

NINETEENTH CENTURY NOTES

FALL 2023

SOCIETY FOR AMERICAN BASEBALL RESEARCH

Nineteenth Century Notes is a publication of the Nineteenth Century Committee of the Society for American Baseball Research

Committee Contacts

Co-Chairman–
Peter Mancuso
6970 Ely Road
New Hope, PA 18938
peterplus4@earthlink.net

Co-Chair/Editor–
Bob Bailey
10223 SW 49th Lane
Gainesville, FL 32608
bobbbailey@cox.net

Co-Chairman–
Jonathan Popovich
70 Mandeville Street
Pompton Lakes, NJ 07442
Jayz43_1b@yahoo.com

Follow the Nineteenth
Century Committee on
Facebook at
@SABR19thCC.

Copyright © Society for
American Baseball
Research 2023

Revolving in the National Association 1871-1875

by Woody Eckard

The National Association that operated from 1871 to 1875 was the first professional baseball “league”. It was (loosely) organized to provide some structure for the national championship competition that had become the game’s main focus of attention by the late 1860s. A related issue was the regulation of players, in part to promote team stability. This article addresses that question by examining player movement – “revolving” – among NA clubs.

BACKGROUND

Immediately following the Civil War, baseball spread well beyond its New York metro area origins. While the game remained ostensibly amateur, *sub rosa* player compensation of various types had become common among top clubs as they competed for talent to field winning teams. Existing rules prevented formal contracts that would bind players to clubs. However, the amateur team ideal was a loyal “band of brothers” playing for the glory of

the club, according to which joining another for money amounted to a dishonorable act of opportunism. Nevertheless, players were changing clubs following the best offers – revolving – both during and between seasons. The term also carried the pejorative connotation of “contract jumping”, despite the absence of formal contracts, as revolving no doubt was based on informal “handshake” agreements.

The sport’s governing body, the amateur National Association of

(Continued on page 2)

Cy Young’s 7-8
Long Home Run

Private Facebook 8-9
Group

Book Club 10

FRED Artifact 11-
Session Returns 12

News & Notes 13

Speakers Series 14
Schedule

The Untrumpet- 15-
ed Trio 26

Co-Chairs’ Corner

by Peter Mancuso

On July 25, 2023, Jonathan “Jon” Popovich accepted an invitation from Bob Bailey and Peter Mancuso to become a Third Co-Chair of our 700 member Nineteenth Century Committee.

Although, a special com-

mittee, made up mostly of SABR Board Members was examining ways to strengthen Research Committees and SABR regional Chapters (one of which was to enlarge the number of leadership positions) it became glaringly apparent to Bob and Peter that the size of our Research Committee, the variety of its

activities and the desire to increase two-way interactive communication with its large membership called for more help.

Jon, already well known to many of our members as an outstanding researcher and presenter, particularly at our annual

(Continued on page 6)

Revolving in the National Association 1871-1875 (cont.)

(Continued from page 1)

Base Ball Players, was helpless to prevent either payments or revolving and, by the late 1860s, it was evident that “professionalism” was here to stay. In December 1868 a resolution was adopted that *de facto* legalized play-for-pay. Thus, in effect, revolving was also legalized, albeit now constrained by enforceable employment contracts. Nevertheless, the romantic ideal of the amateur club lingered, which gave the new play-for-pay market a somewhat tainted aura.

Although pro clubs could now operate in the open, the competition for the national championship remained unorganized (and unofficial). Then, in March 1871, the National Association of *Professional* Base Ball Players (the NA) was created, mainly to provide some structure for the competition.

The founders decided that, each year, any club could compete for the championship simply by paying a nominal fee and agreeing to arrange a specified number of games, bi-laterally scheduled, with each other contestant. There were no other membership requirements and there was little in the way of central management oversight or control.

As a result the NA was highly unstable, with a total of 24 different clubs participating over its five-year life. The number varied annually from eight to 13, with 17 clubs competing in only one or two seasons. Also, there were 13 mid-season failures. Only three clubs, the Athletics of Philadelphia, the Bostons, and the Mutuals of New York, competed in all five years.

The NA also attempted to regulate players, in part to restrict play-

er movement among member clubs, i.e., revolving. This amounted to little more than requiring adherence to player contracts, now “legal” and almost always for a single season. Enforcement involved declaring contract breakers ineligible, assigning forfeits to the transgressing club, and excluding games involving such players from the championship reckoning. Little enforcement effort was needed, however, because hiding in-season player movements was very difficult given the highly visible and public nature of the professional game. The NA also required a 60-day waiting period before a released player could sign with another club, although this became impractical to enforce.

Contract disputes, whatever the cause, were supposed to be resolved by either the NA’s Judiciary Committee or its Championship Committee. But, as William Ryczek noted at several points in his book *Blackguards and Red Stockings* (2016), these committees were notoriously ineffectual in carrying out their responsibilities. While many historians describe the NA as being under player control, it may be more accurate to describe it as barely under any control.

Accordingly, revolving has often been seen as a serious issue for the NA. For example, in his book *Major Leagues* (2020), David Pietrusza notes that National League founder William Hulbert, at the League’s initial meeting in February 1876, mentioned that “players jumping from team to team” (p. 28) was among leading problems needing reform, pre-

sumably referring to the NA. Also, in his book *Baseball in the Garden of Eden* (2011), John Thorn referred to the NA in 1874 as “a time of rampant revolving” (p. 155). And William Ryczek (2016) observed that “[NA] players ... jumped freely from team to team” (p. 5). He also noted that “contribut[ing] to the league’s sordid image [was] the ‘revolver’ ... who failed to acknowledge the sanctity of the contract” (p. 226).

PLAYER MOVEMENTS DEFINED

Generally speaking, there are two categories of player movements: within-season and between-season, which I’ll call within-movements and between-movements. Recall that player reservation by clubs only began following the 1879 season. Also, there were no player trades or contract sales in the NA.

Legal within-movements involved a club releasing a player from his contract before the season’s end, thereby making him a free agent in modern parlance. Once released, the player could sign with another NA club, but only after the waiting period. That 60-day signing prohibition, however, applied to non-NA clubs as well. Thus, players were required to remain unemployed (in baseball) for the full period before starting another NA gig, certainly a major imposition.

Within-movements were further complicated by the NA’s numerous mid-season club failures that resulted in players being “stranded”, or as Ryczek (2016, p. 122) put it, “cut adrift”. Some clubs recog-

(Continued on page 3)

Revolving in the National Association 1871-1875 (cont.)

(Continued from page 2)

nized their situation, announced that they were disbanding, and released their players. But more often failure could only be inferred after a club had gone perhaps several weeks without scheduling a game and/or meeting its payroll, and occasionally literally stranding players on road trips. Under such circumstances, players were considered to be *de facto* released. While the above-mentioned waiting period was enforced occasionally early in the NA's existence, it largely became a dead letter when, for equity reasons, stranded players were granted exceptions as the 60-day period was deemed excessive.

Between-season movement, in contrast, typically required no contract release as multi-season contracts were rare at this time. Players automatically became free agents when their single season contracts expired, usually in October or November. However, complications arose if a player signed with a new club for the next season *before* the current season's end. The concern was player shirking for his "lame-duck" employer, particularly in games against his new employer. While this also violated regulations, such arrangements could be hidden.

To be sure, off-season disputes occurred regarding players signing multiple *new* contracts for the next season (e.g., see Ryczek, 2016, Ch. 22), including cases where one new contract was with the former team. The disputes might involve nefarious behavior by either players or clubs, and sometimes the root cause was simply the naivety or ignorance of uneducated and inexperienced young men. Also, clubs not infrequently presumed a "right" to the services of a valued player after

the end-of-season contract expiration and/or a player "obligation" to the club. But, of course, any such right or obligation ended when the contract expired.

Dispute resolution almost always occurred prior to the upcoming season by negotiations between the parties, although occasionally the NA's lumbering enforcement mechanisms or civil courts intervened. But any related team changing occurred during the off-season and only "on paper".

ACTUAL BETWEEN-SEASON MOVEMENTS

All this raises the question of what NA player movements actually looked like. Between season movements are summarized in Table 1. The underlying data on team rosters are from baseball-

their former club was not possible. Changing clubs was their only option if they wished to continue their NA careers. Including mid-season failures, there was a total of 20 non-returning clubs. Although the NA folded after 1875, we include 1875-76 because six 1875 NA clubs became founding members of the National League in 1876.

The first column of Table 1 shows the number of returning clubs in each year-pair, averaging six per year. The second column shows the mean *total* number of players on club rosters during the initial year, an overall average of 13.2, although usually an uncertain lower number would be active at any one time. The third column shows the number of players who appeared in at least one game on another NA club the

Table 1: National Association Player Movement
Between Successive Years, Averages per Club

	Returning Clubs	Initial Players	Move to	
			Other NA	Non-NA
1871-72	6	12.5	4.3	2.7
1872-73	5	13.4	3.0	3.4
1873-74	6	12.3	5.2	1.3
1874-75	7	14.1	6.6	2.3
1875-76	6	13.8	3.2	3.8
Average =	6.0	13.2	4.4	2.7

reference.com. Of course, this analysis is only relevant for clubs that actually retained NA membership in successive years. Given the league's instability, every year saw at least one non-returner, and usually there were several. Players on the non-returning clubs are excluded as continued employment on

following year, an annual average of 4.4 or 34% of the total. Some of these may not have been under contract, instead being *ad hoc* hires filling in for injured, sick or otherwise absent regulars. The last column of Table 1 shows the players who do not appear on any

(Continued on page 4)

Revolving in the National Association 1871-1875 (cont.)

(Continued from page 3)

NA roster in the second year, many of whom likely found work on independent clubs. They averaged 2.7 annually, or 20% of the initial year total.

These numbers can be compared to those computed in the same way for the National League's returning clubs in its first five successive year-pairs: 1876-77 to 1880-81. On average, 20% of players moved to other NL clubs, and 35% left the NL. The NL's 35% loss rate is higher than the NA's rate of 20%, which may be the result of players drawn to the International/National Association of 1877-80. The NA had no comparable competition for players.

ACTUAL WITHIN-SEASON MOVEMENTS

Given the instability of the NA, three types of within-movements are possible. The first involves players who have been released and the second involves breaking contracts and jumping to another club. The third type is players who are left stranded by failed clubs. Note that movements to non-NA clubs are excluded given the lack of such data. In 1871 there were no within-season moves of any kind.

There were only nine within-moves during the NA's entire five year existence that did not involve stranded players. In 1872, 1873, and 1874, there was but one in each year. The other six occurred in 1875. Ryczek (2016) specifically indicates that five of these nine cases involved released players. Two of these involved the Athletics paying the failing Centennials for the release of players they subsequently signed, amounting to the first player sales (Ryczek, 2016, 203). Of the remaining four in-season moves,

one was a regular player with a brief mention in the Ryczek book unrelated to contract issues and the other three were minor players, totaling 16, ten and two games for the season between their two clubs. Thus, for these four contract jumping seems unlikely.

