

Beating the Bushes



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Minor League Committee*

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Chairman's Message

I hope everyone is healthy and safe as we continue to ride out Covid-19. In the meantime, I have a few initiatives that I would like to share with you.

The newly formed SABR Century Research Committee is developing plans to next year celebrate the hundredth anniversary of the 1921 season. The Century Committee has invited all of the research committees to participate. I saw this as a great opportunity for us and sent out an e-mail to our group.

I heard from 11 of our members on potential subjects. We currently have six projects in progress. The topics include, with the volunteer in parenthesis:

- Jim Thorpe playing for Toledo (AA) in 1921.
(Thomas Brown)
- The 1921 Ludington Mariners (Bill Anderson)
- Minor league team names from 1921 still in use in 2021 (Michael Rinehardt)
- Lou Gehrig's 1921 professional debut with Hartford (Alan Cohen)
- The 1921 Western International League (Bob Webster)
- Suquamish Baseball: A Puget Sound, WA Indian tribe that traveled to Japan in 1921 to participate against Japanese college teams (Mark Brunke)

I feel that research projects like the Century Committee's initiative are an important way for our members to get actively involved. Another possible project, for your consideration, is to produce a second installment of the *Minor League History Journal*. It was last published in 1994. The Journal contained the ongoing research of our members and was well received. Hopefully, I will more information to share in the not-to-distant future.

With the future of minor league baseball is up in the air, Minor League Baseball is poised for a radical new look in

2021. The working Professional Baseball Agreement between MiLB and MLB expired on Sept. 30. Prior to the pandemic MLB was set to cull 40 teams from the present format of 160 teams. If adopted this would be a major change from the way that MiLB has operated since 1963 when it was restructured into six divisions – triple A, Double A, A-advanced, A-short season and rookie.

Without doubt, Minor League baseball will be very different next year. Some observers feel that together with the impact of the pandemic and with the adoption of MLB's recommendation, half of the minor league franchises in the country may not survive. This is something that we will watch closely in 2021.



Daily Arkansas Gazette May 23, 1909

Finding Ray Fagan

A minor league mystery

By Tim Hagerty

Sometimes numbers tell a story. Sometimes that story is a mystery.

I came across the Baseball-Reference page for Raymond Fagan and was stunned by what I saw. It says Fagan went 13-0 with a 1.16 ERA for the Class D Oklahoma City Senators in 1915. Now the stunning part – it says it was his only professional season. Despite those dominant results, it appears Fagan never pitched again.

Raymond Fagan

Position: Pitcher

Bats: Unknown • **Throws:** Unknown

Full Name: Raymond Fagan

Register Pitching

Share & more ▾ Glossary

Year	Age	AgeDif	Tm	Lg	Lev	Aff	W	L	W-L%	ERA	RA9	G
1915	--		Oklahoma City	WA	D		13	0	1.000	1.16	2.67	18
All Levels (1 Season)												

Raymond Fagan's Baseball-Reference page

What happened to Raymond Fagan? Did he suffer a career-ending injury? Did he get into legal trouble and change his name? A Google search yielded no answers. This mystery required a deeper dive.

It turned out to be an abyssal dive. Public records searches brought 44,000 documents connected to people named Raymond Fagan, including dozens of Raymond Fagans who were of professional-baseball-playing age in 1915.

My first call was to Peter Pierce, the author of two books about Oklahoma's early professional baseball history. Pierce knew all about Fagan's masterful 1915 season, but unfortunately didn't know what happened to him after.

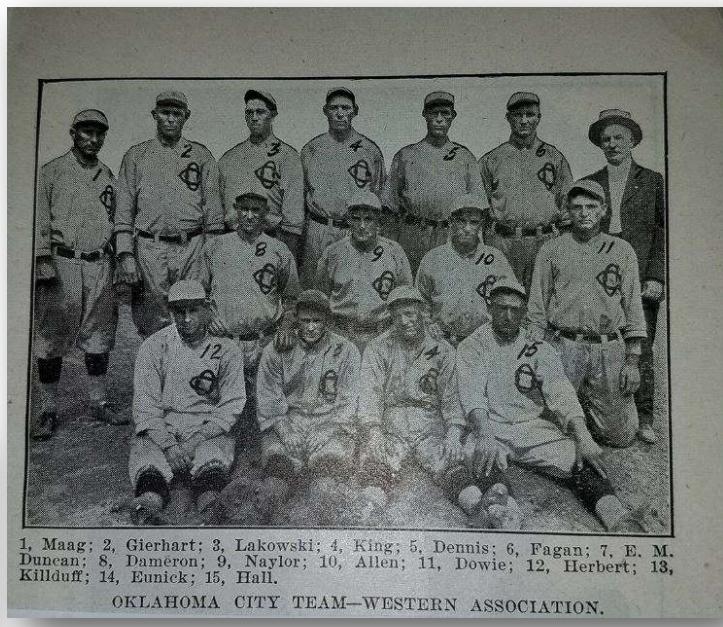
Next I tried a few strategic calls to phone listings of people with the last name Fagan, but that didn't work either. One woman hung up on me.

Newspaper archives validated what we already knew – Fagan had an exceptional year. Here are some 1915 sports section headlines about him:

"Fagan Invincible" –*Muskogee Times-Democrat*

"Pitcher Has Perfect Record" –*The South Bend Tribune*

"Fagan Doesn't Lose Game This Season" –*New Castle News*



The 1915 Class D Oklahoma City Senators

And his opponents were no joke. All eight Western Association rosters had future big leaguers, including Denison Railroaders star Rogers Hornsby, who became one of the best hitters in MLB history.

Fagan's pitching prowess came decades before *Baseball America* or prospect rankings, but having one of the top few ERAs in the minors and an undefeated record would get scouts' attention in any era.

That's exactly what happened. Newspaper searches show that an Oklahoma City baseball observer contacted the Detroit Tigers suggesting they dispatch one of their four "Ivory Hunters," an early 1900s phrase for scouts, to lay eyes on Fagan. Detroit's Ivory Hunter, Arkansas-based Mickey Finn, traveled to see Fagan throw and left impressed. The Tigers bought Fagan's contract from Oklahoma City for \$500 and invited him to their major league spring training in 1916.

