

The INSIDE GAME

The Official Newsletter of SABR's Deadball Era Committee

VOL. XI, NO. 2: "LET'S GET THIS LUMPY, LICORICE-STAINED BALL ROLLING!" APR. 2011

THE CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN

by **John McMurray**

Contemporary research into Deadball Era figures and events can be an extraordinary challenge, both in terms of unearthing new information about a bygone period and in maintaining historical accuracy when reliable material may be difficult to find.

Norman Macht, a member of the Deadball Era Committee, faced these hurdles, among others, while researching and writing *Connie Mack: The Early Years of Baseball* (University of Nebraska Press, 2007). Macht's experience in preparing this volume over approximately twenty-five years offers perspective into some methods and approaches which other historians might apply in chronicling events that are roughly one hundred years old.

In conducting his research, Macht was determined to rely on primary source materials to avoid the potential untrustworthiness of secondary sources.

"I think doing so should be a generally-accepted practice," said Macht.

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FRED MERKLE FIELD PLAQUE

by **David Stalker**

Fred Merkle was honored again in his hometown of Watertown, Wisconsin. On July 22nd, 2010, "*Public Bonehead, Private Hero: The Real Legacy of Baseball's Fred Merkle*" book author Mike Cameron, and I, as Merkle historian, met at Watertown's Fred Merkle Field to donate a black granite plaque to Washington Park.

In 2008, the baseball field was named after Merkle as a sign was put up reading "Fred Merkle Field." I was very pleased that Watertown's Park, Recreation and Forestry Commission named the field in Fred's honor. However, I still wanted those attending games at the park to get some history about who Fred Merkle was. I proposed a plaque to the park. Once I received approval, the required funding needed to be obtained.

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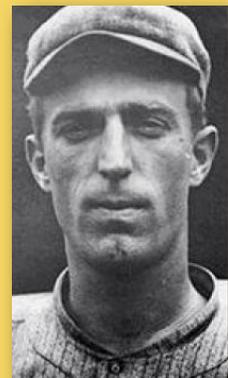
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The "Cincinnati Hit"



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by Dennis Pajot

ALMOST ANOTHER MERKLE GAME

by Dennis Pajot

The box score and summary in the July 5, 1913 *Sporting Life* of the Detroit-Cleveland American League game of June 24 looks innocent enough. The game summary reads: "The Detroits won the second game by scoring five of their runs in the ninth inning. [Bobby] Veach doubled, advanced on [Hugh] High's out and scored on [Del] Gainer's single. [Les] Hennessy ran for [Oscar] Stange, who reached first on [Terry] Turner's muff, and after [Pepper] Peploski fouled out [Henri] Rondeau, batting for [Fred] House, walked, filling the bases. [Donie] Bush cleared them up with a two-bagger. [Ossie] Witt (*sic*, Vitt) walked and [Sam] Crawford was purposely passed, filling the sacks again. [Vean] Gregg was called upon to pitch to Veach, but he could not get the ball over the plate and Bush was forced in with the winning run."

Bottom line: The Tigers rallied for five runs in the ninth inning—the final run scoring on a bases loaded walk—to beat the Naps in the second game of this doubleheader, 6-5.



**The
INSIDE GAME**
The Official Newsletter of SABR's Deadball Era Committee

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Reading the Milwaukee *Journal* of June 29, 1913 I found an article that certainly piqued my interest. The headline read "COULDN'T MAKE A MERKLE OUT OF THIS." The article goes on:

Joe Birmingham had vision of a Merkle at the end of the ninth inning of a game with Detroit this week. A Merkle is the name generally applied to a boneheaded play which can turn an apparent victory into defeat. And that is what Joe thought he saw when Veach, who drew a pass with bases full of Tigers and two outs, tossed his bat away and started for the Tiger bench.

[Steve] O'Neill touched Veach, but Jack Egan refused to call him out. Birmingham kicked vigorously, a crowd collected and Joe complained bitterly, while Veach walked down to first and touched the sack, and Bush walked home and touched the plate and Vitt walked to third and touched that sack and Crawford strolled to second and kicked the bag.

As a matter of fact the rules of the game permitted Veach to go to the bench and take a long drink of ice water before going to first. The rules do not prevent him from stepping out of the batter's box and toward the bench instead of stepping out of the box and walking to first. The game is simply delayed til (*sic*) he gets to first and since he got there finally everything was legal and Ban Johnson will not have to drag out his famous volume "Essays on Diplomacy" to decide a protest from Cleveland.

The play intrigued me for obvious reasons, so I asked around for game summaries of the game from Detroit and/or Cleveland newspapers. Two of the most dependable SABR members I know—Dan O'Brien and Rod Nelson—came through with newspaper clippings from both cities. It turns out the article in the Milwaukee *Journal* was correct in its essentials.

