted .310 in league play. The ANL lasted one year and Marcell found a home with an Eastern independent, the Brooklyn Royal Giants, where he began his career in 1918.

Marcell's stardom in the Cuban winter league paved the way for his peripatetic yet successful baseball career.

While others celebrated Mardi Gras, the last day before the fasting season of Lent, it was Marcell who feasted on white pitchers with jubilee, jubilation, and justification. In seventeen recorded exhibition games against white teams, Marcell was king of the chateau hitting .365 (twenty-three hits in sixty-three at-bats).

Never as friendly as his cartoon cousin Casper, the fiery Cajun saw his professional career come to an abrupt end during the winter of 1930. While in Cuba, he got in Barney Rubble trouble when he tried to borrow five bucks from teammate Frank Warfield for a game of craps. When Warfield refused, Marcell boiled over and fisticuffs ensued. Warfield put a Tyson bite on Marcell's nose, causing permanent disfiguration and, ultimately, low self-esteem, regrettably forcing the once-handsome Marcell to wear a black patch on his kisser.

Marcell resurfaced briefly in 1932 with the

Bacharach Giants and later in 1934 with the semi-pro Miami Giants. When the Miami club was invited to play in the Denver tournament, Marcell decided to stay in town. That year, he convinced Ross Parson, sports editor of the *Denver Post*, to invite the renowned Kansas City Monarchs to the prestigious *Denver Post* Tournament. The best teams, outside the major leagues, participated in this tourney—a fitting stage for the Monarchs. Thanks to Marcell, the Monarchs became the first black team in the tourney—breaking Rocky Mountain baseball's color barrier—roughly a dozen years before Jack Robinson made history.

Settling down in Denver, Oliver had married Hazel Taylor, and they had two sons, Oliver Junior and Everett, also called "Ziggy." Ziggy would later play ten seasons (1939-1948) in the Negro Leagues, and he was also famously known as a basketball player with the Harlem Clowns and the Harlem Globetrotters. Ziggy also zig-zagged with the 1946-1947 Los Angeles Red Devils professional basketball team that featured Jackie Robinson at shooting guard. While in Denver, Marcell became involved with two semi-pro teams, the Denver Monarchs and the Denver White Elephants, both predominantly black teams that competed throughout the Rocky Mountain region.

After his coaching days with the White Elephants, Marcell settled into a career as a self-employed painter around Denver. He died from arteriosclerosis in 1949 and was buried in an unmarked grave. Thanks to the efforts of Jay Sanford and a granite marker donated by the Denver Zephyrs baseball team and the Fairmount Cemetery Company, the "Ghost" was made visible in 1991. The auxiliary inscription of "Baseball's Best Third Baseman, Brought Professional Black Baseball to Colorado" says it all.

A testament to Marcell's overall greatness was evident by the highly regarded 1952 Pittsburgh *Courier* poll when he was the top pick over Judy Johnson and Ray Dandridge at third base. The next year, 1953, John Henry "Pop" Lloyd selected Marcell for his all-time All-Star team. Despite one Hall of Famer, Lloyd, picking another potential Hall of Famer, Marcell, the honors have been sparse.

Somewhat tardy to the party, the Louisiana Sports Hall of Fame in Natchitoches honored the Phantom on June 22, 1996. Awaiting perhaps the next party stop is the Cooperstown Hall of Fame! The cappuccino of any team, Marcell's closest French vanilla version in the majors is probably future Hall of Famer Ron Santo. With all due respect to Santo, Jud Wilson, and Alec Radcliffe, Marcell has to be among the greatest third basemen not in the Hall of Fame. Currently, the black leagues are represented by Judy J. and Dandy Ray at the hot corner. If you get the chance, bet your dough on the Ghost from Thibodeaux as a future Cooperstown inductee.

Recommended reading:

Clark, Nancy. "The Boys of Summer: Even Oliver Will Be Here in Spirit," *Denver Magazine*, September 1991: 1.

Hall, Marty. "Negro Leaguer Marcelle Was a Baseball Pioneer," *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, June 23, 1996: C-16.

Holway, John B., *Blackball Stars: Negro League Pioneers*. Carroll & Graf Publishers. (New York, 1992): 143-149.

Patty, Mike. "Riverside Grave Memorial to Honor 'Ghost' Marcelle," *Rocky Mountain News*, June 1, 1991: E3.

Van De Voorde, Andy. "Ghost Story: A Denver Sports Sleuth Goes Beyond the Grave to Honor a Baseball Legend," [Denver] *Westword*, July 9, 1991: 4, 6.

Baseball cards:

1923/24 Tomas Gutierrez
1923/24 Cigarros Billiken
1974 Laughlin Old Time Black Stars, #3
1990 Negro League Stars, #17

Growing Up With the Denver Bears

Heroes of the Western League

by Bill Gilbert

DENVER'S ASSOCIATION with the Western League dates back to 1886 when they were known as the Mountain Lions and later the Mountaineers. Economic problems forced the league to dissolve in 1888, and Denver didn't return to the league until 1900 when they were known as the Bears and later the Grizzlies. Denver dropped out of the league after the 1917 season as World War I took a toll on minor league baseball.

Professional baseball returned to Denver in 1922 when Denver replaced Joplin, Missouri in the Class A Western League. Denver remained in the league for eleven more years through 1932. The Western League started to fall apart again during the Depression as teams were disbanded and relocated. The league folded after the 1937 season. A new Class D Western League was formed in 1939 and lasted three years. Denver was in the league only in 1941.

After the end of World War II, minor league baseball began expanding rapidly. In 1945, only twelve leagues operated, expanding to 41 in 1946, 58 in 1948, and a peak of 59 leagues in 1949. The Class A Western League resumed play in 1947 with six teams, Denver and Pueblo, Colorado, Omaha and Lincoln, Nebraska and Des Moines and Sioux City, Iowa.

At the time, there were three Triple A Leagues and two Double A Leagues. Each league had eight teams for a total of 40 teams at the higher levels. Since there were

only sixteen major league teams, most clubs had two or three farm clubs between the major leagues and the three Class A leagues. Thus it was a big jump from the Western League to the majors. In 1947, the Western League teams were all farm clubs of major league clubs: Denver (Yankees), Pueblo (Dodgers), Omaha (Cardinals), Lincoln (A's), Des Moines (Cubs), and Sioux City (Giants). Omaha's games were played across the Missouri River in Council Bluffs, Iowa while Rosenblatt Stadium, now the home of the College World Series, was being built.

My initial exposure to professional baseball was in Los Angeles at the age of seven in 1943. We lived there for two years while my dad was in the South Pacific as a Naval Officer. My mother began taking my younger brother and me to Pacific Coast League games in Los Angeles and Hollywood, and I became immediately hooked watching players such as Andy Pafko (on the way up) and Babe Herman (on the way down).

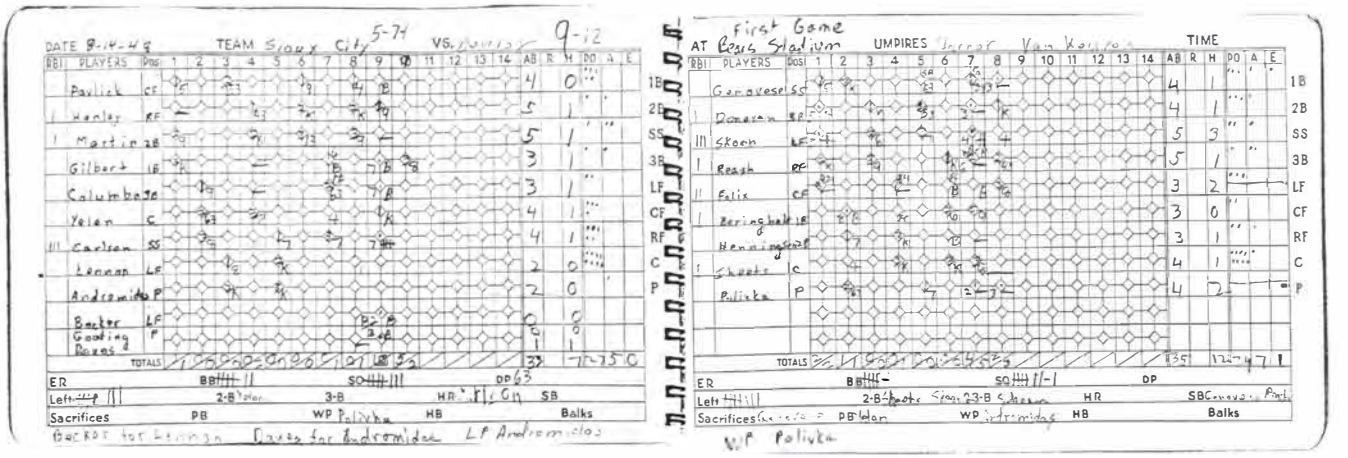
After the war, we moved back to Denver, where we had lived before leaving in 1942. In 1946, there was no professional baseball in Denver, but it was a hotbed of semi-pro baseball, highlighted by the *Denver Post* Tournament at Merchants Park. When professional baseball came back to Denver in 1947, ancient Merchants Park, built in 1922 with a capacity of 7,000, located at the corner of Broadway and Center Avenue was the site. I remember it as a rickety wood structure with many posts that obstructed the view. When I first saw Rickwood Field in Birmingham, Alabama, fifty years later, it reminded me of Merchants Park.

The first season, 1947, for the new Denver Bears was disappointing. The Yankees did not stock the club with a respectable team, and the team finished fifth in a six-team league, 26 games behind first-place Sioux City. Attendance was only 125,000, an average of less than 2,000 per game. Merchants Park was not centrally located and was not a desirable venue for baseball. It was obvious a new stadium was required for Denver to reach its potential as a baseball town.

I remember attending games in Merchants Park in 1947 with my grand-dad and also with my neighbor, Riley McClelland, whose father worked as a ticket seller. Riley's dad had to get there early, and we would go with him and watch batting and fielding practice. I obtained a Goldsmith Official Baseball Scorebook and began keeping score at the games I attended. (I still do, using the same system I used in 1947). The first game in my book is July 18, 1947, Denver versus Lincoln, and I have score sheets for sixteen games in 1947.

In looking through the 1947 score sheets, I didn't find too many household names. The only Denver players who made it to the major leagues were infielder Loren Babe and pitchers Dave Madison and Bob Alexander. Babe played for the Yankees and A's in 1952 and 1953 and also coached in the majors for several years. Madison pitched for the Yankees and Tigers for three years. Alexander was the Bears' staff ace (10-12, 4.15 ERA). In late August, he shut out Lincoln in both ends of a doubleheader. He went on to pitch nine years at the Triple-A level and made brief major league appearances with Baltimore and Cleveland. Other players in my scorebook who later played in the majors include Bob Borkowski, Carmen Mauro, Roy Smalley, Sr., and Les Peden of Des Moines, Preston Ward and Turk Lown of Pueblo, Eddie Kazak and John Bucha of Omaha, and Larry Miggins of Sioux City. Miggins is a SABR member living in Houston and has been a guest speaker at several of our SABR meetings. Dave Garcia of Sioux City didn't play in the majors, but he spent six years as a manager for the Angels and Indians, and later as a coach for the Rockies. The Pueblo manager, Walter Alston, managed the Dodgers for twenty-three years and is in the Hall of Fame. Last-place Lincoln didn't have any players that made the majors, but one of their pitchers, Sheldon (Chief) Bender became a baseball "lifer" spending over forty years in baseball mostly as a scout and scouting director in Cincinnati.

