

AN INTERVIEW WITH DAVID CRAWFORD JONES

by **John McMurray**

David Crawford Jones is a former editor of *The Inside Game*, one-time chairman of the DEC, and the editor of *Deadball Stars of the American League*. With a Master’s in U.S. History and a doctorate in African history, he has written extensively on the intersection of racism and popular culture. This interview has been shortened for space considerations, but the complete interview has been posted on the SABR website at sabr.org/journal/article/qa-with-deadball-stars-editor-david-jones.



David Crawford Jones

John: We are now more than a hundred years beyond the end of the Deadball Era. Why is there such interest in continuing to study it, when we don't find ourselves, say, studying football from a hundred years ago with the same vigor?

*David: Baseball, I think, has been very good at sort of maintaining continuity with the past. I wrote about this idea in the Introduction to *Deadball Stars of the American League*. As I said there, I think there's something special about the Deadball Era because it comes before*

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Babe Ruth. The Deadball Era is really ended by Babe Ruth hitting home runs in New York. So, the Deadball Era is a glimpse into a time period in baseball history when home runs were not king and when the ideas about the game were very different.

What I like about Deadball Era baseball is that it was before Ruth, but the rules are pretty much the rules as we know them now. You have the foul strike rule implemented by 1903, and the distance between the mound and home plate is the same as we have today. All of those rules are in place. There are still rule changes which would happen afterward, but the game that's being played in the Deadball Era, according to the rules, is a lot like the game we play today. Yet it is so different. Exploring that difference and why the game was played that way and how it changed is interesting to me.

Also, the American League existed in the Deadball Era and the National League existed in the Deadball Era. The structure of baseball, as we know it today, was therefore coming into focus during the period. It's like this enchanting mix of the familiar — the rules are similar, the leagues

are similar — and the different. Strategies are very different, the parks are different. At the same time, a lot of the parks that have come to be beloved by baseball fans during the 20th century and up to today were built during the Deadball Era. The Deadball Era is really the time period where I see baseball becoming the national pastime, where it really is becoming a symbol of American culture. All of that, I think, helps us to understand why we love it so much and why we still do a hundred years later.

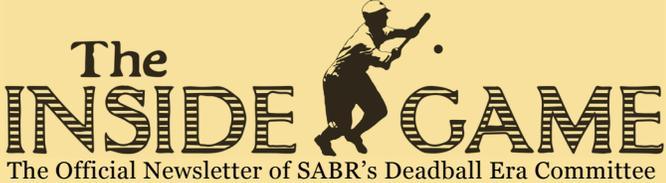
John: You have studied the Deadball Era for more than twenty years. Does it still appeal to you with the same intensity?

David: Yeah. Yeah, it does. I wonder if the Deadball Era in some way attracts a lot of contrarians. We look at the way baseball today is played and grit our teeth. That is certainly the case for me. I really started studying the Deadball Era around the year 2000. That was two years after Mark McGwire and Sammy Sosa had shattered Roger Maris' single-season home run record and home runs were going through the roof. And I hated that. I hated the number of home runs that were being hit. I thought it was ugly baseball. And I kind of feel that way about the game being played now, to be honest. So, for me, the Deadball Era is baseball in a different form and that form is more appealing to me. As an historian, I gravitate towards the Deadball Era because I just think there's something beautiful in it. It brings me pleasure and joy to continue to study it and to think about it.

John: What areas involving race in the Deadball Era should researchers be exploring further?

David: This is something I wish I had done when I was chairman of the Deadball Era Committee. We had done *Deadball Stars of the National League*, we had done *Deadball Stars of the American League*. Together, it was a massive undertaking, there were dozens and dozens of people involved in it. Everyone was a little bit exhausted when those two books came out.

But there was something about it that sat wrong with me, that we did these two books and everyone in them was either white, or in some cases,



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Native American. We had done nothing to document black baseball during that time period. Obviously, SABR has a Negro Leagues Committee that has done a lot of work in this area. But I kind of wished at the time, and I still think it would be a fruitful endeavor, to try and get the Deadball Era Committee and the Negro Leagues Committee to collaborate to examine baseball in this time period. It would be a big undertaking.

It is 2020 now and the 100th anniversary of the Negro Leagues being founded by Rube Foster. Before 1920, you didn't really have organized leagues like you do in the 1920s and the 1930s. Therefore, documentary evidence for players before that time is patchier. Nevertheless, we know that there were great black players in the early 20th century. Some of them were from Cuba. I'm thinking of Jose Mendez, for instance. You also have John Henry Lloyd in the United States, Spotswood Poles, Smokey Joe Williams. There's a lot, and there's many more beyond the Hall of Famers and the most famous ones.

There are also other players who maybe haven't gotten the same level of recognition but also we know were very good players. I think it would be incredibly beneficial to our understanding of baseball history and to our understanding of African American sports to do a work on black players during the Deadball Era. Even with the two books we did publish, we can't honestly say we have told the story of baseball in the Deadball Era if we haven't covered the many great black players of that time. I think that's definitely an area for research which remains to be explored.

John: If some contemporary manager, let's say John McGraw, had signed a black player and brought him to the active roster, what do you think would have happened?

David: Counterfactual history is often difficult. You think about what happened in 1947, when Branch Rickey brought Jackie Robinson to the Major Leagues. A number of his teammates didn't want to play with Robinson. You had opposing teams that didn't want to play the Dodgers. You had opposing managers who abused Robinson and opposing pitchers who abused him as well. And that was in 1947. That

was 30 or 40 years after the Deadball Era, in a time right after the Second World War where African Americans had fought for the United States, died for the United States, where there had been a global struggle against fascism, against Nazi ideology. And, still, there was a huge uphill fight that occurred.

I suspect if integration had happened in the Deadball Era, it would have been that same way but even more intense. Think about what happened to Jack Johnson when he won the heavy-weight championship of the world [in 1908], all the abuse he took. I would say that at a minimum you would have had players from whatever team the black player was playing for, let's say it was Charlie Grant, they would simply have refused to play. You would have had a lot of opposing teams that would have refused to play. You would have had significant harassment of that player and that team everywhere they went.

Also, I don't know if you would have had that the sort of societal context in which there would have been enough people willing to stand up to that harassment to actually make it work. Just the fact that McGraw bailed on the idea once he was called out with trying to bring Chief Tokohama to the Baltimore Orioles in 1901 shows that the fortitude was not there to make it a successful project.

I do think that if it had been attempted and failed, that itself still would have moved the struggle forward. Even if you had a black player brought to the major leagues which led to massive conflict and controversy which forced the team to back off on keeping that player, I think the struggle would have been worth it at the time to advance the cause of racial equality in this country. It is a shame it didn't happen even though it almost certainly would have failed.

John: Oscar Charleston, born in 1896, would likely have made it to the major leagues near the end of the Deadball Era. If he had, how do you think he would have performed in the major leagues?

David: He would have been right there with Cobb as the best player in baseball, I think. Dur-

ing quarantine, I read Jeremy Beer's biography of Charleston. I came away convinced that Charleston was one of the five or ten best players in baseball history. When I read about his speed, his power, his throwing arm, it was kind of like if Willie Mays had come to the Deadball Era. Charleston was 20 years old in 1916 so Cobb at that point would have been maybe a little bit past his peak. Within five years, Charleston probably would have been there with Ruth as one of the two best players in baseball.

John: *It was an era of personalities too. Which other players from the Deadball Era would you like to go back and see play in their time? The players then had different shapes, sizes, and quirks in ways that we don't see as often today either.*

David: If you look at the parts of the chapters of *Deadball Stars of the American League* and *Deadball Stars of the National League* which I wrote, I tended to want to write about the unsavory characters, like the guys who were throwing games. The two players that I was most fond of that I wrote about were Heinie Zimmerman and Benny Kauff, both of whom, at one time or another, were involved in some very shady dealings. One player I'd really like to see is Hal Chase, for two reasons. One is that the way people talk about his defense, you would think that he was the greatest player. In the 1920s, Lou Gehrig is hitting 45 home runs a year and driving in 170 runs, and articles from that period still suggest that Hal Chase was better. Then you look at Hal Chase's numbers, and it's like: "How is that even possible?" Hal Chase is nowhere in the same galaxy as Lou Gehrig as far as offensive contributions are concerned, but then you hear these interviews where they talk about Chase's defense, I want to see it. I want to see Chase's defense because it seems like it must have been really incredible. I also want to see what it looked like when he was throwing games. I'll be honest, I want to see what that looked like.

I think it's fascinating that you had these athletes who basically were going around losing games on purpose. I would love to see what that looked like and how good they were at hiding it. Wouldn't it

be something to go back and watch the 1919 World Series and say: "Can I tell that that Joe Jackson is not on the up-and-up or that Happy Felsch is not on the up-and-up?" I'd like to see a lot of those things.

I'd also like to see the power hitters of the Deadball Era. I'd really like to see Gavy Cravath to see what his batting approach looked like. Would he swing for the fences? Were home runs just coming occasionally because of his power? Harry Davis also. There are a few of them. There was really no one who could survive in the Deadball Era as a home run hitter. But, nonetheless, we know that there were hitters before Babe Ruth who were swinging from their heels, and I would like to see what that looked like. There are also the characters we wrote about in the *Deadball Stars* book. There's so many that jump to my mind.

I was always particularly fond of Dode Paskert. Tom Simon and I were just starting the Deadball Era Committee, and there were others as well who were involved. We were talking about how we didn't all want it to be about Ty Cobb and Honus Wagner and Walter Johnson. We wanted it to be about the other guys, the people that you look at and go "Huh, I wonder what that guy was like."

I researched every fact I could possibly find about Dode Paskert. I found out that he was a great defensive centerfielder. One thing I never found the exact answer to was why he was called *Dode*. There were theories. I was looking up slang dictionaries from the early 20th century. Where did *Dode* come from? What does it mean? There was one person who said it meant "stupid." That was one theory. Another theory is it had something to do with "dead." He had some particularly interesting things that happened in his life. He accidentally killed a kid with his car in Cleveland, where he was from, and he actually saved a whole family during his career with the Chicago Cubs, after he left the Phillies. He saved a whole family from a burning building. He had an interesting life.

Paskert seemed like he was one of those players who was really good but never great. In some

ways, he was indicative of that whole “inside game” approach of the Deadball Era, where you play great defense, you run the bases, bunt, hit and run. He had all that in his game. Nobody ever wrote a book about him. He wasn’t that good, but I always just thought: “I’d like to see that.” I’d like to see what a really good but not great baseball player looks like in the Deadball Era. How does he play the game? He’s not going to be remembered. He’s not going to be the famous person from this era, but, nonetheless, Paskert had a long, successful career. I wanted to be able to picture in my mind what it was like to watch him play baseball. That, to me, always was the joy of the Deadball Era, being able to get into the weeds of players. Amos Strunk is another. Players who were good but haven’t been remembered because they weren’t good enough but nevertheless contributed something to baseball in that era.

John: You mentioned that baseball of that period has some beauty to it. But are you also drawn to the rogues who brawled and were coarse?

David: I love brawls. I love ‘em. I love them today because it shows you the passion and just the contempt that players gain for each other. Like today, somebody hits a home run and they’ll admire it too long and next time they come up, the pitcher throws at them and they don’t like it and the batter charges the mound. In the Deadball Era, that passion for the game, that sort of conflict which is inherent to baseball was allowed to flourish more than it is today. Now, you have to watch more video replays of the brawls, safety is always a big concern, and so on and so forth. It wasn’t back then. Maybe that’s part of the charm of the Deadball Era, I don’t know. Life was viewed differently in that time. It wasn’t a society where everybody who went on their bike wore a bike helmet. It was a society in which people took more risks. People were willing to get in more fights.

