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From the Selected Works of Mitchell J Nathanson

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A People's History of Baseball

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A PEOPLE'S HISTORY OF BASEBALL

By

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EXCERPT

For Joanne, Alex and Jackie. As always.

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Prologue

What is baseball? At first blush this appears to be a straightforward question. And in many ways it is. Baseball is a game. Nevertheless the question persists: what is it, really? Football is a game, but it isn't baseball. Neither are basketball and hockey. Putting aside the differences among balls, pucks, rules and regulations, there seems to be something fundamentally different about baseball when compared to these other sports. All of them are games, but to many people, baseball is baseball. In a sense, it is something else altogether.

This sense perhaps comes from the notion that, aside from a game, it is also a concept. It is America's game -- our national pastime -- so therefore it bears significant emblematic weight. And it has historically borne this weight remarkably well. It has been used to inform us as to our national values and beliefs, to promote and reaffirm what it means to be an American, to define the essence of our country, practically from the time it first gained popularity in the mid-nineteenth century. Even in its shortcomings it has, in a way, defined us, represented us, and told us who we were. So, what is baseball? Symbolically and conceptually speaking, it is America. Through the game's historical

narrative, larger themes emerge: ones focused on equality, patriotism, heroism, capitalism – the usual suspects within the American canon. And to be sure, all of those themes can be found in baseball, some of them in abundance. Therefore, in many ways, baseball's narrative is idyllic America's as well. Assuming we choose to see it that way.

Because we can also see it another way. Rather than see baseball through a patriotic, sepia haze, we can choose to see it through a more critical eye, one which permits us to see our collective selves at something less than our best. Through the growth and development of baseball we can see the corrupting potential of influence, the petty power struggles as well as the consequential ones that have likewise defined our nation for well over two centuries. For while baseball as a game is sharply defined, constrained by tangible boundaries such as foul lines and a strike zone, baseball as a concept is a far more malleable entity. It can be, and has been, many different things, depending on one's viewpoint. To say that baseball is America is simple enough – assuming that we understand what “America” means to the one drawing the parallel.

A People's History of Baseball is baseball history from an alternative viewpoint. Herein are stories focusing on the concept of baseball but ones that challenge convention and play out differently than the oft told tales due to the shift in perspective. Regardless, they have much in common with the more well-known stories in that beyond their differing perspective, they are just that – stories. Rarely, however, is a story merely a story.

Simply put, stories are oftentimes how we construct our world. As storytelling scholars have observed, “[w]e understand, we ‘know,’ by relying on a stock of conventional stories – stories about how the world runs, how people are likely to behave

in it, how certain causes are likely to result in certain effects. These stories are our ordinary understanding of the world.”¹ These tales turn out to be quite useful in our comprehension of more general rules and principles. In short, we become indoctrinated to universal concepts of how our society “should” work through the stories we tell and eventually internalize. It is through this process that the concept of baseball (i.e., the notion that our national game is somehow representative of basic American ideals and mores) flourishes. In this way, and to take as an example one of the stories discussed herein, how we understand the story of Branch Rickey, Jackie Robinson and the breaking of baseball’s color line shapes our perception of more universal principles, such as what it means to be an American. Because of the nexus between baseball and America, these baseball stories often serve as the symbolic examples that enlighten us as to our beliefs regarding how our country operates and what it stands for.

Of course, not all stories are equally effective. To achieve significant symbolic status, a story must connect with its intended audience; it must speak to their values in order to produce the necessary resonance.² In order to do this, it must, first, be coherent: it must hang together such that all of the necessary elements fit neatly as if parts of a puzzle.³ Next, it must ring true with the listener’s own sense of how the story should play out. Interestingly, one thing it does not have to be is accurate or truthful in any way. In fact, fictional stories are oftentimes the most persuasive stories precisely because their freedom from the constraints of truth allows them to hang together so well and so neatly match their audience’s expectations. As Aristotle recognized in his Rhetoric over two thousand years ago, logical arguments or stories persuade not because there is something inherently true about logic but simply because people value and respond to logic

irrespective of the truth underlying it.⁴ “True” stories suffer in comparison due to the inherent contradictions and missing pieces present in messy, everyday life.⁵

Consequently, not only is the veracity of a particular story an inaccurate measure of its persuasiveness, if anything the opposite may be the case: the asymmetry of reality can prove to be a significant barrier to the resonance required for a story to achieve its goal. In this sense, the more resonant the story, the more suspect it becomes. As patriotic, culturally-affirming baseball stories have traditionally resonated very deeply within American society, they deserve their moment under the microscope. Discovering what lies behind their creation might prove illuminating.

Irrespective of the truth, as consumers of these stories, we tend to consider those stories that conform to how we view our world, or our country, as the truth anyway.⁶ In fact, they don't even feel like stories to us. Because they resonate so deeply, we tend to believe that they also inform us as to the bigger picture – our country, our world, our beliefs.⁷ In this way, popular, comforting, cheerful stories are oftentimes the most powerful stories of all.⁸ By contrast, “counter-stories” – ones that challenge accepted, conventional beliefs are, quite naturally, dismissed as (take your pick) manipulative, political, anecdotal, unprincipled and/or unfair.⁹ To a large degree, these criticisms are accurate; counter-stories are typically all of these things and more. But so are the others. In the end, all stories, whether they confirm our beliefs or challenge them, are manipulative, political, anecdotal, and, to the extent they are used to illustrate larger, universal truths, unfair. For in the end, all stories are just that – stories.

A People's History of Baseball is not about the baseball stories we already know, but the ones we're much less familiar with – the counter-stories. At first glance, the

stories challenged and retold herein may not even strike us as stories at all – the founding of the National League, baseball's relationships with the rule of law and the media, the integration of the game, mid-century expansion, and the rise and public rebuke of the Players Association. Rather, they feel like objective, historical narratives. As we now know, however, this makes them immediately suspect – not false per se but subject to closer analysis. The point of telling these counter-stories is not in the expectation that they will replace the conventional stories (indeed, this is far too much to ask – it is extremely difficult if not impossible for a counter-story to change the conventional story merely by highlighting its inherent weaknesses)¹⁰ but rather, in the hope that they will help us achieve a better understanding of the stories we, as a culture, have internalized; to help us recognize that they are simply stories and not objective analyses of the facts that underlie them. Through these counter-stories we can reassess the stories of baseball as America and perhaps understand them, as well as what they represent, more thoroughly.

By challenging the perspective of these deeply-entrenched stories of baseball and offering alternative ways of approaching them, the counter-stories in this book also reveal something else: that the conventional “concept of baseball” stories are not so much stories of equality, patriotism, heroism and capitalism as they are stories of power – how it is obtained, how it perpetuates itself, and how those who have it use the weapon of storytelling (through, in this instance, the notion of baseball as America) to convince their audience that they are not wielding it when in fact they are, and in significant measure. In the end, however, it is important to remember that as counter-stories, they are inherently manipulative, political and unfair. In other words, they're no different than the stories we already know.

Chapter One

A Game of their Own

Practically from the inception of the game, baseball and America have been, in a symbolic sense, virtually synonymous. On December 5th, 1856, the New York Mercury became the first to declare the fledgling sport to be our “national pastime;”¹ four years later nationally renowned lithographers Currier and Ives issued a print connecting the sport with the upcoming 1860 presidential election, declaring both to be our “national game[s];”² later, poet Walt Whitman would exult that baseball was “America’s game,” remarking that it “has the snap, go fling of the American atmosphere – belongs as much to our institutions, fits into them as significantly, as our constitutions, laws: is just as important in the sum total of our historic life.”³ Very quickly, it simply felt natural to speak of baseball and America interchangeably, using one as a metaphor for the other, ascribing values to the game and the men who played and administered it that seemingly rang true on the larger canvas of the expanding and exploding nation as well. All of this

seemed inevitable and uniquely American – to be so fortunate so as to have a game that spoke so clearly to our national character and temperament. What other country could possibly boast of such symbiosis?

In fact, by the middle of the nineteenth century, there were scores of them. In many countries within the vast British Empire, along with many British-influenced societies no longer directly under British rule, people felt toward cricket as Americans were beginning to feel about baseball.⁴ Victorian-era colonial rulers, steeped in the British public school ethos of the cultural and socializing influence of team sports such as cricket, used the game precisely for this purpose when confronted with prospect of “civilizing” the non-British “natives.”⁵ Just as in England, where the game was considered a vital rite of passage in the training of those molded to become the future aristocrats of the empire, colonial rulers in countries such as Barbados deliberately introduced and preached cricket as a “socializing and civilizing agent.”⁶ In fact, “[c]ricket was considered the main vehicle for transferring the appropriate British moral code from the messengers of empire to the local populations.”⁷ So central was cricket to the perceived character of the British Empire, it is not unreasonable to assume that had Whitman been domiciled in the Caribbean rather than New York he would have nevertheless issued a virtually identical ode, substituting only the subjects of his exclamation.

