

## Members of Chapter Visit Negro League Museum in Kansas City

By Brian Flaspohler

On February 22, 2023, seven intrepid members (Brian Flaspohler, Bob Tiemann, Barbara Sheinbein, Bill Marston, Carl Riechers, Clem Hamilton, and Les Boone) of the Bob Broeg Chapter set out for Kansas City to visit the Negro Leagues Museum. Several members met in Chesterfield before picking up the remainder in Wentzville for the three-hour drive across the state. To simplify logistics, the group rented a GMC Yukon for the day. An eighth member of the group (Gayle O'Neill) drove themselves, planning to stay in Kansas City through the weekend.



After the morning drive through some rain, the group arrived in Kansas City just in time for lunch. Any visitor to KC should include BBQ on the agenda. The group went to Arthur Bryant's, which is about six blocks from the museum. This restaurant has been around since 1908 but in its current location at 1727 Brooklyn since 1949. This is a true joint with counter ordering and self-seating. This restaurant has been visited by many celebrities and politicians over the years including at least three US presidents. Excellent BBQ (brisket, pulled pork, burnt ends) served in a no-nonsense manner was enjoyed by all.

After lunch the folks loaded back up and made the very short trip to the Negro Leagues Museum at 18th and Vine. The Kansas City Royals charitable arm made all February visits to the Museum admission free which was great, and the museum had a decent crowd apart from the SABR members. The group enjoyed the fantastic displays, the two looping movies, and, of course, the statues on the field. Geddy Lee's extensive Negro Leaguer autograph collection is still on display as well as a locker for each player in the Baseball Hall of Fame. President of the Museum, Bob Kendrick, interrupted his busy schedule to talk to the group for a few minutes and to take a photo with everyone around the Cool Papa Bell statue in left field. Yes, Bell was a center fielder, but that position was being held down by Oscar Charleston, so it is understood why he had to shift over!

We left the museum and drove by the historic YMCA building where the Negro National League was founded on February 20, 1920. The building is not regularly opened for visitors, but they have done extensive restoration and host special events there. Next, was a quick stop at the Kansas City Municipal Stadium site, checking out the small plaza which commemorates this historic stadium.

For the three-hour return trip, we squeezed back into the Yukon and headed for home. Clear weather all the way made for an enjoyable, if a bit cramped, trip. A fully loaded 2022 Yukon gets about 18.5 mpg with mostly highway driving if anyone else is planning a similar trip! The group talked about doing future road trips including a trip to the Bottomley-Ruffing-Schalk Baseball Museum in Nokomis, Illinois or going to a Springfield Cardinals game in southwest Missouri.



## Serendipity at the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, September 2022

By Tom Best

When you finally make your first trip to Cooperstown, you will likely imagine that just being in the rarified air of the Hall of Fame will be enough to satisfy a lifetime of waiting. I thought this much when I made my first trip there last September of 2022.

Traveling there with my wife, I was making this pilgrimage in part to satisfy my longing to be in the presence of so much greatness. Whether gazing longingly at Stan Musial's locker and the equipment residing within or greatly admiring the language on Bob Gibson's plaque, this was a dream come true. I planned to be there for three days, in part to do research for the book I am writing on the history of baseball in Monmouth, Illinois. Satisfied with my initial results after several hours of research, I began my first day's tour of this baseball nirvana.



Walking down the main street on our second day, me in my replica Cardinal jersey and favorite Redbird hat, I was stopped several times and asked: “What’s the deal with all the Cardinal fans in town?” Not knowing, I jokingly replied “Well, there are a lot of us. I guess we travel well.” Later, when I stopped in one of the card shops, and I got a similar query from one of the owners. I still didn’t have an acceptable reply. A few minutes after leaving, I happened to be walking down the street when

some very well-dressed men with official HOF badges and Cardinal logos passed by. So, I politely asked them to stop and said: “What’s the deal with all the Cardinal fans in town?”

“Ah,” said one very pleasant gentleman, “We are part of the training staff of the Cardinal fantasy camp. “We will be in town for the next few days.” “What?” I replied with a raised voice. “Who’s here?” Gleefully, one official began rattling off the names of the Cardinal alumni who would be here for these fantasy games. “Let’s see: Ted Simmons, Larry Walker, Ozzie Smith, Brian Jordan, David Freeze, Al Hrabosky, and more!”

