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The Game They All Played: Chicago Baseball, 1876-1906

Patrick Mallory
Loyola University Chicago

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

THE GAME THEY ALL PLAYED:
CHICAGO BASEBALL, 1876-1906

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

PROGRAM IN HISTORY

BY
PATRICK MALLORY

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INTRODUCTION

At the close of the 1906 baseball season, the Chicago White Sox of the American League squared off against the Chicago Cubs of the National League in the third World Series in the history of Major League Baseball. That fall, the World Series had national importance, as professional baseball had grown to be an event that engrossed the country. The series took on another level of importance in Chicago, as it represented the culmination of the city's sporting culture from decades of strengthening the game in fledgling amateur clubs that emerged prior to the Civil War, the devastating fire that destroyed the first full attempt at professional sports, the birth of the most powerful baseball cartel in the National League during the 1870s, and the appearance of the first true challenger to the National League at the dawn of the twentieth century, the American League. The story of baseball's transition in Chicago included the working-class, countless ethnic groups, and black Chicagoans, as well as the dominant white middle-class population of the city. By 1906, baseball had become a cultural force like none other, as fans filled stadiums to watch the best professional players, high schools and colleges fielded teams, men played on baseball diamonds throughout city in amateur and semiprofessional games, and men and high school students banged a soft indoor baseball around halls and gyms throughout the city. No singular work has attempted to synthesize the complex role baseball played in the everyday lives of Chicagoans at the end of the nineteenth century and into the dawn of the twentieth, when baseball epitomized the new
modernism of industrial America. This study examines the collective development of the game of baseball in Chicago from 1876-1906, analyzing the growth of the top-flight professional organizations, the development of amateur and semiprofessional baseball, youth teams, high school and college nines, the rise of African-American baseball, and the zenith of the city's control and devotion to baseball, the 1906 World Series.

By 1906, baseball occupied a space in the Progressive Era and the United States' emerging modern age. At the highest professional levels, epitomized by the World Series that year, baseball played an important role in the cultural landscape of the country, as a mythologized American sport, a game born decades before in the pastoral fields of rural America, populated by the white, protestant, middle-class population. This mythology had developed for over fifty years, but ironically the sport did not come from agrarian communities that American citizens came to view as the truth, but rather from the urbanization of the country, a sport that developed within the industrialized city. At the dawn of the twentieth century, the ownership and management of professional baseball sought to foster this belief, as Steven Riess states, "to secure order in its distended society." During the Progressive Era, professional baseball hoped to present itself as a bastion of white, middle-class, protestant values, where baseball owners only operated their clubs for concern of the city's population and every member of society had the opportunity to attend games, regardless of their race, ethnicity, or economic station in life. In reality, baseball owners and the ruling order of the National and American Leagues, sought to secure profits and make the ballpark the epitome of profitable,
industrial America, with comfortable seats able to attract tens of thousands of patrons – all of whom could afford the ticket price.¹

The environment of professional baseball in the early twentieth century did not appear from the ether. Instead, baseball developed organically, through fits and starts in the emerging industrial city. In the oft told tale, the first emergence of the modern form of baseball appeared at the hands of the young, middle-class workers in New York City during the late 1840s, who formed an amateur, fraternal gentlemen’s club called the New York Knickerbockers and staged games on Elysian Fields in Hoboken, New Jersey. In Chicago, the development of amateur baseball happened later and the first teams in the city appeared shortly before the outset of the Civil War. Fittingly, the catch up of amateur baseball in Chicago mimicked the general nature of an urban community that did not have the economic or cultural standing as New York at the end of the 1850s. The Civil War retarded the growth of baseball in the city, as the amateur clubs of Chicago largely ended their devotion to the sport as the war effort consumed the city. Out of the horror of the Civil War, Chicago emerged as a new city that had produced food and industrial goods first for the soldier and by the end of the 1860s, the consumer. In this environment, the city's potential, of industrial strength, that could be an economic powerhouse on the national stage, baseball was reborn.

By the end of the 1860s, Chicago businessmen, drawn largely from the Board of Trade, started to support a professional nine in response to the emerging teams in the North, specifically the Cincinnati Red Stockings. This new investment went through fits

and starts, but crumbled in 1871 when the great fire destroyed the city and with it the new professional baseball team. But like the rest of the city, baseball emerged from the fire stronger, and by 1876 the dream of professional baseball years before came true, and then some, with the start of the National League, an organization centered in Chicago that would become the premier national baseball cartel by the end of the century. This new organization, one that symbolized the larger industrial might of the city, focused on the white, middle-class population who possessed the ability to buy tickets and support the local nine. As this organization steamed along through the end of the century, catered to the middle-class, destroyed competitors, and developed a professional organization like nothing that had ever appeared before, the rest of the city also focused on baseball in a variety of other directions that included the working-class, immigrants, and black Chicagoans.

As the professional team and league developed at the end of the century, with an increased fan base and newspaper coverage growing year after year, the diverse city also embraced baseball, outside of the professional diamond, on empty lots on the outskirts of the downtown business district, and on partially manicured fields for the better amateur and semiprofessional clubs. While the players on these teams, and their supporters, followed the professional team religiously, the lower rung of baseball was played by average men, white collar businessmen from the "loop," workers from grocery stores and retail shops, and factory employees from Pullman and other industrial settings. Increasingly, the diverse ethnic population of recent immigrants and second generation sons also welcomed the game. These players and fans of the amateur and
semiprofessional teams gave Chicago's population an access point into the most celebrated sport in America and the cultural lexicon of the city. By the 1880s, baseball started to be played indoors, by young white-collar men of the Farragut Boat Club. This new diversion, later known as softball, infected the city and by the beginning of the twentieth century was played by Chicagoans from all walks of life, working men, the middle-class population, and in the high schools of the city as an extracurricular activity.

In addition to the growth in amateur, semiprofessional, and indoor games, black Chicagoans also participated in the sport, even while they faced the restrictions of an ever increasing segregated city. African-Americans on the national stage of baseball, attempted to be participants on professional teams, but by the end of the 1880s this hope turned to an impossibility, as a gentleman's agreement in the professional organizations barred their contribution, largely blamed on Chicago's National League club and local hero Cap Anson. In this environment, African-Americans charted their own course and formed their own amateur and semiprofessional nines that played against other black teams as well as against white clubs and joined mostly white amateur and semiprofessional city leagues. By the first decade of the twentieth century, African-American teams went further, by creating their own structure of profitable teams and organizations, the precursor to the later Negro Leagues. While the African-American population of the city navigated the delicate line of race relations, the black baseball community utilized the game as opportunity to create a moderately successful business venture, through the efforts of early African-American baseball entrepreneurs.
This dissertation seeks to explore central issues in the trajectory of Chicago's baseball structure, when the National League officially organized in 1876 until 1906 when baseball in the city reached a heightened frenzy in the World Series played between the two best teams in the country. The larger topics explored in this study are the relationship of class structures, ethnicities, and racial segregation in the top professional teams and leagues in the city, as well as the involvement and organization of amateur, semiprofessional, youth, and African-American players. The period examined represents an unprecedented transition in American history, when the industrial cities of the North experienced heightened labor unrest, immigration, which blurred the lines of socioeconomic divisions. The development of professional baseball, epitomized by the National League in Chicago, strove to create a socioeconomic hierarchy by the end of the nineteenth century by catering to middle-class patrons. Simultaneously, youth, amateur, semiprofessional, and indoor baseball, represented the diverse reality of who played, supported, and organized baseball in Chicago. By the dawn of the twentieth century, the hard realities of bleak, industrial Chicago led to a reformation in the entire city, as settlement houses were born, urban architects used new steel and concrete building design, and city planners and business leaders hoped to create a more efficient and effective city. This change in the Progressive Era transformed baseball, as the White Sox built a new modern stadium, the sport became institutionalized in the city's high schools and colleges, and the reformations of the period looked to baseball as an opportunity to create civic order.


**Methodology**

The heart of this study focuses on contemporary newspaper reports, a tool that provides the most thorough source on all levels of baseball during the period. The sports coverage in newspapers developed alongside the growth of baseball in Chicago. In the earliest accounts on baseball clubs, sports writers focused on the amateur men's teams, that prior to the Civil War meant more writing about the social affairs of the club rather than the games on the field. By the end of the 1860s, the press of Chicago covered the emergence of professional baseball and, by default, questioned why Chicago had not embraced the professional game that infected Cincinnati and the Northeastern cities of Philadelphia, New York, and Boston. Sportswriters in the era wanted a professional team that could match the power of Eastern cities, in articles that stressed the link between a successful baseball team and the larger success of the city. By the beginning of the 1870s, the sporting press got its wish and professional baseball emerged in the city. But this new sporting and cultural diversion proved to be short lived, as the fire in 1871 destroyed the city. As newspapers in Chicago focused first on the destruction of the fire, they turned back to baseball coverage with the redevelopment of the city, further pressuring the city to build a competitive professional team. Once the National League formed in 1876, sports reporting reached new heights, as detailed coverage of baseball and other athletics appeared in full sized sports pages in the papers of Chicago and nationally.

The success of professional baseball and the insatiable appetite of Chicago's baseball fans, provided sportswriters the opportunity to focus on the other baseball clubs
that played every weekend in the warmer months of the year. Sports writing on the lower levels of amateur, youth, and semiprofessional baseball is surprisingly robust at the end of the nineteenth century. Detailed, inning by inning accounts, player profiles, box scores, and league standings sat in news columns side by side with reports of the National League. By the 1890s, sports writers examined the nightly games of Chicago's invention, indoor baseball, played during the winter months when outdoor baseball was an impossibility. The coverage of indoor baseball speaks volumes about the level Chicagoans' devotion to the game of baseball as they embraced a modified version of the summer sport that was played in auditoriums and gymnasiums. In addition to indoor baseball, newspapers increasingly covered high school and college games at the end of the century, and their coverage further demonstrates the importance baseball played in the city.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, sports coverage in the daily papers both in the city and suburbs, reached new levels not only with intricate reports on the teams through box scores and game summaries, but with new technologies that allowed printers to recreate photographs on the page, a substantial change from the nineteenth century when the limited illustrations in newspapers meant readers only saw reproductions of engravings. Photographs on the printed page allowed newspapers to broaden their coverage and provide Chicago fans with real images of the players, and action from the ballpark, that gave the fan unable to attend games an opportunity to see the men they rooted for. The photos that appeared in the beginning of the century also meant newspapers printed images of players from high schools, colleges and universities,
indoor baseball clubs, and the amateur and semiprofessional teams. The increased coverage of baseball in the twentieth century, both with the printed word and photographs, increased the ties Chicagoans had to the game of baseball. The 1906 World Series, between the Cubs and White Sox, represented the pinnacle of sports journalism studied in this period. During the Series, newspapers both locally and nationally, utilized all of their tools to provide readers with the most comprehensive coverage ever witnessed for athletics.

**Existing Literature**

No comprehensive study exists on Chicago baseball during the period examined in this dissertation. Instead, numerous scholars have written works on the entire history of the sport, studies that have explored components of baseball that fit within this dissertation's time frame, biographies on figures who influenced the national game, and scholarly articles that examine portions of the Chicago baseball experience. These secondary sources have greatly influenced this dissertation and the theories and themes, developed by these authors have been applied to varying chapters of the study.

A starting point for understanding the role of baseball in all of American society, can be seen in the grand opus of Harold Seymour's three volume work, *baseball: The Early Years, Baseball: The Golden Age, and Baseball: The People's Game*. The first volume tackles the national story of baseball from the inception of the sport in the middle of the nineteenth century until the birth of the American League and the great baseball war against the National League at the start of the twentieth century. The second volume explores the game of the twentieth century, and begins with the creation of the modern
game of professional baseball when the two powerful opposing leagues banded together to create the modern World Series in 1903. Finally, the last volume highlights the broader role baseball played, away from the spotlight of the best professional teams, and illustrates the complex role average Americans contributed to the national pastime, through accounts of youth, amateur, and semiprofessional baseball, as well as the importance of softball in the United States. Seymour's writings function as a building block for understanding the creation and development of baseball. His works are considered by historians to be the most comprehensive historical accumulation of the game.

In a similar vein, but much less verbose, is Benjamin Rader's *Baseball: A History of America's Game*. Rader’s work summarizes the history of baseball from middle of the nineteenth century until the modern day. His study focused on the development of the professional game, largely ignoring amateur, semiprofessional, and youth baseball. Rader's study does highlight the racial injustice baseball practiced at the end of the nineteenth century when African-Americans were forced out of the professional ranks as profits and white ticket holders grew in size. Rader also emphasizes the national struggle of professional baseball at the end of the nineteenth century, when several organizations attempted to challenge the strength of the National League. These smaller professional baseball wars emphasized the mounting conflict in industrial America where the morals and traditions of the established white Victorian population, that attempted to control the new industrial city, were met with ever increasing immigrant populations and labor unrest. The organizations that sought to challenge the National League provided cheaper
tickets, looser rules on alcohol and, in the case of the Player’s League, an alternative to
the constant struggle in the National League between labor and capital.

Melvin Adelman's work, *A Sporting Time: New York City and the Rise of Modern Athletics, 1820-70*, provides a more focused examination on the earliest period of baseball within a larger study on New York sports. With baseball, Adelman deconstructs the mythological emergence of baseball from the pastoral landscape and transports it to the industrializing climate of urban New York and the young, white, middle-class players that organized the first nines. Similarly, the early game of baseball is examined in Stephen Freedman's article "The Baseball Fad in Chicago, 1865-1870: An Exploration of the Role of Sport in the Nineteenth-Century City," in the *Journal of Sport History*. Freedman's article tailors the early game of baseball to the emerging middle-class population of Chicago, where the same, young men that developed the game in New York, also created the sport in Chicago. However, as illustrated by Freedman’s article, the game of baseball came to Chicago later, and gained enormous popularity after the Civil War, through teams that banded together for fraternal camaraderie more than the love of the game. This early tradition of middle-class men's clubs playing baseball for social companionship, without hard nose competition, influenced the trajectory of professional baseball later in the century, when the National League specifically sought to attract the middle-class fan. As Freedman explains, this culture of early Chicago baseball had unique goals, "because of the game’s narrow following, the qualities most commonly ascribed to baseball were symbolic expressions of deeply held middle class values." Although Adelman’s and Freedman’s works fall before the period examined in
this dissertation, they are valuable foundational tools for understanding how and why baseball developed so rapidly in the 1870s.²

Robert Pruter investigates the role Chicago's teenagers and children played in the growth of baseball in the second half of the nineteenth century in his article, "Youth Baseball in Chicago, 1868-1890." Pruter's approach is to deconstruct a notion, loosely examined by historians, such as Harold Seymour and filmmaker Ken Burns, that youth baseball was a game played on sunny sandlots by kids looking for fun, instead of the gritty reality the sport could be for young Chicagoans. Pruter emphasizes the lack of detailed research on youth baseball, in Chicago and nationally, and emphasizes that "historical truth always proves to be more prosaic, more nuanced, and more complex than the over-romanticized images that capture their imaginations." In Pruter's study, the games of Chicago's youth are organized, competitive, and inclusive of the multiple layers of economic classes that existed in the city. Unlike much of the development of the professional game, that sought to soften the presentation of the sport to the middle-class fan, youth baseball instead mirrored the reality of baseball in Chicago, where the adult amateur players struggled for victory on the diamond and the fans in the seats for the professional teams did not always represent the demureness of the ownership's ideals. But like the professional organizations that continued to stabilize at the end of the century, youth amateur baseball also started to appear in the high schools, colleges, and

universities, and ultimately, "emerged from being a sandlot activity to being a full-fledged interscholastic sport."³

Historian Michael Lomax analyzes how African-Americans shaped their own course in commercial baseball in, *Black Baseball Entrepreneurs, 1860-1901: Operating by Any Means Necessary*. Lomax argues that historians, such as Harold Seymour, typically place black players as, "passive victims as opposed to active participants in shaping their own experience," and these historians only write about African-American baseball in relation to white society, rather than the role it forged at the end of the nineteenth century. The work is largely an economic study on how black ownership and management developed the fledgling amateur game of African-American baseball and created a profitable commercial enterprise by the beginning of the twentieth century. Ultimately, African-American entrepreneurship represented a central component in the overall advancement of the national game. Lomax's thesis on the national game is also evident in Chicago, where black amateur and semiprofessional teams organized independently but played alongside white clubs and also within the same leagues. Although eliminated from the highest levels of professional baseball, African-Americans in Chicago helped create the foundation of the Negro Leagues and, by the first decade of the twentieth century, profitable clubs emerged.⁴

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The story of the National League is the most well known and most written upon subject examined in this dissertation. The account of the founding and development of the organization can be found in countless studies, but all of these focus on the larger national story and does explore specifically on Chicago's central role in the League's development. The aforementioned works by Seymour and Rader both provide accurate and informative accounts of the League's growth and its desire to capture a white, middle-class audience, with Victorian decorum in the stadium and the elimination of alcohol and gambling. Peter Levine's, *A.G. Spalding and the Rise of Baseball: The Promise of American Sport* looks at the life of Albert Spalding and his rise to power in professional baseball that, "coincided with dramatic economic, demographic, and social changes that transformed America into a modern state." Spalding, according to Levine, embodies this shift in the country as his skill as a player, owner, and businessman developed in the new industrial city. As Spalding's baseball acumen was born in Chicago, his rise is tied directly to the culture and population of the city. Spalding's start in the game occurred "when the distinction between amateur and professional was quite novel and when the game itself was haphazard and unstable" and, by the time he retired, the National League, and professional baseball, had become intertwined with the city's success. Through Spalding's guidance the National League became the preeminent sporting organization in the nation and that success for Spalding mimicked the larger industrialized growth in Chicago. Spalding also parlayed his achievements in baseball into the most profitable sporting goods empire in the country, again centered in Chicago. His sporting good company catered to all Americans with guarantees of quality products,
shipped from Chicago. Spalding's sporting goods business fit within the same pattern explored by William Cronon in *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*, where companies like Sears and Montgomery Ward used the economic power of Chicago to sell goods to distant Americans, that would be, "connecting people to make new markets and remake old landscapes." By the twentieth century, Spalding utilized the strength of Chicago to create a modern and lucrative baseball cartel as well as dominating the fledgling sporting goods industry.\(^5\)

The historiography on the American League is not as strong as that of the National League, due to the organization's later arrival and lesser impact on transitioning baseball from amateur to professional. However, the League played a central role in creating the modern two League structure and World Series that have defined baseball for over one hundred years. In *Ban Johnson: Czar of Baseball*, Eugene Murdock examines the life of sportswriter turned baseball magnate Ban Johnson and his successful transformation of a struggling minor league into the most powerful challenger the National League had fought against, the American League. And while the work focuses on Johnson, Charles Comiskey's role in the development of the new league is central to the book. Comiskey, a Chicago icon by the first decade of the twentieth century, was Johnson's right hand in the emerging power of the American League. And just as the National League's strength emanated from Chicago, so too would the American League, where the Chicago White Sox and Charles Comiskey surfaced as the dominant force in

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the new organization. Murdock's study focuses on the nuts and bolts of the American League and the political and economic wrangling it took to secure a profitable and competitive professional organization. Murdock's work inform this dissertation but in centering his efforts on the administrative side to the League, the author only superficially explores the socioeconomic structure of the cities and the fans that made the American League profitable.⁶

The complex relationship cities, owners, players, and fans can be found in two works by historian Steven Riess. His two books, *Touching Base: Professional Baseball and American Culture in the Progressive Era* and *City Games: The Evolution of American Urban Society and the Rise of Sports* analyze how the new urban sporting culture of American cities "came to mark social boundaries and to define status communities." That idea, as presented in *City Games*, spoke on the broad array of sporting diversions in the late nineteenth century, in a period Riess refers to as the "industrial radial city," the transition from America's walking cities to the connected urban centers of public transportation and growing metropolises. Although Riess covers a number of diverse sports like golf, billiards, bowling, and polo in *City Games*, baseball is fundamental to his discussion on the social order of the city. According to Riess, the development of baseball in the new industrial city had been tailored specifically for the middle-class fan, who had a work schedule to attend afternoon games and the discretionary income to pay the ticket prices. Beyond the economic position the middle-class fan possessed, the game of baseball meant something larger to this population of the

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American city, who also saw the sport as having the power to, "fit in nicely with the bourgeoisie's prevailing value system as well as their social experiences." The idea of middle-class isolation in the sport of baseball is central to this dissertation, and is evident in the nature of the National League, the inception of indoor baseball, and the business models of the White Sox and Cubs in the first decade of the twentieth century.\(^7\)

In *Touching Base*, Riess moves beyond a broader exploration of American sports in the developing industrial city and instead focuses his efforts on how baseball played a pivotal role in the culture of urban centers as well as unified and divided the population during the early twentieth century in the new Progressive Era. During the transition from the late nineteenth century, when labor unrest, poverty, squalid living conditions, lack of functional infrastructure, and disease, epitomized the new city, and specifically Chicago, progressive reformers attempted to alleviate these problems at the beginning of the twentieth century. Progressive thinkers, believers in the new optimistic Modernism that emerged in the period, understood the problems of urban America could be solved once they, "were identified, studied, and understood." Within that larger construction, the game of baseball played a role. Riess contends that baseball occupied a unique space where the sport was thought of as, "an indigenous American game which had originated in the countryside and that it typified all that was best in our society." In that climate, baseball owners attempted to celebrate the mythological origins of baseball and "sought to control to homogenize and control the immigrant dominant cities." Ultimately, according to Riess, professional baseball attempted to end the practice of forceful

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separation of ethnic and socioeconomic classes for a greater idealistic American
democratic order and employed baseball as a educational tool that would provide, "heroes
and role models for youngsters," and place white, Anglo-Saxon culture as the benchmark
for urban populations, in an effort to eliminate disruption in society. This idea developed
through professional baseball's new steel and concrete stadiums and the codification of
"rituals of spectatorship."^8

The City Beautiful Movement, a component within the larger development of the
Progressive Era, sought to use, "the physical structure and design of cities to shape their
civic and social cohesion." In that context, Robin Bachin's, *Building the South Side: Urban Space and Civic Culture in Chicago 1890-1919,* explores the design and
construction of the new Comiskey Park, home of the Chicago White Sox in the middle of
the 1910 season. Although the date of construction falls beyond the date of the
dissertation, the planning and design of the new ballpark represent the new cultural
dynamic of Chicago, where once the National League sought to carve out a niche in the
cultural fabric of the middle-class in the nineteenth century, to a new vibrant ideal of the
American League's White Sox, that designed their team and stadium to attract a broad
array of Chicago in an effort, "attract large audiences, and the civic elite." This new
idealism of baseball and the city is a sharp transition to the discord found in professional
baseball in the nineteenth century. The new White Sox Park wanted to utilize the
baseball stadium as an opportunity to create a shared cultural, civic space that would
unite the city as none other. This design followed other urban amusements and

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diversions where, "new immigrants and their children forged alliances with one another that helped overcome ethnic barriers."\textsuperscript{9}

CHAPTER ONE

THE NATIONAL LEAGUE

The Chicago White Stockings played their last home game of 1871 against a local amateur club, the Athletics, at the downtown Union Base Ball Grounds, bounded by Randolph Street to the North, Michigan Avenue to the West, and Lake Michigan and a rail yard to the East. The rectangular park, built for the 1871 season, sat in the Northeast corner of today’s Millennium Park, and the six-foot fences that enclosed the capacity crowd of seven thousand prevented the throngs on the street from watching the games. The lake lapped near the ballpark, as building debris from the Great Fire had yet to be pushed eastward into the water, which ultimately expanded the footprint of the city. The last game progressed unremarkably, other than the White Stockings fielded only eight players against the Athletics outmatched nine-man lineup. The exhibition meant little for the White Stockings, as they were embroiled in a close three-way contest against the Philadelphia Athletics and the Bostons, for the first pennant race of the National Association of Professional Base Ball Players. After the game, the White Stockings left the park for a road trip that closed the 1871 season. On the night of October 8, the Great Fire blazed through the city, burned the ballpark, the fences, bleachers, business records,
and personal belongings of the players, and left the city from Congress Street in the South to Fullerton Avenue in the North destroyed and devastated.¹

The White Stockings suffered the same deprivations as their neighbors, but decided to soldier on through the last days of the season. In Troy, New York, on October 21, they played the local Haymakers, and won eleven to five. Strikingly, they took the field in mismatched uniforms, some players entered the diamond with dark socks and others white, lent by other teams to compensate for the White Stockings’ loss in the fire. The crowd turned out in large numbers, supported the local nine, but the “feeling was much less manifest” as the New York fans understood the tragedy of the visiting club. Even as the White Stockings managed to win the game, the players, manager, and ownership, realized in the midst of their hometown tragedy, the future of Chicago baseball had been jeopardized. In addition to the loss of their park, the White Stockings, on the last day of the season, lost the pennant to the Philadelphia Athletics. By October 23, the Tribune reported the White Stockings had dissolved their partnership with the city, and all of the Board of Trade members, the team’s staunch financial backers, stepped away from the team, and focused their efforts on the recovery from the fire. The team hoped a new group of financial supporters, again from the Board of Trade, could be brought together to field a team during the 1872 season, but ultimately, Chicago had no professional baseball organization for the next two years. The ash covered grounds of the

empty ballpark quickly filled with raw lumber, as merchants from burned out buildings in
the downtown district erected small and flimsy booths to sell their wares during the
rebuilding effort. By October 18, fully framed structures filled the former diamond, and
provided goods for the dazed citizens and workers cleaning away the destruction. The
possibility of playing games again at the “The Old Base Ball Ground,” seemed remote.  

The Great Fire had seemingly incinerated Chicago’s incipient professional
baseball prospects. Professional baseball had grown in the city in the wake of the Civil
War. As the soldiers of the American Civil War came home in the late summer of 1865
and cities of the North settled into a more normal postwar life, the once fledgling amateur
sport of men’s friendly and cooperative baseball turned instead to an entertaining
spectacle, as fences enclosed the field, the fans, and the players. Admission prices
increased as did the demand to see the games. Prior to the war, baseball had been played
by amateur gentleman's clubs, aligned by their middle class station in life and the
individual professions. Those games had been less focused on competition and victory,
but more as an opportunity for fraternal bonding and a reason to organize outside of their
office. By 1869, the first fully publicized professional team, the Cincinnati Red
Stockings, with a salaried lineup, marched through the summer schedule decimating
teams on their way to a an undefeated season and without a lose, until June of the

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Tribune, October 18, 1871, p. 2. “Base Ball,” Chicago Tribune, October 22, 1871, p. 4. “Exhibition
Game: Base Ball for Next Year,” Chicago Tribune, October 23, 1871, p. 1. Benjamin G. Rader, Baseball:
A History of America’s Game (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), p. 45. Steven A. Riess,
Touching Base: Professional Baseball and American Culture in the Progressive Era (Westport:
following summer. For the entire season of 1869, the Red Stockings managed to earn a profit of one dollar and twenty-five cents, with an expensive lineup of players from outside Cincinnati, with the exception of a local-grown first baseman. Baseball owners, club officials, managers and players from around the nation realized the Red Stockings, even with their miniscule profit, represented the future of baseball. The Chicago White Stockings of 1871 adopted this new model of a salaried team, with paid players from around the North. That same year, the White Stockings also joined the National Association of Professional Baseball Players, a conglomeration of teams from Northern cities, some organizations controlled by stockholders, and others controlled by the players themselves. The National Association of Professional Baseball Players represented a significant shift in the history of baseball and American sports. For the first time an entire group of teams agreed to a partnership based on the commonality of salaried players. This fledgling league lasted only a few short years, soon to be overtaken in 1876 by the National League, but its long-term impact revolutionized American sports.³

A new paradigm of professional sports developed once the National League took root in 1876. The League worked from the foundation of the National Association of Professional Base Ball Players, but furthered the separation between amateur and professional players, ended the idea of fraternal baseball organizations in the top tier of teams, and completely embraced the corporate structure of Victorian, industrial America, with stock holding companies controlling all aspects of the new conglomeration. Team

owners constrained player salaries, ended salary negotiations, and gave the players no voice in the development of the league. The National League mandated universal ticket prices and eliminated Sunday games, gambling, and alcohol sales. The League imposed these rules to reinforce the social, economic, and ethnic divisions that existed in the urban North and ultimately to make the professional game of baseball appealing to the white, native-born, middle class American. The high ticket prices and elimination of Sunday games drove away the working class and many of the ethnic minorities from the crowd of spectators. The League’s prohibition of alcohol was designed for the same effect. The League attempted to end gambling in the seats and force out the riff-raff and corruption that had been pervasive in baseball from the outset of professional teams. The League’s new model for professional baseball dominated the sport through the end of the nineteenth century. The League’s structure emerged in Chicago, with the leadership centralized in the White Stockings organization. And while the White Stockings and the idea of National League remained separate entities, it was clear to the owners and managers of the other clubs that Chicago controlled the future of the conglomeration. The White Stockings, and the League’s leadership in Chicago, sold Americans their product, a premier baseball league with an economically and socially conservative structure, mimicking the most powerful corporate giants in industrial America. The culmination of the reserve clause, that controlled labor prices by forced annual contracts between individual teams and players, took root by the end of the 1870s. This system of virtually nonnegotiable player salaries cemented the power of team ownership and League management.
The National League promoted the increasing American belief in baseball as the national pastime. As the industrial American city grew in prominence, so did the fears of native-born middle-class Americans. In late Victorian America, the middle class, white, protestant, population feared the development of large industrial cities with their inevitable labor problems and their babel of ethnic immigrants. As Donald Miller explains, “many American’s saw their country’s future bound up with the future of its industrial cities, and these cities seemed to be flying apart even as they were built even larger.” In this confusion, a carefully nurtured mythology of baseball, made white, Anglo-Saxon, protestant, Americans, more secure in their country. The overwhelming change of the industrial city alarmed Middle-America, and baseball provided a relief, where support of a national game, an American game, supplied a sense of normalcy, continuity, and patriotism. This mythology of baseball solidified in 1907, when Albert Spalding asked Americans to provide evidence for the true origins of baseball. This was an effort to end a growing perception, supported by leading sport journalists of the era, that baseball developed from the English game of "rounders," a children's sport dating back centuries that appeared in colonial America in the eighteenth century. A committee of seven men, that included two United States Senators, concluded baseball emerged from the ether in 1839, a game designed by Abner Doubleday, a future General from the Union Army who distinguished himself in the Battle of Gettysburg. The committee relied on one report by an elderly man named Abner Graves, who claimed he saw Doubleday draw up the rules and dimensions that summer in a field in Cooperstown, New York. Doubleday, long dead by 1907, never claimed in his lengthy memoirs that he
had anything to do with the invention of baseball. Regardless of the lack of truth in the story, the tale conformed to what the white middle-class wanted to believe about an American hero and the origins of baseball. The comforting nature of the Cooperstown legend made white, middle-class Chicagoans, as well as all middle-class Americans feel comfortable about their game in the reality of ugly urbanism in Chicago. Draped in the mythical, pastoral, and rural legacy of the country, baseball offered a sense of relief to the middle-class American and an avenue in which the National League could sell their product. According to the historian Steven Riess, the sport gave some Americans a sense of a “secure order in a distended society.”

The role of professional baseball and the National League had a greater impact on Chicago than on other American cities. The National League’s governance emanated from Chicago, the city where the league developed, and during its early years the White Stockings operated as the premier team and leader of the national organization. Ironically, Chicago’s place in the structure of baseball, the most roaring industrial metropolis of the age, with an ever expanding population of immigrants, ethnic neighborhoods, and factory production, placed the White Stockings and the League as ironic harbingers of the pastoral and native mythology of baseball. Nonetheless, the vision of professional organized baseball, as symbolizing small town values, a sanctuary from the future of American cities, spoke to the middle-class Chicagoans. The National League and the White Stockings worked to promote this belief, to profit from the middle-

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class, and to perpetuate the belief that baseball in Chicago was central to the culture of the city. To make this tangible, the White Stockings promoted “traditional” values through the ending of Sunday games, drinking in the ballpark, and gambling. This wholesome image, coupled with the growing promotion of the sport in the daily newspapers of Chicago made baseball seem a desirable and necessary component of everyday life. Chicago’s power in the development of the National League can be underscored by the annual fluctuation of participating clubs in other cities due to financial failure. While these organizations collapsed, the leadership and advice of Chicago’s professional club, the White Stockings, and the Presidency of the National League in Chicago, guided the organization through desperate times. This chapter will survey the design and growth of the National League during the last decades of the nineteenth century. It will also explore how Chicago helped to create the standard for professional baseball and professional athletics for over one hundred years through the leadership in the National League and the important and stable role the White Stockings played both in Chicago and nationally. Additionally, the relationship of Chicagoans with the National League and the White Stockings will be explored through their experience at the ballparks and vicariously through the daily press that the Chicago baseball fan read so passionately.\(^5\)

**Before the National League**

In April of 1882, just as the baseball season started to develop for the National League pennant race, forty-nine year old William Ambrose Hulbert rested in his home on

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Fortieth Street, miles from his team’s home field Lakefront Park, just off Michigan Avenue in downtown Chicago. Hulbert had been sick and housebound since the previous fall. He had not ventured out to handle any business and left the running of the National League, and his team, the White Stockings, to his understudy, Albert Spalding. While homebound, Hulbert took a turn for the worse in March of 1882 and doctors thought he had only hours to live. However, by the first two weeks of April, he appeared to have rallied and vowed to leave his house and get back to his love, the ballpark, where his White Stockings played and where he had once ruled the day-to-day operations of the club and the National League. It was not to be. Around five in the evening, on April 10, Hulbert collapsed in his home and died almost instantly of a massive heart attack.⁶

During his ten years in baseball, Hulbert created the White Stockings, the National League, and placed Chicago in the role of standard-bearer for professional athletics. Prior to Hulbert’s work with the National League and the White Stockings, Chicago had been on the periphery of baseball. In the years immediately following the Civil War, Chicago had amateur teams that could not compete with the best teams on the Eastern seaboard. This situation was demonstrated most dramatically during one game in July of 1867, when the best amateur team from Chicago, the Excelsiors, lost to the Nationals of Washington D.C. by a score of forty-nine to four. By 1870, financial and civic backers in Chicago wanted a professional organization that could compete against teams from the East, and simultaneously put Chicago on the national map of baseball. However, these early efforts of putting Chicago’s first professional team, the White

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Stockings, into the National Association of Professional Baseball Players, came to a crashing halt in the fall of 1871, when the fire burned the park and temporarily ended professional baseball in Chicago.\(^7\)

In 1866, on LaSalle Street, Chicago’s premier baseball team, the Excelsiors, opened a suite of rooms for their club members to relax and unwind during the offseason and before and after games. To celebrate the occasion, the team had a party, with a large buffet of food and drinks no stronger than coffee the players ate with silverware given to them as a gift from the citizens of Rockford, Illinois for showing “gracefulness” the prior summer when visiting the city. Fittingly, a baseball bat sat in the room, but instead of being used on the diamond, the bat came from a tree at the Chickamauga, Tennessee, battlefield, donated to the club by the Nineteenth Illinois Infantry, a memento that reinforced the link between returning war veterans and the rapid growth of baseball in the late 1860s.

During the war, the Excelsior baseball club had disbanded, and many of the players marched off to war. By August of 1865, just months after the hostilities ended, the old players reformed the team and staged games on a new field at Lake and May Streets, roughly a mile from the Loop. Initially, the club only scrimmaged, divided into two nines, and played one another. By the following summer, the Excelsiors had established themselves as the best amateur team in Chicago and generally defeated teams throughout the surrounding communities as well. During the summer, the citizens of Rockford hosted a tournament of teams from around the Midwest. Clubs from Detroit,

Cincinnati, Milwaukee, and Freeport joined the Chicago Excelsiors. The tournament winner would receive a regulation sized golden baseball as well as floral arrangement from a local women’s organization. The Excelsiors captured the championship and took the prizes back to their LaSalle Street clubhouse. By winning the championship in Rockford, the club put themselves at the top of the amateur baseball community in the Midwest. The tournament itself had been so successful that the Rockford club staged another in early fall. This second tournament drew teams from St. Louis, Peoria, Jacksonville, Ottawa, Louisville, Freeport, Springfield, and Quincy as well as the returning champion Excelsior club. Once again, the Excelsiors captured the tournament championship.\footnote{Federal Writers’ Project, \textit{Baseball in Old Chicago} (Chicago: A.C. McClurg and Company, 1939), pp. 4-5.}

The tournament victories of 1866 cemented the Excelsiors position as the premier club of the Midwest. By the summer of 1867, the Excelsiors believed they could compete nationally, with the older, more well-known clubs in Washington, Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. To prove their abilities the team staged the aforementioned game with the Washington Nationals in July of 1867. The \textit{Chicago Tribune} estimated ten thousand spectators crowded in and around Dexter Park, the field that sat on the corner of Forty-Second and Halstead Streets to watch the spectacle. Unfortunately, the crowd’s enthusiasm died during the very first inning and the spectators were obliged to sit in stunned silence as inning after inning passed with more Washington runs. The game made painfully clear that the Excelsiors and Chicago baseball were not on the same competitive level as the teams from the East. The defeat reinforced what Eastern teams
had long thought of the clubs from the West—a mere backwater of inferior ballplayers and organizations. The Tribune, looking for an excuse, in the aftermath of the debacle of the Excelsiors loss, hammered away at the Washington club. The Tribune passionately criticized the Washington Nationals for employing at least one player, the catcher Alsted, who drew an annual salary of fifteen hundred dollars. Furthermore, the paper accused Washington’s players of earning hundreds more from gambling, making them the equivalent of “circus riders or Japanese acrobats except in the style of instruments they use.” The image of ungentlemanly behavior was reinforced when the Nationals next played a team from Rockford, the Forest Citys, and remarkably lost to them twenty-nine to twenty-three. The loss to the Forest Citys was pounced upon by the Tribune as proof that the Washington team had thrown the game for a rumored sum of ten thousand dollars. Rubbing salt in the wound, many of the lost wagers came at the expense of Chicago sports were certain the Nationals could handle the Rockford nine. The paper complained that the powerful clubs that played on the East coast corrupted baseball, ruined the spirit of friendly amateur competition, and, “prostituted a healthful game perverted into a gambling operation, as demoralizing as racing or cockfighting or tiger fighting.”

Regardless of the humiliating loss and the accusations of Washington throwing a game for gambling profits, many in Chicago, including important financial backers, realized the only path to acquiring a nationally recognized baseball organization would be

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to follow the example of well trained, well managed, and financially compensated players. During the 1868 and 1869 seasons, the Excelsiors muddled along, winning games locally but unable to gain a foothold against the powerful Eastern clubs. Before 1869, teams throughout the Eastern cities had unofficially paid players for several years, but none had publicly proclaimed themselves as a fully professional organization, designed solely to gain profits and promote cities through a new paradigm of urban, baseball boosterism. During the 1869 season, the Cincinnati Red Stockings played the first fully professional baseball season, announced to the national press, and every club they played. With this transition, other teams started the process of developing fully professional organizations and the days of strict amateurism in baseball began to draw to an end. By the 1870s, Chicago and cities throughout the North fully professionalized their clubs, ending the concept of amateur baseball being played by gentlemen athletes.

Although the new professional model had countless detractors, the capitalistic transition to professional athletics had become inevitable. The thousands of spectators willing to pay ticket prices to watch baseball games supplied the demanded for a new model, where financial backers would invest in teams, demand financial returns, and make baseball part of the financial system of the new industrial city. The new model would transform baseball from an amateur system of player participation for fraternal and amateur pride to one of commercialism, looking to draw the most spectators as possible. When the fully professionalized Cincinnati Red Stockings played their first season undefeated in 1869, they only managed to secure a tiny profit. But during an Eastern tour during that first summer, they drew an estimated two hundred thousand fans, traveled in
Pullman cars, and wore practical uniforms to indicate their professional status. The next season they lost games and the team was dismantled by the end of the year. But even with the long-term failure of the Red Stockings, clubs, financial backers, and cities, recognized the future of professional baseball. By fall and winter of 1869-1870, Chicago business, political, and community leaders pushed for a new professional organization.\footnote{Robert F. Burk, \textit{Never Just a Game: Players, Owners, and American Baseball to 1920} (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1994), pp. 37-39.}

Led by Potter Palmer, wealthy Chicago businessmen and prominent citizens invested in a new professional baseball team. The Excelsiors, a team made up of local middle class gentlemen would be superseded by a baseball team made of paid professionals, drawn from cities throughout the North. In October of 1869, financial backers met to hammer out a business plan and operating guidelines that would ensure a successful baseball enterprise. The commercial model for this new “Chicago Base Ball Association,” included annual dues for member-investors and a collective model of decision making. In addition to the powerful store owner and hotelier Palmer, as the newly elected President, General Philip Sheridan, hero of the Shenandoah Valley for the Union during 1864, head of the United States Army’s critical Western Department, and later the military figure who restored order in the aftermath of the great fire, was elected Vice President of the new club. The new team planned to pay players a flat salary of twelve-hundred dollars, higher than the normal salary of Eastern teams of one thousand dollars per season. The high guaranteed salary demonstrated the Chicagoans determination to become the best. While money was making its way into top-flight
baseball organizations across the country few new teams could afford to follow Chicago’s example. Instead, they paid players in gate receipts or valuable jobs.11

The new Chicago club had been designed to compete against other professional teams and to rival the seeming power of the Cincinnati team of the 1869 season and the dominance of Eastern teams. Already deemed the “White Stockings” by the Chicago press, the team traveled throughout the South in the spring of 1870 and followed the Red Stockings step-by-step as they challenged Southern clubs, in a world still defined by the aftermath of the Civil War and a bitterly contested reconstruction. When the squad played the Bluff Citys of Memphis, they won 157-1. The White Stockings moved North by April and made Dexter Park their home field, the same diamond used by the Excelsiors. That season the Chicago club had joined the National Association of Base-Ball Players, a loose organization of clubs, some of which fielded all professional, salaried players, others which paid players via ticket sales and outside jobs, as well as a handful of clubs that still attempted to remain amateur organizations.12

During that first season, the White Stockings performed admirably and eventually squared off against the Red Stockings in September at Cincinnati’s home grounds, winning by a score of ten to six. Roughly six thousand fans filled the Stockings’ park. The Tribune was somewhat wistful about the team’s success. “It took money to accomplish the business, but it is done.” The new professional success of the White


Stockings pushed the financial backers of the team to construct the Lake Front Grounds for the 1871 season. Unfortunately the season was doomed to end in catastrophic failure with the loss of a championship, but more importantly the destruction of the city and ballpark in the Great Fire. During the spring of the 1871 season, the White Stockings joined a new league, one that unabashedly declared itself fully professional, The National Association of Professional Baseball Players, or NAPBBP, later referred to as the National Association, or NA. The league struggled and twenty-five teams came and went from the organization during the years of 1871-1875 and a little less than half of those teams played only one season. This new league failed abysmally due to the lack of central leadership, differences in compensation in player salaries, varying rules in ticket prices, widespread gambling, cheating, corruption, dishonest umpiring, and, finally, no guidelines to create an environment where all Association participants had an opportunity to thrive. The National Association of Professional Base Ball Players had not developed as a closed corporation, but rather as a fluid organization where teams participated half heartedly, scheduled outside games, and only allowed themselves a measure of allegiance with the League. Instead, they concerned themselves only with their own future and financial success, without consideration for the larger conglomeration of teams. While the White Stockings and the city of Chicago healed from the wounds of the great fire, a new concept for professional baseball began to form in the city.13

The National League Begins

By the time William Hulbert joined the White Stockings as a financial supporter in 1871, he had created a very lucrative life for himself. He had been born in Burlington Flats, New York, in 1832, a small community in Otsego County, less than twenty miles from Cooperstown, the future home of the Baseball Hall of Fame and mythical center of the creation of baseball. Two years later, Hulbert’s family moved to Chicago and, when he was a teenager, sent him to Beloit College in Beloit, Wisconsin. After graduation he returned to Chicago and quickly worked his way up in the bustling industrial growth of the city, employed first at the wholesale grocery business, J.H. Dunham Company, and later partnered in Chicago’s coal industry while acquiring a seat on the prestigious the Board of Trade. When the professional White Stockings organized in 1870, Hulbert, a rabid supporter of baseball and the larger growth of Chicago on the national stage, eagerly invested in the fledgling team. Hulbert had frequently told any listener that he would “rather be a lamp-post in Chicago than a millionaire in any other city” and his unfailing support of the dream of professional baseball in Chicago during the dark months following the fire reflected his belief in the future of the city. ¹⁴

As Chicagoans rebuilt homes and businesses, professional baseball ceased to exist in the city. But even as most Chicagoans thought little of baseball in the aftermath of the fire, the former financial backers and players did not end their desire to bring the White Stockings back to the national stage. The professional team sat dormant during the 1872-

73 seasons, with only a semi-professional White Stockings club playing the local amateur teams. By the spring of 1874, the team reentered the National Association, posting a sub five hundred record, as many of their star players returned to Eastern clubs when professional baseball disappeared after the destruction of the fire. Before the start of the 1875 season, Hulbert was called to serve as the Secretary of the team and later that same year took the position of President when acting President George Gage suffered a stroke at home and died two days later. The 1875 season once again ended in mediocrity, with the White Stockings down in the standings at the close of the pennant race in October. But once Hulbert took control of the club, he immediately developed plans to change the White Stockings as well as professional baseball and his decisions would ultimately revolutionize the future of professional sports. In October, the *Tribune* published a scathing article condemning the condition of the National Association of Professional Base Ball Players and the fleeting nature of participating clubs. The paper railed against the National Association for the organization’s inability to keep the same teams on the field year after year. Additionally, the cities that managed to get teams on the field had vastly differing skill levels, where some clubs had full salaried lineups and other clubs used a system offering employment in the community as compensation for playing. The paper reported that of the thirteen teams that started the National Association in 1875, three had folded and three more had left the pennant race prematurely. The worst offender, according to the *Tribune*, was the Brooklyn Atlantics, a team that took the field
the entire summer with amateur players and was unable to keep up with the professional teams.\textsuperscript{15}