The other main category of within-movements involved the 13 club failures suffered by the NA, summarized in Table 2.

on another NA club for at least one game during the same season. Twenty-two of these men, over half, were from three failed clubs: the 1872 Haymakers of Troy NY (7), the 1875 Centennials of Philadelphia (9) and the 1875 Westerns of Keokuk IA (6). Six of the stranded Haymakers moved to the Eckfords of Brooklyn, four becoming regular players. Also, some of the 38 players may

Table 2: National Association Within-Season Player Movements from Disbanded or Failed Teams

Year	City	Club	Moved
1872	Washington	Olympic	2
1872	Washington	National	0
1872	Troy NY	Haymaker	7
1872	Middletown CT	Mansfield	1
1872	Cleveland	Forest City	2
1873	Baltimore	Maryland	0
1873	Elizabeth NJ	Resolute	2
1874	Baltimore	Lord Baltimore	2
1875	Philadelphia	Centennial	9
1875	Keokuk IA	Western	6
1875	St. Louis	Red Stocking	0
1875	Washington	National	4
1875	Brooklyn	Atlantic	3
Total =			38

Note: 1871 had no within-season player movements

There was at least one in each year from 1872 to 1875, and both 1872 and 1875 had five. The total number of players on the 13 teams was 227, although an uncertain lower number was actually still on the teams at the time of failure. Of these, only 38 (16.7 percent) were able to find work

have been *ad hoc* hires filling in for absent regulars. In four cases, none of the failed club's stranded players appeared in a single game for another NA team in that same season. Including the nine "non-stranded" within-movements, there were

(Continued on page 5)

Revolving in the National Association 1871-1875 (cont.)

(Continued from page 4)

a total of 47 within-movements for the NA during 1871-75, with 81% resulting from failed clubs. Thus, within-season movements mainly involved stranded players.

By comparison, the National League in its first five years had a total of 26 within-movements, including five stranded players from its lone failure, the 1879 Star Club of Syracuse. I'm aware of no within movements from contract breaking. Thus twenty-one were non-stranded movements while the NA, with a few more clubs, had only nine. Nevertheless, the NA had a much higher number of total within-movements, 47 versus 26. But this difference clearly was driven by club failures. The NA had 13, while the NL had only one.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

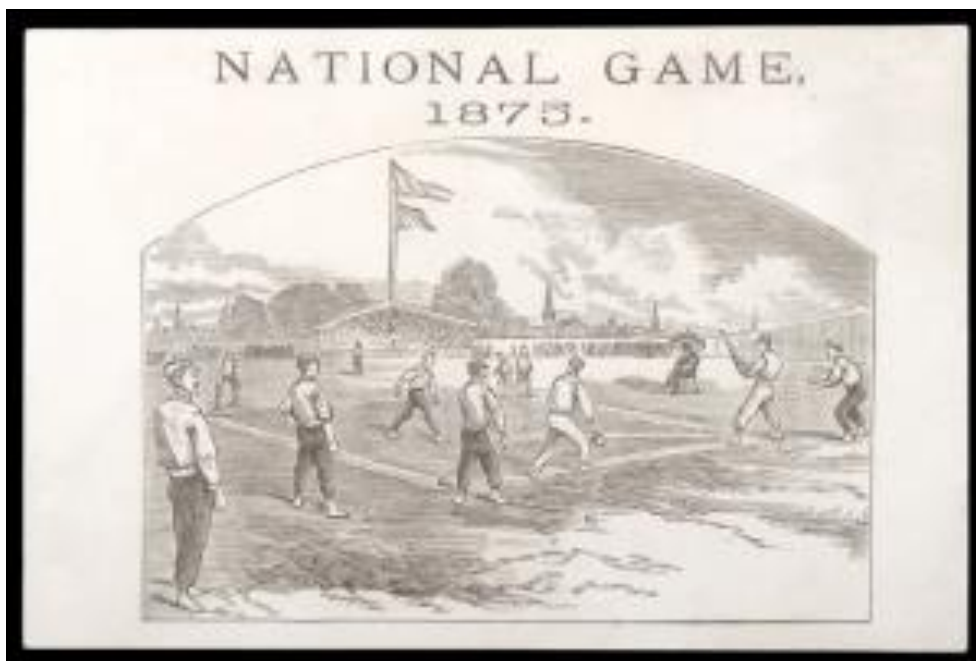
We analyze player movements

among National Association clubs during the organization's five-year life. We find that *between*-season player movements for returning clubs may have been roughly comparable in number to the those of National League. Be that as it may, almost all players became free agents at the end of each season and therefore were free to change teams. And given the many non-returning clubs, there often was no alternative. Revolving with its negative connotations of changing teams by jumping contracts does not apply. Off-season disputes occurred regarding *new* contracts, but were almost always resolved before the next season.

Regarding the NA's *within*-season movements, we find they occurred at a significantly higher rate than those of the League. But this was driven by the NA's unstable organization that pro-

duced many players stranded by failed clubs, who then became available as legal mid-season hires. Otherwise, actual within movements were not untoward.

Thus, with its many mid-season failures and other non-returning clubs, the NA's problem is perhaps better described as "revolving clubs", rather than revolving players. As Ryczek (2016) notes: "teams came and went as frequently as the players" (p. 5). In any event, the NA did nothing to address the underlying cause: its haphazard organization and operation. It also had many other problems, as several historians have observed. These include most famously hippodroming, gambling, and alcohol abuse. Its demise was clearly a step forward for baseball.



1875 Engraved
Trade Card

Co-Chair's Corner (cont.)

(Continued from page 1)

"Fred" conferences in Cooperstown, revealed another dimension of his working personality and talents as he took on (along with Bob Mayer and Gary Passamonte) the administration of an all new "19cBB Artifact Session" at our "Fred" Conference. His abilities as a team player, his attention to detail and his all around enthusiasm made him an obvious choice for a third Co-Chair. His friendly and humble demeanor also made the choice easy. We hope you will all join in welcoming Jonathan Popovich as our third Co-Chair.

The next Annual Frederick Ivor-Campbell 19th Century Base Ball Conference will be held on **Friday and Saturday, April 19th and 20th, 2024** at its traditional venue, The National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, in Cooperstown, NY. It will again feature fifteen Research Presentations (among other activities) for which a "Call for Ab-

stracts" was issued in late July with a deadline for submissions by **October 31, 2023**. Again, Research Presentations must be on any topic of 19th century baseball and must be presented within 20-25 minutes, including Q & A. A/V is not required but encouraged, and is not due to the HOF until late March. Please, email your 200-400 word Abstract to Peter Mancuso: petterplus4@earthlink.net by the October 31st deadline and be sure to include your name, contact information and title of Presentation.

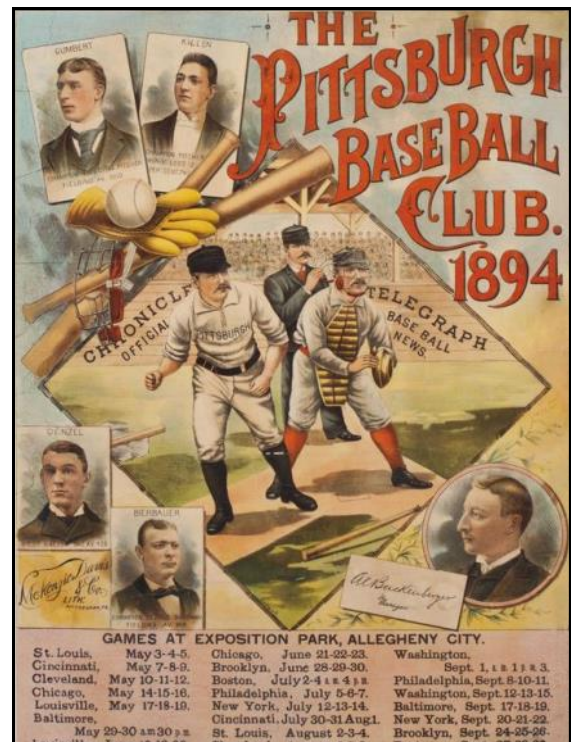
Changes for "The Fred" Registration will become obvious with the release of our traditional **start of Registration date of January 1, 2024** with the publication of our Winter quarterly issue of our newsletter. Since 2009, the only way to register for "The Fred" was by mail to Peter Mancuso with a check payable SABR enclosed. Starting January 1, 2024 we are going to an **on-line registration** process, di-

rectly through the **SABR website**, with all payments (registration fees and optional evening dinner fees) made by **credit cards**. The new details for the Program & Schedule and registering will be made part of the "Fred" Conference materials in January.

Virtual Nineteenth Century Committee: 19cBB Speakers Series and 19cBB Book Club will both be in full swing by the time you read this issue of our newsletter. We hope that you will continue to join and enjoy our on-line learning and discussions. Full schedules are in this issue.

Co-Chairs: Bob, Jon and Peter, "...because, baseball history is not only baseball history."

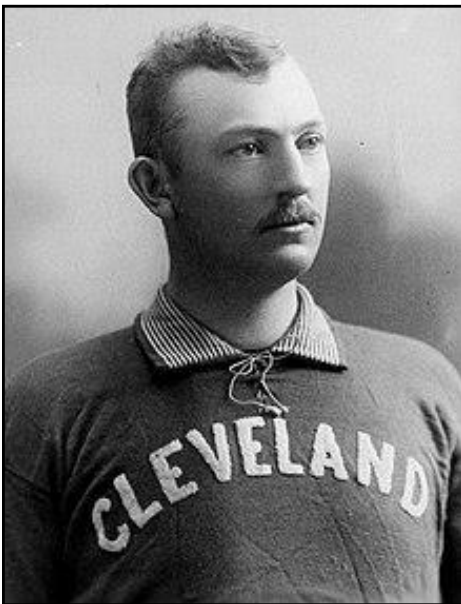
1894 Pittsburgh Baseball Club
Advertising Poster



Cy Young's Long Home Run by Brian Marshall

Cy Young! The name just resonates with baseball history. Baseball historians are well aware of Cy Young and his pitching exploits, but I wonder how many are aware that Young hit the longest home run, to that point in time, at League Park in Cleveland.

