

# The Phoenix at Fenway: The 1915 World Series and the Collegiate Connection to the Major Leagues

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When the Boston Red Sox and the Philadelphia Phils took the field for the third game of the 1915 World Series tied at one win apiece, their rosters had a look of familiarity that went beyond the set line-ups of a long season. Patrolling the Red Sox outfield was the famed trio of veterans—Tris Speaker in center flanked by Duffy Lewis in left and Harry Hooper in right—who had played together since 1910 and formed perhaps the finest all-around outfield in professional baseball's first half-century.<sup>1</sup> On the mound for Boston was Dutch Leonard, who had averaged 16 wins and an earned run average of 1.89 in three seasons with the Beantowners. His ERA of 1 .01 in 1914 still stands as the lowest among pitchers who hurled at least 150 innings in a season.<sup>2</sup> Other veteran standouts for Boston included Dick Hoblitzell at first, Jack Barry at second, Larry Gardner at third, and pitchers Ernie Shore and Rube Foster, who, with 19 wins each in the 1915 regular season, led a deep and talented staff in this category.

For the visiting National Leaguers, the regulars included the big right-handed Virginian and future Hall of Famer, Eppa Rixey, outfielder and fellow Southerner Possum Whitted, and two lesser lights, catcher Ed Burns and

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1. For the six seasons from 1910-1915, Hooper, Lewis and Speaker played in a combined total of 2606 regular season games. They played together 95% of the time. They hit for a combined .301 average (Hooper .267, Lewis .290, Speaker .346) and recorded 5101 putouts, 455 assists, and 106 double plays. Among the outfielders who had played together for five or more years through the 1916 season, only the great Chicago trio of Abner Dalrymple, George Gore and King Kelly (1880-1886), Ed Delahanty, Billy Hamilton and Sam Thompson of the National League Philadelphians (1891&1895), and the Washington outfield team of Clyde Milan, Danny Moeller and Howard Shanks (1912-1916) offer comparable statistics. The Chicagoans hit for a combined average of .310 (Dalrymple .295, Gore .323, Kelly .316) and accounted for 1856 putouts, 348 assists, and 42 double plays in 1272 combined games. They played together in 90% of their games. The Delahanty-Hamilton-Thompson outfield batted .342, .369, and .350, respectively, for a combined average of .354 and managed 3682 putouts, 321 assists, and 79 double plays in 1768 combined games. They were in the same outfield 87% of the time together. The Washington stars hit for a combined .261 average (Milan .293, Moeller .247, Shanks .242) and totalled 3547 putouts, 269 assists, and 59 double plays during 1874 combined games, 82% of which was spent playing in the same outfield. See *The Baseball Encyclopedia*, 7th ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1988) and John Thorn and Pete Palmer, eds., *Total Baseball* (New York: Warner, 1989). Summary data for these outfield combinations are also in: John Hooper letter and brochure to the Committee on Veterans, January, 1971, Harry Hooper File, National Baseball Library, Baseball Hall of Fame, Cooperstown, New York.

2. Additional seasonal and World Series performance statistics are drawn from Hy Turkin, S. C. Thompson, and Pete Palmer, *The official Encyclopedia of Baseball*, 10th rev. ed. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1979); Bill James, *The Bill James Historical Baseball Abstract* (New York: Villard Books, 1986); Richard M. Cohen, David S. Neft, and Jordan A. Deutsch, *The World Series* (New York: Dial Press, 1979); and Joe Hoppel and Craig Carter, *The Series* (St. Louis: The Sporting News Publishing Company, 1988).

pitcher Joe Oeschger. Burns was thrust into a starting role for the Series when an arm injury sidelined “Reindeer” Bill Killifer. The sparsely-used Oeschger, who would not see any action in the 1915 Series, had lasting fame waiting for him five years later with the Boston Braves when he went the distance in the longest game in Major League history, a 26-inning, 1-1, affair between the Braves and the Brooklyn Dodgers on May 1, 1920. But, on October 11, 1915, Oeschger’s presence on the Philadelphia roster with Burns and their relationship with Red Sox stars Hooper, Lewis, and Leonard added a special touch of familiarity to the proceedings. For, like all the players mentioned above, plus three others on both the Boston and Phils’ rosters, they had each played collegiate baseball before moving to the Major Leagues.<sup>3</sup> What set Oeschger, his teammate Burns, and the three Boston stars apart in this distinction was that they were all former members of the same collegiate nine—the Phoenix Base Ball Club of Saint Mary’s College of Oakland, California.

The gathering of the former Phoenix and the other collegians at Fenway Park was remarkable in many respects. At a time when only 7% of the traditional college-age population was enrolled in the nation’s institutions of higher education, Boston’s World Series team counted twelve collegians (52.2%) among its twenty-three members. Moreover, five of these twelve (41.7%) had graduated from the colleges where they had played baseball. The Phils’ numbers were no less impressive. Its twenty-three man roster included eight former collegians (34.8%) of whom half had graduated. Among the Saint Mary’s alumni, three—Hooper, Burns and Oeschger—had graduated, while Lewis and Leonard had each spent one year in attendance at the college before pursuing professional baseball careers.<sup>4</sup>

The twenty ex-collegians on the combined rosters of the World Series teams in 1915 represented 12.3% of the 163 American and National League players that year who had previously played college baseball. Their ranks had steadily risen from the 1870s when Cap Anson (Notre Dame and Iowa), Steve Bellan (Fordham), Denny Mack (Villanova), and Albert Spalding (commercial college in Rockford, Illinois) appeared on the rosters of teams in professional baseball’s first league, the National Association, in 1871. By 1880, the Major Leagues counted twenty players with some collegiate experience among the 489 who had joined the top professional ranks over the previous decade. These twenty represented only 4.1% of the total number of men who had played for the teams of the National Association and the National League throughout the 1870s. But,

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3. The other Boston players with collegiate experience were player-manager Bill Carrigan and pitchers Ray Collins and Vean Gregg. The Phils also counted Milt Stock, George Chalmers and Stan Baumgartner among their former college players. The educational backgrounds of Major League players from 1871-1920 are drawn from the Lee Allen “Notebooks” in the National Baseball Library. Information from the “Notebooks” was cross-checked with the individual player files of the National Baseball Library and, where available, the published alumni directories of American colleges and universities.

4. Figures pertaining to higher education enrollments are in Frederick Rudolph, *Curriculum: A History of the Undergraduate Course of Study Since 1636* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1977), 101; Edwin C. Rozwenc, *The Making of American Society*: vol. 2 (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1973), 155; Arthur S. Link and Stanley Coben, *The Democratic Heritage: A History of the United States* (Waltham, Mass.: Ginn and Company, 1971), 577; and Bureau of the Census, Department of Commerce, *The Statistical Abstract of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1977), 5.

## World Series and Collegiate Connection to Major Leagues

even then, the percentage of professional ball players with college experience surpassed the proportion of the 18-21 year old Americans in college. As Tables 1 and 2 show, with the exception of the decade of the 1880s, a clear and consistent pattern of overrepresentation of college men among Major League ball players had been established.

Reaching back over forty years, the roots of the Phoenix reunion at Fenway, as for other former collegians, lie in factors affecting both American higher education and professional baseball. For the former, the principal development was the dramatic growth in higher education enrollments in the last quarter of the twentieth century. For baseball, it was the professional game's rise to respectability in the years around the turn of the century. In both cases perceptions of opportunity played the key role in attracting students to college and skilled ballplayers to the professional leagues. For the quintet from Saint Mary's, their success in Major League baseball represented a merger of these two avenues of opportunity and an example typical of the path taken by many others.

Enrollments in American colleges and universities tripled between 1870 and 1890, rising from 52,286 to 154,374, and more than doubled again by 1910. In the last three decades of the nineteenth century the number of institutions serving this expanding constituency grew almost 80 percent from 563 to over a thousand. Just as significant were the changes affecting the undergraduate curriculum and student life. In 1870 the dominant aim of higher education focused on instilling virtues of discipline, civic responsibility, and morality in students. The primary means to this end was a prescribed classical curriculum offered by strict taskmasters. The course of studies included mathematics, Latin, classical literature, ethics, rhetoric and, in the church schools, religion. In short, the American university in all of its facets emphasized a community of knowledge and the inherent unity of collegiate life.

By 1900 the aspirations of a growing middle class had transformed the college scene. The influence of this group was felt not only in the numbers it

**Table 1**

### **Proportion of Americans of College Age in College, 1870-1920**

| <u>Academic Year</u> | <u>Population 18-21 Yrs. Old</u> | <u>Higher Educ . Enrollments</u> | <u>% Enrolled Among Persons 18-21 Yrs. Old</u> |
|----------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| 1870                 | 3,116,000                        | 52,286                           | 1.6%   |
| 1880                 | 4,253,000                        | 115,817                          | 2.7%   |
| 1890                 | 5,160,000                        | 154,374                          | 3.0%   |
| 1900                 | 5,931,000                        | 231,761                          | 3.9%   |
| 1910                 | 6,934,000                        | 346,050                          | 5.0%   |
| 1920                 | 7,386,000                        | 582,268                          | 7.9%   |

Source: Seymour E. Harris, *A Statistical Portrait of Higher Education* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1972), 412-413.

