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Outfielders: McVey to Lindell

In 1869 the Cincinnati Red Stockings became the first baseball team to openly proclaim itself a professional club. Players from all over the country were hired, and the club toured the nation, compiling a record of 69 straight victories in 1869 and 1870. The Red Stockings' success encouraged other teams to drop the pretense of amateurism. In 1871 the National Association of Professional Ball Players was formed, the first of the big leagues.

Among the members of the famous Cincinnati team was Calvin A. McVey, a husky eighteen-year-old from Montrose, Iowa, who played right field for \$800. McVey and shortstop George Wright, who received the top salary of \$1,400, were the team's batting stars. McVey's part in his team's first defeat was unusual and it took place, as one might suspect, in Brooklyn. Facing the Brooklyn Atlantics, Cincinnati had a 7-5 lead in the last of the eleventh. As McVey raced to catch a fly ball an excited Brooklyn fan jumped on his

back, causing him to miss the ball. As a result, one run scored, and a few plays later the winning runs came home.

In 1871 higher salaries lured McVey, Wright, and other Red Stockings to join Boston, which dominated the new association from 1872 through 1875. McVey eventually played every position on the field. He and the great pitcher, Albert Spalding, formed one of the famous batteries of the day. When Deacon Jim White took over the catching, McVey played other positions. But he was most noted for his hitting. He compiled such averages as .366 in 1871 and .385 in 1874. Next to second baseman Ross Barnes, McVey was Boston's hardest hitter.

By 1875 the National Association was so infested with gamblers that the public lost faith in its integrity. During the year McVey, Barnes, White, and Spalding, who were known as Boston's "Big Four," were induced to sign with the Chicago White Stockings. When the association threatened to take action against the move, Chicago's president, William A. Hulbert, together with young Spalding, formed the National League, with strict rules forbidding gambling and other practices which had thrown the association into disrepute. In the face of this opposition the association collapsed while the National League has prospered ever since.

McVey played with Chicago in 1876 and 1877,

after which he returned to Cincinnati as manager and player in 1878 and 1879. The team did not do well under his leadership, and since his batting average also dropped McVey left major league baseball in the latter year. Subsequently McVey moved to California, where he died in 1926.

Calvin McVey was the first of more than a hundred Iowans who have played in the major leagues, only a handful of whom became stars. McVey was best known as an outfielder, but fifteen years after his retirement another outfielder from Iowa, Fred Clarke, arrived in the National League. His fame was to far surpass that of Iowa's first major league player.

Clarke was born in Madison County, Iowa, but grew up in Des Moines. His baseball talents were first recognized by Ed Barrow, who later achieved immortality as the man who built the great New York Yankee teams of the Ruth-Gehrig-DiMaggio eras. In the late 1880's Barrow was circulation and advertising manager of the Des Moines *Leader*. In addition, he was the organizer and manager of a local baseball team. Impressed with young Clarke's baseball potentialities, he hired him as a carrier boy, "because he could run like the wind and was tireless." In addition to his newspaper chores Clarke played for Barrow's ball club. Following this apprenticeship Clarke entered professional baseball and in 1894, at the age of 21, he was bought by Louisville of the National League.

By his second season Clarke was one of Louisville's regular outfielders, a position in which he was one of the all-time great performers. He was also a dangerous hitter. He hit .354 in 1895 and in 1897 had his best season when he hit .406. However, Clarke had to be satisfied with second place in batting that year because Wee Willie Keeler hit a fantastic .432 to lead the league. Although Clarke hit over .300 in eight different years after 1897 he never approached .400 again.

During the season of 1897 Clarke was appointed Louisville's manager, becoming one of the first "boy managers," and one of the most successful. The 24-year-old youth could do little with the weak Louisville club, but his luck changed in 1900 when the National League was reduced from 12 teams to the more familiar 8 members with Louisville merging with the Pittsburgh Pirates. Clarke became the Pirates' manager, a post he held for 16 years.

Pittsburgh finished second in 1900, but then were champions for the following three seasons under Clarke's leadership. Their margin of victory over second place Brooklyn in 1902 was an amazing $27\frac{1}{2}$ games. In 1903 Pittsburgh's National League champions played the Boston Red Sox, champions of the American League, in the first of the modern World Series. Partly due to injuries which had decimated Clarke's pitching staff, the Pirates lost, 5 games to 3. Clarke had

better luck in 1909, however, when his fourth National League pennant winning team defeated Detroit 4 games to 3 in the October classic. Clarke helped the cause with home runs in the first and fifth games.

Clarke's service with Pittsburgh ended after 1915, although he returned briefly in the mid-1920's as a Pirate coach and executive. Since his playing days Clarke has become a wealthy rancher in Kansas, but he was remembered in 1945 by election to baseball's Hall of Fame.

Another Iowan who starred for many years as an outfielder in the American League was Edmund "Bing" Miller of Vinton. Miller's father was a minor league player and two of Bing's brothers played professional ball. Bing himself started out as the star pitcher of the local Vinton Cinders. However, by the time he reached the majors with Washington in 1921 he was an outfielder.

