



SPOTLIGHT ON THE MINORS

MINOR LEAGUE COMMITTEE NEWSLETTER

Fall/Winter 1998 Vol 5.2

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I. Committee News:

1. MARYLAND FALL LEAGUE

The Maryland Fall League completed its first season and a 42 game schedule in early November. All 30 major league organizations furnished players for teams in Frederick, Bowie and Salisbury, Md and Wilmington, De. Players wore the uniforms of their parent clubs. Top prospects from Class A and AA competed in the circuit, which has cities in close geographic proximity and with large fan bases. Prince William (Va.) and Hagerstown (Md) may join the league in 1999. Existing front office staff ran the new teams during the fall. Though not exactly a replacement, the fall and early winter Hawai'i League that ran for a few seasons folded after last year. Attendance figures haven't been published, but informal questioning indicates that fans didn't exactly stream into games. In any event, winter is a little shorter in the Mid-Atlantic region this year.

2. CLARENCE "SODDY" M. GROAT DIES

Soddy Groat played for the Boston Braves farm club in Leesburg, FL in 1938, hitting .289. In 1940 he was sold to the Dodgers' organization, but like many others, had his career interrupted by World War II. Serving in the infantry in Europe, he was awarded the Purple Heart, the Silver Heart and the Bronze Star. Though blinded for 45 days, he recovered in time to play part of the 1946 season in Montreal. In 1947 he played for the Dodger chain in Newport News, VA, alongside Chuck Connors and Gil Hodges. Soddy was a Mohawk Indian, born on a reservation in Canada. After a playing career that included both professional baseball and football, he was inducted into the Buffalo, NY Hall of Fame.

3. MINOR LEAGUE RECORDS

Apparently one of the sessions at last June's SABR meeting in San Francisco (or informal discussion) raised the question of home run and RBI records in a special context, because I received three queries. I passed them on to Bob McConnell and this is his reply:

"Two players hitting back-to-back home runs twice in the same game is not rare. However, it would take some research to determine if it has been accomplished in consecutive innings.

Ken Griffey and Ed Martinez of Seattle did it in the 2nd and 4th innings of a game on April 21, 1996 for the latest such feat.

My guess is that 8 RBI' s in a game by a pitcher is not a record. John Cantley has been credited in several publications with hitting three grand slams in a game for Opelika of the Georgia-Alabama League on June 5, 1914. Opelika scored 19 runs in the game. However, the team scored as many as four runs in only two innings. Thus, Cantley could have hit no more than two grand slams. Nevertheless, he probably had a bunch of RBI' s.

Six hits in a game by a pitcher may be a record. My guess is that it has been accomplished a number of times."

[So, I take this as being the final word on the subjects. Unless I hear more.]

4. SMITHSONIAN MINOR LEAGUE BASEBALL SEMINAR

"The Minor Leagues: An Appreciation," a seminar cosponsored by the Smithsonian and Baseball America, will be held at the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C., on Saturday, February 13th, from 10 ala to 4:30 pm. The program will survey minor league baseball from various insider points of view. Speakers include Dave Chase, President of Baseball America, Mike Veeck, son of Bill Veeck, and Maury Wills. General admission is \$120; resident members \$75, senior members \$67.50, and full-time students with ID \$37.50. Participants provide their own lunch. Call (202) 357-3030 for reservations, code 1BO-386.

5. TRIVIA QUESTION

Which 1924 member of the Hartford Senators was the all-time slugging percentage leader in the Eastern League?
Hint: He later starred in the 1938 Hollywood western, "Rawhide."

6. KOM LEAGUE REUNION

John Hall, former batboy in the Kansas-Oklahoma-Missouri Class U League, organized the best attended minor league player reunion ever. The reunion was held in Carthage, Mo., from June 14th through June 18th, and 450 participants showed up. Events included a golf tournament and a baseball game at the old Carthage ballpark. The success of the event should signal the interest in player reunions for those involved in other defunct or extant leagues. Thanks to John Pardon for providing the information.

7. "FROSTY" KENNEDY DIES AT 72

The following item, forwarded by Danny Whitehead, appeared in an unidentified paper on June 8, 1998:

"Forrest ' Frosty' Kennedy, a minor league slugger who was one of 11 professional players to hit 60 home runs in a season, has died in Covina, CA. He was 72. Kennedy hit 60 home runs in a 144-game season while playing for Plainview, Texas, n the Class B southwestern League of 1956. He hit his 60th homer in his final at-bat on the final day of the season."