Cleveland had won the first game of the double bill in 12 innings, 6-4.

The Cleveland *Plain Dealer* account of the last inning of game two confirms what *Sporting Life* wrote, but gives us a little better mental image of what happened:

Veach led off with a double to right. High tapped to [Willie] Mitchell who could have nipped Veach at third but nailed High instead. What did he care if Detroit did get another run? Gainer singled to right, Veach scoring. Stanage hit to Turner and in his eagerness to start a double play, Turner fell headlong and Detroit had two on with one out. Peploski, a youth from Seton Hall, a prep school in New Jersey, was next. He fouled out to Johnston, Doc bumping into the Nap dugout and Gainer and Hennessy, who ran for Stanage, advanced. Rondeau batted for House. Mitchell lost his control and passed him, his first pass of the game. The bases were filled, two out and Bush to bat. Bush doubled to the score board and three Tigers flashed across the plate. Vitt drew a pass. Crawford was passed purposely and Gregg was called to the rescue. He failed to get the ball over for Veach and Bush trotted home with the winning run.

The *Plain Dealer* told its readers after his base on balls Veach, “instead of going to first, turned and made his way to the bench. O’Neill touched Bush as he came in from third and Birmingham claimed that the run should not count. Then the Detroiters forced Veach to touch first base. A vigorous argument took place between Birmingham and Egan but the Clevelanders came off second best as usual.”

In this account, the catcher tags the runner coming home from third base on a bases loaded walk. Only at this point does Veach touch first base at the urging of his team.

The Detroit *Free Press* also gave its account of the game ending events the next day, calling the ninth inning a “final brawl that was a thing of rare beauty.” The Naps were cruising along with a 5-1 lead in the bottom of the ninth inning. Pitcher Willie Mitchell, who had come into the game in the second inning, began to fall apart in

the ninth inning. The *Free Press* account follows that of *Sporting Life* and the *Plain Dealer*. We pick up the *Free Press* immediately after the walk to bring in the winning run:

Veach tried hard to get into the class made famous by Fred Merkle, Snodgrass and other heroes of distinction by starting to walk to the clubhouse, instead of to first base. Manager Birmingham yelled to Catcher O’Neill to touch him and when the backstop did so, Joe wanted Robert called out.

Umpires Egan and Evans finally calmed Joseph down by assuring him that there is nothing in the rules which specifies how soon a man shall start for first base, though it is necessary that he eventually reach that haven in order to make the run forced in count. Veach could have gone to the bench and taken a drink and then walked to first if he had cared to do so, but if he had gone to the clubhouse and disrobed

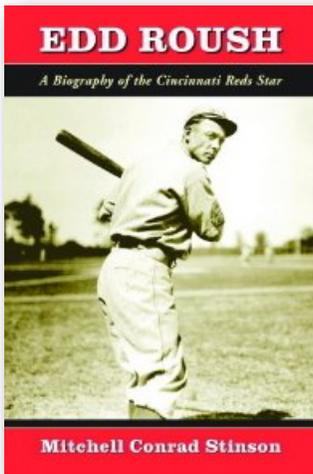
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NEW DEADBALL COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The Deadball Committee is happy to welcome newcomers to SABR who have expressed interest in the Deadball Era.

Frank Barr
James Bennett
Kevin Graham
David Linardy
Sam Lee Martin
Sophie-Julie Painchaud
Thomas Rathkamp
Matt Reilly
Douglas Schoppert
Tony Serri
Joe Shaw
Steve West
Clayton Zoellner

They, as well as all who contributed to this issue, can be contacted through the SABR directory and, of course, all participation and contributions are most welcome.



**EDD ROUSH:
A BIOGRAPHY OF THE
CINCINNATI REDS STAR
BY MITCHELL CONRAD
STINSON**

2010. Jefferson, NC:
McFarland and Company
[ISBN: 978-0-7864-4407-6
248 pp. \$29.95 USD.
Paperback]

Reviewed by
David Fleitz

Before Pete Rose, Johnny Bench and the “Big Red Machine” took the National League by storm in the early 1970s, the Cincinnati Reds had been one of the least successful teams in baseball. During their first eight decades in the league, the Reds had won only two World Series titles (in 1919 and 1940), the first of which was tainted by the Black Sox scandal. Centerfielder Edd Roush, a two-time batting champion, was the star of that 1919 club and, in 1962, he became the first career Red to gain election to the Baseball Hall of Fame. Roush, the last

living participant in the 1919 World Series, has been the subject of two full-length books in recent years.