In 1922 Miller was traded to Connie Mack, who was rebuilding the Philadelphia Athletics. Shortly such fabulous figures as Al Simmons, Lefty Grove, Mickey Cochrane, Jimmy Foxx, George Earnshaw, and others, joined Miller, Jimmy Dykes, and Ed Rommel who were early members of the brilliant array of stars who swept Philadelphia to three pennants and two World Championships from 1929 to 1931. On such a team Bing Miller perhaps received less recognition than he

deserved. Mack traded him to the St. Louis Browns in 1926 but got him back in 1928.

Until age slowed him down Miller could be relied upon to hit well over .300. His best year was 1924 when he hit .342 in 113 games, but in 1929 he hit .335 in 147 games while in the World Series against the Chicago Cubs that fall he aided the A's attack with a .368 average. In addition, it was Miller who drove in the winning run with a double in the last of the ninth of the deciding game of the series. After the series the town of Vinton and a host of Iowans honored him at a great banquet.

In 1935, at the age of 41, Miller moved to the Boston Red Sox, where he was still good enough to bat .304 as a part-time outfielder. He finished out his playing days in 1936 with the Red Sox, but he remained a familiar figure in baseball thereafter as a coach with several clubs, including Connie Mack's last Philadelphia Athletic team.

George Stone of Clinton had a brief, but notable career as an outfielder with the St. Louis Browns from 1905 through 1910. In his first season he hit only .296, but led the American League in total hits. The following season Stone's average rose to .358, the highest in the league. He is the only Iowan to lead the American League in batting. In 1907 Stone's average dropped to .320 and in his remaining three years with the Browns he failed to approach .300.

John Lindell, who was born in Colorado but was raised in Winfield, Iowa, had an unusual baseball career. He won the award of Minor League Player of the Year as a pitcher in 1941, but when he was brought up to the majors by the New York Yankees Lindell showed such promise as a hitter that manager Joe McCarthy put him in the outfield in 1943. Lindell remained with New York until 1950, sometimes as a regular outfielder, but more often as a very useful utility man. He hit .300 in 1944 and .317 in 1948, and tied for the league leadership in triples in 1943 and 1944. His low average in other years did not tell the whole story, because, like so many Yankee players, Lindell was a clutch hitter. In the 1947 World Series he batted .500. In addition, although he was the biggest man on the club, Lindell became a very capable fielder.

Released to the St. Louis Cardinals in 1950, Lindell was soon sent back to the minors. There he took up pitching again, won 24 games for Hollywood in the Pacific Coast League in 1952, and returned to the majors with Pittsburgh in 1953 when he was nearly 37 years old. Lindell pitched some good games for Pittsburgh and the Philadelphia Phillies during this final tour of the big leagues, but his hitting caused him to be used as a frequent pinch-hitter.

Several other Iowans have patrolled the outfield for big league clubs, one of whom deserves men-

tion because of the fame he later won elsewhere. This is Billy Sunday, a native of Ames who, as a twenty-year-old outfielder with a Marshalltown team in 1883, caught the eye of Marshalltown's most famous baseball son, Cap Anson, manager of the Chicago White Stockings. Anson signed Billy Sunday up with Chicago, although many Windy City players insisted that Sunday would never have made the big time had he not come from Anson's home town club.

Between 1883 and 1890 Sunday played with Chicago, Pittsburgh, and Philadelphia in the National League. His speed was his chief asset. He was acknowledged to be the fastest man in baseball. He was one of the leading base stealers of the day, being able to circle the bases in 15 seconds. In addition, he made good use of his speed in the outfield. Sunday's hitting was his weakness. He struck out his first thirteen times at bat with Chicago, and except for 1887 he had difficulty batting over .250. Consequently he often warmed the bench.

Late in the season of 1887 Sunday was converted to Christian service. The next day Chicago played a crucial game with Detroit. John Clarkson was Chicago's pitcher. "Cigarettes put him on the bum," Sunday, the evangelist, later recalled. "When he'd taken a bath the water would be stained with nicotine." In the ninth, with two out and two Detroit men on base, Clarkson slipped

as he pitched and the batter clouted a towering drive in Sunday's direction. Sunday turned, ran and prayed, "God, if you ever helped mortal man, help me to get that ball, and you haven't very much time to make up your mind, either."

With a great effort Sunday caught the ball and turned head over heels. As he got up a prominent man who had bet \$1,500 on Chicago rushed up and gave him \$10 to buy the best hat in Chicago in gratitude for Sunday's game-saving catch. Years later an old Methodist minister said to Sunday, "Why, William, you didn't take the \$10, did you?" "You bet your life I did," Sunday replied.

Sunday quit baseball in 1891 to enter religious work, but he maintained an interest in baseball down to his death in 1935. His unorthodox sermons were full of baseball slang and poses. Once he rigged a bat-shaped slat in his pulpit and at the right moment yanked it loose, crying that he was going to make a three base hit off the devil. At this, Jimmy Ryan, an old Chicago teammate who was in the congregation, shouted, "Go to it, Bill. You never could do it with us."

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