

BLACK SOX SCANDAL



Vol. 4, No. 1, June 2012

Research Committee Newsletter

Leading off ...

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Chairman's Corner

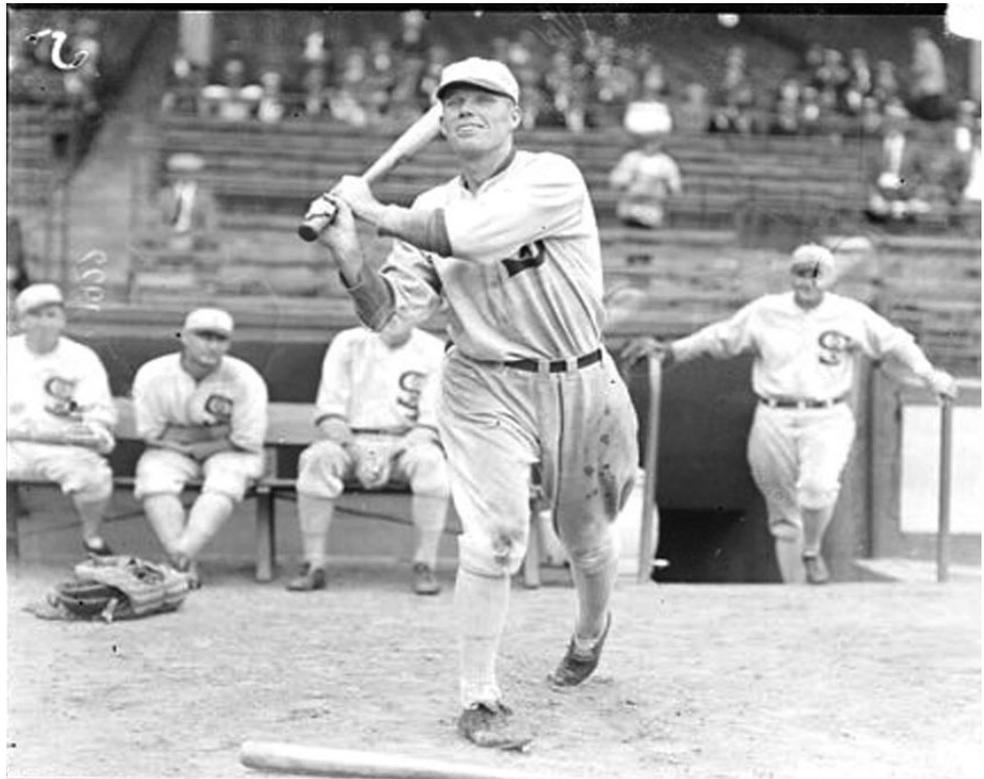
By Jacob Pomrenke
buckweaver@gmail.com

As I write this sentence, I'm looking out over the southwestern United States from 30,000 feet in the air, thinking about all the places most people would never associate with the Black Sox Scandal.

I've been fascinated by this story since I first read "Eight Men Out" at age 16, and wondered just what happened to these disgraced ballplayers who threw some games, took some money and then supposedly vanished from the public eye. Later I found that they had scattered across the country — and as my life and career took me to some of those same places, I began to learn more about the Black Sox connections there.

What I quickly realized was this: The Black Sox Scandal extends its reach into just about every corner of the continent. So no matter where you are, you're

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College baseball fans know Bibb Falk, center, as the coach who led the University of Texas to two national championships and the co-namesake of the Longhorns' famous Disch-Falk Field in Austin. But Falk was also one of the top American League outfielders of the 1920s, compiling a .314 lifetime batting average in 12 seasons. At 22 years old in 1921, he replaced Shoeless Joe Jackson in left field for the White Sox. (Chicago Daily News negatives collection, SDN-063894, courtesy of Chicago History Museum.)

The man who replaced Shoeless Joe

By Jacob Pomrenke
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There's a joke to be made about how no one could possibly fill the shoes of a superstar ballplayer famously called "Shoeless." But that was exactly what the Chicago White Sox asked 22-year-old Bibb Falk to do in 1921.

Falk was signed by the White Sox in June 1920 out of the University of Texas, per-

IN HIS OWN WORDS

Tom Willman, chair of SABR's Oral History Research Committee, interviewed Bibb Falk in 1988 and recently added the recording to SABR's

Oral History Collection. You can listen to Falk tell baseball stories in his Texas drawl by clicking the link below or pasting it into your Internet browser:

<http://bit.ly/BibbFalk>

sueded to skip his senior year for a \$1,000 signing bonus. With the White Sox fighting for a third American League pennant in four seasons, Falk was given a chance to report to the minor leagues for more playing

time. As he told the *Dallas Morning News* in 1988, "I said, 'No, I'd like to stay up there [Chicago] the rest of the season.'"

When the Black Sox Scandal broke that fall, Falk's choice proved to be

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SABR 42 meeting slated for June 28

Hope you're all planning to attend SABR's 42nd national convention, June 27-July 1 in downtown Minneapolis, Minnesota.

The fourth annual meeting of the Black Sox Scandal Research Committee will be held at 6:00 p.m. on Thursday, June 28, in the Elk Room at the Marriott City Center in downtown Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Allen Tait is planning to deliver a brief presentation on "The Black Sox Money Trail — A Path Not Taken."

Tait notes that primary sources agree there was at least an \$80,000 "offer" to fix the results of the 1919 World Series and that the names of the gamblers involved are comprised of a consistent core group.

