

Public History and America's Pastime: The Use of History and Sports Heritage in
Marketing and Community Relations in Minor League Baseball in Tennessee

by

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ABSTRACT

Since it first emerged in the urban cityscapes in the early nineteenth century, baseball has become a defining feature of American culture. Many of these organizations founded in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries still exist today, and as such hold a place in the history of their communities. History and sports heritage are currently utilized by the minor league baseball organizations to market teams in the communities of Knoxville, Chattanooga, and Nashville, Tennessee. Each case study represents three distinct organizations with a strong historical presence in the communities in which they reside, demonstrating the various ways in which their historical presence is marketed. In each of these case studies, successful elements of these marketing programs are examined, as well as ways in which they can be improved in order to demonstrate the practical applications of these models.

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Chapter 1

Methodology and Approach

Since it first emerged in the urban cityscapes in the early nineteenth century, baseball has become a defining feature of American culture. As the twentieth century dawned on America, organized baseball in the form of major and minor league teams could be found in major cities throughout the country. Many of the teams founded in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries still exist today, holding an important place in the history of their communities. This study will examine how effectively minor league baseball organizations in the Tennessee cities of Knoxville, Chattanooga, and Nashville, utilize history to market their teams and enhance community relations. This research will show the ways in which elements of public history and its methodology can be utilized and incorporated by minor league baseball teams.

This thesis will examine how public history practices are embraced and incorporated into existing marketing techniques by minor league organizations. Additionally it examines the question of how historical interpretation can enhance the business operations of minor league teams. This thesis will demonstrate that by incorporating an organization's history and utilizing existing public history methodology, minor league organizations can market history in order to appeal to the general public's sense of nostalgia and in turn increase revenue.

This study will examine three minor league organizations in Tennessee: the Tennessee Smokies of Knoxville; the Chattanooga Lookouts; and the Nashville Sounds. These organizations were selected because semi-professional baseball started in these

communities quite early in 1885. Although the histories of these respective organizations are unique to each community, they share commonalities and have historically had a certain degree of interaction with one another. By applying my proposed research questions to each organization I will determine how each organization presents historical information, what methodology the presentation of the past is incorporated, and commonalities and differences in each organization's approach. With the gathered information, the findings of this study will spotlight successful practices for presenting history in minor league baseball and the models and methodology that have universal applications.

Given the historical popularity of the sport and the large role baseball has played in American culture, incorporating elements of a team's history can benefit the organization. When this is done, franchises and teams often create products that are best classified under the category of corporate history. However, based on their historical presence in their respective communities, it is possible that elements of local history can be incorporated in order to create historically-based projects that celebrate both the organization and the community in which it resides.

Museums and Public History

Since ancient times, museums have served as centers of inquiry and knowledge, displaying vast collections of objects and artifacts in order to educate those who venture through their doors. Today, museums have evolved beyond mere cabinets of curiosity and an entire field of study has emerged around the study of the practices and methodology necessary for museums to present their message effectively to the

viewing public. Museum Studies, one of the fields encompassed within public history, focuses on the relationship between museums and their audiences, and the ways in which they interact.

When one mentions museums, often the image that comes to mind is that of a large stone building, adorned with Greco-Roman imagery, and marble floors, displaying a bevy of artifacts ranging from dinosaur skeletons to the tools and wares of ancient peoples. Yet this image, ingrained in the minds of the public, represents only one form of museum, the academic museum. Museums can, in fact, take many forms and shapes.

These various museums, while connected by a common purpose of educating the public, differ based on size, mission statement, funding, staff, and exhibition type. Academic museums, such as the Field Museum in Chicago and the Smithsonian Institution, often occupy their own facility generally located close to the city center. These large academic institutions, contain on site storage facilities for their collections as well as designated exhibit space in which to display these items. Operated by academically trained historians and curators who utilize the collections for research purposes, museums engage the public by exhibiting items in the museum's collection in accordance with the institutions mission statement. This one to two sentence statement defines the museum's purpose and scope of their collection. Ranging from the desire to "[inspire] curiosity about life on Earth while exploring how the world came to be and how we can make it a better place"¹ to the devotion to "the increase and diffusion of

¹ "Our Mission," The Field Museum, accessed July 18, 2014, <http://www.fieldmuseum.org/about/our-mission>.

knowledge,”² these declarations of intent serve to guide the museum’s actions and future operations.

In addition to location, size, staff, and collections, museums differ in the ways in which they operate financially. As non-profit entities, the majority of academic museums are publicly funded through government grants and taxes. However, alternative sources of revenue are often sought out by academic museums in the form of admission fees, donations, and corporate endowments.³ Yet academic museums represent only one of the various forms museums can take.

Museums can take a multitude of forms, including corporate, community or local, entrepreneurial, and vernacular museums. Of these forms of museum, the latter two, entrepreneurial and vernacular museums, are often quite small, and they are typically staffed by volunteers who generally are not trained in the field of public history and rely heavily on donations and visitor revenue as income.⁴ As a result, corporate and local museums hold a far greater place in the public’s eye, second only to that of the academic museum.

One of the ways in which corporate museums differ from their academic

² “Our Mission,” The Smithsonian Institution, accessed July 18, 2014, <http://www.si.edu/About/Mission>.

³ Emily Lyon Droege, “Public and Corporate History Museums Common Attributes and Critical Differences,” (M.A. thesis, Oklahoma State University, 2006), 24.

⁴ Tammy S. Gordon, “Heritage, Commerce, and Museal Display: Toward a New Typology of Historical Exhibition in the United States,” *The Public Historian* 30, no. 3 (2008): 34.

counterparts is in their location. Many corporate museums are often located inside a company's headquarters or facilities, or in some instances they are located on company grounds.⁵ Situated in areas of easy access for visitors, they might be situated on the first level of company headquarters or in the lobby.⁶ In some instances, these museums occupy their own stand-alone facility located on company grounds.

The size of exhibit space ranges depending on the size of the facility, but many corporate museums occupy anywhere from 3,000 square feet to 10,000 square feet.⁷ These museums, such as the Atlanta Braves Museum and Hall of Fame at Turner Field, are located within the company's main public facility. In the case that the museum occupies its own facility, exhibit space is closer to that of an academic historical institution. The World of Coca-Cola Museum, located in Atlanta or one of Wells Fargo's eleven company museums represent the larger manifestations of corporate historical institutions. As with any museum, exhibit space depends on the size of the facility, but in instances such as these, the exhibits can be up to 100,000 square feet.⁸

As with all museums, corporate museums are guided and driven by a mission statement, reflecting their purpose and the scope of their collections. However, they

⁵Ibid., 34.

⁶ Victor J. Danilov, *A Planning Guide for Corporate Museums, Galleries, and Visitors Centers* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1992), 93-94.

⁷Ibid., 96.

⁸ "FAQ," The World of Coca Cola, accessed July 19, 2014, <http://www.worldofcoca-cola.com/plan-your-visit/faqs/>.

differ greatly from that of their academic counterparts as they often serve to promote the interests of the company. One example of this would be the mission statement of the Ocean Spray Cranberries Inc. Cranberry World Visitor's Center, which states a desire "To enhance the understanding of the cranberry among current and potential consumers of the company's product."⁹

Like their academic counterparts, some corporate museums are staffed by trained professionals. However, the number of curators and or historians in the company's employ is dramatically smaller than at academic institutions. Usually under the auspices of the marketing department, corporate museums generally have around three to four employees and in some instances utilize employees from other departments.¹⁰ While some of the staff are professionally trained in history and have a college degree, others, often those in support roles, are trained by the company for the position they occupy.¹¹

Corporate museums tend to follow many of the practices of academic museums in displaying their collection. Items exhibited in corporate museums frequently come from a collection owned by the company. However, exhibits in corporate museums focus primarily on various aspects of the company such as its history, operations, and products. These exhibits are often designed with the intent to "influence public opinion

⁹ Danilov, 114.

¹⁰ Ibid., 171.

¹¹ Ibid., 173.

about the company” and offer mostly uncritical versions of the company’s past in an effort to enhance the corporate image.¹²

Yet the writing of corporate history can sometimes prove difficult for historians. For scholars in the employ of companies, certain roadblocks may arise that may hinder their ability to perform their duties in creating a historical narrative for the business. In some instances, historians may find that certain company records are not made available or that limited access is given to historical records in order to ensure that information that could damage the company’s image is not brought to light.¹³

As historians writing corporate history run the risk of putting forth a narrative that the perpetuates the company’s desired view of their past in the minds of the public, certain negative misconceptions are held about historians in the employ of companies.¹⁴ Since companies may not wish to publish information that would damage their public image, some perceive corporate historians as “hired-guns,” whose work is simply part of a larger effort by management to manipulate and control workers.¹⁵ Yet this belief, along with the notions that businesses are guilty of “corrupt practices” or that historians are “intellectual snobs” who reside in an “ivory tower,” take away from the beneficial

¹²Ibid., 5.

¹³ David Lewis and Wesley Phillips Newton, “The Writing of Corporate History,” *The Public Historian* 3 no. 3 (1981): 66.

¹⁴ Charles Dellheim, “Business in Time: The Historian in Corporate Culture,” *The Public Historian* 8 no. 2 (1986): 14.

¹⁵Ibid., 16.

aspects of the relationship between businesses and history.¹⁶

Despite this obstacle, corporate history can prove to be beneficial to the public, corporations, and scholars alike. By examining how social, economic, and political forces have shaped the organization, historians can bring to light “how corporate cultures are created and how they change, or fail to change, despite or because of internal and external conditions.”¹⁷ This can be of great benefit to the company, as historical reports can show how the company has responded to social and financial factors, allowing them to plan accordingly for the future.

For the public and academic scholars, the writing of corporate history allows for an insight into the business’s practices and relationship with their workers and the community. Since locate trade often defines communities, the histories of these companies can be incorporated into the larger community narrative. As such, the socio-economic effects of these businesses on the community, can give a greater understanding of the historical course the community has taken.

Local History

While economic history is an important element in creating community narratives, local history encompasses social and political history as well. When brought together, these historical elements create the story of a place and its people, and how their past has created a distinct and unique sense of identity among the populace. As

¹⁶Richard Forman, “History Inside Business,” *The Public Historian* 3 no. 3 (1981): 52-53.

¹⁷Dellheim, 11.

such, history is just as important for communities as it is for corporations in maintaining a positive image in the public's eye.

The task of preserving and presenting a community's history frequently falls to a local historical society. Often occupying a stand-alone facility located in a building of historical significance or in close proximity to major community structures, these museums showcase a town's unique and treasured past. These historical entities generally operate through a combination of money budgeted by local government, private donations, or endowments.¹⁸

As with any historical institution, local museums are driven by mission statements related to the promotion of the history of the communities in which they reside. These mission statements vary depending on the community, ranging from "[telling] engaging and compelling stories of Murfreesboro and Rutherford County to visitors and residents alike, with a special focus on Murfreesboro as a Civil War battlefield and key federal occupation base," or reflecting the mission of the organization responsible for the museum such as, "The Friends of the Plymouth Historical Museum, formally the Plymouth Historical Society, is a privately funded membership organization dedicated to preserving, teaching, and presenting history through the operation and support of the Plymouth Historical Museum."¹⁹ As with other museums, it is the responsibility of the staff to carry out and execute these missions

¹⁸Gordon, 34.

¹⁹"About Us," The Heritage Center, accessed July 24, 21014, <http://www.hcmrc.org/About%20Us>, and "About," Friends of the Plymouth Historical Museum, accessed July 24, 2014, <http://www.plymouthhistory.org/about.html>.

through exhibits, programs, and their outreach activities within the community.

While many local museums employ academically trained historians, the bulk of the staff is often comprised of volunteers.²⁰ As with any museum, the number of staff varies on the size of the facility. Since many local museums are reliant on local funding and visitor contributions, the number of paid staff is often quite small. Volunteers are often relied upon to assist in day-to-day operations, while staff is responsible for exhibit content and construction.

Exhibits at community museums highlight significant historical events from the community's past. They include information on the founding of the town, biographies of the founders, the role of the community in major national events, and other historical details that give the town its unique identity. As many communities are defined by local landscape and industry, there are often common themes in a community's historical narrative. In addition, exhibits may be created to celebrate the anniversary of major events in the town's history such as the founding of the town or the birth of local celebrities.

However, as with corporate history, the writing of local history can be a difficult task for historians. Perhaps one of the largest obstacles for the historian to is navigating the fine line between "academic professionalism and...local patriotism."²¹ As a community's perception of their past plays a large role in creating its identity, scholars

²⁰Gordon, 34.

²¹ John Alexander Williams, "Public History and Local History: An Introduction," *The Public Historian* 5 no.4 (1983): 8.

may find themselves at odds with residents in the event they bring to light evidence that conflicts with the town's traditional historical narrative. In addition to this, many scholars have sought to distance themselves from local history due to the fact that many works written by amateur historians about their communities are "poorly written volumes...[that] are usually mere collectors of facts, unable to...communicate the patterns of existence that give the facts meaning," resulting in the belief amongst some that local history is a second-rate enterprise.²²

Yet local history can be written with scholarly integrity while creating a positive historical narrative of the community. The primary way in which this can be achieved is through shared authority. Rather than historians creating a narrative dictated by academic precedent, the historian works with members of the community, offering guidance and assistance, and allows them to play a role in the creation of their own historical narrative.²³ If shared authority is successfully applied, the resulting product can be one that is a balance of "academic professionalism and...local patriotism."²⁴

Marketing Museums

In order to ensure greater interaction between the museum and the public, the adoption of marketing strategies is necessary for ensuring that members of the general public are aware of events at the museum. These can range from exhibit openings,

²²Ibid., 8.

²³Ibid., 13.

²⁴Ibid., 8.

lectures, available workshops, and family-oriented events. Doing so provides the museum with the opportunity to increase attendance and reach new markets.

In order to develop a successful marketing campaign, the museum must first engage in strategic planning. In this stage of the process, the museum identifies their target audience, what their needs are, and how their needs can be met. Often this begins with identifying the museum's existing visitors, examining the frequency of their visits, as well as the motivation for visiting. This is achieved through examination of visitor surveys and daily attendance records.²⁵

Understanding existing and potential audiences is a key element in developing successful marketing campaigns. In order to ensure the museum reaches as large an audience as possible it is necessary that staff and management understand the population of the community in which they reside as well as what elements of the population the marketing campaign is directed towards. As such, it is often necessary to examine existing information on the region's population and demographic trends in order to identify various age groups and their projected trends; occupational and educational trends and their various levels of disposable income; the ethnic breakdown of the community; and existing growth trends both economic and social.²⁶ Doing so allows museums to have a greater understanding of their existing audience and what appeals to them, in addition to identifying ways to appeal to new demographics.