While Denver fared poorly in 1947, one player who became popular with the fans was veteran minor-league outfielder, Joe King, who joined the team shortly after the start of the season. A strong right-handed hitter, King (.289-9-81) was one of the few players who could reach Merchants Park's distant, 390 foot left field fence. An incident late in the season in a game in Council Bluffs, however, tarnished his reputation. Omaha slugger, Ed Lewinski, hit a ball that barely cleared the screen on top of the left field fence. King, playing left field for the Bears, pulled out a concealed ball and threw it against the



screen, fielded it, and threw it back to the infield. He didn't get away with it, however, and Lewinski was awarded a home run. King's popularity with the fans was never the same. He remained with the team through the 1948 season but played sparingly. He drifted into the lower minors where he played for four more years.

I had an unexpected opportunity to visit with one of the 1947 Denver Bears fifty years later in 1997. Backup catcher, Dick Kern, was on the minor league panel at the SABR Convention in Louisville. I enjoyed sitting with Dick at a ball game and reliving some old memories.

The 1948 season began with higher hopes after the Howsam family purchased the team. Construction began on a new stadium, but the Bears opened the 1948 season in Merchants Park. Mike Gazella replaced Marty McManus as manager, and the team was more successful, finishing second, four games behind Des Moines. The highlight of the season however, was the opening of new Bears Stadium on August 14th in a 9-5 win against Sioux City. Gail Henley of Sioux City had the first hit, and teammate Ray Carlson had the first home run. Willie Skeen recorded the first hit for the Bears, and Lefty Ken Polivka went all the way to pick up the win.

Bears Stadium cost about $275,000, initially seating 10,000 people, and was completely uncovered. The open, well-lit venue was a marked contrast to dreary Merchants Park, and it was an immediate hit with the fans. There was a mad rush to get the stadium open, so there were a lot of things that were not finished. The box seats were folding chairs, and I remember working there that afternoon helping to set out the chairs.

I have score sheets for forty games in 1948. I didn't miss many after Bears Stadium opened and my parents began attending more games. It was a great way to spend a pleasant evening in August and early September.

The Bears were again short of major league prospects in 1948. They didn't have a major league affiliation, but instead had a working agreement with Hollywood of the Pacific Coast League. Their top hitter was Bob Reash (.315-12-97), but he didn't get to the big show. Shortstop George Genovese and Polivka later had cups of coffee in the majors, and 30-year old pitcher, Roy Lee, already had had one in 1945. Jim Hughes, who pitched briefly for the Bears in 1948, pitched parts of six seasons in the majors.

My scorebook contained a lot more familiar names in 1948. Des Moines, managed by colorful Stan Hack, had five players who would later spend several years in the majors, Borkowski, Randy Jackson, Wayne Terwilliger, Carl Sawatski, and Tony Jacobs, and two who had already been there, Don Johnson and Leon Treadway. Lincoln had Bobby Shantz, the league's top pitcher, future Hall-of-Famer Nellie Fox, Lou Limmer, and Bob Wellman. Pueblo had Clem Labine and Steve Lembo, Omaha had

Miggins and Eddie Yuhas, and Sioux City had Henley, Tookie Gilbert, Bob Lennon, and Bobby Hofman. Treadway led the league in hitting (.352), Sawatski in home runs (29), Gilbert in RBI (114), Fox in hits (179) and Genovese in runs (114). Shantz led in wins (18) and strikeouts (212) and Jacobs led in ERA (2.72).

We tried to mingle with the players before the games and get as many autographs as we could. The inside covers of my scorebook are full of autographs that are still legible. I still have a memory of getting Sawatski's autograph. He was walking from the clubhouse to the dugout with an armload of catcher's equipment. When I asked for his autograph, he disgustedly opened his arms and dropped all the equipment before signing.

Denver easily led the league in attendance with 283,000 and they would do so every year that they remained in the league.

The 1949 season again began with high hopes after Bob Howsam became President and General Manager. The Bears became affiliated with the Boston Braves. They contended again, but finished in a tie for second with Pueblo, three games behind Lincoln. Attendance was 463,039, for an average of over 6,600 per game, a league record and the highest the Bears would reach in their Western League years. After a slow start, Gazella was replaced as manager by catcher, Bill DeCarlo on an interim basis and later by Earl Browne.

After filling up my scorebook late in the 1948 season, I upgraded to a larger McGregor Goldsmith model which still has a legible autograph from Stan Hack in the inside back cover. I have score sheets for fifty-one games in 1949, which filled up my second scorebook. Of the Denver teams that I saw growing up, this is the one that brings back the most memories. The Braves supplied some of their top prospects, and the team really caught the fancy of the fans.

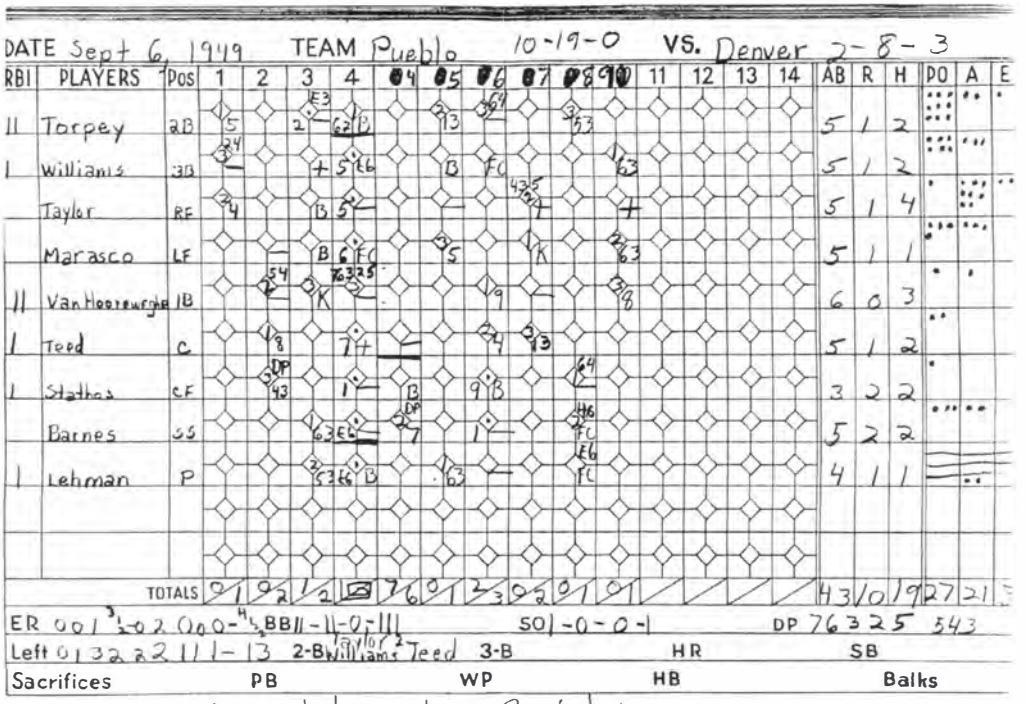
Four players from the 1949 Bears made it to the majors: outfielder Chuck Tanner, catcher Walt Linden, pitchers Ernie Johnson and Denver native Virgil Jester. Tanner had a successful managerial career, and Johnson was part of the Braves' broadcasting team after the end of his pitching career. Center fielder Bob Jaderlund was considered a top prospect on the team, but injuries and a weak bat derailed his career. Linden was the top hitter (.325, 11, 95) and first baseman, Deo Grose had 98 RBI but only one home run. Johnson (15-5, 2.37) and George Uhle, Jr. (10-5, 2.25) were the top pitchers.

My favorite memory of the season is a picture of Tanner, Jaderlund, Linden, and outfielder Bill Sanders taken in our front yard. Our ticket-selling neighbor invited some players to his house for hamburgers after a Saturday afternoon game, and we were also invited. Years later, I showed the picture to Tanner at the Astrodome when he was managing the Pirates, and he remembered the names of the players. When I mentioned that he was the only one of the four to make the majors, he pointed out that Linden also made it (for three games).

The roster of future major leaguers in my 1949 scorebook is not as impressive as the 1948 list. Many of them appeared for only a cup of coffee. Des Moines had seven: Les Peden, Bob Talbot, Fred Richards, Paul Schramka, Dick Aylward, Leon Brinkopf, and Vern Fear. Pueblo had Dick Teed, Ken Lehman, and Marion Fricano, and Sioux City had Ray Katt and Stan Jok. Pennant-winning Lincoln had only first baseman Lou Limmer and pitcher Lynn Lovenguth. Omaha had pitcher Joe Presko and infielder Bernie Creger, who already had his cup, as had Danny Lynch of Des Moines.

Vic Marasco of Pueblo led the league in hitting (.330) and RBI (121) and Limmer led in home runs (29). Lovenguth, Stubby Stabelfeld of Des Moines, and Walter Cox of Lincoln all had seventeen wins, Lehman had 203 strikeouts, and Uhle was the ERA leader (2.25).

The Western League expanded to eight teams in 1950 with the addition of Colorado Springs, as a White Sox affiliate and Wichita in the St. Louis Browns fold. Bears Stadium was expanded to a capacity of 18,523. The 1950 season was a disappointment for the Bears despite strong offense from Moose Womack (.317-17-112), Tanner (.315-7-86), and Pete Whisenant (.312-24-119). Another bright spot was Jack Dittmer, fresh from the University of Iowa, who began his career with a .373-2-59 debut. The club finished fifth, twenty-one games behind first place Omaha, and attendance declined by 84,000. I was part of the problem as my priorities began changing as I entered high school, and I didn't attend as many games. And I no longer kept a scorebook.