"The jump from the Western association (sic) to the majors is a big one, but they all have to start some place and perhaps Fagan has so much natural ability that he does not need to go through the schooling of class A or AA circuits. Walter Johnson came to Washington from a league that was even deeper in the bush than the one that produced Fagan," the *Detroit Free Press* wrote.

Fagan was competing for a spot on a Tigers team that won 100 games and finished in second place the year before. It was a huge opportunity for Fagan, but he didn't rise to the occasion. Fagan "pitched part of a practice game for Detroit

and Manager Jennings, after looking him over, decided he needed more experience," *The Hutchinson News* reported.



The Detroit Free Press previewed Fagan's arrival in their November 11, 1915 edition.

Fagan's pitching wasn't Detroit's only concern. "Pitcher Fagan, who is slated for release by Hughey Jennings of the Tigers, can blame the fox trot for his trouble. The would-be Tiger spent too much time on the dance hall to satisfy Hughey," *The Wilkes-Barre Record* reported. The Tigers sent Fagan to the Class B Beaumont Oilers after his missteps.

Fagan pitched in at least one regular season game for Beaumont, so why isn't there a Beaumont stat line under that Oklahoma City stat line?

I learned that one game wasn't always enough to get a player into the official stats back then. The *Spalding's Official Base Ball Guide* and the *Reach Official American League Base Ball Guide*, two trusted annuals that baseball cranks devoured in the early 20th century, had innings or appearances thresholds that needed to be met before a minor league pitcher earned an entry in the next year's guide. These statistical cutoffs were fairly common in publications back then. "It's one of the bugaboos for minor league researchers," said SABR member Chuck McGill.

Fagan's name isn't listed in baseball guides printed after the 1916 season and that's why his brief Beaumont tenure doesn't appear on Baseball-Reference today.

One day in late-April of 1916, the Oilers were boarding a train to Galveston when Beaumont's manager announced that Fagan wouldn't be making the trip because he had been released. This transaction is where Fagan's baseball bread crumbs stopped.

Where did Fagan go? It was looking like a cold case after he got booted from Beaumont. Newspaper advertisements in succeeding years promoted the "Raymond Fagan Orchestra." Maybe Fagan traded his cleats for a cello and became a traveling musician! Unfortunately, further research showed the musician wasn't our guy. The orchestra played theaters in the northeast in 1915 on the same dates Fagan was strumming strikeouts for Oklahoma City.

There was a student journalist named Raymond Fagan at the University of Kansas around this time. Maybe Fagan went from playing games to covering them? This also proved to be a different guy.

The years 1916 and 1917 were burgeoning for the U.S. Navy. President Woodrow Wilson signed the "Big Navy Act" in 1916, adding dozens of ships, cruisers and submarines to establish what Wilson planned to become "the greatest navy in the world." This \$500 million expansion also included the addition of 19,000 new naval service members.

A call to the Records of the Bureau of Naval Personnel revealed that a Raymond Fagan joined the Navy on June 30, 1917, the same date mentioned by President Wilson in his executive order. Now I just needed confirmation that Navy Raymond Fagan and pitcher Raymond Fagan were the same person. The proof came in an *Evening News* preview of a 1918 naval baseball exhibition in Pennsylvania: "The Navy lineup includes several players of fame in the baseball world. Pitcher Fagan was formerly a member of the Detroit team in the American League."

Tracing Fagan's ship assignments showed that he most likely deployed to European waters during World War I. He was discharged with good health and a fresh arm on May 10, 1919 in Norfolk, Virginia. He stayed in Virginia and revived his baseball career, pitching for the Class C Norfolk Mary Janes, Class B Newport News Shipbuilders, and Class C Richmond Colts from 1919-1920.

Additionally, SABR member Jack Morris (not the Hall of Fame pitcher) investigated and proved that Fagan also pitched for the nomadic Austin/Taylor/Brenham Middle Texas League club in 1915. So the separate Baseball-Reference pages for Austin/Taylor/Brenham's Raymond Fagan, Newport News' R.L Fagan, Norfolk's Fagan, Oklahoma City's Raymond Fagan, and Richmond's Fagan all refer to the same pitcher. This of course isn't a criticism of Baseball-Reference, an indispensable website, it's just an illustration of how imprecise minor league documentation was then compared to now.

U.S. Census surveys show Fagan met his wife Margaret in Virginia and they had one child together, Raymond Jr.



FAGAN, PITCHER

Raymond Fagan pictured in Newport News' Daily Press.

After his baseball career, Raymond Sr. held a variety of jobs before passing away in San Antonio from a blood clot in his heart on April 11, 1969 at age 72.

"I didn't find out that he played baseball until after he died. He didn't talk about that stuff," said Debi Albers, Fagan's granddaughter. "He was a renaissance man. He played ball, he was a private detective, he did security work, he did all sorts of stuff. My mom had a couple of pictures of him in a Detroit uniform. I tell you what, when he was older, he watched baseball on television with a passion."

Debi taught me one more thing about Raymond Fagan – his friends called him "Ray."

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JACK HASKELL: THE DEAN TURN-OF-THE-CENTURY MINOR LEAGUE UMPIRE

by Bill Lamb

Being a member of the umpiring staff of the 1901 American League has earned Jack Haskell an entry in modern-day baseball reference works. But that one-season tour of duty represents only a short chapter in the life of an outsized character who embodied a species now vanished from the baseball landscape: the hometown minor league celebrity. For more than twenty years, Haskell was the dean of turn-of-the-century non-major league umpires, most notably while serving as umpire-in-chief for the Class A Western League. Simultaneously, he served as the circuit's unofficial promotor, talent scout, and trouble-shooter, all the while declining intermittent overtures to return to umpiring in the big leagues.

Haskell's reluctance to resume major league service was rooted in attachment to the city of Omaha where he was a favorite son, noted raconteur, and occasional newspaper columnist; profitably engaged in hotel, saloon, and roadhouse ventures, and involved in local politics. Only the early arrival of Prohibition in Nebraska could get him to relocate. But once resituated in the wide-open Kansas City of the 1920s, Haskell continued to thrive. In short order, he became the proprietor of a fashionable city hotel and a reliable vassal of powerful but corrupt Democratic Party boss Thomas J. Pendergast, reputedly a long-ago semipro baseball acquaintance. Sponsored by Pendergast, Haskell was elected to six consecutive terms in the Missouri state legislature and was the chairman of an important state house committee at the time of his death in January 1940. The ensuing paragraphs recall this once regionally prominent but now forgotten umpire-publican-politician.