The link, then, between sport and society, was not unique to America. What was unusual, however, was that, despite its British roots and heavy British influence through the middle of the nineteenth century, America nevertheless gravitated to a much less developed game – baseball – and saw in it everything its numerous British-influenced

societal kin saw in cricket. Other British-influenced societies had developed native games just as Americans had developed baseball; in this they were no different than America. However, these games largely failed to survive, or if they did, remained confined within the realm of sport. In America, the results were far different. Despite cricket's substantial head start and its historic role as a societal symbol, baseball quickly and forcefully supplanted it both as a game and as the national metaphor. Which begs the simple question: why?

The answer lies, at least in part, in another deliberate social policy, this one on behalf of a group of status-conscious Americans who attempted to emulate the small-town values of the Protestant (WASP) establishment of the early and mid- nineteenth century in an effort to increase their societal standing. As baseball became more popular as the century progressed, these men, who would eventually be known as baseball club owners or "magnates," saw an opportunity to hitch their star to the game and use it as a vehicle for self-promotion. For them, the goal was acculturation into the closed world of the respected (but, perhaps ironically as society became more urbanized and industrial, increasingly less influential) WASP elites – a club they, due to perceived shortcomings as a result of familial and/or ethnic handicaps, otherwise could never hope to join merely through the accumulation of wealth alone. Aided by their journalist allies, these individuals set out to promote the game and, in essence, themselves, as "true" Americans, aspiring to a status they were otherwise not assured of achieving due to these familial and ethnic handicaps.

They would achieve this status through their successful proliferation of what has become known as the "baseball creed." Although, as the following chapters attest, the

creed has been quite malleable through the decades, molding and conforming itself to respond to whatever the pressing issues of the day happened to be, its essence has never changed: that baseball, not unlike cricket in places like England, India and Barbados to name but a few, is more than a game; instead, it stands in for America in name as well as in concept and is an invaluable tool in the teaching and promotion of American values and ideals. In its most overt and cheerleading form (which was characteristic of its earlier incarnations, in evidence from the late-nineteenth century through the early decades of the twentieth), the hyperbole was especially thick: it was promoted as “building manliness, character, and an ethic of success;” it molded youngsters, helping boys become better men not only through playing but simply by watching the game; it contributed to the public health and was an agent for democratization.⁸ All of this was neatly summed up by a journalist in 1907 who wrote, “[a] tonic, an exercise, a safety valve, baseball is second only to death as a leveler. So long as it remains our national game, America will abide no monarchy, and anarchy will be slow.”⁹ Through the baseball creed, these “new money” Americans were ultimately able to gain the status (although as events that unfolded throughout the twentieth century and discussed in later chapters would attest, certainly not the power) they were seeking, breaking through and eventually opening up the historically closed but rapidly changing American hierarchy of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Though initially hardly the “magnates” and “leading citizens” they portrayed themselves to be, eventually they were able to achieve in fact the status they had spent years trumpeting to the American public they had already obtained.

This self-promotional effort was itself not unusual in the sense that social climbing through storytelling has always been, and remains, an American tradition. In fact, America takes its name from a storyteller who hoped to achieve goals similar to those of the early baseball “magnates.” Like many of the early “magnates,” Amerigo Vespucci was a merchant with aspirations to rise above his station into the aristocracy.¹⁰ Like them, he had obtained a measure of wealth but soon learned that while the closed caste of early sixteenth century Europe permitted aristocrats to become merchants, it was not so easy for merchants to become aristocrats. More than wealth was required. What was needed was something money could not buy. Therefore, in search of this elusive goal, “[h]e sought to project himself as a magus in touch with the powers of nature, and he frankly wanted enduring renown.”¹¹ Eventually, following in Columbus’s path, he reinvented himself as a world explorer, spinning tales that exaggerated his navigational expertise, accomplishments and daring. After his death, his legend grew until, by the time of the U.S. independence, it reached fruition when he was hailed as a “preincarnation of the spirit of revolutionary America,” replete with traits symbolic of the nascent, Enlightenment era United States -- a nation that, according to the story, had evolved to become the physical manifestation of the spirit of Amerigo Vespucci.¹²

The early baseball “magnates” sought through baseball what Vespucci found through exploration. That they would find it speaks not merely to their efforts at self-promotion, however. To their benefit came, at the same time, a furious attack on the entrenched power structure and societal elites by the growing American underclasses, which were becoming more diverse through immigration and less like the elites who nevertheless still dominated the ruling and societal classes. Together, these movements

eventually were able to fracture the closed caste of small-town, upper crust America, which had been designed to shut these outsiders out in their efforts to keep status, and therefore power, concentrated in the hands of the few.

A Players' Game No Longer

In its earliest incarnations, baseball was a players' game; the concept of an "ownership" rank, as distinguished from a "players" rank was one far off into the future. Instead, baseball (or at least a version of it, as will be discussed below) prospered largely as a game played between members of middle and artisan-class clubs which themselves emulated the elite clubs that defined and designated the top rung of mid-nineteenth century American society.¹³ Although certainly there was some mixing of the classes and, as such, some upper-class baseball players and even clubs, by and large, many elite clubs preferred cricket to baseball and would typically never even consider the members of these lower-rank clubs for admission into their elite societies. These elite clubs were run and populated instead by white, old-stock Protestants –WASPS -- who, in many instances, formed their clubs for the primary purpose of segregating themselves from the masses in an effort to demonstrate and display their superior societal status.¹⁴ Indeed, the choice of cricket as a unifying theme for their clubs was not accidental: transplanted Englishmen, who initially controlled cricket in the antebellum era, proudly practiced exclusive and snobbish attitudes toward outsiders and discouraged the participation of the lower classes. The WASP cricket clubs that sprung up in their wake merely adopted this attitude.¹⁵ Through their clubs, these old-stock Americans discovered, in the words of sociologist and chronicler of upper crust America, E. Digby Baltzell: "an ideal instrument for the gentlemanly control of social, political and economic power."¹⁶ In fact, it was this

notion of exclusivity through club membership that made the American club unique, separating it from the likes of its forbears, the British club. For while the British club (as opposed to the American club run by Englishmen discussed above) was created to bring together members with like interests in activities such as golf, sailing and tennis in furtherance of their pursuit of these activities, the American club was (as these transplanted Englishmen recognized), and is, designed to foster social exclusivity – sport was merely the by-product of this socializing purpose. In British clubs, sport was the purpose and sociability the by-product; in the American ones, just the opposite was the case. As Baltzell noted, after one graduated from the youthful preparatory societies of the boarding school and the university, “[p]roper club affiliation was, after all, the final and most important stage in an exclusive socializing process.” In the end, it was club affiliation, more than mere accomplishment alone, which determined an individual’s societal status during this era.

As stated above, many of these elite clubs revolved around cricket. As for why these status-conscious clubs gravitated toward the transplanted Englishmen and their fondness for cricket, one only has to look at the nature of American democratic society. Without the protections provided through rigid class lines such as those that existed within the British Empire, the American upper class, suffering from a perpetual case of status anxiety, were drawn to the transplanted Englishmen’s elitist attitude toward cricket (which itself likely emanated from their unease in residing within a society that lacked the formal social structure of their homeland) and were attracted toward this unambiguous marker of high social status. As a consequence, the game was not promoted throughout the larger population.¹⁷ By restricting entry into their clubs, and by

playing a game they discouraged outsiders to take up through their refusal to promote it, club members were therefore able to transform cricket into a synonym for a distinct class rather than society as a whole.

This was quite unlike how cricket was, and is, viewed in virtually all other countries of British influence (Canada being another, albeit lesser, exception). In India and the Caribbean, for instance, people from all levels of society were encouraged to play the game, although “stacking” (the concept of “positional segregation” within teams) was often prevalent and in deference to the differing social classes taking part in a given match (for example, bowling and wicket-keeping were performed by low-status players while the captain and star batsmen were reserved for high-status “gentlemen”).¹⁸ Despite, or perhaps because of, the presence of stacking (which was particularly prevalent in multiracial British colonies such as Barbados, Jamaica and India), cricket was able to thrive among all levels of society within these countries. On American soil, however, given that cricket was quickly co-opted by the anxious, status-conscious upper class clubs, it was never given a chance to take root. In the end, it was the democratic concept of social mobility that killed cricket in America: elites’ fear of the concept that anyone, from even the humblest beginnings, could rise to the top of American society.¹⁹ This caused them to take a game from the public sphere and confine it to their own social circle, where, through club membership, they maintained the ability to thwart interlopers by citing shortcomings such as family, racial or ethnic traits as justification for the perpetual stratification of their societies. As a result, cricket in America developed a snooty image, which is precisely what these elites had intended.²⁰

With these elite clubs, with their elite game, closed off to the masses, those below the top rung of American society focused their energies on a variation of the emerging game of baseball (although some did dabble in both games for a time²¹). Through the promotion of the game by these lesser, although solidly middle and artisan-class, clubs,²² baseball soon assumed the societal role in America that cricket played in England as well as the myriad other countries of British origin throughout the world. Eventually, just as cricket captured the interest of the various classes in those countries, baseball became a passionate pastime of all classes within American society. However, this was not the case initially, at least not with regard to the version of baseball being promoted by these middle and artisan-class clubs. And, like the upper class's co-opting and cordoning off of cricket for their specific, status-marking purposes, this was by design.

