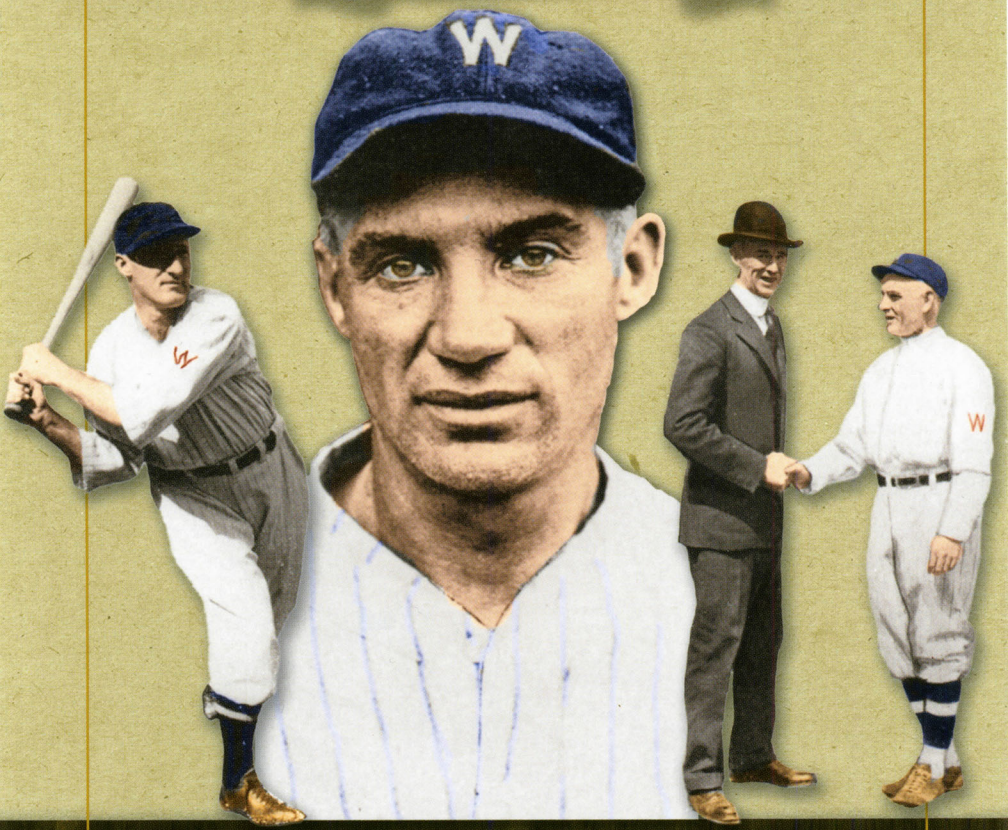
The Washington Senators

SHIRLEY POVICH



New foreword by Richard "Pete" Peterson

The Washington Senators

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Shirley Povich

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To Ethyl

Foreword

Richard "Pete" Peterson

When I became the editor of the Southern Illinois University Press Writing Baseball Series in 1997, I decided to supplement our publication of original writing on baseball with reprints of baseball classics.

I contacted book dealers and collectors around the country and asked them for a list of long-out-of-print baseball classics that needed to be made available again for baseball readers. Their responses ranged from Alfred H. Spink's 1911 publication, *The National Game,* arguably the first baseball history, to Eliot Asinof's brilliant 1950s novel, *Man on Spikes;* but their most consistent recommendation was for reprints of the Putnam team histories.

In 1943, G. P. Putnam's Sons began a series of team histories with the publication of Frank Graham's book on the New York Yankees. From 1943 to 1954, Putnam published histories for fifteen of the sixteen major league teams. The Philadelphia Athletics ball club was the only one not included in the series, though Putnam did publish a biography of Connie Mack in 1945.

Thirteen of the fifteen team histories in the Putnam series were written by four sports writers who were later honored by the Hall of Fame with the J. G. Taylor Spink Award for "their contributions to baseball writing." The famed New York columnist Frank Graham, after launching the series with the Yankees history, added team histories for the Brooklyn Dodgers and the New York Giants. Chicago sports editor and journalist Warren Brown, once dubbed the Mencken of the sports page, wrote both the Cubs and the White Sox team histories, while the eloquent *Washington Post* sportswriter Shirley Povich contributed the Senators history. The legendary and prolific Fred Lieb, who, at the time of his death in 1980 at the age of ninety-two, held the lowest numbered membership card in the Baseball Writers Association, authored six team histories for the Putnam series. He also wrote the Connie Mack biography for Putnam.