DATE Sept 6, 1949 TEAM Pueblo 10-19-0 VS. Denver 2-8-3

RBI	PLAYERS	POS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	AB	R	H	PO	A	E
11	Torpey	2B															5	1	2			
1	Williams	3B															5	1	2			
	Taylor	RF															5	1	4			
	Marasco	LF															5	1	1			
11	VanHoosewright	1B															6	0	3			
1	Teed	C															5	1	2			
1	Stathos	CF															3	2	2			
	Barnes	SS															5	2	2			
1	Lehman	P															4	1	1			
	TOTALS																43	10	19	27	21	

ER 001 3-02000-4 BB 11-1-0-111 SO 1-0-0-1 DP 76325 543

Left 0 1 3 2 2 2 1 1 1 - 13 2-B Williams, Teed 3-B HR SB

Sacrifices PB WP HB Balks

Winner Lehman Loser Barkelew

AT Bears Stadium UMPIRES Storner and Van Keuren. TIME

RBI	PLAYERS	POS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	AB	R	H	PO	A	E
	Jaderlund	CF															2	0	0			
	Rambone	3B															3	0	0			
	Grose	1B															4	0	1			
	Linden	C															4	1	2			
11	Tanner	RF															4	1	1			
	Tedeschi	LF															4	0	0			
	Weisenburger	2B															4	0	2			
	Harmon	SS															4	0	1			
	Barkelew	P															1	0	0			
	Jester	P															0	0	0			
	Cooper	P															2	0	1			
	Bennett	P															0	0	0			
	TOTALS																32	2	8	27	8	

ER 0000000 2-2 BB 111 SO 1111 DP 63

Left 1 0 1 1 1 0 1 1 0 - 6 2-B Cooper 3-B HR Tanner SB Jaderlund

Sacrifices PB WP HB Balks

Tanner led the league in hits (195) and Whisenant was the RBI leader with 119. The home run leader was Pat Seerey of Colorado Springs with a .300-44-11 7 season. Seerey was on his way down after a seven-year career with the White Sox. Tanner, Whisenant, and Dittmer went on to have major league careers.

Other players in the league in 1950 who went on to major league careers included Daryl Spencer and Billy Gardner of Sioux City, Gene Baker and Jim Brosnan of Des Moines and Bob Turley and Don Larsen of Wichita. Bill Sharman of Pueblo never played in the majors, but he had a very successful basketball career with the Boston Celtics.

Bob Howsam made a bold move in 1950 which paid off in future years. He was the first one to bring black players into the league. Through a connection he had in Panama, he first brought in infielder Pablo Bernard and pitcher Al Osorio. Later that year, he purchased infielder Curt Roberts from the Kansas City Monarchs.

The Bears began a successful run in 1951 under their new manager, Andy Cohen, as they finished first or second in each of their last four years in the Western League. In 1951, Denver finished second, two games behind Omaha, and attendance increased by 44,000. In a marked contrast to the previous year, the team received excellent pitching from Rafael Rivas, Barney Schultz, Merlin (Hank) Williams, Fred Wollpert, and Bo Palica. Howie Boles (.259-32-102) was the only one on the team who hit more than seven home runs. Bill Bruton (.303-2-38) played center field and went on to a twelve-year major league career with the Braves and Tigers. First baseman Frank Torre (.313-0-46), Joe's older brother, also went on to play in the majors.

George Freese of Pueblo was the top hitter in the league, leading in batting average (.338), hits (183), and RBI (106). Boles led in home runs. Roy Face of Pueblo (23-9, 2.78 ERA) was the leading pitcher. In addition to Freese and Face, several other players went on to successful major league careers: Ken Boyer and Willard Schmidt of Omaha, Ed Bressoud of Sioux City, Harry Chiti of Des Moines, Don Mossi of Wichita, Bob Lillis of Pueblo, and Arnold Portocarrero of Lincoln.

The Bears became a farm club of the Pittsburgh Pirates in 1952, but they retained several players and manager Cohen from the 1951 team. They finally won their first Western League Championship since 1913, finishing one game ahead of Colorado Springs before closing the deal by beating Omaha in the playoff finals. Outfielder Bill Pinckard (.307-35-108) was the big gun and the only player to achieve the triple milestones of a .300 batting average, thirty home runs, and 100 RBI in Denver's Western League years. But it was again the pitching that carried the day. Al Osorio won twenty games, and Schultz, Wollpert, and Rivas built on their success from the previous year. Attendance shot up to 461,000, close to the record set in 1949. It was the highest in all of the minor leagues that year, and it became obvious that Denver deserved to be in a higher level league. No other Western League team drew as many as 200,000 in 1952.

The Bears' success in 1952 was achieved without many prospects. Only Schultz and second baseman Curt Roberts had any significant major league success. Outfielder Bobby Prescott, another of Howsam's imports from Panama, and pitcher Don Carlsen made brief major league appearances. Some other 1952 Western League players went on to major league careers: outfielders Wally Moon and Jim King of Omaha and pitcher Connie Johnson of Colorado Springs, who had eighteen wins and led the league in strikeouts with 233. Johnson was a big hit as a guest at the 1996 SABR Convention in Kansas City.

In 1953, the Bears won 94 games, six more than in 1952, but finished one game behind Colorado Springs. Attendance dropped to 322,000, a decline of almost 140,000. Denver's attendance, however, was more than twice as high as any of the other Western League teams, as the minor leagues were beginning to feel the impact of television.

Denver had a good balance of hitting and pitching in 1953. Prescott, Roberts, Frank Rice, Orenthal Anderson, Bob Wakefield, and Whitey Ries all reached double figures in home runs, and Jake Thies, Nelson King, Schultz, Osorio, and Roque Contreras all reached double figures in wins. Thies tied for the league lead in ERA with 2.43 and later pitched for Pittsburgh in 1954 and 1955. King also pitched for the Pirates and was a guest at the 1995 SABR Convention in Pittsburgh.

Other 1953 Western League players who had some major league success included Jim Gentile, Karl

Spooner, and Glen Gorbous of Pueblo, Jim Landis and Sam Hairston of Colorado Springs, and Larry Jackson of Omaha. Earl Weaver, Omaha's second baseman, didn't play in the majors, but he had a Hall of Fame career as a manager in Baltimore.

Denver's final year in the Western League produced the most successful season in the eight-year run with another pennant. The Club finished with a 94-56 record, eight games ahead of Omaha. But attendance dropped another 90,000 to 232,000, as crowds continued to decline throughout the league.

In 1954, the Bears received big years from Prescott (.311-23-121), Pidge Browne (.333-17-109), Reno DeBenedetti (.329-15-89), and Rocco Ippolito (.289-20-131). Bob Garber (19-8, 3.18 ERA) and Chuck Garmon (16-7, 3.93 ERA) led the pitching staff, with Harry Pritts, Loyal Bloxam, Dick Drilling, and Chuck Churn also reaching double figures in wins. The only blemish on the season was a loss to Omaha in the playoffs. Prescott led the league in runs (137), DeBenedetti led in hits (183), Ippolito led in RBI (131), and Garber led the pitchers in strikeouts with 173. Future major leaguer and National League President Bill White of Sioux City led the league in both home runs with thirty and stolen bases with forty. Bob Clear of Omaha won twenty games.

Prescott, Browne, Garber and Churn all later played in the majors, but none made much of a mark. Some other Western Leaguers did: Maury Wills, Roger Craig, and Sparky Anderson of Pueblo and Don Elston of Des Moines. The league had two second basemen who later made the Hall of Fame as managers, Anderson and again Earl Weaver, who played for Denver in 1954.

The move to the Class Triple A American Association, along with Omaha, in 1955 was an immediate success. Howsam purchased the Kansas City Blues franchise when the Philadelphia A's moved to Kansas City. The Bears were once more affiliated with the Yankees, and the club finished third as attendance increased by almost 200,000 to 426,000, easily the highest in the minor leagues. The summer of 1955 was my last full one in Denver, and I enjoyed watching the infield of Marv Throneberry at first base, Bobby Richardson at second base, Woodie Held at shortstop, and Herb Plews at third base. Tony Kubek, at the age of eighteen, joined the team late in the season. Whitey Herzog, Jim Fridley, Lou Skizas, and Dick Tettelbach were in the outfield, and Darrell Johnson and John Blanchard were behind the plate.

The pitching wasn't as strong, but Don Larsen, Ralph Terry, Rip Coleman, Wally Burnette, Mike Blyzka, John Kucab, and Jack Urban all later pitched in the majors. Ralph Houk was the manager, and Johnny Pesky, a guest at the 2002 SABR Convention in Boston, was a coach. Both made a few plate appearances during the season.

The Denver franchise remained at the Triple-A level for thirty-eight years before continuing the upward progression to the major leagues in 1993. Denver's minor league days ended appropriately in 1992 when the team, then called the Zephyrs, won the Triple-A World Series.

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A Rocky Mountain Low

John Montgomery Ward and the World Tour in Colorado

by David Stevens

IN OCTOBER 1888, sporting goods magnate Albert Spalding launched the first tour to spread baseball around the world. He matched his Chicago White Stockings against an all-star team dubbed the All Americas, managed by New York Giant shortstop, attorney John Montgomery Ward. The two prior years, Spalding and Chicago manager Cap Anson had blocked Ward's attempts to bring African-Americans into the major leagues. Ward joined the tour late, due to playing in the 1888 World Series, then known as the Dauvray Cup, after Ward's bride, glamorous actress Helen Dauvray. The series gave New York its first world championship.

The tourists arrived in Denver on October 27th and paraded with the local Alpha Band to River Front Park (on 16th St. by the Platte River). The White Stockings won 16-12. The *Chicago Tribune* attributed the sloppy play (including seventeen errors!), to the Easterners' inexperience in the "rarefied atmosphere." But the Denver *Republican* lectured the big leaguers: "Players of their reputation should do their best at all times . . . Denver people know what good ball playing is." Spalding carped that the Denver fans had not shown enough fervor.

Flamboyant California native Jim Fogarty saved a few breaths by sprinting straight across the diamond from second to home! Most games at the time had only one umpire, so occasionally this base running trick worked.

The All Americas who just arrived didn't play, because their uniforms hadn't arrived.

A bigger crowd attended the next day's game, which proved livelier. The All Americas won 9-8 in 11 innings. The center fielders put on a fielding clinic, beginning with Chicago's Jimmy Ryan robbing his All America counterpart Ned Hanlon of an extra-base hit. Ryan later managed the 1904 Colorado Springs club. Hanlon returned Ryan's favor with a similar grab, then in the ninth, prevented a game-winning inside-the-park homer by racing with his back to the plate, diving, and making a bare-handed stab!

Ward dispatched tour reports to the *Chicago Tribune* and the *New York World* about the games and activities such as Anson challenging locals to billiards. At the time, Anson, a tireless self-promoter, had a pool hall in Chicago. In Denver, Ward missed Cap's pool sharking at the Collander to attend the opera. Although Ward's book, *Baseball: How to Become a Player* (now available in reprint format from SABR), had just been published a few months before, Ward did not plug his book in his columns.

In Denver, the teams stayed in the second-best hotel in town, the Windsor. Ward preferred the Queen City's best, the Grand, which had its own theater. The Grand hosted actors from abroad, plus silver and rail barons. Business and pleasure first class was John and Helen's style. In the Gold Rush days, Helen had toured the West, billed by a less classy sobriquet than her adult stage name "Dauvray." To attract '49ers she had gone by "Little Nell, the California Diamond." Helen spun many tall tales about her early life, claiming she owned a chunk of the Comstock Lode in Virginia City, Nevada, where she lived as a child with her father, who was a miner. John had traveled across Colorado Territory at age twenty-one, when he spent a winter hunting, playing exhibitions, and scouting for major leaguers throughout the West.

