

Comments from the Chair

Andy McCue
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AN EXCELLENT TIME was had by all in Seattle, especially at the Bibliography Committee. Old friends we hadn't seen in several years — such as Bobby Plapinger, Rick Johnson, and Max Weder — showed up at the meeting, in the book room, and around the halls.

Bob McConnell proposed a nice project along lines Skip McAfee, Ted Hathaway, and I had been kicking around for several months.

Skip had originally suggested we compile a list of the baseball periodical holdings of libraries around the country. That way, we could know if any nearby library had copies of *The Sporting News*, what format they were in, and what years that run covered. Ted noted that much of that information was available through WorldCat (the successor to OCLC), to which most local libraries subscribe. Bob came up with the idea of creating an authoritative listing of the really rare periodicals, especially those 19th Century publications such as *The Bat and Ball*, which appeared out of Hartford, Conn. from 1866 to 1867. Bob says his anecdotal knowledge indicates some of these publications are held only by private libraries or other institutions that don't show up on WorldCat.

This might make a very interesting, but manageable project for someone, and Bob has given me some start-up material I can share with you. I'm also sure our professional librarians, such as Ted and Bob Timmermann would be willing to offer advice.

Much of the time at the meeting was taken up with a discussion of our project to update such lists as "The Essential Baseball Library" and "The 100 Best Baseball Books." Several of you, notably Dick Beverage and Steve Milman, have contributed lists of suggestions. Ron Kaplan will be

assembling them into a coherent list of possibilities. It would make Ron's job much easier, by the way, if lists could come to him in a format where he could simply copy them into the newsletter (that means full titles and authors' names, please).

I'd urge you to send Ron and me your own nominations. It can be in the form of one list, or of several (biographies, reference works, narrative histories, etc.)

I am pleased that this issue contains several book reviews reprinted from the Deadball Era Committee newsletter. I hope to extend this practice to sharing book reviews with all the other committees, and will be forwarding copies of reviews done for our newsletter to other committees as well.

I urge you to think about doing a review when you finish a book. We know from surveys that SABR members are very interested in thoughtful comment on baseball publications. All our reviews go up on the committee website, and now will be appearing in newsletters beyond our own. A review does not have to focus on a new book. You'll notice many of Terry Smith's reviews are of older works. If you feel your review has something fresh to say about a 50-year-old book, don't hesitate to send it in.

Along the same lines, I'd urge all of you to try contributing to The Baseball Index simply by cataloguing the next baseball book, new or old, that you finish. You can do this at www.baseballindex.org/tbi.asp?a=frm. Don't worry if you get every detail right. The on-line instructional manual is not perfect, but the exercise will give you an idea of how simple it can be to contribute to our core project, the most helpful thing we can do for baseball researchers.

I'd like to remind all of you that Ted and I can design indexing programs that fit into your interests: a team, a player, whatever. If you're doing any kind of research, you can fit your bibliography into TBI format and leave that trail for future researchers. You can help the most by agreeing to do runs of magazines. Or you could contribute money and we could use it to hire college students to do data entry as a summer job. If you have any other ideas to generate more items for TBI, we'd love to hear about it.

Anyway, I hope your summers are going well and that you are planning to join us at the St. Louis convention next year. We will be within walking distance of the new ballpark and in a neighborhood with many eating alternatives. But, as usual, the convention will be about seeing old friends and making new ones, connecting faces with the names you've seen in TNP or on SABR-L and listening to great researchers talk about their work (and thank us for creating TBI).

Book Reviews

Editor's Note: The following reviews were contributed by members of the Deadball Committee.

Baseball in St. Louis 1900– 1925,

by Steve Steinberg.
Arcadia Publishing

Journeying back to early twentieth century St. Louis, a time traveler could easily understand how the city gained wide recognition as a baseball town. Steve Steinberg, an enthusiastic historian of the sport, acts as tour guide through that place and time with his well-researched *Baseball in St. Louis 1900-1925*.

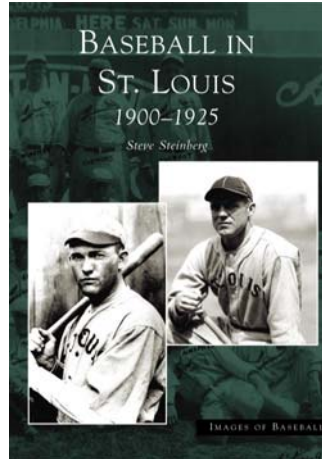
Aided by a bounty of rare images, he highlights the individuals and circumstances that influenced the evolution of the game in St. Louis, as well as in the other cities that maintained major league status into the twenty-first century.