²⁵Gail Dexter Lord and Barry Lord, *The Manual Of Museum Management*, (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 1997), 121.

²⁶Sue Runyard and Ylva French, *The Marketing and Public Relations Handbook for Museums, Galleries, and Heritage Attractions*, (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 1999), 30.

Once these have been determined, it is then necessary for the museum to determine external variables, including existing competition; potential market opportunities; and burgeoning market trends. In addition, staff must also identify the institutions own strengths and weaknesses in order to determine potential internal threats to their campaign.²⁷ This is often undertaken by conducting visitor studies as well as visitor surveys in order to determine what aspects of the museum appeal most to the public.²⁸

Once these have been identified, the museum's staff can then progress to the next stage, formulating a marketing strategy. Here members of the staff evaluate the museum's organizational strengths and determines how their campaign can be introduced into existing and potential markets.²⁹ Once these market demographics have been identified and costs have been determined, advertising and media campaigns can be created, often by the museum's public relations department.

Public relations play a large role in ensuring the success of the marketing campaign developed at the museum. This department's primary responsibility is ensuring that the museum's message reaches the general populace. Through various media outlets that include print media such as newsletters and newspaper

²⁷ Neil G. Kotler, Philip Kotler, and Wendy I. Kotler, *Museum Marketing and Strategy: Designing Missions, Building Audiences, Generating Revenue and Resources*, (San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons, 2008), 45.

²⁸G. Donald Adams, *Museum Public Relations*, (Nashville, TN: The American Association for State and Local History, 1983), 30-32.

²⁹ N. Kotler, P. Kotler, and W. Kotler, 96.

advertisements; electronic media, television, and internet ads; and word of mouth, the museum's public relations department ensures that the museum's marketing campaign reaches the desired audience.³⁰

Corporate and Local History:

Coming Together Through Minor League Baseball

By themselves, minor league baseball teams represent professional franchises built around structured business models. Yet, in many communities, organized baseball as a business has existed since the late nineteenth century. In the case of Knoxville, Chattanooga, and Nashville, organized baseball has been present in these communities since 1885, and as such it has become a staple part of the local culture. Herein lies the question then, if minor league franchises are to market their teams history is it then classified as corporate or local history? Can it be both?

Nostalgia and Sports Heritage:

A Model for Bringing Corporate and Local History Together

Perhaps the most successful way in which local or regional history can be utilized by minor league organizations in such a way that meets the needs of the organization, is by the incorporation of elements of nostalgia and sports heritage into existing marketing campaigns. History is the primary vehicle for invoking nostalgia, which in turn can be a powerful marketing tool. Since nostalgia represents certain elements of the past that invoke positive emotions and memories within individuals or communities, it

³⁰Hugh H. Genoways and Lynne M. Ireland, *Museum Administration: An Introduction*, (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2003), 267.

provides minor league organizations with an opportunity to present themselves in a positive manner.³¹ In fact, nostalgia is often utilized by sports museums and halls of fame, and it is often one of the primary factors for drawing in visitors.

Yet since nostalgia itself can be drawn from a number of sources, whether it is a tangible object, an event, or an individual, and the ways in which these sources invoke nostalgia can take various forms. As such, scholars identify two forms in which nostalgia can take, collective nostalgia and individual nostalgia.³² While these forms of remembrance are distinct on their own, they often overlap and work in relation to one another.

Collective nostalgia refers to “the collective memories of people in a society,” and this is the most common form of nostalgia found in sports museums and halls of fame.³³ Often this is based on the collections that are displayed within these institutions that instill similar feelings within a large diverse audience. Yet collective nostalgia can be drawn from more than just physical objects and institutions, because collective memory can also be drawn from specific historical events. Because of this, scholars believe that collective nostalgia can be used to define various generations, based on the nostalgia surrounding certain events within a specific generation’s collective memory.³⁴

³¹Eldon E. Snyder, “Sociology of Nostalgia: Sports Halls of Fame and Museums in America,” *Sociology of Sport Journal* 8 (1991): 229.

³²*Ibid.*, 229.

³³*Ibid.*, 230.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 231.

Additionally, an older generation's sense of collective nostalgia can be used to reach younger generations thanks to mass media. Using mass media as a vehicle, sports, in particular baseball, "have the greatest likelihood of developing a body of collective nostalgia."³⁵ As such, by appealing to this sense of collective nostalgia, minor league organizations have the opportunity to reach a wider audience and potentially increase their fan base by marketing history to the general public.

While collective nostalgia provides teams with the opportunity to reach a wide audience, individual nostalgia is an important factor as well. This type of nostalgia is often closely related to or stems from collective nostalgia, and represents individual memories invoked by specific imagery.³⁶ As such, invoking private nostalgia through the use of collective nostalgia affords teams the opportunity to strengthen relationships with their existing fan base. Instilling a greater sense of pride within their fans by invoking private nostalgia offers minor league organizations the opportunity to increase attendance and or sales, whether it is front gate sales or merchandise.

While nostalgia plays an important role in today's sports culture, it is closely linked with cultural heritage.³⁷ Heritage itself plays an important role in sports culture, and there are those who argue "that housing all elements related to sports-related

³⁵Ibid., 231.

³⁶Ibid., 235.

³⁷ Greg Ramshaw and Sean Gammon, "More than just Nostalgia? Exploring the Heritage/ Sport Tourism Nexus," *Journal of Sport Tourism* 10 no. 4 (2005): 230.

history beneath nostalgia's roof is misleading."³⁸ Recently, some scholars have argued that heritage better defines the relationship between history and sports culture because it is a "broader, more encompassing term."³⁹

Examining this issue in their 2005 article "More than just Nostalgia? Exploring the Heritage/Sport Tourism Nexus," Greg Ramshaw and Sean Gammon argue that sports heritage greatly improves the understanding of the relationship between history and modern sports culture. Since sports heritage encompasses such a broad spectrum of the relationship between the past and modern sports culture, Ramshaw and Gammon break the term down into four distinct categories. The first category defines cultural elements that are represented by spaces or physical structures. Defining these sites as "tangible immovable," these sites are often "stadia that have hosted famous events, athletes, teams or sports."⁴⁰ Given the historical significance of these sites, they often play important roles in the communities in which they reside, or have national or international significance.

The second category of Ramshaw and Gammon's model examines the tangible moveable aspect of sports heritage. This refers to items and artifacts of historical significance, often residing in sports museums and halls of fame. Given the nature of these items, location is not such a determining factor as it is with those that are tangible immovable. Because of this heritage items in this category have a greater degree of

³⁸Ibid., 230.

³⁹Ibid., 230.

⁴⁰Ibid., 233.

accessibility and can reach a greater audience through traveling exhibits or museum loans.⁴¹

Directly related to the tangible elements of sports heritage are the intangible feelings that these objects inspire. Here one finds nostalgia, which as previously discussed is one of the most significant aspects of sports culture. However, Ramshaw and Gammon also draw attention to the fact that the intangible aspect of sports heritage represents more than just nostalgia. It represents the emotion surrounding sports that includes “rituals, traditions, chants, memories, nostalgia, and other forms of impalpable heritage,” all of which hold a great deal of significance in sports culture, especially as they relate to the tangible elements of sports heritage.⁴²

The final elements of sports heritage that Ramshaw and Gammon discuss are goods and services that represent an aspect of an organizations history and heritage. In particular this refers to marketing and selling historical reproductions, such as pennants, jerseys, or other apparel, as well as services that emphasize a “heritage experience.” This includes teams donning “throwback jerseys” for games, often between rival teams; or incorporating historical elements into the design of a stadium.⁴³ Items of this category are often directed at invoking the intangible element of sports heritage, in particular nostalgia, amongst patrons and fans.

Ramshaw and Gammon’s model of sports heritage presents a way in which to

⁴¹Ibid., 244.

⁴²Ibid., 244.

⁴³Ibid., 235.

better understand the role history plays in modern sports culture. By applying this model to the analysis of the use of history by the Knoxville, Chattanooga, and Nashville minor league organizations, we can gain a greater understanding of the impact of history on modern minor league baseball and the positive aspects of its use. Since the late nineteenth century baseball has played a significant role in Southern culture, and as such, holds a place in its culture and heritage.

Conclusions

By applying Ramshaw and Gammon's sports heritage model to existing minor league organizations in Tennessee, this study will analyze the effectiveness of efforts to incorporate history into existing team business models. Chapter three will closely examine the implementation of elements of sports heritage by the Tennessee Smokies, while chapter four will discuss the Chattanooga Lookouts, their relationship with Engel Stadium, and how this relationship influences the development of historically based programs. The final chapter examines the Nashville Sounds and how history is utilized to strengthen existing relationships within their community. This study will demonstrate the ways in which the use of history and sports heritage can have a positive impact on minor league organizations and the communities in which they reside.

Chapter 2

Baseball in the South: From the Antebellum Period through the Twentieth Century

Prior to the Civil War, early versions of the sport we now know as baseball emerged in the industrial, urban landscape of northern cities where it evolved out of the communal stick and ball game of town ball, an Americanized version of the English game of rounders early settlers brought with them to the colonies.⁴⁴ Large metropolitan centers such as New York, Philadelphia, and Boston saw the formation of amateur clubs as early as the 1830s.⁴⁵ Baseball continued to gain popularity, throughout the northeast and by the dawn of the Civil War, two forms of the game were being played. The “Massachusetts Game” comprised of eight to fifteen men on the field; a square field in which the batter hit between home plate and first; and no foul territory. In addition, the ball was the thrown by the pitcher overhand and runners could be struck with the ball for an out (referred to as “soaking”).⁴⁶ This form of baseball differed greatly from the “New York Game,” which introduced the concept of the game being played on a diamond; underhand pitching; foul territory; and forbade the “soaking” of players.⁴⁷

The game of baseball gained popularity amongst white collar workers in

⁴⁴George B. Kirsch, *Baseball in Blue and Gray: The National Pastime during the Civil War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 7.

⁴⁵Ibid., 2.

⁴⁶Ibid., 4.

⁴⁷Ibid., 5.

northeastern states. Thanks to increased geographic mobility and intercity competition, the New York style of play began to take hold throughout the Northeast and Midwest.⁴⁸ Early teams formed before the Civil War were comprised largely of “middle-class merchants, bankers, doctors, lawyers, [and] clerks,” whose nature of work allowed for greater leisure time than that of laborers and blue collar workers.⁴⁹ Primarily an urban game, the large populations and close proximity of urban centers in the Northeast allowed for friendly competition between amateur clubs and helped popularize the game.

As baseball rose to prominence in the urban industrial centers of the North, it was slow to take hold in the agrarian society of the South. Southern society at the time was structured much differently than that of Northern industrial cities. The Southern merchant class, with whom the game would find popularity, primarily resided in larger cities and towns in the South, such as New Orleans and Louisville that shared characteristics of urban centers in the North. In addition, interactions with northern merchants and southern businessmen gave rise to the popularity of the game in certain areas of the South.⁵⁰

Yet agriculture defined many parts of the South, and in these regions a distinct social structure developed. The merchant class that fostered the growth of the game

⁴⁸Ibid., 9-11.

⁴⁹Ibid., 6.

⁵⁰Ibid., 25.

had a much smaller presence in agrarian society, a social system that was largely dominated by the aristocratic planter class. The sport was met with resistance by many “men of honor” who characterized the planter class, viewing the lack of entitled positions in the game at odds with their cultural beliefs.⁵¹ In addition, the rural environment of the region did not possess a large number of densely populated cities located close to one another as the North did, making local competition difficult. However, in the aftermath of the Civil War, the South would undergo an economic and social transformation that would accelerate the growth of baseball.

Although baseball found popularity in small pockets of the South prior to the Civil War, the period between 1865 and 1885 saw the sport slowly begin to take hold in the region. Burgeoning signs of life for the sport in Tennessee can be seen as early as 1867, perhaps in part due to the efforts of the Tennessee delegates who attended the National Association’s annual convention in New York in 1865.⁵² In addition Northern transplants who arrived in the South following the war organized matches introducing it to communities like Fayetteville, Tennessee.⁵³ Although the decades after the Civil War would see the creation of amateur baseball clubs throughout Tennessee, organized semi-professional baseball would not arrive until the 1880s, when a new socio-economic climate would take hold in the South.

⁵¹Ibid., 24.

⁵² William J. Ryczek, *When Johnny Came Sliding Home: The Post Civil War Baseball Boom, 1865-1870*, (Jefferson , NC: McFarland and Co., Inc., 1998), 132, 78.

⁵³Kirsch, 116. Fayetteville’s first baseball game was organized by former residents of Philadelphia and Washington D.C. taking place in October of 1868, in which they were defeated by a team of Klansmen.

The latter half of the nineteenth century brought a drastic shift in the market economy that saw the transformation of much of the South, ultimately creating urban epicenters in which baseball could gain a foothold in the region. This “New South,” as it would come to be called, saw modest industrial growth as the region strived to shed its dependence on agriculture and compete with Northern industry in an ever expanding national economy. As manufacturing and economic diversification began to take hold, cities such as Nashville, Chattanooga, and Knoxville, underwent rapid urban growth in order to accommodate the influx of laborers converging on these communities. Ultimately this would all come together to create an environment in which baseball could thrive.

The concept of southern post-war urbanization would be championed by urban boosters such as J.D.B. DeBow, Henry Watterson, and Henry Grady, who saw industrialization and urbanization as a way to reconcile the South with the rest of the nation following the war.⁵⁴ The proponents of the “New South” mentality realized that in order for the South to rebuild itself after the war it was necessary to shed much of the antebellum beliefs that epitomized the region. “We have got to go to manufacturing to save ourselves,”⁵⁵ stated booster J.D.B DeBow in 1867. Touting the South’s untapped natural resources, low taxes, and availability of a large un-unionized labor force,

⁵⁴Ibid., 11.

⁵⁵Howard N. Rabinowitz, *The First New South 1865-1920*, (Arlington Heights, IL: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1992), 30.

southern boosters traveled throughout northern cities, speaking with industrialists and capitalists, extolling how northern investment could “help heal the wounds of the Civil War.”⁵⁶ Yet despite their best efforts, the proponents of the New South were unable to attain the degree of northern capital they hoped to reach. However, in the aftermath of the economic depression that marked much of the 1870s, southern boosters successfully obtained financial backing from northern railroad companies.