A "farmer boy", as he was referred to in the newspaper articles



Cy Young in 1891

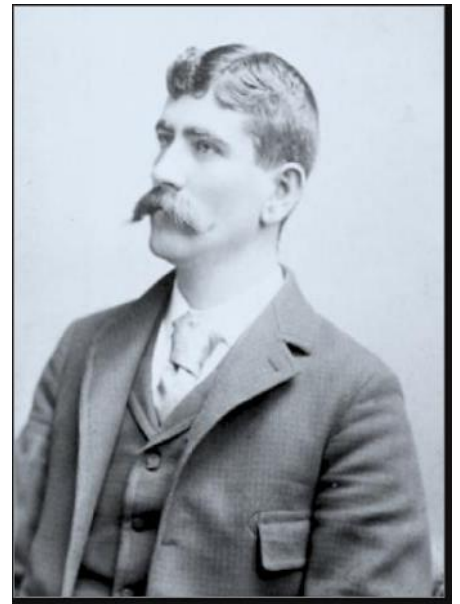
of the time, showed up in Cleveland wearing "misfit pants and a base ball shirt several degrees off color" to pitch his first game for the Cleveland Spiders on August 6, 1890. The fans saw a big, strong, solidly built man which was all well and good, but they were wondering; Who was this guy? and Could he pitch? Young proved himself that August day in Cleveland, striking out five and giving only three batters their base on balls as Cleveland defeated Chicago eight to one. And, from a pitching perspective, the rest, as they say, is history but there

would be a day, in 1893, that Young would also make a name for himself as a home run hitter.

Cy Young, who was also known by a few monikers such as "the Farmer", "Young the Cyclone" and "Rail-splitter" was an imposing figure at 6 feet, 2 inches tall and 210 pounds. To get an idea of just how imposing Young's physical stature was readers can refer to an article in the *Chicago Tribune* that described Young as a youngster "who looks big and muscular enough to throw a ball through a farmhouse". Given Young's physical stature it should come as no surprise to readers to know that he hit a home run, in 1893, at League Park in Cleveland that was described as "unquestionably the longest hit ever on the present grounds."

The long home run that Young, pitcher for the Cleveland Spiders, hit occurred on June 26, 1893, in a game against the Washington Nationals. The home run was the only one Young hit in the 1893 season, it was hit in the sixth inning off Duke Esper, there were two men on base, Jack O'Connor and Tom Williams, at the time and it cleared the fence in center field at League Park in Cleveland. The home run scored three runs as Jack O'Connor, Tom Williams and Cy Young, the bottom three in the batting order, scored on the hit. O'Connor had singled to left field, Williams had hit to Wise which he failed to field cleanly, and Williams managed to beat the play to first. There is a discrepancy in the newspaper coverage; the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* says that O'Connor doubled to left field. It is entirely possible that O'Connor

did in fact double rather than single because the double would have put him on second base rather than first base. O'Connor's position, on first or second base, becomes important when Williams made his hit to Wise. Sam Wise was playing second base for the Washington Nationals. If O'Connor had only singled and even if Wise had fielded the ball



Duke Esper

cleanly one would expect that Wise could have made a relatively simple force out of O'Connor at second base. But instead we know from the *Cleveland Leader* article that O'Connor was not forced out at second and that Williams managed to beat the play to first. Based on those facts it appears likely that O'Connor's correct hit was a double, not a single, and O'Connor quite possibly may have advanced to third base on the Williams hit/Wise muff play.

(Continued on page 8)

Cy Young's Long Home Run (cont.)

(Continued from page 7)

The *Cleveland Leader* described Young's drive as being hit very hard and that it left the fence behind. In fact the ball was further described as being hit so far that it may be travelling yet. There is a discrepancy in the game reports regarding where the ball left the field. The *Cleveland Plain Dealer* says the ball was hit over the left field fence but the *Washington Post* and *The Sporting Life* say the ball was hit over the center field fence. The home run Young hit was his only hit on the day. Young's batting statistics for the day were four PA, three AB, one hit, one sacrifice hit, .333 BA, no walks and no strike

outs. Young scored one run and had no SB.

A point to keep in mind is that there were different versions of League Park in Cleveland so while Young's home run may have been the longest at the League Park, where it was hit, it may not have been the longest ever at League Park when considering all the versions of League Park. The reason I bring the reader's attention to this is because Buck Ewing hit a grand slam home run, of significant distance, that cleared the fence in left field, on June 22, 1889 at League Park in Cleveland. The Young home run may have rivaled the Ewing

home run in terms of distance but each of the home runs was hit in a different version of League Park. [The 2006 edition of *Green Cathedrals* reports League Parks center field dimension was 409 feet. The center field corner in right-center is reported at 445 feet.]

Regarding the information there are discrepancies; a researcher of 19th Century baseball simply has to come to grips with them, expect them, if you will, because they are there and you will undoubtedly come across them.

Launch of 19th Century Committee Private

Facebook Group

by Jonathan Popovich

The 19th Century Research Committee is excited to announce the launch of a new Facebook Group set to go live in the Fall of 2024

An effort has been underway to explore and determine the utility, efficacy, and benefit of the Committee's pre-existing Facebook page...a page that some of you may be familiar with, and one that others amongst you may not even have known to exist.

At present, this public page is operating as it was intended. It was designed and organized to act as a message board with one-way communication between site moderators and committee members. Its current usage allows for the posting of information, announcements, and calendars but lacks the spark of

interaction which is what we are looking to ignite amongst the group with this exciting redesign.

With social media being leveraged in so many ways, Committee Administrators wondered if there was broader interest in expanding our own, current social media platform and presence into this interactive model: a space where surveys, research ideas, and resources could be shared; a space where one could go to seek direction and encouragement on a book project, or how to publish; a site to post and discuss a newly found artifact, and a space to act as the single repository for all the media now being generated by the Committee such as the Speak-

ers Series videos and Book Review presentations. Our site would transform from a public page to a private group and, while it would maintain its message board functionality, it would ultimately...if not immediately...be so much more than that.

As we prepare for this expansion of our re-envisioned Facebook page, we are looking for some Committee support in the form of 2-3 volunteer moderators. These moderators would facilitate the group page by reviewing and approving material...printed and visual...submitted by the membership. The moderators wouldn't necessarily be responsible for generating any content but, as Commit-

(Continued on page 9)

19th Century Private Facebook Private Group (cont.)

(Continued from page 8)

tee members themselves, could surely contribute if they so desire. For those interested in moderating, there will be training and instruction on how to do so prior to our launch...please don't let a current lack of knowledge in this area deter you from pitching in!

Even if social media isn't quite your forte, we would ask all committee members to give some thought to the visitation and utilization of the new Facebook Group. Remember...we envision

this as being a very valuable, interactive tool for your current and future research endeavors. For those among you who have been looking for a chance to promote 19th C. Baseball Research, outreach to others, and maybe even recruit some folks to our 'favorite century' of baseball, consider this a great opportunity to expand the Committee. And, for those of you interested in getting involved as a moderator and directly impacting the flow of our information and communication, we welcome your enthusiasm and assistance.

As things develop with the Group, we will be sure to keep you apprised. For now, we ask that you simply look forward to the advancement of committee communications, the evolution of membership interaction and involvement, and the many ways it will benefit your own efforts and interests.

Those wishing to try their hand at moderation should email Committee Co-Chairman, Jonathan Popovich, at: jayz-43_1b@yahoo.com



1896 Judge Lithograph of "The Base-Ball Craze Has Reached Punkinvillle"

Book Club Schedule

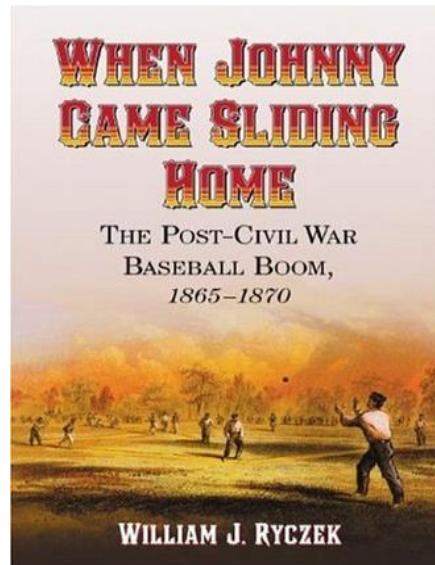
The Fall Quarter of our 19cBB Book Club kicks off in October, and runs through December. All Nineteenth Century Committee Members will receive at least two email reminders from the Committee for each of our scheduled book discussions in addition to a group email from SABR to all Committee Members on the morning of the scheduled discussion, containing the Zoom Meeting link to that evening's discussion.

All 19cBB Book Club discussions will take place at 8:p.m. ET unless specifically stated otherwise. All sessions will be recorded on YouTube and become available on the SABR website within several days of the discussion under "Virtual Events" if you should miss the session. The Moderator will determine (dependent on the size of the group) if the group members should be muted or not and if they should use the "chat" and/or "hand signal" buttons. Naturally, we ask members to be respectful in terms of language and being aware of not dominating a discussion. All Book Club discussions are to encourage participation by attendees with lively exchanges of the book under discussion.

We ask all members interested in a specific book(s) to obtain the book(s) at their earliest convenience or read them on an electronic medium if available. Please, use the Moderators' emails sparingly.

Book for Discussion: Tuesday, October 24, 2023, 8:p.m., ET, via Zoom Meeting, *When*

Johnny Came Sliding Home: The

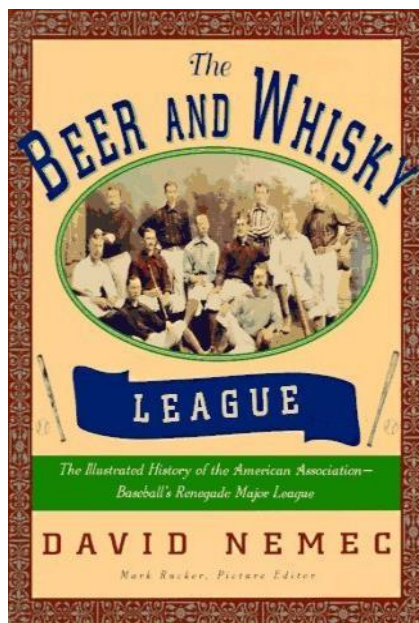


Post-Civil War Baseball Boom, 1865-1870; William J. Ryczek; Jefferson, NC; McFarland and Company; pp 313; 1998. Moderator Peter Mancuso.

Email: peterplus4@earthlink.net

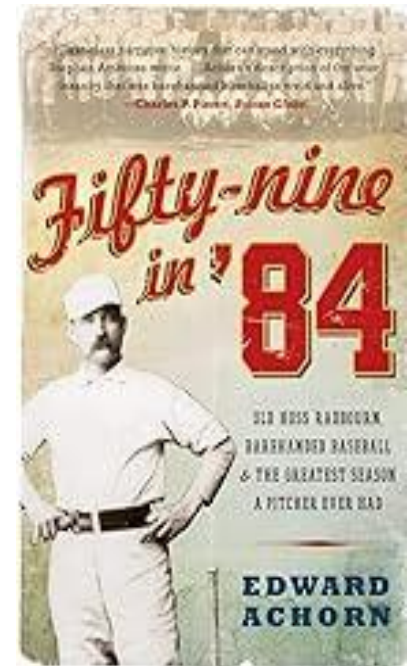
Book for Discussion: Wednesday, November 8, 2023, 8:p.m. ET, via Zoom Meeting,

The Beer and Whisky League: The



Illustrated History of the American Association—Baseball's Renegade Major League; David Nemec (Mark Rucker, picture editor); Guilford, CT; The Lyons Press; pp260; 2004 (1st edition 1994).