Now in a state unmeasurable anticipation, I asked when they would be playing. “Tomorrow!” they offered. “Can I come and watch?” I questioned. “Absolutely. There won’t likely even be a whole lot of people around.” Next, I offered an obvious fan’s inquiry: “Will I be allowed to get their autographs?” “Sure!” So, with a plan formulating in my brain, I sprinted into the nearest memorabilia shop, purchased two MLB baseballs, and hatched my strategy for fulfilling a Cardinal fan’s dream at the HOF’s Doubleday Field.

Arriving amidst the fog and chilly air, and unable to think of getting breakfast, I pulled into the parking lot of Doubleday Field and speed-walked for the first base side of the field. There in full uniform was one of the greatest of my Cardinal heroes—David Freeze, savior of game #6 in the 2011 World Series. Engaging in a regiment of stretching in front of a historical sign denoting the legacy of Bud Fowler (whom I was researching as he had played against Monmouth teams in the late 1800s), I carefully introduced myself, and described to Freeze my serendipitous encounter from the previous day. As he strained from one stretch to the next, our conversation evolved from how he remembered that monumental game in 2011 to what it was like for me as a Cardinal fan whose earliest memories were bathed in a reddish haze of Lou Brock’s base swipes. Bringing a smile to my face, he asked me about my teaching career and why I was involved in my research. This athlete, who looked as if he could still launch millions of Cardinal fans into a state of pandemonium on an October night with a blast off his bat, wanted to know about my work!

Within a few minutes, more alumni arrived. Although appearing tired, and a bit haggard in the brisk autumn air, they willingly stopped to chat and oblige my request for their signature. Al Hrabosky and I chatted about Cardinal baseball on the radio, my childhood friend named for Stan Musial, the future of baseball, and the origins of his legendarily tough personality. Actually, he’s not “mad;” he is really quite nice. Then it was on to Larry Walker, a real Hall of Famer, whom I also managed to have a couple of HOF plaque cards for him to sign for myself and a friend.

After the first game, and some lunch, my wife (the Cub fan) made our way back to the field. My wife, who often told me of her early girlish admiration for the looks of Ted Simmons, was put in charge of gaining this newly minted Hall of Famer's attention. I told of my wife's dream of meeting "Simba" to one of the fantasy players. He shouted over at Simmons, just as he was finishing getting his lineup ready: "Hey Ted, there's a lady over her who wants to meet you." This seasoned veteran of a million squats behind the plate walked over and shook Pam's hand. Too star-struck to explain her youthful obsession, I filled in with a commentary of her interest. Ted was most friendly and pleasantly added his autograph.

I could describe more of this day's encounters, but let's finish with "The Wizard." Ozzie Smith was relaxed and more conversational than I expected. About ten precious minutes ensued with discussions about what Cooperstown meant to him and the glory days of "Whitey Ball." He signed my ball and eagerly joined me in a beaming photograph. My wife turned this treasured moment into a fridge magnet, which I see every day. She knows what true love is!

Cooperstown is a place of dreams for hundreds of ball players as well as millions of baseball fans. My story is of but one such encounter with a real "field of dreams." What's yours?

## How I Prepared My Hall of Fame Ballot

By Steven Gietschier

I began working at *The Sporting News* in September 1986. Over the years, my position was called Director of Historical Records, Senior Managing Editor for Research, and Archivist. I had no idea when I took the job that I would be able to join the Baseball Writers' Association of America (BBWAA), so it was a surprise to me that I was able to do so starting in January 1987. Membership in the BBWAA was then pretty much confined to beat writers, that is, newspaper reporters who covered a major league team every day and various sports editors. But there was a clause in the BBWAA constitution (a copy of which we had in the *TSN* archives) opening membership to "editorial employees of *The Sporting News*." That's how I was able to join. We had to pay yearly dues--I think it started at \$35 a year--a fee that *TSN* did not reimburse.



Every BBWAA member gets a membership card that gets us into every major league press box. It's almost as if the press boxes are embassies: on foreign soil but controlled by an outside power, in this case, the press. Each active member's card has a number on it. I started with number 825. My number went down each year as writers left the business for one reason or another. My last active card was for 2008, and I was number 163. So I had some seniority. Once I left *TSN* in July 2008, I transitioned to BBWAA's Gold Card status: no dues, no number, but the same privileged access to the press box.

