

## Book Reviews

Zingg, Paul J. *Harry Hooper: An American Baseball Life*. Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1993. Pp. xii, 281. Notes, photographs, appendices, bibliography, index. \$27.50.

There was a time, a simpler time, when baseball was played by men from humble backgrounds for humble rewards. The game was played for the enjoyment derived, as well as for a way to avoid the hard physical work on the farms, the coal mines, and other labor-intensive industries so prevalent in the early years of this century. Baseball was still an infant, relative to the financial and media giant into which it has evolved. The offspring of America's significant immigrant population took up the game with great passion, making it the national pastime that it has become.

Into this contest and onto this stage entered Harry Hooper, a young man from California whose introduction to baseball occurred during a childhood trip to visit relatives "back East." This introduction to baseball eventually became a lifelong love affair. Harry was also a brilliant student, which eventually led him to Saint Mary's College where he excelled in both academics and baseball. Upon graduation, Harry had a tough career choice: should he use his academic training in the field of engineering, or should he follow an exciting but more risky dream—to be a professional baseball player? To baseball's good fortune, Harry chose the latter.

Harry Hooper eventually made it to the major leagues where he became a favorite of the fans for his solid, intelligent play and his gentlemanly manners. In Hooper's day, that combination was not often found in professional baseball players.

Paul Zingg has done a superb job in this text of building a solid justification for Harry's election to the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1971. Harry was not a flashy player. Rather, Harry left his mark on the game through his steadiness as a leadoff hitter, his extraordinary defensive abilities in the outfield, and his leadership both on the field and off over a lengthy career. Indeed, he was the captain of the Boston Red Sox during much of his career, a position he took seriously and filled superbly. His significant contributions to four Red Sox World Championships (1912-15-16-18) speaks volumes about his value as a player and a leader.

But this book is about more than baseball. It also paints a picture of how baseball and America grew up together during the latter part of the nineteenth century and the first several decades of the present century, both of them growing beyond the wildest dreams of their founders. It was an exciting time for a bright and talented young man such as Harry Hooper, and Paul Zingg

has succeeded in recreating for us this simpler yet critical time that laid the foundation for the modern-day game.

With the current flurry of baseball books being written and published, this book could easily get pushed to the side because the principal character does not have the name recognition of a Ruth or a Cobb. That would be a genuine disservice to this book because, just like Harry Hooper, this book is steady and solid, not flashy. Its depiction of a typical young boy of that era pursuing and capturing his dream of playing professional baseball is a journey that any baseball fan or historian should not miss.

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Bill Swanson