The Knickerbocker Base Ball Club of New York, the club that is commonly believed to have, in 1845, first set down in writing its rules for the earliest incarnation of what we today consider baseball (although there is evidence that another club in fact did so eight years earlier²³), was a club in every sense of the word in that it was quite select in its membership: among the members of their 50-odd men club between 1845-60 were 17 merchants, 12 clerks, five brokers, four "professional men," two insurance men, a bank teller, a cigar dealer, one hatter, a cooperage owner, a stationer, a United States Marshal, and several "gentlemen."²⁴ In short, this was a collection of men who found themselves one station beneath the city's elite.²⁵ Just as with the upper class clubs, interest in baseball was not the foremost admission criteria for this club; instead, it was the requisite standing within the community that was, in many instances, determinative. As the baseball historian Harold Seymour observed, "[t]he Knickerbockers wanted to restrict

baseball to their own social class. For a while they limited their matches to clubs that used the Elysian Fields, hoping in this way to meet only their social equals.”²⁶ As such, they mimicked the elite cricket clubs that existed for the primary social purpose of excluding the likes of them.

By design, whenever they convened, they made sure that the game they played was one that suited their purposes -- athletically and otherwise. Although there have been bat and ball games of one sort or another for as long as there have been bats and balls, the Knickerbockers, as well as the other “gentlemanly” baseball clubs that sprouted up in New York around this time, adopted a specific version of baseball that appealed to their societal aspirations. In short, in defining “base ball” they made sure to define it such that it spoke to their values and was, not insignificantly, a game that was commensurate with their limited abilities on the field.²⁷ Thus, their game, the “New York game” as it would come to be known, frowned upon the rough and tumble aspects of the New England version of the game, where, among other indignities, runners could be retired by being “plugged” or “soaked” by the ball, and where the taunting of poor play was the norm.²⁸ Instead, as the more sedentary men of the rising middle classes were prone to be, they created a “gentleman’s” game where “manly” skills were on display; however, they defined “manliness” as “gentlemanly,” such that, in the words of baseball historian John Thorn, baseball became more “a matter of decorum and bearing [than] courage.”²⁹ Thorn continued, “[f]or common men of sedentary habits who would, if they had their wish, be leisured gentlemen, such as the Knickerbockers, it was more important to comport themselves well than to play well.”³⁰

The aspirational ethos of the Knickerbocker club and the New York game was soon adopted by the other “gentlemanly” baseball clubs that sprouted around the nation. A St. Louis base ball club, for example, boasted that its membership consisted of “some of the brightest young men of St. Louis, among them a number of whom have left the impress of their handiwork in almost every honorable calling,” while a Cleveland club brayed that its members “were nearly all scions of the best families of Cleveland.”³¹ All of these clubs were following in the footsteps of the Knickerbockers, who, if the reports were to be believed, could call as members players from some of the most socially prominent families in New York.³² Of course, the reports were not to be believed; if these members did in fact hail from such backgrounds they were more likely to be members of cricket rather than baseball clubs. Still the reports spread, in New York and elsewhere, as these striving white collar and artisan status seekers positioned themselves for hopeful ascension into the upper ranks of American society.³³ What was important to these clubs was that they marked and differentiated their members from the lower classes, the semi-skilled or unskilled workers, who, at this point, were not as ravenous over baseball – at least as the New York game defined it -- as they were.³⁴ Indeed, in his study of early baseball and cricket, George Kirsch suggests that the antebellum attraction of artisans to baseball may very well be rooted in their declining societal status as a result of the industrial revolution. As they declined professionally, many of these artisans may have turned to baseball to distinguish themselves this way instead.³⁵ If the base ball clubs of the era had their way, this would have remained the case indefinitely.

In fact, it was not difficult for these middle and artisan-class clubs to restrict baseball (as they defined it) to their own kind, at least initially. These workers, with their

higher incomes and shorter work hours, simply had more time and money to join clubs and engage in recreational activities than did their lower class brethren.³⁶ In addition, as immigrants poured into the country throughout the nineteenth century, they soon came to dominate the lower classes and many of them were simply not interested in baseball given that it was most likely unheard of in their countries of origin.³⁷ Thus, despite the reports of baseball sweeping the nation throughout the mid-nineteenth century, the veracity of this boast depended greatly upon how one defined “baseball”: the New York game did indeed capture the fancy of the rising middle class and artisan status-seekers, and while other bat and ball games were played by the lower classes, their games were far less formalized, and more brutal, than the New York game and were thus not considered “baseball” at all by those interested in promoting the more gentlemanly version of the game. Although there were certainly blue-collar clubs and players who did play the New York game, by and large those above and below the middle and artisan classes had a much more limited interest in it. This would most certainly change as the century progressed, however, and the game became more democratic in its appeal as well as less gentlemanly in nature.³⁸

As the gentlemanly clubs were true “clubs,” they were participant based, with socialization (and marking) of club members the primary goal and sport being secondary. Soon, advances in the game of baseball (as well as the creeping influence of the competitive aspects of the lower class games) changed all of this. The trajectory of the original Philadelphia Athletics provides a representative example of how the gentlemanly New York game morphed from a club sport to a competitive, professional one, giving rise to the concept of team “backers” and eventually “owners.”

The Athletics Base Ball Club was an offshoot of another club, the Handel and Haydn singing society, located at Sixth and Spring Garden streets in Philadelphia.³⁹ Several of the members were interested in the game so, in 1859, they decided to form a ball club. They elected a president of the club, William Emot, who eventually gave way to Col. Tom Fitzgerald, a Handel and Haydn member and Controller in the Philadelphia public school system who was notable for being the first to require music as part of the curriculum of Philadelphia public schools (later, his pamphlet, "Music in our Public Schools" became popular and influential both throughout the United States as well as in London).⁴⁰ Very quickly, this recreational endeavor created by and for members of the singing society, outgrew its gentlemanly constraints. As the Athletics improved, they played more games and travelled more often. Obviously, somebody would have to pay these increasing expenses; the players' membership dues could not cover everything. Soon, the concept of "backers" -- members who contributed financially toward the club's expenses but did not play, took root.

More ominous were the under-the-table efforts to increase the quality of the club. In 1865 Al Reach jumped from the Eckford Club in Brooklyn to the Athletics, becoming in the process the first player to switch cities in order to play baseball professionally and the first true mercenary in the game (there were paid players before Reach but never one who travelled as far as he did for the primary purpose of playing baseball for money).⁴¹ Although the game was still, technically speaking, an amateur, "gentlemanly" endeavor, this was quickly falling by the wayside as the Athletics skirted the rules by having one of their backers set Reach up in a cigar store above Fourth and Chestnut Streets (he eventually transformed this into a sporting goods empire).⁴² Later, backers enticed other

top players to join the Athletics, putting them in fabricated jobs in order to skirt the amateurism requirements. Pitcher Dick McBride was given a desk in the City's Treasurer's office, a \$1,200 salary and no obvious responsibilities; other players such as Patsy Dockney were given similar enticements.⁴³ Although some players, such as Reach, actually worked at these "jobs" and transformed them into something legitimate, others did not bother to hide the fact that they were jobs in name only; Dockney rarely showed up for his, preferring instead to "play ball every afternoon and fight and drink every night" in exchange for his salary.⁴⁴ With Dockney, as with a rapidly increasing number of the Athletic players, it was very clear what they had been brought to Philadelphia to do and they made little or no effort to hide this reality. In fact, even though the Cincinnati Red Stockings of 1869 are generally considered to have been the first professional club in baseball history, this is accurate only to the extent that the Red Stockings were the first openly professional team or the first all-salaried team; the Athletics most likely put nine professional players on the field a year earlier, in 1868.⁴⁵ All of these expenses: uniforms, travel, procurement of top players, now fell upon "subscriptions from the members and extra donations by particular and particularly able friends."⁴⁶ In a few short years, the Athletics of the Handel and Haydn Singing Society had become a quaint and fading memory.

By the late 1860's, despite being members of the amateur National Association of Base Ball Players (NABBP), professionalism had taken over the Athletics, just as it had many of their rivals, thus leading to a vicious cycle where they had no choice but to turn even more heavily toward professionals if they hoped to continue to compete and succeed. Thus, although top players could find a home within the Athletics' club, the less

talented ones were fading into the background. If they hoped to retain an affiliation with the club, it would have to be by a means other than playing. Many members left the club altogether but some remained, choosing to continue their involvement by financially backing the club, becoming the “able friends” so needed to finance the burgeoning business of professional baseball.⁴⁷ In less than a decade, the exclusivity of clubs like the Athletics and others had evolved (or devolved, depending upon one’s perspective) to the point where they excluded most of their founders and members.

