

# KELTNER'S HOT CORNER



## Ken Keltner Badger State Chapter

**April 2021**

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### Upcoming Events:

#### Keltner Virtual Chapter Meeting

**Wed, April 13, 6:00 PM (CT)**

Ron Rabinovitz - Jackie's Pen Pal



**Larry Baldassaro Latest Book**

*Tony Lazzeri*

**Tuesday, April 20, 7 PM (CT)**

New book by Keltner member Larry Baldassaro published April 1

#### Halsey Hall Book Club Author Discussions - 7 PM (CT)

**Jim Walker - Tuesday, Apr 6th**

*Red Barber: Public Man, Private Life*



**Lee Kluck - Monday, Apr 19th**

*Leave While the Party's Good: The Life and Times of Harry Dalton*

Direct questions or comments to:

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### Upcoming Virtual Meetings

#### Keltner Virtual Chapter Meeting

**Wed, April 13, 6:00 PM (CT)**

**A Kid and a Baseball Legend, with Ron Rabinovitz  
Jackie's Pen Pal**

New  
Date/Time

[Ron Rabinovitz](#) was an eight year old from Sheboygan in 1953 when he first met his hero, Jackie Robinson, at a Braves vs. Brooklyn Dodgers game in Milwaukee. Jackie and Ron maintained a one-on-one close relationship and friendship from that time on.

Ron's story is of a kid, his larger than life hero, and the lessons he learned. His story is that of dreams coming true, mutual respect, and "paying it forward". Ron will share the poignant, emotional, and heartfelt letters that provide a unique insight into Jackie Robinson's soul.

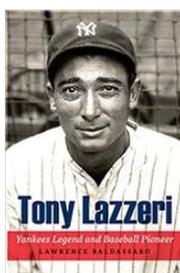


Register in advance for the [Chapter Meeting](#). You will receive a confirmation email including Zoom information.

### Larry Baldassaro's Latest Book

#### *Tony Lazzeri Yankees Legend and Baseball Pioneer*

**Tuesday, April 20, 7 PM (CT)**



Ken Keltner Chapter member Larry Baldassaro's has a new book, published on April 1 by the University of Nebraska Press. *Tony Lazzeri: Yankees Legend and Baseball Pioneer*. You can order the book now at [Boswell Books](#) who will have a [Virtual Book Launch Webinar](#) on **April 15 at 7 PM**. to discuss the book.

Before there was Joe DiMaggio, there was Tony Lazzeri. A decade before the "Yankee Clipper" began his legendary career in 1936, Lazzeri paved the way for the man who would become the patron saint of Italian American fans and players. He did so by forging his own Hall of Fame career as a key member of the Yankees' legendary Murderers' Row lineup between 1926 and 1937, in the process becoming the first major baseball star of Italian descent.

Register in advance for the meeting at: [Baldassaro Chapter Meeting](#) on April 20.

## March Chapter Meeting - *From Rube to Robinson*



Keltner member, John Graf, editor of *From Rube to Robinson* along with Associate Editor Duke Goldman, joined us for an interesting conversation on SABR's Best Articles on Black Baseball. Unfortunately, fellow Associate Larry Lester was unable attend due to the recent passing of his mom. John and Duke did a great job talking about the different

articles in the book including Goldman's piece, 1932-1962: The Business Meetings of Negro League Baseball where we learned that the leagues were organized contrary to the opinion of white baseball thanks to Effa Manley's records. With MLB finally recognizing what many of us have believed, the Negro Leagues are major leagues there was also a robust conversation on that announcement and the effect it may have. Graf prepared a list of Negro League readings that he forwarded after the meeting that follows. To watch the meeting recoding, click on the arrow above.

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### ***For Additional Negro Leagues Reading***

**By John Graf**

Thank you, Ken Keltner Chapter of the Society for American Baseball Research, for welcoming Duke Goldman and me for a March 20 SABR Virtual discussion of [\*From Rube to Robinson\*](#), which I edited with Duke and Larry Lester. For more coverage, including profiles of individual personalities, interested people could start with any of a sampling of other books written by and edited by contributors to *From Rube to Robinson*.

#### **Larry Lester**

[\*Rube Foster in His Time: On the Field and in the Papers with Black Baseball's Greatest Visionary\*](#), McFarland, 2012.