Beginning with the Cardinals and the Cubs in 2001, the SIU Press Writing Baseball Series reprinted eight of the Putnam team histories, including the Yankees, Dodgers, Giants, Pirates, Red Sox, and Browns/Orioles. During that period, the Northeastern University Press decided to get in on the fun by publishing a reprint of the Putnam Boston Braves team history.

When I became editor of the Kent State University Press Writing Sports Series in 2005, we continued the tradition of publishing the Putnam classic series with reprints of the Indians and the Reds team histories. Since then, the Kent State University Press has reprinted Putnam's team histories for the White Sox, Tigers, and Phillies. With this reprint of Shirley Povich's Washington Senators team history, the mission to publish reprints of the original fifteen Putnam team histories, begun a little more than a decade ago, is now complete.

In his Preface to the Washington Senators team history, Shirley Povich wrote that in the early years of the twentieth century, the Senators were so terrible that every baseball fan in the country knew the popular vaudeville gag that "Washington was first in peace, first in war, and last in the American League." When I was growing up in the 1950s, the Senators were so awful that the gag was as popular as ever. At the end of the 1959 season, the Senators, perhaps trying to get some distance from being the butt of baseball's most popular joke, left Washington, took a northwest passage, and became the Minnesota Twins.

As bad as the original Senators were at the beginning and the end of their history in Washington, they were certainly blessed by having Shirley Povich write their team history for the Putnam series. In *No Cheering in the Press Box,* Jerome Holtzman, in commenting about Povich's long-running "This Morning" column in the *Washington Post,* wrote, "the column stands as a treasure of literary elegance, and offers textbook examples for all sportswriters." Povich was such a standard bearing for excellence in journalism at the *Washington Post* that its editor, Ben Bradley, once claimed that for many years his columns and reports were "carrying the paper."

Shirley Povich, thanks to his unusual first name, could also claim the distinction of being the only male listed in *Who's Who in American Women.* In the early 1960s, he received an invitation from its

editors to fill out some data, which he threw away. Undaunted, the editors took Povich's entry from *Who's Who in America* and reprinted it in their volume. The entry made national headlines, and *Time* actually ran a photograph of Povich smoking a celebratory cigar.

Born in 1905, Shirley Povich began his career with the *Washington Post* as a copy boy when he was seventeen. He was still writing columns for the paper up until the day before his death at the age of ninety-two. He had his first byline as a sportswriter in 1924, and in 1926 he became the youngest sports editor for a major newspaper in the United States.

His first report for the *Washington Post,* published August 5, 1924, was on a Senators team, led by "boy manager" Bucky Harris and the great Walter Johnson, that went on to win the World Series that year. His last column, published on June 5, 1998, the morning after his death, was a cautionary note on the home run heroics of Mark McGwire: "To judge McGwire a better home run hitter than Ruth at a moment when McGwire is exactly 300 home runs short of Ruth's career output is, well, a stretch."

Povich was a master of colorful and elegant prose. In describing Don Larsen's perfect no-hitter in the 1956 World Series, he wrote, "The million-to-one shot came in. Hell froze over. A month of Sundays hit the calendar. Don Larsen pitched a no-hit, no-run, no-man-reach-first-base game in a World Series."

Povich could also capture the drama and significance of a moment of baseball history in a simple and powerful sentence. When Jackie Robinson crossed baseball's color line on April 15, 1947, Povich wrote, "Four hundred years after Columbus discovered America, major league baseball reluctantly discovered the American Negro."

In his team history of the Washington Senators, Povich doesn't avoid writing about "the little men of the early years who made fumbling attempts to produce a winning team and resorted to sharp practices and the unconscionable duping of the patient and loving fans." His best moments, however, come when he writes about the Washington Senators' "big men," like Hall of Famers Walter Johnson, Clark Griffith, Bucky Harris, and Joe Cronin.

For Shirley Povich, the real story of the Washington Senators begins with the acquisition in 1907 of Walter Johnson, "the kid pitcher from Weiser Idaho," after the team received letters from

a Washington traveling salesman urging the Senators to sign "this boy . . . the strike-out king of the Snake River Valley League." With his blazing fastball, Johnson would go on to become the most dominant pitcher in baseball.

In 1924, after years of individual greatness and team frustration, he finally pitched in a World Series. After struggling early in the Series, he became the winning pitcher in the seventh and deciding game that gave Washington its World Championship.

While Walter Johnson became the most celebrated player in Washington Senators history, the most important figure in the team's history was "the Old Fox," Clark Griffith. In 1912, Griffith became the manager of the Senators, and, by 1920, he was able to buy out the old and inept Washington ownership.