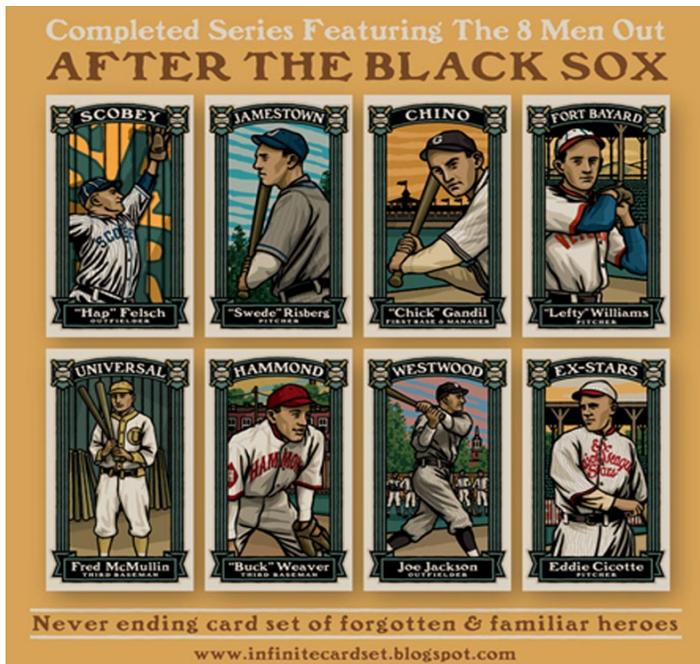
However, other gambler names surface in certain pieces of Black Sox re-

search and the money trail is quite convoluted at present. As a result, the source of the funds for the fix has never been identified. The suspected source of the funds, Arnold Rothstein, was examined by a Grand Jury but not indicted. Tait is researching why the money trail was never investigated effectively.

Jacob Pomrenke will also speak about the Black Sox connections to Minnesota, including their barnstorming tour through the Mesabi Iron Range in the northern part of the state in 1922.

If anyone else is interested in speaking at the meeting, contact committee chair Jacob Pomrenke at buckweaver@gmail.com.

A detailed schedule of all SABR 42 events can be found online at SABR.org/convention.



Get your hand-made Black Sox card set

In 2010, SABR member Gary Cieradkowski, an artist from Crestview Hills, Kentucky, began a series of illustrations on the Eight Men Out, which he's been posting at infinitecardset.blogspot.com:

"I originally had the idea of depicting the players while on the 1919 Sox, complete with their season stats and series record. In fact I actually posted the Lefty Williams and Buck Weaver cards in this format. The more I thought about it though, I decided that I wanted to focus more on an aspect that always intrigued me, what did those players do AFTER they were banned.

"I had heard stories back where I grew up in Northern New Jersey of Shoeless Joe Jackson playing under fake names for little Jersey town teams back in the '20's, but found no proof. At the end of Eliot Asinof's great book "Eight Men Out" he leaves us with tantalizing mention of a Black Sox barnstorming tour. Was this team real? What did these guys do after the ban? Could they have just gave up playing the game they must have loved?

"Through my research and with the help of many historians who generously shared their material I have created an 8-card set of these guys and the outlaw teams they played on after Judge Landis threw them out of organized baseball in the Fall of 1920."

The cards sell for \$5 each or \$35 for a set. E-mail Gary at info@cieradkowskidesign.com for details.

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Swede Risberg: More educated than you think

By Jacob Pomrenke
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Swede Risberg reportedly liked to tell people that he dropped out of school after the third grade because he had "refused to shave." While the comment was almost certainly made in jest, it helped bolster Risberg's reputation as an undereducated, hard-scrabble player who had to fight for everything he got. Playing for the Chicago White Sox from 1917-20, Risberg's social circle included teammates with little formal schooling, such as Buck Weaver, Happy Felsch and the famously illiterate Shoeless Joe Jackson.

In *Eight Men Out*, author Eliot Asinof portrayed the team as filled with dissension, and one of the primary factors he cited was the cliques of educated players — Columbia University graduate Eddie Collins headed a group of nearly a dozen White Sox players who attended at least some college, rare in those days — versus the uneducated.

But Risberg may have had more formal schooling than he liked to let on, which adds another layer of complexity to the story of a Black Sox Scandal ringleader.

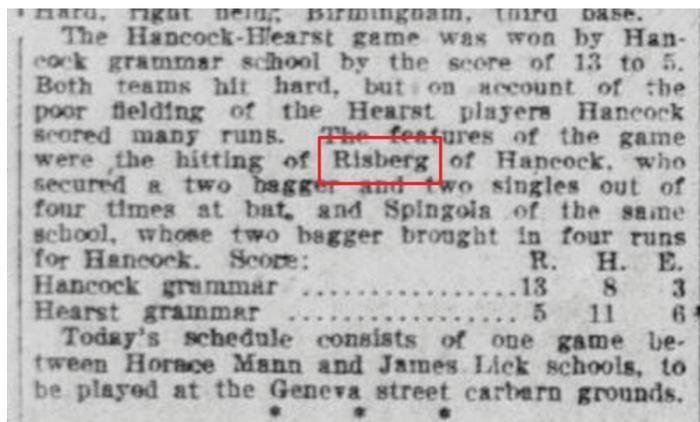
Black Sox researcher extraordinaire Bob Hoie discovered that up through at least age 15, Risberg attended Hancock Grammar School in his hometown of San Francisco, California. Hancock Grammar School, which still stands at 940 Filbert Street, now serves as the Chinatown/North Beach campus for City College of San Francisco. You may have seen the building used as a setting in films such as *Mrs. Doubtfire* (1993) with Robin Williams and during Steve McQueen's climatic car-chase scene in *Bullitt* (1968).