Soon after I joined, I realized that my membership would entitle me eventually to vote for the Hall of Fame. One need be an active BBWAA member in good standing for ten years before getting a ballot. Like the editors at the *New York Times*, our editors at *TSN* did not allow *TSN*



staff to vote for any of the annual postseason awards. "Our job is to report the news, not make it," one said, understandably, but he did allow us to vote for the Hall of Fame. It was an admitted perk, the absence of which would have caused much resentment.

Thus, I got my first ballot in December 1996. I voted for two candidates: Phil Niekro and Tony Perez, and Niekro was the only one elected. Other prominent names on that year's ballot included Dick Allen, Dwight Evans, Steve Garvey, Ron Guidry, Keith Hernandez, Tommy John, Jim Kaat, Minnie Minoso, Dave Parker, Jim Rice, Bruce Sutter, Don Sutton, Luis Tiant, and Joe Torre. Only Sutton and Perez came close to getting 75 percent of the votes, the standard for election, although, as we know, some of these folks eventually got elected.

Over my first ten years of voting, I guess I was fairly restrictive. Voters can vote for up to ten candidates, all of whose names are listed on the ballot, but I never voted for more than seven candidates, and most years, it was less than that. Later on, either I loosened up, or the candidates got better, or both. I voted for ten candidates in December 2013, ten in December 2014, eight in December 2015, ten in December 2016, and nine in December 2017. That was my last election.

At one time, Gold Card holders kept the right to vote for life, but the Hall changed the rules in July 2015, and Gold Card holders lost the franchise ten years after "retiring," which is I guess what I did in 2008.

Overall, my voting pattern mirrored that of the voting membership as a whole. I often voted for candidates who did not get elected, but no one was ever elected for whom I did not vote. I made no distinction between "first ballot" candidates and subsequent ballots. I also changed my mind a few times. For example, I did not vote for Ryne Sandberg until December 2004 (his second year on the ballot) when he was elected. I did not vote for Bruce Sutter until December 2005 (his thirteen year on the ballot) when he was elected, I did not vote for Billy Wagner until December 2016 (his second year on the ballot), but he still hasn't been elected.

On my last ballot (December 2017, my 22nd ballot) I voted for Vlad Guerrero, Trevor Hoffman, Chipper Jones, Jeff Kent, Edgar Martinez, Fred McGriff, Mike Mussina, Jim Thome, and Billy Wagner. On that same ballot, I did not vote for Barry Bonds, Roger Clemens, Andruw Jones, Manny Ramirez, Scott Rolen, Curt Schilling, Gary Sheffield, Sammy Sosa, or Larry Walker. Hoffman, Jones, and Thome were elected that year.

Throughout my tenure as a voter, I never met another voter who did not take the process very seriously. Moreover, I believed that the election was supposed to be an election, that is, a forum in which voters could and should disagree. The standards for election have always been nebulous, and I think that's perfectly fine. If the Hall wanted to use absolute numbers as criteria for election (say, 500 home runs or 300 wins), they wouldn't need an election. Even today, with the widespread appreciation of advanced metrics, I do not approve of rigid numbers that say either "he's in" or "he's out."

Nor, as I have said at our chapter's meetings, do I much like those critics of the voting process who say, "If you didn't vote for X, you shouldn't be allowed to vote" or, conversely, "If you did vote for X, you shouldn't have a ballot." If every ballot had to conform exactly to a certain person's standard, we wouldn't need an election.

Going back to 1996 when I voted for the first time, we clearly did not have at our disposal all the numbers and analysis we have today. In preparing my ballot, I did the best I could with the tools at my disposal and spent hours going over the performance of each candidate. Over time, the range of analytical statistics grew and became more allied with identifying true excellence, and I took advantage, as did, I think, most voters. Looking at voting patterns over time, I think you can see a gradual acceptance of closers and designated hitters as viable candidates, and a growing realization that the traditional stats sometimes do not tell us all we need to know. (Think King Felix and his Cy Young Award.)

So, while I did not create any charts full of numbers. I looked at the numbers we had and tried to interpret them as best as I could. In particular, I was cognizant that while most of the voters were seeing ball games every day, I was not. Thus, I read what they were writing. I tried to get to Busch Stadium often, but I was never close to being a beat writer. So, I always proceeded cautiously, knowing that my vision and my knowledge were necessarily limited.