The divergence between what the Athletics once were and what they had become was formalized in 1871 when the NABBP split into two entities, one amateur (The National Association of Amateur Base Ball Players – NAABP) and one professional (The National Association of Professional Base Ball Players – The National Association). Still, however, although in the National Association there was now a clear demarcation between players and owners, it remained a players’ league; the owners, or “backers,” lurked in the background as the players took center stage. This was evident through the National Association’s rules and practices: a player, not a backer, was elected the first president of the league;⁴⁸ “revolving” (players freely jumping from one team to the next in search of greater opportunity and compensation) was permitted;⁴⁹ and the league was very loosely organized (any group of players could gain entrance into the National Association and become “professionals” so long as they were able to find a backer willing to pony up the \$10 league franchise fee).⁵⁰ This loose organizational structure (clearly drawn up by those more interested in playing the game than running it) soon led to problems that destabilized it: gambling, rumors of fixed games, and incessant revolving (all consequences of the increasing competitiveness of the games – legacies of

the lower class games where the point was to win rather than to comport oneself well⁵¹) were rampant. All of this clashed with the pervasive Victorian values of the time that were passed down through American society by the WASP elites.⁵² With the National Association vulnerable and calls for reform coming from all corners, the backers – the same people who just a few years earlier were pushed aside in their own clubs by the professional players they, ironically, initially recruited to help increase their visibility and, hence, their social status – saw their opportunity to reassert themselves and reclaim their positions of status. In effect, they staged a “coup d’etat,” appropriating the game from the players, forming, in 1876, the National League, and claiming it for themselves.⁵³

In the new National League, the players were relegated to subordinate status; this was going to be an owners’ league, not a players’ league. In 1879 the reserve rule, which prevented revolving (and allowed the owner to choose his players rather than vice versa) was established.⁵⁴ Of course, the owners were free to trade, sell, or release players at their whim. Players were likewise granted no voice in league governance and had no right of appeal of any decision rendered against them; the days of a player presiding over league affairs was long gone. Soon, the players were removed from every aspect of the game save for the actual competition on the field. The owner decided everything else: who was to play on “his” club, what they were to be paid, who was to manage the club, and how “his” ballpark was to be run.⁵⁵ Perhaps most significantly, the National League owners reestablished the concept of the exclusive closed club: no longer could any team join simply by paying the requisite franchise fee. Now, the league was closed to everybody except those chosen by the existing owners to join them – only fellow “elites” could boast of club membership.⁵⁶ In all of these ways, the formerly subordinate club

backers had transformed themselves into powerful, high status team owners and they stood front and center before America in their newly prominent roles.

Once established, these owners were eager to inform the American public, and most notably the WASP elites they aspired to join, of their accomplishments in service to the Victorian values they helped to protect and promote. They “nourished the legend that the NL saved professional baseball from utter ruin. Had it not been for the timely creation of the NL and the sagacious decisions of its leaders, so the fable went, the national pastime would have continued its downward slide into complete degradation...the NL ostentatiously presented itself as the national pastime’s main moral guardian.”⁵⁷ In this way, by rescuing the game “from its slough of corruption and disgrace,” as they boasted, the owners presented themselves to the public as nothing less than American heroes.⁵⁸

Disseminating this information was rather easy and effective given the similar interests of and close connections between these owners and the journalists who were increasingly assigned to cover their games. By the time of the birth of the National League, this relationship between baseball and the media was an established one, with the nationwide triumph of the New York game attributable to, in large part, the handiwork of baseball journalists. Beginning in 1853, the influential and high-brow weekly, the Spirit of the Times, promoted the New York game, complete with its attendant definition of “manliness”, to its audience, defined by its founder, William Trotter Porter, as: “gentlemen of standing, wealth and intelligence, the very Corinthian columns of the community.”⁵⁹ The ability of the Knickerbockers and their compatriots to regularly reach their targeted demographic in this way helped their version of the game ultimately

prevail. Later, other newspapers similarly preached the values inherent in the New York game. In 1889, The New York Times announced that “[b]aseball is an intellectual pursuit, which is indulged in only by gentlemen of the highest mental caliber, and by those whose minds have undergone a singularly-stringent training in the matter of intellectuality.”⁶⁰ Other newspapers wrote in similarly gushing prose of the inherent value of baseball overall. With regard to the reporting on specific teams, lavish journalistic praise was equally forthcoming, for this not only helped to promote the game, it promoted these papers’ hometown cities, as well as their civic leaders.

In the late nineteenth century, particularly in the newer, less established Midwestern cities, survival of communities into the future was far from guaranteed so newspapermen saw it as in their interest to not merely report the news but to engage in boosterism as a means of convincing outsiders, as well as locals, that theirs was a thriving community complete with top notch civic institutions and prominent citizens.⁶¹ In this way, boosterism -- an act of self-preservation -- generated a by-product of bloated, fawning portraits of club owners (who, given their connection with their clubs, were often the most visible ambassadors for their cities) which were far more aspirational in nature than rooted in fact. As such, the image of club owners as wealthy, influential, benevolent “magnates” (a term otherwise reserved for industrial and financial giants such as Rockefeller, Carnegie and the like) -- flourished, despite the reality that these owners were most often self-made, well-to-do merchants or moderately prosperous businessmen: successful certainly (to a degree) but hardly magnates on par with the industrial and financial behemoths of the era.⁶²

Even in the more established Northeastern cities, boosterism existed, although not to the same degree. In addition, there were two other factors that explained the close connection between the owners and journalists in the Northeast as well as elsewhere. First, even as far back as the late nineteenth century many writers depended on the owners for their livelihoods.⁶³ Because owners often paid their expenses and hired them for additional promotional work, these journalists were not about to bite the hand that fed them. Second, the relationship between the media and the owners was occasionally incestuous with many team executives former journalists.⁶⁴ In 1901, former Cincinnati Enquirer sports editor Ban Johnson helped to transform the American League from a minor to a major league and became the most prominent example of this but these types of connections predated him by several years. The Spink family not only founded The Sporting News, it was intermittently involved in ownership of various St. Louis area teams throughout the late nineteenth century;⁶⁵ other newspapers, in the Northeast as well as the Midwest, were instrumental in forming or otherwise supporting their local baseball clubs in their effort to promote their towns.⁶⁶ For all of these reasons, newspapermen found it beneficial to promote their local teams and paint the owners as larger-than-life figures: “selfless philanthropists” operating their clubs in the public interest, conveniently ignoring their many ties to gambling and corruption that would have sullied this image.⁶⁷ Through the journalists, the owners’ goal of portraying themselves as noblemen, deserving of status equal to the WASP elites, moved one step closer to realization.

The National League as Bastion of WASP Values

Although baseball, by the time of the formation of the National League in 1876, had been hailed as the country’s national pastime for two decades, the didactic qualities

of the baseball creed were not as yet firmly entrenched. This changed over the next several years, however, as club owners took the connection between baseball and America deeper than it had previously been, from merely a game that exemplified the gentlemanly qualities of the nation's best citizens, to one which defined the essence of the country overall; one which, through the simple acts of playing or watching it, was vital to the development of new Americans complete with the proper American values and ethics.

The seeds of this transformation were embedded within the insistence of the National League's "magnates" to instill Victorian values within the fabric of their newly created league in an effort to aid them in achieving their ultimate goal: namely, acculturation among the WASP elites.⁶⁸ Interestingly, and despite their identification as "magnates," the club owners by and large aspired to a much smaller and quainter societal position than the one assumed by the true magnates of the day. Taking their cues from the WASP elites, who dominated the small-town lifestyle of the early and mid-nineteenth century that was being eclipsed at that very moment, the club owners adopted and promoted their mores in the hope of achieving a similar (although ironically, rapidly vanishing) status. In many ways they looked backwards rather than forwards for inspiration, seeking the status and community position that had theretofore been available to men of moderate means in the more rural and locally-focused America that dominated the landscape prior to the dawn of the Industrial Revolution.⁶⁹ Drawing upon the small-town values stressed by the WASP elites, ones that preached the virtuousness of the villager or the yeoman farmer (as opposed to the corruption of the cities and of the industrialists currently threatening the status of the Protestant establishment), the club

owners attempted to sell, through baseball, a vision of America that would resonate with these increasingly marginalized small-town elites.⁷⁰ As such, the “magnate” moniker notwithstanding, the club owners did not aspire to become the equals of Rockefeller, Carnegie and their ilk. For those men were, in the eyes of many small-town and rural residents, corrupted city folk; “soulless monsters of monopoly” who threatened the basic fabric of America.⁷¹ The club owners aspired to become the antithesis of these men; they sought to promote themselves, and therefore their game, as bastions of purity and morality – everything the actual magnates were not.

