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SCHMIDT, RAYMOND. *Two-Eyed League: The Illinois-Iowa of 1890-1892*. Homer Township, IL: Privately published, 1994. Pp. vi, 230. Map, photographs, appendices, bibliography. \$11.95 pb.

This privately published book is one of a growing number of minor league baseball histories assembled by hobbyist-historians. Schmidt is a computer scientist who researches baseball and college football in his leisure time. In his preface, he notes that he wrote most of this book “on Friday and Saturday nights,

after everyone had gone to bed, from 10 p.m. until about 3 a.m.” (p. iii). Rare is the academic who exhibits such dedication.

The Illinois-Iowa League of 1890-1892 was a minor endeavor, in more than one sense, put together when baseball in the United States was, for complex reasons, assuming its position as the national pastime. Cities today tend too often to define themselves as “major league” only if they are home to professional sports teams, but this is not a new phenomenon. As Schmidt notes correctly in his introduction, businessmen in small-town America in the late 1800s saw minor league baseball as “a chance to start many a town on the road to progress into the new century. . . . For the most part, minor league club owners were men who had pride in their community and wanted to show off the development of their town” (p.1).

Progressive though his viewpoint might have been, the Illinois-Iowa League actually had its beginning in a regressive idea, the notion that professional baseball should not be played on Sunday. Certain towns in this same region of the Midwest established the Western Interstate League in 1890 but allowed Sunday ball. Other towns, having originally expressed a desire to be part of the Inter-State, declined the privilege over this issue and formed their own league. They were led by E.C. Morgan, an agent of the American Express Company in Monmouth, Illinois. He organized a letter-writing campaign that eventually led to the creation of the league with five teams in Illinois (Aurora, Joliet, Ottawa, Sterling, and Monmouth) and three in Iowa (Dubuque, Cedar Rapids, and Ottumwa). The league’s rules prohibited Sunday ball and forbade liquor and betting on the playing grounds.

Schmidt did extensive research in the local newspapers so that he could cover each of the league’s three seasons in detail. It is fairly easy to read his book and follow the fortunes of each of the league’s teams and the flow of the pennant races. In fact—and this is a virtue possessed by many of these hobbyist-histories—Schmidt has accumulated the data so thoroughly that no one will ever have to do the work he has done again.

With a league like the Illinois-Iowa, however, off-the-field events intruded nearly every day. Disputes arose over umpires’ and players’ behavior, schedule problems, and splits of gate receipts. And the league was so precarious an enterprise that team and league officials had to expend significant effort just to keep their creation afloat. Schmidt has done yeoman work sorting out the franchise shifts as one team after another went belly up and schedules had to be readjusted. But the professional historian might be more satisfied had the author provided more analysis and context for the travails that beset the league, had he delved more deeply into the economic, social, and religious history of the region, especially since it was the question of Sunday baseball that eventually proved the league’s undoing.

Schmidt takes fair notice of the players and managers in the league who made names for themselves elsewhere in baseball history, including the African American Bud Fowler and John McGraw, who played with Cedar Rapids in 1891 after signing contracts, Schmidt says, with several different teams. And the

league itself merits recognition as an ancestor of the durable Three-I League and, by extension, of today's Midwest League.

Finally, it should be noted what fun it is to run into team nicknames the likes of which we just don't see anymore. It is one thing to encounter the Cedar Rapids Canaries, the Ottumwa Coal Palaces, and the Monmouth Maple Cites. But it is quite another to contemplate fans root, root, rooting for the Joliet Convicts, the Jacksonville Lunatics, or the Terre Haute Hottentots.

—STEVEN P. GIETSCHIER  
*The Sporting News*