Often criticized as an owner for being too conservative and tightfisted, he took the bold step of hiring of twenty-seven-year-old Bucky Harris as player manager in 1924. The "boy manager" led the Senators to back-to-back American League pennants in 1924 and 1925 and to the franchise's first and only World Series victory in 1924. In 1933, Griffith appointed another boy manager in twenty-six-year-old Joe Cronin, who led the Senators to the 1933 American League pennant, the last in Washington's team history.

Because of the popular vaudeville line, baseball will always remember the original Senators for being "last in the American League," but the truth is that under Griffith's leadership the Senators were a first division club in nearly half of his more than forty years as a manager and owner. His teams won three American League pennants and a World Series title and had only three last place finishes from the time he became manager in 1912 to his death in 1955, just one year after the publication of Shirley Povich's team history in the Putnam series.

Shirley Povich once said that a confident writer has the independence to write history the way it actually happened and not pander to the public taste: "You say to yourself, 'They're the ball players. Let them play the game. I'm a reporter.'" But he also admitted, "for a reporter, it's more than just a game. It's a great challenge in the sense that there it is—it has happened in front of you and now you must sit down at the typewriter. It's a task."

Happily, for his readers, Shirley Povich was always up to the task of writing stories and columns on our national pastime for the *Washington Post* and certainly up to the task of writing the Putnam team history about his Washington Senators.

Preface

THE most-heard vaudeville gag of the early years of the century coupled baseball's Washington Senators with the illustrious father of the country. The folks in the theater, the man in the street, and the children in school knew that Washington was first in peace, first in war, and last in the American League.

If vaudeville couldn't survive under the incessant impact of that type of humor, the Washington Senators succeeded nevertheless in going on to acclaim. Their early failures produced hardy fans in the nation's capital. They had to be of Spartan stuff or become extinct, the victims of almost continual heartbreak, knowing no triumph until Clark Griffith came along in 1912.

That year manager Griffith strode into the Washington scene with his cowpoke gait and lifted the Senators all the way from seventh place to the heights of a second-place finish. It had taken the Washington team twenty-four years, including twelve seasons in the old twelve-club National League, to get solidly into somebody's first division. In fact, at the turn of the century, the old National League had willingly given up Washington and dropped the city completely. Lopped off with Washington in the cutback to eight teams were Louisville, Cleveland, and Baltimore.

Two years before Griffith took over the team and brought in the new era of baseball to the nation's capital, a four-alarm fire early in the spring of 1910 brought the horse-drawn engines clanging to Washington's American League Park, then being readied for the opening of the new season. Hours later, a huge chunk of the rickety wooden grandstand and the weathered pine bleachers was a charred mess, waiting for a 20,000-dollar insurance adjustment. The District of Colum-

bia's mustached fire chief poked into the smoking wreckage, pulled reflectively at his upper-lip foliage and delivered the opinion that "a plumber's blowtorch must have started this thing."

Out in Chicago, a former manager of the Washington Senators read of the blaze the next day and instantly agreed with the chief's findings. "The chief is probably right," murmured Joe Cantillon, "and the plumber was probably playing third base." It was an understandable reaction by Cantillon, who had joined the long list of Washington managerial alumni, having been fired at the end of the '09 season after piloting the Senators into the cellar twice and seventh place once, in his three-year term. Cantillon was painfully familiar with the incompetents, rejects, and so-called player material given to Washington managers.

The story of the Senators, their struggles, long-delayed triumphs, new frustrations, and more triumphs, is the story of two kinds of baseball men and a city's loyal fans. There were the little men of the early years who made fumbling attempts to produce a winning team and resorted to sharp practices and the unconscionable duping of the patient and long-suffering fans. Then along came the big men: Walter Johnson, with a transcendent skill at playing the game; Clark Griffith, with a low bankroll but a high faith in the capital's baseball future, plus a genius for assembling teams; Stanley (Bucky) Harris, the indomitable boy wonder, a manager who brought two Washington pennant winners; and Joe Cronin, another Cinderella kid, who won another pennant.

It was the modest, beloved Walter Johnson and his pitching feats that set new records in the books, who stood virtually alone against the national scorn for Washington's hapless teams of the early 1900's. The reverence toward Johnson displayed by Washington fans spilled over into the national community, and in 1924 America rose in applause for the man who, after toiling uncomplainingly for seventeen years on Washington teams, found himself pitching in a World Series.

The idolatry in which Johnson was held was best expressed one day by Edward T. Folliard, a native Washing-

tonian and famed Pulitzer-prize-winning correspondent on national and international affairs. Recounting his more important assignments, he recalled tours with Presidents of the United States, his coverage of visiting royalty, and his experiences as a war correspondent on the European front. He listed, too, the day he covered the Walter Johnson story at Rappahannock, Virginia, when Johnson (the Big Train) emulated George Washington's legendary feat of throwing a silver dollar across the Rappahannock River. "As man and boy, that was my biggest thrill," said Folliard. "You see, I was the fellow who held Walter Johnson's coat."