**Table 2**  
**Proportion of Major League Baseball Players**  
**with Collegiate Experience, 1871-1920**

| <u>Decade</u> | <u>Players Entering<br/>Major Leagues</u> | <u>Players with<br/>College Experience</u> | <u>% Players with<br/>College Exper.</u> |
|---------------|---|--|--|
| 1871-1880     | 489                                       | 20   | 4.1%                                     |
| 1881-1890     | 1,068                                     | 30   | 2.8%                                     |
| 1891-1900     | 647                                       | 52   | 8.1%                                     |
| 1901-1910     | 1,218                                     | 269  | 22.1%                                    |
| 1911-1920     | 1,532                                     | 427  | 27.9%                                    |

Sources: Lee Allen "Notebooks," National Baseball Library, (NBL), Baseball Hall of Fame, Cooperstown, New York; Player Files (NBL); College and University Alumni Directories.

represented, but also in the diversity of the social and economic backgrounds of its members and their intentions in seeking a college education. Social mobility and access to the emerging new professions of the period entered more heavily into the decision to attend college than had previously been the case. Colleges and universities responded with courses of study shaped by utilitarian and vocational values and an elective system designed to deliver them.

Similar changes occurred in the area of student life. In part a recognition of new attitudes toward such matters, in part an attempt to attract enrollments, colleges and universities began to relax their codes of student discipline, dropping, for example, mandatory chapel attendance, and to support intellectual, social and recreational programs that added more excitement and variety to the lives of their students. Intercollegiate athletics, in particular, both benefited from and contributed to the new campus milieu.<sup>5</sup>

From the first intercollegiate crew race between Harvard and Yale in 1852, through the heyday of the crew regattas in the early 1870s, the rise of college baseball in the two decades after the Civil War, and the emergence of football by 1900 as the principal sporting spectacle on American campuses, intercollegiate sports competition had evolved from a relatively simple, informal diversion among the sons of the elite in a few northeastern institutions into an instrument of mass entertainment involving entire student bodies, college administrations and faculty, alumni and thousands of spectators. In the final decades of the

5. On the changing conditions of student life at American colleges and universities and the role of sport, see Ronald A. Smith, *Sports and Freedom: The Rise of Big-Time College Athletics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), chap. 2, "Sport, the Extracurriculum, and the Idea of Freedom," 13-25; Joseph F. Kett, *Rites and Passages* (New York: Basic Books, 1977); Oscar Handlin and Mary F. Handlin, *The American College and American Culture* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1970); Frederick Rudolph, *The American College and University* (New York: Knopf, 1968); Lawrence A. Cremin, *American Education: The National Experience, 1783-1876* (New York: Harper and Row, 1980); David Henry, *Challenges Past, Challenges Present* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1975); Lawrence R. Veysey, *The Emergence of the American University* (Chicago: University of Chicago press, 1965); Richard Hofstadter and Wilson Smith, eds., *American Higher Education* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961); and Burton J. Bledstein, *The Culture of Professionalism: The Middle Class and the Development of Higher Education in America* (New York: Norton, 1976).

nineteenth century, American higher education's first era of spirited competition for students and benefactors, college authorities often equated success on the playing fields with preeminence as an institution of higher learning. With enrollments and prestige hanging in the balance, it did not take many institutions long to define their priorities along both academic and athletic lines.<sup>6</sup>

The crew regattas of the 1870s had early demonstrated the value that could accrue to institutions through the athletic victories of young men wearing the school's colors.<sup>7</sup> The surprising win of the Massachusetts Agricultural College over Harvard and Brown in the 1871 regatta not only brought recognition and renown to the tiny 150 student land-grant institution, but also encouraged other colleges to bear the considerable financial costs in supporting a crew in the hope of gaining a similar triumph. Regatta victories by Amherst, Columbia and Cornell between 1872 and 1876 produced jubilation on their campuses and claims of "equality, freedom [and] assured position" *vis-à-vis* the Ivy giants.<sup>8</sup> By the end of the nineteenth century, football had surpassed crew as the main sporting vehicle to institutional prestige. Similarly, the appeal of intercollegiate athletic victory, which crew first revealed, increased dramatically. At colleges and universities like Chicago, Princeton, Pennsylvania, Kansas, Notre Dame and numerous land-grant and sectarian institutions throughout the country, campus authorities, alumni, and benefactors linked success on the gridiron with larger student enrollments, more generous donors, and institutional growth.

The early history of Saint Mary's College closely paralleled national developments in higher education in the areas of curriculum development, student life, and expansion.<sup>9</sup> Founded in 1863 by Archbishop Joseph Sadoc Alemany of San Francisco, the college was initially placed under the direction of his diocesan priests. This arrangement proved unsatisfactory almost from the outset as the priests were neither prepared nor inclined to administer a collegiate institution. With the college's enrollments hovering around thirty a few years

6. On the rise of intercollegiate athletics, see Smith, *Sports and Freedom*; Benjamin G. Rader, *American Sports: From the Age of Folk Games to the Age of Spectators* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1983); John A. Lucas and Ronald A. Smith, *Saga of American Sport* (Philadelphia: Lea and Febiger, 1978); Betty Spears and R. Swanson, *History of Sport and Physical Activity in the United States* (Dubuque, IA: Brown, 1978); John R. Betts, *America's Sporting Heritage: 1850-1950* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1974); C. W. Hackensmith, *History of Physical Education* (New York: Harper, 1966); Howard J. Savage, et al., *American College Athletics* (New York: Carnegie Foundation, 1933); and Donald Chu, *The Character of American Higher Education and Intercollegiate Sport* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1989).

7. On the Harvard-Yale crew race of 1852 and other aspects of the intercollegiate crew competitions in the nineteenth century, see Guy M. Lewis, "America's First Intercollegiate Sport: The Regattas from 1852 to 1975," *Research Quarterly* 38 (December, 1967): 637-648; Lewis, "The Beginning of Organized Collegiate Sport," *American Quarterly* 22 (Summer, 1970): 222-229; Joseph J. Matthews, "The First Harvard-Oxford Race," *New England Quarterly* 33 (March, 1960): 744-82; and Robert F. Kelley, *American Rowing: Its Background and Traditions* (New York: Putnam's, 1932).

8. *New York Herald*, June 26, 1897, p. 3, quoted in Smith, *Sports and Freedom*, 51.

9. The primary history of the San Francisco District of the Christian Brothers is Ronald E. Isetti, F.S.C., *Called to the Pacific: A History of the Christian Brothers of the San Francisco District, 1868-1944* (Winona, MN: Saint Mary's College Press, 1979). Historical accounts of Saint Mary's College include: Matthew McDevitt, F.S.C., *The Early Years of Saint Mary's College, 1859-1879* (Moraga, CA: Saint Mary's College, 1970) and *The Late Years of Saint Mary's College, 1879-1969* (Moraga, CA: Saint Mary's College, 1970); William Beattie, F.S.C., "125 Years: An Educational Adventure," paper prepared for the Board of Regents, Saint Mary's College (1988); and Mel Anderson, F.S.C., *The President's Report: 125th Anniversary Edition* (Moraga, CA: Saint Mary's College, 1988).

later, the Archbishop still remained firm in his conviction of the need for the new school. He succeeded in persuading the Superior General of the Brothers of the Christian Schools to send a group of nine Brothers to take over the struggling college.<sup>10</sup> They arrived to take up the task in 1868, and, within four years, secured from the State of California an official charter for the institution empowering it to grant university degrees. By 1872, the college's enrollments had tripled and its future seemed more secure under the Brother's direction.

As the collegiate curriculum developed, it reflected both the original interests of the Archbishop and the traditional educational mission of the Christian Brothers. The former focused on providing San Francisco immigrants-especially Irish Catholics-with an education that would help them succeed in America and address the many needs of a still frontier society, including preparing men for the priesthood. The Brothers drew upon their order's focus since its founding in France in the late seventeenth century to provide the lower and middle classes with a practical education. The result was a diverse program of studies that expanded upon the original classical curriculum of the college from 1863 to 1868 to offer courses in commercial, scientific, and engineering areas. Between 1872 and 1915 the college awarded 233 B.A. degrees, 175 B.S. degrees in civil and mining engineering, and 459 business degrees. Always conscious of its aim to promote Christian values and responsible citizenship, the college was also clearly attuned to the increasing professionalization and specialization of the American workplace. The young men who attended Saint Mary's, like the first and second generations of new college enrollees across the country, did so for the benefits of both a liberal and a vocational education. Moreover, since the majority of its faculty, students, and benefactors were Irish Catholics, the college especially sought to protect the faith as much as to provide a secular education to enable its students to climb society's ladder.