On this visit in 1888, John bought $20,300 worth of residential lots in downtown Denver. Today the area includes the Museum of Western Art and the Hyatt Regency. One block away was the elegant Denver Club, which opened the same year, and was *the* meeting place for Denver's elite. The booming area became Denver's skyscraper row in the 1890s. At the time "skyscraper" was also a baseball term used for high flies. Ward's investment was a bold move, as he was only in Denver for a day and a half. The amount of money involved indicates that Ward was doing splendidly on his $4,000 salary, especially since he was known for hefty donations to charity.

A contemporary of Ward's from their tiny Pennsylvania hometown made a mining fortune in the area a few years later. Colonel Jack Haverly owned one of the largest theater chains and touring minstrel troupes, but that empire totally collapsed in the 1880s. At the turn of the century, Haverly lost his second fortune, so admirer George M. Cohan (of "Yankee Doodle Dandy" fame) paid for his headstone after Haverly died in Salt Lake City in 1901.

In this era, tuberculosis sufferers flocked to Denver hoping the climate would cure them. Famous ballplayers were among them, including pitcher John Ewing, teammate and brother of Hall of Fame catcher Buck Ewing. In 1893, John Montgomery Ward traded Buck from New York to Cincinnati, in part, so Buck could be closer to his dying brother.

John Montgomery Ward was well-known for spectacular debuts and often being late for practice. Riding horses in the mountains before the Colorado Springs game, Ward and his New York teammate, Cannonball Crane, became separated from the oth-

ers in the Garden of the Gods. This foiled the plan that all players would ride grandly to the game in carriages. According to reporter Harry Palmer, to catch up at the depot "Ward steered his mustang into a post, grasped him about the neck with both arms, and took a slide that would have won him a big burst of applause, had he been able to get it off on the same style on the diamond. We could not wait for Ward to dress, and so drove to the grounds, but John was equal to the occasion. He called a boy to hold his pony and donning his uniform in the (rail) car, remounted and rode to the grounds a la Paul Revere." Revere had warned of the British coming, and Colorado fans wished for an early warning of the Spalding tour. Ward's entrance drew cheers, but his exit drew boos.

The All Americas wore their own major league team jerseys under a vest (the design was attributed to Helen Dauvray). Spalding put Chicago's Silver Flint in superstar Mike "King" Kelly's Boston uniform to convince fans that the wayward Kelly had finally joined the tour. The fat, older Flint was recognized and soundly booed. The All Americas' red, white, and blue uniforms didn't fool the fans about Ward's Paul Revere act either.

The players wore themselves out riding on Pikes Peak, so both teams put on a poor effort, and left at the seventh-inning stretch, hooted out of Colorado Springs by the locals. With Ward playing for the second time, the All Americas won again, 12-11 , after dropping five of the first eight games without him. Chicago pitcher John Tener (a future Pennsylvania Governor and National League President) admitted that "we gave the most miserable exhibition of ball playing possible" in the high altitude. Two years later, Anson whipped his White Stockings into shape in Colorado Springs, one of the first Spring Trainings for a major league club.

Colorado fans wired ahead to Salt Lake City to warn patrons to beware of the much-ballyhooed World Tour. The *Colorado Springs Gazette* urged "South Sea cannibals" to munch on the players, when the tour hit the Pacific, en route to Australia. The *Gazette* urged that Spalding be arrested for "obtaining money under false pretenses."

John Montgomery Ward confronted much bigger problems shortly. Within a month, his wife refused to go abroad with him, and he was sold to Washington (at the time first in war, first in peace, and last in the National League). The biggest jolt, however, came when the owners, taking advantage of union President Ward's incommunicado status in the Pacific, drastically slashed players' rights and salaries. These actions helped to provoke the 1890 Players' Revolt.

Byron Johnson

Remembering the Negro Leagues at 92

by Eric Eames

IN 1937 AND 1938, Byron "Mex" Johnson played in the Negro Leagues for the famed Kansas City Monarchs. As black baseball's glamour franchise, the Monarchs sent the most players to the Major Leagues once the racial wall crumbled when Jackie Robinson made his debut for the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1947.

In 1939 and 1940, Johnson traveled the nation and played on Satchel Paige's All-Star team, which frequently barnstormed against white "all-star" teams put together by Dizzy Dean or Bob Feller. Surviving records of these contests and other exhibition games, dug up by baseball historian John Holway, show the black stars winning 269 of the 438 contests played between 1887 and 1947.

Johnson recalls beating Feller's squads by scores of 11-1 and 14-2. While Feller chose players from both the American and National leagues from the Majors, Satchel Paige's All-Stars were just an extension of the Kansas City Monarchs, said Johnson. So they had team spirit and team unity, and that's better than a bunch of separate individuals patchworked together.

"We weren't only as good as them, we were better," Johnson remarked. "They finally had to recognize that. It wasn't that we weren't good enough, they just never gave us a chance. That is the way we had to play—under those conditions. I had some good days and some bad days, because [white fans] would always come and watch us play, but we couldn't go to their restaurants to eat a good

meal. But that was the way we had to play if we wanted to play at all."

When Robinson, formerly of the Monarchs, bashed the color line, he brought the Negro Leagues' electrifying style of sheer speed and base running to the grandest stage. Millions of Americans flocked to see Robinson. He was named Rookie-of-the-Year. He helped the Dodgers win six pennants in his ten seasons. He stole home nineteen times. He was named National League MVP in 1949. What more proof is needed to show that the Negro Leagues housed some of the greatest players of all time?

"He was better than a lot of the players," Johnson said. "He made Rookie of the Year. He beat out all of them. What does that say to you now? Somebody has been lying about our ability."

What Johnson may have failed to mention is that Robinson replaced him at shortstop when he left baseball to fight in World War II. And Johnson's biggest regret was not getting a chance to play in the big leagues, because of his skin color. He could have taken better care of his family and children if he had.

Johnson has one reason, although it may not be right, but he believes Kenesaw Mountain Landis, baseball's first commissioner, knew what he was doing by barring black baseball players. "We took lots of white boys out of their jobs," Johnson noted, "because as soon as Jackie made it, a lot of other teams added black players to their list."

In addition to Leroy "Satchel" Paige and John "Buck" O'Neil, Johnson played with Norman "Turkey" Stearnes, Wilber "Bullet" Rogan, James "Cool Papa" Bell and Hilton Smith, who Johnson considered a better pitcher than Paige. Five of these six men are enshrined in the Major League Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown. He also played against Theodore "Double Duty" Radcliffe and Josh Gibson, legends in their own right.

During his short stint, Johnson played to generally effusive reviews himself. He was hailed as the best shortstop in the league and perhaps the best shortstop in any league. He was The Wizard (as Ozzie Smith was later called) of his day, a nimble infielder with cat-like feet, unmatchable range to both sides, and a bullwhip arm that would snap the ball to first to complete a textbook 4-6-3 double play.

Born in Little Rock, Arkansas, on September 19, 1911, Johnson didn't have a baseball rolled to him when he was an infant. It went against American etiquette in sport at the time to sell a white ball with red stitches to a black person. When Johnson was old enough to stroll the neighborhood to the vacant baseball diamonds, which were as frequent as basketball hoops are today, he carried a "Broomhound" bat, apparently with the broom amputated, while a baseball took on several forms as did the bases, which could have been a tin can, a rock, an old shoe or hubcap.

"My first ball is the same Coca-Cola bottle cap you see today," Johnson said. "People ask me when did I start to play baseball. I tell them, I don't ever remember *not* playing baseball."

He'd play the day away, bringing home to his mother, Elizabeth, who died when he was nine years old, and his father, Joe, blisters, scuffed clothing, and swollen hands from playing catch without a mitt Byron also tugged around a pet goat in a homemade, all-wood wagon with nervous wheels, while wearing a large sombrero on his head, which led to his nickname "Mex."

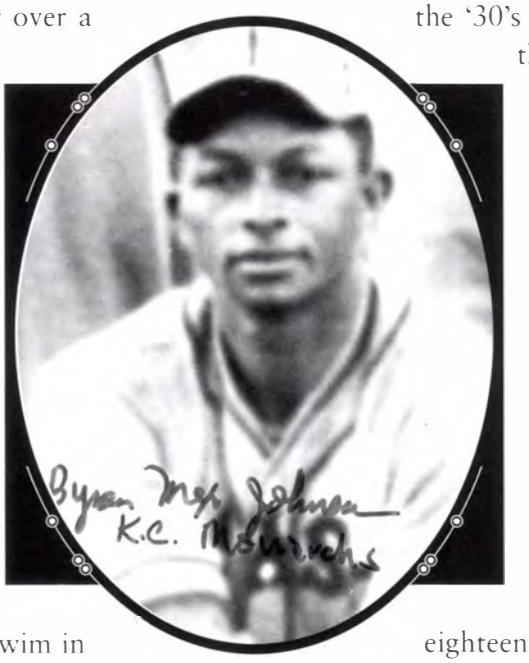
Johnson played semi-pro ball in 1932 for the Little Rock Stars. But it was in Shreveport, Louisiana, where the Monarchs spotted him playing and kept track of him when he headed to Wiley College in Texas on a football scholarship, where he caught footballs with one hand. At Wiley, Johnson earned a teaching degree and immediately got a job teaching at his high school alma mater, Dunbar High in Little Rock. Just when he was getting settled that's when the Monarchs came calling and wanted him to try out.

"I had heard of the Monarchs," Johnson said. "I knew they were one of the greats in baseball. But they were really over what I figured to have ever made. It's just like a youngster now thinking they could make the Rockies. It was a privilege for me to try out for the Monarchs, and I was so thankful that I did as well as I did."

On his first day in a Kansas City uniform in 1937 and after a long bus ride, Johnson met the man who already played shortstop for the Monarchs. Willard Brown was a power hitter, averaging two homers a game. Johnson didn't think he had a chance to replace him. But the Monarchs' white owner, J.L. Wilkinson, still wanted to take a look at Johnson's

abilities and asked him to try out during the middle of a game. Player-manager Andy Cooper obliged by inserting Johnson into the lineup, where the Cool-Whip smooth shortstop gobbled up a hard grounder and instantly started a double play with a quick flip to the second baseman.

It was easy to him, but the crowd lapped it up. By the time he got back to the dugout, he had stolen the job from Brown, who moved to the outfield. It was evidence of the athleticism Johnson had displayed since he was a toddler. "What I didn't know and the owner told me later, was that they had been looking for a shortstop for over a year that could make the double play," Johnson said. "And that's how I made the Kansas City Monarchs baseball team."