Griffith prefers to separate himself from the dismal history of the Senators prior to 1912. In that year he gave up the direction of the Cincinnati Reds to move to the capital city as manager. Against the advice of his associates who reminded him that Washington was the graveyard of all baseball operations, Griffith even demanded a stock interest along with the job of manager. He didn't walk into Washington unacquainted with its unfortunate past. In the 1890's Griffith hit Washington regularly as the star pitcher of Pop Anson's Chicago Colts of the old National League. And from 1901 to 1908 as manager of the Chicago White Sox and New York Highlanders, he knew of the lean crowds in Washington. Yet in 1920 his faith in the town was so great he sank his last dollar and pawned his Montana farm holdings to buy forty per cent of the Senator's stock, half of the controlling interest.

Since then, he has controlled by far the tightest family operation in the major leagues. Griffith kin occupy the front office and run the concessions. Griffith has never departed from a custom of naming one of "my boys," meaning his former ball players, to the job whenever a managerial post on the Senators was vacant. If Griffith has had to operate snugly on the fiscal side—and this is necessary because he is trying to run a big-league team in the smallest town in the American League—he has been an eminently successful operator. Today his Washington team is completely debt free, an unusual circumstance in the major leagues.

If Griffith's teams have not exactly terrorized the American League in the forty-one years of his managership-owner-

ship, neither have they been pushovers. They have won three pennants and a World Series, and in twenty of those forty-one years they have finished in the first division. To keep the Senators operating, Griffith was forced to manipulate his limited player talent. Rarely did he make a player deal without cash accruing to the Senators. Washington fans were not always pleased with those deals. "He'd even sell his son," the fans complained on occasion. They were almost right. Griffith did sell his nephew-in-law, Joe Cronin, to the Boston Red Sox in 1934. The compensating factor was 250,000 dollars of Tom Yawkey's money, the highest cash price ever paid for one player.

It was Johnson's pitching feats and his drawing power that sustained Griffith during the lean years and virtually kept big-league baseball in Washington. Griffith made the most of Johnson as a gate attraction. He carefully spaced the Big Train's appearances both at home and on the road to draw the biggest crowds, and was not above calling sports editors on the telephone the night before the game and pleading, "Johnson's pitching tomorrow. Give us a headline."

Baseball in Washington, short on pennants until the happy year of 1924, was long on history, however. The game in the nation's capital was two years old before the Confederates fired on Fort Sumter.

Chapter I

THE threat of a great civil war hung heavy over Washington, D. C., in 1859, and the people of the nation's capital moved with uncertain step, caught up in the restive spirit of the onrushing schism between North and South. Never a gay city, Washington in that year appeared to the visitor even more solemn. Crime was at a new high, uniforms were more numerous than usual in the streets, and the slavery issue was flaring in the taverns, the drawing rooms, and on Capitol Hill.

But with the wishful thinking characteristic of some people in grim times, one segment of Washingtonians was attempting to continue with the usual social activities. They went to dances at the Drover's Rest to whirl in the Virginia Reels or skip in the Boston Fancy, or to Odd Fellows Hall to laugh at the antics of one Wyman, a comedian of the times. During the summer they piled on the steamer *James Guy* for cruises down the Potomac to Piney Point.

It was during this tense period that the Game of Base Ball —thus it was called, with capital letters—first made its appearance in the parks of Washington. In the summer of '59, government clerks, fascinated by newspaper accounts of the Game of Base Ball in other cities, formed a team called the Potomacs.

The government clerk of that era was a considerable force in the social life of the city. He was an upper-bracket, middle-class worker envied for the wages and security of his job. Thus a team of government clerks could give tone to the new game. Historians of the times report that many were "thrilled" by the prospect of deserting the Willard and Ebbitt Hotel bars for the wholesome, invigorating outdoors, and the game

caught on to the extent that a second team, the National Club, was organized in November of the same year.

Most of the team members came from the then-fashionable Capitol Hill section. James Morrow and J. L. Wright, both government officials, were elected president and vice president of the National Club. The secretary was Arthur Pue Gorman, scion of a noted Maryland family, who was later to be United States Senator from his state.

It was the Potomacs, though, from the "first ward" area, roughly bounded on the east by Fifteenth Street and on the west by Rock Creek Park, who were the more skilled team. In the spring of 1860 the interloping Nationals were challenged to a series of battles at Base Ball.

On the White Lot, then called the back yard of the White House and now known as the Ellipse, the first game was played. The Potomacs won, but the score is still clouded in doubt created by a lack of common understanding of the rules. It was conceded that the Potomacs scored thirty-five runs, but varied accounts of the game credit the Nationals with as few as fifteen and as many as thirty runs.