Changes in the circumstances of student life at Saint Mary's in the final quarter of the nineteenth century paralleled those which were occurring within the curriculum. The movement overall was away from strict structure to a more balanced regimen offering students both choice and freedom. In the early years of the college, regulations governed virtually every moment of the student's day from morning prayers at the rising hour of 6:00 a.m. to lights out at 8:30 p.m. Throughout the day prescribed times for meals, classes, recreation and study halls punctuated the lessons of discipline, industry, and spiritual development which formed the center of the Brothers' educational philosophy.<sup>11</sup>

Even within this highly controlled environment, though, extracurricular opportunities existed to provide students with some relief from their studies. These were quite modest initially and focused on occasional picnics and outings and the college's music program. Encouraged by the college's new president,

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10. Saint Mary's College Catalogue, 1908-1909. 126-153. This edition of the *Catalogue* provides a complete listing of graduates of the college since 1872. *The College Roll, 1883-1919* lists all matriculants in the collegiate programs.

11. Isetti, *Called to the Pacific*, 21-22. Also, editions of the *College Catalogue*, particularly for the 1870s and 1880s, provide details on the highly regimented schedule which the boarding students, who comprised over 90% of the school's enrollments, followed.

Brother Justin McMahon, students also participated in a variety of athletic activities including running, rugby, and handball. Although it is not known whether Justin read Thomas Hughes' novels about the education and sporting life of "Tom Brown," the president was apparently familiar with the manner of education practiced in the English public schools of Eton, Harrow, Westminster, and Winchester and likened his role at Saint Mary's to that of headmaster at those places.<sup>12</sup> He particularly saw physical activity as a manly and appropriate element of a Christian education and promoted proficiency in it with the same forthrightness as he applauded academic achievement. In 1872, the same year that the State of California authorized Saint Mary's to grant degrees, Justin approved the establishment of an organized athletic program at the college. For most of the students this meant intramural sports. For more skillful athletes there was another outlet. Adopting the mythical phoenix as their emblem, these lads turned to the major team sport of the day for the school's first intercollegiate venture and took the field as the Saint Mary's College Base Ball Club.<sup>13</sup>

It was not surprising that the college chose baseball to launch its efforts in sports competition beyond the campus. In the 1870s baseball superseded all collegiate sports in popularity. Whether the Amherst-Williams contest of July 1, 1859, played under "Massachusetts rules" with thirteen men on a side, or the Fordham-Xavier game of November 3, 1859, with nine men on a team, holds the distinction for the first intercollegiate baseball match, the game had begun to make headway on many eastern campuses before the outbreak of the Civil War.<sup>14</sup> Although the war generally retarded the growth of intercollegiate competition, it provided stimulus to baseball and other sports through contests among the men in uniform and the enthusiasm for the games they played which the veterans took home with them after the fighting.<sup>15</sup>

The end of the war signalled a rapid expansion of baseball activity and a virtual mania took hold of the sport. The National Association of Base Ball Players (NABBP), which had been organized in 1858 to establish uniformity in

12. Isetti, *Called to the Pacific*, 22-23. On Thomas Hughes' influence and the origins of the Muscular Christianity Movement, see William Blaikie, "American Bodies," *Harper's Weekly* 27 (December, 1883): 770; Guy Lewis, "The Muscular Christianity Movement," *Journal of Health, Physical Education and Recreation* 37 (May, 1966): 27-28, 62; and John A. Lucas, "A Prelude to the Rise of Sport: Ante-Bellum America, 1850-1860," *Quest* 2 (December, 1968): 50-57.

13. Although mainly a history of football at Saint Mary's during the Edward P. "Slip" Madigan era of the 1920s and 1930s, Randy Andrada, *They Did it Everytime: Saga of the Saint Mary's Gaels* (Piedmont, CA: Randy Andrada, 1975, 1987), 5-7, 15-23, provides some commentary on the beginnings of intercollegiate athletics at the college.

14. Ronald A. Smith, "The Rise of College Baseball," *Baseball History* 1 (Spring, 1986): 23-27. An exchange of correspondence between Colonel A. M. Weyand and Maurice L. Ahern, Archivist of Fordham University (Ahern to Weyand, January 27, 1966; Weyand to Ahern, January 29, 1966) attributes an unspecified reference "probably in the files of the old *New York Tribune*" to support the Fordham-Xavier contest as the first college game in the United States with nine men on a side. The letters are in the "College Baseball" file at the National Baseball Library.

15. Smith, *Sports and Freedom*, 56. For accounts of baseball play among the Civil War troops, see Jim Sumner, "Baseball at Salisbury Prison Camp" in *Baseball History*, ed. Peter Levine (Westport, Conn.: Meckler, 1989): 19-26; Bell I. Wiley, *The Life of Billy Yank: The Common Soldier of the Union* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1952), 170; Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb: The Common Soldier of the Confederacy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1943), 159; and Lawrence W. Fielding, "War and Trifles: The Meter Stick of the Civil War Soldier," *Journal of Sport History* 4 (Summer, 1977): 151-168.

the rules governing the game and to bar paid "professionals" from it, saw its membership leap from 30 clubs in 1864 to 91 in 1865 and to over 200 in 1866.<sup>16</sup> *Wilkes' Spirit of the Times* estimated that there were about 2,000 organized baseball clubs in the nation by the end of the decade.<sup>17</sup>

A similar phenomenon was occurring on college campuses. The postwar matriculation of veterans who had experienced baseball during the great conflict gave rise to the game on both sides of the Mason-Dixon line and farther west. Within two years of the Confederate surrender at Appomattox, for example, baseball teams were organized at the University of Virginia, the University of Georgia, the University of Kansas, and the Platteville Normal School in Wisconsin.<sup>18</sup> The latter joined the NABBP's North Western Association whose membership stretched from Kenyon College in Ohio to Dubuque, Iowa.<sup>19</sup>

When the Phoenix made their debut in 1872, they could already draw upon an established baseball tradition in San Francisco. The origins of the game in the Bay Area can be traced to the heady days of the Gold Rush when young tradesmen and mechanics headed west from New York City, Chicago and other eastern and midwestern cities to make their fortunes in the capital of the '49ers. These men not only contributed to the great population boom of the city—from about 1,000 in 1848 to nearly 35,000 just three years later—but brought with them new recreational interests and the critical mass necessary to sustain them.<sup>20</sup> As early as 1852, "full grown persons" could be observed "engaged very industriously in the game known as town ball" on one of the city plazas.<sup>21</sup> By the decade's end, both cricket and baseball clubs had appeared on the San Francisco sporting scene with the latter clearly becoming the more popular and better organized.<sup>22</sup>

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16. Warren Goldsmith, *Playing for Keeps: A History of Early Baseball* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 72; and Jack Seltzer, *Baseball in the Nineteenth Century: An Overview* (Cooperstown, NY: Society for American Baseball Research, 1986), 5.

17. *Wilkes' Spirit of the Times* 19 (September 26, 1869): 89.

18. Smith, "College Baseball," 27.

19. Seizer, *Baseball*, 5.

20. William Issel and Robert W. Cherny, *San Francisco, 1865-1932: Politics, Power, and Urban Development* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 14.

21. *Daily Alta California*, January 14, 1852, 2.

22. Baseball in 1860s San Francisco was only one recreational diversion among many. Enthusiasm for the game grew steadily, but still paled in comparison with the city's fascination with gambling and racing, either horse or human. Trotters, quarter horses, and thoroughbreds attracted thousands of spectators while pedestrianism not only drew viewers to events, but also encouraged many to take up vigorous exercise on their own. Sailing, cycling, and roller skating especially benefited from the interest in recreation for social and healthful purposes and engaged Bay Area residents in growing numbers. On early San Francisco sports and recreation, see Roger W. Lotchin, *San Francisco. 1846-1856: From Hamlet to City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 284-286; Roberta J. Park, "San Franciscans at Work and at Play, 1846-1869," *Journal of the West* 22 (January, 1983): 44-51; and Joel Franks, "Sweeney in San Francisco: A Local Boy Makes Good, Then Not So Good," *Baseball History* 2 (Winter, 1987/1988): 53. On the origins of San Francisco baseball, in particular, see Fred Lange, *History of Baseball in California and Pacific Coast Leagues, 1847-1938* (San Francisco: 1938); David Nemeec, "A History of Baseball in the San Francisco Bay Area," *San Francisco Giants Official 1985 Yearbook* (San Francisco: Woodford Associates, 1985), 1-14; Robert K. Barney, "Of Rails and Red Stockings: Episodes in the Expansion of the National Pastime in the American West," *Journal of the West* 17 (July, 1978): 61-70; Natalie Vermilyea and Jim Moore, "A Ballad of the Republic," *The Californians* 6 (May/June, 1988): 42-49; and Joel Franks, "The California League of 1886-1893: The Last Refuge of Disorganized Baseball," *The Californians* 6 (May/June, 1988): 50-56.