A lot of these guys who came to the major leagues in the Deadball Era came from the mines, the factories, the mills. They came from the working class. They came from, in some cases, below the

working class, what a Marxist would call the Lumpenproletariat. A lot of them are immigrants, many of them from Germany and Eastern Europe. Baseball was also played by a different stratum of society back then. Today, a lot of the guys who get to the major leagues are the sons of major leaguers. They are people who come mainly from suburban upper-middle class backgrounds where their parents can afford to get them training year-round, and they can get all the equipment they need. Back then, baseball was just something you played in the street. It was an everyday activity that it’s not really today. So that’s another thing about the Deadball Era that I love, that this game was coming out of something that ordinary people really played *all the time*. I think that’s a beautiful thing.

John: If someone had not been familiar with Deadball Era baseball, what would you like them to know about it?

David: There is so much that comes to mind. We were in the very early days of the Deadball Era Committee. Tom Simon, and I can’t remember who else, came up with this phrase about the baseball itself. *Let’s get this lumpy licorice-stained ball rolling*. [Editor’s Note: It was long-time DEC member R.J. Lesch.] The thing I’d first want them to know is about the actual baseball. I would want them to know first of all is what pitchers used to do to that poor baseball and how it was used compared to now, where the baseball is like this object which must never be made dirty in any way. Now, if a small speck gets on it, it gets thrown out. Back then, they were going to use one, maybe two the entire game. They were going to let people rub all kinds of foreign substances on it. Pitchers were going to darken it. The ball was going to be lumpy. It was going to fall apart sometimes, and that’s one of the reasons it wasn’t going to travel very far. I think you start with the baseball and what people used to do with it. So, the one thing I would want them to know is what a Deadball Era baseball in the hands of a pitcher looked like. There’s probably like some bacteria growing on it, you know. It’s definitely not a socially-distanced baseball. It’s not hygienic.

John: *How would you reflect on Deadball Era baseball having been away from the Committee for more than a decade?*

David: I left the Deadball Era Committee thirteen years ago because my life and my career were going in a different direction. I knew that I was going to be living overseas for a little while, and I just knew that I wasn't going to be able to devote the same time to it. But the further I have gotten away from my time with the Deadball Era Committee and my time running the Committee, the more that I've really come to miss it. I would say that I'm grateful as well for you and everyone else on the Committee who has carried on the work all these years. It really means a lot to me personally as someone who was there at the founding of the Committee that the Committee had — and has — stewards that have taken such good care of it and that it continues to be out there and that people continue to care about the Deadball Era is moving to me. The fact that you even asked me to talk about of these issues, I was

so happy that you did because it allowed me to re-engage with all these questions that I still really care about. So, I just wanted to thank you for the opportunity.

David Jones's Deadball Era All-Star team:

Catcher: Louis Santop
First base: Honus Wagner
Second base: Nap Lajoie
Shortstop: John Henry Lloyd
Third base: Frank Baker
Left field: Pete Hill
Center field: Tris Speaker
Right field: Ty Cobb
Pitchers: Walter Johnson, Smokey Joe Williams, Christy Mathewson, Pete Alexander, Jose Mendez
Bench: Roger Bresnahan (c), Eddie Collins (2b), Sam Crawford (of)
Manager: John McGraw

YOUNG AND A GIANT

by **R. J. Lesch**

I have to confess to a blunder. If anyone knows anything about Larry Doyle, it's probably that he once was reputed to have said, "It's great to be young and a Giant!" So did he actually say it? And if so, when?

Larry Doyle was missing from San Antonio in the spring of 1921. He, like Matty and Fletcher, had been a special favorite of McGraw's. He was the one who had said, "It's great to be young and a Giant."

-Frank Graham, *The New York Giants*, 1952

Larry Doyle, who, as a rookie, had gained a measure of immortality by proclaiming to the world, "It's great to be young, and a Giant," was neither by 1921.

-Charles C. Alexander, *John McGraw*, 1988

As one who has been researching the comings and goings of the 1911-1913 New York Giants for mumblety-mumble years now, I've run across

many versions of this quote. But, inexplicably, when I wrote the Larry Doyle biography for the first *Deadball Stars* volume, I framed it like this:

"It's great to be young and a New York Giant," he famously remarked to Damon Runyon in 1911, when he helped his team to its first of three consecutive NL pennants.

-R. J. Lesch, "Larry Doyle," *Deadball Stars of the National League* (SABR, 2004).

I honestly can't figure out why I thought the quote went through Runyon. I've gone through my notes from when I wrote that biography, and I can't find my source. I've also collected all of Runyon's coverage of the Giants from 1911, and I can't find the line in any of it. It's particularly embarrassing as I note that others have repeated the error, citing my biography as the source. My apologies. I don't know where I got it. It was sloppy research on my part. So, let me try to make up for that. Did Doyle say it? And if so, when, and to whom?

The earliest references I can find attributing the quote to Doyle are 1915:

- Grantland Rice, writing about Pol Perritt in a column dated June 20, 1915, starts with this: “Some writer once credited Larry Doyle with saying: ‘It is great to be young and a Giant.’”¹
- Heywood Broun, in a 1934 column, writes that he thought Doyle actually said it during 1915. Since the Giants finished in last place that year, and suffered a disastrous late-season collapse the autumn before, it seems like an odd time to say such a thing.²
- Broun recalled it the same way in his column a year later: “In the year 1915 I came here [New Orleans] with John McGraw and the New York Giants. That was the season when Larry Doyle said, ‘It’s great to be young and a Giant.’”³ But Broun doesn’t say that he heard Doyle say it. He says that was the year Doyle said it.

The “It’s Great to Be Young and ...” phrase goes back further than 1915, or even 1911. A search on Newspapers.com turned up these two amusing notes:

- Montgomery, Alabama, 1909: An article headlined “It’s Great to Be Young and Initiated into Coppa Ba Nana” tells of young women being pledged into a mock sorority at the local high school.⁴
- Brainerd, Minnesota, 1910: “The Ganma [sic] Delta Sigma girls are planning a May breakfast at 6 a.m. on the first Saturday in May. Oh, it’s great to be young and — — — (?)”⁵

This led me to think that this might have been a popular phrase of the day — a Ragtime-era meme, if you will. But then — a clue. Evansville, Indiana, sportswriter Hal Sheridan quoted the line in a 1915 article, and then added this:

There, we’ve gone and done it, not because it is great to be, etc., but because every one else has quoted Jimmie Hopper’s classic baseball line and we simply were compelled to get it off our minds.⁶

So, who is Jimmie Hopper?



James Hopper (1876-1956) was a former college football player turned writer. Hopper covered the New York Giants on at least two occasions: once for *Collier’s Magazine* during the 1908 season, and once for *Everybody’s Magazine* the following spring. Hopper was best known at the time for his short stories, a collection of which (*Caybigan*) was published in 1906, earning him comparisons to Joseph Conrad and Rudyard Kipling from one reviewer.⁷ He would go on to publish more short stories and five novels, a couple of which had sports themes.⁸

Hopper traveled with the Giants during the high point of their fateful 1908 season: their August western road trip. Hopper appears to have joined the squad on their travels on August 13. In his article “On Tour with the Giants,”⁹ he describes the last inning of Christy Mathewson’s 5-3 victory over Brooklyn (though Hopper reports the score as 5-1). From there we follow Hopper and the Giants through an 11-game stretch. They split four games in St. Louis. Hopper dons a Giants

uniform during the first game in Cincinnati and sits on the bench. The Giants win and the players adopt Hopper as a mascot. With him on the bench in uniform, they sweep the Reds in three games and Pittsburgh in four, through Wednesday, August 26. The article does not mention the three-game series in Chicago (August 27-29) which the Cubs swept, so either Hopper filed the story before that series or chose not to include those games. (One wonders whether the Giants regretted not keeping their mascot on hand a little longer.)

The issue of *Collier's* in which it appears is dated September 19, 1908. On that morning, the first-place Giants had a record of 87-46, and were 4½ games ahead of the Cubs with a mere two weeks left in the season. They had just won 18 of their last 19 games. They would go 11-10 over the rest of the season, and would lose the pennant on the last day of the season in a very familiar story.

But back to the subject. At one point, Hopper describes the Giants getting off a train: "These 'giants' were young," he writes, in a passage worth quoting at length.

A clean-shaven, clean-limbed, straight-stomached, straight-backed, well-groomed, stalwart bunch they were. And well dressed. Very well dressed. With a slight superfluity perhaps of reverses, wandering buttons, diagonal lapels, and an exaggeration in slits up the backs and pads beyond shoulders. But, on the whole, very well dressed. The cunning eye of a Broadway tailor had planned these garments, you could tell that. And irreproachably pressed, too.

One or two, or three or four, of these giants, I noticed, were a bit aware of the nattiness of

Bresnahan has a habit of pulling the ball over when there are two strikes on the batsman, and then hurling the ball to the second baseman, to make the umpire believe he considered the pitch a strike. [Umpire Bill] Klem fell for this on every occasion yesterday.

Bright Baseball Briefs, *Pittsburg Press*, August 11, 1907
submitted by Mike Lackey

their attire. When they sauntered it was with shoulders well back, with pivoting neck and roving eyes. Lucky rogues! Seldom did they fail; from some bit of gingham and ribbon an answering gleam, a second or two of lustrous long lashed telegraphy. What it is to be young and a Giant! Ah, me –

Hopper writes about various Giants in capsule summaries. What does he have to say about Larry Doyle? Well:

Between Tenney and Bridwell, at second, is Larry Doyle. If Tenney is the scientist, and Bridwell the artist, Doyle is the athlete. He is young; the world is before him, his to conquer, and he is going about the conquest with zest. Two years ago he was in the coal mines; now he is one of nine men at the top of their profession. The work is still play to him; he performs it with a smile and with joy; with joy in the free, bounding play of his sinews; in the surging, inexhaustible flood of vigor and strength within his supple body. Happy, honest faced, gentle-eyed Larry Doyle! I'd like to be Larry Doyle.

So: Did Larry Doyle say "it's great to be young and a Giant," with Hopper nearby? Was Doyle's joyous style the inspiration for a line that was actually Hopper's creation? At this point, I don't know. However, I'll keep looking.

ENDNOTES

1. *New York Tribune*, June 20, 1915: 11.
2. Heywood Broun, "It Seems to Me," *Murfreesboro (Tennessee) News-Journal*, March 3, 1934: 1. The column is dated "Miami, Feb. 27."
3. *Reading (Pennsylvania) Times*, December 30, 1930: 10.
4. *Montgomery (Alabama) Advertiser*, October 3, 1909: 11.
5. *Brainerd (Minnesota) Dispatch*, April 18, 1910: 3.
6. Hal Sheridan, "Giants Look Mighty Good in the National." *Evansville (Indiana) Press*, April 28, 1915: 9.
7. <https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Caybigan> (retrieved September 15, 2019).
8. https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Author:James_Hopper (retrieved September 15, 2019)
9. James Hopper, "On Tour With the 'Giants,'" *Collier's*, September 19, 1908: 16.

LOST AT SEA: THE DISAPPEARANCE OF BUFFALO BISONS PITCHER BILL THOMAS

by **Bill Lamb**

On the evening of May 4, 1906, right-handed pitcher Bill Thomas appeared in good spirits as he boarded the steamship that would take the Buffalo Bisons ball club on a nighttime passage through the Long Island Sound to New York City. His future remained uncertain, but things were looking up from the previous fall. Then, despite having registered the third of three-consecutive 20-victory seasons while pitching in the Pacific Coast League, Thomas had been unconditionally released by the Tacoma (Washington) Tigers with about a month to go in the 1905 campaign. Over the ensuing winter, he sought to revitalize his career in the East, signing with Buffalo of the highly competitive Eastern League. He had made a successful debut several days earlier, defeating the Baltimore Orioles, and was slated to take the hill in the coming series opener against the Jersey City Skeeters.