Hancock also happens to be where Joe DiMaggio learned to read and write about two decades later. In the years when Risberg was there during the first decade of the 20th century, it was an 18-room school that enrolled about 500 students through the eighth grade. According to the San Francisco Public Schools Directory of 1911-12, Hancock's venerable principal, Nellie G. Gallagher, had been there since 1896.

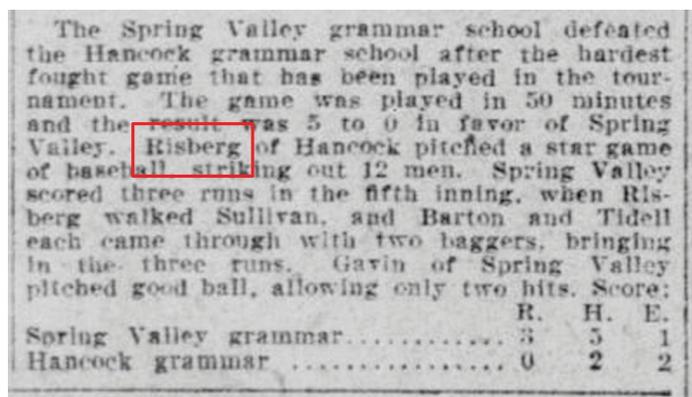
At ages 14 and 15, Risberg was Hancock's star pitcher on the baseball team and the *San Francisco Call* often mentioned his name in its amateur roundups (see newspaper clippings at top-right).

Hoie also pointed out another tell-tale sign that Risberg was fairly educated for his era: his penmanship.

"He had great handwriting," Hoie said. "You can tell he



San Francisco Call, May 7, 1909



San Francisco Call, May 11, 1909

was taught, and taught well."

See page 4 for a photo of a Risberg autographed ball that went up for auction with American Memorabilia in December 2011, which clearly shows off his handwriting skills.

Risberg's education does seem to have ended at about the eighth grade. There is no documentation linking him to any high school in San Francisco, through baseball or otherwise. After earning fame as a semipro pitcher in the Bay Area, the 17-year-old Risberg received a tryout with the Vernon Tigers of the Pacific Coast League in 1912 and began his professional career that summer. Converted to a shortstop in the major leagues, his strong throwing arm was his greatest asset. Following his banishment from organized baseball in the Black Sox Scandal, Risberg once again became a full-time pitcher as he continued to make his living playing baseball in outlaw/semipro leagues around the Upper Midwest.

His business sense also proved keen, befitting someone

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► RISBERG

Continued from Page 3

with more than a third-grade education. According to his son Robert, during the 1920s Swede made more money as the organizer and star of traveling outlaw/semipro teams than he did in the major leagues. After hanging 'em up in the mid-1930s and moving to a small company town on the California-Oregon border, Risberg operated a series of taverns and nightclubs that were successful for many years.

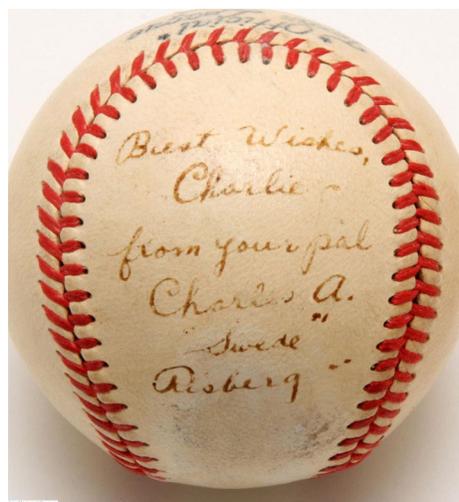
One other note on Risberg's education: His best friends on the 1919 White Sox team, and co-conspirators in the Black Sox Scandal, were fellow Californians, PCL alums and infielders Fred McMullin, who graduated from Los Angeles High School, and Chick Gandil, who attended Oakland High School for at least two years. Dropping out in the third grade would have made Risberg the second-least educated of all his teammates, ahead of only Shoeless Joe Jackson. His story doesn't add up.

Why would Risberg go through the trouble of telling anyone he was less educated than he actually was? There has always been some ostracizing against educated ballplayers by their teammates — after all, the cliché "don't think; you can only hurt the ballclub" was around long before it was quoted in the film *Bull Durham* (1986). And in the White Sox clubhouse, Columbia alumnus Eddie Collins stood apart as the team's highest-paid player and the most management-friendly, neither of which endeared him to the rest of the club. Risberg resented Collins' \$15,000 salary (he made only \$3,250), and, like many of his teammates, despised owner Charles Comiskey, who had refused to trade him back to the Coast League when Swede requested to play



Above: Swede Risberg, left, reportedly said he had a third-grade education, like his teammate Buck Weaver. But he attended Hancock Grammar School in San Francisco through at least age 15, according to newspaper records.