Moderator Jack Bales Email:



jbales@umw.edu

Book for Discussion: Wednesday, December 6, 2023, 8:p.m. ET, via Zoom Meeting, *Fifty-nine in '84: Old Hoss Radbourn, Barehanded Baseball & The Greatest Season A Pitcher Ever Had*; Edward Achorn; New York, NY; Harper rd Collins Publishers; pp.355; 2010. Moderator: Jim Chakulski the roots of the game. Email: jchakulski@yahoo.com

Fred Artifact Session Returns

Due to popular demand, we will again be conducting the 19th Century Artifact Segment at this coming year's Frederick Ivor-Campbell 19th Century Baseball Conference in

tation slot and be held in the Grandstand Theater on the second day of the conference immediately following the keynote luncheon.

This is a call and invitation to our

membership who plan on attending the 2024 'Fred' to consider the digital donation of an item from your own 19th Century Baseball collections for virtual display and discussion during

This segment will feature approximately 9-12 artifacts selected by a panel of three moderators who will integrate your item into a digital presentation as well as present it at the conference on your behalf. We are asking all interested parties to identify an item of 19th Century (or earlier) origins and share it with the Artifact Session Moderators for review and consideration in the program. The item can be anything you wish so long as it has roots in the 19th Century... balls, bats, equipment, images, ephemera, board games, etc.,



Artifact Display at 2023 Fred

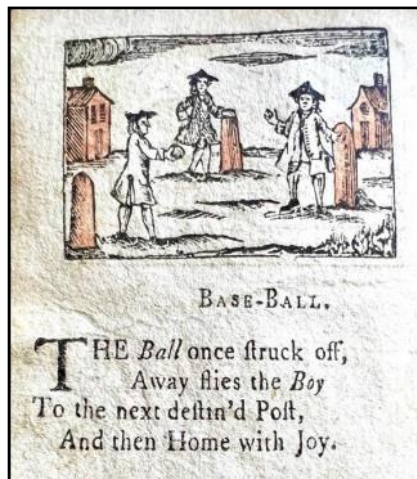
Cooperstown, NY., April 19-20, 2024.

As it was last year, we are excited to announce that the segment will once again occupy a Special Presen-

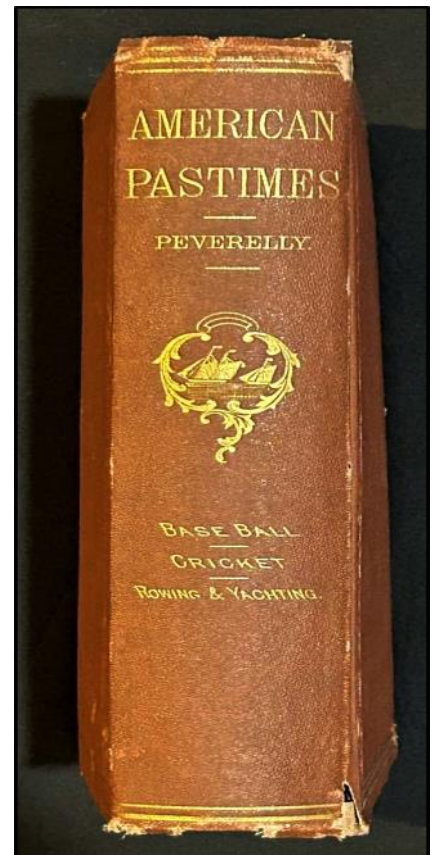
what's already proven itself to be an exciting and enjoyable portion of the conference.



1875 Trophy Ball



A Little Pretty Pocket-Book
Circa 1760s



1866 American Pastimes
By Peverelly

(Continued on page 12)

Fred Artifact Session Returns (cont.)

(Continued from page 11)

etc., and is part of your own collection or holdings. As this is going to be a digital presentation, you wouldn't need to physically bring the item with you to Cooperstown unless, of course, you want to. Arrangements have been made for the physical display of items in



19th Century Base Ball Clock

the Grandstand Theater *but*, the presentation itself, will be facilitated via in-house digital media.

Each item selected for the program will be given individual billing in the slide show and presented by one of the three Session Moderators. The Moderators will have already selected and studied the item in some detail by the time of the conference. For those who were not in attendance for the 2023 Fred, you should envision the program flowing similar to an episode of the "Antiques Roadshow" ...minus any of the appraisals, of course. This should all prove to be both very interesting and very enjoyable! The following are conditions of participation.

Again, this item must be yours or in your possession...not something identified by way of a museum, book, etc.

You will need to submit 3-5 high resolution images (jpeg/gifs) of your item...different/multiple angles are appreciated. You will need to provide responses to the following questions which the review panel will use to judge and rate the submissions. Responses can be remitted in the body of an email or in an attached word document:

1. Please describe your item and based upon your research, what time period you believe it originates from?
2. Please describe how you came to acquire this item and how long you've had it?
3. From your perspective, what is interesting, curious, or significant about your item, AND does it have any connection to a specific person (player or club), location, or event?

Your submissions can and should be made directly to the review panel at: jayz43_1b@yahoo.com. Please ensure that your email includes your name, phone number, and... of course...the items reflected above (the pics and narrative).

The last day for submissions to be considered for the 19cBB Artifact Session' will be February 1st, 2024.

If your item is selected, you will be notified as such by the Session Moderators. At this time, additional information or pics may be requested of you to ensure that the presentation and discussion of your item is comprehensive.

If you have any questions not answered in this email, please



Snyder Bats

reach out to Jonathan Popovich via email at:

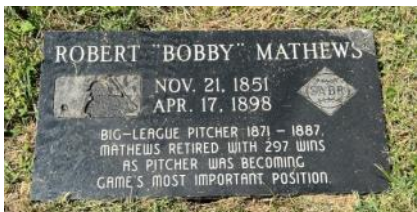
jayz43_1b@yahoo.com

We hope that you give this growing initiative and opportunity some thought and, if able, participate by submitting one of your 19th Century pieces of equipment or ephemera for consideration.

Thank you and best regards,
Bob Mayer, Jonathan Popovich
and Gary Passamonte, 19cBB
Artifact Session Moderators.

News & Notes

-The Committee's Grave Marker Project held a dedication for the ninth marker placed by the Project. A new marker for past Overlooked Legend Bobby Mathews was placed earlier this year and on August 26 the SABR Baltimore Chapter held a dedication at New Cathedral Cemetery in Baltimore. Below is the stone and a video of the dedication presentation by project head Sam Gazdziak at <https://riplebaseball.com/2023/08/28/sabr-dedicates-bobby-mathews-grave-marker/>



-SABR's Origins Committee released their August Newsletter which can be found at [file:///C:/Users/Owner/Dropbox/My%20PC%20\(DESKTOP-6P527JD\)/Downloads/SABR-Origins_Cmte-newsletter-2023-08%20\(3\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/Owner/Dropbox/My%20PC%20(DESKTOP-6P527JD)/Downloads/SABR-Origins_Cmte-newsletter-2023-08%20(3).pdf)

-Memoriam: Tom Ruane Please, take a few minutes to visit the SABR website link, <https://sabr.org/latest/in-memoriam-tom-ruane/> to read a tribute to one of SABR's most endeared members, Tom Ruane. Tom's recent passing deeply touched the many SABR members who knew him personally and many others who knew him through his devotion to many SABR endeavors and Retrosheet. Our

Nineteenth Century Committee extends their condolences to the Ruane family.

-Overlooked Legend: "Doc" Adams In 2013, Daniel Lucius "Doc" Adams, M.D. was selected as an Overlooked 19th Century Baseball Legend, an individual worthy of induction into the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum but who has not yet been selected by the Hall for induction. Just a few years later "Doc" was nearly inducted by one of the Hall's Era Committees. Although he received the most votes by members of that selection committee, he still remained just two votes shy of the number required for induction. Shortly after that, baseball's first official rules, authored by "Doc" in 1857 were rediscovered and subsequently brought \$3.2 million at auction. "Doc's" two biggest boosters for his induction were two of his great-granddaughters, Marjorie Adams and Nancy Adams Downey. Marjorie, a now deceased SABR and Nineteenth Century Committee member, had contributed artifacts and other information about "Doc" to the website created by Roger Ratzenberger about ten years ago to further public awareness of "Doc" Adams.

Upon Marjorie's passing, Roger (a SABR Nineteenth Century Committee Member) and his wife, Cathy promised Marjorie that they would continue to update and publish the website devoted to "Doc;" and they have kept the educational campaign alive ever since. Next year, in December 2024, a new Era Committee designated by the Baseball Hall of Fame to select baseball veterans, including 19th century baseball pioneers, for induction into the Hall of Fame will be determining who will be eligible for consideration. It is the first time that "Doc" will possibly be considered for induction since he came so close several years ago. We hope that many of our Committee members will visit the website devoted to "Doc" Adams, to learn

more about him and to subscribe (free) to the website and add your comments. To view and/or subscribe, please, visit: <https://docadamsbaseball.org> or, to provide a short guest post about "Doc" Adams, email Roger at: Roger@DocAdamsBaseball.org for consideration.

-Special Negro Leagues and Teams Committee... Following up on the work of SABR's Negro League Task Force, which [recommended the recognition of seven Negro Leagues](#) as major leagues, a new SABR Special Negro Leagues and Teams Committee has been convened to study other leagues and teams from Black baseball history. The new group's focus will include pre-1920 Negro teams and leagues, major and minor (this should include 19th century individuals, teams and leagues). A number of our Nineteenth Century Committee Members comprise the core of this new committee including Nineteenth Century Committee Co-Chairs' Award recipients, Adam Darowski, and Jim Overmyer. Paste this link to see further details: <https://sabr.org/latest/sabr-forms-new-special-negro-leagues-and-teams-committee-for-further-study-recommendations/>

-The SABR Board has named Minneapolis as the site of the 2024 National Convention. The event will be held from August 7 to August 11. Watch the SABR weekly newsletter for more details.

-See the following page for the remainder of the Speakers Series schedule.

19th Century Speakers Series 2023-2024

The fourth season of the 19th Century Baseball Speakers Series opened in September with Bill Humber presenting “An Unheralded Ancestry: Baseball’s Missing Chapter. You can find a recording of the presentation on the 19th Century webpage at the SABR website.