As such, they molded their game (or at least the public perception of it) to become one which embraced and emulated the Victorian “blue laws” enacted by the Northeastern WASP elites who still dominated many local legislatures and who considered such laws crucial, particularly in the wake of increasing immigration and industrialization, to the preservation of their heritage and way of life.⁷² Consistent with the prohibitionist wave then cresting in small towns throughout the Northeast and Midwest,⁷³ the National League upon its formation banned the sale of alcohol at league games.⁷⁴ In addition, it prohibited Sunday baseball and mandated that admission prices be kept high precisely to discourage and, in many cases prevent, attendance from lower class fans.⁷⁵ In devising its admissions policy, the National League was simply emulating the more influential New York cricket clubs which likewise had begun to charge admission to their matches a decade earlier for precisely the same reason.⁷⁶ Together, all of this resulted, in the opinion of Chicago owner Albert Spalding, in crowds “composed of the best class of people... and no theater, church, or place of amusement contains a finer class of people than can be found in our grandstands.”⁷⁷

In appealing to this, increasingly smaller, demographic, the National League ignored a potentially growing fan base as club owners went out of their way to make their games convenient for only a relatively privileged few to attend. They left passes for prominent local citizens – businessmen, politicians, clergymen – in the hope that their attendance would lure other well-heeled citizens to consider taking in a game or two as well. They even went as far as telephoning some of their desired patrons in order to inform them of field conditions in an effort to nudge them out to the game. As a result of their rules and behavior, National League teams drew a largely male, middle-class crowd. All the while, there was, as a result of immigration, an increasing multitude of ethnics who did not share the Victorian distaste for alcohol or Sunday baseball and who might have had an interest in attending a game or several if it were convenient and affordable.⁷⁸ However, by design, it was not so they stayed away. Thus, just as concerned cricket officials were able to successfully weed out the working classes from their matches, so were the National League owners able to bar much of these same people from their games as well.⁷⁹ The brave owners who tried to buck their brethren and appeal to this potential fan base quickly felt their wrath and served as examples to the others not to step out of line. In 1881, in an effort to appeal to its increasingly large German population, the Cincinnati club persisted in selling beer and playing Sunday games in defiance of league rules. It was promptly expelled, its large German fan base apparently not the demographic the National League was hoping to attract.

Very quickly, due to the elitist approach of the National League, rival leagues emerged, hoping to court the very fans who would have been National League fans if only they were wanted. In anticipation of the 1882 season, the American Association

was formed (by two sportswriters in cities with large German populations – St. Louis and Cincinnati – whose teams were squeezed out of the National League due to its alcohol policy) as a workingman's counterpart to the National League. The new league halved ticket prices (only 25 cents to attend an American Association game), sold alcohol and permitted Sunday baseball so as to attract the blue-collar fans whose only day off was the one day baseball was forbidden within the NL.⁸⁰ Later, in 1883, the Union Association was formed along similar lines.⁸¹ Initially, the National League responded as was to be expected: by falling back upon the supposedly elite status of the National League as a means of denigrating the upstarts. NL club owners dubbed the American Association "The Beer and Whiskey Circuit;" noted with derision that the Union Association was being floated with "beer money" and alleged that the league itself was "being run in the interests of brewers."⁸² When these appeals to Victorian values failed (the American Association quickly began to outdraw the National League due to its presence in larger cities – after its inaugural season the NL ignored the nation's two largest cities at the time, New York and Philadelphia, until pressure from the rival leagues compelled it to expand into these markets in 1883), NL owners resorted to taking credit for their rivals' success. Making lemonade out of lemons, they claimed that, as trumpeted in the 1883 Spalding's Guide (published by Chicago owner Albert Spalding), such success was merely due to "the revival of the public confidence induced by the gradual establishment of honest professional play under the auspices of the National League."⁸³ Eventually, however, the National League realized that it had no choice but to make peace with its rivals in order to survive financially. In 1891 the National League and the American Association merged and formed an expanded National League. Critical to this merger

was a loosening up of the league's Victorian policies: in the new National League, each city was free to determine its own Sunday baseball policy.⁸⁴

Still, despite bringing the American Association into its fold, the National League clung to its elitist aspirations; however now, in its effort to reach the broader, more ethnically diverse fanbase it previously ignored and which its battles with the working class leagues at last compelled the expanded NL to address (if not embrace), the prescriptive qualities of the game itself became the primary status markers. Hence, baseball as an educational, socializing and acculturation tool was stressed more than ever. From now on, baseball as promoted by the NL owners would no longer be a game merely for gentlemen. Rather, it would be a game that could teach anyone at all to become a gentleman – a model American citizen inculcated with the bedrock values of the nation. This appeal to the WASP elites, of baseball as a gateway toward the moral principles inherent in the Victorian blue laws, and as club owners as gatekeepers of this “proper” way of American life (and fit for admittance into their restricted club) was coming, however, at a time when the elites' club doors were closing on outsiders more firmly than ever before. Before the Civil War, it was possible, although not common, for citizens of ethnic ancestry (such as the early German Jews) to gain entry into the upper echelons of WASP society. This was largely because there were relatively few such candidates for admission due to the trickle of immigration during the early part of the nineteenth century; the few ethnics who were able to accumulate wealth during this time were not considered a threat en masse to the dominant WASP society.⁸⁵ After the Civil War, with the uptick in immigration, this began to change. By the 1880's, with immigrants flooding the American borders, discrimination against all ethnic Americans became rigid and

institutionalized as caste barriers sprang up around the increasingly threatened (and increasingly outnumbered) WASP elites. As the nation headed toward the twentieth century, although WASPs maintained their dominant leadership positions across the country, they were becoming less and less representative of the population as a whole. In addition, although as a group they did not see their wealth decline during this time, they were nevertheless becoming marginalized by the ever-increasing number of big city industrialists and financiers whose wealth and power dwarfed theirs.⁸⁶ Accordingly, they felt threatened and closed ranks in order to protect themselves and their status. By the late 1800's, their closed caste excluded hyphenated-Americans of all types.

In order to justify this increasingly rigid caste, the WASP elites naturally sought to align themselves with their wealthier brethren and against the teeming masses by falling back upon the social science of the mid-nineteenth century (developed and practiced almost exclusively by them given their near monopoly on higher education) which, not surprisingly, validated their exalted societal rank. Following on the heels of Charles Darwin's The Origin of Species By Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favored Races in the Struggle for Life, in 1859, the concept of Social Darwinism (commonly attributed to Herbert Spencer although his views were actually rooted more heavily in Enlightenment ideas of universal evolution rather than the more savage "survival of the fittest")⁸⁷ emerged post-Civil War as a means to justify class distinctions. At its core, Social Darwinism, or at least the crude understanding of it as practiced by social scientists calling themselves "evolutionists," was a radical concept, striking at the heart of Biblical theory which revolved around the assumption of the unity of mankind and which postulated that all men were descendents of Adam and therefore

were all “equally brothers under the fatherhood of God.” These Social Darwinists, which many western thinkers post-Darwin fancied themselves to be,⁸⁸ believed the opposite to be true: in the words of William Graham Sumner, America’s leading Social Darwinist and presumed disciple of Herbert Spencer, “the millionaires are a product of natural selection, acting on the whole body of men to pick out those who can meet the requirements of certain work to be done...It is because they are thus selected that wealth – both their own and that entrusted to them – aggregates in their hands. They may fairly be regarded as the naturally selected agents of society for certain work. They get high wages and live in luxury but the bargain is a good one for society.”⁸⁹ Indeed, perhaps Spencer’s most ardent American protégé, Andrew Carnegie, argued as much through his theory of philanthropy: by funneling a portion of his wealth into charitable endeavors, men such as him “guaranteed the greatest good to the greatest number.”⁹⁰ In the words of Baltzell, these evolutionists “were convinced that the Anglo-Saxon millionaires who ruled the nation in their day were the ‘fittest’ men in the world.”

As a group, the Social Darwinists sympathized with various forms of racialist thinking. As such, they were also strict segregationists. Beginning in the 1870’s, many American scientists drew from Social Darwinist thought in order to justify the separation of the races. Many neo-Darwinists believed that little good could come from the interaction between whites and blacks and supported state efforts to compel both segregation as well as disenfranchisement of black citizens.⁹¹ As the baseball club owners looked to emulate the WASP elites, who themselves were by now supporting many Social Darwinist theories as a means of self preservation, it was perhaps inevitable that the National League would itself become stridently segregationist as well.