John B. Haskell was born in Omaha on March 5, 1869, the oldest of three sons born to clerk-salesman Ira T. Haskell (1838-1880), a native of Rhode Island, and his New York-born wife Elizabeth (nee Dixon, 1839-1925). When Jack was still a toddler, the family moved to his maternal grandfather's farm in southern Illinois. The Haskells returned to Omaha, however, before the death of father Ira in 1880 and Jack completed his schooling there. By 1885, he was in the local work force, employed as a wholesale drug clerk. By then, his mother was remarried to an Omaha grocer named Redman and in time, Jack would have four new half-siblings. As a teenager, Haskell himself became married, taking Mina Boyd, the

16-year-old daughter of Irish immigrants, as his bride. Their union would last more than 50 years but yield no children.

Like other young men of his generation, Haskell spent much of his leisure time on city sandlots. An outfielder, his skills did not rise to professional grade, but he did play some semipro ball. In 1892, he attempted to land a berth in Organized Baseball in the unaffiliated Nebraska State League, but found no employment. But he was afforded a league tryout as a 23-year-old novice umpire. Although Haskell later maintained that it takes years for an umpire to master his craft, Jack was evidently a quick learner. By early July, *Sporting Life's* Grand Island correspondent was reporting that "Haskell is fast earning a reputation as the best umpire in the league."

Haskell's Baseball-Reference listing credits him with playing an 1893 game for the St. Joseph (Missouri) Saints of the fledgling four-club Western Association. Whatever the accuracy of that listing, the historical record unmistakably documents that "John B. Haskell of Omaha was appointed a Western Association umpire" in early June. Unhappily for Jack and all concerned, the WA folded three weeks thereafter.

Haskell's return to a reconstituted Western Association in 1894 exhibited features that became hallmarks of his umpiring career. Weeks before the campaign's start, Haskell initiated the regimen of long walks and vigorous exercise needed to sweat off the excess flesh that he put on each winter. And the sharp division of opinion regarding his umpiring competence was early in evidence. The hometown Omaha newspapers, particularly the *World-Herald*, could be relied upon for praise of Haskell's work, and he was generally well-regarded elsewhere in the territory. Western Association sportswriter James Nolan, for example, was effusive in his commendation of Haskell and fellow arbiter Ed Cline, calling their work "incomparably fine. Their knowledge of the rules, their strictness and ability to keep good order on the field, and their impartiality make them as great a pair of umpires as ever handled an indicator."

But not everywhere, as Haskell would always have a handful of Midwestern critics. His reappointment was panned in St. Joseph, with the local *Sporting Life* correspondent branding Haskell "grossly incompetent and his habits are of the worst kind," the first discovered reference, however veiled, to a career-long impediment: a fondness for alcohol. Also making its first appearance was a temperamental streak that impelled Haskell to resign his post when he deemed himself slighted – almost invariably followed by reconciliation and reinstatement to duty.

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Another turn in the Western Association gained Haskell more Midwestern newspaper plaudits, and by the close of the 1895 season he was being touted for promotion to the National League. But Haskell was obliged to remain in the WA again in 1896 where his return drew the now-expected praise from most circuit observers, and brickbats from St. Joseph. Late that season, however, it was widely reported that National League President Nick Young was now making serious overtures toward having Haskell on his umpiring staff for 1897.

In the end and for the time being, Haskell remained in the minors. But the year 1897 nevertheless proved a fateful one for our subject in two life-changing ways: (1) he was hired as an umpire by Ban Johnson for the Western (later American) League; and (2) he met rising Kansas City powerbroker Tom Pendergast. By this time, Haskell had already entered local Democratic Party politics, making himself useful behind the scenes. He would continue to do so for the remainder of his years in Omaha.

Haskell's Opening Day assignment brought home the perils facing the one-man umpire. In addition to the pressures of close decision-making and the abuse of unhappy players and fans, there was the constant danger of injury. A twisted knee suffered in Kansas City was followed by a severe ankle sprain in Milwaukee, both of which necessitated time off to recuperate. In the meantime, amateurs or designated ballplayers assumed his duties, unsatisfactorily. Haskell then compounded the Western League's qualified umpire shortage by taking an unscheduled "vacation" in mid-July, a two-day bender that promptly earned him a fine and indefinite suspension from league boss Johnson. But less than a week later, Haskell was back on the job, and completed the season without further incident.

Despite the mid-season lapse, Haskell's umpiring work drew rave reviews. And once again, it was thereafter reported that Haskell was ticketed for the National League in the spring. But Haskell rebuffed the NL when its salary offer was not significantly higher than the Western League wage, and came without a large cash advance. A grateful Johnson thereafter appointed Haskell his circuit's umpire-in-chief. This, in turn, prompted the always-fawning *Omaha World-Herald* to declare that "Jack is one of the best in the business and the Western League is

to be congratulated that [Haskell] withstood the blandishments of the big fellows and remained with his first love."

Haskell would soon have reason to regret his decision. With the Western League in financial distress by midseason, the circuit board of directors ordered Johnson to cut expenses. Among the economies imposed by the league boss was a 25 percent reduction in the salary of his chief umpire (or \$60 from Jack Haskell's \$240 monthly paycheck). But Haskell was not having it and promptly submitted his resignation. He then went home to Omaha and spent the remainder of the summer officiating local amateur and semipro games. Haskell returned to the circuit in time to umpire a handful of late-season WL games, but his long-range plans were soon complicated by a commercial venture: the opening of an Omaha café that began "doing Klondike business." Additional business opportunities lay in Haskell's future, and henceforward the need to remain close to the cash register often clashed with the traveling requirements of umpiring.



Circa 1908

In the short run, the diamond prevailed. Haskell returned to the Western League in 1899 and, apart from an on-field encounter with pugnacious Detroit Tigers shortstop Kid Elberfeld that left the arbiter with a bloodied face, completed a relatively uneventful season of umpiring. But big changes were on the horizon for both the Western League and its men in blue. Over the winter, the circuit officially changed its name to the American League, signaling the intention to transform itself into something larger than a merely regional operation. The AL then placed franchises in major league venues like Chicago, Cleveland, and Buffalo. For the time being, however, the American League remained a minor league circuit, thus avoiding direct conflict with the long-established National League.

