



## **CONCESSIONS COMMITTEE NEWSLETTER**

**Spring 2016**

Volume 2; Issue 1

Welcome to the second issue of the SABR Concessions Committee Newsletter. This issue is dedicated to noteworthy and colorful vendors who have added to the great American ballpark experience. We want to consider both the historical vendors such as Harry M. Stevens as well as the modern-day vendors like Roger Owens, the famous Los Angeles Dodgers peanut vendor.

At the Concessions Committee meeting at SABR 46 in Miami, we will be discussing whether to aim for a virtual vendors hall-of-fame on the Internet, and/or for a partnership with an existing institution. Until then, let's all enjoy eating our way through a few baseball games. Remember the words of Humphrey Bogart, "a hot dog at the ballgame beats roast beef at the Ritz."

Bennett Jacobstein, Chair, SABR Concessions Committee

## **PIONEER BALLPARK VENDORS**

### **HARRY M. STEVENS**

Although no one knows for sure who served the first hot dog at a baseball game, no one did more than Harry M. Stevens to connect hot dogs with baseball and to establish the connection between baseball and food.

Harry M. Stevens was born in Litchurch (a village in Derbyshire), England, in either 1855 or 1856 (sources disagree). As a young man he immigrated to America and settled in Columbus, Ohio, where he obtained employment as a book salesman. Although Stevens is best known for his food empire, that was not his start in the baseball world.

Stevens attended baseball games of the Columbus Buckeyes in the Ohio State League. He was frustrated by the lack of information in the scorecards. There was very little discussion about the home team players and no mention at all of the visiting team players. Through his work as a book salesman, he had become acquainted with Ralph Lazarus, one of the owners of the Columbus Buckeyes. Lazarus sold Stevens the rights to produce and sell a new scorecard for the Buckeye games.

Legend has it that Harry came up with the slogan "You can't tell the players without a scorecard!" when he was peddling his scorecards in Columbus.

To call attention to the new scorecards, Stevens dressed in a red coat and straw hat. As he went through the grandstands with his scorecards, he recited lines from William Shakespeare and poet Lord Byron. Fans were able to have printed programs and lineup cards for the first time.

Harry M. Stevens was always looking for new ways to expand his business. According to the September 2012 issue of Columbus Monthly, in 1887 Stevens opened the first food concession stand at a ballpark. This was at the Columbus minor league ballpark.

Stevens' big break came in 1894 when he obtained not only the scorecard rights for the New York Giants at the Polo Grounds but also the rights to food concessions in the ballpark. This would be the beginning of the Harry M. Stevens catering empire.

Before Harry M. Stevens came on the scene, what was sold at baseball games was mostly sandwiches, ice cream, and lemonade. By the turn of the twentieth century, these items had been replaced by hot dogs, peanuts, and soda pop. Stevens also was the concessionaire for horse races, bicycle races, and other New York area sporting events. In time Stevens branched out to providing food concessions at other major league baseball stadiums.

Harry M. Stevens died in 1934 in New York City. His obituary in the New York Times stated, "The thousands of uniformed men who proffer their wares, principally wieners, peanuts and pop, at all sorts of athletic contests in all parts of the country, owe their vocation to Mr. Stevens. He was the first of them and the most successful."

After his death the company, Harry M. Stevens, Inc., was taken over by his three sons and later by his grandsons and a fourth generation. In 1994, after over a hundred years in business, the company was bought by Aramark Sports and Entertainment Services.

Today Aramark is the concessionaire for the Atlanta Braves, Boston Red Sox, Colorado Rockies, Houston Astros, Kansas City Royals, New York Mets, Philadelphia Phillies, Pittsburgh Pirates, and Toronto Blue Jays.

## **THE JACOBS BROTHERS**

About the same time that Harry Stevens began to sell peanuts, three brothers, Marvin, Charles, and Louis Jacobs, were selling peanuts at Coney Island in New York. The brothers then moved to Buffalo, New York, and began selling peanuts at the local ballpark. In the early twentieth century they expanded to other ballparks that were not being served by Harry M. Stevens. In 1915 the brothers founded a company called Delaware North (also known as Sportservice.)

Delaware North Companies is now one of the six major companies that provide food concessions to the 30 major league baseball stadiums.

