

THE ODDEST HOME RUN CHAMPION OF THEM ALL

by **Mike Lackey**

If Fred Odwell isn't the most obscure home run champion in the history of major league baseball, it's only because the competition is surprisingly stiff. After all, who remembers Oyster Burns, who shared the National League lead in 1890, or Braggo Roth, who led the American League in 1915? Who remembers that when Babe Ruth won his first home run crown, leading the AL with 11 in 1918, he shared the honor with Tilly Walker? Even considering comparatively recent time, how many fans remember Nick Etten, who led the AL (with 22) in 1944, when the unavailability of rubber forced the use of inferior balls?¹

The fact that Odwell, an outfielder with the Cincinnati Reds, needed only nine homers to lead the National League in 1905 wasn't unusual at the time. Home runs totaled just 338 in both major leagues during Odwell's big year and dipped below 270 from 1906 to 1909 before rising again in 1910-1911 as the cork-centered ball was introduced. Nine times between 1901 and 1909, and 13 times between 1910 and 1911, the total number of home runs in the National League was less than 270.



Fred Odwell

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1919, league leaders failed to crack double figures.

What separates Odwell from those other dead-ball sluggers is that he lasted only four years in the big show, despite being consistently praised for his all-around play. "No player that ever donned the red grasped affairs in the outfield with greater intelligence than Fred Odwell," the *Cincinnati Enquirer* declared within months of his debut. "Possessed of clear eye, active brain and superb whip, Odwell is the ideal student of the game. ... He 'lays' for the opposition in places to which the ball is most apt to be driven [and] ... he has the baserunners of the enemy terrorized."²

Sportswriter Ren Mulford Jr. called him the Human Greyhound.³ When all games were played in the daytime and weekday games generally started in late afternoon, Odwell was also valued for his skill at playing the sun field.⁴ If his game had a weak link, the writers agreed, it was batting. Odwell is almost certainly the only player who ever led his league in home runs, then apologized for his disappointing season.

Frederick W. Odwell, often called Fritz or Oddie, arrived in Cincinnati without fanfare in 1904 as a 31-year-old rookie. He stood 5-feet-9½ and weighed 160 pounds. He had broken into pro ball as a pitcher with control trouble,⁵ going 6-24 for last-place Wilkes-Barre in the Eastern League in 1897 before being moved to the outfield. Standard sources say he batted left-handed, but it's likely he earned his long-ball laurels hitting as he threw, from the right side.

In his less-than-meteoric rise, he developed no reputation as a home run threat; records are incomplete, but Baseball-Reference.com shows him with just 20 homers in the minors through 1903. His power didn't emerge immediately in Cincinnati, either. It was August 3 before he tagged his first and only home run of 1904, off Tully Sparks in Philadelphia. He completed the season with 22 doubles, 10 triples, 75 runs scored, and a highly respectable .284 batting average.

Of all the odd aspects of Oddie's homer-happy 1905 campaign, one of the oddest is how late he got started. He didn't record his first four-bagger until June 19, in the Reds' 56th game and his 44th. By that time New York's Bill Dahlen had five and his teammates Mike Donlin and Dan McGann had three each, as did Philadelphia's Sherry Magee.

Once he got started, Odwell sprayed homers to all fields. He homered in six ballparks and against every opposing team except Pittsburgh. He homered three times in Boston, whose South End Grounds were one of the era's more homer-friendly venues⁶ and whose pitchers led the league in home runs allowed three of Odwell's four years with the Reds. He hit eight off right-handers and one off a lefty, seven on the road and only two at home.

Oddie hit four inside-the-park, including the two in Cincinnati. This was not surprising given Cincinnati's huge outfield, with fences up to 450 feet from home plate; during the 10 years that configuration existed, barely 10 percent of all home runs went over the fence, and most of those did so on the bounce.⁷ Of the eight pitchers Odwell victimized, three were rookies and only



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one would complete his major-league career with a winning percentage above .500. That said, he caught two of the eight during their best season.

Victim number one was the most obscure of the lot. The Giants' Claude Elliott was in his second and last big leagues season. The homer was "a terrific drive over [center fielder] Donlin's head"⁸ on a sweltering day at Cincinnati's League Park;⁹ Odwell "was so nearly overcome by the heat that he could hardly make it around the bases."¹⁰ The eighth-inning solo blast capped the scoring as the Reds won 17-7. Odwell also singled twice and stole home on the front of a double steal. Elliott pitched in only 10 games in 1905 with an 0-1 record. Only decades after his death would somebody reexamine the record and discover that he also led the major leagues in saves that season, with six.

Odwell next struck on June 27 at Chicago's West Side Grounds. The three-run shot came in the seventh inning and completed the scoring in a 6-0 Cincinnati victory. The ball sailed over the head of left fielder Frank Schulte "and rolled on and on to the far corner in left center where the clubhouse wall meets the left-field bleachers" more than 440 feet from home plate, "as long a hit as can be made on these grounds." Fritz crossed the plate before the ball "got back to a

point where it could be distinguished from a pea."

Cincinnati sportswriter Jack Ryder, apparently believing that running should be a component of any proper home run, applauded "a clean home run, unaided by fence or barrier."¹¹ The pitcher was Bert "Buttons" Briggs, who had won 19 games for the Cubs in 1904. His five-year major-league career ended in 1905, when he had a modest 8-8 record. But his earned-run average was 2.14 and five of his victories were shutouts.

Odwell hit his third on July 14 in Boston. By now both Magee and McGann had hit their fourth. Coming with a man on and the Reds trailing 3-2 in the sixth, Odwell's homer lifted Cincinnati to a 4-3 win. Descriptions of this one are somewhat difficult to reconcile. Where the *Boston Globe* said the ball "struck the top of the [right-field] fence and bounded over,"¹² the *Cincinnati Enquirer* reported "the longest hit made on these grounds this year," clearing the wall 30 feet fair – about 350 feet from the plate – and landing "beyond the streetcar tracks on Columbus Avenue."¹³ Pitcher Irvin "Kaiser" Wilhelm was suffering toward a 3-23 season for the Beaneaters, who would lose 103 games and finish seventh.

This time Odwell connected again just four days later on July 18. His solo homer in the ninth in-



1905 Cincinnati Reds; Odwell fourth from left

ning at Philadelphia's Huntingdon Street Grounds (later renamed the Baker Bowl) tied the score at 4-4; on a day when a thermometer placed in the center field grass registered 116 degrees,¹⁴ both starting pitchers went 14 innings before the Phillies' Bill Duggleby secured a 5-4 verdict over the Reds' Bob Ewing.

The home run initially looked like a routine single or double to right-center field. But according to eyewitnesses from both cities, the ball seems to have defied gravity. One account said that after hitting the wall, the ball "bounded up into the bleachers."¹⁵ Another said it "ran up the brick barrier like a squirrel."¹⁶ It was that kind of year for Bill Duggleby. Though he won 18 games, he also led the major leagues in home runs allowed with 10.

After that it was a month before Odwell homered again. By the time he notched his fifth in Boston on August 17, Bill Dahlen had pushed his league-leading total to six. Odwell's latest went over the short left field fence (250 feet down the line) with the bases empty in the seventh inning. Coming off lefty Irv "Young Cy" Young, it gave the Reds a 5-1 lead; they won 5-3. Considering Harry Steinfeldt's earlier two-run homer to practically the same spot, a Boston writer concluded that "the visitors won the game by virtue of the fence."¹⁷ Young, a rookie, led the league in starts, complete games, and innings. The workhorse of a team that barely avoided last place, he managed a 20-21 record, best of his six-year career.

Next day the two teams engaged in a "batting carnival,"¹⁸ combining for seven home runs in a doubleheader as Odwell moved into a tie for the league lead. Again his shot, in the fourth inning of the second game with a man on, cleared the left field fence. Again the victim was the luckless Kaiser Wilhelm. After dropping the first game, Cincinnati won the second 8-7 when Odwell scored after tripling off relief pitcher Dick Harley in the tenth.

On August 28 Dahlen homered for the seventh time, pulling ahead in the home run derby. Odwell caught up the next day, belting one "high over the right-field fence"¹⁹ at Brooklyn's Washington Park. The hit, off Fred Mitchell with the

bases empty in the sixth, helped the Reds to a 7-3 win. Teammate Cy Seymour, in a season when he led the league in nearly every major offensive category, also notched a four-bagger, his fourth. This was the only time he and Odwell ever homered in the same game. The game was the last Mitchell pitched in the big leagues, although he later made a comeback and caught 62 games for the New York Highlanders in 1910.

Odwell finally took the lead on September 4. His eighth of the season was "a murderous line slam to deep left"²⁰ in the first game of a doubleheader at Robison Field in St. Louis. The two-run clout gave the Reds a 2-0 lead in the fourth inning but the Cardinals struck for seven in the seventh and won 9-2 en route to a sweep.²¹ The pitcher was rookie Jake Thielman, who netted half of his career wins in 1905. He stuck in the majors through 1908, compiling a 30-28 record.

Our man didn't connect again until the next-to-last day of the season, but he was never headed. Dahlen, who led the way for most of the season, struck for the last time on August 28 and finished with seven. That total was matched by Mike Donlin, who collected his last on October 6, and Brooklyn's Harry Lumley, who arrived late at the party but moved into contention with five homers between August 26 and September 16. Seymour, another latecomer, homered five times in the last five weeks of the season and finished second to Odwell with eight. In the American League, the Philadelphia Athletics' Harry Davis led the parade with eight.

Odwell's final home run, the exclamation point on his season, was a drive "to deep center" off Buster Brown. It came with a man on in the eighth inning of the second game of a home doubleheader against St. Louis on October 7, sealing a 6-3 win and giving the Reds a split of the twin bill.

In this article we've viewed the season as a race for the National League home run title, but no one was tracking the chase at the time. Cincinnati correspondent C.J. Bocklet's dispatches to *The Sporting News* rarely mentioned Odwell and unlike today, when updated statistics from around the league are available almost instant-

neously, sportswriters had no convenient way of keeping up with players outside their own cities.

The *Cincinnati Enquirer* covered baseball as extensively as any local newspaper in the country. But when the 1905 season concluded the *Enquirer* could report only that, based on its own unofficial statistics, Odwell had “possibly” led the National League in home runs.²² In any case, the home run leadership wasn’t viewed as a big deal. When the league’s official stats were released, the version published in *The Sporting News* included columns for stolen bases and sacrifice hits but none for doubles, triples, or home runs.²³

Odwell’s achievement – his sole claim to baseball fame – was acknowledged in the ninth paragraph of a Ren Mulford column in *Sporting Life*,²⁴ but apparently it was never mentioned in *TSN* until it provided the lead to Odwell’s obituary in 1948. At that time a weekly paper near his home in Downsville, New York, attempted – with some exaggeration – to put his feat into perspective. “Those were the days of the greatest pitching geniuses the game has known, and before the advent of the lively, hopped-up ball,” the writer explained. “A home run was a sensational thing, calling for headlines.”²⁵

In fact, some newspaper accounts in 1905 noted Odwell’s home runs only in the box scores. In an era when standard baseball tactics mostly fell under what is now somewhat dismissively called “small ball,” Odwell’s prowess as a slugger made little impression on Reds manager Ned Hanlon. While Odwell hit one homer while batting third and another batting fifth, most of the time Hanlon batted him sixth or seventh. All most observers noticed about Odwell’s stickwork was that his batting average dropped from .284 in 1904 to .241 in 1905. The player felt obliged to offer an explanation.

“It wasn’t my batting eye that went wrong. ... It was my left leg,” he said. “Why, there were times when every time I came down hard on that pin it felt like when a fellow jars the funny bone in his arm. ... Sometimes when I was running round the bases it would feel like I hadn’t any left foot at all.” Odwell blamed a torn tendon.²⁶ In fairness, this wasn’t some sort of after-the-fact alibi.

Mulford had reported six weeks into the 1905 campaign that Odwell had hurt himself on Opening Day “when he caught the spike of his left shoe in one of the drainage lids in the outfield,” then aggravated the injury three weeks later sliding into third base.²⁷ He was out for two weeks before returning to the lineup on June 3.

Less than two weeks into the 1906 season, Odwell ran into his old friend Buster Brown, who delivered “a swift, quick-breaking inshoot” that caught Odwell below the heart.²⁸ He suffered a cracked rib and was out for three weeks. While he was recuperating the *Enquirer*’s Ryder reported, as if it were a new development, that Oddie was “batting left-handed these days, and will continue in that style.” The change was viewed as a way to help Odwell beat out bunts and infield hits.²⁹ It might also have offered some protection for the injured rib. Regardless, he never got untracked and as mid-season approached he was hitting .223. The Reds traded the erstwhile home run king along with pitcher Charlie Check to Toledo in the American Association for outfielder Frank Jude.

Odwell’s downfall, in the opinion of the *Enquirer*, was “a weak style at the bat.” The writer – presumably longtime baseball specialist Ryder – lavished praise on all other aspects of the player’s game: “Odwell is as fast and clever an outfielder as can be found in the country today. He has a remarkable whip, and uses the best of judgment, both in fielding and throwing. He is a fine baserunner and a sensible man on the coaching lines. In addition ... he is an admirable character personally ... who always places the interest of the team above everything else.” But none of that could outweigh the fact that “his swing is so long that he has to start it before the ball is anywhere near the plate, and, as a result, he is often fooled by a curveball.”³⁰

Odwell hit .306 (with five home runs) for Toledo and the Reds – with Hanlon expressing the hope that he had overcome his weakness against the curve – gave him another shot in 1907. He batted .270 in 94 games and was said to have “improved wonderfully,”³¹ but he went down with another leg injury – possibly a pulled muscle – late in the

season. The Reds sought waivers on him in December and ultimately released him to Columbus in the American Association.

