



# The ORAL HISTORY Committee

The Society for American Baseball Research

June 2012

## 1912 Fenway Remembered

### Jimmy 'Scoops' Cooney

**100 years in Fenway Park:** What better season to remember Jimmy "Scoops" Cooney?

James E. Cooney, 1894-1991, born and died in Rhode Island. As ballplayers go, he was a hustling journeyman of the transitional 'teens and '20s: Parts of seven solid big-league seasons with six teams, spread over



JIMMY COONEY

12 years. In between those major-league tours (not counting his year as a states-bound doughboy), in baseball places like Providence and Milwaukee, Jimmy Cooney was too good to keep down.

By the book, his Fenway connection is thin but clear: He played 11 games with the Red Sox in 1917, including one of those memorable Babe Ruth vs. Walter Johnson pitching match-ups at Fenway. But there was more to Jimmy Cooney's

**JOHNSON BLANKS RED SOX.**  
 Victory Brings with It Trophy Offered by 101st U. S. A. Regiment.  
 BOSTON, Oct. 8.—Walter Johnson pitched Washington to a 6 to 0 victory over Boston today. He outpitched Ruth, who performed for Boston, and with the bases filled in the eighth inning cleared them with a two-base drive. Johnson was presented a large silver trophy for his triumph. The cup was offered by the associates of the 101st U. S. A. Regiment, formerly of the 101st Massachusetts, to the pitcher of the winning team. The Boston club's share of the gate receipts of the game was given to the 101st Regiment.  
 The score:

WASHINGTON, (A.)				BOSTON, (A.)				
Ab	R	E	Po	Ab	R	E	Po	
Menecky, rf	4	0	2	1	Cooper, rf	4	0	1
Foster, 3b	5	0	1	0	Cooney, 2b	4	0	1
O. Milan, cf	5	0	2	1	Hoblitza, lb	4	0	1
Rios, rr	5	0	1	0	Lewis, lf	2	0	1
Gharrity, lb	5	0	1	0	Shortz, if	2	0	1
Morgan, 2b	4	1	2	0	Walker, cf	2	0	1
Rhanks, ss	3	2	3	1	Gardner, 3b	4	0	2
Alnsmith, c	4	1	1	2	Scott, ss	3	0	2
Johnson, p	4	0	1	0	Thomas, c	1	0	4
					Ruth, p	3	0	1
Total	37	0	11	27	11			

Errors—Walker.  
 Washington  
 Boston  
 Two-base hits—Alnsmith, Cooney, Johnson.  
 Double play—Alnsmith and Morgan, Johnson.  
 Balls—Boston, 7; Washington, 7. Base on balls—Ruth, 3; Johnson, 2. Earned runs—Off Ruth, 3. Hit by pitcher—By Johnson, (Thomas); Ruth, (Shank). Struck out—By Johnson, 7; Ruth, 5. Wild pitches—Ruth, 2 and 3.  
 Time—1 hour 40 minutes. Umpire—Cannolly

*James E Cooney*

association with that original Red Sox championship team. In 1914, as a hustling teenage shortstop, he went to spring training with the Red Sox. There he played with many of the stars of 1912. And finally, there's this: It's also probable that Jimmy Cooney lived to become the trick answer to a trivia question: Who was the last surviving Red Sox player to have witnessed a 1912 World Series game at Fenway? For more about that -- and the hit-and-miss oral history game at the margins of human memory, see Page Two.

### Jimmy Cooney remembers his big day against Walter Johnson

It was the next-to-last game of the season, and the White Sox had wrapped up the pennant. But Johnson and Ruth had been dueling before great crowds all year, so the Fenway stage was set for one last matchup -- with Cooney batting second. Listen to Jimmy Cooney tell it:

<http://bit.ly/Cooney-Ruth-MP3>

## A Distant Echo from 1912 Fenway

In a series of phone interviews in the mid-1980s, when he was past 90, Jimmy Cooney recalled his baseball days. Mannerly and well-spoken, he offered memories that were as textured as they were detailed.

He was a cordial, comfortable conversationalist, and appealing as a baseball witness. Here was a man whose father had played for Chicago in 1890, who himself had played with Babe Ruth and for John McGraw; who had played infield for the Cardinals beside Rogers Hornsby the year Hornsby hit .424.

But his father had died when Jimmy was only 9, and some of his own most engaging stories were as evocative of an age as of the game: walking in a Pittsburgh park with Giants teammate Ross Youngs, for instance, and being accosted by two policemen who mistakenly thought they had flirted with unescorted ladies.

Too, reaching back to 1914 (and beyond) necessarily posed special problems. There is simply nothing like hearing history from someone who was there. But I think of 65 years as the approximate point at which you expect the colors to fade. And here I was asking Jimmy Cooney to remember spring training with the Red Sox in 1914. I was hoping he could look back 72 years, pick out a speck on the horizon and describe it.

### 1984: Jimmy Cooney & SABR, the face-to-face interview

Jimmy Cooney was 89 when SABR researcher Joseph Lawler interviewed him. Lawler's profile neatly captures the delightful detail that an in-person session yields. Access it in the SABR Research Journals Archive by clicking here:

<http://research.sabr.org/journals/is-nl-really-better-study-raises-doubts>

The conversation was wonderful and rich, but on some counts the detail wasn't there. Under those circumstances, if you're the one asking, you begin to cast around. So after a luckless inquiry about Tris Speaker, here's how the conversation went:

*Q: Hey, had you ever seen these fellows play?*

*A: The Red Sox?*

*Q: Yes. Had you ever seen a big league game?*

*A: Yes. I'd seen 'em play in 1912. I went from Providence up to Boston and saw them play once.*

*Q: Who'd you go with, your brothers?*

*A: No, I went up alone.*

*Q: Do you remember that game?*

*A: It was one of the World Series games, they were in the World Series, you know.*

So there it was, a revelation -- and this day, there it was entirely. Detail proved elusive. It was another day when our luck was better, some confirming detail emerged and we could puzzle out which game he saw. If you want to listen to us do it, click the link below. But not to be coy: It was Game 5, Bedient besting Mathewson.

That living memory of Fenway's inaugural season has now been gone for two decades. Jimmy Cooney died just shy of his 97th birthday, on Aug. 7, 1991.

--Tom Willman

Listen to the conversation about the 1912 World Series at Fenway Park:

<http://bit.ly/Cooney-1912-Series>