At the same time, I gave some attention to the definition of "fame." This is a subjective term, of course--and may even be ethnically-biased--but so is calling balls and strikes. I tried to do the best I could. I looked at what you might call "impact" or "celebrity" and perhaps discounted players who switched teams a lot. Maybe that's why I did not vote for Gary Sheffield or Manny Ramirez. And maybe I was wrong.

Finally, like every voter, I had to address the issue of PEDs. As amorphous as this question is, I came down on the side of not voting for guys who used (to the best of our knowledge) or who were generally considered to have used. Is this a slippery slope? You bet. We live on a slippery slope, in fact, many of them. That's our fate as humans.

One last thought: I was thrilled to become a voter. I enjoyed my tenure. I was distraught when I learned that I would one day lose my vote, but now, eight years later, it's okay. The whole thing has gotten too complicated, the arguments too heated, the public criticism too fierce, and I'm not sorry that I'm not directly involved any more.

## **Sports Collectibles Treasures are Still Out There**

by Jeffrey S. Copeland

Sports collectibles "finds" can come in the most unexpected and oddest of places. Several years back, I found an autographed Mickey Mantle "numbered print" (actually, my wife spotted it) at the bottom of a display case in a "home décor" store specializing in primitive furniture. How and why it got there, we never found out, but after plunking down twenty-five dollars, I was out the door with it. I also once found at a flea market a team-issued photo postcard of Roger Maris, when he was with the Cardinals, and his bold signature (not a machine signed version) was penned across the Birds-on-the-Bat on his uniform. The picture was jammed in a box with older vacation-type postcards, and the box had a small sign that read: "Your Choice – 10 cents." He didn't sign many of these while playing for the Cards, so I was thrilled to acquire it for my collection. Another time, after doing a small favor for a friend, he sent me a baseball autographed by "Wahoo Sam" Crawford and Chief Meyers, two greats of their era;

he discovered the ball in a shoebox he was throwing in the trash. The signatures were eventually verified as legit, and this piece of history still sits in an honored place in my study. I've been fortunate through the years to stumble upon some pretty great collectible treasures, but the greatest "find" of all happened under the strangest of circumstances on a morning I'll never forget.

The ad in the newspaper said, "Garage Sale – furniture, clothes, sports cards." The address was also given, and those interested were instructed to get there at 7:00 a.m. the next day. My dear friend Ron, another memorabilia and card collector, called me and said he thought we should check it out just in case the cards turned out to be what we collected. The next morning, I picked him up early so we could be the first in the door. To our surprise, it was the garage door that started going up right at the appointed time, so we hustled over there as fast as we could. Once inside, we saw a series of tables, some with clothes piled up on them, others with miscellaneous kitchen and general household items – and in the far corner a smaller table with piles of cards. Ron and I were the first to see this, so we practically ran to the table. Ron immediately started picking up stacks of nonsports cards from the 1950's and '60's -- Davy Crockett, Frontier Days, Civil War News, World on Wheels, Munsters, and so on. I couldn't believe what was right in front of me: a shoebox full of vintage baseball cards with about a dozen T206's right on top. One was flipped over, and the brand on the back was Hindu, one of the rarest in the set. I could also see some cards from the Goudey card issues of the 1930's – and even a smattering from the 1952 Topps baseball set, including the cards of Orestes Minoso and Dick Groat, one of the coveted Hi #'s. At that point, I was shaking with excitement. I cradled the box under my right arm and kept looking the other cards on the table, but most of the rest were more modern and not something either one of us collected.

At that point, the man running the sale came over, introduced himself, and said he was happy we were finding some things we liked. At that same moment, an older woman I guessed to be right on the doorstep of ninety slid between us, pointed to the box under my arm, and asked the man, "How much you askin' for that?" He smiled and said, "Oh, I think twenty dollars would do it."