Thomas did not make that start – for somewhere between New London, Connecticut and New York harbor, he mysteriously disappeared from onboard the steamer, never to be seen again. The absence of witnesses to revelatory events reduced club officials and police investigators to speculating that a perhaps seasick Thomas had gone on deck during the ship's journey, and fell or was swept overboard to his death in choppy nighttime waters. But Thomas's body was never recovered and no official verdict on his demise was ever promulgated. Preceding a look back at this mystifying and tragic incident is an overview of the life and playing career of the ill-fated hurler.

William Thomas was born sometime in May 1880 in Florin, California, then a sparsely-populated farming community located outside Sacramento. Little biographical data about Thomas – his middle name, parents, schooling, family religion – can be identified with certainty. At the time of his disappearance, however, it was reported that Bill had farmed in Florin prior to en-

tering professional baseball, and that he was the nephew of Sacramento County Sheriff David Reese, a childhood immigrant from Wales.¹

Our subject entered baseball consciousness in spring 1903 when he and older brother Ben Thomas joined the Sacramento Senators of the Pacific Coast League, a fledgling circuit outside Organized Baseball and a direct competitor of the officially recognized Class A Pacific National League. In short order, Bill Thomas established himself as one of the best pitchers on the West Coast. And as he did so, he received tempting offers to leave the Senators, all of which he declined, much to the applause of a hometown newspaper. "Billy Thomas ... has his temptations the same as any other human being," observed the *Sacramento Evening Bee*. "But the quiet young man has but one answer for all of them – 'nit.' Thomas figures that he is bound to the local team because of a contract which he has signed and intends to keep. ... [By doing so], he deserves the respect of his teammates and of the fans."²

On May 3, Thomas threw a four-hit shutout at the Oakland Oaks. The 4-0 victory constituted a remarkable seventh whitewash tossed by Thomas in his first nine professional starts. In 83 innings, he surrendered just three runs and lost only once, a 2-1 setback in 11 innings to the Los Angeles Angels.³ Although formidably sized (6'4"/180 lbs.), the budding star was not a particularly hard thrower. Rather, he relied on a variety of breaking pitches and pinpoint control. By mid-July, Thomas's 16 wins paced PCL hurlers.⁴ One of his five defeats, ironically, came courtesy of brother Ben. Stationed at an unfamiliar position (third base), the older Thomas's botch of a grounder in one inning and his wild throw to first in another cost Bill the two unearned runs that spelled the difference in a 3-2 loss to San Francisco.⁵

Despite being sidelined by illness for several weeks at mid-season, 23-year-old Bill Thomas turned in an outstanding 29-14 (.674) record for a mediocre Sacramento club that otherwise went 76-89 (.461). Over the grueling 210-game PCL season, he took the mound 47 times, posting an excellent 2.39 ERA in 376¹/₃ innings pitched. He

also played ten games in the field and chipped in a useful .286 (46-for-161) batting average, with 11 extra-base hits.⁶

With the Pacific National League going under at year's end, the Pacific Coast League was admitted to Organized Baseball as a Class A circuit for the 1904 season. As Sacramento was not going to field a club for the coming campaign, Thomas signed with recently-appointed Tacoma Tigers manager Mike Fisher, his field mentor the season before. The lanky right-hander turned in a yeoman 422²/₃ innings for the Tacoma club, but his 27-24 (.529) record did not match the 130-94 (.580) pace of the pennant-winning Tigers as a whole. Thomas also played 13 games in the outfield and at first base, but his batting, too, tailed off from the previous season: a (46-for-202) .226 BA with only seven extra-base hits. Yet despite the drop-off in Thomas's numbers, manager Fisher was anxious to have him back and re-signed Thomas for the 1905 Tacoma roster.

Thomas began the new season in sensational style. On May 22, his 3-0 shutout of Los Angeles marked his ninth-straight season-starting win. Tacoma catcher Slats Davis informed gathered sportswriters that "Bill has more to fool a batter with day after day than any man in this league. His almost perfect control enables him to work corners, and keep the ball high or low as he wishes, and when necessary he has the curves to make the batters bite."⁷ Three days later, however, the Angels brought the skein to a halt. Behind the one-hit pitching of Spider Baum, Los Angeles sent Thomas down to his first defeat, 6-0.

From that point, the season began to tailspin for both the poorly-drawing Tacoma club and its staff ace. Although the late-August report that "Bill Thomas has not won a game for many a moon"⁸ was exaggerated, Thomas's performance slackened noticeably after his blazing start. By mid-season, he had been supplanted as Tacoma's number one pitcher by Bobby Keefe (30-22). In fact, Thomas was even laid off for several weeks – either because of a wrist injury or in a club payroll economy move, accounts differed.⁹ On September 18, he was restored to the active duty roster and snapped a Tacoma losing streak with



Bill Thomas
Pittsburg Press, May 9, 1906

a 4-2 win over Seattle. In typical fashion, Thomas was touched for a generous number of base hits (11) but spaced them effectively and walked none while striking out two enemy batsmen.

With more than a month remaining in the PCL playing schedule and the pennant-defending Tacoma Tigers headed for a sub-.500 (106-107) finish amid financial difficulty, Thomas was unconditionally released.¹⁰ The soft-spoken pitcher reacted philosophically, saying "Fisher thought that I was not doing good work and released me. That's the privilege of every manager." Bill then added, "But in my case, I guess I was let go to curb expenses." Whatever the reason, Thomas expected to be signed by another PCL club shortly.¹¹ Oddly, that did not happen, and he sat at home in Sacramento as the PCL season wrapped up. Although Thomas had been unable to sustain his early season performance, his year-end numbers were respectable: 20-16 (.556) in 38 pitching appearances, with a sparkling 2.06 ERA in 288 innings pitched. Meanwhile, the Tacoma Tigers disbanded after a post-season playoff loss to PCL champion Los Angeles.

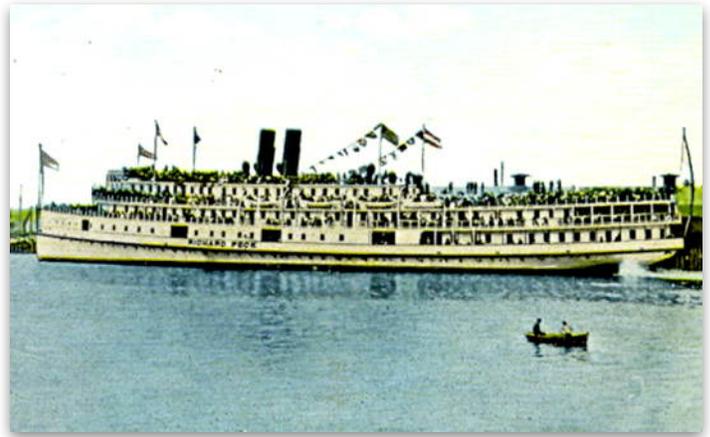
Over the winter, Thomas, still only 25 and yet hopeful of eventually getting a major leagues

chance, opted for a transcontinental change of scenery. In late-January 1906, he signed with the Buffalo Bisons of the Class A Eastern League, a highly regarded circuit just a notch below the majors.¹² In reporting the event, the (Portland) *Oregonian* declared “Bill has pitched great ball ... and when he is right is fast enough for any league. He is not a pitcher who uses a world of speed, but has perfect control and can bend them over.”¹³

On April 30, 1906, Thomas made a successful, albeit shaky, debut as a Buffalo Bison. Taking a six-run lead into the ninth inning against the Baltimore Orioles, he weathered a five-run uprising and hung on for a 9-8 win, allowing 13 base hits and an uncharacteristic five walks in the process. But it was a winning effort nonetheless and with first-game jitters now behind him, Bill was presumably looking forward to his May 5 start in Jersey City.

Between the sets with Baltimore and Jersey City, the Bisons played a three-game series in Providence against the homestanding Grays in which Thomas did not participate. From there, the club’s travel plan was to cover the approximately 185 miles from Providence to Manhattan via a rail-sea transportation route, check into a midtown hotel, and then make the short ferry hop across the Hudson River to play the series opener in Jersey City.

Early on the evening of May 4, 1905, the Buffalo entourage made an uneventful 57-mile railroad trip to New London, Connecticut. There, club members and manager George Stallings boarded the *Richard Peck*, a spacious 300-foot-long steamship and the pride of the New Haven Line for an overnight excursion to New York City via the Long Island Sound and the East River.¹⁴ Assigned to share a stateroom with Bill Thomas was another Bisons newcomer, pitcher Joe Galaski, a fellow Californian and an acquaintance of Thomas’s from the Pacific Coast League. According to some news accounts, Thomas, fearful of becoming seasick during the trip, took the lower berth in the event that a late-night trip outside the cabin became necessary. Other accounts indicate that Thomas was already feeling



Steamer “Richard Peck”

woozy as the steamer left port. By all accounts, however, Thomas asked a ship porter to rouse him as the steamer entered New York harbor so that he might take in the sight of lower Manhattan at sunrise.

When Galaski awoke the following morning, he had the stateroom to himself. Thomas’s berth had been slept in but his cabin-mate was nowhere to be found onboard ship. Galaski, therefore, assumed that Thomas had already gone ashore to do some sightseeing. Curiously, Thomas had left his suitcase behind, so Galaski arranged for its transport to the club’s midtown hotel. But when Thomas did not turn up by late morning, the alarm was sounded. A frantic search by club officials and police found no trace of the missing pitcher at the hotel, onboard the *Richard Peck*, or anywhere on city streets. An examination of the Thomas suitcase uncovered the expected contents but the trousers, shirt, and light coat that had been draped over a stateroom chair were unaccounted for. This soon left those concerned with only a shuddering conclusion: that sometime during the night sea passage, Thomas had gotten dressed, stepped outside his cabin, and somehow went overboard and drowned.

Foul play was not suspected and suicide quickly ruled out. Thomas left behind no suicide note and had not been despondent. To the contrary, the missing man seemed in good spirits the previous evening and was looking forward to his first sojourn in New York City. Thomas’s body was not yet recovered, but death by misadven-

ture was now presumed. Authorities speculated that Thomas had been overcome by seasickness or nausea during the passage and had quietly exited the stateroom to seek relief topside. Perhaps while vomiting over the steamer's low aft guardrail, he had lost his balance or been swept off the deck by the steamer's roll through choppy waters and cast overboard. Once that happened and went unnoticed aboard ship, Thomas's fate was sealed.

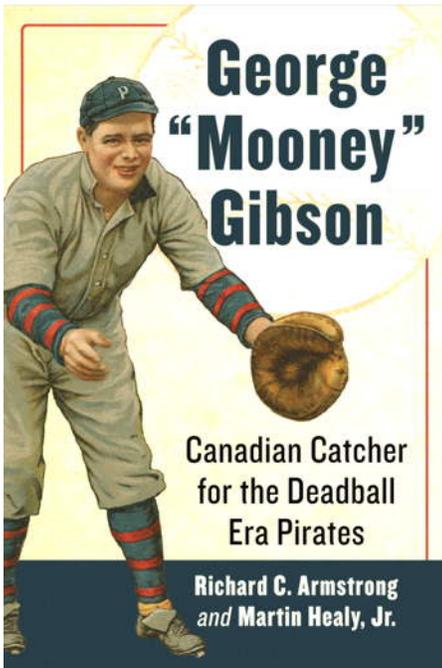
The body of Bill Thomas was never recovered, and within days life resumed its normal course for all except a grieving family in California. The Buffalo Bisons doubtless felt the loss of a quiet, affable, and popular teammate and an expected pitching staff mainstay. But even without Thomas, Buffalo was the class of the Eastern League that season, capturing the circuit flag under the leadership of manager Stallings with an 85-55 (.607) record. By that time, the tragedy of the early season was barely a memory, unmentioned in local reportage celebrating the home club's championship. And so it continues to this day. Well more than a century later, minor league pitching standout Bill Thomas is long forgotten while the precise nature of the events that cost him his life remains a mystery.



