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Article Summary: Beginning in 1867, when a group of interested Omaha citizens met to form the Omaha Base Ball Club, organized baseball struggled to maintain itself in Nebraska as it did all over the country. Clubs and leagues came and went, battling indifferent management, inadequate financing, small audiences, and uneven performance.

Cataloging Information:

Names: James “Grasshopper” Whitney, William A Paxton, Frank Selee, Charles “Kid” Nichols, J S “Dick” McCormick, William “Pa” Rourke, Buck Keith, Joseph Kelley, Byron Bancroft “Ban” Johnson

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Photographs / Images: James “Grasshopper” Whitney, who pitched for the Omaha Base Ball Association in 1879 and went on to win 191 games in a ten-year major league career; Omaha businessman William A Paxton, an organizer of the city’s first professional team; Frank Selee, who managed the Omaha team during its first winning season in 1888; Charles “Kid” Nichols, the pitcher who anchored the Omaha team in 1889 when it won its first pennant; William “Pa” Rourke, who played for Omaha in 1887, managed the team beginning in 1894, and purchased it in 1899 (2 photos)

GROWING IN THE RIVER CITY

BY ANGELO J. LOUISA AND ROBERT P. NASH

The Development of Professional Baseball in Nineteenth-Century Omaha

It will never be known just when the crack of a wooden bat against a ball was first heard in the city of Omaha, but it may not have been long after the creation of the Nebraska Territory in 1854 and Omaha's designation as the territorial capital in 1855. Whatever baseball was played during Nebraska's earliest years, it was certainly unorganized and informal. However, scarcely more than a decade later, Omaha's first organized team was formed. On the evening of May 2, 1867, only two months after Nebraska became the nation's thirty-seventh state, a group of interested citizens met to form the Omaha Base Ball Club. A week later, on May 9, the new club defeated the rival Fort Calhoun Base Ball Club in a hard-fought "pitcher's duel" by a score of 110-50.¹

The first openly "all-professional" baseball team, the Cincinnati Red Stockings, took the field in 1869, and forever changed the nature of the game.² This new professional team received prominent mention in the Omaha press, and added Omaha to the itinerary of its cross-country tour. On the afternoon of October 10, 1869, some two thousand spectators, including Schuyler Colfax, the vice president of the United States, watched as the local lads were soundly drubbed by a score of 65-1. It might have been an even more lopsided score, but the game was halted after only seven innings, when the Omaha catcher could not be found.³ The Omaha team had nothing to be ashamed of, however, as the Red Stockings went undefeated in 1869 with a record of sixty wins and one tie.⁴



The success of the Red Stockings quickly led to the formation of other professional teams, and in 1871 the first all-professional league, the National Association, was created. It lasted until 1875. In 1876 the National League, generally considered the first “major” league, was formed, and it still survives. Three years later, on the evening of March 16, 1879, a group of Omahans, including the cattle and wholesale grocery magnate William A. Paxton, met to form the Omaha Base Ball Association, and Omaha fielded its first professional team as a member of the new Northwestern League, the first minor league west of the east coast.⁵

Several days later, another meeting was held to elect officers and delegates to attend the organizational meetings of the Northwestern League. The famous attorney John C. Cowin was chosen as the club’s first president. Omaha officials joined team representatives from Davenport and Dubuque, Iowa, and Rockford, Illinois, at the league’s subsequent meetings held in Davenport. A thirty-six-game “championship season” was set up with each of the four teams scheduled to play each other twelve times. The teams were to be distinguished by the color of their stockings: Omaha would be green; Davenport, brown; Dubuque, red; and Rockford, white.⁶

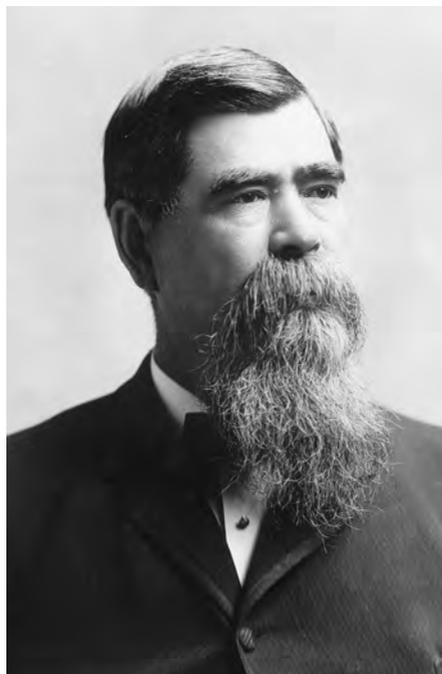
On May 8, 1879, in a sign of things to come, Omaha lost its first professional baseball game by a score of 6-3 to Dubuque, then lost the next two games of its opening home series. Omaha’s first road trip was also unsuccessful as the team compiled a 2-7 record.⁷

Contributing to Omaha’s poor record was an apparent injury to the team’s pitcher, James “Grasshopper” Whitney. The *Omaha Daily Republican* reported

Pitching for the Omaha Base Ball Association in 1879, its first season of professional play, was James “Grasshopper” Whitney (opposite), who went on to win 191 games in a ten-year major league career. National Baseball Hall of Fame Library, Cooperstown, N.Y.