After his ninth and final homer in 1905, Odwell amassed 481 more major league at-bats but never hit another home run. He retired with a career total of 10, the lowest of any single-season leader since 1891. Charles “Count” Campau, who led the American Association – then a major league – in 1890 with nine, also retired with 10. So did Levi Meyerle, who shared the National Association lead with four in 1871. Campau’s big league career consisted of a mere 147 games between 1888 and 1894. Meyerle played in the National League in 1876-77 and in the Union Association in 1884 but hit all his home runs in the National Association from 1871 to 1875.

The only home run champ with fewer career homers than Odwell is Fred Treacey, who shared the NA title with Meyerle (and Lip Pike) in 1871. Treacey’s home runs – a total of seven – all came in the NA between 1871 and 1873.

Nobody remembers Fred Treacey either.

NOTES

1. Bill James, “Reflections of a Megalomaniac Editor,” *Baseball Analyst*, Volume 35 (April 1988): 19.
2. “All Sorts,” *Cincinnati Enquirer*, August 28, 1904: 30.
3. Ren Mulford Jr., “The Human Greyhound Tells of Suffering in Silence,” *Cincinnati Post*, May 24, 1905: 6.
4. Jack Ryder. “Notes of the Game,” *Cincinnati Enquirer*, May 17, 1906: 4.
5. H.G. Merrill, “Odwell’s Career,” *The Sporting News*, August 27, 1904: 7.
6. From 1904 to 1907, Odwell’s years with the Reds, the South End Grounds yielded 112 home runs, a total exceeded in the NL only by New York’s Polo Grounds. No other park in the league saw more than 81. Bill James, John Dewan, Neil Munro and Don Zminda, eds., *STATS All-Time Baseball Sourcebook* (Skokie, Ill.: STATS Inc., 1998): 100-12.
7. Ronald M. Selter, *Ballparks of the Deadball Era: A Comprehensive Study of Their Dimensions, Configurations and Effects on Batting, 1901-19* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 2008): 77. Batted balls that bounced over the fence counted as home runs until the rule was changed in 1931. See Bob McConnell and David Vincent, eds., *The Home Run Encyclopedia: The Who, What, and Where of Every Home Run Hit Since 1876* (New York: Macmillan, 1996): 4.
8. “Reds in Third Place; Win From Giants,” *Cincinnati Commercial Tribune*, June 20, 1905: 6.
9. Though the ballpark where the Reds played from 1902 to 1911 is commonly referred to today as the Palace of the Fans, that name at the time properly applied only to the ornate main grandstand. See for example Ren Mulford Jr., “Redland is Dazed,” *Sporting Life*, April 25, 1903: 3: “The Palace of the Fans ... and all other stands inside League Park were packed.”
10. “Smashed,” *Cincinnati Enquirer*, June 20, 1905: 4.
11. Ryder, (headline missing), *Cincinnati Enquirer*, June 28, 1905: 4. The two-story clubhouse in center field was a new feature of the West Side Grounds in 1905. See Philip J. Lowry, *Green Cathedrals: The Ultimate Celebration of Major League and Negro League Ballparks* (New York: Walker & Company, 2d ed., 2006): 50.
12. “Triple Play,” *Boston Globe*, July 15, 1905: 3.
13. Ryder, “Duplicated the Boston Triple Play,” *Cincinnati Enquirer*, July 15, 1905: 3.
14. Ryder, “14 Innings in the Sun,” *Cincinnati Enquirer*, July 19, 1905: 4.
15. “Phillies Won Out in 14th Inning,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 19, 1905: 13.
16. Ryder, “14 Innings.”
17. “Young ‘Cy’ Must Bow to ‘Spit-Ball’ Ewing,” *Boston Herald*, August 18, 1905: 8.
18. “Batting Bee in the National League,” *Boston Herald*, August 19, 1905: 5.
19. “Minus Their Leaders Reds Break the Streak,” *Cincinnati Commercial Tribune*, August 30, 1905: 6.
20. “Big Holiday Crowd Sees Cardinals Win Two Bouts,” *St. Louis Star-Chronicle*, September 5, 1905.
21. Odwell’s home run log at Baseball-Reference.com says this home run bounced into the stands. None of the newspapers consulted for this article – four from St. Louis and four from Cincinnati in addition to *Sporting Life* and *The Sporting News* – mention that. The two most detailed descriptions suggest that Odwell had to run for the homer, indicating that the ball remained inside the park. One said that after hitting the ball, Odwell “started a sprint, which landed him across the plate.” The other said he made “an easy trip around the pillows, with [teammate Harry] Steinfeldt

- skedaddling in front of him.” See “Cardinals Continue Winning and Cincinnati Twice Falls Victim,” *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, September 5, 1905; and “Big Holiday Crowd Sees Cardinals Win Two Bouts,” *St. Louis Star-Chronicle*, September 5, 1905.
22. “Last Batch of Red Averages,” *Cincinnati Enquirer*, October 10, 1905: 4.
 23. “National Leader,” *The Sporting News*, October 28, 1905: 2.
 24. Mulford, “A Red Desert,” *Sporting Life*, October 21, 1905: 3.
 25. “Fred Odwell, Old-Time Big Leaguer Died Thursday,” *Margaretville Catskill Mountain News*, August 20, 1948: 1.
 26. “Gossip of the Players,” *The Sporting News*, March 10, 1906: 4.
 27. Mulford, “The Human Greyhound.”
 28. Ryder, “Notes of the Game,” *Cincinnati Enquirer*, April 25, 1906: 4.
 29. Ryder, “Champs of the Wide, Wide World,” *Cincinnati Enquirer*, May 12, 1906: 3.
 30. “All Sorts,” *Cincinnati Enquirer*, July 22, 1906: 30.
 31. “Reds Must Have a New Manager,” *Cincinnati Commercial Tribune*, September 22, 1907: 17.

THE 1918 WORCESTER BOOSTERS: DEADBALL ERA BASEBALL'S WORST TEAM

by **Bill Lamb**

If called upon to choose, many would select the 1916 Philadelphia Athletics as the Deadball Era's worst team. Finishing with a dismal 36-117 (.235) record, that edition of A's club was the most hapless of the inept Philadelphia nines presented by co-owner/manager Connie Mack after he had dismantled his American League pennant-winning team of two years earlier. Yet if eligibility is expanded to include the entirety of Organized Baseball, the 1916 Athletics are not seriously in the running, barely making the era's Bottom 10.

Although there are other unworthy contenders – the incompetence of the 24-92 (.207) Boyne City Boosters of the 1911 Michigan State League; the 22-109 (.168) Dubuque Dubs of the 1907 Three-I League; and the 14-71 (.165) Sheldon club of the 1902 Iowa-South Dakota League is surely entitled to consideration – pride of place must seemingly be given the Worcester Boosters of the 1918 Eastern League. When the exigencies of American entry into World War I brought the EL campaign to a premature end, the Worcester record stood at a god-awful 7-52 (.119).¹ Vital components to this striking lack of success were a batting order which did not place a single Booster in the Eastern League's top-40 hitters and a pitch-

ing staff led by a pair of two-game winners. The story of this historically bad ballclub follows.

THE WORCESTER BOOSTERS – ANATOMY OF A FRANCHISE: Long the second-largest city in New England,² Worcester, Massachusetts, has hosted organized baseball clubs since the 1850s.³ But a city nine was not a member of the National Association (1871-1875), the game's first professional circuit, or its successor, the National League of 1876. Rather, Worcester entered the pro ranks in June 1878 when it replaced the Lynn (Massachusetts) Live Oaks as a member of the minor league International Association. The following year, Worcester played in a new and short-lived minor league that assumed the name National Association. Thereafter, the Worcester Worcesters (referred to as the Ruby Legs in certain modern-day baseball references) graduated to the game's top echelon, but were a non-competitive and poor-drawing member of the National League of 1880-1882.

Following its discharge from the NL, Worcester fielded clubs in various minor league circuits for the next several decades. In 1916, the Worcester Boosters, formerly of the Class B New England League, became a charter member of a reorganized version of the circuit that adopted the venerable title of the Eastern League.⁴ Co-owned and managed by retired outfield great and future Hall of Famer Billy Hamilton, the Boosters finished a respectable (61-60, .504) fifth in the 10-club circuit's inaugural pennant chase. The fol-

lowing January, Hamilton left the organization, selling his interest in the Worcester franchise to his club partners, local contractor Edward F. Smith and his brother-in-law M. John McMahon, known in baseball circles as Jack Mack.⁵

Although he had no professional playing or managerial experience whatsoever,⁶ co-owner/club secretary Mack assumed the reins for the 1917 campaign. Veteran pitcher Jim McGinley, however, would pull double-duty, serving also as Mack's assistant manager.⁷ Reverting to its old nickname of Busters,⁸ Worcester went 51-55 (.481) and again finished middle-of-the pack in EL final standings. All the while, American entry into World War I that April cast an ever-growing cloud over Organized Baseball as the 1917 season progressed. And prospects for a 1918 season were uncertain as the time for spring training approached. Still, the Eastern League was among those minor league circuits that decided to go ahead. Caution and the threat of unplayable early season weather, however, prompted EL magnates to push the beginning of the campaign back to late May.⁹ Then four days before the arrival of Opening Day, US Provost Marshal Enoch Crowder issued his historic "Work or Fight" order, directing all 21-to-35-year-old able-bodied American males to enlist in the military or obtain employment in a vital defense industry. Those who did not would be subject to military conscription on July 1. Despite the Crowder edict, the Eastern League decided to press on with the 1918 baseball season – at least for the time being.

WORCESTER'S FUTILE 1918 SEASON: Although major league and operational minor league clubs were shorn of considerable personnel from their previous season's roster, the Worcester Boosters were particularly hard hit.¹⁰ Eastern League batting champ Rip Conway, EL run-scoring leader Pat Maloney, and staff mainstay Axel Lindstrom were among those who would not be returning to the club. Yet the Boosters were not totally bereft of talent. Holdovers Hugh McQuillan (15-11) and Katsy Keifer (10-16) were available to anchor the club's pitching corps while newly acquired veteran minor league shortstop Shorty Dee would bolster the infield. As the season opener drew near,



*Club owner/manager Jack Mack
(M. John McMahon)*

Worcester still remained shy of playing talent but manager Mack was busy signing prospects and reportedly "confident that he will have some stuff in a few days."¹¹

Player recruitment was complicated by an EL magnate decision to limit rosters to 13 players by June 1.¹² Perhaps the most arresting feature of Mack's talent search was his penchant for signing the untested siblings of established major leaguers. Among Worcester's new recruits were pitcher Billy Tyler, younger brother of Boston Braves stalwart Lefty Tyler (and Booster catcher Fred Tyler, also briefly a member of the 1914 world champion Braves) and Curtis Wheat, an outfielder like brother Zack, the Brooklyn Robins star, but also a catcher like brother Mack, a backstop with Brooklyn. With his club so fortified, "manager Mack is very optimistic [that] the Boosters will have the best season in years. He has a collection of young players who have plenty of ambition, and while weakened by the absence of several players whom he had counted on, believes his young blood will make good in the race

for the Eastern League gonfalon,” reported a newspaper from league rival Springfield.¹³

While the progress of the war dominated local concern, Worcester pulled out the stops for the season opener of its hometown ballclub. Pleading the game, pushed back to 4:00 p.m. to take advantage of newly-instituted daylight savings time, were a brass band concert behind city hall and a parade to the Boosters’ playing grounds, Boulevard Park.¹⁴ Inclement weather precipitated a small gate, but those in attendance were not disappointed. Paced by the batting of left fielder Paul Johnson and catcher Fred Tyler, the Boosters started the season smartly with a 4-2 victory over the Providence Grays. The decisive feature of the contest, however, was doubtless the four-hit hurling of left-hander Keifer. Unhappily for Worcester, Katsy would not win another game all season.

For the next day’s rematch, manager Mack handed the ball to recruit Billy Tyler, paired with backstop brother Fred, obliged to report for military service within 24 hours. Regrettably, the youngster was hammered, with Providence’s 15-2 pasting of the Boosters providing a harbinger of things to come. Four more defeats followed in quick succession before Worcester garnered its second win, courtesy of future Chicago White Sox righthander Cy Twombly’s three-hitter over Hartford, 4-1. Plagued by arm problems, Twombly was another staff member who would not win another game for the Boosters that season. Meanwhile, Worcester finished the month with a 2-6 record, good for last place in EL standings.

The Boosters began the month of June by plating a run in the bottom of the first against New Haven – and then went scoreless for the next 38 innings, losing five contests in the process. The Worcester losing streak had reached eight games when the Boosters faced a Waterbury (Connecticut) Nattatucks club working on an eight-game winless streak of its own. Behind the pitching of hometown product Frank Werre, Worcester prevailed, 7-5, raising its seasons log to 3-13. Thereafter, the club promptly resumed its losing ways, with five throwing errors in six chances by

Boosters third baseman Harry Cooney during a 16-0 loss to Hartford on June 14 being a notable lowlight.

On June 17, Bridgeport (Connecticut) Americans ace Alex Ferguson shut out the Boosters on one hit, extending Worcester’s latest scoreless skein to 31 innings. The following day, a 7-4 loss to Springfield reduced the Worcester record to 3-20 (.130). But Waterbury, then working on a 16-game losing streak, was even worse, 3-21 (.125). Meanwhile, circuit leader Bridgeport stood at 23-1 (.958) in lopsided Eastern League standings. After dropping his first five decisions, staff mainstay Hugh McQuillan, a 15-game winner in 1917, finally broke into the victory column. Handsome Hugh had thrown 12 shutout innings with 12 strikeouts before his soft-hitting mates eked out the run that made him a 1-0 winner over New Haven.