The umpiring staff assembled by AL President Johnson included Jack Haskell. But before the 1900 season commenced, Haskell resigned his position to oversee another commercial venture – the roadhouse that he and a partner had opened outside Kansas City. He also retained his interest in the Omaha café. Haskell, therefore, did no professional umpiring that year. But he was back in harness for 1901, the momentous inaugural season of the American League as a major league circuit.

The officiating arrangements devised by Johnson – four

traveling umpires (including Haskell) to work the plate and eight resident umps to handle base duty – allowed for most American League games to have two umpires. This scheme was designed to foster the clean, fast-moving style of play desired by Johnson for the new league, and to attract fans put off by the brawling, dirty tricks game of the National League. But it could not eliminate playing field disputes, and the physical confrontations that sometimes came with them – as Jack Haskell, in particular, would discover.

Throughout his minor league career, Haskell was recognized as a no-nonsense arbiter with little tolerance for dispute of his decisions. He established that this would be his approach in the American League as well, tossing Washington's Bill Everitt for arguing a pitch call on Opening Day. The Everitt ejection was only the first of the 18 AL-leading player dismissals ordered by Haskell during 1901, with those sent to the dressing room including future Hall of Famers John McGraw, Nap Lajoie, and Jimmy Collins.

Haskell's authoritarian approach to decision-making antagonized some, including Baltimore first baseman Burt Hall who punctuated his disagreement with a Haskell call at first by punching the umpire in the face in early August. Once report of the incident reached Ban Johnson, he immediately suspended Hall. Three weeks later in Washington, displeased Chicago pitcher Jack Katoll retrieved an errant wild pitch and then fired the ball into Haskell's unprotected right shin. Moments later, Sox shortstop Frank Shugart split Haskell's upper lip with his fist, precipitating a near-riot by enraged Senators fans. Both Katoll and Shugart were arrested by DC police and taken to a local jail. The two were thereafter released on bail but indefinitely suspended by AL President Johnson. Haskell, meanwhile, cleaned himself up and finished the game.

After the Washington fracas, Haskell continued to work but soon the swelling in his right shin necessitated him being placed on leave to receive medical care. He returned to duty in time to complete the season, umpiring 121 American League games, total. Unbeknownst to all, Jack Haskell's career as a major league umpire was now over. Still only 32-years-old, he would spend the next 13 years entirely in the minors, declining various invitations of President Johnson to return to AL umpiring ranks.

For the 1902 season, Haskell accepted a job with a new independent minor league, the American Association. The Midwestern territory of the fledgling circuit kept Haskell in proximity to his business interests, and he completed the campaign uneventfully. Haskell returned to the AA the following year, and soon his work was draw-

ing praise, the *Milwaukee Evening Standard* declaring "Jack Haskell is without doubt the best umpire in the American Association, and in the entire minor league territory, for that matter." But Haskell's drinking soon placed him in hot water with AA brass.

When the umpire failed to appear for a two-game series in Columbus, Association president Thomas J. Hickey fined him \$25. Claiming that he had been sick in bed, an indignant Haskell promptly resigned his position. In time and via the intercession of Milwaukee Brewers manager Joe Cantillon, a friend and former umpiring colleague of Haskell, and Milwaukee co-owner Charles Havenor, the disagreement was patched up, and Haskell returned in time to umpire the final weeks of the AA season. But Haskell's time in the Association had reached its end.

When Haskell was released by incoming AA president J. Ed Grillo in January 1904, rival circuits competed for the umpire's services. Responding to a complaint about Haskell's drinking voiced in Columbus, a Saint Paul sportswriter responded, "Drunk or sober, Haskell stood head and shoulders above the other umpires hired by [former AA President] Hickey ... and was the only umpire to command the respect of the players." In late February, Haskell was signed to an Eastern League umpiring contract by circuit president Pat Powers. The following winter, Powers successfully fended off an American Association bid to recapture Haskell's services and re-signed him for 1905. "Umpire Jack Haskell did splendid work for the Eastern League last season, and I would not think of letting him get away," said Powers.

Umpiring in the Northeast kept Haskell away from his business ventures, so at season's end he sought work back in the Midwest. New American Association President Joseph O'Brien was happy to oblige, appointing Haskell AA umpire-in-chief for 1906. The signing was heartily welcomed by the *Milwaukee Journal* as "a piece of gladsome news to player and fan alike, as Jack is one of the most competent arbitrators that ever acted. He commands the respect of the men who play under him and that is what the public wants." But the season proved an unhappy one for Haskell.

In early July, Haskell resigned, with no explanation forthcoming from either the umpire or the league office. Days later, however, a *Minneapolis Journal* sportswriter somewhat cryptically reported that "Jack Haskell quit the AA over disagreement with President O'Brien on financial matters." Whatever the cause, Haskell was soon engaged in an exotic new calling: advance man and barker for the Hagerbeck Traveling Circus. "It isn't that much of a change at all," said Jack. "I've met more wild animals on

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the ball field than Kipling ever thought of in his jungle, and it is merely a change of location every day instead of sojourning in the different towns for a series."

Circus life evidently lost its charm rather quickly, and by winter Haskell was back looking for work as an umpire. He soon landed a post that proved congenial: umpire-in-chief for the successor-version of the Western League. For the next half-dozen years, Haskell enjoyed the confidence of WL President Norris O'Neill; served as a talent scout for Chicago White Sox club boss Charles Comiskey, and basked in positive Midwest press – except for the *Topeka (Kansas) State Journal* and (Denver) *Rocky Mountain News*, relentless scolds of the umpire. Rushing, as always, to Haskell's defense was the *Omaha World-Herald* which proclaimed, "Haskell is one of the best umpires in the business. ... He has less trouble and gets rid of what he does have with greater speed and facility than any umpire who can be named. He is a star performer." And at \$450 per month, Haskell's stipend was near double what he was paid by the Western League a decade earlier.