The series presents research presentations via Zoom to the Committee membership from September through May. Each session is held on the second Tuesday of the month and starts at 8 PM Eastern Time.

The SABR office distributes a link to the sessions on the day of each presentation.

The remaining presentations in this year’s series are as follows:

October 10, 2023 at 8 PM EDT.
Jack Bales presents “The Mysterious Lewis Meacham: The Untold Story of William Hulbert’s Right-Hand Man.” Lewis Meacham was a Chicago sports reporter and ally of Hulbert as he worked to found the National League and put Chicago at the center of the baseball world.

November 14, 2023 at 8 PM EST.
Justin McKinney presents “The 1890 Philadelphia Athletics: How a Pennant Contender Became the Worst Team of All Time.” McKinney tells the story of the woeful 1890 Athletics. A proud franchise that struggled financially, could not pay their players, and ended the season with a pick-up team.

December 12, 2023 at 8 PM EST.
Gregory Wolf presents “Bill

Hutchison: A Forgotten Star, Standing 55 1/2 Feet From Home Plate.” From 1890 to 1892 Hutchison won 121 games and was a top pitcher in the NL. He fell off dramatically in 1893 when the pitching distance was increased by five feet. But there are other factors that may have been more important in his decline. Wolf will examine the major league career of Bill Hutchison.

January 9, 2024 at 8 PM EST.
Tom Gilbert presents Amateurism, True Crime, and Baseball.” Gilbert will present some neer-do-wells of the amateur era of baseball’s development who had serious run-ins with the law while playing baseball and beyond.

February 13, 2024 at 8 PM EST.
Matt Albertson presents “The Scorecard Vote: A Fan’s View of the 1895 Phillies.” In 1895 the Philadelphia Phillies had a fan vote for the most popular/most valuable Phillie. Albertson will examine the 1895 Philadelphia season and how the fans selected the winning player.

March 12, 2024 at 8 PM EDT.
Paul Browne presents “‘Hustling’ Dan O’Leary.” While largely forgotten today, Dan O’Leary was always ready to give reporters a lively story, or commit some outlandish act that got his name in the papers. He once bet the team’s payroll on a game to “motivate” the squad to victory. If they won they would be paid and treated to a sumptuous meal. If they lost, they lost their pay. Browne will profile the colorful O’Leary as he “danced on the edge of fame and infamy.”

April 9, 2024 at 8 PM EDT.
Elena Dugan presents “In Spite of His Color, He Is Captain of the Baseball Nine This Year.” Dugan will focus on the lives and amateur athletic careers of three Phillips Andover players: Chentung Liang Cheng, a Chinese student, graduating class of 1881; William Taylor Burwell Williams, a Black student, graduating class of 1893; and William Clarence Matthews, also a Black student, graduating class of 1901. Of the three, Matthews is the most well-known, but all three help us better understand the complicated and often-awkward lives of players on integrated baseball teams in the latter part of the 19th century.

May 14, 2024 at 8 PM EDT.
Vincent Ciaramella presents “Death By Drinking Seawater: The Short Tragic Life and Career of Tom O’Brien.” The presentation certainly portends an interesting story of a player’s attempt to combat seasickness, make a trip to Havana, and ultimately cause his premature death. In addition O’Brien was not the only player on his ship to ingest seawater but only O’Brien succumbed.

As you can see the series presents a wide array of topics that are all well-researched and well-presented. Recordings of past year’s talks are posted on the 19th Century Committee’s SABR webpage.

THE UNTRUMPETED TRIO

By David Nemec

Editor's Note: This article is our first attempt to present a long-form article. If you have such an article for consideration please sent a Word file to : bobbailey@cox.net.

INTRODUCTION

As had occurred in the winter of 1884, when the rebel Union Association declared itself a rival to the two established major leagues, the American Association and the National League, chaos reigned after the 1889 season once swarms of players from the AA and the NL announced they were defying the Reserve Clause, which bound them to their current teams, and defecting to join the fruition of John Montgomery Ward's long-in-the-making brainchild, the newly formed Players League, for the coming 1890 season. But unlike the Union Association, which succeeded in enticing only a handful of pitchers from the two extant major leagues to enlist in its slapdash enterprise, Ward's recruiters pirated almost every established big leaguer of note. Among them were three future 300-game winners: Charley Radbourn, Jim Galvin and Tim Keefe.

Each of the eight Players League teams thereby was assured of having a cadre of veteran major league twirlers when it opened its training camp in the spring of 1890. But holes quickly developed in the pitching staff of several clubs. Veteran stars like John Clarkson reneged on their pledges to skip to the Players League, other

seasoned pitchers reported to camp in poor condition, and the Cleveland PL club watched what had been a very respectable corps of hurlers for the 1889 Cleveland National League entry inexplicably disintegrate in the early going. The result was that three rookie Players League pitchers, all of them complete unknowns to major league audiences when they first appeared in 1890, logged highly commendable seasons that led to substantial big-league careers, each of which included record-setting career and season or single-game performances never to be matched. The trio was Phil Knell, Willie McGill and George Hemming. All three enjoyed at least one 20-win season in the majors before their careers were finished. Their stories could not be more different in most other respects but alike in one of considerable importance: Each holds an all-time career or single season record involving walks that is unlikely ever to be broken.

BASEBALL'S GREAT-EST WUNDERKIND

Willie McGill, aka "Kid" and "The Boy Boozer," is the youngest documented pitcher to throw a no-hitter in a recognized professional league. The diminutive lefty was just 15 and pitching for Evansville of the Central Inter-State League when he held Davenport hitless on July 26, 1889, in topping the Iowa club's ace,

Jack Fanning, 3-0. (The no-no is confirmed by the *Encyclopedia of Minor League baseball*, 3rd edition, Baseball America, 2007.) Until 2017, when Juan Soto of Washington collected 99 walks as a 19-year-old rookie outfielder, McGill also held the record for the most career walks by a teenage major league batsman with 75.

Never knew any of this about McGill?

You're far from alone.

William Vaness McGill was born on November 10, 1873, in Atlanta, Georgia, and was a second generation Irish American. His grandfather was forced by the "Great Potato Famine" to flee Ireland and migrate to North Carolina. The elder McGill's son Thomas was a railroad agent whose job took him to Atlanta where his youngest son William was born. William (probably already known by then as Willie) apparently came to Chicago with his family at an early age and began to be groomed by his father for a career in baseball, probably before he was even out of grammar school. The source of Thomas McGill's strong attachment to baseball is unknown, but his ambitions for his son appear to have been limitless. By the time Willie was in his mid-teens, *The Sporting News* proclaimed that he was already a formidable pitcher with "some of the most tortuous, sinuous and puzzling curves ever seen."

After beginning the 1889 season in the fast-paced amateur Chicago Commercial League, the

(Continued on page 16)

THE UNTRUMPETED TRIO (cont.)

(Continued from page 15)

fifteen-year-old McGill was given his father's permission to sign with the Evansville Hoosiers of the Central Inter-State League in June once his school year ended. At the time he reportedly was just 5'3" and 133 pounds. He still had some growing to do, but not in the areas one might expect. McGill gained a mere three inch-



Willie McGill
1890s

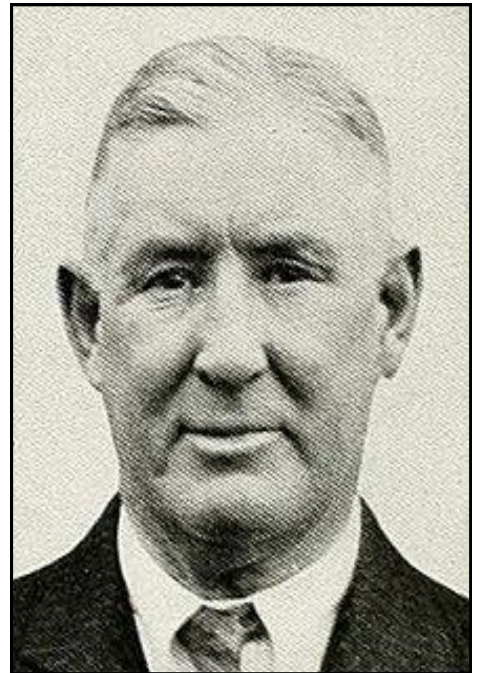
es in height but nearly 40 pounds in weight over the next few years, most of it in his lower body, giving him tremendous strength in his legs. Nonetheless, near the end of his career, the March 5, 1905, *Sporting Life* referred to him as "fat little Willie McGill."

The teenager was so pumped when he joined Evansville in

1889 that he lasted only a few weeks before he ran dry of adrenaline and had to be sent home to rest. Shortly after he returned, he hurled his 6-0 no-hitter against Jack Fanning of Davenport, but after 12 starts he was just 5-7, and a *TSN* snippet from a Davenport paper indicated he was released "owing to his almost total failure of late to fill his position." But some of McGill's teammates contended the real reason was that Frank Nicholas, Evansville's first-string catcher, could not handle the little southpaw's low curves and drops and kept signaling for high pitches, which either were hit or went wild. McGill then signed with Burlington Babies according to the September 7, 1889, *TSN*, but although he is listed on the team's roster that year there is no record of his having appeared in any games with the Babies.

Over the winter, Thomas McGill endlessly palavered streetcar mogul Albert Johnson, owner of the Cleveland Players League entry, to look at his son and finally got his wish when Johnson's club arrived in spring training camp with only three proven pitchers—Cinders O'Brien, Henry Gruber and Jersey Bakley. When it began to appear that the now sixteen-year-old southpaw might make the club along with fellow rookie George Hemming for added pitching depth, his father sealed the deal by promising to travel with the team to look after his progeny and keep him away from wicked influences. Young Willie was far from an instant success; in one of

Cleveland's final exhibition games, on April 12, 1890, at St. Louis's Brotherhood Park (built in the vain hope that the Mound City would be awarded a Players League franchise) he was thumped by the Chicago PL team, 11-4, and committed three wild pitches. He then rode the bench in the first 11 games of the season as Cleveland started 4-7. In the 12th game, on



Willie McGill
1944

May 8 at Cleveland, already aware his team was thin on quality pitching, player-manager Jay Faatz, with little to lose, gloomily started McGill against Buffalo's George Haddock. Afterward, the May 10 *Sporting Life* reported: "The home team gave young McGill a trial and he proved too much for the visitors, ten of whom struck out." In beating Haddock 14-1, McGill,

(Continued on page 17)

THE UNTRUMPETED TRIO (cont.)

(Continued from page 16)

at age 16, not only became the youngest southpaw ever to hurl a big-league complete game but also the first hurler in major league history to face, in the person of Buffalo's Deacon White, a hitter who was playing major league ball before he was even born. Too, his 10 Ks were at the time nearly a record number for a pitcher in his debut appearance. In its May 17, 1890, edition, *SL*, in announcing his signing, informed readers the Cleve-lands were soon to be nicknamed the Infants in his commemoration. The nickname sticks to this day.