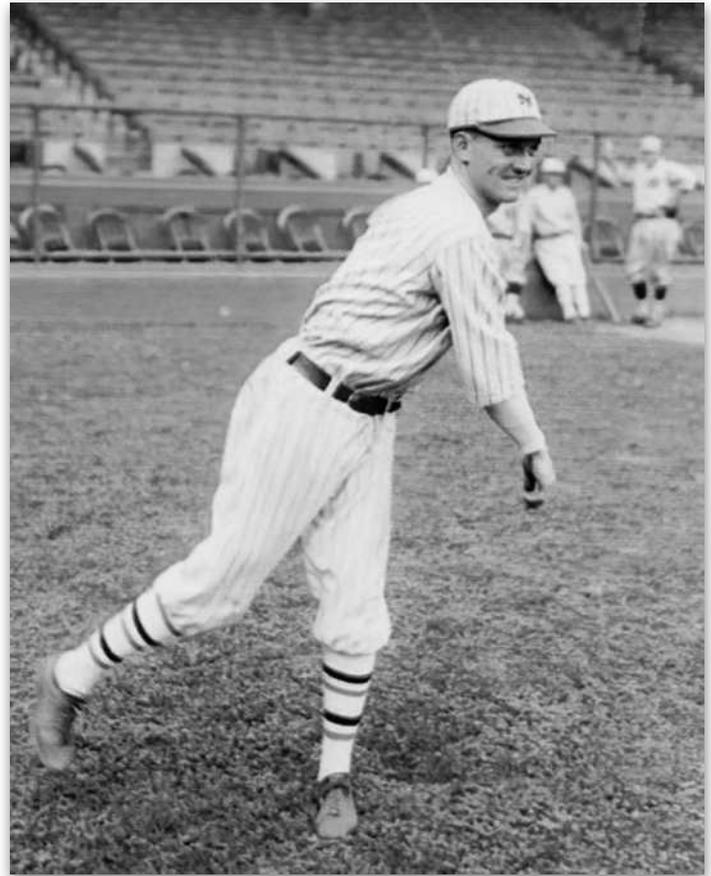
Two days later, the Boosters surprised Bridgeport, handing the league leaders only their second defeat of the season. Staked to a five-run lead, newcomer Bill Bach held on for a 5-4 victory, his lone triumph of the season. Immediately thereafter, four consecutive losses slid the (5-25, .167) Boosters back into the Eastern League basement, one game behind almost-as-woeful Waterbury (6-24, .200). From there, things only got worse as the Worcester Boosters cratered, losing 27 of their next 29 games.

The early-July military service departure of hard-luck pitcher Harry Baum, 0-4 despite mostly effective work and also a useful outfield reserve, and Cy Twombly’s chronically sore arm effectively reduced the Worcester pitching staff to three hurlers: Hugh McQuillan, Frank Werre, and Bill Bach. The ensuing insertion of assistant manager Jim McGinley into the rotation provided scant relief,¹⁵ as the veteran was touched for 12 base hits and five runs in six innings in his first start, a 5-2 loss to Waterbury in early July. McGinley’s only other start resulted in a meaningless but respectable late-season loss to Providence, 4-1. Meanwhile, the audition of nonentities at various field positions failed to uncover much helpful roster material.

In the first game of a July 6 doubleheader against Waterbury, the Boosters snapped a 15-game losing streak. Werre survived a five-run Nattatucks uprising in the final frame to hold on for the victory, his team-leading second of the season for the now 6-36 (.142) Worcester club. A defeat in the nightcap then launched the Boosters on a new four-game winless skid that was short-circuited by Hugh McQuillan's second win of the season, a 4-1 five-hitter thrown at the Hartford Senators. The victory was the club's seventh of the season. And its last. Starting with a McQuillan loss in the evening game, Worcester went without winning another game for the rest of the year.

While the Boosters played out the string, the manpower demands of World War I were closing in on Organized Baseball. Of the six top-tier (Class AA/Class A) minor league circuits that had started the 1918 season, three – the Pacific Coast League, Southern Association, and Western League – had suspended operations by mid-July. Class B operations like the Eastern League fared the same, with only three of six circuits (Three-I, Texas, and Michigan-Ontario Leagues) playing through to their appointed September season finales. On July 15, a meeting was held to determine the course that the Eastern League would pursue.¹⁶ Despite his team's hopeless position in league standings, Boosters boss Mack was game to continue. "Worcester has stated that it is willing to go just as far as any" of the other EL clubs, reported one league news outlet. "But Worcester is winded and would welcome a rest."¹⁷ For the short term, however, the league decided to press on.¹⁸

Days later, US Secretary of War Newton Baker declared that baseball was non-essential to the war effort and that ball players were, therefore, not exempt from the government's Work or Fight decree.¹⁹ With that, Eastern League President Dan O'Neil announced that the circuit would cease operations immediately after the coming weekend's games were played.²⁰ Worcester ended the campaign in fitting style with a doubleheader loss to Bridgeport that extended its season-ending losing streak to 11 games. With a



***Worcester staff ace Hugh McQuillan
(with 1924 NY Giants)***

7-52 (.119) final record, the Boosters finished in last place, 39½ games behind the Eastern League champion New London (Connecticut) Planters (46-12, .793) who surged to nip Bridgeport (44-12, .785) at the wire.

POST-MORTEM FINDINGS AND FUTURE EVENTS: When autopsied, the corpse of the 1918 Worcester Boosters was found to be afflicted with numerous ailments. Obviously, any pitching staff led by a pair of two-game winners (Hugh McQuillan, 2-13, and Frank Werre, 2-8) was debilitated. The club's other three wins were contributed by Katsy Keifer (1-8), Bill Bach (1-8), and Cy Twombly (1-3). The remainder of the staff (Harry Baum, Billy Tyler, Jim McGinley, Paddy Green, and Allen Furman) went 0-12.²¹ But the Boosters' fatal malady was anemia of the batting order. The club failed to score even one run in almost one-quarter (14 of 59) of its games. Not one Worcester batsman placed in the Eastern League's top-40 in the batting race, with everyday left fielder Paul Johnson posting a team-

leading .250 BA. Second base recruit Ed Kelly batted a Deadball-passable .242 in 17 games, but the rest of the Boosters finished at or below the Mendoza line.

The future of the franchise was also in doubt, as club boss Jack Mack refused to commit to fielding a Boosters nine in 1919. Mack was not overly disheartened by his team's dismal play. His concern, rather, was financial. "It isn't because he's sore or disappointed because baseball did not go [well] this season," reported the *Worcester Evening Gazette*. "It is simply a matter of business. Manager Mack and his business associate Edward F. Smith have been the most generous men that ever conducted baseball in Worcester."²² But the club's owners were not receiving any return on their investment.

As it turned out, the Worcester Boosters returned to the Eastern League and respectability in 1919. With Mack back at the helm and replenished by the return of several key members of its 1917 squad, Worcester finished a close (61-44, .581) second to the Pittsfield (Massachusetts) Hillies in the EL pennant chase. By then, erstwhile Booster stalwart Hugh McQuillan was in Boston Braves livery, now embarked upon a respectable ten-season career as a major leaguer that would include victories in two World Series games. Cy Twombly would also get a taste of the big time, enjoying a cup-of-coffee with the 1921 Chicago White Sox, while Frank Werre, Bill Bach, and Curtis Wheat became solid minor league journeymen.

After removing the franchise to Fitchburg, Massachusetts, at the outset of the 1922 season, Mack and Smith sold their interest in the club to new owners who promptly returned it to Worcester.²³ Thereafter, the city maintained a presence in minor league baseball on-and-off through the 1934 season. Worcester then went the next 85 years without a club until 2020 when the Boston Red Sox relocated their Class AAA affiliate from Pawtucket, Rhode Island, to the city. In the meantime, the 1918 Worcester Boosters' claim upon baseball ignominy remains intact, with the 14-96 (.127) record of the 1951 Granite Falls (North Carolina) Graniteers of the Class D Western Car-

olina League appearing to have presented the closest challenge to their vintage awfulness.

NOTES

1. The 5-37 (.119) Tamaqua (Pennsylvania) club of the 1908 Atlantic League lost ball games at the same breathtaking pace as Worcester but has been ruled ineligible for disbanding while the season was still in progress. Also deemed ineligible are the horrendous Oakland (4-71, .053) and San Francisco (9-67, .118) clubs of the then-outlaw California State League of 1908.
2. In 1918, Worcester had an estimated 165,000 residents. With several times the population of Worcester, Boston has always been the largest city in New England. Hartford, the capital of Connecticut and also the site of early major leagues and various minor league franchises, was slightly smaller than Worcester.
3. The constitution of the Worcester Ball Club was promulgated in February 1857.
4. Minor league circuits bearing the name Eastern League dated back to 1884.
5. See Roy Kerr, *Sliding Billy Hamilton: The Life and Times of Baseball's First Great Leadoff Hitter* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 2010), 167. See also, "Jack Mack on the Eastern League," *Springfield (Massachusetts) News*, September 14, 1916: 10.
6. Per "Getaway Day in the Eastern League," *Stamford (Connecticut) Advocate*, May 10, 1917: 7.
7. Same as above. See also, "Jim M'Ginley to Manage Worcester," *Pawtucket (Rhode Island) Times*, March 26, 1917: 6. McGinley, who posted a 2-2 record in a brief stay with the 1904-1905 St. Louis Cardinals, had been a 15-game winner for Worcester in 1916.
8. For reasons unknown to the writer, Worcester returned to the team nickname of its New England League predecessor for the 1917 season. The following year and thereafter, the club was known as the Worcester Boosters.
9. As reported in "Eastern Magnates Complete Plans – Will Ask for A Rating," *Bridgeport (Connecticut) Evening Farmer*, April 9, 1918: 9; "Eastern League Meeting," *Norwich (Connecticut) Bulletin*, April 9, 1918: 4; "Eastern League Circuit Organized at Springfield," *Pawtucket Times*, April 9, 1918: 6; and elsewhere.
10. As noted in "Eastern League Will Open Today," *Boston Herald*, May 22, 1918: 4.
11. Per "Worcester Has Hopes," *Springfield (Massachusetts) Republican*, May 19, 1918: 24.

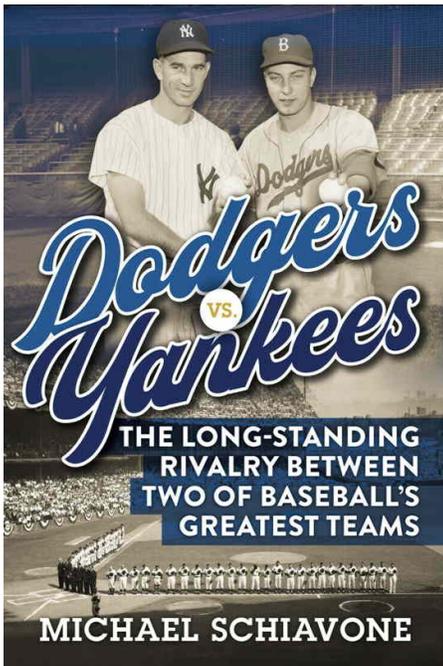
12. See "Fix Player Limit," *Springfield Republican*, May 10, 1918: 12.
13. "Boosters Open Season at Boulevard Park Tomorrow Afternoon," *Worcester Evening Gazette*, May 21, 1918: 8. Six members of the 1917 Worcester Boosters had already answered the call to military duty.
14. "Boulevard Park Opens with Providence This Afternoon at 4 with Keifer in Box," *Worcester Telegram*, May 22, 1918: 8.
15. See "M'Ginley Likely to Be Boosters Twirler," *Worcester Telegram*, July 2, 1918: 8.
16. As reported in "Eastern to Close," *Springfield Republican*, July 15, 1918: 9.
17. Same as above.
18. As reported in "Eastern Moguls Decide to Continue Season," *Bridgeport Evening Farmer*, July 16, 1918: 9; "Eastern League Will Continue Play," *Norwich Bulletin*, July 16, 1918: 4; and elsewhere.
19. As reported in "Draft Ruling Stops Baseball for War Period," *Chicago Tribune*, July 20, 1918: 1; "Baseball Teams Must Go to Work," *New York Times*, July 20, 1918: 7; and newspapers nationwide.
20. Per: "Baseball Declared Non-Essential – Eastern to Close," *Bridgeport (Connecticut) Times*, July 20, 1918: 5; "Eastern League Closes Tomorrow," *Providence Evening Bulletin*, July 20, 1918: 9; "At Death's Door – Eastern to Croak," *Springfield Republican*, July 20, 1918: 10.
21. Per final Eastern League stats published in the *Worcester Evening Gazette*, July 23, 1918: 8. See also, 1919 *Spalding Official Base Ball Guide*, 114-115.
22. "Now Boosters Suspend; Manager Mack May Close Park Unless Satisfactorily Rented," *Worcester Evening Gazette*, July 23, 1918: 8. Drawing particular praise was Mack's willingness to permit Worcester area high school teams to use Boulevard Park free of charge.
23. Mack and Smith received a reported \$8,000 for the club. See "Sale of Fitchburg Club for \$8,000 Okayed by League," *Bridgeport Evening Farmer*, July 29, 1922: 5.

How "Mac" Looks at This Latest Investigation of Ban Johnson's



McGonigle

Washington (DC) Times, November 9, 1911



**DODGERS VS. YANKEES:
THE LONG-STANDING
RIVALRY BETWEEN
TWO OF BASEBALL'S
GREATEST TEAMS**

By Michael Schiavone

*2020, Sports Publishing
[ISBN: 978-1683583141. 288
pp. \$24.99 USD. Hardcover]*

Reviewed by
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Rivalries are an essential part of any sport. Contests between the Packers and Bears, Celtics and Lakers, or Canadians and Bruins are widely followed and victory especially sweet. Baseball has its epic Yankees-Red Sox matchups and bitter, sometimes violent even, Dodgers-Giants matchups. Another of baseball's oldest and most storied rivalries was between the Dodgers and Yankees.

Michael Schiavone, a baseball and labor history writer, grew up in Australia fascinated by these two teams, which met in the World Series 11 times between 1941 and 1981. A Dodgers fan, he was particularly interested in understanding *why* the Yankees were able to dominate his heroes in blue. His newest work, *Dodgers vs. Yankees: The Long-Standing Rivalry Between Two of Baseball's Greatest Teams*, is his effort to solve this conundrum. Was it the work of the "baseball gods"? Were the Dodgers just "chokers"? Maybe the Yanks resorted to underhanded tactics?