The \textit{Chicago Tribune} covered not only the problems of the National Association, but also provided solutions the paper believed would create a stable and successful national body to govern the professional teams. The \textit{Tribune’s} sports editor, Lewis Meacham, offered up four broad suggestions to improve the association. First, only teams with a demonstrably secure financial foundation and a commitment to play a complete season should be allowed to participate. Second, Meacham called for recruiting clubs only from cities with populations of over one hundred thousand residents. Third, there could only one team from each city represented in the league, to end any competition inside individual communities. Finally, each club needed to pay a substantial deposit to enter the league, perhaps as high as one thousand dollars, as opposed to the ten-dollar entry fee of the National Association. The \textit{Tribune} article was a trial balloon. Behind the scenes White Stockings President Hulbert and Meacham planned to put the new principles into practice. At the end of the White Stockings subpar 1875 season, Hulbert contacted Albert G. Spalding, a star pitcher from the Boston club, and signed him to a contract, along with several of his teammates to play with the White Stockings during the 1876 season. Spalding had played with a Boston team that won the last three pennants, but was willing to abandon the team to correct the problems that

existed in the National Association and to work with Hulbert to rectify professional baseball. In addition to the contracts of the Boston men, Hulbert also recruited players from the Philadelphia Athletics, including future Hall of Famer Adrian “Cap” Anson. Once this nucleus of the White Stockings came together, Hulbert turned his attention to the greater task of forming a new national organization of professional baseball teams that would have the Chicago White Stockings at the epicenter. Hulbert fully understood the list of problems that existed in the National Association and worked to ensure only the most powerful teams would gain entry into this new league. The design of the new union would be a closed corporation, without the diversity of talent, pay, and flighty nature of the clubs that made up the National Association. To realize this plan, Hulbert knew he needed to proceed cautiously and somewhat secretly to ensure the best-funded clubs would listen to his arguments. In January of 1876, he took the first step by meeting with the managers of the clubs from St. Louis, Louisville, and Cincinnati, at a hotel in Louisville. He listed to the representatives the failures in the National Association, and explained the benefits a new national organization of powerful professional baseball teams could bring to member clubs. After the Louisville meeting, he scheduled another meeting in New York, in February of 1876. Once he had the backing of the western clubs, following the meeting in Louisville, he wanted to broaden his appeal to the best teams from the East, and remained hopeful the new league would begin in the spring.16

Hulbert’s grand vision for a closed corporation, a powerful new league that would control all of professional baseball, mimicked the growing importance of Chicago in the industrial age. His vision of baseball, one where Chicago stood at the epicenter of the new league, reflected the realities of railroad age geography. As the railroad hub of the nation Chicago was link between the cities of the East coast, the Great Lakes, the Ohio Valley, the South, and of course, the Great West. Railroads emanated out from the city like spokes on a wheel. Hulbert’s vision was similar to that of the grain traders of the Chicago Board of Trade and the lumber merchants along the busy banks of the Chicago River who were already using the city’s central position to build vast fortunes. Hulbert’s experience in groceries and coal had altered him to the way that railroad networks annihilated distance and stimulated the combination of smaller businesses into successful centrally controlled commercial combines. As an exercise in civic boosterism, Hulbert’s baseball combine was in a small way a realization of a half-century of Chicagoans promoting their town as “the central city.” Additionally, Hulbert’s new dream for a closed baseball corporation would allow the league to control participating organizations under the new umbrella of central control, and more importantly to dictate the players’ compensation, through the league president and club owners. Players would receive a contract for an upcoming season from the owner’s office, unable to discuss what the salary would be. This shift in the way the professional athlete would be compensated followed the pattern of the factories, slaughterhouses, and mills that filled Chicago and other large industrial American cities. Ultimately, the businessman in Hulbert sought to
create a system of owner centric baseball, where the corporation would control a player, a paid employee without bargaining rights.\footnote{Robert F. Burk, \textit{Never Just a Game: Players, Owners, and American Baseball to 1920} (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1994), p. 51.}

Hulbert called the national meeting for February 2, 1876, at the Grand Central Hotel in New York City. The representatives from the best teams of New York, Boston, Hartford, and Philadelphia, took seats next to the clubs from the West, Louisville, St. Louis, Cincinnati, and Chicago. The Western clubs came fully prepared to sway the teams from the East with their newly developed corporation. Masterfully, Hulbert was the last to enter the meeting room only after all the participants had been seated and were awaiting his arrival. With great deliberation he entered the room and without saying a word turned and locked the doors. Striding to the head of the table he explained, the locked doors would keep out the curious press, and ensure the team representatives would listen to his plan in its entirety. After he spoke, the Eastern clubs welcomed his new model, but they needed reassurance that the important place of their teams would not be overlooked in the new professional baseball paradigm. As an allowance to these teams, Hulbert, and the Western clubs, agreed that four of the five members of the governing board would come from the East, and the first President of the organization would be the President of the Hartford Dark Blues, Morgan Buckelew, a future United States Senator.
These concessions, however, could not hide the fact that, the design and desire of the new national organization came from the West, specifically Chicago.\textsuperscript{18}

When the group left the hotel they had agreed with Hulbert on his construction of a closed corporation. The newly minted National League of Professional Base Ball Clubs, soon shortened to the National League, agreed to allow clubs from cities of seventy-five thousands residents or larger, a deposit of one hundred dollars, (far less than the proposal of the \textit{Tribune} of one thousand but much greater than the ten dollars required by the N.A.), only one team from each city in the new cartel, and teams could not play organizations outside of the new league, ensuring a standardized schedule that would develop into a competitive pennant race. Each visiting team would also receive thirty percent of the gate and every team would play one another ten times, five games away and five at home. To ensure the clubs adhered to the new system, the possibility of expulsion had been strongly worded in the new agreement. Under the new guidelines, if any club used ineligible players or played teams outside of the corporation they could be ousted from the League. Furthermore, any disregard for contracts, rules, or cancellation of games or portions of the season would be met with review and the possibility of termination from the League. Above all else, this new National League had developed a
g-system of governance that far outdistanced the unorganized National Association of

Professional Base Ball Players, and created capitalistic guidelines that mirrored many of the developing industrial corporations of the period.19

**The National League Takes Hold**

When William Hulbert returned to Chicago at the end of February, he was not the League President, but the teams that signed on to the fledgling National League understood he held the strings to the organization. In that first season, the White Stockings dominated and won the first pennant with their packed lineup of players from Philadelphia and the former National Association champions from Boston. Albert Spalding, born in Byron, Illinois, the star pitcher from Boston, and formerly a hurler from the semiprofessional team of Rockford, Illinois, finished the season with an astonishing pitching record of forty-seven and twelve, and he led the team to the first National League championship. Spalding served not only as a pitcher, but also as a captain, manager, and right-hand man to Hulbert for the day-to-day operations of the White Stockings and the National League. These two men dominated the progress of the new national organization and, by 1877 Spalding served solely as an executive, helping to manage the operations of the White Stockings, the National League, and his new-found business venture, sporting goods. Meanwhile, by the start of the 1877 season, Hulbert seized the position of League President, a position he held until his death in 1882. By securing absolute control of the National League, with the title of President, Hulbert drew

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the ire of many National League teams and criticism from newspapers around the nation. Many of the critics feared that the new National League would become the personal baseball corporation of Hulbert and that all decisions, both for the inner workings of the teams as well as the experience for the fans that flooded the parks throughout the North, would come solely from his office.\textsuperscript{20}

The 1876 season was an economic failure. Two of the most important teams, the Philadelphia Athletics and the New York Mutuals, were expelled from the league during the season, unable to keep pace with expenses incurred on player salaries and traveling expenses. The issues troubling both teams, as well as other organizations in the National League, came from a multitude of unexpected problems. Ironically, the League had been formed to end the troubles of an unstable schedule, and to eliminate financially unstable teams, but found itself plagued with the same issues. The actual financial losses by each organization are not known, but the Boston team had an individual loss of almost eight hundred dollars, which was probably much less than the worst performing teams. The National League’s adherence to a strict schedule, in which games could only be played between member teams, crippled many organizations opportunities to become financially stable. In prior seasons, under the limited requirements of the National Association, teams had the ability to play games outside of their league schedule, and these extra games allowed teams to earn more at the gate while simultaneously undermining the

integrity of the National Association’s pennant race. Once the National League’s schedule took hold, teams lost these extra games and, in the case of the Philadelphia club during the 1876 season, the team pleaded unsuccessfully for an end to their Western schedule, with games staged in Chicago and St. Louis, and asked the teams to come to Philadelphia instead to save the team further financial losses. The desperation of the club even called for the visiting squads to take a percentage of the gate receipts much greater than standard split developed during the February meeting in New York, in hopes of staving off monetary failure. Even the fear of travel expenses and concession returns put Philadelphia in this dire predicament. The precarious situation of the National League in these first years spoke to the larger problems of the national economy, mired in a depression that emerged with the Panic of 1873, when banks closed, railroads failed, and thousands of Americans lost jobs. By 1876 and 1877, the economy in the industrializing North had still not recovered, leading to a decline in amusements and, in particular professional baseball. 21

Once Hulbert gained full control of the League, he would not allow member teams to fluctuate from the organization’s ticket prices and strict prohibition of alcohol served during games. Hulbert forced participating clubs to stick to the fifty-cent admission price, even as teams suffered financially and hoped for a reduced ticket price to lure more fans. He anticipated the more expensive ticket price would cater to the middle-class fan and eliminate working class baseball fans from gaining entry to the

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ballpark. In this vision, the National League would be competitive with other middle class diversions of the period, such as the theatre and lectures in auditoriums. Building on this theme of respectability, Hulbert refused to allow Sunday games, often the only day during the work week in which the working class and ethnic groups had free time from the factories and mills. Hulbert hoped the adherence to these rules would make the National League a respectful Victorian entertainment and move baseball away from unruly fans, gambling, and public intoxication, that he thought marred the sport under the loose guidelines of the National Association. Hulbert’s desire to build the National League as the sporting outlet for the middle-class in the growing industrial city, developed largely from the ethnic, political, and religious divisions that had become commonplace in Chicago by the 1870s. The city’s Republican political establishment, that Hulbert belonged to, feared the growing influence of immigrants and ever increasing labor disputes hindered growth in Chicago, both locally and nationally. Hulbert’s vision of the National League would eliminate the undesirable group of immigrants and working poor, and instead, he and the new cartel would provide the protestant, middle-class fan a sanitized and respectable diversion, and the ballpark would become an outpost of imagined Victorian ideals. Ultimately, Hulbert’s blueprint for a middle-class spectacle would make the National League the beacon of the white-collar baseball fan. These limitations would force the St. Louis Browns to pull out of the League after the 1877 season to have the freedom to serve beer to the large German population of their city.22

This drive to create an enclave of middle class baseball emerged at the same time as unprecedented labor unrest in Chicago and nationally. In the post-Civil War period workers in Chicago for the first time began to come together across ethnic lines and cooperate in trade councils and workingmen’s associations. The old Republican Party notion of free labor ideology was eroded by the growing size of industrial enterprises that shattered previous bonds between employers and workers. Labor organized for a shorter work day and more pay that ultimately led to violent strikes in the 1870s. This tension culminated in the 1877 railroad strikes that swept over Chicago and the nation, and created violent clashes between the government authority and workers and their families. In Chicago, the United States Army was deployed to restore order and bring the strikes to an end. The strike had been crushed by September, and the city went back to work, although under the specter of a changed world, where violence could appear any day between labor and capital. During the same period coal miners went on strike in different parts of Illinois, where miners struck in far south St. Clair County in 1868 and in 1874 at a coal mine in Braidwood, much closer to Chicago. Hulbert, who made his money in coal had to be fully aware of this labor unrest. While Hulbert and Spalding designed the future of the National League in 1876-1877, these tensions certainly reinforced their decisions to further develop a baseball order modeled on the white middle class.

population of the city, removed from the labor unrest driven by the working class population as a reaction to the growing capitalistic order of industrializing America.\textsuperscript{23}

The financial problems experienced by every other team of the National League did not keep the White Stockings from turning a profit. Instead, their economic success strengthened their position within the National League. When Albert Spalding, the star player and manager, started a sporting goods company in February 1876, fellow clubs and the press, both locally and nationally, questioned the direction of the new League. His recent business venture received the lucrative contract to produce the equipment used in all National League games and also gained the rights to produce the official League guidebook, bought by thousands of Americans, season after season, and utilized as a powerful tool for the National League to communicate with fans buying tickets to the games. Once Spalding controlled the official media outlet of the League, as well as the equipment used by the players and sold to the public, and Hulbert controlled the operations of the only profitable team and served as President for the entire League, the White Stockings organization guided the most prominent baseball association in the nation.\textsuperscript{24}

Spalding's sporting goods company, created with eight hundred dollars in the same year of the National League's founding in 1876, developed into the most famous


and lucrative company of its kind by the beginning of the twentieth century. He used the company to sell sporting goods to the middle-class, just as he and Hulbert sold baseball to the same segment of the population. Spading embraced the middle-class desire to see high quality products, made by experts, and advertised as certified goods. Spalding's company always emphasized quality products, the best money could buy, with advertisements designed to make consumers contemplate morality when making purchases between cheaply made goods and unscrupulous business practices by their competitors. Spalding's ultimate sporting goods empire that was questioned as a trust by 1910 connected the city of Chicago to the rest of the country. This connection appeared not only in sporting goods but also in the growing power of the mail order catalogs by Montgomery Ward and Sears during the same era. They too followed the idea of using the industrial and transportation might of Chicago to sell high quality products to people throughout the nation, in small towns and rural communities that gave the consumers the feeling they were window shopping in the best merchant districts in America's largest cities. Through his baseball, cycling, indoor baseball, and other sporting guidebooks, Spalding sold the middle class American the idealized image of American sports that coupled well with the growing power of the White Stockings and the National League in Chicago.25

The dominance of Hulbert, Spalding, the White Stockings, and Chicago, in the control of the National League became even more apparent in the years following the

inaugural season of 1876. Even through a precipitous fall during the 1877 season, to a fifth place finish in the pennant race and a losing record, the Chicago White Stockings were still the most financially dominant team in the League. In fact, Hulbert’s grasp on the National League remained stronger than ever and he fought through economic downturns in the United States economy to keep the fledgling league afloat. From 1876 to 1891 twenty-two teams entered and left the National League, with only the White Stockings and the Boston team remaining for the duration. Every year as teams came and went League teams relied upon the ticket receipts from games with the White Stockings, the preeminent team in the organization, and usually the only organization to turn a profit, even if they were not in contention for the pennant. The National League did not exist without competition and detractors, as many clubs that participated in the National Association tried to compete and draw fans away from the new league. In 1876, a new national conglomeration of teams formed, the International Association of Professional Base Ball Players that attempted to compete with the National League and included former teams of the National Association. Additionally, dozens of other professional teams challenged the League as independent operators, barnstormed across the country, and dreamed of drawing away the fans who bought tickets to National League parks. With Hulbert’s guidance, the National League tried to eliminate the competition by offering competing teams a chance to join the organization, many times by overlooking the seventy-five thousand population requirement spelled out in the bylaws. Even as Hulbert conveniently bent the rules to allow smaller cities the chance at joining the
National League, he still refused alcohol to be sold in the parks or for clubs to offer cheaper tickets.\(^{26}\)

On September 22, 1879, owners and administrators of the National League clubs gathered at Pierce’s Palace Hotel in Buffalo, New York to discuss the ongoing problem of escalating player salaries. Hulbert controlled the meeting and, through an intense session that took up most of the day, the group determined to take drastic measures against player salaries and to ensure future earnings of the League. The White Stockings, even as late as the 1879 season, were the only profitable organization in the National League. Fortunately, by 1880 the rival International League that had openly challenged the National League had fallen apart. But even as rival competition diminished, the League continued to struggle with team continuity and profitability. In light of these problems, Hulbert pushed for a new system of player compensation that was ultimately referred to as the reserve clause. Years earlier, the National Association, in an effort to bring down the most costly expense on a team, player salaries, created a rule that prohibited players from jumping from team to team in the middle of season, in an effort to secure more lucrative contracts. From its inception in 1876, the National League also adhered to this rule and players remained with their contracted clubs throughout each season. For the ownership of League teams, a new problem had developed that caused player salaries to increase during the first seasons. Prior to the 1879 season, owners gave contracts to the players, that were largely nonnegotiable, and the player could either take the salary offered or leave the team. At the beginning of each

season, players had the ability to transfer their services to the best paying organization, that created a catch-22 with teams paying higher salaries for the chance of winning games all the while the higher salaries drove the teams’ financial records into the red.\textsuperscript{27}

Hulbert pushed through a new reserve clause that would end the ability of a player to negotiate his services with vying clubs at the outset of each season. The reserve clause existed as a gentleman’s agreement, never formally written down, but clung to by every organization for almost one hundred years, as a fundamental tool in earning a profit. The clause was so named because initially, each National League team had the right to reserve five players from their roster before the outset of the season. By the middle of the 1880s, that number of reserved players increased to eleven, and eventually the entire team was covered by the clause. Under the new rule, a player signed a contract that paid for their services for an entire baseball season, but the contract also called for their services to be held in reserve for the following season. Therefore, a player could not negotiate with other clubs before the outset on the next season; they had to either accept the contract offered by their contracted team from the prior season or not play at all. Additionally, the club had the right to terminate the contract at any point, without a guarantee of salary for either the reserved or current season. This enormous change in player salaries worked against the fundamental nature of a free market society. The player’s rights for negotiation had been eliminated for the profitability of the corporation. The new system stymied much of the growth in player salaries, but fell far short of

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Hulbert’s original goal of dropping player compensation to the level of the working class Chicagoan. Instead, teams still paid players much higher salaries than the hourly wages earned by workers in the industrial city. Teams hesitated to drop salaries too low, as they feared an enormous reduction in pay would equate to poor performance on the field and would ultimately lead to less ticket buyers in the ballpark. The new reserve clause managed to create a system that allowed for much smaller salaries over the course of years and also gave a much greater margin of profitability for National League. This new system of labor contracts existed in Major League Baseball until the 1970s.28

Through the end of the nineteenth century, the National League represented the pinnacle of professional baseball. A middle class fan base remained the foundation of its success. In 1880, the League sent a stern warning to all players that improper behavior, specifically drinking alcohol to excess, and any uncouth behavior, on and off the field, would not be tolerated. Before the 1882 season, the League expelled ten players for drunkenness, hoping to set an example for all participating clubs. Following the death of Hulbert in 1882, Albert Spalding took control of the League and continued to battle the perceived problem of alcohol use by players. In 1884, the issue of alcohol manifested itself within the White Stockings organization, when Michael ‘King” Kelly, the star outfielder and catcher, spent countless nights carousing and drinking in the bars and haunts of Chicago. Initially, Spalding hired detectives to tail Kelly through the streets, in hopes of catching the player in comprised situations and then punish him for his behavior. Unable to control Kelly, and other players embroiled in similar behavior,

Spalding sold their contracts to other organizations. Furthermore, in 1888, the League attempted to constrict player salaries by implementing a classification system, where the player’s performance on the field would be categorized into grades of pay, where “A” quality players would be compensated a set amount and those salaries would decrease until the lowest rung player would be classified as an “E” skill level and salary.²⁹

Spalding had been out of the country for a worldwide exposition of baseball when this new salary classification took hold. In his absence, the other league owners pushed forward, and planned to further control the salaries of players and ultimately increase profit for the League’s teams. Immediately, the players revolted against the new classification system and, by the start of the 1890 season, created the Player’s League, a new professional organization that created a union brotherhood, with player salaries placed as the highest priority. In Chicago, the Players' League fielded a team called the Pirates and were managed by future White Sox owner Charles Comiskey. They played at a newly constructed stadium at 35th and Wentworth, given the name Brotherhood Park that could seat up to fifteen thousand fans and ironically occupied the following season by the White Stockings organization. Comiskey's club, as well as the rest of the star-studded league only existed for one season, crushed by the power of the National League. The National League teams were willing to take a loss during the 1891 season rather than face competition from a professional organization that focused on bargaining rights for the players. In fact, Spalding compared the revolution of the players to the growing strikes and labor unrest in the industrial city, and mocked their experiment as well paid

prima donnas, with expensive clothes and cigars, trying to earn more money for playing a simple game. Ultimately, the victory by National League, over the gamble of the players, came down to preservation of the reserve clause.\(^{30}\)

Simultaneously, the National League faced strong competition from another upstart league, the American Association, an organization that developed in direct competition against Hulbert’s vision of Victorian morality. The American Association held games on Sunday afternoons, allowed liquor sales in the ballpark, and charged only a quarter for a ticket, half the price of a National League game. Initially, the National League treated the American Association as an unsavory collection of low-brow teams and dubbed the new organization the Beer Ball League. Spalding, and other owners in the National League, believed the new league pandered to the working class by allowing their patrons to drink alcohol in the seats and attend Sunday games. Even with the initial disregard for the American Association, the National League quickly realized the new conglomeration threatened its position as the premier baseball establishment. By 1883, the growing strength of the American Association forced the two leagues to create an agreement that neither league would poach players from the other, an issue that would damage the power of the reserve clause. The growing importance of the American

Association created the precursor to the World Series and for the years the Association existed, from 1882 to 1891, the two leagues played in seven championship series.\textsuperscript{31}

By 1891, the American Association could no longer compete against the powerful National League, even after outperforming them in ticket sales in several seasons. Once the Players’ League collapsed at the end of the 1890 season, both the American Association and the National League scrambled to sign the star players looking for new clubs. This effort to secure players also led to the abandonment of the agreement the two leagues had made years before to not steal players from one another. As both the National League and American Association signed players from the opposing league, players’ salaries skyrocketed, and created an untenable environment for financial success. In this intense competition, the National League had deeper pockets and forced the American Association to financial ruin. At the close of the 1891 season, four of the former American Association teams merged with eight of the National League teams, and created the National Agreement of 1892.\textsuperscript{32}

The fallout of the Players’ League and the damage incurred by the baseball war between the American Association and the National League, together with the long nation-wide economic depression hurt baseball throughout the 1890s. Fan interest decreased and so did admission to the parks, where attendance dropped by thousands


during the decade. The fans had also grown accustomed to a semi-annual championship series that existed in the era of the American Association, but this contest disappeared with the organization. The National League experimented with dividing the league into divisions for an end of the year series, and in other years attempted to have the first and second place teams square off after the pennant was captured. Both efforts failed dreadfully and created little fan interest. As public support dwindled, the National League tried to recoup the losses of escalating player salaries that skyrocketed during the battles with the American Association and the Players’ League. Throughout the 1890s club owners slashed player salaries and reduced the number of players on each team’s lineup. The decade long depression did not help the National League either, as Americans did not buy tickets at the ballpark in an age of widespread economic distress.

As unemployment grew and the National League stagnated, the moral codes enforced by Spalding and Hulbert since the inception of the League, started to fall away. Once the National League admitted four American Association teams in the aftermath of the 1891 season, it gave those clubs the right to serve alcohol and play Sunday games, just as they had done in the past. By the end of the decade these looser moral practices spread to the other National League clubs, where inebriation in the seats became a more common sight and the newspapers announced wagers placed by well-known businessmen, managers, and players. In 1885, Spalding officially stepped away as the President of the National League, remaining only as the President of the White Stockings. Even without the official title, he remained a powerful figure in the League, and influenced many, if not all of the collective decisions. By 1891, Spalding had removed
himself even farther from the daily operations, and relinquished the Presidency of the White Stockings to a business partner, James A. Hart, a minor stockholder in the team. Spalding had guided the league through the tumultuous period of competition between the American Association and the Players’ League, but wanted to spend more time with both his family and his sporting goods company. Spalding still held the majority interest in the club and never completely abandoned the Chicago team. The death of Hulbert and exit of Spalding accelerated the financial downturn of the National League in the 1890s. Without their day-to-day guidance, the League relaxed its formerly strict moral guidelines and allowed the owners and managers to operate their clubs more independently. Furthermore, during the decade, the White Stockings, now known as the Colts, played poorly, even under the guidance of Adrian “Cap” Anson. With the Chicago club losing games, attendance dropped in the city, the most important metropolis in the National League. The lackluster ticket sales also cost other League teams thousands of dollars, when fans lost interest in a visiting Colts game, and the cut from ticket sales in Chicago games dwindled. During the 1890s, the power and control of the League had all but disappeared from Chicago, yet other cities failed to seize control. As the National League diminished in Chicago and nationally, it would take the emergence of another professional league from the Chicago, the American League, to rekindle devotion to professional baseball on the national stage and to reassert the important role Chicago played in the creation of professional sports.\footnote{Benjamin G. Rader, \textit{Baseball: A History of America’s Game} (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), p. 83. Steven A. Riess, \textit{Encyclopedia of Major League Baseball Clubs} (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2006), p. 64.}
The Chicago Fan and the Park

In July of 1876, the Whites Stockings found themselves embroiled in a tight pennant race, the first in the new National League. The team played the Hartford club on the afternoon of July 5, at the 23rd Street grounds, the diamond the team occupied from 1874-1875, as members of the National Association, and now their home field for their first season in the National League. The Tribune reported the throngs that filled the seats, and stood in the outfield for the game represented the largest audience to witness a baseball game in Chicago since 1870. Outside the park, brokers sold tickets at twice their face value as the stadium turned into a mass of humanity, rabidly eager to watch their “Whites” take on the competition. “Idiots” positioned themselves in the bleachers and lit off fireworks, while the police stood around like “monkeys,” grinning, while young boys fired guns off into the air, jeopardizing the safety of the entire crowd.34

The ballpark that July did not match the vision William Hulbert had for the National League. He expected respectable, middle-class Chicagoans to fill the stadium and act with decorum and respectability. However, the fans who shot off fireworks and guns, and those who shouted wildly at the play on the field, did not deter Hulbert from developing a professional ballpark for the middle-class fans of the White Stockings. He wanted a baseball stadium located directly in the path of middle-class Chicagoans, near the fledgling public transportation system and homes of the white-collar workers, while simultaneously positioned near the downtown business district. The team only stayed at the 23rd Street grounds for the 1876 and 1877 seasons, a stadium accessible only by horse

cart and later by steam powered engines. Hulbert realized this park would not be the long-term home of the White Stockings because it was not conducive to drawing the middle-class sporting fan. The city government debated the possibility of a ballpark along Michigan Avenue, and the lakefront, before allowing the White Stockings to construct a field near the pre-fire sight of the first lake front grounds. The city’s government finally agreed to the proposal after an analysis of the alternative, a field filled with rubbish and rotating circuses, a common occurrence since the fire of 1871. In compensation, the Committee on Wharves and Grounds required the Chicago club to pay five hundred dollars annually for police protection35

All professional baseball parks of the period had been built from wood, unlike the steel and concrete stadiums that would be commonplace in the twentieth century. When baseball’s popularity increased throughout the century, the parks grew larger, but the materials and design changed little. This inexpensive method of construction meant the movement of teams from one facility to the next cost little and gave teams more fluidity to attract the most desirable fan. The Lake Park, adjacent to the developed Loop business district, allowed the white-collar worker to travel short distances for weekday afternoon games. Compared to the modern standard of the Major League Baseball field, Lake Park looked bizarre. The park was a slender rectangle, with only a one hundred and ninety-six foot fence in the corner of right field and a one hundred and eighty foot distance to the corner in left. In an era of players trying for singles, homeruns became abundant. To

counteract the explosion of homeruns, the club created ground rules that called for a ball over the fence to be deemed a ground rule double, a regulation the club eventually terminated during the 1884 season. With the ending of the ground rule double in 1884, a ball over the fence equated to homeruns and the White Stockings slugged an unprecedented one hundred and forty two, the most in Major League Baseball until the 1927 New York Yankees.  

The White Stockings played at this location through the 1884 season, when again the city government got involved, this time, instead of allowing the club to use city land, pushing the team away for a violation of operating a private business on public property. The club, under Spalding’s direction, analyzed multiple locations throughout the city to build a new park. He debated moving the team to the Union grounds, at 39th and Wabash, but ruled this space inadequate to attract his desired patrons, the middle-class fans who worked and lived near the downtown business district. The location also had inadequate public trains and street cars that would limit the ability for the business man to get to the stadium. He also planned a possible move to the North, again along the lake, on Ohio Street, just blocks from the Chicago River. This space did not fit his requirements either, as public transportation again fell short and the land itself was too small for the park he intended to build. Ultimately, Spalding signed a five-year lease to construct a new ballpark on land bordered by Congress, Harrison, Throop, and Loomis Streets. The property had over six hundred feet of street frontage on Congress and

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slightly more than four hundred on Loomis, but over the years, the newspapers, and the fans, referred to the field as Loomis Street Park. Close to the business district, a little over two miles to the heart of today’s Loop, and with the Van Buren streetcar passing closer than a block from the field, the property met Spalding’s requirements. Before the ballpark, the land sat empty, other than one small cottage the team razed for the construction. Spalding planned for brick outfield fences, grandstands supported by trusses, and a series of private boxes for the wealthiest citizens, visiting clubs, as well as the owners and administrators of the White Stockings. The arena gave the press their own private boxes to cover the action on the field, an ever growing necessity to allow the selling of the sport through the daily publications. The walls of the players’ clubhouses were constructed of brick, as well as were a set of dressing rooms on the opposite end of the field for visiting football teams, cricket clubs, and bicyclists. To accommodate the recent explosion in bicycle races, Spalding had a first-class bicycle racing track constructed around the diamond. The new stadium was fully enclosed, with twelve-foot walls in the outfield, the only park in the world to be enclosed, other than the Lord’s Grounds in central London.37

The club played at the field, even as the middle-class fans they hoped to attract looked questionably on a massive baseball stadium, with ten thousand seats, being dropped in the middle of their neighborhood. The team played all of their home games at Loomis Street Park until 1891, when they staged half of their contests in the west side field, and the other half at the field on 39th and Wentworth, the former home of the

Brotherhood team, of the defunct Players’ League. Spalding, although lessening his control on day-to-day operations of the team, decided the spot would work well, as the field sat close to the upcoming World’s Fair, and the neighborhood had an emerging middle-class population. Additionally, the field had nearby access to public transit, and rented for twenty percent less of the field on Loomis Street. By 1892, the team played all of their games on the Southside and abandoned the first West side grounds. The Loomis Street park was quickly razed, the bricks, boards, and other construction materials repurposed into a hotel near the former field. The land the ballpark stood on was also quickly resold for businesses and dwellings. The team used the 39th street park through the 1893 season, when Spalding had finished building a new thirty thousand dollar stadium on land he had acquired between, Lincoln, Polk, Wood, and Taylor Streets, directly across from Cook County Hospital. The new location of the park looked perfect to Spalding and the Colts, surrounded by middle class families, and devoid of immigrants and the working class. During the 1893 season, the team only played Sunday games at the site, with the other contests held at the 39th Street grounds.\textsuperscript{38} By 1894, the team played every home game at the West Side Grounds and it remained their home field through the 1915 season, after which they took over the former stadium of the failed Federal League team, the Chicago Whales, originally called Weeghman Park, and later converted to Wrigley Field.\textsuperscript{39}

\textsuperscript{38} By the 1890s it had become commonplace for National League teams to stage Sunday games, in direct opposition to the original plan for the National League to adhere to strict Victorian values.

\textsuperscript{39} “Old Landmark Gone,” \textit{The Sunday Inter Ocean}, August 25, 1892, p. 10. Robin Bachin, \textit{Building the South Side: Urban Space and Civic Culture in Chicago 1890-1919} (Chicago: University of
A new ballpark did not eliminate obstacles to financial success for the National League club. During the 1894 season, as the Chicago Colts played at their new diamond, the residents of the neighborhood, those same middle-class fans, Spalding saw as his economic base, started to grow angry at the raucous and thriving stadium. Additionally, the potential horrors of a wooden grandstand became apparent on a Sunday afternoon game, August 5. The stands of the new ballpark had been closely divided into sections based on the price of tickets. By this point, the Chicago club sold twenty-five cent seats to the “cranks” that supported the Colts. To keep these more boisterous fans out of the fifty-cent bleachers, the team had strung barbed wire that divided the two sections. Additionally, the club had put barbed wire along the wall that separated the field from the stands, in hope of keeping the patrons from swarming the field and attacking the umpire. This worry was a real one, as fans at the 39th Street grounds had jumped the wall to accost the umpire a few years prior. During the Sunday afternoon game, a fan in the fifty-cent seats dropped a lit cigar stub either in a patch of grass near the bleachers, or through the seats onto the top of a tool shed. Regardless of the location, the cigar smoldered and eventually caught the grandstand on fire. Roughly ten thousand fans packed into the stadium that afternoon and, when they spotted the fire, the five thousand sitting in the stands where the flames erupted, panicked and climbed and clawed to get out of the grandstand. Over five hundred people had lacerations from leaping over barbed wire, including at least one woman whose dress had been torn to ribbons and had

a gash from her hip to her ankles. Amazingly, no one died, but one man leapt from the top of the stands, onto the sidewalk below and suffered a broken leg. The boards of the ballpark, dried from the summer temperatures, virtually exploded in flames, and it, “spread up and down the dry structure, as if it traveled on trains of powder. If a man had set to work to dispose of a given amount of pine lumber in an effective bonfire he could not have done better than to have it built into that stand.” The wooden sidewalks turned to ash, buildings near the park caught fire, and the cedar blocks that paved the streets around the stadium burned as well. Half of the park’s stands were either destroyed or damaged, at a cost of over five-thousand dollars. The players on the field got involved in the rescue, by holding open the barbed wires to allow fans to run onto the field. The Tribune, made sure to point out that “Uncle Anson’s Colts” won the game that day, by a score of eight to two. The following day, in another display of the danger of wooden parks, the Philadelphia Phillies stadium burned completely to the ground, when a careless workman left a burning cigar in one of the clubhouses. Fortunately, there were no injuries or deaths, and only a handful of players were practicing on the diamond when the stands burned.40

The stadium fire seems to have unleashed a pack of complainants against the Colts ball park. Spaulding may have sought a middle class audience for his team, but not all fans who turned up for the game behaved in a “middle class” manner. In the short time the Colts played at the Westside Grounds, saloons popped up in the blocks that

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surrounded the stadium, and charges were leveled that ball fans got drunk in these establishments, before and after the games, driving down the character of the middle-class neighborhood and reducing property values. Additionally, anger at the increased number of Sunday games caused a minority of Chicagoans to push for an injunction in the courts to force the club to close the ballpark on the Sabbath. The International Sunday Observance League, with supporters in Chicago, drove the effort to stop games on Sundays. Initially, the religious group won its suit and by court order Sunday baseball was suspended. In a panic Spaulding and the other White Sox investors called in every political favor they could muster. Mayor John Hopkins rallied to their support and the Sabbath injunction was lifted. The superior court ruled that a minority opinion could not force the end of Sunday games and the Sunday Observance League did not bring evidence, but rather opinion. Sunday games continued for the Chicago Colts, but it was clear by the middle of the 1890s, the middle-class Victorian values that Hulbert and Spalding had worked so hard to foster, slowly had eroded. In their place the ballparks had cheaper seats for the working class, boisterous supporters enjoying libations before and after the games, and select seating for more well-to-do Chicagoans. Outside the park Sabbataians were left to ponder their ever declining influence in the dynamic city.41

The Chicago fan who arrived in the park came mostly came from the middle-class population, just as Hulbert originally designed. Initially, the club staged their games during weekday afternoons and on Saturdays, without games on Sundays. The vast majority of the patrons available to go to the park were the white-collar enthusiasts from

the businesses in downtown Chicago. The factory workers and employees in the
slaughterhouses did not have the ability to watch an afternoon game, or even on
Saturdays, in an era when the work week extended to six days. The scheduling of the
games, coupled with the high fifty-cent ticket prices, drove away most working class
fans. During the period, most fans arrived in the wardrobe of businessmen, black suits
and bowlers or straw hats, not the garb of a working-class Chicagoan. Occasionally,
teams staged ladies’ day, and offered admission to women free of charge, but these fans
were accompanied by the same middle-class patron on the average weekday game, as
special sections of the stadium were set aside to accommodate the female spectator and
her escort. Although the photos that captured the crowds at the beginning of the
twentieth century, in the formal dress of the era, made the fans appear as a singular
population of white-collar Chicagoans, working-class fans may have attended the games
in their Sunday best, wearing the same black suits of the middle-class, more easily
procured in the mass produced garments of the industrial city. Only black Chicagoans, a
minority of the city's population faced exclusion from the stands of National League
games. Although African-Americans infrequently attended games, the opportunity
would have been rare, as the aforementioned conditions would have limited their ability
to purchase seats and spend a weekday afternoon away from their jobs.42

The argument over Sunday baseball continued through the 1890s, and the
Chicago team continued to stage games on the Sabbath, as long as the fans, and ticket
sales, demanded them. The club did not embrace the growing presence of beer at

42 Steven A. Reiss, Touching Base: Professional Baseball and American Culture in the
National League games and kept regulations in place to keep alcohol out of the park. This trend ended in the twentieth century as the public demand of beer sales forced teams to provide the drink at every game. By the 1890s, the holdovers from the American Association served alcohol and, by the emergence of the American League at the dawn of the twentieth century drinking in stadiums became a normal component of the fan experience. As Victorian morals waned the importance of Chicago to the growth of baseball in the United States continued to wax. The 1903 National Agreement between the American and National Leagues like the 1876 creation of the National League made clear Chicago’s central role in organizing baseball on a rational, cooperative, and profitable basis. In this way the legacy of Hulbert, Spalding, and fledgling National League of 1876, continued to impact the development of baseball well into the twentieth century. Their efforts created a stable league, manicured for the middle-class Chicagoan, and ultimately developed a national mind frame that put baseball in the forefront of American culture.
CHAPTER TWO

AFRICAN-AMERICAN BASEBALL

During the evening of November 11, 1895, the Chicago Amateur Baseball Association met in the Great Northern Hotel at the corner of Jackson and Dearborn. All 159 teams of the Association vied to win the Chicago Amateur pennant that prior summer and the members gathered in the modern and luxurious hotel to award the title to the best Chicago amateur baseball team of 1895. The Daniel Burnham designed building had electric lights on all seventeen floors, a pipe organ that echoed throughout the lobby, and nine bars – one of which was elegant enough to only accept silver coins for drinks.¹ The Chicago Unions captured the pennant that year with an astounding record of 47-9. Ten players from the Unions represented the club at the proceedings and were celebrated by scores of players from other teams. The most astonishing aspect of this Amateur Association congregation was the fact that the Unions were an all African-American team in a sea of white competitors.²

The Unions, and their pennant-winning season of 1895, represent an example of the blurring of racial divisions in Chicago during the end of the nineteenth century. Baseball, at times, had the power to unify African-Americans and whites in a period known for extreme segregation and racial violence. The Unions remained segregated.

¹ “Last Checkout Today at Great Northern Hotel,” The Chicago Tribune, February 1, 1940, p. 1.
² “Unions Get the Amateur Pennant,” The Chicago Tribune, November 12, 1895, p. 8.
They had no white players nor were their players allowed to play on white teams. However, the Amateur Association, comprised overwhelmingly of whites, congratulated the team for its pennant and took the field with the Unions throughout the amateur baseball season. The Unions are also indicative of the larger picture in Chicago’s black baseball structure at the end of the nineteenth century. Early failures of blacks to participate on white professional, semi-professional and amateur teams forced them to close ranks and develop their own teams and eventually, in the 1920s, their own leagues.

The period from the 1870s until the first decade of the twentieth century represents a transitional period in African-American baseball. The timeframe sits between the national explosion of baseball’s popularity immediately after the Civil War and the early twentieth century’s creation of a long running system of moderately profitable and successful black baseball teams, as well as the founding era of Major League Baseball and the dawning of the World Series. During the 1880s, 90s, and the first decade of the twentieth century, black teams found their own course by barnstorming, playing locally, and, in some cases, starting to make money from their play on the field. Black players, entrepreneurs, and the small black fan base occupied a place in Chicago baseball that belied the racial climate of late nineteenth century city, without overtly challenging the segregationist and racist social strictures of the period. Furthermore, in this period the black experience in baseball changed from an attempt at assimilation by playing the game alongside whites, to one of operating within the rules of segregated Chicago as well as to make a profitable sport and entertaining spectacle. The white spectator also supported African-American clubs and games through their purchasing of tickets to black games as
well as to games played between white and black teams. This audience of white fans gave black teams the opportunity to capture a larger audience and rely less on the African-American community for support. As historian Michael Lomax has pointed out, "the forces that influenced the development of modern white baseball – the political economy, industrialization, and urbanization – created a complex anomaly for Afro-Americans who sought to capitalize upon the baseball craze."³

Baseball in Chicago clearly illustrated the racist atmosphere of the period and demonstrated how African-Americans struggled daily with a designation as second-class citizens. Within that confined environment, African-Americans utilized baseball as an entry point into the larger urban order, to bring together the fledging, pre-migration population of blacks in the city, while simultaneously making baseball an institution of the black community that was as important to, if not more so, than white baseball to the white community. The transitional period of black baseball, from amateur clubs to semiprofessional teams, and finally to professional salaried teams in the twentieth century, largely mirrored the development of the white baseball structure. And while much of the growth of African American baseball in Chicago centered on the support of the black community, the game did not develop in a bubble removed from the rest of the city. Instead, successful black teams, such as the aforementioned Chicago Unions, barnstormed across Illinois and the Midwest, played white teams, took on white clubs in the city, and participated in leagues that were predominately made of white teams. Ultimately, the ability of the black baseball structure to succeed relied on the support of

the black community and fans but also the seeming insatiable desire of white baseball fans to watch good games, regardless of the team's skin color, and buy tickets to the contests. And unlike the much of the development of the ballpark, fans, players, teams, and leagues of white baseball, which focused on attracting different economic classes of Chicago, black teams operated under the more clear lines of segregation and played against a varied group of white teams, from low-level amateur clubs as well as exhibitions and league games against the best white semiprofessional teams. These components, brought together will illustrate the complexity of African-American baseball.⁴

Nineteenth Century African-Americans in Chicago

During the nineteenth century Africans Americans represented a very small minority in the City of Chicago. The Great Migration of African Americans came years later, starting on the eve of the First World War and ending in the 1950s and 60s. African Americans in the nineteenth century lived largely on the Southside of the city along State Street beginning at the southern end of the downtown business district and by 1900 stretching to 39th Street. Later, the area would become known as the “Black Belt” as the population exploded and ever expanded along the State Street corridor during the Great Migration. Blacks represented less than one percent of the city’s population in 1860. By 1880 that percentage had only risen to 1.1 percent of the city’s total population of 500,000. The black population had grown to almost two percent by 1900 and this number would not rise above four percent until 1920. These figures are far smaller than

the number of African-Americans living in the city by 1930 when almost seven percent of the population was black and by 2000 that number had risen to 36.8 percent of the city’s population – far greater than the 12.3 national average. While the immediate south side of Chicago, directly below the Loop, became the center of Chicago’s black population, blacks also lived intermingled with the white population and prior to 1900 a large percentage of them lived on city blocks that did not have a majority of African-American residents. Blacks lived in the fledgling “Black Belt” during the period but also resided west and north of the Loop.⁵

As the population of African Americans slowly increased in the nineteenth century, so did racial tension in Chicago and other Northern American cities. In the South, Jim Crow laws, racist traditions, and the failures of reconstruction created a deeply entrenched segregation that existed until the middle to late twentieth century. In the north, segregation did not have as deep a tradition to draw upon. However, most early white migrants to Illinois came from the upper Southern states of Kentucky and Tennessee as well as the southeast of Missouri. With their migration to the state they brought the traditions of slavery, even if it could not legally exist in Illinois. In Southern Illinois, the few blacks that populated the state dealt with contracted employment and no civil liberties and, after statehood in 1818, Illinois created a series of black codes that restricted the migration of blacks to the state, charged fees of newly arrived black residents, denied education as well as service in the militia, and forced African-

Americans to prove their freedom in the counties in which they resided. Furthermore, the laws created an atmosphere in which blacks could be held in a condition of indentured servitude or be beaten. This system of statutes remained in place until the final year of the Civil War, when they were repealed during the dawn of reconstruction. Throughout the Civil War, referendums, passed by the residents of Chicago supported barring blacks trying to migrate to Illinois as well as refusing access to the voting booth for those African-Americans already in the state. Blacks still did not have the right to vote in Illinois until the fifteenth amendment to the United States Constitution in 1870.⁶ As the population of black Americans grew in large Northern cities, the white population reacted to the visible presence of African-Americans with racism and segregation. The effort to exclude blacks from everyday life, such as public amusements, access to shops and stores, as well employment, radiated to virtually every area of Chicago. Even in the newspapers, such as the staunchly Republican Chicago Tribune, blacks were referred to as “darkys” and ridiculed through stereotypes that mocked their dialect and claimed they collectively lacked a work ethic.⁷

In 1885, the Illinois General Assembly passed the Illinois Civil Rights Law which forbade discrimination in public accommodations, such as theatres, bathrooms, barbershops, skating rinks, public transportation, hotels, and even funeral hearses. The Civil Rights Law underwent two different revisions in 1903 and 1911 to strengthen the

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definition of “public accommodations.” Eventually, the inclusion of cemetery plot prices ensured blacks did not receive inflated costs to prevent integrated cemeteries. Even with the strongly worded law, however blacks never quite knew how they would be treated in public places outside of areas heavily populated with fellow blacks. Restaurants, hotels, and public transportation might be denied if they ventured out of their communities. Such was the case of attorney, and black public leader and black baseball financial backer, Beauregard F. Mosley, who in 1911 was denied service in the Grill Room of the Grand Pacific Hotel. After denial of service, Mosley headed to the closest police station, demanded officers accompany him back to the establishment, and escort the bartender to the station. The bartender received a fine the following morning, even after several white patrons spoke on his behalf that he did not deny service to anyone. According to Mosley, virtually all of the establishments in the Loop denied service to blacks. Certainly, saloons and public accommodations outside of the downtown area, and away from the black population, commonly refused service to African-Americans willing to enter the doors of bars and restaurants. Chicago blacks, with the power of codified civil rights in Illinois, had the ability to bring lawsuits if the statutes were violated by businesses or individuals. Unfortunately, these lawsuits brought little restitution for the victims and did little in the city to discourage the practice of segregation. Furthermore, blacks had an extremely limited role in the workplace, in trade unions, as well as housing. In baseball, the same dynamics of race relations guided the role of blacks with limited access to white amateur
leagues, denial to the highest ranks of professional baseball, and need to create their own baseball structures for profit and assimilation.⁸

**Early Black Baseball Participation**

When the game exploded in popularity during the 1850s, African-Americans played baseball in Northeastern cities such as New York, Boston, and Philadelphia. The organizers of the New York Rules of baseball (the precursor of our modern game) came from middle class backgrounds and occupations in these large northeastern cities. Bank employees, lawyers, office workers, and skilled craftsmen made the rosters and organized the early baseball clubs. The richest Americans living in these places would have occupied themselves with more refined games such as yacht races, rowing, and horse racing, not the fledgling sport of baseball. Instead of the middle class growing in size during the mid nineteenth century as a product of the market revolution, cherished baseball and pushed its popularity nationally. Even though this group of young professional men created and developed the sport, the cities in which they played had very small minorities of blacks who would have undeniably picked up the bat and ball, just as their white neighbors. Little is known about the extent of African American participation in recreational or amateur play prior to the Civil War largely due to limited press coverage of baseball, let alone African-American participation, but as early as 1859 blacks joined rosters of amateur clubs in New York. As the Civil War engulfed the nation, African-American baseball games appeared in Brooklyn and New York City. The

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rise of black baseball in New York and other northern cities coincided with the process of emancipation that began with the 1862 Emancipation Proclamation. News coverage of African-American baseball grew during the late 1860s and, following the Civil War, African Americans increasingly embraced the sport as it spread in popularity both regionally and nationally. American-American players appeared in the newspapers and black amateur teams formed in New York, Buffalo, Boston, Philadelphia, and Chicago. Gradually as baseball officially turned into a professional endeavor after 1869, and seeking to gain profits at the ticket gate, African Americans appeared on rosters on isolated teams and leagues throughout the Northern United States. In this environment, a minister's son and graduate of Oberlin College, Moses Fleetwood Walker, became the first African-American to play professional baseball in 1883, with the Toledo Blue Stockings, members of the Northwestern League. As white teams became more popular throughout the North during the 1860s and 70s, clubs sought an increased stability via leagues and organizations. Unfortunately, this stability meant teams, leagues, and organizations embraced the traditional pattern of segregation and enforced the elimination blacks from rosters. In northern cities, blacks simply formed their own teams, playing one another, barnstorming away from home and playing white teams in smaller communities, and participating in white amateur and semi-professional leagues. In that same summer of 1883, Walker experienced segregation within professional baseball, when Cap Anson's White Stockings tried to boycott a game against the Blue Stockings, but ultimately ended his protest for fear of losing gate receipts. Walker's experience represented the transition to an absolute color line in Major League Baseball.
and, by the dawn of the twentieth century, the public school system remained the only place for integrated baseball, and this too happened rarely.\(^9\)

In Chicago, situated far to the west of New York and Philadelphia, baseball did not explode in popularity in the years leading up to the Civil War. In 1860, Chicago had only four amateur men’s teams playing regularly in the city and those disbanded during the tumultuous period of the war. After the war, baseball expanded to the entire nation as veterans, both North and South, who had played the game in camps and prisons, and learned of it from Northeastern soldiers, took it to their hometowns and shared it with friends and neighbors. Chicagoans also embraced baseball immediately after the war and by 1866 thirty-two teams played amateur baseball. By 1870 over fifty company teams took the field in the summer games and were made up largely of middle class, white-collar, white men playing on behalf of their workplace. Unlike the change of baseball on the eastern seaboard, in Chicago the game occupied a place of social distinction, where some of the most well heeled young men played for company teams and elite amateur clubs, similar to the standing of New York teams in the 1850s. By the late 1860s in New York and Philadelphia, gambling, boorish behavior, and drunkenness had changed the players and tone of the game from elite amateur status to a path of professionalism. The professional player that emerged in the East took money or subsidies for their participation and commonly players were imported to cities to play for publicly presumed amateur teams. In addition to subsidies, players commonly took on jobs given to them by team organizers, who increasingly were aligned with the political machines of New York,

Boston, and Philadelphia. The amateur sport prevalent in the 1850s had all but disappeared in New York by 1865 where the game was played with heightened intensity and fraternal post game banquets and other genteel traditions died away. Chicago had not completely caught up to this change by 1870.10

In the late 1860s, African-Americans increasingly formed teams on the East coast and they played one another, competed against white teams in select games, and barnstormed from state-to-state and city-to-city. By 1870 there were a small number of black teams, and the two most notable organizations were the Blue Stockings and Uniques. The Blue Stockings emerged in the 1860s as the one of the first highly talented all African-American teams in Chicago. Popping up in the same boom that created a wave of white amateur teams and organizations, the Blue Stockings cemented their place in Chicago baseball circles with dominant wins over local white nines as well as other white teams visiting from Rockford and other towns in the Northern half of the state.. The Blue Stockings did not experience the same treatment, both in baseball and in society as white teams, and while they played with whites they also experienced racial exclusion in tournaments and games. As the game of baseball started to abandon a sense of Victorian dignity and was played for commercial appeal on the East coast, Chicago amateur teams still commonly handed out silver trophies after tournaments, a fraternal tradition that had disappeared years before in Brooklyn and New York. Chicago amateur clubs in the late 1860s and early 70s came from white, middle class homes, and were

commonly organized as a company team with a roster of white collar or skilled employees. The amateur organizations of this period wanted to preserve baseball as an island of decency for the young, white, middle class male. In this environment the Blue Stockings attempted to make a foothold in the amateur baseball circuit. Their efforts failed in September of 1870 as they were denied entry into the Chicago amateur baseball championship in which five white amateur baseball teams turned down their application to play in the tournament and compete for the “silver ball” trophy and the “championship of the city.” Ultimately, the white teams decided the Blue Stockings, composed of “hotel and restaurant waiters,” were not eligible for the tournament and “their social standing had somewhat to do with the matter.”