It soon developed that the Nationals could not provide the opposition the Potomacs needed, so the latter team looked curiously toward Baltimore, where a club called the Excelsiors was establishing a reputation as one of the finest teams in the East. On June 6, on the White Lot, the Excelsiors satisfied the curiosity of the Potomacs, who gained a better understanding of the game, plus a 40-to-24 defeat. In the polite reportorial language of the day, an account of the game read:

> The friendly match between the Potomac Club of this city and the Excelsior Club of Baltimore came off on the grounds south of the President's Mansion yesterday afternoon. Quite a number of visitors were present and witnessed the sport and were highly pleased with the result throughout, the opposing clubs bearing their defeats with perfect equanimity. The Excelsiors came out winner at the close of the game. At night they partook of rich entertainment prepared for them by Gunther at the order of the Potomac Club. We understand the Baltimore club made 40 runs to 24 by the Washington Club.

(The city directory listed Gunther as the bartender at the Ebbitt Hotel, so the type of "rich entertainment" provided may be well imagined.)

The Potomacs disbanded with the outbreak of the Civil War, but the Nationals, despite depletions in manpower when many team members left to join the colors, culled enough players to stay in competition. Baseball didn't ask for a green light from President Abraham Lincoln, but it is assumed any such request would have gained favorable consideration. The President was a fan. One of his biographers, in a pamphlet entitled "Abraham Lincoln in the National Capital," tells of Lincoln's frequent visits to the games.

In fact, Lincoln brought a baseball background to the White House, according to the late Steve Hannegan, the high-powered publicist engaged by Baseball Commissioner Landis in 1939 to help acclaim baseball's Centennial Year. Hannegan either resurrected or invented an episode which supposedly took place in Springfield, Illinois, in 1860 and illustrated President Lincoln's affection for the game. The following appeared in the Centennial Year literature:

> "Tell the gentlemen they will have to wait a few minutes until I get my next turn at bat."
>
> The speaker was a tall, gaunt man named Abraham Lincoln. And the gentlemen he was telling to cool their heels were a side-whiskered delegation from the Republican National Committee.... If they gasped through their facial foliage, it was quite understandable... because to Abe Lincoln, whom they found playing baseball on a Springfield, Illinois, stubble field, they had come bearing momentous tidings. They had come to tell him the Chicago convention had nominated him for the Presidency of the United States.
>
> But Lincoln, engrossed in his ball game, would suffer no interruption. Not even to learn that he might become the nation's sixteenth president.... You see, he didn't want to miss his turn at bat.

The close of the Civil War found the Nationals solidly in the esteem of Washington fans, with the club's shortstop, slight, twenty-three-year-old Arthur Pue Gorman, the darling

of the spectators. Young Gorman quickly rose to stardom on the not-too-brilliant Nationals. He worked on Capitol Hill, and the fact that he later became a senator from Maryland moved many historians to associate the name of "Senators" with the Washington baseball teams.

By 1865 the nation's capital was so baseball-conscious that clerks of the government agencies were excused early to permit them to watch the Nationals play the Brooklyn Atlantics and the Philadelphia Athletics in an intercity tournament on the White Lot. By game time six thousand fans were assembled, and on that August day a President of the United States, Andrew Johnson, became the first chief executive in history to watch an intercity baseball game.

High officialdom turned out in force with Army and Navy bigwigs flanking President Johnson in chairs that lined the field for the two days of the series. The first game was a sad blow to the Nationals, who lost to the Athletics, 87 to 12. Although no charge of a rabbit ball was raised, it is a fact that the visitors hit eighteen home runs. On the following day the Atlantics added to the misery and disillusionment of the Nationals by winning a 34-to-19 victory, scoring twenty-two runs in the last two innings.

The tournament, if not a competitive success for the Nationals, was a social bonanza for both teams and the game of baseball. With the visiting players, the members of the Nationals called on President Johnson at the White House and later were received by Congress and banqueted at the Willard Hotel.

Not content with their local games, the Nationals bravely struck out on the first western tour in the history of baseball, a staggering undertaking for the time because it was a nine-game trip into six different cities in states as far west as Missouri. The entire journey was three thousand miles.

At whose expense? Their own, of course. They were amateurs and gentlemen, were they not? To accept pay or guarantees would be profaning the social implications of the game, and on July 11, 1867, the team left from Washington under the supervision of the president of the National Club, Colonel Frank Jones.