The influence of the New York metropolitan area, which, prior to the Civil War, was the center of baseball activity in the nation, was clearly felt during the early years of baseball on the West Coast.<sup>23</sup> Ex-New Yorkers, who had gained baseball experience with such clubs as the Knickerbockers and Empires, as well as the Brooklyn Excelsiors and Peconics, played major roles in developing the game in the Bay Area. San Francisco's first baseball team, the Eagle Base Ball Club organized in November, 1859, drew, for example, upon the baseball knowledge of newcomer John Fisher from New York in getting under way.<sup>24</sup> Similarly, the Shephard brothers, William and James, who had played baseball with the Knickerbockers at Hoboken's Elysian Fields, helped organize the Pacific Base Ball Club in 1862. Walter Wallace, who had played with the Peconics founded, managed, and pitched for the California Theater Baseball Club in 1869.<sup>25</sup> By the late 1860s, over twenty Bay Area teams existed and they often competed against each other on San Francisco's first enclosed baseball field, the Recreation Grounds at the corner of 25th and Folsom Streets, located in the heavily-Irish Mission District of the city.<sup>26</sup>

The establishment of the Pacific Base Ball Convention in August, 1866, gave further impetus to the rise of baseball in San Francisco through the championship matches it promoted and the coveted prizes it awarded, including a "splendid ball bat elaborately mounted in silver."<sup>27</sup> Seeking to advance the game's popularity even more, the Convention invited the Cincinnati Red Stockings to play a series of games against Bay Area teams in early fall, 1869. The completion of the transcontinental railroad in May made such an invitation possible and, when the Red Stockings accepted, the San Francisco baseball fraternity reacted with joy and optimism about the outcome of the contests. The games themselves, however, were not very competitive as the eastern visitors dispatched the local nines by a combined score of 289-22 in five lopsided games. The Cincinnati nine thus easily extended their undefeated streak on a nationwide tour that took them nearly 12,000 miles and attracted over 200,000 fans to their games.<sup>28</sup>

The thrashings at the hands of the all-salaried Cincinnati team had an understandably discouraging effect on the baseball enthusiasts in the Bay Area and attendance at games fell off for a while. By June, 1870, though, the press noted "new life" in the game and the Pacific Base Ball Convention encouraged the organization of new clubs.<sup>29</sup> Over the next few years, clubs formed in

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23. Melvin L. Adelman, *A Sporting Time: New York City and the Rise of Modern Athletics, 1820-1870* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986). 121.

24. Lange, *Baseball in California*, 6-7; Nemeck, "Baseball in San Francisco," 3; and San Francisco *Morning Call*, April 7, 1890, which provided biographical sketches "of the men who have aided in bringing the national sport to its present prosperous condition" in San Francisco.

25. *Morning Call*, April 7, 1890.

26. Issel and Cherny, *San Francisco*, 65.

27. *Daily Alta California*, April 23, 1867.

28. Accounts of the Cincinnati Red Stockings' 1869 season and tour include Barney, "Of Rails and Redstockings"; Joseph S. Stern, Sr., "The Team That Couldn't be Beat: The Red Stockings of 1869," *Cincinnati Historical Society Bulletin* 27 (1969): 25-41; and David Voigt, "America's First Red Scare—The Cincinnati Reds of 1869," *Ohio History* 73 (1969): 13-24.

29. *Daily Alta California*, June 16, 1870, 1; *Oakland Daily News*, December 2, 1872, 3.

Oakland, Berkeley, Alameda, Occidental, Stockton, Sacramento and, of course, at Saint Mary's College. By 1876, the men of the Pacific Convention were willing to test their skills on the diamond against national competition again. The occasion this time was the nation's Centennial celebration.

1876 was also the 100th anniversary of the founding of San Francisco. To mark both events, fifteen ballplayers from several clubs in the Bay Area joined together to form an all-star team to compete in a baseball tournament in Philadelphia as part of the national festivities. Calling themselves the Centennials, the group headed east by rail in late June.<sup>30</sup> Along the way they competed against local nines whenever station stops allowed. In Atlantic, Iowa, for example, the competition on July 4 was a contingent called the Troublesomes and nearly one thousand spectators turned out for the contest. The game "was one of the finest and most hotly-contested ever played in the State," the press reported. Down 9-6 heading into the bottom of the ninth, the home team unleashed a barrage of "heavy and safe hitting" to push four runs across for the victory.<sup>31</sup>

Two weeks later the Centennials arrived in Rochester, New York, and opened a ten-game schedule against eastern competition. The local semi-pros greeted the Golden Staters rudely, handing them a 12-4 loss on July 21, only a few hours after the weary travelers had detrained. Their next New York stop was Elmira for a game against a team from Ithaca. The Californians again failed in the late innings, giving up three runs in the bottom of the eighth, and dropped a 4-3 decision. Their breakthrough into the win column came the next day, however, when, aided by five errors and two wild pitches by the Cricket Club of Binghamton they gained a 6-5 victory.<sup>32</sup>

The San Franciscans then headed to Philadelphia for the principal games of the tour. They responded with their best play. Competing against the finest amateur and semi-pro teams in the area, the Centennials won six of seven games over an eleven-day period. They avenged their only defeat, 10-5 against Campbell of Philadelphia on August 1, with an 8-6 win just two days before beginning the long journey back to the West Coast.<sup>33</sup>

The Centennials' performance underscored the quality of the homegrown baseball talent in the Bay Area and momentarily checked any interest in importing expensive players from other areas of the country to stock the local teams. The example of the 1869 Red Stockings team, which fielded only one player who was a native of Cincinnati, however, was not completely lost. The bottom line in the increasingly competitive West Coast baseball world, as elsewhere, was winning and if that could not be accomplished with a team of local heroes then the importation of professionals was recognized as a justifiable and appropriate step to take. It was perhaps fitting that a former member of

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30. The travels of the Centennials can be traced in the pages of the *New York Clipper*, one of the major sporting journals of the nineteenth century.

31. *Ibid.*, July 22, 1876, 133.

32. *Ibid.*, August 12, 1876, 139.

33. *Ibid.*, August 12, 1876, 155; August 19, 1876, 139.

the Cincinnati team, Cal McVey, should play a key role in this development in the Bay Area. Moving to Oakland in 1879, McVey organized the Bay City Base Ball Club and immediately established it as one of the best in the area.<sup>34</sup> His players demonstrated their prowess in convincing fashion by beating Cap Anson's Chicago White Stockings, the National League champions of 1880, four games out of six in a post-season series.

But McVey and others like him were both an expensive and often unreliable investment. McVey left baseball a year later to become superintendent of an irrigation company in Hanford, California. His club collapsed without him. James "Pud" Galvin, who would go on to record 362 wins in a pitching career with Buffalo and Pittsburgh, was offered \$2000 by the San Francisco Athletics for the 1880 season. He hung around for only a month before bigger money back east lured him away. Similarly, players like Edward "The Only" Nolan and William "Bald Billie" Barnie were barely around long enough for Bay Area fans to appreciate their nicknames before resuming their professional careers with eastern teams.<sup>35</sup> Increasingly, the San Francisco and Oakland clubs returned to the practice of recruiting local talent for their rosters, a decision made easier by the success that such Bay Area products as George Van Haltren, Bill Brown, John Sheridan, Tom Power, Danny Long, Fred Carroll, Bob Blakiston, and Charlie Sweeney enjoyed with the Major League teams of the east in the 1880s.<sup>36</sup> There was no more reliable source of this talent than the Saint Mary's College Phoenix.

The Centennials' tour of 1876 had first brought Saint Mary's to the attention of the eastern baseball world. The Phoenix contributed four players to the all-star squad-catcher Thomas "Brick" Cullen, centerfielder Nicholas Wynn, and pitchers Delos Ashley and William White. Although Wynn and White played only occasionally, White especially after he committed four errors and gave up thirteen hits in the loss to Rochester, Cullen caught most of the games on the tour and even played some centerfield when he was not behind the plate. Ashley earned two victories on the mound for the Bay Area contingent and also played a couple of games in rightfield.

The honor of being the first man from Saint Mary's to make it to the majors, though, went to none of these fellows, but to Jeremiah Dennis Eldridge, a.k.a. Jerry Denny.<sup>37</sup> A student in the college from 1877-1879, Eldridge not only opened the door to the eastern professional leagues for subsequent members of the Phoenix, but he also contributed to the major controversy in intercollegiate baseball of his time. This centered on the question of whether or not a player could retain his amateur status for his college team and play for pay with professional or semi-pro clubs during the summer months and off-season.<sup>38</sup>

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34. Nemeec, "Baseball in San Francisco," 3.

35. *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 21, 1880, 3; June 27, 1880, 5; March 28, 1881, 5.