(Photo: Chicago Daily News negative collection, SDN-062958, courtesy of the Chicago History Museum)



Left: This Swede Risberg autographed baseball went up for auction with American Memorabilia in December 2011. His penmanship seems to indicate that he was formally taught in school — and taught well.

(AmericanMemorabilia.com)

closer to home. He didn't want to be on Collins' side on any issue.

Risberg probably felt like he had nothing to gain by being seen as an educated ballplayer. He was quick to use his fists in a game that still strived to be more gentlemanly, and he cultivated his reputation as "a hard guy," as Jackson once described him. His success depended on a measure of physical intimidation; at six feet tall and 175 pounds, he was one of the larger shortstops in baseball for his time. Socially, he was accepted by most of his teammates in a way that Collins wasn't, though Collins was the far superior player. So his ability to read and write were only of consequence to him when it came time to sign a contract, but he never seemed

able to squeeze more money out of Comiskey in the offseason.

But Risberg was more educated than most, and while he was still not among the most schooled on the White Sox roster, the idea that the Eight Men Out were poor, dumb ballplayers who didn't know what they were getting into with the World Series fix is only half-true at best. They might have been poor, at least by major league standards, but they weren't all dumb. McMullin graduated high school, while Gandil, Risberg and Eddie Cicotte all attended grammar school through at least age 15. It's no surprise, then, that these four players are considered to be the ringleaders of the fix, though their exact roles and actions may never be determined.

Fred Lieb: Suspicions at the World Series

Committee member **Carlos Bauer** recently came across this item from 1974 (in Jack Kavanagh's *Extra Inning Newsletter*, when he was marketing his baseball game), while cleaning out his garage. Thought you all might find it interesting:

We had the opportunity to talk with Fred Lieb after lunch [he was luncheon speaker at the SABR Convention in 1974].

Having driven to Philadelphia we had a car available and we were more than happy to drive the guest of honor back to his sister's home in suburban Haverford. On the way we had the

chance to question him about the 1919 World Series which he'd covered. We wondered at what point the sports writers' suspicions had become aroused.

According to Fred the odds favoring Cincinnati when the Series opened was the first suspicious circumstance. Fred said: "The odds were 6 to 5 in favor of the Reds when by any standard they should have favored the White Sox by close to 2 to 1."

A fly ball which was allowed to drop between two of the fixed players, Joe Jackson and Happy Felsch, was too peculiar for Lieb, it not being one of those situations where two fielders shy away from a collision but rather some-

thing that looked like neither wanted to make the putout.

Before the final game of the Series, Fred recalls, he was in the men's room and noticed a number of known gamblers standing outside talking about the uncertainty of the game.

As Fred came out, one of their number rushed up and said: "It's OK, they'll let them score big in the first inning." When the Reds tallied four tainted runs Fred accepted the certainty that the Series had been fixed. By common consent the writers covering the Series left it for Hugh Fullerton Jr. to develop the story of the Black Sox Scandal.

— Jack Kavanagh

► FALK

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a wise one. Outfielders Joe Jackson and Happy Felsch were among the seven players suspended from the team before the final three-game series against the St. Louis Browns.

"When we went in the clubhouse in St. Louis," Falk recalled, "there were a lot of empty lockers. ... It turned out I got my chance much sooner than I thought I would.

"With that team, I'd have been in the minors a long time."

Falk said he had "no inkling" of the scandal when he first joined the team.

"I was one of three rookies and we pretty much stayed to ourselves."

Falk made an immediate impression. In his first major league start on October 1, 1920 — the White Sox's first game without the Eight Men Out — he went 3-for-5 with a double, a run and an RBI. He earned the starting job in left field for 1921, and batted .285 in 152 games, with a team-high 31 doubles.

In 1923, he began a streak of five consecutive .300 seasons, including a career-best .352 average in 1924. In 1926, he set a White Sox franchise record for doubles (43) that stood for thirty-six years.

After finishing his career with the Cleveland Indians and scouting for the Boston Red Sox, Falk became the head coach at his alma mater, Texas, in 1940. He led the Longhorns to 20 Southwest Conference titles and consecutive national championships in 1949-50. He was elected to the College Baseball Hall of Fame in 2007.

Learn more about SABR's Oral History Collection by visiting <http://sabr.org/research/oral-history-research-committee>.

Special Black Sox issue of *Base Ball* published in May

As Bill Lamb reported in our last newsletter, the Spring 2012 issue of *Base Ball: A Journal of the Early Game*, published by McFarland & Co., is devoted entirely to Black Sox scholarship, with several members of this committee contributing articles.

The issue was just released in May and can be ordered at the standard \$20 price from McFarland & Co. at 800-253-2187 or online at mcfarlandpub.com.

You're definitely going to want to read Bob Hoie's analysis of the 1919 White Sox payroll records, which puts to rest once and for all the idea that the Sox were underpaid. Other articles include: the story of a 1917 Fenway Park gamblers riot involving the White Sox; a Pacific Coast League gambling scandal; a provocative thesis on the 1919 regular-season performance of Lefty Williams and Happy Felsch; and Lamb's comprehensive account of the Black Sox judicial proceedings.