One substitute comprised the team's entire reserve strength, and one pitcher constituted the pitching staff as the ten-man squad entrained for Columbus, Ohio, scene of their first game, against the Capital Club of that city. In fact the Nationals were outnumbered by their loyal fans who also made the trip. Thirteen "sports" entrained with the team and, like the players, paid their own expenses.

Also accompanying the party and lending the dignity and authority of his name to the tour was Henry Chadwick, the first professional writer of baseball, who was a powerful factor in the development of the early rules of the game.

At Columbus, Ohio, the baseball tourists from Washington were hailed as daring adventurers and immediately impressed their western opponents with their skill at the game with a 90-to-10 victory. It was an unprecedented score for western baseball, and the game was called at the end of seven innings with the Columbus team and the spectators conceding the matchless talents of the Washington club.

Victory after victory fell to the touring Nationals in the West. At Cincinnati, on consecutive days, they defeated the Cincinnatis with the famous Harry Wright in their lineup, 53 to 10, and the Buckeye Club of the same city, 88 to 12, in six innings. They won at Louisville, Indianapolis, and St. Louis, and took a six-game winning streak to the scene of their next game, Chicago. And then came disillusionment. Against the Forest City Club of Rockford, Illinois, a team of schoolboys that was playing in Chicago, the Nationals were beaten 29 to 23, on July 26. Fresh-faced, seventeen-year-old A. G. Spalding, a Rockford grocery clerk, who was later to become a giant figure in the sport, was the winning pitcher.

The defeat of the Nationals was as sensational as their string of victories had been. Unfeelingly, the Chicago newspapers taunted the Nationals for that defeat by the Rockford schoolboys and predicted a victory the next day for their own "Champions of the West," the Chicago Excelsiors, who were to be the Nationals' final opponents on the tour. The Excelsiors earlier in the month had twice defeated the Forest City conquerors of the Nationals, and in anticipation of further humiliation of the Washington club, the largest crowd

ever to witness a baseball game in the West paid the admission fee of half a dollar.

Humiliation was the word for what took place that day, but it was the Excelsiors, not the Nationals, who were humbled. The Nationals took an early 7-to-0 lead to demoralize the Excelsiors completely and give them a sound beating by a score of 49 to 4. It was a glorious finish of the tour of the Nationals.

And then scandal broke briefly. The *Chicago Tribune* flatly accused the Washington club of "throwing" the Rockford game for betting purposes before taking on the Excelsiors. In high outrage, president Jones of the Nationals, accompanied by Arthur Pue Gorman, stomped into the *Tribune* office and compelled a retraction of the charge.

There followed a distinct departure from the game as it was originally conceived and played in Washington. At the outset it was accepted as the sport of quality folks, with the city caught up in a frenzy over the success of the well-born young Nationals on their 1867 tour of the West. But within a decade, so-called roughnecks were also playing the game and playing it better. The hub of baseball in Washington for a twenty-year span that carried into the late eighties was Mike Scanlon's Ninth Street poolroom, and Scanlon was the organizing force behind Washington teams.

Scanlon was an adventurer with an honest affection for the game that he first played as a Union soldier after joining the Army at fifteen, as a commissary clerk. He drifted to Washington in 1866 with only his Army pay in his pocket and bought on credit the poolroom at the corner of Ninth and S Streets, N.W., that was to bear his name until his death, sixty-five years later.

The sporting blood of the city gravitated to Scanlon's pool hall and in an atmosphere where it was possible to get down a bet on the ponies or the eight-ball in the side, or a wager on a ball game, baseball talk was foremost. Scanlon preached the desirability of getting Washington into an organized league, and to his side he drew many of the social elite who shared his ideas and interest in the game.

To this man who talked baseball so ambitiously came

Colonel Frank Jones, president of the Nationals Club; Arthur Pue Gordon, the senator-to-be from Maryland; Nicholas Young, head of the Olympic Club, who was to become a president of the National League; and Robert Hewitt, a wealthy Washington businessman who was an avid fan of the game.

With Arthur Gorman as his partner in their baseball enterprises, Scanlon had entree to the White House during the administrations of Presidents Andrew Johnson and Ulysses Grant. On taking office, President Grant commissioned Scanlon to outfit the White House with a billiard room. In later years, Scanlon proudly displayed a gold-tipped cue stick that was the gift of Grant.

Scanlon was an authority on baseball rules, with which most players of the day had only a vague familiarity. He trained them, arranged games, and soon was rewarded with popular fan support. As early as 1868, crowds averaged four thousand at the Saturday afternoon games on the White Lot behind the White House. President Johnson, an eager fan, ordered the Marine Band to play at every Saturday game. After President Grant was elected, he watched the games faithfully from the vantage point of the White House's south lawn.