In 2006, Susan Dellinger, Roush’s granddaughter, wrote the first detailed biography of the Hall of Famer. Titled *Red Legs and Black Sox*, the book dealt with Roush’s early life and career through the 1919 World Series and its aftermath. Probably at the publisher’s insistence, Dellinger’s book jumped directly from the Black Sox scandal to the ballplayer’s death in 1988. The abrupt end of the book left the reader with a sense of incompleteness as Roush played for another decade after that. Certainly, one thought, there were many more stories to tell about Edd Roush.

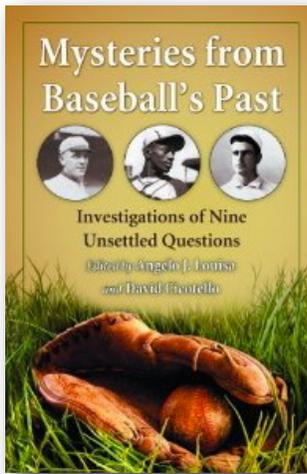
Mitchell Conrad Stinson also owns a connection to Roush, though not a familial one. On two occasions during the 1970s, the teenaged Stinson, armed with a tape recorder, visited the elderly ballplayer and his wife Effie at their home in Oakland City, Indiana. The resulting interviews, in which Roush describes his career in honest, sometimes blunt detail, led to the production of this latest book. *Edd Roush: A Biography of the Cincinnati Reds Star* illuminates the life of the man who was honored during baseball’s centennial celebration in 1969 as the greatest Reds’ player in team history.

Stinson, like Dellinger, describes the ballplayer’s early years. Edd’s twin brother Fred, a catcher, never went far in baseball, but Edd caught the attention of the Chicago White Sox, who signed him in 1913. After a brief stay in Chicago, Edd jumped to the Federal League and starred for two seasons. Signed by the New York Giants after the Federal League collapsed, Roush clashed with manager John McGraw, who sent the young outfielder to the Reds in 1916. The Indiana native rose quickly to stardom, winning batting titles in 1917 and 1919 while establishing himself as the best centerfielder in the National League.

Stinson paints an image of Roush as a proud, stubborn individual. His frequent holdouts (one of which lasted for the entire 1930 season) cost him much playing time and caused hardship for his teammates, but Roush’s strong sense of his own value would not allow him to accept less money than what he was worth. He admitted to spiking opposing infielders who blocked him off the bases and, once, while an argument raged on the infield, showed his annoyance by lying down in center field and taking a nap.

Though the sport changed dynamically during the hard-hitting 1920s, Roush refused to change with it. He remained

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**MYSTERIES FROM
BASEBALL'S PAST:
INVESTIGATIONS OF
NINE UNSETTLED
QUESTIONS**

**EDITED BY
ANGELO J. LOUISA &
DAVID CICOTELLO**

*2010. Jefferson, NC:
McFarland and Company
[ISBN: 978-0-7864-4545-7
205 pp. \$29.95 USD.
Paperback]*

Reviewed by
Gail Rowe

As every reader of this review knows, the history of organized baseball is replete with mysteries, unsettled questions, suspicions and debatable events. Each reader has his or her own favorite. Admitting that there is a limitless list of such mysteries to draw upon, editors Angelo J. Louisa and David Cicotello make no effort to explain or justify their choices of the nine 'cold files' that comprise this book or indicate if they believe these nine events are more important or more

relevant than other possibilities. Nor do they explain how or why the eight contributors who joined them in this venture were selected. Or why they settled on nine questions. Three of the nine essays have appeared in print in modified form, and all of the subjects have been explored in other publications. The majority of topics addressed focus on the Deadball Era.

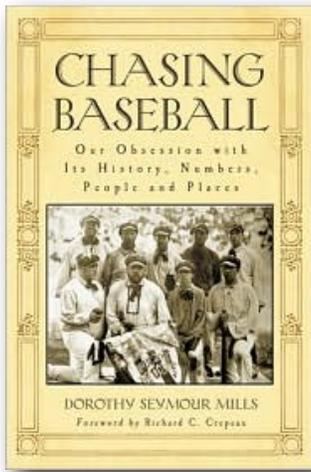
Questions surrounding the deaths of Ed Delahanty (by Jerold Casway), Chick Stahl (Dennis H. Auger), and Harry C. Pulliam (Louisa and Floyd Sullivan) comprise the first three chapters. Trying to establish the truth behind Grover Cleveland Alexander's supposed 1-0 loss to Wilbur Cooper at Forbes Field in under 59 minutes (Cicotello), and the specifics of Satchel Paige's alleged heroic diamond confrontation with Josh Gibson as related frequently by Buck O'Neil (David Ogden) occupy two additional chapters. Another two chapters treat the supposed scandals involving Jimmy O'Connell and Cozy Dolan in 1924 (Daniel Ginsburg) and Tris Speaker-Ty Cobb-Joe Wood between 1919 and 1926 (Timothy Gay). Finally, the late Gene Carney tries to nail down Ed Cicotte's role in the 1919 World Series and Robert Trumbour seeks to identify the primary 'villain' in the Dodgers' 1958 move to Los Angeles.