II. New Committee Members:

NAME

Rich Klien
3939 Rosemeade Pkwy #1221
Dallas TX 75287

INTERESTS

Going to ball games

NAME

INTERESTS

Thomas J. Stillman
870-40th Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94121-3317

History of Affiliations

Edward Simmer
P.O. Box 3390
Suffolk, VA 23439

Southeastern Virginia
teams, Old Dominion
and Virginia Leagues

Craig Fuller
1845 S. 1800 East
Salt Lake City, UT 84108

Pioneer League
Utah-Idaho League
Pacific Coast League

Welcome!

III. Research Requests:

1. Vince Guerrieri is researching an amusement park in Youngstown, Ohio. A class C Mid Atlantic League team played in a ballpark located in the amusement park, apparently in the shadows of the roller coaster. The team moved to Oil City, Pa in 1951 and the league folded the same year. A fire destroyed the records of the park in 1951. Vince would appreciate anyone who has researched either Youngstown or the Middle Atlantic League for information. He can be reached on e mail at gvince@bgnet.bgsu.edu.

2. Julia Cooper had a grandfather who played for the Kansas City Blues (or Kansas City Cowboys) in the 1890s. She has exhausted most research channels like the Hall of Fame. If anyone has information on Gordon Wilson Tackett (or Tacket) please contact her at 6708 McClure Road, Van Buren, AR 72956 or at jcooper799@aol.com.

3. Has anyone run across the name Edgar William Doty in minor league baseball, probably during the years 1910-25? He was possibly a pitcher for Vancouver, and may have played in Washington state. If so, please contact Lothar Konietzko, at lothar@grebner.com, or send me the information and I will forward it. The player was a relative of Lothar' s.

4. Frederick Marion Curtis (1880-1939) played two games as a first baseman for the New York Highlanders in 1905. He later coached for the Toledo Mud Hens or another Ohio team. His great niece, Charlene Sutherland, 22474 Gascony, Eastpointe ME 48021 is trying to learn more about his career. She sent along a picture of Fred Curtis in a baseball uniform with a gothic W on the shirt and hat but no other identifying characteristics. If anyone can help, please contact Charlene.

5. Alan J. Grost is undertaking what he calls a "massive" project. He is trying to compile a list of as many former and current minor league **Jewish** baseball players as possible. If anyone has a similar interest, or any suggestions as to how to proceed on such an endeavor, please contact him at 12301 Morning Light Terrace, Gaithersburg, MD 20878.

IV. Research Resources:

1. Ron Selter has recently compiled league record slugging averages for the Eastern League 1916-32 (minus War year 1918) and the New York-Penn League 1923-1997. The data are available for researchers through ran at selter@courier3.aero.org or from the Minor League Committee chair.

2. David Skinner has been compiling box scores and other data on the Long Branch Cubans, in organized baseball in 1913 (NY-NJ League) and 1914 (Atlantic). His compilation for the 1914 Atlantic League differs from that of the Encyclopedia of Minor League Baseball. He also has some interesting points about one of the players being an Afro-Cuban, though newspaper reports referred to all the players as white Cubans. David will share his research if you contact him at P.O. Box 777, Bisbee, AZ 85603, or (520) 432-3995.

3.

Minor League Farm Club Project

The purpose of this project is to compile an accurate list of minor league clubs in the farm system of each major league club and, also, in the farm system of any minor league club. Outright ownership of farm clubs will be noted. This will be a year-by-year list.

The Encyclopedia of Minor League Baseball, 2nd edition lists the farm clubs of all major league clubs, starting with the 1932 season.

The Sporting News Baseball Guides list farm clubs starting with the 1947 season (in the 1947 guide).

Jerry Jackson has compiled a list of farm clubs, covering the seasons between 1896 and 1945. Jackson lists five clubs with at least one farm club for the 1896 season. His list then jumps to 1910. Jackson notes outright ownership and he lists farm clubs for a number of high minor league clubs.

A comparison has been made between the Encyclopedia and Jackson for the period from 1932 thru 1945. There are many farm clubs on one list and not the other. Also, there are some disagreements as to the parent club of some minor league clubs.

A comparison has not been made between the Encyclopedia and the Guides for the period from 1947 to date. They probably agree fairly close.

The Encyclopedia and the Guides do not note outright ownership. A fair portion of the project can be devoted to this subject. Likewise, the Encyclopedia and the Guides do not list the farm systems of high minor league clubs.