“Mr. Whitney’s arm seems destined to drive him from the profession, as he was unable to pitch much of the time during the tour.” This prognosis proved premature; in 1881 Whitney, then playing for Boston, led the National League in wins and ultimately won 191 games in a ten-year major league career before he died of consumption at the age of thirty-three.⁸

Omaha’s on-the-field performance, however, was apparently offset off the



Prominent Omaha businessman William A. Paxton was among the organizers of the city’s first professional team in March 1879. NSHS RG2141: 0-1735

field, and the *Omaha Daily Republican* reported, “with the ladies the club is particularly popular, having already acquired the title of the ‘Omaha Mashers.’” The team’s “exploits in that line were something quite remarkable,” the *Republican* noted, and four of the players had [brought] home “several trophies of their conquests.”⁹

Although Omaha finally started to win games, by July the financial situation of the club was such that the directors were forced to disband the

team. The *Omaha Daily Herald* reported, “Many of the directors have lost very heavily, and have displayed the utmost honor in seeing that all the players receive their full salaries and that the affairs of the club are settled honorably.” Omaha then bowed out of the league with an 8-12 league record, having played a few more than half its scheduled league games.¹⁰

After its 1879 failure Omaha went without professional baseball for five years, but in 1885 the River City was ready to try again. At a meeting in Indianapolis on February 12, 1885, Omaha joined teams from Cleveland, Indianapolis, Kansas City, Milwaukee, and Toledo to form the new Western League, with the season set to begin on April 18. Omaha’s new team did not do well. A defeat in Cleveland on May 21 was reported in the *Omaha Bee* under the headline “As Usual,”¹¹ and another Omaha newspaper acidly remarked:

We notice that several baseball players have been convicted and fined in Cleveland for playing baseball on Sunday. The Omaha club would be perfectly safe in Cleveland. It could not be convicted of playing baseball on Sunday or any other day.¹²

In early June, the *Omaha Daily Bee* gleefully announced, “At last the gratifying news has been received that the so-called Omaha baseball club is going to disband.” The Omaha franchise was transferred to Keokuk, Iowa, on June 6. The rest of the franchises fared little better, and the league folded on June 14.¹³

Omaha did not field a professional team in 1886, but in October a meeting

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was held in Frank Bandle's cigar store where it was decided to organize a team to rejoin the Western League. In November, Bandle and George Kay returned from a league meeting in Leavenworth, Kansas, having had their application for entrance into the league accepted. Omaha was admitted at the expense of the team representing Leadville, Colorado, reportedly in part because a game played in Leadville the previous July 4 had been delayed by snow. In addition to the five teams from Denver, Leavenworth, Lincoln, St. Joseph, and Topeka, new franchises from Kansas City and Hastings, Nebraska, were added.¹⁴