The book promises no resolutions to its nine unsettled

questions and offers none, although Casway's conclusions regarding Delahanty's death are stated more forcefully than those found in the other chapters. The book's essays are uniformly well-written, intelligently focused and entertaining, if not always compelling. The research, for the most part, appears both serious and thorough, although there is a surprising paucity of legal records cited in those articles involving matters for the police.

Cicotello and Louisa provide their readers nine seemingly arbitrarily-chosen incidents, all doubtless familiar to fans of the Deadball Era. Two of the more interesting chapters involve checking the veracity of great exploits by Paige and Alexander. The authors' conclusions in those pieces are stark reminders that much of the history of baseball floats on legends and tall tales and the often fragile or inventive memories of players, managers and fans alike.

The editors promise subsequent volumes, welcome news for readers who enjoy light, entertaining mysteries. This reader hopes that in their next efforts they seek out more significant lacunae in baseball's long historical evolution. Having whet readers' appetites by these light, tasty and very pleasant offerings, let's hope that the editors in subsequent volumes mix in more challenging, substantial and filling fare.



**CHASING BASEBALL:
OUR OBSESSION WITH
ITS HISTORY, NUMBERS,
PEOPLE AND PLACES**

**BY DOROTHY
SEYMOUR MILLS**

2010. Jefferson, NC:
McFarland and Company
[ISBN: 978-0-7864-4289-8
266 pp. \$39.95 USD.
Paperback]

Reviewed by
Leslie Heaphy

If you are a baseball fan, then this is a book for your shelf. Dorothy Seymour Mills has authored a book that examines America's ongoing love affair with baseball. She argues that, contrary to what some suggest, baseball is not in decline. In fact, she says, baseball is as strong as it has ever been but much of the growth and interest is outside the parameters of organized baseball. This is the strength of her book as she focuses on women's baseball, the growth of fantasy baseball, museums, books and other corresponding evidence. By participating in

baseball through so many different formats, Mills writes that people are able to find their own connection and passion.

Through each chapter, the reader is taken on a journey of baseball's growth. A historian of the game, Mills establishes that, from the beginning, baseball had an appeal to a wide audience. The next two chapters focus on the amateur ties to baseball and the notion of heroes; why do we have them and who have they have been? Next, the reader gets an introduction to some of the museums and historical societies that are associated with baseball. Here, Mills does not just include the famous and well-known, but she begins with the Baseball Reliquary and their "Shrine of the Eternals."*

Fantasy baseball has its own chapter, which has an especially personal tone to it as the author expresses surprise over the growth of this aspect of the game. She is surprised by who it appeals to and the passion which many bring to their own teams.

**Publishers' contacts for
books reviewed in this
issue:**

McFarland
Box 611
Jefferson, NC 28640
(336-246-4460)

Photo Credit on page 9:
Boston Globe
(Boston.com)

But, even here, Mills provides us, in context, the history behind its beginnings and growth. This chapter is followed by one on the connection between religion and baseball. Mills maintains that studying this connection is important because it helps us understand the depth of feeling many have for the game. The final chapter in the first half of the book deals with some of the trials and struggles baseball has had over the years that could have destroyed baseball but did not. Mills argues that baseball is too much a part of American life to ever disappear.

* *Ed. note: The following comes from their website: "The Baseball Reliquary is a nonprofit, educational organization dedicated to fostering an appreciation of American art and culture through the context of baseball history and to exploring the national pastime's unparalleled creative possibilities."*

The "Shrine of the Eternals" is their version of the Hall of Fame, except that the people enshrined are there for their contributions and/or noteworthiness and not their statistics. Such notables include Pete Rose, Marvin Miller, Bill James, Jim Bouton and Mark Fidrych. In the case of Annie Savoy ("Bull Durham"), on the ballot for the first time, having lived doesn't appear to be a qualification.

EDD ROUSH

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a “scientific” hitter who disdained the swing-for-the-fences style made popular by Babe Ruth. He never hit more than eight homers in any season, preferring to use his 48-ounce bat to drive doubles and triples into the outfield gaps. Stinson, in covering this final decade of Roush’s career, picks up where Dellinger left off, detailing Roush’s continuing stardom with the Reds, his trade back to the Giants and the hated McGraw and his farewell season in Cincinnati, after which he called it quits and returned to Indiana.