36. Dick Dobbins, "Oakland's Long Baseball Heritage," *Official Magazine of the Oakland Athletics* 8 (1988): 39-43.

37. Franks, "Sweeney of San Francisco," 54.

38. On the play-for-pay controversy, see Smith, "Rise of College Baseball," 34-38; Smith, *Sports and Freedom*. 62-66.

Eldridge, like others, had done this under a thinly-disguised pseudonym. He would hold on to his-Jerry Denny-throughout his professional career. The way in which Saint Mary's responded to the play-for-pay issue revealed both the nature of the controversy and one of the key factors that contributed to the Phoenix' great success on the diamond.

The question that Eldridge's actions raised focused as much on the distinction between amateur and professional status as it did on notions of what was considered proper behavior or activity for a college gentleman. The latter concern particularly engaged those who looked to English universities for an amateur ideal. In that context, "intercollegiate" sport was the property of an aristocratic sporting elite who generally acknowledged a common body of established customs for their conduct. Foremost in their code was an emphasis on the distinction between work and play. It was simply bad form to commit too much to the pursuit of victory. Accepting pay for play, under any circumstances, violated the English gentlemen's concept of fair sporting behavior. Making a career out of one's athletic talents, especially in baseball, was an option only for the lesser sorts. There were many ways for healthy, energetic young men to earn a livelihood, editorialized the *New York Times* in 1870, "more creditable to himself and more profitable to his country than by playing baseball matches."<sup>39</sup> The nature of the sport made no difference to a Harvard professor who frankly declared a few years later that "a gentleman has something better to be than a professional athlete."<sup>40</sup>

The fluidity and diversity of American society would not permit the exclusiveness of the English sporting scene, despite protestations to the contrary. By the time Eldridge had signed a professional contract with Providence in 1881, baseball was well on its way to becoming, in Mark Twain's words, "the very symbol, the outward and visible expression of the drive and push and rush and struggle of the raging, tearing, booming nineteenth century."<sup>41</sup> This meant, particularly with regard to the play-for-pay issue, that neither the sponsors of teams who sought playing talent nor the collegians themselves who appreciated the earning power of their baseball skills looked upon the practice as socially or ethically reprehensible. It seemed consistent with the principles of a free and competitive market environment and the quest to gain an edge in it.

Despite periodic condemnations of the practice at many institutions, the college baseball world never fully resolved the issue until well after the establishment of the Intercollegiate Athletic Association, the immediate predecessor of the National Collegiate Athletic Association, in 1905. Such inaction only underscored the *laissez-faire* conditions governing intercollegiate athletics that permitted a blurring of the lines between amateur and professional. The lack of agreement on the play-for-pay issue, as for such other eligibility controversies of the late nineteenth century as a minimum residency require-

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39. *New York Times*, September 11, 1870.

40. *Boston Post*, November 25, 1889, in "1889 Football Controversy" File, HUD 10889.1, Harvard University Archives.

41. Samuel L. Clemens, *Mark Twain's Speeches* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1923), 145.

ment and the status of transfer, graduate and professional school students, provided sufficient latitude for institutions and individuals to set their own standards.

Saint Mary's was no exception to this trend. The college developed an eligibility code for its athletes that focused primarily on their identity as enrolled students of the college, not their status *vis-à-vis* a strict amateur ideal. Accordingly, the college permitted semi-professionals to play for the Phoenix and its other athletic teams as long as they fulfilled minimum scholarship requirements and obeyed the college's rules of social conduct.<sup>42</sup> This halfway covenant with standards, lenient by some institutional practices, firm by others, proved to be not only an effective approach in bringing young men to the college-and the Phoenix-but also a beneficial arrangement for them as long as they stayed. It was common practice for Saint Mary's to provide play-for-pay opportunities for its athletes with semi-pro teams in the local leagues. The best players on the Phoenix could expect to play for these clubs on holidays and Sundays during the regular collegiate playing season, as well as summers and vacations, for anywhere from \$5 to \$25 per game plus considerations for room, meals and trip fare. Pitchers and catchers rated the top stipends, but quality players in any position had access to these bonus arrangements.<sup>43</sup>

A generous eligibility policy provided the means for Saint Mary's to field potentially strong teams and such supportive conditions for baseball in the Bay Area in general as an extraordinary amount of sandlot and bush league activity and a mild, year-round climate served to foster playing talent. Yet, it was the realization of that potential and the contributory effect of success to further success that largely explained the growing reputation of the Phoenix as a baseball powerhouse. The impressions of Saint Mary's baseball that Jerry (Eldridge) Denny left were positive ones and his performance in the Majors opened wider the doors to the highest competitive circles for the Phoenix who followed. In a thirteen-year career with seven different National League teams, Eldridge hit for a lifetime batting average of .260, which included 74 home runs and 512 runs batted in.<sup>44</sup> An ambidextrous third baseman, Eldridge disdained the use of a fielding glove. When he retired after the 1894 season, he was the last player in the professional leagues to go about his defensive chores bare-handed.<sup>45</sup>

Following close on Eldridge's success were Saint Mary's alumni Jim Fogarty, Charlie Gaggus and Joe Corbett.<sup>46</sup> Although Fogarty had played

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42. Gerald P. Beaumont, "A Training School for Baseball Stars," *Baseball Magazine* 18 (November, 1916): 74.

43. A useful source for information and anecdotes on the Phoenix is "The Brickpile Seniors Newsletter." Published from 1952-1955, "The Newsletter" was the shortlived effort of several Saint Mary's College alumni to maintain contact among those students who had attended the college when it was located in Oakland from 1889-1928. The one square block, five-story, red brick building which housed the college during those years was affectionately called "the brickpile." Entries in the issues of September 19, 1952, October 15, 1952, February 17, 1953, and June 15, 1953, provide some detail on the playing arrangements between members of the Phoenix and local semi-pro outfits.

44. *Baseball Encyclopedia*, 901.

45. James, *Baseball Abstract*, 51.

46. *Baseball Encyclopedia*, 959,1142, 1819.

second base for the Phoenix in 1883, he found himself in the outfield of the Philadelphia Phils for his Major League debut in 1884. He remained there throughout most of his seven-year career earning a reputation as one of the most reliable outfielders around. His lifetime batting average of .246 included a career high .293 in 1886. His premature death in 1891, after one year with the Philadelphia entry in the abortive Players League, ended a modest, but steady, career. Gaggus, a student at Saint Mary's from 1875-1877, played only one year in the Majors with Washington of the Union Association in 1884, but he distinguished himself as both a pitcher and hitter. He compiled a 10-9 individual win-loss record with a team-leading earned run average of 2.54 for a club that finished 46½ games behind league champion St. Louis in the final standings. His .247 batting average made him a useful substitute in the outfield. Corbett, the younger brother of "Gentleman Jim," the heavyweight boxing champion, attended the college from 1889-1893. He then pitched for four years in the National League with Washington, Baltimore and St. Louis. His 35-21 career record on the mound included 24 wins for second-place Baltimore in 1897.

By 1910, fourteen former Phoenix players had made it to the Major Leagues. As Table 3 shows, no college or university west of the Mississippi came close to matching that record and few elsewhere had comparable or greater numbers.<sup>47</sup> The domination of this list by Catholic institutions particularly underscored the conscious attempt of these colleges and universities to use athletics to further their interests. Faced with growing competition for students and resources from the rapidly-expanding land-grant and nonsectarian sectors of the higher education community and concerned that their visibility was dimming as quickly as their moral authority, these schools increasingly turned to their intercollegiate programs as agents of institutional identity and promotion.<sup>48</sup> Although football and, later, basketball would be the sports of choice in this effort, for Saint Mary's, as well as many other Catholic colleges and universities, baseball put the college on the athletic map first and set the tone for all subsequent forays into the world of intercollegiate athletics.

No one was more important in the effort to develop baseball at Saint Mary's than Brother Agnon McCann. Arriving at the college in 1879, Agnon quickly became the leader of the group on campus which supported the growth of the college's athletic programs. In 1883, he helped organize the Saint Mary's College Athletic Association, which raised funds through a \$5.00 annual student membership fee to purchase athletic equipment for the school's teams and to keep the playing fields and track in good condition.<sup>49</sup> A staunch advocate of all athletics, Agnon particularly favored baseball and dedicated his energies to managing the school's program. Each Saint Mary's player who made it to the

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47. Other western institutions sending a representative number of players on to the Major Leagues between 1871-1910 included the University of California-Berkeley (4) and Iowa State University (3).

48. On the development of intercollegiate sport at Catholic colleges and universities, see Chu, *American Higher Education and Intercollegiate Sport*, 34; Rudolph, *American College and University*, 385; and Savage, *et al.*, *American College Athletics*, 263-265.

49. "Brickpile Newsletter," August 15, 1953, 6.