The economic depression that followed the Panic of 1873, saw the closure of railroads throughout the South, as many companies defaulted on their bonds.⁵⁷ However, thanks in large part to the injection of northern capital into the region, it began to appear that the idea of a New South was possible. By the onset of the 1880s railroad construction began taking place at a rapid rate, growing from 59,600 miles of track in 1880 to 84,600 miles by 1900.⁵⁸ The expansion of rail lines in the South during this period created a transportation network connecting Southern cities and allowed merchants to ship goods to manufacturing centers in the North.

The rapid growth of northern industry that characterizes much of the Gilded Age in America in turn created a high demand for raw materials produced in the South. Thanks to the newly created rail lines connecting the country, large deposits of coal and

⁵⁶Ibid., 32.

⁵⁷Ibid., 102.

⁵⁸Ibid., 37.

iron ore, found in northern Alabama, east Tennessee, and western Virginia,⁵⁹ could now be shipped north. The demand for these goods in turn led to the growth of communities such as Birmingham and Knoxville, whose local economies centered on the mining and processing of these natural resources.

Elsewhere throughout the South, local industry was still dependant on the production of cotton and other agricultural commodities, albeit in a far different way than during the antebellum period. Cities such as Memphis owed much of their growth to the production and manufacturing of cottonseed oil, which proved to be one of the largest manufacturing bases for the local economy, second only to the lumber industry.⁶⁰ Cotton also led to the development of textile mills throughout the South, which grew at such a rate that by 1900 the South was the leading region in the nation in terms of textile production and manufacturing.⁶¹

In addition to manufacturing, the economies of several Southern cities centered around the wholesale distribution of goods. As previously mentioned, Northern railroad companies were encouraged by New South boosters to create rail networks in the South i to increase profit. As Northern railway companies secured their control over these networks, they consolidated their holdings thereby exerting a great deal of influence on the Southern economy. In cities such as Nashville, Tennessee, who hosted at least five

⁵⁹Ibid., 38.

⁶⁰Ibid., 109.

⁶¹Ibid., 45.

railways prior to the Civil War, had come under the thumb of the Louisville & Nashville railroad by the 1880s. However, thanks to low shipping rates the Louisville & Nashville offered, Nashville became the most significant distribution center in the upper South.⁶²

As manufacturing in Southern cities grew, so too did their populations. The latter half of the nineteenth century saw a dramatic rise in urban populations in the South as the emerging manufacturing centers offered the possibility of prosperity to both the business and labor classes alike. As a result, communities that had existed as little more than townships before the war emerged as significant urban centers by 1910 as southern cities experienced a collective population percentage gain of 1,022%. By the first decade of the twentieth century cities such as Memphis and Nashville would grow from populations of less than twenty five thousand in 1860 to over one hundred thousand in 1910. Additionally, smaller cities such as Chattanooga would increase from a population of 2,545 to 44,604 residents during the same time period.⁶³

This population boom would also have a profound effect on the eight cities that would form the Southern League in 1885. Atlanta experienced a population growth of 292% between 1860 and 1880, when the number of residents reached 37,409.

Elsewhere in Georgia, Augusta's population grew from 12,493 to 21,891, while Macon's increased from 8,247 to 12,749. Nashville boasted the largest population of any of the

⁶²Don H. Doyle, *New Men, New Cities, New South: Atlanta, Nashville, Charleston, Mobile, 1860-1910*, (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 39.

⁶³*Ibid.*, 15.

cities in the Southern League, with a population of 43,350, up from a pre-war population of 16,988. Meanwhile, Chattanooga, in size was comparable with Macon, Georgia, while 33,592 residents called Memphis home. Birmingham was the smallest community within the Southern League, home to a population of 3,086 in 1880,⁶⁴ which may have in part been due to the fact that it had only been established after the Civil War as a mining town.⁶⁵

Table 1

Population Growth of Southern Cities with Populations Over 25,000, 1860-1910⁶⁶

| | Population of Southern League Cities | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| | <u>1860</u> | <u>1880</u> | <u>1910</u> |
| Atlanta | 9,554 | 37,409 | 154,839 |
| Augusta | 12,493 | 21,891 | 41,040 |
| Birmingham | | 3,086 | 132,685 |
| Charleston | 40,522 | 49,984 | 58,833 |
| Chattanooga | 2,545 | 12,892 | 44,604 |
| Knoxville ⁶⁷ | 5,379 | 9,693 | 36,346 |

⁶⁴Birmingham, who later became a member of the Southern Association upon its formation in 1901, would experience one of the largest population booms of any of the minor league cities in the South, going from 3,086 in 1880 to 132,685 in 1910, a percentage growth of 4,200%.

⁶⁵Doyle, 39.

⁶⁶Ibid., 15.

⁶⁷Although not one of the original charter members of the Southern League, baseball in Knoxville emerged at the same time. The growth of baseball in Knoxville correlated directly with that of Southern League cities.

| | | | |
|-------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Macon | 8,247 | 12,749 | 40,665 |
| Memphis | 22,623 | 33,592 | 131,685 |
| Nashville | 16,988 | 43,350 | 110,364 |
| New Orleans | 168,675 | 216,090 | 339,075 |
| Savannah | 22,292 | 30,709 | 65,064 |

With the rapid growth of the number of residents residing in urban environments came the dramatic reshaping of the social structures of many Southern cities. As a direct result of the economic climate of the post war South new social classes emerged, resembling less of that of antebellum Southern society and sharing characteristics of urban industrial centers in the North. The Southern agricultural elite, who exerted influence over both social and economic environments of the region prior to the war, found themselves competing with the newly emerging urban business class for control of Southern labor.

With the urban and industrial transformation taking hold in the South, organized baseball began to emerge. The Southern League of Professional Clubs opened their inaugural season in the spring of 1885, choosing to adopt the New York style rules of play. Operating in eight southern communities that benefited from the effects of socio-economic changes of the New South, professional baseball had found a home in three southern states. Overseeing the league was Alexander Proudfit of Macon, Georgia while

Atlanta newspaper man and former New South booster⁶⁸ Henry Grady served as league president and Proudfit's second in command.⁶⁹

While the success of the 1885 season demonstrated the growing popularity of baseball throughout the United States, the remainder of the Southern League's history is characterized by tumult and disorganization. Following the 1885 season Birmingham and Columbus would not return to the league, and Savannah and Charleston took over their spots.⁷⁰ The following year four teams dropped out, leaving the Southern League with clubs in Charleston, Memphis, Nashville, and Savannah. Mobile and New Orleans joined the league that year, but losing records and poor attendance caused Mobile and Savannah's clubs to withdraw from the league early in the season. Financial troubles midway through the season caused Nashville to remove itself from the league, while a club was formed in Birmingham and the 1888 season saw the Southern League finish with four teams.⁷¹

Further hardships would be in store for the Southern League, with the league folding midway through the seasons the next two years and halting operations all together for 1890 and 1891. Yet play resumed for the season of 1892, with league once

⁶⁸Ibid., xi.

⁶⁹Bill O'Neill, *The Southern League: Baseball in Dixie 1885-1994*, (Austin, TX: Eakin Press, 1994), 2.

⁷⁰Ibid., 4.

⁷¹Ibid., 6.

again fielding teams in eight southern cities. Riding on the success of the 1892 season, the league expanded to twelve teams in 1893, yet scheduling conflicts and the disparity between successful teams demonstrated the shortsightedness and poor management of the league.⁷²

With the league reverting back to eight teams, the Southern League resumed play for the season of 1894. However, once again poor attendance and financial difficulties forced a number of teams to disband before the season's end, resulting in a split season finished by the four remaining teams. While the following season was somewhat more successful with six teams finishing their schedules, it would sadly be the last full season the Southern League would enjoy⁷³. The 1896 season saw only half the season completed, while play was not resumed for 1897. Despite the fact that the season came to a quick end the following year because of the outbreak of the Spanish-American War, the Southern League would make an attempt at what would be their final season of operation, with the four team league folding midway through the season.⁷⁴ Yet despite the failure of the Southern League, baseball had firmly implanted itself in Southern culture, and it emerged anew in 1901 in the form of the Southern Association.

Following the collapse of the Southern League, efforts were made to reorganize

⁷²Ibid., 11.

⁷³Ibid., 15.

⁷⁴Ibid., 16-18.

professional baseball in the South. In October of 1900, a meeting was held at the Morris Hotel in Birmingham to discuss the revival of minor league baseball in the South.

Present at the meeting were five cities of the defunct Southern League that included: Birmingham, New Orleans, Memphis, Nashville, and Chattanooga, while newcomer Shreveport made the sixth spot.⁷⁵ After deciding that the environment in the South was ripe for a new minor league circuit, rules were drawn up for the newly formed Southern Association.

Each team in the league was to provide a guarantee fund of a thousand dollars, with an additional thousand dollars guaranteed to each team, made in two payments of five hundred dollars. Teams were limited to salaries of no more than eleven hundred dollars a month for their players, and any violation of this policy incurred a one hundred dollar fine.⁷⁶ Yet the organizers of the Southern Association recognized that in order to ensure the success of the league it would be necessary to avoid the financial mishaps of the Southern League. In order to ensure this a “sinking fund” was created that would be financed by pooling ten percent of each team’s income.⁷⁷ This would help ensure a more financially stable environment for the league as it guaranteed the availability of funds for league operations and, if necessary, provided assistance to teams experiencing financial difficulties.⁷⁸

⁷⁵“In Line Once More. The South Will Again Have Baseball,” *Sporting Life* 36 no.6 (1900): 10.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*,

⁷⁷*Ibid.*,

⁷⁸ “ In the South. Some Facts About the Head of the New League,” *Sporting Life* 36 no. 13 (1900): 1.

Heading the operations of the Southern Association was twenty eight year old R.W. Kent. Prior to his election as president, Kent had been a player-manager in the “Two Eyed” League and Nebraska State League while helping to organize the Western Association in 1894.⁷⁹ Atlanta and Little Rock joined the league in November,⁸⁰ and with the inaugural season slated for spring 1901, President Kent expressed his optimism, stating: “The Southern Association has a splendid outlook ahead of it. Never in the history of the South has a body of men assembled with such determination to organize and conduct a base ball league on business principles.”⁸¹

Fans throughout the South welcomed the return of minor league baseball as the 1901 season proved successful for the Southern Association. That same year in Chicago saw the creation of the National Association of Professional Baseball Leagues. This organization, comprised of semi-professional leagues throughout the United States banded together as a form of protection against the power and influence of the major leagues.⁸² However, in 1903 a convention was held in St. Louis between the two major leagues and the National Association ratified a charter recognizing equality amongst the

⁷⁹Ibid.,

⁸⁰ “President Kent of the Southern League Announces that Eight Cities are in Line,” *Sporting Life* 36 no. 10 (1900): 4.

⁸¹ “In the South. Some Facts About the Head of the New League,” *Sporting Life* 36 no. 13 (1900): 1.

⁸² Charles A. Hurth, Herman D. White, and Bruce Dudley, *The Story of Minor League Baseball* (Columbus, OH: Stoneman Press, 1952), 19.

three organizations.⁸³

The formation of the National Association proved instrumental in the expansion and success of minor league baseball. As more minor league circuits joined the National Association, its numbers grew from fifteen leagues in 1902 to thirty-four member leagues three years later.⁸⁴ Upon gaining membership, each league was awarded classification based on criteria established in the National Association's founding charter. Each level of classification (Class A- Class D in ascending order) included a minimum population requirement for the circuit as well as salary restrictions for teams.⁸⁵

The Southern Association would enter the 1902 season as a Class B⁸⁶ member of the National Association. In the years leading up to America's entry in the First World War, the Southern Association would enjoy success amongst the populations of the South's larger cities. Although the locations of teams in the league was subject to

⁸³Ibid., 21.

⁸⁴O'Neill, 96.

⁸⁵ Vern Luse, "Evolution of Minor League Classifications," *Society for American Baseball Research Minor League Newsletter* 3 (1989): 3. These classifications would later be modified, in 1908 Class AA was added as the top tier bringing the total number of classifications to five. This system would remain in place until a reorganization in 1936.

⁸⁶ The minimum population requirement for Class B was 400,000. This meant that in order to meet this requirement the populations of the eight cities in the Southern Association, when added together, exceeded 400,000 but did not meet the 1,000,000 population requirement for Class A.

change,⁸⁷ it was not until war broke out that league faced their first challenge.

Despite America's entry into the First World War during the spring of 1917, the Southern Association remained unhindered by any wartime restrictions. However, by 1918 the federal government instituted travel restrictions that created difficulties for the league. Despite this obstacle, the decision was made to go ahead with the 1918 season, with the Southern Association becoming one of nine minor leagues to go forth that season. Facing further restrictions and waning public support, the Southern Association made the decision to halt operations at the end of June. Wartime restrictions would effect other leagues as well and of the nine teams that started the 1918 season, only the International League completed their schedule.⁸⁸

Despite this brief setback, the Southern Association would return to a successful season the following year as a post-war America embraced its national pastime. Capitalizing on the popularity of southern baseball, in 1920 the champions of the Texas League and the Southern Association faced off in a seven game series, drawing nearly 37,000 fans to see Fort Worth take on Little Rock.⁸⁹ After the elevation of the Texas League to Class A the following year⁹⁰ this championship series, dubbed the "Dixie

⁸⁷O'Neill, 22, 28. Following the 1902 season the franchise in Chattanooga was sold to Montgomery, Alabama. Shreveport joined the Texas League in 1908 with Mobile assuming their spot. Baseball returned to Chattanooga following the 1909 season after the purchase of the Little Rock, Arkansas franchise.

⁸⁸Ibid., 36-37.

⁸⁹Ibid., 42.

⁹⁰The Southern Association had been elevated to Class A after the restructuring of the minor league classification system in 1908.

Series” became an annual event until the late 1950s.⁹¹

Significant changes would take place in minor league baseball in the years leading up to the Second World War. The first came in 1926, with the development of the “farm system,” which brought minor league teams under the fold of major league organizations. Created by Branch Rickey⁹² of the St. Louis Cardinals as a way to ease the financial burden player contracts placed on the organization. The goal of this system was to develop players at low cost, and as they develop, players move up through various minor league classifications. Yet despite the objections of baseball commissioner Kenesaw Mountain Landis, the system soon began to take hold.⁹³

Although the Great Depression was quickly taking hold over America, Minor League baseball remained popular. The introduction of night games in 1930 and the later adoption of a postseason playoff allowed the Southern Association to maintain attendance in the years leading up to the Second World War.⁹⁴ Although the war had a detrimental impact on the minor league system, the Southern Association would find a way to carry on.

In the year prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor, 43 minor leagues operated within the United States, but by midway through the war travel restrictions and a declining

⁹¹O’Neill, 42-43, 86.