The book's chronological account covers the dead ball era and transitions to the onset of the lively ball. Players, both those destined for Cooperstown and ones who are lesser-known but colorful or significant in some way, come to life in the book. Additionally, managers, owners, coaches, and others are described in relation to their involvement in the Mound City's big league clubs and ballparks of the times. It serves as a retrospective on the one club that remains there today. Steinberg then closes the adventure with well-done profiles of notable media persons, such as the late J. G. Taylor Spink, who became editor and publisher of *The Sporting News*.

Through terrific photos (some never-before published) as well as absorbing factual and anecdotal stories of St. Louis baseball, one gets a real feel for the period. Meeting such characters as Arthur "Bugs" Raymond, a Cardinal spitball pitcher in 1908 (of whom it was said: "He seldom finished anything but a drink,") interjects a human, as well as humorous, reality check.

Further, the writer emphasizes the career paths of a number of Hall of Famers who played for or managed a St. Louis club. For instance, Steinberg profiles two young men who came to the American League Browns and the National League Cardinals, respectively, during the Federal League days: George Sisler and Rogers Hornsby. The author also explores that amazing time when St. Louis supported the Federal League Terriers as well as the two other clubs, each with its own ballpark.

In addition to learning about the many personalities and talents, one becomes familiar with Robison Field, where the Cardinals played until 1920. It becomes clear how that team subsequently came to share old Sportsman's Park with the Browns, as well as how the rise and fall of the Federal League



impacted both clubs. Significantly, the author explains why we now call St. Louis a National League town rather than an American League town. Rounding out his treatment, he covers the Negro National League Stars, who also had their own park built during the last part of that quarter century.

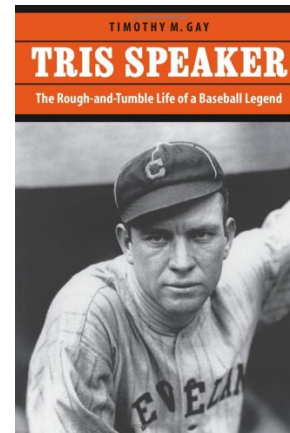
Throughout the book, one becomes acquainted with meaningful historical information. One salient example is the account of Branch Rickey's influence on the Cards' acquisition of Hall of Famer Jesse Haines. It's this kind of detail that will not only intrigue knowledgeable baseball fans, but raise interest in those who simply find it fun. In essence, this portrayal of baseball from 1900-1925 in a town where baseball continues to be a big part of its culture will serve as a fundamental component to even a rudimentary baseball library.

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Tris Speaker: The Rough-and-Tumble Life of a Baseball Legend

by Timothy M. Gay
University of Nebraska Press



Tris Speaker is one of the few super-greats of the diamond who remains in the shadows. We don't have the countless anecdotes from everyone who ever met him as we do for Babe Ruth, nor the oft-jarring words and actions of Ty Cobb from which to fashion a biography. Gay gathers many scraps of Speaker's legacy and weaves them into a book that covers his life in more or less detail.

This book is well-written, but not always riveting. Excellent passages include Gay's portrait of the friendship between Speaker and the singing, future trainer Lefty Weisman, who was Jewish. Indeed, Gay is good at pointing out where Speaker rose above his early prejudices. Also interesting are Spoke's various retirement pursuits, such as an indoor baseball league, alcohol distribution, coaching, and — news to me! — broadcasting.

There are many passages where Gay captures the spirit of the Gray Eagle as he describes Speaker in action. These are effective because they are done selectively; this book is anything but monotonous game-by-game summaries. In fact, this is perhaps taken to extremes.

There were some strangely absent facts, like Bagby's home run in the 1920 World Series (the first ever by a pitcher). In a Series described as — ludicrously, even to this Tribe fan — "one of the wildest, wooliest, and ultimately, one of the most satisfying World Series in history," any omission seems odd.

The section on Spoke's time with the Senators and A's

is too spare to begin with. Why not even mention that fellow-oldie Eddie Collins was also present with Cobb and Speaker in 1928?

The lengthy non-Spoke *divertissements* about Boston, Joe Wood vs. Walter Johnson, and gambling were sometimes interesting, but coupled with the lack of detail in other areas left me with a feeling of incompleteness. Couldn't more have been told about Speaker's pioneering platoon system? What about Ed Bang's possible role in the acquisition of Speaker, detailed in Franklin A. Lewis's *The Cleveland Indians*?