The lone horseman of baseball's apocalypse

By Steve Klein

steve.klein@cox.net

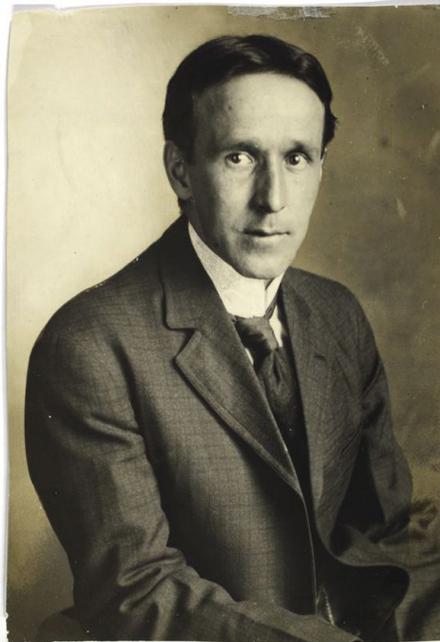
WHENEVER I come across a book that deals with the Roaring '20s and the so-called Golden Age of Sports, I look for entries about Hugh Fullerton.

It will be 93 years ago this fall that Fullerton, arguably the best-known baseball writer of his time, revealed his suspicions about the eight grossly underpaid players on the American League champion Chicago White Sox who threw, or fixed, games in the 1919 World Series. The scandal was the ensuing cover up by Organized Baseball, which was about to abandon its dead ball era for the thrill of Babe Ruth and the home run.

Most writers, and history in general, have forgotten Fullerton, even though he was a combination of Peter Gammons and Bill James at a time when baseball writers had no peers on the sport pages. Hughie, as he was affectionately known, has been all but erased from baseball's worst memory.

At the age of 46, Fullerton ultimately suffered the loss of his reputation and livelihood by biting the hand of the game that had literally fed and delighted him for more than a quarter century.

It is almost as if The Game, unable to forget its darkest moment, chose to kill the messenger: the only nationally prominent journalist who wrote about the fix when it



Unlike most prominent baseball writers, Hugh Fullerton wrote about the 1919 World Series fix as it was happening and demanded that baseball leaders clean up the game.

(Photo credit: The Albert.G. Spalding Collection, New York Public Library)

happened rather than procrastinate until it was unsuccessfully litigated more than a year later.

The story of how that happened, and why, is as much a continuing part of the Scandal as the cover-up that immediately followed the fix. It is Hugh Fullerton's story, but no one focuses on it.

Consider the eminent Roger Kahn's book, *A Flame of Pure Fire, Jack Dempsey and The Roaring '20s*, published in 2000.

There is no mention of Fullerton, who also dabbled in boxing during that post-Scandal decade of his declining sports writing career.

To find any mention at all in the book about the Black Sox, you

have to look under the name of Fullerton's better-known protégé, Ring Lardner, to find "on White Sox scandal, 213-214."

Kahn is best known for immortalizing the Brooklyn Dodgers in another book, *The Boys of Summer*. In *A Flame of Pure Fire*, Kahn credits Dempsey, the great heavy-weight boxing champion of the '20s, with nothing less than creating big-time sports in America.

However, the *New York Times'* Robert Lipsyte, one of the most significant sports columnists of the late 20th Century, would argue with Kahn about that.

"The so-called Golden Age of Sports, the twenties and early thirties, was really the Golden Age of Sportswriting," Lipsyte wrote in his classic book, *SportsWorld, An American Dreamland*, in 1975.

"The glories of the Babe, the Manassa Mauler [Dempsey], the Four Horsemen, were tunes composed on portable typewriters by gifted, ambitious, often cynical men who set customs and standards of sports journalism that are being dealt with to this day."

If Kahn's assessment of the Black Sox Scandal and his surprising ignorance of Fullerton's role in reporting on it is any indication, Kahn is suffering, as Lipsyte wrote, from those same unfortunate "customs and standards."

"Some reporters covering the fixed World Series wrote naïve

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► FULLERTON

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stories about the White Sox's poor play," Kahn writes.

He cites Christy Mathewson, the Hall of Fame pitcher who reported on the Series in collaboration with Fullerton, and Ring Lardner, as two who didn't.

But if you read the coverage of the 1919 World Series, as I have, you know that Lardner was among the reporters who wrote naïve stories.

Did Lardner know, like his friend and mentor, Fullerton, that the Series was crooked?

He had to know. Ring Lardner was no Jack Keefe, his fictional creation in the *You Know Me Al* stories. Gambling and baseball had co-habited with baseball for a long time — even Jack Keefe knew that — before baseball's post-Scandal commissioner and supposed savior, Kenesaw Mountain Landis, swept what he couldn't erase out of public sight.

What differentiated Fullerton from Lardner, as Kahn should well know, is that Fullerton wrote about it. Lardner didn't. Lardner's reputation has benefited because he ignored the fix. Baseball honors him to this day.

If you can't imagine popular baseball writers like Bill James or Peter Gammons disappearing from memory in the 21st century, then it should be equally remark-

able that Roger Kahn and so many others have been able to so conveniently forget Hugh Fullerton, thus denying his rightful place in the 20th.

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So who was Hugh Fullerton, and why is he the man baseball and American cultural history have chosen to forget?

To fully appreciate Fullerton, you first need to understand the significance of baseball in the collective American consciousness.

“Fullerton ultimately suffered the loss of his reputation and livelihood by biting the hand of the game that had literally fed and delighted him for more than a quarter century. It is almost as if The Game, unable to forget its darkest moment, chose to kill the messenger: the only nationally prominent journalist who wrote about the fix when it happened rather than procrastinate until ... later.”