⁹²Rickey would later go on to sign Jackie Robinson for the Brooklyn Dodgers and play an instrumental role in the desegregation of baseball.

⁹³Hurth, White, and Dudley, 26.

⁹⁴O’Neill, 51.

pool of eligible players caused many leagues to suspend operations. In 1943 only ten minor leagues were in operation in the United States, amongst them the Southern Association.⁹⁵ However, following the end of the war minor league baseball surged in popularity. As new leagues emerged a new classification system was developed, creating AAA status for the largest cities and a reclassification of the Southern Association as AA.⁹⁶ The latter half of the 1940s would be boom for minor league baseball and the Southern Association reached an average yearly attendance of almost two million fans.⁹⁷

Despite the boom of the late 1940s, the following decade would see the decline and deterioration of the Southern Association. By 1953, the league recorded only 1.3 million fans in attendance that season, down from 2.2 million in 1947.⁹⁸ The rising popularity of televised games played a significant factor in the league's dwindling attendance; however the Southern Association's failure to embrace racial integration also contributed to the league's decline.⁹⁹ As other leagues began adding African American players to their rosters, the Southern Association would only see one team attempt to integrate its roster. The Atlanta Crackers made this lone attempt adding

⁹⁵Ibid.,64-65.

⁹⁶Ibid., 50.

⁹⁷Ibid., 76.

⁹⁸Kenneth R. Fenster, "Earl Mann, Nat Peeples, and the Failed Attempt of Integration in the Southern Association," *Nine: A Journal of Baseball History and Culture* 12 no. 2 (2004): 79.

⁹⁹O'Neill, 79.

outfielder Nat Peeples to their roster in 1954.¹⁰⁰ Yet public opposition to integration remained strong and Peeples only appeared in two games before being demoted down to single A Jacksonville.¹⁰¹

Attendance continued to decline for the Southern Association throughout the 1950s. The Texas League experienced a similar drop in attendance and the final Dixie Series was played in 1958.¹⁰² Teams throughout the league suffered from poor attendance, often boasting season attendance of only a little more than 100,000 fans. The future looked bleak for the Southern Association and after a recorded attendance of 647, 831 fans for the 1961 season the league ceased operations.¹⁰³

After the collapse of the Southern Association, Chattanooga and Nashville transferred their franchises to the South Atlantic League. Conceived by Ted Sullivan, the league organized at a convention held in late November 1903, when team representatives drew up the league's charter.¹⁰⁴ After attaining membership in the National Association in December of 1903,¹⁰⁵ the Class C¹⁰⁶ South Atlantic League

¹⁰⁰Fenster, 73.

¹⁰¹O'Neill, 83.

¹⁰²Ibid., 86.

¹⁰³Ibid., 89.

¹⁰⁴“Timely Topics,” *Sporting Life* 42 no. 11 (1903): 6.

¹⁰⁵“National Association Leagues,” *Sporting Life* 42 no. 14 (1903): 11.

¹⁰⁶Class C was defined by the National Association as following: Total league population between 200,000 and 400,000; \$800 a month salary limit; \$200 draft limit; Protection Costs of \$20 per team; and individual salaries could not exceed \$100 a month. From Vern Luse, “Evolution of Minor League Classifications,” *Society for American Baseball Research Minor League Newsletter* 3 (1989): 3

opened on April 26, 1904. Comprised of two teams from South Carolina, three from Georgia, and one from Florida, this six team league enjoyed success during their nascent years of play, expanding to eight teams in 1908.¹⁰⁷

Like so many other leagues at the time, the South Atlantic League halted operations for the 1918 season, successfully reorganizing with six teams the following year.¹⁰⁸ Elevated to Class B in 1921, the South Atlantic continued to grow, expanding to eight teams in 1925.¹⁰⁹ Comprised of teams in Asheville, Augusta, Charlotte, Columbia, Greenville, Knoxville, Macon, and Spartanburg, the South Atlantic League continued to operate successfully until the Great Depression forced them to cease operations in 1931.¹¹⁰

As the nation began to slowly recover from the Depression, the South Atlantic League reorganized in December of 1935. Fielding six teams for the 1936 season, the league quickly grew, once again expanding to eight teams in 1939.¹¹¹ Yet the league's success would be short lived as wartime restrictions forced the league to halt operations following the 1942 season.¹¹²

However, the post war boom in minor league baseball saw the South Atlantic

¹⁰⁷O'Neill, 101.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., 106.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., 107-108.

¹¹⁰Ibid., 113.

¹¹¹Ibid., 113, 114, 116.

¹¹²Ibid., 119.

League return in 1946 as a reclassified Class A league . Crowds flocked to games as the league experienced record attendance levels, exceeding over one million fans in attendance for the 1947 season.¹¹³ While attendance would slip for other leagues throughout the 1950s, the South Atlantic League would remain popular amongst Southern baseball fans.

Efforts to integrate the game were met with more success in the South Atlantic League than in the Southern Association. The 1953 season opened with the introduction of five African American players to the league, including a young Hank Aaron.¹¹⁴ Yet fans responded poorly to this move by the league and by the late 1950s the American public's lack of interest in minor league baseball began to affect the South Atlantic League, who soon began experiencing dwindling attendance and ultimately forcing two teams in the league to disband.¹¹⁵

Despite attendance dropping to 491,194 for the 1959 season, the South Atlantic League managed to survive.¹¹⁶ The collapse of the Southern Association left the Texas League and the Mexican League as the sole remaining AA organizations in minor league baseball. Following major league baseball's restructure of the minor league system in 1963 that eliminated B,C, and D classifications, the South Atlantic League was promoted

¹¹³Ibid., 121.

¹¹⁴Ibid., 124.

¹¹⁵Ibid., 130.

¹¹⁶Ibid., 131.

to AA status.¹¹⁷ As the 1964 season approached, the South Atlantic League felt a new image was necessary in order to avoid association with their former status as well as to avoid identification with the defunct Southern Association, and once again the Southern League returned to minor league baseball.¹¹⁸

However, in adopting the moniker of the South's first semi-professional circuit, the Southern League began to experience similar problems that plagued the original league. Poor attendance forced two teams out of the league, while another team dropped down to the single A Carolina League. A replacement was found, bringing the league to six teams, but attendance was still sluggish as the 1967 season saw only 240,566 fans pass through the gates.¹¹⁹ Yet the league would see a rise in attendance the following two seasons as numbers reached 333,516 for the 1969 season.¹²⁰

By the following season things had begun to improve for the Southern League as renewed interest in the league allowed them to once again expand to eight teams. Yet this success would be short lived as poor attendance forced one of the teams in the league to fold and a replacement city could not be arranged. Left with only seven teams, the Southern League merged with the Texas League, which faced a similar predicament. This unique three division organization, dubbed the Dixie Association, lasted only a year

¹¹⁷Ibid., 133.

¹¹⁸Ibid., 133-134.

¹¹⁹Ibid., 146.

¹²⁰Ibid., 148.

as both leagues once again returned to an eight team format the following season.¹²¹

Despite fluctuating attendance, the following seasons saw stability in the Southern League, and by the late 1970s attendance had reached almost half a million fans.¹²² By 1978 the arrival of franchises in Memphis and Nashville¹²³ expanded the league to ten teams, and with attendance records the following season reaching one and a half million people,¹²⁴ minor league baseball in the South was on the rise.

1980 saw the return of the South Atlantic League, reorganized as a Class A circuit,¹²⁵ while the Southern League continued to enjoy increased attendance levels. By the mid 1980's Nashville, a city who had hosted a Southern Association team for the first half of the twentieth century, would be elevated to AAA, while Huntsville, Alabama would take their place in the Southern League.¹²⁶ By the time the 1990s approached, the Southern League remained strong, finishing the decade as the only ten team AA circuit.¹²⁷

Both the South Atlantic League and Southern League began the 1990s strong, with franchises in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Tennessee, as well as North and South

¹²¹Ibid., 151-153.

¹²²Ibid., 157.

¹²³Ibid., 159.

¹²⁴Ibid., 161.

¹²⁵Ibid., 267.

¹²⁶Ibid., 171.

¹²⁷Ibid., 178.

Carolina. Both leagues would continue to find success in the years that followed, with the South Atlantic League expanding from twelve teams in 1990 to fourteen the following year. Although the franchises in each league has changed, both the South Atlantic League and the Southern League continue to delight baseball fans throughout the South.

The history of minor league baseball in the South demonstrates how the sport has come to represent an allegory for the urbanization of the south following the Civil War, but also how baseball has played a significant role in the local culture of southern communities. Because of baseball's one hundred and thirty year presence in cities throughout the South, minor league organizations are provided with an ample opportunity to celebrate not only baseball's rich history in these communities, but the team's role and significance in local culture. As the following case studies will show, interweaving team history with community history, provides minor league teams with the opportunity to create a connection with fans and the community through nostalgia.

Chapter 3

The Tennessee Smokies

Baseball gained popularity amongst the citizens of Knoxville following the Civil War. The growth of the sport accelerated as the community underwent urbanization during the 1880s in part because of urban boosters who championed the idea of a “New South.” While Knoxville did not join the Southern League, the city’s semi-professional team participated in various leagues until their admittance to the South Atlantic League in the 1920s. Presently the “Smokies” no longer resides in Knoxville, but the team plays in neighboring Kodak, Tennessee, operating in the Southern League as a Class AA affiliate of the Chicago Cubs.

Semi-Professional Baseball in Knoxville:

From the Nineteenth Century to the Present

The earliest form of baseball was brought to Knoxville by local businessman S.B.Dow in 1865. Dow organized a team that played on a makeshift field on the edge of the city.¹²⁸ Ten years later, baseball began to show signs of popularity, and by 1878 organized baseball began to take shape in the form of the Knoxville Reds.¹²⁹ Yet it was the arrival of professional baseball that signified the rapid urbanization taking place in post war Knoxville.

¹²⁸Bill O’Neill, *Baseball in Dixie: 1885-1994*, (Austin, TX: Eakin Press, 1994), 255.

¹²⁹E.T.B.H., “Baseballs! Baseballs!” July 1875, *Knoxville Chronicle* and Ramage & Co., “Baseballs And Bats, Croquet, Canes, Games of All Kinds, at Ramage & Co.’s.” May 1879, *Knoxville Chronicle*, and “Victory for the Reds, Republished from Sunday’s Edition, Victory for the Reds. The Result of Yesterday’s Match Game of Baseball. The Reds Scoop In the Roanes By a Score 6 to 5. And Win Laurels Worth Wearing-Intensely Exciting Game,” *Knoxville Chronicle*, July 30, 1878.

Like many other cities in the “New South,” the presence of a strong network of railways contributed greatly to Knoxville’s urban and economic growth. With sixteen railroads running through the city, including major rail lines like the East Tennessee, Virginia, and Georgia line, Knoxville became one of the largest commercial centers in the South, distributing goods manufactured in Northern cities to regions of Kentucky, Virginia, Tennessee, North Carolina, and Georgia. In turn this led to wholesale distributors becoming a large sector of the local economy. By the early 1880s, forty four wholesale trading firms, dealing in goods ranging from groceries, clothing, and raw materials, existed in Knoxville, half of which had been established after the Civil War.

The economic boom of the late nineteenth century allowed the business elite of Knoxville to firmly establish their presence in the community. Amongst this social class were the “Merchant Princes” of Knoxville, whose ranks included: W.W. Woodruff Sr., E.J. Sanford, M.L. Ross, and W.P. Chamberlain, businessmen who used their wealth to bring professional baseball to the city.¹³⁰ Woodruff, Sanford, and Ross owed much of their wealth to wholesale distribution of goods (Woodruff started a successful hardware company; Sanford dealt in pharmaceuticals; and Ross made his money in wholesale grocery items,) while Chamberlain successfully invested in local industry and railroads. In addition to symbolizing the nouveau riche that prospered under the conditions of the

¹³⁰W. Russell Briscoe, “Commerce and Industry,” in *Heart of the Valley: A History of Knoxville, Tennessee*, ed. Lucile Deaderick, (Knoxville, TN: The East Tennessee Historical Society, 1976), 411-412, and “Knoxville To Buy Out One of the Southern League Clubs,” *The Sporting Life* 5 No. 15 (1885): 1. In addition to these men, another gentleman named E.G. Coffman participated in the purchase of the Birmingham, AL baseball team that was brought to Knoxville. However, there is little mention of him in many of the local histories of Knoxville and as such I have been unable to include substantive information on him.

“New South,” Chamberlain, Sanford, and Woodruff in particular represented Northern capital that came south following the war.¹³¹ While these men would not initiate the origins of baseball in Knoxville, their effort to capitalize on the growth of the sport would further its popularity amongst the residents of the ever growing mountain city.

What makes the arrival of this form of baseball significant is that it represents the socio-economic changes that the “New South” brought to Knoxville. Purchased with the money from the personal fortunes of men who owed their success to the industrial economy of post-Civil War Knoxville, the team would find support amongst the growing merchant middle class of the “New South.” Much like their Northern counterparts who pioneered the game, the team’s success would be directly tied to the urban growth of the community. As such, the period between 1885 and 1910 would see a rise in both the popularity of the sport as well as the rise of the Knoxville team to eventual class D minor league status.

In preparation for the arrival of the team, a ballpark was constructed with an additional rail line created to allow for greater access for fans.¹³² The park was located along Asylum Street outside the city center, where the team would remain until a new

¹³¹William Bruce Wheeler, *Knoxville, Tennessee: A Mountain City in the New South*, (Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 2003), 14. Chamberlain, who hailed from Ohio, and Woodruff, a Kentucky native, arrived in Knoxville after the Civil War. Sanford, who was born in Connecticut but had arrived in Knoxville in 1853 and immediately following the war. It should be also noted that all three men were veterans of the Union Army.

¹³²“Base Ball Park,” *Knoxville Daily Chronicle*, July 13, 1885.

field was constructed closer to downtown Knoxville in 1895.¹³³ Although evidence suggests that the early years of Knoxville baseball appear to have somewhat tumultuous for the team, by 1890 the Reds would become a secure themselves within the community.¹³⁴

Thanks in part to the construction of their new downtown location, patronage increased and under the management of Frank Moffett, baseball in Knoxville would enjoy success in the waning years of the nineteenth century.¹³⁵ In 1895, Knoxville assisted in the creation of a tri-state league consisting of cities in Tennessee, Georgia, and Alabama, as well as incorporating several former Southern League organizations.¹³⁶ In addition, the popularity of baseball would take hold outside of its semi-professional form as local companies organized their own teams.¹³⁷

¹³³“Baseball: Athens vs. Knoxville Next Friday,” *Knoxville Daily Chronicle*, July 28, 1885, and “Will Play Ball. The Survey Made for the New Asylum Street Park, A Bicycle Race Track Will Be One of the Features of the Park When Completed” *The Knoxville Journal*, March 21, 1895.