The Edd Roush that Stinson presents is more hard-edged than Dellinger’s. In later years, Roush complained about being passed over for the Hall of Fame, criticized modern players who could not execute a bunt properly, and even groused about the “colored fellas” who caught fly balls with one hand. Still, he never lost his love for baseball. One incredible photograph shows the 79-year-old Roush sliding head-first into third base during an old-timers’ game. Stinson does a good job of illuminating this tough, uncompromising star, and his book makes a fine companion piece with Dellinger’s work.

THE INCINNATI HIT

It is believed Roush finished his career with 2,376 hits, 1,784 of them with the Reds.

“Believed,” as it’s been noted in numerous places, one of them being here in the previous issue, that those responsible for transcribing records to “dailies” didn’t always get it right.

Now, throw in the occasional rule change or scoring decision which might defy both our logic years after the fact as well as maybe that of those who instituted it “way back when,” and it’s likely that no one can be sure exactly how many hits anyone had.

Here’s one on the “Cincinnati hit.” Let’s begin with James D. Szalontai’s book, *Small Ball in the Big Leagues: A History of Stealing, Bunting, Walking and Otherwise Scratching for Runs* (McFarland, 2010, digitized in Google Books):

A direct statistical comparison between the National and American Leagues cannot be made for many of the Deadball Era seasons because the rules varied in each league for some campaigns concerning the foul strike, infield fly, balk, the criteria for an earned run and a number of other scoring decisions. There was no established criteria for who would be declared the winning or losing pitcher of a game. Ban Johnson would sometimes intervene and change the official scorer’s decision in this regard a few days or even a few weeks after a game. The height of the pitcher’s mound could vary drastically from one ballpark to another. There were different judgments by the scorers in situations where a fielder unsuccessfully tried to throw out a baserunner. For example, if there was a runner situated at the second sack with one out and the batter grounded to the shortstop and then threw to third where the runner slid in safely, some official scorers credited the batter with a hit, while others gave him a fielder’s choice, and some even gave him a sacrifice. The scribes were concerned about the lack of uniformity in scoring decisions. At the major league meetings in February, 1913, several of the sportswriters (Jack Ryder, William Hanna, Fred Lieb, Tom Rice and George McLinn) who also had the responsibility of scoring games could not come to a consensus regarding how this play should be scored. Ban Johnson provided the final verdict and for the sake of uniformity he declared this play would be scored as a hit. Jack Ryder of the Cincinnati Enquirer was such a strong supporter for crediting the batter with a hit in these situations that it was called the ‘Cincinnati Base Hit.’

William Phelon wrote this in *Baseball Magazine* in July, 1913:

As usual, the scoring rules are being debated and sagely discussed, with suggestions *ad libitum*, some sensible, some impossible, and many, offered in good faith, wholly impractical on account of varying local conditions. The acceptance of the "Cincinnati hit" as a base hit instead of a fielder's choice is about the only notable addition to the rules so far, and that has been pretty well fought out both pro and con. Wonder what will be the next device to increase batting averages by artificial means?

As it turned out, the term "Cincinnati hit," like the Texas Leaguer or Baltimore chop was used outside its native area as well. Here's this Braves-Phillies writeup from *Sporting Life*. It's the second game of the July 7, 1913 doubleheader:

The second game was marked by excellent twirling, (Pete) Alexander and (Walt) Dickson, who started, each gave way to a pinch hitter. The home team tied the score in the ninth on (Fred) Luderus' double, and (Cozy) Dolan's single and won the contest in the twelfth on Luderus' double, a Cincinnati base hit by Dolan and a fumble by (Bill) Sweeney.

Not everybody was enamored of the "Cincinnati hit." From *Sporting Life*, June 7, 1913:

President E. W. Dickerson (of the Michigan State League) has made a big hit about the circuit by his barring of the "Cincinnati base hit" from the totals of safe blows recorded for each player. "The scoring of this "Cincinnati base hit,"" said Mr. Dickerson, 'seems to me and must appear to any fair-minded scorer as nothing short of a joke. Nearly all these raps are easy outs if the ball is played to first base, and the efforts of some parties to falsely boost a player's batting average in this way are really laughable.'

The "Cincinnati hit" was gone by 1914 while the Texas Leaguer and Baltimore chop, which are styles of hits and not scoring rules, of course, live on.

Thanks to Dan O'Bindy and the SABR Deadball Committee site on Yahoo for the subject matter.

CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN *continued from page 1*

For instance, in his research, Macht had to consider a story in Mack's 1950 book, *My 66 Years in the Big Leagues*, which could not be reconciled with other published accounts. In the book, Mack claimed that his father had died when Connie was a teenager and that responsibility for the entire family and all his brothers and sisters fell on him (p.16). "If you want to take that as your source and say 'Fine, it's got Connie Mack's name on it,' then you'd stick it in the book," said Macht. "But I wouldn't do that, and I went back and found that it wasn't true. He was thirty when his father died. This is just one example of the value of going back to primary sources."

It is worthwhile to note that Macht later told me he began to doubt what he had said in our interview; it had been over twenty years since he had dealt with that part of Mack's story. He thought the book may have had it right and the other sources were wrong. So he went back and checked it out and found that the book did have it wrong. This "memory pothole," as Macht referred to it, is an object lesson in how important it is to verify--"then re-verify what you think you know."

Macht's research into Mack's early life and career was particularly travel-intensive in the era before the Internet. Macht went to Pittsburgh and Milwaukee to acquire material about Mack's time there. He also spent time in Brookfield, Massachusetts, and Hartford and Meriden, both in Connecticut, in addition to visiting between thirty and forty players to get their respective recollections. He has been able to conduct much of his more recent research online using ProQuest and Retrosheet.

Another challenge was how generally to reconcile conflicting accounts of the same event. As Macht recounts in the Introduction to the first volume, when he was faced with different accounts of the same occurrence, he would rely on the one that was closest in time to the event in question. "I think it's a good practice," said Macht. "I think that the memory is sharper. There is less of a

tendency to embroider, and there is less imagination involved in the storytelling. And, by going over the years of tracing the same story, I found that there were things changed and added as the years went by and they were less likely to be accurate, which I think is understandable. It's part of growing old."

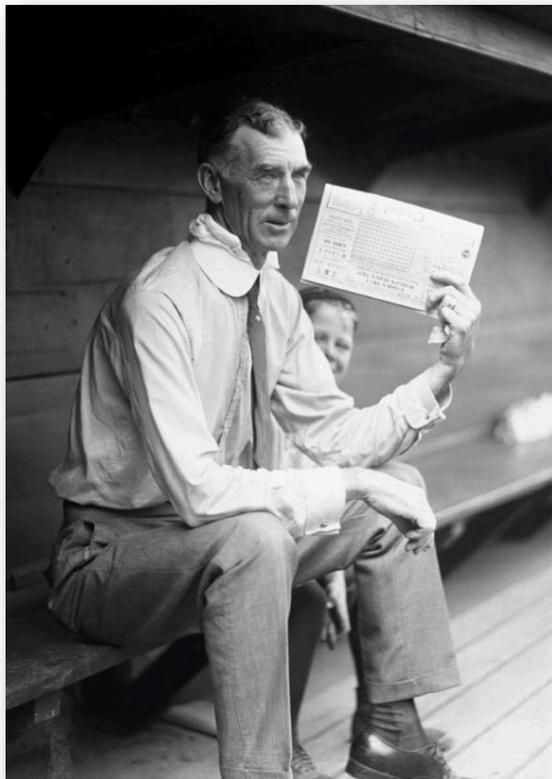
With the Internet available as a baseball research tool, it makes it even easier to achieve accuracy in research. In that spirit, Macht believes that it is incumbent upon an historian to go to great lengths to check facts. "I think it's the historian's responsibility to do his best to verify stories. I'll give an example: In several different places, I have come across a story told by Paul Richards about himself. In at least two instances, the reporter was present when Richards told the story. I have also heard the same story from other players.

"Richards told of an incident in a ballgame involving Charlie Gehringer and the Tigers when Richards was with the A's. Since Richards was with the A's for only half the 1935 season, it is fairly easy to check it out. He said that there was a ball four on Gehringer, and Richards disagreed with the umpire's call, and he stood there bouncing the ball on home plate, arguing with the umpire, while Gehringer stole second, third, then scored. The story is that, the next day, Richards was gone, traded to Atlanta for a pitcher, Almon Williams, whom he had recommended to Atlanta. Now, that part of it, I've already found not to be so because the records show he stayed the rest of the season with the A's and was traded or sold to Atlanta in December 1935. So that part of the story clearly is not accurate.

"The Gehringer part of it I'm still trying to track down. If I can't find it, I can't use it. And that, to me, should be the rule of an historian. It is the responsibility of an interviewer or historian to verify everything that the interviewee said."

Macht's interest in Connie Mack was kindled, at least in part, by meeting him when the author was eighteen years old. After approaching Mack and introducing himself, Macht found Mack to be "polite and patient," traits which Macht says

he learned that Mack had for "all of his life." One of the greatest attractions in Mack's story was that his career had spanned roughly all of major league baseball up to the time of his death. Still, Macht was faced with the challenge of how to make a long-deceased manager relevant to a younger generation.



