

SABR RESEARCH GUIDE #9 (Bibliography Committee) by Patricia Palmer.
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writing from the author :

COLLECTIONS ON THE HISTORY OF AMERICAN BASEBALL

Baseball has enjoyed a rich and colorful history in America, reflected in a variety of baseball collections. From Boston to San Francisco, Washentaw to Sioux Falls, minor and local teams abound, each with enthusiastic fans and serious collectors alike. This study includes collections in public institutions of the history and development of baseball as a national sport, as it influences the major league professional teams and their development over a period of time. Collections on one team, one person, the minor leagues, or narrow spans of time are excluded.

Each collection described has particular strengths. The National Baseball Library is player-oriented; New York Public Library is best for the early history of the game and for the game as a subject of art; the Library of Congress has its strength in the Mann and Rickey Papers relating to the integration of Blacks into the major league; the Cleveland Public Library has an extensive history of the game gathered from newspapers and from a fan's perspective.

Collections held by institutions are actually a very small percentage, repetitive and often incomplete, of what can be found in private hands. But the collections in private hands have not been inventoried or published. This has become a project, however, of the Bibliography Committee of the Society of American Baseball Research (SABR), an organization formed in 1971 specifically for baseball research. The membership, now exceeding 6000, is comprised of individuals from all walks of life and lead the country in publications and collecting. The organization publishes four regular publications and frequent monographs. They are ostensibly the "grapevine" of this project and it was through the help of their members that much of this information was gathered. I gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Lloyd Johnson, SABR's Executive Director; Tom Heitz, Librarian at the National Baseball Library; Frank Phelps, Chair of SABR's Bibliography Committee; Allan Teichroew, Manuscripts Division Reference Librarian at the Library of Congress; Thelma Morris, Head of the Social Sciences Department at the Cleveland Public Library, also a SABR member; and Sam Pathy, SABR member and friend, who led me to them all.

It was also necessary to utilize newspapers and baseball resources to research the background of the private collections that found their way into public institutions. Baseball organizers, managers, sports writers, collectors and most players are neglected by the traditional biographical sources. Those found in those sources also had other professions providing the impetus for their inclusion. Albert Spalding's 206-56 pitching record and athletic abilities are passed over in favor of his successful sporting goods business. Bradshaw Swales extensive collection is not mentioned among his outstanding credentials as an ornithologist. Within baseball circles, however, the reverse is true.

NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME AND MUSEUM, INC.
National Baseball Library

The National Baseball Library was dedicated June 12, 1939 amid much pagentry and ceremony along with the Hall of Fame and Museum on the centennial of American baseball. It is founded on the highly questionable notion that baseball was "invented" in Cooperstown by a local youth, Abner Doubleday, while he was fooling around with some friends in a pasture one summer day in 1839. In 1905, the Mills Commission, a committee of baseball presidents and organizers, gathered to determine the origins of the national pastime and gave the honor to Doubleday three years later. The convincing evidence was a letter from Abner Graves, who had grown up in Cooperstown and swore he had been there the day Doubleday marked out baselines with a walking stick and put bases at three angles to originate baseball. Baseball historians have since discredited this story but as the plaque in the Cooperstown Room reads: "...in the hearts of those who love baseball he Doubleday is remembered as the lad in the pasture where the game was invented. Only cynics would need to know more." It is interesting to note that Doubleday himself never took credit for the game.

It is the policy of the Museum and Library not to purchase anything for the collection, leaving them both without a coherent or written acquisitions policy and with extensive but not complete collections. All five million newspaper documents, 200,000 player data cards, 125,000 photographs, 15,000 baseball books, 2000 pamphlets, 400 videotapes, 300 motion picture reels, hundreds of old radio broadcast tapes, sheet music, among other things, have all been donated. These materials document the game from 1840. The number of items received each year increases dramatically. Papers from the Baseball Commission and National League of Professional Baseball are actively sought but they have no obligation to donate to the Library. The entire complex is financially independent, making a living on gate receipts, donations and revenues from the souvenir shop. It belongs only to the fans.

The first professional librarian on staff was Tom Heitz, who came to the Library in 1983. He is still the only professional on the staff and has been given credit for making the Library what it is today: the mecca of baseball researchers. Ten thousand or so individuals consult the Library each year, primarily for publication purposes.

Baseball is the only subject collected. The most notable collections are the papers of Abraham G. Mills, president of the National League of Professional Baseball Clubs 1883-94; August Herrman, Head of the National Commission 1890-1921; and the John Tattersall Collection of early-to-recent box scores. Information and biographical material regarding about 85% of all the men who have ever played the game at any professional level, official records of the major and minor leagues, and statistical information are actively collected as are baseball publications. Complete runs of Baseball Digest, Baseball Magazine, Sport Magazine, Sports Illustrated, team publications, media guides, yearbooks, and numerous other journals of interest to baseball researchers.

NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY
General Research Division

The holdings are of considerable importance for the study of baseball up to approximately the 1930s. They center around three large gifts: The Spalding, Swales, and Goulston Collections.

Albert Goodwill Spalding (1851-1915) was a prize pitcher for Boston in the National Association 1871-1875. When the National League was organized in 1876, Spalding helped draft the constitution and became one of the owners of the Chicago team that is today called the Cubs. That same year he formed the sporting goods firm, A.G. Spalding & Bros., that has become the most famous business organization of its kind. He also served as president of the Chicago club 1882-1891, organized the first world tour of baseball players in 1888, wrote an important history of early baseball, and throughout his lifetime lent his counsel to the game's affairs.

The personal collection of A.G. Spalding came to the library in 1921 as a gift of his widow. Consisting of over 3,000 books and pamphlets, 102 periodicals, more than 600 photographs, and 30 original drawings, the collection documents the history of baseball from 1845 to about 1914. It contains much material on other sports, such as cricket and card games, most of it in pamphlet form. Spalding had acquired and incorporated the libraries of Harry Wright, secretary of the National League 1878-85, and Henry Chadwick, president of the National League 1862-1904, notable in themselves. The major strength is the correspondence file with reports of early organizational sessions.

The June 7, 1921 New York Times carried the story of the acquisition of the Spalding Collection. Mr. Edwin H. Anderson, Director of the New York Public Library said, "It was known for some years that he [Spalding] had this collection and it was much coveted by not only individuals but by foremost universities of the country where it was regarded by Faculties as a valuable asset to any up-to-date college. Mrs. Spalding felt that it would be the wish of Mr. Spalding as well as her own that the library should be placed where it would be most accessible to the greatest number of lovers of our national game and so she wrote to the officials of the Public Library regarding its disposition."

Bradshaw Hall Swales (1874-1928) was a noted ornithologist whose interest in baseball collecting began when he played on his Detroit High School team and later with the Detroit Athletic Club. His training in scientific method led him to realize the value of records and also the ephemeral character of much of the material having to do with the history of the game. His collection reflects an understanding of the minutely detailed records. The New York Public Library received the collection as a gift from his widow in 1929.

The collection comprises 460 volumes, 37 pamphlets, 26 periodicals, 39 folders, newspaper and manuscript material, complete National League rosters 1876-1930, minor league rosters, 144 volumes of scrapbooks, books relating to baseball, card files, Baseball Magazine 1908-28, Sporting Life 1883-1917, The Sporting News 1918-19.

In 1946, Leopold Morse Goulston donated his baseball collection in memory of Leo J. Bondy, Vice-President and Treasurer of the New York Giants, who died in 1944. The collection is mostly pictorial but contains some books and pamphlets which make important contributions to the history of baseball. An 1822 French juvenile publication, Les Jeux des Jeunes Garçons, describes and illustrates "la ball empoisonnee", or poisoned ball, which duplicates the English game of Rounders, from which baseball is to have evolved. The 1834 Book of Sports, published in Boston, has an illustration showing boys playing baseball on Boston Common, lending further belief to the notion that Doubleday's baseball game was not the first in America. There are about 1000 portraits of players and teams from advertisements inserted into cigarette packages, the predecessor of bubblegum baseball cards. In their time, they were very inexpensive and plentiful but few have survived to this day. This part of the collection includes the complete set of 250 "Old Judge" photographs, issued in the 1880s in exchange for twenty cigarette coupons; a set of 550 "Sweet Corporal" pictures, issued in the 1890s and the first to be colored; and the set of "Mecca" folded cards of 1910, the first to have double-sided pictures of the players. The Mecca cards are unique in that the two players shared the same set of legs. The Goulston Collection also has original portraits of baseball players, photographs of old teams, many original drawings by artists who contributed to Life and Puck showing baseball diamonds, six rare Currier & Ives prints, and rare silver annual passes issued by the New York Giants.

The Library continues to add to the collection through acquisitions of current periodicals such as The Sporting News, Amateur Baseball News, publications of the National League of Professional Baseball Clubs, and yearbooks. The Library is now actively soliciting for material to fill in the gaps of their collections.