¹³⁴“Augusta Scared: A Report that the Franchise Will be Sold to Columbus-Money to be Raised, Etc.,” *The Sporting Life* 6 No. 19: (1886), 5, and “The Pennant Arrives-Uncomfortable News From Augusta, Etc.,” *The Sporting Life* 6 No. 21: (1886), 1. There is an informational gap for the years between 1887 and 1889 in which I was unable to find any mention of baseball in Knoxville. During this period and up until the mid 1890s, many teams missed seasons or temporarily folded due to financial difficulties. It may be then that the lack of information on Knoxville baseball during this period may have been due to the team taking a temporary hiatus in order to restructure the business aspect of the organization and secure funding. The team would change their name three times during the period between 1895 and 1910, including the Indians, Appalachians, however the team would return to using the moniker Reds in 1910.

¹³⁵“Knoxville Will Have Ball,” *The Sporting Life* 23 No. 2: (1894), 6.

¹³⁶“Knoxville In Line,” *The Sporting Life* 25 No.1: (1895), 4, and “A Southern Tri-State: Talk of Such a League Down in Georgia,” *The Sporting Life* 26 No. 14: (1895), 1.

¹³⁷“Baseball Team, The Fountain City Land Company Will Have One,” *The Knoxville Journal*, March 24, 1895.

The dawn of the twentieth century saw the expansion of baseball in the Southeast as new clubs were added to existing leagues, signifying the growing popularity of the sport.¹³⁸ Baseball would continue to maintain popularity in Knoxville as the city's growing population provided a stable fan base for the sport, ultimately catching the eye of larger leagues as a new market for expansion.¹³⁹ Midway through the season of 1909, Knoxville was admitted into the Class D South Atlantic League as a replacement for the defunct Charleston, South Carolina ball club.¹⁴⁰ Ecstatic about the news of Knoxville's acceptance into the league, the local populace flocked to see the highly anticipated opening game.¹⁴¹ Although the summer of 1909 would be the only season Knoxville would play in the South Atlantic League until their return in 1925, baseball would continue on in Knoxville as the team won the 1910 Southeastern League pennant before joining the Appalachian League the following year.¹⁴²

Knoxville remained in the Class D Appalachian League, until the league folded in 1914. Professional baseball would remain dormant in Knoxville until the aftermath of

¹³⁸“A Tri-State League-A New Southern League Being Formed With Clubs to be Located in Tennessee, Alabama, Georgia and North Carolina,” *The Sporting Life* 43 No. 8: (1904), 14.

¹³⁹“Chances Are Favorable For a Sally League Team In Knoxville. How President Jones Talked in Chattanooga Following His Visit Here,” *The Journal and Tribune*, June 30, 1909.

¹⁴⁰“South Atlantic League,” *The Sporting Life* 53 No. 20: (1909), 24.

¹⁴¹“Will Warmly Welcome Team, News of Baseball Transfer Gladly Received. Knoxville Sally Leaguers Should Draw Big Crowds At Monday's Opening.” *The Journal and Tribune*, July 3, 1909 and “Knoxville and Columbia Teams Open the Sally League Season This Morning.” *The Journal and Tribune*, July 5, 1909.

¹⁴²“To Settle Row: South Atlantic League to Placate Knoxville Men,” *The Sporting Life* 55 No.6: (1910), 7, and O'Neill, 256-257.

the First World War when the Appalachian League began anew in 1921. After back to back pennant wins in 1923 and 1924, the following year saw Knoxville elevated to the Class B South Atlantic League, when the league expanded from a six club format to eight. Adopting a new moniker, the Knoxville Smokies' early years in the league would see the team finish in the cellar. However by the late 1920s the team showed signs of life and captured the league championship in 1929.¹⁴³

While the onset of the Great Depression proved to have a detrimental impact on minor league baseball, baseball in Knoxville would survive. Despite dire economic conditions preventing Knoxville from fielding a team for the 1930 season, the team would reorganize the following season. The South Atlantic League had ceased operations, but the transfer of the Southern Association's Mobile franchise to Knoxville kept baseball alive in the community until 1944.¹⁴⁴

While no team would be fielded for the 1945 season, baseball returned again the following year as Knoxville joined the Class B Tri-State League. Comprised of teams in Tennessee and both Carolinas, the Smokies enjoyed moderate success, reaching the playoffs twice, before relocating to the Class D Mountain States League for the 1953 season. After the Mountain States League folded following the 1953 season, Knoxville once again returned to the Tri-State League only to see the league cease operations at the end of the 1955 season.

¹⁴³O'Neill, 256-257.

¹⁴⁴Ibid., 256-257.

However, this would not spell the end of the Smokies as a team arrived the following year after the Montgomery, Alabama franchise was transferred to Knoxville. This move saw Knoxville once again return to the South Atlantic League, which had been elevated to Class A status ten years prior.¹⁴⁵ Making several playoff appearances throughout the late 1950s and early 1960s, Knoxville would be elevated to AA status along with the rest of the South Atlantic League following the 1963 season. However, Knoxville's fortunes would change in the newly christened Southern League, as consecutive last place finishes saw attendance dwindle. After a season attendance record of only 21, 390 fans for the 1967 season, the owners relocated the franchise to Asheville, North Carolina, and the Smokies were suddenly gone.¹⁴⁶

Baseball's departure from Knoxville would prove to be brief, as a new team once again returned to the Southern League in 1972 as an affiliate of the Chicago White Sox.¹⁴⁷ This relationship would prove to be successful for the franchise, as the renamed Knoxville White Sox secured championship titles in 1974 and 1978.¹⁴⁸ 1979 would be the last season Knoxville remained affiliated with the White Sox organization and the following year began the season as a farm team for the Toronto Blue Jays. Despite several division titles and postseason appearances throughout the 1980s, the Knoxville

¹⁴⁵Ibid, 258, 119.

¹⁴⁶Ibid, 258-259.

¹⁴⁷Ibid, 259.

¹⁴⁸Ibid, 259-260.

Blue Jays were unable to repeat the success of 1974 and 1978 and did not return to the league championship.¹⁴⁹

In 2002, the Smokies lengthy relationship with the Blue Jays came to an end. Becoming an affiliate of the St. Louis Cardinals, in 2004, the Smokies returned a Southern League championship title to Knoxville for the first time since 1978. The following season saw the Smokies once again change affiliations, becoming a farm team for the Arizona Diamondbacks. Yet this partnership lasted just a year, and in 2006 the Smokies engaged in a relationship with their current parent organization, the Chicago Cubs.¹⁵⁰

Team Stadiums: 1885-Present

As the city of Knoxville geared up with anticipation for the inaugural 1885 baseball season, the team constructed a ballpark outside of the city center on Asylum Street.¹⁵¹ With rail lines running to the stadium, allowing fans easy access on game days, the Asylum Street grounds stood for ten years as the home of semi-professional baseball in Knoxville. As the popularity of the sport grew, the decision was made to construct a larger stadium closer to the city center, allowing for greater accessibility for

¹⁴⁹Ibid, 260-261.

¹⁵⁰“Team History (1896-Present),” http://www.milb.com/content/page.jsp?ymd=20100314&content_id=8786142&sid=t553&vkey=team1. Accessed September 22, 2014.

¹⁵¹“Base Ball Park,” *Knoxville Daily Chronicle*, July 13, 1885.

fans.¹⁵² Opening in time for the start of the 1895 season, the new stadium, dubbed “Baldwin Park,” hosted games until the 1906 season when the Knoxville Reds folded.¹⁵³

The return of semi-professional baseball in 1909 brought with it a new ballpark. Chilhowee Park was home to the Knoxville Appalachians (1909-1910) and Reds (1911-1914) for six seasons until baseball once again left Knoxville following the collapse of the Appalachian League after the 1914 season.¹⁵⁴ Baseball returned again anew following the conclusion of the First World War, once again bringing with it a new home for the Knoxville ball club. This new home, christened Caswell Park, played host to two Appalachian League pennants in 1923 and 1924 and the 1929 South Atlantic League champion Smokies, before the Great Depression forced Knoxville to halt operations after the 1929 season.¹⁵⁵

After a brief hiatus from baseball in 1930, the Smokies returned to play for the 1931 season. That same year, the decision was made by the city of Knoxville to demolish Caswell Park and construct a new stadium for the Smokies. Named Smithson Stadium in honor of W.N. Smithson, the city councilman who led the push for a new stadium, this

¹⁵²“Will Play Ball. The Survey Made for the New Asylum Street Park, A Bicycle Race Track Will Be One of the Features of the Park When Completed” *The Knoxville Journal*, March 21, 1895.

¹⁵³“From Knoxville: Prepared to Duplicate Last Year’s Success,” *Sporting Life* 27 no. 7: (1896), 6, and “Team History (1896-Present),” http://www.milb.com/content/page.jsp?ymd=20100314&content_id=8786142&sid=t553&vkey=team1. Accessed September 22, 2014.

¹⁵⁴O’Neill, 256.

¹⁵⁵*Ibid*, 256-257.

park hosted baseball in Knoxville until a 1953 fire destroyed the stadium.¹⁵⁶ After the fire that destroyed Smithson Stadium, the city constructed Knoxville Municipal Stadium, a 6,700 person capacity park costing \$500,000, that would be renamed Bill Meyer Stadium in 1957, in honor of the passing of the former Knoxville player and manager.¹⁵⁷

After nearly fifty years of use Bill Meyer Stadium no longer met the needs of the Smokies and the decision was made in 1999 to construct a new stadium. This state of the art facility, constructed at the cost of 19.4 million, led to new changes for the Smokies organization. Since land could not be acquired in Knoxville, the team relocated to nearby Kodak, resulting in the team rebranding itself the Tennessee Smokies. This move proved successful for the organization as following the opening of Smokies Park on April 20, 2000, as the organization set an attendance record of 268,000 fans for the 2002 season.¹⁵⁸

The Utilization of History and Sports Heritage

Presently, the Smokies recognize only a minimal amount of history and sports heritage in their current operations. Examples of their use of history and sports heritage include the presentation of tangible moveable objects, in this case displaying jerseys of former players who have gone on to major league careers and a website that offers a detailed narrative celebrating the history of the organization and semi-professional

¹⁵⁶Ibid, 257.

¹⁵⁷Ibid, 256-257.

¹⁵⁸“10 Years at Smokies Park,” available at http://www.milb.com/content/page.jsp?sid=t553&ynd=20100218&content_id=8093018&vkey=team1, accessed September 22, 2014.

baseball in the region. While their current efforts certainly offer the opportunity for invoking intangible elements such as nostalgia and memory, there are several other ways in which the Smokies organization could improve upon existing elements of sports heritage and incorporate others. As such, the Smokies represent a potential new market for the incorporation of historical marketing and sports heritage, which can in turn be applied to similar organizations.

However, before discussing the incorporation of additional elements of sports heritage into current operations, it is necessary to analyze existing efforts by the team to utilize history and heritage. While the displaying of jerseys of former players in the stadium restaurant plays homage to an element of the team's heritage and history, it is displayed in such a way that reaches an audience that is limited to the restaurant's patrons. The Smokies recognize players who have made significant contributions to the organization and the team's website contains an "All-Time Roster" of former players. However, this list simply contains the players name and their years spent with the organization.¹⁵⁹ This list can be improved by including significant records, either single season or all-time records, these individuals hold and or major contributions they have made to the organization.

This existing model could be improved upon by setting aside space within Smokies Park as a designated hall of fame that showcases and highlights players who

¹⁵⁹"All-Time Roster," available at http://www.milb.com/content/page.jsp?ymd=20140123&content_id=67019354&fext=.jsp&sid=t553&vkey=, accessed September 27, 2014.

have made significant contributions to the organization. Many major league teams have incorporated this element of sports heritage into their stadiums and these techniques have proved quite successful. By doing this, it provides teams with the opportunity to better showcase individuals of historical significance and engage fans in an element of the team's heritage. In part, the reason this model is so successful is that it appeals to collective and individual memory, in particular the sense of nostalgia. Because this model has been so successful for other organizations, it presents the Smokies with an additional opportunity to increase attendance as well as their fan base.

The historical narrative found on the team's website affords the Smokies with another opportunity to greater utilize elements of sports heritage. Firstly, the narrative itself could go further back into the history of baseball in the region. This narrative acknowledges semi-professional baseball as starting in 1896 with the Knoxville Indians; however, as evidence shows, organized baseball had emerged at least eleven years prior with the Knoxville Reds.¹⁶⁰ Going even further back, this narrative can include mention of the 1878 Knoxville Reds, which while not technically a professional ball club, is one of the first organized teams in the area. Doing so demonstrates the historical popularity of the sport in eastern Tennessee and demonstrates how it has come to be a major part of the local culture. This would show the general public that local sports heritage is connected to them, and it is a part of the greater culture of the region.

¹⁶⁰Team History (1896-Present) available at http://www.milb.com/content/page.jsp?ymd=20100314&content_id=8786142&sid=t553&vkey=team1, accessed September 27, 2014 and "Knoxville To Buy Out One of the Southern League Clubs," *The Sporting Life* 5 No. 15 (1885): 1.

Additionally, this historical narrative provides the opportunity for the creation of displays and exhibits that can be placed throughout the park. These proposed markers could provide information on previous teams or pay homage to championship winning teams. The Smokies could follow the example of the Iowa Cubs, who have concession stands situated throughout the park named after historical minor league teams from the area. Each concession stand includes a small historical marker that gives a brief description of the team in question, including years of operation and team highlights. Although Iowa is a Class AAA organization with a larger stadium than the Smokies, aspects of this model can be incorporated into Smokies Park that may prove beneficial to the organization.



Figure 1. Des Moines Bruins concession stand and Des Moines Bruins historical marker. One of the concession stands used by the Iowa Cubs and the historical marker that accompanies it. This particular concession stand pays tribute to the Des Moines Bruins, a minor league ball team who operated from 1947 to 1958. This is one of five such concession stands situated throughout the park.

Finally, the popularity of retro merchandise and apparel presents another opportunity for the team to capitalize on sports heritage. Many major league organizations, and minor league as well, produce and sell jerseys, ball caps, and other

merchandise that pay homage to past teams and players. As Ramshaw and Gammon point out, these items “refer to eras when...players were seemingly more accessible, and to times when jerseys were not littered with advertisements.”¹⁶¹ As such, this merchandise would appeal to fans sense of nostalgia through collective and or private memory, and can potentially create a new source of revenue for the organization. Currently, the Smokies do not sell any historical reproductions, but given the history of the organization, it provides them another opportunity to capitalize on another element of sports heritage.