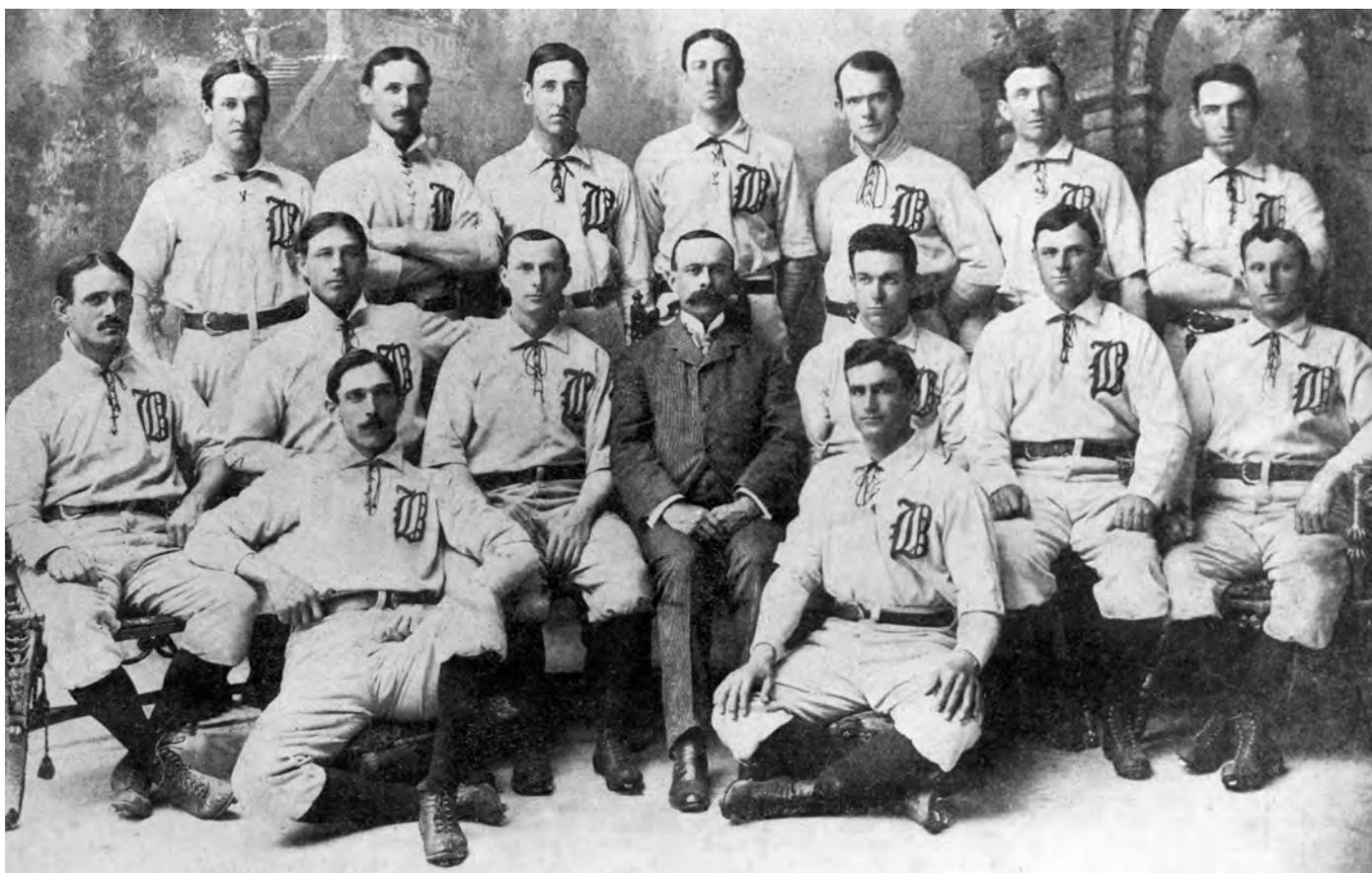
The Leavenworth and St. Joseph teams were unable to finish the season

and were replaced by teams from Wichita and Emporia, Kansas. Omaha, however, completed a season for the first time, although they finished in the bottom half of the league standings. According to the *Omaha Daily Herald*, one reason for Omaha's poor showing was the violation of the league's salary limit for players by Denver, Lincoln, and Topeka. It was also reported that Denver and Lincoln could not support baseball teams with the attendance they attracted, and the *Omaha Daily Herald* further criticized the Omaha club for joining a league including "some country towns which it might have known could not last through a league season."¹⁵

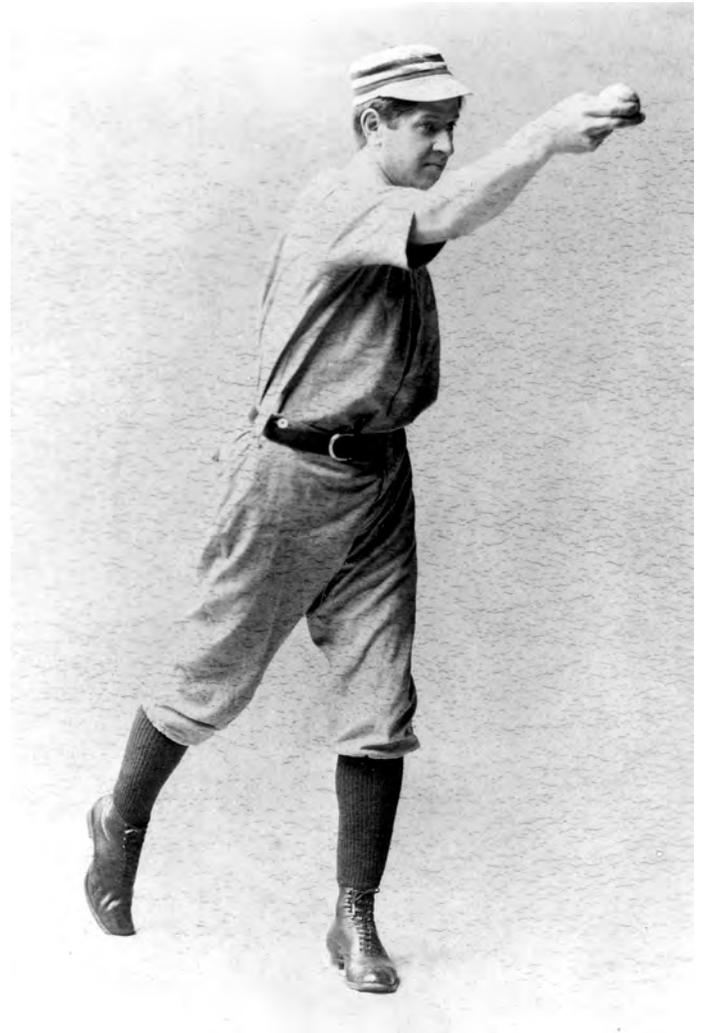
Indeed, as it later turned out, only Omaha and Kansas City returned teams