Those looking for a detailed, game-by-game, blow-by-blow account of each of the World Series between them (and subsequent interleague matchups) will find it here. Each series has its own chapter, prefaced with a few pages to catch the reader up on what had happened with each team between seasons and during the regular season. The writing is tight, and the book's 264 pages can be consumed quickly, with several pages of useful suggestions for those looking for more. Along the way, Schiavone makes some keen observations about the impact of the amateur draft and free agency on the rivalry. The book rolls along at its best when he steps back to discuss the background of some of the rivalry's participants, but this happens all too rarely.

Unfortunately, Schiavone leans heavily on certain clichés re-

garding "history repeating itself," even summoning Karl Marx's theories of history to aid his understanding. He usually judges managerial decisions on outcomes rather than whether they were reasonable at the time. And while he notes that the Yankees dominated the Dodgers, they really dominated virtually *everyone* in those years, winning 15 AL pennants and 10 Series in the 18 years between 1947 and 1964. The better question might be what made the Yankees a breed apart for much of the game's history. Consulting Armour and Levitt's *Paths to Glory: How Great Baseball Teams Got that Way* or Burton and Benita Boxerman's study of George Weiss might have been useful.

More to the point, *Dodgers vs. Yankees* doesn't really delve into the heart of the rivalry, which involved not only players but fan bases. It would have been interesting to read about those who lived and died on every pitch in an effort to understand why they cared so very much, which could have led to a useful exposition of what makes a rivalry, and why it eventually fades. For once the Dodgers left Brooklyn for the Left Coast, they were no longer "Dem Bums." They would split the remaining series two apiece, no longer playing the Washington Generals to the Yankees' Globetrotters. The dominance Schiavone purports to dissect is really restricted to the period from 1941 to 1956.

During that period, where the Yankees dominated six Series wins to one, the teams played for very different constituencies even if all were legally known as “New Yorkers.” It was not really Dodgers vs. Yankees so much as Brooklyn vs. Manhattan. And the Dodgers were the team of the largely immigrant population that settled in Brooklyn before and after World War II, a close-knit community that looked on “Dem Bums” almost as family. The Yankees, in contrast, were corporate America in a baseball uniform. Cultures clashed as much as baseball teams.

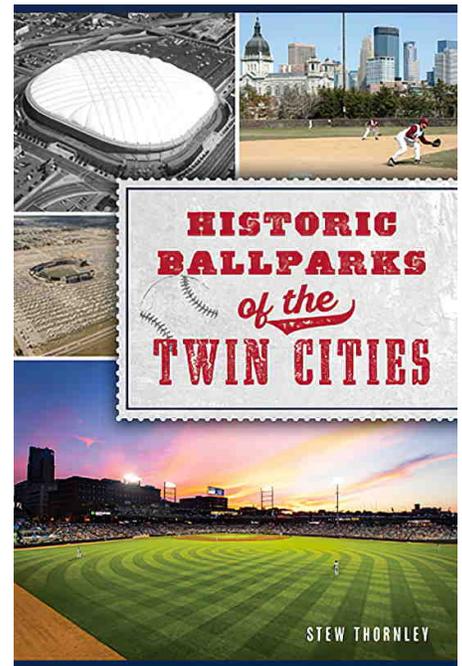
Looking back, Schiavone concluded that there was no “magic” behind the Yankees’ success. They were simply the better team, if only by a little bit. But the broader perspective is interesting as well; perhaps the teams really did reflect their communities. Dodgers fans loved their

“Bums” and ownership seemed content to keep them together. Meanwhile, as Schiavone notes, the Yankees were quicker to part with those whose best days were behind them, allowing them to keep one step ahead of their inter-borough rivals. To what extent these differing strategies reflect the cultures of their fan bases, and to what extent is it explained by the financial advantage the Yankees’ were afforded by their much larger ballpark in an era when the gate, not media contracts, was the main source of revenue, could have been more fully explored.

A “good field, no hit” little league catcher and outfielder, Alec Rogers has retained his lifelong affinity for his hometown Detroit Tigers while acquiring another for his current home team Washington Nationals. A longtime consumer of SABR’s work, he is a member of both it and the Deadball Era Committee.

PUBLISHER ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

As is always the case, the books reviewed in this issue of the newsletter were generously supplied to us by their publishers. *Dodgers vs. Yankees* comes from Sports Publishing and can be ordered by telephone (212-643-6816) or email (orders@simonandschuster.com). *Historic Ballparks of the Twin Cities* and *Detroit Tigers Gone Wild* are published by The History Press, a British house, and can be obtained from Amazon and other book retailers. *Making Japan’s National Game* is published by Carolina Academic Press and can be ordered direct by calling 919-489-7486 or through Amazon. *This Never Happened* is self-published via Summer Game Books and is available via Amazon and other book retailers. *Comeback Pitchers* comes from the University of Nebraska Press and can be ordered by telephone (800-848-624) or email (orders@longleafservices.org). Your patronage of these publishers is appreciated.



HISTORIC BALLPARKS OF THE TWIN CITIES

By Stew Thornley

2021, The History Press
[ISBN: 978-1-4671-4634-0. 175 pp. \$21.99 USD. Softcover]

Reviewed by
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In recent years there have been a wealth of books published about baseball parks, both new and historic. This cottage industry has spawned works from Curt Smith’s *Storied Stadiums: Baseball History Through Its Ballparks* (2001) to the more recent *Ballpark: Baseball in the American City* (2019) by Paul Goldberger. While these works have largely been national in scope and have emphasized the history of major league venues, noted Minnesota author and historian Stew Thornley has taken a more focused approach and set

his sights closer to home. Thornley, a recipient of SABR's Bob Davids Award, is the author of over 40 books, among them *Baseball in Minnesota: The Definitive Story* (2006) and *On to Nicollet: The Glory and Fame of the Minneapolis Millers* (1988).

In his most recent work, he takes us on a chronological journey of the various ballparks, professional, college, and amateur, which have existed in Minneapolis-St. Paul since the mid-nineteenth century. Thornley has done his work well. Utilizing sources from interviews, local newspaper, and historical society archives to his own personal photographs and experiences, the author provides a lively, entertaining, and image-rich narrative in this slim but complete volume of 175 pages that will appeal to Twin Cities residents and baseball fans beyond Minnesota.

While fans are familiar with past MLB venues such as the Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome and Metropolitan Stadium, and more serious fans may even be familiar with their long-gone minor league predecessors, Nicollet and Lexington Parks, how many are aware that the current home of the Minnesota Vikings, U.S. Bank Stadium, is the early season home of University of Minnesota baseball for two months each year? Or that nineteenth century professional baseball was once played in downtown Minneapolis just a long home run from today's

Target Field? Or that St. Paul once hosted a Comiskey Park?

Ballparks have been a part of the built urban environment since the game's early days, and their locations have been determined through time by such diverse reasons as urban "fire districts," bans on Sunday alcohol sales, the availability of land, seating capacity, noise complaints, accessibility to local transportation systems, not to mention civic aspirations. All are addressed as Thornley discusses how these venues came to be, the challenges surrounding them, as well as the games, people, and landmark events that defined them.

With large plots of land often unavailable, many times the result was a field with odd, irregular dimensions such as St. Paul's "Pillbox," officially the Downtown Ball Park, an early home of the St. Paul Saints. It is estimated that the distance from home plate down the right field line was 210 feet, while the left field side measured 280 feet. Because the tight dimensions required that the grandstand be close to the field, protective netting was placed in front of the spectators in order to prevent injury, ironically a standard feature of today's parks.

The old wooden parks of the nineteenth century usually had short life spans and quickly succumbed to new development in the rapidly changing urban environment of the turn of the twentieth century. Nicollet and Lexington Parks, home

to the American Association's Minneapolis Millers and St. Paul Saints, respectively, would each stand for over half a century and play host to some of game's greatest talents, among them Willie Mays, Roy Campanella, and Ted Williams.

By the 1950s, the Twin Cities had aspirations of becoming major league. When the Boston Braves moved to Milwaukee, it was the first relocation of a major league team in over fifty years and it soon set off rumors that Horace Stoneham would move the New York Giants to the Twin Cities. This set off a stadium race between St. Paul and Minneapolis to see which city would host the team. Minneapolis business interests responded by financing Metropolitan Stadium in suburban Bloomington. It opened in 1956 with 18,000 seats as the new home of the Millers, and its "erector set" design would be expanded through the years to meet major league standards.

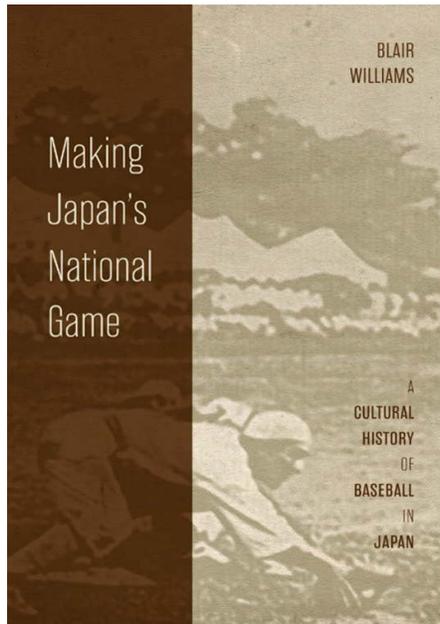
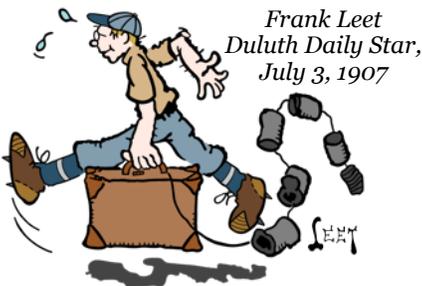
Not to be outdone, St. Paul interests responded by building their own "expandable" stadium in hopes that a team would land in the capital city. Midway Stadium opened in 1957 as the new home of the St. Paul Saints, the Brooklyn Dodgers' American Association AAA farm team.

Of course, ballparks are just empty shells of concrete, steel, wood, and glass without the players, fans, and team employees. It's the human element that brings life to ball

parks. It's here where Thornley excels, with anecdotes, often amusing, which brings texture and completeness to this book. His description of how one player dealt with the lack of restrooms at Minneapolis' Parade Stadium is telling. In another, he recounts the arrival of a local former TV celebrity by freight train at St. Paul's Midway Stadium for a Saints promotion.

Thornley's book nicely brings to life the Twin Cities rich history of ballparks. If I have one complaint, and it's a minor one, it's that there is no appendix listing and detailing the nearly two dozen venues he discusses. Wisely, Thornley has limited the use of excessive game details which weigh down similar books and avoids this becoming a recap of games. His impeccable research blended with interviews of former players, employees, columnists, and broadcasters offers a wonderful history of Twin Cities ballparks.

Bob Komoroski is a member of SABR's Halsey Hall Chapter. He lives in Minneapolis and is a lifelong Chicago White Sox fan.



**MAKING JAPAN'S NATIONAL GAME:
A CULTURAL HISTORY OF BASEBALL IN JAPAN**

By Blair Williams

*2021, Carolina Academic Press
[ISBN: 978-1531015312. 220 pp. \$33.00 USD. Softcover]*

Reviewed by
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The origins of baseball in Japan date to the latter part of the nineteenth century. In this scholarly work, author Blair Williams states the game was introduced there by an American teacher to his Japanese students. Williams's book is based on his doctoral dissertation while a student at the University of Minnesota. His expertise in East Asian history reveals itself throughout the work.

Williams's central argument is that baseball in Japan is an in-

tegral part of the culture, originally based on *bushido*, defined as the way of the warrior. The Japanese believed strongly in physical education which provided the participants with strength of body and mind. Those playing baseball were thought to be warrior-like, akin to the ancient samurais. Their baseball skills were assumed to embrace the qualities that led to military careers and service to their country. Williams contends that Japanese baseball went hand-in-hand with the country's social and economic views, only changing with their defeat in World War II.

The book traces Japan's attempt to turn away from Western society, while becoming militaristic in its politics and actions. By the 1900s, those in power made certain their baseball was quite different from the American game by incorporating non-Japanese players onto the rosters, regardless of their place of birth. Japanese scholars pointed out that while major league baseball was white only, their teams allowed Soviets and even an American-born player in their ranks. Any type of arguing and unfair play were frowned upon.

The Japanese government went to great lengths to keep baseball alive at the outbreak of World War II. The government wanted to demonstrate that the country was capable of waging war around the world while still adhering to their principles of nationalism, which closely aligned with their game. Only in 1944, when the

course of the war turned in favor of the Allies did Japanese baseball collapse.

Williams illustrates in great detail how the American occupation forced Japan to westernize their game after the war ended. With factories destroyed, baseballs and bats, along with basic needs, were in short supply, enough so to become dependent on American generosity. In short order, Japanese baseball transformed to the American version. Much to the distaste of many fans, the newly named Nippon Professional Baseball League (NPB) adopted western names for their teams including the Giants and Hawks. New baseball stadiums were built, several with American names such as Nile Kinnick Stadium and Stateside Park.

By 1951, the NPB announced the formation of the Baseball Exchange Students, under which four Japanese ballplayers traveled to the United States and trained with the San Francisco Seals. Despite the four being former Japanese soldiers and already stars in the NPB, they spent a month with the Seals. Along with adapting the American lifestyle, their prime objective was to learn the correct way to practice running, fielding, and batting. Japanese tradition called for mental and philosophical preparation instead of on-field time. After a month of workouts, the players flew to Hawaii for a series of games against foreign-born Japanese before leaving for home. The

American government wanted to prove to the world that Japanese citizens could safely visit Pearl Harbor.