Under his father's tight rein, McGill kept regular hours and was not allowed to travel with the team when his father was unable to accompany him. His second start of his rookie season did not come until June 9 at Buffalo when he again beat Haddock 14-4; three days later he took Haddock's measure for a third time and was now 3-0 and already regarded as a Phenom. But after winning his fourth start at Chicago his hometown, 7-6 over Mark Baldwin, the Players League leader in strikeouts and tied with teammate Silver King for the lead in victories, McGill came crashing down to earth when he lost a return match with Baldwin on June 19, 20-9, and the June 20, 1890, *Chicago Tribune* crowed "HE WAS NOT THE PUZZLE YESTERDAY THAT HE WAS ON MONDAY." After that he was used sparingly and was shut down entirely for over a month. He nonetheless finished 11-9, not including a 9-9 tie in his final appearance of the season on October 3 against fellow PL rookie star Phil Knell and was the

only Cleveland qualifier to post an above .500 record.

After the PL disbanded, all the established major league teams seemingly were leery of McGill's age until his father finagled Mike "King" Kelly into hiring his son for Kelly's ragtag last



-minute entry in the American Association, the Cincinnati Kelly's Killers. McGill started the Killers' opening game on April 8 at St. Louis, opposing the Browns' ace, Jack Stivetts. The game was marred by endless disputes with novice umpire, Bill Gleason (a former shortstop working his first and what turned out to be his last game in blue) and ended officially as a 7-7 tie when Gleason was overruled after he forfeited the game to St. Louis owing to the Killers' stalling tactics in the 9th inning. McGill then lost his next three starts before topping Columbus's Hank Gastright 4-3 in 10 innings at Columbus. He won only one more game with Cincinnati. In its May 2, 1891, issue *Sporting Life* recounted that at Louisville, where McGill had traveled without his father, "on April 23, {fellow pitcher} Ned Crane and Willie McGill painted the town red and were locked up. Manager Mike Kelly secured their release upon the payment of \$10 and costs, to which Kelly afterwards added fines of \$30 apiece.

The next night Crane started to take McGill out again, where-

upon Kelly interfered. Crane refused to remain in the hotel, became abusive and finally slapped Kelly in the face. The latter thereupon promptly knocked Crane down, and afterwards hustled him off to his room." The day after *SL*'s appearance on the newsstands, St. Louis Browns owner Chris Van der Ahe purchased the teenage lefty for an undisclosed amount.

Within days of the sale McGill's father died of head injuries suffered in a railway accident near Indianapolis, leaving his callow young son not only fatherless but without a travel companion and protector from teammates like Crane. Bereft, McGill struggled on alone until early August when his mother came to St. Louis to comfort him in his grief. Her visit ended with him accompanying her back to Chicago and vowing as he boarded the train that he was through with baseball forever. Scarcely a week later, he was back in St. Louis in time to beat Washington's Kid Carsey 7-5 on August 12. Despite losing his last two starts of the season, McGill finished with a 20-14 composite record for his work with both Cincinnati and St. Louis and in so doing, at age 17, became the youngest 20-game winner in major league history. As for the rest of his game, McGill was an indifferent fielder, very weak on bunts, and in the October 31, 1891, *TSN* writer Al Flournoy contended, "He is the poorest batter, I think I ever saw stand up to the plate." No one at the time appeared to notice that

(Continued on page 18)

THE UNTRUMPETED TRIO (cont.)

(Continued from page 17)

while McGill collected just 15 hits in 1891, he earned 34 walks, a remarkably paradoxical pair of statistics that he would repeat in almost every season throughout his career. Missing too at the time was the recognition that he was now the youngest 20-game winner (and is still), largely because winning 20 games was not yet a significant seasonal landmark and, what's more, for the most part won-lost records for pitchers were only loosely compiled and still were years away from becoming officially documented.

Assigned to the NL Cincinnati Reds when the AA and NL consolidated in December 1891, McGill held out in the spring of 1892. While he dickered for a salary increase, he pitched for the University of Notre Dame in its first ever varsity baseball game on April 24, beating Michigan, 6-4. Given the relaxed eligibility rules at the time, no one particularly cared that McGill was not a Notre Dame student, nor would he ever be. Exactly a week later he made his initial appearance with the Reds in the first ever Sunday National League game at Cleveland and stumbled to a 12-7 win over the Spiders' vaunted rookie Nig Cuppy. He then immediately embarked on a flurry of benders and was released after just two more starts. Handed the money to pay his outstanding bills in Cincinnati and train fare home to Chicago, according to the May 14, 1892, *TSN*, McGill instead loitered in Cincinnati and squandered it on "German tea."

His mother, who had been told of his release, frantically cabled Reds player-manager Charlie Comiskey as to his whereabouts when he did not appear at her door. At that point the club learned he had never left town. In its May 28 edition, *TSN* observed that McGill remained in Cincinnati for several more weeks, "haunting the park" every day in search of another chance before finally reconciling himself to serving his penance for the rest of the season with Menominee in the lowly Michigan-Wisconsin League. Shortly before his departure the *Cincinnati Enquirer* wrote: {He is} "a miserable little tough, who should be taken by the police and given about sixty days on the rock pile at the workhouse...a miserable foul-mouthed loafer." The July 18 *Atlanta Constitution* noted that he was the only member of the Reds who had been suspended that season that Comiskey would not take back. Since the Michigan-Wisconsin League had a salary limit and McGill's contract purportedly exceeded it, the club passed a contribution box around at home games when he pitched. Even though McGill tied for the league lead in wins with 14 and the club also had on its pitching staff past or future major leaguers Frank Pears and Harry Burrell, Menominee finished second to Green Bay.

That winter Chicago president Jim Hart took a gamble on McGill after hearing that the wife of major stockholder in the Menominee club had reformed "The Boy Boozer" and he hadn't

touched a drop since she began overseeing him. After encountering a huge pothole in the road to his big-league return in a 10-1 loss on Opening Day to Cincinnati's Bumpus Jones, the 19-year-old lefty settled down and showed his gratitude to Hart by leading Cap Anson's Chicago staff in wins (17) and strikeouts (91) and adapting far better than most hurlers to the new 60'6" pitching distance. McGill likely benefitted from living at his Chicago home in 1893, either with his mother or his older brother John, or perhaps both. But his reformation ended almost as soon as the 1894 season began. Released after logging a 7-19 record and a 5.84 ERA, he signed with the Philadelphia Phillies for 1895. McGill seemed to be making a genuine effort to stay on the wagon and had won his 10th game by June 15 when he beat Pittsburgh, but it would be his last victory that year. On June 22, 1895, in a 12-9 loss, he was spiked on the ankle while sliding into a base in a game at Brooklyn. During his lengthy stint on the DL, he was "indiscreet enough to break discipline" according to the October 25, 1895, *TSN*, and thereupon finished 10-8.

When his misdeeds continued in the spring of 1896, culminating in his final ML game, a start against lowly Louisville on June 12, 1896, in which he had to be relieved in the second inning by Al Orth, he was traded later that month to St. Paul of the Western League for outfielder Sam Mertes. Reunited with his 1892 nemesis Charlie Comiskey, McGill hurled just four games with the Minneso-

(Continued on page 19)

THE UNTRUMPETED TRIO (cont.)

(Continued from page 18)

ta club before breaking his pitching hand. *TSN* charted the healing process and in its September 12, 1896, issue revealed his hand was still not strong enough to grip a ball.

Around that time, he seems to have finally matured and begun taking better care of himself, but it was too late. His hand never healed sufficiently to grip a ball with its former strength. Although McGill continued pitching professionally until 1905 in the minors and for several years thereafter in the Chicago City League and for independent teams in the Windy City area, the minor league stats that are presently available reveal that he won less than half his games and, in more seasons than not, pitched too few innings to be deemed a qualifier. His final pro innings appear to have come with Freeport in the 1905 Class D Wisconsin State League.

McGill might have allowed his father's tragic death and his own immaturity to spoil a highly promising baseball career, but he learned a hard lesson from it and later became the athletic trainer at several colleges including Illinois and Northwestern, where he also served for a time as its head baseball coach. He then was associated with the Butler University Athletic Department before settling in the Indianapolis area and working for Indianapolis Power and Light. Meanwhile he married, had a family, and became a Hoosier fixture. Last known to be living in Center, Indiana, in 1940 with his wife Mary, McGill died in Indianapolis on August 29, 1944, and is buried

at Crown Hill Cemetery in that city.

In his seven major league seasons, McGill compiled just 96 hits and a career .202 batting average but, owing to his never explained ability to draw walks, he finished with a .594 OPS, very respectable for a pitcher. To this day, his .344 career on base percentage remains the highest among all pitchers with 500 or more plate appearances who did not also play another position for at least one full game during their careers.

OLD WAX FIGGER

George Earl Hemming's only nickname during his playing days was "Old Wax Figger," a nineteenth century slang word for figure. Its origins are as murky as his own; one might suppose it was given to him because he was rather bland, imperturbable, and always wore virtually the same expression. Hemming was born on December 15, 1868, in Carrollton, Ohio, the seat of sparsely populated Carroll County. In the late 1880s the tiny town's only claims to fame were that it housed no saloons and not a single crook was lodged at the time in the county jail, which was in Carrollton. What mark, if any, Hemming had left on this "dry" and perhaps rather dull community by that time is unknown, as is his childhood family history apart from the fact that his father's name was John. Although the town had three newspapers when the 1880 census was taken, this writer has encountered only

one mention of Hemming in any of them in his research thus far on the wraithlike pitcher. In 1930, when Hemming died, his obituary appeared in the *Carroll County Free Press Standard* along with his father's first name.

One might reasonably assume, however, that like most small-town boys Hemming played some baseball, and there is ample evidence that he had become quite good at the game by the time he reached voting age. We first find talk of him in *The Sporting News* in the late summer of 1889 when he was working as a cook at the Ohio State Mental Hospital in Columbus, Ohio, and pitching for a local amateur team. At some point outfielder Larry Twitchell, who had already signed with the Cleveland PL club for 1890, spotted the 5'11" and 170-pound right hander and recommended him to Cleveland's owner and staunch PL proponent Albert Johnson. Invited by Johnson to training camp the following spring, he was signed just before the 1890 PL season began when Cleveland's three main starters, Cinders O'Brien, Enoch Bakley and Henry Gruber, all looked shaky in exhibition play. Hemming was quickly put to use when he was called on to relieve Bakley in the second game of the season on April 21 at Buffalo and went 2-for-4 in a 15-8 loss to the Bisons' Alex Ferson. After a second relief appearance, he was given a chance to start a game, on May 2 against Chicago, and was dropped after absorbing an 11-4 shellacking. In his brief stay with

(Continued on page 20)

THE UNTRUMPETED TRIO (cont.)