Scanlon built the first baseball park in Washington with a fence around it. In 1870 he obtained a lot near the corner of Seventeenth and S Streets, N.W., constructed five hundred seats, and charged an admission fee of twenty-five cents. Twenty-one years later he not only selected the present site of Griffith Stadium but was instrumental in having a park built there.

Scanlon's dream of a Washington club in an organized professional league was realized in 1871 when, with the backing of Nick Young, the Olympic Club was given a franchise in the National Association of Professional Baseball Players, known then merely as the National Association. Young, president of the Olympic Club, had helped to organize the league.

Young, like Scanlon, was weary of the chaos of intercity competition without organization, with teams failing to respect scheduled games if more gate receipts were promised in other cities. Players were being induced to jump teams

for a financial consideration, and the whole business of schedule making was unstable.

And so the Olympics found themselves in a league with the Athletics of Philadelphia, Red Stockings of Boston, White Stockings of Chicago, Forest Citys of Cleveland, Forest Citys of Rockford, Illinois, the Haymakers of Troy, New York, the Kekiongas of Fort Wayne, Indiana, and the Mutuals of New York.

Playing a thirty-one-game schedule in 1871 the Olympics did well enough, winning sixteen games and losing fifteen, finishing fourth among the nine clubs, with the Athletics winning the pennant with twenty-two wins and seven defeats.

But the club owners had many difficulties following this first attempt at an organized league. Player raids continued with the same regularity as before, and the Olympics lost their star pitcher, Bob Leech, to the Nationals despite the fact that the latter club was playing an independent schedule and was technically classed as an amateur team while the Olympics were playing as professionals. In the case of the Olympics and other league teams, there was no regular salary arrangement for the players, whose earnings were based on the generosity of the club owners. Few players made a living wage from the gate receipts.

Overshadowed in 1871 by the league-member Olympics, the Nationals sought and gained entry to the National Association in 1872, an eleven-club league that season. The result was a fearful blow to Washington's pride in its baseball teams. The Olympics and the Nationals both failed to finish the season after being far down in the standings. Boston beat out Philadelphia for the flag.

The Olympics quit the Association in 1873 with no great sense of loss, since the circuit was beset by financial troubles that caused four clubs to abandon league play shortly after the season started. The Nationals were one of the latter, after winning only eight of thirty-nine games.

Baseball in Washington during the next decade was decadent. At least the town had no big league pretensions. The fans were overfed with the futility of Washington teams try-

ing to compete in the National Association, and the city lapsed into a bush town of baseball.

The National Association, renamed the National League in 1876, was in disrepute anyway. Four Louisville players, Al Nichols, Jim Devlin, G. W. Hall, and W. Craver, were expelled on charges of throwing games. Washington began to take a new pride in its amateur teams comprised of government clerks playing in a departmental league. It was not fast baseball, but it was at least above suspicion.

And then, in 1885, a Washington team suddenly won a pennant. The Nationals found a franchise open in the Eastern League, a shaky organization comprising teams from small cities in New Jersey and Virginia, and finished on top. But it was a hollow triumph. They were in second place, being outdistanced for the pennant in September when the league-leading Richmond Club suddenly dropped out of the league for lack of funds. Nobody exulted over Washington's first pennant, no parades were held. The baseball I. Q. of the Washington fan was sufficiently advanced in 1885 to permit him to distinguish between major-league and bush-league baseball.

The team, for the second straight year, made money, and during the winter Hewitt and his other backers made overtures to Nick Young, by now president of the National League, for the next franchise. When Providence and Buffalo quit the league, Washington and Kansas City were awarded new berths. Almost immediately the stock of the club was boosted from 5,000 dollars to 20,000 dollars. In an attempt to provide the best of playing conditions, the club management leased from W. M. Gait and Thomas W. Smith an entire square of ground bounded by F and G Streets and Delaware Avenue and North Capitol Street. This playing ground was named Capitol Park. The ground was leased for five years at an annual rental of 500 dollars for the first year, 1,000 dollars the second year, and 1,250 dollars during the last three years. Compared to parks in other cities, the playing grounds were not sumptuous. Nevertheless, the property provided an area 800 feet by 400 feet, one of the largest playing fields in the East.

The financial success of the club was not matched, however, by the performance of the team. The Nationals, managed once again by Mike Scanlon, and now calling themselves the "Statesmen," soon found the competition in the big leagues was more than slightly tougher than that afforded by the Eastern League. Shortly after the opening of the season they found themselves lodged in the cellar, the first of many Washington teams to sink to that unenviable position in the major leagues.

