

Louisville from the National League to the American Association, 1877- 1883

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Although Louisville was a charter member of the National League when it formed in 1876, the city withdrew its team following the 1877 season and the revelation that four players had taken bribes to “throw” games. In 1882, a new “major” league, the American Association, was created. and once again, Louisville was a charter member.

This paper will review the scandal that prompted Louisville’s withdrawal from the National League in 1877, trace the five year hiatus when the city was without major league baseball. and explore the forces that worked to bring baseball back to River City, I will use newspaper and other local sources to attempt to answer such questions as: Who was involved in the new Louisville team and what was their social and economic standing? Was there any relationship between the owners and operators of Louisville’s National League team and its new team? Was there any appreciate interest or enthusiasm in the general public for a return of baseball to Louisville? Can any comparisons between 1882 and 1982 (when minor league baseball returned) be drawn?

Needless to say, it may not be possible. given time and resource limitations. to develop satisfactory answers to all these questions. But the effort is, I believe. worthwhile and should shed some light on Gilded Age baseball history and in the development of the American Association in the early 1880’s. a topic about which baseball historians such as Seymour and Voigt are curiously vague.