Bill Thomas
Buffalo Evening News, May 5, 1906

ENDNOTES

1. Per "William Thomas Meets Sudden Death," *Sacramento Evening Bee*, May 8, 1906: 5.
2. "Baseball Gossip," *Sacramento Evening Bee*, May 9, 1903: 9.
3. Per "Sacramento and Butte Divide Honors," *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 4, 1903: 4.
4. According to "Fandom Random," (Portland) *Oregon Journal*, July, 11, 1903: 19
5. After batting .111 (4-for-36) in 12 games, Ben Thomas was released by Sacramento.
6. Stats have been taken from Baseball-Reference.
7. "Gossip about the Players," *Seattle Times*, May 23, 1905: 11.
8. *Seattle Times*, August 30, 1905: 10
9. Compare untitled article, *Seattle Times*, September 6, 1905: 10 (Thomas resting wrist injury) to "Handsome Skel Was Wild," *Seattle Times*, September 19, 1905: 11 (Thomas laid off "because he was drawing a good salary while the club was running behind" in billpaying).
10. See "Pitcher Thomas Is Released," (Portland) *Oregonian*, October 15, 1905: 17.
11. Per "Gossip of the Diamond," *Oregonian*, October 22, 1905: 17.
12. As reported in the *Los Angeles Herald* and *Oregon Journal*, January 28, 1906: 8. According to Baseball-Reference, 16 of the 21 other members of the 1906 Buffalo Bisons played in the major leagues, while Buffalo manager George Stallings' lengthy resume included field leadership of the 1914 world champion Miracle Boston Braves.
13. "Fresno Is Chosen," *Oregonian*, January 28, 1906: 17.
14. The narrative of the fateful voyage has been drawn from contemporaneous reportage published in the *Buffalo Courier*, *Buffalo Enquirer*, *Buffalo Evening News*, *Buffalo Morning Times*, *Jersey (Jersey City) Journal*, *Pittsburg Press*, *Providence Evening Bulletin*, and *Sacramento Evening Bee*, May 5-8, 1906.



**GEORGE "MOONEY"
GIBSON:
CANADIAN CATCHER
FOR THE DEADBALL
ERA PIRATES**

**By Richard C. Armstrong
and Martin Healy Jr.**

*2020, McFarland
[ISBN: 978-1-4766-7969-3.
251 pp. \$35 USD. Softcover]*

Reviewed by
Mike Lackey
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Was George Gibson a superstar? Richard C. Armstrong and Martin Healy Jr., authors of *George "Mooney" Gibson: Canadian Catcher for the Deadball Era Pirates*, slap that label on him in the first paragraph of their preface. Given his career slash line of .236/.295/.312 and his own acknowledgement to Lawrence Ritter that he "was never a very good hitter," Gibson would

likely demur. Superstar or not, Gibson was a mainstay of good Pittsburgh teams for a decade. He was highly respected by opponents. He was renowned for his defensive skills, brains, and extraordinary durability. Gibson is a player who typifies the Deadball Era.

The authors' stated intention is to recognize a "forgotten" player. That's fair enough, given that Gibson played his last game more than 100 years ago. Even so, Gibson is less forgotten than many noteworthy contemporaries. He has been inducted into no fewer than three halls of fame. And short of Cooperstown, a Ritter interview is about as good a guarantee of immortality as any deadballer could hope for.

Which points to one of the book's recurring distractions. In addition to their repeated insistence on their subject's superstardom, Armstrong and Healy at least four times describe Gibson as "beloved." Sometimes it seems they're trying too hard to convince the reader that this story is worth telling. Gibson doesn't need the help. There's plenty here to justify a full-fledged biography. This is a guy so admired in baseball that after his Pirates defeated the Detroit Tigers in the 1909 World Series, Tigers manager Hughie Jennings accompanied him back to London, Ontario, to share in the celebration in Gibson's hometown. Johnny Evers credited the Pirates, and Gibson in particular, with foiling the Cubs' bid for a fourth straight pen-

nant. For three years, Evers said, the Pirates had studied Chicago's plan of attack and "knew every move to expect."

Armstrong and Healy have done excellent research, scouring more than 50 newspapers as well as other sources. They've come up with three dozen interesting photographs, many from family members or Gibson's hometown newspaper, whose negatives are happily archived at Western University in Ontario. The book sheds light on Gibson's relationships with longtime teammate Honus Wagner and Pirates owner Barney Dreyfuss, and offers telling personal glimpses. The son of immigrant parents, the catcher sprang from a family that took to baseball early: Two uncles were active with one of his hometown's first baseball clubs a decade before George was born. He was a proud, almost stereotypical, Canadian – an avid curler who favored "Maple Leaf Forever" as his walk-up music. Gibson also comes across as a man of considerable wit. His description of a typical day in the offseason is as funny as anything you're likely to read in a baseball biography.

One choice Armstrong and Healy make is to jump directly to the 1909 World Series in Chapter 1. The book might have worked better in straight chronological order, tracing Gibson's development as a player and a leader and building up to 1909, the high point of his career. It's clear he was recognized early as managerial

timber. Both Pittsburgh manager Fred Clarke and later John McGraw with the Giants used Gibson as a player-coach. His subsequent managerial record is good enough to raise a question as to why he didn't get more opportunities.

The book does a good job of contextualizing baseball in Canada and Canadians in baseball in Gibson's time, noting that a disproportionate number of the best Canadian deadballers were catchers. Armstrong and Healy have an explanation: "Canadians live in a harsh Northern climate ... [which] gives a Canadian player a special kind of physical and mental toughness."

Toughness was Gibson's hallmark. The most remarkable aspect of his career was his unique disdain for protective gear. As an amateur he sometimes came home with two black eyes after casting aside his face mask. Even after Roger Bresnahan made shin guards acceptable, Gibson caught more than 1,000 games (and set a record for consecutive games caught) without them. The authors might usefully have expanded on the initial

reaction to shin guards: Cubs manager Frank Chance baited Bresnahan, charging that he wore them "because he is not game enough to stand up to the plate ... for fear of bodily injury," and the first time Bresnahan modeled them in Pittsburgh, the fans laughed.

Gibson experimented occasionally with shin guards and teammates may have encouraged him to use them; when he tried them in spring training in 1912, he got a round of applause from the Pirates' bench. But in 1955, when he was 74 years old, he still maintained that shin guards "made a sissy of the catcher."

And nobody was going to call George Gibson a sissy.

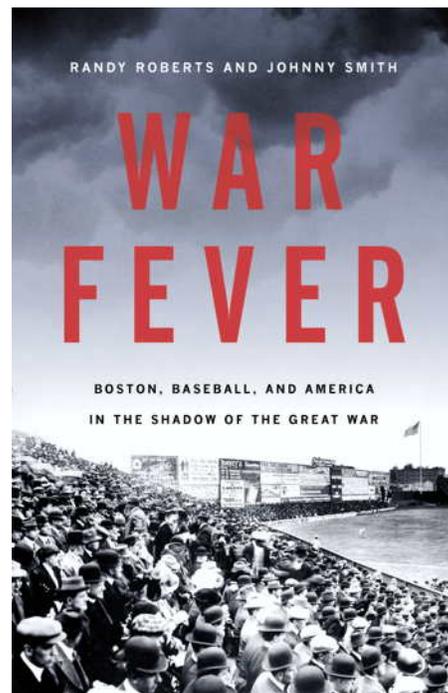
Mike Lackey has been a SABR member since 1985. He is the author of Spitballing: The Baseball Days of Long Bob Ewing which received the Larry Ritter Award in 2014.

Roger Bresnahan actually got up nerve enough to appear behind the bat in several innings without his ridiculous shin-guards.

Pittsburg Press, August 11, 1907

PUBLISHERS ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

As always, the books reviewed in this issue were generously supplied to the newsletter by their publishers. *George "Mooney" Gibson* comes from McFarland and can be ordered by telephone (800-253-2187) or email (info@mcfarlandpub.com). *War Fever* is published by Basic Books and can be obtained from Amazon and other book retailers. Your patronage of these publishers is appreciated.



WAR FEVER: BOSTON, BASEBALL, AND AMERICA IN THE SHADOW OF THE GREAT WAR

By Randy Roberts and Johnny Smith

2020, Basic Books
[ISBN: 978-1541672666. 368 pp. \$30.00 USD. Hardcover]

Reviewed by
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It's July 1918 and manager Ed Barrow's Boston Red Sox are clinging to first place in the American League pennant race. Barrow's problems are many, but chief among them is this: some of his players have responded to the government's "work or fight" edict and have chosen to decamp to factories or naval yards where they will ostensibly contribute to the

war effort but more than likely just continue playing baseball. Other players are simply waiting to be drafted. Furthermore, Barrow's relationship with his star player, the talented but volatile Babe Ruth, is crumbling. There is serious fear among major league club owners that the baseball season could end at a moment's notice.

The United States has been at war in Europe since April 1917 and, more and more, the national pastime has become an afterthought in the minds of the American public. While Red Sox owner and impresario Harry Frazee agonizes over dwindling crowds at Fenway Park, the German-born conductor of the prodigious Boston Symphony Orchestra, Karl Muck, languishes in an internment camp in Georgia, the victim of a vicious campaign by the *Providence Journal* to tar him as an enemy sympathizer. Muck's offense: he had reportedly refused to play the Star-Spangled Banner before a recent concert. Further FBI digging turned up questionably disloyal letters written to his mistress. With very little due process, Muck is transported in the dead of night to a military prison in the Deep South.

Meanwhile, the Great War rages on the Western Front. A son of an elite New England family, Charles Whittlesey, leads what was to become known, somewhat erroneously, as *The Lost Battalion*. A Williams College grad and Harvard Law School alumnus,

Whittlesey had a poet's sensibility and a compulsion to serve. It was inevitable that he would answer his country's call and rise in the officer class.

Randy Roberts' and Johnny Smith's *War Fever: Boston, Baseball, and America in the Shadow of the Great War* attempts to take on these subjects, and more, in a rambling narrative that would seem to be too ambitious to pull off. Not so. If anything, this account leaves the reader begging for more. There are cameos from Artillery Captain Harry Truman, journalist Damon Runyon, and a 16-year-old Walt Disney. Plus, a carrier pigeon by the name of Cher Ami.

The authors introduce Muck and Whittlesey with biographical detail that draws the reader into their worlds just enough to set up the events that ensue. In Muck's case, the steady buildup of war hysteria — irrational paranoia, inflamed fear, and hatred of all things German, including anyone with a Germanic surname — created an environment in which merely playing music by Beethoven or Wagner fostered suspicion. Henry Higginson, Muck's patron and employer, stood by him as long as he dared before finally succumbing to pressure in a futile attempt to save his orchestra.

Roberts and Smith devote a good deal of their book to Babe Ruth, his rise from an orphanage to the brink of stardom at the age of 19. *War Fever* lacks a bibliography but it is well

footnoted and from what I can tell the authors have relied on just about all the popular Ruth source material. That said, the reader will find few new nuggets of Ruthiana here. There is no surprise in learning that Babe Ruth changed the way baseball was played. The book does make an effort to pinpoint the exact moment it changed: from May to June 1918, when the Babe began hitting homers in bunches and the fans took notice. And the authors emphasize that Ed Barrow spent most of the spring of that year resisting Harry Hooper's insistence that Ruth should be inserted in the Red Sox everyday lineup. The boss valued Babe as a pitcher too much to risk him in the outfield or first base. Barrow finally relented, but only when he realized that the war had deprived him of most of his good hitters.