[\*Black Baseball's National Showcase: The East-West All-Star Game, 1933-1962\*](#), Expanded Edition, NoirTech Research, Inc., 2020.

[\*The Negro Leagues Book, Volume 2: The Players 1862-1960\*](#), with Wayne Stivers, NoirTech Research, Inc., 2020. Original *Negro Leagues Book*, with Dick Clark, SABR, 1994.

[\*Baseball's First Colored World Series: The 1924 Meeting of the Hilldale Giants and Kansas City Monarchs\*](#), McFarland, 2014.

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#### **Todd Peterson**

[\*The Negro Leagues Were Major Leagues: Historians Reappraise Black Baseball\*](#), Todd Peterson, editor, McFarland, 2020.

[\*Early Black Baseball in Minnesota: The St. Paul Gophers, Minneapolis Keystones and Other Barnstorming Teams of the Deadball Era\*](#), McFarland, 2010.

#### **John Holway**

[\*The Complete Book of Baseball's Negro Leagues: The Other Half of Baseball History\*](#), Hastings House, 2001.

[\*Blackball Stars: Negro League Pioneers\*](#), Meckler, 1988.

[\*Black Diamonds: Life in the Negro Leagues from the Men Who Lived It\*](#), Meckler, 1989.

[\*Josh and Satch: The Life and Times of Josh Gibson and Satchel Paige\*](#), Meckler, 1991.

[\*Voices from the Great Black Baseball Leagues\*](#), DaCapo, 1992 (Revised edition, original 1975).

### **Jim Overmyer**

[Queen of the Negro Leagues: Effa Manley and the Newark Eagles](#), Rowman & Littlefield, 2020 (Negro Leagues Centennial Edition).

[Cum Posey of the Homestead Grays: A Biography of the Negro Leagues Owner and Hall of Famer](#), McFarland, 2020.

[Black Ball and the Boardwalk: The Bacharach Giants of Atlantic City, 1916-1929](#), McFarland, 2014.

### **Jeremy Beer**

[Oscar Charleston: The Life and Legend of Baseball's Greatest Forgotten Player](#), University of Nebraska Press, 2019.

### **James E. Brunson III**

[The Early Image of Black Baseball: Race and Representation in the Popular Press, 1871-1890](#), McFarland, 2009.

[Black Baseball, 1858-1900: A Comprehensive Record of the Teams, Players, Managers, Owners and Umpires \(3 Volumes\)](#), McFarland, 2019.

### **Jules Tygiel**

[Baseball's Great Experiment: Jackie Robinson and His Legacy, Oxford \(25th Anniversary Edition\), 2008](#).

[The Jackie Robinson Reader: Perspectives on an American Hero](#), Jules Tygiel, editor, Dutton, 1997.

### **Brian Carroll**

[The Black Press and Black Baseball, 1915-1955: A Devil's Bargain](#), Routledge, 2015.

[When to Stop Cheering? The Black Press, the Black Community and the Integration of Professional Baseball](#), Routledge, 2006.

### **Steve Hoffbeck**

[Swinging for the Fences: A History of Black Baseball in Minnesota](#), Steven R. Hoffbeck, editor, Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2005.

### **John Thorn**

[Baseball in the Garden of Eden](#), Simon and Schuster, 2011.

[Total Baseball: The Official Encyclopedia of Major League Baseball](#), Sport Media Publishing, 8th edition, 2004.

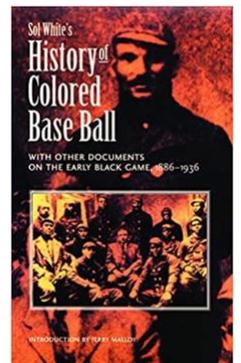
[The Hidden Game of Baseball: A Revolutionary Approach to Baseball and Its Statistics](#), John Thorn and Pete Palmer, editors, University of Chicago Press, 3rd edition, 2015.

“Our Game” blog at: <https://ourgame.mlblogs.com/>

### **Jerry Malloy**

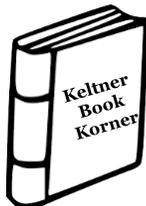
[Sol White's History of Colored Base Ball, with Other Documents on the Early Black Game 1866-1936](#), compiled and with an introduction by Jerry Malloy, 1995, University of Nebraska Press. White's original copyright 1907. In addition to Malloy's introduction, the book includes a “Sol White Chronology” by the late **Dick Clark**, another of our contributors to *From Rube to Robinson*. It also contains a player register and career statistics collected by SABR founder **Bob Davids** of Black players competing in the otherwise all-White minor leagues from 1878-1899. Davids is the founder and first president for whom the Society for American Baseball Research's highest honor recognizing the “ingenuity, integrity and self-sacrifice” he exhibited is named.