In 1908, WL President O'Neill signed Haskell to a three-year contract and delegated selection of the circuit's umpiring staff to him. Over time, Haskell assumed additional administrative work for the league, becoming O'Neill's unofficial right-hand man. But midway through the following season, Haskell was embarrassed when arrested in Denver and accused of being connected to a notorious ring of ballpark pickpockets, the leader of which was Jack's longtime Omaha friend, convicted con man Rolland Noble. The incident was briefly exploited by Haskell nemeses like the *Topeka State Journal* and *Rocky Mountain News*. But the following day, the charges were dropped and the umpire more or less exonerated. Shortly thereafter, Haskell was back behind the plate, and the matter was soon forgotten.

President O'Neill shifted more responsibilities onto Haskell's shoulders in 1910. He now devised the game schedules for Western League umpires, increased to a grueling 168 games for this season and next, and promulgated a dress code for his crew – a matter that came naturally to a fashion plate partial to flashy suits, jaunty hats, and walking sticks, and often called the Beau Brummell of baseball. More important, Haskell served as O'Neill's emissary in Pueblo, assigned the task of preventing WL player defection to the Colorado State League. He also did promotional work for his circuit. But his work on the diamond continued to divide league ob-

servers, with Des Moines Boosters club president John F. Higgins joining the ranks of Haskell detractors. But the umpire retained widespread support, with both American League President Ban Johnson and American Association boss Thomas M. Chivington recruiting Haskell for the 1911 season, unsuccessfully. In addition to being content as WL umpire-in-chief, Jack was now reportedly "pulling down as big a salary as is given to the best men" in major league baseball.

The 1911 season was preceded by Haskell's annual spring labors to reduce the flesh roll acquired over the winter and by invention of an inflatable chest protector for umpires. He was also empowered to impose fines upon any WL player assaulting an umpire. Regrettably for Jack, that power was unavailable to him after he was seriously injured by angry Pueblo fans after the home side dropped a 1-0 decision to Denver. Two of the umpire's assailants

were placed under arrest, but the fines later imposed had to be ordered by a Pueblo court, not by assault victim Haskell. Of more significance, Jack was dispatched to negotiate a possible Pittsburgh takeover of the financially failing Des Moines franchise after club owner Higgins abandoned the Western League.

In February 1912, Haskell signed a new contract to continue as Western League umpire-in-chief. But far more press attention was devoted to a Haskell misadventure in a different sport realm the following month. While refereeing an Omaha boxing exhibition, Haskell was knocked cold by an errant overhand right thrown by Great White Hope heavyweight contender Fireman Jim Flynn. The baseball

season also proved trying for Haskell, as the work of his umpires continued to receive fire and discontent with chief umpire Haskell himself grew. At the fall league meeting, club owners directed President O'Neill to fire the entire WL umpiring crew, including Haskell. But Haskell replied that his contract with the league ran through the 1915 season and that he, for one, intended to remain on the job. This despite a standing offer to join the American Association and other minor leagues. In the meantime, Jack and a business partner named Harry Pullman opened the Umpire Buffet, a new watering hole inside the Carleton Hotel in downtown Omaha. A natural raconteur, Haskell also amused himself by authoring often-improbable tales for the *Omaha World-Herald*.

The situation reached crisis proportions in early 1913. First, WL President O'Neill announced that Haskell would return as chief umpire for the new season. But led



Rep. John B. Haskell, c.1935

by Sioux City Packers club owner Ed Hanlon and armed with the minutes of the Fall meeting, Western League members refused to accede to Haskell's retention, some even declaring that they would not place their clubs on the field if Haskell was umpire. This stance compelled O'Neill to sideline his umpire-in-chief until such time, if ever, that WL club owners unanimously agreed to his reinstatement.

As it turned out, things could not have worked out much better for Haskell. His new saloon was a success, with the co-owners turning a reported \$100 per day profit. Meanwhile, umpiring in the Western League sank to new depths, with the work of Haskell replacement George Sigler being deemed particularly objectionable. In mid-July, Sigler was terminated and Jack Haskell recalled to duty. But for reasons never made public, he did not finish the WL season and was placed on the suspended list over the winter.

Notwithstanding his Western League suspension, demand was high for Haskell's services that winter. Old boss Ban Johnson wanted him to return to the American League. The National League also made a bid for Haskell, while the American Association renewed its standing offer for the veteran umpire to join their circuit. But Haskell's most ardent suitor was a new arrival on the baseball scene, the self-declared major Federal League. Its agents offered him a \$1,000 signing bonus in return for his signature on an FL umpiring contract. But whether a matter of convenience, loyalty to Norris O'Neill, or something else, Haskell re-upped with the Western League, accepting a modest \$400 per month stipend that he could have bettered by accepting one of his other employment offers.

In the opinion of Omaha sportswriter (and Haskell friend) Sandy Griswold, the veteran ump "knows the rules better than their makers, has oodles of intuitive baseball sense, and as a strictly honest and thoroughly competent arbiter, cannot be beaten." These attributes, however, did not shield Haskell from on-field mishap. In mid-June, a foul-tip foot injury resulted in blood poisoning that confined Haskell to bed for a week. Shortly after he returned to action, Haskell dislocated a toe and tore tendons in his foot while racing to cover a play at first base during a 7-2 Denver victory over Des Moines on July 19, 1914. Unbeknownst to all concerned at the time, the date marked the end of Jack Haskell's career as a professional umpire. Sometime thereafter and for reasons never publicly disclosed, the still-disabled Haskell was laid off by President O'Neill without warning or explanation, but with his salary for the remainder of the season paid in full. Umpire Haskell was then placed on the Western League's suspended list.

Over the winter, the Federal League renewed its contract offer to Haskell. And the Western League's official release of the umpire removed him from Organized Baseball's suspended list. But Haskell's baseball days were now behind him. His new objectives included an "earnest desire ... to set a new record in the matter of spirit consumption," and expansion of his business operations by becoming the public face of an unlicensed roadhouse opened just outside Omaha city limits in Riverside – a venture that soon visited grief on Haskell. His partners in the new venture included Omaha Democratic Party fixer Tom Dennison and county Commissioner John Lynch, entrusted with ensuring its political protection. The roadhouse made up the income lost when local prohibitionist forces succeeded in banning the sale of spirits in city establishments, including the Umpire Buffet. The healthy monthly profit turned by the roadhouse allowed Haskell to decline offers to return to umpiring reportedly extended to him by the American League in 1916 and by both major leagues and the American Association the following year.