This practice occurred throughout the 1950s, sometimes with entire Japanese teams training in the states. Though many Japanese citizens were not in favor of Americanizing their baseball with practice time and material things, others understood the importance of aligning their country with the West's sole superpower.

The author relates the noteworthy story behind Masanori Murakami, the first Japanese player to enter major league baseball. In 1964 the young pitcher was sent to the San Francisco Giants organization for an entire season. Williams asserts that Giants manager Alvin Dark, under fire for alleged racist comments, engaged Murakami to counter the arguments against him. The 20-year-old pitched well for two seasons but sparked a war between the major leagues and the NPB before returning to Japan. Thirty years would elapse before Hideo Nomo, the next Japanese player, signed with the Los Angeles Dodgers.

In the final chapters of the book, Williams devotes time to the career of Sadaharu Oh, Japan's greatest player and living legend. Though a citizen of Taiwan (his parents moved to Japan in the 1920s), Oh attended school in Japan but was barred from certain national events due to his ethnicity.

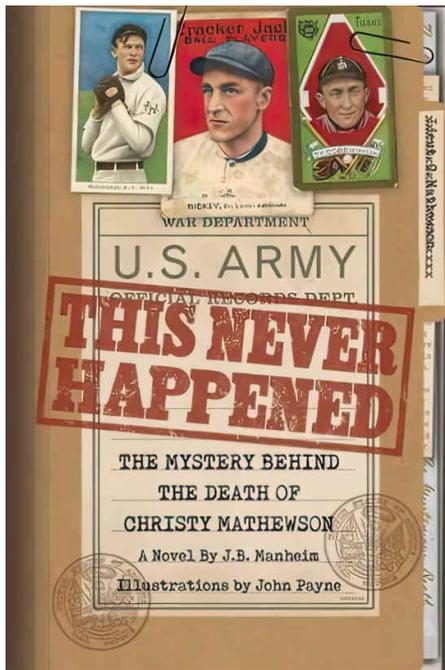
Williams explains the circumstances and shares insights about Oh's career as player and manager. The book ends with the influx of Japanese ballplayers in the United States and how Japan came full circle from nationalism to an international power.

It must be pointed out that the work is not filled with portraits of Japanese players, teams, key games, and statistics. There are extensive footnotes throughout the book and each chapter begins with an argument and a conclusion. Photographs are few and far between and could have benefitted from sharper images. This book is not a concise study of the history of Japanese baseball; however, the author presents a well-supported argument regarding the game's interrelationship with the culture of Japan.

Scott Longert has written for a number of publications and is the author of several books, including Bad Boys, Bad Times, the Cleveland Indians and Baseball in the Pre-War Years, 1937-1941. He is retired from the National Park Service and teaches part-time at Cleveland Community College East and West.



*Gene Ahern,
Milwaukee Journal,
November 25, 1918*



THIS NEVER HAPPENED: THE MYSTERY BEHIND THE DEATH OF CHRISTY MATHEWSON

By J. B. Manheim

2021, Summer Game Books
[ISBN: 978-1938545924. 280
pp. \$18.99 USD. Softcover]

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I know SABR members and others who eschew fiction because they want to learn new information. Although most of my writing (other than my resume) is nonfiction, I understand that a great deal of research is needed for fiction writing. Especially with historical fiction, there's a lot I've learned, and the details often stick with me better when put into a storytelling format.

So it is with J. B. Manheim's *This Never Happened*. Man-

heim opens with a narrative of Christy Mathewson getting gassed during the Great War and the usual story that the incident happened in France. He then highlights research questioning the usual accounts. In particular, he calls attention to the records of an ordnance company in which Mathewson served with Ty Cobb and several other prominent baseball players, including Honus Wagner. Manheim, in his brief opening, details inconsistencies among the military records and introduces the fictional body of the story, labeling it as an "imagined answer" while then asking, "If this is a fiction, one is left to wonder: what is the fact?"

The fiction blends historical characters such as Cobb, Christy and Jane Mathewson, and Branch Rickey with colorful made-up characters in the form of ne'er-do-well Jocko Drumm and the most notable baseball writer of the period, J. T. Willett, who was about to break the story of a lifetime. The story switches between characters and time frames. Like a Harlan Coben novel (or for that matter, the movie *Pulp Fiction*), the time jumps are clear, and a reader is able to follow the narrative with no confusion. Manheim does a good job leaving readers hanging a bit at the end of many vignettes, wanting to learn what was going to happen next but knowing it would be a while before they would find out. The story contains several twists, including an interesting wrap-

up as our protagonists get one last chance at making things right.

Though fiction, the book is educational in many ways and includes illuminating details around the first class of Hall of Famers and other facets of the period, such as train travel. In tracking down the Hall of Famers (and one widow among them), Willett has to get from place to place, and the story nicely covers the challenges of making such journeys in the 1930s. One item I found interesting is how the stations differ: Grand Central Terminal in New York and Union Station in Washington are a terminus, with the tracks ending at bumpers. In contrast, New York's Penn Station has tracks passing through in different directions. Those not as fascinated by trains or other forms of transportation as I am still have plenty to learn about other things from 100 years ago as the book covers the Deadball Era to the Depression to modern times.

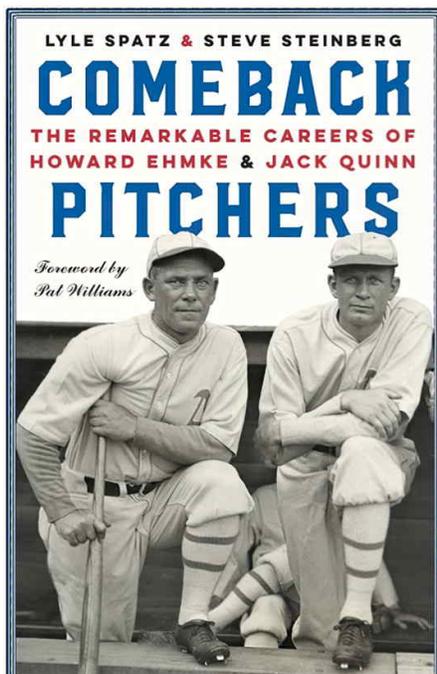
While Manheim appears to stay true to historical facts in the fictional part of the book, I wondered if he had given in to the myth that Charles Comiskey's cheapness drove his players to throwing the 1919 World Series. "A couple of gamblers offered to do what Charley would not – pay his players for their performance, or in this case, their nonperformance," is a sentence in a mythical Willett column of 1936. The portrayal of Comiskey as penurious was

prominent in Eliot Asinof's 1963 book *Eight Men Out* although it has since been debunked. Was that the prevailing opinion in the mid-1930s? It may have been. Jacob Pomrenke, chair of SABR's Black Sox Scandal Research Committee, provided articles that indicate at least two writers of the time – John Lardner and Westbrook Pegler – expressed sentiments similar to those of the fictional Willett.

Another element I liked was that Manheim included profiles of the real people who appeared in the story and the ordinance company commanded by Mathewson after he concludes his story. He ended with a more detailed explanation of what was real and what was not along with a notes section, which I would love to see in all works of historical fiction.

From *This Never Happened*, readers can be entertained by a gripping story while still learning a lot of things that they never knew before.

Stew Thornley has been in SABR since 1979. He is an official scorer for major league baseball (for the Minnesota Twins home games) and a member of the MLB Official Scoring Advisory Committee. He participates in five dead pools and is currently leading in two of them.



**COMEBACK PITCHERS:
THE REMARKABLE
CAREERS OF
HOWARD EHMKE AND
JACK QUINN**

**By Steve Steinberg and
Lyle Spatz**

*2021, University of Nebraska
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There are, as of the summer of 2021, 263 players in the Baseball Hall of Fame. There are many more, perhaps three times as many, who would merit induction into a Hall of Very Good. With this in mind, Steve Steinberg and Lyle Spatz present a double bio of two pitchers who may not have Hall of Fame credentials, but more than qualify for the Hall of Very

Good. These two hurlers from the Deadball Era are the subjects of the new book, *Comeback Pitchers: The Remarkable Careers of Howard Ehmke and Jack Quinn*.

Quinn, whose real name was John Picus, was born in Slovakia in 1883 or 1884 (no one knows for sure). This right-handed spitballer was 25 or 26 years old by the time he reached the majors with the Yankees in 1909. Ehmke, who threw fastballs and curves from the right side, was ten years younger than Quinn and joined Buffalo of the Federal League in 1915. Their careers intertwined several times, as teammates on the awful 1923-24 Red Sox and again on the champion 1929-30 Athletics. Though largely forgotten today, Ehmke and Quinn were stars in their time, and as Spatz and Steinberg skillfully describe, they were present at, and played key roles in, some of the most important events in baseball history.

Ehmke, a .500 pitcher (166-166) during his 14-year career, is most famous for one game. In 1929, nearing the end of the line with the Philadelphia Athletics, he begged his manager, Connie Mack, to let him pitch the first game of the World Series, bypassing aces Lefty Grove and George Earnshaw. Mack acquiesced, and Ehmke struck out a then-record 13 Chicago Cubs on the way to a 4-1 win. Steinberg and Spatz fill in the rest of the story – that Mack bitterly criticized the pitcher both publicly and privately that season, that his teammates resented his

presence as his production waned, and that Al Simmons may have physically attacked Ehmke one day. Nonetheless, Ehmke claimed that he had “one great game left in this old arm,” and he delivered when it counted. It was the last good game he pitched.

Quinn found early success with the Yankees, but after a quick sojourn in the Federal League, drifted back to the minors. A successful campaign in the Pacific Coast League in 1918 led the Chicago White Sox to sign him, and he went 5-1 in six starts in August of that year. However, his PCL club had sold his contract to the Yankees, and league president Ban Johnson awarded Quinn to New York. This decision may well have made the Black Sox scandal possible; had Quinn pitched for the White Sox in 1919, would he have become the ace of the pennant-winning club? If so, would fellow starters Eddie Cicotte and Lefty Williams been able to throw the World Series?

Ehmke battled arm problems and health issues during his up-and-down career, but won 20 games for the Red Sox in 1923, pitched a no-hitter, and lost the chance at a second hitless game in a row to a controversial scorer’s decision. Ehmke then built a successful post-playing business career. He lived long enough to see Carl Erskine break his record for strikeouts in a World Series game. Quinn, who was traded, waived, or released several times, kept bouncing back and proved his value in starting and relief roles, even in his forties. The ageless

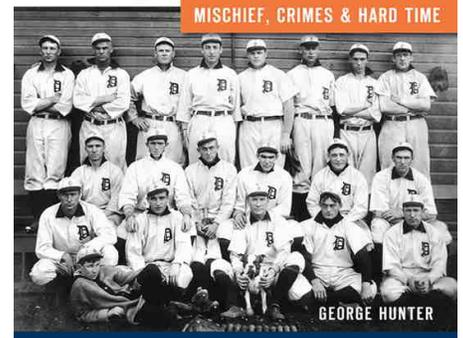
Quinn won 247 games and became the oldest pitcher to start a Series game. He won 18 games at age 44 and pitched until he was nearly 50. His life ended tragically; after losing his wife in a freak accident, Quinn, who had always kept in top physical condition, spent his final years lost to alcohol.

Spatz and Steinberg, whose previous collaboration *The Colonel and Hug* won the SABR Baseball Research Award, specialize in telling the stories of long-ago baseball personalities. The book is a long one – 473 pages – and could easily have been two separate books. However, both Ehmke and Quinn fit the label of “comeback pitchers,” and the authors bring these two stars back to life in the first full-length biography of each man. The book is full of detail, with nearly 100 pages of footnotes, but is highly readable, and features rarely-seen photographs from the families of the two hurlers. With this book, Spatz and Steinberg make a valuable contribution by bringing attention to these two members of the Hall of Very Good.

David L. Fleitz, a web developer and SABR member from Troy, Michigan, has written ten well-received books on baseball history., including biographies of Shoeless Joe Jackson, Lou Sockalexis, and Cap Anson. David is a graduate of Bowling Green State University and a lifelong Detroit Tigers fan. His latest work, titled Eddie Cicotte: The Life and Career of the Banned Black Sox Pitcher, was published by McFarland and Company in 2020.



DETROIT *Tigers* GONE WILD



DETROIT TIGERS GONE WILD: MISCHIEF, CRIMES & HARD TIME

By George Hunter

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In his preface to *Detroit Tigers Gone Wild: Mischief, Crimes & Hard Time*, author George Hunter explains that while bad actors don’t represent the majority of Tigers fans or players, “ne’er-do-wells, lawbreakers, and general chaos have always been an unavoidable, crucial, fascinating part of the story.” And so Hunter lays out the highlights (or perhaps lowlights) of the shenanigans of both the team and its fans, from the 1800s to the present.

And shenanigans there were, including an Opening Day riot at Bennett Park in 1897 that included both players and fans, and resulted in the umpire who had called a Tigers player out at second in the eighth inning of a tie game ultimately being shoved into the visiting team's horse-drawn bus, which then tore down the street to escape. These early days of mayhem are well covered by the author, and I am sure that even the most devout Tigers fan will learn a thing or two about how the team, its players, its owners, and its fans behaved (or misbehaved) in the early part of the Tigers' tenure in Detroit.

The mischief doesn't stop at the turn of the twentieth century. Hunter devotes a full chapter of the book to Ty Cobb and his various and sundry transgressions, both on and off the field. These include Cobb's fight in his hotel room with New York Giants second baseman Buck Herzog, whom Cobb had spiked with a hard slide into second in that day's contest; Cobb's well-known leap into the stands in May 1912 to assault a New York Highlanders fan who was heckling him throughout the game, and his fight with a hotel night watchman in Cleveland, which led to criminal charges that were ultimately dismissed after Cobb paid the victim \$115.