Gay hits his stride in describing the atmosphere or gambling, booze, violence, and religious/ethnic/racial prejudice that swamped the era — he seems to relish portraying owners as tightwads to the nth degree, Cy Young as a tippler who may have thrown a World Series game, and jocularly suggests that Hal Chase threw exhibition games on a western barnstorming tour.

The chapter on Leonard vs. Speaker/Wood/Cobb details the machinations of Landis, Ban Johnson, and the other protagonists, even though, as Gay warns us, few indisputable facts are known. Still, one wonders why Gay does not more closely consider points raised by Bill James (in his *Guide to Baseball Managers*) on the scandal, which James finds to be almost wholly trumped up, certainly as it concerns Spoke. Why was Speaker allowed to manage in the minors when Landis claimed the standards for both are the same? Was it truly Landis always mucking up Spoke's rumored attempts to manage? Gay foreshadows the scandal earlier in the text, portraying it as fact. I'm not an expert on the subject, but that seems like over-dramatizing speculation to me.

Some mistakes were strange to find in an academic publication. Muddy Ruel is named as the "umpire" in the Chapman game. Cleveland was the Forest City long before the Deadball Era (see their National Association club nickname). Freddie Schupp? The Chicago Wales?! (That last one was a momentary geographic mindbender.)

I was a bit saddened by the paucity of photos in the book. There is but one action photo of our hero, and only a tiny shot of "The Golden Outfield" of Spoke, Lewis, and Hooper. There's no trace of the comical photo of Wood and Speaker where they appear twice in the same image. I would love to see the picture of Spoke holding up two bar mitzvah cakes, myself.

After finishing this book, I was left feeling that the definitive bio of Spoke had yet to be written. It's difficult to write about a legend whose legacy on paper does not match those of other super-greats, but I also believe that there are more details that could have been related/ unearthed about the great Gray Eagle. Gay's is a good book, pulling together most of the strands of a life heretofore covered piecemeal. I would recommend the book based on that accomplishment, but if you happen to know a lot about Speaker from other books (Elfers, Sowell, or Zingg), this volume may be superfluous.

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Ring Around the Bases: The Complete Baseball Stories of Ring Lardner

Matthew J. Brucoli, editor
University of South Carolina Press

On the surface, *Ring Around the Bases* is a grand slam. Ring Lardner writing and Matthew Brucoli editing is the equivalent of Christy Mathewson pitching and Roger Bresnahan catching — a Hall of Fame battery, as it were. It is a treat to have all of Lardner's baseball fiction in one convenient, attractive place.

They're all here: the complete text of *You Know Me Al* plus the rest of busher Jack Keefe's letters, "My Roomy," "Horseshoes," "Harmony," "Hurry Kane," and the wonderful "Alibi Ike." These pieces show Lardner doing what he does best, masterfully recreating American vernacular speech to portray a world inhabited by subliterate, inarticulate, deceitful, deluded people.

However, *Ring Around the Bases* also raises a number of questions.

First, one might ask why the book was published and whether it was even necessary. With one exception, this volume is virtually a reissue of a book of the same title published by Scribners in 1992. The exception is the addition of "The Courtship of T. Dorgan," originally published in *The Saturday Evening Post* on September 6, 1919, but uncollected. Another of Jack Keefe's letters, published at the same general time as later Keefe pieces, is included as the last piece in the book, leaving the impression that it was tacked on as an afterthought or as justification for reissuing the book.

In addition, explanatory notes identifying little-known figures like, say, Nixey Callahan and Del Gainor, fictitious figures, or places would assist readers who are not conversant with baseball from 1910 to Lardner's death in 1933. At that — to borrow one of Keefe's favorite phrases — even the knowledgeable reader might appreciate such notes. Indeed, making George W. Hilton's edition of *The Annotated Baseball Stories of Ring W. Lardner: 1914-1919* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995) so valuable is the set of explanatory notes, not to mention the photographs, illustrations, bibliography, and index.

Ironically (but as often happens) Lardner's genius for depicting American vernacular turns out at times to be his weakness. In other words, he transcribed everyday speech so well, so accurately, that some of it has become archaic or obsolete. In several stories, for example, the ever bellicose Keefe claims he was about to knock someone "for a goole" (as opposed to busting "him one in the jaw"). According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, "goole" is an archaic term for "goal"; a note to that effect would have been useful.