Thank you to all for your interest in *From Rube to Robinson*. Happy reading!



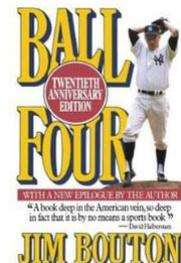
## Keltner Book Korner Book Club News by Mary Shea

Greetings, Keltner Bookworms,



Thank you to the 14 members who joined our Keltner Book Club meeting on March 31 to discuss [K A History of Baseball in Ten Pitches](#). We had an amazing group talking about pitching and how well written the book was covering these ten important pitches with fun stories and history of this great game. All who read it, highly recommend the book to anyone who has not read *K* yet and enjoys a good story to two...okay 100.

Our next Keltner book club selection will be *Ball Four*, by [Jim Bouton](#). Rob Neyer describes this baseball classic as “A great book, wildly entertaining, worth reading every two or three years”. We’d have to conduct a seance to have the author join us for this one, but we always have a spirited and fun discussion. Our next virtual book club meeting will be in early June, and more details will be included in the May newsletter. Feel free to direct any questions to [Mary Shea](#). All SABR members are invited to attend.



Following *Ball Four*, we are looking at reading, [A Year of Playing Catch](#) with an in-person meeting in July or August when Dennis is back in Wisconsin so we can also play catch as a group. Hopefully, we will finally be able to meet together in one place.

Also, we will now have a Show-and-Tell segment at the end of each meeting, and no, we are not too old for this. It was cool how this just kind of developed at our last meeting, and I think everyone enjoyed it. We all have amazing baseball treasures to share, so feel free to choose an item of interest.

Thank you so much for your participation in the book club.

Happy reading!

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### Halsey Hall Chapter Book Club April Meetings

The Halsey Hall Chapter has scheduled a virtual meeting for author discussions on Tuesday, April 6th at 7pm (CDT) and Monday, April 19th at 7pm (CDT). The writers are also members of the Ken Keltner Chapter. Both books are scheduled to be published by University of Nebraska Press. The discussions will last about an hour to an hour and a half.

The April 6th presentation will feature Jim Walker discussing his new book, *Red Barber: Public Man, Private Life*. Register in advance for the [April 6th Meeting](#).

The April 19th presentation will feature Lee Kluck who will discuss his new book about Harry Dalton titled *Leave While the Party's Good: The Life and Times of Harry Dalton*. Register in advance for the [April 19th Meeting](#).

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### Get to Know...Lee Kluck

Lee Kluck is a baseball historian from Stevens Point Wisconsin. He has loved the game in every form and has, on numerous occasions, argued that he would watch eighteen ten-year olds if it meant he could watch a game

While Lee is an avid baseball fan in all respects, he is a diehard member of the True Blue Brew Crew along with his wife Carla. Lee's research interests include the evolution of the professional game from 1941-2001 as well as studying the lineage and history of grass roots (amateur and semi-pro) baseball in Wisconsin.

Lee has had his work published numerous times by SABR (in books on the 1982 Milwaukee Brewers, the 1986 New York Mets, and County Stadium) and has also had work published in the *Journal of Baseball History and Culture*. Kluck has also been a frequent presenter at the *Spring Training Conference* and has appeared on various podcasts where he tried to sound smart while talking baseball.

Currently, Lee is writing a biography of Harry Dalton that will be published by the University of Nebraska Press. When he isn't working on research, or watching games, he is cooking with his wife, enjoying a good book or movie, or plotting how he will spend time with his nieces and nephews when he can finally leave the house.

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## **Borchert Field, the Bonus Chapters**

**By Bob Buege**

During the February Keltner Book Club meeting featuring Bob Buege and his awesome book, [\*Borchert Field Stories from Milwaukee's Legendary Ballpark\*](#), we learned that 13 chapters were not included in the book. We asked Bob if he would like to place them in the *Hot Corner*; he happily agreed. We'll feature one monthly into 2022. Thanks, Bob!