All this drama — the war, the paranoia, the baseball season on the brink — was being played out in the midst of a slowly enveloping and little understood pandemic soon to be known as the Spanish Influenza. Initial efforts to contain the spread were inadequate; inevitably, the disease thrived on the crowded conditions in army barracks and troop ships. Descriptions of the illness in Boston and eventually around the country and around the world will be depressingly familiar to today's readers. Among notables, the book suggests that Babe Ruth suffered bouts of the flu on

perhaps two separate occasions, and Harry Frazee himself survived his own battle with the illness.

Finally, the story of Whittlesey and the Lost Battalion is one of tragic and heartbreaking legend. Charles Whittlesey re-

turned home a reluctant hero, speaking only of the valor of his men and never mentioning his own Medal of Honor. One of his final acts was attending the dedication at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, where he may have wondered if the

anonymous doughboy was one of his own fallen men. On the last page of *War Fever* Roberts and Smith deliver the ultimate valediction. I won't spoil it.

Art Mugalian is a SABR member from Chicago now living in Minneapolis. He is retired.

DEADBALL ERA EVENTS AS RECALLED BY CLARK GRIFFITH

submitted by **Tom Simon**

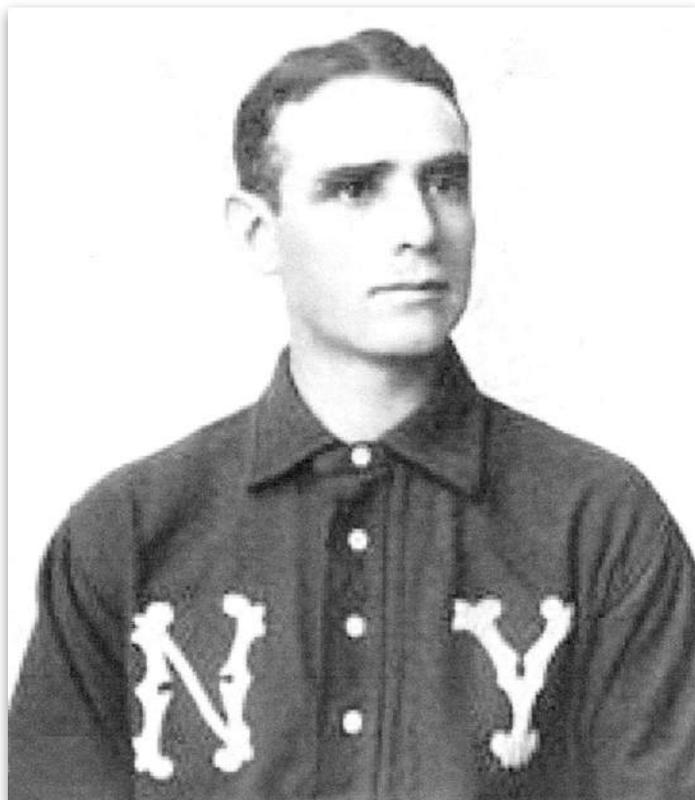
[Editor's Note: While working on a G.H Fleming-style book about the 1924 Washington Senators during the first two months of the pandemic, Tom Simon came across vintage reminiscences of club boss Clark Griffith about Deadball Era events. Tom, the founder of our committee, cannot vouch for the historical accuracy of Griffith's memories but thought that same would be of interest to newsletter readers. And we do, too. Our thanks to Tom for passing these fascinating news items along. Bill Lamb, Editor.]

ABOUT THE BIRTH OF THE SQUEEZE PLAY, WASHINGTON TIMES, FEBRUARY 7, 1924

Quite the most interesting sidelight of the American League schedule meeting in Boston Tuesday was the discovery of the birth of the well-known squeeze play. Jack Chesbro and Willie Keeler were the discoverers and the thing was done in the spur of the moment in an extra-inning game. Griffith was managing the Yanks and coaching at third base where Chesbro was parked. Jack was tired and willing to call it a day. "I'm going home on this one and make Keeler bunt." And he did. He cut loose with the wind up and yelled at Keeler. Willie got the idea without taking his eye off the ball and dropped down a bunt while Chesbro scored. "That was the first squeeze play," explains Griffith, "and we pulled it a month after that, before the gang got wise to how effective it was. Then, of course, it was worked to death."

ABOUT THE ORIGIN OF THE SPITBALL, WASHINGTON EVENING STAR, FEBRUARY 15, 1924

The origin of the spitter is veiled but the distinction of perfecting it belongs to Chesbro, accord-



NY Highlanders player-manager Clark Griffith

ing to Griffith. "Chesbro perfected the spitball while pitching for me," Griff reminisced the other day, "and he did it under odd circumstances – because he was forced to, in fact. Although he had been a very successful pitcher with Pittsburgh of the National League, the delivery was unknown to him when he came to the New York club in 1904. In New Orleans that spring we met up with the White Sox who had landed, in Elmer Stricklett, a pitcher from the coast who was tinkering with a new-fangled delivery. It was the spitball, but Stricklett, who was a slightly built chap of little power, was unable to accomplish much with it, and as I recall it he was left in New Orleans by the Sox when they quit town. Strick-

lett let Chesbro in on the delivery while they were practicing on the old New Orleans grounds.

Jack experimented with it, and did a lot of talking about it, but he never made any attempt to use it in a game until the first Western trip of the Yankees that season. We opened in Cleveland, with Chesbro in the box. He was getting a fine lacing, and in the hope of ending the bombardment, he told his batterymate, Jim McGuire, that he was going to try to use the spitball. McGuire fixed up a sign for it, and the result caused a furor in the stands. He started off by fanning Lajoie and two of his mates. He made the Cleveland players, including the Big Frenchman, look so amateurish in their efforts to connect that the crowd razzed Lajoie with such questions as, 'Where were you last night, Larry?'

Chesbro's games in Chicago and St. Louis were repetitions of that in Cleveland, they just couldn't hit him, that's all. Thereafter, Jack used the spitball, mixed it up with a fastball almost exclusively. He won 14 straight games before he was stopped, and as everyone knows set a new high mark for total victories [41] that year."

ON THE LOSS OF THE 1904 PENNANT, WASHINGTON EVENING STAR, FEBRUARY 15, 1924

Chesbro is generally blamed for New York being nosed out by Boston that [1904] season, but the charge is not justified according to Griffith. Catcher [Red] Kleinow was the real culprit. "We were having a nip and tuck battle with Boston and came to the final series of the season just half a game behind them with five games to play, a single contest on Friday and doubleheaders on Saturday and Sunday (*sic*), all scheduled to be played in New York. Chesbro won the first game handily putting us in the lead by half a game and making necessary only two victories in the four games remaining for us to cop. It seems that Frank Farrell, then the owner of the New York club, did not figure us for a pennant contender in the advance dope and had leased the old Hilltop grounds at 168th Street to Columbia University for a football game that Saturday, which made it necessary to switch the first of the two remaining doubleheaders to Boston.



Staff Ace Jack Chesbro

Having gotten the jump on Boston in the first game of the final and deciding series, I ordered Chesbro to stay in New York and rest up for work again Monday in case we failed to clinch the flag in Boston. But when we went to the station to take the train to Boston at 11:30 that Friday night, there was Chesbro with his handbag, ready to go. He begged to be allowed to make the trip to Boston, explaining that friends in his native state of Massachusetts had planned a celebration at the park in his honor, including the presentation of some gifts, and I yielded.

The next day we found the old Huntingdon Ave. grounds literally jammed with fans. The attendance numbered 28,000, a huge throng in those days. Jack Powell was slated to pitch for us, and had started to warm up, when Chesbro sought me out and asked that he be used. Willie Keeler,

Kid Elberfeld, Jimmy Williams, and some of the other boys, including Powell himself, joined Chesbro in urging that he be used, and, as Jack was a regular horse for work, having often come back successfully with little or no rest, I yielded to Chesbro's pleading that he be allowed to 'settle the race' that day.

Chesbro got along fine for about four innings, then a couple of scratch hits through Williams started Boston on a rampage and they beat us 12 to 6. [Note from Tom: The score was actually 13-2.] On top of that Cy Young beat Powell in the second game, 1 to 0, which put it up to us to grab the last two games in New York Monday in order to get the flag.

In the first game of the doubleheader that day, with Chesbro in the box for us, we went into the

ninth inning tied at 2-all. Lou Criger, I think it was, was roosting on third base and Freddy Parent was at bat, with two strikes on him as a result of having missed a couple of spitters. Jack Kleinow signed for another of Chesbro's favorite deceivers and settled on his haunches. Chesbro let 'er go. His spitball always broke sharply downward, but this particular one failed to do so and the ball sailed past Kleinow to the stands. With it went the game and the championship. The ball was not really a wild pitch. It passed over the plate not more than chin-high to Parent, and an alert catcher would have at least knocked it down, if not caught it. It was Kleinow, not Chesbro, who muffed the pennant.

GUY ZINN: DEADBALL ERA LANDMARKS, RELIGIOUS CONTROVERSY, AND AN EXPENSIVE BASEBALL CARD

by Bill Lamb

Handicapped by attitude and injury problems, Deadball Era outfielder Guy Zinn never achieved the success predicted for him. Nevertheless, his time in the game was not without modest distinction. On Opening Day 1912, New York Highlander Zinn became the first major league player to enter the batter's box; the first to reach base; and the first to score a run in just-constructed Fenway Park. Later that season, he became one of only 11 players in modern big leagues history to steal home twice in the same game. Thereafter as a Baltimore Terrapin in 1914, Zinn scored the first run ever tallied in the renegade Federal League.

Another distinction once ascribed to Zinn proved illusory. He was long recognized as the only Jew ever to play in the Federal League – until it was discovered that Zinn was not Jewish. This revelation, in turn, vastly deflated the six-figure price tag attached to a rare 1914 Guy Zinn baseball card, earlier the subject of a nasty 2016 dispute between memorabilia collectors that drew the attention of both the *New York Times* and *The Times of Is-*

rael. As the religion/baseball card controversy swirled, its focal point was safely in his grave, Zinn having died in October 1949. The story of Guy Zinn's life and the posthumous controversy that arose over his religion and the effect that it had on the value of his baseball card follows.

THE EARLY YEARS

Guy Zinn was born on February 13, 1887 in Holbrook, an isolated hamlet located about 40 miles southwest of Clarksburg, West Virginia. He was the second of eight children born to carpenter Noah Zinn (1859-1947) and his wife, the former Elizabeth Bee (1861-1932). Although the surname Zinn was German, most of Guy's forbears were Seventh Day Baptists of English and Welsh stock who began arriving in the Virginias in the late-1740s. Shortly after Guy's birth, the family relocated to Clarksburg, a bustling county seat with an active baseball scene. There, he attended school through the sixth grade before entering the local workforce. Like his father and brothers, Guy would spend his non-baseball working life in the building trades, usually as a lather.