The woman had some bills crumpled in her left hand, and as swiftly as a pickpocket, snatched out a twenty, handed it to the man, pulled the box from under my arm, and headed as quick as she could out of the garage and down the driveway. I stood there with my mouth open as Ron and the man started howling at the suddenness and absurdity of the situation. I didn't look at them. Instead, I started after her, but when I reached the driveway, I suddenly could see the headlines of our local newspaper: "Local Professor Tackles and Fatally Injures Ninety-Year-Old Woman While Fighting Over Baseball Cards." I stopped in my tracks, defeated, deflated, dumbfounded. The man running the sale offered, while still laughing, "I've never seen anything like that before in my whole life!" I just shook my head and replied, "I

think I'm going to be sick." When he finally regained his composure, he added, "Those were my dad's cards – but I held his favorites back. I really don't know what I'd do with them, so I guess you can have them for the same twenty bucks."

He headed in the house for a couple of minutes before returning with about a two-inch stack of cards held together with a rubber band. He handed them to me, and the first card on top was the 1962 Post Cereal card of Roger Maris. I could tell by the coloring and edges it was the promotional version from *Life* magazine of that same year, and I knew it was worth well over the twenty dollars, so I reached into my wallet and handed over the funds. I was still muttering to myself and was so disappointed I didn't even bother to look at the other cards under Maris. After Ron paid for his treasures, we started walking down the sidewalk toward my car. "What did you end up with?" he asked, still trying to stifle his laughter. I carefully slid off the rubber band, took a closer look at Mr. Maris, then started through the stack. The second card was the 1959 Topps card of Mickey Mantle in a conservative "excellent" condition. "whoa – look at that!" I beamed. Then, next, there it was: my Holy Grail card: The iconic 1952 Topps Mickey Mantle in beautiful condition. I stopped in my tracks, showed the card to Ron, and we both screamed at the same time.

By the time we got to the car, I felt so guilty I decided I needed to go back and tell the seller he'd made a mistake giving me the cards so cheaply. Back at the garage, I tried to tell him he needed to contact one of the national dealers or try to sell them at auction, but he would have none of it. He simply said, "Dad would be happy they are going to a good home. Keep them. They're yours now." We both had tears in our eyes, but for very different reasons. I still have that Mantle, the pride of my collection, and I'm grateful to be its custodian until it finds a home down the road with another collector. Still, to this day I wonder what was in that box the old woman grabbed for a snatch-and-run. There were plenty of T206's, so maybe an Honus Wagner card? Goudey's of Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig? A Stan Musial or Satchel Paige rookie card? I'll never know, but I do know treasures like that are out there, so I'll keep looking. After all, the "thrill of the chase" is the most fun of all. But I still wish I had that darn box!

## My Strat-O-Memories

By Bill Marston

Back in the day – before I cared much about girls, before I could drive, and when I still thought that I was going to play in the major leagues – I played my first game of Strat-O-Matic Baseball.

It was the summer of 1971. I was a huge baseball fan. I couldn't wait to get my weekly copy of *The Sporting News*, and I read it thoroughly, including the advertisements. The enticing ad for Strat-O-Matic Baseball made it sound like the best game ever; maybe it is!





I was in such a hurry to get the game that I even forked over the extra \$1.75 that it took for a rushed special delivery. I remember my excitement the first time I put my hands on the red box with the faceless batter, catcher, and umpire.

Fifty years dampen my memory a bit, but I believe that I bought the basic set that had six teams. I played some games with neighborhood friends, and

I remember playing my dad one time. He had the Cardinals and set his lineup with Bob Gibson batting eighth and Dal Maxvill ninth. He figured that even the pitcher's hitting card had better results than Maxvill's. I thought he was silly, but it should be noted that he was thirty years ahead of Tony LaRussa.

My love for the game grew, so the next year I purchased the complete 24-team set of the 1971 season. It could be the fifty-year fog, but I don't remember playing this game with friends or family, but the thrill of just holding those cards gave me a feeling of closeness to the players. Looking at the card was like having the player right there with me, and I looked through those cards a lot. They even had a smell that meant Strat-O-Matic Baseball to me.

My favorite card was Joe Torre's with his .363 batting average in his MVP season. It's funny how faded some memories are, yet I can still clearly picture the name Rennie Stennett with his .353 batting average at the top of his Pirates' card. When writing this, I checked his stats on Baseball-Reference.com. Sure enough, I was spot on recalling his 1971 batting average.

I'm not sure if I wanted to fill a baseball void caused by the 1972 players' strike, or if I just couldn't get enough baseball, but I decided to hold my own Strat-O-Matic tournament with all 24 teams. I drew the bracket on poster board and pinned it to my bedroom bulletin board.