### **Heater from Van Meter**

In the 1930's the people in the heartland of the U.S. could not catch a break. The Crash of '29 dealt the nation a cruel blow, but the news only kept getting worse. In a largely rural and agricultural country, even the weather seemed to conspire against the hard-working folks trying to eke out a living on small family farms. Extreme temperatures and a decade-long drought produced dust storms of frightening magnitude that spelled foreclosure for tens of thousands of unfortunate farmers. Southwestern states like Texas and Oklahoma suffered most, but much of Iowa endured the same hardships. Farm life was not easy.



Just west of Des Moines, near the little town of Van Meter, Bill and Lena Feller raised their small family and a substantial herd of cattle on acreage along the Raccoon River. Son Bobby grew strong and healthy by performing his endless daily chores: harvesting the crops, milking the cows, and every morning carrying water for the animals from the river. Bill Feller was a demanding father, but he was also an unrepentant baseball fan. Each day he managed to find time to play catch with his boy and teach him the fine points of the national pastime. By age eight young Bobby was throwing pitch after pitch at a wire hoop his dad had hung from a tree near the barn.

In addition, the Fellers made frequent day trips to the ballpark in Des Moines. On October 29, 1928, they were privileged to see an exhibition between the Bustin' Babes and the Larrupin' Lou's, led by legends [Ruth](#) and [Gehrig](#). (The two famous Yankees had performed the previous afternoon in Borchert Field.) In 1932 fourteen-year-old Bobby and his dad spent several months of after-chore time creating their own ball field on their land, which they called Oak View Park. (This may have been the inspiration for W. P. Kinsella's "Field of Dreams.")

Bob started playing American Legion ball and quickly caught the eye of big-league scouts. His fastball drew comparisons to [Walter Johnson](#). Feller's career pre-dated the invention of the radar speed gun, but in Chicago in 1940 he threw alongside a speeding motorcycle cop on a Harley Davidson to try to time his fastball. The announced result was suspect, but Major League Baseball measured Feller's velocity at 104 miles per hour. Whatever the exact speed, Feller was faster than any of his contemporaries.

In July 1935, Cleveland Indians super-scout [Cy Slapnicka](#), a native Iowan, signed Feller to a minor league contract for a one-dollar bonus and, he later testified before a Congressional committee, three baseballs autographed by the Indians' ballplayers. Slapnicka was a former Milwaukee Brewers pitcher who won 25 games for their 1913 pennant-winners. He and the Cleveland organization proceeded to circumvent organized baseball's rules by keeping Feller out of the minor leagues and

bringing him straight to the majors. [Commissioner Landis](#) ultimately made a ruling that exonerated the Indians and kept Feller from becoming a very wealthy free agent. Feller became a career-long Cleveland Indian.

On July 6, 1936, just after finishing his junior year at Van Meter High School, Bob faced big-league hitters for the first time. He pitched three innings of an exhibition in League Park against the St. Louis Cardinals' "Gas House Gang." He allowed two hits and one run while striking out eight batters, including [Leo Durocher](#) twice. Suddenly the whole country knew who Bob Feller was and how hard he could throw.

Thirteen days later Feller made his official debut in one inning of mop-up relief in Washington's Griffith Stadium. His first start occurred on August 23 in Cleveland against the St. Louis Browns. He pitched the complete game, allowing one run on six hits while striking out 15, tying [Rube Waddell's](#) American League record. It was his first of five complete games in the final month of the season. In a two-hitter on September 13 against [Connie Mack's](#) Philadelphia A's, he tied [Dizzy Dean's](#) major league record with 17 strikeouts in a nine-inning game. He did, however, walk nine batters.

Following the end of the season and a series of exhibition appearances, the 17-year-old phenom returned to Van Meter and resumed high school. His 18 fellow seniors voted him their class president. On May 15, 1937, nearly twice the town's population jammed the red brick schoolhouse for his graduation ceremony, which was broadcast on a live hook-up by NBC radio. The evening was festive and exciting for everyone, but Feller faced one ominous fact—his arm hurt.

He had experienced fatigue before, but the muscular young farm boy was unaccustomed to arm pain. On April 24 he had pitched his first regular season game of 1937, which was to be his first full season in baseball. Opposing the St. Louis Browns, he had a horrible first inning, giving up four runs. After that he settled down and cruised through the next five innings, striking out eleven and not allowing any more runs. Then something happened.