Baseball is a metaphor for how Americans measure themselves against each other and how they size up — take a stance, like a batter facing a pitcher — their competitors. In many ways, it is a deeply religious experience, as a team owner tells a young phenom in Tom Grimes' 1992 novel, *Season's End*:

“Revere this game. Revere it. This game reveals in incomprehensible ways the awesome

sublimity of profitable things. It's an expression of our collective national spirit. This game ... is our religion.”

“What did we have before the game?”
“God.”

Taken in that context, it is not difficult to understand why F. Scott Fitzgerald, who spent many late nights in the early '20s drinking and talking with his equally cynical friend, Ring Lardner, chose the Black Sox Scandal as the perfect metaphor for American disillusionment following World War I. In *The Great Gatsby*, with its memorable references to the fixed World Series, Fitzgerald understood that the illegitimacy of the defining event of the Great American Pastime represented the ultimate deception of American popular culture that is so well articulated in the mythology, if not the reality, of baseball.

Fullerton, like his peers in the early 20th century, helped create that mythology. Born on Sept. 10, 1873, in Hillsboro, Ohio, Hugh S. Fullerton III's character was irrevocably forged while growing up in the American Midwest. Church, school and home furnished what Lewis Atherton, in “Main Street on the Middle Border,” called “an extensive code of morality.”

Like other journalists and authors who were born on the

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► FULLERTON

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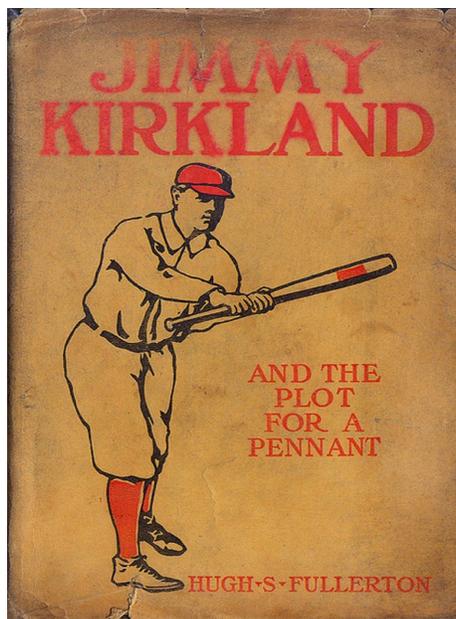
“Middle Border,” writing for Fullerton became an attractive alternative to preaching without a pulpit. As organized sports, most specifically baseball, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries accommodated itself to the benefits of capitalism, the game preyed on the American dependence for moral guidance that had for so long been provided primarily by religion. Professional baseball was just evolving into a business whose profitability depended greatly on spreading and believing in its own mythology and moral correctness. That profit motive, therefore, benefited enormously by positioning professional baseball as a secular religion.



Hugh Fullerton was in the vanguard of that quasi-religious movement. It was a good time for a man like Fullerton to be a sports writer.

A lifelong student and devotee of the grade school textbooks popularized by William Holmes McGuffey in the middle third of the 19th century, Fullerton emerged from a Victorian agrarian America into an urban industrial society influenced by America’s first reform movements that became known as Progressivism. Like many Progressives who grew up as children of the Victorian Era, Fullerton found solace and even renewed hope in a reemerging McGuffeyism in the 1920s right up until his death in 1945.

In the decade preceding the fix,



Fullerton, a prolific and eclectic writer, had published more than 100 freelance magazine articles. The majority were for the popular *American Magazine*, the favorite soapbox of the Muckrakers, Progressive journalists who pioneered American investigative journalism.

Sports writers are rarely, if ever, included in discussions about muckraking, or “the literature of exposure” as it was called at the time. Fullerton may not have thought of himself as part of the Progressive movement, but he fervently believed in and helped create the ideology that professional baseball was creating for itself and in the necessity of purity and honesty of its participants.

Fullerton’s faith in the game may not have separated him from his peers, but the disillusionment that resulted from the impact gambling was having on the game made him a unique observer of the Black Sox Scandal.

It was the lessons from the McGuffey Readers of Fullerton’s childhood, among the numerous

other influences on his life and career, that stand out as having shaped his view of life, baseball and, ultimately, the crooked World Series of 1919. The behavioral patterns of the Protestant ethic, put forth with near lethal effectiveness in the Readers, comes through consistently in much of Fullerton’s work, which encompassed much more than baseball.

To Fullerton, baseball epitomized high moral purpose. But it was also a game in which the results made perfect sense. As the preeminent prognosticator of his era, the results of the 1919 World Series did not make sense to Hughie. Fullerton, like Bill James and the followers of Sabermetrics today, possessed an unshakable belief in his own scientific system of forecasting baseball games. Fullerton attracted national attention as early as 1906 when he picked the “Hitless Wonder” Chicago White Sox to defeat an overpowering Chicago Cubs team in the World Series. Remarkably, he not only selected the eventual winner, but he came close to picking the correct score of every game and even predicted a rainout! Of such stories legends are made.

Ironically, and as if to demonstrate the acceptance researchers continue to demonstrate about Fullerton's reputation, Jonathan Yardley wrote unkindly about Hughie in his 1977 Lardner biography, *Ring*: “Fullerton was a good-natured fellow, a bit of a windbag but bearably so, who had achieved a considerable reputation by predicting the outcome of the 1906

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► FULLERTON

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World Series. ... The incident made Fullerton a minor celebrity and, some sports writers have argued, he coasted on it for the rest of his career." In truth, Fullerton had been predicting the winner since the World Series began in 1903. He continued doing so for another two decades, missing only three times -- most notably in 1919.