Very naturally it would, as the young men belonging to our leading amateur clubs are all respectable and of good standing, some of them being connected with the best families of Chicago. They were all thoroughly in earnest regarding the title of supremacy with the ball and bat, and were not disposed to burlesque the tournament by the admission of a colored club of inferior capacity, even though the gate receipts should suffer thereby.

With limited access to white amateur competition, the Blue Stockings were largely limited to playing only other black teams in Chicago.¹¹

As games declined between white and black clubs, the Blue Stockings experienced an up-tick of all black games and squared off against other African-American teams such as the Red Hots, Red Stockings, and Uniques. Frequently their games were staged in Green’s Garden, a series of empty fields on West Madison, west of

the Loop that had once been home to the Chicago Cricket Club. The amateur clubs that used the fields, both black and white, commonly charged an entry fee of twenty-five cents that went to both black and white teams. The Garden space, contradictory to the name, did not have much green grass, and the fields had debris and garbage blanketing them. In addition to cricket matches and baseball games, the fields were used for second-rate circuses, variety shows that included trained monkeys, dancing dogs, and shortly after the great fire in October of 1871 displaced and homeless people occupied the grounds as temporary squatters. In July of 1872, the Garden partially filled with ticket holders eager to watch a gas filled balloon ascend into the sky. Below the bottom ring of the balloon a trapeze artist performed tricks until he crashed off the shore of Lake Michigan and had to be rescued by amused onlookers. Needless to say the second performance of the day was cancelled. By 1876 the derelict Green’s Garden appeared on a real estate auction list, to be divided into a subdivision. In addition to Green’s Garden, the Blue Stockings played on a field at 33rd and Michigan, a spot bordering the growing neighborhood of African-Americans eventually known as the Black Belt. By 1876, the Blue Stockings held a voting position in the Chicago Amateur Base-Ball Association, an organization comprised of the black team as well as four other white organizations. In April of that year the clubs gathered at “Quinn’s Exchange,” on Madison Street, between Dearborn and State, to adopt a new baseball for game play, discuss a playing field, and to codify the record keeping process. In addition to these bureaucratic points, the
organization voted on the application for the “colored” Uniques to join the league for the summer. The vote failed and the Uniques were denied entry.¹²

The Uniques experienced more prominence both locally and nationally than the Blue Stockings and they played a better game as well. During the 1871 season, players from the Blue Stockings jumped to the Uniques and during a game between the two clubs in May, the Uniques crushed the Blue Stockings thirty-five to nine. In that same year, the Uniques traveled to Baltimore, Philadelphia, Washington D.C., and New York City, to play black teams from each city. The Uniques, during the early part of the 1870s, commonly played their home games at the Twenty-Third Street grounds, home to the White Stockings, Chicago’s premier professional team and future leader of the National League. They played both white and black teams at the grounds, charged admission to their games, and won more times than not. It was here in 1875 they squared off against the St. Louis Blue Stockings, in a game called by darkness after the eighth inning.

Unfortunately for the Uniques, the game ended in controversy as the umpire wrote the editor of the Tribune the following day and claimed the Uniques forfeited the match, not due to the darkness, but by hiding the baseball in the eighth inning while holding the lead fifteen to fourteen, and refusing to take the field in the hope the game would be called.

This game, albeit an unflattering portrayal of the team, demonstrated the importance the team had to the city of Chicago and throughout the Midwest by meeting a traveling black team from St. Louis, and the games received press coverage in both cities and by

prominent papers. By 1878 the Uniques were the only black team in the stellar Amateur Association of Chicago and were considered to be one of the most stable teams in the organization. The success of the Uniques did not come unchallenged as white Chicagoans commonly segregated blacks and considered them second-class. In 1878, the *Chicago Tribune* ran racist fictional stories portraying blacks as superstitious, lazy, and unintelligent, and in one case with an article titled, “A Little Darky’s Story.” In 1874, a white amateur team, the Franklins, who also played in the Amateur Association, refused to play the Uniques for a city championship, even for the purse of three hundred dollars. Their refusal, made public in *The Times*, claimed a team of blacks was not worth playing, based exclusively on their social status and race. By 1879, the Franklins and Uniques did play one another at the newly built Lakefront Park, on the East side of Michigan Avenue, and home to White Stockings, the most powerful team in the National League. This game, and the game against the Franklins that never materialized in 1874, illustrate the absence of hard and fast rules to guide racial relationships in Chicago baseball.¹³

**Professional Black Baseball Emerges**

There were black participants on amateur and professional white teams during the 1880s and 90s. However, during this period the line of racial segregation became more clearly defined as the most powerful baseball organization, the National League, vocally refused to admit blacks onto rosters and demonstrated its unwillingness to stage

exhibition games against integrated teams. The National League did not have an official rule barring blacks from teams, but a gentleman’s agreement, eliminating blacks from teams and created by league owners, remained in place until Jackie Robinson’s emergence on the baseball in the 1940s. Furthermore, the National League, in its entire seventy-one year history, until the play of Robinson in the spring of 1947, never allowed one African-American onto a roster. The Newark, New Jersey team, a member of the International League, employed a black pitcher, George Stovey, during the season of 1887. Adrian “Cap” Anson, the manager of the Chicago White Stockings, refused to take the field during an exhibition game against Newark if Stovey remained on the field. The Chicago White Stockings, the organization that remains as today’s Chicago Cubs, dominated professional baseball during the era; commonly as a powerful force on the field but more importantly the financial and administrative leader of the National League. Anson’s notorious refusal to play with black opponents ushered in the hard and fast rules of both white and black baseball on the professional level. By 1887, due in large part to Anson, the racial climate of baseball had changed dramatically.¹⁴

The National League existed for the entertainment of the white middle class. Ballpark locations were centered in the middle class neighborhoods. The starting times of games not accessible to people tethered in the factory and wage earning jobs of the city, but rather designed for the more fluid working hours of skilled labor and middle-class office workers. After 1887, the possibility of integration in the white professional ranks diminished. African Americans, in Chicago and nationally, embraced amateur baseball,

¹⁴ The International League of 1887 is the same Triple A league that performs today, with Major League Baseball affiliations.
semiprofessional baseball, as well as the first all black professional teams at the end of the century. At the beginning of the twentieth century black teams grew in importance for fans both black and white.\(^5\)

During the 1880s and 90s, as black teams and players grew more numerous, the racial culture of Chicago, as well as Northern industrial cities in general, operated with more racial divisions than ever before. Increasingly, the black teams of Chicago, and other larger northern industrial cities such as New York and Philadelphia, played for their own national championships and played white teams for barnstorming exhibitions and usually did not attempt to join white amateur leagues. During the period the most talented black teams turned fully professional and left behind the amateur status. They played baseball locally, with gate prices on the weekends and traveled during the weekdays, taking on white and black teams throughout the Midwest, as well as the East coast if talented enough. In Chicago, as white professional organizations rose in stature, made money at the gate, and developed a daily fanatical following in the numerous newspapers of the city, baseball held an unprecedented place in society. The white baseball community, in reaction to the importance of baseball in Chicago, and in other Northern cities, created a more staunchly regulated role of blacks in the game and treated them as a separate athletic group, operating under different rules, and unacceptable to the apocryphal ideal vision of the pastoral, and deeply American game. During the 1870s, even with frequent racial discord, black teams met with, played with, and organized with

white teams in leagues and games. By the late 1880s, these mutually respectable encounters lessened and games were played with the understanding blacks and whites occupied distinct places in society. News coverage of African-American teams focused more and more on “colored” games operating distinctly from the white games. Reporters virtually stopped including black teams or players in sporting coverage without first labeling them as “boys,” “colored,” or “darkies.”16

This growing racial segregation in baseball stemmed from the heightened importance the game played in white society. Once baseball stopped being casual, carefree, amateur affairs, and became nationally recognized contests with significant profits and civic pride at stake, white team owners, league managers, players, and coaches created a baseball infrastructure that was designed to eliminate African-Americans. As the nineteenth century drew to a close, the exclusion of blacks became codified and trickled down to the lowest reaches of the sport. Sports coverage in the press tried to make two distinct and idealistic versions of baseball, one was the white game, of rural imagery and noble white athletic superiority, and the other was the black game, sometimes ridiculed as a version of cheats, clowning, and child-like ignorance.

Athletics, for a time, had been a place that blacks could demonstrate equality with whites. Once baseball etched out a position of great importance in white society and no longer could be looked at as just a game, the white culture of Chicago and other Northern

communities, attempted to push blacks out of the sport, to ensure equality would never occur. According to Ed Williamson, a longtime star for the Chicago White Stockings, and recounted in the 1891 *Chicago Daily Tribune*, the feet-first slide, common by the 1880s, emerged to eliminate blacks from the game. Williamson pointed out in his story that, "darkies," normally permitted, "to carry water to them or guard the bat-bag but it made them (i.e., white players) sore to have the name of one in the batting list." In his tale, the professional team from Buffalo, New York, during the 1880s, employed one black second baseman and opposing teams turned to the new slide to hurt the man and drive him from the game.

They made a cabal against this man and incidentally introduced a new feature into the game. The players of opposing teams made it their special business in life to ‘spike’ this brunette Buffalo. They would tarry at second when they might have easily made third, just to toy with the sensitive shins of this second baseman. The poor man played in two games out of five perhaps; the rest of the time he was on crutches. To give the frequent spiking of the darky and of appearance of accident the feet-first slide was practiced.

Eventually the black player took to wearing wooden shin guards on his legs to no advantage. The white opposition, according to Williamson, started sharpening their spikes, and split his guards with hard slides. The player stopped taking the field after five innings and in the aftermath feet first slides became prominent and according to Williamson, “that’s how Kelly learned to slide” a reference to the popular tune of the day written in honor of Chicago’s Mike “King” Kelly. It is unlikely the feet-first slide emerged from the Buffalo team in the 1880s, however, the story of Williamson promoted an idea that one of the most violent plays of baseball, the slide into second, came from
the need to remove blacks from the game. This player, “a few lines blacker than a raven” forced the white competitors to react violently and seemingly in the best interest of the game.

Environments such as this occurred as well as the increasing discrimination in baseball black teams in Chicago managed to push their way into the world of semi-professional white baseball. As the white baseball community hardened the lines of racial segregation, black teams created their own paths and did not acquiesce. The Chicago Unions, an all black semi-professional team, was formed in this environment during the season of 1886. The Unions became the Chicago powerhouse of African-American baseball until the beginning of the twentieth century. Working against the hardening racial rules in the game, the Unions frequently played against whites, attended formal league ceremonies with whites, and competed with and won league seasons against white teams. With the Unions, white teams loosened the racial code of the professional leagues, and allowed their participation in varying degrees throughout the 1890s. The Unions had a foot in both the black and white baseball worlds and they strove for consistent white games and league play but never abandoned facing off against black teams in Chicago and throughout Northern cities. Initially, in 1886, the Unions played as amateurs, making ends meet with limited gate prices and weekend play that only covered their baseball expenses. But in this period, what exactly constituted either professional or amateur remained fuzzy, especially on black teams which tended to

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branch out and barnstorm. By 1890, the amateur approach of the Unions largely vanished, even as they competed with white teams in the Amateur Association of Chicago on Sunday afternoons but referred to themselves as “semi-professionals.” In a public announcement in the spring of 1890, the Unions’ manager Frank Leland, proclaimed the Unions would cease to be “strictly amateurs,” and instead they traveled through Illinois, Indiana, and Michigan, playing exhibition teams against all-comers, both black and white, and remained in Chicago on Sundays to play local teams. The Unions played baseball full-time during the summer months of the 1890s.¹⁸

For two years in a row, 1888–1889, the Unions hosted the New Orleans Pinchbacks, considered in the late 1880s to be the best African-American team in the south, at the White Stockings’ Park. Eighteen hundred people attended one game during the three game series in 1888. A reporter at a game in 1889, described the crowd as “greater part being colored people.” By 1890, the Unions sold themselves to competitors as a full-time team, hoping to attract the best foes as well as lure in the best black players the city and surrounding areas had to offer. Once they stacked the lineup with excellent players the Unions possessed a greater ability to travel and earn profits from barnstorming. Leland, as the manager, signed black players from around the Midwest, such as Detroit, Michigan, Peoria, Illinois, Wilmington, Ohio, as well as a third baseman from Atlanta, Georgia. In one brief, two-week tour during May of 1898, the Unions played games against white teams in Dubuque, Cedar Rapids, Quincy, and Ottumwa, Iowa, and then they turned back east to the Quad Cities to play a Rock Island team before

¹⁸ “The Union Ball Club,” The Daily Inter Ocean, April 2, 1890, p. 6.
returning to Chicago. When home, the Unions invited the Memphis Cliffords, advertised as the “champion colored team of the south” for a three game series, and the white Joliet Standards played the team at their home field at 37th and Butler. Although the Unions played numerous games at the 37th and Butler field, and the diamond was referred to as “Unions’ Ball Park,” they never occupied a field consistently throughout their existence and frequently played at different fields in Chicago such as the grounds at Sixty-Seventh and Langley.  

By 1895, the Unions frequently squared off against the two best semiprofessional white clubs in the city, the Dalys and the Edgars. But, increasingly, the Unions competed against black teams for a claim to the national “Colored Championship.” As the decade progressed, top-flight African-American baseball had two regions, the star clubs from New York City, the Cuban Giants and the Cuban X Giants, and in the West, the Unions, as well as the Page Fence Giants from Adrian, Michigan. These four teams made national headlines with outstanding play and continuous barnstorming. During the late 1890s the premier African-American teams dominated semiprofessional white teams and took on one another in cities throughout the North. The Chicago Daily Tribune even noted in 1897 that “Good colored baseball teams are rapidly increasing” when referring to the visiting Memphis Cliffords, that had lost two games to the Unions during the fourth of July weekend. The Cuban X Giants, one of the elite teams of the East, also came to

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Chicago in 1897 to challenge the Unions. The Cuban X Giants had played the National League’s Cincinnati team, as well as barnstormed, and normally won games throughout the eastern seaboard. Unfortunately for the Unions they were beaten badly in June of that year and lost once more in August. The Unions did manage to defeat the Cuban Giants, the other great African-American New York team, at least two out of three games in the summer of 1899. The attendance and financial success of the Unions marked them as a powerful black team that could contend for the unofficial “Colored Championship” of the country. In 1896 the team averaged more than 3,500 fans to their Sunday games at Union Park, 37th and Butler Streets (just blocks from today’s U.S. Cellular Field) and took in gate receipts, per game, of over seven hundred dollars. The popularity of the Unions, and the revenue they generated also attracted the other nationally renowned teams of the East. These changes helped inaugurate a true sense of a national black game, distinct from the white Major Leagues.20

Towards Black Baseball Stability

On Monday afternoon, April 16, 1899, in front of two thousand spectators, the Chicago Unions, arguably the top-ranked black ball club in the West, squared off against the formidable Standards, a white semi-professional team from Joliet. The grounds at Thirty-Seventh and Butler Streets had filled with rain in the prior days and the home team

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spread sawdust throughout the infield in an effort to shore up the playing surface. Unfortunately, the sawdust floated on pools of water and mud and did little to make the field more presentable or usable. The batters sank to their ankles in mud and the fielders charged for balls that stuck in the ground while they slipped, tumbled, and sank in the quagmire. With the enormous crowd gathered, the game could not be called and hundreds of local African-American fans screamed and cheered for their Unions and shouted and laughed about the muddy playing conditions. The black ballplayers quickly realized the mud-covered field could be used to their advantage by bunting the ball down, hard into the soft field, where it would become stuck, and they could scramble to first base. By the end of the afternoon the score stood at twenty to four in favor of the Unions.21

By the dawn of the twentieth century, black baseball, at the highest levels, had developed into a profitable endeavor and the future looked promising for teams both locally and nationally. Inaugurating the season with, and then dominating a very good semi-professional team like the Standards, even in the atrocious playing conditions, speaks volumes about the skill level of the Unions as well as their other black competitors. In the first twenty years of the century, before the formal development of the Negro Leagues with the Negro National League in 1920, black teams shaped their own course, made profits, and warred with one another over team financial shares, players, club names, and scheduling. In many respects these developments mirrored the white professional leagues, as teams folded, leagues battled, upstart leagues formed and

died, and the Western League developed into the modern American League. The pinnacle of the modern, white baseball leagues, the World Series, developed simultaneously with the best black clubs in the country searching for a black national championship team.

Chicago’s black teams, as well as their counterparts in New York, Philadelphia, and elsewhere, experienced games that were profitable and closely followed by fans. In spite of this, racial segregation became more standardized and the mingling of races on one team became preposterous in most communities. This hardening of racial guidelines coincided with the Supreme Court’s 1896 Plessy v. Ferguson decision that rejected the intent of the Fourteenth Amendment by allowing Jim Crow’s separate but equal philosophy to exist nationally. Unlike ethnic minorities that managed to find positions in the stockyards and mills, blacks could rarely acquire a well paying position in the city, let alone a position with the possibility of advancement. Ethnic groups commonly secured positions, managed to work their way up and hope for a better future for their children. The black population of Chicago did not have that opportunity and, in some cases the number of blacks in certain types of positions decreased during the first twenty years of the century. Commonly, if black advancement to white collar jobs occurred, it was within the segregated, "Black Belt," along State Street on the South Side of the city, within the handful of businesses that were owned and operated by African-Americans. Instead of the steel mills, stockyards, and slaughterhouses, blacks worked as porters, elevator operators, waiters, as well as scabs crossing picket lines. Crossing the picket line made African-American strikebreakers hated by the unions. However, these early
unions denied membership to blacks and black scabs had virtually no understanding of the role of unions in industrial Chicago as they were recent immigrants from the rural, sharecropping south. Entry into manufacturing, mill, or stockyard jobs came only with the dangerous, hated, and temporary position of strikebreaking scab. Segregation in baseball, already the norm, became even more widespread, and the possibility of black players on white professional, semi-professional, and even amateur teams seemed impossible. During the first decade of the twentieth century in Chicago, segregation appeared more in more in public places as well as the workplace. However, black teams playing white teams on the baseball grounds throughout the city developed into a Sunday ritual for countless Chicagoans and even with the strong racial structure in society and baseball, black players, managers, and owners made the most of the situation and strengthened the role of black baseball in Chicago and elsewhere.22

Black teams also continued to participate in the semi-professional leagues in Chicago as the newly formed Union Giants played in the Chicago League and later the Leland Giants would participate in the Chicago City League. Simultaneously, while participating in the white baseball culture of the city, the black teams of Chicago continued to barnstorm all over the nation, taking on the best black teams both afar and on Chicago’s playing fields. Just two days before the Unions defeated the Joliet Standards they faced Northwestern University’s varsity team in an exhibition in Evanston, and dominated them eleven to five. Even playing reputable and skilled white

teams, (although “the purple” of Northwestern clearly did not possess the talent of the Unions), the Unions faced discrimination in press coverage in both of these games, and their success on the field came from “tricks” and the “colored boys,” faced the “men” of the Standards and the “varsity men” of Northwestern.23

The power of the Chicago Unions waned as the new century began. In 1899 the Page Fence Giants, of Michigan, moved to Chicago permanently, and changed names to the Columbia Giants. They immediately challenged the Unions as the preeminent team in the city and they succeeded in engaging as well the best black clubs from the East. They established a home field at 39th and Wentworth and by 1900 called themselves the colored champions of Chicago. The Columbia Giants did not last long as reigning champion of the city and by 1901, the long standing Unions, under the guidance of Frank Leland, former player, manager, and general manager, merged with the Columbia Giants, to end the feuds between the clubs as well as the stealing of players. After Leland raided the rosters of the two teams he called the new organization the Chicago Union Giants. The gutted Chicago Unions, the long-standing black baseball powerhouse, continued to play as a much less talented barnstorming team through the 1930s. The new Union Giants joined the Chicago League and played white teams locally, staged wildly popular Sunday afternoon games, and challenged teams from the East to hopefully claim the spot

as the colored champion of the nation, an unofficial title trumped up by the press, and used as ticket sales device by the team that claimed the championship.  

The Chicago Union Giants only lasted a few years in the Chicago baseball community and changed names to the Leland Giants in 1905, after owner Frank Leland, an African-American baseball entrepreneur that would help develop the Negro Leagues. But, during their years as an organization, they continued the tradition of barnstorming across the Midwest during the week and playing local semi-professional white clubs in Chicago as well as hosting visiting black teams. In August of 1903, they squared off against Waterloo, Iowa’s best semipro lineup, in Waterloo, and split a two game series. The Stars of Racine, Wisconsin lost to the Union Giants in May of the next summer and in July the Unions beat the ‘Soo’s” of Sault Sainte Marie, Michigan. In August of the same year the Giants played the Decatur Gray’s and defeated them seventeen to eleven in eleven innings. By September of 1904, the Union Giants hosted the visiting Cuban Giants from New York City, at Auburn Park, at the confluence of 79th and Wentworth, and the club won three to two on an error in the ninth inning of a close game. The Union Giants continued to secure a position of black baseball in Chicago, and nationally, while furthering their status as a local barnstorming ticket draw in smaller Midwestern communities. Additionally, they brought in the best black teams in the country to square off for a claim to the colored championship and to make money through ticket sales.  


In late 1904, the Union Giants experienced a schism, as the two owners and operators, Frank Leland and William Peters, split the club in two. St. Peters attempted to start a team by the same name in Springfield, IL and Leland wanted to keep his operation rolling in Chicago. After much consternation, and the support of the Chicago League, Leland eventually renamed the Union Giants the Leland Giants. By 1905, this club played as the premier black organization in Chicago. As Leland changed the team name he also employed a well-known black pitcher named Andrew “Rube” Foster, a Texan, who played for a white team in Otsego, Michigan in 1902, but had also bounced around the best black teams in the East. In the same year he briefly pitched for the Union Giants, and by 1903 played for New York’s powerful black Cuban Giants. During his one-year stay with the Cuban Giants, he won fifty-four times and lost only once, and with this outstanding performance he pushed the Cuban Giants into the position of playing for the national colored championship against the Philadelphia Giants. With Foster’s tremendous performance, the Cuban Giants defeated the Philadelphia squad in the fall of 1903 and reigned as the black national champion. The following year, Foster switched sides, and pitched for the Philadelphia. During the next two seasons, Foster stuck with the Philadelphia club, and continued to prove himself as the best black pitcher and player in the country. Regardless of his success, the ownership of the Philadelphia team decided to draw back compensation in the fall of 1906, with promises for only a lowering of the team salaries, a fifteen cent allowance for two meals a day, thirty promised play dates,
and a requirement the players buy their own uniforms. The team did not lower Foster’s salary, as his pitching abilities helped keep the organization profitable, but he had to sit back and watch his teammates lose large sums of money.26

Foster understood his prominence in the black baseball community and contacted Leland of the Chicago club for the hope that his place in the sport would not only guarantee his salary but guarantee the salary of many of his teammates. Leland assured the salary of Foster and subsequently hired him as a player-manager of the team. Foster immediately signed the best Philadelphia players, his former teammates, and released most of the Chicago starters. Leland initially objected to the drastic changes but through Foster’s guidance the team achieved success, both with white and black clubs. In the city they flourished, playing games at Comiskey’s White Sox Park and “wiped the earth” with the best black club of Indianapolis, the “A.B.C.’s.” They hosted the Brooklyn Royal Giants, at the 79th and Wentworth grounds, as advertised in a large announcement in the Suburbanite Economist, where tickets cost twenty-five cents for admission and thirty-five cents for the grandstand. By August of 1907, the Leland’s were considered, “too strong for any colored team in the West.” But even through this success, the new Leland Giants continued to experience the racism and segregation common in Chicago and other Northern cities. Even with an exceptional pitching performance in the 1907 A.B.C. game, where Foster allowed only seven hits and one run, the press remarked, “It was a holiday slaughter for Rube and he had a grin on his face that meant bad for water melons all the way through the game.” In a three game exhibition with the Chicago Cubs at the

end of the 1909 season, the Giants played two contests close, albeit losing games and the third was called by darkness in the seventh inning with the score tied. Regardless of the impressive performance, and an understanding the Leland Giants possessed the playing abilities to challenge one of the best teams in the nation, a Cubs’ team that won the World Series in both 1907 and 1908, Frank Chance and Johnny Evers, two of the best known Cubs’ players, refused to take the field against the all black Leland Giants. \(^{27}\)

**Conclusion**

In late October, at the very end of the 1923 baseball season, the Chicago American Giants, the all-black team managed and owned by Andrew “Rube” Foster, “rang the curtain down” on the Detroit Tigers, the second-place team in the American League that summer. They played at the Giants’ field, Schorling’s Park, under sunny skies and a game-time temperature in the forties. The stadium had been the one time home of the Chicago White Sox, who abandoned the facility in 1910 with the opening of the steel and concrete Comiskey Park. The Giants missed two of their best players, who were on a trip to Cuba for the winter months, but managed to win the game eight to six. Noticeably absent from the game, the Tigers’ player/manager Ty Cobb, the celebrated outfielder, hitter, and notorious racist, who had a long record of hatred towards blacks, physically attacked innocent blacks on at least two different occasions, not to mention a deep animosity towards Roman-Catholics. The Georgian sat out this game, allowing the Tigers to meet the Giants on their own, without his enormous batting prowess or base

running skills. The Giants demonstrated the rise of black baseball, in Chicago and nationally, by challenging, and succeeding against a top caliber major league team. But their victory came bittersweet, the absence of the racist Cobb, underscored the fact that the black game remained apart from the white game, both locally and nationally.28

Foster’s organizational abilities as a team manager, general manager, and outstanding pitcher, gave him unprecedented importance in black baseball. By 1915, he and his teams traveled all over the nation as well as to Cuba and when Foster and the club made long distance trips he traveled in a personal Pullman car, the only black baseball man in America with that luxury. After operating the Leland Giants through the 1909 season, Foster, and team owner Frank Leland, became embroiled in a dispute over profits and shares of the team dating back to the 1907 season. Once the dust settled, Foster remained as operator and owner of the Leland Giants and Leland started a new club, with most of the old players, as the Chicago Giants. Foster piloted this new Leland Giants team through the 1910 season, and in 1911 changed their name to the Chicago American Giants. Under Foster, at first player and manager, but later only an owner, the American Giants dominated black baseball for the next fifteen years.29

A few weeks before the start of the 1920 season, Foster and other black baseball representatives from around the country, as well as sportswriters from black newspapers


in Indianapolis, St. Louis, and Kansas City, and Chicago, (including a representative
from the *Chicago Defender*) met in the Kansas City Y.M.C.A. to create a new league,
draft a schedule, and to sign a “protective agreement” for each club. This meeting
created the first successful Negro League in baseball, with Foster as the lead
representative not only of the Chicago clubs, but also acting president of the new
organization called the Negro National League. Foster’s American Giants captured the
first three pennants of the League before by the middle of the decade the Kansas City
Monarchs developed into the star team. But more importantly, Foster guided this league
with the hope that a successful black baseball organization would positively impact the
black communities of the Northern cities, where the population was exploding during the
Great Migration. Foster hoped, as well as the many other organizers and owners of black
teams that monies generated with baseball games would stay within the black community
and ultimately empower the fledgling culture and business of the new population of
Northern African-Americans. By the 1920s, black baseball in Chicago, and nationally,
had changed dramatically. In the 1920s, Foster and his colleagues understood the
segregated and racist line drawn in Chicago and elsewhere, and they pushed through their
plans for a profitable baseball league, that drew fans, both black and white, and created
the long-standing Negro Leagues that existed until the 1950s. The long process of
developing Chicago’s black baseball community emerged from the confused lines of race
relations in late nineteenth century. The developing black players and teams of the
1860s, 70s, 80s, that attempted to find their spot in the larger baseball community, with
varying degrees of success, morphed into the more structured Negro Leagues of the
1920s and onward. During the Great Migration of the African-Americans, black baseball players, entrepreneurs, managers, owners, and fans understood the hardening position of racial roles in Chicago. In this environment the black baseball community created a profitable and professional baseball system that mirrored the constriction of segregated everyday life in the city, but also made black Chicagoans stronger in their neighborhoods, homes, and community, through the solidarity of sport.  

CHAPTER THREE

INDOOR BASEBALL AND THE BIRTH OF SOFTBALL

In September of 1933 during the Century of Progress World’s Fair, tens of thousands of people filled Northerly Island, just off Chicago’s Lake Michigan shore, to watch the first ever nationwide tournament in men's and women's softball. Specially constructed softball diamonds had been positioned on the open fields just east of the Fair’s massive Sky Ride tower, then the continent’s second highest structure. The diamonds were only accessible by passing the Hall of Science, filled with dioramas of coal mines and rubber plantations as well as explanations of cosmic rays and dynamos. Teams from throughout North America entered the Chicago World’s Fair tournament for a chance to capture the national championship in three different categories, men's slow pitch, men's fast pitch, and women's slow pitch bracket. Because softball teams across the country used different sized softballs, from ten inch to sixteen, the organizers decided that all teams would use a fourteen inch ball in the single elimination tournament. A squad from Joliet squared off against a team from Detroit and teams from New York, Memphis, Denver, South Bend, Clearwater, St. Petersburg, Ontario, New Orleans, as well Patterson, New Jersey filled the brackets. A team of Chicago women from Great Northern Laundry defeated a group of teenagers representing Chicago’s Roby playground, workers from Briggs Manufacturing in Detroit beat a group of workers from Dunlap Clothes out of Cincinnati, and members of a Swedish Mission church faced off
against a team of grocers from Chicago’s Hillman’s Pure Foods. In the end Chicago teams captured all three inaugural championships. The remarkable story of softball and Chicago’s love affair with it began almost forty-six years before the World’s Fair, long before the glamour of a global event, when friends in a Chicago gym created a game known as indoor baseball.¹

The geographically, ethnically, and economically diverse teams of the 1933 fair, some of which travelled hundreds of miles to play, pursued a game that was born in Chicago; created by members of a wealthy boat club at the end of the nineteenth century. Nineteen Thirty Nine signified the birth of modern softball for two central reasons: Chicago held the first national softball tournament that year and 1933 represented the inauguration of the Amateur Softball Association. This organization became the leader as well as governing body for the burgeoning sport and, as of 2013, still plays a vital role in the course of the game. Since 1933, the sport of softball has been largely unvarying; teams throughout the nation play slow and fast pitch games with a twelve inch ball and, the game made famous in Chicago, with a sixteen inch ball and no gloves. Since the World's Fair and standardized rules, governance, and equipment, the sport's popularity has exploded.

When indoor baseball, the game that later evolved into outdoor softball, developed in Chicago during the 1880s; it did not have the technical and organizational stability that became commonplace in the twentieth century. Instead, the game morphed from one economic group to another and along the way brought in culturally diverse people who pursued the sport for reasons of ethnic and economic solidarity, as an entry point into the process of Americanization, but most especially for the fun of participation. During the first twenty years of the game’s existence, the players and spectators changed dramatically. Indoor baseball united people in a love of a distinctly urban version of baseball, although they sometimes remained divided along ethnic and economic lines. At other times, different economic classes played alongside one another, as in the case of business sponsored clubs. By the beginning of the twentieth century, indoor baseball found a place in the athletic programs of the growing system of public schools, and boys as well as girls fielded teams. This chapter will focus on the infancy of indoor baseball in Chicago, from the birth of the sport in the 1880s until the dawn of the twentieth century, when the people of diverse economic and cultural backgrounds were drawn to the game.

The name "softball" has been the widely accepted title of the sport since the 1930s, with the formation of the American Softball Association and the national spectacle of a World's Fair tournament. In the decades leading up to the 1933 World’s Fair, the sport evolved from names such as kitten ball, diamond ball, playground ball, and, the original name, indoor baseball. When created, indoor baseball did not look like

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modern softball, nor did it include economically and ethnically diverse players and spectators that would be common by the dawn of the twentieth century. On Thanksgiving Day, November 24, 1887, several members of Chicago’s Farragut Boat Club, an elite all men’s social and athletic club, assembled in their clubhouse on the Southside of the city at the corner of Thirty-First Street and Lake Park Avenue.3 They had been following the annual Harvard-Yale football game by telegraphic reports. Either through boredom, camaraderie, or a chance to exercise, upwards of twenty men, led by George W. Hancock, a reporter for the Chicago Board of Trade, began tossing a boxing glove around the room. After a few minutes one of the members struck the glove with a broom handle. At the suggestion of Hancock the men very quickly rolled a wrestling mat on the floor, positioned themselves upon it as if it was a baseball diamond, and commenced playing an indoor game of baseball. At the end of the day, Hancock proposed to the other members that he would go home and construct rules for the sport while his friend and accomplice, Augustus J. White, also employed at the Board of Trade, would make a workable ball that would cause no damage indoors and could be seen in the limited interior lighting. He wanted to finish the entire project by the following Saturday night so the club members could inaugurate the sport of indoor baseball.4

Indoor baseball emerged in the same era as other indoor sports such as basketball and volleyball. During the 1890s, as indoor lighting became more predominant, sports

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moved inside to facilities that could handle the dimensions of the games (just as outdoor lighting developments in the 1930s and 1940s helped softball become a national outdoor game.) At the end of the nineteenth century, the halls, clubhouses, and gyms the teams played within had natural gas lamps that lit the diamond, but offered limited visibility. In 1878, as a demonstration of not only the power of electric lamps, but also as the weakness of gas lighting, two outdoor electric street lamps were illuminated at Michigan Avenue's water tower. Those two electric lights amazed the Chicagoans in attendance, and created enough light that represented the equivalent of six hundred and fifty gas powered street lights. By the beginning of the twentieth century, electric lights started to appear inside gyms and halls, and replaced the dreary and dim lighting of the prior decades. These early games, played under the dim gas lights, offered players a chance to engage in vigorous team exercise while escaping the winter climate in the large urban centers of the Northern United States. Indoor baseball started in the all men’s yacht club on the Chicago shore of Lake Michigan, unlike volleyball and basketball, which developed in two Massachusetts YMCAs. The early YMCA athletic programs aimed to attract young men from the diverse economic and ethnic backgrounds that flooded cities throughout the Northeast and the Midwest at the close of the nineteenth century. In reality most of the young men who eventually utilized YMCA programs and facilities during the 1890s came from Protestant, white, middle to upper class backgrounds.\(^5\)

In Chicago, indoor baseball did not begin with the concept of uplifting displaced young Christian men. Instead, the originators referred to the sport as the gentleman’s game of Chicago, and initially it remained confined to private organizations such as the Farragut Boat Club.\textsuperscript{6} However, by the early 1890s, just a few years after indoor baseball’s inception, the men’s clubs represented only a fraction of the people playing in Chicago as the game gained widespread popularity. Cycling clubs and amateur leagues as well as high school students that included girls’ teams by the dawn of the twentieth century embraced the sport and broadened the appeal to a much wider audience as the century drew to a close. Additionally, business sponsored teams emerged at the end of the century, just as these same teams developed in the outdoor game during the same period. Commercial teams broadened the role indoor baseball played in bringing together Chicagoans. Workers in the city's companies could build corporate solidarity by supporting on the indoor diamond players from the offices and the factory floors. These business-sponsored teams were an opportunity for company owners and managers to finance an outlet for employees that they hoped would placate workers, and drive down unrest and unions. Throughout the 1890s the sport also spread nationally. In the large cities on the east coast such as New York, Washington, and Boston, teams and leagues appeared. Even smaller cities such as Oshkosh, Wisconsin, and Lowell, Massachusetts held games during the decade. By the turn of the twentieth century, indoor baseball had even moved to the southern climes of Savannah, Georgia. As the sport grew in stature and importance, Chicago remained the unofficial hub of rules and organization. The

indoor game developed in Chicago within the larger context of baseball's dominance in the second half of the nineteenth century. When the indoor game emerged in the 1880s, outdoor baseball, in Chicago was wildly popular with an exploding number of amateur, youth, and semiprofessional clubs, in addition to the fan's devotion to the National League team in the city. Indoor baseball fit within that larger growth and allowed players and spectators to enjoy an indoor version of the game they had increasingly grown to love.\(^7\)

**The Gentlemen's Game**

George Hancock’s rules, largely created in that first winter of 1887, remained the predominate guidelines well into the twentieth century. The diamond shaped field had unsecured sand filled bases twenty-seven feet apart and the distance from home plate to second base was thirty-seven and a half feet. However, the dimensions could change depending on the size of the hall, auditorium, or clubhouse. The pitcher, only allowed to throw underhand, albeit fast with no curving pitches, stood in a six feet by three feet box twenty-three feet from home plate. Hancock stipulated that eight or nine men could play per side.\(^8\) The wooden bat could measure no longer than thirty inches and could only have a diameter of one and one-quarter at the thickest section. The players wore uniforms similar to the baseball outfits of the period with pants that came to the knee, a cap, buttoned shirt and appropriate shoes. The players of the indoor game used rubber


soled shoes instead of the typical spikes of outdoor baseball. For safety, Hancock’s rules stipulated that uniforms have pads on the knees and elbows to soften the blows delivered from the hard indoor flooring. In addition, it was recommended that teams place mats against dangerous walls and corners to prevent injuries from players running or sliding into these obstacles.\footnote{Spalding’s Official Indoor Baseball Guide (New York: American Sports Publishing, 1903), pp. 15-16. “To Play Ball Indoors,” Chicago Daily Tribune, 25 October 1896, p. 25.}

Hancock created the list of rules and his friend White created a bat and ball by the Saturday evening that followed the Thanksgiving Day improvised game. Members of the Farragut Club made up the first two sides to play the inaugural game of organized indoor baseball. The intra-club teams had nine men each and played before a small audience of both members and visitors. The players, having no indoor baseball experience other than the Thanksgiving contest, had trouble adjusting to the new game, their catching, throwing, and hitting of the large ball in the tight confines of the clubhouse led to many errors, stumbles, and general poor play. By the end of the game the score stood at an astronomical forty-one to forty. The spectators laughed both at and with the players for their lack of ability and the novelty of baseball being played indoors. Regardless of the initial poor play, the sport caught on in the Farragut Club and by winter’s end the game became known throughout the men’s clubs of Chicago. As the popularity of the game
grew, the quality of the play improved as well. As club members practiced and played more frequently the scores became lower and play became sharp and quick.\textsuperscript{10}

By the winter of 1888-1889 several social clubs in the city had formed the Midwinter League. This indoor baseball league, supported whole-heartedly by Hancock, met in clubhouses, armories, and halls throughout the city. In addition to the Midwinter League other social clubs had formed the Chicago League by the winter of 1890-1891. In that same winter a Bankers’ League appeared representing firms such as the First National and Chicago National banks. Indoor baseball largely remained an exclusive game for the social clubs and upper social and economic class of the city. The use of facilities capable of holding events like indoor baseball, as well as the additional costs of staging games, suited these social and business clubs.

The Farragut Boat Club sat at the confluence of Thirty-First Street and Lake Park Avenue, along the shore of Chicago’s Southside. It was here, in 1887, that indoor baseball was born. The club had experienced their share of turmoil by 1887 - the building and gymnasium that housed the men’s group represented the sixth structure built for the club in fifteen years. Founded on March 10, 1873, the Farragut Boat Club originally consisted of ten members and its facilities were old barge called the \textit{Farragut}, moored next to a simple wood framed building once owned by the Illinois Central Railroad. The following year, with a growing membership, the club built a new boathouse at the foot of Twenty-First Street. Throughout the 1870s the club continued to

grow numerically and in stature. However, as the decade wore on they went through a series of clubhouses, some of which were destroyed by winter storms, others abandoned due to size limitations. In 1877 the club directors decided to build a permanent structure of brick that could withstand the powerful changes in Chicago’s weather and growing numbers of club members. The new Farragut clubhouse sat at the lakefront on Twenty-Fifth Street, was composed of two floors, a brick structure, and enough space for both social activities and sporting boats. Unfortunately for the club, on St. Patrick’s Day 1883 ice from Lake Michigan crashed ashore and wrecked the structure once again. That same year the club built their final house, where indoor baseball developed.¹¹

The Harvard Club, located on Harvard Street between Sixty-third and Sixty-fourth streets, quickly embraced the sport of indoor baseball shortly after Hancock’s inception.¹² The organization fielded a team in the Chicago League (the rival of the Midwinter League) and also frequently competed against the Farragut Club. By 1889 the Harvards had built a forty thousand dollar facility to house their club activities. The two-story building had several card rooms, a bowling alley, a barbershop, and a dance hall that measured seventy by forty feet as well as a stage and dressing rooms. The members

¹¹ “Success Through Grit,” Chicago Daily Tribune, 1 June 1887, p. 9. “Wrecked by Liquor,” Chicago Daily Tribune, 1 December 1893, p.10. The Farragut Club shuttered their doors in 1893 due to an ongoing internal fight over the presence of alcohol and a bar. The bar had slowly eliminated the older members of the club who did not believe a “sideboard” matched the tradition of the organization. As the bar slowly eroded membership, two batches of spiked punch in the fall of 1893 dealt the final blows to the club. Younger members of the Farragut Club “doctored” a batch of punch served to the visiting LaSalle Club and then a short time later another reception was held with both spiked punch and boxing exhibitions. After these two situations, coupled with the existence of a bar, the older members withdrew their memberships by the dozens. When the members left the club grew heavily indebted and closed their doors.