In May 1917, a newly-elected county attorney publicly accused the proprietors of the Riverside roadhouse of various regulatory and criminal offenses including unlicensed operation, illegal gambling, after-hours sale of alcohol, and corruption of a government official – county commissioner Lynch, the primary target of the investigation. After legal skirmishing, Haskell, Dennison, and company were compelled to testify during civil court proceedings instituted to expel Lynch from office. Same revealed that Lynch was paid \$600 each month to ensure that Riverside operations went unmolested by officialdom. The county attorney then filed criminal complaints against all concerned, including Haskell. But witness disappearance and other proof problems proved insurmountable, and the criminal case was eventually abandoned by the county attorney in April 1918.

By the time of the dismissal of the criminal charges against him, Haskell had relocated. The adoption of state prohibition laws by Nebraska in December 1916 had forced the shuttering of Haskell's Omaha businesses, and he sought a new start in licentious Kansas City. With the assistance of Missouri political boss Tom Pendergast – a longtime acquaintance whom he had become closer to while business partners with Harry Pullman and Tom Dennison, both friends and political allies of Pendergast – Haskell soon found himself proprietor of the downtown Majestic Hotel. The premises closed during the ensuing Great Depression, but by that time Haskell was ennobled in the Missouri state legislature, Democratic Party representative for the First District of Jackson County (Kansas City), first elected to six consecutive terms in No-

vember 1926. The 1932 FDR Democratic Party landslide then gave Pendergast forces control of the Missouri state legislature, with reliable Jack Haskell assuming the chairmanship of the important House Committee on Accounts.

Although a renowned barroom orator and newspaper story teller, Haskell was a closed-mouthed and largely inert legislator. “You know, I quit umpiring to get into politics,” he once explained. “But it wasn’t because I had any pet bills. I decided that I wouldn’t propose any new laws unless I believed they were badly needed and no one else suggested them. A man can legislate just as well with silence, studying bills, and intelligent votes as he can with loud speeches.” Rather, Haskell understood that his primary job was to protect the interests of his patron, Tom Pendergast. As Haskell candidly admitted as his political career neared its close, he was “a Pendergast goat in Kansas City politics for 39 years.”

With both himself and his wife in failing health, Haskell declined to stand for reelection in November 1939. Suffering from chronic nephritis (kidney disease), Representative John B. “Jack” Haskell died in his Kansas City hotel room on January 3, 1940. He was 70. Following funeral services conducted at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, he was interred at Calvary Cemetery, Kansas City. Survivors included widow Mina (who would be laid next to her husband that June), and younger brothers Harry and William.

Dick Schattinger And His Summer of '42

by Bob Brady

The late Richard Charles “Dick” Schattinger was a former minor league switch-hitting infielder and a SABR member. As a membership benefit, he’d received a copy of the Society’s publication, *The Fenway Project*, which captured in print events surrounding 2002’s annual convention in Boston. Its focus was on the Friday evening, June 28, experiences of some 600 SABR members at Fenway Park in attendance at an Atlanta Braves-Red Sox game. The scheduling of this interleague series was designed to capitalize upon the historic rivalry between these two ball clubs dating back to the days when the Braves also had claimed Boston as its home.

As the native Californian leafed through the pages of the publication, Dick noted a number of passages referencing the fact that a Boston Braves Historical Association was active in New England. Taking pen in hand, he wrote to me in my capacity as a *Fenway Project* collaborator and in conjunction with my dual affiliation with the Association and SABR. In his letter, Dick revealed the reason for his interest in a team that consistently dwelled in the National League’s second division and habitually suffered from anemic hometown fan support — he had a Boston Braves connection.

As a talented high school ballplayer in pre-World War II California, Dick further honed his skills playing “winter” baseball in an industrial league in the Glendale area.

Many of the league’s teams received sponsorship in one form or another from major league clubs. Then Boston Braves manager and off season Glendale resident Casey Stengel took a particular interest in the local nine and supplied the club with hand-me-down uniforms appropriated from Boston’s minor league affiliated Evansville Bees (the latter nickname was a remnant of its use by the parent club from 1936-40). On his “busman’s holiday,” Casey took note of Dick’s skilled infield play as well as of the long-ball hitting prowess of teammate Eddie Buliavac. Upon his upcoming graduation from South Pasadena-San Marino High School in 1942, Dick was invited by Casey to spend the summer in Boston at Braves Field along with Eddie and a squad of other prospects to be kept around for possible “future use” as military conscription depleted the Tribe’s roster.

Casey’s offer constituted an opportunity of a lifetime for the talented sixteen-year-old prospect. Dick would journey to the east coast and set foot on a big league diamond for the very first time. Traveling by train in a Pullman compartment, he first disembarked in Hartford, Connecticut for a week of orientation with the Braves’ Eastern League farm club, also nicknamed the “Bees.” While in the Connecticut capital, Dick briefly crossed paths with the team’s top pitching prospect, 21-year-old southpaw Warren Spahn.

After departing Hartford, Dick arrived in the Hub where he would stay until shortly after Labor Day. He and Eddie roomed at the Hotel Buckminster in Boston’s Kenmore Square for the first couple of months with the entire tab being picked up by the Braves. Given wartime budgetary pressures, this arrangement proved too costly

for the team and the roommates were signed to minor league contracts that included small housing stipends that forced them to relocate to a less expensive rooming house at 9 Buswell Street, a few blocks from the square. According to Dick, that location was not without some notoriety as Red Sox slugger Ted Williams purportedly dated a female tenant.

Dick's initial recollection of Braves Field was that it was "spacious" and "disjointed." As a "pre-rookie," he and his gang would practice early under the watchful eyes of the front office. When the big leaguers took over the field, the group would be relegated to shagging their batted balls. Once, Dick got to throw batting practice to Casey Stengel as the "Old Professor" attempted to instruct one of his minions on proper bunting techniques. Perhaps the group's greatest thrill was to be allowed to take pre-game infield practice on Labor Day, receiving a good hand from a season high home crowd of 29,000 there to witness a doubleheader against the Dodgers. When games were about to commence, Dick's troop usually moved from the field to seats behind the third base home dugout. There always was plenty of room to move about as Stengel's hapless seventh place team enticed only 285,000 hardcore fans to pass through Braves Field's portals.