(Continued from page 19)

Cleveland, Hemming had already demonstrated the shortcomings that would haunt him his entire career. In the 21 innings he pitched, he walked 19 batters but



George Hemming

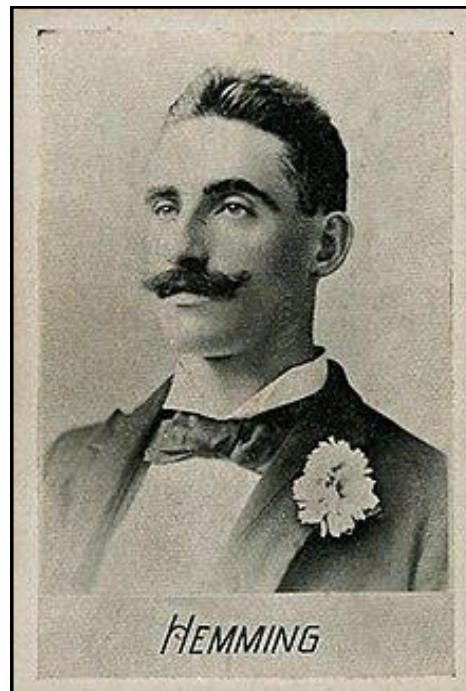
struck out only three.

Upon his release, he joined an independent team in Anderson, Indiana, where he remained until the Brooklyn Ward's Wonders, run by PL kingpin Johnnie Ward, saw more in him than no one else ever had and acquired him in July 1890. In the second half of the season a different Hemming emerged, going 8-4 in 19 outings for Ward's second-place club with a laudable 3.80 ERA, .43 runs below the league average in the hitter friendly PL. His overall showing made him a natural

to be snatched by Ward for Ward's next venture as player-manager with the Brooklyn National League club after the Players League collapsed following the 1890 season. Hemming had a great spring in 1891, raising Ward's expectations that he would be the one of club's best pitchers, but instead he was its worst after he suffered a bout with malaria according to his brief bio in the June 3, 1893, *New York Clipper*. His nadir came on the afternoon of August 25 at Chicago when he gave up 27 hits and 49 total bases in a 28-5 complete-game loss to the Colts' Jack Luby. The August 26 *Chicago Tribune* wrote that "this morning {Hemming} has the distinction of being the hardest-hit pitcher that has done duty in the league for many a day." Why Ward would submit him or any pitcher to so much torture can only baffle us today.

Threatened with a large salary cut after posting an 8-15 record in his first full season in the majors, Hemming held out in the spring of 1892 along with two of Brooklyn's other pitching mainstays, Tom Lovett and George Haddock, and Ward's response was to reconstruct almost his entire pitching staff, cutting not only Hemming but also Bob Caruthers and Bill Terry. Hemming worked an uninspiring trial game in relief with Cincinnati and was not offered a contract. He then finished the year with Louisville, one of the National League's dregs, showing just enough in four starts to be retained. The following season he

went 18-17 with the Colonels while the rest of the staff was 32-58, an achievement that did not escape Baltimore manager Ned Hanlon. On August 31, 1894, Hanlon sent pitcher Bert Inks and \$2,000 to the cash poor Colonels



George Hemming

for Hemming and received an immediate dividend when his new pitcher was a perfect 4-0 in the final weeks of the season.

A member of a championship caliber team for the first time in his career, Hemming celebrated with a 20-win season in 1895 and was 15-6 for the league-leading Orioles the next year before running aground. Correctly judging that Hemming's arm was ailing, Hanlon sold him back to Louisville in April 1897. When the Colonels released him in June after a poor relief outing against

(Continued on page 21)

THE UNTRUMPETED TRIO (cont.)

(Continued from page 20)

Baltimore on the 12th of that month that proved to be his major league finale, *The Sporting News* reported he vowed that he would “rest his arm for a year at least.” But he returned the following spring with Springfield, Massachusetts, of the Eastern League. Hemming remained active in the minor-league EL with Springfield, Hartford and Newark until 1902 as a pitcher-outfielder. A marginal contributor for most of those five seasons, his high points came in 1899 when he hit .318 in 98 games and 1900 when he won 13 games for Hartford.

After throwing his last professional pitch with Newark in 1902, Hemming retired. Most players of his small-town upbringing in that era returned to their roots at that point, but he settled instead in Springfield. Whether he had cultivated strong friendships while playing there, had an appealing job awaiting him or even perhaps a sweetheart and the makings of a new family of his own is still unclear, but none are likely. Upon his death in a Springfield hospital on June 9, 1930, from septic poisoning, all his *Free Press Standard* obituary said of his later years was that he “continued his interest in baseball, so much so that scarcely

a season went by in which he did not take up the coaching of some amateur clubs in that city [Springfield].” The obituary concluded that he “was the last surviving member of his family” and left no relatives except two nieces and two nephews, all of whom were living either in Carrollton or Canton, Ohio. No mention of a spouse, let alone children. Nothing substantive of how he occupied his last years except coaching local amateurs. (In *The Players League: History, Clubs, Ballplayers And Statistics*, McFarland & Company, Inc., 2006, Ed Koszarek reported stumbling on an obituary that said Hemming married an actress, no name or date given, while with Brooklyn but did not cite his source and this writer has been unable to track it down.)

Hemming is buried in Oak Grove cemetery in Springfield. Even among avid nineteenth century baseball historians, probably few have visited his grave site.

There are no juicy surviving stories about him, nothing to disturb the impression that he was as colorless as his nickname would suggest. Surely there must have been something memorable to say about a player who was first discovered working as a

cook in a mental hospital. But no. Nothing. A near cipher. Yet there may be another explanation: Hemming may have deliberately kept a low profile during his playing days and not returned to his hometown because *he was too well known there*. But for what? There is a slim hint in the *Chicago Tribune* account of the severe pounding he took on August 25, 1891, while pitching for Brooklyn against Chicago. The next day’s *Tribune* described Hemming as a “tall, tan-colored chap.” Tan-colored is a curious description for a ballplayer in 1891, particularly in late summer when all presumably were tanned to some degree. Unless...it was a code description sportswriters of that day used for an athlete suspected of being a racial mixture. Could Hemming conceivably have been thought to be part Indian or Black and trying to pass as Caucasian? Did that have anything to do with his odd nickname? Might he have chosen to live out his final years in Springfield because he had found a certain acceptance there that was denied him while growing up in Ohio? None of this can be any more than a conjecture nearly a century later and one derived from substantiation that is little better than a smudged fingerprint. But it nonetheless points to a player that may prove fertile ground for a future researcher with more tools at his disposal than are available at present to this writer.

What is firmly in evidence is that Hemming spent all or part of

(Continued on page 22)

	SO/BB	IP	SO	BB	ERA
1 George Hemming	0.52	1587.2	362	691	4.55
2 Kid Carsey	0.61	2222	484	796	4.95
3 Bill Hart	0.61	1582	431	704	4.65
4 Vern Kennedy	0.66	2025	691	1049	4.68
5 Brickyard Kennedy	0.66	3021.2	797	1201	3.96
6 Bert Cunningham	0.67	2726.2	718	1064	4.22
7 Elam Vangilder	0.68	1714.1	474	700	4.29
8 Duke Esper	0.68	1735	456	668	4.40
9 Win Mercer	0.70	2466	525	752	3.98

THE UNTRUMPETED TRIO (cont.)

(Continued from page 21)

eight seasons in the majors and won 91 games, the most among our rookie trio. Moreover, he is forever immortalized as the last pitcher in the nineteenth century and the penultimate pitcher in major league history to win the third game of a tripleheader. It came on September 7, 1896, at Baltimore when he hurled the Orioles to a 12-1 win over Louisville's Bert Cunningham in a game abbreviated to eight innings by darkness. According to the September 8, 1896, *Washington Post*, the historic game lasted an hour and a half before being called by the two umpires, Jim Donnelly and Doggie Miller, serving as player officials after the regular umpire took sick.

Owing to his spotty control, a career-long problem—he thrice walked over 100 batters in a season—compounded by his work all coming in the 1890s when strikeouts were scarce, Hemming owns an all-time negative distinction in addition. Among major league pitchers who labored a minimum of 1,500 innings, he will almost definitely always possess the record for the poorest strikeouts to walks ratio. (See Table Below). Albeit, if his 1893 bio in the *New York Clipper* is to be trusted, he fanned Harry Stovey nine times in a row in 1890, a feat that may be unmatched by any other hurler *vis a vis* the game's greatest nineteenth century right-handed slugger.

THE WEST COAST WILDMAN

Philip Louis Knell is the only one of our three featured Players League rookie pitchers who had previous major league experience, albeit just three games and 26⅓ innings in 1888 with Pittsburgh of the National League, not enough to preclude him in 1890 from yearling status. The February 5, 1898, *The Sporting News* described the southpaw as blond, wiry at 5'7½" and 154 pounds, a loud non-stop bench jockey and never a popular teammate, but his assortment of curve balls were so lethal against left-handed hitters that Dan Brouthers, the leading lefty swinger in his time, called him the toughest pitcher he ever faced. There was even a joke that Knell, a natural southpaw, trained to become a right-handed hitter to prevent ever being at such a severe disadvantage as Brouthers against a lefty like himself.

Born on March 12, 1865, in Mill Valley, California, Knell starred at an early age in the mid-1880s with arguably the West Coast's two most renowned teams at the time, the Tufts-Lyons club of Los Angeles and Oakland's Greenhood & Moran's club, before Pittsburgh bought him from the latter team for \$1,000 in June 1888 after he reportedly gave up just one earned run in 12 starts with the G & M's. Universally condemned by the local press for going east during the G & M's summer season, he was grudgingly wished luck only because he was a "California boy."

In his major league debut on July 6, 1888, at Pittsburgh, he

was caught by fellow Californian Fred Carroll and topped Washington's Jim Whitney 3-2 despite doling out eight walks and hitting two batters. Washington was a weak team, but Knell's debut nonetheless was a success in all. Rather than recognizing it as such, Pittsburgh's erratic manager Horace Phillips (soon to be institutionalized for madness) considered only Knell's difficulty in finding the strike zone and for the next six weeks or so consigned the Californian to taking tickets at the gate while he worked on his control. Finally given another opportunity on August 25 in the second game of a doubleheader against Indianapolis, he lost 7-6 to the Hoosiers' Bill Burdick.