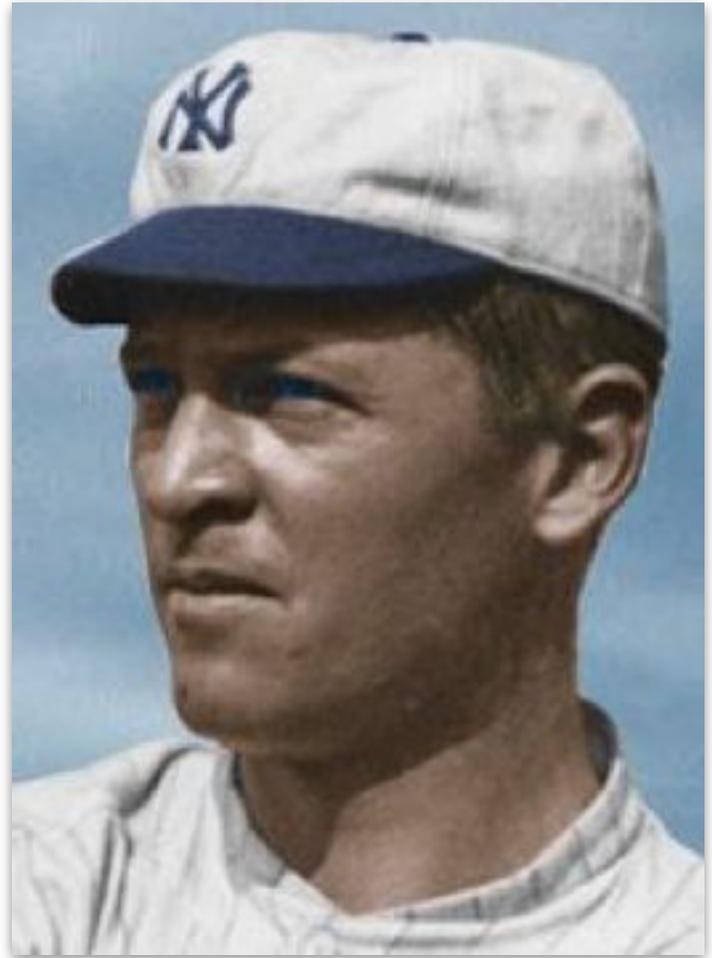
As a youngster, Guy devoted leisure time to playing ball for sandlot clubs, often with his older brother Romeo. A good-sized teenager (later officially listed at 5-foot-10½, 170 pounds, but probably a bit larger), the left-handed batting, righty

thrower first came to press attention in 1906 as an outfielder-pitcher for Clarksburg's entry in the area amateur league. Zinn got his first taste of major league pitching that August when Clarksburg dropped a 5-0 exhibition game decision to the visiting Cincinnati Reds, going 1-for-4 against righthander Charley Hall. Zinn made his professional debut the following spring, signing with the Clarksburg club in the Class D Western Pennsylvania League. He made a favorable impression as an outfielder in the early going but was released after suffering a throwing arm injury. While his arm recovered, Zinn played summer ball for the semipro Clarksburg Americans.

In spring 1908, Guy regained a roster spot with the local minor league club, now called the Clarksburg Drummers and a member of the newly-organized Class D Pennsylvania-West Virginia League. But again his tenure was short-lived, player-manager Ferd Drumm "having handed him the scarlet slip" in mid-May. By now, Zinn was a married man, having taken Ethel Carter as his bride in December 1907. In time, the couple had two children, Buster (Guy A., born 1909) and Jean (1910) whom Guy supported by working off-season lather jobs.

In 1909, the now-22-year-old Zinn finally got a firm foothold on the professional baseball ladder with the Grafton (West Virginia) club in the P-WV League. He saw regular playing time in the outfield and batted a solid .294 in 88 games. He also stole 19 bases. The hometown newspaper of a league rival reported that Zinn, "besides being a star in left field, was great [with] the bat and a good baserunner. His throw from left field to the plate was also a much admired feat." A national journal concurred, informing readers that Zinn has "developed into a great batter and a fine baserunner."

In spring 1910, Zinn jumped up to Class A ball, acquired by the Memphis Turtles of the Southern Association for the standard \$300 draft price. But he found SA pitching much harder to hit, posting a disappointing .232 batting average in 43 games with Memphis. Demoted to the Macon (Georgia) Peaches of the Class C South Atlantic League, Zinn again underperformed with the bat, hitting



Guy Zinn

only .229 in 71 games. Still, Toledo Mud Hens president Bill Armour had taken a fancy to Zinn and acquired him for his Class A American Association ball club in August. Zinn raised his batting average to .245 in 19 games with Toledo, but after the season a dissatisfied Armour sold his contract to the Altoona (Pennsylvania) Rams of the Class B Tri-State League.

ZINN'S FIRST TURN AS A MAJOR LEAGUER

Guy got his career back on track in Altoona. He batted a robust .317, with 32 extra-base hits in 106 games played for the Rams. In mid-August, Zinn was purchased for a reported \$1,000 by the middle-of-the-pack New York Highlanders of the American League. Initially, the plan was for him to complete the Tri-State League season with Altoona before reporting. But soon injuries left the Highlanders short of outfielders, so Zinn was summoned to New York in early September. He made his major league debut on September 11,

going 1-for-4 (a single) against future Hall of Famer Chief Bender in a 12-5 loss to the Philadelphia A's. Thereafter, Zinn was not given much further look by recently-installed playing manager Hal Chase, appearing in only nine game (six starts) total, and failing to impress with a meek .148 (4-for-27) batting average. Still, New York retained hope that the still-promising prospect would blossom and placed him on the club's reserved list for the 1912 season.

With a good-hitting outfield (Birdie Cree, .327; Harry Wolter, .304; Bert Daniels, .286) slated for encore duty, competition for the remaining Highlanders outfielder spot was keen the following spring. Ex-Philadelphia Phillies slugger Fred Osborn was Zinn's principal competition for the coveted fourth outfielder spot. New York sportswriter Bill Macbeth had no doubt regarding who his choice would be. In a syndicated column, Macbeth wrote "Zinn is a far better outfield proposition [than Osborn]. While not as strong a hitter, he is a finished fielder, a fine thrower and a fast man on the base paths." A strong training camp performance by Zinn brought new Highlanders manager Harry Wolverton to the same conclusion, and Guy made the club.

Another round of outfield injuries placed Zinn in the Opening Day lineup. On April 20, 1912, the Boston Red Sox inaugurated a brand new ball park by hosting the New York Highlanders. The first player to set foot in the Fenway Park batter's box was New York left fielder Guy Zinn. Drawing a walk off Sox right-hander Buck O'Brien, Zinn then became the ball park's first baserunner. And when later driven home by a Roy Hartzell single, Zinn scored the grounds' first run. In the century-plus that has now elapsed, the number of major league ballplayers who have entered the batter's box or reached base or scored a run at venerable Fenway Park is near countless. But the first player ever to accomplish these feats will forever be Guy Zinn. Unhappily for Zinn, he did not reach base again, going 0-for-5 in the Highlanders 7-6, 11-inning defeat.

Better days, however, were on the horizon for our subject. With Cree and Wolter sidelined, Zinn remained in the lineup, and he quickly began to hit.

And often in the clutch. Three times in the early going, base-hits by Guy in the ninth inning or later produced New York victories. Zinn also supplied the club with some much-needed power (31 extra-base hits) through mid-season. During an August 15 win over the Detroit, Zinn stole home twice off Tigers right-hander Jean Dubuc. In so doing, he became one of only 11 players in modern (since 1901) major leagues history to steal home twice in the same game.

To the sporting press and American League fans, the newcomer seemed on his way to stardom, "one of the finds of the year" in the estimation of a Washington newspaper. A Cleveland newspaper concurred, declaring "Zinn gives promise of being a great hitter. He hits the ball hard and what is more, does his hitting in the pinches." The chorus of approval even reached the sticks, a backwater Kansas weekly calling Zinn "one of the most promising players possessed by any club in the country." But uncorrected deficiencies undermined the esteem of manager Wolverton. Despite being fleet of foot and a capable fly ball catcher, Zinn was a substandard (.893 FA) defensive outfielder, plagued by a penchant for mishandling balls hit to him on the ground. And the daring-do of August 15 notwithstanding, Zinn had not developed into an effective base-stealer, being thrown out almost 40 percent of the time on theft attempts. Undisclosed to outsiders but worst of all, Zinn proved a dissention-causing actor in the clubhouse. A card-playing companion of star first baseman and suspected game-fixer Hal Chase and a subversive member of a bad ball club headed for a last-place (50-102, .329) finish, Zinn rapidly fell into disfavor with Wolverton. An August batting slump then provided the Highlanders manager the cover needed to rid himself of this troublesome rookie.

Although Zinn's offensive stats (6/55/.262 in 106 games) approximated the full-season batting averages of outfield teammates Roy Hartzell (1/38/.272) and Bert Daniels (2/41/.274) with considerably more power, Zinn was dispatched to the Rochester Hustlers of the Class AA International League in late August. Stunned and angry, Zinn refused to accept the demotion and declined to report, saying that he "would rather

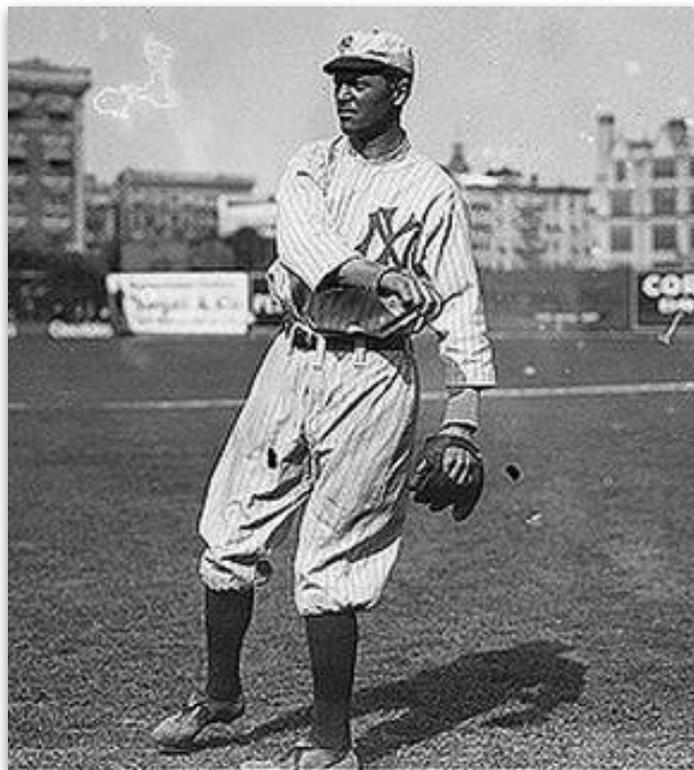
retire than return to the minors.” As a result, New York was obliged to send recently-acquired outfielder Fred (Klondike) Smith to Rochester in his stead. Hustlers’ boss John Ganzel, meanwhile, placed the recalcitrant Zinn on the Rochester suspended list where he spent the remainder of the 1912 season.

A SECOND CHANCE

After several months back in the workaday world, Zinn “reconsidered his determination to give up baseball and will report to the Hustlers next spring,” *Sporting Life* advised readers. But there was apparently a catch. Zinn would report to Rochester spring camp in 1913 – but only if reimbursed the month-plus wages that he had forfeited while on the club’s suspended list the previous season, an arrangement apparently agreed to by Hustlers boss Ganzel. Zinn responded to this largesse by sowing strife on the club, his late-night fist fight with first baseman Butch Schmidt bringing rumors of team dissention into the open. Still, Zinn put up solid numbers for Rochester. In 110 games, he batted .287 with 28 extra-base hits and earned himself another major leagues shot. In mid-August, Zinn’s contract was purchased by the National League Boston Braves.

Guy made a splash on reentry into the big time. In his first game for Boston, he went 3-for-5 with a triple, handled seven chances in centerfield flawlessly, and sparked his new club to a 7-6 victory over St. Louis. The “all around clever playing of Guy Zinn stood out most prominently,” wrote Boston scribe William B. Grimes. Although that kind of pace could not be maintained, Zinn played well for Boston. In 36 late-season contests for a weak-hitting fifth-place (69-82, .457) Braves club, Zinn batted .297, with 11 extra-base hits and 15 RBIs. He also played a respectable (.948 FA) centerfield. Yet as soon as the season was over, he was remanded to Rochester.