An offshoot of Social Darwinism was the Eugenics Movement, founded in 1883 by Darwin's nephew, Francis Galton.⁹² As a group interested in the biological consequences of social policy, they warned the Social Darwinists that the "fittest" were not, in fact, surviving. Instead, "while millionaires were making money, morons were multiplying; modern medicine was preserving the unfit while modern war was sending the best to the front and keeping the worst at home; and, above all, the old-stock graduates of Harvard and Yale were being rapidly outbred by alien immigrants."⁹³ Supported by the WASP elites, they called for extreme curtailment of further immigration in an effort to protect even further erosion of the rapidly fading WASP-centered society; the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 being but one testament of their significant sway. Through all of this -- Social Darwinism, the "evolutionists," and the Eugenics Movement -- nativism hardened as a core, impenetrable principle among the WASP elites. As outsiders, like the baseball "magnates," banged on their doors demanding entry, the WASP elites fortified their clubs by falling back on lineage as their last line of defense of privilege with nativist clubs or "orders" soon sprouting up like dandelions. In 1883, the Sons of the Revolution was formed; this was followed by the Daughters of the American Revolution, the Society of Mayflower Descendants, the Aryan Order of St. George or the Holy Roman Empire in the Colonies of America, among many other nativist clubs. In fact, of the 105 "patriotic" nativist orders founded between 1783 and 1900, 71 were founded after 1870.⁹⁴ Genealogy also boomed during the last decades of the century. Amid the immigration surge, there was likewise a "patrician scramble for old-stock roots" in an effort to separate the established from the

newly arrived. This scramble was, of course, “intimately bound up with anti-immigrant and anti-Semitic sentiments.”⁹⁵

It was in this environment that the National League owners, themselves in many cases the targets of these anti-immigrant, anti-Semitic sentiments, sought to gain entry into the upper echelon of American society through their baseball creed. However, they appeared to be up against a brick wall: while they were busy promoting their game, and therefore themselves, as authentically American, the WASP elites were busy arguing the opposite. Ironically, although on the surface it appeared as if the baseball creed was an attempt by the club owners to ingratiate themselves with the WASP elite, in fact the creed was a direct challenge to everything the elites stood for. For the prescriptive nature of the baseball creed preached the acquisition of American values through baseball; the social science of the era, as practiced by the Social Darwinists and Eugenicists taught the converse: that such values were inherent in some and unattainable in others; that it was heredity that mattered, not environment. By contradicting the predominant social science of the time, by challenging the values and assumptions of the WASP elites through their contention that, via the baseball creed, even the lowliest immigrant could be taught to be an upstanding, moral, American citizen, the club owners were taking a seemingly curious path toward acceptance by the WASP elites. However, not only was this perhaps the only avenue available to these Americans of newer stock, the creed too was the product of social science – a strain that very soon, due to the changing face of the nation, would become predominant.

The Baseball Creed Prevails

In the end, the “magnates” and their baseball creed could not help but emerge victorious in this clash of American societal theories. This was because the baseball creed was consistent with and grew out of a larger, emerging social scientific theory – a new social science – which would soon become predominant and which was in keeping with the changes taking place in late nineteenth, early twentieth century America. As immigrants continued to pour over the borders, despite the protestations of the Social Darwinists and Eugenicists, America became much less homogenous and WASPish than ever before. Inevitably, the hereditarian view of human nature held increasingly little sway in an increasingly multicultural America. In fairness to the Social Darwinists, most millionaires and societal leaders in William Sumner’s time grew up in an America much more rural than it had by now become. In their youth, when society was small, controlled and homogenous, heredity mattered, both on the farms and in the families who ran them. Good genes meant good livestock and good farmers from one generation to the next. In this world, good families prospered, bad ones went to seed. Social Darwinism not only justified these old-stock Americans’ place atop the social hierarchy, it was consistent with their life experience.⁹⁶ As America grew more urban, these old rules and values no longer held sway.

The industrialized America of the late nineteenth century bore almost no resemblance to the rural or small town America to which the WASP elites were tethered. The slums of the big cities were debilitating and the issues that arose out of them were far too complex and pressing to be ignored and blithely explained away through the vehicle of oversimplified elitist social theories. Social Darwinism thus became vulnerable in this

increasingly urban, heterogeneous America. Inevitably, a new social science emerged which appealed to the burgeoning immigrant masses in that it explained their predicament and offered them a path toward advancement in their new country. Very soon, it vanquished Social Darwinism and the Eugenics Movement, which would ultimately fall on their own swords with the rise of Adolph Hitler and the Third Reich.

The new social science – evolutionary environmentalism -- was advanced by John Dewey (he preferred the term “instrumentalism”) and focused on cultural environment as the key factor in achieving success. Diminishing the role of heredity, Dewey preached that education, as with most of the crucial skills in life, was a matter of experience rather than innate logic. One of his followers was Clarence Darrow who neatly summarized the new social science’s focus on environment over heredity when he said, “[a]sking how people grew up may make all men equal yet.” This focus rapidly caught on (coming into its own by the turn of the century) given that it was compatible with the goals of the U.S. education system at the time which was primarily focused on the task of assimilating the children of immigrants into mainstream American life.⁹⁷

Increasingly, studies measuring the importance of cultural environment were produced that rebuked the Social Darwinists by showing that it was environment, rather than the “natural” factors stressed by the Social Darwinists and Eugenicists, that primarily accounted for group differences. One study of Army recruits during World War I famously showed that northern blacks clearly benefited from their superior cultural environment when they tested higher than white recruits from the poverty-stricken Deep South.⁹⁸ Other studies showing that environmental factors were primarily to blame for youthful lawlessness were also publicized. In 1910 and 1911, the anthropologist Franz

Boas gave a series of lectures at Harvard where he discussed the result of his latest work, an anthropological study of immigrants, where he studied the physical changes in certain characteristics of immigrants and their children as their environment changed from Europe to the United States, and what this might suggest regarding cultural adaptability as well. His conclusions cut to the core of Social Darwinism and the Eugenics Movement: “The adaptability of the immigrant seems to be much greater than we had a right to suppose before our investigations were instituted,” he concluded.⁹⁹ Time and again, these studies demonstrated that inborn racial or ethnic traits were outweighed by environmental factors. In sum, it was cultural conditioning that lay at the heart of the evolutionary environmentalism movement and offered hope to those who were not born into privilege.

The baseball creed, with its overt claim of just the sort of cultural conditioning the new social scientists were preaching, fit neatly into this paradigm. In reaching out toward children and immigrants, offering baseball as a way to acculturate into mainstream American life, the creed, bolstered by evolutionary environmentalism, turned a spotlight on the owners that portrayed them as true, respectable, praiseworthy Americans after all. It was not out of the blue that people such as sportswriter Hugh Fullerton gushed that “[b]aseball, to my way of thinking, is the greatest single force working for Americanization. No other game appeals so much to the foreign-born youngsters and nothing, not even the schools, teaches the American spirit so quickly or inculcates the idea of sportsmanship or fair play as thoroughly.”¹⁰⁰ Rather, these sentiments were simply in keeping with the emerging social science of the era. Due to the seamless fit between the baseball creed and evolutionary environmentalism, many Americans by the

turn of the century saw baseball as an accurate reflection of contemporary society. To an increasing number of them, nothing more than baseball spoke to and of the nation. That baseball and America were, by the early part of the twentieth century, gloriously entangled was summed up by Albert Spalding in 1911 when he concluded that the connection was obvious: it was like saying “two plus two equals four.”¹⁰¹ If baseball had become “America’s game” – a vessel through which the soul of the nation could be found -- then the owners had wisely positioned themselves as the gatekeepers of this source of discovery. It was no coincidence that baseball came of age at the precise moment when the new social science bloomed across the nation; the two were intertwined.

It was likewise no coincidence that in both the new social science and the baseball creed the emphasis was the same: faith in reform through environmental improvements. This was compatible with the aspirations of the increasingly large number of urban immigrants of non-WASP ancestry. Both evolutionary environmentalism and the baseball creed supported and rationalized these minority groups’ search for acceptance and respectability. Both served the interests of the downtrodden (especially immigrants struggling to assimilate) by attributing differences to malleable factors such as cultural surroundings rather than immutable ones such as race or ethnicity. Both gave hope to these people by stressing that they could indeed rise through the hierarchy of American society and could, if they were able to improve their environment, realize the American Dream. In all of this, both stood firmly on the side of the future; Social Darwinism and the Eugenics Movement were firmly rooted in the past.

As it became more widespread and accepted, the baseball creed was likewise compelled, cruelly enough, even on those who harbored few wishes to assimilate into the

dominant culture. Perhaps inevitably, its rhetoric, infused as it was with the foundational principles of evolutionary environmentalism, gained much traction as well with those who believed in the forced cultural assimilation of Native Americans in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Indeed, Richard Henry Pratt, the founder of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in 1879, was a proponent of the creed and believed baseball to be instrumental to achieving his goal of “civilizing” his Native American students.¹⁰² Not unlike his British forbears in the Caribbean and India, Pratt – substituting baseball for cricket – used the game to enforce his lessons regarding the dominant white culture, urging his students to “pitch in and learn to play!”¹⁰³ In addition to the cultural whitewashing his Carlisle school practiced in its formal curriculum (which among other things mandated haircuts, school uniforms in an effort to separate the students from their native clothes and jewelry, and the repression of indigenous languages),¹⁰⁴ baseball was added to the mix in 1886 – four years before its more famous football program began intercollegiate play – and quickly became another tool in furtherance of the school’s assimilationist policy. Significantly, the team wore uniforms with the initials C.I.T.S. stitched on the fronts, initials which technically stood for “Carlisle Indian Training School” but which also suggested the word “citizen.” Pratt was very clear to point out that this was not a coincidence: “See how near that (C.I.T.S.) comes to being an abbreviation of ‘citizens,’ which they all are aspiring to become?”¹⁰⁵ For better or worse, the baseball creed very quickly became ingrained within mainstream American culture.