**Table 3**  
**Leading Colleges of Major League Players, 1871-1910**

| <u>College</u>   | <u>Type of Institution</u> | <u>Location</u> | <u>No. Players</u> |
|------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| Notre Dame U.    | Private/Catholic           | Indiana         | 20                 |
| Holy Cross       | Private/Catholic           | Massachusetts   | 18                 |
| Georgetown U.    | Private/Catholic           | Wash., D.C.     | 17                 |
| Brown            | Private/Non-denom.         | Rhode Island    | 15                 |
| Saint Mary's     | Private/Catholic           | California      | 14                 |
| U. of Penn.      | Private/Non-denom.         | Pennsylvania    | 13                 |
| Fordham          | Private/Catholic           | New York        | 11                 |
| Manhattan        | Private/Catholic           | New York        | 11                 |
| U. of Michigan   | Pub./St. supported         | Michigan        | 8                  |
| Bucknell         | Private/Non-denom.         | Pennsylvania    | 7                  |
| Dartmouth        | Private/Non-denom.         | New Hampshire   | 7                  |
| U. of Illinois   | Pub. / St. supported       | Illinois        | 7                  |
| St. Bonaventure  | Private/Catholic           | New York        | 7                  |
| Villanova        | Private/Catholic           | Pennsylvania    | 7                  |
| Princeton        | Private/Non-denom.         | New Jersey      | 6                  |
| Cornell          | Private/Non-denom.         | New York        | 5                  |
| Penn. State U.   | Pub./St. supported         | Pennsylvania    | 5                  |
| U. of Pittsburgh | Private/Non-denom.         | Pennsylvania    | 5                  |
| Santa Clara      | Private/Catholic           | California      | 5                  |
| U. of Vermont    | Pub./St. supported         | Vermont         | 5                  |
| Washington U.    | Private/Catholic           | Missouri        | 5                  |

Legend: Pub. = Public; Non-denom. = Non-denominational; St. = State.

Sources: Lee Allen "Notebooks," National Baseball Library (NBL); Player Files, NBL; College and University Alumni Directories; National Association of Professional Baseball Leagues, "Outstanding Graduates of Colleges to Major Leagues," *The Story of Minor League Baseball* (Columbus, Ohio: Stoneman Press, 1952), 661-666; Dave Anderson, Cappy Gagnon, Collegiate Baseball Committee *Newsletter*, Issue No. 1 (March, 1989); and David L. Porter, ed., *Biographical Dictionary of American Sports: Baseball* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987).

professional leagues underscored for him the appropriateness of a major effort on behalf of baseball at the college.<sup>50</sup> For Agnon, career preparation was not restricted to academic lessons. Although this viewpoint was not shared by all

50. Beaumont, "Training School for Stars," 74.

members of the Brothers' community, and notwithstanding the summer play-for-pay issue, competitive success in the "national game" and the resulting favorable publicity for the college kept the pro-athletics group in charge of the situation for many years.<sup>51</sup>

Sharing Agnon's appreciation of athletics and, more important, in a position to support it, was Brother Joseph Fenlon, the college's athletic director from 1905-1911. Arguing that athletics constituted an "educational medium: a means to bring out what is in the boy," Joseph was not reluctant to note that a successful sports program was a convenient way to keep the college before the public eye. In Joseph's view, though, an over-emphasis on winning was a "sordid sentiment of misguided success" that would lead to "professionalism of the pronounced type and a disgruntled and troublesome student body." "Well-directed athletics," on the other hand, "will of themselves advertise the school . . . and [ensure] the development of the man, physically, intellectually, and morally."<sup>52</sup>

Winning, though, was what the well-directed Phoenix did under Agnon and Joseph's supervision. The team benefited from both an elaborate infrastructure designed to develop its players and the compelling appeal of their success. By 1900 there were three baseball teams on a 200 student campus, the Phoenix and two junior varsity squads, the Collegians and the Young Phoenix. Two more teams would be added in the next decade. Assisting Agnon with the coaching chores were several Phoenix alumni who had remained in the Bay Area after leaving the college and had volunteered their services to the team. Many like John Brady, Clarence Duggan, Tom Feeney, George Haley, John McPartland, Joe Nunan and George Poultney—had enjoyed brief stints with teams in the California, Pacific Coast, and Pacific National Leagues. Similarly, the Brothers also attracted the expert help of several present or former Major Leaguers who either resided in the Bay Area in the off-season or who had retired near the campus. Included in this group were Parke Wilson and George Van Haltren of the New York Giants, Doc Moskiman of the Boston Red Sox, and Hal Chase, the former Santa Clara College star who worked with the Phoenix in the early months of 1907 before rejoining the New York Highlanders for the new Major League season.

As the number of talented individuals on the Phoenix suggest, the team enjoyed great success against other collegiate, as well as amateur, semi-pro, and, occasionally, Major League competition. The club captured its first title in 1892 (the Pacific Amateur League), added both the California Collegiate and Midwinter Intercollegiate championships in 1893 and 1894, and then ran off

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51. Isetti, *Called to the Pacific*, 171-174; Andrada, *They Did Every Time*, 7. Sports coverage in the college's student newspaper, *The Collegian*, amply documents the ever-present figure of Brother Agnon in the baseball program. From designing uniforms, testing equipment, and groundskeeping to recruiting players, coaching and mentoring them, the unofficial "dean of athletics" assumed something of a proprietary interest in the game. Both Isetti and Andrada suggest that the intensity of his commitment to baseball reflected his frustration at not having the opportunity to play professionally himself.

52. Brother Joseph Fenlon. "Ethical Significance of Athletics in Colleges," *The Collegian*, May, 1909, 372-375.

twelve consecutive championships in the California-Nevada College Baseball League from 1901-1913. When the old California League broke up in 1893, the Phoenix played a large part in keeping baseball alive in the Bay Area by playing teams comprised of former players of that defunct league. Oftentimes the opposition consisted of players loaned from the Phoenix organization in order to field a full team. This practice further allowed Saint Mary's to develop players for its first team. The Saint Mary's boys even proved their prowess against international competition, defeating a touring team from Wasada University of Japan, 19-2, in 1902. Perhaps the finest Phoenix team prior to World War I, and, arguably, one of the greatest college nines in the history of the game, was the 1907 lot. It included six future professionals, including Eddie Burns, Harry Hooper, and Harry Krause, and swept through its twenty-seven game schedule without a defeat. Among their victims was the Chicago White Sox.

No Phoenix player exemplified more strongly the Saint Mary's-Major Leagues' connection and the increasing presence of college-educated players on the professional rosters than Harry Hooper.<sup>53</sup> Born of immigrant parents (father from Canada, mother from Germany) in 1887 in Bells Station, California, a small dry-farming community south of San Jose, Hooper arrived at Saint Mary's in 1900 to begin a college preparatory curriculum. He distinguished himself both academically and athletically and gained admission to the collegiate program in 1903. Over the next four years young Hooper moved up through the ranks of the Saint Mary's baseball organization. As a freshman in the spring of 1904, he pitched for the college's fifth team, the Midgets. He continued to pitch in his sophomore and junior years, but on the advice of Brothers Agnon and Joseph, who felt that he did not have the physical size and pitching velocity to make it as a hurler in the professional leagues, Hooper began to concentrate his considerable baseball talents on hitting and fielding. His efforts were rewarded with a starting spot in rightfield for the 1907 Phoenix.

The great success of that team attracted the attention of scouts from California professional clubs and the Major Leagues. Hooper, who had led the team in batting, drew the most interest. Immediately at the close of the collegiate baseball season, he signed a contract to play a few months with the Alameda club of the California State League. But Harry, his engineering degree now in hand, was not yet sold on making a career in baseball. He opted in the summer of 1907 for a situation that would allow him to pursue both civil engineering and baseball. He moved to Sacramento to accept a position as a surveyor with the

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53. Hooper's career at Saint Mary's can be traced through newspaper clippings and press releases in the Saint Mary's College archives, the National Sports Library Archives, San Jose, California, and the National Baseball Library, Cooperstown, New York. Yet, of greatest value in documenting and assessing Hooper's career are the collections of his own notes, correspondence, scrapbooks, photographs, diaries, and memorabilia in the homes of his two sons, John, in Houston, Texas, and Harry, Jr., in Capitola, California. The Hoopers have a keen interest in the family's history and have gone to impressive lengths to chronicle it. Their efforts include handwritten narratives of their lives by Harry Hooper, Sr., and his father, Joseph, and taped interviews with several members of the family. The latter include Harry, Sr., reminiscing about his playing days with his lifelong friend and former Boston teammate, Larry Gardner. The author gratefully acknowledges the kindness and generosity of the Hoopers in opening their homes to him. The author also notes with sadness the death of Harry, Jr., in December, 1989.

