

Lee County Legend

K E E P I N G T H E M E M O R I E S A L I V E

Coalfield Baseball Part 2

Since its beginning, baseball has been an interesting game. Lee County Coalfield Baseball has included some outstanding players and has proven to be a wholesome past time for most of those associated with “the game”.

In this issue of the Lee County Legend, you will find articles about more than just the players who went beyond the local leagues. You will read about:

- **How a Lee County man became part of the Baseball Hall of Fame**
- **The Beginning of the story of the 1952 Pennington Gap Little League**
- **History of baseball rules and Baseball Pioneers**

Past Publications, Pictures, Champions lists and much more are on our website:

www.leecountylegend.com

Please send your stories and pictures to be included.



Baseball People

By Dave Audia

Baseball takes us in when we are young, keeps us playing until we can no longer hit the fastball, then, holds us captive for decades beyond.

There were people just like us in the early years of our country. They were instrumental in taking baseball from a playground game to the national pastime for kids and adults alike. See in the group below a few of those **baseball pioneers and key players from the 1800's**.

- **Alexander Cartwright 1845, wrote "Knickerbocker rules", recognized as the birth of organized baseball.**
- **Daniel "Doc" Adams during 1846-1862. added 90' base paths 9 inning games. Founder of the "shortstop" position.**
- **Jim Creighton 1850s, First Baseball "star". First paid player. Made baseball a contest of pitcher-hitter rather than hitter-fielders.**
- **Joe Start 1860s-1880s, power hitting first baseman for Brooklyn Clubs. Credited with being the 1st first baseman to play off base.**
- **Paul Hines 1870s-1880s, 1st unassisted triple play, 1st rookie to win a batting title, 1st major leaguer to win triple crown, 1st World Series hitter and 1st player to wear sunglasses.**
- **John Clarkson 1880s-1890s, Major League Career best 328 wins on mound at that time.**
- **Albert Spalding 1870s-1900s– outstanding player who parlayed playing career into great Spalding Sporting Goods company.**
- **Other early stars: King Kelly, Willie Keeler, Cap Anson, John McGraw, Buck Ewing, Dan Brouthers, Hoss Radbourn, Tim Keefe, Harry & George Wright and Asa Brainard.**



A LABOR OF LOVE

Lowell Lawson

Just a year ago my phone rang. I did not recognize the voice. "This is the Lee County Legend. You've never met me but you need to. I have an idea and you can help it happen.

My friend said you had some book learning and could read and write some. I want to tell the story of the history of Lee County Sports." And that is how I met Dave Audia and how the Lee County Legend came to be.

Here we are, seven issues later. I am the behind the scenes team member. Dave tells me that he is an all-around athlete. I told him that that I have been all around athletes most of my life. In high school I collected the uniforms from the players and washed them.

Dave and I share duties here in the office. He writes all the articles and does all the research. The biggest challenge is that I try to be sure that what goes into print is the actual truth. As Dave is growing older his accomplishments become greater. In 1962 he hit a dribbler to the shortstop and forced the runner at second. Last week he told me that it was one of the longest home runs ever hit at Leeman Field. We finally agreed that he would take 50 feet off his home run and I would spell his name right in the paper.

Dave promised me a big salary if I would take the job. It is a fair deal. I get my first check when our circulation reaches 100,000. We already have five subscribers and at least sixteen online friends. Pretty good beginning, don't you think?

Dave knows everybody in Lee County. At least, that is what he told me. Funny thing though. During my visit to Lee County I asked some folks if they knew Dave Audia. Latest count: 43% said "Yes". 31% said "No". 21% were undecided.

If you ever have a chance to come by our office we would love to meet you. Dave has the big oak desk and plush executive chair right up front. I don't have fancy furnishings. Dave found an old school desk from Pennington High School. He said it was historical. I told him it was uncomfortable.

Gotta go now. Dave just asked me to go get him a cup of coffee and a donut. It's part of my contract. You will find it in the little tiny print.

SPORTS BEGINNINGS IN LEE COUNTY

Dave Audia 10 November 2011

Beginnings are never easy to identify. The further we go back, the more difficult the challenge. The earliest history was not written, it was passed down by word of mouth. Much of what we will base this article upon is deductive reasoning and suppositions. We will do the best we can to define this history.

In the 1700s, prior to becoming a county, the Lee County area was used as home and hunting grounds for Cherokee and Choctaw Indians. Logic would lead us to believe that the Indians played games here.