Sporting Life and The Sporting News are good sources of information. Hopefully, committee members can track the history of their favorite clubs or leagues.

Please send all information to: Bob McConnell 210 West Crest Road Wilmington, DE 19803 phone 302-764-4806 (sorry, I live in the dark ages - no E mail) Include your source of information, even if it is just your memory. Hopefully, most of the committee members have access to the Encyclopedia and Guides. I would have to obtain Jackson's permission before giving out copies of his compilation.

V. Minor League Articles Available for Order:

Short articles which are of general interest to committee members should be mailed to the chairman for inclusion in this section. Copies will be reproduced and disseminated at cost, which is indicated after the article. Please make checks payable to Ernest S. Green, and not to SABR. If you have written an article (published or unpublished, except those already in SABR volumes) on the minors, or have compiled data and are willing to have it circulated, please send it in.

1. Lingo, Will, "Diehards Keep Game Going in Small Towns," Baseball America, Nov. 9-22, 1998. Discussion of the challenges of keeping baseball going in small town America. (.50)

2. Sieb, Philip, "Minors Keep True Spirit of Baseball," Dallas Morning News, Sept. 8, 1998. Description of baseball in the Class A Pioneer League, including where you can get a cup of Moose Drool beer. (.50)

3. Moseley, John A., (AP). Article on Pat Stasey on being inducted into the Texas Baseball Hall of Fame. Stasey was an outfielder/manager/team owner and played for 12 seasons, hitting over .300 in twelve seasons. Playing mainly in the West-Texas-New Mexico and Longhorn Leagues of the southwest, Stasey hit a career high .416 in 1947 (almost winning the batting championship). (.50)

4. Brown, Gord, "The Year Our City Won a Pro Baseball Championship," 1998 Program of the Kitchener Panthers (semi-pro), Canada. The author traces the history of a Class D Canadian League team between 1911 and 1925; the team was apparently forgotten by the city. (.50)

S. Akin, William E., "' Where Baseball Can Still be Fun' : The Flowering of Minor League Research," NINE, vol. 5, Fall 1966, 130-138. A survey of research on minor league academic baseball history. Akin analyzes what is needed for "a full-blown history of Minor League Baseball." (1.00)

VI. Publications:

1. Asinof, Eliot. Man on Spikes. Foreword by Marvin Miller. Southern Illinois University Press, P.O. Box 3697, Carbondale, IL 62902-3697. \$14.95 p. Reissue of the 1955 McGraw-Hill publication. An early realistic novel about a career minor leaguer.

2. Green, Ernest J. Diamonds of Dixie. Lanham, MD: Madison Books, 1995. New in paperback (6/98) \$14.95. Travels through the southern minor leagues. In bookstores, or order from the publisher, (1-800 462-6420).

3. Voigt, David Q., The League that Failed. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1998. Price not available, hardcover, 322 p. While not a book on the minor leagues, Voigt's coverage of the 1892-1900 baseball era reveals the milieu from which minor and major leagues emerged as separate entities. Bookstores.

4. Bready, James H., Baseball in Baltimore: The First Hundred Years. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1998. 242 pp. \$34.95. The author is a former writer for the Baltimore Sun. Most of the book concerns the minor league Orioles, as the book ends with the move of the St. Louis Browns to Baltimore. In bookstores.

5. Tucker, Bill and Jerry Walker, DP or Billy and Jerry in the Promised Land. Keizer, OR: Volcano Press, 1998 I think), 247 pp, hardcover. The two authors, one a lawyer from Brooklyn and the other in real estate in the Pacific Northwest, met at a baseball fantasy camp and decided to buy a baseball team. They purchased the Bellingham Mariners and moved them to Salem, Oregon. Subtitled "A primer on minor league baseball franchise purchase, ownership and operation." Order from Volcanoes Press, P0 Box 20936, Keizer, OR 97307, or call 503-390-2225 (Fax: 503-390-2227).

(Trivia question: Lou Gehrig set the record for the old Eastern League (1916-1932) with a slugging percentage of .720 in 1924. Lou played himself in the 1938 B western Rawhide. In between he played first base for the New York Yankees.)

"I've never, not once, had a problem with the guys in the league. They know that I've paid my dues. They treat me like I'm just another ballplayer. If I get any opposition, it's from women. "

Duluth-Superior Dukes pitcher Ila Borders