¹² This club was not affiliated with Harvard University but the organization claimed alumni in their ranks.
kept warm in the winter with steam heat and enjoyed electrical lighting throughout. The social club had been designed with the wealthier members of the Englewood neighborhood in mind. The organizers had initial fees of fifty dollars and annual dues of twenty-five; this obviously did not attract many from the working class, as the average annual earnings for a family of four in 1889 amounted to less than six hundred dollars.\textsuperscript{13}

In the first two years of indoor baseball, teams like the Farragut Boat Club and the Harvard club embodied the spirit of the game. Other private groups with expensive buildings and financially elite members like the Carleton, LaSalle, and Marquette clubs also engaged in the indoor baseball leagues. The groups almost always played within the confines of their clubhouses in front of other members, or guests – both male and female. Indoor baseball, when played in these elite men’s clubs, became an opportunity for club members to unify themselves in a middle class group, with the same shared ideals, occupations, and amusements. The development of indoor baseball mimicked much of the development of early outdoor baseball in Chicago during the 1860s, where middle class young men organized teams, built clubhouses, and created a small world that represented the virtues of the middle class. Just as the clubs created membership guidelines that sought to develop the economic and social commonality of the members,

the baseball games simply became another way for members to develop camaraderie with their white, middle class peers.\textsuperscript{14}

The organized games of men’s clubs were often well attended and occasionally overcrowded. At times women comprised the majority of the audience, likely the wives and guests of the men on the field. The clubs purposely excluded outsiders, admittance was restricted, and the clubs mandated that only members and guests of members could attend games. The clubs blamed overcrowding of the facilities for the elimination of outsiders from watching their athletic contests. Of course, these exclusive clubs, with their dances, socials, and athletics did not want people representing the lower socio-economic groups or ethnic minorities infiltrating their proceedings. Broadening admittance would undermine the exclusive feel the organizers of these fraternities wanted to foster, as they were looked upon as the “society” of Chicago. A small cartoon in the \textit{Chicago Tribune} of an indoor baseball, with anthropomorphic arms and legs, and sporting a top hat and kid gloves accompanied the game reports in the fall of 1891. This small drawing emphasized the exclusive nature of not only the game in the early 1890s but of the men’s social clubs that had created it. Due to this exclusive origin the game came grew as a means of establishing upper middle class male camaraderie and building ties that were at once cultural, social, and economic.\textsuperscript{15}


Although only gentlemen played this early version of soft ball the games in these elite organizations could take on a rowdy feel, even with aldermen and ministers in the seats cheering for their respective side. Commonly, in the early days of indoor baseball, the seats of the particular club’s gymnasium would fill by the opening pitch of the game. The fans would align themselves with “their” teams and created noise levels that reached deafening proportions, as the spectators shouted at the players and umpires and the ball ricocheted off the tight confines of the gym. The yelling and boisterous play echoed off the walls and ceiling, creating a wild atmosphere quite unlike the formal dinners and soirees that occupied most weekend evenings in the various clubs. The close quarters provided by playing in the clubhouses ensured an exciting if not confusing spectacle. Batters struck balls that pounded the rafters in the ceilings above the court, fans found themselves almost literally on top of the players, and the sounds of the gymnasium during game time disturbed any other activity going on within the club building.

Shortstop Hildebrand of the LaSalles would stand up to the plate with his bat on his shoulder and a defiant glance would cross his face. The turnover (the ball) would come at him, the thin white stick would fly through the air like a discarded cigarette, and catch the missile with the report of a snow shovel hitting a box car. The turnover would tear through the infield and bang up against the center-field door, shaking the building and causing a “ramps” in every pin pool table in the billiard-room.

These rambunctious games echoed through corridors of the men's clubs, setting a tone very different than what was commonplace at polo matches or boat races, let alone the billiard room.16

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The City’s Game

On Wednesday morning, November 22, 1893, a thin layer of damp snow covered the streets of Chicago. Downtown workers splashed through muddy puddles as the snow melted on sidewalks in the thirty-three degree air. The White City wore a “whiter pall of death” as the World’s Fair buildings in Jackson Park felt colder inside than out. That night an indoor baseball game was scheduled in Irving Hall, a two-story brick structure that sat on the corners of Paulina and Madison streets near today’s United Center. The game matched the Lake Forests and the Irvings, two amateur men’s clubs, and drew an audience of several hundred. To accommodate the people, who crowded the floor around the players, the ten foot high spectator gallery stood open and quickly filled. The fans in the first row of the gallery rose up and cheered as the game wore on, while those behind leaned on the shoulders of the front row. A wooden railing lined the upper grandstand but as the fans pushed forward and leaned into their neighbors the rail gave way, sending a dozen men and boys tumbling to the floor below. The remaining gallery panicked, creating a mad rush to the ground and out the doors. One victim, fifteen year old Ed Whitney, was rushed to County Hospital with blood streaming from his mouth and ears.17

While indoor baseball was still plagued by the limitations of improvised facilities, the game had changed by the early 1890s. The Irvings and the Lake Forests played in front of fans removed from the wealthy social clubhouses of the city and were drawn together on a stage that far exceeded the sport of George Hancock. Irving Hall had functioned as a space for political rallies, an armory, and even a dancing school – a space

fundamentally different from the exclusive social and economic climate of the Farragut Boat Club or Harvard Club. In the early 1890’s the sport spread throughout the city of Chicago and broadened to people outside of the elite men’s social clubs. Schools, work organizations, cycling clubs, and teams affiliated with the humbler neighborhoods of the south and west sides of the city all shaped the game as the dominance of the men’s private social clubs diminished. During the 1890s the game also spread nationally with teams on the Atlantic coast, in New York, and in southern California. Yet even with the growing national popularity for indoor baseball the game remained a decidedly Chicago sport where the rules, governing bodies, and the vast majority of the teams existed. The city represented the only place in the United States with teams and leagues playing year after year. During the 1890s what had once been an exclusive game played solely by elite social organizations began to spread to a broader array of Chicago society that included both fans and players. These new participants picked up the game as indoor spaces became more accessible, bats and balls became more affordable, company employees banded together to form teams. Athletes at high schools and colleges discovered another sporting outlet, and ethnic groups and religious groups found another game that banded them together while embracing a thoroughly American pastime.\(^\text{18}\)

The exclusive social clubs of Chicago still maintained a leadership role in the game of indoor baseball as the last decade of the nineteenth century began. These groups also made up the majority of the teams that played the sport, however the spaces in which

they played moved to larger and more elaborate facilities. In December of 1891, two elite men’s clubs, the Marquette and Carleton clubs, played in the First Regiment Armory, an enormous structure designed by Burnham and Root, located at Michigan and Sixteenth Street. The building had an open floor roughly three quarters of an acre where the players held their December game and National Guard companies routinely marched. A skylight above the third floor allowed light to shine onto the ground below and into the galleries that lined the second and third floors while the outer part of the building had four imposing bastions on each corner and the structure was laced with window slots for riflemen. The front door closed with chains and bars of steel, reminiscent of a medieval castle. The game between the two clubs drew roughly one thousand people who lined the balconies to watch the action on the parade ground. After the game ended, the patrons came down to the floor to dance to music provided by the Elgin Band. That night most of the fans did not belong to the clubs. The game had been advertised in the newspapers of Chicago and all of the ticket profits as well as donations went towards the First Regiment to raise money for the newly constructed armory.

This armory game, one of many played in the First Regiment building, drew in fans for the purpose of entertainment and a charitable cause; not for the camaraderie and economically and socially exclusive purposes of the elite Chicago clubs. Although the attendees must have largely sprung from the more wealthy fabric of Chicago society, the armory after all was supported by industrial magnates determined to have military support against rebellious workers, the crowd possessed more diversity and a much different purpose than the games of crowded clubhouses. The armory game was
indicative of how the sport changed as games arose for charities, entertainment, and the bonding of players outside of the social clubs. Although in the early 1890s a transition to an armory or country club may have been only a small step toward the general public, the sport undeniably was broadening its appeal to the larger society.¹⁹

Like the armory gatherings, indoor baseball popped up in other new places as well. For at least three years, beginning in 1891, an annual game of indoor baseball was held in the newly constructed and lavishly designed Auditorium building by Dankmar Adler and Louis Sullivan on South Michigan Avenue. In January, a charity event was held for the Illinois Humane Society with music by regimental bands, a dance, and a finale of indoor baseball. The teams came from the Midwinter League and the players represented the men’s clubs of the city. Over 3,500 people attended the first year for an admission price of one dollar; the boxes going for a higher price. George Hancock, the proud “father” of indoor baseball oversaw the entire proceedings. This annual event underscored the origins of the game, a sport supported by the wealthier fabric of the city,

¹⁹ “First Regiment Armory,” Chicago Daily Tribune, 12 May 1889, p. 13, “Benefit Indoor Baseball Game,” Chicago Daily Tribune, 1 December 1891, p. 3. Robert Fogelson, America’s Armories: Architecture, Society and Public Order (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), p. 59. The First Regiment Armory, like many armories in the country, was constructed in this period as a response to the escalating conflicts between labor and capital. In the case of the First Regiment building, Marshall Field, the owner of the lucrative business that bore his name, leased the land on which the arsenal was constructed for a nominal fee of four thousand dollars per year – far less than the true value of eight thousand annually. Field, and other civic leaders and wealthy benefactors, financially supported the regiments due to their growing concern over the class conflicts playing out in the streets of the city. Shortly after the Haymarket Riot, Field and others fully supported the efforts of the Guard units to strengthen their presence as the Illinois state government provided no financial support during the latter half of the nineteenth century.
but it also illustrated, like the armory game, the weaving of indoor baseball into the winter recreational activities of a broadening swath of Chicago.  

Trade and labor organizations, high schools, ethnic groups, and even politicians began to play indoor baseball throughout the city. Games sprung up in the livestock pavilion at the White City, games were held in distinctly German-American halls, and, years before the birth of modern softball, indoor baseball even moved outdoors. During the final years of the nineteenth century indoor baseball diversified, drawing in more and more people throughout the city. Simultaneously, the game also divided Chicagoans into teams of social, economic, or ethnic background. Banker teams played National Guardsmen, German American teams played each other, white collar workers played for their employer, and tradesmen played tradesmen. Adding to the rich milieu were leagues that sprang up made of teams representing Y.M.C.A.’s, the athletic clubs of the social elite, cycling clubs playing one another, as well as a Catholic League. By the middle of the 1890s teams, players, and fans took the indoor game and made it their own. This sport that gave solidarity to the commercial white collar workers of the loop also tied ethnic groups together and offered a vehicle for blue collar solidarity. As indoor lighting became more accessible, the game’s popularity became broader.  

Klare’s Hall, at 72 North Clark Street in the city’s loop, hosted numerous games of indoor baseball throughout the 1890s. This building also served as a political


gathering point, a social facility, as well as the center for labor organizations. In 1896, the East Ends indoor baseball club and the West Ends, of the Amateur Baseball League, made this their home field, playing host to at least seven different teams from very different backgrounds. In winter months of January and February these two teams faced off against an Irish Catholic team playing for St. Patrick’s Church, a team representing the cigar and tobacco company of Wm. H. Heegaard, as well as another from the department store of Siegel and Cooper. While these diverse teams played indoor baseball in the building, other groups utilized the space to further social causes and support labor and political movements. In 1879 a group of German Americans of the Democratic Party used the hall for a mass meeting in an effort to get more judges elected. A socialist stood up and addressed the crowd imploring them to support the Democrats in the next election even though he had abandoned the party years before. Carter Harrison, the mayor of the city, spoke at the hall and appealed for the election of Democrats throughout the city and wanted the members to draw in the “honest” Republicans to their side.22

On the evening of May 4, 1888, over eighty couples gathered in Klare’s Hall for the second annual May Party of the Ladies’ Excelsior Assembly, No. 8318. This offshoot of the Knights of Labor represented Chicago’s shoestichers. This same facility that hosted indoor baseball and political rallies also held a dance for young workers who, as the Tribune reported, “waltzes, schottisches, quadrilles, and reels until the night grew pale and the stars refused longer to cast a reflection in the limpid depths of the south

branch.” In addition to shoestackers, Klare’s Hall also hosted striking cigar makers trying to reach arbitration with employers in 1891. The group “tendered a vote” giving thanks to the Saloonkeepers for their support and refusal to sell cigars except those produced by union members. Employees of the city’s map department used the same hall for their first annual ball in 1895.23

Klare’s Hall underscored the changing role of indoor baseball as the sport moved into public spaces that also housed very diverse engagements in the 1890s. Additionally, the simple structure of the game, with limited equipment and facilities, gave the workers of the city easy access to the sport. By 1891, the Pullman Company on the Southside of Chicago, had their own team which played independent indoor teams from Chicago, as well as other company funded clubs. The Pullman Company, as well as the company town, had created the Pullman Athletic Association that developed a complex athletic organization that supported company funded outdoor baseball, football, cricket, cycling races, as well as an enormous boat race on the company built lake. The Association also pushed to include all levels of company employees, from the white collar organizers of the games and events, to the workers on the floor that played alongside the management and office workers of the corporation. The Pullman Athletic Association’s importance to the town and community was so strong that the company would fund all travel arrangements by visiting indoor baseball teams. During the middle of the decade, a Commercial League had also developed, that pitted department store employees from teams that represented Carson, Pirie, Scott, and Company, and Schlesinger and Mayer

against other clubs from the publishing house of A. C. McClurg as well as the wholesale grocers of Sprague, Warner, and Company. These clubs and games demonstrated the growth of the indoor game from the middle class clubs of the city to the working class player, who wanted to pursue a passion for baseball even during the winter months. While companies sought to harness the employee, and to inhibit unions and worker solidarity, the worker could use the camaraderie of a team game to build stronger ties with the men of the shop floor.24

As the spaces changed so did the players and in many cases the purpose of the sport. City politicians looking to profit from the popularity of indoor baseball staged a game in March of 1897 in Natatorium Hall, on Madison Street, just west of the Chicago River. The politicians dressed as sailors, Turks, clowns, cowboys, and even a cigar store Indian, played a group of nine businessmen from the local community in a game marked by poor play. In the midst of the chaos of bad fielding, Frank Collier, a formerly prominent Chicago lawyer and vice president of the Chicago Board of Education who had lapsed into insanity years before, rose to announce his candidacy for mayor as he stood on home plate and stopped the game. The players and umpires surrounded him and begged that he remove himself from the premises but Collier ignored them and continued to speak. Finally, the Gilmore Nit Band, in residence for the evening, started performing “Tell Them That You Saw Me,” and “All Coons Look Alike to Me,” drowning out

Collier and forced him from the field.\textsuperscript{25} Once the game resumed poor play continued, with an Alderman falling into the crowd while friends and relatives of the players enjoyed the absurdity of the spectacle of the costumed politicians that performed so badly. The strange and unorganized game played in Natatorium Hill reinforces the expansion of indoor baseball across Chicago.\textsuperscript{26} Politicians assembling, for a charitable game, knew linking themselves to indoor baseball would help reinforce their standing in the community and thereby create more votes on Election Day. The game had become commonplace enough to the average citizen of Chicago during the 1890s that it could be used as a political ploy.

**The People’s Game**

In March of 1896, as the indoor baseball season drew to a close and the outdoor games about to begin, Austin High School captured the Cook County High School indoor baseball championship. Evanston and Lake View High Schools ended the season dramatically with two games, the second of which would be a playoff for second place. The two teams met for the first game on March 17 in Washington Turner Hall, at the

\textsuperscript{25} Frank Collier had been a prominent lawyer in Chicago, a Vice President of the Chicago Board of Education, a staunch supporter of the Republican party and served as an ambassador for the City of Chicago to have breakfast with Queen Victoria in London in 1887. In March of 1889 Collier was embroiled in a heated political campaign when he received a fraudulent telephone call asking him to come to the Illinois club immediately for consultation in a political dispute. While walking to the club he was attacked by three unknown assailants, bludgeoned, and left on the street. Collier never fully recovered from this attack and spent the rest of his life in periods of insanity while convalescing in five different asylums. He eventually became a laughing stock of Chicago as he proclaimed his candidacy for mayor and other political offices while exhibiting bizarre behavior. Towards the end of his life he had brain surgery to alleviate the pressure in his skull but his health never recovered and he died of typhoid fever in August, 1901.

confluence of Clark and Racine streets. Evanston won this contest by the score of eleven to seven in front of dozens of the participants’ classmates, both girls and boys, who screamed out at their favorite players and the plays on the diamond. This win by Evanston forced a playoff game to be staged two days later, in the city of Evanston, at Bartlet’s Skating Rink. When the two teams squared off again, Lake View won by the score of ten to six and finished the season second to Austin High School. The loss by Evanston left them so disgruntled they formally protested what they regarded as unfair umpiring. The winning pitcher of the second place Lake View team, and pitcher of both final games, was Luther Pollard, an African American teenager, singled out in the *Chicago Tribune* as a star of the games. Integrated high school teams faced off in Chicago, long after the infamous refusal of Adrian “Cap” Anson to allow his National League Chicago White Stockings to face the black player Moses Fleetwood Walker of the major league Newark Little Giants in 1887.\(^{27}\) The integration of indoor baseball and the focus on high school teams reinforces the changing nature of the game to include the diversity of Chicago, racially, ethnically, and economically. Just as the high schools picked up the indoor bat so did the Young Men Christian Associations, Hull House, and teams representing religious organizations like the 41 Street Presbyterian Church.\(^{28}\)

\(^{27}\) Luther Pollard, the pitcher for the Lake View High School team, was also the older brother of Fred “Fritz” Pollard. The older Pollard went on to become one of the first two black players to play in the National Football League and also the first black coach of a National Football League team.

At the dawn of the twentieth century the Chicago social clubs lost interest in indoor baseball. Yet more and more high schools, youth organizations, church teams, and employee clubs took the place of the social teams that had defined indoor baseball in the nineteenth century. The Cook County High School Indoor Baseball League existed from 1896 until 1913 and during this period became the most consistent indoor baseball organization as other men’s leagues and clubs were born and died. The high school teams played in a skating rink, Y.M.C.A. halls, a high school library, as well as facilities like Washington Turner Hall. As the support of indoor baseball faded in the adult men's clubs and organizations, high schools kept the sport alive, as they organized teams, played both intramural and city wide games, and made indoor baseball an athletic endeavor largely confined to secondary schools.

In 1902 men’s indoor baseball enjoyed a brief revival when the National Guard formed a league comprised of teams representing the naval reserves, the cavalry, the signal corp, as well as the army. The news of the National Guard's new league inspired many of the men’s clubs to bring themselves together again to reinvigorate the “gaslight diamond” but this was short lived and competitive men's club adult indoor baseball again waned in the city. Even the Chicago Tribune recognized the disappearance of the once important game. In an article that announced the new National Guard league the editors referred to the “Formerly Popular Winter Sport.” With this inauspicious start the National Guard league still promised a revival of indoor baseball. The promise, however, was short lived as the league soon failed, even though the National Guard continued to play somewhat regular games against the remaining men's amateur clubs and the
remaining National Guard teams. Even as late as 1909 a National Guard team from Chicago played another Guard team from Wisconsin. Regardless, the Guard’s foray into indoor baseball came at the tail-end of the adult men’s participation.29

The indoor game lingered longer among Chicago businesses. The Spalding Company, the purveyor of sporting goods and baseball guides, funded a team that included ethnic players such as, "Otto Kempf" and "F. Sternberg." Simultaneously, the Armour Grain Company, F.B. and Company, Bartlett Pattern and Company, and George Young and Company, sponsored teams that had players with names such as "Gerwig," "August Dipe," "E. Kralovec," and "J. Vicek." While these ethnically diverse players played for their employer teams, entire clubs developed around their own ethnic group. The Swedish Methodist Church of Humboldt Park had their own team with players such as "T. Malstrom," "W.T. Steelhammer," and "W. Edgren," and the St. Alphonsus Presbyterian Church had players named, Vollman, Walsdorf, Balke, and Debus. In the first decade of the twentieth century churches in general embraced indoor baseball. In addition to Swedish Methodist and St. Alphonsus, Belden Avenue Baptist Church fielded a team with players named Lingenfelder and Lendahl, and church clubs from St. Paul Congregational and Garfield Methodist Episcopal competed against one another. While the elite men’s fraternities shied away from the game, the company teams with working class players, and church teams, with ethnically diverse Chicagoans from across the city, continued to support the game. Once indoor baseball completely left Chicago sports,

these same players took the legacy of the game and helped to develop the outdoor game of softball, with the soft sixteen inch ball, and the easy access to the city park diamonds.\footnote{By the beginning of the twentieth century the game of basketball, created by James Naismith in a Springfield Massachusetts Y.M.C.A. in 1891, had exploded in popularity across much of the country. In Chicago, basketball took root only slowly largely due to the tradition of indoor baseball during the winter months. However, basketball started to draw more and more school aged girls and boys and depleted the indoor baseball scenes.}

ranks of indoor baseball rosters. In an effort to increase participants, proponents pushed more and more for young women to participate and extolled the virtues of the sport while simultaneously downplaying the growth of basketball. In the 1903 *Spalding’s Guide to Indoor Baseball* Dr. Milo S. Walker, a teacher at Chicago’s West Division High School explained to a national audience:

There are two reasons for the fact that indoor baseball has not been played as much by women as basketball. The first reason is that basketball is easily understood by spectators, which makes it popular, especially with those who do not know the general rules of athletic games. The majority of those who attend indoor games for women do not understand baseball.

Walker proceeded to explain the other reason for women to be drawn more easily into basketball stems from, “the fact that the coaches and teams may be discouraged before the players become proficient in the game. There are natural ball players among women, but it takes much time and patience to develop the playing of most individuals and a longer time for team work.” The Spalding guide makes clear the move of women from being mere spectators of indoor sports to full participants. The transition was encouraged by the growth of high schools in Chicago. During the Progressive era high school athletic programs were usually managed to achieve clear social goals such as teamwork, mental and physical health, and Americanization. By the first decade of the twentieth century, Chicago high schools had women's indoor baseball teams, in addition to basketball teams. These games were deemed socially acceptable for female participation. While the Spalding guides emphasized the importance of indoor baseball for all participants, the authors continued to draw upon the success of the game in Chicago, which accentuated
the continued importance the game held in the consciousness of the city, but also rein-
forced that indoor baseball had started to retreat around the country. 31

Teams comprised of girls did gain ground in the 1900s as more and more young women played an inter-
mural variety of indoor baseball. Interschool competitions, however, were less frequent. The version played by girls did not match the game played by boys. Schools and organizations, such as the Y.W.C.A., in an effort to keep young women “more refined, more gentle,” eliminated sliding, tripping, and blocking bases. Regardless of changing the more “objectionable” components of the men’s game, girls’ teams flourished in areas of the city. As late as 1915, on the south side, girls from the Englewood area squared off against each other in public park gymnasiums, with the teams representing their local park district. Later still, in the spring of 1918, a girls’ team from Hyde Park competed against a team from Hamilton Park in the Englewood neighborhood. One significant change at this time was that teams often played the game both indoors and outdoors. This development marked the transition from the game of the 19th century to the more modern form of softball common by the 1920s and 30s. 32

In Logansport, Indiana, in the summer of 1914, just as World War I erupted in Europe, the local park district presented a report on the mid-season activities staged for the city’s children. The report was published in the Logansport Pharos-Reporter, sandwiched between a vaudeville advertisement for “Paul Bowens: King of Black Face


Comedy,” and an article predicting the economic solvency of the United States during the war in Europe. Edward Mazurkiewicz, a native of Grand Rapids, Michigan, and a student at the YMCA’s Springfield College in Massachusetts—the birthplace of basketball, and the new director of Logansport’s “Playground,” listed the games played by the children. He told of swimming lessons and tennis tournaments they played, he even broke down, piece by piece, the type of playground equipment used by the participants in the summer program, including a slide, swings, and “teete boards.”

Mazurkiewicz opened the report with an explanation of the necessity of physical activity, beyond the register of activities, lessons, and games the children played, where the playground activities he directs are fundamental to the development of children both mentally and physically. Written during the height of the Progressive era, he stressed that games socialized children, kept them from being problems for the police, and, most importantly fostered the development of will, where he emphasized, “The child then learns self-restraint, which is the latest thing that is developed in a child or man.” Buried within this report, situated with the reed basket making, hiking, and picnics of the Logansport Playground are the games and tournaments of “playground ball,” the outdoor game of indoor baseball. Over one hundred miles from Chicago, playground ball had become an integral part of the summer curriculum for the progressive Logansport park district.  

The game was becoming predominately an outdoor spectacle but something that could be transferred from one location to the next. Originally, the time of year prohibited

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the opportunity to take indoor baseball outside in the cold Chicago weather but increasingly teams played the game in spring, summer, and fall months and found the gloveless sport, with a large sixteen-inch ball worked well outside. In the spring of 1918, with the American military arriving en masse at training camps in the United States and in France, enormous quantities of athletic equipment donated from a special branch of the YMCA, known as the “Y” War Work Council was made available to the troops. Most of the items sent to Europe were baseball bats, gloves, and catcher equipment as well as lesser numbers of footballs, rugby and soccer balls, as well as volleyballs and boxing gloves. In March of 1918 12,600 indoor baseballs were shipped to the soldiers. This quantity suggests not only the national familiarity of the game through an army made up of different ethnicities and hometowns separated by hundreds of miles, but also the transitioning of the sport from indoor to outdoor play. The thousands of encamped soldiers on the fields of France would obviously be using these twelve thousand indoor balls outside. In 1919, the YWCA sent an additional batch of sporting goods to the American army of occupation. On this occasion the balls are referred to playground balls – not the traditional indoor baseball.34

**Conclusion**

Throughout June and July in the summer of 1933, from all corners of Chicago, over one thousand softball teams comprised of men, women, and girls and boys played one another for a chance to enter the preliminary tournament of fourteen and sixteen-inch

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softball held in Wrigley Field during August. Championship titles would be given in fourteen and sixteen inch free lance teams, girl and boys seventeen and under, as well as church and commercial teams. The winners in the seven divisions would enter into the world’s championship tournament held during the Century of Progress World’s Fair in September, where every team would use a fourteen inch ball.35

Indoor baseball changed dramatically by 1933, as the early game of Hancock, with a boxing glove and broom handle now was linked to Wrigley Field and the World’s Fair. Indoor baseball, since Hancock’s day, had touched a wide swath of Chicago’s young people. The sport had engaged the elite men’s clubs of the 1880s and 1890s, the city’s businesses and factories, religious youth organizations, city high schools and it finally evolved into a outdoor sport known as playground ball. The simplicity of indoor baseball made it malleable for players and teams, and the ease of approaching the sport made it ideal for companies to instill a sense of camaraderie and company loyalty. Publications such as Spalding's Guide focused on character development in young participants. As other indoor winter sports such as basketball and volleyball eventually overtook the indoor game of baseball, with game play and dimensions more suited for gymnasium play, the appealing nature of the sport did not disappear. Additionally, indoor baseball played in the winter months in congested and ill lit halls did not fit within the mythical outdoor story of baseball, with green fields and the tradition of outdoor escapism that developed in the middle of the nineteenth century. What did remain was the easy access to the game of softball, especially the Chicago sixteen-inch sport, where

players only needed a ball and a bat, and the ever growing number of public outdoor diamonds that meant anyone could pick up the game and become a softball player.

Softball grew in popularity throughout the latter half of the twentieth century and much of the accessibility and camaraderie of our modern game stems from a sport invented in the clubhouse of a Chicago boat club in 1887.\(^{36}\)

CHAPTER FOUR
THE AMATEUR AND SEMIPROFESSIONAL TEAMS

Abraham Lincoln spent the entire month of July 1860, in his hometown of Springfield, Illinois. He had been nominated for President in May, and worked through the summer in an attempt to shore up as much political support he could find. In the Northern states he had been pitted against Stephen Douglas, a Democratic Senator from Illinois. Douglas had relocated to Chicago in 1847, after living in Jacksonville, Springfield, and Quincy. When Douglas and his family moved in 1847, the city had 17,000 residents and lined Lake Michigan for three and a half miles. By the summer of 1860, Chicago had grown to over 117,000 people, and the city pulsed with anticipation for the upcoming Presidential election and residents aligned themselves between the two candidates. The Chicago Excelsiors, the city's best men's amateur baseball team, found themselves equally divided along political lines, much like the rest of the city and country. On July 25, the team split for a scrimmage that pitted the club into two nines, one made of the Lincoln men, the other of Douglas supporters. The team met on the club's grounds, an empty lot at the corner of Lake and Ann Streets, and in front of twelve hundred supporters, the Douglas men beat the Lincoln team by a score of sixteen to fourteen. The Republican Chicago Press and Tribune, told readers, "Never mind, Lincoln boys, there's a victory in store where Douglas will make no 'runs.' He is a lame 'short stop' and has been 'caught out.'" When the Civil War broke out the following
spring, the Excelsiors disbanded, many joined the war effort, and the club would not to be reformed until late in the summer of 1865. That summer in 1860, no player for the Excelsiors understood the cataclysmic events that stood before them, that would not only be disruption to the fledging sport of baseball in Chicago, but would alter the lives of all Americans.¹

In 1860, Chicago had at least four organized amateur men's baseball teams, and the three most prominent clubs were the Excelsiors, Columbias, and the Olympics. They had all formed in the late 1850s, and started the process of Chicago's involvement in the baseball craze that had already swept over the northeast, where New York, Boston, and Philadelphia had developed dozens of clubs that played an organized, amateur, and fraternal game of baseball. Historian Stephen Freedman has suggested that less than a hundred Chicagoans understood the rules of baseball in 1860, but this number appears low, as the four organized teams had dozens of players, and the Lincoln – Douglas game had been staged in front of over one thousand fans. Even with only four recorded organized men’s clubs, there had to be hundreds of individuals playing baseball in the city by the end of the 1850s. If four men's teams garnered coverage in the local press, other unorganized teams played for recreation, and the exercise, a phenomenon that started to grow in the 1850s and the 1860s with athletics viewed as "health-giving and

character-building." Regardless, baseball occupied a small place in Chicago prior to the Civil War and it would not grow into a mass urban spectacle until the end of the 1860s.

After the Civil War, Chicago veterans returned home and attempted a normal life for themselves and their families. The young men who returned also looked to the game of baseball for a recreational outlet, a sport they learned had been ingrained for over twenty years in their Eastern comrades, in regiments from New York, Philadelphia, and Boston. In the aftermath of the war, over thirty teams developed in Chicago by the end of the 1860s. These teams followed the prescribed pattern of East Coast clubs that met for amusement, fraternal bonds, the healthy nature of the outdoor game of baseball, and for a shared experienced in the industrialized city where they could find camaraderie with their socio-economic peers. The first wave of the great baseball fad that struck the city in the 1860s bonded low white-collar young men, who found baseball to be an opportunity to enjoy an open air pastoral break from the increasingly industrialized harshness of Chicago. Additionally, the game gave these same young men the chance to organize themselves within their class structure, in an effort to further exclude themselves from the growing numbers of industrial workers. This belief had been strengthened by the press of the city which viewed baseball as an opportunity to experience a clean game, with clean air, outside of the dreary offices of Chicago.²

Baseball had turned into a city wide spectacle by 1870, and the commercial minded people of the city looked to the game for an opportunity to make a profit. That year, the first professional team had organized in the city. In the decades that followed

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the game evolved into a mass entertainment that attracted paying customers and helped to
eclipse the amateur culture that had previously dominated baseball in the city. Even
though the nature of amateur teams changed, they did not disappear. Instead, they
changed with the times, focused less on fraternal bonds and team clubhouses, and played
a competitive game that attracted their own fan base. Even at this early date, Chicagoans
embraced baseball in part because it offered relief from the growing industrialized city,
and was associated with a mythic, pastoral image. Ironically the game celebrated for its
link to farms and fields needed the mechanization and industrial power of cities to
succeed. Amateur baseball teams, as well as professional, celebrated the game as it gave
them relief from the city but employed the industrial setting, and all its tools, to promote
baseball. Historian Steven Riess has suggested that corporations embraced the game of
baseball, and by the 1870s had developed their own company teams as an exercise in
"welfare capitalism." For Riess the owners "sought to promote company loyalty, retain
skilled workers, forestall unionization by promoting a sense of community at the
workplace, increase profits, and improve the firm's public image." By the end of the
century, company teams made the daily sports page, created their own leagues, and
commonly took on the best amateur teams in the city as well as semiprofessional clubs.
As Harold Seymour has pointed out, "Industrial and business baseball thus grew as part
of this paternalistic and manipulative system set up as social control by businesses for
motives of enlightened self-interest, such as increased production, less employee
turnover, and, above all, prevention of unionism and strikes." By the end of the
nineteenth century, "White collar and blue, small business and large, all participated."
But even with the greater diversity of baseball players in amateur clubs, access to teams largely remained a middle class exercise, as men who worked in the factories, lived in slums, and were new immigrants had little access to baseball games or the ability to play. Commonly, the only day they had free fell on Sundays, and the culture of urban America frowned upon a spectacle of sports, as well as participation in a friendly afternoon game, on the Sabbath. Even with these hindrances, working class Chicagoans, as well as immigrants, played and watched baseball, albeit in a smaller number than their middle class neighbors. Baseball did provide the opportunity for the working class as well as immigrants to embrace the greater culture of the city and in the case of immigrants to find an entry point into American culture.³

During the 1870s, the growing power of professional baseball began to crowd the amateur game out of the daily newspapers, but the teams continued to play. By the 1880s, the growing appetite for baseball brought amateur baseball back to the public mind and the sports pages covered the action on the field, the number of teams grew, and fans crowded neighborhood parks to watch the clubs square off. The best amateur squads largely used four enclosed parks in the city occasionally played games in the National League stadium, and charged admittance to games. By the end of the decade, amateur clubs blurred their position as non-profit teams that played for fun and camaraderie. Increasingly, the teams charged at the gate, sometimes turning a profit, and the two

opposing teams would split the gate receipts by keeping forty percent of the money and
giving sixty percent to the stadium owner. The teams played as amateur organizations,
but in reality the best teams had become semiprofessional, when they left the ballpark on
weekend afternoons with a profit from the ticket holders. By 1887, the eight strongest
clubs formed the Chicago City League, an organized league that played on the weekends
in the enclosed parks and the National League stadium, and drew in thousands of
spectators. The sport had developed into such an important component of everyday life
for Chicagoans, that the National League team did not satiate the population, Chicagoans
were willing to turn out by the thousands to attend a semiprofessional game.
Additionally, the Chicago City League charged twenty-five cents for grandstand seats
and fifteen cents for general admittance, a far more affordable choice than the fifty-cent
admission price for White Stockings games. By the 1890s, the ticket price would also
provide the fan two games, one between the semiprofessional teams, and the other a
warm up act of top flight youth teams, independent clubs made of teenagers in the city.4

In 1890, the City League had created a pennant race that would culminate with
over three thousand fans packed into enclosed parks, spilling over in the seats and fans
lined the field around the players. In that year, six teams vied for the championship, but
by 1895 only four teams competed for the title, and the League collapsed, not to be
reformed for another decade. The end of the City League did not mean a lessened
importance of semi-professional baseball, and instead the number of semi-pro and
amateur teams continued to grow. This growth contributed to the failure of the City

League, as teams found greater competition and profits by diversified schedules, and eliminated the growing cost of playing in the City League. Additionally, the paying customer supported the more varied schedule, and enjoyed watching a larger number of teams that competed on the weekend.

By the end of the 1890s, African-American clubs increasingly played against the best white semi-professional teams, and squared off against other black teams from the east as well as barnstormed across the Midwest. At the same time, white semi-professional teams grew in stature, many made up of former major leaguers or long term minor league players that made as much money during the weekends in Chicago as they had in the rough life of traveling with a minor league organization. Even while they earned money from baseball, semiprofessional players still held full time jobs to compensate their baseball salaries. By 1905, as the White Sox and Cubs worked for supremacy in the city, semipro teams increasingly recruited former big league players to put the best product on the field.5

In 1906, as the White Sox and Cubs squared off in the first cross town World Series, amateur and semi-professional baseball continued to draw in fans and capture the imagination of the city. The 1906 season could arguably be considered the "city's greatest of all time at semipro and major league levels," as the White Sox won the World Series over their city rivals and the best semi-professional teams played close exhibition games after the Series, and occasionally won, against the respective National League and American League champions. Simultaneously, the public's participation and attendance

at amateur games remained high and baseball infected the entire city. The 1906 season represented the high water mark of passion for amateur and semi-pro ball. By the end of the decade, even as the City League drew in fans, Cap Anson played against a black team, and Rube Foster starred for the Leland Giants, Chicago fans started to focus on the professional teams of the city and the lower rungs of baseball slipped from the public's conscience. As the Progressive Era and drew to a close with the destruction of World War I, amateur and semi-professional baseball largely left the sporting pages of the Chicago newspapers. Instead the professional teams dominated the spectacle of baseball, where the ticket holders focused their energies on the White Sox and the Cubs and lessened their support of semi-professional and amateur baseball.  

The First Chicago Amateurs

In July of 1866, a reporter for the Chicago Tribune wondered what had caused the recent explosion in baseball so soon after the cataclysmic Civil War. Chicagoans, it seemed to him, had entered a different age, where “play” had developed into a new normal, after years of focus on, "a habit of life which knew no employment but work, and nor reward but money," into an era of the "free and manly sports of heroes." This transition made sense to the writer, who saw the great explosion of baseball in the city as an aftermath of the Northern victory in the war, a new nation that no longer focused on work, "but a nation at play, driving business as we drive a ball." Baseball represented the reward of a victorious Union, where the heroes of the conflict made a profit in white collar jobs, and spent free time pursuing a passion for exercise in the fraternal bonds of

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baseball. The sport transcended simple leisure or recreation, and developed into a representation of a powerful nation, where the passion for baseball mirrored the military and economic success of Chicago. The writer compared the new baseball fad embedded in Chicago to the powerful ancient Persians that conquered Asia and Europe "on a match game," and thought the power of the ancient Greeks came from their devotion to the Olympiad where boxing matches and sprints ranked at the highest levels. And through the "gladiatorial games" of ancient Rome the empire suppressed Greece in a "game" of war. And in Chicago, the recent victory in the Civil War, and the profound economic growth of the city, allowed the young men to celebrate with the game of baseball. To the writer, the continued success of Chicagoans depended on baseball; without the games the city might, "subside from them into the languor of amusement, or lose ourselves again in the incessant toil of business, we may expect that the generous pulse of our business and public life will begin to be languid or corrupt, or famish again."7

Ultimately, the rhetorical flourish of the Tribune reporter spoke to the shared sentiments of middle-class Chicagoans after the bloody Civil War. Baseball emerged as a dignified pursuit, of manly exercise and camaraderie, where white collar workers participated in the economic growth of the city and shared a passion for baseball. Instead of rejecting baseball, as a waste of valuable working hours, the city's middle class started to embrace the sport as a component of everyday life. Additionally, the sport had a democratic air, as all players could theoretically participate, and the game remained dignified, where women could attend games and the sport offered the opportunity to

escape from vulgar contests such as boxing, that had been considered a crude and brutal spectacle. In the late 1860s, the press believed baseball could also filter down to the working class of the city, where players could be educated on the behavior of gentleman, and participants could learn about athletic leisure activities that forbid alcohol, both by players and spectators. Even with this possibility, games on Sundays remained frowned upon, and the amateur teams played on Saturday afternoons, at a time when "day-laborers" were unable to participate, either as participants or spectators. In addition to leaving work for a baseball game, members needed to provide club dues and secure transportation costs back and forth to the field, a difficult feat when wages for the working class remained low. Lastly, the pursuit of baseball gave players the chance to engage in a Christian and moral physical exercise, that when practiced in moderation, "is one of the most healthful of known recreations. It gives full play to all the muscles of the body, strengthens the lungs, and invigorates the circulation of the blood." But when played in excess, and the participant spends too much time on the game, "it weakens and damages the system by the over-exertion." By the end of the decade baseball stood as a pinnacle of middle class exercise and gave the future middle class leaders of Chicago the opportunity to continue "physical health, moral well-being, and a staid outlook on life."

In this atmosphere the Excelsiors thrived in the years immediately after the war. They built their own clubhouse on LaSalle Street by December of 1866, and the lingering effects of the War, in which many of the players had served, carried over to the

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decorations in the facility, where a baseball bat manufactured from a tree of the Chickamauga battle field sat on a table with a silver plate embedded in the barrel explaining the origin. The team mimicked much of the fraternal teams of the East coast that thrived in the 1850s, where baseball had been an excuse not only to enjoy the game of baseball, but also as an opportunity to spend their free time with their peers: unmarried, young, middle class, white, protestant Chicagoans. In the evenings they retired to their clubhouse to enjoy food, coffee, camaraderie, and on occasion, music, and on at least one evening they listened to a quartet of musicians that performed not only for the club members but guests of the team. The Excelsiors played other men's clubs, such as the local Atlantics and the Eurekas, on the home field of the Excelsiors at Twenty-Second and State Streets, and the Lake Forests of Rockford, Illinois, visited the city as well as a club called the Unions, from St. Louis, Missouri, that played and lost to the team thirty-seven to five in September of 1866.9

The Excelsiors were the best club in Chicago at the end of the 1860s. The team’s members played their games as escape from the office, and the contests were a, “community event which helped to foster the kind of fellowship rarely seen in the working world.” This bond on manliness and white collar association with baseball as an extension of friendly play that drew together club members, friends, and family, and an escape from the industrial monolith of the downtown business district, eroded quickly at the close of the 1860s. By 1867, Eastern clubs traveled to Chicago for profit, and in that

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same year the Excelsiors lost in a devastating manner to the Washington D.C., Nationals that had also defeated teams in St. Louis and Cincinnati. The *Chicago Tribune* editorialized the worst part had been the tens of thousands of dollars that changed hands in wagers at the downtown hotels on the outcome of the games. Gamblers from the East traveled with the Nationals, wagered on the games, and helped to transform the nature of amateur baseball in the city. The somewhat naïveté of amateur men's clubs in Chicago in the 1860s came to a crashing halt with the realization that the best men's teams in the East practiced regularly, accepted various forms of compensation for their services, and attracted gamblers who diligently followed games. By 1870, the erosion of the amateur game had become complete, as local businessmen decided to create a professional nine of their own, to represent Chicago and to compete against the increasing professional teams on the East coast. This transition led to the demise of the first wave of amateurism in Chicago baseball, and eliminated the idea of a game focused on exercise, built for middle class, white, young businessmen. The club, built around baseball, with fraternal bonds, and dinners, music, and balls, ended and was replaced by the focus on elite teams that won games against the best competitors. Above all else, fraternal baseball had been replaced with the opportunity to make a profit on the ever growing spectator. But as fraternal baseball waned, a new version of the amateur sport appeared, that broadened participation to a larger section of Chicago's society, and ultimately made the amateur game stronger. As the new amateur game developed, the baseball fan in Chicago focused
on the professional team, and initially paid little attention to the still strong amateur games that were played throughout the city.¹⁰

As this first wave of fraternal baseball waned by the start of the 1870s, due to the growth of professional baseball and the fire of 1871, amateur baseball did not disappear. Instead, the amateur game thrived as never before, but the sport took a turn away from the then archaic form of baseball as a men's fraternal club, in a clubhouse setting, with banquets and music, friendly play, and light competition. In the fall of 1870, the Chicago Tribune declared that "base ball had ceased, at least for the players, to be an amusement." Instead, the professional game had replaced the game of the post war fad, and now Chicagoans looked to the paid athlete as the pinnacle of achievement. The paper lamented the loss of the dominance of amateur baseball, but still held out hope the teams would continue to thrive. The reporters believed baseball needed to continue to offer a viable form of exercise for the class of workers that had, "intellectual occupations," such as "students, lawyers, doctors, clergymen, merchants, bankers, clerks, and book-keepers." Baseball would continue to allow the white collar middle class workers of Chicago a chance to overcome "the slow palsy that steals daily over the frame, and stiffens and weakens the muscles of the sedentary class." The writers thought professional baseball would continue to exist as an amusement but the real importance and strength baseball could provide for middle class Chicagoans was the opportunity to exercise for good health. In addition to good health, amateur baseball was still viewed as a clean, moral

game, devoid of gambling and drinking, and "undue excitements," that existed in the new professional games. The good health of the middle class would also equal better men running businesses and strengthening the city, as "Sound health is still the fountain of sound judgment, as in the Roman adage of two thousand years ago; and sound judgment is the basis of pure morals and a genial, useful life."¹¹

The idealized and sanitized version of amateur baseball offered in the Tribune had already eroded by the middle of the 1870s. Teams competed with greater intensity and largely modeled their organizations on the professional clubs. During the decade the sporting press focused less and less on the amateur clubs, but did occasionally report on the outcome of games, won and loss records, as well as individual statistics. The focus on winning and statistical success mimicked the professional teams and the players for amateur clubs seemed to care less on fraternal bonding and more on victories. This relationship between amateur and professional teams had not been ironed out in 1871, when individual statistics such as batting averages of the professional teams included hits earned in games against amateur teams as well. Professional and amateur teams played one another, further pushing amateur teams to play in a style more akin to their profitable counterparts. Even with the blossoming of baseball, individual amateur teams struggled to field nines year to year. By 1872, the Atlantic baseball club had disappeared, as well as several other amateur teams. When a number of their former players attempted to create a new amateur club and held a meeting at Sixty-One Canal Street to develop a schedule and structure, only a dozen players attended the meeting. Gamely the

organizers pushed forward and elected a chairman and a secretary, and planned to schedule games throughout the summer. They planned on most games being held at the grounds at Twenty-Third and State Streets and intended on contests against both amateur and professional teams.\textsuperscript{12}

By 1873, the amateur clubs established an Association that included a city championship, and the Franklins developed into the premier team in the city, and won every title from 1873 to 1878. By 1878, ten top level teams competed for the championship, the Franklins, Dreadnaughts, Oakland, Uniques, Lake View, Crook, Clipper, Liberty, Firemen's, and Mutuals, and in 1879 two more teams were added to the fold, the Socials and the Insurance nine. These teams played one another in a fixed schedule that spanned from April until October. Typically the teams played once a week, on Saturdays, but on occasion they played extra games against teams that did not count for the championship, such as the nines for the local colleges and universities. The Uniques embodied the blurry line between professional and amateur that had already emerged in the 1870s. The all black team barnstormed across the Midwest, and made trips to the East Coast to play other black nines. Their barnstorming invariably led to profits, but in Chicago they played as amateurs. The Amateur Association of the 1870s played on the weekends, had players that held full time jobs, and played the game for

pleasure, and not for monetary gain. However, the top teams sold tickets, drew in hundreds of fans, and earned a return on their games.13

The Employee Baseball Nine

During the 1880s, as amateur baseball continued to grow in importance in Chicago, a new type of baseball club emerged; the company nine. Unlike in the prior thirty years, where men of a certain economic and social class joined together to play at first a fraternal, and later a more competitive sport, in the 1880s, clubs formed from individual companies, that included, retailers, grocers, meat packing plants, and newspaper teams. By the end of the decade leagues started to form around particular industries, such as the Grocers’ League and the Mercantile League. By the beginning of the twentieth century a Bankers’ League formed from some of the most prominent banking and investment houses in the city.