Conclusions

Given the significance of nostalgia and memory in today’s sports culture, the incorporation of history and elements of sports heritage into existing operations offers minor league organizations a bevy of opportunities that have potential for positive outcomes for the team. In the case of the Tennessee Smokies, existing sports heritage efforts can be improved upon and in turn have a positive effect on the organization. In turn, the Smokies represent a new market in which history and sports heritage can be greater utilized by organizations engaging in minimal activities and are no longer associated with tangible immovable elements of the organization’s heritage.

In order to develop successful programs that utilize the team’s history and elements of their sports heritage, a marketing strategy that emphasizes these elements

¹⁶¹Greg Ramshaw and Sean Gammon, “More than just Nostalgia? Exploring the Heritage/ Sport Tourism Nexus,” *Journal of Sport Tourism* 10 no. 4 (2005): 230.

is necessary. As a nascent market, it is necessary develop a three to five year long-term marketing strategy based on a combination of qualitative and quantitative information.¹⁶² Doing so allows the Smokies to identify present and potential markets; who their target audience is; develop appropriate marketing strategies; and identify appropriate media outlets for reaching various marketing sectors of the local population.¹⁶³ In doing so, the Smokies can successfully develop and implement historical programming that appeals to the local population's sense of nostalgia and memory and in turn create the opportunity to generate additional revenue for the organization.

¹⁶²Gail Dexter Lord and Barry Lord, *The Manual Of Museum Management*, (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 1997), 122.

¹⁶³*Ibid.*, 121.

Chapter 4

The Chattanooga Lookouts

Although baseball was already present in Chattanooga in the early 1880s, the formation of the Southern League in 1885 signified the arrival of semi-professional baseball in the community.¹⁶⁴ The next twenty-five years would prove tumultuous for baseball in Chattanooga, however, the arrival of a Southern Association franchise in 1910 provided the city with a stable team. The construction of Engel Stadium in 1930 continues to have a profound impact on the city's sports heritage legacy.

Semi-Professional Baseball in Chattanooga:

From the 1880s to the Present

Having secured a spot in the newly formed league thanks to the efforts of club president John C. Vance and manager Frank Monroe, Chattanooga opened the inaugural 1885 season of the Southern League with a victory over Nashville.¹⁶⁵ Despite returning to the league the following season, the disbandment of the Augusta, Georgia franchise in early July 1886 left the Southern League with an uneven number of teams.¹⁶⁶ Unable to fill Augusta's position in the league with another franchise, last place Chattanooga was forced by the league to withdraw for the remainder of the season in order to

¹⁶⁴“Baseball: Chattanooga Defeats Huntsville-Score Only 27 to 3,” *Chattanooga Daily Times*, September 24, 1884.

¹⁶⁵“Our Team: Arranging Details for the Southern League,” *Chattanooga Daily Times*, December 29, 1884 and “First Blood: Chattanooga Defeats Nashville by Score of 6 to 5,” *Chattanooga Daily Times*, April 7, 1885.

¹⁶⁶“Baseball: Effect of Augusta's Retirement from the League,” *Chattanooga Daily Times*, July 5, 1886.

balance out the league.¹⁶⁷

After a two-year hiatus from the league, Chattanooga returned to the Southern League in 1889. Initially comprised of New Orleans, Atlanta, Chattanooga, and Mobile, league leaders realized that in order to ensure a successful season more teams must be added to the circuit. Despite the addition of franchises in Birmingham, Charleston, and Memphis, these additional teams would be unable to alleviate the league's woes. Atlanta, Memphis, and Birmingham would withdraw from the league, once again leaving the Southern League with a four-team format.¹⁶⁸ Despite faithful support from fans in Chattanooga, the team and the league would play the final game of the 1889 season on July 6.¹⁶⁹

After suspending operations for the 1890 and 1891, the Southern League reorganized for the 1892 season with franchises in New Orleans, Mobile, Columbus, Macon, Atlanta, Memphis, Nashville, and Chattanooga.¹⁷⁰ The Chattanooga team was successful in 1892 as they finished the season as the league champions.¹⁷¹ Chattanooga was unable to repeat their success from the previous season, finishing the 1893 season

¹⁶⁷“No More Ball: Chattanooga Withdraws, With Full Privileges, from the League,” *Chattanooga Daily Times*, July 9, 1886.

¹⁶⁸Bill O’Neill, *The Southern League: Baseball in Dixie 1885-1994*, (Austin, TX: Eakin Press, 1994), 11.

¹⁶⁹“The Last Game: Chattanooga the Last Team to Give Up,” *Chattanooga Daily Times*, July 7, 1889.

¹⁷⁰“Southern Affairs: Working to Complete the Circuit,” *The Sporting Life* 18 no. 23 (1892): 1.

¹⁷¹ O’Neill, 228.

with only forty-eight wins.¹⁷² While not fielding a team for the 1894 season, Chattanooga returned to the Southern League the following year. Despite a promising start to the season, by early July the Chattanooga franchise was experiencing financial difficulties, and on July 7th the team's owners relinquished control of the team to the league.¹⁷³ Efforts by the league to keep the Chattanooga franchise afloat proved futile and on July 19th, the league transferred the team to Mobile, Alabama.¹⁷⁴ While the Southern League would play only two more seasons, Chattanooga would not field another team for the remainder of the nineteenth century.

The twentieth century would prove far more successful for southern baseball. The formation of the Southern Association in 1901 saw semi-professional baseball once again return to the city of Chattanooga.¹⁷⁵ Chattanooga finished sixth in the Southern League the following year and despite assurances of a strong team for the 1903 season, the franchise was sold and relocated to Montgomery, Alabama.¹⁷⁶

After a five-year hiatus from semi-professional baseball, Chattanooga was

¹⁷²Ibid., 299.

¹⁷³“Not Dead Yet: Base Ball in Chattanooga Gets Another Short Respite,” *The Sporting Life* 25 no. 16 (1895): 17.

¹⁷⁴“Southern League,” *The Sporting Life* 25 no. 18 (1895): 15.

¹⁷⁵“Baseball Season Opens Today,” *Chattanooga Daily Times*, May 2, 1901.

¹⁷⁶“Southern League,” *Chattanooga Daily Times*, September 22, 1902; “Baseball Next Year: Speculation as to the Chattanooga Team,” *Chattanooga Daily Times*, September 28, 1902; and Bill O’Neill, *The Southern League: Baseball in Dixie 1885-1994*, (Austin, TX: Eakin Press, 1994), 228.

awarded a spot in the South Atlantic League for the 1909 season.¹⁷⁷ Purchased by O.B. Andrews, the Chattanooga Lookouts finished the season as the South Atlantic League champions, later defeating Atlanta in a best of seven series between the champions of the Southern Association and the South Atlantic League.¹⁷⁸ The following season Andrews purchased the Southern Association Little Rock franchise, returning Chattanooga once again to the Southern Association.¹⁷⁹

Interrupted only by the United States' entry into the First World War, Chattanooga would experience several mediocre seasons, with consecutive finishes at the bottom of their division. All this would change in 1929. With the introduction of the farm system by the St. Louis Cardinals general manager Branch Rickey in 1926, major league organizations now began forming relationships with minor league organizations in order to train and develop players as a cost saving alternative to purchasing major league contracts.¹⁸⁰ In 1929, Clark Griffith, owner of the Washington Senators, purchased the Lookouts, incorporating them as a farm team for the Senators. However, it was his appointment of former Senators pitcher, Joe Engel, as team president that

¹⁷⁷“Men and Measures,” *The Sporting Life* 52 no. 7 (1908): 10.

¹⁷⁸“In a Series Between Atlanta, the Southern League Champions, and Chattanooga, the South Atlantic Pennant Winner, the Latter Wins Handily,” *The Sporting Life* 54 no 5 (1909): 15.

¹⁷⁹O’Neill, 228.

¹⁸⁰Charles A. Hurth, Herman D. White, and Bruce Dudley, *The Story of Minor League Baseball* (Columbus, OH: Stoneman Press, 1952), 26.

would have an outstanding impact on baseball in Chattanooga.¹⁸¹

One of Engel's first acts as head of the Lookouts was the construction of a new stadium for the team. Construction on the new stadium began shortly after the purchase of the team in 1929. Completed at a cost of \$150,000, the stadium opened in time for the beginning of the 1930 season.¹⁸² The construction of this new stadium would prove successful for the Lookouts, who went on to win the Southern Association pennant in 1932 and 1939 as well as to defeat Beaumont in the 1932 Dixie Series.¹⁸³

Although play would be interrupted by the Second World War, the Southern Association resumed activity at the wars end in 1945. The Lookouts finished third in 1946 with a record of 79 wins and 73 losses, while the following seasons would see Chattanooga coast to consecutive last place finishes.¹⁸⁴ The Lookouts fortunes changed as the team took the 1952 Southern Association pennant, a feat that was repeated in 1961.¹⁸⁵

While 1961 would be the final season of play for the Southern Association, baseball managed to survive in Chattanooga. Three years prior to the collapse of the Southern Association, the Washington Senators ended their affiliation with the

¹⁸¹O'Neill, 229.

¹⁸²Timeline<<< The Engel Stadium Foundation, accessed August 3, 2014, <http://www.engelfoundation.com/historical-importance/timeline/>.

¹⁸³O'Neill, 229.

¹⁸⁴Ibid.,304-305.

¹⁸⁵Ibid., 229.

Lookouts. However, Engel was able to make a deal with the Philadelphia Phillies, and in 1963 Chattanooga moved to the South Atlantic League. Despite being elevated to a class AA league, dismal performances and dwindling attendance records forced the team to fold following the 1965 season.¹⁸⁶

After the Lookouts folded in 1965, it would be eleven years before baseball returned to Chattanooga. In 1976, the Oakland Athletics decided to place a franchise in Chattanooga, once again bringing minor league baseball back to the city. The Lookouts affiliation with Oakland would be brief. Two years later the team became an affiliate of the Cleveland Indians. Although the Lookouts would make an appearance in the playoffs in 1979, the following seasons would see dismal finishes for Chattanooga. Cleveland ended their affiliation in 1982, and the Lookouts would spend the next four seasons in a partnership with the Seattle Mariners.

Despite several years of last place finishes, the Lookouts fortunes changed in 1987 when Chattanooga became the AA affiliate of the Cincinnati Reds. Although in the first year of this relationship the Lookouts finished sixth in their division, they clinched their division the following season and went on to win the Southern League championship, sweeping Greenville in three games.¹⁸⁷ Chattanooga won the Western Division once again in 1992, yet the success of the 1988 season was not repeated as the

¹⁸⁶Ibid., 230.

¹⁸⁷Ibid., 232.

Lookouts fell to Greenville in the finals three games to two.¹⁸⁸

The 1992 season proved successful for Lookouts, winning the Western Division title before falling to Greenville in the playoffs.¹⁸⁹ Yet the remainder of the 1990s saw the Lookouts fail to reach the playoffs, a trend that continued into the early 2000s. Following the 2008 season, Chattanooga ended their long affiliation with the Cincinnati Reds, beginning a three-year partnership with the Los Angeles Dodgers. This year, 2014, Chattanooga ended their relationship with Los Angeles and are currently part of the Minnesota Twins minor league farm system.¹⁹⁰

Team Stadiums: 1885-Present

Upon Chattanooga's entry into the Southern League in 1885 a new home was constructed to host the newly formed Lookouts, christened Stanton Field. This park would be the home of semi-professional baseball in Chattanooga until 1902, when the city's franchise was relocated to Montgomery. Stanton Field remained standing until 1905, a reminder of baseball's former glory in Chattanooga.¹⁹¹

Baseball returned anew for the 1909 season, thanks to the efforts of businessman O.B. Andrews and his purchase of a South Atlantic League franchise for the

¹⁸⁸Ibid., 332.

¹⁸⁹Ibid., 231.

¹⁹⁰"History," available at http://www.milb.com/content/page.jsp?ymd=20080129&content_id=41271002&sid=t498&vkey=team1, accessed September 28, 2014.

¹⁹¹O'Neill, 228.

city. Due to the fact the Stanton Field was no longer available, the Lookouts resourcefully made use of the University of Tennessee Chattanooga's Chamberlain Field. The following year construction began on a new stadium for the Lookouts, located on the corner of Third Street and O'Neal Street in downtown Chattanooga. Named after Lookouts owner O.B. Andrews, this field would be the home of the Lookouts until 1929.¹⁹²

After the team's sale to Clark Griffith in 1930, Andrews Field was torn down and a new stadium was constructed on the site. Named after Lookouts president Joe Engel, this new stadium was the home of Chattanooga baseball until 1999.¹⁹³ Following several renovations made to Engel Stadium between 1988 and 1994, the Lookouts owners made the decision to construct a new stadium. Construction began on this new park in 1999, and the new stadium, located on West 3rd and Power Alley, opened in time for the start of the 2000 season. Originally dubbed BellSouth Park, the stadium underwent a name change in 2007 and is currently known as AT&T Field.¹⁹⁴

While the Lookouts relocated to their new park in 2000, it was unclear what to do with the aging stadium. In 2002, the University of Tennessee Chattanooga purchased

¹⁹²Ibid., 228.

¹⁹³Ibid., 229, and "History," available at http://www.milb.com/content/page.jsp?ymd=20080129&content_id=41271002&sid=t498&vkey=team1, accessed September 29, 2014.

¹⁹⁴"History," available at http://www.milb.com/content/page.jsp?ymd=20080129&content_id=41271002&sid=t498&vkey=team1, accessed September 29, 2014.

Engel Stadium with the intention of using the field for community and sporting events.¹⁹⁵ However, the State of Tennessee never approved the purchase, and by 2010 the stadium was in a state of disrepair. In an effort to preserve the park, which was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2009, a group of concerned Chattanoogaans formed the Engel Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to in order to restore the historic ballpark to its former glory.¹⁹⁶ In 2011, the State of Tennessee finally approved the University of Tennessee Chattanooga's 2004 purchase of Engel Stadium. The following year, the university agreed to lease the stadium to the Engel Foundation, which is continuing their work in restoring the historic park.¹⁹⁷

The Utilization of History and Sports Heritage

Given semi-professional baseball's one hundred and thirty year history in the community, the Lookouts are provided with an ample opportunity to incorporate elements of history and sports heritage into their existing marketing and business model. As such, the Chattanooga Lookouts represent historically conscious minor league organizations actively incorporating and developing marketing strategies that utilize elements of regional and communal sports heritage. Because of the team's awareness and recognition of the Lookout's historical significance in the community, they utilize

¹⁹⁵“UTC To Own, Not Lease, Engel Stadium,” *The Chattanooga*, January 31, 2002.