And so it goes, with the author summarizing the crimes committed by Tigers players throughout the years (in the well-named chapter "Felonious Felines") and devoting another

chapter to Denny McLain and his long record of criminal activity, which led to multiple suspensions during his career and sent McLain to prison multiple times after his retirement.

The chapter titled "From the Cellblock to the Corner," which describes the Tigers' signing of Gates Brown and Ron LeFlore, at first seemed a bit misplaced in a book about Tigers players' hijinks, since Gates Brown's career with the Tigers was exemplary and definitely not an example of Tigers mischief. But then there is LeFlore who, while sharing the distinction with Brown of being signed to his contract while incarcerated, seemed to follow a more problematic trajectory in terms of off-field difficulties and criminal charges.

The book also includes the inevitable chapter about Billy Martin's tumultuous career and his tenure as the Tigers manager, which included being arrested during spring training of 1973 for "using profanity in a public place" while standing up for one of his black players who had been arguing with another man in a restaurant. Martin had much greater managerial success in other cities, but his stint in Detroit had its newsworthy events and the book captures those stories.

The book is extremely well written, and even the most diehard Tigers fan is likely to learn something about the team, its players, managers and fans (see for example, "Fan

Fury," the chapter that describes Tigers fans high-spirited behavior and misbehavior throughout the years). The biggest weakness of the book is the lack of both a bibliography and an index. In reading about specific events, such as the infamous Cobb leap into the stands, it might be that the author found the information in the archives of the Detroit newspaper (or papers) of that time, but the reader is left in the dark regarding the sources for the events and players described. This lack of references reduces the book's value both to other researchers and to the casual reader who might want to learn more about one or more of the events described.

That said, there is much in *Detroit Tigers Gone Wild: Mischief, Crimes & Hard Time* that makes it worth the read, especially if you are a Tigers fan who grew up hearing snippets of the stories that the book explains in full.

Barb Mantegani is a SABR member from Washington, D.C., a Red Sox fan by birth, a Tigers fan by marriage, and a Nationals fan by geography. She supports her baseball habit by advising companies on international tax issues.



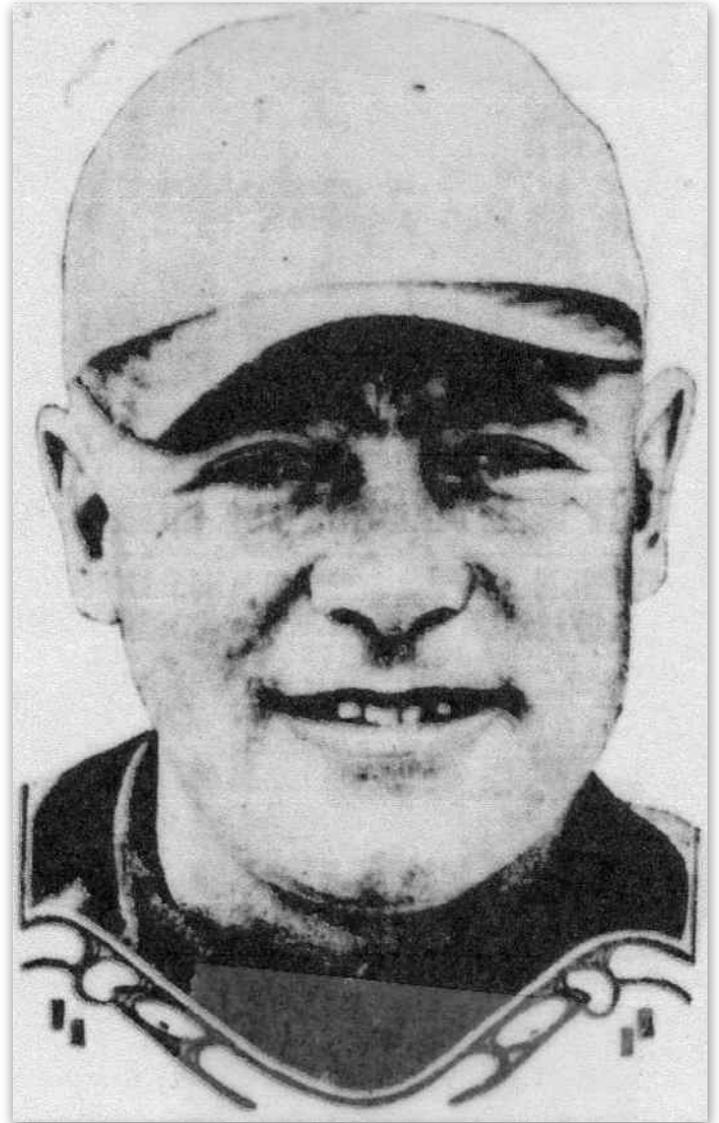
FRANK EDINGTON AND THE SECOND MAJOR LEAGUE CHANCE THAT NEVER CAME

by **Bill Lamb**

Frank Edington's 15-game major league career was byproduct of a tragedy in the life of Deadball Era star Mike Donlin. In June 1912, Donlin left the Pittsburgh Pirates to attend the bedside of celebrity wife Mabel Hite, a vaudeville headliner terminally ill with stomach cancer.¹ To fill the right field void during Donlin's absence, the Pirates purchased the contract of 20-year-old Edington from the Lexington (Kentucky) Colts of the lowly Blue Grass League.

Inserted into the starting lineup, Edington proved a surprisingly able replacement, batting over .300 with 14 RBIs and playing errorless outfield defense. But once Donlin, in the midst of a season that would yield a solid .316 batting average, was back in town, club brass was in a quandary about what to do with Edington. Rather than have their promising young prospect languish on the bench, Pittsburgh decided to option him to a nearby minor league club where playing every day would keep his skills sharp. Edington's demotion was accompanied by praise from Pirates management and press prediction that the youngster would soon be recalled.

Sixteen years later, Frank Edington hung up his spikes, still awaiting the summons to return to the majors. This despite any number of productive seasons with minor league clubs. A century later, the reasons why Edington never got another big league shot are not obvious, as he was a durable, conscientious, and fan-friendly ballplayer. Perhaps his unimpressive physical appearance – Edington's squat physique later spawned the nickname *Stump* – or the defensive position limitations of being left-handed handicapped his chances. Whatever the case, the potential of his 1912 audition was never fulfilled. After baseball, Edington pursued various occupations – insurance salesman, deputy sheriff, government bureaucrat, railroad inspector, optometrist – until his death in 1969. In a grim



Edington with Forth Worth Panthers, 1925

irony, he succumbed to stomach cancer, the same malady that had claimed Mabel Hite some 57 years earlier. A look back at the long and eventful life of this frustrated baseball hopeful follows.

Jacob Frank Edington was born on July 4, 1891 near Koleen, Indiana, a rural hamlet located in the southwestern part of the state. He was one of six children² born to prosperous lumberman-turned-real estate broker Melvin Grey Edington (1869-1933) and his wife Stella Ann (nee Meredith, 1872-1915). The elder Edingtons were Indiana natives who imbued their offspring with a mixture of English, Scotch-Irish, and German blood. Frank, as our subject was known in his

youth, was raised in the slightly more substantial town of Lyons where he attended class through high school graduation in 1909.

Short, stocky (a shade under 5-foot-7 and 180 pounds),³ and athletic, Edington first attracted attention as a southpaw pitcher-outfielder playing for amateur nines in Lyons, Bloomfield, and other backwater Indiana towns. He entered the professional ranks in December 1909, signing with the Paris (Kentucky) Bourbonites of the Class D Blue Grass League.⁴ The following spring, Edington impressed in his maiden mound outing, striking out seven in three scoreless innings of preseason intra-squad work.⁵ But after 19 regular season appearances, the youngster was released by Paris.⁶ He then hooked on with a league rival, the Lexington (Kentucky) Colts.⁷ In 49 BGL games combined, Edington posted an 11-5 pitching log while batting .238 in 49 games. Returning to Lexington in 1911, Frank upped his batting average to .333 with 27 extra-base hits, good for a .500 slugging average in 72 games played mostly as an outfielder. He also posted a 2-3 record in eight pitching appearances.

Edington returned to Lexington for a third campaign in 1912 and was batting a torrid .372 when Mike Donlin's need to attend dying wife Mabel Hite left the Pittsburgh Pirates with a mid-June need for outfield help. Although higher-tier minor league players were available, club brain trust reached all the way down to Class D ball to purchase young Frank Edington. Later, club president Barney Dreyfuss related that Edington "had long been under the watchful eye of Pirate scouts."⁸ Shortly after he arrived in Pittsburgh, Frank made his major league debut as an unsuccessful ninth-inning pinch-hitter in a 5-3 loss to Cincinnati on June 20. Days later, Pirates skipper Fred Clarke gave his new recruit a start against the Reds. He went hitless in his first three plate appearances against right-hander George Suggs, but drew a walk in the bottom of the eighth and eventually scored the winning run in a 2-1 Pittsburgh victory. In post-game analysis, Edington's "sweet" defensive play in right field drew plaudits from *Pittsburg Post* sports-



Mabel Hite and Mike Donlin, c. 1910

writer Ed Balinger.⁹ *Pittsburg Press* sports editor Ralph Davis was also favorably impressed, informing readers that the newcomer "displayed good judgment at the plate," twice hit the ball hard albeit into outs, and played excellent defense in right. Edington's "debut on the whole was immensely successful," Davis opined, "and it is certain that Clarke will look him over further before he passes him along."¹⁰

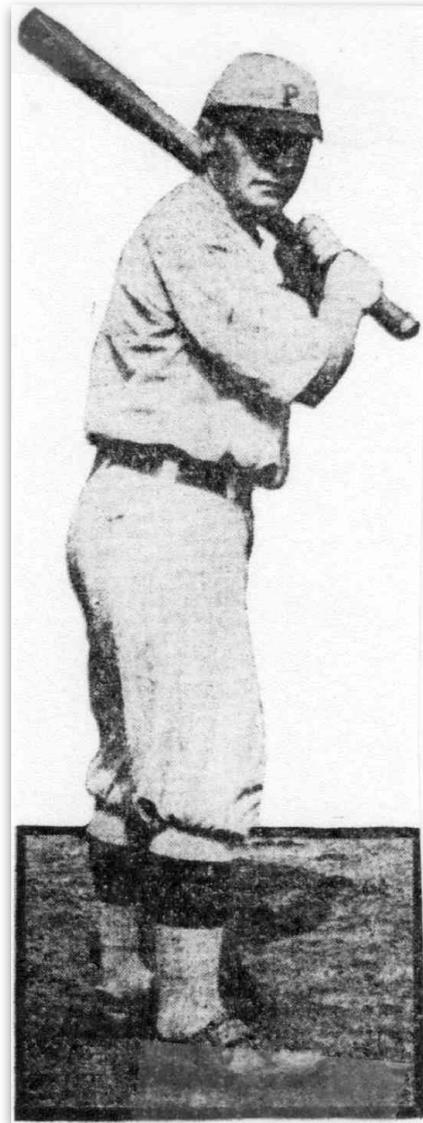
As Davis predicted, manager Clarke had Edington back in the lineup on June 24 against St. Louis, slotted third in the batting order between future Hall of Famers Max Carey and Honus Wagner. And he did not disappoint, going two-for-four off right-hander Rube Geyer, with a triple, an RBI, and a run scored during a 4-3 Pirates defeat. Thereafter, Clarke left the rookie in the lineup and he continued to produce. After 11 games, the Edington batting average stood at a team-high .349.¹¹ On July 4, Frank celebrated his 21st birthday by going five-for-nine in a doubleheader sweep of Cincinnati. Afterwards, *Press* sports editor Davis observed, "The more Manager Clarke sees of Frank Edington, the more deeply is he impressed with the ability of the Blue Grass leaguer."¹² Himself an Edington admir-

er as well, Davis continued, "Edington possesses talent in every department of the game. He has more than proved his ability to swat the ball, and in the field handles himself with confidence such as seldom displayed by a mere youth. He plays both ground balls and fly balls perfectly, and has also proved that he has a strong whip."¹³ But a week later, the return of Mike Donlin complicated the Pittsburgh situation.

With the third-place Pirates already lagging 15 games behind the pace set by the New York Giants in the National League pennant chase, Clarke was loath to supplant veteran outfielders Donlin, Carey, and Chief Wilson, all of whom would bat .300 or better that season, with a novice like Edington, his eye-catching showing to date notwithstanding. But random pinch-hitting appearances and gathering dust on the bench were not in the youngster's best interests either, reasoned Clarke. With reluctance, the Pittsburgh skipper subsequently decided to option Edington to the nearby Wheeling (West Virginia) Stogies of the Class B Central League. There, Edington could remain sharp while he awaited what seemed his inevitable recall by the Pirates.¹⁴

Notwithstanding the recruit's demotion, "Pittsburgh's management is tickled over the way that Edington filed the hole in right field when Donlin was absent" and was confident that the youngster "gives promise of reaching a high plane in the diamond sport," declared *Sporting Life* correspondent A.R. Cratty.¹⁵ At the time of his dispatch to Wheeling, the Edington stat line was indeed a promising one. In 15 games, he had posted a (16-for-53) .302 batting average, with four runs scored and 14 RBIs. He had also drawn three walks while striking out but once in 59 plate appearances. In the field, Edington had been even better, handling 25 chances without a single fielding miscue for a perfect 1.000 FA. Few at the time would have imagined that these numbers would also serve as the final ones for the major league career of then 21-year-old Frank Edington.