These teams did not replace the independent amateur clubs in the city instead they played alongside those teams and simply increased the number of nines playing each weekend around the city. A number of factors contributed to this rise in business teams at the end of the nineteenth century. As Riess suggests, a business sponsored team helped keep workers devoted to their employer, and the baseball team was intended to acquiesce the employee in an effort to stave off unionism. Historian Steven Gelber explains as the industrial city became even further mechanized, organized, and disciplined, for both the white collar professional and the worker on the factory floors, baseball simply replicated the machine like efficiency of industrial America. Individual

merits on the baseball diamond were of lesser importance to the overall success of the team, much like individual achievements in a business or meat packing plant meant much less than the larger success of the organization. According to journalists covering these teams baseball success in the period largely depended on the, "willingness of the individual to sacrifice his personal glory to the collective good, and only those who already accept that value will be attracted to team sports." Ironically, players, fans, and business owners, still viewed baseball as a rural, idyllic escape from the same mechanized processes that allowed not only business sponsored baseball teams to thrive, but baseball in general. Ultimately, the thriving corporate teams of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century developed for numerous reasons: as a way to placate workers and encourage loyalty to the employer, to keep unions out of the companies, and as an extension of the industrialized, modern city, in which baseball fit perfectly.14

No company team epitomized the relationship between employee and employer funded athletics better than the Pullman Palace Car Company and their idealistic company town, fifteen miles south of the loop. The Pullman Company, the first major corporation in the United States to support company athletics, had a ten acre field next to Calumet Lake, set aside for track and field activities that included baseball, cricket, and football. The lake also held massive professional boat races that attracted thousands of

spectators, and each year the company sponsored a cycling road race from Chicago that culminated on grounds of Pullman. The company developed the Pullman Athletic Association, a corporation sponsored organization, overseen by executives that promoted employee participation in athletic teams. Although the white collar executives controlled the Association, they promoted every worker to get involved, and at its height over half of the athletes came from blue collar jobs in the factory, the others were white collar employees or foremen. On the large field at Pullman, other amateur baseball teams, some business funded while others independent, challenged the company backed club. The Pullman team also traveled to the parks in the city to take on challengers away from their home field. When not playing against outside competition, the Pullman Athletic Association promoted intramural games, again with players from both blue and white collar jobs. After the Pullman Strike in May of 1894, the company’s support for athletics started to erode, and by the end of the decade the great field had been sold and work was contracted to install an elaborate railroad switching facility, that would end all athletic uses of the grounds.¹⁵

By the middle of the 1880s, press coverage for amateur baseball and company sponsored teams had increased dramatically from the end of the 1870s. Almost weekly in the summer months, Chicagoans could find the scores of amateur games played throughout the city. While the baseball fan's insatiable appetite for both professional and

amateur games increased the size of the sports page, it also started to include the clubs from businesses and manufacturers. By 1884, the "Commercial League," games appeared in the *Chicago Tribune*. Unlike the better and more well-known amateur clubs, not to mention the professional teams, that had elaborate box scores, inning by inning reports, the commercial teams in 1884 only received a sentence or two that reported on final scores. In September of 1884, at the very end of a lengthy column on the winding down of the National League season, the *Tribune's* report on the Commercial League only included this sentence, "The tie game for the championship of the Commercial League resulted as follows: Insurance, 2; Keiths, 1." In addition to the Insurance nine and the Keiths, the league that summer also had a team from the Board of Trade, Marshall Fields, and a team composed of men from the Chicago Banks. Undoubtedly, the members of these teams came from white collar jobs and middle class backgrounds, as judged by the companies and organizations they worked for. During the period, the *Tribune* referred to the best amateur leagues and teams as having lineups that came exclusively from, "men holding responsible positions for the best houses in Chicago," a veiled reference to their middle class backgrounds and positions of importance in the Chicago business community. This version of the Commercial League floundered sometime in 1885, blamed on rampant gambling by employees wagering on their company's teams.\textsuperscript{16}

In 1886, a new Commercial League formed, with a much more defined group of teams that represented individual businesses, unlike the prior organization made of insurance men or bankers. The league organizers claimed the gambling problem had been, "throttled," and the new organization would not be "morally degenerating." The league consisted of teams from the A.G. Spalding Company, the Putnam Clothing Company, Butler Bros., the Chicago Mail, J.V. Farwell and Company, and Crane and Company. The Butler Bros. company sold retail goods on the one hundred block of Adams Street, the Crane and Company created manufactured goods, and in 1885, they installed the elevators in City Hall, and J.V. Farwell and Company sold merchandise via mail order. The businesses all agreed to close their doors at one o'clock every Saturday during the baseball season, giving their employees a "half holiday." They gathered in city parks and played in front of "large" crowds that congregated around the diamond to watch the action on the field. Invariably, the fans that came out to witness the games were the employees that had been let out of their jobs on Saturday afternoon. By the end of the 1887 season the clubs met at the Tremont House for a banquet and to hand out annual prizes. The Spalding team won that year and received a gold baseball as a trophy, donated by their parent company, as well as a silver urn given to the League by the Chicago Herald. The champion batter, an employee for the Crane and Company, received a silk lined overcoat, and the leader of total bases, from the Spalding team, won a gold watch also donated by Crane and Company.17

By 1889, the only remaining member of the original group of teams in the Commercial League was the Spalding club, as new options for business funded baseball teams exploded, and teams could find other outlets. The Commercial League continued to play in city parks, and at times drew over two thousand fans for a game. Even with the success of the Commercial League, by 1889, several new leagues played throughout the city, that included a group called the Mercantile League. This organization was composed of merchant teams that played a structured schedule, modeled their by-laws on the Commercial League, and played their games in city parks. In the first season the League consisted of teams from Lyon & Healy, D.B. Fisk and Company, Edson Keith and Company, Montgomery Ward and Company, and Gage Brothers & Company. The League also elected officials, a president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer, and each club had an official manager that guided the clubs on the field. In the same year, the Garden City League played a competitive schedule, with teams from a variety of businesses, that included a club made of workers from Armour and Company, the Crane Brothers and Company, Buhman and Hansen, J.H. Walker and Company, and a team from the Inter Ocean. They too played their games in the open spaces of city parks and attracted hundreds of fans. These teams still largely represented the white collar, middle class players, much as amateur baseball had attracted for decades. But they also diversified their lineups, as teams fielded nines with names with traditional Anglo-Saxon names like Dwight, Walsh, and Baker, but players with names like Sauter, Kurz, McGinnis, and Sauler, also played on company teams. The same was true for a game

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1885, p. 3. "'Twas Titcomb's Fault," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 17, 1887, p. 6. "They Play Good Ball," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 24, 1888, p. 2
between amateur teams from the *Chicago Herald* and the *Chicago Times*, where players with the names, Carter, Clark, and Rice, played against "McGow'n," "Ratg'b'r," "Oschg'r," and O'Connell. At the same time these clubs played, the Grocers' League formed, a league made of wholesale grocers that had even more diverse players with names that came from a variety of ethnic groups. The League consisted of teams from the grocers, Strassheim and Jaeger, Reid-Murdoch, MacVeagh, and "M'Neil and Higgins," and the players had names such as Farstel, Sullivan, Shay, O'Meara, and Cavanaugh. Christopher Strassheim, the senior partner at Strassheim and Jaeger, was born in Buffalo, New York, a second generation American from German parents. Strassheim's father, a carpenter by trade, had moved to Chicago in 1867 and started a grocery business. At the same time another league formed called the Market Street League, made up of teams from multiple businesses, such as the Rubber Paint Company, Mullen & Company, and Hart, Schaffner and Marx, the famous men's clothing company founded by German immigrants. These clubs had players named, Kreis, Corbett, Coughlin, Quinlan, and Gleicher, participants that came from Irish and German immigrant families, and also played their games in the city's public parks. These teams, and their players, represented the diversification that happened at the close of the nineteenth century in amateur baseball. A game that once had belonged to a select group of middle class Chicagoans now had immigrant and second generation players, who

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participated for the fun, and support of their employer. The employer on the other hand wanted to extend the workplace to the playing field and, in the process hoped to satisfy the worker and prevent unrest in the workplace.19

Business sponsored clubs thrived during the 1890s, and the Commercial League continued to play games, but changed membership throughout the decade. By the 1896 season the Commercial League had six teams, none of which that played during the 1889 schedule. The teams that played that year were the A.C. McClurg and Company, Mandell Brothers, Lord, Owen and Company, Charles Truax and Company, Schlessinger and Mayer, and Peter Van Schaack and Sons. They still played their games in the public parks throughout the city and league officials stressed that all employees of the companies were eligible to join the baseball team. Additionally, the Commercial League planned to expand their activities that summer and include other "branches of athletics and amusements," in a further effort to keep the employees satisfied and devoted to their company. By 1902, the Commercial League lineup dramatically changed again and fielded teams from, Siegel, Cooper, and Company, Whitman and Barnes, Chicago Edisons, Crane Company, Lyon and Healy, Kellogg Switchboard, Tom Murray's Kids, Mossler Brothers, Allis-Chalmers, and J.V. Farwell. The extracurricular activities supported by the Commercial League did little to stop employees of the Kellogg

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Switchboard company from staging a strike in 1903 when ninety-two employees walked off the job.20

Company teams did not disappear at the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, and in fact company sponsored baseball, and other athletics grew in stature. Steven Riess suggests that welfare capitalism, with industry funded teams, including baseball clubs, reached a zenith during the 1910s and 1920s. During those two decades, a company funded athletic structure became the norm for companies that employed over five hundred workers, and baseball, as the most popular sport in the nation, placed at the top of worker games. These large companies built gyms, bowling alleys, poolrooms, and nearly one out seven built baseball fields for their employees. What the employer wanted was "mass participation," to further create identification between the worker and the workplace, in a constant effort to eliminate disruption, strikes, and disgruntled employees. The efforts of companies to keep employees complacent also led to highly competitive teams in the period, and the highly competitive baseball nines could attract thousands of fans. While the company teams thrived in the era, press coverage diminished, as the sporting fan looked more and more to professional athletics. Additionally, the widespread ability for the average employee to play baseball for their employer made the company team less of an anomaly for the reader to find interest.21


The Other Amateurs and the Rise of Semiprofessional Baseball

In August of 1888, fourteen Chinese-American Chicagoans hopped on a street car for the open prairie at Thirty-Third Street and Stewart Avenue, near today's Armour Square Park. They came from a neighborhood between Wabash Avenue and Clark Street and were labeled "laundrymen" by the Tribune. Led by the "millionaire grocer of Clark Street," Hop Lung, they traveled to the site to play a game of baseball. The men left the car in a line, each carrying a ball bat while Hung Lung held a box that contained the baseballs. Not knowing the rules or dimensions of the game, Lung attempted to walk off the lengths of the base paths, told the players the basics of the game, and set them loose while he umpired the contest. A few dozen "urchins" surrounded the game and local workers from the Chicago and Eastern Illinois Railroad stood by and laughed as the Chinese baseball novices attempted to organize a game. At one point, two police officers arrived at the field and started to ask questions about the legality of the game and questioned if the men had a permit to play on the grounds. After the police looked over the spectacle, one of the officers reported, "It wuz 'ginst de ord'nance," shortly after Lung had put several cigars in their hands. According to the Tribune, a "Chinaman knows a thing or two if his eyes are slanted," and the game continued unimpeded. They players divided themselves between a nine that represented Clark Street and another for Wabash Avenue. At the end of the game the score stood Twenty-Six to Four in favor of the Clark Street nine. After a lengthy two hour game the two sides retired to Hop Lung's home near Clark and Van Buren Streets "where much beer and tea were drank," and, according
to the reporter, the winning club was awarded "a barrel of rice and five pounds of opium."  

The interest in baseball by these Chinese American men, even with the racist and tongue in cheek report by the *Tribune*, demonstrate the increased accessibility and awareness Chicagoans had for the American game. By the late 1880s and 1890s, baseball appeared everywhere in the summer months and residents of the city sought out the game to demonstrate neighborhood allegiance, the fun of participation, the weekend thrill of competition, or as an access point to the American way of life. Most games went unrecorded and the papers devoted their columns only to the most competitive teams in the city. The average amateur game occurred without celebration and spectators, spread throughout the city parks and suburban communities. By the end of the century, the recorded games focused on the top flight amateur teams in the city that played highly competitive ball in front of thousands of ticket paying fans. By the turn of the century, the new semiprofessional teams gained prominence, received detailed coverage in the local press and worked to draw in fans that might choose a cheaper game than the professional teams. Historian Ray Schmidt considers the period of 1906-1910 as the absolute height of amateur and semiprofessional baseball in the city, as teams vied for league championships in front of thousands of fans, and the strict organization of major league, minor league, amateur, semiprofessional, and African-American teams had not

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solidified. During this period teams of different caliber might play one another across color lines, and World Series teams played semiprofessionals.\textsuperscript{23}

On Tuesday, September 1, 1891, over sixty-five amateur teams, composed of both men and boys, left Battery D, the First Regiment Artillery Armory, located at Michigan Avenue and Monroe Street for a massive parade that would end at the Lake Shore Depot. After the parade, players would depart by train for the West Side Grounds to watch a game between the semiprofessional Whitings and the Garden Citys. Around noon, Frank Rheims, the grand marshal of the parade as well as Whitings' manager, mounted his horse, and bellowed "March." Behind him ten policemen stepped in time, followed by a military band, the "Kings of the Prairie," a team composed of players six years of age, and then two divisions of infantry. After the infantry, the first wave of players rolled along, from the best semiprofessional teams, in twenty-two horse drawn carriages. After the semiprofessionals, even more players appeared; a grand total of six hundred who were greeted with cheers and applause throughout the route. When a group of players who had been deemed guests of the National League club made it to West Side Grounds, they were treated with the Garden Citys beating the Whitings by the score of eleven to four, in a game played in a crisp hour and ten minutes.\textsuperscript{24}

This massive parade signified the relationship Chicagoans had with their amateur baseball teams. The collective celebration did not stand alone during the 1890s; in 1895


the Amateur Baseball Association declared September 1 as "Amateur Baseball Day," and
the group reported to the *Tribune* that over one hundred and eighty teams played in the
city. To honor the day, a group of amateurs boarded the steamer *Christopher Columbus*
at the Rush Street Bridge for a trip to Milwaukee, to stage games against their Wisconsin
neighbors. Amateur baseball also continued to be viewed as a pure sport, ideally devoid
of the gambling, drinking, and games on Sunday, which led University of Chicago head
baseball and football coach Alonzo Stagg to deem the games "healthy." Stagg a product
of Yale University and the Y.M.C.A. believed the ever growing sport of football was a
superior game, where every player had an active role in every play, and for the fact, "The
physical exertion is greater, calling for greater courage, and the exasperating collisions
and accidents demand greater good feeling, forbearance, and self-control." However,
Stagg believed the game of baseball would "never cease to be the American Game," as
the powers of baseball could not be surpassed. According to Stagg, what ailed
professional baseball was the "desecration of the Sabbath; that ought to be stopped. Then
the sale of liquors on the grounds ought to be prohibited." Stagg, a former star pitcher at
Yale, found no fault with amateur baseball, a game still filled with morality and clean
play, a least on the amateur level, and when he was personally called upon by baseball
team owners to turn professional, he refused their offers to focus on his education to
become a Presbyterian minister.25

As early as the late 1880s, the best clubs separated themselves from the hundreds
of others that played throughout Cook County. By the end of the decade they had started

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Baseball," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 2, 1892, p. 42
to play competitive semiprofessional games while still referring to themselves as amateurs. And while the best teams played one another, they also squared off against lesser organizations. In 1890, the semiprofessional Garden Citys took on a team of letter carriers from Chicago's Post office. In an article littered with puns about postal work, the Tribune gave a detailed account of the beating the mailmen received at the hands of the semiprofessionals. The game had been staged at the White Stockings park in front of roughly seven hundred fans, and ultimately the Garden Citys, "ran in sixteen registered packages," while the letter carriers could only get, "four into the mail pouch." For many of the lesser teams to gain coverage they had to be play higher competition or staging a game for charity. In 1891, eighteen Jewish community leaders staged a game of baseball at South Side Park, to raise money for the "Jewish Training-School." Also in 1891, a game was held on the West side between the "Chicago Heavy-Weights" and the "St. Louis Fat Men" for an unnamed charity. The Tribune claimed the Chicago team tipped the scales at a ton and a half while the St. Louis team looked to be around two tons. Ed Williamson, a retired professional player who suited up for the Chicago team had gained seventy four pounds since his playing days and had become, "a purveyor of liquid refreshments." A.G. Spalding had interest in playing for the home team and a "committee of obese individuals," considered allowing him to play, albeit with a "pillow beneath his vest." In 1893, amateur baseball played a role in the World's Fair, when the teams competed in the official amateur sports program at the White Stockings field. In the two day contests held in the stadium, athletes from around the world competed in sprints, hurdles, walking and bicycling races, the pole vault, hammer throws, and tug of
war. In addition to track and field events, football, lacrosse, cricket, and baseball games were held.26

There were over six hundred teams playing in Cook County by 1896 and baseball occupied "a position in Chicago never before accorded to it." Even with the growing amusements, spectacles, and other sporting events such as cycling and football, baseball remained the premier sport in the city. The Tribune, called Chicago "a baseball city" and most Chicagoans would rather, "watch the battle of two amateur teams than sit through the finest trotting races in America." Watching baseball, as well as playing, united Chicagoans across classes and ethnicities, and “the professional man jostles side by side with the laborer in the street car and both were eagerly devouring the account of how a North Side tam defeated the pride of the South-Siders." In 1895, after the collapse of the first City League, almost three hundred amateur clubs organized the Amateur Base Ball Association in an effort to streamline schedules, search for good umpires, settle disputes between clubs, and to secure good playing fields. The Association even reached beyond Cook County and ultimately included teams from Racine, Wisconsin, Streator, Illinois, and as far away as Hartford, Michigan. The Association also had in their ranks the Illinois Cycling Club, an organization of over seven hundred members and one of the few cycling clubs in the area that also fielded a baseball team. With that number of teams the newspapers could not publish every score and focused on the premier clubs. Even with the impossible task of tracking every team in the city, scores did get published for the

lesser teams on some occasions, as well as the even rarer box score. The smaller amateur teams also played in public parks, and teams like the Northern, Manchesters, Wenter Social Society, Young Progressive Society, Phenixes, and Cogdals of Austin, Illinois made the sport page of the *Daily Inter Ocean*. In the *Tribune*, teams like the Crystals, Hartmans, Starlights, Muffets, and Warriors played on open clearings like an empty lot at the corner of Lincoln and Twelfth Streets, or on the Southwest City League grounds at Ogden Avenue and Rockwell Street. The Blue Islands, from Blue Island, Illinois, and the Ravens, from the Ravenswood neighborhood also showed up from time to time in the *Tribune*'s columns, and commonly the amateur schedules would post purses for the winning teams anywhere from twenty-five dollars to one hundred. In addition to the typical independent organized teams, other clubs popped up, such as a game between "the barbers of the *Evening Post* shop" that challenged the Whiskers at Leavitt Street and Chicago Avenue. In 1898, the city's Building Department defeated the Sewer Department by the score of nine to two at the Northwest grounds. These limited reports also included ethnically diverse names such as Kolski, Maasberg, Zousins, Jungandrens, Riechardts, Prentzler, Vitzents, and Seifreid, that indicated the diverse immigrant and second generation families of the city and surrounding communities that played a role in the ever expanding game of amateur baseball.²⁷

In 1906, Hugh Fullerton, the hall of fame sports reporter told the readers of the *Tribune*, "If you really want to see baseball played don't attend American or National

League games. Go out on to the lots," where "on the prairies of Chicago," a fan could experience "real baseball games." As the hundreds of middling amateur teams played weekend games throughout Cook County in the era, the public and the newspapers grew fascinated with a handful of the best of these teams that by 1890 functioned as semiprofessional organizations, and in some respects as a version of the minor leagues before they had become a central component to the hierarchy of Major League Baseball operations. By the first decade of the twentieth century, some players on the semiprofessional teams had been former major leaguers and some younger players would go on to play in the big leagues. By 1907, some local papers abandoned the term amateur for the crack clubs and referred to them as "professional."

The first strong wave of semiprofessional baseball teams in Chicago emerged at the outset of the 1887 season, mostly in an effort to defray exorbitant costs of renting baseball diamonds at the city's four enclosed parks, at "Portland Avenue and Thirty-Third Street; Southwest Grounds, at Rockwell Street and Ogden Avenue; Northwest Grounds, at Division and Street and Oakley Avenue; and North Side Grounds, at Clybourn and Sheffield Avenues." Semiprofessional teams begged off the costly rental fees, and instead played games at the National League West Side Park, when available, during the weekends, and also held games in the open spaces of the city's parks. In light of this problem, a new City League, composed of Amateur baseball teams formed. By June, the new league had made agreements with the owners of the enclosed parks and continued to

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hold their games at the fields, and finished off the year with a pennant race to inaugurate a champion. During the 1888 season, the League had another problem, as the Western Association, a minor league that included the local Chicago Maroons, and would develop into the American League by the end of the century, started to stage Sunday games, in direct competition against their own contests. The League publicly declared a boycott of A.G. Spalding, whose employees started to gain interest in playing for this organization and the Western Association. Even with this distraction, the six-team League, composed of the Franklins, Aetnas, Picketts, Garden Citys, Diamonds, West Ends, Stars, and Imperials had a competitive season that frequently drew in over one thousand fans for a single game. The City League played their games on the Sabbath, against the accepted morality of the day. In fact, most amateur teams staged their games on Saturday afternoons, so the City League was an anomaly. The City League understood Sunday games could attract the largest crowds, as they would hold the monopoly on Sunday baseball. In addition to charging admission prices at their games, they explained the need to hold Sunday contests due to, "business exactions of the players. Most of them are men holding responsible positions for the best houses in Chicago." Tickets cost fifteen cents for admittance, twenty-five cents for reserved seats, and ladies had free admission.29

By 1890, the City League held a tight six team pennant race, and played all of their Sunday afternoon games in three enclosed parks, North Side, Northwest, and Southwest. They attracted over one hundred thousand fans during the year and other

teams around the city, that witnessed their success, tried to join the League. Despite this enthusiasm, before the 1891 season, the Northwest and North Side ballparks had been torn down and the League had to scramble and build two new parks, one at Halstead Street and North Avenue, and the other at Thirty-Ninth Street and Wentworth Avenue. Additionally, the interest in the prior season had made the League assume they could field eight teams in the upcoming season, but by opening day the League remained at only six teams. By 1891, the League had a strict method for compensating the clubs and players through earnings at the gate. A percentage of the money was divided between the teams after each game, with the winner getting one-third more than the loser. The remaining monies were held by the League until the end of the season, when they were divided equally. The League continued in this manner through the 1894 season, with a fixed schedule of twenty plus Sunday games throughout the summer. However, by 1895, the Whitings bowed out of the organization, because they realized, as did other member teams, that they could make more money by playing an independent schedule. By going independent, teams could secure new opponents to keep the games fresh for paying customers, and when they rented a ballpark for their games they could divide the earnings as they saw fit, and in the process kept larger sums for themselves. After 1895, the City League folded, at least until the first decade of the twentieth century.  

After the collapse of the City League, semiprofessional teams moved towards independent schedules that would be more lucrative and less restricted. Even with the

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collapse of the City League, the Whitings, a team that joined the league by the early 1890s, played the Franklins, as did other former City League teams. But the also played outside their former opponents and teams from surrounding communities also competed, and succeeded against the best Chicago teams. Semiprofessional teams from communities such as, "Aurora, Joliet, Elgin, Kankakee, and Morris," played alongside teams in Chicago, and they further diversified the schedules that attracted fans. At the end of the 1890s, black teams started to play at the highest levels of semiprofessional baseball, competed against the former City League clubs, as well as barnstormed across the Midwest. In addition to the local black clubs, the Page Fence Giants, from Adrian, Michigan also traveled to the city to take on the best semiprofessional teams. By 1899, a new top-flight semiprofessional team emerged, the Gunthers, that took on and defeated teams throughout the city and surrounding communities. The team had been founded by Charles F. Gunther, a German immigrant that came to Chicago in 1837, made a fortune as a candy manufacturer at his confectionary shop on the two hundred block of North State Street, had been the mastermind behind the creation of the Libby Prison Civil War Museum, and organized his own semiprofessional team that became increasingly dominant in the first decade of the twentieth century. In their best season the Gunthers would attract more than 135,000 fans to their games.31

In 1903, a new semiprofessional league emerged, the Interstate League that had ten teams from Racine, Elgin, and Aurora, as well as the best teams in Chicago that

included the Gunthers. The Gunthers had built their own grounds by 1904, but traveled to Racine, Aurora, and other communities to play games. Their local dominance did not prevent a loss to a team of "Nebraska Indians" in 1904 at the White Sox Park in front of five thousand fans. The "red men" defeated the local Gunthers eight to five and in the report, the *Tribune* referred to the Gunthers as "Semi-Professional." The Interstate Games drew in large crowds, and in a game between the Aurora's and the Chicago Athletics in April of 1903, three thousand fans purchased tickets. While the Interstate League received heavy press coverage, the City League reappeared in the 1904 season, but the organization was a shell of its former self, received minimal reports in the sports columns, and by the following summer collapsed again.32

Semiprofessional baseball reached its zenith during the 1906 season, when the Cubs and White Sox won their leagues and faced off during the World Series, and Chicago fans could not get enough of baseball, including the semipro clubs. The Logan Squares, a top flight semiprofessional club represented the height of semiprofessional baseball, with a team of past and future major league players that included the team's organizer and star, Jimmy Callahan, a former pitcher for both the Cubs and the White Sox. The team had enough capital to build their own enclosed ballpark at Diversey and Milwaukee Avenue, and was considered by surrounding communities as a fully "professional" team with salaried players. The professional stature of the Logan Squares was advertised in a announcement in 1906 for a game against the Normals, at

Washington Park at 69th and Halstead Streets, where fans could gain admittance in the box seats for thirty-five cents, the grandstand for twenty-five cents, and bleacher seats for fifteen cents. In fact, the Logan Squares, like almost all the players of these semiprofessional teams, still had to find jobs not only during the off season but also throughout the summer schedule. With the Logan Squares' lineup filled with former major league players, other semiprofessional teams also searched for other professional caliber players for their own teams. In a game between the Gunthers and the Logan Squares in July of 1906, each team used current major league pitchers that represented the fervor both the teams and fans felt for semiprofessional baseball.33

In late October of 1906, after the Sox had beaten the Cubs in the World Series, both the Gunthers and the Logan Squares played each World Series team in exhibition games. The Gunthers played both club tightly, but ultimately lost to the Cubs by the score of four to one and to the White Sox four to zero. Remarkably, when the Logan Squares met the White Sox, Jimmy Callahan pitched a three hit game, out dueling the star Nick Altrock, and Callahan's team won two to one over the World Series champions. The following day the Logan Squares played the Cubs, and again stunned the baseball world by defeating the National League Champions one to zero, against the future Hall of Fame pitcher Mordecai "Three Finger" Brown. Amazingly, the Logan Squares swept the games and the Chicago semiprofessional fans went wild after the second win, and stormed the field at North Side Park, until police could restore order. In 1907, the semiprofessional game continued to produce outstanding moments when Rube Foster, the

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legendary black pitcher organized the Leland Giants and Adrian "Cap" Anson formed Anson's Colts. The former star of Chicago’s National League team had been so popular with the fans that after leaving baseball he was elected City Clerk. When he was finally turned out of that office Anson embraced the semi-pro game. A year later Anson’s team played the all black Leland Giants. This was a remarkable turn of events since it was Anson who in 1883 helped to draw the color line in major league baseball by refusing to take the field against black players. Anson’s action contributed to the segregation of baseball that lasted until Jackie Robinson broke the color barrier in 1947. But in 1908, as a washed up player and a failed politician, Anson agreed to play a black team if it would mean a hefty gate for his team.34

Through the end of the decade semiprofessional remained strong, signified by a new City League in 1909 that had the premier semiprofessional teams in the city, including the Gunthers, Logan Square, and Anson's Colts. By 1911, the reign of semiprofessional teams over the fans of Chicago started to falter, as Jimmy Callahan returned to the major leagues, and Rube Foster created the fully professional American Giants, that barnstormed across not only the Midwest but the rest of the country. As these men abandoned the once thriving semiprofessional ranks, the entire structure started to falter. The downturn in semiprofessional baseball, as well as the newspapers tracking the results of amateur baseball, fit into a larger shift in American culture. At the end of the nineteenth century, according to historian John Kasson, "the nation came of age as an urban-industrial society and its citizens eagerly but painfully adjusted to the new terms of

American life." Amateur and semiprofessional baseball occupied a role in that
adjustment. Baseball’s phenomenal growth in the post-Civil War era was part of the birth
of mass entertainment for Chicagoans. The game was a competitive outlet for some city
dwellers and a diverting entertainment for many at a time when there were few other
outlets outside of religion. By the beginning of the second decade of the twentieth
century, mass entertainment and amusements became more diversified and professional,
and the role of second-tier baseball fell out the daily conscience of many Americans. By
the First World War, this level of baseball remained an important outlet for players, in
semiprofessional, amateur, and business sponsored clubs, but not something to be
followed by the readers of the daily newspapers. The addition of steel and concrete
baseball stadiums, built for the White Sox in 1910, and later when the Cubs occupied the
former field of the Federal League’s Chicago Whales, later known as Wrigley Field, in
1915; further separated the height of Major League baseball from all competitors. By the
1920s, Major League baseball soared to new heights, with newsreels and action photos of
the best players in the game such as Babe Ruth and every team played in an elaborate
new stadium.

While amateur and semi-pro baseball was eclipsed in twentieth century Chicago
the memory of the game’s glory days was kept alive by the Old Timers Baseball
Association. This organization of former Chicago sand-lot players held an annual dinner,
which they boasted was the largest in the nation. Well into the 1940s, at the palatial
Stevens Hotel, over 1,600 of the former boys of summer gathered to gorge themselves on
corn beef and cabbage and down copious toasts to the days when baseball electrified a
gas lit city.\textsuperscript{35}

CHAPTER FIVE

YOUTH, HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE BASEBALL

Samuel Ransom, a teenager from Hyde Park, started as catcher for his high school team from 1900 to 1904. He had the distinction of being the first black player for any Hyde Park team in the school's history, as well as being the first black player to be elected captain for any Cook County high school. He not only starred for a championship baseball team, but excelled at track, basketball, and football. Ransom entered the high school in February of 1900, and finished an entire year of curriculum in five months while excelling in spring athletics. The Chicago Tribune labeled him "modest" and emphasized he worked nights and weekends as a bellboy at the Del Prado Hotel in the Hyde Park neighborhood. After high school, Ransom went on to excel for the Beloit College football team, in Beloit, Wisconsin, and served as captain of their baseball team in 1907. After graduation, Ransom coached football for two seasons at the historically black Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tennessee. With American involvement in World War I, Ransom served with distinction and was wounded near Leon, France ten days before the armistice on November 11, 1918. His action on the battlefield earned him the French military decoration of bravery as well as the American Purple Heart. At the close of the war, Ransom gained further recognition as well as an appointment to First Lieutenant from his prior rank as Sergeant. In 1942, with the United States involved in the Second World War, Ransom, a twenty year clerk in the St. Paul, Minnesota post
office, earned the rank of Major in the Minnesota Defense Force. When asked by the Associated Negro Press whether his position would lead to a "Jim Crow outfit," or "Negro" unit, he responded, "he was a major of the Minnesota Defense force, for all the citizens, and not for any race group."1

Ransom's rise in high school and college baseball was an anomaly at the beginning of the twentieth century. Black teenagers commonly did not gain access to youth teams, including high school, college, and private clubs during the period. His story embodied the complexity of northern city race relations and the segregation of athletics in the growing industrial city of Chicago. By 1900, the idea of a black player in the Major Leagues had disappeared, the long term effect of a “gentleman's agreement” that mandated segregation in the National League. The National League's treatment of blacks both in Chicago and nationally, largely reflected the situation in amateur sports, and mirrored the larger racial segregation throughout the city. However, Ransom's ability to gain access to the Hyde Park baseball team demonstrated that beneath the surface youth baseball in Chicago at the dawn of the twentieth century sometimes took on a more complex and nuanced appearance. Not only did blacks and whites occasionally play together, there also were times when diverse ethnic and economic groups also shared the game of baseball. In addition to helping to build a fragile foundation for racial, ethnic, and socio-economic relations, youth baseball contributed to the long term success

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of the game as young players devoted countless hours to the sport that help to ensure its
long standing position as the national game, when those teenagers became adults and
rabidly followed professional baseball. This chapter will explore the role of youth, high
school, and collegiate baseball in Chicago during the latter half of the nineteenth century
and the beginning of the twentieth, and will demonstrate children and teens played a sport
with an intense competitive fire and at times their games broke down the stereotypical
racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic divisions that usually regimented the city. The rise in
youth baseball coincided with the increased importance of mass entertainment and leisure
activities in Chicago, and children and teenagers created an entire world of baseball
distinctly their own, a component in the larger cultural order that was moving into the
modern age. By the first decade of the twentieth century, the loose youth baseball
organizations in high school, colleges and universities, that dominated the nineteenth
century, and had been controlled by teen players, had largely disappeared and instead the
game was a structured affair organized in conferences and managed by the bureaucracies
of educational institutions and the faculty and administrators that ran the schools.²

The transition to the formalized game found in high schools and college spoke to
the era when baseball was viewed as a tool to keep young men organized for a common
goal via respectable diversions. During the nineteenth century, youth baseball had been a
self controlled sport, managed and played by the teenagers themselves. At the dawn of
the twentieth century, in the midst of the burgeoning Progressive Era, baseball became an
opportunity for high school and college administrators to use the game for goals of

² Robin Bachin, Building the South Side: Urban Space and Civic Culture in Chicago 1890-1919
controlling the city youth, encouraging a healthy social and physical environment in the industrial city. In the middle of the nineteenth century, especially in rural areas young men worked alongside their families, in homes that raised food, or pursued a craft trade. A half century later American large percentage of fathers were urban dwellers who worked afar, in the factories, steel mills, meat packing plants, and even the business district of the "loop." Progressive thinkers of the era believed a society of idle and undirected teenagers required masculine and Christian influences and baseball provided that opportunity. As historian Benjamin Rader has pointed out, "The thrust for this larger movement to control the environment of youth stemmed from a heightened concern that the traditional agencies of socialization no longer satisfactorily prepared youth for adult roles in the community."\(^3\)

While sandlot games with "pick-up" neighborhood players were part of the Chicago sporting scene in the late nineteenth century as they would be later, it would be a mistake to think that disorganized and friendly games were the sum of the sport among Chicago’s young. Rather, at an early date youth baseball displayed a modestly regimented structure in the nineteenth century, and was largely devoid of the apocryphal "broom handles and heavily taped, ragged ball and the grounds a merely a cleared empty lot."\(^4\) Long before the formation of the National League in 1876, youth baseball teams had organized leagues and games in Chicago, controlled by club secretaries and


determined players that looked for competitive games throughout the city. Unlike the mythical notion of young boys that played baseball in a sanitized and friendly manner, youth baseball commonly took a darker and more intense turn where umpires were heckled and fights erupted. As early as the late 1860s youth clubs had divided themselves into different age groups and played passionate and aggressive games throughout the city. Additionally, youth clubs, made of players from middle-class homes, would travel out of the city for games, with schedules and travel arrangements put together by a club secretary. This model of structured baseball followed the pattern of the development of early adult amateur baseball, a sport dominated by middle class participants that allowed for formally structured competition. As Robert Pruter points out, the limited research done on youth teams has led historians to make general assumptions that teenagers played a game of baseball that was a soft and friendly sport, but even the most famed writer on the mythical nature of youth baseball, Harold Seymour, believed on the one hand the "boys bridged it on their wings of imagination" where they envisioned themselves as the triumphant heroes of the daily newspapers and aspired to the highest levels of professional athletics, but he also wrote, "not every boy romped free on sandlots and pastures" and some children during the period worked "ten hours a day for three dollars a week." The period of independent youth teams subsided with the growth of high school teams at the end of nineteenth century, but their place in Chicago neighborhoods did not disappear until well into the twentieth century.5

Public high school teams developed more slowly, as did public high schools themselves, which did not gain a strong foothold in Chicago or nationally until the late nineteenth century. During the 1860s and 70s, public high schools in Chicago were rare, with only two in the entire area; Chicago High School and Hyde Park. The development of high schools only gained legislative support in 1872 when the Illinois General Assembly passed a law that allowed for communities to build and support township high schools if the residents felt their district required the education. Coupled with the rarity of public high schools, the two schools in and around Chicago had limited athletic programs, and teenage baseball players found their outlets in the club teams throughout the city. Private secondary academies did play ball in the city during the 1870s, but they found their opponents not only among themselves but also with independent youth clubs. By the 1880s, and increasingly so by the beginning of the twentieth century, high schools became more prominent, grew in number, and increased their accessibility to larger numbers of Chicago teens. Even as late as the 1880s, Chicago high school baseball teams were regarded as sandlot clubs that focused more on intramural contests than playing fellow high schools in the city. During the 1890s high school baseball started to gain greater importance and by the beginning of the twentieth century the sport played an integral part of the public school system and the newspapers followed the contests and elevated the games to civic prominence.⁶

Historians have focused their efforts on the development of collegiate athletics centered on the Eastern seaboard, much like the analysis on the origins of baseball in men's amateur teams as well as early salaried teams. Rightfully, the modern game of baseball originated with the New York Knickerbockers and the first recorded intercollegiate baseball game occurred in 1859, before the Civil War, between Amherst and Williams College. By the 1870s, the Ivy League schools had a well developed schedule and attracted a large number of spectators and played exhibition games against professional clubs. The collegiate game in Chicago happened more slowly, and the first local press coverage appeared in the 1870s when the small number of local colleges and universities began to organize teams at their own schools, and create a competitive schedule against their rival schools. By the 1880s, the college game solidified but still had limited opportunities for competition. Much like the gradual growth of high school baseball, college baseball did not develop into a highly organized game till the dawn of the twentieth century, when teams were controlled by university administrators and college conferences started to develop. As the college game urbanized in the last decade of the nineteenth century, it also gained a greater following with spectators and the local press, and played a role in the greater growth of baseball in Chicago. Like high school baseball, college baseball became a central component to the fabric of competitive sports in Chicago, with strong press coverage creating another access point for the game to be integrated into the fabric of the city. Although there was little ethnic or economic diversity in Chicago's universities, the heightened importance of college baseball also added to the growing importance of "urban citizenship" where all residents had a stake in
the cultural and athletic endeavors in the community, and citizens unaffiliated with the colleges and universities followed their progress in the daily papers.7

Youth Baseball

On the afternoon of June 1, 1890, a group of teenagers gathered in a vacant lot at Wood and Fifteenth Streets, on the West side of Chicago, to play baseball. The players ranged in age from twelve to fifteen, and each club offered up a fifty cent stake, while ten cents went to the umpire. At the close of the game both sides complained over calls of the umpire and argued over the ninety cent purse. The confrontation turned physically violent and boys charged each other with fists, sticks, and stones. In the melee, one of teens pulled out a revolver and shot thirteen year old Andrew Dressel on the left side of his body just below the ribs. As Dressel bled on the ground, the teenagers scrambled for safety and dashed away to their homes. The police rounded up five teenagers by late afternoon and locked them in the Thirteenth Street police station. After midnight, another teen by the name of Winowsky, turned himself in at the precinct, never admitting his guilt but the police believed he was the shooter. Dressel, the son of bricklayer, later died from his wound in his parents’ home on the six hundred block of Ashland Avenue.8

Dressel's untimely death represented the extreme competition and violence that could accompany teenage baseball games. Although the shooting of a player rarely

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occurred, the incident clearly reveals the intensity of late nineteenth century Chicago youth amateur baseball, with wagering, arguments, organized teams and structured schedules, and occasional physical violence. Even as independent, organized youth teams diminished in the early twentieth century, with the growing importance of high school athletics, violent outbreaks still erupted periodically during ballgames in the neighborhoods of Chicago. Violence aside, the serious structure and intensity of the youth game defies the mythology of children's baseball in the late nineteenth century. As historian Robert Pruter has pointed out, the hailed chronicler of baseball, Harold Seymour, believed that youth baseball in the nineteenth century was, "innocent, young, and pure," and sharply criticized the modern form of amateur youth baseball as over-regulated. In reality, the structure and intense spirit of nineteenth century teen baseball had a passionate nature that mimicked the fraternal clubs in the 1860s and 1870s, and by the 1880s and 1890s, youth clubs took cues from the professional organizations that increasingly took center stage in the newspapers and homes of Chicagoans. By the 1890s, the Tribune declared that male teenagers in the city knew every player in the National League and he may "be a dull lad in 'figgers' at school but he can be relied on to have at his fingers' ends the batting, fielding, pitching, or base-running record of Anson, Kelly, Ryan, Clarkson, 'Old Silver,' or any one of the long list of men who earn their living on the diamond." Youth baseball joined with professional baseball to increasingly defy the social structure of nineteenth century Victorian America and Chicago. Just as the professionals slowly moved towards Sunday games and alcohol in the park, youth clubs played on Sundays and increasingly resisted the accepted social order of acceptable
behavior for young boys. The players fought on the field, used obscenities, gambled, and smoked cigarettes while they watched each other play. The rise of high school baseball arose in part to control the unruly youth game that mirrored professional baseball. Unlike the professional game however, high school sports reflected the more diverse racial make-up of the city. College baseball on the other hand existed as a bastion of middle class sporting values, where student athletes came from middle class and wealthy backgrounds. By the twentieth century, youth baseball became intertwined with the normal athletic and cultural order of the city, organized by high school and colleges, and the independent youth team, controlled by the teenagers themselves, slowly eroded away. This change coincided with the greater shift of amusements, diversions, and athletics that occurred during the early twentieth century, both in Chicago and other Northern cities.9

While youth baseball teams mimicked the professional players they knew, organized their own games, and created a world of baseball completely their own, the neighborhoods of Chicago, filled with immigrants and working class families, created an environment in which youth baseball could thrive. During the late nineteenth century, and the dawn of the twentieth, neighborhood allegiances were formed for support of their respective clubs, and on the south side of Chicago, the Irish neighborhood of Bridgeport, in addition to the large Polish and German populations in the area, started to support their local professional team, the Chicago White Sox. With this burgeoning backing of their professional teams, baseball became intertwined with community identity. Youth baseball was also enlivened by a strong sense of neighborhood pride. By

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the end of the century, youth baseball thrived in this climate, where gambling on professional, as well as local games, was a large part of sporting culture in the city. Even with the restructure of unmanaged youth baseball at the beginning of the twentieth century, the importance of backyard games, in a neighborhood or community that supported baseball at all levels, left a lasting impression on the young men that participated in the game.\(^\text{10}\)

Later, writers would emphasize the importance of youth baseball in Chicago's immigrant and industrial neighborhoods, that placed amateur and youth baseball as a centerpiece of community identity. James T. Farrell, famed writer of the Studs Lonigan character, an Irish American on the South Side of Chicago, also wrote a book titled, *My Baseball Diary,* a compilation of his writings that detailed the important role baseball played in the Chicago's Irish working class community, as well as detailed his love of the Chicago White Sox through recollections and short stories. In one account that covered a "Back Yard Ball Game," an Irish mother, Mrs. O'Flaherty, blew her whistle to bring in boys playing an imaginary game of baseball in a yard, where they stood in the batting stances of Sox hero Buck Weaver. In another chapter, Studs Lonigan, "imagined himself driving a home run over the center fielder's head and then making one-handed and shoe-string catches in the outfield," instead he comes back to reality and weakly hits a ball back to the pitcher. Another Irish American Chicago writer, Finley Dunne conveyed the profound importance of baseball to working class Chicago through his famed character, Mr. Dooley, an Archer Avenue bar man. In Mr. Dooley's world baseball had the power

\(^{10}\) Eileen M. McMahon, "The Literature of the Sox Side," *Chicago History* (Fall 2008): 1, 30.
to be tied to the Irish revolutionaries in Chicago, a group that supported Irish
independence from England and where, "'Las' week th' Sarsfields wrote a challenge an'
stuck it in Finerty's paper that they cud bate an'ny baseball club iv rivolutionists in th'
sixth wa-ard f'r tin dollars a game." These writers encapsulated the normal hardscrabble
life of living in ethnic communities at the dawn of the twentieth century and frequently
focused on how baseball became a vehicle for transcending its mundane realities.
Baseball offered a stage for genuine recreation as well as imagined triumphs whether
through the success of your favorite professional team or player or through day dreams of
yourself making the game saving play. For both Farrell and Dunne baseball was an
important part of the daily life of working-class Chicago. Baseball was a shared lingua
franca of male conversation and camaraderie as well as a parallel universe where boys or
men such as themselves could rise to fleeting fame and glory.¹¹

In the aftermath of the American Civil War, as baseball exploded in popularity in
Chicago, as well as nationally, adult amateur teams grew dramatically in the city. The
first group of Chicagoans to embrace the sport came from middle-class backgrounds, and
by 1866 had organized at least thirty-two teams. Chicago’s first large group of amateur
baseball players believed in the healthy nature of outdoor athletic competition, and
followed the pattern developed by the teams on the eastern seaboard prior to the war,
where friendly competition and fraternal camaraderie embodied the game. The first
youth clubs in Chicago mirrored their adult contemporaries, played friendly fraternal ball,

¹¹ Peter Dunne Finley, *Mr. Dooley and the Chicago Irish: The Autobiography of a Nineteenth-
with limited intensity, devoid of monetary purses, and without angry and violent outbursts on the diamond. As Robert Pruter points out, many of the youth players in the 1860s and early 1870s came from middle class backgrounds, much like their adult counterparts. In this period newspapers provided minimal coverage of youth baseball, but did demonstrate many teenage baseball players had middle-class parents, and were sons of meatpacking owners, real estate executives, and powerful contractors.\textsuperscript{12}

In addition to the limited number of middle-class teenagers playing baseball, there were thousands of young men and children in Chicago, without access to education, commonly immigrants or the children of immigrants, who lived in poverty. Newspaper accounts frequently complained about the culture of unschooled children that wandered the streets, vandalized property, and violently attacked other boys. The “urchins” existed in a larger order of displaced young men that wandered the streets unemployed and destitute. By 1896, the \textit{Daily Inter Ocean} explained how Clark Street, between Twelfth and Van Buren Streets on the near south side, had become overrun with groups of “tramps” and “vagabonds,” sitting along the curbs and drinking beer in the large number of saloons. Four detectives marched from saloon to saloon and arrested those they suspected of vagrancy, and threw them in a patrol wagon that followed right behind. As they marched down Clark Street, word spread to the saloons further along the route, and dozens of young men went running to avoid being thrown in jail. By the time the detectives finished they had arrested over fifty young men. The \textit{Tribune} reported in 1872

that a group of “young ruffians” had been “lying in wait” around school buildings on Walsh, Polk, and Pearson Streets, accosting younger children as they went to and from school. In addition to beating them, the hoodlums stole their money and possessions. When they broke dozens of windows in the school buildings the toughs finally attracted the attention of the Mayor and police superintendent. According to the paper, “The boys are all young roughs who refuse to go to school, and are on the high road to the Penitentiary.” In 1881 a group of young boys threw rocks through the windows of Saints Peter and Paul Cathedral at Peoria and Washington Streets on the west side of the city. When police arrived most of the group managed to get away except thirteen year old Eddie O’Brien who had started to crawl through one of the broken panes. The police arrested him and charged him with burglary and Inter Ocean labeled the vandals as, “Sacrilegious Urchins.”