It had been a rainy day, and the pitcher's mound was muddy and slick. He slipped while breaking off a curve ball, and his arm went out. He left the game and didn't try to throw again for several days. The arm seemed to heal, but now he could not straighten it. More rest did not help. Three days after his graduation, Feller tried to pitch in relief in Fenway Park. He faced one batter and walked him before the pain again forced him to the bench.

The Indians were worried. Their teenaged Walter Johnson had a million-dollar arm that had stopped working. They sent him to specialists at Johns Hopkins. They tried the Mayo Clinic. No relief. On Tuesday, June 1 Feller checked in to Milwaukee's Hotel Miller and registered under the name of "Bob Smith." Traveling separately, Cy Slapnicka also arrived in Beertown.

Feller was soon recognized, of course, and confronted by a reporter. Feller explained unconvincingly that he was in Milwaukee to visit Brewers hurler [Bill Zuber](#), who, like Feller, was from Iowa. In actuality, Feller was in town to receive treatments on his ailing arm from Frank Ohm, a local chiropractor and physical culturist. Ohm examined Feller and told him the soreness was the result of pitching in cold weather.

Wanting to protect his meal ticket, Slapnicka took a treatment first, to relieve a kink in his neck. After being convinced that Ohm would at least do no harm, the Cleveland GM allowed him to treat Feller. Each day for five days, Ohm manipulated the pitcher's spine.

After the second treatment, Feller borrowed a Milwaukee uniform and warmed up in Borchert Field before the Brewers-Mud Hens game. He chased fly balls during batting practice but did not take the mound. He received special permission from the head umpire to stay in the Brewers dugout during the ballgame. Two days later he returned and threw from the pitching rubber while Slapnicka and Brewers trainer Doc Buckner watched attentively. Buckner gave the arm a rubdown, and Feller professed to be pain free. Feller came back to Borchert one final time on Saturday and threw, this time with less velocity, under the studied gaze of chiropractor Ohm. Afterwards, the bone-bender told Rapid Robert he would be ready to pitch normally in a week.

He was not. On June 22 he worked two innings in relief, but once again he was ineffective and the pain made him stop. The Indians seemed out of options when a local Cleveland physician came forward and said he could cure the problem. Dr. A. L. Austin said the problem was adhesions. He packed the elbow in hot towels, then stood in front of the pitcher with his back to him. He grabbed the arm and pulled it straight in a fast motion. Dr. Austin explained that Feller's ulna bone had been at least a half-inch out of its socket, so he forced it back in place.

Austin told Feller he could pitch the next day. The right-hander waited two days. "I went out and pitched and never felt it again. He saved my career."\*

Rapid Robert visited Borchert Field again on June 27, 1940, when the Cleveland Indians played an exhibition with the Brewers. Feller went through warm-ups on the field but then changed into street clothes. In the seventh inning he was introduced over the field microphone. The crowd gave him a big hand, which he acknowledged with a wave.

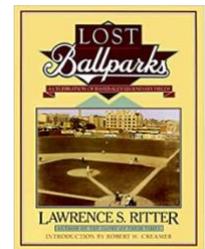
\* Hal Bock, *The Vindicator*, December 8, 1993, p. C5.

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## **Historical Ballpark Ruins** by Mary Shea

Time for a road trip?

Many years ago, my husband gave me a book called [Lost Ballparks](#), by Lawrence Ritter. It's been one of my favorite books over the years. This book beautifully documents the teams that played and important events that occurred at each ballpark. I enjoy the history and am especially intrigued by the sites and any remnants that might remain. Alas, a few of these ballparks are not completely lost. After traveling to various American cities over the years, here are a few of my favorite historical ballpark sites. They're worth a visit, and perhaps you can imagine what it was like to experience a game in these hallowed grounds.



### [Forbes Field](#)



The Pittsburgh Pirates called Forbes Field home from 1909 to 1970, and it was also the home park for the [Homestead Grays](#) in Pittsburgh. A few miles from downtown is the University of Pittsburgh and Schenley Park, and there are significant remnants of the ballpark and also points of reference here. A large portion of the brick outfield wall still stands, from right to center field, along with the flagpole that was in play. You can stand in the outfield where the great [Roberto Clemente](#) used to roam. A typical deadball era park, it was an amazing 457 ft. to dead center. Home plate is located close to its original location in Posvar Hall. The left field wall is marked with bricks to commemorate [Bill](#)

[Mazeroski's](#) 1960 World Series-winning home run.