"In the world of books, Mack wasn't marketable in the way that Mickey Mantle and John McGraw were. I had an agent tell me, 'Bring me anything about any current Mets or Yankees player. I don't care if it's any good or not. I don't care who it is. Bring me anything about any current Mets or Yankees player.' I learned something from that."

Ultimately, Macht was able to break through by appealing to a publisher, citing the depth and breadth of Mack's career. The Acquisitions Editor at the University of Nebraska Press when the book was pitched to them in 1995 was a SABR member, Dan Ross, who was interested. Macht had to write up a detailed proposal to meet the Press' academic standards, resulting in a July 1997 contract for a standard 300 to 400 page biography with a 1999 deadline. Over time, Macht came to realize the scope of Mack's 93-

year life was so vast it would take more time and pages to do it justice, leading to the three-volume agreement that he now has with the University of Nebraska Press.

Macht's larger objective, he has written, was "to illuminate some truth about Mr. Mack for [the reader]." Part of that truth-telling, according to Macht, came in debunking some common perceptions about the Hall of Fame manager. In the first two volumes, for instance, Macht refutes the notion that Mack was a 'cheapskate' with his players by citing many examples where players were treated no better where they were traded and sometimes sought to be traded back to Philadelphia.

"During his pennant-winning years, Mack had the highest payroll in baseball," said Macht. "In 1932, Jimmie Dykes was the highest-paid third baseman in the league...An example of [Mack's] so-called tightness that is often cited is the one-day trip to Cleveland to play a Sunday game on July 10, 1932, when he took only two pitchers, allegedly to save train fare. The fact is that it was a common practice for teams that had no Sunday baseball to leave several players home for those one-game trips."

Though Macht notes that the research itself is what takes the bulk of his time, he pays particular attention to the actual writing. He has written more than thirty books, including *Rowdy Richard* (with Dick Bartell) and *Thank Youuuu* (with Rex Barney).

"I try not to overwrite," said Macht. "One of the biggest handicaps, I think, of any nonfiction writer is the urge to throw in absolutely everything you have discovered. And that's an urge that has to be fought. Actively. I'm not sure that I win the fight all the time. And maybe that's why the first volume is 700 pages, and the other volumes are going to be the same length. But I know better than to do the game-by-game kind of recount of what happened each day. That bogs it down. I've written a lot, and maybe, through experience, you get better."

While Macht admits to be influenced "usually by the last guy I read," he is particularly conscious

of what he had read by Red Smith in researching Connie Mack's life. "So, of course, I'm thinking of Red Smith and trying to be like Red Smith when I'm writing," Macht said. "And, of course, I'm not."

Macht rejects the practice of evaluating historic events by contemporary standards:

"Those who do so are not good historians. They don't realize what it is to write history accurately. I have read far more eminent historians than I am proclaiming the same basic adage or maxim: 'Never write history from the viewpoint of today's standards, ethics, or values.' It is an absolute no-no."

Macht claims to have had no sense of mental fatigue in spite of researching the same subject for more than three decades:

"For me, Connie Mack's life is a never-ending fascinating story," said Macht. "If he went along and had last place teams for thirty years, that would be one thing. For instance, think about what I consider the greatest team ever: the '29-'31 A's. Starting from the ashes, having nothing around 1920, '21, and '22, what went into building it? That was far from dull and routine. It was fascinating how he put it together piece-by-piece."

Previously, Macht had relied on late SABR member Jim Smith, whom he called a "demon for accuracy," to help him fact-check his work. Macht today fact-checks all of his own work, doing so as he writes.

In recent years, there have been about ten new books annually written on the Deadball Era under consideration for the Ritter Award, which is presented annually to the best book set primarily during the period written during the prior year. Macht's first volume of Mack's biography won the award in 2008. Why are so many new books being written now about players and events in the Deadball Era?

"How many thousand books have been written about the Civil War?" said Macht. "To SABR members, the Deadball Era may be their equivalent of the Civil War."

MERKLE PLAQUE *continued from page 1*

I decided not to ask Fred's daughter Marianne Kasbaum and the Merkle family to contribute because they had given generously in 2005 for the Fred Merkle monument that was put up at Watertown's Octagon House Grounds. Knowing that there is a good-sized Merkle fan base, I decided to go that route, asking Mike Cameron to team up with me. What really made the project possible came from a very generous donation from MSNBC's Keith Olbermann. In fact, he offered to cover the total cost, but with other donations coming in from more Merkle fans including Dave Anderson (of *More Than Merkle* notoriety), it was decided to go with a larger plaque than originally planned. For many years now, Olbermann has been a wonderful spokesperson for Merkle, annually telling the true Merkle story on the air.