Evidently unaware of the turmoil that Zinn caused in various clubhouses, his release was a head-scratcher to the local press. Nor was Boston management very forthcoming about the reasons behind Zinn’s termination. “Zinn came to the Braves from the Rochester club and in a few games shone brilliantly but, in the judgment of the Braves’



Guy Zinn

management, he was lacking in the qualities required for the 1914 season,” observed an unidentified *Boston Herald* sportswriter, leaving the vague club rationale for Zinn’s departure unexplained. A.H. Mitchell, *Sporting Life*’s Boston correspondent, openly expressed his puzzlement at the jettisoning of Zinn and first baseman Hap Myers, but hinted at something besides game performance being the cause of the moves: “Both are good men, almost first class and good judges here wondered that [Boston manager George] Stallings disposed of them. Doubtless there are reasons that do not appear on the surface. ... Zinn looked very good to Boston fans. ... He certainly looked better than some of the outfielders that Stallings retained. But as I said, there may be something under the surface in Zinn’s case. Doubtless, Stallings had good reason to send him back to Rochester.”

Perhaps understandably, Rochester did not want Zinn back, his strong performance for the 1913 Hustlers notwithstanding. Claiming to be overstocked with outfielders, Rochester promptly put Zinn up for sale. And in December the Louisville Colonels of the American Association grabbed him. Now, W.M. Leahy was the *Sporting Life* correspondent whose commentary left unsaid why

Rochester had let the productive outfielder go: "Guy Zinn has been sold again, this time to the Louisville club of the American Association. Zinn is a good ballplayer and a fairly good hitter, but as the local management had no use for him they decided to let him go. A change of scenery and climate may do him good." But Zinn had ideas of his own and would not be heading for Louisville.

A SOJOURN IN THE FEDERAL LEAGUE

Trouble for baseball's establishment was in the offing during the winter of 1913-1914. After having played a season as an unaffiliated minor league circuit concentrated in the Midwest, the Federal League placed franchises in large Eastern venues like Brooklyn, Baltimore, and Buffalo and declared itself a major league. Disregarding Organized Baseball's reserve clause, the Feds then began raiding National and American League rosters for playing talent. One of the first big leaguers signed by the Federal League was none other than Guy Zinn, inked to a contract by the fledgling Baltimore Terrapins. On April 13, 1914, municipal dignitaries and a paid crowd of 27,692 jammed Terrapins Field to witness Baltimore and Buffalo do battle in the inaugural game played by the Federal League as a major. With the game scoreless in the bottom of the fourth, Zinn led off by slashing a double to right off Buffeds right-hander Earl Moore. One out later, a Harry Swacina double to left drove in Zinn with the first run ever recorded in the third-major Federal League. The Terrapins eventually went on to win the game, 3-2, with local sportswriter Shear Matthews naming Zinn one of the game's stars.

As the campaign approached the half-way mark, Zinn had established himself as Baltimore's everyday centerfielder, playing competent outfield defense and posting respectable batting numbers: .280 BA, with 19 extra-base hits and 25 RBIs. Then, calamity struck. During a Sunday July 12 exhibition game against a Washington DC semipro team, Zinn broke his left ankle sliding into third base. The injury was a severe one, and put him out for the rest of the season. And Guy Zinn would never be the same player thereafter.

When he returned to the Terrapins the following spring, it was obvious that Zinn's injury had not

fully healed. His "ankle is not quite right," observed sportswriter Matthews. "He limps while running but manages to get about." To accommodate Zinn's reduced outfield range, he was shifted to left field for the coming season. As it turned out, the year proved an unhappy one for both Zinn and the Baltimore Terrapins. Appearing in 102 games, Guy's batting average fell off slightly to .269, with modest power (26 extra-base hits and 43 RBIs) and only two stolen bases. He was also a defensive liability. The Terrapins fared worse, spending the season in the FL nether regions.

Late in the season that ended in a dismal last place (47-107, .305) finish, the Baltimore brain trust began paring veteran players from the club roster. With two weeks left in the campaign, Zinn was unconditionally released, but without his final paycheck. That winter, he emulated Chief Bender and other similarly aggrieved Terrapins and sued club management for unpaid salary. Shortly thereafter, the financially strapped Federal League went out of business, bringing the five-season major league career of Guy Zinn to a close. In 314 American/National/Federal League games, he posted a Deadball Era-respectable .269 batting average, with 89 extra-base hits, 136 runs scored, and 139 RBIs. But his defensive play was mediocre at best, with a career .927 fielding average divided fairly equally across the three outfield positions.

PLAYING OUT THE STRING AND POST-BASEBALL LIFE

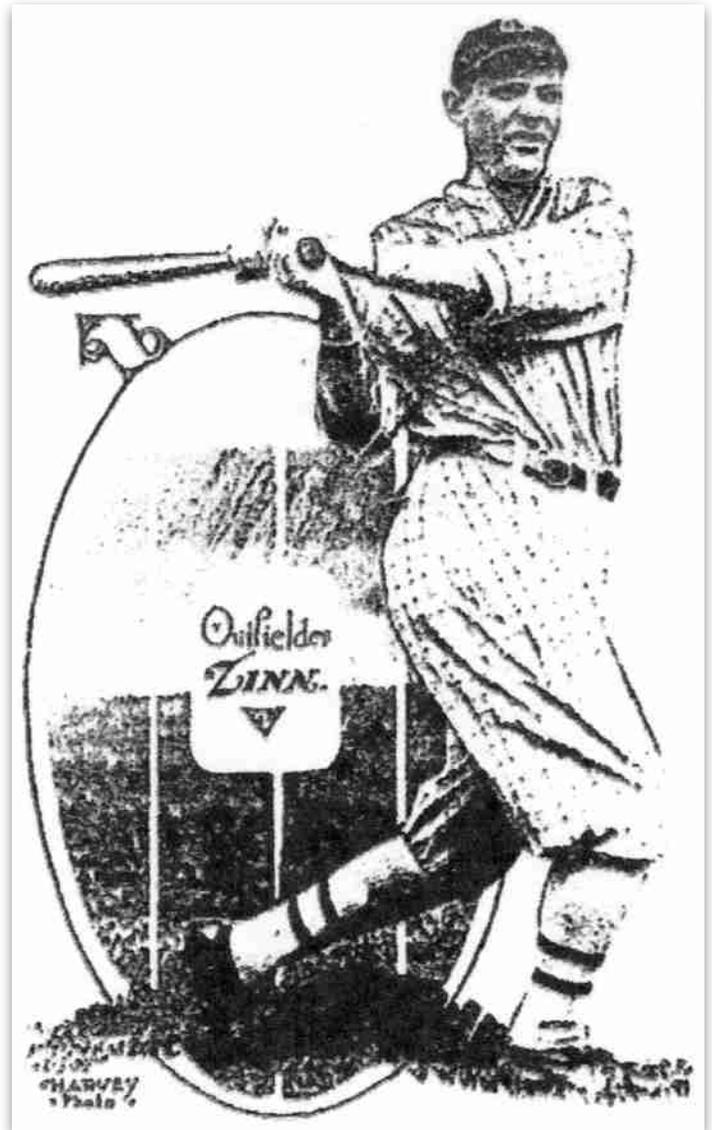
As with other players who jumped to the Federal League in disregard of the reserve clause in their contracts, the rights to Zinn reverted to the Louisville Colonels. But he did not remain club property long, being sold to the Scranton (Pennsylvania) Miners of the Class B New York State League before the 1916 season began. Regarded as "one of the best outfielders" in the NYS League, he was retrieved by Louisville but failed to impress (.221 BA in 21 games) in a brief stint with the Colonels. A month later, Zinn was shipped to New Orleans for an audition with the Southern Association Pelicans. But after going 5-for-26, he was returned to Louisville. By mid-August, Zinn was back in the

New York State League, this time as a member of the Wilkes-Barre (Pennsylvania) Barons where he finished the season with a .260 batting average for Scranton/Wilkes-Barre, combined. Over the ensuing winter, Louisville, which still held the rights to Zinn, sold his contract to the Bridgeport (Connecticut) Americans of the Class B Eastern League. Used in only 63 games, he batted .263 the following season.

Although no longer a major league-caliber player, the manpower drain attending American involvement in World War I elevated Zinn back up to the Class AA International League in 1918. He lasted until mid-July with the Newark Bears, released after being arrested for assaulting a heckling game spectator in Baltimore. He then played a handful of games for the IL Jersey City Skeeters. In 70 games combined, he batted an inoffensive .218. Zinn concluded his professional career with four seasons in the Class B Michigan-Ontario League, posting career-high marks in batting average (.324) and slugging (.499) for the Hamilton (Ontario) Tigers in 1919. The following season, he hit .307, with 33 extra-base hits. After an unsuccessful bid for the vacated team manager's post, Guy returned to Hamilton in 1921 and was batting .268 in 51 games when traded to a league rival, the Saginaw (Michigan) Aces in early July. A crippling foot injury, however, prevented Zinn from playing any further that year.

Zinn began the 1922 season with yet another MION League club, the Brantford (Ontario) Brants, but was traded to the league-leading Bay City (Michigan) Wolves in late-May. He managed at least one appearance in Bay City livery, but "bad legs that refused to respond to treatment" soon militated his release. In 20 games combined between the two clubs, he batted .298. The last discovered report pertaining to the playing career of Guy Zinn placed him with a semipro club in Morenci, Michigan. Thereafter, he receded into the anonymity of private life.

By the time that Zinn left baseball, his life was much altered from when he had started playing professionally some 16 years earlier. Although shrouded by the passage of time, it appears that he and his wife had separated by 1918, as Guy was



Guy Zinn
New Orleans Item, August 7, 1916

then a resident of Baltimore while Ethel Zinn and children remained in West Virginia. Two years later, the census listed Ethel, with pre-teen children Guy A. and Jean, as members of her father's household, and she and Guy evidently divorced soon afterwards.

Not long after he left the game, Guy relocated to Poughkeepsie, New York, a small city along the Hudson River about 60 miles north of Manhattan. There, he lived and worked quietly as a lather and plasterer for the next quarter-century. The 1928 Poughkeepsie city directory registered Guy and a second wife named Verna (about whom nothing was discovered) as local residents. Verna disap-

peared from available records thereafter, and the 1940 US Census listed Guy Zinn as a widower. In 1949, he was diagnosed with terminal lung cancer and went back home to West Virginia for his final days. On October 6, 1949, Guy Zinn died at the home of his brother and boyhood teammate Romeo in Clarksburg suburb of Nutter Fort. He was 62. Following funeral services, his remains were interred in the Zinn family plot in Greenlawn Cemetery, Clarksburg.

RELIGION AND THE 1914 ZINN BASEBALL CARD

Some years after the death of Guy Zinn, baseball historians began efforts to track him down. By 1965, however, the only survivor of his immediate family was daughter Jean Zinn Talley. She had been raised by her mother in the household of grandfather Carter, left home to get married at age 14, and ended up living in Louisiana. She had little contact with her father and mistakenly thought that he had died in 1948. Jean could provide little information about her father off the top of her head when located by baseball researchers, but promised to make inquiries. Subsequently, she returned a completed player questionnaire that listed Guy Zinn's ancestry as "German-Jew." With the Zinn clan having Protestant roots that went back centuries, what possessed Jean to list her father as Jewish is a mystery. But that was all it took to stoke interest in this long ignored Dead-ball Era mediocrity.

With his daughter's designation accepted uncritically, Guy Zinn, whose religious beliefs had never been mentioned during his playing days, entered the pantheon of Jewish major league baseball players. Baseball authors focusing on Jews in baseball incorporated Zinn into their work. Even Jewish historical societies embraced him. This, in turn, dramatically affected the value of a 1914 Guy Zinn Baltimore News schedule-back baseball card. Already a rare piece of baseball memorabilia, Zinn's now-presumed Jewishness skyrocketed the card's market value. In 2010, a collector named Dan McKee placed a \$250,000 value on his Zinn card. Six years later, McKee put the card up for sale, reducing the asking price to a mere \$125,000. Sale negotiations promptly ensued with Jeff Aeder, a well-heeled collector of baseball



1914 Schedule Back Card

cards of Jewish players. According to Aeder, the key to the card's value was Zinn's religion. "If Zinn was not a Jewish player, this card is probably a \$10,000 card," he told the *New York Times*.