Equally remarkable, but less well known, is a series of three youth novels Fullerton wrote that the John Winston Company published in 1915. Fullerton used the Jimmy Kirkland series of boys' books to proselytize from the lessons he had learned from the McGuffey Readers of his youth and later summarized in an article for *American Magazine* in 1921 titled, "The Ten Commandments of Sport, and of Everything Else."

The evolving plot remarkably foreshadows the Black Sox Scandal four years later and concludes with a pennant-fixing scam in *Jimmy Kirkland and the Plot for a Pennant* — dedicated, ironically, to White Sox owner Charles Comiskey. Given the real scandal that Fullerton would confront just four years later, and that Comiskey would attempt to cover up, the novel is prophetic and astute.

The plot is uncovered by Technicalities Feehan, a baseball writer and thinly disguised stand-in for the author. Feehan notices irregu-

larities in the team's statistics that point to wrongdoing. "I deserve no thanks," Technicalities tells Kirkland, the young hero. "It's merely in the line of square dealing and justice."

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Fullerton never intended to be a hero. In fact, he may never have perceived himself to be a muck-raking Progressive attempting to reform the game he loved to his dying day, a quarter century after writing the most important and vilified stories of his life.

"Although Fullerton's public reputation was destroyed and his impact lost on future generations of sports writers like Roger Kahn, it is not too late to credit Fullerton for being a prophet ahead of his time. ... It was Fullerton's persistent belief in his late Victorian Era values, as consistently demonstrated in his writing, that contributed to his willingness to uncover the fix."

Fullerton stunned and upset his many friends in Organized Baseball with an article titled, "Is Big League Baseball Being Run for Gamblers, with Players in the Deal?" The story ran in the *New York Evening World* — not in Chicago — and not until Dec. 15, 1919, nearly three months after the Cincinnati Reds had upset the White Sox, five games to three, in the World Series. Neither the *Herald-Examiner*, the Chicago newspaper that originated Fullerton's syndicated column, nor

the *Chicago Tribune*, for which Fullerton wrote for 18 of the 22 years he worked in the city, would publish his stories about the fix because they feared being accused of libel.

"He was like a bird dog on the scent and never let go of the story," wrote another famous baseball writer, Frederick G. Lieb. "From gamblers, politicians and players, he pieced together a story."

But Fullerton was a solitary voice. His career and reputation never fully recovered from stepping outside baseball's conservative establishment, of which he

and every sports writer was a part. A 1920 editorial in *The Nation* stated: "We do not trust cashiers half as much, or diplomats, or policemen, or physicians, as we trust an outfielder or a shortstop." To write otherwise, despite decades of mounting evidence about gambling's influence on the game, was unthinkable and just about unprintable in 1919 America.

In the story, which the *World* ran on page two of the newspaper, Fullerton wrote: "Some are for keeping silent and 'allowing it to blow over.' The time has come for straight talk. How can club owners expect writers, editors and fans to have any faith in them or their game if they make no effort to clean up the scandal?"

Reaction from the baseball establishment to "the

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► FULLERTON

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peddlers of scandal” was quick and harsh, even though the peddler was considered to be the dean of America’s baseball writers. Comiskey, the White Sox owner and a member of baseball’s Hall of Fame, certainly suspected the fix. But lacking the hard evidence to prove it and the resolve to undermine his ball club and business, he conspired during the trial of the accused players with the very gamblers who had arranged the fix.

Hughie took an awful beating. *Baseball Magazine*, a mouthpiece for the franchise owners, attacked Fullerton, calling him an “erratic writer. ... If a man really knows so little about baseball that he believes the game is or can be fixed, he should keep his mouth shut when in the presence of intelligent people.”

Even though he was vindicated by the lifetime suspension of the eight White Sox players by Landis, Fullerton’s sports writing career began an almost dizzying decline. He left Chicago mere weeks after the conclusion of the World Series for New York and eventually settled into the an editing position with *Liberty*, a conservative magazine subtitled “A Magazine of Religious Freedom.” It was a far cry from *American Magazine* and the muckrakers.

“When I denounced the Chicago Black Sox during and after the World’s Series of 1919,” Fullerton wrote in 1927 in *Liberty*, “I was assailed from all directions and an

attempt was made to assassinate me. This only strengthened my convictions that the series was crooked.”

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By September of 1920, almost a full year after the fix, the baseball world was preoccupied with Babe Ruth’s assault on the 50-home run mark (Ruth would hit a then-record 54, breaking his own remarkable record of 29 in 1919, the season before the lively ball) and tight pennant races that included the White Sox. Attendance increased from 6.5 million in 1919 to 9.1 million in 1920, led by Ruth’s New York Yankees with 1.3 million.

The dead ball era was over, not unlike Major League Baseball’s post-strike era in which Mark McGwire and Sammy Sosa dominated the headlines in 1998 with record-breaking home run totals. As baseball approached a new profitability, this was hardly the time for a scandal. Owners like Comiskey were in lucrative denial that baseball had a gambling problem.

Although Fullerton’s public reputation was destroyed and his impact lost on future generations of sports writers like Roger Kahn, it is not too late to credit Fullerton for being a prophet ahead of his time.