If you look at old photos of the ballpark, you'll see a beautiful and unique building that still exists. The Cathedral of Learning stands behind where left field used to be. It's also part of the university campus, and I highly suggest exploring inside if it's open. It contains a number of classrooms that are decorated to represent different cultures.

Of course, if you visit Pittsburgh, you probably need to visit Primanti Brothers for a sandwich. Just know that they put the sides right on the sandwich, very efficient. There are a few locations.

## League Park

This was where the Cleveland Indians played from 1891 to 1946, a few miles east of City Hall at 66th and Lexington. The legendary Alta Weiss pitched here with her team, the Weiss All Stars. League Park is now a public park where you can walk on the field. The original ticket office and part of the brick wall still stand, and remnants of the dugouts were very visible when I visited years ago. The park has been renovated, so children can play ball where many baseball greats used to play.



## Braves Field



Braves Field was the home of the Boston Braves from 1915 to 1952, facing its demise when the team moved to Milwaukee in 1953. The site is located toward the far end of the Boston University campus, just off of Commonwealth, and some of the ballpark has become Nickerson Field, the football stadium for BU. As with League Park, the original ticket office at the main entry still stands and is now used by campus security. The original right field pavilion also still stands and is part of the football stadium seating.

## Polo Grounds

This ballpark has had an incredible history as the home field of the New York Giants from 1891 to 1957. The New York Yankees and Mets also played here. A public housing project, Polo Grounds Towers, was built on the site of the ballpark, on Harlem River Drive between 157th and 159th. What makes the site worth visiting is Coogan's Bluff, a notable point of reference overlooking where the ballpark stood, which is part of beautiful Highbridge Park in the Washington Heights neighborhood of Manhattan. You can stand on this bluff and imagine all the history that played out down below. Starting in 1913, fans used to approach the ballpark from the bluff by descending down the [John T. Brush](#) stairway, which has been reconstructed using the original brass lettering, the only remnants of the ballpark that exist on the site. Nonetheless, it's a striking location to visit.



## Ebbets Field

This beloved ballpark of the Brooklyn Dodgers was regrettably replaced by a Robert Moses apartment complex. One remnant that remains is the flagpole, but it's located outside of the Barclays Center, home of the Brooklyn Nets.

### **And in a League of Their Own:**

## **Simmons Field**



Built for the Simmons mattress employee team in Kenosha, Wisconsin, it eventually became the home of the [Kenosha Comets](#), one of the teams in the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League, made famous by the movie *A League of Their Own*. It's now the home field of the [Kenosha Kingfish](#) of the Northwoods League. You can still catch a game in the original grandstand.

## Horlick Field



Also a former AAGPBL field, the [Racine Belles](#) played here from 1943 to 1950. It is mostly used for football, and the field has been replaced with artificial turf. However, the stone facade still surrounds the park.

## Beyer Stadium

The [Rockford Peaches](#) played here from 1943 to 1954. The ticket booth and a small stairway remain, and a community project has recreated the field, along with a wonderful outdoor museum. Girls and women continue to play baseball here, and the International Women's Baseball Center is being developed as a museum and training center for girls' and women's baseball.

These are just a few, and I'll continue to explore more historical ballpark sites. Feel free to share your discoveries on the Ken Keltner Facebook page.



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## Baseball's Better Together Membership Drive

Everyone knows **Baseball's Better Together!** With a new season upon us, we encourage all SABR members to share details about our new membership drive with the baseball-loving fan in your life.

In honor of the 2021 season, all baseball fans can **save 21%** off a new SABR membership! Visit [SABR.org/better-together](https://SABR.org/better-together) for details on how to sign up. We could celebrate our 50th anniversary this year by eclipsing our all-time high in global membership. With your help sharing this great offer for new members, this goal is within our reach!

SABR is the essential community for the world of baseball, where we celebrate history, research, and statistics of our great game. If you're a passionate fan, there's a place for you in SABR!

Spread the Word!



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## EMIL ROTHE CHICAGO CHAPTER MARCH-APRIL 2021 |

**VOLUME 12 | EDITION 2**

**Latest Edition, Now Available**