Being raw recruits, Dick's crew was treated politely but from a distance by the pros. Tribe utility infielder "Skippy" Roberge was the exception, talking and extending courtesies to the youngsters. Dick's treasured memories included watching the excruciatingly slow Braves backstop Ernie Lombardi capture the National League batting title and observing Jim Tobin's dancing knuckleball. He could still recall the hillbilly music wafting from a phonograph in the visitors' dugout whenever the St. Louis Cardinals came to town.

When the Tribe went on the road, Dick and his buddies worked out at Braves Field in the morning and then traveled down Commonwealth Avenue to catch Red Sox afternoon games at Fenway Park. After observing the "Splendid Splinter" over the course of thirty such games, Dick concluded that "Ted Williams was the sweetest swinger I have ever seen. Period."

The pre-rookie squad also would be taken on "field trips" by Braves longtime scout Jeff Jones to watch college

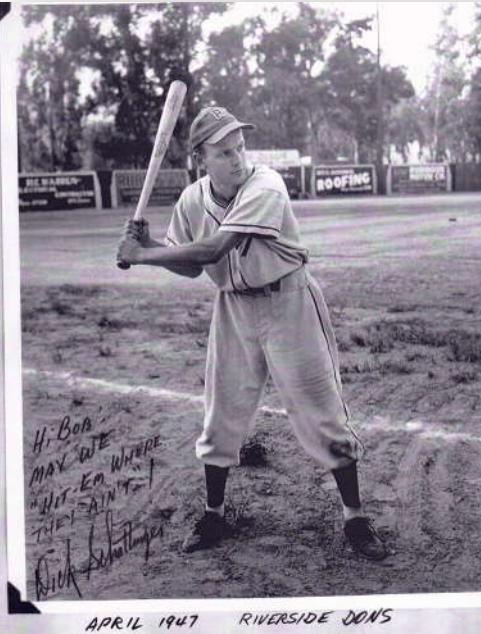
games at Harvard and M.I.T. While most of the names of the non-roster group had faded from Dick's memory, one of those remembered was Ernie Johnson who would pitch for the parent team in Boston and Milwaukee and later serve as a broadcaster in Atlanta. Johnson commenced his professional career in 1942 with a brief eight game appearance with Hartford before being called to military service. Dick's roommate from the west coast, 17-year-old Eddie Buliavac, achieved some notoriety when his picture appeared in *The Boston Globe* of August 1 under the banner, "Double Trouble." Ambidextrous Eddie could bat or throw from either side and was pictured with gloves on both hands.

Dick was present when "Big Poison" Paul Waner recorded his 3,000th hit. He also saw shortstop Lennie Merullo commit four errors in one inning on the day that the Cubs infielder's son (later aptly nicknamed "Boots") was being born. Dick was amazed by the dexterity exhibited by one-armed Pete Gray during a thirty minute workout at the plate and in the field at the Wigwam.

With the summer drawing to a close, Dick was bid adieu by the Braves along with an entreaty to keep the team posted on his draft classification. He returned to California to enroll at UCLA where he earned a varsity letter and was regarded as the university's outstanding freshman ballplayer. Along with many others of America's "Greatest Generation," Dick put civilian life aside to serve his country, enlisting in the Navy in 1943. While repairing naval aircraft in the New Hebrides, the Solomons and the Philippines, he also managed to play a little

second base at some of the jerry-rigged diamonds in the Pacific Theater. Upon his release from military service in the spring of 1946, Dick shook off the baseball rust by joining the semi-pro southern California Cincinnati Reds Juniors, led by future California Angels manager Harold "Lefty" Phillips. There he attracted the attention of Pirates' scout Babe Herman, who inked him to his "second" professional contract.

Although a self-professed "good field - no hit" infielder, Dick batted .319 with the 1947 Riverside Dons of the Class C Sunset League and was named the circuit's all star third baseman. A highlight of his inaugural professional season occurred in a game against the Boston Braves affiliated Las Vegas Wranglers when he clubbed two round trippers off of pitcher/manager Newt Kimball, a former Na-



As a member of the 1947 Riverside Dons

tional League right-hander. Unfortunately, this display of power proved to be an aberration as Dick only tallied five round-trippers over a three year minor league career.

Dick's solid debut earned him a promotion to the B-level Big State League Waco Pirates. An inability to sustain his batting proficiency led to an in-season demotion to the Fargo-Morehead Twins of the Northern League. Dick retained vivid memories of that circuit's ill-fated 1948 season that was marked by a July 24th fiery bus crash that took the lives of four members of the rival Duluth Dukes and injured fourteen other players. "We were traveling from Aberdeen to Eau Claire when a highway patrolman pulled us over and told us about the Duluth tragedy." In his scrapbook was a yellowed front page from the Sunday edition of the *Fargo Forum* dominated by headlines and photographs reporting the previous day's tragic accident. Upon his release by the Pirates, Dick returned to the Sunset League. In 1949, he wrapped up his professional career at age 24 with the independent Porterville Packers.

Despite only a brief three season stint in the low minors, Dick crossed paths with over twenty past and future big leaguers including 1956 World Series perfect game hurler Don Larsen and 1979 World Series championship manager and then Boston Braves farmhand, Chuck Tanner. He even played against a couple of ballplayers that moonlighted as pro hoopsters — Mel McGaha (1948-49 New York Knickerbockers) and Gale Bishop (1948-49 Philadelphia Warriors). The former, a survivor of the Duluth bus crash, went on to manage the Indians and Athletics. Even though Bishop, a Washington State College cage star, proved to be a \$12,000 bonus baby bust for the Boston Braves, he achieved a form of immortality by appearing in Bowman Gum's 1948 basketball card set.

Although Dick's big league aspirations ended in 1949, his dream was attained some thirty-two years later by his son. Right-hander Jeffrey Charles Schattinger was the Kansas City Royals' number one choice in the January 1979 secondary phase free agent draft. He'd previously been a draft selection of the California Angels in 1978. With the 1981 American Association Omaha Royals, Jeff earned a spot on the league's all star team. He was called up late in the season and on September 21, 1981, Jeff took



to the mound at Royals Stadium in the sixth frame. He tossed three scoreless innings of relief against the Minnesota Twins. The achievement was to prove bittersweet for father and son as it would mark Jeff's only appearance in a major league contest. Prior to the start of the next season, Jeff was swapped to the White Sox in exchange for utilityman Greg Pryor. Despite having what Pale Hose manager Tony LaRussa described as one of the best sinker balls he'd ever seen,

Jeff was dispatched to the minors. He hung up his spikes in 1984 and pursued a career in the real estate development and construction industry.