***Fred Merkle Field
Watertown, Wisconsin
Hopefully, it has a second base.***

I am very thankful for the support of Merkle's family and his ever-growing fan base; together they eagerly give in efforts to preserve his legacy. From these efforts the public is learning who the real Fred Merkle is. He is no longer known for just a controversial play, but as an intelligent, outstanding person, family member and ballplayer. In his book, Cameron has labeled

Merkle a "role model against adversity." Watertown has taken much pride to claim Merkle as their own.

The plaque reads:



ALMOST ANOTHER MERKLE GAME *continued from page 3*

as he intended to do, the game would have been called on account of darkness with the score tied. There was much excitement and confusion as a result of Birmingham's outbreak, but no riot resulted.

The articles above never approximated how far Veach went toward the bench although, reading between the lines, it appears he got fairly close. It is clear he had no intention of going to first base. This begs the question: Were players in the Deadball Era unfamiliar with some rules or was the enforcement of some rules so lax that players did not pay attention to them?

I could find nothing that the game actually was protested.

One wonders if the result of this game would have changed if the two most famous players of the Deadball Era were on the field. Ty Cobb was out of the Tigers' lineup with a sore back, while Shoeless Joe Jackson had been suspended because of his row with Umpire Egan a few days earlier.

THE LAST WORD

by **Mark Ruckhaus**
Editor, *The Inside Game*

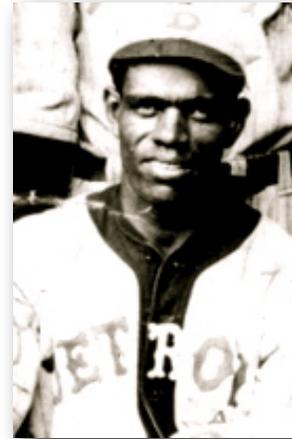
So, John McMurray, Trey Strecker and his lovely wife, Geri, and I are sitting around the breakfast table on the first full day of the last SABR convention. Though Mark Dugo and Gail Rowe couldn't make it, I guess you could call it a *de facto* Deadball Committee staff meeting. OK, three out of five, so maybe we had enough for a quorum.

With Trey and I as fresh faces, "newbies," if you will, what came out of our meeting was our desire to keep the Committee relevant. At the risk of repetition, because I said it at the chapter meeting at the convention as well as in a previous column, it's not easy to keep a subject which has pretty much been dead for 90 years fresh. Matty and Wagner. Cobb and Lajoie. The great Young and the misunderstood Waddell. The old wooden ballparks and the first generation of concrete and steel ones (save for Fenway and Wrigley, of course). Excuse the poor grammar, but it ain't coming back. None of it. I'd give my eyeteeth to watch McGraw in the third base coacher's box at the old Polo Grounds or The Big Train whip something that hissed past an unsuspecting hitter. But I'm a realist and will suffer through LOOGYs, Tony LaRussa and players uppercutting incessantly.

I did mention Geri Strecker. Like her husband, she's an Assistant Professor at Ball State. Both teach English while Trey also has Sports Studies as part of his repertoire. Both have done extensive baseball research and writing. With Geri, it's the Negro Leagues, including finding a heretofore "lost" cache of photos at the Carnegie Mellon library while doing research on the Pittsburgh Crawfords and their home, Greenlee Field. Here's the webpage: <http://cms.bsu.edu/Academics/CollegesandDepartments/CSH/NewsEvents/LostFound.aspx>.

There are plenty of SABRites out there who have done far more reading and research than I. But, in all my reading, one thing which I have yet to come across is, what the style of black baseball was during the Deadball Era.

Unfortunately, the organized Negro Leagues date back to Rube Foster founding the Negro National League in 1920. Before that, it was apparently independent and barnstorming ball and maybe some loose sort of league play with teams like the Leland Giants, the Philadelphia Stars and the Cuban X Giants and players like John Henry Lloyd, Pete Hill, Walter Ball, Frank Grant and, of course, Foster.



Pete Hill

**(Courtesy: Negro Leagues eMuseum,
Kansas State University)**

What I had asked Geri is if she had any information about the style of play from back in the day. Did it mirror white ball or, like black baseball in the '40s, did they do it just a bit differently, in that case featuring an aggressive running and stealing game which eventually got integrated, along with them, into Major League ball?

Unfortunately, and though there were black newspapers such as the *Chicago Defender* and the *Baltimore Afro American*, without organized leagues, the coverage is spotty, at best.

Though she has a lot on her plate right now, I know Geri will come through. But what I'm asking all who read this is, if you have reliable information on the style of play of black baseball during the Deadball Era, I'd love to publish it.

As I said, I want to keep us relevant. Besides, nobody likes stale.