for the 1888 season. They were joined by new teams from Chicago, Des Moines, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, St. Louis, and St. Paul, but St. Louis was replaced by Sioux City and Davenport by Minneapolis before the end of the season. The 1888 season was marked by Omaha's first winning record, 66-52, a fourth-place finish in an eight-team field, and by the arrival of new manager Frank Selee. Selee had been lured away from the Northwestern League's Oshkosh, Wisconsin, team by Joseph Garneau, Jr., the manager of a large cracker factory at the northwest corner of Twelfth and Jackson Streets.¹⁶

On the negative side, the club had to contend with difficulties surrounding Sunday games. In January the Presby-



Omaha's first winning season came in 1888 under manager Frank Selee, shown here with the Boston Braves in 1899. He later managed the Chicago Cubs and their famous double-play combination "Tinker to Evers to Chance." National Baseball Hall of Fame Library, Cooperstown, N.Y.



In 1899 Omaha won its first pennant with a record of 83-38. Anchoring the team was pitcher Charles “Kid” Nichols, who won 39 games and struck out 368 batters. National Baseball Hall of Fame Library, Cooperstown, N.Y.

terian Ministers’ Association objected to Sunday baseball not “from mere theological defense of the Sabbath,” but because Sunday baseball disturbed the worship services of the churches located near the ballpark.¹⁷ The matter came to a head on May 8, when Edward A. Parmelee, who lived next to the ballpark, filed a preliminary injunction against Sunday ball in the District Court of Douglas County. Parmelee objected to the foul language used by the fans attending the games, the balls that hit his house, and the hackmen who waited for

the games to end. The court ultimately ruled against Parmelee, saying that most other residents were not disturbed by the games, and baseball had been played in that park for a number of years, giving Parmelee plenty of time to have complained before 1888, but he had not done so.¹⁸ Subsequently, Omaha does not seem to have faced many of the difficulties with Sunday baseball that other cities encountered.

In 1889, Omaha won its first pennant with an impressive record of 83-38. The team was anchored by pitcher Charles

“Kid” Nichols who won thirty-nine games and struck out 368 batters in what one writer has called “one of the finest seasons any minor league pitcher ever had.” Nichols would later go on to win 361 games in a distinguished major league career, which earned him election to the National Baseball Hall of Fame in 1949. But despite the team’s success on the field, its directors complained that the team was unprofitable and threatened to disband it if more fans did not attend games, and if Omaha’s streetcar company did not

give the club a percentage of its receipts on game days.¹⁹

Before the 1890 season began, Frank Selee left to manage the Boston Beaneaters of the National League, with Kid Nichols following him to Beantown via Cincinnati, the major league franchise that had purchased Nichols from Omaha after the 1889 season. Selee went on to an outstanding major league managerial career in Boston and later Chicago, where he was responsible for putting together the Cubs' famous double-play combination of "Tinker to Evers to Chance." In 1999 he was elected to the National Baseball Hall of Fame.²⁰

Not surprisingly, without Selee at the helm or Nichols pitching, Omaha slipped back into the league's second division with a 51-69 record. After one of the team's many losses, the *Omaha World-Herald* lamented "the members of the home team played like farmers, with one or two exceptions, and as usual lost the game by costly blunders." During one particularly bad stretch, an eleven-game losing streak was broken only because Lincoln forfeited a game to Omaha when Omaha refused to pay Lincoln's gate guarantee at the end of the fifth inning.²¹ Omaha's games were poorly attended and Omaha may have been one of only two teams in the league to lose money. Nevertheless the franchise survived and fielded a strong team for the first half of the 1891 season. One other money-losing team, Des Moines, transferred to Lincoln on August 12.²²

The 1891 season was troubled from the start. Omaha played well, but the team struggled financially, and during the first week of July, club president J. S. "Dick" McCormick threatened to disband the club unless one of three conditions was met before July 12: First, he would sell the club for \$5,000. Alternatively he would maintain the team for the remainder of the season if Omahans would donate \$4,000 or if a committee of "five reputable citizens [would] dispose of \$10,000 worth of base ball



In 1894 Omaha finished fifth out of eight teams in a reorganized Western Association. It was Omaha's first season under William "Pa" Rourke who had played for the team in 1887. Douglas County Historical Society Library/Archives Center

tickets." McCormick's deadline passed and the team was disbanded as promised, even though Omaha was leading the league with a 43-23 record.²³

At that point the league stepped in to rescue the Omaha franchise. Five other league owners bought five-hundred-dollar shares, and an Omaha group donated an additional two thousand dollars to keep the team afloat, but only five players from the original team returned. On July 25, Omaha resumed play again, but when it was swept in a three-game series against Milwaukee by a combined score of 54-10, it was quite clear that the new team was only a shadow of the league-leading team it had replaced.²⁴ Omaha was not alone in its misfortunes. In August, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Lincoln, and Duluth (the team had moved from St. Paul at the beginning of the season) all folded.²⁵