CLEVELAND PUBLIC LIBRARY

Cleveland Baseball Collection [formerly the Charles W. Mears Collection]

Charles Williard Mears was born in Monroeville, Ohio in 1874 and moved to Cleveland with his parents in 1885. He is best known as a pioneer in automobile advertising, authoring several books on the subject that have become classic textbooks. Prior to his career in advertising, he contributed regularly to the St. Louis Sports World, a baseball publication, and served as the sports editor for The Cleveland Press 1902-03. His interest in baseball statistics and players was evident throughout his life.

The Social Sciences Department of the Cleveland Public Library received the Charles W. Mears Collection of Baseball Scrapbooks and Records in September 1944 as gift from his widow, Blanche Connors Mears. Before his death on December 9, 1942, Mears had approached several major universities and museums offering to sell his collection. His primary wish was to keep the material together in the form he had it and to preserve it as

a unit. The institutions he approached could not agree to this but the Cleveland Public Library was not among them, ironically enough. When Mrs. Mears gave up trying to sell the collection and donated it to the Cleveland Public Library without any stipulations, researchers immediately sought the collection. This suggests that the asking price was too high. Within a few months the collection was available and enjoyed a steady stream of patrons until the National Baseball Library became accessible. It is estimated that the Library now gets a few hundred requests per year for copies, walk-in research, and information about the materials.

The entire collection is on microfilm and original materials are shown only to serious researchers requiring them. The Mears Collection was the first set of baseball materials acquired by the Library. As other material has been added to it, the emphasis has shifted to the local American League team, the Cleveland Indians. The collection was officially incorporated in 1985 into the Cleveland Baseball Collection. Baseball researchers, however, continue to refer to it as the Mears Collection. It is still recognized as one of the best collections of the 1850-1940 baseball era by SABR.

The greatest assets of the collection are the continuous runs of baseball publications including The Sporting News, Beadle's, New York Clipper, Sporting Life, Dewitt's, Baseball Digest and the Chadwick Manuals. Registers, clippings, box scores and editorials from most of the midwestern newspapers were compiled on each team into large individual scrapbooks. Besides writing his own biographies of his favorite players, Mears collected published biographies, and books written by baseball players. There are approximately 2000 volumes and 1320 items in this collection, dating from 1850-1940. Other than continuing the runs of the publications, there has been no attempt to add significantly to the collection in the past twenty years. In 1985, a fan of the Cleveland Indians donated scrapbooks dated 1946-83 on that team to the Library. It was then decided to change the name of the collection to the Cleveland Baseball Collection.

The local SABR group is very active and has promoted the collection in the press and on television. The group's president has helped the Library develop connections in the Indians' front office and advised on purchases and donations. Regional SABR groups are encouraged to take this role with area libraries.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS Manuscripts Division

Several papers on baseball comprise a modern history of baseball collection. Included are the Arthur William Mann Papers, the Branch Rickey Papers, the Manuel Seller Papers, the James Patrick McGranery Papers, and John Kieran's correspondence. These papers cover the years 1924-66.

The Mann and Rickey Papers are the best known and most frequently used, primarily because they relate to the integration

of Blacks into the major leagues. Mann was a noted sportswriter and baseball executive who did extensive research on Rickey and his influence on baseball. Rickey coached the Brooklyn Dodgers and in 1947, hired Jackie Robinson, the first Black to play professional baseball. Much of this material, totalling approximately 2000 items, included correspondence, manuscripts, speeches, printed material, newspaper clippings, memoranda and notes. Both were acquired as gifts from the respective estates of the two men.

While having other information on the major leagues, the Seller and McGranery papers are especially valued for their information on the 1954-62 monopoly case argued before several judges and finally, the Supreme Court. The decision broke up the National League monopoly on baseball. These materials include case files, correspondence, court transcripts, and briefs. The Seller Papers were a gift from Seller; the McGranery Papers are on "deposit" by the family. That is, no gift or purchase has been made officially because the family wishes to maintain copyright. Generally when something has been placed in the Library of Congress on deposit, it becomes a gift after the death of the depositor.

John Kieran (1917-1981) was a noted sports columnist for the New York Times whose correspondence, columns and notes were donated by his widow in 1981. This collection, as well as the others in the Library of Congress, were acquired for their representation of American culture and history. The Library of Congress does not develop subject collections.

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CHAIRMENS' NOTE

Patricia Palmer, a new member of SABR and of the Bibliography Committee, wrote the foregoing as part of a class project while a graduate student in library science at the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana. Currently she is Conservation Librarian, Washington University, St. Louis, MO. Because of the obvious merit and appropriateness, I requested permission to reprint the article as a SABR Research Guide. If you have comments about the contents or the avenues of investigation they may suggest, please furnish them to me.

Frank Phelps, Co-Chairman
SABR Bibliography Committee

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