In the 1860s and early 1870s the link between these “Youthful Vagabonds” and baseball went largely unrecorded. The newspapers in the era devoted large sections of their sporting columns to amateur baseball, which occasionally included youth baseball. The players of these teams had names that derived from Anglo-Saxon backgrounds, and presumably did not come from the wave of immigrants that started to flood Chicago in ever increasing numbers. Youth teams in this early period divided themselves into three separate groups. A pony club had boys fourteen years and younger, a junior team had players below seventeen, and the senior clubs were made of players eighteen years and

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up. As early as 1860, junior teams traveled out of the city to play scheduled games commonly in response to an advertised challenge. The opponent would then return the favor and travel to Chicago for a follow-up match. The distances a team would travel could be extreme. In 1868, a pony team from Cincinnati, fittingly called the Buckeyes, traveled to Chicago to challenge the Atlantics and won the game twenty-eight to nine. The Saxon Junior Base Ball Club of Goshen, Indiana, challenged any team to travel to their city for the championship of the state of Indiana, and advertised their challenge in the Tribune in 1870. The Actives, of Chicago, "champion juniors of the Northwest," traveled over one hundred miles to accept the challenge. In front of a crowd of eight hundred to a thousand spectators, many of which were from the "fair sex," the Actives beat the Indiana team by a score of forty-seven to eighteen. When teams did not travel out of Chicago, city clubs challenged one another and played afternoon games in empty lots. The distinct age differences in games could cause challenges to go awry, as in 1869, when the "pony" Baltics accepted a challenge from the Favorites, a team they later accused of fielding junior players. A letter from the secretary of the Baltics to the Tribune pointed out this unscrupulous behavior after the Favorites won the "Chicago and State pony championship."¹⁴

The fields on which these games were staged looked very different from the idyllic pastoral setting in the mythology of youth baseball. In 1860, two junior teams, the

Niagara Base Ball Club and Junior Atlantics, played a Saturday afternoon baseball game in an empty field at the corner of West Van Buren and Halstead Streets. The Niagara teams won the contest by the score of twenty seven to nineteen. By the late 1860s, adult and youth amateur games were staged at the corner of Lake and May Streets, another vacant lot repurposed for baseball, and increasingly becoming the preferred spot for youth baseball. The idealized and apocryphal setting of youth baseball was very different from the reality of the Lake and May grounds. It was an open and unregulated urban space where in 1861 a regiment of Zouaves gathered to choose their officers after the outbreak of the Civil War. A decade later the newspapers reported a game could not be played at the site because the field had been taken over by disruptive thugs who would not let players enter the field. In addition to the corner of Lake and May, in 1870 pony and junior teams played at Camp Douglas, the former Confederate Prisoner of War camp – a remarkable spatial juxtaposition for one of the most notorious and deadly prisoner of war camps during the Civil War.15

By 1871, the coverage of youth teams in the local press sharply declined and virtually disappeared by the middle of the decade. The change in part may be traced to the impact of the great fire that decimated Chicago in October of 1871. Coverage of all sports declined for a time. The games, however, did go on, as occasional brief press mentions indicate. In June of 1872, for example, the Tribune reported on a "Pony" club

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defeating a team in Sandwich, Illinois, over sixty miles from the city, by the astronomical score of ninety-seven to seventeen. Regardless of the game in Sandwich, youth baseball left the sporting news of Chicago during most of the 1870s and 1880s. During these years professional baseball occupied the majority of sporting news coverage and youth baseball continued but in the shadow of the pros. By 1870, Chicago businessmen put together a professional baseball team to compete with the best players in other Northern American cities. The change to professional sports, that left the amateur game behind, also led to the sporting columns of Chicago newspapers focusing on the professional game. While youth sport lost coverage in the press, children still passionately played baseball throughout the city. As the population soared so did the number of players, clubs, and games. Ironically, the professional teams of the 1870s that helped drown out the coverage of youth baseball, helped bring it back to readers in the 1890s. By the very end of the nineteenth century sporting news increased dramatically, and the Chicago male could not get enough of baseball where, "The passion for the National game, which has reached out and taken possession of the Board of Trade man, the lawyer, the preacher, the doctor, the merchant, the editor- men of every class and profession - has absorbed the Young America of today."

"Where are you going, little boys, and what are you going to do with those clubs you are carrying?," started a Tribune article in July of 1885 that updated the city on the status of youth baseball. One Sunday afternoon four boys, between the ages of nine and

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twelve, led by "Capt. Billy," had been crossing Michigan Avenue at Harmon Court, 11th Street today, on their way to Lake Front park just on the other side of the street. Three of the boys carried well used baseball bats, and sported clothes that were tattered and thread worn. At the intersection of the street, two elderly women, well dressed, and on their way to the mission, stopped to ask the boys the question above. They gave the quick answer, "'We be a goin' to the Lake-Front, mam, to play ball. Yer se, de Dearborn Street 'Blues' has challenged our nine an' we're jist a goin' to make 'em tired afore we get through with 'em; ain't we Teddy"" The women tried to talk the boys into abandoning the sinful practice of baseball on Sunday, and to accompany them to the mission. With sheepish answers they declined the offer, and informed the ladies the game had too great of an importance to be skipped, and none of the four could be spared. Nearby two older gentlemen, well dressed, one in a "duck suit" with a panama hat, the other clutching a gold headed cane, watched the boys run the bases and shout at one another on the diamond. After some time, one of the men said to the other, "'Sunday-school may be a good thing,...but a little of God's sunlight, mixed in with a bit of this fresh air, and the privilege of running and yelling as hard as he likes, ain't a goin' to hurt any boy, and I know it.'"\(^{17}\)

On Sunday afternoons in the 1880s, hundreds of boys filled Lake Front park and Lincoln Park to play baseball. The boys came from neighborhoods throughout the city, some well dressed and clean, others filthy, barefooted, with ragged clothes. The games in the public parks had a democratic air and demonstrated the increasing diversity in not

only in the amateur baseball but in particular the youth game. Black children and teens also occasionally played for the youth teams, and the illustrations printed in the newspapers of the era spoke of teams breaking down the color barrier to field the best nine players. Even if the Sunday games seemed immoral to the Victorian sensibility, Sunday provided thousands of children the only opportunity to play during the week, as many were mired in employment or schooling for much or all of the other days of the week. It would not be until the very end of the century that the Illinois General Assembly passed the Illinois Factory Law that banned employment for children under the age of fourteen. The fields in which the young men played were considered, "fresh, bright," as well as "greensward," where the boys could enjoy, "drinking in the fresh, health-giving breezes from the lake." In reality the skies of Chicago in the late nineteenth century could be blackened with factory smog while nearby trains of the Illinois Central Railroad that poured into the city at all hours belched dark smoke and ash. The Chicago River and Lake Michigan were horribly polluted, filled with industrial waste, trash, and the runoff from the city's streets. But these limited green spaces gave the youth a respite from the harsh realities of the industrial city. On Sunday afternoons, the game of baseball provided an escape from the "poorly provided and oftentimes crowded homes upon the narrow streets and ill-ventilated alleys in the poorer quarters of the city, away from the harsh voice of a careworn mother, or, perhaps, the sullen ill-humor of an overworked father."\(^18\)

By the late 1880s and 1890s, Chicago newspapers rekindled sports coverage of youth and teenage clubs, after an absence since the early 1870s. The clubs no longer referred to themselves as "pony" teams, but instead used the word "junior" to capture virtually any team with players under eighteen years of age, unlike the clear distinction twenty years prior. In May of 1892, Alonzo Stagg, the recent hire at the University of Chicago to coach their football and baseball teams, and a former star pitcher at Yale, wrote a column for *The Sunday Inter Ocean* that gave a detailed blueprint for how youth baseball teams should be structured and hoped to "give the boys some practical hints."

The article provides a window into the average Chicago youth team during the 1890s. A team would commonly have eleven players, one for each position and two substitutes. Once the eleven players met they would hold elections to determine three officers that would oversee money, equipment, schedules, and positions on the field. The boys would elect a captain, the highest position on the club. The captain's duties included picking the best players for the positions, guiding practices (if any were held), determining the location and time of games and practices, and to work with an opposing captain in times of dispute on the diamond and to select umpires for games. Under the captain would be the treasurer and score keeper, a position that held the limited money for the team, as well as kept and purchased game equipment. This position had the responsibility of keeping score during the course of the game and commonly did not play during the games. The manager would be the last position elected on the team and served directly under the captain, and organized games with other clubs, made sure the equipment made it to the field, found seats for the players, and had the bases secured on the diamond and water
available for the team. Stagg's vision for the perfect youth baseball team, well funded, well equipped, in nice uniforms, and playing serious but enjoyable games did mirror many of the youth clubs of Chicago. Those teams advertised in the papers, had elected officials, and commonly wore uniforms. The wearing of uniforms was a component in determining what team a club was willing to challenge, as uniforms indicated the seriousness of the organization. But while these teams existed, hundreds of others in the city had limited organization and money, played without uniforms, and held their games in "all the vacant lots throughout the city."\(^{19}\)

Most youth teams in Chicago did not advertise their games or challenges, and had virtually no newspaper coverage of the outcomes. Teams with names like, "Bat Splitters," "The Young Rivals," "White Diamonds," "Prairie Waifs," "Champions of Goose Island," and the "Larabee Street Red Sox," played their games in anonymity, in deserted fields, and on occasion overseen by a policeman. The boys commonly had on ragged clothes and played with or without shoes, were seen to be smoking cigarettes on and off the field, and the older teenagers could, "fill up on bad beer, and generally wind up their games with a free fight." The twelve year and younger teams tended to play with less swearing and fighting than the older players but could still end games with a brawl. In one game between them, "Young Rivals, the champions of West Van Buren Street," and the, "White Diamonds," ended in the seventh inning due to a large fight breaking out on the field. In the middle of the quarrel, the fourteen year old boy with the job of

holding the purse for the victors ran down the nearest alley with the money, not to be seen again. The only reason the *Tribune* covered this particular game was to give readers a window into the idiosyncrasies of the average youth game that took place every Sunday in the warmer months. Gambling on games happened regularly with a pool of money put up by both teams before the start of the match. The amount could vary from a less than a dollar to five, ten, or fifteen dollars for the premier eighteen year old teams. If not money, the losing team might scratch together "35 to 40 cents" to purchase a watermelon for the winning team that would quickly be cut apart with a pocket knife by the captain.20

While these types of games epitomized much of youth baseball, some organizations developed into premier teams, had the best equipment, and played in front of paying spectators. In 1890, eight boys’ teams formed the "Boys League," that played many of their games in front of the spectators of the City League, essentially a warm up act for the adult clubs. The City League held the position of being the city's highest men's amateur organization, but in reality it existed as a semiprofessional league with ticket prices of twenty-five cents for grandstand seats and fifteen cents for general admission. By 1891, the Boys League had dwindled to six teams but continued to play in front of the City League's spectators. The City and Boys League primarily played their games at three enclosed fields, North Side Park at Halstead Street and North Avenue, Northwest South Park at Thirty Ninth Street and Wentworth Avenue, and West Park at Ogden Avenue and Rockwell Street, but the Boys League occasionally played independently at South Side grounds. In 1890, the City League drew in 115,000 paying

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customers, a stunning success in a city filled with entertainment that included a National League team. Five years later, however, the City League folded and took with it their opening act, the Boys League. The *Inter Ocean* partly blamed the collapse on the National League’s decision to gradually start playing Sunday games that took away important weekend gate receipts for the amateur game.²¹

By the end of the 1890s, the press coverage of youth baseball diminished again, and a number of factors led to this decline. By the end of the century, Chicago had not only the Chicago Orphans, the perennially important National League team, later called the Cubs, but also the emergence of the Western League White Sox, that would later be the Chicago White Sox of the American League. Since 1876, Chicago had been the epicenter of professional baseball, and with the addition of the American League, the professional game rose even more in prominence for daily readers of the papers, driving out the coverage of teenage games. Ironically, the greater importance of baseball in the daily press may have contributed to the decline in coverage of youth baseball. Chicagoans may have passionately followed baseball as never before, but the newspapers had all they could do to cover the daily games of their two top flight professional teams, as well as coverage of boxing and horse racing. It was at this time, as the century turned that the press coverage common in today's newspapers began to solidify, with lengthy articles and illustrations that documented minute by minute action of the professional

teams, and box scores. Commentary on games played by independent teenage clubs did simply did not have the news value of the Cubs and the White Sox. When youth baseball did receive press attention it was devoted to articles on high school and college athletics. The combination of the even greater importance of professional baseball coupled with the transition of teenagers playing for high school nines and college teams made the idea of commenting on independent youth clubs, essentially modeled on the men's amateur teams a thing of the past. If youth games did pop up in the press it was not for the contest on the diamond but rather for an unfortunate or violent event such as a game in 1909 between the Potomac Stars and the Western Avenue Colts, a team managed by the daughter of a Western Avenue saloon owner. Ten and eleven year old boys played the game through the eighth inning until a fight erupted over the score, and led to the players stoning one another until one boy had his skull fractured.22

High School Baseball

Just as youth club games stopped appearing in the daily news, high school baseball suddenly appeared as a preeminent sport. By the late 1890s, public high schools had organized into a county wide baseball league and played games that had daily box scores and reports in the newspapers of Chicago and surrounding communities. High school baseball in Chicago started inauspiciously, as there were almost no high schools in the city until the middle of the 1870s and until that point only one public high school existed, Chicago High School, founded in 1856. It would not be until the end of the 1870s that more public high schools popped up in the city and suburbs. By 1875,

Chicago High School had divided itself into three different two year schools, the North, South, and West Divisions. There were private academies, like Dhyrenfurth's Educational and High School, as well as Beleke's Academy, literally owned and operated by Dr. Beleke, that educated teenagers in the city. With the limited educational outlets, high school baseball remained a rarity until the end of the century. Chicago High School did have a baseball team that played against other teams before the school's division in 1875. However, these opponents came from the large group of youth and men's amateur clubs, not other high schools. In one instance, they played a game against Chicago University. More times than not, the Chicago High team simply scrimmaged against one another, in what would be considered intramural games. Evanston High School also developed a baseball team in the 1870s, but it too mostly played against amateur clubs in the city and not other high schools. In addition to playing other amateur organizations, the Evanston team, as well as the Chicago High, modeled their organizations on the typical amateur club of the 1870s and 1880s. The players do not seem to have been inspired by what later generations would call “school spirit,” the school was only a path to organizing essentially an amateur youth baseball team, and teams did not even wear uniforms until the 1880s. By the end of the 1880s, high school baseball grew rapidly, as did the number of high schools in the city as well as the number of students, and by the end of the century there would be 250,000 children and teens in the Chicago Public School system. Simultaneously, the model of high school athletics started to form, as
high schools competed against one another, formed an athletic conference, and the school and students looked at baseball as a vital extracurricular activity.  

In the spring of 1890, the number of competitive high school baseball teams demanded a formal league, with a set schedule, and a prize for the champion. In April, the Tribune announced the new "Cook County High-School League," with teams from both public and private schools; Englewood, Hyde Park, Evanston, as well as the "Harvard and University Schools of the city." The Tribune would provide a pennant to the league champion at the end of the season, as well as unnamed individual prizes to each member of the winning team as well as a silver cup to the runner up. A.G. Spalding and Company agreed to give a gold medal to the best base runner in the organization and the Jenney and Graham Gun Company, a firearms retailer on State Street in the Loop, agreed to give a gold medal for the best batter. The league used the city's parks to stage most of the games, at Washington and Jackson Parks on the south side, and Lincoln Park on the north side. This new organization, scheduled, with a championship pennant and awards, and filled with only high school teams, helped to create the model of high school athletic conferences and regulations at the beginning of the twentieth century. That same year the Cook County high schools had their second annual field day, where over six hundred male teenagers, almost all students of the schools, gathered at the "Wanderers'  

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24 The Jenney Graham Gun Company also had their own company team that played other men's clubs in Chicago as well as traveled around the Midwest. "Local and Miscellaneous Items," Waterloo Courier, July 3, 1889, p. 8.
Cricket and Athletic Club" at 37th Street and Indiana Avenue. They timed races on foot and on bicycles, threw the shot put and the hammer, staged a broad jump, and finally had a baseball throwing contest. The winner, "A. Charles," from Lake View threw the baseball over one hundred and fourteen yards.25

By the spring of 1891, members of the Cook County High School Baseball League met at the Grand Pacific Hotel to discuss the expansion of the league to ten teams. Five years later, in April of 1896, the Cook County High School Baseball League met at least four times in the Great Northern Hotel, in downtown Chicago, to discuss the upcoming baseball season, and iron out pressing issues. The success of the league in attracting more schools to join created a challenge to scheduling a season of contests. To address this and other issues the League had developed a constitution and bylaws, and held formal meetings to address constitutional changes and guidelines for admittance of teams and players. Each school sent a representative, a player from the team, to participate in the meetings, and these student athletes made all of the decisions on the workings of the group. Hyde Park High School put a proposal before the group in the meetings of 1896 to install a three dollar fine for teams that protested umpiring decisions during games. If the school won the protest they would get their three dollars returned and if they lost the money would be put into the League's treasury. The amendment did not pass. Additionally, during the meetings the representatives had to accept the lineups from every high school that would be participating in the upcoming season. To be

accepted, all of the players had to be active students, with agreed upon courses completed by the time the season started, and each lineup had to be reviewed by every high school principal. At the 1896 meetings, English High School failed to get the signature of "Prof. Robinson," the principal of the school, which forced the league to investigate whether the team had the proper "twelve hours in recitations."26

By 1897, the League had eleven public high schools: Hyde Park, Englewood, Oak Park, South Division, Lake View, North Division, Austin, West Division, John Marshall, English High, and Evanston. They still played games in Lincoln and Washington Parks in the city but also played in Evanston and Oak Park. In early May, Austin High School beat Englewood in front of a thousand spectators in Washington Park. By the end of the decade, the Cook County High School Baseball League had prominent coverage in the daily newspapers in the city and suburbs, with box scores and stories that analyzed the games play by play. The teams also practiced intensely in preparation for the season and their players were looked at as premier athletes in the city, and some went on to play in the new Western Conference, the precursor to the Big Ten. The 1895 and 1896 League champion, Hyde Park High School, sent their former catcher "McGill," to the University of Illinois' baseball team.27

In 1899, the League continued to grow in size as well as prominence, as newspapers increased their coverage of the sport, the number of represented high schools went to fourteen, and administrators and faculty from the schools had direct oversight of


27 "High School League Opens," Oak Park Vindicator, May 7, 1897, p. 4.
the League, both in administration and play on the field. When the club managers met in April of the year, in the Schiller Building on West Randolph Street, a Louis Sullivan designed skyscraper, they agreed to split the growing League into two separate East and West divisions that would be divided along Halstead Street. The competitors on the East would be, South Division, South Chicago, Englewood, Hyde Park, Chicago Manual Training, Evanston, Lake View, and North Division. On the West, Oak Park, La Grange, Austin, West Division, English High and Manual Training, Medill, and Northwest Division would compete. The schedule guaranteed that every team would play one another in each division, fifty-six games in the East and forty-two games in the West. At the close of the season, the teams that finished first and second in each division would meet in a four team playoff to decide the champion of the League. As for the management of each game, the faculty of the schools decided on the umpires. By the spring of 1899, the Cook County High School Baseball League had transformed from a fledgling experiment into a city and county institution.28

At the dawn of the twentieth century, the Cook County public schools continued to grow in importance with the public, as well as the number of schools and the size of the population that demanded expansion. The newspapers covered the games with a measured intensity, not the daily aggrandizement of professional baseball, but with enough coverage to keep the reading press abreast of the teams. By the winter of 1901, the Chicago public school system had built five new schools that cost over five hundred thousand dollars, and would have built even more except for struggles with protesting

laborers. In the city's fifteen high schools and over three hundred elementary schools, there were roughly a quarter of a million students and an additional one hundred thousand students of school age but did not enroll in the city's educational system. In the surrounding communities, there were an additional two hundred grammar schools and nine more high schools. By that time, the Chicago public schools had a complex bureaucracy that employed almost sixty five hundred teachers and sent medical inspectors into each school who identified over four thousand students that had contagious diseases.29

The Tribune broadcast the best players in the Cook County schools with photo prints in the paper, a new innovation of photo realism for the journalism of the nineteenth century, when engravers had once interpreted and reproduced photographic images for the printing press. By 1900, photographs of Chicago's best players appeared in the Tribune, both portrait photos of players in their best suits, and others that captured the boys wearing their uniforms while catching, throwing, and batting, as well as the traditional team photos of the uniformed players lined up in rows. The Chicago Daily News also covered the high school teams and captured them as they played on the field, and practiced before the games. Throughout the first two decades of the twentieth century, Chicago's newspapers closely followed the best high school teams with printed box scores, profiles of star players, and ran photographs of the action on the field. The papers also photographed the players in front of large grandstands, decorated with

advertisements for products and political elections, as well as photos of the silver cup awarded by the *Daily News* to the baseball champions of Cook County. By the early 1920s, the star sports reporter, Hugh Fullerton, known for his coverage of the Black Sox scandal in aftermath of the thrown World Series in 1919, covered high school games as well, an indication of the importance high school baseball had on the attention of Chicagoans.\(^{30}\)

As the city's population, number of public high schools, and baseball players increased at the beginning of the twentieth century, so did the ethnically and racially diverse players. In the 1890s, the growing number of public schools had a limited number of baseball teams, and their lineups came from decidedly Anglo-Saxon backgrounds, with last names such as Johnson, Ball, Hunter, Andrews, Field, and Henry. In the first years of the twentieth century, the large influx of immigrants had flooded public high schools and participated on the competitive baseball teams. By then, the players came from immigrant backgrounds and had names like Smejkal, Lewinsky, Neprstek, Stein, Steinbecker, Kubat, Santucci, and Pasquinelli. These players received the same coverage in the papers as their Anglo named teammates and had articles on the

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sports pages that aggrandized their abilities. As early as 1900, the presumably Jewish Marcus Bernstein had a profile and large photo in the Tribune, as a champion baseball player, and also as the winner of the billiard tournament in the West Division High School. The depiction of young ethnic ball players as accomplished athletes, triumphing in the most American of sporting activities was a wonderful source of community pride and a telling advertisement for the power of baseball to assimilate men of alien backgrounds to American culture.

In marked contrast to the success of youth baseball in preparing the immigrant’s path to social acceptance blacks did not experience the same sporting equity and opportunity as white newcomers. At a time when Jim Crow legislation was being upheld in the United States Supreme Court they increasingly experienced a more harsh segregation, where their accusations of discrimination by public school athletic departments fell on deaf ears. Unfortunately, while the aforementioned Samuel Ransom excelled at baseball for the Hyde Park team, more and more blacks were denied the opportunity to play on baseball, track, and football teams due to their race.31

**The College Game**

In the years immediately following the Civil War, baseball exploded in popularity in Chicago. Amateur teams dominated the period, commonly composed of young, middle-class men, who used baseball not only as a competitive sport but also as a

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fraternal club. Much of that tradition waned during the 1870s as professional baseball dominated not only in Chicago but throughout the nation. College and University baseball developed alongside the amateur fraternal teams in the 1860s increased their popularity in the 1870s and at times not only played intercollegiate games but would also challenge professional teams. During the 1870s, collegiate baseball in Chicago had not developed into a powerful extracurricular activity, supported by the administration or the student body. Student athletes commonly funded their own teams and the players or captains solicited their fellow students for extra funding. In some seasons raising money from non-playing students could be the least of the worries for the college team as fans failed to show up for games, and in 1878, *The Vidette*, Northwestern's student newspaper, stated, "That esprit du corps, which marks other college students, seems to be entirely foreign to N.W.U." During the 1870s and early 1880s the game existed as an independent organization, with the college or university only as an excuse for the young men to form a team. Much like high school baseball, by the end of the 1880s through the beginning of the twentieth century, college and university baseball in Chicago started to thrive. There were more schools that fielded teams, conferences were formed, and the relationship between the university administration and college athletics became standardized. By the first decade of the twentieth century the role athletics played on college campuses solidified and looked much the same for the rest of the century.32

In the 1860s, along the Eastern seaboard, collegiate baseball had already turned into a common component of college life. Teams at Harvard, Brown, Yale, and

32 "Shall We Withdraw?" *The Vidette*, June 1, 1878, p. 112.
Princeton had fixed schedules, played one another, played men's amateur teams, and during the early 1870s competed against professional teams with greater frequency. By 1870, faculty and administration took a larger role in the team's development, oversaw their schedules, and tried to lessen the number of games played in an effort to keep academics the central reason for attending the university. During the same time period, baseball in Chicago's colleges played a much smaller role; teams had difficulty finding intercollegiate games, and more often than not squared off against men's amateur teams. The *Tribune* regularly covered college games outside of Chicago, due to the limited games being played in the city by college nines. In one article the paper reported on the Excelsior Baseball Club of Peoria that lost a game to the Knox College team, and the Beloit College team in Wisconsin that beat a men's team from Madison. In the city, there were rare college games, and in one case the sophomore class of the first University of Chicago beat a "picked nine" on the grounds of Camp Douglas in November of 1869. In the same month, "picked nines" from Chicago Academy played Dyhrenfurth Commercial College, a local business school on Randolph Street. Like the high school teams of the same period, Chicago's college clubs also frequently played intramural games, commonly between different classes, as when the Dyhrenfurth Commercial College juniors beat the seniors by the score of forty-one to twenty-five. Small enrollment in the city's colleges and universities, as well as the large number of amateur teams available for young men, help to explain the limited number of college and university teams and the lack of news coverage in the city's papers.33

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In the early part of the 1870s, Chicago's university and college baseball teams muddled along, as regional teams such as Racine and Beloit Colleges received coverage in the newspapers. By 1870, baseball had been a part of St. Ignatius College, the year of the academy's founding and later known as Loyola University, but would not be covered in the city's press until much later in the century. In the middle of the decade the local collegiate baseball scene gained steam and the teams played more competitively. In 1875 Northwestern University and the first University of Chicago created a college championship trophy, a "silver ball," that would be passed to the best collegiate team. By May of 1876, this championship had been expanded to a fledging conference known as the "College Base-Ball Association," and included Northwestern, the University of Chicago, and Racine College, in Racine Wisconsin. Lake Forest University actively sought to be added to the organization and the participants hoped Beloit College and the University of Michigan would join in the coming months. Even with their grand plans, by 1878, the league still only consisted of the three clubs. Their relationship within the tiny conference did not always have friendly camaraderie, and in 1875, Northwestern had captured the "Silver Ball," but the University of Chicago refused to give up the trophy as the club accused the Evanston team of fielding a player that was not a student during their games. In a letter to the Tribune, the University of Chicago team accused the Northwestern catcher, "Mr. Partie," as not being "a member of Evanston College," and with an investigation from "Prof. Fisk," at Northwestern, they determined the catcher "is

now or has ever been connected with the Preparatory School.” Even with the
disagreement, lack of the "Silver Ball," and the possibility of cheating, the Northwestern
team still called itself champions at the beginning of the 1876 season.\footnote{Marked by its small intercollegiate conference and more press coverage, college
baseball in Chicago continued to muddle along. Teams still held intramural scrimmages
and continued to play men's amateur teams. In late May of the 1876 season, in which
Northwestern would be battling for a repeat championship over Racine and the
University of Chicago, they played, in order, a game against the local men's amateur
club, the Franklins, followed by a trip to Racine College, and then to Milwaukee to play
another men's team, the West End Club. Enthusiasm and financial support also remained
difficult at Northwestern at the end of the decade. The University newspaper chastised
the student body for not giving enough money to the struggling baseball team, and
pointed out the entire freshman class had not donated any money at all. By the first week
of June the team still had not paid for any of their expenses. During that season the
captain of the team purchased all of the uniforms and by the next fall, a local tailor
donated thirty dollars worth of uniforms to the club. The paper also questioned the
bookkeeping of the baseball team, and when their accounting ledger was checked at the
end of the 1878 season not a single entry had been written on the pages and was, "as
clean as when they left the maker." The club had not won a single game against Racine}

and the University of Chicago, and the student paper linked the poor accounting to poor play on the field. By February of 1879, *The Vidette* considered the baseball team to be, "very indifferently supported." and blamed the entire student body for refusing to participate in athletics at the University.35

During the 1880s, college baseball in Chicago and the surrounding area gained strength, and a new conference formed called the Western College League. In 1882, the League consisted of the Racine College, the University of Michigan, the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and Northwestern University. The new organization meant a much greater number of intercollegiate games and fewer contests against men's amateur teams. Press coverage commonly ran box scores and articles alongside the National League games, compiled lengthy lists of statistics for League leaders for batting and fielding, and by 1884, the Northwestern team drew hundreds of fans for each game. In 1886, the lineup changed to Racine College, Beloit College, the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and Northwestern University. By 1888, Lake Forest College joined the conference which put two Chicago suburban schools in the hunt for the championship. In 1890, the same schools sent representatives to Milwaukee where the students elected officers of the League, made changes to the by-laws, decided to use the Spalding baseball and adopt the rules from the Spalding baseball guide, and hammered out a schedule. University

administrators also tried to influence the schedules of each team, a sign that baseball had
developed into an institution on the college campuses of the Midwest.36

In the early 1890s, as college baseball continued to rise in prominence, as well as
track and football, university administrators worried about the power these sports had
over their students and campuses. The growing power of baseball on the students and
players became clear in one game in 1891, when Northwestern defeated the University of
Wisconsin, Madison, in front of two thousand fans. State universities in the Midwest
questioned the trend of athletics dominating much of student life, as college teams
continued to be largely unregulated by faculty and administration, and the role of sports
occupied an increasingly greater distraction to students and the fans. Initially,
administrators wanted to eliminate athletics altogether, but universities ultimately decided
guidance and restrictions would greater serve the student body. By the middle of the
decade certain players of baseball, as well as football, joined teams for different schools
dependent on the season, were given salaries to play for teams, sometimes did not enroll
in courses, and bounced between college, professional, and semi-professional teams. At
the newly created second University of Chicago during the 1893 season, Amos Alonzo
Stagg, the coach and faculty member of the team, pitched, played shortstop, and while
coaching the football team occasionally played halfback. Additionally, high school
athletes played for college teams under assumed names if their talent was great enough to

36 "Baseball Averages," The Daily Republican-Sentinel, November 19, 1882, p. 5. "Base-Ball,"
"Fixed For Play," The Milwaukee Sentinel, February 15, 1890, p. 2.
make a contribution. University teams continued to play professional and amateur teams at the start of the 1890s, although such contests occurred with declining frequency. College officials frowned on such games, as professional clubs were thought to corrupt their students by teaching that athletic success was of first importance. In 1895, at a meeting in the Palmer House, called by the President of Purdue University, officials from Northwestern University, the University of Chicago, as well as the state universities from Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin met to discuss how athletics hindered the students’ ability to succeed academically. All officials agreed to limit the power of sports in their schools, and eliminated games with non-college teams, forbade players not enrolled in classes from playing, required student athletes to be of good academic standing, disallowed players from participation on teams outside of the school in which they had enrolled, required team purchases and debts be approved by the schools, and limited the usage of the university fields to intercollegiate games. When the Northwestern faculty met independently after the meeting and agreed to the new restrictions, the football manager resigned, and told the group, "I can't help thinking that the action of the faculty in assuming responsibilities that belong entirely to students will tend to discourage athletics even more in the future." The baseball manager, E.J. Williams did not respond to the faculty until he had been told the baseball grounds at the campus would be limited in the upcoming season to six games, "After I've about completed the arrangements for at least two extensive trips and scheduled a dozen or

37 The first University of Chicago, built by Stephen Douglas as a Baptist School in 1857 closed due to financial problems by 1886. The current University of Chicago opened in 1892.
more games away from home I'm confronted by this rule which will compel me to change all my plans."\(^{38}\)

Of the schools present at the 1895 meeting, only two were private institutions Northwestern University and the University of Chicago. Both institutions fell in line with state universities and implemented the changes to their baseball teams, as well as other athletic programs. In spite of the dismay expressed by students used to managing their games on their own, both schools, as well as the state schools thrived under the new guidelines. Unwittingly, the 1895 meeting of faculty and administrators, created what would become the Big Ten conference, an organization that would monitor compliance with the new restrictions. Although only seven schools initially participated, the groundwork for a strong athletic conference centered in the Midwest had been cemented. This type of athletic association, managed by university officials and faculty, was unprecedented in collegiate athletics. By the beginning of the twentieth century, faculty fixed the schedules that determined when schools played one another in baseball, football, track, and basketball as well as games against universities and colleges outside of the conference. The problems anticipated by the meeting in 1895 did virtually nothing to hurt Northwestern's baseball team, which traveled to Kentucky and Tennessee in the spring of 1896 to play exhibition games against college teams in the South. That season the team scheduled games against the participants of the new conference, but also played

Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana, as well as the University of Indiana in Evanston, Illinois.  

By the twentieth century, Northwestern and the University of Chicago had developed a normalized conference schedule, against teams that initially would be known as the "Big Nine," as the Indiana and Iowa state universities gained admittance in 1899. During their athletic seasons, the administration and faculty gained an even greater control and determined when and where the baseball teams would play. Both the University of Chicago and Northwestern played schools in the conference, but still played independent games around Chicago. Both schools played Lake Forest College as well as Wabash College, and Lake Forest played schools in the area as well schools in the Midwest, like DePauw University, in 1904. By 1910, Loyola University fielded a varsity lineup that also challenged Lake Forest. DePaul University remained far behind the two powerful universities in the city, the University of Chicago and Northwestern, and squared off against high school competition as late as 1908, when they beat Lake View High School by a score of twelve to ten.

As an example of the growing power of collegiate baseball in Chicago and the Midwest, as well as the increasing importance of the "Western Conference," later known as the Big Ten, the University of Chicago, "Maroons," staged an international tour against college teams in Japan and the Philippines in the fall of 1910. Twelve players

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from the university traveled over nineteen thousand miles to take on the challengers across the Pacific Ocean, at Waseda and Keio Universities in Japan, and the best teams in the Manila City League. The University of Chicago deemed the games the "longest a college team ever has ventured" and the trip would not only be about baseball but would offer the team an opportunity to "strengthen our country's international relations with the orient." On the four thousand mile trip by train to the west coast, the team stopped in Montana, and Seattle, Washington to play exhibition games on their way across the ocean to "Tokio." Once they arrived in Japan, after a sea voyage of over four thousand miles, the team played almost flawlessly and won every game in the country. In one contest, twelve thousand Japanese fans packed the field to watch the American college students, some of which camped out overnight to get the best seats for the game, which the University of Chicago won eight to four. The next day, the Maroons beat Waseda University by a score of twenty to zero. After wrapping up the games in Japan, the team went on a sightseeing tour of China before they headed to the Philippines for their final games. Once in the Philippines, they won every game, and disbanded to travel the world, work in the Philippines, or make their way back to Chicago. Part of the team went to Europe, one player stayed in the Philippines for a teaching position while two others stayed in Manila to work. In December, after a six week trip, the first four members of the team returned home to Chicago, after they missed an entire semester of school. Alonzo Stagg, the head coach of the baseball team since 1893, remained home for the trip, to coach the football team through the fall schedule.  

The University student in 1910 represented a tiny fraction of the American population, as well as the population of Chicago. They typically arrived on campus from middle class and upper middle class homes, and participated in the transformation of the American collegiate system at the beginning of the twentieth century. By 1900, colleges and universities across the nation developed more systemized academics and administrative bureaucracy, where courses, degree completion, and the role of faculty and students became standardized. Simultaneously, the role of athletics fit into that larger pattern, with faculty, administrators, and burgeoning college conferences that regulated the organization of teams, schedules, and play on the field. Part of the streamlining of college campuses also included catering to the student that could afford tuition and would have the financial and social background acceptable to the campus community. At the beginning of the twentieth century colleges frequently recruited the best students and increasingly mimicked one another in an effort to provide the most desirable setting for students. In 1890, only three percent of eighteen year olds in the United States attended a university. By 1900, that number increased to four percent and in 1910 it inched up to five percent. University students represented only a tiny fraction of young adults in the United States and their baseball teams were even a much smaller number. Regardless, college and university baseball changed dramatically at the dawn of the twentieth century, as games, schedules, conferences, coaching, and playing became much more

regimented. The standardization of baseball fit into the larger “University Transition Era,” when colleges developed into more homogeneous organizations across the country.

For college baseball the first decade of the twentieth century in many ways was a high-water mark. By 1910, the role of baseball on college campuses slipped dramatically as collegiate football became the game to see. Football played in the fall when the academic year was beginning better suited the college calendar than baseball, a game celebrated and enjoyed at a time of the year when schools were either ending their classes or in recess.

The transition of collegiate sport from student to faculty control followed the pattern of high school baseball in Chicago when the entire city moved to the modern age and brought along youth baseball as well. By 1900 summer in Chicago meant baseball. On college campuses, on high school diamonds, and at street corner lot boys, sometimes in natty uniforms, sometimes in work clothes, pitched, hit, and ran the bases with unbridled enthusiasm. For some the game was a means of Americanization and social mobility, for others it was an opportunity for asserting established class relationships, for all it was an enjoyment of a recreation that brought individuals together as a team and held out the prospect for public recognition and pride. In an era when elite society struggled to come to terms with the unpredictable, chaotic nature of a rapidly industrializing and urbanizing nation youth sport like so many other aspects of society became increasingly rationalized, organized, and controlled. The unregulated street game
CHAPTER SIX

THE AMERICAN LEAGUE

In Washington, DC, the Office of the Weather Bureau forecasted snow in the far Northeast of Illinois, for Thursday, April 12, 1900. Contrary to the federal government’s prediction, the Chicago Tribune anticipated fair skies and unseasonably cold temperatures, a bitter prediction, but not a dramatic shift from the weather Chicagoans had come to expect during “spring.” The weather it turned out was worse than either the Tribune or the Weather Bureau anticipated. In the afternoon, forty mile-an hour winds rushed along city streets, and pushed through a snowstorm, that dropped over two inches on the city before sunset, and more drifts accumulated throughout the night, setting a twenty-four hour record for April snow. The quantity of snow paled in comparison to a typical winter storm in Chicago, but the harsh surprise of heavy snow and winds, in the middle of April, incapacitated the city. On the far Southside, at Stony Island Avenue and Ninety-Fourth Street, a train collided with a local trolley car, blamed solely on slick rail lines, and injured three people. Electrical outages shut down other rail lines in the city, and the 39th Street to Indiana Avenue route of the elevated train had intermittent service.
that continued until ten o’clock that night. By morning, transit traffic had been restored, and Chicago’s workers moved with ease around the city.¹

The morning after the storm, Charles Comiskey wandered around his new ballpark at 39th Street and Wentworth Avenue, only days before he had watched workmen hammer away at grandstand seats, and install the final touches necessary for the start of the first season of the American League. That morning he specifically went to the stadium to inspect the condition of the field, a muddy quagmire after the heavy snow the day before. On Sunday afternoon, his new club had a preseason exhibition game scheduled against the all black Chicago Unions, and Comiskey told the Tribune he felt comfortable the recent weather would turn balmy and the baseball season would begin according to the schedule. Instead, the game against the Unions had to be cancelled, and the start to the American League season was delayed in Chicago due to the muddy field on the Southside. By April 19, Comiskey still waited for sunny skies to dry the playing surface, and held out hope the new League, and his new team the Chicago White Sox, would be able to start their season in the coming days. Finally, on April 21, Connie Mack’s Milwaukee Brewers arrived at Comiskey’s new ballpark for the first home game of Chicago’s newest team. With an inauspicious snowy start, the brand new American League was born in Chicago.²


By the time the new owner, Comiskey, finished plans on the wooden ballpark for his White Sox, professional baseball had undergone a substantial change in the last fifteen years. The National League, the premier organization of professional baseball, had tackled heavy competition from the American Association, a league designed to challenge the National League’s supremacy. Additionally, the Players’ League emerged during the 1890 season, in an effort to secure better salaries and control for the players. Both of these organizations failed during the early 1890s, and the National League stood alone at the top of professional baseball and athletics in the United States. But the damage wrought by the competition, coupled with a substantial economic downturn in the American economy, left the National League stagnated, without growth in ticket sales, and for much of the decade the League experienced less fan support than in the past. During these years Chicago slowly lost its control over the National League. Founding President William Hulbert had been in his grave since 1882 and after 1894 Albert Spalding focused the bulk of his attention on his sporting goods empire. A Washington D.C. native, Nicholas Young, served as League President from 1885-1901, and did little to strengthen the organization. Instead, the League went adrift, filled with corruption and poor play, largely due to the inept leadership of Young. Throughout that time, as the center of power in professional baseball slowly moved away from Chicago, the League weakened, in ticket sales and economic growth, although it was without new outside challengers. Even as the National League lost relevancy in American culture, and control of the National League left Chicago, the city remained the top metropolis in the
League, and ticket sales in the city supported the continual strength of the National League club, even as they failed to win a pennant throughout the 1890s.\(^3\)

The American League began as the Northwestern League in 1879, a fledgling minor circuit that during the 1880s had teams in Iowa, Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Wisconsin, Ohio, and Indiana. Four times during the 1880s, the League cancelled the season, due to lack of interested teams and financial backing. Before the start of the 1888 season, the organization decided to change their name to the Western Association, a label that stuck until 1892, when the clubs renamed their association the Western League. The organization would keep that title until the formation of the American League in the fall of 1899.\(^4\) The early development of the Western League, and its transition in 1894 to a more dependable minor league circuit, with strict schedules and league continuity, had little to do with baseball in Chicago. The National League had experienced pressure from top-tier professional leagues prior to 1894, and the backwater Western League had a trivial influence or impact on the day-to-day workings of America’s premier baseball cartel. Instead, while the Western League grew in power and importance during the decade as a minor circuit, it was preyed upon by the National League in search of better players, the idea of the association as a potent contender for national prominence seemed remote. But even as the National League prowled for future


\(^4\) When the Western League changed to the American League at the dawn of the twentieth century, a new Western League was born without any of the clubs that moved to the American League. The new Western League functioned again as a minor league and existed intermittently through the 1950s, stopped for a time by the Great Depression, World War II, and it was finally the abandoned by Major League Baseball at the end of the 1950s.
stars in the Western League, the association continued to grow in distinction during the late 1890s. By the end of the century, the management of the National League grew concerned about emerging strength of the Western League, and questioned if the organization would attempt to infiltrate Chicago with a new team. The management of the Western League understood a jump to the elite status of the National League would require placing a team in Chicago.5

This chapter will explore the emergence of the American League and the role the Chicago White Sox played in the development of that organization at the dawn of the twentieth century. Additionally, the importance of the fan experience in the ballpark, and the growing desire of the White Sox and the club owner Comiskey to provide a economically and ethnically integrated stadium, accessible to the large group of differing ethic and socio-economic groups, changed the structure of the class divided ballpark of the National League in the nineteenth century. As historian Robin Bachin has suggested, this was an effort to, “transcend the confines of the immediate neighborhood and make his ballpark an emblem of the emerging links between commercial culture, civic pride, respectability, and Americanism.” Of course these lofty ambitions did not include making the new ball park a welcome place for black Chicagoans and women would long occupy only a tiny minority of seats at the games. Yet, even with the absence of blacks and women, the new ballpark experience of the American League was a significant departure from the National League’s nineteenth century notions of an appropriate fan experience.

The ownership and management of the Chicago club in the National League, and the overall management of the entire League wanted the ballpark to be the center of white, middle-class respectability, and they largely ignored ethnic minorities and the working class. Ultimately, Charles Comiskey who grew up as part of ethnic Chicago, eagerly took advantage of an underserved urban audience and created a democratic ballpark that mirrored the complexity of the economic and ethnic populations that filled the city.

