

Hall, Alvin L., ed. *Cooperstown: Symposium on Baseball and the American Culture*, 1989. Westport, Connecticut: Meckler Press, 1991. Pp. ix, 363. Notes, References. \$49.50.

On June 8 and 9 of 1989 The State University of New York College at Oneonta sponsored a conference on Baseball in conjunction with the fiftieth

anniversary of the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum. One result of the conference is this book which contains the twenty-one papers presented as part of the symposium. As with any collection of this sort the quality varies, but almost all of these papers have something of interest for the baseball historian, the baseball buff, or scholars in various fields of sports studies.

For all that has been published on baseball in America and around the world, it would seem likely that there would be a point at which repetition would become a problem. If this collection is any indication, we have not yet arrived at that point.

The keynote address appropriately dealt with the history of the Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum. James A. Vlasich in "Alexander Cleland and the Origin of the Baseball Hall of Fame," provides an excellent examination of the development of the Hall with an emphasis on the role played by Alexander Cleland, and his employer Stephen Clark. Vlasich provides an excellent analysis of Cleland's efforts and examines the forces in Cooperstown and in Baseball which led to the creation of the Hall of Fame. If there is any weakness to this piece, it is the failure to dwell fully on the public relations aspects of this effort. Cleland's successes in enticing Organized Baseball and former major leaguers are detailed, but not enough attention is given to the involvement of the U.S. Government in the project, including a presidential message and proclamation, and the issuing of a Baseball Centennial stamp and first day covers. Nonetheless, Vlasich provides an excellent addition to the history of the game as a central factor in American culture.

The largest number of these papers concern themselves with literature and language. Four papers treat baseball literature from different perspectives and with varying degrees of success. Peter Bjarkman's effort is the most ambitious, trying to survey baseball fiction since 1973. He has some interesting comments on several of the most important novels and offers his rankings in various categories. J. Michael Lillich offers a number of observations on the nature of baseball and its appeal, but is less than convincing in his claim that there is very little high quality fiction. Richard Gaughran's "Farmers, Orphans, and Cultists" is an excellent exposition of the pastoral theme in selected pieces of baseball fiction. Sally Canapa's thoughtful "Time for Heroes" focuses on four novels including the overlooked and fascinating, *Babe Ruth Caught in a Snowstorm* by John Alexander Graham.

Three of the papers examine some aspect of baseball language and culture. Maggi E. Sokolik analyzes baseball terminology in general use in American life, Linda Kittell looks at the influence of baseball on American English, and Robert Moynihan examines the origins of baseball terminology. All three papers are admirable efforts.

Thomas Alther in a "Swing and a Myth" offers analysis of various baseball myths, as well as some speculation on the reasons for the popularity of the game. Monty Nielsen and George Schubert takes an extended look at heroes and role models including a lengthy discussion of various types of heroes in baseball. This paper concludes with a survey of players and non-players on the

concept of the ball player as role model. Michael Kimmel examines baseball and the concept of masculinity from 1880-1920 and in doing so offers an interesting and thoughtful follow-up on Warren Goldstein's treatment of the subject in *Playing for Keeps*. Gai I. Berlage's history of women's baseball at eastern women's colleges in the Victorian period breaks new ground in the history of baseball, and offers interesting perspectives on the history of women's sport in the 19th century. Paul Gaston's speculations on the fall and rise of minor league baseball and its meaning for American culture is a stimulating essay.

In the end the piece that I found most interesting and thought-provoking was Ronald Story's "The Country of the Young: The Meaning of Baseball in Early American Culture." Story goes back into the second-half of the 19th century to look for an explanation of why baseball is the game Americans love the most. He finds some tentative answers by taking the concepts of love, passion, and youth, as being central to an understanding of baseball's place in American society. This striking and original piece ought to be read and contemplated by everyone working in the field of sport history or any aspect of baseball.

This symposium offers a high number of quality and thoughtful pieces on baseball and American culture and all exude a love for the game as well as a passion for scholarship. This certainly was an excellent beginning for what has become an annual event, and it set a very high standard for future symposia to meet.

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