Children’s games like “Hoop and Pole” had variations of rolling a hoop using a stick to propel and guide it. In some variations, the hoops were used for targets for darts, arrows or spears. Most Indian games were based on skill building activity. Archery and Spear Throwing were among these competitions that helped the young Indians gain life skills

Other games, such as Lacrosse and Double Ball were played with hundreds of competitors. These games were very violent with serious injury and even death likely. In Double Ball, the players used curved sticks and a double ball, which consisted of two small oblong deerskin bags joined together by a deerskin thong. The object of the game was to get the ball over the opponent’s goal.

Regardless of the geographic location, certain ball games were brought to America from Europe. Town Ball, Cricket and Rounders are given credit as forerunners to baseball. Base Ball itself is mentioned much earlier than most realize.

- In 1744, there was a publication by John Newberry of England that included a poem about baseball. On the front there was amazingly, a picture that depicted the game of baseball.
- In 1762, this same publication was reprinted in America.
- In 1778, according to MLB’s Baseball Timeline, the diary of an American soldier, found at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, refers to a game of “base” being played by the soldiers.
- In 1791, bylaws passed in Pittsfield, Massachusetts banned the playing of baseball within 80 yards of the town meeting house. It seems that too many windows were being broken by the power hitters of the day.

Continued in next column.....

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- In 1922, the Powell Valley News is covering baseball in Lee County
- In 2011, *The Lee County Legend* publishes research findings that for the first time in print, approximate the beginnings of baseball in Lee County, Virginia.

By the 1860s, baseball had become an American passion. According to the 1869 *De Witt Guide*, the mushrooming of baseball popularity was not just a phenomenon of the North in the years following the Civil War. The Guide states “when the cruel war was over” baseball was generally adopted throughout the South. The game gained popularity in Virginia and beyond.

Based on all available research it seems that baseball was the first organized sport to find it’s way to Lee County. Baseball was the favorite pastime of many Lee County residents by the mid 1800s just as it was in other parts of Virginia and the South.

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1952 PENNINGTON LITTLE LEAGUE

Feb 7, 1952 Powell Valley News

A town wide citizens community meeting is called for Sunday, Feb 10, 1952 at Pennington High School auditorium for the purpose of organizing Little League Baseball for boys in the age group of 8 to 12 years of age.

Note: Full stories on the organization of this league, including the names of the teams, coaches, umpires and men behind the success of the program will appear in the next issue.

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Or, you may read all issues and more free online at our Website: www.leecountylegend.com
Let us hear from you with your stories, articles and pictures!!

BASEBALL RULES

Baseball rule changes are continual. Almost any activity begins with a few simple rules. As games are played new situations occur for which there is no rule. Thus a new rule is born. We look forward to sharing with you some of the rule changes that have taken place. Volumes have been written on this topic. We shall share with you some of the more interesting changes.

(Excerpted from *The Rules of the Game*, compiled by Eric Miklich, ©2005)

PITCHING RULES

- 1845 The pitcher stood on a circular iron plate painted white 45 feet from home plate.
- 1858 The pitcher was allowed to take a short run before delivering the ball, provided he did not overstep the boundary line, behind which he could move as he liked.
- 1860 The pitcher must deliver the ball as near as possible over the center of the home base and for the striker (batter).

The ball must be pitched, not jerked or thrown to the bat; and whenever the pitcher draws back his hand, or moves with the apparent purpose or pretension to deliver the ball, he shall so deliver it.

- 1884 Overhand pitching legalized. Pitching distance set at 60'6" (The same as in 2011).
- 1887 Running start discontinued.

The ball must be pitched, not jerked or thrown, to the bat, and whenever the pitcher moves with the apparent purpose or pretension to deliver the ball, he shall so deliver it, and must have neither foot in advance of the front line or off the ground at the time of delivering the ball; and if he fails in either of these particulars, then it shall be called a balk.

The ball shall be considered jerked, in the meaning of the rule, if the pitcher's arm is swung forward to deliver the ball; and it shall be considered as a throw if the arm be bent at the elbow, at an angle from the body, or horizontally from the shoulder, when it is swung forward to deliver the ball. A pitched ball is one delivered with the arm straight, and swinging perpendicularly and free from the body.

- 1888 The pitcher no longer had to have both feet in contact with the ground when he released the ball.
- 1892 The pitcher shall take his position facing the batsman with both feet square on the ground, one foot on the rear line of the "box". He shall not raise either foot, unless in the act of delivering the ball, nor make more than one step in such delivery. He shall hold the ball, before the delivery, fairly in front of his body, and in sight of the umpire. When the pitcher feigns a throw to a base he must resume the above position and pause momentarily before delivering the ball to the bat.