Finally, Lardner occasionally lost control of the strongest aspect of his style. In the epistolary stories in the collection titled *Lose With a Smile*, he lays the vernacular on so



heavy-handedly that Danny's letters to Jessie become almost unreadable.

Nevertheless, there's still much to like in *Ring Around the Bases*. When Lardner was good, he was very good indeed. *You Know Me Al* is first-rate all the way. "Alibi Ike" is a masterpiece, and "Hurry Kane," "Harmony," "Horse-shoes," and "My Roomy" aren't far behind. Particularly serendipitous are the inclusions of "The Cost of Baseball," foreshadowing a world ruled by George Steinbrenner, and the brief pieces grouped under the rubric of "The 1919 World Series," about which Lardner knew or surmised a great deal more than he could talk about at the time. Finally, Lardner Jr.'s foreword and Brucoli's introduction are informative and perceptive.

This book will delight the baseball enthusiast who wants to delve into the writing of one of the master writers of the game. For all of its obvious value, however, the collection will disappoint readers seeking Lardner's best fiction. Except for "Alibi Ike," Lardner's nearly great stories ("Some Like Them Cold," "Champion," "The Golden Hon-ey-moon," and the amazing "Haircut") along with a handful of excellent ones, are not included.

Lardner's best stories can stand with those of his almost exact contemporaries Joyce, Lawrence, and Katherine Anne Porter or the next half-generation made up of Fitzgerald, Faulkner, and Hemingway. To find the best Lardner, one has to get hold of his two major collections, *How to Write Short Stories* (1924) or *Round Up* (1929).

Jan Finkel

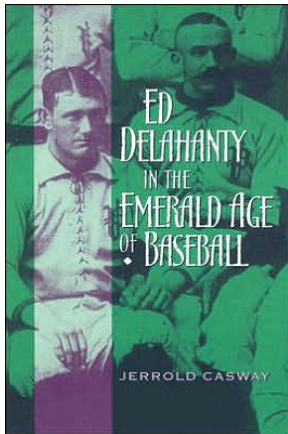
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Ed Delahanty & The Emerald Age of Baseball

by Jerrold Casway

University of Notre Dame Press



In an era dominated by players of Irish heritage, accurately styled as the "Emerald Age" by author Jerrold Casway, Big Ed Delahanty was arguably the most talented Son of Erin. Casway provides the kind of in-depth description of Delahanty's ancestral heritage requisite for a biography.

Delahanty's career in the big leagues spanned from 1889 to 1903, a period when baseball underwent radical transformations. Changes in the rules

governing foul balls began in 1894 when foul bunts were declared strikes, and it culminated in 1900 when all fouls were ruled strikes. Then, in 1893, the shape of the diamond was changed forever by eliminating the pitcher's box, increasing the pitching distance, and adopting the pitcher's rubber. These critical changes are carefully outlined in the

book, and the impact on Delahanty's performance is noted.

The research performed by Casway shines as he details Delahanty's role in the baseball wars, first in 1890 and again from 1901-1903. As an emerging star in 1890, Delahanty was vigorously recruited by the Player's League franchise in his hometown, the Cleveland Infants. The tale of Delahanty's double-dealing as he pitted the Phillies — to whom he was legally bound — against the Infants alone is worth the "price of admission."

After re-joining the Phillies in 1891, Delahanty began carving out a brilliant career. Famous as a hitter, Casway describes Delahanty's batting style and his preference in bats. The reader is given a well-rounded portrait of a ball-player with clearly identified strengths as well as the inevitable weaknesses. The resulting understanding of Del leaves no doubt as to why in the decade of the 1890s he reigned as "the King of Swatsville."

When Ban Johnson's new league struggled for parity with the established National, Delahanty was one of the top two or three position players in baseball, and the demand for his services was commensurate with his brilliance. In 1902, Delahanty jumped to the Washington Nationals, but at the end of the season he attempted to jump to McGraw's Giants back in the old league. Until the present time, the understanding of the sequence of events from that initial contact with McGraw until the tragedy of July 2, 1903 has been muddled. Now, Casway's meticulous research provides clarification and removes all doubt as to what transpired — what Delahanty did and did not do — and just as importantly, the motivation for his behavior.

Delahanty's career — and life — ended just after baseball crossed the threshold to the Deadball Era. Since the time of Delahanty's disappearance, the attempts to explain his death have ranged from the reasonable to the bizarre. Carefully and with precision, Casway presents newly uncovered facts and builds a logical scenario that is compelling. The fog of uncertainty is removed with precision by a professional historian in the role of a detective.