¹⁹⁶“Group Fights to save Engel Stadium,” *Chattanooga Times-Free Press*, March 12, 2010.

¹⁹⁷“Timeline,” available at <http://www.engelfoundation.com/historical-importance/timeline/>, accessed September 30, 2014.

several elements of Ramshaw and Gammon's sports heritage model.

One of the primary ways that the Lookouts incorporate sports heritage into their business model is through utilizing and recognizing the historical significance of the tangible immovable, represented by Engel Stadium. The Lookouts efforts to renovate the park between 1988 and 1994, show that the team's awareness of the stadium's historical significance in the local community.¹⁹⁸ Despite relocating to a new stadium, the Lookouts still maintain this sense of historical awareness through their relationship with the Engel Foundation. Since the formation of the Engel Foundation in 2009, the Lookouts have supported the foundation's efforts to revitalize Engel Stadium and their foundation's mission "to restore, preserve, promote, and revitalize Historic Engel Stadium as a center for baseball and community life through education, history, culture, entertainment, events, social programs, and other sports-related activities."¹⁹⁹ Thanks to this relationship, the Lookouts recently utilized Engel Stadium while hosting the 2014 Southern League All-Star Game, by holding the league's Home Run Derby at the historic park.²⁰⁰ Currently, the Lookouts are engaged in talks with the Engel Foundation discussing the possibility of holding a yearly "throwback" game at Engel Stadium.

In addition to promoting this tangible immovable element of the team's sports

¹⁹⁸Ibid.,

¹⁹⁹"The Vision," available at <http://www.engelfoundation.com/about-the-foundation/vision/>, accessed October 2, 2014.

²⁰⁰"Lookouts to Host 2014 Southern League All-Star Game," available at http://www.milb.com/news/article.jsp?ymd=20140124&content_id=67070936&fext=.jsp&vkey=news_t498&sid=t498, accessed October 2, 2014.

heritage, the Lookouts actively engage in projects that represent the tangible movable. Like many other minor league organizations, the Lookouts maintain a historical narrative devoted to the history of the organization on the team's website. Arranged as a chronological timeline, this narrative highlights years of historical significance dating back to the original 1885 Lookouts of the Southern League.²⁰¹

While the timeline certainly highlights important events in the organization's history, the information provided about each year lacks significant details. Presently, a one to two sentence narrative accompanies each highlighted year on this timeline that simply presents events of that year in no great detail. Given the large audience that can be reached with the internet, a historical narrative written in great detail provides a greater opportunity for the Lookouts to highlight their history and engage with their fans.

Another way in which the Lookouts have incorporated tangible movable elements of sports heritage into their business model is through the creation of a team hall of fame. Created in 1994, the Chattanooga Baseball Hall of Fame recognizes individuals associated with the organization that includes both players, managers, and other members of the organization. This Hall of Fame highlights individuals who have made significant contributions to the organization and an induction ceremony is held annually.

However, like many other minor league organizations, the Chattanooga Lookouts

²⁰¹“Timeline,” available at <http://www.engelfoundation.com/historical-importance/timeline/>, accessed October 2, 2014.

have not yet explored an important element of sports heritage--goods and services, particularly historical merchandise. Given the popularity of retro apparel coupled with the organization's historical awareness, the production and sale of historical merchandise presents the Lookouts an opportunity to build upon their existing revenue source. Additionally, historical merchandise can be promoted to coincide with marketing promotions that highlight events of historical significance for the organization or apparel of players inducted into the Chattanooga Baseball Hall of Fame. Doing so would likely create another venue for the Lookouts in which can cater to elements of the intangible.

Conclusions

Because nostalgia and memory, both collective and private, are significant elements of sports heritage the Lookouts are able to reach a larger audience through tangible movable elements of sports heritage, as well as strengthen their existing fan base. The Lookouts' relationship with the Engel Foundation, as well as their active incorporation of history into existing business and marketing operations, demonstrates the significant role intangible elements of sports heritage play in local culture. Nostalgia and collective memory surrounding the Lookouts have certainly been important factors in the movement to preserve Engel Stadium, yet it also demonstrates the importance baseball holds as part of Chattanooga's cultural identity. The Lookouts certainly recognize this, and as a result, they have successfully marketed themselves as a historically conscious organization.

Yet in order to maintain this image, the Lookouts must continue to develop

historically based marketing campaigns. Given that the organization has successfully built a strong fan base by promoting elements of the team's history, much of their historical marketing promotions focus primarily on Engel Stadium. While these efforts should be continued, the creation of additional marketing campaigns that promote the historical presence of the team in Chattanooga may prove beneficial.

However it is the Lookouts' awareness of the organization's historical role in shaping the communal identity of Chattanooga that is fundamental to their success. By actively working with members of the local community such as the Engel Foundation and developing historical-based marketing projects, the Lookouts are creating a positive image within their community and strengthening ties with their existing fan base. While building upon their current efforts to market elements of sports heritage can only have a positive impact on the organization, the Lookouts ultimately represent a successful model for other minor league organizations to follow. Historical awareness is a key element in an organization's success, and as such it is important that minor league teams to recognize this.

Chapter 5

The Nashville Sounds

According to local legend, the game of baseball was introduced to the citizens of Nashville shortly after the Civil War by a federal employee named Herman Sandhouse.²⁰² While this story may be of questionable historical merit, baseball did gain popularity in the region following the Civil War. By 1885, Nashville saw the first semiprofessional club take form, as the Nashville Americans became a charter member of the Southern League. Sulphur Dell served as the home of minor league baseball in the Athens of the South, until the sport's departure in the early 1960s. Yet as baseball once again returned to Nashville in 1978 with the formation of the Nashville Sounds, Sulphur Dell may once again see the return of America's pastime.

Semi-Professional Baseball in Nashville:

From the Nineteenth Century to the Present

As with many cities in the post-war South, baseball originated as a recreational pastime for organized amateur clubs in Nashville. Yet as the popularity of the sport began to take hold in southern culture, it soon took on a new form. The formation of the Southern League brought the first semi-professional baseball franchise to the citizens of Nashville, as the newly formed Nashville Americans opened the inaugural season of the Southern League in 1885.

²⁰²“First Baseball Game Here Was In Late Sixties,” *Nashville Banner*, October 30, 1932.

Opening the season with a loss in Chattanooga,²⁰³ Nashville returned home the following week to best Chattanooga four to three.²⁰⁴ The Americans would finish the 1885 season in fifth place with a record of fifty five and thirty seven. Their fortunes would improve the following year as the team finished third in the league.²⁰⁵ Reorganized as the Nashville Blues, the 1887 season saw the team linger at the bottom of the division. By mid August, the five-team Southern League was facing financial difficulties, and in order to salvage the season it reorganized as a four-team league, dropping Nashville from the circuit.²⁰⁶

It was not until 1893 that Nashville returned to the Southern League, reorganized as the Nashville Tigers.²⁰⁷ In the 1893 and 1894 seasons, Nashville finished at the bottom of the Southern League, and the 1895 season saw the team, renamed the Seraphs, win the league championship.²⁰⁸ Despite a dispute with the Atlanta team following the end of the season over rightful ownership of the championship title, league officials maintained their stance and the pennant remained in Nashville.²⁰⁹

²⁰³“First Blood: Chattanooga Defeats Nashville by Score of 6 to 5,” *Chattanooga Daily Times*, April 7, 1885.

²⁰⁴“Baseball,” *Nashville Banner*, April 10, 1885.

²⁰⁵Bill O’Neill, *The Southern League: Baseball in Dixie 1885-1994*, (Austin, TX: Eakin Press, 1994), 298.

²⁰⁶“Around the Bases: The Four Club League Will Try to Hold Together,” *Nashville Banner*, August 11, 1887.

²⁰⁷O’Neill, 17.

²⁰⁸“Baseball News,” *Nashville Banner*, September 9, 1895.

²⁰⁹“The Southern League Pennant,” *Nashville Banner*, September 24, 1895.

The victorious season of 1895, would be Nashville's last season as a member of the Southern League. Semi-professional baseball would once again be absent from Nashville, and while the Southern League folded in 1899, the formation of the Southern Association in 1901 once again brought the sport back to the Tennessee capitol. Following the inaugural season, the Nashville Volunteers clinched the 1902 Southern Association championship title, repeating the feat again in 1908.²¹⁰

While the Volunteers enjoyed moderate success over the next seasons, the 1916 season saw Nashville return to the Southern Association championship, eventually emerging victorious after a close pennant race with New Orleans.²¹¹ However, the Southern Association pennant remained elusive for the Volunteers following the 1916 championship as several seasons were characterized by poor performances by the Nashville team. Although Nashville finished several seasons in second place between 1929 and 1939, the championship title once again returned to the Music City in the fall of 1940.

After finishing third in the Southern Association the previous year, the 1940 season saw Nashville climb to first place with a record of 101-47.²¹² After defeating the Chattanooga Lookouts in the playoffs, the Volunteers winning streak continued as they

²¹⁰“Southern League Pennant,” *Nashville Banner*, September 22, 1902, and “The Pennant Is Won,” *Nashville Banner*, September 22, 1908.

²¹¹“The Southern League,” *The Sporting Life* 68 no. 2: (1916), 11.

²¹²O’Neill, 304.

defeated Atlanta for the Southern Association championship, later defeating Houston in the Dixie Series.²¹³ This feat would be repeated the following two seasons, and the Vols emerged victorious in the Southern Association playoffs in 1943 and 1944.²¹⁴

As the fans returned to ballparks across the country in the aftermath of the Second World War, Nashville once again returned to play for the Dixie Series championship. After consecutive playoff defeats during the 1947 and 1948 seasons, Nashville defeated New Orleans and Mobile in the playoffs to advance to face Tulsa in the 1949 Dixie Series. In a closely contested series that lasted seven games, the final game of the series saw Tulsa fall to Nashville, once again returning the championship title to the Music City.²¹⁵

The 1949 season was the last championship title the Vols brought home to Sulphur Dell. Although Nashville would secure the 1953 Southern Association pennant, defeating Birmingham in five games, the Volunteers fell to Dallas in the Dixie Series. In 1957, the Vols made their final appearance in the playoffs. After besting Memphis in the opening round the team was swept by Atlanta four games to none.²¹⁶ By the late 1950s, the future of the Southern Association looked dire. As attendance in the league continued to drop, the league ceased operations following the 1961 season.

²¹³Ibid., 306, “Boots, Jeff Give Atlanta The 1-2-3?” Nashville Banner, September 23, 1940, and “Club Reaches A New ‘High’ In Last Tilt,” Nashville Banner, October 11, 1940.

²¹⁴O’Neill, 284.

²¹⁵Ibid, 306-307.

²¹⁶Ibid., 307.

Despite the setback caused by the folding of the Southern Association, an effort was made to continue baseball in Nashville. While the Volunteers did not operate in 1962, the following season marked Nashville's induction into the South Atlantic League as an expansion team after the league's elevation to class AA.²¹⁷ Yet the season would be marked by tepid support from fans as the Vols finished in last place with a record of 53-86.²¹⁸ As a result of the team's poor performance and lukewarm support from Nashville fans, the Volunteers chose to cease operations marking the end of one of the founding members of the Southern Association.

The departure of the Vols would not mark the end of baseball in the Music City. After a fifteen-year hiatus, baseball returned anew to the Tennessee capitol as the Southern League's popularity continued to grow, allowing the league to expand, placing franchises in Memphis and Nashville.²¹⁹ The selection of Nashville for the placement of an expansion team is largely due to the efforts of Larry Schmittou, who capitalized on Nashville's reputation as the home of country western music, christening the new franchise the "Sounds" as well as bringing major country musicians on board as investors.²²⁰ On April 15, 1978, the Sounds made their long awaited debut, facing off in

²¹⁷Ibid., 284.

²¹⁸Ibid., 320.

²¹⁹Ibid., 159.

²²⁰Ibid., 284.

a road game against the Memphis Chicks.²²¹

Although their debut season saw the Sounds finish in ninth place, the following year proved far more successful for the Nashville team. As the 1979 season came to a close, fans saw a close fight for first place between Nashville and Memphis, with the Sounds edging out the Chicks by one game to finish the season with a record of 83-61 and clinching the Western Division title for the Sounds.²²² The Sounds winning streak continued as they faced off against the Columbus Astros, defeating them in three games and bringing Nashville its first championship pennant in over twenty years.²²³

The Sounds success would not be interrupted, despite the franchise changing affiliations in 1980 from the Cincinnati Reds to the New York Yankees. The same year saw the Sounds clinch another division title but fall to Memphis in the first round of the playoffs.²²⁴ After another division title and playoff appearance, falling to the Orlando O-Twins in the championship, the Sounds secured the 1982 Southern League championship title, besting Jacksonville in three games.²²⁵

After two more consecutive playoff appearances and another division title, the Sounds left the Southern League in 1985 to join the Class AAA American Association.

²²¹“Sounds In Debut Tonight With Dawley On Mound,” *Nashville Banner*, April 15, 1978.

²²²O’Neill, 329.

²²³*Ibid.*, 332.

²²⁴*Ibid.*, 285.

²²⁵*Ibid.*, 291, 332.

Nashville's elevation in status came after Larry Schmittou purchased the Evansville Triplets, formerly of the American Association, and relocating the franchise to Nashville.²²⁶ Along with the change in classification for the Sounds, the Nashville franchise once again changed affiliations, forming a partnership with the Detroit Tigers that lasted until the end of the 1986 season.²²⁷

Following the conclusion of their association with Detroit, the Sounds once again became an affiliate of the Cincinnati Reds. During the five-year partnership with the Reds, the Sounds secured an Eastern Division title in 1990 after defeating Buffalo in a one game playoff after a both teams finished the regular season tied for first place.²²⁸ The 1992 season would be the Sounds last year of affiliation with Cincinnati, becoming a White Sox affiliate beginning in 1993. While the Sounds still called Nashville home, the Music City also hosted a double A Southern League team. This unique situation arose when Charlotte's franchise was elevated to Class AAA, leaving the Southern League with a franchise without a home city. Larry Schmittou offered the use of Nashville's facilities until a replacement city could be found and as a result both the Sounds and the double A Nashville Xpress called the city home.

The Xpress would relocate to Wilmington, North Carolina following the 1994

²²⁶Ibid., 286.

²²⁷"Team History," http://www.milb.com/content/page.jsp?ymd=20100201&content_id=8006386&sid=t556&vkey=roster, accessed September 11, 2014.