Unbeknownst to Edington, he was about to embark on a 16-season minor league odyssey. Seemingly let down by his demotion to Wheeling, he underperformed, posting only a .260 batting average in 35 games against Class B pitching. Before season end,



Pittsburgh Pirates, 1912

Edington was released to another Central League club, the Fort Wayne (Indiana) Railroaders, who, in turn, promptly shipped him to the Columbus (Ohio) Senators of the Class AA American Association.¹⁶

Edington split the 1913 season between Columbus and an in-state AA rival, the Toledo Mud Hens, but he again produced underwhelming offensive numbers. In 106 games combined, he batted only .250. Likely as a result, Edington attracted no interest when the upstart Federal League self-declared itself a major league for the 1914 season, thereby expanding the complement of top-echelon playing opportunities available for fading big league veterans, career minor leaguers, and marginal talents by one-third. Instead, he remained in the American

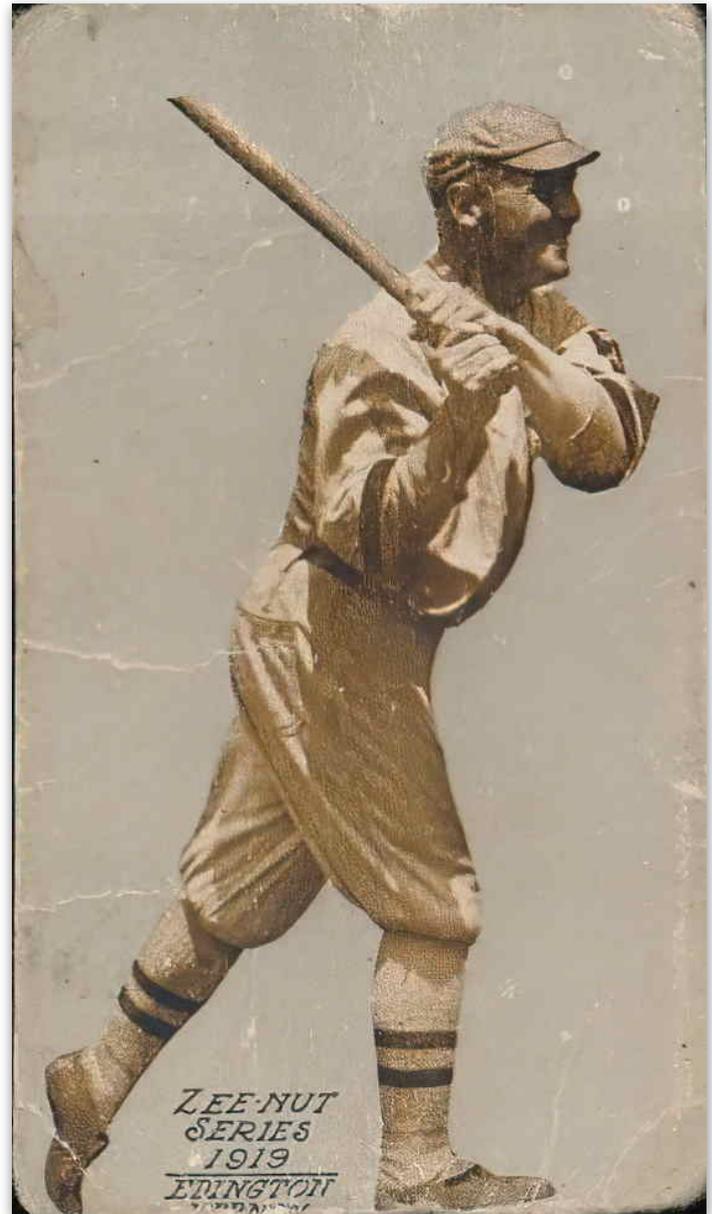
Association and again posted substandard numbers, batting only .245 in 28 games played for Columbus and the Indianapolis Indians. Released in May to the Denver Bears of the Class A Western League, Edington regained his batting stroke, posting a club-best .347 batting average in 100 games played for the Mile High City club.

Despite its Denver revival, Edington's career took another step backward in 1915. He spent the season back in the Central League, this time with the Grand Rapids (Michigan) Black Sox.¹⁷ Playing for one-time Cincinnati pitcher Bill Essick, Edington continued his comeback with the bat. In 123 games, he hit a club-leading .322 and paced the Sox in doubles (20), triples (7), home runs (6), runs scored (77), total bases (196), and stolen bases (39). Still, he went undrafted at season end, thereby necessitating an encore with Grand Rapids in 1916. And when his batting numbers again regressed (.262 BA in 133 games), Edington was fortunate to secure a return engagement from Grand Rapids for the 1917 season.

Once again, Edington's batting stats rebounded. His .339 BA and 144 base hits led Grand Rapids, while the baseball press finally took notice of an unappreciated Edington skill: his ability to draw walks. *Evansville Journal* sports columnist Jimmy Dunne described Edington as "a sure fielder, a dangerous batsman, and a good waiter. His record for bases on balls is nearly twice that of any other player."¹⁸ Frank finished the season with 102 walks, setting a new Central League record.¹⁹

As the 1917 season drew to a close, Edington received a promotion, drafted by the Memphis Chickasaws of the Class A Southern League. But the Memphis draft of Edington was preempted by an organization with considerably more draft clout: the US Army. Twenty-six and single, Frank had long been a prime candidate for military conscription and eventually received orders to report for duty in April.²⁰ Like many other professional ballplayers, he spent no time overseas, fighting World War I from center field at Camp Taylor in Indiana.²¹

Mustered out shortly after hostilities ended in November 1918, Edington sought to resume his baseball career but found himself the subject of an in-



Vernon Tigers, 1919

ter-club controversy. When Memphis discovered that Edington was bound for military service, it rescinded its draft of him. And the Grand Rapids club to which his rights reverted had since disbanded. From among various claimants, Edington was awarded to the Vernon Tigers, a Class AA Pacific Coast League team managed by Bill Essick, Edington's former skipper at Grand Rapids.²² While his professional affiliation was being sorted out, Frank attended to a domestic matter. In February 1919, he married Jessie Wilson Williams, a 29-year-old divorcee with a five-year-old daughter.²³ His new bride accompanied the ballplayer to the West Coast

but the couple's union was short-lived. The Edingtons divorced sometime in the early 1920s.

In retrospect, Edington's ensuing three-season (1919-1920-1921) hitch with Vernon had a trio of noteworthy features. First and foremost, Edington's mediocre performance – a combined .286 batting average with modest power in the high-octane post-WWI offensive game – effectively ended all realistic prospect of his ever returning to the major leagues. Second, Edington's time in Vernon coincided with the scandal that enveloped the club during the 1920 season when game-fixing accusations led to the indictment of Tigers team captain/first baseman Babe Borton, several other PCL players, and notorious West Coast gambler Nate Raymond.²⁴ Detailed discussion of the scandal, however, is beyond the scope of this profile.²⁵ Suffice it to say that Edington was among the Vernon players who denied contributing to a slush fund maintained by Borton for the bribery of opposing players.²⁶ Finally, the penchant of PCL sportswriters for describing Edington as *stubby* or *stumpy* evolved, over time, into the late-career nickname *Stump*, the appellation which now supplants *Frank* as Edington's first name in modern baseball reference works.²⁷

In January 1922, an AP wire dispatch announced that “Frank (Stumpy) Edington, outfielder, and Ford (Scotty) Alcock, utility infielder, [were] traded by the Vernon club of the Pacific Coast League to the Beaumont club of the Texas League for Jackie May, pitcher.”²⁸ The transfer to a non-competitive Class B ball club cemented Edington's descent to journeyman minor leaguer. And it was in Texas where the nickname *Stump* really took hold for Frank Edington. Seeing regular duty for a sixth-place (65-88, .425) Beaumont Exporters nine, Edington ripped opposition pitching for 52 extra-base hits on the way to posting a .326 batting average and leading Beaumont batsmen in three other offensive categories. His reward for this sterling performance: the thankless job of Beaumont manager for the 1923 season.²⁹ The novice skipper lasted until late-May, resigning with his charges residing in their familiar sixth-place spot in TL standings.³⁰ Shortly thereafter, Edington was released by Beaumont at his own request.



Edington with Knothole Gang admirers

Before June was out, Stump Edington was back in the now-Class A Texas League, signed by the three-time defending circuit champion Fort Worth Panthers.³¹ Immediately inserted into the lineup by manager Jake Atz, Edington provided reliable service, finishing the campaign with a .307 batting average in 136 games, combined. He also established rapport with Fort Worth fans, becoming a particular favorite of knotholers.³² The Panthers, meanwhile, captured their fourth-straight Texas League crown.

Just prior to the start of the 1924 season, Edington remarried, taking 23-year-old Myrtle Lucille Gleaves as his second wife.³³ Their marriage would endure for the next 45 years, but be without children. Once back in Fort Worth harness, everyday right fielder Edington upped his numbers to .335 with 49 extra-base hits as the (109-41, .727) Panthers pulled off a Texas League championship five-peat. Player and ball club encored in 1925. Edington: .295 BA with 59 extra-base hits, 107 runs scored, 128 RBIs, and a new Texas League-record 144 walks;³⁴ Fort Worth: 103-48, .682, and a sixth-consecutive Texas League title.

All good things came to an end the following year. When Fort Worth stumbled out of the gate, impatient manager Atz took his displeasure out on his players. And when Edington misplayed a fly ball into a triple in a May 17 loss to Shreveport, Atz lit into him. The now-35-year-old Edington jawed back, prompting Atz to jettison him from the club roster.³⁵ Ensuing attempts by Fort Worth to sell or

trade Edington to other minor league clubs were frustrated when he refused to report,³⁶ preferring to spend his time “semi-proing in West Texas.”³⁷ Eventually released by the Panthers, Stump signed with a Texas League rival, the cellar-dwelling Waco Cubs. In 113 TL games total, he batted .326, and thereafter signed for the 1927 season with Beaumont.³⁸

Back in his adopted hometown, Edington got off to a blistering start, batting close to .400 in the early going. But he also drew a high salary that the financially-shaky Beaumont franchise was taxed to meet. So in lieu of a present for his 36th birthday, the Exporters gave Edington his unconditional release.³⁹ Within days, Stump’s erstwhile employer, the Waco Cubs, scooped him up.⁴⁰ For the remainder of the season, he engaged Waco player-manager Del Pratt in a scintillating duel for Texas League batting honors. In the end, Pratt (.386) prevailed; Edington (.376) came in second, but led the circuit in walks (95).⁴¹

Waco desired Edington back for the coming season, but with his legs aching, the veteran looked for a club where he could be shifted to first base. He also wanted another shot at managing.⁴² Stump therefore jumped at the chance to play and manage the Portsmouth Truckers of the Class B Virginia League. He had his new club off to an excellent 25-14 start when the four-team circuit went under in late May.⁴³ After a brief sojourn with the Spartanburg (South Carolina) Spartans of the Class B South Atlantic League, Edington completed his 18-season professional career as player-manager of the Raleigh (North Carolina) Capitals of the Class C Piedmont League.⁴⁴ Although he was pretty much a dud as manager (28-41, .406), Stump could still hit, producing a commendable .341 batting average in 61 games played for the Capitals.

In spring 1929, Edington worked out with the Beaumont Exporters but was not signed by the club. He subsequently turned to umpiring, but was dismissed by the Texas League in late-June. Meanwhile, he supported himself and wife Lucille as an insurance salesman.⁴⁵ That December, Edington donned a new kind of uniform – that of a Jefferson County deputy sheriff.⁴⁶ Stump, however, did not abandon the game, serving as a coach for



Edington and Texas League president Dick Butler at 1957 Fort Worth Panthers reunion

Beaumont’s crack American Legion team into the mid-1930s. In early 1934, he was placed in charge of the Veterans Bureau at the National Recovery Administration office in Beaumont.⁴⁷ Three years later, he was working as an inspector for the state railroad commission. By 1942, Edington had relocated to Bastrop, Louisiana,⁴⁸ where he spent the remainder of his working life as an optometrist.⁴⁹

Throughout his workaday years, Edington stayed connected to baseball. In addition to his coaching Beaumont youth, he participated in local old timers-type affairs and observed Texas League meetings as time and circumstance permitted. The last discovered photo of Edington has him attending an August 1957 reunion of former Fort Worth Panthers.⁵⁰

In late life, the now-retired Edington was diagnosed with stomach cancer. Removed to Bastrop’s Moreland Parish General Hospital, he died there

on November 11, 1969.⁵¹ Jacob Frank “Stump” Edington was 78. Thereafter, his remains were transported to his boyhood hometown of Lyons, Indiana, where funeral services were conducted by a local minister.⁵² Interment was in Prairie Chapel Cemetery, Lyons. Immediate survivors were limited to his wife Lucille, step-daughter Thelma Doerr, and sister Mary Jane Edington.