Western Pacific Railroad and to play ball for the Sacramento Solons. For the former he received \$75 a month, for the latter \$85. As Hooper later recalled: "I played with the Sacramento club, mainly because they promised to get me a surveying job. I guess you might say that was my bonus, a surveying job."<sup>54</sup>

Hooper immediately demonstrated why he was being paid more to play baseball than to plan trestles. In thirty-six games with the Solons in the summer of 1907 he batted .301. For the full 1908 season he compiled a .344 average that earned him the accolade "Ty Cobb of the State League." It was becoming clear to Hooper that his days working on the railroad were numbered. Others were reaching this conclusion too. Sacramento manager Charlie Graham, who worked as a scout for the Boston Red Sox, encouraged owner John I. Taylor to give young Hooper a chance. Taylor obliged in purchasing Harry's contract for \$2000 after the 1908 season. The following spring Hooper found himself in Hot Springs, Arkansas, for the opening of spring training with the Major League Red Sox.

Hooper's acquisition was part of a youth movement on which Taylor banked the future of his ball club.<sup>55</sup> By the start of the 1909 season, the Sox had traded away veterans Cy Young, Jimmy Collins, and Bill Dinneen and now looked to such newcomers as Tris Speaker, Smokey Joe Wood, and Eddie Cicotte to regain the form that had produced consecutive league championships in 1903 and 1904. Hooper quickly established himself as one of the stars of the Boston resurgence, although he was not in the starting line-up when the season began. An injury to rightfielder Dot Gessler soon gave Harry his chance. Against Washington in the second series of the year, the California rookie fielded flawlessly and stroked two hits in three appearances at the plate. By the end of the season, Gessler had been traded and Hooper had right field to himself. He owned it for the next eleven years.

From 1909 to 1920 with the Red Sox and then five more years with the Chicago White Sox, Hooper quietly built a career that would eventually earn him a place in the Baseball Hall of Fame. Batting lead-off throughout most of his career, the left-handed hitting Californian banged out 2466 hits for a lifetime average of .281. Although not a spectacular average, it was attained in the era of the spitball, dead-ball, and raised pitching mound when there were only a half-dozen or so consistent .300 hitters in the American League. Harry's ability to hit in the clutch matched baseball's best in any era. In four World Series with the Red Sox, all won by Boston, he batted .293 with a slugging percentage (total bases accumulated in all plate appearances) of .435. Fellow Hall of Famer Walter Johnson, who pitched against Hooper throughout his entire career, called him "the toughest of them all in a pinch."<sup>56</sup>

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54. Harry Hooper interview in Lawrence Ritter, *The Glory of Their Times* (New York: William Morrow, 1984), 139.

55. Ellery H. Clark, Jr., *Red Sox Forever* (Hicksville, New York: Exposition Press, 1977), 10-18, 53.

56. Quoted by Christy Walsh in John J. McGraw, *My Thirty Years in Baseball* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1923). McGraw, incidentally, selected Hooper on his All-Time American League team in the outfield with Ty Cobb and Tris Speaker. Many notable quotes about Hooper are listed in a case prepared by his son, John, for his father's consideration for selection to the Hall of Fame. See John Hooper to Paul S. Kerr, President,

As a defensive player, Harry was one of the best the game has ever seen. Playing Fenway Park's difficult right field with its spacious dimensions and tricky shadows, Hooper took hits away with his great speed and instincts and stopped runners in their tracks with his powerful, accurate throwing arm. Asked who was the game's greatest fielding outfielder, Babe Ruth quickly replied, "Harry Hooper of the Red Sox. No doubt about it."<sup>57</sup> His 344 assists and 81 double plays place Hooper among the top ten in these categories for all outfielders in the game's history. In addition, his perfection of the sliding catch, which allowed him to field sinking line drives without loss of momentum or balance, and his innovative use of sun glasses attached to the visor of his cap underscored his ability as a student of the game as much as they contributed to his performance as a player.

But beyond the records and the accolades, Harry Hooper was part of a subtle change in baseball's ranks that was contributing to the professional game's rising popularity and respectability. Although, as Tables 1 and 4 demonstrate, former collegians had begun to establish themselves in the Major Leagues prior to Hooper, he and his fellow alumni from Saint Mary's were still in the vanguard of a collegiate connection to the top professional circuit. They were sought both as players with proven talents and as agents of respectability, which owners felt their collegiate experience, limited as it was in many cases, would provide.<sup>58</sup>

Connie Mack was the most avid recruiter of collegiate players around the turn of the century and his success with such men as Chief Bender (Carlisle), Eddie Plank (Gettysburg), Jack Coombs (Colby), Harry Davis (Girard), Al Orth (DePauw), Eddie Collins (Columbia), Jack Barry (Holy Cross) and Andy Coakley (Holy Cross) influenced others to look to the college playing fields for baseball talent.<sup>59</sup> Between 1902 and 1914, Connie Mack's Philadelphia Athletics won six pennants while the number of new players on Major League rosters with previous college-level playing experience increased from 21 in 1902, more than any previous year, to 57 in 1914.<sup>60</sup> To help locate and assess talent in the collegiate ranks and to gain an edge in the recruitment battles, Major League clubs expanded their scouting systems and established ties with the coaches and managers of the leading college nines. Connie Mack, in fact, had a standing offer with Saint Mary's for many years to offer a contract to the best Phoenix pitcher each season. He landed Hal Krause in 1908 and Tiny Leonard in 1911 through this arrangement.

National Baseball Hall of Fame, January 1, 1971, Harry Hooper File, National Baseball Library.

57. Interview between Ruth and Joe McGlone, 1947, quoted in Hooper to Kerr, January 1, 1971.

58. Steven A. Riess, *Touching Base: Professional Baseball and American Culture in the Progressive Era* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980), 173-174; Harold Seymour, *Baseball: The Golden Age* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 98-99; Guy Harris White, "College Men Should Play Professional Ball," *Baseball Magazine* 1 (August, 1908); Thomas I. Lynch, "The College Players in the Big Leagues" in *Spalding's Official College Baseball Annual, 1911-1912*, ed., Edward B. Moss (New York: American Sports Library, (1911); Fredric P. O'Connell, "College Players Who Have Made It Good," *Illustrated Sports News* 5 (June 10, 1905): 6-7; and Francis Wallace, "College Men Go From Campus to Big League Diamonds and Make Good," *New Yorkpost*, September 5, 1928.

59. Connie Mack, *My 66 Years in the Big Leagues* (Philadelphia: John C. Winston Co., 1950), 33, 43.

60. See sources listed for Tables 3 and 4.

**Table 4**  
**Former Collegiate Players on Major League Rosters, 1876-1916**

| Year | Total No.<br>Former Col-<br>legians on<br>ML Rosters | Teams with<br>Greatest<br>Representation<br>and Number |    | Team Season<br>Record/Finish |
|------|--|--|----|------------------------------|
| 1876 | 5  | Chicago (NL)   | 2  | 52-14/1st                    |
| 1886 | 20   | Chicago (NL)   | 3  | 90-34/ 1st                   |
|      |  | Pittsburgh (AA)  | 3  | 80-57/2nd                    |
|      |  | Cincinnati (AA)  | 3  | 65-73/5th                    |
| 1896 | 23   | Baltimore (NL)   | 5  | 90-39/ 1st                   |
|      |  | Brooklyn (NL)  | 3  | 58-73/9th                    |
| 1906 | 101  | St. Louis (NL)   | 9  | 52-98/175th                  |
|      |  | Chicago (NL)   | 7  | 116-36/1st                   |
|      |  | Pittsburgh (NL)  | 7  | 93-60/3rd                    |
|      |  | Brooklyn (NL)  | 7  | 66-86/5th                    |
|      |  | Philadelphia (AL)                                      | 10 | 78-67/4th                    |
|      |  | New York (AL)  | 8  | 90-61/2nd                    |
|      |  | Boston (AL)  | 8  | 49-105/8th                   |
| 1916 | 168  | Chicago (NL)   | 13 | 67-86/5th                    |
|      |  | Philadelphia (NL)                                      | 11 | 91-62/2nd                    |
|      |  | Boston (NL)  | 11 | 89-63/3rd                    |
|      |  | Pittsburgh (NL)  | 11 | 65-89/6th                    |
|      |  | Philadelphia (AL)                                      | 19 | 36-1 17/8th                  |
|      |  | Boston (AL)  | 16 | 91-63/1st                    |
|      |  | Cleveland (AL)   | 16 | 77-77/6th                    |

Legend: NL = National League; AA = American Association; AL = American League.

Sources: See Table 3. Also: *The Baseball Encyclopedia*, 7th edition (New York: MacMillan, 1988) and John Thorn and Pete Palmer, eds., *Total Baseball* (New York: Warner, 1989) for rosters.