The American League White Sox started with a wooden ballpark in 1900 with a stadium design similar to that used by most professional teams at the end of the nineteenth century. By 1910, the club built an elaborate new concrete and steel stadium, a city landmark, which the Tribune called the “Greatest Ball Park in the World.” This new ballpark attempted to bring in all residents, to enjoy the urban spectacle of professional baseball, and avoided catering to a specific group of Chicagoans. This cultural shift in Chicago, and in the large urban centers of the North, happened in a flash, and was also reflected in the change of many other forms of entertainment in the first decade of the twentieth century. The amusements of the new century attempted to create a universal bond of urban culture, and as historian John Kasson indicates, “Slowly at first in the late nineteenth century, then quickly as the twentieth century advanced, the genteel middle-class cultural order crumbled.” The White Sox embodied that change. They
rejected the middle-class fixation of the National League and created an experience at the ballpark that was open to all Chicagoans.⁶

**The Western League**

During the 1893 baseball season, Byron Bancroft “Ban” Johnson met with Charles Comiskey, the manager of the Cincinnati club of the National League, to discuss the possibility of seizing control of the Western League. The two gathered in the Ten-Minute Club, a Cincinnati bar that required patrons to buy a drink every ten minutes or face eviction from the establishment. The well lubricated men then hatched a plan that included Johnson dropping his position as reporter, to secure the presidency of the Western League and Comiskey to take control as an owner and manager of a member club. Johnson had been a sports reporter for the Cincinnati *Commercial-Gazette* and during seven years with the paper had been frequently critical of the John Brush, the owner of Cincinnati’s National League club. The friendship of Johnson and Comiskey was unusual, because Comiskey had been the manager of the club that Johnson harshly criticized in the daily paper. The sour relationship between Johnson and Brush, however, did not spill over to Johnson and Comiskey, at least not with the ample flow of drinks at

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the Ten-Minute Club. Comiskey had little difficulty convincing Johnson to join him in Chicago and assume the Presidency of the Western League.⁷

Ban Johnson was born in 1863, in Norwalk, Ohio, a small community south of Sandusky, Ohio, near the shore of Lake Erie. When he was a young boy his family moved to Avondale, Ohio, a neighborhood in Cincinnati where his father pursued a career as a teacher and a passion for the local Presbyterian Church. Education was the central preoccupation of Johnson’s early life, and ultimately he enrolled in Oberlin College, and later studied at Marietta College, where he excelled more in baseball than academics. After graduation from college he spent a few weeks with a low-level professional team in Ironton, Ohio. An injury to his thumb, however, caused him to end his brief career as a player. Without a desire to follow his father in education, or in the Presbyterian Church, Johnson entered the University of Cincinnati’s Law School, where he worked towards a degree for eighteen months, found a job clerking in a law office, but quit the pursuit of a degree to take a position as a sports reporter for Cincinnati’s Commercial-Gazette in 1886. Even though Johnson failed to finish his law degree, his brief experience at the University of Cincinnati provided him a background in laws and contracts that would be invaluable when he controlled the American League. In less than a year, the sports editor of the Commercial-Gazette left for a position in New York, leaving Johnson as his successor. His time as writer and editor of sports gave Johnson intimate knowledge of the inner workings of professional baseball. In his years with the

paper, Johnson learned how professional baseball’s management controlled both the business side of the game and ensured the play on the field remained competitive. He entered journalism at the dawn of sports writing in the American press, when the ability to convey a deeper understanding of baseball was a requirement to satisfy the reader. Johnson’s brief legal training, coupled with his intimate understanding of organized baseball, put him in a unique position to one-day control a professional league.\(^8\)

Charles Comiskey's rise to power as the owner of the White Sox, and the most influential proprietor in the American League by the start of twentieth century, made him wealthy, as well as an icon in the sporting scene of Chicago. Comiskey’s father came from a more humble background than Comiskey’s ultimate success might suggest. John Comiskey was born in 1827, in Crosserlough, a city in Cavan County, in the Ulster province of Ireland. In the midst of a giant wave of starving Roman-Catholic Irish immigrants that flooded cities in the North, he migrated to New Haven Connecticut in 1848. He stayed in Connecticut for six years before moving to Chicago in 1854. John Comiskey represented the new group of Irish Catholic Chicagoans, by carving out a career in city politics and government. He served as alderman for thirteen years, and represented the eighth, ninth, and tenth wards as the districting of the city changed during his tenure. After his terms on the city council he was appointed as the Clerk for the Board of County Commissioners, and Superintendent of the Water-Meter Department, both positions secured due to his deep loyalty to the Democratic Party in Chicago. After ending his involvement with city government, the elder Comiskey joined the Henry

Greenebaum banking firm until his retirement. His son Charles was born in Chicago in addition to four brothers and a sister. Upon his death in January 1900, just months before his son opened his new ballpark John Comiskey was also buried in Calvary Cemetery in Evanston.⁹

John Comiskey did not want a life of baseball for his son Charles. Instead, John secured a job for his teenage son to deliver bricks to construction sites in the city. In a possibly apocryphal story, the son drove a wagon through the city, loaded with bricks, and passed a baseball game between two local youth clubs, the Hatfields and the McCoys. When Comiskey saw the ball game, he stopped the horses and convinced the Hatfields manager that he should be inserted in the lineup to push the team to victory. After he entered the game, the wagonload of bricks sat idle, while masons at the construction site waited for their delivery. Ultimately, Comiskey’s father had to be summoned and was told his son abandoned the bricks in the middle of his route. When the Alderman saw what happened, he took the reins of the wagon and delivered the bricks himself, and let his son continue his pursuit of baseball. In the parable like story John Comiskey learned to give his son the latitude to pursue baseball that ultimately led to his ownership of the Chicago White Sox. Furthermore, that fateful decision, and the story of the game between the Hatfields and McCoys, helped cement the mythical Comiskey as a

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man of the masses, an example of the American dream who participated in the daily fabric of the city, and embodied the American passion for baseball.\textsuperscript{10}

In fact, as opposed to legend, Comiskey’s game of baseball with the Hatfield’s did little to deter his father’s hope for a solid education for his son. The younger Comiskey ultimately enrolled at St. Mary’s College, just west of Topeka, Kansas. However, following his graduation from St. Mary’s, the willful young man embarked on a baseball career. Comiskey played on baseball clubs in Elgin in 1875, a Milwaukee team in 1876, and for the Dubuque, Iowa Rabbits, a semi-professional club from 1878 to 1881. While working his way through the lower rungs of professional and semiprofessional baseball he also sold papers as a newsboy on trains during the off-season. Once Comiskey seized upon baseball as a passion and a career, he moved up the ladder as a pitcher and first-baseman and landed on the roster of the St. Louis Browns in the American Association in 1882. During his years with the Browns he mostly played first-base, and helped revolutionize the position by playing away from the bag, collecting ground balls, and not simply standing idle on the base catching thrown balls to put the runner out. After his first year with the Browns he became both first-baseman and manager, and from 1885-1888 led the team to four consecutive American Association championships, and in the first of these two pennants beat the National League clubs in a championship series that foreshadowed the World Series. In the fall of 1889, Comiskey joined several other players and managers in the ill-fated attempt to overthrow the


In 1892 he moved to the National League Cincinnati Reds where he played first base, and managed the club through the 1894 season. During his three-year stint in Cincinnati, Comiskey steered the team to a five hundred record, and failed to distinguish himself with play on the field. The most important change to Comiskey’s life came from his growing relationship with the newspaper reporter Ban Johnson. After the end of the 1893 Reds’ season, Comiskey went on a tour of the South, scouring semi-pro teams for talent to shore up the Cincinnati lineup for the upcoming season. While traveling from city to city, he encountered representatives from Western League teams that had endured a terrible season of poor ticket sales. The club owners outwardly questioned the future of their organization and Comiskey suggested the League should search for new leadership, and offered the club owners the name of Ban Johnson. The meeting in the Ten-Minute Club stemmed from these informal encounters with Western League leaders. In November 1893, Johnson, through Comiskey’s efforts, was invited to attend the annual meeting of the Western League clubs. After the invitation, Johnson had only planned on the possibility of election to the position of secretary, but was surprised when the League appointed him to the title of president, treasurer, and secretary with the annual salary of twenty five hundred dollars. The new job forced Johnson to temporarily step aside from
his duties at the Commercial-Gazette, and by January 1894, it was publicly reported he had retired from sports writing.\textsuperscript{12}

Quickly, Johnson seized control of the Western League and made it more competitive, financially successful, and recognized in the national press. By his first year in 1894, newspapers celebrated his drive and pursuit of excellence, and noted that there was “nothing lukewarm or uncertain about his love of the sport,” and that he was “in the game heart, soul, body, and creased trousers.” Comiskey, on the other hand, had another year of his contract with the Cincinnati club to finish, and did not join Johnson in the Western League until the 1895 season. At the fall meeting in 1894, the League gave ownership of the 1893 League champions, the Sioux City Cornhuskers to Comiskey. Even though the Cornhuskers captured the League pennant, they had low turnout with only forty-two thousand ticket holders, and the city’s population was the smallest in the organization. In October, the League attempted to move the Sioux City club to Chicago, but the National League made clear it would vigorously prevent any baseball organization from stealing fans from one of their clubs. Due to this pressure, and a review by League management, the League, in their annual meeting at the Tremont House in Chicago, moved the Cornhuskers to St. Paul, Minnesota, and Comiskey secured the contracts of the eight best players from Sioux City to play during the 1895 season in

Minnesota. For five years, Comiskey oversaw the St. Paul Apostles, and never guided the team to a better finish than second, which they achieved in their first year in Minnesota. By 1899, the club experienced a continual decline in ticket sales, and Comiskey and Johnson started to plan a shift to the capital of professional baseball, Chicago.¹³

Johnson, as well as Comiskey experienced continual challenges each season in the Western League. Teams came and went, with eight teams playing in sixteen different cities from 1894-1899. Even with this apparent inconsistency, five of the teams remained in their respective cities throughout the period, giving the League a measure of stability. The deeper problem for the Western League was the continual poaching of players from member teams by the National League. Under the National Agreement of 1892, in the aftermath of the American Association, and Players’ League, the National League and minor circuits agreed to a policy where new National League players had to be drafted from the lower tiers of minor league circuits. In an era that predated the minor league farm system, where major league clubs oversee their own developmental teams, the National League paid minor league team draft fees for their players. During the 1890s this rate typically fluctuated between five hundred and a thousand dollars. It would not be until the 1930s when the modern form of minor league farm talent would change the structure of the relationship between the minor leagues and Major League Baseball. With

the drafting system in place, Johnson, as well as the entire Western League, that included Comiskey, had difficulty keeping their star players in the lineup from year to year. National League teams would pay their draft fees and decimate lineups, in turn causing once stellar teams to drop precipitously. In the case of the Indianapolis club, John Brush, owner of the Cincinnati Reds, owned both organizations. As Johnson’s tenure as head of the Western League progressed, the situation became untenable, as his most promising organizations faced crushing poaching from the National League and the National Agreement. Annually, he would try to pressure the National League to increase the fees for drafting or create a rule that forced players to spend two entire seasons within his organization before being drafted. Time and time again the National League refused to change the policies. By the end of the decade, Johnson, with counsel from Comiskey, realized their only course of action would be to bow out of the National Agreement and start their own top-level professional circuit.¹⁴

The Birth of the American League and the Great Baseball War

On April 14, 1908, Chicago police chief, George Shippy, entered South Side Park as part of Mayor Fred Busse’s personal escort, along with Fire Chief James Horan, Building Commissioner Joseph Downey, and other department heads from city hall. The crowd for opening day of the White Sox season filled the grandstand bleachers and spilled out onto the margins of the playing field while outside throngs filled the streets that bordered the stadium. Due to the large attendance, the game between the Sox and

the Detroit Tigers started later than normal, and kept the mayor from throwing out the first pitch. Comiskey had anticipated eight thousand fans for opening day but instead upward of twenty thousand filled the grounds and fans began scrambling over newly built and unfinished exits, to gain entry to the stadium. On the playing field pandemonium broke out as hundreds of spectators rushed the diamond before the game, and the small police force attempted to restore order. The players, warming up before the start of the game, had to run back to their dugouts to avoid the crazed Chicago White Sox rooters in wool topcoats and cold weather bowler hats who surged forward to grab the best seat in the house. Two brass bands exploded in song during the chaos, and attempted to bring the crowd to a standstill. The larger of the two ensembles was positioned near first base, but their music did little to quell the disorderly hoard. Ultimately, Comiskey had to call for more policemen to take the field, and Shippy himself climbed down from his elevated perch near the mayor to direct the security on the field. A wall of Chicago police filled the diamond and pushed the fans back to the outside of the foul lines, to take a position on the grass, as seats had become such a premium that they were rarer than a “cake of ice in Mephistopheles’ realm.” The game had to be delayed fifteen minutes, but the Sox won the contest fifteen to eight, but not before the Tigers’ Ty Cobb hit a home run and went three for five.\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{15} “White Sox Tame Tigers Before 20,000 Fans with a Holiday Score,” \textit{Chicago Daily Tribune}, April 15, 1908, p. 10. Policemen Pushing Back Spectators on the Field during a Game Between the White Sox and Detroit Tigers at South Side Park (SDN-006846, Chicago Daily News Negatives Collection, Chicago Historical Museum.)
professional baseball. No longer a backwater regional league, the new American League captured a national audience that had once exclusively belonged to the National League.

From the inception of the National League in 1876, major league baseball underwent three baseball “wars”; the Players’ League in 1890, the emergence of the American League in 1900-1901, and finally the upstart Federal League in 1914-1915. Remarkably, both Comiskey and Johnson played a role in all three. During the Players’ League tumult in 1890, Comiskey had served as the manager of the Chicago Pirates, while Johnson covered the everyday action of the National and Players’ League with the Commercial-Gazette. During the final altercation with the upstart Federal League in 1914, Comiskey owned and operated the Chicago White Sox and Johnson commanded the entire American League. The emergence of the American League in 1900-01, pitted both men as protagonists in the combat against the senior circuit, the National League. Of all the revolutions in professional baseball, none was greater than the conflict between the National and American Leagues in 1901. Chicago and Comiskey were central to the war, and forever changed the landscape of professional baseball, as well as popular culture in the city of Chicago.16

To advance to a major league, competitive with the National League, the Western League took two dramatic steps between 1899 and 1901. The first came in October, 1899 when repeated bad deals stemming from the National Agreement finally forced the Western League clubs to challenge the authority of the National League. The Western leaders met in the Great Northern Hotel, a Burnham and Root designed building on South

Dearborn, in Chicago’s Loop. During the two-hour meeting they approved that new teams from Indianapolis and Buffalo would be included in the ranks, and decided their regional name, the Western League, would not draw in fans around the country. In turn, the ownership and management agreed to change the name to the American League for the 1900 season. The more difficult challenge, discussed long before the gathering in the hotel, was placing a team in Chicago. By October, the club owners and league president realized for long-term success, the newly minted American League had to relocate a member club to Chicago, the most important baseball metropolis in the United States.17

Comiskey’s personal earnings from the 1899 season in St. Paul amounted to only seven dollars and seventy-nine cents. The accounting, whether accurate or not, demonstrated that ticket sales in Minnesota had been poor, and reinforced his, as well as the entire League’s desire for a Chicago team. Because they were still only a struggling minor league, the Western circuit owners did not yet want to declare open war on the National League. Instead they cleverly acted as if they intended to remain bound by the old National Agreement that cemented their subservient status. This complicated the creation of a league franchise in Chicago because this would necessitate the acquiescence of the National League owners and the league President Nicholas Young. Understandably, Club owners in the National League feared two professional baseball clubs in Chicago would saturate the market, and ultimately drive fans away from West Side Grounds, home of the Chicago Cubs. James Hart, owner of the Cubs, was, predictably even more vehement than other National League owners. He realized a new

17 “American League Now,” Chicago Tribune, October 12, 1899, p. 4.
American League team in Chicago would be owned and operated by Comiskey, a local icon, doubling the possibility of financial ruin for the Cubs. Johnson and Comiskey believed on the other hand, that Chicago’s sporting fan, and the sheer size of the city, could support two professional clubs. Johnson told the Tribune, “Chicago covers an area of nearly 200 square miles, with a population of 2,000,000. We think it is entirely unfair and unjust that one man should have exclusive jurisdiction over such a great extent of territory.” Even with the hesitation of the National League, Johnson and Comiskey planned on a team in Chicago for the 1900 season, and they were determined that the team would be the struggling St. Paul club owned by Comiskey. The outward appearance of the American League showed nothing but respect for the National Agreement. When the St. Paul team relocated to Chicago, it would still be in a minor league, subject to drafts from the National League, and presumably using players with lesser talent. In fact, the only major changes underway in the winter of 1899-1900, was the use of a new league title and the new Chicago team. Privately however, when the right time came, Johnson and Comiskey intended to end the National Agreement, establish the American League as a major league, and declare war with the National League. The renaming of the organization and the move to Chicago were only the first step in that process. By 1899, Chicago's role as the preeminent team in National League, as well the guiding force behind the entire league structure had faded, and limited the club's ability to stave off the growth of the Western League. This dwindling stature of the Chicago club developed in the aftermath of Hulbert's death in 1882, and the smaller
role Spalding played in major league baseball at the end of the century; two men who would have never allowed this transformative revolution.18

By November, Johnson and Comiskey had publicly announced their intention to move forward with a new club in Chicago. The National League greeted this with silence at first and by January and February the owners still debated the possibility of the allowing and American League team in the city. Johnson and Comiskey handled the transition spectacularly by forcing the National League to grant them rights to play in Chicago and avert a potential baseball war. The sporting press understood the implication, and knew the National League would have to bow down to the American League’s daring plan or battle for baseball supremacy, a fight they the owners did not want to tackle in an environment of stagnant ticket sales. By November, Johnson realized the high stakes at play and forced all club owners in the American League to give him control of fifty-one percent of the shares, so he could prevent any team from leaving the circuit if war with the National League occurred. When the National League held their annual meeting in December, the owners argued about the in-house problems of the league but did little to resolve what should happen with the expansion of the American League in Chicago, a crucial problem they were incapable of addressing. By January and February of 1900, both Johnson and Comiskey told reporters the plan to relocate the St. Paul team to Chicago, and they hoped that the National League representatives, as well as Hart, would agree to the geographical change without altering

the rest of the National Agreement. At the end of February, Comiskey held a long drinking session with Hart, and hammered out an accord to get the St. Paul club moved to Chicago. Hart stipulated that Comiskey’s American League club had to be on the South Side, near the stockyards, the uniforms of the players and the advertisements for the team had to be devoid of the name “Chicago,” and finally he required the Cubs to be allowed to draft two players annually from the newly named White Sox. The Comiskey-Hart deal to allow a new team in Chicago had to pass through the rest of the National League ownership and President Young. By the first week of March, Comiskey and Johnson pushed forward with their plan, looked at potential players to field for the relocated team, and scouted potential playing grounds for the 1900 season. Comiskey’s concern for the future of his White Sox came across in a column for the Tribune, “I will either have a team in Chicago or go on the police force…I think I can pass a good enough civil service examination to get a job as a desk sergeant. I shouldn’t want to travel n beat, but I guess I could if the worst came to the worst. I am pretty nearly six feet tall and weigh over 180 pounds. I ought to be able to qualify as a policeman. That is the proposition as far as I am concerned.” Obviously, Comiskey had no intention of joining the Chicago Police. In the same column the reporter explained how Comiskey had poured over two possible locations for a new stadium. But the Irish-American Comiskey, long aware of the position his father held in city government, understood the tenuous situation with the National League and the suggested move to the police force would do wonders for his public persona in the city.19

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19 “Hart and Johnson in a Quarrel,” Chicago Tribune, November 18, 1899, p. 6. “Bound to Place
Remarkably, as the worries over the reality of an American League White Sox team progressed into the spring, Comiskey had not settled on a location for his ballpark. The National League did not publicly announce an agreement for the new Chicago team until March 17, just weeks before Comiskey planned to stage games. His new stadium was erected in April in an extraordinary amount of time. Comiskey proclaimed happiness at this last minute agreement, but the National League could do little at this stage to stem the tide of an American League franchise in Chicago. Temporarily, it meant a peace between the two Leagues. The American organization would function still as a top-level minor league under the rules of the National Agreement, while the National League could enjoy a season of amicable relationships, without a new nationally recognized League challenging its position. The rest of the 1900 season progressed unremarkably, other than the Western League becoming the new American League. The placement of a club in Chicago had a much deeper impact in the national stage of baseball, as the city had been the center of the National League for over twenty years. During the course of the season, other than the shift of the White Sox to Chicago, nothing more dramatic occurred between the two leagues.  

The American League underwent dramatic changes at the close of the 1900 season. As Johnson and Comiskey had plotted prior to the 1900 season, to make the American League a major league, by the fall of 1900 they actualized their plan. A series

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of fortuitous events added to their desire to leave the National Agreement. At the close of the 1900 season, the five year agreement between the National and the old Western Leagues ended, which allowed the American League to eliminate drafting of players from their rosters and keeping out of National League cities. Additionally, the National League had reduced its clubs from twelve to eight and during the off-season Johnson quickly added Baltimore and Washington for the 1901 season. The players of the National League had also issued complaints against the reserve clause and poor salaries, causing the group to demand changes in the relationship between club owner and player. The end of the National Agreement, and the revolt of National League players, allowed American League club owners to poach players from the senior circuit. Finally, the national economy improved during the 1900 season, allowing for dramatic growth in ticket sales for both the American and National Leagues. The ticket sales for the minor circuit pushed Johnson and member teams to work towards major league status. 21

When the American League made clear its determination to make their organization a major league after the 1900 season, the national press wondered if a baseball war was afoot. Johnson claimed a new major American League would only invigorate professional baseball, and the idea of a war stemmed directly from the poor ticket sales and attitude of the National League, who “will provoke it, and, much as I would regret that outcome, I believe it would prove the ruin of the National League.” The role of the White Sox continued to be paramount to the success of the American

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League’s attempt at challenging the National League. Initially, Chicago would be the only city with both National and American League teams, but the American placed clubs in Cleveland, Washington and Baltimore; cities abandoned by the National League prior to the 1900 season. By 1901, the American League would plant clubs in Philadelphia and Boston; two cities with National League teams. When traveling, Johnson frequently brought Comiskey along, not only as a his compatriot and right hand man from the days in Cincinnati, but also as a figure from Chicago, the centerpiece of the competition between the leagues. Chicago’s importance bore out on the playing field as the 1901 season of the American League put them in direct competition with the National League. By the end of September, Comiskey’s White Sox won the first major level pennant in the American League by four games over the Boston Americans, later known as the Red Sox. In addition to winning the pennant, the White Sox remained profitable, pulling fans from the National League, where tickets cost a minimum of fifty cents, while the American League club charged twenty-five. At the outset of the 1902 season, the American League agreed to raise their ticket prices to fifty cents, in an effort to pay player salaries that escalated when players were poached from National League teams in the offseason of 1900-1901. By 1902, half of the players on American League clubs had jumped from the National League, a situation that made the American circuit comparable on the field but also at the bottom line as team payrolls soared. Most American League teams hoped the ticket price increase would bridge the gap in salaries and profitability, but in Chicago, the success during the first major league season did not require a full price increase, and the White Sox were allowed to keep twenty-five cent tickets. In addition to the profitability
of the club, Comiskey understood a lower ticket price than his cross-town rival Cubs, would continue to lure fans to his ballpark. Additionally, in the prior season, the White Sox had paid out over six thousand dollars to the National League in “protection and players,” expenses of a feeder team to the senior league that all went back to the team during the 1901 season, when the American League emerged as a major league, which gave Comiskey greater leverage in the club’s finances.22

The American League had strong attendance against the National League in 1901, the first year of the baseball war. The American League managed to draw in 1,683,584 ticket holders versus 1,920,031 of the National League, and the cities of the National League drew on total urban populations of eight and a half million against the little over five million of the American League. Remarkably, this almost twelve percent difference, disappeared after the 1902 season, when the American League outdrew the National League by over a half of a million fans. During the 1902 season American League attendance shot up, from the 1,920,031 of 1901 to 2,206,457 in 1902. Simultaneously, the National League’s attendance dropped almost twelve percent during the same time period from 1,920,031 to 1,683,012. In the five years that followed, however, attendance in both leagues climbed, and by 1908 the attendance of 1901 had been doubled in both organizations. Chicago continued the dominance of professional baseball during the first decade of the twentieth century, as the always powerful National


After the 1902 season it became clear the American League had captured a national audience and seemed likely to compete, if not surpass, the National League. Clubs formed in Boston, the Americans, that would later be the Red Sox, in Philadelphia the Athletics signed up, and by 1902 the New York Highlanders joined the organization, a team that would later be known as the Yankees. At the close of the 1902 season the American League had clubs set in place, in the aforementioned cities, as well as in Cleveland, Detroit, Washington, and St. Louis that would be unchanged until 1954, when the St. Louis Browns moved to Baltimore and changed their name to the Orioles. In Chicago, the White Sox routinely packed in crowds and undeniably captured the city’s enthusiastic fan base. After the club won the American League pennant in 1901, they struggled to a fourth place finish in 1902. The White Sox would not capture another pennant until their historic 1906 season when they beat the cross town Cubs in the World Series. Critical to the health of the National League in the first decade of the Twentieth Century was the on-the-field success of the Cubs. The senior circuit’s Chicago franchise was the cornerstone of the league and it managed to hold its own in the face of Comiskey’s challenge by fielding some of the best ball clubs in team history. In fact, the
Cubs developed into Chicago’s team of the decade, winning four pennants and two World Series titles by the end of the 1910 season. Yet at the same time, Comiskey’s White Sox established themselves as a comparable major league organization after the baseball war and had success at the ticket gate. By the outset of the 1903 season, the National League realized their backs were to the wall and sued for peace with the American League. Both Johnson and Comiskey welcomed stability, and by the fall of 1902 a new National Agreement was hammered out between the two contentious Leagues. For the 1903 season, a three-man committee would govern all of major league professional baseball, now a unified body, and the group would oversee both American and National Leagues. The commission consisted of each president of the American and National League, as well as a third member appointed by the two presidents. This new system lasted until 1920, when a baseball commissioner was appointed in the wake of the Black Sox scandal, and the throwing of the 1919 World Series. More importantly, the new National Agreement set an unprecedented continuity in professional baseball, as no team would move from their city until 1953, when the Boston Braves moved to Milwaukee. Ironically, the new Agreement also reestablished guidelines on the minor league organizations, and again created guidelines for the systematic drafting of player.24

The Stadiums

On September 10, 1906, the Detroit Tigers scored one run in the top of the first inning against the Chicago White Sox at South Side Park. In the bottom half of the inning the White Sox tied the game at one run apiece, a score that would stand until the

ninth inning. In the top half, George Davis, the veteran shortstop of the White Sox, handled a bad bounce on a hard grounder, and tried to throw out an advancing runner at third base. Instead, the ball nearly hit the runner, sailed past the third baseman George Rohe, and bounced off the wall in front of the spectators’ seats. When the Sox came up in the bottom of the ninth the score stood at two to one in favor of the Tigers. Davis, came to the plate first, and had the opportunity to redeem himself and laid a perfect bunt down the third base line, and beat the hard throw by a step. The Sox fans erupted in cheers hoping they could pull out a ninth inning victory. Instead, Billy Evans, the fielding umpire, called Davis out and instantly the crowd hurled boos and showered the field with glass bottles. The rain of bottles sent the players and umpires scrambling for cover underneath the grandstand until order could be restored. Once the fans temporarily stopped throwing debris, the next two batters were retired unceremoniously. After the game, Evans had to be escorted from the stadium by the police, and as he pushed his way through the crowd, Sox fans threw wild punches and struck the umpire in the back of the head. Miraculously, once Evans and the police made it to the curb, a streetcar pulled up in front of them and the umpire and his entourage scrambled aboard to safety while the trailing fans shouted at the fleeing umpire.

25 Ironically, one year later, Billy Evans had his skull fractured from a glass soda bottle thrown from the seats during an American League game in St. Louis. A mob formed in the seats and attempted to lynch the man responsible before police restored order and pulled the offender from the seats. Evans is the youngest man to umpire a major league game and later served as an executive on numerous major league teams, ultimately elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame. “Umpire’s Skull Fractured,” New York Times, September 16, 1907, p. 1

26 “Sox are Beaten; Umpire Mobbed,” Chicago Tribune, September 11, 1906, p. 6
Ironically, one of the selling points of Comiskey, and all of the American League, had been to provide a spectacle devoid of rowdy behavior both on and off the field. By the 1890s, the respectful, courteous, middle class and Victorian fans and players that Albert Spalding and William Hulbert had dreamed of when they established the National League in 1876, had vanished. In the place of those subdued fans and players came rampant gambling in the stadium, fights on the field, and a general tumultuous behavior that took place throughout the National League. Comiskey hoped to have order during the White Sox games, and wanted to develop a ballpark that would be a palace for spectators, but one that allowed all Chicagoans to enjoy professional baseball. He dreamed of baseball fans watching baseball with calm respect for the players on the field and for fellow enthusiasts. The new ballpark of the twentieth century would be designed to create an atmosphere of decorum, with segregated seating to allow every Chicagoan access to the park, and as historian Robin Bachin suggests Comiskey believed modern ballparks “linked the physical control of the game and the crowd to propriety and civic responsibility.” Initially, Comiskey attempted to implement this plan in his 1900 wooden ballpark, a design that carried over from the nineteenth century. The wooden park frequently overflowed with spectators, had an air of chaos, and his grandiose vision did not always keep the fans from gambling and unruly behavior. By 1910, the steel and concrete “baseball palace” would become the new paradigm of professional baseball. The new stadium would allow Comiskey to construct an arena for the entire city of Chicago, with regimented boxes for the wealthier class as well as the cheaper bleacher seats for the working class fan. This new design sat diametrically opposed to the design
of the National League's ballparks in the nineteenth century that wanted to weed out anyone other than the middle class fan. Comiskey's park strove to invite the entire city, and create seats that would be accessible to all Chicagoans, ultimately segregated by their financial standing, but a setting that mirrored society. Comiskey's plan was designed with a more democratic framework, for all classes of Chicagoans, unlike the National League that wanted to appeal to the genteel section of the city.\textsuperscript{27}

Just weeks before the start of the of his first American League season, Comiskey hurriedly threw together a wooden ballpark in March and April of 1900. The slapdash wooden ballpark, at Thirty-Ninth and Wentworth, former home of the local cricket club, the Chicago Wanderers’, followed the pattern of major league structures throughout the nation, made almost entirely of wood, both in the grandstands and bleachers. Regardless of the temporary look to the new stadium, Comiskey’s ballpark had excellent access to public transportation. From downtown, fans could grab the Alley “L,” dropping them within walking distance of the park, while the Cottage Grove and Indiana lines crossed with the Thirty-Ninth street train directly in front of the ballpark. Finally, the cable car that rumbled south along State Street, left fans only a few blocks from the park. The transportation access, as well as the cheaper tickets at twenty-five cents, made Comiskey’s new gamble pay off. The stadium had a main grandstand, with a towering cupola in the center of the park, flying an American flag far above the spectators. On either side of the grandstand, sat two large bleacher sections turned from the end of the first and third base stands and rounded the outfield. These seats, along with the roof of

the grandstand, had American League team flags flying lower than the centrally placed American flag. Spectator boxes, premier seats of enclosed rooms that overlooked the field, ran along eyelevel to the field, underneath the central grandstand, but these seats were frequently obstructed during games by the hoards that took positions on the ground to gain a closer spot to the action on the diamond. In times of rain, the playing field commonly turned to a muddy quagmire, and could make the surface unplayable for days, upsetting the schedule and preventing crisp play on the diamond.28

When crowded, South Side Park had a feeling of chaos, even when the fans were orderly. Spectators unfolded collapsing chairs between the foul lines and the grandstand, sat crossed legged on the field against the outfield fence, and gave the stadium the air of claustrophobic pandemonium. In the bleachers, men crowded densely together, wearing their best suits, while vendors patrolled the seats selling food out of wicker baskets while wearing white sports coats and straw baseball hats. In the colder Chicago spring and fall, the fans wore wool topcoats and warm bowler hats or driving caps, but in the late spring and summer, they appeared in lighter jackets and straw hats to minimize the heat. The fans at the South Side Park were part of the game, literally occupying one of largest fields in professional baseball, and poised a potential threat to umpires and players at every game. Along the outfield walls advertisements spoke directly to the customer, hawking cigars, men’s clothing, and newspapers. Women had

virtually no presence in the stadium other than infrequent ladies’ days, and the African-American customer was almost absent from the ballpark. From black and white photographs of the period the sea of spectators have the appearance of uniformed men, wearing largely identical formal suits. The middle class spectator, a man that likely wore a nice suit to the office each day, sat alongside the working class fan that donned his best Sunday best to attend a game. Even in the bleachers, the cheapest seat in the stadium, the benches were filled with men in similar dark suits and hats. And while these men took on an identical appearance in newspaper photos during the period, nuances in dress would have been apparent to the spectators. The quality and price of working class men's suits paled in comparison to the attire of the middle class fan. Even with these differences, the blend of socioeconomic groups spoke to the growing democratic air of public spaces, where working class men could dress in their best clothes and sit with businessmen. The blend of working class and middle class men represented the larger change in public space at the dawn of the twentieth century, where these different populations attended not only the ballgames, but theatre productions, music halls, public parks, and restaurants that further democratized the community amusements in Chicago.²⁹

²⁹ Baseball, Scoreboard at South Side Park with Two Boy Score Changes Standing on Ledge, (SDN-003129, Chicago Daily News Negatives Collection, Chicago Historical Museum.) Baseball Player Pat Dougherty, Standing in the Outfield at South Side Park, (SDN-006822, Chicago Daily News Negatives Collection, Chicago Historical Museum.) Baseball Vendor Carrying a Basket, (SDN-003127, Chicago Daily News Negatives Collection, Chicago Historical Museum.) Crowd of Men and Boys Sitting on the Side of the Field at South Side Park, (SDN-053302, Chicago Daily News Negatives Collection, Chicago Historical Museum.) Crowd Sitting and Standing at Edge of Right Field during a Game Between White Sox and Detroit Tigers at South Side Park, (SDN-006822, Chicago Daily News Negatives Collection, Chicago Historical Museum.)
The need for police protection, for players, umpires, and fellow spectators, commonly occurred during games at South Side Park. The frequent overcrowding of the stadium was the main culprit for the common disorder. The White Sox would allow overflow crowds to attend games, unable to secure seats, which led to the crowd scrambling for positions on the field. On June 19, 1904, over twenty-six thousand fans filled the stadium, pushed their way onto the field until, until there was no longer room to play the game. When estimated, the stadium was eleven thousand customers over capacity. Ultimately, several fans climbed the structural posts of the grandstand and took a position on the roof, watching the action from the top of the stands. During the game fans started to grow angry at the umpires, but quieted themselves before Comiskey had to send the police onto the diamond. During an October 1903 interleague exhibition game, between the two local professional clubs, the White Sox and the Colts (the later Cubs), fans again jumped fences, surrounded home plate, first and third bases, and lined the outfield wall. When the first fans pushed onto the field, thousands more followed suit, breaking down the gates in the wall that kept them separated from the playing surface. Comiskey, unable to secure enough uniform police officers, sent down plain-clothes officials to attempt to restore order, but, “the baseball fan in particular has no respect for anything that does not wear a blue coat.”

The ten years at South Side Park, with wooden grandstands, did not match the grand design Comiskey had for his White Sox. Once his league and team were firmly

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established Comiskey decided the opportunity was at hand for a grand new stadium. Fortuitously, the great palace envisioned by the club owner, was given an opportunity to succeed on the night of April 25, 1909. That afternoon, a careless fan left a smoldering cigar in the grandstand near the first base pavilion after the White Sox and St. Louis Browns game. By nightfall, the entire section had erupted in flames, and burned down the entire fifty-cent seat concourse, one of the largest grandstands in the country.

Neighborhood volunteers and the Chicago Fire Department extinguished the fire before the entire stadium turned to ashes. At his home, 3052 Michigan Avenue, Comiskey’s phone rang, just as he was about to eat a plate of strawberry shortcake. On the other end a voice told him, “Say, Commy, hurry over here; the grand stand is burning up. On the square, Commy; no kid.” The *Tribune* likened the situation to Nero watching Rome burn, and emphasized Comiskey’s nickname of the “Old Roman” in the report.

According to the paper, the club president finished his strawberry shortcake and asked for a second helping due to his inability to play the apocryphal fiddle of the Roman emperor.\(^\text{31}\)

As Comiskey finished his shortcake and the grandstand burned, he already knew the White Sox would end their 1910 season in a new ballpark. The lease at South Side Park expired at the end of the 1909 season and the club owner had decided he would seize the opportunity to upgrade the baseball facility long before fire consumed the grandstand. Comiskey quickly rebuilt the grandstand after the fire to complete the 1909 season. The team played from the end of the summer in 1909, through June of 1910, in

\(^{31}\) “White Sox Park Scorched,” *Chicago Tribune*, April 26, 1909.
front of crowds that filled the old wooden park. Prior to the fire, in December of 1908, he purchased land at Thirty-Fifth Street and Shields Avenue, slightly over half a mile from the current stadium. He had wanted to buy the land at the former Players’ League stadium where he had managed the Chicago Pirates during the 1890 season. That field had sat at Thirty-Fifth Street and Wentworth Avenue, but in 1908 the land was not for sale. Instead, Comiskey settled on the Shields site, just slightly west of the former stadium and paid one hundred thousand dollars for the land. The land he purchased was used as a city dump and a cabbage patch, and Comiskey bought out the garden owner and cleaned up the garbage to build his field. For several months prior the residents of the University of Chicago Settlement House had been actively working to clean up the landfill that filled the block and Comiskey’s proposed new stadium quickly finished their efforts. Comiskey chose to build his park in a neighborhood that was marginal in terms of criminal activity and socio-economic status. The new steel and concrete stadiums built in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, sat in middle class neighborhoods, and had the feeling of safety for the patrons coming and going from the stadiums. Comiskey's site did not have the same sense of personal security as stadium built near downtown Chicago. The site at Shields and Thirty Fifth street was in a working class neighborhood and had numerous businesses, factories, and apartments. Comiskey understood the local blue collar community had given the club strong support in the last decade and wanted to continue to draw them to the new stadium.\footnote{Robin Bachin, \textit{Building the South Side: Urban Space and Civic Culture in Chicago 1890-1919} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), p. 225.}
Comiskey wrote an open letter to the Tribune in early April of 1910 and promised the fans of the White Sox their team would be competitive throughout the year and they would be rewarded with a grand new stadium and “superior accommodations” by July 1. The owner hired local architect Zachary Taylor Davis, who had recently designed St. Ambrose Catholic Church, also on the south side, at Forty-Seventh Street and Ellis Avenue. As the White Sox started their 1910 season, at the same park at Thirty-Fifth Street and Wentworth Avenue, workmen had already started building the new stadium less than a mile away. Unlike the old ballpark, steel workers installed beams and rivets, concrete laborers built elaborate ramps that moved spectators from one concourse to the next, and the new design would be virtually fireproof, a feature warranted by the previous fires at South Side Park, West Side Grounds, and the recent tragedy at the Iroquois Theatre in 1903 that killed roughly six hundred people. By 1911, the city of Chicago created a new statute that required ballparks to restrict fans in the stadium to the number that adequately filled the seats, essentially a mandate on capacity crowds. Regardless of the statute, crowds commonly filled the foul territories and had to be held back by police once the stadium opened.³³

The new park sat near Armour Square, just slightly east of the large Irish and East European neighborhood of Bridgeport. Comiskey chose to build his ballpark in a working class neighborhood, unlike many major league clubs that wanted to centrally

locate their teams in the middle class neighborhoods or the bustling business districts. According to historian Robin Bachin, the ballpark’s design was basically utilitarian but did incorporate elements of the art and crafts movement, the prairie style, and classical motifs that appeared in the arches of the façade that mimicked the Coliseum in Rome. Additionally, Davis designed the stadium to blend in with the warehouses, factories, apartment buildings, and workers’ cottages that occupied the neighborhood surrounding the site. Once workers started to hammer away at the new stadium, property values in the neighborhood began to soar, and within a decade some lots doubled or tripled in value. The large plot that Comiskey purchased allowed Davis to design a symmetrical field and stadium, unlike a number of stadiums built later such as Fenway Park in Boston that had to conform to the irregular streets that lined the stadium, and Ebbets Field in Brooklyn, that required varying heights of outfield fences to again compensate for the streets that banded the stadium. The building of the park coincided with the height of the Progressive Era in America as well as the City Beautiful movement. Comiskey’s new South Side Park epitomized this period, with a grand, elegant stadium built for all of Chicago. The baseball palace was designed with seats for all levels of Chicagoans, the working-class, the middle-class, and the wealthiest of citizens. Comiskey also intended the park to be used free of charge for community purposes, and allowed union, church, and veterans groups to occupy the space when the club was not in town. He also let other sporting events such as boxing matches, amateur baseball, and football teams use the field.34

34 Robin Bachin, Building the South Side: Urban Space and Civic Culture in Chicago1890-1919
The city's workmen only had three months to complete the new stadium. They worked relentlessly to complete the project by the July 1 deadline. By the end of May huge cranes sat on the infield surface, lifting enormous steel beams into place on the central grandstand. The metal beams and girders looked like a giant skeleton framed with unpainted arched brick walls that lined the unfinished seating decks around the diamond. Horse drawn carriages came and went from the construction site from morning until dark, and delivered the bricks, cement, and miscellaneous raw materials needed for the project. Even with the stadium far from complete, advertisements already lined the outfield fences. By June 18, the city's building inspector visited the park to ensure the safety for the patrons. The central grandstand had a rating of two hundred and ninety one pounds per square foot. The *Tribune* joked that even if the entire section was filled with three hundred pound men, they could not individually fit into a one square foot sections, "unless they extended eight or nine feet into the air," and the paper claimed the new stand would, "be surpassed in point of safety only by the rock of Gibraltar." By the middle of June, workmen started to install the new sod, and waited only for the steel workers to finish tearing down their crane that sat near home plate. Almost every seat had been installed and the entire bleacher section was ready for occupancy. The upper deck would still be unavailable by opening day, as concrete had yet to be poured by the third week of June. Part of the delay had been due to a structural iron workers' strike that slowed the building of the park. During the final days of construction, Comiskey wandered around

the stadium from "sunup to sundown" managing every detail of construction. At the main entrance to the stadium, fourteen turnstiles were installed, and workmen built exits at multiple points throughout the park. To gain access to all the seventy-five cent boxes as well as the fifty-cent pavilions, fans entered through the main entrance. To take a seat in the twenty-five cent seats, fans needed to enter on the corner of Thirty Fourth Street and Shields Avenue, a segregation of the public that mimicked the segregation of ticket prices and seats. More and more, the *Tribune* referred to the unprecedented structure as "the Plant," an obvious allusion to the enormous size and industrial design of the facility.  

On opening day, July 1, 1910, many spots around the stadium remained unfinished, but the fans found "the Plant" decorated with hundreds of feet of red, white, and blue bunting and potted plants and ferns littered the concourses and walls. 24,900 fans paid to see the game but the actual number went higher than twenty-eight thousand, as ticket counters failed to add up the additional guests, both civil dignitaries and military personnel that added to the total. The *Tribune* noted the "swiftly clicking turnstiles, swallowed the people almost as fast as the transportation facilities could get them to the grounds." Ushers moved the spectators around the facility, as the fans had almost no idea

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where to go or where to find their seats. Before the gates had opened over a thousand people lined up outside the park in anticipation of the grand opening. As the sloped concrete walkways led the patrons to large entranceways that guided them to their seats, they commonly stopped and stared in awe at what they saw: a sea of seats and a vast expanse of grass in the middle of the bustling, industrial south side of Chicago.³⁶

Before the game, a parade of automobiles moved along the streets around the stadium waving streamers and flags, in anticipation of the first game. The city council and Mayor Fred Busse attended as official dignitaries and before the start of the contest they presented Comiskey with a blue and white silken banner near home plate that bore a large "C" and the date July 1, 1910. As Comiskey walked onto the field a regimental band erupted in "Hail to the Chief." After the banner presentation, the band "suddenly awoke from parade rest," and marched onto the diamond, and they turned and faced the large flagstaff in left field. As a new American flag was hoisted onto the pole the band played the Star Spangled Banner and the thousands in attendance erupted in cheers. For Comiskey, this national and civic pride could only help his new stadium and team, and cement the baseball organization to the city and the country. Mrs. John Edwards had the honor of being the first woman admitted to the park in this markedly masculine affair while Miss Alice Cann had the first box seat for a lady. Undeniably, the stadium

continued to be a man's experience, women were as rare at future games as they were at the first game at South Side Park.  

No records of African-Americans attending the game exist, but black patrons would be allowed to watch the games in the newly constructed park. Even though the black belt, along Michigan Avenue, had just started to develop and sat not far from the entrance to the new stadium, scanty evidence suggests that black fans remained a rarity although they had open access to purchasing tickets. A *Chicago Tribune* sportswriter reflected the common bias against black Chicagoan’s baseball aspirations when he wrote: "In the meantime, while we are toasting the Cubs, the Leland Giants, the colored champions of the world, are cutting their watermelon. It's a real watermelon, too. You can go broke on that." Even with the strong racial separation during the period, black fans were not denied the opportunity to buy a ticket, as evidenced by historical photos of the period, where an occasional black fan would appear, usually standing behind seats filled with white spectators. The *Chicago Defender*, the most important black newspaper in the Chicago, frequently commented on the outcome of the White Sox games, and in 1915, ran an article marking Comiskey's fifty-seventh birthday. Unlike blacks, the Irish, Germans, Poles, Czechs, and Jews, as well as other first and second generation immigrants, commonly attended White Sox games, and the working class location of the new park catered to their presence.  

Comiskey's effort to make the stadium an original civic space, where a diverse population could gather from all socio-economic and ethnic groups in the seats, and with a new level of decorum from a prior generation, appeared in the architecture and flow of the ballpark. Regardless, Comiskey and his new stadium failed to control the rampant gambling both on and off the playing field. At the old South Side Grounds, the wall along the third base line had been emblazoned with "NO GAMBLING ALLOWED ON THE GROUNDS," at the new park the same wall had the phrase, "NO BETTING ALLOWED IN THIS PARK." Regardless of the warnings in the park, betting on baseball games had been a normal experience from the dawn of the professional game in the 1870s. Players frequently bet on their own teams, fans bought into weekly baseball pools, and newspapers covered the ever moving odds. Players of the White Sox and other teams spent time in bars, saloons, racetracks, and other gambling dens that added to the climate of wagering on baseball. This rampant gambling culture coupled with the low salaries of professional players, led to ever increasing suspicion in the second decade of the twentieth century that players clouted in the throwing of games. When attendance decreased during the First World War, salaries also decreased, and thrown games went on the rise. Regardless of his efforts to sanitize baseball, make it a community experience, and eliminate gambling, Comiskey's record of paying players a paltry amount helped to lead to the 1919 World Series, when his club purposely lost the World Series for financial gain.39

39 American League Baseball Diamond, View of Field From Right of Home Plate, Chicago, (SDN-008706, Chicago Daily News Negatives Collection, Chicago History Museum.) Robin Bachin, Building the South Side: Urban Space and Civic Culture in Chicago 1890-1919 (Chicago: University of
The *Tribune* recognized the enormous shift in baseball with the construction of the soon to be named Comiskey Park, "the greatest ball park in the United States – and that means in the world." In an article commemorating the building of the new stadium, the paper recounted the building of the last South Side Park and how the baseball world had changed in the last decade. The last ballpark opened with roughly five thousand spectators. Chicago fans of that day were used to losing teams, and they glumly watched the White Sox lose in that first game to Milwaukee by a score of five to four. The park in 1900 was barren, with rough seats, and the entire facility was "innocent of paint." The five thousand fans that closed South Side Park in June of 1910 equaled the opening of the stadium ten years prior. And, as the old ballpark closed, a reporter noted "melancholy reigned in the old stand yesterday, ten years ago the fans were jubilant. They hoped for a successful future for the White Sox team and the climax will be reached when it returns to Chicago on Friday to its new home." The closing of the park in 1910 signified an incredible change in professional athletics, as well as the culture of the city. The White Sox, and their new park, no longer represented a niche entertainment. Instead, the club characterized a new civic ideal, with a monumental park that became a structural icon in Chicago, and the game of baseball became a distinct component of American urban culture. Comiskey's new steel and concrete stadium ushered in a new period in American

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sports, where baseball heroes filled the newspapers, and the average Chicagoan understood the central role the team played in the city.⁴⁰

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE 1906 WORLD SERIES

Two teenagers, Frank Sceneliski and Ted Habrozelwicz, robbed William Bartwecki’s grocery store on Sunday morning, October 7, 1906. The store was closed, just as all grocers closed their doors on Sunday mornings, and Barwecki and his family had gone to church, most likely at St. Stanislaus Kostka or Holy Trinity, two Polish churches within walking distance of the building. The store sat in the heart of Chicago’s largest Polish neighborhood, on the six hundred block of North Ashland Avenue, just over a half-mile from the confluence of Ashland, Division Street, and Milwaukee Avenue, and pulsed with Polish immigrants and second-generation families. The two boys knew where the money sat and knew how to gain access to the building, as Barwecki’s teenage son told them how to carry out the robbery. When they left, the two boys had over sixty dollars, an enormous sum in 1906, when an oak rocking chair cost less than three dollars and green beans advertised for eight cents a can. For over two days the police searched for the elusive thieves, scoured the neighborhood, and ultimately arrested them on Wednesday afternoon and held them at the Rawson Street police station. The police rounded up the criminals when Barwecki’s son told his older brother the plot and the latter spilled the story to his father. When questioned at the small, boxy, two-story station of the 33rd precinct, the boys did not deny the charges against them, and justified what they had done because of their need to gain access to the talk of the city,
the World Series. The young men had taken the grocer’s earnings to buy tickets to the first two games between the best baseball teams in the world, the Chicago White Sox and the Chicago Cubs, and told police, “we had a good time on the money, anyway.”¹

Sceneliski and Habrozlewicz had witnessed important events in the history of baseball, the history of Chicago baseball, and the history of the city itself. Baseball experts were confident the well-established National League would win, while American League fans were hopeful that their “junior” circuit would show its strength. The two games the boys sat through were only the fifteenth and sixteenth games in the history of the championship between pennant winners; and that included the first series being played a full nine games. Just two years before in 1904 the series was cancelled because of disputes between the leagues. The idea of a World Series, an event in the twenty-first century as expected as the turning of the leaves in the American fall, had not yet formed, instead, the Series of 1906 arrived as a still new concept, a clash between the impregnable National League, an organization that thrived and grew in stature for thirty years, and an upstart conglomeration of teams in the American League that wanted a place on the national stage of baseball. The World Series did not have a certain future, but Americans, including Chicagoans, believed that this fall championship held importance above all other contests in American sports. In Chicago, fanatics of baseball swarmed the ballparks, paraded through the streets, and read the voluminous reports in multiple daily and weekly publications. The impending World Series made front-page

news on all nine of the major Chicago newspapers and the *Chicago Tribune* in particular saturated the sports section with detailed commentary of the games.  