Omaha and the other three remaining teams continued league play until September 13, when Omaha disbanded for the second time, its record at 51-59, and twenty-two games left to play.²⁶

For the 1892 season, the Western Association reorganized, calling itself the Western League again, with Omaha joining teams from Columbus, Indianapolis, Kansas City, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, St. Paul, and Toledo. In May, St. Paul was replaced by Ft. Wayne, and in July, the entire league folded shortly after the start of the second half of the season. The one bright spot for Omaha—besides a winning record for the first half of the season—was the appearance of outfielder Joseph Kelley, who later that year went up to the major leagues where he became one of the great stars of the 1890s and the first decade of the twentieth century.²⁷

Plans were made to reorganize the league for the 1893 season, with teams representing Omaha, Denver, Kansas City, Pueblo, Topeka, and Wichita. However, the manager of the Omaha club, J. T. McVittie, observed, "The projectors of the western six-club league made a successful failure of the matter" at an organizational meeting held in Kansas City, and the league folded before it ever got started. This fiasco was followed by the development of a spin-off league consisting of Kansas City, Lawrence, St. Joseph, and Topeka, which played a short season before collapsing on June 20.²⁸

With the failure of the 1893 season, Byron Bancroft "Ban" Johnson appropriated the Western League name along with one of its former members, Sioux City, and created a new league comprised of teams from Detroit, Grand Rapids, Indianapolis, Kansas City, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, and Toledo for the 1894 season. Four of the teams from the old Western League—Omaha, Des Moines, Lincoln, and St. Joseph—joined with four teams from Illinois (Jacksonville, Peoria, Quincy, and Rock Island-Moline) to form a new edition of



"Pa" Rourke, seen here watching a game in 1902 at Western League Park, 15th and Vinton streets, returned in 1899 and purchased the Omaha team in partnership with Buck Keith. Bostwick-Frohardt Collection, owned by KMTV and on permanent loan to Western Heritage Museum, Omaha, Nebraska.

the Western Association. Omaha finished fifth out of the eight teams with a record of 66-59, and was managed for the first time by William "Pa" Rourke, who would ultimately become one of the most influential and successful figures in Omaha's professional baseball history.²⁹

The Western Association survived intact for the 1895 season with the exception of the Rock Island-Moline team, which was replaced by Rockford. Although Omaha fielded a competitive team that was in the thick of the pennant race for much of the season, its finances were inadequate, with gate receipts that the *Omaha World-Herald* called insufficient to "buy hay for a burro." The *World-Herald* went on to describe the team as "dead as a last year's craw fish." In July the Omaha team was transferred to Denver, and in

August, the Jacksonville team relocated to Springfield. Neither survived through August, and Dubuque and Burlington of the disbanded Iowa League were added to finish out the season.³⁰

With the demise of Omaha's 1895 team, the River City would go through its longest period without professional baseball since the early 1880s. The Western Association began the 1896 season with Burlington, Cedar Rapids, Des Moines, Dubuque, Peoria, Quincy, Rockford, and St. Joseph, the same teams that finished the 1895 season, but the league disbanded in early August. Although there was hope of Omaha fielding a team with the Western Association for 1897, the league decided to proceed without the River City.³¹

By 1898, things began to look up again for professional baseball in Omaha, as the *World-Herald* reported

that the city was being seriously considered as a replacement for the defunct Grand Rapids franchise in Ban Johnson's Western League. Omaha's interest in baseball was high enough that the *World-Herald* claimed the city would have baseball in 1898 even "if it has to organize a league of its own." Such extreme measures did not prove necessary however, because in February Omaha joined Columbus, Detroit, Indianapolis, Kansas City, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, and St. Paul in the Western League.³²

Unfortunately, Omaha again struggled financially, the *World Herald* reporting that attendance "has been woefully [sic] scant ever since the season opened, and the club has been a losing venture from the start." In June came the news that the Omahogs, as the team was then being called, would not return to the River City from the road trip they had just begun, and on July 7 the Omaha franchise was transferred to St. Joseph, Missouri.³³

But as the *World-Herald* stated:

It is not only an off year for the national game in Omaha, but in every city in the circuit with the possible exception of Kansas City, and to a man up a tree it looks doubtful whether the league itself will be able to weather the storm.³⁴

The league did survive and in 1900 became the American League, today's rival of the National League.