Aeder's initial offer was a lowball \$10,000 that immediately antagonized McKee. Sale negotiations then turned acrimonious following a poor rating given the card's condition by Sportscard Guaranty Company. In the end, the sale foundered and McKee kept the card. But press attention given the aborted card deal extended all the way to Israel. The Zinn card dispute also engaged the interest of Bob Wechsler, an expert on Jewish baseball cards who promptly initiated his own inquiry into the matter. From the outset, Wechsler was struck by the fact that a Zinn family member-historian seemed perplexed by the claim that distant cousin Guy Zinn was Jewish, as the Zinns were a devoutly Christian family. He then

discovered that a genealogist named Elaine Hirschberg had done extensive research on the Zinn clan, tracing them back to immigrant Seventh Day Baptists who had settled in the Virginias in the 1740s. The clincher was the revelation that author and encyclopedia designation of Guy Zinn as Jewish rested entirely upon the posthumous player questionnaire completed by ill-informed daughter Jean Zinn Talley. No independent or corroborative research of Zinn's religious ties had been undertaken. That was enough for the Jewish Baseball Museum. Guy Zinn was struck from the rolls.

Stripped of its religious cachet, the Zinn baseball card plummeted in value. Card authority Jeff Katz advises that an older catalog listed a \$8,800 quote on the Zinn, and estimates that, given the card's rarity and the passage of time since then, the value of the Zinn card probably approximates the \$10,000 assigned to it by Jeff Aeder if Zinn was not a Jewish player. While \$10,000 is hardly a trifling sum to the non-collector, it represents a

more than 90 percent drop in the \$125,000 price tag that Dan McKee placed on the card and that Jeff Aeder was seemingly prepared to pay for it (if ultimately necessary) in 2016.

From the Pioneer Era (Lipman Pike) through the 1930s (Hank Greenberg and others), the arrival on scene of a relatively rare major league ballplayer who was Jewish was invariably noted in the press. Thus, the absence of contemporaneous reportage on Guy Zinn's purported Jewishness should have placed baseball authors and encyclopedists on their guard. But it did not. Nor did the 1965 burial of brother Romeo Zinn in Seventh Day Baptist Cemetery in Lost Creek, West Virginia. As a result, for several decades our subject was accorded a distinction that was spurious. Not that it much concerned the man himself. Guy Zinn remained long dead throughout the entire kerfuffle.

A fully annotated version of this article should be posted on the BioProject website shortly.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

The newsletter invites readers to inform us of questions, concerns, disagreement, or feedback of any sort to material published in *The Inside Game*. Below is a letter received this July from DEC member and newsletter book review contributor Mark Sternman. The subject is the comparison of Jake Daubert to other Deadball Era first basemen in John McMurray's most recent column. Mark wrote:

In his delightful profile of two-time batting champion Jake Daubert, Deadball Era Committee Chairman John McMurray posits: "Even if Fred Tenney ... was Daubert's equal in the field, there is no doubt that Daubert was the superior all-around player. And for all of Frank Chance's fame, recognition, and leadership abilities, few would contest that Daubert was superior to Chance both at bat and in the field."

Having profiled Tenney for the SABR BioProject, I naturally doubted these claims. In Wins Above Replacement (WAR), Baseball-Reference has Chance at 45.8, Tenney at 43.9, and Daubert at 39.1. JAWS, the Jaffe WAR score

system that takes peak performance into account, nevertheless ranks the trio in the same order, putting Chance 36th, Tenney, 45th, and Daubert 57th among the greatest first basemen ever. *The New Bill James Historical Baseball Abstract* has Chance 25th, Daubert 61st, and Tenney 70th. James adds a dig at Daubert for knocking "in only 31 runs per 100 hits throughout his career, a dismal ratio."

James puts Ed Konetchy, unmentioned by McMurray, at 48th, above both Daubert and Tenney. Konetchy's WAR of 46.4 leads this quartet, and JAWS has Konetchy at 41st, below Chance but above Tenney and Daubert. SABR's own Deadball Stars of the National League has an all-star team with Chance at first.

While disagreeing with McMurray's assertion, I thank him for making it and the newsletter for publishing it. The Deadball Era Hot Stove League should forever rage, and McMurray certainly added fuel to the fire.

Mark S. Sternman
Somerville, MA

GAMES AND BIOPROJECT

Recent GAMES Project entries of interest to Deadballers range from an account of an April 1907 game in which Johnny Bates hit for the cycle by Mike Huber to Pete Alexander's return from WWI game in May 1919 by Jan Finkel. Other Deadball Era game accounts have been contributed by Stew Thornley, Thomas E. Merrick, Rob Nee, Brian Frank, and Sharon Hamilton. Meanwhile, new Deadball Figures profiled by the BioProject include Gus Getz, Claude Gouzie, Bill Cooney, Maury Uhler, Jack O'Connor, John Shevlin, Jeff McCleskey, Pop-Boy Smith, Poll Perritt, Ed Ashenbach, Bill Lattimore, Wayne "Rasty" Wright, and Grant "Home Run" Johnson. Please check these out if you have not already done so.

THE CENTURY COMMITTEE

The newly-created Century Committee seeks to commemorate significant milestones in the game's history. Although the 100th anniversary of important events is the committee's focal point, other noteworthy events from, say, 75 or 125 years ago or other landmark year will also be recognized by the Century Committee. Recently, the committee debuted with an entertaining and informative Zoom panel discussion on the 100th anniversary of the fatal beaming of Cleveland shortstop Ray Chapman by Yankees pitcher Carl Mays. The discussion was hosted by committee chair Sharon Hamilton (a DEC member) and provided the insight of experts Mike Sowell, Don Jensen, and Kevin Trusty, all DEC members, as well. If you missed it, the Ray Chapman presentation can still be viewed via the SABR website and is well worth a look. Although the time frame of our committee (1901-1919) is not a natural fit, DEC members with ideas about anniversaries, Deadball-related or not, that might be worthy of Century Committee recognition are cordially invited to contact Century Committee chair Sharon Hamilton (livesliterary@gmail.com) or vice-chair Bill Nowlin (Bill.Nowlin@rounders.com).

NEW DEADBALL ERA COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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

Luis Blandon	Grayson Kirkham
Jeffrey Delwiche	Mark Mannino
Mick Eichten	Mark Sorell
Mike Engelsman	Noah Stafford
Patrick Hansbury	Cliff Wexler

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

As 2020 comes to a close, we at the newsletter renew our annual request for newsletter readers who are not yet officially committee members to join the Deadball Era Committee. This past year, committee membership has remained stable at just under 500, notwithstanding the tribulations of COVID-19. While grateful for that, we would nonetheless like to grow DEC membership. The committee admission process is quick and painless; just add the DEC to your SABR profile and you're in. Thanks.

BASE BALL 12: NEW RESEARCH ON THE EARLY GAME

Base Ball: New Research on the Early Game is a scholarly journal published annually by McFarland. Founded by DEC member John Thorn and currently edited by fellow committee member Don Jensen, *Base Ball* presents original research and insight into the game through the 1920 season from experts in the field, including Deadball Era Committee members. The latest issue, *Base Ball 12*, is currently scheduled for release in late November and will feature articles on pitcher Harry Coveleski; Canadian baseball during World War I; Polo Grounds landlords Harriet and James Coogan; comparison of the Brooklyn and Pittsburgh clubs of 1900-1909; and Deadball Era sportswriters, plus reviews of several recent books on Deadball Era subjects. Copies of *BB12* can be ordered from McFarland by calling 800-253-2187 or emailing info@mcfarlandpub.com.

THE INSIDE GAME: THE YEAR 2020 IN REVIEW

To continue a practice started several years ago, we conclude this year's run of *The Inside Game* with a look back at what has been published since our last report. Regrettably, the newsletter was not immune to the pandemic-related decrease in production that afflicted most everything else in the country in 2020. With the SABR 50 convention postponed, our usual June convention-focused issue fell to the wayside. Although we still satisfied our commitment to provide newsletter readers with at least four issues this past year, our output was no greater than that for the first time since 2013. This year's newsletters were also reduced in volume (107 pages), particularly compared to the unprecedented 194 pages of newsletter published in 2019. That said, we take pride in the fact that the quality of *The Inside Game* has not diminished (in our estimation) and from our delivery of far more content this past year than any other SABR committee newsletter.

In addition to Deadball-related news items and the columns of DEC chairman John McMurray, 11 original research articles and 11 book reviews were delivered to readers. Our contributors, all newsletter veterans, included article writers Kevin P. Braig, Phil Williams, Brian Morrison, R.J. Lesch, and Dixie Tourangeau. In the February, Herm Krabbenhoft completed the final installment of his rigorous statistics-scrutinizing Deadball Era articles, a near-constant feature in *The Inside Game* dating back to 2014. It was our privilege to publish Herm's important, record-revising research. Another recurring newsletter feature was Doug Skipper's insightful commentary on this year's Larry Ritter Award co-winners: *James T. Farrell and Baseball: Dreams and Realism on Chicago's South Side* by Charles DeMotte, and *Oscar Charleston: The Life and Legend of Baseball's Greatest Forgotten Player* by Jeremy Beer, both published by the University of Nebraska Press. This year's interview subject was David Crawford Jones, an early editor of *The Inside Game* (2000-2003), DEC

Chairman (2004-2007), and editor of DEC-driven *Deadball Stars of the American League*, published in 2007.

Under the supervision of Book Review Section Editor Dan Levitt, we published 11 critical assessments of recently published works touching upon the Deadball Era. Here, too, our reviewers were all newsletter vets: Mark Sternman, David Shiner, Vince Guerrieri, Rick Huhn, Bob Komoroski, Paul Langendorfer, Andrew Milner, Jan Finkel, T.S. Flynn, Mike Lackey, and Art Mugalian. From a grateful newsletter editor, many thanks to the talented researchers, writers, and reviewers who selflessly contributed their talents to this year's newsletter issues.

As always, the annual review is not complete without the editor's call for new voices to join the ranks of newsletter contributors. With approximately 500 DEC members, we are hopeful that at least a few new recruits will enlist. We particularly encourage those who have not yet tried their hands at baseball research and writing to give it a try. The newsletter editorial staff stands ready and able to extend whatever assistance that may be sought, or to leave fledgling contributors in peace. Whatever works best for you is fine with us. Those interested in a book review assignment should contact Dan Levitt at danrl@attglobal.net. For anything else, drop me a line at wflamb12@yahoo.com.

Finally, I want to thank staff colleagues Dan Levitt, Bob Harris, Mark Dugo, and DEC chairman John McMurray for another year of cordial collaboration and unstinting effort in getting out this past year's newsletter issues. I look forward to working with them again in 2021. And thanks, as always, to newsletter readers for your interest and support of *The Inside Game*. Will get back together with you next February. Till then, stay safe and best wishes.

Bill Lamb, Editor
The Inside Game

DEC MEMBER INTERESTS

As in recent Februarys past, the next issue of *The Inside Game* will contain a listing of the particular interests of Deadball Era Committee members. Those wishing to amend or update their listing, as well as those previously left unmentioned are invited to submit info to the editor. For newcomers, all that need be done is fashion a brief blurb that looks something like this: Bill Lamb, contact wflamb12@yahoo.com – Interests: George Davis; NY Giants organiza-

tional history; Black Sox scandal. Then email it to me anytime before January 31, 2021. As before, we believe that informing fellow committee members and other newsletter readers of your particular interests alerts like-minded SABR members to mutual interest in a subject and may well result in the sharing of beneficial research and other pertinent information.

Bill Lamb, Editor
wflamb12@yahoo.com

1906 CARTOONIST CAPTURES ESSENCE OF 2020 MLB



BASEBALL TO DATE.
Rules revised to suit conditions.

Drawn by Charles Bartholomew

Minneapolis Journal, July 20, 1906