While not strictly a Dead Ball Era biography, *The Emerald Age of Base Ball* is a fascinating story of a star of the first water, a vivid description of base ball in the 1890s, and a solid introduction to the ground-breaking structure of base ball in the new century.

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The American Indian Integration of Baseball

by Jeffrey Powers-Beck

University of Nebraska Press

I didn't read Jeffrey Powers-Beck's *The American Indian Integration of Baseball* casually. As a writer working on a biography of a player who is profiled in this seminal work, I've found no other resource half as valuable. So it's not difficult to sing the book's praises.

The only challenge for a reviewer is touching on all of the noteworthy material. The word “exhaustive” is often overused in commentary about historical works, but it’s difficult not to use the adjective here. Powers-Beck surveys the careers of more than 120 players of American Indian ancestry, turning over innumerable stones on what must have been a lengthy path of research and understanding.

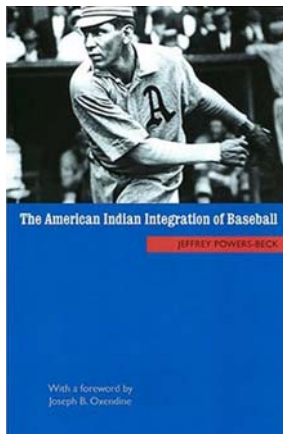
The book is constructed as a series of essays. A professor of English and assistant dean of graduate studies at East Tennessee State University, Powers-Beck profiles lesser-known players such as Elijah Pinnace, George Johnson, Louis Leroy, and Moses Yellow Horse, as well as more recognizable names, including Jim Thorpe, Charles Albert Bender, and John Tortes Meyers.

Using an extensive list of scholarly sources and popular-press accounts, the author provides historical perspective and detailed information on such topics as the Carlisle Indian Industrial School team and the Nebraska Indians barnstorming team. There is also a list of every American Indian player who reached the major leagues between 1887 and 1945, starting with James Madison Toy (no, as Powers-Beck explains, Louis Sockalexis was not the first American Indian to play in the majors).

The book begins with a discussion of the almost universal “Chief” nickname and concludes with points about racist team nicknames still in use. In between, Powers-Beck shows how American Indians, in the 50 or so years prior to the African-American integration of baseball, battled discrimination. American Indian players, unlike African-American players, were allowed on the field, but they were expected to withstand a barrage of racial epithets as part of a day’s work. The author authoritatively argues that baseball was “a crucible of both racial and cultural prejudices” against American Indians.

Objects of derision by sports writers who regularly pushed stereotypes, by fans who taunted them with war whoops and other vitriolic jeers, and by teammates who insulted them, American Indians faced a prejudice that too often has been unexamined by baseball historians. The book describes such experiences and amplifies contributions made by American Indians during the first half of the 20th century as they tried to find a place in the national game.

The American Indian Integration of Baseball won the Ritter Award as the best Deadball Era book of 2004. It was a curious choice, if only because much of the book is not specifically about the period. But this book is a work worthy of praise. Whether you are conducting research or merely after an education about a previously under-reported and important topic, you’ll appreciate the breadth of the material as well as Powers-Beck’s readable presentation of it.



The Meaning of Ichiro: The New Wave from Japan and the Transformation of Our National Pastime

by Robert Whiting.
Warner Books.



From the opening quote of the first chapter of Robert Whiting’s *The Meaning of Ichiro*, you’re hooked. By the time you get to the bottom of the first page, where Ichiro’s mother complains that half a month’s wages are spent on a baseball glove for a child and his father replies, “It’s not a toy. It’s a tool that will teach him the value of things,” you have chills running down your spine. This one, you think, is going to be good. Indeed, the first chapter, “The Education of Ichiro,” is nothing short of compelling. The flawlessly told, compact, and elegant story of Ichiro’s devotion to mastery of the game of baseball leaves you wanting more.

And more you get. Moving from Ichiro’s extraordinary self control and resulting success (seven straight batting titles in Japan), Whiting describes with an insider’s eye the remarkable cultural transformation that Ichiro caused. Japan and America, he argues, came together over Ichiro, each in its own way — Japan basking in the long awaited dominance of one of her own over American athletes, and America embracing a new way of playing the game that we all sensed was born of more than mere talent.