In a spiralbound notebook I kept a scorebook containing all 23 games in this single-elimination tournament. I have no recollection how I filled in the bracket to decide the matchups and which teams played an extra game, but I do remember that my St. Louis Cardinals played the Detroit Tigers in the first round. To my great disappointment, the Cardinals were eliminated. In a sequel to the torturous 1968 World Series, the Cardinals were once again dominated by Mickey Lolich. I shouldn't have been surprised. The 1971 Lolich, even better than in 1968, finished second in the Cy Young voting. I probably should have chosen a weaker pitcher in the Tigers' rotation to start for them to aid the Cardinals' chances.

I named Rick Wise the starter for the Cardinals. Wise was with the Phillies in 1971, so his card wasn't even part of the St. Louis team. However, I was enamored with this pitcher who in one June game the previous season pitched a no-hitter and hit two home runs, so I put his card in with the Cardinals and moved Steve Carlton to the Phillies.

Wise went homerless and gave up plenty of hits to the Tigers, and the Cardinals were finished. As a result, I considered making the tournament double elimination to keep the Cardinals alive. Realizing that would require drawing up a 24-team double-elimination

bracket, I nixed that idea. I consoled myself by playing a couple of consolation games with the Cardinals after finishing my tournament.

I'm sorry to say that I don't recall who won the tournament, but there was one exciting game that has stuck in my mind for five decades – the game I played in the parking lot at school. The high school I attended as a freshman had a policy that every other week there would be one night with no homework assignments. On this particular homework-free day, I took my game with me to school thinking that I could use my last-period study hall to play one of my tournament games rather than trying to further my academic studies.

My dad was a math teacher at the school, so our Volkswagen Bug was parked conveniently in the faculty parking lot. I climbed into the back seat where the game could be spread out and played somewhat comfortably. As the game moved into the late innings one of the pitchers had a no-hitter going! I wish I remembered for sure who the pitcher was. My memory says Mickey Lolich. That recollection could be confused with the pitcher who beat the Cardinals earlier. Or it could have been that he followed up that performance with a second strong outing, which would mean that I had no sense of using a pitching rotation; I just went with a team's best pitcher.

The excitement built for me just as it does in real life. I wanted that no-hitter to happen. I must admit that I might not have managed the opposing team as well as I should have. I think I might have even let the pitcher bat for himself late in the game. Regardless, Lolich completed his no-hitter, and I was thrilled. That was the most exciting study hall I ever had.

For many years, my Strat-O-Matic game stayed stored in the basement, until it reached an untimely end. Water got in the basement, and the game and cards were in such awful shape that I had to throw them out. And my scorebook? During a cleaning many years ago, I decided to pitch the notebook, thinking, "Who would ever want to look through the scoresheets for games that weren't even real?"

Fifty years later, I would!

## **The Research that Enlightens and Feeds Your Soul: Studying Local History through the Subject of Baseball**

by Tom Best

Dedicated historians will tell you that the feelings experienced during the search for elusive facts, people, events, and explanations for the causes and effects of historical developments are amazingly strong. When such a search involves the topic of baseball, as it often does for me, you have a doubly intensive experience.

Around Monmouth in Warren County, Illinois, one of those areas where the territory between Cub fans and Cardinal fans is deeply contested, local folks know of my love of both local history and baseball. Therefore, a moment for discovery was not a surprising development a

few years ago when a friend offered me a look at darkly shaded older photograph of an old-time ball player. The caption was simply stated: Welsh, 2b, Monmouth Browns of the Central Association of which they finished in fourth place. At first, the result was little more than a brief article in our local Warren County Genealogical Society's newsletter about this interesting find. I was hoping that some local folks might have at least a smattering of information on this player and/or team. Indeed, I heard that a minor league team once existed in our community of under 10,000 people, but I assumed that their time was brief, and their impact limited on the stage of early baseball.

Within weeks, I took it under my own increased curiosity to start sifting through old scrapbooks at our local history room in the county library, engaging in searches on the Internet for samples of Monmouth Browns box scores, and reaching out to some older members in our area to see if their parents or grandparents might have a story or two to share. Initially, I uncovered enough information to offer my thanks back to our local genealogical society by offering to write a multi-part article for their newsletter. With additional assistance from our best local historian, Jeff Rankin, I was able to relate back to interested readers and researchers that—yes, indeed—we have had baseball played on the streets and fields around Monmouth dating to the time of the Civil War. This brief article will illustrate my early research by describing some of the fascinating tales I learned about baseball in the earliest years of the post-Civil War era.