There are other prisms through which the "Jim Crow" era of baseball and of the United States can be refracted. But the real players —players such as Johnson— know better than to swallow the Hollywood version. No amount of stirring music can change it into a completely positive experience.

As a child, Johnson had to swim in the creek. It was water not fenced off and water no one cared about. The whites swam in a clean public pool. Johnson watched movies with a squint from row dead last, and that was if they let him through the theater doors. The whites sat up front, on the lower level going back and forth with butter popcorn silos, cool sodas, and American dreams.

Johnson had to stand next to the COLOREDS ONLY sign waiting for the spigot's dry heaves to moisten, gurgle and spit, while the WHITES ONLY fountain freely flowed. "It was hard to understand why they hated us," Johnson said. "I had never done anything to them. I never got into a fight with no white person. They tried to pick a fight with me. I just think these people hated me before I was born. I didn't have a chance before I was born."

While he was playing for the Monarchs and Satchel Paige's All-Stars, white fans would come and watch the black players play, especially in the 1930s after the stock market collapsed. With the Great Depression gripping the nation, people could barely afford to eat, so they were not spending money to see ball games.

But with Paige working his magic on the mound—using antics like telling his defenders to sit on their gloves for an inning—and with the invention of night baseball, the Monarchs still drew an adequate number of fans and in some sense kept the game alive. "Baseball was dying in America in the '30's and who brought it back more than anyone man, I would have to say it was Satchel Paige," Johnson declared. "Bob Feller didn't draw any crowd like Satchel Paige."

But Feller was never shooed away by white hotel and restaurant owners. In the Army during World War II, race lines were no different from that in the states. Out of all the things he remembers from the war—from landing at the site of D-Day just days after the initial assault on Normandy and experiencing eighteen days of combat— what Johnson remembers most is watching German prisoners enter a makeshift cafeteria through the front door, while he still had to go through the back way.

"That was one of the roughest times in my life," Johnson said. "I'm going to fight for my country and I have to go through the backdoor, but then my enemy is walking in the front door . . .

"I don't try to sugar coat nothing. I'll talk about the good, and the bad. I have some great white friends . . . . But I don't like to dwell on it, because it's making me angry now and I get all upset. I have white kids ask me questions. They say 'Byron how is it that you don't hate anybody?' I say, 'Well, I guess it was the training of my parents, what they taught me is what I believe.' I don't hate anybody."

It was baseball that winched Johnson through the segregation period. Playing the game was like pulling a blanket over his head. After it was over, the

veil was removed to show things were still the same. But for those nine innings, Johnson didn't see color or worry about where he was going to sleep that night. All he saw was a baseball and he had to get it and hit it and rip it across the diamond to the first baseman.

In 1938, Byron gained recognition for his defensive talent and base running ability when fans voted him to the East-West Game (the equivalent to the Major League All-Star game) at Comiskey Park in Chicago. Before he left to represent the West, Stearnes let Johnson borrow his bat for the game and challenged Johnson. The deal was if Johnson got a hit, he could keep the bat. If he didn't, then Stearnes wanted it back. Many years later, Johnson walked into the Negro League Baseball Museum in Kansas City, Missouri, to donate the bat.

This February, Buck O'Neil, who was also the Monarchs' player-manager and was in town to speak at Coors Field about Negro League baseball, stopped to visit Johnson. And when those two get together to reminisce, they don't bother counting words before spending them. Byron's daughter, Jacquelyn Benton, who is an instructor for African American studies at Metro and to whom Johnson has passed down all this history, sat down and admired more historical grandeur.

"I can remember Satchel Paige from when I was a little girl, meeting him when he came to play in Little Rock," Benton recalled. "My father took me out to a game with Satchel Paige. I knew he played with Satchel Paige, but that was before we moved here (to Colorado) . . . . I've known Buck O'Neil practically all my life too. I still call him Uncle O'Neil, because that is how I always referred to him.

"When I was a teenager and older, I knew about that history. I guess I didn't really start thinking about it a lot myself until a lot of attention started coming to my father, which of course wasn't until he was in his eighties, which of course has been about ten years ago.

"And I think it wasn't probably until then that I did really recognize the fact that this is history. He's history. Of course, I'm fortunate, because I'm with him, so I get to hear the stories all the time about when he played in the Negro Leagues, about all those great players he played with and played against. When Buck O'Neil comes in, it is just wonderful to be in the room and hear them talking. I've had a chance to met Double Duty Radcliffe, too, and I got to hear him talk about his memories of my father. He called him a couple of things from what I can remember. He called him 'The Man With The Arm.' He also called him 'The Vacuum Cleaner,' because he said he snatched up every ball that tried to get passed him on the field."

Benton now takes care of her 92-year-old father. She rarely allows reporters to visit her father as often as before. Since December, Johnson's motion has been reduced to a painful walker-aided shuffle. A nasty winter fall broke part of his hip, which has kept him from visiting Dr. Tom Altherr's American Baseball History class at Metro State College for the first time in seven years.

He now sits gingerly watching the Rockies, shifting from time to time to relieve the pressure on his hip. A Budweiser can sits on the eating tray that strides his walker, along with peeled orange slices. His hands shake a little as he places his hearing aids. An ever-present baseball cap casts shadows on the light-brown polka-a-dot freckles on his cheeks and a smile for the ages.

His small, gnomic stature (5-feet 8-inches, no more than 120 pounds) belies the aura that surrounds him and the magnitude of the era he lived through, an era forgotten in many circles, an era where he says the best and most entertaining baseball was played.

And if history ever unravels all the statistics, a feeble prospect considering the lack of coverage from the white newspapers and defunct black publications, the proof will be hard to deny.

Grand Junction and Farmington

The Rise of Amateur Baseball on the Western Slope

by Myles Schrag

BEFORE 1959, the biggest baseball excitement in Grand Junction, Colorado consisted of following the Grand Junction Eagles' exploits against military ball teams throughout the West. Before 1963, the biggest baseball moment in Farmington, New Mexico occurred twenty-seven years earlier when the Farmington Apple Pickers raised $232.50 from local residents and businesses to make the trek to the prestigious *Denver Post* tournament.

Since those watershed dates nearly a half century ago, hundreds of thousands of fans have watched top-flight amateur baseball in those two cities. Kirby Puckett (in Grand Junction) and Ken Griffey, Jr. (in Farmington) played there before their careers took off. George Brett and Joe Garagiola (in Grand Junction) and Ted Williams and Warren Spahn (in Farmington), among many others, spoke in those towns after their careers ended. Both communities gather at their ballparks for week-long national tournaments that have become synonymous with the cities' names. Grand Junction *is* the JUCO (Junior College) World Series. Farmington *is* the Connie Mack World Series.

Long before the Colorado Rockies brought major league baseball to the intermountain West and long after mining camp squads first peppered the rugged region with the burgeoning national pastime, Grand Junction and Farmington brought a unique piece of baseball history to the area, a history that is still being written.

How did this happen? How did two isolated agricultural outposts manage to become national baseball destinations at a time when traveling to either of the towns was considered an unnecessary burden even among people in their own states? More significantly, how have these same two cities—both larger but still remote even in this technological age—transformed their week-long tournaments into their civic pulse? The events are by now annual slices of Americana and economic boons whose influence extends far beyond the ballpark to include virtually all of their respective populations.

Through infectious leadership, energetic frontier citizens, and ultimately by using the game of baseball as a showcase for civic pride, these two cities took similar but separate routes to becoming respected members of the national baseball community. Certainly these two carbon-copy communities have experienced significant growth since mid-century, but their baseball highlights have multiplied far more than their populations or job opportunities.

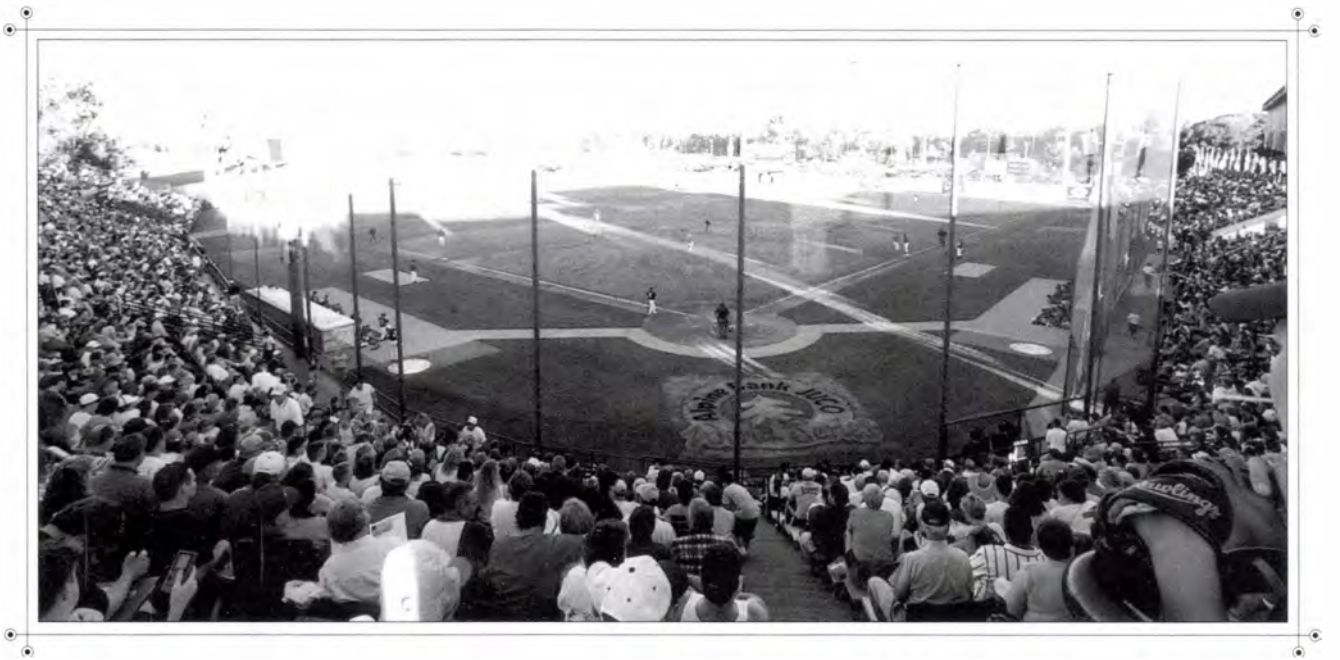
Only four hours of stunning mountain scenery along the Rockies' Western Slope separate these two carbon-copy communities, these two amateur baseball Meccas that thousands of ballplayers annually strive to reach. In many ways, at either end of that majestic trip on the Million Dollar Highway a traveler feels as though he or she is in the same city. Both Farmington and Grand Junction sit roughly a mile high in river valleys. They are surrounded by mesas and framed in the distance by Rocky Mountain vistas. A century ago, neither had more than a few hundred residents, and both staked their reputations on the quality of their fruit that extensive irrigation made possible. When Grand Junction was incorporated in 1881, the area was part of the Northern Ute Indian Reservation. To this day, the Navajo Indian Reservation's eastern edge begins just minutes from Farmington. Their populations are both about 40,000 people in counties that contain slightly more than 100,000. Farmington's growth was more dramatic, as it rode the wave of an oil and natural gas boom in the 1950s, but today both cities are commercial centers for sparsely inhabited areas.

