

BASEBALL FROM A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

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“The Games Between Boys”: White Manhood, Class, and Baseball Players in Wilmington, North Carolina 1906-1919

The business elite intended the City League of Wilmington, North Carolina to represent the town’s progressive nature. Lasting from 1906 to 1917, however, the league came to embody ideas that differed from those of its founders. The eleven years that spanned the league’s existence saw important socioeconomic and cultural changes that reshaped the league’s meaning. Its middle-class participants found themselves torn. On one hand, they supported the league’s booster rhetoric because of their desire for advancement. On the other hand, they needed to prove their passionate manhood by playing rough baseball and winning. Balancing these two poles proved impossible. The nature of the game they played created physical confrontation that flew in the face of the league administration’s self-control message. Local working-class teams soon demonstrated skills commensurate to the City League’s, making its superiority debatable. Emerging ideas concerning personality-based — rather than character-driven — identities made accommodating these usurpers possible. This action transformed the nature of the league when coupled with socioeconomic change, nullifying its booster content. The actions player’s took during these years exposes shortcomings of such a city’s economic situation and raises questions about the firmness of the southern white consensus.

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“A Diamond is a Boy’s Best Friend”: The Rise of Little League Baseball, 1939-1964

This paper examines the rise of Little League baseball in the United States, primarily in the post-World War II era. This growth had the potential to speak to the concerns of postwar

America by addressing such issues as proper gender roles, ethnicity, professionalism, and consumption. In postwar United States, Little League baseball allowed Americans to address some of the complex tensions caused by the changes wrought by the end of the war and its aftermath, and to help children find their place in this rapidly changing environment. Little League baseball, as both a participatory and spectator sport, was one cultural vehicle through which familial roles were redefined and strengthened and by which numerous groups of Americans helped children accommodate themselves to such shifting structural realities as the rise of the corporate work world, the continued growth of a consumption-based society, and the beginning of the Cold War. Little League baseball, in short, served as an arena in which to address the concerns associated with these changes, as well as an important instrument of legitimating values initiated by the new social, cultural, economic, and political realities of postwar America. This was true among the adults of the United States as well. For such grown-ups, Little League not only served as a force of legitimization, but also came to symbolize how the postwar economy of corporate liberalism – a democracy based on traditional gender roles, corporate hegemony, and increased consumption – was supposed to work, and how this type of democracy could be spread around the world in the Cold War struggle against communism. By appealing to the historically sanctioned practice of youth baseball, Little League was able to help a number of segments of the American population come to terms with this new postwar order.

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Baseball, Bushido, and American Sporting Influence in Japan

This study invokes hegemony theory to examine the United States imperial efforts in Asia, more specifically, economic colonialism in Japan and the Japanese reaction to such encroachment. Intrinsic to the westernization of Asia was the promotion of Western superiority in knowledge, culture, technology, commerce, war, and physical prowess. The latter often involved a public demonstration in the form of sport in order