²²⁸Ibid., accessed September 12, 2014.

season, while the Sounds remained a White Sox affiliate until 1997. During the remainder of their affiliation with Chicago, Nashville won two Eastern Division titles and appeared in the 1994 American Association championship that saw the Sounds fall to the Western Division Indianapolis Indians.²²⁹ The 1998 season saw new changes for the Sounds as the Nashville team became an affiliate of the Pittsburgh Pirates and transferred to the class AAA Pacific Coast League. The Sounds' affiliation with Pittsburgh would last through the 2004 season, after which they opened the season as a farm team for the Milwaukee Brewers²³⁰ and go on to win the 2005 Pacific Coast League championship.

Team Stadiums: 1885-the Present

Upon Nashville's acceptance into the Southern League in late 1884, construction began on a ballpark to host the newly formed Nashville Americans. This park, located behind the Tennessee State Capitol building in between Fourth and Fifth Streets in an area known as Sulphur Spring Bottoms. Originally referred to as Athletic Park, the original stadium consisted of a wooden grandstand, featuring coverings in the center and left field side.

²²⁹Ibid.

²³⁰ The Nashville Sounds recently changed affiliations and have become the AAA affiliate of the Oakland Athletics.

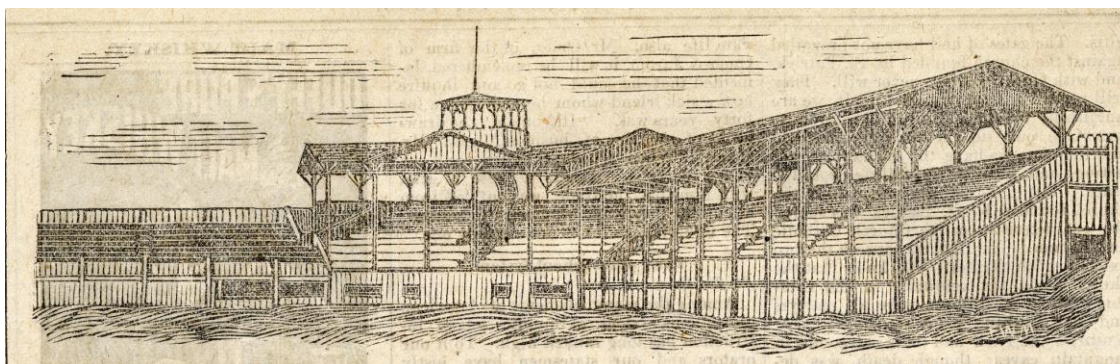


Figure 2. 1886 newspaper print of Athletic Park in Nashville. A newspaper print depicting Athletic Park as it appeared in 1886. Courtesy of the Nashville Library Metro Archives.

In 1908, additions were made to the field increasing the size of the grandstand. Commentating on the stadium, sportswriter Grantland Rice proclaimed a new moniker for the field stating, “the saw and hammer get busy reclaiming the arid waste of Sulphur Spring, which classic spot, with a new set of stands, will be known as Sulphur Spring Dell and not Sulphur Spring Bottom, as of yore.”²³¹ The name stuck and the field soon became known simply as Sulphur Dell.

In 1927 Sulphur Dell underwent renovations, which included rotating the field one hundred and eighty degrees. To accommodate this, the field’s old grandstand was demolished, replaced by a new 7,000 capacity grandstand made of steel and concrete. Eleven years later the team added an additional fifteen hundred seats, increasing the stadium’s seating capacity to 8500.²³²

One of Sulphur Dell’s most defining features was the stadium’s outfield wall.

²³¹Grantland Rice, “Berny Off For Dixie,” *Nashville Tennessean*, January 14, 1908.

²³²Skip Nipper, *Baseball in Nashville*, (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2007), 40.

Based on the surrounding geography in which Sulphur Dell resided, the park's outfield was elevated resulting in a small hill outlining the outfield. Because of the difficulty of fielding balls off this outfield hill, visiting players referred to the stadium as "Sulphur Hell."²³³



Figure 3. Night game at Sulphur Dell circa 1940. Sulphur Dell's elevated outfield seen in an image of a night game circa 1940. Courtesy of the Nashville Library Metro Archives.

Following baseball's departure from the Music City in 1963, shareholders of Vols Inc., the organization that owned Sulphur Dell, voted to sell the park in 1964.²³⁴

Purchased by Frederic Gregg Jr, a local businessman and chairman of the Lin

²³³Ibid., 39.

²³⁴"Stockholders Vote Today On Sale of Sulphur Dell," *Nashville Banner*, October 1, 1964.

Broadcasting Group, Sulphur Dell saw brief use as a race track. Yet this venture failed to draw sufficient crowds and in 1969 Gregg made the decision to demolish Sulphur Dell.²³⁵ Today, a historical marker erected in 1967 serves as a reminder of the Nashville Vols and their time spent in “Baseball’s Most Historic Park.”²³⁶

Upon baseball’s return to the Music City in 1978, they city saw the construction of a new ballpark, located off Chestnut Street, well south of the city’s former park. Named in honor one of the team’s financier’s, Herschel Greer Stadium, opened in the spring of 1978. Since then, this 10,700 capacity ballpark has been the home of minor league baseball in the Music City.²³⁷

In 2013, the Sounds announced plans for the construction of a new downtown park. Located near the city’s Bi-Centennial Mall, this new facility is situated near the site of where Sulphur Dell once stood.²³⁸ This new facility, dubbed First Tennessee Park, is to be constructed at a cost of 40 million dollars, and the 10,000 capacity stadium is scheduled to open in spring of 2015.²³⁹

²³⁵*Nashville Banner*, April 16, 1969.

²³⁶“Sulphur Dell Marker Set,” *Nashville Tennessean*, June 30, 1967.

²³⁷Nipper, 103.

²³⁸“We Have A Deal: Governor, Mayor, Sounds Agree On New Baseball Stadium,” *Nashville Public Radio*, November 8, 2013, available at <http://nashvillepublicradio.org/blog/2013/11/08/we-have-a-deal-governor-mayor-sounds-agree-on-new-baseball-stadium/>, accessed October 3, 2014.

²³⁹“City reveals details about Sulphur Dell stadium,” *Nashville Post*, October 25, 2013, available at https://www.nashvillepost.com/news/2013/10/25/city_reveals_details_about_sulphur_dell_stadium, accessed October 3, 2014.

The Utilization of History and Sports Heritage

The Sounds' decision to construct a new stadium on a site of historical significance to the community of Nashville represents the implementation of goods and services emphasizing sports heritage. While this new park is of modern design, structural elements of old Sulphur Dell have been incorporated into the park's architecture. This includes an overhanging canopy covering the central grandstand, as well as the layout of the field. The park will also feature the iconic guitar shaped scoreboard from Greer Stadium, paying tribute to the Sounds' former park.



Figure 4. An aerial view of Sulphur Dell from 1942. Courtesy of the Nashville Library Metro Archives.



Figure 5. A digital rendering of First Tennessee Park. Courtesy of the Metro Government of Nashville and Davidson County.

The decision to construct a park on the land that once hosted “Baseball’s Most Historic Park,” demonstrates the Sounds’ historical awareness and the significant role sports heritage plays in today’s sports culture. The historical significance of First Tennessee Park’s location provides the Sounds with the opportunity to market intangible elements of sports heritage to their existing fan base. Nostalgic memories of watching games at Sulphur Dell are certain to be invoked by older members of the community, while Greer Stadium’s iconic scoreboard serves as a fond reminder of baseball’s return to Nashville. Given that these two historical elements define two distinct generations of baseball in Nashville, their incorporation into the construction of First Tennessee Park provides the Sounds with the opportunity to strengthen their existing fan base through collective nostalgia while in turn creating a new generation of baseball fans.

Yet the construction of First Tennessee Park represents not just the utilization of

elements of sports heritage by a minor league organization, but also demonstrates the utilization of history in shaping economic development. The historical and cultural significance of the area is recognized by both the Sounds and the city of Nashville who both acknowledge this in the initial stadium proposal stating that the project "...paves the way for baseball to return to its historic home at Sulphur Dell, the original home of professional baseball in Nashville. Sulphur Dell was home to several minor league teams and the Negro League's Elite Giants."²⁴⁰ In addition to the construction of the new ballpark, plans are in place for the development of the area surrounding the park to include: the construction of a greenway; a parking garage for state employees; a new facility for the Tennessee State Library and Archives; a new building for the Tennessee State Museum; and land set aside for private development.²⁴¹

While the construction of First Tennessee Park demonstrates the utilization of goods and services relating to sports heritage, the Sounds historical awareness also incorporates tangible movable elements as well. This is represented by the historical narrative chronicling the history of baseball in Nashville available on the team's website. Like Chattanooga, Nashville's historical narrative addresses the city's participation in the 1885 Southern League as the start of organized baseball. However, this narrative also includes mention of popular folklore surrounding the introduction of the sport by Union

²⁴⁰"Fact Sheet-Sulphur Dell Ballpark Proposal," available at <http://www.nashville.gov/News-Media/News-Article/ID/2250/Fact-Sheet-Sulphur-Dell-Ballpark-Proposal.aspx>, accessed October 6, 2014.

²⁴¹"Nashville Ballpark," available at <http://www.nashville.gov/Portals/0/SiteContent/SportsAuthority/docs/ballpark/PublicMeeting102413small.pdf>, accessed October 6, 2014.

soldiers during the Civil War.

Another feature that makes this historical narrative stand out is a section devoted to the history of Negro League baseball in Nashville. This section discusses the formation of the Nashville Standard Giants in 1918; a brief history of Wilson Park, which served as a home park for the Giants; and the team's departure from Nashville in 1934. Following this, this narrative discusses the final years of Sulphur Dell, the formation of the Nashville Sounds, and a detailed description of the history of the organization broken down by their years affiliated with various major league teams.²⁴²

In addition to this historical narrative, the Sounds also recognize players who have made significant contributions to the organization. This is accomplished with: an all-time roster; a list detailing the team's top ten all-time career leaders in batting and pitching; records from both single seasons and individual games; and biographies of Skeeter Barnes and Don Matingly, both of whose numbers have been retired by the team. All of these resources are available under the roster subheading on the Sounds' website.

Conclusions

Economic and urban development projects that center on the construction of a minor league stadium, such as the project currently being undertaken in Sulphur Dell, have the potential for creating a positive economic impact on the local community. In addition to the potential for local economic growth the Sulphur Dell stadium project

²⁴²“Team History,” available at http://www.milb.com/content/page.jsp?ymd=20100201&content_id=8006386&sid=t556&vkey=roster, accessed October 6, 2014.

offers, it also creates a positive image for the local community. To residents and non-residents alike, First Tennessee Park not only offers the Sounds the opportunity to show their commitment to their fans and the community as a whole, but the overall project allows the city of Nashville to show its dedication to growth and improving the quality of life of its residents, which in turn creates a positive image for both the city and the Sounds.

The Sounds' sense of historical awareness is also apparent in the detailed narrative provided on the team's website. The inclusion of the history of Negro League baseball is certainly a significant feature of this narrative, and is absent from the historical narratives of both the Smokies and the Lookouts. In addition, breaking down the history of baseball as it has been played in Nashville into specific chronological eras provides readers with a clear and detailed narrative. As such, this narrative serves a successful model and template in which can be emulated by other minor league organizations.

In order to successfully market the historical significance of baseball in Sulphur Dell as well as promote themselves as a historically conscious organization, it is necessary for the Sounds to identify their target audience. While the Sounds have built a sizeable fan base since over the last thirty five years, there are certainly those within Nashville who recall memories of attending games at Sulphur Dell. Since nostalgia and collective memory can be used to connect different generations, the development of marketing campaigns that appeal to older Nashvillians memories of Sulphur Dell may

prove successful.²⁴³ Additionally, promoting baseball's historic presence in the area demonstrates the cultural significance of the sport in local culture.

Through the development of First Tennessee Park and their development of tangible moveable elements of sports heritage, the Nashville Sounds represent the emergence of historical consciousness in minor league organizations and an emerging market of teams actively embracing significant elements of sports heritage. As such, minor league teams such as the Sounds demonstrate the positive impact history and sports heritage have on a team's business model and in turn provide models for other organizations to follow. In addition, the Sounds existing model can be built upon, particularly through the inclusion of retro apparel and merchandise. These historically based goods can be marketed together with the historical significance of the site of First Tennessee Park, further appealing to their fans sense of nostalgia and memory.

²⁴³Eldon E. Snyder, "Sociology of Nostalgia: Sports Halls of Fame and Museums in America," *Sociology of Sport Journal* 8 (1991): 231.

Conclusion

Since baseball first emerged in the urban, industrial centers of the North prior to the Civil War, it has played an integral part in the cultural development of communities across the country. For the cities of Knoxville, Chattanooga, and Nashville, what baseball represents is more than just a popular sport, but an indicator of the development of a new identity in the region as the South sought to rebuild itself after the Civil War. In the urban South fans, managers, and players helped establish the game we know today.

Yet it is this history, the history of baseball as it has been played in Tennessee, which stirs nostalgic emotions and fond memories amongst the sport's fans. Therefore it is in a team's best interest to embrace and market its history to demonstrate the organizations historic role in the community. Yet it can be done, often to both the benefit of the team and the community.

Various elements of sports heritage offer ways in which history can be incorporated into the existing business models of minor league organizations. As seen in Knoxville, Chattanooga, and Nashville, it is often done based on the present interests of the team. Each of these organizations demonstrates a potential new market; successful usage of history and sports heritage; and the embracement of history in an emerging market. From these models, one can draw on the ways in which history is promoted in order to find successful methods in which to best develop historical marketing strategies.

Yet a strong sense of historical consciousness is key to the implementation and development of historically based projects. For organizations that have some semblance

of historical awareness yet promote very few elements of sports heritage, it is necessary for these organizations to develop a greater understanding of the historical role the organization has played in the local community. As it has been shown, this can be done, and it is often achieved by working closely with elements of the local community and local historical organizations. By doing so, teams create a positive presence in the community that can potentially have a positive impact on the community as a whole as well.

Nostalgia and memory have a profound impact in today's sporting culture. Yet they represent one of many key elements that make up the culture and heritage that is interwoven into the history of today's professional sports. It is essential that teams embrace this and utilize their history and heritage to their full extent. In Tennessee minor league baseball is deeply engrained in the history and culture of communities throughout the state. Knoxville, Chattanooga, and Nashville represent communities where baseball has enjoyed a long historical presence, and because of this they have made various efforts to embrace it. While they have done so in various ways, they show the powerful impact history and sports heritage have on local communities and as such, represent models for other organizations to follow.

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