Sportservice's foothold in major league baseball was the result of the Jacob's reputation for honest, fair dealing. The reputation was born of an episode, now legendary, whereby Louis Jacobs presented the owners of the Detroit Tigers with a \$12,500 check after a particularly profitable year selling concessions. Jacobs felt that the Tigers had made a bad bargain with Sportservice, and should share the unanticipated wealth. This generous gesture came back to Sportservice one hundredfold in the form of additional vending contracts, and the financial assistance which enabled Sportservice to weather the dark times of the Depression.

Today Delaware North (Sportservice) is the concessionaire for the Baltimore Orioles, Cincinnati Reds, Cleveland Indians, Detroit Tigers, Milwaukee Brewers, Minnesota Twins, San Diego Padres, St. Louis Cardinals, and Texas Rangers.

## **NATHANIEL LEVERONE**

Nathaniel Leverone founded the Automatic Canteen Company of America. He got his idea for the business while waiting on a Chicago "L" platform. Leverone put a penny into two different coin-operated weight machines and got readings of 106 pounds and 200 pounds. A gum machine ate another coin but a peanut machine rewarded him with a few moldy morsels. Penny-in-the-slot machines had been around a long time in Chicago.

The company's first big success came at Chicago's 1933-34 World's Fair, where his Automatic machines dispensed affordable sandwiches, cakes, pies, ice cream, and candy to those visiting the Fair. The Automatic Canteen Company landed its first major league baseball park concessions contract with the Kansas City Athletics in 1954, and later obtained the concessions contract with the New York Yankees in 1964.

After a number of name changes and acquisitions, what began as the Automatic Canteen Company of America has become Centerplate. Today Centerplate is the concessionaire for the San Francisco Giants, Seattle Mariners, and Tampa Bay Rays.

## **MODERN-DAY VENDORS**

### **ROGER OWENS**

The best-known vendor of modern times is Roger Owens of Dodger Stadium, known as “The Peanut Man.” Roger has worked at Dodger Stadium from its opening in 1962 until the present day. He became known for his trick tossing of the peanut bags to customers up to 30 rows away. His antics gained him much renown including an appearance on *The Tonight Show with Johnny Carson* in 1976. Although many ballplayers have had biographies written about them, Roger Owens may be the only peanut vendor to have achieved this honor. *The Perfect Pitch: The Biography of Roger Owens, the Famous Peanut Man at Dodger Stadium*, by Daniel S. Green, was published in 2004.

### **CHARLEY MARCUSE**

Hot dog vendor Charley Marcuse worked for the Detroit Tigers for the last decade. He was known as the “Singing Hot Dog Man” for singing the words “hot dog” in operatic falsetto. He was also known for his adamant dislike of ketchup, wanting all of his customers to put mustard on their hot dogs. This condiment controversy led to a dispute with management and to Charley leaving the Tigers in 2013.

### **DERRICK MOORE**

Derrick Moore has been working concessions at various stadiums for over 30 years. He tries to think of catchy sayings because he knows it makes him unique and increases sales. He currently sells lemonade for the Arizona Diamondbacks at Chase Field. His now-famous pitch is “Lemonade, lemonade like grandma made!”

### **EMILY YOUCIS**

Emily is known as “Pistachio Girl.” Her cry of “PISTAAAAAACHIOOOOOOS!” has become legendary at the Philadelphia Phillies Citizens Bank Park. Unfortunately, in 2015 the Phillies stopped selling pistachios and Emily shifted to Cracker Jack and lemon water ice. Fans have started a petition to bring pistachios back to the ballpark.

### **HOWARD ELLSWORTH LOWE**

Known as “Crazylegs,” Howard is always on the move. He sells kettle corn at the San Francisco Giants AT&T Park. He is in his early 70s with arthritic knees. His herky-jerky dance moves evoke Michael Jackson when he did his moonwalk. Howard’s call is “K-E-T-T-L-E, kettle corn time here,” spelling out the word so that everyone can catch it.

**BENNETT JACOBSTEIN** (I'm not really that famous yet, but I hope to be some day)

During most of the game at the San Jose Giants (Class A affiliate of the San Francisco Giants) Municipal Stadium, I work inside a concessions booth. Starting in the eighth inning, I don my hot-dog hat and head into the stands, where I sell leftover hot dogs for a dollar each.