NOTES

1. Hite died in October 1912. Following their marriage in 1906, Mabel incorporated her ballplayer husband into her stage act. Thereafter, theater appearances cost Donlin at least two full seasons during the height of his baseball career.
2. The other Edington children were daughters Cledie Ann (born 1890) and Mary Jane (1899), and son Harley (1893). Daughters Ruth and Helen (birth years unknown) did not survive infancy.
3. Modern reference works list Edington as a Dead-ball Era unremarkable 5-foot-8, 170 pounds, but this appears approximated. Both photographic evidence and frequently-used descriptive terms like *stocky*, *chunky*, *stubby*, and *stumpy* (which evolved into the late-career nickname *Stump*) indicate that Edington was short and squat. More to the point, the late-life questionnaire submitted to the Baseball Hall of Fame Library by Edington himself lists his measurements as 5-foot-6¾ with a playing weight of 180 pounds. His 1942 WWII draft registration card also lists Edington as 5-foot-6¾ (and now 200 pounds).
4. Per “Prospects Bought for 1910 Club,” (Paris, Kentucky) *Bourbon News*, December 21, 1909: 3.
5. As reported in “Colts Win in Yesterday’s Contest,” *Bourbon News*, April 22, 1910: 2, and “Paris Vets Beaten by Colts Nine,” *Lexington (Kentucky) Herald*, April 23, 1910: 8.
6. “Blue Grass Changes,” (Covington) *Kentucky Post*, June 1, 1910:6. Paris club stats published in the *Bourbon News*, June 3, 1910: 9, listed Edington with a (12-for-54) .222 batting average. No pitching stats were provided.
7. Unless otherwise noted, stats from here on have been taken from Baseball-Reference. B-R lists Edington as also playing for a third Blue Grass League club, the Winchester (Kentucky) Hustlers, and his *Sporting News* player contract card includes a Winchester affiliation in 1910. The writer, however, was unable to find any evidence that Edington ever appeared in a game for Winchester.
8. Per A.R. Cratty, “Pittsburgh Points,” *Sporting Life*, July 13, 1912: 7.
9. See Ed F. Balinger, “Camnitz Allows Four Tiny Swats and Pirates Win,” *Pittsburg Post*, June 23, 1912: 41.
10. Ralph S. Davis, “Reds Make Four Hits,” *Pittsburg Press*, June 23, 1912: 20.
11. Per “Batting Averages of the Buccaneers,” *Pittsburg Press*, July 8, 1912: 14. The still-absent Donlin was second with a .341 BA in 16 games.
12. Ralph S. Davis, “Pirates and Reds Meet Again Today,” *Pittsburg Press*, July 5, 1912: 22.
13. Same as above.
14. See “Wheeling Gets Edington; Mensor to Be Retained,” *Pittsburg Post*, July 25, 1912: 10; “Bugs’ Edington Goes to Wheeling,” *Lexington (Kentucky) Leader*, July 26, 1912: 1. See also, *Lexington Herald*, July 27, 1912: 12: “Clarke thinks that [Edington] has the makings of a good ballplayer ... and will get another shot with the Pirates if he shows well in his new berth.”
15. A.G. Cratty, “Pittsburgh Points,” *Sporting Life*, July 13, 1912: 7.
16. As reported in “Edington Sold,” *Lexington Leader*, November 2, 1912: 4, and “Released by Purchase,” *Sporting Life*, December 17, 1912: 12, and as reflected in Edington’s *Sporting News* contract card.
17. Denver’s preseason release of Edington to Grand Rapids was reported in the *Topeka (Kansas) State Journal*, February 27, 1915: 4.
18. “Jimmy Dunne Has All Star Team Picked,” *Evansville (Indiana) Journal*, July 27, 1917: 12. In his first 105 games that season, Edington drew 94 walks and struck out only 19 times, per “Some Record,” *Evansville (Indiana) Courier*, August 20, 1917: 7.
19. See “Frank Edington Gets 102 Passes,” *Chattanooga (Tennessee) News*, October 25, 1917: 5; “Given 102 Walks in 126 Games for .810 Average,” *Duluth (Minnesota) News-Tribune*, November 5, 1917: 8. See also, Jack Keene, “Sport Snap Shots,” *Fargo (North Dakota) Forum*, October 15, 1917: 9.
20. Per “Chicks Lose Another,” (Little Rock) *Arkansas Gazette*, April 8, 1918: 10; “Edington, Eligible for Military Duty, Lost to Chickasaws,” *New Orleans State*, April 8, 1918: 11.
21. See “Team Prepared for Game with Soldier Nine,” *Richmond (Indiana) Palladium and Sun-Telegram*, June 21, 1918: 8.
22. Per “Essick Signs New Gardener; Long Will Report,” *Los Angeles Evening Express*, February 6, 1919: 2. See also, “Indiana and Ohio Baseball Men Meet in Cincinnati,” *Richmond Palladium and Sun-Telegram*, February 27, 1919: 12.

23. As memorialized in State of Indiana marriage records accessed via Ancestry.com. Edington's new step-daughter was Thelma Juanita Williams.
24. Those charges were subsequently dismissed on technical grounds by a Los Angeles court.
25. For an informative account of the PCL scandal, see Larry R. Gerlach, "The Bad News Bees: Salt Lake City and the 1919 Pacific Coast League Scandal," *Base Ball: A Journal of the Early Game*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (Spring 2012), 35-74.
26. See "Deny Knowledge of Crookedness," *Grand Forks (North Dakota) Herald*, October 19, 1920: 1; "Witness Threatens Borton Libel Suit," (Portland) *Oregonian*, October 20, 1920: 19.
27. The unflattering descriptives appear to originate in the early-1920 reportage of West Coast sports-writers. For "stubby," see e.g., *The Oregonian*, February 9, 1920: 8; and *Los Angeles Times*, March 9, 1920: 11. For "stumpy," see *Los Angeles Times*, March 7, 1920: 11; (Portland) *Oregon Journal*, March 9, 1920: 12; *Riverside (California) Enterprise*, April 5, 1920: 6.
28. See e.g., "Vernon Lands May for Stump Edington and Scotty Alcock," *Seattle Times*, January 20, 1922: 15.
29. Edington's acceptance of the manager's job was reported in "'Stump' Edington Signs to Pilot 1923 Exporters," *Beaumont (Texas) Enterprise*, December 6, 1922: 9; "Important Sales Looked for Today at Ball Meeting," *Beaumont (Texas) Journal*, December 6, 1922: 9; and elsewhere.
30. See "Frank Kitchens May Succeed 'Stump' Edington, Resigns," *Beaumont Enterprise*, June 1, 1923: 10; "'Pop' Kitchens May Be Made Exporters' Pilot," *Beaumont Journal*, June 1, 1923: 12.
31. As reported in the *Fort Worth Record*, June 18, 1923: 5, and *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, June 18, 1923: 11.
32. See "Knothole Gang Crowns 'Stump' Star," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, June 17, 1925: 14, and "Part of 'Knot Hole' Gang and their Idol," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, June 27, 1925: 3, with photo depicting a smiling Edington surrounded by young admirers.
33. Per State of Texas marriage records accessed via Ancestry.com.
34. According to Ned C. Record, "Fantastic Fancies," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, October 15, 1925: 10, and May 5, 1926: 15. Baseball-Reference does not provide Edington's runs scored, RBIs, or walks for the 1925 season.
35. See "Edington Out of Fort Worth Line," *Brownsville (Texas) Herald*, May 19, 1926: 6; "Edington Argues with Manager Jake Atz and Loses; To Be Released," *Dallas Morning News*, May 19, 1926: 11; "Cats Drop Edington from Rolls After Clubhouse Row," *San Antonio Light*, May 19, 1926: 10.
36. See "Edington May Sign with Waco," *Shreveport (Louisiana) Journal*, June 18, 1926: 14.
37. Per the *Beaumont Express*, August 13, 1926: 10.
38. As reported in "Goes to Beaumont," *Dallas Morning News*, January 26, 1927: 14; "Edington Signed by Beaumont Shippers," *Houston Post*, January 26, 1927: 14; and elsewhere.
39. See "Stump Edington Given Pink Slip on His 36th Birthday," *Beaumont Journal*, July 6, 1927: 20. See also, "Edington and Calderon Released by Beaumont," *Dallas Morning News*, July 6, 1927: 16.
40. As reported in "Stump Edington Joins Waco Club to Finish Year," *Beaumont Enterprise*, July 12, 1927: 12; "'Stump' Signs Up with Waco," *San Antonio Light*, July 12, 1927: 8; and elsewhere.
41. Per Texas League statistics published in the *Shreveport Journal*, September 17, 1927: 8.
42. Per the *Beaumont Journal*, January 27, 1928: 17.
43. Per *The Encyclopedia of Minor League Baseball*, Lloyd Johnson and Miles Wolff, eds. (Durham, North Carolina: Baseball America, 3d ed., 2007), 311.
44. See A.J. McKelvin, "Stump Edington to Manage Caps," *Raleigh (North Carolina) News and Observer*, July 3, 1928: 9. See also, "Stump Edington Will Manage Carolina Team," *Sacramento Bee*, July 26, 1928: 1. Edington was secured from Spartanburg after Capitals player-manager Jimmy Viox was injured and disabled for the rest of the season.
45. Per the *Beaumont Journal*, March 19, 1929: 7.
46. "'Stump' Edington Is New Deputy in Sheriff's Office," *Beaumont Journal*, December 3, 1929: 19.
47. As reported in the *Beaumont Enterprise*, January 3, 1934: 2.
48. Located in northwest Louisiana, Bastrop was the hometown of Yankees Hall of Famer Bill Dickey.
49. Per Edington's WWII draft registration form and the player questionnaire that he completed for the Hall of Fame in 1960.
50. Published in the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 11, 1957: 21.
51. The Edington death certificate lists the immediate cause of death as severe arterio-intestinal hemorrhage due to stomach cancer.
52. Per "Edington Services Conducted Today," *Bloomfield (Indiana) News*, December 4, 1969: 1.

DEADBALL STARS AND THEIR NAMESAKES: CORRECTION AND UPDATE

THE SAM CRAWFORDS

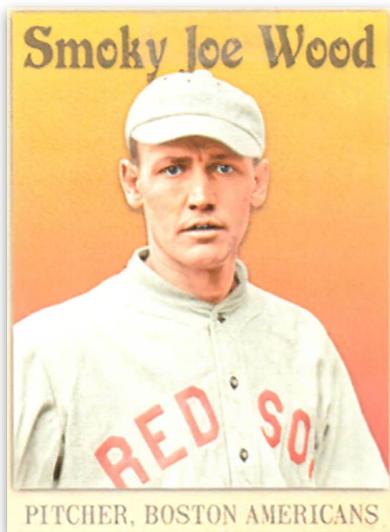
Last issue's feature on Deadball Era stars and their namesakes included side-by-side images of star Detroit Tigers outfielder Wahoo Sam Crawford and Sam Crawford, a journeyman Deadball Era and Negro Leagues pitcher. But we goofed. The image that purported to be the latter was actually a photo of Hall of Famer Cool Papa Bell. Charge the error to the newsletter editor. Below is a photo of the actual Sam Crawford wearing a Kansas City Monarchs jersey. Thanks to Paul Gardner for bringing the misidentification to our attention.



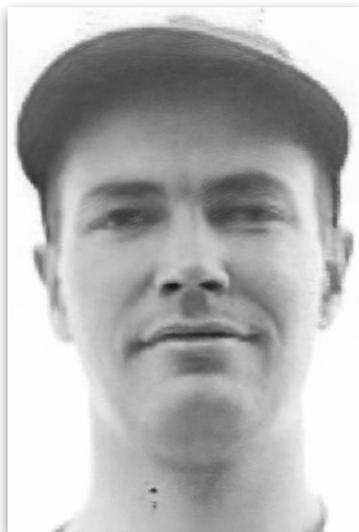
Pitcher Sam Crawford

SMOKY JOE WOOD, SON JOE WOOD, AND INFIELDER JOE WOOD

DEC member Chuck McGill, meanwhile, noted the absence from our gallery of Deadball pitching legend Smoky Joe Wood and his namesakes: son Joe Wood, a three-game pitcher for the 1944 Boston Red Sox, and Joe Wood, an infielder for the 1943 Detroit Tigers. Their images (left to right) appear below.



Smoky Joe Wood



Son Joe Wood



Infielder Joe Wood

GAMES/BIOPROJECT

Since the last newsletter appeared, the Games Project has published 13 new accounts of Deadball Era games, ranging from a recap of an August 1904 Charlie Case shutout written by Russ Walsh to Jacob Pomrenke's account of a 1918 White Sox exhibition game played at the epicenter of the Spanish Flu pandemic. Meanwhile, the BioProject published profiles of such Deadball Era figures as Lew Richie, Zack Wheat, Monte Pfyl, Rolla Mapel, Rudy Baerwald, Red Torkelson, Oscar Horstmann, Homer Hillebrand, Gus Abell, George Crable, Ben Taylor, Moxie Manuel, and George Morigridge. As always, we urge you to check these stories out if you have not already done so.

NEW DEADBALL ERA COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The Inside Game is pleased to welcome to the committee the following SABR members who have expressed interest in the Deadball Era:

<i>Andy Broome</i>	<i>Arnaldo Rincones</i>
<i>Mark Davis</i>	<i>Mike Slocum</i>
<i>Scott D. Fletcher</i>	<i>Paul Sternburgh</i>
<i>Joseph T. Jordan, Jr.</i>	<i>John Tenney</i>
<i>Michael Minio</i>	

We look forward to their active participation in committee endeavors. These new committee members, as well as our newsletter contributors, can be contacted via the SABR directory.

DETECTIVES BOG FOOTSTEPS OF THE HOOSIER PLAYERS

Indianapolis— That detectives employed by the Indianapolis baseball club, of the American association, have been following the club players, noting their dissipations, became known here today, when the sleuths submitted lengthy typewritten reports, showing the number of drinks each player has had, the various resorts visited, and the time the men have retired each night during the past three weeks. A thorough shakeup of the team which began Thursday with the installation of Charles O'Day, of the Springfield Central league team, as manager, in place of Charley O'Leary, the ex-Tiger, is promised.

The sleuths were employed by President Sol Meyer, of the club, to ferret out the reason for the team's recent slump. President Meyer admitted that six or seven of the players have already been suspended and fined, but he refused to give their names for the present. The team has been away from home for over three weeks. During the time, the detectives followed the players night and day.

Pittsburg Press, July 28, 1912

DEADBALL ERA PUZZLE CLUE

Since 1925, *The New Yorker* has published top-drawer political reportage and commentary, arts and popular culture criticism, poetry, literary satire, and celebrated cartoons. But the May 24 issue of the weekly suggests that a Jack Quinn or Phil Douglas fan may be among those who craft the magazine's crossword puzzles. Puzzle solvers were given this clue: slippery shade makers. As Deadball Era aficionados might be the first to decipher, the answer: **ELMS**.

Contributed by Mike Lackey

BASEBALL PLAYER IS KILLED

FRANK HERBERT OF DAYTON DIES FROM INJURIES RECEIVED IN RUNNING THE BASES

DAYTON, O—[Yesterday's] game was called at the end of the sixth inning at Fairview park because of the announcement of the death at the St. Elizabeth hospital of Frank Herbert, Dayton's first baseman, who was injured on Thursday by running into Alvoy Spangler in trying to get to first base. Herbert's home is at Wheeling, W. Va., and the remains will be taken there for burial.

Chicago Tribune, July 10, 1904