In 1900 Omaha rejoined the Western Association, which returned to its original name, the Western League. What followed was a century of greatness when the River City fielded professional teams for eighty-three seasons, won twenty-three championships, and nurtured future major league stars including Mordecai "Three Finger" Brown, Heinie Manush, Babe Herman, and George Brett. Probably no one could have predicted such a future by looking at Omaha's nineteenth-century attempts at professional baseball, raising the question of why Omaha struggled so much to maintain a professional baseball franchise during the late 1800s.³⁵

There are several reasons. First, financial problems continued to haunt the Omaha club. Reports of fiscal difficulties and complaints about attendance can be found for almost every season that Omaha fielded a team. Such problems were no doubt aggravated by the depression of 1893–1897, a time when Omaha did not have a team for three years, and only one team played an entire season. Second, there was a general reluctance on the part of the Omaha community to work hand-in-hand with the officers of the baseball club. In 1892, for example, John Speas, the president of the Kansas City club, said that if the people of Omaha could raise three thousand dollars in stock or cash, the league would take charge of the team, but the money was not forthcoming, and the *Omaha World-Herald* reported:

The capitalists have not seen where a base ball club would be of particular use to Omaha, and consequently few have come forward and offered to aid Speas and Rowe [David Rowe, the new manager] in their efforts in behalf of this city. They have seen where a few would be benefited, but they do not seem to understand that a base ball club in the season is a big advertisement for any town.³⁶

Perhaps an equally significant contributing factor was the quality of baseball played by the Omaha teams. With several notable exceptions, Omaha baseball was not the stuff of legend. Of the eleven teams Omaha fielded between 1879 and 1898, only five had more league wins than losses.³⁷ Part of the problem was the departure of Frank Selee, who likely would have found a way to maintain a winning team even without Kid Nichols. But Selee, a masterful judge of talent, later admitted that he had been acting as an agent for the Boston club of the National League during his championship season in Omaha, and his Omaha success led to his job as the Beaneaters' manager.³⁸

Also contributing to Omaha's poor performance was Dick McCormick's dismantling of the 1891 team.

McCormick's impatience with the team's financial posture and lack of community support caused him to ruin what might have become Omaha's second league championship.

The McCormick fiasco highlighted yet another problem: the lack of dynamic leadership from which the Omaha club suffered until William "Pa" Rourke took charge. Rourke, who played third base for Omaha in 1887, had managed the team in 1894, one of Omaha's five winning seasons. At that time, however, he was still in his journeyman days and had not yet decided to settle in Omaha. That decision would not be made until 1899 when Rourke returned to the River City, formed a partnership with Buck Keith, and purchased the Omaha baseball club. Rourke then used his promotional skills—some of which he gained as a salesman for the Continental Cigar Company—his eye for talent, and his managerial abilities to produce not only winning teams and, at times, championship teams, but also teams that usually did well at the box office.³⁹

Nor were Omaha's baseball troubles endemic only to Omaha. For the eleven seasons Omaha had a professional baseball team, nine were spent in the Western League/Western Association founded by Ted Sullivan in 1885. Those nine seasons were played between 1885 and 1895, with Omaha not fielding a team in 1886 and 1893. During that eleven-year period, thirty-four other cities fielded teams in the league for at least part of a season, but only eight were members of the league for five or more seasons.⁴⁰

Furthermore, during the same period, twenty-three of the league's franchises (not including Omaha) folded or moved⁴¹ and the league itself disbanded three times, in 1885, 1892, and 1893. Thus, despite being praised as one of the better minor leagues, the Western League/Western Association was still an unstable organization.⁴² The continuing instability produced an atmosphere of uncertainty for the Omaha club. Travel

expenses varied from one season to the next, rivalries changed, and long-range planning was severely hampered.

The Western League/Western Association did not have a monopoly on instability. Between 1883 and 1899, 217 minor league clubs that had signed the National Agreement folded, moved, or were expelled, and nineteen minor leagues that were members of the National Agreement disbanded.⁴³ Nor were the major leagues exempt from such turmoil. The last quarter of the nineteenth century saw the rise and fall of the American Association (1882–1891), the Union Association (1884) and the Players League (1890), and the eventual demise of all but eight National League clubs. Professional baseball at both the minor and major league levels was truly in its childhood, suffering growing pains as it stumbled into adolescence and eventual adulthood; Omaha was no exception.

Notes

This article would not have been possible without the assistance of Stacy Carlson, who offered suggestions on what the article should cover; Bill Francis, researcher at the National Baseball Hall of Fame Library; Sara Howieson, who read countless reels of microfilm; Elizabeth A. Jones, former administrative assistant, Society for American Baseball Research Lending Library; Anna Louisa and Pamela Louisa, who proofread all the drafts of the paper; and Dierdre Routt, former librarian and archivist, Historical Society of Douglas County. The authors are also grateful to John H. Freeland, whose unpublished thesis, "The History of Professional Baseball in Omaha" (M.A. thesis, University of Nebraska at Omaha, 1964) was a road map directing them through the forest of sources and facts related to professional baseball in the River City.

¹ *Omaha Weekly Herald*, May 3, 10, 1867.

² Harold Seymour, *Baseball: The Early Years* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1960), 56.