During the summer the fans and sports writers clamored for the scalp of Manager Scanlon, and he was finally released on August 20. Umpire John Gaffney then resigned from his position to replace Scanlon. Fan support dwindled as the season drew to a close and the backers, who started the season with high hopes, were desperately seeking new talent to bolster the team for the following season since it was already too late to help the cause in 1886. Their search turned to Hartford, Connecticut, where a battery combination of pitcher Frank Gilmore and catcher Cornelius McGillicuddy was burning up the New England League.

Hewitt's primary interest was Gilmore. He was regarded as a welcome addition to the pitching staff, which then was headed by fiery Hank O'Day, a recent purchase from Philadelphia. Gilmore asked Hewitt if it would be all right to take along young McGillicuddy, since they had operated as a team for so long. Three other players, enthusiastic at the prospect of entering the big leagues, also persuaded Hewitt to buy their contracts. The result was an addition of five players to the Washington fold at a cost of 3,500 dollars.

On his arrival in Washington, Gilmore failed to justify his promise at Hartford, but young McGillicuddy, whose name promptly was shortened to Connie Mack by the sports writers, caught on immediately. Although warned that Mack's batting was weak, manager Gaffney inserted him in the lineup, and Mack proceeded to make liars out of his critics by batting .361 for the ten games in which he appeared. But it was his brilliant defensive play behind the plate which won him the recognition of the fans and sports writers alike. He turned out to be the most popular player on the team, and

the season ended on a note of optimism. The new acquisitions, especially Mack, were sure to bring better baseball days to Washington in 1887.

The high note of optimism was retained throughout the winter and flowed over to the opening day of the 1887 season, which was marked by a long parade down Pennsylvania Avenue. Enthusiasm wasn't dulled when the Boston Beaneaters won a 14-to-9 decision in the opening game. But as the season progressed, it developed that even the new players from Hartford couldn't make up the difference between a good minor-league team and a bad major-league team. Manager Gaffney also had his difficulties with the players who refused to keep training rules. The upshot was a poor season, but still better than 1886. The Washingtons finished seventh in an eight-club league. Their record: forty-six victories, seventy-six defeats for a percentage of .377. At the season's end, only one of the five players purchased from Hartford was still around. He was the skinny catcher nobody thought would be successful—Connie Mack.

Here is what the Washington *Evening Star* of April 7, 1888, said of Connie Mack:

> Connie Mack is a Washington favorite. He is always willing to play and plays hard to win. The public would rather see any other man on the ball field make an error than Catcher Mack. His success in his difficult position is due largely to the fact that he always keeps in good condition. His manager doesn't have to keep his eye on him for fear he will sneak off and get drunk. Whatever else may happen, he knows that Mack will play the same game week in and week out.
>
> . . . He is a steady catcher, an accurate thrower and a first-class hitter. He has little or nothing to say during a game but keeps his jaws going quietly all the time. He is six feet and weighs 160 pounds. It is a common saying while the players are practicing that Connie won't chase the ball because he is afraid he will lose a pound.

The Statesmen of 1887 became the Senators of 1888, but the change of nickname didn't change the baseball fortunes of the team. In fact, they were worse in 1888, when they once again descended to the cellar of the National League. Connie

Mack was used chiefly in utility roles during the 1888 season as the Senators underwent numerous personnel changes, due not only to the losing baseball of the players but also to some of the extracurricular gambling and drinking activities of the stars. Ted Sullivan, a former player, was named manager of the team in midseason, but the fans were staying away from the Capitol Park, and the management, fearing another baseball eclipse, took an unprecedented step in the winter of 1888 to improve the team. On November 24, President Walter Hewitt bought the release of the famous John Ward from New York for 12,000 dollars, the highest price ever paid for a baseball player up to that time. Ward, a wealthy socialite, was then in Europe and balked at the deal. Hewitt immediately crossed the Atlantic and tried to talk Ward into accepting his terms, but Ward was adamant and the deal fell through.

Faced with the collapse of his team, Hewitt tried to get the best available talent from other teams, but was unsuccessful. Few players wanted to associate themselves with a club which gave no promise whatever of emerging from the cellar in the foreseeable future. Connie Mack was still behind the plate for the Senators in 1889, but Hank O'Day, his favorite pitcher, was sold to New York in midseason—a deal which clinched the pennant for the New Yorkers. Meanwhile, the team was going from bad to worse. A man named "Honest John" Morrill was installed as manager, then fired within two weeks for incompetence. Hewitt placed himself in charge of the team and finished the season in last place with a group of discontented ball players on his hands. Threats of players jumping to the newly-formed Brotherhood League were rife as the season drew to a close. Hewitt was summoned to Nick Young's office at National League headquarters. He expected the worst and got it. The Washington franchise was turned over to Cincinnati. Connie Mack jumped to Buffalo, of the rival Brotherhood League. Washington again had flopped as a major-league city.