Within this avenue of baseball studies, I was able to uncover the circumstances that “base ball” (spelled as two words in this period of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century) was being played by young men in the area of the downtown business district, offended store owners requested that the game featuring a struck ball that likely hit more than one store window or hit one passing horse-drawn wagon was to be limited in its play.

Following our nation's most consequential conflict of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, a likely “junior team” was formed among more interested and talented baseball players (“junior team” likely referring to older teens). This team which played together in various rosters from the later 1860s to mid-1870s was known as the “Clippers.” Their abilities were regarded as good enough to be challenged to play a variety of similar teams across the area of northern Illinois, especially including some of the best amateur teams in the state from the area of Chicago. For instance, the Clippers participated in a series of challenges against an all-star team of local talent and defeated them 47-34. Next, they traveled to little Altona, Illinois in next door Knox County and upended them 64-42. The last game of record was against Young America (soon to be called Kirkwood) where the Clippers emerged on top doubling their opponents output 92-35.

In 1869, the Clippers played other amateur teams from the Chicago area. Their opponents were said to have included four of five members of the previous Chicago Excelsior club (one of the better post-war teams in Illinois, which could boast victories over the highly respected “Forest City” squad and matches with clubs on the east coast such as Brooklyn and Philadelphia). One contest was a close match with a 31-26 result through nine innings for the Amateurs. The Chicago Tribune was complementary to both teams in terms of the quality of their play, declaring that this game was best seen so far this season. Particular praise was laid at the feet of the Clippers for being “the best batters, either sending their balls along the grass or beyond the field . . .” (in fact, the Evening Post admitted that a victory over the “Clippers” was a “plume” for the Chicago team as the Clippers “rated high”).

Now, against such superior talent, the Clippers eventually learned the true nature of their own talents as supposedly “invincible.” They soon handed a humiliating 76 to 1 crushing by players on one of the best regional teams in not just Illinois, but the entire Midwest. This Rockford club included such prominent baseball stars as Albert Spalding, Charles Roscoe “Ross” Barnes (who later became a major-league “superstar” and batted .397 between 1871-1876), and Bob Addy (a bow-legged, but big-hearted character, credited with first introducing the “slide” to a ball game). Their talents and depth far surpassed such typical “hometown” teams.

While the Clippers were not anything but very competitive in this era, their game against the “Forest City” team of Rockford, Illinois proved embarrassing. Stocked no doubt with some of the best players from northeastern Illinois, if not the Midwest, the Clippers faced one of the best athletes in this contest in future Hall of Famer Albert Spalding, then just 18 years old. To illustrate Spalding’s playing ability (before his days as a manager and sporting equipment magnet), he pitched for the Boston Red Stockings and Chicago White Stockings in what was called the “National Association.” In his six main seasons stretching from 1871 (when he was a twenty-year-old rookie for the Boston team earning \$1,500 a season, or about \$32,000 today) to 1876 (when he was then earning \$3,500 or the equivalent of \$85,000), Spalding amassed a record of 251 wins against a mere 65 losses.

Interested? I hope to share more stories from what is becoming a book of about 500 pages which I am finishing up at this point in time. I hope to share more about this work in some future articles.

## Upcoming Events and Meetings

### Monthly Meetings

We meet monthly at The Sports Café located at 3579 Pennridge Dr., Bridgeton, MO 63044. The meetings start at 6pm and are also available on zoom. Our meeting dates for the remainder of 2023 are as follows: July 24, August 21, October 16, November 13, and December 11.

### Fellowship Meetings

These informal get-togethers are held the first Wednesday of every month at Mike Duffy’s in Kirkwood located at 124 W Jefferson Ave, Kirkwood, MO 63122. People beginning meeting around 5:30. The meeting dates for the remainder of 2023 are as follows: August 2, September 6, October 4, November 1, and December 6.

### Rygelski Research Conference hosted by Webster University

Our annual research conference will be hosted by Webster University on September 30 in the Sverdrup building located at 8300 Big Bend Blvd, Webster Groves, MO 63119. A call for papers and information to register for the free conference will be sent via email near the end of July.