He was a trailblazer in the profession who went beyond the exaltations of romantic, uncritical peers like Grantland Rice. More critical and cynical writers like Lardner and Damon Runyon, ultimately abandoned the profession

to write short stories and theater plays or to cover politics. Fullerton labored on copy desks in New York, Philadelphia and Columbus and became increasingly involved in the sometime burgeoning McGuffey movement to return the old school books to the classroom.

It was Fullerton’s persistent belief in his late Victorian Era values, as consistently demonstrated in his writing, that contributed to his willingness to uncover the fix. That was at odds with *The Game*’s need to mirror America’s perception of itself. Baseball required honesty, but its association with gamblers indicated the opposite and therefore needed to be ignored or covered up.

The sports writer’s daily job, said Paul Gallico, a former sports writer himself who went on to write literary fiction, was to “peddle treacle about the baseball heroes and soft-pedal the sour stuff.” Beneath the surface of writing style, however, are the issues of journalistic integrity. And in that area, Fullerton may have known no peer or set a better example on so big a story.

The Black Sox Scandal provided sports writers with a unique challenge, but only one journalist was up to it. What should have been Hugh Fullerton’s finest moment proved to be his last in the spotlight.

The quintessential apostle of baseball before the fateful World Series of 1919, Fullerton emerged as the ultimate McGuffeyite thereafter: spreading an unwanted gospel that left him scorned, ridiculed and, finally, forgotten.

► CHAIRMAN

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never far away from a local angle to pursue in your research.

In my north Georgia hometown, I searched for any truth to the rumors that an aging Shoeless Joe Jackson had once played in a mill league game there. In California, I visited Fred McMullin's house in the Lincoln Heights neighborhood of Los Angeles — which he bought with his 1917 World Series money. In Arizona, where I live today, I've been seeking more information on the summers when Chick Gandil, Lefty Williams, Buck Weaver and Hal Chase played in the outlaw Copper League down near the Mexican border.

The Internet, of course, has made it much easier to do research on places and subjects far from home. Newspaper archives from any region can be accessed online in minutes.

But geography can be a useful resource to find new stories that haven't yet been told — and as we've learned over the past few years, there are still a lot more stories about the Black Sox Scandal to be told. Stories that fill in the gaps — or, sometimes, shatter our beliefs — about a subject that, as Gene Carney liked to say, is only a "cold case, not a closed case."

A prime example is the case of Joseph "Sport" Sullivan, the Boston gambler who helped set up the fix with Chick Gandil. Sullivan's full biography has never been told. But surely there is some more evidence to be found in Boston about his life there, especially after the scandal.

Or take the subject of Allen Tait's presentation at our SABR 42 meeting in June (see page 2). Allen will be speaking on the Black Sox "Money Trail" and why it's never been fully investigated. We've long

known that gambling syndicates in St. Louis, Pittsburgh, Des Moines and other cities may have been involved in the World Series fix. But who were they? How do those pieces fit into the puzzle?

No matter where you are, there's an interesting Black Sox story to be found in your area.

Minnesota? Swede Risberg owned a farm in Blue Earth and is said to have been a food supplier to the world-famous Mayo Clinic. I'll talk more about his life there at SABR 42.

Utah? Lefty Williams' wife Lyria, who may have been threatened before Game 8 of the World Series, came from a prominent Mormon pioneer family in Weber County. The two met there when Lefty was pitching for the Salt Lake Bees of the Pacific Coast League.

Pennsylvania? That's where Buck Weaver was born, where Joe Jackson was heckled mercilessly as a rookie, and where Eddie Collins began his Hall of Fame career.

Texas? What really happened when Dickey Kerr held out for three years there in a contract dispute with the White Sox?

Canada? Risberg and Happy Felsch toured Saskatchewan and Manitoba throughout the late 1920s with their semipro traveling teams.

Mexico? Third-string White Sox catcher Joe Jenkins' older brother built an empire in the sugar and film industries, and was once called the "richest man in Mexico."

So if you want to get into Black Sox research ... consider looking in your own backyard. Who knows, you might find a connection there and help us all learn something new.

For more information about SABR's Black Sox Scandal Research Committee, contact chairman Jacob Pomrenke at buckweaver@gmail.com.

Axelson's 1919 book 'Commy' available online

"Baseball is the most honest pastime in the world. It has to be or it could not last a season out. Crookedness and baseball do not mix. ... This year, 1919, is the greatest season of them all."

— Charles A. Comiskey

The most famous quote from Gustav W. Axelson's 1919 biography, *Commy: The Life Story of Charles A. Comiskey*, published by The Reilly & Lee Co., gives readers a hint at how gushing a portrayal of the White Sox owner is within its 320 pages — a bio typical of the era.

But *Commy* is one of the very few contemporary sources in existence with extensive quotes from the Hall of Fame executive, and offers some interesting anecdotes of Comiskey's life in baseball up through that fateful season of 1919.

Thanks to OpenLibrary.org, this once-obscure book was recently made available online. It can be read or downloaded here:

<http://bit.ly/Commy-Axelrod>

Axelson's writing should be taken with a grain of salt, of course. Like most baseball books of that time, *Commy* is littered with purple prose and sugarcoats its subject as often as possible. But it also offers glimpses of Comiskey's personality, such as his penchant for sarcasm, that are rarely found elsewhere. It's worth your time.