In between, we get a history lesson in Japanese baseball that no fan should miss. I won’t spoil the fun of the details, but I will say that every one provides a delightful surprise. From the missionaries who introduced baseball to Japan, to Babe Ruth’s 1934 tour, to Masanori Murakami and Hideo Nomo, Whiting makes you wish that there were a giant *History of Japanese Baseball* that you could turn to as soon as you finished his book. Until then, the chapter on Hideo Nomo, Hideki Irabu, and labor relations between Japanese and American clubs will serve as a wonderful introduction.

The book turns in the seventh chapter from the fluid narrative that connected Ichiro’s relentless training with a long history of Japanese baseball emphasizing rigor and discipline, to a series of stories about Americans in Japanese professional baseball. The stories are somewhat disconnected, but they are well written and entertaining, and they serve to emphasize Japanese culture’s prominent position in their national pastime. The chapter on Bobby Valentine, which could easily be longer, demonstrates this nicely. While these are good stories, the book’s message shifts from explaining how Japanese players are transforming American baseball to a description of Japan’s stubborn resistance to American baseball strategy and methods.

The book loses some steam by the ninth chapter when the author relates briefly the stories of six Japanese players who played Major League baseball. Unlike the previous

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stories, these are flat, listing each player's height, weight, physique, and basic statistics along with the stories of how they left Japan, what their motivation was, and how they fared in America. But the book picks right back up with a nice chapter on Hideki Matsui. Emphasizing Matsui's grace and deep respect for Japan and Japanese baseball, the chapter bookends nicely with the one on the flashy, yet equally disciplined Ichiro.

Whiting's book is a fitting follow-up to his wonderful *You Gotta Have Wa*. He knows Japanese culture, he knows Japanese baseball, and he is a terrific writer who writes with enthusiasm and balance. I found the book to be touching, entertaining, and informative; it is well worth any baseball fan's time.

Dr. John D. Eigenauer
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This n' that

Featured Library Sources: America's National Game: The Albert G. Spalding Collection of Early Baseball Photographs

More than 500 photographs, prints, drawings, caricatures, and printed illustrations from the personal collection of materials related to baseball and other sports gathered by the early baseball player and sporting-goods tycoon A. G. Spalding. This collection includes 19th-century studio portraits of players and teams of the day, rare images, photographs, and original drawings.

Visit: www.digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/explore/dgexplore.cfm?col_id=198



Library of Congress: Baseball Cards, 1887-1914



This collection presents a Library of Congress treasure — 2,100 early baseball cards dating from 1887 to 1914. The cards show such legendary figures as Ty Cobb stealing third

base for Detroit, Tris Speaker batting for Boston, and pitcher Cy Young posing formally in his Cleveland uniform. Other notable players include Connie Mack, Walter Johnson, King Kelly, and Christy Mathewson.

Cigarette card collector Benjamin K. Edwards preserved these baseball cards in albums with more than 12,000 other cards on many subjects. After his death, Edwards' daughter gave the albums to noted poet and Lincoln biographer Carl Sandburg, who donated them to the Library's Prints and Photographs Division in 1954.

Visit: memory.loc.gov/ammem/bbhtml/bbhome.html

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FROM BASEBALL-ALMANAC.COM: “Book shelves lined with baseball books: some reference, some fiction, some historical, and some that are just plain fun to read. Over seventy-thousand books have been written covering every facet of our national pastime. With so many choices, and so many different versions, it can be difficult deciding what books deserve your money. Moe Berg, the legendary Major League catcher turned spy, once said that he, “would rather be a poor man in a garret with plenty of books, than a King who did not like reading.”

There aren't a ton of reviews, but, as Spencer Tracey said about Katherine Hepburn's athletic physique in the classic *Pat and Mike*, “What's there is cherce.”

Some essays— more than 50 as of this writing — are accompanied by excerpts from additional reviewers.

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USA TODAY RECENTLY RAN A PIECE on baseball books (“Beyond scorecards and box scores: Fresh baseball reading arrives for fans,” July 17, 2006, www.usatoday.com/sports/baseball/2006-07-17-baseball-books_x.htm).

The article contains links to excerpts from David Maraniss' *Clemente: The Passion and Grace of Baseball's Last Hero*; Jay Feldman's *Suitcase Sefton and the American Dream*; and Barry Svrluga's *National Pastime*

Editor's Note: Readers of *Current Baseball Publications*, produced by Rich Apri, will note a new format: a bibliography with all known published items (for the current year to date listed). Items added since the previous edition are noted with a **bold** number. This should be of help to users since they will no longer have to page through two or three issues as the year goes along.