LEE COUNTY MAN IN BASEBALL HALL OF FAME

Mr. R. P. Stewart

from Powell Valley News, 10/15/1942 and comments by Dave Audia 11/5/2011

*Comment: Making it to the Baseball Hall of Fame is an extraordinary honor that seems to be beyond the reach of ordinary people. The very purpose of the Hall of Fame limits inclusion. **Mr. R. P. (Perle) Stewart of Pennington Gap** found a way to join that elite group.*

PVN: Beginning in 1932 and finishing in 1939, Mr. Stewart collected a group picture of every World Series winning team up to that point. This collection is the only one of its kind and is today on display in the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, N.Y. William Beatty, Curator of the Hall of Fame, wrote, "You sure gave me a nice surprise today. Your series of World Series Ball Groups are now on display and causing more comment and getting more attention than anything we have in the museum". "It is safe to say that up to the opening of the baseball season this spring, 75,000 people from all corners of the United States and 32 foreign countries have seen these teams.

PVN: Mr. Stewart, of Lee Motor Company, said in part, "I started .. in 1932, I followed it almost daily until it was completed in 1939. I wrote hundreds of letters, sometimes as many as 40 a day. At times, it looked as if the collection would fall through, that to collect certain ones was impossible, but upon contacting old ball players and umpires who participated in Series as far back as 1903, and other actual participants, they would dig one from an old attic or old trunk; thus, inspiring new life in my hope of completing the collection.

Comment: Mr. Stewart must have been part bulldog. Remember, he was working on collecting things 30 years prior and, in those days, pictures were not all that common. See the next paragraph for an obstacle that would have discouraged most.

PVN: In two instances, the managers of the World Series Champion clubs were superstitious and had refused to let a group picture be taken for fear of bad luck. Group pictures of these teams were finally collected from a dozen states, from individual pictures of players that once appeared on cigarette packages. They were assembled and converted into a complete group.

Sports writers and World Series players were the most help. Players who helped were Clark Griffith of Washington, James Collins, Nap Rucker, Gabby Street, Dazzy Vance, Hans Wagner, Tris Speaker, Shoeless Joe Jackson, Ki Ki Cuyler, Jo McCarthy, Bill McKechnie, Connie Mack, Burley Grimes, Cy Young, Babe Ruth, Dick Curr, Eddie Roush, Bic Sorrell, Herb Pennock, Carl Mayes and Rube Waddell.

Comment: WOW!

PVN: Perle Stewart was once a major league prospect before World War I. An injury during the war ended his baseball career. Since then, he has become a content business man and in 1937, he helped reorganize the Appalachian class D League.

It was Mr. Stewart's idea and promotion that attracted business men in the town of Pennington Gap to construct Leeman Field, as the largest enclosed baseball field in the world. It served as home for the Pennington Lee Bears and the Pennington Miners in the Appalachian League and takes in acres of land.

PVN: To reach the Hall of Fame is a world renowned honor. For some, it takes as little as 9 innings to obtain, for some, it takes a career. Most never get there. For **Mr. R. P. Stewart**, who never had the remotest dream of being in the Hall of Fame, made it in 7 years. **He now has his name beautifully inscribed there in Cooperstown before this rare collection of pictures.**

1957/58 St Charles Midgets

Left to right:-Billy Slover, Terry Smith, Cecil Cochran, ??, ??, Bruce Miles, Norman Cody, Frank Scott, Larry Kirk, Tony Rogers, ??, ??, Coach Cecil Sumpter.

BLACKWATER HIGH SCHOOL



1962 Pennington Bobcats

Back Row, L-R, Jerry Allen, Jackie Parsons, L Helton, Terry Robinson, Jimmy Creech

2nd Row from top, L-R, Coach Ikey Joe Chadwell, Carl Smith, Doug Kelly, Dave Audia, Jerry Hughes, Coach Joe Robinson, Mayor Hughes

3rd Row from top, L-R, Ronnie Edwards, Sonny Johnston, Gary Gilliam, Charlie Pope, ??, ??

Front Row, L-R, David Parsons, ??, Bud Napier, Happy Allen, Louis Audia, Ronnie Pack, Paul Hamby

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TO:

KEEPING THE MEMORIES ALIVE