³ *Omaha Weekly Republican*, July 14, Oct. 13, 1869.

⁴ Seymour, *Baseball*, 57 (See note in Oxford Univ. Press paper edition, 1989).

⁵ Bill Bryson and Leighton Housh, *Through the Years with the Western League* (n.p.: Western League, 1951), 17; *Omaha Daily Republican*, Mar. 16, 1879; For further information on Paxton, see Alfred Sorenson, *The Story of Omaha from the*

Pioneer Days to the Present Time, 3rd ed. (Omaha: National Printing Company, 1923), 551–553.

⁶ *Omaha Daily Republican*, Mar. 19, Apr. 4, 1879. For information on Cowin, see Sorenson, *The Story of Omaha*, 368–369.

⁷ *Omaha Daily Republican*, May 9, 1879; *Omaha Daily Herald*, May 11, 13, 1879, morning edition; *Omaha Daily Republican*, June 14, 1879.

⁸ *Omaha Daily Republican*, June 17, 1879. For further information on Whitney, see Harold Dellinger, “James Evans Whitney,” in *Nineteenth Century Stars* Robert L. Tiemann and Mark Rucker, eds. (Kansas City: Society for American Baseball Research, 1989), 138; Bob Hoie and Carlos Bauer, comps., *The Historical Register: The Complete Major & Minor League Record of Baseball’s Greatest Players* (San Diego: Baseball Press Books, 1998), 443; *Reach’s Official Base Ball Guide for 1892* (Philadelphia: A. J. Reach Co., 1892), 47; and John Thorn, Pete Palmer, Michael Gershman, eds., *Total Baseball*, 7th ed. (New York: Total Sports Publishing, 2001), 1823.

⁹ *Omaha Daily Republican*, June 17, 1879.

¹⁰ *Omaha Daily Herald*, July 9, 1879. Omaha also won six games against three independent teams to finish with an overall record of 14–12. *Omaha Evening News*, July 14, 1879.

¹¹ *Omaha Daily Bee*, May 22, 1885, morning edition.

¹² From an unnamed 1885 Omaha newspaper quoted by the *Omaha World Herald*, Aug. 18, 1985, sunrise edition.

¹³ *Omaha Daily Bee*, June 4, 1885, morning edition. For details of the league’s demise, see Bryson and Housh, *Through the Years*, 18, and W. Lloyd Johnson and Miles Wolff, eds., *The Encyclopedia of Minor League Baseball*, 2nd ed (Durham, N.C.: Baseball America, Inc., 1997), 110.

¹⁴ *Omaha Daily Herald* Oct. 19, 1886, morning edition; *Omaha Daily Bee*, Nov. 9, 1886, morning edition; Bryson and Housh, *Through the Years*, 37.

¹⁵ Bryson and Housh, *Through the Years*, 18; *Omaha Daily Herald*, July 10, 1887, morning edition.

¹⁶ For further information on Garneau, see Sorenson, *The Story of Omaha*, 262.

¹⁷ *Omaha Daily Bee*, Jan. 14, 1888, morning edition.

¹⁸ John H. Freeland, “The History of Professional Baseball in Omaha” (M.A. thesis, Univ. of Nebraska at Omaha, 1964), 23–25.

¹⁹ Bill Carle, “Charles Augustus Nichols,” in *Baseball’s First Stars* ed. Frederick Ivor-Campbell (Cleveland: The Society for American Baseball Research, 1996), 118–119; *Omaha Daily Republican*, Sept. 26, 1889. For further information on Nichols, see John L. Evers, “Charles Augustus ‘Kid’ Nichols,” in *Biographical Dictionary of American Sports: Baseball* ed. David L. Porter (New York:

Greenwood Press, 1987), 419–420; *The Historical Register*, 393; *Reach’s Official American Association Base Ball Guide: 1890* (Philadelphia: A. J. Reach Co., 1890), 72, 75; and *Total Baseball*, 126, 1660–1661.

²⁰ Shortstop Joseph Tinker, second baseman John Evers, and first baseman Frank Chance were immortalized in “Baseball’s Sad Lexicon,” a poem written in July 1910 by sportswriter Franklin P. Adams of the *New York Evening Mail*. Tinker, Evers, and Chance were elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1946. For further information on Selee, see Bob Richardson, “Frank Gibson Selee,” in *Nineteenth Century Stars*, 114; A. D. Suehsdorf, “Frank Gibson Selee,” in *Biographical Dictionary of American Sports: Baseball*, 506–507; “Frank Selee, Dynasty Builder,” in *The National Pastime: A Review of Baseball History 4:2* (Winter 1985): 35–41; and Frank G. Selee, “Twenty-One Years In Baseball,” *Baseball Magazine*, 1908, 23–28.

²¹ *Omaha World-Herald*, Sept. 21, 22, 1890, morning edition.

²² Bryson and Housh, *Through the Years*, 18.

²³ *Omaha World-Herald*, July 7, 14, 1891, morning edition.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, July 21, 26–28, 1891, morning edition.