It's also worth noting that the ballparks that house the Connie Mack World Series and the National Junior College (JUCO) Division I World Series sit near the center of their respective towns. This makes their ballparks perfect meeting places. Each year during the last week of May in Grand Junction, everybody converges on Sam Suplizio Field to welcome the arrival of summer. Likewise, the first week of August in Farmington brings everybody out to Ricketts Park shortly before school re-opens and fall football practice begins.

Considering the striking similarities of the two communities, perhaps the nearly parallel rise of their tournaments' success shouldn't be a surprise. The beginnings, however, were humble, led by aggressive individuals who seized an opportunity.

Jay Tolman watched the first National Junior College Athletic Association baseball tournament flop in Miami, Oklahoma in 1958. Back at home, the athletic director at Grand Junction's Mesa Junior College gathered a few community leaders at the Mesa Drug coffee shop: college baseball coach Bus Bergman; D.S. Dykstra of Home Loan Bank; Dale Hollingsworth of the chamber of commerce; and Sam Suplizio, a former New York Yankees farmhand and Grand Junction Eagles star who had married a local woman and just started selling insurance at Home Loan. "Jay said, 'We don't have much going on in the spring,'" said Suplizio, who recently retired

Previous: 1999 JUCO Champs, Grayson (TX) Junior College.



Sam Suplizio Field, Grand Junction, Colorado.

as long-time tournament chairman. "We all agreed it would be fun."

Grand Junction put in a bid for the 1959 tournament, and the NJCAA rewarded that enthusiasm with a one-year contract and no promises. The community got to work sprucing up Lincoln Park and organizing the tournament. Local service clubs agreed to host incoming teams to make them feel welcome, and fans packed the primitive bleachers full. By the time Paris, Texas had wrapped up the junior college title, the eight-team tournament had netted a profit of $179—enough to convince the NJCAA to go west again in 1960 and every year since. "The service clubs all took an interest in the young kids, taking them to picnics, looking after them," Suplizio said. "That set the seeds for community involvement."

The New Mexico town had a bit more experience to draw upon in grabbing the 1965 Connie Mack World Series. Farmington won the right to host the 1963 Babe Ruth World Series for 13-15-year-olds and proceeded to build a ballpark entirely with volunteer labor and materials. The gregarious J.W. "Doc" Jones, a manager at El Paso Natural Gas Company, spearheaded the effort and coaxed businesses from all over the San Juan Basin to donate supplies and manpower. The baseball tournament and the new park were by all accounts a great success.

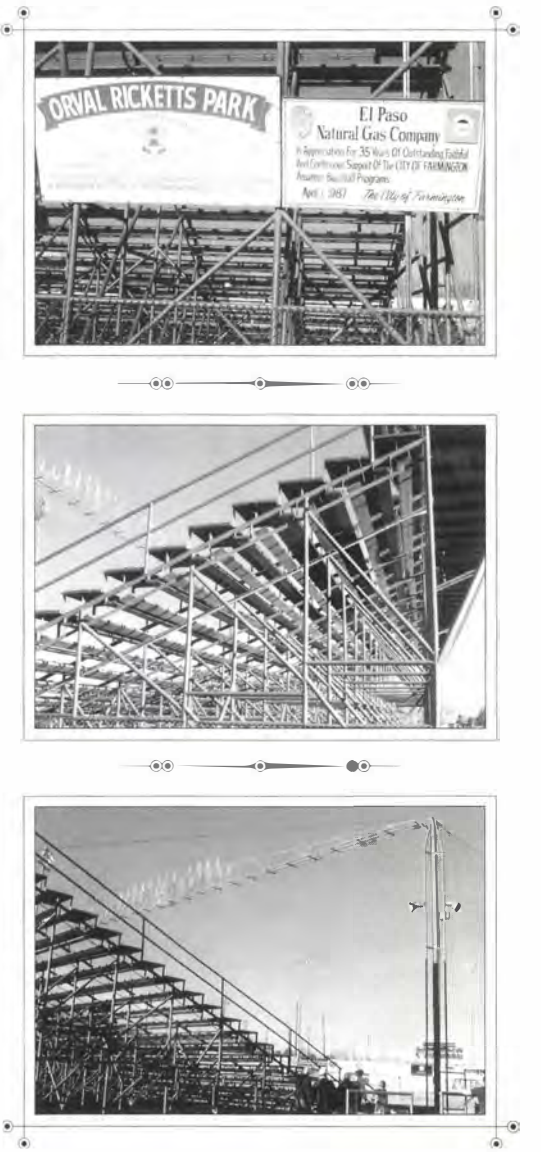
That spurred Farmington's baseball leaders to go after the 1964 Connie Mack South Plains Regional Tournament for 16- to 18-year-olds, an event that outdrew the Connie Mack World Series that year in Springfield, Illinois and convinced the CMWorld Series' national governing body, the American Amateur Baseball Congress, to give isolated Farmington a shot at the big prize. Farmington's bid included substantial help from Frontier Airlines in securing flights for the ballplayers. That travel guarantee assuaged the AABC's fears about going to such an isolated locale, and Farmington—already beginning to call itself the "Amateur Baseball Capital of the World"—responded with a red carpet welcome for each team on the airport tarmac, a parade, civic club sponsorships, a Connie Mack Queen pageant, and, most importantly, big crowds at Babe Ruth Park.

Like the communities that host the tournaments, much has changed at Farmington's field (now called Ricketts Park) and Grand Junction's stadium (now called Suplizio Field) since they became destination spots for amateur teams nationwide. Farmington finished a $1.85 million federal and state-funded reno-

vation in 2001. Grand Junction has put in more than $1 million in upgrades since 1995 and has continually pumped money into the stadium from tournament proceeds over the years.

The ballparks have grown, and so has the spirit that initially brought big-time amateur baseball tournaments to the Western Slope. The JUCO World Series now draws more than 120,000 fans to its 10-team, 20-game double-elimination tournament. It has become the most attended annual amateur sports event in Colorado, and its success is the prime reason that junior college baseball programs have grown so much that the programs now are split into three divisions. The Connie Mack World Series gets an attendance of 85,000 annually at its seventeen-game extravaganza, and it is the third largest annual event in New Mexico, only behind the State Fair and the Albuquerque Balloon Fiesta. Baseball scouts, coaches, and players rave about the graciousness of the host communities, and local fans clamor for more. Farmington has a contract with the AABC to hold the tournament through 2009; Grand Junction has a lifetime contract to host the NJCAA Division I tournament as long as it wants.

Only four other national amateur baseball tournaments have been held at one location longer than Farmington and Grand Junction: the National Baseball Congress World Series in Wichita, Kansas (since 1935); the Little League World Series in Williamsport, Pennsylvania (since 1947); the Stan Musial World Series in Battle Creek, Michigan (1937-41, 1946-53, and continuously since 1955); and the College World Series in Omaha, Nebraska (since 1950). Williamsport is the smallest in population, and all four of these other cities benefit from much larger concentrations of population and more direct travel routes. The ability of two towns in the intermountain West to maintain a stranglehold on their beloved baseball tournaments for thirty-eight years and counting is a testament to those westerners' resourcefulness and respect for the national pastime.



The grandstand at Orval Ricketts Park in Farmington, New Mexico.

Imaginary Baseball in the Rockies

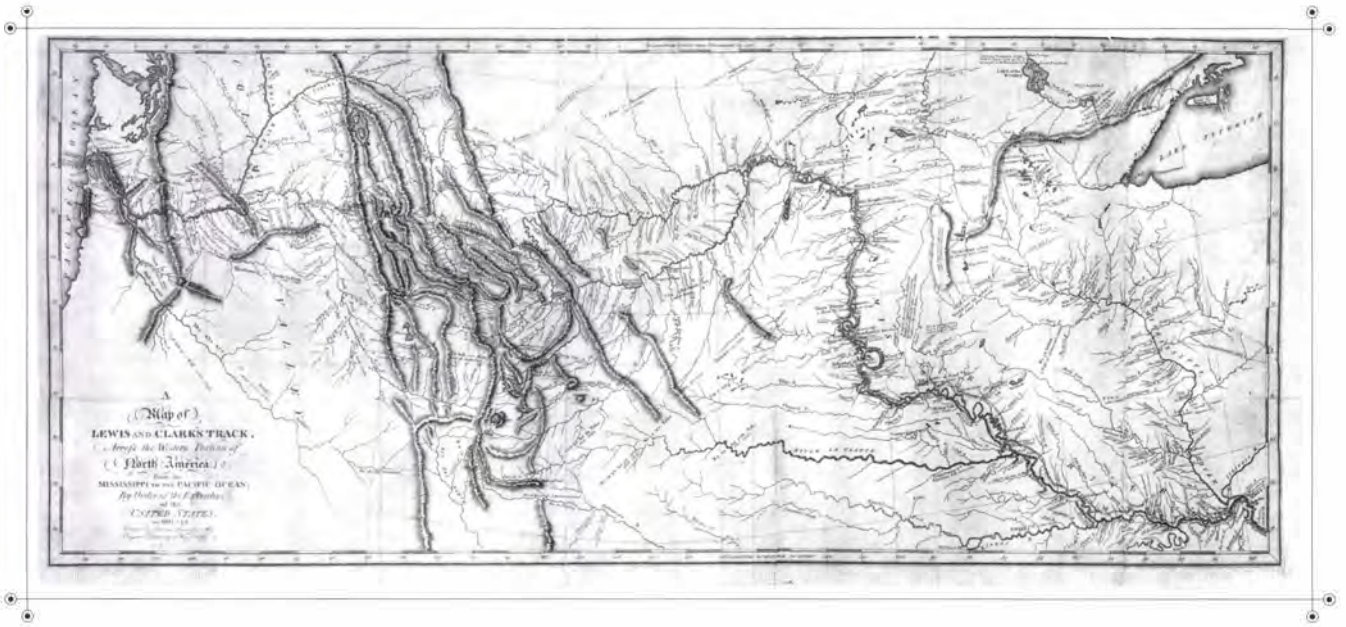
Ken Burns, Lewis and Clark, and the Nez Percé

by Thomas L. Altherr

IN THE SECOND PART of his 1997 PBS video, *Lewis & Clark*, American documentarian extraordinaire Ken Burns had his narrator declare that on June 8, 1806, Meriwether Lewis and William Clark and other members of the Corps of Discovery played a game of bat and ball with the Nez Percé indigenous peoples in what is now Idaho. The soundtrack ran as follows: "The men ran foot races with the Indians and taught them a new stick and ball game called base."[1]

Ah, Kenny, would that it were so! We baseball historians, who are always on the lookout for examples of pre-Abner Doubleday Myth, pre-1839 baseball and baseball-type games, could have celebrated mightily that these games so associated with the East went West so rapidly.[2] What a pity! There were already the famous "nine young men from Kentucky" along on the journey—a ready-made nine, if ever there was one! Would their boss back in Washington, Thomas Jefferson, have approved? He had written in 1785, "Games played with the ball and others of that nature, are too violent for the body and stamp no character on the mind."[3] What position would Sakakawea have played? Center scout? Oh, to be able to remark as well that the game crossed a racial divide and indigenous people took to the game so early.