Two days later, again in the second game of a doubleheader, this time at Chicago, he was blown out 10-1 by the White Stockings' Mark Baldwin. Soon afterward, Phillips announced his release. Knell left, having been charged with 18 walks and five hit batsmen in his three appearances. The California League happily welcomed him back that winter but lost him again the following spring when he joined the St. Joseph Clay Eaters of the Western Association (then the strongest minor league) and went 13-19, including a no-hitter on July 14 against Sioux City as per the *Encyclopedia of Minor League Baseball*, 3rd edition, *Baseball America*, 2007, before being sold to Hall of Famer Frank Selee's Omaha club in time to share in the Omaha's claiming the WA pennant. Hired that winter to pilot the Boston National League entry, Selee

(Continued on page 23)

THE UNTRUMPETED TRIO (cont.)

(Continued from page 22)

took his staff ace, 39-game winner Kid Nichols, with him but did not think to include Knell who won only one of his five decisions under Selee's tutelage.

However, over the winter of 1889-90 the 25-year-old lefty was observed by scouts roaming the year-around California League in search of talent for Players League clubs caught short when major league veterans reneged on joining



Phil Knell
1895

the rebel loop at the last minute. It is not known who spotted Knell with the Oakland team in late March and steered him to the Philadelphia Players League entry just before it broke its spring training camp in Richmond, Virginia, in April. Knell, in any case, was so lightly regarded that Philadelphia

gave him permission to stop off in Omaha en route east to exchange pleasantries with former teammates there. Expected to vie with another more esteemed rookie, Bill Husted, for the last spot in the Quakers' rotation behind Charlie Buffinton, Ben Sanders and Bert Cunningham, he instead found himself advanced to the third spot when the veteran Cunningham started off the regular season 3-9 and was dropped while Husted proved to be out of his depth against the top echelon Players League hitters. By the end of the season Knell survived 168 walks and 28 hit batsmen to lead the fourth-place Quakers with a fine 22-11 record and would probably have won Rookie of the Year honors to boot had the award existed in 1890. As it was, in their 1984 book, *The Hidden Game of Baseball*, John Thorn, Pete Palmer and David Ruether credited the lefty with a PL leading 6.5 wins above team.

Despite his shining frosh ledger, Knell was still legally bound to the minor league Omaha club when the rebel PL folded after the 1890 season. He escaped to the Columbus Solons of the American Association in April 1891 when Omaha kept him hanging too long in wait for an acceptable contract and the AA declared itself outside the National Agreement in the interim, enabling its teams to sign anyone not under a binding contract for 1891. In his first season with an established major league team, Knell logged a southpaw season-record 226 walks, an all-time season record for hit bats-

men with 54 and threw 23 wild pitches. Irregardless, he finished above 500 with a 28-27 record and won nearly half of the second-division Solons' 61 victories along with leading the AA with five shutouts. In addition, he had the distinction of facing John McGraw in McGraw's first major league game on August 26, 1891, as McGraw played second base for Baltimore and went 1-for-4 in



Phil Knell
1889

a 5-1 win over Knell's Solons.

Not long after the 1891 season ended, Knell married Fredericka Morsch of Los Angeles on December 9, 1891, and the couple would later make the LA area

(Continued on page 24)

THE UNTRUMPETED TRIO (cont.)

(Continued from page 23)

their permanent home. That same month he once again was on the move when the AA consolidated with the National League, and the Columbus franchise, which was not included in the new loop, could only stand by and watch its players dispersed among the 12 clubs in the expanded circuit. It was Knell's misfortune to be assigned to one of its poorest teams, the Washington Nationals, who posted a .239 team batting average and finished in 10th place. His lone bright spot came on June 6 at Washington when he was chosen to hurl in the first major league game ever witnessed by a sitting president—Benjamin Harrison—and lost to Cincinnati's Tony Mullane 7-4 in 11 innings. A month later Washington released him two days after he sustained a 9-2 loss at Cleveland in the morning game of a July 4 twinbill. Toiling for a weak team, he had been a respectable 9-13 when Washington manager Arthur Irwin dumped him for his continual displays of insubordination under Irwin's dictatorial style of managing. Knell signed with the Phillies in late July 1892 and again fared reasonably well, going 5-5 for a composite 14-18 season, yet was not reserved for 1893.

Knell spent the first year at the new 60'6" pitching distance back on the West Coast with San Francisco and Los Angeles of the California League, but even though his comeback bid was spoiled in part by a broken hand in late June, Pittsburgh issued

him an invitation for 1894. The Pirates' recall was rescinded, however, after a sloppy early season relief appearance in which he gave up six walks and was rocked for 11 hits and nine runs in seven innings. About to return west, Knell got an unexpected offer from Louisville and stayed to lead the last-place Colonels in several pitching departments. His highpoint in his last full major league season came on Au-



President Benjamin Harrison and Family undoubtedly discussing Phil Knell's pitching

gust 14 when he beat the Phillies 13-7 in a game that had to be played at the University of Pennsylvania field after Philadelphia's park was destroyed eight days earlier by a fire. In the course of the contest, he was the beneficiary of six Louisville home runs, including his own second career four-bagger, courtesy of a right-field fence that was considerably shorter than the prescribed major league distance at the time. On the whole, Knell's season was remarkable in that he led the last-place Colonels in losses with 21 and pitcher strikeouts with a

mere 67 but shaved his walk total to 104.

A 0-6 mark in his first six starts in 1895 prompted Louisville to pull the plug on Knell after an 18-11 loss to Baltimore's Kid Gleason in the first game of a Memorial Day doubleheader. Once again, he was given a last-minute reprieve when he was hired by Cleveland manager Pat Tebeau more to coach the bases and lead the club in bench jockeying than to pitch. (The August 16, 1895, *Washington Post* observed that his most singular baseball talent by that time was unnerving opposing pitchers.) Pressed into service in the box when the Spiders suffered several pitching injuries soon after he joined the club, he shocked Tebeau by winning two emergency road starts in Philadelphia, 8-7 on June 8 in 10 innings and 7-6 in 11 innings three days later. With Cleveland in a hot pennant race with Pittsburgh and Baltimore, Knell pitched sparingly after that but appeared in several key games in July, the most significant coming on July 24 at Cleveland. Although hit hard the entire game by Washington, he survived to win 12-8 when the D.C. club had to prematurely leave the park to catch a train after batting in the bottom of the eighth inning. The victory vaulted Cleveland into first place, the latest date to that point in time that the Spiders had owned the best over all record in the National League.

Cleveland eventually settled for second place and then took the Temple Cup in the five-game postseason series with first-place

(Continued on page 25)

THE UNTRUMPETED TRIO (cont.)

(Continued from page 24)

Baltimore, but Knell by then was only a footnote on the team. His last appearance with the Spiders—and what proved to be his final major league game ever—came on September 25, 1895, at Louisville on the closing day of the season when he relieved Nig Cuppy in Cuppy's 13-8 loss to Colonels rookie Tom McCreery, stopped by darkness after eight innings. The game is best remembered today for Knell's tangential role in one of the most remarkable big-league finales ever. Playing in his sixth and final major league contest, Louisville center fielder Hercules Burnett had already singled, tripled, stolen a base, and scored two runs when he came up in the seventh inning. Facing Knell, Burnett completed his Herculean performance by drilling a solo home run, making him only the third player in history to that point to go yard in his last big league plate appearance. A native of Louisville, Burnett was born there in 1865, the same year of Knell's birth, and died in the River City in 1936.

The following year, Tebeau loaned Knell to Fort Wayne of the Interstate League, where it was hoped that Tebeau's brother George, who managed the Farmers, could teach Knell to play the outfield. But Knell soon took the mound again in addition to serving as an occasional gardener and later, after finding himself back on the West Coast without an engagement for 1897, boasted that he went 18-4 with Fort Wayne and cited the August 15, 1896, *TSN*, to support his claim, although incontrovertible

proof of his boast and *TSN*'s math is still lacking.

In any event, it was evident by then that Knell would never hit well enough to be a useful position player and his arm, after some ten seasons of pitching year around thanks to the mild California winters, was fraying. Eventually Knell relented in the spring of 1897 and returned to the California League. He played in various incarnations of that circuit until 1908, although by then he was primarily a first baseman-outfielder. His last full season as a pitcher came in 1904 when he went 9-23 for San Francisco in the newly minted Pacific Coast League. Four years later he bobbed up for his last full professional season at age 43 as the player-manager of the San Francisco club in the independent California State League, where he posted a 3-10 record on the mound and hit .149 in 57 games.

But Knell was far from ready to leave the diamond behind. An inveterate self-promoter, as late as his early 50s he was constantly arranging pseudo All-Star and benefit games in baseball crazed Southern California, usually with himself as the feature attraction pitching for one side or the other against the likes of such acclaimed amateurs and semi pros as teenager Walter Johnson. He also served two separate stints as an umpire in the Pacific Coast League, but each ended badly. As per the September 10, 1913, *Los Angeles Times*, in early September of 1913, Knell dispensed with officiating when a livid crowd at Los Angeles's Wash-

ington Park mobbed him as he tried to fight his way through it to his dressing room, backed by San Francisco players armed with bats. Knell was over 60 when he played with former PCL catcher Dad Meek's Vernon team in his last "Old-Timers" game preceding a Pacific Coast League contest in 1926. He died 18 years later in Santa Monica of a heart attack on June 5, 1944, and was cremated. His obit in the *LAT* reported that he was a member of the Masons with Hollenbeck Lodge #319.

Knell held the major league record for the most career walks issued in fewer than 1,500 innings (705) until Monte Pearson broke it in 1941. His seasonal "Wildman" records, all of them set in 1891, have never been seriously challenged.

What are we to make of Knell's place in the baseball history of his time? Plainly, he was a major talent, particularly against left-handed hitters, but overwork early in his career almost undoubtedly robbed him of his hard stuff and reduced him to something of a junk baller, just good enough to get by on his past reputation until a ripe age. As for the company he kept, after spending his rookie year with the fourth-place Philadelphia club of the Players League, he was never again on a contender until his final major league season when Cleveland picked him up largely to raise havoc as a base coach. Unhappily, no anecdotes of his coaching techniques appear to have survived.

THE UNTRUMPETED TRIO (cont.)

The author relied most heavily on the following primary sources in assembling his three biographies. The Sporting News (*TSN*), Sporting Life (*SL*), the Boston Globe, the Washington Post, the New York Times, the New York Clipper, the Brooklyn Eagle, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch,

David Ball's Nineteenth Century Major League Player Transactions and Trades log, Carlos Bauer's as yet unpublished The History of California Professional Baseball, vols. 1 and 2, the Charles Mears collection, the Chicago Tribune and Baseball-Reference.com. Key pas-

sages are attributed in the article's text to the precise date and issue of their source.

Earlier versions of all these biographies first appeared in *Major League Baseball Profiles: 1871-1900*, vol. 1, The University of Nebraska Press, 2011.



McLoughlin Brothers Base Ball Game
Circa 1892



Spinner for McLoughlin Brothers Base Ball
Game
Circa 1892