²⁵ *The Encyclopedia of Minor League Baseball*, 116.

²⁶ *Omaha Bee News*, September 14, 1891, morning edition; *Reach’s Official Base Ball Guide for 1892* (Philadelphia: A. J. Reach Co., 1892), 70; *Omaha Bee News*, Aug. 26, 1891, morning edition.

²⁷ Bryson and Housh, *Through the Years*, 22; *Reach’s Official Base Ball Guide for 1893* (Philadelphia: A. J. Reach Co., 1893), 16–17, 103. Joe Kelley played for seventeen years in the major leagues and was elected to the Hall of Fame in 1971. For further information, see *The Historical Register*, 153; Steven P. Savage, “Joseph James ‘Joe’ Kelley,” in *Biographical Dictionary of American Sports: Baseball*, 301; Robert L. Tiemann, “Joseph James Kelley,” in *Baseball’s First Stars*, 87–88; and *Total Baseball*, 908.

²⁸ Bryson and Housh, *Through the Years*, 18; *Omaha World-Herald*, May 11, 1893, evening edition; *Reach’s Official Base Ball Guide for 1894* (Philadelphia: A. J. Reach Co., 1894), 35; *The Encyclopedia of Minor League Baseball*, 118.

²⁹ Bryson and Housh, *Through the Years*, 18; *Reach’s Official Base Ball Guide for 1895* (Philadelphia: A. J. Reach Co., 1895), 20; *The Encyclopedia of Minor League Baseball*, 119, 120.

³⁰ *Omaha World-Herald*, July 28, 1895, morning edition; *Reach’s Official Base Ball Guide for 1896* (Philadelphia: A. J. Reach Co., 1896), 15.

³¹ Bryson and Housh, *Through the Years*, 22.

³² *Omaha World-Herald*, Jan. 2, Feb. 25, 1898, morning edition; *Reach’s Official Base Ball Guide for 1899* (Philadelphia: A. J. Reach Co., 1899), 50.

³³ *Omaha World-Herald*, June 27, July 7, 1898, morning edition.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ For information on Brown, see John E. Findling, “Mordecai Peter Centennial ‘Three Finger,’ ‘Miner’ Brown,” in *Biographical Dictionary of American Sports: Baseball*, 53–54; *The Historical Register*, 319; and *Total Baseball*, 161–162, 1366. For information on Manush, see John L. Evers, “Henry Emmett ‘Heinie’ Manush,” in *Biographical Dictionary of American Sports: Baseball*, 375–377; *The Historical Register*, 176; and *Total Baseball*, 974. For information on Herman, see William A. Borst, “Floyd Caves ‘Babe’ Herman,” in *Biographical Dictionary of American Sports: Baseball*, 249–250; *The Historical Register*, 131, and *Total Baseball*, 852. For information on Brett, see David L. Porter, “George Howard Brett,” in *Biographical Dictionary of American Sports: Baseball*, 47–48; *The Historical Register*, 33; and *Total Baseball*, 146–147, 630.

³⁶ *Omaha World-Herald*, Feb. 6, 7, 1892, morning edition. For information on the depression of 1893–1897, see Harold U. Faulkner, *Politics, Reform and Expansion: 1890–1900* (New York: Harper & Row, 1959), 141–146. For information on the depression’s effects on Nebraska, see James C. Olson, *History of Nebraska*, 2nd ed. (Lincoln, Neb.: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1966), 254–255.

³⁷ The Omaha teams’ winning years were 1888, 1889, 1892, 1894, and 1895 (while the team was in Omaha).

³⁸ Selee, “Twenty-one Years in Baseball,” 24.

³⁹ For further information on Rourke, see John Davis, “The Man They Called Pa,” undocumented source found in the Historical Society of Douglas County’s clipping file on William “Pa” Rourke.

⁴⁰ The thirty-four towns fielding teams were Burlington, Chicago, Cleveland, Columbus, Davenport, Denver, Des Moines, Dubuque, Duluth, Emporia, Fort Wayne, Hastings, Indianapolis, Jacksonville, Kansas City, Keokuk, Lawrence, Leadville, Leavenworth, Lincoln, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Peoria, Quincy, Rock Island-Moline, Rockford, Sioux City, Springfield, St. Joseph, St. Louis, St. Paul, Toledo, Topeka, and Wichita. The eight that remained league members for five or more seasons were Denver, Des Moines, Kansas City, Lincoln, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, St. Joseph, and St. Paul.

⁴¹ *The Encyclopedia of Minor League Baseball*, 110–120.

⁴² *Spalding’s Base Ball Guide* called the Western Association “the most successfully managed organization of professional clubs of the season of 1890.” *Spalding’s Base Ball Guide and Official League Book for 1891* (Chicago and New York: A. G. Spalding & Bros., 1891), 164.

⁴³ *The Encyclopedia of Minor League Baseball*, 108–125.