But, alas, even the the quickest consultation of the primary sources reveal that Lewis and Clark *et al.* did *not* play a baseball-type game. They played a game called



Lewis and Clark had many interesting adventures on their journey to the Pacific Northwest, but playing baseball with the Nez Percé wasn't one of them.

"prisoner's base," a longtime children's game that much more resembled hide-and-seek than baseball. Both Lewis and Clark in their respective journals are clear about what recreation they enjoyed that day. Here is the actual excerpt from Meriwether Lewis:

> *Sunday, June 8th, 1806*
> *Drewyer returned this morning from the chase without having killed anything . . . . several foot rarces* [sic] *were run this evening between the indians and our men. the indians are very active; one of them proved as fleet as* [our best runner] *Drewer and R. Fields, our swiftest runners. when the racing was over the men divided themselves into parties and played prison base, by way of exercise which we wish the men to take previously to entering the mountain; in short those who are not hunters have had so little to do that they are getting rather lazy and slothfull . . . . after dark we had the violin played and danced for the amusement of ourselves and the indians.*[4]

William Clark's entry was somewhat less detailed, but it clearly paralleled Lewis's:

> *Drewyer returned this morning from the chase without killing any thing . . . . in the evening Several foot races were run by the men of our party and the Indians; after which our party divided and played at prisoners base until night. after dark the fiddle was played and the party amused themselves in dancing.*[5]

Sergeant John Ordway, in his journal entry for the same day, noted the same activities: "Our party exercised themselves running and playing games called base."[6] The next day the assembly continued their frolicking. As Lewis, noted about his group on June 9th: "[T]hey have every thing in readiness for a move, and notwithstanding the want of provision have been amusing themselves very merrily today in running footraces pitching quites [quoits], prison basse &c."[7] Clark echoed him in his own journal entry: "...amuse themselves by pitching quates [quoits], Prisoners bast running races &c."[8] None of the other Corps of Discovery journals cover this day or time period or discuss the recreational events of these days. Unless Ken Burns and his research staff have uncovered some source hitherto unknown to historians, the "sad" truth is that the groups played prisoner's base.

Accounts of medieval and early modern sport occasionally refer to or describe prisoner's base. Although there is a bit of fuzziness in some of the descriptions, it is clear that the game mixed early elements of hide-and-seek and Capture the Flag. None of the accounts mentioned balls, bats, sticks, or baseball-type bases. One description should suffice, this one from historian Sally Wilkins:

> *In Europe, base, or prisoner's base, was a game played by both girls and boys. Players divided into teams and defined the playing area —a street, field, or courtyard. Each team had a tree, pillar, or rock designated as their "base" and another as their "prison." The teams lined up, linking hands, each chain with one player touching the base. One by one the players at the ends of the chain let go and chased each other. If one caught the other, the captive was brought to the prison, and soon chains of players were strung from each prison. Now the runners leaving their bases would try not only to capture new prisoners but also to liberate their teammates by touching the chain of prisoners. Once freed, prisoners ran back to their own bases, where they were safe until they set off again.*[9]

Elijah Harry Criswell pointed out in his 1936 dissertation on Lewis and Clark's linguistic influences that Clark used a newer version of the term ("prisoner's base") and Lewis stuck with the older term ("prison base").[10] But clearly prison base, or prisoner's base, was not a baseball-type game. The lesson here for baseball historians is that whenever we encounter an early reference to base, such as George Ewing's celebrated diary entry at Valley Forge in 1778, we have to be cautious assuming, without corroborating evidence, whether or not the game was baseball or prisoner's base.

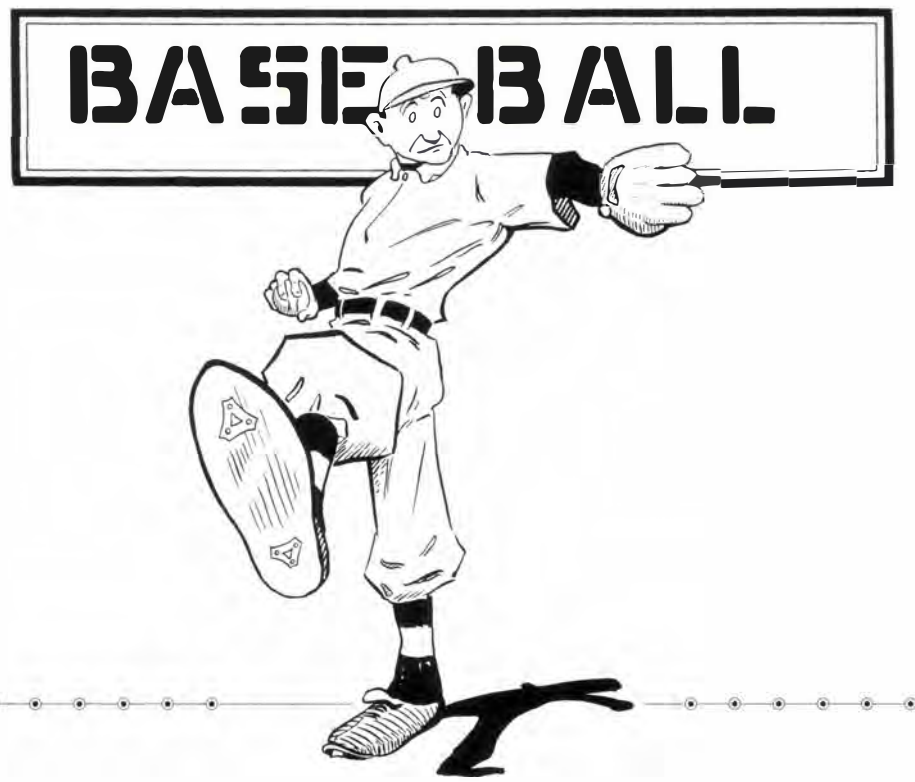
Notes:

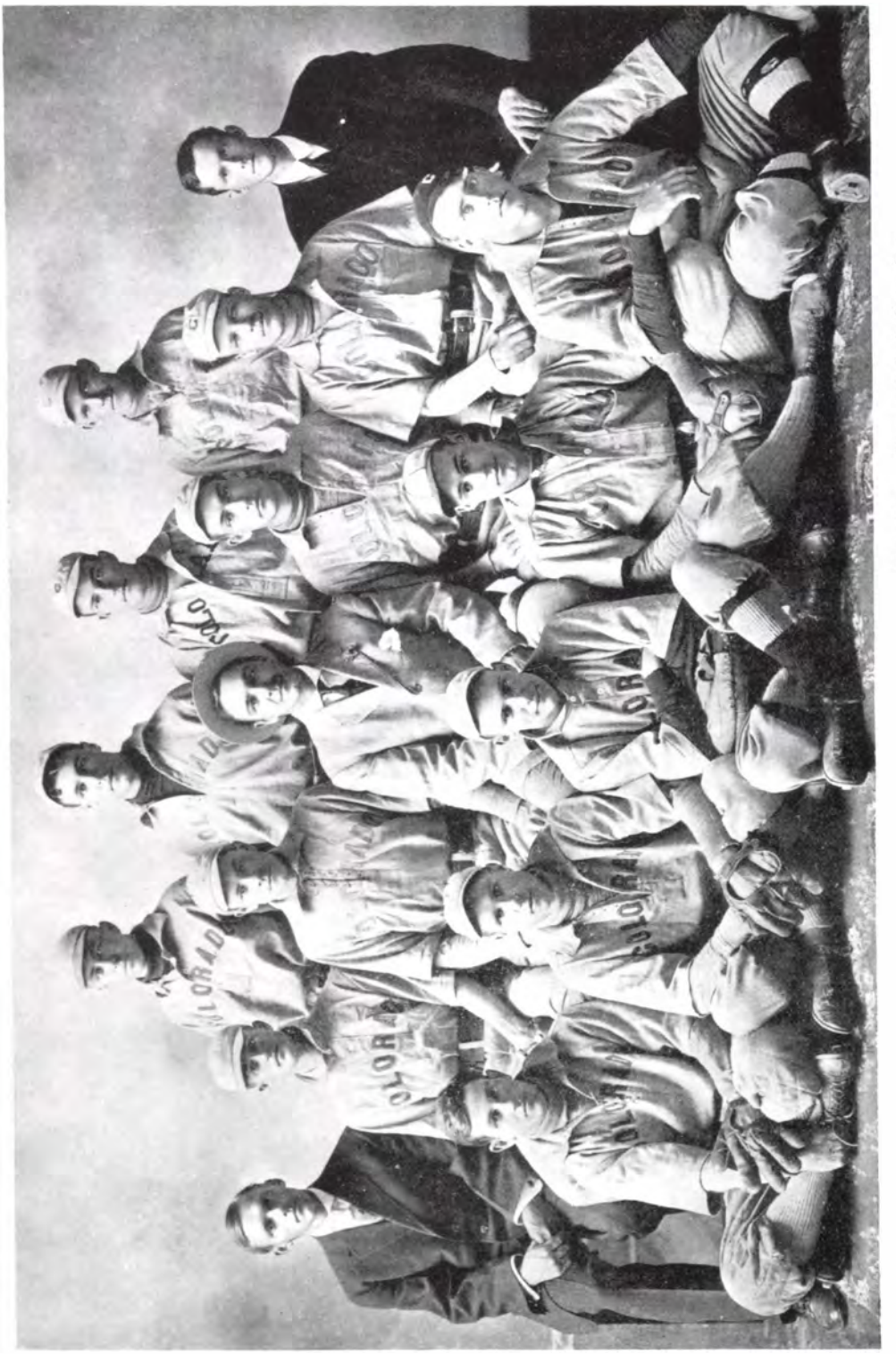
1. *Lewis & Clark, A Film by Ken Burns* (New York: Florentine Films, 1997), part II.
2. See my research in Thomas L. Altherr, "'A Place Level Enough to Play Ball': Baseball and Baseball-Type Games in the Colonial Era, Revolutionary War, and Early American Republic," *NINE*, v. 8., n. 2 (Spring 2000), 15-49.
3. Thomas Jefferson to Peter Carr, August 19, 1785, in Julian P. Boyd, ed., *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, 23 vols. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1953-), v. 8, 407.
4. Meriwether Lewis, June 8, 1806, reprinted in Gary E. Moulton, ed., *The Journals of the Lewis & Clark Expedition March 23-June 9, 1806* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1991), 346-347.
5. William Clark, June 8, 1806, reprinted in Moulton, ed., *The Journals of the Lewis & Clark Expedition March 23-June 9, 1806*, 347.
6. John Ordway, June 8, 1806, reprinted in Gary E. Moulton, ed., *The Journals of the Lewis & Clark Expedition: The Journals of John Ordway, May 14, 1804-September 23, 1806, and Charles Floyd, May 14-August 18, 1804* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 320; although Ordway simply referred to the games as base, there's not enough evidence here to contradict Lewis and Clark's more specific description of the game as prisoner's base.
7. Meriwether Lewis, June 9, 1806, reprinted in Moulton, ed., *The Journals of the Lewis & Clark Expedition March 23-June 9, 1806*, 349.
8. William Clark, June 9, 1806, reprinted in Moulton, ed., *The Journals of the Lewis & Clark Expedition March 23-June 9, 1806*, 349.
9. Sally Wilkins, *Sports and Games of Medieval Cultures* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2002), 122-123.
10. Elijah Harry Criswell, *Lewis and Clark: Linguistic Pioneers, The University of Missouri Studies, v. 15, n. 2* (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri, 1940), 68.