As American society grew more heterogeneous and as the old-stock WASP elites became less representative of the population as a whole, their influence began to wane.

Not all retreated to their exclusive country clubs but their presence in public life and status as elite cultural scions, although still significant, was hardly the virtual stranglehold it once had been. Meanwhile, the rise of Adolph Hitler and the Nazi party during the 1930's, with their emphasis on a "master race" and extermination of supposed genetic inferiors, ended the debate between the new social science and the old for good. In Nazi Germany, Social Darwinism and Eugenics were being practiced in their most extreme, most horrifying form. As a result, practically all western thinkers outside of Hitler's sphere of influence soon discarded any sympathy or attraction they may have previously had in these theories. Scholarship treading in these areas was no longer recognized as legitimate; the debate was over.¹⁰⁶ The new social science was now overwhelmingly accepted (although within it, there were, and always would be, disagreements between various threads). In the end, the owners – societal outsiders throughout the mid and late nineteenth century – were able to elevate their game and, ultimately, themselves just as they had hoped. Through the ceaseless promotion of the game through the baseball creed, and its convergence with the emerging social science of the time, the owners' dreams had been realized.

Ironically, it was most likely the failure of these late nineteenth and early twentieth century owners to thoroughly convince the public that they were indeed noblemen that finally led them to achieve the status they so desperately sought. Although they preened and called themselves "magnates," most people recognized men such as department store and Cincinnati owner John Brush, meatpacking "moguls" and Washington Nationals owners George and J. Earl Wagner, streetcar developers and Cleveland Spiders owners Frank and Stanley Robison, as well as the numerous billiard

parlor operators, saloon keepers, theater owners and the like (many of them Germans, Jews, and other ethnics) who likewise invested in National League clubs for what they were.¹⁰⁷ As such, and perhaps to the club owners' initial consternation, much of the public saw right through their boasts. However, in a changing society, this was to their benefit. For in the owners, many Americans did not see a class of men blessed with privilege from birth but rather, something of themselves – men from hardscrabble pasts who demonstrated the social mobility possible in this land of opportunity. In short, they were precisely the sort of self-made men envisioned through the hopeful ethos of the baseball creed.

By their very presence, the club owners suggested that the creed and evolutionary environmentalism were more than just theories. In many ways, they were the real-life incarnations of the Horatio Alger “rags to riches” stories that had become increasingly popular during the Progressive era.¹⁰⁸ This would be somewhat ironic in that the Alger stories embraced the small-town WASP ethos that most assuredly took a dim view of evolutionary environmentalism. However, their overriding message of indomitable hope for the hopeless spoke (most likely unintentionally) to many whom otherwise may have been predisposed to be hopeless themselves.¹⁰⁹ All of this inured to the benefit of the club owners who, in retrospect, should not have been surprised to find themselves tethered to a strand of WASP culture given that they had spent many years doing all they could to emulate it.

Their good fortune was certainly not all of their own doing, however. Had the country's first adopters of cricket – the WASP elites – felt less status anxiety and more secure in their sense of place within American society, they may very well have shared

their game with the nation and perhaps cricket rather than baseball would have evolved into a national metaphor here as it has in other countries of British origin.¹¹⁰ That they kept their game to themselves opened the door to a new game, one promoted by people seeking status and power rather than fearful of losing it, and one that came packaged with a rhetoric designed to help them achieve it. This rhetoric resonated with a country in transition – one with millions of new citizens who were strangers in a strange land looking for something to guide them, something to grab hold of, in their effort to become, at last, “Americans.” It was on the backs of these people that the club owners were able to elevate their game and, in turn, their own status to the point where baseball became more than just a game but symbolic of America as a whole. The baseball creed would be the first widely embraced, culturally affirming story of baseball; it would hardly be the last.

End of Excerpt. “A People’s History of Baseball” is available for purchase on Amazon.com and wherever books are sold.

Notes

Prologue

¹ Jane B. Baron, *Resistance to Stories*, 67 Southern California Law Review 255, 261-62 (1994). See also Daniel A. Farber & Suzanna Sherry, *Telling Stories Out of School: An Essay on Legal Narratives*, 45 Stan. L. Rev. 807, 822-23 (1993).

² See Steven D. Jamar, *Aristotle Teaches Persuasion: The Psychic Connection*, 8 Scribes J. Legal Writing 61, 62 (2001-02).

³ See Stephen Johansen, *This Is Not The Whole Truth: The Ethics of Telling Stories to Clients*, 38 Ariz. St. L. J. 961, 981-82 (2006), for a discussion of the value and impact of fictional stories.

⁴ See Jamar, *Aristotle Teaches Persuasion*, at 61-62.

⁵ See Johansen, *This Is Not The Whole Truth*, at 981-82.

⁶ See Richard Delgado, *On Telling Stories in School: A Reply to Farber and Sherry*, 46 Vand. L. Rev. 665, 666-67 (1993).

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid., at 674.

⁹ Ibid., at 666-67, 674.

¹⁰ Ibid., at 667. (“Unless the storyteller is exceptionally ingenious, the scope for change through remonstrance, argument, and other verbal means is much more limited than we like to think.”) Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic coined the term “emphatic fallacy” to describe the erroneous belief that we can somehow overcome our desire to screen and interpret new stories – the counter-stories – through the medium of the old, accepted stories. Through this method of interpretation, we naturally reject those counter-stories that are radical departures from what we previously believed to be true. See Richard Delgado & Jean Stefancic, *Images of the Outsider in American Law and Culture: Can Free Expression Remedy Systemic Social Ills?*, 77 Cornell L. Rev. 1258, 1261, 1278-79 (1992).

Chapter One

¹ Jules Tygiel, *Past Time: Baseball As History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000, 2001), 6.

² Ibid., 3-4.

³ Benjamin G. Rader, *Baseball: A History of America's Game* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 1.

⁴ Jason Kaufman & Orlando Patterson, "Cross-National Cultural Diffusion: The Global Spread of Cricket," *American Sociological Review* 70, (February 2005), 82, 92.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid., 85.

⁸ Steven A. Riess, *Touching Base: Professional Baseball and American Culture in the Progressive Era* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 7-32.

⁹ Ibid., 22.

¹⁰ Felipe Fernandez-Armesto, *Amerigo: The Man Who Gave His Name to America* (New York: Random House, 2007, 2008).

¹¹ Ibid., 110.

¹² Ibid., 194-95.

¹³ Harold Seymour, *Baseball: The Early Years* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960, 1989), 15.

¹⁴ E. Digby Baltzell, *The Protestant Establishment: Aristocracy & Caste in America* (New York: Vintage Books, 1964, 1966), 112-13.

¹⁵ George B. Kirsch, *Baseball and Cricket: The Creation of American Team Sports, 1838-72* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989, 2007), 97-98.

¹⁶ Baltzell, *The Protestant Establishment*, 136. The discussion of the distinctions between the American and British clubs discussed herein draws primarily from Baltzell's study. *See also* pp. 124, 135-36.

¹⁷ Kaufman & Patterson, *Global Spread of Cricket*, 99.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 93.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 98-99, 105.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 97.

²¹ This would continue throughout the amateur era of baseball. In fact, the game's first professional baseball player, Jim Creighton, played cricket as well in 1861 and 1862, as did some of his Brooklyn Excelsior teammates. John Thorn, *Baseball in the Garden of Eden: The Secret History of the Early Game*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2011), 124.

²² In his study of nineteenth century baseball and cricket, Kirsch notes that in New York, where baseball took early root "most of the first baseball players were skilled craftsmen, clerks, petty proprietors, or managers." He further notes that "very few unskilled or semi-skilled men played baseball in New York or Brooklyn before the Civil War..." Rather, the game was favored primarily by white-collar workers. Kirsch, *Baseball and Cricket*, 130.

²³ Thorn, *Baseball in the Garden of Eden*, 26, 38-39. Indeed, William Rufus Wheaton appears to have taken on this task for the Gotham Club, also of New York, in 1838. As Thorn notes, The Knickerbockers were more likely "consolidators rather than innovators" as, rather than create new rules for baseball, they most likely jotted down the rules as they knew them to be at the time.

²⁴ Seymour, *Baseball: The Early Years*, 16.

²⁵ Melven L. Adelman, *A Sporting Time: New York City and the Rise of Modern Athletics, 1820-70* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 122-23.