For twenty-six years, Dick worked as a factory representative for RCA Distribution Corp., covering a territory that ranged from Modesto to Bakersfield in California. He retired in 1986. In October of 1996, he returned to New England, ostensibly to view the fall foliage. However, memories of '42 drew him back to his old haunts. Dick found the Hotel Buckminster, then still thriving in Kenmore Square. The flat that he and Eddie Buliavac later rented had become a part of Boston University's student housing. At the site of Braves Field, Dick posed for a photograph in front of the familiar surviving distinctive administration building that also served as the main ballpark entrance. Peering inside, Dick observed, "All is changed." Except for a piece of the old right field uncovered pavilion, Braves Field's innards were gone and an artificially turfed university athletic facility, renamed Nickerson Field, had been reconstructed in its place.

Unbeknownst to Dick, during his visit to Boston, the Boston Braves Historical Association had conducted its fifth annual player-fan reunion on the school's campus at an auditorium within walking distance of the former ballpark. The day's events included a guided tour of the remains of the old "Wigwam." Among the honored guests at the celebration were former outfielder Tommy Holmes and ex-second baseman Sibby Sisti, two of Dick's 1942 Tribe "teammates."

Dick signed on with the Boston Braves Historical Association and continued as a SABR member until his passing at Lake Arrowhead, California on April 4, 2008 at the age of 83.

Western Association Ballparks

by Ron Selter

The Western Association operated as a Class C minor league from 1905-10, 1922-32, 1934-42, and 1946-54. The league was the successor to the Missouri Valley League of 1902-04. In 1924, the Western Association had teams in eight cities located in the four adjacent states: Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, and Oklahoma. The eight cities were Bartlesville, OK; Fort Smith, AK; Hutchinson, KS; Joplin, MO; Muskogee, OK; Okmulgee, OK; Springfield, MO; and Topeka, KS.

Before the start of the 1924 Western Association season, the league president, J. W. Seabaugh, gave a series of interviews to the local press¹. In an interview reported in the Springfield, MO newspaper, a review of the league's eight ballparks was provided.

Bartlesville, OK

The team was called the Bearcats and their home park was Bartlesville Baseball Park. The Bartlesville Bearcats, with a 19-23 record, moved to Ardmore, OK on June 8, 1924 and became the Ardmore Boomers². Shortly thereafter, the Joplin MO team (the Boosters) moved to Bartlesville June 16, 1924. Thus Bartlesville had two Western Association teams with partial seasons that used the Bartlesville Baseball Park. This ballpark was located three blocks from the Bartlesville business district. The ballpark's stands consisted of a wooden grandstand and bleachers with a combined capacity of 2,500. LF was 345 and RF was described as much greater than LF (estimated to have been 400). A local legend has it that Babe Ruth was the only player to ever hit a home run over the RF fence.

Fort Smith, AK

The Western Association team was the Twins. The ballpark was called Andrews Field and had been built in 1921. Andrews Field was located 4.5 blocks from the business district. In 1924 the stands were steel-and-concrete with a capacity of 3,200. Home plate was in the NW corner of the park site and the sun field was LF. A ballpark with generous dimensions-both LF and RF were 372. Because of the larger than typical outfield dimensions, only nine home runs were hit over the outfield fences during the 1923 season.

Hutchinson, KS

The team was called the Hutchinson Wheat Shockers and their home park was named Gano Park. This ballpark was located a five minute walk from the city's business

district. The park site was bounded by South Adams St, South Jefferson St, West "E" Ave, and West "D" Ave. The infield was all dirt. Home plate was in the NW corner and the dimensions were LF 340 and RF 250. One suspects most of the home runs were hit over the short RF fence. Capacity was 2,500.

Joplin MO

The Western Association team was called the Joplin Boosters and their home park was Miners Park. This ballpark was located a four minute trip by street car from the city's business district. In 1924, the front of the grandstand had been recently remodeled in concrete. The ballpark's dimensions were LF 327 and RF 316. Capacity of the ballpark was 3,500. The Joplin Boosters moved on June 16, 1924 and became the Bartlesville Boosters as the prior Western Association franchise in Bartlesville (the Bearcats) had moved to Ardmore, OK earlier in June.

Muskogee, OK

The ballpark used by the Western Association team (the Muskogee Athletics) was League Park. It was built in 1921 and in use 1921-26. The grandstand was steel-and-concrete and the park's capacity was 3,500. The location of the ballpark was two blocks from the Muskogee business district. Later in 1934, the ballpark was renamed Athletic Park. The park's dimensions were generous: LF 360, RF 380. Today the old ballpark site is site of the Muskogee Civic Center.

Okmulgee, OK

The ballpark used by the Western Association team (the Oilers) in Okmulgee was Athletic Park. It was built for the 1924 season. The park's capacity was 2,500. The location of the ballpark was six blocks from the cities' downtown. The field had home plate in the SW corner of the playing field and RF was the sun field. The park's dimensions were: LF 327, RF 327.

Springfield, MO

The ballpark used by the Western Association team (the Midgets) in Springfield was White City Park I. This ballpark was built in 1904, renovated in 1921, and was undergoing re-construction in early March 1924. The playing field had home plate in the SW corner of the park site. The ballpark's dimensions were modest: LF 325 and RF 325.

Topeka, KS

The ballpark in Topeka used by the Western Association team (called the Topeka Senators in 1924-26 as Topeka



Topeka ball park circa 1912-1920

was the state capitol) had the not very original name: Topeka Baseball Park. This ballpark was built in 1901. The park's seating capacity was 4,450. In addition in 1924, the ballpark provided free parking for several hundred cars. The ballpark was located at 15th St and Adams St and was 12 blocks from downtown. The infield was dirt with the outfield covered in blue grass and clover. Home plate was in the SW corner of the playing field. The ballpark's dimensions were quite modest: LF 316 and RF 327.

Sources:

- 1) "Seabaugh Discusses Association Parks", *Springfield News Leader*, March 9, 1924
- 2) "Boomers Celebrate Opener at Home by Defeating Twins 5-2", *Ardmore Daily Press*, June 19, 1924