College Baseball at the University of Colorado, 1910

by Jim Wohlenhaus

THE FOLLOWING is a reproduction of the review of the 1910 University of Colorado Baseball Varsity team from the 1912 *The Coloradoan*, the University yearbook. As can be seen, the team played five games versus Colorado College, Colorado School of Mines in Golden, and Colorado State University (then Colorado Agricultural & Mechanical College). It appears they were all a home and away series, except against Colorado State University, which may have been postponed due to weather.





First Row—Moses, Hall, Bailey, Bonner.
Second Row—Worcester (assistant manager), Briggs, Kemp, Castleman (coach), McNeil, Matthews, Perkins (manager).
Third Row—Wightman, Fawcett, Bond, Swartzlander, Cowell.

Varsity Base Ball Team

Officers

George Matthews.....Captain
Merritt Perkins.....Manager
Dean Worcester.....Assistant Manager

Team

Bond.....Catcher	Fawcett.....Third Base
Bailey.....Pitcher	Cowell.....Short Stop
Swartzlender.....Pitcher	Hall.....Left Field
McNeil.....First Base	Kemp.....Center Field
Matthews.....Second Base	Briggs.....Right Field

Conference Games

At Colorado Springs, April 9, 1910.

										R.	H.	E.
Colorado College	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	—1	5	6
Varsity	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	—2	0	5

Batteries: Bailey and Bond; Van Stone and Siddons.

At Golden, April 23, 1910.

										R.	H.	E.
Varsity	5	0	0	3	1	1	0	3	0	—8	10	2
Mines	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	—2	6	5

Batteries: Bailey, Swartzlender and Bond; Warren, Dugan and Brooks.

At Boulder, May 12, 1910.

										R.	H.	E.
Aggies	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	—0	5	1
Varsity	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	2	*	—5	9	3

Batteries: Jeffries, Vosler and Converse; Swartzlender and Bond.

At Boulder, May 28, 1910.

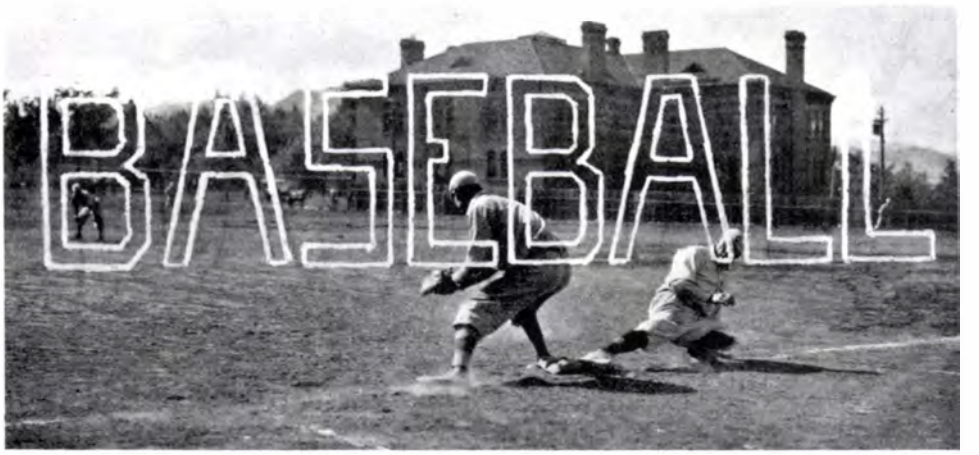
										R.	H.	E.
Mines	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	—0	6	8
Varsity	1	0	0	2	1	1	0	2	*	—7	9	1

Batteries: Dyrenforth and Bruggerman; Bailey and Bond.

At Boulder, June 4, 1910.

										R.	H.	E.
Colorado College	0	0	0	3	1	0	5	0	1	—10	10	2
Varsity	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	— 0	3	5

Batteries: Van Stone and Siddons; Bailey and Bond.



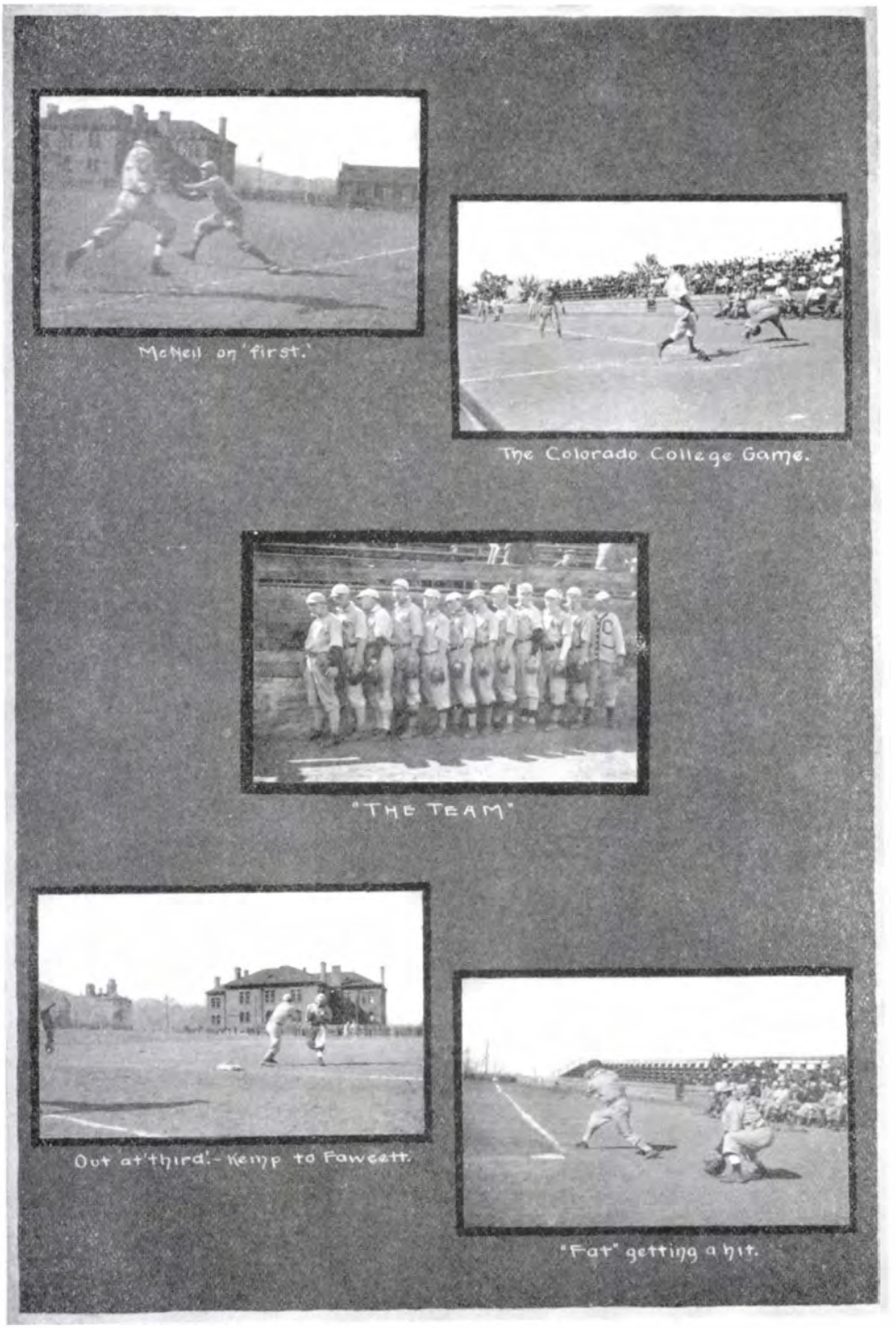
REVIEW OF THE SEASON OF 1910

Starting with a squad in which no tried 'Varsity twirler appeared and but few veterans for the other positions, Coach Castleman and Captain Matthews slowly but surely built up a team which tied with the Tigers for the Conference championship and decisively defeated its other rivals from Fort Collins and Golden. With the usual practice season over, the team went to Colorado Springs on April 9, and, in spite of being held hitless by Van Stone, won the first championship game by taking advantage of the Tigers' misplays.


Captain Matthews

Two weeks later Golden was invaded and the Miners given a lesson on how to play the game. The 'Varsity's heaviest stick work was crowded into this contest, while the Goldenites were helpless before Bailey and Swartzlender. In the next two games these two men worked like old timers, the Aggies losing to Swartzlender 5 to 0, and the Miners taking the short end of a 7 to 0 score from Bailey. In the game which closed the season, however, the story was reversed. Van Stone was a puzzle at all times, while the haughty Tigers caught Bailey on an "off" day and pounded out a one-sided victory, dividing the series with Colorado and leaving the race a tie.

Individually, every player deserves commendation, for each played his part well. Captain Matthews, at second, proved a popular and efficient leader, and, with Fawcett, Cowell and McNeil completed one of the best working infields Colorado baseball has seen. In the outfield Kemp, Hall and Briggs were sure and steady, while at the bat this trio delivered nearly half of the season's hits. To the twirlers, Bailey and Swartzlender, too much credit cannot be given, for, without previous 'Varsity experience, each worked through the season like a veteran. Supporting these men behind the bat "Genie" Bond proved that not all of Georgia's baseball blood flows in the veins of "Ty" Cobb. The little catcher held and steadied his men well, while his throwing to bases was fully respected by the enemies' baserunners in every game.



Photos by C. T. Madge and C. S. Sperry

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