²⁶ Seymour, *Baseball: The Early Years*, 23.

²⁷ Thorn, *Baseball in the Garden of Eden*, 48, 81.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 111.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 112.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 48.

³¹ Peter Morris, *But Didn't We Have Fun?: An Informal History of Baseball's Pioneer Era, 1843-1870* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2008), 49-50.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Riess, *Touching Base*, 32.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 31-38.

³⁵ Kirsch, *Baseball and Cricket*, 130.

³⁶ Riess, *Touching Base*, 31-38.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 38.

³⁸ See Kirsch, *Baseball and Cricket*, 155-56. Kirsch notes that, as the nineteenth century progressed, there were ever more blue-collar baseball clubs and even "mixed" clubs with members of varying economic backgrounds. Prior to the Civil War, however, there were far fewer blue-collar players. Between 1850-55, 87% of New York's baseball players were white collar workers. By the time of the War era, the percentage of white collar ball players hailing from New York and Brooklyn had dropped to 64%. In sum, semi-skilled and unskilled workers constituted only a small percentage of baseball players in the antebellum period. *Ibid.*, 130.

³⁹ John Shiffert, *Base Ball in Philadelphia: A History of the Early Game, 1831-1900*

(Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., Inc., 2006), 24.

⁴⁰ *Makers of Philadelphia: An Historical Work Giving Portraits and Sketches of the Most*

Eminent Citizens of Philadelphia From the Time of William Penn to the Present Day,

Charles Morris, ed. (Philadelphia: L.R. Hamersly & Co., 1894), 122 (Profile of Col.

Thomas Fitzgerald). Available at

<https://secureapps.libraries.psu.edu/digitalbookshelf/bookindex.cfm?oclc=29893541>

⁴¹ Shiffert, *Base Ball in Philadelphia*, 41.

⁴² Morris, *But Didn't We Have Fun?*, 177-81.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 178.

⁴⁵ Shiffert, *Base Ball in Philadelphia*, 62.

⁴⁶ Morris, *But Didn't We Have Fun?*, 177-81.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Seymour, *Baseball: The Early Years*, 60.

⁴⁹ Riess, *Touching Base*, 158.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ See Thorn, *Baseball in the Garden of Eden*, 85-89.

⁵² Rader, *Baseball: A History of America's Game*, 47-48.

⁵³ Seymour, *Baseball: The Early Years*, 80.

⁵⁴ Mitchell Nathanson, *Gatekeepers of Americana: Ownership's Never-Ending Quest for*

Control of the Baseball Creed, 15 NINE: A Journal of Baseball History & Culture 68, 71

(Fall 2006).

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Rader, *Baseball: A History of America's Game*, 49.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 50.

⁵⁸ Seymour, *Baseball: The Early Years*, 81.

⁵⁹ Thorn, *Baseball in the Garden of Eden*, 104.

⁶⁰ "Baseball at Delmonico's, *The New York Times*, April 9, 1889, 5.

⁶¹ Rader, *Baseball: A History of America's Game*, 33; Morris, *But Didn't We Have Fun?*, 147-48.

⁶² Tygiel, *Past Time*, 48.

⁶³ Nathanson, *Gatekeepers of Americana*, 74.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Morris, *But Didn't We Have Fun?*, 147-48.

⁶⁷ Nathanson, *Gatekeepers of Americana*, 74.

⁶⁸ Rader, *Baseball: A History of America's Game*, 44.

⁶⁹ Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform*, (New York: Vintage Books: 1955), 135-36.

⁷⁰ Hofstadter refers to these values as the "agrarian myth" and notes the contrast in how the WASP elites identified themselves and their vanishing world with the rapidly growing cities and the men who had overtaken them in both economic and financial status. Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform*, 8-46.

⁷¹ Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), 45-47. See also Richard Weiss, *The American Success Myth: From Horatio Alger to Norman Vincent Peale* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 100. Weiss notes

that despite their name recognition, the business magnates of the Gilded Age “were not the heroes of the popularizers of the mobility ideology.” Instead, those who preached tales of American success during this time idealized the small businessman who valued principles and virtue rather than naked wealth and power.

⁷² Riess, *Touching Base*, 138-39.

⁷³ Wiebe, *The Search for Order*, 56-57.

⁷⁴ Seymour, *Baseball: The Early Years*, 91.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*; Riess, *Touching Base*, 33.

⁷⁶ Kirsch, *Baseball and Cricket*, 195-96.

⁷⁷ Riess, *Touching Base*. Unless otherwise noted, the National League's owners' courtship of the well-heeled draws primarily from this text. *See also* pp. 37, 51-52.

⁷⁸ Rader, *Baseball: A History of America's Game*, 55.

⁷⁹ *See* Kirsch, *Baseball and Cricket*, 195-96.

⁸⁰ Riess, *Touching Base*, 135.

⁸¹ Seymour, *Baseball: The Early Years*, 150.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 144, 150.

⁸³ Nathanson, *Gatekeepers of Americana*, 72.

⁸⁴ Riess, *Touching Base*, 136.

⁸⁵ Baltzell, *The Protestant Establishment*, 58, 138. *See also* pp. 27-32, 74-75, 98-105, 113-115, 157-175 re: his discussion of WASP society, Social Darwinism and the emergence of the new social science discussed herein.

⁸⁶ Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform*, 137.

⁸⁷ Robert C. Bannister, *Social Darwinism: Science and Myth in Anglo-American Social Thought* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1979), 35. According to Bannister, the term “Social Darwinism” has been historically misunderstood as has much else surrounding mid to late nineteenth century social thought. *Ibid.*, 6-7. Technically, Spencer was not a “Social Darwinist,” although he expressed many views, some contradictory throughout his lifetime, on social policy. He did spawn many followers who misinterpreted his beliefs, thus giving rise to various forms of “Reform Darwinism” that in many ways were likewise inconsistent with the beliefs and teachings of Charles Darwin himself but which were nevertheless used to justify the stratification of society and to support various exclusionary and discriminatory practices.

⁸⁸ For a more complete analysis of the debate between various theories of Social Darwinism, see e.g., Bannister, *Social Darwinism* and Richard Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought* (New York, Beacon Press, 1992). Bannister and Hofstadter differ on the definition of the term as well as on who wore the moniker. A detailed analysis of their disagreement is beyond the scope of this chapter.

⁸⁹ See Baltzell. Interestingly, Sumner diverged from Spencer in many ways, most fundamentally with regard to Spencer’s Enlightenment belief in universal evolution. Bannister, *Social Darwinism*, 99. In addition, although Sumner was a proponent of individual and laissez faire, he recognized the necessity of law in order to protect competition. In this way, he was very much a progressive in spite of his naturalism. *Ibid.*, 100.

⁹⁰ Wiebe, *The Search for Order*, 135. Spencer once described Carnegie as one of his two best American friends. Despite this, Carnegie, as did many others, badly misinterpreted

much of Spencer's work. As historian Joseph Wall once wrote, "Carnegie waded bodily into the writings of Herbert Spencer, and with his feet barely wet...imagined himself to be swimming in the strong current of a new faith." Joseph Wall, *Andrew Carnegie* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 365.

⁹¹ Bannister, *Social Darwinism*, 189-90, 196, 198-99.

⁹² If anything, Galton was convinced that Darwin (who in any event never intended his theory of "natural selection" to be the final word with regard to human social interactions and policy, Bannister, *Social Darwinism*, 31) was wrong, as discussed herein. *Ibid.*, 168.

⁹³ Baltzell, *The Protestant Establishment*, 105.

⁹⁴ Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform*, 138.

⁹⁵ Baltzell, *The Protestant Establishment*, 115.

⁹⁶ See Baltzell, *The Protestant Establishment*, 157, 58; Wiebe, *The Search for Order*, 136.

⁹⁷ Baltzell, *The Protestant Establishment*, 167.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 169.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 171-73.

¹⁰⁰ Riess, *Touching Base*, 29.

¹⁰¹ Rader, *Baseball: A History of America's Game*, 93.

¹⁰² Jeffrey Powers-Beck, *The American Indian Integration of Baseball* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 7.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 38-39.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 34-35.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 38-39.

¹⁰⁶ Baltzell, *The Protestant Establishment*, 274-75; Bannister, *Social Darwinism*, 178-79.

¹⁰⁷ Rader, *Baseball: A History of America's Game*, 36; See also Tygiel, *Past Time*, 47-48.

¹⁰⁸ Weiss, *The American Success Myth*, 52-60.

¹⁰⁹ Although, given the WASP values embraced through the stories as well as their foundation within the agrarian myth, Alger's tales were undoubtedly written for a nativist audience, his appeal broadened significantly after his death. By World War I, aggregate sales of his books had exceeded 16 million copies. Frank L. Mott, *Golden Multitudes: The Story of Best Sellers in the United States* (New York: Macmillan, 1947), 158-59.

¹¹⁰ Kaufman & Patterson, *The Global Spread of Cricket*, 105.