West Side Park, the Cubs’ home field, sat west and slightly south of the Loop, bounded by the streets Polk, Taylor, Wood, and Wolcott Avenue and South Side Park, the grounds of the White Sox, faced 39th Street, between Princeton and Wentworth Avenues. Both parks were built in the midst of the neighborhoods oft close to the factories, meat packing plants, and the frame cottages of millions of industrial workers, as well as the bustling downtown business district. This World Series, matching two Chicago teams, brought together the diverse Chicago population, of ethnic minorities, and workers from very different economic groups, to celebrate and cheer their respective teams. The Series not only unified the massive urban population of the city, it also represented the culmination of the development of modern Chicago, where this powerful, industrialized city managed to dominate the most important sport in American consciousness, a sport that represented the largest and wealthiest American cities. Unlike the Cooperstown myth of baseball as a pastoral sport, born on rural fields, baseball developed in large Northern cities like Chicago and the sport grew in importance as these culturally diverse urban centers entered the twentieth century teaming with social energy and unprecedented industrial wealth. By controlling the 1906 World Series, Chicago placed itself as not only the center of the baseball world, and added an exclamation mark to its status as a modern, economic powerhouse. Not only was Chicago “major league”

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twice over in sports, it was major league in food commodities, lumber, meat-packing, clothing production, steel making, railroads, machine tools, and the degree to which it boasted of its remarkable growth in less than a hundred years. Urban baseball developed in unison with industrial growth. The game itself required the industrial city to thrive. Manufacturing supplied the surplus wealth that paid the player’s salaries by putting workers and managers in the seats. Industrial technology provided the means and methods behind the construction of the ballparks themselves. As historian Bernard Weisberger points out, even the consumption of Cracker Jacks, a snack made in Chicago, and the production of baseball gloves—made from cow leather surplus to meat-packing, as well as the new forms of urban transportation, such as the elevated train, necessitated an industrial complex to provide the resources so the game would continue to grow and succeed. By controlling the 1906 World Series, Chicago not only demonstrated the power of their local teams, but also reinforced in the public imagination the central city’s unique commercial and industrial position in the American landscape. In October of 1906, the New York Times declared the prior season would be, "placed on record as being the most successful in many particulars in the history of organized baseball." The New York based National Police Gazette, took the hyperbole even farther by stating, "Never in the history of the National game has so much interest been aroused in a championship series between the Chicago Nationals and the Chicago Americans." By these first years of the twentieth century, as the World Series appeared as a new entity, the Chicago World Series of 1906 represented the culmination of professional baseball since the

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founding of the National League in 1876. During the summer of 1906, and into the fall championship, baseball never looked stronger both in Chicago and nationally. During the season the Chicago professional teams drew one-fifth of all ticket sales in Major League Baseball that strengthened the city's role as the heart of top flight baseball. Part of the celebration of industry and the game, where Chicago emerged as an economic powerhouse while simultaneously fielding teams that dominated the professional sport, existed as component of the larger goal of urban boosterism. The game of Chicago baseball truly did enliven the population as no other season had done before, however the press pushed harder for the success of baseball and their local teams, as Steven Reiss states, "their professional careers were wrapped up in it." Team owners also worked to make their teams a centerpiece of cities, just as the Cubs and White Sox ownership understood their team’s success and future lay with community support as juxtaposition to other cities with their own professional baseball teams. By 1906, this combination of Chicago's emergence as an industrial might, a city with the best baseball teams in the world, and the strength of boosterism, made the World Series an unprecedented event. Ironically, none of the players for either the Cubs or the White Sox were Chicago natives, and much like the rest of the city, filled with new immigrants and African-Americans transplanted from the south, thought of Chicago as their hometown. Yet the real and embellished focus of the World Series gave all Chicagoans something to look to, a sport that gave them community identity and a bond that did not exist with their own backgrounds.⁴

How the World Series Came to Chicago

In October 1906, Ulrich Schulte was, “the most unusual man in Chicago, perhaps the freakiest in America,” at least according to a Chicago Daily Tribune reporter in a three-quarter-page article prominently featuring a large engraved portrait of the man.

Schulte, born in Germany in 1870, came to the United States in 1884, learned English, worked hard in his Uncle’s grocery store, and eventually opened a meat market on Robey Street, now known as Damen Avenue. By 1906, he owned his own home, had a wife and three children, the oldest being a six-year old girl. The Tribune reporter featured Schulte because he apparently knew nothing of baseball, did not know anything about the White Sox or Cubs, and had no idea that pennants existed for professional baseball, let alone the fledgling World Series. After a thorough examination of his life, his store, and his coworkers, the Tribune concluded that this must be the only man in Chicago who knew nothing about baseball, the most important thing happening in the city that October. The tongue in cheek article humorously told the story of Schulte and his ignorance of baseball, but the newspaper’s focus on an immigrant meat market owner illustrated the degree to which the World Series, allegiances to the White Sox and Cubs, and an obsession with baseball had engrossed the people of Chicago. Save for the clueless Mr. Schulte, the sport of baseball had temporarily swept aside immigrant origins, local trade

issues, and socio-economic positions. The World Series enveloped the city as no other
sport or cultural diversion had done before. 5

Although the major papers of the city failed to comment directly on the diverse
population's relationship with the World Series, the working class fan, immigrant,
children of immigrants, and the black community had established an undeniable bond
with the national pastime. And while baseball served as a link between the residents of
Chicago, the city still had strong separation between the ethnic communities and the
white protestant hierarchy, and the small black population, that had started to rapidly
grow, sat on the outskirts of the social order of the city. During the summer of 1906, the
famed Russian socialist writer, and later Bolshevik revolutionary, Maxim Gorky,
published a scathing article in the Tribune that accused Americans of worshipping "gold
accumulation, this idolatry of money, this horrible worship of the Golden Devil" and tied
the passion of baseball to the children of American cities as, "Playing ball amidst the
crash and thunder of iron, amidst the chaos of the tumultuous city, they seem like flowers
thrown by some rude and cruel hand into the dust and dirt of the pavements." While
Gorky railed against American capitalistic society, John “Bath-House John” Coughlin,
Alderman of the First Ward, wrote another article in November 1906, which detailed the
diversity and poverty of his constituents, "a world in miniature." In a ward where
"Chinamen Obey the Laws," and there is a "Queen of Little Italy," the neighborhood also
moved across the Irish section to the "Darkest Africa," where the African-American

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population lived along Dearborn Street. This group of men and women, according to Coughlin, were largely, "law abiding and respectable."\textsuperscript{6}

Even with the scathing indictments of American cities by Gorky, and the racist explanation of Coughlin's First Ward, baseball did manage to breakthrough to the diverse ethnic and black population of Chicago. A generation before the baseball fans of the city celebrated the exploits of Michael "King" Kelley, an Irish American that also enlivened the Irish population of Chicago. After the Cubs clinched the National League pennant in 1906, the \textit{Tribune} ran an article on the exploits of the pitcher Ed Reulbach, a German-American pitcher that won nineteen games for the Cubs. The article ran the heading, "German Spud is Strong." By 1906, African-Americans in Chicago looked more and more to the fledgling Negro teams that competed against the best semiprofessional Chicago teams and captured a black audience in both the papers and the stands. However, black Chicagoans remained invested in the white professional teams of the city, and by 1911, the \textit{Chicago Defender} published a large article on the World Series between the Philadelphia Athletics and the New York Giants, which included photographs of the stars in the series, with Giants' manager John McGraw centrally located. And while the papers did not comment on the ethnic worker, black fan, and stockyard and lumberyard employee and their relationship to the World Series, the story of the Polish boys stealing for tickets, of Schulte's ignorance of baseball and the \textit{Tribune}'s indifference to his nationality, and the Defender's later inclusion of white professional baseball, indicated the game had the ability to draw Chicagoans together for support of

the two best baseball teams in America. But in the case of the African-American fan, the burgeoning black population of Chicago carved out their own space, and with it an ever growing distinct culture along the "Black Belt," that followed the white professional teams grew ever supportive of their own Negro League clubs in the subsequent years.7

The National League dominated professional baseball from the very beginning, when eight teams banded together in 1876. In the thirty years that led up to the 1906 World Series, other leagues formed, and players revolted to challenge the power of the National League. None of these organizations experienced long-term success and by the dawn of the twentieth century the National League remained the most important baseball structure in the nation. In 1894, Ban Johnson, a former newspaper reporter, took over the presidency of the Western League, a minor league system that had no teams in National League cities, and players that were eligible to be drafted by the National League at any point in the season. Through a series of aggressive moves, Johnson made the Western League more prominent, more powerful, and more profitable. By 1900, Johnson had renamed his league the American League, and during the same year, defied the tradition of keeping Western League teams out of National League cities by moving Charles Comiskey’s St. Paul, Minnesota club to the Southside of Chicago. They renamed the team the White Sox, stealing the original name of the Chicago National League franchise. The new White Sox played their games at the aforementioned South Side Park. By 1901, Johnson proclaimed the American League a major league, and started to sign players

from the National League, emptying their rosters and making American League teams more economically viable and competitive on the diamond.

During the 1906 season the Chicago National League team was increasingly referred to as “the Cubs.” The former White Stockings had been known during the waning of the nineteenth century as the “Colts” and by the beginning of the twentieth century were called the “Remnants,” “Panamas,” “Microbes,” and more fittingly, the “Nationals.” Finally, during the tenure of the Irish-American owner Charles Murphy, a time when they had a number of Irish-American players the press dubbed them the “Spuds,” after that ethnic group’s stereotypical food. However, it was not until the team took the field in the 1907 World Series that their jackets carried the emblem of the Cubs, and during the season of 1908 the emblem of a bear and the “C” took hold on the daily uniform.\(^8\)

The last weeks of the 1906 major league baseball season ended differently for the Cubs and the White Sox. The Cubs rolled through their competition that summer, filing a record of one hundred sixteen wins and thirty-six losses, setting the modern record for most wins in a season, and the only team to reach that number in a one hundred and fifty-two game season. When the Cubs’ train stopped in Pittsburgh, the “city of smoke,” for two of the last games in the 1906 season, the team played under a hazy sky of burning coal billowing from the stacks of the surrounding steel mills. The team won both games and the players looked forward with confidence to the World Series. Sports writers acknowledged the overwhelming superiority of the Cubs. They were already touted as the

\(^8\) John Snyder, *Cubs Journal: Year by Year and Day by Day with the Chicago Cubs Since 1876* (Cincinnati: Emmis Books, 2005), p.17.
best team in the world, and reporters doubted their win total would ever be surpassed. Their lineup was framed around the most important components of the sport: running, fielding, hitting, and pitching. The team stole 283 bases, hit a League leading .262 average, had less than two hundred errors – the first team in the modern era of World Series baseball to accomplish the feat, and had unfathomable starting pitchers anchored by Mordecai "Three Finger" Brown, who compiled twenty-six wins that season. In all, the pitching staff of the Cubs posted a 1.76 earned run average, remarkable for the era and even more so in the twenty-first century. On top of that, the club shutout their opponents twenty-eight times, and had the legendary infield of "Tinker to Evers to Chance," that consisted of shortstop Joe Tinker, second baseman John Evers, and first baseman Frank Chance, all of which were later inducted into the Hall of Fame. After a ten game winning streak the Cubs grabbed the lead in the National League on May 7, less than a month into the season. On May 27, the New York Giants experienced first place in the National League for one day, when they beat the St. Louis Cardinals, and the “Spuds” lost to the Boston Braves. The games reversed themselves on May 28 as the Cubs came out on top of Boston and New York lost to St. Louis. From that day forward the Cubs held first place in the National League. Their play defied the predictions in the spring, when newspapers believed the Giants and Cubs would be locked in a summer long struggle for control of the league. Against the prognostications of the reporters, by the middle of the summer the Cubs rolled from series to series, pulled far away from their competitors, by winning fifty out of their fifty-seven final games, including a fourteen game winning streak. The Cubs easily captured their first pennant since the National
Agreement brought the two leagues together in 1903 and the first for Chicago’s National League team in twenty years, when Cap Anson guided the Chicago White Stockings to victory by two and a half games over the Detroit Wolverines. 9

The American League’s White Sox did not move through the 1906 season with as much ease as the Cubs. Instead, they faced a summer of ups and downs, at the end of July they sat in sixth place out of eight teams, and the Philadelphia Athletics looked poised to pull off the same feat the Cubs had managed in the National League. The White Sox started off poorly, perhaps because they did their spring training in New Orleans, which famed Chicago sportswriter Hugh Fullerton considered the worst place to warm up for the coming season. They stumbled through fourteen exhibition games in the gloomy, rainy southern spring weather. On top of the dreary conditions, they played their games on poorly maintained fields. Once the regular season began the Sox did not play well, most baseball commentators thought at least four teams “looked better on paper” and Chicago would not be a factor in the final weeks of the season. During the first three and a half months of the season the New York Highlanders (occasionally called the Yankees in the press,) the Cleveland Naps (later the Indians,) and the Philadelphia team seemed to be the only contenders for the title. By the middle of July, the White Sox took on the nickname the "Hitless Wonders," in their ever increasing inability to score runs when it mattered. With this name, the press questioned how they continued to have the ability to squeeze out wins, in late innings, with their players unable to have good

appearances at the plate. By the end of the season they had the American League's worst team batting average at .230. Even with the poor batting the Sox had a strong group of starting pitchers, two of which, Frank Owen and Nick Altrock had over twenty wins and Guy Harris "Doc" White notched eighteen more. With these tight wins, and continued struggles by their batters, the White Sox charged in August with a fifteen game home stand and the race became a four-way contest. During the first two weeks of the month they beat the A’s in five straight games, defeated the Highlanders in three games, and on August 12 took sole possession of first place. Again, unlike the Cubs, this did not equate to riding out the season in the lead without competition. Instead, the Sox had to struggle down the stretch, and by September, Chicago, New York, and Philadelphia had put themselves in position to capture the pennant with Cleveland falling back to six and a half games out of first.10

The team did not have the athletes of the Cubs, nor the star power, but Charles Comiskey, the owner of the White Sox, and manager Fielder Jones, stressed to the team that playing cohesive baseball, as a team and not as individuals, would decide their fate. Late in the season the White Sox stumbled, accusations were made in the local media that the players stayed up late drinking and carousing, rumors spread the players wanted to revolt against the manager Jones, but by the end of September the team pulled itself up and managed to win games down the stretch. On October 2, the White Sox defeated the St. Louis Browns, in St. Louis, for their ninety-first win and on October 3, Philadelphia

lost to New York. The win over the Browns and the A’s loss to the Highlanders, mathematically secured the American League Pennant for the White Sox, and at the close of the season their record stood at 93-58. When the White Sox captured the pennant, the city of Chicago exploded in celebration, and rapturous fans realized all games of the series would be played in their city. In the Tribune, an article ran on the sports' page with the massive headline, "White Sox, the Hitless Wonders, Who Won the World's Pennant," with a cartoon at the bottom, below the photos of the best players, titled "At the Home of the White Sox," that depicted a bearskin hung on the side of a small building with two white socks protruding from the door. With the twin pennants flying over Chicago fans were “sky-high.” Chicago baseball fans flocked to the ballparks, to ticket brokers, to armories and auditoriums to watch the live returns of the games, to barrooms, and spilled into the streets to spend money on the series and rabidly celebrate the clubs they spent the summer following in the newspapers and on the field. Much to the envy of other cities Chicago was cemented, at least for one year, as the center of baseball, the most important sport in America, where Ban Johnson served as American League President and the National League had originated from Chicago decades before, and controlled the organization until the dawn of the twentieth century. The individual control of the Leagues occupied a much higher position in the first two decades of the twentieth century, when Major League Baseball did not have a Commissioner, an office that developed in the aftermath of the Black Sox scandal. Being the baseball capital of the United States elevated the position of Chicago in the national news and thereby made this great industrial and urban center a popular culture focal point as well. Hugh Fullerton
explained in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* when the White Sox finally captured the American League pennant, “Chicago is the baseball center of the earth. Since last night a combination of pennant poles, marking the site of Chicago, has served as the earth’s axis and around it something less than 2,000,000 maddened baseball fans are dancing a carmagnole of victory, while in every other city in the American and National league there is woe.”\(^\text{11}\)

**The Series Begins**

The Cubs’ sharp season, that overwhelmed the competition in 1906, droned along by the end of September. They had blown away the National League and spent the weeks before the World Series passing time, knowing that the most important games were yet to come. In an attempt to hone the edge of his idle team the Cubs owner, Charles Murphy, staged an exhibition game on October 5, against the minor league, Youngstown “Ohio Works,” a successful organization and champion of the Ohio and Pennsylvania league. He hoped that his Cubs would sharpen up for the seven game series, and be ready for their hometown fans, and shore up against the coming stress of the contests with the White Sox. The Cubs played in front of three thousand fans, far greater than the typical crowd of an Ohio and Pennsylvania League game, and struggled through eight innings, giving up a run in the second, and the score stood one to zero coming into the ninth. Finally, in the ninth inning, the visiting Cubs scored four runs, on a bases loaded double and then a triple to finally break through against inferior

competition. The Youngstown team had laid out an elaborate banquet for both squads in
the spirit of an exhibition, to be held at the local Elks’ Hall. Instead, Frank Chance,
manager of the Cubs, hurried his team off to Pittsburgh to catch a train for St. Louis, and
their last game of the National League season. They arrived two hours late from
Pittsburgh, went to church with the Cleveland Americans (in town to play the St. Louis
Browns), and rushed off to Robison Field in North St. Louis. The game went eleven
innings in front of ten thousand fans eager to catch a glimpse of the National League
champions and ended in a three-to-three tie. That evening the team left on a 9:10 train
for Chicago, to receive instructions the next morning in the Auditorium Annex on
Congress Street for the upcoming series. The last days of the season created an
inauspicious start to their World Series.¹²

The National Baseball Commission President, August Garry Hermann, (the
precursor to the Commissioner of baseball, established in 1920), as well as the Presidents
of the National and American Leagues, Harry Pulliam and Ban Johnson, respectively,
gathered in an apartment suite in the Auditorium Annex building on Congress Street on
October 4. Joining them in the up-scale apartment, built in 1901, and meant for those,
“who seek high-class apartments,” were Presidents of the Cubs and the White Sox,
Charles Murphy and Charles Comiskey. They gathered to determine the structure of the
series, which stadium would host each game, and to flip a coin to settle which ballpark
would host the first game. Murphy flipped the coin while Comiskey called it in the air,

Daily Tribune, October 8, 1906, p. 10.
choosing heads, but the coin turned up tails and Murphy decided West Side Park would be the site for the first game. All the parties agreed that the games would go back and forth between parks, one game after the next, until one team won four games out of seven. During the meeting the League Presidents lined up the umpires for the Series, only two men, one behind the plate and the other for the field. Jim Johnstone of the National League and Silk O’Loughlin from the American League called each game, alternating between home and the bases every game. Just in case of an emergency both leagues lined up two extra umpires, neither of which called any of the innings.¹³

The White Sox ended their season with losses to Detroit and Cleveland, but came home to Chicago riding high from their roller coaster finish to capture the American League. The Sox and the Cubs did not have much time to reflect on the last few days of the regular season as the World Series planning committee gathered on Friday, October 5, to decide the starting times of the championship games. Ordinarily, the commencement of the first pitch of professional baseball happened at three in the afternoon, to allow the workers of the city to leave the office a little early and venture to the park. In the middle of the summer 3:00 p.m. allowed ample sunlight to get the game in, even if extra innings had to be sorted out. In the middle of October, the waning of the summer sun did not allow for evening baseball so the Presidents of the National and American Leagues, as well as the President of the National Baseball Commission, decided to move the Series games to 2:30, to ensure all the games would be completed before dark, a precedent started during the prior World Series between the New York

Giants and the Philadelphia A’s. The same afternoon, carpenters hammered away on new wooden bleachers at both the West Side Grounds and South Side Park. Without home games in the closing days of the season, the Cubs’ park sat idle, and gave the workers more time to finish the seats before the start of the series. South Side Park hosted games the last week of the season, and the carpenters scrambled to finish before the fans would fill the stadium.14

As baseball officials worked those last days and hours before the start of the games, the city prepared for the whirlwind they imagined the Series would bring. Even though both Leagues doubled ticket prices for every game of the Series fans made a mad scramble for the best seats in the park. On the morning of October 5, the National League’s office in the Masonic Temple, located on Randolph and State Streets, opened their doors with the intent to sell two thousand five hundred box seats to the first game of the Series at West Side Park. According to the Washington Post, when the first customer walked in to buy a ticket he was told they were sold out, all the tickets had been promised away to reservations that had been pouring in the office since the beginning of July. The Chicago Daily Tribune, claimed the first ticket buyers came to the office, bought all the reserved and box seats by noon and the office had to turn away dozens of fans throughout the rest of the day. By that afternoon, scalpers took to the streets with both real and imagined tickets, hawking them to all comers. The prices for the box seats went from five to twenty five dollars and simultaneously these speculators started to sell grandstand seats for two to ten times their value. Remarkably, the grandstand seats would not be

available until noon, on the afternoon of the game. The speculators charged fees 
*anticipating* they could acquire good seats for their customers. The astronomical prices 
set by the speculators dwarfed the prices at the gate on game day, which were already 
twice the price from the regular season; one dollar and fifty cents for the grandstand, one 
dollar for the pavilion, and finally fifty cents for bleacher seats.¹⁵

Besides the speculation on tickets, the anticipation of the Series brought out the 
gamblers and bookies. In the days leading up to the first game the local press, as well as 
the newspapers across the nation, reported on the fluctuating odds, and the thousands of 
dollars wagered. The odds ebbed and flowed but the Cubs remained the unquestioned 
favorite. The *Los Angeles Times* called the National League team a two to one favorite 
on the eve of the first game while the *Washington Post* claimed the bettors fluctuated 
between three to one and eight to five. Roughly twenty-thousand out of town baseball 
fans and gamblers flooded the hotels, streets, and railroad stations, hoping to be a part of 
the exhilaration of the World Series. City officials and councilmen, from Memphis, 
Tennessee, took a train to Chicago and stayed for the duration of the series, taking in the 
games at both ballparks. Even as newspapers across the nation announced fluctuating 
odds on the outcome of the Series, in anticipation of fans and gamblers wagering on the 
sport, *The Chicago Daily Tribune* reported little to no gambling in the city, with residents 
referring to the odds but not carrying out any wagers. So as reporters from far off cities 
cajoled the writers from the *Tribune* to give them details on the way Chicago bettors

¹⁵“Starting Hour Changed to 2:30,” *Chicago Daily Tribune,* October 6, 1906, p. 8. “Chicago 
moved in the days leading up to the series, the Chicago writers speculated that Chicagoans shied away from betting, due to a general sense of “camaraderie” in the city, and a feeling of euphoria that both of their teams would be squaring off in Chicago’s World Series. More probable, and spelled out by fluctuating odds, the Tribune guessed that Chicagoans were waiting for the odds to change. The bookies and many baseball fans had the National League “Spuds” pegged as the heavy favorite. Chicago fans seemed to believe lineups of both teams matched evenly, regardless of what newspapers claimed and they wanted the odds on the “Spuds” to come back to earth before placing their bets. Even if the betting in Chicago remained light, at New York’s Belmont Park, Long Island’s horserace capital, the baseball bookmaking raged as horseracing aficionados passed the time waiting for the first post time by wagering on the national pastime. New York gamblers laid money on both the Cubs and White Sox, all the while crying for more information from Chicago odds makers. Ban Johnson, President of the American League, publicly announced his opposition to gambling on the Series, worried that wagering dispirited the minds of the American public and the ticket-paying spectator, and that “Gambling in any form is a serious menace to the game and should not be tolerated.”

Fear of not gaining a seat to the games gripped the Chicago baseball fans, as reserved box seats sold out instantly. Spectators questioned whether seats would be

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available for any of the games, as the White Sox sold out the seats in Southside Park for
games two and four, and the Cubs sold all of their seats for the first, third, and fifth
games. Comiskey refused to sell additional seats for the sixth game; fearful that the
series would not run the full seven games and the refunds to the box office would be
overwhelming. That news, coupled with the heightened prices, both at the ticket office
and by the scalpers roaming the hotel lobbies, made most ball fans forsake the pricey
trappings of the stadium and to seek other ways to follow the games. Due to the
unprecedented interest in the series, the Chicago Daily Tribune, decided to broadcast the
game in the best technology of the day, by selling seats at the Auditorium Theatre, and
give play-by-play updates to readers of the paper for a nominal ticket price. Loyal
readers of the paper could acquire a seat in the theatre by visiting the first floor office of
the Tribune building. Once in the Auditorium Theater they could follow the action on a
twenty foot screen, with a mockup of the diamond being updated by news from the parks.
A telegraph operator from the corresponding ballpark would send instant updates to
another operator, positioned at a desk behind the elaborate screen, to apprise the patrons
on minute-to-minute activity. The paper promised to have an experienced “‘Baseball
Man’” on hand to interpret the dots and dashes at the theatre. For those that did not get a
ticket to either the ballpark or the theatre, the Tribune utilized the gothic revival First
Regiment Armory, a stone building on Michigan and Sixteenth Streets. The Armory,
built by the famed Burnham and Root firm in 1890, for the First Regiment National
Guard, had been host to sporting activities and social events for years. Elaborate balls
and indoor baseball games had been held in the facility since its initial construction.
Unlike the Auditorium, and the American and National League ballparks, the Armory would give out free seats on a first come, first serve basis, and be given the same play-by-play treatment received by the guests in the theatre. Even in Washington D.C., the Washington Post broadcast the games, through megaphones, from a window in their building on Pennsylvania Avenue. The paper gladly provided this service but also reminded the readers that a more thorough description of the game could be found on their pages that cost three cents a day.¹⁷

The Games

On October 9, 1871, thirty-five years to the day before the matchup of the Cubs and White Sox in game one of the 1906 World Series, Chicago burned in the great fire, killing hundreds of people and destroying millions of dollars in property. The Chicago Daily Tribune could not resist linking the fire to the championship series, calling it the most important event in the history of the city since the fire leveled much of downtown Chicago. In light of this anniversary, the paper dubbed October 9, 1906, “‘Chicago Day,’” in honor of the catastrophic fire and “the beginning of the greatest struggle in baseball’s history.” Caught in the moment, the writers and the readers of the Tribune, and other papers both locally and nationally, thought of this as a culmination of professional baseball, when one city controlled the two pennants of the National and American Leagues. The power of this series, opening on a dreary October day, meant more in the moment to the paper and citizens than any other magnificent achievement.

between the fire and the 1906 World Series. The massive growth of industry, population, architecture, and even the 1893 Columbian Exposition, did not match the apex of historical significance of an all Chicago World Series. Baseball, it seemed, gave Chicago a position of national power and prestige, the envy of the nation. The aftermath of the fire of 1871 had culminated in this sporting struggle; “Today a fire is raging through the city that has been smoldering for weeks past and will burst into its full fury at 2:30 o’clock this afternoon, when Chicago’s two teams of champions face each other on the green battlefield which is bounded by Polk, Wood, and Lincoln streets on the west side.”\(^1\)

Well before noon, on October 9, 1906, hundreds of fans started to descend on the West Side Grounds, emptying the cars of the Metropolitan Elevated trains that ran close to the field. Streetcars outlined the stadium, dropping hundreds of more fans near the gates to the World Series. When the doors opened at noon, fans clamored around the stadium, in the reserved seats and bleachers, and on the field, waiting for the much-anticipated spectacle to begin. Around 1:00 p.m., drizzle began to fall, as well as periodic snowflakes, and temperatures hovered around thirty-two degrees, as the players took the field to warm-up and practice. The cold weather confounded the forecast of temperatures in the fifties. The *Tribune* had warned fans to wear overcoats to the game, and by the ninth inning patrons stamped their feet and anguished over forgotten hot water bottles. Fans in the upper rows of the grandstand endured frozen winds, up to thirty miles an hour, and struggled to stay warm through the game. These patrons placed


In the third base box seats, wives and girlfriends of the White Sox cheered on their players, and female fans of the Cubs hung a woolen stuffed bear cub from a long string down from the top of the grandstand, although they were forced to pull it up when the White Sox looked to be victorious. In the stands, a number of local sporting dignitaries cheered, including the best polo players, footballers, and bowlers, as well as the long time manager of the National League team, and future Hall-of-Famer Cap Anson, who had guided the club during from 1879-1897. In addition to baseball dignitaries, such as the Presidents of both Leagues and the Commissioner, was the infamous and corrupt alderman of Chicago’s first ward, John Coughlin. “Bath-House John” sat near the field in a splendid suit and shirt collar secured with diamond studs.

The stands had American Flags strung from one end of the park to the other although this bunting was blocked from view throughout the game by the crowd standing and cheering. Outside of the stadium, scalpers hid from the police and dodged the plain clothed detectives watching the entrances to the park. A few days before the start of the series, the city had decided to arrest ticket speculators who attempted to sell seats above ticket prices, and the chief of police sent five hundred officers to manage the crowds and watch
for ticket brokers. In one case a “hunchback” scalper came close to apprehension by an officer, but slipped away towards the nearby county hospital when a woman, standing between the police and the speculator, dropped her glasses and distracted the policeman.20

The game rolled through four innings without either team scoring a run, the epitome of dead-ball baseball, when pitching defined the outcome of the game. In the top of the fifth the White Sox’s third baseman, George Rohe, led off with a triple, followed by a strike out on an attempted bunt, and finally by a suicide squeeze play that brought the runner home. In the top of the sixth inning, the Sox scored again, matched in the bottom half by the Cubs. The 2-1 score did not change, and the Sox won, in a game that lasted one hour and forty-five minutes. When the Cubs made the final out in the bottom of the ninth inning, the White Sox fans stormed the field with the sounds of horns blaring, congratulated the players, and carried Rohe off the field on their shoulders, while the Cubs players walked off the diamond quietly and downtrodden. Even though the Cubs had been heavily favored going into the game, the Series’ largest surprise came from the game’s attendance, only 12,608 ticket holders entered West Side Park that day, far less than the anticipation of scalpers, tourists, and ticket runs on League offices seemed to indicate. The Cubs’ organization had planned for at least twenty thousand fans, and had extra bleachers built to seat the nonexistent throngs. The First Regiment Armory’s live

broadcast had a measure of success with roughly fifteen hundred fans packed into the hall, riveted by the clicks of the telegraph operator and announcements from the master of ceremonies. Cubs’ fans outnumbered White Sox supporters that day, but when the telegraph operator, controlling the massive board displayed the final out of the game, the Sox fans roared support for their team and celebrated with “war dances” as the armory crowd filed out to the streets.  

The second game of the series moved to South Side Park, again with temperatures hovering around freezing, and more snow flurries fell on the crowd. Spectators covered themselves head to toe in heavy clothes, hoping to beat off the cold. While exhibition games in St. Louis, and elsewhere in the Midwest, had been called off that day due to the cold snap; in Chicago, the presidents of the Leagues pushed forward with the series and never debated the idea of stalling the series another day, because they understood the weather in Chicago could be much worse in the coming week. The concessions under the grandstand, the “life saving station,” tried to keep the fans filled with hot sarsaparilla, but the demand could not meet the supply and in the later innings fans in the cold stadium were turned away from the concession stands. Outside the park, maybe in light of the lack of attendance the day before, only one scalper appeared, standing in a back alley with a readymade escape route. Inside the park, fans of both teams hollered for their teams, at the opponents, and at each other, but the atmosphere remained good-natured and the police presence did not need to interfere in the friendly ribbing of rooters for their

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Chicago clubs, except in the right field grandstand seats where fans continually pressed forward, against the box seats on the first base side of the field. In a front row box seat, one White Sox fan continually beat on a brass gong, “big enough to have served at a newsboys’ Christmas dinner,” hoping to rally his team.\(^{22}\)

In another disappointing turn for both leagues, the crowd for game two was light again, with the *New York Times* estimating between nine and ten thousand spectators, while the hometown *Chicago Daily Tribune* gave the official number at 12,595. Regardless, the second game had a poorer turnout than the first, and hundreds of seats, many of which were newly constructed, sat empty. The Cubs pitching and hitting, the story of the game on the field, silenced the home crowd. They scored seven runs in the second game and left the White Sox with one run on two hits. Comiskey commented to reporters, “That’s one and one, and we’ll be there with the right kind of goods tomorrow. You can’t win many games on two hits.” The series, knotted at one win apiece, would return to the west side the following day, again to be played in cold weather. The press warned that the fans should come prepared with, “Heavier Overcoats.”\(^{23}\)

Things looked up for the White Sox in game three at West Side Park, the weather moved up a few degrees, many rooters appeared for the visiting team, and future Hall of Famer, Ed Walsh, struck out twelve batters with his spit ball, in the 3-0 victory. Four years before, Walsh had been a coal miner in Wilkesbarre, Pennsylvania, worked his way


up in minor league organizations, and joined the Sox in 1904. By 1913, Walsh had a
deaf arm and left baseball, but the victory in the 1906 World Series helped define his
career. In addition to the 13,750 spectators in the ballpark, the Tribune's live display of
the game at both the Auditorium Theatre and the Armory brought in thousands more
fans, breathlessly waiting through five full scoreless innings for the first run to be scored.
The announcer in the Auditorium stood on the stage and announced that George Rohe
had stepped to the plate. The silence of the crowd was such that the clicking of the
telegraph machine could be heard throughout the theatre. The bases had been loaded
when George Rohe, the hero of game one, came to bat, and when the telegraph sounds
ceased, the master of ceremonies walked in front of the crowd again, waving a small slip
of paper towards the throng believing he needed to silence them. The gesture was
unnecessary, the crowd had been silenced by the knowledge that the game likely rested
on this at-bat. After a long pause, the four thousand ticket holders in the Auditorium held
their breath as the announcer stated in a clear voice that Rohe “had made a three base
hit.” As Rohe cleared the bases, the Sox fanatics exploded in cheers, as they, and their
Cub counterparts, stared at a large billboard marking the moments of the game. The two
thousand six hundred fans in the First Regiment Armory “stood on chairs and screamed
and yelled, they threw their hats and coats into the air, they sang, they cheered, they
danced in the aisles. They forgot completely that they were not in the bleachers with
their eyes riveted on Rohe cutting around the bases.” Long before radio’s national
explosion, the patrons of the Auditorium Theatre and First Regiment Armory experienced theatre of the mind.  

The annual contract each player signed before the first game of every season meant little during the World Series. The league presidents had determined the winning club would receive seventy five percent of the total gate earnings, which after the fourth game stood at 61,855 dollars, the players would be given 33,401 of that amount. When the series returned to the south side for the fourth match up, the Cubs won, another odd turn where in each game the visiting team came out on top. This time, in a 1-0 victory, the National League won in the lowest scoring game of the entire World Series. The weather had warmed by Friday afternoon, and the crowd that brought heavy coats and wraps laid them on their laps by the start of the game. As the temperature warmed the attendance shot up as well, 18,385 ticket holders filled the seats of South Side Park, the largest through the first four games. Again, the Chicago clubs drew even with two wins apiece, by two sacrifice fly balls and a sharp single struck by second baseman Johnny Evers that scored player-manager Frank Chance in the top of the seventh inning.  

As the White Sox played step by step with heavily favored Cubs, the evenly matched series began to draw even more interest in cities throughout the country. The latest victory by the Cubs was prominently displayed on the front page of the Reno, Nevada, *Reno Evening Gazette,* where the writer told the readers about three to four thousand people standing outside South Side Park, waiting as early as eleven a.m., for the

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gates to open. The games made *The Galveston Daily News*, in Galveston, Texas and filled half of page four in the *Manitoba Free Press*, in Winnipeg, Canada, the article being placed alongside curling results. In the *Atlanta Constitution*, photographs of both teams as well as coverage of the games, occupied almost the entire front page. Cities throughout the nation, and well as the local community, contacted the League offices trying to move a potential seventh game of the championship series to their towns. In Kankakee, Illinois, the manager and secretary of the Kankakee Browns, a minor league club, offered his park to the Cubs and Sox. In Fresno, California, the hometown of manager player Frank Chance, local businessmen offered the sum of twenty-five thousand dollars, forty thousand spectators, and a guarantee of sunshine if the seventh game moved west. From city leaders in Denver, Colorado a similar offer of fifteen thousand dollars appeared and then Spokane, Washington upped the offer to twenty thousand dollars and another guarantee for sunny skies. The League presidents and team owners ignored these offers and focused on the games at hand, and celebrated Chicago’s position as the center of the baseball world.25

Warm and sunny weather remained for game five of the series, held again at West Side Park. The warm weather also brought out the largest crowd of the series, between twenty-five and thirty thousand fans, with thousands more lingering in the streets surrounding the stadium. At one forty in the afternoon, and hour and forty minutes after

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the gates opened, the ticket office shut down, as League officials believed no more fans could be packed in the stadium. A few minutes later, the same officials found more space, between the ropes on the field separating the game from the fans and the front rail of the grandstand. The ticket office reopened for a few hundred more fans that bought standing room only tickets for one dollar and fifty cents per square foot. Right before the start of the game the thousands of fans saw a member of the Board of Trade lead two live bear cubs down on the field, one of which circled the bases for the enjoyment of the crowd. When the rooters turned their eyes toward the sky they saw dozens of kites being flown all around the stadium, with political slogans trying to influence the next election.26

The live bear cub mascot did nothing for the outcome of the game, as the Sox beat the home team by a score of 8-6. The Cubs felt good after the bottom of the first inning when they led the Sox three to one. But in the top of the third, the Sox scored two runs to tie the game and then followed that with four more in the top of the fourth. After that, they never relinquished the lead. The wild scoring game sent fans, both inside and outside the park, into a frenzy. On rooftops across the street from the wall of right field, spectators jumped and screamed when the runners crossed home plate. Other fans were, “clinging to telegraph poles and wires like monkeys, or betting behind locked gates,” and when the game wrapped up the thousands of fans from the park merged with the thousands more in the streets around the field. The fans rushed to the elevated trains to find them backed up for forty-five minutes, packed with people leaving the game. The

crowds grew so large on the platforms many took to the streetcar or simply walked home.
The disappointing loss resulted in a solitaire instance of violence for one Cubs fan and a
group of White Sox fans. John J. Ryan, of 60 Carpenter Street, got involved in an
argument with the Sox supporters at the corner of Clark and Randolph Streets,
disappointed at what happened to his team. Ryan’s anger caused him to single handedly
rush the group and attack them, ultimately leading to his arrest and a night in jail.27

**The Series Comes to a Close**

Nineteen thousand two hundred and forty nine fans filled South Side Park, for the
sixth and ultimately decisive game in the 1906 World Series. White Sox officials
claimed the park would have held five thousand more spectators but did not allow more
to enter the stadium for a fear of too few policemen. Dozens of fans appeared in front of
the park before eight in the morning, packed with lunches, ready to wait until the gates
opened to secure seats. The fear of the crowd caused the ticket office to suspend ticket
sales three different times before finally stopping all purchases at one fifteen, an hour and
fifteen minutes before the start of the game. In one of the boxes, near the field, a brass
band of six musicians, played songs throughout the innings, but the roar of the crowd
drowned the sound of the music, and only during lulls could the musicians be heard.
During these lulls, the crowd sang along with the band to popular songs of the day, only
to be unheard again when the action on the field intensified. The White Sox decidedly
won the contest, by a score of 8-3, and scored three runs in the first inning and four more

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27 “Sox Bat Heavily; Beat Spuds, 8 to 6,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 14, 1906, p. 1. “Notes
and Comment on the Game,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 14, 1906, p. 2. “Americans One Shy of
in the second. These runs were all that they needed, but added another in the bottom of
the eighth inning. At that point in the game, the White Sox fans had been worked into a
craze, ready to scramble over the wall and mob the players on the field.  

An infield groundout by the Cubs ended the game, and as soon as the ball struck
the bat the White Sox outfielders started sprinting for their dugout and did not stop until
they had cover from the thousands of wild fans. Some of the Sox players encountered the
scrambling patrons as they hurriedly looked for safety, but the entire team made it back to
the clubhouse with nothing more than screams in their ears and their backs being slapped.
But seconds later thousands of fans filled the field, cheering, screaming, and dancing to
the unbelievable Series victory against a team that looked far more superior on paper and
that had won one hundred and sixteen games. Just as the crowd exploded inside the
stadium, the fans outside of the park also erupted in cheers. As the spectators began to
file out, to fill the streets with the exuberant crowd gathered outside, they almost instantly
started a chant that echoed in the downtown streets until the early morning hours,

“What’s de matter wid de White Sox? Dey’re all right. Who’s all right? De White Sox!”

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The same celebration outside also led to freak injuries for two White Sox fans who made a bizarre wager with friends that supported the Cubs. The Irish-American Patrick Ryan and Henry Holland, most likely a forty-two year old bricklayer, had bet the Cubs’ supporters that whichever team won the game the losing fans would be required to pull the winners in a horse buggy through the streets of the city. The other catch; the losers had to do the pulling without shoes or socks. When the Cubs lost, Ryan and Holland acquired a buggy, tied two pairs of white socks to the side, and told the losers to pull them from North Avenue to Chicago Avenue and then back again. Friends of the gamblers formed an escort and all along the route roman candles and torches lit their way. They made the first leg of the journey unfettered, but on the return trip the men pulling the buggy grabbed a cable car, and held on to pull the winners back to the starting point. After only a few feet, one buggy wheel became stuck in the cable slot in the street, and the car pulled the men off the buggy rods and threw Ryan and Holland to the ground, both of which sustained mild injuries.30

The celebrations also spread throughout the south side of Chicago, with a bon fire lit at 3554 Cottage Grove Avenue large enough to block all traffic, and the conflagration required the fire department to extinguish the flames. A band of nearly two thousand Sox supporters, led by successful businessmen, started marching through the streets, looking for Sox players at their homes and in restaurants, to serenade them with cheers. They found the shortstop George Davis, sitting in a restaurant, and carried him on their shoulders to manager Fielder Jones’ home, where they demanded, and received, a speech.

Next, they marched to the Hotel Hayden, on East Thirty-Sixth Street, and screamed and cheered at the façade until one of the Series’ hero, George Rohe, appeared from a second story window, and promptly unfurled a six foot long stuffed white sock from the sill. The marchers went wild.  

The next evening, President of the Chicago Cubs, Charles Murphy issued a statement from his office, “The series which closed today was the most remarkable ever known, and was made possible by the liberal patronage which the national game has enjoyed in the greatest baseball city in the world – Chicago.” Chicagoans reciprocated this feeling, and understood their teams stood atop the nation, with both pennant winners, and a world champion emanating from their city. This series transcended baseball, not only did it put Chicago at the center of the baseball world, it reinforced the position of Chicago as the center of the nation’s industrial might, as a powerful transportation center, and the apex of the nation’s agricultural output. This modern city managed to demonstrate to the world through a newly formed sporting event, that it could not be matched. Simultaneously, the games of the World Series managed to bring together the population, both white and blue collar, ethnic groups, and even neighborhoods. Although the afternoon games, and their doubled ticket prices, catered to the wealthy and white collar workers of the city, who could leave early from their jobs and pay the elevated prices, the fans that surrounded the parks, burned fires in the streets, and marched in celebration did not all come from this higher socioeconomic group. As evidence of this desire to not only include the diverse population in the celebration but in the regular

audience of white professional baseball, by 1910, Charles Comiskey built a new baseball palace for White Sox fans, on a former garbage dump, surrounded by the factories and the working class homes full of the fans he hoped to attract. Black fans on the other hand, although able to purchase tickets to professional baseball, continued to forge their own communities and culture, separate from the ever increasing melting pot of white ethnic communities. By capturing the World Series, Chicago’s professional baseball franchises managed to temporarily unite the city in excitement and support for their clubs. This type of event had never been witnessed before, either in sport history or urban history. As the Chicago Daily Tribune published two days after the close of the series, “The Tribune remarked before the baseball championship games began that Chicago could not lose, and it has not.”

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VITA

Patrick Mallory was born and raised in Wood River, Illinois. He obtained his BA in history from Saint Louis University and then his MA from the University of Central Oklahoma in a dual degree program of history and museum studies. Patrick is employed by St. Louis Community College and works in the college library system. He lives in Alton, Illinois with his wife, Erin and his two daughters, Hattie and Livia.