

# Baseball in the 1940s: Contribution of the AAGPBL to the Sport

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More than any other sport baseball has reflected the changes in our country as well as our societal values. Throughout the years, baseball has experienced both peaks and valleys, yet the game has remained steadfast in the hearts and minds of Americans. During the World War II years, baseball became particularly vital to the American spirit. However, as many talented, young players entered the service, the level of play declined and was met with criticism by fans. With many major league ball players off to war, professional baseball was in danger of folding. P.K. Wrigley and Branch Rickey, in 1943, created the AU American Girls Professional Baseball League in order to preserve the game of baseball. At its height, the AAGPBL had ten teams which played throughout the mid-west. Two qualitative research projects have been conducted with the members of the All American Girls Professional Baseball League Players' Association. These projects have examined the historical and cultural factors which impacted on the women during their Playing years. Data were gathered by means of a self-administered questionnaire and a modified ethnographic interview technique. A third project, exploring the success of the League through the eyes of fans who attended games is currently being conducted. The women believed they had done little to influence the game of baseball, due to the limited scope of the League. However, respondents strongly indicated the uniqueness of the League and the void which it filled during the war years. Fans and players alike noted the skill, athleticism, and professionalism with which the girls played. The players of the AAGPBL experienced the chance of a lifetime, providing society with good, solid baseball by women who were outstanding athletes.