

# From Chadwick to the Chipmunks

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Like the idyllic marriage of the Jack Spratts, American baseball's symbiotic relationship with newspapers long blessed both principals. Indeed, the relationship between the two goes far to explain major league baseball's psychic hold upon the American people.

In briefly surveying the history of this important "second dimension" of baseball, Henry Chadwick's significance as father to the baseball writing profession is sketched. So is the rapid development of baseball writing and the stylization of the journalistic form by the end of the 1880s. The major thrust compares two species of 20th century baseball writers, the "tortoises" of baseball's pre-World War II era with the new breed of "chipmunks" of the Expansion Era.

Much beholden to baseball owners, the conservative "tortoises" romanticized baseball players, defended the game's unique customs and laws, and bowdlerized what they regarded as threats to the game's public image. Sports editor Stan Woodward's analytical tool of the three schools of tortoise style—the Gee Whiz, Aw Nuts and On the Button schools—is used to sort out representative scribes and anecdotes characteristic of the species.

By the 'Sixties the emergent new breed was spotted by Jimmy Cannon who bestowed upon them the derisive label of "chipmunks." In adapting to the new world of Expansion Era baseball, the chipmunks coped with TV competition by taking readers where TV cameras could not go. Thus, depth interviews and deep explorations of the hidden areas of baseball by chipmunks treated readers to more realistic and naturalistic insights into baseball's constituencies as well as the swirling problems that buffeted the game.

But given the durability of surviving tortoises and the polytypicality of the new species of writers themselves, baseball writing appears to be in no danger of falling into a singular, cultic stylistic mode.