The respectability issue was linked to various factors and developments in the professional game during the late 1890s and early years of the twentieth century. Led by Albert Spalding and Henry Chadwick, baseball owners, publicists, and entrepreneurs in other aspects of the business of sport extolled the alleged virtues of the "American game" and tried to market its appeal around a set of traditional middle-class ideals and values. Club accountability for player behavior and appearance increased. More attractive playing and viewing environs

were constructed. Clubs made special efforts to attract women to their games as evidence of baseball's worthiness, popularity, and propriety. Yet, perhaps the most important step taken in the professional game's quest for respectability was an improved salary scale. This served not only to attract a better class of men, including former collegians, to the professional ranks, but also to provide a certain status to ballplayers through a lucrative reward structure.<sup>61</sup>

The professional baseball world that Hooper entered was changing rapidly as it tried to escape a relatively recent past in which "the moral and intellectual atmosphere was murky, to say the least."<sup>62</sup> The old paradox affecting professional ballplayers-practitioners of a game that was hailed for its embodiment of cherished national virtues and values, yet possessors of very little social standing themselves-was fading along with the notion that these men were nothing more than illiterate rowdies. Old-timers, like Hall of Fame outfielder Sam Crawford, whose nineteen-year career in the Majors started in 1899, could still recall how "Baseball players weren't too much accepted. . . . were considered pretty crude . . . couldn't get into the best hotels and all that."<sup>63</sup> But, for the most part, a new and positive spirit of professionalism was beginning to characterize the game. Hooper contributed significantly to it. Although he did not possess the star quality of Bucknell's Christy Mathewson, the most celebrated representative of the new baseball professional in the early twentieth century, Hooper's steady play, solid work habits, and quiet manner underscored a similar intensity and intelligence that elevated the game.

That professional baseball could attract Hooper, Mathewson, and the scores of other former collegians, who, season after season after the turn of the century, increasingly appeared on the rosters of Major League teams, was certainly a reflection of the game's status as a respectable and legitimate career path. It is interesting to observe, however, that respectability *per se* was rarely noted by the ballplayers themselves as a principal factor in explaining the appeal of the game.<sup>64</sup> Respectability had several meanings, in fact, different meanings for different players-higher wages, social standing, community influence, off-season and post-career business opportunities, public acclaim. But what brought players to the professional game, before and after these meanings had any validity, was what had first stirred them about the game-its intrinsic appeal as a sporting activity, a test of skill, a matter of fun.<sup>65</sup> The grandest

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61. On aspects of the respectability issue, see Peter Levine, *A. G. Spalding and the Rise of Baseball: The Promise of American Sport* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); Allen Guttman, *Sports Spectators* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986); Warren Goldstein, *Playing For Keeps. A History of Early Baseball* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989); Donald J. Mrozek, *Sport and American Mentality. 1880-1910* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1983); George B. Kirsch, "Baseball Spectators, 1855-1870." *Baseball History* 2 (Fall, 1987): 4-20; David Lamoreaux, "Baseball in the Nineteenth Century: The Source of Its Appeal." *Journal of Popular Culture* 11 (1977): 597-613; essay reviews of Guttman, *Sports Spectators*, by Donald G. Kyle and Melvin L. Adelman, with a response by Guttman, in *Journal of Sport History*, XIV, 2 (Summer, 1987), 209-225; and correspondence among Rader, Kirsch, Adelman, and Riess regarding the class associations of baseball in *Journal of Sport History* 15 (Summer, 1988): 224-231.

62. J. C. Kofoed, "Baseball as a Profession." *Baseball Magazine* 17 (September, 1916): 61.

63. Crawford interview in Ritter, *Glory of Their Times*, 51.

64. See, for example, the recollections of Willie Kamm, Specs Toporcer, Chief Meyers, Fred Snodgrass, Jimmy Austin, and others in Ritter, *Glory of Their Times*.

65. Goose Goslin, a veteran of eighteen Major League seasons, probably spoke for many ballplayers in

occasion for the game, of course, whether as sporting spectacle, competitive showcase, or celebration, was the World Series and in October, 1915, the heroes wore red and blue—the colors of the Boston Red Sox and the Saint Mary's Phoenix.

Harry Hooper set the tone for the Series with a single off Grover Cleveland Alexander in his first at-bat. By the end of the five-game series he had accumulated six more hits for a championship average of .350. Two of his blows were home runs. They both came in the final game of the Series, marking only the second time in Series history that a player had hit two round-trippers in one game.<sup>66</sup> His second homer of the game, a shot on one bounce into the temporary field boxes in center field, came with one out in the ninth inning. It broke a 4-4 tie and won the game—and the Series—for Boston. His hit was the first time that a Series game had been won with a home run.

What Harry did not do at the plate, Duffy Lewis did. Batting fifth in the Boston order, Lewis rapped out eight hits in 18 at-bats for a .444 average. His offensive numbers included the only other Red Sox home run, five runs batted in, and game winning hits against Alexander in the bottom of the ninth of the third game and George Chambers in the fourth. He was the only player on either team to hit safely in all five Series games. Together, Lewis and Hooper drove in eight and scored five of Boston's twelve Series runs. They gave nothing back in the field. Throughout the Series, they accepted 18 chances flawlessly, including six putouts by Duffy alone in the fourth game.

Dutch Leonard's contribution to the Boston victory was a masterful three-hit shutout in the third game. Going the distance in his only Series appearance, the big lefthander struck out six, walked none, and set down twenty Phils in a row from the third inning on to post a victory over Alexander. One of the hits off him was a single by Ed Burns, whose three Series hits was exceeded by only two of his teammates. The former Phoenix catcher was behind the plate for the entire Series and handled his chores well. However, his only error was a costly one when he dropped the ball in a collision with Hooper at the plate in the first inning of Game Two.

The Series triumph meant a \$3825 payoff to each Boston player and the opportunity to earn more on the winter vaudeville circuit.<sup>67</sup> However, only Leonard among the victorious Saint Mary's men could be tempted in this direction. While Dutch divided his time on the stage in baseball uniform showing his pitching form and in formal wear playing the drums, Hooper and Lewis headed home to California. Bay Area sports fans happily welcomed them with parades and banquets. Their achievement signalled a celebration that combined hometown pride and typical baseball hyperbole. An editorial in the *Oakland Tribune* captured these themes perfectly:

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admitting "I'd have paid them to let me play. Listen, the truth is it was more than fun. It was heaven." From Goslin's interview in Ritter, *Glory Their Times*, 279.

66. Patsy Dougherty also of the Boston Red Sox had done it first, hitting two home runs in the second game of the 1903 Series.

67. Harry B. Smith, "Duffy Lewis Is a Modest Hero," *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 13, 1915, 5.

## World Series and Collegiate Connection to Major Leagues

Five boys from Saint Mary's College, Oakland, in the coming world series. Can any other institution of learning in the whole wide world equal that record? Can they even tie it? Can they even approach it at a respectful distance?

Were we a Saint Mary's College boy, we'd feel amazingly proud of that school. We're not a Saint Mary's College boy, but still we feel amazingly proud of that institution of learning. We're an Oaklander, and we believe that most Oaklanders feel a bit of pride in an institution that can develop five boys good enough to play in the greatest of all American sporting events, probably the greatest of all sporting events in the world.<sup>68</sup>

The irony of the Phoenix's triumph was that as the collegiate connection to the Major Leagues became more active, college baseball itself had rapidly lost ground to football as the principal sporting attraction on campuses across the country.<sup>69</sup> By 1915 intercollegiate football had become the primary symbol of an institution's athletic prowess and the major sporting means of keeping an institution before the public eye. This even became true at Saint Mary's a few years later when the Galloping Gaels of Coach Edward "Slip" Madigan captured the nation's fancy with their winning ways against the teams of much larger universities such as Arizona, California, U.C.L.A., Stanford, Fordham, Southern Methodist, and Southern Cal.

But in 1915, before the doughboys went off to the Argonne and Chateau-Thierry, before the "Black Sox" exposed the corruptibility of the playing fields, before Red Grange and the Four Horsemen expanded the pantheon of American sports heroes, no institution exemplified the relationship between college sport and the professional world more than Saint Mary's. The publicity which the college received because of the representation of its alumni in the Fall classic that year certainly did not hurt its reputation as a place where "they raise ball players in the oven."<sup>70</sup> Over the next ten years, another dozen Phoenix, including Lou Guisto, Stubby Mack, Walter Mails, and Lew Fonseca, would make it to the Majors. Like Hooper and the others who preceded these young men, baseball drew them to Saint Mary's and provided an attractive career opportunity when they left the college. Through their interaction, both baseball and college had fulfilled a shared promise as pathways to respectability.

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68. *Oakland Tribune*, October 1, 1915, 2.

69. J. R. MacGowan, "The Failure of College Baseball," *Baseball Magazine* 7 (August, 1911): 43-45, attributed baseball's demise to the inability of colleges to sustain a spirited interest in baseball for an entire season. He argued it was easier to focus attention on a football game or a track meet where the outcome was more "definitive." More likely explanations focus on the spectator value of football and the game's ability "to generate potent symbols" for the many constituencies associated with a college or university's athletic program. See Rader, *American Sports*, 75-76, 209-210; Smith, *Sports and Freedom*, 67-98; Mrozek, *Sport and American Mentality*, 167-171; Chu, *Character of American Higher Education*, 53-57.

70. Beaumont, "Training School for Baseball Stars," 73.