

# The Other Major League, 1943-1954

SHARON TAYLOR-ROEPKE

Marcellus, Michigan 49067

In 1943 there existed three categories of Major League baseball, each representing the highest levels of their class: the white male major leagues, the black male major leagues, and the All American Girls Baseball League. The latter is THE OTHER MAJOR LEAGUE which, to date, is unacknowledged by the legitimizing institutions of organized baseball. Consensus declaration, financial stability, and elite athletic performance distinguish a “major” league. The All American Girls Baseball League was a sustained popular attraction, declared a major league by its originators, and played and operated with professional expertise. The brand of ball played was “dead ball” baseball, and the game evolved in a fashion similar to male major league baseball.

The athletes were the top of their class and recognized as such by former male major leaguers. Wally Pipp, former N.Y. Yankee first baseman, termed Dotty Kamenshek the “Rockford Peach,” a better fielder than most major league (male) first basemen. Sophie Kurys stole more bases in a single season than any other major league ballplayer in history. She may never be acknowledged as the great ballplayer she was because organized baseball does not view women as real ballplayers. They are unrecognized by the National Baseball Hall of Fame and have been ignored in numerous histories of the game. They are less visible in baseball lore than their black counterparts who were ignored for many years.

The A.A.G.B.L. began a slow but persistent decline when Arthur Meyerhoff, Management Corporation owner, sold out to the franchise owners. Conflict between the Meyerhoff corporation and local city owners led to significant cutbacks in promotional funding and resulted in the League’s demise.

The All American Girls Baseball League, begun by P.K. Wrigley in 1943 as a non-profit wartime entertainment, slid to a quiet death under the misdirected guidance of independent owners in 1954. The League’s innovative game with its charm school training, central player ownership, balanced team philosophy, and superbly trained female athletes died with most of the U.S. minor league system in the early 1950s, a victim of poor management and the entertainment competition of the postwar era.

